



2017 Season

3rd May 2017

In Britain now summer starts in April and ends in June. We were going to miss it again. The *almost* red-eye flight into Preveza (Easyjet beats Monarch by a couple of minutes) deposited us tiredly into a tiny hire car and we yawned the two kilometres into Ionion Marine yard. *Aderyn Glas* huddled somewhere under a blanket of red Saharan dust like brown flour that the boom tent had ironically funnelled onto the coachroof, but it wasn't yet hot enough to enjoy turning it into a river of mud with the hosepipe. Nevertheless we cleaned her up breathing in the dust and the scent from Africa then left in the late afternoon for a hotel. And if we had dreamed of sitting on the hotel balcony looking out over the anchorage north of Preveza at the yachts bobbing and waving to floating friends with a glass of wine in our hands, that bubble was popped when we realised the view was of the hospital car park and the weather was too cold anyway.

Next day, our first full day, we took up the floor and struggled to extract our domestic batteries and replace them with new superlative ones (T1275s) guaranteed to last twice as long as the 31XLS – or so the Trojan engineer had told me. But then they'd said the same of the disappointing ones we were taking out that should have lasted another year at least.

But that's just work and the reason we were in Preveza was not just work, we were here to enjoy ourselves. We do more socialising, more eating out, drink more wine, meet more people, in the week we spend in the yard than we probably did in all the weeks since Christmas at home. We would moan about it being chilly and delight in the crowds parading along the quayside each night, and love the fact that restaurateurs remembered us and gave us little gifts even though everyone else would get the same. And love the food again – real Greek cooking – grills and stews and *forget what greens look like you won't get them here sir*.

And across the estuary, in the yard we were surprised that there weren't more mosquitoes but blamed it on the chill and thanked the Boss who'd had the drainage trench filled in so they couldn't breed. And cursed the cold showers on chill days and cursed the Boss who hadn't taken some of her huge profits to install electric water heaters. But loved being there: back in Greece.

10th May Launch day

Then, suddenly, the outboard was fixed, the engine was fixed, the batteries were fixed and charged, the sails were hanked on, the

shopping was done, *goodbyes-for-now* were all said and we put her in the water while the few friends still in the yard watched and smiled and waved. And we motored towards Lefkas. And a few minutes later the engine overheat alarm started screaming.

So we stopped the engine and pulled out the sails, turned around and ran in front of the mis-forecast wind while I went and did what I should have done in the yard – bled the engine – and got scalded by 95C water which wouldn't have happened in the yard and Ann said why hadn't I done it there. A thought nagged me: Simon, the engineer who fixed our engine mounts, had told us he had to remove the water pump and while he undoubtedly bled the engine when he refitted it our little Volvo has a few hidden places to store an airlock. So I got scalded but that was all and we soon headed south again to Lefkas and then to Vliho, happy to be on the water and away from the dry dusty smell of the yard and the brown flour that you can never quite get rid of and the noise of the boat lift and the views of many more masts than you could ever count.



Vliho. Wide, expansive, safe, surrounded by hills that delayed dawn and shut off the sun long before sunset. Easiest place in the world to anchor: just drive along parallel to your chosen neighbour then stop and drop the anchor. Done! Calm, serene, Vliho. There was a micro-burst here once and people died and

millions of pounds of damage was done. Calm, serene, Vliho where *I will not go* if there's a chance of thunderstorms. Vliho where you eat on board or take your dinghy to either shore, east or west. So we launched it and fitted the outboard motor to it and pulled the starter cord and it started first time! Since I had modified the carburettor needle setting it runs hugely rich but very reliably; so friends for dinner. It's all such fun.

12th May something hit us

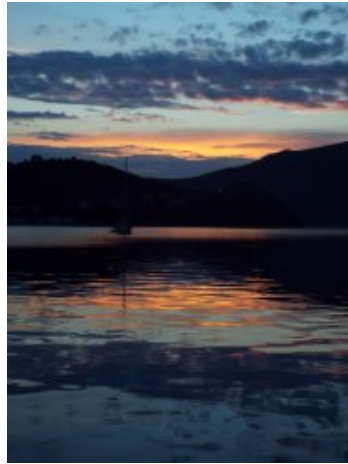
Something hit us in the middle of the night. We lie in the forepeak so anything blown by wind or carried by current is always going to hit that end when we're anchored and that night something did. A thump on the hull loud enough to wake us and have us roaming around the deck in the dark with the big searchlight. And we found... nothing. Maybe Vliho has turtles, though we've never seen one there. In the morning it rained muddy Sahara. So we left. In the rain.

But our engine mounts had a date to keep with Simon and his spanner otherwise we would have stayed put. We motored around Meganisi island, taking the long way to add required hours, so had to flog, moaning, on engine into a southerly. Eventually we came to Sivota where the southerly component was rolling everyone around a bit, but not enough to stop us sleeping. Simon was fine, the mounts were fine, Giannas's ice cream was better than fine and the fish platter at Stavros was better than that.

It rained again and the boat became Sahara muddy; again. So we left next day and ran happily in front of a mis-forecast southerly back to Vliho to wait until the weather settled a bit. And then we got ill.

13th May quarantine

Being ill on holiday is never in anyone's plans and it took us four days to get over the bug during which time we didn't eat much and drank no alcohol, so you can see it was really, really serious. Eventually we felt better and so did the weather and we started southward in earnest. First Vathi:



Vathi on Ithaca where we did some shopping but still didn't feel much like going ashore. There again it was raining (yes! Raining) but when the rain stopped and the sky cleared we were treated to one of those lovely sunsets you see now and then which cheered us up enough to try a glass of *krasi*.

And in the morning we left, heading south to Sami on a beam reach that took us nearly all the way there. Things were getting better.

Sami on Kefallonia and the most precarious cross-wind landing to date running backwards at 45° to the quayside and determinedly aiming at the very expensive motor yacht in the corner. But it worked. Sami is one of our favourites though, like everywhere, it's changing and not for the better. Paying is mandatory on both Ithaca and Kefallonia now which adds considerably to the holiday cost - even at a lowly €10 a night over 60 nights it's significant. The other change is that the council has made the cafe owners take down the awnings they'd erected over the tables along the quayside so now the restaurants are open to the elements. To us this was a big mistake and has changed the whole character of the place. Sigh loudly and move on to Poros.



Poros on Kefallonia was empty, so empty that we moored alongside to make life easy. Ann wanted Kefallonia meat pie but the restaurant only cooked it in July when they could guarantee selling it all so *come back then and you can*

have all you want but today it's pizza and grills.

'And now it's time to go south', said Ann, 'next stop Katacolon', which was a big mistake.

Pelononese

21st May, Katacolon

So off into the unknown. Well... not quite, we had been to Katacolon before and we couldn't really claim the Pelopenese was unknown, people had been there before. We left Poros after just one night and headed south at the start of what Rachel the chartplotter told us would be an eight hour leg. At first the sea was flat calm and we motored happily along with Rachel the autohelm steering while we came to terms with a long boring day. We like long boring days much more than exciting rough ones, but it's better to have a bit of wind to help us along rather than a noisy donkey.

'Careful what you wish for.' Said Ann.

And so it came to pass that after an hour the wind gradually increased from astern until the anemometer was reading 16 knots and the boat was doing 6½. More of a problem to our little round hulled yacht was the sea state which, with an uninterrupted fetch of many many miles, was building continuously. We considered turning right for Zakynthos but that would have put us beam on to the sea, which by now had spume blowing off the crests, and that would have been far worse. So we slogged onwards, pretty uncomfortably with an increasing wind that was, thankfully, behind us. After a short time Rachel, the autohelm, began to fail and we had to steer manually and around about then we decided that one hour watches were too much time to hold the boat square to the following seas so we opted for 30 minutes each. It was uncomfortable and cold and damp and very tiring.

After about four hours we could see a headland and I thought without really thinking that this was the headland at Katacolon and, of course, it wasn't – we had another four hours for that. But the sea changed marginally as we closed the shore and tweaked the course a little and the wind dropped so much that we had to start the engine. The comparative calm didn't last though. From then on we ran the engine at about half revs but kept the sails up, the genoa was doing the driving and the main helped us stay stable and we ran like this downwind at nearly seven knots.

We sucked sweets for sugar and ate biscuits and drank mainly water since neither of us were feeling up to going below for anything more substantial. The shoreline presented us with towns and blocks of strange buildings like military barracks but they could have been hotels. And we came quite close to the shore before angling away again. Our planned route was much further to seawards than the track

we were making but that was the way the wind and sea took us and we wanted to keep square to the waves.

And then we rounded the headland with the lighthouse and took the wind on the beam which accelerated us towards the harbour but made it difficult to get the sails furled. But we did it and motored in towards the quayside, calling as required on the VHF and, as usual, being completely ignored. Exhausted I decided to forget the normal bow anchor and reverse into the quay tactic, in any case in that side wind it was not going to work, so I went alongside. We'd arrived, and if anyone complained we'd sort it later.

Next day we'd convinced the harbourmaster that we couldn't anchor because I needed to work on the winch and since the quay was only half full we had no argument.



We're never sure whether we love or hate Katacolon. It's sole function is to provide a mooring for cruise liners to enable their passengers to visit Olympia and when a liner arrives the town suddenly springs to life, shops open, cafes do good business, the Beer Bike starts

running, extra trains arrive and depart, beggars and street traders appear and noisy touts try to entice quiet passengers onto their coaches *'three Euroes Sir, Madame, just three Euroes for a whole half day'* and if you don't want to squash into one of the many coaches there are hoards of taxis lined up *'but be back on board to leave by six, remember Delphi tomorrow'*. And when there are no ships - which is rare - the town becomes a ghost like it was the day we arrived.

We'd been to Olympia and didn't want to go again so we sought out alternative distractions and rediscovered the Museum of Ancient Greek Technology, just up the track from the railway station. If you go to Katacolon, make sure you visit this museum and if you don't have a look online here: <http://kotsanas.com/gb/> It's a real eye-opener, from a coin operated machine for dispensing holy water and temple doors that opened automatically if a sacrifice was made, to automaton theatres that rolled around the floor, to weapons of war and some very idiosyncratic clocks (the ancient Greeks divided the day into twelve hours between sunrise and sunset regardless of the season).

For passing yachts Katacolon is not as good as it was. Last time we were here there was a bit more organisation, a guy would tell you where to moor, help with the ropes and keep the showers and toilets clean. Now all the harbourmaster does when he eventually turns up is take money and if you want clean toilets use a cafe and clean showers either clean them yourself or climb the hill to the hotel and pay Giannis. Time to go...

23rd May, Kyparissia

If you want to stop on the way south from Katacolon to Pylos this is the only place you can do it. And that tells you everything you need to know about Kyparissia apart from the two turtles that swim around the harbour and the excellent Mythos pizza place - if you can find it (it's on the main street). And it was there that we watched the horrific scenes from Manchester.

This time we'd had a quiet six hour motor across the bay in a straight line a little bit east of south but even then the sea was choppy, like the Bristol Channel we'd cut our sailing teeth in, not quiet uncomfortable but going that way.

24th May, Pylos



It took us five hours from Kyparissia to Pylos and we motored all the way getting bored in the process. The coastline is not particularly interesting with the sole exception of a small island off Marathos which seems to have a monastery almost hidden in the folds of its hills. There are many monasteries

in Greece, it's hard not to find one. Sometimes, like on Corfu, they have a complement of just one or two monks or nuns.

Another couple of hours brought us level with the northern extent of the Bay of Navarino which was the site of the famous battle where British, Russian and French forces hammered the Ottomans to help Greece win its freedom back in 1827. It was the last time Ships of the Line drew up and faced each other. Apparently the superior training of the British crews meant they could fire about twice as fast as the Ottomans so the Ottomans lost and are presumably scattered all over the bottom of the bay.

But we were the other side of a slip of land from the actual bay and looking up at the old castle of Neocastro (which probably means 'new castle'). It took another thirty minutes to reach the entrance of the bay and turn east towards the town. Guarding the entrance was another castle; and I thought we had a lot in Wales.

So passed the port and the town and find the entrance to the marina which, it became immediately apparent, was another one of those that had never been finished; like Argostoli, like Trisonia, like Benitses, like... like... I'm guessing but it seems like European money is spent to make these places then at the last moment, just before it's finished, the money disappears somewhere and all the local boats move in and tie up and stay forever at no cost. Am I cynical? Yes. But it does seem fishy.

So the marina is dilapidated with a few hulks and an impounded motor vessel and an old wreck of a guy in a cap with a notebook who is the self appointed harbour master and stung the unwary (us) for ten euros per night. Later we found he has no official authority to do this and no ability to provide any of the normal marina services like water. In fact there are no services in Pylos that we could find.

But Pylos is a lovely place. It was built by the French after the battle and is laid out around a square in a French style. The square has shaded cafes and restaurants and ice-cream places and a supermarket and a vegetable shop that Rick Stein eulogised about and a fishmonger that Rick Stein eulogised about and Poseidonia restaurant that Rick Stein cooked in where the owner and staff eulogised about him. And the square has the famous three sided statue to the victorious Admirals who won Greece her freedom. And noisy kids because school had finished for the summer.

Actually, although we'd seen Rick Stein's *'Venice to Istanbul'* we'd not noticed Poseidonia and it was only when we wandered passed the door and started chatting to the waiters that the whole thing fell into place. Of course we ate there. Of course it was wonderful. Of course we are now poorer.

We meant to stay three days and ended up staying six. And all the time we could hear but not see the buzzing of high speed aero engines. The delay was due to the weather and discouraging forecasts that kept showing thunderstorms. Some of them appeared as predicted usually in the dark part of the night. And there was a lot of muddy rain and the temperatures were about ten degrees colder than in Britain and everyone enjoyed telling each other about it.

Two Italian huge fishing boats arrived and moored behind us alongside the quay and, although these guys were friendly – accepting that it's not easy to tell since Italians never smile – the sheer size of their boats was intimidating. We hauled Aderyn Glas along the quayside as far as we could just so that we could see more than the prow of their vessel when we looked out of our cockpit and their captain came and helped and smiled.

We visited the castle and the museum and we shopped and ate in restaurants. We bought boat bits from Captain Fotis and were given samples of his olive oil and cups of orange squash (so rare in Greece) each time we walked through the door. This is his trademark and we loved it. And we met some great people, Dutch and Australian, so did some socialising. Pylos: love it!



Methoni 30th May

Just an hour south and around the cape is Methoni with crystal water and a sheltered anchorage. The approach from the north has to be one of the best sights on this side of the Peloponese with the Venetian castle storming

down to the point of the cape then a separate tower standing out to sea serving to warn sailors of the rocks on which it's built and invaders of the strength of the once-great Venetian republic. At sunset it's lit with red rays and looks magical.

So we had to visit and despite a shortage of explanatory signage we found our way around and down to the tower on the point. The castle was firstly 13th century Venetian and then 15th century Ottoman and covers a huge area. Between its walls were parade grounds and a

church and plenty of room for the necessary barracks. And long grass. Lots of long grass, which is why I had 24 mosquito bites when I woke up next day.

I tried swimming. In a wet suit. Thinking it had been long enough since May for the sea to warm up a little and I was wrong. It was freezing. I swam to the anchor and swam back and that was it. Ann didn't even get her toes wet. Methoni sunsets are amazing. And the day-long buzzing of aeroplanes continued.

Finikounta 31st May

We sailed from Methoni to Finikounta with the wind behind us. Up through the bay the sea became choppy but it died away as we approached the beach and dropped anchor. Finikounta is a small village spread along a seashore with a harbour for local



boats not us and a beach that drops so steeply into the water that one stout lady had to be pulled out of the sea. A family from Britain swam out and around us. They came so close that I had to warn them about the way the boat was swinging and be careful the stern didn't hit them. We stayed on board for some reason not wanting to go ashore until the morning and when the morning came a swell started rocking the boat so violently I started the motor and used it to turn around the anchor. 'Time to go,' said Ann.



Koroni 1st June

The forecast was for a quiet, benign day with just a little breeze so we started south on engine looking for a bay near Maratho we had been told about. We think we found it but it was so open we had some doubts and had no choice but to leave. By then the

sea was picking up and so was the wind so we found ourselves again rolling our way uncomfortably southward at seven knots. Ann asked whether we were getting too old for this kind of travel and looked serious but I thought it was the short chop that seemed to be everywhere on this coast that was making life hard. We discovered that one of the islands to the south was a military range which may explain the buzzing aeroplanes; but we still didn't see any. Maybe they are Greek stealth fighters – heard but not seen.

Eventually we rounded Cape Akritas at the southernmost tip of the first Peloponese finger and turned north. The wind and sea switched off completely in the shelter of the cape and we motored north to Koroni.

Another anchorage. We were heading for a marina fix at Kalamata which was another three hours passed Koroni so we had decided to stop there for the night to break the journey. It has a port but not for us, and a quayside, but not for us, and mooring buoys, but not for us so we scouted amongst the sunken broken slabs that seemed to form the

seabed until we found somewhere we could drop the hook without it getting snagged. Then we went ashore to see another castle.

And found almost a ghost town. In contrast to the Preveza area the season here simply seemed not to have begun yet. There were restaurants and cafes and bars and none of them had more than one or two bored looking customers. We wandered up to the castle and found nothing to look at, once inside the walls there was just a path that led from one side to the other and that was it. Later we found we had missed the monastery at the top of the hill inside the walls which welcomes visitors; actually we didn't miss it we simply assumed it was private and walked passed it.

Back in the village Ann found a bakery run by a young couple who showed us how the bread was baked in a stone oven and sold us breadsticks suffused with olive oil and herbs which were wonderful and lasted me for almost a month. I wish I'd bought more.

That night we were rolled around yet again so now the place is called *rolly Koroni*.



Kalamata 2nd June

Three hours north and a bit east of roly Koroni is the second largest city on the Peloponese: Kalamata. We were up and away early playing to Ann's anxiety about arriving too late to get a place in the marina and so we motored again all the way except

for thirty minutes in a window between too little and too much wind. We arrived about lunchtime and called in on the VHF only to be met with silence. After my third call an exasperated woman answered and told us where to go, which was a particular pontoon. Her frustration wasn't with us though, the security people (all built like tanks) are supposed to answer these calls and direct yachts to berths but for some reason didn't answer us. A bad start, it made us feel insecure. And not helped by the security man who took our lines running off half way through berthing us.

But it all turned out right in the end, in the maximally air conditioned office was the woman who had answered the radio and she sorted everything out. So we got the toilet key which is also where the showers are and the laundry. Water was €4 for as much as you wanted and electricity was included in the €26 per night it was costing us. There were plenty of restaurants along the quayside and town was close and we got a map *and make sure you don't miss the railway park*.

Kalamata is big, it has an airport, a large commercial harbour, a marina and a castle so it must be big. It has many supermarkets and restaurants and a park with retired steam engines. A sophisticated central road that is part pedestrianised and a pharmacy every 50m or so in all directions who all agreed that the temperature was 33C and showed that the populace are obviously prone to sickness but when we stared at them they all seemed very fit and healthy to us. And it's a clean and bright and airy city, like the best bits of Paris or Cardiff.

It had the smells of a city, slightly dusty, slightly perfumed from the purple tree blossom that was everywhere, and it had the noise of tourists, obvious in their shorts and cameras. It had a huge Russian gin palace in the commercial harbour and it had a tiny, saintly church that marked the boundary between the old town and the new. And the marina had everything we wanted including seriously good restaurants and attractively low costs.

We started to hear rumours. The rumours told us that the next place on our itinerary – Lemoni – was a seriously exposed bay on the seriously exposed west coast of the next finger. And we began to seriously doubt whether this voyage of ours was going to get any further than Kalamata. After a few days it became a given. We had tacitly decided to turn around and go back the way we had come, to swallow our disappointment and put up with the early morning starts we would have to make. The decision was made in part because to go onwards would mean a string of anchorages with no obvious source of water for our tanks and no obvious source of fuel if we needed it combined with rough sleepless nights. As it turned out it was the right decision for us – but we wouldn't know that for a day or so.

In the end we left after three nights and headed back the way we had come. Time to go...

Returning 5th June

So we went backwards retracing our steps to the sound of derision at dumping our plan so unceremoniously at the first hint of trouble, sneers, cat-calls, sniggers and a great amount of nose-looking-down – and that was just from us! So we snuck away stealthily, back to rolli Koroni, buzzy Pylos, ghostly Kyparissia (even the pizza place wasn't so welcoming this time) and into hectic, noise filled Katakolon.



Really early starts followed by arrivals before the afternoon breeze turned against us. Thunder and unpredictable weather again. A 50 foot yacht crewed with young fit men told us the swell in Lemoni was so bad they couldn't get off their boat to go ashore. All added up to make us feel justified but we didn't feel better.

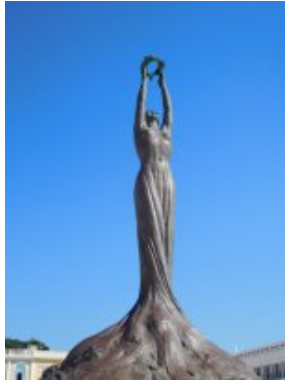
'Look,' said Ann, as we sat drinking Coke on the cliff top looking out over the harbour at the cruise liner people strolling on the red carpet that lined the quayside. 'we came all this way to do something different and we've certainly achieved that.'

I felt a tiny bit better and smiled almost happy.

'So lets keep doing it. Lets go to Zakynthos.'

I felt a tiny bit worse and the smile froze in horror.

Ann looked down on the cruise liner that carried 4000-odd paying passengers. 'Time to go,' she said.



Zakynthos 13th June

We had always avoided Zakynthos. When we arrived in Greece it was a place about which dire stories were told of Gestapo-like port police, of a man on a bike who took your papers to the police station for a fee far in excess of the mooring charge, of noise and all night disco music, of dust and dirt and smells, grubby restaurants and grubbier holiday makers mainly there for sun, sea, sand, seduction, sex, shame and lager though not necessarily in that order. Oh, and British Food – none of your Greek muck.

And now it's all changed. We arrived after a lovely boring crossing from Katakolon where the only interest came in the form of a cruise ship that was crossing our bow and, since we were pointing at her for a long time, seemed to decide we might be threatening and stopped in front of us. We expected any moment to see a rib storming towards us with hundreds of heavily armed guards waving their weapons at us, but it must have dawned on someone in charge that a 10m sailing boat with a maximum speed of about six knots wasn't going to catch a cruise liner with a top speed of fifteen knots any time soon, so she started up and sped on her way.

We'd booked on advice and it was a good move. There's no marina here (actually there is but it's not finished and is now full of local boats – have I written those words before?) so visiting yachts go stern to the quayside under guidance of an outfit which seems to have the concession for collecting fees. But we got water and electricity and it was cheap enough. And the guys were friendly, one pointing out that we were the first boat that season to use an anchor buoy; the significance of that comment we didn't get until later.

And here was the problem: when we arrived the staff put us at the town end of the quay where there was plenty of space but as the afternoon wore on the space filled up – with huge tripper boats. When we arrived back from town in the late afternoon one of the crew of the nearest began shouting something at us and it



wasn't until he came and stood at the base of our passerelle that I realised he was telling us that the largest boat was still to come and would anchor so close to us that it was bound to cut our buoy loose and would we go and remove it. I didn't argue, just leapt in the dinghy and went and rescued it two minutes before the tripper boat arrived. Then we were trapped. Unless either the cat to our port or the tripper boat to starboard left next day we were stuck. This was less than funny. The staff discovered that the tripper boat would be running next day but who knew when after that? So next day we moved. A case of find somewhere else for us to moor or *goodbye* (which was an amazingly empty threat since they already had our money and who

was going to care if we left). But they were good guys and promised us a new place.

Next day the tripper was due to move at noon so we had to wait around. At one o'clock a coach arrived and a drunken, noisy bachelor party staggered up the gangplank and eventually the boat left with much shouting, cheering and jeering. For a bachelor party they seemed to have a lot of women with them. We moved and everything calmed down again.

So Zakynthos is now high on our hit list. The town is clean and busy with restaurants and shops on a pedestrian street that stretches the length of the port and there is a museum of Byzantine art, a cathedral and a monastery for when we needed something serious to do. We hired a car and toured the island in a day, stopping at beaches on the east coast, at the clifftop cafes of the west coast and driving down the central valley where it's hard not to get drawn into the olive oil factory tours. The one we took was run by a lady from Britain who took the time to educate us. So we came away with soap, tapenade and orange flavoured olive oil. Finally we drove to the top of the cliffs overlooking the port for a panoramic view.

Back in port we went over the quay wall and joined some local families in the sea which, if you ignore the frozen dip in Methoni, was the first proper swim of the year and so much later in the season than other years.

So do we like Zakynthos? There are still some places where the holidays are based around noisy good times but they are on the south coast and weren't anywhere near us. What we saw was a bustling town but one which wasn't overly noisy or threatening, and a quiet island with some stunning views. Like Corfu, once you get away from the narrow tourist strip, there is still a bit of Greece to be found. Bougainvillea, monkey puzzle trees, far away horizons down fertile valleys and quiet roads and clifftop cafes all make it a place to return to.

'Time to go,' said Ann, sadly. So we did.

And then came September...

So what did I say above? Never go to Vliho if there's thunder on the forecast? Did I also say somewhere how unreliable weather forecasts were in Greece this year? We sailed and motored down to Vliho all happy and innocent, looking forward to a night far away from every other boat in a quiet anchorage. There was a bit of a wind behind us and we'd actually had a good sail, the weather seemed to be predominantly southerlies which gave us some of the best sailing we'd had in the area for a long time, but now it had changed and blew a little from the north.

Why jellyfish are affected by the wind is a mystery to me but I stood on the foredeck after we'd anchored and started counting. Jellyfish as big as my head. In all directions. I quartered the boat and counted the jellyfish I could see in the starboard bow quarter: fifty. That meant 200

jellyfish within sight from our boat. And they clumped together into disgusting writhing globular pulsating mats.

At 4 p.m. we found that the weather forecast had changed. No surprise there but it now showed a thunderstorm at 9 a.m. the next day. We were tired and the thought of moving back into what was now a strong northerly wind got a thumbs down from both of us, and the storm wasn't due to hit until daylight so we could cope with that one way or another.

At twenty minutes past midnight the boat heaved and Ann on her knees in bed tried to see out of the hatch above her head. Lightening was strobing but the noise of the wind and rain drowned any thunder. We'd been here before (read our book) and we'd heard about and seen the results of the 2011 microburst. So we threw ourselves out of the bunk and, shouting above the noise, Ann grabbed the lifejackets and I started the engine. A vision of loveliness in a soaked nightdress and lifejacket Ann stripped off the canvas that joined our bimini to the sprayhood so that we could see forward and we were both immediately blinded by the horizontal stinging rain.

A lightening flash lit the world of frothing sea and boats in all states of rolling and thrashing around. Ann's scream got my attention. At right angles across our bow the lightening showed a 47 foot yacht riding up our anchor chain. We were transfixed. I had no idea what to do. For several seconds while lightening continued to flash around us I stood and watched. Nothing changed. His anchor chain was still taught and was off to the left so I turned our wheel right and opened the throttle. Slowly our bow came around and he started to slide down our port side. As we moved forward we also turned away so that by the time he was halfway down our side a gap started to open between us. The noise of the storm drowned any noise of damage being done but it seemed we might have escaped anything serious. As we watched he slid away behind us and I wondered for a moment who he would hit next but he was headed for the shallows. Seemingly no-one was on board.

Aderyn Glas was still rolling violently and yawing around her anchor and I remember very clearly thinking at this point that if we had to abandon the yacht we were going to be stung to death by jellyfish before we could swim to the shore. It's strange what goes through your head at times like this.

All around us navigation lights were coming on and we'd already turned ours on. For the next hour or so all the boats motored into the wind trying to keep the load off their anchor chains. I tried to see the windspeed on the gauge but the stinging rain still blinded us.

When things settled down enough Ann went to find us some clothes – by that time we were both shivering violently. We put clothes onto wet bodies but at least there was some warmth in that. Around three in the morning the storm began to abate and we began to feel we would survive.

When daylight came we could take stock. A dinghy oar had ripped out taking the rowlock with it and a great chunk of rubber had been ripped from the strake along the side of our lovely yacht. We were lucky it seems. The storm was very widespread and we heard stories of 63

knot winds and of boats being damaged 16 miles away in Preveza. The fact that we were in Vliho had actually helped us, we had enough room to manoeuvre and all the boats around us knew what to do and we all managed to miss each other. The one we collected was unmanned and dragged his anchor and we were unfortunate enough to be in his way. We also dragged, despite motoring for most of the night and possibly because of the collision: the GPS showed we were 150m from where we'd anchored.

So: Vliho in a storm, *maybe!* And, added bonus: most of the jellyfish had gone.

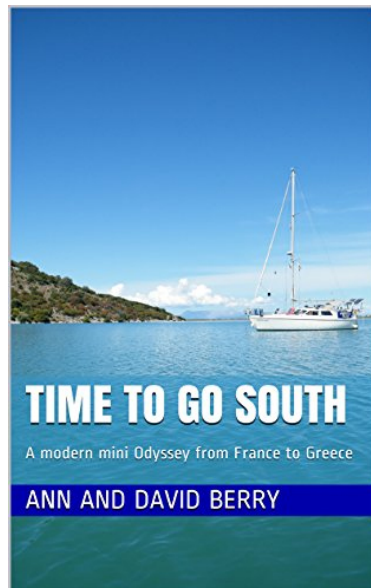
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