

The glamorous

Rosie

by Jack Clark

Colin and Rosie Swale set out from Gibraltar in 1971 in their 9.14m catamaran, with their two very young children, to retrace the clipper ship route from Sydney to England round Cape Horn. After refitting in Sydney on a shoestring, they were ready to leave.

Colin and Rosie had intended to leave Sydney by mid-November, so they could reach Cape Horn before the worst of the season's weather, but the difficulties they encountered kept them until 6 December.

Then, after only a few hours at sea, they had to turn back to repair the radio aerial and a new self-steering device. Then they were off again, this time for good. The Tasman was rough, but Wellington, their last port before Cape Horn, was welcoming. They could, however, stay for only a few days, and left again on 23 December.

Only a few days out they encountered very heavy weather, but throughout most of January 1973 moderate conditions, with occasional heavy squalls, prevailed. This enabled them to make good time towards South America. Then at the beginning of February they were hit by the most violent storm they had met on the whole voyage.

For twenty-four hours they had to hand steer – a most exhausting exercise. Gradually conditions moderated, and on 8 February they



Part 2

Rosie taking the sun in the cockpit of *Anneliese*.

sighted Cape Horn just as the wind virtually died. Finally they had reached their longed-for goal. Miraculously it remained in sight for over five hours, giving Colin many opportunities for photography and for the children the most exciting sight they would most likely see in their lives. Colin and Rosie celebrated with champagne and Christmas pudding.

Then the weather closed in again as they turned north, now in the Atlantic, towards the Falkland Islands, but the welcome they received there, and the few days rest they were able to have, enabled them to go on quite cheerfully. They were heading north off South America now, direct to England, and the south-east trades saw them make good time for five weeks, almost to 30 degrees south. One night, however, as Rosie went on watch, she was hit by a severe abdominal pain, followed by excessive bleeding.

They both knew she would need treatment quickly, and the pain relief remedies they had aboard *Anneliese* helped Rosie very little. Clearly it was a most serious situation. The best they could



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do was head for the nearest port Recife, almost on the great curve of the Brazilian coast. But this was weeks away, despite favourable winds and Colin's best efforts.

In fact it took exactly two weeks, and Rosie was quickly taken to Recife's central hospital. There she learnt she had suffered a miscarriage, and was lucky to be alive. She recovered quickly after treatment, and after several days in hospital, and only a few more to recuperate, they set off again, impatient to reach home, and this time even more determined to make it in one hit.

They made good time, even through the Doldrums, crossing the Equator on 6 May, and despite some storms in the last seven or eight hundred miles, arrived in Plymouth on 1 July. Their voyage had lasted eighteen and a half months.

Anneliese received a tremendous welcome, no doubt inspired by the great interest aroused by the British journalists who had followed the Swales' exploits across the world. But this was also the product of the many feature articles Rosie had written during the voyage, accompanied by Colin's photographs. These had been sent back from the places they had visited on the voyage as often as possible.

One of the interesting features of these articles was the inclusion of Rosie naked or half naked in some of the photographs. Rosie had been a model at one stage of her earlier life, and, as she points out, this was often a comfortable way to dress in the Tropics aboard *Anneliese*. Not surprisingly this aspect of the articles attracted many readers not normally interested in sailing, enhancing the sales of those magazines with Rosie's articles.

Apart from the voyage itself, a surprising aspect of the Swales' eighteen and a half months at sea was that Rosie wrote two books, in addition to the many feature articles for newspapers and magazines she relied on to help finance the enterprise.

The first book was *Rosie Darling*, an autobiography to the point she met Colin, and the second was *Children of Cape Horn*, an account of the voyage itself. The first was finished by about



Kids at play on Anneliese.

the halfway mark, the second almost complete by their arrival in England. All were written on a battered portable typewriter. The articles and the book chapters, as well as Colin's photographs, were sent back to England from the ports they came to, and Rosie was delighted to be handed a proof copy of *Rosie Darling* on their arrival in Plymouth.

After their very warm welcome home and the publication of Rosie's first book, she resolved to give her children her complete attention for some years. So until 1983 she did just that, while writing several more books. Colin continued with his photography, and they both enjoyed a quiet life. ↓

Next month: The Glamorous Rosie – part III

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