

# CHINESE NEW YEAR

by Sean Baylis

This Chinese New Year I wet my bed, here is the story...



Chinese New Year is always a quiet time for us 'gweilo' who stay in HK for the holidays. Our cruising friends planned a week long cruise up to Mirs Bay Double Haven to spend a week out on anchor.

'The Chinese New Year Amada' as we called ourselves, Ben and Lyndsey on ALLUNA, Ryan and Fanny on (Long overdue, soon to be renamed Payaaya Mingo), Andy, Devere, Will and Steve on DragonFly and myself Sean on Malarky1 with the ship's dog Bonnie.

We departed Hebe about 11am and motor sailed North with less than 5 knots of wind. Lucky for me the coast up around Dai Long Wan was flat with the slightest hint of a swell. (I get sea sick watching Volovo Ocean Race on Youtube).

For the first night Ben and Lyndsey suggested we head up to Tai Po, Tai Mei Tuk and anchor there. This was a great idea as we've always wanted to head into Tai Po, which was new territory for all of us. There is a great little anchorage right in the corner of Tai Mei Tuk just near the BBQ pits and the Tai Po boat club, good muddy holding. We dropped anchor about 4pm, while the boys on Dragonfly tucked into the beers, I took Bonnie ashore for toilet and to look around. There a BBQ site full of folks enjoying the first day of the CNY holidays, people riding by on bicycles and young folk walking over to the youth hostel. Bonnie loved the grassy knowl.

That evening we ventured across the road to survey the many restaurants along Ting Kok Road, after checking out the menus and prices, Ben got into a little negotiation with the manager of Tuli Indian Restaurant. "Bucket of Kingfisher 5 bottles \$150" said the affable manager. "7 bottles \$150" Ben replied "and we will order a lot of food, 10 very hungry sailors" "ok Ok" he replied as we all took our seats and began to order a veritable feast. The bill came to roughly \$150 per head and the food was most excellent, highly recommend.

Stuffed and tipsy we headed back to the boats. A party broke out on Dragonfly, but I was knackered and headed to bed.

In the morning I borrowed one of the many 'shared' bikes strewn everywhere and rode along the Plover Cove Reservoir seawall, Bonnie had never seen me on a bicycle and loved running next to me. Being the first day of Chinese New Year we were greeted with "Kung Hei Fat Choi & Sun Sing Fai Lo".

Back on the boat, time to head for Double Haven. Our destination Sam Ah Tsuen. Dragon Fly, Alluna and PMingo had a great little sail up the Tolo Channel. Half way up the channel is the Police Check Point, all boats must 'check in' when they pass, but the police waved us thru without a query, we didn't look the smuggler type.

Exiting Tolo channel we turned to port at Wong Chuk Kok Hoi on toward Double island, with a gentle Northeasterly on the stern. Wing on Wing we all sailed beautifully thru the narrow channel between Double Island and Crescent Island. Dragonfly were well pleased this being their first time 'wing on wing'. We all had our phones out snapping pics as we cleared thru Chik Mun Tau into Double Haven.

Dropping anchor in Sam Ah Tsuen an hour later, the boys on DragonFly tucked into the beers while I took Bonnie ashore to look for a suitable site for the evenings 'beach bbq'. Stepping ashore I was greeted by a large AFCD sign stating 'NO FUN' (No fires, No BBQ) Sam Ah Tsuen is part of the 'Marine Park'. Doh we really wanted to have a nice beach BBQ.

Back on Alluna we looked over the charts searching for a suitable beach within striking range. Ben had earlier

suggested Camp Cove, the chart showed a beach and a decent anchorage. We pulled anchor and bid Sam Ah Tsuen farewell. Nice place but it looks nothing like the photos you see in the tourist guides, and no fires was a deal breaker for this crew of misfits looking to get loose on a beach. Dropping anchor in Camp Cove 45 min later we all smiled at the nice looking sandy beach before us. Smiles were soon lost as Ben and Lyndey went ashore and got mugged by sandflies, dammit! We then ventured about 300m down the shore to another beach that looked suitable it was strewn with firewood and no sand flies. We soon had a roaring fire lit with a separate 'cooking fire' manned by Will, thanks Will for your great cooking. Thus ensued an epic night gathered around a fire on a remote beach, not another soul in sight, good wine, good food and a nice little sing along. We polished off a few good bottles.

That night the after party was on Malarky where we proceeded to get tucked into the bottle of Baileys I'd brought, after we finished the rum, after we finished the vodka and tequila.

Next morning, I dove into the clear turquoise water to wash away my handover. The water in Double Haven is so clear, you can see all the way to the bottom.

Later that afternoon Ben, Lyndsey and myself felt like a walk, 'lets go check out the pagoda on the hill above our bay'. Only we found the trail to Cat O village on the other side of the island and our little walk turned into a three hour adventure.

20 years ago, there were 6000+ people living on Cat O, now only about 250 mostly older folk who refused to leave for the 'big city' remained. The village was deserted, but we did meet Peter a real 'character' he told us that everyone had left the island to look for work and the place was crumbling and derelict. He told us about the 5 view points on the island.

Our plan was to spend one night in Camp Cove then another night anchored off Cat O village but after our walk we decided to spend another night in Camp Cove. P-Mingo and DragonFly had departed earlier that morning, they were only able to stay two night, but Malarky and Alluna were in for the long haul.







Next day I pulled the anchor early and motored around the corner to Cat O. I wanted to get some decent drone shots of the village with Yan Tien in the background. It was now the last day of Chinese New Year and the tourists were out in full force, the village was full of day trippers enjoying seafood lunches and buying 'chilli oil and dried fish'.

We hiked up to the pagoda above Cat O, view point #3 according to Peter. Cat O is directly across the water from Yan Tien Harbor, China's busiest container port. Quite a sight seeing this crumbling old world fishing village with the massive modern container ships and cranes in the background. I flew the drone and got some great shots.

Then it was time to head toward home. We planned to spend our last night in Long Harbour anchored off Wong Shek Pier.

About half way across the bay to Hoi Ha Wan, Malarky broke the bolts holding the shaft onto the gearbox. "Pan Pan Pan, this is Malarky I'm gonna need a tow" Getting towed back to Wong Shek I was somewhat dismayed, I'd just put a new gearbox and pressure plate in Malarky, obviously something still not aligned quite right.

Luckily it was only the bolts that broke, so the next day I hopped in a taxi and headed back to Hebe where Peter H. had some replacements waiting for me. Twenty minutes in the engine room with Ben and we were ready to go.

Up until this point we'd had glorious weather, it had been warm and sunny everyday, shorts weather, little wind and calm seas. That all changed Friday morning as we prepared to sail home past Dai Long Wan. As we cleared the channel at Grass island the first swell slammed into Malarky, I went below got into my foulies and put on my PDF, what I didn't do was latch the forward hatch big mistake. With main and mizzen we beat to wind, I didn't want to run the engine in case the alignment caused another failure, and with 20+ knots of wind it would have been a sin not to sail. Crashing forward, each swell getting bigger and bigger we rounded Bate's head and got into the full force of the stiff Easterly. Now on a broad reach Malarky's mizzen blew out. The clew let go and the sail ripped along the foot, I quickly dropped it. I was thinking to hoist my nice little 'storm jib' but there was no way I was going on the foredeck in pitching 2m seas. We didn't need it, we were making 6knots with just Malarky's main. The next 2 hours were the worst sailing conditions I'd ever done solo, huge waves howling winds and a dog that just wanted it all to stop. I did not get sick I could not.

Arriving back at Hebe a few hours later I went below to find my vee berth bed was soaked, I'd forgot to latch the hatch doh. That night, my lovely girlfriend Wemmy and I celebrated our first night of the New Year together at the self serve laundrymatt in Sai Kung town washing all the bedding.

If you haven't been to Double Haven, Cat O and the surroding area what are you waiting for, we will be heading back in the summer, join us! Just remember to latch your hatch on the wild coast so you don't wet ur bed.

Captn McBlinky til the next time me hearties

