

On a clear day, you can see forever. In the outer Oslo fiord, the air is never as clear as on a bright, chilly winter day. Not a boat in sight and the only ones on board are my 13-year-old son Julius and I. The winter archipelago surrounding our beloved island Tjøme rests in perfect tranquillity and the Volvo Penta D3, discreetly humming below the Grand Sturdy's thoroughly insulated steel plates, does not disturb it much. For that, I'm particularly grateful.



Winter Wonder Land

Norwegian conversion from a Colin Archer to a Linssen

Text Helge Johnsen; Photos John P.Marthinsen & Gunnar Rougnö

For the past few days, the more than 500 small islands scattered around the approximately 40 square kilometres island Tjøme, have been generously covered with snow, almost down to the rim of the calm blue sea. The blue, glittering sea and the blue sky form a beautiful contrast to the all white islands shining brightly in the sun. Julius and I take it in, beholding it silently. No need for words. I have seen it so many times, but it still leaves me humble and grateful. On days like this, I always think of my ancestors living on one of these small islands. Fishermen, sailors and strong women, continuously working. Materially poor, but not really lacking anything. To them, the boat was half their life, sometimes the whole, and sometimes the end. My great grandfather, captain of tall ship BUD, went down with his ship somewhere along the journey from Scotland to a town

near Tjøme in November 1905. His widow and her seven children received compensation from the ship owner equivalent to 7 to 8 euros.

Granite Islands

There is no English word for these small granite islands, probably because there is nothing like them anywhere in the world. Nothing grows except for some scarce, tiny, but beautiful coastal flowers. The granite is polished to perfection and everything is carefully rounded and free of sharp edges. Naturally shaped sun beds are found everywhere and during summer nights, the warmth collected from the sun keeps the granite and your body warm until the sun rises again in the east. But then of course, in midsummer, the sun merely takes a short brake and the nights are never



dark. More than 10,000 years ago, a good 1,000 meter thick inland ice covered Scandinavia. The rare combination of ice this thick and extremely hard stone, such as granite and cyanite, shaped these gentle forms. The ice itself was not the actual artist though, but a layer of melting water containing sand and pebbles, wearing away at the ice with incredible power, carving and polishing the stone into these gentle shapes. Most of the birds residing here in the summer took to the wings a few months ago and flew south. Some to Africa, some all the way to Antarctica and some lazy specimens simply go for the French and English coastlines. I am looking forward to taking the Grand Sturdy out in early spring when all these lovely birds reappear, and manoeuvre her carefully and quietly through the narrow and sometimes shallow necks and sounds. Again, the Grand Sturdy's quietness will come into its own.

Norway's second highest lighthouse

Sailing a little further, the two lighthouses Svenner and Færder come into sight, the latter built in 1857, still being Norway's second highest lighthouse. The light shining from its 43 metre top is clearly visible 19 nautical miles away. My family and I have spent several fantastic days and nights there, and we very much look forward to taking the Grand Sturdy there. On fine summer days, there may be a handful of visitors in daytime, but by night we are usually the only ones left and can enjoy the next day's breathtaking sunrise all by ourselves. In Norway, we define nights when the temperature does not fall below 20 degrees as 'tropical nights'. Such nights occur almost every year and the small

island of "Tristein" ("three stones") on which the lighthouse is situated is the location in Norway where most tropical nights occur. The record – 18 tropical nights – was set in 1997, which is pretty amazing considering the location is 59°01'36" North, 10°31'28" East. A fair, warm, summer night, the sun sinking below the horizon only for a short while and with the day extending to almost 19 hours, is a night you will never forget. During winter storms, however, you would not like to be out there, even though you would probably not forget that either.

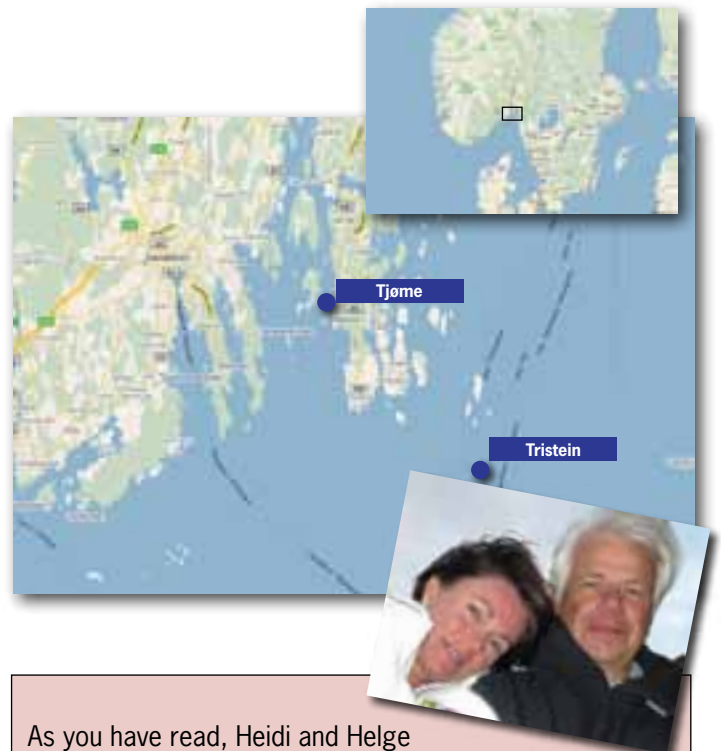
Colin Archer

This year, the storms have been fairly reasonable. Last autumn, I exchanged a Colin Archer, an extremely seaworthy long keel, wooden double ender with a two meter draft, for a Linssen Grand Sturdy 40.9 AC. A fairly radical thing to do. As I use the boat all year, I appreciate solid seaworthiness. However, I no longer seek stormy weather the way I did when I was a youngster. I must admit that I was somewhat sceptical about the 1.20 meter draft of the Grand Sturdy, but the boat was really to my liking so I wanted to test it. The same day that a furious gale blew the Chinese tanker "Full city" against the rocks of the Norwegian south coast – and at the very same place – I had the chance to test a demo Grand Sturdy from the Norwegian sales representative. Although the wind had dropped quite a bit from the night's maximum, the sea was still heavy. I deliberately handled the little ship carelessly, but the boat itself took care of the problems I presented it to. I was surprised and content.



Out on the fiord this winter day, Julius commented that “in a few weeks, we can take this trip on foot, if we like”. And he is right, of course. It seems to be a strong winter this year, and the fiord is bound to freeze over, as it does every 5 to 10 years. On the way back to the quay outside our house, we discussed the precautions we would have to take to make sure the Linssen would survive the winter without any damage. A couple of hours work, and she will be ready.

Some time at the end of March or early in April, we can cast off again and set to sea. 🛶



As you have read, Heidi and Helge Johnsen are seasoned water sports enthusiasts. They mostly cruise along the Norwegian and Swedish coast. Helge is passionate about traditionally constructed wooden vessels. The highlight was when he and a few friends decided to restore a 76-foot, 110-tonne two-master dating from 1877. The yacht was later handed over to the Norwegian Inspectorate of Ancient Objects. In 1987 (110 years later...) he single-handedly built a 30' clinker-built boat, which he still owns today. In 2009, Heidi and Helge decided to switch from their Colin Archer to a Grand Sturdy 40.9 AC.



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