

Dataw Island

By Bob Newbert
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“Absence makes the heart grow fonder,” they say, so after four years, we returned to Dataw Island.

We were not disappointed.

In keeping with a “Four-Year Reunion” cruise, we had to choose between four different ways to get to the island by boat. Inside? Outside? Or one of the two routes in-between? We opted for one of the “tweeners” for it was the most scenic journey taking us through the “S” curves and oxbows of Edenic creeks. It’s also a route with fascinating back stories on pirates, ghosts, marsh tackies and monkeys.

Boring it’s not.



Along the way, we stopped at a South Carolina “National Natural Landmark” (one of only 6); paused at Blackbeard’s favorite hideout concealing his yet undiscovered treasure; shared the testimonials of people who have seen a beautiful woman with her one-handed lover (Blackbeard cut his other hand off in a rage of unrequited love for the woman) as they emerge from the sea on moonlit nights with an incoming tide; and talked about “Letters of Marque” which no ABCHH captain carries to the best of my knowledge.¹ And let’s not forget the eerie tales of Blackbeard’s unseen presence given away by clues he leaves behind --wet footprints on deck when you are the only one aboard; or, on rare occasions, golden tokens of his ghostly proximity.



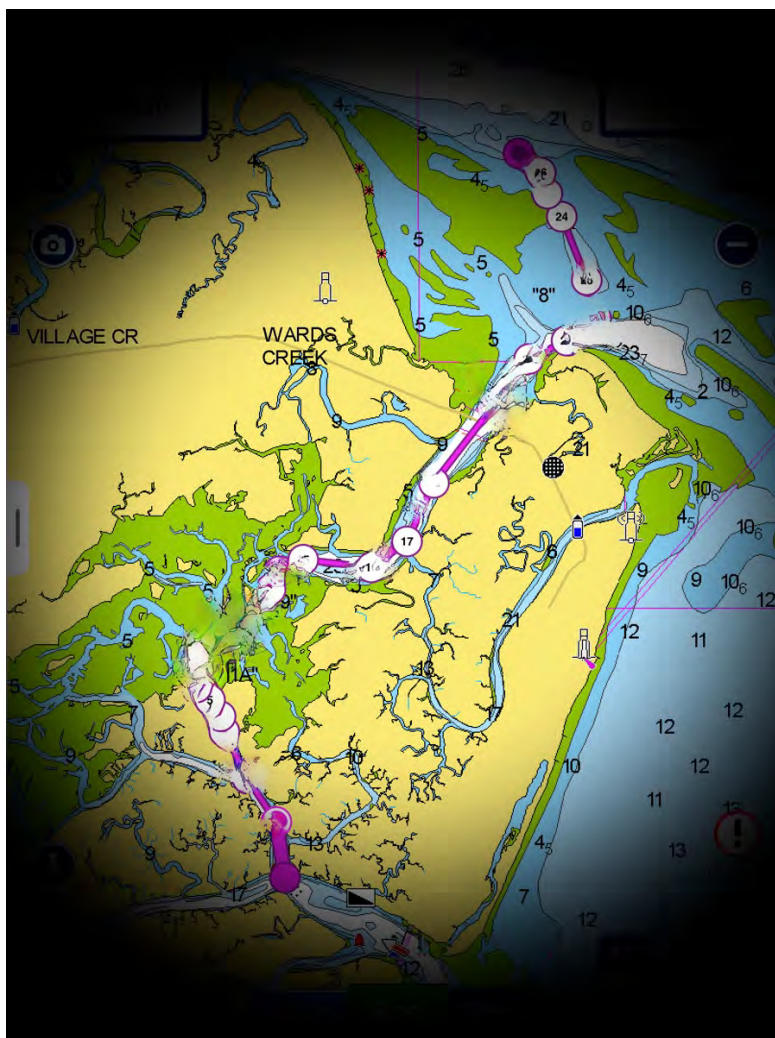
BLACKBEARD loomed large along our chosen route to Datow.

The famous pirate is said to haunt the area of his buried treasure and confound trespassers. How true! There is a particularly treacherous 8-mile section of our journey where I did not want to put myself and others at risk. I plotted our course turn-by-turn on Navionics to stay safe. As we approached the Danger Zone, I pulled out my iPad with each waypoint in the minefield of shoals diligently noted.

¹ If you have a Letter of Marque, please DM me with the king & country; and how you qualified, so I can get one, too.

Problem was the route was garbled! Blackbeard put a hex on it! I had no choice but to rely on muscle memory to get us through unscathed (I've done this route before). Luckily, we made it. No casualties.

“AAAARRRRGGGGHHHH! TAKE THAT BLACKBEARD -- YOU BLACK-HEARTED, BILGE SUCKING SCALLYWAG!”



BLACKBEARD'S CURSE made my Navionics route through the Danger Zone unreadable.

Our destination as we twisted & turned through a maze of backwater creeks was the Morgan River Grill on Dataw Island. Here, we were welcomed like old friends by the Grill's new management with our own ABCHH "Dataw Island Adventure" menus. Part homecoming; part sightseeing tour; part meet-the-new owner, our Dataw adventure blended the best of old & new. After four long years away, it earned a perfect 4.0!



"HURRAH FOR DATAW!" ABCHH cruisers cheer our Dataw Island adventure.



***BLACKBEARD'S CALLING CARDS mysteriously appeared on our boats.
Did the great pirate walk among us?***



FORMER COMMANDER Pete Dion (left) twists like a pretzel to show the back of his “Lady D II” shirt (top) with Debbie Dion, Lisa Becker and Don Becker.



HANDLESS LOVERS? Kevin Hunter (left) and Kevin Thieneman (right) appear to be missing a hand just like the privateer Blackbeard maimed and killed in a jealous rage. The Big Question: Was Blackbeard in love with Cristina Giroux (white shirt) or Stefanie Thieneman? Or both?



BAND OF BRIGANDS with Stefan Gantenbein (right) enjoying a little grog at lunch.



SHE-PIRATES (yes there really were female pirates) Cindy Wise (left) and Jeanette Davis (right) with their buccaneers Michael Wise and Mike Davis.



LETTER OF MARQUE in hand, Eric Sutherland (left) toasts his successful plunder of a merchant ship with crew (L to R) Sari Kandel, Noel Wendt, Kim Winnett, Dave Winnett and his 2nd in command, Susan Sutherland.



ALL HANDS ON DECK for a hot meal after months of hardtack (L to R): Mark Viskovich, Tim Scavone, Beth Scavone, Mary Warner, Craig Warner and Janet Viskovich.



UPPER DECK John Fitzgerald (left) and Jim Galan. QUARTERDECK (L TO R): Ed Berry, Lori Berry, Angie Hutchins, Todd Hutchins



NOTORIOUS CORSAIR Capt. Rick Sturges (center) with his fellow marauders of the sea Kathy Sturges, Donna Chapman and Brian Chapman.



CAPT. RICK FORD (blue shirt) with his band of hearties & mateys (L to R): Karen Neely, Marilyn Sobwick, Julie Traylor, Nancy Ford and Joe Neely.