

[A Short Voyage on a Square Rigger!](#)

This contribution from Post Captain Robin Plumley that will make many of us green with envy, when 'Going Aloft' was an adventure, not a final voyage!

In August 1974, British & Commonwealth cadets joined the crew of the ketch **Halcyon** for the Tall Ships Race, from St. Malo to Portsmouth.

Halcyon was the sail training vessel of the Southampton School of Navigation, Warsash. She came fourth in her class.

Cadets Mike Brook, Robin Plumley, Chris Edwards and Christopher Turner were four B&C cadets from the lucky few chosen to sail in the big Soviet barque, **Kruzenstern**.

The cadets were invited to recall their experiences in short feature stories for CLANSMAN, the British & Commonwealth house magazine.

The two winning entries from Cadet Plumley and Cadet Turner both earned a book token for their contributions. Both articles are replicated here.

Although the company is long gone I acknowledge the article in CLANSMAN which I have used. The photo showing us on the yard was supplied to CLANSMAN with the assistance of Novosti Press Agency with the picture provided by Soviet Weekly. All other colour images are the authors own.



Cadet Plumley, one of the lucky few, proudly describes the voyage and the vessel, but makes familiar noises about the unfamiliar food.

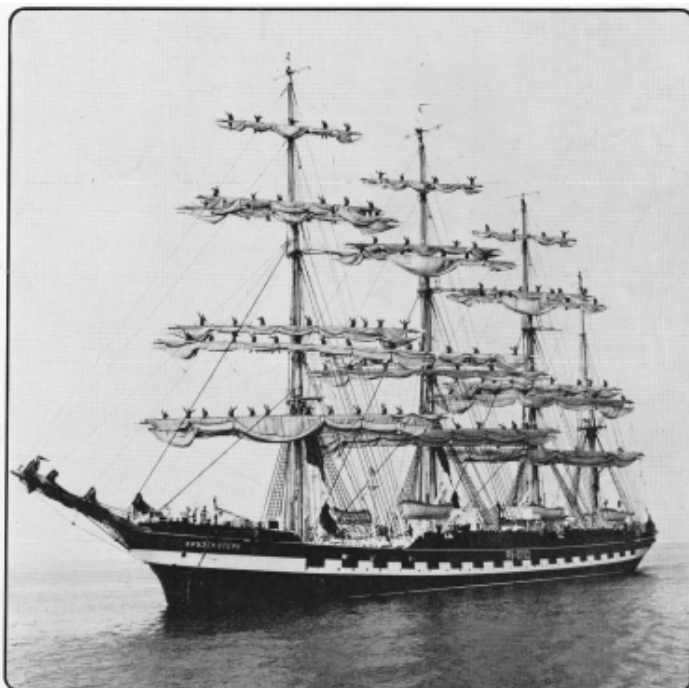
Kruzenstern

During the recent Tall Ships Race (while crewing for the School of Navigation, Warsash, ketch **Halcyon**) I was chosen, along with 19 other young people, to sail on the Russian four-masted barque **Kruzenstern** across to St. Malo. She had sailed to Portsmouth from Gdynia in Poland after taking part in the Copenhagen-Gdynia Race as part of Operation Sail 1974.

She is owned by the Ministry of Fishing in Moscow and is used as a training vessel for apprentice seamen and navigators who intend making a career in Russia's vast fishing fleet. Built in Germany in 1926 she was donated to the USSR after the Second World War.

We joined her on Sunday August 4 in the morning after permission had been obtained from Moscow. At 11.30 we had our first taste of Russian food. This consisted of a very watery tasteless vegetable soup which we were to have at nearly every meal. The main course was set out in a pot with potato in the bottom with a few chunks of meat laid on top. Not very filling, really. There was also a drink with the meal. It looked like tea but tasted like water from a drainpipe with some soot stirred in. We were later told that the drink was a form of fruit juice. After the meal we returned on deck to watch the departure of the vessels from Portsmouth.

Aided by tugs we left the berth and followed the Polish **Dar Pomorza** along with the rest of the



fleet westwards towards Cowes in the Parade of Sail to salute the Duke of Edinburgh on the Royal Yacht *Britannia*, with *HMS Ajax* in attendance.

After the sail-past we headed towards the Nab Tower and then set course and sail for St. Malo. On board, tea was at 15.30 and dinner at 19.30. All the meals were basically the same and very simple. At about 20.15 that evening we passed *Halcyon*.



While aboard we were looked after by the training officer in theoretical seamanship Capt. Chesnikov, who was a master in the Russian fishing fleet and a lecturer in seamanship at the University Sea School of Murmansk. He talked to us about the ship and its use with three other training vessels; this is the only sailing vessel, though.

The *Kruzenstern* has a permanent crew of 200 and carries about 150 trainees on voyages usually of between two- and three-months duration. She is based in the Baltic Sea whereas the other three vessels are based in the Pacific, Far East and Black Sea.

Breakfast on the Monday morning was at 07.30 after which we assembled on deck at the foot of the mizzen mast to have practice and instruction in going aloft. The first task was to climb the rigging to

the mainsail yard and down the other side. When that was completed, volunteers went aloft again to furl the mainsail. When finished we climbed further up to the lower topsail yard to furl the lower topsail. Safety belts were worn at all times when aloft. Eventually we had furled all the sails on the mizzen mast, these were: mainsail, lower topsail, upper topsail, lower topgallant, upper topgallant and the skysail at the top, On the mainmast this is called the royal.

The vessel is square rigged on the fore, main and mizzen masts and fore and aft rigged on the gigger mast, aft, which carries a double gaffsail and a gaff topsail. Forward she carries three jibs, flying, outer and inner; also, a staysail. Between the masts she carries two main staysails, two mizzen staysails and a gigger staysail. All this amounts to 3,700 square metres of sail.

At 11.00 on the Monday morning we anchored off St. Malo. After lunch we were presented with an Operation Sail 74 badge and a stamped postcard signed by the Master showing the vessel under full sail. These were presented to us by twenty of the Russian trainees. The rest of the day was spent furling the other sails and getting to know a bit more about the ship. In the evening we were shown a couple of films: one a documentary about the underground railway system in some of the cities in Russia, the other a Russian war film.

Tuesday morning at 08.00 we weighed anchor and entered through the lock into the harbour in St. Malo where a very large crowd waited to see the vessel in. Some of us were allowed aloft to line the skysail yard on the mizzen mast 180 feet above the deck. Quite a sight!

Once alongside and cleared by Customs and Immigration we made our way to our own vessels feeling very proud of sailing on such a fine vessel - the envy of the fleet in fact.



High up on a yard of the Russian barque *Kruzenstern*, a sailing instructor shows British cadets how the giant sails are handled. In this picture are some of the British cadets who crossed the Channel on the vessel during the week of the Tall Ships race

Cadet Turner reviews the whole Tall Ships Race experience, giving a quick-moving impression of crowded days.

Halcyon days

When Capt. C. Phelan succeeded Capt. M. Stuart as the director of the Southampton School of Navigation, he planned to enter the school's sail training vessel *Halcyon* for the 1974 Tall Ships Race. Due to the organisation required and dates of courses, it was only possible to enter her for the last race from St. Malo to Portsmouth.

Volunteers were called for and from the 42 applicants a crew of 14 was chosen. The shipping companies involved were subsequently asked to second the cadets for the duration of the race. The companies' response was one of whole-hearted support for the venture and all agreed to sponsor their own cadets. Four B&C cadets took part in the race: Mike Brook, Rob Plumley, Chris Edwards and me. D. Sinclair, a B&C chief officer, at present a divisional officer at the school, was one of the watch officers.

The venture started at 08.30 on August 3, when we loaded our gear aboard and stored ship. We left our moorings in the Hamble after lunch and arrived in Portsmouth at about 16.30, when everyone turned to, to clean ship and prepare for the cocktail party we were holding at 19.30. Members of the STA (Sail Training Association) race committee and masters of the other vessels - including the 3,543-ton *Amerigo Vespucci* - were invited and the party was a great success. That evening we all went ashore to dances that were being held at the Mecca and Guildhall, and a great time was had by all.

The next day, Saturday, all the crews marched to Southsea where prizes for the previous races were being presented by the Duke of Edinburgh. After the prizegiving we were treated to a flying display by the Red Arrows. During the afternoon, crew exchanges took place for the sail in company over to France. In the evening we all piled into the open top buses to get to Southsea where "Beat the Retreat" was being played under the castle walls. This was followed by a magnificent firework display of which we (as competitors) had a grandstand view.

On Sunday Rob Plumley and I, together with a P&O cadet, made our way over to the *Kruzenstern*, a Russian four-masted barque which was to be our ship for the next two days. The *Kruzenstern* is one of the training vessels for the Russian fishing fleet, and we were the first people to sail on a Russian vessel in the Tall Ships Race. We left Portsmouth at 13.00, with the help of two tugs and a pilot who had great difficulty in conversing with the Russian master.

After leaving Portsmouth we took part in the Parade of Sail past *Britannia* and *HMS Ajax*. As we continued on our way round the island we passed *Halcyon* under full sail and were given three cheers by her crew.

We anchored off St. Malo the next morning just before lunch, and spent the afternoon furling sails, climbing the rigging and sunbathing. We were also shown films on underground railways in Russia and a liberation film about the Second World War. Early on Tuesday we manned the mizzen royal yard and entered St. Malo some 180ft up in the air. We tied up in the lock after much manoeuvring among a great fleet of small boats which came out to welcome us. We arrived back on-board *Halcyon* after lunch only to find that we were playing football that afternoon, as it turned out, against the *Kruzenstern*. Needless to say, from the 50 cadets on board they managed to field a team which beat us 8-2, both our goals being scored by Mike Brook. That evening we held a wine and cheese party on board *Halcyon* but unfortunately were unable to obtain any cheese. Its absence was not really missed.

During our stay in France we also competed in the rowing regatta in which we came third and the swimming which fell through due to lack of organisation. Apart from this the crews of *Halcyon*, *Sir Winston Churchill*, *Malcolm Miller*, *Rhona* and *Dodo* entertained a crowd of about 150 with an impromptu sing-song finishing with a conga through the streets.

A dance was also held for the crews on the last night in the local casino. This would have been more enjoyable if drinks were slightly cheaper; beer at £1.65 a glass was somewhat expensive. (*That's £16.70 today... Ed*)



The day of the race dawned fine but slowly degenerated as it progressed. We moved off the berth only to find that the organisation of boats through the lock had collapsed. Consequently, we were 38 minutes late reaching the start line. Though we arrived with all sails set and the engine on full revs, it was switched off the second we crossed the line. Still by hard sailing we managed to achieve a fourth in our class out of eleven.

Malcolm Miller was first, *Dodo* second (after smashing her main boom and breaking a shroud). *Eendracht* was third followed by us.

It was certainly a fabulous experience taking part and one that I'm sure I'll never forget.

