



[2012 Season](#) [2013 Season](#)

Note this blog is top-down, latest dates are at the top earliest at the bottom so, if you're new to this site, start at the bottom!

## 2nd July to 15th July

### British cooking

We stayed in tranquil for three nights going into Nidri for supplies and to pick up a kit to mend the dinghy properly. Then we moved the mile to Vliho via a drift down the Meganisi Channel again and a motor around Scorpios for tea with the Onassis's; but they weren't at home. Aristotal Socrates Onassis - what could you do with names like that except succeed? He liked the area around Nidri and so bought the island (but to his irritation couldn't buy the sea around it so had to put up with the riff-raff coming to swim off his island shore). What is less known is that he was a philanthropist who provided water, schools and work for the locals around Nidri. For that he got a statue in the square. Riff-raff we, we settled for a fly-by and headed for Vliho. Vliho is the easiest place in the world to anchor - it's huge, shallow and everyone is well spread out. If you've never anchored and need a place to practise, go there.



Vliho anchorage

Vliho Yacht Club - not a club at all except in the loose sense of meeting the same people over and over. After two and a half months of Greek food I yearn for British food - I don't know why, it must be some obscure chemical I'm lacking - and so we come to VYC which boasts such traditional British fare as Thai fish cakes, curry, tika marsala, pizza... and sausage and mash with onion gravy.

### Hand feeding fish

We needed water again after a couple of nights in Vliho. In fact we were so low that the gauge wouldn't register and the sight glass couldn't find a drop either so back across to Spartakhor. By this time the boat had worn a groove in the water between Nidri and there. What was unexpectedly wonderful was a new clarity to the already usually pretty clear water and shoal after shoal of fish. I went over the stern with the little underwater camera and spend an hour filming the various species. Holding a morsel of bread in one hand and filming with the other I got a few marvellous stills and many minutes of [video](#) of being surrounded by fish.

### Ann feeding fish in Spartakhor



Looking under the boat I had another surprise, a line of small minnows standing vertically in the water were eating their way along our hull. Looking for all the world like a mobile fringe they had begun at the bow and were moving backwards.

On the other hand it shows how much weed had stuck to the Coppercoat this year! Here's a [video](#).



**If we could only train them to clean our hulls on request !**

### **Shopping by boat**

On the way back to Kapali we dropped into Vathi and sat alongside the quay so that Ani could go shopping. Normally we wouldn't have expected there to be enough room in a place like Vathi to do this but the town quay was empty except for two small yachts. It's not a place we like much and haven't been there by boat since the flotilla days, but it has a few supermarkets (it also has very expensive orange juices!). Coming alongside and springing off later into a slight breeze was something we'd not done for a long long time – it went okay but it made me aware how the skills can disappear!

So back to Kapali to squeeze in the corner near a very grumpy couple in a 28' yacht who could have helped us but didn't. Ann part rowed, part swam, part fell and part dived into the water to get a rope from the shore while I part ran aground and dodged the stern around the parked boats while trying to meet her. Luckily the water was cool afterward which helped when I volunteered to go and free the dinghy which Ann had somehow managed to include as part of the shore line. Later the bay emptied a little (most bays have some boats that want a meal ashore so it's always worth waiting – or asking) and we moved slickly and quickly into our favourite corner.

### **Vliho again**

When we left this time there was a definite sense of 'going home' and I must admit to mixed feelings about it – on the one hand the ambient temperatures were constantly climbing well over 30C and the only way to survive was to swim or to sail and when neither were possible the heat became oppressive. On the other hand not only was the Ionian lovely but Britain was dreadful – the wettest continuous three months since forever. But we had no choice really so we planned the last few stops, the first was back to Vliho. And again we sailed, hurtling northwards past Scorpios and then watched in despair as the wind wound down to nothing. Ann went below to read leaving me to try and wring the last ounce of pressure from a non-existent wind. I put the helm over one way then the other to try and find a breeze but nothing happened. Then I noticed a curious fact, when I turned the wheel left the boat turned right and when I turned it right the boat went left. It took a while for my fried brain to realise what was happening – we were sailing backwards! I started the motor.

We were going to Vliho to try the tavernas on the east side of the bay where you could tie up your dinghy and step ashore directly to your table – but we went to VYC instead! I rarely mention food because my taste is not your taste and so on, but those chicken livers were amongst the most exquisitely lovely things I've ever tasted! Anywhere!

Next morning we left early and motored north just missing the 10:00 bridge. Once through the canal we sailed and kept sailing all the way to Vonitsa.

### **Vonitsa**

Three days left to our haul-out date so Vonitsa seemed a sensible choice, pretty enough and within spitting distance of Preveza but far enough from the noisy blaring music spewing from the cafes on the quayside to allow us some peace. We anchored behind the island and tried to stay cool. After a walk to town we were drained, ready for heat exhaustion and pretty dismayed to find the dinghy we'd taken to the shore – our poor wounded dinghy – had become so hot the makeshift patch had sprung a leak and the tube was nearly deflated. It was all getting too much and we wanted to be ashore and ultimately home, where we could run around in the rain and shiver at night. That night, as if in spite, a wind blew that was like a furnace. Like, as someone once told us, standing in a hairdryer.



**Sunset over the island off Vonitsa**

### **Vouvalos island**

But we had one more night to pass and I thought it would be good to get away from Vonitsa and the hairdryer blast and try for our own little deserted anchorage so we sailed and then motored north to Nissos Vouvalos where we had a good chance of being alone overnight in a curved, sandy sheltered bay. Last year we'd woken to the sight of turtles feeding all around the boat, so it was an attractive proposition. No turtles this year though but we did spot a couple of dolphins. And we were alone and it was sort of what the whole thing is about - a lovely spot, sun and sea, swimming and walking along a deserted beach. A fitting way to end our spring cruise. Of course, in the morning, we had to sweep thousands of dead mosquitoes off the decks before we could even walk around - attracted to our anchor light I suppose.

### **All alone off Vouvalos island**



### **Preveza, homeward bound**

After that everything changed and we became industrial motoring back to Preveza and getting hauled out. If we thought it was hot on the water it was incredible on the land with the entire hull exposed to the sun. The only way to do anything was to get up early, survive the afternoon and eat late. It was survival stuff, any attempt at rational thought or analysis of the boat's problems went out the window early on. But we survived and by the time we return in September we'll have forgotten the discomfort.

### **22nd June to 1st July**

#### **Kastos**

One thing is always certain, after a while anywhere we have to move. This is because there are only so many trees and rocks to study, only so many angles to paint the views from, only so many boars and goats and, prosaically, the holding tank only holds so much! So we hauled up the anchor that had caused so much hassle when we arrived, and set off north back to Kastos. It was an uneventful drive across the sea; the motor behaved itself because we didn't drive it hard, the dolphins stayed away and we caught no fish.

This time we went straight to the buoy in the corner dropped the stern anchor and tied to the buoy as a safety. The other side of the buoy was a Greek boat with a guy who didn't stir so much as a finger to help tie us up, but we'd rarely met a Greek boat and assumed this was their way.

We stayed two days. Over the course of those two days we met the five Greek guys who were on a holiday fishing trip. They became more and more friendly as time wore on and, although only the captain spoke any English, Ann managed to get some sort of conversation going by photographing him with the fish his mates had speared. They were all civil servants. Did they worry now that the government had changed? No, they said, they work for any government. Business as usual in Greece then! Ultimately they got friendly enough to donate some mussels to Ann which they'd collected and kept in a net over the side. The captain explained the best way to cook them but Ann found them a little gritty and the balance were returned to the sea.

On our last night we went to Belos for dinner and ended up sitting and talking the night away with Gerry's wife, Naiomi,

she of the wonderful paintings, and the daughter-in-law of the restaurant's owner, a Greek-Canadian named Zena, who brought her kids over for the women to gurgle at. Another one of those lovely evenings that make the cruise for us.



**My starfish**

And I played with a starfish which was a first for me, squeamish as I am of all things in the sea.

But the one thing you can't get in Kastos is water so we had to leave again.

### **Spartakhor**

And return to the taverna at the head of the inlet for a night. No fun to find a flotilla having a punch party but it was all civilised enough.

From there we trundled back around the corner to meet up with friends on Silver Finn in Kapali bay for a hectic (! by our Greek standards...) couple of days of socialising. We managed a 'coffee morning', a 'dinner party' and something of a 'drinks evening' or 'cocktail party' complete with rusty music from the rusty strings of my travelling guitar. Ann and I also squeezed in a walk over the hill to Vathi next day, strangely empty for this time of year.

And Ann found an octopus while she was swimming around the boat and had the presence of mind to film it so here's a [YouTube](#) link. The wobbly bit in the middle is where she became frightened it was going to attack her. We all got in the water looking for it later but it was nowhere to be found; sensible creature.

### **Tranquil Bay**

But now there's a distinct feeling that we're heading home. We sailed south through the Meganisi channel and then turned around and flew the cruising chute on it's once-yearly outing. It pulled us northward at about two knots in nothing of wind so we just laid back and bimbled back to Tranquil Bay.



**Look! A cruising chute!**

Where we had a shouting match with an Italian (an IIB - incompetent idiot in boat) who did the Italian thing of anchoring as close as possible to another boat (us) and, in this case, positioned himself upwind over our anchor before dropping his and a few metres of chain in a pile. Ann pointed out his folly, I told him to move and he leapt up and down in his cockpit waving his arms and shouting basta basta (enough enough) and didn't move. It was only luck that the weather was calm enough that night that saved us having an Italian boat collecting us in the dark - he would have dragged, of that I'm sure. No doubt he'd have blamed me as his compatriots did in Sardinia - accusing me of dragging into them - which would have meant dragging into the wind - clever!

Apart from that Tranquil is the same as ever - windy now and then, baking hot now and then, but always there's water to leap into to cool off.

### **16th June to 21st June**

#### **Amplified wind**

We left Mesallonghi marina with a bit of to- and fro-ing to dodge the lazy lines which seem to stretch forever here and headed off in a breeze back down the canal to the gulf. As soon as we spilled out into the wide waters of the gulf the wind dropped, of course, so we motored westwards back towards Petalas. After a while the wind grew and we sailed and had some fun for a couple of hours before Ann pointed out that we were getting further and further from Petalas and that we still had twelve miles to go to get there, so we stopped playing and started plugging into a rising wind and a rising sea under engine with the main up for stability. We eventually arrived at Petalas anchorage late in the afternoon wet, and tired, to find the wind whistling through it, gusting up to 25 knots, and had a struggle to get the sail away. I don't understand how the hill that is Petalas island can actually amplify the wind speed but I'm convinced it does. We had no choice but to sit at anchor in the wind and make the best of it until it switched off at sunset.

### **Totally irrelevant but a pretty picture**



Next day we moved, but instantly discovered a problem – our engine coolant water had overflowed the day before – the engine appeared to be making the stuff. This was significant and was no doubt going to be costly like everything on a boat, the guys on the YBW forum suggested a cylinder head gasket leak and I was thinking holes in heat exchangers. For now there was nothing to be done.

### **Goats and pigs and cows and comedy**

We'd looked at Pandelimon on the way from Astakos and it seemed like a nicely sheltered place. By this point the weather forecasts were predicting fairly strong stuff from the wrong direction, and we wanted shelter which we certainly where not going to get in Petalas. So Pandemonium Bay was the place to try. If you think of going here there are two things to note: the entrance to the south bay appears to be blocked with a farm but can be passed on the east side, and, motor slowly with an eye on the depth gauge, the depth varies rapidly. That said we anchored in six metres and took a line to a tree.

And it's a lovely place. We were the only boat that first day. In the evening a flock of goats wandered along the waterside path jangling their bells. An hour later we were entertained by five pigs that came down to the water's edge to grunt, wallow and roll around in the shingle. Later still some cows shook the trees on the hillside; all for us alone.



**Daddy likes to scratch is rump while mummy soaks up the sun**

Next day was polling day in Greece, a completely irrelevant fact but we wondered what difference it would make to our world. *Apparently none – the revolution is not yet scheduled.*

Entertainment of a different kind today. I have to say first that in general I don't have a problem with flotillas, most flotilla people are here to enjoy themselves and often look at liveaboards with some envy, so they are generally polite

and ready for a friendly chat. Added to that is the availability of a lead crew who are there to sort out any problems with anchors or tying up and so on which I find reassuring. Today though we had a lone Sailing Holiday's wolf. He was one of the type that believed the answer to everything could be found in a full throttle charge, either forward or backward, and he thundered into the bay far faster than we would dream of and with complete disregard of the variable and diminishing depth. After trying one side of us he decided to drop his hook the other side and reverse into the shore parallel to us. He did this at a speed far faster than his anchor winch could cope with but somehow managed to get lined up with his selected tree. Then his chain ran out while he was still the other side of the bay. Faced with this problem he solved it by leaving the boat in reverse (actually clever that - if I'd tried it our Aderyn Glas would simply have turned circles around the anchor). But this was Flotilla Man of the worst sort, the kind that thinks that the solution to all problems is to get help from anyone nearby and that such help is always free and never withheld. He wanted to borrow our RIB, he said, because his was not yet inflated.

Ann has a kind heart and ignored my comments. She changed out of her dress and into shorts and rowed across to him. I just got the movie camera and filmed everything, hoping for some entertaining footage. Flotilla Man, let's call him Formby, threw some rope into our dinghy and, while Ann did her best to row, tried hard to tow the cruiser with the rope. After a few moments Ann suggested that they would get further if Formby actually let some of the rope out. When his first length ran out he tied a dubious knot onto another length and Ann continued rowing. When the second length ran out he looked mystified until Ann suggested he swim back for more. She saved his watch which he was just about to dive in with, and all this time the yacht was struggling against the anchor chain. And so it went on, eventually Formby had his rope around a tree and the other end tied to his yacht and that rope stretched right across the mouth of the bay. Ann paddled back to me exhausted and hot and we had a swim and waited for Formby to donate a couple of cans, or at least, motor over in his now inflated RIB to say a proper 'thank you'. But no, Formby Flotilla Man *expects that this day that every man (and woman) shall do ...* expects this sort of sacrifice, this sort of service and doesn't tip!

Next morning they had to leave in a crosswind. We kept our heads down despite plaintive looks thrown our way from time to time. After a while he revved the engine in reverse as hard as it would go then let off his mooring rope with such a bang that the tree it was tied to shook the birds out of their nests. Then he threw his motor into emergency forward speed and charged over his anchor while his poor spouse tried to winch in. Pulled up by his anchor he spun violently then reversed at full throttle towards the fishfarm trying, apparently, to haul his anchor out of the mud. Clearly no-one had told him this has the opposite effect. But no, the way to solve all problems was to use brute engine power and he was going to haul up his anchor or plough up the seabed in the attempt. After a while it dawned on him that reducing the power gave his anchor winch a chance and wife finally got the anchor up.

He retrieved his rope with his dinghy while she drove the yacht away. We last saw them steaming towards the sea, him chasing her in his RIB she not stopping for him. Maybe Flotilla Woman has more sense than Flotilla Man. Anyway, we want to thank them, whoever they are, for providing such an entertaining spectacle.

### **Water and food**

After three nights we needed some food and water for the tanks so we slipped up to Astakos where we tied up outside Yanni's restaurant again. It seemed to be our week for the incompetent. Along came a Swedish battleship of a yacht, solid as Bismark (oh, wait - she sank) with a panicking woman and an old man. She aimed at the space next to us then left the boat in gear, charging at the quayside among the shouts of the, by now, assembled throng while he waited until far too late to throw the anchor in. Somehow he got to the throttle in time to save the town but since his anchor had not bitten decided to reverse out and try again. Because neither of the crew seemed to know how to handle their ship in close quarters (it looked like it had sailed the oceans, but you don't have to dock very often in the middle of the Atlantic) they reversed straight across our stern anchor line. Ann and I held our breath, it was too late for us to drop the line. The battleship's screws missed the line but then the keels caught it. Luckily for us it held. Interestingly neither of the crew could bring themselves to acknowledge our existence afterward, though, in their case, it was probably shame and guilt. Not a word passed between us.

But Astakos this time was too hot. After dinner in Yanni's we went for a walk and at ten o'clock the heat radiating up from the pavements was uncomfortable. We tried all ways to sleep, but the temperature with the hatch closed for modesty, made it impossible. Added to this the quayside at night seems to be a drag strip for the local motorcycle nuts. One night was enough.

### **Pandemonium again.**

So we went back to Pandelimon. This time it was our turn to cause a nuisance. There was a Dutch boat in the space we had occupied last time so we anchored nearer to the entrance, there was plenty of room. But the anchor wouldn't bite. We tried all over the place the noise of our engine and the exhaust must have been spoiling their lunch, but they were polite - we met them later and apologized. After three or four attempts I got Ann to pull the anchor all the way in and she found a nicely wrapped parcel of plastic sheet and seabed stuff wrapped around the point of the anchor. She cleaned it off and the anchor caught without hesitation next try. We still learn...

Hellish hot - we recorded 41C - but it's a lovely place. For entertainment there are the families of pigs (are they boars? They have tusks) and the water to swim and cool us. Beware the rocks on the shore though I managed to puncture the dinghy on one which is when I discovered the repair kit had all but drowned in it's a-little-bit-waterproof container (don't trust the ad'). But this is the best place to be, far from Flotilla Man and far from towns. Please don't come here - this is our bay, **OURS**, do you hear!!!



**Each day pigs root around for something under the water and scratch and wallow at the water's edge**

**8th June to 15th June**

### **Down to the Gulf**

Our aim was to sail the Gulf of Patras to discover for ourselves some new places. Each year we mix places we've been with somewhere new. This year it was to be a gentle meander southward along the mainland then turn the corner and venture just a little way along, perhaps as far as Trizonia. So we began in Astakos.

### **Astakos**

We motored and then sailed to Astakos from Port Leoni, a distance of about 30 nautical miles. At first there wasn't a wind to speak of but by the time we rounded up into the inlet it was blowing nicely and we were cruising along at six knots under a very untidy sail set that neither of us could be bothered to trim. Astakos is at the head of a tapered inlet and usually manages a good blow in the afternoon it seems. We had trouble with the stern anchor too - for the first time it managed to wrap itself in chain totally preventing its fluke digging in - and this meant a lot of heaving and hauling from the dinghy (and thanks to everyone for holding Aderyn Glas still while we sorted it out).

### **Astakos town quayside**



I like Astakos. True it has a line of restaurants just a couple of metres from the boat and most of the owners won't let you walk past without discussing why you should eat at their restaurants, but the town is very Greek - a Greek tourist spot - and the universal English that is spoken everywhere else is totally absent. It also has a good little chandlery-cum-hardware store and we bought some anchor rode at an amazingly low price. Facemasks, on the other hand, were expensive.

### **Petalas**

Petalas is a great big anchorage on the corner of the mainland - which runs roughly north-south - and the gulf - which runs roughly east-west. Because it's so big the normal anxiety of getting in early enough to ensure a place doesn't apply, and, because we have such a shallow draught (1.2m) we can go much further into the anchorage than most yachts. So we could sail from Astakos and not worry about how slow we were going. Ann went below and read a book - that's how slow we were going. At one point I realised the only usable wind was offshore so we went backwards for an hour. Ann read more - this stopped her fretting about turning the engine on so we were both happy.

Then late in the afternoon we caught some wind and ran before it into the bay with the sails gullwinged looking like some miniature J class from the thirties. These are the magic moments that only people who sail can understand I suppose.

Petalas is not a quiet place though (and you especially don't want to be there in a southerly). Even tucked in behind the cliff under the cave there's enough fetch from the north for little whitecaps to form and because the place is on the corner of the gulf the wind always seems to whistle across it in the afternoon. When we were there it switched on about two o'clock rising to 25 or 30 knot gusts in half an hour, then switched off equally quickly about eight as the sun went down behind the hill. Anchors hold well though and the mud is like glue.

If a characteristic of Italians is to shout and be gregarious it seems the outstanding characteristic of Germans is to strip off. The nearest boat to us was German and it was impossible not to notice that most of the time both sir and madame were naked. The concept of swimming costumes as something worn when swimming seems to have passed Germans by, to them swimming costumes are for sunbathing and should be removed before swimming in order to keep them dry. Sometimes this provides an entertaining spectacle, sometimes not, depending on the relative fitness of the people involved. A friend described how, when he was snorkelling, he came across a large naked German lady (how did he know

she was German?) who was ploughing through the water like, he said, one of those David Attenborough films of polar bears swimming, arms doing doggy-paddle and the blubber trying to keep up. When she turned the skeleton went in one direction and the blubber followed a few minutes later.

## Messolonghi

Dolphins put on a show for us we left Petalas, turning somersaults in the entrance to the bay. After that we just drove the five hours to Messolonghi with Rachel the autohelm doing the steering.

Here's a lovely town, full of history (Lord Byron died here and his heart is still buried here). The streets are small and shaded and the cafes cosmopolitan. The populace all seem to ride bikes (it's very flat) while talking on their phones, and most of the people seem to be school or university age. It has a buzz. Ann took a tour of the historic sites so read her blog (<http://www.getjealous.com/whiteoaks7>) if you're interested in the detail.

The marina is newish and still relatively cheap, clean and well looked after, though it is still possible (despite rumours) to anchor outside if you wish.



Messolonghi

But here we decided to chicken out of our tour of the Gulf. We debated a voyage to Navpaktos for some days especially since the wind was due to change to easterly and would thus make it easy to return. But Navpaktos is five hours away and we worried about finding room; more so than usual because there's nowhere to sail to and nowhere to anchor if it's full. What finished the discussion was a glance at Google Earth which showed the tiny harbour filled with all of three yachts. You could bet we'd be the fourth.

## 3rd June to 7th June

### A place out of time

Kastos and Kalamos are small islands east of Meganisi and we motored and sailed our way across to Kastos for a bit of the simple life. It's a small island with a small harbour and a small village full of charm and, despite the new apartments all tastefully built and clad in the local stone, it's still on our "must visit" list. So small and reliant on ferries is it that yachts are not even allowed to leave their rubbish behind – everything, rubbish included, has to be ferried in and out.



### Looking out to sea from the Windmill cafe - how wonderful is this?

The harbour holds about a dozen boats and anchoring can be tricky; our first attempt to get the anchor to bite didn't work and we had to do another circuit. In the afternoon there is always a wind from the south west and this is when many boats find their anchors are not holding. Near the western corner is a buoy and it's wise to tie a line to it if you can get close enough. We didn't but after a while a 40' Italian yacht stormed into the gap between us and the buoy. His anchor didn't hold either and he was poised, amid much shouting and argument, to go out and try again. I pointed at the buoy and suggested he tied onto it. He spoke only Italian and I spoke no Italian but he got the idea. Being a gentleman and having a dinghy in the water already I offered to tie his rope for him. Hello, you may think, this is not my usual response to an Italian in need. Quite true dear reader (does anyone read this I wonder) but

having a large boat tied to a buoy next to me gave me a wonderful platform to tie Aderyn Glas to if it blew. Next afternoon the wind was serious enough to start a raft of boats wriggling their anchors free and we ended up with five boats hanging on that buoy – I wonder who laid it and where the end of its mooring chain is?

We visited Gerry in the supermarket and Ann talked of grandchildren to his wife (who has some fabulous artwork on her wall that she's painted of scenes from her native New Zealand). For food we walked up the hill and ate in the Windmill (Milos) restaurant which was surprisingly good.

### **Bees as big as birds, spiders big as gorillas**

Port Leoni on Kalamos is a bowl on the south of the island on one side of which is a village, abandoned after the 1953 earthquake severed its water supply. All that remains is a church freshly painted and picturesque, and some ruins on the waterfront. Everyone comes here and everyone hopes this will be the night when no-one else will be here. We were unlucky and caught a Sunsail flotilla. We were also greeted with bees as big as birds and wasps as big as bees but they weren't aggressive. Ann took the stern-rope ashore and fell out of the dinghy into the shallows. She is now the proud owner of battlescars but her radio didn't much like the seawater. Now we're waiting to see if the flotilla wants a Barbie on the beach...

Of course it did. Next morning early they left and we had the place to share with just a small German boat fifty metres away. Ann had some sewing to do so I took the dinghy ashore and climbed the hillside. I started out scared of treading on a snake, which in my best crocs was probably not a good thing to do, but didn't even see one. Then I walked through a spider web and my whole focus changed, the spiders there are the biggest I'd seen with abdomens about the diameter of a two Euro coin. When I got back the boat and felt brave enough to look over my shoulder the whole hillside was coated in sliver strands of spider's web.



**The blurry white blob on the left of the photo is my index finger which wouldn't stop shaking.**

Why do Italians moor so close? It was a phenomenon we'd seen in Sardinia – if there was a bay with just one solitary Italian boat in it the next boat to enter would go and moor next to him completely ignoring the vast expanse of bay where no boats moored. I think it's an assumption on the part of each boat that the previous boats must have found the best places so they needed to get as close as possible to the first to arrive. So maybe that's why a fifty foot Italian yacht had to ignore the still almost empty bay and come and anchor so close to Aderyn Glas that I really feared his tender would wrap around our anchor line. But I needn't have worried – they were all blokes so it was clear they would leave before dinner time with no woman to do the cooking.

### **Aderyn Glas all alone in port Leoni, the ruined town in the distance**



That night we got what we'd come for – just us and the remote German bobbing quietly in the corner. Oh – and a wasp or two for tennis.

### **29th May to 2nd June**

#### **Nidri and the cold, cold sea**

I've grown to like Nidri. When we first came here ten or more years ago on a flotilla we found a dusty, untidy, ramshackle, chaotic beach resort without a beach and we hated it. Now it's a dusty, untidy, ramshackle, chaotic beach resort with something of the Greek character still; and it hasn't changed so I suppose we have. We always anchor in Tranquil Bay, a small inlet opposite the town, which is mostly quiet but sometimes isn't; this time it is. The odd thing

about it is that the shape of the bay tends to make the breezes circle around so it's often possible to see yachts within a few boat lengths of each other pointing in different directions - in fact we've seen four boats boxing the compass within a hundred metres or less. This makes anchoring a challenge, where normally you can expect an anchor to be buried in front of its boat, in Tranquil Bay it can be anywhere; even behind it. Added to that is the obstacle course of sunken vessels whose decaying ribs just clear the water and a web of mooring ropes from yachts that seemingly never move and the novice can really fall foul in all sorts of ways. But we're wise now after a few years of visiting the place and we tough it out against the glares and comments shouted from the other boats who all think they know best.

The outboard worked. This was one of the last worries we had. We need the outboard to work in order for us to get ashore in places like Nidri and to enable us to tie lines to the shore in many of the places we wanted to visit. And it worked, the lovely little two stroking thing it is! So we went ashore. In the cloudy cold unseasonable weather that was cooler than Britain we crossed the fairway and tied our dinghy to the Neilson pontoon (bless them) and walked into town for wi-fi and coffee and a few supplies... and lunch. It was the season for sardines. And the two things met in café Yefsi; the first and greatest sardines of this season.

But I'll remember Nidri this season for two disconnected things, bites and my first swim. It's wise to know what your wife is like in bed. Mine fights me for the duvet and while this isn't normally a cause of conflict and pain, here it is. Ann turns over and pulls the duvet from me exposing my feet which are grateful for the cooling exposure to the air, but are blissfully unaware of the temptation they provide to my least favourite animal in the world - the mosquito. When I woke up I had five bites on one foot and three on the other. It was amazing how much they burned.

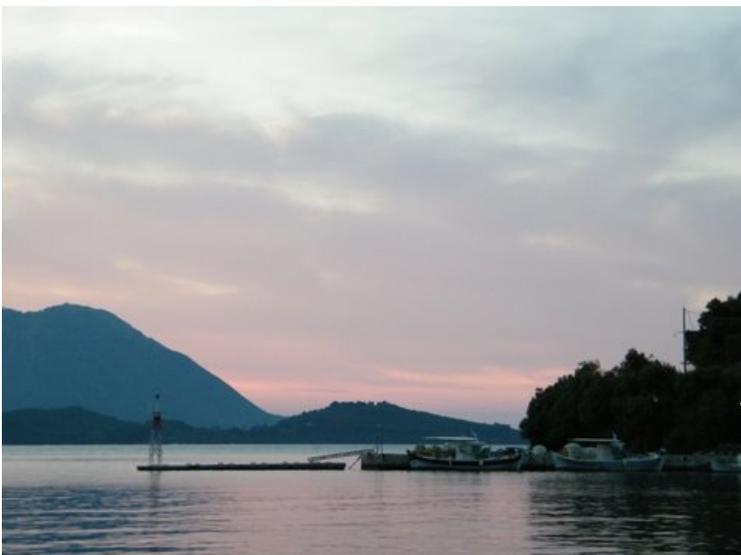
The first swim was a necessity because the little paddle wheel that drives our log (the speedometer) had decided for some reason only to rotate in the reverse direction, so we only knew how fast we were going when we went backwards. The water was shockingly cold, pain in the chest cold, and when my new snorkel filled up and choked me I thought I'd swum a stroke too far. Ultimately I climbed out exhausted then knocked my expensive facemask into the oggin and had to watch as it sank slowly into the abyss like something from the final scenes of Titanic.

### **Tennis with wasps**

We left Nidri and went to Port Atheni on 30th May and the weather changed and summer began, as if someone had thrown a switch. Port Atheni isn't a port in any normal sense of the word just one of the inlets on the northern coast of Meganisi island but it's one of those nice places to anchor. We walked up to Katomeri the town above the port where we wandered in the now sunny weather and found an ancient lady dressed in black who happily demonstrated an ancient loom for us; then sold us a hand woven table cover for twenty Euros.

As well as mosquitoes we have to manage wasps. They come and snoop around, sniffing the air in search of tasty morsels. In the main they are just a nuisance and not aggressive but we do our best to get rid of them anyway. The latest fun way to rid the boat of the odd unfortunate wasp is to play tennis with it. Unfortunately for the wasp the tennis racket we use is charged with a few thousand volts (you can buy these for about a fiver) and, if you are kind hearted, the wasp usually survives the initial shock and lies compliant waiting to be flicked out of the door. On the other hand, if you really don't like them you can administer repeated shocks until they stop wriggling or flick them in the sea for the fish to finish.

Our final stop on Meganisi was Spartakhor and the brother's restaurant on the beach with one of the most wonderful sunset views we've ever seen. We sailed here from Port Atheni by way of coffee with friends in a neighbouring bay and an hour and a half of sailing just for the hell of it in the Meganisi channel where there always seems to be a wind going somewhere. The village of Spartakhor is perched on the top of a cliff overlooking the bay and twenty miles of Ionian. We climbed the zigzag road through the pines that seemed out of place in such a hot land and took all the same photos as we'd taken every summer for the past five years but we didn't care, this place is wonderful.



**Spartakhor sunset**

**24th May 29th May**

**Levkas**

We launched on the 24th day of May, unnoticed by the world press and the occupants of the boatyard in general. A couple of fighter jets flew past at low level and I had a moment's flash of hope that my achievement was being recognised but they were only a couple of fighter boys playing in the sky because someone had beaten them to the Wii. The engine started the systems appeared to work, we weren't leaking too much and the defect list didn't grow too long so we set off into the green wet stuff.

I always get seasick on the first leg of any new voyage and Preveza to Lefkas was long enough, at two hours, to get me gripping the wheel and staring at the horizon in a vague attempt to stabilise whatever part of my brain or ears didn't understand which way was now up. Lord Nelson suffered like this too; he also wasn't Hardy. Ann is; she disappears below and with total disregard to the mind numbing walls of water that hurtled over the decks from the breaking three inch high combers dives head first into some obscure locker she's kept secret from me until now which hides the very piece of clothing I need to keep me dry and warm. I can't do it - go head first into the boat. I can't do anything but burp and go silent and yawn and hang onto the wheel with white knuckles and a stiff lip. I used to work on submarines and I used to feel it was unmanly to take seasick pills. Then I saw the submariners, who are nothing if not manly, swallowing pills like sweets. Perhaps they were sweets, but submarines suffer from lack of any horizon and roll like pigs and the crews get sick quickly so they take pills. So now I take pills but the creeping, insidious toxins of seasickness still work their way around me. I know it won't last, in a few days my tolerance will have built up and I'll feel at home again on Aderyn Glas. This is just my little Nelson touch and ultimately I'll have my victory (okay - finished now... :-).

It's so cold here this year. Here we are in late May and the temperatures are only just creeping into the twenties (yep - not a typo). In the UK it's sunbathing weather and in the Ionian I'm sitting typing this in a sweater with a blanket over my knees. Last night we went for a meal with friends and we all turned up in long trousers and anoraks; wet and muddy from the rain. In May! In Preveza! I really worry most for the mosquitoes though, they're going to be hard hit by the cold and their sources of nice warm blood are now walking around with extra layers of clothing on; poor things, I bleed for them. In the boatyard this morning one of the tortoise was building a nest ready to hibernate. I know how he feels.

### **6th May to 23rd May**

#### **Return to the Ionian, Preveza yard**



**I'm sure I left my boat here somewhere...**

Not only is the Greek economy unstable at the moment so is its weather. We arrived to blue skies and beautiful sunshine as normal for early May but since then rain, wind, overcast skies and untypical unsettled conditions have dogged us. Now all the seventy-odd jobs are finished or deferred and we're ready to go; southwards probably, past Lefkas and on to the inland sea. But the weather has made us change our launch date twice and we are still not sure if we will get in the water tomorrow after nearly three weeks in the yard.

Our social scene has been hectic meeting up with old friends and making new, a round of meals and 6.00pm drinks and nibbles. We need to get in the water and start swimming or walking to combat the calories, but it's fun.

