

The glamorous *Rosie*



At first glance you would not have imagined that the young couple in the little catamaran with their two very small children were setting off to face the greatest challenge of any yachtsman's life. But they were. They were about to follow the wool clipper route from Sydney to London round Cape Horn.

Anneliese.

Rosie Swale was born in Switzerland in 1945 to an Irish father and an Austrian mother. When her mother died, she was taken to Ireland by her Irish grandfather, and spent her childhood years there. She came to London as a teenager to escape a life of poverty and neglect, and after a series of jobs, including modelling, she took off for India with a friend in 1965, hitch-hiking. With little money she had to walk barefoot part of the way when she lost her shoes.

Two years later she met and married Colin Swale, who was also an adventurer. He had run marathons in Yorkshire when he was young, and later climbed Mt Kenya. He had competed against judo experts, and for some years had been involved in motor racing.

Their first child, Eve, was born in 1969, and in the same year they bought a ketch rigged 9.14m catamaran called *Anneliese*, teaching themselves to sail it by trial and error. It was while they were sailing along the coast of Italy that Rosie gave birth to James, and they then sailed to Gibraltar.

Rosie and Colin had for some years nursed an ambition to carry out some extremely daring adventure together, and in Italy the idea of rounding Cape Horn was born. This was complicated by the ages of their children, but they decided they had to go soon, while the children were young and wouldn't be in the way.

So just before Christmas 1971, Colin and Rosie set out. Leaving aside the initial problems of stowing everything they had brought aboard for a cruise that might take two years, and the constant care of two very young children, they had few difficulties until the night of 23 March 1972, somewhere between Barbados and Panama. When she came on deck to take over her watch, Rosie carelessly forgot to fasten her lifeline, and was swept overboard by a freak wave, along with the inflatable dinghy. Fortunately Colin was able to find her quickly, and they learned a valuable lesson that night about safety precautions.

Anneliese passed through the Panama Canal in April – an adventure in itself for a small yacht – and set out for the Galapagos Islands. After a very slow passage they decided to rest for a week or so there, enjoying the extraordinary



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flora and fauna, the beaches, and exchanging stories with other yachtsmen.

It was these islands that had so excited Charles Darwin more than a century earlier and helped lead him to formulate his famous theory of evolution by natural selection.

The next stage of the voyage was much faster, the yacht reaching the Marquesas in 30 days. From there they sailed to Tahiti, where they spent several weeks while Rosie had minor surgery and convalesced. At the end of July they set out for Raratonga, which they reached in fourteen days. After a short stay they were off again, this time for Tonga, then Sydney, where they arrived on 20 September.

They made sure to wait outside the Heads until daylight, then as they sailed in on a beautiful spring day were duly impressed by the harbour itself, the Bridge, the large number of yachts, and even the unfinished Opera House. They were welcomed at the Cruising Yacht Club of Australia in Rushcutters Bay. Among the large number of reporters, the many British media representatives were more interested in them at this stage than were the Australian press.

Colin and Rosie spent eleven weeks in Sydney, mostly in making what repairs they could to *Anneliese* and in desperately trying to raise money for the major items, for which they didn't have the resources. So far they had financed the voyage largely on the articles Rosie was writing and the photographs Colin was taking, both sent home by mail from the ports they had visited. But now more was needed, and despite their frantic efforts no sponsors were prepared to help, seeing them as too great a risk.

Most Sydney opinion tended to agree with this view,



The Swale family aboard Anneliese.

including that of Dr David Lewis, who himself had considerable experience in the Southern Ocean, and who tried to persuade them not to continue. In the end, though, it was Lewis who gave them a radio, and the smaller donations of many others enabled them to give *Anneliese* a substantial refit for the ordeal ahead. They also had their teeth checked over, and fillings carried out where necessary free of charge, courtesy of a dentist introduced to them as a very keen yachtsman.

Next month : The Glamorous Rosie Part II

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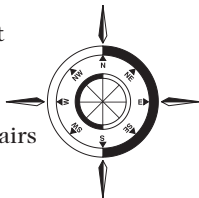
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