

PUMPING AUGUST SUN SOUTH

At the start of the 2019 Winter I was doing another yacht delivery. The yacht was called August Sun a Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 40 originally launched in 2001 in USA, sailed around the Caribbean, and bought by Martin Payne in 2011. He used the boat in the USA until 2019 and then had it shipped to Auckland. It arrived 23 March and the plan was to bring it south in April. Instead because the yacht was damaged in transit, it was May before the repairs were complete and the delivery happened.

Sunday 19 May Brent Porter, Wayne McEwen and myself flew to Auckland to commence the delivery. Martin was aboard when we arrived a little before 1400 at Half Moon Bay marina Pier H. Following established British tradition I put my bag in the starboard aft cabin. I looked in the port side aft cabin, saw it was full of boxes of tools and stores and quickly decided it would be better if we moved them to the forward cabin that would probably be untenable at sea.

There was a fresh southwest wind blowing and some rain as we inspected the food and gear and made ready. There was time for afternoon tea when my sister and her grandchild arrived. I was pleased to see them and the treat was doubled by the chocolate kornie biscuits that she brought made to our mother's recipe.

After a trip to the supermarket, marine shop and a check of the weather forecast we were ready. Martin left for the airport, the lines were cast off at 1650 and we motored out into the Tamaki estuary. Once clear of Brown's Island I unrolled the headsail to starboard but kept the motor going. The wind had eased and under that rig we sped out to Cape Colville. The wind was not more than ten knots and being from the west meant the apparent wind speed was only 4 knots. At times the wind briefly freshened but the sea remained slight and with a clear sky and full moon it was a wonderful night to be at sea.

Wayne took over galley duties and cooked corned beef and vegetables for dinner while I made sure we missed all rocks and ferries and with Brent memorised how to use the two chart plotters but it was a while before they were mastered.

"Why does the plotter show the boat and a red line pointing in a direction different from the green line for the direction of travel?" I asked. No one had an answer but we agreed that in the morning we would read the manual.

By 2200 hours we were out by Cape Colville after an easy passage with speed hovering between seven and eight knots. There were no tide rips in the Colville passage and I expected that we would soon lose the wind until south of Whitianga. Instead the wind remained steady and now being on the beam the mainsail was hoisted and engine stopped for a lovely night sail down through the Hole in the Wall. The moonlight meant all the stacks were visible.

Just south of Great Mercury Island the problem with the plotter display was resolved. From Cape Colville onwards the red line and the display of the boat had remained obstinately at ninety degrees to the direction of travel. At 0145 hours I told the Autohelm to change the course by twenty degrees to starboard. August Sun promptly rounded 130 degrees to starboard and the reading of the flux gate compass differed substantially from that determined by the GPS. An idea had come to me

“Wayne, could you check what is in the locker in your cabin by the flux gate compass?” was my request. He came back with a smile.

“I have moved the fuel transfer pump with its fixed magnets elsewhere.” The compass reading and GPS then agreed, as did the red and green line and the calm passage continued.

I had pondered the course to take across the Bay of Plenty. Windy.com had indicated westerly winds around 30 knots in the middle of the bay on the direct course. A few miles to the west only ten to fifteen knots were predicted. As we left the Hole in the Wall behind I resolved to take the direct course and hoped that by the time we arrived at the middle of the bay the stronger winds might have passed. A navigator has to be optimistic while being prepared to deal with what happens. In the dark hours of the morning the wind remained light needing some motor assistance. A large ship appeared to be running parallel to our course at much the same speed. When it was abeam I checked its statistics with the AIS data. She was steering 139 compared to our 93 degrees and running at 13 knots. The VHF radio burred something and the only bit I heard from the deep male voice was, “what are your intentions?” After a giggle at the Edwardian expression, I realised the ship was perhaps referring to our yacht so slowed the engine and advised they should pass clear ahead. The only response was that the ship did that and headed off for Tauranga.

Soon after day break the wind freshened and the engine was stopped. A rather boisterous but not unpleasant ride followed. The wind direction was from aft of the beam and only the bow sections of the yacht received any spray. The cockpit stayed dry but the wind had a winter chill in the morning.



At 1000 hours we wound two turns on the headsail furler and pulled down the first reef. There was a problem with the latter. The reefing line had not been tied around the boom in the correct place mostly because there was no slot left in the sail tamer. The only slot was at the middle of the boom. We retied the rope outside of the sail cover. We also had to re reeve the forward end of the rope as it was twisted about the tack of the sail. After settling the boat with reduced rig we then turned to the inflatable dinghy. It was still packed in its bag and would be of little use to us like that. It took three of us to scrabble about the cabin top to push and heave the floor in place. After a small battle Brent suggested it might work better if we inflated the tubes and that did help. About an hour later the dinghy was lashed athwartships between the dodger and mast.

While the dinghy battle was being won the wind and sea had slowly increased. There was a mass of white caps so the second reef was pulled down on the mainsail. That reefing line also needed retying around the boom. August Sun kept up her pace and it was nice not to have the engine running. The wind was about 25 knots and the sea a metre in height. In the far distance we could see a plume of smoke from White Island.

Below decks there were more problems. Wayne reported that he was getting his feet washed in the port aft cabin. I checked that the bilge pumps were turned on and then tried to find them. It proved too hard and eventually we used the manual pump mounted in the cockpit. About ten strokes of the pump were achieved before it was

spitting air. That was repeated on hourly intervals and after the fourth pass no more water was obtained.

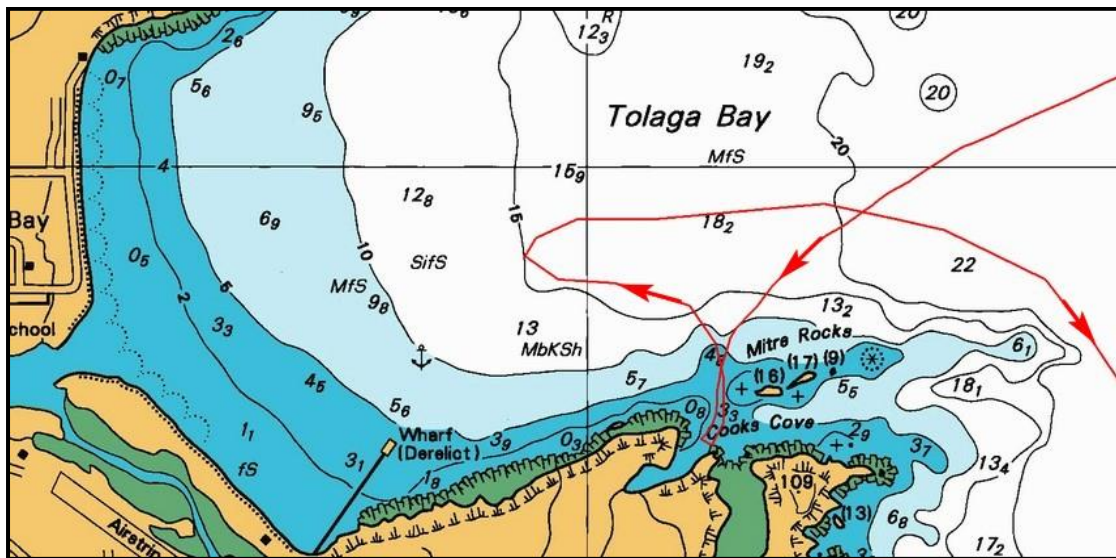
Up the sharp end of the boat was a similar but different problem. There was water sloshing up from under the floorboard. Brent managed with a bit of fiddling to lift the board and found the flat shallow bilge was filled with water. There were no limber holes to let the water run aft to the pumps so we used a plastic container to scoop up the water into a large plastic bin. It took a while and many trips with the bin to the sink. The source of the water was a mystery but we managed to get the area dry with sponges.



It is 127 nautical miles from the Hole in the Wall to Cape Runaway so of course it was dark well before our arrival. As so often happen in the Bay of Plenty the westerly wind got tired with the day and by 1700 the motor was again assisting the sails. As we were eating dinner the sea was calming and it was very dark being a little early for the Moon. Once the Moon rose it was like daylight and that was useful. We however had our heads down inside the boat. Again there was water sloshing around under the floor board of the front cabin. Contact with Martin directed us to a locker under the starboard end of the large bunk. It was full of water so we bailed that with a pot into a bucket that was emptied into the hand basin of the forward head. Eventually we rigged the oil pump out unit so that the off watch crew could easily and quickly empty the compartment without having to have a second person hold up the heavy mattress. The source of the water was a puzzle but seemed to be coming from further forward.

During my watch up to midnight I went to tighten the Boom Vang. Nothing seemed to happen so I peered through the dodger and wondered why the strut for the vang appeared to be attached to the mainsheet. Sticking my head around the dodger I could see that the strut was no longer attached to the boom. Repairs could wait for daylight.

Thirty minutes after midnight we turned south to use the passage between East Cape and East Island. The sea was calm and the wind the gentlest of breezes from the land. Once through the passage I retired to the starboard aft cabin and slept well until daybreak. Brent and then Wayne had kept the boat on a straight passage heading 185 degrees true. When I surfaced August Sun was abeam of Tolaga Bay so we did a smart starboard turn, motored into Cooks Cove and dropped the anchor to deal with a number of problems in non wobbly water. I wanted to try and find the source of the water in the fore end of the yacht, the vang had to be reattached and we needed to transfer fuel from the large tank on the cabin top to the main tank. The vang was easy as I spotted the pin on the side deck and all it needed was a new split pin to secure it in place. 90 litres of fuel went into the main tank from the jerry cans and then we stopped for breakfast.



After breakfast we tried to refill the jerry cans from the deck mounted tank using the portable transfer pump. That proved hard because the pump was not self priming and the new suction hose was in a tight coil and would not stay on the bottom of the tank. The solution was to strap the extension arm of the socket set to the end of the plastic hose (to keep it straight) and to siphon the fuel to refill the jerry cans.

Looking for the leak was not successful. The starboard locker under the fore cabin had received a squirt of water every time the bow of the boat nudged into a wave. We had been pumping out 3 litres every hour but at anchor the locker stayed dry.



We then each had a hot shower and at 1235 set off for sea. It was a warm sunny day, T shirts and shorts were all that was required as we motored over the southeast swell and by Gable End Foreland headed 202 degrees true. There was no wind. We left Ariel Bank 2 miles to our port side and watched the swell break thereon. By the time we had our five o'clock nibbles and nip of whiskey we were 12 miles ESE of Young Nicks Head. The sea was calm, the engine was running, the main bilge was dry and the fore cabin needed a regular pump.

Dinner was a massive stir fry and after clearing that we were 6 miles east of Kahutara Point (Table Cape) and by 2200 four miles east of Portland Island. I had been practising sleeping and missed the dark view of those lighthouses. The wind was very light as we crossed Hawke Bay. The sails were hoisted to help but most of our progress was made by the engine. The next problem was a complaint that the water tank was empty.

"No trouble," I replied and removed the back to the navigator's seat to access the valves and swap from the forward aft to the forward tank. The water flow was a bit slow but after a while the pump got rid of the air and flow was normal. At 0200 we passed over the Lachlan Banks and were abeam of Cape Kidnappers. Its light was a friendly beacon 23 miles to the west. Two fishing boats were nearby.

At the 0600 watch change it was dark, cold, the sea was calm, the wind very gentle and lights of farmhouses were visible. We had maintained a steady 6.6 knots for most

of the night and continued at that rate. The next significant headland was Blackhead and we were eleven miles due east of there by 0900 Wednesday. I had been pondering why we had used so much fresh water and decided to turn on the seacock for saltwater to the galley. Preliminary rinsing would then use seawater and fresh water for cleaning.



By midday we were admiring the white cliffs of Cape Turnagain and the picture made by a large ship passing to the north. We were also enjoying a lunch of salad and a hot mince pie. The wind had increased and the engine was off.

In westerly conditions there is considerable acceleration of wind out over the sea between Cape Turnagain to Castle Point. August Sun was about to receive the brunt of such conditions. The forecasts indicated 25 knots from the northwest and I felt the yacht should easily handle that. There was a more pressing matter. With the engine off we could hear water sloshing about under the floorboards of the main cabin. There was little depth to the bilge and the water was moving at speed. We bailed and pumped and removed what we could but did not achieve a dry bilge. Where was the water coming from and why was the automatic bilge pump not dealing with the problem? The float switch was amidships and with the yacht heeled perhaps the switch was declaring no need to do anything. We used the manual pump in the cockpit and forty strokes sucked dry.



Soon after lunch the first reef was pulled down and part of the headsail rolled away. The sea was slightly forward of the beam and our speed dropped to about 5.5 knots and then climbed as the wind increased. The second reef on the mainsail was pulled down and more of the headsail furled. Around 1530 Wayne and I were in the cabin making improvements to our pumping pipes when the yacht lurched a bit and there was a loud yell for help from Brent who was at the helm. The wind was at thirty knots and gusting higher. Wayne and I shot out of the cabin and furled all of the headsail. August Sun was still over canvassed and the best solution was to lower the mainsail and let her continue under bare poles, dodger and bimini. The latter was in danger of flying away and Brent was holding the windward corner to prevent that. Wayne and I ran a rope across the centre section and lashed it to the rail on each side. That meant Brent could let go and start the engine. In a horrid sea we changed course twenty degrees to starboard so as to slowly close with the land near Castle Point. We had been ten miles from the shore and from 1600 to 1730 reduced that to six miles with the sea and wind abeam. The direction made August Sun roll vigorously but it was easy on the hull. The seas were steep but not particularly high. I did not feel that heading directly into the sea was an option with the broad flat underwater hull sections. It would have been very noisy and slow despite the fifty horses in the engine.

Having reduced the fetch, the sea was more forgiving and we had continued to make progress south and pass out of the wind acceleration area. The course was changed back to 218 degrees and some of the headsail unrolled. The sea and wind rapidly eased and dinner was in peace and calm. The course took us only half a mile clear of the dangers north of Flat Point but that was enough and I did not want more rough seas.

As we came abeam of Honeycomb Rocks there was another cry from the cockpit. It was almost 2300 hours, the moon was high in the sky and Brent had turned the boat directly to windward. 50 metres to the southwest was a large red buoy with a flashing red light and to the south of that, a fishing boat.

“Are there lines from the buoy to the boat,” Brent asked.

“Don’t know,” was my reply. “Head out to sea and then resume course,” which is what we did. The chart showed an underwater chasm with a depth of 500 metres that was probably a good fishing spot. It was later suggested it could be a mooring for fishing boats, but why would that be put in 500 metres when it would be cheaper to move it into less than 45 metres only a mile west or south?

As we plodded to the south I was getting increasingly worried about water intake. The fore cabin was under control with about 4 litres being removed every three hours but the number of strokes to clear the main bilge was increasing. Initially it had been 40 but had increased to 60. At midnight the sails were furled, the sea was flat and there was only 23 miles to get to the south of Cape Palliser. The area we were in is often calm even when there is a fresh northerly wind blowing in Cook Strait. The forecast for Cook was for the northerly to ease and a gentle southerly to arrive in the morning. Roll in gentle southerly especially after we round Palliser. Our speed over the ground was steady at just over seven knots from 2400 revolutions of the engine. We had found that speed produced the best effort for noise and fuel economy.

It was 0330 when we were south of Cape Palliser. I had handed over the watch to Wayne at 0300 and pumped 300 strokes out of the main bilge. Brent had stated he could not get the bilge dry when he pumped and I had another go with the same problem. While doing that there was a disturbing thought running around my mind. The sea water under the main cabin started to appear after the cock for the galley salt pump had been turned on. I turned it off and wondered if the pipe work had a missing link, retired to bed and slept for an hour. When I poked my head out I found the headsail was set and helping us to cross Palliser Bay so went back to bed. I was next out in the main cabin at 0650. We had passed Turakirae Head and the harbour entrance was in sight. I made our final morning call to Maritime Radio and closed our TR. As always Maritime Radio’s operators were always pleasant to talk to and showed an interest in our trip.

We had a head wind as we came into the harbour so the sails were furled, bilges again pumped and the mighty Yanmar continued its important job. The wind eased as we came up the harbour and did not cause me a problem to back August Sun into her new berth on pier D. The clearance between the finger and outer pole was only just wide

enough and I was grateful that Matt and Gillian were there to provide a push at the right moment. By 0934 the yacht was secured and we could relax.

It had not been a hard trip but the constant ingress of water had been a worry and damp. 541 nautical miles had been covered in 88 hours forty minutes or an average of 6.1 knots. If the time at anchor in Cook's Cove is removed the average climbs to 6.4 knots.

The water problems were resolved over the next few days. All of the stopcocks on the boat had been renewed prior to the voyage. The one at the galley had originally been a Y valve enabling the pump to pull seawater to the sink or to drain the bottom of the fridge if it was used as an icebox or defrosted. Unknown to Martin the Y valve had been replaced with an ordinary stopcock. When turned on the seawater could flow into the bottom of the fridge and from there more slowly into the bilge. Up forward the floor of the anchor well had been leaking into the yacht. Thus rain and spray had run into the boat and when pushing into a sea, water coming in the drains would end up inside the yacht. Pumping does give the crew work to do.