

With Norna Biron to the Faeröer Summer 2021



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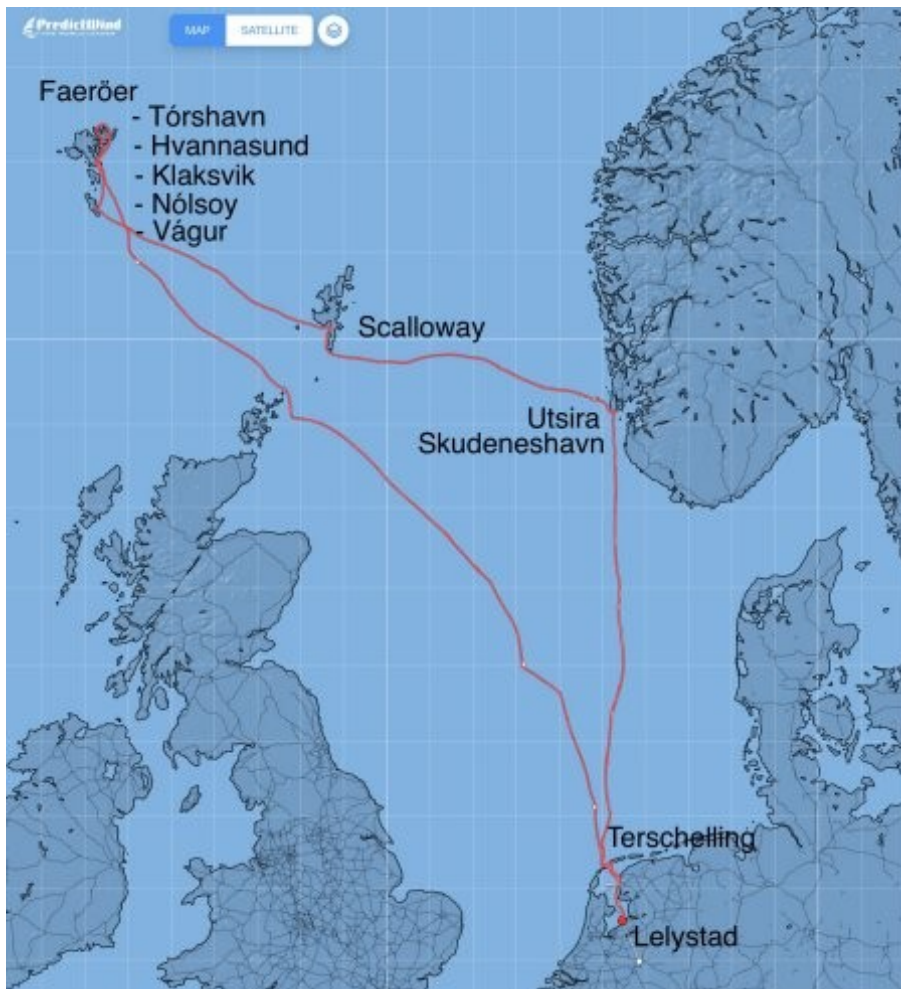
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This travel story is a sequence of the on-board written and published episodes on my blog <https://framsblog.wordpress.com> and the redirection to Zeilersforum.nl.

Henny van Oortmarsen (© 2023)

Norna Biron to the Faeröer

August 6, 2021



After her delivery from Greece (see Tags), Norna Biron hasn't sailed much. Except for a trip to Urk, where she was hauled out to replace the rudder bearings. What a pleasure it is now; she can be steered normally again, and there's a new sense of sailing joy 😊.

During this time, a lot has happened. The sun awning has been removed, allowing the boom to return to its (lower) original position, along with a new mainsail. The shed on the foredeck had to make room for the Purdey dinghy. Much of the running rigging has been replaced, and the temporary connections

for the navigation devices have been replaced with permanent solutions. The mast has been taken down, inspected, and equipped with new wiring and lighting. The temporary repair of the rubbing strake, as I had done in Messina, visually doesn't seem too bothersome and has now been replaced by a more permanent solution with four battens stacked above each other, the same concept but now spanning the entire length of the bow.

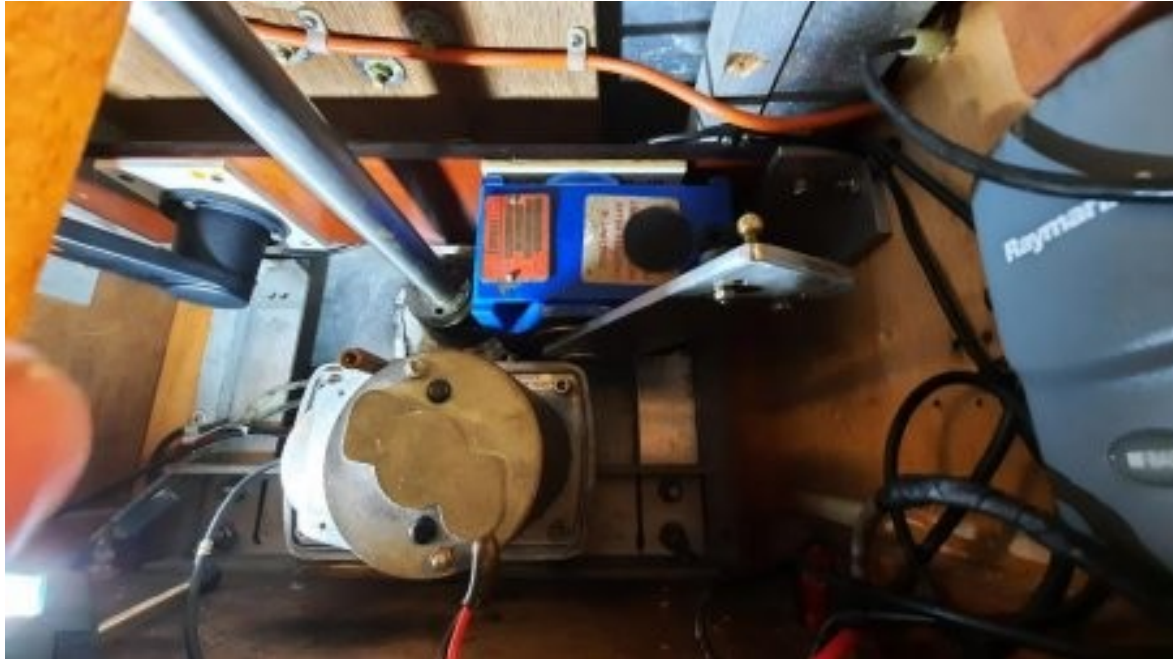


In short, Norna Biron is ready for new adventures. Initially, the plan was to embark on a 4-month journey to the far North into Arctic waters. Unfortunately, we had to postpone that for a year due to the challenges of the Corona situation. As an alternative, this year, we are undertaking a shorter trip with the advantage of better preparing Norna Biron for the Arctic waters.

We departed on Thursday afternoon for a 4-week journey to the Faroe Islands. Hans V. (ZF), sorry that we missed you; our attention was demanded by a temperamental autopilot. It was working, but it seemed to want to follow its own course entirely.

It quickly became apparent that the rudder position indicator had a different idea about the rudder's position than the rudder itself. Something was not right. The mechanism, along with the transmission and the autopilot drive, is located in the top of the service cabinet. The rotation of the steering wheel is transmitted via a toothed belt to the shaft, which is then converted into something the rudder position indicator understands by a gear housing. The arm intended for this purpose turns out to be about 30 degrees off-center, while the rudder itself is definitely in the center position. We conclude that this

must have happened during the reinstallation of the rudder in Urk. There is also a gear construction at the quadrant, which transmits the movement of the steering wheel to the quadrant. Something must have been twisted during the installation, the consequences of which were apparently not recognized. Above the saloon table, there is also a right-angle transmission with a chain. None of these transmissions provide an adjustment possibility.



The clamp of the gear on the steering wheel shaft for the toothed belt to the gear housing is proving difficult to release. It seems there is also some kind of key, making any rotation seemingly impossible. The belt is fairly inaccessible at the front of the gear housing, which is secured with four bolts at the top. If we loosen three of them, the entire housing might be able to rotate on the fourth bolt, allowing us to release the belt. We manage to do that. We are now in Kornwerderzand and can go to sleep with peace of mind. Tomorrow morning, we'll reassemble everything.

Friday morning, the moment of truth in "De Boontjes". The autopilot is steering again. That feels like a victory 😊.

We still need to refuel with diesel and plan to do so in Harlingen. Unfortunately, the diesel pontoon is behind the Tjerk Hidde locks, which prove too shallow for us. We are stuck (2m threshold) and have to go back up through the lock and reverse out of the lock. Refueling will have to wait until Terschelling.

On the way to the Schuitengat, I have a vision of Norna Biron getting stuck at low tide. Her 2.4m draft cannot be ignored, and the information about the shallow Schuitengat is currently only coming from the chart. The route via De Slenk seems somewhat safer for now. Let's go that way. Although Quicktide suggests it can be easy... we'll save that for departure tomorrow.

The autopilot still has issues ☹️.



We are now rounding the north of the Orkney Islands. The first 4G buoy provides an opportunity for an update.

Saturday at the 4G buoy.

The issue with the autopilot turns out to be a poor connection with the compass. It's nice to be able to let the wheel go again, especially at a time when manual steering is not as interesting. We have crossed the shipping lane on a sea that is otherwise completely calm. The engine ensures our progress. Life on board is slowly taking shape, and we establish the watch schedule, 7/24, with 3 hours on and 6 hours off. This allows for plenty of sleep, and the watches shift by three hours each day, so you don't have the same watch every time. Happy hour is around 17 PM, and we agree that dinner should be

consumed around 19 PM. I'm curious about the culinary delights that will be served. The fresh supplies are not lacking; the bathtub is filled with them.



I may go first, from 9:00 to 12:00 PM, the beginning of a rhythm for the next 5 days, so delightful. Joost relieves me at 12:00, and I have the first happy moment off watch and into the warm bunk. Many more will follow 😊.

Sunday. My next watch is at 6:00AM. The sun is already warming up nicely, and even better, there seems to be some wind. According to the grib, it is expected to increase further. Time to hoist the sails. The jib was already unfurled yesterday, and now the (new) mainsail joins in. I let the autopilot steer the boat almost into the wind and start the morning gymnastics. This involves not only winching up the mainsail but also a few sprints between the winch and the leech of the mainsail. The battens keep getting caught one by one behind the lazy jacks and need some manual assistance to get past them. A familiar phenomenon, of course, but alone, it takes some effort to get everything up. The other two are still in deep sleep.

The new sail is beautiful and clearly made with a lot of dedication. The wind shifts further aft and decreases again, but the silence without the engine compensates for a lot. When Edmond takes over from me later, I will ask him to fetch the spinnaker from the forepeak. As a joke, of course, as there is no spinnaker on board. Unfortunately, I forget to mention it.

Sunday afternoon, there is suddenly a large blue bag on the foredeck with a bright yellow spinnaker inside. Huh? Never knew, and the bag, apparently from the deep forepeak, had not caught my attention before. There is only one problem: we don't know exactly what's inside, and we don't have a spinnaker pole. The suggestion to hoist it as a cruising chute is rejected when unpacking reveals that the yellow piece of fabric seems to be a symmetric spinnaker.

There are two short poles on board but no topping lift or downhaul. The latter is quickly improvised, and the topping lift is temporarily made up of flesh and blood during the hoisting.

But not big enough. It will be a comical sight, but nonetheless, the yellow thing is ensuring progress today. The lettering on the yellow fabric is peeling off, and the first "A" of the apparent sponsor of the sail flutters away and falls into the sea. The absence of the topping lift makes it challenging to secure the short pole, and as a result, it has embarked on a self-destructive process against the shrouds. I realize that I can fabricate something with the other pole to prevent that. A makeshift topping lift, but just a bit different.

For the rest, life today is very simple, and we enjoy the beautiful weather and Norna's progress. Towards evening, we lower the spinnaker and continue sailing northward under a full rig (mainsail, staysail, and jib).



As I write this, in this second night at sea, we are passing a whole series of oil platforms to starboard. Hod, Valhall, Eldfisk, and Ekofisk are further ahead. It starts to drizzle.

Routing, Monday 12-7

A top sailing day with 12-15 knots on a broad reach, and the boat speed reaches 7-8 knots. The morning started with rain and a course change to pass the Pierce Oil Field. I don't dare go above because of the waves, so we opt to go below, which puts Norna on a somewhat wobbly broad reach. I adjust the autopilot sensitivity one notch up to help her stay on the broader course. An hour later, we can adjust the course again. We pass one oil field after another. To port, a ship is towing a long seismographic cable, and its length is marked with virtual AIS buoys. It's visible on iSailor but not on Weather4D, but that might be a setting issue.

Joost does the routing on the iPad with Weather4D. I wanted to learn it too, so I purchased this app. Having a mentor at hand just saves a week of figuring it out. With his help, I quickly got it running. There are quite a few settings to adjust, but I manage to do a routing fairly soon. Norna Biron's polar data is also copied into my app for this purpose. The only issue is that my track and Joost's track on his iPad seem to deviate significantly. It's strange, probably due to settings, but it gives me an initial feeling of mistrust. It doesn't get better as it suddenly stops working. Starting the routing gives an error. I can't figure it out, tried everything, studied the manual from front to back and back again, nada. But Joost can't figure it out either. It suggests the worst; reinstalling, but then I lose all the charts. It took a few evenings to get them in properly. And a good Wi-Fi connection. Frustrating.

Dinner is prepared today by Edmond with a delicious risotto, cooked for two days, making it easier for the cook tomorrow.

Tuesday morning around 6 am, we pass the Claymore Oil Field. It's progressing well, and the watch has it easy with nothing but sea ahead, no obstacles between here and the Fair Isle Channel. The saloon becomes a more pleasant watch spot than the wet cockpit. Long live progress 😊

The routing issue on my iPad has also kept Joost busy, and he triumphantly announces that it works again, but with the polar of an X37. A few polars are included in the program, including that of a Hanse and this X. It works fine with them; the problem apparently lies in Norna's polar.

ASSUMPTION IS THE MOTHER OF ALL FUCK-UPS!

Of course, the manual lists various causes for the error. One of them is in the polar settings. But that's a copy of the working polar from Joost's iPad. It can't be that. But it is....

But it works, and I can practice to my heart's content. I quickly manage to download a grib from the Iridium satellite. This is powerful. Another nice surprise from Weather4D is the graphical display of the CPA (Closest Point of Approach). The expected shortest distance at the time of passing our boat with that of the enemy is indicated by a dotted line between the expected positions of both at the time of the closest approach. Very cool.

We're heading towards the middle of the Orkney Islands. Going through the islands is not an option due to the expected strong adverse currents. Also, the wind has decreased enough that Norna's progress is around 2 knots. Time for a course change and turning on the engine. If all goes well, we'll round the Orkneys with the current in our favor. And it does. We find the 4G buoy near Dennis Head in the far northeast of the Orkneys. There's some contact with home, and I can send a report to ZF.

Storm and leakage

I have just finished reading the book "Terug uit de witte hel," about how polar explorer Sjef van Dongen became a national hero. (ISBN 978 94 600 3-74 1, Publisher Balans) Highly recommended! It reveals in an exciting story how the Netherlands got a polar hero. But also how a hero is made by the writing media that do not shy away from exaggeration, letting truth and fiction go hand in hand without consequences.

Meanwhile, the wind has increased to stormy. The moderate wind of the past few days has not created any swell yet, but the ruthlessly striking and rapidly building wind waves are giving Norna a hard time. Despite her 30 tons, we already frequently look through the cabin windows under the waves. While the jib has been furled much earlier, and one reef is already in the mainsail, Norna sighs under the rapidly increasing wind. The wind meter is already well over 40 knots, Beaufort 9. Surprised by the intense storm, much deeper reefing is now required. The sense of insignificance is palpable among all in this play of great, blind elements and natural forces.

My watch was heavy, wet, and cold, and I long for my bunk. But first, we need to reef even deeper to bring Norna back into balance with the forces of nature. Just as everyone has put on their heavy weather gear, and we intend to furl the sails, we see water above the floor. Seawater sprays up through all the cracks and holes into the cabin. We are taking on water! All hands on deck. The engine and batteries are already underwater, and due to Norna's violent movements, seawater freely flows over the cabin floor. The crew doesn't panic, accustomed as we are to facing sudden emergency situations. But action is needed to prevent going under with the 30 tons of steel. The few bilge pumps are not doing anything. Norna must have gained at least 6 tons of weight before the water fills the deep bilge and rises above the floorboards.



Outside, it has turned into a cauldron. There is far too much sail for the wind, which has now increased to Beaufort 10. The reefed mainsail, although eased out, is being whipped by the wind and the rigging, where it tries to curl around. White foam sprays off the waves, obscuring the view on deck. But the crew has nothing to do above deck right now; we need to keep Norna afloat. It hurts to leave her to this force of nature. To make matters worse, there is also a ship on a collision course, CPA 20m, but not for another 30 minutes. Get out of here; we have the right of way! Hopefully, that Eastern European or Filipino helmsman understands what we expect from him. They are often idiots.

From the forward compartment comes a heavy-duty bilge pump with a similarly substantial hose. The hose is of firefighting size, and we lead it through one of the cabin windows to the outside. To keep the hose in check, we tie it to the deck. The pressure of the pumped water turns the flat fire hose into a barely manageable stiff pole that wants to come back inside. The pump works well. In turn, we hang upside down in the bilge above and below the diesel, grease, and oil-saturated water. One holds the other's feet, guiding the fire hose as best as possible towards the cabin window to leeward. The pump needs to be guided, and loose debris must be caught before it clogs the pump. Sometimes we almost go flat, and as much water comes in through the open window as the pump is discharging. The man in the bilge is alternately relieved to hold the other's feet and empty his stomach. The smell and the vertical position of the body are enough to make any seasoned sailor sick. We are no exception, except for Joost, who is unaffected, but that's why he is the skipper.

One of us keeps missing the bucket and just empties the stomach into the bilge. It doesn't matter; it quickly mixes with the other sludge and will be pumped away.

After a time that seems endless, we now see the water level dropping. Once the water has withdrawn to the deeper parts of the bilge, it goes quickly, and the bottom comes into view.

In the meantime, we are desperately searching for the leak, which we cannot find. We suspect the propeller shaft passage. The water that is still coming in is easily manageable with the bilge pump.

Now that this is under control, Joost and Edmond go on deck to further reef the sails. They can barely stand in the wilderness, and I keep an eye on the men from behind the fixed sprayhood to be able to intervene quickly in case of a calamity.

Talking or shouting is futile. The howling of the wind is deafening and drowns out everything. Our communication is through universal hand gestures. The new mainsail turns out to be incredibly strong and has withstood the storm's lashings so far.

I no longer perceive the unwinding of the clevis pin. The superhuman efforts claim their first victim. My last watch has taken its toll, and I am already well into the necessary rest time. It's been good enough, so I head to my bunk to focus on the next task. Listening for the leak. (Freely adapted from Albert 45 😊)

Tórshavn

After that harrowing adventure with too much water, too much wind, and more than pleasant pumping, we now conclude that the leak is above water. Tightening the stuffing box on the propeller shaft has alleviated the worst of the damage. But it continues to blow quite strongly with 10A on the wind turbine.



Joost is a master at teaching small moments of happiness. With a speech and an official ceremony, he hands me the remote control of the autopilot. So far, it had not surfaced, but the watches are increasingly taking place in the warm salon of Norna instead of her cold and wet cockpit.

The watch leader can now also steer from the salon, with a good book on his lap. This comes in handy as it has noticeably gotten colder, and the ocean is becoming emptier and emptier. I also don't let the chance for an official moment pass me by, by at the end of my watch and with an official ceremony, handing over the control of Norna Biron to Edmond by transferring the autopilot remote.

For some reason, small inconveniences always seem to arise during my watch.

It's becoming noticeable. Even now, in the last night at sea. Although night, it doesn't really get dark here anymore. The autopilot is acting up again, and I have to go back to steering by hand. Fortunately, Edmond comes to help. We have to steer by hand for the last stretch to Tórshavn. The sting is in the tail, as they say. That's true now too. It has suddenly become a lot colder, and the wind continues to blow strongly at 10A.



On Thursday morning at 10:30 AM, we arrive in Tórshavn. The police, alerted by phone, appear on the dock in the form of two very friendly officers in uniform. We introduce ourselves as obedient and well-behaved double-vaccinated Dutch people but, as it turns out, cannot escape a PCR test. Every foreign visitor must undergo this before mingling with the lovely population of the Faroe Islands. The appointment is easily made digitally, but we can only be tested tomorrow morning. The result will be known by the end of the day. However, not being allowed ashore for two days is also not a pleasant prospect.



With respect for the formal rules, as we are guests in this beautiful green island realm, we ask the authorities on the dock how we should proceed.

"Ah, just be careful on the streets and respect the 2m distance from others. By the way, would you like a stamp in your passport?"

Yes, of course, we would like that, and he adds that when we leave again, we can get another big stamp if we want. What a joy! A large stamp appears, leaving a firm impression on the still virgin passport page, using the hull as a solid support.

We explore Tórshavn, and it gets even more enjoyable right away, at least for me as the only monarchist in the group 😊

We encounter Queen Margrethe II of Denmark on the sidewalk in front of her hotel, although she hasn't specifically come outside to welcome us. She is the fifth monarch from the House of Schleswig-Holstein-Sonderburg-Glücksburg, which has ruled over the Danish kingdom since 1863, including the Faroe Islands. As Dutch people, we naturally have a warm regard for her since she is also the godmother of our own King Willem-Alexander.

She wears the Faroese national costume. Of course, she does. As the ultimate representative of the Danish realm, she doesn't want to offend the nationalist movement on the Faroe Islands too much. After all, the independence discussion has been ongoing within Faroese society for decades, where Faroese is the primary language and Danish is the second language. When a Faroese person speaks to a Dane, they switch to English to make it clear that they don't consider themselves Danish. They see themselves as a nation with all the associated symbols, such as their own flag, national anthem, a national football team, their own banknotes, and national holidays like Flag Day or Ólavsøka.

However, the current prosperity is also thanks to the financial backbone that Denmark represents for the Faroe Islands. Not everyone is convinced of the need for separation, and it seems that the Faroese population is roughly divided fifty-fifty on the matter, which partly explains the indecision and the current status quo. When we ask the two lovely ladies at the museum about it, they smile a bit coyly. The younger of the two stayed behind on the Faroe Islands as the only one in her group of friends. The others, mostly girlfriends, left for Copenhagen for more opportunities in education, career, and relationships. There is a shortage of women on the Faroe Islands, and

importing from Asian countries like the Philippines and Thailand is quite common.



Queen Margrethe II waves to the people in the local village square, addressed by community dignitaries and serenaded by the mixed choir, all dressed in traditional attire. Incidentally, we caught the choir earlier in a narrow alley where the throats were warmed up by singing a birthday song to one of the choir members. COVID-19 doesn't seem to exist here; there is no enforcement of distancing by the omnipresent police, and masks are nonexistent. The atmosphere is cheerful and convivial on the village square with the queen at the center.

The PCR testing location is a considerable walk the next day, contrary to the 5 minutes I had in mind. Apparently, we entered a different address on the website than the location right next to the harbor.



The next morning, as COVID-19 suspects, we stand in an early and lengthy line in front of a narrow door, the entrance to the testing location. People who have already been tested exit through the same door. I can't help but think that this could be a perfect COVID-19 hotspot. Inside, the test is administered by seriously clad laboratory technicians, fortunately only swabbing the throat and not the nose. It's my first testing experience, and except for some gag reflexes, there's nothing to worry about. Given my previous profession, the entire setting reminds me of an inhabited asbestos-contaminated site, where the heavily clad asbestos investigator, accompanied by mom, dad, and the kids, takes his samples.

In the distance, deep down in the valley, Joost points out a small museum with a harbor. Of course, we must go there, and naturally, my experienced companions or mountain climbers prefer the unbeaten paths to reach it. Quite

amusing when you think you only need to walk 5 minutes to the nearest test location and not to one at the other end of the city, so you haven't worn suitable footwear or (rain) clothing. Long story short, at the end of the day, we're back at the boat, and I can take off the sailing boots to give my now sore toes some relief. The new fleece jacket purchased at CIV in Den Oever turns out to be quite waterproof. A pleasant surprise.



Saturday, maintenance day; outside, the wind blows at 3 knots. We don't need shore power; that's something for Germans and other Sunday sailors. Here, two solar panels and the wind turbine provide the necessary energy. Both during the voyage and here in the harbor, the battery energy level has not dropped below 99%. It's delightful, no worries about power on board.



The underdeck Autohelm drive is no longer a mystery for us. Apart from the gears and toothed rings, the transmission between the motor and steering force has three essential attachment points in the mechanism. One of them, after its failure, we addressed on Norna's delivery journey from Greece to the Netherlands, now already two years ago. The repair or modification from back then is better than new. The other remaining original attachment of a second

toothed ring with 4 screws still looks fine. This time, it's the pin between the shaft and the planetary gear base that gave in. Understandable after 25 years of use. It's a rolled pin. We discuss the replacement, such as turning a stainless steel bolt on a lathe. However, outsourcing this locally is beneath our dignity, and with a lathe on board, it should work. Except that we still need to build that lathe first, for which creative ideas quickly emerge.



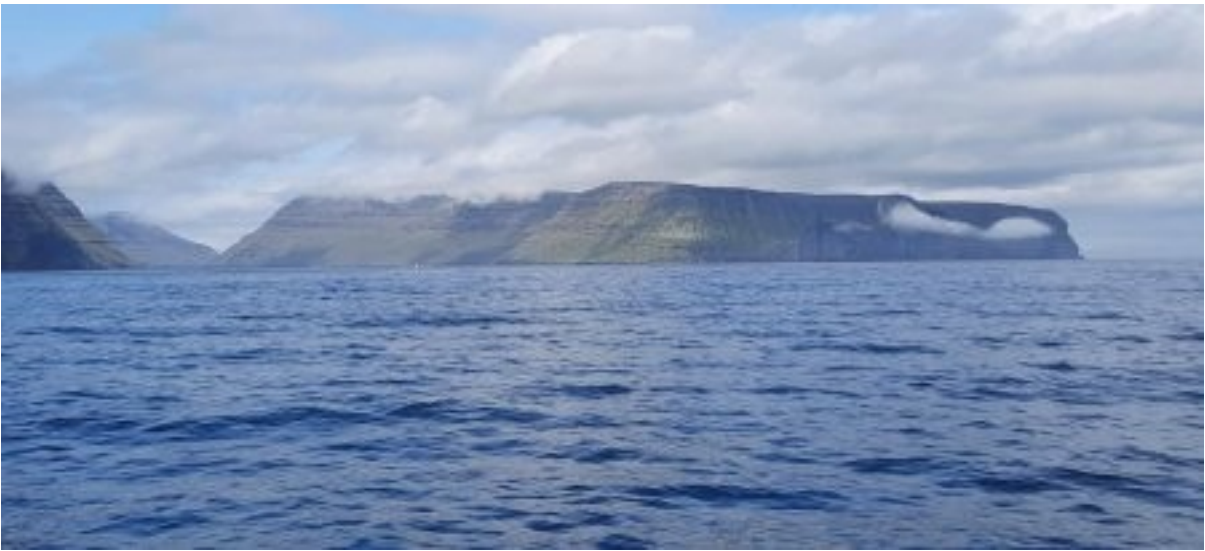
A much simpler alternative is to search for a suitable drill bit in the boring box. Once found, shortening it is all that remains to create a fitting pin. From the deep recesses of Norna, several new Autohelm parts, such as gears and toothed rings, emerge to make the Norna crew extremely happy again. The little machine is purring like never before 😊

There's more to do. Propeller shaft, grease nipples, hatches, caulking, gas stove, WD40, duct tape, etc. The crew of Norna Biron cannot be denied boundless energy. Sometimes, I feel tempted to let the excess energy dissipate by sitting quietly in a corner and waiting for it to pass. But not on board this ship; the whip is cracked to preemptively punish any form of mutiny.

Sunday Rest Day ?

The skipper's announcement of delivering some edifying words on Sunday morning raises concerns. My upbringing dictates that I should come to listen when the Angelus bell rings, and I have no objection to the ship's bell as an alternative.

After 4 nights in Tórshavn, we have just departed. Enjoying some sailing again.



We are moored again, this time in Hvannasund, surrounded by a breathtaking landscape.



A somewhat delayed happy hour, but well worth it.



Fishermen wave to us.



Hvannasund, a charming small hamlet at the foot of an imposing scenery.



Just a few more atmospheric photos because I can't resist.







Hvannasund

It sounds like a dream to be in the Faroe Islands. We had a delightful sail in a breathtaking setting and arrived yesterday in Hvannasund, a small harbor with a few houses and a church in the middle of the sund with the same name. Going further is not possible because the sund is divided into two by a dam.



Hvannasund by night; it doesn't really get dark here anymore. Today, Tuesday, July 20th, I learned a new word thanks to the ZF medium: "Walstromers."(*) Since we are the only Sunday sailors here, there is no one else who can see us as Walstromers even if we dress up as such. The hiking destination for today is the northernmost mountain in the Faroe Islands, Villingadalsfjall, which also gives its impressive shape to the northernmost cape of the Faroe Islands, Enniberg. At the foot of Villingadalsfjall lies the village of Viðareiði, consisting of no more than a few houses and a church, even smaller than Hvannasund but is the capital of the Northern Faroe Islands.

(*)I think it is a Belgian expression for armchair sailors

Unfortunately, the bus driver, apparently familiar with Walstromers, does not take us, but walking to Viðareiði, which is 8 km away, Edmond's thumb is rewarded with a lift from a friendly and somewhat older resident of Viðareiði. The climb of Villingadalsfjall is a considerable challenge for this untrained climber, where the unnecessary Corona kilos make themselves felt. The cloud boundary is far and high enough for me, and it's time to start the descent. Edmond perseveres and reaches the top and the cape, being an experienced climber.







On the way to the northernmost point of the Faroe Islands.



A few more atmospheric shots while rounding the northernmost cape of the Faroe Islands.



From Hvannasund outside to Klaksvik



Nólsoy

Friday, July 23. After spending a night in Klaksvik, we are now on the 213-inhabitant island and harbor of Nólsoy. Apparently, the Faroe Islands have excellent soil for producing good rowers. Of course, here, leg muscles are cultivated; not a single road or path is flat—it's always climbing or descending. If Hvannasund was the birthplace of Livar Nysted, the record holder for ocean rowing, here in Nólsoy, Ove Joensen is the local hero who rowed solo from here to Copenhagen in 1986. His rowboat, Diana Victoria, is displayed under the tourist information room.



The friendly population is remarkable, not only here but throughout the Faroe Islands. Helpful and always up for a chat. With even a bit of sun, you see people enjoying it, retreating to a bench or corner to not miss a moment of the sunshine.

Once upon a time, there was a beautiful Scottish princess who fled to this peaceful island. So begins the saga. She had to escape her father since she carried the unborn child of his greatest enemy. However, the Scot discovered that they had both settled here on Nólsoy and came after her. She hid the father of her child and told her father that he had to kill her and her child first before he could get to him. The enraged Scot then softened and allowed them to continue living in peace on this lovely island.

It was also the period when Fiskejeppen originated, a wild sport celebrating the end of Grindadráp. Using sharp whale hooks, a dolphin or small pilot whale had to be deposited on the other's boat. In such duels, things got rough; the fewer men on board, the easier it was for the opponent to achieve their goal. The boat was defended with tooth and hook, and attempts were made to take the fish from the other. With the fish on the hook, an effort was made to knock the opponent's crew out of the boat.

In the North Atlantic Ocean, including the Faroe Islands, notorious pirates were active at the time. Besides valuables, residents of both Iceland and the Faroe Islands were captured and sold as slaves. The so-called Turks were especially feared. However, they were not Turks but Dutchmen who had converted to Islam. At that time, all Muslims were called Turks. The worst were Jan Janszoon from Haarlem (Moerad) and De Veenboer (Soliman Raïs), who were successful in their trade in the Middle East. There, strong Faroese men and often toothless women, direct descendants of the Vikings, were sought-after slaves. Of course, they also brought their sport to the desert, where it mutated into Buzkashi.

Of all this and the illustrious history, there is hardly anything left to find here. Although Fiskejeppen as a barbaric sport has long since died out, Grindadráp still takes place. Barbaric in the eyes of PvdD (Dutch Political Party for the Animals) supporters, a cultural heritage of the Faroe Islands for others. The fact is that it no longer takes place commercially, and the proceeds are distributed free of charge to the population. It will not be easy to find a country as closely intertwined with nature as the Faroe Islands.

By the way, Joost and I ate whale yesterday. Quite tasty, but a lot...



Clearing customs.

We have now arrived in Vágur after a beautiful crossing from Nólsoy.



Although some anarchism is not unfamiliar to the crew of Norna Biron, we decide to submit ourselves to another PCR test. We want to go to Scalloway in the Shetland Islands. It is mandatory to have a test to enter the UK. The test must not be older than 3 days. Therefore, we wake up early to take the bus to Trongisvágur. Despite being together on Norna for almost 3 weeks, there is still plenty to talk about at breakfast, and we almost miss the bus. We wait for another fifteen minutes, hoping the bus is delayed, but unfortunately, the next one departs in two and a half hours, making us late for the appointment we digitally scheduled with the testing location in Trongisvágur.

We stick to Amsterdam time = boat time. There is sometimes a bit of discussion about "what time is it" because some tablets and smartphones have a mind of their own and always show the local time.

Wait a moment, who said what time it was? Aha, an hour mistaken, it is an hour earlier here, and shortly afterward, we are on the bus to Trongisvágur. Google maps shows us the exact location of our appointment, 2 km back from the bus stop. A friendly request to the driver makes the bus stop exactly where we want to get off.

Two ladies in spacesuits are already waiting for us. There doesn't seem to be much other clientele in this deserted corner of Trongisvágur. Outside, at the picnic table, a tongue spatula is inserted deep into the throat of each of us, followed by the swab, which goes a bit deeper. Fortunately, not in the nose again. One of us gags a bit harder than the other. Unfortunately, no photo taken.

It seems practical, given the strict entry requirements for the UK, to have our passports stamped for exit. We decide to walk to the police station 3 km away. We are a bit early, the office is still closed, and it only opens at 10:00. The bakery nearby provides us with a sandwich and coffee. The bus back to Vágur departs at 10:35, the next one is not until 14:50, so it is important to catch the earlier one to avoid wasting half a day here. At 9:45, we are already waiting at the entrance of the "Politi," and an early employee kindly lets us in. The question about the exit stamp catches her off guard, not knowing what to do with it. In a nearby room, Joost points to a desk with at least 15 stamps, neatly lined up. One of them must be the right one, but she doesn't dare. The uniformed colleague she has called scratches his head. Apparently, our question is not as common as we thought. Some phone calls are made, and a few stamps are tried on a piece of paper. The right one seems to have been found, and he triumphantly asks for our passports. Three thuds, he looks approvingly at them, and then gives them back to us triumphantly. He adds that we must leave today. We promise.

We are back on time for the bus.

Our previously good citizenship now seems to be under threat due to the UK's further entry requirements for Corona and Customs. The jungle of rules is difficult to unravel. The positive thing is that, as Dutch people, we do not come from Holland but from Corona-green Faroe. This only obliges us to a 2-day test in the UK without quarantine requirements, assuming we have received a negative PCR result from Trongisvágur by that time. However, we stumble over the "passenger locator form" from gov.uk, which must be submitted before departure. The form is not designed for private boat transport, and our destination, Scalloway, cannot be entered either.

For a change, collective anarchism on board now takes the upper hand. We will go; in Scalloway, the negative test will probably have arrived. We won't harm the people of Scalloway, and we'll let the rest come our way.

And so it happens.

The crossing is very calm and gives me the opportunity to finish the nearly 800-page thriller "I am Pilgrim." The crossing is dominated by light broad-reaching winds and mist. On the AIS, I see a fisherman disappear right ahead. Could he have turned off his AIS? I see nothing on the radar, outside either, but visibility is only 50m or so. The distance is still about 10 miles, and just when I feel a bit uncomfortable, another AIS icon appears. I immerse myself again in Chapter 32 of The Pilgrim.

After a smooth broad-reaching journey from Vágur on the southernmost island of Suðuroy, we arrived in Scalloway on the Shetlands around midnight yesterday.

Well-rested at the Scalloway Boat Club pier, Edmond calls Customs. It seems that the friendly officer on the other end of the line is dutifully working through his checklist of questions and then kindly thanks us for the call. That's it, no visit, no further obligations, and the yellow Q-flag can be lowered again.



At the jetty in Scalloway, there are two yachts, ours and a Swiss with a Corsair 31 trimaran. He bought the tri in the US and has now reached the Shetlands

via Greenland, Iceland, and the Faroe Islands. Quite an impressive journey for such a small trimaran. He is glad that we removed the Q-flag. He doesn't fly any flag, let alone the Q-flag.

An attempt to book the mandatory PCR test fails due to logistics. Besides, there is no one here, no one is coming, and no one is interested in us. It's deserted here, except for two yachts.

We leave it at that. Following a visit to the Scalloway museum, we take the bus to Lerwick. We have to get used to those cumbersome but mandatory face masks again.

What was supposed to be a joyful reunion dissolves in the gray mist and rain. There isn't a single yacht in the harbor; it's deserted, with wet and empty streets, despite the perpetually fluttering festive flags that should bring some joy. Unfortunately, there's sadness everywhere. I cherish my better memories of Lerwick. Tomorrow to Norway.



Utsira, Norway.

Thursday morning, I walk to the local supermarket. I arrive just in time as it opens at 8:00 am. Although the selection isn't very extensive, I manage to replenish the fresh vegetables. I also want to restock the happy hour supplies, and as I try to put a crate of tasty beers into my cart, I am sternly reprimanded. No alcohol can be sold before 10:00 am. "It's the law!" the supermarket lady apologizes, although she looks quite strict. Too bad, although I must admit I wasn't looking forward to the heavily loaded return trip to the boat. After all, the cart is already quite full.



The crossing to Norway promises to be a peaceful journey with a fresh breeze on the beam. Only towards the end, near the Norwegian coast, there might be stronger winds up to 30 knots, but still from a broad-reaching direction. During my night watch, I encounter a large tanker on a diagonal course relative to ours. I see that it has adjusted its course to run parallel but opposite to ours. It's too hazy to see it clearly. Almost perpendicular, it adjusts its course again, making a wide turn to pass behind us and disappear towards the northeast. The closest distance has been no less than 1 nautical mile. It's quite impressive to see how such a huge tanker maneuvers to avoid us.



The direct course to our destination in Norway is not ideal for sailing. We opt for a more northerly course to keep the sails filled, anticipating that the wind will veer later, allowing us to bear away. As for the destination, the options are plentiful – Skudeneshavn, Stavanger, Tananger, or even continue further south to Egersund, maybe Kirkehamn – all appealing choices. During happy hour on Friday afternoon, the decision is made to head for Utsira, a small rugged island off the coast. We might even reach it before dark tonight.



Utsira offers a shower with a clogged drain. Well, at least we're clean again with neatly combed hair. A short hop of about 30 miles away lies Skudeneshavn, and we decide that it will be the last Norwegian port before we embark on the journey home. With only the staysail, we bob along in strong winds, 7-8A. The final stretch involves navigating through rocky islets while the wind occasionally increases to 10A, according to the wind turbine. A power cable to the lighthouse obstructs our passage at the last moment. Coming to a halt, we read on a sign that the clearance is 20 meters. Hmm, we're a bit short, and we have to go all the way around the cape and lighthouse after all.



Skudeneshavn is a pleasant reunion. The White Haze, a Robert Clark classic that has by now visited all corners of the earth, is also moored there. Ada and Akko have already sailed more than 100,000 miles with her, and despite her 60 years, she looks immaculate. It's exciting to hear Ada's enthusiasm about Iceland. After all, Iceland is still on our wish list.

Tomorrow, Sunday, we depart for the Netherlands, a good moment to once again visit the local restaurants. There isn't much choice. A bistro with white tablecloths and gleaming polished wine glasses doesn't look very inviting in our condition, so we opt for the take-out pizzeria where you can also sit.

The breakfast pizza goes into the doggy bag.

Homebound.

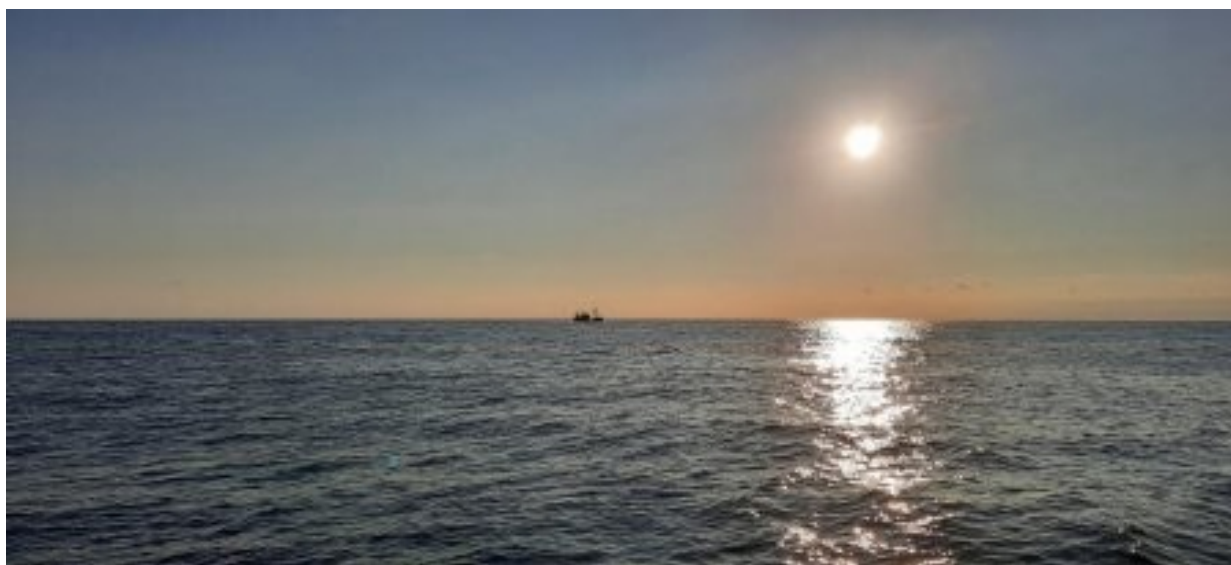
Sunday, August 1st, departure for our last 3-day crossing from Skudeneshavn to Lelystad. As the last rocks of Skudeneshavn disappear behind the wake, we quickly settle into the rhythm of the multi-day crossings.



Unanimously, we agree that this is much more enjoyable and relaxing than shorter trips. It's a different way of sailing. It's traveling with a sailboat. Our watch system of 3 hours on and 6 hours off provides a lot of regularity and tranquility. Provided the sea conditions cooperate, which is certainly not the case during the first days and nights.

With a wind coming from astern at about 30 knots and only the headsail deployed, Norna indulges in what she enjoys the most—rolling. She excels at it. Sometimes almost from side to side.

It's fun to look at the fish through the portholes, but sleeping becomes a bit problematic due to the constant rolling. I've discovered every hard spot in my bunk by now, and because the body and internal organs are constantly in motion, falling asleep, without being exhausted, is almost impossible. It's more a matter of resting than sleeping.



The next two days, the wind steadily decreases, along with the sea conditions, allowing for sufficient catch-up sleep. Watching a movie or reading a book are the favorite activities during the watch. Although there is still quite a bit of shipping activity here. We sail for a long time almost parallel to the TSS Vlieland-Skagerak route. Both oncoming and same-direction traffic. However, it's noteworthy that large shipping vessels seem to be moving more slowly than in the past. "Seem" is the key word; it could also be a coincidence.



Wednesday morning, August 4th. The last night at sea is beautiful. A spectacular sunset is followed by a clear starry sky, the first of the entire journey. Other nights were either too cloudy or too bright, or both. Besides the beautiful clear night, it has also become much warmer.

The white light appearing ahead to starboard I initially mistake for a fishing vessel without AIS, the rogue. However, there is little movement, so after a while, I decide to check the chart. Ah, it's the L9-FF-1 platform of the NAM, visible from afar. That's progressing nicely. When getting closer, I have Norna veer about 30 degrees to port to then be able to cross the shipping lane perpendicular. I leave that to Edmond, who, after rubbing the sleep from his eyes, is immediately confronted with about 6 ships coming from the East with, for now, a small CPA. That's a wake-up call. For a change, it's busy here with shipping coming from the east and then from the west. I go to sleep but stay ready in case assistance is needed.

I'm only awakened when we enter the Blauwe Slenk. Edmond has also been in dreamland for about three hours, and Joost has already navigated us onto the Wadden. Hmm, I must have slept really well on the now so calm sea. Well, I share my shift with Joost because it's not much longer. A nice current helps us, and we arrive precisely at the turn of the tide at the end of the Pollendam, so we have a favorable current in the Boontjes as well. How things can change 😊



From Harlingen, a flotilla of boats approaches us, all heading to the islands with the current at this early hour. It takes a bit of getting used to with all those boats around us again. In the Boontjes, we pass a beautiful classic, the Wallaby, well known on the Zeilersforum. Edmond wakes up as we moor at the quay in Kornwerderzand. He seems to have slept well too.



We say goodbye to the saltwater with a sense of nostalgia, at least for now. We've been on the road for exactly 4 weeks, and time has flown by. We were lucky with the weather. The sailing gear has hardly been worn; it hasn't been too cold or too wet.

The original plan was to head to the far North for 4 months. However, Corona threw a wrench into the works. That trip has been postponed for a year, with

the advantage that we've been able to embark on a practice voyage first—to get the boat in order and become a good team. We've almost succeeded.

Almost, because Norna's salon still lacks a cinema-worthy screen, which goes on Joost's To-Do list.

We celebrate it with a dinner at the restaurant of the Flevomarina, Norna's Homeport.

