



Acte III ou le troisième voyage

Chapitre 11: Santarem-Trinidad

Brian reprend la plume pour ce dernier chapitre de la campagne 2008-2009 de Caramel. Natif d'Écosse, notre ami équipier sait manier la langue de Shakespeare avec un humour tout britannique. Ceux qui ont la chance de lire l'anglais dans le texte se régaleront. Ceux qui ne l'entendent pas, liront la traduction française finement ciselée par un lecteur français. Tout ceci est bien dans l'esprit de rencontre et de fraternité du sillage de Caramel. A bientôt.

Brian takes up the pen for this last chapter of Caramel's 2008-2009 campaign. A native of Scotland, our friend and crew member handles the language of Shakespeare with humour that is unmistakably British. Those who are able to read the text in English will give themselves a treat. Those who don't understand will read the French translation finely crafted by a French reader. All of which is eminently in the spirit of brotherhood and encounter that follows in Caramel's wake. Bye for now.



I arrived at Santarem Yacht Club at 8 a.m. At that hour it was deserted and looked as though it had seen better

days, and those long ago. But as the morning wore on and while I read and dozed in the shade the workers wrought a miracle. They cleared the place up, started filling the pool and by lunchtime with white cloths on the tables the club looked remarkably smart.



The Rallye fleet arrived just about then and Patrick came ashore in the rubber dinghy with Jaqueline, the crew member I was replacing. I negotiated the absurdly narrow pathway with its ragged wire fence that led to the dingy mooring, scrambled aboard uncertainly and we took my baggage out to Caramel. I was thinking excitedly about being on the Amazon at last but in fact I was not there yet. Santarem stands on the Tapajos river near where it meets the Amazon.

We came back to the club for lunch and I met a number of the other Rallye participants, including Daniel my fellow crewman. Later we took Jacqueline to her hotel and I had my first good look at Santarem.



The town itself strikes one at first as a typical third world dorp, all potholed streets and smelly gutters. But it's a bustling lively place.



The waterfront is jammed with boats carrying cargo and people hither and thither. Passenger traffic seems to be mostly at night and as you walk along you see people settling into their hammocks on board these high two or three decked vessels ready for a trip to some even more remote settlement.

We went to the market where you can buy varieties of fish ranging from dinky little Piranhas about six inches long to vast Grouper like creatures five or six feet in length. The mystery is where do they come from because you see only the occasional fisherman on the river in a tiny pirogue or a dozen lads casting their rods along the promenade.



The following day we motored off to stock up on fresh water since abnormally there had been little rain in the days before my arrival. We manhandled 20 large plastic bottles and emptied them into the boat's water tank. Then we stocked up on groceries.

That evening we had a certain amount of restrained fun pottering about the waterfront in that caressing warm darkness that is a delight of the tropics. There were lots of people about,

walking, chattering, eating ice creams and sucking coconut milk through straws - delicious. There were kids playing basketball, kayak races on the river, mendicants with goods for sale - all in all a very jolly atmosphere. I'd say it was Mediterranean life in spades.

We eventually settled on a restaurant terrace to enjoy the local hooch, the well known caiparinha, eat some food and relax. The food is excellent but served in mammoth portions. Three of us had in fact lunched off the doggie bag from the previous night's dinner and still had to throw some away. So I chose a steak sandwich and helped out with the finishing off of a huge pizza that someone else couldn't manage.

For most of the time we had musical entertainment from a keyboard and guitar duo who played and sang excellent latin jazz, bossa nova and so forth. Lots of what I took to be their own



compositions but they didn't neglect to throw in the occasional standard. I expect that throughout the country and indeed the world their Girl from Ipanema was one of thousands played that night.

There was a great variety of people to watch and wonder about and one peculiarity I noticed was that in the same street you find near slums and beautiful villas. Is this a sign of social cohesion or just of rich and poor rubbing along till the next revolution or military takeover?



On the morning of Good Friday there was a skipper's meeting to talk about the descent of the river, the way into the open sea and the entry to Cayenne since many of the boats are making for there after the official end of the Rallye. I sat discreetly at the back trying to follow what was going on and nodded wisely at multi-lingual poring over charts.

Later we went into town where in contrast to the previous day everything bar one internet café and one restaurant was closed and where the only people around were attending mass.



Through a misunderstanding I hung about forlornly waiting for Patrick who was waiting for me elsewhere. Eventually I went back to the Yacht Club, had a very pleasant swim and a good dinner and was in bed nice and early ready for the following day's dawn start.



We set sail at 6.30 and although we are hundreds of miles up-river we officially leave Brazil here. There is nowhere else on our route between Santarem and the sea where exit formalities can be carried out.

This left Alain, who crewed Caramel on an earlier stage, went back to France and has now returned to join another boat, somewhat concerned. He arrived too late for Nicolas to process his passport and fears he may never be able to enter Brazil again because officially he won't have left, no office being open here on Good Friday to do the business.



The boats spread out in a grand procession and there was much VHF traffic between them and the organisers on board the guide boat, Comandante Aires.



It wasn't long before we left the Tapajos and entered the Amazon, a point clearly marked by the change from a "black" river to a "brown" one.



There was a bit of traffic on the river, both local boats and large sea-going freighters.



The river was pretty wide here so I couldn't see terribly clearly what was happening along the banks but it looked mostly uninhabited forest with the occasional hill – probably teeming with life though.



I saw a bit more of the boats in the Rallye as we motored along and decided that if I ever had a boat I'd have to register it in Luxemburg because of their beautiful flag.



We reached our anchorage for the night at a spot on the river called Outeiro around 4.30 and the boats



dropped anchor in a long line parallel to the bank amidst much crying out via radio of chain lengths and water depths. It was explained to me that this was relevant to possible collisions should current changes cause one boat to swing towards another.

Patrick and Daniel had a wash in the river but I didn't. Frankly I was scared but I was also concerned about how my knee (still recovering from its mysterious swelling in February) would cope with climbing up the ladder to get back on board.

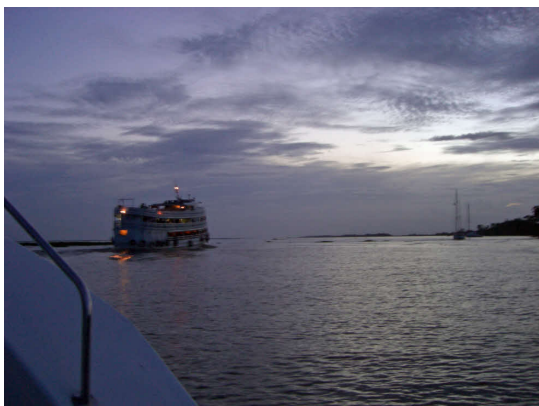
We then went for a trip in the dinghy to admire the wonderful foliage along the banks.



We went ashore for a brief stroll in the forest and saw various birds but the wildest animals we came across were water buffalo in their paddock.



Back to Caramel for a glass or two of Campari on deck watching darkness approach and this beautiful river boat sail by till mosquito activity drove us below for dinner.



We opened a bottle of Brazilian plonk that we had bought in Santarem and like most plonks it improved with every glass.

The next day was not quite such an early start but we were away by 7.30. I spent quite a while at the tiller following the boats in front without bumping into them and manoeuvring to avoid the tree trunks and large clumps of vegetation (floating islands) that abound in the river.

These clumps can wrap themselves round anchor chains and clog up propellers and the tree trunks can damage the boats. Apparently the firemen, who together with a number of policemen are aboard the Comandante Aires, had been up half the night dealing with the floating islands.

I hacked away at a small one around our chain myself. Daniel fed me horrifying "facts" about the dangerous wildlife the islands provide a home for. Careful hacking ensued.



It had rained most of the night and the rain continued throughout the morning. It was cold and wet. The cloud and mist shrouding the hills provided a very romantic atmosphere.

By lunchtime we had reached our mooring for the night at Jurapari.

We left the river and sailed up a little inlet and anchored amidst very pleasant surroundings.

I hadn't slept very well thanks to the rain I'm sure and not the Brazilian plonk, so after lunch I dozed for a bit to catch up on lost sleep.



We then went for a trip through little creeks admiring the foliage and the bird life around.

We came across houses practically immersed in water but not without modern conveniences.

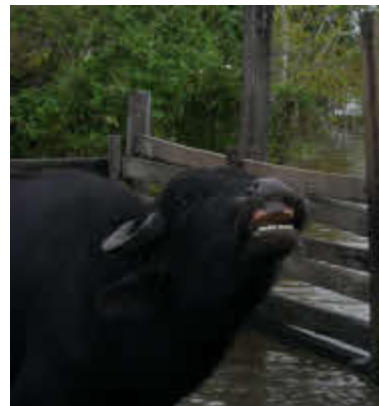


One had chickens on the roof and a few pigs on a nearby platform.



The lady of the house was standing in the river cleaning a large cooking pot. She told us that they were waiting for the water level to go down – maybe by July.

A little further on we found her husband tending to his water buffalo.



This one doesn't seem too happy to see us.

Then it was back on board for cocktails and dinner.



Another day of steaming uneventfully down-river at about 10 knots admiring the passing scenery and the beautiful skies. You feel that you could reach up and pull down one of the candy-floss clouds.



We moored for the night at a spot on the river called Mojui and went for our usual spin in the dinghy along a little river passing several dwellings and a little sawmill.



Apart from the raising of pigs and water buffalo that's the only economic activity that seems to be available to the river dwellers.

They are not well off for social services either. One of the Comandante Aires's crew was taken to hospital earlier in the day with a suspected broken arm. There was no plaster available to make a cast so an old-

fashioned splint had to be used. At least the Rallye had the means to get him to a hospital reasonably quickly.

We took the dinghy up a beautiful little creek that I was sure must be the lair of crocodiles and anacondas but we saw no wildlife at all. Being a bit low on fuel we paddled back down. This was not the easiest of operations with two of us trying to co-ordinate our paddling properly in order to move ahead but frequently bumping into bushes overhanging the water.

As a result when we got back to Caramel the dinghy was full of debris and had to be cleaned out.

We needed to be cleaned up as well so I reluctantly joined Patrick and Daniel in the river for a soapy swim but I was not wildly happy. Even less so when I learnt next morning that one boat had found a snake in their dinghy. It had to have come from the water.

But that trial over there was a lovely sunset and we had guests for dinner and spent a pleasant and convivial evening with them.



The following day started cold and wet and some delay in getting away because of an engine breakdown in one of the boats and the afore-mentioned snake in a dinghy.



When we did get underway with steaming lights on because of the mist and rain we made sure that Daniel's baobab got the

benefit of the weather.

The weather brightened up as the day wore on.

We came to a more densely populated part of the river and were approached



by pirogues, mostly crewed by children, who inspected us with silent curiosity as we snapped away to capture the moment on film.

In what I thought was an amusing turning of the tables one man in a pirogue sailed by taking photographs of us.

Caramel was equipped with goodie bags containing useful things like pen-

cils and treats like sweets and these were thrown to the kids but we didn't have nearly enough to satisfy the demand.



We moored off Serraria, a large village with a sawmill (hence the name probably), a church, a school, a bar/restaurant and a handful of houses. It lies tantalizingly close to the Equator at 0.55 degrees South.



Inspection by pirogues continued and when we went ashore we were no less an object of curiosity.

In the evening the whole Rallye congregated in the village bar/restaurant where we were served with delicious kebabs and drank no less delicious drinks.

It was an absolutely charming evening with swarms of kids milling around, having their pictures taken and sharing our food and drink. We bought up the bar's entire supply of

popcorn in an attempt to satisfy the childrens' hunger for sweet treats.



Here's Sylviane with a bunch of them plus the hand of another one who's determined to get into the picture somehow.

We went back on board in a tropical downpour.

An early start next day and a long sail to Afua where we finally tied up alongside the Comandante Aires at about 5pm.



On the way we passed this pair of barges being pushed along.



There was a spell of heavy weather and we had to take the dinghy down from this position slung alongside where it was being buffeted

to and fro and up and down and take it in tow to prevent dinghy and contents from ending up in the drink.

One of the boats had to be taken in tow when its engine broke down. The heavy weather had stirred up whatever muck lay in the bottom of their fuel tank with a resultant clogging up. Apart from these incidents the sail was uneventful and as we got closer to Afua we passed more and more riverside settlements.

Afua is an absolute jewel.



The town is built above the water or rather mudflats. The narrow streets are edged by shops and houses all supported on wooden piles often with



little bridges to get to the front door. There is not a powered vehicle to be seen or heard.

This is a bicycle town.



What is not transported on the river from one pier to another goes by bicycle van. The streets and quite grand town square are constantly occupied by streams of cyclists.



There are cycle taxis, four-wheeled family cycles, people speeding along with a friend on the pillion under a parasol and even a cycle butcher.



The peace that you might imagine a consequence of no cars is somewhat tempered by loud music from bars and by the good news of Jesus being yelled out through loudspeakers mounted on - you've guessed it - a bicycle.

The Rallye spent several days in Afua winding down from the six month long voyage and celebrating the adventure.



Celebrations included a tea party with Afua's third age club and an evening do at which speeches were made,



prizes awarded and traditional dancers, one of whom selected me as a partner, entertained.



We said goodbye to a number of people who set off by ferry to Macapa where they could catch a flight to Recife and then on to Europe.

Alain went along as well on a 48 hour dash to sort out his official exit from Brazil and get back before the fleet left Afua.

Much of the rest of the time was spent strolling around enjoying the atmosphere and socialising in the town's bars and restaurants.

The food available, with the honourable exception of a pizza place, was the same everywhere.

There was chicken, beef or pork either fried or stewed. In both cases the accompaniments were rice and spaghetti (both normally cold) and three small plastic tubs. One held a macedoine of vegetables, one a piquant sauce and the third grated manioc. Brazilians appear to adore grated manioc but it is a taste not readily, nor I daresay willingly acquired by the rest of us.

Fish, astonishingly was seldom available but delicious ice-cream was.

The Amazon is tidal at this point which meant that if you cleared floating



islands when the tide was in one direction you stood a good chance of being caught by them again when it turned. The firemen were kept busy.

Patrick decided that Caramel would be better off out in the river rather than tied up alongside the Comandante at the quay where a great deal of vegetation and rubbish gathered so we moved her on the Saturday morning.

I spent the afternoon releasing baby turtles into the Amazon. It was all part of a project to conserve and protect Amazonian wildlife, or more specifically various species of turtle.

We steamed off on one of the large river boats full of a cheery mass of wildlife enthusiasts, or maybe just enthusiasts with nothing better to do on a Saturday afternoon. We sailed for about an hour, during which there was a draw for tortoise preservation



tee shirts. For some reason this was done in the noisiest part of the boat. Add to that my limited Portuguese and it's not surprising that I could make out nothing.

But thanks to a friendly local who heard my number being called I got one, but so I think did 90% of the

passengers - some of them, unlike me, even got an appropriate size.

When we reached the large island where the turtles were to be released we had to be ferried ashore by small boats.



There were a number of vats full of baby turtles and an area of beach fenced off and lined with small crates.



Several posters were on display explaining the turtle's problems and how they were being sorted out thanks to the public authorities of the region. One had an English translation of the "rotdogs sold here" variety.



There was a loudspeaker system set up and an awning under which stood representatives of the various bodies involved in this project. There were speeches from each of them, about six in all I'd say. And then various votes of thanks. You didn't need to be able to understand much Portuguese to know what was going on.

I expect the speeches were boring because before they were finished some enthusiasts got hold of a few turtles, put them on the sand, pointed them towards the river and wished them luck.

Eventually there was a more substantial release when the crates were filled from the vats and hundreds of turtles were given their freedom. Some of them didn't quite understand and went the wrong way but amazing-



ly the vast majority made straight for the river. How on earth did they know which way to go? Maybe they are genetically geared to go downhill.

When it was over we all clambered back into little boats, got aboard the mother ship and enjoyed a snack and a cold drink on the way home. All this courtesy of the various sponsoring bodies.

Here's a family relaxing on the return leg who clearly had enjoyed their day out.



On our final day in Afua we did some last minute provisioning and spent time cleaning Caramel and preparing for leaving the river. The outboard was brought inboard and I did some minor repairs to the cockpit canopy using a cunning gadget the size of a screwdriver that replicates the action of a sewing machine.

I couldn't resist taking a picture of what must be Afua's most exotic bike before leaving.



Our early start the following day was delayed a little when one of the yachts lost an outboard engine from its mounting on the deck rails as it brushed accidentally against a local boat. The firemen gallantly plunged into the murky waters but the search was eventually given up.

We sailed first along a fairly narrow stretch of water with the usual dense forest cover on either side and into a much wider expanse. I was at the wheel during rainfall that was so heavy I couldn't see the Comandante Aires who was leading the way. When the depth fell to about 3 metres the fleet slowed and maintained position (which wasn't easy in the conditions) while Aires searched for a passage. When that was found we proceeded at full steam ahead.

This was the point at which the Comandante Aires had fulfilled her mission and the Rallye was finally over. She stood by with Patrick Hebel, Jaqueline, Nicolas, the crew, the firemen and the policemen waving good-bye as the fleet sailed past and onwards towards their last anchorage before heading out to sea.

Patrick set off a couple of fireworks on board Caramel and there was much mutual transmission of good wishes amongst the fleet via VHF.

We reached our quiet and pleasant anchorage off an island somewhere in the Amazon delta around 3.30 and did more preparations for going to sea including bringing the dinghy up on deck.

Most importantly Patrick took me through all the safety gear and proce-

dures, both of us keeping our fingers crossed that we'd never have occasion to use them.

During the day the system drawing in water from outside to flush the toilets had failed. The inlet had been blocked by some of the floating debris that had accumulated around us in Afua.

We failed to clear the blockage from inside so both Daniel and Patrick had a go from the river, secured by ropes against being swept away by the strong current. Eventually Patrick had to put on scuba bottles to be able to spend enough time at the job to unblock the inlet.

After that it was good to relax with visitors (Livia and Roberto) for drinks and snacks. I can't swear to it but I suspect some of the snacks were served on Patrick's excellent home-made bread.



We set off at 5.30 the following morning with the objective of getting well out to sea clear of fishing areas along

the coast before turning North and picking up a favourable current.

The sea was quite heavy and sitting on the side of the cockpit as Caramel plunged down wave and up again was exhilarating. It felt rather like skiing across a mogul field and reminded me also of what fun I'd had dinghy racing in the dim and distant past.

We crossed the line during the afternoon and held a delayed celebration with foie gras and Vouvray at cocktail time.

I took the first watch and was truly terrified at the responsibility of being in charge of Caramel on the high seas in the dark even though I knew a shout would bring a more than competent sailor to take over within seconds. I was very glad when midnight sounded and I was released. I wasn't glad for long though because although the rough seas hadn't troubled me on deck once I got into my bunk it was a different story.

Up and down went the bow, and me and my stomach with it. It didn't take long for my stomach to throw in the towel. Fortunately I made it to the toilet before throwing up.

I then spent some time on deck and finally crawled into a ball on a bench in the main cabin amidships and slept fitfully. I felt rough.

I didn't feel too bad next day but concentrated on seasickness pills rather than food and spent a second night on a bench by the dining table.



On our third day at sea conditions were much calmer and we made excellent progress under sail.



Here is the blue sea, so different in colour from the Amazon, with the coast of Guyane in the distance.

In the Marina des Dégrads de Canne we moored alongside the catamaran Marie Soizic, a fellow participant in the Rallye. She was already second boat out from the quay because the small marina was pretty crowded but there is electricity and water so we're fine. We filled up with water and I had my first shower for some days.

A lot of the Rallye boats had decided to come on to Guyane and here's



Brise du Sud tying up in a similar position to us but many boats had to moor in the river.

One of the excitements of being in the marina was the fact that a rowing race from Senegal to Guyane was ending just when we were there and the boats were arriving at the marina.



Can you imagine spending over 40 days and nights in the Atlantic in one of these?

The marina is several miles from any-



where so for the four days that we were to be here we hired a car and a fun-packed series of excursions was planned.

First up was a guided tour at 8 in the morning of the European satellite launching complex. It was a long way from where we were so yet another early start was needed.

This was a fascinating visit after which we had lunch in a quiet little town where I had fish but Daniel and Sylviane tried a local wild beast.

Guyane is of course a département d'outre mer which means that it's actually part of France so, strange though it seems in this tropical setting the road signs and many other things are identical to the same things in metropolitan France. One of the strangest is perhaps the fact that the Paris fire brigade run the fire services at the space centre.

That evening we went into Cayenne and wandered round a series of stalls that were associated with celebrating the Senegal-Guyane rowing race. There were some very impressive school projects on display.

We had drinks in Les Palmistes, a bar that has been around for a hundred years and an excellent dinner in Le Kas Kreol where the welcome by large ladies in colourful costumes was exceedingly warm.

Next morning we went into Cayenne again to buy provisions for the next



leg of the voyage. We started in the market which was overflowing with fruit and vegetables both known and unknown.

The market's customers refreshed themselves with ice drenched in sweet syrups.



The Cora supermarket we went to afterwards was less exotic and going by its contents we could have been anywhere in France.

There was a beach near the marina where it was said turtles came to lay their eggs. I visited it twice but saw only one turtle and it had died in the attempt to get up the beach. The atmosphere of the place particularly in the evening reminded me strongly of Mombasa and Dar.



A popular excursion here is to the Hmong market at Cacao deep in the jungle and which you get to via a road in infernally bad condition.

The Hmong are a sub-ethnicity of the Chinese who were historically ill-treat-

ed by the dominant ethnicity and they moved into Laos and Vietnam. When the struggle against European settlement of that region began they sided with the colonisers and later with the Americans. So they found themselves in a difficult position in the 70s and many fled to refugee camps in Thailand. In view of their earlier support France offered them refuge and several hundreds (later more) were resettled in Guyane at Cacao in the middle of nowhere.

I suppose it was not too dissimilar to the environment they were used to and they have flourished over the years. They are now said to contribute 80% of the fresh produce that is sold in Guyanese markets.



They have kept themselves largely to themselves.

This little old lady could be making her way home anywhere in Indochina instead of Guyane.

They can be seen manning stalls in urban markets throughout Guyane and their own weekly market where they sell artisanal products as well as food is a tourist attraction.



We potted about looking at this and that in the village and in the market, buying a few fruits, querying what were some of the weird concoctions, visiting the Hmong history and culture exhibition and finally having lunch.



Here's our serious young waiter, no doubt helping out the family with his little Sunday job.

Back at the marina there was an evening "bring your own" picnic that brought together all the Rallye participants who had sailed here from the Amazon. It was a chance to chat to many of them for the very last time although others like ourselves were going on to Trinidad.

The picnic broke up as darkness fell and the mosquitoes came out to play.



On our last day in Guyane we had a wonderful excursion. We took a speedy catamaran from Koukou to the Isles du Salut which again meant an early start and a long drive for Daniel poor chap.

The islands include Devil's Island where Dreyfus was incarcerated and from where Papillon, according to his own account escaped. Not quite true

apparently but what the hell the regime was just as bad where he was.

The French could have taught the Germans and the Russians a thing or two about how to run a prison camp. The truly astonishing thing is that this camp was only closed down in 1945 and the detainees in Guyane were not finally freed and/or resettled until the 50s.

The complex of buildings on Isle Royale which is where the main prison was, is a quiet and peaceful paradise now.



The former administration building is a smart hotel and the prison officers' bungalows can also be used by tourists.



A walk round the island offers wonderful views and gives glimpses of monkeys and other wildlife that my camera strains to record with any

clarity so I won't offer you any of my out of focus shots here.



On the other hand here's quite a pretty shot of Devil's Island.

But seeing the exercise yard and en-



trance to the punishment cell block brings the visitor back to the horrific reality of the cruel history of these islands.

The chap who gave the guided tour was a master of his material and delivered it with great enthusiasm and humour despite the bleakness of the subject.





Here's our last view of Isle Royale and I'm sure it's a view that its forced residents would have been delighted to see but a large proportion of them didn't survive long enough to savour it.

On our last evening in Guyane we enjoyed the hospitality of Françoise and Jean-François aboard Brise du Sud.



In the morning while waiting in heavy rain for the tide we bade farewell to our neighbours on the quay Alain, Marie-Françoise and Sylviane from Marie Souzic with whom we had shared many good moments. They were not going on to Trinidad.

We spent four days at sea en route to Trinidad. The weather was a little unkind at first but soon settled into fine sunny conditions and the wind and current bowled us along merrily.



There was plenty of this stuff to look at but not much else until we reached

the coast of Trinidad which we sailed along for hours.

It was mountainous and thickly wooded with only a few lights here and there breaking through the darkness. We moored in Scotland Bay around 10pm and spent a peaceful night untroubled by any swell.

We set off early in the morning and arrived within an hour or so at the Crews Inn marina.



When I hear the word marina this is what I think of - lots of beautiful yachts lying peacefully in the sunshine and I imagine their crews idling the days away. The latter proved not to be at all true.

After sorting out the paperwork at immigration, customs and the marina reception we took Caramel to her berth - a stone's throw from the hotel swimming pool and bar.



Caramel was destined to spend about eight months in Trinidad so the focus was on preparing her for that. A start was made today with breaks to escape the heat in the swimming pool and to enjoy a couple of beers.

In the evening we met up for drinks with some of the Rallye participants who had also called at Trinidad and we all went on to an Italian restaurant not far away.

I played my role of RIDS translator for more or less the first time since joining the Rallye by giving Marcel a hand at the hotel and I continued to help him over the next few days with the arrangements for storing his yacht here. None of that was too difficult but I had a more challenging and amusing assignment helping Hamilton the owner of the Brazilian yacht Pilata.



Here she is with Hamilton standing alongside.

They had a number of technical problems that needed to be sorted out before they could carry on with their round the world voyage. It was difficult with limited English.

Well my English was fine but my Portuguese was non-existent and my tech-

nical knowledge likewise. However we managed surprisingly well. He would explain the problem to me in Portuguese; I would get the gist of it translate it as best I could into English and give him the response in my mediocre Spanish with much waving of hands and dumbshow.



After a couple of days of cleaning, dismantling and storing came the fascinating process of taking Caramel out of the water. We sailed into a narrow channel and a vast machine trundled over us, slings were slung below the boat, a diver plunged in to make sure the slings were not fouling



any essential under water bits and the boat was raised into the air. (We were no longer aboard.)The travel-lift, for such is the machine's name, rolled forward on its massive wheels and held the boat steady above the ground. A man with a jet hose scooshed water all over the hull for ever and a day.

Then a cowboy nonchalantly but with precision drove a huge flatbed truck under the boat.



Supporting hydraulic ramps were raised, the slings were removed and



Caramel was trucked off to her temporary resting place.

We ended up propped up on various supports with a long ladder to get in



and out since we were still living aboard.

Storage preparation work continued. I was spared much of the work since it required yachtie skills so I can't complain, only marvel at the dedication it takes to fully enjoy the yachting life.

So I wandered about the boatyard and one day bumped into a Leith registered yacht and had a chat with the owner. He'd been sailing round the world for several years, single-handed for the last while because his wife got fed up, jumped ship in Singapore and headed back to Auld Reekie.

While in the boatyard we got together with all the Ral-lye crews who were in the marina and had a lovely barbecue.

Here's Joan from Pilata looking after the cooking.



Before Caramel came out of the water Daniel and I had a day off, hired a car and toured the north-west corner of the island.

Poor old Daniel had to do the driving again because I had no licence with me. Not only was it a challenge for him to remember to drive on the left but the traffic in Port of Spain and the long continuous strip of towns that leads east out of the capital was very bad and road conditions extremely poor. The local driving standards

were dreadful and I think both of us felt quite nervous at times.



Up in the mountains it was very beautiful as was one of the beaches we stopped at but some of the people were not very friendly.



One of the guys in this picture insisted that we could photograph only the fish, not him. He was pretty nasty



about it but fortunately he didn't realise I'd already snapped him.

Eventually with all the work on the boat finished this stage of Caramel's voyage came to an end.



Patrick and Daniel flew off to Europe leaving me to go back a few days later to console myself with Scotland's

