

Swedish holiday in a Cornish Shrimper

16 May to 20 June, 2002.

Robin and Gillie Whittle (Bumble Chugger: 124)

Part 1: Overland to Gothenburg

Our plans for 2002 were quite extensive marking our first real chance to enjoy my retirement. The major event was a five week trip to Sweden starting mid-May. We planned to launch Bumble Chugger (BC) at Gothenburg and decided that it would be convenient/efficient to tow BC on the trailer all the way there. This meant taking the ferries from Dover to Dunkirk and from Frederikshaven to Gothenburg. Our return journey to the UK would be interrupted by Shrimper Week in Zeeland so that we would not arrive back until the end of June.

I spent two week-ends at the end of April overhauling BC's trailer. It is a middle-aged four-wheel trailer (SBS) that has been used many times to launch BC in both fresh and seawater. Although we have taken care to try and keep the bearings and brakes from getting wet, this has not always been possible. I decided (after a little encouragement from Gillie) that each wheel should be completely dismantled and given an overhaul before setting off. This turned out to be a little more traumatic than expected, as all the brake parts for the Lockheed Mark II auto-reversing shoes were now obsolete. I did not obtain all the necessary parts until two days before we were due to leave. Luckily everything fitted together and the test run did not reveal any problems. In fact the bearings and brakes lasted the 2,500 miles without mishap [that is, until we got out of the car on arriving back home seven weeks later. When we got out of the car we noticed that the rear off side wheel of the trailer was leaning over at an odd angle. The following weekend I jacked the trailer up and the wheel fell off! Very little of the bearings remained and part of the brake mechanism was missing. It was a small miracle that we had not lost the wheel or worse! I was surprised that this had happened since I had packed all the bearings with Duckham's marine grease. The other wheels were still in fine working order. It may have been caused by not having quite the right torque on the hub nut - too tight could cause overheating and too loose could cause vibration].

The car and trailer journey to Sweden took three nights with an average speed of about 40 mph. We passed through five countries including France, Belgium, Holland, Germany and Denmark. On dual carriageways we drove at about 55 mph. At night we stopped and used BC as a caravan. This worked very well as instead of using marinas for the loos and washing facilities we used the filling stations. OK, they were more limited than most marinas but it was not a big sacrifice for just a few days. They were also convenient in terms of time as we could buy the necessary stores and fill up with petrol all at the same place. We crossed to Dunkirk on the morning of Thursday, 16 May and drove up through France and Belgium into Holland. Our first night was spent in Hertzogenbosch. We had seen a large cathedral from some distance away and drove slowly through a complicated maze of one way streets which at last led conveniently to a car park just beside it. We found



Track of the car journey to Sweden and back



Gillie at cafe outside cathedral at Hertzogenbosch

ourselves in a very pleasant tree'd, cobbled square, bordered by the cathedral, bars and restaurants buzzing with people spilling out onto chairs and tables on the pavements. After a pleasant meal we move out to a quieter spot for the night.

The next day we found a pleasant town at Rottenburg in Germany to stop for a lunch. While enjoying our picnic in the cockpit we were approached by an Englishman who had lived in Germany for the past twenty years. In his spare time he played in a band at gigs in all the local villages. When he heard that we were off to explore the town he went and fetched us a blue parking card.

We set off again mid-afternoon and decided that we should drive straight through Hamburg and try to reach Denmark before night fall.



We arrived at Åbernrå fifteen miles north of the border and tucked ourselves into the car park of the large marina and sailing club bordering on the Åbernråfiord. There was the most beautiful view out over a large bay, very flat and still with the evening sun lighting it up. The restaurant was open and we had a good meal before retiring to BC for the night.

The next day, Saturday, brought more cloudless weather. We had time to spare and decided to leave the motorways and head towards the north end of Denmark before settling down for the night at Frederikshaven. We found a very pleasant beach at Løkken, a little resort on the west coast and stopped to have a picnic lunch there. After this we had a stroll around some fishing boats left high and dry by the tide.



We then set off towards the northern tip intending to spend the evening in Skaagen. It was very hot and in the late afternoon decided to have a short nap in a lay-by.

This was where a small disaster occurred. We are not certain what actually happened but my version is that just before joining me in the land of nod Gillie remembered to turn off the sidelights. When driving in Denmark and Sweden the rule is to keep the sidelights on during the day. When I awoke and tried to start the engine the battery was flat. I believe that instead of turning off the lights Gillie had actually turned the headlights on. After a few moments of panic we realised that we had a spare battery in BC. I exchanged them and the car battery immediately started to receive charge from the solar panel fitted to the cabin-sliding roof of BC.

After recovering from our scare we continued on our way to Skagen. It is a fairly ordinary little town, but it has big docks and an expansive marina, both of which were buzzing with activity. There must have been a rally from Sweden, as most of the yachts moored at the marina were flying the Swedish flag. Their crews, mostly young tanned men were rapidly getting rowdier by the minute as crates of beer were carried aboard. There was a row of restaurants along the quay, mostly selling exotic

sounding fish, but not knowing what these were in English we boringly went for 'fish and chips' followed by an ice cream each. It was quite late by the time we set off back to Frederikshaven. Our luck seem to be back with us as we quickly found a marina in which to park and spend the night.

The next morning, Sunday, 19 May, while we sat in the cockpit having our breakfast, a hare with enormous ears lolloped by. It seemed quite oblivious of our presence. From this happy scene we rapidly descended into near despair with our next near disaster.



Fish and chips at Skagen

Before embarking on the ferry to Gothenburg, which left at 1030, we decided to fill the car up with petrol and so leave the marina in good time. I considered that the car battery had had enough time to receive sufficient charge and decided to replace it in the car. The car has an automatic anti-burglar system and for some reason it decided to perform just as I was fitting the battery back in. Nothing we did to try and switch it off had any effect. Eventually we decided we must get help from a local garage. Luckily we noticed a man cycling in the marina and stopped him to ask if he knew of a local garage which might be open early that Sunday morning. His English was rather hesitant but he had a very calm manner. In spite of this he was not at all confident that we would find anywhere before our ferry left. It was a very depressing moment. He rode off and I had a last try at stopping the alarm and starting the engine. I do not know what sequence I tried but it had the right effect and the alarm stopped and the engine started. We set off immediately and still had time to get petrol before catching the ferry!!

The ferry took two hours to get to Gothenburg. We had some impressive views of the city as we approached it up through the channel.



First view of Gothenburg

Little time was wasted in disembarking and once we had driven clear of the dock we started looking for possible launching spots. This was singularly unsuccessful and after half an hour we decided to make our way to the main yacht club. This was tricky as the streets became narrower the closer we got to it. Eventually we parked by a residential block of flats and walked the last hundred yards. The Harbour Master was friendly but adamant that we could not launch there. After a snack lunch we decided to drive up along the Göta River to Trollhätten and find a place to launch there. We drove for about 40 miles and decided to check out the lock at Åkerssjö referred to in the guide book. We arrived at the lock and could see no sign of a slipway. We walked into the control room for the lock and had a friendly chat with the lock keepers. They pointed out a little gravel ramp three hundred yards up the canal which they thought we might be able to use. We drove up to it and Gillie immediately decided it was quite unsuitable. After quite a lot of musing I persuaded myself it was possible, but very tricky. The slope was steep and led off sharply from



Launching at Akerssjo (1)

the track, but provided that the trailer approached it at an angle from the side, there should be just enough clearance underneath. There was not enough room for both car and trailer so we detached the two. Amazingly it all worked at the first attempt and BC was afloat - well not quite. A barge was just about to pass by and I called to Gillie to push the bow off. I was concerned that the pre-wave suction would grind BC on to the rocks. Gillie succeeded but the effort caused, in her words, something to go “ping” in her chest. We never discovered what this was and she said it did not hurt so we both forgot about it. The next day the muscles in her chest started to ache and took several weeks before she felt back to normal.

Whilst I motored BC back towards the lock Gillie drove the car and trailer to the car park near by. This is where they remained until the end of the sailing holiday when we returned pick them up. The cycles are fold up Bromptons which we have found very hardy. I have been using one to cycle from Waterloo Station to work, close to the Post Office Tower, for fifteen years. Although there is very restricted room in a Shrimper we found it possible to take them by keeping them in the cabin during the day and moving them to the cockpit at night. They both fit quite neatly on one side of the centreboard, leaving room for access into the cabin on the other.

We settled down for our first night afloat, moored close to the lock. The day had been another of almost perfect weather and we felt very relieved that we had arrived and launched without major mishap.

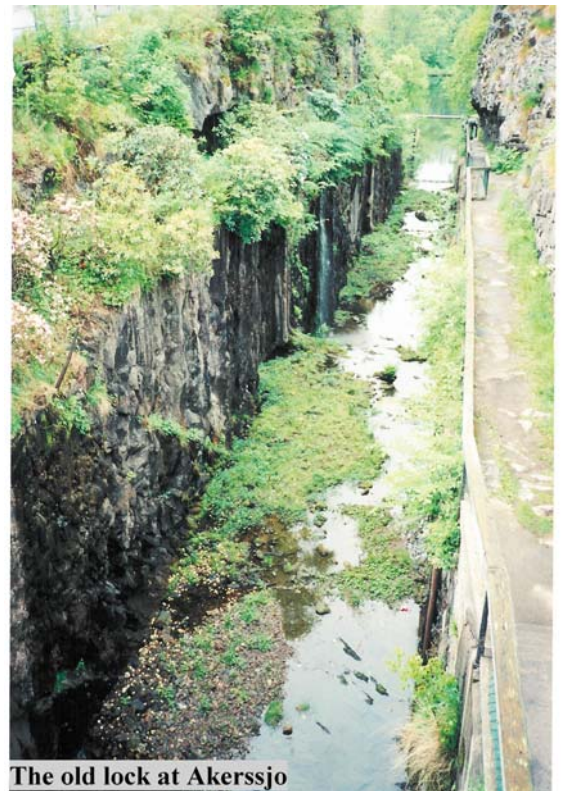
Waking up to our first morning afloat we realised that the glorious weather was over. However it wasn't raining and we had achieved the first important step!



Launching at Akerssjo (2)



First night at Akerssjo



The old lock at Akerssjo