

TALL SHIPS RACE 2023
OCEAN SPIRIT OF MORAY
23 JULY - 13 AUGUST



Ocean Spirit of Moray

by Sophia Slessor

Ocean Spirit of Moray, 24m Sail Training Ketch
Inverness, Lerwick, Bressay, Arendal, Kristiansand, Ramsland, Inverness
23rd July to 13th August 2023, 22 days on board, 20 night hours
1,140 Nautical Miles, MWF 5

Note: BST = GMT+1, UTC = GMT+2



Our adventure on Admiralty chart

OVERVIEW

The three weeks' sailing was made up of three sailing phases, interspersed with two periods of celebrations and festivities at Lerwick and Arendal:

1. 24 – 25 August: Prepositioning from Inverness to Lerwick, Shetland Islands.
2. 29 July – 2 August: The race from Lerwick to Arendal.
3. 6 – 13 August: Recovery phase from Arendal to Inverness; 6-10 Aug sheltering from Storm Hans in Kristiansand; night 10/11 August anchored off Ramsland.

The crew arrived at Inverness Marina by 1500BST on Sunday 23 July. 0500BST the next morning we departed and sailed to Lerwick, arriving on the next day, the 25th, at 0700BST.

After three days of parades and festivities, we set off towards the start line on the afternoon of Saturday 29 July. There was thick fog, which caused the race committee to delay the race and, instead, impose a finishing cut-off time of 0200UTC on 2 August, with a new start line at Way Point 1. The race would now be a time-trial. We returned to the Shetlands and anchored in a sheltered bay on the isle of Bressay waiting for the wind to pick up. We then set off on the afternoon 30 July.

We arrived at the start line at 0500 on 31 July but waited to cross the SL until 1605UTC, picking the best start point and the best bearing.

The race was cancelled about 24 hours early, around 0200UTC on 1August, due to light winds. Apparently it made it difficult for the large, square-rigged ships.

We headed for Arendal along the coastline, sailing between islands. Beautiful scenery. We arrived in Arendal at 1430UTC and tied up next to the Netherlands Navy boat.

Festivities took place over 3-6 August. However, with Storm Hans entering the North Sea, we had to consider only moving a short distance from Arendal on Sun 6th, perhaps to Kristiansand, to wait out the strong winds and rough seas. This we did and, after several days there, we crept another 15nm or so along the coast to an anchorage off Ramsland in preparation for the 360nm dash across the North Sea to Inverness, expecting a Force 5 southerly.

DIARY

Sunday 23 July

Arrive Inverness Marina and prepare boat for departure Monday 0500BST. We did a recap of safety and how it never takes a day off, as well as getting our spatial awareness of the boat (winches, ropes, sheets, sails, etc).

Monday 24 July

Departed Inverness and while we were sailing towards Lerwick we saw dolphins, rainbows, and puffins, coupled with surviving through seasickness! Did my first night shift when we were just off the island of Stonybreck at midnight.



The Crew

Tuesday 25 to Saturday 28 July

Arrived off Lerwick at 0700BST on the 25th. Anchored, waiting for ship Swan to arrive so she can berth and we will tie up against her. Tied up alongside Swan 1000BST.



Festivities in Lerwick.

Wednesday morning we were putting up the flags and later on we had the opportunity to take our first proper look around Lerwick. In the afternoon we all changed into our crew uniforms and gathered together with the other ships, preparing for the crew parade. We saw the crew members from the other ships dressed up, huge flags being swung around, music, banners, and the streets full of people. That was the moment when we all felt exuberant! Later on that day the crew parties began, where there was a lot of good music and fun dance moves!

On the 27th we got to take part in various activities and that's when I did the Westside tour of Lerwick, ate local cake, saw goats, Shetland ponies, and went on a lifeboat tour during which we visited the famous elephant arch. That evening we also had a dinner party with Swan where we all made friends and played music on our own instruments.

The 28th was the day I met Princess Anne and we laughed when she asked where I live and I explained that I had meant Dallas Scotland, not Dallas Texas.



Sophia Slessor with The Princess Royal



Ethan and Finlay

Saturday 29 July

Start of race 1545UTC. Slipped mooring 1345. Fog. Start officially delayed until following day and to begin at Way Point (WP) 1. The fog meant that the expected parade of sail could not happen due to the bad visibility.

We turned around and head back to find an anchorage while we waited for the fog to lift and winds to freshen.

2200BST at anchor in a bay on the northern end of the island of Bressay, opposite Lerwick. We were starting to think of waiting to cross the start line as late as Monday.



One of the square-riggers – Fryderyk Chopin

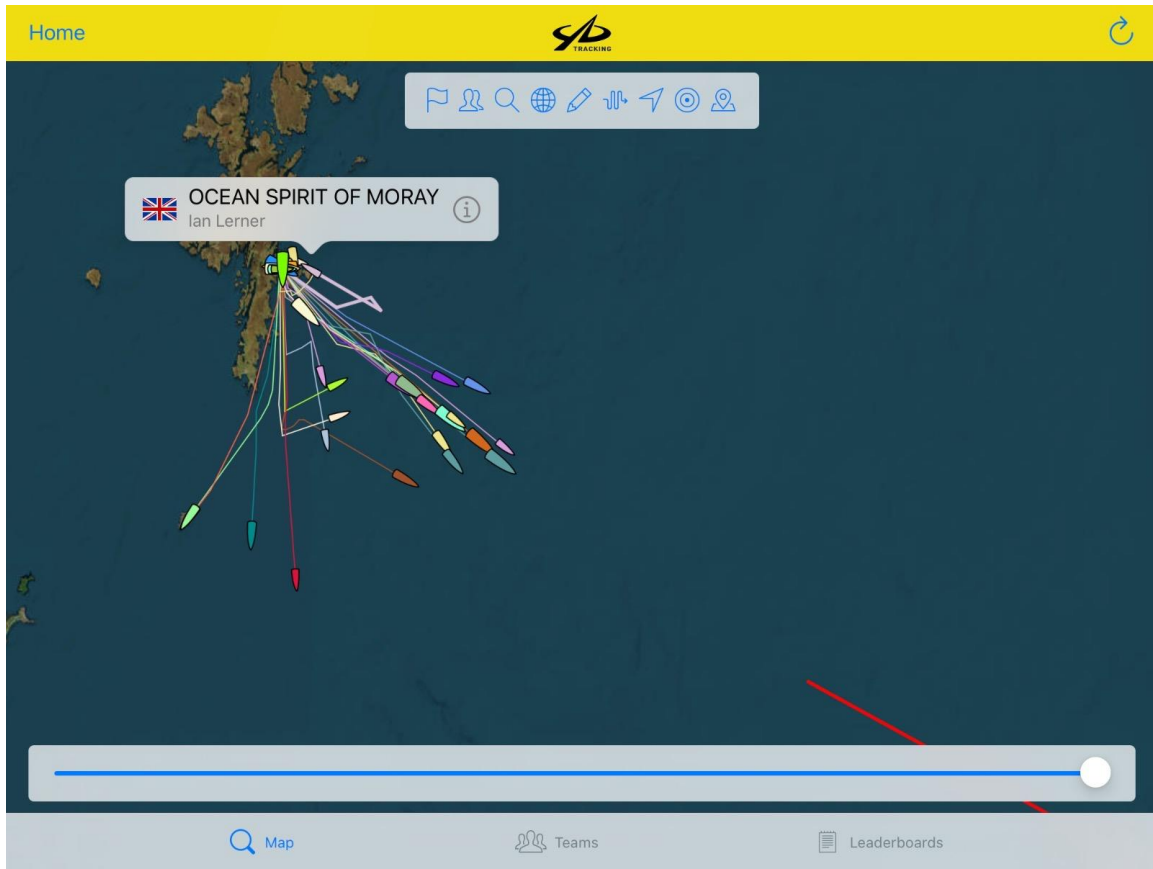


The Three Musketeers

Sunday 30 July

1330UTC Left Bressay to head for start. Winds light and variable. Sailing for the Start Line (SL). Before leaving, we rowed in the rib, practised knots, and learnt about points of sail, all for the certification of Competent Crew.

That night the sky was clear due to no light pollution and we saw so many stars, and the moon was very large and bright! That day I also learnt how to fill in the log, which became my new hobby and duty.



And they're off!

Monday 31 July

0500UTC near SL but holding off so we can delay our start until wind forecasts are at their best. No official start time. Race will be a time-trial format with a cut-off at 0200UTC on 2 August.

Crossed the SL at 1605UTC, which we do at northern-most end (best position 59° 07.5'N 001° 27.3E on a heading of 130°).

Urania, in Class D, crosses at same point, on same bearing, 2 hours behind us. Spaniel, also in our Class C, crossed very early (as soon as they arrived at the SL?), so she's miles ahead and she does well in light winds as she is a racing boat - sleeker, lighter, smaller crew.

Tuesday 1 August

0450UTC we are still in 1st place for speed, with Spaniel looking to be 1st in Class C for endurance, given her early start!

Race has finished. We only had around 10 hours of sailing :(However today is an amazing day for sailing: calm seas, warm weather, and lots of wind (going up to 10-11 kts). Also, we keep overtaking other ships, which is a good sign.

Captain made choice to head due east to hit the Norwegian coastline for route to Arendal. Beautiful scenery and sunset.

Wednesday 2 August

0500UTC: about 40nm to Arendal, making 4-5kts so should get there early evening.

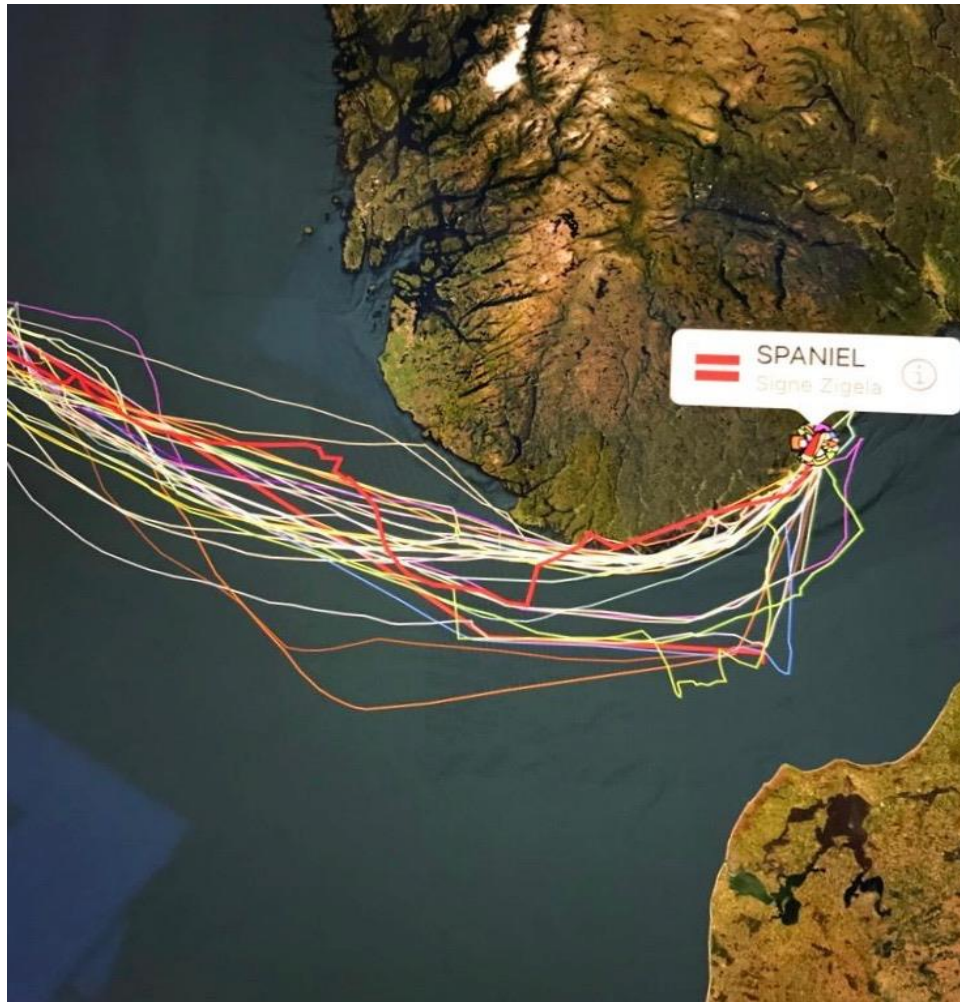
1200UTC: about 10nm from Arendal, we turned into coastline to cruise through islands, taking in the scenery. All the locals own speed boats!



Island Sailing to Arendal

1440UTC arrived Arendal.

1450UTC tied up alongside. Dutch Navy next to us. Had a much needed shower!



End of race – fleet arrives Arendal

Thursday 3 August

We all did a deep clean of the boat, which is definitely necessary after a few days of sailing, and later on that day I also did my laundry.



Winners



Arendal Fireworks

Friday 4 August

Crew parade and Prize giving. Ocean Spirit is awarded the prize for speed/sprint in Class C.

Crew party, which had fantastic live and DJ music.

Next day, Saturday, we took part in the Viking games which was a lot of fun.

Sunday 6 August

Untied at 1100BST and joined the parade of sail on departing Arendal.

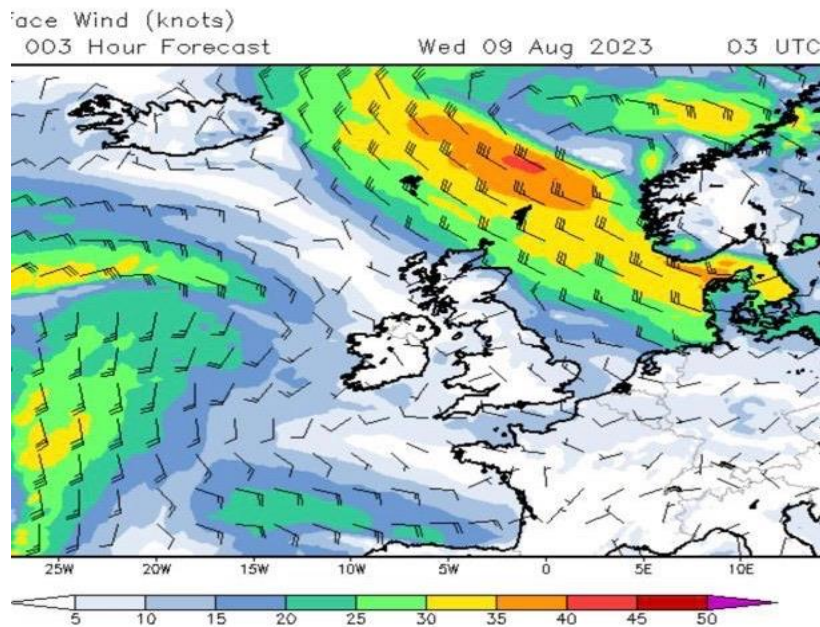


Ocean Spirit leaving Arendal



Parade of sail, Arendal

1700BST arrived Kristiansand where we expect to spend several days to allow Storm Hans to pass through before crossing the North Sea back to Inverness. Our Captain is going to use the time to go through the syllabus for the RYA Competent Crew certificate. We have lost some crew who have had to fly out due to the delay of our arrival back in Scotland.



Storm Hans heading our way

8 and 9 August

Tour of Tenacious which is a large square-rigger that helps a lot of people with disabilities (great ship). Helped make pizza dough for the pizza party tonight with the two boats Swan and James Cook. Made friends that I will stay in contact with after our adventure is over.

Next day did another deep clean; did a walk around an island, got amazing ice cream, and Swan left early in the morning but James Cook invited us for tea.

Thursday 10 August

Departed Kristiansand at 0800BST. Aiming to cruise inshore to anchor about 35nm further west to wait tonight for weather improvement before starting to cross North Sea. Crazy weather, windy, wet, and a reefing line snapped.

Anchored in bay off Ramsland, 58° 1.89'N 007° 6.56'E .

Friday 11 August

0800BST we weighed anchor to set course for Inverness. Was on the helm for an hour. That night was so clear and the next couple of days we experienced a meteor shower and I also saw the Andromeda galaxy.

Saturday 12 August

In a moderate to fresh breeze we made good time and by 0800BST – so in just 24 hours – we were passing the midway point. 15 to 20 kt winds continue to be forecast for the following 12-15 hours, although the wind was forecast to slacken off for our last 60nm or so into Inverness. We saw a lot of Gannets and Fulmars, as well as something spectacular: white-beaked dolphins bow riding with us for almost 2 hours! Also we can see land :)



Homeward Bound

Sunday 13 August

Berthed back at Inverness 0800BST and had one last massive deep clean!



The Trainees

LESSONS LEARNED

Teamwork

Leadership

Skills (crewing, helming, navigation, cooking)

Biggest Challenges (sea-sickness, tiredness, fear in big seas)

EXPERIENCE

Personal growth

Independence

Place in the world

Nature and human smallness

New sea family

RYA Competent Crew certificate



