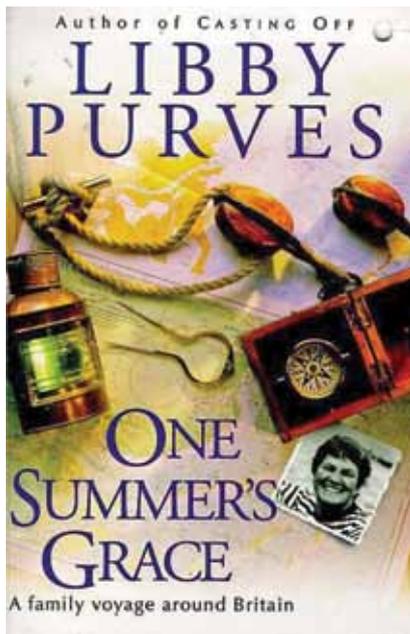
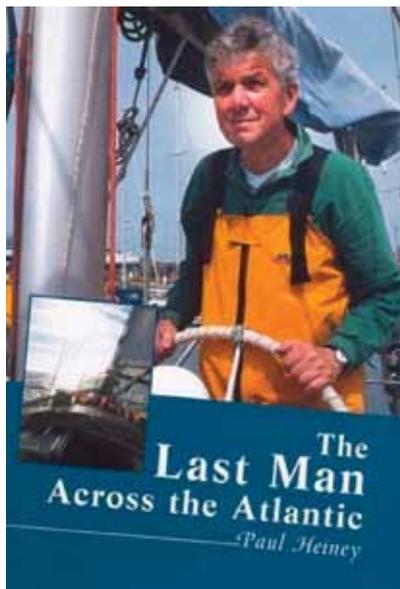


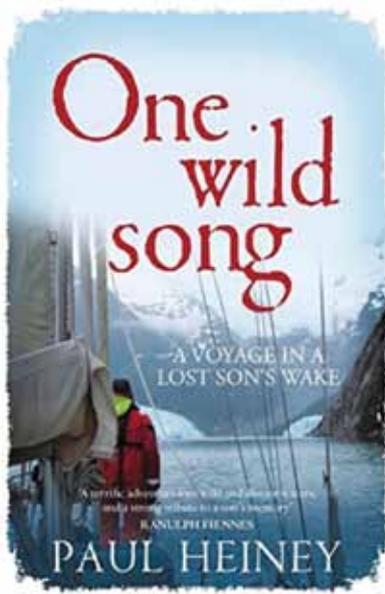
Books Review ~ *Simon Rippon*



Paperback: 272 pages
 Publisher: Hodder Paperbacks,
 Rev Ed edition (2 Oct. 1997)
 ISBN-10: 0340707852
 ISBN-13: 978-0340707852
 Dimensions: 12.8 x 1.9 x 19.8 cm
 £5.99 (KINDLE)



Paperback: 256 pages
 Publisher: Mainstream Publishing,
 New Ed edition (1 Jun. 2006)
 ISBN-10: 1845961072
 ISBN-13: 978-1845961077
 Dimensions: 13 x 1.6 x 19.3 cm
 £8.78



Paperback: 240 pages
 Publisher: Adlard Coles, UK ed.
 edition (11 Feb. 2016)
 ISBN-10: 1472919513
 ISBN-13: 978-1472919519
 Dimensions: 19.8 x 1.8 x 13 cm
 £8.10

ONE SUMMER'S GRACE, *The Last Man Across the Atlantic* and *One Wild Song* are three very different books in style and content, but I have chosen to review them as a trilogy because of their common background, rooted as they are in family, seamanship and voyaging. All subjects close to the hearts of DCA members.

The books are skilfully written. Ms Purves and Mr Heiney are adept at invoking a spirit of place whether crossing the Atlantic, voyaging to the Southern Ocean or rounding Cape Wrath. To ship aboard the *Grace O' Malley*, *Ayesha of St Mawes* or the *Wild Song* as vicarious crew is to be transported to a wild, windy place where the tides run strong and the waters are deep. Their prose is captivating. Reading in the comfort of your living room you almost expect Paul to be standing behind you checking your steering against the compass, or Libby to pass you on her way aft to read the Walker Knotmaster Log.

In all three books the accounts of the voyages are interspersed with personal reminiscence and philosophical reflections about the nature of voyaging through life as well as across the world's oceans. *One Summer's Grace* being as valuable for Libby's portrait of family cruising with small children as for her recording of the local characters, culture and history that she encounters. Overall, she presents her readers with a snapshot of England, Wales and Scotland in the late twentieth century but, tucked in amongst it all, are the domestic details that give *One Summer's Grace* its uniqueness and strength. It is also now notable for its period details. The world of Decca Navigators (DCA members under twenty-five may have to look this up) and the emphasis on regular and detailed coastal navigation is refreshing in this age of GPS and the chart plotter.

Libby's descriptions of the Kinlochbervie Fishermen's Mission (closed over a decade ago), The Piper Alpha disaster and the now dwindling coble fleet of the North East bring you up sharply. Even while we live our world changes.

Moving away from the coast, *The Last Man Across the Atlantic* and *One Wild Song* depart for deeper waters. Written by Paul in 2006 and 2015 they are the accounts of his voyages to America and to Cape Horn in the *Ayesha of St Mawes* and *The Wild Song* respectively, undertaken wholly or partially single-handed, the toughest option.

Paul's background of investigative reporter and television presenter sets the scene; here is a man who likes a challenge.

Perhaps it was inevitable that, while repairing the shed roof, he lit on a single handed transatlantic as a way of scratching an itch. *The Last Man across the Atlantic* is the story of Paul's race in the OSTAR, Original (formerly 'Observer') Single-handed Transatlantic Race of 2005. Rather than the 'Go for Gold' attitude beloved of Olympic

heroes, he adopted the Corinthian Spirit of being there for the taking part rather than the winning, a position that many DCA members may sympathise with. It is a reflective book and with the help of a perceptive forward by Sir Robin Knox-Johnston Paul draws on the writings and motivations of the pioneers of short-handed deep water sailing to inspire and to achieve. The book is an entertaining, witty, instructive and occasionally bleak read as he deals candidly with both the highs and the lows of deep-sea voyaging while treating those two impostors both the same.

Like Libby's writing, his keen eye for small domestic details enhance the text and provide tips for our own cruises. A 'Mrs Woodman's Sustaining Ocean Cake' is a must for any DCA rally. Technological updates, too, bear comparison with *One Summer's Grace*. 'Waypoint', for instance was not even a word in the dictionary in 1988, nor did the satellite technology exist that allowed EPRIBS and Navtex aboard, and which enabled emails allowing access to friends and family for help, advice and moral support. None of this should detract from the fact that he had to sail every sea mile of the Atlantic, from one side to the other, facing whatever came and all the while streaming the trusty Walker Knotmaster Log.

One Wild Song stands alone, subtitled 'A Voyage in a Lost Son's Wake' it is Paul's account of a voyage across the world following a passage made by his seaman



son Nicholas. Nicholas Heiney was a gifted man; a writer, poet and sailor, he voyaged across both the Atlantic and Pacific oceans in the square-rigger *Europa* and had written about doing so before his death at the age of twenty-three. Paul made his voyage in the *Wild Song*, a yacht named from a phrase in one of Nicholas's poems. *One Wild Song* is the story of a Tilmanesque voyage from Falmouth through the Beagle Channel, round Cape Horn then back to Falmouth. Paul's purpose was to attempt to rationalise Nicholas's death and to explain his life; in doing so he creates a book about a daring and adventurous voyage and a powerful extended essay on grief and loss.

This book is different from the other two in several other ways. Structurally the boat is less integral to the venture; there is, for instance, no appendix with line drawings and a technical specification, no list of stores, at no point is the class

of the boat mentioned although the reader can work this out from the illustrations if they wish to do so. *The Wild Song* is far more of a vehicle than the *Grace O'Malley* and the *Ayesha of St Mawes*, both of whom were almost portrayed as part of the family during the course of their voyages. The overall tone of the book is one of humility. The author is humbled by the sea, by the unforgiving weather of the southern latitudes, by the distances and by his grief, with no room for recipes or for pictures of freshly baked bread.

What is unique about reading all three books in sequence is that it enables the reader to grow with the family, moving from boat to boat, voyage to voyage. Libby and Paul mature and change, as we all do as the years pass. Like DCA members they sail for the fun, the experience, the adventure, the challenge, to learn something of themselves and of the world in which they live.

Libby and Paul, as befit two experienced writers and disciples of Tilman, are masters of the memorable phrase and the pithy one-liner. My favourite quotation from *Last Man* is attributed to fellow competitor Phil Rubright as they set off on the 2005 OSTAR: 'Here we go again. I don't know why.'

Libby sums up their 1988 circumnavigation in the 1997 edition of *One Summer's Grace*:

'Anyway, none of us will ever be sorry that we did it.'

Thoughts that must have gone through every sailor's head! **SR**

