

Sport

SAILING

Successful sail across the Atlantic

Wilfred Sultana

No matter how near or far you go, there is always an element of adventure involved with sailing. Furthermore sailing with great and passionate people is paradise.

These words surely define the feeling of pride and satisfaction experienced by three members of the Malta Cruising Club who, in February, sailed across the Atlantic Ocean.

This they did cruising from Port of Mindelo on the Island of Sao Vicente, Cape Verde Islands (off the north-western coast of Africa), to Chaguaramas Bay on the Island of Trinidad, a distance of approximately 2,200 n.m., which they covered in 14 days of continuous sailing.

The three adventuresome yachtsmen were Patrick Genovese, aged 49, an IT Company Director; Dr Carmel Abela, 53, a Doctor; and David Jones, 66, a Master Mariner & Marine Surveyor. Patrick is also a Malta Cruising Club committee member.

"I've been wanting to do this for quite a long time, and this was the 3rd 'opportunity', the first two fell through, but this one came to fruition. The boat we crewed on is owned by friends, Gareth Thomas and Anna Maria Darmanin, who are very experienced sailors and RYA instructors," remarked Patrick.

The owners have plenty of Atlantic sailing experience but this was their first crossing. This was done on their new boat Zingala, a 2003 Nautor Swan 56R.

Patrick felt at ease because "The boat is a comfortable, well equipped, and very powerful yacht. Furthermore, knowing the owners, I was confident that from a safety point of view the boat will be properly prepared, equipped and operated safely."

The participation of Dr. Carmel Abela and David Jones was not planned. Two of the original crew members were forced to drop out, due to a health and work commitments respectively.

This led to Patrick helping the owners to find replacement crew by canvassing his contacts in the sailing circles which led to Carmel and David joining the crew.

David's decision to join was relatively fast while in Carmel's case it was a little more complicated due to the need to ensure that appropriate replacements were available to cover his work commitments/duties in his absence.

Once on board, the crew were briefed on the boat's systems especially everything related to safety. Every boat is different, so all had to adapt to Zingala's characteristics.

Everyone was assigned a watch duty which was done on a rotation basis. Watches lasted 2 hours and with a crew of 5 watches rotated on 2 hrs on 8 hrs off basis. This allowed each crew member ample



Cape Verde Islands - All set to go - (from left) David Jones, Carmel Abela, Gareth Thomas, Qwerky the dog, Anna Maria Darmanin and Patrick Genovese.

time to rest and relax.

Any other duties were assigned very informally as everyone got on really well and lent a hand whenever anything needed to be done.

Boat handling e.g. hoisting/dropping sails, reefing etc. was a team effort since Zingala is a powerful boat that needs a crew to handle her properly.

A well-fed crew is a happy crew and in addition to co-skippering the boat Anna Maria did a wonderful job of keeping the whole crew well fed with healthy and very tasty meals.

Cooking under way on a boat that is constantly in motion and sometimes rolling quite heavily is no easy task. Despite the chal-

lenge, mealtimes were certainly one of the highlights of each day.

Carmel, in his 'role' as official fisherman on board, was a regular provider of several large Dorados (Lampuka) and Sea Perch which were duly turned into very tasty meals by Anna Maria - "It was literally a case of from the sea into the pan/oven", observed Patrick.

The weather was generally good with winds between a force 5 to force 7 with waves between about 1.5m to 4m. The average wind speed was about 20 to 25kts. Most days they had generally good weather with clear skies, and a few overcast days with some minor rain showers.

Another highlight of the trip was

the night sky, which free of light pollution, is simply spectacular.

Did the weather affect your eating and sleeping patterns?

Patrick: "The first couple of days under way I did not sleep very well but once I acclimatized to the movement, I was able to sleep and rest well consistently. One day I got dehydrated and this made me a bit seasick but took Carmel's advice, rehydrated and all returned to normal quickly".

Carmel: "After those first 12 hours I got my sea legs and I was surprised how well I was coping to do all the things that I would normally have a problem with out at sea like reading and typing on my iPad.....after my first at-

tempt at making a cup of tea ending up cleaning the galley and hardly had tea in my cup as it all spilt while I was trying to add milk from the fridge!"

David: "I was not that affected too much by the sleeping issue. With regard to eating we kept the same time all the way across the Atlantic. That kept our body clocks fairly steady. It was however tiring when you were up hanging on all the time to a fast-moving boat".

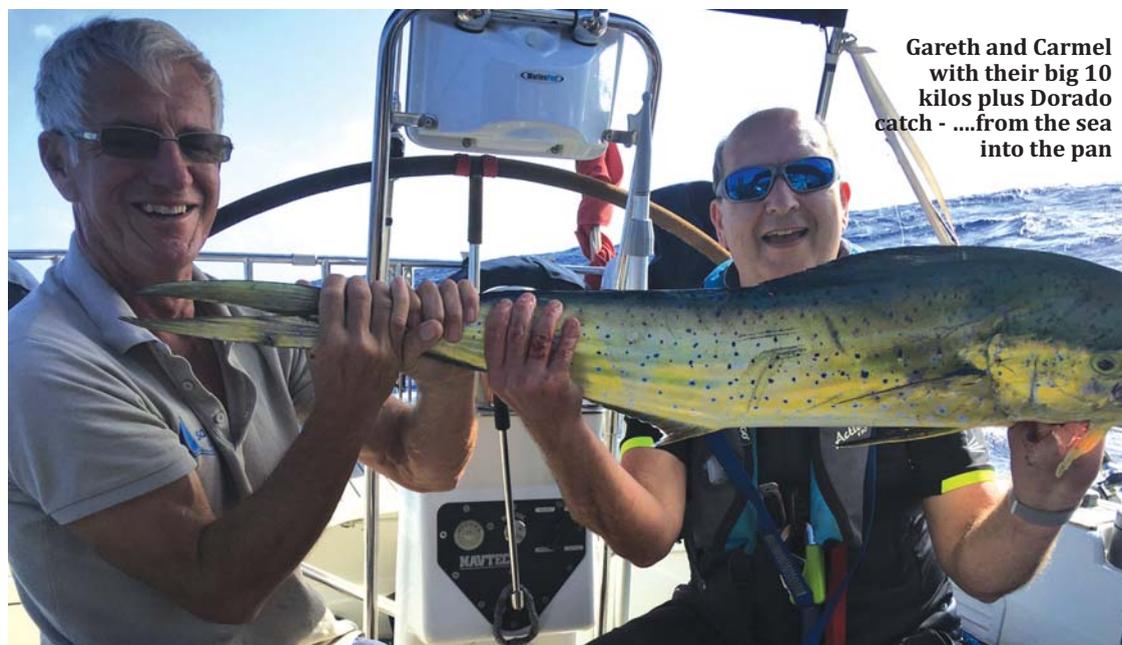
14 days' Atlantic Ocean crossing - Prior to this adventure Patrick longest non-stop sail was one of 24hrs, with Carmel mastering 16 hours and never had experienced a night-time cruising before, with David sailing for around 48 hours sailing from Italy to Greece.

Last comments

Patrick "Doing this crossing has been on my wish list for a very very long time. I am glad that I did it and grateful to have done it with such a fantastic group of people"

Carmel "this trip made me understand why people sell their house to buy a boat that will take them round the world - who knows maybe one day I might be one of them too"

David "The owners Gareth and Anna were very good at listening to our ideas. Gareth was very good at chairing discussions prior to nights and various points on the voyage. It was easy to have any sound ideas included in the plan".



Gareth and Carmel with their big 10 kilos plus Dorado catch -from the sea into the pan