

Friday night, June 2

I thought I had best write this email tonight as I am not sure when I will get the chance to sit and write again for the next few days. I have and am having a wonderful time here in Bangkok. I had never really thought much about what it would be like over here but it is amazing. I guess it isn't everyone's cup of tea but I am enjoying it. I arrived Wednesday night just before midnight and it was quite late by the time I arrived at the hotel and settled in. Bangkok is 3 hours behind Australia, usually 4 but they have daylight saving. It was late by the time I cleared customs and so had to go straight to bed and get a couple of hours sleep before I had to get up again to go on my first tour. The first day I had a tour to Ayuthaya, looking at the ancient palace, temples and a cruise up the river. I started the day with a lovely breakfast here at the hotel. The river is so muddy due to the rain and floods they have had. The cruise up the river back to Bangkok was really relaxing. It was lovely sitting outside on the front of the boat with the breeze. It has been quite humid and hot. So good to feel the warm weather again. I met an American girl on the cruise so we ended up going shopping together that evening as well. It was much better having company as we explored more together. She was staying at a hotel about 15 minutes away I guess. Wow I am learning fast here, how to bargain, cross the busiest roads without lights and cars coming and going from all directions. We had a really fun day. We both bought the few things we wanted to buy. Everyone is so friendly here and so much English spoken it is quite easily to converse.

Today I had another tour to the floating markets and the river kwai. It was a long day but another great day. It was good getting out of Bangkok and seeing more of Thailand. It was a very different countryside today than yesterday. We headed south and then west across to the bridge. We had a speed boat ride today up the river to the bridge. They are funny speed boats over here, like the one in the James Bond film. We walked across the bridge and I found it really interesting reading the info around the place and we also went to one of the cemeteries where the English, Australian and Dutch are buried. Am taking lots of photos but I am sure when I go through them I will delete a lot of them. It has been a busy two days but very interesting and loved it.

After our tours today Chris and I caught up again and we had a foot massage, pedicure and manicure. It feels so nice and was lovely to play ladies for a couple of hours. Chris is now on her way to London. She left on the same flight as I will be catching tomorrow night. She has a lot of exciting things happening in her life at the moment as well and we are planning on keeping in contact. She has to go back to Costa Rica where she is working at the moment and then will be moving to Geneva. She will be back in August to live and will be holidaying around France and Spain and we are planning on catching up then. Her new man is also English and loves sailing so we think we should have some fun. We are both on an exciting adventure. It was lovely to sit and have a coffee before she left to go to the airport.

I have a half day tour to the grand palace tomorrow and Chris says it is well worth it. She did it today and then had a Thai massage after the tour. Am very tempted to do the same tomorrow. I will potter around and repack my bag before going to the airport tomorrow evening. Alan is waiting for me at Poole. He has checked out where the bus station etc is and looking forward to my arrival. When I first hopped on the plane I was wishing I had just booked to go straight to London and not stop over in Bangkok but it has really been worth it. I would love to come back again and spend some more time here looking around. It is so cheap as well. The night life is very different tonight than last night. The clubs have their doors open down near the markets and the girls can easily be seen dancing in side and people out on the footpath trying to get people to go in. The markets are in walking distance, 10 – 15 mins but gosh there are a couple of dicey roads to cross. Still that is the fun of it all. It has been an exciting couple of days. At this rate my holiday will be over in no time. The days are surely racing by. It is 23.22 now and I should be going to bed as I have to be ready for the tour again by 0700. They start early but it will be a good day. Today I had to be ready by 0640. That was early and I had to have breakfast first. Still I can sleep on the plane to London. I will have 12 hours to do that and I am sure I will manage to sleep quite well. The flight from Sydney to here went quite quickly really, especially when you sleep most of the way. I have window seats which worked out well on the way here. It has been a great start to my new adventure. I still can't believe I am going to be away for 6 months. I expect it to take a little while to truly relax into it after working full time for so many years. Keeping busy, I don't think that that will be a problem at all. I have a lot to learn and am really keen to learn how to sail the cat alone. I should imagine that will take quite a while to do.

I will write again when I get a chance, hope everything is well with you all. I will be looking forward to receiving emails as well. My telephone number is +447624111595. I still have my optus one that I can send and receive sms on but wont use it to talk.

Bye for now and goodnight. It will be tomorrow (Saturday) when I email this as I won't go out now and find an internet café.

Take care,

Love you

Marilyn

Saturday midday

Just adding to my email of last night. I went on the grand palace tour this morning. I was the only one in the group today so had a personal guide. He was great. We went on a boat ride all around the canals looking at the temples, houses etc. One of the couple on the tour yesterday with us was going this morning as well but must have been in a different group. The groups are only small around town, 8 max in a van. I am going to go and sort my gear and have it all packed for when I check out tonight and then go for a bit more of a wander around. Just thought I would send these emails first. I head off to the airport just after 9.00 pm, flying out at 0020, arriving in London at 0625 Sunday morning their time. I am going to make sure everything is charged and ready to go. Have a bit of a panic attack thinking I am going to miss the easy life of having power etc handy. I think I will soon adapt and work it out. Like going bush for a while!!

Anyway, will send these. Hope everything is ok

Love

Marilyn

8th June Thursday

Hi,

I thought I would take a little while to type a quick email and try and find an internet café tomorrow to send this off. We are heading off tomorrow to go around to another bay further East. I'll start from when we left England. We spent Monday doing bits and pieces and getting the power unit for the laptop to run it from a cigarette lighter. We got up early Tuesday morning at 5.00!! and set sail by 5.30 to head across the English channel. It was cold but really a good crossing. It took 10 hours to cross from where we left at Poole to Cherbourg in France. It was 60 miles to cross where we did. I took a sea sick tablet just in case and actually felt really good the whole way. Didn't feed the fish once. I had a few layers on mind you, the wind chill factor was rather cold. We have to cross 2 shipping lanes as we cross the channel so saw quite a few big container ships. Alan just kept a close eye on them. They are supposed to give way as we are under sail but doesn't mean it will happen. We arrived early afternoon and the bay was a little rough so have been parked at a marina – for a price. Everything is dear here in France but it has been nice. We biked around yesterday and had a general look around here, today we hired a car and drove down to the landings for D Day, we drove through lots of villages and went to 2 museums. It was so interesting. It is light till at least 10 pm here so we had a big day. We arrived back here, parked the car at the marina and then had to walk to the car hire place to pick up our bikes. It is so much fun riding around and my little bike Alan bought is a beauty. So good to ride. Lots of people riding bikes in France. It hasn't been that cold either. The days have been lovely and sunny and jeans weather with a top on really. The car we hired was a cutie – a citreon C1. A little 2 door job. Alan did all the driving. Europe drives on the right hand side like America. Would have cost an extra day hire for both to drive so we said no to that. We did about 260 klms altogether. Petrol is so dear over here, won't be driving around a lot but it was worth it today. Great to look around the countryside. We are going back around the bay to work our way down the west coast of France tomorrow. I have taken lots of photos and will sort out sending some over to you guys.

I am getting used to having a shower on the boat!! A case of wet yourself down, turn it off, soap up and then rinse off. The hair is still a disaster. Just as well Alan is wearing rose coloured glasses as it is sooooooo bad. He is studying the charts getting organized for the trip tomorrow. It should take about 4 hours or so to get there, the wind is the right direction so should be a good trip. I will have to take some photos of the inside of the Rush to show you my living!! Like camping! We have the music going now and it is quite civilized really. No it is fun. We are going to have so much fun biking and walking around the countryside. Alan likes to get outside and walk and bike. We even like the same healthy food so that works, I just can't have my hot curries!! I can live without that and even cutting down on the coffee, only one cup today and a cup of tea. How good is that? I will be ready for Haydens nice coffee when I get back though, remember that Hayden.

I think the time will go so fast and my holiday will be over in no time. It is so much fun. I just loved Bangkok and would love to go back there for a holiday and look around more but not at such a hurried pace. It was a long flight to England. I wasn't comfortable in the plane and I got a bit of the Thai 'belly'. Must have been the fruit I bought from the floating markets the day before I left. Didn't think they prob washed their fruit in the water. Well that belly has been around to haunt me for a few days and finally settling thank goodness. Nice welcome for Alan!! He has been so good, so considerate. We are having a load of fun. He has even forgiven me for nearly killing both of us crossing the road as pedestrians. He did get his own back today though, wandered onto the wrong side of the road a couple of times!! It was a good day even if it was long.

Well that is about all the news for now. I haven't seen internet cafes around but they must be somewhere. If you want to send sms to me maybe you should send them to my old number as I am not sure if they are coming through on the international one. I rang yesterday to say they haven't been received by the ones I have sent them too so to be on the safe side use the old number till I know for sure it is working. It is 23.17 here at the moment, we are 8 hours behind you guys.

Bye for now, will email again when I can anyway.

Love

Marilyn

Sunday June 11

Hi,

We have had a great couple of days here at Port Bail. We arrived Friday about 5.00 pm. The tides are unreal on this side of France, you have to time it right to get it as the tide goes out and we are sitting on sand. We had a fairly good trip here, took about 6 hours around the point. It is a lovely quiet little bay. We took the bikes to shore and biked around here for the last 2 days. Today we biked about 40 odd kils so were really tired by the time we got back home. There are so many little quaint villages around here, the houses are right on the narrow streets. We stopped today to buy some bread, and we could smell a rotisserie out on the street and weakened and bought a chicken, would you believe for nearly 13 euros. That chicken tasted good, we had it for lunch and dinner. It was well worth the money (about \$25Au). It seems on Sundays the butchers have these spits out on the street and sell their meat. I could be anywhere in France and they have no idea. I haven't had to go through customs, we are just pottering around having such a good time. It looks like we are in for a change with the weather. It is cooler tonight and could be rainy tomorrow. We are sailing across to Jersey tomorrow. Alans GPS failed on the way across the channel and he is going to see if he can get a new one in Jersey or get on sent across to another bay we are going to further down the coast. He has it linked to his computer and he can pinpoint exactly where we are at any given time on it. It is amazing the technology available that we don't even have. I am getting quite used to living this relaxing lifestyle. It is great. It is comfortable here on the boat and we have everything we need. My little old bike goes well, it is a second hand one but with gears!! We went over some bumpy roads today, the butt was glad to get off the bike seat by the time we got back. Everything is packed away ready for our trip tomorrow.

It is a real little farming area around here. I can't get over the fat cows, how small the fields are and how much hay they get off a field. The paddocks look like they are sand around here, it seems they put

fertilizer on the grounds, water it in and then plant corn, potatoes, turnips? And even grass for hay. The fertilizer looks like a silage type and smells, probably full of nutrients to get it to grow as well. It is unreal to see. We sat down at the beach today for a spell and all the tractors are lined up down there, where people tow their boats to the sea to put them in. Sensible idea but just something you don't see at home.

We are doing well working out the language. Not that hard and sign language is a powerful tool. We get there. Be harder in Spain and Portugal I should imagine.

I have my ipod playing music through the stereo, can charge the computer etc so all in all quite comfortable. Cute little toilet, you have to pump out each time you use it, shower is a bag one so it is an economical one for sure.

I have taken lots and lots of photos, they still don't really capture the real picture though, so hard to do that. I really need to load them on here and name them all as I will forget the names of all the places. I have briefly written down where we have been. It is great, we can stay a while if we want or move on. Need to buy some moisturizer tomorrow though, it is drying out in the wind and sun. I think I will have a very good tan before long. Can see it on my arms already. Been lucky with such mild weather. So good missing the cold winter this year. It will only get warmer as we head closer towards the equator over the next few months too.

It doesn't get dark till very late and it is only just starting to get dark now and it is 10.30. It is late by the time we get to bed so often working by the daylight. We have been going for a walk in the evenings after dinner but not today, too lazy, we have to row to shore!! Then walk.

Well that is about all my dull and boring news for now. Yes I am happy and having a good time.

Bye for now

Tuesday 13th

Here we are sitting in the catamaran on the sand, the tide is out and I have a prob nearly 2 hours to race to shore and do my stuff while I can walk across the sand. After that we have to row the dinghy ashore to do anything. It has been a miserable rainy day today, not too cold really. We cycled to the shops so Alan could get a new GPS. It started raining on the way, got a bit wet. We sat under cover for a little while. This is the island of Jersey!! It is quite fun really as you have to experience all kinds of weather to appreciate the good stuff. Haven't been able to do sightseeing today so if the weather forecast is good for Thursday we will stay an extra day tomorrow and cycle around then. There is a north easterly tomorrow forecast and that is an excellent wind to sail across to France. It sounds colder and stormier than it is. Been a good chance to catch up on a few bits and pieces. We have our last chance to buy some groceries English style.

I must keep moving and go and catch the internet café and do some washing if I can. It is such a good life.....handwashing the clothes, washing the dishes in a little bowl to conserve all the water we can as we have to carry it onto the boat. Just like camping. We have all the time in the world. When the tide is out have to pee in a bucket!! Can't really empty the loo out onto the sand!! The tides are something like 3 mtr at times so if I don't get back to the boat it time I will be swimming!! When we went biking yesterday we had to remember to get back on the left side of the road. Europe of course is on the right and we were so used to it. By the time I get back to Aussie I will have to readjust again, how to drive a car! Love this getting around on bike or foot but it does take more time. At least it keeps us fit. Alan has gone back to the shop to ask a few things about his GPS. He has a few kms to bike around the shore but it is flat and on a sealed surface bike track. Well I'll just trot off through the sandy mud now and email this to you all. I hope you appreciate the effort. Bare feet and being agile to move around on the boat, climbing in and out of the dinghy and on and off the back of the cat is a must. The water is so blue just looking out the window now
Bye now,

2130 13th June

Well that was good intentions wasn't it? I climbed off the back of the boat, walked through hail and snow, well not really, across the muddy sand in bare feet, jeans rolled up, rain jacket on, got on my bike and biked to the internet café to find I couldn't plug in my flash drive so no emails sent. It cleared up this afternoon and we went for a bike ride to another coast. It was just lovely. It was a bike track that used to be an old railway line so was a gradual slope all the way but boy was it good coming home.....all downhill. Collected more water and just got back to the boat and it turned rainy again. So good to have a nice hot dinner. I'm getting good at all these culinary skills again. Absolutely amazed at what I can do with a little gas stove. Mind you when it is cold anything tastes good doesn't it?

We are planning on sailing to France tomorrow so will try once again to find an internet café. They are available in these little towns at a price. The boat is floating at the moment, the lights of the island are in the distance and it is lovely, even listening to the waves splashing on the boat and the trickle of rain. It is cosy in here. I seem to have adjusted to the motion very quickly which is excellent. I often don't even notice it is rocking till I think about it. I have enclosed a couple of photos on dry land! And yes we are floating and sailing as well. It isn't all a made up story, We are really sailing the high seas.

Goodnight for now

14th June

Today we sailed from Jersey to St Malo. The weather was still overcast in Jersey, not raining but not really worth spending another day there. There wasn't a lot of wind at first and the visibility was reduced so we motored initially and then started sailing. We took quite a while to get here to St Malo. I think about 8 or 9 hours. Visibility cleared before we got here and it was quite tricky getting into the harbour due to the currents and the rocks. Still Alan did a good job as usual and we decided to head up the inlet as it was still choppy out in the first bay area. We had to go through a lock, one that fitted quite a few boats. We got through there and headed upstream to another quiet bay. We just moored on a mooring bouy for the night. It was still overcast and not the best for photos but the scenery was just beautiful. I can't get over the number of little houses and villages tucked into the coast line. Everything is very green and old. Churches stand out all over the place and sometimes you can hear the bells. It is lovely hearing them in the distance. Today was a bit on the chilly side but with the warm jackets on it was cosy.

15th June

Today we spent a few hours heading up the inlet through another lock and then up the river. It was amazing going through the locks and it was like another world on the other side of the lock. Today was a narrower lock with only 800 cm spare all around on the boat. The boat is 22 ft wide and 33 ft long so it is rather a bigish boat for coming up the river. It was so peaceful and relaxing motoring up the river. We finally got to Dinan, quite a way inland and we have moored here. It is a really old historic town, quite large and obviously a lot of tourists come up here. The streets are so narrow and the oldest buildings. Part of the wall that used to be around the city is still there and we climbed up it in parts. A lot of the French words I learnt at school are coming back to me. We are doing very well I think, not a lot of English is spoken but we work it out and get there. Sign language is a wonderful thing.

Friday 16th

Just a quick addition before I email today. We have woken up to the most glorious day and am enclosing a photo of what we are waking up too. We are going for a bike ride today, for hours I should think. Goodness knows where we end up but it is fun exploring around the tracks and villages as we go. I will organize something so you can see some photos of our travels. It is so different to anything I have seen before. I will be more organized and you wont have to sort through me doubling up on what I have said.

Bye for now,

Marilyn

Friday 23rd

Hi,

Thought I would start writing an email for when we get to an internet café again. We have been having such a good time. Dinan was absolutely wonderful, the weather was warm and sunny and lots of great bike rides. We have been cycling around 40 to 50 kmls in a day going from place to place. Sometimes we took the wrong roads and had to take short cuts to get to where we wanted to be. Sometimes we ended up on the main roads with the cars whizzing past us. Fortunately there aren't as many cars in France as you would expect. The roads are quite narrow but then most of the cars are small too and there are quite a few people cycling around. We work hard to get up some hills but it is so much fun going down the other side. Its amazing looking back over the scenery to where we have come from, how far we have cycled, how high up we have climbed. One day it was so warm we just had to find a pub on the bay and have a beer it was so good as it cost an arm and a leg. Once we left Dinan to travel back up the river to St Malo the weather wasn't so good. We still managed to get out and walk and bike around. The first day we biked to St Malo to the walled city it rained and we toyed with the idea of just going back to Rush but then thought what the heck, lets go for it and we continued on and it fined up soon after. It was well worth biking around the rest of the day. Cycling along the water front was the best. We then came through the last big lock up nearer to St Malo but buoyed in the bay closer to Dinard. It rained one day quite a bit so it was the afternoon before we ventured out just for a walk. Alan took the dinghy over to get some bread and a few things and the tide was on its way in and the dinghy floated under the pier and wedged underneath and started filling with water. The tides are still big even though not as big as they have been in other places but enough to cause Alan to have to strip off and go for his first swim! To get the dinghy out!! He came back to the boat saturated. Luckily the little outboard didn't go under water or it would have been fun then. We took a local bus trip yesterday to Mont St Michael, there is a huge abbey there. It was commenced about 800 ad and continued to be built on over the years and it is huge, it gets surrounded by water when the tide is in. The tide was out when we got there, about 9 miles of sand to the waters edge. The tide was just starting to flow back in as we left. The day turned out sunny and the sun shining on our backs was lovely and warm. We have left St Malo this morning. We are heading further around the coast. Not sure at this point exactly how far we will go, be nice if there was some wind!! We are coasting along slowly, Alan starts the outboard every so often and we motor for a bit. Back to sailing again now. It is so peaceful sailing, listening to the waves gently slap against the boat. We have the music playing through the speakers outside on the boat and it is really relaxing.

I have taken lots of photos but need to really sort them out properly. I have even finished one book and started another. I have had no problem relaxing into this way of life at all. Rush is cozy inside and a good layout for living in. We have everything we want even if the shower is a quick rinse and you have to pump out the toilet!! French wine is so cheap we have been enjoying a glass of red with our meals. Our days are pleasantly busy and the good thing is we can just stop and relax and laze about if we want to. We don't have a busy schedule we have to follow and I just love the sightseeing the way we are doing it. Away from all the busy hustle and bustle of the touristy areas. Cycling through villages and fields, up hill and down dale. The countryside and sightseeing is unreal and Alan says as we go further south in France it will be prettier. I find the way the houses are built so high and so many tucked into such a small area unreal, expecting to see people everywhere and it is isn't. So quiet through the villages and hardly a soul around. It looks such an excellent life style, stress free and relaxing.

Alan is pottering around looking at the charts and books to see where we will go today, I am reading my book, and being totally lazy. Can really recommend it. Seems like an age since I left Australia and all the busy life I lived there. Like I have said before, this is really an adventure of a life time.

I think I have bored you all for now. Will add some more on later before I send it anyway.

Saturday 24

We are now moored again up a river but not too far this time at Lazardrieux. We are going for a bike ride today so it will be a big day. We end up pottering around and going for ages. It might be hillier than our last big stop. We were just over a week between Dinan and St Malo. We sailed all day yesterday. The wind took a while to pick up but the good part is it was a good sail. The countryside is

different here. The town is back a bit behind us and we wake up to the look of farm land scattered with houses. It is going to be a glorious day, already is, not a cloud in the sky. Definitely short weather today. It was cold yesterday sailing so had lots of layers on.

I must away as Alan has the bikes out and we want to get going before the tide goes out to much. Today we will be able to row close to shore and by the time we get back about 5 ish the tide will be coming back in so we wont have to carry the bikes too far on the beach.

Hope all is well with everyone. Take care,

Love

Marilyn

Saturday Evening

Well these French computers are something else. I have been doing quite well till today but this internet place was very different. I tried to save everyones emails and read them tonight and goodness knows where they are!! When I went to send this one it wouldn't show and here back on my computer it is back!! Have been getting good reading the French on the computers but today it beat me. We have had a great day though. We didn't bike as far today but boy did we find some hills. Racing down the other side though was something else. Am sure we broke the speed limits. We found a big supermarket so did this huge shop so we were well laden getting back to the dinghy but of course we made it. We are moving back upstream tomorrow to moore near the island at the inlet where we came in here and will bike around the island for a day. Not sure when we will find another internet café but as soon as we do will send this. When we went bike riding today we couldn't believe the rocks near the inlet we manouvred through. Unreal, a must to come in on a high tide that is for sure.

Monday 26th

Hoping to be able to send this email today. We left the ile de Brahat this morning and motored around the coast a bit further and it has turned into a lovely sunny day. We are in the river Tregier and about to take the dinghy upstream to the town and see if we can find an internet café and better luck this time. We had a good time cycling around the island yesterday but as the day grew later the day became very overcast and it started to rain quite heavily around 8.00. There were a lot of visitors on the island yesterday so we ended up going back to Rush about 5.00 and having dinner and then went for another bike ride later on and finished off around the island once the visitors/tourists had left. Alan has rigged up and little set up to collect rain water so we filled 2 x 25 litre containers easily. This morning was still overcast so thought we might as well sail along the coast even though the wind wasn't the best direction and thought we would have to tack quite a bit but in the end it worked out really well and we made good times. Still a lot of rocks along the coast line. It is like being back on the farm, walking through all the mud to get to shore. Roll up the old trousers and off you go, backpack with everything in it and get to shore, wash your feet, don the shoes and socks and off we went. We took the dinghy ashore last night to pick up the bikes as the tide was in and easier than carrying them all the way across the mud. Getting good at the balance thing moving around inside and outside the boat while sailing. Bare feet are my best friend for agility. I am gradually picking up the sailing bits and pieces. Need to know as when we cross from France to Spain across Biscay it is a 3 day sail and I will have to help. More fun for me and a great new challenge to master as well.

Well I best go as I have to type Alans emails for him yet and the day is getting on.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

July 5th

Hi,

The days have been going so quickly since I last sent an email and I haven't even kept my trip diary up to date. We are now at Benodet, now in South Bretagne. We have taken a few days to get here, the wind hasn't been as good as we liked but have still had a good time. The places we have stayed in have been interesting and fun and we don't have a definite schedule so it doesn't matter time wise. Now we are around here it will only be short little hops from one place to the next before we cross over to Spain. We have been so lucky weather wise really, there has been rain or overcast days initially, even quite a bit of fog but it has cleared everyday to come out lovely and sunny and we have been able to get out and about. We sailed from Treguier to St Pol-De-Leon and did a huge bike ride down to Morlaix. Coming home was really quite tiring against the head wind. It was one of those days where I was fine if I kept biking but stopping and starting all the time made my legs feel like jelly. Still it feels like a real achievement when we have done it. I love the bike rides. We ended up at the Ile-D-Batz on the weekend and there were tourists everywhere. We took the bikes out and biked over the island. If we didn't have the bikes we wouldn't be seeing anywhere near as much as we do. It was funny when we were leaving that day from St Pol-de-leon, we are on our mountain bikes, casual gear and left at the same time another couple in their lycras and skinny racing bikes. We get up the road a bit and off they go on the main road and we detour off to the off beat tracks, once again end up in a farmers paddock. Can't get over the way the farmers don't have fences or very little, so we just follow their lanes through the fields in the direction of where we want to be. So much more interesting. The next place we stayed we hadn't long arrived and a couple we had met way back at Port Bail came in. We thought they were ahead of us when we spent so much time at Dinan. They have been sailing with us the last few days but they went into a different bay last night about 1 ½ hours away. Alan is very patient sailing and he also can sail with more variable winds than Peter and Sue. Their cat is smaller and they have to motor more if the wind is against them. We are quite happy to take a bit longer and sail. A lot of people use their motors but then a lot have to with their make of boat. Peter and Sue are coming around here today to us as they aren't impressed with where they are. Alan was thinking of going there too but mooring but a bit of a question so decided to keep going on to here. When we were at Port Bail one of the locals took a photo of Rush with a great reflection and also of Peter and Sues boat. We left that day as he was taking the photo to them so Peter and Sue said they would probably catch up with us some where so they gave it to us. The weather turned a bit nasty at Camaret. We had had a great bike ride that day and after dinner and saw the most spectacular scenery. Didn't take the camera as we thought it might rain and of course it didn't!! We had no longer got back on board and the thunder and lightning started and went on and off over night, woken early at 6.00 am to feel the anchor dragging. Flew out of bed, started the motor and another boat was doing the same as we were getting a bit closer to another boat. The other boat went and tied up at a mooring but Alan reanchored and it was ok. The wind was coming from all directions and we just spun a 180 deg so quick the anchor came out. This boat is a very comfortable boat I think. I am not getting sea sick at all which really surprises me. Alan says I am better than him, he couldn't potter around inside like I do when the seas are a bit choppy. Yesterday was a really good sailing day, we were going between 6.5 and 7.5 knots a lot of the way. The dolphins playing around the boat just made it. Unfortunately I was so busy videoing them I forgot to take a still shot although Alan says we will see them lots so I can take another one then. Would have been ideal to be up the front of the boat filming them but I didn't want to risk getting the camera wet so just lay on the top of the boat and then walked down to the front and watched them over the front of the boat. It is lovely sitting or lying out on the top of the boat as we are sailing, reading or whatever. Much easier to walk around with bare feet to help keep my balance though. It hasn't been so cold sailing this last week and have been out in the shorts more with a couple of jackets on.

The day is starting to clear and we will get the bikes out and go off this afternoon for a bike ride. Alan has gone to get his baguette for lunch. They are yummy. We will do another grocery shop later as well and restock up supplies. It is so peaceful sitting here, the birds are chirping in the background, the sun is trying to shine through the clouds. Often the coast line is a bit hazy so not the best for photos but the scenery is still beautiful even if it can't be captured on photos. We will stay here for a couple of days and go for some good bike rides around the then just short sails to go along the coast line from here. It is a month since I left England. It seems like a lot longer as we have done so much. The downside is the time will go all to fast and I will be on my way home.

Well I must go get dressed and ready to start the day. My hair is really getting bleached by the sun I am sure. It is behaving itself much better, that or I have got better and organizing it. Must fly and be ready for when Alan gets back so we can get out and enjoy the day. It was raining this morning when we woke so have had a lazy morning.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

July 10, 2006

We have just arrived at Concarneau and hoping to find an internet café. We found one at Benodet but was just so expensive we thought we would try the next place not meaning to stay at Benodet for so long. We were all set to leave a few days ago and decided it was so pretty we would go up the river and explore. It was just lovely and we ended up cycling into Quimpar as well. That was a long ride! We woke to rain yesterday morning and it was quite settled and we knew it was windy and choppy in the bays so decided to stay and have a lazy day up the river in the shelter. I got my cross stitch out for the first time and had a lazy few hours stitching. It was well timed as Alan pulled his back pulling the dinghy onto the back of the boat a couple of days before so it gave him a chance to rest it as well. We took the dinghy out in the afternoon to try and learn to sail it but the wind was changing all directions but I am getting the hang of it a bit more. All I want now is some steady wind to really practice jiving and tacking with the wind. It will be fun to be able to take the dinghy off for a sail. We left Benodet this morning, stopping to stock up with groceries and water before we left. It was a steady slow sail over here today but it is lovely and peaceful sailing even if it is slower than we would like. We are going to go ashore and explore and hopefully be able to send this today. There is something new everyday and loving every minute of it. I must away and get moving as it is nearly 3.30 pm. It is just a pleasant temperature today, in shorts and a top, envy me!! I guess you have to just love this life to envy me really. Not everyones cup of tea but the way things are going I am going to be leaving to go home in no time. Alan asked me this morning if I missed the car as we were heading back to the dinghy with the groceries. For us it is taking the dinghy ashore, walking or cycling to the shops and loading our back packs and an extra bag and getting back again. The other day as we set out to get some bread etc along the cycle track Alans back just hurt too much and I said I would go on alone. I took a wrong turn, still got there and then found a supermarket in the town and headed back home. He was starting to get worried as I took longer than he thought and was thinking where would he start looking for me. Poor love. We have been with Peter and Sue, people we met back at Port Bail for the last week or so since they caught up with us and Alan told them he was worried, that I had a good sense of direction for a woman!! How is that? Alan didn't realize there was a supermarket in the town and that buying some extra groceries is what took the time.

Well that is enough to bore you for now. Alan is just filling the water tanks with the water we collected this morning and then we will be off. The sun has come out and it is looking really pretty here now.

Looking forward to checking my emails and catching up on any news from you guys as well.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

PS Photo taken by Peter when we were sailing with the spinnaker. It is just lovely lying out on the deck. Yes I am dressed, in shorts and a top.

July 14, 2006

Hi,

Today is Bastille Day here in France and we are at Vannes. We didn't realize it was Bastille Day so wandered into town last night to find people everywhere and dressed up acting out historic scenes and singing and music playing in the streets. At midnight they had fireworks which were quite nice, we could see them from Rush up the river. We aren't far from Vannes, about ½ a mile away so we can see Vannes from here. We are anchored in a little bay, just one other boat, there isn't room for many more really as the tide goes out so far and Alan doesn't want to dry out any more, particularly if he can help it and not knowing exactly what the bottom is like. It is so quiet here and the wind is blowing us gently around so as I look out the door the scenery is changing backwards and forwards. The tide is on its way in at the moment and slowly the water is covering all the mud. We have been for a long bike ride this morning and left the dinghy up near Vannes. When we got back we were way out of the water and had to carry the dinghy down to the steps and put it back in the water. It isn't a light weight dinghy really. Alan wanted a sturdy one and he made it out of fiberglass. It rows well and sails well with the little sail. We have been using the little outboard when we have to go any great distances and when the dinghy is loaded up with the bikes and the shopping. It is a glorious day, 28 here in the cabin so I guess it could be hotter outside, would be out of the wind but of course the wind cools it down here on the water. We are going to go back into Vannes later this evening after dinner and watch more of the celebrations and stay for the fireworks if we can stay awake. Alan is having a snooze now but thought I would take the time to at least start on some emails for when we find another internet café and there is plenty of power with the sun and wind as well. We have been here for 1 night and will stay another couple of days probably, there is plenty to see and do around here and lot of excellent cycle tracks. Invariably when we are out biking we get a head wind home, usually when one is tired as well. Alan calls it "sod's law" which I think he is right! Our bikes are chained up down in the town, do hope they are there when we go back. There are so many boats around in this area called the Gulf of the Morbihan. Also it is now school holidays and people are on holidays as well. Coming in yesterday there were boats of all shapes and sizes everywhere. A lot of big tourist boats around here taking people around on cruises. We are quite brown little bunnies now so nice to get out of the sun at the moment for a break.

We have had a couple of pleasant days near the mouth of two rivers we sailed partway up and I had another practice at the sailing the dinghy. I have graduated now to be able to let go out solo if the weather conditions are right!! I didn't tip us over the last time we were out. Alan wants me still to be close enough that he can take the surf ski out after me if I get into trouble!! I can always row home however long it may take. All those skills I learnt growing up are coming in handy right now. We were rudely awoken at 0415 here by Rush hitting something or rather someone hitting us and a boat had anchored too close to us and turned during the night and it hit us on the port side across the front of Rush. He was a Belgium guy and quickly motored off and picked up a mooring buoy. I think he might have been a bit embarrassed! Didn't damage either boat thankfully but gave me a fright for sure. We sailed over to the Ile De Groix and stayed there a night, cycled around the island all the afternoon after we arrived and then left to sail here yesterday which took most of the day to get here. Good winds at times and then slower the last few hours. Alan's back is almost back to normal so that is good. Concarneau was a great little place but could only stay the one day. The walled village was really interesting. I still can't get over how houses seem to be built out of houses and attached to another house and another one with such narrow streets in these old cities. The architecture still amazes me. So hard to take photos to really capture it all as it is. There is still so much of France to see, I am only see a small part of it. Save some for next time! From here on it should be getting warmer and warmer but not warm enough to swim yet, not me anyway. Alan thought he should go for his back when we were at the Ile De Groix. He finally got in the water and then disappeared. I could hear him and asked where he was, he was under Rush, thought it might have been warmer under there!! He said it was freezing, needless to say he didn't stay in the water for long. There are some interesting people on boats as we travel around. I can understand why so many people love it over here.

I'm not sure when I will send this email but just wanted to make a start. It is hard to write it at the moment. It is just so relaxing sitting here in Rush watching outside, listening to the waves tapping against the side of the boat and the dinghy bobbing away in the waves. Just looking out to the countryside is just the best. Tiny little paddocks with hedges around them, so much hay from one small paddock, lots of cows to the one small paddock as well and the houses scattered around. It is nearly 6.30pm and I should be making a start on dinner. Will add to this before I send it anyway.

Hope everyone is well and not too cold back home!! Would send you some of this glorious weather if I could. Have a good idea, how about spending summer in Australia and then summer in Europe. What a good idea! I could handle that.

Bye now,

Marilyn

We had a great few days in the Morbihan. We stayed at Vannes for 3 days as it was a good little anchorage and such good cycle tracks so were able to cycle quite a bit around the area. We then sailed to another place called Larmor-Baden in the gulf to spend the days with Peter and Sue before we left. It was hot day so we spent the day on Rush swimming, playing on the surf skiboard and watching boats go through the current between the islands. We said our goodbyes yesterday and sailed all day to the entrance of the River Valaine. We passed through the barrage at the 2100 opening last night and anchored just inside the river. It is so pretty in here. We are staying here the day. Too hot to bike around the countryside, just catching up on everyday jobs and having a swim in the fresh water. Am going to go for another sail when the wind comes up again. The river is very wide here so plenty of room to sail around without having to dodge other boats. It is so good to just stop for a day and do nothing but chill out. Gives us a chance to catch up on emails as well. We will sail up the river about 5 miles tomorrow to la Roche-Bernard and find an internet café and send the emails then. Another day without a cloud in the sky and gosh it is 34 inside the cabin here and I would think it is that outside as there is a gentle breeze going through and doesn't feel that hot.

July 18, 2006

Hi everyone,

It is a week now since we left Concarneau, sailing to Pt Manech at the entrance of the River Aven. Wind was good and didn't take long to sail there. We spent the day there going up the river part way. Tight squeeze in the river with lots of boats. A Belgium boat anchored beside as later in the day and we were rudely woken at 0415 to find the Belgium boat port side against the bow of Rush. Fortunately no damage to either boat. We then sailed to Ile de Groix and spent the day cycling around the island. It was very dry compared to France itself. Very expensive to use the marina there. Picked up a mooring buoy in a little bay further around the island. The next day sailed to Vannes, in the Gulf of the Morbihan, variable winds but sailed most of the way. We arrived as Bastille celebrations were starting the day before Bastille Day. Anchored about ½ mile up the river from Vannes. From there we were able to cycle around the area easily as there were such great cycle paths all through that area. We went into Vannes in the evening and watched the parade and the fireworks. Vannes is an interesting town. We spent 3 days there before sailing back to Larmor-Baden spending a day chilling, swimming as the days are noticeably warmer now. Temperatures the last few days ranging from 28 – 29. Have had to put the awning up to help keep Rush cooler. Am finding the sun hot when sailing all day.

We set sail again yesterday to sail to the River Valaine. It was a slow trip taking all day as again little wind but still managed to sail all the way. We passed through the barrage with the 2100 opening and anchored just passed the barrage. It is very picturesque in here and plan to spend a few days here, sailing up to la Roche-Bernard.

Depending on the weather over the next week or so will depend on when we cross Biscay. Probably sail over to Belle-Ile while we are waiting and maybe leave from there. Either way there is plenty to do around this part of the coast to fill in the days till a good 3 day weather window comes about to cross the bay.

Regards,

Alan

PS Have set up an email address you can access to have a look at some of the photos taken so far. Go to www.hotmail.com and log in as alanrush2@hotmail.com and password is elantral. Enjoy

July 20, 2006

We are about to cycle into Reddon and find an internet café. Will send some photos to an email address you can go to and log in and see a few photos of our trip. It is hard to really capture a lot of the scenery etc in such a few photos or as it really is but hope this is a start. Go to www.hotmail.com and email address is alanrush2@hotmail.com and password is elantral. I will send the photos from my email address so just click on the messages and open them up. It is really relaxing up the river and enjoying swimming in the fresh water to cool off.

Bye for now, have to start that cycle ride, not get in a car!!

Marilyn

July 25

Hi,

This is a surprise email. We were hoping to be crossing the Bay of Biscay to Spain today but the weather forecast isn't the best. We ended up spending a week up the Villaine River, thoroughly enjoying the fresh water swimming and the sightseeing. It was lovely up there and a lot of great places to visit. The days were hotter more inland and the temps were between 30 and 35 a lot of days. Unfortunately the biking wasn't as good as some places so cycling was a challenge but good. Cycling in to send the last emails was real fun. The track was as bumpy as, covered in a lot of hay and tractor treads making it really bumpy as the track went along the edges of the farmers paddocks. Needless to say we came home on the sealed road. Well the exciting part was me getting stuck in one of the ruts. The pedals weren't going anywhere! And couldn't get my feet to the ground fast enough and opted to go plonk in the hay. It did look soft and the landing was great only bumped my right leg on the lower shin as I fell. Alan of course was worried and I laughed. The leg, well that is a different story, it has been quite sore but you know me, I just keep going, the bruising though has come out right down near the inner sole of my foot/ankle. I must have given it a nasty bump. That though is just the story of my life. I have been trying to see how much I can knock myself around in general anyway, so what is one more bump. At first I kept banging my head inside the cabin, not bending over far enough, I proceeded to slip down the steps at Pt Menach and give myself a nasty bruise on my left hip and a green seat to my white shorts. Not thinking that was enough I walked into the boom and gave myself an egg on my forehead and broke my sunglasses. I think I might have completed the circuit and when this is healed I might be right for a while – all in the sense of adventure. We met up with some friends of Alans as we were going through la Roche Bernard and spent a day with them being shown around the area in their campervan. They are an English couple moving to France and as we were going passed the marina I hear 'Rush' being called out. It was great being able to see more of the country but I don't think a campervan is ready for us yet. Alan and I so love being out in the fresh air but there we wouldn't have been able to see so much with the campervan that day. We did look forward to being back on Rush and going for a swim in the fresh water river. We went across to the Ile d'Houat yesterday and spent the day there hoping for the weather to improve. It is only a small island so we didn't take the bikes ashore. The water was crystal clear, there were lots of lovely beaches and just picturesque there but didn't want to sit around there and slowly sailed over here to Belle Ile this morning. The wind picked up and we had a good sail here in the end but there was a thunderstorm warning coming through, and even though it wouldn't have been that bad to sail in Alan thought it best to wait as we have the time. This island is a lot bigger but also hillier. We set out on the bikes this after lunch with grey skies expecting it to rain but then we can't wait around and waste time, we don't mind heading off in the rain. At first it was soooooo hilly. My poor thighs just struggle on the steep hills, fine on gentle undulating and flat but the hills get me. I don't think they are going to get any better either. They are as strong as they will ever be. We headed off along the sealed road in the middle of the island and it was great and as we arrived at the first little town it started to rain. It wasn't that heavy but we would have got wet so sat in a little shelter for a while waiting for it to pass. Decided to brave it again and head off towards the other side of the island to le Palais. The rain passed, picked up a couple of groceries as we passed the supermarket and on into the port of the town. It is one busy little place. It amazes me how the big ships travel up the rivers so much over here. At home we would truck it everywhere. In this little tiny marina was a big ferry loading cars etc to take people back to the mainland, unloading groceries, the trucks lined up in the streets to load straight into. There were quite

a few boats coming in and out as there is a little canal going into the town and boats moored everywhere in the canal. Amazing how this big boat just backed through one of the locks to unload its stuff. We want to go back there tomorrow and will send some do our internet while we have the chance as this should be the last chance before we cross over to Spain. It will be good to go and have a good look around the town, it is an old town but buzzing around, of course it is the holiday season over here. We thought we would go the 'cycle' route back to Rush!! What a choice, it was beautiful scenery but you know how they say a minute on the lips and a lifetime on the hips. That was a bit like today's cycling. A minute downhill and an age getting up the hills. The roads are so narrow so the cars have to stop to pass each other as well. There are these cute little hire cars over here of all designs for people to get around the island. Little jeep look alikes, dune buggy look alikes and ordinary little cars. Of course the motorbikes are for hire and cycles as well. Funny how so many men cycle so far ahead of their women cycling uphill. I'm not the only one who struggles. Alan is funny, he used to say it isn't hilly and I would tease him Mt Everest was ahead. Then other times he would say last hill!! Well pigs might fly. Today he was quick, he says last hill and look a heap of pigs flying overhead!! Still it is worth it and even though it is hard work uphill and down dale it is fun and really gets the old adrenalin working. Rush is so comfortable and it is so good to be back home!! Now for a nice hot bath, I wish!! Have to just have my warm water in the shower bag. Amazing how fresh and clean one feels with such a small shower. I would be good for level 4 water restrictions on the coast now. I could show them how it is done!! I practice level 10 I think everyday!! Still I wouldn't be anywhere else for all the tea in China. I have loved exploring France. We have seen so little of it and it has been exciting every minute. The weather overall has been excellent. It has rained at times but usually clears so we still get out or just seems to hold off till we get back to the boat. Only one day we have been boat bound for the best part of the day and it didn't matter as Alan needed to rest his back and sometimes we have just taken a day out and veged. We have been fitting so much into our days really. It will be a different world going to Spain. I am looking forward to it. Crossing for 3 days across Biscay will be tiring I should imagine as we will have to take turns on watch and of course I will have to wake Alan more than he would need to wake me. It is only 250 miles from here so hopefully with a good wind we might get across in 2 1/2 days or a touch less as we are starting closer to Spain than from the mainland. It is a good chance to make sure we are stocked up, rest and ready to go.

Well I should make dinner. It is 7.20 pm. Alan has nodded off to sleep and I have taken this opportunity to type this email ready to send tomorrow. Will email you from sunny Spain!! Nearly 2 months of this traveling and loving every minute of it. I do hope you appreciate the effort I make to email!! Walking across mud, cycling through rough paddocks, hot sun, up and down hills only to get to the French computer with keys in different places than ours and working out the French language. Having mastered it quite well now, wow, wait till I get to Spain!! Maybe noone will hear from me there, now need to learn another language, speaking and shopping again, what fun.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

Ps Planning to add more photos to the alanrush3@hotmail.com address today.

PPS Just couldn't face those hills to get back to La Palaise yesterday. We nearly opted for a bus today but have decided to go the way we went to La Palaise the other day which is easier but further and come home the same way and avoid the hills. They really got to me the other day. It was really tiring. My 5 klms walk with the dogs, even power walking is nothing compared to those hills the other day. Took it easy yesterday, lazed around the boat reading and went for a long walk in the afternoon and a bike ride in the evening. Head wind getting there today but hopefully a tail wind coming home and NO groceries today. Looks like a few days yet till we leave to cross, probably after the weekend.

August 1, 2006

Hi,

We have had the best few days waiting for the weather. The computer was really slow at La Palaise and sorry didn't add photos to the email address. We were there nearly an hour just trying to do the emails and as there was only one computer we had to wait a while to even get to use it. We biked back to Pt Ando or Rush via the more undulating road and we had a great day. As we left that morning we decided we had to take the bikes, going by bus was a cop out after all the miles we have done on the bikes so far. As we neared La Palaise I suggested we keep going to Souzon and so glad we did. It was a lovely sunny day and we sat on the river bank and had lunch. Wasn't game to suggest going to some of the other places of interest as I knew we had a long bike home. Biked back to La Palaise and had more of a look around there. An interesting little town. We were about to start making dinner around 6ish and suddenly decided we would sail back to the Ile d'Houat as there was a great wind for that direction and the anchorage was more protected there. It was so good, sailed across in a bit over an hour, steered Rush all the way, going about 7 – 8 knots the wind was so good. Next morning we sailed back over to the mainland and anchored at La Trinite but it wasn't a bit choppy there so sailed back to the Morbihan where we were a week or two ago. It was like coming home. It is so beautiful here and so much to see and do. We went to a different part to where we went before and anchored in a lovely little spot at Le Bono, a couple klms downstream from Auray. There are some lovely walks around here and bike rides. We even biked over to Lamor-Baden where we spent the last day with Peter and Sue before we left the Morbihan. The weather still didn't look good for a few days so we went into Auray on Saturday morning and arranged a rental car for yesterday and today. It was a pretty overcast day and we went down to the old part of the village to have lunch. It was my birthday Saturday and Alan wanted to take me out and make it a special day. Alan had said he wanted to take me out for my birthday ages ago and we thought we would be in Spain or on the way so I suggested we waited till we got to Spain and celebrate the Biscay crossing at the same time. I didn't think anymore of it and Alan wanted to walk down to the old village and said he was taking me out to lunch so we looked through the menus of the little restaurants till we found one with what we liked. There are a lot of mussels on the menu and neither of us are into that. We had what is called a plat de jour, which is their lunch time specials, 2 or 3 course meal for a set price. This was a date with a difference, first time I have been taken out on my bike for a meal and then have to bike back home as well!! It was really special. We wandered around Auray sightseeing for a while and it started to really rain while we were having lunch. What good timing? On the way home we were just about back and it started to sprinkle with rain again lightly but we got home without getting wet. It was a fun day. We went for a long walk after dinner to walk off that big lunch.

We have just had 2 great days with the rental car. It was a peugot 1007, little 1.4 cc engine, 2 door, only 5500 klms on the clock. Everything was electronic and the doors opened along the side of the car with a press of the switch. Cute little car. We headed off straight towards Chateaulin to meet up with friends of Alans and also Peter and Sue. They were nearby when we let them know we were going that way so they ended up sailing up the river and were tied up to the pontoon at the same place as Tony and Sally. We had such a good time catching up. Peter and Sue came out in our little car for a drive all around the area to places we hadn't been before, lots of fun and laughter but unfortunately not a lot of sightseeing as it rained for most of the time. Still we got an idea what the places were like. We stayed overnight on Peter and Sues boat and headed off midmorning back to some places we wanted to go to and stock up on groceries while we had the car arriving back at Le Bono about 6ish. Alan had left the dinghy on Rush as we thought that might be safest and took the surf ski over and tied it up at the jetty. I had to wait for him to paddle back to Rush, get the dinghy and come back and pick me up. I was waiting for ages thinking something must have happened. The water was a bit choppy, the tide and current was against him and it took him ages to paddle back to Rush. It was good to come back home. Rush was lovely and warm as the wind was quite cool on the way back across the water. We have to be up early in the morning to take the car back so we thought we would do the internet tomorrow before we go, keep you all up to date and then head back over to Ile d'Houat tomorrow and hopefully be able to get underway crossing Biscay on Thursday, Friday at the latest. We have had the best few days while we were waiting though, lots to see and do and great to catch up with friends again. We'll rest up tomorrow and not do too much anyway as this will be my first long sail and we aren't sure how comfortable it is going to be. We might have it good or it might just be a bit rough towards the end. Alan is going to get the weather fax through shortly for the forecast for up to 96 hours and hopefully we can get away. So far it is looking more promising that it has been.

That is about all my exciting news. Just another dull and boring day being forced to cycle and walk around France exploring, oh and a little drive. We just noticed how much traffic there is around, on the bikes we don't notice it and also we have been to a few more busy roads that we don't usually go on.

France is a wonderful place to explore. We really miss exploring on the bikes. It is funny how you seem to miss so much with the car. It doesn't seem to get the atmosphere of the place the same. When we are biking we see sights come into view and they stay in view for ages, not like driving. Thank goodness the French are religious though. Those steeples of the churches have been godsend at times when we are in and out of places and taking the wrong roads. The roads are very poorly signposted over here and the arrows to show the directions are off on a funny angle. Most of the time we get there quite easily but the other day it was another tour d'france but still fun. We get spoilt at home how well things are signposted. I still marvel at the scenery, the old villages and old buildings and how many floors the old buildings are built. I won't miss the French keyboards when using the internet though. Maybe I will, maybe the Spanish ones will be harder. Surely not but just getting used to the way they work. So glad I can type the emails on my computer here and not at the internet cafes, they would never get written. It is a like a weight off my shoulders when we have finished at the internet believe me. Alan relies on my to do the computer for him as well and it is double work but great to hear from everyone.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

Hopefully there will be some new photos there for you to see

Please only reply to this email address. The alanrush one with the photos; everybody can access it and read them. I am only using that address for photos

August 10, 2006

Hi,

This has been a really exciting 8 days. It seems we have done so much in that time. After spending 8 weeks in France it seemed strange to be going somewhere new and totally different but exciting at the same time. Once we had decided it was time to cross Biscay we had to wait that extra week or so in France. We had sailed out to the islands hoping to make them a starting point but when the weather wasn't going to be suitable for at least a few days I am so glad we decided to go back to the Morbihan and spend more time there. It was like going home and as I said to Alan, if we have to wait, lets make the waiting time exciting. It rained that last day I sent the emails. We were almost back to the dinghy when it started so we were both quite wet by the time we got back to Rush. We were ready to go and psyched up to leave. Alan felt it better to wait until we had a good weather window to make the crossing as comfortable as possible and the gale warnings just never seemed to eventuate. We had 300 nm to cover from Ile d'Houat to Ribadeo in Spain. That is equiv to about 600 klms. The first day was rather choppy and we were averaging around 7 – 8 knots. Rush is running quite heavy at the moment with the extra food supplies and spare equipment Alan has on board for the rest of the journey back to Aus. Alan was up taking his sea sick tab and I thought if he is I had best do the same. I was fine the first day, just fighting tiredness from the tab and decided I wasn't going to take anymore as I had to do night watch as well and didn't want that to be a struggle. Wasn't sure how I would go staying awake after so long but it was a breeze. It is a very different feeling sailing at night and a peaceful time as well. I ended up doing 7 hours as I was wide awake. Alan got up and down a few times. All the big plans for meals went out the window. We weren't that hungry for one as Alan says he was feeling about 70% even with the tabs and I was about 90% the first day and joined him for about 70% the next day. The sea calmed down during the night and remained a lot calmer the next day so determined I was I rustled up a yummy chow mein the second evening and we sat out on deck and ate it as the sun went down. The wind was still really good so Alan had to put a reef in the main sail and furl in the head sail partway so we slowed down to time arriving in Ribadeo as the sun rose. We could see the lights of Spain along the coast for a few hours before we arrived. I stayed up with Alan and we watched the dawn break. It was quite hazy really but soooo good to anchor in Ribadeo after 48 hours sailing non stop. Now I know a bit more of what to expect I will be organized in a different way next time as far as the meals go. I only fed the fishes twice which was really good. The first time because all Alan wanted was baked beans for dinner, simple and easy BUT the tin was in the hull and I had to

bend over head in the hull looking for the beans. Next time they will be out in the cupboard. I thought Alan would have been better than me but he says he is always like this for a few days on trips.

Spain is so much hillier than France. Haven't found the cycle tracks either so out on the main roads. How limiting our sight seeing would be if it wasn't for the bikes. Even if we do walk up so many hills, we coast down the other side and see so much more. We really noticed the car sightseeing versus the bikes. How much more you take in on the bikes of the scenery and the atmosphere. We were entertained the first night to an all night disco till 0500. We are in Spain! Didn't bother us that much but when we woke all the other boats around us had left. There was some ceremony of blessings the first day and the priest was off in the head boat with boats of all sizes trailing after him to the 3 villages near by. Here we were in our little yellow dinghy rowing back to Rush with our bread and the boats take off and we are in the middle of them! So funny. The winds have continued to be so good and the right direction we have kept moving along the coast and more bike rides each day. We have even managed 30 klms of uphill and down dale so I feel quite proud of our efforts. Alan being the whiz with the bright ideas has decided he could rig up a generator on the boat powered by the bike so I could bike as we sailed and be an extra power supply!! Alan thought it would be good exercise as well!! He thinks I might be able to put out 5- 6 amps in the hour!!! We have had cloudy days since we left France till yesterday and with the wind behind us even the wind generator hasn't been making a lot of power so we have had to be careful and haven't really been able to use the computer till yesterday.

We are now in Coruna. It is basically the capital city of this region Galicia. It is huge and people everywhere. We have been treated to sitting here in the harbour with a front row seats to the fireworks last night which were great and watching the tall ships leave this morning on the next leg of their trip. They were all in port last night for their 50th anniversary and no doubt we have a good chance of seeing them further around the coast again as we head off tomorrow around to the west coast of Spain. Spain appears a lot cheaper grocery wise and petrol wise. We were paying between 1.38 and 1.48 a litre for petrol in France so when you convert the Euros to Aussie dollars it is about \$2.60 a litre or a bit more. Biking is definitely cheaper. Friends of Alans have just had a cycling holiday in Spain and they are really fit people but even they struggled with the hills and said they did 350 klms by bike, 800 by train!! We might be on that train yet! We are taking the bikes ashore this afternoon and going to cycle around the waterfront.

It is a glorious day today, not a cloud in the sky. We were both pretty tired yesterday, I think we have been on the move so much the last few weeks it is going to be good to just stop and enjoy an easy day. I know we only really spent time in the Bretagne area of France which is older and more celtic than the rest of France but we found a comfort zone in being able to understand the language on a reading basis and now it is all new but shopping of all things may be easier. They seem to have more westernized things that we are used to buying here in Spain.

I had best keep moving. Have Alans emails to type up yet. It is so hard to get going. Just find myself sitting here watching the world go by.

Hope everyone is well.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

August 16, 2006

Well what an interesting few days we have had since we left Coruna. Since we have been away we really have heard very little what is going on in the world. We are quite insular sailing around not seeing a newspaper to catch up on the news. We could get the BBC news but we just don't seem to have the radio on. It is amazing how full our days are. We surely don't have time to get bored. As we were leaving Coruna and working our way around the coast we could see bushfires all along the coast. As we rounded the cape towards Camarinas the smoke was so thick we could barely see the coastline and on the opposite side of the Ria we didn't even realize there was a village there till later that night.

It just reminded us of the bushfires back home. The sun was bright orange shining through the smoke. The water was shining an olive green colour from the haze and smoke. It was quite an eerie feeling. We didn't realize that the north west corner of Spain was in a bad way with bushfires. We anchored into Camarinas on the opposite side of the bay to the town as the smoke thickened as it was blown out to sea and the fires raged. There were 2 firefighting planes and a helicopter fighting the fires nearby, filling in up their tanks in the Ria near us. The wind was so strong all the way from Coruna to Camarinas, the fires would have been fueled by the wind and of course the gumtrees making it so much more flammable. Later in the evening the smoke settled enough to be able to see the town. It was too smokey to go ashore and the bay too gusty. It was just a stop off point to move on the next day. We sailed on the next day around Finistere to Muros. Friends of Alans were up the Ria near Noia so we sailed up the Ria to meet up with them. The wind was so strong we had up to 2 reefs in the main and the headsail furled in part way at times. With the wind behind us it is a fun feeling surfing the waves at times. The best speed we have achieved is 13.2 knots so far with the surf. Here we were for the first couple of months of the trips wishing we had some good wind and now we at least get that!! We were treated to a school of dolphins playing in the stream of Rush as well. That is one sight I don't think I will ever tire of. I captured them again on video, better this time than I did a few weeks before. The wind actually allowed us to sail most of the way up the Ria and we used the motor just for the last part at the end and did it do its work. It was really struggling against the current and the wind that last little bit.

Alan and his friend Mike are going to have a race in their dinghys. Been planned for a long time. One of those grudge matches boys have!! Well here they both are out practicing in their dinghys – Alan breaks his rudder and Mike breaks his centreboard!! The race is still to happen. Mike has mended his centerboard (maybe better than ever) and Alan is still operating with a shortened rudder!! Tomorrow may be the day! This I will have to catch on video for proof. Alan holds the title at the moment so he has to defend it and Mike has improved his dinghy so it will be fun watching the outcome.

Being creatures of habit, the bikes have been taken ashore again and we have cycled around the roads. We were impressed to note the roads were gently undulating as we sailed up the Ria. They were 'do-able' roads. We sailed across to Noia as Mike had said he had gone over there with his dinghy and we thought we would pound the pavements on foot the other day. Well, we had to walk for ages to get into Noia as the tide was so low we couldn't get that close. We truly missed the bikes that day. It was an interesting town and Alan found an English speaking dentist so he was pleased. He had broken his plate and that was the priority to get it fixed. As fate would have it I had a filling fall out last night so timing being what it is, we were able to go back into Noia today and pick up the plate and get the filling attended too at the same time. Yesterday we sailed back up to Muros as the wind was changing and we thought we would just get a bus to Noia today. As we were leaving yesterday 'another' fire started just near where we were anchored. It seemed to take an age before anything was done and the fire seemed to be spreading fast. As we sailed away the helicopter came with its bucket and then 4 airplanes. It was fascinating a few days earlier watching the planes refill their water right in front of Rush. They circled around and came down to fill coming towards us and then took off again. I could only feel for the firefighters fighting these fires and the sickening feeling so many people must have felt when their homes were in jeopardy. The terrible part is, like home so many of the fires were deliberately lit. Such a waste. They have lost a huge amount of their forest industry now. Today the fires could safely be said to be out. It started raining overnight and rained quite solidly today which would have been so welcome to the area. We were about to go ashore to catch the bus and it was bucketing down. Alan has this little system rigged up to catch the rain water so not only has Rush been washed but we have filled all the containers without even going ashore!! How good is that?

August 17, 2006

We managed to get into Noia drier than we expected. It was just teaming down as we went to go ashore. We ended up waiting till it eased, hurried ashore and waited for ages for the bus. It continued to rain most of the way to Noia and bucketed down as we arrived. We had an appointment so we couldn't sit around and wait and fortunately it eased quickly and we scurried to the dentist, rather wet but there. The girls at the dentist laughed and made hand signals at our state! Today we have woken to a lovely sunny crisp day. There will probably be more rain later but for now we are enjoying drying out and the warmth of the sun. We plan to head on further around the coast tomorrow, spending another 2 weeks in Spain before heading down to Portugal. Spain is so different to France but still I love it. It hasn't been hot for a while, quite cool here in Spain. The night music and rockets seem to

happen in every place we go to. What the thrill is setting off these rockets and nothing but a loud bang I am yet to find out. Now if it was fireworks I could understand!

Must keep moving, places to see, things to do. I just find it so relaxing sitting here looking out the window as I type these emails and the scenery changing as Rush gently changes direction with the wind. I will add more photos today when I send this email.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

August 23, 2006

Hi,

Just a quick email to keep in touch with our travels. We had a slow sail around to the Ria De Arosa last Saturday. We left on Friday to head off and as we sailed further into the Ria there just wasn't enough wind to keep on sailing so we basically just sailed across the ria to Porto Do Son. We went for a cycle south to some famous Castle ruins in the afternoon and just enjoyed a different place. Porto Do Son will always be remembered for the 2 ladies in 'brief' bikinis borrowing Alans dinghy for a joy ride. Needless to say he was not impressed. We had just returned from our bike ride and here they were up the beach. We were disappointed they had dragged the dinghy down the sand and then through the rocks. They couldn't row the dinghy and they had an oar each, dinghy half full of water when Alan got it back. He gave them his 'angry' look!! He said we would have tipped them out if they did a runner. That would have been interesting!! Golden opportunity to capture it on the camera. That great zoom I have proved to be useful! We left in hope on Saturday, we were going anyway even if we had to motor. At first it looked promising as we got passed the heads and then the wind just died. We did actually sail most of the way slowly but it took us a long time to get there. The seas were very choppy. It was an amazing sight though as we entered the Ria De Arosa. It was just like entering the Morbihan but Spanish style. The wind was behind us and Alan put up the Spinnaker and we were able to sail all the way up the Ria and then we thought we would work our way back. We anchored at Rianxo, very much a working village. We were the only visitor here, all the other boats were fishing boats. Still it is a lovely little village, peaceful and the days being so gloriously sunny but not hot make sightseeing enjoyable. We cycled to Padron on Sunday and that was our biggest ride in Spain. We would have done a good 40 kms that day. At first we thought it was going to be a real effort. So much walking up hills and then the free riding down the otherside. I was beginning to think that today was definitely a rewarding day – definitely an icecream and a beer reward day when we got back. The fires have burnt out the hillsides badly around here, right down to the houses. It still amazes me how the fires can burn all around a house and it appears to be unaffected. How the gardens can still be totally unscathed or just the edges singed. There must have been some good firefighting going on around here. It made it hot for a while along the road with the burnt out trees on both sides of the road. About half way to Padron we were able to pick up a road that followed the river in so it ended up being a really enjoyable ride. There are a lot of grapes grown around here, people selling their own grapes and of course maize. How cruel to be looking at all this supposed 'sweetcorn' and it is maize. Fields and fields of maize and no corn! The grapes appear ready to eat but still a bit sour – thought we would try one hanging on our side of the fence!! Speaking of things on our side of the fence. I made the famous apple and blackberry pie when we arrived here at Rianxo. It was good. The oven wouldn't heat passed 250 deg F but it did cook eventually and I think it was first class for a 'Rush' pie. Home standards might not have been reached, but definitely tasted good to us and better again the next day!! Well worth the picking and getting rained on.

Monday was an excellent day for us. Mike and Delphine joined us up the Ria on Sunday and we all caught a bus into Santiago. A little bit of history I didn't know – the apostle James is supposed to be there in a tomb and pilgrims make their way there for redemption/salvation equivalent to going to Jerusalem. As we walked into town from the bus station we just walked along only the general direction of where we were heading and as we crossed through the park here were the spires of the 3 churches standing up above the trees. The sights only continued to get better. It was so hard to capture

everything on camera as it is so immense and every corner you turned was another Kodak moment. We looked at the postcards as often they have a shot that captures the scene better in some ways but the postcards didn't do the place justice at all. I think our photos were better. We just strolled around all day, stopped for a lunch and then more lunch and meandered back to the bus station for 1900 to get the bus back here. It was a great day, soaking up the atmosphere of the place. I did a 360 deg video of one part, there was flute music playing and really the only way to capture it the atmosphere. Some very good buskers around playing bag pipes etc as well. The architecture was so impressive and the size of the buildings was awesome.

We are going to cross today to another part of the Ria so we can do some more cycling. Today is quite windy at the moment so we should sail easily (as long as it is in the right direction). Definitely a place to visit in Spain this Ria.

Hope everyone is well.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

August 30, 2006

Hi,

Today is going to be our last day in Spain before we sail off down the Portuguese coast tomorrow. We are heading to Porto but will probably take 2 days to get there as it would be a long sail for one day. It is the most glorious sunny day today here in Baiona, not a cloud in the sky. We are close to shore and all the amenities we need so soon we will set out first for the shopping and water. We have had a great few days since leaving Rianxo. We headed down to the entrance of the ria Arosa around Caramanil. We ended up anchoring right in the bay there due to the direction of the wind. So often we aren't really close to the towns and we have to walk or ride a distance to get all the things we want. We biked a lot along the Ria there and down to Riberia. The scenery is just beautiful in that Ria. Time was running out as we wanted to be heading for Portugal by September so we sailed down to a little bay on the opposite side of the Ria near Vigo. We passed a few islands off the coast of Spain that looked interesting so ended up spending a day on the Islas Cies and sailed back north to Isla de Ons yesterday for a few hours. Alan must have painted his dinghy to very much attract the Spanish. As we returned from our walk yesterday here was a naked lady sitting in the dinghy this time and a naked lady lying beside it. I just wouldn't think of getting in someones dinghy on the shore let alone taking it for a sail like they did a few days earlier. Just different cultures too. Kids yes, but not adults! You have to laugh at the sight of Alan retrieving his dinghy!! The winds were good yesterday so sailed down here to Baiona last evening. This was the place we were heading for to restock last in Spain. It looks an interesting town, busy with good sightseeing. We will get the bikes out and do that today. It is peaceful and calm sitting here on Rush typing this at the moment. The winds tend to come up later in the day quite brisk so we may move around the bay later on today. We did lots of walking on the islands. The views were just spectacular and well worth the long climb up high. I have some lovely photos of the mainland of Spain as well as we were up so high and way out over the islands. The wind has been quite cool though, straight in from the Atlantic so on Rush it has been quite cool until we get on land. Alan is just saying now if there is a good wind tomorrow we will try and do Porto in one day, it is 60 miles and a good entrance to go in after dark but will just play it by ear. We are then planning on staying in Porto for a couple of days and then an overnight trip to Lisbon after that.

We are now flying the British flag!! Customs came very close to us on the Islas de Cies just on dusk when we were walking to the lighthouse. As Rush is registered also in England and with Sydney on the back rather than encouraging interest from the customs, Alan has been 'forced' to borrow an English flag and for the next month will fly on the back of Rush. Think the Aussie flag will join it soon on the other side to say Australian crew on board!! Up till now we have only been flying the

courtesy flag but after customs coming around twice that evening and again the next morning we thought it might be diplomatic to fly it. Look at the state of the flag though, how sad!! Mike lent us his spare!

It is just the day today to be out there so this email will only be short. It is too nice a day and too many things to see and do in such a short time. We have stocked up on the groceries and water. I'll add some photos to the collection for anyone who would like to have a look anyway.

The day is calling so hope everyone is well.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

September 15, 2006

Hi,

Wow we have put a lot into the last couple of weeks. It has been quite tiring but here we are finally in Cascais, just near Lisbon. We will get the metro down to Lisbon as this is a better place to anchor than going into Lisbon itself. We ended up spending 9 days in Porto due to the fog. It was only on the coast, as soon as we were a few metres ashore it was clear and sunny. You could imagine each morning waking up and looking out the window and all we saw was fog. Somedays we could see a few hundred metres on and off and other times we would joke and say we needed the compass and fog horn to row the dinghy into the marina to get ashore. We did have a good time. We certainly can say we saw Porto. We were anchored in Leixoes and biked into Porto which was about 10 kms. It was a great way to start the day especially on some days when we biked in to catch the train and we went as fast as we were able. I am getting used to biking on the footpaths as they do over here. It still seems so wrong but then it is safer as well. Each day as we biked on the cobbled streets of Porto I would think how so many people pay to be shaken around to help loose weight by those machines and here I am getting it for free! Honestly if I didn't hold my mouth shut tight I would bang my teeth together bumping up and down on the cobbles. Porto has trams, really modern ones that look like trains and the old fashioned trams of Melbourne only shorter in length. We had to bike up the middle of the tram tracks at times. They doubled for a footpath and a tramtrack. It was a case of finding the smoothest ride. If you were carrying eggs they surely would be scrambled by the time you got home. Imagine carrying the beer home riding on those streets. We daren't open them for a while!! Still it was fun. We went on the train up the Douro Valley, famous for its Port. We did the port tasting in Porto itself. We even took a train ride south the day and noted the fog all the way down when the train line went near the sea. We also have a lot of fun socializing with other boats so there is never a dull moment. We finally left Porto taking 5 days to get here when we were hoping to do an overnight trip here. It was either lack of wind and fog or rain that made us take so long. We were so glad to wake up this morning to a glorious sunny day and not have to go anywhere. The fog shouldn't be a problem any more, it is further north. It was like coming home yesterday. As we entered the harbour just before dark we had a welcoming committee from another catamaran we met at Porto. They are the loveliest French family on their way over to the Caribbean with their 6 children. They were all on deck waving away as we came in and asked us over there for dinner. As we travel further south we catch up with more and more boats who we have got to know on the way. Yesterday we did 61 miles and a long day. The sea was so rough getting out of the narrow opening to the bay we were in. Another couple have been sailing with us for the last 5 days and they left just before us. They have a smaller cat than us but a good engine and as I watched them going out into those huge waves and the boat lifting and diving in the waves I thought S*. Then Alan gets the life jackets out! That was the first time and I thought here goes. Everything was shut up tight. The little 9.9 horsepower outboard on Rush did us well. We could see the waves just crashing down right across in front of us but thankfully by the time we reached them there was a lull and they weren't crashing so hard by the time we got there. I would have liked to take some photos but was too busy hanging on. It was spectacular. The sea continued very choppy all day with large swells which made sailing a real work as the sails kept losing the wind. Poor David and Jill would have had a worse time than us as they cat is so much smaller and they were a good hour behind

us even using their motor. I thought these seas are just giving me a little taste for when we cross the Pacific!! Hopefully not but you never know or even just crossing from Portugal to Morocco. We still have a couple of few day trips to do yet. Funny how the days we sail can be quite tiring, when the sails have to be continually changed, the spinnaker up and down and especially in the fog, constant scanning and watching for anything out there as well as the fishing pots which are all up and down the coast. Sometimes it is best not to know what you haven't seen I think.

When we were leaving France I felt a bit sad as it had become so familiar to us and it was so lovely but Spain and Portugal have been great as well. I think I am enjoying Portugal despite the fog more than Spain. The fact so many people speak English here certainly helps and makes it easier to get around. So much contrast in poor to well to do areas. So pleased to see that at least they have their priorities right. The poorer and shabbier the houses the more satellite dishes they have on the houses!! Apparently a lot of the movies are in English in Portugal and that is why they often speak so much English. We met a lovely couple from Belgium on the train and they said their movies are in English too and when they travel it is easier to know English even for them. We are back to our childhood when shopping buying our groceries by picture! It is cheaper here in Portugal and Spain than France. We really noticed the difference.

Well I guess I had better make use of the day, it is lunch time and we are going to go ashore here and look around Cascais today and visit with some of the other boats we have got to know. Cascais is a place where people start diverting to other directions, going south like us or out to Madeira or to the Canaries.

I think I have bored you for long enough. The trip is going well and so many good memories and lots of fun. Looking at a world map last night we have still only seen such a small area.

Bye for now,

Hope everyone is well. Love

Marilyn

Ps I will add some more photos today as well. One of our friends draws her trip rather than take photos and this is a page she did of us in one of the Rias we were up in Spain. Such talent, I envy her

September 21, 2006

Hi,

We are finally down to the Algarve. It is so good to be here. We ended up taking 20 days to get here with one thing and another. First the fog from the day we left Baiona, little wind and rain. Still it has been fun and lots of experiences. Its been fun having David and Jill with us most of the way to Sines. I'm glad David was with us the day we left San Martinho do Porto with the lovely surfing seas coming across the entrance. I just wish I was game enough to take some photos on the way through the opening to the bay. Jill said it was comforting to her to look back and think we had yet to get through and I am looking at them thinking well if they can do it so can we! David and Jill had a pod of 15

dolphins swimming with them on the way to Sines. We only had the pleasure of watching them diving in a big circle, maybe catching their lunch. On the way from Sines to Cape Vincent though we had about 9 dolphins swimming and diving with us for about ½ an hour. They were just delightful to watch. Now when we look out over the ocean, Africa is way way in the distance and not America any more. We anchored just around the tip of Portugal after a long day sailing and motoring. We set off the next morning to sail the 20 miles to Lagos with good wind and then suddenly it just died and the ocean was like a mill pond. As we entered the bay at Ponte da Piedade tourist boats were going around the rocks and into the caves. As it was so calm we anchored and took the dinghy and did our own tourist trip. Motor boats with dolphin watching safaris were going out to sea and I thought we have had our own dolphin watching and trip to the Grotto on a beautiful warm and sunny day.

We are anchored in the lagoon near the town of Alvor. We biked into Lagos yesterday and it is an interesting place. A real tourist town. We were further up the lagoon yesterday and we ended up drying out on the sand. Alan was at least able to clean the bottom of Rush as she was really quite dirty. The weather forecast for today was strong winds and rain and we surely got the rain this morning. It didn't last long though, only a few hours and of course it had to be pouring with rain when we moved up here in the lagoon. We had to wait till Rush was floating of course to move and not long after arriving the rain suddenly settled. Still as we have our water bottles full again and Rush is washed clean. Alvor is fast becoming a tourist place as well and you can tell so many English people come here, there were signs everywhere for English breakfast and hamburgers and chips, even fish and chips. Tomorrow we plan on biking into Portimao and then we plan on heading towards Faro. This is a really delightful part of Portugal. It is pretty, rolling hills in the backgrounds, lovely beaches and blue water. Of course nice and warm does help. It is now 6.50pm and the sun is starting to go down and the wind is a little chilly but still a clear sky out there with few clouds. We had a lovely walk today along the inlet high up on the rocks.

I feel like our holiday is really winding down now. We are relaxing more in one spot now as we have been busy most days going here and there. I feeling like joining all these English people wintering here in the Algarve and just sit and enjoy the atmosphere. Maybe we will be able to one day. Maybe it will even be warm enough to go swimming yet before I go home. That is one thing I don't have to worry about is coming home to cold weather. 3 summers in a row isn't bad is it? So many places to go, so many places to see.

The sun is shining straight into the cabin and it is lovely. So peaceful sitting in here. I don't miss work at all, funny that!!

Hope everyone is well, love

Marilyn

October 1

Hi,

Here we are now on the border of Spain and Portugal. The Guadiana River divides the two countries for about 20 miles up the river from the sea and then rejoins again further up the river. We are about 15 miles up the river at Alcoutim and Sanluc de Guadiana. Depending on which side of the river we are on as to what time it is. It is 3.14 pm in Portugal and 4.14 pm in Spain. The church bells ring during the day sometimes on both sides of the river and sometimes at separate times. Portugal have a little tune play after the dongs which always comes after the Spanish chimes. I was woken at 0800 this morning to the Spanish chimes, then the Portugal and then the Spanish again. Must say the Portuguese ones have a nice tone!! Plus the cute tune after is almost like 'my darling clemantine' but I don't think it is!! My imagination running wild again. It is very dry up here, hilly with little undergrowth and scattered trees. There is still a beauty and peace about it. It is so quiet, the day has been really hot for a while as inland does but now there is a lovely breeze through the valley and up the river. We managed to sail most of the way slowly yesterday around 3 knots and it was just magical gliding along up the river, the odd house on the way, lots of old ruins of houses. I can't get over the pomigranite trees and the quince trees though. Haven't seen quinces on a tree since I grew up on the farm. I used to love them raw then, sour as and dip them in sugar to make them edible. I just had to buy some the other week and stewed are delicious. Not everyones favourite fruit I must admit. We picked some along the road at Tavira. Here I could just row the dinghy over to the edge of the river and pick them. We are having some fun memories with the fruit grown locally in our travels. The blackberry pie, overripe figs!, pomigranites and the quinces, sour grapes and maize that SHOULD have been sweetcorn. We have been up 4 different rivers inland from France and including this one here. They are all so different and a change from the sea. All those lovely white sand beaches, along the coast get boring don't they! No this holiday has been far from boring. It only feeds the desire to travel more. I didn't really have any idea what this holiday would hold for me. Not having done any

sailing before everything is a totally new experience and so much part of my everyday it is hard to imagine being back home and going to work each day. It is so innate now to just go to the right side of the road to walk or cycle I will have to be careful when I get back. It is an ideal way to just say ok, we will have a lazy day for a change and just relax around the boat and it is relaxing hearing the waves gently tapping on the boat. The dinghy is out the back of the boat and it is gently rocking in the river. The washing is hanging on the sides of Rush. Have to admit it will be nice to just put my clothes in the washing machine and give them a good wash when we get to Lanzarote. I want to have them properly clean before I go back home. They might fall apart with shock that they are being washed in a machine! It would be very hot to bike around here on the sealed roads and ride up and down hills. Isn't that a good excuse not to get out there!! We haven't been that lazy today. We did walk up to the old fort at the top of the hill along the gravel road and a brilliant view of the area. We then walked up to 2 old time windmills that have been restored on another hill. Be a nice day to take the surf ski out for another paddle. It was so lovely at Tavira just quietly paddling along on a gloriously sunny day, quiet and just pottering along the lagoons and waterways. Every day there is something new to see. I think one of the best things about this way of travelling you really get to feel the atmosphere in a place. We enter the places quietly, slowly either on Rush or the bikes and really can soak it all up. I have so many photos, just too many but they will be brilliant memories.

I've been able to do more reading and cross stitch since we came down to the Algarve as our pace has slowed and the nights get darker earlier so we aren't out cycling or walking as much so I really feel I am on holiday. We have a good selection of books to read and we have swapped with other boats as well when we have finished them. This place has a sign on the jetty for a place to swap English books so must go there later and have a look.

I am looking forward to going to Morocco in a week or so. It will be about 250 miles across to Casablanca. Will have to see what they have for Humphrey Bogart there!! We will stay in a marina there as I don't think it would be as safe to anchor. We are hoping to do a trip up to the Atlas mountains. Am waiting to hear from a French family we have become good friends with who should be there by today sometime and they are going to fill us in on all the goings on there. We had been hoping to meet someone along the way who had been there but no luck.

It is 0700 and it is only just becoming light. That is in Portugal, 0800 for Spain. The hours of daylight seem strange to me. It is daylight till about 7.30 pm. They seem all wrong when it is only the beginning of autumn.

We are heading up the river today as far as we can go and doubt there will be internet so will send this this morning and send some more photos on the way back. The air is still, the water not a ripple. We are leaving soon to go up with the current but at the moment you wouldn't think there was an incoming current there. The dogs are still barking, the roosters crowing but otherwise as quiet as can be. No hustle or bustle of anyone around. The church bells haven't chimed this morning yet. I think they chimed enough during the night in Spain anyway to make up for it!!

Bye for now,

Marilyn

October 7, 2006

Hi,

Here we are in Morocco at a place called Mohammedia. It is about 20 mins from Casablanca. The marina is very small and we are literally wedged in between 2 boats with fenders stopping us touching each other. We have to get used to the sound of a boat rubbing along side us!! We had a good crossing in the end. It started off well, the wind was great and we were averaging over 6 knots – well all good things come to an end and a few hours later the wind just virtually died. It was just enough to keep us going between 3 and 4 knots. That lasted all day and we managed 52 nm in the first 12 hours, 209 all together. As the sun went down, the wind came up and how. We ended up doing 82 nm in the next 12 hours. Alan had to put a reef in the main overnight as well. We both had the weirdest dreams, Rush racing through the waves outside and the waves slapping obviously stopped us from totally relaxing. The shipping lanes ended up not being a problem. We saw lots of ships but the timing just seemed right as we passed through them. The wind died a little during the day but we still maintained around 5 – 6 knots getting us in before dark and thankfully we did as getting in after dark wouldn't have been easy. The full moon made it lovely sailing at night. The French family we have come to know well were still here. We thought they would have left by now and it was lovely to see them again. Arabic is the first language here and then French and then English so it was good having them here to interpret for us. They have been here a week as they left to come here when we left to go up the Guadiana River and they have been tripping around and have all the details for us. So good as we would never have managed to understand get all that info. Customs and immigration came on board last night and we only have to collect passes now to go ashore. It is a world of barter here it seems and going to be really interesting.

Well the day is calling, our bikes are ashore and we are going to go for a ride and have a look around to get our bearings.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

October 13, 2006

This time last week we were still crossing from Portugal/Spain to Morocco. We were still 6 hours away and excited to be starting a new adventure in a new country. One very different from France, Spain and Portugal. Not sure what to expect, we sailed into Mohammedia just before 6 pm. It was so good to see the French family we had become friends with still here. We thought they would have moved on to the Canaries by now. Not realizing French is the second language here it was great as they were able to help translate when we arrived and also give us the touristy info. This is the first marina we have been in since we left Cherbourg way back at the beginning of the trip. We thought it would be safer here, we could leave Rush while we traveled around and there isn't really anywhere to anchor here anyway. The first exciting experience was actually getting into the marina especially when there was only enough room to fit between 2 boats and our fenders kissing each other. It was an eerie feeling looking out the windows and seeing the other boats right there. We then had the difficulty getting on and off Rush as we had to make room for the waves to stop Rush actually boarding the marina! If the winds had been stronger and caused more waves we would easily have pushed the front of the hull onto the steel strip along the marina edge. Fortunately Regis and Christine were leaving a couple of days later so we were able to move into their spot and we are now port side along the marina instead of the bow. It will also be easier for when we leave. I have to admit it is rather a treat going to the showers each day and having water so handy. We are being spoiled. Shame there isn't a washing machine so still washing by hand. Still can't have it all I guess. The bikes have been worth their weight in gold here. We didn't go ashore till the next morning after arriving as we had to clear immigration and get shore passes and arrange with the harbour master to stay here as well. We were amazed we could buy all the fruit and veges you could want here in the markets. Monday we took the train to Casablanca and walked around all day. There is so much poverty hitting you right in the face. I have been taken aback seeing all the people young and old who are blind or maimed. The beggars in the street are so sad. It has been a real eye opener. It is Ramadan here at the moment too which means the muslims (which is nearly the whole country) don't eat from sunrise to sunset. We have been discreetly eating or drinking or just going without when we have had to just to be respectful. This lasts for a month and by the end of the day tempers seem to be frayed. I think as the days go on as well people are less patient with each other and it doesn't take much to set them off. We had a great trip to Marrakech for a few days. It is 3 1/2 hours by train, the second largest city in Morocco. We visited the Souks and literally bombarded with beggars and everyone trying to sell their goods. Everything has to be bargained for. Even the taxis are fighting over the service. We decided to hire a taxi to take us up to the mountains for the day – well what a drama. They ended up having a bit of a fist fight trying to get our service. Alan and I just stood there flabbergasted. Everyone has their territory here. There are petit taxis who only work in the town they are in, grande taxis to go into the country and to make sure no one is out of their territory they are all painted different colours for different towns. We had the best day up in the mountains. We went to Setti Fadma first, stopping on the way and then walked up the valley a short way for lunch. That in itself was an effort. Everytime we stopped someone is trying to sell you something and jewellery is on top of the list I'm sure. We just wanted to walk up the river and quietly eat our lunch away from everyone and we had guides hassling us, saying we couldn't go without one and others trying to get us to go to restaurants etc. You can go on a 5 – 6 hour walk up the valley one way and they try to say you need a guide but you don't really. We would have loved to do the walk but we just didn't have time as it would have meant a day each way. Instead we went up to Oukaimeden. The drive was brilliant. The taxi drove slowly all day so it was really leisurely and the scenery was awesome as we wound our way up the mountain. It was quite cold by the time we got to Oukaimeden. We looked over to the highest mountain in Morocco – 4165 metres. It would be a brilliant sight in the snow season. The mountains are so dry and appear unforgiving yet there are little mud huts and villages built up out of the mountains everywhere. It is hard to imagine how they survive up there or even in the mountains at any level. In the valleys it is much greener and the water would surely rush through in torrents when the snow melts. Coming home on the train there were lots of shepherds with their small flocks, women getting water from the wells, mules pulling carts as the farmers worked their land. There are hay stacks everywhere, the paddocks are bare, a lot worked over

ready for planting I guess. Everywhere seems to spell poverty though in the country. Walls are being built or have been built around the 'slum' areas as if to hide it away. There is so much building going on, I wonder if they are blocks of units being built to move the poor into as they are all building them in and around the hovels as well. Amongst all this poverty though, the satellite dishes and the mobile phones kept ringing. It seems the poorer the country the more satellite dishes, even in the slums. There are a lot of very modern areas of course and a variety of architecture. In France the churches were great as guides to where we were but the mosques here don't work like that. They are the same so see one mosque and you think you are going in the right direction only to find you are heading towards a different mosque. In Marrakech Alan had the bright idea to be adventuresome and eat as the locals and with the locals. There are little food stalls in the big square, looking quite delicious really waiting for the sound of the mullah? Coming from the mosque so everyone can start eating. The Moroccans are sitting there with their little bags of food and water ready to go. We joined them at the table and we all had our little bowl of Ramadan soup served and waiting. We then moved to a different stall but I just couldn't eat. I was happy to just watch Alan munch his way through salad, sausages and chips. I just couldn't handle the flies crawling over the food. Definitely vegetarian while I am in Morocco. The meat is out in the open and the flies are having a field day. I know the chicken I buy back home was alive once but I just couldn't handle choosing the chook to be killed for me to buy. I'm used to seeing the chickens ready to buy with their feet still intact now!! What was worse was the bunny rabbit about to meet the same fate! Different cultures. Nothing is wasted that is for sure. Every bit of the animal is used in one form or another!! We haven't seen one rat though in our travels and that is probably largely due to the number of cats around. Would rather the cats anyday thanks. I bought Alan some dried apricots from a stand and assured him I had specially chosen the ones the flies hadn't crawled over!! I am sure the same can be said for my sultanas and figs too!! Everything is just handled all the time from food to wares. Arranged and rearranged!! Morocco is surely a fascinating country. A country that is well worth the visit. We are having a rest day today, we just needed a break from the constant bargaining and begging. We are going to be brave and have another adventure tomorrow and go to Fes. It is more a medieval town and be interesting in its own right. I just love watching the Moroccans work at their trades. As we walked up the streets you would see little rooms the size of a lot of laundries or a little larger with someone or a few people working away at their craft. I would love to have taken more photos but they don't like their photos being taken much. There were a lot of tourists in Marrakech and probably in Fes too but I have continued to wear jeans and a t shirt and died of heat exhaustion out of respect. The tourists scantily dressed did stand out and drinking and eating as they walked around I thought was a bit rude. One Muslim guy I spoke to said it was ok. He respected we had our religion and they had theirs but he was appreciative at the discretion we showed. I will be glad when I can get back in my shorts and sit outside on the deck and eat and drink. As usual photos just don't capture it as it is. Have added some more photos to the hotmail and a map of Morocco to see where the places are that we have visited.

October 18, 2006

As I look out the door there is a lovely blue sky, good breeze blowing and yet out there at sea is another story. We are waiting and waiting for the weather to improve to make our 4 day crossing hopefully to the Canaries. This is going to be the biggest sail we have done in our little adventure so far. The good part is we are safe and comfortable here at the Marina, we can leave the boat to go out and not worry. We have showers, everything we really need handy. Did I say showers!! It is so good to walk up to the showers each day and enjoy a lovely hot one. I think it is so much better with the hot days we have been having and our feet get so dirty we can have a good scrub, thongs and all. We are making the most of having water handy as well. Alan is busy doing some of the little jobs he had on his list he needed to do before he crossed the Atlantic so the time hasn't been all a waste. That is sailing, waiting for the weather. It seems like our plans are those of mice and men sometimes. They change from day to day quite often. It is good to be able to just go off on the bikes when and where we choose without waiting to be rowed to shore. We are really enjoying just vegging out as well. We really have been on the go for the last 5 months. Biking and walking especially in the France when the evenings were longer and we would be out and about again after dinner. The days sailing are quite tiring believe it or not. Always on watch and I think being out in the fresh air and sun also tires you out. 'Oh what a shame' I can hear it from here!! Our one week in Morocco looks like at least 2 at this stage and possibly a bit longer. There are a couple of boats here in the Marina waiting with us. There is a big 57 ft monohull who arrived day before yesterday and 'what weather' we were told by the skipper. Well

they left yesterday morning as they planned and Alan said wouldn't it be funny if they are back in 6 hours. Well true to form, they did come back in about that time!! Alan being the concerned citizen and not wanting to gloat went over to see how things were!! Supposedly a short in the electrical system for the anchor!! Something to be said for too much technology. Electric winches aren't all they are cracked up to be!! They were hosing everything down, all their rucksacks etc so I think going straight into the wind, with a few metre waves wasn't the best idea after all. Alan was speaking to one of the young guys on board earlier this morning and they are planning on leaving again tonight, they think it might have calmed down a bit by then, not for us but maybe for them with their big motor. Unfortunately we don't go till we can sail. I'm sure our little outboard would not be impressed chugging into that weather and we wouldn't get too far. If possible we will look at coast hopping if it is feasible but otherwise just wait it out here. It gives us a chance to see more of Morocco. We could move into the harbour and anchor if we had to to save Marina fees but we will wait another few days yet before deciding. It isn't that easy to get ashore here. I will be rolling in the door by the time I get home after eating all these lovely French pastries. Well why not, I will be walking the dogs and going back to work so that will solve the weight gain in no time. It's a wonder the French aren't fat with all these yummy pastry treats.

We decided to go up to Fes last Saturday and stay overnight returning the next day as it is just over 4 hours by train. As soon as we started heading north the countryside was greener and I couldn't believe it could be so different going north to south so quickly. There is a lot more agriculture and market gardens north so of course that would make it greener anyway. It seems there are a couple more rivers as well. As we headed inland from Rabat the middle Atlas mountains came into view. They are lovely in the distance. We were lucky on the way to Fes a man from tourism came into our carriage and spoke good English and we learnt so much about the country. They have gum trees forests for paper. 2nd grade for firewood. The haystacks are covered with clay till they are needed. We saw some of them being covered. We wondered what these mounds were when we were going south. Fes is a more medieval city with a lot more gates and walls around the city. It seems to be divided into 3 main areas, the ancient medina, Middletown and newtown. We wanted cheap accommodation and we got a hotel for \$20 au the night. It was just a room, hotel really old, squat toilet and one flush toilet with a leaking water closet and a pay shower. We opted for a wash in the basin in the room thinking that was about as good as the shower would most likely be. Still it was clean. We must have been fairly close to a mosque as we were woken at 4.30 am with the call to prayer and if that wasn't enough sounds like small bangers and the city was up and about. Still it is all part of the atmosphere. We went to the ancient medina on Saturday and saw the crafts – tanneries, carpets, cloth weaving etc and had a Ramadan dinner that nights. Their Ramadan soup is really nice I must admit and being vegetarian and hot I feel it is safe to eat. A standard dinner though is a piece of pancake, piece of sweet bun, some dates, hardboiled egg in the shell and some very sweet honey and sugar treats and a milky coffee. Oh and of course a big bottle of water. As we walked through the souks on Sunday at first I thought these sweet treats were covered in flies but on a closer look they were covered in bees! Could handle that better than flies though. There is a big Jewish community in Fes as well and come late morning and the gold jewellery shops open up. It was amazing, these tiny little shops with windows of gold, all 18 ct and so many of them in this small area. The items are weighed and then the price is calculated. The workmanship is beautiful. I just loved it. From there we went through a fun park and there was a kangaroo ride!! How cute. The trip back Sunday afternoon was just a nightmare. The train was the old fashioned carriages with the corridor along one side and vinyl bench seats in each compartment. The train was packed and the air conditioner didn't work properly and we were definitely in a hot box. We could have washed in our perspiration and our clothes were wet as when we got off the train. There was no doubt where we headed as soon as we got home. A beer and a shower. Refreshed we headed back at dusk to go buy our Ramadan soup. For 60c a bowl it is cheap and a good starter for our evening meal. We bike there, eat our soup, bike home and then have dinner so the edge is taken off our appetite and we end up with something simple usually. We might take our own container to buy it today and bring it back here and eat. A lot of locals do that. Still it is all part of the atmosphere. As I bike around I get so many 'bonjour madame' from the men and children. It makes me laugh, they have big smiles on their faces, thumbs up. Alan gets ignored!! I don't think we have seen a woman on a bike, local or tourist so I guess it amuses them. The blonde hair stands out too I guess. When they ask where we are from they have often replied 'far away' and 'kangaroo'. One man told us we are called the Aussie nomads as we are so far from home.

I'll head on now to the internet and do my emails. It is so good being able to take the laptop down and plug into directly to the broadband. Everything is on the computer when I get back then as well. This

wifi is definitely the way to go. My day is going to be so hard today!! Stop off on the way home at the boulangerie for the pastries to go with a cup of coffee and then I think I will spend a few hours doing my crossstitch today. When I have had enough of that I can read. Alan will be reading when I get back so it will be a really relaxing day I am sure. Maybe a bike ride this afternoon might be in the program and of course the soup tonight for dinner. Tomorrow we are going to get up early and go to Rabat about 40 mins away. Rabat is the capital and I think there will be some interesting things there too. Am going to research it on the net today. Must download the latest weather too, watching that closely for the window to leave.

This is a long letter, hope not too boring for you all. Probably added too many photos but hard to choose to get a real picture of the place.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

October 25, 2006

Hi,

The plans of mice and men continue. We are still sitting in the marina at Mohammedia waiting for the weather to improve. I think we are all 'Moroccaned' out. Its difficult to relax properly when we are always on the ready to leave as soon as there is a window. After our trip to Fes weekend before last we needed a break just on Rush and it was a good opportunity to catch up on jobs that had to be done before Alan crossed the Atlantic and so the time wasn't really wasted. At least it was easier to strip the dinghys outboard down, change the oil in the main outboard and have a decent look at the furler while we weren't joggling around in a harbour – especially when it was so important not to loose parts. The best part for me of course was winching Alan up and down the mast, 3 times in a day over 2 days!! On a positive note my back will get better soon!! The furler in particular was a major and important job as it started playing up on the odd time over the last couple of months but very difficult as we neared Morocco. At least we have headsail to use to get to the canaries as we were thinking it was going to be a spare sail for a while. 2 days of pulling it apart, adjusting, up and down the mast and finally seems to be working ok, just a bit of fine tuning hopefully will make Alan happier about it. We planned on going to Rabat, the capital city last week but Alan got the gastro bug and laid him low for a couple of days. Being the dutiful nurse I am he was lovingly cared for!! I did remind him this is not really midwifery and I was a bit out of practice!! I wish. We couldn't work out what set him off though. He had made a stew for dinner with TVP so all vegetarian. Of course he didn't want to have any more of that so I being the thrifty person that I am, thought I would have some for dinner the next night. I only had a small amount and I was fine, thought smugly the stew was ruled out and finished it off the next night. Well did I ever wish I had left his stew alone. I tell you, you hear of women poisoning their menfolk, well this was the other way around!! Seriously, it is fun to laugh about it now but it wasn't at the time. Between the back ache and the belly tied in knots it was a long night. Funny how something like that cures your appetite real quick. We haven't ventured out for the Ramadan soup since and Ramadan has now finished and everything is back to normal. We actually made it to Rabat yesterday and listen to this, we went to McDonalds for a meal! Good old maccas. We didn't realize that nearly everything would be shut the day after Ramadan finished and when we arrive in Rabat nearly everything was closed. Well you should have seen Alan drooling when he saw maccas and I could even be convinced to join him. They make the best coffee. Unreal, wish they made it like that back in Aus – they would have a regular customer. Even better than McCafe. We did the foot slog around the city. Once again we were pestered by 'guides' trying to show us around and they are so persistent it is really exhausting. We are wising up now and shortly after one of them started, Alan asked him what he did for a job and he said guide and Alan very quickly told him we didn't need any help thankyou and all of a sudden 'shit' he says and marches off. Did know good English after all!! If they would just agree on a price and then do it but they don't. They start on how about a bit more, we have a family etc etc and it goes on and on and they won't take no for an answer. In the end I told one of the guides yesterday that this dishonesty is what I didn't like about Morocco and walked away. In general it is fine, I feel sorry for all the beggars around and sad cases but in a lot of places we go to regularly we

would be swamped the next time we go there as we are obvious tourists. Almost a local we have been here so long.

Today it has been raining solidly most of the day. This is the first day of bad weather consistently in a long time. Bit of a nuisance as we had quite a few things to do today as we are planning on moving into the harbour tomorrow afternoon and then heading off down the coast as far as we can while there is a small weather window. At least we only need another small weather window then to complete the trip. I think we have 420 nm to go this time and even in a straight run I think with the weather forecast we are looking at a good 4 day trip. We really only have a window of 3 days at the most at the moment and they aren't brilliant days. We almost feel like we are being left behind with all the boats stopping over and going on again the next day. There is one German boat who may leave with us but are basically watching the weather and preferring conditions to be what we are looking for. The trouble with most of the boats or all of the boats coming in so far they are on such a tight time schedule to catch flights etc they are just battling on out there in the sea. I imagine this could be one of the roughest sails we will have had, just might take the seasick tabs this time and be done with it. We have been sitting in a marina for 3 weeks by the time we leave and I don't think there are any sea legs left for either of us.

When I started this adventure I had no real idea of the odd situations I would get into. It has been fun all the same. I will miss the bike and I think I just might have to invest in one when I get home. I do so many short trips and the bike would be fine. Right now I am sitting straddling a small bench in the shower/toilet block plugged into the power socket to type this and recharge my ipod!! The solar of course isn't charging the batteries, the fridge has been playing up for ages and we have been hoping it would hold out till the canaries but the batteries are not well charged, and we aren't game to use power on the boat. Thinking we were going to be really smart, Alan ran the outboard for an hour to help a bit, we borrowed a battery charger from the marina and a power cord to really charge them up only to find the power on the marina isn't working. I guess the rain has got in and cut the supply and of course can't be looked at till the rain stops which with our luck should be when we are ready to anchor in the harbour tomorrow afternoon!! Alan doesn't have the necessaries to plug into marina power as we rarely use marinas so we were going to plug into the German boat who is plugged into the main power way up the marina as the plugs near our boats don't work!! I mean this isn't any top notch marina. It is safe and comfortable and has showers and of course a power point in the shower block. What more could I ask for? Well I think I am all recharged now so can go back to Rush till the ipod goes flat again and then return to this little spot for a recharge. I have been having the best time cross stitching and watching my ipod. Now that we have finished watching all the sex and the city episodes it is movie time for Alan and me now and here we were the other night cosied up with the ipod watching Herbie Fully Loaded. The graphics make a real impact on a little screen about 2" by 1 1/2". Still it doesn't use a lot of power and better than nothing!! Like always it could be worse. Alan is reading books at a rate of knots, will have to start on the girly ones soon poor love. Still this new age sensitive guy should be able to handle that shouldn't he?

Well that is all for now. I will add more before I go to the internet tomorrow before we leave. This time 33 years ago I was holding my eldest son in my arms and how the time has flown. I am sad to see this 6months coming to an end. It has been brilliant.

It is now 1330 on Thursday 26th. We are definitely leaving in the morning and making our final preparations to leave. We have been out this morning and stocked up on food. There is a big European style supermarket here we went too. It took us nearly an hour to get the groceries. I mean to say, you try translating the word acidophilus into Arabic and read it on the yoghurt carton!! I have a laugh sometimes when I open some food and find it isn't what I thought it was. This picture shopping doesn't always work, meaning reading labels by the pictures on the containers. Still it is all part of the fun.

We seem to have about 3 days up our sleeve where the weather isn't too bad so we will just make the most of it As I said earlier we will just call into some ports on the way down the coast and at least we will have made some progress. The charger Alan borrowed from the marina is now working since the rain stopped and helping to charge the batteries. It started off sunny today but now it is looking like rain and some thunder so long may the charger keep helping. Everybody keep your fingers and toes crossed for us and anything else you have for a good few days of weather for us. Alan is working through his list of jobs and has to go up the mast again. I am hoping our German neighbours will

winch him up before I get back or else I will have a little treat waiting for me. Glad I have a good supply of painkillers!!

I must be off and get home before it starts raining. I will email as soon as we get to the Canaries. I won't bother with the internet along the way unless it seems we will be stopping somewhere for any amount of time. Oh oh, it has started raining already. Oh well, so I will get wet. Have a plastic bag to protect the computer and I can dry out.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

October 31, 2006

Hi,

Well we didn't make it to Lanzarotte in the Canaries. We have spent 3 full days at sea, very comfortable I must say but very very slow. We started out on Friday not doing too bad. We motor sailed till lunch time and then the wind picked up a bit and did some nice sailing till late in the evening. We actually managed to do 125 nm in the first 24 hours so we didn't think it was that bad. Our good luck didn't last of course and we ended up sailing slowly and motor sailing on and off for most of the next 2 days. We were thinking of pulling into Essaouira and waiting for the weather to improve but decided to continue on. By the end of the third evening Alan had had enough and we didn't have enough fuel to motor all the rest of the way so decided to alter course and head into Agadir 65 miles away. Of course as soon as we did that we had good wind most of the way here, motoring the last 15 nm. We didn't mind going slow the last few miles as we wanted to come in daylight. I did most of the night watch this trip. I made a deal with Alan if I did the nights he would do the days. Alan was able to get a good sleep each night even with being woken at times. We found this much less tiring this time. I love the nights so it works well. I had a great time, reading, watching my ipod and listening to my music. Alan was sound asleep so I could sing away when I felt like it without hurting his ears. Two nights the sky was full of stars and I love the glow of the moon on the water even though it wasn't there for long. It is so peaceful listening to the waves and feeling Rush glide through the water, motor or not. The second night I saw this white shape coming towards the boat and move slowly up the side of the boat, out the front and then back along the side. I wasn't sure if it was a fish, about half the length of Rush or a weird wave. I was sure it must have been a shark, the way it moved so slowly. It was an eiry feeling. I know it is stupid but it unnerved me a bit. . Still not being 100% sure but what else could it be I was sure last night when I was treated to dolphins swimming with us. I have been told it is a lovely sight and so hoping to see them. It was just glorious. I walked down to the front of Rush and watched them for ages, there were about 6 at that time. The phosphorescence (however you spell it) make them look so magical. I just love watching them in the daytime but this is special at night. Twice more during the night a few came to swim with us again. I just had to watch them till they went away. Shame it can't be caught on camera. We arrived quite refreshed early morning and are quite excited at the prospect of doing some more sightseeing in a rental car this time. It was so good going through the paperwork with customs etc and no one asking for 'gifts'. There is lovely beach nearby and we will go for a swim hopefully. It seems to be more modern here and have seen a lot of tourists in shorts and even a local in shorts so I shouldn't find it so hot this time. I won't have to be so covered up. This is very much a fishing port, just full of fishing boats, big ones like we haven't seen before. Alan said it was great watching the fleet come back in at dawn this morning. I grabbed a couple of hours kip just before we arrived so I missed watching the sunrise that I love so much.

On the first day at sea Alans faithful old spinnaker decided to rip very badly. He is hoping to get it stitched good enough to get a bit more use out of it. This is the place to get it repaired cheaply and he is getting his old GPS looked at so there might have been a reason we should have called in here. We could continue on motor sailing but we have decided to spend a few days together before we get to the Canaries as it will be full on once we get there for Alan getting his last minute preparations done. The weather is looking quite good for the weekend so we will head on then. A rental car is only 25 euros a day so we hope to take a couple of days and see a different view of Morocco and go as far as the desert. It is cloudy and overcast at the moment. Hoping it might fine up. We want to double check the

weather as soon as I can get a signal. I was able to get free wifi yesterday but no luck so far today. Might have to take my laptop into town. Alan found a place that can have a go at repairing the spinnaker yesterday but couldn't find it last evening when he went back with it so we are going to go off in search of the place again this morning. It is in the old section and small streets and quite a distance from here. It has just started to rain so we will wait it out at present. I'll add a few more photos to the email. There is a Norwegian boat in here waiting for motor repairs and the lady told Alan the showers were quite good here. I just have to add a photo of what she called quite good!! For me, Rushs shower will do just fine!!



Shower and toilet in one in Marina.JPG

Looking outside at the moment, it wouldn't have been very nice at sea. The wind is from the southwest and cool. Good day to tuck up and read a book I think, maybe some more cross stitch.

It is now nearly 1100 and the rain has passed over, still overcast and am sitting in the internet café, gave up trying the wifi on rush and running out of power anyway. It is only 50c for an hour so can't complain. Alan is off looking for the sewing place and I have the spinnaker here till he comes back to get it. Have downloaded the weather but not looked at it yet, waiting for Alan to know what our plans are going to be.

This place doesn't seem so pressured here, at least where we have been so far so it is so much more relaxing. We are looking forward to our sightseeing trip. Will send another email before we leave here.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

November 3, 2006

Hi,

We have had the best time these last few days in Morocco. We haven't been so pressured here and we are also getting better at saying no thankyou. We hired a little Fiat Uno and set off Wednesday morning to go north of here on a 220 kl circuit up through the mountains and back along the beach. The scenery was just so good and we could imagine how much better it would be when there was some rain and the cascades would be just magical. It is very dry and the rivers have little water and looking down through the valleys and the mountain slopes you can see where the water would be running. We were able to share the driving this time so we each had a good chance to look at the scenery. We picked up a couple of locals as they are sitting beside the road waiting for a taxi/bus to pick them up and the area is so remote they would be waiting for a very long time. They were always so grateful for a lift. Shame we didn't speak French as we could have muddled along in a sort of conversation if we did. We went to the Cascades but there was no water running, just a pool at the bottom and a trickle of water coming through the trees. All along the path were little stalls trying to sell their goods to tourists. Alan was persuaded to buy a box of wooden dominoes in a little box. They will be good to have on the boat. I weakened and bought a necklace and bracelet as really they were so cheap and they have to earn a living anyway. The Moroccans deserve top marks though for getting money out of you or selling you something. Obviously no is not a word used in their language often!! The scenery north of here was still so different from what we had seen on our other trips and again yesterday when we went south as well. The mountains were very steep initially working our way over them but they would keep changing, the face of the mountains would change in colours dramatically, texture, steepness and formation. We did over 400 klms yesterday, leaving by 0700 and not back till after dark around 1900. I am getting really good at cycling and driving Moroccan style. It is unique, well I guess a lot of these countries are all the same really. Lanes are made up, they toot to tell you they are going to pass, bikes everywhere with no lights and amazingly we don't see any accidents. The roads are very narrow once

off the main road, more a single road and passing means getting right off into the gravel sides. A distinct lack of barriers around the mountain roads and no lines or reflectors would make driving in the dark or even a very overcast day an extremely exhausting experience. Still we are tough, after all we are Aussies! Thank goodness all the cars are small over here and of course economical especially with the price of petrol over here in Europe. I think a lot of Aussies could do with a trip to Morocco and see how the other half lives. Motorised pushbikes and small motor motorbikes are so popular. How cheap to get around. Of course cheap travel is the old bicycle and the donkey! I am sure if there is anything old that is in need of repair Morocco would be the place to get it fixed. It seems nothing is wasted, everything is repaired and used. Definitely not a throw away society here. We have decided there are a few main professions here in Morocco – mechanics, policemen, fishermen and guides! I know it is their culture but I find the treatment of women appalling. Men and children on the donkey, women walking behind. Women out gathering the wood and lugging it up the roads on their backs. It amazes me how many children just run along without even carrying some too. The men are in the cafes having their drinks, women are obviously at home! Mostly since I have had to wear so many clothes in the heat I find the fact that men can wear just a shirt and trousers but women have to have the d'jilaba and often the headgear so they have to suffer more heat as well. Alan laughs at my observations. I was saying I couldn't live with those conditions. Alan told me he would let me ride on a donkey, he wouldn't be that mean. Even he had conditions though, he would also be on a mule, his ride would have to be bigger than mine to save face!!! So glad it is a changing world!! Despite everything the Moroccans are really a lovely friendly people. Another thing that stands out to me is their organization skills. We noticed how everything was being arranged constantly in the shops. While they are waiting to serve they are constantly moving the food with their hands. Everything is displayed beautifully and rearranged and rearranged. I notice it in their fields too, their fields look so tidy, the rocks are piled everywhere in piles, the buildings have such straight rock walls as well as their rock fences. Even the fishing boats here in this harbour are all perfectly lined up, even down to the little wooden ones. The fishermen sit there for hours sorting their nets. I have never seen so many policemen as over here. It is funny they have them along the main roads with signs to say police, and then signs reducing the speed down, the policeman is standing in the middle of the road but doesn't seem to stop anyone. It's as if their presence is enough to have order. They are literally everywhere. No shortage of finding a policeman here if you needed one. Very friendly too which is good. We took a Norwegian couple for a drive to see the night lights last night and as I was driving I called out hello to a plod and he says hello back and they laughed. They thought it was so funny. I figure I should keep on their right side.

Today is the day for housework unfortunately and it is all done now, everything clean, washing done ready to set sail to the Canaries tomorrow some time. 220 miles left to go and we are planning on getting there much faster than we managed the last 200 odd miles. Alan has the fishing lines ready and we are hoping we might be lucky to catch a fish on the way. Thinking back we could have fished while we plodded along down the coast to here!! We will be at sea I should think for 2 nights as we aren't planning to leave till about lunch time and the wind is forecast to be very light and expecting to motorsail the first 20 miles or so as the forecast appears very light near the coast. Then, as always, one cannot rely on the weather forecast.

Tonight we decided to really mix with the Moroccans. We cycled down to the poorer part of town, Alan says the working sector. We had dinner in a little café. I did check carefully if I would be able to eat there! No fresh stuff, only cooked things I thought would decrease the chances of a stomach upset. We did have a yummy dinner and cheap so can't complain. Quite a few of the cafes had rotisserie chickens going and I think it was too much for Alan to resist. The sun was just going down when we left so by the time we had had dinner it was well and truly dark. Well we did what the Moroccans did and joined the traffic on our bikes, no lights, no helmets and just went for it like they do. At one stage Alan was ahead of me and just as Alan was checking to see where I was a taxi decided to make a new lane and go up behind Alan. It looked so funny seeing the look on Alan's face. Well we biked past heaps of policeman in the dark. Same road rules applied to us we felt. It was fun and we did arrive home safely. We thought we would apply the saying 'when in Rome do as the Romans do'. After being here this long we are an old hand at getting around and have learnt their road rules well!! Morocco is truly worth a visit. We have really enjoyed it.

Am adding more photos but they don't capture Morocco as we saw it. It is so hard to capture on camera how it really is. These photos really serve to jog the memory of the spectacular scenery. There are so many times too that I would have loved to have taken a photo and it wasn't appropriate. They

are a very private people. We noticed yesterday on our trip how the women were far more covered up than we had seen before. Only their eyes were showing and often as we passed they would pull their veil or whatever they call it right over their heads. In contrast in Agadir they seem more western dressed and I felt comfortable wearing cooler tops here. It has been hot here and even the nights quite warm. We didn't get to the beach. Alan says we can surely do that in Lanzarotte.

Hope you enjoy the photos. Must away as it is time to go to bed and hopefully I will get the wifi on here in the morning to send this, otherwise I bike to the internet café.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

November 6, 2006

Hi,

Just a quick note to let you know we arrived safely in the Canaries at Lanzarotte. We had a great sail. Started out slow for the first 6 hours and then the wind picked up and we arrived at 0400 this morning, 42 hours after leaving Agadir – a total of 225 nm. The trip was so smooth we glided through the water and felt great. I did my usual 7 hours night watch the first night and we shared last night as we were coming in during the night. Alan had a few hours sleep till we were about an hour out. We only saw one ship the second day and a fishing boat way way in the distance the first night. We had a full moon both nights, a lot of cloud at times but still very light and a fantastic trip. It is overcast here today, we must have forgotten to bring the sun with us. We had the fishing line out both days but didn't catch anything and just as we were entering the harbour here a flying fish jumped on board, about 12 inches long, a nice size for a meal. Needless to say he is filleted and ready for us for breakfast.

It is sad arriving here really. This is the end of my trip. I have to book my airfare back to London and it makes it seem real. On a positive note, what a great sail to finish my trip with, I had the pleasure of a school of dolphins or rather porpoises just on dark the first night. No night time visits this time though.

We have had an easy day today. Currently anchored near Mike and Delphine so have had a catch up day with them and a quick walk ashore. This will be a social time here in Lanzarotte. A nice way to end my holiday. They have siesta here from 1.00 to 5.00 every day so we had a siesta to catch up on some much needed sleep. Going ashore now to send the emails and socialize.

Bye for now,

Love

Marilyn

November 19, 2006

Hi,

As always when you don't want the days to go so fast they are. It is only a few days now till I fly back to London. I am leaving on November 23, this Thursday. We haven't done a lot of things here in Lanzarotte, well not what you would call exciting. We have just been pottering around, Alan getting sorted for the next part of his trip and me getting organized to go home. We hired a car last week for a couple of days and went for day trips around the island. Mike and Delpine came with us and we had a good couple of days. It is amazing how a small island has so many facets and interesting things to see. The Canaries are volcanic islands and the highlight of our trip was to the National Park of Timanfaya. We went on a bus trip there through the lava fields and to what they call the Fire Mountain. For an island about 60 klms long there are a lot of mountains. It is a very dry island, with little vegetation. Some amazing scenery. The grapes are grown in a very interesting manner. They have circles of stone

and a plant in the middle of the $\frac{3}{4}$ rock circle. Sometimes they just use rubber tyres or dips in the soil. The soil is black over most of the island so hard to imagine anything growing in it. Fields are all laid out with this black soil. There were some cactus gardens, caves and a long walk through caves, all 8 euros each for admission. 8 must be their favourite number. We chose to spend our 8 going through the volcanoes. From the pictures of the caves they were like we saw off Portugal and what we have seen at home and in New Zealand. The volcanic area was very different to what I have seen before. Very different to the big island of Hawaii and New Zealand. Today we did our final bike ride and what a ride to remember. It was 10 klms up hill all the way to Teguisse. When we got there, there was a castle made into a museum high high on the top of a mountain beside a crater. The walk up there was hard, very hard. The scenery was great overlooking the valleys and the town of Teguisse. Unfortunately it was a quite hazy so not the best for photos. The museum was interesting and everything had English as well as the Spanish. I didn't realize there was such an emigration from here to America, in particularly Texas and Cuba. Also they had a few attacks from pirates. Bit gruesome too. Since being here we have had very little sunshine. We did think we would see more. For a few days we had the winds coming across from Africa bringing with them the red dust of the Sahara. Rush has this coating of red dust all over her now. We had a few drops of rain one night and all it did was make streaks over the decks instead. It keeps looking like rain but not yet. The best part of today was the ride back home. Coming down from the castle Alan raced on freewheeling. He had a cheeky grin on his face by the time I got down to hear he nearly lost it on the last bend, not realizing it was so sharp. He said the boy in him took control again!! We were so tired when we got back it was siesta time today. Still it was good, we needed to have that ride.

November 23, 2006

I didn't get too far with this email the other day. I have found it difficult to concentrate this week. My 6 months is all but up. I fly out to London this afternoon and it is going to be hard to say goodbye. I still have 8 days till I fly back to Sydney, leaving Dec 1 from London and arriving in Sydney 6.30 am Dec 3. This has been the best 6 months. I am sure it will take some readjusting back into life back at home. On the other hand, we do often fit back in far too quickly don't we and we feel like the holiday never happened. On Tuesday Alan arrives back to Rush with plans for us to do another last bike ride along the water front to Porto Del Carmen. After all the cloudy and overcast days we have been having, yesterday was just glorious. We headed off starting the day with an English breakfast along the waterfront and then off along the beach. A really relaxing day. This morning is another lovely day, sunny and clear skies. Alan is going to give my bike to an English lady who lives here in Arecipe who was wanting a bike anyway. She is a friend of Delphines so glad it is going to of use to someone and not just dumped. We have done about 2600 miles since we left England on June 6 this year. That is about 5200 klms. We have met some lovely people this year, lots of laughs and fun times, great exploring and experiences. The bikes have been so good. Everyone who sails should have bikes, it is the best way to see the countryside and feel and absorb the scenery.

I will add one last lot of photos to the hotmail site. I hope these photos make everyone want to pack their bags and check these places for themselves. Shame photos just can't always capture the real picture but then it is better than nothing.

Well I must pack my bags and head off to send this email. Time will get away very quickly. I keep telling myself it is only for 3 months and then my adventure will start again from Ecuador. Lots to do and organize in the time I am home. Then the sailing will really begin with a lot more longer sailing passages between places. A lot more different scenery. Each country has been so different and the one thing I know is I really would like to come back and enjoy more of this life.

Tomorrow I will be in Switzerland. I believe it is cold there!! Let alone England. Strange that!! I am going to have to keep telling myself it isn't that cold as I didn't pack for such cold weather. Layers of clothes will have to suffice. Back to England next week and then home.

Bye for now and it will be great to catch up with everyone when I get home. That is one bonus. Hope everyone is well. I am leaving my international sim card with Alan so I will only be contactable on my Australian mobile from today - +61412617020.

Love

Marilyn

November 27, 2006

Hi,

I'm sitting here at Gatwick waiting for the bus to Bournemouth, the sun is trying to come through outside, it isn't raining and there is blue sky behind the cloud. It is nearly 2.00 pm so it won't be light for much longer. I have just had the best 3 days in Switzerland with a very dear friend. We needed this time together, the fun, the laughter and adventure. Adventure we had. We spent Friday walking around Geneva, stopping for a coffee and generally soaking up the atmosphere. It was a little overcast, the air crisp and cold but wonderful. I couldn't believe how much I enjoyed the cold weather. It reminded me of the crispness of the country area down where I grew up – cold but beautiful days. I was looking forward to catching up with Chris again, I was feeling a bit sorry for myself leaving Alan, she'll be shocked as well after spending almost 6 months in another world, another life. As the plane flew down over the lake I suddenly realized in the distance I could see the glorious Swiss Alps and what a sight to see. From there it was all go. It was so cosy walking down the street watching everyone rugged up, snugly and warm. As we walked into a shop or café the warmth hit you and it seemed like it was saying 'welcome'. Chris works for the United Nations and she said it is a very transient life in Geneva, the world of banks and diplomats so it doesn't always seem so warm and friendly. Appearances aren't always the reality. Needless to say she is settling in and has lots of fun times to look forward to with the winter coming in particular. The ski season is happening. Chris had organized to hire a car and we picked it up Saturday morning and headed off to Mount Le Blanc in France. Our map went as far as that. We stopped along the way for coffee etc at Chamonix and had lots of laughs with no itinerary planned as such. The only itinerary was to have a good day. The sense of freedom and adventure took over and we decided to head off to Italy for the rest of the day. Neither of us had been there before, we had no map and we just went where the spirit lead. The pass through to Italy was a long tunnel, waiting at the border there was snow on the hills but not on the ground. 39 Euros (\$78 Au) later we had paid the toll for a return trip. That we didn't realize as we decided to go to Italy. Oh well, we were in the queue of cars, let's go. As we came out of the tunnel eventually the snow was down on the ground. It felt like it was going to snow, it looked like it was about to snow. We decided to go as far as we could without chains. As we entered Courmayeur it was spectacular. The ground was covered in snow, the castles, churches and houses were unreal. We continued on through the Aosta valley to Aosta. We stopped there, walked the streets and even had an icecream while in Italy. Needing to go to the bathroom we went into a café and tried ever so discreetly mask the reason for the visit. While we were looking at things of interest we touched a little tin of lollies and the back one fell over the behind the counter. We heard a soft plop and looked into the glass counter to see it sitting on top of this beautifully decorated cake!! Well we saw the funny side of it and just cracked up laughing. The waitress kept on busily serving totally unaware this tin was now decorating the cake as well. You know when you go into a china shop they say if you break it you buy it. Well here we were expecting, now you decorate it, you buy it! We laughed till we cried and that little tin of lollies will forever remain in my memories. We loved Aosta so much we didn't leave till nearly dark and headed back to Courmayeur for dinner. We thought while in Italy we just had to have a real Italian meal. We saw this little restaurant that appealed but went for a walk around the town first. When we got back to the restaurant there were still no customers and we thought doesn't matter, we will go in anyway. We were no longer seated and in came the customers. I was amused to watch them hang up their coats near the tables, the ceiling was low on the top floor where we were sitting and everyone had to stoop a little. The waiter was just gorgeous. We went with his recommendations and Chris had a few pieces of pasta left on her plate when he was collecting the dishes. He said no, no, kissed her on the head and told her to finish her meal!! First time I have seen a waiter make you finish the food on your plate. The customers were queued up waiting for a table in no time. Dinner over we headed on back home and arrived home around 2300. It was a long but really fun day. Up early the next morning we headed off around the other side of the lake towards Lausanne to Martigny for coffee, come breakfast, come lunch. We had thought we would like to see Matterhorn (the highest mountain in Switzerland) but it was a fair distance but again adventure set in again and off we headed to Sion, Visp, Saint Niklaus to Tasch. From there we caught a train up to Zermatt. This is where the ski action was. Skiers flooded the town and the season hasn't started yet. There is a lot of glacier skiing happening at the moment. We walked around Zermatt till we felt we had absorbed the atmosphere and as dark

approached we headed on back home. The last part of the road to Tasch was very windy, narrow and not well lit with markers so I wanted to get through those parts before it really became dark. We were home by about 2000. Time to look through the photos and have our last chats as our weekend was over.

Monday morning saw me returning the rental car and catching a flight back to London Gatwick. The flight was delayed an hour and so had plenty of time to check out the airport!! It has amused me how I have had to walk across the tarmac and up the steps to catch the plane at Lanzarote, Gatwick and now walk for an age in Geneva. Every flight has started with a boarding gate and had it changed. I at least got my exercise walking to the gates.

Wednesday

I am sitting here in the lounge with the sun shining and the colours are just beautiful outside. It is cold outside, I know that but not really too bad. It started to rain yesterday afternoon but a lovely morning as well. They have had a lot of rain here over the last few days but the sun is shining now. I wonder where Alan is and how the sailing is going. He left on Saturday to head towards the Cape Verdes. The wind was forecast to be good that day and then reducing on the Sunday/Monday I think. I had a text message from him on Sunday afternoon as he was heading out of range. Apparently Richard who is sailing with him confessed to Alan he isn't a good cook and Alan gets sea sick so I should imagine they might be having some fun satisfying their appetites. I would love to be a fly on the wall. I am having quiet time here with Peter and Sue. Sue hasn't been well and in hospital last week but slowly getting better. It is just nice being here with them and relaxing before I head home. I am winding down. I don't feel like rushing around sightseeing anymore. Besides it leaves me something to come back for. I will be rushing around enough no doubt when I get home. I'm stockpiling on sleep as Monday night work will be calling! This is a good transition back to the real world!! My time back at home will be planning my next adventure. Of course some socializing catching up with friends and family will be the best pastime. The days will surely fly.

Friday sees me heading off to the airport, flying out at 2145 via a direct flight home via Singapore – arriving 0630 all being well at Sydney. Alan should be almost to the Cape Verdes all being well. We will be almost as far apart as we can possibly be distance wise. Seems strange heading off in opposite directions. For now I am looking forward to catching up with everyone again. See you soon,

Love

Marilyn