

Jock McLeod Newsletter Christmas 2005

I do not normally send a newsletter but this year I feel I should because it has been an "Annus Horribilis" for me, and more or less a write off.

In effect it all started in summer last year when my right hip showed signs of developing arthritis, like my left hip years ago, which was replaced in 1986 and has given me no trouble ever since even though its life was forecast as 12-15 years. By late summer I realised my right hip was deteriorating rather fast so I arranged a private examination by a Consultant Surgeon in Inverness. I did this to avoid the NHS queue which was apparently six months or more long. He agreed that my hip needed replacing and put me on his private list for an operation probably in the New Year. However, I felt my hip was beginning to disintegrate and saw him again. After a second X-Ray he agreed with me and said that it was now a priority case and he would do it as soon as possible on the NHS. This turned out to be 31st December 2004!

The operation was a success and I was home after about a week. However, the wound blew up after another week and I was taken back into hospital. It had developed some serious infection (not MRSA but something as difficult to cure). I then spent a month being pumped with antibiotics intravenously and having the wound cleaned out in a series of operations. Eventually the wound dried up and I was allowed home again. I was home for four months, and I was able to visit my sister and her family in the south. But all was not really well, and in June on my monthly visit to my Surgeon he reckoned that the infection was still festering away so I was back in hospital again for more operations. The normal procedure in these situations is to remove the metalwork of a new joint because apparently the bug sticks to any metal and forms a protective covering for itself. This means a period with no artificial joint and probably requires keeping the leg in traction for a month or so to let the antibiotics work. I dreaded this happening, but fortunately my Surgeon found he could not remove the "cup" part of the replacement hip without destroying my pelvis. So he removed the artificial femur part from my thigh bone and immediately replaced it with a new one and then sewed me up again. (The old femur is an excellent size and weight to make a "priest" for killing fish!). I was very relieved to find I was not in traction when I woke up! I then underwent a long course of pumping me with antibiotics and it was seven weeks of this boring routine before I persuaded my Surgeon to let me out. But I still had to return to the hospital every day of the week for a two hour session of antibiotic treatment. However I was largely at home which was a relief. Eventually it was decided that the treatment could stop and be replaced by several antibiotic tablets taken throughout the day. I now have blood tests each month and see my Surgeon. Apparently the poison is gradually being defeated, but I am still not totally mobile without a stick.

I have obviously not been able to sail this year and never commissioned my boat. I have now decided to sell her as it seems clear that I will not be steady enough to keep my balance in a bouncing boat, and anyway most of my sailing friends seem to be the same, and so I have decided to "swallow the anchor". I have had thirty-five years of pleasure from my boat and sailed many tens of thousands of miles, and visited many countries including the North-East coast of USA and Canada three times, and the coast of Norway from Oslo to the Lofoten Isles as well as the British Coasts with Orkney and Shetland and in particular the Western Isles, so I have had my money's worth.