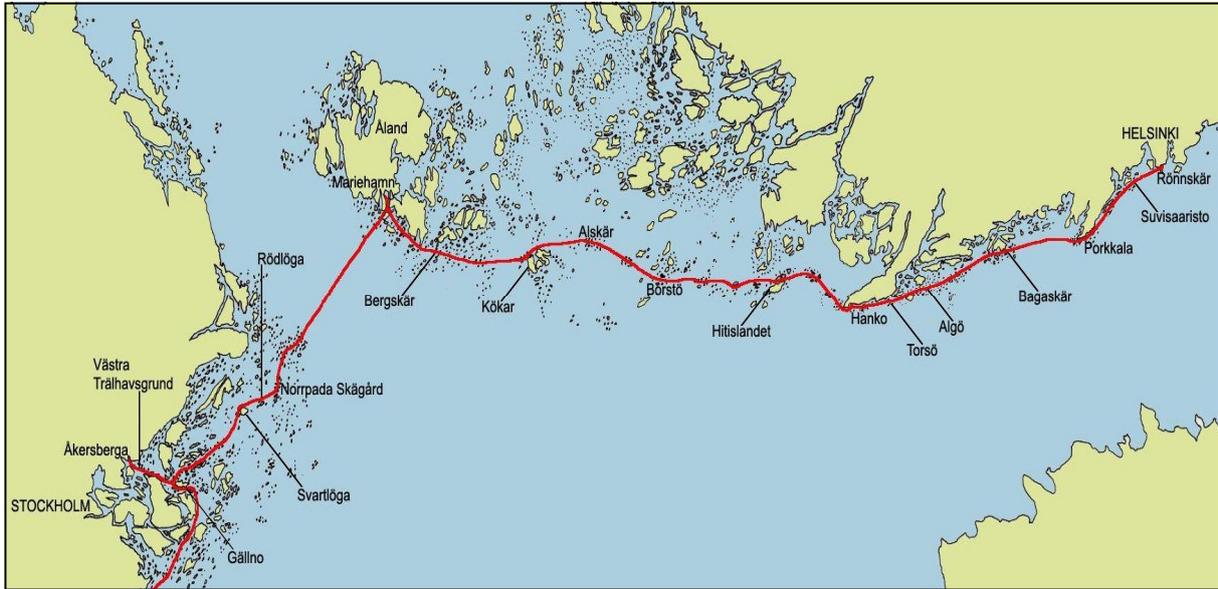


Section 6 - Stockholm, (Sweden) to Helsinki (Finland)

Sailed in July 2009 with crew Åke Nilsson & Sten Willstrand (Sweden)

Time taken: 25 Days Distance covered: 320 mls



Ralph Roberts



The crew for the 2 Wayfarers

Åke Nilsson



Sten Willstrand



Martin Ellis



W9885 Spree Lady



Preparing the boats for the trip at Åkersberga.

W7987 Sunny Side Up



Section 1 . Åkersberga to Mariehamn



Day 1 - It had taken much of the day to drive from Trollhättan, on the western side of Sweden to Åkersberga on the east, and it was early evening by the time we had the boats prepared for our trip.

The boats pulled out of the water using rollers, on a rare sandy beach.



Moored up at the Trälhävets Båtklubb in Åkersberga and packing the boats.

Fortunately Åke and Sten knew of a nearby island, Västra Trälhavsgrund, which had a sandy beach where we could to pull the boats up for the night.

Day 2 - The prevailing weather systems consisted of south-westerly winds. Unfortunately, a mighty high-pressure system had parked itself over Scandinavia for the period: this was useful in providing two weeks of sun, good weather and moderate winds, but rather less than helpful with the winds being mainly from the north-east.

A lunch-time stop on the island of Grinda.



Sailing in a light breeze towards the islands south of Gällnö.

The weather was bright and sunny with a light breeze when setting off from our night stop in the Västra Trälhavsgrund. Sten proved to be a master navigator, and guided us through the labyrinth of islands that often blended into one another such that it was difficult to see that there was any channel ahead

We stopped for lunch at a secluded bay on Grinda, nearly managing to permanently wedge a stern anchor between some under-water rocks. This was fortunately retrieved by paddling the boat out beyond the anchor, and pulling from the other direction.

Moored up at a sheltered inlet south of Träskö-Storö.



Our arrival at a destination was celebrated with a tot of whisky.

Arriving at a sheltered inlet south of Gällnö, we found an ideal spot to moor up and make camp for the night. We had bought a couple of bottles of whisky on the ferry over to Scandinavia, and we quickly made a ritual of celebrating our day's sail with a wee dram. Åke and Sten pitched their land tent, whilst Martin and I erected boat tents.

Day 3 - Setting out in a fresh, north-easterly breeze we sailed close hauled eastwards. Rounding Grindö, a reef was needed in the main as we tacked our way up the Träsköfjärden. The wind dropped significantly after a lunch break on a small island near Storö, allowing us to enjoy a leisurely beat during an afternoon of glorious sailing.

Anchored off the rocks on a small island south of Svartlöga.



Sailing in the lighter, afternoon winds on a glorious sunny day.

Arriving at a small island to the southwest of Svartlöga, we decided to look for somewhere to stop for the night and quickly found an idyllic anchorage completely sheltered by a rocky protrusion. By dropping a stern anchor, we were able to moor our bows off the solid rock and step ashore over the foredeck.

Day 4 - The wind continued to blow from the north east, making for another day of slower progress than had been hoped for. We tacked our way into the headwind through the many clusters of islands until finally rounding the larger island of Svartlöga, to head for Rödlöga.

Moored up to a public jetty on the island of Rödlöga.



Sailing through the Stockholm archipelago in light winds.

Rödlöga was one of the relatively few islands on which there was a small thriving community, complete with a local shop and even a small café. We used the surprisingly well stocked shop to re-provision our dwindling food supplies, and then visited the cafeteria, where we were served with the finest of smoked salmon sandwiches.

Setting off from Rödöga in light winds after our lunch-time stop, we beat our way through the myriad of islands making up the Söderarm archipelago. We always kept within close sight of each other to avoid losing contact, and aimed to sail for around 6 hours each day, making a leisurely start in the morning, and stopping in the late afternoon.

Anchored in a shallow bay of an island in Norrpada Skärgård.



Another day of sailing in glorious weather but light winds.

We found another ideal overnight anchorage on an island within the Norrpada Skärgård group, which was almost two islands, but for a narrow causeway. The approach was over a shallow area of rocks requiring walking the boat through to the shore, but it was perfectly sheltered once tied up.

Our normal routine after landing was to set up camp, with Åke and Sten finding a flat area of rock on which to pitch their tent, using large stones to secure the base and guy ropes, before cooking ourselves an evening meal. The site may well have appeared untidy after washing up, but no litter was ever left behind.

Sailing in light winds to Rammskärsfjärden.



Åke programming the next day's planned route into his GPS.



Day 5 - Another day of light winds made for slow progress as we weaved our way through the final group of small islands toward Rammskärsfjärden, and the open stretch of water between Sweden and the semi-independent Finnish area of Åland. By now we were way behind schedule of our anticipated schedule.

There was a well buoyed channel through the narrower or rocky parts between the many islands, though we would often take a more scenic, unmarked route. We made a lunch-time stop on one such detour, visiting a most picturesque and natural cove on an island east of Hamnö, with its wide entrance, and narrow exit at the far side.

Anchored off the rocks for our final night's stop in Sweden.



An idyllic lunchtime mooring on an island east of Hamnö.

We made our final night's stop for the night on Swedish soil . or rock would perhaps be more appropriate . on one of the Rammskärsfjärden group of islands. We spent the most magical evening on the small island, with only the flashing light of the Söderarm lighthouse visible after dark, and not a sound to be heard.

Good winds giving us a glorious sail into Mariehamn.



A windless, flat calm sea – with the motor, rather than the sail providing forward motion.

Day 6 - The day dawned bright and sunny, but without a breath of wind . on the one day that we needed to sail the complete 30Nm passage over to Åland. Packing the boats with extra care for the open sea crossing, we hoped a sea breeze might develop, but were forced to use the outboards on slow speed in the hope we would have sufficient fuel for the trip. We did however both carry a set of oars if all else failed. A breeze eventually got up around mid-day, and we were able to enjoy a fine sail into Mariehamn.

Åke and Sten knew of a campsite on an inlet to the east of the city, requiring the masts to be lowered to pass beneath a bridge. Having had a good off-wind sail up to that point, we used the outboards to motor the remaining distance north to a fine sandy beach that was part of the large campsite. It proved an ideal location for our two day stopover.

The boats pulled onto the beach over-looking the large inlet.



All the gear removed from the boat prior to rolling it ashore.

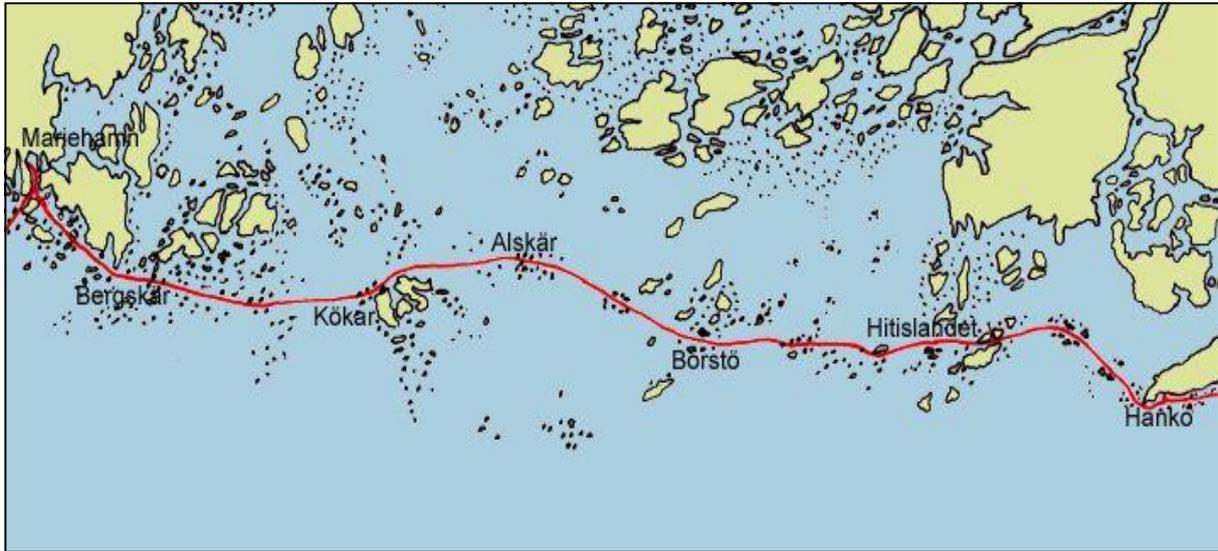
Checking in at the campsite office, it was no problem for us to leave the boats on the beach . even to erect our boat tents to sleep aboard, with Åke and Sten able to set up their land tent on grass for a change.

The Tall Ship 'Pommern' moored up in Mariehamn harbour.



Day 7 - We spent a very relaxing day in Mariehamn, which is the administrative centre for Åland, a semi-autonomous region of Finland. Our visit coincided with the World Inter-island Olympic games with a team representing the Isle of Wight, who were also staying at the campsite, competing in the sailing events. A main tourist attraction in the harbour was the tall ship 'Pommern' which had been set up as a museum that re-created all its working facets as a trading vessel.

Section 2 . Mariehamn to Hanko



Martin and Åke setting sail from the beach of the campsite at Mariehamn.



Ralph and Sten departing from the same spot a few moments later.

Day 8 - Setting off under full sail, we had quickly needed to reef the sails as we beat our way south into a strong headwind toward the reputed 90,000 islands that form the archipelago between Åland and the Finnish mainland. (A more accurate image of the mass of islands than is illustrated in the very basic map above can be viewed on Google Earth). The wind had been against us for the mile or so to the campsite a few days previously . and was now against us on the return trip. How typical!

Reaching the southern end of the channel, we turned off the wind on a south-easterly course, with the many islands affording us protection from the breeze. It was another great day to be out sailing in such a beautiful, scenic area. We anchored off the rocks in a small bay on an island near Rödhamn for a short lunchtime stop. It was idyllic.

Martin and Sten sailing in W7987, 'Sunny Side Up'.



Stopping for a lunch break at a scenic spot on an island near Rödhamn.



There was a clearly marked passage through the archipelago but with the crystal clear water allowing us to see any shallow area with rocks, we were often able to sail a more direct and interesting route. The few motor boats and yachts that were also out making the most of the fine conditions, always strictly followed the channel markers. This was Wayfarer sailing in as perfect a location for cruising as it was ever possible to find.

The boats anchored off the rocks for an overnight stop on the island of Bergskär.



Sten and Åke sailing W9885 Spree Lady in the archipelago.



Clearing the final headland of Åland, we were able to change course eastward and the vista of the many islands ahead was a truly amazing sight. We threaded our way through the most southerly part of the Föglö archipelago, and made landfall at Bergskär for the evening.

Day 9 - This was the first day of our trip that the wind actually blew from the normal prevailing direction of south-west. We sailed through a more open area with smaller, rocky outcrops that disappeared out into the vastness of the Baltic Sea, and at last covered a good distance. We made a lunchtime stop on one of the barren islands near Kökar.

Martin with his spinnaker up and enjoying the perfect conditions.



Looking out into the Baltic past the last barren outcrops of rock.

Both boats had packed spinnakers for the trip and it gave us some pleasure that we were able to hoist them for a glorious day of sailing. We had spent most of our previous 7 days negotiating our way through many shallow, rocky areas, and as interesting as this was, it was good to enjoy a more relaxing sail.

Arriving at the next cluster of islands making up the Alskår group, we quickly found a suitably sheltered spot to anchor up for the night. This was never difficult since there were numerous small islands with craggy inlets, so it was merely a matter of sailing round to the lee side of a convenient looking island.

Martin and Åke checking out nature's own 'Picasso' work.



Moored off the rocks on a small island in the Alskår group.

The more difficult task than finding somewhere sheltered to anchor the boats each night, was Åke and Sten's need to find a suitable flat area of rock on which to pitch their tent. By the end of the trip they were using the hotel star rating to grade each night's site! After cooking a simple evening meal, we would make an exploration of the island by walking around its perimeter.

Day 10 - The fine spinnaker weather didn't last beyond just the one day however, and the sail the next morning proved to be the most unpleasant of the whole trip. With a strong headwind and heavy rain, we sought sanctuary on a militarised island not open to the public. We went ashore, persuading ourselves it was an emergency situation.

Anchored in another idyllic spot east of Borstö.



Setting off in better conditions from the militarised island.

Wet and cold, we made ourselves a hot drink. We weren't ejected from the beach, so presumed a nearby watchtower had not been manned. Setting off in better conditions, with the wind veering round to allow for an easier sail, we found another perfect anchorage for the night on a small island east of Borstö.

Day 11 - The next day's sail was much more enjoyable, and we made great progress towards the Finnish mainland. We had booked specific dates to ensure our tickets . being peak season . for the ferry passages from Helsinki to Stockholm, a return to Helsinki with the cars and trailers, and a final trip back to Stockholm with the boats. Our last few days of fine sails had quelled our fears about reaching Helsinki in time. The day's glorious sail was completed by finding another ideally sheltered spot for our overnight stay.



Ghosting in on the last of the day's fine winds to a small bay on an island east of Hitislandet.

The natural rocks were used as stepping stones in shallow water.

Day 12 - A good northerly breeze meant that the remaining 15Nm through clusters of inhabited islands to Hanko was covered by the early afternoon. It was evident from the great number of yachts out racing as we approached the headland that a large regatta was taking place off the town.

Åke and Sten packing 7 day's of provisions into containers.

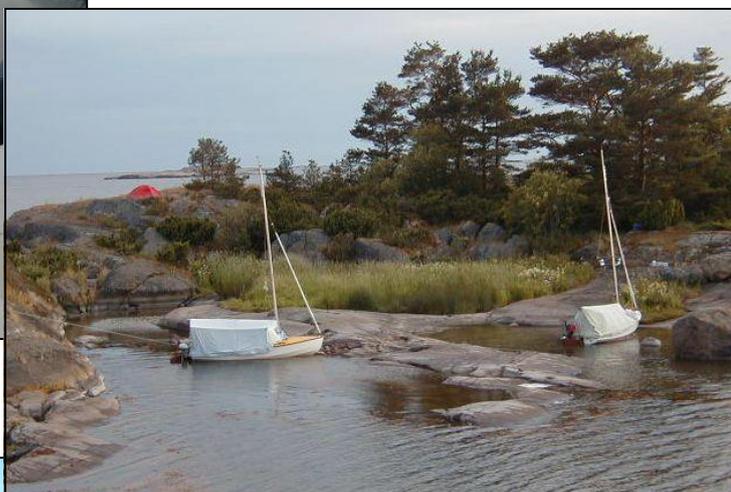


Åke and Sten's tent with large rocks anchoring the guy ropes.



Åke helming Spree Lady toward Hanko with Sten navigating through the island chain.

Entering the harbour at Hanko, we found the fleet of boats participating in the regatta had taken up every possible space and our only option was to tie up at public landing place which was intended to be kept clear. We had an urgent need to re-stock with provisions, having last shopped in Mariehamn, and no other places to shop before Helsinki. We were only too pleased to set off to find a more tranquil setting after completing our essential re-provisioning. The rowdy behaviour of the younger competitors made it a truly awful place to stop for any longer than necessary.



Moored in a sheltered inlet a few miles from Hanko with Åke and Sten's tent clearly visible.

The offshore islands continued along the coast and we only needed to sail a few miles to find a much more peaceful anchorage for our overnight stop. Initially anchoring side by side in a deeper area of water, I determined that there was just sufficient depth to drag Spree Lady over a shallow rock into a more sheltered position. Whether it was worth slipping and getting soaked for, was debateable!

Section 3 . Hanko to Helsinki



Day 13 - Studying the chart after setting off from our overnight stop, Sten declared that there appeared to be an ideal lunch-time stop by sailing through a channel between two islands. He hadn't appreciated that the channel would be quite so narrow though, or so rocky. Being always up to a challenge, I sailed in close for a reconnoitre, before turning round to sail through . much to the apparent interest of the passing cruisers keeping to the marked route.



The narrow, rocky channel between two islands sailed through in our Wayfarers.

Our overnight anchorage on one of the small islands south of Algö.



An idyllic setting for a lunch-time stop on an island south of Torsö.

Sailing out on an easier route around the far side of the island, we continued along the scenic coastline to the next cluster of small islands near Algö, easily finding a suitable overnight anchorage.



Day 14 - Åke and Sten maintained a daily morning routine of listening to the weather forecast and there were warnings of gales arriving the next day. With another fine day for sailing before the expected gale, we were able to reach the cluster of islands near Bågaskär and find a sheltered spot on the lee side that would offer protection from the gale.

Still anchored in the sheltered bay during gales the next day.



Anchored off the shore for the night on an island near Bågaskär.

Day 15 - The morning forecast confirmed the expected gale later in the day so we set out on a walk around the shoreline of the island. It seemed unimaginable that anyone would drop their rubbish in such a beautiful natural area, but always there was litter, I had filled a plastic bag by the time we had returned.

Day 16 - We made further good progress the next day to Porkkala, on the mainland. The entrance from the west through a channel between some offshore islands would have offered the port excellent shelter. However an open passage from the south left it completely exposed to winds from that direction.

Enjoying a relaxing coffee break in the café during the gale.

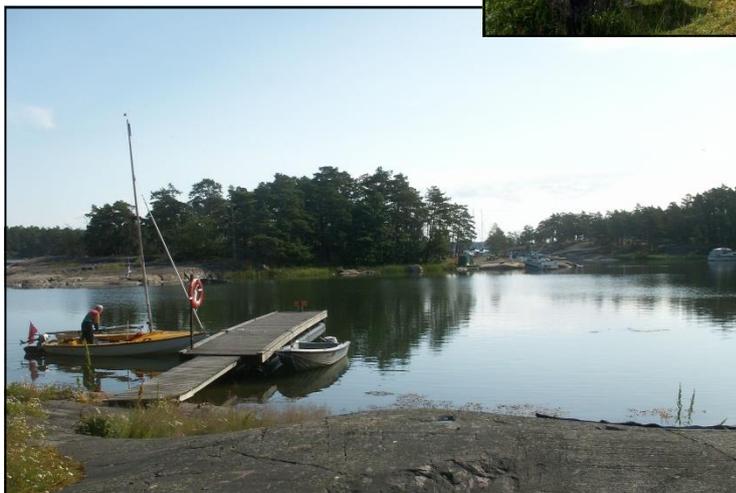


Moored in Porkkala with our kit temporarily placed on the jetty.

Day 17 - The radio forecast had warned of further gales, and these had started during the night. It blew even more furiously than the gale two days previously. However, this was a much more comfortable place to be holed up, with a café and small shop, a restaurant, even a sauna. It beat sheltering in a tent, listening to the rain on the canvas.

Day 17 - Whilst moored at the marina there had been a number of visitors intrigued we had sailed such a long distance in small boats, and that we were sleeping aboard each night. One such visitor had been Kaj Landell, who subsequently sailed with me on the trip from Malmo to Stockholm. The gales finally abated in the mid-afternoon and we were able to ready the boats to set sail.

Moored up to the jetty, with the cruisers anchored in background.



Pulled up onto the grass with the mainland on the horizon.

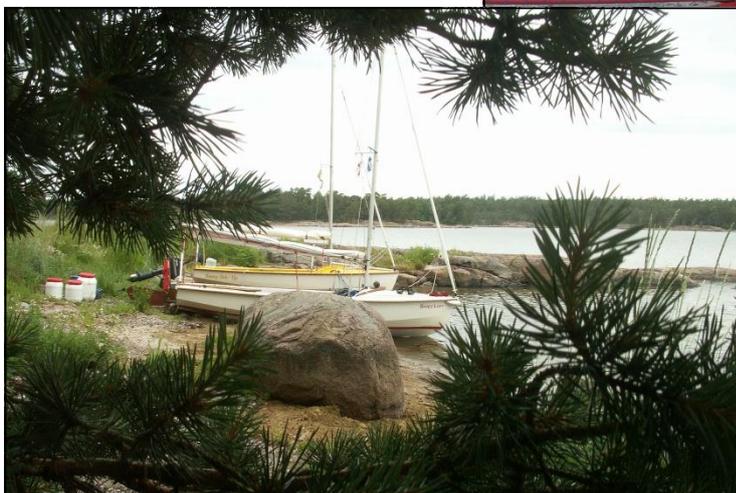
We had been told about the public amenity island of St Svartöa just a few miles to the east, which not only made for a more tranquil overnight stop, but was also far cheaper than the expensive fee at the harbour. We were able to find a quiet spot away from the main anchorage for the larger cruisers.

Day 18 - With the good breeze blowing from the south-west, we set sail in high hopes of reaching our final destination. Finding somewhere to stop for a lunch break proved to be more difficult, since every possible landing place had a holiday home attached to it, being within driving distance of Helsinki.

Rollers were used to pull the boats up onto the beach.



Sunny Side Up enjoying a good sail in the fine breeze.



To our good fortune during our stay in Porkkala, we had not only been informed about the public amenity island nearby, but also of others that would make ideal stopovers for the night. An ideal landing spot with a sandy beach to pull out the boats on was found on the first such island, south of Suvisaaristo. We were technically not allowed to camp, but risked erecting boat tents.

Day 19 - Starting out from our overnight spot, the wind continued to blow strongly from the south-west and after emerging from the last of the group of islands, we needed to quickly put a reef in the main and furl the genoa to make the sailing more comfortable. We encountered the biggest seas of the whole trip on the last stretch of open water, and it took only a few hours to sail the final miles to our destination of Helsinki, with Sten navigating us to the island of Rönnskär. We had made it!



Sailing the final leg into Helsinki in strong winds and big seas.



Toasting our arrival in Helsinki with a tot of whisky.

A quiet lagoon with a rocky, shallow entrance was situated just off the busy main marina and permission was sought to move the boats there . not really expecting to be allowed to do so. No motor or sailing boat had seemingly ventured in there before because of the hazardous entrance, so the young lady in charge, not knowing whether it was allowed or not, kindly permitted us to do so. It provided us with us with a far more tranquil mooring during the few days it took Åke and Martin to return with the cars and trailers.



Anchored off the rocks in a quiet lagoon away from the busy and less protected visitors moorings.

Ralph Roberts W 9885