

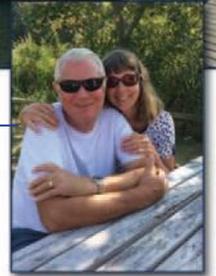
Covid Cruise 2020

by *Derek Roberts - “Celtic Warrior”*

Since acquiring Celtic Warrior in the spring of 2004, we have sailed in excess of 20,000 miles in her, and have spent over 40 months on board during the summer months. After circumnavigating the UK and Ireland during the early years from our base on a mooring in the Menai Straits, we made the decision in 2010 to take her from her over-wintering berth in Tollesbury in Essex through to the Baltic. We chose the island of Fehmarn, about 50 miles from the Kiel Canal to be our new home and have successfully over-wintered there ever since. The following narrative is a summary of this summer’s cruise, which was foreshortened considerably due to the restrictions imposed on us by the Coronavirus pandemic.

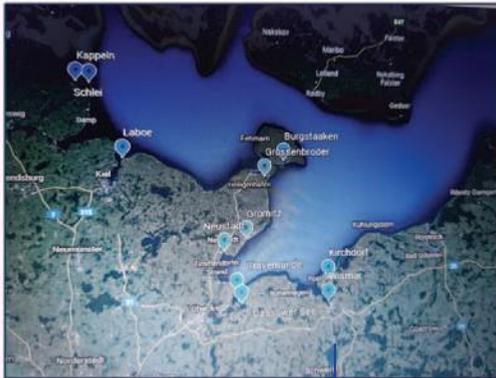


Celtic Warrior
The author & his wife, Julie



We originally chose to come to the Baltic as it has a number of significant advantages for the cruising sailor. The obvious one is that by and large, there are no tides or currents of any note to worry about - no more early starts to catch a tidal window!

On top of that there are a number of independent countries to visit, each with their own unique characteristics. Some of these countries, most notably Sweden and Finland have literally thousands of islands and islets around their coastlines, affording a virtually



The Cruising Area with Principal Locations

unlimited opportunity to anchor in safe and secluded surroundings. Moreover, during the summer months it can be quite warm, with temperatures reaching the mid - to high 20’s Celsius and because the days are long with extensive periods of sunshine and the sea is shallow, especially in Northern waters and around the archipelagos, the sea temperature can be very warm, 28°C is not uncommon. Finally, almost every coastal hamlet, village or town offers berthing facilities, there are

thousands of them and all at reasonable cost - certainly when compared to the indifferent and expensive marinas available in the UK. In short, the Baltic really does offer a great deal to the cruising sailor, we certainly never tired of it.

2020 everything was different. Firstly, largely due to the restrictions on travel, we were not able to come until past the middle of July and because our insurance cover only allowed us 31 consecutive days away, we were forced to come back mid way through August, our actual dates being 21st July and 21st August respectively. Moreover, our two nearest neighbouring countries, Denmark and Sweden, had issues with visiting boats due to Covid-19 restrictions so we opted to spend our time in the immediate vicinity to our home port of Burgstaaken on Fehmarn, limiting ourselves to a 70 mile radius. I hope that what follows will give some insight into quite why this is such an interesting sailing area.

Having arrived in Burgstaaken, we first had to prepare and launch our boat. This may sound obvious but it does afford me the opportunity to point out that here she is over-wintered in a heated hangar-like shed, on her own dedicated trailer - and when we first contracted to stay here the price was considerably less than overwintering outside, propped up with wooden props, in Tollesbury! We had a few days to prepare the boat as we were to be joined by two friends for the first week - incidentally we felt that we could effectively and safely coexist on board, as the main saloon is very commodious and most of the time, we would be on deck or in our respective cabins, the guests' aft and ours in the forepeak. Once everyone was on board, we were pleased to see that we would be lucky with the winds, in that for the first half of the week it was forecast to blow from the south and west and later, from the north so with luck, we should be able to sail most days. Given the wind direction, our obvious outward route would be towards Kiel and up to the Schlei - a narrow inlet that cuts into Schleswig Holstein for about 20 miles, culminating in the historically significant city of Schleswig.

U Boat & monument to all sailors who perished at sea

Our first overnight stop would be in Laboe, a marina in the mouth of Kieler Bucht or Kiel Bay, which has the famous city of Kiel and its associated canal on its western extremity. Laboe, apart from boasting a well equipped marina, also has a large monument, visible for many miles



out at sea, called the Laboe Naval Memorial. This was originally erected to memorialize Germany's sailors lost during WW1 and later WW2 but in 1954 it was rededicated as a memorial to all sailors lost at sea. Not quite as visible from out to sea but nevertheless equally significant, is U-995, a WW2 U-boat that is adjacent to the monument and one of the few U-boats to survive the war- by the end of the war the average life expectancy of a U-boat crew member was 60 days!

We arrived in Laboe, 34 miles from Burgstaaken, after an exhilarating sail in winds of F4/5, reaching speeds of over 9 knots at times in the flat seas (*another advantage to sailing in*

these waters) and having had a comfortable night there, we pressed on to anchor just inside the mouth of the Schlei and the following day, went to a marina in the small town of Kappeln, a few miles inland. One of the interesting features of Kappeln is that it sits on the borders of the lands of the Angeln, of Anglo-Saxon fame. Another never to be forgotten fact about Kappeln is that it was here that I lost my mobile phone, it fell out of my pocket into the murky waters of the Schlei as I was getting on board!

Kappeln was the furthest point away from Burgstaaken for this section of the cruise, we had covered 62 miles and with that we had to retrace our steps so that our friends could get back in their car in Burgstaaken to drive to the Rotterdam-Hull ferry, about 7 hours' drive from Fehmarn. Incidentally, this article is partially about our 'Sailing in the Time of Covid' (*with apologies to the author of Love in the Time of Cholera*, Gabriel García Márquez - *thank you Wikipedia!*) so I feel I must mention the superb precautionary measures taken by P&O to safeguard its' passengers and crew - at no time did we feel even remotely exposed to the possibility of catching the virus, and neither did our friends on their crossings. Similarly, our experiences whilst in Germany were very positive, masks were universally worn in shops etc and full precautions were taken in the restaurants we visited, adequate screening, masks, face screens, hand sanitizers and so on.

Having parted company with our friends, my wife Julie and I set off in the opposite direction to Kiel, down towards Lübecker Bucht or the Bay of Lübeck, or to be more precise, a little to the east initially to Wismarer Bucht or the Bay of Wismar. Sadly this did not prove to be an epic sailing day as the wind, as forecasted by both Windy.com and PredictWind.com dropped as the day progressed. We hoped to find a space in the small harbour of Timmendorf on the western side of the island of Poel but this plan was thwarted when we found that there was not a single space, and Celtic Warrior, being a beamy boat, requires a bit more than most! This was a feature of this cruise - in normal years during the summer, local boats are scattered far and wide throughout the southern Baltic so harbour space is never a problem. This year, most people have stayed nearer to home, with consequent pressures on availability. Having drawn a blank at Timmendorf we decided to try Wismar,

as this is a significant town with three harbours and here we were successful, lying in the lee of a large cruise ship!

*View across Old Harbour
into Wismar*

Returning to my theme about sailing hereabouts - another plus factor is the number of historically important and interesting towns and cities within reach of the sailor.



Principally, the Hanseatic towns of Stralsund, Rostock, Wismar and Lübeck are all within a few dozen miles at most. During the height of the Hanseatic period, between the 13th and 15th Centuries, the Hanseatic League had commercial influence in over 200 towns and cities and was easily the most significant trading and defence organization of its time. We had been to Wismar several times before but one cannot tire of looking at the wonderfully preserved or painstakingly reconstructed Hanseatic buildings (*reconstructed using the original bricks wherever possible after the damage of WW2 and subsequent neglect by the GDR - effectively all points east of Lübeck were in the German Democratic Republic until unification in 1990*).



Samba - the Swallow Yacht Baycruiser 26

It was whilst we were in Wismar that we met with the only other British boat we encountered this year. She was a pretty trailer/sailer manufactured by Swallow Yachts in Cardigan. Samba's owners have downsized from a Rustler 34 to this 26' little boat and are delighted by their decision.

Coincidentally, our paths crossed again at the end of the cruise but they were not intending to return to Fehmarn for over-wintering for some weeks.

Our next port was the lovely little harbour called Kirchdorf, just a few miles from Wismar on the island of Poel, where we spent two idyllic days in gorgeous weather - actually this was a recurring theme, as we enjoyed good weather almost throughout.

Kirchdorf



Nice Sandy beaches hereabouts



From Kirchdorf we travelled westwards some 32 miles up to Travemünde, situated on both banks at the mouth of the river Trave, which incidentally is the artery serving Lübeck, the originating town of the Hanseatic League.

Our chosen spot for the night was an anchorage in a large bay just inland from Travemünde,

called Pötenitzer Wiek and leading off from this bay was another, almost enclosed lake-like body of water of some 5 square miles called Dassower See, where we opted to anchor after a night in Travemünde.

It was here that we realized that we'd broken a German law - we had anchored in a



Sunset in Dassower See

nature reserve! A kindly and polite eel fisherman told us this, saying that we would face a heavy fine if we were caught but as we were on the point of leaving, we got away with it. We did wonder why there weren't any other boats in this vast expanse of eminently anchorable water!



a Dutch topsail Schooner (I think!)



Returning once more to my theme - the Baltic is an excellent place to see old sailing ships, both being actively used or laid up as museum exhibits.

The Passat

In Travemünde there is a marvellous example of the latter, one of the few remaining examples of the famous flying P-Class of 4 masted barques that were around at the turn of the 19th century, 'the Passat'.

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On our way in to Travemünde we passed the sail training ship Alexander von Humboldt 2, another fine sight. In truth, old sailing vessels are a commonplace hereabouts and all the better for it.

Alexander von Humboldt 2

Our cruise was now drawing to a close. From our illicit anchorage, we called into the nice town of Neustadt, where we spent 2 nights in a berth in the local sailing club.



We were literally 20 yards from the beach and 20 yards from the barbecue area - barbecues are often laid on in this part of the world - another bonus! From there we headed northwards to the holiday resort and marina of Grömitz; somehow the Germans manage to avoid making their seaside towns tacky, it is quite a pleasant spot.

Our concluding night was at anchor in an enclosed bay called Grossenbroder, just a short hop away from Burgstaaken and where we met up again with Samba, it was
