

Adrian Morgan



A sunnier outlook

Can this month's illustration make *Adrian* see the brighter side of life?

The observant among you – which means all but the skinny bloke in faded oilskins perched on the bridge deck with a cup of cocoa, fag on, blocking the companionway (don't you just hate when they do that?) – will have noticed this month's deliberate mistake. 'Ullapool Outlook' says the strap line (I think that's what they call it in the trade) and right there underneath what do we find? Picture of a boat and a girl swimming. In Loch Broom? You gotta be joking. She'd be as blue as that antifouling by the time the Sea King plucked her to safety and whisked her off to Inverness hospital.

Now, I am being unfair in that up here when the weather's good (like the little boy) it's very, very good. But when it's bad it's horrible, nasty, vicious, cold, wet and one day it wouldn't surprise me to find frogs raining from the sky (no chance of locusts, too cold; and nothing, not even a hungry midge, can beat upwind against a Hebridean sou'wester).

But heigh-ho. Artists are artists, and Charlotte (who drew the picture) is young and optimistic. She must be, as she and her partner, Dan, have embarked on a lengthy restoration of a 1920s cruising yacht with the usual problems.

The explanation as to why she chose to illustrate this month's drivel with a picture like that may have been in order to propitiate the gods. For she is embarking on a trip north, to the far north, in fact, with a septuagenarian adventuress on board a little boat for a few months. Before she went she handed me a sheaf of illustrations with a "here, write something around those for a change". It was a challenge I could not resist. As an attempt to placate the north winds, I hope it works.

Anyway, I'll let you know if the sun did indeed shine on Ullapool in August, but I can tell you now that no one would have gone swimming in the loch even in mid summer. The Gulf Stream, which is supposed to bathe these shores, takes a loop offshore at Rubha Rhe, the big headland to the south of us (you know, the one with the Admiralty warning "venture beyond this



CHARLOTTE WATERS

point at your peril") and heads off towards Cape Wrath, where it swings right en route for Sweden. But again, I have my doubts about that. A warm current that starts in the Gulf of Mexico ends up warming the skerries off Gothenburg? Pull the other one.

Spring came late to Loch Broom (Gulf Stream or not) and it was mid May when the boats were finally launched from their collection of gimcrack trailers, down the stony beach in front of the sailing club. All went well, apart from one sorry episode in which I played a key role. You remember the little Blackwater Sloop I refurbished some years back? Well, she's got two sizeable holes punched in her quarters from ill-fitting trailer pads. Why? Impatience. Instead of waiting for the next tide, my owner (why, oh why did I not positively insist he waited rather than just say "be it on your own head?") opted to go for it. Result: two cracked planks and lots of scraped paint. Not terminal (nothing is on an old boat) but I could have done without the work. Hell. Given the slim chance of good weather up here, I want to get out on the water, take *Sally* to the Outer Isles, lap up

the sunshine in that little anchorage on the ill-named Summer Isles, and go swimming (not). I don't want to be messing about with old boats with cracked frames.

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