

Friday 27 January 2017

Hi Peter,

**Log Book of Avanti 2017,
Chapter 2**

Weather Bound at Akaroa

Stop and Ponder

After a difficult passage from Port Chalmers to Oamaru and on to Akaroa in heavy northerly conditions we have decided that sadly the weather for the next month looks gruesome and not suitable for we two ancient mariners to proceed further. We only accepted yesterday that Akaroa was as far as we were prepared to sail. We have never given up in 27 previous voyages over a period of 42 years when sailing from Dunedin to Picton, but this time that is exactly what we have done. Quitters?

Plans

However we are looking on the bright side. Here at Akaroa we have friends, a good stout mooring, are not far from the Akaroa Yacht Club and close to this quaint town for food supplies and eateries. The weather is pleasant, although as in most of the country, northerly gales are afoot. When we feel the urge it is only 140nm to sail south to Port Chalmers and with a northerly we can be back home in 36 hours. Another plan suggested by son Alastair is to take the bus home to Dunedin, stay a few days to do the chores, check on the house and drive the car back to Akaroa. The car would then be up here for our use and we could repeat the Dunedin trip.

However when it blows in Akaroa Harbour you could well wish you were somewhere else. A big strong mooring feels so much cosier to be on than our own anchor. There is much of Banks Peninsula yet to explore.

Jolly on the Town

Once settled onto our new mooring, owned by Steve Bradley, close to Akaroa Yacht Club wharf a suggestion was made that we join John and Beverly Milligan for dinner ashore in the evening. The AYC wharf is exposed to the wind and seas and landing in windy conditions in our inflatable rigid dinghy can be fraught with difficulties. Margaret is not as nimble as she used to be and the lack of a pontoon makes clambering up tall iron ladders impossible and onto slippery wooden wharf platforms a major problem for her. Because of the wind the weather was unsuitable for us to dinghy ashore and in addition Margaret was not feeling well, I postponed the arrangement for another day. However as this day progressed both the weather and Margaret made rapid recoveries and the arrangements and the booking were reinstated at the Ma Maison (My House) Restaurant, allegedly the best in Akaroa. Accordingly the Milligans picked us up in the car at the yacht club and we went off for a jolly on the town.

When ordering dinner at such an excellent establishment naturally 75% of the party ordered fish and chips, as you do. But Margaret ordered scollops. Ma Maison having such a good reputation, did not look a bit offended at our choices. The weather remained calm and we were safely home to Avanti, out at her mooring before dark.

Steve's mooring first, then No 207

Steve Bradley, owner of "Duende" which was up on the slip for painting, said he would be going back into the water on Thursday and I understood he would be wanting his mooring back again. Several members of the AYC said that they would always find a mooring for us. Sure enough Jonny Bell came by in his beautiful yacht "Regardless" and told us that mooring No 207 was available for as long as we needed it. We moved immediately before the northerly freshened to make pick-up difficult. Severe gales were forecast for Wednesday night which made us keen to get settled before the next big blow.

Outboard Problem

On three occasions the model 2c Yamaha 2hp outboard had behaved strangely. It petered out halfway to somewhere, like going to the Town Wharf when we had intended to dinghy to town to do some provisioning. The motor stopped after running for ten minutes indicated overheating, and that

indicated that I had either failed to add oil to the fuel or there was no cooling seawater being pumped through the engine. I suspected a failure of the cooling sea water pump impeller which would normally be above the gearbox.

I spent the whole of Wednesday struggling to dismantle the the lower part of the propellor and gear box. I had to move very slowly because although I had the owners manual I had no service manual to tell me about the inner mechanical mysteries of the outboard nor could I find one on the internet. On several occasions I rang Richard and Latham at Read Marine, the original suppliers, who were very helpful in verbally guiding me through the intricacies of the dismantling procedure. In case the impeller was shredded they also popped a new one in a courier bag and sent it off to the Akaroa post shop.

The northerly was blowing half a gale and I could certainly row ashore but it was doubtful I if could row back. Without the outboard we were stuck aboard until it was fixed so I couldn't even get to the post shop to pick up the new impeller to fix it, if that indeed was the trouble. When I did get th outboard's pump dismantled I could see that the installed impeller did look in good shape but without a servicing manual I did not know how to thoroughly inspect nor remove it. I also cleared an obstruction in a part of the cooling water channel which was the possible cause of lack of cooling water. The way ahead was to reassemble the outboard and if it went - good. If it went for a while I could row ashore, pick up the courier bag and perhaps motor back against the wind before the engine petered out.

The plan was to spend the next day reassembling the outboard. Unfortunately it was blowing a full gale peaking at 30kts (60kph) which set the high-wind alarm sounding for a while and it seemed unwise to go anywhere. The boat was pitching making it difficult even to stand up. Cautiously I maneuvered heavy parts of the motor up onto the cockpit seat where I could work on it, hoping it would not slide off onto my foot. Bit by bit I re-assembled the parts that I had dismantled and late in the day it was all in one piece and I had not lost any vital bits. Anything left over could be used as spares for next time.

Outboard Repair Successful

The wind continued to blow strongly during the night, howling in the rigging and the boat was pitching in the harbour swell. Margaret and I had been living aboard for nearly two weeks, become used to the movement and slept well. By morning it was calm and it looked a good day to test my mechanics skills. We lowered the dinghy into the water and clamped the motor onto the stern. The test was successful - a jet of cooling water was flowing out of the back of the outboard which ran for ten minutes without hesitation.

The wind was forecast to return at about noon which meant we had two hours to dinghy 0.8nm to Daley's Wharf, do the shopping at the supermarket, sort out our mail problem, collect the new impeller couriered to us from Dunedin and get back to the yacht before the wind got up again. We loaded the little dinghy with our carry bag and trolley, and wearing sailing jackets, sea boots, inflatable life jackets and hats set out for the wharf and supermarket.

Cruise Ship Barges

At 07:00 the large tourist ship "Celebrity Solstice" with 2,850 passengers, 1,250 crew and 122,000 tons had anchored 2nm out in the harbour. At 10:00 they started to run their large barges to the Akaroa Town Wharf pontoon. Each of the six barges carried 40 passengers. They plied back and forth all day until 18:00, then were hoisted aboard and the ship departed. The barge traffic generated a constant series of waves from their wake which caused an all day joggle on the water and the movement of Avanti was unpleasant. The barge traffic waves also made it difficult to land Margaret at Daleys Wharf steps and to beach the dinghy at the nearby launching ramp where the water was surging back and forth like the surf at St Clair beach.

NZ's Best Butcher

The local butcher's shop is considered to be one of the best in New Zealand. In we went and bought enough meat to last a week, dealing with a butcher of the kind we remember from our childhood. Bluff, polite, helpful and always ready with a free saveloy or two and a merry quip. Such is Akaroa.

Tourists

A line of ten busses were waiting to take ship's passengers to Christchurch but Akaroa was still awash with tourists from Celebrity Solstice. They mainly seemed 60 to 70 years old, cheerful and

didn't mind the rain. We spoke to a couple from the Czech Republic, who had helped Margaret out of the dinghy at Daleys Wharf and an American couple whom I directed to the Akaroa Museum to view the section on Capt Frank Worsley, a local man, who became Earnest Shackleton's captain during his 1905 expedition to Antarctica. Worsley was a brilliant navigator and seaman and when they were attempting get help to rescue the the rest of the cast-ashore crew he navigated the expedition's tiny makeshift boat from Elephant Island to South Georgia. A wonderful story.

Washing machine disorder

At the yacht club there was an autistic washing machine. There was no telling what it would do next. With her psychiatric skills Margaret tried hard to master it's uncooperative ways but after an hour of talking it refused to cooperate with her. Hands on squeeze, rinse and slow spin got the job partially done. Then the little spin dryer aboard Avanti got rid of the rest of the water and all could be hung out to dry. Victory.

French Farm Aquatic Club

John and Beverly Milligan invited us to the French Farm Aquatic Club. It was an interesting organisation which was much more than a yacht club. It is a well run local community organisation, paddle board and fishing, yacht and motor boat club. For the residents who live in this scattered community the upstairs lounge was the only place where they could meet as a group. Also the boating facilities and the surrounding shallow seabed depth was fine for canoes, paddle boards and small yachts. The bigger boats had to be moored further out to have deep enough water for their keels. French Farm Bay was well sheltered from the southerly quarter winds and less well sheltered from northerly winds. The fetch to the north was 1nm which would give only small harbour waves.

Big Harbour Waves

At our current mooring off Akaroa Yacht Club the fetch from Duvauchelle Bay to the north is 3.5nm where large harbour waves can develop in the northerly wind. And when the south west wind blows the fetch is 3nm which also generates large waves. At first we had some shelter but when the SW wind has been blowing for a while, larger waves are generated in the main part of the harbour with a fetch of 5nm from the Heads. These waves curl 30° around Green Point and rush along to Avanti's position moored off the AYC. Then she really begins to pitch and crew are frantically searching the medical draw for the seasick tablets.

The Best Anchorage

My conclusion is that French Farm Bay definitely has better shelter, especially in a south west wind. But to is a lonely place where there is only the fine member-built club house and wharf, a number of boat sheds, a slip and a new dinghy launching incline. About 20 yachts and launches were on moorings in the bay. There are no houses, no shops for miles, and when we were there for one night only there was no activity at all.

Akaroa is much more exposed to wind and swell but it has shops, restaurants, people and lots of marine and road traffic. There is the yacht club, classical music concerts, cruise ship barges plying to and from the tourist ships anchored off, tourist marine activity, dinghy sailing boat and keeler class yacht races. People on paddle boards, in canoes and heading out in the "Swim with the Dolphin" launches and more. And of course it has the best butcher and the best fish and chip shop in the South Island. But oh my, it certainly can blow.

Interesting People

During our evening at the FFAC we met a number of interesting members. Unlike the AYC most were couples, some with children. They all bought their own tippie and nibbles to share. We both had interesting conversations, collecting several complete life stories. There was the man who farmed 140 alpacas and the man who departed Zimbabwe just ahead of newly organised police department which were intent on arresting him for tax evasion. Then there was Peter who was 94 years old, who had lost a leg when he was 17, refused all offers of assistance, but had been sailing and building his own yachts all his life. There was a charming 55 yo woman who sailed yachts on delivery voyages for a living. There was the English doctor who retired when he was 53 years old and came to live in NZ and used his qualifications to medically test aircraft pilots. His wife had been a top BBC presenter but now was trying to write for a living. She knew all about the series that was to be made about my Uncle Archie (Sir Archibald McIndoe, plastic surgeon) by the BBC. For some reason the project is still delayed. Margaret and I met all those charming and fascinating

people, and more, in one and a half hours on our first visit to the quaint and isolated French Farm Aquatic Club.

Sunday 22nd January 2017

Hyper-vigilance

Last night it blew a gale from the east out of Childrens Bay. The fetch was only 0.5nm so there was no sea with it. Margaret slept soundly but I has on hyper-vigilant watch and slept well between six wakeful periods. But I did keep an eye on the boat, checking our position in the bay (our mooring was not dragging), that other moored boats were not getting dangerously close (their moorings were not dragging), that the bilges were still dry, all sails and gear on deck were still secured and nothing was loose in the cabin.

The Latest Gale

Come morning time the gale reduced somewhat but still too strong to even consider putting the dinghy in the water. About noon the wind veered from north east to south west and strengthened to a full gale. With a 3.5nm fetch across the harbour and 5 nm to the heads the wind generated waves got bigger and the bow nearly burying itself in the sea. The boat was pitching violently, and occasionally rolling 15° and veering from side to side in the changing gusts. I am very glad we are at mooring and not at sea. The mooring rope is emitting deep stressful groans where it goes round the bollard.

The wind strength is gusting 36kts (70kph) with the gale alarm (set at 30kts) of the wind instrument sounding continuously. Standing in the galley cooking tea Margaret is struggling to maintain her balance. With a firm grip on the pot with one hand and holding onto a convenient grab handle with the other she has a problem stirring the eggs. Good rough weather tucker - scrambled eggs in a cup eaten with a spoon.

Where to Sleep?

Where to sleep is the next decision? There is a lot of movement In our own bunks up forward and we may not be able to sleep. The bow is rising and falling 800mm every 2 seconds. We could sleep in the saloon where the sea-bunk on the port side is good but the settee on the starboard side has only a netting lea-cloth to prevent one from being thrown onto the floor. It is a bit of a chore shifting all the bedding aft and setting it up again so we'll just stay up forward where it goes rock-a-bye-baby.

Prognosis

The outlook is not good. The next gale will be severe, averaging 34kts (68kph) right through the night to noon on Monday 23/1/17 and then slowly start to ease becoming NE 15kts in the afternoon.

Very Best Regards,

Bill and Margaret,

Avanti

On mooring No 207
off Akaroa Yacht Club
New zealand