

Hermit Island Rally

Maine, New England

America - a country that steadfastly refuses to acknowledge the metre and where even a gallon is not truly a gallon.....

The International Rally - this year celebrating the Wayfarer 50th anniversary - was held in Maine, USA. I joined the event along with Ralph Roberts and Ray and Jill Scragg, as representatives of the UKWA. We had a fleet of 18 boats with other Wayfarer sailors coming from the USA, Canada, Holland and France. Our hosts were extremely hospitable and either provided boats for us or ensured we were able to crew for someone else. (Emma, my Wayfarer, stayed behind in the UK, as I didn't fancy emulating Frank Dye's ocean crossing passages!)

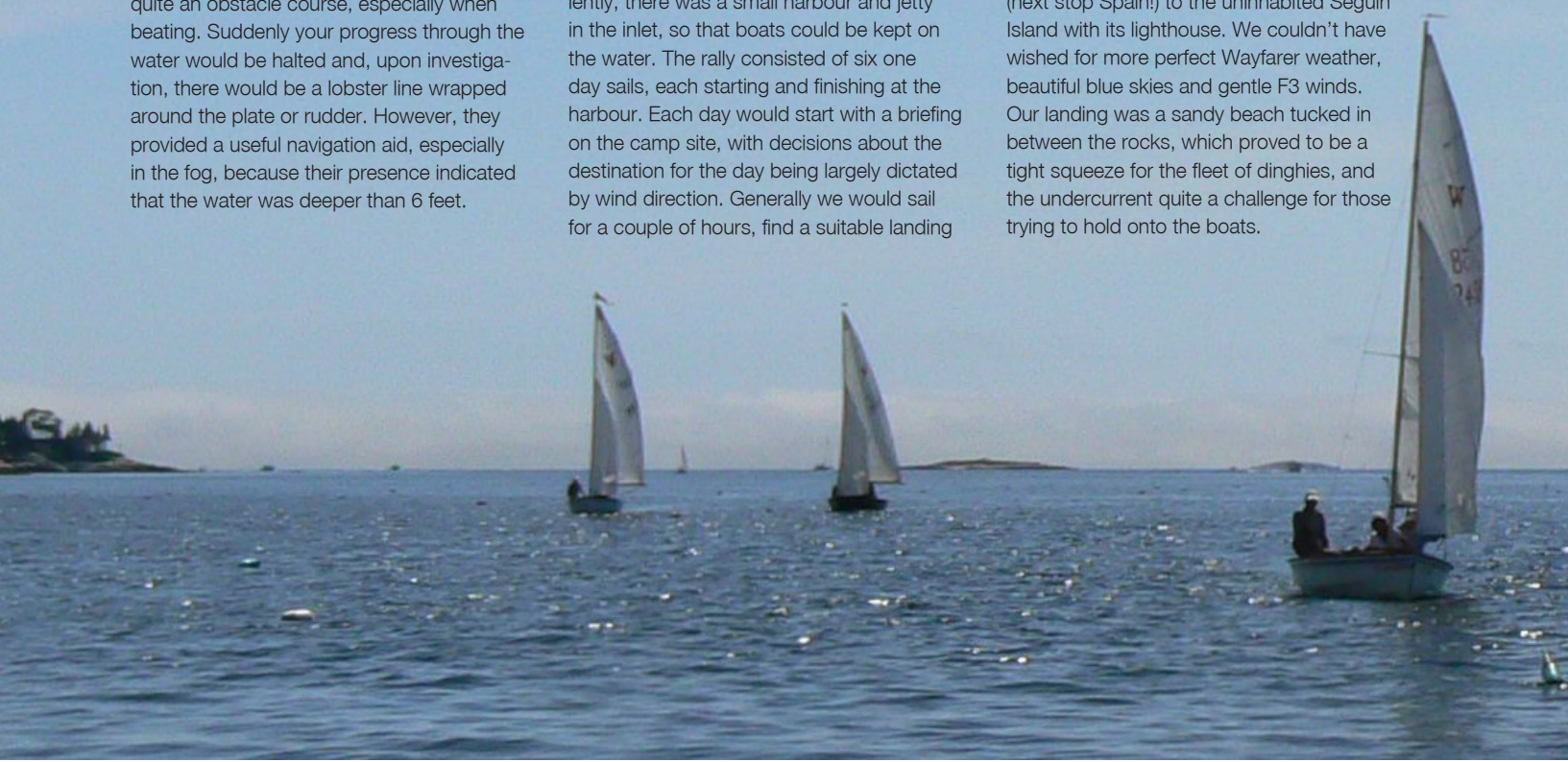
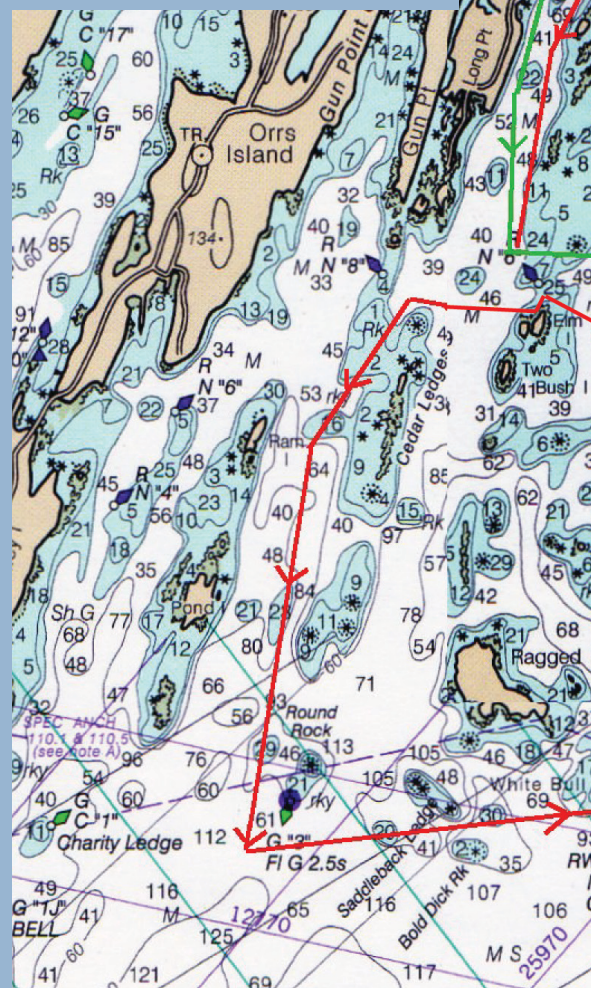
The coastline of Maine is a fascinating series of deeply incised bays carved out by the ice. The maze of headlands and islands lent itself to exploration by dinghy. The ice scoured landscape is reminiscent of parts of the Swedish coast, being fairly low lying, and, where vegetated, is largely wooded. The weather was kind to us and, with amazingly consistent winds, never exceeding a gentle F4, we had a superb time island hopping. As long as you could count off the islands and kept a weather eye out for the breaking water, indicating isolated rocks, navigation was straight-forward and the only real challenge was the fog that would roll in from nowhere and engulf the fleet. An additional challenge was created by all the lobster pots. Maine is famous for its lobsters and the bays were full of lines of pots which created quite an obstacle course, especially when beating. Suddenly your progress through the water would be halted and, upon investigation, there would be a lobster line wrapped around the plate or rudder. However, they provided a useful navigation aid, especially in the fog, because their presence indicated that the water was deeper than 6 feet.

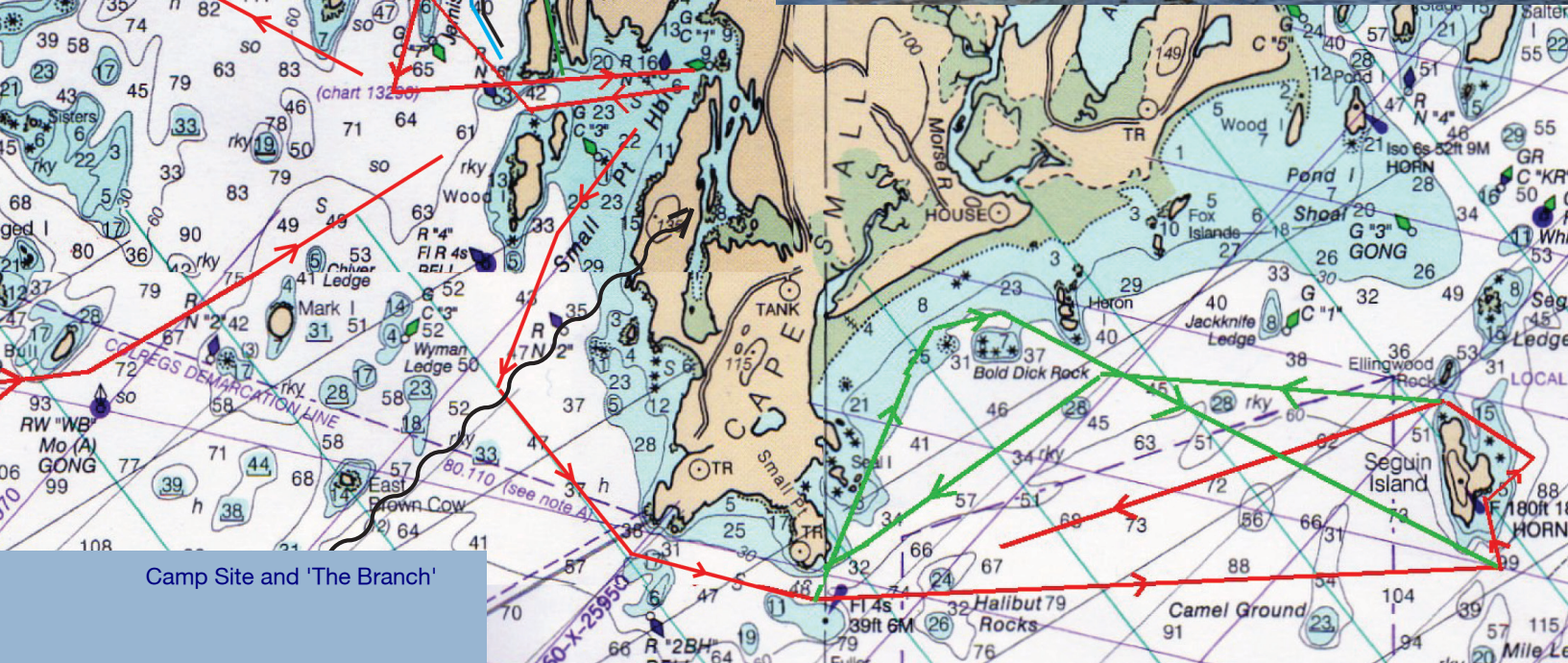
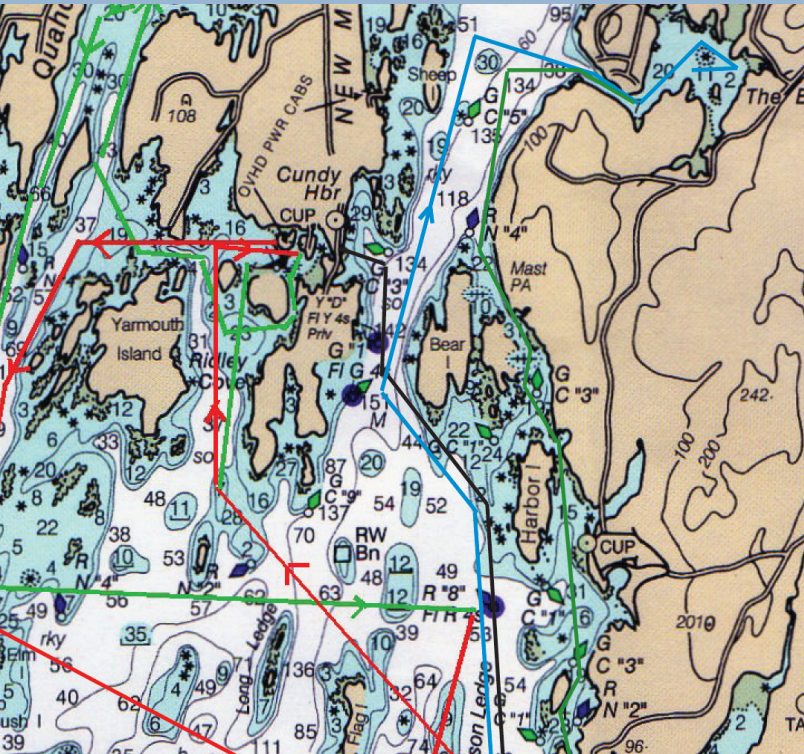
Another quirk of navigation in America is the buoyage. Just to make life difficult, channel markers indicate the channel from the perspective of someone leaving harbour rather than entering, as it is in the UK. So the port and starboard hand markers are the opposite way around. Not too critical for a shallow draught boat like the Wayfarer, but it certainly proved a challenge for one yacht that we saw perched on a rock off one of the islands, on a falling tide.

When I enquired what the tidal range in the area was, I was told it was about 12. This took me back a little, as I started to picture the Bay of Fundy, which isn't far to the north and its reputation for one of the biggest tidal ranges in the World. Then the penny dropped, this is America after all, a country that steadfastly refuses to acknowledge the metre and where even a gallon is not truly a gallon. We were talking about a range of 12 feet, not metres - not too dissimilar to my home waters on the East Coast. In fact tidal currents were only really significant in narrow channels, although our route in and out from the harbour every day was very much influenced by the tide, which, fortunately, tended to be in our favour.

Our base for the rally was Hermit Island, near Bath, on the Atlantic coast of Maine. Whilst not strictly speaking an island, the peninsula was devoted to a large campsite and nature reserve. The organisers had managed to secure a sequence of pitches along the shore of an inlet so that we were able to camp together as a group. Conveniently, there was a small harbour and jetty in the inlet, so that boats could be kept on the water. The rally consisted of six one day sails, each starting and finishing at the harbour. Each day would start with a briefing on the camp site, with decisions about the destination for the day being largely dictated by wind direction. Generally we would sail for a couple of hours, find a suitable landing

for a leisurely lunch and then return via a different sequence of islands. Our lunch stops ranged from delightful local villages to deserted, rocky islands. Our most adventurous sail saw us heading out into the Atlantic (next stop Spain!) to the uninhabited Seguin Island with its lighthouse. We couldn't have wished for more perfect Wayfarer weather, beautiful blue skies and gentle F3 winds. Our landing was a sandy beach tucked in between the rocks, which proved to be a tight squeeze for the fleet of dinghies, and the undercurrent quite a challenge for those trying to hold onto the boats.





Camp Site and 'The Branch'

True to form and typical of Wayfarer rallies was the camaraderie. Evenings were spent on the campsite with groups gathered around camp fires regaling each other with tales of Wayfarer sailing. There was the traditional Wayfarer singalong, with songs in English, French and Dutch (with a bit of Danish thrown in for good measure). No visit to Maine would be complete without a lobster supper and our last night saw the entire crew on the beach under the camping shelter being served an enormous feast of locally caught seafood.

If you have never been on an International Rally, I can strongly recommend them. This was my fourth rally abroad and they have all been superbly organised. You benefit from sailing in foreign waters with others who already have a good local knowledge and are all too happy to share their expertise. The atmosphere both on and off the water is superb and in the true Wayfarer spirit. Next year's International Rally is in Brittany – a little more accessible

than Maine – so why not write the date in your diary now and broaden your horizons.

Anne Kell
W247 Emma



Embarking on Thursday's sail to Cundys Harbor via Yarmouth Island. Photo Al Schonborn

Hermit Island Rally

"Wow, you guys are fantastic – what class of boat is that!"

Wayfarer rallies are a wonderful opportunity to share cruising grounds with pioneering types who have already been out there on their own, found wonderful places and are keen to share their knowledge and experience. Even though we normally just race our Wayfarer we have been privileged to go to the Brittany Rally some years back with the Cooters; the Suffolk Rally led by the Kells; the Friesland Rally led by Jan Katgerman and Hans De Bruijne; a Danish Rally at Rantzausminde led by Poul Ammentorp – all fantastic experiences. So when Jill said 'why don't we do the International Rally at Hermit Island?', I just said OK, why not? Hermit Island is on the east coast of the USA, not far northeast from Portland in the state of Maine. Inspired and organized by Dick Harrison and assisted by Tom Graefe, this rally provided an opportunity to get a taste of life in New England and in particular a convoluted area of rocky coast, sandy beaches and inlets, providing a wonderful and extensive cruising ground. Furthermore, extensive lobster fishing in the area provided us with a backdrop to our cruising experience – lobsters (and clams) provided the main theme for our supper get-togethers and lobster pots aided our navigation!

Hermit Island provided not only a quiet, rocky, tree-covered campsite, but also a sheltered anchorage and creek – ideal for launching Wayfarers. As well as us Brits, including Anne Kell and Ralph Roberts, the participants gradually arrived from the USA, Canada, Holland and France – the latter on bicycles from Montreal airport 300 miles away! Our tent and cooking stuff appeared in the back of a heavily-loaded Volvo estate and Wayfarer brought all the way down from Toronto by Kit Wallace and Patsy Poulin, who were our wonderful buddies for the week. Each tree-surrounded pitch had



Nothin' but the deep blue ocean - our Canadian buddies Kit Wallace & Patsy Poulin en-route to Seguin Island

its little bit of beach adjacent to the creek, complete with picnic table - the 'done thing' was to erect a square tent of mosquito netting around these for eating/drinking spaces. The icing on the cake for us was the loan of Wayfarer "The Jolly Blue" by Frank Pedersen, who towed it hundreds of miles and then got it set up and launched for us! Hospitality showed no bounds! Furthermore there were allocated mooring jetty spaces too – not all taken up by the local lobster fleet.

Each day brought a bit of a challenge departing from and returning to our sheltered creek, aptly known as 'The Branch'. Some parts were quite narrow with some impressive rock formations either side in places and with the trees lining the creek the wind was inevitably light and fickle. Sailing was made even more interesting by the mix of moored boats and sometimes a lowish tide. On poking our noses out of 'the Branch' we had our first glimpse of the magnificent island-endowed sailing waters - what a cruising ground, edged by the Atlantic Ocean and

bathed in warm sunshine and a very gentle breeze – just right to acquaint ourselves with our Wayfarer. But our shake-down trip was to take us in sheltered waters inland to Cundys Harbor, where we tied up for a relaxed lunch and gentle sail back. Monday brought cooler temperatures and a lightish force 2-3 breeze – ideal for a bigger course, stopping at Elm Island for lunch and then going out towards the Atlantic, taking in Cedar Ledge, Round Rock and Ragged Island – such evocative names – couldn't really argue with any of them! The 'piece de resistance' of the whole week was Wednesday's trip out to Seguin Island, located off the mouth of the Kennebec River and home to the Seguin lighthouse. The breeze was light, the sunshine warm and the scenery fantastic, the kind of day you never forget. The tiny inlet behind Seguin Island had the effect of amplifying the little bit of Atlantic swell, making the entrance 'interesting' and causing some concerns as the Wayfarers dragged forwards and back in the waves; they needed to be well beached, but there wasn't a lot of room! However, we can't have made



too bad an impression - a crewmember of a moored yacht hailed to Dick Harrington "Wow, you guys are fantastic - what class of boat is that!" Thursday again brought warm weather and light breezes and we headed off northwest via Yarmouth Island to the back end of Cundys Harbor, tying up at the jetties and ordering up beers and ice creams. The trip back took us out towards Elm Island and here the breeze started to get up to force 4 on the nose with ominous looking clouds brewing up over Hermit Island. These turned out to be shifting fog banks - we took a little extra care over our navigation. The wind eased a bit as we approached Hermit Island but the mist created a surreal atmosphere as the sun shone through weakly in places - the kind of conditions you want to capture on camera, but somehow you can't quite get!

We took the opportunity to look around ashore too. As one whose experience of the USA is mostly of business trips to the major cities, this sojourn in New England was an eye-opener. The pace of life was easy-going, reminding me more of rural England, this impression enhanced by the plethora of English place names like Bath, Topsham, Yarmouth, Ipswich, Wareham, Portsmouth to name but a few - one felt immediately at home. This impression was further amplified when visiting merchants' houses, in which any item of furniture had to have been imported from England - if sometimes only labelled as such! Besides lobster fishing in the area, there was a shipyard in Bath, now building missile destroyers, but having evolved out of a successful but ultimately short-lived schooner building industry. The links with the early settlers and merchant trading with England and the rest of Europe provided a thought-provoking perspective to our trip. We drove back to our departure city of Boston via the White Mountains of New Hampshire, taking stops at viewpoints in the warm sunshine. I was most impressed by the logos on the New Hampshire car licence plates -

"Be free or die"...

Ray & Jill Scragg
W7698 Blue Jay



Top: Beached up at Seguin Island Photo: Al Schonborn



Below: Wayfarers returning home from Thursday's trip to the Yarmouth Island/Cundys Harbor area, wind dropping, mist swirling, but the sun coming through - one of those magic evenings

