

# *Trolling to Scandinavia*

*In the second of two features, Morvyn Phillips describes the latter half of his Scandinavian summer cruise, from the Danish capital Copenhagen to the coastal islands and canal-linked lakes of Sweden*

Peculiarly, the holiday season in both Denmark and Sweden seems to run only from mid-June to the end of July. At first we thought this might be because of the weather was bad outside this short period, but we cruised in Scandinavia from mid-July to mid-September, most of that time in glorious weather. Indeed, August is an ideal cruising month as the harbours and anchorages are less crowded and the sea temperature higher. There can be few things more tempting than to moor against a weather-smoothed rock and dive into clear blue water at a temperature of 23°C. Because of its small size and its location close to the famous Little Mermaid statue in København (Copenhagen), the yacht harbour at Langelinie becomes very crowded during the cruising season, and there is only a limited number of visitors' berths. The sun beat down relentlessly during late July and, much as we liked the Danish capital, we were glad to get away. Our Moonraker 36 Darius bowed to the Little Mermaid on the wake caused by a passing ship, and turned northwards, passed through the main harbour entrance and out into the northern part of the Øresund.

## ***Moonraker meets stargazer***

Besides regaling us about Moonrakers being known locally as 'banana boats', because of their shape and usual colour, the harbourmaster at Langelinie had told us that if we were going up the sound we should not miss the opportunity to visit the Swedish island of Hven. Although small, it is served by three harbours, and within a few hours we were alongside the curved mole of the largest, Bäckviken (Brook Cove). Hven is a little gem which became famous as the home of the astronomer Tycho Brahe, who accurately charted more than 1000 stars - before the invention of the telescope. Many a sailor has been indebted to him when navigating by the stars, and it did the King of Denmark no credit when he banished him after a petty squabble in 1597. The site of his house and observatory lie in the centre of the island, close to the village of St Ibbs. Climbing the short hill leading from the harbour we came upon a huge cyclepark with over 600 bikes for hire. Although vehicles can now be ferried to the island, the cycle remains the main form of transport and that is one of Hven's attractions. Looking northward from Hven, we could see where the Øresund narrows to a width of no more than five miles and we knew that on the Danish side lay the town of Helsingør, our next destination. Heading up the Øresund, we were unsure of the exact whereabouts of the border between Denmark and Sweden, and flew both nations' flags so as not to give offence. In a calm blue sea, with the temperature rising in the wheelhouse to over 90°F, it was not a time to hurry, and we were content to watch all the activity around us. A good watch was essential, for this is the narrowest point of the entrance route into the Baltic, and commercial shipping is abundant.



### ***Shakespeare and seals***

We were unprepared for the magnificent sight of Kronborg, Hamlet's castle, which appeared gaunt and imposing. Its Shakespearean associations make Helsingør an almost obligatory visit for tourists, but the town is worth a day in its own right. We wanted to fill up with diesel here, and almost made a mistake which would have had dire consequences. Many of the fuel pumps in Scandinavia are automatic, so they can be used 24 hours a day, and those at Helsingør were no exception. This was the first time we had tried to use one, and I somehow failed to get the pump to work and had to call out the harbourmaster. It was lucky I hadn't succeeded, because he informed me I was wielding the petrol hose!

Our next port of call, Varberg, lay 50 miles distant. The headland called Kullen Vesta was misty, but visibility improved after Torekov, a fishing village and holiday resort. Crossing Laholmsbukten (the Bight of Laholm), we planed past the port of Halmstad, rounded the headland at Tylø, and passed the town and port of Falkenburg. After picking up the buoyed channel leading below Varberg's imposing fortress, we selected a mooring at the marina at Getterøn, opposite the town.

Next morning we continued northward. Varberg lies at the southern end of a coastline dotted by numerous islands. These form an effective barrier between the coast and the often rough waters of the Kattegat, and by keeping in their lee it is possible to cruise in comparative comfort .....

Admiralty charts for this area are insufficient in their detail to permit safe navigation, so we now needed the Swedish charts of 25,000:1 or, in the most island-strewn areas, an even larger scale. Navigation became very intense. Many of the rocks only just break the surface, and some could only be discerned by spotting turbulence surrounding them. Larger ones were the haunts of common and grey seals who watched us without concern as we passed close enough to photograph them.

Constant pounding by the elements has eroded these rocks so that none are jagged, something for which we were very thankful when, trying to find a narrow gap just off Kullavik, Darius lurched and slid sideways. No damage seemed to have been sustained, as confirmed later when I inspected the hull.

Kullavik is little more than a marina nestling in a small inlet, with a few houses on the adjacent hillside. If you were looking for the razzamatazz of a holiday resort this would not be the place to visit, but if the priority is messing about on the water then it is ideal.

We spent several days, in glorious weather, pottering around small islands in the dinghy or just lazing on deck, and it was with some reluctance that we continued our journey north towards the entrance to Sweden's canal system.

### ***Flight of fancy***

You reach the Trollhätte Kanal either via one of two rivers, the Gøta Älv or the Nordre Älv. The former, the deep shipping route through Göteborg (Gothenburg), is the more widely used; the latter's fjord includes a military firing range, but is more picturesque. Gambling that the Swedish Air Force would not think Darius a good target, we took this route and reached the head of the fjord unscathed.

Entering the Nordre Älv proper, we soon found a peculiar structure barring our way: a movable dam sporting a small lock. The dam was built not to maintain a required depth in the upper reaches of the river but to keep salt water at bay, because Göteborg's drinking water is taken from the river just above it, and to force river water down the Gøta Älv, thereby scouring the channel through the city's docks.

As we approached the lock, the signal was green and the gates at both ends were open, but we noticed a depth gauge giving the clearance over the cill as only 1.8m (5ft 10in), so we passed through very slowly.

Some 5km (3 miles) above the dam, standing high above the river, is the impressive Bohus fortress. To visit this we passed under the Bohusbron bridge, turned up a narrow channel to port and stopped at the small marina at Kungälv.

As we proceeded up the Trollhätte Kanal, which is the western end of the Gøta Kanal route across Sweden (see MBM Jan 93 p42), the countryside gradually changed from gently sloping farmland to more rugged terrain. Then, rounding a bend, we suddenly came face-to-face with the steel gates of the bottom lock in the Trollhättan flight. Despite having read about and seen photographs of this, we were quite unprepared for the awesome sight. The hillside is split as though by a troll's cleaver, and within the defile sits a three-chambered riser lock, leading to a small basin, which in turn leads to the top lock ...

Darius did not have to wait long before the entry - signal turned to green and we cautiously entered, feeling very small and insignificant. The flight raises vessels by 128ft (39m), but there was no turbulence from the sluices. Having paid a toll of SKr420 (about £36) for the one-way trip, we moored in the small yacht harbour immediately beyond the canal office at the top.

Exploring the area, you can see the two earlier sets of locks which are now bypassed by the modern ones. The first successful flight was opened in 1800, but after the completion of the Gøta Kanal in 1832 a new one was required to meet the bigger dimensions. Opened in 1844, this had more chambers and two passing pounds. The current, even larger locks were opened in 1916.

### ***The great lake***

After passing through the last lock on the Trollhätte Kanal, and stopping at the marina at Vänersborg to refuel, we passed under a railway liftbridge and entered the third-largest lake in Europe.

Lake Vänern has a surface area of over 2000 square miles and even merits its own weather forecast, as its surface can quickly be ruffled into short, steep waves. On this particular day, with a slight breeze and a cloudless blue sky, it was in a placid mood, so we gave Darius her head. Some 23 miles and 1½ hours later, we were preparing to enter the Dalslands Kanal.

We had punched into the GPS a waypoint for the canal entrance. When we reached it, we could see a large building with a faded red roof, but no sign of a canal. I re-checked our position, and in so doing missed the buoy denoting the start of the twisting channel. The warning scream of the echo-sounder told us of shallows, so we stopped immediately and retraced our steps, finally finding the buoy.

Marked by spars, the channel takes several 90 degree turns to avoid rocks lurking just below the surface. Soon we arrived at the single building that is the port of Køpmannehamn. There were no signs of life, except an old steel boat, like a Scottish puffer, lying beside a quay made from huge granite blocks.

Later, at the canal museum at Haverud, we would identify the boat as typical of those engaged in the timber trade here, which came to an end in 1967.

### ***Hewn from granite***

The canal continued to twist and turn. After a railway Swingbridge which opened as we approached, another sharp bend took us to Køpmannebro, and the first of the 26 locks we were to ascend.

This was also the toll office. For SEK 648 (about £52) we purchased a Kvitto licence, which would allow us a one-way passage to the town of Tocksfors, being punched at each lock. We also bought a chart of the canal, together with a booklet (In English, thankfully) on the facilities available at various places. Both were to prove invaluable as we picked our way between rocks to moor against the steep lakesides.

Of the 254km (160-mile) length of the Dalslands Kanal, only 10km (6 miles) are in fact man-made, built to connect the string of lakes. The engineering highlight of the waterway lies two locks and two lakes beyond Køpmannebro, at Haverud. Here the waterway climbs a ravine until it runs out of space, and then vaults a gorge on an iron aqueduct to enter Lake Aklangen.

Haverud is a tourist resort, and from here day trips or longer cruises can be taken on vessels such as Storholmen, which has been operating on this canal since 1934. The town is also

home to the canal museum, the only glassmaking factory in the county of Dalsland, and a fishmonger selling fresh produce farmed in the lakes.

Throughout her wanderings across Europe, Darius has never encountered locks like those on the Dalslands Kanal. Each is hewn from solid granite. Many are not only bow-sided, as on the Canal du Midi in France, but also have sloping walls. To protect boats from the jagged sides, trunks of fir trees are laid vertically down them at close intervals. Complete compliance with the lock-keeper's instructions is essential. All but one of the locks has electrically-operated sluices, but this is the one acknowledgement to modern times since the canal was built in 1868.

We moored for the weekend in the second lake, Raverpen, above Haverud, an ideal location from which, using the dinghy, we could visit the Bronze Age rock paintings at Hogsbyn. Our Narwhal RIB generally proved a boon, enabling us to explore creeks where Darius could not enter, which greatly enhanced our enjoyment of the waterway.

There is little industrial activity left on the banks, except the odd timber yard whose raw materials were once rafted down the canal (they now go by road). The lakes are unspoilt and unpolluted, to the extent that in the northern ones such as the Stora-Le and Lelangen the water is said to be fit to drink untreated. Despite these assurances, we took the precaution of boiling it first.



Wooden house resplendent in typical red preservative paint on the Dalsland Canal.

### **Northern limits**

Lock followed lock and lake followed lake as we chugged north towards Tocksfors. Here, and also at Nössemark and Ed, there are boat transporters which will take you to Norway, either to the landlocked Halden Kanal or to the coast at Halden or Oslo. Depending on your destination, the largest craft they will carry are 10.5m (34ft 6in) long, 3.5m (11ft 6in) in beam,

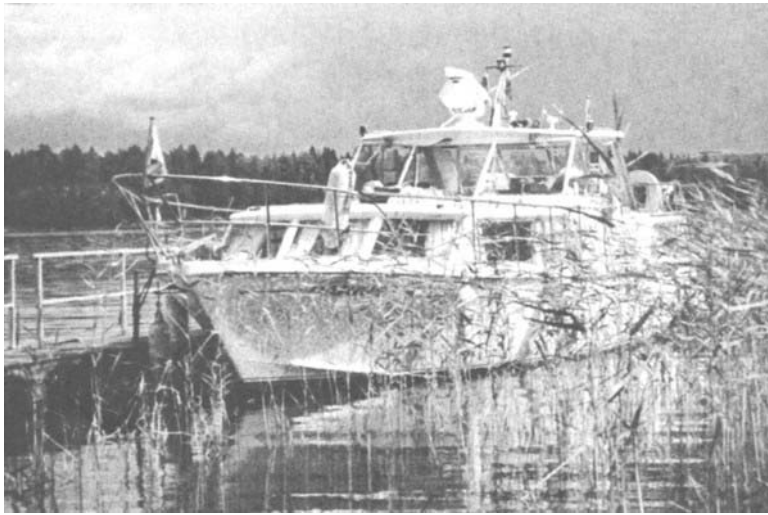
3.9m (12ft 6in) in height and 8tonnes in weight. Also at Tocksfors you can enter the Tocksfors Kanal, also known as the Stora-LeOsten Kanal, which extends both north and south of Lake Foxen. A further toll is levied, of SKr 112 (£10) for a return trip. Keen to reach the furthest limit possible, we paid up and continued north.

Passing through two locks and the narrow Lake Tock, we came to two swingbridges which, judging by the difficulty we had in opening them, are rarely swung. Fortunately help arrived, in the form of a group of young people. We proceeded to the northern shore of Lake Osten which, at 59°39.5'N, was the most northerly point Darius had ever visited.

The village of Ostervallslog is only 1 km (half a mile) from the Norwegian border, so we took the opportunity to step onto Norwegian soil by walking to the border, which is marked by a plaque set in a cairn at the roadside.

The following day we gave Darius herself the opportunity to sample Norwegian waters, by entering Lake Stora-Le from Lake Foxen and turning hard to starboard. We were able to fly the Norwegian flag for the first time. However, we were not permitted to moor in the marina at Ottied, and when we attempted to anchor our CQR refused to hold, so we headed for the small marina in the Swedish town of Nössemark.

The longer we dallied in the lakeland paradise of Dalsland, the more reluctant we became to return south, but we had no choice: the canal closes for the winter on 31 August. We arrived back in Kopmannehamn to look out across a bleak, wave-tossed Lake Vänern, and had to wait two days for the weather to abate and allow us to run back down the Trollhätte Kanal.



### **Naval manoeuvres**

The next evening we entered the marina and ferry harbour of Lilla Bommen in the heart of Göteborg, the second-largest city in Sweden. This was a complete contrast to the tranquillity of Dalsland, but that only heightened our enjoyment of the city. We stayed four days before heading out past the docks and the fortress, back into the open sea of the Kattegat. We turned to starboard, and once more came to the western end of the Nordre flv, but this ti-

Left: Darius on unspoilt Lake Lelaangen

me we continued northwards. Navigation through the islands of Bohuslän was made even more difficult by a malfunction of the GPS, which seemed to have developed an intermittent fault that occurred only during the middle of the day, never early in the morning or late in the evening. Because of its position directly under the wheelhouse windscreen, I had draped a towel over the top of the set to protect it from direct sunlight, thinking that would keep it cooler; in fact we soon discovered that this was having the opposite effect. Once the towel was removed, the receiver worked perfectly.

The entrance to the harbour on Marstrand island is dramatic, with cliffs coming to the water's edge, and the gap between them was so narrow that yachts had to take care when passing each other. Despite it now being 'low' season, we only just managed to find a mooring on the pontoons.

While we were talking to the harbourmaster in his office at the quay, the name of the engineer Nils Ericson cropped up, not for the first time. This was the man who had built the Dalslands Kanal and the Trollhätte locks, and it turned out it was also he who had blasted the half-mile cutting through which we had just passed, known as the Albrektssunds Kanal. It was created so that at no point between Göteborg and Marstrand would the Swedish navy have to cross the open sea.

In the 18th and 19th Centuries a large naval presence was kept here, to intercept marauding Norwegians, and the Carlsens Fästning fortress was built, overlooking all the entrances to the town, to protect the fleet. However, with the coming of the steam engine, and its ability to force its way against wind or current and through ice, the coast could equally well be protected from Göteborg, and in 1882 the garrison marched out.

The town reverted to a fishing village, and later a holiday resort, and we enjoyed exploring the narrow streets clinging to the hillside beneath the fortress. Only public service vehicles are allowed on the island, and people transport their goods in carts.

### **Hibernation time.**

It was now September, and the weather was becoming unsettled. A Force 8 kept us in Marstrand for two days before we could head south again.

At Onsala, we had the only mechanical problem of the voyage when an oil pipe broke. We made do by using a brake pipe, made up at a local garage, which served for the remainder of the voyage.

There was little wind and a calm sea as, in four hops, we crossed Køge Bugt and entering the marina in Køge, where Darius would hibernate until the spring while we returned to Britain. Three days later, having completed her winterisation, we said goodbye to the boat as she sat forlornly on the hard, supported by cradles lent by the harbourmaster.

Had the reality of a Scandinavian cruise matched our dreams? Yes and more, helped by the region's finest summer in 300 years. The scenery is magnificent, everyone speaks English, and the possibilities for simply dropping the hook and relaxing are endless.

This year Darius will be visiting the east coast of Sweden, including Stockholm, for another helping of our kind of cruising.

### ***Documentation***

France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Denmark and Sweden, the countries visited in Darius' cruise, are all in the European Union, the latter having become a full member this year. There should be no entry formalities for boats arriving in one EU country from another, if everyone on board holds an EU passport.

However, Customs, harbour and police authorities are entitled to ask to see 'ship's papers' and all boats should carry: boat registration document (Part 1 or SSR) / passports for all crew / evidence of third-party insurance / VHF radio licence and operator's certificate / evidence of VAT paid on the boat (or evidence that it was built before 1985). / helmsman's certificate of competence, such as the new International Certificate of Competence issued by the Royal Yachting Association (compulsory in some countries, on certain waterways and in certain boats; if using boats over 15m or capable of 11 knots on Dutch estuarial waters, you will also need the minimum of a Day Skipper theory certificate) / canal licence (as appropriate in France, the Flemish region of Belgium, and Sweden).

### ***Cruise statistics***

Total distance 1475 miles. Locks negotiated 106. Diesel used 654gal(2973 lt).

Charts.

Admiralty (UK) 2115 The Sound

3194 Københavns Havn 3671 Tylø to Viken. Båtsportkort (Sweden) B Strømstad to Varberg E Vänern / J Dalsland Canal (available from Imray).

### ***Pilots/guides***

'Båtturist' (Swedish Tourist Board). Details of all guest harbours in Sweden and neighbouring parts of Denmark, Norway and Finland, updated annually, in Swedish.

'Dalsland Canal Handbook' (Båtsportkort; available from Imray).

'Small Boat To The Skagerak'

'Small Boat Through Sweden'

by Roger Pilkington (both out of print, but may be available from Shepperton Swan).