

**2001
ANNUAL**



**IRISH
CRUISING
CLUB**



Notes for Contributors

Submissions should above all make enjoyable reading. To be desired are Logs conveying the spirit of the cruise, navigational information, where adding to that in the Sailing Directions, and shore information. To be avoided are reef-by-reef details, family-album minutiae and menus. Use a narrative rather than a 'diary' style.

Due Date

To achieve Pre-Christmas publication, we must have your Submissions by October 15th. Advise me of your intention to submit a log.

Logs

- Should be submitted on Disk, IBM compatible or Apple Mac, preferably in WordPerfect or Microsoft Word. Label your disk with: (a) Your name; (b) Software name and version. Where possible, text files should be saved in RTF format. (Rich Text Format) will carry over italics, bolding etc. The disk should be accompanied by two typed copies, in double spacing, single sided.
- Length should typically be 3,000 – 5,000 words, with the log for a major cruise extending to 7,000 – 10,000 words.
- Log Title should include the name of the area cruised.
- Track charts for Irish waters are not necessary, other than to illustrate particular features. For non-Irish waters, Track-Charts in draft form are desirable. A simple tracing in black pen is best.
- A summary is optional. This should include the dates and durations of the main passages. Times and distances should be rounded-off. Distances should be stated as rhumb-line or sailed. The length of the Summary should not exceed half an A4 page of typescript.
- Photographs. Send about one print per 800 words; to illustrate the boat, the people and shore features. Write or type the caption first on a self adhesive label, then fix to back of photo. Do not paste photos on to text. Do not write on back of photo.
- Do not send me:
 - Emails – Photos on Disk – Slides
 - Albums
 - Computer generated or laser copied photographs.
 - Logs without a floppy disk.
- All logs will be entered for Awards, unless requested otherwise.

Dunns Ditties

Dunns Ditties should be anecdotal in nature, illustrative of a cruise highlight – or lowlight. The length should be 200-400 words. Include a photograph, if you can. There will be an award for best Dunns Ditty submitted.

Favourite Harbours/Anchorages

We invite submissions for publication, about 100-200 words. Photographs and Sketch Plans are optional.

Sundry Items

We welcome illustrations, artwork or verse conveying the feel of cruising.

And remember ...

Use *Italics* for ships' names or underline typed copy.

Clock times should be on the 24-hour clock.

Place Names should be correctly spelled.

Compass Bearings should be in numbers.

Wind Speed expressed should be mean-speed.

e.g. We departed 06.30 hours, sailing 235° true, in a N.W. Force 4, bound for 54° 30' North 06° 13' West.

Directions – north, south, east, west – should be as here, no capitals; northeast, southwest, etc. – always one word.

Editorial Sub-Committee

The Honorary Editor may edit or limit the material to be published and may consult the Editorial Sub-Committee.

Good cruising. Write and let us read about it.

Paddy Barry, Honorary Editor.

21 Belgrave Road, Monkstown, County Dublin.

Tel: 01-280 0820

IRISH CRUISING CLUB ANNUAL 2001



PERROS GUIREC – SUMMER CRUISE-IN-COMPANY

Amongst those in the front row are Monsieur Giles Dechloher, Deputy Mayor (centre, white jacket), flanked on his left by Vice-Commodore Donal Brazil, and next to Donal is Gerry Sheridan (organising sub-committee), and on the Deputy Mayor's right is Andrew Curtain (organising sub-committee) and his wife Helen.

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Front Cover

Northabout outside Illulisat, west Greenland.
Photo: Cathal de Barra.

Back Cover

Preview of some of the photographs taken in August 2001 by Kevin Dwyer for the tenth edition of the Irish Cruising Club Sailing Directions for the East and North Coasts of Ireland due for publication in 2002.

Submissions for 2002 Annual

To reach the Honorary Editor, Paddy Barry, 21 Belgrave Road, Monkstown, Co Dublin (telephone 280 0820) by 15th October 2002 at latest.

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Honorary Secretary's Report

I cannot recollect who proposed that a cruise in the English Channel be held this year, it turned out to have been an excellent idea and resulted in a most successful event. The weather was generally very good, particularly for those able to start the cruise a day or two early. Overall organiser Arthur Baker had wisely confined the event to three functions only. The first was held in Dartmouth, where some members got their first taste of south of England marina charges. The visit focussed on Britannia Royal Naval College, with which Andrew Curtain had arranged an extensive programme, starting with our attendance as guests at a passing out parade on the Friday afternoon where cadets marched to the band of the Royal Marines. Our member Malachi O'Gallagher was present, he passed out with the last group of Irish Naval Officers to be trained there some years ago.

Dinner in the Ward Room on Saturday 16th June was, for us, unusual in two respects. First, as the college is considered to be a naval ship, grace, toasts etc. are said sitting down. Naval tradition is that the youngest officer present proposes the toast to the Queen, that honour fell to John Malone, member since 2000.

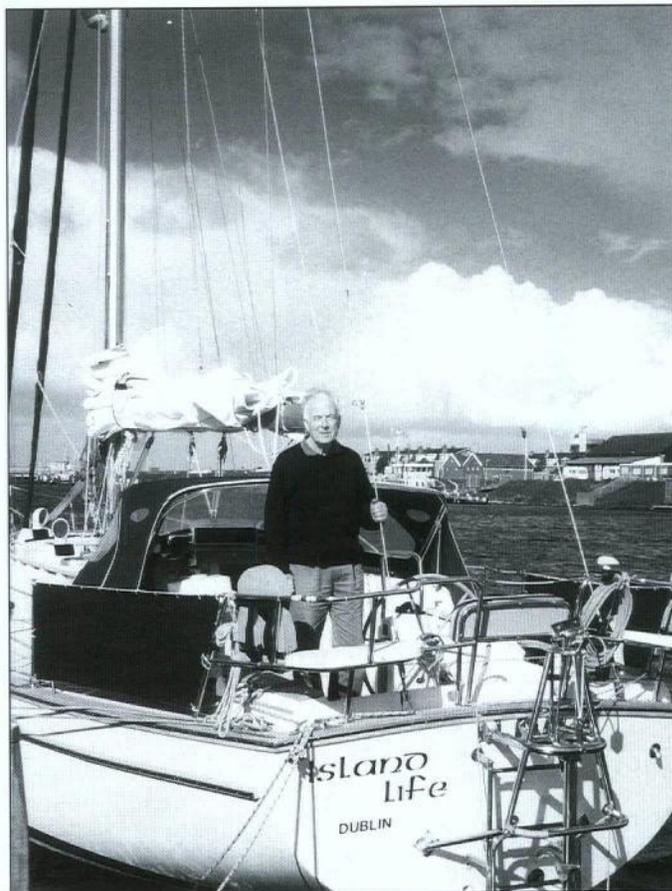
Boats then sailed to Jersey and in to St Helier. The Commodore had made the arrangements there with Sir Peter Crill, a former Bailiff of the island, which more than smoothed our way, including reduced marina berthing charges. A section of the marina had been reserved for ICC yachts just below Liberation Square which he had opened in his official capacity on behalf of the government of Jersey in 1990. Twenty seven of the cruise yachts came to Jersey, many for the first time and greatly enjoyed its hospitality in glorious weather. Sir Peter was guest of honour at the excellent dinner in Gorey.



A toast from Andrew Curtain and Donal Brazil.

Then the cruise moved on to Perros Guirec, a motoring leg for most in brilliant sunshine. Here preparation work by Gerry Sheridan and Andrew Curtain had ensured not only that all went smoothly but that excellent restaurants and fine wines made a memorable finale for the finish of the cruise.

The Annual Dinner, fortuitously the responsibility of the west and therefore under the direct control of the Commodore, was held in the Corrib Great Southern Hotel in Galway. A nail-biting run up through the foot and mouth crisis meant that it was only days before the event that it was finally cleared to go ahead. The email directory, prepared and managed by Guy Johnston proved how useful this form of instant communication can be, over 100 members had email addresses and through them the welcome news that the dinner was to be held was quickly spread to most of the 340 members and guests who had booked to attend. On the Saturday afternoon Brian Lynch had arranged a cruise on Killary Harbour on the MV *Connemara Lady* which was very well supported. A two hour drive through Connemara enabled members and their guests to enjoy some of Ireland's most scenic countryside before joining the ship miles outside Leenane.



The Honorary Secretary in his new boat on the North Sea Canal near Amsterdam.

Photo: Arthur Baker



Our guests giving a good rendering of Mustang Sally!

Photo: Kevin Dwyer

The Commodore had asked John Gore-Grimes to propose the toast of the Irish Cruising Club. It was expected that he would recount some details of the cruise of the *Arctic Fern* north from Howth towards ice, such as the occasion when he and his crew came to a full stop in the ice at 80°44' 49N and Kieran Jameson took advantage of the pause by going for a swim in the arctic water, the temperature of which was recorded at -0.5°C. Unfortunately, there does not seem to be an appropriate trophy among the club's awards to mark his survival. But, in the best theatrical tradition of the legal profession, John presented his talk in the form of an outrageously funny double act with Yorkshire man Reggie Revill, replaying the conversation between them when, it appears, Reggie was sailing his own course many degrees away from that which his skipper had planned. John solemnly issuing



The conductor of the band of the Royal Marines which entertained us during dinner, in conversation with the Commodore.

orders from the podium at one side of the hall and being answered by Yorkshire grunts from the far end of the room had members in stitches and certainly conveyed a flavour of the atmosphere which prevailed on *Arctic Fern* throughout that voyage.

The Annual General Meeting, again held in the Royal St. George Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire was attended by over 100 members. The Hon. Treasurer reported that the accounts of both the club and the separate entity, ICC Publications Ltd., were in a healthy state. That was reflected in the company by its surpluses having absorbed all previous tax credits, it was now having to pay for the first time while at the same time it had accumulated sufficient funds to meet the printing costs of the new south and west edition of the Sailing Directions. However, the Hon. Treasurer proposed that the annual subscription be increased from 1st January 2002 which he said was necessary to keep the Club's head above water.

Members will be aware that each year a small number persist in deferring payment of their subscriptions in spite of receiving an invoice and reminder letters. The committee, considering that this placed an unreasonable burden on the voluntary efforts of the Hon. Treasurer, Subscriptions, proposed a change to rule 12 (v) to require it to remove from membership any person whose subscription has not been paid by 15th March. The proposal was passed and with it was deleted that persons in default could be spoken for at the AGM.

Before moving on to the presentation of Awards, Bill Rea who has been controlling their whereabouts made an appeal for any information which could lead to the recovery of the Benbow Trophy which has been missing for many years.

The October Committee Meeting, always held outside Dublin took place in Killaloe. Commodore Dave Fitzgerald, still recovering from his hip replacement sent his apologies and the meeting was chaired by Vice Commodore Donal Brazil. Under the revised rule 12 (v) the names of eleven persons for whom the Hon. Treasurer had no record of their having paid a subscription, were removed from the list of members. However, a further number in the semi senior category whose health was known not to be 100% were, on the suggestion of the Vice Commodore, to be looked at more favourably.

The decision having been made that there would be no further cruises between now and 2004, it was agreed that



Marjorie Baker and the Hon. Sec. in excellent form after the fine food and wines at Perros Guirec.

Photo: Arthur Baker



Bill and Rosemary McKean stepping it out. *Photo: Kevin Dwyer*

another Shannon Cruise should take place in the Autumn of 2002. this will be organised by the west and will probably be based around Killaloe.

Preparations are already well in hand for the 75th Anniversary Celebrations in 2004. A probable start date for the Cruise is 17th July with the event spread over the following ten days or so. Based on the turnout for the last cruise in 1996, it is anticipated that there could be up to 200 boats and 1,000 people taking part. With these numbers, a major logistical exercise will be called for.

In the evening an informal dinner was held in Killaloe which local western region members attended. The guest of honour was Roger Blake, who had been elected a member in 1940 and who has clear memories of dinners and functions held in the twenty years after the formation of the club.

Jarlath Cunnane and Paddy Barry are not long back from their traverse of the Northwest Passage. To have done it at all is to have performed an amazing feat, to have achieved it in one season is quite astounding and will be marked by the club in a special way.

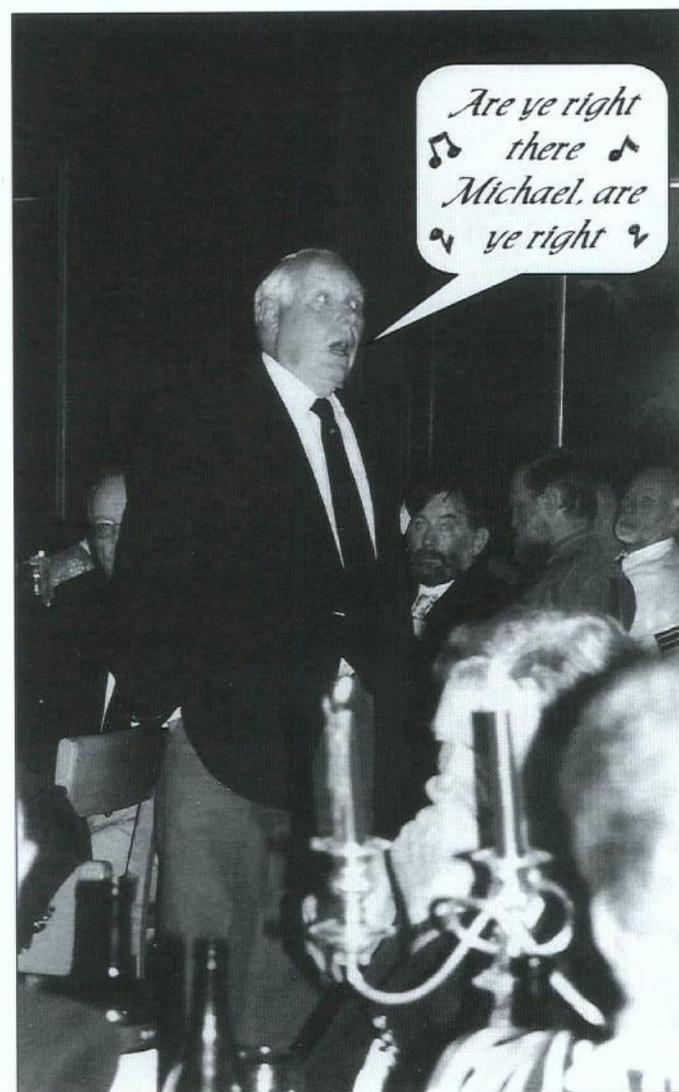
The August event in the south, a short cruise to Clare Island which was started some years ago by Chris Bruen goes from strength to strength and this year in spite of poor visibility, attendance at the lunch on the island was bigger than ever. The attendance at this, and at the June Rally by the East Region to Carlingford which northern boats also attended is indicative of the vitality of the Club.

Cormac P McHenry
Honorary Secretary



Terry Johnson and Diana Connolly in grand form.

Photo: Kevin Dwyer



Michael in full voice at the dinner in the Britannia Royal Naval College in Dartmouth.

Bob Fannin

Bob Fannin, cartoonist and yachtsman, died on December 13th last, aged 75. He will be known to many for his gently sardonic cartoons which appeared in the Irish Field, the *Evening Herald* and, from its first issue more than 30 years ago, Business and Finance Magazine.

Born in Limerick, he attended St Munchin's College, where his prowess both as a rugby player and as a sprinter helped alleviate what may not have been the happiest years of his life. In later years, in fact, he attributed his uncharacteristic ferocity on the rugby pitch to his feelings about a punishing school regime which was to leave him devoutly undevout.

After moving to Dublin, Bob attended the National College of Art and Design. As an impoverished art student, he also began working nights at the Irish Press, where he took in the death notices and, as he said, became an unofficial bouncer to the bowsies who mistook the paper for an after hours drinking club. It was as a student that he met the soprano Marie Hand, who soon gave up NCAD for the more glamorous world of the stage, working at the Theatre Royal, the Capital and the Gaiety. Thus began a 50-year marriage which produced its own share of dramas as well as four children: Laura, Valerie, Robert and Hilary.

Bob began a career in advertising, becoming head of studio at McConnell's. Also at this time, he developed his enduring passion for the sea and sailing. By the early 1960s he was competing in Fastnets, and in 1973 was a member of the Irish Admiral's Cup Team. However, it was on voyages to the far north – Iceland, Greenland, Spitzbergen, the Faroes and the elusive 80th parallel – with skipper John Gore-Grimes on *Shardana*, that he had his best adventures. Those who sailed with him remember Bob as entirely at ease on a boat – patient, humorous, knowledgeable, unfazed by icebergs, polar bears, raging storms or walls of water – and he took pride in his membership of the Irish Cruising Club, the Royal Ocean Racing Club and Howth Yacht Club.

Becoming a cartoonist gave him the freedom to sail whenever he wanted, and it also provided the outlet for his lateral way of looking at life. His work was wry rather than heavily satirical, and often looked at events from the point of view of animals (the demure but pained expressions on the faces of cattle attending the Beef Tribunal spring to mind).

He created his own orbit, and within it benefited from his generosity and tolerance. When I first turned up in Dublin with his daughter in 1990 – a Londoner largely ignorant of rugby, sailing and, to be honest, Ireland – I was absorbed into the routine he set up in his later years, and was made to feel I belonged.

After a painfully early start to his day (a cartoon was produced for the *Evening Herald* by 9a.m.), and a couple of hours at B & F in midmorning, the back of Bob's working day was broken and we would head to the Baggot for a couple of glasses of wine, O'Donoghue's for a beef and onion sandwich, one at Doheny and Nesbitt's, maybe, followed in the evening by a game of snooker at Howth Yacht Club. In this easy-going way I learnt my way around the city and gradually discovered I had emigrated. And over the years I met many, many others who had, like me, been made feel at home (and sometimes given a home) by Bob and Marie.

On arriving at the hospital just before Christmas for what he sensed would be the last time, his apprehension was confirmed by the Sacred Heart of Jesus that shone brightly above the crib. "Poor fool came in for a heart transplant," he said. "and look what happened to him".

The absence of Bob's familiar, unruffled, pipe-smoking figure will be keenly felt in all his Dublin haunts. His ashes are scattered in the sea by the Baily lighthouse in Howth, a good setting for a fearless sailor and independent spirit.

G.N.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Flag Officers and Committee 2001-2002

Commodore	David HB FitzGerald	2nd year
Vice Commodore	Donal Brazil	1st year
Rear Commodore	Peter Ronaldson	2nd year
Rear Commodore	Peter Killen	1st year

Hon. Secretary	Cormac P McHenry	12th year
Hon. Treasurer	Arthur Baker	1st year

East

B Bradley
B Connor
T Johnson
B MacManus

South

C J Bruen
D McClement
G Sheridan
W A Curtain

West

T Clarke
B Lynch

North

R Barr
H Kennedy
D Park
J Nixon
M McKee (ex officio)

New Members

Timothy Barry	Cork
Peter Crowley	Cork
Philip McAuliffe	Cork
Ross Monson	Belfast
Robert Pendleton	Skerries
Noel Casey	Dublin
Aodhan Fitzgerald	Dingle
John Marrow	Dublin
Gearoid O'Riain	Dublin
Alan Robertson	Scotland
Stephen Cullen	Dublin
Micheal Harris-Barke	Dundalk
Nelson Moore	Cork
Sam Moore	Newtownards
Duncan Whitehead	London

Deceased Members – Remembered AGM 2001

J F Burke	05/12/00
Pat Colleran	24/07/00
Bob Fannin	03/12/00
Perry Greer	02/02/00
Arthur Madden	08/10/00
Micheal Tomlinson	25/08/00
John Waddell	20/08/00
Reggie Walsh	20/01/01
Denis Doyle	11/11/01

Challenge Cup Awards

Alan Leonard

Members may take heart from this Annual that their Club is in good fettle, with cruises ranging from Polar waters to the Bay of Bengal and the Indian Ocean, but how on earth does one adjudicate between such disparate voyages? The decision is inevitably arbitrary and idiosyncratic.

Many members seem to have taken Frank Larkin's advice last year to heart and the increase in the number of members undertaking cruises of greater distance and longer duration continues. There were few entries eligible for The Fortnight Cup. Perhaps some day it will have to become "The Three Week Cup". This year I have been asked to make an award for the best Dunn's Ditty. I have the temerity to question the wisdom of this decision, lest it encourage more to submit Dunn's Ditties instead of logs. Several of Dunn's Ditties have grown greatly from the short notes which I think Aidan initially envisaged and would have warranted submission as proper logs. Equally one or two of the logs might have been submitted as Dunn's Ditties!

FAULKNER CUP – When I heard that Paddy Barry, Jarlath Cunnane and their crew had successfully negotiated the Northwest Passage there was no doubt in my mind that they would win The Faulkner Cup. Little did I realise that the task of awarding it would fall to myself! Now having read all of their logs I am happy to confirm this decision. Indeed one wishes that there was some greater honour which one could bestow. I have no doubt that other accolades will follow. Many members undertake meticulous planning for their cruises. Few go to the lengths of building a new boat specifically for a voyage! No one who has read anything of the tribulations of Franklin, Ross and others can be in any doubt of the magnitude of this achievement. The ice may have been kind to them at a crucial stage, but without meticulous planning and great skill and experience in Arctic waters they would not have been placed to take the leads when they opened up. Well done!

ROCKABILL TROPHY – What is it about high latitudes that draws some of our members back year after year? Brian Black gives some of the answers. As befits someone working in the media his log is highly readable, so much so that it sounds almost easy! Yet despite the arduous conditions encountered in these waters they carried out a detailed cruise. This log makes one year for more information and detail and I look forward to seeing his television programme next year. In any other year this log might well have won The Faulkner Cup. I have no doubt that the seamanship and navigation were exemplary and won the award of The Rockabill Trophy fully justified.

STRANGFORD CUP – Traditionally this cup for the "alternative best cruise" seems to be awarded for a very different cruise to The Faulkner Cup "pour encourager les autres" and I follow in this tradition. The choice narrowed to two in the Eastern Mediterranean, two in the Baltic, Brittany and the Atlantic Islands. How on earth does one decide? I award The Strangford Cup to Bernard Corbally for his extensive and detailed exploration of the Baltic.

ATLANTIC TROPHY – Three logs were eligible for this trophy including two fine transatlantic crossings. Peter and Susan Grays' log of another year's cruising the Western Pacific, Queensland to Darwin and across the South Indian Ocean includes two passages eligible for the Atlantic Trophy, from the King George River to Christmas Island and from Cocos Keeling to Rodrigues. Conditions were boisterous in the early part of the latter passage which was completed at an average speed of over 140 miles per day. I award The Atlantic Trophy to Peter and Susan Gray.

FINGAL CUP – I award The Fingal Cup to Michael Balmforth for his cruise round Ireland and Biscay. For me this was a log which had everything. Highly readable, from the Clyde, Ireland to port, taking in a few good few anchorages in the south west and then a fast passage across Biscay to Bayona. There followed a detailed cruise of Galicia

and the Basque country and taking in Brittany on the way home. What more could one ask for!

ROUND IRELAND NAVIGATION CUP – for the best circumnavigation is awarded to Donal Walsh for his readable account of an anti-clockwise circumnavigation which contains good pilotage notes. His exploration of Mulroy without a large scale on board was a remarkable achievement. I trust that his pilotage notes have been passed to the Honorary Compiler of Sailing Directions. It is also good to read a log of a family cruise in a smaller yacht.

WYBRANT CUP – Following on last year's award members may be forgiven for thinking that to win this trophy for the best cruise in Scottish waters it is necessary to visit the west side of the Outer Hebrides! The award is to Sean McCormack for his cruise to St Kilda and the Monach Isles which also took in a good number of less remote anchorages. Perhaps the provisioning could have been better! Again a good cruise in a smaller yacht.

THE PERRY GREER BOWL – for the best first ICC log is awarded to Noel Casey. Clearly experienced in northern waters, for something different he tried a fortnight's charter in the Mediterranean. His entertaining style tries but fails to disguise a very competent cruise which would also have been eligible for The Fortnight Cup.

WILD GOOSE CUP – I do not feel qualified on literary merit but there were certainly several very readable logs any one of which could qualify for this award. Robert Barr's cruise to Brittany to visit the widow of an old friend put me in mind of George Millar returning to visit friends of former years in "Oyster River" and I award him the Wild Goose Cup. I hope that I can buy a larger yacht when I am his age!

FORTNIGHT CUP – is awarded to Gary Villiers-Stuart in *Winefreda of Greenland*. The aims of this cruise were musical, mystical, religious, at the same time taking in a number of well loved anchorages in the west of Scotland. Which of us has not been deeply moved by some experience at sea or while cruising?

GLENGARIFF TROPHY – is not awarded this year.

DUNNS DITTY – The award for Dunn's Ditties is given to Brendan Travers for an extended cruise in Brittany in a 23 footer with no vane steering or autopilot, mostly single handed. What a pity this was not submitted as a full log as it would have warranted a high award.

I would like to thank the Commodore and Committee for inviting me to adjudicate on the Club's Challenge Awards. It is an honour and a pleasure but a challenge. Inevitably the authors of some well written logs of fine cruises and voyages have had to go unrewarded. I hope that they will forgive me.

THE EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE awards THE DONEGAN MEMORIAL to Mungo Park for active for active sailing into his eighties.

THE SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE awards THE WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP to Andrew Curtain and Gerry Sheridan for their channel cruise.

THE NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE awards THE WRIGHT MEMORIAL SALVER to John and Anne Clementson for hospitable Arc and Carribean sailing.

THE WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE awards THE ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY to Roger Bourke for 60 years of cruising, a member since 1940.

THE COMMODORE awards THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP to Carmel Winkelmann for her services to Junior Sailing.

Antigua – Azores – Jersey

Henry Barnwell

In June this year Richard Yates decided to take his Hallberg Rassy 46 *Beaucastel* home to Jersey from Antigua. I was one of a crew of four, being the skipper, Richard, who used to run a sailing school in Jersey and had several trans-Atlantic deliveries under his belt, Jersey man Chris Cavey who had sailed east to west with Richard, and a medical student from England, Ed Melanby.

We spent a couple of days in final preparation, including lashing ten plastic cans full of diesel to the side deck, and a half day excursion to anchor off a deserted beach whilst the water-maker freshened itself up. Following a pleasant lunch ashore, during which Ed received news that he had passed his exam with a merit, we were more than keen to be off. Antigua has gone downhill in the last ten years. In particular, Jolly Harbour, from where we set sail, is tatty, the proliferation of holiday chalets and apartments (some five hundred in all) has destroyed the image of a Caribbean bay and sad to relate it seems to have a good dose of the dread disease which is threatening the life-blood of all of the ex-British islands, and that is surliness. The un-ease which we all felt was to be justified some two weeks later when we stood ashore in Horta to warm and genuine smiles and an intense desire to be helpful.

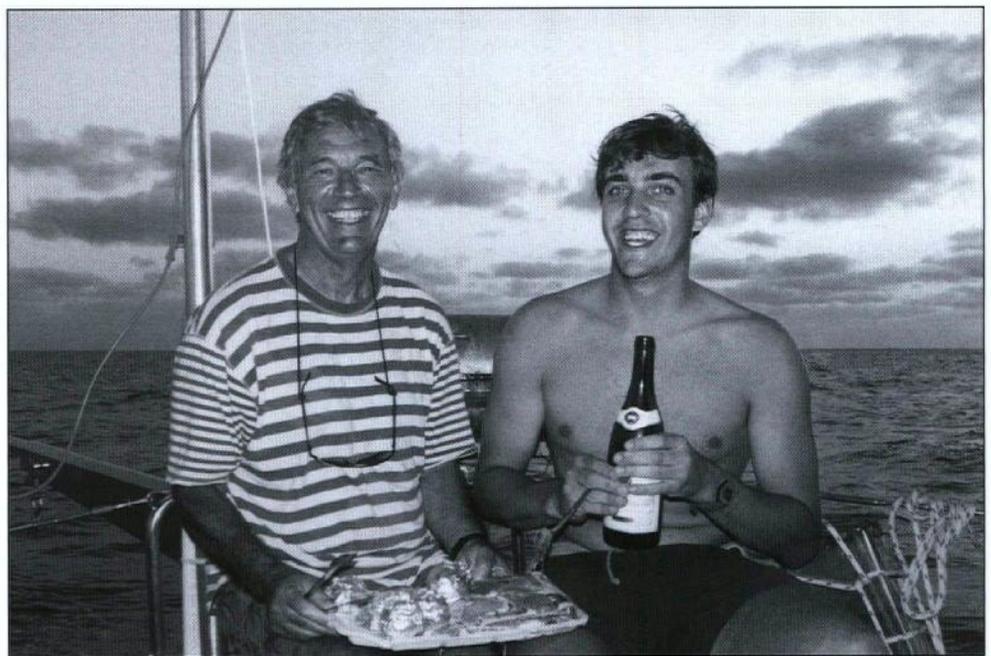
I have to say that I would not be really happy to leave a boat in Jolly Harbour, although there is a swim pool and a small boatyard with a tiny chandlery and a very good but expensive American carpenter; the security did not look too clever. The travel-lift is small, up to fifty tons, which would necessitate most Irish yachts having to remove the back-stay. I enquired if English Harbour had changed since our last visit (1992) and was told it was as lovely as ever.

At about 15.00 on 5th of June we cast off and steamed out to head north under main and genoa in a fresh easterly trade wind. There were indications of a revolving storm winding up off the Cape Verde islands, however, our impression was that we should be well clear before it struck the Caribbean, if indeed it ever did. During my first night watch (we stood one man four hour watches by day and one man two hour stints by night) I identified a blip on the radar and became concerned when the blip did not translate into a visual sighting, also, according to the radar screen the target appeared to be heading straight for us. Last winter there were four incidents of armed piracy very close to Trinidad, all of them involving firearms and one of them resulting in a Swedish man being shot in the back which

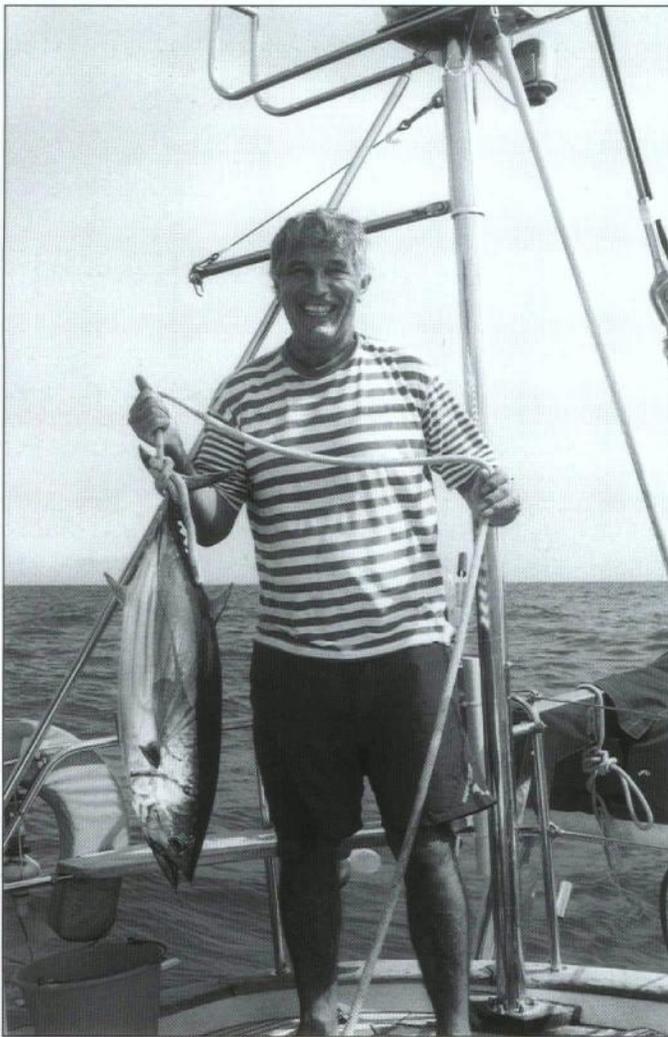
injury confined him to hospital for months. When Ivy and I were leaving Trinidad in mid May he was still in hospital. One of the incidents was strictly speaking, not piracy, but did involve heavy gunfire when Venezuelan customs men mistook a yacht anchored in a quiet bay for a drug-running boat and as their initial approach resulted in the skipper opening up with everything he had they retired, returning after midnight with bigger and better guns. Believing he was being attacked by pirates the skipper again opened up drowning the sound of the crickets. A dinghy was punctured and some shots pierced the hull before a cease fire was declared, at which point the couple on the yacht accepted the bona fides of the officials, poured a few glasses of rum and retired to bed again.

Being as yet unfamiliar with the calibre of the canons on the Hallberg Rassy, the skipper being asleep and the target down to a thousand metres and closing, I became concerned. As luck would have it, Ed, who felt hot down below came on deck, but, not even his young eyes could make out navigation lights. Then a red and a green lit up just as I had decided to alter course and a twenty metre fishing vessel passed us very close.

We spent the remainder of the night clearing Barbuda on our starboard side and just before dawn began to haul up as close as we could go to the wind which remained easterly. Two days passed on this point of sail before the trade wind died and the sea became calm, two days of being bashed and banged and bumped and bathed in perspiration, not being able to open the hatches or portholes, even those to leeward. I imagine this would be extremely uncomfortable for anyone not accustomed to the tropics. Ed and I hauled a fine tuna, which took about twenty minutes to land assisted by the gaff.



Enjoying the barbeque



Henry with the tuna.

Shortly after the wind began to drop a very loud bang saw all hands on deck, the starboard davit had broken allowing the dinghy (a semi-rigid) to collapse. We remained calm and having chatted all of the options through decided to remove the gear being several fenders, spare mainsail and spare genoa, lash them to the after deck, drop the dinghy into the water, tow it to a midship position alongside, lift it aboard using a spare halyard, lash it to the foredeck and then at our leisure remove the broken davit. Chris volunteered to go over the stern, Ed feeding him the necessary tools, it took several hours but eventually we manhandled the heavy piece of stainless steel on board where it was lashed down carefully. We were so lucky the sea was tending to calm.

By the third day the wind had become very light and was veering, allowing us to use the cruising chute. The skipper tightened some pipes in the engine room containing the six cylinder 90 H.P. Volvo and the two cylinder diesel generator. Some hours later the 24 volt alternator on the main engine failed, we had left a plastic pipe too close to the fan felt which sawed through it allowing the alternator to be doused in salt water.

The wind continued to veer becoming southerly which allowed us to make great use of a nice tri-radial reacher, the HR revelled in these conditions, making eight knots without effort hour after hour. For some time I had been trying, during my watches, to persuade the big ST 8000 autopilot to steer a straight line, without much success. As the wind piped up the boat began to yaw, sometimes up to thirty degrees off course, which had to have a serious effect on our distance made good.

Noon to noons were poor 137 miles at best, to date, according to the pilot chart we should have had a favourable current, yet the GPS speed over the ground was not converting to VMG. I turned the autopilot off steering by hand as straight as I could, the boat had the feel of a skitty racing yacht, not at all what I had imagined a HR would be like. We spent the remainder of the voyage wrestling with this problem, I am a great fan of German Frers, I think his designs are superb, but thirty degrees to port then thirty degrees to starboard in a moderate seaway and moderate breeze do not add up to quick passages. The other side of that coin is of course, do we have to go quickly? To which I would answer an emphatic no, but, sometimes it is pleasant to sail a boat close to it's optimum without feeling stressed.

The HR 46 has a LOA of 48' 9" and an optimum hull speed of 9.2 kts so that by deducting fifteen per cent for steering error, cruising rig etc, she should have been giving us 180 plus days with fifteen knots favourable wind; she only did that once. It may be necessary to drop the keel bulb half a metre or so. Under steam she did not yaw which led us to conclude the problem must be down below.

Despite this little irritation we were a very happy crew and ate and drank like natives of Dalkey, most nights we cooked on the barbeque at the push pit and ate under the full moon in the spacious and oh so comfortable wheel house. We rotated the cooking and laying claim to being the worst chef in recorded history I fully expected to be excused, not a bit of it, Richard insisted I do my duty, for which kindness I am eternally grateful, because now I can cook a long list of rubbish. If it had not been for Ed and Chris I would have had some really sad tales to relate. In particular Ed became my buddy and at the first sign of the barbeque bursting into flame he would ensconce himself beside me and as we swigged our way through the bottle of red wine, issued following representations to the skipper by Ed and I, to all chefs as an assist to combat the stress of trying to keep steaks attached to a grill in a seaway. He watched my every move and never reported any little slip-ups, which quickly became cover-ups. At this stage we were just about to enter the area of a huge Azores anti-cyclone which often forced the crews in the eighteen and nineteenth centuries to kill and eat any horses which remained standing, the horse latitudes. We were a little more sophisticated in that our eldest son Nigel is a very fine amateur meteorologist whom Ivy and I have come to rely on greatly when cruising. We had a satellite telephone on board and linked this to a lap-top which, however, could only receive and send text messages, no images. No problem, what I did was ask Nigel to study his met maps and direct us daily to a waypoint, which for the first ten days was the same 30N. 050W. Higher than that was a roaring gale and below us north easterlies. This was a priceless facility for a normally windless area, Nigel just managed to keep us on the edge of the anti-cyclone and we were never becalmed.

Six days out, still running in south westerlies, we carried the tri-radial for over forty eight hours, the only concern was when the guy, which was brand new spectra parted with a crack.

The next day gave us another loud crack, all hands on deck again, the clew cringle on the brand new North mainsail had ripped out. Because of the in mast furling system this was to occupy a good deal of time. Before leaving Antigua I had suggested abandoning the old main and genoa, I argued that I had two mainsails at home in a garden shed which had never seen the light of day since being replaced. The skipper decided otherwise and the two old sails were loaded into the dinghy so that when the accident happened I had to endure some well deserved slugging, being a gentleman I did, of course, resist the temptation to suggest that the extra weight in the dinghy might have contributed to the collapse of the davit.

It took hours to set the spare sail, in the meantime Richard



Chris guying flying fish.

had got a message away to a British yacht close to Faial and alerted the sail maker to our plight. When we docked this man told us that he has repaired several such sails and that he believes the new spectra webbing some sail makers are using is not as strong, on some angles, as the old material. Most certainly we were in a moderate seaway and there was some slatting but not for long.

On the tenth day somebody wrote the following log entry "16.18. THAR SHE BLOWS, HUMPBACK, MR BARNWELL" I was particularly delighted that Ed was first to respond and was rewarded with the sight of the flukes going down, if only because I had been reminiscing for days until it began to seem he would never sight his first whale. The position was 33.50N 042.17W.

This sea area is un-doubtedly the most attractive I have experienced, one does not need clothes, even at night, the wind is mainly below fifteen knots, the seas seldom angry and the sky mostly blue. We did not see any ships and truth to tell began to feel lazy about bothering to watch at night, a quick scan of the radar was often the only exercise needed.

Day eleven, another of our famous cracks, this time the cruising chute ripped from luff to leach, which greatly surprised me because it looked fairly new and in good condition and the breeze was steady at sixteen knots. This time we needed all hands on deck to avoid wrapping a sheet around the propeller or keel. It was not possible to have this repaired in time in Horta and as the area to be sewn was very large for hand-sewing we simply packed it away for another day, although it is a very useful sail to have on board, I liked it.

The next day dawned with about 380NM miles to go to Faial it was our twelfth day at sea. We knew from Nigel's last e-mail that a cold front had spun off from the revolving storm I wrote about in the beginning. This storm had hit land in Florida producing hurricane force winds and extremely heavy rainfall. We took it right up the transom but the rain was more un-comfortable than the wind,

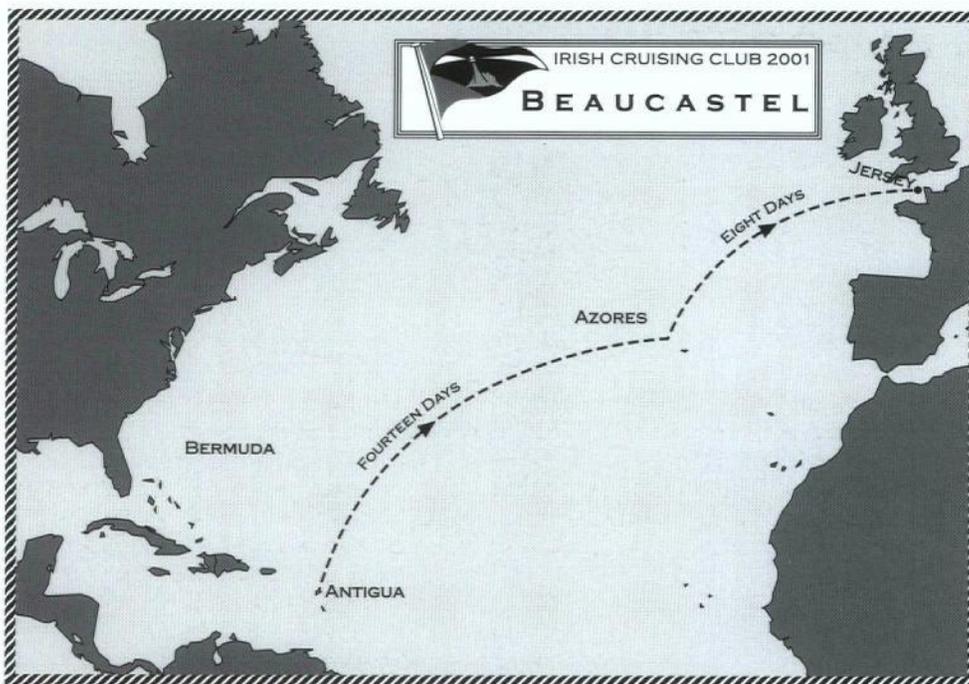
which never exceeded thirty five knots, not a real gale and the boat handled it very well. Having been in paradise for so long the effect of the grey sky, grey sea and grey everything was traumatic. We began to feel really cold and for the first time I noticed shoes and socks and long trousers suddenly appear. For me it felt like I had been in an art gallery revelling in that wonderful command of colours which famous artists enjoy when without much warning someone somewhere turned the lights off and everything appeared grey, grey, dark grey, yuk. Suddenly I began to dread the approach to the north west coast of France.

We continued under much the same conditions until just after dawn on the 20th of June Ed called me to say we were in the channel between Pico and Faial and had Horta in our sights. Before entering the marina we sailed over to inspect a very large yacht anchored off, she turned out to be none other than *Hyperion*.

We were to spend the next five days partying as the Ocean Cruising Club rally saw yachts arrive from a variety of destinations, including Ireland. Brian Coad and Alan Rountree sailed *Raasay* and *Tallulah* single-handed from home being joined by Colin Chapman on *Deerhound* and a new boat to the club *Papageno*. The boat, which took the rally by storm, however, was *Olbario* from the DMYC. The first I learned they were in town was one morning when I took time off from chores to sip a coffee in one of Horta's very pleasant cafes eavesdropping on a conversation between four or five locals who obviously were involved in one of the Faial bands and who simply raved about a trumpet player with his pal a saxophone player both of whom had apparently treated the town to a free concert the night before. Mike Murphy, the owner of the lovely Swan *Olbario* was the sax player and one of his crew members just happened to have a b flat trumpet on board being Ray Martin who plays as sweet a trumpet as can be heard. Our skipper being nothing if not gallant succumbed to the temptation and invited them on board that night. The last post was not blown until dawn by which time I am sure most crews in the marina had abandoned any hope of sleep and just settled down to enjoy the music if not the fun. These two talented musicians treated us to some lovely mood music at the official dinner the next night. In addition both the Portugal Tourist Board and the Harbour Authority of Horta treated us to sumptuous receptions.



Henry investigating the whaling boat at Pico.



In such a cosmopolitan ambience I had a wonderful opportunity to judge what others said about Irish boats and about Irish people in particular being as I was in service under a red duster, and surrounded by similar dusters. I am delighted to relate that it was all favourable; they raved about our ability to party, about our musical talent and never stopped commenting favourably, sometimes ecstatically, about the economic miracle called the Celtic Tiger. Several times I overheard conversations alluding to the brilliant ability of our younger generation to handle European languages and in general to our educational systems. It confirmed to me something Ivy and I have noticed on our travels which is that the tricolour is a very tradeable commodity these days.

Like all good parties this one had to end. At noon on the 25th of June we started up and steamed out of Horta into a gentle breeze out of the east, which just allowed us to sail between Sao Jorge and Graciosa. All four of us stayed on deck



Between the Azores and Jersey.

that evening bewitched by a beautiful sunset, which enhanced the natural beauty of the lovely archipelago. Before the sun went down we had in view, at the same time, Faial, Sao Jorge, Terceira, Graciosa and peeping over them all Pico, what a vista these made, sparkling like emeralds against a shimmering blue sea in the setting sun.

Before we had all recovered our sea legs another depression passed through, this one producing a near gale from the southwest with heavy rain. We reefed down and continued peering into the gloom. On the third day out the sky began to break, we goose-winged genoa and main in 22/24 knots still out of the south west and looked forward to the daily messages from Nigel at home.

The barometer began to rise on day four which gave us the chance

to hoist our tri-radial but unfortunately this did not last too long and after twenty four hours we had to resort to our iron spinnaker. The forecast was for adverse winds for the foreseeable future so we all decided to leave the engine running and to decant the fuel in the spare cans to the main tank.

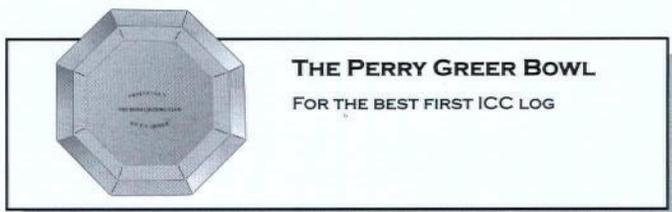
Day seven, still under steam, approaching the separation zones off Ushant into a head wind of some fifteen knots and a moderate seaway. The boat slowed down to 3.5 knots VMG, which seeing that we were so tantalising close to port was not deemed quick enough. We bore off to port allowing the main to fill and immediately stopped the awful hobby-horsing motion. That afternoon we all heard a thump and noticed that the engine revs had decreased, there could be no doubt about it, we had fouled something. Ed volunteered to go over the wall and following a couple of dives announced that a very large piece of heavy plastic had fouled the propeller. The immersion in such cold water left Ed shivering which condition was soon rectified by a large glass of rum taken in his bunk.

Day eight saw everybody packing bags, cleaning lockers, carpets, etc so that we would have time to enjoy the approach to St Helier, albeit at low tide, we docked at 11.30. having covered the 1,300 NM from Horta in one hour short of eight days, which produces an average of 6.8 knots. Three days under engine was the longest I have had to endure, but I have to record that the big Volvo made it easy enough, noise levels were particularly agreeable.

The entire voyage from Antigua to Jersey, some 3,600 NM had taken almost twenty three sailing days at an overall average of 6.5 knots. The company both ashore in the Azores and at sea was most enjoyable, a journey I will take a long time to forget but what I shall never forget was the sight of five of my grandchildren accompanied by Ivy and our two daughters Fiona and Ciara together with Fiona's husband Daithi on the quay to greet us in St Helier.

Mediterranean experience 2001

Noel Casey



Having sailed mostly in northern latitudes to mostly island destinations over the past ten years, to such locations as the Orkneys, the Faeroe islands and to Iceland and the island of Grimsey on Iceland's north coast, not to mention all of the islands of Ireland from Lambay south about to Cape Clear Achill and Tory, it seemed appropriate to consider the Mediterranean islands in the winter of 2000, while planning the 2001 activities. Why not Corsica, suggested a French friend with whom I had sailed to Iceland. He was recently retired and the coalescence of ideas seemed propitious. A charter was the optimal solution to do the west coast of Corsica. Accordingly a Beneteau Oceanis 390 was chartered from Port Camargue, some 100 km. west of Marseilles

Getting to Port Camargue was via flights to Paris and onward to Nimes which is some 30km north of the Camargue. Leaving Dublin at noon on a Friday in June saw us sitting down, some ten hours later, to pre cruise planning in Aigues Mortes, just a stones throw from the marina at Port Camargue. What a marina, a three thousand berth marina, but an ordinary marina in France would be some three hundred berth and they are located virtually everywhere. This part of western Provence is in the district of the Gard and in early June, there are no tourists or at least no English speaking voices apart from our group of Irish and French with conversations in Franglais and as the ears of our French companions attuned it became mostly Anglais, which is a great shame, but the average Frenchman, who has learnt English from age of ten has a vastly better command of English than an Irishman has of French. No contest, Anglais rules. Aigues Mortes is a lovely medieval walled town with incredible local wine, but served in a bar at FF10 per bottle, with canapes, real value, real liver rotting, but immensely pleasurable. So it was at 0700 on Saturday morning after a very late night and the most reasonable drink that we are called. The Oceanis 390 is available at 1000 and we have a plan of going straight to the southern tip of Corsica, a mere 250 miles away. With military precision the crew of six is divided into three groups each charged with a task of provisioning, checking the yacht – its equipment inventory and the integrity of various systems. At 1700 we were ready and motored to the fuelling berth and by 1730 we cleared the breakwater and at 1800 set a course of 120 degrees for Bonifacio, some 240 miles away at that stage. Initially there was very little wind and the iron jib was used for two hours until the wind came. Initially it came up to northeast force two then to force three to four and we looked forward to a sparkling reach to the south east. In the course of our first night at sea the wind increased steadily and backed to the north-north-west such that within a few hours the Oceanis was running dead downwind in a NNW force six, hardly what we associate with the Med., but we had found the local prevailing wind, the north west mistral known as the Tramontane, which blows quite strongly even in summer and over the course of the next day was to vary from force four to seven. We had it up the transom and seven knots without too much difficulty with each watch seeking the speed record, which was a surfing nine knots for a few seconds. However we

were averaging over six knots which is comfortably conservative for a thirty-nine footer.

The problem with downwind sailing is concentration in avoiding a gybe. This is especially so at the change of helmsman while running at night. On a racing yacht there is a pecking order of helmsmen, but on a cruise with friends, there is an equality of opportunity that does not allow discrimination amongst helmsmen of differing ability, except in extreme weather and force six in a thirty-nine footer is certainly interesting, but manageable. Democracy has its price and each crew will have a weak link and this meant that some thirty six hours out a tear of some 70 cm. was noticed on the seam at the top batten pocket as recorded in the log at 0510 on Monday June 11th

How I hate helmsmen who do the occasional crash-gybe. The main had to come down and course had to be altered for Ajaccio, where there would be a better prospect of a sail-maker for the repair. So some fifteen hours after the sail tear was noted we were in the vieux marina at Ajaccio or old marina, but it all seemed the same physically as the newer portion, except that it was nearer to shoreside facilities. Our arrival there was some fifty hours after leaving Port Camargue. A few scoops, an early night and arise again at 0730 and a workgroup to find a sailmaker (easy), unlike my experiences in Akureyeri in Iceland in 1994, where we had to settle for a saddle maker as the only person with an industrial strength sewing machine. Another detail was to deal with the electric bilge pump which was not working. Maintenance is a necessity.

We "lost" a day in Ajaccio, but a day well spent as we did tourist things after the boat was shipshape. Ajaccio is the birthplace of a certain Napoleon Bonaparte and his birthplace is still standing along with a few memorials to him. He left Corsica, aged sixteen, to go to military school in Paris and never returned, but Corsica is very proud of him. The French meteorological service is fantastic in the frequency and detail of their service, both coastal and offshore. They do however suffer from an increasingly rare phenomenon in Ireland, – they go on strike and in our time there they were on strike on the Tuesday that we were in Ajaccio and on the Wednesday of the following week. However we did get weather from the Monaco coastguard and were amused to listen to coastal shipping complaining about missing forecasts.

At 0600 we departed Ajaccio bound for Bonifaccio, some twelve hours later arrived off of Bonifacio. The entrance to Bonifacio is not unlike the entrance to Cape Clear, in that it is a very narrow opening in a cleft of cliffs. It is hard to spot but once in, the entrance it opens out in a manner similar to Castletownshend. However, unlike Castletownshend, it has a four hundred berth marina and a wondrous aspect highlighted by a light that never shines in west Cork. Homer in the Iliad describes Odysseus as having been there, and having had two of his crew cannibalised by the locals. However, we were not accosted and celebrated by having a takeout pizza along with our usual libation of wine, r ose for lunch and red wine in the evening, with past s as soon as the sun crossed the yard arm,

weather permitting. i.e. less than force three. Is five litres a day too much for a crew of six. Yes if it blows, otherwise no!. Entry to Bonificio marina was tricky with a north westerly twenty knot breeze up our transom. Difficult to do a Mediterranean mooring with your transom upwind and a bow anchor, but character building! We toast Homer, Odysseus, and other Mediterranean adventurers with a bottle of rum donated to us by another boat whom we helped to berth. Their unorthodox berthing went wrong and Andre stripped off and taking to the water with a warp to assist, swam over to give them our warp, as their transom had fouled an adjacent berths bow warp. Question, How do you berth a fifty foot trimaran (en Franglais) in a marina in twenty knots of breeze?. This was a further spectacle to entertain marina occupants.

The next day it was westerly twenty five knots in the marina and the forecast was less than ideal. We decide to stay and do tourist things. A Glenans sailing school boat, of some 9 metres LOA departed at 0900 bound for Sardinia, which is nearby, but returned within a couple of hours. This confirmed that our decision to stay put as being spot-on. At 0630 on the next day we depart Bonificao heading south. Early morning departures are emotionally moving as the stillness of the land and the timelessness of the landscape is a reminder of those who have been there before us, as we pass fortifications on Corsica from Roman to modern French Foreign Legion times. Sardinia is only a few miles away and north Africa is only a couple of days away. Corsica is a department of France, but has a strong independence movement. We head south towards the gulf of Bonificio, between Corsica and Sardinia.

The pilot book says that it is a windy spot and we verify this. In the gulf the wind rises from force three to five on entering the gulf. As we pass the Ilé Lavezzi a monument to the shipwreck of a troopship lost while returning from the Crimean war can be seen to leeward as can the beacon that is now on the rock upon which seven hundred perished. At times like that we acknowledge our predecessors who navigated these waters without the benefit of navigational aids. We will never see their likes again. To rely exclusively on electronic aids is a negation of the principles of navigation and the use of the permanent celestial markers and pilotage is in serious decline. Over reliance on radar and gps can be problematic. Navigation by classical methods is essential for the development of an offshore navigator. There was two periods of a couple of hours each over our cruise when we had poor gps coverage.

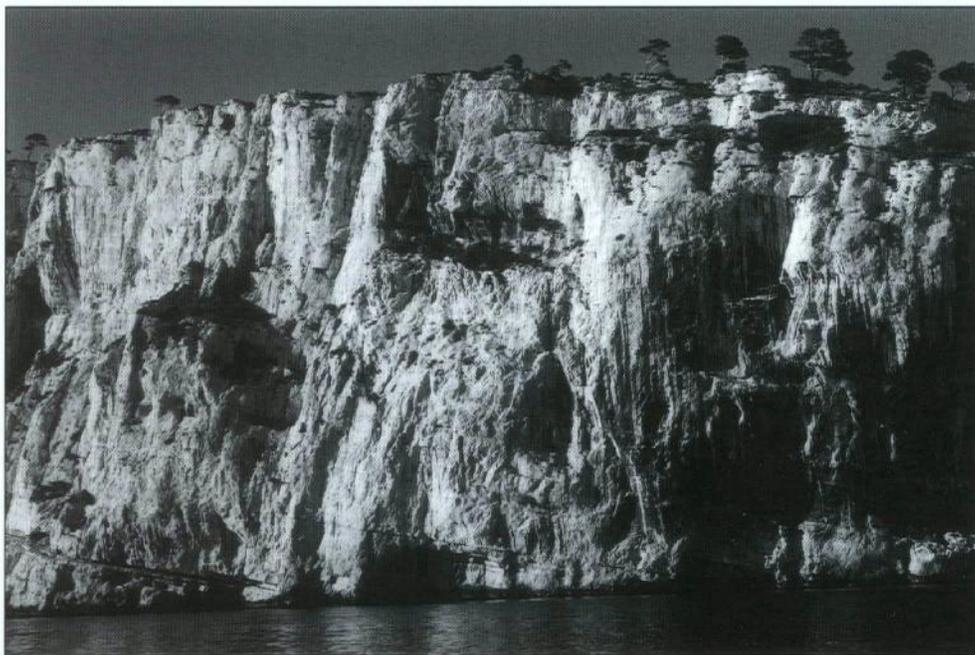
Having briefly forayed into Italian waters, north of Sardinia, we now set a course for mainland France but contrary winds send us to Propriano on the west coast of Corsica. We enter Propriano marina and decide that for only the second time in over a week, that we will not cook, but will seek a restaurant. As we are completing our tying-up at the marina in Propriano a small day boat ties up nearby. We ask Maurice, who is a dead ringer for the part played by Marlon Brando in "The Godfather" if he can recommend a restaurant. Maurice is a retired Belgian businessman and his daughter has married into the island and he spends his summers with his daughter.

Maurice says he knows a restaurant five kilometres away

and he offers to drive us there. So we are driven there by Maurice and his daughter, wonderful as she speaks perfect English.

The journey uphill for some twenty minutes brings us to the village of Viggianello and we alight in the centre of the village opposite the church and Chez Chralot, which is the recommended restaurant. It is now 2100 and we have a few (six) pastis but no-one comes to take our order. We are told that the entire village is at the festival and that there is no restaurant service, but we are most welcome to be the guests of the mayor, at the festival street party. The mayor, a friend of Maurice, was fulsome in his invitation to be part of their the mid summer festival which in part was being enacted in the church across the road, with singers from children of ten to adult gospel signers. The festivities, which is a buffet set out to the side of the church looks stunning and as song follows song in the nearby church, it becomes even more inviting. The bar is serving, mostly men who are slipping out of the church, but we are starving and can't face further drink without food. After what seems an age at 2245 the singing ceases and the party begins. Never was food, real food so welcome. Traditional Corsican fare, including smoked wild boar (recommended) and wonderful deserts along with lots of wine—fantastic. Being completely starved we laid into the food with abandon. There was a price and we, the Irish were asked to sing, presumably for our supper, which was in the processes of digestion, and we did a rendition of Molly Malone and had the Rose of Tralee in mind as an encore, but there was no call for an encore – "quelle surprise" It was a wonderful night in Propriano. How did we get back to the marina? Later on the forecast said that there was a depression in the Gulf of Lions moving to north Italy, west-north-west six to eight, becoming force eight to ten at the extremities of the area.! Our plan had been to go to Calvi in the north, the northern extremity, but with that forecast, a dash to Ajaccio was prudent. We got back to Ajaccio without difficulty, but the forecast remained bad, coastal forecast in afternoon southeast four, becoming west six and west eight to nine in north, seas rough four to six metres! That was the coastal forecast, offshore "au large" it was in afternoon west-north-west seven locally nine, seas six metres. This forecast prompted a further stopover in Ajaccio! Our shore contact in Nimes said that it was very windy there.

On Monday 18th June we left Ajaccio for France. The



The south of France.

prospect of getting to St. Tropez on the way back to Port Camargue was receding and it was decided to set a course for Porquerolle. The French Met. Office were about to go on a one day strike, but the weather seemed to be improving!. At 0630 we departed heading north west and at 0900 we had a westerly force five and at midday a westerly force seven to eight and forty knots across the deck. There is the aptly named Isles Sanguinas off of the coast and we had to weather them. They names translate as bloody islands and I concur. It took an age to weather them. During the afternoon the westerly seven to eight eased slowly and at 1900 we had force one! All was not well as three hours later there was a forecast of north west seven to eight in Languedoc-Rousillon and this was on the nose!



At Town Hall, Marseille.

Next day was Tuesday 19th June and the French Met. Office is again on strike and the sky is full of cirrus clouds to the west. There was a gale warning on the previous day for west Cote d'Azur and there are ominous dark clouds away to the east and north. There is no alternative but to continue for Porquerelle, we are "au large" and have plenty of sea room and after some interesting pilotage we are alongside at Auereil at 0045 on Wednesday June 20th. The Porquerelles are an offshore island grouping some fifty miles south west of St Tropez. The wind never went above force five while "au large" and the sea was blue, but wariness is the order of the day in the Med. where wind can appear strongly from a clear sky. Although somewhat tired, we stroll through the village, which is a deserted village at that hour and return aboard. At 0730 a croissant purchasing party goes ashore, but the shops don't open until 0830, most unusual-obviously a resort.

The met. men are back in action and fair weather is forecast as we go west along the French coast. Close inshore we reach along by limestone cliffs or "calanques" as they are called under a blue sky and scorching sun. It was decided to anchor in a sheltered inlet off of a stony beach at Cap Morgiou and the anchor is dropped, but it came up again as the sea-breeze shifted to make the beach a lee shore. At that stage it was decided to go to the iles Freiul in Marseille approaches. A shortcut was taken inside an island grouping where the English language Pilot book said there was two metres in the narrows, but the French pilot book said three metres. Who to believe?

We inched carefully through and found a least depth of just over three metres!

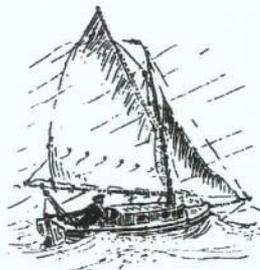
In relation to coastal pilot books there is the Imray, Laurie publishers of "South France Pilot", which was published in the early 1990's but without any update. However we also had French yachtsman's pilot book "Pilote Cotier" by Alanain Rondeau, published by Praxis marine. (www.pilotecotier.com) The Mediterranean is covered in several sturdy paperback volumes at FF190 each and was dated 2000. It was a far superior production in terms of information, chartlets of the approaches and corresponding aerial photos. It is well worth having as even if your French is *petit peu*, the pictures and

charts are accessible. At dusk we arrive off of the marina at Freiul and have much fun again in mooring stern to by picking up a buoy and dropping back toward the quay. It being June, the restaurants were closed at 2200 and there was little sign of life on the island, which has a fifteen hundred berth marina. Next morning we sailed to Marseilles itself, passing the Ile d'If immortalised by Alexander Dumas and the chateau d'If. The marina in Marseilles itself is very pretty and is in the old harbour. The commercial port itself is closed to yachts. The marina has at its head one of the main thoroughfares in Marseilles and is long and nearly a mile deep but comparatively narrow. The life of the town and its links to French colonial Africa are very evident in the buildings along the old harbour, with the town-hall, a Foreign legion fort and a tropical diseases hospital, now a disease research centre, all very prominent

Some time later we crossed into the Bouches de Rhone passing by Port Fos, which is the largest petrochemical facility in France. The mouth of the Rhone is nearby and is some four hundred metres wide but is described as dangerous on the chart. However vin de pays de Cote d'Rhone is anything but dangerous! Continuing on we go to a small marina (three hundred berth) in Port Gardian. This is on the edge of the Camargue, which is an extensive salt marsh and where there are mosquitoes. At dusk they come out in force and we seriously had to consider if we should have dinner in the cabin, but the sultriness of the cabin precluded this. This was the last evening to dine on board and much celebration took place using the local produce, Guinness had been tried on Bloomsday but it was vile and over twice Dublin prices.

When in France, drink as the locals do, encouragement is scarcely necessary. We felt well satisfied having done six hundred and eighty five miles in our fortnight. In summary the south of France is to be recommended, but at least in June it was our experience that it was windy with four days with wind in excess of force seven. Also there is no warning of wind via clouds and it can gust violently from a clear sky. In compensation it is warm, sunny and it is a far more pleasurable experience than the Irish Sea and is in the same league in my mind as the north Atlantic for something indescribable.

Donal Walsh



THE ROUND IRELAND NAVIGATION CUP

FOR THE BEST CIRCUMNAVIGATION WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON NAVIGATIONAL AND PILOTAGE CONTENT

Every time the topic of a summer cruise came up at home there seemed to be so many commitments and other demands that restricted the availability of crew that I began to despair and thought that we might not slot our usual summer family holiday aboard *Lady Kate* at all in 2001. Emma had a concert, summer job, Laser sailing, and a notion that holidays with parents are no longer “cool” – Brendan had hurling and football priorities, and Mary although as interested as ever was happy to “see her garden grow”. Eventually a compromise of sorts saw us on our way from home port Dungarvan at 0800 hours on July 8th bound Eastabout on a round Ireland cruise. We would go for three weeks and then leave the boat somewhere after which I would sail her home the last bit over a few weekends.

There was little or no wind on the south coast that morning and we motored in pleasant sunshine passing Hook and Kilmore Quay making a course cross St. Patrick’s Bridge and were close up to the shore at Carnsore Point to avoid the worst of the adverse stream as we rounded our first “corner of Ireland”. By late afternoon the wind had picked up and we had a lovely sail passing inside Collough Rock and Splaugh Rock. We decided to head for Wexford as we had never been there by sea, and as we cleared Rosslare we happened to be close astern of a group of local yachts also bound for Wexford, and with the obvious benefit of local knowledge were taking a short cut through the outlying banks. With a rising tide, the temptation to follow could not be resisted and with some helpful guidance from Philip Scallan in Scallywag, we soon found ourselves in the main channel SE of Raven Point. From here the pilotage was easy and after following the local marker buoys placed midchannel, we eventually tied alongside the town quay. Yachts are welcome here, with the town and all facilities close by. The new board walk recently opened here is wonderful and a basin exists which could easily accommodate a small marina. If this development takes place Wexford could become a popular stopover. We visited the sailing club and were welcomed by Commodore Tom Duggan.

We were away early next morning to catch the northgoing stream. It took nearly 2 hours to clear the Wexford channel and then we headed north in flat calm and sunshine. After Cahore Point the wind came up and gradually freshened all day. Off Wicklow Head *Lady Kate* was running before the wind with jib poled out and surging on the following sea at speeds of up to 11 knots. This continued as far as Dun Laoghaire, but as we passed through Dalkey Sound the concentration shifted to the property along the seafront and an unplanned gybe carried away the mainsheet shackle from its track. At the Royal Irish, – another great welcome, Terry Johnson was here to greet us, a few drinks in the evening sun and life was good.

A different plan was made next morning. Mary and Emma took the train to Dublin for the day and would meet *Lady Kate* that evening in Malahide. After repairing the damage to the mainsheet system Brendan and I headed across the bay under furlled jib in an awful squall which caused mayhem to the junior sailing fleet. We had a brief stop at Howth to pick up

some ice and then continued on to Malahide and after picking out the safewater mark followed the buoyed channel to a marina berth. It blew a gale that evening and all next day so we became tourists in Dublin. I also revisited the Grand Hotel in Malahide – my previous visit was in 1959 for victory celebrations when Waterford last won an All Ireland Hurling final.

On Thursday the wind was still whistling in the rigging but the forecast was for it to moderate and as “Men and ships rot in port” so we were off. I had a short passage in mind just for a change of scene perhaps Balbriggan or Drogheda. Off the fairway buoy we set a reefed jib only and turned north, soon the wind dropped and allowed us to set a reefed main, shortly after it was SW 4/5 and we powered along in fine sunshine. The Mourne Mountains came up out of the sea and by evening Drogheda and southern ports were forgotten, *Lady Kate* was bound for Ardglass and by 20.30 hours we were alongside by the marina.

I got away to sea early next morning but after a short period of calm the wind headed us blowing about 4 out of the north. Wanting to make progress we motor sailed past Burial Island (Ireland’s most easterly point) By the time we got the Copeland Islands the tide was also against us – *Lady Kate* headed west for Bangor where we spent the night.

Another early start – 0500 hours to catch the northgoing stream – but this was not going to be a good day. The wind was fresh NNW and after we cleared Black Head we lost the little lee we had. By keeping close along the shore north of Larne we had some shelter but not much. We headed for Carnlough. I had been told of a new marina recently opened in Carnlough. There was no marina in Carnlough, it is in the old Quarry works at Glenarm 2 miles SE. We were advised to overnight in Glenarm rather than Carnlough but when we made to shift berth we changed our minds – the tidal stream had changed too – we



Donal Walsh at the helm of *Lady Kate* of the east coast.

Photo Emma Walsh



Brendan Walsh at Bloody Foreland.

Photo Donal Walsh

were bound north again! The wind was still fresh out of the north and it was cold, even with the tide it took 4 hours to reach Ballycastle. We were close up as we rounded Fair Head and managed to avoid the worst of the Rathlin Sound overfalls. The headland was majestic as it towered over us in the evening sun. I was delighted with Ballycastle, a lovely clean marina run most efficiently by a wonderful helpful friendly young man. Here also was Capella bound for Scotland with Dan and Maura McAuley, also John Stevenson and Robert aboard. John and I slipped away for a few Sunday morning beers only to find the Harbour Bar alive with a hell of a session of music. Back on board the forecast warned of a coming depression with lots of wind and on the spur of the moment we decided to head for Portrush before it struck. It was calm and the Antrim coast was at its best in the crisp evening sunshine and we carried the west going stream under us arriving in Portrush before nightfall. We tied outside a Dutchman on the pontoon, to be greeted with "Ve are leafing at six o'clock in the Morning" "That's ok we will get up and let you out" He was bound west and I then explained that I intended to go west also but would wait until 0800 when the tide changed. He then told me I was a lazy Irishman and that the correct time to leave was six o'clock.

The forecast still promised a severe gale but I still figured we could get west of Malin before it hit. At 0600 hours there was no sign of life aboard the Dutchman, the forecast came at 0700 hours "A deep depression will move slowly across the SW approaches, through the English Channel, and Low Countries..." Malin's allocation was for SE 5/7 increasing to severe gale later. Our Dutch friend had decided to stay put. When I announced we were away to sea he told me I was crazy. Now I was both lazy and crazy! There was hardly a puff of wind, it was a gorgeous day and we were well west of Malin before it started to freshen. We opted for Mulroy Bay, partly because we had not been there before and also we could explore different anchorages there if it stayed fresh for a few days. Although there was no large scale chart of Mulroy Bay aboard *Lady Kate* we did not want to sit out a southeaster in Fanny Bay. I enjoy a pilotage challenge and now this was it. It was difficult to identify the points, rocks, and islands referred to in the ICC directions without a proper chart, there were however sufficient clues – "grass covered rock, conifer covered island, rock with bent perch," – also onboard were some old ICC annuals and other members accounts of their visits here which were a great help. I was all but beaten at the very end as I could not identify which of the last remaining islands to be passed was Hewitson's Island. Kevin Dwyer's excellent photograph of Milford Quay from south shows clearly the foul sounds between the islands. We had cracked it and soon were anchored snugly off the old mill quay.

On reflection it might be time to revise some of the instructions in the directions, the beacons are hard to identify, – pity somebody doesn't give them a splash of paint, – also now there are many fish farms, the transit of the Third Narrows could be better described, the mill at Milford at the head of navigation is a dangerous structure, as is its jetty – do not go alongside, anchor off and land just north of it by dinghy. Despite all that it was a wonderful anchorage, and here we sat out the gale which by now had finally caught up with us. Within minutes of anchoring the heavens opened and rain poured down. Crazy and lazy Irishman! How easily we could have missed this great day.

It was blowing stink next morning. We went ashore to explore, we met Donal O'Flynn owner of locally based yacht *Quoile Spirit*. He kindly offered us the use of his mooring and gave great advice on the pilotage. We visited Rathmullen, found the house where my grandfather was raised, and in the local graveyard the grave of a Captain Pakenham lost off the ship *Saldanha* with his entire crew numbering nearly 300 in 1811. John Kelly a lovely man, with a mine of information, who runs a local taxi brought us back to the boat. I learned of the mill, a huge business in its heyday, employing over 100 people and have since discovered that wheat was shipped here from Dungarvan aboard Moloney's of Dungarvan steamship *The Lady Belle*. Along the way I bought an ordinance survey map of Mulroy Bay which had all the placenames and would make our exit simpler. I was outdone, on the floor of the inflatable was a sealed plastic bottle with photocopies of the local large scale chart compliments of Donal O'Flynn who we met that morning.

Next day the wind was still fresh but had gone round to the north, the forecast was for NW to N 4/6. We caught the morning tide and headed out of Broadwater to Fanny's Bay where we anchored at 0930 hours. Armed with all our newly acquired pilotage information this transiting of the Narrows was simple. Ashore at Meevagh we rambled over the hill via country lanes to Downings where we saw a few yachts at anchor, but all appeared to be more exposed to the prevailing conditions than *Lady Kate* back in Fanny's Bay. We remained at anchor in Fanny's Bay and hoped by morning that the wind would have dropped sufficiently to allow us to continue.

The best time for departure was 0730 hours to catch the west going stream, by then we would have got the forecast also. It spoke of a slackening N to NW wind and I decided to leave, only then did I remember the bar at the mouth of the bay. We had a falling tide and the strong onshore wind had thrown up a really huge swell. I figured we had just enough water left to get out and decided to have a go. The wind was still very fresh out of the north and the areas of broken water made the deeper water easier to identify. We had to motor until we were well north of Melmore Head as there was no possibility of beating in the narrow entrance. This is really a dangerous place with an onshore wind and swell over an ebb tide and I imagine it would be even harder to enter in these conditions as the broken water would not be as obvious. It seemed to take forever to get enough searoom to lay off west. Under a reefed main and jib we passed inside Tory and were abeam of Bloody Foreland by 1300hours. This was our third corner of Ireland but we still had not passed the halfway mark on our journey. I was looking forward to the pilotage in the sounds inside the islands between Foreland and Burtonport. This was not to be, it was still too fresh and we sailed a less adventurous route outside everything, leaving Owey island to port before entering Aran Sound where we altered for Burtonport to get some supplies. As we had never been to Aranmore we made the short hop across later that evening and picked up a visitors mooring in Aran Roads, south of Calf Island for the night.

It was Friday 20th July and it was hard to believe the 0700



Mary Walsh

Photo Donal Walsh

forecast, which gave SE moderate to fresh becoming SW 4/6 with rain, the winds shifts seem to be related to *Lady Kate's* passage plan. The crew would have mutinied if I even suggested going to sea, and determined to have a lazy day. I could have none of this – I went ashore and spent an enjoyable day walking the island and ended up in Jerry Early's pub in good company. We cleared the South Sound of Aran by 1000 hours next morning and were able to lay a course for Broadhaven Bay. Later the wind came more on the nose and we laid off, but with 36 miles left it became a tiresome passage and we rolled up our jib and motored. I thought of spending the night in Portacloy but when we had a look, there was an uncomfortable swell running and we carried on to Ballyglass. The visitors moorings here have pick up buoys attached which eliminates the usual acrobatics associated with trying to get a line on them.

We were able to sail off the mooring, but the wind was watching us and not going to give any quarter. By Erris head he had us again bang on the nose! We took the passage inside the Inniskeas and suffered until we cleared Achill Head. When we could lay off for Achill Sound, the sun tried to shine but it was a dismal effort. I felt the instructions in the directions made the



Darren Connolly, John Connolly and Michael Daly off Galley Head.

Photo Donal Walsh

entry sound a lot more difficult than it actually was, there is a strong current but it is not unmanageable. We anchored off Kildavnet Castle but could have done better close up to the shore, a little more to the south. There is no diesel here but John Johnson a member of the lifeboat crew, who also runs the charter angling boat *Lady Clare* very kindly let me have some of his fuel. There is water on the quay (bring a vice grip) and at the lifeboat house, but the pub is a thirsty two mile walk. We were fortunate and got a lift to Achill Sound where we picked up some supplies. While we were there we saw the bridge open to allow a small yacht to transit. It was interesting to watch the reactions of those motorists, most outward bound for Dublin, caught in the hold up on a busy Sunday afternoon. "How could they even dare open the bridge and disrupt traffic" I had to contribute and pointed out that the water and right to navigation were there first and the bridge was the offending article. That really stirred things up. Apparently the bridge can open a few times a week or sometimes not open for months depending on demand, 24 hours notice is required. The water main has to be disconnected before the bridge can swing, and because of the gearing mechanism it must be hand operated. The council workers enjoyed their pints afterwards – Sunday openings paid better than weekdays. All in all it was heartening to see this bridge being opened. If only the power cables could be carried underwater, which would not be a fantastically expensive job, it would really open up a new route for sailors.

On Monday we awoke to torrential rain, it rained and rained and rained all day long, it was so miserable that the crew refused to budge and spent the day reading. I gave in and joined them. Another day lost. On Tuesday there was a hell of a tide running against us as we left Achill, but it only lasted for a short distance. We passed east of Clare Island and went into the pier for a look, then south past Caher, Inishturk and Inshboffin Islands.

Friar Island Sound tempted us after which we left Cruagh Island to port before laying off for Clifden. The visitors moorings are a long way out and we chose to anchor closer inshore. Although it was low water we were able to get to the old town quay by inflatable, admittedly we had some difficulty and it wasn't worth it and I would not do it again. We left Clifden at 0900 hours to catch the tide at Slyne Head. It was bleak and miserable but remarkably the day changed south of Slyne, the sun shone and we left Eeragh Island to port and passed along the south shore of Inishmore, before taking Gregory Sound into Kilronan. Here we met my sister Máire in *Maratana* also bound round Ireland but in the opposite direction. Ashore later we were joined by our friend John Allen who works with one of the ferry companies. Next day we took a day off. Mary went ashore while I fixed up a new autopilot for Máire. This had its rewards and we were invited aboard her boat for dinner that evening.

We awoke to find the island covered in a dense fog, but were determined to leave anyhow, and I expected that it would clear when the sun got to work. Having cleared the harbour we took Gregory Sound but saw no land at all. Later the sun as expected cleared the fog and we motored south in very calm conditions. It really was a lovely day and we

were entertained by schools of porpoises all the way along – in fact I think there may even have been some dolphins as we crossed the Shannon Estuary. By 1900 hours we were in Smerwick Harbour secure to a visitors mooring buoy. We parted company next morning, Mary and Emma got a lift into Dingle, Brendan and I went by boat. Conditions were perfect and we spent most of the day exploring the Blaskets, getting close up to most of the islands. The Tearaght was majestic – we could have landed it was so calm, but I think a crew of at least four people is necessary to achieve this. We did land on Inishnabro but I was somewhat disappointed, having read several accounts of landings there, I thought it would be more exciting.

There was some pressure on us to return to Dungarvan and as Máire had left us her car which was in Dingle we decided to leave *Lady Kate* in Dingle for a few days. It was a mistake, the next few days were really fine, summer weather at its best and just our luck to miss out on it. Brendan and I headed south again on Friday morning, Mary in the car would meet us later that evening somewhere along the way. It was a lovely day, we passed along the Valentia shore with a beam wind and the sun shone.

I didn't want to go to Derrynane again, and to make a change intended to overnight in Ballinskelligs. As we rounded Horse Island three concrete structures were apparent. At first I was uncertain which was the pier, I now know this to be the southern one and as it was high water we could get alongside. Our options now were to dry alongside or anchor off north of Horse Island. I really wasn't happy with the conditions given the swell that was running into the bay – either way it would make for an uncomfortable night – so decided to move on again as far as Derrynane.

Leaving Derrynane next morning we took Dursey Sound, crossed Bantry Bay, and then left Mizen Head to port – our last corner of Ireland – before anchoring in Schull for the evening. By now I was looking for a mooring to leave *Lady Kate* for the coming week as I intended to return and join the ICC meet at Cape Clear on the coming Saturday. We had no luck in Schull and then tried Baltimore with the same result, – on reflection I should have left her in the inner harbour in Cape. Eventually we gave in and headed east again as far as Glandore, and leaving *Lady Kate* on a visitors mooring returned by road to Dungarvan.

The following weekend I was joined by friends Michael Daly, John Connolly and his son Darren for the final leg home to Dungarvan. There was a fresh SW with rain and we ran before it with our jib poled out achieving some spectacular speeds as we surged off the swells. East of Old Head the wind dropped off and by Cork Buoy it was really light so we motored to Ballycotton. From here to Dungarvan is familiar cruising ground, and today we had a following wind which gave us an average speed of 5.9 knots, a great sail to finish our cruise. As we picked up our mooring in Dungarvan I noted our total distance run was 899.5 miles.

Conclusions

Last time we went round Ireland I took 27 days and felt a longer time was necessary. This time round it took 27 days and now I know it definitely is not long enough.



Emma Walsh off Fair Head.

Photo Donal Walsh

I wanted to visit as many new places as possible and this dictated where we overnighted.

We added Wexford, Dun Laoghaire, Malahide, Ballycastle, Mulroy Bay, Aranmore, Achill Sound, and Smerwick to our list of ports visited, with whistle stops at Howth, Carnlough, Clare Island and Ballinskelligs.

Other well known ports were Ardglass, Portrush, Burtonport, Ballyglass, Kilronan, Dingle, Schull, Baltimore, Glandore, and Ballycotton.

Brendan tells me we called at 35 pubs!

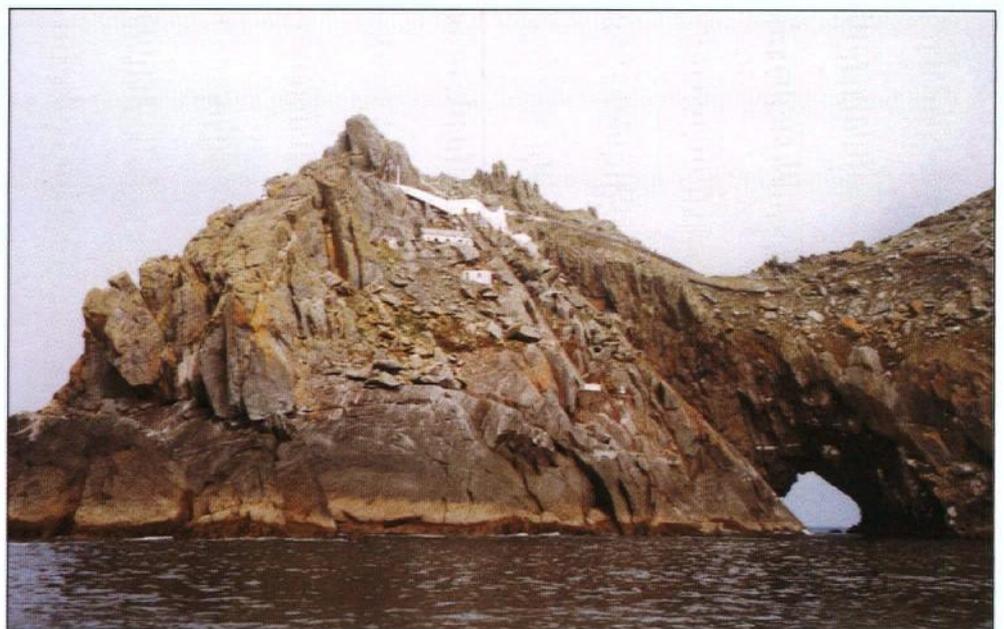
The weather was mixed and spoiled things a bit for us, we were held up by strong winds in Malahide, Mulroy, Aranmore, and Achill.

For the first time we did not have anyone suffer from seasickness, which was always a bit of a problem when the children were younger.

Lady Kate performed well and apart from a broken shackle on the mainsheet we had no gear failures.

Interestingly despite being bilge keel we did not dry out anywhere along the way.

At home I attempted to raise the subject of next year's cruise.....



Tearacht, Blasket Islands.

Photo Donal Walsh

Northwest Passage

Paddy Barry



THE FAULKNER CUP
THE CLUBS PREMIER AWARD

Jarlath Cunnane (OCC) was Skipper, I was Leader, the distinction being undefined, but broadly that I dealt with overall management / navigation and that Jarlath built and ran the boat. It was in essence a partnership, in conjunction with some good friends.

Insofar as our interests extended shoreward, well beyond the highwater mark, it might be termed an expedition. While this was primarily to be adventure sailing, some climbing was intended. We would be taking a strong interest also in nineteenth century Arctic explorers, particularly the Irish ones.

We first discussed this over 'pints', as one does! Jarlath, myself and climber Frank Nugent, with our Antarctic Shackleton re-run now 3 years behind us, considered that it was time for another worthwhile outing, the Northwest Passage. Mike Brogan and Gearoid Ó Riain (both ICC) and other old shipmates joined. Twelve boats have made this, since Raold Amundson did it first in 1903-6.

Jarlath's boat *Lir*, at 34 feet, being too small, and my gaff rigged Galway Hooker *Saint Patrick* being unsuitable, we decided to build an aluminium vessel, purpose designed for polar expeditions. We received the plans of the *Nadja 15* (metre) from her French designer Gilbert Carroff in February 2000.

Building of the inverted aluminium hull began on Easter 2000 in Jarlath's Mayo workshop. Aluminium was chosen in preference to steel for ease of building, durability and low maintenance. The heaviest of the plates, the 12 mm, 1.25 metre wide keel, was lifted into place by the local football team one evening after training! *Northabout* as she would be called (my wife Mary's inspiration) was pulled out from the shed and

turned in September 2000, pulled back in, her hull finished and sprayed with 75 mm of insulation in February 2001. Jarlath's formidable boat building skill was supplemented by the help of good friends in Mayo and Dublin both. I kept material and fittings 'flowing' to the workshop.

Passage preparation, which I did, was the collecting of charts, pilots, weather and ice information, together with establishing good communications with the various Canadian authorities (Customs, Ice-Service and Coast Guard in particular) and with commercial 'ice-men' mariners.

Northabout was launched on June 1st at Westport Quay and motored round to the quieter Rosmoney Pier for rigging, final fitting and loading of stores.

Midsummer bonfires blazed on the coast of Achill on Saint Johns Eve, June 23rd, as we sailed for Greenland. Aboard were Gearoid Ó Riain and myself, in for the long-haul, with Pat Redmond, Harry Connolly, Eoin Coyle and my son Cathal de Barra for the first month. Aboard were stores for eight months, being planned for two to three arctic seasons. Diesel was 1,800 litres to run her 90 HP Perkins and Dickenson heating/cooking stove. We were chartered through to Vancouver.

The departure date was dictated by backwards arithmetic from the normal time of ice break-up in Melville Bay, West Greenland, this usually being the last week of July. Therefore some finishing work remained; sea-trials would take place on the passage to Cape Farewell, 1,300 miles to the westnorthwest.

Low pressure to the south gave us the delightful benefit of northeasterly wind. On Sunday July 1st, 7½ days out, we sighted the mountainous coast northeast of Cape Farewell, magnificently stark, black mountains streaked with snow and ice. The 'storis' sea-ice current, driven down Greenland's east coast and round up the west coast, prevented our making a landing until Paamuit, 250 miles further on, 3 days later on Wednesday July 4th.

During those 3 days we passed along outside the ice-edge and sometimes unwittingly inside it in unsuccessful attempts to make into shore. On Tuesday it blew 40 knots from the east. We attempted to get to shelter in Arsurk Fjord, but making little headway, stood to sea and hove to. We now were clear of the 'storis', but still the icebergs, at about 2 mile centres, seemed all too close.

Well fendered we tied up in the busy fishing harbour. The option of anchoring up the bay, as suggested in the RCC directions,



Northabout departs Westport.

Photo: Shay Fennelly



Atlantic/South Greenland crew. Gearoid Ó Riain, Pat Redmond, Paddy, Eoin Coyle, Harry Connolly and Cathal de Barra

is no more as the bridge to the new airport closes it off. We made our number with the Politii, who here, as in nearly all small communities, let us use their showers and gave us the 'low-down' on the local scene. We stretched our legs in the surrounding hills, and undid the good in Petersons Bar.

Over the next 2½ weeks we cruised northward 500 miles. Nuuk the capital of Greenland has a good general purpose harbour, comfortable for yachts. We tied next a friendly La Rochelle yacht, 10 years out with skipper Michelle. Sailing up the fiord to Sadelo Island three Atlantic Humpbacks with their white tails practically splashed us. Sermitsioq mountain gave us a good climb, but denied us her submit. At Manitsioq, a lovely harbour, we had some beer in the Ajo Bar and climbed Mountain '1325' on Sermilinguaq Fiord. Harry summited. Greenland is putting a big effort into tourism, one by-product being many good hiking maps. We called to Sisimuit, where Michelle had wintered her boat, and then sailed onto Qeqertassuaq (formerly Godhavn) on Disko Island. Our hero McClintock, on a Franklin search in the 1850's, wrote "I do not know a more enticing spot in Greenland for a weeks shooting, fishing and yachting than Diskofjord". We hiked.

Sailing, east to Illulisat we met the many ice-bergs calved here and bergy water. There we crew-changed. Our 'Delivery Cruise', as Pat Redmond had termed it, was as fine a mixture of sailing, climbing, music and craic as a body could stand. Jarlath, Terry Irvine, Frank, John Murray (filmmaker), Kevin Cronin and Mike Brogan (doctor and fiddleplayer) shipped on board. With Gearoid and myself, we were now eight. On Sunday July 22nd we left for Upernavik and there, a couple of days later, we took stock.

Sea-ice in Lancaster Sound at the entrance to the NWP, normally cleared by Mid July, was still very much not clear. But Melville Bay was opening ahead of its normal time. We got Canadian Ice Service charts daily, better than the Danish which are twice weekly. In Upernivik we happily met with Bob Shepton (OCC) and his climbing crew on *Dodo's Delight*. Their principal objective was a traverse of Bylot Island, following in and around Tilmans many footsteps. Through the wonders of on-board email we learned of their success.

Northwards we went along Greenlands increasingly icy coast. At Tugsaq Island we visited the hunter Peter Aronson, he who had been a couple of weeks aboard *Saint Patrick* when in these waters in 1993. We passed Kap Shackleton, called to

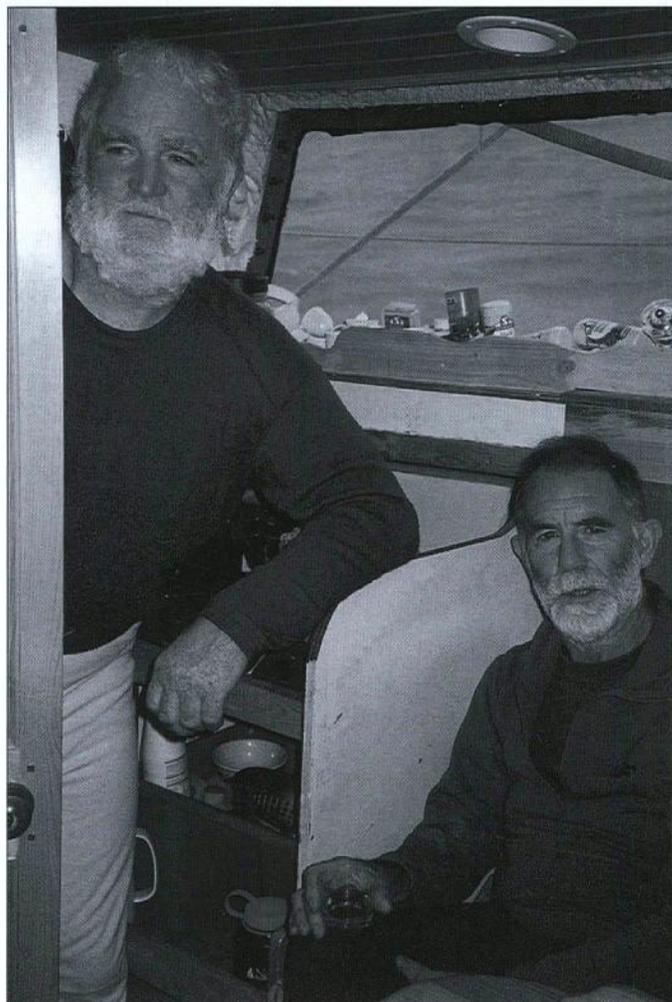
Kraulshavn and thence to Kuvlordsuaq. There Frank and I climbed The Devils Thumb, a sharp rock of a mountain so called by the whalers of old. Mike, with his fiddle, entertained the villagers.

It was now Sunday July 29th. Melville Bay before us was virtually clear of ice. Incredible, after all the stories and indeed our own 1993 experience, when several weeks later in the season ice had stopped us.

A day later we were off Cape York, but not before the excitement of spotting our first ice-bear, a young one, first seen asleep on a floe. And a more unlikely sighting was *Dodo's Delight*. We shouted greetings underway and parted, she for Bylot, we for Thule. The ice was still clogging Lancaster Sound, uncharacteristically late. Rather than sail over and just be looking at it, we decided to go the

'scenic' route, and so detoured north. At Thule Air Base the welcome was frigid. Happily at Qaanaaq, 75 miles onward the opposite was so.

This village is where the Innuits displaced by the Americans were sent to. It has no natural harbour, the only village in Greenland to be so located. But the anchorage is good. Beware



Jarlath and Paddy drink a tot at Point Barrow.

the half-tide breakwater sheltering the local small boats! This peninsula is where Peary based himself in the 1890's while serving his polar apprenticeship. Of narwhal whales, said to be abundant here in Inglefield Fiord, we saw none, try as we did, even going 20 miles up the fiord for a 'guaranteed' sighting. Here also we met the Greenpeace vessel 'Arctic Sunrise', and her crew, a most varied and interesting lot. They said the same about us!

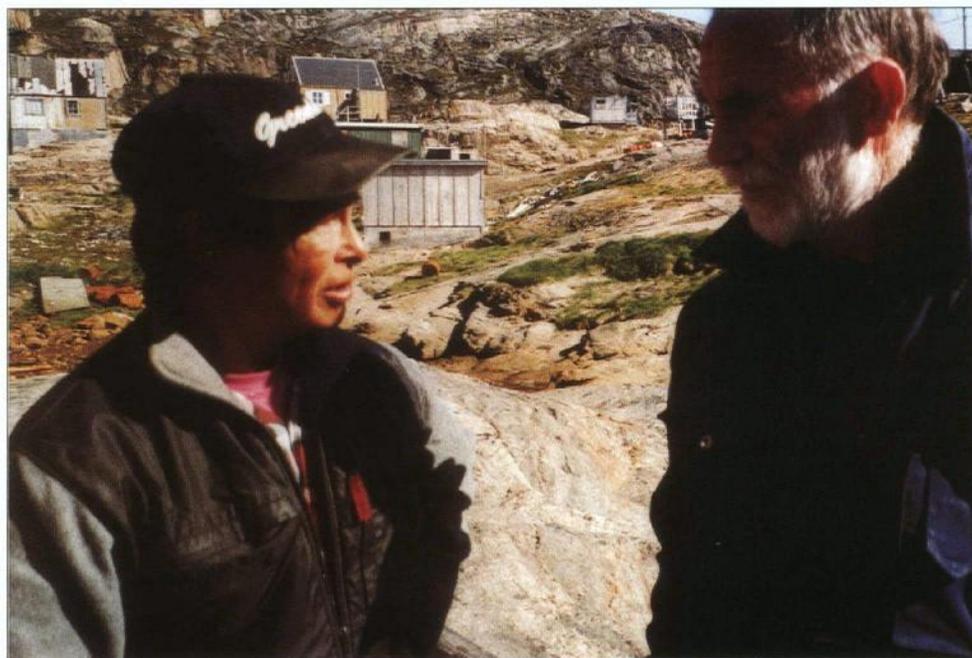
Meanwhile, ice had improved in Lancaster Sound and more improbably, Peel Sound, beyond it, was already showing some clear water. Leaving Smith Sound to our starboard we left Greenland waters behind and raised the Maple Leaf, over the flag of its new province Nunavut. The fog hid all. The compass had gone from lazy to useless. GPS worked a charm, as did the radar and sounder. Coburg Island, off the entrance to Jones Sound has a shallow bay on its south which gave us a good anchorage, ice-free, once we got in. Our shore-party came across a disused hut, more scientific than hunting, to judge by the discards.

Going southward, by the east shore of Devon Island, few of our 4 hour watches passed without meeting and working through bands of 3/10 - 4/10 ice, generally 1/2 mile wide or so. These never seen so daunting when open water is visible beyond. On Tuesday, August 7th 04:00 UT we rounded Cape Sherard and into Lancaster Sound. The Northwest Passage proper was begun. Conditions were perfect. Clear visibility, bergs only, flat sea and light northerly breeze, cold. Our spirits were high. We stood southwesterly to clear the pack-ice reported heavy on the northern side of Lancaster. Sure enough



Happy gang on Herschel. L to r: Frank, Kevin, John, Jarlath, Paddy, Mike, Gearoid.

its hard white edge could be seen, with the mountains of Devon Island behind. We met an icebreaker later that day; or maybe it was night, with no darkness and our ships clock set to UT, time was measured in watches. She had come east out of Resolute. Her ice-officer advised that she had come though 7/10 ice, rather than the 9/10 charted, but that there was a band of first-year 7/10 ahead of us. She gave the lat/long at which she had entered and left it. We tried, by going south, to avoid it. Fog descended, and we found ourselves in it. And thus we lay silent and still for 24 hours, until a slight lift in the fog and opening of a lead coincided, and off we were again, patience rewarded and only lightly reprimanded for allowing ourselves to be beset.



The hunter Peter Aronson with Paddy on Tugsaq Island, near Upernavik, Greenland. We had last met in 1993.

On the northwestern end of Prince Regent Inlet lies Port Leopold, a bay where our Irish forbears Captain Kennedy and McClintock had overwintered. Ice prevented our entry but 10 miles onward we anchored in Rodd Bay, ice-free, and hiked back, some of us. Our reward was to see a school of white beluga whales disporting themselves inside the ice of Port Leopold. There also in a cairn was a bottled note explaining that the lat/long on a nearby plaque, erected by some worthies in 1974, had had to have its figures changed from the inscribed '73 degrees west/93 degrees north!

More interesting was the stone inscribed 'E.I. 1849'. This was not referred to in any literature we knew, and most surely was for James Clark Ross's vessels *Enterprise* and *Investigator* who wintered here in 1848/49, while in search of Franklin.

Beechey Island, with its



Mike Brogan – “a one hat day”

Franklin remains, was, unfortunately, inaccessible to us because of ice, as was Resolute. Peel Sound awaited, largely ice-free, marvellous. Peel Sound is a great icy door on the NWP, normally closed until the end of August, if it opens at all. Joyous, with all sail set, a ‘one-hat-day’ we ran towards it and then turned southwards. Southwards to the shallow, sometimes narrow channels, which had for so many years hidden the elusive passage. In by the western end of Bellot Strait, reminder of that plucky French Officer, and then we landed on Cape Victoria. A caribou tossed his head and took off, Terry with his shotgun behind, too far. Empty shells of the modern hunters lay among the stone rings of the old hunters summer tents. Surprisingly there were no cairns. We built one and left a message within in a whiskey bottle, empty of course. The chart shows shallow water south of Cape Victoria, depth unspecified. Even a mile offshore we had to lift our centreboard to get to deeper water.

James Ross Strait is shallow and narrow. We wound our way

through in near perfect conditions, but were surprised not to find an island shown as ‘PA’ on our chart. It sure was approximate, about ½ mile out of place, just abeam when we spotted it, a bunch of rocky fangs barely peeping over the water. With relief we continued and next day approached Gjoahaven. Now we had nights, about 4 hours. In the last few days we had come south from 74 degrees to 68 degrees. This, together with the coming of Autumn, had taken us out of the days of 24 hour day light. Approaching the village, following the route described by Amundson, we touched bottom, raised centreboard and continued to anchor in the sheltered small inner bay. Ashore an RCMP police pickup followed our progress. It was about midday on Sunday, 8 days after leaving our last habitation, Qaanaaq, Greenland.

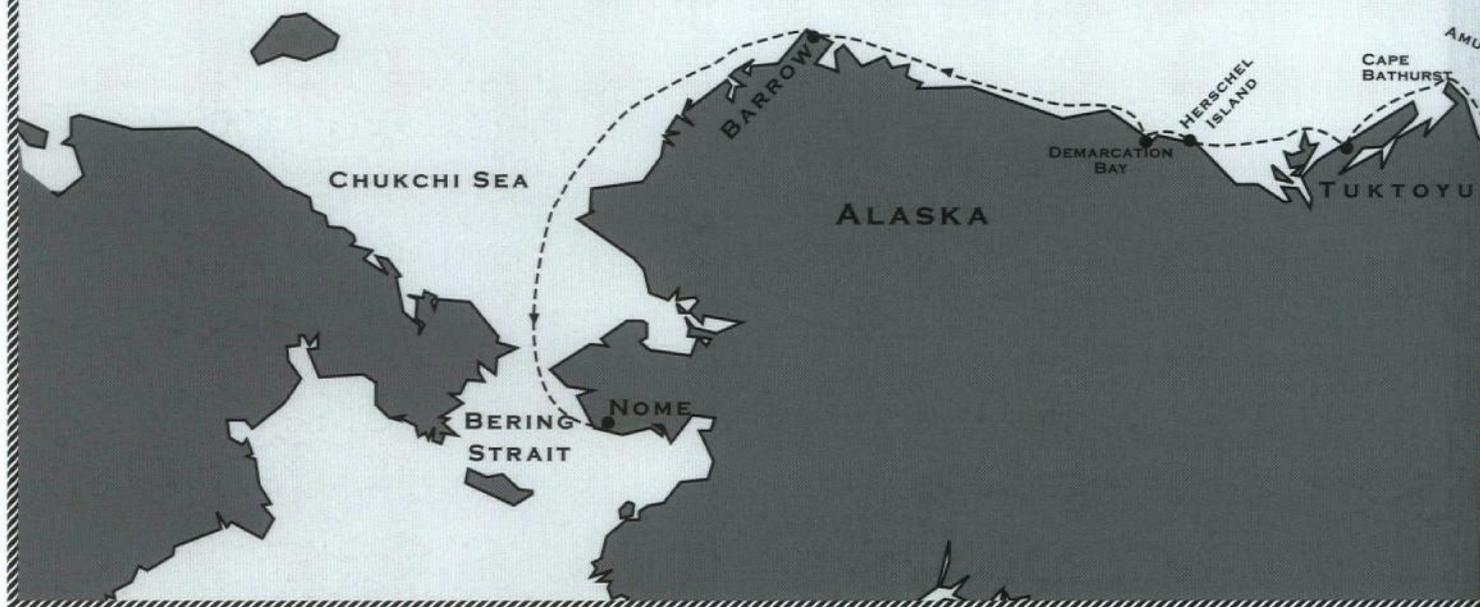
Months of preparation and communication had gone into details of the Immigration and Customs aspects of our entry into Canada. Even the spectre of Foot and Mouth Disease had been raised. These problems melted away in the welcome by RCMP constables Todd and Christine; it was first names all the way from the very beginning. They brought us up for showers, gave us the run of the laundry machines, stamped our passports and told us that in 2 hours time there would be a ‘Drum Dance’ in the hall as a welcome from the Elders in the village. We responded with a medley, our ‘act’ getting almost polished. Even Kevin and Gearoid have found voices they never knew, Jarlath was Musical Director.

Gjoa Haven was dusty, scattered, with 1,000 inhabitants. It has a large school, sports complex/pool, 2 shops and ATV’s (All Terrain Vehicles, little 4 wheel quads), like mosquitoes buzzing. Mammys use them shopping and picking the kids up from school, teenagers ‘cruise’ in them, hunters go to the ‘land’ in them. We met Paulus Amundson! A grandson of the man himself. A likeness plain to be seen. Driven around in the RCMP pickup, we saw the village and out to the edge of the ‘land’ – a wilderness where that hardy race of netsiliks managed to thrive on abundance of beluga, caribou, seal and bear, living in igloos by winter and travelling in summer with tents.

Dogs and Skidoos now are in equal numbers – the new heavy sledges being pulled by high HP skidoos. The hunting here is still more real than ‘hobby/weekend’. M.V. *Turmoil* 1,600 H.P. arrived. We had met briefly back in Qaanaaq, same



Terry at Qaanaaq.



NWP intent, but different style – I think I mentioned the seaplane? With his 20 crew and guests on board and eight of us, her saloon was barely crowded.

They left Gjoa Haven an hour ahead of us. At their 300 miles a day, we were unlikely to see them again, but with ice now blocking the way at Cape Parry, 500 miles ahead, who knows?

We landed at Todd Island, 20 miles westward, and saw remains, thought to be those of Franklin's men trying to escape southwards. Through twisting Simpson Strait we had the benefit of the many beacon transits, before the fog closed in. A NW head wind blew in from Queen Maud Gulf. It rose to gale. We dodged shorewards to anchor in shelter, 'feeling' our way in, the GPS and chart being about 1 mile adrift. Next day we closed. Jenny Lind Island, northward of our course, for shelter as we passed. DEW (Distant Early Warning) Stations stood like lighthouses every 100 miles or so, empty and automated now. Seas were ice-free.

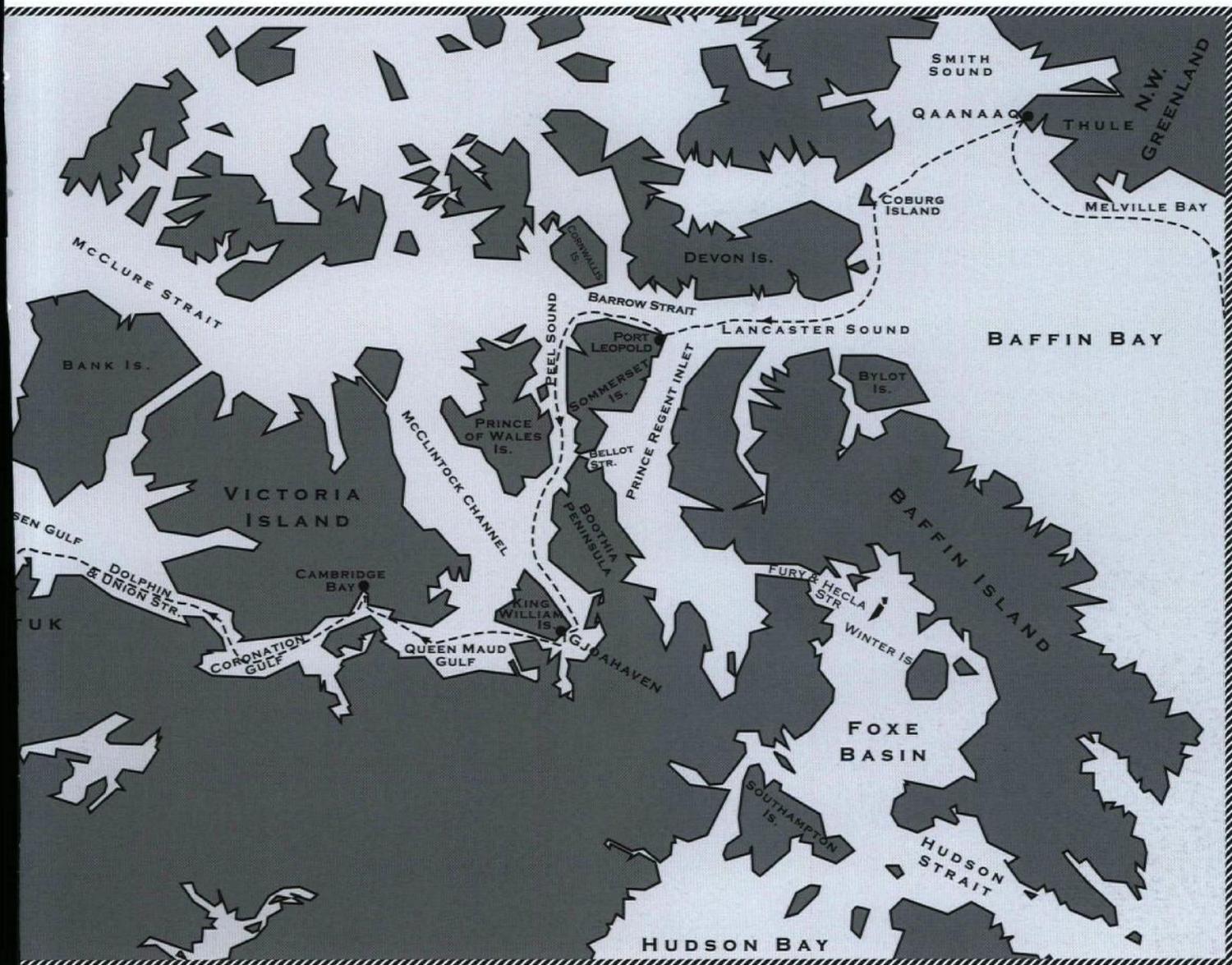
On August 3rd we entered Cambridge Bay, population about 1,500. It is more of a town than a village. It's a Government centre, busy and brash; well, relative to the last month or two it seemed so. Notwithstanding, we met some great people, individuals all. The town is a 'dry' one, but not at weekends. Our intended 1 day stop was changed by the weather. It blew up. We had to leave the jetty and go to anchor 3 miles up the

west bay, then lay out a second anchor, our brute of a 90 lb fisherman, and another 60 metres of chain as the NW wind blew some more.

The Arctic char were running well and helpings were generous. The weather was dark and cold with a wind that would cut you. It didn't snow but it could have, halcyon days of Greenland long gone. Impatient to be off, we left on Sunday August 19th, bound for Tuktoyuktuk, 650 miles westward. The first two days went well, going through Coronation Gulf, Dolphin and Union Strait, as though turning the place-names of exploration history. Then in Amundson Gulf we met ice again, more or less where the current ice-charts were showing it. Progress slowed as we banged and shimmied through it.

We could now get through about 5/10, depending on ice-type, old hard hummocked multi-year or soft (ish) 1 year, small floes easily, broken or pushed, or big immovable ones. '5/10 ice' description could give the impression that there is 50% water, and there is, but its not evenly spread. In the 5/10 or even 4/10 there can be denser bands and these are the problem.

We detoured about 60 miles south into Franklin Bay to get round some 6/10 to 9/10 ice. The Coast Guard Icebreaker *Henry Larsen* had passed the direct route only about 16 hours earlier and told us on the radio that they met only 1/10. Ice, like everything in the Arctic, does not stand still. We rounded Cape



Bathurst and had a clear run to Tuk, but with the north coast of Alaska on our minds.

The Canadian Ice Service were now saying 'Below normal temperatures are forecast for the Beaufort Sea for the second half of August. Northeasterly to easterly winds are forecast to develop during the fourth week of August along the Beaufort Sea from west of Herschel Island to Point Barrow. A narrow open drift route may form for only a few days, but is expected to close shortly afterwards'.

Tuk, is near the mouth of the Mackenzie River, up through which come the supply barges. In summer it is a busy commercial harbour. There we took on water and diesel. Gearoid installed our back-up radio actually). Our new Raytheon Auto pilot had long been out of action. Tuk would be good for boat lift out, were theft not a problem. Inuvik, 100 miles up the river, is said to be better. (We were on the one hand optimistic and pushy about getting through, while at the same time watching our back).

Wing and wing we sailed across Mackenzie Bay, 120 miles, to close Herschel Island, island of whalers, in darkness. Radar, sounder and GPS took us in to anchor. Next morning two Inuvik Park Rangers gave us the tour. They mind the whaling artefacts and the wild life. All too quickly we left, to the seaward of Herschel, practically ice-free. Mike stood on deck, binoculars in his hand feeling 'caribou about' in his bones.

What he saw, we all did, was a magnificent male ice-bear, first near us at a floe and then ashore and up a cliff, spread out four paws, fast. And I would have felt safe on top of that cliff! From Herschel to Point Barrow was 400 miles. The ice-charts showed a 50 miles band along by Demarcation Point (the Canadian - Alaskan Border), then an ice-free band beyond. The east wind should be pushing the ice out from the shore, if the solid pack-ice would leave room for it to move. Blown ice moves at 30 degrees clockwise to the wind, in the northern hemisphere, the Coriolis effect, the same one that turns the bath water exiting, the way it does.

We pushed on in mostly clear water with all speed, engine, sails and sometimes both, mostly in light winds, all the time with fog greater or lesser. At longitude 141 degrees, the Canadian border with Alaska, we had a little flag changing ceremony, taking down the red maple-leaf and raising the stars and stripes. Immediately afterwards, we ran into serious ice. In the twisting, turning and backtracking to get out of it, Kevin reckoned that we had the wrong flag up many times over!

About 10 pm local time, dark coming on, ice now all about but loose, and fog down to about 200 yards, we were going in to anchor in Demarcation Bay. Its eastern entrance was clogged with ice, impassable. Its wider western entrance, a mile further on, was clear, as far as we could see. Then the engine gave a queer rattling noise - Oh Lord! With headsail drawing lightly,

we ghosted, in fog, into the bay, now dark and ran our anchor out. And dark were our thoughts as Frank and Gearoid set to work on the gearbox. Thoughts of having to lay-up the boat here for the winter, radio in a bush-plane, flying out with gearbox, bankruptcy! All flashed before my mind so quickly. Happily the lads had all to rights soon again and we slept soundly.

At dawn, 4 hours later, still in fog, we 'felt' our way out of the bay, our position not so clear because the chart is about ¼ mile out in this area. Our Log for most of that Tuesday tells of our struggle to get through ice. We tried to go along the shore, where it was lightest. There there was an ice-free strip of about 20 yards. But even with our centre-board up and us drawings only 4 feet, we still went aground again and again. In one instance the engine wouldn't refloat us. We were stuck. Using the dingy, we ran out an anchor and line back to one of our winches. With this winched bar taut, most of the crew in the dingy to lighten the boat and the engine going flat out, she pulled off. By nightfall we were going good-o, and kept going through the dark, there being just enough light to make out the floes. We weaved through them. The lands abeam of us here are rich in oil, caribou and controversy, not yet opened up to extraction. Bush may change that.

20 miles east of Prudoe, we took the 'lagoon route', 10 feet of water generally, and clear of ice. On the VHF radio we could hear the chat of the Prudoe oilfield. Workboat men, few words, laconic. We spoke to a few, unseen, and rattled on in freezing fog, with ice in our rigging.

Wednesday was better for us. We blasted on, happily through light ice only, but with the solid white line to our starboard never far away. Now we weaved through ice at 6 knots, which only weeks earlier would have had us slowing to a crawl.

The weather forecast for our area, Cape Lisburn to Cape Halkett, gave Small Craft Advisory, 25 knots, northeasterly, – great.

“09.10 Ice floes frequent. Reduced from yankee to staysail. Running rigging frozen.”

“10.40 Cold wind blowing. Light ice all over boats deck”

We rounded Point Barrow at 6 am on Thursday. The village of Barrow was 10 miles on. We had hoped to anchor off and breakfast ashore. However there was too much wind and surf on the shore to safely land in the dingy. We shook hands, drank a celebratory tot, raised twin headsails and were on our way.

Through all this, Kevin baked the bread daily. Frank, Mike and Gearoid fed us dinners, John rolled the camera and Jarlath oversaw all with equanimity. Brendan Minish, back in Mayo with friends unseen in Winlink, made possible our cyber-communication.

The wind backed northerly and blew 30 knots (most surely bringing in the pack to close the Alaska coast we had passed only yesterday). For three days we were pushed, roughly but effectively, 500 miles southwest through the Chuckchi Sea, through Bering Strait-in-the mist and, in lightened wind, we entered Nome Harbour, Alaska on Sunday September 2nd.

There, *Northabout* was lifted ashore for winter.

- Since Amundson, we were the 13th boat through the Passage.
- Website www.northabout.com may be of interest.
- *Northabout* email / Communications System is separately described by Jarlath.



Near journey's end, 'the halcyon days of Greenland long behind'.
From top: Kevin Cronin, John Murray, Frank Nugent.

Orkney revisited

Roy Waters

In the Summer of 2000 we had made "our best ever" cruise which took us across the North Sea to Northern Germany, Denmark and Sweden and included passages through the Gota and Trollhatte Canals. We had hoped to call at at least one Norwegian port on the way home but seriously bad weather in the Skaggerak prevented this. Southern Norway was therefore on the schedule for 2001 with the outward passage via Orkney and Shetland and the return via the Caledonian Canal. However various domestic commitments including the construction of a house in our front garden meant that we only had three weeks for a cruise in July but we should at least get as far as Shetland in this time.

Last year there were no less than eighteen people involved in our cruise at various times with a maximum of ten for three weeks in the Baltic and the canals there, but this year we only had the family crew of two ageing adults and two teenage boys. Geoffrey, who is now 17 is still keen enough to go sailing with ageing parents but unfortunately he suffers from Friedrich's Ataxia. He can only walk a few paces with difficulty and with something to hold on to and is otherwise wheelchair bound. However he can steer the boat and perform some basic navigation at the chart table, when he is so inclined, and also takes a great interest in the weather. *Sundowner* has a "workshop" on the opposite side of the engine to the galley with a large opening into the cockpit, and here the wheelchair is stowed when at sea. One of the many improvements I made the first winter we had *Sundowner* ashore at Bangor was to fit not just "granny bars" but a whole double railing on the foredeck, similar to what can be found on a pilot boat. Susie said this arrangement looked like a cattle pen but it is far less conspicuous than some of the gantry arrangements I have seen at the after end of other boats to carry aerials and other equipment. It gives a great sense of security when on the foredeck at sea and inside the "pen" we can securely stow fenders, sailbags and even the wheelchair in fine weather. Geoffrey can also get up the foredeck in good weather since he has something secure to hold on to. Robert, now 16, is a strong and able young man and well able to perform many tasks about the boat when he can be motivated to do so, but sometimes he just "turns off" and so is not reliable! He is our "masthead monkey".

Even with only a three week cruise, preparations took about a week with the necessary purchase, transportation and stowing of provisions etc. Preparing the house which includes hiding any silverware and putting all the house plants outside also takes

some time. However on Sunday 8 July the dog and the cat went to the local kennels for their "holiday" and two trips in the car got the crew and the final gear on board the boat. We spent the night aboard at Bangor and had Chinese carry out for supper. There was no rush to sail on Monday 9 and we did not depart until 1100 so as to carry the ebb tide up the North Channel. The weather was very unsettled and continued so but for this passage the wind was very light westerly, and mainsail plus genoa plus "iron topsail" plus favourable tide carried us north at about 8 knots. In the past we have frequently made Gigha our first port of call when bound north but this time we made our second visit to the new marina at Ballycastle, which meant that Geoffrey and his wheels were easy to get ashore. In fact for the whole of this cruise we never anchored once and only once picked up a mooring! Having arrived at 1650 the boys had a run ashore, Susie and I had showers and we all had home made perk stew and trimmings for supper.

Next day we made what was the longest passage of this cruise – 78 miles from Ballycastle to Oban. The weather forecasts were not encouraging with several lows lurking about but we had another day of mainly light airs, occasional showers and even a bit of sunshine late in the day. Departing Ballycastle at 0950 and maintaining our usual 7 plus knots under engine we carried favourable tide past and to the north of Rathlin Island and again favourable in the Sound of Luing. We set various sails but they contributed little to our progress. Craobh Haven was a possible port of call for the night but progress was so good that we pressed on to Oban, where we found a berth alongside another yacht at the pontoons at Kerrera at 2020. Robert was immediately ashore to discover that since our last visit here there was now a lounge in the end of one of the old boatsheds, complete with large screen colour television and a pool table. Therefore Geoffrey's wheels were unloaded on to the



On the pontoon at Corpach Reach, Caledonian Canal. Ben Nevis in the background.



In the crowded harbour at Kirkwell, Orkney.

pontoon and he and Robert immediately headed for this attraction. The gangway between the pontoons and the shore was a problem but they got there. This meant that some slippers were a little late but we did have home made meat loaf, potatoes and cal-rots – always excellent thanks to Susie's efforts in the week before departure.

Chicken Massage – very tasty!

Heavy rain and a strong westerly wind set in during the night and continued for most of the next day. I did get up to listen to the 0530 weather forecast, decided we were staying put for the day and returned to my comfortable bunk and sleeping bag! Shortly after this a Dutch boat arrived alongside us, having vacated a visitor mooring on the Oban side of the harbour due to the uncomfortable motion. The pontoons at Kerrera were by now quite crowded with “stormbound” yachts of various nationalities and I didn't notice any of them depart that day. The free ferry provided by Oban Yacht Services across to the town was in great demand and required the provision of a second boat since each of them can only carry twelve passengers. The boys spent much of the day in the television/ pool room ashore but went with me for a two hour visit to Oban in the afternoon. On Susie's insistence all the accessible bilges were opened up and thoroughly cleaned following which I hopefully cured a small leak in one of the diesel tank covers. Last year's problem with an annoying leak at the inner end of the stern tube had also reappeared but I could do little about this with the boat afloat. Regular pumping when motoring and plenty of grease otherwise kept the problem at bay and indeed if the boat had our last boat *Melandy's* very deep bilge it would have hardly been a problem at all. Before supper Robert and I managed to get Geoffrey into the shore toilets and got him showered. This operation can be an ordeal since he is not cooperative! Supper on board was M&S tinned Chicken Massage, with rice and tinned veg. – very tasty!

There was more heavy rain and a strong NW all night and there was little change by morning. Our ideas of making long daylight passages to get well north were fading and we did not leave Oban until 0930 on Thursday 12 July. We simply motored up the Sound of Mull into a fresh/strong headwind and found a vacant mooring off Tobermory at 13.15. It would not have been very pleasant off Ardnamurchan and up the Sound of Sleat. In fact this was the only occasion we picked up a mooring during this cruise and we never anchored once! Circumstances demand that we find alongside berths where access for the

wheelchair is possible. This was also the only occasion we used the dinghy. Robert went ashore for newspapers and milk and I went with him later to get carry out fish, chips, haggis and “flat” battered sausages for supper.

A considerable improvement next morning with wind down to force 3 and we were away by 10.00 after a quick trip ashore for the papers and morning rolls. The passage round Ardnamurchan and up the Sound of Sleat was very pleasant. We even had the headsail unrolled for a while although it didn't do much to help. Any rain that was about seemed to miss us. By the time we got to Kyle Rhea the tide was still against us but with our Perkins M90 engine that was not a problem. We found a berth on the new pontoon outside the Lochash Hotel and a very

welcoming harbour master – better still there was no charge! We found excellent showers in the nearby public amenity block and followed this with supper ashore in the hotel. The next morning, Saturday 14th we were away at 0900. Out under the Skye Bridge and away further north in light and cloudy conditions. We reached Lochinver where we found a berth at the new yacht pontoons behind the new breakwater. However there were no facilities, the local hotel was unattractive and the fishermen's mission was closed for the weekend. Indeed it would be fair to say that Lochinver was dead with hardly a fishing boat moored on the extensive quays. This was a big change from when we were here in *Melandy* 20 years ago! Corned beef hash and carrots went down very well for supper on board.

Sunday 15 brought light airs and fine weather with sunshine. We were up late but only motored the short distance north to Kinlochbervie where we were alongside a fish quay in company with two other yachts by 1500. The scenery on the way was the Highlands at their best but Robert preferred to sleep the whole way. Like Lochinver this place, another extensive fishing harbour, was dead with very few fishing boats evident and of course the fisherman's mission was closed. There was a yacht pontoon but this was cluttered up with small local boats. M&S chunky chicken, tinned peas and corn and potatoes made another excellent supper on board. Television reception was excellent and this was sufficient to keep the boys happy even with our small black and white receiver. Susie and I prefer to read books. She, being an arts graduate? is usually into heavy classical stuff while I, as a simple sailor, am happy with popular novels!

Monday saw Susie and I up at 0530 and after listening to the weather forecast we were underway at 0600 to cover the 75 miles to Stromness, Orkney. Sailing at this time we had favourable tide for rounding Cape Wrath and again for arrival at Stromness. With nothing more than light airs all day it was an easy passage under engine. Overcast to begin with the day ended bright and sunny. By late afternoon we had found a berth alongside a diving boat close to the ferry terminal in Stromness Harbour. There were quite a number of diving boats in evidence, mostly converted fishing boats and I discovered that the big attraction was all the First World War wreckage in nearby Scapa Flow. We managed to get Geoffrey plus wheelchair ashore right away and went off to look around this fascinating town. Some shops were still open and we obtained

the necessary fresh stores. We were last here twenty years ago in *Melandy*. Nearby on the quay was the Ferry Inn, which provided Susie with a shower and all of us with an excellent supper.

Tuesday 17 July and we had to be up in good time to let the diving boat inside us get away at 0900. We shifted over to the fuel berth while we were at it to top up with diesel and water. Diesel here was supplied by the Orkney Fishermen's Co-Op, and at 26p per litre was excellent value. The current price at Bangor Marina was 38p!

There was more hopping and showering ashore that morning and Geoffrey and I made it to the local leisure centre, a short distance out of town. Here there was a splendid and recently installed handicapped toilet and shower facility which Geoffrey voted first class. In view of our house building at home I made note of the features here. We departed Stromness at 1215 to suit the tides and motored north to Pierowall on Westray. The wind was NE x 4 all the way, "on the nose" as ever? but it was a warm sunny day and the scenery was magnificent. The harbour at Westray was the same as it was twenty years ago but now there was a pontoon for yachts, fully occupied by Norwegian boats! We berthed alongside a German boat on the opposite side of the harbour at 1745 and found that we were almost beside the recently constructed toilet and shower block toilet, charge for which was included in the very modest harbour dues.

The friendly and helpful harbour master on our last visit had since died but the present one was equally friendly and helpful and sat in the cockpit chatting for a long time. He was also the Skipper of the nearby ferry boat which operates several times a day to and from Papa Westray, mostly with only one or two people on board and hardly a commercial proposition. However with oil money the Orkney Islands Council can afford to provide and subsidise all manner of uneconomical services for the islanders. They are now apparently seriously turning their attention to facilities for yachts and the pontoon at Westray is only a start. There are plans for marina facilities at both Kirkwall and Stromness and some of the yacht charter companies are showing serious interest in the area. We had supper on board which this time was M&S chunky steak with carrots and potatoes.

Orkney hospitality

We had hoped to get as far as Lerwick in Shetland with a call at Fair Isle in the available three weeks but we had lost time already due to adverse winds and now the wind settled into the north east, fresh to strong, with a worse forecast. We stayed in Pierowall all the next day and so did the other boats. The Norwegians were bound for Shetland and thence home. In the afternoon we got Geoffrey and wheelchair ashore and went for a long walk all round the bay to the two local shops and post office, to post letters and buy a few stores. It was too far for Robert to walk and he had to borrow a bicycle from the Harbourmaster to make this trip – lazy creature! The next morning, 19 July, Susie and I were up early so that we were ready to sail by 0900 and carry the tide down through the islands to Kirkwall. Geoffrey was up and had his insulin injection and breakfast before we sailed; Robert remained stubbornly in his bunk for the whole passage! The wind was NE x 6 and we carried the headsail for most of the passage reaching Kirkwall by 1200. Anchored off was the cruise ship *Saga Rose*, with a shuttle service of launches running to and from the harbour with the "over 50s" passengers for which *Saga* cater. We entered the inner harbour basin very carefully since it was very crowded, too crowded to get *Sundowner* turned round in the strong wind, and we berthed alongside a Norwegian boat stern to the wind. We were sixth boat out from the quay and poor Geoffrey was unable to get ashore at Kirkwall. However three of us explored the town and did some shopping.

Robert had no interest whatever in St. Magnus Cathedral and Susie and I had visited it the last time here. I was looking for a small replacement bilge pump for the after end of the engine bilge and on enquiring about a local ship chandler a complete stranger took me there in his car and brought me back with a new pump, the chandler being in an industrial estate about a mile out of town. This is typical of Orkney! We were given a key to access the Yacht Club on the seafront for showers and Susie and Robert duly made a visit there. For supper that night we had an excellent carry out from the local Chinese restaurant.

Next morning, 20 July, we were up early again and departed Kirkwall at 0900, the time again being dictated by the tide, which was strongly in our favour out through Shapinsay Sound to Copinsay. The wind was down to NE x 3 so we set headsail and mizzen – and reduced the engine revs! Off Copinsay there was quite a bit of broken water and it must be really nasty out here in bad weather! Heading south we duly passed Duncansby Head and Noss Head to reach Wick at 1520. This is another once prosperous fishing harbour and we had no trouble finding an alongside berth in the Outer Harbour in company with other yachts although there was a low swell which caused us to range a bit. Wick is a rather dirty unattractive town but Susie did go as far as the nearest supermarket for a few stores. Geoffrey would not attempt the long climb to the quayside although we would have rigged a safety line for him. Anyway we had an early supper of mild curried chicken, rice and fresh garden peas which Robert actually shelled for us!

Up at 0330 on Saturday 21 and were underway by first light at 0400 the reason being to carry the flood tide into Inverness Firth and reach the Caledonian Canal entrance at high water. This turned out to be a warm sunny day with a light SE wind dying away to a calm later on. Through the narrows at Chachonry Point at 145 with the tide, straight up the Firth and under Kessock Bridge to reach the Canal entrance at Clachnaharry at 1345, dead on High Water! Into the canal right away and by 1420 we were on a pontoon in Muirtown Basin at Inverness for the rest of the day and the night. There were various trips ashore for shopping and showers in the not very good amenities under the Canal headquarters offices. Supper was a carry out of fish, sausage, haggis and chips. On Sunday morning it was ashore for the papers and then into Muirtown Locks by 0930 in company with a few other boats. I have not kept a record of the number of times we have been through this canal over the years but it must be into double figures! This



Cape Wrath to starboard.



Sundowner of Beaulieu.

time we made it through the northern canal section and along Loch Ness to reach Fort Augustus in time to lock up before "closing time. We spent the night alongside a Dutch yacht just above the top lock. The boys wanted more fish and chips for supper so Robert walked all the way back down the locks to the chip shop to get some while Susie and I had tinned meat pies and peas.

The next morning Susie walked down to the excellent Fort Augustus butcher's shop to get haggis and turnip before we got under way at 1000. Except for a one and a half-hour hold-up at the road bridge leaving Loch Oich we made good time through the canal and reached the top of Banavie locks by 1715. Here we made fast on the outside of a large Swedish yacht who couldn't decide whether to go down the locks or back to Inverness! It had been overcast all day with rain never far away and now it turned into a wet evening. We did not venture to the Moorings Hotel for supper but had haggis, turnip and potatoes on board. Television reception here was very good and that kept the boys quiet. Tuesday morning saw us down "Neptune's Staircase" and into Corpach Reach. The wind was fresh to strong SW and we could see plenty of white water out in Loch Linne. We now had time in hand and so made fast to a pontoon in the reach for the rest of the day and that night. There were various trips to Corpach village for newspapers and stores and Geoffrey went off on his own trip along the towpath. He arrived back with sore and blistered hands! The "Calymax" cruise ship *Lord of the Glens* passed us bound for Inverness. From travel literature we gather the cheapest berth on this vessel for a one week cruise between Oban and Inverness is about £1,400 with shore excursions extra!

On Wednesday the wind was little more than light airs with

some rain and drizzle. We were out of Corpach Sea Lock by 1040 and followed the "pretty" route from there to Oban where we were back on a pontoon at Kerrera by 1440. The boys headed straight for the TV and pool table in the lounge ashore while I went over to Oban for a few stores. Susie had an afternoon rest and cleaned the boat. Corned beef hash and carrots for supper. Next morning we filled up with diesel at 29p per litre and headed off for Craobh Haven at 1200 to carry the tide down the Sound of Luig. It was virtually flat calm all day plus overcast and humid. We reached Craobh Haven by 1445 and spent the night there. TV reception good!

M&S tinned lamb, turned into Shepherd' Pie, for supper. A first attempt at this and it was very tasty! Susie and I had showers ashore in the now excellent toilet block.

Robert jumps ship

Friday 27 July was another flat calm day. We departed Craobh Haven at 0810 and motored off down the Sound of Jura. However it was overcast and we encountered some very thick fog banks until about lunchtime when it cleared up and the sun came out. We covered the 65 miles to Ballycastle in 9 hours, arriving at 1710. Just as we finished mooring in came *Melandy*, our old Nicholson 32, with owner Dr. Russell on board, and having just completed a circumnavigation of Ireland! He came round for a chat and despite some bad experiences in heavy weather is still very pleased with the boat. We had another carry out of fish, sausages and chips for supper and except for Robert it was an early night. He of course had to head off somewhere in town but at least was back at a reasonable hour. On Saturday morning Robert decided he had had enough of the boat and "jumped ship" to go home on the bus!

We did not sail until 1220 50 as to carry the flood tide all the way to Bangor and as it was we covered the 42 miles in a few minutes over 5 hours – about 8.0 knots average speed. It was yet another day of light airs and calms and engine all the way Back in Bangor Marina by 1710, friend Trevor Boyd came down to drive me home to get a car. Robert was actually on the pontoon to meet us when we arrived! Two hours and two car trips later we were all home with a Chinese carry out for supper.

Compared with our efforts in recent years this was a modest cruise of less than three weeks but it was all the time we could afford this year. However it was a very pleasant return to Orkney after 20 years and it was just a pity we did not make it back to Fair Isle and Shetland.



On the pontoon at Kyle of Lochalsh with Skye Bridge in the background.

Zaandam to Schull – The Northern Route

Tim Barry

Having made the decision that Judie and I could manage a larger yacht on our own we decided to upgrade *Daedalus* our Dehler from the 36CWS to the 41CR. We looked into purchasing the new yacht from Dehler UK but found that due to the strength of sterling it was considerably cheaper to buy the identical yacht from Dehler Netherlands. Language is not a problem as the Dutch speak English as well as ourselves.

We accordingly attended the Dusseldorf Boat show in January 2000 and placed an order for a new yacht to be built by September 2000. Part of this deal included the promise to overwinter her in the Dehler yard at Zaandam, which is about 10km from the centre of Amsterdam. Zaandam is an historic shipbuilding town which has, in the central square, a statue unveiled by Czar Nicholas III at the beginning of the 20th century of his ancestor Czar Peter the Great who learnt his shipbuilding skills in this town prior to returning to found the Russian navy which he based at the new Baltic port he built and called St Petersburg.

During our maiden voyage in the autumn 2000 we explored the Ijsselmeer and the Friesen Islands. Very little needed to be done during the winter which was therefore given over to planning the 2001 cruise.

The “milk run” would leave England to starboard. We thought that this was mundane and chose the alternative route to pass north of Scotland. Plans originally were grandiose and took in Helsinki, St.Petersburg and Talinn en route but research with a school atlas revealed that this trip would either require an unacceptable amount of “oggin’ floggin’” or another winter away from our home base at Schull. We settled for a compromise with the idea that we would go to places which we were unlikely to visit under sail in future years.

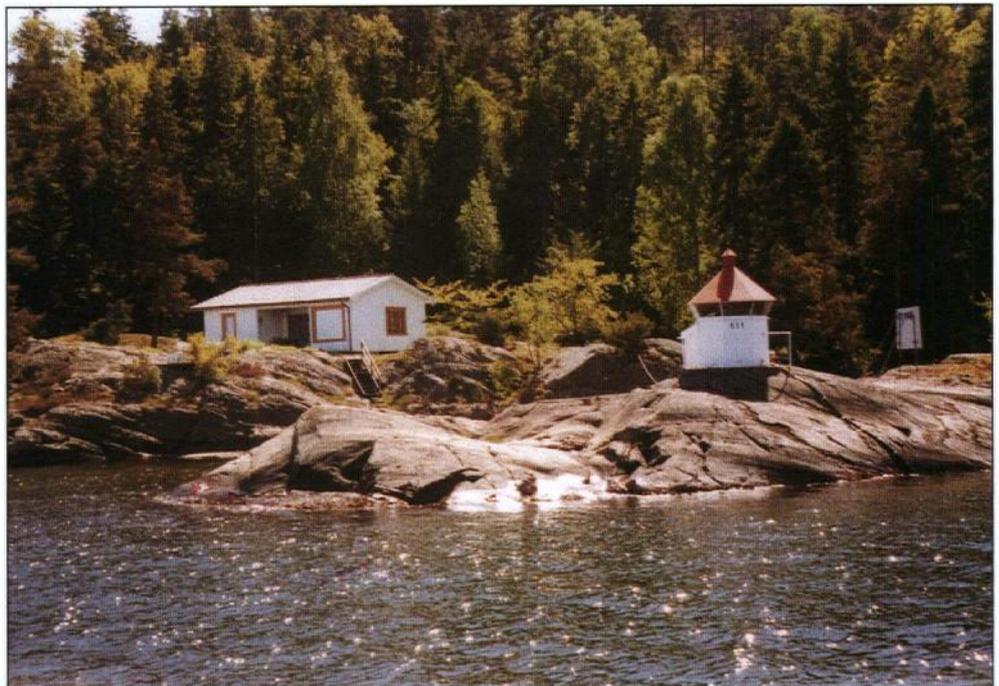
The next problem was crew changes and transport. Ryanair seemed the likely answer here and we duly researched its timetables with the plan to sail *Daedalus* so that she would be close to its destinations on likely change of crew dates. Ryanair is of course a law unto itself and its published destinations are invariably mythical. Also we soon found that the much-publicised low fares were of course available but usually very early in the morning or late at night. As we needed to start from Cork and most flights start from Stanstead, this meant spending nights in the UK and we were pleased to note that Ryanair no longer advertises itself as the ‘low cost’ airline-which, with the additional cost of staying in a

hotel overnight, it most certainly is not – but rather the ‘low fare’ airline!

Thus Hamburg airport is at Lubeck some 50kms away, Aarhus in Denmark is in a field about 45kms away from this city, and Oslo airport is at Torp, over 100kms to the south. At least from Cork there is a direct Aer Lingus flight daily to Amsterdam which we were able to use during the winter for visits to stock and victual the yacht. Invariably in Amsterdam we ended up in the red light district and the skipper found that window-shopping can be a pleasure rather than a chore!

Together with daughters Emma, Brigid and Sophie we set sail on Maundy Thursday, 12th April, despite warnings that this could be a particularly cold Easter as a north to north east wind was expected throughout the week-end. We proceeded under full sail along the Nordzeekanaal passing south of Amsterdam, the delights of which city are not evident from the canal. We entered the Oranjesluizen lock and as we were on our own we were able to experiment in attaching ourselves to the bollards without witnesses. The channel into the Markermeer is well marked but this sea and the Ijsselmeer have a normal depth which is less than four metres except where there are dredged channels for use by commercial shipping. Navigation with a yacht drawing 2 metres is therefore interesting but as long as the depth sounder showed that we had over three metres under the keel, I was unconcerned.

Rather than face the North Sea we stayed in these waters for seven days as, although there was a strong north to north east wind, force 5 to 7, the inland seas were relatively calm. The continual wind however, caused the seabed to change and on a



Norwegian Light – There are thousands of these around the coast, normally powered by solar energy.

number of occasions we ploughed our way through mud even though the chart indicated a reasonable depth.

On the first night, we steered north and tied up in the town centre in the Binnenhaven at Hoorn. This town like many others in the region became rich due to the sea-faring activities of the Dutch East India Company and, in fact, one of the captains of this Company named Cape Horn after his homeport. The town's wonderful architecture reflects this wealth. These days, however, along with most other seaports in the area Hoorn is given over to pleasure yachting.

Having added our son, Edward and Naomi Godkin to the crew, we spent the next few days visiting marinas at Enkhuisen, Hindenloopen, Den Oever and Makkum. Our only serious problem occurred when leaving Makkum along the Makkumerdiep, a dredged channel, as, in mid-channel we came to a shuddering halt – a German yacht passed half a length to starboard and we shouted for confirmation of his depth, he answered that it was 4.8 metres and turned to check if we required assistance but we powered ourselves off this underwater pinnacle with the aid of our bow thruster only to find that the German had placed himself upon it instead!

Kiel Canal

On the Friday 20th April it appeared that there may be a gap in the weather and we decided to proceed northeast towards the Kiel Canal, we exited the IJsselmeer by the eastern lock at Lorentzsluizen. Our original plan had been to emulate Erskine Childers and cruise the Waddenzee between the Friesen Islands and the mainland. This however, was impractical due to the continuing strong winds combined with powerful currents and possible shifting sandbanks. Although the channels through the sandbanks are clearly marked with buoys and withies, I was not inclined to put my new yacht at risk in these conditions and took the view that the seaman-like way forward was to leave all islands to starboard. That evening we stayed at Oudeschild on Texel having sailed westwards through the Dove Balg and Texelstroom. The following morning we rose at 0600hrs to carry the last of the ebb through the Zeegat van Texel and Molengat and take full advantage of the flood tide to assist us on our fifty-mile passage passing the four most westerly Friesan islands (Texel, Vlieland, Terschelling and Ameland) to starboard.

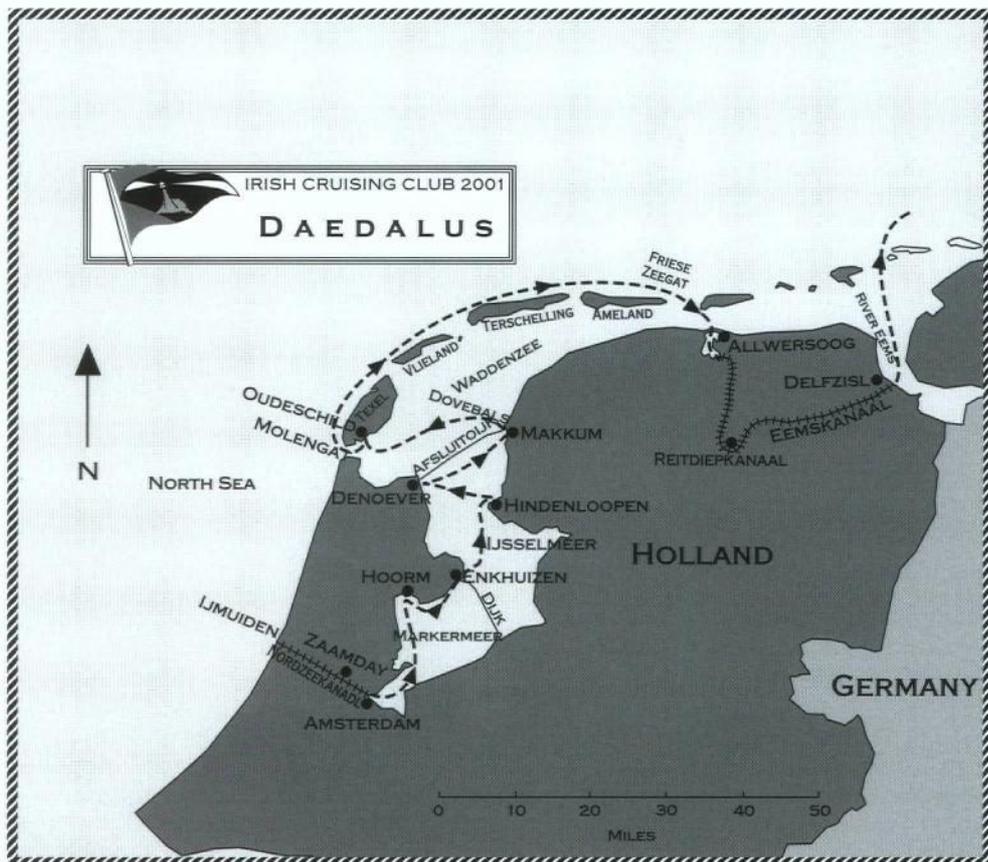
By 1600hrs the weather had deteriorated, visibility was less than half a mile and we were beating into a blizzard with a northeast Force 7 wind. The crew was huddled together for warmth under the cockpit cover apart from Edward who was manning the navigation equipment in the cabin and plotting waypoints to be read on the repeater chart-plotter adjacent to the helm. This was manned by the skipper, assisted by the best eyes on board belonging to Emma. She spied, to everyone's relief, the first of the channel buoys of the Friese Zeegat. This is an eight mile long channel through the sands to Lauwersoog, but the ebb tide was by this time running strongly against us and the engine together with fully reefed main and jib were fully

stretched to buck this tide. Emma was able to pick out buoys through the falling snow valuable minutes before the skipper's poor old eyes were able to identify them.

At 1845hrs we arrived at the buitenhaven at Lauwersoog and hurriedly dropped sail in order to pass through the Robbengatsluit lock before it closed for the weekend at 1900hrs. Gratefully, we entered the Jachthaven at Noordegat and tied up to the snow-covered jetty. Stowing the sails, manouevring in the lock and tying to the jetty ensured that the whole crew was severely cold and the Webasto heater came into its own as the whole crew hurriedly retired below to recover from hypothermia.

The three day shipping forecast warned of similar weather continuing and, indeed, we did suffer snow showers on each of the next five days. Not surprisingly there was little interest in further voyaging to the north and east. However, relief came in the form of a neighbouring yachtsman who suggested taking inland waterways through Groningen to the German border. Research revealed that there is indeed one suitable canal with a minimum depth of 2 metres where all bridges open so there is no necessity to remove the mast. With relief we left Lauwersoog, and proceeded south through the Vaarwater naar Oostmahorn into the Reitdiepkanaal. Within half an hour we were being chased by a police launch, which came to inform us that due to Foot 'n' Mouth restrictions, landing was not permitted on the banks of the canal. We had planned to spend the night in the ancient university city of Groningen but due to the skipper misreading the cruising guide we arrived at the Reitdiepbrug bridge at 1730hrs; sadly it does not open after 1700hrs prior to 1st May.

However, we arose early the next morning and having made contact on VHF with the Harbourmaster – we passed through the 14 bridges of Groningen in 45 minutes. These are organised in a most efficient way as two bridge operators on bicycles leapfrog from bridge to bridge to ensure that yachts progress through the city at three knots without interruption. I dread to think how this must have disrupted the traffic on land.





Brigid on foredeck passing through Gronigen, Holland. 18/4/01.

We proceeded down the Eemskanaal to Delfzijl, where we tied onto the marina and left our yacht to be picked up by Edward and six of his friends who acted as crew for the next part of the cruise. His plan had been to traverse the Kiel Canal and to meet us at Aarhus, which would fit in with connecting Ryanair flights. This schedule proved slightly ambitious and on our return, Judie and I hired a car at Aarhus and drove 160km to Egersund situated on the Flensburger Fjord, which is the border between Denmark and Germany. The abiding memory of our drive through Denmark is the overpowering stink of pig slurry. They may pride themselves on Danish bacon but this comes at an environmental cost.

Petrol and sex!

One disadvantage of living on an island is that one does not appreciate the social and economic variances that become apparent when crossing land borders. Thus, on the Danish side of the border there was for sale only petrol and sex in the form of shops selling a variety of aids and videos as well as a licensed brothel. Window shopping was not on this occasion permitted! In Germany we were able to provision for the following week and add considerably to our stocks of alcohol. We were, of course, aware that the price of this essential would increase substantially as we progressed north through Scandinavia.

Having made contact with Edward and his crew and seen the quantities of empty cans being removed from *Daedalus* we decided to take refuge in a hostel for the night. This had the dual benefit that the boys were not put out during their last

night of revelry by our attempts at sleep and we had a restful slumber. The plan was a huge success judging by the state of the crew and their sore heads in the morning. I was despairing of ever moving when an articulated lorry appeared carrying a 30ft yacht. The driver gesticulated that we were in his way as alongside us on the quay there was the crane required to launch this vessel, furthermore, we were told, five more yachts were to be launched that morning.

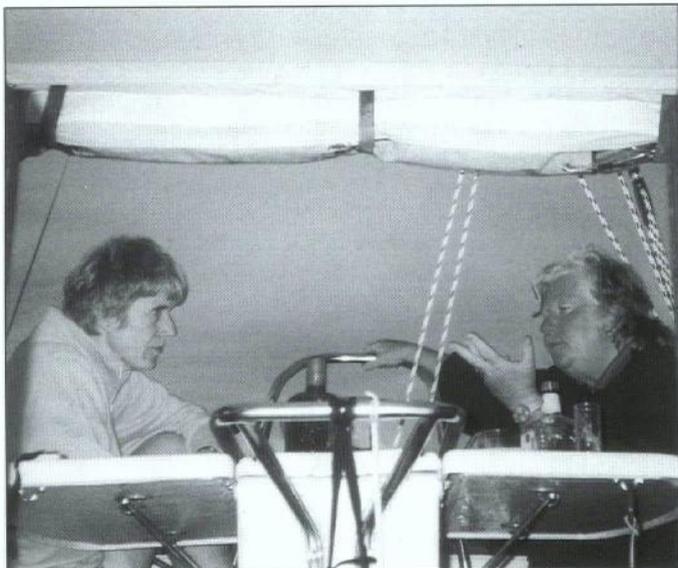
Hangovers were instantly forgotten as we returned down the Flensburger Fjord under full sail to drop five of this crew off at Sonderborg where supposedly there is a train connection with Lubeck (Hamburg). After lunch we proceeded up the Als Sund and Als Fjord to a tiny marina at Dyvig, which involved a tricky manoeuvre including a dogleg through a dozen beacons in a cutting, so recently dredged that it did not appear on our chart

The following morning, Tuesday 8th May we motored into the persistent north wind to drop Tim Seigne, the last of that crew at Middelfart. After an extended lunch we continued with no set plan. This evening there was a flat calm and there seemed little point in delaying further. The crew consumed a gourmet meal (roast chicken and two veg) whilst underway as the sun set and we settled for a gentle motor to the north leaving the island of Samsø to starboard.

At 0400 the skipper was on watch as Judie and Edward purred gently in their bunks. Grenaa, the easterly point of Jutland was abeam and a decision was needed. Quietly and with no interference from 'management' a waypoint was entered at 57.35.50N, 11.37.00E, (the Trubaduren light) the southwest entrance to Gotenborg, some 80 miles to the northeast. I estimated an ETA of 1600 and on the dot, and after a beautiful sunny passage, we arrived and sailed into the centre of the city to tie up in the marina adjacent to the opera house and a major shopping complex. The sun was so strong that the workers were all shirtless and this was the beginning of May. The old town is about 1/2 mile from this marina but it was too hot and sticky to make the trip. There were a number of good restaurants close to the marina and we needed to venture no further.

On the next morning, Wednesday, 9th May we bought the local charts covering the coast to the Norwegian boarder and were delighted to see that there would be ample opportunity to tax our navigational skills. We also bought the local cruising guide published by the Swedish Cruising Association, which prides itself on having 37,000 members and claims to be the biggest in the world. The photographs in this guide were taken from space and give an excellent direct aerial view of the numerous anchorages together with the positions of the 5,000 mooring rings drilled into the rock and maintained by them. Armed with this book we searched out an interesting inlet at 57.51.60N, 11.35.05E on Klaveron Island where we were planning to spend the night. However it became clear to us that the rings cater for the numerous small motorboats that far outnumber keeled yachts and lazily it was decided not to inflate the dingy which was needed to take warps ashore. We moved a further five miles up the coast to Marstrand where the marina to the west of the sound offered plenty of space. We found that sailing in these waters in May and June is ideal if peace and quiet is required as all the anchorages and marinas are uncrowded.

On Thursday we proceeded north across the Marstrands fjorden, inside the island of Haron through the Kyrkesund and on for a further twenty five miles avoiding the open sea as we sailed between barren, often unmarked islands all looking remarkably similar. That evening we stopped on the island of St. Korno at a small deserted village with a tiny pier onto the end of which we were able to tie. We met one fisherman on our walk through the village and to the top of the small hill. All the



Sheila and Judie planning the action for tomorrow – or perhaps putting the world to rights!

houses were clearly kept in good order and we presumed that they are used at weekends. It seems that these waters are teeming with holidaymakers for the months of July and August but for the rest of the year they are devoid of the human race. This part of the coast of Sweden is rock, bare and treeless, but it is an interesting observation that the planning is so severe that there is no evidence of housing from the sea and all the villages are compactly and discretely built alongside sounds or inlets, sheltered from the elements. This also says something about the winters perhaps! Where there is substantial industrialisation, at Uddavalla for instance, the large oil installation is well and truly hidden and landscaped.

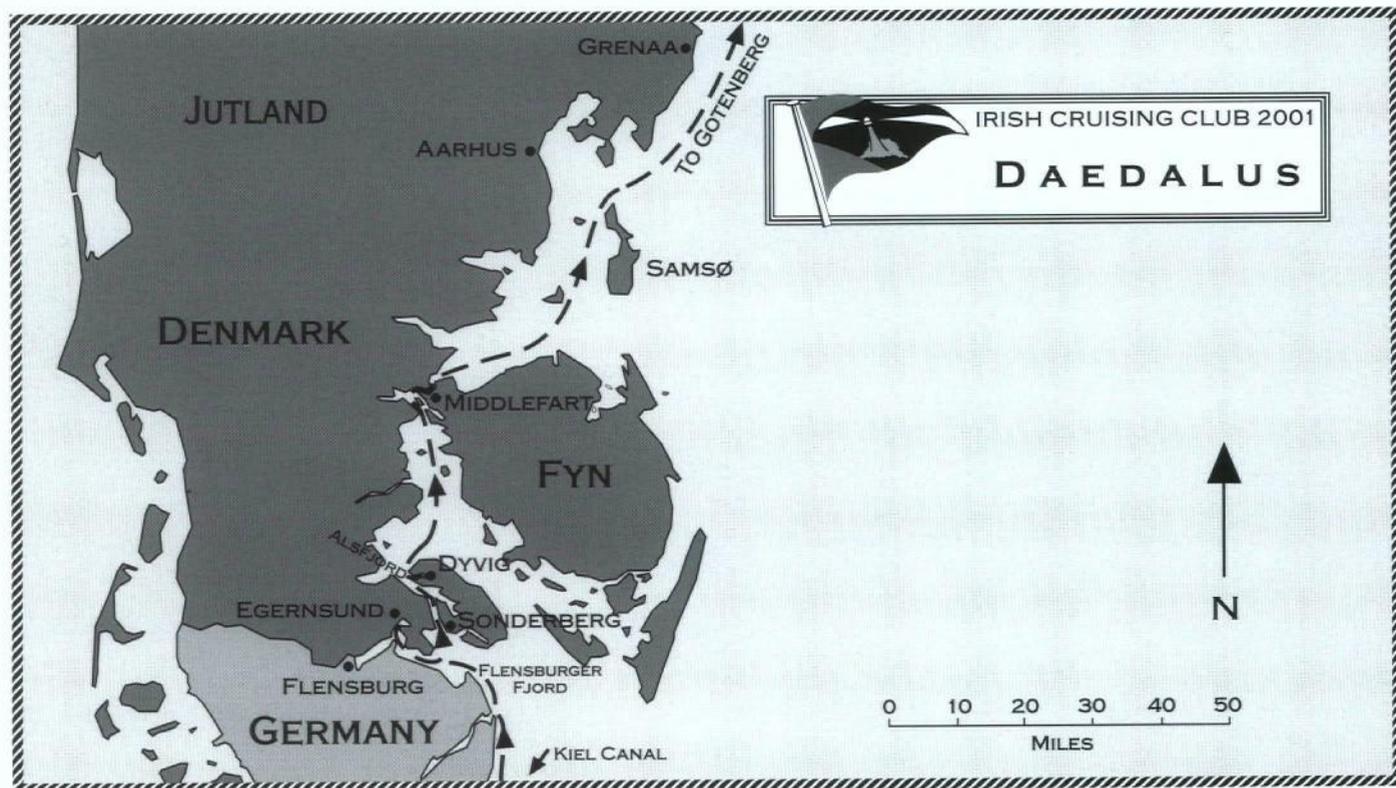
The next day was more of the same, exploring a number of wonderful narrow sounds, the Hamburgsund, for example, which is three miles long and in various places less than half a cable wide. Our objective was to arrive in Norway with at least one local chart and this we found (at considerable expense) in a

bookshop in Fjallbacka. This was the only town we came across in Sweden north of Gotenberg that has a variety of shops and restaurants which are open in early May.

After our last night in Sweden at Hamnsundet on the island of Reso 58.48.00N, 11.10.00E the wind at last changed to the southwest and we were able to set our jenniker for the first time since Holland for our twenty-five mile crossing of the northern Skagerrak and the Oslofjord. For the whole of our week's trip from the German/Danish boarder, the wind, if any, was invariably on the nose from the north!

I nearly threw a fit when I first saw the Norwegian charts as every rock is marked regardless of depth. However as we got used to the local navigational aids we found that we were able to progress through incredibly narrow channels with confidence. The main aid is the "Varde", which is normally a black beacon (sometimes with a white horizontal stripe) that has a finger post on top indicating which side to pass. These are claimed to be the oldest navigational aids in the world still in use. Where lights are required, and there are hundreds of these, they are normally housed in squat round houses sitting on the rock at sea level with little red roofs and a solar panel for energy. Apart from these structures which can be identified from afar, local rocks and shoals are extremely well marked with beacons, usually a stake on which there is an topmark indicating which side to pass. Once we got used to these navigational aids we found that they were easier to follow and less likely to be misinterpreted than the international yellow and black cardinal marks.

We were immediately struck on our arrival in Norway by the lush vegetation and the comparative lack of planning. Every island or promontory appeared to have a building on it together with it's own landing stage and boathouse. The locals are all proud of their wealth and their independence of the bureaucracy of Brussels! We tied up on the end of a small marina on the north coast of the island of Tjome at Ferje Odden and were invited to leave *Daedalus* there by the harbourmaster, Herman Hy as we told him that we were planning to return to Ireland for two weeks. At the time I declined the offer as I had read that Tonsberg was the oldest city in Norway and that it is possible to leave a yacht there.



As we discovered the next day, Sunday, this is not the case. After a leisurely start we gave ourselves plenty of time for a gentle sail up the fjord for ten miles to Tonsberg to be told by the assistant marina manager that he had no space and he confirmed with the other marina in the city that they, too, only cater for residents and have no facilities for long term stay. The trip back down the fjord was anything other than leisurely. Ten miles in the wrong direction with a Ryanair flight to miss as a distinct possibility, but the owner of the marina at Ferje Odde could not have been more obliging and personally drove us the fifty kilometres to Torp airport where we arrived as a consequence in good time.

We returned to Torp on 2nd June and, aware that shops close in Norway at midday on Saturday and do not open on Sunday, we hired a taxi to return to *Daedalus* via a supermarket in Tonsberg. We had less than 30 minutes to provision the yacht and limited ourselves to fresh foods. The taxi delivered us to the marina and as the driver was agog to inspect our yacht, he assisted in carrying on board our luggage and provisions.

That afternoon we sailed back up Tonsbergfjord to pick up the next crew, Sheila, Martin and Steve for the adventure round the Norwegian coast. The crew awoke on Sunday to the peels of church bells which encouraged an amazing display of holiness. The Catholic parish church appeared to be permanently locked but the non-catholics found a Dominican friary and enjoyed Mass complete with a christening. We sailed at 1145hrs. with the wind NE force 4 for a shake down run back down the fjord and passed south of the Svenner and Tvistein lighthouses. For the night we picked up a mooring buoy at the top of the Hummerbakkfjord. This is a risky way of spending the night as one has no knowledge of the quality of the ground tackle. The evening seemed settled and we accepted the gamble.

Amazing voyage

The following morning we crossed the Langesund into the Eksefjord and started an amazing voyage of over 100 miles between the mainland and outlying islands, rocks and skerries. Having identified the gap, half a cable wide, north of Fluerholmen we proceeded along the Kreppa between the islands of Lango and Gumo as far as Kragero. Rather than face the sea fog which was rolling in we sailed inland across the Kilsfjord to find a beautiful bay to the west of the island of Brato. We anchored and tied our stern to a rock for the night and were delighted to find the next morning that the sea fog had cleared. We progressed to the picturesque town of Risor, famous for a large white marble rock on the hillside to the east of the harbour which acted as an identification mark for north-bound sailing ships approaching the Norwegian coast. Lunch was a bit of a failure here as again little was open this early in the season. That evening we anchored at Lyngor, the tidy town winner for 1991 which prides itself as being one of the best preserved old towns in Norway.

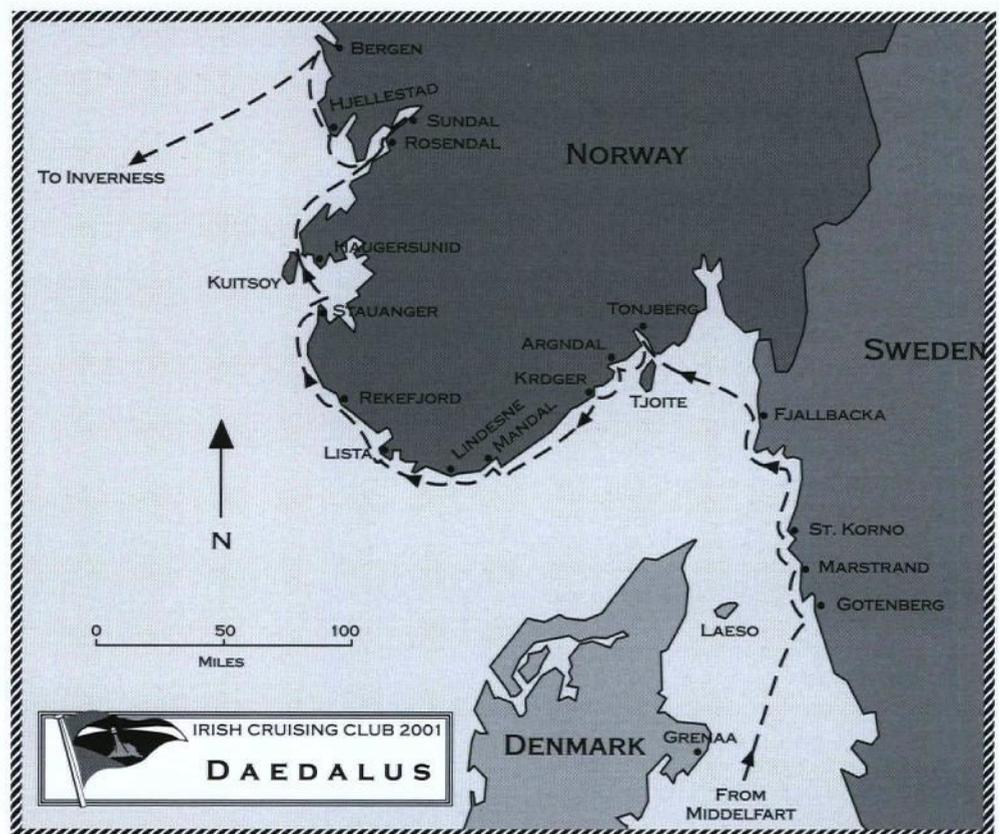
The largest town in the area is Arendel. This town is approached

from the north east via the Tromsund. Here we stopped to replenish our camping (butane) gas only to find that in Norway this is not available, there is only propane on the market. This has something to do with the hard winters and the temperature at which gas freezes. It was a major blow as we had used a substantial amount of the replacement cylinder and I needed to save the remainder of the gas for the passage across the North Sea. Thenceforth meals were cooked on a bar-b-q and water was heated on a single propane ring both bought in this town.

We continued down the Hagefjord and Tramoysund but were unable to enter the eastern end of the Blindliea as the bridge at Fergestad has a clearance of 19 metres whereas our mast is 20 metres high so we left the island of Justo to starboard to enter the Blindliea by a narrow channel leaving Brekkesto also to starboard. Friday night was spent up a wooded fjord 58.09.50N 08.14.60E. There was sufficient current to lie comfortably at anchor without the hassle of taking a line ashore.

This wonderful scenic passage ended on Saturday as we sailed south of Mandal and passed into the open sea to clear Lindesne lighthouse by a cable at 1530hrs. We headed into a west wind, force 4 and expected a troublesome sea in the Naze as the pilot books warn of notorious overfalls here at the southernmost point of Norway. I was fully prepared to retreat and head some miles out to sea to avoid any danger but found that the gods were with us and we had relatively calm conditions. Two and a half hours later we cleared Lista lighthouse and headed northwest for the twenty five mile crossing to Rekefjord where we planned to spend the night. Sadly this plan went awry as, on entering we discovered a working quarry that appeared to operate twenty-four hours a day. We tied onto a jetty whilst we prepared and ate dinner and returned to sea at 2330hrs. for a night passage in a north westerly direction. I took the view that this part of the Norwegian coast as far as Stavanger is less scenic than elsewhere and was glad for the excuse to make an overnight passage.

Sunday, 0900hrs we slipped quietly between rocks through a



narrow channel from the south west into Ydstebohavn on the island of Kvitsoy. Originally navigation to this island would have been aided by the lighthouse but these days the west of the archipelago is dominated by six radio aerials (136m.high) which are naturally visible for very many miles. Our tranquillity on this tiny island was shattered by the arrival of a mini cruise ship whose passengers disembarked and were guided round an otherwise peaceful village which, as it is Norway, has no facilities open on a Sunday. We duly departed after a lunch provided by a local fisherman of four live crabs. My strict rule that the cooker was out-of-bounds was relaxed in order to cater for the complicated cooking arrangements that this gastronomic repast required. We exited through the eastern islands and went too close to the radio aerials. This caused the wind direction arrow on the top of the mast to spin at high speed with the inevitable result that it suffered from terminal giddiness and refused to work from then on!

We progressed up the Karmsundet, to the west of the island of Karmoy to Haugesund which boasts a statue to its most famous daughter, Marilyn Monroe whose father, a baker, emigrated from here to the States. One is amazed by the culture that can be acquired when cruising! And, incidentally, such is the wealth of the country that they are planning a 25km. road tunnel from Stavanger via Kvitsoy to Karmoy. Tunnels are dug and high suspension bridges are erected regardless of cost, even though there appears to be little usage for many of them, in order to encourage the indigenous islanders to remain on their islands.

Folgefjonn glacier

In the distance we could see snow capped mountains and realised that the cruise would not be complete without a closer inspection. This required a trip up the Hardangerfjord and the 'Norwegian Cruising Guide' recommends that we spend a night at Rosendal. The mountains behind this village rise to 1700m. On the top of which is the Folgefjonn glacier. The waterfalls coming from this glacier are spectacular but we were not over impressed with the village or its facilities. The following day we progressed further up the fjord to lunch at Sundal from which village it is a two-hour walk to the glacier. There was no enthusiasm as the village and environment were not over inspiring and in any event time was limited so we returned and passed through the Lokksundet to spend the night at anchor in a splendid hurricane hole, Katanes on the island of Tysnesoy.

Thursday, 14th June and we were awoken by Magnus, a retired NATO pilot and great character who brought with him fresh bread and milk and the Norwegian morning paper; he soon realised that this last gift was not required! He recommended that we leave *Daedalus* (as we were again returning to Ireland) with an ex-girlfriend of his and a former Miss Norway at the Hjeltestad marina south of Bergen. We considered that this was a good enough reason to at least call in and found that the manager, Sven could not be more helpful but sadly there was no evidence of the former beauty queen. It was no problem for us to leave *Daedalus* there and without effort a taxi was organised to take Judie and me to the airport and the following morning to take Sheila, Martin and Steve to the station for a scenic train journey back through the mountains to Oslo.

Our next crew for the passage across the North Sea was Sophie from Ireland, Bill from England and Emma, flying direct to Bergen from Murmansk, north Russia via Helsinki. She was fog bound and this journey took her forty-eight hours. We arrived on Friday, 29th June and sailed to Bergen, fourteen miles north where we spent two days whilst we waited for her to arrive. This is a delightful Hanseatic port and we tied up to the town quay alongside a splendid market which sells, amongst other things, the most wonderful fresh fish. A trip to



At anchor at Bratö, Norway. 5/6/01. 58°51' N, 09°19' E.

the top of the Funicular is recommended but the whole city is vibrant with music and with the youth crowded into the many restaurants and bars along the waterfront.

When Emma eventually arrived on Monday, 2nd July at 0730hrs, she was given breakfast and we immediately set sail for Scotland. I reasoned that she would have plenty of rest time on the voyage! The crossing of 358 miles took just 50 hours, an average of 7 knots on a course of 230. The wind was a kindly south or southeast force 4 to 6 and we were able to gallop along taking in and shaking out reefs as required. The visibility was not great and we saw only one oilrig and little shipping. Our destination was dependent on the wind direction and I would happily have made our landfall on the Shetland's or Orkney's had the wind headed us but it was extremely fortuitous that we laid Inverness as, on entering the Caledonian Canal, we discovered that we had no reverse gear, potentially an interesting and expensive problem but luckily covered by guarantee.

Three weeks later and with yet another crew of Ellen Beardsley, with Nicky, Jessica and John Stevenson and with a new gearbox eventually supplied by Yanmar we set off along the Caledonian Canal into a stiff southwest force 6 and grey drizzle, all the more galling as we were informed that England and Ireland were enjoying a heatwave. The final 280 miles to our home port of Schull via Kinsale took ten days as we sailed through the southwest Scottish islands and the Irish Sea.

Rafiki goes rallying in the eastern Med.

Bill and Hilary Keatinge

We had heard many tales of the rally over the summers as we moved eastwards into the Mediterranean and it seemed the ideal way to visit some countries which are not on the normal cruising circuit. So last December we signed up for the XIIth Eastern Mediterranean Yacht Rally (EMYR) motivated by the desire to see northern Cyprus, Syria, Lebanon, Israel and Egypt and hoping that the Israeli/Palestinian conflict would not cause disruption to the schedule. The concept of the rally is Turkish inspired with an international volunteer committee and the driving force behind it at present is the irrepressible Hasan Kacmaz, GM of Kemer Marina in Turkey. Hasan makes a huge contribution as rally leader and diplomat *par excellence*. The start is in Istanbul mid April and ends seven weeks later in Israel with yachts joining and leaving from various points (ourselves from Kemer). The only limitations: no charter boats, no single-handers and that you have limitless energy; the programme is not for the faint hearted!

Rafiki had wintered in Kemer, near Antalya southern Turkey and we spent three weeks in the area fitting out, finding out (dirt in the fuel tank...) and driving inland to see the extraordinary natural wonders of Cappadocia. We hoped we would be ready for the Grand Start from Kemer on Saturday 5th May but were rather bounced into putting on our rally hats a couple of days earlier when the fleet came into the marina. There was no escaping the Rally Games tug-of-war, dinghy paddling and other such vigorous events (we managed to avoid the limbo...). Our offspring Richard and Suzanne flew in to join us for the first week so we had a strong crew as we crossed the start line in a flat calm among a fleet of 50 yachts and 4 power boats. Twelve different nationalities, with the largest contingents from America, Germany and Great Britain and the fleet was divided into five groups – we were among ten 39 to 42-footers. Our group leader had to pull out at the last minute as Su was struck by a serious back problem and Peter the Canadian reluctantly 'volunteered'. We were to report our position to him on Emma Louise every four hours and it took his crew most of that first long night to get the routine going smoothly.

It is 154nm from Kemer to Girne (Kyrenia) in N Cyprus, the course SE and the wind... ESE 1-2 and we were to be off Girne at midday to enter the harbour as a group. We made what use we could of the main and chugged on through the day and into the evening settling down to 3-hour night watches. Despite the calm Antalya Radio Navtex was giving strong wind warnings and suddenly at 0254 up came the easterly, two reefs in, some staysail and we cut the engine and payed off on the port tack, south of the rhumb line. Oilskins, harnesses and no let up for 12 hours as we beat into an increasingly unpleasant sea with gusts of over 30knots. We had to resort to motor sailing to claw back our leeway and to make our deadline. The seas as we closed the island were short and steep and we took one enormous one which did not break until it was poised high over the cockpit. It was a huge relief to be finally into the shelter of the old harbour of Girne. We fell back on our own anchor, second row out, wedged between the bows of another rally yacht and a gulet.

This unexpected (for most of the fleet) blow was a big setback for many, boats were hours late, some of the most hardened were seasick and a couple of the yachts had turned back, one with gear failure. On *Rafiki* we did wonder about the joys of rallying as we inspected the damp patches down below and Bill noted in the log that the First Mate was very unhappy with the evidence of old and even a couple of new leaks! But one could not be downhearted for long, we were in charming surroundings and although the gale raged on we were very well protected.

Northern Cyprus, which officially does not exist, is very welcoming to the Rally and the President hosts a reception in the wonderful setting of the Girne Crusader castle. In general the mood was muted as the crews recovered from the battering. We hired a car next day (well two actually, the first one had to be abandoned as the back door kept opening and not all the gears could engage!) and drove over the dramatic Kyrenia Hills and east along the fertile Mesaoria Plain to Gazimagusta (Famagusta). We lunched overlooking the ghost resort of Varosha. When the island was divided in 1974 the Greeks were driven out of this prosperous tourist area and it is still very much 'disputed' territory, many parts literally untouched (shelled buildings, washing on lines, parked cars...) since the inhabitants fled during the conflict. A short drive north to Salamis (11th Century BC) which has had some excavation carried out and the more recent (31 BC) Gymnasium and Baths were worth the visit.

Next day we followed in the steps of Lawrence Durrell as we went to the lovely abbey of Bellapais (1205 AD); Durrell lived in this village and his book *Bitter Lemons* which tells of his purchase of a house in the village, made excellent background reading on the whole island. We had lunch under the famed Tree of Idleness, and indeed fell into the other-worldly calm which pervades the place. But back to the boat and readied for social action as we donned our pirate gear for a rally party. This set piece did not really take off, there was no opportunity to mix and meet before the food was served and add to that the strange group phenomena that if you are not first in the buffet line, the food will run out. And there were the speeches; the Rally is part about the participants making passages but also a PR exercise and many officials had to have their say.

One of Hasan's miracles was that he persuaded the customs officials that as we were an international group and that we needed a lot of fuel so we justified a full tanker of duty free diesel. There was however, some discrepancy in the amounts we all took, *Pandora*, a large aluminium cruising boat next to us took 1,700 litres, ourselves just 117, but it was worth it!

The rally stayed an extra day in Girne and the wind and sea had time to dissipate. Next port was Mersin in eastern Turkey, the distance 108nm on a course of 033o. Our group was scheduled to arrive between 1030 and 1100 and the plan was to leave at 1600 the afternoon before. We raised our anchor without a hitch always an anxious moment that in a crowded harbour, ominously there was even a diver on duty! We had two

hours of excellent sailing, a reach under full sail... what bliss. However, not for long and the westerly died with the sunlight and though the direction changed during the night, going into the NE in the early hours we did not register more than a force 2. Highlight of the night was a marvellous golden moon which added to the peace of the crossing. Just under 18 hours later we were off Mersin and were alongside in time for the arrival of the welcoming brass band at 0926.

The social programme was thrown by losing that day in Cyprus but Richard and Suzanne were able to join a small group going on a whirlwind day tour to Cappadocia and we were not unhappy to just chat along the pontoons with the odd drop of sustenance to keep us going. Our friends on *Lazy Life*, having missed Girne because of late arrival in Kemer of their new furling gear, were already in port. Part of that problem was to do with the drastic devaluation of the Turkish lira (almost 50%) and the fact that few local firms had foreign exchange for imports. The Mersin Chamber of Commerce had two grand parties lined up for the Rally, one held in Ali Baba's Night-club where we were entertained by some superb singers, accompanied by some less than background music and the second was an elaborate dinner with the same musicians, but different repertoire and slightly less deafening.

We had been due to leave on the Saturday afternoon but the forecasters were having trouble giving us the green light and even the uninitiated could see it was not great as we ducked out of heavy rain and avoided the hail. There were several forecasts flying round, there was the long range German forecast ("... keeps more boats tied up in harbour than any other...") now predicting a blow, Cyprus warned: "sea moderate to rough" wind for Taurus (our area) L6 and Jeddah Radio gave a full thundery forecast for the Red Sea which was way off course but added to the tension. So who to believe? In the end the coastguard advised against departure and everyone except Hasan and his rally schedule relaxed for another night in Mersin.

Our crew deserted us here and flew back to UK via Adana airport; we hoped that as a crew of two we were rested enough for the night passages ahead.

Mersin to Lattakia, in Syria is just over 90 nautical miles SE and our rendezvous time off Lattakia was 0900. The forecast was not great: S-SE 4-6 but due to back to NW, there was heavy rain around and at least one yacht postponed departure. We left at 1500, put in one reef and the wind though light was absolutely dead ahead as we motor sailed into it. The visibility was at best moderate and we had the very eerie experience of a 'blue' sun, caused, we guessed, by dust particles. Two hours later we put in the second reef as the wind rose fast to force 5, but then fell back to 4, though the seas were increasing and we were making slow progress. From 2200 we took one hour on, one off and slept as best we could in the cockpit, it was really very uncomfortable down below. Amazingly we did get into a routine and though we both swore we hardly slept, there was, said some, noisy evidence.

The rally lead boat, 44 footer *Abracadabra* with Hasan on board was attempting to push on very fast and suddenly they were all over the place, as we saw from their navigation lights; their steering had lost its hydraulic fluid. We offered to stand by in case they needed assistance and Hasan told us afterwards they were very relieved to have our offer, though in the dark we 'lost' them fairly quickly and would have had a job to find them again. Under awful conditions they managed a repair and though the boat was badly shaken up (the champagne glasses shattered!) they were able to straighten onto their course again. The seas did become more manageable, it rained and a few degrees more west in the wind meant we could throttle back the engine as the main was working at last.

The procedures for entering these harbours were fairly rigid

and we had been given two waypoints to keep us a diplomatic distance off the coast with a final 90° change of course in towards the port. The expected Syrian naval patrol boat did not materialise, but then it was not an ideal night to be at sea, while from the very start we were shadowed on all our passages by two armed Turkish Coastguard boats which was comforting. One of the great pluses of the rally was that all the paperwork was taken care of, all we had to do was hand in our papers, with lots of copies of everything, plus our passports, which were not stamped, and in return shore passes were issued and that was it.

Lattakia has a new yacht basin east of the commercial port and while its entrance is not protected by the main harbour wall and is narrow with a bit of a bar, once inside it is safe. We dropped anchor and backed up to the quay where there were helping hands, plus power and water (though not drinkable). Another rugged night had taken its toll and three boats had turned back to Mersin. *Rafiki* had weathered it very well, though there were still the leaks, but we were ready for them this time and the crew were tired but relieved to be in without mishap at 0940.

A clean up and then onto the bus for our first tour, to Ugarit "Ras Shamra". There is evidence of development at this site going back to 6000 B.C and though not much has yet been excavated the most important discoveries to date are the clay scripts, examples of the first alphabet. These are now in various Syrian museums. Back into the 21st century, well the centre of Lattakia may not yet have got *quite* that far... and a walk through the narrow winding streets, absorbing the many aromas, the rainbow shop-front displays, the friendly bustle and



Rally games in Kemer. Bill is ready for the tug-o-war and Hilary is prepared for the dinghy dash!

our guides on hand to interpret. Our Arabic was not yet very advanced, though many of us were busy working out the numerals from the car number plates. Sign language bought us a wooden juice extractor and a bag of delicious pistachio biscuits. Later we were treated to an excellent reception at the end of our quay, ground level seating on carpets and cushions and a selection of delicious Syrian dishes, (BYO wine), and local music. It was a great introduction to Syria.

Early next morning we were on the road to Damascus (that phrase does have such an evocative ring to it...), but not directly as we stopped off first at the massive citadel Krak de Chevalier. Thirteen towers and double ramparts, protective glacis and moats, halls and stables, built of huge limestone blocks, Krak has withstood earthquakes and the frequent battering of medieval warfare. Then Damascus itself, one of the oldest cities in the world with traces of its history round every corner. We walked through the Christian quarter to lunch opposite a Greek Orthodox convent, posters advertising the visit of the Catholic Pope in every window. We were led through countless alleys to admire the splendour of the Umayyad Mosque with its three famous minarets. Here the beliefs of Christian and Muslim meet round the elaborate shrine which holds relics of John the Baptist (also known as the Prophet Yahya) while in another area a large group of heavily veiled Iranian women were on pilgrimage to the shrine of a revered muslim.

Our half-hour in the Souk Al Hamidiyeh was fascinating, not least because one of the rally couples, from the States, had their handsome chow "Tugger" with them. Well this dog stole the show and business came to a halt as people jostled for a look at the novelty, indeed at one stage we wondered if the poor dog could keep his cool. We did not buy a nerguch (hubble-bubble pipe), or an inlaid mosaic box or even a spangly belly dancer outfit but the sights and sounds were wonderful.

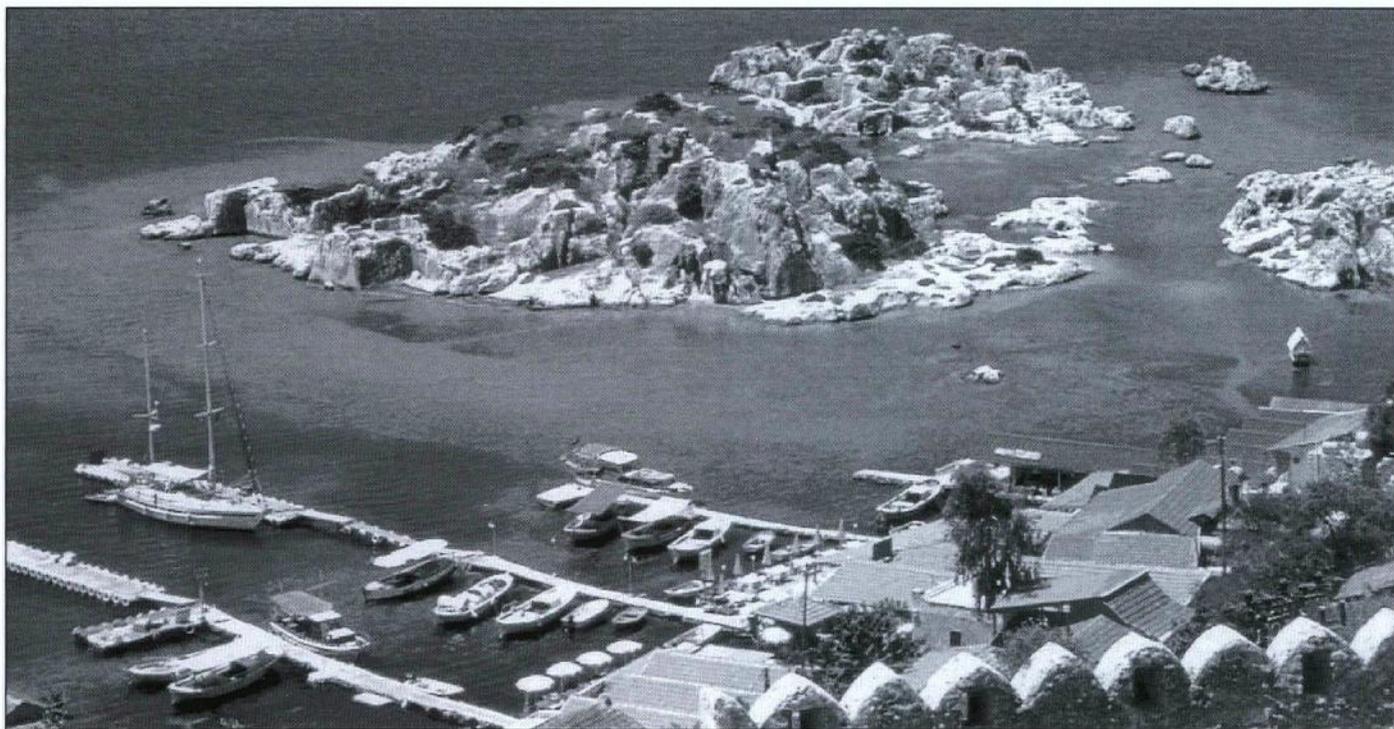
Our after dinner entertainment produced a very curvaceous belly dancer and several of the assembled had a chance to dance with her, our coach guide quite fancying himself as her partner. His English was excellent, and on tour his lectures covered modern social and religious issues in Syria as well as the BC interests but he did succumb to sulks if we did not hang

on his every word. We were booked into a very splendid hotel near the airport for the night with the added excitement of CNN and BBC World, no surprises but we had felt so out of touch. Out of touch too was 'Noddy' our faithful Nokia Communicator; Syria was the only country we visited with does not cater for the mobile phone groupie though it was possible to get a fix through the Lebanon on... well, of course... on the road to Damascus.

Highlight of our trip to Syria was Palmyra; in the lush oasis in the Plain of ad-Daw the marvels of this ancient city (certainly 1st century BC but undoubtedly going back a very long time) are still truly remarkable. The main hall of the Temple of Bel (Baal) stands proudly in the centre of its large courtyard and the colonnaded avenue running about 1200m through what was the ancient city is breathtaking. The theatre, which is a gem, has been very well restored and the many arches and colonnades leave one gasping for superlatives. Local colour is supplied by brightly bridled camels begging to take you for a ride through the site; well their minders begged, the camels looked supremely indifferent.

We lunched well in a Bedouin Camp; the camp was actually set up for the tourists but the Bedouins themselves were genuinely welcoming and we were well entertained with musicians and even more belly dancers. We had an hour among the royal tombs before the long drive back to our well guarded boats in Lattakia. And so we did Syria in three days.

Back to sea on Thursday 17th May, the forecast was good, winds 3-4 from the north-west and 98 nautical miles to Jounieh, Lebanon. Again an afternoon departure arid we sailed and fished and chugged (when our speed dropped below 3.5) into the night. It was calm and clear, what a joy, and once 'Noddy' was in range (a loud bleep at 0200 woke the skipper.) in came ten emails. We are almost more in touch with friends when we are at sea than in land-line reach at home. The wind backed to the NE but never exceeded 12 knots and we were not in a hurry as we were expected to arrive at 0800. Once into Lebanese territory we were instructed to keep west of a couple of set waypoints and call up "Oscar Charlie" on Ch.11 and identify ourselves. We were given an entry number with instructions to call up again at 6 miles off and on arrival and once more we had



Rafiki alongside in Kale Koy, Kekova Roads, Turkey.

to come in on a 90o turn several miles out when abeam the Marina entrance. There was some confusion as to which group should enter when but once in we were able to take on fuel, though not before we had been checked out by the customs who came on board for a look.

Jounieh is a very fine private, though impersonal marina; the fancy clubhouse and pool are much frequented by the smartly dressed who come to jog and to be seen and who seldom go to sea, in truth where would they go with the political problems along this coast. (*We understand it is quite possible to leave one's boat here for a week or so if going touring inland.*)

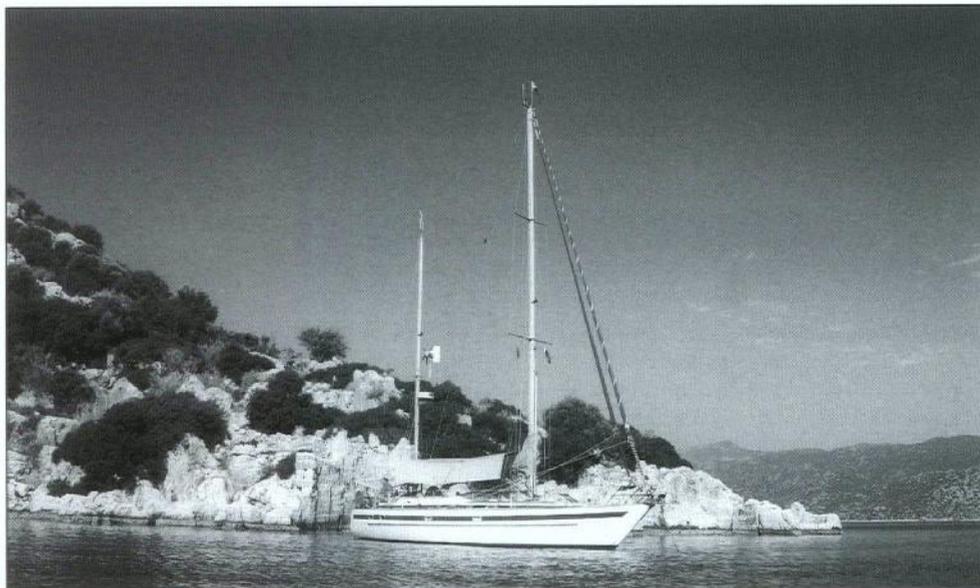
Our afternoon bus tour into Beirut was not a success as we had no guide and a driver who spoke no known language, though we had all manner of languages on offer among the group. Next day made up for it though and we had an excellent guide who though alternating between German and English gave us all the information we could absorb. There were great views as we climbed east across the Mount Lebanon Range and then apparently down into the Bekaa Valley; in fact the valley is over 1000m above sea level. Once known as the Roman 'breadbasket', the Bekaa was infamous for an even more lucrative crop (Red Leb) until fairly recently. One wonders how long the farmers will be content with the rewards from simple cereals and vines.

We had one stop before arriving at Baalbek, site of classical wonders and present day centre of the Hezbollah. Only signs of the latter being some ominous banners along the way while the Syrian manned anti aircraft sites we passed were definitely armed and ready for action. In a quarry on the outskirts of the town is one of the world's largest building blocks, cut and ready to move. It is estimated to weigh 1200 tonnes, known as the Stone of the Pregnant Woman, it is still awaiting delivery! Then to visit the ancient Phoenician site of the 'Sun City', Baalbek, known to the Egyptians and Romans as Heliopolis. We had a charming elderly guide, full three-piece suit and sun-proof umbrella as he talked us through the temples and courtyards in impeccable English. The sheer size and grandeur is awesome.

We had lunch at a trout farm en route to the much more modern Aanjar (7th/8th centuries AD) but it was really too much to take in in one day and it was just too hot to give it the attention it deserved.

But our coach guide was not finished with us yet and having heard of the failure of our Beirut tour he promised to fit that in before dark. Help'. The city was too misty in heat haze for a panoramic photo stop en route, but at our request, we did get out at the impressive Monument to Peace. Unveiled in 1996 it incorporates ten storeys of tanks and guns set in concrete and is a chilling reminder of Lebanon's recent history, And that is all too apparent in the city itself for side by side there are the barely finished shiny glass and chrome ultra modern offices and the shells of grossly shot and bombed buildings, most of which, it has to be said, are still inhabited.

We have friends in Beirut and we eschewed the tour next day for time with Richard and Wendy and their tiny daughter. We drove to Byblos for lunch at the Fishing Club owned and run by an eccentric artist and restaurateur Pepe Abed. Byblos was charming though we did not visit the castle preferring



Rafiki at rest after the EMYR (Tersane, Kekova Roads, Turkey).

instead to spend the time closer to the big city at Spinners, a huge and wonderful supermarket. Amazing how some sailors find such emporiums alluring after weeks of quayside markets!.

The Israeli question had been a worry from the start and the news over the months and weeks did nothing to allay those worries with daily accounts of bomb blasts, suicide attacks and confrontational politics. We were not the only boat where the question was being debated. With a lull in the fighting our compromise was to go with the rally to Haifa, then make our own way further south to Herzlyia where we have friends and instead of taking *Rafiki* on to Egypt via Ashkelon, to head for southern Cyprus and fly to Cairo from there thus giving ourselves more time to see Bill's sister and the sights. The rally was only spending three nights in Port Said and the berthing there did not sound too comfortable. (*In the event we heard the basin specially allocated to the EMYR on the western side of the Canal was very secure and was sheltered from the wash of the pilots, tugs and ships.*)

Monday 21st May and we had to come in nose to the Jounieh fuel quay to exchange shore passes for passports, a bit of a business this but the officials wanted to be sure we really were leaving, they were very wary of our foreign fleet. It was hot at 28°, the humidity was 66% and inevitably in such conditions no wind at all. As we headed west to our clearing waypoint the only ripples on the water were frolicking fish – somehow they did not think much of our lures and we did not even get a bite though two yellow-finned tuna were caught by others in the fleet. The only interest of the 15-hour passage to Haifa was before dawn when the stealthy Israeli patrol boat darted through the fleet, each of us was subjected to the full beam of their searchlight as they called up questions on Channel 09; we reckoned we were actually still in Lebanese waters. We worked a 2hr, then two 3hr watches through the short night, first light came shortly after 0400 and it was a peaceful passage, we even had to slow down to avoid being too early.

Carmel Yacht Club, Haifa, has new pontoons – finished the week before we arrived, in an extremely smelly little basin. There were laid buoys for our stern lines and lots of conscripts on the shore side to help; no power or water as yet. A red rose for each boat and a very warm welcome from the yacht club members, though we were closely quizzed by a polite official with very piercing eyes, on our plans and boat, he did not come aboard. There were a lot of armed and uniformed personnel

dealing with the paperwork. Somehow when you are travelling in the region you do become somewhat blasé about guns bristling out of every uniform.

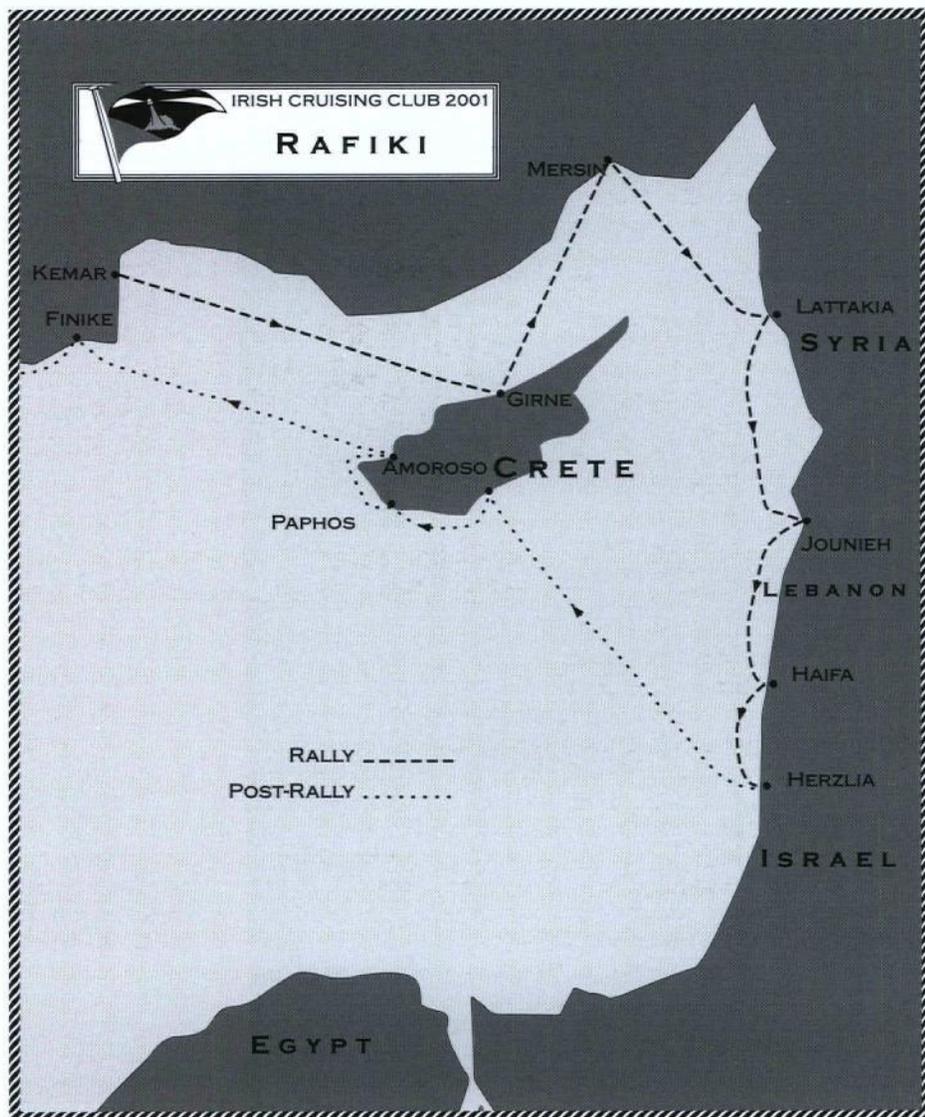
Our shore guide made the most of an eclectic range of sights on offer in Haifa – German Templar homes, a Baha'i temple and gardens and a Carmelite Monastery and finally a shopping centre with distinctly artistic overtones. Only problem at this last venue was that none of us had any shekels so unless paying by credit card it was a no-shop look-at-the-art stop. That evening the Club hosted a modest reception on the quay and afterwards each boat was adopted by a local member. We dined at the home of the Vice-Commodore and his wife, Eli and Rifka Kohn and their sons, the younger already a formidable competitor in the world of 470s. It was a very special evening.

The Rally fleet set sail for Ashkelon late in the afternoon (Wednesday 23rd May) while a small group of us planned our departure for Herzliya early next morning Herzliya is 5nm north of Tel Aviv and has a new purpose built marina and all the amenities, but we understand, though happily did not experience ourselves, is uncomfortable in a blow from the NW.

We had now officially left the Rally, received our plaque and medals and were on our own once more after a fascinating and 'character building' three weeks. Sadly the rally 'family' spirit had taken a long time to gel and we personally would have enjoyed more informal get-togethers with the participants. There was no doubt that the escalation of tensions in Israel had put a pall on us all (*and indeed the final Rally dinner in Herzliya on 1st June coincided with the night-club bomb blast some 5 miles down the coast*). However, we visited countries we would never have done on our own, we saw as much as possible of the sights and scenery, we met the locals and sampled their specialities. We made some testing passages as the weather did not help and two nights of rough seas and headwinds are not much fun on a 'forced march' but we did have a few hours of memorable sailing. **Our overall verdict: a really great experience.**

Back to Thursday 24th May and the wind was light but hopeful until mid morning and in hazy humid conditions we motored south along the Israeli coast into a head wind – the NW promised by the forecast never materialised. En route we saw helicopters buzzing around and noted a mushroom of smoke just inland; later we were to learn that it was a Lebanese Cessna which had refused to respond to the Israelis and so had been shot down. So concerned were our Haifi hosts Eli and Rifka that they tried phoning us, but 'Noddy' was not responding and they drove down to Herzliya to check that we had not been upset by the shooting. We have long time banking friends living part-time in Herzliya and over the next three days we saw much of them as well as hiring a car and driving to the Sea of Galilee.

Post-rally: From Israel we made for southern Cyprus and leaving *Rafiki* secure at St. Raphael Marina, 6 miles east of



Limassol, we flew to Egypt for a week. Since then we have seen something of Cyprus. Larnaca by road as the marina had a waiting list; Paphos harbour is charming and "I can always find a spot for a visitor" said the larger-than-life harbour master, but there were very few anchorages if any on the south coast. There is one pretty and useful anchorage inside the north west corner, Amorosa Fortuna, and we sat out a gale warning there before making our way back to Turkey. We then had several glorious weeks of doing... well nothing very strenuous, real cruising! Mid July we flew home leaving the boat in Keci Buku and part two of our 2001 cruise is planned for the southern Greek islands and Crete with the boat to come out of the water for the winter further north in Preveza.

Mileage chart

Date	From	To	N.Miles
5th April	Kemer, Turkey	Girne, N Cyprus	154
9th April	Girne	Mersin, SE Turkey	108
13th April	Mersin	Lattakia, Syria	92
17th April	Lattakia	Jounieh, Lebanon	98
21st April	Jounieh	Haifa, Israel	85
24th April	Haifa	Herzlia, Israel	53
28th April	Herzlia	S Raphael, S Cyprus	172
17th May	S Raphael	Finike, S Turkey	128
	Total		890

Dawn runs to Cowes and back

Dianne Andrews

High Jinx is an X412 designed by Neils Jeppesen and built in Denmark. She is a 41 foot Cruiser / racing yacht, with 2.15m draft and 3.9m beam, Bermudan mast head rig and has a 43 HP Yanmar 3 cylinder diesel engine. There were five crew for the first week's cruise to Cowes, which included two seventeen year old boys getting their first taste of overnight passages. Crew numbers swelled to twelve for the eight days racing at Cowes week and reduced to four for the cruise home.

DESTINATION DECISION 2001. At the end of last season we discussed our plans for 2001 with our crew, giving them the choice of a cruise to France or attending Cowes Week. The decision was unanimous! It was to be the 75th Cowes Week and many of them had also been reading about the Celebrations planned to mark the 150th anniversary of the race around the Isle of Wight that spawned the America's Cup. There was to be a gathering of some of the world's most famous yachts – a spectacle not to be missed.

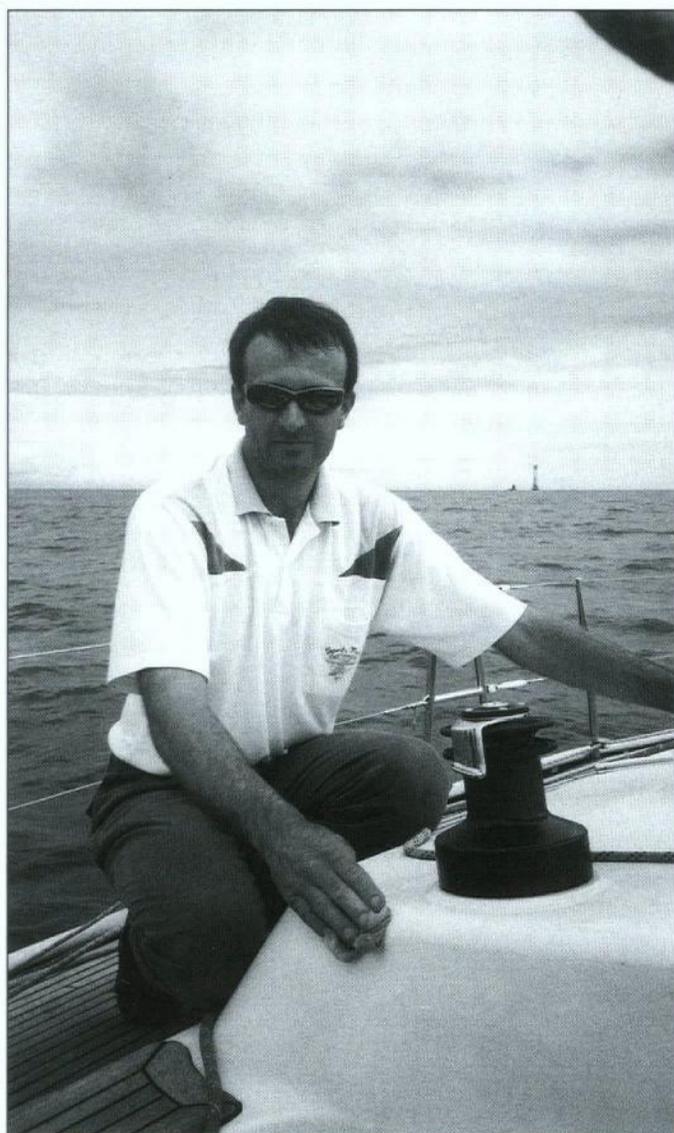
FRIDAY 27TH JULY. Ringhaddy to Arklow 103 nm Passage planning was nearly brought to a halt three weeks earlier when the skipper fell off his bicycle and broke a bone in his elbow. However luckily no operation or plaster cast were required but plenty of encouragement that the wheel would be much easier to cope with, than the tiller was in our last boat Gumdrop. We promised to lash him to the backstay if conditions got rough! Luckily the weather was set fair for departure at 1855 from our mooring in Strangford Lough. The cruising mainsail and furling headsail although in place were not required as it was very calm when we motored out of the Lough. By 2115 St Johns Point was abeam and the sun was still trying to shine. A good feed of stew prepared us all for the long night under engine. The boys, Peter (our nephew from Scotland) and Dylan had not seen each other for a year, so they had a bit of catching up to do.

It was a cloudy night with only a small section of moon appearing intermittently between the clouds, so after a couple of beers and a few tunes from Radio 1, the boys decided to turn in. The remaining three of us shared the watches. At 0400 Rockabill was abeam and we could see a few fishing boats. It was very still and calm. By 0700 the visibility had closed in and we couldn't see Howth but things improved later, as we passed Dalkey, we saw a porpoise and the sea around us was thick with jellyfish.

We motored into Arklow at 1130 and cautiously approached the entrance to the new Marina. This was lucky because it was low water and proved to be very shallow just outside the entrance. We probably missed the bottom by an inch or two! The new marina was fairly full and there was no sign of a harbour master but an old building adjacent had been renovated to provide excellent showering facilities. A notice board gave the telephone number to call and get the PIN for the showers. Saturday was a beautiful sunny day to enjoy walking about Arklow and stocking up with some of the tasty homemade products available in the shops. We ate on board afraid that

officials might confiscate our provisions due to the Foot and Mouth crisis but we need not have worried because the notice at the marina stated that food already on board upon arrival must be consumed aboard and not brought ashore. The tide suited best to leave at dawn which was not popular with the lads, when an early night was suggested and we had to miss the crack in the pubs.

SUNDAY 29TH JULY / MONDAY 30TH. July Arklow to Falmouth, almost 30 hours 210nm. A little later than anticipated we left at 0600 under engine. Once outside Arklow we hoisted full sail and by 1200 we were making 8.5 knots with the Tusker abeam in beautiful sunshine. Off the Smalls we had great fun with



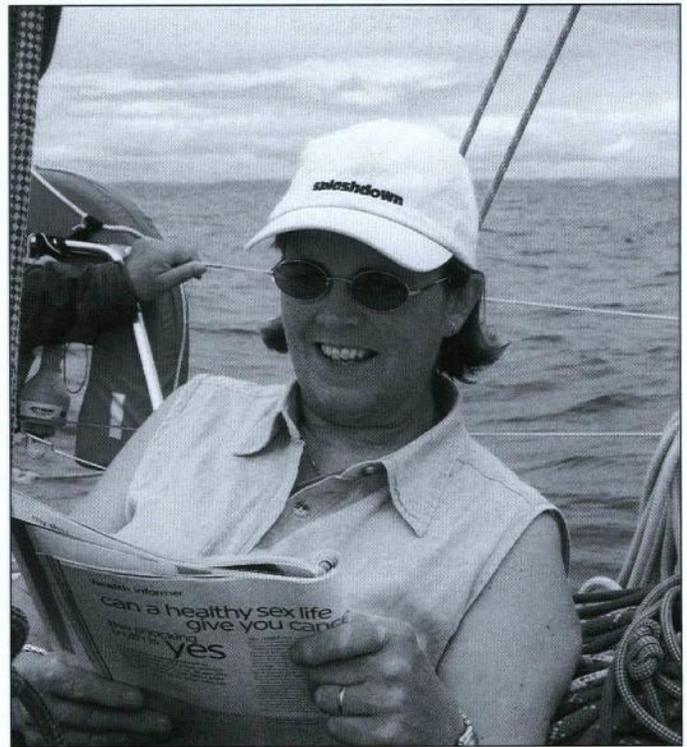
Thomas Parker making everything shipshape with Eddystone lighthouse behind

several dolphins playing around the boat. They would come zooming in towards the bow and then dive under the stern before appearing again. Peter and Dylan were thrilled to bits watching them. The SW wind began to increase to a force 4, so we furled the headsail to half size and still made 7 knots. By 1815 we were beginning to see some ships as we approached the shipping lanes. We passed a couple of large trawlers and saw 3 other yachts and a whale with a fin (maybe a pilot). We made a simple meal of bacon butties and beans to get the crew fed before dark.

Around 0230 Monday we could see the loom of the Seven Stones light and altered course for the Longships to get closer to the coast. The wind had decreased so the engine was required. As dawn was breaking around 0500 Land's End was abeam and we had to alter course for a ship as we crossed the shipping lane. The tide was again with us and we were making 7.4 knots. The early morning continued calm and cloudy and by 0900 off the Lizard, an HM Customs boat *Sentinel* motored slowly past and decided not to board us thank goodness! (but they would not have found anything).

High Jinx arrived into Falmouth at 1145 (we reckoned favourable tides had saved us about 6 hours) and luckily found a berth alongside at the Port Pendennis Marina. We were tied up beside a beautiful classic yacht called *Lutine* which was built in 1952 for Lloyds and had recently been refurbished in the Helford River Boatyard.

All the marinas on the south coast are always very busy, so it is advisable to telephone ahead to book a berth. You can be turned away if you just turn up. Port Pendennis marina is within easy walking distance of restaurants, pubs and the main shopping street of Falmouth. After exploring the bustling narrow streets and sampling a pub lunch at The Chain Locker, we purchased some Cornish Pasties to take on board.



Dianne Andrews caught reading uncensored material!

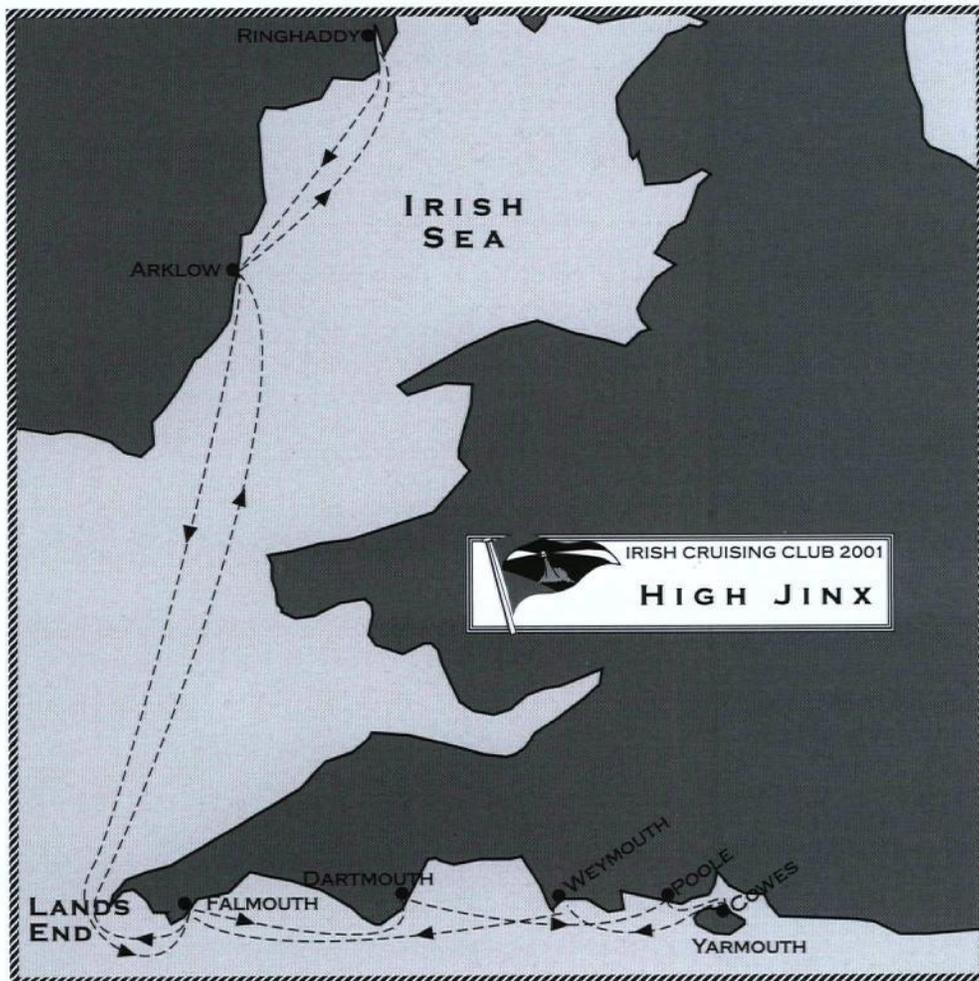
TUESDAY 31ST JULY. Falmouth to Dartmouth 67nm. Another early start to suit the tide. At 0700 we left under engine meeting a huge cruise Liner *Astor* from Nassau at the docks entrance. It is amazing watching how they can manoeuvre such an

enormous vessel in such confined water. We were still motoring about eleven miles from the Eddystone at 1030, as there was low cloud and not enough wind to sail. The sun came out as we passed Salcombe and two of us got heavily involved in cleaning the GRP around the cockpit. We used a bathroom mousse spray which proved excellent for brightening up the white without abrasion.

Later when relaxing on the deck, I saw a huge orange plastic bag just submerged under the surface disappear under our bow. It was too late to avoid it, so quickly Tom was signalled to, to put the engine into reverse. Thankfully the bag slowly came to the surface behind us without causing damage.

There were plenty of small dinghies sailing around as we approached Dartmouth about 1730. It is such an impressive and historic entrance. It made everyone reach for their cameras. There are new visitors pontoons at Darthaven marina since the last time we were there and they are really convenient to the ferry across to the town centre.

We took the ferry across and the lads were fascinated by the old fashioned rope mechanism used by





Skipper Tom Andrews relaxed – in cruise mode.

the old workboat pulling the car ferry across the river Dart. Luckily we found a shop open to provision the boat and set about exploring the quaint narrow streets. We came upon a little old pub called the Cherub Inn which was adorned with the most magnificent hanging baskets and window boxes in full bloom. This picturesque exterior enticed us inside to sample the beverages and partake of a delicious meal.

WEDNESDAY 1ST AUGUST. Dartmouth to Poole 75nm. Peter and Dylan were pleased to hear that we didn't need to leave until 0745. It was however a very foggy morning with a 16 knot easterly wind. We had a bit of a scare about 0900 when we heard a foghorn but could see nothing. It sounded very close and then changed to two short blasts at regular intervals. Suddenly out of the gloom appeared a large, heavily laden tanker from Hong Kong called *Dyna Gemini*. We had to alter course rapidly as it turned to port and crossed ahead of us. It must have been going to anchor in Lyme Bay as the chart showed an anchoring area for tankers. Thank goodness we had kept such a careful watch as we might have been run down, as Tom initially assumed it must be heading up the channel.

The wind was still on the nose and had increased to 20 knots. We decided that it would probably be more comfortable under sail and the visibility had improved a little. Now with one reef, beating to windward we were making 6 knots and taking the waves better. As we sailed inshore towards Bridport, the sun came out. We tacked in near the beach, and then made for Portland Bill at slack water. Abeam of Portland Bill we were pushed along at 6.5 knots as the tide turned but there were still a few rogue waves about. At 1915 we were beating with jib and engine passing the St Alban's Ledges and making 8.5 knots in a lumpy sea and tide with us. It was beginning to get dark when we arrived at the new Dolphin Haven Marina at Poole Quay. This is a new marina just completed this year and still has temporary showering facilities. It was the most expensive marina at least 50% more than any other we visited. However it is great to be right up near the centre of Poole.

THURSDAY 2ND AUGUST. Poole to Yarmouth 20nm. The morning was spent provisioning the boat and exploring the town. At 1430 we left in heavy rain and poor visibility under engine. After the overfalls at Poole bar we motor – sailed past the

Needles. The lads had only seen photographs of the Needles in glorious sunshine, so this was rather disappointing for them. At 1745 we tied bow and stern to the piles in Yarmouth harbour, as we had a night to spare before meeting other crew in Cowes.

Gradually the weather improved and we went ashore in a water taxi £1.50 per head. We had a beer in the Bugle Pub where we left Peter and Dylan playing pool and headed off to have a meal in the Fenders Bistro.

Friday 3rd August Yarmouth to Cowes 10nm. It was a bright dry morning, as we headed out of the harbour under engine, with the tide under us, arriving at Shepards Wharf in West Cowes at 1015. There was a wonderful atmosphere with everywhere bedecked in flags and yachts of all shapes and sizes arriving. The rest of the day kept us all very busy, moving

all the cruising gear ashore, putting on the racing mainsail, removing the furling system and generally preparing the boat for racing. The rest of the crew arrived and got their shore accommodation sorted out in the Duke of York pub up the road. We now had a crew of twelve, some whom we had not seen for ten years when they had sailed in *Gumdrop* with us. Three were to sleep on board and the rest ashore. It had been a huge organisational operation to get the correct crew together despite a broken engagement, a suspected heart attack and sudden changes in circumstances like a pregnancy!

SATURDAY 4TH AUGUST TO SATURDAY 11TH AUGUST. 230 Miles around the Solent. A strong westerly airstream had established itself for the entire week with wind strengths between 24 and 34 knots. This was most disappointing for all the magnificent yachts which were assembling for the Jubilee Regatta the following week, as they could only motor about or sail very well reefed. We had hoped to see the J boats and past Americas cup challengers in full sail. However there was plenty of action, with the record 1000 entries for Cowes Week. The racing everyday was on a knife edge with many broken masts and booms, torn sails, hairy spinnaker gybes, and a couple of sinkings.

Unfortunately we did not escape, as we broke our forestay during the fourth race. Luckily the mast was held up by the jib halyard and baby stay. We limped up to Hamble Point marina because we knew a rigger there and reckoned all the riggers on the Isle of Wight were already snowed under with jobs. The broken fitting proved to be non standard and hard to find a replacement, but the rigger nicknamed *Flash Gordon* persevered and got an alternative made up. The skipper and a couple of crew brought *High Jinx* back to Cowes on Wednesday evening and motored past the Royal Yacht Squadron whilst the rest of the crew were enjoying the RORC cocktail party on the lawn! We survived the last three windy races to finish 19th overall out of 52 in our class. The camaraderie amongst the crew was great and they all enjoyed the atmosphere, of Cowes especially those who went to observe the 0800 first gun of the day fired in front of the Squadron each morning. There was a great selection of restaurants and pubs and we had some memorable crew dinners, including one cooked aboard. The race week had drawn to a close and there

had been a couple of pre-planned crew changes during the week. It was time to transform the boat into cruising mode again and the crew worked like an army of ants ferrying all the gear back on board!

We welcomed Ray King on board for the last race and the trip back home. Robert Percival Price was also coming back with us to make a crew of four. There were plenty of Good-byes and happy memories as the rest of the crew departed.

SUNDAY 12TH AUGUST. Cowes to Poole 30nm. Another dawn run 0530 on a grey drizzling morning we left a very quiet Cowes still packed with boats.

By 0700 there was 31 knots of wind on the nose and we were only making 4.2 knots with a reefed main and number 4 jib. We decided not to put the furling headsail back on, as the wind was predicted to be strong and on the nose. A normal small headsail gives a much better up wind performance.

There was a huge confused sea at the Needles channel with square waves caused by wind against tide. We were wrong in our assumption that it could not be as bad as Strangford Bar. Progress was slow and we were glad we were not competing in the Fasnet race which was due to start on the next tide. It was a relief to get out of the waves when we turned in at the Poole fairway buoy.

About 1015 we heard a Mayday on the radio and saw a lifeboat speeding out. We tied up in Dolphin haven Marina in Poole at 1100. Michael our son and Sarah his wife who live in Wiltshire came to have lunch with us.

MONDAY 13TH AUGUST. Poole to Weymouth 30nm then to Falmouth 112nm. Another dawn start on a slightly better looking morning, we left with a reefed main and small jib into the usual headwind. However the tide was with us and we were making 7.3 knots. Later the tide would not be in our favour if

we continued towards Portland Bill, so rather than sit stemming the tide we decided to go into Weymouth. At 1045 we arrived into the wonderful peace and quiet after the endless headwinds. We tied up at the north pontoons near the Royal Dorset Yacht Club where you can get showers.

It was our first time in Weymouth, so off we went to explore. Walking down the Promenade was like turning the clock back 50 years! There were lots of little stalls, hurdy gurdys, dodgems, coconut shys, tombolas, helter skelters and a Punch and Judy show on the beach. Dozens of deck chairs for hire and plenty of families enjoying themselves. The atmosphere was magical. It was well worth a visit. On the way back to the boat we bought some Dorset pasties for a late lunch.

We left Weymouth at 1530 hoping for a better forecast. The wind had eased below 20 knots, as we sailed past Portland Bill at 1820 and we were making 5.6 knots to windward, at slack water. By 2100 we were half way across Lyme Bay under full mainsail. The wind had eased and the sea conditions were much improved.

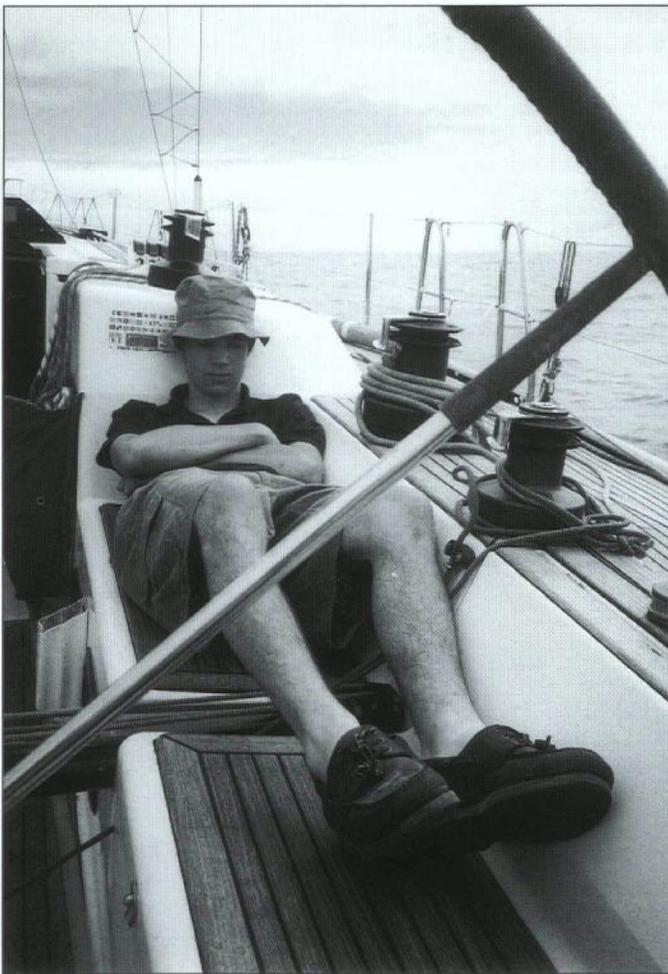
In the early hours of Tuesday morning we motor sailed past Start Point and Salcombe. We had been keeping a look out for the leaders in the Fastnet race and at 0900 just approaching Bellows Point approx 16 miles from Falmouth met the leading Trimaran.

Later we passed some of the other leaders. We telephoned Port Pendennis marina to book a berth and arrived into the same pontoon space as we had two weeks earlier at 1215. We enjoyed a relaxed lunch aboard and later found a restaurant called "Cassis" where Robert treated us to an excellent meal. Then guess what, it was early to bed in preparation for yet another dawn run!

WEDNESDAY 15TH / THURSDAY 16TH AUGUST. Falmouth to Arklow 210nm. We left Falmouth under engine at 0530 in thick



Windy conditions during Cowes week.



17 year old Peter Hume takes a well earned rest.

fog. Thankfully the Tsunamis navigation programme on a laptop computer connected to the GPS made it possible to find our way. By 0800 we were two miles off the Lizard and visibility had improved although there was drizzle and a headwind of course! The mainsail was hoisted but we continued to motor sail. The fog returned again as we approached the Runnelstone. Ray and Robert had been looking forward to seeing Land's end and at around 1130 the fog cleared just enough for them to discern Land's end before closing in again. The drizzle turned to rain about midday, but with improved visibility we were sailing to windward, off Cape Cornwall making 7.3 knots. In the late afternoon there was three hours of torrential rain and squalls, we took in one reef which reduced the speed but made life aboard more comfortable. There was a nasty squall just as the rain stopped which caused a slight knock down so we quickly bore off. Tom and Ray rushed up from below to see what was happening but panic over, we soon got on course again. Once things had settled down again Robert pointed out a 12 foot basking shark just below the surface on the port side. We watched it just lying there quite unperturbed as we sailed past.

The wind picked up and it was time to put in a second reef to help cope with the lumpy confused sea. We were still making 7.3 knots and enjoying a beautiful sunset. After sunset there was a wonderful clear star spangled sky and Robert was convinced he saw a satellite space station crossing the sky.

In the early hours of Thursday morning we had a nasty

experience. The lights of a large ship on a parallel course were clearly visible in the distance on the starboard side. Suddenly it seemed to be on a converging course and it became clear that it was going to cut across us, as if we didn't exist! It was a large passenger liner and to bear off and gybe in the strong wind might have caused us to lose the mast, tacking would also have been difficult with only two of us on watch, so the best option was to stop the boat head to wind until the liner passed ahead. The noise of the flapping sails, of course awoke the other two and they came up just in time to see the huge ship pass ahead. Tom said it was so close that he could see the passengers sitting at tables in the brightly lit dining room, but I think they were in their bunks! The liner was probably turning to go into Waterford or Cork and it had not picked us up on the radar, despite the fact that we had two radar reflectors hoisted up the rig.

Later things settled down and by 0630, it was a bright cool morning and the Tuskar was abeam. At 0900 the sun was shining and the Skipper cooked us all bacon and egg butties. We arrived into Arklow marina at 1230 in brilliant sunshine just in time to enjoy a pre-lunch drink to celebrate our landfall. We had been at sea for 30 hours and averaged 7 knots. During all this time at sea, Ray had managed to keep his deck shoe clad feet dry but as he walked up the pontoon stepping into the Foot and Mouth protection bath, the disinfectant came up over his ankles! As you can imagine he was not amused! In the late afternoon we had a lovely walk along the River bank and then Ray treated us to a delicious meal in Kitty's Pub.

FRIDAY 17TH AUGUST ARKLOW TO RINGHADDY. 103nm. Our last dawn run, we left at 0500 to get the best tide, and enjoyed watching a beautiful sunrise, in calm conditions off Wicklow head. At 0915 the skipper was in action again cooking his favourite bacon and eggs, served up as *High Jinx* crossed Dublin Bay. We went inside Lambay Island, enjoying the beautiful scenery in glorious sunshine. Later a breeze came up and by 1645 we were reaching past Annalong. We arrived back to Ringhaddy at 2030 with enough remaining daylight, to tie alongside and unload our gear before going to our mooring. We had been away 21 days and covered 1200 nm. Sixteen crew members had been involved and all the pre-planned changes had gone smoothly. As far as we are aware *High Jinx* was the only Northern Ireland entry at Cowes Week 2001.

Distances and ports of call

Ringhaddy to Arklow	103 nm 13.5 hours
Arklow to Falmouth	210 nm 30 hours
Falmouth to Dartmouth	67 nm 10.5 hours
Dartmouth to Poole	75nm 9 hours
Poole to Yarmouth	20 nm 3.25 hours
Yarmouth to Cowes	10 nm 1.5 hours
Racing on the Solent	230 nm many hours
Cowes to Poole	30 nm 5.5 hours
Poole to Weymouth	30 nm 4.5 hours
Weymouth to Falmouth	112 nm 21 hours
Falmouth to Arklow	210nm 30 hours
Arklow to Ringhaddy	103 nm 14 hours
Total Nautical Miles	1200 nm in 21 Days

“When he fancied he was past love...”

Robert Barr



THE WILD GOOSE CUP

AT THE ADJUDICATORS DISCRETION
FOR A LOG OF LITERARY MERIT

Early last year, as the Rubicon of 70 was imminent, I decided that after a long innings I should curtail my sailing to occasional forays with friends in their boats. And so I sold my beloved *Pen Men*. Later on during the summer a vista of perennial gardening brought on severe withdrawal symptoms which threatened to do irretrievable mischief. It became clear that a boat had been part of life for too long and another would have to be found to fill an uncomfortable void. The answer came when I discovered a splendid Nicholson 35 and immediately fell in love again. She was in immaculate condition with all sorts of creature comforts suitable to my time of life.

My first task was to decide on a new name. The Aven river in south Brittany is for me the heart of France. My old friends, Jacques and Marie Claire Rougeulle, with whom I have sailed in company many times, have a house there (previous ICC logs describe numerous experiences which we shared over the years). Sadly, Jacques died early last winter. Naming the yacht caused no problem. She was called *Aven* in his memory. I also decided that the focal point of my first cruise should be a visit to Marie Claire at her home by the river. A crew of old salts who she knows well of yore were rounded up for the first leg of the enterprise and we were set fair to launch *Aven* into her new life. Gathering together St. Pierre Fagan, Seymour Cresswell the Younger, the Gannet Purcell and John Peart created a most agreeable reprise from an ancient time-warp. It was great to have them back and in such good form. The years have been kind to us all.

On 31st May we set off from Dun Laoghaire on what transpired to be something of an epic passage of 392 miles to Concarneau. I would have preferred a couple of intermediate stops to break ourselves and the boat in, but time constrains dictated one long leg and in the event it worked out very well. We started with an 18 - 25 kts NW, a moderate sea and cheerful weather. Conditions soon freshened to 30 - 35 kts and gave us an SOG of 8.1 even with reefed main and genoa. Next morning a northerly gale was forecast which caught up with us later in the day and then moderated for a few hours. We found ourselves on a dead run in a turbulent sea which caused us to quarter and lose some of the time we had gained up to then - even so, we were still managing 7 - 8 kts over the ground. The weather was glorious and it was all very exhilarating stuff - especially when we tried out our new cruising chute which

gave us an extra 2 kts. When we reached the Ar Men whistle buoy at the western extremity of the Raz de Seine the strong northerly faded to a gentle 10 - 12 kts and our boat speed to a modest 5 kts. When we were south of the Raz the temperature improved by 10° or more and we embarked on a period of gloriously determined summer weather punctuated only by one or two soft days until the final passage home.

The Concarneau run turned out to be an ideal exhilarating opener with an average speed of 6 kts. It was a joy to be back in Brittany after 6 years and to meet Marie Claire and other old friends. Dinner at Chez Armande near the marina was an admirable re-introduction to the delights of Breton cuisine. It is outstanding in quality and value - well worth serious consideration. Our next door neighbour on the visitors' pontoon was Andy Stott and his lovely cruiser, *Duala*, on which he lives at Drake's Pool, Crosshaven.

The next morning was spent buying trinkets for the nearest and dearest at the weekly fair which is a major event in Concarneau. Anything can be bought from bloomers to dining-room tables and grandfather clocks. Later we sailed to the Aven river and a splendid welcome at Mouez Avel, the Roguelle home. That night we returned to another old haunt, Chez Jacky, on the Belon river - famous for oysters and just about everything that comes out of the sea. It has lost none of its delight. Tuesday was a rest day. We visited the lovely old town of Pont Aven still devoted to art where Gauguin had an impressionist school which included Walter Osborne for a time. That night the climax of the week was one of Marie Claire's inimitable banquets at home which set the seal on a delightful visit. It did us all good.



The outer at Sauzon, Belle Ile.

Next morning it was necessary to leave the river at 06.20 in order to cross the bar near Port-Manec'h at the entrance while there was still enough water. There is no problem for three hours before and after high tide. The perch which marks the bar is a good indicator. It is safe to cross if the rock on which it stands is covered. On a warm sunny morning we had a brisk sail to Le Palais, Belle Ile. We tied up at the north pier fore and aft with a line to a chain on the pier wall. Some things never change. The manoeuvre required is quite tricky and can be exciting if the ferry arrives with Gallic elan at the crucial moment when making up to the chain. Le Palais, dominated by Vauban's greatest maritime fortress, was as spectacularly attractive as ever. All in all, our experience was that south Brittany has happily remained unspoiled and has managed to retain its distinctive charm. The general impression we had was that changes were usually advantageous and it was good to find that the essential character remains well preserved.

Next day we set off for Sauzon at the northern end of the island. It is reputed to be the loveliest maritime village in France and I have no reason to doubt that accolade. The original inner port dries out. However, about twenty years ago an outer harbour was built where there are a number of visitors' moorings in deep water less than half a cable from the northern shore. When we arrived we had a choice of several.

We discovered a real treasure in Sauzon, a small restaurant called Roz Avel set in an attractive garden near the parish church. There we had one of the finest meals any of us could remember in France. No mariner should miss this delight.

An important purchase in the port from a fisherman's wife was a handsome pair of live lobsters to celebrate the arrival of Alan McGettigan at Lorient next day. We had another brisk passage from Sauzon in a 15-20 kt NE and arrived at the visitors' pontoon which is part of the marina near the centre of the town. Alan was there to meet us and it was great to have him on board.

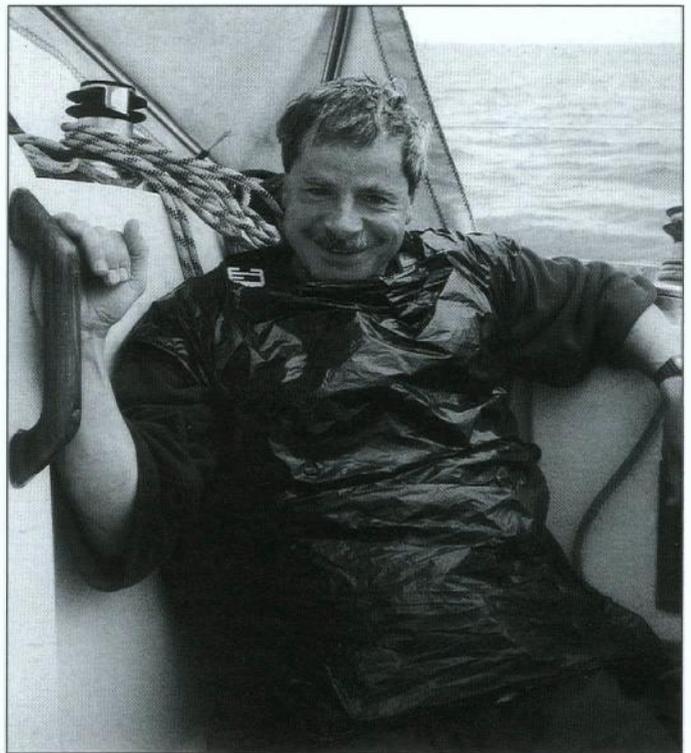
Lorient, famous for its World War II U-boat pens and its contemporary NATO naval harbour, is a large and quite attractive town with rail and air services to Paris which make it a good place for crew change. The marina is central and has good facilities. Lorient also boasts a remarkable *maitre de fromage*, M. Stintzy Martin in avenue Marshal Foché who claims to have the finest cheeses in France. There is a constant pilgrimage to his shrine.

The second major event planned for our Breton odyssey was a visit to old friends Guy and Laurence Tonnerre at Port Tudy, Ile de Groix to celebrate Guy's 50th Birthday. It transpired that he is now the Mayor of Groix, but high office has not curtailed his exuberance and *joi de vie*. Much thought had been given to The Birthday and it was decided that our contribution to the festivities should be a Cruise Christmas Dinner on board *Aven*. Cresswell, known far and wide as a distinguished maritime chef, came into his own and produced a tour de force for eleven diners. The night ended in song and story. A cruising milestone.

Next day we sadly parted with Seymour, St. Pierre and the Gannet. It was time to return to their time-warp and a genie whisked them away in a ferry for Lorient. As always, they had added a special dimension to the proceedings.

The rest of Sunday was spent in gentle recovery. John set about finding out why Neco, the self-steering gear had let us down on the original outward passage. He discovered that a cable retaining collar had emerged from its housing due to a nut and bolt coming adrift. All were restored and Neco was back in action again. Later more suitable nuts, washer and a bolt were obtained in Newlyn and were duly fitted successfully. The gear remained fully operational for the rest of the cruise – even in the northerly gale on the nose en route for home.

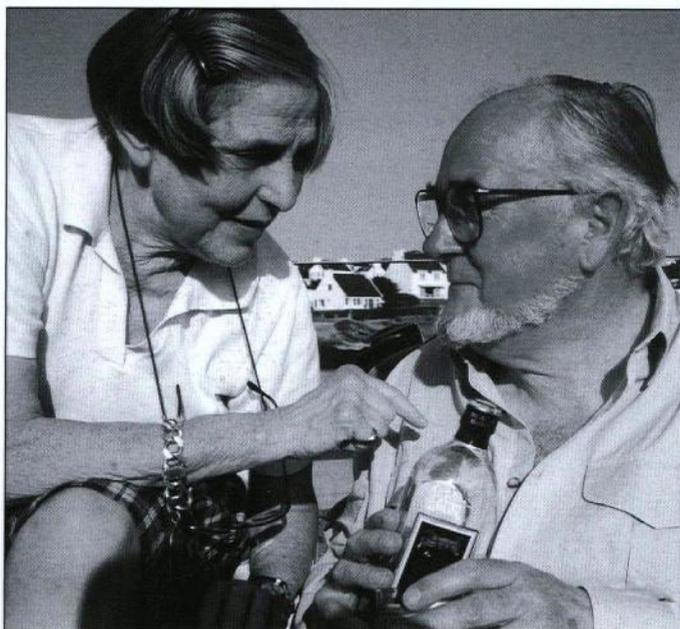
Next day we bid farewell to our friends on Groix and tore ourselves away. The weather was tropical but the sun killed the



Our chef in repose.

wind and we motored most of the way to Benodet until a 12kt W let us douse the engine. We sailed up the Odet river for 5 miles to show Alan and John some of the elegant chateaux set in delightful parklands and forests down to the water's edge. It was an idyllic journey in the evening sun. In the end we tied up at a marina close to Ste. Marine, a little gem of a village opposite the town of Benodet. The waterfront comprises a crescent of buildings most of which are upwards of 150 years old. The ground rises steeply to a little church and a second layer of old houses. Further away there is a substantial modern development but it does not impinge on the waterside buildings which, by and large, have retained their original character. The sea-front includes a couple of restaurants, a small atmospheric cafe and an admirable creperie. We dined at the Cafe du Port which was agreeable if not outstanding. Tuesday 12th offered another lovely morning which lacked only wind. There was a fitful 4 - 6 kt SE which gave up the struggle before noon.

We had an early start for our 60 mile passage to Camaret as I was anxious to pick up the flood tide from the Raz de Seine to the Pointe de Toulguet at the S entrance to the Rade de Brest. Echemühl LH at the N end of the Penmarch peninsula was abeam soon after noon and an hour later Ian Guinness in *Alakush* passed close by going south. A slight engine problem developed in course of the passage. It would occasionally rev up of its own volition. We switched it off and John Peart, our ship's engineer, carried out a thorough inspection. Nothing positive was found and it was thought that perhaps dirt in the fuel was the most likely source of the trouble. John, like all good surgeons, thought that one or two parts should be taken to pieces for detailed inspection. I am more of a physician and am a great believer in medication. I remembered that I had got a bottle of an American Starbrite product for neutralising water in diesel. A liberal measure was applied to the fuel tank and the patient made an instant recovery. The problem returned again some days later in heavy weather. It was then discovered that a seal on a deck fuel cap was perished in consequence of which some sea water was percolating into the tank. A new seal and more medication has brought a permanent cure. The Raz was reached in good time and we were rewarded by a 10 kt



Marie Claire Rougeulle and your scribe at Concarneau.

southerly which enabled us to sail at last. 8.5 kts over the ground was stimulating in a moderate sea with a few overfalls.

I was sorry that we did not have sufficient time to visit the island of Seine, which is the most zany of Breton delights, and in particular our old friend Madame Bridget and her waterfront bistro. Folklore has it that in times past the islanders were a wild, savage lot who lured ships to their doom by false lights. Certainly the family cottages bare that out as most of the furniture is obviously ancient maritime. The menfolk were also reputed to rampage the mainland and carry away suitable young women to improve breeding stock. However, it is fair to add that, according to some islanders, none of the women ever expressed any desire to return home. But then they would say that I suppose. The traditional antagonism between the island and the mainland was underlined for me years ago by a man from Audierne who told horror stories about the islanders' dreadful past. He ended by alleging that Seine was the last place in Europe to receive Christianity. I asked him when. He said that he thought it would have been about 1927! That might be an exaggeration.

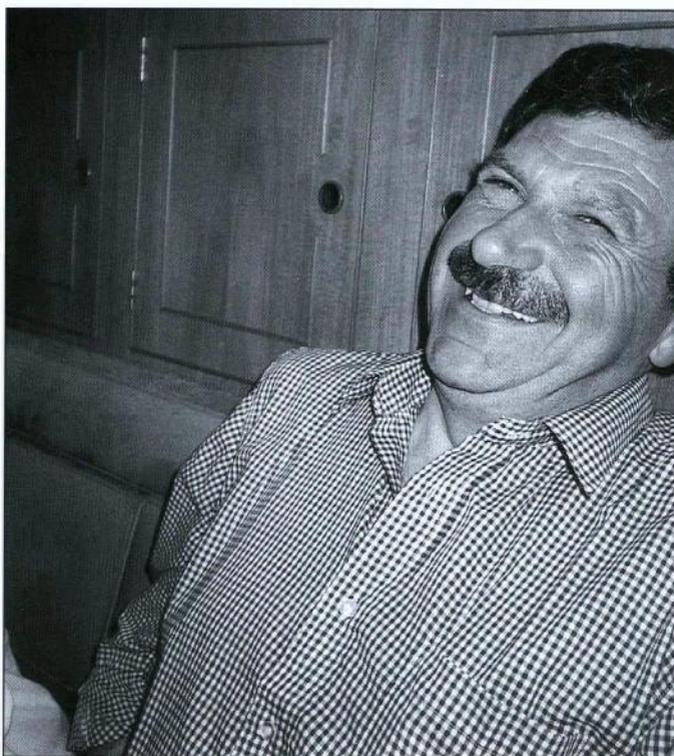
Camaret is traditionally the first and/or last port of call for yachts cruising south Brittany. It has given comfort and pleasure to many a mariner over the years. Its marina was, I believe, one of the first in that part of France and it hasn't changed much since then. In addition to water, electricity and all mod. cons, one of the attractions is a fuel pontoon. The Styvel Hotel restaurant turned out to be as good as ever – an admirable place to say goodbye to cuisine de France.

It suited the tides to stop off at the village of Lampoul on the island of Ushant on our way to Newlyn. It is another of my favourite places and it was great to have even a few hours there. This entailed an early start on Wednesday 13th to make the 32 mile passage to the Bai de Lampoul. I wanted to arrive in the last hour of the flood tide. A nice SW materialised which gave us a good sail and ensured arrival on time. Lampoul Bay and the white visitors' moorings near the village present no great difficulty with the benefit of a favourable tide. A detailed chart is important. There are two broken towers on the west side of the entrance to the bay. Coming from the east, cross the entrance until Le Stiff LH on the N end of the island is in transit with a small white beacon. Follow that line and leave Le Course islet (a very large rock) close to port. When clear of Le Course the moorings are dead ahead in a cluster about 1 - 1.5

cables to starboard of the outer village pier. I understand that the latter has sufficient depth at the end of it at low water. I have tied up there several times in the past without difficulty. The ferries from the mainland used to dock there, but nowadays they land at a jetty near Le Stiff LH except in adverse northerly conditions when the Lampoul facility is used. When we arrived, there was already a yacht tied up at the pier. If we lay alongside her, *Aven* would obstruct the nearby lifeboat slip, so it was decided to take up a visitors' mooring (of which there are about two dozen) and row ashore. A major hidden danger between the outer pier and the visitors' moorings is a reef which only becomes apparent near LW. It is not marked and an unsuspecting visitor could fall foul of it if heading for the pier from Le Course two or three hours before low water. The safe course for the pier is to pass between port and starboard pillars which are in line on the approach from Le Course and thus avoid the reef. All-in-all, it seems to me that it is preferable to avail of a visitors' mooring which are in safe water, and then row the short distance ashore. Unfortunately, Ushant is not included in the RCC North Biscay Pilot which commences with the Chenal du Four and the Rad de Brest.

Lampoul village has remained its cheerful simple self. The history of Ushant, that windswept, rugged desolate island has much of interest. Two aspects stand out in my mind – the women-folk and the village church. It seems that it is a matriarchal society. Women's liberation came long ago – even to the extent that it is the female prerogative to propose marriage.

The parish church is a remarkable story. In the latter 19th century a large British packet steamer foundered on rocks off the island in a storm. The islanders succeeded in rescuing over four hundred passengers and crew. Queen Victoria was much impressed and decided that the gallantry of the rescuers should be recognised. It was discovered that the island church was nearing final collapse. The Queen decided that there should be a new parish church as a memorial to the islanders' great courage. A large fund was raised and a Whitehall functionary was sent to Ushant to supervise the project. After construction had started the people discovered the size of the fund. They



The birthday boy on song!

decided that a modest, simple church would suffice and assumed that the balance of the finance would be divided among the island families. However, they did not realise that that is not the way things are done in Whitehall. It was pointed out that the entire fund would have to be spent on the church otherwise any balance remaining would be remitted to the Treasury in London. The end result is that a simple parish church now stands in Lampoul village with perhaps one of the most elaborate steeples in Christendom. Every time the islanders look at it they must think how tiresome bureaucracy can be!

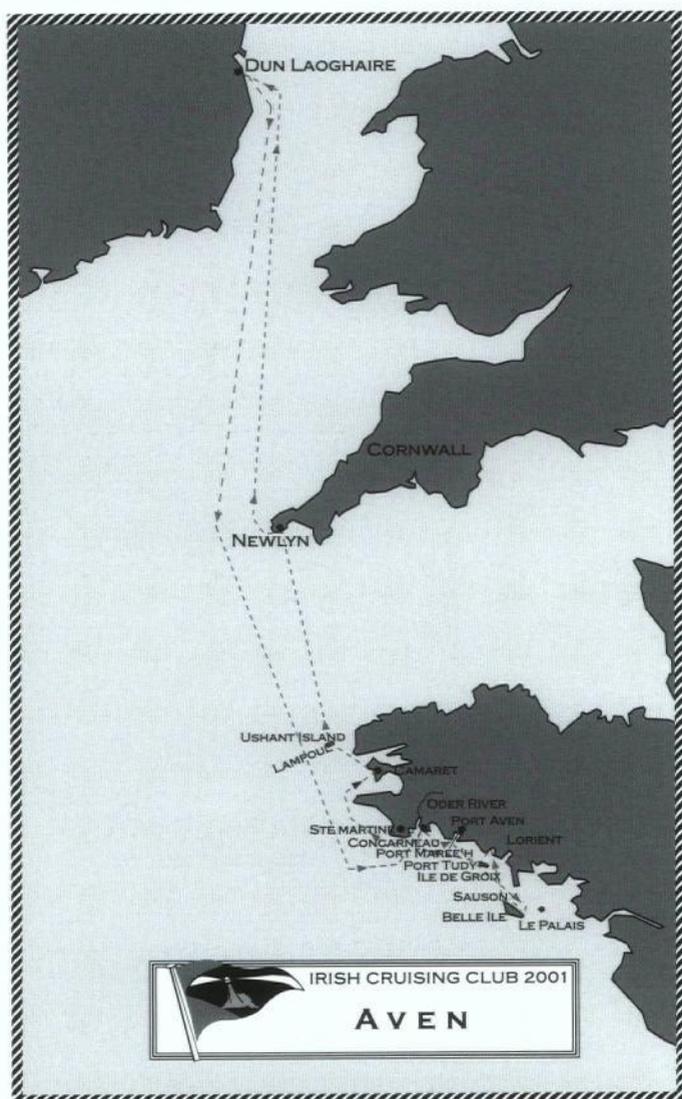
The passage from Ushant to Newlyn was a curate's egg affair. It started in tropical evening sun and no wind, but in mid English channel a SSE 15 - 20 kt dead run heralded ominous cloud, rain, a rough steep sea and poor visibility. Quartering was necessary in rising wind. We were happy to reach Newlyn in early afternoon and tie up at the usual yacht trot near the butt of the Williams Pier on the lifeboat side. We lay alongside a little pre-war 24 ft. cutter designed and built by David Hilliard. Tim, the owner, had just bought her and with a friend was in the process of sailing home to Dingle. Soon after our arrival we were joined by Robert Curtis and Olivia Duggan in their GK 29 from Dun Laoghaire. What a small world - Robert and I crewed together on *Adastra*, the Dublin Bay 24, in the early 60s - halcyon days!

Later on my old friend Andrew Munson, the harbour master,

paid us a visit and we exchanged traditional gifts. We talked about families; affairs of State and many other things. Two items of particular interest emerged. First, the good news, Andrew has put in train plans for a 60 berth marina to be situated at the north pier near the lifeboat mooring. Some dredging will be necessary but there will be no need for lock gates and it will be open at all stages of the tide. This will be a very welcome asset as the existing yacht trot is not easy - especially when an inner boat wants to leave at a troublesome time.

The other problem was not so good. Newlyn is a major fishing port - one of the biggest in the UK. Andrew told me that it lost 60 trawlers last year. The EU quota system and a plethora of difficult regulations from Brussels have combined to do grievous harm to the Cornish fishing industry. This is very sad as Newlyn is heavily dependent on fishing which is its only industry.

Dinner at the ancient Tolcarn Inn was a simple, pleasant affair. Next morning breakfast and showers at the Mission to Seamen got us off to a good start. At 19.00 as we departed Newlyn the tide scene was right for the homeward passage to Dun Laoghaire. But as it transpired there was little else of joy for us. We started with a SW 30 kt dead beat in a big sea to the Runnelstone buoy near Land's End. As we rounded it the wind turned to the NW and freshened. A short sea with 6 - 8 ft waves built up and progress was slow. After the Longships the wind moderated for a few hours but then veered north and increased to 35 gusting 40 kts in a big sea. Several long slow tacks were necessary. That situation continued until we were 25 miles S of the Tuskar LH. Then the wind moderated swiftly and at last backed S as the forecast had promised. Galley service had been restricted until then, but as we entered the Irish Sea Andrew's fish made their appearance and were much enjoyed. At Wicklow Head the wind faded away and the sea was glass calm - a profound change from the N gale and 8 ft waves which we had 12 hours earlier. It was a good illustration that weather forecasting is still an inexact science. The three day forecast issued on the morning we left Newlyn was correct only in one prediction - rough seas. However, having had such good fortune up to the final passage, it would be churlish to complain. *Aven* stood up to the battering and the three of us managed quite well. We tied up at the RIYC soon after midnight on Monday 18th June. It had been a great first cruise for *Aven* under new management. I have no doubt that she is for me an ideal finale.



Summary

Ports and Anchorage	N. Miles	Hours Sailing	Hours Motor Sailing
From Dun Laoghaire to Concarneau	392	66	14
To Aven river	19	2	1
To Le Palais, Belle Ile	41	5	2
To Sauzon, Belle Ile	4	1	-
To Lorient	26	6	1
To Port Tudy, Ile de Groix	8	1	1
To Ste. Marine and Odet river	40	2	5
To Camaret	62	12	8
To Lampoul, Ushant	32	2	3
To Newlyn	108	-	18
To Dun Laoghaire	240	-	55
	<hr/>	<hr/>	<hr/>
	972	97	106

White Shadow cruises east to west in the Mediterranean

David Nicholson

APRIL 2001 – It was with much regret that I decided to leave Turkish waters after four most enjoyable and happy years in the excellent marinas of Marmaris, Finike and Kemer. This year we planned a cruise to Menorca via the Greek Islands, the Corinth Canal leading on the Gulf of Corinth and Patros. Then north to the Islands of Kefallonia and Corfu. From there we would sail west to Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Menorca.

Early pre-planning of route and crew ensured that this trip would be an especially enjoyable time for all involved. *White Shadow* is in good shape but inevitably parts break down when it is least convenient and we duly replaced the gearbox and clutch plate as well as stripping down and servicing the anchor winch and rope cutter. Our engine went without a murmur all day but would not start in the mornings. Qualified and unqualified mechanics in three different countries were not able to put their finger on the exact cause of our air leak in the fuel system. But no problem as I bled the engine each morning before breakfast!



A swordfish boat in the Straits of Messina.

Photo: Leo Conway

Leaving Kemer in early April we sheltered through three force seven gales in the first ten days but once the summer settled in, sunshine and light winds were the order the day with lots of motor sailing. Entering Greece in Rhodes we sailed on through the Islands, through the Corinth Canal into the unspoilt Gulf of Corinth. We visited and marvelled at the site of the Oracle of Delphi and spent a while in the lovely Island of Trizonia. Kefallonia, still an unspoilt island, was our next port of call. We hired scooters (these machines have a mind of their own!) and stayed overnight in Poros and Fiskardo.

After a visit to Nidri, a busy yacht harbour and major centre for charters, we headed on to Gouvia Marina in Corfu for a change of crew. It was with a little trepidation that we returned to this island where *Black Shadow*, my previous boat, was wrecked over ten years ago. But the old town of Corfu is always worth a visit. When the new crew arrived we set off to Catania in Sicily.

After a most enjoyable few days at sea we tied up in one of the city centre marinas in the large ferry port, which is secure inside the port walls, close to the offices of customs and police, but with few facilities. Having produced the necessary documents and satisfied all long-winded queries we rented a car.

Next morning we were just about to set off to visit Mount Etna when we were visited by a party of seven customs officials. The local man introduced the skipper to the Controller of Customs in the east coast region of Sicily. He was a well-fed, stern looking gent, bursting out of his shiny suit. He spoke reasonable English and explained that they were here to search our craft. Meanwhile a large Alsatian dog, along with his gun-sliding handler, stood by ready to come aboard. We lay bow to the marina and therefore the deck was several feet off the ground, so it is easy to understand the problems that would be involved in getting the animal on to the boat. They hoisted him up and the terrified dog hung there in mid air with his paws wrapped around the stainless steel pulpit. It was only after quite a struggle that his handler eventually succeeded in landing him safely aboard.

A prolonged search followed with the now excited animal sniffing out every conceivably cranny without any luck until he came to the heads where he got very interested. The locker under the basin was opened and like a bullet his head went in to snatch out a plastic bag, which he discarded immediately. Some eight years previously this bag of dressings and utensils had been brought aboard by a doctor friend from his hospital!

Eventually after an hour searching, the entire group left peacefully. The boss no doubt was off to a large liquid lunch but without an exciting story to relate to his friends of a massive seizure.

After all this excitement we continued our plan to tour the region. Firstly we visited the mountain top village of Taormina, which was teeming with tourists so we hastened away to see Mount Etna. We saw some activity from the volcano but the major show happened after we returned to Ireland.

Sicily is an interesting and exciting country to visit. The

Mafia appear to be still active and we were fortunate to observe some of this activity at close hand. We dined at a small, secluded seafood restaurant and noticed a man acting unusually.

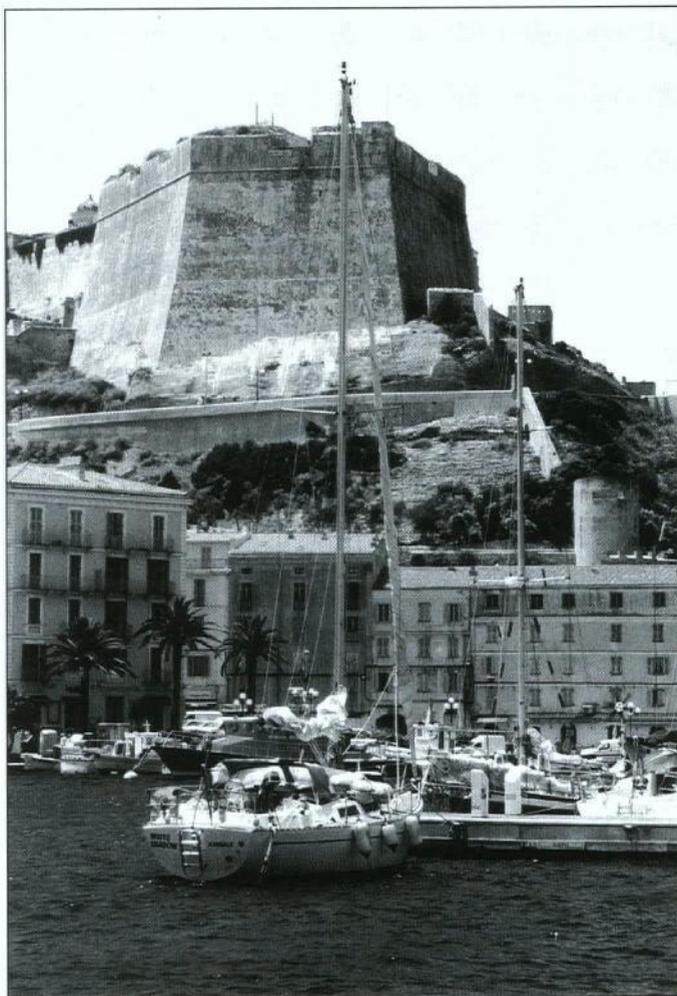
He checked the kitchen and toilets before the main party arrived. This group appeared to be the local mafia godfather and his satellites. The first man now sat at a separate table and kept an eye on everything and everybody while reading a newspaper and sipping a glass of wine. Some nefarious scheme was being hatched and furtive glances were cast towards all new customers as they entered. We, apparently, were no threat although we were seated at the next table to the group. Realising the implications and innuendos of this party was a talking point aboard *White Shadow* for many days.

With a favourable southerly wind and a flat sea we motor sailed north and passed through the straits of Messina without any trouble. Scilla, where we spent the night, is a small fishing harbour on the main land. In the season the swordfish boats leave here in their most unusual craft, which are steered by the fish spotter from the masthead. When the swordfish are sighted he directs the boat towards them. The crew can then harpoon them from the long bowsprit.

Proceeding on westwards along the north coast of Sicily we called into Portorosa, Cefalu and San Vito la Capo before setting sail for Cagliari, the capital of Sardinia. One hundred and seventy nautical miles of motor sailing brought us to La Marina Picola de Poetto where we were given an excellent berth on the marina close to a sandy beach and about five miles from the city. The summer festival was taking place and the highlight was a huge display of multi-coloured kites flying over the beach.

During our stay in Cagliari we hired a car and explored the south west corner of Sardinia as far as Santa Antiocha returning by the inland route and out to the south east region via a mountain pass through the maquis. At one place we observed a vast herd of goats in a valley with a stream, each goat's bell making music as they went.

We came across a particularly splendid nuraghe on our travels. Nuraghe are stone towers built between the eighth and tenth century B.C. and numerous in Sardinia. Six days passed quickly while we awaited the arrival of Joan and Phil from Rome where they had been following the "Bernini Trail" including a day at the Museum de Borghese with its



White Shadow in Bonafacio, Corsica.

Photo: Joan Nicholson

magnificent sculptures by Bernini and paintings by Caravaggio.

FRIDAY JUNE 1ST. With our new crew we left Cagliari travelling east on the south coast and then north along the east coast. It was very calm and extremely hot (32°C) but in the afternoon a sudden true wind allowed us to sail for an hour. The following we covered 76.5 miles motor sailing all the way except for the afternoon brief sail and arrived at Porto Caletta – a small seaside town. A blustery wind turned into the Mistral which blew hard for two days making it impossible to leave. This gave time for plenty of sampling of spaghetti and other Italian delights.



Leo Conway and David O'Morchoe off the Straights of Messina.

Photo: David Nicholson

JUNE 4TH. We continued up the east coast and berthed a night in Porto Rotundo. The marina here was new and extremely well run. Being close to a small beach we were able to continue our practice of early morning swim with aerobics. As we were close to Porto Cervo we had to investigate this millionaire's harbour where, according to the guidebook, "all the beautiful people go". It was



Getting the 'sniffer' on board!

indeed a magnificent place – very grand and very well designed – but not for us. So, after anchoring for a swim, we continued north and arrived at Maddalena Island, just off the north east coast. It is a pretty town with many holiday makers. But we decided we needed more solitude and so, after a good lunch ashore, we made the three hour journey by engine through Deadman's Passage and anchored between Isola Budeli and Santa Maria at Pink Beach. There was a full moon that night and we had a memorable evening with dinner in the cockpit, and bade farewell to Sardinia.

We had a very early start next morning in order to meet our Corsican friend in Bonifacio but we still made time for a 0630 hours swim before leaving.

Arriving at Bonifacio by water is an incredible experience. The chalk cliffs are extremely high and striated in a horizontal direction. Looking up from sea level, you strain to see the buildings of the old town overhead on the very edge of the cliffs. Tourists are ferried out from Bonifacio in great numbers to admire the view. The pontoons in the narrow harbour project out from the street and it was a very busy scene. We had been advised to moor on the Port side to avoid disco sessions.

While here, our friend Bruino Allais lent us an apartment four miles out of the town and close to a beach, in The Sperone Golf Complex – which he had designed. It had wonderful views of the islands Isola Budeli, Razzoli and Santa Maria. Having a bed that did not move and a washing machine that did was a great luxury!

We hired a car and explored this lovely island inland where the wild flowers and maquis gave off a wonderful perfume. Corsica is quite unspoilt and only a few tourists were around in the small

towns. One word of warning! Credit cards are rarely accepted in restaurants inland and the skipper was very close to having to do the dishes in one place.

Wild boars were spotted by some of the party and the many wild flowers attracted a lot of attention but were very hard to identify. A visit was paid to the Cucuruzzo ancient sight – a development from the stone age through the iron age to middle ages; an incredible way of living amongst huge granite boulders. The big mountain range, Les Aiguilles de Bavella, – the Needles – was visible from all angles as we drove around the countryside.

Restaurants in Bonifacio were plentiful and varied, but the Stella Doro in the old town should not be missed.

Altogether we spent six nights in Bonifacio a place we all enjoyed

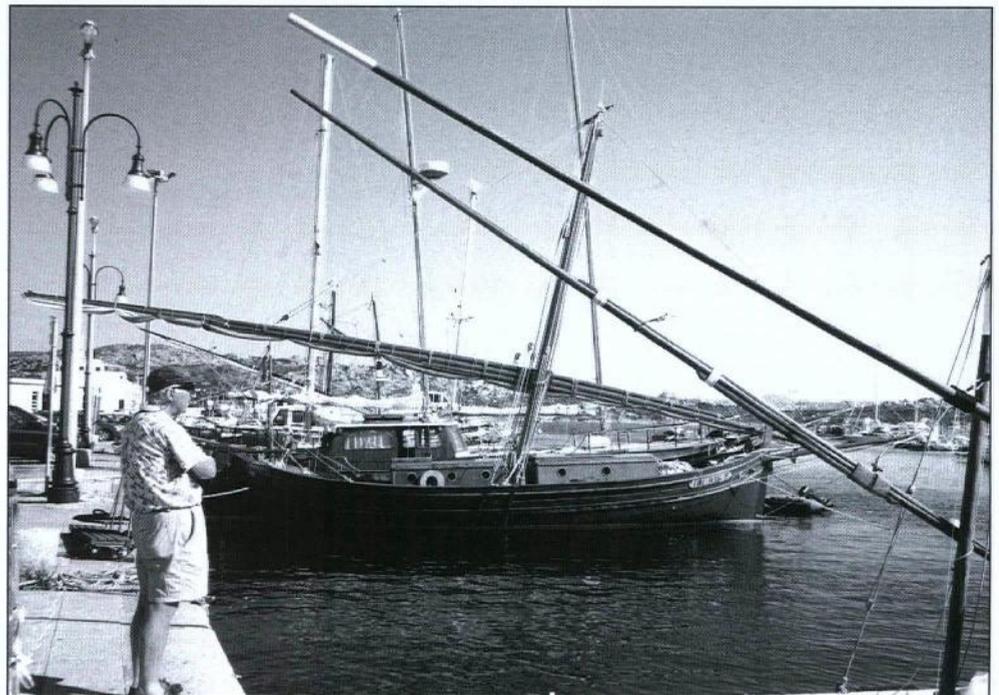
and would love to return to. For the skipper it was the fourth currency change in this cruise and there was to be one more in Menorca. The euro will certainly make that matter easier.

Our plan had been to leave for Menorca from Sardinia, but very windy conditions delayed us and so we went direct from Bonifacio starting at 0400 hours on June 12th.

It was foggy and raining at first, and dark. We motorsailed all day on two hour watches. By nightfall the rain and wind had eased and we had a very starry night.

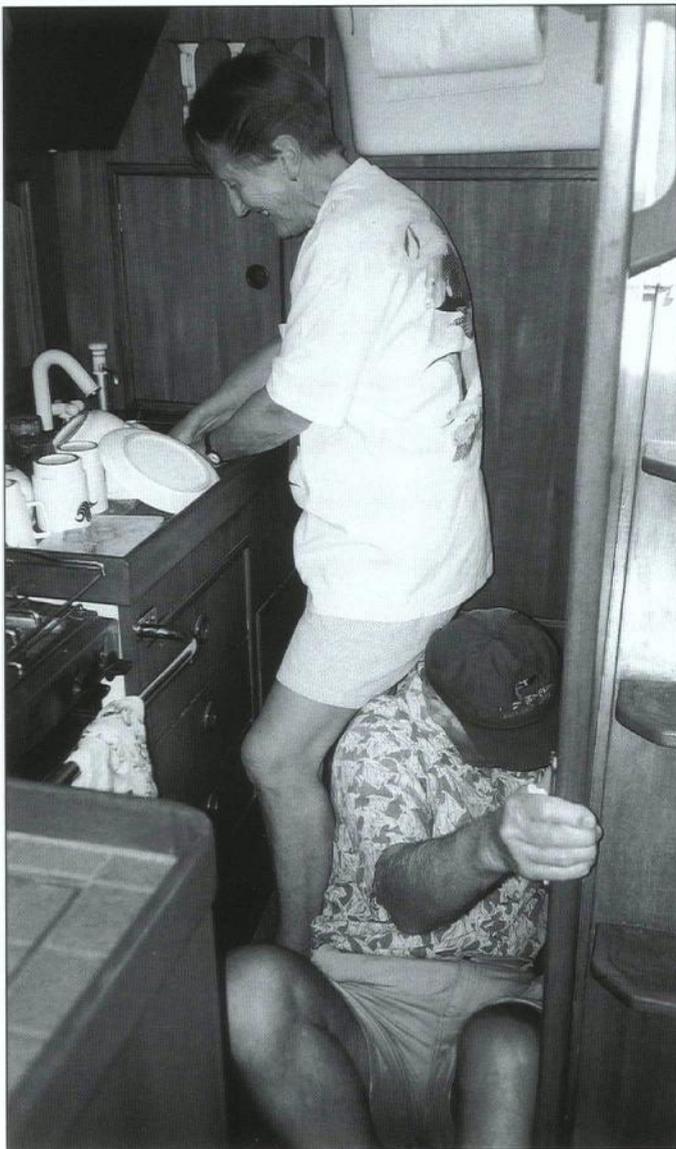
Night went into day and we continued on 246° for Mahon with the weather improving all day. After forty hours sailing and 240 nautical miles we arrived at Mahon, Menorca, the end of a memorable cruise.

White Shadow is now berthed at Nigel's Marina at the inner most pontoon of the harbour and will remain there for the winter.



Maddalena, Sardinia.

Photo: Joan Nicholson



Joan washes up while David bleeds the engine. Photo: Leo Conway

FOOTNOTE. To minimise bureaucracy we avoid ferry ports as Customs and Harbour Police are often unused to handling small craft. Instead we find there is less hassle at marinas elsewhere.

Crew changes

- Leg 1 Kemer, south Turkey via Mykonos to Lavrion (for Athens).
Crew: Skipper, Eddie Sheehy ICC, Colin Chapman ICC & Gordon Huntor.
- Leg 2 Lavrion to Corfu
Crew: Skipper, Eddie Sheehy ICC, Patrick Coughlan, Bobby Low & P.J. Daly.

- Leg 3 Corfu to Catania, Sicily
Crew: Skipper, Eddie Sheehy ICC, & Leo Conway ICC.
- Leg 4 Catania to Poetto (for Cagliari) on Sardinia.
Crew: Skipper, Leo Conway ICC & David O'Morchoe ICC.
- Leg 5 Cagliari to Mahon, Menorca.
Crew: Skipper & Joan, Leo & Phil Conway.

Route plan

April 14th/15th	Meltemi blows	
April 16th	Depart Kemer Marina, Turkey to Rhodes	138 N/M
April 18th	Meltemi blows to Mykonos	172 N/M
	to Lavrion – Crew change	71 N/M
	<i>Wind SW Force 6 – sailed to alongside pier as gearbox defunct.</i>	
	Meltemi blows to Perdika on Nisos Aigina	34 N/M
	to Galaxida – visited Delphi	102 N/M
	to Trizona	20 N/M
May 1st	to Poros on Kefallonia	65 N/M
	to Fiskardho on Kefallonia	22 N/M
	to Nidri	25 N/M
	to Gaios, on Paxos via Levkas Canal	45 N/M
	to Gouvia Marina on Corfu – <i>Crew change</i>	38 N/M
	to Rocella on Italian Mainland	201 N/M
	to Catania, in Sicily – <i>Crew change</i>	90 N/M
May 20th	to Scilla via straight of Messina	58 N/M
	to Marina Di Portarosa	38 N/M
	to Cefelu	58 N/M
	to San Vito Lo Capo	64 N/M
	to Poetto Marina, for Cagliari – <i>Crew change</i>	187 N/M
June 1st	to Porto Corollo – ideal sailing conditions	40 N/M
June 2nd	to La Caletta	76 N/M
June 3rd	Mistral blows	
June 4th	to Porto Rotondo	40 N/M
	to Maddalena Islands – visited en route Porto Cervo	25N/M
	to Bonifacio	14 N/M
June 12th	to Mahon Port, Menorca	246 N/M
	TOTAL	1869 N/M

Total hours at sea 350 fl ± 75% Motorsailing.

Marie Claire explores a sun-drenched west coast of Scotland

Sean McCormack



THE WYBRANT CUP

FOR THE BEST CRUISE IN SCOTTISH WATERS

The Hebrides is probably my favourite cruising ground. The plan was to cruise to the outer Isles and, if the weather looked settled, to go out to St. Kilda which *Marie Claire* had not yet visited. The crew comprised of Con Moran, long time friend who introduced me to sailing 25 years ago; John Ahern, sailor, musician and singer, both doing the full trip with me. Loyal racing crew Gordon Knaggs agreed to do the first half of the trip to be replaced by Willie Finnie.

Friday 14th July at 19.20 hours *Marie Claire* departed Howth and we had good sailing during the night in winds between W and NNW. At the South Rock LV, due to a building foul tide and headwinds, we reluctantly put into Portavogie which we were hoping to avoid. Con was bribed, with the promise of a pint in the first bar visited, to go to the top of the mast to sort out a furlex problem.

After breakfast we were away again just two hours after arriving. The wind was still on the nose but had now increased to force 5. A hard sail brought us to Bangor Marina where we tied up at 16.15 hours.

Con was again up the mast in return for another promised pint. The skipper and crew had visions of this becoming a rather expensive trip and agreed that a solution was urgently required. The spinnaker downhaul was attached to the bottom of the furlex swivel and, when tension was applied, our jamming problem was solved. Everyone was happy except perhaps Con.

After showers and a meal ashore and some rest, we were away at 22.00 hours with the wind still from ahead but now down to force 3. We motor sailed and nudged our way cautiously into a sleeping Carnlough at 03.20 hours. The narrow transit in the harbour approach required concentration as it was near LW and we eased past the pierhead with little to spare. We went alongside Juffra (ICC) with Dr. Michael Hill and family aboard. They kindly helped us tie up and we apologised for disturbing their nights sleep.

Departed Carnlough at 11.10 hours in company with two other yachts. We motor sailed until mid afternoon when the wind picked up from the NW and we were able to sail. At this point I gave Gordon a new compass course for Port Ellen on Jura. His reply on adjusting to the new course was "that's grand, all I have to do now is to keep that Stanchion (middle starboard) in the cleavage of the Paps of Jura".

We tied up outside another yacht at the pier in Port Ellen at 18.15 hours. After dinner on board we had two drinks in a deserted pub playing loud music.

Monday 17th at 10.15 hours sees us depart Port Ellen, destination Iona via the Sound of Islay. During the morning we passed five distilleries on Islay and we were very tempted to put into the anchorage under the Lagavulin Distillery. The skipper was conscious of the danger that Lagavulin would become our unscheduled overnight stop and the cause of Tuesday mornings hangover!

Because of the early light winds and later fresh head winds in the Sound of Islay, we motor sailed until we got to the northern end of Colonsay. From here we had a good sail close hauled to Tinkers Hole in the SW corner of Mull. We were the 13th yacht into this lovely anchorage and most of these were taking part in the Classic Malts Rally, organised by the CCC. We anchored in the only available space in the NW corner and set a second anchor from the port quarter to keep us off the nearby shore. We had a lovely quiet night here out of the tide.

Tuesday morning after breakfast and on hearing an optimistic RTE forecast of settled weather for the coming week, we went ashore on Erraid Island and climbed to the top and were rewarded with great views over the Sound of Iona and beyond. We exited Tinkers Hole by the northern end and anchored in Martyr's Bay to visit Iona. On my previous visits to Iona I do not remember seeing as many visitors as were here this time. Most come for just the day but many stay on the island for a week. On our way to visit the cathedral we heard the cuckoo. This was a rare and lovely sound on a warm sunny morning.

After lunch back on board, we made the short trip north to Staffa and Fingals Cave. We anchored in deep water at the SE corner of the island. In the prevailing settled conditions we risked everyone going ashore in the dinghy. We motored into the cave in the dinghy but found it rather rough at the inner end so we did an about turn and got out fast. We then went ashore at the landing stage and walked back to the cave. John played his tin whistle in the cave, much to the amusement of the many day trippers. The acoustics would be the envy of any concert hall.

Back on *Marie Claire* the avon is deflated and stored in preparation for a night passage out to Barra. Departed Staffa at 17.35 hours and motored in light winds and our course took us through the Treshnish Islands and then through Gunna Sound between Coll and Tiree. The light winds stayed with us all the way to Barra on a beautifully clear night. With "George" the autohelm doing the steering, the watch system broke down due to the reluctance of those on watch to come below. This is not a normal occurrence on *Marie Claire*. We had slight confusion for a time while approaching Castle Bay trying to pick out the various lights and transits but all soon fell into place. We picked up the second last visitors mooring at 04.25 hours well pleased with ourselves.

The next day Wednesday saw us rise at 10.00 hours and after breakfast we enjoyed a leisurely day ashore. We went for a two hour hill walk to the east of the anchorage. This gave us the necessary thirst for two pints in the Castlebay Bar. John entertained the locals on his guitar and his rendition of the Green Fields of France left not a dry eye in the bar. After booking the Castlebay Hotel for dinner and buying cards to send home, it was time to stock up on provisions. Unfortunately, there was no milk or bread until the ferry got in next morning, alas too late for us. The hotel gave us half a loaf of



What grown men will do for a pint!

Willie Finnie

bread that night. In the afternoon we went alongside the pier and took on water and diesel. Dinner that night could be described as a razor fish experience with some having it for starters and others as the main course. Opinions were divided on the wisdom of the choice.

Thursday 20th and we were away at 07.10 hours heading north in a light W wind. The sails needed some help from the motor. We decided to pay a short visit to Loch Boisdale on South Uist to get the milk and bread that we failed to get in Barra and to have a late cooked breakfast. We tied up outside a local fishing boat at the pier and then discovered that the shops were three miles away. We had just finished breakfast when the trawler inside us decided to do what trawlers normally do so we departed at the same time which was just under an hour after we arrived.

The wind was now SW and we enjoyed a great sail up the east sides of South Uist, Benbecula and North Uist and then into Loch Maddy for the night. All five visitor moorings off the Ro Ro pier in Loch Maddy were occupied. We had put out fenders with the intention of going alongside a tug tied up at the pier when we were hailed by the owner of the moody Marlin on one of the visitor moorings. He invited us to share the mooring with him as the conditions were light. Roy Smith and his wife and their young son Christopher were sailing from their home port of Dunstaffnage. They were very friendly and we shared a couple of drinks with them before dinner. It transpired that they knew Joe Mahony from Howth Yacht Club and one of Joe's sons had holidayed with the Smiths. He gave me an RNLI jumper to give to Joe on my return to Howth. After dinner the Smiths joined us and serious inroads were made into *Marie Claire's* stocks of Redbreast Whiskey.

Next morning after breakfast and a water tank top up at the pier, we got away at 08.00 hours motoring in a glass like sea for the Sound of Harris and our exit west to our target of St. Kilda. We were steering a course to go through the Sound via the Staunton Channel which is the recommended and widest channel. This was the route I had studied beforehand and had a clear picture of in my mind. A yacht which had come from the

direction of Skye passed ½ mile astern of us heading for The Cope Passage through the Sound of Harris. We could see all the channel buoys in the flat sea and instantly decided to follow this yacht through. This worked well for us and saved us some distance but I would not dream of doing it if the weather was unsettled.

At 12 noon we had cleared the Sound between Pabbay and Shillay. We motored all day into a slight W. and later NW wind. During the day the only traffic was two yachts, one ahead of us going to St. Kilda and one returning.

We were listening to the BBC 17.55 hours shipping forecast when about half way through the announcer apologised as he was reading the wrong forecast. There followed about five minutes of music until they sorted out the problem. Rather unlike the BBC. The forecast for Hebrides was for variable winds going E 3 or 4.

This direction was a bit of a worry because if the wind got up even to a force 4 from anywhere in the east, we would have to get out of the Village Bay anchorage. The only options would be to go to Glen Bay on the north side of the island which is too deep for safe anchoring or head back for the Sound of Harris.

We dropped anchor in Village Bay in 9 metres at 21.00 hours and immediately went ashore. We were keen to set foot on St. Kilda and have a quick look around in case we had to get out during the night. Ashore we met Andy Robertson, the warden, who gave us a brief history of the island and its facilities. After a brief sightseeing tour we enjoyed a couple of drinks in the Puff Inn, membership charge of £1. We had an enjoyable hour here with the crews of two other yachts and some of the civilian maintenance crew looking after the military installations on the island.

We had a comfortable night at anchor and next morning there was very little wind so we went ashore content to explore the Island more fully. We climbed to the top of Mullach Mor, 361m. by the concrete road and then to the top of Conachair 426m. The high cliffs on the north side of the island were awesome. The variety and sheer numbers of bird life was astounding. While descending Conachair we were constantly dive bombed by skuas which was a little worrying.

The other things that stood out were the islands breed of soay sheep, the old grey army huts now occupied by the American civilian team servicing the tracking station. The ruins of many of the old houses and village boundary walls are still to be seen. The hundreds of cloiths or dry stone storage huts, all over the place and high up the hills, are reminders of another age. This other age is well documented in the National Trust Museum housed in a restored croft house. Here we learned that the last inhabitants were taken off the island in 1930.

Making a living fishing in the mountainous seas around St. Kilda was not an option. It was normal practice for all the men to meet each morning in the cluster of houses overlooking Village Bay to discuss and plan the days work. During the month of August it was the custom for the younger men to

climb the high rock cliffs and snare fulmars with long ropes and throw them down to a boat waiting below. This was difficult and dangerous work and required great skill. Egg collecting on the rock face was also an important source of food.

Back on board we had a swim and lunch and then ashore again. John bartered in the Puff Inn resulting in a loaf of bread and some butter to augment our meagre rations.

About mid-afternoon John and Gordon rushed to the dinghy as a basking shark had appeared in the anchorage. They spent 30 minutes watching him. After they came ashore we had a last drink in the Puff Inn before our departure. We had planned to take photos of Stac Lee and view the steep cliffs from close in. When we got back to the dinghy we discovered that the aft section had deflated due to the valve plug having been knocked out. The outboard engine was under water. Even with washing out in fresh water and help from one of the maintenance team, the outboard refused to start.

It was 21.40 hours by the time we got away and our plans to view the cliffs and Stac Lee had to be abandoned. As we headed east for the Monach Isles the St. Kilda group of islands was silhouetted in the last rays of the evening sun. We were very happy with our visit. The decision to visit the Monach Isles was only taken when we were in St. Kilda. As we had a day to spare before our crew changeover on Wednesday in Portree and the weather was so settled, it would be a pity not to avail of this once in a lifetime opportunity.

It was a lovely bright night with a light NE wind. We got some sailing but had to motor sail for periods. We nosed into South Harbour between Shivinish and Ceann Iar Islands at 06.10 hours on Sunday 23rd. We anchored in 7m of crystal clear water off a magnificent white sandy beach. We then took to our bunks until 09.50 hours.

We went ashore on Shivinish Island. The contrast between the St. Kilda group and the Monachs could not be greater. The Monachs are flat with soft soils, white sandy beaches, turquoise waters, hundreds of curious grey seals and are a beachcombers paradise, with a few palm trees it could be the Caribbean. The Monachs which lie about five miles west of North Uist are uninhabited and only accessible in good weather.

We spent a fascinating three hours exploring Shivinish and Ceann Iar Islands. We discovered hundreds of fishing floats washed up and the usual flotsam. We found an old drone largely intact that will fly no more. Our movements ashore were closely watched by, at least, 100 grey seals who kept following us as we explored the shoreline.

The one yacht that was here when we arrived left soon afterwards. With the birds and seals we now had the place to ourselves and it was pure magic with St. Kilda to the west, Barra and South Uist to the south, Harris and the Cuillins and Skye to the east over Benbecula and Lewis to the north, all clearly visible in the bright hot sunshine. We were very reluctant to leave this wonderful place on the hottest day of the year. Anchor up and away at 15.10 hours to the deafening sound of the calling seals which are reputed to number up to 300.

We had a tortuously slow motor sail into fresh headwinds and a seemingly adverse tide for seven hours as we made our way up the west side of North Uist. Dinner this evening consisted of the last of our depleted food supplies comprising soup, one tin cold meat and plenty of spring onions.

It was dark when we entered The Cope Channel and the wind much fresher but, at least, we were now sailing due to our new SE course through the channel. Full concentration was required in picking out the channel buoys in the correct



Village Bay, St Kilda.

Photo: Seán McCormack

sequence and watching for tidal set in the narrow channel. Safely through we had a lively sail in a freshening N wind that was up to force 6 at times as we crossed the notorious Minch to Loch Dunvegan on Skye's west coast. The anchor hit the bottom at 05.20 hours as the three visitors moorings were occupied, two by local fishing boats. Later in the morning we had a hard row ashore in the strong winds to purchase much needed provisions. Showers are available in a camp site, 20 minutes walk south of Dunvegan.

Back on board we had lunch and John entertained us on his guitar. Later ashore we visited a rather neglected Dunvegan Castle, the family home of the McLeod's since the 1200's. We had an excellent dinner in "The Tables" part of a small family hotel. Back on *Marie Claire* and after two nightcaps it was time to catch up on lost sleep.

Fouled anchor

Next morning Tuesday our departure was delayed by 25 minutes due to a fouled anchor. I'm a great believer in trip lines which rarely fail in this situation. Finally away at 09.50 hours bound for Rona. After clearing the mouth of the Loch, the wind increased to force 6 N and later NW. We had good sailing until about one hour from Rona when the wind went light and the motor was required.

There were three other yachts in the Acarseid Mhor anchorage when we arrived at 18.40 hours. After dinner, cooked by Gordon, we had the first rain of the trip and we decided not to go ashore until morning. We played a card game called "Switch" which went on for 1½ hours.

After breakfast, and with an improving morning, we explored ashore and climbed to the highest point on the island. We ignored the "Beware of the Bull" sign and regretted that the restored cottage was no longer offering showers to visiting yachtsmen as indicated in the pilot. This is a beautiful and safe anchorage but care is needed to avoid rocks on the way to the anchorage behind the islet near the head of the inlet. We all enjoyed our stay here and the skipper picked a bunch of heather for *Marie Claire's* pulpit.

On arrival in Portree harbour at 12.00 hours, the Harbour Master helped us tie up at the pier and later allowed us to spend the night on the small one berth pontoon on the inside of the pier. This was all very convenient because of the crew change. Willie was arriving later today and Gordon was away early next morning. Thanks to a phone call from the Harbour Master, a mechanic had collected the outboard 15 minutes after we arrived and returned it working 1½ hours later. Gas, diesel, water, ice and groceries were all quickly acquired and showers were made available in the RNLi premises on the pier in return for a contribution. Willie arrived on time and we had two pre-dinner drinks in a local bar. Dinner was booked for the Bosville Hotel restaurant which was good but very expensive.

Next morning Gordon left us to go back to Dublin. We motored in a windless sea and under the new road bridge to Skye at the Kyle of Loch Alsh. We tied up at the new pontoon outside the Kyle of Loch Alsh Hotel at 13.00 hours. The harbour area was very busy and I noticed large quantities of imported fish feed destined for the many fish farms that have mushroomed all over the west coast.

Mid-afternoon we were away and got a good tidal push through Kyle Rhea. We picked up one of the Forge Inn's visitor moorings off Inverie, Loch Nevis at 20.45 hours. On our way into the Loch we had called them on the radio and confirmed the mooring and also booked a table for dinner, resulting in no charge for the mooring. After a delay in getting a table in a very busy restaurant, we enjoyed an excellent seafood dinner. After

dinner John entertained the customers and a good night was had by all. On our way out to *Marie Claire* we were invited on board a large motor yacht for drinks, resulting in a very late night.

Next morning we got away at 06.45 hours. The sea was like glass and there was a slight mist over the hills. The sun was up but not yet visible over the hills. Not a sound was to be heard and the whole scene was pure magic in this picturesque loch. It seemed a shame to shatter all this by starting the engine. We arrive into Loch Scavaig at 11.50 hours. The pilot describes this anchorage as one of the most dramatic and awe inspiring in Europe. It is right under the Cuillins on the south coast of Skye. Mooring space is limited and the anchorage is only suitable in settled weather due to the severe down draughts. Some of us had swims, John tried fishing with no luck and all enjoyed the spectacular scenery. We took many photos but were very aware of the limitations of still photos in such a vast and dramatic setting. Later we all went for a long walk on the shores of Loch Coruisk and understood why this area attracts serious rock climbers. After dinner on board we joined the crew of a Swan 47 for a few drinks on board and a most enjoyable 1½ hours it was.

Kinlough Castle

Next morning Saturday we got away at 09.40 hours after a very comfortable night at anchor. As there was no wind we motored to Loch Scresort on Rhum. A new pier is under construction here but we found it a pleasant stop. We had a short guided tour of Kinlough Castle which was built in sandstone by Sir George Bullough in 1897. His father had bought the island earlier for use as a shooting estate. (It is described as a Victorian extravagance with no expense spared. One example is the orchestration which cost £2,000 - £120,000 in today's money). Electrically driven it uses large rolls of perforated card and paper thin brass to simulate a 40 piece orchestra. The controlling belts and pulleys play a noisy overture before every melody. The amazing array of pipes and percussion devices cheerfully belt out military marches, polkas, operatic excerpts and Edwardian popular songs. It sits under the stairs and is one of only three made. It is thought to have been ordered for Balmoral Castle by Queen Victoria who died before it could be installed.

We then had a drink and made some small purchases in the islands only shop run by Clare man, Aidan McKeon. We spent 40 minutes with Aidan hearing about all the problems and hopes of the islands. In the later afternoon we made the short trip to Canna Harbour where we spent the night.

Next morning, Sunday 30th, we headed south passing one mile west of a windless Ardnamurchan. Just south of the head John and Willie caught our lunch in the form of seven mackerel. This lunch was taken in Eilean na nEillean, Carna, one of the many anchorages in Loch Sunart. In the evening we moved the short distance to Loch Drumbuie where we shared the SW corner of this popular anchorage with eight other yachts. Two other ICC yachts were also here for the night. Former ICC Commodore Michael McKee and his wife Anne on Isobel and George and Shelagh McCann on Deucalion were making the most of the Scottish high pressure weather system. I had a pre-dinner drink on Isobel and the McKee's and McCann's joined us after dinner for a "wee dram" on *Marie Claire*.

The next two days saw us visiting Tobermory, Kerrera/Oban and Puilladobhain. The Tennents West Highland Week Fleet of 200 yachts was just leaving Oban Bay as we arrived.

On entering Puilladobhain on Tuesday evening we

discovered that the first cairn forming the transit through the narrow channel into the anchorage was completely submerged by the Big Spring tide. Luckily I had been into this favourite anchorage a few times previously and we got in safely, if somewhat cautiously.

After dinner on board we had a mile walk over sodden grounds to Tigh an Truish at Clachan Bridge (Bridge over Atlantic). Before leaving the pub I decided to enter our call in the visitors book which is not much used nowadays. The rest of the crew were quite impressed when I was able to show them previous *Marie Claire* visits entered in the still used book, dated July 1983 and July 1993. It was black dark for our return and luckily we had brought a torch. The torch, however, did not save Con from putting one leg into a drain. Back at the dinghy, which luckily is on dry land, we found the aft section flat again. I suggested going out to *Marie Claire* and pumping up the section and returning to bring the others out. However, John got down on his knees and with some help from Willie inflated the dinghy by mouth. This operation, overseen by an uncomfortably wet and dirty Con, at well past midnight I found rather hilarious.

We had a lie in on Wednesday morning and after breakfast we got away at 11.40 hours, destination the Garvellachs Islands where we put into the Eileach an Naoimh anchorage. A steep climb up rocks from the dinghy led to a very interesting island with extensive remains of a monastic settlement and the reputed grave of St. Columbas mother. We explored a beehive hut, chapel, old store, water well, etc. A lot of history here and everything very well signposted.

Gulf of Corryvreckan

Another of the reasons for going to the Garvellachs, which none of us had visited previously, was the opportunity of going through the Gulf of Corryvreckan. This stretch of water, 1½ mile long and ½ mile wide, lies between Scarba and Jura and is an area of savage overfalls, whirlpools and standing waves and has a fearsome reputation. As the weather was settled and our arrival timed for slack water, the passage through was rather tranquil except for some whirlpools. Another "must try that sometime" ticked off.

Our course from Corryvreckan to Crinan took us through the Dorus Mor which was also on its best behaviour. We picked up a mooring outside Crinan Harbour just as the sun went down over the Dorus Mor and Corryvreckan making a picture postcard at the end of a rewarding day. Ashore Crinan locks looked very pretty and the pint in the hotel bar tasted good.

Next morning we went into the open sealock and took on water before heading south to the MacCormaig Isles. Here we encountered the strongest tides and whirlpools of the trip near the entrance to Eilean Mor on the northern end of the MacCormaig Isles. This was my third visit here and it is a one yacht anchorage with restricted swinging room. This is due to two rocks, one of which was recently blown up but all the debris may not have been removed. We explored ashore for an hour and while going out in the dinghy we heard *Marie Claire* bumping gently on the nearby rock. Luckily there was little wind and I would be slow to advise a yacht to visit. Shortly after we anchored another yacht arrived and had to leave again.

We left at 11.25 hours heading for Gigha. On the way the wind was up and down and we got in some sailing. On arrival we found all the visitor moorings taken so we anchored. Ashore we all do our own thing, shopping, gardens, church, etc. Mr. McSporan may have retired from his other 14 jobs on the island but, for the moment, he is still running his shop. We had a pleasant meal in the Gigha Hotel and everyone was impressed with the island, basking in the hot Summer sun.

Friday morning sees us away with the tide at 09.30 hours with Church Bay Rathlin the intended destination. We were close hauled all day and just cleared the eastern end of Rathlin before rounding up into Church Bay. Since my last visit two new breakwaters have been built. Unfortunately, as mentioned by Ed. Wheeler in the 1999 ICC Annual, there is not 2m MLWS at the entrance to the inner harbour as stated in the pilot. Ask the bottom of my keel! We spent some time exploring ashore and later had a drink in the new, large rather impersonal pub.

In the evening we crossed Rathlin Sound to the small, comfortable new Marina in Ballycastle. This is a great facility strategically positioned, cost £10 per night including showers.

Saturday morning after breakfast, showers and small shopping, tides dictated a 09.00 hours departure. During the day we had periods of sailing and motoring in winds that were light most of the time. The tide had turned against us as we approached Donaghadee Sound so a few hours in the harbour here seemed a good idea. We nosed our way carefully to the pier through the crowded harbour. We were then advised to move back about 10 yards as a local boat was due in soon and the grumpy owner would not be pleased to find another boat in his place. It was festival weekend in the town which was very busy. There were many bands from all over the north. We enjoyed our stay.

For the final leg of our trip to Howth, departure from Donaghadee was 21.10 hours. During the night we had some good sailing after motoring for the first hour or so. Once or twice during the night the winds went light but soon came up again. We got into our marina berth at 12.55 hours Sunday 6th August.

We were all delighted with the cruise which took us to all the anchorages we had hoped to visit and, indeed, many more. The weather was exceptional for the west coast of Scotland and, if there was a down side, it was the lack of sailing breeze on many of the legs. The high points for me would have to be the Monach Isles, St. Kilda, Loch Scavaig and motoring into Fingals Cave in the dinghy.

My thanks to Con, John, Gordon and Willie for making this one of *Marie Claire*'s best cruises.

Cruise duration	23 days
Total mileage	958 miles
Passage time	189 hours
Motoring time	101.5 hours
Total No. of Anchorages visited	32
Anchorages new to <i>Marie Claire</i>	14

Alys in Madeira and The Canaries

David Park

Hilary and I flew to Faro at the end of April having left *Alys* on the hard at Vilamoura the previous autumn. We were live-aboards for a week fitting out in this excellent yard which has tight security, clean loos and showers, and water and electricity to each boat. There is also an adequate chandlers.

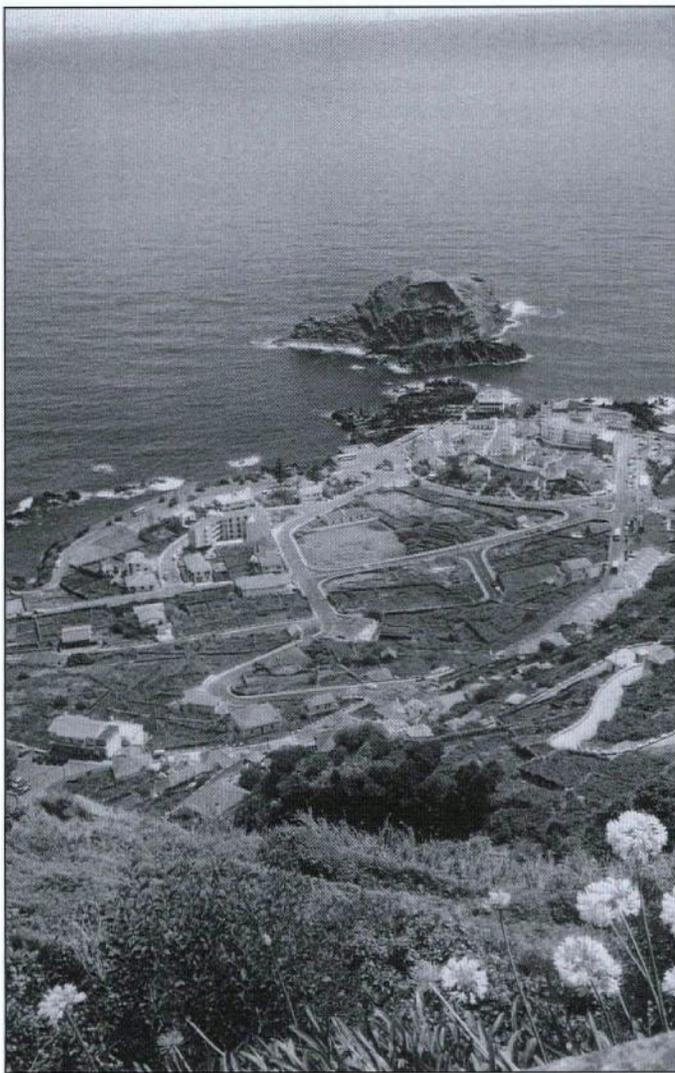
Aidan Tyrrell (ICC) and Helen Hassett joined us on 6th May having flown from Cork. We left Vilamoura the following day and had a gentle overnight sail to Chipiona in Spain. This is a quaint little town, with a fine marina, at the entrance to the River Guadalquivir and from here it is 55 NM up to Seville which we managed on one tide. The river flows through flat rather uninteresting countryside and there is much commercial shipping. Even large cruise liners go up to Seville, so it is well marked navigationally. The Club Nautico is a palatial establishment close to the historic centre of the city and we were made welcome here, tied to the club pontoon, with the use of all the facilities. It was also surprisingly inexpensive. We spent the next 4 days sightseeing; a fantastic city and a memorable way to visit it. Helen left us here to return to Cork. And so downriver; it takes two tides going down so we anchored, out of the stream, for a night of wind and rain. We returned to Chipiona and then to Villa Real de Santa Antonia; a fine town at the entrance to the River Guadiana, which divides Spain and Portugal. From here we sailed to Lagos in the Western Algarve where I had a new Isotherm fridge fitted. The old fridge constantly discharged the batteries whilst the new one only uses 1 Amp/hour and can be left on all the time – a blessing in the heat.

Aidan, Hilary and I left Lagos on 29th May bound for Madeira. We had a gentle uneventful sail with the wind on our stern and only a little motoring. Travelling with us for several days were a swallow and a house martin. We covered the 447 NM to Porto Santo in a little under 4 days. We stayed 3 days in the small marina here and explored this interesting island by taxi. And then a grand NE tradewind blew us the 40 NM to Funchal, Madeira where we tied alongside a trot of boats against the marina wall. The marina here is small and all berths taken up by locally owned boats, the showers and toilets are primitive, but you still pay the full whack to lie against the wall. Again we did the touristy bit, taking a taxi to the west end of the island through some spectacular scenery. Hilary and I tried to have a swim at Reids Hotel but they no longer welcome itinerants!

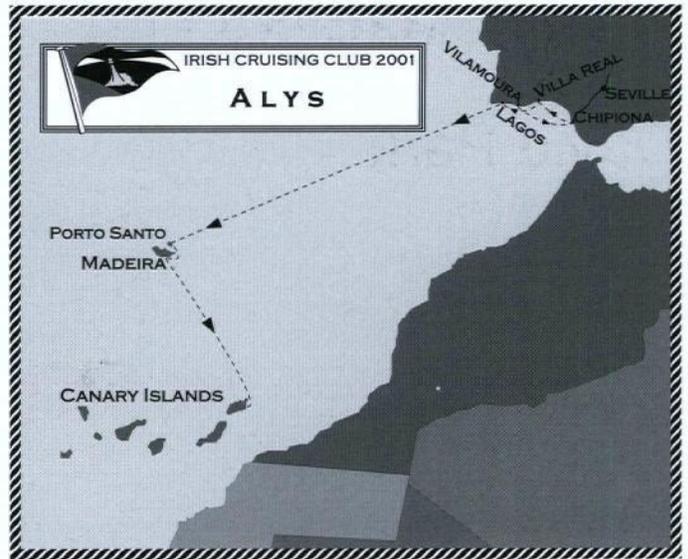
Altogether we stayed 6 days in Madeira and left on 11th June for the Canaries. The NE trades blew extremely fresh for the next 48 hours and we were fully reefed, with oilies on, in a big uncomfortable sea. Cooking was fairly primitive but baked beans and sausages ensured that no one starved. We reached Isla Graciosa, the small island north of Lanzarote, on 13th June: 277 NM. at an average of just under 6 Knots. There is a good harbour here and a one pontoon marina at the very pretty small town of La Sociedad. Tourism is strictly controlled and no hotels allowed. We had several good meals ashore of local seafood. The following day we sailed down the east coast of Lanzarote to the large marina at Puerto Calero and used it as a base to explore this fascinating volcanic island. Aidan flew home from here and Hilary and I continued south to Puerto Castillo on Fuerteventura where there is a small marina at a large tourist complex. The compensation was a free swimming pool beside the marina and a musical show each evening in the square which we both enjoyed. Fuerteventura is a rather bleak uninteresting island apart from its long sandy beaches. We continued south to Morro Jable where there are two pontoons in the harbour; another very touristy place. On passage to Morro Jable we encountered our first acceleration zone (AZ) for which the Canaries are noted. These areas are clearly defined and the NE can increase very rapidly in a short distance. From sailing in F2 we were soon fully reefed in F7, all in a matter of minutes. On leaving Morro Jable we again had very strong winds at the SW corner of Fuerteventura, another AZ, and our



The marina, San Sabastian, La Gomera.

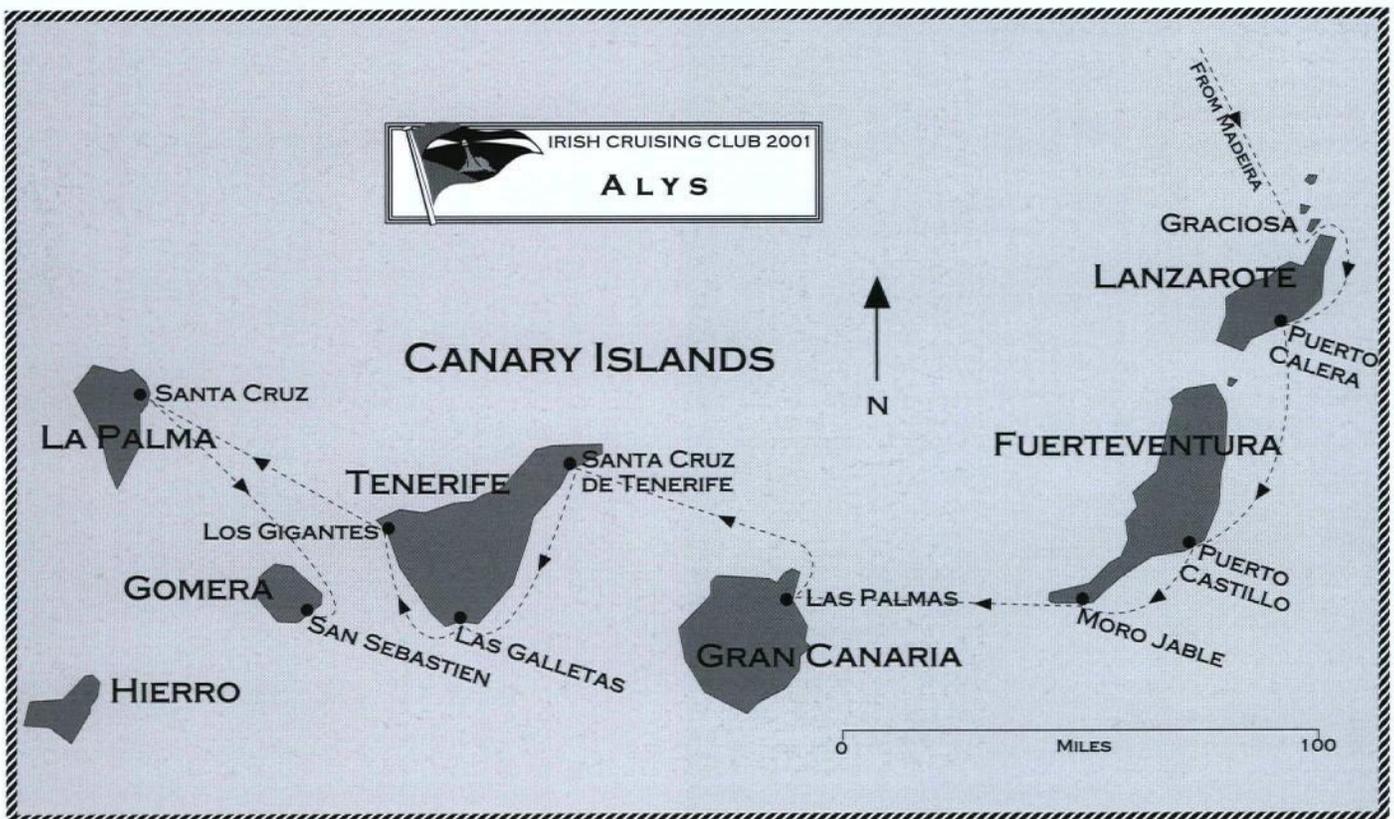


The beauty of Madeira



passage to Las Palmas, Gran Canaria (57NM) was also boisterous. We stayed several days in Las Palmas and then had another rough sail (52NM) to the Marina Atlantico at Santa Cruz on Tenerife where we were joined by Peter Minnis (ICC) and his wife Carolyn. We sailed down the east coast of Tenerife to the fishing village of Las Galletas where we tied alongside a moored yacht, launched the dinghy and went ashore for a drink in yet another very touristy town. From here we sailed to the marina at Los Gigantes which is a pleasant tourist town with a fine swimming pool and rock pool close by the marina. We took a taxi and then the cable car to the summit of Mount Teide (3718 metres) on a very clear day but at this altitude Hillary and I felt quite peculiar.

From Los Gigantes we sailed to Santa Cruz on the island of La Palma (55NM) and although a huge commercial harbour, there was no suitable berth for yachts but we managed to tie alongside a tugboat for the night. La Palma is a beautiful island and I think the greenest of all the Canaries. The massive crater,





Floating restaurant, Funchal, Madeira.

which dominates the centre of the island is most spectacular. On arriving back on the boat after our tour, an officious port policeman ordered us away from the tugboat as he said we were causing an obstruction. We had to tie astern of it and had a most uncomfortable night.

We sailed the next day to the island of La Gomera (50NM)

where there is a friendly marina in the port of San Sebastian. Once again there is a noted A. Z. between Gomera and Tenerife. Gomera is another beautiful island with a National Park high in the mountains in the centre. The Club Nautico, close to the marina, has a fine swimming pool and restaurant and the small town, with its connections to Columbus is most interesting. Our stay was only blighted on one occasion when there was a "Pop" concert in the town square which went on to 0600. The noise was horrendous and as it was to go on a second night, we all moved into a local hotel for the night! Peace.

Peter and Carolyn left us for home on 17th July and Hilary and I used the boat as a hotel in the sun. Patrick Tisdall (ICC) and Sue came alongside us in the marina in their catamaran *Speedbird Of Throne* and they related more

horror stories of the harbour at Las Palmas – a place to be avoided, I think, for the present.

And so home for the month of August and back out again for the month of September when family and friends joined us. Thus ended our second season in the sun and we managed to sail 1400 NM in a mixture of winds.



Hilary on the summit of Mount Teide, Tenerife.

Scoresbysund

James Nixon

Last year I joined David and Judy Lomax on *Cloud Walker* (RCC) and we attempted to reach east Greenland, but met some foul weather in the Denmark Strait described in last year's ICC Annual.

They asked me to join them this year to have another try. *Cloud Walker*, a standard Beneteau First 345, wintered at Hafnafjordur near Reykjavik, and David and Judy recommissioned her at Easter. They then re-joined her in July with their nephew Vyv. They are experienced Arctic sailors, and this was their seventh trip in Icelandic waters.

I joined them in Isafjordur in the West Fjord area of Iceland on 2nd August, again flying by GO to Reykjavik and then taking an exciting internal flight to Isafjordur. I was again impressed by the Icelandair piloting skills, particularly as we turned at the head of the valley prior to landing, sphincters atremble.

Judy and David were at the little airport to meet me and that evening we had the standard "Hot Pot" in the local swimming pool followed by dinner, including guillemot, in the local hotel. I retired early to my bunk and the others went to the local cinema to enjoy 'Bridget Jones Diary' with Icelandic subtitles.

We set off the next day northwards in settled weather out past Straumnes, into the Denmark Strait. The snow-capped mountains of this very spectacular coastline slowly settled astern. A killer whale inspected us briefly causing excitement but no damage.

Later that evening to our surprise we encountered ice. Rather large "bergy bits" appeared and we had to turn east for a few hours to get round them. It was settled weather and we were occasionally motoring. We had heard that ice had been seen quite near the Icelandic coast, but this was very close, and we had barely crossed the Arctic Circle.

The following day fog and a few areas of ice were still visible to the west as we steadily made our way northwards occasionally motoring. The sea temperature was dropping steadily from the 10°C on the Iceland coast, and eventually reached 2°C. We were using radar regularly as we passed through fog banks. To the west we had an occasional glimpse of Greenlandic mountains.

On the third day I came on watch early to spectacular ice scenery, with pack-ice just visible (and audible) and occasional larger bergs towards the mainland of Greenland, the mountains of which were clearly visible, pink in the dawn (though it had barely darkened overnight). In calm

sunny weather we made our way through small bergy bits and brash-ice and came alongside some remarkably spectacular and beautiful 'proper' bergs. Further to the west we could see some enormous bergs still within the pack ice. The Admiralty Pilot advised attempting entry to Scoresbysund from the east rather than the south and this proved correct.

We identified Kap Brewster at the south entrance to this huge inlet, and to the north and west it appeared to be clear. We had seen no shipping since leaving Iceland but identified a large red Danish Royal Arctic Line supply ship the *Irena Arctica* leaving Scoresbysund. It was making its annual visit to the settlement (Ittoqqortoormiit). The ship turned to inspect us and we talked by VHF. They reassured us that there was no ice at the settlement and we pressed on. In a freshening easterly we had a fine reach in past the small settlement on Kap Tobin on the northern side of the sound. Many of the names on this coastline are British or Irish. Some were named after crew-members of the survey vessels, others possibly named after grandees in the Admiralty. A couple of miles on we anchored off Ittoqqortoormiit at about 0200, after a passage of just less than 3 days.

We were now north of 70°N and it was still quite light with lots of activity ashore. We had the Greenland courtesy flag hoisted and did not meet the same fate as John Gore-Grimes, who had called there about thirty years ago and hoisted the Danish flag to be greeted with shot gun fire. The anchorage off the settlement is somewhat rolly but nevertheless we had a few hours sleep and later went ashore in bright sunshine. About 500 people live in the settlement and over 200 are children. Many were playing around at the little pier (which provides no



Seydisfjordur, Iceland after the gale.



Judy's Bay, Denmark Island with Milne Land in background.

shelter). There were no trees and there was very little greenery. The houses were mostly wooden but seemed to be well built and many had strings of huskies chained up nearby. There was a constant noise of barking and yelping from of them throughout our stay.

We made contact with the outside world through Jens, the local manager of the Royal Danish Arctic Company (KDN). We had showers in his house, and we were able to do some shopping in the local supermarket, well-stocked after the visit of the supply-ship. Alcohol was available and seemed to have been taken in large volumes by many of the locals. Guns were on sale and many were being carried. We heard chilling tales of the number of murders committed every year in this small community. The mayor was elected to office following release from prison after serving his sentence for the same offence.

The settlement sits on the side of a hill facing south. It was formed as recently as 1927, as the Danish Government established its territorial rights to this previously deserted coast. In the nineteenth century the English scientist and cleric William Scoresby (junior) had named this huge sound after his father (also William) who had discovered it during a successful whaling career. In the Scoresby Sound (in English) area there are found the largest, widest, deepest and most spectacular fjords in the world. The system does not clear of ice every year, so we were fortunate to get thus far. In winter a polynya forms at the mouth of the Sound. This is a phenomenon where an ice-free area persists even in the coldest weather, probably on the basis of the deeper warmer water moving continually to the surface. This attracts large numbers of seal, whale and walrus and make for good hunting. The settlement would not have survived without this.

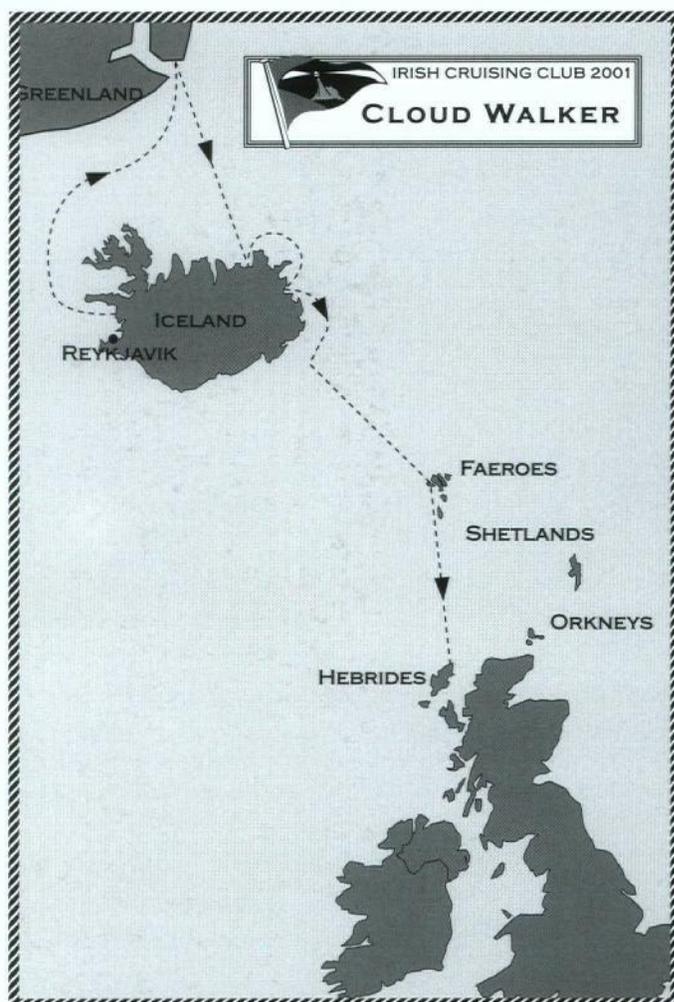
The Greenlandic name Ittoqqortoormiit (the place of houses) has been in use since Greenland gained independence, though Danish influence (and aid) is obvious. There was a well-equipped school and a small hospital and I made contact with the local doctor who proved very helpful later.

That morning there was the most spectacular view to the south across the Sound. Huge bergs moved slowly in this inlet which is about 20 miles wide at this point. Fog banks moved in without warning and beyond we could see ice-capped mountains and glaciers on the south shore.

The next day in a somewhat blustery northeasterly we set

off up the Sound trying to head westwards and inland. We ended up with three reefs and a tiny amount of jib, as we weaved our way through the icebergs with intermittent fog banks. There were thousands of little auk, a bird I had never seen before. They are now very unusual around Iceland. The radar was essential as we felt our way up towards Milne Land and particularly Denmark Island, where at 0400 we crept into a small bay on the southwest corner. It was almost totally blocked by moderate sized icebergs, many aground, and we moored close to the shore. Later we walked ashore (armed with a shot-gun) and realised that there was a better anchorage over the nearby point. The sun shone, the huge mountains to the west dominated the landscape and there was a constant rumble with intermittent crashes as glaciers calved further

up the fjord system, particularly in Gaasefjord (Goose Fjord). We saw ptarmigan, but no geese. Later we motored round to the next bay and anchored for lunch, and later saw that the only identifiable anchorage in this area, Hekla Havn, was in fact the third bay on this corner of Denmark Island. Its entrance was marked by a large cairn and there was a rescue hut at the head



of the little bay. Evidently the depth of the Havn is such that icebergs do not enter in winter, and a yacht *Hekla* overwintered there under the ownership of a Dane called Ryder in 1898.

We continued around Denmark Island leaving it to starboard. It is rather low with peaks rising a mere 1000 feet. Close by to the west was Milne Land with peaks rising to over 7000 feet and at one point we identified on the Danish chart a similar depth of water, indicating the extraordinary scale of the landscape.

We turned into the 3 mile long northern inlet in Denmark Island and we moored on the southeast corner – possibly the first yacht to do so? We named this Judy's Bay after the first mate. There was no sign of human activity here and we went ashore (again armed) identifying snow buntings, and a pair of Great Northern Divers made their haunting call as they swam around *Cloud Walker*.

Back aboard, we left the North Inlet and continued clockwise around Denmark Island. The north shore appeared almost to be blocked by icebergs but we were able to wend our way through back out into the main Fjord. Close to one berg we passed over a visible underwater ice-shelf that registered a depth of 60metres. We would have liked to have explored more but we realised that we were fortunate in the conditions, and there was always a chance that ice could move in. We sailed and motored back eastwards toward Ittoqqortoormiit and at this stage the engine started to play up.

On Friday 10th August we limped into our former anchorage at the settlement and found the population in holiday mode. The musk-ox hunting season had opened and all the men, including the best diesel engineer in East Greenland had gone shooting. We spent the next 3 days on tenderhooks, trying to sort out what seemed to be a fuel starvation problem. The taste of diesel still lingers.

The adage that there are only 3 things that go wrong with diesel engines (fuel, fuel, fuel) seemed to be proved, but it was not until the splendid Jonas re-appeared from the hunt that the fault was found and cured. A gasket on one of the filters had become displaced allowing air into the system.

Greenland anticyclone

Thankfully the Greenland anticyclone was stable and the sun shone with light breezes as we rolled in the swell, itching to get underway. A small oil tanker arrived to make its annual delivery, mooring stern-to the shore. The crew told us that they had been iced-in without warning last year in August for 10 days, and this increased our efforts to cure the engine problem. The engine was essential for a safe passage in such calm and foggy conditions. I again contacted Age Bergstrom, the single-handed doctor, and he allowed us to bath in the little hospital. Jens and his daughter Karina helped greatly with our



Children, *Cloud Walker*, fog bank and icebergs at Ittoqqortoormiit.

difficulties and with translation. We had them aboard for drinks but none enjoyed staying long with the rolling motion.

On the Sunday morning we were wakened by the ringing of the little Lutheran church-bell, followed shortly after by the simultaneous yowling of every husky in the village, an amazing sound and light relief as we struggled with fuel lines. A hunter came alongside and sold us a large portion of musk-ox, and at last I could offer a useful skill, as we filleted it. It provided delicious eating as steak and stew for days.

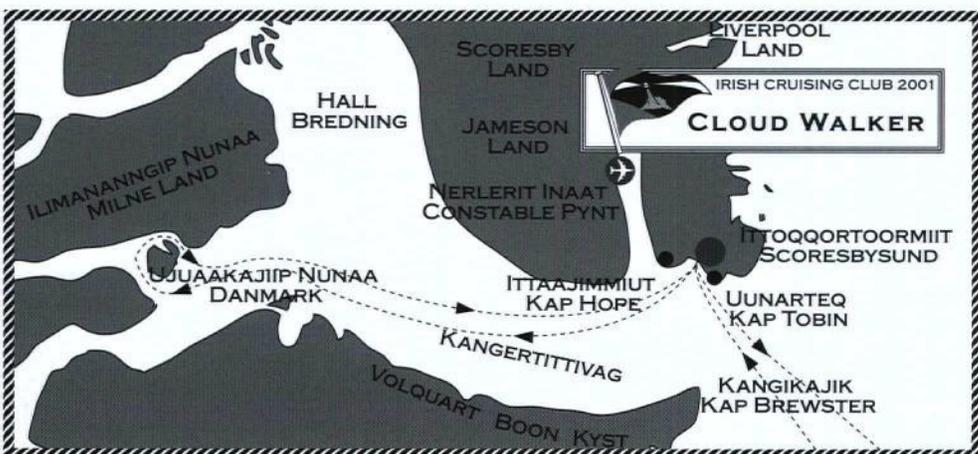
At last on Monday evening 13th August we had the problem sorted out and departed in very light winds before midnight.

The first night out on our return journey to Iceland was foggy and calm, and we had an exciting time avoiding icebergs, seen only on radar. Conditions remained calm for the next 24 hours as we saw an occasional ice-berg. I remember one particularly large one that loomed ghost-like out of the fog, appearing to be quite close but radar confirmed that it was about 4 miles off.

As we worked our way southwards a breeze started to fill from the north and eventually we re-crossed the Arctic Circle as we passed Grimsey, about 30 miles off Iceland. We had landed there last year. We were now running quickly before a brisk northerly and headed for Husavik where we berthed early in the morning just over 3 days from Scoresbysund.

Husavik is a delightful town with a good harbour and here we refreshed ourselves and the boat, and a day later set off eastwards in lighter conditions towards Raufarhofn. Here we spent an entertaining evening in the local hotel which David and Judy knew well.

Unfortunately and inevitably the wind now moved to the east as we headed in that direction, and we had an uncomfortable beat out to Langanes and then a very lumpy reach down to Seydisfjordur. Our land-fall here was in horrible conditions with a big sea, fog, rain and now a fresh easterly driving us onto the shore. We had an exciting sail into Seydisfjordur in very murky conditions. The fjord is very impressive, the more so in these conditions with waterfalls pouring off the high ground carrying





Vyv Lomax wending through the bergy bits!



James Nixon, David and Judy Lomax and gas cylinder! with iceberg.



Judy sailing *Cloud Walker* down Gaasefjord.

foaming tawny water which could be seen spreading out from the shore.

We berthed alongside the fuel jetty at Seydisfjordur. We spent 3 days here riding out an easterly gale, with significant seas passing along the jetty.

On the 3rd day with the weather settled, the weekly ferry arrived from the Faroes. The town was extremely busy as we left in light conditions motoring down-fjord. We were heading for the Faroes but the first day was pretty horrible with very slow progress in a big sea, light head-winds and fog, but eventually the breeze started to veer with a little west in it (rather than the southeast, the direction in which we were heading) and ultimately we had a grand sail. Reaching in towards the Vestmannaund we passed down this impressive channel (under which a tunnel is being constructed) and on to Torshavn to moor alongside a small group of boats from Norway and Denmark. We spent 24 hours here, enjoying baths in the local Boat Club which was right beside the berth.

We set off with a doubtful weather forecast and as we approached Suduroy, a Faroese gale warning was broadcast. These are not given lightly in this part of the world so we headed for Tvoroyri on Suduroy and berthed in the excellent harbour there. The wind and rain filled in from the southwest and we spent almost 2 days there. Hiring a car, we explored the Island investigating particularly some of the ancient fishing stations on the west side of this spectacular island.

We were starting to fret as deadlines were approaching for return to duty, and ultimately we were able to set off in a reasonably gentle westerly on Wednesday 29th August. The passage back to Scotland was very civilised and we were lucky to have some lovely sailing on the second day and berthed at Stornoway at midday on the 31st, just less than 48 hours from Tvoroyri.

Unfortunately I had to jump ship and was able to get the last seat available on a flight to Glasgow and thence home to Belfast. David, Judy and Vyv continued southwards and had a fairly uncomfortable time meeting some heavy weather at anchor in Lough Maddy. Later they called at Bangor where the hard-working Autohelm required to be fixed. At this stage we were already starting to reminisce about the earlier part of the cruise. Later Judy and David were able to deliver *Cloud Walker* safely to her home on Southampton Water.

It had been a truly memorable cruise, in excellent company, and it was reassuring to have two such experienced Arctic voyagers in charge. Vyv's presence made for easier watch-keeping: 2 hours on, 6 hours off – luxury! He was also a star pasta cook and taught us to make Australian toast (simply fry stale bread on a very hot pan). We were fortunate to have such excellent conditions for exploring Scoresbysund and the few unpleasant engine-related memories are fading, so much so that one would consider returning to that most spectacular coastline quite soon.

Communications on *Northabout*

Jarlath Cunnane

Perhaps some members may be interested in the communications system used on *Northabout* on our transit of the Northwest Passage in the summer of 2001. Having investigated other communications systems we installed Winlink 2000, which allowed us to send and receive e-mail. In addition we could access information on tides, weather, ice bulletins, navtext and weatherfax. All this available without charge, an important consideration on our limited budget! As many ocean going yachts already have radio and laptop computer on board, the only additional cost is the pactor controller costing in the region of £500.

Hardware and software

To access Winlink the following is required:

1. Amateur [Ham] radio of HF marine radio
2. Automatic antenna tuner
3. Pactor controller
4. Laptop computer capable of running windows
5. Airmail software
6. Optional but useful- an interface radio from computer to radio, to allow radio be controlled by computer.

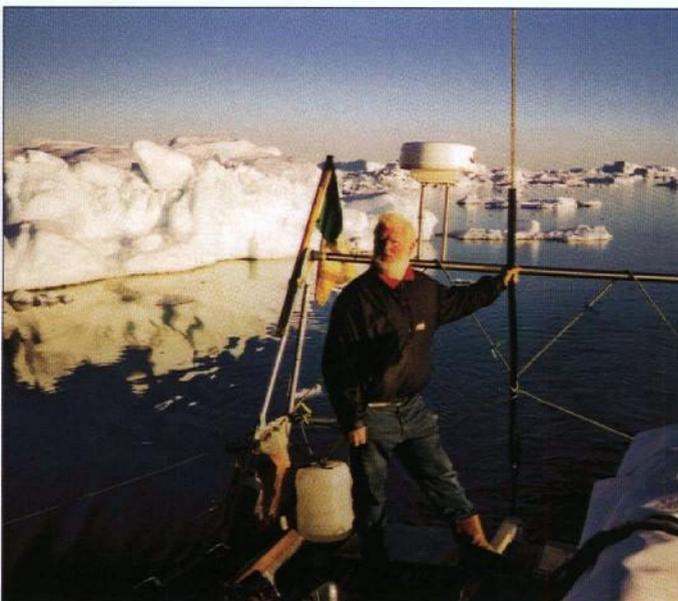
Important note – an amateur radio licence or Marine HF license is necessary to operate radio

To send email

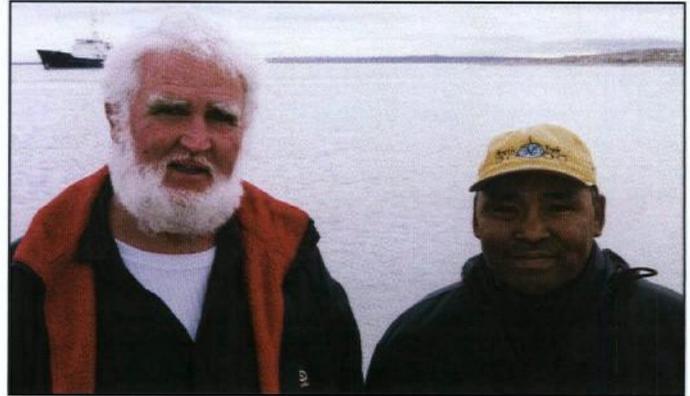
Type your e-mail messages on laptop.

Queue for sending.

When all e-mails are ready, connect to one of the Winlink stations [see map for locations] If station is available Winlink will connect and forward mail and receive any incoming mail. If chosen station is busy, retry later or select another station.



Easy-going!



Jarlath and Paul Amundsen in Gjoahaven.

Your Winlink address is your radio call sign@winlink.org, i.e. our address: E16GH@winlink.org

Some limitations and recommendations

When sending mail to Winlink users it is important to keep messages short, use only plain text messages, remove original message when replying, preferably no attachments like photographs or videos!

No commercial traffic is permitted. Radio link can be slow in transmitting text or images. Generally users are limited to a half-hour usage per day.

In practice we had no difficulty in using Winlink once we advised our friends to stop sending us pictures of their babies, and the jokes we already heard.

Radio signals are affected by the aurora, which disrupted voice communications for a time near the polar region.

Winlink communications were not disrupted to the same extent

The most enjoyable part of the day for us ancient mariners was our evening slot when Gearoid Ó Riain our computer whiz linked us to our families and friends. In a scene reminiscent of the early days of radio we all gathered around the laptop, glasses in hand, to hear the latest ice chart. Incidentally, every well found yacht should have a "Gearoid" aboard, his knowledge of electronics and computers was invaluable, and his youth reduced our average age to under 50.

Some useful web sites

Airmail software available free from:

<www.airmail2000.com/>

<www.winlink.org/> for information on Winlink

<www.scsptc.com/> for information on Pactor controller

<www.winlink.org/K4CJX> for map of Winlink stations

<www.arrl.org/> for information on amateur radio

<www.jvcomm.de/> for software to decode weatherfax using the SCS pactor controller

Getting to know you

Jim Slevin

It is always difficult to choose an appropriate title for a log. Though down the years I have attended many of the club functions this is the first time I have taken part in a cruise in company and it is certainly the best way to get to know the other club members. At the outset I would like to return thanks to our Commodore, Dave Fitzgerald, Arthur Baker and his team for their hard work and unstinting efforts in making it such a memorable success.

Donal Tinney, Brian Rodgers and myself travelled to Bangor on June 8th, and having provisioned *Testa Rossa*, set the alarm for an early call on Saturday morning. We left the marina at 0700 on a fine morning with light winds and motorsailed down the Irish Sea to Howth. We tried to contact the marina there on channel 16 but could not elicit a reply. We finally made contact with them on the mobile phone to find that the marina was full and Dun Laoghaire was suggested as an alternative. On arrival at Dun Laoghaire harbour, we received instructions that were vague and with some difficulty eventually found our berth in the fading light. We suggested to the staff that the letters should be painted on the approach side of the piles also so that craft entering the marina could identify the berths more easily. Sunday morning was spent shopping and filling diesel cans at the Royal St. George Club. We left Dun Laoghaire after lunch to carry the tide and motor sailed to Arklow. The small marina there which is very close to the town appears to suffer from a design fault in that sludge and sewage accumulates therein. Having tied up we met Maurice Butler on board *Leemara*. We left Arklow at dawn on Monday morning and reported our T.R. to Rosslare coastguard. Another bright morning with light winds, so more motor sailing. Once we left the Tuskar behind us we encountered plenty of shipping. A school of dolphins accompanied us down the Welsh coast during the night. As they criss-crossed under the boat the phosphorescence lit the water and we could hear them breathe in the oily calm water. While rounding Land's End we could hear the Commodore calling some of the club members on the VHF. We fuelled up at Falmouth Yacht Marina on arrival on Tuesday evening at 35p per litre, only to learn that it could be purchased for 26p from the barge moored midstream. We had been having trouble with our starter switch and took the opportunity to purchase a new one from Lucas whose premises are situated near the marina.

On Wednesday, Donal being keenly interested in art, took the bus to visit the Tate gallery in St. Ives. Meanwhile Brian and myself donned our shorts to take advantage of the glorious weather and moved the boat down to the Visitors Yacht Haven in the town where the charges are much lower. The skipper of *Run Free*, a 42ft. gaff rigged ketch based on the design of the 19th century Norwegian sailing lifeboats came over to speak to us. He had a lovely retriever dog that he wanted to bring with him on an ocean voyage but he had a problem. The dog was quite happy on board but when he started the engine the noise annoyed the dog and he tried to tunnel his way through the hull

to escape. Brian, who has some experience in dealing with human disorders offered him a solution. He suggested that he should desensitize the animal by making a recording of the engine noise and while nursing the dog, play the recording at a low volume initially and then gradually increase the volume over a period of time. I am sure that if it worked the gentleman will be eternally grateful to Brian.

Dull morning livened up!

Thursday was a dull morning with dark clouds scudding across the sky as we left Falmouth. The wind was SE 5 – 6 so we reefed down and had an exciting sail to Dartmouth. En route Donal picked up an American sailor on the VHF making contact with Falmouth Coast Guard. He popped his head up and said 'Lads, you're going to get some entertainment!'. How right he was. After making initial contact the Coast Guard transferred him to channel 67 and the conversation went something like this:

CG – 'Can I have your call sign please?'

American – 'Call sign? Dermot O'Brien'

CG – 'Your call sign sir, your radio call sign'

American – 'Well oh, I ain't got one. There are a number of fishing boats out here trailing something in the water and they are pretty damned close'

CG – 'What is your position sir?'

American – 'I am up on deck'

CG – 'What's your boat's position sir?'

American – 'Do you mean my lat and long, why? Oh never mind'

CG – 'In order to determine which type of fishing vessels you are encountering, your position would be of assistance. Did you try speaking to them?'

American – 'They don't talk'

CG – 'I suggest to you that they do talk!'

American – 'No, they don't talk'

CG – 'You could try them on their working channels, 8 or 14'

American – 'They are under power and I am a sail boat so they should keep outta my way. Have a nice day'

The conversation ended. We admired the Coastguard's patience. While passing close to the Eddystone light we passed six warships on exercise with the submarine HMS Norfolk. Then the first rain since we left Bangor arrived. And it did rain, for as we rounded Start Point we could, with difficulty, only see the lighthouse. We took down our sails just inside the entrance to the Dart river and motored up the river to raft outside *Deucalion*. George McCann appeared in his summer gear to help us and kindly invited us on board to dampen our spirits on the inside. Though George and his crew hailed from Bangor and its surrounds, I had never met them before and that was the start of 'getting to know you'. Friday morning the briefing at the hotel was attended and in the afternoon we were given an

interesting tour of the Royal Naval College. This was of special interest to us because of the close association of the College with the Mountbatten family. We moor *Testa Rossa* at Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo where Lord Mountbatten spent the month of August every year until his untimely death. Afterwards we attended an impressive Divisions in the glorious sunshine. On Saturday evening we attended the dinner in the Nelson Hall at the College and it was a memorable and historic occasion carried out in full naval tradition.

Next morning we made an early start and soon after leaving Dartmouth with the wind behind us, we poled out the genoa and in a lumpy sea, set sail south to Guernsey, to arrive in time to clear the sill into the marina at St. Peter Port before it closed. We went ashore after dining on board to find that we would not be served any alcohol without first having a meal on a Sunday evening. We were not impressed. On Monday we left Guernsey and with very light winds motored to Jersey to arrive at the waiting pontoon at noon. Another hot sunny day. We did some shopping and Donal and Brian found Friday's Bar which is run by a young lady from Belfast. We returned to a party there later that evening which lasted longer than anticipated, so a couple of heads had to be nursed next day. Tuesday was a rest day and with temperatures in the mid twenties we spent time meeting and talking to the other Club members in the marina. We enjoyed the sunshine and relaxed atmosphere and in the evening attended the reception in St. Helier Yacht Club hosted by Jersey Tourism.

As crew had commitments back in Ireland we had decided on a 0430 departure next morning so we opted out of the dinner at Jersey Pottery in favour of an early night in the bunks. We left on schedule and waved goodbye to our colleagues though I guess most of them were still asleep. We watched the sun rise over Point De Corbiere and again with very light winds we motorsailed all the way to Hughtown, St. Mary. We found two other ICC yachts on the moorings before us namely *Granga* and *Juno*. CL Kildrew, skipper of *Juno*, and his son came on board that evening for an exchange of pleasantries. The St. Mary to Penzance ferry leaves the pier at 1630. Fuel and water can only be taken on board at the ferry berth after the ferry departure. This generally leads to a minor melee. The French proved themselves assertive in the scramble that took place but we managed to satisfy our requirements and returned to our mooring.

On Friday we were able to pick up Valentia radio on VHF channel 16 before we left Hughtown. We had the company of *Juno* for the first 10 miles but then our paths diverged as he was sailing to Glandore and we had set our course for Schull. On receiving a forecast next morning of strong northerlies, with Schull harbour being exposed to the north, we changed our destination to Lawrence's Cove. The first rain since leaving Dartmouth met us at the Mizen but fortunately it was only a shower. Having completed the 196 miles from the Isles of Scilly we received a warm welcome from the marina owners who took our warps and slotted us into one of the few remaining spaces. There were no boats on the Department moorings outside the marina.

We dined at Kitty's Cafe in the village where the food was both good and reasonably priced. On the way back to the marina I met another ICC member, James Villers-Stuart. We talked about many things though mainly about the diminishing number of seabirds to be seen at sea. Then we heard a cuckoo for the first time this year and memories came flooding back of the lovely log written by the late Bill Cuffe-Smith in 1997 detailing his voyage entitled 'St. Kilda and on to Cuckoo Land'.

Fungi escorts us into Dingle

Next morning we left this delightful little marina to make our way up Dursey Sound with a 3-4 SW wind with the flood tide. Though I had previously passed through the sound on many occasions this was the first time to pass under the cable car as it passed overhead from mainland to the island. We sailed out to seaward of Lemon Rock to give us a good offing to pole out the genoa once more for our approach to Dingle. As always Fungi came out to escort us into Dingle Harbour and Johnny came down to direct us to a berth in the marina. We dined at the Smoking House on the Mall that evening and the food was reasonably good.

On Monday we left Dingle in the early afternoon having replenished our stores. We spent a busy time avoiding salmon nets off Smerwick Harbour with no assistance from the fishermen. They could learn a lot from their colleagues on the Donegal coast where the fishermen come out and guide you round the net or call on VHF to give you a lat and long of the extremity of the net. We arrived in Fenit marina at 2010 and found the people there very welcoming. Though it was late one of the Lifeboat men phoned the Harbourmaster and he arrived promptly to give us a fill of diesel. We were both surprised and delighted to meet Paddy O'Sullivan on the pontoon. We had spoken to him the evening before we left Jersey. He told us he had to leave Brian Kenny and *Tam O'Shanter* in Jersey and fly back to Kerry to attend the family business.

Next day was another rest day as we had time in hand. Fortunately we met Michael O'Boyle the man in charge of the building of the expensive *Jeannie Johnston*. Michael is another Donegal man and he kindly took time out to give us a detailed conducted tour of the ship. It is only when you see the fine finishes, attention to detail, steel bulkheads and the level of navigation equipment on board, down to the desalination machines that you begin to understand where all the money was spent. He explained to us that though it was a replica of the original vessel, it had to be built to take account of modern health and safety standards. We were impressed with the nineteen local yachts that turned out for the race that evening.

On Wednesday we left Fenit in a 3-4NW and passed High Island before we eased our sheets for the approach to Inishboffin. We had to lay the anchor out twice as on the first occasion it fouled in kelp. It was fortunate that we replenished our stores in Dingle as on going ashore we found that the little shop closes at 1800. We showered and dined at the Doonmore Hotel which was very good. There were few yachts anchored there with one German, one British, one Swedish and ourselves.

Next morning, with a cloudless sky and no wind, we motored all the way to Ballyglass in Broadhaven Bay. When we visited this anchorage last year we suggested that Mayo County Council beef up and lengthen the strops on the mooring buoys. We are happy to report that the suggestion was taken on board as it makes tying to them much easier. Last year all of the buoys were situated on the east side of the bay but that has now changed and only two remain in the original position while the others have been moved to the western side. The Council should be commended on their initiative. Friday brought winds of 5-6 SW giving us a very fast passage under reefed sails to our home anchorage at Mullaghmore.

In conclusion we covered a distance of 1265 miles in 21 days at an average speed of 6.3 knots, visiting 12 ports and enjoying 6 rest days. We made many new friends and got to know many of the club members that we had not met before. Regrettably we missed the visit to Perros Guirec, but all told it was a most enjoyable cruise.



Jeannie Johnston in Fenit Harbour.

Photo: Jim Slevin

Distances

Distances	Time
Bangor to Dun Laoghaire – 98 miles	14 hours
Dun Laoghaire to Arklow – 32 miles	5 hours
Arklow to Falmouth – 232 miles	38 hours
Falmouth to Dartmouth – 74 miles	11 hours
Dartmouth to St. Peter Port – 86 miles	12 hours
St. Peter Port to St. Helier – 31 miles	5½ hours
St. Helier to Hughtown, St. Mary – 196 miles	32 hours
Hughtown to Lawrence's Cove – 196 miles	32 hours
Lawrence's Cove to Dingle – 60 miles	10½ hours
Dingle to Fenit – 47 miles	7½ hours
Fenit to Inishboffin – 95 miles	14 hours
Inishboffin to Ballyglass – 56 miles	10 hours
Ballyglass to Mullaghmore – 62 miles	8 hours

Cover girl recovers



Caught on the prop, as we passed from New York Harbour to Long Island Sound in the middle of a thunderstorm, it reduced our speed to 3 knots. Action shot of its removal not possible! The water was so thick that the prop was missed altogether on the first try. We cruised north, spent a month in Long Island Sound and we're planning a month in the Chesapeake before heading home to Florida. We last saw New York's skyline two days before 11th September 2001.

Asgard II in Irish and European waters

Captain Michael Coleman

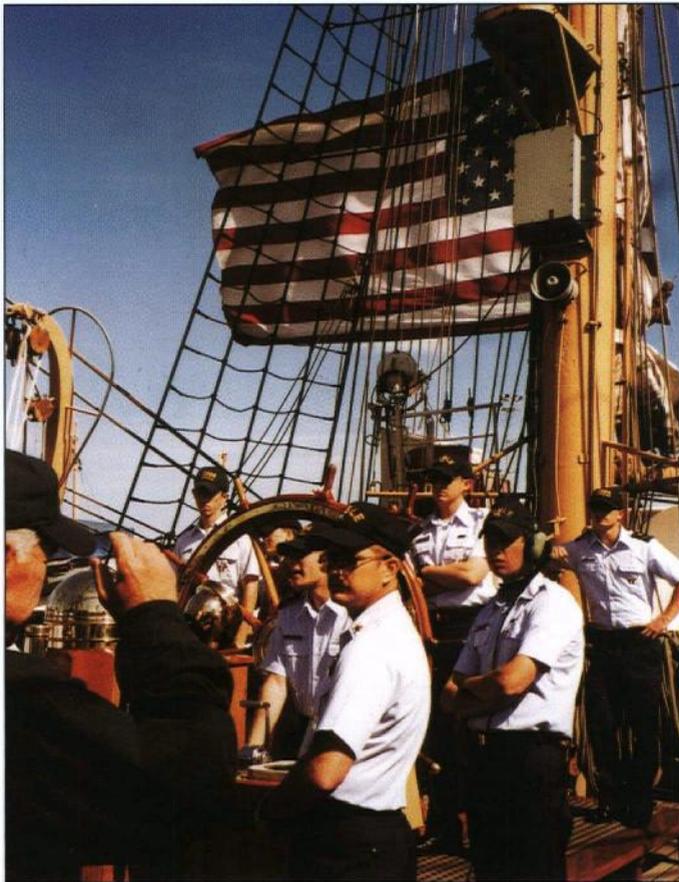
This year again my sailing was of the square rig variety and revolved around *Asgard II*. The ship now has a new man in command – Captain Colm Newport, who hails, incidentally, from Howth which is the vessel's real home port. The ship visited Howth for her 20th birthday on St. Patrick's weekend and was very warmly received. Many hundreds of the Howth public visited the ship on open day. It was my pleasant duty to take over from Colm for three cruises whilst he went home for some well-earned leave.

For my first cruise I joined the ship on the 15th May at Dublin where she was tied up at her usual birth, on Sr. John Rogerson's Quay. The new crew of young trainees joined in the afternoon. Joining day is one of the busiest days of a cruise. A comprehensive series of lectures and talks have to be given to the new crew, focused mainly on safety on board, basic seamanship, sail handling, working on the yards etc. The lectures conclude with fire drill and man over-board drills.

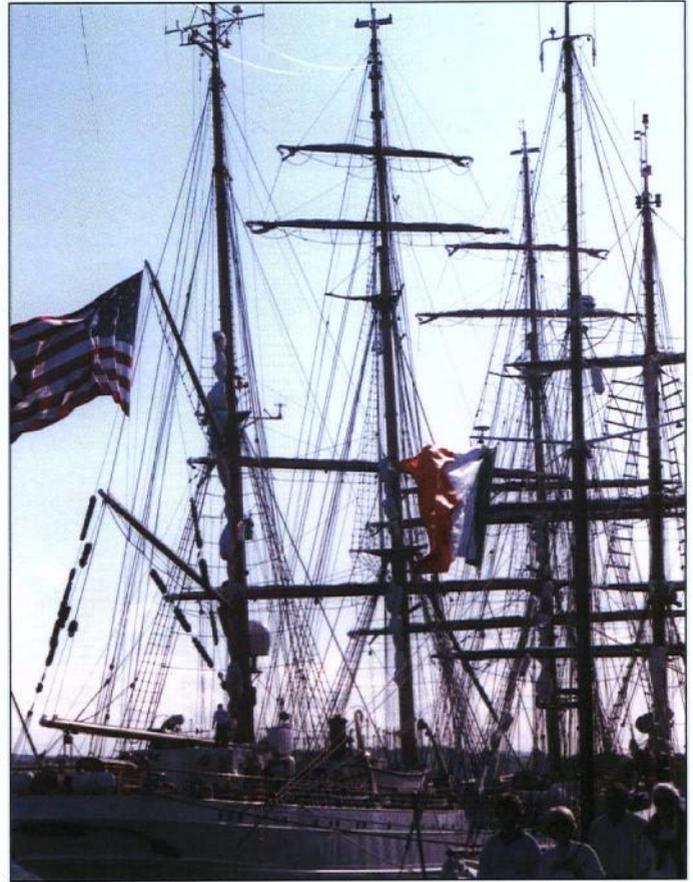
We were to sail the next day but were unable to do so because of an industrial dispute by the crew manning the East-Link bridge. A compromise was reached the following day and so at 13.00 we sailed for Dingle where we were due another

crew change in 8 days time. Setting sail on the first day out with a raw crew of trainees takes a little time as everything has to be explained and demonstrated in advance. However, by mid afternoon we were under all plain sail and making fine progress down the east coast, inside the banks in flat seas being powered along by a fresh north wester.

Over the next few days we made over-night calls to Cobh, Glandore and Schull. The weather, which had been mixed, became glorious and we enjoyed the many attractions of the north west coast in perfect conditions. On arrival off Dingle, Fungi made us welcome by performing his usual nautical aquabatics, although not as spectacular as on previous visits, maybe old age is catching up with him! In fine Summer sunshine Dingle looked its very best. It really is a sailor's Mecca. It has everything, magnificent natural scenery, many great shops, restaurants, and friendly hostellers to suit every taste. Bright gay colours and flower boxes completed the picture. Touches of old Ireland greet the visitor frequently, half-doors are common, old farming tools displayed together with fisherman's casks and nets make for an authentic feel of times past. There is a wonderful pub-come-hardware store still doing



Mast and rigging of the Tall Ships at Cobh. *Asgard II* in foreground, *Eagle* in background.



Quarter deck on the *Eagle*.



Exchange of gifts on *Eagle*. L to r: Captain Coleman, *Asgard II*, Captain Luke, *Eagle*, Paul Ivory, mate, *Asgard II*.

business on the main street, the locals told me that it was last modernised fifty years ago – let's hope that it is left alone for another fifty!

The Harbour Master Commander Brian Farrell, who is an old friend of mine, kindly invited a few of us on a tour of the Dingle peninsula one evening. To round off the day we made a call to the South Pole Inn at Anascaul – the pub made famous by its previous owner Tom Crean, the famed polar explorer who is only now receiving his due credit many years after his sad and premature death. It is so sad that a man of such indomitable will and boundless courage was laid low by such a simple problem as an unattended appendix. Many pictures and mementos from his polar exploring days adorn the pub walls. What a great pity that his great deeds went unrewarded and unrecognised until recent years.

We changed crews on Thursday May 24th and after the usual joining lectures sailed the following day for Waterford. On our return voyage around the northwest corner the weather was mixed but improved towards the end of the cruise. The magnificent United States Coast Guard barque *Eagle* was due in Cobh on Monday 28th and our aim was to meet up with her on her arrival there. The mate Paul Ivory, Sean McLoughlin, Secretary Coiste An Asgard, and myself attended a very enjoyable function on board *Eagle* during which gifts were exchanged. The *Eagle* has a very interesting history. The famous Blohm and Voss Shipyard built the ship in 1936 in Hamburg Germany. She was built as a training ship for the German Navy and named *Horst Wessel*. During the war the ship was operated as a supply ship for the Navy and also fulfilled her all-important training role mainly throughout the Baltic Sea. During this period the ship was armed and shot down three aircraft. Towards the end of the war, the ship was laid up, fell into disrepair and suffered some bomb damage at Bremerhaven.

When the war was over the ship was taken over as a war prize by the United States government and renamed *Eagle* and given to the United States Coast Guard to be used as a training ship for their

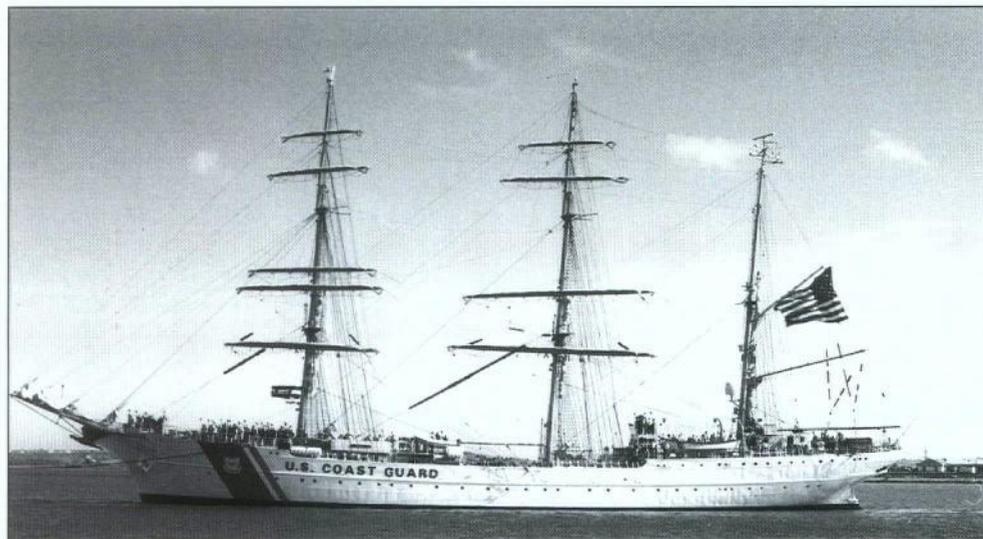
officers and men. A Coast Guard crew assisted by some members of her original German crew still on board restored the ship to a seaworthy state and sailed her back to the U.S. in 1946. The ship is in pristine condition despite her age and has given sterling service to the Coast Guard. We enjoyed several days in her company in Cobh and many new friendships flourished between our two crews. The atmosphere in Cobh was akin to a mini tall ships regatta. We parted with *Eagle* on Wednesday May 30th and sailed for Waterford where the cruise ended.

I again joined *Asgard II* on Aug 5th at Esbjerg on Denmark's west coast to sail the vessel back to Cork. The Tall Ships races this year took place in the North Sea and ended in Esbjerg. The voyage home commenced with a spectacular parade of sail out of Esbjerg harbour following which the large fleet dispersed and proceeded to their various home ports. We encountered gale force northwesterly winds on the second day out, the first trippers of which there were many received a baptism of fire, but were rewarded with fine sailing by the end of the cruise. We called to Den Halder on the NW corner of Holland for a night's rest before carrying on to Ostend, Belgium.

Ostend is a very attractive port consisting of a small commercial section catering for small ro-ro ferries and two large marinas located close to the town centre, in fact the main street fronts onto the marina creating a very pleasing maritime setting. During the course of our ramble around the pontoons I came across the steel ketch *Williewaw* made famous by Willie de Roos, that tenacious Belgian circumnavigator who was also the first man in sailing history to successfully transit the North West Passage in a yacht. He completed this epic feat in one season back in 1977 and he was single-handed for the most part. His book entitled simply '*North West Passage*' makes for great reading. It is wonderful too that our own Paddy Barry, Jarlath Cunnane and their stalwart crew have joined the North West Passage hall of fame – well done everybody.

After further calls at Cherbourg and Falmouth *Asgard II* reached Cobh on the weekend following August 15th. Traditionally this weekend has been the Cobh Regatta weekend since the turn of the century. The whole town was in festive mood. A full sailing programme including traditional 6 Man gig racing was laid on. We enjoyed the great maritime weekend culminating in a spectacular fireworks display. A trip up river to Cork the following morning concluded the cruise.

I am signed up the another 10 day cruise in late October / early November. By then another rewarding and satisfying sailing season will be stored away in the memory bank to be recalled with pleasure in the years to come.



United States Coast Guard barque *Eagle* at Cobh.

Xanadu's Transatlantic

Norman Kean

Xanadu is a 48-foot steel ketch designed by German Frers and built by Frers & Cibils, Buenos Aires, in 1982. She displaces 17 tonnes and carries 1100 square feet of plain sail and an 80-hp Mercedes diesel. Under her previous owners, she completed a 15-year circumnavigation in 1998.

Xanadu left the Bohemia River, Maryland, on May 14, 2001 and arrived in Baltimore, County Cork, on June 14, with three days spent on an unscheduled stopover in Horta. We were a crew of five – Gene and Iain made up one watch, Lew and Lou the other, and I skippered, cooked, navigated and engineered. None of us had crossed an ocean at sea level before, although Xanadu had crossed them all. Gene had owned a C&C 40 for 12 years, and had raced to Bermuda and the Caribbean; Lew had sailed Lake Michigan, Chesapeake Bay and the Virgin Islands, Iain was the ship's World Traveller (he knew where Scotland was) and Lou's claim to fame was a canoe trip from Lancaster, Pennsylvania to Cape May – no mean achievement, and I kid you not. As for me, I always like to cook, because (a) I get to eat what I like (b) the cook doesn't wash up (c) you can hate the captain if you want, but you better be nice to the cook.

I was going home. Geraldine and I always planned to buy our ultimate boat at the end of our stint in the US, and bring her back to Ireland. We bought Xanadu in Annapolis in July 2000, and spent six months working our way through a list of 170 refitting projects. After a six-week shakedown cruise to Florida and the Bahamas in March and April, we reckoned her fit for the ocean again.

We planned a mid-latitude crossing, due east from Cape May along 39 deg N for 1000 miles and then ENE for Ireland, catching the benefit of the currents and the prevailing westerlies, and staying well south of icebergs and fog. This course would take us about 400 miles north of Bermuda and the Azores, the total distance a shade over 3100 miles.

As it turned out, we never saw a westerly wind in the whole crossing. For the first week we had headwinds, a brief SW gale and an even briefer flat calm, and despite the gale we only made a disappointing 600 miles in seven days. Low pressure systems were tracking eastwards just to the north of Bermuda, much further south than normal for the time of year.

We had begun by checking in daily with Herb Hilgenberg – "Southbound Two", the well-known amateur weather forecaster based in Ontario – whose advice was to go south and get underneath the lows, but even with a powerful 48 foot ketch we couldn't move fast enough. Six days out we were below 37 deg N, 150 miles south of our rhumb line and still in headwinds. Eventually we gave up trying to be too clever and just sailed the boat for Ireland. That seemed to work, and from then on we came to rely more and more on the pressure charts from our trusty weatherfax as our primary source of forecast information. The following 9 days gave us 1340 miles in NW to NE winds of F5 to 6, putting us almost 2000 miles on our way but still struggling to make distance to the north, and pretty much heading straight for the Azores. The unrelenting fresh-to-strong winds forward of the beam made hard going, and there was always water on the decks. There were few days

when we could leave hatches and ports open, and now and again we would long for a bit of calm.

Notwithstanding, we had great sailing and some unforgettable experiences. We saw a lot of dolphin, and big fin whales on six occasions, one so close we could have scratched his back with the boathook. There were sea turtles paddling furiously in mid-ocean, prompting comments of "What's the hurry, I hope she's worth it", and man-o'-war jellyfish quietly out-pointing us to windward. We went swimming in 15,000 feet of water in the Gulf Stream, and we had some glorious starlit nights and spectacular meteor showers.

Close to the American coast the Gulf Stream is an awesome thing, and its effect on the weather and the sea state dominated our tactical thinking for the first few days. We sailed through its so-called North Wall on May 17, and for several hours that day, in a NE wind dropping from F6 to F4, we rode some of the biggest waves of the voyage – steep, short and deep, deep blue.

We passed six ships on the ocean, and spoke on VHF with three of them – the tanker *Limar* bound from Genoa to New York, the P & O container ship *Singapore Bay* from Gibraltar to Halifax NS, and a Norwegian bulk carrier from Newport, Gwent to New Orleans. Their watch officers answered the radio immediately and were helpful and friendly. They seemed pleased to see us – I suppose we brightened up an otherwise routine day for them.

We made up frequent excuses to celebrate, such as 1000 miles from Cape May, 2000 miles to the Fastnet, the halfway point, and the furthest point from land. I was surprised to realise that this point – equidistant from Cape Race,



Donal and Jim ready to dine at Dartmouth RNC. Photo: Brian Rogers



Xanadu

Newfoundland and Flores in the Azores – was only 600 miles offshore.

Xanadu's Adler-Barbour fridge served us exceptionally well. We had frozen and then vacuum-packed all our fresh meat, and stowed four big blocks of ice in the bottom of the fridge compartment to start with. We carried some emergency tins of stew just in case, but there was still a sliver of ice left when we got to Ireland, we were still on fresh food with very little waste and we had at least one hot meal every day. The fridge and the Robertson autopilot were the biggest current users – we had to

run the engine for an hour or two a day to keep pace. Visibility being good all the time, we almost never used the radar and we didn't routinely show side and stern lights unless we had a ship in sight, which was seldom. In fact the sidelights failed anyway due to water ingress and couldn't be kept working.

Everyone knows that ocean crossings are hard on a boat's gear, but the reality still bites hard. We tore our biggest genoa, lost the inverter to a rogue water drip which fried its control board (goodbye microwave and hairdryer, what a tough life), cracked the fuel line to the engine, and built an impressive collection of broken blocks, bent shackles and chafed lines. Lou found a talent for spotting stray nuts, bolts and shackle pins on the side decks, for which he didn't always

immediately get the thanks he deserved.

On May 30, 350 miles west of Flores in the Azores, we had our most serious gear failure when one of the lower shrouds parted with a bang at the fitting on the mainmast. Lou and Iain went up the mast and transferred the lee shroud to the windward side, and we made for Horta, arriving on the morning of June 3. Steady northerlies and *Xanadu's* sturdy rig had saved us the necessity of jury-rigging a temporary stay. As the winds lightened near the Azores, and now with the prospect of refuelling, we motor sailed the last 150 miles. Passage time



The Gulf Stream – Gene at the helm.

from the Bohemia River to Horta was 19 days and 8 hours, with day's runs totalling 2319 miles.

June 3 was a Sunday, and Monday and Tuesday were the annual Espiritu Santo holiday in the Azores. However the modest but capable Mid Atlantic Yacht Services chandlery was open for a couple of hours on Tuesday, and by a minor miracle they had exactly the fittings we needed.

There were yachts from 19 different countries in Horta harbour, and for most of my American friends it was a novel experience to be in such a cosmopolitan place. Gene commented appreciatively that it was the first time he had ever been anywhere where the dominant culture was not American, and Lew was surprised at the absence of American cars (although I lost my \$10 bet with him when we found a rusty old scrap Chevy Nova in a quarry). On the other hand Iain, the world traveller, was immediately at home and could even make himself understood in Portuguese. He had opted out of a walking tour in Vietnam to sail with us, saying "Vietnam will always be there".

We had noted the warning in the *Atlantic Crossing Guide* about the bureaucracy in the Azores. It took me almost an hour to get through the formalities with the harbour office, although Immigration and Customs were somewhat less burdensome. The paperwork on the way out was just as time-consuming, and at the end of it I was asked for the equivalent of only £8 for our three days' stay.

As is customary for visiting yachts, we left *Xanadu's* signature painting on the harbour wall (you would not believe the number and quality of these paintings in the place) before we left Horta at noon on June 6. An hour out of the harbour, our two fixed GPS sets suddenly and simultaneously sprang to life. They had shown "no signal" since we left Savannah, way back in April, while on our pre-transatlantic shakedown cruise. We blamed sunspot activity for that, and we had got used to obtaining GPS positions by wandering hopefully about the deck now and again with a handheld unit. Anyway, it kept us in practice with the sextant, and our sun sights were gratifyingly consistent. HF/MF radio reception was also pretty hit-and-miss. We got through most days on the SSB to family and friends in the US, and to Valentia Radio after we left Horta, but it was hard work, most of it in the dead of night when propagation was at its best. However it paid off in reassurance for those ashore and in



A little light refreshment in Horta, l to r: Iain Mourer, Gene Barnhart, Lew Buckminster and Lou Mareski.

moral support for *Xanadu* and her crew. Our radio reports were being relayed by e-mail to an ever-widening circle of friends – Geraldine's list reached 176 addressees, and they in turn were forwarding the messages to hundreds of others. We had a primary school class in Indiana keenly following our progress, a nun in Rome putting in a word for us, and supporters as far apart as Seattle and Hong Kong.

From the Azores to Ireland our day's runs totalled 1144 miles and we took 7 days and 19 hours, with winds mostly SE (strong to gale) to SW (light to moderate), with gale conditions lasting for 18 hours. June 11 saw our best overall day's run of



Who says it rains in Ireland!?! Donal off the Kerry coast.

Photo: Jim Slevin



Brian looking forward to his food.

Photo: Jim Slevin

174 miles. The autopilot packed in six days out of Horta, and that day we also lost our last fishing lure. Gene was the ship's angler, and he had rigged a reel clamped to the pushpit rail. We

trailed the line most of the way across the ocean. It provided occasional entertainment in the form of a sudden "whizz.....ping!" noise, but sadly no fish suppers. I wouldn't have relished sharing the cockpit with a Great White Shark anyway, no matter how good they taste.

At 0115 on June 14, we sighted the loom of the Fastnet light, and spoke to Valentia Radio on the VHF. They gave us a forecast of easterly gales, prompting a look from Lou that indicated his imminent intention to swim ashore and take up golf, so we cracked on sail and blew the rest of the diesel, and headed for Baltimore. His cherished Boston Red Sox baseball cap blew overboard just as we passed the Fastnet at 0610. Serve him right for smoking a cigar and drinking beer at that hour of the morning.

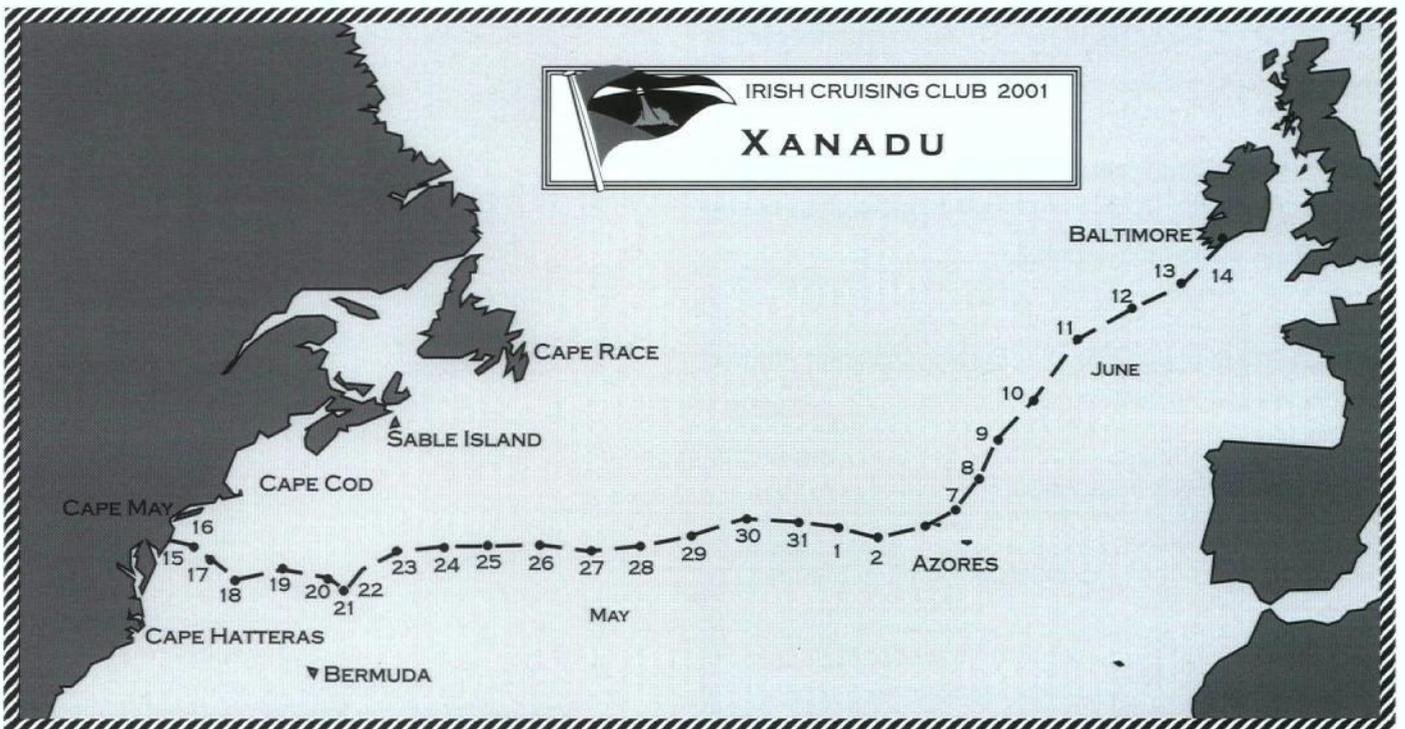
Even though GPS has taken all the guesswork out of the thing, the sight of the hoped-for shore still produces a palpable sense of relief and achievement. We had crossed the ocean, we were in one piece, nobody had even been seasick and we hadn't had to eat the tinned stew. The usual dictum of "90% boredom, 7% maintenance and 3% terror" didn't apply. It wasn't boring in the least – we slipped into a routine and the days just rolled by. For me at least, maintenance was a lot more than 7%, and the nearest I came to terror was trying to get the boat off the fuel berth in Horta in 50-knot gusts of wind without sinking anyone. *Xanadu* had looked after us well – she had stayed dry and comfortable, and it is a tribute to her seakindly motion to say that the only breakage below was a glass coffee pot.

Entry formalities were conducted by phone from Baltimore Garda station, and after the usual explanations and questions, I asked the Customs officer if he planned to come down and inspect the boat.

"Well, now, maybe or maybe not, but you're fine to go ashore," came the reply.

"OK, thanks, if you happen to be down and we're not on the boat we won't be far away." "I'll know where to find you," he said, "you'll be in Bushe's pub."

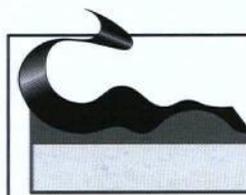
An exchange which quite enchanted my American friends, and reminded me why I went to all that trouble to get back to Ireland. It's the craic, that's what it is. And indeed, some little time that day was spent in Bushe's pub.



Waxwing's ocean wanderings –

Vanuatu to Mauritius

Peter and Susan Gray



THE ATLANTIC TROPHY

FOR THE BEST OPEN SEA PASSAGE
WITH PORT TO PORT AT LEAST 1000
MILES

We signed off our log last year at the end of September when we reached Vanuatu. This year we are composing it as we cross the Indian Ocean from Oz to South Africa – 6000 nautical miles with stopping places few and far between. Mauritius is really the only really sizable one until we get to Richards Bay (north of Durban).

October 2000 – Cruising Vanuatu. We cruised the island paradise of Vanuatu moving slowly north up the eastern sides of the eastern island chain meeting wonderfully cheerful, bright, friendly, generous people and enjoying the anchorages many of which had golden sandy beaches. Outside the two large towns of Vila and Luganville, the people live basic simple lives but education (to university level) is the norm even if the children sometimes have to travel by dugout canoe to get to and from school. Good English and French in places (depends on which set of missionaries were last to depart) is spoken as well as the local brand of Patois

Leaving *Waxwing* in Vila for a few days, we flew to the southern island of Tannah to view the active volcano there. It was raining when we reached the crater and the heat had turned the water to mist so we saw nothing but a black lunar-like landscape. Still, it was a nice break made even more enjoyable by the company of other yotties.

Two days north of Vila we put into Port Havannah and had a bit of an adventure there when we tried to leave in the dark. We could not understand why, with the anchor chain taut, we were drifting out to sea. Eventually with all our chain out and in sixty metres of water, we came to the conclusion that we could hardly have fouled the anchor on the bottom but the weight was quite beyond our capacity to lift and we returned to the anchorage. In the light of day next morning we discovered that we had hooked a sunken sand-filled heavy old navigation buoy. At low tide, with the aid of a rising tide and a double block and tackle arrangement led aft to a primary winch, we managed to move it centimetre by centimetre into shallow water with an obvious dipping of our bow. With the offending object lying again on the bottom we were able to unhook our hook with the assistance of an Italian friend Enrico (*Nunki*) wearing his mask and snorkel.

An easy overnight sail then took us to the well-sheltered and attractive anchorage at Lamén Bay on Epi Island and there we stayed for eight days. We visited the local High School and Apia and Bennington and their really attractive family. They provided us with fresh fruit and vegetables from their garden as well as making us feel welcome. We were even invited to a family wedding “up in the mountains” but were unable to accept. Susan gave Bennington (an aunt of the bride) a disposable camera to record the occasion. The copra market was not good last year and the fall back of a small market garden yielded little beyond living essentials so that paying for education was becoming a problem. Nevertheless it remained a priority. Dan, off *Antaries* (UK) had given them an old solar panel and a battery and had fixed up a 12 volt light in their kitchen hut. He was their hero. Dan had had Apia and

Bennington to supper on *Antaries* and so we felt we should follow suite. It was quite a success as they were an articulate and well-informed pair.

Out at the anchorage we swam with the turtles and a semi-tame Dugong (sea elephant). Susan had a tiny, almost unnoticeable graze on her leg and got an infection in it. Coral waters are full of infectious micro things. Cellulites developed rapidly. It was a worrying time. We were able to get advice over the SSB radio from a Kiwi doctor, Robyn McIntyre, on *Alchemist* who was also cruising north and was just a little ahead of us. However, after a few days she decided that Peter's nursing skills were not up to scratch (although he was able to bake tolerable bread and otherwise keep the patient fed and full of antibiotics) and she and her partner Brett bashed their way back to windward for thirty miles to come to our aid. A few days of Robyn's intensive care and a regular application of hypodermic needles to Susan's rear end saw the infection halted then beaten back and an airlift to Vila for hospitalisation avoided.

One of the most pleasant and relaxing sights as the sun went down was of the dugouts “sailing” back to a small island with a fan-like spread of leafy palm branches for a sail. The occupants had paddled over the couple of miles in the morning to tend their gardens and were taking advantage of a favourable evening breeze for an easier down wind ride home.

Soon Susan was well enough to continue our exploration and we headed north towards Wala Island, stopping at several anchorages on the way. Wala is a small island with only one village consisting of a collection of huts and a wooden church serving which ever denomination wanted to use it. A new, bigger stone-built replacement was nearing completion and we subscribed modestly to the building fund.

We gave dinghy rides to the children after they had paddled back in their kiddies dugout canoes from the French school on the main island, Malakula, about four miles away and we welcomed visitors (we are usually very cautious about having locals aboard but these people were so patiently honest and good mannered we made an exception) so we got to know the people well.

One of the attractions of the anchorage at Wala is that it is an easy dinghy ride to Rano on Malakula to see the custom dancing in the village of the little nambas (penis wraps fashioned from leaves and rather uncomfortable looking), which are a traditional covering worn from puberty. The village of the big nambas was up in the hills and was too far to visit but we were given to understand that little or big is not an indication of the size of the goods inside.

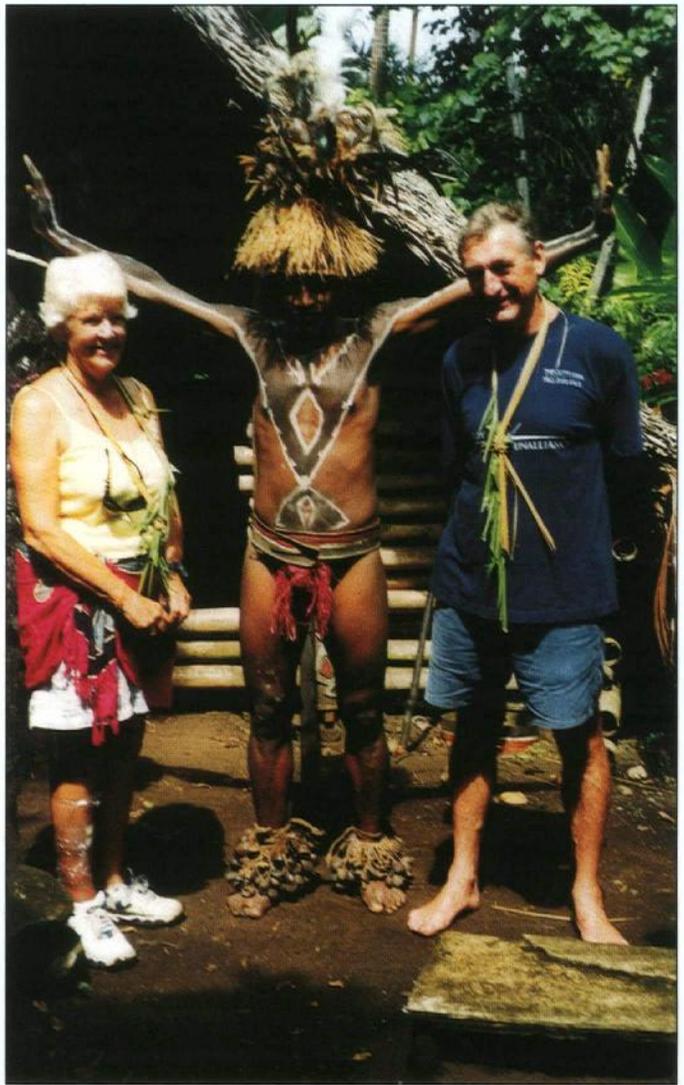
Village welcome

Although there were only two of us and our guide, Loran, the villagers put on the full show – exotic costumes and wonderful dancing depicting traditional activities and how to scare away evil spirits as well as summon good ones. The men performed the custom dancing; the ladies and children sang and did a little topless side dance and at the end all thirty or forty of them lined up for a handshake. Peter kissed the Chief's wife, which

seemed to please her but raised howls of laughter from the others. We told them it was an old Irish custom. We were told that theirs is a democratic society with the chief elected for life but not permitted to pass on the leadership to his sons. The younger ladies were mostly shapely and attractive with sparkling eyes but the married ones were missing a few teeth which spoiled their smiles somewhat. Apparently in this part of Vanuatu, bashing one's wife in the mouth occasionally to knock out a tooth is the highest sign of affection and the fewer the teeth the more public indication of value.

It was only a six-hour passage to Luganville on Espiritu Santo where we intended to complete clearance formalities and we had an easy down wind sail. The anchorage there is a bit open and not very attractive so we took a mooring at Aore resort on Malo, the small island opposite the town. The resort offered gourmet eating (coconut crab accompanied by a good chilled chardonnay could hardly be bettered) and a ferry service to the town. We greatly enjoyed our three days (and three dinners!!!) there and would have stayed longer but for the favourable weather window beginning to open for the passage to Australia.

Strictly speaking, once we had our clearance papers from Customs and our Passports stamped by Immigration, we should have headed west through the narrow strait between Santo and Malo but actually we headed east and then north so that we could call in at some of the anchorages on the east side –



Deputy chief in the village of the Little Nambos.



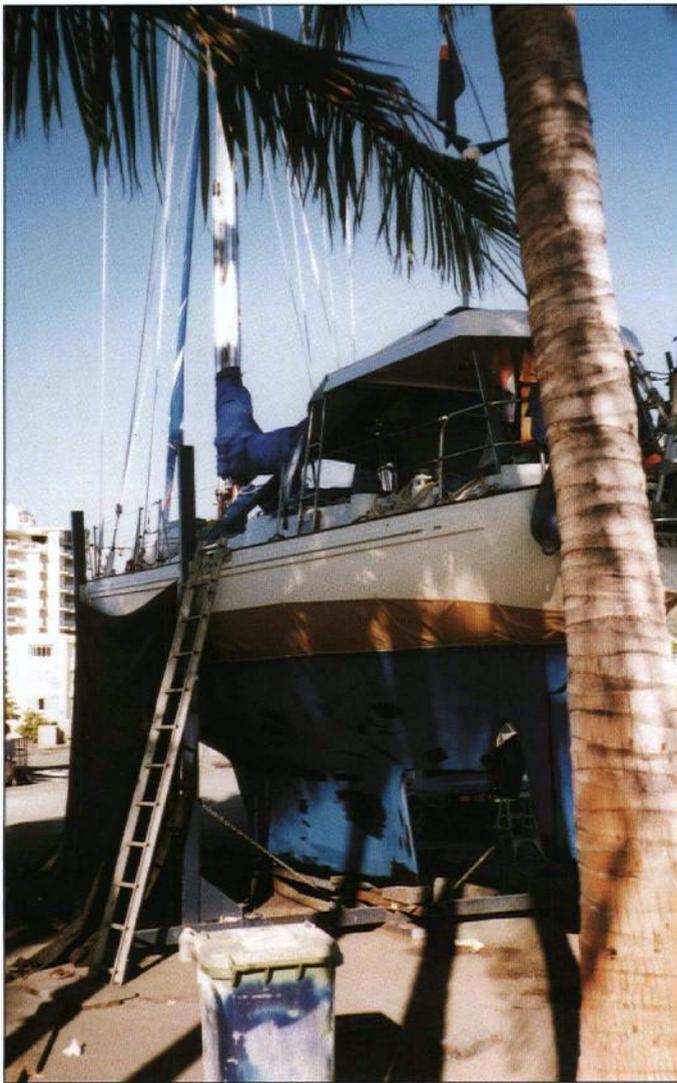
Trying out *Andromeda's* old spinnaker.

Oyster Bay and Champagne Beach were well worth it for snorkelling and the scenery. At Champagne, Susan made friends with a local resident, Janet, and her young children who took her to the caves – a tourist attraction. Cruise ships called here (thankfully none did while we were there) and the locals would come out of the jungle to set up stalls along the beach front selling cool coconut milk and genuine hand-made souvenirs. Susan and Janet exchanged gifts.

One of the other yachts set up a badminton net and soon it became obvious that Janet and her family were no strangers to the game or something like it.

With masterly planning, Peter managed to get us to our next stop, Oyster Bay, at dead low water and we were unable to make it through the shallow pass to the inner anchorage – but not without a try which was duly punished by a stranding while we waited for the tide. We then contented ourselves with the outer anchorage and dinghied the three miles up to a clear blue freshwater pool for a refreshing swim watched only by a few cows.

November 2000 – Vanuatu to Bundaberg – 1060 nm. We cleared Cape Cumberland at the north end of Espiritu Santo and headed a little west of southwest heading for Chesterfield Reef, an uninhabited mid-ocean reef belonging to New Caledonia and about 200 miles north west of it. We made a good, comfortable passage except for an electrical storm as we cleared Santo and we caught a fine Mahi Mahi on the way.



On the hard at Townsville.

Chesterfield lay across our direct course and consists of several islets joined by a circular reef which remains under water and thus offers limited protection. The lagoon is about five miles across. We anchored behind a sandy knoll offering good shelter from the prevailing southeast wind and swell and excellent holding on coral sand. We walked some of the islets observing the abundant bird and crab life and snorkelled on the inside of the reef. We saw some good coral and fish – Parrot, Spotted Groupers, Angel fish in particular – and Susan chased a small reef shark to try and take its photograph. Peter got back in to the dinghy post haste!!! To him a shark is a shark is a shark and sharks are known to bite. We stayed for three days and did not see another boat. The blue-billed Boobies seemed to take a liking to us and regularly perched on our pulpit. They allowed us to come quite close and politely turned

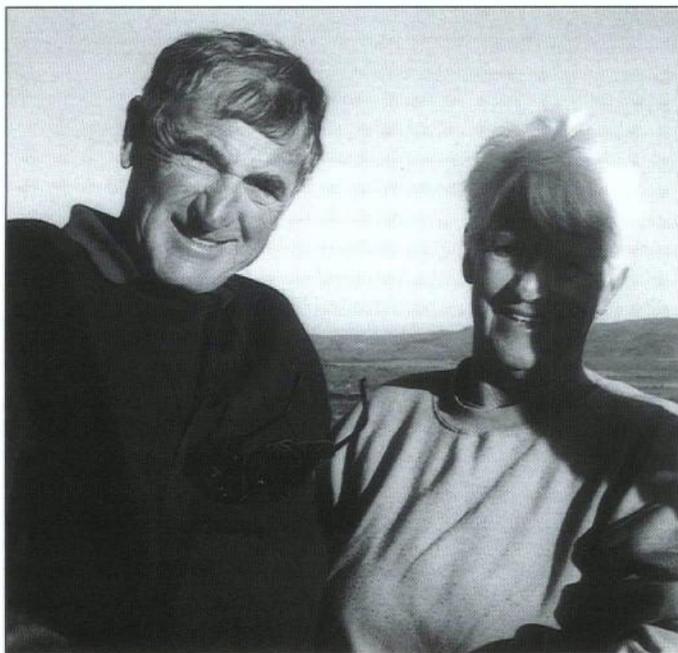
their backs when they needed to drop something – out of respect, we liked to think, for our white deck. On our last day we left it a bit late in the evening to get back to *Waxwing* and had failed to observe the signs of a change in the weather in time to move across the “bommie” (underwater isolated coral outcrops) infested lagoon. The outcome was a very uncomfortable night keeping anchor watch as the wind, having veered to the south west and risen to 25 knots or so, left us on a lee shore in a big swell that dipped our bow despite an anchor chain scope of 15 to 1 and a long nylon rope snubber in about 4 metres of water. The weather did not look like reverting so we left the following morning, sailing across the lagoon and out the western pass.

Some of the boats spending time in Vanuatu headed for Queensland via Numea in New Caledonia to sample the French life-style and see the Festival of the South Pacific which only happens every third year. Others, like us, took the shorter and more direct route. A radio net was formed for all with a daily schedule which included a weather analysis from Dave on *Nimbus* (Canada). He spent a lot of time and battery power pulling down fax charts from a number of stations and from them and feed back from the net he drew his own chart which he then discussed on the next schedule. His observations were invariably perceptive. A wonderful service but only typical of the co-operation that exists among the world cruising fraternity. It was interesting that those of us on the more northern route experienced good weather and free winds while only a hundred miles or so to the south strong head winds and big seas were the order of the day. A front from a low with its centre down New Zealand way extended just as far as the others but had petered out by our latitude. We could see cloud banks to the south while we sailed along in a sort of sunny bowl.

Thus the 460 miles to Bundaberg was sailed in perfect conditions off the wind at an average of seven knots which is magic stuff for *Waxwing*. We tied up at the Customs/Immigration/Quarantine pontoon which they had located very conveniently at the Port Marina where we were staying. Our Australian Visas were in order (one simply must not arrive in Oz without one); the formalities were quickly and easily completed and, with plenty of help from the friendly marina staff and from other “yotties”, in jig time we were snug in the berth we had reserved. There we stayed until December well catered for by Jeff and his staff at the marina and by Brad and



Visiting boobie birds at Chesterfield Reef.



Hot air balloon trip at Yorkey's Knob.

Lee in "Baltimore", the marina bar/café/restaurant which was the social focal point.

The Port Marina is small (but growing with additional berths and a travel hoist) so we quickly got to know the other wandering cruisers and to enjoy eating, drinking and sightseeing excursions to surrounding establishments. The marina ran a courtesy bus and there was a local public service to Bundaberg about seven miles up river; any service not available at the marina could be found there.

We decided that it was time for a celebration of some sort. We had set out from Dun Laoghaire just five years before and, despite many adventures and misadventures, we had got well over half way round. Added to which it was Susan's birthday so we invited every one on the marina to a BBQ lunch on the lawn in front of "Baltimore" with Brad setting it up and doing the catering and the drinks. It was voted a wild success and continued on in one form or another ashore or on the pontoons or in boats until very late.

December 2000 – April 2001 – Cruising Sandy Strait to Tin Can Bay and back to Bundaberg. Apart from the fact that Bundaberg is a convenient port of entry and is rated "cyclone-safe", it is conveniently located only forty miles to the west of Fraser Island and the northern entry to the Strait where interesting off-season (or so called cyclone season) cruising may be enjoyed in comfort. Boats staying further south at Mooloolaba or Brisbane or north at Gladstone are more or less confined to marinas.

Elizabeth Masser (Marlow and Sandycove, Kinsale), joined us here as an interlude in her "grand tour" of eastern Oz visiting friends. The eight hour crossing to the Lagoon anchorage inside Fraser was quiet and we dropped our 60lb Mansfield plough in crystal-clear water on a fine sandy bottom offering excellent holding. We explored the lagoon by dinghy, swam and generally relaxed into the cruising mode.

Later in the cruise, when in Sandy Strait itself, we took lunch at the Kingfisher resort on the island and went on a rather bumpy four-wheel drive coach tour to see the flora and fauna of Fraser and to learn something of its ecology. A rain forest walk and a swim in a rainwater lake (no springs or streams) were highlights. Fraser is completely sand but has water layers and thus plenty of trees and vegetation.

There are four or five metre tides and fast running currents in the strait and in the Mary River which flows in to it from the mainland. Moreover the river twists and turns for the twenty miles up to Maryborough with plenty of bunkers just beneath the surface to strand the unwary pilot who strays even slightly from the narrow buoyed channel. By entering at the beginning of the flood we made it up with only one or two bumps on the soft mud bottom and anchored just below the town – and a charming town it is.

We spent three days there and the rest of Elizabeth's time with us exploring the remainder of the Strait until we ended up on the small marina at Tin Can Bay at the top of the southern arm. We left *Waxwing* there while we visited our family in Auckland for Christmas. We had intended to berth at Mooloolaba some eighty miles to the south and a swinging town with easy access to Brisbane but we decided there was no point in braving the notorious and difficult Wide Bay Bar to reach the open sea only to face a long bash to windward in 20 knots and big seas when we were perfectly comfortable, if a little isolated, in Tin Can Bay.

On our return, we were joined for a few days by Johnnie and Emer Heron (RStGYC) who had just completed a circumnavigation in their westerly 42 Pala, taking the Red Sea route and leaving her in Tunisia for the northern winter. They had flown back to Australia and New Zealand to do a little land cruising. We enjoyed a short trip out to Inskkip Point just inside the Wide Bay bar where we anchored in three metres in soft mud and lazed the days away swimming, walking a bit of the "ten mile beach" south towards Rainbow Beach and sampling some good Australian wines while we caught up with news from home.

Later we were very happy to have Dick and Heather Lovegrove aboard for an all-too-short cruise back to Bundaberg. However, we managed to fit in a few excursions like walking the southern beach on Fraser Island and dinghy rides up shallow creeks filled with turtles and rays. A highlight was to be a stay at Lady Musgrave island sixty miles further north but the weather was a little unsettled and caution (and the Lovegroves flight schedule) decreed that we berthed a couple of days early at Bundaberg Port Marina where we were warmly welcomed back. That left us time in hand to take the high-speed ferry out to Lady Musgrave where we snorkelled to our hearts content and also viewed the coral and fish from a semi-submersible. The island and its surrounding reef is claimed to be the southern tip of the Great Barrier and we had a most interesting and rewarding day marred only slightly when, on the passage back into rough head seas, some unfortunate Japanese fellow tourists (who had eaten lunch well rather than wisely) were continually and noisily seasick for the two hours it took us.

May – July 2001 – Bundaberg to Darwin and places between – 1900 nm. At the end of April, the pundits declared the cyclone season over and fleets of live-aboard ocean crossing yachts emerged from the marinas at Brisbane, Mooloolaba and Bundaberg and even further south for the great migration northwards along the Queensland coast towards Cape York – a wonderful cruising area inside the Great Barrier Reef. We mostly kept to the islands (no crocodiles or box jellyfish – both fatal) and clear water with good coral and tropical fish. We visited 19 island anchorages and 10 mainland harbours, marinas or rivers (but only 4 towns). Day hops and night stops were the order of the day. The whole stretch to Cape York at "the top end" is well buoyed for shipping; the weather was great so it was a relaxing time. We did a little motoring but mostly it was easy and fast down-wind sailing in the 15 – 20 knots of the prevailing south easterlies. Our Aries, used either with the wind vane or linked to our small tiller pilot, took care

of the steering leaving us to enjoy the view and the sailing and to attend to the minimal navigation needed. The Coast Watch Cesna checked up on moving vessels most days and continued to do so until we cleared Christmas Island much later. They were clearly looking for would-be illegal immigrants or drug runners but we welcomed the contact as they noted our position which was comforting.

There was plenty of socialising with the other yachts in the anchorages and sometimes with the crews of small fishing boats resting up at the end of their season before returning to base at one of the big towns. They were usually in need of critical supplies (beer!!!) and, in exchange for a few cans, were generous with gifts of lobster, prawns and shrimp. The best-known and most extolled group of islands is the Whit Sundays but we found them a little disappointing (perhaps because our expectations were too high) and the anchorages were rolly. Whales and manta rays were away on holiday and, although we enjoyed the swimming and a few walks ashore, we soon repaired to near-by Airlie Beach, spending a night at the splendid (and not expensive) marina and two out at the quiet anchorage. There we met up with old friends Peter and Karen *Piquet* (USA) whom we had first met in the Caribbean and more recent friends Ed and Julie *Cinnebar* (USA) and had a long lunch session ashore. This included using the hotel swimming pool and looking on at a typical and colourful Australian out-door wedding – religious service, the lot. Our favourite island was Lizzard where we had a fascinating guided tour of the marine life research station and braved the one and a half hour 360 metre climb to the lookout point following in the footsteps of Captain Cook. He had got himself trapped behind the Great Barrier Reef having found his way in somehow but unable to see a way out. From his vantage point with its 360 degree panoramic views, he was able to spot a break in the reef and off he went again to continue the surveying and charting work that still serve us well to day. We signed the visitors book left there in a small water-proof box (with pen!!!) but the Captain must have overlooked doing so as we could not find his name in it.

During this stretch of our cruise we used the travel hoist at Townsville to go on the hard for a few days for an anti-foul. An excellent marina with all the services one could need either on sight or in the nearby town. It is worth recording that Queensland is known as the “land of the public loos” because there is always one about whenever required. Public or private in the marinas, they were kept spotlessly clean and everything worked – even in the towns and cities. Marina fees ranged from five pounds to seven pounds per night for our 12.6 metres (they one and all squeezed us into the 12 metre price). This included electricity and water on our pontoon together with hot showers, loos, garbage disposal, security (mostly active) and sometimes a courtesy bus. We shall probably get a rude awakening when we get back and have to pay fees at or near home. In Townsville we caught up on the culture thing by attending an excellent production of *The Merchant of Venice* in an outdoor theatre.

The next major stop was at Yorkey's Knob 15 miles north of

Cairns and with easy access to the city or to a large shopping complex by marina courtesy bus. Plenty of touristy things to do and we indulged in a hot air balloon flight to watch the dawn breaking as we drifted slowly over the table land. We were impressed by this small marina and some of our friends left their craft there to go touring inland or even to return home for a period preferring it to the much larger and possibly more convenient marina in Cairns itself. No swimming in the sea though – we were in crocodile country.

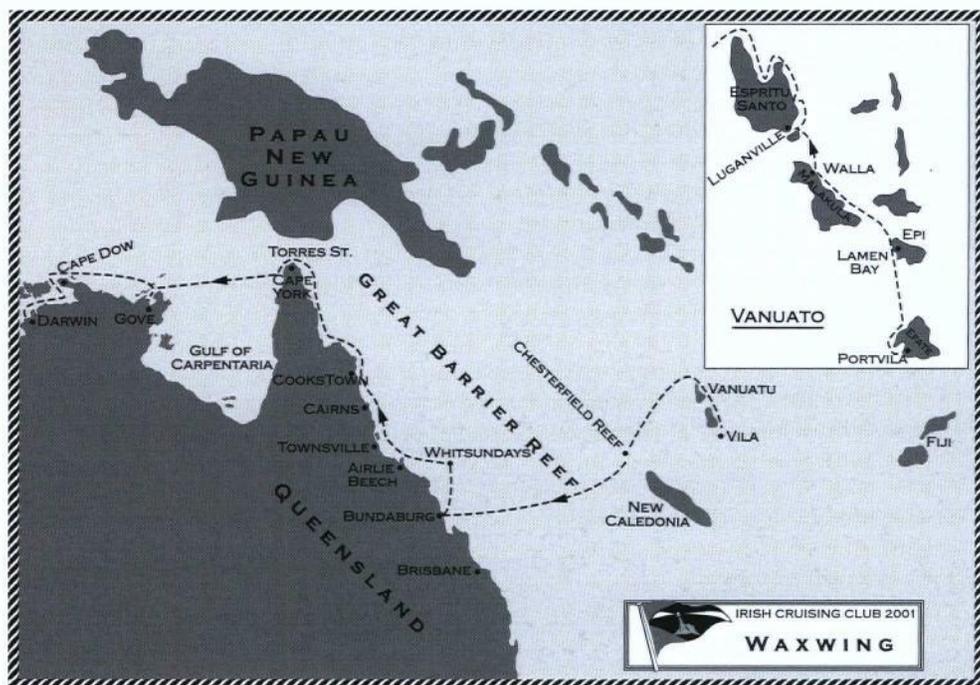
At Fitzroy Island, we took a tour boat to go snorkelling to pay our respects to a Giant Clam. It obligingly did its thing of opening and closing as we dived down to tease it. We could also lay claim to a bit of life saving. In dead of night we both jumped up into the cockpit when we were awakened by a plaintive voice calling. It turned out to be a fisherman from a near-by boat sitting on a water-logged dinghy and trying to paddle it. He was getting swept out to sea. We launched our dinghy (when at anchor we usually hoist it to gunwale level for security and to keep the hull clean) and towed him back to *Waxwing*. We managed to get him aboard and dry him out a bit before returning him to his boat. The crew had been ashore celebrating or drowning their sorrows and he had got left behind. He had borrowed a dinghy (a very unstable one) and capsized it. We were not sure if his problem stemmed from the severe cramps of which he complained or an excessive amount of alcohol in his blood but he was fine the next morning when he passed by to thank us.

Later we put in to Cooktown (the most northerly town in Queensland) but stayed only one night as the anchorage was restricted and unsatisfactory and we could not avoid grounding on the soft mud as we swung to a strong tide.

With weather windows (even as far away as South Africa) always in mind, it was onwards ever onwards to try and keep to some sort of schedule without missing interesting stops.

We rounded Cape York in to the Torres Strait at 10.00 on Friday 8th June and from then on a general bearing between 260 and 270 degrees true would bring us across the Indian Ocean – not counting diversions along the way.

Along with *Hanabella* (UK) we headed for a lovely sheltered little anchorage behind Red Island Point on the west, or inside, of the cape and only a few miles from the top. Next day we took a high-speed ferry to Thursday Island in Torres Strait itself to join a guided tour as the island is of historical



interest and to have lunch with friends who had elected (as most yachts did) to go stop there. The graves of the Japanese pearl divers (and of their descendants who still live there in strength) who mostly died young from "the bends" was a reminder of the exploitation of the week by the strong in the pursuit of wealth. The old fort which was used in a number of wars and times of threat was strategically located on high ground and offered splendid views over the Strait to the mainland as well as housing an impressive collection of war artefacts. It was interesting to see that Aboriginal men were actually permitted to join the Australian army in the area and, if called on to do so, give their lives for "king and country" as the caption on the photographs said. One way or the other, there was no avoiding the three day crossing of the Gulf of Carpentaria to Gove which is a good place to break the leg to Darwin and is warmly welcoming to cruising visitors.

The Gulf is shallow and nasty, big, breaking seas urged on by the strong south easters accelerating across the narrow cape make for an uncomfortable ride – and we had one. In the dark of night we were caught in a thirty-knot squall with too much sail up; the Aries steering was unable to hold her and Peter disconnected it and took the helm. Unfortunately he got a bit disorientated and gybed unintentionally with a viscous bang. Our Yankee was in tatters (fortunately an old, slightly undersized one and we have its twin) and was busy tying itself in knots round the forestay foil. We managed to secure it. The preventer and the mainsheet anchor point on the boom also broke and the gooseneck fractured but luckily that was the extent of damage and we were able to continue, if more slowly, through the rest of the night with our staysail only set as the main had, of course, to come down. At daylight, we managed to unravel the yankee tatters despite the wind and the wild gyrations of the boat and hoist our full Yankee under which configuration we continued perfectly satisfactorily to Gove making achieving a very acceptable vmg of 6 knots for the passage. We measure our progress by reference to the distance to our intended destination at noon each day.

We stayed at anchor in Gove for five days but by Sunday 17th June we were heading for Darwin four hundred miles to the west. There is plenty of shelter from the islands that parallel this part of the coast and a number of good anchorages we had pleasant cruising. The narrow Hole in the Wall between the Wessel islands of Raragala and Gungan thirty miles out of Gove was a challenge with its twelve-knot currents but we made it through with only one heart-stopping moment towards "slack water" when our six knots through the water translated to nothing over the ground. We had entered a mite too early but we heard of boats which were simply swept back out with hardly room to turn so we felt luck was with us. It's a favourite short cut that saves many miles and worth doing – for the excitement if for nothing else.

Some miles further on, we took another shortcut through Bowen Strait inside Croker Island and sailed through a patch of the most amazing coloured water – a pale translucent green. A pod of about twenty dolphins welcomed us on the approach to the strait and guided us into the channel before peeling off to sport elsewhere.

We spent nights at Knives Bay on Raragala Island and further west in Port Essington on the mainland where we went ashore at Black Rock and paid a courtesy visit to the Ranger to ask permission to visit this area which is restricted for ecological reasons and in deference to Aboriginal sensitivities. One usually needs a permit but, as we were staying ashore for only a few hours, the formality was dispensed with for us. Isolated as it may be, the place boasted a very fine and interesting exhibition and interpretive centre. Guided tours operate from Darwin.

Cape Don on the approach to Darwin was rough and

unpleasant with wind against tide but the conditions were worth enduring for an hour or so to catch the twelve hour favourable tide up to the town itself and the anchorage off the yacht club in Fannie Bay which we reached as dawn broke on 24th June. At one point, as we passed between two islands, we saw ten knots over the ground with only four through the water so tide was a major consideration.

The warm hospitality of the club beckoned and we enjoyed dinner that night on the veranda gazing out over the water through a fringe of palm trees in an exotic tropical setting. However, it would not have been a great idea to leave *Waxwing* unattended there for long as the anchorage is tide rode and is exposed in some wind conditions so next day we moved to Tipperary Waters marina and entered through the lock in the early morning to suit the tide. There we stayed apart from two weeks in Auckland and two days touring Kakadu national park which is owned and controlled by Aborigines and where we examined giant termite hills, ancient rock art, strange and exotic bird life and crocodiles at close range. Darwin is a fine city/town with three marinas and all services. A new (and we think stronger) stainless gooseneck was soon fabricated and fitted at a cost of only 63 Euro. Peter spent time up the mast fitting the new tri light (the old one had shaken itself off in the gybe described earlier), shipped to us by the US mail order store, West Marine, with their usual speed and efficiency. Fortunately the wires were still protruding – just. We have navigation lights on the pulpit and pushpit but much prefer to use the tri.

The ocean cruising fleet had homed in on Darwin as it is a logical place to prepare for the next stage be it via near-by Indonesia and Asia to the Red Sea or across the Indian Ocean to Capetown so we met up again with lots of friends and made some new ones who were going our way

August and September – Darwin – King George River – Christmas Island – Cocos Keeling – Mauritius – 4300nm. We cleared Darwin Customs, took on some duty free (including diesel at 25p per litre) and were away at dawn on August 2nd. Little or no wind as we headed west and, such as there was, set us in towards the coast of Northern Territory. After two hundred miles of somewhat frustrating sailing and a little motoring, this put us off the entrance to King George River which is the most eastern of the Kimberly coast anchorages. We decided to rest up there and wait for more favourable conditions for sailing.

The river is a long fjord-like one stretching seven miles into towering cliffs up to two magnificent waterfalls. The bar at the entrance is a bit tricky as the sand banks move around but we eyeballed our way in and were rewarded by four days of pure magic. We anchored just below the falls in perfect tranquillity – alone but for the hushed sound of falling water and nature.

We took the dinghy up to the falls and, while the main flow was far too strong for it, we were able to fill our containers and wash ourselves just to the side in clear, pure, sweet-tasting water. We climbed the steep, narrow, track to the top of the cliff and gazed memorised at the spectacular view. We swam in the cool, shallow, pools at the top of the falls and generally recharged our personal batteries which had got a bit soggy with too much good, soft, living while in Darwin.

Crabs crossing!

After four days a strong southeaster filled in and we set sail for Christmas Island just 1250nm away. Nothing really exciting recorded for the passage other than catching a large Tuna and the appearance of an Indonesian fishing boat which altered course and came close to have a look at us. Thoughts of pirates sprung to mind but, curiosity apparently satisfied, they sheered off after a while and headed on southeast. Nine days later we picked up one of the moorings at Flyingfish Cove thoughtfully provided to persuade yachts not to anchor on the coral.



Dick and Heather in "Baltimore" in Bundaberg.

Although Christmas is part of Australia, full clearing and quarantine procedures have to be observed. Peter collected Harry the Policeman (police do customs and immigration in outlying places) and Terry the Quarantine by dinghy. The formalities were quickly completed and, in the temporary absence in Cocos Keeling of Don the Harbour Master, they welcomed us to their island. We were soon known in the shops and restaurants and the library (books and emails), we hired bikes to get around the rather scattered settlement, a car for a few days to tour the island and admire the scenery and the large population of red crabs (wherever else would you see a road sign "SLOW - CRABS CROSSING") and generally had a good and relaxing time. We even renewed our nodding acquaintance with scuba diving to view some spectacular coral and fish. We provisioned here as opposed to Cocos as choice was much wider and prices much lower. Provisioning for the 25 days we estimated it could take us to get to Rodriguez could have been a bit of a concern as our fridge had broken down but luckily there was a fridge-fixer on the island and he quickly sorted out the problem.

There is a Malayan-Chinese population of about 600 mostly working in the phosphate mines and processing plant and a few hundred whites doing what ever. The standard of living seemed high and the facilities far from basic so we assumed the Australian tax payer was helping out. The Malaysians were Moslem with their own Mosque within hearing range of the anchorage and we were "entertained" by the Mullah at 04.45 every morning and regularly throughout the day as he called the faithfully to prayer. Hadn't a note in his voice.

One day we watched as over four hundred illegal immigrants from Afghanistan arrived in the most decrepit old boat packed in like sardines. They were quickly processed by the now experienced authorities and, having been given food, showers and rest, were flown to the mainland. Our hearts went out to them. They had each paid as much as US\$20,000 for the trip and had arrived with great expectations. On the mainland they would be confined to camps while their applications for residency were processed. The skipper and crew would be jailed for a year and then sent back to Indonesia while those that made the big money get off scot free. It's a lucrative business. The boat (wooden and, as far as we could see, rotten) was towed out to sea and blown up. Sinking hadn't worked with previous such boats.

It was an easy three and a half day down hill ride from Christmas to Cocos Keeling if a little bumpy at times. Our alternator stopped charging along the way and, uncertain of the risks of running the engine without a thorough check, we entered Cocos under sail and dropped our anchor in 4 metres of lovely coral sand just off Direction Island in the company of several other yachts. Fortunately the wind blew steadily at over twenty knots so our Airmarine wind generator kept the batteries up putting in up to 30 amps during gusts and there was no real problem other than a small matter of a fire in the battery compartment and in the engine box when Peter managed to short out the system when trying to trace the fault in the alternator - only a broken connection as it turned out. The powder from the

extinguisher took ages to clean up. Despite the wind (and we had 40 knots one night) the anchorage was well sheltered from the south-easterly ocean swell and the holding good so no one there experienced any problems. At one time there were seventeen yachts at anchor simply enjoying the place or waiting for a weather window for the move on to Chagos to the north west or, like us, Rodriguez and Mauritius further south on a more direct course to Richards Bay, South Africa.

Like Christmas Island, Cocos has its own Customs, Immigration and Quarantine procedures (all done by Mark the Police and Rosie the Policette) so the formalities had to be completed again though it is also part of Australia. Still, it was all very easygoing. Mark and Rosie came out to us by launch to check us in and again to check us out so we avoided the half-hour dinghy ride (always wet) to Home Island, then the regular free ferry to West Island and the free connecting bus to the shopping and administrative centre there. A full day's excursion. About 600 Malayan Moslems live on Home and about two hundred others (mainly Australians) live on West.

We stayed for ten days enjoying the swimming and snorkelling and a couple of BBQ parties ashore. We also did an interesting "drift snorkel" in a rip flowing between Direction and Home islands and saw some spectacular coral and fish, including reef sharks. After the night of the gale, a ten foot shark was reported near the rip which put a damper on peoples' enthusiasm for getting in to the water. We did visit Home Island by dinghy and looked over a well presented museum and a big old colonial-style house as well as having lunch and doing a little shopping.

By Tuesday 11th September the weather prognosis looked reasonable and, as we were ready to leave, we set sail for Rodriguez 2000 nm away on a bearing of 253 degrees true and, after a short stay planned for there, on a further 350 nm to Mauritius.

Appalling weather

For seven days we experienced appalling weather. Persistent torrential rain accompanied 25 knot winds (happily from astern) with regular gusts to 30 knots and occasionally 40 and we did not see the sky at all. Maybe a point to be made in the ongoing debate about the every increasing reliance on GPS. Sextant or GPS, whichever the choice, it is clearly prudent to be prepared to sail a dead reckoning course if needs be.

We acquired an Electronic Chart system when in Australia. It works from our laptop linked to our Garmin 128. Its fun to see your boat moving across the chart and it is a useful addition to the usual range of navigational aids. We rely, and probably always will, on paper charts but ours are mostly photocopies with all the lack of clarity that sometimes implies. We needed nearly one hundred to cover us from Bundaberg to Capetown so weight and expense were important considerations.

The swell on this passage, while predominately from the south east, seemed to come from any old where, was never less than 3 metres and more at times. While now and then the seas looked as if they might overwhelm us, *Waxwing* nearly always managed to lift her stern at the last minute and the breaking wave would slide under us. Occasionally, she got it wrong and our cockpit and side decks would become a seething mass of white foam but in fact we never felt really threatened – just very uncomfortable. We battened down the hatches to try and keep inside dry and set only the staysail or a well furled yankee. We still averaged over 6 knots vmg.

At one point, Peter was thrown across the boat from the galley to the navigation station. *Waxwing* wasn't damaged and Peter suffered only a loss of dignity and a few grazes and bruises but it was a timely reminder that the safety belt at the galley is not just for decoration.

Jimmy Cornell in his *World Cruising Routes* suggests that the sort of conditions we had may well be experienced on this route until one is past the half way mark when "normal" trade winds of 20-25 knots and a much lower and regular swell can be expected with some lovely sailing and sunny days. And so it has proved for the first half anyway and more or less for the second when 10 – 12 knots were the norm with some calm days when we had to motor – not so much to make progress as to escape wallowing about in the swell with sails flapping and snapping. We were regularly visited by flying fish at night who, no doubt blinded by, or attracted to, our lights committed suicide by the dozens leaving an oily mess on sails and decks.

During the crossing we enjoyed our daily radio chats with Paul and Kay *Wirlinga* (Aus) who had left Cocos two days before us heading for Chagos before turning south again for Mauritius – a long way round but worth it they thought to experience this uninhabited paradise of islands. They had the same bad weather as us for the first thousand miles then no

wind at all so we did well with only occasional bursts of the engine to keep up the batteries and through the few calms.

It was difficult to get reliable weather information as we could not pick up signals from the Australian weatherfax stations or indeed any others so we just did the best we could and it worked out as the patterns were fairly stable and the sky, once we could see it again, looked much the same day after day and we observed no change in the swell pattern once the weather improved. Bird life was no help either as we saw only Stormy Petrels and those all the way.

For the remaining 500 miles to Rodrigues the wind came and went but never exceeded ten knots so the pace was slower but to compensate a little the swell was much easier. 150 miles out we saw our first ship of the passage. It was heading north and passed about a mile ahead of us during the night. We had no need to alter course but called on VHF anyway. No response. We saw dolphins twice and hooked, but did not land, a fish which must have been of considerable size as our 60lb breaking strain line snapped but otherwise this part of the passage was unremarkable.

14 days and 3.5 hours after lifting our anchor we dropped it again in Port Mathurin, Rodriguez 2000 miles later. We logged only 35 miles more so obviously we managed to sail pretty straight course. As is often the case, the smaller the nation the more the paper work and it took quite a time to complete all the forms – about seventeen in all – many of which duplicated each other and calling for four officers to call on us. Still, we were glad to be in and they did make us feel welcome. A bit of a contrast to New Zealand and Australia where one, or at the most two, officers with one form did the business and welcomed us just as warmly.

Rodriguez is an interesting place with reasonable, if rather basic, facilities and we were glad we had stopped there. It's a Department of Mauritius. The people are mainly the descendants of Negro slaves who were transported to the island from Mauritius, where they worked in the sugar cane fields, after slavery was abolished. They were replaced by indentured workers imported from India and their descendants now run the show. Mauritius is just 350 miles to the west and we intend to stay here for some weeks before moving on to the French island of Reunion for a bit of the flavour of France. It is to be our "launching pad" for the passage of 1600 miles to Port Richard.

