

BALTIC CRUISES 1978

For eighteen successive years the College has sent parties of Apprentices on cruises in the Baltic Sea. The first crew went in 1961, and the Skipper for all these cruises was Lt Col Stan Townsend, who uses his own yacht, the 53' sloop RAGNA R, to carry on the College tradition of cruising in the Baltic.

In 1978 a change was made in the travelling arrangements which gave us the opportunity of exploring new cruising areas that had been outside the limits of previous cruises. Instead of travelling to Kiel, the first Chepstow crew joined RAGNA R at Kristiansand in Norway by way of the ferry from Newcastle. The yacht had been sailed from Kiel to Kristiansand by a crew of apprentices from Harrogate who returned to Newcastle on the same ferry.

The first Chepstow cruise, Skagerrak Venture, explored the coast of South Norway before crossing over to the Swedish coast and sailing south as far as Goteborg. From here RAGNA R sailed across the Kattegat to the Danish Naval Base at Frederikshavn. The Skagerrak Venture crew then returned to Kiel by road, and so back to England by the Hamburg - Harwich ferry. The relief crew for the next cruise, Kattegat Venture, travelled by the same means in the opposite direction.

The crew for Skagerrak Venture consisted of APP TDSM Kevin Hufton, who acted as Mate, Mike Page, Robert Panton, Colin Saunders and Pal Roberts, all of 'C' Company. APP TDSM Panton wrote the log of the cruise, reproduced here in condensed form. We arrived at Kristiansand on the ferry on the 18th August. Col Townsend met us with Norwegian Navy transport to take us to the naval base at Marvika where RAGNA R was moored.

An early start was made next day in bright sunshine and a blue sky, which stayed with us all day. First stop was Lillesand, a picturesque spot with a large well-sheltered harbour. After lunch we sailed on through the islands to Grimstad, another pretty place surrounded by small islands.

After a good night's sleep we washed and had breakfast and then it was time to go. The weather was even better, with brilliant sunshine and a calm sea. We went in and out of the islands, intending to stop at Arendal for lunch, but we decided to carry on and have lunch under way. On our way to Risør inside the islands one of the yachts we passed hailed us with the cry "How nice to see the British flag here again!"

Eventually we moored at Risør, and we went for a look round the town. Here we met a few Norwegian blondes, too many at one stage. Kevin got the cold shoulder for the third time in four nights.

Next day we set off again for Kragerø, but with the weather and sea not too good some of us began to feel seasick. When we arrived at Kragerø we found a well-

sheltered harbour surrounded by high rocky islets. During the night there was a very heavy storm, but the harbour was so sheltered that although we could hear the wind howling overhead the sea was hardly disturbed.

In the morning the wind and rain were still with us so we stayed on in Kragero for the day. Next day the sun was bright and hot and there was little wind, so we thought it would be an easy sail to Larvik, but it proved to be a little different. When we emerged from the islands the open sea greeted us with high rolling waves. The further out we went the higher the waves rolled, and some of us were feeling pretty rough by the time we reached the Larvik Fiord. Here the seas calmed down and we made fast in the harbour near the ferry station.



APP TDSM John Blaus, the Mate on 'Kattegat Venture'

The following day we stayed in Larvik, intending to sail next day, but when the Skipper got the weather forecast he decided to stay another day. We visited the maritime museum and the home of the famous designer and boat-builder Colin Archer.

In the morning we set sail for Sweden. Nearing the Oslo Fiord the weather worsened and the wind and rain came and went all the way into Swedish waters. Finally at 2030 we moored at Stromstad.

After two days in Stromstad we sailed off for our next port-of-call. Sailing through the skerries was a bit tricky but eventually we arrived at Hunnebostrand and moored in a lovely harbour.

Next we went through the Soten Canal, and then through another winding channel in between bare shining rocks to Kungshamn, where we stopped for lunch. Then we went on to the large town of Lysekil, where it started to rain heavily just as we were making fast.

We thought we would be staying in Lysekil, but Skipper decided to sail on to Marstrand. All the way we were chased by rain clouds but we managed to avoid them. Next day we awoke to find a gale blowing outside, so we stayed in Marstrand. In the evening we went to a disco in one of the hotels, but it was not very good.

In the morning we set off from Marstrand and sailed through the Albrechtson Canal, where we saw some seals basking on the rocks. As we approached the Gota river mouth we could see the buildings and docks of Goteborg. We moored in the Lilla Bomma yacht harbour. In the evening we went into the town and we were amazed at the amount of life there, and also the number of drunks about.

On the Monday morning Skipper had intended to sail to a small island at the mouth of the Gota river, but as we were enjoying it so much in Goteborg we persuaded him to stay for one more day

We set off for Frederikshavn at 0750 next day, and after about two hours we were all alone in the Kattegat. Later we sighted the coast of Denmark and soon we were moored in the Naval Base at Frederikshav.

The following day we visited the Danish Royal Yacht DANNEBROG, and then had an early night on board. Next day we were invited for lunch in the Mess with the Base Commander and his deputy and a number of other officers. It was a grand finale to our most enjoyable cruise.

On our last morning we loaded the transport and said goodbye to RAGNA R, before leaving in a Danish Naval bus on the journey to Kiel. We stayed the night at the Kiel Training Centre, and next morning went on in Army transport to Hamburg to catch the ferry to Harwich, and so back to England and Chepstow.

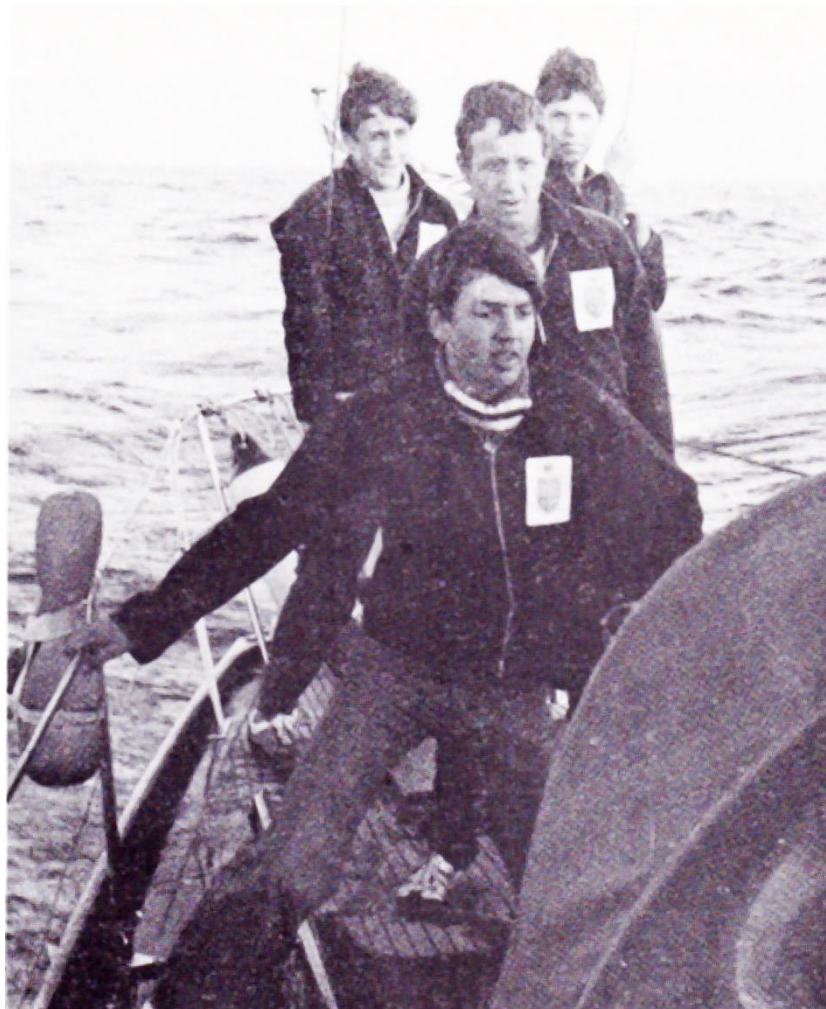
The second Chepstow cruise was planned to sail from Frederikshavn to Copenhagen, and from there through the Smaalands and the Great Belt to RAGNA R's winter berth at Thuro near Svendborg. Two periods of bad weather with unusually strong winds necessitated a curtailment of the scope of the cruise, and the detour to Copenhagen had to be omitted.

On Friday 8th September the crew arrived by road from Kiel. They were APP TDSM John Blaus, Harry Wyatt, Danny Christon and Nigel Mulholland of 'B' Company and APP TDSM David Hitchen of 'C' Company APP TDSM Wyatt wrote the log of the cruise which is again given in an abridged version.

We set off from Frederikshavn in company with a British Army yacht from Kiel called KRANICH. To begin with it was not too bad, but because of increasingly bad weather we put into Hals, on the east coast of Jutland, and KRANICH followed us in. Next morning in a Force 6 wind we had a good sail to Grenaa, and moored in a very sheltered position in the fishing harbour. Outside the wind was really beginning to howl.

For the next four days we lay in harbour while Hurricane Flossie blew itself out across the Baltic. Winds were up to Force 11, and we were glad to have such a sheltered harbour.

On the fifth day we set sail in a good wind and sunshine. Late in the afternoon we put in to the little harbour of Ballen on the island of Sams. We then headed for Nyberg and averaged 7 knots all the way.



'Skagerrak Venture' Mate APP TDSM Kevan Hufton drives Ragna R across the Kattegat

Next morning we set sail for Svendborg, and with the wind in our favour it was easy sailing.

In the morning we made the journey to Thuro, where RAGNA R is laid up for the winter.

For two days we worked on the job of laying up RAGNA R for the winter then we left on the Skipper's minibus for Kiel, then Hamburg, then Harwich, then Chepstow.



'Kattegat Venture' crew at Thurø, with Ragna R behind ready for slipping