Hi all,

An email from my 'other world', away from Ruthin and cycling, to say 'Hello' and hopefully keep me in touch with the club for my eventual return.

I'm writing this in Port Angeles in the Juan de Fuca strait, aboard my 34' sailing boat "Nomad", looking out across the strait at the snow-covered mountains on Vancouver island in Canada, just fifteen miles away. I've already cleared US Customs and Immigration and I'll sail over there in a couple of hours from now.

I collected the boat from the builder in Sweden in 2000 and sailed back to the marina in Caernarfon, before departing that summer for St. Johns, Newfoundland. I then sailed down the U.S. east coast to the Caribbean and on down the east coast of South America, French Guiana, Brazil, Uruguay, Argentina and around Cape Horn and into Chile. From there I sailed north through the Patagonian channels and then across the Pacific, Easter island, Pitcairn, French Polynesia, Cook Islands, Tonga and down to New Zealand. From New Zealand, north, through the Australian Barrier Reef, Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and the islands of Micronesia, Guam, Truk etc to Japan's 'Inland Sea'.

Then to South Korea and south, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Brunei and Malaysia to Singapore and on to Thailand. Then, across the Indian Ocean, Sri Lanka, the Maldives, Mauritius and Reunion to South Africa and into the south Atlantic by way of Cape Town. After calling in at Saint Helena and Ascension and Brazil again, I eventually arrived back in the Caribbean to cross my outbound track of twelve years(!) before and so completed my circumnavigation. I then passed thorough the Panama Canal (not nice in a small boat) and back into the Pacific. From Panama I sailed up to Hawaii, my longest passage, 42 days and 4,600 nautical miles, about 5,300 statute miles. From Waikiki on up to Kodiak, Alaska and then down the Alaskan and Canadian coasts through the 'inside passage' to the U.S. west coast, San Francisco, San Diego and Los Angeles, before proceeding on down to spend a season in Mexico's Sea and of Cortez. To date that's about 83,000 statute miles, 39 countries, I think.



*Not a good photo, I must take more,*
*but at a dock somewhere in Mexico.*

People often ask about weather and, of course, there has been some bad weather along the way, but it can't have been too bad as I'm still here, still enjoying it. Of course, it's not all beautiful anchorages in tropical islands, with swaying palms, hula girls and great diving out on the reef, there are times out at sea when it's blowing a full gale, bitterly cold and the motion of the boat is pretty wild, so that even making a cup of tea is a major operation and I might then sometimes have asked myself, "*What the *^*#* am I doing here?"*

Highlights? Too many to list, French Polynesia, the Micronesian islands, the Maldives, Alaska, New Zealand, South Africa and Japan, all of South America. And the many interesting and good people I've met along the way and the hospitality I've enjoyed from



both fellow sailors and locals. Sometimes the boat just serves as my 'hotel' while I'm a tourist in some of the great cities, Sydney, New York, Rio, Cape Town, Tokyo (by the bullet train out of Osaka), Hong Kong, Buenos Aires. Then there's the challenging sailing 'highlights', that first Atlantic crossing, when I got caught in Hurricane Alberto, then the sense of achievement in rounding Cape Horn, the total isolation of the Patagonian channels and too there's the sense of achievement in reaching out of the way places such as Easter island, PitcaIrn, St. Helena, Ascension Island and the fiords on the west coast of New Zealand's South Island.

But mostly cruising is time actually spent ashore, either anchored off a tropical island or in a marina, simply being a tourist somewhere far off the usual tourist routes. And although I sail alone, there is a big cruising community around the world and I'm never long in port before we visit each other's boats for drinks or for meals and a few beers ashore. I also have friends, non-sailors, visit for holidays in the many parts of the world, the Caribbean, Tahiti, New Zealand, the Barrier reef, Thailand, Chile.

I hope, too, to have friends visit once I am up in Canada, to enjoy the hundreds of little islands that stretch up the coast north of Vancouver into Alaska, the "inside passage", with glaciers, huge waterfalls and snow-covered rocky mountains dropping straight into the

anchorages. I sailed too quickly thorough the area a couple of years ago, on my way south from Alaska, but it was very late in the season and very cold so I didn't hang around but I saw enough to think, "*One day I'll come back here"* - and now Is that time. It has been a hard slog to get up here, into the prevailing strong NW'ly wind all the way from Mexico. Sailing is like cycling, a tail wind is so much easier and more enjoyable than a head wind, but sailing to windward, the "potholes" are very much deeper and much wetter in the ocean than when cycling and the contrary current meant that 'the road' was actually rolling me backwards.

And after Canada? I don't bother with long term plans, but it's a big world, there's still plenty to see!



*I don't know how this one crept in - it's my screen saver from, er, in front of my house a long time ago, when I worked building roads in remote areas of New Guinea. I'm the one on the left(!), with my 'house boy', Samuel, a member of the 'kukukuku' tribe.*

But now, before I can start up the inside passage, I have things to fix. Cruising is often described as "*fixing boats in exotic locations*". My boat has certainly done far more miles than 99% of boats ever do in their lifetime, but it is holding up very well, much better than the skipper I sometimes think. Nevertheless equipment gets 'tired' and need repair or replacing and I certainly have a long (and expensive!) "fixit" list.

So, if I haven't sent you to sleep already, if you haven't already reached for the 'delete' button, my very best wishes to you all. Certainly, the major non-sailing highlight since buying a house in Ruthin a few years ago was meeting all the people I did through the

Ruthin cycling club - I look forward to seeing you and riding with the club again. I hope you have a great summer to enjoy your riding. Much as I enjoy this life, I still miss the bike and riding with the club.

Charles Williams