

“Hawk” – 47’ Van De Stadt Samoa – 7’ draft

May 2001

Subject/Area: Faeroe Islands

© 2006 Evans Starzinger

We have not seen another cruising boat the past two months while sailing up the West coast of Ireland & the Outer Hebrides to the Faeroes. We have been a bit early in the season but it’s still amazing given what a wonderful cruising area it is and how close we are to crowded Europe.

The Faeroes have a bit of a mystique as a remote ‘high latitude’ destination. While they are at 62N, they are in fact really a quite easy and attractive destination from Scotland. They are less than 2 days sail (211 miles) about due N from Stornoway, Scotland. Stornoway is a safe and pleasant place to wait for a favorable wind direction (most likely SW). In the Faeroes there are about a half dozen harbors designated ‘winter harbors’ safe in all weather. Both the Outer Hebrides and the Faeroes are at the tail end of the Gulf Stream so the climate is reasonable (about 10-14C during the summer). The nights are short, as in mid-May the sun rises at 5am and sets at 10pm. The local people have that wonderful welcoming friendliness that is often found in small remote fishing communities.

The strong currents around the Faeroes are the only major concern. The locals consider a 2 or 3kt current ‘weak’, many of the headlands and channels have 7 or 8kts, and a couple narrows get 11-12kts. There are quite nasty tide races off most of the headlands and channels during strong winds. Usually we would have looked for a quite fresh SW wind from Stornoway to make a quick passage, but in order to minimize any trouble with these tide races we instead looked for a light 10kt breeze. Even with this there was a lumpy sea and a visible race off the South end of Suduroy. The British Admiralty Pilot “North Coast of Scotland” includes the Faeroes and has a tide atlas but does not indicate the races. The Faeroese publish a local almanac (Almanakki) with shows the races and includes the necessary tide tables. This is available from a bookstore in Torshavn (Jacobsens Bokahandil), but we could not find anyone who sold it in the UK or USA.

We are using the same weather resources that worked in the UK & Ireland: the shipping forecast on BBC Radio 4 (198kz @ 0555, 1201, 1750 local time) and the Northwood weather faxes (Schedule broadcast on 2618.5, 4610.0, 8040.0kz @ 0236 & 1436UT). Note that this spring (4/2001) the British Met office closed down the Bracknell weather fax service and moved the Northwood schedule to the Bracknell frequencies, so at this point all the published times and frequencies are inaccurate and you need to get the new schedule on the above time/freq.

Everything is quite expensive (double UK prices) in the Faeroes, so stock up before arriving if at all possible. Customs are quite touchy about alcohol. Theoretically you are only allowed to bring in one liter of wine, one liter of spirits and two liters of beer (in long neck glass bottles only – cans prohibited) per person. Surprisingly most of the marine supply & local stores take only cash & a Danish bank card (Dansk Card) and not Visa/Mastercard/AMEX. About half of the cash machines (in the bigger banks) did

accept the standard VISA/Mastercards. So, we got cash from these machines and paid the stores in cash. Banks and the post office are closed both Saturday and Sunday.

Tvoroyri on the island of Suduroy is the most convenient landfall harbor. This is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest town in the Faeroes, having a population of about 2,000 people. This harbor gets about a dozen cruising boats a year, mostly German and UK, and we were the first US boat in several years (at least the first that had checked in with the police). We anchored at the head of the fjord, with convenient dinghy landing in the small boat harbor and about a mile walk into town. This seemed to puzzle people, as everyone in town expected cruising boats to tie up in the trawler harbor (the first of the three enclosed harbors in the fjord). If you do this, be prepared with fender boards as the walls are all covered with big black tractor tires. The Harbor Master expects all yachts entering the fjord to call him on VHF 16 even if they plan to anchor. Then the Police will want to check passports, and customs may or may not appear. There is a post office/bank with cash machine and a supermarket in the center of town. There is a Shell station in the trawler harbor with sells fuel and oil. There are a couple quite dramatic walks to lakes and cliffs.

In this same fjord, there is now a large fish farm in the Oravik anchorage with little room to anchor. A smaller fish farm is in Tjaldavik but there is still room to anchor there.

From there the next natural harbor is the capital town, Torshavn. The Tvoroyri Harbor Master recommended we leave at about 3 hours before local high water to catch the NW going current (approximately 3kts) up to Torshavn. This worked out pretty well, although we encountered a 2kt counter current eddy as we passed by Sandoy Island.

In Torshavn, inside the major breakwall, there are East and West small boat harbors. Both are completely filled with small (20-30') local fishing boats, and the pontoon finger slips are sized for these boats and not suitable for anything much larger. We called harbor control on VHF 16 but they seemed uninterested in us and just told us to find any open berth. The only convenient spot for cruising boats is in the West harbor along the wall on the right (East) side as you enter. Right at the head of the wall is reserved for small fishing boats offloading fish, but anywhere else is acceptable. The depths are 8' or greater. You may initially need to raft off a boat already there, but the locals will usually quickly rearrange the boats so you can be right on the wall. The tidal range here is minimal (1-2') and the wall is of smooth concrete so fenders and shorelines are easy to set up. There unfortunately is a sewerage drain pipe coming near the head of this wall with a noticeable odor during the weekdays.

Right across the street from the wall a two-story dark blue building houses a seaman's club, which has showers and laundry machines. Up the street a block and to the right up some steps is a Post Office. A bookstore, which stocks the current atlas, is just a block up the hill to the right (facing town). To the left on a slight rise above the harbor is a chandlery (you can see a Volvo Penta sign from your berth on the wall). Across the harbor to the West is a significant shipyard, with all facilities for dealing with the largest fishing trawlers including a major railway/slipway. There are two marine electronics

(radios, radars and autopilots) shops – NavTech near the shipyard and RadioService overlooking the East Harbor. There is a Yanmar dealer in the same building as RadioService.

There is an incredibly extensive and inexpensive network of buses and ferries from Torshavn to all the other islands. While waiting in Torshavn for a replacement autopilot ram to arrive from England, we went to see the Vestmanna bird cliff colonies, the old churches and settlements in Kirkjubour, and some of the natural rock formations along the N. Coast of the N. Islands.

We received mail sent to: Poste Restante, Central Post Office, FR-100 Torshavn, Faroe Islands. This central post office is about a mile walk from the harbor. The local tourist information offices can provide maps and directions.

From Torshavn, we made two more stops on our way out to Iceland. First to Klaksvik, the second largest town in the Faeroes and a major ship building port. It's an interesting place to get ideas for fitting-out serious offshore boats as just about every possible type of modern offshore fishing vessel is maintained here. You tie-up South of the Ferry pier near the Tourist information Center (a modern building with a row of flag poles). There is a laundry in town a couple blocks up the head of the harbor. There is an attractive Lutheran Church and the North Islands museum to see.

The last stop, through one of the narrow and dramatic channels, is Eidi. This is a very small and quiet town in the only protected harbor on the N coast – a good jumping off point for Iceland and a place to spend the night after day sailing along the dramatic North Coast cliffs. There are two places you could tie-up. Right in front of you as you enter is the trawler dock – a classic concrete pier with tractor tires. Tying on to the West face with your bow pointing south would be snugest and most out of the way. Slightly more convenient is the long floating pontoon to your right as you enter the harbor. The inside face has slips all full of small local boats, but the outer face is for along side tying for bigger (35'-50') boats. There was a spot open for Hawk, but if not you could raft alongside a boat already there. The boats did not seem to come and go very often. There is a nice village church here, a folk museum and views of the two sea stacks “the giant and the witch”.