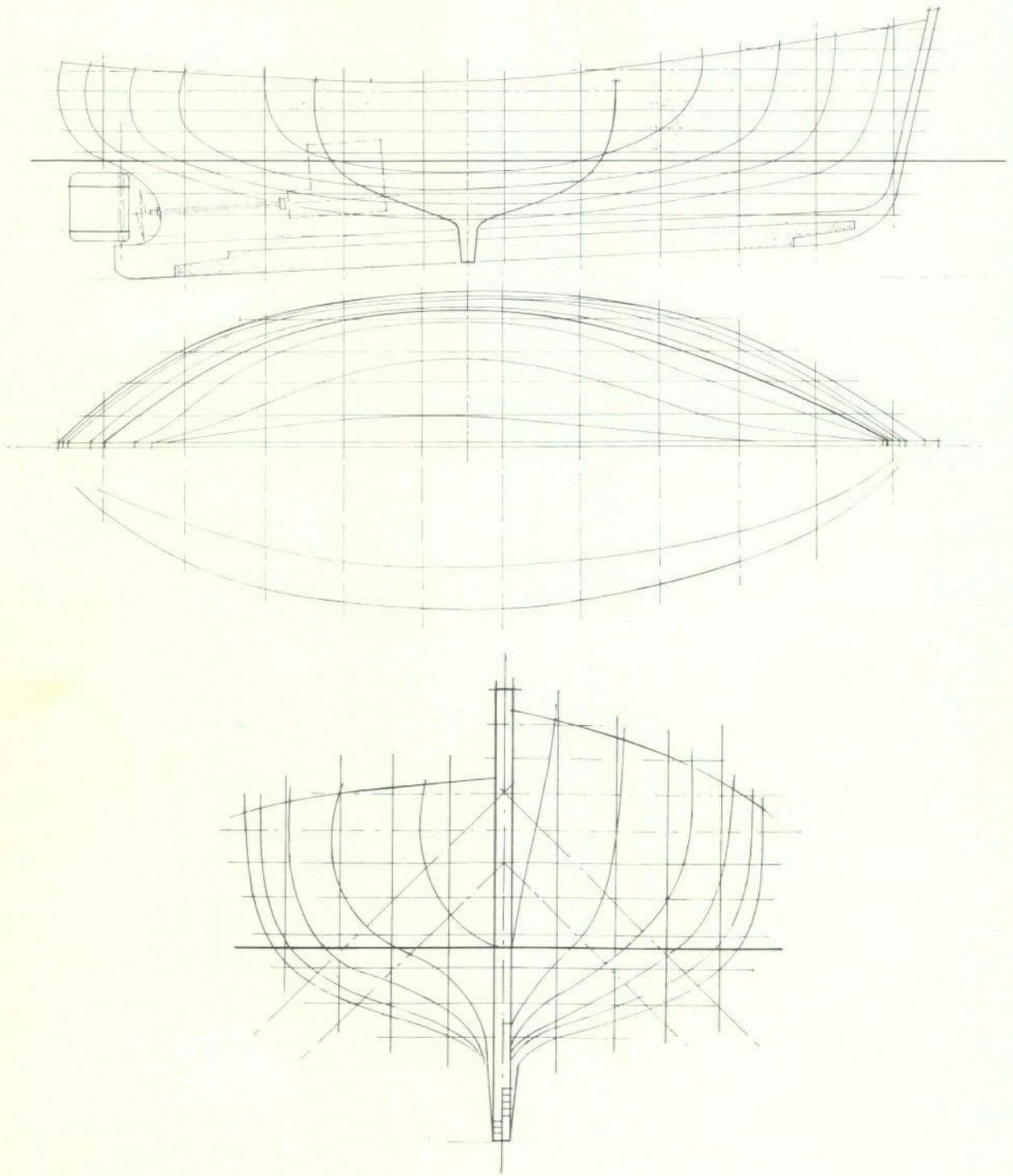




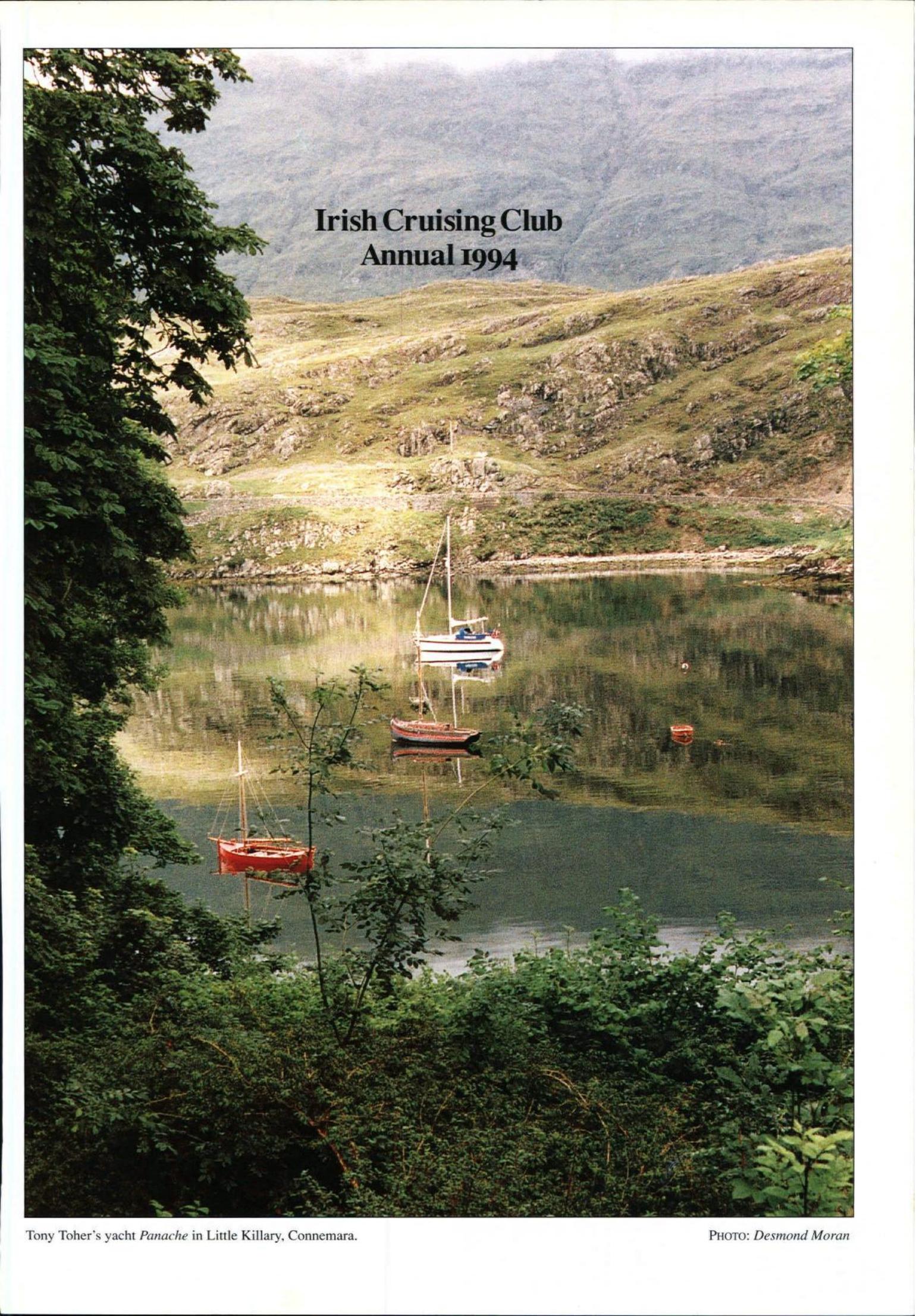
Irish Cruising Club

1994 ANNUAL





The 36' 6" motor sailer designed by Ronnie Barr. Reproduced courtesy of A Riley, Newcastle, Co Down.
See Page 89.



**Irish Cruising Club
Annual 1994**

Tony Toher's yacht *Panache* in Little Killary, Connemara.

PHOTO: *Desmond Moran*

New East and North Coast Sailing Directions

Kevin Dwyer has been up there again with his camera, in and around and beneath the clouds. This year the photographs on the front and back cover of the Annual give members not only a taste of some of the photographs that will be included in the next edition of the *East and North Coast Sailing Directions* but also possibly give them an interest in cruising parts of the coast of Ireland that they have not considered before.

The new edition of the *East and North Coast Sailing Directions* will be published in April 1995.

Kevin, a member since 1966, submitted a log of his trip 'Round Ireland' which is published in this journal

Front Cover – COMPETITION.

Where in the world?

(Or, to be more precise)

Where in Ireland?

This year the Irish Cruising Club is running a competition. The prize, which is a copy of the new edition of the *East and North Coast Sailing Directions*, will be awarded to the first correct entry received in the post and opened by the Honorary Editor, Ronan Beirne, on Friday 20th January 1995, stating 'the correct name of the anchorage featured on the front cover of the 1994 annual'.

Flag officers and committee of the ICC are not permitted to enter this competition. (The editor's decision will be final).

PHOTO: *Kevin Dwyer*

Back Cover

PHOTOS: *Kevin Dwyer*

ISSN No.: 0791-6132

Submissions for 1995 Annual

To reach the new Honorary Editor, Paddy Barry, 21 Belgrave Road, Monkstown, Co Dublin (tel 280 0820) by 15th October 1995 at the latest.

Please advise early should you intend to submit a log.



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Irish Cruising Club Annual 1994

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Peter Hogan.

Honorary Secretary's Report

This past year, 1994, must be remembered above all for the Brittany Cruise which took place in glorious weather in the month of June. Looking back, it is very surprising that it has taken the club until this year to organise such an offshore rally, which, to the best of your Hon Secretary's knowledge is the first to have been held in the history of the club, (participation with the CCA in rallies such as that in Maine in 1982 do not fall into the same category) and it was entirely due to the drive of our Commodore David Nicholson in determining that a rally be held and then to his inspired selection of Brendan Bradley to organise the event. It is fully reported elsewhere in this annual, so all I would like to add are my own thanks and congratulations to Brendan, and mention my sincere regrets that I was not able to participate.

At the election meeting in January the committee was again faced with very difficult decisions. Sixteen persons had been nominated for membership, for what the committee had decided would only be up to five places. After considerable discussion, rule 5 (xv) was invoked and eight applicants were elected. It was also decided to invoke rule 5 (viii) for the eight applicants not elected so that they, if they so wish, may be considered again in 1995 without the requirement to renew their applications.

Then, at the committee meeting held after the AGM, in accord with rule 5 (i), the decision made was that no new applications for membership would be accepted in 1994 for the 1995 election meeting, the intention of the committee being to reduce the number of members somewhat below the 550 maximum stated in rule 4 (ii), thus making it easier in future years to consider new applicants on their merits as potential members without the added difficulty of the maximum number limitation.

The AGM was held on 4th February, earlier than in recent years so that it would not be on top of the Annual Dinner as had been occurring when both events took place within a fortnight or three weeks of each other.

The recorded attendance was 94 with 58 apologies. As the



Brendan Bradley contemplates the Brittany cruise on the way to the Convy East Coast Rally at Whit. PHOTO: Bernard Corbally

meeting commenced, noisy representations were made on behalf of a possible new category of membership, the currach people, by James Cahill and Jarlath Cunnane, but like the Currach Mutiny, they were quickly suppressed by the Commodore and the meeting proceeded with the normal gravity and decorum usually associated with our AGM.

Honorary Treasurer Donal Brazil reported on what had been for him a difficult year in sorting out the problems which had arisen for many members with the use of credit cards for their subscriptions. However, this is now under control, but because of the problem, he had not prepared a list of Subscription Defaulters which could result in members being read out. He proposed that new Auditors to the Club and to the independent Irish Cruising Club Publications Ltd be appointed and this was adopted. To ease the burden on the Hon Treasurer, Seamus Lantry proposed that the year end for accounts be 31st October and this, together with Brendan O'Callaghan's proposal that the ICC Publications Ltd accounts be presented at our AGM, also was agreed.



The new Transoceanic Pennant

The Commodore in his address said he had been struck by how much our cruising activities had broadened over the past twenty years. They covered distances and areas of the globe virtually unthought of those few years ago. This had inspired him to suggest to the committee a new award, the Transoceanic Pennant to be awarded to owners or skippers who crossed a ocean in their own boat. He was aware of 14 members entitled to fly it and he read out their names.

An object of our club, as set out in rule 2, is to gather and publish information useful to yachtsmen. Our new edition of the South & West Sailing Directions was selling very well and now the East & North must be brought up to the new standard. With Malachi O'Gallagher taking over as Hon Compiler of the Sailing Directions from Arthur Orr, amendments and material should now be sent to him.

Noting the comments at the last AGM, he had had a review of the trophies carried out and that would be reflected in the awards to be made later in the meeting. However, the Commodore noted with evident satisfaction that our members had been most successful in garnering awards elsewhere. Paddy Barry had been awarded the premier trophy of the Royal Cruising Club, the Tilman Medal, and Winkie Nixon the Founders Cup. Well deserved awards both, which reflected well

on the status of your club as well as on the recipients and their crews.

He then listed some of the yacht clubs who had extended their facilities and their hospitality to the Irish Cruising Club over the year. The Royal Ulster, Strangford, the Quoile, the Irish, George and National in Dun Laoghaire, the Royal Cork, Kinsale and the Royal North. We were always made most welcome even though inevitably our presence caused disruption in some measure to the members of the clubs themselves.

The commodore commented on the changes to the committee which would take place this year. Four members were standing down, mainly because they realise that it is a good thing that new blood come on. David FitzGerald has served for fifteen years and in that time has built up the west. Now he would like time to make more and longer cruises. He also expressed his gratitude to Jennifer Guinness, to Donal O'Boyle and to Clayton Love Jnr.

When the meeting moved to any other business, Michael d'Alton asked that the committee consider making an award for real navigation, compass, log line and sextant should be the only instruments allowed. From comments made, your Hon Secretary gained the impression, perhaps incorrectly, that log lines and sextants were outside the ken of many present. Thus distracted, his notes fail to record the outcome of Mr d'Alton's suggestion.

The Commodore then swiftly drew the meeting to a close and invited the adjudicator, Arthur Orr, to deliver the awards which were presented to the recipients by Joan Nicholson, not Jean Nicholson as announced by the Hon Secretary who must have been dreaming of Jean FitzGerald at the time.

The Commodore himself then awarded the JB Kearney Trophy to Arthur Orr for his services to yachting over the years as Hon Compiler of our sailing directions. These had not alone been of immense benefit to our members but to all who have sailed around the coast of Ireland. This was greeted with prolonged acclamation.

Further donations of charts and books have been made to our joint library at the Royal Irish Yacht Club at Dun Laoghaire during the year and further discussions have been held to see if



There is no truth to the rumour that Fitzgerald Menswear of Cork City are to open a branch in West Cork! A former Commodore, Joe Fitz, plying his trade in Castletownshend. PHOTO: Aidan Tyrrell

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Flag Officers and Committee 1994

Commodore	David Nicholson	2nd year
Vice Commodore	Brian Hegarty	2nd year
Rear Commodore	Michael O'Farrell	2nd year
Rear Commodore	Patrick Walsh	1st year
Hon Secretary	Cormac P McHenry	5th year
Hon Treasurer	Donal P Brazil	2nd year
Hon Auditors	T P Glasheen & Co	1st year

East:

R M Beirne
B Bradley
D J Ryan
M O'Gallagher

North:

C E Ronaldson
M McKee
R J Shanks
A S P Orr

South:

B O'Callaghan
D J McClement
A Baker
F Cudmore Jnr

West:

F J Larkin
P O'Sullivan

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED 1994

Adrian Bell	Bangor
David Delamer	Howth
Sean Flood	Howth
Liam Kavanagh	Cork
Peter Killen	Malahide
Tom McCarthy	Cork
Mary O'Keefe	Tralee
Johnny Rooney	Dublin

DECEASED MEMBERS

S R H Clarke
Lady Janet Faulkner
Terence Kennedy
Tom Roberts
Fred Rogerson

arrangements can be made to operate it as a lending library. Items for inclusion should be sent to our joint Hon Librarian, Chris Stillman, at the Royal Irish.

The Annual Dinner returned to the Slieve Donard Hotel in Newcastle Co Down on 12th March and a capacity crowd of members and their guests enjoyed an excellent evening in the newly furnished dining hall. Rear Commodore Michael O'Farrell had charge of the arrangements and had laid on a full gale outside, so that members at one or two of the tables were heard to remark that they regretted not having brought sailing gear to insulate their evening wear as the wind whistled through the nether regions of the dining room. However an excellent menu followed by some energetic dancing soon had their hypothermia at bay and it was well into the graveyard watch before members retired to their bunks.

On the Friday evening as has become the custom, a new members cocktail party was held. This got the weekend off to a flying start for all who could attend. Unfortunately a number of those newly elected were not present, nor was the CCA barrel which had been delayed its way up from Cork. Your Hon Secretary has not yet received any satisfactory explanation for that delay, but he did note that the barrel was dry when it turned up in time for the dinner. He also noted that it was dry (nearly) in the early hours of Sunday morning.

The cocktail party is now so well established that the committee has decided that a small charge should be made for it next year. The dinner itself usually breaks even but this year, probably because the barrel was in absentia, the cocktail party overran its budget.

There was a good programme of rallies during the year. The East Coast event over the June weekend was to some extent overshadowed by the Brittany Rally to take place a week or so later and so the number of yachts participating was down on recent years. Dublin-based yachts had an energetic trip across to the new marina at Conwy and a most friendly and informal evening at Conwy Yacht Club to which members were conveyed to and from by mini bus. Yachts taking part included



Commodore David Nicholson, Rear Commodore Michael O'Farrell and W M Nixon.

Alannah, Elysium, Erquy, Raasay of Melfort and Rionnag. Raasay, only launched the previous Thursday, had come straight over from Dunmore East to take part. Members should note that a couple of yachts who had booked to take part did not attend and did not cancel. This is obviously unfair to our hosts as it upsets their catering arrangements.

In July the South held a rally to Schull where they met up with the RCC for a pleasant evening. They they held their usual end of season rally to East Ferry, again very well attended.

In the North the opportunity was taken to sail up Belfast Lough into Belfast Harbour and right up to the new weir. This has been installed for flood control purposes and an explanation of its main functions was given to members by the appropriately named Derek Weir who manages the Lagan on behalf of the Laganside Corporation. Northern area committee member Peter Ronaldson was instrumental in arranging this event.

The Autumn Committee Meeting took place in Galway at the beginning of October and Rear Commodore Paddy Walsh organised an excellent weekend for the committee members and their wives who were able to attend. The meeting itself started at the unusually early hour of 09.30 and this perhaps contributed to a most constructive meeting. Members may like to note that organisation of the CCA Rally to the south coast in July 1996 is well under way and indications are that it will be another memorable event. It is expected that Bob Drew who is organising matters on the American side will be our guest from the CCA at our dinner in Tralee next year, thus providing an opportunity for members to discuss any points they would wish to raise with him.

Most committee members went to Moran's of the Weir for lunch, relaxed by the feeling of a good morning's work unlike previous years in Galway where they felt confined to orange juice and crisps because the meeting still hung over them. However a number shot over to Inishmore either by plane or high speed ferry in glorious autumn sunshine. The dinner that evening was very well attended by members and friends from the west with Bill King present to receive from the Commodore the decanter he was awarded a couple of years ago to mark his receipt of the CCA Blue Water Medal.

Thus the second year of Commodore David Nicholson's term of office may be remembered with quiet satisfaction as a year of special achievement which leaves the club vibrant and active as ever.

Cormac P McHenry
Honorary Secretary

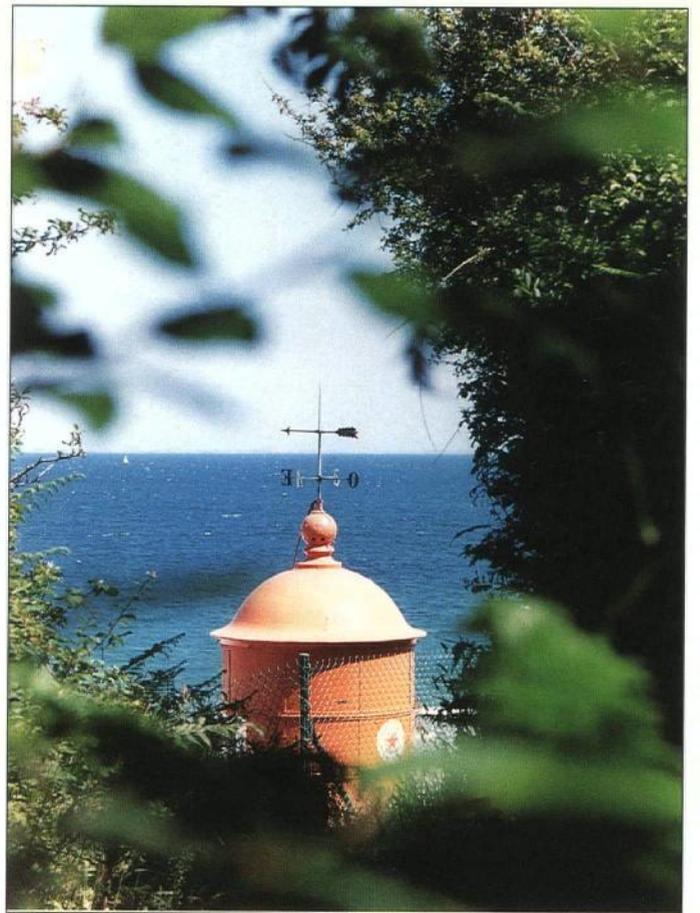


ICC yachts at the Lagan Weir. From left to right; C Peter Ronaldson, Rear-Commodore Michael O'Farrell, Derek Weir (Manager Laganside Corporation) and Michael McKee.



St Katherine Dock, London.

PHOTO: *Hilary Keatinge*



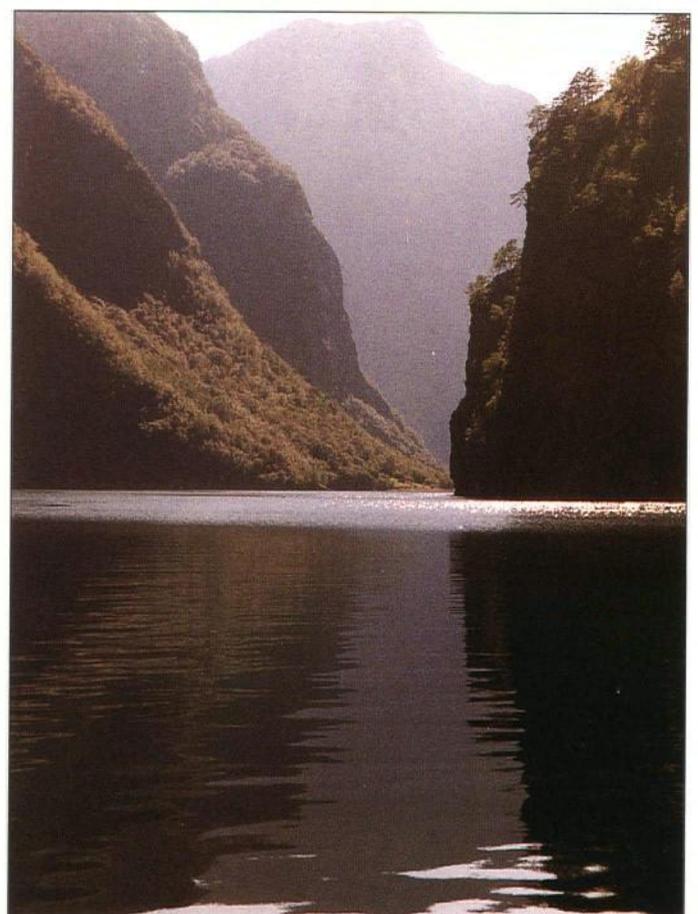
Île de Groix.

PHOTO: *Lorraine Scully*



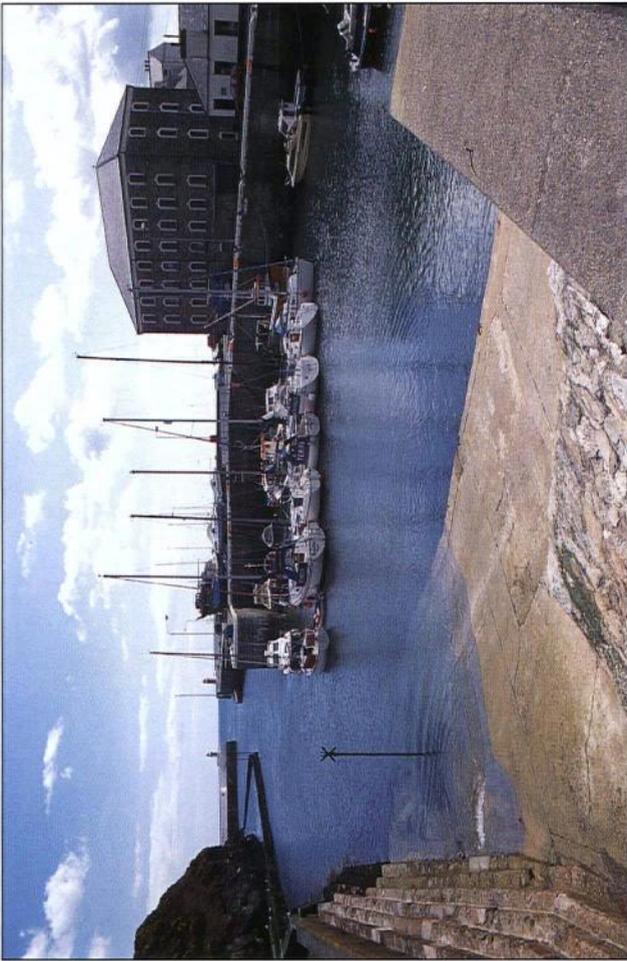
Rionnag at Geiranger Village.

PHOTO: *Enda Cullinan*



Naeroy Fjord.

PHOTO: *Enda Cullinan*

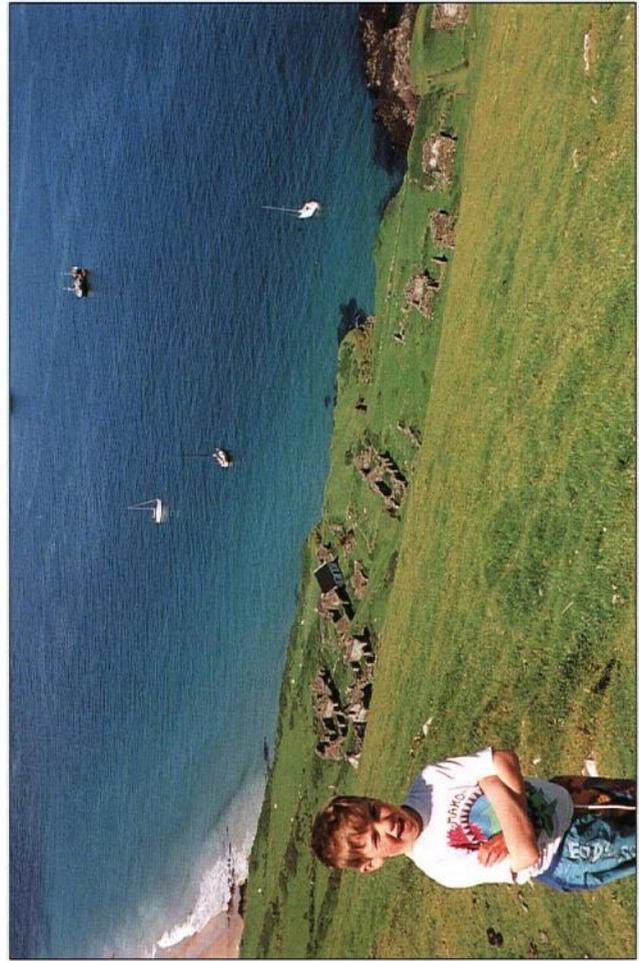


The narrow drying harbour of Laxey in the Isle of Man. *Witchcraft* with 6" 8" draught has just managed to nudge her way alongside the outer quay as the tide makes. PHOTO: W M Nixon



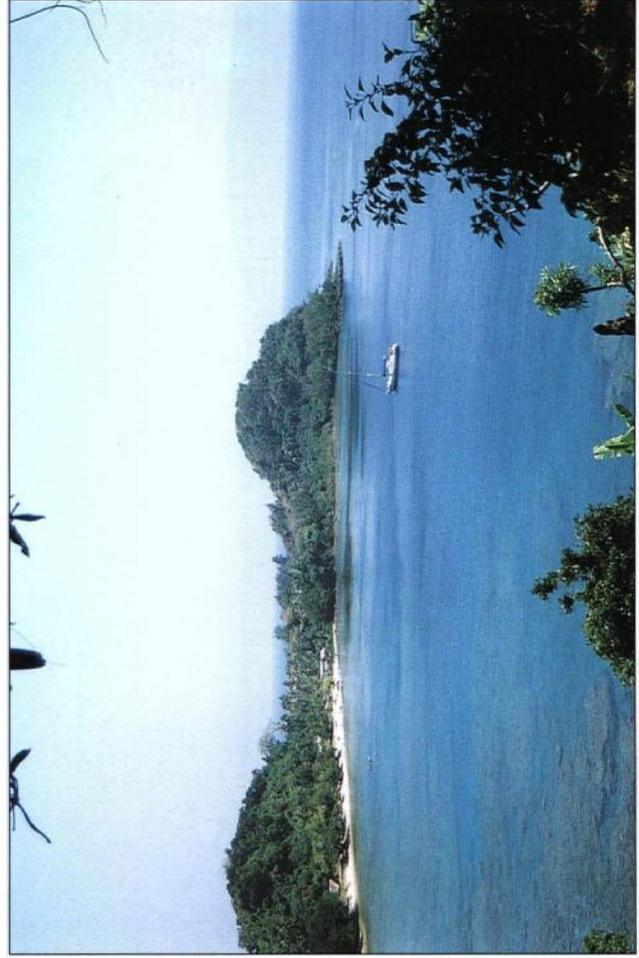
Indienne River, Dominica. David and Joan Nicholson and their guide.

PHOTO: Stuart Nairn



"My little legs won't carry me any further." Brendan Walsh on the Great Blasket, *Lady Kate* is the boat on the left

PHOTO: Donal Walsh



Shalimar at anchor. Maewo Island, Vanuatu.

PHOTO: Onóra Lynch

Honorary Editor's Note



This 1994 Annual is my last as editor, having greatly enjoyed the privilege of getting an advance read of members' cruising over the past eight years, I now feel this pleasure should be passed on. Paddy Barry has agreed to take on the task and has already been a great help with this edition.

I wish to thank the many members who have contributed their logs, photographs, charts, Dunn's ditties etc. Our adjudicators who every year face a most difficult task and the three commodores whom I have served who have all been a great encouragement, John Gore-Grimes, Hugh Kennedy and David Nicholson.

I thank our previous Hon Treasurer Donal O'Boyle, and present, Donal Brazil. Both have shown the utmost patience and tolerance. Our past and present secretaries, Brian Hegarty and Cormac McHenry, have both put up with many phone calls and queries from me as editor.

Kevin Dwyer's roving lens and Ronnie Barr's charts have involved a great commitment. On behalf of the members I thank both and on behalf of the many log authors I thank Ronnie for his charts which have enhanced many logs. A feature of the annuals in the past was the line drawings by our member John Kearney. In this age of mass production this talent is still with us and I am delighted to include some drawings from Ronnie Barr's board. Putting together the annual involves the bringing together of many parts, and without the technical know-how of Declan Clancy, your Hon Editor would have been in the fog. Declan has been a pleasure to work with.

Sheila and the children have put up with Dad buried in logs every November. In the first year as editor the baby was in the cot allowing the Hon Editor to get on with the job. This November the bed-time stories included Pete Hogan's 'Rounding Cape Horn'!

Finally remember to send your submissions by October 15th for the 1995 Annual to Paddy Barry and alterations to the lists of names and yachts to Cormac McHenry.

Ronan Beirne

Challenge Cup Awards 1994

Raymond Fielding

It is an honour to be again asked to adjudicate, having pondered, on the ICC awards for 1994, I accepted with alacrity, mainly on the grounds that it would enable me, two months earlier than usual, to peruse the logs, so usually looked forward to over Christmas. Having thus committed myself, I now realise that deciding the winners and especially the non-winners is almost as traumatic as recovering from open heart surgery.

This year there was a plethora of logs submitted ranging from the North Cape to Cape Horn, the Atlantic and from the western Med through the Pacific to New Zealand and around these islands. Apart from around Ireland there is a dearth of cruising logs from the Celtic fringe. The hard-working Hon Editor has since told me that Dermot Ryan is compiling a compendium of logs pertaining to the successful ICC cruise last June south of Penmarch. From perusing the logs several things seem to stand out, especially the fact that our members seem to have much more time than heretofore cruising and that GPS is very much in use now both on and offshore. Also the weather in northern Europe last season does not appear to have been very good – I would make an appeal to future log authors to include a short description of their boats – sine qua non.

Commodore's cruises do not traditionally feature as entrants for club awards but nevertheless David Nicholson's South American, Caribbean and trans-Atlantic cruising this year, with the involvement of club members, is worthy of mention.

The standard of the logs overall was superb. They all provide some excellent information for yachts planning to pass their way in the future. The ICC is very much 'alive and kicking' and afloat in 1994.

Having read and re-read all the logs submitted, and enjoyed them even more, the following are the winners of the ICC awards for 1994 – as to the remainder of the (unlucky) logs I only wish that there was a trophy available for each of them also.

1. The Faulkner Cup – *Stella Maris*.

Michael Coleman with his robust 45ft steel yacht and crew cruised from and to Cobh for 2 months, half of that time north of the Arctic Circle, via the Caledonian Canal and the North Cape to Murmansk where they had very well-described shore problems to say the least. Having extracted themselves they then went north about Iceland, sighted ice and endured severe gales. They had a fast passage from Reykjavik via Baltimore to Cobh. A magnificent tough cruise in the wavetroughs of Tilman, O'Hanlon and Gore-Grimes. As to the *Stella Maris* – fine girl you are. Her cruise was eligible for six of the eight club trophies.

2. The Strangford Cup – *Alys*

David Park, family and friends successfully completed a fine classical, sometimes rough cruise, to and from and around the Azores archipelago in their Sadler 34, via Dingle and home south about. His advice re that elated period at the end of the cruise, in home waters, should be noted. On the well-prepared boat there was little damage apart from a frayed inner forestay towards the end of the cruise.

3. The Fortnight Cup – *Elusive*

Frank Larkin in the Sisk brothers' First 45s completed a lovely old-fashioned family cruise from Cork to Dingle in reasonable

weather visiting old haunts. It was a nostalgic cruise for those of us who cruised these waters in the 50s and 60s when firstly the Old Head and subsequently the Mizen were local Cape Horns, in the then less efficient, less electronically equipped boats. Dunkerron seems well worth a visit.

4. The Wybrant Cup – *Ricjak*

James Cahill and his 42ft steel cutter and crew were one of the few contenders for this trophy this year. Several other cruises passed through Scotland on their way further afield. The owner and crew visited St Kilda on passage to the Outer Hebrides where they had some minor scares before returning to Westport within 2 weeks.

5. The Round Ireland Navigational Cup – *Lady Kate*

Donal Walsh, his wife Mary and his two children Emma (9) and Brendan (6) went south about Ireland in 26 days in July in poorish weather in their bilge-keel Moody 31. A fine achievement with such a young family won them the trophy – four other ICC yachts are known to have gone around. They avoided the inlets and stayed on the periphery. His comment on the helmsman using a mobile VHF when among salmon nets and their attendant boats (ch7 around here) is a good one.

6. The Atlantic Trophy – *Twayblade*

Jonathan Virden in his 32ft Buchanan sloop, well-known to ICC members in the sixties, had a relatively easy passage to the Azores from Plymouth. His family then joined him for a cruise around the 9 islands, which seems to have been enjoyable apart from some electrical problems. It is for his ensuing 1,427-mile passage from Horta alone to Penzance in just over 12 days, very much on the wind which was often fresh, that this trophy was awarded.

7. The Fingal Cup – *Wild Goose of Moyle*

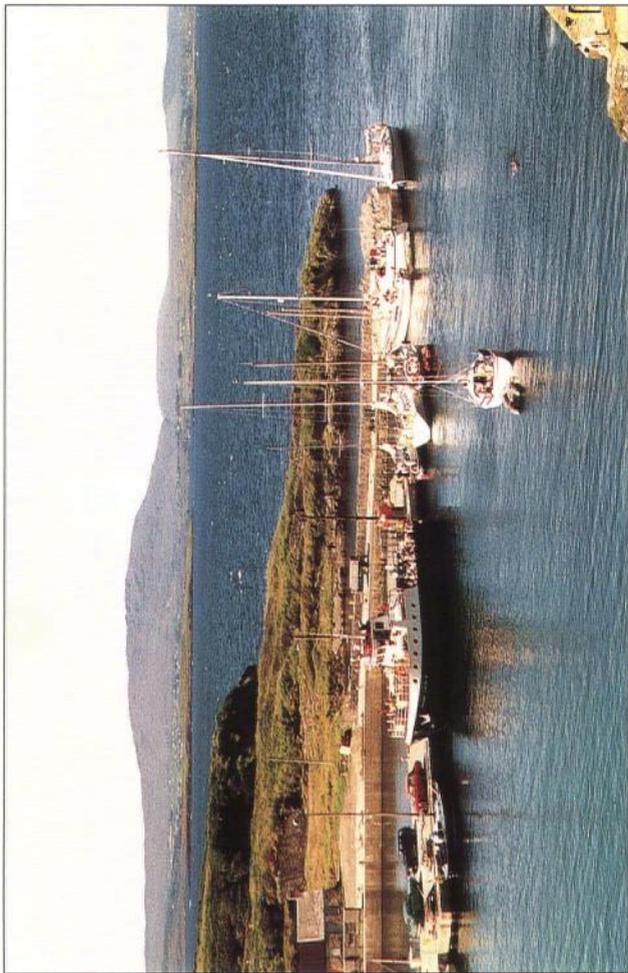
Wallace Clark's cruise from Portugal to Portrush last June appealed to me very much both in its own content and also for the fact that it was the last leg of a unique circumnavigation of Europe, commenced by his late son Miles who in stages brought this 1936 10-ton Maurice Griffiths yawl around the North Cape, through Russia to the Black Sea, and Wallace brought her home in two stages of which this was the last. An epic voyage in toto.

8. The Rockabill Trophy – *Molly B*

Pete Hogan built this wooden two-sticker himself and has already completed many sea-miles. This award is for an exceptional feat of seamanship and navigation. The log submitted is part of a chapter from his forthcoming book. The owner and his boat are unique in the annals of the club and in the history of our country, being, to my knowledge, the first Irish-flagged yacht to have been sailed alone east about the Horn on her way around the world. Our minds surely boggle as the narrative unfolds. Well done Pete and *Molly B*.

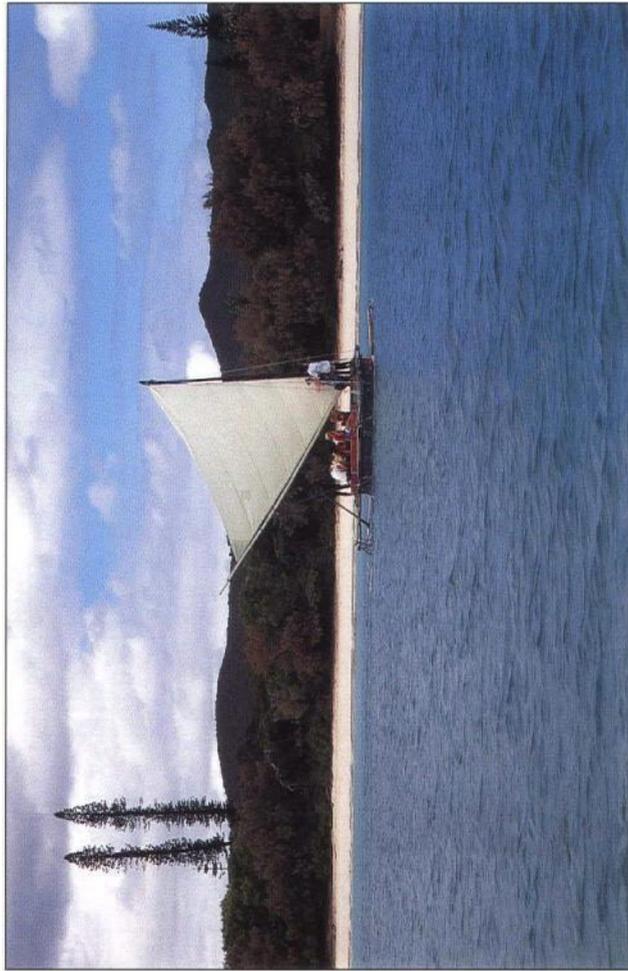
9. Glengarriff Trophy – *Pen Men*

Robert Barr in his newly acquired S&S 30 was on circuit again and completed his 21st recorded cruise in the pages of this journal. He did not call to the Royal Cork Yacht Club in Crosshaven from which this trophy emanated but like the *QE2* this year, he went to Waterford and to the castle on Little Island where he spent three nights in Youghal, with various troubles, an old port which seldom appears in cruise logs in Irish waters. A worthy winner.



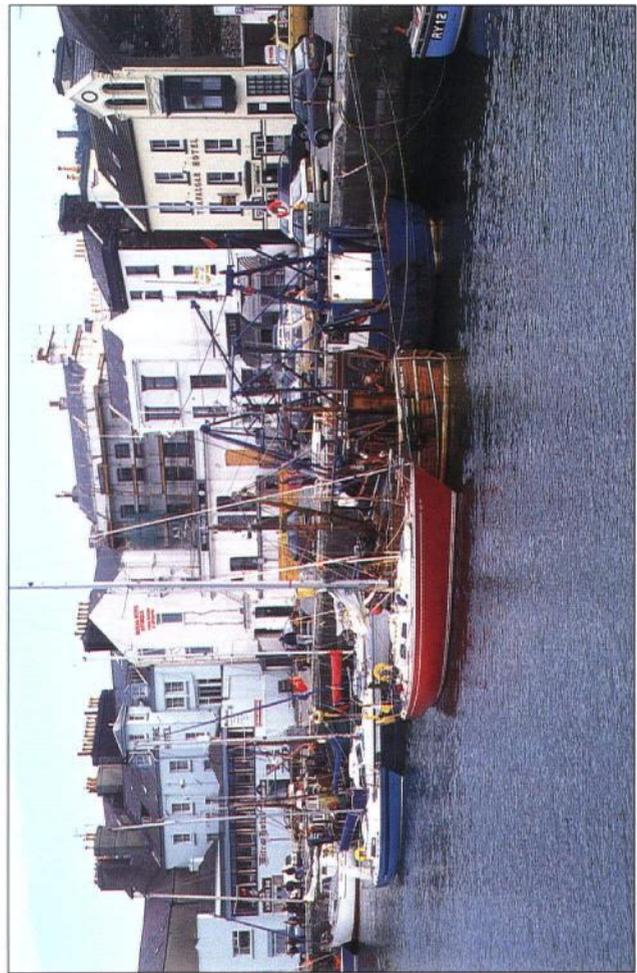
Elusive tied to the outer pier knuckle at Cape Clear.

PHOTO: F Larkin



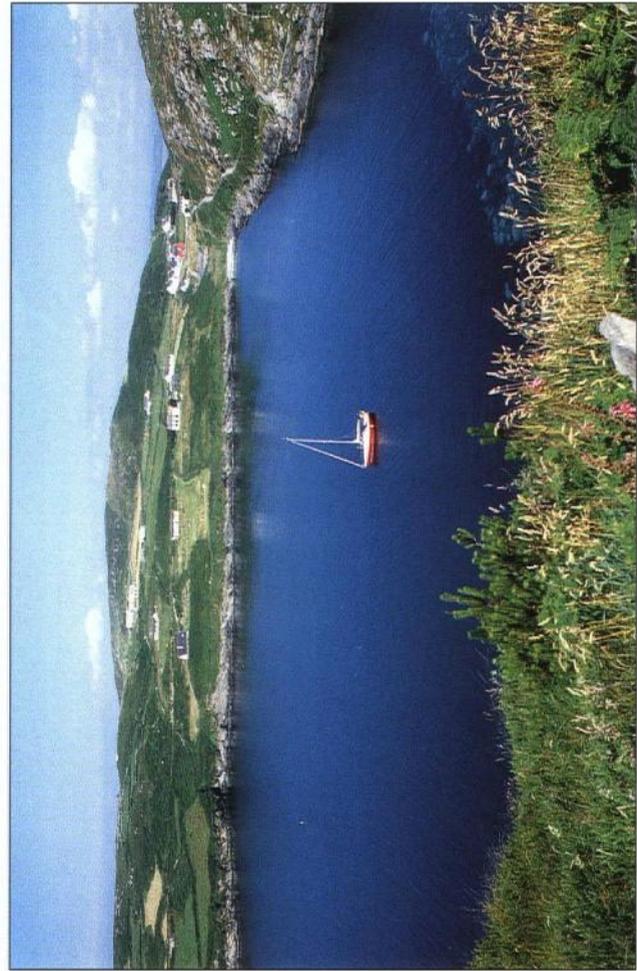
South Pacific sailing.

PHOTO: Brian Lynch



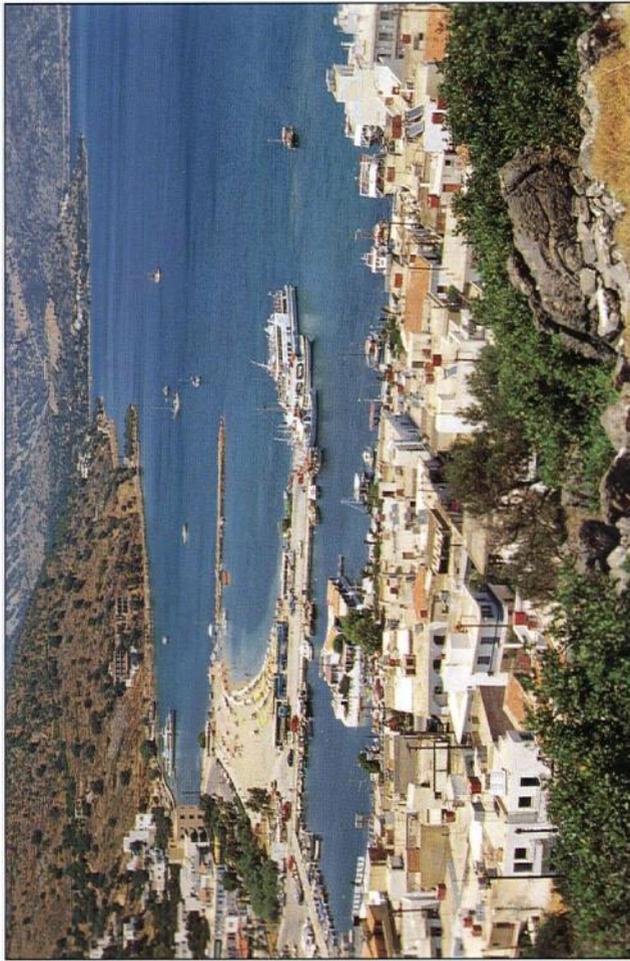
Witchcraft of Howth in Ramsey harbour, Saturday April 30th.

PHOTO: W M Nixon



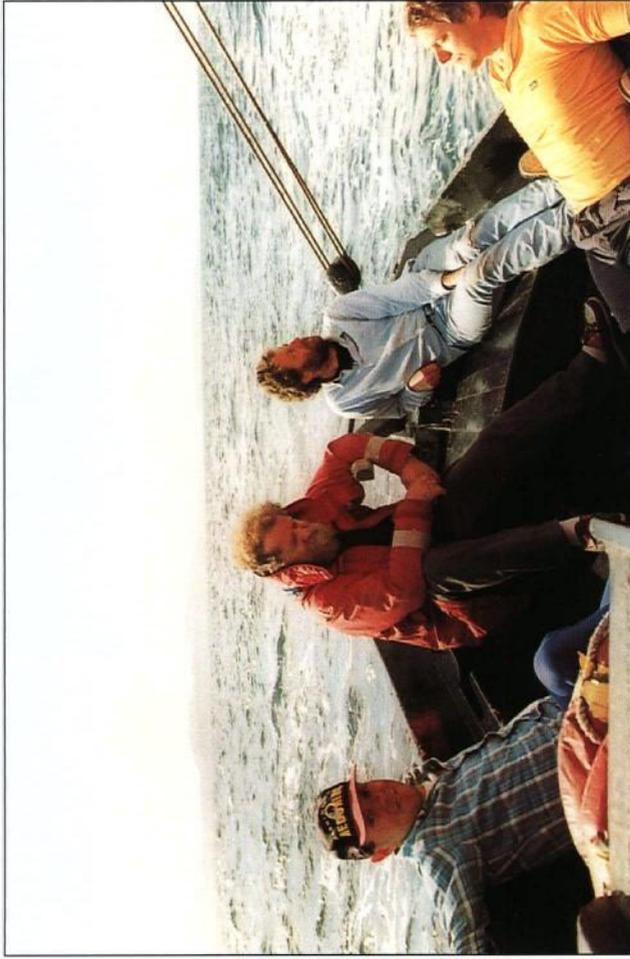
Witchcraft of Howth in South Harbour, Cape Clear.

PHOTO: W M Nixon



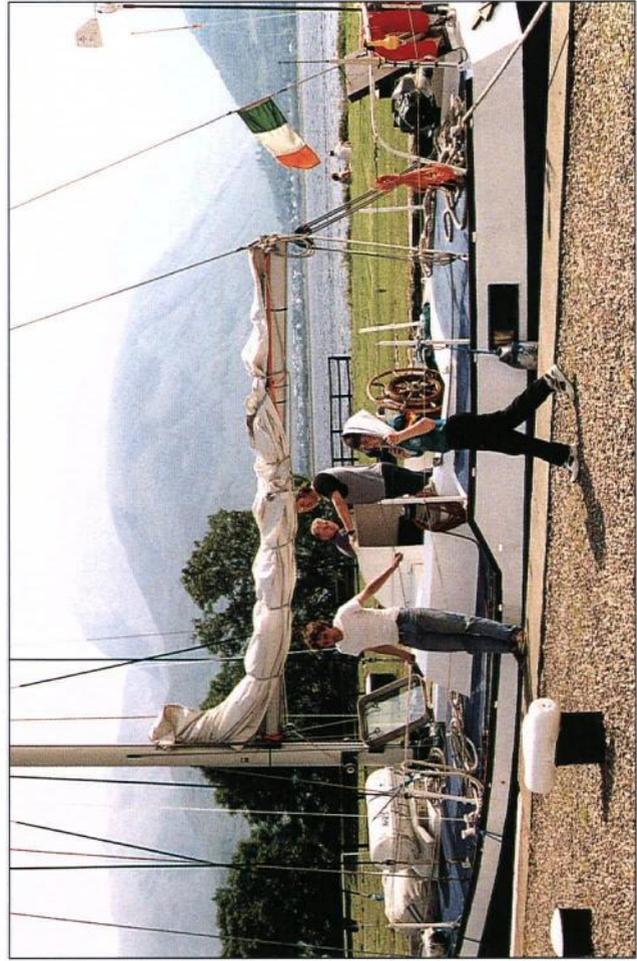
Elounda is one of the most strategically useful anchorages in the eastern Mediterranean.

PHOTO: W M Nixon



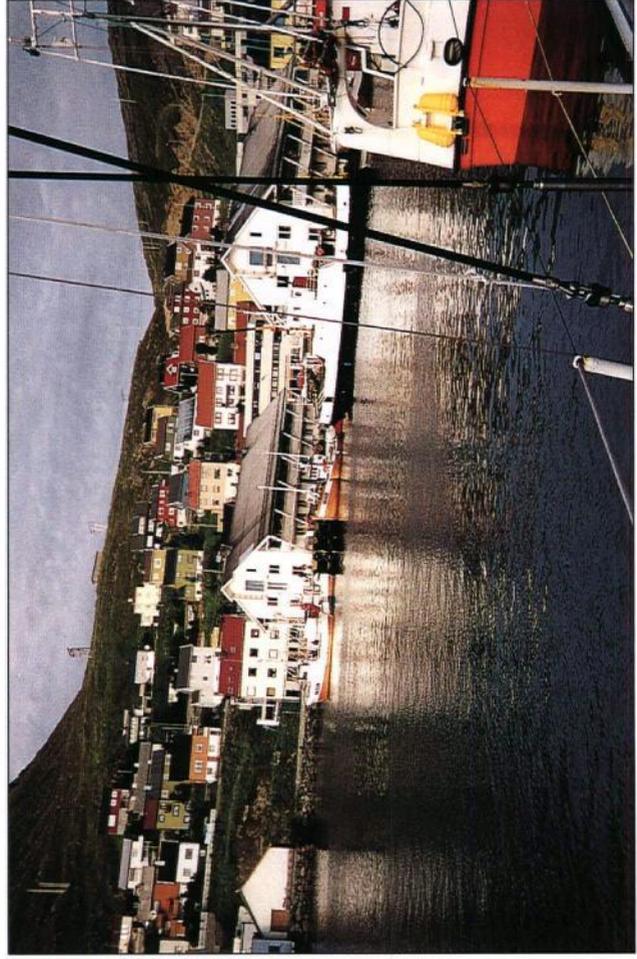
We'd have sung the 'Mingulay Boat Song' – if we knew it! Maurice, Pat, Paul and Earle on *Saint Patrick*.

PHOTO: Pat Redmond



Stella Maris at Corpach sea lock.

PHOTO: K White



From *Stella Maris*, in Hunningvag.

PHOTO: P O'Connor

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Arctic	89.02, 90.04, 92.20, 94.06
Atlantic Crossing	87.03, 88.16, 89.07, 90.10, 92.01, 92.03, 92.04, 93.01, 93.02
Atlantic Islands	87.03, 87.08, 87.19, 88.16, 89.10, 89.05, 89.07, 90.07, 90.10, 90.20, 91.19, 91.13, 92.05, 92.11, 93.02, 93.13, 93.15, 94.11, 94.13
Australia	88.13
Baltic	90.08, 91.22, 92.13
Brittany	87.16, 87.17, 88.05, 88.06, 88.07, 88.18, 88.19, 89.11, 90.03, 90.09, 90.12, 90.17, 91.15, 91.18, 91.08, 91.21, 91.06, 92.07, 92.17, 92.23, 92.25, 93.12, 93.19, 93.22, 94.20, 94.18, 94.01, 94.16
Caribbean	87.03, 87.21, 87.23, 88.11, 88.14, 89.19, 89.07, 90.02, 90.05, 90.06, 90.10, 90.12, 93.02, 94.03
Channel Islands	89.15, 90.22, 94.20
Chile	88.02
Clyde	91.11
England – East Coast	90.16
England – South Coast	87.14, 88.06, 88.07, 88.08, 88.20, 89.15, 90.03, 90.22, 93.20, 94.12, 94.25, 94.17
Faeroe Islands	93.06
Falkland Islands	87.09
Greenland	92.01, 93.01
Hebrides	87.04, 87.05, 87.22, 87.25, 89.13, 91.16, 91.09, 91.13
Holland and Belgium	89.03, 90.16, 92.13, 94.12
Iceland	91.13, 93.18, 94.06
Ireland – Circumnavigation	87.01, 87.07, 87.12, 87.15, 87.22, 88.01, 88.09, 88.20, 89.01, 89.17, 90.01, 90.11, 91.01, 91.12, 92.12, 94.02, 94.14, 94.07, 94.10
Ireland – North Coast	91.09, 91.20, 92.26, 93.14, 93.17
Ireland – South West Coast	90.18, 91.10, 91.07, 92.02, 94.07, 94.09
Irish Sea	87.14, 87.24, 87.26, 88.03, 88.21, 92.09, 92.18, 93.14, 94.25, 94.16
Mediterranean – East	87.10, 87.20, 90.14, 91.04, 91.24, 93.08, 93.09
Mediterranean – West	87.18, 88.08, 88.10, 89.08, 98.12, 91.04, 91.02, 92.16, 93.08, 93.09, 94.07, 94.15
Normandy	90.16, 94.17
Norway	93.08, 94.08, 94.06
Orkney Islands	87.05, 87.06, 90.13, 91.14, 93.07
Pacific	93.21, 94.05
Portugal	89.06, 90.07, 94.04, 94.23
Russia	93.08
Scandinavia	88.12, 89.02, 90.04, 90.08, 90.13, 92.20
Scilly, Isles of	87.14, 87.17, 88.19, 89.15, 90.03, 90.17, 91.10
Scotland – East	87.06, 90.15
Scotland – West	87.04, 87.05, 87.06, 87.13, 87.25, 88.04, 89.04, 88.09, 89.13, 89.14, 89.16, 90.15, 90.21, 91.14, 91.16, 91.20, 91.09, 91.17, 92.19, 92.24, 93.11, 93.17, 93.20, 94.10, 94.22
Shetland Islands	90.13, 90.15, 91.14, 92.08, 93.07
Spain – North Coast	88.17, 89.06, 90.07, 90.12, 92.14, 92.15, 92.21, 93.05, 93.13, 93.16, 93.19
Venezuela	88.14, 88.16, 90.19, 94.03
World Cruising	91.03, 92.10, 94.24

The Brittany Rally

Dermod Ryan

For a number of years past your Committee has been considering a foreign rally of the members but somehow it never got organised. However, last year (1993) our Commodore decided to take the issue to heart and, with the wholehearted support of the committee, appointed Brendan Bradley as the 'Co-ordinator', ably assisted by the Cruise Committee, consisting of the Commodore, Michael O'Farrell, Dave Fitzgerald and Donald McClement. To decide on the venue the members were circulated and resulted in enormous support for Brittany, indeed the extent of the response took many by surprise. With the venue decided Brendan Bradley, accompanied by his wife Pamela, set off to Brittany to reconnoitre the area by car. During his tour he selected the overnight stops, negotiated with the marina managers in each location to ensure that space would be available for us and of course, at a discount, met with restaurateurs to discuss seating capacity, menus and prices. He also met with various dignitaries to ensure 'mayoral' receptions for us, after all, the members of the ICC were coming to town and that called for recognition! By the end of his tour, Brendan had his schedule in place and now he could advise the membership of the programme and enquire who would be going. The immediate response was overwhelming, indeed if everyone who replied had, in fact, participated, there would hardly have been enough marina space in France, let alone Brittany! Inevitably this number was reduced and on the day 27 yachts arrived in Brittany, a huge support for our first offshore rally and each boat seemed crewed with ICC's top performers so we could be assured of a hectic week, and so it was. What follows is the log of *Sceolaing* but I believe that any other yacht's name could be substituted, except the owner and crew would probably have been more disciplined. The list of participating yachts is set out at the end of this log.

My crew consisted of son Paul, daughters Yvonne and Ali and Jimmy Foley, to be joined in Concarneau by Cas Smullen in time for the initial dinner, of course, and by Dara MacMahon in La Roche Bernard for the passage home. *Sceolaing* had wintered in Kinsale and on Saturday June 11th at 1900 hours we cast off from the marina heading for the Scilly Isles, motoring in a flat calm. The day was sunny yet a little cool. The trip was uneventful and 23 hours later we were anchored in Porth Cressa, St Mary's. A gentle start to the cruise, and it was nice to be in the Scillys again, they are so pretty in good weather. We had a nice dinner in the Pilot Gig where we met the crew of *Busy Bee*, our first ICC encounter. The next morning we

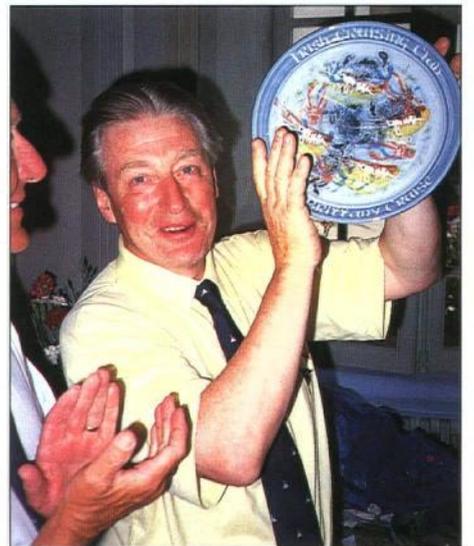
shopped, drank beer in the Mermaid, then motored to the nearby cove on St Agnes for more beer in the Turk's Head, this is a lovely spot. Shortly after 1800 hours we set off for Lampaul on the island of Ushant. Once again the conditions were calm and we motorsailed the entire distance. The morning of our arrival was cool and very hazy, indeed the marginal visibility made the rocky entrance to Lampaul decidedly tricky, in spite of radar and GPS. The coast of Ushant is extremely tidal and this, together with an Atlantic swell over the rocky bottom, created quite a sea. By 1000 hours we were tied to a mooring buoy and ready for a visit ashore. Although not very popular with visiting yachts there are numerous buoys available for the visitor. We had a relaxed walk ashore, Le Stiff lighthouse is very impressive as it stands supreme amongst acres and acres of colourful heather. The town is quite pretty and very French. We enjoyed beers ashore and later lunch on board before leaving for Camaret at 1630 hours, a tricky journey of 34 miles, certainly the navigator had to be alert as the poor visibility persisted and specific buoys had to be identified and rounded. Five hours later we were tied alongside the marina in Camaret.

Next morning we noticed the rally 'battleflag' flying from three nearby yachts, *Lola*, *Mary P* and *Mashona*. The fleet was beginning to assemble. Over twenty years ago I made my first 'foreign' cruise to Brittany with Camaret as our first port of call. I liked it then and still do, it has a real French fishing village character about it. We strolled around, had our first al fresco lunch in the Hotel du France, shopped, visited the caves and the chandlers. Dinner in the Restaurant la Voiterie was superb, espe-



Evening at La Turballe.

PHOTO: A Ryan



Clockwise from top left:

Joe Woodward's *Moshulu III* and David Whitehead's *Eudora* approaching inner dock at Le Palais, Belle Île.

The cruise battle flag.

Commodore's plate presented to 'the Co-ordinator', Brendan Bradley, at La Roche-Bernard.

Commodore's cocktail party at Concarneau.

Skipper and crew of *Isobel* at La Coquille Restaurant, Concarneau. From left; Ronnie Barr, Eve Ronaldson, Russ O'Neill, Hazel Barr, Michael and Annie McKee.

cially so as Paul hosted, I expect he was paying off his Access account for months! Nearby we discovered an Irish bar, Donegan's, and decided it deserved our support. Inside, hiding behind large pints of Guinness, we found the crew of *Mary P* downing Guinness in quantity, and it £5 per pint no less. We gave the barman great exercise as he pulled and pulled copious pints. Then, as though we needed a drink, we all returned to *Sceolaing* for a nightcap or two. Next morning, Thursday, Michael Knatchbull kindly delivered baguettes and thereby saved us the long trek to the village. A beautiful morning dawned as the high pressure developed over France, I often find high pressure causes morning sickness as it did this day, nonetheless we set off for Benodet at 0930 hours in calm conditions once more, passed through the Raz de Sein some two and a half hours later and tied up in Benodet at 1800 hours. Benodet is a favourite of mine, being a seaside resort it is lively and full of bounce as well as being pretty, with the river Odet separating it from Saint Marine on the opposite bank, two lovely towns. On my first visit here many moons ago a chain ferry was used to transport motor vehicles across the river, but inevitably the quaint ferry was obsoleted by a huge modern bridge.

Next day the crew made for the nearby beach to sunbathe while I encountered Liam McGonagle and his colleagues from *Meander* sipping wine, eating crêpes and generally relaxing outside a local hostelry. I joined them and we engaged in a highly intellectual discussion on some matter of total irrelevance.

Saturday the 18th, the first day of the rally, dawned beautifully. We left early lest there be a scarcity of space at the marina in Concarneau, regardless of assurances to the contrary. Naturally when we arrived there were spaces aplenty. The fleet assembled with battleflags flying from forestays. It was quite exciting meeting friends old and new as visits were exchanged and an air of anticipation developed. Cas joined us at 1600 hours that afternoon as the skippers gathered for a briefing from the Commodore and Brendan. Everyone was presented with their excellent cruising packs setting out details of the forthcoming events, charts etc. The first event was dinner that evening in the Relais la Coquille, a lovely restaurant with walls bedecked with beautiful paintings which created a warm, friendly atmosphere. The group which totalled 119 members and friends were seated in three separate rooms but regardless of the separation the banter was first-class as wine flowed copiously. The meal was excellent. Following words of welcome from the Commodore, all attention was turned to a giant television set which Brendan had ensured would be in place for that evening as Ireland were playing Italy in the World Cup. Ireland's success added to the general excitement, and as one would expect, provided an excuse for celebratory drinks. The owner of the restaurant was taken aback with the quantum of wine consumed during the evening and also by the fact that everyone paid their bill! In any event, the rally had gotten off to a great start and we on *Sceolaing* were happy that Sunday was a lay day. Concarneau is a bustling town with many interesting old buildings but these pale into insignificance when compared to 'La Ville Close'. La Ville Close is a magnificent old walled fortress town built in the 14th century by Vauban. Although now an accumulation of crêperies and souvenir shops, the character of the old ramparts and buildings is truly impressive. We surveyed the town (the view from the ramparts is very attractive) and availed of the produce of a crêperie, as we sat outside enjoying the sunshine. The next function was scheduled for Tuesday, when a cocktail reception was organised at the Citadelle Vauban, that man again, in Le Palais, Belle-Île. We decided to break our journey by overnighing in Port Tudy, Île de Groix. The day was cold and cloudy with a light southerly wind, so at last we could sail. On arriving at Port Tudy we had the option of tying to large mooring buoys in the outer harbour or using the marina which is inside lock gates, thereby restricting the departure time to near

high water. Having tied to the buoys several years ago and spent the night fending off Frenchmen who had neither fenders, decent warps nor manners and who had never heard of tying springs nor wanted to, we decided to avail of the marina, as did *Live Wire*, while others of the fleet opted to overnight outside. Île de Groix is a pretty island and small enough to walk around. We had dinner in the Restaurant le Thonier, it seemed OK on the night but the following day I was sick as a dog, Cas sick as a pup. We blamed the crab, my crew nodded sagely. My discomfort was not helped as we waited and waited for the lock gates to open so that *Live Wire* and *Sceolaing* could leave for the cocktail party in Le Palais, (our colleagues who had tied up in the outer harbour were long gone). It was obvious now that we would be late for the party. Annoying as this was, matters were made worse when, as the gates were due to open, a customs officer decided he should clear the visiting yachts, and no-one was allowed to leave until he had done so, so so much for the Single Market. Although he didn't actually rummage the boat, he examined our papers and passports in detail and completed various forms before we were free to leave, and it took an age. *Live Wire*, having gone through the same routine and having been cleared first, had left before us but, once we were freed, it soon became a race for Le Palais in a lovely sailing breeze, SWS.

Modesty forbids me specifying the winner, but suffice it to say that *Live Wire* was a sporty second. As we entered the harbour it was obvious we were late for the entrance to the inner harbour as the lock gates were firmly closed, so we had to tie to a buoy in the outer harbour, a tricky operation going astern in the strong crosswind into a tight space between two enormous yachts. After much anxiety and unrepeatable language we were finally tied properly and were free to join the reception. The famous Citadelle has been beautifully restored and was a lovely venue for our get-together. Unfortunately we were very late for the event but managed to avail of a beer or two before the Commodore delivered an excellent speech in the vernacular



Dermod Ryan suffers a crab at Restaurant Le Thonier, Port Tudy.

PHOTO: A Ryan



Sceolaing and *Live Wire* locked in at Port Tudy, Île-de-Groix.

PHOTO: D Ryan

thanking the assembled dignitaries for their kind reception and, of course, for "the use of the hall". The Mayor replied wittily in English and, the formalities over, the group went their way to the five separate restaurants which Brendan had organised for us as none of them could cope with our numbers individually. We ate in the L'Acadienne, a group of about thirty of us, and although the dinner was marginal, the crack was good. After dinner we wandered around the town having a drink here and a drink there, it was 0100 hours when the seniors got back on board – the minors, with others, stayed up to waken the cocks for cock-crow and doubtless their noisy return wakened the sleeping crews in Kinsale, Perth, San Francisco and further afield.

Wednesday morning was overcast with drizzle, which was a concern as this evening was the BBQ on the Île de Houat. We spent the morning lazily in Le Palais and left at about 1600 hours with a group of other ICC participants (a gargle perhaps!) who had locked into the inner harbour and were trapped until now. We all motored to and through the Passage du Beniquet, 14 yachts in line, and on to the magnificent beach, Treac'h er Gouret. *Alakush* was anchored here since midday, having arrived from NW Spain, wondering where everyone was. Just as doubts arose regarding the timetable, the fleet began to arrive and Jennifer relaxed again.

Unfortunately the evening was somewhat overcast and we did not see this beautiful anchorage at its best. Nonetheless it was lovely, but exposed to the east. The BBQ was held on the dunes overlooking the bay, where the fleet of yachts looked most impressive. Tables and chairs were scattered on the dunes, close by were five barbecue stands whose chefs had been commanded from the participants and it must be said that each of them performed excellently, the steaks (the best of Irish, of course) were outstanding. The local hotelier provided the starter, a tasty charcuterie, and following the BBQ, cheese and tarts with copious quantities of wine. All in all the food was really good but what I personally enjoyed most was the way people circulated with food and wine in hand, chatting to all and sundry as crews became better acquainted. It was during this circulation that a certain lady member told me that her son, still at home, was keen to join them for the final dinner. Her husband, anxious to help, discovered it would be possible by travelling overland, joining La Vitaine River and sailing downriver to La Roche Bernard on a local vedette. At the first opportunity he excitedly phoned home and outlined to his son the route to the river from whence he could join us by 'bidet', (another failed French student!) The BBQ proved to be our most popular event with 134 participants. As the evening progressed, Peggy Robinson bounced to her feet and played the bagpipes. Being a lady she is clearly exempt from the ancient definition of a gentleman, namely one who can play

the pipes but doesn't! Peggy did a great job and raised spirits even higher, not that they needed any lifting. The Commodore spoke (again!), welcoming the local Mayor and other dignitaries, concluding with the announcement that an auction would now take place to dispose of the BBQ sets and other items, the proceeds going to the club's coffers (will the Auditor please note). Michael McKee was appointed auctioneer as one might expect. Michael's performance was deserving of an Oscar and in the hilarity of the auction *Meander* bought three of the five barbies on offer. It is rumoured that, following the cruise, all food was barbecued at 'The Tansey', regardless of rain or storm, guests were advised to bring oilies.

The gaiety of the evening diminished, rapidly for some, as it became apparent

that the tide was still ebbing strongly and a number of yachts were aground. Probably as a result of an excess of cocktails the previous evening, some participants overlooked checking depth and calculating the tidal rise and fall, in any event half a dozen yachts or more were hard aground and falling over on their topsides. It was an anxious time for those aground but fortunately all rose with the tide and no serious damage resulted. Indeed they were fortunate to be afloat next morning when the wind built up from the east eventually to F5 causing a sizeable sea in the anchorage which would undoubtedly have caused damage had they still been aground. However, back to the party, it ended for most of us at 2300 hours and the long walk carrying our dinghies across the beach back to the water's edge indicated just how far the tide had ebbed.

As already mentioned, the following morning the wind went to the east and developed to F5 making the anchorage decidedly unpleasant. Inevitably we all raised anchor at much the same time and headed dead to windward for our next port of call, La Turballe. It was very bumpy. As we left the anchorage we almost misread the beacons surrounding a nearby rocky shoal which would have been disastrous. Fortunately the error was noticed just in time to avoid a 'mayday'. An interesting statistic regarding Houat, it has a population of 400 souls, 100 of whom are active fishermen; 100 young folk under 20 and the remaining 200 are involved in tourism and farming so there is no real unemployment, incredible for such an isolated island.

The sky was clear and sunny and a few brave hearts sailed but we motored into the chop, arriving three and a half hours later at La Turballe at low water. We ran aground in the entrance to the marina but wriggled off for the 'U' section of the marina which had been specifically reserved for us, but which proved inadequate for our group, and we spilled all over the marina. However, being second to arrive, after *Meander*, we had our choice of space and while heading for a corner berth ran aground again but we managed to winch ourselves into our space. La Turballe is an attractive old fishing town, but the powers-that-be have decided it should also be developed to attract tourists, hence the excellent marina and onshore facilities. There is no doubt but that the local French authorities could give lessons to the Irish counterparts, especially in Dun Laoghaire, on how to set about developing profitable marinas and local businesses. It was a hot, hot afternoon as we explored the town, another beauty with excellent bars, restaurants and shops.

Next day, Friday June 24th, was the day of lunch and wine-tasting at the vineyard at Chateau de la Cassemichere in the Loire Valley. The visit was a good diversion, got us away from the sea and provided an opportunity for us to see the local countryside. The bus took 1½ interesting hours through typical

Breton countryside to reach our destination. First we visited the winery and enjoyed a tour thereof, looking in awe at the huge vats holding gallons of the liquid gold, and then for an al fresco lunch and tasting at the chateau in the sunshine under the trees. Our host, the export sales manager, apologised that the usual dining/tasting area in the chateau had been pre-booked by Japanese visitors, an announcement which brought smiles, for we had it all, an excellent buffet in beautiful surroundings, sipping the different offerings and giving vent to our opinions, mostly appreciative, before finally placing orders which required a separate bus to bring the cases of wine back to the marina. It was such a wonderful afternoon we felt sorry for the poor Japanese trapped below in the bowels of the chateau in a dark, gloomy chambre. On our return to the marina we discovered that in a very short time the wind had risen to gale force causing one and all to adjust warps and fenders while *Deerhound* and *Caranja* had to move over to the fishing harbour to avoid the possibility of damage. In three hours the gale had passed and we were all happy to be safely tied up in the marina and not at sea for that short, sharp blast.

That evening our excellent dinner in the restaurant 'La Godville' was diminished by the news from Orlando, namely Ireland 1, Mexico 2. Again Brendan organised with a local pub to have a TV available and to lay on extra staff to ensure no slowing in our normal rate of consumption. We compensated by hosting a party for the restaurant owner, his staff and the hanger-on diners. It was very late and many francs later when we scrambled aboard.

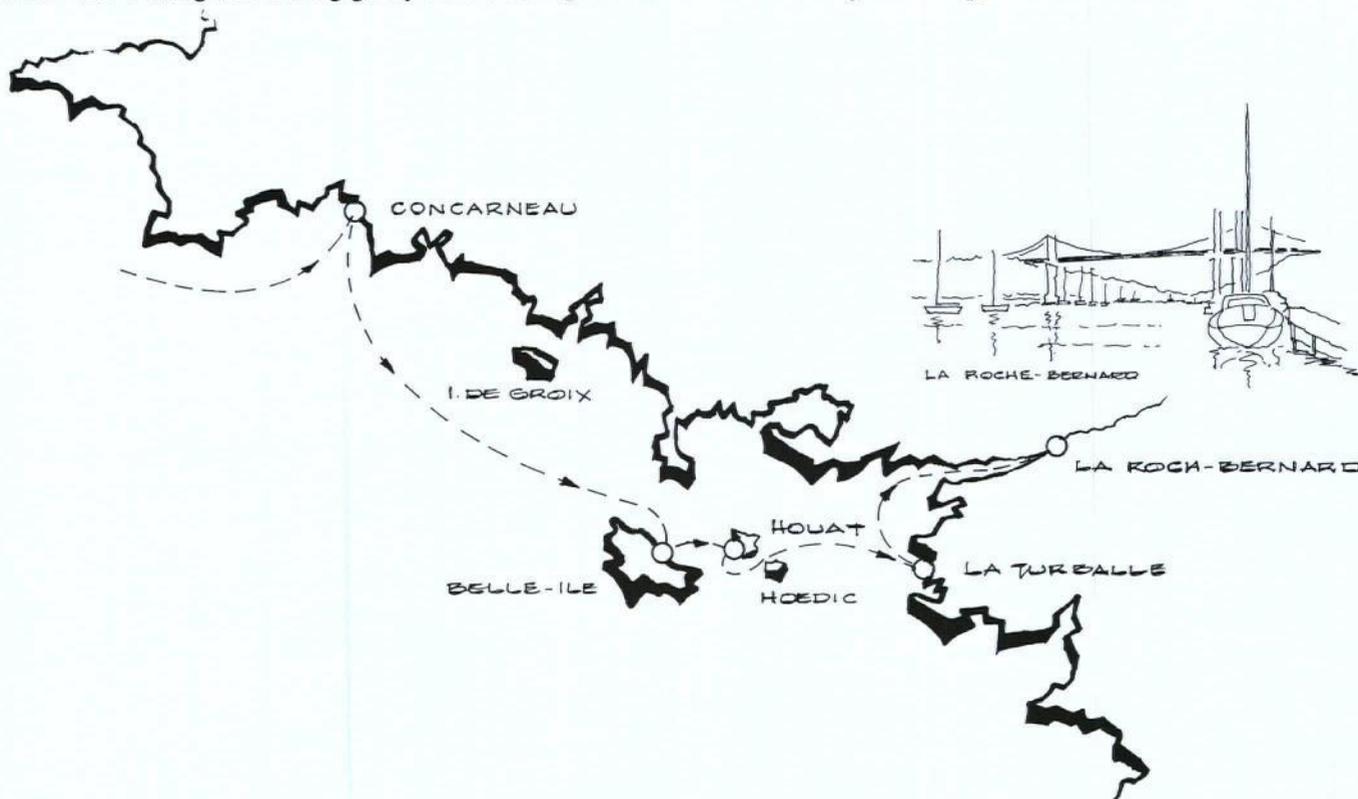
The entrance to La Vilaine river is shoal, very shoal, so to access the river called to an early start on Saturday morning. When we arose at nine-ish to a calm, sunny morning, most of our fellow members had already left. We did likewise in due course with a rising tide, sailing gently before a SW₃ under a



The fleet anchored at Île Houat for the barbecue.

PHOTO: A Ryan

clear, blue sunny sky, this was real sailing. As we approached the entrance to La Vilaine, the sea looked sandy coloured and the echo-sounder indicated that the bottom was getting very close to the top when we grounded gently. We motored astern, freed ourselves, and when in nine feet of water dropped the hook and waited for the tide to rise. *Live Wire* and *Jabberwok* had done likewise but George Nairn's *Lola*, drawing only five feet, scraped over the shoals into the river. It was a magnificent afternoon so the hour or so wait was no hardship, but it emphasised why the clever ones had left at 0630 hours. However, our pleasant wait would have been a different matter had there been a strong wind, what with the shallow water and open bay it would have been wrecker country for sure. In any event, the tide rose and we got through to our final destination, La Roche Bernard, 11 miles upriver with a lock some half-way up. The lock is part of a roadway system which opens for a few minutes at specific times to allow boats through quickly which because of the short opening time avoids horrific traffic jams. Having motored upriver, we tied alongside *Miss Demena* at the pontoon reserved to us. We had a major wash-up, clouds of deodorant and aftershave



before a departure for our final pre-dinner drinks party where prizes were presented by the Commodore for the prettiest girl, grumpiest skipper and so on and, of course, to Brendan Bradley in appreciation of his efforts. Then to our final dinner which again had to be shared between two restaurants, Restaurant des Deux Magots(!) or Restaurant du Vieux Quartier, both offering identical menus. The food and wines in the Deux Magots were really excellent as I believe they also were in the Vieux Quartier, it was a great final night yet it was not a late night, well, not too late, as crew-changing was to take place the following day, Sunday. Here again Brendan's organisational skills showed once more, he had chartered an Aer Lingus Saab turboprop to fly to Nantes bringing out new crews for the trip home and returning with those who could only arrange a two week holiday. It was very convenient yet inexpensive. The buses departed for the airport at 0900 hours, sadly Yvonne and Jimmy were amongst the returnees, all of whom were bringing many happy memories home with them. Dara MacMahon arrived with the new arrivees from the airport at midday.

We cast off at 1500 hours, bound for Port Haliguen. The road lock was scheduled to open at 1600 hours and with the short opening time, we wanted to ensure that we arrived in good time. On our journey through the previous day only a handful of boats made the locking each way, however this day being Sunday and rather later in the afternoon, the lock disgorged some 30 or more yachts of all sizes and shapes and when we locked through there were dozens more waiting for the next opening, an hour later. When one considers that the lock is at least one hour from the sea it gives some measure of the enthusiasm of the sailing community who sail from here. It could take half a day to get to and from the open sea. Yesterday, when we touched the sandbar at the entrance to the river in calm conditions we reckoned how unpleasant the area would be in a blow. Well, as we emerged from the river we encountered a WS, on the nose. Even in this

wind there was a short, dirty, lumpy, stopping sea and it was only by really turning up the revs that we bashed our way through at an acceptable speed. We motor-sailed to Port Haliguen, 25 miles to the west, where we tied up at 2215 hours. There are two marinas here, no less, the one on the starboard side on entering seemed quite full but the one on the port side was being refurbished and so mostly empty. We tied up here. Later *Errislannan* joined us.

Port Haliguen is an interesting town, yet another being upgraded to attract tourists. The nearby town of Port Maria is active and buzzing with tourists so clearly Port Haliguen is hoping to entice some of them to their sheltered side of the peninsula as Port Maria on the west side is too exposed for a marina. In any event its port is too busy, being the base for the never-ending ferries to Le Palais.

Next day, Monday, was sunny and hot, and the sea was calm. We left at 0930 hours and by using the excellent French yachting charts, we ignored the recognised channels out of the Bay de Quiberon and navigated our way through the rocks, saving many miles in the process. This was the most challenging part of the day as thereafter we set the autopilot for Benodet and sunbathed. We now had our minds on getting home, without indecent haste, of course, and although we also stopped at Camaret and Porth Cressa we didn't linger. The weather was unbelievably sunny and calm and the passages were relaxed and easy, encouraging conversation which with Cas on board was raised to a very intellectual level. At one point as a gannet flew by, a lengthy discussion ensued as to whether or not the correct name for the bird was a 'gan', a gannet (gannette) being a small gan! No more gin for Cas that day. We arrived in Dun Laoghaire at 1600 hours on Saturday July 2nd in the thick of the Royal St George Regatta. The cruise was over and what a cruise it had been. The rally was an outstanding success, I heard not one complaint, unbelievable! The closest to criticism was when a certain Howth member was heading off for yet another gastronomic meal and was overheard to say "Jaysus, I'd love a mixed grill". To Brendan and, of course, to Pamela, we owe a great debt of gratitude, the organisation of the event was so effective that everything happened like clockwork and Brendan was always available to help and answer questions, he seemed so relaxed. In all, a masterpiece of organisation. There can be no doubt that this will prove to be the first of many foreign rallies in the years ahead. It will be a hard act to follow.

Yachts

<i>Alakush</i>	Jennifer Guinness
<i>Archibald Le Grand</i>	David Nicholson, Brendan Bradley and Leo Conway (charter)
<i>Aronelle</i>	David Whittaker
<i>Busy Bee</i>	John and Angela Ley
<i>Caranja</i>	Jim Menton
<i>Cuchulain</i>	Michael O'Farrell
<i>Deerhound</i>	Colin Chapman
<i>Errislannan</i>	Bruce Lyster
<i>Eudora</i>	David Whitehead
<i>Isobel</i>	Michael McKee
<i>Jabberwok of Howth</i>	Ross Courtney
<i>Leemara of Howth</i>	Bill Cuffe-Smith
<i>Live Wire</i>	Derry O'Brien
<i>Lola</i>	George Nairn
<i>Mary P</i>	Neil Prendeville
<i>Mashona</i>	Cal Condon
<i>Meander III</i>	Liam McGonagle and Des Turvey
<i>Midnight Marauder</i>	Brendan O'Callaghan
<i>Miss Demena</i>	Maurice O'Keeffe
<i>Morning Mist</i>	Leslie Auchincloss
<i>Moshulu II</i>	Joe Woodward
<i>Natian</i>	Donal Brazil
<i>Ruinette</i>	Jack Gallagher
<i>Sceolaing</i>	Dermod Ryan
<i>Setanta</i>	Richard Cudmore
<i>Suaeda</i>	Alan Hutchinson
<i>White Heather</i>	David Fitzgerald

Date	Passage	Mileage
June 12	Kinsale to Porth Cressa	155
13/14	Porth Cressa to St Agnes & Lampaul	112
14	Lampaul to Camaret	34
15	Camaret	—
16	Camaret to Benodet	56
17	Benodet	—
18	Benodet to Concarneau	13
19	Concarneau	—
20	Concarneau to Port Tudy, Île de Groix	26
21	Port Tudy to Le Palais, Belle Île	23
22	Le Palais to Île de Houat	12
23	Île de Houat to La Turballe	22
24	La Turballe	—
25	La Turballe to La Roche Bernard	26
26	La Roche Bernard to Port Haliguen	36
27	Port Haliguen to Benodet	56
28	Benodet to Camaret	56
29/30	Camaret to Porth Cressa	119
July 2	Porth Cressa to Dun Laoghaire	218
Total		964

Sounds of Ireland

Donal Walsh



The Round Ireland Navigation Cup

The Waterford coast from Helvick Head to Mine Head runs north/south and is approximately 4 miles long. As we rounded Helvick Head outward-bound from Dungarvan at the start of our 1994 summer cruise the wind began to head us up and we rolled up our jib and decided to motor-sail until we reached Mine Head, where we expected the wind should free. Our two-adult, two-children crew was as follows; Emma (9), Brendan (6), Mary and myself. This year the plan was to sail *Lady Kate*, a bilge-keel Moody 31 built by Marine Projects Plymouth in 1986, around Ireland. We had already sailed to France twice with the children, usually bringing some friends to help with the outward passage and sailing home ourselves, and we felt that the children were now old enough and we could cope with the planned passage as a family crew. We spent the first night aboard alongside the pontoon at Dungarvan Town Quay and sailed at 0930 on the 6th July 1994.

At Mine Head we passed inside the Rogue rock using the inshore passage popular with some local boats – not that it is any great saving on distance, but I always use it if conditions allow as the pilotage makes the trip a bit more interesting – and when we altered SW for Ballycotton the wind veered and was still on the nose and so we motor-sailed under main only until west of Youghal Harbour and then tried for a sail the last few miles into Ballycotton. This was spoiled by a heavy shower which really dampened our spirits on our first day out.

We tied alongside, had some lunch and when the shower cleared the children went to the beach. Later on we had a visit from our friend Michael Lane Walsh, a member of the Ballycotton Lifeboat crew who had sailed with us to France in 1993. The forecast was for a calm night with fresher weather following and on Michael's advice we set off again at 2210. We passed through Ballycotton Sound and then set a course for the Old Head, motoring in an almost calm oily sea.

Brendan and I had great fun crossing Cork Harbour in the dark, watching the different light characters and the sectors changing colour. Later on Emma was fascinated to watch the beam of the Old Head passing way above us as we passed close by below. I took the last part of the watch alone and altered for Courtmacsherry and anchored off the pier at 0345.

I felt reasonably comfortable about entering Courtmacsherry in the dark as I had been there many times before and could make out some detail of the shore as we went past. I did get a bit of a start when I passed close to one of the channel marks and took it to be a fixed perch. "You'd feel very stupid if you hit that", I thought. Next morning I found the marks were spar buoys made from plastic pipe.

When we woke it was raining. The forecast was for S 3/4 becoming SW. We wanted to be in Glandore for the classic boat rally at the weekend and decided to move before we were headed completely. From the Seven Heads to the Galley Head the wind was slowly swinging into the south-west and when we cleared the Galley it headed us again. We motored with main set the last

few miles into Glandore. We anchored SW of the pier but the holding was poor and it took several attempts before I was really satisfied we were anchored properly.

We stayed in Glandore all day Friday 8th July. We met our old friend Stan Prichard from Christchurch aboard *Alvenia*, a remarkable man well into his sixties who cruises singlehanded each year for several months. He came on board *Lady Kate* and over a few beers we shared the news since we last met in Scilly in 1993. By Saturday morning the wind had freshened and the accompanying heavy rain put all thoughts of sailing out of our minds. We went ashore and attended Paddy Barry's talk on his sail to Greenland in 1993 which we found very interesting.

The forecast gave the wind going more to the south and I felt we should move our anchorage to have better shelter. In the course of this exercise we went alongside at Union Hall and walked to the village for stores. Construction of an extension to the pier is well advanced and this should relieve some of the congestion here when it is finished.

By Sunday morning the wind had moderated and we headed west again passing inside the Stags and the Kedges and then into Baltimore where we anchored north of the pier at 1400. We had a short run ashore after which we left through the north entrance to Baltimore, bound for Cape Clear North Harbour where we decided to go right into the inner part of the harbour and dry out.

When the tide fell the outer keel went into a hole and *Lady Kate* fell out off the quay at an uncomfortable angle, we were amused as we eavesdropped on the passers-by on the quay above who assumed we were a fin-keeler and couldn't figure how we had got into such a pickle and had all sorts of suggestions as to the correct way to handle the situation. Eventually the tide rose and we floated. Next tide we dried in the outer harbour just clear of the ferry berth. I was looking forward to a few pints in Paddy Burke's and was disappointed to learn that because he hadn't been well recently he wouldn't be opening for the afternoon session which we enjoyed so much on previous visits. That evening we sailed for Crookhaven in pouring rain and anchored north of the pier for the night.

Next morning the sun shone, the sea sparkled, and the wind blew softly from the south-west. We needed little encouragement to be on our way although we had the wind on the nose until we cleared the Mizen. This was the first 'corner of Ireland' we rounded and the children were delighted with it. Off Sheep Head Mary sighted a rather large object in the water which at first looked like some wreckage but on investigation turned out to be a dead whale or porpoise-type creature about 15' long floating on the surface.

As we entered Dursey Sound we had almost forgotten the rain and wind of the past week. Anticipating a fluky wind as we exited the sound we rolled up the jib and motored through the narrows. Clearing the sound we laid off for Derrynane and as we entered a customs patrol in a high-speed inflatable came alongside looking for cannabis. Unfortunately we didn't have any for

them and they took off to continue their search elsewhere. We anchored off the beach in Derrynane and went ashore and visited my cousin who lives in the area.

The fine weather continued next day and Mary took the children ashore to the beach while I tried to fix a problem with the VHF. We sailed at 1330 bound for Dingle in a light SW wind. On this passage we took *Lady Kate* through Puffin Island Sound. The directions given in the pilot book are accurate but I noted that the tower on the SW corner of Valentia Island in transit with a conspicuous black mark on the cliff beneath it leads through clear of all fowls. Next came Fungie who delighted the children as he welcomed us to Dingle. We went alongside the marina, stayed two nights, stocked up on fuel and stores for our journey north. When planning our holiday we anticipated that the leg from Dingle to Aran, a distance of 70 miles, might be a bit boring for the children and we planned to cover this distance at night while they slept. Reviewing this plan in Dingle we decided to land on the Blasket Islands while waiting for the north-going stream through the sound and north of it. We anchored off the beach in Great Blasket Island and went ashore in the inflatable to the slip at the landing place. The beach is very steep and I would advise against landing from an inflatable on it as even when we were there the slightest seas broke dangerously. There is a fisherman's mooring off the slip and a yacht could use this for a short time, having first obtained permission from the ferry operators. The ferry does not go alongside the island but lands its passengers by inflatable so it is necessary to haul one's inflatable up the slip to be well clear of this local traffic. The day we visited a smart response was necessary coming alongside to get the dinghy clear of the water as there was a big run on the slip. The island is a lovely scenic place but I was saddened by the sight of the ruined village and thought of the frugal existence the community that once lived here had, and of their efforts to survive the ravages of wind, weather, and sea.

Brendan and I climbed to the summit of the island, there were lots of protests "my little legs won't carry me any farther" always sure to get a piggyback the rest of the journey, but Dad's back wasn't up to it either today so we both walked. Back on board again to catch the north-going stream, we cleared Blaskets at 1630hrs and with the wind almost on the nose again, we motored with main set and autohelm steering. Mount Brandon is one of those places it appears to take forever to pass and it was a long time before it eventually disappeared into the sea. After an uneventful passage we passed through Gregory Sound and anchored near the lifeboat off Kilronan just as the first light appeared and turned in for a few hours sleep.

When I woke at 1100 the children were in top gear having slept all night and were bursting to go ashore. We moved *Lady Kate* to the old West Pier which was unoccupied and went ashore, hired some bicycles and did the tourist trail to Dun Aengus. Our intention was to sail early next morning so I didn't want to dry out alongside the old pier on the morning tide so we moved to the East Pier and tied outside some other yachts there to be ready for an early start at 0430.

There we encountered a friend of mine, Seamus Cleary, formerly of Dungarvan and now sailing out of Fenit, and sat up late talking much. When I woke next morning it was well past our planned starting time and we eventually got away. It was flat calm when we cleared the harbour and we motored towards Slyne Head. Given the conditions we took the passage through



Landing place, Blasket Islands.

PHOTO: Donal Walsh

Joyce Sound which I found more difficult than I imagined it would be, mainly because of the difficulty of identifying the rocks at the entrance to the passage. Our course now had a more rewarding north element and we appeared to make better progress, we passed outside Clark Rocks, inside Cruagh Island, close by Aughrus Point, and inside Friar and High Islands before entering the harbour at Inisboffin at 1430. We went alongside the old pier and soon after were established in Day's Bar. We allowed *Lady Kate* to dry out as I wanted to check the seaocks on the heads and while this was being done Mary took the children to the beach nearby. When we floated again we anchored off the new pier as we wanted to be away early next morning. On Monday July 18th when we left Inisboffin at 0800 it was raining heavily. Again we motored in the calm leaving Inisboffin to port and Inisturk to starboard. The calm weather allowed us to pass between Carricakin and Achill Head but we did not enjoy the spectacular scenery to its fullest due to the low cloud cover. Further north, as we passed inside the Iniskeas, the rain stopped and the sun shone but the wind remained non-existent. I had a very old chart of this area and as was the practice on the old fathoms charts it credits the officers who carried out the survey under the title. Two of the names mentioned, Lieut A G Edey and Mr A B Osborne, also appear elsewhere on the chart – Osborne Shoal and Edey Rock – had the surveyors of the 1850s an inkling that the charts of the 1990s would no longer carry the survey credits as part of their title and was this their way of ensuring that they would be remembered? I daydreamed of these men and their work as we made the passage between Inis Keeragh and Inis Glora and Leacarrick and the land and wondered what kind of weather they had while they surveyed here between the rocks 150 years ago. North of Annagh Head the big Atlantic swell was apparent once more and we opted for Broadhaven Bay rather than spend an uncomfortable night in Port na Francaigh. Eagle Island slipped by on our port hand and soon we rounded Erris Head and headed SE for Ballyglass.

I had never been to Ballyglass before and was debating whether to tie alongside or go to an anchor when I spied some people on the lifeboat slip. On hailing them we were advised to anchor and offered a lift into Belmullet provided we did not take too long coming ashore. In an effort to speed things up everyone got a job, Mary and Emma were sorting gear below, I was anchoring, Brendan was busy inflating the dinghy using the electric inflator pump, when suddenly there was smoke everywhere, when I had disconnected the power supply I discovered



The crew of *Lady Kate* on Great Blasket Island.

that one of the strings of his lifejacket had been sucked into the pump air intake causing it to overheat and burn out the motor. We finished the job using the foot bellows and went ashore and met Joe Murray, a member of the lifeboat crew, who gave us a tour of the lifeboat house, a lift to Belmullet, and local knowledge on the pubs of the town.

Next morning I got up early and had *Lady Kate* away to sea at 0520. Again we had to motor as there wasn't a breath of wind. I set the autopilot and we headed across Donegal Bay bound for Aranmore. The Decca was giving us a very wrong position and we worked our way on DR because the visibility was poor. When we picked up the land we decided to enter through the South Sound and left Illancrone to port and then altered for Burtonport via the South Channel leaving Rutland Island to port. The pilotage here was very interesting and the instructions in the sailing directions are very good, although I gather the locals have some different transits which they use. Burtonport is primarily a busy fishing harbour with the added traffic of many ferry movements to Aranmore. There was a major construction job going on in the harbour, but despite this we felt we were wel-



Joyce Sound Pass looking NW.

PHOTO: Donal Walsh

come there, and we were able to top up with fuel, water, and ice very quickly, and were directed to a safe berth for the night. It really was a major construction job, the hylac driver didn't stop until well after midnight and he was off again at 0400 in the morning. I thought the tide would eventually shut him up but at 0700 I surrendered and put to sea. I enjoyed the pilotage through the north entrance to Burtonport, and as we passed through Owey Sound. We then entered Gola South Sound, left Bo Island to starboard and entered Gweedore Harbour. Some 20 years ago a charter angling company in Dungarvan had two boats built in Bunbeg and I always wanted to visit there. I didn't realise there was so much tide gone when we entered and found we could only go as far as Yellow Rocks, we dropped back to a position just south of Iniscoole and anchored and waited for the flood. Later we were able to make our way into Bunbeg and spent a few hours ashore

before moving on north again. Soon we passed another 'corner of Ireland', Bloody Foreland. Brendan got great mileage out of this one, it gave him a legitimate use for the word 'bloody'. The rain came again, very heavy rain, and when we anchored in Camusmore bay, Tory Island, there was mixed interest in going ashore. But then we had come a long way to get here and might not be here again for a long time... and so we went ashore. We certainly were not prepared for what we found, we have been on most of Ireland's islands and of all of them Tory must be the least prosperous. Standing there in the rain on the grit track that served as a road we thought 'if this is summer what is winter like here?' And then the generator dropped in the middle of the village, condemning its inhabitants to a lifetime of incessant noise, all this in a place where people come to find solitude and peace. There must be magic somewhere on this island but on that wet, miserable July evening we could not find it. We tried the hotel, unfortunately we were the only customers, but we did leave feeling a little better. We were away again next morning at 0930. We were going to go ashore again while we waited for the east-going stream but it was a lovely morning and the wind was right.

We found ourselves in the company of four other yachts all bound east. The leaders soon discovered the Donegal fishermen use long salmon nets, we managed to avoid them by watching where the other boats went. We carried our genoa boomed out all day until we altered into Lough Swilly and then anchored off Port Salon at 1600. We simply had to visit Rita's, having heard and read so much about it. It was an enjoyable visit.

I really got the tide all wrong next morning. I misread the time of High Water Dover and the time I took was actually Low Water so we left to round Malin Head at the worst possible stage of the tide, it would be against us for hours! There was, however, a nice southwesterly breeze of about 12-15kts and we decided to stick with our plan and try for Portrush. As we approached Malin Head we kept close up so as to carry as much eddy as possible. Immediately north of the head were sever-

al salmon fishermen drift-netting. Given the wind against tide situation I had no wish to go to the offshore end of their nets. We made contact with them on channel 6 VHF and were advised that there was just enough room to pass between the nets and the land. By doing this we avoided the strongest of the foul tide, we hugged the shore all the way along, passed inside Blind Rock and through Garvan Sound and took advantage of the tidal lee created off the headlands. Outside us in Inishtrahull Sound the sea was boiling but we enjoyed a smooth passage under the lee of the land. When we came on the first net there was another east-bound yacht a few hundred yards to the north of us who opted to pass outside these nets and she ended up many miles astern of us after a short time. By the time we reached Lough Foyle the wind was almost gone and we ended up motoring the last few miles into Portrush. The children delighted in Portrush, the amusements were a complete surprise, we ate ashore, did a tour of the town, and then there was a wonderful fireworks display. It was all so different to the lifestyle we left behind us on the west coast of Ireland. We decided to act the tourist and take a day off and on Saturday morning found ourselves boarding an open-top double-decker bus to visit the Giant's Causeway. Again this was a new experience for Emma and Brendan and the causeway fascinated them and tired them out quickly. Later that evening back in Portrush we paid another visit to the amusements and then turned in for an early start next morning.

I made sure I had the tide right this time but there was nothing I could do about the wind which was heading us from the east. The passage from Rathlin Sound to Tor Head was very uncomfortable with large disturbed seas and many overfalls. There was no alternative but to go through them until we reached calmer water. Off Fair Head the wind increased, possibly as a result of a downdraft from the land, and was blowing over 30 knots at one stage and we had to respond by getting a reef in the mainsail fairly smartly. Many of the seas came green over the bow, some as much as eighteen inches deep, but extraordinarily most did not carry aft and we remained reasonably comfortable.

As we passed another 'corner of Ireland' little interest was shown by Emma and Brendan who despite the conditions preferred to remain below and play with their Lego set. Visibility decreased, we lost the land several times even though we were only about three miles off, and as I did not believe that the Decca really knew where it was, we kept a good DR plot. By the time we picked up Garron Point the ship's company had had enough and we opted for Carnlough even though there was still some favourable south-going stream left.

Alongside in Carnlough, in the course of preparing lunch, the gas ran out. When we changed to the spare cylinder we found that empty also and I had to walk to the petrol station about a mile away for refills. After lunch Mary decided to take the children off for a few hours while I caught up on lost sleep. "What will you say when you meet your Maker" ...ZZZZZZZ... from the depths of sleep I first thought my time on this planet was over and I was being called to account for my stewardship! More fully awake now, I realised that a group of goddamn evangelists had set up shop on the quay wall alongside *Lady Kate* and that was all the sleep I was going to get that afternoon. In retaliation I joined the crew of the Clyde-based yacht *Spectrum* outside us and shared a few whiskeys with them until the Gospel session was over.

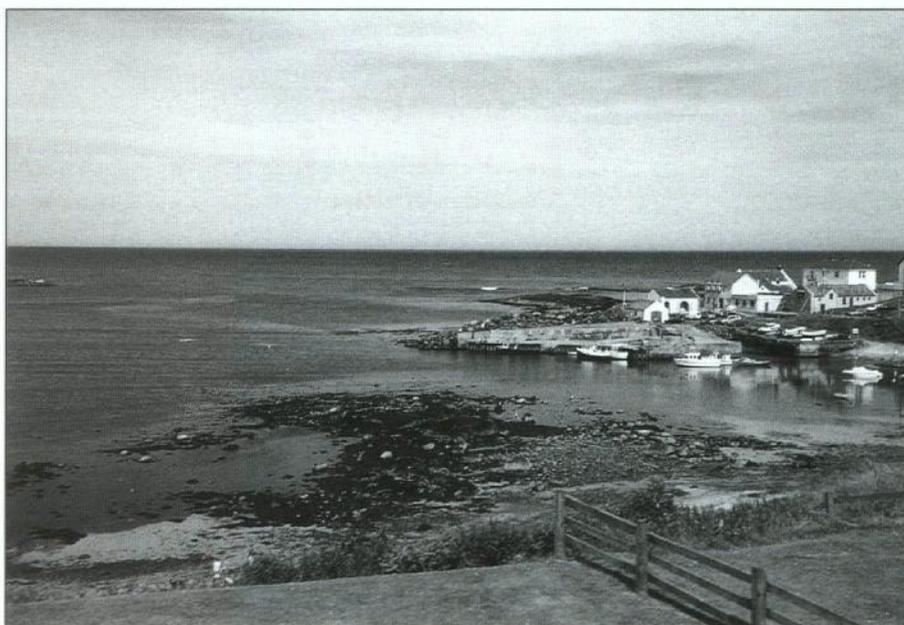
The south-going stream started next

morning and we left Carnlough at 0730. There was dense fog, with no wind and when we were 100 metres off the entrance to the harbour almost every trace of the land had disappeared. We decided to return and wait for the fog to lift. After an hour we tried again and this time the visibility had improved sufficiently to enable us carry on. South of Ballygalley Head the fog cleared and we could see the Maidens and the wind started to pick up from just west of south. We set some sail but the wind was too light to be much use until we were off Black Head when it freshened against the stream and made some very disturbed seas. We decided to alter for Carrickfergus and rolled up our jib and motor-sailed under main only into Belfast Lough. I found the entrance to the marina confusing, expecting to transit the beacon on the west arm with another behind to lead in – I discovered later that it marks a shoal patch – a little further to the west we opened the entrance clearly marked with red and green beacons on the breakwater ends.

Ashore we had an excellent lunch in the Wind Rose at the marina, then visited the Knight Ride – a novel and enjoyable history of Carrickfergus – a combined ticket gave us entry to the castle where the children had the opportunity to learn more history and then dress up and act it out. We had to remain in Carrickfergus the next day as it was blowing strong from the south'ard, we took a bus to Belfast and did a tourist trail of the city. We were pleased with Carrickfergus, the marina was good value – two days for the price of one – with good facilities, and we were made very welcome by the staff.

Leaving Carrickfergus the wind was southerly again and we had a sail to Donaghadee Sound, I wanted to visit Ballydorn to see the light-vessel there as our club had a similar project in mind. South of the Copeland Islands we had to roll up the jib and use the engine with the main set to be sure to catch the tide at Strangford narrows. The children had worked out that the coast at Burial Island was the most easterly part of Ireland and on this passage this new corner was passed. I had never been into Strangford before but a yacht we had been in-company with some days previous had advised that once one was clear of Angus Rock the tide would whisk us into the lough clear of all dangers. This was probably a bit of an over-simplification but we found the entrance very easy and enjoyed the pilotage in the Lough immensely.

We were allowed to lie alongside the light-vessel at Ballydorn and spent an enjoyable night in the bar in pleasant company. We learned much from our hosts about their experiences in convert-



Ballintrae, Co Antrim.

PHOTO: Donal Walsh

ing *Petrel* to a clubhouse over the years. One sage in the corner, who had obviously contributed enormously to the project over the years, advised us on our return to Dungarvan to recommend to our colleagues that we acquire anything else except a light-ship as a club premises. We had some time to spare before slack water off the entrance to the lough and as we headed south we meandered through the islands and had a short stop at Strangford village. Our exit was much less spectacular than our entry as most of the tidal stream was spent. Outside we found ourselves heading into a freshening southerly wind and once again opted for a motor-sail with main only set. Off Ardglass we encountered a very menacing fishing vessel who decided to play chicken with us and even though we were clearly the stand-on vessel we were obliged to make a drastic alteration in our course at the last minute to avoid a collision.

Carlingford Lough goes into our book as one of those places that appear to take forever to pass, (Point de Penmach is still No 1, Brandon Mountain is a close second). As we passed, the Mourne Mountains looked well from seaward. We still had not decided where we would stop for the night, I would like to have called to Port Oriel at Clogher Head but we were anxious to get south and carried on. We were off Skerries at 2130, again I would have stopped here but it was just about low water and the pilot book advises against going alongside, and I didn't want to have to use the inflatable at this hour of the evening, also the wind had dropped and the forecast for the next 24hrs was for strong southerly winds, and so we opted to carry on to Howth. We slipped between Colt Island and St. Patrick's Island, later passed inside Lambay Island and Ireland's Eye and were secure alongside Howth marina at two minutes to midnight. We spent two days in Howth and at 0500 on Sunday July 31st headed south again in poor visibility and light SW wind. I was tempted to alter to pass inside Dalkey Island in order that our circumnavigation would have included all the sounds of Ireland, but decided to be practical and maintained our course. We had thoughts of a lunchtime drink in Arklow after which we planned to overnight in Wexford, but progress was good and we carried on past Arklow and by the time we were off Wexford the tidal stream was with us again so we decided to carry on as far as Dunmore East. We rounded our last 'corner of Ireland', crossed St Patrick's Bridge inside the Saltees and entered Dunmore at 2200 having covered 105 miles. It was Bank Holiday Sunday and Dunmore was very lively, we tied alongside *Winterwind* who coincidentally had left Howth at exactly the same time as us but had arrived in Dunmore five hours earlier. Emma and Brendan wanted chips and burgers and a run ashore. This was a major ordeal as we had to cross five beam trawlers, each complete with masses of rusting chains and equipment. Around midnight, some fishermen who were on the inside of the trots ahead of us decided to leave, and caused chaos and confusion to those moored outside them. At 0530 somebody started welding operations which were accompanied by lots of hammering and associated noises, by 0900 *Winterwind* was leaving and we decided to head homeward on the last leg of our journey. At first we had a light southerly breeze which freshened later and gave us a good sail home. As we entered Dungarvan Harbour and we crossed our outward track the log was reading 869 miles.

Conclusions;

The wind headed us most of the time, from Dungarvan to Aran it was always forward of the beam. We had very little or no wind from Aran to Bloody Foreland. On the north coast we carried a fair wind as far as Portrush. Thereafter the wind was on the nose until we cleared Dunmore. We lost three days to strong winds, in Glandore, Carrickfergus, and Howth.

Our crew had diverse needs. Emma and Brendan had to be given a run ashore or some time on a beach or some other play off the boat each day. Mary and I like to sail but are not purists and we avoid punishing ourselves with too much unnecessary windward work. I tried to balance this by motor-sailing into headwinds with the main set and jib rolled up. I planned for a passage 32 days, we actually took 26, had the weather been better I would have taken longer. If I were to do it again I would take longer and believe that something in the order of 40 days is required for a worthwhile circumnavigation. I enjoyed the pilotage and found the instructions in Sailing Directions accurate for all the places we visited.

We had some problems with our VHF reception and transmission range but I carried a handset as a backup which I found very useful especially when working our way around the salmon nets as the person on the helm is able to communicate with the other boat directly. Our Decca was not accurate enough to be dependable all the time and the decision to opt for GPS has been made. The dinghy inflator pump was the other failure but this could not have been foreseen.

At sea the children played with Lego, drew and coloured pictures or read books.

PASSAGE DETAILS

Date	Passage to	Distance logged	Engine hours
July 6	Ballycotton	28	3.0
6th/7th	Courtmacsherry	38	5.0
7th	Glandore	30	2.5
10th	Cape Clear (via Baltimore)	24	3.0
11th	Crookhaven	10	1.0
12th	Derrynane	39	4.0
13th	Dingle	35	2.0
16th	Kilronan (via Blasket)	84	11.0
17th	Inisboffin	45	6.5
18th	Ballyglass	58	9.0
19th	Burtonport	71	11.0
20th	Tory (via Bunbeg)	23	3.0
21st	Port Salon	30	1.0
22nd	Portrush	52	4.0
24th	Carnlough	35	5.0
25th	Carrickfergus	25	3.0
27th	Ballydorn	40	6.0
28th	Howth	70	12.0
31st	Dunmore East	105	17.0
Aug 1st	Dungarvan	24	1.0
Totals		866	110.0

White Shadow: October 1993-October 1994

Joan Nicholson, Stuart Nairn,
Jack Forde and David O'Morchoe

Joan Nicholson introduces the voyage of White Shadow with other members of the crew describing their involvements in different legs.

During the twelve months since October 1993 *White Shadow* has voyaged over five thousand nautical miles starting in Antigua, West Indies and finishing in Horta, Azores at the end of May 1994. Irish Cruising Club members aboard included David and Joan Nicholson, Stuart Nairn with his wife Janet, Jack Forde, Rob d'Alton and David O'Morchoe with his wife Margaret. Robin and Doris Matthews joined in the Bahamas and Gordon Hunter joined the last leg from Bermuda to Horta. Antigua to Venezuela covered 420 nautical miles over a three-week period. Venezuela to Bahamas covered 1,430 miles over a six-week period. Bahamas to Azores via Bermuda covered 3,230 miles over a nine-week period. My memories of this extended trip are many, namely the heat and humidity of the West Indies in October, the unspoilt coastline of Venezuela and the vast, vast expanse of trees there, the raucous dawn chorus of parrots, macaws and scarlet ibis at Canaima, 600 miles inland, and the fantastic snorkelling in the national parks of Venezuela and the Bahamas. David rates his visit to Cuba one of the most interesting countries he has ever visited, in spite of coming under fire while cruising along the coast near the American base at Guantanamo. *White Shadow* remains at Horta and a trip home to Ireland is planned for Spring 1995.

Stuart Nairn records Antigua to Venezuela

"The trouble with retirement is that you get no holidays", said David Nicholson and as if to disprove himself promptly invited

Janet and myself to make a foursome on the cruise from English Harbour, Antigua to Isla Margarita in Venezuela during October 1993.

Nelson's Dockyard, English Harbour, photographed and written about over four decades in yachting magazines and a byword in ocean cruising circles, lived up to its hype despite now having some similarities to Bunratty Castle and Folk Park. It has been rebuilt, revitalised, sanitised and priced to international yachting standards but nothing can daunt West Indian élan. Our first evening was spent memorably sinking rum punches at the barbecue on nearby Shirley Heights, getting into the Bob Marley/steel band rhythms and soaking up the tropical warmth. We were privileged to have the use of a bungalow nearby in the grounds of Desmond and Lissa Nicholson's home and this made victualling and refitting for the trip much easier. Desmond is island historian extraordinaire with an encyclopaedic knowledge, especially of its maritime past.

Time flew as we acclimatised to the fierce heat (92°F in the shade) and the pace of life. The assistant to the Venezuelan Consular office at St Johns (the capital) explained that as it was so late in the day, they could accept no more visa applications. Sure wasn't it 11.30am!

A coterie of 'proper' yachts inhabited a 'hurricane hole' beyond our berth with shapely bows and bowsprits right up to the mangroves. Awnings and sidescreens stretched stemhead to taffrail. Standing tall amongst them was the lovely *Manella* a reminder of 'Ould Decency' on the Clyde. She had recently changed hands, reputedly for US\$300,000.

On leaving English harbour we called at Guadeloupe, Les Saintes and Martinique, all French islands and part of metropolitan France (but apparently not of the EU). Tres chic, well organised, lots of grants, mopeds, good roads and Hobie Cats. Like most of the Leeward Islands, their shape is spectacularly volcanic, cloaked in luxuriant foliage. In stark contrast to the less-developed islands, their postcards are sophisticated and suitably volcanic too.

Daily routine was to up anchor, motor out of the lee of the island into the trade wind which blew continuously from an easterly direction and was quite fresh between the islands. One-hour watches, often with the helm on autopilot, allowed us to go below out of the fierce glare of the sun. A midday rest was essential. In harbour we often stretched an awning over the cockpit and rigged the windscoop over the fore-hatch.

Meals at anchor and at sea were usual-



White Shadow at Santiago, Cuba.

PHOTO: J Nicholson



Stuart Nairn (helm), Gordon Stuart (relaxing).

PHOTO: David O'Morchoe

ly round the folding table mounted on the steering wheel pedestal and we had fun tasting local produce – all the better for being al fresco. Joan and David were expert at culling the local markets for new and exotic fruit and vegetables to add variety to the bulk victuals bought in Antigua.

Sail-handling was simple, the jib rolled up and the fully battened main dropped easily into lazyjacks. Navigation was really pilotage as we were seldom out of sight of land and always on a reach. The Garmin GPS was set up and saved much up and down with the handbearing compass when identifying approaches.

Dominica, our next stopover, was the least developed island we visited and the only one with remnants of the original Carib population. Essential briefing for the area is James Mitchener's 'Caribbean', a long read, but a fascinating explanation of the evolution of the different island societies.

Fourteen-year-old Damien and his silent mate accosted us two miles off our anchorage at Portsmouth and won the contract to take us up the Indienne river where we were treated to wildlife safari in the the shape of land crabs, birds, rum bar (closed) and swamp bloodwood trees with massive twisting buttress roots. A boa constrictor makes occasional appearances, but alas it was his evening off. What our guides lacked in natural history lore was amply made up for by their charm and innocent descriptions of local life. Despite his name Damien thought our ensign was possibly Italian! His father worked "on the buildings" in Miami and he had met him – once. He sometimes went with his mother when she travelled in the local sloops up and down the coast selling bananas.

He warned us of a disco that night and he wasn't wrong. The

decibels were unbelievable and we dropped off to sleep about 0400 the next morning.

The West Indians are born entrepreneurs and we were often offered food, mooring services and handicrafts – but nothing more sinister.

David was firm in handling these guys who could occasionally be irritatingly persistent – the banter was great gas. But sometimes you have to accept the inevitable and yield as gracefully as possible to re-distributing the world's wealth.

Fort de France, Martinique was our most urban stop and we were within sight and sound of the morning rush hour. An impressive rush of cruise liners and pseudo sailing ships characterised port operations. They kept a hectic schedule and no sooner had they arrived than it seemed they were heading out again – been there, seen that, got the t-shirt. There were several torrential cloudbursts in Fort de France and the girls were delighted to wash their hair in unlimited fresh water. David and Joan swam often to keep cool but copious supplies of fresh water at any time were always welcome.

St Lucia is a major base for charter fleets which seem to be an increasing feature of the area. If you crave solitude you have better go in the hurricane season or follow northward the intrepid Paddy Barry or Michael Coleman. On the other hand new possibilities are opened up for minimal-hassle family cruising.

St Vincent and the Grenadines are magic and include Bequia, home of a great seafaring and whaling tradition. They are allowed to take three whales per annum from open boats - a la 'Moby Dick'. Keeping up with the times, the island runs an annual regatta week which is now reckoned to rival Antigua. We were anchored near *Prospect of Whitby*, well-know swinging sixties ocean racer, and enjoyed the short walk under palms from yacht club to the small town of Port Elizabeth.

We decided not to disturb any rich or famous on the island of Mustique and headed straight to the next anchorage at Tobago Cays. A dramatic spot with nothing between us and Africa but an extensive submerged coral reef which broke the swell despite a stiff breeze which blew all night.

Janet and I had our first experience of snorkelling but the fish would never wait around while we surfaced for the camera. There were about twenty other yachts anchored but in the season, November to April, we were told it would be packed.

Calling briefly at Union Island we moved on to Carriacou to anchor overnight in Tyrrel's Bay. Local 'schooners', more correctly sloops, still use the tax-free trade wind to augment their diesel but their rig has shrunk to a gaff main and jib. We saw a couple of the local trading craft being built in leisurely fashion by the roadside. Things happen slowly hereabouts – the attraction no doubt for one of the builders, once a resident of Shepherd's Bush... "hey, man, take it easy, have a nice day".

Grenada is a lively place with interesting markets and girls were delighted with spices for which the island is famous and which are on sale everywhere. We anchored at the Spice Island Marina, Prickly Bay as this seemed quieter than St George's but meant a taxi ride to town.

We spent two nights here prior to sailing for Venezuela and had a chance to tour locally around St George's and up into the mountains. There were still traces of the civil war and the contentious American invasion of the island.

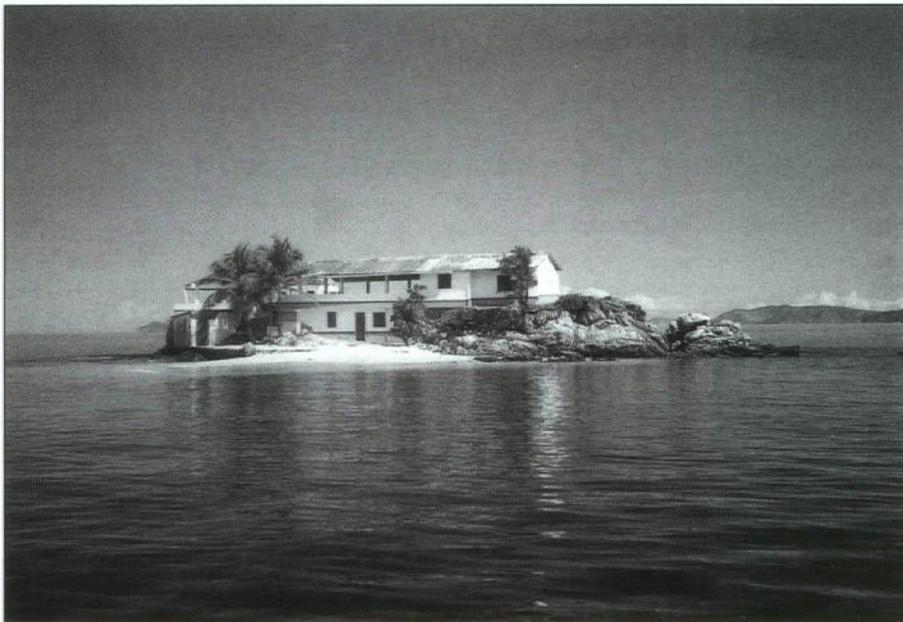
From here we sailed overnight to the Venezuelan islands of Los Testigos, about ninety miles away. It was just no hardship. The warm force four easterly trade wind wafted us under a full moon over an empty sea. T-shirts were superfluous.

At the main settlement of the islands there is a sort of fibre-glass igloo, HQ for the Guarda Nacional which, complete with flag, represents officialdom. While not a port of entry, they like you to check in if proceeding to Venezuela.

There are no native inhabitants but the half dozen or so islands accommodate fishermen from the mainland who live

with their families in government prefabs and their own shacks. There is a primary school and we noticed schoolchildren going by boat from other islands. We were able to communicate only enough to satisfy the formalities as we had no Spanish and they had no English. There was so much we wanted to ask but in the time available there was no way we could bridge the gap. A smattering of Spanish is essential in this area.

The fishing boats moored by the various beaches of the islands were about 20-30ft long open boats with a couple of large outboards on a broad transom and a dramatically high



The island home, Islas Piritus, Venezuela.

prow on either side of which was painted an uncannily lifelike eye. After a day's work, the fishermen would sometimes just dive in off the beach to cool off. The Guarda Nacional boys did the same but made sure they had sunblock on their noses. Yuppies!

Unlike the West Indians, the people seemed shy and reserved though friendly enough when we tried to communicate. The tempo had also changed from reggae and Bob Marley to more Los Paraguayos – all harps, guitars and mustachios. Hammocks also were much in evidence under the palm trees, the only shade being along the beaches.

The climate means lots of cactus and very prickly thorns in the arid landscape. We were excited when Joan spotted an iguana in a stumpy tree overhanging our anchorage.

The best sail of the cruise, in a fresh easterly, had us touching eight knots as the Testigos sank astern and the mountains of Isla Margarita hove into view. We anchored at Pampatar near duty-free Porlamar (the main port) and, despite serious initial reservations, employed the well-known Manuel to attend to clearance formalities. You can do this yourself but it is reckoned to take about a day and a half and it is probably in everyone's interests to inject a little more cash into the economy. Cost of living is low in Venezuela and Manuel completed the job in a day.

We toured the island, one of the first to be conquered by the Spanish who prized its pearl fisheries, saw the ancient capital (built inland to discourage pirates), did not buy a hammock (northern realism), viewed flamingos etc in the lagoon nature reserve and promenaded on the main 'in' beach on the island. Ladies please note, topless is out but bottoms can be as cheeky as you like!

Janet and I flew home via Caracas and Miami, 'the capital of South America' to Shannon. Our only regret being that we did not have three months instead of three weeks to savour the varied

cultures of the islands. There was so much to see and do in 420 miles sailed and 14 islands visited.

Jack Forde records Venezuela to the Azores

This journey starts a long way from home – on Isla de Margarita off the coast of Venezuela. The Commodore of the ICC had sailed to this lovely island where Rob d'Alton and I joined him and his wife Joan. He met us at Porlamar airport and had a taxi laid on to take us 5 miles to Pampatar where the boat was anchored. There was the dinghy chained to a tree and a reminder that we were not in Ireland! The next chore was to get a permit to go to our next port which would be Cumana on the coast of Venezuela. This is a routine that had to be endured by the skipper almost every time we wanted to move. On this island there had been many allegations of graft and deceit so an agent had to be employed. After greasing of palms everything appeared to be in order.

Before leaving we decided to go shopping as it is a duty-free island. But we were somewhat thwarted. It was November 1st, All Saints Day, and all banks were closed.

However, the shops were open and we had sufficient bolivars to make a good few purchases. Booze was incredibly cheap – rum and gin £2 a bottle, whisky £3 and beer about 70p a pint!

We left the moorings at 0725 and as this was our first time in these waters we looked forward with interest to the weather conditions. Well, the first day gave us a flat sea, little or no wind, very hot sun – in the nineties – and very humid with plenty of lightning at night. We decided to go up the Gulf of Cariaco which is really beautiful and has many good anchorages. We anchored in a lovely cove and at dusk people arrived from everywhere and they went to the graveyard and left wreaths there. Anything to do with All Souls Day? We were unenlightened.

On the next day, Thursday November 3rd, we travelled on to Cumana, a distance of only 7 miles. On the way into the marina we decided to top up our diesel tank. To our great delight it only cost 15p a gallon! The marina was excellent with a very good restaurant, some shops and good shower facilities. Most important of all, the security was excellent.

The skipper went to town to report our arrival. It took him three hours even with the help of a taxi! The rest of us went to travel agents in town to enquire about going to the Angel Falls. This is a rough, tough spot and it would not be advisable to be around it at night. Even the travel agents had security guards outside their premises and when we passed the local hospital we vowed we were not going to get sick in this place! That evening we had a very enjoyable meal at the marina and we met friends who were involved in the Columbus trip last year. We also met a New Zealander, Neil by name, who had wintered his yacht during 1992/1993 at George Hegarty's yard in Monkstown, Co. Cork!

We left the next day and had a lovely sail. We anchored for the night in a lovely cove called Bahía Manare. The following day we retraced our steps for a few miles so that we could visit Puerto Mochima. This is a well-known tourist resort in a National Park. The distance from the entrance is only about 4 miles but there are some lovely inlets. In many ways it is very reminiscent of Glengarriff but there are many more places where one could anchor. You could spend a long time along this coast enjoying the sailing, sun, beautiful beaches and safe anchorages

PHOTO: J Nicholson

without going near the major towns.

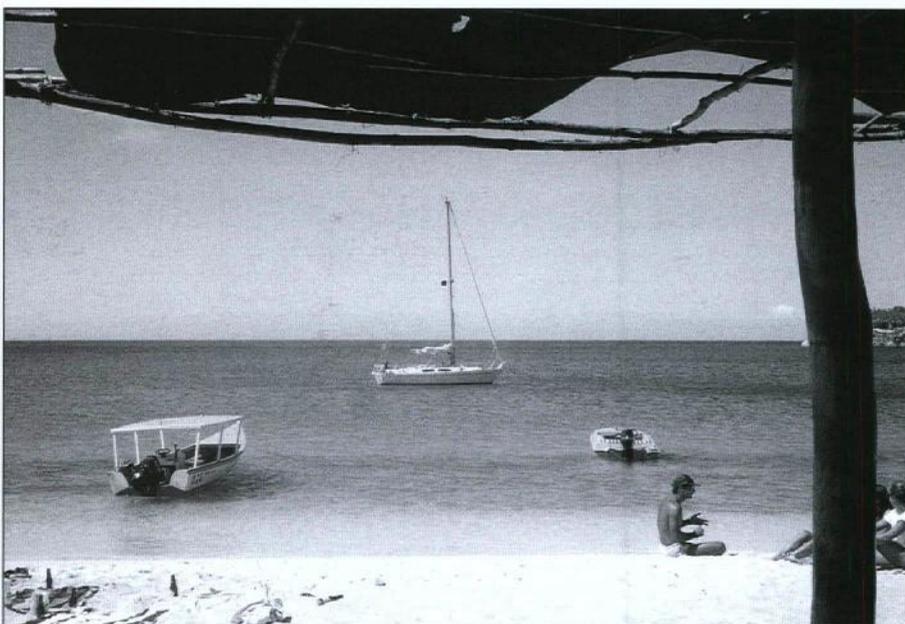
By Sunday, 7th November, we were heading for Puerto la Cruz. We stopped near a beach on the way and saw the locals coming and going. It seemed to us that there were thousands of them! There are some excellent restaurants in Puerto la Cruz and we certainly picked a winner when we chose 'The Steak House'. The food and wine were excellent and the prices reasonable. It is a busy town and there are many local tourists. Motorboats abound and there were 240 of them stored in a four-storeyed store on the marina. It is also a good place for provisioning and there are some fine hotels.

We had a short sail of 20 miles on the Monday and anchored off one of the low-lying islands of Islas de Piritus. It was good for snorkelling and there were quite a few reefs nearby. One island was completely occupied by one house!

We were now in three minds as to what to do next. We were enjoying our sailing immensely, so should we continue? Or having travelled this far should we go up the Meride mountains which are noted for their beauty or visit Angel Falls which at 3,212ft are the highest in the world. All agreed we should venture inland so our next two questions were "where will we go?" and "where can we leave the boat in safety?" The only thing was to contact a local and fortunately we knew one. We phoned Erie Lopez in Caracas and he told us to leave the boat at Carenero and that he would be down at 0900 the next day to collect us. He duly arrived and he reminisced all the way to Caracas of the happy times he had as a member of Kinsale Yacht Club and was delighted to learn that it had been rebuilt and is now more popular than ever.

After a trip inland by air to Canaima National Park, the Angel Falls and the Orinoco River, we returned to *White Shadow*. Having filled up with diesel and water we motored about 2 miles to another lovely harbour for a swim. There we were welcomed by a yachtsman from Southampton who had been on his own there for 4 months. As dusk fell we saw numerous Scarlet Ibis and their colours really stood out in the fading light. We left for Les Roques at 1800. What wind there was was more or less heading us and we took 18 hours to cover the trip to El Grand Roque where we arrived at noon. Les Roques is one of the many places in the Caribbean where Columbus is alleged to have said "This place is like heaven".

After a swim, a drink and some lunch the Skipper and I went ashore for Customs and Clearance. The customs were a formality but the Capitainerie said he could not clear us. This didn't surprise us as when we came to his 'office' we saw him asleep one of 3 double bunks. We made noises to try and awaken him. He came to and beckoned us in. Then we saw a lizard walking across the floor. Eventually we think he said he could clear us but we felt that what he really wanted was money so we said we



White Shadow near Mochima, Venezuela.

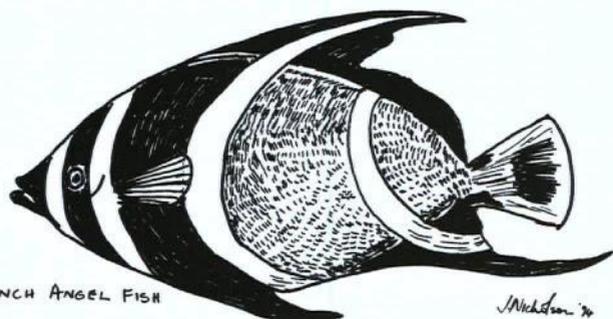
PHOTO: D Nicholson

would come back on Thursday. Our next job was to find out if Joan could fly to Caracas on Friday. First we were told that as the boat hadn't arrived with the equipment to mend the runway they thought the planes would be flying. At the next air company we were told that they had contracted out their planes as they were told the airport would be shut! No one knew whether the airport would or would not be open or whether there would or would not be flights. Nothing is straightforward and you get the impression that the locals thrive on it. Their motto is probably 'that intrigue expands to fill the time available'.

It was a very hot day and we seemed to have been thwarted everywhere we went so we decided to sail about 4 miles to an island named Norronqui. We entered through a very narrow entrance and once inside we were almost totally surrounded with coral reefs. There was also the now-familiar wreck on one of these reefs. It was magic! Next day we moved to another island, Crasqui. This was also a lovely anchorage but the weather had become a bit unsettled. We had a deluge for about an hour as well as some bad squalls but fortunately all was well again by morning. Our next stop was on a lovely island about 8 miles away named Carenero – the same name as where we left the boat on the mainland. This was idyllic and when we heard on the BBC that the Republic of Ireland had qualified for the World Cup it became even more idyllic.

We headed back for El Grand Roque to check Joan's flight (if there was any). Not even the airlines or the natives were sure but eventually she booked a flight for 1730 on the Friday. *Mirabile dictu*, it left just after 1700 and Joan was aboard! Before she left, however, we had plenty to occupy us. During the night – to be more precise, about 0400 – we heard the pair on the boat beside us hurling abuse at each other and using language that hasn't yet got into the Oxford Dictionary. The unanimous decision on our boat was that she won the argument hands down – or whatever they call it out there! In the morning Rob noticed that the dinghy with outboard was missing. This stopped us in our tracks as we were a 1/2 mile from shore. We, therefore, had to summons the warring pair on our neighbouring boat. We found them affable and most helpful, but we couldn't help commenting that she was so much bigger physically than he! They told us that our dinghy was missing when they went aboard at 2230 so we calculated that it was already 20 to 30 miles east of us unless it was picked up by another boat. All enquiries were to no avail and there appeared to be very little hope that we would find it.

Sat 20th November dawned but there was still no sign of the



FRENCH ANGEL FISH



Off St Lucia – Les Pitons. David and Joan.

PHOTO: Stuart Nairn

dinghy when we left at 0600. This was a great sail before the wind in a lumpy sea and we averaged 7 knots. We tried fishing on the way. We became excited when we caught one, only to see him being cannibalised on the way in. Then we caught a barracuda but returned him to the deep. We arrived at Avo de Barlovento at 1445 and as we were about to anchor a lady popped out of a catamaran beside us and said "I couldn't believe I was seeing the Irish tricolour as I had a cassette of Christy Moore on below". They came aboard for a drink and told us they were going to another boat – a 52' ketch – for supper. They contacted their host and he kindly invited the three of us as well. Lobster and crayfish were the highlight and a great night was had by all.

This brought us to the end of our trip in Venezuela waters and I would like to reflect on some of my most lasting impressions. Everything was unbelievably cheap. The people were very nice, friendly, helpful and very quiet in themselves – rather self-effacing. Bureaucracy was unbelievable. Everybody was looking for something extra just to get ordinary things done. They have beautiful sailing waters that are still very undeveloped. The trip inland gave us an insight to their fine waterfalls, huge rivers and beautiful terrain. The place is full of birdlife ashore and afloat. The number of pelicans around, and the abundance of sea fish, surprised me. To get the best out of a holiday there you would need to have somebody who could speak some Spanish.

We edged our way out of Barlovento just as dawn was breaking on Monday 22nd November. It was coming up to 0600 with a 60-mile sail ahead of us to Bonaire. Unfortunately, the fan belt started slipping so we fixed it and then the depth sounder went on the blink. This is an extremely important aid in the Caribbean. Fortunately it functioned again after 30 minutes. It was a lovely sail even though on a dead run with a force 5/6 wind and we averaged 6.5 knots and were tied up in Bonaire at 1550. This is a Dutch settlement. Snorkelling and diving are the big tourist attractions. Prices are similar to Ireland and there is no difficulty getting dollars in banks even though the official currency is guilders. There are good restaurants and an excellent supermarket and the place generally is very attractive and very clean. One word of warning is not to stay on the marina if you suffer from the effects of mosquitoes! Apparently flamingos live off mosquitoes so Bonaire is not called Flamingo Island for nothing!

On the Wednesday we left for Curacao, about 40 miles away, which is another island in the Dutch West Indies. They are also

known as the A B C islands. Aruba, which we didn't visit, Bonaire and Curacao. We were told that we would be able to get a dinghy and this we did within 30 minutes of arriving, but at a price appropriate to somebody who is in real need! Our stop was at Spanish Harbour and there was a small marina called Sarafundys which catered for all the yachts in the bay in a rather unique way. You helped yourself to what you wanted – drinks and all – then you marked it on a blackboard. You were on trust and everything was on credit until the following Friday or the day you left, if that was earlier. This was a really lovely anchorage and very safe. The following day we hired a car and visited the capital, Willemstad. It was well worth a visit and the floating market with about 70 boats rafted up to the quay and selling all sorts of fish and produce. It was most colourful.

Our original plan was to go to Jamaica and then Cuba. However in view of our timescale we decided to go direct to Cuba

and stay there for 4 or 5 days. Distance is 620 miles approximately and we reckoned it would take us about 4/5 days. We left Curacao at 1700 on Thursday 25th November. The moon was almost full and we had dinner at sea in the open without artificial light. It was magic! We were keener to be on night watches rather than day ones as it could get hot when the sun was up. We had favourable winds and made good progress although we were aware from the weather forecasts that there was a nasty front almost stationary over eastern Cuba – we were later to learn that 13 people lost their lives in floods in Santiago and Guantanimo. On the Sunday we saw the eclipse of the moon as clear as could be. To clear our consciences we must admit we weren't aware it was going to take place! On the way we stayed over 20 miles off Haiti.

And so to Cuba and almost spot on schedule. We alerted the Harbour Authority at Santiago when we were about 5 miles off, and they told us we were welcome to Cuba and asked us to stand off about 1 mile and that a pilot boat would come out to escort us. The boat was with us within the hour and guided us to a pier within the naval precincts. As we approached the pier I told the skipper that I thought we were in the wrong place as there were so many people on the pier that it looked as if they were waiting for a ferry. Not so – all of them were waiting for us! The doctor was the first to come aboard as he spoke English. He told the Skipper to write out details of the crew 8 times. Each of these had to be stamped with the official yacht stamp. Ours bore the words 'Céad Míle Fáilte' - little did they know that this was not Irish for *White Shadow*.

Four hours later we were free to go ashore. It took 16 people in all before we were cleared. This included the naval pilot boat, a doctor, a sanitary inspector, a veterinary inspector, an immigration officer, a national security officer, customs officers, a port authority official and the marina manager! They relieved us of about 160 dollars. They searched the boat and were obviously envious of the luxuries such as food and drink. The chief customs officer told us we could take a bottle of spirits each and we must seal the rest. Then after plying them with more booze he announced, "Captain – I think you haven't a problem". This meant that nothing was sealed. The next problem was to get into town. Fortunately the Customs men were still awaiting their car so after giving them more beers he offered us a lift. In addition, they had to go via the airport and gave us coffee! They dropped us in the centre of Santiago which is the second city of Cuba. This was something to behold but difficult to describe. There

were people everywhere – young and old with the majority touting for dollars. Prostitutes were in abundance, there were virtually no vehicles as they do not have petrol, people were queuing for food everywhere, the shops were almost completely empty of goods, and for good measure the rain was bucketing down! Tourists are privileged but they pay for it. We hired a car at about £70 per day and went up the mountains. The views were beautiful and, as we had dollars, we were able to get a very good meal. That evening we went to a doctor's house – whose wife was also a doctor. They get around by foot or by bus or lorry as they do not have a car. You should see their home – a small apartment with a small medical room. Electricity was off – that's the norm. They have a TV set – it doesn't work. They gave us herbal tea and coffee for our evening meal as that is all they had. He took us to his parents home where he keeps about 60 budgerigars – all he can do with them is sell them to the government. The parents apologised as they could not give us a drink. They had no coffee, tea or sugar. It was very sad and they obviously lacked nutrition.

On the Thursday we went to Baracoa which is about 160 miles to the north-east. There was some lovely countryside at first, then about 40 miles along the coast and then a magnificent trip through the mountains. The roads were very good and the motorways were wider than in Ireland. Furthermore there was no traffic – you had the roads on your own. We also saw numerous cowboys rounding up cattle. Baracoa itself was obviously a nice place in the past but is terribly run down. We stayed at the El Castillo hotel which was once a US base and it dominates the town from the top of the hill. The view over the two bays is excellent. We ate well there and the room was £15 per person but there was no electricity or hot water! As in all hotels there is a shop for tourists but even there you can't buy bread, butter, tea or sugar. We needed petrol to get back and this presented another problem – there were very few garages, and not all of them had petrol, and even if they had petrol they may not be able to give it to you if the electricity was off! We managed to get some and considered ourselves lucky. Before we left Cuba we took our hosts out to dinner and also replenished their stocks. We hired a taxi one day and the driver's name was Sean O'Rourke. However, he was dark and his English was very limited.

The memory is a very sad one – long (and I mean long) queues for food, little transport and no future. All the money poured into the country by Russia up to 2 years ago has been used and now they have no income.

We decided to leave on Saturday 4th December and arranged for 'the boys' to visit us at 0800. They duly did and again they were looking for gifts. Can you blame them? We left at 0930 duly escorted by the naval patrol boat. Each of us felt a sense of relief on leaving Cuba. Little did we know what was to happen later. Our destination was Matthew Town on the Great Inagua in the Bahamas and this would take us through what is known as the Windward Passage. To mitigate the effect of the headwinds and tide we kept as close as possible to the Cuban coast always keeping a close eye on the depth sounder! All went well until 1720 when we were about 2 miles off the shore and we thought we heard the sound of gunfire! Ten seconds later we heard a similar sound astern and were in no doubt. I was at the helm and I immediately went about and put the boat on autohelm. Rob shouted they were live bullets and in his haste he opened a wound on his forehead when he hit his head against the hatch cover. The skipper lay down in the cockpit lying fore and aft whilst I lay athwartship and was able to use the autohelm with my toes. Four more shots were fired – 2 down each side. David then contacted the US naval base at nearby Guantanamo and they told him that "they were not on any exercises today". They also said we should not be within 3 miles of the coast – but nobody had told us – and asked if they were still firing at us and if we needed help. By then we were the requisite 3 miles offshore and



MACAW
EATING A WATER MELON
CANAIMO
VENEZUELA

we felt a bit safer. We didn't venture inside the limit again! This was certainly the most eventful day so far on our trip. However, the next day was not without a bit of excitement. The US Coastguard contacted us and asked the usual questions. They then requested permission to board the vessel. They came by inflatable dinghy and when the first man tried to board *White Shadow* he missed his step but fortunately the skipper managed to haul him aboard. Three more joined him and they gave us an 85% efficiency mark. The lack of a holding tank meant we couldn't get 100%.

Despite the delay with the US Coastguard we arrived at our destination at 1730 – just in time before the sun went down. Although the winds headed us off Cuba we were able to fetch from there and we made reasonably good time with the help of the engine. Our next job was to check in to the Bahamas. We went ashore by dinghy and there was a person waiting to meet us. He introduced himself as Mark Fry from Foxrock, Co Dublin and told us he was on a delivery trip when his yacht broke down and he was holed up there awaiting engine parts. He was most helpful and well-known locally and this made our Customs and Immigration procedures very easy. The town has a good shop, bank, restaurant, telephone centre and millions of mosquitoes! The people were very friendly and so were the mosquitoes so we anchored off. The island is noted for 3 things; (i) they export 1 million tons of salt a year, (ii) it is a sanctuary for flamingos so they don't want to do anything to reduce the mosquito colony, and (iii) in the population of 1,000 the men outnumber the women 8 to 1.

Then we headed north to Hogsty Island in a lovely reaching breeze and the ocean to ourselves. We saw our usual quota of wrecks and this helps to concentrate the mind. The following day we sailed past the Acklins and on to Clarence Town. Here again the approach is fairly difficult as there are quite a few coral reefs. It is a pleasant settlement dominated by 2 churches and also boasts 2 grocery shops, a restaurant and a pub. The contact person ashore is John McKay. He operates on Channel 16 and the code name is 'Sunseeker'. He knows the area very well and is most helpful. He will keep you up to date on weather forecasts

as well. Unfortunately for us they were predicting a front going through so we were keeping a close ear to the forecasts so that we made the best use of the winds. We decided to go about 50 miles north the next day and anchor overnight at the NW tip of the island before making our final passage to Georgetown. We went ashore to go for a walk to the lighthouse on the northern tip of Cape Santa Maria but were beaten back by mosquitoes and their friends. We retreated to *White Shadow* and were joined by 3 fly bats. They loved Rob's beard and two of them settled down for the night in the saloon. At first we were a bit apprehensive but John McKay assured us that they were harmless and were more like large butterflies and are known as love bats. We accepted his assurances but felt he was a bit more than kind in his assessment.

As morning dawned it was clear that the front had moved rather quicker than predicted as the wind was already south and tending south-west – the forecasts aren't always right! As we had only 32 miles to go we set off in reasonable weather but after a few hours we encountered some very heavy rain – you can say that again – and a 30-knot wind going to the west and northwest. Visibility was down to 4 miles and we had visions of having to stay at sea as there was no way we could attempt to enter the tricky approach to Georgetown in this type of weather. Fortunately it improved and we anchored at Stocking Island and were welcomed by Ruth and Peter Insole who had looked after us so well the previous year. They gave us a loan of a runabout for the 5 days we were there and this enabled us to visit some of the beautiful cays. Apparently the weather had been poor (by their yardstick) but we had no complaints. Whilst there we did some jobs on the boat and then moored it in Hurricane Hole, Stocking Island.

On the Sunday December 12th we went to mass in the Anglican Church and this gave us almost two hours to thank God for a lovely holiday and for freedom from the Cubans.

Then it was time to leave. Rob was off to Texas to be with his daughter and family for Christmas. David and I were travelling home.

David O'Morchoe takes up the log in April.

White Shadow reached Fort Lauderdale, Florida on 27 April with David and Joan Nicholson and David and Margaret O'Morchoe aboard.

The girls flew home on 29 April, the same day that Stuart Nairn flew out from Cork to help crew on the homeward journey back across the Atlantic. On 30 April we took *White Shadow* upriver to a boatyard where we had to lift out to make some running repairs to the keel. On arrival in Georgetown David had greeted me with "great to see you, do want the good or bad news first?" My heart sank because on other occasions when accepting David's generous hospitality on his boat near-disasters (recorded in previous issues of the Journal) had faced us! Settling for the bad news he told me he had been aground on the coral and the keel had been damaged to the extent that it would be necessary to haul out before we left to cross the Atlantic. The good news was that he had got off, albeit with the help of three other boats, and that *White Shadow* was not taking water!

The journey upriver to the Somerville Boatyard was fascinating. Fort Lauderdale had been reclaimed out of swamp and canals had then been dug off the main river. Referred to as the Venice of the USA, houses had been built along all

the many canals, most of which run at right angles to the river and parallel to each other. At the end of each back garden, which border the canals, house owners keep their boats, ranging from ocean-going to day boats. It even seemed if some were just there as status symbols! We had to negotiate more than one lifting bridge which, outside the town rush hour, lifted on a call on the radio. We were impressed that boats on the river got priority over vehicles on the roads.

Our stay in the boatyard lasted 'til 3rd May and fortuitously (or by design?!) coincided with the break in the Round the World Yacht Race. This was fascinating for us and we enjoyed examining the yachts in a dock area in which had been created a Heineken Village. Sadly we met no crews but we got over this by talking ourselves into the main Heineken reception one evening during which we met several Irish participants.

In the boatyard Stuart valiantly volunteered to go aloft and inspect the rigging at the masthead, no doubt motivated by a sense of self-interest to ensure that all was well for our journey. To our dismay he discovered that the head of the roller reefing furl had worn and was split. A new section was ordered but it failed to arrive before we left. We did most of our non-fresh victualling in the USA as we knew from others that Bermuda was a very expensive island.

At 1740 on 3 May we cast off from the boatyard, the rush hour having ended at 1730, and headed downriver to the harbour entrance. Somehow the bouyage system did not tally with the system at sea and we managed to touch bottom where the river forked just before entering the final stretch. Fortunately a passing power boat took our line and we managed to get off, without, we hoped, damaging the repair work that had been done on the keel! And at 1900 we passed the buoys at the entrance to Port Everglade, the port name of the town of Fort Lauderdale, and headed on a course of 040 degrees for the North West Buoy, off the north-west of the Little Bahama Bank. Although there was water over this bank we felt it prudent to skirt the shallow waters. The Garmin satnav told us that the buoy was 95 miles away just east of north and we expected to go by it early the following morning.

Outside the harbour, on attempting to unfurl the jib we discovered that it would not budge. The two Davids had had some difficulty re-rigging it after Stuart's inspection but whatever we did it was not going to unfurl. So the noble Stuart again offered to ascend the mast. It took him all of an hour, swaying regularly and severely at the masthead, to undo the jam.



Jack Forde, the Commodore and Joan near Angel Falls, Venezuela.

PHOTO: Janet Forde



St Vincent, Wallilabou Bay. Joan and David haggling.

PHOTO: Stuart Nairn

By 0600 on 4 May we were abeam of the North West Buoy and we altered course to 075 direct for Bermuda. Later we had a good wind aft so off went the engine and up went the spinnaker. We made good progress and managed to sort ourselves into sea-going behaviour, began to adjust ourselves to the 2-on, 4-off routine we (the skipper!) had decided upon, and relaxed in the intense heat of the sun. By 1700, 24 hours out, we had completed 171 miles and we were pleased with ourselves.

The spinnaker came down before dark and we motor-sailed through the night and through a cold front with its attendant spectacular lightning show. We trailed a wire over the side ostensibly to earth the boat. Whatever it did we survived but the lightning was both thrilling and frightening. With the passage of the front the wind swung round to the NW and even under main only *White Shadow* managed a good 5 knots. As it dropped away in the morning and as we could not carry the spinnaker, we decided to try the No 2 jib on the roller reefing forestay. It worked and though we were nervous we left it up and sailed on.

We had covered 118 miles during the second 24 hours and from 1600 that evening 'til 0530 on the morning of Friday 6 May we had a superb sail with the wind 10-15 knots from the NW and *White Shadow* spun along at a steady 6 knots. We were visited by a couple of birds during the day and passed two ships in the evening. Otherwise there was no one about! We added another 129 miles by 1700 on the 6th, making 418 miles so far.

From noon on the 6th 'til 1900 on the 7th we motored. We had no wind, though the seas rolled with a swell but without any waves breaking. Our routine was, get your own breakfast, salad for lunch and a supper, more often than not, cooked by the skipper and eaten by candlelight on deck provided we were not rolling too much. By now the ice had melted in the fridge, though the meat was still good. Pink potatoes we had bought had gone off and were smelling though the white ones were still edible (and were 'til the journey's end). Fresh tomatoes were beginning to go mouldy and the outer lettuce leaves turned brown. We covered 130 miles to 1700 on the 7th.

On the evening of May 7 the wind strengthened from just east of south and we took in a reef. The No 2 jib was still up but it was all or nothing as we did not think it safe to roll it. We were able to maintain our course and the Garmin told us that Bermuda bore 082 degrees. And so the wind remained at a steady force 3 through Sunday 8th and up to about 0030 on Monday when we started the engine. It had been a marvellous sail with the wind on the beam and the boat making about 6 knots through the

water. Activities below were comparatively easy to perform. A frigate bird circled the mast top for a while and we saw a couple of ships but otherwise the day was grey and we were on our own. We clocked up our best run yet of 172 miles.

After two hours of engine the wind picked up again from the same direction and by midday Monday we had taken a second reef in the main and risked rolling the jib half in. By now we had a force 7 wind and the going was anything but comfortable. The waves were up to 4-5 feet and the sea becoming more and more disturbed with some of the waves breaking. Wet weather gear was the order of the day and sleeping, eating and cooking became more difficult but we were able to maintain our course with the beam wind. The boat was at such an angle that we were not able to pump out the slops in the heads; some of us minded, others didn't! There was no question of using the automatic pilot but sailing the boat was so exhilarating

that we didn't mind forgoing our coffee during our watch. By evening our daily run had been 120 miles with 67 still to go, according to Garmin. The jib was fully rolled (we had become brave, assuming that the spare for the roller reefing would be waiting for us in Bermuda) and we were still on two reefs.

By 0200 on Tuesday 10th May the loom of the light on the SW end of Bermuda was visible and we changed our Way Point to off the NE point of the coast as we intended to enter St George's Harbour on the NE point of the island. Stuart and I were vaguely alarmed by the fact that we did not have a chart with a scale adequate enough to take us into harbour! The skipper was full of confidence though that all we had to do was to get the harbour authorities on the radio, they would guide us in and we would be home and dry! And as always he was right! We entered the narrow channel into the open harbour in the company of several other yachts which had approached Bermuda from all points including the Caribbean and UK as well as the east coast of the USA.

St George's Harbour delighted us. Although it takes cruise ships, which have to leave at weekends, it is blissfully unspoilt. Our first engagement was, of all places, O'Malley's pub, sporting an Irish flag, under which we sat drinking a very welcome pint of Guinness; until we got the bill! £4 a pint, as was beer throughout the island.

After recovering in St George's we motored through the inland route to Hamilton, the capital, where we found a riggers' yard to which the skipper had had the spare parts for the roller reefing gear delivered. We spent until Saturday 14th in Hamilton as it took time to have the roller reefing gear repaired. In fact the problem was much worse than it had appeared but the spares we received were adequate to have it repaired as new. We also welcomed our new crew member, Gordon Hunter from Greystones.

We returned to St George on the Saturday, cleared customs, obtained the latest weather maps from the nearby US naval base, which provided, free of charge, the weather forecasts for the island and had our last meal ashore, totally exhausting the kitty!

St George was a haven for yachtsmen of all nationalities, experience and enterprise. It was a very happy place to be because everyone paused for conversation on the basis that they would learn something from whoever they talked to. Such a contrast to the Fort Lauderdale Yacht Club, who, when the skipper in his capacity as the Commodore of the ICC called to pay his respects, was told that they did not normally entertain foreign yachtsmen but as they were one of the sponsors of the Round the

World Yacht Race they would allow us to have lunch! Our experience was that yacht clubs were for locals and not the places to encounter fellow voyagers.

As we prepared to leave on Sunday 15th May Gordon, who took on the role of engineer, topped up the engine oil, yet again. We had a brief conversation about the reasons for doing this as we had done it rather more frequently than was healthy before Gordon had joined us. But we had plenty of spare oil so, slightly against our better judgement and perhaps because it was Sunday and we wanted to go, we agreed "to keep an eye on it!"

We passed the Spit Buoy at 1300 with our first way point SE of the Azores bearing 103 degrees at a distance of 1250 miles along the 32-degree meridian. The skipper's plan was to keep south of any dirty weather in the north Atlantic until we were SE of the Azores and then head NW the remaining 700-odd miles on a bearing of 030. The forecast was reasonable as we left with lows well to the NE of us and a high 1800 miles to the east. Unless the lows moved towards us we were set for fair weather.

With the extra hand we were less stretched than on the way to Bermuda. We did 2 hours on and 6 off which meant that we were on the same watches each day. This turned out to be very satisfactory and everyone knew exactly where they were and could organise themselves accordingly.

Our first day out was very leisurely. There was almost no wind so we motor-sailed into the dark when we took the jib down and left the main flapping. Progress was swift as the engine took us along at about 6 knots. Dolphins and portuguese men-of-war were in abundance.

We were still motoring at noon on 16th May. The sea was calm, though the waves were quite high, but very long so we rode easily over them. We covered 135 miles in the first 24 hours and we finished the day with the skipper's menu written out and handed round;

*Pork Fillet
with a*

Wild Mushroom, Onion, Courgette and Tomato Sauce, seasoned with Herbs and Spices

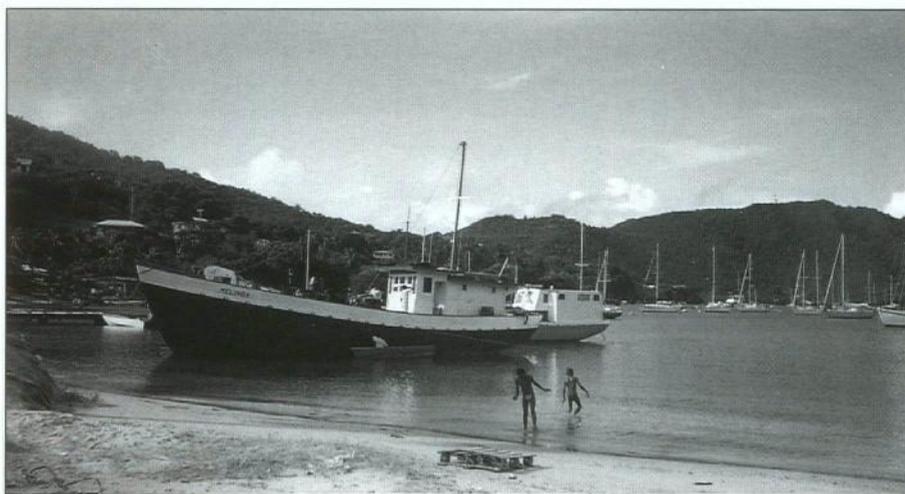
Pomme de Terre Rouge au White Shadow

with the skipper's choice of wine of course!

Crisis, when Gordon who was fortunately on watch since it is unlikely that anyone else would have noticed, discovered that the engine was overheating to boiling point. He eventually worked out that although the engine had its own coolant system, this in turn was cooled by sea water, driven by an impeller, flowing around it, and that the impeller had seen much better days. In fact only one and a half of its eight blades were still intact! However all was well as the skipper had a spare. This was quickly installed and we had no further problems with it.

This then was the time for the wind to pick up, and so it did. At about 15 knots from the SSE we had the spinnaker up and we were flying at 6, 7 and even 8 knots 'til we took it down as dark and stronger winds approached. The same wind continued into the next day, the birthday of the two Davids! Great celebrations with birthday cards hanging all round the cabin.

Our daily run to midday 17 May was 138 miles. By now the wind had gone round to WSW which allowed us to sail on a course of 120 degrees. This would bring us south again as we had gone further north of the 32nd parallel than we intended. Thereafter the wind increased and we sailed with two reefs and half the jib through the night. We woke to white horses and seas 4-5 feet on the 18th. At midday 18th May we had done 155 miles



Waterfront, Bequia.

PHOTO: Stuart Nairn

and we took the third reef in the main.

We were into what Stuart described as "a comfortable gale" with the rain coming down in torrents and visibility very poor! Sailing was not easy but in the event exhilarating. At no stage did we feel that the boat was not under our control and we were able to keep our course. But conditions and the movement of the boat were such that it was extremely difficult to move about it. Helming in these conditions in the pitch black and with the rain pouring down was frightening as one had no idea what one was steering for. We were just hoping that it was not for the side of ship because there would have been no chance of seeing it even if it was lit. It was at just this stage that Gordon reported that the automatic pilot had packed up! And so it had, and despite continuing efforts by Gordon and the skipper for the rest of the journey, it stayed sleeping. In fact, the sailing was so exhilarating that none of us minded except for the fact that we could not take a break for a cup of coffee during the night watches.

By noon on Thursday 19th our daily run was 150 miles, almost all of it with three reefs and half a jib. We had to keep all the hatches below shut and as a result the atmosphere below was hot and horrid and the cockpit was wet and cold. By this stage we had all our warm gear on, and of course we were enjoying it!

On our way we were in contact by radio with other boats we had met in Bermuda, also with 'Herb'. Herb, a self-appointed weather forecaster living in Bermuda, broadcast each evening for two hours, starting at 1920, to all yachts wishing to listen to him, wherever they were in the Atlantic, from UK to the Bahamas and from Newfoundland to the Canaries. He covered each area of the Atlantic, calling yachts which had booked into him. Each gave their location and local weather conditions and in turn he told them what to expect over the next 24 to 48 hours and if it were possible, how to avoid the worst of any weather adjacent to them. His accuracy was uncanny and we came to rely on him each evening. Herb confirmed the skipper's view that we should keep south of the 32nd parallel until nearer the Azores.

We had covered 157 miles for the 24hrs up to noon on Friday 20th. The day had started sunny with less wind. By noon it had clouded over and by 1700 we had the engine on. Herb was still telling us to stay south as gales were hitting the Azores. During the day the wind changed to the SE on our starboard quarter and we boomed out the jib. This gave us exciting sailing with the boat moving along at 6 to 7 knots so that by noon on Saturday 21st we had covered 153 miles.

However as the wind moved to almost directly behind us we began what turned out to be our most uncomfortable stage of the journey. With the wind taking alternatively the jib on one side of the boat and then with the role of the waves, the main on the other the boat rolled steeply and regularly inducing what Stuart called "rhythmic rolling" where the wind and waves took con-

trol and it was a real struggle for the helmsman to get control again.

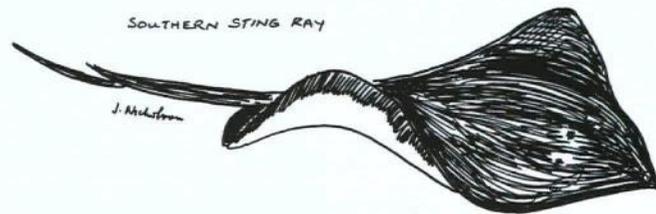
Sleeping below was practically impossible as we were flung from side to side of our bunks. We were sailing with 2 reefs and half the jib and making 6-7 knots. The distance run to noon Sunday was 135 miles giving us still 850 miles to go. But being a week at sea gave cause for celebration!

Herb was still giving gales in the Azores but with more gales threatening from the NW he was beginning to suggest that we alter course towards our destination. So after the 121-mile run to noon on Monday 23rd and then with 730 miles to go we altered course with an early morning gybe to 077 degrees heading for the Azores. By midday Tuesday, having had to do some motor-sailing, we were 123 miles nearer our goal. The next three days gave us varied but uneventful sailing during which the skipper ran a backgammon competition. As none of the crew had played previously, the right person won and this of course was good for discipline!

We kept getting reports from Herb of gales affecting the Azores and he was advising boats heading direct for England to call to the Azores in order to ride out the worst of the weather.

Several did. But we headed on with the wind varying from just off the port bow to astern though we were able to maintain our course. By noon on Friday 27th we had 175 miles to go and we were looking forward to getting there. In any case water in the main tank was low and we had had to change the gas bottle. We had strong winds and there was a very large swell giving enormous waves and some very confused seas. We suffered a lot of falling down onto waves which did not suit the skipper as he was in the forward cabin! But our progress was good and at 1022 on Saturday 28th we spotted the 2,300-metre mountain of Pico. Well done the Garmin !

We tied up at the Customs dock at 1620 on Saturday 28 May having been thirteen and a half days at sea and covered 1878 miles. A great experience, wonderful companionship and very varied weather, but no dramas. There we left *White Shadow* on the marina to be collected some time in the spring or summer of 1995.



Wild Goose Comes Home

Wallace Clark



The Fingal Cup

En route home from the Med, we wintered ashore at Povoa de Varzim. Ten years ago this was a small town with a dirty drying harbour, about 15 miles north of Oporto. Since then European money and tourism has turned it into the Blackpool of North Portugal. But it is still a kindly informal place, and several good friendships developed.

The harbour now acts as a home to some 150 offshore boats. We left *Wild Goose* afloat from August until October, sharing a berth alongside with a *Lancha*, a heavy 40-foot open pulling boat. (Can't seem to get away from replicas!) This was of the sort they used to fish from fifty years ago, with 20 oars and a huge lateen-type lug. Another unusual neighbour was a German-owned steel schooner of about 60 tons which was carrying gravel from Lough Swilly to Oporto and returning with Portuguese china. The crew were partly cadets which helped to keep expenses down. I'd have gladly shipped home on her but the passage to Hamburg was estimated at ten days and jobs at home were calling.

The only crane suitable was 15 miles south at Matosinos. Not only did this prove expensive but made us four days late. Irritation was considerable. But the winter berth in the yard of the Club Navale was gratis. Continual high winds drove sand into every corner, mixing with the fine dust we had experienced in Syros the year before and the cement powder from Chalkidi. The club guardian was helpful; there was no pilferage but the yard-cats found a hole in our cover and inside performed every function of their existence. One had kittens in the cockpit – a first for *Wild Goose* – but it did keep the mice out! Harbour dues were nil, a situation which will not maintain as a marina has been started.

When it came to re-launching, the crane was days adrift again and held up our departure planned for the 10th of May. Chris Tinne had kindly come from Donegal to supply good crack and help. He soon became a champion procurer, finding the best shop for every item in town. We did an intensive week of painting in mixed weather.

It looked like breaking seriously the day we at last got afloat and the mast in. We were anxious to get north at least 25 miles to Viana, away from a place we'd seen enough of. The western sky seem to show where the grapes of wrath were stored, with many shades of grey streaking over the horizon, but we reckoned to have a few hours before the wind hit us. I would have put off sailing but, "Let's go!" said Chris. So I made a hasty job of setting up the rigging while he bent on the main. The swell was breaking five foot high on shoals either side of the harbour mouth and sometimes in the channel, but we found a thin way through. Outside the swell was 15 to 20 feet high but un vicious and the wind a useful westerly force four so we had a fine reach north along the low coast.

We made Viana in five hours, still in force four. Approaching the bar 200 yards south of the end of the sea wall a house-sized wave rose suddenly astern, thirty-footer I estimated, but smooth-



Wild Goose among the Ardmore Islands.

barrelled. Chris steered us skillfully across its inner face. The next two were smaller but broke, luckily either side of us, then we were into calm in the lee of the wall. In the river the tide was flooding strongly and we had to make a very sharp turn to port 50 yards short of a low bridge to enter the marina on the north side. Very soon made friends with a family of four on a 45-foot Buchanan ketch called *Spring Tide*. David Lumby, the Cruising Association representative, was most helpful. This was a lot better place to spend a week than Povoa. It rained fiercely during the night, then blew very hard from the west and the bar was breaking clean over the sea wall and in continuous long crests of white for half a mile south of it. Chris, good man, did boatkeeper for a week while June and I toured battlefields ashore.

Ten days later he left and June and I set out north in light weather for Spain. We spend the night off S Martin in the Islas Cies, a bay almost as nice as Scotland and deserted so early in the year. In the morning the sea alongside was one endless

stream of red swimming crabs about the size of an old halfpenny. There was enough current to make us roll during the night and I suspect that Rodas on Isla Norte is more comfortable. Next day took us to Porto Novo on the Ria de Ponte Vedra. Anchorage in the outer harbour gave an easy row into the town and yet close to beaches so we found it most agreeable. Toja in Ria d'Arosa was next, anchorage in the bay just north of the luxury hotel. Fine island, but you are pinned in by the shallows and only able to move after half flood. One meal at Toja was sufficient, a dinghy trip to St Martin de Grove good fun. Another to Cambados a disaster as the landing at low water was too slippery for June and we almost stuck on acres of drying flats on the way back. We made for Caraminal on the north shore of the same Ria. It was Sunday and the town at leisure, a pleasant place to spend an afternoon watching the world and his wife go by from a seat in the sun, see a film, and dine on excellent seafood.

Next passage, to Muros, was in thick weather, and as I had not yet hooked up the GPS, crossing the rock-strewn Ensenada de Corubedo required close attention. Mountain peaks out of the top of the mist which lay over the land gave clues. The Ria entrance is easy so by 6 o'clock we brought up off pretty and friendly Muros village. There we stayed for a week and got to know Jean-Claud and Zoe, a charming couple from Arcachon living in a fine wooden ketch, *La Brigne*.

Then Tony Harvey joined us direct from New Zealand and June had to go home.

We left Muros at 11 o'clock on 7th June. In the bay it was very hot, outside it was misty as we steered cautiously past Los Bruyos, splashes of spray seen through fog, but the brume soon dispersed. By 1430 Cape Finisterre itself was abeam to starboard one mile, not a cloud in the sky, the swell north about six feet and the wind light north-west. The coast was bold like Donegal but had more trees; a dark mane of forest ran along the hill crests behind the cliffs. Fine white beaches showed at their base and gannets were diving. A young one caught a fish just off the starboard bow at 1610. It flew off looking extraordinarily pleased with itself, the fish gleaming in its beak, perhaps the first it had ever caught. There were noticeably no flags on the post buoys here, unlike Portugal, and not many buoys either.

By 1630 we were dodging the sunken *Bujardo* off Cape Villano. Lots of rocks around there, avoided by following the 50-fathom line on the echo sounder. The sea did not live up to its villainous reputation. By midnight we were abreast of Sisargas island at the NW apex and looking forward to an easy run east to Coruña. The wind cruelly gusted up and flicked into the north. It was too dark to take the inside passage so we skirted round to the north passing many pots on, many shoals, an alarming sight in the glow of the nav lights. At last we were round but there was to be no easing up as the north-northeast wind produced an unpleasant hollow sea which broke over our weather rail with vigour. There were many fishing boats lit up like funfairs to dodge, and a confusion of shore lights to puzzle over. At 0630 dawn was just breaking after a sleepless night as we passed the Tower of Hercules and opened up the fine Bay of La Coruña.

The only dry thing on board was the back of our throats but Tony soon put that right. "Any port in a storm," was the appropriate toast as he broached a bottle of finest Oporto. He'd spent 5 days visiting the caves there, strictly business, he assured me, and joined us well-laden. What a splendid shipmate Tony had once again proved himself a rave as Billy-be-damned, a top class and willing cook and able to fix anything with a piece of number eight wire. We anchored near the outer end of the triple row of boats in the shelter of a long stone wall. Billy Patterson from Donegal joined us here, an old trusty shipmate and, like Tony, an *Aileach* galley slave of two years ago. Beside us was *Nirvana*, last seen in Belfast Lough in the hands of Douglas McIlwaine, now under the Spanish flag. She had had a messy fire on board

but externally looked very trim.

We set off on the following day to beat up in the lee of the land as far as El Ferrol. No use trying going any further as the wind was very stiff north-east. By early afternoon we edged in, with a fair tide, between forts on either side of the mouth and found a berth alongside. It was within 50 yards of the naval arsenal, by the granite block pier of the commercial harbour. Commandant of Marines Jose Torres came on board and kindly invited us to use the Officers' Mess. Yachts are a curiosity here and *Wild Goose* excited a lot of interest in contrast to Coruña. This is Spanish Portsmouth with all the signs of 'Jacks Ashore', including a street beside us 'where sportive ladies leave their doors ajar'.

Saturday 11th June.

A sunlit run, pushed by powerful ebb, took us out after breakfast between the high green heads of Ferrol. So many fine ships have passed this way. From Roman to the present. From here Villeneuve set forth full of hope with 23 Sail of the Line, three months before Trafalgar.

For us a stiff beat up the coast. Deep reefs in the main, and a small jib. A lot of water over the bow and running along the lee deck. Sunny and bright. Tried beating round Cabo Prior 5 miles north but found it impossible. Wind increasing so at 1330, turned back, then at Tony's suggestion headed inshore to anchor in St Joseph's Bay, off the beach, in 25ft. Sunny and warm out of the wind. Four windsurfers having a lot of fun. A few family groups on the beach, no other boats. Boarded by Customs from inflatable, clumsily launched by steel mother-ship which anchored beside us. Quite affable at sight of our papers. Six o'clock forecast only too familiar: 'Finisterre E or NE 4 or 5, but 6 to 8 in the south', which is where we are. We were seeing clearly how the NW corner of Spain is a very windy spot; even when the rest of the big sea area of Finisterre is moderate, winds day after day seem to be much stronger close in, off the headlands.

Yawing wildly so layed out the 55lb CQR, which steadied her down.

12th June, Sunday

Forecast on Sunday morning indicates winds a bit lighter. A quick cuppa, up both hooks and motored away. A high in Shannon and another one funnily enough in the middle part of the Bay of Biscay seems to be causing all these north-east winds. Tacked to seaward past Cabo Prior about 15 degrees north of course. Sea very heavy off the head. Tide seemed to be with us although ebbing and so supposed to be running south. Tidal stream info on this coast curiously vague. Guns on the top of cliffs looked like six-inch or bigger. Tunnels which perhaps hold smaller guns visible beside them, part of the defences of Ferrol. Tacked into the coast after clearing head, with swell on beam which was easier but a great many gusts coming up and putting our lee rail down. We knew that the wind would probably reach its peak by midday or early afternoon so were anxious to get on up on Cedeira before this. Ditched part of deck cargo – a rusty paraffin jerrycan which continually tried to break loose where lashed to the shrouds. Tacked close in off the beach at 0930 just north of Punta Frousina. It has a big white column daymark on it, helpful as coast not that easy to identify on our small-scale chart. Billy got his airman's portable GPS going on top of doghouse but hard to keep it out of spray. 1100: tacked in too close and felt ground swell so better to turn out to seaward again. Seas easier, wind down a little.

1300 – a relief to short tack to clear the rocks off SW point of Cedeira. That harbour had seemed as desirable as the dreams of Alcibiades during our three-day struggle to get there. On arrival it looked worth dreaming about. Sun on sparkling calm blue water, entrance easy, forested slopes on either hand. Looked like Kenmare as we came in at first, then Moidart as we got closer. Big trees behind white beaches, with ridges and clearings as if the plantings are well managed.

Anchorage indicated in CA Pilot in the lee of the pier by Castello full, mainly of little boats, so moved on up towards the head of the bay and anchored at low water in 10 feet. Ashore for lunch in café abreast the new pier. Percivales (goose barnacles), soup, grilled chicken, big ice-creams and coffee. Lots of vino – 1200ps each. Asked for Julia, a mettlesome maid who we'd met with years back at Arosa but nobody seemed to know – a staid married woman now, I suppose. A big airy dining room with balcony overlooking the bay and arched windows. Two British yachts came in as we ate, both going south as we later heard. Sunbathed for a glorious half hour on sand hot to the touch while Tony and Billy walked on to explore. Town has attractive balustrades each side of the river and on bridge. A few little fish to be seen in the shallows and dinghies stranded on sand amid interesting cobweb pattern of warps; rather like Audierne at low water. Bar lady, beef to the heel like a Mullingar heifer, told us "Tiempo muy malo until miercoles". No shops open. Sunday taken seriously here, and tomorrow is a holiday.

Wind freshening at dusk. Layed out second anchor by motoring up to windward but not enough let out on first drop so it dragged back before biting and failed to take as much weight as I had intended.

The funnel effect of the hills increased the wind to force 9 that night. With the beach only half a mile to windward *Wild Goose* still kicked over the traces. Billy and I slept well enough aft but Tony forward was almost hurled out of his bunk. There was one mighty crack in the night, then she seemed to settle down again.

In the morning we found that the chain had jumped out of the bow roller (I should have tied it) and cut back through several inches of bulwark. An amiable engineering shop, 50 yards from the old stone quay, soon welded all back in place.

On Wednesday morning we set out about eight to beat around Cape Ortegal. The wind grew rapidly stronger; main rolled right down and reefed staysail the *Goose* was labouring. It was 'muy malo' for sure. When a pair of half-hour tacks gained a doubtful quarter mile, it was time to turn back once again.

Tony learned from a fishergirl, by what means I know not, that Cape Ortegal is almost always calm at dawn. So we set off at six next day. Lo and behold! We got there before the wind up!

Cape Ortegal is magnificent, one of the few which vies with Fair Head for grandeur and south-west Skye for height. It sheers 1800 feet of bare rock. Scores of stormy petrels flitted round its base. At nine o'clock the sea was still windless and the cliffs half hidden in mist. Ahead stood the Aquilones, pointed stacks seen through wraiths like witches in council.

Soon they too dropped astern and we could head east. We had intended to call at another Spanish port, perhaps Gijon, for bunkers (and more importantly Carlos Tres brandy), before setting off on the Biscay passage but the wind was now south-east. By 1355 the forecast gave east all over Biscay and nothing above force 5 in Finisterre. This corresponded with a five-day forecast by landline. To take advantage of it sadly meant abandoning the club meet in Quiberon. The past eight days of strong NE had used up all our spare time.

Under sail we were making only two knots so ran the engine gently and set course for Penmarch at four and a half. At 0630 on Friday 17th of June we were 75 miles north of Cape Ortegal making a northern course in 7 degrees W. The wind had swung from a SE to NE so we were going to lose a great deal of time if



Wild Goose under Bosphorus bridge.

PHOTO: Miles Clark

we tried calling on Bernard Felix at Tremazen in the Four as planned. So that looked like a washout too. But no sweat; we were working the easy routine of two hours on and four off, and enjoying it. I took over at 6am Friday for the morning watch, always my favourite. There was nothing to see in the way of birds or shipping so began to observe the light. At 0630 the sun's top limb rose boiling hot out of a cold blue sea. "Not much wonder the Ancients were continuously amazed and turned the sun into a god," was my thought. It became a ball of fiery red, twice as big as it looks up in the sky. By 8am the up-sun gleam of silver was too bright to look at, a band of quaking quicksilver, hurtful to the eyes.

The sea beside us was a deep prussian blue, with each wave capped by with countless curving facets, ever reflecting, ever changing. By 1030 the fires of glass had gone, as the sun was too high, but a million spear-points of light reflected from the waves. The surface of each facet when not lit up silver was now a clear transparent blue. There was still that faint northeasterly so the motor purred at easy revs. Nary a ship but many gannets in dark immature plumage. Under the midday sun, as we sipped a Noon Balloon, the sea was a uniform blue, the light pleasant but uninteresting. By 6pm celestial scene-shifters began again, water looking like a wrung out floor-cloth to port, dark prussian blue to starboard. At sunset the sky to the west turned a pale mother-of-pearl, delicate shades of pink and little bits of oyster.

By midnight the afterflow was fading. The Plough appeared on its end. Good to steer due north of Polaris; every puff of wind getting us nearer to Ireland.

Cassiopeia lay on her back to the starboard bow. "A big W up there in your honour, Wally," Tony remarked as we shared a dram at midnight. The moon track, or feuflamme as the old sailors called it, was like some great silver-scaled dragon, a wriggling sea monster swimming away from *Wild Goose's* stem towards 'the baths of all the western stars'. In contrast was the soft light of the paraffin lamp in the cabin casting curious shadows as it swung over sleepers below. I think of our grandson Finn in England strewn across his bed asleep, secure in the relaxation of the four-year-old surrounded by family love.

Then the half-moon began slowly descending into haze. Feuflamme not so strong, but still illuminates the round stem of the dinghy as I look forward over the coach roof. Makes it look clean and bright, not smudged in dirt as it is in daylight. 1230: A wee breeze comes in from a northerly quarter. Harmonic curves of swell shadows, every changing show, black against the

moon until it sets like an orange spinnaker on west horizon. I hear something splashing alongside bigger than usual. Is it dolphin or just the swell wave pushing the bow wave up higher than usual? I go cautiously forward. Yes! Its dolphins robed in phosphorescence bow-riding in pairs. Can see their bodies wriggling vertically and side to side underwater much clearer than in daylight. They stayed with us for 15 minutes.

Saturday, approaching Ushant:

I looked up at 0600. Billy on watch. He said he'd carry on until 0700, forecast time, so I crashed again. That made four and a half hours sleep as I had turned in at just before two, when I'd woken Tony a few minutes early to see the dolphins. He came up at once without having to dress; stayed continuously in the old Milo Yachting Monthly oilskins day and night since we left Cedeira 50 hours ago. Saves trouble but. . . !

At 0655 (keeping Spanish time on board) in the warmth of Musto oilies I listen to the weather. Can get it clear from the cockpit now, south of Lisbon we could only get it with difficulty, at night with the set held up high above the coachroof. With every hundred miles we make north the Channel 4 marks our progress as it becomes louder. Plymouth and even Biscay all turning south-west so we can head for the West Country on 032 magnetic and be clear of the separation zones off Ushant. We start the sheets too for the first time since Arosa.

Dawn in total contrast to yesterday. One might ask, "Is there a dawn?" Pale dirty grey sky. No signs of sun. Its thick ahead. Vis maybe half a mile; the bank seems to move on as we progress in a damp circle. "The sun'll scoff the mist," we hope. A purple sea to the east with fine lines of blue in it. Little ripples cast trout-sized shadows. There is a low, gentle northerly swell, maybe three-foot. Rubbish now, floating paper, planks, plastic bags, an empty green bottle, debris from liners leaving the Channel.

The sky stays monochrome.

Aha! As I blow on my tea at 0730 a pale white disc appears about 12 degrees above the eastern skyline. A pale gold reflection on the sea below the disc, or where it was a moment ago. A curious white streak, almost like ice-blink, on the last bit of the sea visible ahead. Sea is bluer and the mist disappearing. By 8 o'clock "my friend the sun, like all my friends, remote, inconstant, far away," shines clear platinum and brings the sea to life. I listen to the home news, the first we have had in 5 weeks. By 0815 the sun made a broken glitter off the top of each swell, the orb still veiled in a wall of mist.

Wind very light east, main guyed out and just filling. Autohelm clicking away like a clocking hen. A glass of Tony's port and mussels on toast for breakfast. Blue-grey carrier pigeon circles undecidably then lands on deck. Joined by a brownie chum. They take some water and crumbs, puff out their feathers in exhaustion and sleep. "Those jokers'll make a nice lunch," said Tony. For a moment I thought he meant it.

Some small basking sharks on the surface to port, wind gone flat. The sea like muscles swelling under the skin of a scaly blue-black snake.

Engine check, fan-belt still ok. 4 knots at 1100 revs and running almost four hours to the gallon, starboard tank two-thirds full so we should have plenty to take us to the English coast if need be.

The wind came up soon after that and we got busy enough to break my mood of reverie.

We were about 30 miles west-south-west of Ushant, a good distance at which to get round at the west end of the separation zones.

The winds tried to come up from the southwest. The sea was like a sheet of heaving blue plastic, odd little ruffles of a breeze in the morning, less as the day wore on. Occasionally ripples giving a herringbone effect, a day of poor colour, pale blue sky and pale blue sea. We saw five tankers and one area of an acre

of pollution, planks in oil and yellow scum. At 2300 Ireland was one up on Italy at half-time in the World Cup. Sunset was not 'the orange band of eve' but a shocking pink, music hall variety.

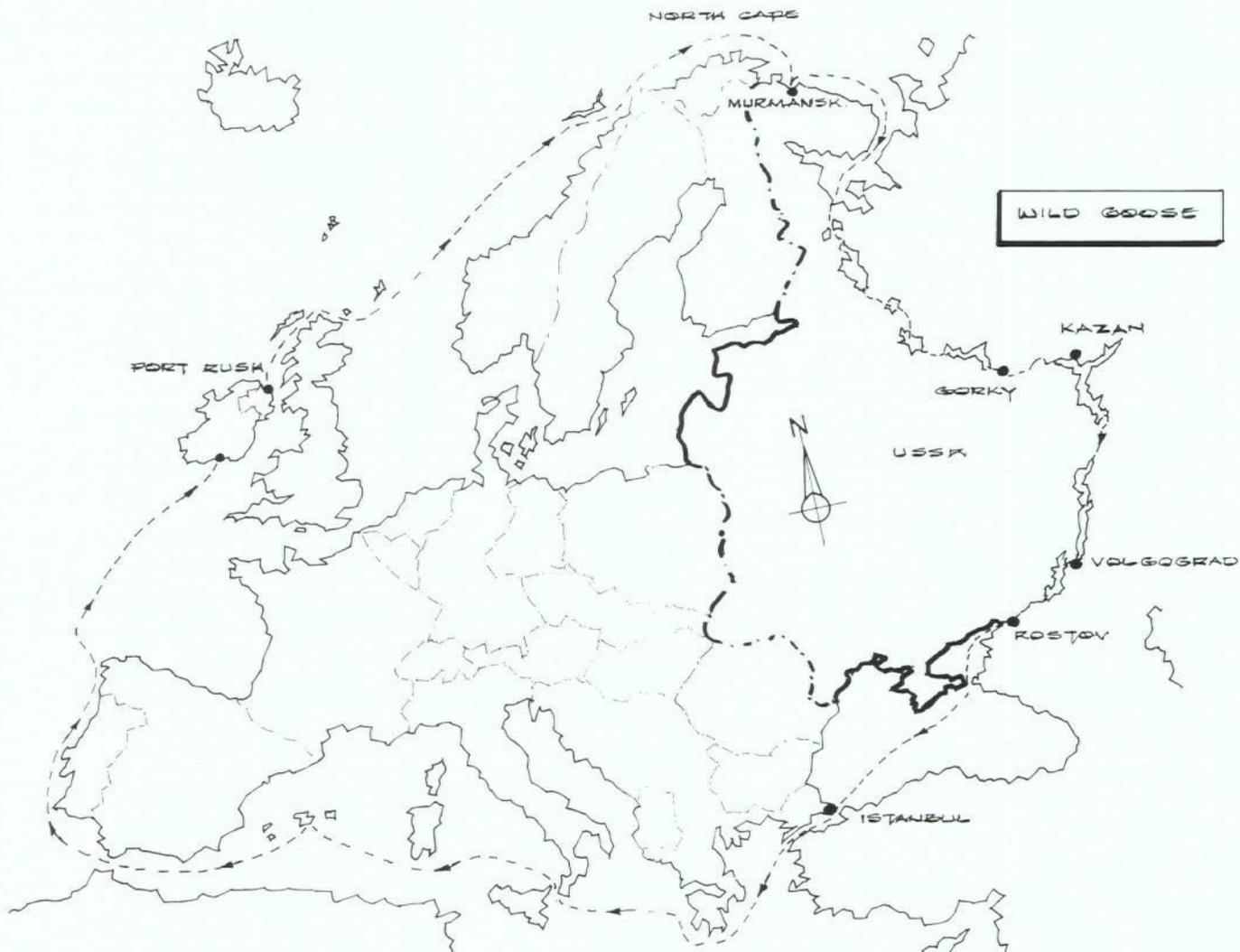
We saw our first fulmar! The nicest sign of being back in northern waters. The swell grew higher, six to nine feet north-westerly at about 150-yard intervals as we entered the chops of the Channel. 1030 the big Racon buoy at the south-west of the outer traffic zone was a mile to starboard. At 2am next morning Monday we were groping our way into Mounts Bay and trying to puzzle out the continuous glare of lights which runs from Newlyn to Penzance. The pyramid of lights on the Mount was confusing at first, a help once identified. Found a yacht alongside among a hundred fishermen in Newlyn, tied beside him and were soon asleep. A harbour in which everybody was helpful. Billy Patterson left to pick up his aeroplane at Bristol and fly home. That left Tony and me with 150 miles or so to make an Irish port. We'd covered some 420 miles in four days with scarcely a wave on deck. Not bad for an old 'un and a comfort to Billy on his first off-shore passage. He told me afterwards he'd been thinking as we tried to beat round Cape Ortegal, "Cripes, if its like this inshore, what the hell is it going to be like in the bay?"

A pleasant couple of days exploring ashore until the weather mended. Sailed away Thursday. Wind, E or NE 4 or 5, drove us steadily on track. It gusted up above 6 at 7am when we were abreast of the Smalls. An unpleasant hour or two with much water on board and a plank down at times.

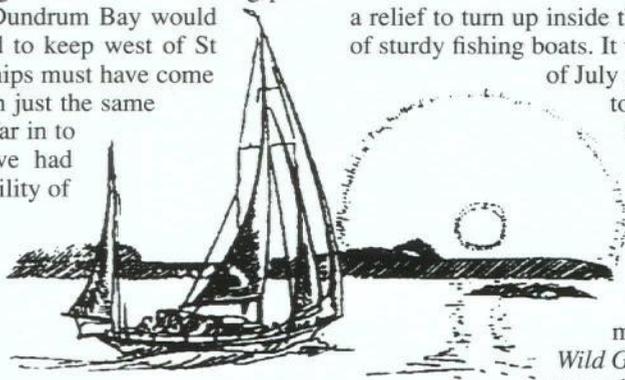
There was a good deal more traffic here than we had seen off Ushant which speaks well of commerce in the Irish Sea. Various options on sighting the Irish coast, as we both had to get on north soonest; leave at Dunmore or Arklow. By 1030 the blow was over and the wind light from the south, jumbly and negative white horses. Tony saw a whale, probably a killer, crossing our bow very close ahead; perhaps after the dolphins who had been bow-riding to welcome us. I hope he missed. By 1130 the Tuskar was abeam to port ten miles, a great moment but disappointing that there was no visible sign of this other than the Rosslare ferry crossing ahead. There were many gannets, more handsome by far than the immature yearlings in Biscay, and Atlantic shearwaters more graceful and agile than their cousins further south. We were getting home.

Low visibility, alternating with fog persisted all day. I'd hoped to introduce Tony to the splendour of the Wicklow hills but we drank rum instead. It seemed as if Ireland had sunk at her moorings. In the grey zombie light over a jumbly sea and hundred-yard visibility one's eyes got tired of hours staring ahead and could hallucinate a wave-top as anything from a submarine conning tower to an upturned boat or an on-coming vessel's bows or mountains ashore. I imagined all of those things. The first real object was the Kish light at 0100 like a great dalek in mid-ocean. We were operating on a very small-scale chart as I had not planned to make this passage without a break to collect Irish charts and it was some years since I had sailed into Dublin Bay. There was a good deal of fumbling and some oaths before we found the right lights from the mass ahead, and thankfully tied up alongside a hooker in the Coal Harbour about 5am.

The George kindly provided a mooring. Ten days later Tony and I returned to sail home. We spent two days on board, first the oil, getting the fuel lines overhauled and doing the minor repairs. The horn on the pierhead boomed incessantly and went on booming for hours after the fog had ceased, due I was told to the condensation on the glass remaining. At times the fog was so thick we couldn't see more than halfway to the clubhouse and finding our way in was a navigation exercise. A pint of Guinness steadied the nerves before sailing. We were joined at Howth by lawyer friend Peter Jones, who after working in London for many years has returned to work on the Northern Ireland bar. In the morning we visited Lambay. It is over ten years since I have



been there, the staff gave us a most kindly welcome but we had a good look around the superb garden. Revelstoke too ill to see us. Sadly he died a few days later. The passage north was a run in overcast conditions with a rising southwesterly. Normally one picks up the Mourmes and has the comfort of a hump to steer on. This time there was nothing. The wind steadily increased and the visibility remained low. At six o'clock we were off Carlingford and thought of going in but it was gusting above six at this stage and the tide ebbing so the entrance would be disagreeable. Then we thought of Kilkeel but the water was low and the bar dredging out of date so that it would be risky. Much as we longed to get in out of what was now a gale with rain and spray the only thing to do was carry on for Ardglass. GPS was working perfectly, otherwise the run across Dundrum Bay would have been worrying. We just had to keep west of St Johns Point. How many sailing ships must have come to grief in the old days faced with just the same problems and getting a little too far in to the west where they would have had extreme difficulty or the impossibility of beating out. Hence the busy time the Newcastle lifeboat used to have and the lesser responsibilities now. The last hour north of St Johns the flood began and the sea grew gurlly, probably the gurliest sea we had met the whole way back from Greece.



Wild Goose

Endless rows of hostile waves reared up and big white combers broke out on either quarter but luckily nothing astern. Tony, matter-of-fact as ever, steered skillfully, I scanned the shore and echo sounder while Peter did lookout. Even with the GPS, in visibility less than a quarter of a mile, it would have been possible to find ourselves to leeward of Ardglass with a battle to get back. At last it opened up. We had handed the main a little before and now the staysail came down and we ran in under bare poles with the engine ticking over for the entrance. "I thought you told me it was half a mile wide," said Tony as he eyed the distance between the new pier and the rocks on which the swell was breaking furiously to starboard. "Not that", I said, "I meant the mouth between the headlands." Anyway he got us in and it was a relief to turn up inside the wall and find a berth beside a row of sturdy fishing boats. It was the holiday weekend for the 12th of July and we could lie there without having to evacuate at 2am when the fleet would normally go to sea.

We spent the night anchored offshore peacefully in Browns Bay, Larne and the third one at Rathlin. On Tuesday 18th July exactly on schedule we approached the long black training walls of the Bann Bar mouth. With an almost audible click *Wild Goose* crossed her outward track as we turned in and the circuit of Europe, probably the first ever, was completed.

Adventure in the South Pacific

Brian Lynch

In the 1993 annual I wrote about our arrival by air to New Zealand and our sail from Auckland to Tonga in May 1993 with the Island Cruising Association. My wife Onóra and I, together with our three daughters Anna (10), Sheila (7) and Christine (4) chartered the yacht *Shalimar*, a 51-foot cutter, in New Zealand. In completing my log of our South Pacific odyssey I hope to give a taste of what it was like cruising as a family with three young children. Our route took us over some 5,400 nautical miles and to 81 anchorages or harbours in nine months. We sailed through the islands of Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia during the tropical winter and returned to New Zealand for their summer, avoiding the tropical cyclone season. For the ocean passages between the main island groups insurance and good sense dictated that we had four adults on board. This worked well and we enjoyed the good company of family and friends who flew out to join us.

Tonga

We planned to sail from Tongatapu to Vava'u, which is 180 miles further north, via the Ha'apai group of islands. The Ha'apai group is remote and has few visitors because the anchorages are only suitable when the wind is from the east or southeast and in fine weather, with clear skies for good visibility to see the coral reefs. At this stage I had almost no experience of sailing in coral and was quite apprehensive. Charts were not accurate enough to rely on in close waters as there were many uncharted coral heads. The importance of eyeball navigation had been emphasised to me.



Shalimar.

25th May 1993

We sailed from an anchorage at the west side of Atata Island at 0200 in order to arrive at Nomuka at midday when the overhead sun would provide good visibility. As it happened, when we arrived at the entrance to the Nomuka anchorage heavy showers, dark skies, squalls of 25 to 30kts of wind and rough seas reduced the underwater visibility to nil. Thankfully the Pacific Islands Pilot published by the Royal Navy gave a compass bearing for a passage clear of the coral heads and into the anchorage. We were glad to get our anchor down beside another yacht in the lee of a reef, just off the beach. *Shalimar* rolled uncomfortably in the swell. The reef that provided shelter was awash with breaking seas. There was too much wind to even think of going ashore to the beach on the island. The children were disappointed but were quite contented to do some baking instead. The following morning I watched the crew from the other boat as they dinghied ashore.

They motored along parallel to the beach, just outside what looked like a wall of breaking surf, until they saw a gap in the surf which marked a passage through the reef. They entered the gap, keeping close to the surf breaking on the windward side of the reef and then disappearing from sight behind a wall of white water. I was glad I saw them doing this as it helped me in my effort to get ashore later. The swell was such that getting into the dinghy with the children was demanding, with the sugarscoop transom crashing down onto the dinghy. I wondered was I out of my depth here with the children and wanted to make for safer water. Once inside the reef it was peaceful.

While relaxing on the beach we watched two Tongan men approach in dugout canoes. I admired their skill in manoeuvring their canoes through the gap in the reef, riding the waves like a surfboard. They baled furiously and then paddled bashfully to the beach. Later they brought me into the jungle and one of them climbed up a 50ft palm tree and chucked down some coconuts to the other man who hacked a hole in the top of them with his machete. We drank with such ceremony that I knew the moment would remain with me forever.

Vava'u

The next day we had an overnight passage to Vava'u where we stayed for 4 weeks. Rainbow and The Moorings charterers have bases here. Despite this there were plenty of anchorages including deserted islands where we had the whole place to ourselves. Pilot whales swam around *Shalimar* while at anchor. Onóra established school routine with the children at

PHOTO: B Lynch



Reef breaking off Ngau Island, Fiji.

PHOTO: Tom Bryan

this stage. In the morning we would get up at about 08.00 and have a swim. School started on board at 09.00 and continued for about two hours. This was not easy and there were often tears. We covered two of the three terms of their school year in fifteen weeks. We did not want to take too much time from their holiday and from the education their new environment was giving them. My memories of Tonga will be of the big, dark, smiling faces. Many of them wore woven mats around their waist, tied awkwardly with string or a belt. They liked their food and being fat was a sign of wealth. Pigs roamed freely through the villages. Everything was devoured, including dogs. There were very few birds because the eggs were being eaten.

Tongans love children and having ours with us was a big advantage. Barriers were broken down very quickly. Families entertained us in their homes which were mainly shacks with tin roofs. Only a few of the traditional huts built with coconut fronds remained. Enormous flying foxes (fruit bats) hung in the mango trees above them. A second Island Cruising Association fleet had sailed directly from Auckland to Vava'u and arrived into Neiafu harbour while we were there. A regatta week was organised by the association and we partook in several fun events. There were great celebrations on in Neiafu for the King of Tonga's birthday whom we were happy to meet at an agricultural show where he chatted to us for a short while. He wanted to know were we from the north or south of Ireland. His mother, Queen Salote, visited Ireland in 1953 after attending the coronation of Queen Elizabeth II. At the end of June our friends Tom Bryan, his daughter Heather, who was Anna's age, and his wife Jane flew into the airport at Neiafu to join us for our sail to Fiji. At the airport we could walk right up to the door of the plane to greet our friends as they got off. The duty-free shop was a table outdoors and sold tins of spam, corned beef, biscuits and umbrellas.

Tonga to Fiji, 30th June 1993

We bade farewell to our many friends in the Island Cruising Association as we had now decided to cruise independently. At noon we set sail for Levuka, Fiji, 470 miles north-west. The voyage began with a moderate swell and almost no wind. We had to motor for the first few hours. A frigate bird followed us for a short while. My log for the first day at sea reads:

Within half an hour of leaving wharf the hydraulic steering goes a little spongy. I spot a leak and fill it up. It works fine. I allow the leaking fluid drop into a jug. We have light winds of 10kts from SSE. Calm sea and sunshine. Everybody feels

in top form and the mood is good. We catch a tuna at 0530 and eat it an hour later for dinner. It is dark at 6.30. We had arranged to make contact with friends on the SSB radio each evening at 6.45 while at sea. This was very reassuring and we reciprocated the arrangement with other boats. As time went on during this passage the wind increased and for the 3 days it took us to reach Ovalau in Fiji the following wind rarely went below 25 to 30kts and the sky was overcast most of the way. We had rough following seas which made us all seasick but we recovered quickly. We spent one day passing what looked like the most inviting islands I had ever seen but could not stop because of clearance regulations. Fiji has only got 3 ports of entry namely Levuka on Ovalau which is an island on the east side, Suva the capital and Lautoka on the west side. Once cleared into Fiji it is not easy beating back

against the trade winds and the ocean current to some of those beautiful places on the extreme eastern fringes.

Fiji

We were warned that the customs and immigration people in Fiji can sometimes be quite fussy and that it helps to dress up a bit by putting on a shirt and jacket. I took this advice to heart and wore a shirt and tie and reefer jacket with a pair of long trousers. I went ashore with Tom Bryan. We felt we really impressed the Health and Quarantine official for as soon as we got into his office he put his shoes on. The other officials probably thought we were somebody important and the quick and attentive manner in which they dealt with us was almost embarrassing. Other skippers reported almost a half a day of hanging around and going from office to office. Levuka was at one time the capital of Fiji. The colonial architecture is very attractive. There is a large fish-processing plant where Japanese, Korean and Taiwanese trawlers land their catch of tuna. They are granted fishing licenses from the money-hungry Fijian Government and are reported to use nets up to 13 miles long. The trawlers looked in such terrible condition that I doubt if any of them would be allowed near a port in European waters. They continually pumped a mixture of oil and water from their bilges to keep their boats afloat.

After a few days in Levuka, we took advantage of a nice southerly wind which allowed us wank our way back to the island of Ngau which was forty miles east of us. This island does not have many visitors as very few people with trade wind experience beat to windward, so we were favoured to have this beautiful day with ideal conditions. Getting in through the gap in the reef was also easy. We sailed to a position 2 miles northeast of the entrance and skirted the reef until we saw the entrance. I climbed up the maststeps to the crosstree and signalled a course to Onóra. The view from the mast was so good it was as simple as driving along by a stone wall and turning left into an open gate. Inside the gap I was alarmed to see two coral heads as if they were 2 metres or less below the keel. The chart said they were 10 metres down. It was hard to get used to judging the depth in such clear water. I experienced a few anxious moments when fish under the keel set off the depth alarm. We anchored alone in Herald Bay.

When a yacht anchors in any bay in Fiji the skipper of the boat is expected to go ashore alone, meet the chief of the village and bring a gift of kava. When I brought my dinghy to the shore about 10 locals helped me carry it up the beach and I was taken

to the chief's house. This was a handsome structure of natural materials built with bamboo walls and a thatched coconut frond roof. There were two rooms with a bed in one and no furniture in the other. The chief sat cross-legged on a big woven mat that covered the floor and gestured to me to sit down. I presented my kava and recited my few words in Fijian giving him my greetings. The chief chanted a reply as if praying. A younger man translated for me and said that the chief bestowed "on you, your crew, your relatives in your home country, his blessings, regards, protection and health." I was moved by the grace of these people and excited to have experienced this custom. The ceremony is called *sevu sevu*. This is a formal occasion and the gift is always a bunch of kava root, bought at the market, from which they make their local grog. I made a point of learning a few Fijian words to say at the ceremony and the effort was well received. The chief told me that I was welcome to anchor my ship and visit the village. He asked me not to kill any fish in the bay and after all this, to my surprise, he asked me for my ship's papers. I told him that I didn't bring them with me and he said that I could bring them later. I was shown around the village. In many of the villages that we visited we received genuine hospitality. On 11th July we made an overnight passage from Ngau Island to Lautoka on west side of Fiji avoiding Suva. We did this because the west side of Fiji has less rainfall and more settled weather. Our friends flew home from Nadi airport. Alone again for two months we cruised the islands off the west coast of Fiji. We were again made welcome into local villages where our children were a curiosity. The girls eventually got very fed up of the native women and children touching their hair and pinching their cheeks. Occasionally we would rendezvous with other yachts that also had children on board and cruised in company with them for a few days. The Yasawa Islands were the most interesting with pleasant villages, jungle walks, rivers and palm-fringed beaches. Some anchorages were uncomfortable and did not have the protection of a surrounding reef. The trip back to *Shalimar* from the shore on the dinghy was tricky, as there was a potential danger of being blown out to sea. I always carried an anchor and long line and if visiting another yacht after dark I carried flares. Sailing among the numerous reefs and coral heads, often uncharted, required constant vigilance. The maststeps to the crosstree were well used. There was excellent snorkelling in Fiji where the sea temperature was on average 28°C. We all had 3mm wetsuits with short arms and legs. These provided protection from the sun as well as giving extra buoyancy. Even Christine by this time was able to swim using a mask and snorkel. We never got tired of it. Onóra and I had completed a scuba-diving course with Scuba Dive West, near Renvyle, Co Galway, just before leaving home.

We were glad to have done this. The diving in Fiji was extraordinary. The visibility in 25 metres of water was perfectly clear. We went on many diving expeditions and saw spectacular coral formations that looked like beautifully-coloured flowers, branches or domes. There were always thousands of colourful fish that were never disturbed by our presence.

One particular dive was so amazing that it was worth coming out to the Pacific just for that alone. Very often we did not need to bother about wearing wetsuits when diving. The worry of encountering sharks while swimming was something that we had to contend with. We followed some elementary rules such as not swim-

ming early in the morning, or late in the evening, when sharks feed. No swimming in murky water, just after cleaning fish, or if bleeding, and no frantic splashing was allowed. I must admit I rarely felt one hundred percent comfortable and always kept a watch out.

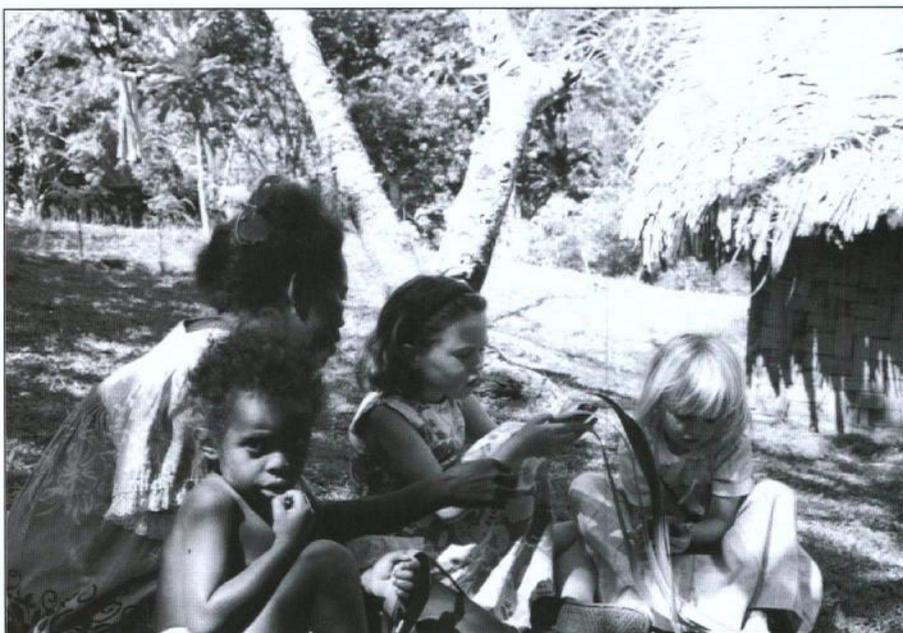
We caught a constant supply of fish. Numerous gifts of fruit and vegetables meant that our large stock of tinned food was unnecessary. Our tins made very acceptable presents or were used for bartering. We returned to Lautoka to pick up our next crew and prepare for the leg to Vanuatu. There was a small marina and boatyard where several yachts were being repaired. Many of these had suffered damage after hitting reefs. We had a two-day trip into the interior and saw some of the Fijian Indian culture.

Fiji to Vanuatu

I had imagined that ocean passages on the South Pacific would be idyllic downwind sailing in balmy trade winds and perfect weather. So far we had had nothing of the kind except within the coral reefs. So for this passage, I had resolved that we would wait for the right weather and pick our time carefully. I wanted the perfect passage and I am happy to say that my dream came true.

On 10th September we left Fiji on the tail end of a front. Our crew were John and Rose O'Mahoney, friends from Ireland who now live in Canada. The total distance was 605 miles north-west to Espiritu Santo Island. This is the northern port of entry into Vanuatu and meant that we could work our way south through the islands to Port Vila, the capital, from where we could clear out. We knew that by doing this we might face 170 miles against the trade winds and ocean currents but thought it would be rewarding. We had a good start covering 10 miles on the first day. The winds decreased from 25-30 knots to a steady 10-15 knots as the days went on. The log on the second day reads:

Today is the best we have had for a passage. Blue sky and sea, good dinner last night and good company. Shalimar has a steady motion. We continued the same watches. I did 6-9, Rose 9-12, John 12-3 and Onóra 3-6, each doing the same hours day and night. I was always in the cockpit in the mornings when the children got up. These early mornings gave me a very special time with the children. At dawn they would come into the cockpit in their nightclothes. They would sit or lie in the shelter of the fixed hood, asking questions or just looking at the sea and the sky. "Daddy, the sun is coming up.



Sheila and Christine are taught how to weave coconut palms. Maewo Island, Vanuatu.

PHOTO: Onóra Lynch

Put out the fishing line," Christine used to say. She might ask "How long is a whale?" or "Does the sea have eyes?"

Another morning my log reads:

0630 Sheila (8) and I are on deck. The sun is rising behind low-lying clouds, long rays of orange and red light shoot up into the sky. Sheila silently watches this beautiful sight and then says "the crack of dawn". They were happy and had got over their seasickness. During daylight we trolled a fishing line and this always provided a source of excitement.

The lures were almost as big as a wine bottle, designed to catch big fish. On the third day of this passage we hooked a marlin. This is the king of game fish and puts up a fierce fight when caught. They can swim up to 50mph when hunting or escaping from sharks. When that marlin took our line it reeled out furiously and I feared he would unreel the entire 500 metres. Eventually the marlin's long snout and dorsal fin appeared. He leaped clear out of the water, spun on his tail, the line went slack and he was gone. It was one of my most thrilling moments at sea. On this trip we reported our daily position to Keri Keri Radio in New Zealand, on the SSB radio. This is a private radio association and *Shalimar* was a subscriber. Onóra took charge of this job and became quite expert at drawing weather charts as described over the radio. Keri Keri included us on their roll call when requested and gave us daily weather forecasts. From a safety point of view this facility was very reassuring. Other boats we made friends with over the season often came up on the SSB at these times and so kept contact with us. We were in no hurry as *Shalimar* slipped through the water, almost playing with the swell like the shearwaters that accompanied us. The night skies sparkled with stars. The imposition of a landfall broke the spell of such a magical passage. On the morning of our 4th day we sailed between Pentecost and Ambrym Islands, Vanuatu. Pentecost is where the ancient tradition of land-diving from wooden towers is observed. Ambrym has an active volcano.

Both islands were heavily wooded down to the shore. Some of us spotted the fins of sharks lurking about. We attempted to anchor at Ambrym but the very steep shore and squalls gusting down the mountain made this difficult. We decided to sail on another 20 miles to Banan Bay, Malekula Island. On the way John hooked and landed a 1.2 metre mahimahi (dolphin fish). Anna expertly skinned, cleaned and cooked the fish on her own that evening.

While at anchor Sheila saw another shark near the stern of *Shalimar* which was probably attracted by the bits of fish thrown overboard. Onshore, edging the tropical jungle, was a tiny village of about five houses built from bamboo with thatched roofs. We celebrated John's birthday and a magnificent voyage.

Vanuatu, 15th September

We had a 60-mile leisurely voyage to Santo to clear customs formally.

There was plenty of bird and sea life. We had an interesting encounter with a sailfish who snapped at our lure but did not bite. We saw its sail or fin breaking the surface and following the lure for a minute. We were doing over seven knots at the time. Spirits were high as we hoped for a catch. This fish can be up to 18 feet long and is the fastest in the ocean, capable of speeds up to 60 mph. This fish was not fooled and disappeared. Later Rose caught a fine 1.1-metre wahoo which filled our freezer. After clearing at the wharf in Luganville, Santo, we anchored a mile away in Luganville Bay.

Malaria is endemic in this region. Our precautions included anti-malaria pills, mosquito nets over the hatches, mosquito coils, repellent sprays, creams and of course gin and tonic!

We anchored at least five cables offshore and remained on board after dusk. We explored the island by mini-bus chartered from 'Goodfella Tours'. The Americans were here during World War II and the place is full of derelict reminders of their presence. We visited a custom village where the wheel has not yet



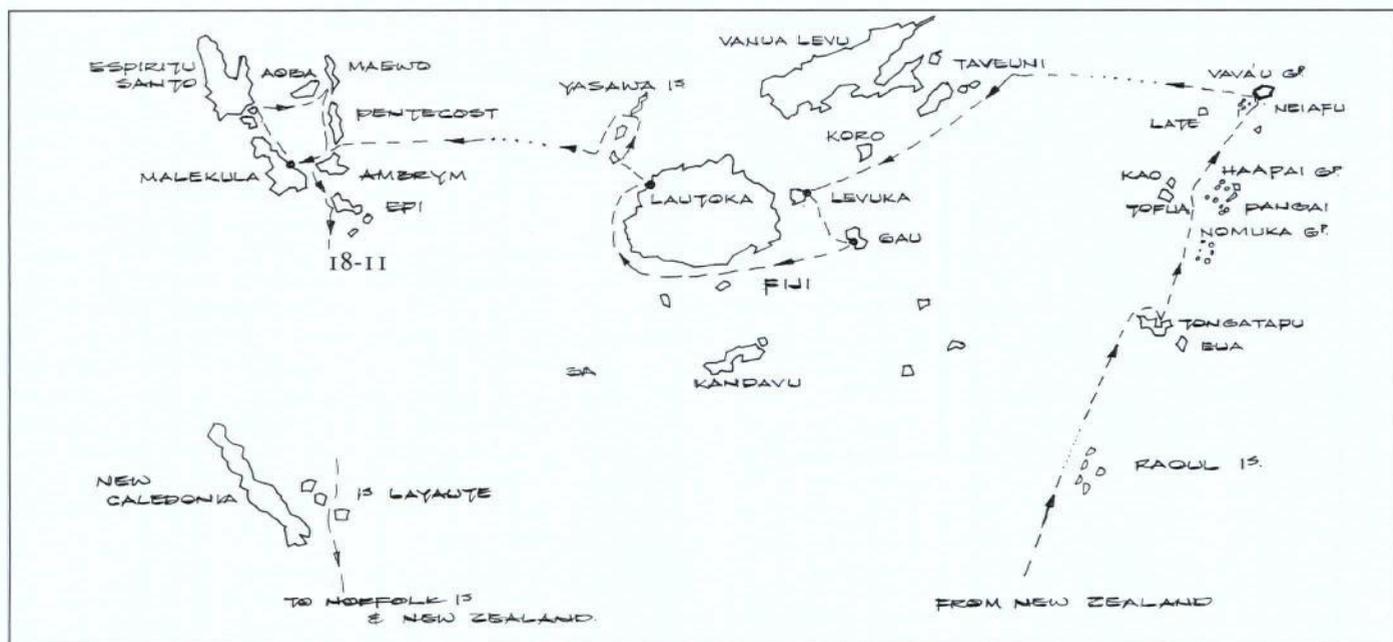
The Lynchs and friends aboard *Shalimar*, Maewo Island, Vanuatu.

PHOTO: John O'Mahoney

arrived. The men wore loincloths and the bare-breasted women wore a few twigs that could not be described as skirts.

On the 18th September, as luck would have it, a southerly wind enabled us to make an easterly passage to Maewo Island 63 miles away. Maewo became our South Pacific paradise island and was for all of us the highlight of the entire cruise. An American had drawn for us a sketch of a tiny anchorage which was not mentioned by any of the cruising guides. We anchored in 50 feet of calm water. Colourful fish swam about the boat and the coral on the bottom was clearly visible. Jungle-clad hills sloped to the shore. Children in dugout canoes shyly watched us from a distance. We were welcomed ashore and shown a waterfall and pool which could be used for bathing. A narrow trail over the hills led to a village where we were invited to join a wedding feast. It was so remote that I had no qualms in giving the school the computerised printout of my office balance sheets and profit loss accounts, sent to me by my accountant. They used it as drawing paper. We went on many walks into the jungle and the local boys carried Christine on their shoulders. We were given bunches of bananas, bags of shrimp and fruit and vegetables of all kinds. In return we gave gifts of clothes and took almost the entire village for a short sail on *Shalimar*. Our children were especially welcome and always the centre of attention. Parting from here four days later felt like saying goodbye to close friends. On 22nd September we set sail. Our anchor had been snagged in the coral and I was forced to scuba dive to free it. This was the first and only time that this occurred. We had overnight stops at Pentecost Island where we saw the land-diving towers and Ambrym Island where we bathed in volcanic hot springs.

Shalimar tacked for her first time in 5 months to sail into the anchorage at Epi. Here we saw the fine sight of large dug-out canoes with sails made from bunches of coconut palms, spread out in the shape of a fan, sailing into the sunset. On our final leg to Port Vila our engine broke down due to dirty fuel, forcing us to sail right into the inner harbour of Port Vila where we anchored in 30 metres. It was a relief to get in as I was not able to get the engine going. In fact I wished I had done a course on diesel engines before I set off, as I ended up learning the hard way. Our arrival into Vila was celebrated with a bottle of 1982



Krug! Port Vila was full of yachts and impressed us as a fine harbour and town. It was also a good place for crew changes and John and Rose flew home from there. About 35 yachts had taken part in the famous Musket Cove Regatta in Fiji and cruised in company to Vila while we had been exploring the islands further north. We spent a week getting *Shalimar* ready for the voyage to New Zealand via New Caledonia.

We were joined by James Ryan, Onóra's brother-in-law from Westport. Another friend from Ireland couldn't make it so we invited Kirsten, a New Zealander whom we met in Fiji, to join us.

Vanuatu to New Caledonia:

On October the 9th we sailed south-west on the most restful passage of all to New Caledonia which was 320 miles away. A gentle 10-15kts of easterly wind and long slow one-metre swell created ideal conditions for this two day passage. The Havannah Canal is the principal passage through the reefs from the east. Timing was important because of the strong tidal streams. I got a kick out of looking up the canal in the tidal almanac and discovering that the constant port was Yokohama, Japan. We were sorry we were unable to stop in Tana, Vanuatu or the Liberty Islands, New Caledonia, but could not do so because of customs regulations. The South Pacific may sound carefree but they are sticklers for the paperwork. We in fact stopped at an anchorage short of Noumea overnight and reported to Noumea Radio station that we had arrived. At the anchorage Onóra and I had an early-morning swim and later learned that we should not have done so as it was a breeding ground for sharks!

New Caledonia

Chic Noumea was a shock. This was France transported to the South Pacific and was in complete contrast to anywhere else we had been. Once we cleared customs we left for the Isle of Pines, 70 miles south-east. This island has magnificent beaches and picture-postcard turquoise water. James and I had one of our best scuba dives of the whole trip at the Isle of Pines. It was brilliant. We went with experienced guides and were hoping to see sharks in the wild. We saw superb colourful coral, including huge fan coral, a turtle, a giant tuna which I first thought was a shark, a crayfish and millions of reef fish. I was so exhilarated that I used my supply of air in 16 minutes when it should have lasted 35. Onóra and the girls walked to the top of Pic Nga (872 feet), the highest point of the isle. On our return to Noumea we intended anchoring at a small lagoon called Ilot Ndo. Once inside the lagoon I did not fancy the lack of shelter it offered so we decided to get out again. This involved motoring west against the

evening sun thus breaking the golden rule of pilotage through coral. Obscured by the glare we brushed against a reef and were lucky to escape without incident. Back in Noumea we made our final preparations for our last ocean passage. The atmosphere was very lively with yachts departing daily for New Zealand or Australia as the cyclone season approached. The children enjoyed meeting many of their friends again and went from boat to boat on the marina exchanging tales of their adventures. New Caledonia is the fourth largest island in the Pacific and is surrounded by the second largest barrier reef in the world.

The flat waters inside the reef offer infinite cruising and we were sorry our time was limited.

New Caledonia to New Zealand.

I had a niggling fear about the 847-mile passage to New Zealand for some time. The owner of *Shalimar* had kindly offered to fly to New Caledonia with some friends and sail down with me. We could hit some bad weather off the north coast of New Zealand and big seas from the Tasman. In my innocence I knew nothing of this before I left Ireland. I was concerned for the safety and comfort of the children but when I offered to fly them back they wanted to sail. Sheila said, "we want to say we did the whole trip." They had their own sense of achievement and insisted on coming even though they knew it might be unpleasant. I had been studying the weather maps in the marina office for a few days and watching for a suitable 'window'. There was a high over Australia and by motoring through this for a few days, westerlies could be expected to push us towards New Zealand. The best chance of encountering favourable winds was to stay west on the approach as the worst winds usually came from the south. This would add 150 miles to the voyage but we considered that it would be worth it. As it turned out we had beam winds for the eight day trip.

October 22nd

At 09.15 we changed the ship's clock to 11.15 which was New Zealand time. We had had enough of the darkness by 18.30 in the tropics and were happy to give ourselves 'a stretch in the evenings'. It was a beautiful day but there was very little wind. After two calm days the third morning brought a change to rough weather. It was Sheila's eighth birthday. My log reads:

Shortly after 06.30 when Sheila came up to the cockpit and looked out at the weather and sea conditions, her face dropped. It was a sad moment. She hoped we would have no wind and flat seas like yesterday. She had planned her birthday party on the aft deck, sitting around a tablecloth, picnic style. She took it all in good cheer.

We were warned of a front ahead by Keri Keri Radio and were expecting 20 knots but ended up getting 30 to 35 with gusts of 45 knots (force 9). The sailing was not easy during this time. We had furled the yankee and dropped the staysail and fully reefed the main. We set the sail for a reach and motored slowly a little closer to the wind for a few hours during the worst of the weather. This made *Shalimar's* motion reasonably comfortable, enabled us to charge the batteries and use the automatic pilot. In the rough seas I did not want to scare the children and needed to make sure they would not fall and injure themselves. They were so cheerful they lifted my spirits. James and I both slept during the strongest wind while Onóra and Kirsten looked after *Shalimar* and the children. I am a lucky man! The next day the winds eased but the sea remained rough. At latitude 27 south James saw a turtle floating on the surface. Later in the day my sleep was disturbed by Anna who had spotted a wandering albatross. I rushed on deck and got the closest glimpse ever of this magnificent bird flying a few feet over the aft deck. He inspected us for a few minutes and then disappeared. On the second day after the gale, Sheila as usual appeared in the cockpit in her nightclothes. This time she was pleased to see blue skies and much lighter winds. "Do you think we can go on to the aft deck without harnesses today and have my birthday party?" she asked. My log reads:

At 13.30 we hove-to and drifted towards Australia. Birthday cake, Sprite, grapes, potato crisps and balloons. A lone petrel appears as we sing 'Happy Birthday'. We have one of the most special birthday parties ever in one of the most unusual places in the world. We are less than 100 miles from Norfolk, 600 east of Australia and 480 north of New Zealand. Kirsten, James and I go for a mid-ocean swim. Kirsten cut her foot on the boarding ladder and Dr Onóra puts in two stitches.

On day 6 while on early morning watch I wrote in my log: *400 miles to North Cape. No sign of the sun. 98% cloud cover. The sea temperature has dropped to 19°C and has lost that deep blue of the tropics. And so this in a way marks the end of my fling here. It is sad to leave such a beautiful place where we had such a good time. I am no longer worried about the rest of the trip to New Zealand. I have an oilskin jacket on to keep me warm. A pair of shearwaters and an albatross zoom by and I am reminded of our trip north just over six months ago.*

The remaining two days of the passage were straightforward apart from a bashing when rounding the North Cape in very confused seas. We hooked two big albacore tuna, one of whom got away. We were all very pleased to tie up at the customs wharf in Opuá, the Bay of Islands on 30th October, having covered 1,052 miles since Noumea. Opuá was bustling with yachts arriving from all over the South Pacific to escape the cyclone season. After a few days' rest James left for Ireland and Kirsten returned to her home in the South Island.

New Zealand

New Zealand has two main islands which are long and narrow, spanning 1,100 miles from top to bottom. No place is more than 68 miles from the sea 80% of the 35 million population is actively involved in boating and most of this is done on the northeast coast of the North Island. We spent two months cruising this area. We did not find the isolation we expected and on occasions we found anchorages so crowded with boats on moorings that there was no room for us. The famous Bay of Islands was very attractive and provided excellent day-sailing in sheltered waters. It was a break not to be worried about coral reefs. I scuba-dived for scallops, the legal allowance being 20 per person. Dolphins were plentiful and we were thrilled to come across a family of orcas (killer whales) within two miles of Opuá harbour. They played around *Shalimar* for about half an hour, surfacing right beside the cockpit. There was abundant bird life. Shags perched

in the pahutakawa trees that grew along the shoreline. Gannet colonies transformed rocky outcrops into gleaming white beacons! In December we left the Bay of Islands and slowly worked our way towards Auckland along the sheltered northeast coast. The weather was very changeable with frequent fronts passing over. Many of the harbours had Maori names. Aotearoa is the Maori word for New Zealand meaning 'the long white cloud', which is what New Zealand looks like from the sea. At Whangamumu Harbour we anchored off an old whaling station. In Tutukaka marina most of the boats were for serious game-fishing and diving. The Poor Knights Islands lie 12 miles offshore and offer the best diving in New Zealand. The area is a marine reserve and I spent a day there with a diving company. At depths of 15 metres we swam through towering kelp forests, hundreds of fish such as john dory, golden snapper, kelpfish, wrasse and giant-size sting rays. A visit to Whangarei seemed fitting as *Shalimar* was built there in 1982. Whangarei, strategically placed, is popular with local and international yachts who undergo complete refits at very reasonable rates.

Christmas

Auckland was packed with boats and it seemed as if we got the last marina berth in the city. On 15th December Onóra's mother and father, Johnny and Sheila Mulloy, from Westport, flew out to spend Christmas with us. They could not have given us a nicer Christmas present. *Shalimar* looked marvellous, decorated from top to bottom, complete with tree and fairy lights. On 18th December, well-stocked, we had a leisurely sail to Waiheke Island in the sheltered waters of the Hauraki Gulf. It was a comfort to be away from the city and the noise of the traffic crossing the harbour bridge, above the Westhaven marina. The next day, Anna took the helm and engine controls while I lifted the anchor with the electric windlass. She was now very keen and ably hoisted the staysail on her own. A 35-mile downwind passage in glorious weather brought us to Great Barrier Island. We anchored at Graveyard Bay, Whangaparapara Harbour. Lush vegetation covered the hills right down to the shore. The huge pahutakawas (New Zealand christmas tree) were beginning to blossom with bright red flowers. In the morning we moved further into the bay near another old whaling station. Great Barrier has one of the last remaining natural forests of New Zealand and is now a national park. We spent a most enjoyable few days walking the trails through the pine, eucalyptus and native bush. On 23rd December we sailed to the Coromandel peninsula on the mainland, leaving the sunshine behind us. We were hit by a ferocious squall with a thick wall of rain that passed over in a matter of minutes. The forecast was for unsettled weather. Coromandel harbour was very shallow but the anchor dug in well and the holding was good. On Christmas Day we were welcomed to the local church by its tiny congregation. Santa Claus had found *Shalimar* without any difficulty and the atmosphere and fun were just like at home. Force 9 was forecast from the northeast compelling us to move to a more sheltered anchorage an hour away. Here there were already ten yachts at anchor. We had our Christmas swim followed by a gala dinner, crowned by Sheila's plum pudding brought all the way from Westport. I made telephone calls to my family on VHF through the coastal radio station. Within two days the weather had cleared and we returned to Auckland. There was a vast parade of boats of all kinds heading in the opposite direction to us, setting off on their summer holidays. We sadly sailed under the massive Auckland Harbour Bridge and returned *Shalimar* to her home berth at Westpark marina. Sheila and Johnny departed, very pleased with their cruise. On the 3rd January 1994 our turn came to say farewell to *Shalimar*, our home for nine months. It was a relief that we were all safe. We took the cautious options and might have been more adventurous but I have no regrets. The supreme reward for Onóra and I was to have spent so much time with our children while fulfilling our yearn for a long-distance cruise.

Sailing the Arctic Convoy Seas

Michael Coleman



The Faulkner Cup

Even though *Stella Maris*, my Bruce Roberts-designed 45-foot chined steel sloop, has sailed many thousands of blue water miles including previous voyages to Iceland (1987), Norway (1990) and to Greenland and Newfoundland (1992), she has in fact never sailed north of the Arctic Circle. This state of affairs could not continue. Over the years I have been vaguely contemplating an Arctic cruise and have greatly admired the outstanding cruises of John Gore-Grimes and, of course, Paddy Barry in venerable *Saint Patrick*. In *Stella Maris* I had, I believe, the ideal boat constructed in tough steel and heavily rigged with over-size fittings for security and peace of mind in gales and heavy weather.

I spread the word around my usual sailing companions and commenced serious planning. Having discussed my ideas with Paddy O'Connor of the Naval Service, he immediately expressed a desire to come on board as first mate and I must say that I was delighted as Paddy and myself have campaigned together previously. He is an outstanding deep sea sailor and we work very well together. Both Paddy and myself had relatives who served on the Arctic convoys during the war.

Paddy remembers, as a young boy, listening to his grandfather telling stories of the awful hardship – terrible weather, gallantry and endurance of those men who served in what has been called the toughest run of them all in the last war. As a tribute to these sailors, we decided to cruise to the North Cape of Norway, then on to Murmansk in North Russia, which was the port which most of the convoys sailed to as Archangel is closed in the winter months due to ice. From Murmansk we would roughly follow the homeward convoy route from Murmansk, north of Bear Island, then westward round the north of Iceland, down through the Denmark Strait to Reykjavik Bay where the convoys used to assemble and disperse. The total distance is close to 5,000 miles and we felt that it was achievable in a two-month cruise, provided too much time was not spent in port.

Having got the boat shipshape for the trip the next task was signing up the crew. Getting suitable sailors proved to be quite slow and difficult enough. My verbal enquiries made around the haunts and watering-holes in the harbour area frequented by seagoing types drew a blank. I eventually had to resort to placing an advertisement in the local paper and the local yacht clubs. I also displayed an advertisement in Wicklow Sailing Club as I felt that some sailors, after finishing the Round Ireland Race, could be interested. The advertisement was simple and to the point and went as follows: 'wanted crew for 2-month Arctic voyage,' and was inserted in the Yacht and Boat section of the newspaper. I always get a bit of a kick whenever I read the famous advertisement which that great adventurer Bill Tilman used to place in *The Times* before departing on his many world-class cruises and it went like this: 'Hand wanted for long voyage in small boat. No pay, no prospects, not much pleasure.'

Interestingly enough the first few who responded to the ad did enquire about the pay, and when informed that in fact they would

have to contribute towards the expenses of the voyage, quickly lost all interest. However, the ad was worthwhile as many fine sailors made contact and in the end I was spoiled for choice. I finally signed on Kevin White from Pope's Quay, Cork City as the 2nd Watch Leader as I intended to work a three-watch system when on passage. Kevin works on the oil rigs and indeed hard tough work it is – good training for the rough and tumble that is life on a small boat on the high seas. He had recently completed the Yachtmasters course and had sailed from Ireland to the Canary Islands last Autumn. I was glad to have him on board as he proved himself to be a very able sailor and a fine companionable shipmate. He was also that rarest of treasures afloat, a competent cook who actually liked working in the galley. The three deck hands were Adon Fitzgerald from Dingle who hails from a sea-faring family, had plenty of experience and crewed on one of the Round Ireland boats. Michael Keogh from Newport, Co. Mayo also from a sailing family, his father having successfully campaigned his yacht *Spirit of Mayo* in the Round Ireland Race, was the 2nd deck hand. Finally, Niall Brophy from Dublin completed the squad. Niall had little previous sailing experience but was very keen to do the voyage and was willing to learn. So having got the boat, in all respects, ready for sea, and having got a crew willing and able, I set a sailing date of 15th July.

So on the morning of Friday the 15th July I boarded the *Stella Maris* at her usual mooring at White Point, Cobh, let go the mooring and motored downriver to the town and made fast at the pier head. Some of the crew were waiting and we organised ourselves into two work parties and commenced storing up the boat. Thankfully it was a dry, sunny day which made the task a pleasant one. The storing-up went on all afternoon. The amount of stores which went on board was truly amazing and *Stella Maris* sank lower and lower in the water until eventually the boot-topping was completely submerged. I estimated that the boat's draft increased by six inches and that, in all, a total of 3 tons' weight was put on board, including the weight of 6 crew and their gear, 150 gallons fresh water and also 150 gallons of diesel. Even though the boat was deep in the water, she had plenty of reserve buoyancy and was not at all sluggish when we put to sea. At 2000 hours we were ready to go and having said our farewells to our families and friends, who had kindly turned up to give us a rousing sendoff, we slipped our lines, swung the boat around towards the Spit lighthouse and the open sea.

It was really a wonderful feeling to be heading for the wide open spaces with the lonely sea in all her moods and the sky in all its glory which was to be our home and our playground for the next two months. I usually find that the last week before departing on a major cruise can be quite stressful as in the end everything or almost everything is down to the skipper and the pressure mounts up. So as we motored seaward, I felt a great sense of relief as if a weight had been lifted from my shoulders.

It was great to be free, free at last. The ties which bound us

all to the land, to the daily grind of earning our daily bread were unloosed and the sea was there in a restful mood to welcome us with open arms.

We cleared the harbour at 2100hrs, and set our course eastward as our first stop was to be Lerwick in the Shetland Islands.

8 days and 12 hours out from home, we had covered 660 miles. We averaged 4.1 knots, a lot of it under power, but progress was satisfactory. Leg one was behind us, the weekend in port and the hospitality of Lerwick awaited.

Leg 2: Lerwick-Hammerfest

We passed a most pleasant and agreeable weekend in Lerwick. The evidence of the oil prosperity was easily discernable, much progress has been made since our last call a couple of years ago. The hotels, especially, have all been upgraded, the pubs and shops also have a prosperous air about them, not at all what one would expect in this remote outpost off the Scottish mainland. Fishing is still an important source of revenue and side-by-side with the oil service industry ensures a very busy maritime scene in and around the Shetlands. We made lots of friends in the Lerwick Boat Club. I must say that their hospitality was quite overwhelming. The round system of buying drinks is still very much in fashion in the club and before a glass was half empty another full one was in its place. We found it impossible to return their generosity, eventually accepting defeat as we approached hazy oblivion.

In the evening of the day following, which was Sunday, we strolled up to the club. Ivor, one of the club's more prominent members, was celebrating his Silver Wedding Anniversary and we were promptly whisked away to the party. We danced the night away stepping out to the hornpipes, bagpipes, highland flings, not to mention jigs and reels. By the early hours we were indeed again reeling, however, a great night was had by all.

We departed Lerwick the next morning around 10.00 bound for the North Cape via Hammerfest about 1,000 miles distant. Before leaving we stocked up with a few last-minute purchases of fresh fruit and veg, etc. Having cleared the harbour, we were pleased to find the wind from the SE force 3 and this would give us a broad reach. We hoisted sail, trimmed and adjusted the gear and settled down to a fine sail, skirting the northern shores of the Shetlands. Prior to sailing, we called to the harbour office to pay our dues. We obtained a long-range weather forecast which indicate light stable conditions with wind from the SE force 3 to 4.

Armed with this information we looked forward to swift and easy passage and so it proved to be. At 2000 the first evening out, we crossed the Greenwich Meridian and entered the Eastern Hemisphere. We had great sailing for the next few days – for one watch we averaged 7 knots. Occasionally, the wind backed and veered a few points but basically held true and fair. We gybed a few times in order to optimise our sailing performance – the younger members of the crew were keen racing men and so the sails and sheets were being constantly trimmed and adjusted. As the days went by and our northing increased, the nights became briefer and briefer.

On Friday 29th July at 00.30, *Stella Maris* crossed the Arctic Circle. We were 14 days out of Cobh. I took a bottle from the locker and put a few small tucks in the mainbrace in honour of the occasion. This was a first for the boat and crew and it was right that the event should not pass unnoticed. In all we were to remain almost one

month sailing in the Arctic waters.

At 20.00 the same evening we made our landfall off the mighty, lofty peaks of the Lofoten Islands which lay about 40 miles off the coast of mainland Norway. The islands looked magnificent in the evening sunshine, the Arctic night was so pleasant that the entire crew sat in the cockpit until well after midnight, chatting and storytelling. Kevin had us all enthralled telling us of his various home-brew and poteen recipes, dandelion and peapod shell was the best he reckoned and closely followed by bananas and parsnip. The Arctic high was very pronounced this year, accordingly the Nordic countries enjoyed a long fine summer. Arctic nights, at this latitude, are most agreeable – a soft silky feeling permeates the atmosphere. It never becomes dark so there is no need to use the binnacle light at all. It is a real pleasure to steer the ship over a dark green-tinted sea, under a clear starry sky flecked with streaks of cirrus, and watch the majestic Lofoten Islands slip by to starboard at a fine pace. Nights like these are what cruising is all about. Even though we were on the coast we still had 300 miles to go.

The next afternoon our spirits were dampened down somewhat as we were unexpectedly engulfed in thick fog which lasted on and off for the next 36 hours. When it did finally clear away, we were left rolling about in a flat calm off the entrance to the Sorosund which leads to Hammerfest. Now we had only 30 miles to go so it was a case of on with the Ford and motor through the scenic sound to our destination. The noon entry in the log book went as follows; '12.00 motoring NE through Sorosund to Hammerfest on the most beautiful morning imaginable – a truly heavenly environment with magnificent vistas of snow-spotted mountains reflected on a mirror-surfaced fjord together with a crystal-clear atmosphere overall. Heaven could not be better.' We tied alongside the pontoon right in the centre of town at 1800.

The locals claim that Hammerfest is the most northern city in the world, a claim hotly disputed by all the authorities of Hunningsvag, which is 50 miles further NE. Roll Stianeen, the local harbourmaster and pilot, paid us a visit the following morning. He was very helpful, supplying weather charts and local pilotage information, etc. The port is very busy handling 4,000 ships per annum, many of them cruise liners. Fishing boats and the oil industry service ships are also important. The area is extraordinarily prosperous having regard to its remote



Stella Maris' crew (l to r): K White, M Coleman, M Keogh, A Fitzgerald, N Brophy, P O'Connor.

PHOTO: Norwegian Press

location and extra-harsh climate. It has experienced a checkered history, having been completely destroyed on 3 separate occasions. A hurricane in 1856 ravaged the town, again in 1890 the town was left in ashes after a disastrous fire. When the German occupation forces withdrew 50 years ago in 1944, it was totally destroyed by fire. Only one building was left standing, which was the burial chapel. The Norwegians are a resilient and industrial nation and the city was quickly rebuilt after the war. It is now a very modern town with no building (except the chapel) more than 50 years old. The pontoon adjoined the Sea Cat terminal; Sea Cats (giant motorised catamarans) are a regular sight in the fjords, they glide along at anything up to 30 knots. Recently a service has been inaugurated between Hammerfest and Murmansk. When we hear this, we went on board to get pilotage information from the captain. Business was good and passengers were travelling to and fro without any problems. Customs and immigration formalities were routine. The long delays and red tape associated with entering Russia, which was previously the norm, had disappeared – we were glad to hear this and we looked forward to a trouble-free visit – little did we know what lay in store. Prior to leaving Cobh I had sent a message to the harbourmaster of Murmansk informing him of our intended visit. I received a positive response – we would be most welcome, so I was told.

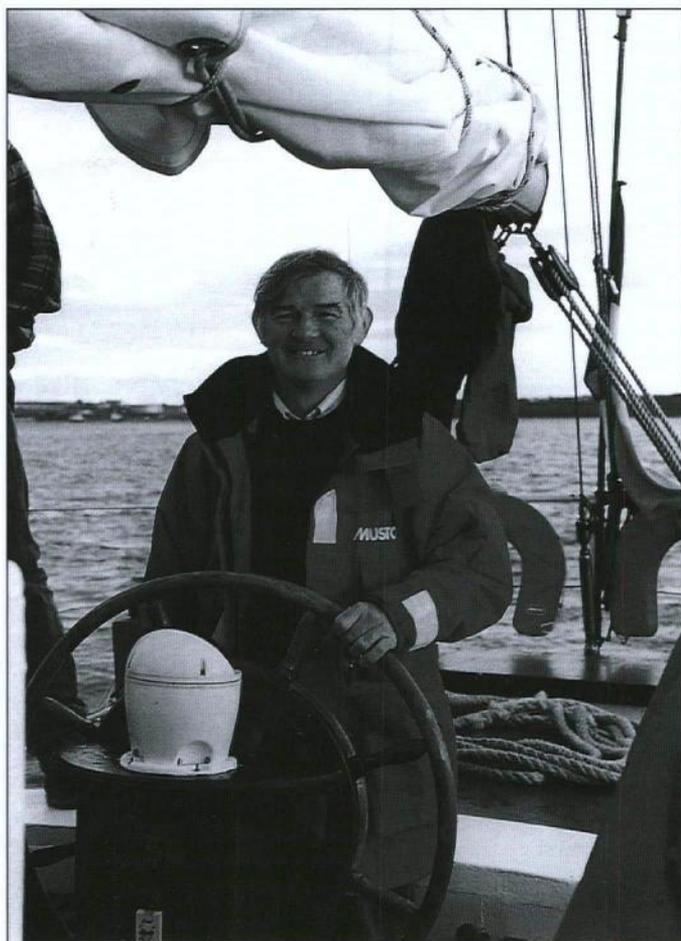
Leg 3: Coasting in the Arctic

After a relaxing 28 hours in port, we slipped from the pontoon at 22.00 and motored seaward. We were anticipating a pleasant night's sail, however it was not to be as a few short miles out we picked up a rope or net in our propeller – our speed slowed to a crawl. We turned about and headed back, making fast again one hour later. We located a diver the next day and he cut away the obstruction which proved to be part of a heavy net. The job was completed by noon and following a barbecue lunch we again sailed for Murmansk via the North Cape (distance was about 300 miles). We experienced nice easy sailing through fjords and sounds to the North Cape which we passed at 00.25 on Thursday 4th August on day number 20. I must say that it is a magnificent, imposing headland as befits its strategic location right at the tip of mainland Europe.

We sailed past in moderate winds aft of the beam with all sail drawing. We were hit by several katabatic squalls a couple of miles past it and had some excitement on deck slapping in reefs in the main and changing down headsails. Everybody was in great form and the enthusiasm and efficiency on deck would do justice to the Whitbread boat. Two hours later the excitement was all over, the breeze faded away as suddenly as it appeared and it was back to plain sailing again. By midnight next day Vardo lay on the beam to the south. I would have very much liked to have called in there. It is just a small little port but very historic because of its association with those two indomitable Arctic explorers, namely Nansen and Amundsen. Many of their Arctic voyages ended there. The visibility was poor so we decided to press on. The entrance to the Kola inlet, the head of which lays Murmansk port, was now only 80 miles to the SE and the port was a further 35 miles inland. We crossed into Russian waters some three and a half hours later.

The dividing line is shown on the chart, the lines follow the 32nd meridian until 12 miles off the coast and abruptly stops. I assume that there must be some dispute with Norway concerning the waters close in to their shores. Several hours later brought us off the Poluoostrov Rybachi peninsula. We sailed close to the coast, it was barren and bare and austere-looking. However, we were still in the 70°N latitude – well north of the treeline. As we approached the entrance to the Kila inlet we made many efforts to contact the port authorities on VHF but without success. We continued our efforts all afternoon and even as we sailed up the inlet.

We arrived off the entrance to the inlet around 1400. We



Stella Maris skipper Michael Coleman.

PHOTO: K White

expected to be met and challenged by some port control tender or similar vessel but there was nothing in sight so we continued on in at a steady 5 knots, the breeze was a steady force 4 and it was a fine, sunny afternoon. Many bays and tributaries adjoin the main inlet and many large warships were at anchor in these. The naval presence was everywhere. A few miles in from the sea we were passed by the Pilot cutter, we called on VHF but got no reply. When he came close we hailed them over, he was obviously very busy and carried on his way after giving us a friendly wave. Several small coastwise vessels and harbour craft honked their sirens and waved friendly greetings as we sailed in. We were pleased with these reactions and confident that we would receive a friendly welcome when we would finally tie up. Halfway up the inlet we passed the military city of Severomorsk. This city is entirely populated by military personnel to the exclusion of civilians and is also a massive naval base with a large collection of perhaps the mightiest naval power in the world. We counted rows and rows of the large surface ships of various types, plus submarines – all heavily-armed and in pristine condition. Obviously the military here had a limitless budget. Further on we passed a fleet of older, run-down warships at mooring buoys and anchors. Some of these were in a very sorry state, indeed, some were very old and it looked as if the scrapyard would be their next port of call.

In amongst these we spotted what was, to Paddy and myself, a nostalgic sight, we both spotted it simultaneously – it was a flower-class Corvette and she looked in good enough condition. This ship and others of her type played an heroic and decisive role in the battle of the Atlantic protecting the convoys from submarine attack. Regrettably when the war was over they were all consigned to the scrapyard one by one, surely at least one of them should have retained as a museum ship in honour of the pivotal and historic contribution that they played in bringing

final victory. I hope that the Russians look after their one as the only other in existence is in Canada. Just before coming to the outskirts of Murmansk port itself, we passed a fleet of the most powerful icebreakers in the world. Some of these were nuclear-powered and showing the nuclear symbol on the bow. Some had various bow designs indicating that the design process still has not been optimised. The Russians are acknowledged experts in this field.

We finally tied up at the passenger landing stage at 2000. I immediately hopped ashore to a nearby watchman's hut and after much effort managed to get him to phone the customs officials and inform them of our arrival and requested them to attend our vessel. When I pointed to the 'Q' flag which we were flying he got the message straight away. One hour later we were still waiting for the officials to appear. The younger members of the crew were getting restless – after all it was Friday night and we were at our final destination – the place which we were aiming for and talking about for the last three weeks. Another hour later, I figured that it was okay to let the crew go ashore so they gleefully headed for the bright lights.

Soon afterwards the drama began. A group of 4 stern-faced officials plus 2 civilians appeared on the quayside. We helped them on board and invited them into the saloon and offered them the hospitality of the ship by placing a bottle of Paddy and glasses on the table. They identified themselves to us as being Customs, Immigration, Coastguard, local Military Commander and finally the Chief of the Border Guards plus an interpreter. There were no words of welcome and they immediately started a line of hostile and aggressive questions. Where did we come from, why did we come to Murmansk, what was our cargo, what did we want, what was the purpose of our visit, did we belong to Greenpeace, who gave us permission to visit Murmansk, did we not know that no yachts ever come to Murmansk as it was not a pleasure port?

I must say that we were taken aback somewhat by this turn of events. In all my time at sea I had never been made to feel unwelcome anywhere, this was a new and most unpleasant experience. I explained the motivation behind the voyage and the Arctic Convoy connections. It did not seem to impress them at all nor indeed interest them in the slightest. I explained the concept of deep sea cruising, I showed them some past Irish Cruising Club annuals which we always keep on board but the response was a puzzled and bewildered look. The interrogation, for such is what it was, went on for over two hours. Initially they all declined to partake of the hospitality offer but one by one they mellowed somewhat and had a taste. But one official, the Chief of the Border Guards, continued the hostile and aggressive line of questions. He went over and over the same questions. He also put it to us several times that we had no permission to be in Murmansk. I informed him strongly that we had verbal agreement given freely by the harbourmaster, only one month previously. I also requested him to check this out with the said harbourmaster and he eventually agreed to do this. I requested permission to telephone him but this was refused.

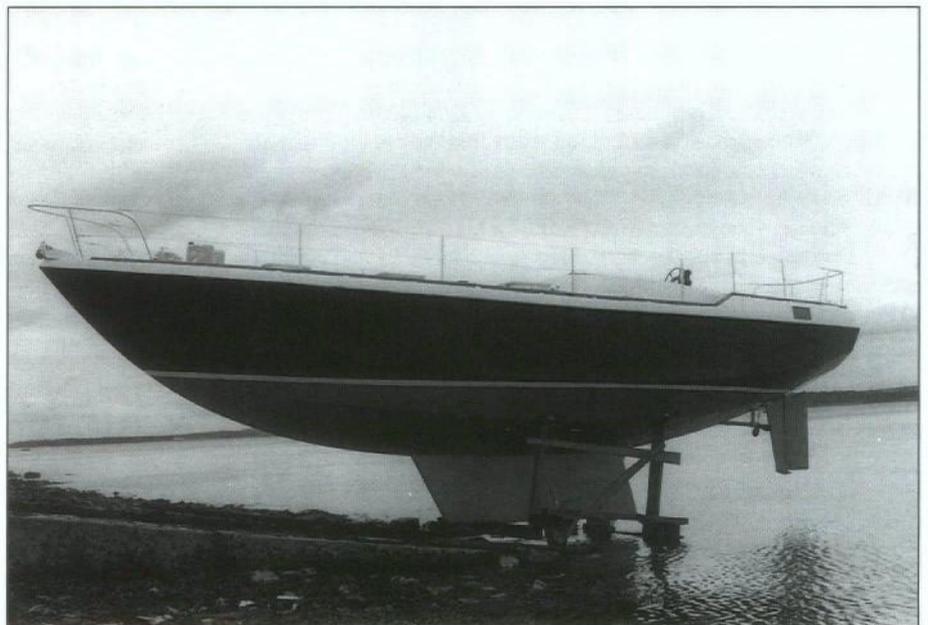
During a lull in the inquisition, the customs officer requested us to fill out the usual crew declaration forms detailing valuables etc, such as cameras and camcorders and, of course, bonded stores. We usually carry a shotgun on these voyages and we declared this in the appropriate column on the customs declaration. This

again caused a major crisis, much discussion in Russian followed, much shaking of heads and glum-looking expressions. The weapon had to be produced, passed around and examined. It had to be placed in a locker and sealed. The next official to enter the fray was the local military commander and he requested permission to inspect our charts to check our route along the Russian coast and the approaches to the port. During my work as a marine pilot back home in Cork I am frequently on board Russian ships. I occasionally discussed my plans to sail to Murmansk with some captains and usually they offer any help they can. In this way I had acquired a collection of Russian charts. Charts are now quite expensive and we had over 50 on board for this voyage alone, so to receive gifts of them is very welcome indeed.

Unfortunately, unknown to me these charts were stamped 'for military use only' and also another notice saying 'when no longer required destroy immediately'. When he saw these he flew into a rage and entered an excited and agitated discussion with his colleagues – we were really in trouble now, previously we were in the frying pan, now we were really and truly in the fire. How could I account for the fact that I had top secret Russian charts on board, he demanded to know, and in the next breath "are you a stealth craft on a secret mission?" "are you all spies?" he enquired, stamping his fist on his charts. This was really incredible and we could not believe our ears. For a second I lost my composure and gave a flippant reply – "yes, we are all spies for Bord na Móna, we are here on a top secret mission to find how much turf you have in Siberia. In Ireland we are building a fleet of turf-powered submarines and we are going to ship your turf back to Ireland in secret." The interpreter laughed at this and when he finished translating they all had a good laugh and the atmosphere on board improved. Things began to look better – maybe we would not end up in the gulag after all.

"Please to be serious, please to be serious," he responded. I explained my marine background and that I acquired the charts as presents from friendly Russian fellow mariners – such people do exist, I reminded him, in fact all the Russians I had met up until now were friendly, courteous and easy-going – the finest people one could wish to meet.

As the interrogation wore on it became more and more tiresome. It was harder to keep cool and composed. The whole situation was comical and indeed farcical. It was difficult to take the whole thing seriously. The most comical sight of the night was the customs officer in a tiddy state attempting to seal the



Stella Maris on launching slipway.

PHOTO: Michael Coleman

gun locker with makeshift paper seals and using an evomastic gun as a sealing agent. After two hours the interpreter informed us that we were all under house arrest – or was it boat arrest. They would decide our fate in the morning. They then trooped ashore, taking our charts, our passports and our ship's log with them. I again protested at our treatment and insisted that a receipt be given for the items removed from the boat. This they did before disembarking. After one or two nightcaps we retired to our bunks. It had proven to be a long and wearisome introduction to Russian officialdom. Things would be better in the morning, or so we hoped.

But we hoped in vain as at 10.00 the next morning an official visited the boat and informed us that nothing would change until Monday – it was now Saturday – three days confined to the boat did not appeal to us at all. After a brief discussion among ourselves we decided that the best line of action now would be to cut

our losses and sail back to Norway. Our request that our charts etc be returned on board and that we be allowed to leave were refused. Before departing the official pointed out that we were to be placed under the protection of two armed soldiers just in case we decided to do a runner. So there was nothing for it but to grin and bear it for the weekend. Saturday was a wet and cold day. We passed most of it in our bunks, reading and catching up on sleep. Sunday turned out fine and sunny. We passed the day doing various bits of maintenance around the boat.

We had a little party in the evening to pass away the night. We introduced our guardian angels to the joys of Irish whiskey, they enjoyed it – in fact they could not get enough. We had to limit their supply because if they became merry whilst on duty we could be charged with sabotaging the security of the Russian state, after all we could not have that.

Perhaps I should say a couple of words as to how the boys got on, on their run ashore to the bright lights. They ended up in the bar of the Arctic Hotel, surprise, surprise! The Arctic is the best around, standards are not what they were in Norway but in fairness the prices were not as well, everything was quite cheap. The general impression of the place was not great. There was a run-down air about, dilapidated is about the best word to describe it. Evidence of poverty was widespread, people begging in the street were commonplace. The buildings were in a state of semi-decay, even the Arctic Hotel had an air of run-down grandeur about it, its former glory was long past gone. The contrast with Norway was very stark, indeed it could not have been starker. I had been to Leningrad four years ago and knew what to expect, things have not improved in the interim. It was sad to see one of the great countries of the world reduced to the status of a third world state. Let's hope that things will get better because if they do not I would very much fear for their future. Obviously, the 'system' has not been working for a very long time.

We rose early on Monday morning, we were hoping against hope that they would have a change of heart. We waited and waited until 12 noon, nothing happened – nobody came near us – it was time for us to take an initiative. I spoke to our guards and advised them that we intended to sail in one hour with or without their permission – we had had enough. Soon afterwards the officials arrived on board. Our charts and passports were returned to us. They ordered us to leave at once and return to Norway, we had no option but to comply. They had spoken with the harbourmaster, he did confirm our version of events but nevertheless we had to go. All the officials, with the notable



Scrapping warships, Russian-style.

PHOTO: Michael Coleman

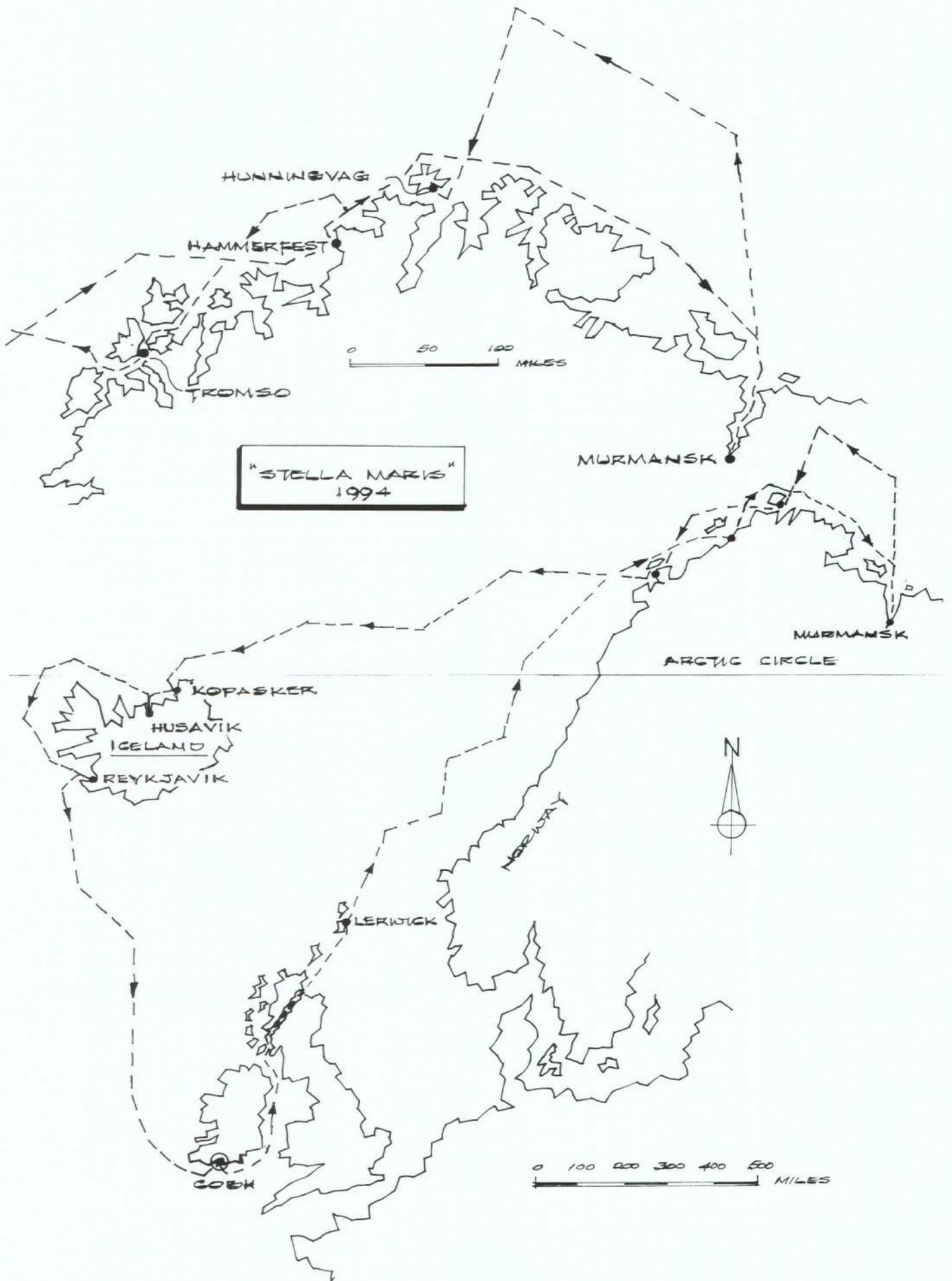
exception of the Chief of the Border Police, expressed regret at the way things turned out. They even gave us little gift tokens and insisted on handshakes before leaving.

We were all very disappointed and a little upset at the way things ended up as we had hoped that common sense would prevail. The officials did not seem to be in any hurry ashore, maybe they were expecting some more hospitality. In this they were mistaken, the party was well and truly over. I pointed out the Irish flag flying proudly on our transom and informed him that, even though we were in Murmansk harbour, *Stella Maris* was in law a little piece of Ireland and that if we were not welcome in Murmansk then he and his officials were not welcome on board. I immediately started the motor and started to cast off while they quickly scampered ashore. We backed out into the river and headed downstream.

Straight away a navy tugboat approached and made signs indicating that he wished to tow us out of port. We were certainly having none of this. It would be a most undignified departure especially up off the city with half the population looking on. As it turned out it was right in the middle of the flood tide and our progress was painfully slow, we eventually relented and accepted the tow. We were swiftly towed out to sea and at least we saved on the fuel oil. We passed the navy bases on the way out but the tugboat made sure that we did not get close enough to see anything. I should mention their unique method of scrapping their warships when their useful(?) life is over. The method is simplicity itself even if it does leave a blot on the environment for many years. The main guns are removed and the ship is then rammed, full ahead, up on a convenient beach and abandoned to rot and fall apart. Dozens of such wrecks blight the austere grandeur of the Kila inlet.

When we arrived out at sea, the tug slipped his rope and we were on our own, or so we thought. Soon afterwards a frigate came close and hailed us – we were to follow him until we were in international waters, he informed us in very poor English. We were surprised at this development, the tugboat was a little low on status but a fully-manned frigate with guided missiles – this was style with a capital S, certainly we were getting the full treatment.

We followed our naval escort but soon it became apparent that we were at cross-purposes. The course back to the North Cape was more or less NW. Our escort was insisting that we steer N, this would add a lot of distance to our voyage, naturally we were not keen to do this. The fastest route back to Norway was our



preferred choice. Naval frigates capable of 35 knots are not designed to escort cruising yachts of 5 knots. He could not continually start and stop his engines so he was obliged to steam at this dead slow pace which was about 12 knots. The whole thing was a frustrating and irksome experience for both of us. We continued to steer NW and our escort continued to steam past close on our port side in an effort to force us to comply with his instructions. This cat-and-mouse game continued for 12 hours until we were about 60 miles out. At about 0400 in the morning he made a close run past at high speed flashing his searchlights, blowing his siren and then took off in a cloud of smoke back E. He called up and wished us a safe passage, this was a nice gesture – he was only doing his duty and carrying out orders issued from his high command. We were glad to see the last of him – we were free men again – we were relieved when the affair was over. I think that we have all seen the first and the last of Murmansk.

Our plan was now to sail to Bear Island which is half-way between the North Cape and Spitzbergen and then west around the north of Iceland to Reykjavik and finally home. A total distance of around 2,500 miles. After an easy first day out, the weather turned against us with a vengeance. The wind swung around to the NW and over the next 12 hours gradually increased until it was a full gale and right on the nose to boot. The barometer dropped to 973 and the temperature hovered around zero. We reefed down to treble-reefed main and storm jib, any less and the boat would not go to weather at all. It was very tough going indeed as the squalls which were really vicious turned from rain to sleet. Our cup of misery had really runneth over. Our position was about 100 miles NE of the North Cape and Bear Island lay 200 miles dead to weather. Spitzbergen is only 150 miles N of Bear Island. The water between the two is quite shallow so the North Cape current, that is the northern end of the North Atlantic Drift, funnels strongly east. Our prospects of making progress were almost nil with everything stacked against us. After a day of beating in awful condition we decided to cut our losses and run to Hunningsvag just inside the North Cape. Nobody had eaten or slept properly for over two days and some of the younger crew members were weakened by seasickness, conditions on board were atrocious. Everything was wet and the icy cold penetrated everywhere. As we closed the land, conditions improved rapidly. We arrived in Hunningsvag on Thursday 11th August. We were one month out from the Holy Ground.

The joys of entering port on a fine sunny morning after beating into an Arctic gale are great indeed. Hunningsvag is a delightful town, it is the gateway to the North Cape. John Gore-Grimes described it very well when he visited there a few years back. John, the bar Ritz is still going strong and still serving B52s. We passed two pleasant and relaxing days in port and really enjoyed the place – the whole area possesses great natural beauty. Before leaving we checked the weather chart and it was to be very light, fine conditions for the next week. We decided to motor-sail SW through fjords and sounds to Tromso and depart from there to Ireland. Our route inside the islands took us through some of the finest scenery in northern Norway. It took us through the Mageroyssund, west through the Masoyssund then SW through the Rolvsosund. As we approached the island of Soroy the visibility closed in. As we had no radar we headed out to sea and when we were about two miles off the land we came

around onto our SW course, plotting our position every hour so. After 12 hours the fog lifted and we again closed the land and entered the Fugloysund which separates the islands of Vanna and Arnoy. Finally we motored SW through the Grotssundet which leads to Tromso where we made fast alongside the yacht pontoon right in the heart of the city at 23.00 on Sunday August 14.

Much has been written about Tromso in previous ICC annuals. It is indeed a pleasant city located in a beautiful setting. We enjoyed a brief stay – the long road west beckoned, it was now mid-August, the sun was well on its way south and it was also time for us to think of heading homeward. There are many



Stella Maris in rough conditions.

PHOTO: P O'Connor

places of interest in Tromso, the polar museum proved to have a magnetic attraction. There were many fine exhibits on show, showing life in the Arctic. However, most of the museum is given over to the life and extraordinary achievements of the most famous and one of the bravest Arctic explorers of them all, namely Roald Amundsen. His achievements were many including the first navigation of the North-West Passage in the little *Gjoa*, which is now restored and preserved in the Oslo Maritime Museum and on show to all. Amundsen was also of course the discoverer of the South Pole, using dogs and sledges. He then took to the air and led the first expedition that succeeded in crossing the Polar Sea by airship. To see the large collection of exhibits was fascinating and we spent many hours soaking up the unique ambience of the place. We were sorry we could not linger longer.

Leg 4: Norway to Iceland

We departed from Tromso at 10.00 on Tuesday. The long-range weather forecast was favourable – we should get light to moderate SW'ly winds for most of the passage. So it proved to be – we were blessed with some fine sailing, every day we rolled off more than 100 miles. For the most part it was quite mild for the latitude – remember for all the passage we remained north of the Arctic Circle. We experienced some really spectacular sunsets and indeed sunrises as well. Many whales were sighted but not one ship or fishing vessel – it is a lonely part of the world. After seven days out we raised Langanes Point on the extreme NE corner of Iceland. We planned to continue on around the Melrakka Sletta peninsula and head for the fishing village of Kopasker, 110 miles along the coast. Soon after our landfall we ran into fog, again the satnav earned its keep. The only chart of Iceland on board was number 565. This shows all of Iceland on

one sheet, so the detail was not great. However, a local fishing boat, observing our timid approach, approached and offered to lead us in. Soon we were alongside and entertaining him in the saloon.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of cruising is the friendliness and hospitality which are unexpectedly received in small, isolated fishing communities. So it was in Kopasker. Gummy, our new-found friend, insisted on inviting the crew ashore to his house and organised a barbecue on the spot. We protested but he insisted – an enjoyable night was had by all.

After a twelve-hour stay we departed early the next morning bound for Husavik around the corner, 30 miles away. Kopasker was so small that we were unable to get the stores we needed. After a leisurely morning sail we arrived in Husavik early in the afternoon. Kopasker had a population of only several hundred, Husavik was a city by comparison boasting a population of several thousand. Having purchased our stores, we were on our way again with 24 hours, destination Reykjavik, distance 400 miles.

I shall never forget this passage, the weather for the most part was simply *ATROCIOUS*. We encountered gale and storm force winds for most of the run. Our course would take us around the Horn of Iceland whose reputation is almost as notorious as its southern namesake. Our progress was brisk enough as for the most part the wind was abaft the beam, however as we were in soundings and never more than 40 miles from the land, very heavy dangerous seas built up. We were running before them with just storm sails set, also training lines and warps with tyres attached to slow the boat down. Having passed the fearsome Horn we clawed our way seaward until we were 40 miles off the land. The wind was NE and full gale force with storm force gusts in the frequent squalls which were really vicious. We were extremely anxious to get a good offing from the land, because had the wind backed just a point or two we would be then on a lee shore and our predicament would be most uncomfortable to say the least. When we were 40 miles off the land we deemed it safe to gybe around and run south parallel to the coast. Shortly after the gybe we sighted a large iceberg, doubtless there were more about – this added to the already-tense atmosphere on board. Storm force winds with its associated poor visibility is one thing but when icebergs come into the picture then our cup of misery was complete. We posted an ice-watch and prayed for an improvement in conditions.

Unfortunately, our prayers went unheeded – apparently the Good Lord had confidence in us and decided to test us further. We were continually shipping heavy water on deck and occasionally the pounding forward was very heavy as we hit the seas. The conditions were the worst the boat was ever out in. We had every confidence in the boat and gear but heavy weather sailing in a small boat is not a pleasant experience.

Just before midnight on the second day out we shipped a really big sea on the port quarter, it completely filled the cockpit and threw the boat over on her beam ends. Everything happened so quickly that it was difficult to know the exact sequence of events. I was on the helm myself, things were too hairy to press on, I gave the order to get all sail off her – we would run under bare poles for the night and hope for an improvement in the morning. The boat would not hold her course so we lashed the helm and went below leaving one man on lookout changing over every hour. We passed a most miserable night, it was black as death itself and the storm continued its fury until well after dawn when the barometer showed a feeble unsteady effort at a rise. Later, the low-flying cloud lifted a little and later again we saw the odd glimpse of blue sky through ragged gaps.

The gale eventually blew itself out as all gales do, we got under sail again and set a course SE to Reykjavik which was now only 100 miles ahead. The wind was so fierce that it blew the masthead light clean off, it blew the blades off the Aero Generator and the constant pounding caused the plating to be pushed in the way of the forefoot causing a starved bow effect.

The last 100 miles were easy enough and we came alongside the yacht pontoon at Reykjavik at 1000 on Sunday 28th August, day 44 of the cruise.

Leg 5: Iceland-Ireland

Again, we enjoyed the calm after the storm. Reykjavik was good to us. It was fine and sunny and all bedding and clothes were brought up on deck. The boat looked like the back yard of a Chinese laundry. We did the rounds visiting a few pubs in the evening. Things have really changed as during my previous visit seven years ago no pubs existed at all as beer could only be bought at government-licensed stores. The Icelanders learned fast when the law changed, now there are pubs everywhere. We were enjoying a casual drink in one when the musicians struck up and rendered the tunes of a few well-known Irish ballads. We joined in and before the night was out raised the rafters. Everybody seemed to enjoy our contribution. The landlord struck up a conversation and eventually inquired "have you tried the black death yet?" Our puzzled looks indicated that we had not. He placed a tray before us containing dried cubes of shark meat which smelt horrible. The black death consisted of eating a cube followed immediately by a tot of raw local vodka. We passed the test and afterwards received the hospitality of the house.

We remained for 30 hours, the season was drawing to a close, the nights were closing in there was a definite nip in the air – it was time to head south. We sailed at 1400 on Monday for Cobh, the distance was roughly 1,000 miles – we should do it in 10 days at most. As it turned out the passage was completed in 8 days. We had hoped for an easy passage but it was not so. The first few days were easy enough but the wind slowly built as did the sea. As we approached Rockall conditions were rough enough, however we reeled off the miles quickly enough – no day did we log less than 100 miles. After Rockall conditions became more favourable, the wind veered around to the SW to give us a fast reach to the Irish coast. We made our landfall on Inis Tearacht at midnight on 6th September. We were seven and a half days out. We called in to Baltimore at 15.30.

Showers, steaks and stout were the order of the evening. We were glad to be back in our own backyard. It was a great voyage – a great adventure – one to look back on with pride when I am in the rocking chair.

My thanks to all who helped us in various ways, Paddy Barry who loaned charts etc, Mike Whelan of Celtic Diving from Cobh who loaned us various items of marine equipment and Dave Hopkins who did likewise. A special thank you to my wife Eileen and family who kept the shore base ticking over in my absence – it seems that I am not indispensable after all. I must not forget Liz O'Boyle who kindly offered to decipher my scribbling and type this log up on computer disk. To everybody who helped us, my sincere thanks and last of all the crew – well done lads, I could not have asked for better.

We sailed up the coast to the Holy Ground the next day – we were delighted to receive a rousing welcome home from our families and friends and our final thoughts were;

*And doesn't old Cove look charming there,
Watching the wild waves' motion,
Leaning her back up against the hills,
With the tips of her toes in the ocean.
IT WAS GREAT TO BE HOME.*

We won't know where we are until we're there

W M Nixon

It was of course the Blessed Aidan who supplied the title which defined our somewhat unstructured summer, which was largely dictated by circumstances beyond our control. We were trying to arrange a rendezvous in West Cork with the said Mr Tyrrell, who was expecting to be cruising there or thereabouts with Sartor Parvis and Dad's Army in *Mandalay*. Its somewhat difficult to arrange a rendezvous when a location cannot be agreed in the first instance. But rigidity of planning is totally at variance with the true spirit of West Cork cruising. So when we tried to tie them down by demanding where they'd be on a certain Friday evening, Aidan's response was: "We won't know where we are until we're there." Yet somehow or other, meetings did take place, and we'd some fine old times.

It was typical of the season generally. We managed to start it early by not really de-commissioning *Witchcraft* in the winter. About a million years ago (1964 to be precise) we managed to win the Round Isle of Man Race from Ramsey with the old *Ainmara* in the days before she became a farmyard ornament. Thirty years on, it seemed reasonable to go back. But as they'd moved the race to the Bank Holiday at the beginning of May, the only way we could be sure of being ready was not to make the boat unready in the first place.

The horrible Spring weather would have defeated any fitting-out programme in any case. But as the end of April approached, conditions relented, and we put together a proper ICC crew in order to have an old-fashioned cruising weekend in which the

race round the island would only be part of the programme. Somehow we sailed from Howth in the small hours of Saturday April 30th, and breakfast time found *Witchcraft* trundling along in a sunny westerly with the Isle of Man emerging from the morning mists and the crew of myself, Ed Wheeler, John Malcolm and Davy McBride (all ICC), together with John's brother Charlie, beginning to hope that Spring might at last have arrived.

Taking the flood up the island's east coast, towards lunchtime we were getting near the narrow little drying harbour of Laxey, so we nudged our way in, kissing the sand in the final yards to the outer quay wall. Ed and I were enchanted to find that the traditional Manx nobby on the quayside having her sternpost renewed was none other than *White Heather*, a resident of Groomsport on Belfast Lough during our childhood, when Plunkett Connolly worked for many years to restore her. Poor old Plunkett never quite finished the job, but now back on the island Mike Clark keeps her in sailing trim.

Davy got talking to a man working on a little fishing boat, and called us over to tell us the salmon still run in the river, as the name Laxey implies. Rubbish, said we, salmon don't run – they swim. We further added to the gaiety of nations by getting Davy with his pointy hat to pose for photos among gnomes clustered outside a tiny place called Pixie Cottage. It served us right for being such smart alics, when, after a pub lunch in Laxey and sailing on up the coast to Ramsey in sunshine, the crucial task of drying out in Ramsey's attractive harbour went slightly astray. In short, *Witchcraft* dried out down by the nose.

It was no way to treat a lady, but we'd to make the best of it, and the party in the Manx Sailing & Cruising Club chambers on the quayside was remarkable, not least for meeting the charming Margaret Fraser-Casey, Ross Courtney's sister, who has lived on the island for many years. What with also meeting up with the likes of Dickie Brown, David Craine, and the Hinds brothers, there was little enough of the night left when we'd to think about sleeping. Most managed to borrow beds ashore for a brief horizontal sleep, but by daybreak we were heading out for the 0600 start, having also taken on board as extra crew Manxmen George and Ian, who had been recruited through the good offices of photographer Rick Tomlinson.

With light airs, the racing was tense, and George and Ian suffered from culture shock through the discovery that, in such conditions, 98% of the words in the *Witchcraft* Racing Dictionary start with



Ed Wheeler with the Manx nobby *White Heather* on the quay at Laxey. When he was a schoolboy, she was a permanent resident of Groomsport in County Down, and it was thought she'd never sail again.
PHOTO: W M Nixon

the letter F. But it did the business. With unfair things being expected of the floater spinnaker ('f' for floater, you see), at one stage we led the entire fleet except for one enormous catamaran. When we slipped back a bit, the gallant crew were like men possessed in keeping up the pressure, and fortune was on our side. Light airs up the eastern side of the island only served to redouble efforts. A lucky tack offshore found us a private breeze, and at 0040hrs Monday with the seams of the floater straining mightily, we slipped across the finish line, dropped off our Manxmen into a passing boat, and immediately headed for home round the top of the island as we didn't want to be bumbling through boats still racing up the east coast.

Thus we went round the island twice, and covered 248 miles, just to race 65. But we didn't see it that way at all. We saw it as a fine old cruising weekend which happened to have a bit of a race in the middle. And the sail home was sheer joy. We picked up a sunny sou'easter down at the Calf of Man at breakfast time, and had a close reach home in sunshine through the Bank Holiday Monday, a glorious sail. The forecast was lousy, but we were comfortably back in port before the rain arrived, and while pints were being organised, John phoned the Ramsey club to see how we'd done. He gave it to us in snippets. First in class... first in division... first overall. It means we've a lot of silverware to collect from the island. But as one of them is the Manx Brewery Cup, Davy has a plan for annihilating an entire weekend in the depths of the winter. This is serious stuff.

Cruising Crete

Meanwhile, cruising continued with a week's berth for Georgina and me aboard the Vice-Commodore's *Oleander of Howth* in Crete at the beginning of June. Doubtless the V-C will produce his own account of all his 1994 wanderings, all I can say is that if there's a better skipper to cruise with, then I haven't met him. The Heg has everything sussed out, such that even in Heraklion, where we joined ship, he'd cased the joint and knew where to go for an agreeable time, an experience at variance with the popular perception of the Cretan capital as a somewhat grotty place. But as Johnny Malcolm, happily also on that crew, sensibly pointed out, the Cretans probably keep Heraklion superficially unattractive in order to keep it for themselves, as the rest of their fine island gets many visitors.

We headed east along an increasingly mountainous coast for Elounda on Spinalonga Lagoon, stopping off for lunch and a



The shore base – in the Britomartes Taverna on its island in the middle of Elounda Harbour are (l to r): Johnny Malcolm, Brian Hegarty, Georgina Nixon and Betty and Libby Hegarty.

PHOTO: W M Nixon

swim behind the little church-tipped point at Khersonisos on the way. Clayton Love's *Nich 70 Royal Tara* lay handsomely off Elounda; they were away early next morning, hoping to reach Rhodes before an expected Meltemi arrived. We meanwhile were well content to stay at Elounda, a delightful place in a region steeped in history. In the midst of the little harbour, the Britomartes taverna on its own little island reached by a bridge soon became our shore base, friendly folk with good food. So though we went on down the coast for an overnight in the raw new marina immediately south of Aghios Nikolaos (the marina built with a 75% EU grant!) the charms of Elounda called us back, and *Oleander* comfortably rode out the Meltemi there, though some of the squalls from the mountains were impressive.

Thus it was thought better that somebody should stay aboard, so we took it in turns to head up-country in a little hire car finding our way to characterful mountain villages and twisting up vertiginous roads through the stupendous peaks where eagles soared among the crags. Crete certainly is some place. But it had its quieter pleasure too, such as mornings in the lagoon when turtles came by on their daily cruise of inspection around this perfect miniature cruising area.

Eventually we'd to head back west, and even when our final Saturday lunchtime stop in a cove on the island of Dhia off Heraklion looked like being spoilt by the arrival of a noisy charter boat and a jet-ski school, the Heg's Moral Presence saved the day. One look from him, and the charter boat moved away. As for the would-be jet-skiers, none of them could get it up under the great man's penetrating gaze, so they soon headed back to Heraklion in shame, leaving us in peace.

While others may get into trouble with officialdom in Heraklion, the Heg contrives to get into the same handy berth under the Venetian fort, with the same gold-plate treatment from the man he has rightly assessed as the Cretan version of Frank Hendy. Thus everything, right down to our final supper together, and the punctual arrival of the taxi for the airport, slides perfectly into place.

Round Ireland

The Cork Dry Gin Round Ireland Race resembles its sponsor's admirable product in that it can become habit-forming, and sometimes you wonder if the after-effects aren't too great a price to pay. Nevertheless it's an event mighty popular with ICC members. And Ed and I rather wanted to do it in 1994, as it seemed

the least time-consuming way of celebrating the fact that, thirty years ago, we made our first round-Ireland cruise in *Ainmara*. So, early on the morning of the distinctly chilly Thursday June 16th, my son Brian (aged 20) and I left Howth to take *Witchcraft* to Wicklow for the pre-race scrutineering. Being scrutineered is an experience akin to meeting your tax inspector. But we managed to get it finished before close of business on the Thursday, which was as good as being a whole extra day in our lives, and in Wicklow Sailing Club it was like an ICC Rally with Denis Doyle, Davy McBride and Jim Donegan launching themselves into a night of determined partying.

Next day we finished storing, and I tried to get away from the extraordinary pre-race party in time to get a good night's sleep. We were doing the race with six on board – Ed and I, Brian, John Derham and Denis Murnane from Howth, and Simon Parker from Bray.

Came Saturday June 18th, and the

evocative "Wicklow towards Wicklow" headed the first log entry. The forecast was for wind on the nose all the way down to the Fastnet, and quite a bit of breeze at times, but we started in a moderate sou'wester. However, the tides were right against us, and short-tacking all the way to Arklow was a wearing business. South of Arklow we held to the land while others went offshore as the ebb started. When they came back in again we found we were quite well placed, tramping along ahead of one of the women's crews in the IMX 38 *Tropicana*.

A bit of sunshine on Saturday evening flattered to deceive, the wind was steadily building. Somehow or other we found ourselves going through the Rusk Channel in rugged wind-over-tide conditions. With Ed calling the pilotage we got through before darkness, but it isn't something you'd do for pleasure sailing. By the time we were passing the Tuskar shortly after midnight, we were down to No 3 and double-reefed main. Sometimes we were able to take one reef out, but nevertheless it was a gruesome beat, and several boats retired. We went well out, and then late morning next day (Sunday) found us on port tack closing the land west of Mine Head in company with several higher-rated Sigma 38s, which was very satisfactory. We declared Open Season on Sigma 38s.

Off Ballycotton, we found we were crossing tacks with Mike Taylor-Jones' S&S 34 *Deerstalker*, which was bad news, even if the lower-rated *Deerstalker* is one of the most successful offshore racers in Europe. But our relative performance improved a little as the wind eased, and passing Cork Harbour entrance on a pleasant evening under full main and Number 2 genoa, we were rewarded by seeing the Polish square rigger *Dar Mlodziezy* emerge past Roche's Point and break out her canvas in the watery sunlight.

She reached away to the southeast while we continued plugging west, but after weathering the Old Head of Kinsale, conditions were gentler, and we made to windward under full sail, just laying the course with the occasional glimmer of moonlight. But then Monday morning brought a freshening wind, and by the time we passed the Fastnet at 0745 and finally freed sheets a little, we were back to Number 2 and a reef.

One of the interesting things for a cruising man doing the Round Ireland race is the way it changes your attitude to the weather forecasts. Had we been cruising, we would now have been looking for a snug anchorage, as all forecasts agreed on southwest 7, locally 8, and there were plenty of good anchorages within easy reach. But we were racing, albeit in cruiser-racer rather than flat-out style. So we simply took account of the weather as it would affect our tactics, and thanked God that with every great rock and headland going rapidly astern, sheets were being further freed.

There was a fair-sized sea running, but it was harmless unless you got caught by a breaking crest. Down below, *Witchcraft's* weight and general comfort belied the noise outside. We managed to keep three totally dry bunks, while Denis was well on top of the catering to provide excellent food, so all in all it wasn't as disagreeable a wet Monday afternoon as it might have been. Nevertheless the Skelligs looked hugely sinister in the murk, and out beyond the Blaskets it was as well to be travelling as fast as possible. However, as we freed sheets that little bit further beyond the Blaskets, the top came off the wind, so we'd enough sail set running in the huge seas of that area under

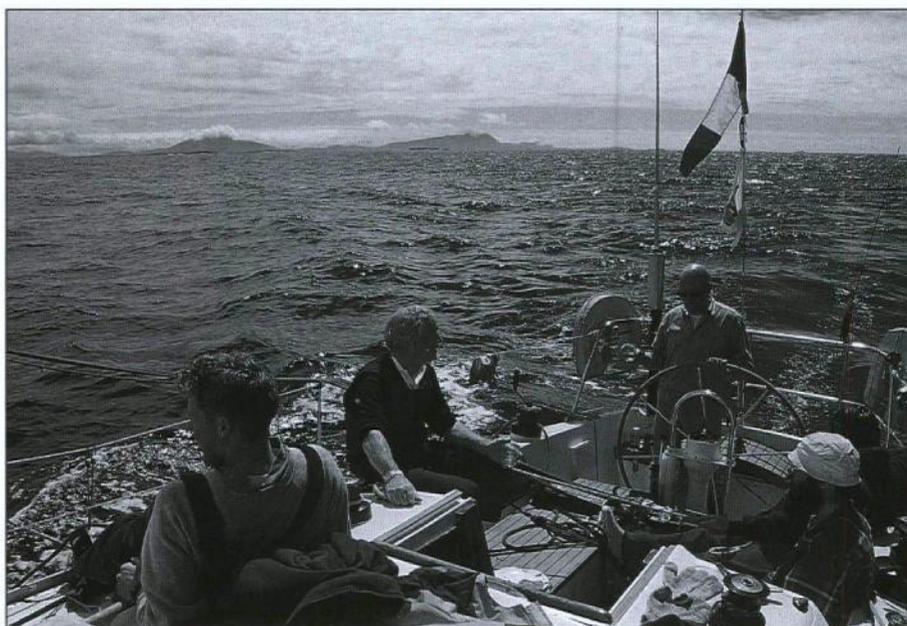
boomed-out Number 2 and full main, with the speedo off the clock as we surged mightily.

Yet before nightfall we were virtually becalmed in very heavy rain. Distinctly sinister. But by morning (Tuesday June 21st) we were running gently under spinnaker past Inishbofin, and as the day wore on it managed to give a fair stab at being Midsummer's Day. *Witchcraft* is surprisingly good at running in light to moderate winds, so we were doing well here, holding in with the two or three other boats in sight, even if we thought a spinnaker fading astern might be that so-and-so *Deerstalker*. But the coast from Achill northwards was looking magnificent in the sunshine, and Ed and I reminisced about how we'd sailed past here in sunshine thirty years ago also in sunshine, doing the circuit anti-clockwise in *Ainmara*, with a great air of celebration once Achill Head was astern. So we'd a bit of a celebratory lunch in the cockpit, marvelling that it was all possible off this utterly bare coast of Mayo.

Beyond Erris Head, things were even better, dreamlike summer sailing as we started the long haul across to Tory, with the blue sea suddenly alive with dolphins. But it was too good to last. A little local low was rocketing through to the north of us, and pressure was building up over southern England. But just one sea area was given the forecast of an imminent gale. Malin, naturally.

It was very much a local gale, but that was one of the features of the '94 circuit – the remarkably localised nature of the winds. It was a real little gale nevertheless, with Malin Head reporting 44 knots straight from the west, and it gave us one hairy sail along the north coast. Getting past Tory in the first streaks of daylight (Wednesday) was tense – just how far does the point run out beyond the lighthouse? But we cleared it, and got past Inishtrahull with a fair tide, and in the relative shelter beyond there was one fishing boat still working.

It was the *Slieve Bloom of Greencastle*, and he was preparing to head for home, but not before he'd a radio chat with us. For as it happens, her skipper is Owen Doyle, whose brother Eamonn crews with us in club racing. Just eleven days earlier, Owen had been visiting Dublin, and Eamonn had brought him along to do the Lambay Race. "Don't forget to call the *Slieve Bloom* if you get as far as Donegal in the Round Ireland," said he as he went off home afterwards. So we spoke with him on this crazy morning as we thundered along towards Rathlin, where the tide had turned but the sea was flat, and we romped round the



Ed Wheeler at *Witchcraft's* helm with the mountains of Achill in the distance, June 1994.

PHOTO: W M Nixon

corner in a cloud of spume and streaked on southeastwards with the Antrim coast coming and going in sunshine and squalls. Having passed Tory at 0400, we'd cleared Rathlin by noon. This was cooking with gas.

Right inshore under the Antrim coast to cheat the tide, then out for the mandatory rounding of the Maidens. The gale went as quickly as it had arrived, and with the evening flood and a moderate westerly, we were under full sail as Ed called his Sister The Coastguard in Bangor to make the final radio check-in at Mew Island.

The last hundred miles were a doddle, with Denis excelling himself in the galley with steaks and all the trimmings on the table, and wine as well, for this was real cruiser racing. With calm and then a sou'easter expected, we nudged to the east, and soon had picked up the new wind after being flatters for only a couple of hours. For a while it was free enough on Thursday morning to carry spinnaker. Then it veered, and we were beating for the last thirty miles to the finish, finding ourselves closing in towards Wicklow with a couple of higher-rated craft. We crossed at 1440 Thursday, an ideal time of day, for it allowed plenty of time for civilised showers and a party in the club, where the post-race atmosphere is infinitely preferable to the frenetic pre-race mood.

But before it got out of hand, Georgina turned up to become a calming influence. Things were beginning to look dangerous, as it became clear that not only had we lifted a useful third in our class of 17 boats, but as well we were 13th overall out of the 53 starters, and had succeeded in our Open Season on the Sigma 38s by bagging all nine. Ed was delighted to find we'd averaged 6.3 knots over the direct line, and if there'd been a prize for doing the race in comfort, we'd have won it with points to spare.

On the Wind to West Cork

We'd been meaning to go to the Classic Boat Regatta in Glandore in July in any case, but it became Official Business when the organiser, Donal Lynch, asked me to give a talk on Conor O'Brien at the associated Summer School on Friday July 8th. In the circumstances, going there by any means other than on one's own boat was unthinkable, but pressures of time meant it was late on the evening of Tuesday July 5th before Aidan Tyrrell and I headed away from Howth with the cassette containing the slides for the O'Brien talk carefully stowed below.

It was exactly the kind of night you wouldn't have chosen to head south, a raw and freshening sou'sou'east wind with heavy rain squalls. Fortunately since the end of the Round Ireland race we'd installed our new cruising comfort, an excellent and very handsome spray-hood made by Paddy Downer of Dun Laoghaire. But it was grim progress nevertheless. We bashed our way down to Wicklow and rode out the foul tide there. Heading on in the morning (Wednesday July 6th) at 0650hrs, conditions had improved in that there was little wind, and the rain stayed over the land. So we motored all the way to Blackwater Head, going through the Sluice on the way, and then motor-sailed round Carnsore Point in sunshine while even blacker clouds built over the land, giving a freshening breeze which led to re-naming of St Patrick's Bridge as 'The Bridge Under Troubled Water.'

The weather was dominated by a slow-moving depression centred over Ireland. Not only was it shallow, but it was filling, going up from 1006 to 1011. The idea of a low pressure in Ireland of 1011 millibars was so absurd that Aidan said it must be a manic depression intent on becoming a high. As you can see, this little cruise was just a laugh a minute. But far from becoming a high, the 'manic depression' produced a trough which provided torrential rain by the time we got to Kinsale on Thursday (having sadly decided we just didn't have time to drop into Dunmore East).

However, although it was still damp when we headed on west

at daybreak Friday (July 8th), conditions were on the mend, and the arrival at Glandore was total enchantment. The sun had broken through, and we glided in under sail across blue water with the gentle green hills on either side glowing in that special West Cork way. There were some very classy classics in port. We came slowly past *Solway Maid* to drop off a parcel which had arrived for them in Howth after they'd headed on south, we then dropped down past *Madcap* to wish them good morning as they emerged tousle-headed into this beautiful new day, we glided on past the still-sleeping *Saint Patrick*, and then *Witchcraft* came to and we dropped our hook beside *Stormy Weather*.

In the depth of winter, Glandore can number its population at about sixty. But at the Classic Boat Regatta, which was officially and stylishly opened that afternoon by President Robinson, the little place became a natural grandstand and one very hospitable little port. It was a fabulous party, and the crew of the fifty or so boats taking part had themselves a fine old time.

At some stage or other we finally met up with the crews of *Mandalay* and *Faoilean* across in Nolan's Bar in Union Hall. The drollery was vintage. Indeed, the weekend was vintage. But as the latter half of our season was shaping up as a series of extended weekend cruises, we'd to tear ourselves away, leaving *Witchcraft* lying to her own anchor off Union Hall (its one of the few places left where you can do this) with the dinghy stowed in Nolan's yard at the quay thanks to the good offices of Stan Roche.

Ed, Georgina and I returned the following Saturday (July 16th) for an extended weekend working towards the Cruising Clubs' Meet at Schull on Monday July 18th. Sweeping into Glandore in the car at lunchtime, we could see that all was well with our pride-and-joy across in the Union Hall anchorage, so lunch at that fine establishment, Hayes' Bar, was decidedly celebratory. After it, thanks to the kind help of Don Street's son Rich, Georgina was able to position the car in Schull and then join us at Castlehaven, where we'd sailed in leisurely style through a lovely summer afternoon.

The night ashore in Mary Ann's, however, was scarcely leisurely. Dinner there was superb and enormous, and the place seemed to be filled with convivial sailing folk. Our run ashore concluded at a very late hour with PJ and Jo Scanlon, who'd come round from Foynes with the S&S 34 *Oberon*, once owned by Dave Fitzgerald. The night was utterly calm by the time we all got down to the quay, and conversation continued merrily as the two dinghies rowed out across the phosphorescent water. Suddenly an irate individual erupted on to the quay from one of the nearby houses. "If you're going to waken whole villages with that infernal noise," he bellowed, "you should go and do it in Blackpool or Brighton or Bournemouth!" For days afterwards, we pondered just how Bournemouth had come to acquire this sudden reputation for noisiness.

The morning, Sunday July 17th, found us away at 0645 in sunshine. When your cruising is shaping up as no more than a series of extended weekends, you like to make the best of your time. Or at least that was my viewpoint. Ed had done his entire season's cruising the night before, so he took his sore head back to bed as soon as we were under way, while Georgina is not an early morning person, so I'd the world to myself. Outside, there was a light sou'easter. When it fell away, we motored to South Harbour on Cape Clear in the hope that its usually roly anchorage might be smooth, as the basic swell outside was from the southeast. The shelter was perfect. South Harbour was perfect. Cape Clear was perfect on that summer's morning. After walking the island we'd lunchtime pints at Cotter's (Paddy Burke had taken a holiday for all of 1994) with naval architect Myles Stapleton from Malahide and traditional boatbuilder Liam Hegarty from Oldcourt near Baltimore – they'd sailed out to the Cape in the delightful little American-style ketch Liam has built

for himself. Then back at South Harbour the water was so inviting I'd a swim while Ed and Georgina put together an excellent warm salad lunch featuring the best of Clonakilty black pudding to continue the progress of as good a cruising day as you could imagine.

We headed away early enough in the afternoon to allow time for a spot of fishing at the Alderman Rocks at the entrance to Crookhaven. A shrewd move. Ed hauled in a cod, two mackerel and a pollock in as many minutes, and then we headed gently on into the anchorage. Despite it being a pleasant Sunday evening in mid-July, Crookhaven was soon like a deserted village. Ireland was playing some match or other in the World Cup. It was so agreeable sitting there in uncrowded comfort sipping a pint in the evening sunshine outside O'Sullivan's (where the curtains were closed to facilitate the tele-viewing within) that we concluded that the secret of cruising West Cork in high summer is the avoidance of crowded venues, so we decided in future to consult the regatta programmes, but only in order to be able to avoid the crowds. And then we returned aboard and feasted upon Ed's fish.

When we finally got to Schull next afternoon, it was to find itself at its best, for there were only 20 or so boats at the meet, and the town was delightfully uncrowded. Not dead by any means, just pleasantly alive without the usual struggle to move around, and Newman's the very soul of civilisation. We'd never known it so agreeable, and up-graded our opinion of Schull in jig time. It was further up-graded by the quality of the Cruising Club meal in La Coquille that night, by which time Aidan Tyrrell had finally joined us. Then next morning, with every intention of getting briskly back to Dublin, we bade our farewells to the flag officers, and headed round to Rossbrin where we'd arranged to use one of the moorings provided by Edmund and Erika Krugel at Rossbrin Boatyard.

While they may have one of the most modern boat workshops in West Cork (they can haul boats up to 18 tons) the atmosphere around Rossbrin is so soothing that our plan of hastening back to Dublin was soon being modified. Indeed, being in West Cork with Aidan Tyrrell would make anybody adopt a more leisurely attitude to life, so entertaining is his company. Thus we got no further than Clonakilty for lunch, and it was well gone past 1700hrs before we cleared Cork City. But as two weeks were to elapse before we saw *Witchcraft* again, it was as well we had made our departure so pleasant.

The next mini-cruise finally got under way and we were comfortably ensconced in La Coquille, facing up to an afternoon programme no more demanding than bringing the boat round from Rossbrin and stocking her up at Schull quay, which was mercifully clear of boats as everyone was out at Cape Clear Regatta.

Uncrowded Schull may have been, but if you felt like meeting some of sailing's more entertaining characters, you simply had to spend a quiet hour or two in Newman's that evening. Jim Collins was there in splendidly abrasive form. Later, Donal McClement was holding court. With our time severely limited, we'd decided on a cruise featuring the detailed miniature rather than the broad canvas, and this colourful tableau was right on target, as too was a convivial supper back on the boat.

The following evening we'd to meet up with Georgina in Baltimore, but the charm of West Cork is that you can find entire universes within short distances. So when we did finally keep the rendezvous, we felt as if we'd made an extensive cruise. But all we'd done was amble out to North Harbour on Cape Clear for the day, and then glide in leisurely style into Baltimore by way of Gascanane Sound.

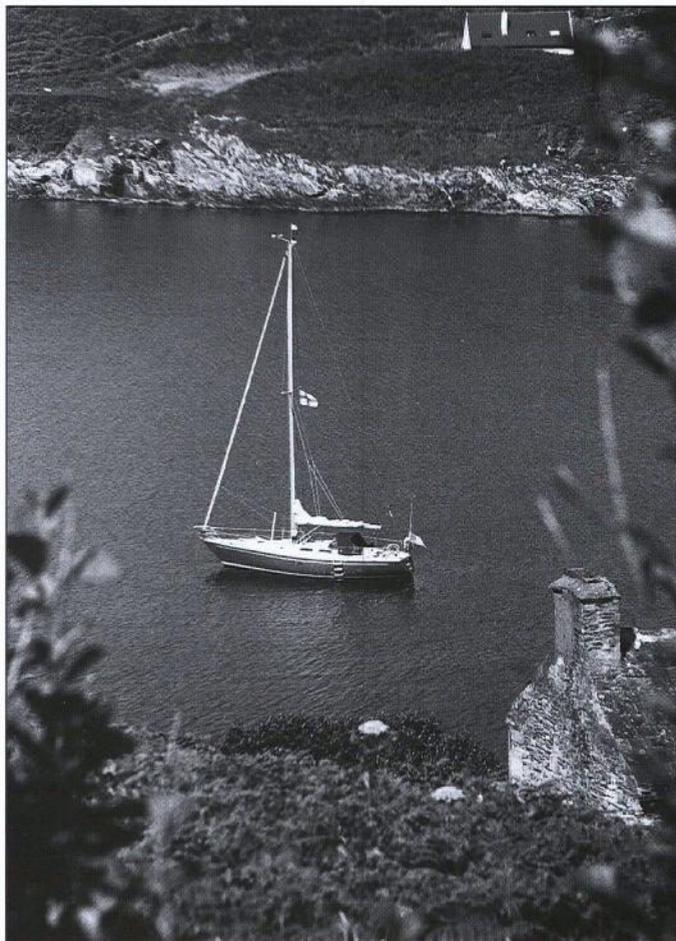
Our pleasure in returning to Cape Clear had been accentuated by the fact that it was Joyce's first visit there. Such things refresh your own perceptions of the place. She returned on board with a little bundle of heather which was lovingly arranged in

water in a glass in the drinks rack. As I write this in mid-October, that gallant little cluster of heather is still on board, and still in bloom, if a little faded, a soothing reminder of a great cruising place which seems a whole world away from the bustle of Howth marina.

Later, Baltimore was lively in the evening sunshine without being overcrowded. Le tout West Cork was partying outside Bushe's. We met up with former commodore Hugh Kennedy, and outlined our predicament. Ed had taken our ICC burgee home for repair, and we'd returned to West Cork without it. On that very day Hugh had taken delivery of a new burgee from Liz O'Boyle, and had lovingly fitted it to his old burgee staff. Somehow after we'd had an heroic fish dinner Chez Youen, and had then met up with Hugh again with a party aboard *Witchcraft*, the new Kennedy burgee was on its way to *Witchcraft's* masthead. And in the morning, after Harry had repaid him by the formal presentation of an ICC cravat, it seemed only right and proper that Hugh should sail with us round to Glandore with a stopover for a late lunch in Barlogue.

It was one of the few perfect days of summer in a season when Ireland did not share the good luck of other areas with the weather. We ran gently through the passage inside Kedge Island with boomed-out genoa and then slipped into Barlogue where Stan Roche's lovely little *Faoilean* was at anchor with the great man apparently already into his post-prandial nap. After our own lunch Harry and Hugh went off to shoot the rapids into Lough Hyne while the rest of us zizzed, and we emerged to find the rapideers returned, and *Faoilean* rafted alongside.

At the Glandore Classic Boat Regatta, one of the most interesting features had been the exhibition of models in the little church, and the most interesting of all had been George Bushe's model of one of the sailing lobster boats which used to be based



Summer perfection – *Witchcraft of Howth* in South Harbour, Cape Clear.

PHOTO: W M Nixon

in Roaring Water Bay at Inishdriscoll, which is generally known these days by the much less attractive name of Hare Island – let's all conspire to change it back. Anyway, there used to be around 50 of these handsome little 27ft cutters working their pots all along the coast between Mizen Head and Ballycotton. The last of them disappeared in the 1950s, but when Stan decided to get himself a little character boat for cruising and fishing, he got George to design the boat based on the Inishdriscoll lobster cutters, and he got Pat Lake at Crosshaven to build her.

With such a pedigree the result is of course a real gem. In Spring and Autumn, Stan keeps her in Oysterhaven where he now lives, but in summer he moves her west to a mooring in Union Hall, cruising the area gently, and catching fish to order. There isn't much that goes on along the coast thereabouts that Stan doesn't know about, so we'd a hugely entertaining hour or so yarning with him, the time passing so quickly that we'd something of a rush to get to Glandore as Hugh had to get to a lifeboat fund-raising that night.

We meanwhile found Glandore more entertaining than ever. Harry had last been there when he'd sailed in as a schoolboy crew member with Ross Courtney aboard the old *Brynoth* some-time around 1960. He was delighted to find the place prospering yet still retaining its intimate and friendly character. We'd a grand meal in the Pier House Bistro, and then went contentedly back to the ship anticipating an easy passage up to Kinsale next day.

Needless to say in a season in which we'd twice had it on the nose getting down to West Cork, the wind now settled stubbornly in the northeast. We slugged along into a cold breeze under flattened main and engine, effective if joyless progress. We were to experience a lot of it all the way back to Howth, but fortunately as Georgina had planned to leave us at Kinsale, while Joyce was likewise leaving at Cork Harbour, at least they didn't experience too much of this drudgery.

And while it may have been drudgery for much of the time at sea, there were the inevitable diversions in port. Kinsale couldn't be other than entertaining, and we visited with Ray and Christine Fielding aboard their new 33-footer. In Cork Harbour we went up to East Ferry, where Jim Butler told us hilarious tales of doing the 1949 Fastnet Race aboard the old Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter *Theodora*, when they carried a ton of coal for the saloon stove and used it all, and thought nothing of heaving-to for 24 hours in order to repair sails. Then over in Crosshaven on Sunday evening (August 7th) the crack was great in the club, and grand at the Grand Hostel, and Mr Tyrrell re-appeared. Though he couldn't join us next day for the passage to Dunmore East, he arranged to join us up there that night.

"Up there" was the operative term. It was uphill all the way, but pleasantly sunny once Mine Head had been passed. Dunmore East was its usual crowded self, and a bit popply in the increasingly determined nor'easter which was being generated by a developing low over the Bay of Biscay. Our promise of the requisite pint in Waterford Harbour SC was foiled by the bar being closed on that day for maintenance, but the Butcher's and the Ship provided much-needed cheer and sustenance for the inner men, and the crack was good.



Faolean and Witchcraft in Barlogue.

PHOTO: W M Nixon

Northeasterly gale warnings were in force next morning, but we felt we might just manage to get round Carnsore Point before the top came off. We did that, and then thanks to going right inside the banks north of Rosslare, had a lovely sunny sail, albeit still hard on the wind, across towards Blackwater Head in semi-sheltered water. But thereafter conditions deteriorated steadily, and it was one harsh and windy evening by the time we got into Arklow, where it blew so fresh from the northeast that night (Force 9 and more) that we'd to double the warps because of the surge in the basin, which Aidan had never seen before in thirty years of visiting the place, while down at Rosslare ferries had to be cancelled.

But the sting had gone out of it by the morning (Wednesday August 9th), and anyway we were running out of time, so we battered our way with the fair tide up to Wicklow Head, where we used experience gained in the Faeroes in '93 to dodge as much as possible inside the tide race. Then it eased for a while, but slugging past Bray at High Water Springs, we could see that every sea was sweeping the promenade in huge clouds of spray. So it was a relief to get some shelter in Dublin Bay, then after a final bit of plugging round Howth Head, we got to our marina berth in time for various important things, but only just, and bruised all over for good measure.

Thus in this season of not really knowing where we were until we got there, our seagoing had included just under a thousand miles of crashing to windward. It was a hard price to pay for the fair winds we'd enjoyed in going to St Kilda in '91, the Blaskets and round Ireland in '92, and up to the Faeroes in '93. But you only need one day of fair winds to forget the pain of going to windward, and Georgina and I had that in early September for the most perfect visit we've ever made to Lambay (how miniaturised can one's cruising get?) And as for the year's major happenings, we still have to see if we can survive a mid-winter visit to the Isle of Man for a spot of silverware-collecting under the aegis of McBride Travel Services (motto: You Find Us, And We'll Lose You...)

South Coast members and friends at the East Ferry raft-up.



PHOTOS & LAYOUT: Kevin Dwyer

Cruise to Norway on *Rionnag*

Bernard Corbally

We departed from Dun Laoghaire at 19.07 on Wednesday the 6th of July, with Aidan Maguire, Enda & Daragh Cullinan and Jonathan Baker as crew. Our passage north took us to Bangor, Gigha, Puilladobhain, Foyers and Inverness where Jonathan departed and Chris Stillman joined.

Thursday 14th July we left the Basin Marina, Inverness, at 10.45 and were allowed out through the sea lock at midday even though it was close to low tide.

West to north-west winds allowed us to sail most of the way across the North Sea on a course of 52° , with assistance from the engine if our speed dropped below $4\frac{1}{2}$ kts. We even managed a ten-hour spinnaker run on the Friday. For the first two days, the sky was generally overcast with only brief periods of sunshine and occasional light mist. On Saturday, at 2227, we were politely requested to alter our course by about 30° to starboard in order to clear well ahead of Seismic Cable Towing Ships. We were back on course at 2340, a bit further south than we had intended. Enda was the first to sight land about sixteen miles to starboard at 0200 on Sunday morning. We were off a very rocky coastline extending about ten miles from Hovden Island (just north of Floro).

We headed inshore in order to get east of $4^{\circ}43'$ longitude, which would take us onto our large scale charts for the coastline. We then headed north round the Bremanger Peninsula. It was a clear sunny day, which made navigating through a series of rock clusters relatively easy as we could see the breaking water. We gave Vagsoy an offing of about three miles leaving the Steinen Rocks to starboard and the Noreskallen Buoy to port.

Fortunately, the wind was a gentle NE F2, which made our passage round the notorious Statt Peninsula only a moderately bumpy experience, as we gave it about the two miles clearance necessary to leave the Bukketjvane Rocks to starboard. We then passed Svinoy Island about two and a half miles to port and the Fauskane Rocks also to port as we headed for the north end of Skorpa Island. We gave the Rundeflu Rocks an offing of only two cables to starboard before rounding Muleneset Point on Nerlandsoy Island, which we followed round to the east in order to get ourselves onto our next detailed chart before heading north again to clear the rocks which extend for about a mile off Runde Island. From there onwards, it was straightforward navigation into the Brosundet (visitors' harbour) in Alesund. Our passage in would have been a lot easier, and probably quicker, had we purchased a couple more offshore

charts and not had to rock-hop along the coast.

We tied up to a pontoon near the top of the Brosundet, which is right by the town centre, at 1605, having completed a North Sea passage of 466M at an average speed of 6kts. The sun was shining and we were extremely happy to be in such a delightful place. Alesund was almost completely rebuilt in an attractive Art Nouveau style after a devastating great fire in 1904 which destroyed the town centre. The Brosundet was packed with boats, mostly small motor cruisers, and we were lucky to get such a good berth. There is another guest pontoon off the

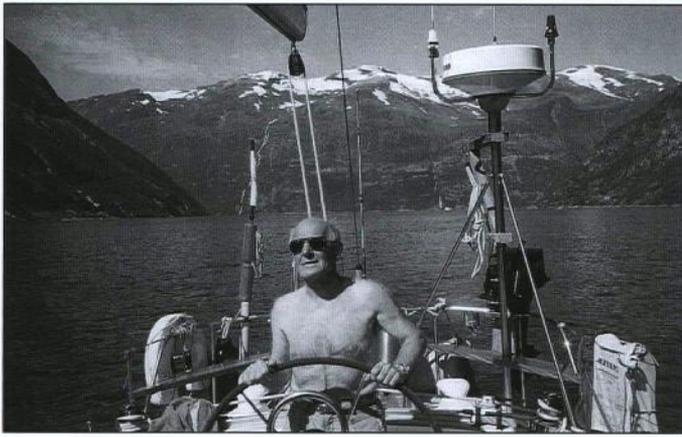


Alesund Yacht Haven, in the centre of the city. PHOTO: Enda Cullinan



Rionnag in yacht harbour, Alesund.

PHOTO: Bernard Corbally



Aidan Maguire in the Geiranger Fjord. PHOTO: Bernard Corbally

Scandic Hotel on the way into the Brosundet, which was empty when we arrived. It would make an excellent rendezvous for a change of crew. The mooring fee was NOK50, which was the standard fee for almost all the pontoons that we used in Norway.

After a leisurely sunshine cockpit breakfast, on Monday Enda, Daragh and the skipper climbed the 422 steps to the cafe restaurant on Aksla Hill (689m). The panoramic view of the town with its surrounding seascape, against a background of snow-capped mountains, was breathtaking.

We left Alesund in the afternoon. Heading west, we rounded Heissa Island and Eltranaset Point to enter the Sule Fjord. (The bridge at Vegsundet was too low for us to consider the shortcut through the Borgund Fjord). The hot sun had us all in shorts, with our shirts off, as we sailed gently up the Sule Fjord, into the Stor Fjord. At first, we delighted in the lovely island scenery, and then we enjoyed passing by wooded hillsides with quite a lot of rocky outcrop and a background of mountains. A few colourful hamlets were dispersed along the waterfront, adding to the beauty of our surroundings. As we progressed up the Stor Fjord, the wooded slopes became more and more rocky, there was quite a lot of snow on the mountains, and there were fewer hamlets. We were so engrossed in sightseeing that it was 2000 before we started thinking about a place for the night. Dyrkorn looked enticing, but on closer inspection, did not have a suitable wharf. We tried Stordal next, where we found a tiny pontoon opposite a two-storey industrial building in the centre of the bay. We dropped our anchor about 30m off the end and then hauled ourselves back alongside with a stern line. After a superb fish curry dinner prepared by Chris, we set off on a magical twilight midnight walk through a most picturesque village of wooden houses, all different. A waterfall crashed down the mountainside just beside the village. We sighted three supermarkets!

As we made our way out of Stordal Bay on Tuesday, the sun was just beginning to break through the light clouds that were draped over the surrounding mountains. In places, snow-topped peaks towered up above the clouds looking unbelievably high. We headed up past Stranda into the Sunnylvs Fjord. Forestry gave way to rocky slopes lightly studded with trees which appeared to be growing straight out of the rock! Dozens of narrow ribbon waterfalls, glittering in the sunshine, were enthusiastically captured by clicking cameras. The mountains on both sides of this narrow fjord peaked up to over fifteen hundred metres, and there were impressive waterfalls everywhere you looked. To sail gently through such magnificent scenery was a wonderful and silencing experience. One particularly beautiful set of waterfalls, all close together was called 'De Syv Sostre' (The Seven Sisters) and their film of light spray really did remind one of bridal veils. Directly opposite was a massive waterfall called 'The Suitor' (Friaren). A huge cruise liner, passing in the opposite direction, looked like a dinghy against the waterfalls and almost vertical mountain sides.

We moored up to the T end of the small boat marina pontoon at Geiranger village. We were rather large for the facility which gave us a 'Gulliver' feeling as we dwarfed the local motor cruiser runabouts.

The sun was still shining as we retraced our way out of this fjord complex as far as Haeimsvik Village on Oksenoya Island. Again we played 'Gulliver' at the T end of the small boat marina by the holiday village. We only saw one other yacht throughout the whole day.

The sky was lightly overcast on Wednesday without a breath of wind as we left Haeimsvik at 1000. By midday, we were once again gloriously sweltering in the sunshine. The slopes of the hills on both sides were mainly forested with areas of rock face. Behind the hills, stretching away into the distance, were the snow-studded mountains.

Time just slipped by as we motored down through the Vartdals Fjord, between Eikoy and Yksnoy Islands into Rovde Fjord. The navigator had to bestir himself to take us through the rocky passage between Voksa Island and Atam Point and again through the concentrated mass of rocks and tiny perches north-west of Storhl Island before we were safely into Vanylvs gapet. It is very easy to lose a sense of direction as one weaves one's way through these hazardous areas. There is no time to read the GPS!

Once again we were fortunate to have calm conditions for our passage round Statt Peninsula. This time we kept mostly within about three cables of the shore line, which left almost all the off-lying rock clusters to starboard. We passed close outside Buhl Island and then headed straight for the Gamla Rocks Buoy, leaving the Skjerboen Rocks close to port. It was then a straight course down to the Vaagsoy Sound with the Gnullane Rocks to starboard.



Aidan admires the Seven Sisters, Geiranger Fjord.

PHOTO: Bernard Corbally

We reached Malloy at 2114 and moored to the pontoon on the Vagsoy Island side of the sound, just before the bridge. Our NOK50 was collected by filling in a form on an Honesty Box and putting in the money!

The following day, having topped up with fuel at the Esso pontoon on the opposite side of the sound, we made our way on Thursday under the bridge into the Nord Fjord (110km long) at 1118. The scenery changed dramatically from gentle tree-covered slopes to a much more mountainous panorama when we reached the Ise Fjord. The snow-topped mountains were particularly impressive at the point where the Ise Fjord joins the Hundvik Fjord, especially the view up the Alfot Fjord. We continued to enjoy spectacular mountain scenery all the way along the Hundvik Fjord. However, at the east end, where the Hyen and Gløppen Fjords branch off, the panorama all around us was absolutely breathtakingly beautiful in every direction. We tried sailing in a light breeze, but the direction was so fickle that we had to abandon the attempt. Some of the wind shifts were about 180 degrees! The sun was so hot that we had to rig a protective canopy!

There were lots of mare's tails in the sky and the barometer was falling as we reached Stryn near the head of the Innvik Fjord at 2018. There were no pontoons and the black tyres on the wharf looked forbidding. We anchored in 15m just outside an almost awash pladdy and enjoyed our cockpit dinner as we watched the sun set over the mountains.

Friday, and the clouds were right down the sides of the fjord as we rounded Ulvedal Point after an early start. We even had to endure some light rain. However, by 1107 we were once again enjoying that wonderful sunshine which we were beginning to take for granted in fjord country.

At 1315, somewhat apprehensively, we decided to take a shortcut through the Rugsund into the Froyjoen. The narrows at the north-east end of Storoy Island were only about 40m wide and carried a strong tide, which brought us rapidly into a mile-long lagoon. The second narrows at the south end of the island were only 30m wide with reefs and rocks on both sides, marked by tiny perches which were very difficult to see. Our depth sounder went down to 1m under the keel as we shot through, although the minimum depth on the chart was 4m.

We continued down into the Hornels Fjord and found ourselves surrounded by craggy mountains and mountainy islands with impressive fjord views in five directions. This was one of the most delightful places visited during the cruise and most definitely merited a lunch stop. We dropped the hook in Sveneset Bay and opened a celebratory bottle of wine.

After lunch, we continued down the almost equally impressive Froysoen, which was a Geologist's Paradise and had Chris in a state of ecstasy – conglomerates, thrusts, folds, etc etc – the mesmerised pupils listened! A protected anchorage behind Hennoya Island looked very tempting, but our time for this leg of the cruise was limited, so we pressed on.

We left Olaskj Lighthouse to starboard, keeping close to the mainland shore as we passed down inside Hovden Island. The navigator was then kept pretty busy dodging rocks and identifying the narrow channel markers to the east of the Naeroy Islands, and then down west of the Sandvoeret and Langoyflua rocks to find the entrance channel into Floro. We tied up outside two other Hallberg Rassy yachts (both Norwegian) on the less

crowded pontoon to the east of the overhanging wooden restaurant Hjørnevikbua, at 1910. Dinner in the above restaurant was memorably delicious.

The following day we visited the Esso pontoon in a small cutting at the west end of the harbour, and then followed two Norwegian yachts down the tricky passage through the islands and reefs which lie to the west of Flora Island. We then sailed down towards the east of the Oddane Islands, through the passage just east of Askrova Island, and round Stavenes Point. We kept about two cables off the point to avoid the myriads of reefs and tiny islands off to the west. We continued our passage down south through the Crane Sound east of Atloya Island and entered the Vilnes Fjord, leaving the tiny Flotoy Islands to starboard before turning south-west. We gave Lammetu Island an offing of about a mile, to keep clear of a mass of rocks off the north-west corner. A course of 170° then brought us west of the Sakrisskj Beacon. Abeam of the beacon, we altered course to 135° to take us through the sound between the Sula and Spørpa Islands. From there we branched out through the Tolle Sound into the Sogne Fjord. It had taken us nearly seven hours to reach here from Floro, via the innermost navigable route inside hundreds of islands and rocks. The GPS was frequently in the red, so the navigator was kept continuously busy while the rest of the crew lounged about enjoying superb island and mountain scenery under absolutely ideal sunshine conditions. It was a magical passage!

The Sogne Fjord is Norway's longest fjord (205km) and is very wide (4-5½km) until one reaches the top branches. The north side is well inhabited in the lower regions, where fruit farming is prevalent. It was difficult to find a place to moor for the night which would be protected from the forecasted SW winds. We finally anchored off Hest, in the south-west corner of Fugleaset, at 2115.

On Sunday the mountains shaded Hest from the morning sun, so we decided to motor out into the bay for breakfast. As we prepared to weigh anchor at 0830, a very worried-looking local resident approached us in a rowing boat. He had a pattern of thermal cables laid out on the bed of the fjord, which provided winter heating for his large house. His concern was that we might have damaged some of the cables with our anchor. We raised the anchor very carefully, under his watchful eye. Fortunately it came up without obstruction!

As we emerged into the sunshine at the mouth of the Fugleaset, we lost our wind protection and found ourselves in pretty lively



Chris Stillman (ICC) enjoys Naeroy Fjord.

PHOTO: Bernard Corbally

water with lots of white crests and a wind that gusted up to 30kts+. It was on the nose, so we upped the revs and headed right into it. The younger members went forward to the pulpit to revel in the sheets of spray that were thrown up.

Approaching Vangnes Point, we were surrounded by a panorama of snow-studded mountains glistening in the sunshine. The scenery seemed to get better and better as we continued up the Sogne Fjord and then branched into the Aurlands Fjord. But when we entered the narrow steep-sided Naeroy Fjord (about 1km wide), the mountains literally towered above us to 1200m and more, completely dwarfing a huge ocean liner that was leaving the fjord. Several mighty waterfalls tumbled down from a great height. There was not a ripple on the water and the only sound was that of cascading water. We had cut the engine to tarry for a while in this paradise. It was certainly the most beautiful and most dramatically impressive fjord that we had seen. The fjord narrowed to about five cables as we continued up as far as the tiny hamlet of Bakka. The time was 1711, and since it was 37M back to our planned night stop at Ortnevik, we turned back.

Our dinner that evening, drifting down the fjord as the sun set behind the snow-capped mountains, was a wonderful experience.

Chris, Enda and the skipper crawled out of their bunks at 0435 on Monday. A lone fisherman stood in the middle of the stream, methodically casting his line for salmon, as we very quietly motored out of Ortnevik Bay. It was 75M to Bergen, and we wanted to arrive in sufficient time to book dinner in Chris's favourite restaurant. Enda took the helm and was rewarded with a magnificent sunrise, while Chris and the skipper hit the hay.

At 0814, the wind picked up and we got in about an hour and a half of sailing before being becalmed again. A strange glow in the eastern sky made us wonder what might be brewing and we upped the engine revs. About an hour later, we were hit by several rain squalls which considerably reduced our visibility and we became concerned about the tricky navigation ahead of us. Fortunately, the unpleasant weather passed us over in about forty minutes, and we were back to sunshine motoring. We decided, as we rounded Rossoy Beacon, to take the shorter route straight down the coastline and save a few miles. This meant that we were back to rock-dodging, spotting almost invisible perches and trying to locate a variety of buoys, but we were much closer to the scenery, which made it all well worthwhile.

We arrived alongside the Bryggen Quay in Bergen at 1722, in plenty of time to book for what proved to be an absolutely delicious dinner in the Bryggenloft Restaurant. The reindeer dishes were particularly memorable.

On Tuesday we went up Mt Floyen on the Funicular Railway and were rewarded by a superb view over Bergen and its surroundings. We also explored one of the beautiful woodland pathways at the top, which brought us to a lovely little lake where people were swimming.

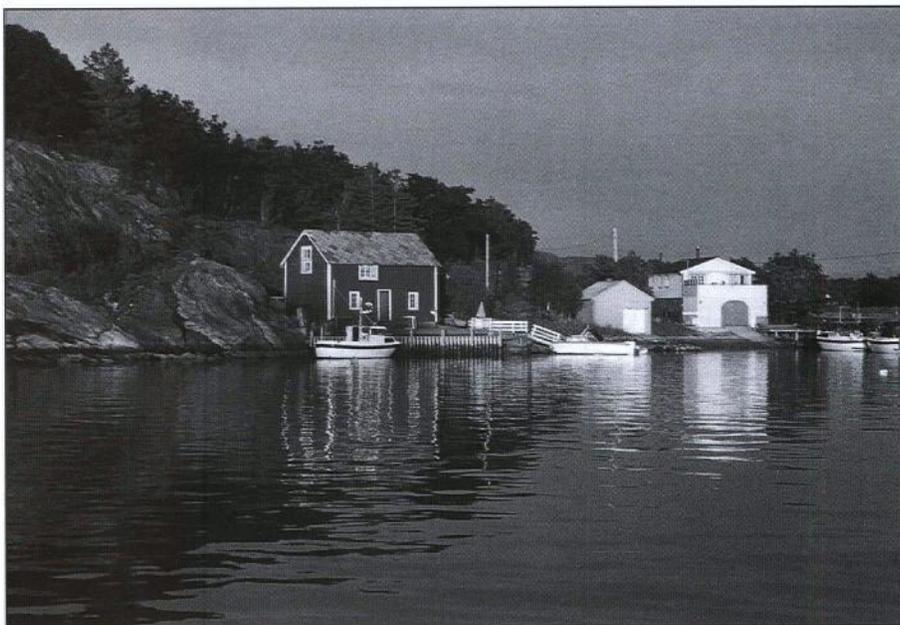
The weather deteriorated into continuous rain during the early afternoon, appropriately as Aidan, Chris and Daragh departed. The new crew, consisting of Clive & Mary Martin and Erica Corbally, arrived in the middle of a heavy rain-shower at 2200. They had been told about Norway and had brought an umbrella! For the next two weeks it was to be gentle cruising the skipper had promised!

We spent a morning exploring Bryggen, a delightful old

medieval town of wooden houses. In the afternoon, we made an expedition to the Aquarium.

A dull showery start to Thursday morning brightened up into a lovely sunny day. We replenished our stores at the convenient supermarket beside the SAS Royal Hotel, topped up with fuel at the Esso station alongside the large red building on the south side of the harbour, and were on our way by 1230. We slowly sailed west under the new fjord bridge, allowing the new crew to absorb a taste of Norwegian panorama with a scattering of white sails in the foreground to enhance the view. We turned south through the sound east of Little Sotra Island and anchored for lunch in the beautiful little Katla Bay, on the north-west side of Bjoroy Island.

After a leisurely lunch, we continued south leaving Leroy Island to port. Our interest was focused on lots of attractive-looking houses, with matching boathouses, which were dispersed along the coastlines of the islands that we passed. On entering the Bjorna Fjord, we headed south-east to round Strone Island before making for Vinnes on the Bogafjell Peninsula.



Evening in Vinnes small boat marina.

PHOTO: Enda Cullinan

When we passed through the narrow entrance into the Vinnes Lagoon at 1915, we were delighted to find a small boat marina with an empty guest berth at the T end. Gulliver again! We were in a beautiful place with a superb view, stretching across the Bjorna Fjord to the snow covered mountains in the distance.

A multi-hued sunset cast a warm red glow over the few scattered buildings on the shore, as the ladies produced 'Whale Meat' nibbles as a prelude to a sumptuous fresh salmon steak dinner, accompanied with cool white Bordeaux wine. We felt very privileged to be taking part in such quality living.

We awoke to a fabulous sunny day, on Friday 29th July, which tempted Erica and Clive to go for a swim while Enda prepared our favourite breakfast: cereals with fresh strawberries; bacon & egg, tomato, mushrooms, toast & honey; fresh coffee. The splashing of the swimmers was the only sound that disturbed the peaceful stillness of the place. The temperature of the water was 18°C. Later on, we watched the wake of a solitary motor boat glistening in the sunlight.

When we left Vinnes at 1045, there was a sufficient breeze for us to sail across to the Lukka Sound at 2kts. We arrived in perfect time to catch the tide, which changes every two hours and can reach 4kts at Springs. The only British yacht that we saw in Norway passed us, going in the opposite direction, as we entered the sound. We motored through the narrows, passing under the

32m bridge with the usual trepidation. The view from our lunch stop anchorage inside Teroy Island was beautiful, and the sunshine very hot, so it seemed just natural to lie back and enjoy it all after good food and a glass of wine. It was afternoon when we weighed anchor and headed off to Varaldsoy Island in the Hardanger Fjord.

We managed to sail for about an hour on the way across the Fjord to Rosendal, arriving at 1215. The berth that we chose on the town wharf was too shallow, with a sloping-out bottom. We used our whisker pole to hold ourselves off the wharf as the tide dropped over lunch, staying only because the location was very convenient for dropping the departing crew off for the bus. We then moved about half a mile along the coast to the Rosendal Fjord Hotel which had private pontoons and where the facilities, sauna etc, were superb.

Elizbeth Arnesen, a friend of Enda's from Ulvik, joined us in the late afternoon and managed to persuade the skipper to swim in water measuring 20°C. Later we explored the rose garden and grounds of the Baroniet Rosendal (a manor house built by Ludvig Rosenkranz in 1665) and went for a delightful walk up along the river towards the waterfall. A dinner-dance in the hotel that evening was fun and the meal was superb, especially the 'gravlaks' starter (specially treated salmon) and the mountain trout main course.

Friday morning was wet and nasty but it cleared up completely by the afternoon. When Elizbeth departed after breakfast, Enda and the skipper returned to the Baroniet and booked in for a most interesting tour of the manor. We also saw an impressive exhibition of Hans Gude paintings in part of the building. Ann Woulfe Flanagan, and Terence & Thomas Moran (5) had arrived and were swimming by the boat when we returned. We dined extremely well again in the hotel that evening. The view of the sunset from the dining room window was dramatically beautiful, consisting of a red ball that reflect-

ed back to us across the fjord, framed by small trees in front of the hotel and backed up by silhouettes of the mountains against an orange sky.

On Saturday 6th August a very strong gusty wind during the night gave rise to concern about the strength of our pontoon, as the sections became more and more distorted. Fortunately we had two large inflatable fenders on board which enabled us to cope with the changing geometry of our berth. A particularly heavy rain squall woke the Skipper at 0800. and, although we were tempted to stay put for another day, we set forth at 0954. The scenery looked very different under these stormy conditions, but it was still impressive with the mountain tops all around us lost in cloud. A light westerly wind was unhelpful until we had rounded Gavlefl Lighthouse. We then got in a bit of sailing until the skipper took his nose out of his book and realised that we were miles off course, which was easy enough in these archipelagos. We turned sharply to port and headed for the narrow Fjelberg Sound between the Borgunde and Nordhusoya Islands. About an hour later we were tied up alongside a robust metal pontoon off Vik village in the completely protected Dala Bay.

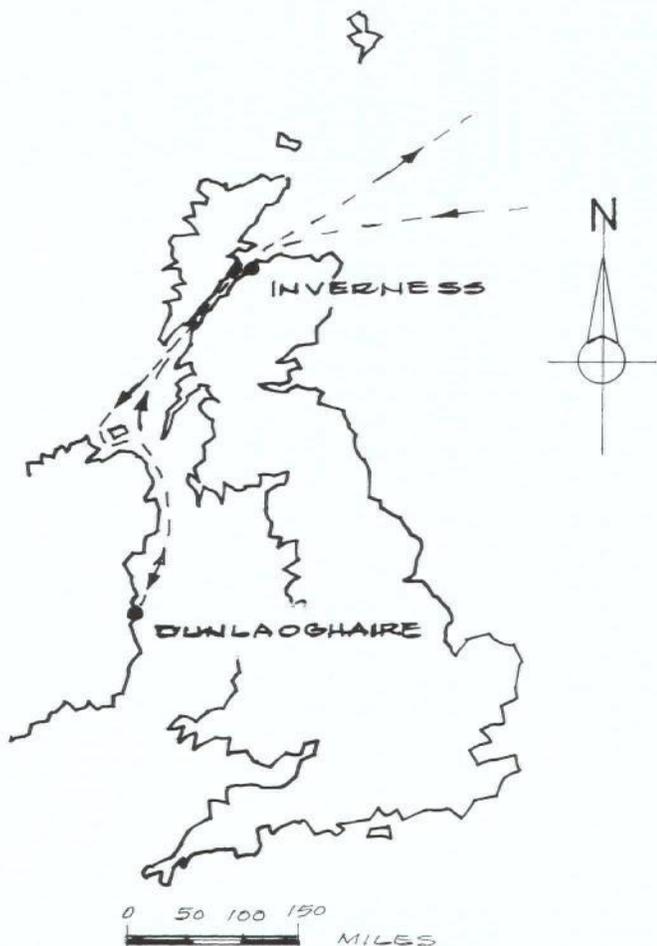
Having retraced our route out of the sound, we were able to sail again in a F4 wind that occasionally blew up to 32kts during the rain squalls which interspersed with periods of sunshine. We made good progress down the Bomla Fjord, reaching 8kts at times, until we rounded Bomlahuk Point to beat up to the Espevær Islands (There are over a hundred of these islands, which vary from tiny to up to 1Mx2M). We entered the basin by the village through a passage between the Shardhl and Aaneoy Islands, arriving at 1940. There were waterways everywhere with beautifully maintained painted wooden houses all over the place, each one with a small jetty or wharf and a motor cruiser to go with it. It was easy to find a wharf berth.

Ann, Enda and the skipper, on going ashore, followed a beguiling path which led us across several hills and waterways to the site of a UFO circle which was clearly etched on the grass in a small waterside clearing. Terence had dinner ready for us on our return. It had been a great day despite the somewhat inclement weather.

Sunday 7th August we spent a delightful morning in the dinghy exploring the complex of waterways through the Espevær Islands. Every gap between islands opened up another beautiful vista of yet more islands and plenty of rocks. There were so few people about that we almost felt that we had the place to ourselves. There was a bird on every perch that we saw, which might explain why we saw very few in flight!

The sun was shining and there were still five hours of favourable tide left when we finally dragged ourselves away from this super place at 1247. We departed through the much easier passage west of Skardhl Island and set sail immediately. The sea between Espevær and Haugesund was liberally sprinkled with islands and rocks and the sun was sparkling on the white tops of the waves as we headed south. We left the two main island and rock clusters, Raudl & Ramnsh, to starboard and then followed the coastline. The entrance to Haugesund Sound was well buoyed, although some of the buoys were difficult to sight. Having passed under the bridge in the sound, we tied up at the jetty on the west side of Bovangen Bay, opposite the church. It was a peaceful rural location from which we could watch the traffic pass through the sound as we enjoyed our lunch.

After lunch, we continued to sail with the tide to Krokeneset Point (South Fosenoey), which we rounded close-to before navigating our way through the narrow channel north of the Selen & Sauoy Islands. We required a bit of engine power to assist us across Austdjupet Bay to Tallakshl Island, which we left to starboard. We then sailed across the north end of Vestre Bokn Island and down the narrow Bokne sound under the 25m bridge, which looked extremely close to the top of our mast. This shortcut into



the Bokna Fjord only took us about an hour, but the scenery was magnificent.

We averaged about 7kts under sail between the Rovet Oerne Light Buoy and Höna Point on the north tip of Finnoy Island. We then followed the east coast of Finnoy for four miles, which brought us to the northern entrance to the Naade Sound. The gap between the sunken rocks was only about 10m and the depth went down to 1¹/₂m below the keel as we slowly navigated our way through by rock-spotting from the bow. We found ourselves in a beautiful sound, about three cables wide, which had a magical tranquillity and where everything was reflected in the mirror surface of the water. We moored up to the end of a pontoon at the Naadaa Holiday Village (full facilities on shore). As usual, we were rather over-sized for the marina.

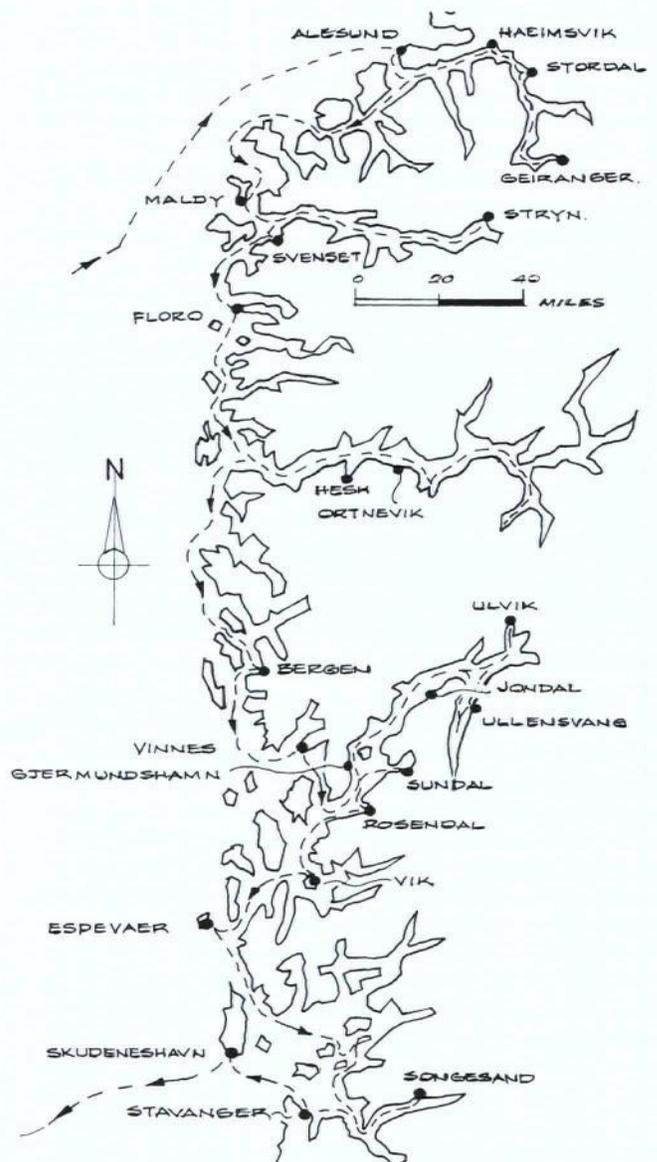
Monday and we awoke to a fabulous sunny day, which enhanced the beauty of our surroundings. Finnoy is just one island in an archipelago of islands, a little bit similar to the Isles of Scilly but without the sandy beaches. It is reputed to be one of the most popular cruising grounds in Norway, with loads of anchorages in quiet secluded bays and fabulous island scenery everywhere. We were very glad that we had allocated two days to explore its delights. Our problem was a lack of information about the best places to visit. The Stavanger Sail Training Club was based on the tiny Langoy Islet at the bottom end of our sound, and we headed for it as a likely source of ideas.

There were two yachts moored off the club premises, stern to the jetty, but the clubhouse and facilities were closed for the winter as from yesterday. Knut Husebo, owner of a Maxi 33 *Sabatin*, very kindly marked up our chart with a recommended selection of nearby anchorages. We replenished our stores in a delightful country-style shop in the south-west corner of the sound, and then made our way out of the sound through the much easier passage to the west of Langot Islet. It took us about half an hour to sail across the Finnoy Fjord and anchor in Vadhl Bay, Fogn Island, for lunch.

We stopped off in the south Sanoy Island anchorage for afternoon tea and then made our way up to Kotaberg Bay on Randoy Island for the night. Fortunately, there were red and green perches marking the very narrow passage into the bay. We moored alongside a substantial private pontoon jetty at the north end of the bay, taking care to keep clear of the mooring warps which ran out from the end, and from the centre of the pontoon. It was a well-protected and secluded bay with a lovely outlook.

Tuesday, the sky was cloudy with extensive blue patches as we cast off at 1024 and sailed down the Fister Fjord to the south entrance of the sound between the Byre & Buoy Islands. The entrance between two small islets is about 40m wide, and care must be taken to identify the right islets! Once inside the entrance to this very protected area, we turned to port to avoid a shallow area and tied up alongside a wooden jetty at the north end of the basin. We had a magnificent view from this berth as we enjoyed our coffee break. After a brief photographic expedition ashore, we continued down the Fogna Fjord to the north entrance to the sound between the Solsoy & Rossoy Islands. We were the only yacht when we occupied the outside berth of the pontoon jetty on Rossoy Island. This is a special nature reserve island with lots of worn pathways, one of which brought us to the top of a hill with a panoramic view of the surrounding islands and fjords.

We left Rossoy Island at 1718 and



enjoyed a most pleasant sunshine sail to Jorpeland, which we approached by a tricky passage inshore of the off-lying islands. The small boat marinas were unsuitable, so we went alongside



Stavanger Sailing Club.

PHOTO: B Corbally



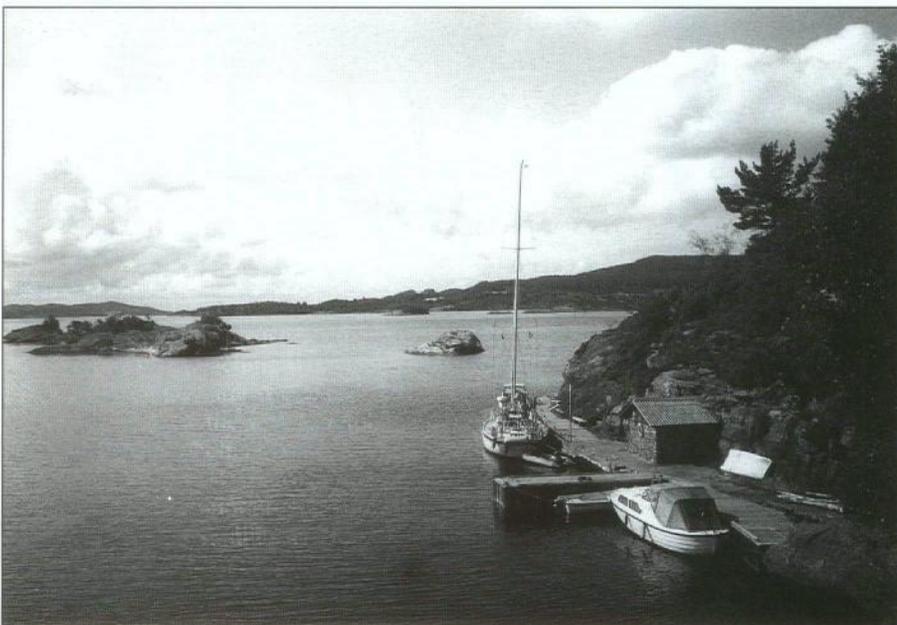
Espervær, with *Rionnag* alongside.

PHOTO: Ann Woulfe Flanagan

an old retired trawler that was being renovated. The owner kindly informed us about a guest pontoon right up at the top of the harbour next to the town. We moved up to this much more convenient location.

The following day we caught the bus to the Prekestolen car park, and then followed the pathway through the woods. Soon we were walking on a beautifully-laid stone path across marshland. This was followed by boulder climbing, and then a transit across a fairly level rockface before doing a bit more climbing to reach the huge flat rectangular projecting rock called 'the Prekestolen' (Pulpit). The view up and down the Lyse Fjord and out across the surrounding mountains was outstanding, and to look straight down 600m to the water below was a most awesome experience. Huge ocean cruise liners look like dinghies from this height! A liberal sprinkling of people were seated about on this fifty-square-meter rock, taking a well earned rest after the two-hour climb under the sweltering sun.

On Thursday 11th August we motored away from Jorpeland at 1005, leaving all the little islands to starboard and a single perch to port (a much easier route than our approach!). It was



Rionnag at Byre Island.

PHOTO: Bernard Corbally

only 3½M to the north end of Idse Island, which we rounded by the innermost passage, leaving the tiny Rishl Island to starboard. It was then a straightforward run up the Hogs Fjord for about 8M before turning to port to enter the Lyse Fjord. The scenery improved dramatically as soon as we arrived in this mountain-lined fjord. Our views very quickly changed from beautiful to being dramatic with mountains rising straight up from the water edge, leaving no space for habitation. The most awesome part of the fjord was where we approached the place where the Neverdalsfjell Mountain rises vertically to the famous Prekestolen, which we had visited yesterday. The actual pulpit rock was difficult to identify because, in relation to the massive cliff faces of the mountains on the north side, it is comparatively insignificant. When we eventually did spot it, after several false recognitions, we had to use the binoculars to pick out people at the edge.

We continued on up the fjord for about 4½M beyond the Prekestolen, dallying for a while by an impressive waterfall, photographing the silvery-coloured rocky mountains around us that were shimmering in the sunshine, drifting for a while to enjoy another of Enda's imaginative lunches. We were having an unbelievably wonderful time in a super setting, so when we saw the tiny hamlet of Songeland ahead on the port side, with red, white and orange coloured houses on an oasis of green, we immediately considered it as a possible anchorage. There was a 42ft yacht from Alaska, *Arctic Swan*, moored to a jetty beside the ferry terminal, which we tied up alongside, having tried the small boat harbour and found it to be too shallow. The owners, Tom & Jan Monroe, joined us for drinks and a most enjoyable chit-chat. The only access to this hamlet used to be by ferry until the road was built this year!

Friday 12th August. As we departed from Songeland at 0715, we had a fabulous view of the sun rising above the mountains, gradually lighting up the whole fjord in a glorious blend of orange and purple shades which were reflected by the mirror surface of the water.

We explored Vikka Bay, on the south shore, for breakfast, and found it to be a delightful anchorage with three houses perched on a green slope at the end of a valley, with mountain cliffs on both sides.

We enjoyed a pleasant but uneventful passage the rest of the way to Stavanger, arriving in the Vagen harbour area at 1145. Mark Jordan was very conveniently waiting for us on the Skagenkaien Quay to take our warps as we manoeuvred into a tight space, inside the floating pontoons. Once again we had a berth right in the centre of a major city. We had observed a huge marina on Solyst Island, by the bridge on the way into Stavanger, but it was a private enterprise with no guest berths. Also, it was a long way from the city centre.

As soon as we had settled into our berth, it began to rain and continued to do so for the rest of the day. We had noticed that the barometer had dropped ten points quite quickly, and the forecast indicated

gales on the way.

There was no executive heads facility, but the harbourmaster informed us that arrangements had been made with the Skagen Brygge Hotel. They quoted us NOK30 (approx £3) per person just to be allowed to shave, which we felt was being deliberately discouraging. We were also disenchanted by the amount of floating rubbish that had been allowed to accumulate in our part of the inner harbour.

In the afternoon, we took the bus out to Havanna Badeland, a large water-fun activity complex at Sandnes, which was thoroughly enjoyed by all of us. We dined well in the Mortepumpen Fish Restaurant (Atlantic Hotel), where the decor incorporates the customers into a street scene. We heard later that the best place to eat in Stavanger is the Munkestuen Restaurant (booking essential).

Saturday 13th August and our night was disturbed by noisy revellers from the nearby nightclubs, and later by very strong gusting wind which gave us an uncomfortable buffeting. The morning forecast was full of gale warnings, and we resigned ourselves to another day in Stavanger.

It was unpleasant blustery weather, with intermittent rain, and we had difficulty fending off from the huge tyres on the quay-side. We bought another fender from the chandlery across the road which helped us to cope with the situation.

The skipper and Ann walked over to the private marina on the other side of the bridge where our American friends, that we had met in Songeland, had borrowed the berth of a yacht that was leaving for a weekend rally. They had a party going on board and made us very welcome. When we eventually got back to *Rionnag*, Mark introduced us to Owe Hegstad, a Norwegian naval officer and lone sailor that he had met while admiring his beautiful Colin Archer-style yacht *Midgardsormen*. Our berth had become extremely uncomfortable and even our large inflatable fenders were requiring constant attention. It looked as if we would have to instigate a watch system. Owe suggested that an alternative idea would be to move our yacht across to the floating pontoon which was lying across the entrance to our section of the inner harbour. We could then hang back from the pontoon with a couple of bow lines and attach a stern line onto one of the mooring buoys provided for that purpose. We extricated our 110m anchor warp, which Enda worked around the boats ahead of us and then floated across to Mark who was being liberally doused with spray on the pontoon. Some of the other boat owners assumed that we were setting a line across the harbour which would block their exit and began to get quite agitated! Owe calmed them down with an explanation in Norwegian, while we cast off and pulled ourselves across to the pontoon, picking up the mooring on the way. We were soon much more comfortably secured for a stormy night.

Sunday morning brought no abatement in the stormy weather and the forecasters were promising more gale force winds all around our area. We were reluctantly contemplating yet another day in Stavanger, when Owe brought us a special weather report that he had obtained from the Norwegian Navy Office, which covered the specific area of the North Sea that would affect us. "The current strong winds would begin to die down during the afternoon and evening, and we would then have almost a two-day window before the next weather system moved in."

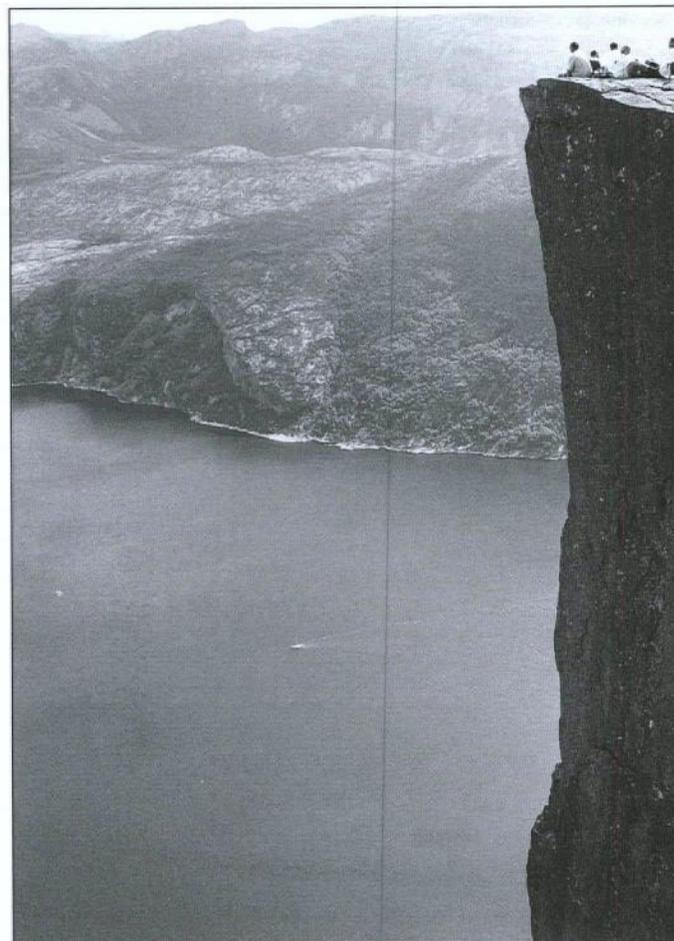
The wind did begin to ease off in the afternoon, and the waves were no longer breaking over the pontoons. We cast off at 1605,



The Prekestolen and view of the Lyse Fjord.

PHOTO: Bernard Corbally

and having topped up with fuel (arranged through the tourist office on the quay) headed towards the Aamoy Fjord, destination Scudenshaven. We motored the 17^{1/2}M against a strong north-west wind that reached over 40kts in the gusts and, despite a pretty lumpy sea, arrived at 1900. The entrance to the inner harbour is about a mile long, and is well marked for day and night navigation, with street lights at the narrow part. The sides were lined with attractive-looking houses and both private and public jetties. It is a beautiful place.



Yacht makes its way up the Lyse Fjord.

PHOTO: Enda Cullinan



Rionnag on visit to Bondhus Glacier, Sundal.

PHOTO: *Enda Cullinan*

We were delighted to find a pontoon for visiting yachts which was empty except for a German HR42 charter yacht which we had followed into the harbour. The large German yacht *Plejades*, which we had moored alongside in Sundal, was lying alongside the quay. We enjoyed an excellent steak dinner in the Lanternen Restaurant/Bar.

We left the sheltered protection of Scudenshaven at 0812 on Monday August 15th, and headed out into the North Sea. A F5 wind allowed us to enjoy sailing at over 6kts for most of the day, which was mainly sunny with occasional overclouding. The sea was still pretty lumpy after the recent gales. At 1900, the wind dropped and we were back to motoring. At 2234, we observed two very bright groups of lights on the port side, which materialised into oil rig installations. For the next 100M (approximately 14 hours) we passed many rigs and a few accommodation blocks. At one stage, it was a bit like driving down a very wide highway at night, with the street lights being provided by gas flares. The sea had become very calm so that it reflected the lights making the whole scene surrealistic and weird. At 0500, the watch crew unwittingly entered the 500m restricted zone of the production platform *Tiffany*, attracted

rather like moths to a candle. The skipper was awakened by a very unusual choppy sea motion, rather like a tidal race. The helmsman slowed down significantly and made a turn to port. Immediately afterwards, we were called on the VHF by the rig patrol boat and strongly admonished. Maybe that strange motion was caused by the rig mooring chains flexing underneath us! The rig certainly looked massive and rather close, towering up above us like a huge lit-up sky-scraper, when the skipper looked out to assess the situation. The rest of the passage to Inverness was uneventful. We ended up motor-sailing quite a bit to ensure that we would reach the sea lock soon after 1000 on Wednesday, which would allow to make our approach on a rising tide.

We had pretty mixed weather on our passage through the Caledonian Canal to Corpac. The sea lock was opened for us at 0810 and we were soon motoring through the beautiful mountain scenery around Lough Linnhe to a berth in the Craobh Haven Marina.

On Sunday we motored down to Rathlin Island, where we moored alongside the resident trawler in Church Bay harbour. We returned to Dun Laoghaire with a stop at Bangor on the way.

SUMMARY OF CRUISE TO NORWAY

Date	Passage	Sailing		Motoring		Total	
		Time Hrs. Mins	Distance K.Miles	Time Hrs. Mins	Distance K.Miles	Time Hrs. Mins	Distance K.Miles
Wed 6 July	Dun Laoghaire-Lambay Island	—	—	2 23	14.5	2 23	14.5
Thurs 7 July	Lambay Island-Bangor Marina	1 12	6.6	12 48	75.2	14 00	81.8
Fri 8 July	Bangor-Gigha	—	—	9 10	60.0	9 10	60.0
Sat 9 July	Gigha-Puilladobhain	5 09	33.5	3 41	24.3	8 50	57.8
Sun 10 July	Puilladobhain-Shuna Island	1 11	4.7	2 27	14.1	3 38	18.8
Mon 11 July	Shuna Island-Corpach	—	—	3 00	18.3	3 00	18.3
	Corpach-Fort Augustus	2 27	8.1	7 33	15.7	10 00	23.8
Tues 12 July	Fort Augustus-Foyers Hotel	3 18	9.2	3 07	7.7	6 25	16.9
Wed 13 July	Foyers-Inverness	—	—	4 02	16.7	4 02	16.7
Thurs 14 July	Inverness-Alesund	8 56	52.7	4 19	24.4	13 15	77.1
Fri 15 July		15 29	96.6	8 31	56.4	24 00	153.0
Sat 16 July		22 00	124.7	2 00	14.1	24 00	138.8
Sun 17 July		—	—	16 05	92.3	16 05	92.3
Mon 18 July	Alesund-Stordal	1 40	8.4	4 26	28.8	6 06	37.2
Tues 19 July	Stordal-Geiranger	0 54	4.5	3 06	22.6	4 00	27.1
	Geiranger-Haeimsvik	—	—	6 14	37.9	6 14	37.9
Wed 20 July	Haeimsvik-Maloy	—	—	11 14	68.6	11 14	68.6
Thurs 21 July	Maloy-Stryn	1 54	8.7	7 06	45.5	9 00	54.2
	Stryn-Leirgullen Bay	2 42	17.8	4 09	26.6	6 51	44.4
Fri 22 July	Leirgullen Bay-Floro	—	—	3 45	21.5	3 45	21.5
Sat 23 July	Floro-Fuglese Fjord	1 31	9.2	8 59	52.2	10 50	61.4
Sun 24 July	Fuglese Fjord-Ortnevik	—	—	14 25	93.4	14 25	93.4
Mon 25 July	Ortnevik-Bergen	1 27	9.3	11 28	75.4	12 55	84.7
Tues 26 July	BERGEN						
Wed 27 July	BERGEN						
Thurs 28 July	Bergen-Bjoroy Island	0 16	1.1	1 20	7.8	1 36	8.9
	Bjoroy Island-Vinnes	—	—	3 50	23.2	3 50	23.2
Fri 29 July	Vinnes-Teroy Island	3 14	5.8	1 41	7.7	4 55	13.5
	Teroy Island-Sundal	—	—	3 29	19.7	3 29	19.7
Sat 30 July	SUNDAL						
Sun 31 July	Sundal-Ulvik	1 12	4.5	7 20	47.5	8 32	52.0
Mon 1 Aug	Ulvik-Ullensvang	0 30	1.3	5 56	27.5	6 24	28.8
Tues 2 Aug	Ullensvang-Jondal	0 48	3.9	3 32	18.7	4 20	22.6
Wed 3 Aug	Jonda-Gjerdmundshamn	—	—	3 16	18.6	3 16	18.8
Thurs 4 Aug	Gjerdmundshamn-Rosendal	0 45	2.7	1 45	2.9	2 30	5.6
Fri 5 Aug	ROSENDAL						
Sat 6 Aug	Rosendal-Vik	2 02	10.9	2 42	14.2	4 44	25.1
	Vik-Espevær	2 50	18.3	0 50	3.0	5 07	21.3
Sun 7 Aug	Espevær-Avaldsnes Bay	1 47	10.4	0 44	3.8	2 31	14.2
	Avaldsnes-Naadaa: Finoy	2 11	13.8	3 36	13.6	5 47	27.4
Mon 8 Aug	Finoy Island-Langoy Island	—	—	0 35	0.7	0 35	0.7
	Langoy Island-Fogn Island	0 18	1.5	0 12	0.4	0 30	1.9
	Fogn Island-Savoy Island	1 19	3.9	0 20	1.0	1 39	4.9
	Savoy Island-Randoy Island	0 36	2.0	0 21	1.4	0 57	3.4
Tues 9 Aug	Randoy Island-Byre Island	1 00	2.7	0 33	2.2	1 33	4.9
	Byre Island-Rossoy Island	0 12	0.6	1 00	3.1	1 12	3.7
	Rossoy Island-Jorpeland	1 42	8.4	0 16	0.9	1 58	9.3
Wed 10 Aug	JORPLAND						
Thurs 11 Aug	Jorpeland-Sohgesand	—	—	5 55	24.6	5 55	24.6
Fri 12 Aug	Songeland-Stavanger	—	—	4 32	22.9	4 32	22.9
Sat 13 Aug	STAVANGER						
Sun 14 Aug	Stavanger-Skudenshaven	—	—	2 55	17.7	2 55	17.7
Mon 15 Aug	Skudenshaven-Inverness	11 17	73.5	5 31	34.3	16 48	107.8
Tues 16 Aug		14 31	100.3	9 29	63.2	24 00	163.5
Wed 17 Aug		—	—	12 45	76.1	12 45	76.1
Thurs 18 Aug	Inverness-Urquhart Castle	—	—	3 19	12.2	3 19	12.2
	Urquhart Castle-Fort Augustus	—	—	2 26	14.3	2 26	14.3
Fri 19 Aug	Fort Augustus-Corpach	—	—	8 50	25.3	8 50	25.3
Sat 20 Aug	Corpach-Oilir Mhor Bay	—	—	4 59	31.4	4 59	31.4
	Oilir Mhor Bay-Craob Haven	1 18	4.9	2 10	11.8	3 28	16.7
Sun 21 Aug	Craob Haven-Rathlin Island	—	—	10 59	68.0	10 59	68.0
Mon 22 Aug	Rathlin Island-Bangor Marina	—	—	8 20	42.7	8 20	42.7
Tues 23 Aug	Bangor Marina-Dun Laoghaire	—	—	17 45	116.6	17 45	116.6
TOTALS		105 16	664.5	297 11	1685.2	416 34	3190.5

A Family Cruise on the South-West Coast

Frank Larkin



The Fortnight Cup

We arrived in Crosshaven on Saturday 16 July to collect *Elusive*, a First 45s which had just completed Cork Week and her owners, George and John Sisk, had very kindly offered her to me for a two-week family cruise from Crosshaven to Dingle. The crew for our family cruise consisted of myself, my wife Caroline, our two children, Kevin (18) and Aideen (15), and two of their friends, Cian MacMahon and Niabh Keane.

We spent the afternoon stowing our gear for the cruise and watching the Cork Week competitors depart. Before departing on Sunday morning we were invited aboard the Swan 77 *Desperado* which had been the largest yacht competing in Cork Week. It just goes to prove that you can never satisfy some people – my young crew came back from *Desperado* complaining that *Elusive* had no TVs, VCRs or CD players, whereas *Desperado* had three of each!

We left Crosshaven at noon and motored out past Roches Point into a light SE breeze. This being World Cup Final Sunday the sailing had to be kept to a minimum so we set the main and genoa and headed on a broad reach for Kinsale. We had a pleasant sail in sunny conditions and tied up at the Kinsale Yacht Club marina in plenty of time to watch the final on a big screen in the club that evening.

With the World Cup out of the way we could now concentrate fully on cruising and on Monday morning we motored out of Kinsale to be met by a calm sea and thick fog. I set a compass course for the Old Head and had difficulty picking it out until we were a few hundred yards off. I then laid a course to clear Seven Heads and Galley Head and we continued motoring over a glassy sea in dense fog. We did not see either headland until we were within a few hundred yards of each of them. Having passed Galley Head we altered course for Glandore and as we approached Glandore in the late afternoon the sea fog finally lifted. We entered Glandore Harbour under power and anchored in 3 metres outside the local moorings S of the quay.

In the morning Caroline and I walked as far as the bridge to Union Hall while the rest of the crew tidied the ship. We departed around 11 am and beat into a moderate southerly as we headed for Castletownshend. We anchored opposite the landing slip and went ashore to Mary Ann's for lunch. We did not delay very long as the skipper was anxious to get to Barlogue Harbour before high water which was at 1600. We had a splendid sail around Toe Head and inside the Stags in the warm southerly breeze. Not having been to Barlogue Harbour before, I had to read the ICC Directions a few times before I was convinced that there was a



The skipper and first mate at the Fastnet.

PHOTO: Aideen Larkin

gap in the cliff face ahead of us and as we approached I was relieved to see a yacht emerge from what seemed an impenetrable cliff-face. We entered Barlogue Harbour and anchored without further incident. It was interesting to note that we were the only Irish yacht among the seven yachts anchored at Barlogue. We made several dinghy trips up the narrows into Loch Hyne which was very exciting and afterwards all of the crew had a swim in the cold, crystal-clear waters of Barlogue Harbour, except for the skipper who had of course to stay with the ship.

We left Barlogue around 1800 and again had a great sail in the warm evening southerly breeze to Baltimore Harbour where we anchored outside of the moorings N of Baltimore Quay. We ate on board and went ashore later for a few drinks.

The next morning, Wednesday, we awoke to rain and mist from the south-west. Looking ashore I noticed some trawlers being refuelled from a fuel truck so as we had done quite a lot of motoring we hurriedly raised the anchor and dashed alongside where we refuelled from the truck. We then went alongside the new pontoon above the quay and filled our water tanks. Suitably replenished, we motored out of Baltimore Harbour after lunch in poor visibility. We motored through the Gascanane Sound and set a compass course to pass between the Middle and East Calf Islands which we couldn't see until we were a few hundred yards off. Having passed safely through Calf Sound we then set course for Schull Harbour and tied alongside the pier outside several yachts in the early evening.

The skipper and first mate retired to the West End Hotel for a meal while the younger crew members went in search of burg-



Elusive anchored inside the fish farm at Deenish Island off Derrynane. PHOTO: Frank Larkin

ers and chips. We later went to Newman's for a few drinks before heading back to *Elusive* in heavy rain. Our two young men met some lively company and did not return on board until 4am.

The next day, Thursday, dawned bright and sunny and we spent the morning shopping for supplies and strolling around Schull. I managed to break away from the shopping for a while and do what I like best in Schull which is to spend an hour or two browsing in the well-stocked Mizen bookshop. We sailed to Cape Clear in the afternoon accompanied by two glamorous young Dublin girls whom our crew had met the previous evening. The lads put on a great display of seamanship for their benefit and we were in North Harbour in no time where we tied up alongside the outer knuckle of the north pier. From previous visits in *Elusive*, it is the easiest place to lie alongside for a short visit.

It must be a sign of the times that the skipper and first mate went for a walk around Cape Clear in glorious sunshine while the younger crew members went to the pub! We regrouped around 1800 and enjoyed a full sail reach back to Schull. My original cruising plan was to spend no more than one night in the same place but I decided to stay a second night in Schull rather than risk a mutiny. We visited *Elusive's* owners' sister who lives in Schull and afterwards retired again to Newman's for a few quite pints. This is a lovely old pub with a clientele consisting mainly of the RCYC on tour.

We finally dragged ourselves away the next morning and motored out through Long Island Sound on a lovely sunny day but again with light airs. The crew expressed a wish to have a close look at the Fastnet so we motor-sailed out to the rock. It was so calm that we considered landing but this suggestion was vetoed by the first mate so we had to make do with photos of the crew with the Fastnet Rock in the background. We circled the rock a few times, while the skipper bored his young crew to death with epic tales of his many adventures in that most famous of yacht races, and then headed for Crookhaven where we anchored close inshore opposite Sullivan's Pub.

Lo and behold, who arrived shortly afterwards, by pure coincidence of course, but the two Dublin girls aboard their parents' yacht. The crew of *Elusive* went their separate ways that afternoon. Our two girls walked as far as Barley Cove for a swim, the two boys gave their girlfriends a guided tour of Crookhaven, and the senior crew members spent the afternoon in the cockpit sipping gins and tonics in the brilliant sunshine while all the time feeling sorry for *Elusive's* owners who were back in Dublin

working very hard to keep us in a style to which we rapidly becoming accustomed.

We had arranged that two sailing friends, Michael and Gretta Wallace, would join us for the weekend and they duly arrived from Limerick. We left Crookhaven next morning, Saturday, and headed for the Mizen. Michael hadn't yet got into the laid-back spirit of this cruise and he worked hard on sail trim to get the best out of *Elusive* in the light south-westerly airs. After spending two hours trying to round Mizen Head, the skipper reasserted himself and soon we were heading into Bantry Bay at seven knots under power. A south-westerly breeze filled in after lunch as we passed Sheeps Head and we were able to sail up Bantry Bay.

The parents of our young crew-member, Niabh, were staying in their caravan at a waterside campsite on Eagle Point near Ballylickie at the head of Bantry Bay and from the chart it looked as if we might be able to anchor close to the

campsite. Sure enough when we got there after a pleasant sail up Bantry Bay we were able to anchor off the campsite in four metres SE of Eagle Point a few miles W of Bantry Town. The anchorage is exposed to the SW and could only be used in fine weather. Niabh's parents, Willie and Anne Keane, rowed out to join us and said the arrival of *Elusive* had caused great excitement in the campsite.

Willie and Anne then took the junior crew ashore for a campsite barbecue while the senior crew members motored *Elusive* around to Glengarriff where we anchored near the town jetty at 1900. Having fed the multitude, Willie and Anne collected us at the jetty and the six adults had a most enjoyable meal in the Wooden Shoe restaurant, run by a Dutch couple in their home just outside Glengarriff for over seventeen years.

The next morning, Saturday, we shifted anchorage to be nearer to Illnacullen Island. We rowed ashore to this beautiful island, past large groups of seals sunning themselves on the rocks (is there any animal who looks more content than a seal sunning himself?), and spent the morning wandering around the magnificent gardens which are managed by the Office of Public Works. We finally set sail about noon with the regular crew and the Keane family on board for a sail to Adrigole Harbour. That afternoon we had the best sail of the cruise as we beat down Bantry Bay in glorious sunshine into a fresh south-westerly with two reefs in the main and a well-rolled genoa.

We reached Adrigole in the late afternoon and anchored off the pier on the east shore as shown in the ICC Directions. Adrigole is indeed the beautiful anchorage that the Directions describe. We had originally planned to have lunch here but had spent so long on Illnacullen Island that the lunch became a dinner at which we fed a total of fourteen adults and children. We said goodbye to the Keane family, except for Niabh who stayed with the ship, and sailed in the late evening out of Adrigole and around the Roancarrigmore Lighthouse to Lawrence's Cove on the N shore of Bear Island where we anchored just in time for the thirsty members of the crew to row ashore for a pint before closing time.

In our rush to get ashore before closing time we had anchored as close to the village as possible, in the narrow channel near to the small islet with the large rusty tank as described in the ICC Directions. We were to regret this laziness around 4am when the southerly gale which had been forecast duly arrived and we started to drag across the narrow channel. I roused the crew and we hauled the anchor and dropped it again closer to the islet, but

shortly after we started to drag again. We hauled the anchor again and this time dropped two anchors, a fisherman's on the chain and a danford on a nylon warp, but we continued to drag. We repeated this exercise a few times with the same results. The most annoying aspect of this exercise, apart from losing our sleep, was that not one of the other four cruising yachts anchored in the cove dragged. We got fed up with these fun and games after a few hours and moved around to a small bay west of Lawrence's Cove where we put out our two anchors again and didn't budge thereafter. Next morning it was still blowing strongly from the S and raining, so we stayed in bed for the morning to make up for our nocturnal antics.

The wind eased slightly in the afternoon and we set shortened sail and headed up Bearhaven Sound. The wind continued to ease and as we anchored in Castletown Harbour at 0500 the sun made its first appearance of the day. We sent the younger crew members on another search

for burgers and chips, and the senior crew members dined in a superb fish restaurant called the Old Bank Restaurant, which not surprisingly is located in a large and prominent former bank building complete with safes and counters. We wondered if there was any significance in the restaurant owner's decision to locate the gents' loo in the former bank manager's office.

The next morning we refuelled again and filled our water tanks at the Fishermen's Co-op, we seemed to be doing a lot of motoring and washing on this trip, and said goodbye to Michael and Gretta as Willie had arrived from Ballylickie to bring them to Crookhaven to collect their car. The resident crew of *Elusive* motored out through Piper Sound before setting sail for Dursey Island in a moderate south-westerly and a lumpy sea left over from the gale the day before. We rounded Crow Head and bore away for Dursey Sound. I have passed through Dursey Sound many times but this was the first time that I actually saw the cable-car in operation, and we exchanged banter with the cablecar occupants as we passed underneath. We passed through the sound at low water and appeared to have plenty of room to spare under the cables but I was horrified weeks later when John Sisk told me that *Elusive's* masthead was 22 metres above the deck, as the HWS clearance is 24 metres under the cables and 21 metres under the cable-car itself.

We reached across the Kenmare River and entered Derrynane Harbour at 1600 where we were met by a dinghy containing our friends, fellow ICC member Tony Clarke and his wife Eileen, who guided us to the mooring at the head of the harbour that Tony had arranged for us. Tony and Eileen keep their First 345 *Silver Breeze* in Derrynane during the summer where they also have a summer house with stunning sea views. In her spare time Eileen plays at being a small farmer and the Larkin and Clarke families enjoyed the fruits of her labour at a splendid fresh lamb chop barbecue at their house that evening. We had to pretend that the lamb chops were bought from the local butcher as the Clarke children had become very attached to their lambs and they would have reported us to the ISPCA had they known where our succulent chops came from.

The next day, Wednesday, we embarked with the Clarkes on a mini-cruise-in-company up the Kenmare River. Tony had heard reports of a new marina with a restaurant in Dunkerron Harbour near the top of the Kenmare River and we decided to investigate. The weather was again settled with light SW winds so we decided to give the younger crew members some practi-



Elusive and *Silver Breeze* tied alongside the new marina at Dunkerron Harbour with the Bistro Restaurant on the left.

PHOTO: Frank Larkin

cal experience by letting them sail *Silver Breeze*, under the command of Deirdre Clarke, while the four adults travelled on board *Elusive*. As we left Derrynane Harbour at low water we ran aground in *Elusive* and had to make a few attempts to find the deeper water closer to Lamb Island. Fortunately, our blushes were spared as we had given *Silver Breeze* a half an hour of a head start.

We caught up with and passed *Silver Breeze* on the run to Kilmakilloge Harbour where we had decided to anchor and go ashore for lunch. We anchored off Bunow Pier and were of course full of advice for our offspring when *Silver Breeze* cut the corner of the Cushkeal bank and became stuck for a few moments. We had a disappointing lunch in the pub beside the pier due mainly to the excessive noise levels caused by a fork-lift loading containers of farmed salmon onto a freezer truck outside the pub. It put into context the problems of trying to develop industry and tourism side by side in these remote areas.

We left Kilmakilloge together and headed up the Kenmare River past increasingly beautiful scenery. The river narrows above Sneem and one has to take care as some of the perches are difficult to see against the land. We arrived off Dunkerron and entered the harbour carefully. There are two piers in the harbour and we headed for the one which is E of Reen Point, as there appeared to be development works taking place there. When we got up close to the pier we could see that the old pier had been extended and some pontoons installed. However as it was near high water and we only had 3 metres under us we were not keen to stay. We were about to head back down the harbour in search of deeper water when a man rowed out from the pier and assured us that a small basin had been dug for the marina and it had over 2 metres at low water. *Elusive* went in first and I was relieved to see the depthsounder reading increase from 3 to 6 metres as we neared the pontoon. The young crew of *Silver Breeze* followed us in after we had *Elusive* tied up and we took their lines. When we had the two yachts secured for the night we were able to inspect our surroundings. We were in the grounds of Dunkerron House, which is an elegant country house hotel, and its owner is developing a marina at the old pier and has also opened a fine restaurant called The Bistro in the old boathouse adjoining the pier.

The juniors ate on board that evening while the adults had a superb dinner in the Bistro overlooking the small marina with our two yachts. Visiting yachts are asked to sign their names on

the wall in the Bistro and we were the third and fourth yachts to visit this new venue behind a Swedish and a French yacht. Going back on board close to low water it was interesting to see the two yachts floating in what looked like a small swimming pool. At present the marina can only accommodate four or five yachts, and *Elusive* just touched at low water, but we were assured that the marina would be extended by next season.

The generally settled weather which we had enjoyed for most of the cruise looked as if it might be coming to an end, and as we were midway through the second week of our two week cruise I didn't want to be too far from our final destination at Dingle if the weather broke so my plan for the day was to head for Portmagee. In any case if we didn't leave on the morning high tide we would be stuck in the marina pool in Dunkerron for another day. We parted company with *Silver Breeze*, as the Clarkes were stopping at Blackwater Harbour on their way back to Derrynane, and we motored out of Dunkerron. The wind was light and on the nose so we continued to motor for the morning as we headed back down the Kenmare River. By lunchtime we were abeam of Lambs Head at the northern mouth of Kenmare Bay.

By this time the crew were fed up with motoring so I suggested a lunchtime stop at Deenish Island off Derrynane. From a distance a large salmon farm seems to occupy most of the horseshoe shaped bay on the E side of the island but as we got nearer we could see that the farm was a few hundred yards from the shore and we were able to go inside it and anchor close to the steep rocky shore in 5 metres.

We left the anchorage at Deenish Island after 3pm and as we had plenty of time I decided to give the crew a closeup view of the Skelligs. We got to Skellig Michael around 1700 but decided against landing due to the swell. In any case the rock is now closed from Tuesdays to Thursdays to allow repair work to be carried out on the monastic settlement. The 214m-high rock is steep-to on the S side, with a depth reading of 50 metres just a boat-length out from the rock, so my crew were suitably impressed as I motored *Elusive* close alongside the rock. After a few more passes we headed across to Little Skellig to have a look at its stunning gannetry and then headed for Portmagee.

We entered Portmagee Sound and followed the ICC Directions up to Portmagee itself. I had intended anchoring off the pier at Portmagee as recommended in the Directions but we discovered that the Dept of Marine have recently completed a fine extension to the pier so that there is now 5 metres alongside at LW and so we tied up to the pier behind some trawlers. There was a SW gale warning in force so it was nice to be tied up to a well-sheltered pier. We went ashore to a fine pub-cum-restaurant at the head of the pier and had a super meal. I could see *Elusive* from where I sat in the pub and after our meal I noticed some trawlers arriving and making attempts to get inside her. I hurried down the pier and spoke to the fishermen who asked me to move *Elusive* as more trawlers were expected ahead of the gale. They very kindly offered me a substantial mooring just above the pier and I was delighted to take up this offer as I did not fancy riding out the gale at anchor after our experiences at Lawrence's Cove.

The wind continued to rise during the night and by morning, Friday, it was blowing a full gale with continuous rain from the SW. Up to this we had been very fortunate with the weather and this was the first day of the holiday that we were unable to sail. Rather than waste the day stormbound in port we decided to retrieve the car from Crosshaven. Poor Caroline drew the short straw (as we both decided that the skipper should stay close to *Elusive* in the bad weather conditions!) and spent the next ten hours in various forms of transport getting from Portmagee to Crosshaven and back again. To keep the rest of the crew amused

on the wet and windy day, I took them across the bridge to Valentia Island and we visited the Skellig Experience Interpretive Centre. Having just recently had a closeup view of the Skelligs themselves, the centre was tame compared to the real thing. Our intrepid young male crew members spent the evening in the pub instructing some Italian girls in the intricacies of Irish dancing, and they were disappointed when the skipper vetoed their plans to accompany the girls to Waterville after the pub closed for more intensive lessons.

We had planned on the Friday to meet some friends at Portmagee and take them for a sail around Valentia Island to Kells Bay on the S shore of Dingle Bay where they had a summer house but unfortunately the weather made a nonsense of our plans. However, the winds were forecast to ease on Saturday so we put our plans back by one day. It blew strongly all night but the SW winds did start to ease on Saturday morning. There was still a nasty sea at the entrance to Portmagee Sound and as our guests were new to sailing I decided to go through the bridge, which opens regularly twice a day or otherwise on request, and pass inside Valentia Island and on into Dingle Bay. We collected our guests at the pier and after passing through the bridge we had a super sail in flat water to Knightstown. We anchored for lunch just beyond Knightstown in the snug little bay in front of Glanleam House, described as anchorage No 4 in the Directions. The wind continued to ease as we set sail again and headed for Kells Bay. This is a beautiful little bay but it is open to the N and it would not be advisable to leave a yacht unattended for any length of time. It was now calm again so we motored close in and anchored in 3 metres inside the local moorings. That evening we enjoyed a convivial meal with our friends at their house in Kells and it was great to be among friends as our cruise drew to a close.

The final day of our cruise, August Bank Holiday Sunday, dawned with a gentle drizzle and we spent a lazy morning having an extended breakfast and reading the papers. In the afternoon Caroline drove the car around to Dingle while the rest of the crew motored across Dingle Bay. We tied up in Dingle Marina at 1600 where our lines were taken by the ICC Rear-Commodore, Paddy Walsh, who had seen *Elusive* come in flying the ICC burgee.

Our sincere thanks are due to our friends George and John Sisk for trusting us with their lovely yacht, *Elusive*, for what turned out to be a memorable family holiday.

SUMMARY

Dates	Passage	Distance	Engine Hrs.
July			
17	Crosshaven-Kinsale	15	2
18	Kinsale-Glandore	28	6
19	Glandore-Baltimore	14	2
20	Baltimore-Schull	9	2
21	Schull-Cape Clear-Schull	10	0
22	Schull-Crookhaven via Fastnet	18	4
23	Crookhaven-Glengarrif	36	4
24	Glengarrif-Lawrences Cove	20	2
25	Lawrences Cove-Castletown	4	0
26	Castletown-Derrynane	27	2
27	Derrynane-Dunkerron	22	3
28	Dunkerron-Portmagee	45	8
29	Portmagee		
30	Portmagee-Kells Bay	17	1
31	Kells Bay-Dingle	9	2
	Totals	274	38

Saint Patrick in the West of Ireland and the Hebrides

Paddy Barry

A whole fortnight to cruise from West Cork to Connemara laid before us a most delightful menu of prospects and places.

We would call into spots previously bypassed, stay awhile, as the mood inclined, and would of course sail only on fine days!

Crew for this were unsurprisingly easy to recruit. Ruadhri O'Tuairisg from Indreabhán and Rory Walsh, teachers both; Kevin Cronin and Austin Duke, who have normal jobs, and our friend Raphael McIlhone from Killyleagh, who works strictly on an informal basis, made up the six of us.

An unpleasant weekend delivery shunt from Strangford Lough to Ballycotton, then overnighing along South Cork was the price pre-paid for a kickoff in that jewel called Glandore.

The Classic Boat Regatta astern, we achieved all of twenty miles on day one, bringing up in the mist of Cape Clear harbour on Monday evening, July 11th. In Cape not a lot had changed, outwardly at any rate. Rory and I walked to the top of the island to gaze over Roaring Water Bay and look down for a sign of Bullig Reef, that we had passed after coming west through Gascanane Sound – not an inkling of it.

Were I around here enough I'd take the trouble to find its clearing transits, by GPS or better still from the lads on the island ferry *Naomh Ciaran*.

Tim Pat Coogan, who was having a chat in Cotter's, and Christy Moore who was playing pool in the co-op bar, went largely unrecognised. Next day brought a sunny morning, swimming and chatting to strollers, people-watching arrivals off the ferry, until it was time to go to catch the last of the tide around Mizen.

The sail up Dunmanus Bay was glorious, with only the too close appearance of the breaker as we passed Carberry Island disturbing the perfection of quartering wind, flat water and afternoon sunshine. Top of the tide saw us tied alongside Durrus Pier in three metres of water. However a boathook-survey found a

ledge at the bottom of the pier wall which might have caught the hull when drying, so back out to anchor we went – as the ICC directions recommended in the first place.

Durrus by evening was somnolent, a mood to which we neither added nor, I think, subtracted, before midnight Walk-Out-to-Dinghy-Time.

Anchoring off Durrus Island the next day, in the bight north of the cable-way, we went ashore leaving the boat manned. Durrus has a few people, but no longer a community. The school lies empty. Bachelors outnumber the remaining three or four families.

High pressure was supposed to have set in, but with local ripples. In such a ripple we sailed to Derrynane, sandy leafy home of 'the Liberator', Dan O'Connell. Going alongside the sheltered south pier at the top of spring tide left little water beneath the keel. Beautiful and all as Derrynane is, we didn't wish to spend a lunar half-month aground here. The north pier, opposite the bay entrance, had plenty of water but had an overexposed feel to it. Back out to anchor we went, near Adrian Spence on his Bristol Channel Pilot Cutter *Madcap*.

There undoubtedly are nights when the bar here is good, but the World Cup took from that. Leaving Derrynane it is important not to follow the leading line until after going through the inside beacons. Kevin corrected in time, just.

This was the day that the ripples went away and stayed away. Great weather consistently now. Across Ballinskelligs Bay, outside Puffin and Valentia Islands we travelled and into Dingle, unashamedly looking for nightlife.

The following day, Friday, dawned fair and calm over Dingle Marina. If we were ever going to get onto Skellig Michael, today must be the day. By the time we had engine ten miles there came a westerly breeze and sail up. An hour later, in the lee of Skellig, the sea was up too. Kevin dinghied towards the landing



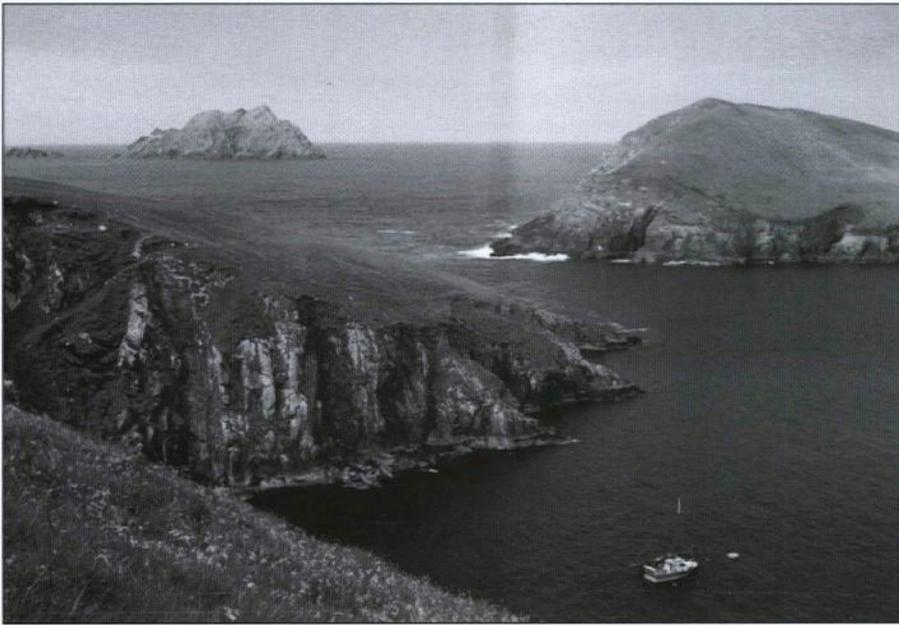
Cape Clear. Chatting to strollers.

PHOTO: Rory Walsh



The road on Durrus Island, looking north.

PHOTO: Rory Walsh



Inishvickillane anchorage. Inis na Bro and Tearacht to the north.

place to see whether we could bring the hooker alongside.

White splashes rose about him. Peculiar that gannets should be diving in here! Then we copped that these were rocks being thrown at him from above.

Incredulous, he rowed hastily out of range and back to *Saint Patrick*.

No 'Keep Off' sign was visible, OPW or otherwise, no relevant Notice To Mariners was known to us, no shouted, signalled or VHF communication was attempted with us.

In Port Magee that evening we learned that, by arrangement with local boatmen, visiting was restricted to three other days a week. Fair enough, but some civility wouldn't have gone astray.

No harm done. In fact as we carried on round the Skellig it was apparent that the steps a couple of hundred metres to the south were a much calmer place for a dingy landing.

Donie, the Port Magee bridgeman, opened for us the following morning, all as arranged before closing time. Valentia cows gazed us up the channel on our way to Inishvickillane, island of the Dalys in previous times. Devoid of occupants on this sunny day, the hooker swung far below on the substantial mooring, kindly provided.

The sun rounded to the west, two anchors bit the sand close in off Tra Bawn on Great Blasket and Danny Sheehy leapt aboard from his Zodiac. Danny lives across in Ballyferriter. He had sailed to America with us in 1986 and is a fount of local lore.

Inspired by sun, history and foolishness, Rory and myself ran the length of the Blasket Ridge that evening. Up from Barr An Bhaile to the Signal Tower, discarding shoes first and then all but shorts. We passed the wartime letters, seven meters high laid in stone, spelling EIRE. Up Dun hill, then down the cliff path through the ferns and then up again to Cro Hill! An exultant sweep down Red Ridge to stand on Black Head facing across to Inis Na Bro and Tearacht beyond.

We sat that night in Peig Sayers' house and thought of the islanders

*for they kept their boats high on the waves
and their roofs close to the ground*
— D. Quin

We left Danny ashore at Dunquin next morning with some low-ground walkers, Rory and myself were dropped at Brandon Creek for Munster's Holy Mountain, with Raphael and Ruadhri bringing the boat round to Brandon village — all to meet up again at day's end.

We put the boat alongside the pier to dry out, not normally possible here because of the surge.

More swimming and quiet conversations. A man and his wife sat in the evening sun on the pier wall, he with a pint and she with a glass of red. I enquired for a man who had been helpful to us here during the Fastnet gale of '79. He was away. A friend of his put a salmon aboard later.

Quilty on the west coast of Clare wouldn't normally be on any cruising agenda. Though tucked inside Mutton Island and extended and dredged to take fifty-footers, it must catch any groundswell going. This was no problem in this weather. We walked the mile to the village and there in the heartland of Irish traditional music suffered the sounds of amplified country & western. Rescued and driven into Miltown Malbay by a cousin of mine, we arranged to go next day drawing in bales of hay.

PHOTO: Rory Walsh

Eleven hundred of them, off six acres, piking each one high on the trailer, then again high into the shed, left us with sore hands and arms the following night. Tired and content, we listened to Jackie Daly playing magic on his box.

Inis Thiar was a disappointment to me after a fifteen-year gap. Beyond the village, antiquity remains, but the new buildings, the racket of stone-crushing for the new pier and O'Brien Shipping have taken from the serenity that was.

A glorious sail took us flying east past Ceann Bóirme (Black Head) and into Ballyvaughan pier at high tide. Water abounds, from half tide upwards only. Anchored later out in the bay, we grounded and sat the low tide out.

Ruadhri's brother, Paraic, is the minder of monuments on Inis Mor. In his OPW Landrover he brought us around. In 'Na Seacht Teampall' there was continuous habitation for a thousand years up to the year 1700 while other institutions came and went.

In a light breeze next day Paraic sailed with us to Inis Mean, which alone of the Arans remains unspoiled.

Sailing in Ruadhri's home waters across Loch Lurgan, as Galway Bay used to be called by the badóiri, Raphael and himself swapped stories of Down and Connemara, moving as easily from last week to the time of the Fianna as you'd walk through an open door. Conversation used to be the pastime in Connemara. Competition lay in accuracy of recollection and in complexity and beauty of the phraseology.



Danny Sheehy (on left) from Ballyferriter is a fount of local lore.

PHOTO: Rory Walsh

On Sunday July 24th, two weeks out of Glandore, we ferried ashore to the Sean-Céibh in Roundstone, leaving the hooker swinging gently to two anchors against a forecast gale.

The following three weeks were intended to be domestic and I maintain that they were!

However, with 'pressed' crew we managed day-sails to McDara Island, through Joyce's Sound to Turbot Island, High Island, Luc Hallaire's Ardbear Bay, Clifden and Mannin Bay off whose south shores *Saint Patrick* lay to anchors for a beautiful week.

I was also fixing gutters, mending fencing, painting windows – Paddy works on the buildings.

It was time to go again, to Donegal with my son Cathal and four of his pals, myself to be sort of in an advisory capacity sounded good to me!

However, the day before leaving, the boat lay out from the wall in Clifden and partly filled through the galley outlet before refloating. The following 24 hours' events included much pumping, putting out a wiring fire, replacing the starter motor, driving to Dublin and back, rewiring, draining and flushing the sump and cylinders – and rewiring the GPS which for some apparently unrelated reason went out of action.

Thank you, as ever, Liam Canavan, who made possible the quick turnaround, and to my girl Bairbre and her pals who were stalwart and unfazed through flood and smoke.

The evening tide carried our fresh crew past Turbot, Cruagh and Friar Island at dusk and in darkness into the new pier on Boffin.

'Island-Hours' ensure no thirst.

O'Day's was our first call, until sometime after three, followed by a westward journey to Murray's for more of the same.

We should have called to Inis Turk the next day but the sailing was so good that we kept going. Then round Roonagh and Inis Gort we sailed, to anchor east of Dorinish Mór while waiting for the rise of tide into Westport.

When Beatle John Lennon owned this island some 'hippies' had lived here. Now cormorants nest on the low gravel outlier.

Darkness at ten o'clock saw our bow waterline a foot high after running firmly onto hard ground. We were at the tower, a mile or so off the quay. With only an hour of the tide yet to rise this was an uneasy berth indeed. Our (low-power) VHF call was



In a light breeze we sailed from Cill Ronan to Inis Mean.

PHOTO: *Hugh Clay (RCC)*

picked up by Frank Clarke who runs the Sea Angling boats. We got off astern under our own power and were glad of the guidance in.

The low training wall we had hit is shown on the chart but I had been busy avoiding the main training wall. Westport is definitely better entered in daylight!

Daylight had been no help to the thirty-two victims of the Achill Drowning, in June of 1894, when the 18-ton hooker *Victory* capsized after gybing in Westport channel. A monument was erected on the quay this year.

Broken weather set in as we made for Grace O'Malley's island. Close hauled to a south-westerly, pushed over towards Achill Sound, we used our 'little helper' to gain the anchorage of Clare Island and later made the pier wall.

its all 9.9hp Yamahas on the currachs around here, and they sure shift.

There's also a shift in the clock – see notes on Boffin by night, and add a few hours.

Raising sail off Achill Head a couple of days later, a good wind drove us past the deserted islands of North Mayo and overnight across Donegal Bay. We made towards the south side of Arran, fully reefed now in darkening weather. At low-water neaps, South Sound looked good enough and it was, even though our keel touched lightly on a charted 2-metre patch east of Chapel Sound.

We anchored off the village and slept, moving to the new pier after the last ferry.

The Channel Tunnel was built by Arranmen, and many other tunnels besides. Yesterday the holidays in Arran had finished, the men and their families had left again and the island would be quiet until Christmas.

John O'Donnell, the lifeboat mechanic, sorted out a poor wiring connection for us and we talked late into the night.

Burtonport, across from Arran, is entered by way of a long narrow channel fronting Rutland Island. Substantial stone buildings and old quay walls testify to the time when Rutland was a thriving port and administrative centre.

Our young bucks departed the ship, happy enough I think, making way for fresh men off McGeehan's bus in Dungloe only five hours from Dublin. Frank Pa O'Donnell helped collect them on that Friday night and over a few pints we prepared for sea the next day.

Ahead of us lay a week, the only fixtures being a landing in Barra and finishing in Dublin. Paul Cooper and Pat Colleran



Dawnwatch. Paddy and Earle.

PHOTO: *Pat Redmond*

tread regularly over the pages of the ICC Journal. Paul, strong and reliable, Pat, an artist on a boat whether sailhandling or cooking.

Pat Redmond, who had dragged me around the Comeragh Mountain Marathon in May, too had scars from *Saint Patrick's* previous Scottish weeks. For Maurice O'Hara, who had won that mountain event, sailing was to be a new experience. For Australian Earle Bloomfield it wasn't. He had had five sailing seasons in Greenland on his own boat, sea-kayaked round Tasmania and climbed here and there.

The 120 miles to Barra was as pleasant a passage as you could ask for, leaving Tory well to the east and picking up the light on Berneray next morning. The words of the Mingulay Boat Song just could not be recalled as that island went abeam. We rounded westwards into Castlebay and the CalMac ferry arrived in too, that sunny Sunday morning.

Barra, at about 16 miles round on the coast road or 6 miles across, is easy enough to get a handle on. We did a pleasant few hours on the undemanding hills, ate ashore and listened to some unexciting imported music before motoring from the pier to the DoE moorings for the night.

Late morning, away north-east we went in a freshening breeze, destination undecided. In squalls and rain we tied up at Loch Boisdale outside one of those boats that patrol when firing from the army ranges of South Uist is in progress.

The patrol boat was out of action waiting for a fuel lift pump. We offered our Perkins spare.

'You would nae hae one for a Rolls Royce, would yae?'

We definitely couldn't help!

The rain lashed down and the wind blew. Lines were doubled and the fire stoked.

Scotland for a whisky drinker, I suppose, is Heaven, but their beer is unsatisfying. The ubiquitous 'pint o' heavy' was the best on offer in Loch Boisdale Hotel.

In daylight and in less rain, we viewed South Uist. It needs a coat of paint.

An afternoon clearance gave us a good sail eastwards towards Rhum. In falling light we rounded instead into Canna, where our lines were taken by Don Hind to his charter vessel *Lorne Leader*.

Canna is known for its verdant braes and its 500 evictions during the 'clearances'. Empty and beautiful it remains, a



Fair and calm over Dingle Marina.

PHOTO: Rory Walsh

National Trust of Scotland property now. 'Do not dump rubbish in the harbour,' the sailing directions exhort! What sort of people do they think we are at all?

A seven o'clock start had us away 20 miles north to Skye, with Maurice, Pat and myself being set ashore at Loch Brittle to do some climbing across the Cuilleans and meet the boat again on the other side at Loch Scavaig.

The sea-farers arrived in that wondrous sea-loch before us, picked low-tide mussels and showered (they say) beneath the stream which falls onto its shore.

In a lather of exuberance and sweat, we three raced the three and a half thousand feet down from the summit of Sgoir Alisdair. All together by five in the afternoon and away under motor for Tobermory by midnight.

On the scale of 1 to 10, on which our chef-du-day is rated by the diners' ballot, the marks were low that evening. Some very imaginative cooking is required without food on board!

Ben Mór on Mull is best approached from its south side, achieved by bus in our case.

Now Thursday – no, it's Friday, and time to be getting along. Good sail down the Sound of Mull, an unscheduled man-over-board event (to recover myself), engined through Luing and took the eddy through the Dorus Mór to tie in Ardfern Marina for our last night ashore.

Or so we thought.

Weather pinned us on Saturday. On Sunday we left, but could get no further than Craighouse on the south end of Jura

Departed Craighouse 0600hrs Monday.

Arrived Howth 0800hrs Tuesday August 30th.

Epilogue

*'And now there came both mist and snow
and it grew wondrous cold*

and ice, mast high, came floating by as green as emerald'
Thus, verbatim, did my watchmate Earle greet me on the dawn-watch. Indeed a man for all seasons.



Castlebay, Barra.

PHOTO: Pat Redmond

Nine Islands: *Twayblade* 1994 Azores

Jonathan Virden



In 1994 *Twayblade* cruised to the middle of the North Atlantic and visited all nine inhabited islands of the Arquipelago dos Açores.

Twayblade was built of wood in 1961 by Harry King at Pin Mill to the classic design of Alan Buchanan. She is a mast-head sloop, 32ft long, just under 9ft beam, and draws 6ft and sleeps four in reasonable comfort.

Julian Power, nearing the end of his year between school and university, showed his worth and organised sea stowage most efficiently. The forecast was not good for going a long way west and south. In the morning there was no aggressive weather and we beat all day from Plymouth to Helford, arriving in very poor visibility. This stretched the rigging, and revealed that the usual leaks around the coachroof were in good form. Both of these were attended to, and next day, being cloudy but otherwise benign, we sailed very pleasantly past the Lizard and on to Penzance. We made a brief visit ashore for fresh bread and fruit (to satisfy Julian's passion for oranges) and for a kit to patch the exhaust hose where it was developing a crack near the skinfitting (two-part kit for radiator hose: fairly easy to apply and very effective). At 1600 on 7 July we left Penzance and were soon, but briefly, becalmed. Julian saw a shark. During that night the wind became F5 from NW, and we raced away on a reach in an increasingly uncomfortable sea, but directly towards our goal. We covered 140 miles in 24hrs. On 9th July the wind died to very light; and all the natural impatience of a teenager showed as Julian learned the first lesson of long-distance sailing; there is nothing to be done about lack of wind. And when there are 1,000 miles still to go, the engine is only useful if the batteries need to be charged.

We cooked the first of two lovely pieces of ham which Julian had brought. Julian was the cook and most successfully supervised the production of all the hot food for the rest of his time on board. Sadly for his need for hot food the cooker went on strike. The first big shakeup it had had for several years swilled all the accumulated water and gunge from the paraffin tank into the jets. For much of the passage one burner worked occasionally. Julian's view about the merits of gas for cooking became clear. Being determined to avoid gas always, I, privately, decided that crews who really need hot food should be shipped by other yachts. I recall no other disagreements with my crew, and that made the voyage a model of how it should be done.

To make the voyage very easy we were using the Hydrovane self-steering and the Trimble Transpak GPS for position-finding. The GPS does make the navigator very lazy, but I do at least one sunsight on every crossing which lasts more than two days to keep myself in practice; the results correspond remarkably well with the satellite system.

During the following night the wind came back, from east which was rather unusual. And it stayed with us almost all of the rest of the way to Sao Miguel; a fine wind and it was the best of good fortune. We covered, in successive 24hrs, 152, 146, 141,

128, 111, 113nm, and finally ran out of useful wind on 16 June at 1040. At this point we were some 30 miles from the nearest point of Sao Miguel. For most of the distance we were on a broad reach, with only the big genoa set.

For the rest of 16 June we motored over a calm sea. The east end of Sao Miguel became visible at a range of 11nm at 1415. During the afternoon we motored along the south coast of Sao Miguel and reached the reception jetty at 2215 just after dark. The logged distance from Penzance was 1134nm, and we had not been more than 10nm away from the great circle course at any time.

The new marina was ready for us to take a berth at a pontoon as soon as the formalities were complete (incidentally, the officer of the Guarda Fiscal (frontier police) was using the services of two boys aged about 10 as interpreters). The showers were just wonderful, and so was the peaceful sleep.

On the following day I restored the cooker to good health and Julian found supermarkets, and padarias for delicious bread. I obtained the Livrete de Transito de Embarcacoes Estangeiras (transit card for foreign boats) from the Capitania. It is necessary to carry this when going from port to port or from island to island. In the evening we went to the Club Navale for rather expensive beer and philosophy.

Having gained several days by means of the unexpectedly favourable wind, we decided to visit the neighbouring island Santa Maria, before our return flights to London. On 19th June we sailed, mostly, from Ponta Delgada to Santa Vila do Porto, Santa Maria. The passage took 12 hours and passed very pleasantly. We anchored near the town slip well inside the big new breakwater. The officer was waiting for me on the quay, and the formalities were soon done. After a quick dinner we walked up the steep path to the centre of town and found a lively pub. This was the life!

On 20 June we hired a small car and did a tour of the island, calling at Anjos, Sao Laurencio, Praia, and the radio station at the top of the mountain. It was easily done in a day, including a hamburger and beer at the café at Sao Laurencio and a snooze on the pleasant beach in the afternoon. Santa Maria is a delightful petite island with a wide range of landscapes. Desert-like in the west, then thick woods, very green cultivated valleys in the east, and steep cliffs round small bays. In the evening we set sail back to Ponta Delgada and had a very quiet passage, close reaching on a light westerly wind under bright stars and full moonlight. I saw a turtle as we approached Ponta Delgada.

We re-established ourselves in the marina where the facilities are very new and good, and we prepared *Twayblade* for a rest while we returned to London.

The second stage of the cruise started when the family and I flew back on 10th of July. The marina staff had done a fine job in throwing buckets of seawater over the topsides and deck every evening; this kept the planks and deck in tight condition even in

the powerful sunshine of the Azores.

On 14 July we spent part of the day in preparing to go to sea. We left Ponta Delgada in the evening for a night sail to Terceira, about 90nm to NW.

For the first 4 hours we motored over a quiet sea, and discovered that the electric autopilot was useless. It was almost new and was brain-dead and remained so 'til after the season.

Near dawn we were sailing on a close reach and on a flat sea; it was quite extraordinarily quiet. I could hear only the breathing of the crew, deeply asleep, and a few bubbles passing the hull. There was a breeze NE F3 for most of the passage, but it died and we had to motor for the last 2 hours to Angra do Heroísmo.

As there was little wind we moored to one of the visitors' buoys. These are big metal spheres and it was likely to bump *Twayblade*, so we hauled it up as close as possible to the bowroller. A better way to use it might have been to use it as a stern anchor and lay the main anchor to seaward. This would have had the advantage of keeping us head to the swell which otherwise made us roll badly.

Having cleared both Guarda Fiscal ashore and the Capitania who called to see us in a big, nearly new, fast inflatable, two of us went for showers in the club in the SW corner of the bay.

Shortly after our arrival *Alys* (ICC) took the next buoy. David Park and his crew had had an awkward passage from Dunmore East via the Bay of Biscay. They joined us in a search for 'torada a corda'.

This version of bull-fighting is usually, but not quite always, non-destructive, except occasionally to the dignity of the bull, or a rash youth. The bull, an ex-ring bull, is attached to long ropes, about 300m, and is controlled by two teams of appropriately dressed attendants. He charges from time to time at anything which attracts his attention and gradually makes his way round

a couple of blocks of the town, which have been boarded and barricaded suitably.

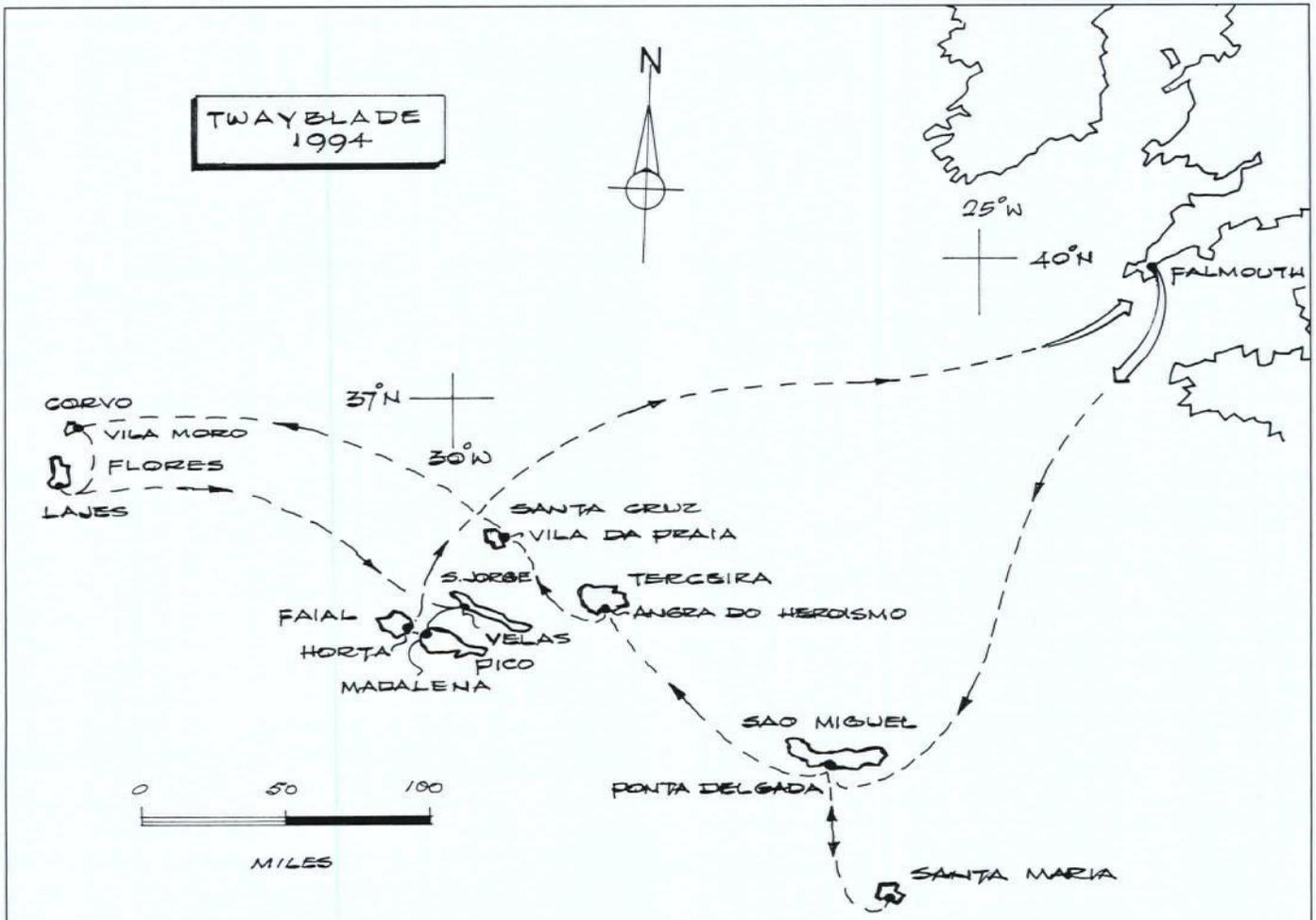
On the second day in Terceira we walked to most of the peaks of Monte Brazil which forms the south arm of the anchorage at Angra do Heroísmo. This is a pleasant walk on roads in the woods and then on paths among scrub on the higher parts of the extinct volcano. From here the whole south coast and much of the southern slopes of Terceira can be seen. Terceira was the first of several islands where we did not have enough time to see much of the land. To see most of what each island has to offer it would be best to allow one day for the passage to it and then two or three days for exploration, and then to add two or three days to allow for bad weather to pass. In most islands it is possible to hire a car; but a friendly taxi is almost as cheap.

We spent 18 July in a gentle passage to Graciosa, 45nm to NW of Terceira. We motored all the way, close hauled against F2, which allowed the Hydrovane self-steering to work in the absence of the electric autopilot. It was sunny, hot and hazy all day, and in the late afternoon we came to Vila da Praia having seen several dolphins and many shearwaters and petrels.

The anchorage at Vila da Praia is better than it first seems from the charts and plans. We did some careful soundings from the dinghy and found that the rocks plotted off the beach near the town and near the long new pier are not as much in the way as we expected. Our solar shower was a wonderful investment.

The village of Vila Da Praia has very little to offer, but we found a taxi who would take us to the spectacular cavern and then round the island to Santa Cruz, the principal town.

Santa Cruz is a pretty little town with most of the shops and cafés which one may need. The big supermarket on the east side of the tree-filled square has all basic stores. We had a very cheap and good meal at a café in a side street. Santa Cruz has a very exposed anchorage of doubtful holding and it is much best to



visit from Vila da Praia by taxi to get the best of both anchorage and shopping.

From Graciosa we sailed in the morning of 20 July aiming for Flores. There was a wind from SW and with the engine we were just not able to point as far south as Corvo. This was the first time that there was any movement in the sea for this crew, and it gradually wore down their resistance to seasickness.

Having been pushed north of our planned course, we decided to go to Corvo before Flores, and it was the nearest possible place to anchor. We had a broad reach to Vila Nova on Corvo, arriving in the late afternoon of a bright sunny day. The unwell crew were put ashore from a bouncy anchorage while we attended to the anchors.

At first, on the approach to the bay, we put down the 25lb CQR with about 30m of chain, and that caught, rather uncertainly, among the small boulders leaving us in line with the pier about 80m from it, facing the swell out to sea. As we did not move for some time, in spite of considerable rolling and pitching, and much grinding from the chain, we slid the 25lb lead weight down the chain as is our normal habit. Although it was very noisy until I inserted a piece of nylon line into a bight of the chain, the anchor did hold in that position. But for added security, and to give us time to do something else if the anchor did 'jump' as the local people said it was likely to do, I took a 50lb lead weight, especially cast at home for this purpose, and dropped it on a short piece of chain and 100m of 6mm nylon rope as far out to sea as I could take it in the dinghy. We stayed in that place for one very uncomfortable night.

We walked up to the town and then found the restaurant Caideira which is SW of the pier.

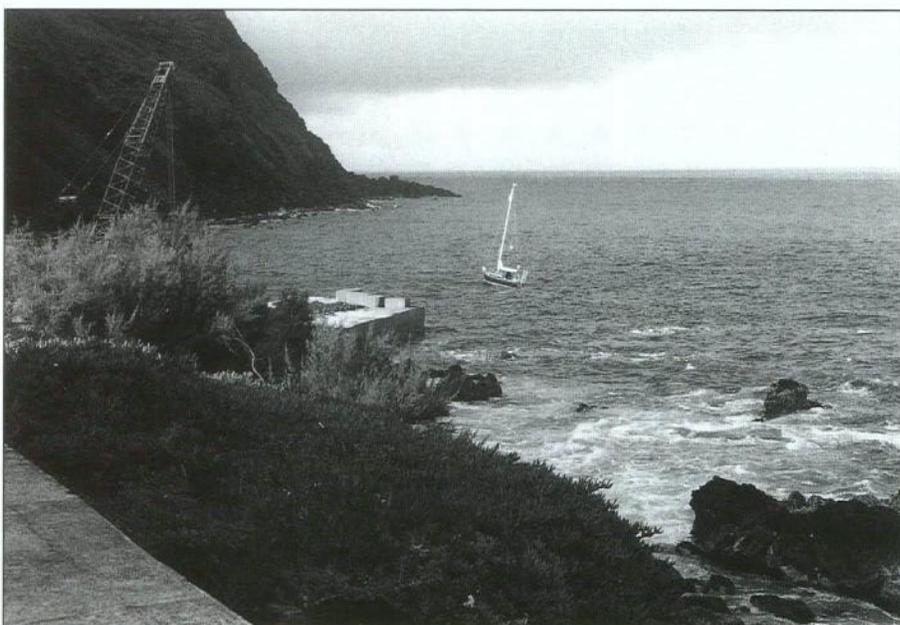
Next day we sailed rather slowly to Flores. For part of the way we motored under a low cloud base which hid most of the high ground of Flores. We were advised by VHF from a passing ferry that Lajes was the place to go. It seems that all yachts are now being diverted away from Santa Cruz, with its small and difficult harbour, to the big new anchorage at Lajes. A great deal of money, perhaps mostly from the European Union, has been spent in the construction of a huge long new harbour wall and a large area of dockside for container traffic. The development extends up into the town at the top of the new road to the harbour, where there are new public buildings and delightful parks.

The anchorage is sheltered from all directions except NE, though some swell would come in from N and E. It is intended that Lajes will become a port of call for transatlantic yachts, but there are almost no facilities for them yet.

We found a café, very new and not very pleasant, just above the slipway; and later found the comprehensive supermarket at the top of the town, well beyond the new developments. We discovered that bread is only available from a travelling van; by good fortune he passed by at the right moment and sold us some loaves of the local maize bread. He then paid a popular visit to the quays for the other yachts.

Our lack of time to dwell and explore the island properly was most evident in Flores. Although the mist was down over the high ground for all of our stay at Lajes, we would have liked to have had a spare day to see the rest of this island which is very different from any of the others. We spent a very quiet and very long night close to the quays and this was most welcome after several days in the open Atlantic, and bouncing around at Corvo.

On 23 July we left Lajes to sail the 148nm to Sao Jorge in the



Twayblade, Vila Nova, Corvo, Azores.

PHOTO: Jonathan Virden

central group of the Azores. The following wind was very light for almost all day, so the engine was used intermittently.

The regulator of the alternator died, so lights and all but essential navigational use of electricity was banned. The Volvo Penta MD 11C engine can be started by hand, but it is a serious effort and I strained some muscles while winding the handle. We have two batteries and they were fully charged, so we had essential services, including engine starting, until we reached Horta five days later.

A better wind came from SSW with the dawn next day and we sailed gently watching the hills of Faial grow out of the haze and the top of Pico appear over the clouds. Finally Sao Jorge appeared with its extraordinarily steep cliffs, and in the afternoon we reached steadily over a flat sea along the SW coast of Sao Jorge to Velas.

I had laid up my previous boat at Velas in 1969/1970 for a winter and hoped that the same people would be there 25 years later. They were.

Before we had the anchor down near the rocks of the inner pier there was a great noise and flashing of headlights. There was Manuel Soares waiting on the quay. Formalities were quite forgotten 'til the next day, and the Soares clan took us over immediately and completely. Restaurant dinner in Rosais, big family lunch party, visit in Manuel's truck to other parts of the island in the ordinary course of his transport business, and a major dinner in the next town to which the Azorean families did not allow us to contribute any of the cost. A truly fabulous reunion after a quarter of a century. And there is no way that that can be returned today, except by passing on the spirit of the same hospitality from place to place and from generation to generation.

From Sao Jorge we sailed quietly to Madalena, Pico. The Pico mountain looks big from Sao Jorge, but it grew and grew as we approached. The first noticeable tidal flow we had experienced whisked us south down the channel between Pico and Faial, and we skimmed into Madalena in a sunny evening. We anchored in the middle of the bay near the old slipway, away from the commercial quays. We felt unsure of the visitors' moorings, though they might have been more comfortable just before we left two days later.

Madalena is a pleasant spacious little town with ordinary shops and supplies, but our main objective was higher up. In the morning of 27th July we took a taxi to the usual point to start the climb up to the top of Pico. Taxis take climbers up almost exactly half of the total height, and will collect at a specified time. We

took more than seven hours, to climb to the rim of the main crater (2 1/2hrs), to have lunch (1/2hr), to scramble up the 300ft of the 'little pimple', take photos, see the magnificent views, though it was fairly cloudy nearby, put a hand in steam fumarole at top point, and slither very cautiously down to the crater again (2hrs), and scramble down through the cloud layers on steep rough lava, often very loose, and through heather and butterflies, navigating by the row of concrete posts to the taxi (2 1/2hrs). It was very exhausting but well worth the effort.

The last passage of our cruise among the Azores was the shortest, from Madalena to Horta, Faial. The weather and sea had become most uncomfortable in Madalena harbour – a swell from WSW was making the centre of the anchorage rather rough. The anchor chain became stuck for a while under the edge of a rock on the sandy bottom where we could see it. When relaxed and shaken a couple of times it came free. We beat in sunshine across the Canal do Faial and came to the marina at Horta, where all was peaceful and sunny. The marina was expecting us, and they are well organised for reception of the yachts which pass through.

I spent much time seeking a solution to the problem of the regulator. Some of the 'engineers' proved to be wholly unreliable and never appeared at an appointed time. Eventually Peter Azevedo put me on to the right track to find the only man in the Azores who has a stock of regulators from which one, not the correct one, would serve to get me home with working electric power.

The rest of the crew spent the day in preparing to fly home on 30th July. We re-stowed and re-victualled *Twayblade* for the voyage back to England.

It was warm and sunny and the showers were much used, even though our other system had worked quite well. Naturally we visited the Café Sport, and also saw the museum collection of scrimshaw, decoration on the teeth of whales, which is housed above the cafe. Jane and Joseph did the obligatory painting on the pavement to record our visit.

Twayblade and I had called at all the nine islands which was the main objective of the cruise, and I have still the Livrete de Transito with the stamp of each island to prove that. Also we collected a stone from each island to place in the garden to remember a lovely cruise.

The voyage from Faial to England started poorly. At 1530 on 31 July *Twayblade* and I left the marina at Horta with the assistance of two skippers of other yachts and motored out into the Canal do Faial. There followed a period of flat calm and contrary tide, depressing the spirits. However the wind filled in from NW and *Twayblade* could reach past the NW point of Sao Jorge at a good speed, and then clear Graciosa to starboard by 5nm.

The tactics for this voyage were to follow the traditional scheme. This is to make as much northing as possible till 45°N and then aim for Cornwall. The principal points are to avoid the consistent northerly winds near Spain at that time, and to seek westerlies as soon as the light winds near the Azores have been left behind.

However I found that the westerlies were ideal for good progress to NE for the first 2 1/2 days and then they failed; thereafter all the winds had an easterly component. Thus a route to east followed by north would have been much better overall. During 1st and 2nd of August we rocketed along on a broad reach in F5, which made for a surprisingly splashy ride. The wind shifted from time to time bringing us almost to close hauled and back to reaching as several fronts with drizzle or showers passed. The sea was lumpy and confused and *Twayblade* gradually became wetter and wetter everywhere. At one point a whole litre of sea came through a ventilator, which I had

never seen happen before, and soaked the only dry place; that was my bunk at the time. But we were making good progress and I was unwise enough to begin to anticipate another fast passage.

At 0100 on 3 August the wind suddenly died, and then came back, and then died, leaving a most confused sea. Over 12 hours it fell away and the sea became almost glassy with slight undulations. In the evening a drift of wind came from SE. We were near 44°N, so we headed directly towards Penzance. From this time on 4th August the wind very gradually increased to 25kts and gradually shifted to just N of E by the early hours of 8th August. On that day I put the second reef in the mainsail and slowed to under 4kts for comfort. The wind eased a little during the day but shifted round to ENE, and I shook out the second reef.

On 9th August we were about 300nm west of Brest and the wind was forecast to shift to northerly when the thundery low, then hopping about between Finisterre, Biscay and northern France should decide to move on. During the day I tried to motor-sail on port tack, but made very little progress in very bad visibility. In the evening I changed to the small genoa just in time for a sharp increase in wind speed, but took it down as night fell and put the second reef back into the mainsail. This was fast sail-changing for one who usually thinks about any change for six to twelve hours. *Twayblade* sails very quietly about 60° off the wind with this rig, and we stayed like this for 36 hours in 26-30kts wind coming directly from Penzance. We lost some 35nm while we waited for any other wind, and I read and slept fairly peacefully.

In the early morning of 11th August the wind started to ease and shift further N so that by 1100 we were pointing directly at Penzance and making modest progress again. From that time 'til we came into Penzance on 13th August the wind was rather variable between N and NE in direction, but declining in strength.

The looms of the lighthouses came clear on time as we approached the Scilly Isles and the same happened for the Cornish lights as we passed 2nm north of Round Island. During the night the engine was needed occasionally to keep us moving in the right direction in the tides.

The voyage from Horta to Penzance was at no time seriously rough or difficult. But it showed what a very good sea-boat *Twayblade* is with her easy motion and considerable weight, especially when she is allowed to go at her own comfortable pace. It was very tiresome to have been held up for so long near the end of the voyage, and as good as always to come to the end of what may be my last long passage.

SUMMARY:

Passage from-to	Distance nm
Plymouth-Helford	56
Helford-Penzance	27
Penzance-Ponta Delgada	1,134
Ponta Delgada-Santa Maria	54
Santa Maria-Ponta Delgada	54
Ponta Delgada-Terceira	93
Terceira-Graciosa	46
Graciosa-Corvo	148
Corvo-Lajes, Flores	24
Lajes, Flores-Velas, Sao Jorge	135
Velas, Sao Jorge-Pico	18
Pico-Horta, Faial	5
Horta, Faial-Penzance	1,427
Total	3,521

The Summer '94 Cruise of *Kilpatrick*

Bill and Hilary Keatinge

Enkhuizen to Ostend. Wednesday 8-Monday 13 June, '94.

One of the joys of being based in North Holland is that there are so many ways of leaving it. North into the Waddenzee, west out into the North Sea, via Amsterdam and IJmuiden and several inland routes southwards. There was one inland route left for us to try – from Enkhuizen to Vlissingen via Haarlem, it could be done non-stop in 48 hours, but timing at certain of the bridges is crucial; we were not in such a hurry.

The wind was very light as we motored south to overnight in touristy Volendam, a useful stopping harbour in the southern IJsselmeer, about half-way from the lock to the entrance to the river IJ and Amsterdam. We made good progress southwards and we were through the Schellingwoude Bridge and the Oranje locks in a record thirty minutes. An easy motor west along the North Sea Canal. At this point we had yet another look in the Dutch Almanac, Part 2, to check on the Haarlem bridges, we confirmed that our timing would be just right. In addition to the almanac, we had obtained from the ANWB their latest listing on the bridge opening times.

Opposite kilometre post 10 we turned south into the Zijkanaal C and the first bridge opened almost immediately. Not much delay through the next bridge or the lock in Spaarndam, it was looking good. On the outskirts of Haarlem the first bridge passed us through according to plan, but the rail bridge, instead of opening in sequence with the Prinsenbrug stayed firmly closed, eventually opening at 13.55, and five minutes later we were at lunch.

We knew there were waterway personnel on duty until 16.00, so we confidently cast off at 15.40 to clear the next four bridges before they went for tea, but no, the next south-going convoy would not be leaving until 18.00, we were firmly informed, there was time for the washing-up after all, though it was too late to visit the famous Frans Hals Museum. We were finally allowed to leave Haarlem in company with two large barges. We had given up our plans of getting further than the Sassenheim road and rail bridges (third and last opening of the day at 19.33) and we might have enjoyed a very pretty passage if we could have seen through the increasingly heavy rain-showers. We tied alongside a staging within sight of the bridges, in retrospect we could have avoided the traffic noises if we had stopped further back. The crew voted the lamb stew and Dutch Hutspot (mashed potatoes and vegetables) a hit as they tried to think sunny summer thoughts.

We were ready for the bridges from 06.00 and they lifted at 06.33. It was just such a shame that the prettiest part of the Ringvaart van de Haarlemmermeerpolder (yes it is all one word), between Buitenkaag and Weteringbrug was enshrouded in precipitation (very much in sight). We crossed the open space of the Brassemermeer, its shores latticed with habituated inlets and numerous sailing clubs. Then back into the confines of the canal again to pass through Woubrugge, its banks a contrast of fine, then derelict properties and at one point a tantalising aroma coming from a little bakery. It was here that we fell in behind a

large barge called *Kelly* and for the next 45 minutes we were sucked along at an extra three quarters of a knot in her slipstream, it was like being on a rollercoaster, one had no control, just hold on and hope for the best!

On past the manicured gardens we were swept, the lifting bridges all opened for *Kelly* with ourselves bringing up the rear; it was here that we passed a yacht going northwards, the crew so heavily camouflaged in oilskins that it was only at the last minute that we realised they were friends from Enkhuizen. The town of Boskoop came next, an area of market garden growers, with long rows of developing shrubs and herbaceous plants on either side before the town seems to close in on the canal which does become even narrower. Here *Kelly* got away on us as we



Kilpatrick alongside in Haarlem.

PHOTO: Hilary Keatinge



Following in *Kelly's* wake.

PHOTO: Hilary Keatinge

were cut off by a quick-closing bridge. On our own again through Waddinxveen, a much more plebian area, small factories and suburbia. The sun came out, but now there was nothing to photograph. We had been on the go for three hours and we were to be before the Gouda rail bridge (only 3 openings a day) with an hour to spare.

By the time we went through and on into the lock quite a convoy of yachts and motorboats had gathered. The lock takes time and one has to clamber up a rather slimy ladder to pay the required dues – all that effort for about £1.50. The Hollandse IJssel twists on south and westwards, again past a mixture of shiny modern and derelict properties, we looked through windows into neat-laid homes, a tidy contrast to next-door factories, and then out into the real world of busy waterway – the Nieuwe Maas at Krimpen aan den IJssel. This is tidal shipping territory with shipyards and dry docks and much more impressive water traffic moving up and down via Dordrecht.

It was at this stage that we had a serious problem, and our summer holiday was in danger of foundering on... no, not a navigational error... but an eyelash. Hilary was in such considerable pain that we came off the river and into the Royal Dordrecht Rowing and Sailing Club marina. She needed no second admonition from our resident doctor, she was off to find medical help before the lines were long ashore. After minutes of lights and 'scopes with the nearest available GP she was sent on a taxi ride for immediate specialist help at the hospital. It was exactly five minutes to five on a Friday afternoon – but in 30 seconds the problem was removed, an in-growing eyelash... what a relief, what timing... not even a soaking later, as we tried to find a restaurant for dinner, could dampen her spirits.

Old Dordrecht is charming and well worth a diversion; the marina lies just off what is the busiest waterway in Europe; 1,500 barges pass through Dordrecht each day according to the statistics, and it is not that hard to believe as you navigate between them. The tide is now fast-flowing as you approach the rail and road bridge across the river, there is nowhere easy to tie up in the vicinity so it is best to call up (channel 74) for the opening times. As you go southwards there is the added excitement of crossing the even swifter-moving barge traffic to proceed, according to the rule books, along the starboard side of the river. There are no further fixed hazards until the Volkerak locks 3nm further on. We made a stop just short of the locks in Willemstad, there was talk of doing some urgent shopping, but really it was an excuse to have a midday borrel (drink); the town is really

charming, though the town quay, where you can sometimes lie for just a short stopover, is not the easiest to manoeuvre onto or away from.

The forecast of a 'high Shannon, expected Fastnet 1035' was now beginning to make itself felt even in our area and though not much of it, the wind was from the north. We all began to relax and we had a good reach after the St Philipland locks, a brisk beat up towards the Zeeland Bridge and finally a run down to the Goes canal. Goes has a good rail link with Schipol and Tuffet Webb was due to leave next day. "Lock open until 20.00," the navigator assured the skipper, who had thought it read 19.00... some discussion, and as we motored out of the lock at precisely 19.00, surprise, surprise, 2 red lights switched on one above the other (= gone home for the night!), the lock at Sas van Goes closes at 19.00 and the bridges at Goes town at 20.00... we had very nearly come unstuck. We motored up the very picturesque canal,

through the bridge at Wilhelminadorp which operates in conjunction with the lock, and had a half-hour wait for the bridge just before the town – then hard to port into one of the prettiest marinas anywhere – WV De Werf. It was a lovely evening, real holiday weather.

We saw Tuffet off in a taxi next morning, and we moved out for the 11.00 bridge opening. We were somewhat taken aback at the very large number of boats going down the canal, and we were joined by even more at the lock, it was a tight fit as locals made what we can only suppose was a late start to a Sunday outing. Round the corner to the Zandkreeksluis where we were glad to be at a distance from a chartered motorboat with a very damaged bow (the small yacht alongside us had seen it all happen the day before... he too was keeping out of the way). We had a pleasant sail in fluky conditions along the Veerse Meer, nor were we alone... there were hundreds of boats of all shapes and sizes; the Dutch really do take to the water at holiday time. By 1600 we were on a run down the Walchern Canal, just under jib, and finally motored the last short stretch from the Middelburg bridges to Vlissingen. The marina as always was quite full, but they probably never turn anyone away and we found a place alongside a motorboat just returned from taking part in the veterans' celebrations at Dunkirk.

Our log from Enkhuizen to Vlissingen read 150.1, we had taken 4 days at a leisurely pace.

Monday morning 06.55 and the BBC weather lady gave us a warm, sunny day, and so it was. The wind was from the NNW but we moved with the engine and tide (course over the ground reading 9.4 out of the Oostershelde) until the wind reached a force 3, then we had a relaxed reach with the fishing lines over the stern. Four hours later we entered Ostend harbour and tied alongside a pontoon at the North Sea YC in time for lunch and to wait for Martin to join us; we spotted him on deck as he came in on an afternoon ferry from Ramsgate. We had an excellent meal ashore in the evening, but otherwise there is not much going on in Ostend.

08.45 was allowed to be a very civilised departure time from Ostend for our Dover Strait crossing; the forecast was for variable/northerly 2-3, good visibility. The sun was trying, the sea calm as we motored out. The tide was with us for the best part of 7 hours and we made a very fast passage of 8 hours for the 60 miles. The visibility in fact was not great, ships looked into sight at about three miles; the shipping lanes, observed Martin, were exciting enough even motoring, Martin, being more used to

windsurfer regatta fleets these days, found the idea of 50,000-ton ships on a converging course a bit daunting. There is quite a confluence of lanes north of the Sandiette banks, with shipping making seemingly violent changes of course as they headed in and out of the great Dutch and Belgian ports. Our Brooks and Gatehouse log was giving problems and the battery of the Stowe log was flat, but that apart we had a very peaceful daylight crossing to Ramsgate.

We know North Foreland quite well now and it has never been a comfortable spot. We were heading northwards the following morning very early in a rising WNW'ly and with wind against tide we were really thumping into it. The log jammed again and as it was not the moment to open a great hole in the bottom of the boat and have another look; we streamed the now-operating Stowe log.

The Thames runs into the sea through eight channels – Margate, Queens, Princes, Knob, Knock John, Barrow, Middle Deep and the East Swin and there are big blobs of sand between each, so that making a passage directly across is an exciting pastime at the best of times and in this awful short sea we were very tempted to go right out into the North Sea and then turn north. but this would add miles and miles so we wore our way across the deeps and crept apprehensively through the passages of 'yellow sand' ie the shallow bits where the colour of the water can change ominously. With some difficulty we identified and cut through the south Edinburgh channel; it looks easy on the chart but the buoys seem to be constantly changing, having the GPS to confirm our position was a great assurance. Conditions were much calmer now, the wind a gentle force 3 and the visibility was good as we crossed Knob Channel and north-east under the sinister Knock John battery tower to work through the shallow keep-your-eye-on-echo-sounder gap in the Barrow banks. A good reach along the Barrow Deep, then round north-eastwards again to the Swin Spitway. We were now being set westwards by the tide as we inched over the shallow cut to Wallet Spitway, just over a nautical mile, but it felt like forever.

The tide was running against us as we battled slowly up the river Colne in a brisk force 5. It was calm and peaceful in Pyefleet Creek and we were on a visitors' mooring so there was no need for the crew to keep an anchor watch.

The following day Brightlingsea seemed to beckon for a noon-time refreshment, but with one boat already listing in the mud across the bar, and it was not yet low water, we decided against even trying. This did upset our tide calculations however and we had an adverse tide all the way to Harwich, but the seas were slight and we had a good reach along the coast past the lines of bathing huts by Clacton-on-Sea and Walton-on-the-Naze, just too chilly for the bathing belles though and it looked quite deserted. It was a beat for the last couple of miles to go through the lock for the night in Shotley Point Marina on the north side of the Stour, across from Harwich Town.

Martin, relieved to have been let off lightly on his first North Sea crossing, though still muttering about 'yellow water', bussed off from Shotley on Thursday morning and we made our way up the Orwell in a gentle force 2 from the south. What a lovely river it is, we did enjoy our first glimpses of the huge manor houses, complete with follies, and the magnificent trees under the high road-bridge into Fox's Marina at Ipswich – not that easy at low water, pushing as we were through the mud. (We have it on good authority that this is an issue now at the top of the local committee's agenda).



Fishing harbour, Ostend.

PHOTO: Hilary Keatinge

This is the home base of Oyster and we were able to consult on various bits and pieces for *Kilpatrick*, plus we needed advice on fully interfacing our GPS and the new Yeoman Plotter- even the experts spent a lot of time trying to find the cause of our problem; one connection had not been correctly wired by the mechanic fitting it originally and it now cost us an extra £70 to put right which was annoying. Running in tandem with the GPS, and with us the users becoming more proficient, the Yeo-Man, as we call him, has proved an invaluable navigational aid, we still mark our position on a real chart but can plot and check our position at any angle of heel very quickly and easily, it just takes seconds.

The next two days were spent in the area with Suzanne and her two friends Emma and Harriet. They wanted to sail, destinations were not so important. The first day we went to the Walton Backwaters and anchored for lunch, the enthusiasts were dispatched in the dinghy to explore. We had a vigorous sail back up the river to busy Woolverstone Marina where we were due to join Bill's fellow lawyers for a Bar Yacht Club dinner at the Royal Harwich YC. It was a small but interesting group who sat down to dinner and our girls found their match amongst the eccentric judges. After Bloody Marys on Sunday morning we went to sea and back as each of our visitors took the helm under Suzanne's supervision. We had a lovely day's sailing, smooth seas and sun, though chilly in the wind; we dropped the girls to their car at Fox's and headed back downriver once again to anchor behind Shotley Marina for the night.

Monday we let Suzanne beat the boat up the narrow channel in the River Stour to Wrabness until we ran out of water, and by then it must be said, the energy for any more short tacks! The navigable channel is very narrow, and gets narrower; it has to be said that this stretch is not nearly as picturesque as the Orwell. We tacked once more and ran downstream again, turned the corner and beat back up the Orwell again to Fox's. Suzanne left for work in Cambridge and Bill and Hilary put on their banking glad rags and headed for an office dinner in London. It was a timely break in our sailing as it was blowing 7, gusting 8 by the time we returned next day and we spent the rest of Tuesday at Fox's.

The wind had dropped to force 5 on Wednesday and with just the two of us we reached down to Harwich at a good 6 knots with just the jib. We motored up the narrow buoyed channel against the wind to see Hamford Water, a very lovely backwater but with a very few mooring or anchoring places among the oyster beds. Then along the Walton Backwaters as far as Twizzle – just to see the name really, ignored the Titchmarsh Marina and picked up a mooring in a relatively open space. The wind finally abated with a last powerful gust late in the afternoon. A full moon filled a

clear night sky and we thought it was just wonderful.

We came out of the creeks with the last of the tide, had a good reach to the Naze and a run south along the coast in a steadily rising wind. We were heading for West Mersea and as we approached we found it far from easy to understand which channel was which, even with easy sounding descriptions in the cruising handbooks. West Mersea was just a wall of boats and we picked up a free mooring in the fairway. We were later advised by a passing boatman to move to a free WMYC buoy which we did. We hoped that he could be contacted on the VHF next morning to bring us ashore, but he had turned profoundly deaf, and with the wind whipping up an uncomfortable sloppy sea we decided against making the journey in our own 'rubber indignity'.

It was blowing ESE 6, gusting 7 as we slipped the mooring and with 2 reefs in the main, we motor-sailed into a stiff headwind out to Bench Head buoy against the tide – our speed over the ground was just 3.7, our destination Burnham-on-Crouch. We planned to go through the Spitway cut at high water, which we did, but then we lost our position, and what was worse, our confidence in knowing exactly where we were; it does not take long for the tide and seas to confuse one. We had 30 minutes of as much confusion as either of us would ever like to have again; we re-established our position and made our way in between Buxey and Foulness sands on an uneasy rolling run, against the now ebbing tide. What was that story of a 'go-with-the-flow' cruise... for what seemed like hours we were out of sight of land and making what way we could until we were finally abeam Holliwell Point on the dike. We called the harbour office of the new Burnham marina on channel 37 and we were promptly given a berth – box B50 he said, but then it was impossible to tell the numbers unless you were walking on the pontoons! We were helped to find our berth and breathed sighs of relief that we had finally arrived.

It was 17.40 but in need of supplies we set off on a ten-minute 'short walk' to the supermarket; the usual story, local car owners say it is just a step away while the reality on a hot, humid summer's evening is twenty minutes plus... and twenty-five something back with heavy bags. We just made it back to the boat when a very violent thunderstorm pushed over us. Menacing, extremely black windswept clouds came in low over the water and even in the marina we registered over 52 knots of wind; we heard some gusts were actually recorded at over 80. We picked up one Mayday from a single-handed skipper running ashore and losing her keel in the Medway. It was, we decided, the most dramatic storm we had ever experienced; we battened down our hatches and poured a soothing draught. By this time it was low water and even there in the marina we were heeled over in the mud, at such an angle that we had to stow everything away. The marina power was cut, the storm raged for a solid hour and a half.

Calm settled and we began to worry about the non-arrival of Suzanne who was to join us again. Bill made a sortie about eleven, no sign of her; at midnight I conferred with the watchman, begged a lift to the railway station with the marina owner – he was investigating a screaming burglar alarm set off by the storm; the midnight station was deserted but we flagged down a passing police patrol – no, they had not seen a bedraggled young lady, but would keep a look out... back to the boat, exhausted, we had just climbed into our bunk when... tap...tap...tap... Suzanne had arrived.



Just enough water at the entrance to the new marina in Burnham-on-Crouch.

PHOTO: Hilary Keatinge

Thunder was still rumbling next morning as we pushed out through the mud at 09.15 (LW) to try for fuel at Essex Marina, but there was not much hope of either sufficient water or anyone to operate the pumps so early so we gave up, our spare 5 gallons was still intact anyway. We wanted to go through the Spitway as close to high water as possible so it was an 8-mile battle against the tide once more; the long run enlivened by a close Sonesta race fleet contesting water round the channel buoys; finally our turn round Whitaker Beacon where we were now on a close fetch with full sail into a westerly force 3. There was a lot of grey, no sign of land for hours and the big excitement was that we gave passage to a small brown bird, possibly a rarely-seen Rock Thrush. In along the East, then West Swin Thames channels, across the Warp to the Medway buoy and as we fell off close to the Cant beacon it was engine time once more to fight the tide into the Medway. We anchored for the night in the peaceful pool in Stangate Creek.

Going up the Thames from the Medway we knew that we had to be at the Nore Sand with the turn of the tide, so we once again fought our way out against the flow, but only until we rounded the corner of the Isle of Grain, then the tide was with us right to Tower Bridge. We had a headwind at every twist of the river so we motor-sailed until we could be sure of reaching St Katherine's lock for their two-hour opening period. At midday we turned off the engine and had a hard beat up the river, there was competition in sight and the racing crew went into gear. It was energetic tacking; given the 2-3 knot tide, great care had to be taken to tack early rather than be greedy and get forced into obstructions. 'We have him beat!' they all cried, but then a large ship passed, we lost the tide and the ship took all our wind, he got away again. At Erith the opposition dropped sails and ducked into the marina, the heart had gone out of the battle, we motor-sailed the rest of the way. We picked up one of the new marina buoys and were only 20 minutes early for the first lock opening.

Now followed the Party Week, friends found that having a boat to visit in the heart of London was just great and we had to make daily trips to the super superstore with our small wagon on wheels for fresh supplies of Pimms and ice. It was not just our party week for Tower Bridge was celebrating a hundredth birthday with two evenings of fireworks, parachutists falling from the sky and noise and bustle all around; our guests thought we had had it laid on especially. It was warm and sunny nearly all week.

We had a raft of planned scenarios for the passage home: to Ramsgate a distance of 71nm, Harwich 80+, and even hopes of Scheveningen at 179nm. There were three of us on board as we

came through the first lock opening at 09.30, behind the British Steel 65-footer *Group 4* with Mike Golding at the helm.

This is Richard's log entry for Monday 4th: "The longest day. Plans for a relaxed break from work were confirmed (think he is being rude!) as we moved swiftly down the Thames from St Katherine Dock with Royal Yacht (we dipped to the *Britannia* as we passed) and Royal Observatory along the way. A very decent sail on the first afternoon out of the estuary, but the wind (not the sea which was very uncomfortable) fell away and we had to motor-sail through the night. A mystery problem with the rudder was solved with a tack – it must have been some debris from the river. We kept a 1 1/2 hour on, 3 hours off watch system and fortunately the visibility was excellent. There was light from about 3am onwards and very clear visibility as we crossed the busiest part of the shipping lanes. It was a tiring crossing, but with such favourable weather a democratic decision to go on with the tide to IJmuiden was not challenged by Mum, when she woke up! This was one of *Kilpatrick's* longest passages and notable for the boxes of tissues got through – how can you get hay fever out at sea? – and the food! Lunch – pitta bread with curried chicken and chutney, beef and rice for supper, warm egg and tomato sandwiches for breakfast... and a three-shot supper, including gammon and parsley sauce in IJmuiden. I doubt if it was ever like this on *Group 4*..."



Tower Bridge is 100 years old.

PHOTO: Hilary Keatinge

Our log distance to IJmuiden was 189.0, the chart distance 197; our average speed 6.9kts. We had a very slow passage through the IJmuiden locks, the wait though was enlivened by a view of work being done to right two upturned barges, two very damaged tugs were alongside... it must have been quite some accident. The trip back to Enkhuizen was very restful indeed and there were no complaints from the crew. The wind was never more than a NW2, through true to form, that did happen to be

more or less the direction in which we were going!

The only trouble with a four-week holiday is that one can never be totally relaxed, there always seems to be that deadline lurking, it is just too short to accommodate both the crew and the weather. And to enjoy the east coast of England one needs plenty of time, a lot of luck and basically a shallow draft boat to proceed anywhere with that illusive flow. When you go seawards it is invariably against the tide so that you can take short cuts in the outer banks with high water, and then it goes without saying, the tide is against you again as you u-turn and work up the next river channel. However there are beautiful anchorages and challenging stretches of waterway which are sure to lure us across another time.

Our holiday log was 782nm in what was effectively three weeks of sailing.

