

4th Report: 19 August to 25 November 2009 from Svølvær 68° 14.4'N, 14°34.4'E to Litlebergen 60 32.3'N, 5°14.2'E with the interruption of two trips to Switzerland

On 11 August, Alex's mother Hanny died. The family and many friends gathered in the church of Interlaken for a very touching memorial service. We left with a good feeling, despite our rather hasty departure after the funeral.

On Wednesday, 19 August, we got up in Ehrendingen together with Renzo at the unearthly hour of 0420 for our return trip to Svølvær. We drove to Zurich Airport, boarded the plane to Stockholm, spent several hours for the connecting flight to Oslo, then continued with good connections from Oslo to Bodø and finally from Bodø to Svølvær. The planes decreased in size from leg to leg. The last one was propeller-driven. On the last flight the weather was perfect and we flew at such low altitude that every sheep (comparison of magnitude!) on the many small islands in the deep blue water would have been visible, although we sighted none.

After 16 long hours we arrived in Svølvær dead tired. We planned to leave first thing in the morning, so we cleared *Silmaril* before bed nevertheless. Our schedule was tight, since our return flight with Renzo had already been booked before our hasty departure for Switzerland on 12 August. We did not want to lose more money on cancelled and additional flights. Moreover we had fixed appointments with friends and class mates. We had to arrive in Ålesund on the 28th to be able to fly on the 29th.



In the morning, Alex went to the nearby garage to shop for essentials and then we left. In rather gloomy and wet weather we crossed Vestfjord. Renzo was at the helm most of the time and Alex very gladly took advantage of his enthusiasm.



On the island of Hellivær we made fast at the Hurtigbåt pontoon at Vokkøya. There was no other good possibility in sight. Alex called and the captain assured us that he would always find a place to moor, just to stay where we were.



A young man came to talk to us. He was interested in our where from and where to.

Only few people live on the island all year round, but quite a number have summer houses and come for the long holidays. He and his father were working on the old house inherited from his grandfather. We talked about fishing. He answered our many questions about private fishing on the islands of the vicinity.



Vokkøya lies at a narrow passage between two islands. And a wide bay opens just inside. It was obviously used as a shelter for all kinds of boats and ships in heavy weather. All around the bay we saw large white circles painted around hooks and rings in the cliffs for mooring lines. And with storms raging out in the open, the bay was crammed full with boat of all sizes.

On Friday morning we left before 0800 and proceeded through the narrow passage. There are three aerial cables across the passage on the charts, one of them at only 22m. I did

not like this at all, but everything went well. Our mast is probably less than 20m above water, as marked in our papers or they included the 1m antenna in the overall height.

Our next destination was Klokkergården on Rødøya. Alex and I had celebrated there our first crossing of the Arctic Circle.

We had good wind, but mostly on the nose and so we tacked a good deal. As we approached Rødøya, Alex absolutely wanted to pass through the small harbor, where we wanted to fill diesel on our way north, but had to skip the maneuver because of too little depth at the jetty during low tide. The entry from the north seemed unproblematic. But suddenly the sea bottom was clearly visible and dramatically close to the surface. At 2m30 on the depth sounder Alex shifted in reverse fast and turned *Silmaril* 180° very carefully. So, we had to sail around the island and take the same way as on our trip north. In perfect weather we arrived in Klokkergården.

Unfortunately everything was closed and our hopes for excellent food, freshly baked bread and luxurious warm showers were painfully dashed. Renzo did take a shower, although a cold one, since his 5 crowns lay in the wrong meter!

On Saturday, 22 August the weather was crazy. It changed from good wind to too little and far too much so suddenly that reefing and unfurling turned into a strenuous race. During a lull we observed the cruel food hunt of a black seagull. It persecuted a small white one with vicious attacks until it sat on the water, pitifully crying like a baby and retching up the content of its stomach. My bird book confirmed the behavior; the black hunters attack persistently until the exhausted victims surrender the good food to the clever thieves.

We also saw eagles soaring up high and some porpoises showed their back fins.



In the vicinity of the Arctic Circle wind and waves were very agreeable and *Silmaril* gave us great pleasure with her superb performance. Slowly but surely the sky darkened.



And at about two hours to Sandnessjøn, the ride became rough. 30 knots wind directly on the nose and choppy waves forced us to zigzag under genoa and engine toward the harbor by very unfavorable tacking angles. It soon started to rain and I quit taking pictures. As soon as we entered into the harbor, the wind decreased considerably and even the rain stopped. The mooring maneuver suffered from communicational difficulties. Steaming in? (unverified expression, meaning inching forward into a line from the boat to the pier in order to stabilize the boat along the pier) Yes, of course, but who is in charge of what? Ideas about methods change with three people involved. In any case, we landed safely and the discussion afterwards cleared all three standpoints. Our French friend Jérôme was also in the harbor with his *Lady Salope*. We had coffee on his boat and later on he shared our ragout on *Silmaril*.



He never came without a little present on previous occasions. This one here was missing on a tree in the harbor.

The weather forecast was good for the next day, although little wind was announced.



We left Sandnessjøen at the same time as Jérôme. He headed north and we continued on our southward journey. Again we sighted back fins of porpoises and lots of seagulls. The route was not exactly difficult and there was lots of time to study the charts and investigate the funny noise from the rudder.



All clear, no serious problem!



We sailed along the "Seven Sisters" who hid their heads in many-shaped clouds.



A little later we took the time to turn into the bay of the Petter Dass Museum. On our way north, Alex and I had taken a bicycle trip to this place and wanted to show Renzo the ultra modern architecture of the brand new museum.



The picture did not turn out well at all. But it gives an impression of the three main buildings, the 17th century church hidden by the trees, the modern museum looming over the water and the very old fishing shed and store house on the shore.

The leisurely journey left much time to admire beautiful cloud pictures and take many photos. One of these days I am going to make a real cloud book.



The ambiance changed with breath-taking speed from light and lovely to threateningly beautiful. A series of rain squalls passed us, but not one caught and drenched us.



We sailed along the west side of the isle of Leka planning to anchor in a wide bay at its southern tip. The island is very barren, but the color of the cliffs is beautiful; many different shades of brown tinge the bizarre rock formations.

Right in front of the bay Solsemvågen Alex and Renzo tried their luck with the fishing rods. And Alex landed a large Pollack. At anchor in the deserted bay we enjoyed a great fish dinner and the peace and quite of the evening. No one was in sight, not at the few houses not at the pontoon where a number of fishing vessels were tied up. Total calm all around. Alex and Renzo looked again into the funny noises of the rudder and I washed the dishes and cleaned the pantry. Shortly before midnight we turned in and slept like marmots.



In the morning we woke up around 07:00. Oily water all around us, not a breath of wind and a radiant sun.

In such weather the stern shower is quite an attraction and Renzo was fully awake after it.

We soon left the bay and headed for Rørvik, where we planned to fill diesel, go shopping, and buy propane gas. We knew the place had an easily accessible gas station at the water front from our previous stay here. *Silmaril* had waited for us in the nearby harbor, when we returned to Switzerland for a short while last June.



We soon left Rørvik again and continued our way south. There was little wind and we changed between genoa with and genoa without engine. It was frustrating to have either no wind or too much directly against us. But that's the way it is, sailing means accepting whatever the weather offers, frustration or no frustration.

Our next destination, Bessaker, was also a familiar little harbor.

Again we were alone at the jetty in front of the restaurant and store. And again everything was closed. We climbed the hill behind the harbor, where the Germans had built a stronghold with bunkers and gun emplacements in the Second World War. The view was well worth the steep ascent, although we had been up here on our first visit already.

Alex made a picture of almost the entire panorama.



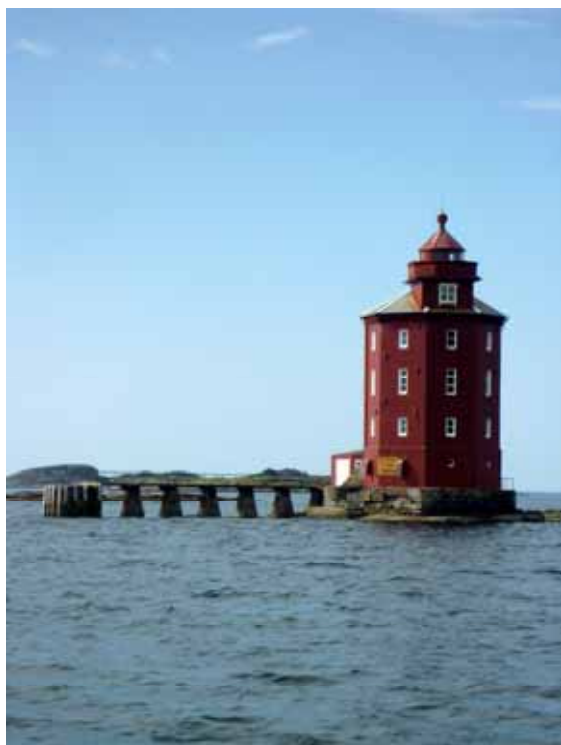
I found mushrooms, some sort of boletus, and we ate them as a starter to chili con carne. On Tuesday, 25 August we got up very early. The weather forecast had promised good wind. During breakfast an impressively large fuel vessel made fast directly behind us. I always admire how such monsters are maneuvered within centimeters from any obstacle, here our stern.



And sure enough, there was a lovely breeze out in the open. At 15 knots we made good headway.



In the Stocksundet the wind freshened to 25 knots and we tacked in rather short legs in the narrow sound heeling considerably and at 8 knots speed. Close to the 90° curve in the waterway we decided to take down the sails and ran under engine around the sharp bend. In the narrow fords falling winds are extremely unpredictable. And we wished to avoid the risk of a spontaneous jibe. Renzo would have risked more, but we have had the ugly experience of sudden falling winds in narrow fjords and he had not.



This gorgeous lighthouse stands just before the entry to the Trondheimsleia. I believe that there exists a German stamp with its picture. But I have not succeeded in finding it yet. And from here we saw the house of the Forsthöfels again, the family who had invited us for a grill dinner when we lay in Brekstad last May.

Around 14:00 the wind died suddenly to total calm and we had to continue under engine.

It was warm, almost hot and Renzo compensated for his lack of training with devotion.



Passed charming lighthouses and a bit gruesome wrecks we reached the sheltered anchorage in Taftøy bay.



Before we went all the way to the end of the bay, Alex and Renzo dropped their fishing hooks, but to no avail.

The bay is rather shallow at its end and not very wide. So, we cast the anchor in good distance to the shore to have plenty of room to swing even in changing winds. Renzo and Alex had a "fine nose" in doing so. Toward midnight the anchor alarm woke us up indicating that in the now strong wind *Silmaril* had drifted farther away from the anchor as Alex had defined as safe. In 25 knots *Silmaril* danced quite vigorously on the chain and had obviously stretched its slack a bit. After a while we were sure that the boat moved within a narrow circle. Renzo and I crept back to bed and fell asleep in no time. Alex kept

watch for over two hours until the wind decreased to 13 knots and *Silmaril* only gently tugged at the chain.

In the morning the wind had died completely, the water in the bay looked like oil and there was once again no wind for our sails.



On the approaches to Kristiansund we passed again the advertized leisure center for small boats, which we had considered as overnight mooring place on our way north. But the sight of it soon taught us that the piers and jetties were in such bad shape that this was not for us. It does not look so bad on this picture. But even Renzo would not have stayed here. The piers were tumbling in the water and the jetties half submerged.

We continued along the narrow water ways leading us to Kristiansund, where we planned to stay over night, refill provisions and take long showers. And all of it actually happened.



In the immediate approaches to the harbor a fishing vessel persecuted us. He kept coming very close and tried to get in our way. The idiot really scared me. And that was assumingly exactly what he wanted. He eventually turned away and headed into another passage. We proceeded on our way into the harbor with no other mishap.

We came across a huge ship, an absolute giant of a special kind, not a cruise ship nor a tanker or icebreaker, but a Dutch working platform called *Seahorse*. Alex checked its website. It is a floating factory with 150 crew members. The thing can perform almost any kind of hard job on the water, pore concrete under water, anchor huge buoys on the bottom of the sea, ram sheet piling into the ground, etc. It flabbergasts me how such a monster can be maneuvered in narrow places.



The harbor of Kristiansund lays snugly between a group of islands. It has three main entries all of them spanned by bridges. The town is very colorful. All around the harbor houses are pretty and well kept. Only opposite the guest harbor there are some dilapidated factories or warehouses and abandoned shipyards.



We took a leisurely walk around town. From the hill behind the main street we had a nice view of the colorful houses and the great church.



This is the "klippfisk" woman. The statue stands on the main street along the water front. She is the symbol for the great production of salted cod dried on the cliffs, that brought the city great wealth between 1830 and 1872.



She stands in her impressive pose of good health, energy and self confidence. The production of "klippfisk" is time-consuming and strenuous work, as we learned in the museum in Å on the Lofoten. Every day the salted fish is spread on the cliffs and every evening it is collected into round piles and covered with wooden lids. No weakling would be able to survive such work.

Thursday, 27 August. We got up early. The notorious Hustavika is ahead of us and Alex planned to leave it behind us before the stiff breeze announced for the afternoon. We started with little wind, but soon set sails and passed Hustavika in good wind and agreeable weather.



It was pure pleasure!



We reached our next port of call, the little island of Finnøya rather early. We sailed through shallow and rocky water to the entrance of the harbor, but the dangerous rocks were well marked and we knew from our books that the signs just in front of the harbor were a bit confusing, red exchanged for green and we proceeded at snails pace. The entry to the harbor is very narrow and in the true sense of the word menacing.



We made fast at the wooden pier to find out where we could possibly stay for the night. The sign "Guest Harbor" points into a narrow waterway blocked off by a large house. Alex and Renzo went to investigate on foot. And what a surprise! At the end of the passage after a 90° turn the brand new marina lay before us.

Renzo carefully maneuvered *Silmaril* around bends and pontoons and put her alongside the jetty with the nose into the wind.

The wind had increased as announced and we were well prepared for what was to come. And it did come. With bicycles borrowed from the marina we set out to visit the island Harøya, which is connected with Finnøya by a dam. There is a factory in the village of Steinshamn that builds the world's largest winches. We wanted to see them. On the way there the wind pushed us with great force and on the way back pedaling against it, it almost took our breath away.

The sea on the left and the right side of the dam was agitated, the noise of wind and water deafening and the sky simply nightmarish.



We arrived on Harøya safely and did see the winches. I did take pictures, but although a man looks like a very small dwarf next to them, they hardly show on them. So, no documentation.



Back in the marina we got the keys to the indoor pool and enjoyed a few hours of peace and quiet with great views and warm water in the pool all to ourselves. The day had been absolutely perfect in all respects.

Friday, 28 August. The last sailing day with Renzo. Today we reached very well known waters. We were only a short distance away from Ålesund.



Soon we sailed around the northern tip of Heissa, where the Marine Aquarium of Ålesund is located . . .

. . . continued along the pretty boat houses . . .



. . . and enjoyed the view of our well-loved winter quarters of last year with its ancient a bit dilapidated warehouse at the southern tip of Heissa before us and the antenna on the hill behind.

Our friend and boat neighbor of last winter in Nørvevika, Axel, (he volunteers as harbor overseer next to his job as an intern in the local hospital) suggested that we make fast alongside the club boat *Gassen*. We were not very happy with this solution. The pontoon was supposed to be exchange for a new one during our absence and all the boats would have to be moved. We did not want to burden our friends with an extra boat. Alex went by bicycle to investigate at Gulliksen, a nearby motor dealer with a private pontoon, whether we could leave *Silmaril* with tem. Yes, we could. So, Renzo and I sailed to Gulliksen with a short stop-over in one of the last berths on the pontoon to retrieve the bicycle bag we had forgotten. The rest of the afternoon was filled with packing, preparing *Silmaril* for the time of our absence, mounting the "Küchenbude", the tent over the cockpit, and a short outing by bicycle to the city for Renzo and me – Alex stayed with the boat, since we only have two folding bikes.

Ålesund was packed with people, cars and boats. A festival was in full swing, the harbor had been provided with a number of extra pontoons, the streets were jammed with stands and tents of all sorts. I hardly recognized the place.

On our way back all three of us met with Axel on his Hanse *Esther* in the marina of Nørvevika for beer and goodbye.

Just before we turned in, torrential rain patterned on the deck; and Alex consented, although reluctantly, to order a taxi to take us to the bus station early in the morning. We had to get up at 04:00 and it was still raining carts and dogs. The taxi driver was not very enthusiastic about the short ride, but I certainly enjoyed it very much warm and dry.

The plane took off from Vigra at 07:10 and landed in Zurich around 16:00 after stopovers in Oslo and Copenhagen. Alex and I accompanied Renzo home, packed our luggage into the car and left right away to a long planned meeting in Pruntrut with our friends, the Labhardts, the Schmids, and the Zinslis.

Our stay in Switzerland was rather short. On 8 September we already returned to Ålesund to sail *Silmaril* down to Bergen, where she was going to stay for the winter.

We arrived very late and experienced the worst storm of our entire life on board. The wind blew with 50 knots for hours, and considerably more in gusts. We lay in almost perfect shelter behind the large building and in a closed waterway. There were no waves of consequence, but the force of the wind and the roaring rain shook *Silmaril* so vehemently that the entire boat started to vibrate with deafening noise and incredibly jerky movements. We did not get much sleep, but *Silmaril* lay safely moored and we were not really worried. We simply had to wait for the storm to blow itself out.

The wind was still strong on Wednesday, but not so bad and we prepared to move to the city harbor Brosundet. There are no services here at Gulliksen and Nørvevika had no free berth.

On Thursday we sailed around Heissa into Brosundet. Towards evening we drove to Sjøholt with Alexander, another friend and boat neighbor from Nørvevika, where his *Shield of Faith* lay. He wanted to move her to Brosundet as well. Alex accompanied Alexander on the boat, I drove the car back and cooked dinner for the three of us.

On Friday, work on the new pontoon had started in Nørvevika. We anticipated great disorder with all the boats still in their berths, loads of material on the old pontoon, dozens of helpers and miserable weather with wind and rain and a dark sky.

What we met with when we arrived to watch the progress, was well organized steady work.



Axel (in the blue jacket) is fixing one of the metal gangplanks onto the new pontoon with *Esther* already in place.



A new group of boats with the gangplanks attached to them is moved out of the way . . .

. . . to make room for another section of new pontoon tugged into place . . .



. . . which is then added to the new pontoon



and . .



. . . finally the group of boats with the attached gangplanks is fastened to the new pontoon.

We were very impressed with the smooth performance and nobody was screaming!

The days in Ålesund passed quickly. We visited our friends in Emblem, ate dinner with Axel, went to the concert by the Ålesund Chamber Orchestra in the church with the newly restored organ together with the Ulstein family, and met once more with Alexander and our present boat neighbor and friend of Alexander's, drank beer and talked about boats, plans for boats, boat trips and boat stories . . . Tired but happy we saw our guests off and went to bed for the last time on *Silmaril* in Ålesund.

Monday, 14 September. On the move again. The weather was very much better and with left Brosundet with pleasant anticipation of the coming days and a bit melancholy. We will probably not come back here with *Silmaril*.



We sailed passed the light house on God, probably for the last time.

Stad presented itself not in the least as notorious as this "nose" is. We sailed along the mighty cliffs and many rocks in good wind and almost cloudless sky.



We intended to go to Silda. The island has two harbors. We chose the northern one after fishing without success. The mermaid greeted us somewhat sadly. Well, there was no activity in the harbor at this time of year.



On the next morning we hiked up the hill and saw both harbors from the top.

Down there lies *Silmaril* next to a Norwegian.



And in the southern harbor sail boats could also find a mooring place, but no mermaid!



An old fisherman came into the harbor with a new catch and moored his vessel at his boat house close to our pontoon. Alex went to buy fish from him. He refused to sell, but gave him a good-sized saithe as a present. I brought him Toblerone. We did not talk much, but his eyes understood Toblerone very well and his hands accepted it gladly.

Our rather unkempt boat neighbor came to talk to us in his socks. We talked a bit. He was on his way south. Where to? Don't know, will see. Later on a Polish sailboat made fast on the other pontoon. They were not very communicative. Too bad.

On Tuesday morning the weather was pretty awful. We decided to stay and do some administrative chores and go for a hike up the hill. The Norwegian had already left.

Wednesday, 16 September. Elections of the Swiss Federal Council. We listened to the broadcast from the "Bundeshaus" during the preparations for departure. On 15 September, the Norwegians had elections. As our Norwegian boat neighbor left the pontoon, he yelled: "We are still socialists, thank goodness" and disappeared behind the break water.



We left at 09:00 listening to DRS 4 on the elections over the speakers in the cockpit. The weather was still so-so. But rain produces beautiful bows . . .

. . . and spectacular conditions of illumination and clouds on the gloomy sky.



We sailed south passed Måløy 's fish factories and the large bridge with a stiff breeze and Silmaril gave us quite a rough ride. But we made good speed. The day had been rather long when we finally dropped anchor in the tiny Skifjord around 8 p.m. The night was very peaceful and we woke up well rested and fit for another leg of the journey.

In the morning it was dead calm in our bay. We took our time to leave and planned to buy some bread in Bjørnstad, about half way to the exit of the fjord.



I could not go up to the only pier in front of the red boat house. The water was not deep enough and the pier not long enough for *Silmaril*. So, I maneuvered her with the nose close to the pier and let Alex jump off and go looking for the store. Meanwhile I reversed and turned in slow circles farther out waiting for him.

He did find the store, but it had been transformed into a carpenter's workshop since the author of our book with the description of the place had been here.

It was not catastrophic, we had plenty of food. So, we chugged out of Skifjord. The little wind out in the mouth of Sognefjord had

turned unfavorably and we had to tack very close-hauled. The steady current against us added to the slow going. And we tacked and tacked through the Fedjefjorden down to the Radfjorden. Around 7:30 p.m. we found a very lovely hidden bay on the isle of Uttoska. We could hardly see the entrance to it and advanced at snail's pace with Alex standing in the bow and looking out for underwater rocks. I tried to stay exactly in the middle of the very narrow passages and reached the rather wide bay around several small islands. The ground in the bay wa perfect for good anchorage. And once again we were alone on the wide water.

On Friday, 18 September the weather was finally dry and warm. This was the last sailing day before Bergen. We kept tacking against moderate or little wind.



Time and again we had to give right of way to such monsters. We tried to decide at what point we were going to go about without the help of AIS and predetermined points of collision on the plotter. I still could not estimate the distance to a danger point accurately and shouted for a hasty maneuver far too early.

Soon the first houses of the vicinity of Bergen came into view.



This one here I liked very much. What a view!

The Hurtigruten ship just passed under the bridge, so it must have been around 2 p.m. they usually moor at the terminal at 3:30.



At the entrance to the city harbor there lies one of the city's landmark: the SS *Statsraad Lehmkuhl*, a military training vessel. We had watched her leave port several times. The ship has a distinguished history. Wikipedia tells you all about it.

And this is Bryggen, the medieval houses in the harbor. This is probably the most famous picture of Bergen.

Originally these buildings served as warehouses, wharfs, and trading centers at the water front.

Today they are kept intact with incredible effort and investment. They house stores, galleries, restaurants and living quarters. In summer time the place is full of life. Of course Bryggen is also frequented by masses of tourists. But this does not do any harm, with them Bryggen lives and can be kept functioning.



On this warm and sunny Friday the harbor was full of activities. Many visitors arrive for the weekend by boat. And they lay four abreast. We made fast at the end of Shetland Larsen Kaien at the Zacharias Bryggen, where we

had been before. Very soon a Norwegian arrived and tied up alongside *Silmaril*. Right behind us on the other side of the pier a floating single-family house was moored. On the picture above on the right one can see its square shape. We visited it. It has room for four people, has a kitchen, a bathroom, a sauna, a roof terrace, a small balcony in front of the larger bedroom, a living room with an electrical fire place and a small office. The thing can be maneuvered by a steering wheel on the roof; it has two engines and is inhabitable all year round. Ingenious.

A huge stone half sphere ornaments the pier with the 515 names of the seamen from Bergen who died in the First and the Second World War.



We stayed here for the weekend, took care of our costumes problem (*Silmaril* is only allowed a limited stay in Norway without paying the 25% sales tax), attended to some urgent cleaning and washing chores and strolled through the city.

On Monday 21 September we left, stopped briefly at the customs pier in driving rain, handed in our written request for a prolonged stay over winter and continued north toward our new winter quarters in the marina of Litlebergen. Our boat neighbor from Nørvevika, Raymond, moved here last winter. He works here for the boat dealer FjordSailing and lives with his wife Anne on their boat *Helmax*. Raymond welcomed us affectionately and assigned us berth 26, where we moored *Silmaril* stern first. We had arrived "home" for the winter. Anne was not at home. She works on a huge service ship for oil rigs and other gigantic jobs on the water. She is away for four weeks, works 12-hour shifts and is home again for four weeks. The ship often sails in far away waters, in India or the Gulf of Mexico.

We began preparing our return to Switzerland, packing our stuff and getting *Silmaril* ready for the time of our absence.

On Wednesday, 23 September we took a taxi to the bus station, continued to the train station and boarded the train for Oslo at 07:55. The trip on the Bergen railway was fantastic. The route leads through wonderful landscape and the engineering miracles of railway tracks in those mountains are truly awe-inspiring. The pictures taken through the windows are all blurry unfortunately. In Oslo we went aboard the ferry to Copenhagen, where we had a few hours for a harbor cruise and a visit to the National Museum. Since our last visit in Copenhagen years ago, the city added some very impressive new buildings.



The opera with its several floors below water level is in principal smoke-free, but allows an exception for the queen; she is a chain-smoker!!

The Annex of the Royal Library, the "Black Diamond", has a façade of black marble from Zimbabwe, polished in Italy. Each slab weighs 75kg!!





And there is also a huge office building.

In the evening we took the night train to Basel and Frick. Here as well we met with an innovation, although not in megalomaniac style. I still had to take a picture of the cute chap.



In Effingen we took the car out of the garage, loaded our movable household, drove to Ostermundigen to visit my mother, and continued to Praz. In the small cabin at the lake of Murten we stayed until we moved into the rented apartment on Zelglistrasse 1d in the house of Edith and Rico in Untersiggenthal on 10 October.

And at the lake we also experienced wonderful sceneries, like the early morning sun on a misty day.



Our stay in Switzerland was overshadowed by the death of my mother. She passed away on 25 October. We are very happy that we were with her to the end.

Wednesday, 11 November. We go north again. On our way up we stayed over night in an old inn far away from the highway in the vicinity of Kassel.



Two women greeted us and put an entire apartment at our disposal, since we had a reservation and all the rooms were taken by craftsmen working in the neighborhood. Everything was down to earth, rural and very congenial.

We drove on to Hamburg and Kiel the next day, where we took time to visit friends.

On Saturday we left in the afternoon in order to go some miles toward Hirtshals at the northern tip of Jutland where the ferry leaves for Bergen. We finally stopped very close to the ferry harbor and stayed in an awful hotel with dozens and dozens

of family units. The first one smelled so bad of cabbage that we asked for another one. O.K. we moved. The departure of the ferry was scheduled for 12:30 AM on Sunday only. So, we had time for a few hours general tourism. As I sat in the car I missed my little backpack. It was neither in the car nor in the room. Panic attack. We had been in a very small harbor café drinking hot chocolate and eating cake way back in Flensburg. And I remembered clearly that I had hung it on the back of the chair. But no, I also knew that I had grabbed it and put it on my back as we left the place. What now? Heart racing and knees wobbling!! We could not embark without my passport. And suddenly, after a few very anxious moments, I remembered where the little bag was, in the corner next to the bed in the cabbage smell infested room. How stupid can you get, I had forgotten the most important piece of luggage when we had moved.



In very high spirits we visited the lighthouse and enjoyed the grand view over the misty harbor and the surroundings with the huge military stronghold of World War II.



We did not honor with a visit, though.

The passage to Bergen was calm, despite the bad weather. We arrived in port at 08:00 and charged our GPS to navigate through the city. The funny machine led us through the steepest and narrowest streets to be found in Bergen. Alex had to stop and back up many times to let other cars by. Towards 10:00 we arrived in Litlebergen. We had come "home". It was a great pleasure to return in such good weather and find *Silmaril* moored between all those other boats in perfectly peaceful surroundings.



Thanks to the Duty Free on the ferry, the bilge box was full of beer cans and Schweppes bottles.



We took advantage of the relatively warm weather and hiked up hills and cycled to many places to investigate or to go shopping. Rain was an ingredient most days, but that is quite normal in Bergen and vicinity.

A hike up the hill on the neighboring island granted us with a marvelous view over our winter homeland.



On the way per bicycle to the trail head we stopped briefly on the Hagelsund Bridge, and Alex made a picture of the Nordhordland Bridge. On this side it rests on floating concrete structures and spans a tall bow over a stretch of water to the mainland for the passage of large ships.

The bridge can also be seen very far away in the misty background of this picture.



Looking out north the Kvernalfjorden stretches to the horizon, the Håøysundet to the west, where we live now, ends here and Alverstraumen branches off to the east through a very narrow entry. Both of these waterways lead north and are frequently used by the fast ferries and many leisure boats, despite the fact that on the charts they hardly look wide enough to be used at all.

We decided to make ourselves a rather extravagant Christmas present: a trip by Hurtigruten from Bergen to Kirkenes and back, a voyage of 11 days. In the evening of November 26 we went aboard the MS Lofoten and returned to *Silmaril* in Litlebergen on 8 December.

I will report later on this event. The trip was absolutely fantastic and I need more time and leisure to rethink everything and let it sink in.

After our return we had eight days to get ready for the trip back to Switzerland. We used the time for various jobs and activities. The creation of our New Years card together with Heinzl on board was certainly a highlight.

Another memorable event took place on Alex's birthday, 12 December. We sailed with Anne and Raymond for an entire wonderful day. The two know the surroundings of Litlebergen very well and took us along the many winding waterways.



First we sailed north through Håøysundet and out across Kvernafjorden into Alverstraumen..





There are many islands, large, small and tiny ones. Some are inhabited, others are not.



It was very cold on the water and suddenly fog appeared. We turned and sailed out into fog-free Kvernafjorden.



Some wind had come up and we set sails, passed under Hagelsund Bridge and continued toward Nordhordland Bridge. Soon the wind almost died, we hardly moved, took our time to drink coffee from the thermos and eat the waffles that Raymond had made in the morning, he added mayonnaise, the others just jam!

The sky presented us with a cloud spectacle of a very special kind.





The Nordhordland Bridge lay behind us and the sky darkened with the beginning of evening.



With the dusk the wind had died completely. It was growing very cold. So, we took down the sails and returned to Litlebergen in the evening light.



A very happy Alex on his birthday!

Under an enchanting evening sky we arrived in Litlebergen.



Silmaril was now safely moored in her berth and would wait for us until we return in February.



Next morning we had to pack and prepare the boat for the long wait.
Our new folding bikes disappear in their bags and in the aft holds.





On 16 December we took last pictures of the pontoons before we departed for the ferry terminal in Bergen. It was about 10:00, the sun was just coming up.



In the city we bought a few Christmas presents and then joined the long queue of vehicles waiting for boarding.



Yes, the ferry actually leaned over toward the pier!

The voyage to Hirtshals began under cloudless skies and calm water. In the night and the next half day, however, the ship gave us a very rough ride.

Fortunately we did not suffer, except the inconvenience of noise and rather violent thrusts of the ship. In the morning we were told that the arrival was delayed by at least three hours and that it might be too risky to pass the narrow entry into the harbor in such a storm.

The pictures of the storm are not very impressive. It is very difficult to ban wind and agitated water on film. We did receive substantial proof of the force of the storm, when we went to have breakfast. About halfway up the height of the ship, wind and waves had broken a window. The crew is obviously prepared for such eventualities. The damage was already repaired, the window replaced by a piece of wood. Only a handful of passengers enjoyed the rich breakfast. Many were seasick. Shortly before we reached the approaches to Hirtshals, the captain announced that he would enter port and we went on deck to witness the maneuver.



Looking back from the harbor basin we appreciated the successful arrival through this kind of entry.



In the harbor we experienced again how strong the wind still was. Behind a tall building, falling winds thrust the water up like rising jets and the gulls seemed to play in the violent gusts. The mooring procedure took a very long time. A tugboat had to push the back of the ship toward the pier until all the lines were fast. The wind came directly from the side and was so strong that the captain could not steer the boat to the pier and keep it there by the ships own power until all the lines





were safely fast.

After a full hour the ship was finally ready for unloading.

Back on firm ground we went straight to the nearest pharmacy. We had both caught a very bad cold, could hardly breath without coughing or sneezing.

Well provided with various anti-flu products, we started to drive south. The whole of Jutland had been covered in snow during the storm and the driving winds had blown huge masses of it across long stretches of the highway. By the time we got there, it was slow driving, but no longer waiting for hours.

On the German highways the situation was precarious as well. We advanced slowly through snow or rain. Close to Göttingen we stayed over night once more and arrived on Saturday, 19 December in Untersiggenthal. The rented apartment at Edith's and Rico's seemed like our old home. We had managed to take part in the party of Lynn's seventh birthday on 20 December. And very soon, Christmas preparations took us into their tight grip and we were so happy to be here and see all our loved ones going strong.