

Swedish holiday in a Cornish Shrimper

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Part 3: Stockholm

We awoke to sunshine in our snug anchorage. After a quick breakfast we set off on the last leg to Stockholm. It was exciting to approach the outskirts of the city and start to recognise some of the features that we had first seen over a year before. We sailed through two bridges up to the ornate City Hall with its golden topped tower. We recognised the jetty from which we had been taken for a cruise on our previous visit. It did not look very suitable for us and we turned back looking for a suitable short term mooring. Along the embankment we found a gap between



two cargo ships and managed to moor up against a very large tyre, well over 6 foot in diameter. Although we did not realise it at the time, this turned out to be the saviour of BC, when, as each pleasure steamer passed, the water suddenly became very violent, tossing us against the quay wall as if we were a small dinghy. The tyre provided an ideal fender for these rather extreme conditions. After we had witnessed two or three such buffets and confirmed that BC would survive them we went shopping. This included the purchase of food, drink and petrol. The drink part turned out to be a bit of surprise as in Sweden the sale of alcohol is controlled by the government through special shops. We found one of these and it turned out to be similar to an Argos store. Bottles of various forms of wine and beer were displayed in locked cabinets, for viewing and choosing only. We queued up and named the drink we wished to purchase and were required to provide proof of identity just to get a bottle of red wine. It made us realise how lax the system is in other European countries. We learnt later that this strict system was considered necessary in Sweden as a result of the growing problem of young peoples' drinking habits. Before returning to BC we called my Swedish friend from a phone booth and arranged to meet with him and his wife for an evening meal at a restaurant close to the quay where we were moored.

On returning to BC we decided to explore the waterways local to the west of Stockholm. We set off the way we had come and after passing under the first large bridge turned right. This took us through two more bridges and although the wind was fickle we managed to sail around for a couple of hours before returning through a narrow short cut to the main reach where we had started. We passed some moored yachts where the water was calm and after noticing a few gaps between the boats, decided to return there for the night. We then motored back to the main quay and moored up against the big tyre again. Later we met up with our Swedish friends and enjoyed a delicious meal in the restaurant on the quayside. It was a sunny evening and as we ate we could see out of the window several brightly coloured hot air balloons floating by overhead. Even when we said our good-byes it was by no means the end of the day for us. We walked up the hill to the main railway station where we had arranged to meet Lucy and Ben. They were expecting to be there at about midnight and sure enough they arrived looking a little inebriated from an overdose of free alcohol on the plane. We walked back to BC and motored to the spot that we had chosen earlier that afternoon. We moored there without difficulty and put up the tent over the boom to provide two extra berths in the cockpit. It was after 1 am by the time we had all settled down.

We woke up a little later than usual and after a leisurely breakfast decided to sail to Drottningholm and have a walk round the palace grounds there. It was a warm and sunny day and we meandered around several islands before arriving there. The quay adjacent to the palace was set up to receive the commercial tourist steamers and there was no room there for private boats. However we found a grassy bank and a small wooden jetty close to the main road which crossed a very low bridge nearby and moored up there. Two other small craft arrived with the same intent, so we felt less obvious and set off on foot confident that all was in order. The grounds are very spacious and apart from formal laid out gardens, there is access to an open park area where people were sitting or playing games and enjoying the sunshine. A small crowd were celebrating after an Indian wedding.



After a picnic lunch we returned to BC and set off to explore further afield. Drottningholm is situated at the east end of Lovön Island and we sailed south around to a narrow part of the waterway which led up to a low bridge at Tappström. We had to stop rather suddenly when we realised that the mast and gaff would hit it. We were not deterred and got busy lowering the sails and then the mast. There was enough slack on the jib halyard to allow the mast to drop sufficiently to get under the bridge and we were through and sailing again within twenty minutes. We sailed a further five miles to the entrance to a small marina on the outskirts of Stenhamra. The approach to the marina was through a narrow winding channel overhung with trees with high rushes along the banks. This opened up with meadows on the right and the narrow pontoons of the marina on the left. There was very little life which suited us well and we settled down for a meal aboard and an early night.



Sunday 2 June. We had an early start and set sail back to Stockholm at 8 am. We had arranged to take our Swedish friends for a sail and were due to pick them up at 10.15am. We found a sheltered spot close to the restaurant where we had met them for a meal. It turned out to be a private set of pontoons which was being used to buy and sell yachts. The owner was distinctly unhappy about our arrival but did not physically push us off. Fortunately we did not stay for more than twenty minutes as our friends arrived in good time. We set off in a rather light breeze redeemed by the warm sunshine. It was a short sail and we found a little cove for a picnic. We had pleasant views of the various yachts and pleasure steamers in the area. It was similar to the Solent with some of the local yachts taking part in a race. After lunch we sailed around the islands close to Stockholm and my friend pointed out some repair work being carried out on two of the concrete bridges in which he was involved. We found a

marina close to the abutment of one of the main bridges and decided to spend the night there. The bad news, we discovered, was that it was a private club - the good news was that we met, by chance, the commodore and his wife, who welcomed us for the night. In all that day we had sailed 19 miles.



We had an invite to our friends' house for the evening and we all set off for the short walk along the bank to where their car was parked. They lived about 10 miles outside Stockholm in a quiet suburb. They admitted that it was their wedding anniversary and insisted that this would be a nice way to celebrate it. Gillie and I accepted the offer of having a shower, the first for four days. It was very refreshing. We were then treated to a delightful meal and afterwards our host gave us over an hour's recital on his cello. We were driven back to BC in a very mellow state.

After a good nights rest we discussed our plans over breakfast and decided to sail through the Hammarby lock into the Baltic onto the east of Stockholm. The water on the western side was a few feet above the level of the Baltic and the difference in level is carefully maintained. It is kept that way to ensure that the inland waters remain fresh. In fact the Baltic is not very salty and does not suffer any significant tides or currents. The remarkable recovery of the Vasa was possible because of this. The bacteria, which destroy sunken timber ships common in salt water conditions around our shores, does not live in the brackish conditions of the Baltic. This allows the timber of ancient ships to remain in excellent condition for hundreds of years.

While we waited for the lock to open we brought out our flags to dress BC overall in commemoration of the Royal Jubilee. We continued on our way in a very colourful style. We managed to arrange the flags without affecting the setting of the sails. It was very warm and sunny and we decided to explore one or two offshoots to the main channel. We found a pretty channel which separates Skuru from Björknäs. The rocky banks had a pleasant mixture of houses and trees with private jetties carefully constructed



to blend in with the shore. We came out into a larger area of water and the wind had risen sufficiently for us to look for shelter and a more suitable mooring place to have lunch. We found a secluded bay close to Oservik. After our picnic the two young ones went for a scramble on the rocks while we did some sketching. On their return we weighed anchor and returned to the main channel and explored the

coast and islands further afield. The following day was to be the last for Lucy and Ben and they wanted to visit the Vasa before leaving to catch the bus to the airport. For this reason we decided to return to a marina, Fjäderholmarna, on a small island only four miles from Stockholm. Although there was a thriving restaurant there we decided that we preferred home brew and enjoyed another sunny evening with a number of hot air balloons floating overhead.

After breakfast the next day, at the civilised time of 8.30, we set off to the Vasahammen passing quite close to the amazing sculpture, Gud på Himmelsbågen, off Nacka Strand. This is made up of a thick white steel strip which loops out over the water in the shape of half a bow (of bow and arrow). A jet of water shoots out of the end, 30 feet above the sea, and creates a curve of spray mirroring the shape of the steel bow. At the top of the bow a boy



stands astride with his arms outstretched. At the foot of the pole a man stands looking up. Some large passenger steamers passed close to us on their way to foreign parts. The wind shadow they created was so extreme that it caused a suck and we heeled hard to windward. I was reminded of a 505 race in Plymouth Sound when three Destroyers steamed straight through the middle of the race course. The effect was startling. Thirty boats suddenly capsized to windward!

We landed Lucy and Ben in a marina close to the Vasa museum and whilst they visited the museum went for a nosey along the dock side of Östermalm. We returned in time to ferry Lucy and Ben to the main quay for them to catch a bus to the station and then on to the airport. It was a sad moment of farewells.



We returned to the marina close to the Vasa Museum and on checking the electric charge

discovered that the solar panel had become disconnected. The simple matter of reconnecting the wires developed quickly into a nightmare. I carelessly allowed the wrong wires to touch which caused a small explosion. When I had recovered from the shock I realised that the diode had become two small terminals - the part between had distributed itself around the cabin. My afternoon rapidly developed into a panic. Although I am a Civil Engineer I am not confident as an electrician. I have always relied on my brother's knowledge about such matters. He had provided both the solar panel and the diode noting that the latter prevents reverse currents when the sun goes down. At the time I was convinced that the solar drip feed was essential for our survival (intermittent running of the cool box). We do have a connection to the Honda *four* but I had not established that this was actually working. Anyhow I decided that it was essential to replace the diode. So I leapt on to my cycle and went in search of one. I cannot speak Swedish and I did not have a street map but quite quickly I found an electrical

shop. The assistant explained in very good English that I should go to a chandlery and gave me directions (with many turns). I was lucky to find it as I made two wrong turnings. Another patient assistant explained that I should go to a marine electrical specialist and gave me instructions how to get there. After another half hour I managed to find the place. It was full of the latest Garmin equipment and the man behind the desk was not very willing to talk about diodes. I tried to show confidence in what I wanted and why. Eventually he disappeared into an inner room to ask someone my question. He came back saying that the diodes that they had were not the right ones. I insisted on knowing why not and what current they would take. After another visit behind the scenes he came back and said that they would be too inefficient. I now started to talk amps and volts and he started to look less confident. He went back to the inner room and after a longer pause appeared with a small diode. I looked at the writing on it and decided it would probably do the job even though its resistance was higher than that of the original. He looked almost disappointed and charged me 10 krona (75p). He noted that the man in the chandlery should have known about it and been able to help. I decided to retrace my steps and pass this message on. The journey back was quicker and I found the same assistant and explained what I had been told. He said that he had never been asked such a question before, then after a pause, he noted that he was recovering from a stroke. He could not have been more than forty and I started to apologise for bothering him about it. He explained that the stroke had caused a major memory failure and he was relearning from scratch all the details of his business. We decided that customers who bought solar panels would also buy control units to go with them. These contained a switch, a fuse and a diode. He showed me an example priced at several hundred krona. After this sobering experience I cycled back to BC and wired in the diode and reconnected the solar panel. All was well again!! We had a stiff drink.

It was well into the evening by now and we decided to sail back to the marina at Fjäderholmarna for the night. We both felt a little bit down and were missing the company of Lucy and Ben.

However with the thought of new excitements ahead we settled down to dream about the east coast and exploring the Baltic.

