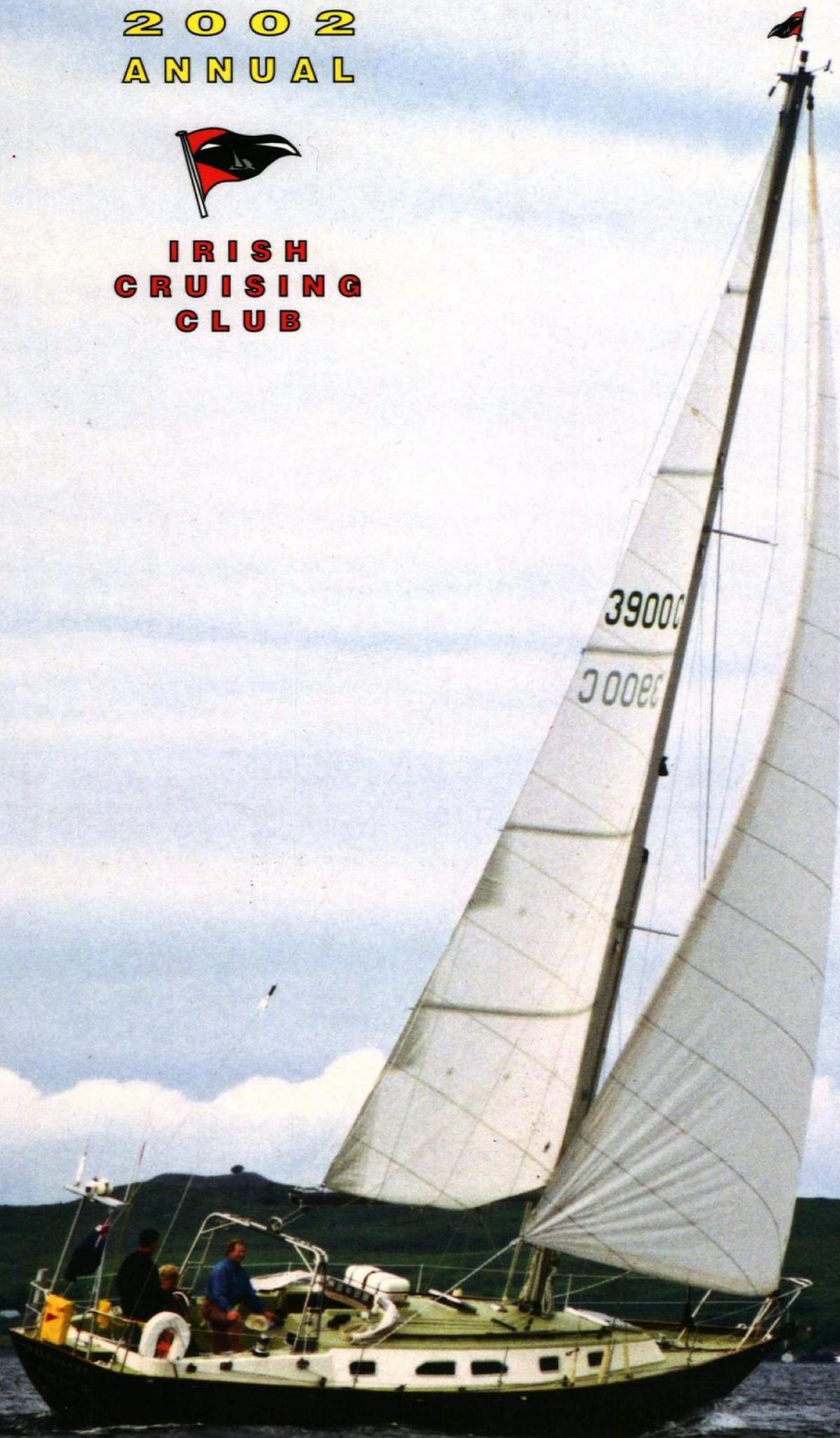


**2002  
ANNUAL**



**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). This 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. Overshort logs may be put in as Dunns Ditties.
- 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
  - 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 2002

IRL 4441

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*Arctic Fern* leaving Howth, December 27, 2001

*Photo: Tom Lawlor*

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**Front Cover**

*Greenheart* Mike and Alison Balmforth's 'Dawn 39'.

**Back Cover**

Photos taken by Kevin Dwyer at the Autumn Rally .

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**Submissions for 2002 Annual**

To reach the Honorary Editor, Paddy Barry, 21 Belgrave Road, Monkstown, Co Dublin (telephone 280 0820) by 15th October 2003 at latest.

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# Honorary Secretary's Report

Members of your committee who had been slumbering peacefully during the winter months were called on watch and expected to be fully alert for the first meeting of the year, held in the second half of January. This is the election meeting for new members and 19 nominations were received. In recent years it has been emphasised that the suitability of each applicant, irrespective of where that candidate is from, should be the deciding factor. This has obviated the faction fighting which members might be surprised to learn was vigorously pursued in earlier years by regions on behalf of their "own" applicants. Generally, two thirds of the available places can be allocated quickly, but the last few invariably take considerable time to decide and inevitably some very good applications have to be turned down. If more members who no longer sail, who do not attend any club functions and whose interests have gone elsewhere, could be persuaded to resign, the application process could be opened up to more of those well qualified nominees. However, I would emphasise again that those who are still interested in sailing, (and where possible attend functions) but who may not be as active as they might wish either through age or health are expected to remain and enjoy their membership.

The Irish Cruising Club is a member of the Conference of Yacht Cruising Clubs (CYCC), an organisation started by publishers of Sailing Directions and expanded to include the RYA, Hydrographic Office, etc. The CYCC deals with matters such as royalties for the use of Admiralty chart extracts, attempts to charge light dues on yachts etc. etc. Michael McKee has attended meetings on our behalf for some years and provides a detailed report to your committee on matters relevant to us. With the spread of "bureaucracy", including actual/proposed EU licensing regulations for skippers we can contribute to the Conference influence in ensuring that changes are reasonable and sensible.

The long standing tradition was maintained when the members of the Royal St. George Yacht Club allowed us to "take over" their Club for our Annual General Meeting. We are a peripatetic Club wandering from place to place and are very grateful to all who provide us with meeting rooms, dining facilities etc, but none more so than the Royal St. George on whom we impose every year. Members and staff make us most welcome. I would encourage our members to

show their appreciation by contributing even more generously to bar takings on the occasion of our annual visit.

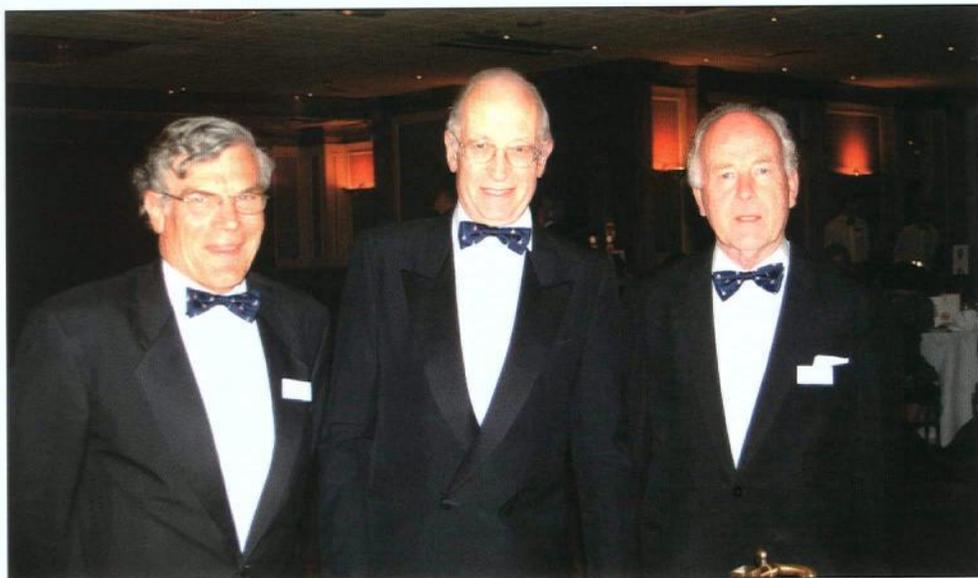
Again our AGM attendance used the full capacity of the George. Eighty six members signed in. In addition fifty five members sent apologies for inability to attend. It is a very healthy sign that over a quarter of our total membership take such an active interest in the affairs of the Club.

Asking those present to stand in tribute to deceased members, our Commodore mentioned among others, Denis Doyle, a previous Commodore, a Rear Commodore of the RORC and a wonderful ambassador for the Irish Cruising Club. Terry Roche, who was elected a member in 1935, six years after the Club was founded and who in recent years had lived and sailed in his yacht in the Mediterranean, almost to the end. Steve Malone, well known to many for his cruising, including the Channel Cruise in 2001.

Honorary Treasurer Arthur Baker's report on Club finances revealed a most positive position, so much so that not one single question on the accounts was forthcoming!

Commodore David FitzGerald, the first Western Region Commodore in the history of the Club had told committee members that with regret he felt unable to continue in office for a third year. It being the south's turn to follow, he had suggested that he be succeeded by Arthur Baker. Andrew Curtain, Gerry Sheridan and Michael McKee stood down from the committee after varying years of service of which Michael McKee's was by far the longest. He served on the committee since 1966 with only two short breaks and had held each of the flags. All three have served the Club very well.

Members will be well aware of the tremendous achievement



Peter Ronaldson Vice-Commodore, Arthur Baker Commodore, Cormac McHenry Hon. Secretary.

*Photo: Kevin Dwyer*

of the *Northabout* crew in transiting the Northwest Passage in one season. To mark this, the Club struck its first Gold Medal and as his final duty Commodore FitzGerald presented one to each member of the crew:

Paddy Barry\*, Jarlath Cunnane\*, Michael Brogan\*, Terry Irvine\*, Kevin Cronin, John Murray, Frank Nugent, Gearóid O'Riain\*.

*\*Members of the Irish Cruising Club.*

One additional medal has been struck for the Club to retain amongst its memorabilia.

David FitzGerald in a few words said how much he had enjoyed his term of office and the duties which it had entailed and then formally handed over to Commodore Arthur Baker.

The rule change covering payment of subscriptions had real effect at the first committee meeting following the AGM. In accord with the new rule, eight members who were in default had their membership terminated, but in the spirit of the comments made from the floor at the AGM when the revised rule was passed, the committee exercised discretion with regard to a number of senior members who were known to be indisposed and their membership continues for the time being.

Consideration of our members use of the Library facilities at the Royal Irish Yacht Club was discussed. Royal Irish Commodore Fred Espey had hosted a reception at that Club to show the refurbishment which had been carried out and again welcomed ICC members to make use not alone of the Library, but also of their dining facilities. We continue to note the very small number of our members who avail of this continued and most generous offer.

Donal Morrissy had requested clarification from the same meeting as to how the Gull Salver was awarded and after discussion it was agreed, on the proposal of Donal McClement, that it be awarded to the highest placed Irish yacht in the Fastnet Race, thus consolidating the interest our Club has had in that event over the years.

The Northern Region had organised our Annual Dinner for the Slieve Russell Hotel in Ballyconnell, Co. Cavan. This



Ron Holland.

*Photo: Kevin Dwyer*

highlights the difficulty the success of our dinners imposes, there being very few hotels big enough to take us all outside of the principal cities of each region. The hotel imposed a lot of work on Vice Commodore Peter Ronaldson because their booking system could not cope with our numbers and it started to indicate that the hotel was full from the beginning of January. That was not the case and Peter Ronaldson, assisted by Michael McKee had to demonstrate to hotel staff that they still had many rooms free. Fortunately, the other arrangements by the hotel were excellent. The speaker was Ron Holland who has, apart from his international clientele, designed many yachts for our members. He delivered a very interesting address which gave members ideas for the yacht of their dreams.

The golfers enjoyed the first class course and those lucky enough to get on the barge trip on the canal enjoyed it also. Again luck was not with Vice Commodore Peter Ronaldson who had to contend with engine failure on the barge, overbooking again – it seemed everybody wanted to go on the barge – and the logistics of bussing parties to and fro. A weekend enjoyed by all, from which the Vice Commodore escaped on the Tuesday to his yacht in the Med. to recover!

The date for this dinner was 13th April. Over the past ten years



Alan J. Taylor, Commodore OCC, Arthur Baker, Christopher Thornhill, Commodore RCC, Peter Fairley, Commodore CCC.

*Photo: Kevin Dwyer*

the dinner has moved from February, partly to avoid being too close to the other major event of the year, the Annual General Meeting, partly in the expectation of better weather. Those who experienced the rain in Tralee on the last occasion the dinner was there will remember that the consensus then was to move to a later date. But now, with more and more members' yachts permanently moored in the Mediterranean suggestions have been made about an earlier date to enable members get away to their boats. Your views would be very much appreciated by the committee.

With the arrival of "Summer" members moved into a busy season of activities and cruises. The June Rally for the East Region was organised at Kilmore Quay by Brian MacManus on behalf of Rear Commodore Peter Killen who had headed way up north to Iceland. There was a reasonable turnout, but it appears that for these short weekends members are reluctant to travel far from their home ports. Perhaps another indicator of the pressures of business on skippers and crews that they cannot afford to risk being prevented from being back at their desks on Tuesday morning by weather.

The Hon. Secretary headed to Holland to bring his new boat back in leisurely fashion via the Baltic and Norway while his wife dealt with queries and letters and kept the Club afloat in his absence. Previous Commodore David FitzGerald set off to Spain again and the breadth and measure of this seasons cruising activity is well recorded throughout the rest of this journal.

As I write the Shannon Cruise is about to commence and with about 44 boats taking part it should be a most enjoyable Club event. Rear Commodore Tony Clarke of the West Region is in charge. Hopefully, all will go smoothly as he has already

had his cruise and cannot escape to the Med. afterwards to recover!

The last committee meeting of the year was held in Bangor at the beginning of October and later sixty members from the region joined the committee at lunch. The meeting covered progress on planning for the Rally to mark our 75th in 2004 (a commemorative book is to be commissioned), the hand over of Publications by Terry Johnson to Leo Conway, progress on the web site by Gary MacMahon and discussion on our use of the Royal Irish library, led by Brendan Bradley. A high turnout of committee members was recorded.

Having been away for three months in the summer and planning to be away for even longer next year I have decided that I will not offer myself for re-election at our AGM on 21st February 2003. I took over from Brian Hegarty on an interim basis in 1989 and you formally elected me in March 1990. Over my years in office I have seen the number of members increase rapidly until it became necessary to impose a top limit. I have seen the range of our cruises increase without limit and the size of our fleet increase enormously in number, length and quality.

I have served under Commodores John Gore-Grimes, Hugh Kennedy, David Nicholson, Liam McGonagle, Michael McKee, David FitzGerald and Arthur Baker. From all I received assistance and support without measure. I came in contact with you, the members, in a way I would not otherwise have done and met many others from the cruising world outside. For myself, it has been a most enjoyable chapter of my life. Arrangements are being made to have a successor put forward for your approval at the AGM. That person will I trust derive much pleasure from the post. I can say with sincerity that I hand over the administration of a strong and vibrant Club.

Thank you all for your support.

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

### Flag Officers and Committee 2002-2003

			East	South	West	North
Commodore	Arthur R Baker (South)	1st year				
Vice Commodore	Peter Ronaldson (North)	1st year	B Bradley	C J Bruen	B Lynch	HP Kennedy
Rear Commodore	Peter Killen (East)	2nd year	B Connor	D McClement	G MacMahon	R Barr
Rear Commodore	Tony Clarke (West)	1st year	T Johnson	D Tucker	D FitzGerald	D Park
Hon. Secretary	Cormac P McHenry	13th year	B McGonagle	D Brazil	(ex officio)	J Nixon
Hon. Treasurer	Brian MacManus	1st year				

#### New Members

Stanton Adair	Bangor
Harold Boyle	Belfast
Deirdre Clarke	Limerick
Francis Ennis	Howth
Peter Fernie	Galway
Paul Hegarty	Cork
John Hughes	Holywood
Terry Irvine	Ballyclare
Raymond Lovett	Cork
Liam McElligott	Clare
Ian Morrow	Bangor
Joe Phelan	Dublin
Douglas Smyth	Greenisland
Cormac O'Carroll	Cork

#### Deceased Members

Jimmy Butler	10/09/01
Bernie Cahill	06/08/01
Richie Coe	02/10/01
Frances Cuthbertson-Smith	02/06/01
Denis Doyle	11/11/01
Dan McAuley	20/10/01
Stephen Malone	08/01/02
Douglas McIlwaine	06/02/02
Terry Roche	01/03/01
Arve Osmundsvaag	25/07/02

# Challenge Cup Awards

## Colin A Chapman

When our Commodore asked me to perform this task I tried putting down my ground tackle but having dragged I must now put to sea.

Not being a literary luminary or a particularly loquacious log writer I decided to penalise pub-crawling and reward sailing as we are after all a cruising club. Vicarious voyaging has proved to be very enjoyable ranging from coastal hopping, ocean passages professional captains and Corinthians. I do however wish that the writers of logs would tell us more about their boats, equipment, and perhaps share some of their secrets.

**THE FAULKNER CUP** must go to John & Ann Clementson for their passage home in *Faustina II*.

Our erstwhile Commodore, David Fitzgerald, returned to his favoured cruising waters with such joy that **THE STRANGFORD CUP** is I suggest appropriate.

The logs of cruising in Scottish waters were of such merit that my task here was particularly difficult but Paget McCormack just crossed the line first to win **THE WYBRANT CUP**.

The club dose not run to strait-jackets so that John Gore-Grimes will have to be dealt with by awarding **THE ROCKABILL TROPHY** for his seamanship in appalling weather.

I hope that Andy McCarter didn't cruise for more than sixteen days. His log does not clearly reveal this but it is a record of a super sail and thus wins **THE FORTNIGHT CUP**.

**ROUND IRELAND** award goes to Sean McCormack in *Marie Claire II* for her wet and windy circumnavigation.

Dianne Andrews brought back such wonderful memories of my first Atlantic crossing that I want to thank her with **THE FINGAL CUP**.

How appropriate that Brendan Travers should in his little craft *Seodín* reach for **THE GLENGARRIFF TROPHY**. This

log reminded me of one of Adlard Cole's early works' *Sailing Days*.

I have not awarded **THE ATLANTIC TROPHY** because those eligible are getting other awards.

Finally although I am no judge of literature, I found Peter Fernie's log very refreshing and thus have served him with **THE WILD GOOSE**.

I have enjoyed this piece of navigation and am much relieved to find that other people have engine, navigational and just plain miserable moments too. Thank you Mr. Commodore for launching me early into reading of others voyages. This collection of logs is evidence of an active and healthy club of which I am proud to be a member. I commend this year's collection to the membership.

### AWARD WINNERS

**THE COMMODORE** awards **THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP** to Tom McSweeney for his contribution to Irish Maritime Affairs.

**THE EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE** awards **THE DONEGAN MEMORIAL** to Cormac McHenry for his cruise, mostly single handed, from Holland to Dun Laoghaire.

**THE SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** awards **THE WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP** to Donal McClement for his services to sailing.

**THE NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** awards **THE WRIGHT MEMORIAL SALVER** to David Park for his cruising among the Atlantic Islands.

**THE WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE** awards **THE ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY** to David Fitzgerald for his cruise in Biscay Waters.

The Award for the **BEST DUNNS DITTY** goes to Wallace Clark.

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# **White Magic in Iceland – Land of steam and hot pots!**

**Peter Killen**

The last time we had travelled around Iceland was back in 1993 in a 30-foot S&S named *Cilla*. She was a little tight for 5 large crew plus lots of stores etc. and we had a rough time of it on the way up. Nevertheless, I had fallen in love with the place and now that sufficient time had elapsed to obliterate the bad bits and highlight the good bits I thought it was time to go there once more. The added comfort of an extra 7 feet plus auto helm and various other bells and whistles was also encouraging.

Friday evening May 24th was the departure date and the crew valiantly kept their heads down as I prepared the boat for the off (I jest). Everything was going to plan – apart from the weather, which was bitterly cold, with a full northeast gale blowing as hard as could be. Then on Thursday evening the 23rd I landed in A & E in Beaumont Hospital with a problem that threatened the trip maybe altogether or at best till sometime the following week.

An understanding nurse, who loved sailing – and a determination to get away at all costs saw us leave Howth marina at 1500 hours on Sunday 26th May in lovely sunshine and the gale well gone.

The crew consisted of Hugh Barry and Joe Phelan, who have sailed with me for years, together with Sean Colbert and Tony Nolan. The combination could not have been better.

The trip to Seydisfjordur on the east coast of Iceland could not have been easier, with lots of motoring. We stopped in Castle Bay, Barra, en route to take on extra fuel, and Hugh – who had been on the '93 trip and was leaving the boat at Akureyri in Northern Iceland, reckoned that he had “got away with murder”. I couldn't agree more!

Seydisfjordur, on arrival on Saturday 2nd June was best described from an entry in the log: “Just off Daltangi Point, and about to turn into Seydisfjordur. Damp, foggy, snow on the hills. It looks great! Lovely to be back again and what an easy trip!”

We were tied up at 14.30 and had a “hair of the dog which produced shiny noses all round”.

Everywhere was shut including the local swimming pool and hot-pots. We finally headed for the one and only Hotel... where the owner allowed us to use two en-suite bathrooms for showers etc. (for free) followed by a large brunch and beer (not free)!

Seydisfjordur has changed since we were last here in so far as there are more houses. It is an important fishing port and is also the main ferry port via the Shetlands and Faroe Islands.

Following a wander around the town, in the damp, without seeing more than about ten people, we headed back for the boat in a gathering downpour, where shortly afterwards, the local harbour master arrived to check us out and allocated us a berth in a different part of the harbour. He was quickly followed by the customs man who also turned out to be a most friendly person. In fact in all our dealings with officialdom in Iceland, we found everyone to be most courteous and relaxed.

The following day turned out to be a much nicer day and we headed off to the local swimming pool for a swim and hot pot.

The hot pots are marvellous. They consist of small pools of very hot water in which you sit immersed up to your neck until you can stand the heat no longer when you hastily clamber out. These hot pots are situated in most pool complexes and really are the business. They are mainly situated outdoors and are used all the year round. One or two of the crew were having a great time gambolling around in the hot pot and were a little taken aback to notice, when we were leaving that at the reception desk there were monitoring cameras which both the receptionist and the public could view together! I hope the sequence wasn't captured on video.

We then headed up the hills for a decent climb, which nearly killed me and finally back to the boat, where after dinner I headed for the bunk. I was still, to an extent recovering from my stint in Beaumont. The rest of the crew headed for the bright light, and Joe writes...

“Seydisfjordur, Sunday evening, 2nd June 2002: opening of new tourist season!

Sunday evening in Seydisfjordur was like any Sunday evening in Dublin – in January! Straight down drizzle, 5°C air temp, and poor viz. So after a good meal on board washed



*White Magic in Grimsey Harbour.*

*Photo: Peter Killen*

down with a quality wine it was straight to "The Coffee House", previously recommended, for after dinner drinks. It was the first day of the new tourist season in Seydisfjordur and the "Coffee House" was under new management. She turned out to be an attractive young lady, full of enthusiasm, and who just had completed a qualification in marketing in Reykjavik and was now putting her knowledge to good use in the pursuance of an alternative career. She had left the man in her life, her twenty year-old-son who was the star player in the Reykjavik soccer team, and she informed us that in addition to her new career, she was looking for a new man in her life. The four of us, Tony, Sean, Hugh and Joe (Peter was hors combat in his bunk on the boat) were the only tourists in the whole of the town. And so she engaged us in animated discussion as the other three in the bar were obviously local and none was apparently available to be engaged, as the new man. She informed us quite positively, that the town of her birthplace and upbringing was without doubt the best town in the whole world. The name of the town was Djupivogur (pop. 580) and was just down the coast.

It soon became obvious that Hugh and Joe were outside the age range for the new man, and so she concentrated on Tony and Sean. Or was that the other way round. In any case Hugh and Joe resolved the problems of the world over a succession of excellent liqueurs (just pretend it's monopoly money) and we all returned to *White Magic* at about half past. The sun was up, the rain had stopped and all was well with the world. Unfortunately, neither Tony nor Sean had made the grade!

Sunday dawned still overcast, but the fog had cleared sufficiently for us to climb a good way up one of the surrounding mountains and what a view we had of the fjord.

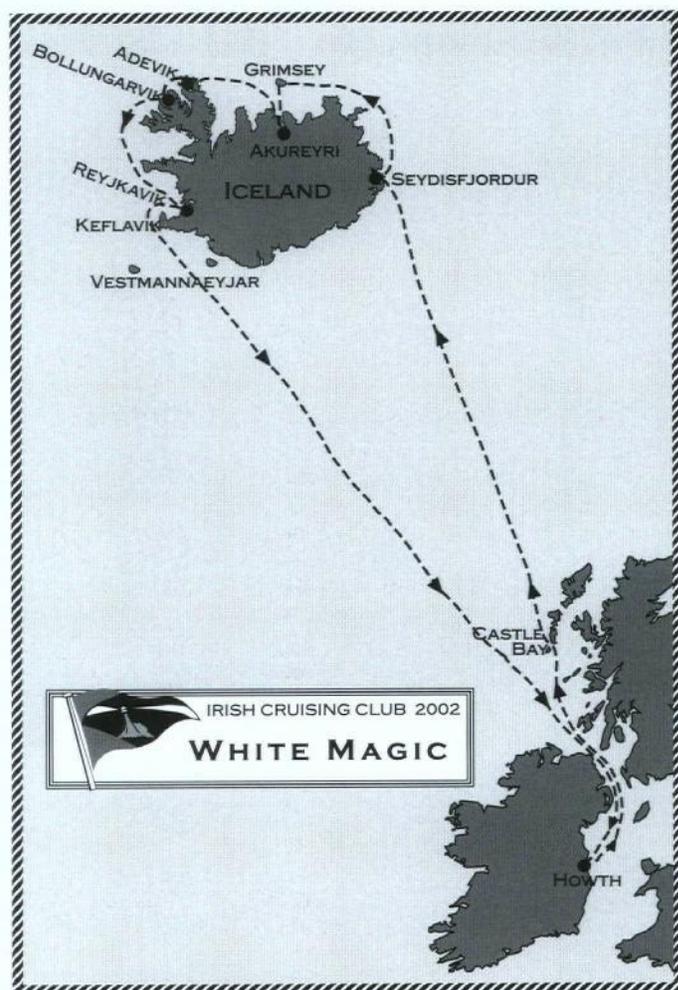
The next day we departed for the island of Grimsey, which is situated mid way along the north coast of Iceland and on the Arctic Circle. As we headed north the weather improved. What difference sunlight makes! En-route we came upon a humpbacked whale feeding. The area where he was feeding was filled with sea birds of all descriptions, which were diving in a frenzy. He was huge, and we stopped the boat for some time to watch. I sincerely hoped he didn't come up under us by mistake as he drove fish towards the surface.

We arrived in Grimsey Harbour on Tuesday 4th June in glorious sunshine and with an extremely cold following wind. The island is stuffed full of seabirds and the harbour is stuffed full of small working boats. The fishermen are most friendly and helpful and we had no problem tying up outside one of the boats having first been asked to move from a spot by the wall.

As we walked along the island cliffs looking at the hundreds of thousands of nesting seabirds, we could look across to mainland Iceland and savour the marvellous views of snowy mountain ranges reflecting the evening sunlight. It was breathtaking.

The next morning just prior to departure for Akureyri, Sean met two children who had come to look at the boat and wanted to know what part of Ireland we were from. It turned out that their mother was from Ireland (Dundalk) and she is married to an Icelandic trawler owner (the second largest trawler in Iceland). They live in Akureyri and were visiting their grandparents on Grimsey. The following week they were off to Dublin where their Irish grandparents live. We subsequently met the whole family two days later when they came to visit the boat in Akureyri and brought us a present of black seagull (Guillemot) breasts which Joe professed to love. He proceeded to stir-fry them and handed us all a plateful each. Joe, having eaten his fill professed them "lovely", the rest of us were not quite as enthusiastic. They tasted rather like liver – very strong liver!

En-route from Grimsey to Akureyri we had the pleasure of



using our spinnaker for the first time during the trip. The day was magical with soaring mountains either side of us as we sailed up the fjord and hastily gybed away from the only shallow bit on the starboard side. The farms on the lower slopes look extremely prosperous, with the farmland well tended. I believe that some of the best farming land in Iceland is here. Certainly they appear to have a microclimate, given the length of the fjord (it is 30 miles from the entrance to the town) and also the fact that tall hills and mountains surround it, it is very protected. Whatever the reason however, Akureyri is second in importance only to Reykjavik, with its own university.

Thursday was spent fuelling and watering the boat. That evening we had dinner in a restaurant called Fredrick V. It was an absolutely lovely meal followed by port and brandy in a sitting room off the dining room. When we were leaving they gave us a name card, which had been signed by all the staff. Perhaps we had spent too much! In general, eating out was more expensive than eating in Ireland and drink prices were off the Richter scale. I suppose you would find the place good value if you were an anorexic teetotaler. On the other hand, food in supermarkets was not too expensive and there was a good variety.

There is a bar downstairs from the restaurant, and we sat at a window watching young people driving endlessly past in a sort of motor promenade around the town centre. There seemed to be lots of near misses – perhaps that is the way they finally meet, a sort of vehicular courtship! Some of the cars they drive are truly exotic American jobs, such as Thunderbirds etc. I think they may buy these from the US armed forces who are stationed in Keflavik near Reykjavik.

The following day we took a day bus tour to Godafoss Waterfall, Lake Myvatn (the "Lake of Midges" which really

lived up to its name). Stutustadir, where there are what they call pseudo-craters, on to Hvesis with its sizzling bubbling sulphur mud pots (boiling hot), on to Dimmborgia (Dark Castles) where the huge lava formations do look like castles, and finally back to Akureyri. The whole trip did take a day, and the tour guide (a teacher in school term) thoroughly enjoyed himself as he gave us fact after fact! He was especially eloquent at Lake Myvatan, where before leaving the bus he had suggested we might like to buy midge nets, which would cover our heads, from the local tourist shop. These we felt were really too expensive, so almost nobody bought them. He then happily talked for what seemed hours, well away from the bus and beside the lake, while the rest of us tried to stop breathing and kept our ears and eyes closed as we were surrounded and infested by countless millions of mossies – luckily not the biting variety.

The plan was to have a crew change in Akureyri. Hugh was flying home from there.

Joe's wife Trish and Tony's fiancé – Marita, were flying in. Trish was joining the crew. Tony and Marita were going to tour Iceland by road for two weeks, prior to going home and getting married 3 weeks later.

The change over took place, and having had a final hot pot, swim, sauna and meal we bade farewell to our departing crew.

One last thing we decided to do prior to leaving Akureyri was to take a bus to Husavik, which is 90 kilometres away. We were interested to see this settlement since it had been an alternative port to put into, east of Akureyri. It is an important whale watching location.

The minibus, which we, and another 4 or 5 people took, departed Akureyri at 14.30 and was driven by a cheery girl. We did the total trip, much of it on dirt roads, in 45 minutes. We fell off the bus having been told that the returning bus departed at 18.30.

We had a pleasant day in the whale museum and had a few pints in a pub overlooking the harbour. I'm glad we had not put in there rather than Akureyri, for I thought the place not very attractive, and very dusty in the strong wind that was blowing.

At 18.30 sharp we arrived at the rendezvous point for the bus, to find it was full. No room for the 4 of us. The girl was as cheery as ever. Yes we had our return tickets. No problem, she would organise alternative transport. A man was standing beside her smiling quietly, as finally an old Japanese car with a blown exhaust, stuffing sticking out of the seats, and exuding smoke pulled up at the petrol pumps nearby.

We were told to hop in, some fuel was also popped in, the man got into the drivers' seat, was shown where the lights, indicators and wipers were and we were off! Trish was seated in the front passenger seat and I could see her body bracing as we slid around bends on the dirt road, with a good drop on either side. I asked the driver if he worked for the same bus company as the girl. He explained that he was also a prospective bus passenger who was heading to Akureyri to catch a plane that evening. Since we were driving like a rocket I asked if the plane was leaving shortly or was he just interested in opting out of this life and heading for the next. "Look behind you", he said. "Every time I slow down that girl driving the bus practically hits my bumper!" I looked behind and sure enough there was the grill of the bus inches behind.

Our driver turned out to be a University professor who was doing research work in Husavik, and was fascinating to talk to about Icelandic history and about his boyhood years spent fishing and farming with his grandparents in summer. We finally reached Akureyri (35 minutes) bade goodbye to the professor and headed for our boat.

Two hours later we were heading for the open sea once more, having had a huge meal in a Bar/Restaurant called "Ruby Tuesday's".

The weather continued to be absolutely gorgeous, and of course with 24 hours daylight, life could not be nicer! The only fly in the ointment tended to be the fog, which strikes quickly and lasts a considerable time.

The sail west along the north coast was, following a spell of wind on the nose, fast and exciting broad reaching – a lot of the time in the fog. As we rounded the northern point called Kogurnes we dug Trisch out of her bunk (she was off watch) to have her picture taken over the GPS repeater, which showed us to be just north of the Arctic Circle – a first for Trisch! At the time it was bitterly cold, with a chill wind blowing and thick fog, thus the strained smile!

The wind soon rose once more and it wasn't long before it was blowing 30 – 40 knots from the northwest. We sailed fast along the coast through some truly large overfalls then round the corner and into a beautiful tranquil bay called Adelvik where we anchored in 4 metres of water off a deserted beach. The scenery was magnificent. Sean popped the feathers over the side and in less than 15 minutes he had landed a large cod.

A quick swim followed by a large meal and wine followed by bed. Another miserable day in paradise!

The next morning we took the dinghy ashore. There are a few houses tucked under the mountains on one side of the bay, but they are now only used in summer, since the bay is no longer inhabited permanently. In winter, from what we heard subsequently, it is a remote and god forsaken place – cold and very forbidding.

We climbed to the top of a nearby mountain (through a small snowfield) and could see through a gap in the mountains a small ice choked fjord with fog rolling in waves past the entrance.

I had forgotten to mention earlier that as soon as we hit fog for the first time this trip, our Radar had conked out never to work again. I had cheered the others up by pointing out that there was very little shipping around the north of Iceland apart from the odd trawler.

As we stood on top of the mountain we stared, in silence, at the gap through the mountains, north, as two ships passed on a reciprocal course to the one we had taken. I enthusiastically pointed out the magnificent scenery all around us, but for some strange reason the others continued to look north. Oh well!

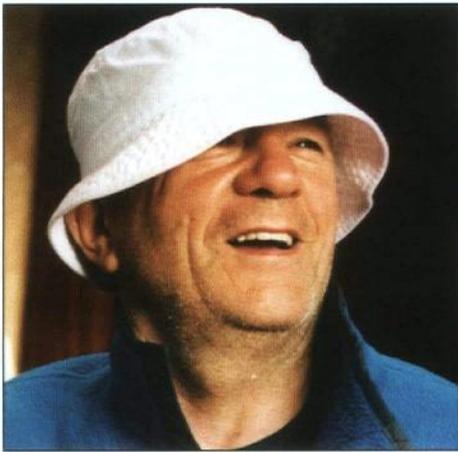
Our hike ashore also included trying to ford what looked like a very wide shallow stream of melt-water. We took off our walking boots and socks, rolled up our trousers and headed off. The water was bitterly cold but not deep and we treaded our way carefully through the water. Having finally nearly arrived at the far side, the water suddenly got very deep so we hurriedly retraced our steps making moaning, sounds as our legs started to develop what felt like terminal frostbite!

We saw a couple in the distance – back packers – who looked as if they were heading across country on a serious hike. We heard later, that people are dropped off by boat in the vicinity of where we were anchored and walk/climb for a few days before being picked up at another destination.

We finally upped anchor and headed on around the horn heading for another fjord called Hesteyrasfjardhur which, we had heard, is beautiful. Unfortunately when we reached the mouth of the fjord the wind was blowing at 30 knots from the mark. I decided we would use too much fuel and it would take hours to reach the head. Instead we bore off for the settlement of Bollungarvick which was directly downwind of us.

We quickly arrived there and upon entering the harbour (which is very protected) we noticed that one of the harbour walls was draped with rubber tyres to act as fenders. Most of the fenders had Fulmars nesting in them. A really amusing sight!

We found the one and only pub/shop/video store, and



Hugh Barry

Photo: Peter Killen



Trish on the Arctic Circle Ph: Sean Colbert Sean Colbert



Photo: Peter Killen

following a few pints the lady who owned the premises offered to show us a traditional settlement house and drying store, both of which had been restored. Off we headed on the 3-mile drive over a causeway at 00.30 hrs! It was all very interesting. She particularly pointed out an "antique open fishing boat" her words, which had been restored. Carved into the boats transom was the year it had been built – 1941...the year Joe had been born! He was not happy being classified as an antique.

She drove us back to our boat and joined us for a drink or two. She is not a native of Bollungarvick but married a local fisherman. The total population is 900 souls, and in winter they are often cut off from the outside world.

Bollungarvick is a busy little fishing harbour but also a very quiet place, though the local youths do perform the obligatory car promenading – all four cars!

I'm afraid that after our guest had left, Joe and I sat up all night in the daylight and demolished a bottle of Jameson whilst we discussed the meaning of life, the universe and everything! We, I believe, had solved all the problems by bedtime, but unfortunately couldn't remember a single solution when we awoke again.

Luckily Sean and Trish supervised our departure for Reykjavik. Someone wrote in the log "Depart Bollungarvick, calm sunny day, Skipper and mate diseased and staying below!"

The trip down the west coast was really magnificent. We had

wind speed averaging 30 knots gusting to 40 knots from the north and big seas for much of the journey. The scenery was stunning – for we had little if any fog, and the snowy mountains including the glacier Snaefellsjokul were crystal clear.

With about 70 miles to go the wind swung and we were beating into 30 knots for a change, but we finally arrived in Reykjavik at 1400 hrs the following day Thursday the 13th.

My wife Beverly, and Robert Barker were due to fly in the following day and I met them at the airport in lovely sunshine at the end of yet another fine day.

We rented two cars and spent the following day touring dirt roads to see a geyser called Strokkur, which dutifully did its thing, spouting haphazardly to shouts of delight from everyone. On to Gullfoss, where a mighty waterfall drenched us with its spray, and finally we dropped in to the Blue Lagoon at Keflavik. This is a man made hot water lagoon, which is situated in the middle of a lava field and is a by-product of a very large geothermal plant. It is a very popular place for tourists to visit, for one can swim around in the hot water and in general have a marvellous soak.

All in all we drove about 300 kilometres that day, Bev driving one car, I the other. It was quite tough as the cars were light and the roads really just stone dirt tracks. Don't buy a second hand hire car in Iceland!

The next day Sunday the 16th we watched Ireland v Spain on a telly in a pub called "The Sports Bar". The excitement was huge, and I think we met the entire ex-pat Irish population there! Later that afternoon we had a visit from an Icelandic boat builder named *Hanibal Sigurvinsson* who presented us with a bottle of wine – since we were the first yacht into Reykjavik this summer. He told us that this is a tradition he has established over the past several years. He is a very interesting person who apart from working on trawlers also has restored some wooden classic boats – something he hugely enjoys.

That evening, after dinner we went for a nightcap to one of the bars, and met a lovely Icelandic couple, who were out having a quiet drink to celebrate the wife's 50th Birthday. They had had a large party the day before and they were definitely in the recovery position!

Well, after a few pints with us, the wife (who certainly did not look a day over 40) insisted that we all came back to their house to, as she put it "see an Icelandic home". She would not take no for an answer.

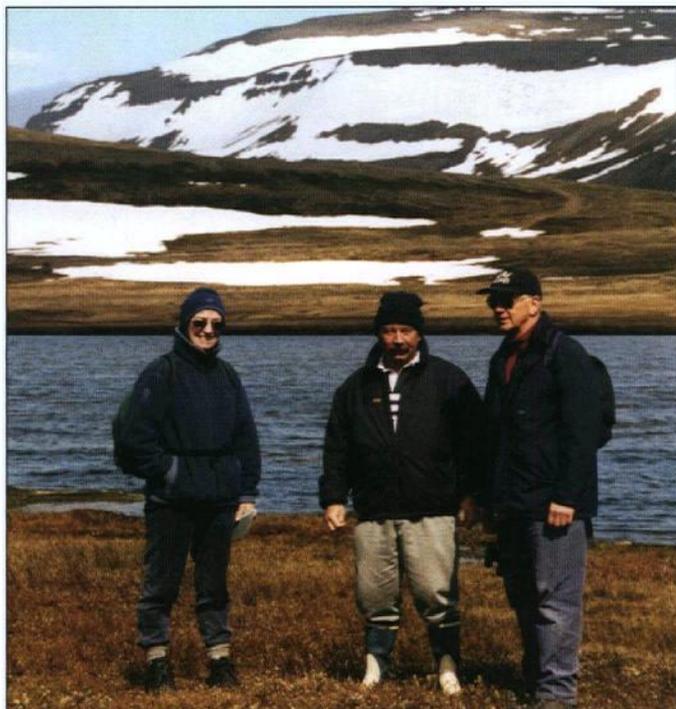
Off we went in a mix of the family car, driven by a son who had collected them, and a taxi, to a really nice house in a very attractive suburb.

The husband, who was a delightfully friendly person, told us that he had started his working life as a fisherman, subsequently had studied economics at university, became a



Tony Nolan.

Photo: Peter Killen



Trisch, Sean and Joe.

Photo: Peter Killen

government economist, continued to own his own trawler and also did some speculative building! They were living in one of the houses that he had built, together with their children and grandchild. We had a smashing evening and finally fell into our bunks at about 03.00, having been driven back to the boat by their long suffering son who was due to leave for Australia later that morning with his wife and baby son!

By Monday the 17th (the national holiday) the weather had changed. It became cold and blustery and by the following morning a full storm was blowing. Luckily we were tied to the leeward side of a pontoon situated deep in the back of the harbour, for it blew a full 50 knots for a good 10 hours. We had quadrupled the lines, the pontoon, not to mention the boat, was lepping around the place, and a really vicious chop was breaking over it. I hate to think what the wind speeds were out at sea, but later, one of the harbour staff did tell us that some of the shipping off the south of Iceland had had a very tough time indeed.

One had to wear full oilskins to move about the deck and we had to hang onto the girls, to stop them being blown away, and time the jump from the boat to the dock. One of our mooring lines – a good heavy one, snapped with a bang. Having put even more lines out we headed for the town to shelter from the wind. That evening the wind abated and Pat Barker (Robert's wife) arrived from Ireland.

Next day we swam and hot-potted in the local pool and having eaten a final meal ashore we reckoned there was a weather window. The forecast was good and we hoped to get to the Westmann Islands where Bev and Trish were due to depart Iceland by plane.

We departed Reykjavik at approximately 2400 hrs in a gentle northerly breeze. The course was initially due south swinging to the east and sure enough as we swung east so did the wind and so it piped up. Soon we were beating into heavy seas with winds gusting between 25 and 30 knots complete with heavy rain. Typical cruising!

By 13.00 the next day I decided that we were going to be a long time getting to the Westmanns and that there was going to be precious little time for Bev and Trish to see much there

before they had to board a plane for home.

The relief in the boat was tangible as we turned downwind, and in no time we were happily surfing downwind in a following sea heading for Keflavik where we arrived at 2230 that evening.

The distance from Reykjavik to Keflavik is about 15 miles. We had sailed a total distance of 114 miles! I was not terribly popular. Bev described the experience as "rather like living in a concrete mixer."

Keflavik is a rather utilitarian town. It has a U.S. army base there and is also a NATO depot. However the soldiers keep a very low profile. There are some nice bars and two pleasant restaurants, and the harbours (two) are very well protected.

As I was saying goodbye to Bev the next day, she asked me if I had got Iceland out of my system, and cautioned me to think carefully before I answered "because if I hadn't, it was divorce!"

On Saturday 22nd June, we finally departed Keflavik bound for Howth in perfect weather, and were quickly sailing past the Westmanns and Surtsey, the island which emerged out of the sea in the 1960's. Soon after passing them the wind swung onto the nose and for the next two days we were beating into winds of up to 40 knots or so. After that, the Gods took pity on us and gradually the wind veered and eased. We had some wonderful sailing as we headed south.

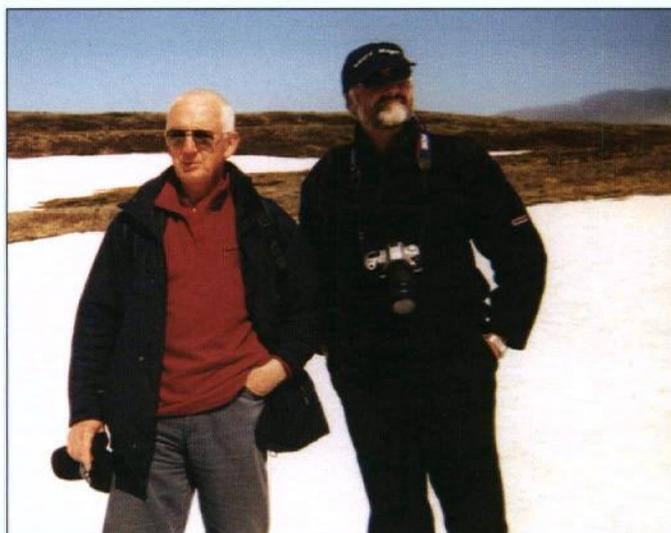
One night, as I lay in my bunk, I heard what sounded like electronic interference on the VHF and wondered if it was dolphins.

I went on deck and Pat Barker, who was on watch pointed out a huge moon which was rising over our bow. I pointed behind the boat and there surfing through the waves was a large herd of pilot whales. Their course bisected our transom and as they moved they chatted to each other. One could not hear them on deck, but below the boat acted like a bell and they could be heard clearly. In fact, one could distinguish easily between the bulls, cows and calves.

Having wakened the others we watched them for maybe a half an hour in our jocks until the cold drove us below once more.

We tied up in Howth at 0130 on Saturday 29th June and bade a fond "goodnight" and "thank you" to *White Magic*, who had looked after us so well.

The total distance sailed through the water was 2,285 miles. Total engine hours 126.



Joe and Skipper.

Photo: Sean Corbett

# Skye's the Limit!

## David Beattie

Following upon our successful and relatively fast round Ireland trip in 2000, the 2001 season augured well but proved to be a true *annus horribilis* for our Shipman 28, *Aeolus*, as she was badly damaged in Dun Laoghaire. Between one thing and another we lost half of the season and our well-developed plans for a Scottish cruise had to be abandoned.

2002 was going to be different and as we like to pay respect to the pagan gods (for goodness sake the boat is named after a god) we decided that the New Year should be deemed to commence at the solstice. This entitled us to mark its recent arrival on Christmas morning by making a short cruise in company with *Red Velvet* flying the flag of Paul Butler (ICC) to watch the Forty Foot swim and toast the coming season. Now Laurence Thompson (my co-owner) and I have only so much capacity for champagne so the remainder of the holiday was spent contemplating the pilot books and planning our cruise. It may have been the champagne, or just blind optimism, but the idea formed in our heads that a 16 day cruise with the minimum purpose of reaching Loch Scavaig on Skye but with an undocumented objective of going further west was realistic. Of course we should have known better and, indeed, having been following the weather pattern as a settled and clement spring gave way to a moist summer with a steady series of low pressure systems and associated fronts, might well have modified our expectations before the weather did it for us.

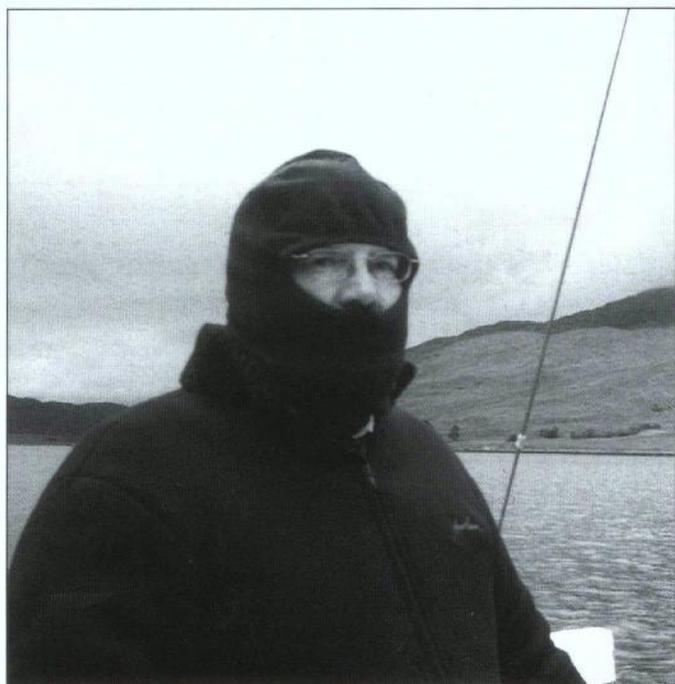
We decided to aim to leave at 0001 on Saturday 25th May to enable good time for digestifs after dinner in the RIYC and to avoid the bad luck of a Friday departure. The forecast was robust but promising. There had been strong southerlies for

days and these were set to moderate and back southeasterly. Nevertheless, there were expressions of doubt on the faces of the crew when they mustered at 1930 on Friday. I usually find that the crews' appetite for a "spot of yottin" is improved by a couple of aperitifs, some good solid club food, a decent bottle of burgundy followed by some Stilton and the usual accompaniment. Unfortunately it wasn't to be. Philip (Mahony) on his first cruise announced that he "didn't do night passages" after eating stilton, Laurence and his wife Kirin supported Philip on the basis of the forecast indicating a moderating wind overnight and we all agreed to meet again in the morning. "I don't do ..." became the by-word of the cruise!

In fact it was 1840 on Saturday when we slipped away northwards planning to catch the young flood about mid-way between the Nose of Howth and Lambay. The wind was southeasterly 3 or 4, the sea still rather disturbed but with full main and number 3 genoa we ploughed steadily northward, tucking in a single reef as darkness overtook us. As it happened we didn't need the reef as the wind veered to the south and eased overnight falling away completely with the dawn. Its easy to forget the impact of one's first good dawn at sea. I don't think Philip will forget his for a while. The sun heaved itself out of the Irish Sea lighting the tops of the Mourne then reaching downwards and turning the valleys and County Down coastline into a pink wonderland. The sea turned to molten gold. From below a groan heralded the arrival at the galley of my co-owner. He announced that he knew where we had stowed the potato cakes and that we should have an Ulster fry. He then boiled a kettle and returned to his bunk. Now I can take a hint as well as the next man and so our 2002 culinary competition began...

In the meantime we motor sailed. The South Rock came up and disappeared over the horizon, we briefly assisted Belfast Coastguard who were attempting to locate the driver of a jetski who had not returned on time and the cruise started to take on its own rhythm. Philip and I both keep vessels on the Shannon and are regularly plagued by the buzzing of jetskis. We were therefore a little less than wholeheartedly enthused by the idea of searching for one of them. Happily he was found and not by us as there would have been a strong temptation to make him pay for the depredations of his inland colleagues.

By lunchtime Laurence had emerged from the forecabin and served us his traditional minced sardine sandwiches. With Mew Island abeam and now under main and No. 1 and a strong ebb it was possible to make progress without the engine. Belfast Lough looked strangely deserted for a pleasant Sunday afternoon but the visibility was good and we could see right up the Lough to the H & W cranes. Just abeam of Black Head the wind deserted us and we were left in an oily swell as the last of the sea state from the previous week abated. We had written "Dún Laoghaire towards Islay" in the logbook but the prospect of flogging the tide up the North Channel and around the Mull of Kintyre under engine was not welcome so we slipped in to the new marina at Glenarm just as the stream turned against us and were made fast by 1820. This new facility is perfectly placed for tide dodging.



It was cold in Loch Spelve – *The Skipper*.

Our berth was free provided we were gone by morning said the Harbourmaster who gave us the keys to the showers (very adequate) and directed us to the Poacher's Pocket for supper (basic but welcoming). By now we were comfortable to go into our relaxed cruising watch keeping rota of three hours on, six off with the Skipper on call at all times so there were two asleep as we slipped out at 2350 Sunday, set the main with 1 reef and motor sailed northwards. The BBC at 0048 proposed northwesterly 3 to 4 backing southerly later, squally showers, moderate or good. And so it was. The logbook records long periods of heavy "wetting" rain and the wind had not backed by the time we picked up a former Highland and Islands Development Board mooring off Port Ellen at 0745 Monday. A good "ziz" and brunch with wine were called for and provided in satisfactory measure.

By early afternoon it was time to venture ashore. The wind had backed and the anchorage where the moorings are laid is open to the south so a small wave was running in to the beach. The trusty Avon was produced and I unveiled the Seagull that had been shrouded in a protective plastic shopping bag on the pushpit. "I don't do Seagulls" was heard from Philip but ignored. By the time the four of us had reached the beach (in two shifts) I had decided that our tender was definitely too small. In any event we walked off in search of a distillery to visit and pints.

There are plenty of both on Islay of course, although things are rather less casual than they used to be as regards visiting hours at the distilleries and we managed to be too late. Instead we had a good walk and a couple of pints. Laurence practiced his West Cork-learned blás (*blás = bloom, beauty, condition* (Dineen)) on the locals in the pub and managed a brief conversation. We eventually got everyone back on board without getting too wet. Dinner, much better than in Glenarm was mostly prepared in the pressure cooker.

The tide would not serve until late morning so we had a lazy start. The Met. Office was warning of gales in Shannon and Fastnet, while we could anticipate east to southeast 3/5 veering west to northwest and increasing 4/6 later. I had never been through the Sound of Islay so given the forecast it seemed a good time to go there. An hour out of Port Ellen and we had a reef and a number 3. Kirin spotted a big squally cloud tearing in from the west so it seemed like a good idea to put in the second reef. We were travelling at 5.8 knots as McArthur's Head came abeam and we tucked in to the Sound. The reefs came out shortly afterwards and poor Philip, who had only signed on for a week, sighed with frustration and helped himself to a beer as we glided past the immaculately white distillery buildings at Port Askaig and then Bunnabhain. He recovered in time to serve a late lunch as we approached Scalasaig (Colonsay) shortly before gin time (1800).

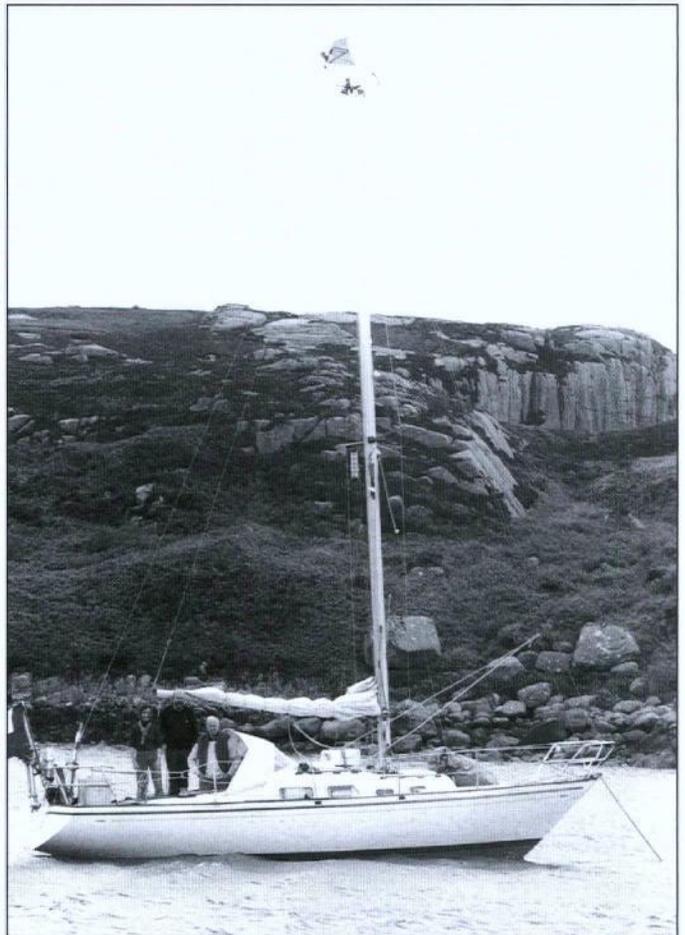
It would have been interesting to stop here. However our uncomfortable night off Port Ellen as the southerly built was fresh in our minds and there was an easterly swell running, which was predictable given the forecast wind direction, so we pressed on northward and in the dusk threaded our way carefully through the rocky shoals that guard the southeastern approach to Tinker's Hole. It took a while but eventually we identified Rankin's Rocks and passed safely to the east of them steering on the prominent outcrop of Rubha Calachain. We took care to estimate the location of the drying rock to the east of Eilean nam Muc, skirted it and dropped the Bruce with 15 fathoms of chain off the northeastern corner of the pool. *Aeolus* hunted a little lying now to the tide and then athwart the tide to the wind.

To say the place was deserted would be an understatement. Even the seabirds were on a day off. We hadn't seen a yacht since we left Port Ellen and the last sign of mankind had been a

Caledonian McBrayne ferry that had emerged behind us from the Sound of Islay. We luxuriated in the sense of remoteness and enjoyed supper in the cockpit admittedly huddled under the sprayhood for warmth. Tinker's Hole is a snug place and not the worst in which to hear a gale warning, which shortly after setting the anchor light on the forestay, we did. Now as it happened it was for Rockall. However after our fast passage up the Irish Sea and around Kintyre and our longer than expected voyage that day we wanted a rest day and a gale warning "uptide" insofar as weather systems were concerned gave what for us was an adequate excuse.

The early forecast only gave south or southwesterly 5 or 6 but it can funnel through Tinker's Hole and this morning that is what was happening. Our masthead anemometer was recording 45 knots in the gusts, which only spurred Laurence on to greater things for breakfast. Thus fortified we had one of those days with four crew on a small (by modern standards) 28 footer. Everyone withdrew into their shells and suddenly what had appeared only two days earlier to be very cramped quarters seemed by magic to be more than adequate. Books were produced and read. The diesel was topped up and engine checks carried out. The gas soldering iron appeared and that loose connection on the circuit for the forecabin lights was repaired. A spectacular lunch of three courses each accompanied by an appropriate wine manifested itself without a word being exchanged.

Then I suggested Scrabble. Laurence decided that this was a good opportunity to inflate the dinghy and climb Eilean Dubh. The others, having sailed less with me than he has, agreed to play... anyway it all ended amicably and somebody won the right to prepare supper! When Laurence returned he reported heavy seas outside and so we stayed put for another night.



*Aeolus* hunted, lying now to wind, now to tide.



The breaking rock at the southern entrance to Tinker's Hole.

At 0930 the next morning, the forecast was more moderate (southwesterly 5 or 6, decreasing 5 later) and so, conditions having improved to so that the anemometer was reporting no more than 25 knots in gusts we sallied forth. It would have been fun to leave by the northern entrance, but given the aftermath of swell from the previous day I felt it prudent to re-trace our steps around the half tide rock in the southern entrance and out to the Sound of Iona. Having been frustrated by passing so many distilleries, Philip was determined to visit the Cathedral on Iona to repair his soul (and liver?) however conditions in the Sound were not promising. We had set the main with two reefs as soon as we were underway from our anchorage. The wind was funnelling through the Sound over the strong tide and rounding to a mooring we discovered that even with the engine flat out it proved extremely difficult to hold station for the few seconds required in order to pass a line through the eye on the top of it. As our dinghy was now accepted as being too small and in the conditions, the shore run was felt to be too risky and we pressed on northwards through the Sound. We passed an anxious moment or two as we picked our way at rather too great a groundspeed between the sand banks off the Cathedral and erupted out of the wind tunnel that was the Sound in clear sunshine to a glorious vista of the Mull mountains with Staffa in the middle distance and the strange shapes of the Treshnish Islands farther north.

It was still blowing quite hard and the mainsail was un-happy as we were on a dead run. It was time to experiment, so down came the main and up went the No. 1 genoa (heavy cruising) and our racing No. 3 wing a wing. Everything went quiet and we surged ahead making just under 6 knots.

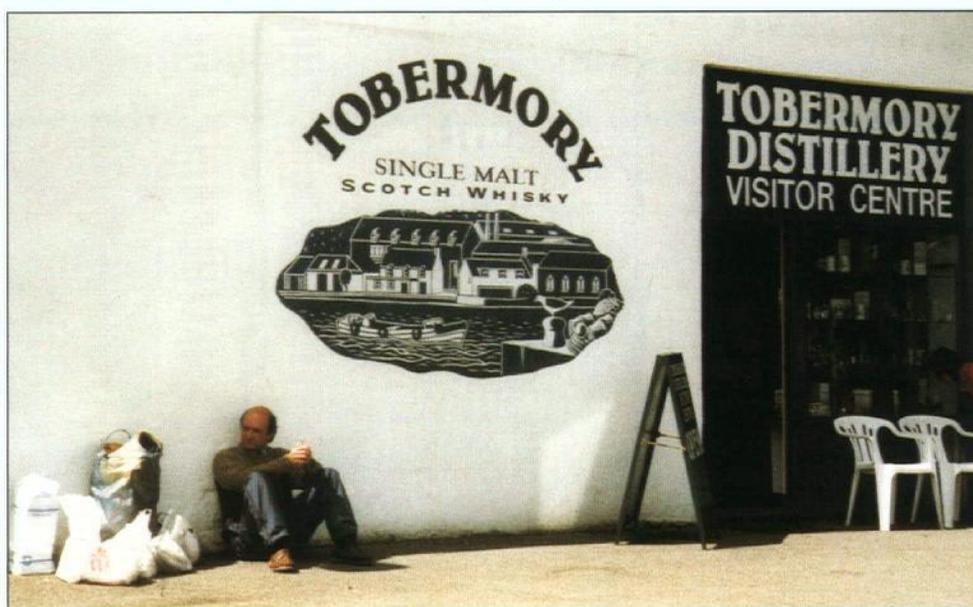
Passing a mile or so west of Lunga and Tighchoie (Treshnish Islands) we were fascinated by their shapes. Lunga looked like an enormous damaged aircraft carrier

from this angle while Tighchoie looked like a surfaced escort submarine! Our good progress continued so that, having abandoned our shore run to Iona at 1125, by 1615 we had Arinagour (Coll) abeam and by 1735 Ardnamurchan itself was falling astern.

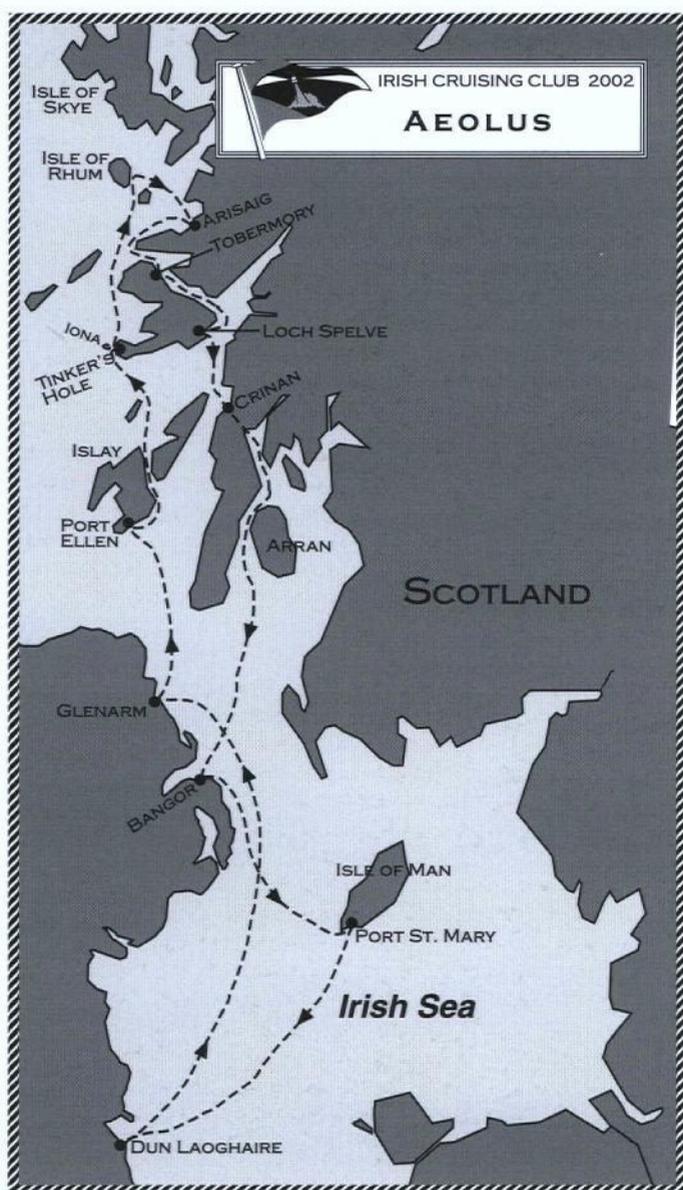
We spotted a group of yachts anchored in the lee of Muck off Port Mór, but by now had our sights firmly on the Isle of Rhum and Loch Scresort to be precise. The wind eased as we closed the land and we motor sailed the last couple of miles in to anchor in four and a half fathoms at 2125. Soon cooking smells were wafting out of the hatch while a bottle or two chambréed in the pilot berth. We were pleased that we had sent the anchor light aloft as while we were enjoying our post prandials

in the cockpit at around midnight a large blue steel ketch swept past under engine, showing the correct lights but with his cockpit so flooded with light that I doubt that the helmsman even saw us.

None of us had visited Rhum before, but we had heard tales of 1980s cruises in the Dublin Bay 24 footer *Arandora* that had been ameliorated by a night or two of luxury in Kinloch Castle. Accordingly each of us was keen to make a run ashore. In any event we were low on water. The wind had backed more into the west during the night, and therefore, while the anchorage was perfectly sheltered from swell, strong gusts were coming off the mountainsides and funnelling own the valley from behind the castle. Given the squally gusts, we went ashore in pairs and enjoyed the conversation of the hill walkers who had just landed from a ferry and were to spend a week in the hostel that now occupies the former staff quarters of the castle. We also had the chance to peer through the windows of the formal rooms of the castle, which have been preserved as if in aspic. There was a sense of gradual decay about the place and the



We finally made it to a distillery! Alan guards the booty!



vegetation, which has the same feeling of luxuriance as is found in pockets of Kerry and west Cork, seemed poised to strike and take over the castle. I was very much reminded of the ruined Dutch-gabled house on Rossdohan Island near Parknasilla, which has long since surrendered to nature, or even of Castlefreke!

By now it was Friday and we had a rendezvous to arrange with Alan Algeo who was driving Philip's car up from Dublin to change places with him. Our plans had left sufficient turn around time for Alan and Philip to pass each other on island ferries if we were out of reach of the mainland. However given the weather pattern and that the series of low pressure systems showed no sign of abating, we admitted that the Western Isles were now an unlikely target and arranged matters so that we would meet in Arisaig the following morning. I chose Arisaig partly because of its romantic connection with the "Arisaig Love Lilt" and thoughts of the Prince over the water, and partly because its entrance looked interesting from the chart. It is accessible four hours either side of high water and the channel has some doglegs to be negotiated. Matters for once look more complicated on the chart than they do in real life as the entrance is very well marked with perches and beacons.

We made a delightful whole sail passage across from Loch Scresort, passing north of Eigg and close to a large Bowman making a reciprocal course and romping along in the sunshine.

To the north we could see the Cuillins and the layer upon layer of peaks lining the Sound of Sleat and further afield. In short the visibility was wonderful. We felt that it was too late to change plans, but the decision to go to Arisaig was the wrong one – we should have spent the evening in Loch Scavaig and enjoyed the scenery collecting Alan the following morning.

In any event Arisaig was welcoming. The boatyard had just closed for the night, but there is now a loading pontoon and adjacent water tap. The anchorage was full of yachts and there were moorings available for £9 a night. Polite conversations with fellow yachtsmen, then a shore run for our first steps on the Scottish mainland, pints of eighty bob, dinner in the hotel (adequate but not justifying a postcard home), with the promise of the first showers since Glenarm and the arrival of Alan in the morning – truly a cornucopia of delights.

Alan duly arrived complete with the five man rubber duck from Schollevaer, replenished supplies and advice to Philip that he needed to hit the road if he was to catch the Belfast ferry. A hurried breakfast in the hotel with Philip and the promised showers – demanded by Alan as a condition of staying – and we thought that we might catch the train to Mallaig. We passed the C of S chapel on the climb up to the station and resisting the kindly but insistent prosletising of the lady Minister found the railway halt un-manned. According to the posted timetable a train was due in ten minutes but it didn't arrive. A telephone was provided for enquiries with a winding handle ringer. Persistence produced a polished Edinburgh voice, which disavowed any knowledge of the Highland Line... or anywhere north or west of Falkirk too we reckoned! Further grinding roused a cockney voice, which after a short lesson in geography and British politics, undertook to trace the train and get back to us. To our surprise, cockney was true to his word and regretted to inform us that our train was running eighty eight minutes late, there was no train ahead of it and he could not predict when, or if, a return journey from Mallaig would be possible. By now members of the crew had ceased whistling the air of the "West Clare Railway" and were singing it openly. To this day we aren't certain whether the firmly voiced complaint of the only other waiting passenger (a stout lady in tweeds and highly polished lace-up brown brogue boots) was prompted by the lyrics, the lack of tune or the disrespect that we were showing for private enterprise!

Retracing our steps downhill we spotted a smart looking restaurant, open for lunch. Entering to try to obtain a taxi to Mallaig we soon succumbed and had a very pleasant lunch accompanied by some fragrant New Zealand Semillon. The wine even pleased Alan, a former Athlone wine merchant. The restaurant is to be recommended and I regret having mislaid their card. However it is the only restaurant in Arisaig and is located about fifty yards south of the hotel and beside the sub-post office. Lunch over and the visibility was closing in. To the north the Cuillins had disappeared and the cloudbase was no more than five hundred feet. The plan to leave as soon as there was water at the bar and spend the night in Loch Scavaig seemed pointless. Nevertheless we repaired on board, now enjoying the luxury of the bigger punt. Even the Seagull prospered as a result of not having the HT lead to the spark plug immersed in every swell. Having had a post-lunch 'ziz' we got a forecast and this confirmed our fears. South or southwest 5 to 7, rain at times, moderate to poor... all in all not an invitation to Loch Scavaig, nor, indeed, to round Ardnamurchan with the south going tide.

With it decided that a second night was called for in Arisaig the task of reconciling Alan to his fate commenced. While he lives on the former Dutch sailing barge *Linquenda* on the River Shannon with his family, this hardly equips him for the confines of a Shipman 28, as *Linquenda* is so big that were she

a house, she wouldn't qualify for the first time buyer's grant! A light supper and recourse to ship's supplies soon assisted the settling in process and the early forecast that our low was stationary west of the Outer Hebrides and filling decided us to start our homeward journey as soon as there was water at the bar the following morning. We gave Ardnamurchan a good offing and were treated gently as a result. The wind was fresh and *Aeolus* demonstrated her racing pedigree as she ate up to windward to make her offing under No. 3 and one reef so that seven hours after dropping our mooring (with most of it on the wind) we were made up to another one in Tobermory as a gift of the Harbourmaster.

The traditional run ashore to the Mishnish Hotel ensued. It had been seven years since my last visit and the place was not quite as homely as I remembered while the collection of single malts seemed smaller. Laurence had insisted on wearing a rugby shirt with green hoops reminiscent of a certain Glasgow association football club. Now "ee's a big lad" as they say in football parlance, but even he was somewhat shaken by some of the exhibits in the shrine in the back bar to that other Glasgow football club. Our chosen restaurant was booked out (even on the first Sunday in June) while the one we found was not... which should have told us something, but as we had no booking and were late by highland standards beggars could not be choosers. Our collective advice would be to stick to the waterfront.

In the morning we shopped for souvenirs and at last visited the Tobermory Distillery visitors' centre, drinking a silent toast to Philip whilst testing the product and buying a bottle for home. Our start was therefore fairly late, but calculated to make the most of the tide down the Sound of Mull. We were aiming for Loch Spelve, that remote and almost landlocked sea loch on the south coast of Mull. We decided to demonstrate that now old-fashioned skill of sailing off our mooring and were able to run goose-winged out of the harbour and in to the Sound, before hauling our wind and close reaching full and by southwards. The sailing on the flat water was delightful and the views up the Firth of Lorne to the Grampians, dominated by Ben Nevis, spectacular.

Suddenly a rainsquall came in from seaward and we felt our way along the cliffs of the southeast coast of Mull in poor visibility to the un-marked entrance to Loch Spelve. From close



Philip Mahony dreaming of single malt with Kirin Thompson.

to it is hard to distinguish the entrance from the east until one is right upon it; then a sharp eye should pick out the blotch of white paint on the eastern shore (described in Martin Lawrence's "Yachtsman's Pilot to the Isle of Mull and adjacent coasts" (Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson 1999 edition) as a "white cross on rock" that acts as a landmark (literally) and subsequently spot the beacon marking the rock directly across the channel from "the mushroom". As for the "gables of ruined cottage" and "white boulder on skyline" we saw neither until they were no longer of assistance. Posting a lookout at the shrouds on each side and giving the thickly kelp covered rocks a berth we slipped in to the Loch which rapidly opened up to reveal its three branches running respectively north, northwest and the longest southwest. There is a real sense of a hidden land in Loch Spelve and I would strongly recommend it to anyone prepared to undertake the simple pilotage to enter it. We motored gently down to the southwestern end observing ruined jetties and landing places and several fish farms. If it were not for the fish farms you would think the place had been abandoned fifty years ago. The ruined jetties exuded a strong aura of wartime "derring do" and I imagined commandos and miniature submariners being trained out here in secret.

The holding is poor in the thick kelp at the end of the loch and we were pleased to find a cluster of moorings close to the northern shore. There was no one from whom to ask permission but we reckoned that five boats were unlikely to return simultaneously, or at all given the falling tide, so we borrowed one. This is not something of which I approve, but in the circumstances I feel it was the correct decision. We had a reasonable night's sleep considering the tremendous squalls that swept through repeatedly. They were being focussed by the cleft in the mountains that extended directly to windward from our mooring place. The gusts were so strong that the standing rigging was vibrating like the spring of a jew's harp for much of the time. Our only neighbour was not so fortunate, and although we had kept a general eye on him during the night, we awoke to find that he appeared to have dragged into shallower water and was half way to high and dry but with his hull luckily cushioned by the extremely thick kelp. In fact he may not have dragged at all but miscalculated the rise and fall, which is hard to estimate given the tidal constraint at the entrance. He seemed quite happy with his 45 degree angled lot and his anchor was clearly visible laid in the right direction so after a brief exchange we left him to it as we had an appointment with the Sound of Luig and the Dorus Mor.

Leaving Loch Spelve at 0730 we thought that the entrance would be much simpler to negotiate as now we knew where everything was. However we were under time pressure to pass through Luig and the Dorus at slack water and this meant leaving the Loch as soon as there was enough water. Luckily we were able to determine that the entrance channel in the lee of Cnoc nan Scolb was sheltered. We were therefore able to nudge our way along using the boat hook to determine on which side the depth was greater while also obeying the pilotage notes to the letter. We found that it was quite safe (indeed wise) to pass within fifteen feet of the northern shore once one had passed south of the ubiquitous "white cross on rock" until southeast of the "caves".

Once at sea we set full main and No. 1 and reached southeastwards passing through an un-troubled Sound of Luig and Dorus Mor. Alan wondered what the fuss had been about! We spoke to the lock keeper at Crinan and locked in to the basin intending to continue towards Craighouse the following morning.

Now I have no doubt that the mobile telephone is a wonder of modern technology. It is also a curse! Alan received a message that he was required to attend to urgent personal

business in Athlone, first thing on Thursday morning. It was too late to arrange anything there and then, so we made the best of the shower facilities in the boatyard and inspected the (many of them wooden) yachts still laid up. The work being done seemed to be of a high standard and the stock of timber to a better standard than much of what passes for good stock at home. We established that a bus left Crinan for Ardrisaig ten miles away at 0830 in the morning to catch the Glasgow bus and Alan departed by bus (3), aircraft (1) and train (1) for home.

The weather had deteriorated overnight and a promised northwesterly 4 or 5 had arrived as a southwesterly 5. The three of us remaining had no appetite for a beat to Jura or Kintyre so we purchased a canal pass and spent an ideal inland waterways day passing through the canal. The Cairnbaan Hotel near the mid-point has re-opened. We descended into the basin at Ardrisaig at high water and with five minutes to go before the lock keeper knocked off for the night. He was nowhere to be seen and we feared the loss of now rather precious time. However he re-appeared silently after his "tea" and let us out. The flat water of Lower Loch Fyne was welcome and while we were on the wind with one reef in the main the passage with the tide was both fast and comfortable. Darkness came on as we closed the Cock of Arran and the shore lights twinkled. By 0500 we were well out in to the North Channel and by 0950 alongside in Bangor marina.

Lunchtime drinks in the Royal Ulster and dinner in the Stonehouse seemed in order. Afterwards we clambered aboard to be met by Alan who had done his business that morning and reached us by bus (1) and trains (3). This return required to be celebrated and that is why I was late rousing the duty member of the crew to slip out and make the Copeland Sound at slack water! Of course I was late and the wind against tide produced a horrible short and steep sea, shaking the wind out of the sails and when we resorted to engine, leaving the screw spinning in clear air every few seconds. It seemed like an eternity but soon we were through it and on the wind. I was very pleased that we had renewed the standing rigging earlier in the year as the snatch loads on the mast must have been severe. Funnily enough Alan didn't mention the anti-climax of several days earlier again.

As we logged south along the County Down coast we were increasingly headed so making a virtue of it decided to free sheets and make for the Chicken Rock. The wind rose steadily to a good force 5 and twelve hours out of Bangor (i.e. at 1520) we were alongside a brand new Bavaria 34 in Port St. Mary. A good meal ashore in the pub and at 0640 away for home in a light southerly that went to southeast for a time so we could close reach under spinnaker. This wind gradually headed us so that we reverted to No1 and eventually as it fell away in the evening to a light southwesterly.

The cruise had reached that point when people wanted to get home, but were relaxed and happy with what we had achieved. We sat in the cockpit letting "Wee Jimmie" (the autohelm) and the engine do the work and maintained a watch. Suddenly at 2053 the autohelm stopped functioning. It was overcast and the steaming light and navigation lights were on, but suddenly they too failed. I noticed a wisp of smoke escaping from the engine compartment hatch and an acrid smell. Reacting, I stopped the engine and opened the locker cover to isolate the batteries. This gave me a view of the wiring loom which was glowing white hot and clearly fusing with or melting anything it touched. I switched off the isolator and quickly closed the locker lid, grabbed the grab bag and handheld VHF and escaped into the cockpit coughing violently from the smoke which was now filling the cabin. Laurence was missing from the cockpit and had fallen asleep down below. While Alan roused him with



Laurence emerged from the forecabin seeking an Ulster fry.

some difficulty, I decided that I didn't think that a fire extinguisher would do much good and that I should warn Dublin Coastguard Radio of our position and that if the fire did not go out with the batteries and engine off then we might need assistance. All power having been lost I used the handheld VHF. The cool professional tones of the operator were reassuring. I checked and found that while much smoke was still being produced, the glow was now a dull red colour. Dublin informed me that he had alerted Howth Lifeboat. I replied that we were proceeding under sail and that the situation was under control. Dublin then said he had requested that the Lifeboat launch and check us out in any event.

By the time the lifeboat reached us off the Nose of Howth the reality that we had no lights apart from a couple of flashlamps and no power and were proposing to cross the busy shipping lanes of Dublin Bay was beginning to overcome the sense of pride that said "finish what you started" and therefore we willingly accepted the strongly phrased offer of a tow. With consummate professionalism we were deposited inside Dún Laoghaire Harbour and in turn made the crew a gift of the bottle we had purchased for Philip in Tobermory.

On checking matters once the boat was stationary it became apparent that the mountings for one of the battery boxes had sheared (presumably in the Copeland Sound) and had caused a starter lead to come under tension and to chafe against a sharp edge underneath the cooling water pump on the engine. This had caused a short, luckily downstream of the isolation switch, which therefore was effective to stop matters getting worse. More worrying was that the wiring installation was such that the positive and negative leads crossed upstream from the isolation switch and had very nearly burned through their insulation. Had this happened before I could turn off the switch then the only way to prevent further burning would have been to disconnect all of the battery terminals. This would not have been possible in the circumstances... I have since replaced the wiring myself and taken care to ensure that such an accident could not happen in the same way.

And so our cruise ended with all safe and sound except for sore lungs from the smoke. It seems that the gods whom we had treated so frivolously earlier in the year were determined that whatever else might happen, Philip would not get his whisky! I do understand that he is willing to join us again in the future, indeed he is certain that we are not safe to be let out without him.

# Atlantic dream comes true. ARC 2001

## Dianne Andrews

Like so many other experienced sailors, I have always dreamed about sailing across the Atlantic, especially when the media gives us all the chance to follow many famous races like the BT challenge. It would also be following in my father's footsteps because he used to tell me about his Atlantic crossings during the war to collect small wooden minesweepers.

In order to get a taste for long distance offshore racing, I took part in "The Round Britain Race", sponsored by Teachers Whisky in 1995. This was a five-nations challenge, with ten Sunfast 36 ft boats, two from each of England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France.

I was a navigator on one of the Irish boats and the longest leg from Rothesay to Hartlepool took eight days and nights at sea. We sailed west of the Outer Hebrides, north of St. Kilda and the Orkneys. Although my husband Tom and two sons hoped that this would satisfy my ambitions for long distance sailing, I still longed to complete an Atlantic crossing.

Ellen McArthur in *Kingfisher* was an inspiration and said after her success:

"If there is something you want to do, Go For It!", I decided that I must fulfil my dream and sail across the Atlantic.

Since racing has always been in my blood, the ideal event for me was the ARC race. This Atlantic Rally for Cruisers started in 1986 and in 1989 a racing division was introduced.

The racing division were mainly the Challenge boats or Global 60 footers. The Cruising divisions were handicapped by the World Cruising Club into classes, which race across in a relaxed way. Engines may be used but the hours of use must be declared upon arrival by the skipper.

There were 225 yachts taking part in 2001. The race started from Las Palmas in Gran Canaria on Sunday 25th November and finished in St. Lucia in the Caribbean, a distance of 2668 nm. The crossing would take 2 to 3 weeks depending upon weather conditions. Although I realised it could be very tough and challenging, I was really looking forward to the experience.

The yacht I crewed on was a 52 foot Jeanneau called *Great Escape* which was very appropriate as I was escaping from all the pre-Christmas rush and the cold weather.

*Great Escape* was in Cruiser division 1 Class C and we were given number 95 which was our estimated finishing position.

Communication was very important during the race and volunteers from the fleet operated an SSB radio net, contacting each boat in their group once a day at 1300 UTC. The positions were then emailed back to the World Cruising Club in Cowes.

Many yachts had INMARSAT DT, which automatically sent their position back to the UK by satellite. The progress of the race was very well monitored on the internet - website [www.worldcruising.com](http://www.worldcruising.com), which was where I had negotiated my crew position on *Great Escape*.

There were ten crew including myself on board and I had not met any of them prior to my arrival in Las Palmas. I had expected that there would only be eight.

It was a risk that we would not be compatible but as things turned out, we all got on really well.

I flew out to Las Palmas a couple of days before the start to meet the crew and help provision the boat. The atmosphere was very festive and filled with anticipation.

All the yachts were dressed overall and on every pontoon, crews were washing, sorting and drying their fresh fruit and vegetables. One rotten potato could easily ruin the whole sack after a few days at sea!

The skipper Bruce and Jerry the mate had both sailed the Atlantic before, and the rest of us were experienced sailors. Kate the only other woman on the crew was 22 and we were to share one of the forward cabins. Ben was 18, the youngest crew member. I was the oldest! Among the other five men was Jim from Boulder in Colorado, Pete from New Zealand and Bruce, Kerry and Tim from England.

We made our final purchases at the supermarket, made sure everything was properly stowed aboard.

"*Great Escape*" had four heads, two forward and two aft. Due to the large crew, we used the two forward heads as stores. After a good clean, the port one was filled with potatoes, onions, apples, tomatoes, pasta sauces and tinned vegetables. The starboard one was filled with cereals, bread, fruit juices, and milk.

We also had a huge net full of green apples, iceberg lettuce and chillies hanging in the saloon.

The skipper did not want much alcohol on board so we only brought a couple of beers each and two bottles of Spanish Brandy for medicinal purposes of course!

On the eve of our departure we planned out our watch system. We divided into two groups of 5. I was in Jerrys watch with young Ben, tall Bruce and Jim from Colorado.

The watch system was very clever and devised by skipper Bruce.

Noon - 1800 (1900)	1800 (1700) - 2200
2200 - 0200	0200 - 0600
0600 - 1200	

This meant the whole crew were up together for a snack lunch made by the watch just coming off duty at noon. Then later we had a happy hour from 1700 when the same watch got up again to prepare the evening meal. We then all ate together usually out in the cockpit. Therefore each watch cooked for the whole crew every other day.

Another important issue was safety and Skipper Bruce made sure that we each had a lifejacket. We were instructed always to wear them in the hours of darkness and in strong winds. They must also be worn at the start and finish.

The next task was to work out our race strategy. We planned to head south for the coast of Africa and hopefully about 27 miles off, we would pick up a favourable current. This could add approx 24 miles of distance per day to an average speed of 7/8 knots. We would continue on a southwesterly course 270° until we reached 25°N and 22°W, where we should pick up the trade winds which blow a constant force 4/5 east to west.

The idea of going south was to avoid the ridges of high pressure which usually move across further north producing very little wind. We had great hopes the plan would pay off.

Our last task in Las Palmas was to help one of our crew Bruce Mauleverer, who had worked out a sponsorship system for our boat in the Arc Race to raise money for UNICEF to send to the children in Afghanistan.

We decided to have a collection around all the boats and collected £450.00 towards his fund.

Bruce did a marvellous job with his sponsors and at the end of the race he had raised £25,000 for UNICEF's Afghanistan Appeal.

On Sunday 25th November, there was a tremendous atmosphere as we headed out to the start of the largest transoceanic crossing in the world involving 1,000 sailors in 225 boats.

The wind was NE force 5 and the forecast was for more wind and the threat of hurricane Olga moving southwest.

For the first three days it was a bit like being on a 'Bouncy castle'! The rolling ocean swells and strong winds caused quite a lot of damage to the fleet and we heard reports of broken booms, torn spinnakers and seasickness.

The wind was gusting NNE 8/9 confounding the forecast and we stormed along making 10 – 11 knots. The wind blew and blew for the next 48 hours as we skimmed the coasts of Western Sahara and Mauritania

We reefed the mainsail and had some wonderful sleigh rides down the huge rolling waves but every so often a rogue wave would hit us sideways and send us spiralling upwards.

We all took turns to steer, which in these conditions was rather like an aerobics session.

We headed south, past the Cape Verde Islands and down the coast of Africa. At first this seemed to be paying off and we were well up in our cruiser class. The out and out racing class were well ahead of us by now.

We saw plenty of gannets, a school of dolphins and a small basking shark. There were also plenty of flying fish skimming over the waves. Often one would land and get stranded on the deck.

We were now having 13 hours of darkness and eleven hours of light. Sunrise 0839 and sunset 1926. However there was a full moon which meant it really never got very dark. We saw a satellite moving swiftly across the sky.

On Tuesday night there was some heavy rain and lightening. I went down to change into my last pair of dry trousers, only to

find that I had packed a pair of Tom's instead of mine! Luckily they had a draw string at the waist.

Thursday 29th / Friday 30th November

The wind had settled down to 20 knots ENE and the weather faxes from Boston predicted that Hurricane Olga would drift northwest of the ARC fleet. Thank goodness we didn't have to worry any more because we were so far south.

The skippers watch decided to launch a spinnaker, but disaster struck and the sail got so badly torn on the anchor at the bow, as it was hoisted, that we were unable to use it or repair it. (I hasten to add this didn't happen on my watch !)

However we set up twin headsails and were able to make good speeds of 8/9 knots on a course of 282°.

After the first day all the other boats were out of sight and there was a wonderful feeling of being the only people in the world in the midst of a vast ocean. We only saw about six ships during the entire crossing

The crew all got on exceptionally well and enjoyed watching dolphins, flying fish, beautiful sunsets and having lengthy discussions during the night watches.

We all took turns to cook and make bread. The meals were good until the fresh veg and meat ran out. Nobody really likes tinned Chilli or liquid (in the high temperature) corn beef ! We tried to catch fish but never succeeded.

We had a water maker on board so we were able to have showers a couple of times a week. The water maker was powered by a generator.

Each day we reported our position to our group leader by VHF radio and each evening received a weather fax from Boston.

On Monday 3rd December, I took down the group positions on the SSB. Some of the boats further north had had more wind during the night and pulled away from us. We also heard that there had been quite a bit of damage throughout the fleet. A Sydney 41 had a desperate struggle with their steering gear and managed a temporary repair with a pump handle, a Clyde Cruising club belt and a deck scrubber !

Our path was further south than most of the fleet because we hoped to pick up the trade winds. Unfortunately they never kicked in, which meant we remained on a dead run coming towards our destination and middle of the fleet.

With 1500nm to go it was getting very hot and sunny. The wind and swell had decreased so the crew decided to have a swim. (not me I'm afraid of sharks !)

Not much progress was made in the next few days. We had the bimini up during the days to shade us from the sun and motored for a few hours.

It was a good time to clean the boat, get the washing done and do some serious cooking. Our progress was so slow. The skipper announced it would take twelve years to reach St. Lucia at this speed !

The auto pilot packed up, so it was back to manual shifts. At times it was so hot that the person on the helm was quite happy to have a bucket of water poured over his head.

The calm we were experiencing was caused by a big high in mid-Atlantic but there was a low above and below so there



Dianne enjoying the Atlantic swell.



Dianne Andrews centre of cockpit at finish of 2001 ARC Rally.

would be wind again soon. The trade winds had not kicked in as expected.

There was very little moonlight now on the long night watches; one night we had to take avoiding action when another yacht came reaching towards us on a collision course. We tried calling him on the radio but there was no response. He must have been on autopilot and asleep below as we couldn't see anyone on deck. Thank goodness we had kept a careful watch!

Another dark night we were contacted by radio by one of the Ward Evans Atlantic Rowing Challenge boats – UPSALA.com number 32 from Sweden. They were concerned about being run down by us. Although they were only half a mile away it was impossible to see them because their boat was very low in the water and only 23 feet long.

Our skipper asked them to let off a flare, which they did and it was then possible to identify their position which was 14°47N and 40°42W.

*Great Escape* circled around them and they asked if there were any ladies present because they always rowed in the altogether!

They reported that their water maker was not working and one rowing seat was broken. We promised to radio the information to their race control. Then we tied some chocolate to a fender and streamed it out for them to retrieve. An interesting night encounter.

SAT 8TH/SUN 9TH DECEMBER

The weather began to change with showers at night and one heavy one left 2 inches of water on the cockpit floor.

We still had 789nm to go and had run out of chocolate, crisps and squash to flavour the nasty tasting water from the water maker.

In the early hours of Sunday morning a series of heavy squalls started hitting us and we just lowered the goosewinged headsail in time as 50 knot gust hit us at 1020. The teeming rain caused the sea to flatten and go steely grey with white streaks. The visibility also closed in and it was quite scary.

WED 12TH DECEMBER

We still had 117nm to go. Our position was 13°26N and 53°50W.

Course 259°. There was a strong 30 knot wind blowing from behind with big swells often breaking over the side into the cockpit.

As we approached the Caribbean we experienced more heavy rain squalls with gusts up to 50 knots of wind. The cabin below turned into a steam bath as dripping bodies came off watch.

The last 100 miles seemed to be the longest, although we were recording good speeds of 11.7 knots at times.

It was an exciting moment on 14th December at 0101 when we sighted land ahead. It was Martinique, which is north of St. Lucia. We sailed north of Pigeon Island and into Rodney Bay to the finishing line. It was very dark and there were no navigation lights on the north end of St. Lucia. We had made radio contact about 5 miles out.

The whole crew wanted to stay on deck to experience the finish.

At the line a photographer in a rib came motoring round us taking photos and the whole crew gave a big cheer before congratulating each other on our achievement.

The crossing had taken 18 days 19 hours 38 minutes and we arrived into St. Lucia in darkness at about 4 am to receive a real Caribbean welcome with lots of hooters and rum!

I am so pleased that my dream became a reality.

# Reiver anti-clockwise round Ireland 2002

## David Williams

Peter and David Williams spent 11 years in the construction of the *Reiver*, a 35 foot steel sloop to a design by Alfred Mylne, launched in 1989. The cruising log passed the 10,000 mile mark last year and included a clockwise passage round Ireland. An unfulfilled ambition to sail anti-clockwise was realised in a four-week 949 mile cruise from 1 to 27 July 2002. This account was compiled by David and Peter and co-skipper John Hughes.

"It's official" screamed the headline in the Sunday Times of 30 June. "Irish weather is far worse than it used to be". The article informed us that cloud cover over Ireland has increased by 20 per cent in the last century. Sobering news for us, planning an anti-clockwise circumnavigation and especially for David as he set off north the next day, 1 July, into a northerly, muttering darkly about not knowing how far he would get.

**First phase: Whiterock to Killybegs:** *David writes* – With Terry Needham as crew, we left Strangford Lough Yacht Club under sail at 10.00 hours to catch the last of the ebb out of Strangford Lough. We headed for the South Rock light ship, only to be reminded that the famous vessel has been replaced by a red lanby. By 16.00 hours we were abeam the Skulmartin. We timed our passage to catch the tidal stream through Donaghadee Sound, arriving at Bangor marina at 19.00 hours. So far, so good.

After an overnight in Bangor we headed north until the tide turned, had an afternoon kip in the excellent new marina at Glenarm, then on to Ballycastle marina in the evening. The weather forecast was ominous.

Next day it blew hard from the northwest, so we stayed put. Wee Terry pursued part of his new self improvement scheme, learning to play the penny whistle. The skipper even managed some sleep during one session!

The following morning we popped into Portrush where we were joined by Jim Millar, complete with a discarded spinnaker pole over his shoulder, on his way from the Sonata Nationals in Dundee to Cork Week! With the prospect of storm cones being flown, we were glad to have him on board. His sailing experience is considerable and he has recently been dabbling in the occult: celestial navigation. We pushed on, picking up a sloppy mooring at Culdaff till the tide round Malin Head allowed us westwards to Lough Swilly, where we anchored under Dunree Fort.

Friday gave us sunshine and a wind abaft the beam. I couldn't remember what to do in those conditions but Wee Terry knew how to set the sails because he used to own a Galway Hooker (American Mór) which would only go with a following wind! We rolled downwind in an increasing Atlantic swell to Tory Island where we entered the much improved harbour at West Town. We had a look at the distinctive Tory art which is so much in demand on the other side of the pond. There was no need to be able to speak Gaelic to order pints – euros were the only requirement!

The GPS was dropping out from time to time, giving a red light when it was most needed. As the forecast was more

dismal than normal, we headed between the rocks (some we didn't see) for Gola, an excellent anchorage. The weather then hit with more than usual violence, so we stayed put from 6 to 9 July.

Jim had bumped his elbow during the passage from Tory to Gola and it had swollen up to the size of a ping pong ball, giving him 'pins and needles' in his hand. During our enforced stay in Gola he conducted his own 'pan pan medico' by mobile phone to his brother-in-law's wife, a medic in Keady. Unfortunately we didn't have to perform an operation on the cabin table!

We eventually got fed up playing Ballymena or Fingers Whist, a game where the score seems to be inversely proportional to the amount of alcohol consumed. The skipper still hasn't worked out why he never wins! On the evening of the third night we were able to fire up the 35-year old Seagull (sporting a new gearbox) and go ashore to disperse the 'cabin fever'. We sampled the few delights that Gola had to offer: the Asgard memorial, a corncrake (out of reach of the RSPB in



*Reiver* with Peter Williams at the helm.

Irish waters), one part-time inhabitant and some very nice sheep.

The enforced stopover gave me the chance to ring home and report that the GPS (currently celebrating its 9th birthday) was malfunctioning and it was time to buy a hand-held. This Peter duly brought with him for the crew changeover at Killybegs. The old one eventually got to Clifden, where it thinks it still is. Really one would not wish to be without a GPS nowadays.

From Gola, the *Reiver* went round to Church Pool, Portnoo on the south side of Aran and on, via Teelin to Killybegs, our second nice day in eleven! The evening in Teelin was helped along by watching a net being laid out from the shore by a rowing boat, directed by a very old man in a black suit who was perched on a rock. They didn't appear to catch very much.

In eleven days we saw only six yachts at sea, a big change from Scottish waters. My lasting memory of sailing round Ireland (as it was in 1995) is dodging fishing nets and incurring many extra miles in heading round these ill-marked obstructions.

Now the only bit of the Irish coastline that I haven't cruised is from Kinsale to Dingle. We missed the company of George Wylie, the normal (well fairly normal) ship's chef who was unable to join us this year. The grub was adequate but a lot less flamboyant than George's efforts.

**Second phase: Killybegs to Dunkerron Harbour:** *Peter writes* – I arrived by car with John Hughes (ICC) and John and Sheila Pim. After a quick hand-over, the others departed to drive via Bushmills to Saintfield.

*John Hughes writes* – This was a reunion of last year's happy cruise to the Hebrides, but sadly without Anne Williams who was unable to cruise this year. It was a beautiful day and the sun shone as the new crew found their sea legs on the short passage westward under sail to Teelin.

The week's weather was dominated by a ridge of high pressure which resulted in a shortage of wind. What little there was, blew from the southeast at first and then veered northwest, but never exceeded force four. The good weather was a blessing in as much as the vessel's GPS went down as was to be predicted on the second day, unable to get an update on the position. The new hand-bearing GPS was brought into use as occasion demanded. Otherwise a careful record was made of progress using old-fashioned fixes.



*Reiver* at Tory Cross, West Town.

Passage planning was done each evening by Peter and myself, using skills acquired from our Yachtsman warrants. We covered for each other as navigator during the day. John and Sheila are both experienced sailors, Sheila being a mate on the Ocean Youth Trust's sailing training vessel, *Lord Rank*.

The Twelfth of July was marked with an appropriate toast after an eleven-hour passage from Teelin, passing the Stags in the late afternoon. We had planned to overnight in Broadhaven Bay, but changed our mind and headed for Eagle Island. We tied up to a mooring in Frenchport, on the Mullet, among some fishing boats. Lying close by was a yacht flying a German Flag. On closer inspection it was revealed that the yacht was from Bremen, the home port of my wife Helga, who chooses not to cruise in small yachts riding large waves!

Difficulty in complying with the magnetic course to steer revealed a difference of 10 - 15 degrees between the ship's compass and the hand-bearing compass on certain headings. The good weather experienced meant that we were able to avoid sailing into danger. We later concluded that the hand-bearing compass was at fault, possibly through living in a steel ship, and the problem was listed for urgent attention on return.

*Peter writes* – Next day saw a run ashore on Inishkea. At last the weather was beginning to clear. Later on we sailed to Clare Island where we spent an uncomfortable night on a visitor's mooring.

We took it in turns to row the dinghy. On the occasion when Sheila insisted it was her turn, she found herself rowing three large males in front of some old salts standing in disbelief on the pier but giving the thumbs up in approval! Three cheers for equality.

*John writes* – The deficiencies of the first aid box were demonstrated when it came to dental care. I lost a crown – needless to say on the Friday evening – which caused some discomfort. Amalgam carried from an earlier cruise proved ineffective as it had dried out. The only ship's glue available was silicone, applied with great skill by Sheila, but the crown only held for 24 hours until a visit to a dentist. I have since presented a dental repair kit, which is now part of the ship's first aid inventory.

In order to go ashore on Clare Island, we tied up alongside the Galway Hooker *MacDuach*. On board was Paddy Barry who lost his own much-cruised Galway hooker, *Saint Patrick*, when the mooring chain parted in Glandore Harbour earlier in the year.

Our next port of call was Inishbofin. We inevitably repaired to Day's pub for Guinness and delicious rolls. After a quick visit to the heritage centre, we rowed back to the *Reiver* and headed off under engine for Turbot Island. After rounding the headland, we were able to shut down the engine and sail under the foresail into Clifden Bay.

*Peter writes* – We anchored off the boatyard at Errislannan. Monday morning was spent ashore in Clifden, John Hughes to find a dentist and Sheila and I to visit the Brooks' at Errislannan Manor, bearing good wishes from Maurice and Hilary Brooks at Whiterock and to see their Connemara ponies.

Later that day we rounded Slyne Head and motored and sailed (a bit) to Kilonan on the Aran Islands. Next morning we hired bicycles (whose idea was that?) to visit Dun Aengus, the grimmest and most terrifying fortress I have ever seen. Fish and chips and Guinness restored the morale of the skipper to such an extent that he was unable to resist the lure of reduced price Aran sweaters. Later on a fair wind allowed us to enjoy real sailing at last close to the Cliffs of Moher.

We had intended to go in behind Mutton Island for the night but a soldier's wind sent us on round Loop Head to drop a hook in Kilbaha harbour.

Next day, 17 July, we had breakfast in the cockpit (just) and

wondered if summer had finally arrived? Then off to the Great Blasket, meeting the small luxury cruise ship, *Hebridean Princess*, after rounding Sybil Point. We anchored in the sandy bay, where the hardy lady member of the crew enjoyed a good long swim in 13° Centigrade! The rest of us preferred to bask in the glorious sunshine.

*John Hughes writes* – We had read Wallace Clark's interesting comments<sup>1</sup> on the Blaskets before going ashore, so we knew what to look for. We were therefore somewhat surprised to find that there is now a tourist office on the Island, which also provides lunches and teas. And there were quite a number of overnight campers who had pitched their tents in the fields overlooking the bay. We departed in the late afternoon for Dingle. The town is a delightful tourist centre offering great shopping and a vast array of souvenirs, in which we duly invested.

*Peter writes* – The next day we circumnavigated Inishvickillane to inspect Ireland's answer to Camp David, also guarded by Seals! Also to see if we could glimpse its most famous (OK well-known) citizen! Then on to Portmagee for the night, rounding Bray Head in the late afternoon.

Friday 19 July saw us heading south, sailing round the two Skelligs. We observed the myriad of gannets in their perches on the Little Skellig and the famous monks' beehive dwellings at the top of Michael, which are being restored.

On route and quite by chance we met *Gift Horse* (Robin and Sue Hogg's Moody) returning to Coleraine from two years in the Mediterranean and a trip through the French canals. The Pims, having spent ten days with the Hoggs in France a month previously, were particularly delighted with this reunion – such serendipity!

*John writes* – The evenings aboard the *Reiver* are always enjoyable. The very full drinks locker and well-stocked larder are a welcome reward for the rigours of cruising. Great issues are discussed over supper, which gives way, after washing up by those who did not cook (a ship's rule), to a game of auction whist or 'Slippery Ann'. A sufficiency of port and malt ensures that tiredness is soon induced!

*Peter writes* – Then up the Kenmare River to Dunkerron Harbour where we were made more than welcome at the Drumquilla Hotel and arranged a crew change for the next day which, astonishingly, worked perfectly. Robert Perceval-Price arrived by bus from Cork, having spent Cork Week on *Amethyst* (Tom and Dianne Andrews, ICC). Graham Harron obviously decided that taking the train to join the ship from Killyleagh was far too boring, so he flew to Stansted and from there to Kerry, arriving finally in Kenmare by taxi.

John Hughes and the Pims left by bus for Killarney, trains thereafter to Dublin and Belfast, arriving only two minutes late, and probably taking no longer than the flights. Later in the day John Ballagh (ICC) *Simon den Danser*, arrived in Dunkerron, so there were two ICC Northern area boats in the harbour that night. Wouldn't you know? – John had been at school with Graham!



*Reiver* at Gola, Jim Millar and David Williams.

**Third phase: Dunkerron to Kinsale:** *Peter writes* – Sunday 21 July commenced with a sail through the Dursey Sound and on to Adrigole in Bantry Bay, said to be the most beautiful anchorage on the west coast.

Next morning we motored up to Castletown Berehaven and tied up at the Fisherman's Co-operative, where we requested a fuel tanker and bunkered 172 litres of diesel. Then we were off round Mizen Head, inside the Fastnet Rock and past Clear Island (which wasn't a bit clear because of a sea mist) in continuous drizzle to Castletownshend, where we were able to dry out over an excellent dinner in the rightly famous Mary Ann's sea-food restaurant.

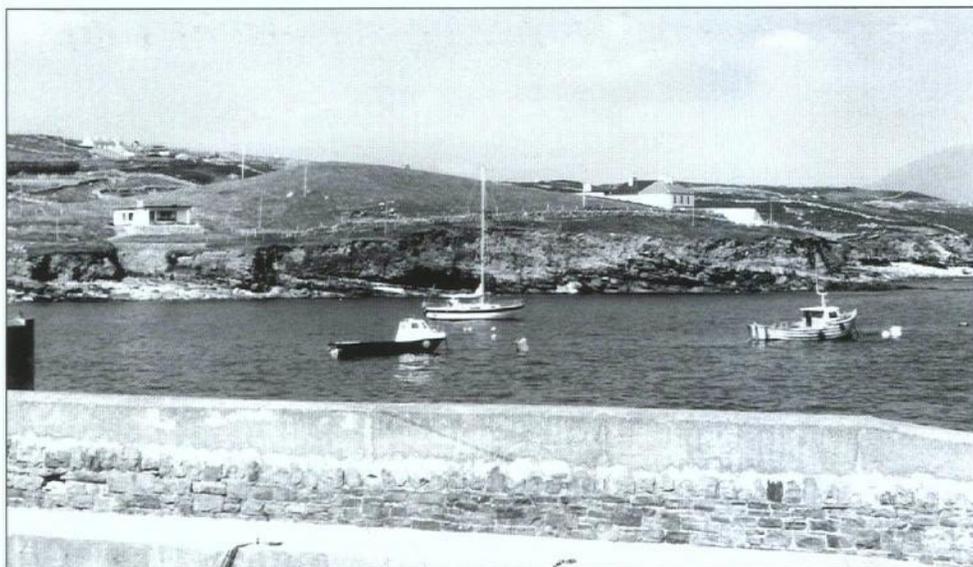
On to Kinsale under jib only, a lovely sail in a fresh breeze and next afternoon we departed after being given an excellent lunch by John and Diana McWilliam, now living in Sandycove, Kinsale and very much missed from their previous home at Whiterock.

*John writes* – The *Reiver* (sail no. IR 576) is fitted out for short handed cruising. The theme throughout is, keep it simple. Weighing eight tonnes, she has a steel fin keel containing 2.6 tonnes of lead. The engine is a 1.5 diesel Leyland, which enables an average of five to six knots to be achieved in calm conditions. A prerequisite was that there should be six feet and three inches of headroom throughout the cabin as both owners are tall. Ample grabrails are a safe precaution in heavy weather. There is a deep cockpit with a tiller for steering, not ergonomically perfect for Wee Terry! The self-steering gear performs well in wind force three and up. The sail area is 66 square metres, with three reefing points. A spinnaker was judged unnecessary.

The interior layout of *Reiver* was much influenced by: Peter's experience of cruising in the late John Waddell's *Centurion*, *Heather of Mourne* and David's cruising with the late Harry Hicks in *Blazer*, a Nicholson 43. The mahogany dining table, which has two-inch fiddles, folds into two and pivots on an aluminium pole. The vessel sleeps five comfortably but the layout is such that up to seven could be accommodated. There are two cabins forward of the main bulkhead. The heads and galley are forward of the aft bulkhead and the chart table faces aft.

**Final phase: The trip home:** *Peter writes* – Leaving Kinsale in late afternoon under sail, we arrived in Youghal in late evening. Rather than going into the harbour, we went round the

1. *Sailing Round Ireland* by Wallace Clark, page 129



Reiver at Clare Island.

Cruise duration	27 days
Total mileage	949 miles
Passage time	243 hours
Motoring time	103 hours
Number of ports of call	30
Anchorage new to Reiver	13

Over dinner in the splendid clubhouse, we reflected on the Reiver's growing list of new ports of call in home waters. This passage added thirteen to the list, from St. Kilda to the Fastnet Rock and most points in between, as well as all the Inner and Outer Hebrides, with visits to the Stevenson lighthouses at Skerryvore and Dubh Artach.

back of Capel Island and anchored off a small slipway – fine for calm, settled weather.

The tidal streams on the southeast coast dictated an early start. We motored in thick fog round Carnsore Point in the late afternoon – unable to sight either Carnsore Point or the Tuskar Rock to starboard. Thank heavens for GPS.

The passage up the Irish Sea took us outside Lucifer, past the Blackwater cardinal and into Polduff as darkness was descending. Polduff, which lies just north of Cahore Point and south of Arklow, was a new port of call for us and we found it a very suitable passage anchorage in calm weather.

After six hours to wait out the tide and allow the crew some nourishment and sleep, it was on to Howth with the next morning's flood. Our passage took us between Glasgorman and the Arklow Bank, a distance of 45 miles.

clockwise this time and came to the conclusion – shared by most skippers who have been round Ireland – that it makes no difference. The critical factor is the weather. Met Office records show an average of two gales in July – we got just one. For the rest of the time we suffered a serious lack of wind, not to mention fog on the south coast.

A 03.00 hours departure from Howth on 29 July enabled us to reach the Strangford bar in time to catch the tail of the flood. We had an uncomfortable but fast sail with the wind dead astern. The Reiver covered 949 miles in the course of the cruise.

The gloom under which we set out was soon forgotten. Isn't memory marvellous? It always seems sunnier in retrospect. Just as well, perhaps.

Cruise summary (Ports of call in bold are first time visits)									
Date	Passage	NM	Ports of call	Hours	Date	Passage	NM	Ports of call	Hours
July 1	Whiterock to Bangor	37	1	9	July 16	Kilrona to <b>Kilbaha Hbr.</b>	41	1	8
July 2	Bangor to Ballycastle	40	2 <b>Glenarm</b>	7.5	July 17	Kilbaha Harbour to Dingle	52	2 Great Blasket Island	10
July 3	Ballycastle				July 18	Dingle to Port Magee	34	1	6
July 4	Ballycastle to <b>Dunree</b> (Lough Swilly)	62	2 <b>Culdaff</b> Portrush	14	July 19	Port Magee to <b>Dunkerron</b> Harbour	46	1	10
July 5	Dunree to <b>West Town</b> (Tory Island)	25	1	6	July 20	Dunkerron Harbour (Kenmare)			
July 6	West Town to <b>Gola</b>	15	1	3.5	July 21	Dunkerron Harbour to <b>Adrigole</b>	43	1	9
July 7	Gola				July 22	Adrigole to Castletownshend	45	2 Castletown Berehaven	9
July 8	Gola				July 23	Castletownshend to Kinsale	32	1	6
July 9	Gola to <b>Portnoo</b>	29	1	8	July 24	Kinsale to <b>Capel Island</b> (Youghal)	29	1	5.5
July 10	Portnoo to <b>Teelin</b>	27	1	6	July 25	Capel Island to <b>Polduff</b>	84	1	14
July 11	Teelin to Killybegs to Teelin	26	2	5.5	July 26	Polduff to Howth	45	1	9
July 12	Teelin to <b>Frenchport</b>	61	1	3.5	July 27	Howth to Whiterock	71	1	13
July 13	Frenchport to Clare Island	37	1	12	<b>27 days</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>949</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>243</b>
July 14	Clare Island to Clifden	30	2 Inishbofin	7					
July 15	Clifden to Kilronan (Aran Islands)	38	1	7.5					

# Preveza to Venice via Dubrovnik in *Rafiki of Lymington*

## Bill and Hilary Keatinge

The biggest drawback in having a yacht an aeroplane ride away is luggage. Three bags so large and heavy that the check-in attendant stuck a "heavy" label on each, she barely blinked at the new Mercury outboard – the packing of this was definitely a work of art, and then there was the 1m x .70m Yeoman Plotter mat in its plywood case. We were charged a very modest overweight sum and with some relief on 17th April, we flew off to Athens with EasyJet and then a local flight to Preveza in northwestern Greece where *Rafiki*, our 42 foot Aphrodite ketch, had spent the winter. We picked up a hire car as arranged, piled everything in and set off to navigate the way to our first-night hotel, but no GPS to hand; driving round Athens is not for the faint hearted.

The winter jobs seemed to have been well done by the Aktio yard's team, several of them English. The engine and batteries checked, topsides shining; we marked the anchor chain distance links a bright red (maybe someone could invent a good alternative to paint...) and we were ready to launch. Sails bent on and off on our shakedown cruise. But first 0.3nm across the harbour to provision in town, great shopping, everything stowed, spirits high; engine switch – nothing – dead, no power. The starter battery had turned up its toes, but so, we soon discovered had our four 6volt domestic ones. The latter had to be ordered from some remote place in Greece and were transported to us slowly by bus and van, they took a tense week to arrive.

To sea, to sea...

Finally within range of the yard, we tried out everything we could think of as we spent one night in the Gulf of Amvrakios, surrounded by small fishing boats and nets. Season 2002 could finally begin. We were heading for Croatia and Venice via the islands of Paxos and Corfu.

**The Islands of Paxos, Corfu and Othoni.** It is just under 40nm NW from Preveza to Gaios on the island of Paxos, and though the wind could not manage more than Force 2, we did sail gently for a while. There are two entrances to the town quay at either end of a small island and we took the shallow southern cut and dropped anchor backing onto the town's main street. There is not much to the town but it is quite charming. What we did not realise until later was that on Easter Saturday everyone goes to church at midnight and when they come out they release hundreds of firecrackers as the candlelit procession winds noisily down the main street. By way of contrast we then

spent two very peaceful nights at anchor 4 miles further north in Lakka.

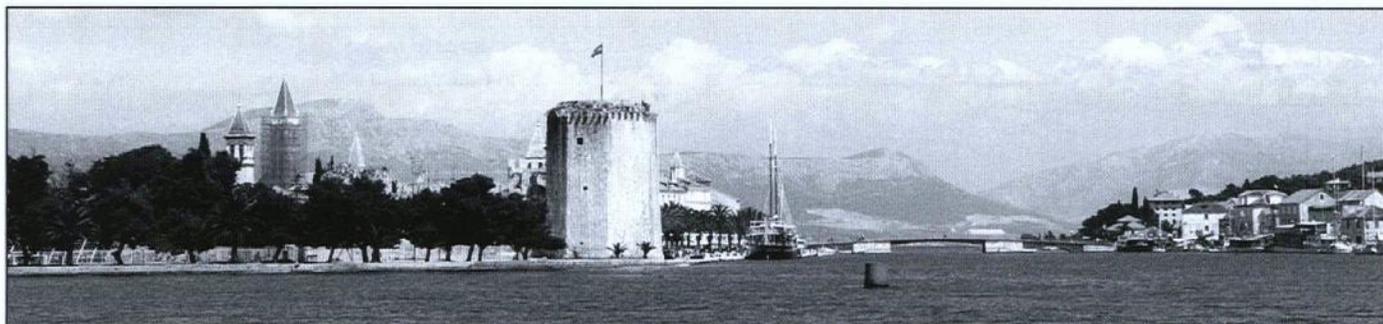
Gouvia marina, just north of Corfu town is a very useful stop as there is one of the best chandlers in the region there, plus an enormous supermarket just a short walk from the marina. We felt confident we could face the unknown as well stocked as possible. We also spent a couple of nights in the Corfu Yacht Club marina. It is tucked in under the forbidding ramparts and there is some swell from the ferries but it is friendly and the food, though limited to what is in stock, is good; the fried 'small fish' were excellent. We did wonder however whether the members lunching knew much about picking up mooring lines and such as they just watched with interest as we squeezed in.

**Passage north to Croatia.** Plan A had been to cross the north of Corfu and drop down the western side to spend a night in Paleokastrita but the light was not great (for the photographer). The rugged island of Othoni off the NW corner (Plan B) offered a much better starting point for our long passage north and with the forecast very light we guessed the anchorage, though open to the south would be comfortable enough. It was not a long night anyway as we were away at six.

We sailed west of our rhumb line as we wanted to keep in reserve the option of ducking into the Italian ports of Otranto or Brindisi if the weather turned nasty. It would also keep us a good distance from Albanian waters; we heard a US warship busy all night on the VHF checking on traffic in the area. The wind blew gently from astern but so we would not become too complacent, the forecast warned of isolated sudden storms. As darkness fell we motor sailed in very light conditions with one reef in the main – in case. Being just the two of us we did two hours on, two off; there was some shipping, but no sign or sound of the thunder and the phosphorescence was a show in itself. Our log distance was 195.5 and we were tied alongside the Croatian customs depot in Gruz at midday; our passage time 30 hours.

### Croatia

The formalities were fairly formal as we went from police to harbour authority, to a hole-in-the-wall for what appeared to be the last notes of local currency in stock, back for our one-year permit (approx. £150). Then to customs, who came on board but did not go below, they looked at our papers, and after a final



Approach to the medieval town of Trogir, Croatia.

check from the police we were cleared within the hour. We motored 2 miles up the pretty inlet, under an impressive new road bridge, to Dubrovnik marina; which is very attractively set in the grounds of an ageing manor house. Our first evening was very convivial and we had drinks with the crew of *Samphire II*, (RCC) who had just arrived from Italy. All was well until about 02.50 when it began – a boat load of charterers set up a karaoke machine in their cockpit, flashing lights included and proceeded to perform regardless of the rest of the marina; the phrase “the charterers from hell” put it too mildly. Complaints flooded the marina office from early morning and the yacht, based elsewhere, was forced to leave. We began our cruise in the area with an early aversion to charter yachts.

It is an easy 30-minute bus ride from the marina gate into town. The medieval walled-city of Dubrovnik is a joy from the minute one walks through the Pile Gate. The paving stones of Stradun (the main street) glisten with a patina of history, there are no signs or hoardings over the shops and restaurants and but for the modern fashions it could well be an earlier age. Our favourite place was the Dominican Monastery; incorporated into the defensive walls where one passes through a timeless cloister into the museum and the church with its eclectic collection of art. St. Blaise being the patron saint of the city appears in many guises here and indeed, throughout the area, sculpted in stone, set in glass windows, painted in pastel, and usually holding a model of the city. We sat in Gradska kavana (café) among the locals and sipped our coffees as a thunderstorm washed the tourists off the Luza Square and later in bright sunlight walked the city walls. From their heights we could see little evidence of the siege and bombing which had so damaged the city in the early 1990's though the newly tiled roofs were more pristine than their weathered neighbours.

Croatia has chains of islands running NW parallel to the 2000kms of coastline, there are over 1000 islands. It is no wonder that it is a favourite area for the Germans and Austrians who can drive down easily, and for the Italians who come buzzing over in packs of boats during their tight holiday season. This year there has been an explosion in their tourist industry, we know that over 500 new yachts for charter have been introduced this year alone. The marinas are full and the lone yachtsman is best to avoid them from midday Friday when it is turn-round time for the charterers. Hearing all this we busied ourselves with securing a place for *Rafiki* for the six weeks mid-summer when we planned to fly home. We also negotiated a winter place in Dubrovnik, they could only offer us a place in the water but we were glad to take that. By email



we received confirmation of a berth in the vast Zlatna marina, near Zadar for July, August and we booked our flights from Zadar to London via Zagreb. With the two folios of excellent Croatian charts on 15th May we set off to explore.

**Dubrovnik to Zadar.** Mljet is mostly wooded, and part of the island is designated National Park. On our first night there we anchored in the pretty landlocked harbour of Okuklje on the northeastern end. It was here that we were offered lobster by a local fisherman, but at £30 a kilo, we decided on a different menu (fish from the same source was £20 a kilo!) We had a brisk beat with mizen and staysail the 24 miles to Polače on the northwestern end of Mljet where we anchored in good solid mud in the northern arm of the harbour. We walked across the island to the ‘lakes’ – entrance from the sea is prohibited except in emergency. Here we took the ferry across to St. Mary’s

Monastery. No one lives there now and though the cloister garden had run delightfully wild, the church was well tended; we heard there was a plan to convert the site into a hotel but so far there is only a fairly disorganised café. We took the shuttle bus back to Polače and had an excellent lunch at the ‘Bourbon’. Good restaurants are fairly thin on the ground but we enjoyed this one very much. This was a very social day as we chatted to the Irish charterers in the Bourbon, had drinks on *Retreat from Battle* (from Battle) and a nightcap on *Warrior Shamall* (RCC).

There was no wind for our 18-mile passage to the next island along, Korčula. There is a marina here run by ACI who have a large group of marinas in Croatia and it



Kriviča - peaceful after the storm.

was the case in previous years that you could get an annual ACI group card which offered all kinds of discounts, including substantial savings on airline tickets, but that sadly is no more. This marina is safe once you are tied up, but in a cross wind there is very little room to manoeuvre and we found it very useful to throw a line to our upwind neighbour to steady our bow as we left. The town is lovely, ancient walls and narrow alleys; the Bishop's Treasury houses one of the best art collections in Croatia while strange beasts and gargoyles decorate the front to the Cathedral of St. Mark. Going to Mass on the Sunday was fascinating as half the town was there for the First Communion of about thirty children; this seemed to be one of the most photographed events of the year.

The islands all look somewhat similar, most are pretty barren, long and low, cleared areas are marked by stone walls and terracing, even more intense than the Aran Islands. No passage among these islands is a straight line and the chart Plotter came into its own; it is like those childhood 'dot-to-dot' puzzles as we entered waypoints round the ends of islands, west, then east, then north and a final west. From Korčula we did just that bypassing Hvar for later in the season and heading for one of the many Uvala Lukas, this one on the island of Brač, just south of Split. We took a mooring here, there were seven and it cost under £7 for the night. Most of the moorings have a light plastic cone which you capture with the boathook, but then you have to pass your line through the eye in the mooring line itself.

Our Navtex gave out reliable forecasts and we usually turned on for the 08.30 issue. The weather was much more influenced by frontal troughs than we were expecting and in May alone we had 21 warnings; of these 4 for fog, 8 for sudden gusts and 9 sudden storms; we have yet to experience a 'bora' for which the area is famed. May 19th en route to Luka we had rain and thunder, but no wind. There were thunderheads building next day too but over the mountains in the interior. We pottered along the north side of Brač to Bobovišća. This west facing inlet is divided into two parts, the northern branch had a line of fishing floats down the middle so we anchored and took a line ashore on the south side of the main arm. It is a very attractive spot and well sheltered. Some charter boats came in and lay off the quay which has been upgraded, laid lines etc. We spent much of the late afternoon fascinated by a singlehanded operator clearing a site with a claw and drill. As in many places the face of Croatia is changing almost by the day, particularly along the coastal strip as the tourist industry expands.

Next on the itinerary was Trogir. This town is really on an island but is connected now to the mainland and to the island of Čiovo by low bridges. There is an ACI marina on Čiovo which you approach from the west. Yes we could have a berth for two nights but we must be gone by midday on Friday – and this was repeated to us at least four times by different marina personnel. We could have lain alongside on the town boulevard (too pretty to call it a quay...) but even there on the Friday they were clearing space for something big and *Royal Tara* (ICC/RCC) and another RCC boat had to move further in. The closer to the bridge the stronger the current we noticed as three/four knots boiled through during Springs. The town of Trogir is another gem, a walled medieval town, with narrow streets and shiny paving stones. The Cathedral was closed for renovation but we did enjoy the modestly posed Adam and Eve on either side of the west portal. We ate ashore both nights once expensively at Konoba Fontana and then at the other end of the scale at Skrape – here the speciality was a large flat sort of hamburger made with veal and onions; the friendly cheerful atmosphere at Skrape made it memorable. There is an excellent market on the mainland side where the modern Trogir is growing apace, much of the produce coming straight from market gardens in the region – it was cherry season too, wonderful.

We had to don our oilskins for the short passage to Vinišće. This is a very safe but not particularly attractive bay on the mainland, just 7 miles from Trogir and in the indifferent weather it suited fine, we snuggled down below and tried out the heating.

Next we made a longer passage round a more protruding ragged mainland strip to Zirje, one of the islands west of Sibenik. Here in Stupica Vela we picked up a mooring, had a rather chilly swim and it was just warm enough to have drinks in our cockpit with Tony and Liz French(RCC) from *Enki II*.

The next group of islands is the Kornati Archipeligo, about ninety small islets which fringe the larger islands of Kornati and Dugi Otok. For once we had a good long sail in a following Force 4, genoa poled out, main boom preventor on and with the sun trying to come through we sped after *Enki*, who had left before us. We sailed up the western side of the group, most seemed smooth topped, with some scrub but basically very little if any habitation. We came into the cut between the two big islands, there is a deep inlet here on the southeastern end of Dugi Otok, Telašćica. This bay is protected as a National Park and there is a charge made for anchoring (they will however take your bags of garbage in return). Telašćica is about 5 miles long, with several anchorages. The nicest we decided, having visited each one, was at the top of the bay tucked behind two tiny islands. Here we stayed for three nights having drinks with *Enki* on night one and dinner in Goran's restaurant on the second. Goran's had been recommended to us and the speciality (book it at least three hours before) is leg of lamb cooked in an earthenware pot with lots of herbs and potatoes – definitely enough for four, even six – we took home our leftovers for night three. The meal came to a rather abrupt end as a clap of thunder sent everyone scurrying to their dinghies. The storm broke some hours later and was really ferocious, vicious gusts, torrents of rain and nasty hail; we did not sleep well though we knew the holding was good. Another trough and cold front was crossing the Adriatic from the west. To



*Rafiki* anchored with lines to the shore. Kriviča Croatian island.

continue this very social beginning to our cruising in Croatia we had lunch-time drinks on *Astrea of Attica* (R.T.Y.C./RCC).

Wednesday 29th May we wove our way east and south to round the southern end of Pašman and then up the narrow channel between the island and the mainland to Zlatna marina. We wanted to confirm, in person, that our booking for *Rafiki* in July and August was indeed confirmed. It was just as well we did so as it took a bit of to-ing and fro-ing before they agreed that such a commitment had been made. This is a vast, impersonal, purpose-built marina with 1,200 berths and they are all taken, every last one. We did not linger at this stage, though we did take a taxi to see the sights of Zadar. It is another medieval walled gem, alleys, slippery shiny paving stones and a wonderful market. The highlight for Bill was a visit to the Treasury where as well as seeing some wonderful art, he had a fascinating chat with the nun on duty – we were very glad to hear that she had been praying for us all on the night of the last storm.

**Zadar to the northern mainland ports.** There is a bridge between the islands of Pašman and Ugljan; one pilot gives 16.5 clearance and the other 18m. As we lay at anchor in the cut between the islands we watched a charter boat – with a pro crew on board, hoist someone to the top of the mast, with a long measured pole and back very slowly towards the bridge to check the height. Unfortunately we did not discover the result, but we hoped they took into account the appreciable rise and fall of water level, especially at Springs.

More interesting course making as we headed northwest into a wind from... the northwest, so motoring. We cut in between the islands and rocks between Sestrunj and Molat and into a well sheltered anchorage behind the islet of Brguljski in a Molat bay. There were lots of moorings to choose from, the sun was shining and the swimming was good though not many fish.

Pag is renowned for its lamb and cheese and as we enjoy both the plan was to go into the ACI marina at Šimuni on the west coast of Pag. It was not a successful choice – the marina was very small, full of silent, parked motor boats, the hamlet had no shop we could find and the cheese sign led to nowhere, to add insult to injury neither of us were feeling 100%. We did find a piece of local cheese in the tiny marina shop, no lamb.

More storm warnings and we were picking our next anchorage with care. Chart distance 22.5, direction as the crow flies, northwest. We came up the western arm of Molat, through

a narrow gap between Molat and Ist, (there is a good anchorage here and we returned to it later), leave the islands of Silba and Ilovik to starboard, and take the third bay on the western coast of Mali Losinj. This was Kriviča and we were to be here for several days. There were a number of yachts and motorboats already in the bay and we slotted into a gap – always a busy manoeuvre as the shore line has to be ready, the oars for the dinghy assembled, anchor dropped, quick into dinghy and climb ashore to the nearest tree. All eyes are watching, one is centre stage, the afternoon show. We took a second line ashore, crossing the two for a better lie. The swimming was lovely, the water a benign 22.1°.

**A Storm.** Wednesday 5th June the diary entry reads: "...wind came up, no sight of the sun; motor boat left, Italian yacht came in, ashore with third line, a lost day, BUT Ireland drew with Germany, hoisted Irish flag! German boats did not notice..." (World Cup news was text-messaged to us by our daughter watching in London). It blew very hard all night and we were both up several times but there were no problems.

Thursday 6th: Barometer 997, forecast winds from S/SE 35-50knots. Bill was deep into a biography of Ataturk, my Irish novel *Visitor's Book* was much lighter reading. By evening the barometer was reading 995.

Friday 7th: there were signs of blue, but it was still blowing. We went ashore to find "Balvinida Restaurant". There were signs along the track but we managed to take a wrong turn and climbed fifteen minutes up a steep flint path, between high flint walls before retracing our steps to arrive at the restaurant just in time to see Mr.Beckham score a winning penalty goal on the fuzzy TV on top of the fridge. The meal was good, though not for free. That night the wind swung into the SW and dropped off, but even tucked in where we were, the remnants of the seas outside rolled in; an uncomfortable night.

**Mali Losinj to Novigrad.** No one lingered and next morning there was a general exodus. We headed north up the island and into the large natural harbour of Mali Losinj. We spent the Saturday at the marina; the pilot is not particularly encouraging about either marina or town pontoons but there was enough west in the wind and it was pleasant enough if you could ignore the high hose pressure roar from the dry dock. We took the dinghy into town where we found another of The Rough Guides restaurant recommendations – Barracuda, a good choice. The restaurant at the marina had a good barbecue and here we met the (Essex) skipper of a 77' Wally; this is sailing with a difference, state of the art electric everything, with a hull so light that going to windward under sail over force 5 is not an option.

There was more heavy rain next day and the soaking laundry was left to soak a bit longer. We watched in fascination as really large numbers of charter boats passed first on their way to the town pontoon and then next morning hovered near us waiting for a lifting bridge which opens twice a day for those seeking an east/west shortcut.

We were almost the last to leave the marina and we motored up the harbour, put our nose out round the approach island of Zabodaski before putting up the main for a one reef motorsail NW into a head wind, but stronger northerlies were forecast for the next day. It was chilly – and this June in the Adriatic, Lymington was probably warmer.

Just south of Pula is a large twin armed inlet, to the north a huge marina but we headed for the southern anchorage, U.Kanalič (also called Soline). It is a very large area and the holding is good though deep in the middle. We were amazed at the quantity of boats of all shapes and sizes, mostly owner driven and on survey found that about 98% were flying German or Austrian flags, there was one Italian, one trailer-sailor with a Dutch ensign and ourselves. From here on we



Look across to the Y.C. marina on S. Giorgio, Venice.

hardly saw a red/blue or Irish ensign and our social engagements faded.

The approach to Pula is interesting as you bend round the buoys, round deserted island shipyards and the marina, also ACI, lies within sight of a great Roman amphitheatre. Another historical town and the temple to Augustus still stands, complete with roof next to the Town Hall which began life as a Temple of Diana. The market was a lively bustle and our bags were almost too well laden for the walk back to the boat.

We were now moving up the northern mainland coast and the crossing to Venice was an easy distance from any number of ports. Head wind once again as we made our way inside the exclusive Brioni Islands, erstwhile holiday retreat of Tito and now favourite with the super rich. At one time you could moor your yacht in the harbour, but not sleep aboard, there were villas and an exclusive hotel for that. The day was very hot and we decided on a swim before going in to Rovinj. We anchored behind the island of Vestar; this is heavy resort area but doubt anyone brings much luggage as the visitors are mostly naked and we felt positively overdressed. This is a feature of the boat charterers from central Europe and to our minds there is something a bit odd in crews of large undressed middle-aged men busy-ing round on foredecks, or stranger still, sprawled on their backs in the midday sun.

The tall belfry, with St. Eufemija turning with the wind on top leads one in to Rovinj. We spent the first night at anchor in the southern bay and the early evening show featured a small group of disappointed footie fans (Croatia lost to Senegal), but eventually they got tired and peace descended. We went into the marina next day and found an excellent laundry, reasonable shop, good fruit and veg stall and a very poorly equipped chandlery.

11 miles further north along the Istrian coast is the town of Poreč. The guide gives it a population of 3000 with an influx of tourists for the 35,000 beds available but it was not as crowded as we expected. It has been ruled by nearly every power you can imagine, Romans, Ostrogoths, Byzantium powers, Franks, Venetians, Austrians, Italians... It was badly bombed during the war but has been very well restored. The Basilica of Euphrasius in Poreč has the most wonderful golden mosaics and an interesting museum.

There was plenty of space early afternoon on the town quay and there was power and laid lines too. As the day went on our quay filled up and it was as well to be on board with all fenders out and the boat hook to hand when some of the whizzy power boats backed in...they did not have a clue.

One more northern hop to Novigrad where we picked up a mooring buoy. Fun afternoon as we were lured into a bar by the playing of the Irish National anthem and we watched the Irish v Spanish game with a group of locals amused at our enthusiastic support for the boys in green. Before leaving for Italy we had to check out here and while some of the formalities could be done the day before we had to go alongside the customs quay (on duty 24 hours) for final inspection before setting off at six the following morning.

**Crossing to Venice.** Monday 17th June, the barometer stood steady at 1016, the temperature was 24°, humidity 82%; a high was stationary and the wind – well you cannot have everything, was forecast at NW-erly 4/10 knots. The distance to Venice is 52 miles on a westerly course. We did get a lovely sail for about four hours, but by midday the wind had died and gone ahead. There were numerous fishing boats, some dolphins, a lot of heavy flotsam – tree roots, trunks and the like but all in all a very easy passage. The sea in the northern Adriatic is not at all deep – being somewhere between 14 and 34m and as result the water temperature was remarkably high, over 30.1°C when we checked. What we did not know, and maybe it was just as well,



Rafiki lying in the Y.C. marina, S. Giorgio, Venice.

was that the night before we left, as we lay on a mooring in Novigrad, with just a distant rumble of thunder, Venice was being hit by a violent storm with gusts of 100 mile an hour. We had toyed with the idea of making a night crossing so we could come in with the dawn behind us. As it was the visibility was not great and we were well up the Porto di Lido approach channel to the great city before we saw any of the glories on the skyline.

By arrangement we had a place reserved in the yacht club's harbour on S. Giorgio Maggiore. What a fantastic place to be (even with a noisy generator and pump busy on urgent repair works on the harbour wall). We were one Vaporetto stop from S.Marco and the Piazza, the view from the top of the campanile of the S. Giorgio Basilica is the best in town (and there is a lift!) Then there are the many glories of Venice, we did have a glorious week. The temperature it has to be said was in the top thirties but neither crowds nor heat could dampen our enthusiasm. Our Venetian contact, Gianpietro and his wife, Milena looked after us very well and showed us Venice as it should be seen from the canals, they dined us and wined us; Bill saw masterpiece after masterpiece and the photographer had a ball.

One week later and we were quite exhausted. But Venice did not want to see us go and at 0730 we were firmly stuck in the harbour mud. We got away by eight and motored back east in a force 1-2 from variable easterly directions! We spent another three weeks mainly island hopping before leaving *Rafiki* in Zlatna's enormous marina in mid July. Part 2 of our cruising season is due to begin at the end of August and we will return to Preveza in Greece at the end of October to take the boat out of the water for the winter.

# *Faustina II* comes home from the Caribbean

John Clementson

Ann said, "I don't want to do it, but I do want to have done it". She repeated this line several times as we sailed *Faustina II* up from Trinidad to the Bahamas. Very reasonably she was concerned that the two of us should take on the transatlantic voyage home to Ireland on our own. There was no way that I was going to ship the boat home so I offered to do it solo, but she said that would cause her even more concern. We asked a few friends whether they could join us, but the Irish summer (little did they guess the awful weather they were going to get!) and the RNIYC Centenary celebrations had their prior commitment.

We had left *Faustina II*, our trusty Bowman 40, at Chaguaramas in Trinidad for the hurricane season and re-launched her at the end of November 2001. From there we made our way northwards through the Windward Islands, which we had explored quite thoroughly in 2001 after our ARC crossing. We stayed for about a week in the area of Union Island and the Tobago Cays. I did several scuba dives with two very amusing Swedes and we walked ashore and shopped for supplies. For Christmas Day we joined up with several other yachts by prior arrangement in Chatham Bay on Union Island. We had Christmas drinks on board a fine old Baltic Trader from Scotland and our dinner was barbecued lobster cooked very well for us all on the beach by a great local character known as 'Shark Attack'.

On Boxing Day we moved away to the north and made overnight stops in St. Vincent and St. Lucia. The normally delightful Marigot Bay was so full of charter boats that we made no attempt to go in and simply anchored off the entrance. We stayed three days in Martinique at three different anchorages enjoying the French connections including its bread and croissants. The French islands in the Caribbean are part of metropolitan France and thus the EU – and it shows in the quality of life on them. The last of the Martinique anchorages was off St. Pierre where almost exactly 100 years ago 30,000 inhabitants lost their lives when the nearby volcano exploded. We met the Swedes again and I did a great 30-metre dive with them.

We loved Dominica and spent a pleasant New Year's Eve there attending a hotel party at Roseau. We spent several days exploring the island by taxi, scuba diving (John) and snorkelling (Ann). The island claims to have 365 rivers – and it probably has. Wet and heavily forested, it is the last home of the ancient Carib race who now produce delightful artifacts to sell to tourists. Near our second island anchorage off Portsmouth we explored the 'Indian River' just after dawn to do some bird watching, and later we climbed up to Fort Shirley, an old British fort that with its outposts on nearby hills is being well renovated.

We had a few days at anchor in the small island group of The Saintes, one of which was spent having repairs done to our pulpit. The damage was caused by a French yacht that had left the anchorage under sail and become caught in stays. Having hit us, the yacht then just sailed away, but I chased them in our new RIB and made then return to give us their details.

Our RIB with its 15 hp outboard engine is bright yellow and aptly named Buttercup. She was an extravagance that we never begrudged as she gave us much greater 'exploring range' and we very rarely got our backsides wet, even in quite rough weather. She is also great fun to drive – and useful for chasing boats that damage you and leave without offering to pay up!

We sailed on to the north, visited a marina overnight in Guadeloupe, and then took *Faustina II* through the channel that splits the island in two. This transit has to be started in the dark of early morning (due to bridge opening times) and it was as well that we had gone right through the pass in *Buttercup* on the previous day. By checking in daylight we were saved at least one embarrassing mistake in the night. However we STILL went aground for a long mosquito-infested 90 minutes before we broke through to the sea again.

We left the island of Monserrat with its newly awakened volcano billowing smoke well off to port and arrived in Antigua to anchor in English Harbour, Nelson's Dockyard. The old naval base has been very well renovated over the last few years and is well worth visiting (especially when the cruise ships are not in – though this can be said of many places we visited.) We managed to get our anchor caught under one of the big so called 'Nelson's Chains' which were laid across the harbour floor to hold the Navy's men of war during the hurricane season. That was 6 metres down. I free-dived down and managed to damage an ear that wouldn't 'clear' and that gave me pain for several weeks thereafter. However, happily, after a while I freed the anchor without having to call in divers. Round at Falmouth harbour we anchored near Vincent and Maureen O'Farrell (ICC) on *Fastnet Dancer* amongst the staggering collection of large and wildly expensive yachts and motor-cruisers.

After a few days we sailed on in a very fresh wind to pass between Nevis and St. Kitts where we anchored in Major's Bay for the night. We had planned to spend the next night at Basseterre on St. Kitts but the marina was a mess having been hit by a hurricane and the wind was too fresh to anchor off. We therefore went on to St. Eustatius (Statia) where we spent a rolly night anchored off Oranjestad and then gratefully north to the security of Sint Maarten. We called first at Philipsburg on the Dutch side of the island – along with several large cruise ships the passengers of which were apparently solely interested in shopping at the expensive shops on 'Front Street'. We shopped with the locals in 'Back Street'. We cleared immigration with the stupidest man in authority that we met anywhere and then moved around to the lagoon where many long-term cruisers make the most of the shelter and the excellent repair and supply facilities available. We became frequent visitors to the St. Martin YC (located in four containers but a great place to meet, eat and drink) and took the RIB north across the lagoon to St. Martin (the French side) on most evenings to eat away our last French Francs before they became useless with the introduction of the Euro. After a week doing some essential maintenance we made the longish crossing over to the British Virgin Islands.

The BVI are quite rightly a chartering paradise. They have

lots of interesting and beautiful places to visit, all quite close together and with well-sheltered waters. Sadly it is expensive there – presumably as charterers don't mind paying high prices as they are only out for their two-week holiday. It is hard to find anywhere to anchor, as all the bays are full of moorings costing US\$20 a night. Also we found the locals the least cheerful of all the islanders that we had met to date. Still we had a very pleasant and easy 10 days pottering and relaxing.

It was now early February. We had hoped to spend more time exploring different islands but the weather this year has been 'unusual' – a description used often by the Caribbean weatherman, David Jones, in his daily SSB radio forecasts. The Christmas winds came in January and stayed fresher than usual throughout the season – easterlies force 5-6, occasionally 7, instead of the more normal force 4-5. This tended to slow us down, as we would decide to 'stay here another day'. It also meant that didn't know whether we had a few days clear to get ashore to visit the island in more detail.

We left *Faustina II* for a month in the capable hands of David and Hilary Park (ICC) while we flew back to Trinidad for the Carnival (another story) and then home to NI for a couple of weeks.

On our return, and with a jet-lagged Hazel Barr (ICC) on board, we joined a fun regatta that took us racing up to the reef-bound island of Anegada for a day of games, swimming and good eating, and then down to the west end of Tortola at Soper's Hole. We came 13th (dodgy handicapping!) – but STILL won a prize! We made a brief visit to the USVI but the immigration authorities there made us return Hazel to the BVI so that she could arrive in the USVI by commercial means – as she had no US visa. She went back to St. Johns in the USVI on the ferry and we sailed back – again. Bureaucracy – or what?

After a day or two we returned to the BVI and there we had very welcome visits from family members for a week. It was great to see sun-starved folk enjoying the sun and warm blue sea. Overall, we stayed in the area for about four weeks during which time we had a new mainsail made – also a mainsail 'cradle', a great invention for packing away the mainsail quickly.

Now there were just the two of us again and once more we moved over to the USVI, and again we met the O'Farrells on *Fastnet Dancer*. Together we dined at the St. Thomas YC and Vincent provided an ICC pennant for the club that was received with great good humour and pleasure. Then, after anchoring for a few days near the capital of the USVI, Charlotte Amalie, in the company of some cruising friends we set off to Puerto Rico (PR), visiting the islands of Culebra and Vieques *en route*.

We probably should have known better but PR surprised us. It is a great place. OK, it's rather Americanized but it is also beautiful and interesting. We anchored for a day in great seclusion in the Golfo de Jobos on the island's south coast where there are supposed to be many manatees living amongst the mangroves – but we couldn't find one. Next day we anchored in a sheltered bay called Salinas

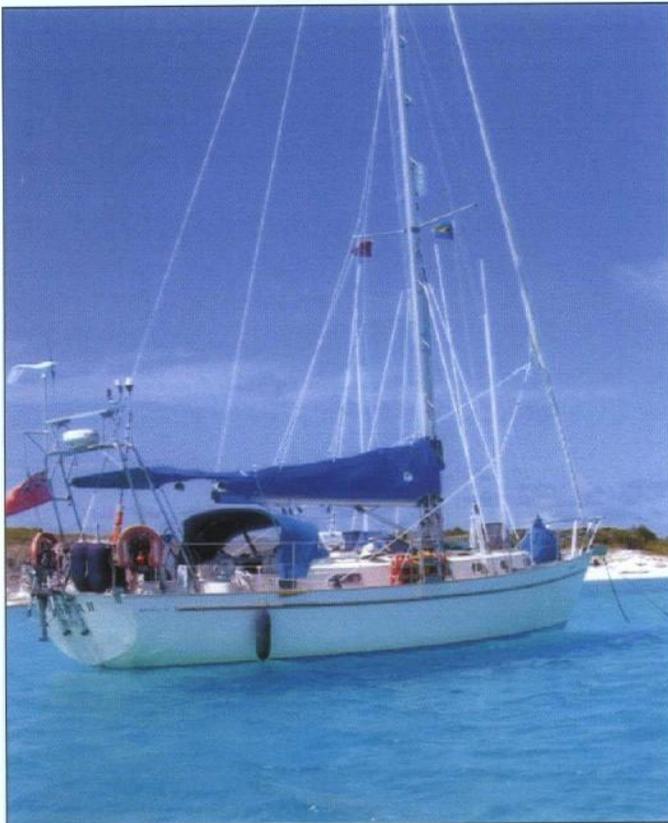
(another meeting place for long-term cruising folk) and hired a car for 5 days. We visited San Juan, the capital, on the north coast where the old city and fortifications are lovingly preserved but where the new city has horrendous traffic and huge shopping malls. Next day we drove over the mountains to visit the awesome Caves of Camuy, the 3rd largest cave system in the world. We stayed overnight in a hotel in the mountains (what luxury!) – and did some shopping at a huge mall. A week in PR would never be wasted. There is so much to see and do. We sailed along to the west coast and had to take a taxi to Boqueron to clear out with the US immigration authorities before we set out across the notorious (at least to Americans trying to sail to the east against the wind and current) Mona Passage. We actually had an easy run over to Mona Island, which is in the middle of the Passage, where we literally scraped into an anchorage inside the reef and went ashore to look at the National Park. It was lovely. The only inhabitants are three Spanish-speaking 'Yogi Bear' Park Rangers but we enjoyed the walking and saw large iguanas in the wild.

We left here on a Saturday evening and had a good run northwest across the rest of the Mona Passage and around the northeast corner of The Dominican Republic (DR), along its north coast to the little village and good anchorage of Luperon, where we arrived on Monday morning. Luperon is yet another of the places where cruising boats congregate. In some of these meeting places owners live on board for several years and almost become part of the local community. Luperon is very poor; the sanitation was appalling and the shops had little in them. The bureaucracy was long winded but easy-going – and the people were incredibly friendly. We had laundry done while we were there. Ann saw no sign of a tap in the place where the job was done, nor where she bravely had her hair cut, but the laundry was the best we had had done to date and her hair was very well cut too. She had allowed a very large man on a scooter to take her off quite some distance for her haircut (while I was still trying to clear immigration), which shows how desperate she was to have that job done! School children were immaculately dressed both before and after school – but we had seen this a lot throughout the Caribbean.

Sadly we could stay here only two days because we had



Vincent O'Farrell, Ann and John Clementson and Maureen O'Farrell present an ICC burgee to Nancy Firestone, the manager of the St. Thomas YC.



*Faustina II* anchored off Conception Island in the Bahamas.

tentatively agreed to meet with my sister in the Turks and Caicos Islands (TCI) and the unusual weather was threatening to make the passage to the TCI difficult in a day or two. (She never actually arrived, due the very high cost of the airfares from the USA, but of course we didn't know that then.) An overnight motor/sail to the north brought us to the TCI at Big Sand Cay – a small desert island surrounded by translucent turquoise water with beaches to take your breath away. Just – WOW! We loved it and had a lovely few hours swimming and taking a walk ashore. Sadly here, as in every place we visited, the eastern 'weather' side of the island was covered in litter (mostly plastic) brought in on the sea. After lunch we sailed across to South Caicos where one anchors, well protected, near reefs in quite shallow water. We cleared Customs (the only place I was offered an arm chair to sit in while I completed the copious paper work.) and explored a bit. During the next couple of days I did four scuba dives off the reef 'wall'. The snorkelling just off the town on the 'Admiralty Reef' was amongst the best that we saw anywhere. We walked ashore a lot. Our arrival coincided with the supply ship's monthly visit and so there were stores in the two shops. Ponies ambled around the town, flamingos waded in the salt flats and a band in full dress uniform was playing at the Protestant church on Sunday. They looked very hot!

South Caicos is pretty run down. The housing stock is photogenic but very poor, and there is little work. The TCI government has largely caused this to happen. Apparently so many of the inhabitants used to run drugs that it was deemed necessary to punish the whole population – and so the airport was closed. This kept all tourists away (except the few yachts that happen by). The airport has recently been reopened after several years of punishment and so perhaps the islanders will start to attract tourists again. Sadly for them the other islands, especially Providenciales, have had a head start and I doubt that South Caicos will ever catch up. I think that there is only one hotel. Thus it remains a delight for the unsophisticated casual visitor (like us!) – but less so for its diminishing residential population.

To go from South Caicos to Providenciales (or Provo), the main island of the TCI, one can either go north around the islands (a long way) or go across the Caicos Bank. Most of the Bank is too shallow for a yacht to pass over but there a couple of routes that are just ok – if you keep to the (unmarked) route. There are lots of coral heads to be avoided too. TG for GPS. We motored in flat calm conditions over the Bank, a distance of about 45 miles, and for much of the time there was not more than a metre under the keel. We could see stingrays as we sailed over them – so clear was the water over the sand. We didn't touch and anchored safely off the south coast of Provo, where we stayed for 4 days.

Provo is developing as a major tourist resort and is basing itself on the worst aspects of Florida. A car is essential as the shops and facilities are widely spread around the island and it is HOT and dusty. We hired a car and with some other yachties we explored and ate out and scuba dived. It would be good for a holiday – it has good beaches and diving – and the hotel resorts look fine. The yachting is a bit limited by the extensive reefs that virtually surround the island.

We cleared out of the TCI and entered the Bahamas, about which Don Street (he of the transatlantic guides) had said to us that, 'You can always see the sea bottom but rarely see the shore'! There is some truth in that. We went first to Mayaguana, the most easterly of the 'out-islands'. There's not a lot there but we met some interesting people and watched as hundreds of conch shells were cleaned ready to be sold up in Nassau. The



John Clementson painting *Faustina II*'s mark on the Atlantic wall at Horta in Faial, the Azores.

island's Mr Fix-it helped us without payment by hammering our damaged boom gooseneck pin straight. The anchorage has two approaches, one is about 2 miles across the inside of the reef and the other is a dash through a narrow gap. We came in the one and went out the other. We stayed lucky!

And so on to the west. We called on West Plana Cay (deserted except for the two large barracudas that patrolled under the boat for the duration of our stay and which somewhat discouraged swimming!) where we stayed for two days – mainly due to high winds. Then we went on to anchor overnight in an empty bay on Atkins Island, and then in the amazingly indigo-water at Crooked Island where the barman at the most isolated hotel in the Bahamas spent sometime going through his repertoire of party tricks. At least the meal, taken in the company of fellow yachties, was good. Then came Clarence Town on Long Island where, famously, a Father Jerome had built first the Protestant church and then, after changing his faith, another for the RCs. Again the approach to the anchorage needed care, as the water gets quite 'thin' in places. All these island hops were quite short day-sails. The next one brought us to Rum Cay with yet another thinking-man's entrance. They have a small but very good marina, which they are enlarging over a 10-year period. 2002 was alleged to be Year 8. We ate ashore (expensively).

We had a fine sail to our next stop at Conception Island about which we had heard much over the SSB in conversations between people who had been there. It was said to be unmissable – and so it turned out. It's uninhabited, it's flat and it's covered in scrub. However the anchorage is fantastic. The beach is long with white sand and all that you would expect of a tropical island whilst the warm sea was the usual variety of stunning blues. We settled down to chill-out for a couple of days. Our stay included a run in *Buttercup* to visit the interior of the island which has lagoons filled at each high water. We had met a delightful American couple who had been cruising around the world for 13 years and we spent quite a lot of time together with them until we left the Bahamas two weeks later. We shall long remember Conception Island – and the joy is that the cruise ships will never get there. No shops!

A nice easy morning's sail brought us to Georgetown on Great Exuma Island, which has two very tricky entrances through reefs. We stayed there for 10 days while various adverse weather systems came off the US east coast and pestered us. Georgetown has several anchorages between it and Stocking Island a mile across from the town. The game is to move from one anchorage to another depending on the expected wind. It's called the 'Georgetown shuffle' and we shuffled a couple of times. With our friends we hired a car and explored but that was easily finished in a day. There was little to see. We shopped, walked, repaired things, and socialized with other boats until at last we got a good weather window to head north to Bermuda. This was to be a leg of 793 miles and was to be our first prolonged voyage with just the two of us on board.

We were, by now, already quite relieved that we were expecting no extra crew as were under no pressure at all to be anywhere to meet them. This certainly improved the quality of the daily decisions about whether to sail or not. We were already a bit behind our planned schedule for reaching Bermuda, but it really didn't matter. So we waved goodbye to our friends who were heading for Florida and set off to the northeast.

We had arranged to talk with David Jones, the weatherman, on the SSB each morning. For a payment he gives individual yachts routing information that covers the next 7 days. He is usually pretty good for the first three days after which his forecasts understandably become less reliable. We had



*Faustina II* in mid-ocean. Not sinking!

also arranged to speak with Herb Hilgenberg (known to all Atlantic yachties as just 'Herb') the well-known weather guru who is based in Canada. (<http://hometown.aol.com/hehilgen/myhomepage/vacation.html>). His forecasts are free, as he is a 'ham', and they are excellent. The only problem with Herb is that he talks to a lot of yachts each evening and gives each one good detail. Thus you may have to listen to him for up to 3 hours before he gets to your area and calls you up. If you miss his call he moves on to the next boat quickly. He doesn't suffer laggards! We 'got' David until Bermuda and then we benefited from Herb all the way from Bermuda to Ireland – for which 'thank you Herb'. He kept us out of trouble.

We got to Bermuda in 5 days and 4 nights but the weather window was so 'good' that we only managed to sail for two days and one night of that. The rest was motoring. We had had some battery troubles and these caused the alternator to burn out during this trip leaving us to use the Aquagen, solar panels, the Airmarine wind generator and our mobile Honda generator to make power. You HAVE to have cold mixers for the rum!

We entered the Town Cut into St. George (there seems to be a town called after 'George' on every island – and Sao Jorge Island in the Azores) and anchored with about 20 other yachts. Some of these had already set off for the Azores. Two days out Herb had advised them to return. Some did – and were ok. Some turned back later when the weather had already deteriorated and some suffered damage. The group became known as the 'boomerang flotilla' as they had returned to where they had started. It was a lesson that we took to heart. The weather is everything. Get that right and the dangers reduce. We were in no hurry and we were prepared to wait until Herb gave us a clear green light.

In the meantime we set-to to explore Bermuda – and to get our alternator and its 'intelligent controller' replaced. Bermuda is a well-governed and prosperous island that one can explore in sufficient detail to satisfy in about 10 days. There are no cars for hire – only scooters, and the bus service is excellent thank goodness, as the narrow, often twisty, roads would soon be jammed. We visited Hamilton the capital, the old Royal Navy dockyards (now very well converted to provide a tourist attraction complete with a pool with dolphins to play with). Ann wasn't too keen on the scooter (or my driving perhaps!)

and often went to places by bus but I loved the scooter. I failed to find a suitable alternator on the island and couldn't get anyone to come to the boat to check the electrics. In the end I arranged for Adverc to send me a complete charging system from the UK, which arrived in 3 working days by courier.

By now we had made some new American friends on a boat called *Southern Cross*, Joe and his wife Lee and John and his wife Connie. They were all experts on some aspect of boats. Joe wrote for US yachting magazines and John and Connie had worked on yacht refrigeration and electrical systems. John ASKED to help me fit the new alternator and controller – and this was by no means the last time that their help was to be a Godsend to us. We were to sail in company from Bermuda to Ireland. They were great company and generous people.

I asked if anyone would like to join a twice-daily SSB net for the trip to the Azores. Six boats joined up and the chats *en route* were to prove comforting, and helpful to at least one boat that *Southern Cross* was able to give advice to about its engine problems – rather like a radio doctor. Ann was able to pass the recipe for an apple crumble to an English skipper who was keen to impress his American lady crew with 'English cuisine'! Joe and I took it in turns to run the net during which we logged each boat's position and heard what weather they were having. Occasionally the ladies had a chat together.

Once we were ready to sail, Herb stopped us from going for a few days because of a new front coming off the USA. This one was being called a tropical storm, though happily it never developed fully. Finally after two weeks in Bermuda, on 17 June, we sailed out and headed for the Azores some 1,800 miles distant.

We started with a watch system that worked ok but which evolved into the following routine. The night was split into three 4-hour watches, 2000-0000, 0001-0400 and 0400-0800. The first and last of these had quite a lot of daylight in them. We had our evening meal at about 1930 and our breakfast we made ourselves if necessary. John, say, would take the 2000-0000 and 0400-0800 watches and then be allowed to sleep during the following morning until he woke up or was ready to get up – usually around lunchtime. Then Ann would be allowed to sleep all afternoon, building up rest before the following night when she would do the two 'outside' night watches. This system worked really well and neither of us got seriously tired at all. John was occasionally called from sleep to deal with some sailing matter but for the most part, fortunately, we had pretty good weather, else we might have found life rather more tiring. The night watches, especially when we were motoring, largely consisted of sitting at the chart table glancing at the radar occasionally. This warned of incoming squalls and of course the very occasional ship. Even a good visual lookout would not have seen lurking whales or containers. Of course we looked around outside frequently.

The weather was kind to us. At first we could still talk to David Jones in the BVI but increasingly Herb became 'the man'. Our SSB was disappointingly inefficient probably due to some cabling running parallel to other wires. Thus we had increasing problems in contacting Herb. However *Southern Cross* was getting good contact and talked to Herb for both of us (as we were never out of VHF range of each other). Anyway it was easier for them with their 'large' crew to spare the time to wait for Herb to call them each evening. This was a great bonus for us and was much appreciated.

Another use of the SSB that we had set up when we were in the BVI was the ability to send and receive emails on board. The 'Airmail' system is a ham-only system (ie. you have to have passed the amateur radio exam – and Ann had) but once you have bought the special modem (called a Pactor) the service is free. There is a similar system called 'Sailmail' that

costs \$200 per year for which amateur status is not required. The system requires you to call up a participating ham by SSB from the boat (it's done semi-automatically) when his radio will take your mail and send you any thing for you that is in the system. There is no talking involved. It works extremely well and it was fun and pleasurable to 'talk' to one's friends and family from mid-ocean. The system had a web site that shows your yacht's position whenever you report it in. The site can be accessed by anyone. ([www.winlink.org](http://www.winlink.org)).

Generally we had good weather *en route* to the Azores. I was able to deploy the cruising chute as a small spinnaker a couple of times and we often poled out the Yankee for many hours at a time. We had to beat occasionally and were unable always to keep to the Great Circle route. Indeed sometimes Herb deliberately took us away from it to allow us to find better winds.

We had expected to see lots of whales but we were disappointed. I was looking ahead one fine day and suddenly I saw a pilot whale in mid-air about 30 metres ahead. I called Ann (who was awake and up) but of course all she saw were the bubbles where the 30-foot animal had landed back in the sea. We saw many dolphins and on flat calm days we usually saw Portuguese Men of War and turtles. Ann saw whales blowing in the distance but all the other yachts in our group reported good sightings.

*Southern Cross* had planned on going straight to Horta on Faial in the Azores but we persuaded them to come with us to the island of Flores first – as it was sort of *en route* to Horta. That was an excellent decision for both of us. We arrived in the harbour anchorage of Lajes on Flores on 2 July. The crossing from Bermuda had taken 14 days, an average of 130 miles a day and 5.4 knots. Flores turned out to be our favourite island of our whole time away. It is green and friendly. The harbour master even offered to let us use his machine for our laundry! The bureaucracy is still extensive in all the Azorean islands (you have to book in and out of each one) despite Portugal's membership of the EU. But the flowers make it all amply worthwhile. The island is a mass of hydrangeas growing along the walls of fields and up the sides of the steeper slopes. These are interspersed with Cana lilies, wild roses and myriad other flowers. The islanders are all involved in cattle farming or fishing (though they have not been allowed to catch whales for



Hazel Barr gets piratical with Ann Clementson's granddaughter Isabel at Billy Bones restaurant in the BVIs.

many years). Our taxi driver showed us his island with great pride. After a couple of days we all went for a long walk to the north of the island that took us over some wild areas and then down along an ancient cliff path to the sea – about 10 kms in all, exercise that we badly needed after so long at sea.

After 4 days on Flores we sailed overnight the 120 miles to Faial and to the famous yacht rendezvous of Horta harbour. The marina has been extended and now lies well within the old Atlantic wall on which so many yachts had left their marks. The new wall is already, after only about 4 years, full of painted reminders of visits, and the newest section of the marina, only just opened, is already proving to be a worthy canvas for talented sailors to paint on. The locals are proud of these paintings and a section of the museum is devoted to an exhibition of them.

We were berthed alongside for the first time since Trinidad and made the most of the luxury of shore power. We were to be here for two weeks – at least one week longer than originally planned. The first days were devoted to boat maintenance – the rectification of little problems that are a nuisance rather than a danger. On the third day we all (*Southern Cross* and ourselves) went for a great walk that began high up on the island's centre at the old volcano's caldera and ended 6 hours later near the north coast. Unlike our first walk on Flores, this time we thought to take a picnic for which a couple of bottles of local wine were included. The walk went from the highest point of the island, through forests, along a mile or two of irrigation channels and over farmland. Beautiful!

The next day was my birthday (66) and we celebrated that with a wonderful dinner at a restaurant where one cooks one's own meal on a very hot slab of lava. I cooked my prawns to perfection! That was followed by apple strudel, decorated with 11 candles, cooked for me by Lee on *Southern Cross*. To walk all this off we took the fast ferry to the island of San Jorge next day, a journey of about an hour. We hired two taxis at Velas and they carried us to the start of yet another brilliant walk from the island's high volcanic ridge down through stunning scenery (sometimes masked by clouds) to the sea on the north coast. Yet another well-stocked and leisurely picnic was taken *en route*. We were tired by the time we met our taxi at the walk's end but happily some entrepreneur had set up a small beer stall there and our spirits were soon revived prior to the spectacular ride back over the hills to Velas.

Four days of boat work and socializing followed. We visited the local botanical gardens in Horta and the small but interesting museum. We ate out at various quite good restaurants – and throughout I carried on with my painting on the jetty wall. This was not a work of art – more one of careful measurements. There were paintings by other ICC members on view.

We all then went for our last walk in the islands – on the island of Pico. The old volcano of Pico is across the water from Horta. One rarely sees the whole mountain as the top, the middle or the bottom is usually shrouded in cloud. Walking to the top sounded like work for younger people but we decided that following our walking practice to date we would walk DOWN the mountain. We crossed to Pico on the ferry and took two taxis up the slope. Somehow our instructions were misinterpreted and we were taken MUCH higher than we had planned and were set down at a place where the going looked, and was, rough. We were at a height of about 1100 metres. Some of our party had the wrong sort of shoes on for this. We should have got back into the taxis and gone down a way – but we didn't. However we all made it in the end. Two got lost. We all got spread out and we only JUST made it back to the port of Madelena in time to catch the ferry that saved us having to wait there another five hours. However it was a lovely walk through

very varied countryside. After nearly two hours we took our picnic lunch at the point at 700 metres altitude where we should have started the walk. Close by we were able to explore a few hundred metres of *Furna* – tunnels created by lava that cooled to the size of large Underground Railways. We had time to visit quickly the gardens of a now demolished *Quinta* or country house that is being maintained by the forestry department and which was a delight to see. By the time we got back to Horta we were a very tired party of walkers.

The wind blew strongly from the north over the next few days and setting out for Ireland was out of the question. We therefore went for more walks, shorter this time. We went back to Pico to explore the *Quinta* garden more fully and we then walked down to have dinner overlooking the sea in Madelena. Another walk was to the hills a mile or so to the north of Horta and the second was to the caldera of Mont Gaia, which lies just to the south of the town. That was on Sunday and we had a good meal that evening in the famous Peter's Sport Bar where so many yachties have congregated to tell tales of derring-do over their beers. Peter's unique scrimshaw museum is amazing.

That was our last evening ashore as next morning, 22 July, having been given the 'go ahead' by Herb, we cleared out with the authorities and set sail for Ireland, about 1,200 miles away. Our original plan had been to head straight for home (Bangor marina in N.Ireland) via the north coast of Ireland. However we had managed to persuade *Southern Cross* that for them to go to Falmouth without having visited southwest Ireland would be a sin – no less. They gave in and we felt obliged to keep them company and to act as their guide. So we both set off on the Great Circle route to Bantry Bay.

The weather at first was mild and gentle. Up to this time we had been downloading weather faxes each day from Boston, USA, but now were in Northwood's (UK) area. These faxes, which are obtained via the SSB radio and our trusty laptop computer, provide an essential background to safe cruising. It is true that we were often not able to see how Herb was getting the forecast that he was giving us but we would then begin to see developing what he had noted a day or two earlier. We didn't follow Herb blindly – we occasionally made our own decisions and Herb 'allowed' that we had done so, even if he then told us how to get ourselves out of the mess that we had made! On the third day out we were having a good run with the cruising chute when a large Spanish fishing boat came over to join us. An Irish voice called us on the VHF – he was an EU fishing inspector (from Bangor) and had been aboard for three months with only a brief stop ashore in Nova Scotia, now on their way back to Vigo with 300 tons of fish in the hold. The poor man was longing for a talk in English and we chatted away for 30 minutes or so before the Spanish skipper dragged him away again.

The next day the weather became misty and cold and we dug out our warm clothes for the first time in earnest – although, for the last time, the cruising chute stayed up all day.

Early next morning Ann woke me to tell me that we were approaching lightning. We had a really big black cloud dead ahead of us with continuous sheet lightning amongst it and occasional flashes of fork lightning coming down to the sea. This was the only time that Ann was frightened – she has never liked lightning. She had put as much of the electronic gear into the oven as it would take – the theory is that the oven acts like a Faraday cage. Happily we were able to make a slight course change and the cloud blew away to the south before we reached it – and the 'cage' wasn't tested. The wind came in from the west and we decided to head north so that we could take advantage of the northerly wind that was forecast for later in the day and sure enough by late evening we were back on the rhumb line (065° mag) for Bantry Bay. By midday next day we

were again being headed and we altered course to 330° mag but during the night the wind slowly 'clocked' (the very sensible American word for 'veered') around to the south and we once again headed for Ireland. The winds had been quite fresh for a couple of days and the seas bumpy (at very least!). The wind now moderated and we even used the engine for a few hours to move along.

A huge school of dolphins came bounding across the sea ("Yippee, there's a boat we can play with!") and they stayed around us giving us the usual delightful privilege of watching them seeming to play in the bow waves. We were also adopted for several days by what appeared to be the same pair of fulmars that skimmed along below the level of the wave tops and turned this way and that, never quite touching the moving water beneath them. Wonderful to watch. People often ask whether I don't get bored looking at water all day every day. I answer that I never get bored as the sea is always changing as is the sky and the weather – and there is always plenty to do. I love it when I am asked, as I have been several times "What do you do at night?"!! Pull into a lay-by of course.

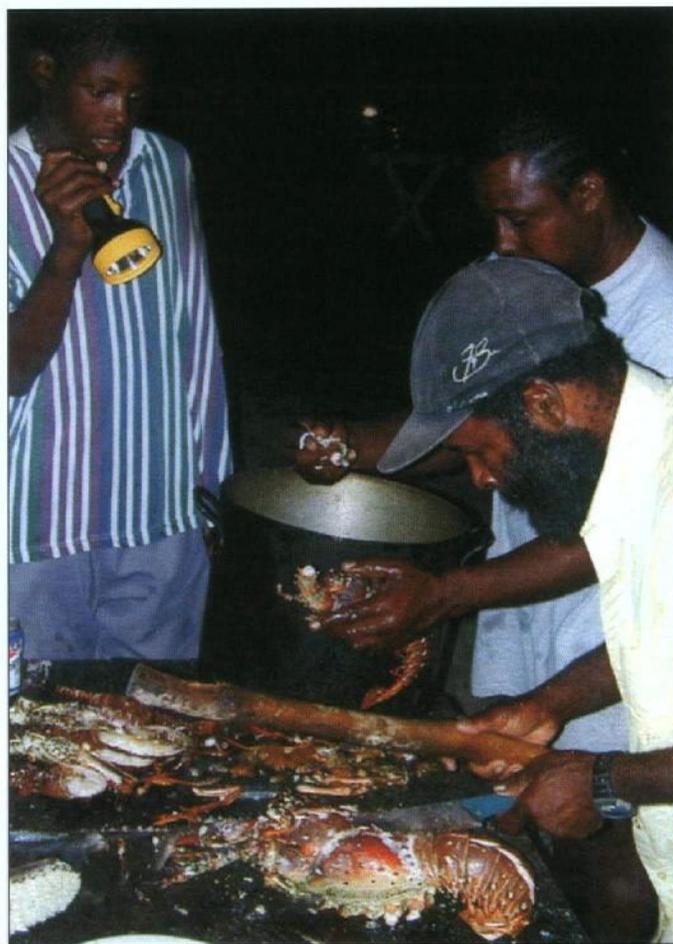
On the evening of 30 July Herb advised that we should not go east of 8° west as there was a to be a strong gale off the coast of Ireland. We were about 3 hours ahead of *Southern Cross* at the time so we turned back and hove-to, after dark, about a mile from our friends. We stayed like that for about 30 hours. It was a bit bumpy but not uncomfortable. In fact Herb had overstated the problem a bit and there was no gale, only strong winds. However one disregards Herb at one's peril even if he does tend to err on the side of caution. Early on the morning of 1 August we set off again for the coast we had got within 200 miles of and the next morning we entered Bantry Bay in poor visibility, went into Pipers Sound and made our way into the harbour of Castletownbere.

This leg had taken 11 days covering an average of about 110 miles a day. We had had two days of head winds and over a day of being hove-to.

Arriving in southwest Ireland was an inspired move as it allowed us a 'soft landing' before going home after our two years of having the boat away. *Southern Cross* relished the scenery and the people they met – as did we. Over the next two weeks we visited Dunboy, Glengarriff and the gardens on



Ann Clementson takes a breather on Flores in the Azores.



Christmas dinner BBQ of lobster at Union Island – cooked by 'Shark Attack' and his assistants.

Inacullin, Adrigole, Schull and Baltimore. From there we were invited to join the ICC southern areas buffet lunch on Clare Island and both our US friends and ourselves were made to feel most welcome there. Finally we moved on to Kinsale. The weather had been 'mixed' for our Irish period but the sun had shone enough to remind us just how lovely the area is when the fog isn't hiding it all away. It was great.

From Kinsale we parted from *Southern Cross* leaving them to go on to Cork and then the Isles of Scilly and England while we made our way to Ballycotton for the night, and then to Kilmore Quay. We left there at night to head north to Howth where we were royally entertained by friends. There was another late evening departure to catch the tide for the last leg to Bangor marina – and home to a hot bath for the first time in five months.

Ann may not have *wanted* to do the ocean crossing but now she had indeed *done* it! She had been very brave and was entitled to be well pleased with herself.

I would like to thank warmly all those members who kindly lent us charts and pilot books, thus saving us much money. On the other hand I now have a large selection of more recent charts etc that members may care to borrow should they be needed.

For those who like statistics I estimate (our log wasn't too accurate!) that we covered nearly 5,000 miles this year and some 9,000 miles since we left N.Ireland in July 2000. This year we flew 20 different courtesy flags!

# Seoidín's shake-down cruise around West Cork

## Brendan Travers

I was surprised at how painless it was in the end! That is parting with *Sea Maiden*, my 23-foot fin-keeled Bermudan sloop in which I had clocked up over 20,000 sea miles since I acquired her new in 1980. Admittedly the parting was made easier by the fact that she was going to a new owner who would give her the TLC she was accustomed too. But the real reason for not being too upset was that I had already fallen for *Samantha*!

*Samantha*, now rechristened *Seoidín* (Little Jewel) is a Mark I version of the Cornish Crabber 24. She carries a traditional gaff cutter rig (not a winch or bottlescrew in sight) on a heavily laid up GRP hull with wooden spars. With tan sails and all wooden interior, her overall appearance was greatly enhanced by a black paint job for the hull and teak laid decks, both professionally done by the Rossbrin Boatyard two years ago.

A long ballast keel with steel drop-plate makes her a very stable boat in rough seas and drawing only two and a half feet with the plate raised it is very easy to access sheltered anchorages that would not always be an option for deeper draught boats. For example, of the fifty five nights spent on board from mid-June to mid-September thirty three were at anchor, eighteen on moorings (my own or borrowed) and only four in marinas.

It obviously makes sense to own a boat that is compatible with the use one has in mind. Boats don't have to be a compromise. That particular cliché is often nothing more than an excuse by designers and builders for not giving the boating public what they are looking for, i.e. good-looking, safe and seaworthy craft. Now retired, I wanted a boat in which I could repeat my cruises done in *Sea Maiden* – Round Ireland, West Coast of Scotland, Wales and England South Coast, Channel Islands and North Brittany – and maybe carrying on further south. But this time doing it in a more leisurely fashion, creeping into sheltered anchorages and up creeks where only shallow draught boats can easily go, and most important of all to do it under sail only – well at least 90% of the time!

The decision to change from

Bermudan to gaff was admittedly due partly to the romantic notion that I think most sailors entertain at some time or other, but was also greatly influenced by the impressive arguments made for gaff as a cruising rig by Charles Stock (of *Shoal Waters* fame) in his book "Sailing Just for Fun", and of course by Tom Cunliffe whose publication "Hand, Reef and Steer" greatly assisted in unraveling the apparent mysteries of what initially seemed to be a very complicated set-up. At only 24 feet LOD, with a 5-foot bowsprit, and without the need for running backstays, *Seoidín* is in fact straightforward enough for single and shorthanded sailing.

The early part of the year slipped by quickly organising *Sea Maiden* for handover and delivery to Lough Derg, researching the Mark I Cornish Crabber with the help of the Owners Association and inspecting examples in Plymouth and Chichester harbour. But none compared with the boat my son Ian and I had first seen in Rossbrin in the previous December,



*Seoidín* exiting Gascanane Sound with Cape Clear in the background.

and as soon as its price came into line with what it would cost to buy in the UK the deal was done. About fifteen days work (spread over five weeks) in the shed in the friendly Rossbrin Boatyard saw the exterior timber and spars revarnished and the interior cleaned and painted. New unused upholstery came with the boat. The boatyard manager, Donie Twomey and mechanic Stephen overhauled the 24 year old Yanmar 8HP diesel with integral 6 litre capacity tank sitting on top, updated the electrics and replaced the lifting keel bolt and cable. So she was in very good order when launched on the 15th June.

The plan was to initially do a four week shake-down cruise around West Cork getting used to the boat and gaff rig, and not straying too far from Rossbrin in case further jobs were found necessary. During that period the weather was quite bad so a lot of time was spent sheltering in Schull, Church Strand Bay in Baltimore and at anchor or on Richard Collin's (owner of Jolly Roger pub) mooring at Sherkin Island. Not that I minded as the walking was good on that beautiful part of the coast and the socialising equally so in the evenings. I met a lot of old cruising friends including Arthur Bingham from Carlingford in his Moody 39 *Aloha II* whom I last saw in Penzance a year ago and Paddy Horan in his Oyster 35 *Doran Glas* en route to France. And I received some great hospitality from Garoid and Orla Flanagan, and baby daughter Laoise, aboard their catamaran *Cheetah*. It was nice to see them afloat again, following a few year's break on completion of their three-year circumnavigation in their Freedom 30 *Saoirse*.

But there was also some good weather during which I learned a lot about *Seoidín* and her ways, criss-crossing between Schull, Baltimore, Cape Clear and Sherkin Islands. On his return from the Round Ireland race aboard *Imp*, my son Ian visited to review the new boat and for some serious sailing trials. Having spent the previous eight years aboard *Moonduster* he had developed very high standards regarding a boat's appearance and performance. Suffice to say he was well pleased with *Seoidín*, including her speed and relatively good pointing ability. An objective assessment? Or had he too fallen for her many other favourable attributes and nautical charms!

On 15th July we slipped out of Baltimore in a NW Force 1 bound for Crosshaven but with planned stopovers in Glandore, Courtmacsherry and Kinsale. The idea was to delay arriving in Crosshaven until the end of Ford Cork Week. *Seoidín* quickly proved her worth as a light off-the-wind boat doing three knots with the mainsail and large foresail. In similar conditions I would have been motor-sailing in *Sea Maiden*. When the wind changed to W Force 2 – 3 she romped along at four and a half knots all the way to the visitors moorings in Glandore. Three



Party aboard *Seoidín* in R.C.Y.C. marina.

days later a brisk sail around Galley Head in a fresh northerly brought us quickly to Seven Heads from where we motor-sailed under reefed mainsail deep into Courtmacsherry Bay, and then carefully up the Channel to the anchorage. Arriving a little earlier than planned at LW, and with some of the Channel perches missing, I appreciated the benefits of *Seoidín's* shallow draught.

Next day was a tough one for boat and skipper, beating our way around the Old Head of Kinsale in a NE Force 5, gusting 6, and dodging the many sea-angling boats and a constant stream of spinnaker-flying Ford Cork Week yachts returning home or just going west for some restful cruising. It took a couple of long tacks to seaward before we finally got the right side of the Old Head. But we persevered and by the time we were north of the Bulman Cardinal mark the growing flood tide helped a lot. Taking down sail when Summer Cove came abeam I motored up the river to anchor about a hundred metres down from the bridge on the north shore. A combination of socialising, walking and bad weather kept me in Kinsale for four days before setting out on the last leg in a W Force 3 to Crosshaven where I introduced *Seoidín* to her mooring up the Owenboy River. It was then down to an overnight berth in the RCYC marina for a clean up of both skipper and boat in readiness for the arrival on the following day of the extended family for a welcome home and 65th (mine) birthday party on board *Seoidín*.

Lounging in the spacious cockpit on the following afternoon, happy to see the family again, basking in the admiring (for *Seoidín*) glances of passersby and grateful for the birthday present of a new rubber dinghy, I was indeed well pleased with life – and with *Seoidín* in particular. She admirably fits the bill for my type of cruising. She is many things (most of them good), but definitely not a compromise!

# Marie Claire circumnavigates a wet and windy Ireland

Sean McCormack

Having completed 90% of a round Ireland cruise on a friend's Ruffian 25 years ago, the idea of doing a round Ireland cruise on my own boat became an ambition in recent years.

The crew for the trip were John Ahern, Gordon Knaggs and Vincent Dromey. My wife Mary was to join us for a week on the west coast.

We departed Howth at 18.00 hours on Friday 14th June 2002, bound north in a fresh S.W. wind. We had great sailing with the wind occasionally going a little light and with some heavy showers. We saw quite a few fishing trawlers off Carlingford during the night. We continued briskly up the North Channel in cool sunshine and tied up in Rathlin Island harbour 23 hours and 50 minutes after leaving Howth, very satisfied with the northward leg of our voyage.

After a short walk ashore and checking out the local church and pub, we dined well on board. Gordon and I being tired took to our bunks, but John's energies were revived by rumours of craic agus ceoil. He had heard about a ceilidh that was taking place that night as part of the Éigse Festival and decided to participate, returning at 01.00 hours. From his report, it is clear that gaelic culture is just as alive and well in the glens of Antrim as it was in rural Ireland 50 years ago.

Next day, with a forecast of a force 8 – 9 gale, we opted to cross the Sound to the shelter of Ballycastle marina. We watched Spain defeat Ireland in World Cup soccer in the Marine Hotel and had dinner there that night to ease our disappointment. During the night and for the first part of Monday, the winds fully measured up to predictions, and we were happy to be in a secure harbour. However, continuing adverse weather was about to ensure that our progress westward would be difficult as we battled our way along the north coast.

On Monday morning, as we could not go to sea, we went for an 8 mile walk by the shore, in sometimes soggy conditions and rough terrain, along the shore to Fair Head and back to

Ballycastle by a circuitous land route. By the shore, we saw spoil from the old coalmines in the cliff face and the ruins of a ship loading facility. Nearby, a guillemot was teaching its chicks to forage underwater for food in the surging shore surf. Our discomfort and thirst were relieved on the way back by the discovery of a small country pub, marred only slightly by my sour pint of Guinness.

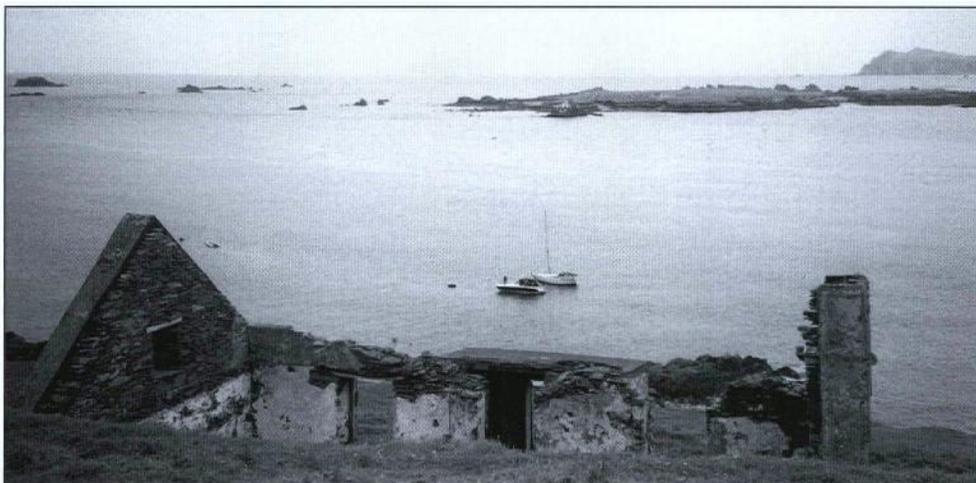
On Monday evening, with the wind now a fresh west 3-5, we sailed under Genoa only to Portrush Harbour, tying up outside another yacht on the north pier. We enjoyed a lovely meal in a very popular and busy Ramore Restaurant overlooking the harbour.

On Tuesday morning we set sail in very fresh conditions to get west. The Harbour Master in Portrush presumed we were planning to go no further than Culdaff. We encountered several salmon nets off the Foyle. In one incident, we were directed and escorted to the southern end of a net by a fisherman, who signified with a friendly wave that we were clear to proceed. However, we almost failed to notice, until nearly too late, that 50 yards further south was another buoy marking the northern end of another net. The owner of this one was not present and obviously not a pal of our false and fishy friend!

As we approached Inishtrahull the wind freshened and headed us for a while. The tide had now turned adverse and the going was tortuously slow but, thanks to the wind freeing us again, we got safely through Garvin Sound. After clearing Malin Head the seas were fairly big and confused and we had a few nasty crashes off waves. We were damp, exhausted, and very relieved when we picked up a visitor's mooring in Portsalon, Lough Swilly at 21.30 hours. After dinner on board, we retired.

Next day we had planned to go to Tory Island but this had to be aborted as we again met big seas and headwinds when we got out of the Lough. The search then began for a suitable anchorage and we ended up in Fanny Bay Anchorage, in Mulroy Bay. We picked up a slightly suspect mooring at 10.55 hours having briefly touched a muddy bottom. We enjoyed a late breakfast and did a general boat tidy up and relaxed for a few hours.

Later we decided to sail round to Downings in Sheephaven Bay for the night. We picked up a visitors mooring off the pier head. After dinner on *Marie Claire* we went ashore taking our rubbish, which we had to carry for nearly a mile, as there were no bins in the harbour area or nearby. This is obviously a popular resort with plenty of holiday homes, visitor accommodation and facilities, but we found it deserted and almost eerie. Away from the jostling



Marie Clare anchored off the Great Blasket Island.

Photo: Sean McCormack

crowd for sure, it was a town whose busiest pub had three customers. Thursday morning, the 20th June, sees the sun shining for a change and we are on our way to Tory Island. At Horn Head we try, unsuccessfully, to catch our lunch in the form of some mackerel. The new harbour in Tory is a fine facility and the newly-installed leading day marks stand out very clearly in line 005°.

We got help to tie up and were made to feel most welcome. We bought some provisions in the local small unmarked shop, which is due to move soon to a new location nearby. We had the most unusual and welcome experience of hearing 5 corncrakes at the same time as we walked part of the treeless island and admired the dramatic cliff scenery.

Two days before departure from Howth, John had a small cyst removed from his forehead and the resulting stitches were due to be taken out today. Gordon and I had earlier in the day declined the suggestion from John that we might put on our

white coats and do the job. I knew there was a nurse on the island but, as luck would have it, Dr. Jimmy Brogan was in the clinic, having just come in by helicopter on his fortnightly visit. He was very interested in our trip and, after removing his stitches, gave John his prescription for guaranteed healing – plenty of fresh air and antiseptic salt water spray, which was certainly not going to be a problem. Also, he was instructed to have the “titanic” fish platter in the Lobster Pot when we reached Burtonport. Before leaving, we had a pint in the local hotel but decided against lunch after seeing the outrageously priced lunch menu.

We reluctantly left Tory and beat our way south in freshening head winds and rain, arriving in a miserable Aran Island at 19.45 hours. We found a welcome visitor’s mooring south of Calf Island in Aran Road on the east side of Aran. We enjoyed dinner on board and, due to the wet conditions, did not go ashore.



## **Autumn Shannon Rally**

**Lough Derg – 17 - 20 October 2002**

*From a cruise starting at Ardnacrusha  
Says him to herself, “Ah mo cushla”  
Lough Derg is so cold  
There’s no chance to be bold  
I wonder how they do it in Russia*

Composed by Brian Lynch and crew

Next morning it was still raining but with the oilies donned we explored ashore and had a coffee in a sleepy and just-opening-for-the-day Glen Bay Hotel. We were very surprised at the large number of cars on the road but failed to see any livestock on the rather poor land.

At lunchtime we made the short but navigationally demanding trip over to Burtonport for diesel, water and provisions. Two coachloads of schoolgoers awaited the ferry, bound for a stint of fun and teen romance 'as gaeilge' in Aran's Irish college. The harbourmaster told us that work is about to commence on improving the harbour. We lunched in the Lobster Pot and John requested his titanic dish, in compliance with doctor's orders. This elicited a size warning from the friendly young waiter. An enormous platter arrived, loaded with mixed salad and every conceivable kind of local shell and game fish. Gordon and I, after having our much more modest fish of the day dish, had to help John to clear his extravagant plate, which we managed with relish.

We left Burtonport at 16.50 hours for the long trip across Donegal Bay to Frenchport on the Mullet Peninsula. For a time we had sunshine with very little wind and we were motoring in pleasant conditions. During the night, however, the wind increased and headed us and progress was slow. We were looking at Eagle Island for a long time. While beating across Donegal Bay, John went forward to secure the anchor locker hatch, which had been thrown open by the pitching of the boat. His waterproof watch failed the test when a couple of big waves broke over him. Had we not made arrangements to meet Vincent in Frenchport, it would have been much easier to go into Broad Haven. In the end the wind veered west as forecast and we arrived into an empty Frenchport at 17.40 hours. We logged 105.8 miles for a rhumb line distance of approximately 75 miles.

Vincent, who was driven from Dublin by his wife, Patricia, joined us in Frenchport. We enjoyed an excellent dinner in the recommended and very scenically-located Belmullet Golf Club in Carne.

On returning to our dinghy at the new pier, near L.W., it was rather difficult to get launched over the weed-covered stone beach. Our experience was that the slip probably dries at every ebb, and not just at L.W. springs, as indicated in the pilot.

On Sunday morning, after leaving Patricia ashore to drive back to Dublin, we set off for Inishbofin. After a while, the wind freed us and we had great sailing as we passed the Inishkeas with improving visibility. The highest cliffs in Ireland on the north face of CroAghann Mountain, Achill, looked awesome as we sailed past. We had great views of all the islands, with Croagh Patrick and the Twelve Bens majestic in



Main Street, Tory Island.

Photo: Sean McCormack

the afternoon sun, while Clare Island beckoned but alas, visiting time was up.

After anchoring near a smaller yacht in Bofin Harbour, we had dinner on board and then walked part of the island before visiting Day's pub. Their old hotel building is being gradually demolished to make way for a new hotel, and the roof timbers were donated that evening to fuel a bonfire for St. John's night. Due to the spring tide, we had to carry the dinghy out from the old quay and even then it was very stony and unsatisfactory. Next day, we discovered that the best place to land by dinghy, if near L.W., is on the shingle beach between the new pier and the church.

When we got back to *Marie Claire* we found that she was aground with a fair list, which corrected itself as we enjoyed a nightcap on board. We intended to re-anchor in the morning but, at about 03.00 hours, while answering a call of nature, I discovered that we were dragging. With "all hands on deck" we moved further west to where we should have anchored in the first place, before eagerly returning to our bunks.

Next morning, we walked to East End Village where the restaurant mentioned in the pilot was closed now for some time. After getting provisions, we had a coffee in Day's and Brendan Day filled us in on present-day life on the island. A century ago the island population it was nearer 1,000 but today is only about 200. During our walks ashore it was sad to see so many rusting old cars and abandoned gear of all sorts.

Leaving Inishbofin we sailed through the Sound between High and Friar Islands on our way to



New harbour, Tory Island.

Photo: Sean McCormack

Slyne Head and Roundstone. We had a great off the wind sail to Slyne Head and then a dead run on a surging swell into Roundstone. We anchored off the harbour mouth, as the visitors' moorings are a long way out. We dined well in O'Dowd's Seafood Bar.

The next morning ashore we completed various chores, including much-needed showers in the Eldon Hotel. There were plenty of visitors in this bustling tourist venue. The plans for a new marina for Roundstone were shown to locals the previous evening. Such a development would be a great convenience on an exposed coast with the minimum of facilities for cruising yachts.

We had lunch on board and left for Kilronan where we picked up a visitor's mooring at 19.15 hours. We dined on board this evening. Later ashore, with all the day-trippers gone, we found things very quiet with the pubs all dead, except one near the harbour, which was obviously doing most of the business.

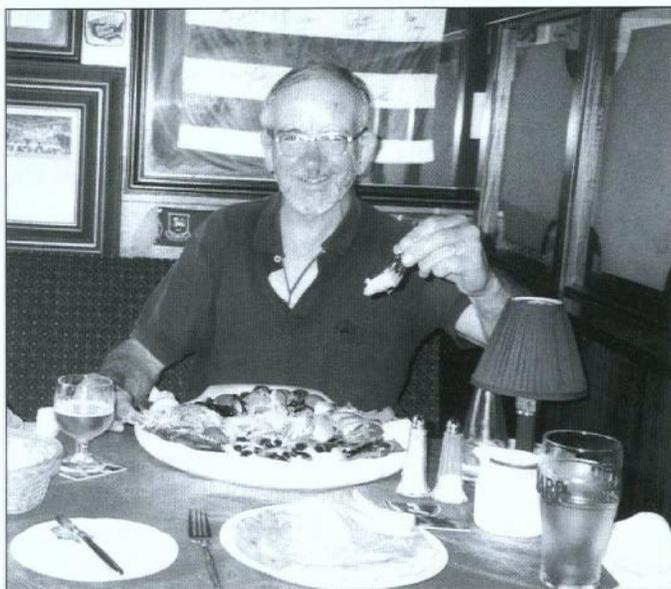
Next morning is damp and misty and Gordon takes the Galway ferry to return to Dublin. No one feels like hiring a bike and cycling up to see Dun Aengus in the fog. Vincent spends time ashore while John and I look after a few jobs on *Marie Claire*. This weather is getting me down. My wife Mary, very wisely, decides that she is not going to swap her dry warm bed for a damp sleeping bag and wet boat on a miserable west coast of Ireland. In the early afternoon, however, the sun appeared and with a good wind it was time to get out some much-needed washing, which we got reasonably dry by evening.

We had a good view of Dun Aengus as we sailed through Gregory Sound late evening for an overnight passage to Dingle. The wind was now N.W. 5/6 with the prospect of a fast and enjoyable leg to Dingle. With a reef in the main and a few rolls on the Genoa we romped along. We caught the start of a favourable tide through Blasket Sound and then we tried some fishing between Sleah Head and Ventry Harbour. This produced just 3 pollock and 1 mackerel. "Fungie" greeted us as we entered Dingle Harbour and I noticed that the number of tourist launches has decreased considerably since I was last here in 1998.

We berthed in the marina and Vincent cooked some of the fish in the oven for brunch at 13.00 hours. This was preceded by a hot whiskey, believe it or not, as the day was cold.

The plan was to dine out in Dingle that night and Vincent was despatched to make a booking. However, John disappeared into the town and soon informed Vincent by mobile phone that he had an alternative plan up his sleeve. All we were told was that we would be picked up by car at 20.00 hours.

Lisbeth's car duly arrived and after some polite and general conversation, we discovered that she was the wife of Louis



John's titanic platter in Burtonport.

*Photo: Sean McCormack*

Mulcahy, ex R.T.E. cameraman, who now has his own upmarket and very successful pottery business, Potadoireacht na Caoloige, out between Dunquin and Ballyferriter. Louis is an old school pal of John's. We met him at their beautiful home beside the business and he took us on a necessarily rushed tour of the pottery and showrooms. He employs 50 people in total and exports to many countries. He also has a small shop in Dawson St. in Dublin. Lisbeth is Danish, a talented weaver, and a fluent Irish speaker. With her own very successful craft and giftware shop in the centre of Dingle, she is well known in Irish craft and small industry circles.

We had an excellent dinner in Gorman's, Glaise Bheag, Ballydavid overlooking Blasket Sound. Louis gave us a guided tour of the area, including Brandon Creek. The following morning I learned that after leaving us back to the marina in Dingle, he worked in the pottery until 04.00 hours. What a man!

Friday 28th sees us heading out of Dingle to fulfil a long-held ambition of visiting the Great Blasket Island. We anchored at the N.E. corner and had no difficulty in getting ashore. We were fortunate that this was one of the best days weatherwise of our cruise.

The Great Blasket is the largest of 4 larger islands that make up the group. This island, with an extraordinary history, was inhabited up to the 1950's. From a very small population it produced 3 well known authors, namely Peig Sayers, Muiris Ó Súilleabháin and Tomás Ó Criomhthain.

We walked a few miles of the island and enjoyed the spectacular scenery and had a late evening swim on the beautiful white deserted beach. The ruined cottages of the deserted village evoke strong impressions of a bygone age, their kitchens roomy enough "to dance a set or wake a corpse". A couple of the houses are now renovated for summer use and it is now possible to have a coffee in one of these.

In the late evening, we motor sail in light airs to Knightstown on Valentia. We secured to one of the six visitor moorings provided and



Visiting doctor's helicopter, Tory Island.

*Photo: Sean McCormack*

had dinner on board. After listening to the 23.55 hour shipping forecast, we went ashore for a quick look around. At that hour it was quiet and we had a drink in the nearest pub/hotel. The imposing clock tower is the centrepiece of a colourful village on an island that has changed, for the better, since being connected to the mainland by a road bridge. The locals were friendly but one felt a long way from the political mood of Ballycastle or Portrush.

The next morning we got away at 08.00 hours in wet miserable conditions and head winds. Later in the morning visibility closed in and only lifted slightly to allow us into Derrynane Harbour for a lunch stop.

Away in the afternoon in improving conditions and we had brilliant sailing going through Dursey Sound and all the way to the small marina at Lawrence Cove on Bere Island. Dinner on board this evening and a visit to the village pub, to check out the beer, rounded off a busy and fruitful day.

Next morning we were away early to avail of the tide and I was concerned because the forecast was for southerly gales and we had to get round Mizzen Head and into Schull as John had arranged a meeting of all his local relations. Without this deadline I would have stayed in port given the forecast.

It was hard on the wind across Bantry Bay to fetch Sheep's Head, but crossing Dunmanus Bay the wind freed us a bit and we had a fast and brilliant sail in dull conditions around Mizzen Head, through Man of War Sound and up Long Island Sound and into Schull. The wind never went over force 6. As we entered Schull Harbour we were welcomed by John's cousin, Greg, who flashed his car lights in welcome from his holiday home overlooking the harbour. We picked up the second last vacant visitor's mooring.

After lunch on board and a rest we were met by Greg Ahern who took us first to the holiday home of his sister, Susan Traynor, where we met John's uncle Gus, his wife Claire and several of their very sociable extended family. Back at Greg's house his wife Ellemarie treated us to a nourishing dinner. We were taken on a tour of the local area by car and later on that wet night had an enjoyable few hours in a busy local hostelry.

The next morning we took *Marie Claire* alongside the pier to facilitate provisioning. With this completed and a farewell coffee on board with Greg and his wife, we departed for the short trip to Cape Clear's North Harbour. I knew before leaving that it was very fresh outside and had a number 3 jib in place. Outside the harbour there was a dramatic increase to force 7 W necessitating another reef in the main. We weathered Calf Island west and my concern was the narrow, rocky entrance to North Harbour. I was in here a number of times before but in these conditions I was aware that it might be too risky. As it turned out, there was no problem with the entrance and inside was perfect peace as we tied to the pier ahead of the ferry berth. Ashore we walked to South Harbour and later checked out both island pubs.

Tuesday 2nd July sees us away early to avail of a favourable NW force 4 wind. We had a fast sail to Kinsale, averaging 6.5 knots. I was sorry to be passing so many of my favourite anchorages but the deadline of Monday work was now beginning to compress our plans. We encountered 2 salmon nets on the approach to Kinsale. Kinsale marina was overcrowded with yachts held

up for days because of westerly winds. The weather had now gone downhill again with wet miserable conditions. That evening we dined in Jim Edwards' and later met a local friend by arrangement for a drink in the Yacht Club.

The next day we had another very fast sail to Kilmore Quay. We had the usual salmon nets off Ballycotton and took mild abuse from a net owner for not hearing him call us on channel 16. After he guided us to the end of his net, I asked him if we were now clear ahead. He told us to go in shore as far as the Red Can Smiths buoy and then we would be O.K. A little later I realised we were given a bum steer. We tied up in handy Kilmore Quay marina at 21.45 hours. On the approach we failed to pick out Ballyteige Castle for the day mark transit. I suggest that the very visible village church should be substituted.

Thursday morning 10.45 hours sees us underway with Arklow the destination. With plenty of water over Patrick's Bridge and light winds, we had an easy reach to Carnsore Point, which is now visible for miles, thanks to the new very prominent wind farm generators. No doubt these landmarks will also soon become a feature of the Arklow Bank. Hopefully, they will provide extra navigation references to make this area safer for shipping. Fresher winds give us a fast downwind sail all the way to Arklow. It was raining heavily again by the time we got into Arklow marina but we were very pleased with our fast leg from Kilmore Quay.

John's wife Emily collected us by car and we had dinner in Kitty's. The next day the Aherns collected us and we drove to their new holiday home just outside Wicklow. Our wives joined Vincent and me and a good night was had by all. John showed slides of a sailing holiday we did together in the Caribbean a few years ago and then entertained us on his guitar. We retired to the luxury of a steady dry bed.

The next day, Saturday 6th July, saw us complete the final leg to Howth marina, arriving at 19.25 hours.

Writing this some weeks later, the parts that stand out in my mind were the wet and miserable conditions on many days. On the other hand, we had some excellent and fast sailing with very high average passage times on the 927 mile circumnavigation. The time spent motoring or motor sailing was way less than on any of my previous trips. The scenery of the west coast was quite dramatic when we could see it. We dined very well both on board and ashore and did our share in supporting the liquor industry. Above all I had an excellent crew and good company for the 22 days. Thanks to everyone and the wives at home.



Overlooking Roundstone Harbour. L to R: Sean, Gordon, Vincent, John.

# Journey to St. Kilda

Andy McCarter

Islands have always fascinated me and over the years I have come to appreciate that one of the benefits of yacht ownership is to command the means to visit Islands which have long since dropped off the route maps of normal transport services if in fact they were ever there to start with. Whether it is in the Caribbean or the northwest coast of Donegal the thrill of stepping ashore on a remote and tiny atoll is to experience a feeling of travelling back in time to when these places were inhabited whether for reasons of security, banishment or just plain masochism. To wander through the tiny fields the derelict houses and imagine 100 years ago families going about their daily tasks in almost complete isolation from the outside world is a pastime that never becomes monotonous for me.

On a wet and miserable storm bound day in Westport I picked up a book entitled *St. Kilda – Island on the edge of the world* by Charles Maclean and read “For more than 2,000 years the people of St. Kilda remained remote from the world. Its society was viable, even Utopian; but in the 19th century the island was discovered by missionaries, do-gooders and tourists, who brought money, disease and despotism. St. Kildan culture gradually disintegrated and in 1930 the few remaining islanders asked to be evacuated.” This little book was as compelling as any Frederick Forsyth might have written and I didn’t put it down until every page was read and the storm clouds lifted in Carnamoney bay.

I decided that day that I had to get to St. Kilda but it was three years later before this promise was to be fulfilled and then as a result of a chance meeting with Tom Gallagher at a lecture in the verbal arts centre in Derry in early 2002 given by Frank Nugent on the heroic efforts of the modern day crew of *Northabout* to find the North West Passage. I knew Tom by reputation as a wily sailor who had made a number of charter boat (he was a strong believer in the old adage “If you can drive it, sail it, fly it or f\*\*\* it... Rent it!!) voyages to the Hebrides. In the course of conversation I asked him if he had any cruising plans for the coming season and he told me he thought his cruising days were over but that his biggest regret was that despite two attempts he had never managed to get to St. Kilda. I confessed my deep-seated desire to make that trip also and the seeds were sewn.

Thus on 31st May when it became apparent that I was free for 10 days in June I made the call to Tom and the plans were firmed up with a departure set for Saturday June 8th out of Rathmullan at 05.30hrs. The crew was to be Tom, Merv Hutton my cousin and retired Texaco super-

tanker skipper now running an excellent B&B in Ramelton County Donegal and Paddy a wonderful woman and my partner in sailing as well as the rest of my life. Regrettably Merv had to cry off at the last minute as he was called away to the US to do a ship inspection and the money was to good to turn it down!

We dined ashore on the Friday night in An Bonnán Buí where the John Dory is cooked Brazilian style and washed down with Argentinian merlot. We barely made it back to the pontoon in time for our departure. Dawn was breaking and the wind was SW 3-4 as we ran down the Swilly next stop St. Kilda showing 169nm to run on the GPS. Alas disaster struck before we had even passed Dunree when yours truly went below and smelling diesel proceeded to tighten up some pipe work at the injectors and succeeded in shearing the leak-off pipe on the Volvo MD2030.

After much cursing and gnashing of teeth brains were racked extensively but the conclusion was reached that by the nature of this particular piece of pipe work there was no way to jury-rig it and the prospect of touring the Outer Hebrides without an engine for 10 days was unacceptable so at 08.00hrs we turned around and sailed back to Rathmullan with Tom absolutely crest-fallen and lamenting that as far as St. Kilda was concerned this was his third unsuccessful attempt and he was a Jonah.

However Paddy lifted our spirits with food and drink and we spent the weekend on the pontoon until I was able to order the replacement pipe from Derek Craig in Belfast first thing Monday morning and with their usual excellent service it was delivered the following day and after successful fitting the three musketeers once more set out for St. Kilda on Tuesday evening at 20.30hrs just as Lough Swilly Yacht Club were finishing



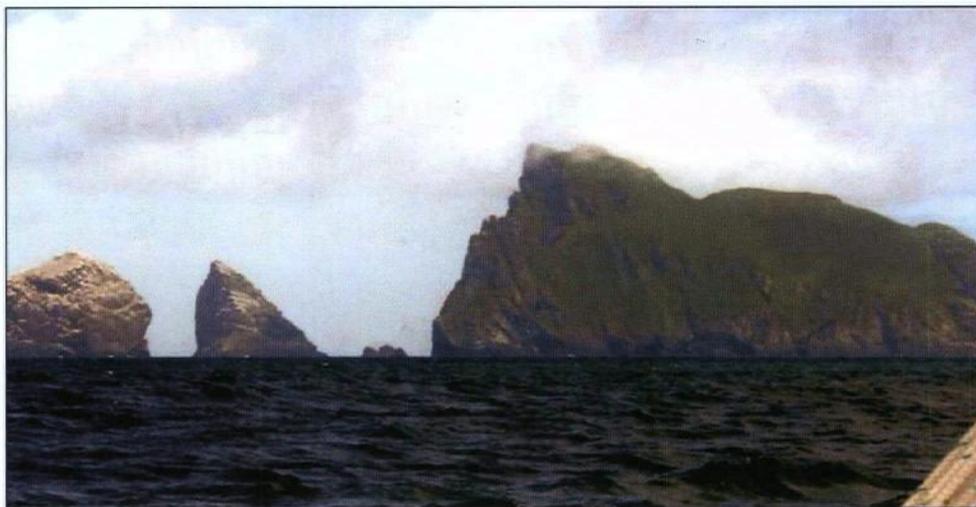
*Gwili 3* at anchor in Village Bay.

their first summer series race in a balmy SW force 5 with a forecast that said increasing 5-6 occasionally 7 later.

*Gwili 3*, a Sadler Starlight 35 is a very comfortable sea boat easily managed by 3 people and with the wind on our beam we almost sprinted out of the Swilly and into the sunset towards the elusive St. Kilda. We dined on steak and onions around 23.00hrs and it was still sufficiently light that we saw a lone pilot whale about 50 metres from our port side as it gracefully arched out of the water heading up Lough Swilly. We called to Malin Head who have to be the most friendly and informal coast radio station in the whole world and reported our position and intention to make St. Kilda by Thursday morning. They asked who was on board and when would we back before wishing us a safe voyage and a request that we let Stornaway know when we arrived.

Tom and Paddy took the first watch and I tucked in to the aft bunk and slept soundly until it got light around 03.30hrs when I relieved the other two and started to get into passage mode with an hourly plot of our position and watching the miles go by on the chart and the GPS. I find these periods on sole watch in the very early morning so peaceful and very conducive to private thoughts that the time flies and I am almost always a little disappointed that the watch is over so quickly.

I lost Malin Head's VHF announcements around 06.00hrs by which time we were approximately 50 miles north of Fanad Head. I expected to pick up Stornaway for the weather as we came closer to Barra but for some reason this didn't happen and to add to the problem I experienced a black-out in my BBC Radio 4 reception also. The wind had picked up overnight and by midday we were about 20 nm to the west of Barra and an ETA at St. Kilda of around midnight. We were concerned at the lack of a weather forecast and not wanting to arrive in St. Kilda pitch dark in the teeth of a gale where shelter and holding are



Approaching Boreray with Tac Armin and Stac Lee to the west.

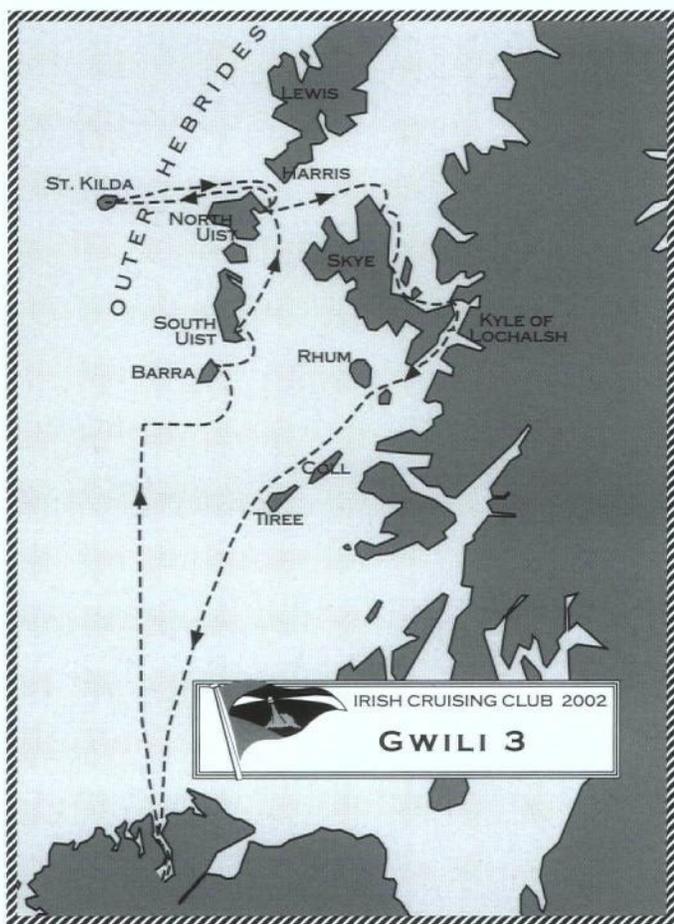
notoriously poor we decided to gybe and change course for Barra Head with the intention of making land fall at Castlebay where we could go ashore and pick up a forecast by phone or fax if necessary.

Did I mention the cold? It was hard to believe that the temperature could have dropped so much since we left the Swilly since we were barely a degree and a half further north but believe me I thought we were approaching the Arctic Circle! It was cold and wet and generally miserable with visibility down to a couple of miles at most. We slid past Berneray and Mingulay around 15.30hrs and turned in towards Castlebay trying with great difficulty to pick up Sgeir Liath and other marks described in Imray Guide to the Western Isles. Thank God for GPS which over the last 5 years I have come to love and respect as experience has continued to boost my confidence in this wonderful system. *Gwili 3* has a Raytheon 610 Chart plotter integrated with Autohelm 5000 pilot and ST80 instrumentation which works well 99% of the time but very occasionally throws a wobbler (true to Murphy's law of sailing this always happens at the worst possible moment when you need it most!) Just to be sure to be sure I have a back-up Garmin hand-held and another one to back-up the back-up (at approx €150 each would you be without them?).

I think my pilot must be a bit out of date as was my chart because there is now an additional starboard hand mark in place which makes entry to Castlebay harbour absolutely plain sailing. I hope I'm right in my belief that as they update charts and pilots they always add additional aids to Navigation and never remove anything or make radical changes. Castlebay is open to the south but with the shelter of Vatersay just across the bay there is little or no fetch and the anchorage is quite satisfactory. We thought to tuck in behind the Castle itself but changed our mind as there were several other fishing boats in there and it was a bit congested. There was a beautiful big mooring that was very tempting after our long sail and the miserable conditions



Tom and Paddy at the top of Main Street, St. Kilda.



but as it had RNLI in letters a foot high across it we decided to amble across to the other side of the pier where we picked up a Highlands and Islands visitor mooring. Still could not raise Stormaway on the VHF and once we were happy with our mooring the three of us retired to our bunks and slept soundly for a couple of hours.

At 19.00hrs the rain stopped, the sun came out, the crew showered and went ashore feeling a million dollars. We found the Craigard Hotel where the delightful receptionist faxed the met office and got us by return a 5 day forecast for Rockall, Malin and Hebrides which further improved our spirits by telling us we were in for light to moderate south-westerlies and mainly fair weather. We had a few pints to celebrate and on the way back to *Gwili 3* for dinner we finally made contact with Stormaway by payphone and were informed that the Barra area generally was given to poor VHF reception.

Thursday was a bright and pleasant sunny day with heat in the sun so that we were able to sail in ordinary clothes for the first time this season. We headed out around 10.00hrs in SW 4 and gently ran up the inside of Eriskay, South Uist and Benbecula toward Loch Maddy on North Uist with a stop in at Loch Boisdale where we anchored and ate lunch. The scenery in here is quite breath-taking, not dissimilar from parts of Donegal but noticeably much less signs of habitation. Obviously either the harsh winters or the planners or both have succeeded throughout the Hebrides in discouraging the ribbon development and holiday homes that are so evident even in remote parts of Ireland. We were treated after lunch to the sight of a buzzard hovering close by and just to the north side of our anchorage. We also heard a cuckoo quite distinctly. I know this probably isn't much of an occasion for most people but I've only heard one cuckoo in my life before and that was on Tory Island. Aside from the buzzard, the cuckoo and two orca whales which we sighted just off McKenzie Rock there was no sign of

any other life from we left Loch Boisdale until we arrived at Loch Maddy after a very pleasant 5 hour beam reach with a beautiful view of Skye out to the east of us. We went inside Ruigh Liath and were secure to a visitor mooring just south of the pier in time to watch the sun go down. Feeling satisfied with our day and warmed by good food and wine we managed a forecast from Stormaway which gave SE for the following day which clinched our decision to head for St. Kilda via the Sound of Harris.

The Sound is one of those places that from the chart and reading the pilot looks horrendous only to be contemplated under the influence of alcohol late at night but in reality in suitable weather it is a doddle and easily navigated when you're actually there. There are three marked channels and we elected to traverse via Cope Passage. It was well marked from entrance at the east side through to the sandbar on the west where we took a line from the last red port marker to Capay Island then bearing away onto 280 deg for St. Kilda after clearing Shilay. It was approximately half-tide and we never saw less than 11 feet under our keel which gave me confidence for success on our return journey. As we left the Sound at 13.30hrs with 44nm to run the weather closed in with fairly light wind from the east and heavy rain which made for a pretty miserable journey. Tom took the helm and we furled our jenny and tried to keep him focused on not gybing with some success. Four hours later the wind began to veer to the south and strengthen until at 18.00hrs we were on a beat with two reefs in the main and the jenny half furled when we sighted Leverish and then Boreray out of the drizzle which gradually cleared as we approached our destination. A few miles off we were fortunate to be entertained by a sizable shoal of porpoises which came along side ducking and diving under the boat and playing with us until we entered Village Bay. We were so lucky with the weather (apart from the rain) which had provided a fair wind to get us almost all the way there and then at the appropriate moment had veered to the SW to give us shelter in Village Bay to anchor in relative comfort. According to the pilot there is always a swell here and that was our experience. It was somewhat uncomfortable as we found ourselves lying beam on to it and boats just aren't meant to rock that way. We ended up lifting the anchor and picking up a substantial mooring which was 50 metres off the little pier. We then were able to lay a stern anchor to the west and use this to keep *Gwili 3* with her nose into the swell which was a much more satisfactory arrangement. By this time it was almost 22.00hrs and while Tom and Paddy set to preparing dinner I went ashore in the Zodiac to see if I could locate Andy Robinson the warden who spends 6 months a year on the Island and whom I'd spoken to on the telephone a month earlier when planning our trip. I beat the swell at the pier and set foot on St. Kilda at the little pier making my way to The Factor's House where Andy has his office and accommodation but nobody in! I doubled back to the prefabs which had been built by the British Army back in the 60s to facilitate a radar tracking station for the missile base on Benbecula. These are absolutely hideous and a blot on an otherwise idyllic landscape, the style of architecture being akin to the outposts which used to be scattered along our borders in N.Ireland. I detected life in one of the buildings and on approaching the door could see lights and hear music and voices. After the long voyage I was certain that my ears were playing tricks as I even thought I heard the clinking of glasses. I opened the door to find myself confronted by about 40 people all thronging about drinking, playing pool, watching the TV. When the door opened all noise stopped and every head turned towards the stranger in the doorway. 40 minds thought "Where the \*\*\*\* did you come from?" Seizing the moment I proclaimed "I'm here to claim this for Ireland!" Well that broke the ice and after being informed that I was too late the Scots had got there

first I was welcomed with open arms and treated to a few cans in the comfy surroundings of the "Puff-Inn" which it turns out is as close to a pub as St. Kilda has ever had or is likely to get. The clientele were a mixture of half a dozen employees of the radar base which is now operated the year round by a private company and Scottish National Trust Volunteers who pay for the privilege of spending two weeks at a time on the Island under the supervision of Andy and Susan who is the archaeological warden (and believe me no fossil herself) renovating the deserted cottages and surveying the site for artefacts and information on a civilisation which dates back as far as or possibly further than any other on these Islands of ours.

It was all I could do to extract myself from the craic at the Puff-Inn but I knew I would catch hell from Tom and Paddy if I left them afloat so back I went with the promise that we would be back although I have to confess that with the day that was in it and beautiful dinner and a few bottles of wine back on board we weren't fit to return until the following day well rested.

It turned out to be a wise decision as the next morning the sky was blue, the sun was warm and the wind was light. It was an ideal day to do our sight-seeing which commenced with finally meeting Andy Robinson who formally welcomed us to St. Kilda and gave us permission to have a look round. It did not disappoint and I commend it to all those with similar interests to our own. The people who lived here were surely hardy souls. They hacked out an existence from an extremely hostile environment but it is fascinating to view the cottages strewn along the main street and try to picture what life was like here a hundred years ago in the depths of winter. The Trust has converted one of the houses into a mini museum where it is worth spending an hour to get a flavour of St. Kilda life and culture. Three other houses serve as accommodation for the summer volunteers and then there's "the wee free Presbyterian church" with school attached complete with slates and inkwells. We saw the shaggy Soay sheep and the St. Kilda wren flitting about between the stone walls and the plethora of cleits built as storage huts and scattered everywhere about the Island. There is a relatively modern anti-aircraft gun overlooking Village Bay. Apparently a German U-Boat surfaced in the Bay in 1915 and proceeded to shoot-up the Island. The Islanders made contact with the War Department to ask for a means of protection and were successful in getting this gun deployed in 1919... a year after the war had ended. Some things never change!

Then a strange thing happened. From total tranquillity with *Gwili 3* being the only sign of life in the Bay there arrived the *Poplar Diver* from Oban bringing new crews and supplies to relieve the Trust volunteers. Then two yachts appeared with more visitors for the Island and to crown it all a helicopter with supplies for the radar base landed. We decided it was time to bid farewell to Piccadilly Circus! We found Andy and Susan and presented them with a Lough Swilly Yacht Club plaque (I didn't have an ICC one!) and a bottle of Connemara Irish Whiskey to show them what real whiskey tastes like.

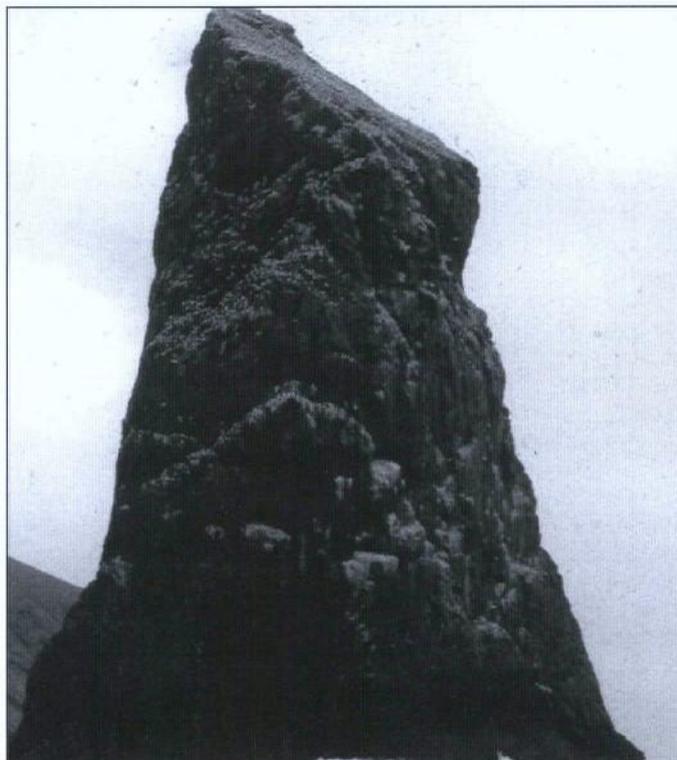
But it wasn't all over yet as we left Village Bay and its noisy commotion the weather was so perfect we decided after circumnavigating St. Kilda and Soay to head for Boreray that largest gannetry in the world (our own Little Skellig is apparently the second and as these mighty hunters are reputed to fly up to a thousand miles in search of food I wonder if the Boreray gannets and the Skellig gannets visit each other much). Stac Armin and Stac Lee were awesome towering above us out of the water and alive with gannets. The St. Kildans used to come across here and climb these in the spring time to collect gannet eggs and are reputed over the years to have grown prehensile toes (like fingers so I'm told). When I looked at the Stacs I couldn't help but think I would need more than

prehensile toes to hold on up there... they were indeed mighty men!

We headed back to Harris around 14.00hrs in a balmy force 4 wind from the south giving us a reach all the way back and through the Sound of Harris at which point we downed the sails and turned the corner back once more into the calm and relative security of Lough Maddy. This time all visitor moorings were occupied so we anchored... a mite close to the reef as it transpired since we were woken by a bit of a thump in the middle of the night and had to get up and move to a deeper spot.

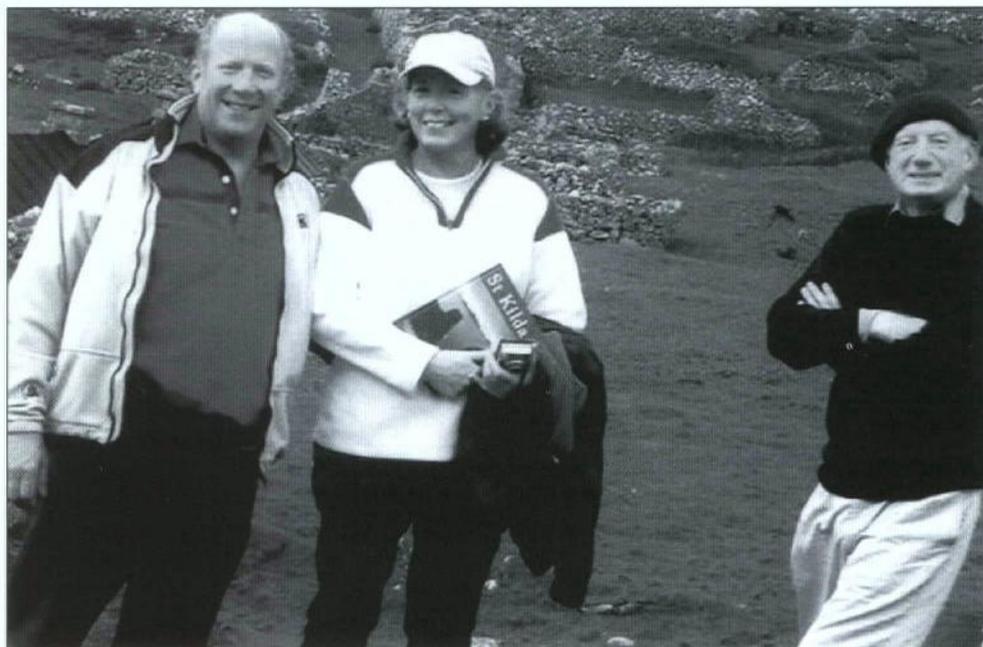
Sunday was an unforgettable day, not because of the weather or the magnificent scenery but because it was the day when Ireland were so unjustly knocked out of the World Cup by Spain! We dallied in Lough Maddy and went ashore to watch the match in the local hotel. It was a sullen crew that returned to *Gwili 3* to set sail for Portree in Skye at 16.00hrs. In our excitement at the match and our subsequent depression at the result we failed to get a weather forecast otherwise we would not have left our mooring. It was a glorious evening in June with a flat sea and not a breath of air as we crossed the Minch from Harris to Skye and difficult to describe the beauty of this part of the world. It is also difficult to describe our shock when at 21.00hrs just off the northern extremity of Skye we picked up a repeat of a gale warning from Stornaway giving S/SW winds force 9-10 imminent... IMMIDENT. As it sunk in this word struck terror into our hearts. Although it was still dead calm we were about two hours from Portree and after consulting the chart we decided to go into Staffan Bay which was 15 minutes away and appeared to be well sheltered from the south and west. In we went and anchored in the southeast corner of the bay at the mouth of a burn. At 01.00hrs we got a fresh forecast this time giving Violent Storm 11 for sea area Hebrides. What could we do? We had another glass of wine, let out some more anchor chain and settled in for the night expecting the worst.

The wind didn't start to get up until the next morning around 08.00hrs. Then it picked up very fast until at noon we were in force 9 with occasional gusts of 10. The anchorage



Stac Lee gannet heaven.

proved good as we were in a relatively calm water although all round us we could see the spray and the spume flying. We removed the spray hood and reduced and secured the mainsail stac-pak to give less windage and sat tight listening to the roaring howl of the wind. Then we had our only crisis. We had gone below for a bite of lunch and 15 minutes later I popped my head up through the hatch to find that we had dragged the anchor and were heading at quite a lick backwards in deep water towards the mouth of the bay. All hands were on deck in a flash and Tom and Paddy struggled to lift the anchor while I started the engine and attempted to get under way against the fierce wind with considerable difficulty. The boat actually broached and I found myself having to run down wind



The skipper and crew of *Gwili 3* claim St. Kilda for Ireland.

for a bit to get enough way to turn her head once more back into the wind. This was a harrowing experience for all of us and it took the best part of two very tiring hours to get back to the anchorage where we went as far into the shore as we dared before dropping the anchor again and letting out maximum chain to find with immense relief that we dug in and were holding fast. We took it in turns from that point on to keep watch in case we dragged again but through the night and the next morning as the wind continued to howl around us we mercifully held fast. I had time to analyse our situation during those several trying hours and concluded that we were not properly prepared for this situation. We had a main anchor which is a 40lb CQR with 40 metres of  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch chain. We also carried a kedge anchor which is a fairly heavy Danforth but with no chain for the kedge it became obvious to me that had we lost our main anchor or broken the chain then the kedge with only rope to hold it would have been next to useless. (On our return from this trip I added a further 20 metres of  $\frac{5}{8}$  inch chain to our main anchor and purchased a 30 metre length of  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch chain for the Danforth.)

The following day the weather forecast went down to F10 and then to F9. Eventually Stornaway announced F8 and to us this now seemed like relative calm so I cajoled the crew into upping anchor and heading south to Portree. When we got outside the shelter of Staffan Bay we found that it was indeed blowing gale 8 with the odd 9 gust but the sea was relatively flat in the lee of Skye and with 3 reefs and our small jib we proceeded to beat the 12 miles down to Portree. Some of us found this sail exhilarating while others found different words to describe it. Tom, the master of the one-liners confided to Paddy that he thought the skipper "had loads of balls but no brains".

In any event early that evening we were snug and secure in Portree on a visitors mooring and feeling much better about the whole experience. In retrospect because the sun shone throughout it didn't seem so bad. I think when it's a dark sky combined with high wind everything seems so much worse.

This was to be our last night together as Tom and Paddy were under pressure to get back home and the storm had delayed our planned return via *Gwili 3*. There is a small airport at Broadford on Skye and we had arranged for a replacement crew of my son Sean and nephew Austin to fly there from City of Derry airport in a twin engined Cessna which then was to

take Tom and Paddy home. We dined together on board and had a very pleasant evening as we reminisced about our experiences together over the previous week. The next morning the storm was gone and sunshine once more reigned. We cast off and went in alongside a fishing boat at the pier where we filled up with water and diesel for the journey home. Interestingly we heard from the Portree life boat that a yacht had been wrecked during the storm off St. Kilda but that fortunately her crew of 3 had been safely lifted off by helicopter... as the song says "What a difference a day makes".

We bade our fond farewells and Tom and Paddy set off in a taxi for Broadford while I hopped up the town and bought a few provisions for the trip home.

Sean and Austin arrived back in the same taxi an hour later and we set sail for the Kyles of Lochalsh and onto Armadale where owing to the lack of culinary competence on board we went ashore to eat in the hotel. Next morning the guy from Sleaf Marine came by to collect our mooring fee and in the course of conversation told me they had a couple of boats badly damaged in the storm when the charterers had left them tied up at the pontoons in Lochalsh and sought safety ashore.

Sean and Austin are not big into cruising yet and see themselves more as a delivery crew, so despite my best efforts to squeeze a few more days out of the trip with stops in the Small Isles, Tiree and Coll it was not to be. They wanted home by Friday for a night out on the town in the relative civilisation of Inishowen and so we sent off from Armadale at the crack of noon and made for Lough Swilly approximately 120 nm away. I agreed to this plan only on condition that I would get to bed at my normal time and get to sleep through the night and to be fair to the lads they kept their end of the bargain.

I woke at 09.00hrs on Friday morning to find it rainy and miserable but since the two boys were knackered I had no option but get up and relieve them. We were 25nm from Fanad head and doing about 6 knots under engine in a very light southerly wind.

Five hours later we were back on our mooring in Fahan Creek in the shelter and safety of Lough Swilly and very shortly afterward speeding ashore by Zodiac to the welcoming arms of Paddy and a hot bath and early night in our own soft bed at home.

# Treasures of the Aulne River and more of Brittany

Clive Martin

Having taken *Lindos* to Kilmore Quay for the ICC June Rally, I was delighted to receive an invitation from Bernard Corbally for my wife Mary and I to join his new Halberg Rassy 42 *Beowulf* for a cruise in Brittany. This was a very welcome invitation as, despite the many areas that I have cruised, I had never sailed in Brittany our nearest European cruising waters.

Ryanair and Buzz provided us with simple and cheap flights so that we could fly from Dublin to Brest via Stansted. We arrived on Friday evening 5th July and *Beowulf* was tied up on the southern end of the Moulin Blanc marina. That night we dined at La Petite Folie (tel. 02 98 42 44 42), a converted Breton fishing boat, which had been beached not far from the marina. We chose a variety of fish dishes, which we found to be excellent and to be highly recommended. It was a perfect introduction to the cuisine of the area.

On Saturday morning we visited Oceanopolis close to the marina. This huge aquarium housed a very well mounted exhibition of all matters to do with the sea. The couple of hours that we spent there was not enough for us to take in all that was to be seen.

We had to go into the centre of Brest to stock up with provisions for our cruise.

Brest was practically levelled to the ground during World War 11 but has been re-built in a very fine modern style. Countless marriages were taking place in the very splendid City Hall. We noticed that a civil marriage was booked that day for every ten minutes. One was a naval bridegroom in full naval uniform and his party looked splendid for their photographs in front of the magnificent water fountains.



Bastille Day, Benodet. Crew aboard *Beowulf*. L to r: Noo & Peter Wallis, Mary & Clive Martin, Bernard Corbally.

Shopping at the vast Le Clerc supermarket enabled us to stock up with provisions.

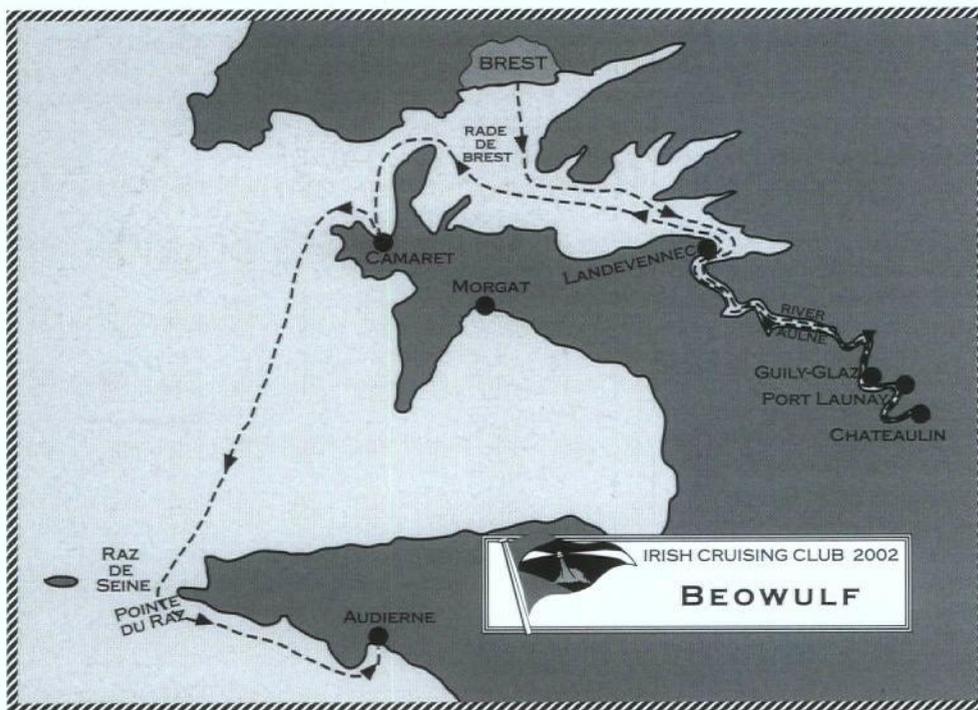
All manner of delicacies were heaped into our trolley, as our skipper proved to be a compulsive buyer. So many bags were packed at the check out that it was necessary to get a taxi back to our boat. Reader beware, as taxis are almost impossible to find in Brest, in the end we had to go into an hotel and ask reception to call one for us.

That evening Peter and Noo Wallis arrived to join us on board. Next morning Sunday 7th July we cast off from the Moulin Blanc marina at 0800 hrs. heading for the Aulne River. It was misty, wet with some fog patches, which meant poor visibility. The charts showed quite a narrow channel between shallow areas at the entrance to the Aulne River but as we approached it was easy to identify the navigation buoys. The visibility had improved considerably. After we had travelled some 15 miles from the marina at Brest we decided to drop an anchor in the area of Landevennec and wait for the tide. We only had charts of the river up to the Pont de Terenez, a bridge spanning the river with 27 meter clearance. *Beowulf* has a 21 meter mast. From there we would have a further 11 miles of the river waters to navigate without charts until we reached the lock at Guily-Glaz. The lock gates only opened one and a half hours before high water, so it was necessary for us to plan our trip on a rising tide so that there was sufficient water in the river and to time our arrival at Guily-Glaz when the lock gates would be open. We waited at anchor in the shelter of a small island before rounding a large bend in the river. When we moved on again under engine, rounding the bend we saw a number of naval hulks which were rafted together and tied up to huge naval moorings. This apparently is an assembly point for French naval vessels, which have been taken out of commission before they are finally taken to the breakers yard. It is a very picturesque spot and rather reminiscent of Drakes Pool at Crosshaven.

As we proceeded up the river we reached the Pont de Terenez and of course we all wondered if our mast would clear the bridge. From there on it was a very exciting passage as we had no charts and it became quite an adventure like "Swallows and Amazons". Without charts we did not know the heights of overhead cables and had to assume that we had clearance. Parts of the river were very beautiful with large forests on the starboard side. Some of these were pine forests but most of the hillsides were covered in deciduous forests, which had a large variety of trees which included lime trees, chestnuts, and even oak, with their leafy foliage stretching out over the waters of the river. Further up stream we encountered a complete oak forest which looked really magnificent.

Without charts we could only move very slowly up the river with a watchful eye on the echo sounder. We were also lucky to have a forward looking sonar on board. As we know that rocks can not float between the surface and the sea bed the strange objects that appeared on the sonar screen must have been large salmon for which the Aulne River is so famous.

As the river meandered we kept as far as possible to the



Irish Cruising Club. Unfortunately it poured rain but oil skin clad crew walked around the town and visited the 15th Century chapel of Notre Dame perched high on the hill. There was also a submarine observation chamber where one could watch the fish as they passed up beside the weir. Further up stream past the main part of the town, there is a very pleasant walk along the tow path of the river canal bank.

Next morning we moved *Beowulf* down to the private pontoon belonging to the Hotel Au Bon Accueil (tel 02 98 86 15 77) in Port Launay where we had booked for dinner. This village is a gem and our private jetty was planted with an array of colourful hydrangeas, ranging from deep magenta, through white to various shades of blue. The hotel lived up to its name. We chose the set menu of four courses which gave

outside of the bends, remembering our school geography lessons on the formation of ox bow lakes, we knew that we would have deeper water. With the forestry on the starboard hand, the reeds and rushes on the port side would occasionally part and give us a view of characteristic countryside: endless rows of hedges which enclose all the fields to protect them from the constant winds. This gives the area the appearance of a huge patchwork quilt.

There were only one or two small villages en route along the river and occasionally isolated fishing lodges, with fishing platforms raised on stilts.

Not many yachts pass this way, because few would have charts. It is 11 miles from Pont de Terenez to Guily-Glaz lock and we telephoned ahead to the lock keeper whom we found to be a cheerful soul and very helpful. The lock keeper's house was beautifully kept with hanging flower baskets and well planted flower beds giving a bright display of colour. Peter also telephoned the Hotel Au Bon Accueil, at Port Launay, in fluent French to make a reservation but was informed that they close on Sunday.

The cruising guide informed us that it was 7 miles from Guily-Glaz lock to Port Launay. This was a misprint and should have been 0.7 miles because as soon as we cleared the lock we could see Port Launay through the vast arches of the viaduct ahead. This is a most picturesque place which is a crescent shaped village with colourful yachts tied up alongside the Aulne river / Nantes to Brest canal. As the hotel was closed we decided to head on for Chateaulin which is virtually on one of the last bends of the Nantes to Brest canal. We tied up to the mooring pontoons on the starboard side just before you reach the first bridge and weir. There is only room for about six yachts on these pontoons and there are only minimal facilities of showers and toilets. There is also a very large Le Clerc supermarket close by which enabled us to stock up and we were allowed to take our trolley back to the boat. We tied up at Chateaulin at 1602 hrs. and although it had only been 28.7 miles from Brest it had taken us 5 hours 20 minutes because of our wait for the tide and we could only proceed up the river very slowly with one eye on the depth finder.

Chateaulin is a delightful old town well away from the sea in the heart of Brittany and seldom visited by members of the

us a choice of dishes such as oysters, moules, smoked salmon, duck, filet steak, crème brulee etc. For 20 Euro this was fantastic value and we wondered how we ever got tourists to Ireland. There was something very special in having *Beowulf* moored to the private jetty outside the front door. Highly recommended.

Our return trip down the Aulne river was more rewarding as the sun shone on the oak forests and we could see the countryside with greater clarity. The water levels had risen, possibly due to the very heavy rain over the previous days but nevertheless we were equally vigilant watching the depth. We all agreed that the Aulne River had hidden treasures, rarely visited by Irish yachts. Fifteen miles down stream from Port Launay we dropped anchor behind the little island opposite the naval hulks. Here we dined on board in beautiful surroundings on a really peaceful evening.

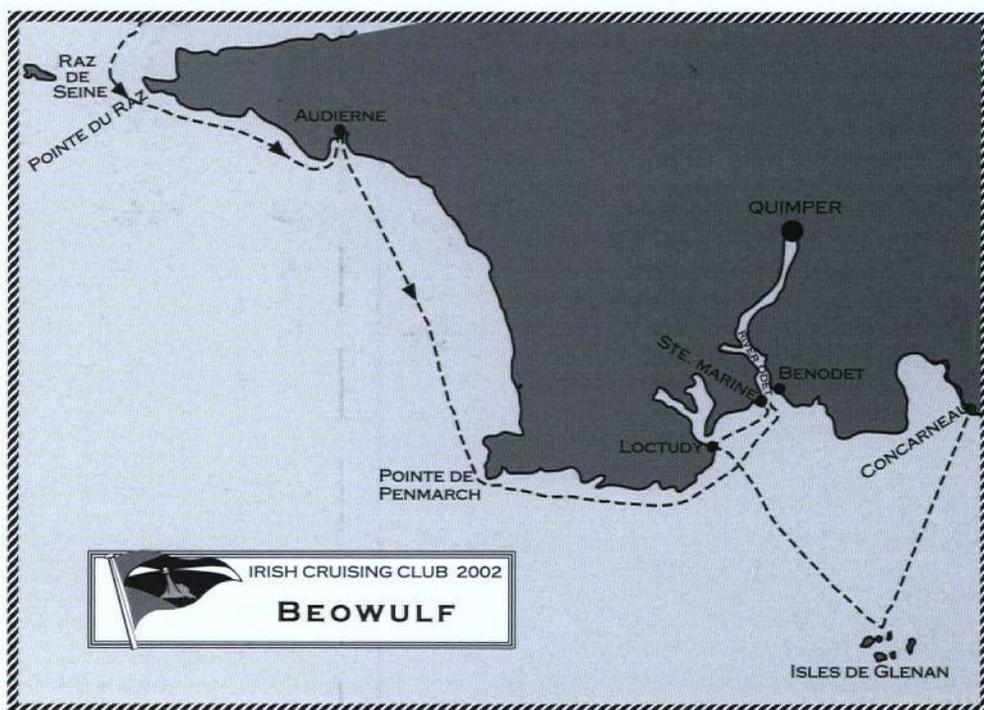


Port Launay, Aulne River.

It had been our intention to visit the Abbey of Landevennec the following morning, but this plan had to be abandoned as we had problems in starting the outboard motor on our dinghy. There was an abbey at Landevennec as early as 860 AD, when the monastery records "a mild and pleasant spot, the first in the land to see the flowers open each year". The old abbey dates from the 11th/12th Century and the church from 16th Century but this fell into ruin and they built a new monastery and abbey which was consecrated in 1965.

Next morning we weighed anchor and set off for Camaret which was less than 20 miles away through the Rade du Brest. Unfortunately we encountered head winds and so had to motor but the strong engine pushed us along at a lively pace. On the way we passed a French square rigger with all her sails set and the sun shining through the canvas. When we reached Camaret we got a berth on the outside marina and discovered that they were hosting a rally of traditional craft lead by their own *La Belle Etoile*. Camaret is well known to most of our members and combines fishing with yachting and is in reasonable striking distance from the Raz de Sein. Fishing is in itself a special chapter in the Breton economy, for almost half of all French catches are brought ashore in Brittany. If one walks around these fishing ports when the fishing fleet comes in one sees an abundance of delicacies from the sea, ordinary lobsters, spiny lobsters and oysters from local beds. We dined well at the Hotel Thalassa.

In the morning some of the crew took a long walk right around the headlands from which there were splendid views. Clive and Noo had their first swim from the beach and all this activity worked up a good thirst which we quenched with a



large presson and lunch at a waterfront café sitting by the roadside watching the world go by. Hectic work was in progress erecting a tented village to house the stalls in connection with the traditional boat festival. These traditional boats varied in size from quite tiny craft of not more than 14 foot to large square riggers. As we left in the morning, Noo shouted to the skipper "mind the bow sprit" as a very lengthy bow sprit from one of these vessels stretched out across the fairway exit from the marina.

Making a passage inside Le Pohen and Mendufa rocky islands we became immediately aware of the dangers of this coast as the jagged rocks protruded from the sea like sharks teeth. The skipper had done his home work so that we arrived at the Raz de Sein in reasonably benign conditions at slack water. As we rounded La Vielle and La Plate in rather poor visibility it was only a little bit bouncy, but we could see from swirling waters like boiling marmalade that wind against tide could give appalling conditions. Once through the Raz we altered course for our next port of call, which was to be Audierne. Still clad in heavy weather gear we decided that the summer in Brittany was every bit as bad as it was in Ireland. Arriving at Ste Evette after a 28 mile trip we look an all tide mooring to have a lunch break and wait for a favourable tide to take us up the entrance of the River Goyen.

While we were on the mooring the local sailing school were teaching children in tiny catamarans, like twin hull Optimists. One of these headed straight towards us and the terrified helmsman, panicked and shouted for his instructor who was well out of earshot. When he realised that he was out of control, he threw down the tiller and becoming almost hysterical hammered the floor boards with his fists as he rammed the side of "Beowulf". The boat was so tiny that it did no damage and later the instructor came to apologise. We felt very sorry for the small boy and wondered if he would ever go sailing again.

We studied the instructions for entering Audierne in detail and kept alongside the breakwater until we could see the red and white chevrons on the roadside and kept close to the light on the estacade before we aligned the second set of chevrons on the fish market building. At this point we altered course 90 degrees to port to keep close to the long line of fishing vessels berthed on the quays. For this operation we had Peter on the



L to r: Noo Wallis, Bernard Corbally, Clive Martin & Peter Wallis enjoy a presson.

fore deck, Noo with the sharpest eyes to line up the chevrons standing beside the skipper at the helm. Clive was on the aft deck to watch for any leeway or side drift while Mary was below watching that we kept to the "road" on the chart plotter. This was a "belt & braces" exercise but did require a degree of care. We took a berth on the T-piece at the end of a marina pontoon near the centre of this market town.

In the morning we found that a very busy and bustling market had been set up in the town market square. Here we spent a couple of hours browsing over the great variety of items offered for sale. Amongst a few purchases that we made included a Breton jacket for our skipper. A lovely red headed girl played the harp in the midst of the market, reminding us of home. The Bretons are, of course, descendants of Celtic settlers who in the 5th and 6th Centuries fled the Anglo Saxons and founded an independent Duchy. They have always retained their own language and every genuine Breton is bilingual.

After lunch on board *Beowulf* we went to swim at Ste Evette which gave us a thirst for further pressions. We thought it might be a good thing to say a few prayers and enquired the way to the Church from a local who told us we would have to go to a neighbouring village of Esquibien and offered to give us a lift in his car. Thomas, who spoke excellent English, had been a helicopter mechanic with the French Navy for fifteen years. He took us to Esquibien which was a really quaint little hamlet like something you would find in the Cotswold mountains. All the houses were built of cut stone and the very old church had an ornate war memorial built as an arch over the gate.

We invited Thomas and his wife on board *Beowulf* on our return and although she spoke no English and conversed with her husband in Breton, her eyes lit up when we produced a bottle of Paddy. That evening we dined on sea bass, which we had purchased from the local fish market. This is a local speciality. That night they were opening a new foot bridge near the entrance to the port, and as it was the eve of Bastille day the town mounted a fantastic firework display. We all thoroughly enjoyed our stay in Audierne where the first night we had dined at La Pecherie, a turquoise coloured restaurant, which is popular with many cruising sailors.

On Sunday 14th July, Bastille Day, we set off for Loctudy but changed our minds and went on to Benodet. This was our longest trip being 37 nautical miles but again the winds were not favourable and we had to make the passage by motor. It did, however, require considerable vigilance as it is strewn with dangers around the Pointe de Penmarch. We tied up at the marina at Ste Marine on the western side of the Odet river opposite Benodet. Ste Marine is a very picturesque little place with old world buildings on the waterfront. A small but quaint church looks down on the slipway and a chateau keeps guard over the marina. It was a really lovely day with soaring temperatures, the first perfect day we could remember this summer and a brisk walk took us to the huge beach in about twenty minutes. Here we all took to the sea for a swim.

Peter is a wine expert and chose some excellent local wines which we enjoyed with dinner on board. We had an outside berth on the marina, which gave us a grandstand view of the barge in the centre of the Odet river on which they had set up a fantastic firework display to celebrate the holiday. A concert took place on the other side of the river in Benodet and we could clearly hear the strains of "Molly Malone" and Cockles and Mussels (in French, of course). We all agree that it was the

finest firework display that we had ever seen. The next day was equally lovely, so some of the crew made their way back to the beach, while others crossed the water to see Benodet.

Late in the afternoon we made the short sea trip of less than 5 miles to Loctudy. The marina there is relatively new and tucked away behind Ile Tudy. This is a delightful back water and there are one or two private islands here with very substantial summer residences which probably belong to wealthy Parisians and have been passed down from generation to generation. The locals told us that they were rarely used. There is a commercial port here with very colourful fishing boats and a walk around this area revealed an artist working on his canvas capturing this inspiring scene. There is an excellent restaurant in the marina building called La Mer a Boire. It was the only modern restaurant that we dined in but it is well worth a visit. Peter purchased some strawberries in the market and then cleaned up the boat, removing the floor boards in the cockpit for which the skipper awarded multi brownie points which was noted in the log.

Sadly Peter and Noo had to leave us in Loctudy as we had enjoyed their company so much over the previous ten days. Their places were taken by Leonard and Yvonne Little who arrived in their own car having come over from Ireland by ferry. They took Clive and Mary to one of the local beaches as it was a lovely day.

We had a very short finger on the pontoon and when it blew up it was quite uncomfortable.

We set sail in the morning for Les Iles de Glenan, a passage of some 17 miles and for once we had a favourable wind and were able to sail comfortably on a broad reach. We arrived at 13.20 hours and dropped our anchor off the Fort Cigogne-Bananec. As it was neap tides we had only just enough water. Here we met David Brain from Cornwall and Jan on *Suzerain* a Sovereign designed by Ian Anderson.

Our outboard had been repaired in Loctudy, so we took the dinghy over to St. Nicolas Island for morning coffee. We looked over the Glenans sailing school and enjoyed a swim on one of the glorious silver sand beaches. Earlier that morning we had witnessed a small local trawler getting its nets caught in the ground tackle of two French yachts anchored not far from us. Fortunately they broke free before it developed into an ugly incident.

We departed the Islands at 13.00 hrs. for Concarneau a short passage of only two hours. Concarneau is an exceptional town, which is well known to many Irish Cruising Club sailors. The old walled town with its fortress and moat conceal many high quality shops and entertaining buskers. Dinner at Chez Armande (tel 02 98 97 00 76) was a rewarding way to end our cruise. Close to the marina entrance this restaurant was of outstanding quality in every way. Although more expensive it was good value by Irish standards.

Mary and I had to return home from Concarneau. It had been a most memorable fortnight and a great introduction to cruising in Brittany. We never set out to break any records but resolved to spend at least two days in each port so that we could fully appreciate each new place. Bernard was a splendid host and patient skipper and *Beowulf* a very comfortable and seaworthy ship. We all agreed that the trip up the Aulne River with the twin treasures of Port Launay and Chateaulin was the highlight of the cruise.

# A cruise to the Hebrides on *Misty*

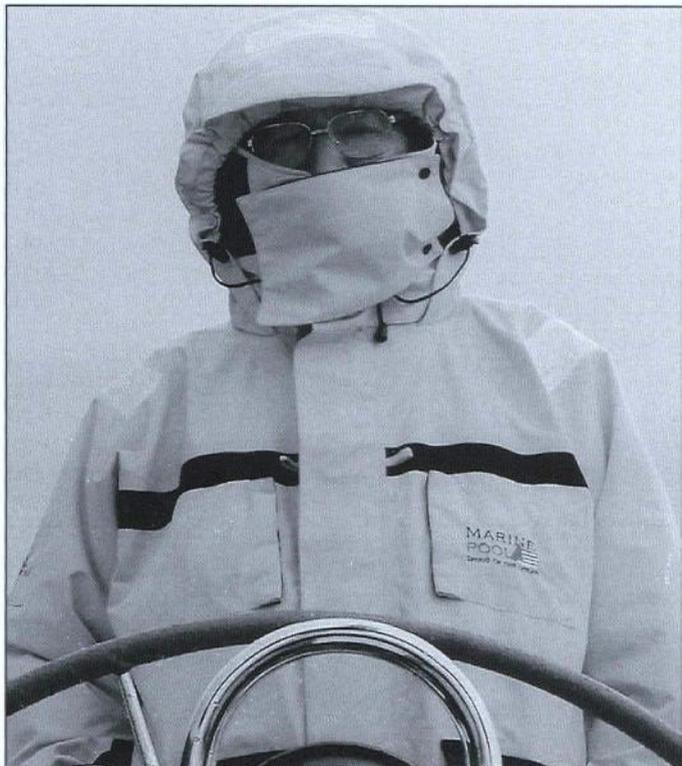
Trevor Wood

Our plan for June 2002 was a cruise to the Orkneys and back through the Caledonian Canal. It turned out to be a case of the "Best laid plans of mice and men".

The crew to Stornoway was Trevor Wood, John Fisher, Michael Knatchbull (all ICC) and Edward Taylor.

On Friday 31st May after an excellent dinner in the Royal St. George YC, we set sail for an overnight to Bangor in pleasant conditions. 14hrs 30mins later we tied up at Bangor marina (96miles) at 13.50hrs. That evening we dined at Royal Ulster Yacht Club, in their fine new dining room, with Patrick (ICC) and Mary Knatchbull, and Douglas and June Galbraith.

On Sunday we were up at 04.00hrs to catch the tide through the North Channel en route to Colonsay. We started motor sailing in damp conditions but by 09.30hrs the weather had greatly improved and the Chef de Cuisine served a full breakfast, including porridge on a table, resplendent with a green checked tablecloth, as we passed the Mull of Kintyre Lighthouse. (Tough this cruising). Progress was so good that we anchored for a late lunch, at Fraoch Eilean on Jura, whilst waiting for the tide to sluice us through the Sound of Islay. On our arrival at Scalasaig (91 miles in 14 hrs 40mins) we were greeted by a family of bottlenose dolphins, who thought our bow wave was great fun. We tied up at 18.40hrs alongside the inner wooden pier. We dined on board and then walked the half-mile to the Colonsay Hotel for a nightcap (a wee dram or two or maybe more).



John Fisher enjoying a summer cruise in Scotland !

Next morning, Monday 3rd June, we woke to a steady Scottish drizzle and mist. Navigator Michael got us underway at 06.10hrs, en route to Tobermory (50 miles). The wind died, the barometer dropped to 1011 but the scenery and the Sound of Mull was as beautiful as ever. Having fuelled and watered we picked up a comfortable visitor's mooring at 13.40hrs. Then it was ashore for showers and pints in the Mishnish and booked for the Anchorage Restaurant (formerly the Captain's Table.) The food was excellent and reasonably priced (recommended).

Tuesday 4th June and still moving north. We departed at 08.40hrs in light winds and were soon around Ardnamurchan Point, heading up towards the Sound of Sleat, leaving Muck, Eigg and Rhum to port. It had been our intention to make Isleornsay and take the tide the next morning through Kylerhea. However our progress was so good that it soon became evident that we would make Kyle of Lochalsh. We tied up at the pontoon just below the Lochalsh Hotel at 15.25hrs (50 miles), having averaged nearly 7.5 knots! Again we dined on board, making full use of the pressure-cooking expertise available, to quickly produce an excellent Naverin of lamb and time to enjoy a dram later at the hotel.

On Wednesday 5th at 07.50hrs we departed from the pontoon on a beautiful clear morning sailing under the new and elegant Skye Bridge, in an easterly 10 knots of wind with a rising barometer at 1020. Passing along the Inner Sound and past the Isle of Rona, into the Minch where the wind went northerly and increased, so for comfort we put a reef in the main. The autohelm went on the blink for a short time. We arrived safely at Stornoway at 17.30hrs (62 miles in 9hrs 30mins) and found the small marina. The pontoons were quite short but comfortable, with water only, however fuel was available at the fish quay. The distance we sailed from Dun Laoghaire to Stornoway was 348 miles.

The weather in Stornoway was glorious. As we had a day to spare we hired a car and toured the island. The wonderful lakes, inlets, valleys and bogs of Lewis and Harris made it a memorable day. We visited the standing stones of Callanish (A sort of Scottish Stonehenge) and lunched well at the visitors centre. We also saw the Whalebone Arch (the jaw bone of a 85 foot whale). In Tarbert on Isle of Harris (southern part of the



Crinan Hotel. You've been warned!



*Misty* at anchor

same island) there was an amazing general store, which seemed to sell everything, from beers, split pins, shirts, butter, to spades and ploughshares. Wonderfully reminiscent of a general store at home in the 1930s and 40s.

In the Stornoway marina there were about 10 large semi rigids with huge outboards, a group doing a circumnavigation of Great Britain, what a way to spend a holiday! They probably thought the same of us, they burbled their way out of the harbour mid morning to picnic on the Shiant Islands on their way south. In the evening we provisioned at Safeway's in Stornoway before meeting Fred and Val Hanna at the airport and having a very fine dinner at the Crown Hotel.

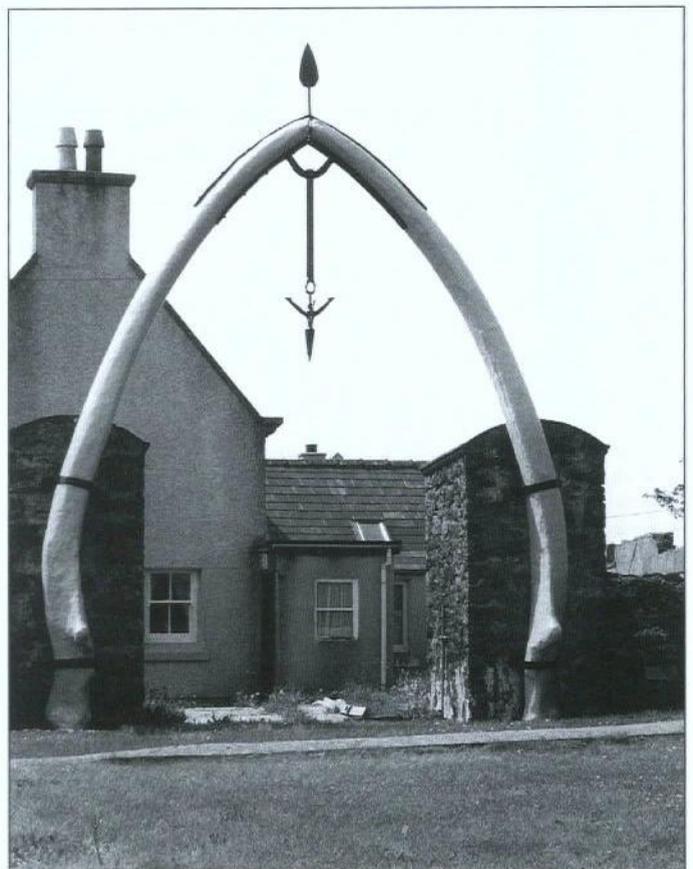
Friday 7th June. Ed Taylor departed on the early ferry to Ullapool before we set out for Kinlochbervie, just south of Cape Wrath, this would have given us a reasonable passage to the Orkneys. But alas the east/northeast gradually increased to Force 5/6 on the nose with somewhat awkward seas. It became evident that we would not make our destination, some 45 miles to windward and we reminded ourselves "we were on holiday and Gentlemen never." We were lucky to have Lochinver, about 25 miles south, as a bolthole. The rest of the trip across the Minch was in bright sunshine with fair winds. We tied up to a small pontoon at 15.30hrs. This is a busy little fishing harbour that has benefited from EU funding as a servicing port for Russian and French boats, fishing far out in international waters, to unload their catch to freezer lorries for direct delivery to Europe. The local harbour office gave us the bad news that the forecast for the next five days was for easterlies Force 4/6 with seas moderate to rough, caused by the large "high" in the Norwegian Sea. They were having temperatures in the 80s! We had to reassess our plans as we had scheduled crew changes in the Orkneys and Inverness. Reluctantly we took the decision to re-arrange the crew changes to Fort William and return south.

Our next port of call was Loch Ewe, where we anchored off Aultbea Pier in heavy rain, we had dinner on board having our first taste of "The Haggis" purchased in the Isle of Lewis, and it tasted great. It was here also we had the first opportunity to appreciate the new arrangement with the rubber dinghy, which is clipped sideways to the bathing platform, ready to drop to the water at any time. This proved to be a quick and convenient means of launching the dinghy.

Next morning we moved up the loch to an idyllic anchorage off the jetty at Inverewe Gardens. We visited the gardens, which were started in 1842 and are beautifully maintained with the help of 8 gardeners and 200 tons of compost annually by the National Trust. The Gulf Stream gives a wonderful climate for exotic plants. It is interesting to note that the latitude here is north of Moscow. About mid-day we weighed anchor and in a nice gentle SW with Genoa and Main, set sail up Loch Ewe and round Rudha Reidh Head for Portree, picking up a visitors mooring off the Cuillin Hills Hotel where we enjoyed an excellent dinner. We encountered for the first time hungry, or were they thirsty, Scottish midges? The next day we took a bus to Dunvegan Castle, the home of the Macleods since 1296, a castle full of history of clan battles, legends, murders most foul and great loves. We measured ourselves against the Scottish giant Angus MacAskill who stood 7'9", and who is mentioned in the Guinness book of records as the strongest man who ever lived.

Next morning, Tuesday 11th after refuelling on another damp Scottish morning we sailed through the Sound of Raasay to Lochalsh (19 miles) over-nighting alongside *Gordonstoun Oyster* (65ft) which subsequently made a dramatic rescue of the Round Britain racing boat *Audacious*. The harbour master Don McCrea deserves special mention. He made room for us and his enthusiasm for the environment and digital photography was infectious and he took an excellent portrait of the skipper. His other love is "Shinty", a Scottish form of our hurling and he arranges exchange matches with teams in the west of Ireland.

Next morning John Fisher left us by Highland train. He later enthused about the finest scenic rail journey ever. We departed south motor sailing into a SW Force 5/6, finally making Armadale, where we picked up a charter boat mooring in a lollypop anchorage. It was another damp and cold evening. An



Whale jawbone on Isle of Harris

excellent meal was served in comfort with the heating on, but it was a bumpy night. We left early next morning for Tobermory (34 miles). Ashore the town was without electricity. We got a pint and showers but no groceries, as the tills were electric! After lunch we sailed gently down the lovely Sound of Mull to the beautiful Loch Aline and picked up a very peaceful visitors' mooring. It was a beautiful evening with a glorious sunset. Aline is famed for its silica sand which is used in glass making.

Next day, Friday we had to make the long passage north up Loch Linnhe, for our rearranged crew change at Fort William. The low clouds and rain made it impossible at times to see either shore, only about a mile away. We carried the tide through the Corran Narrows and tied up at Corpach pontoon (no facilities), outside the sea loch to the Caledonian Canal. The co-operative loch keeper allowed us to stay there for a few days, free of charge. We had the use of showers etc.

Sunday 16th we stayed long enough to see the Irish-Spain football match at the local bistro. The forecast wasn't looking too kind (Force 11 in the Outer Hebrides) so we moved on in the afternoon for the safety and comfort of Dunstaffnage marina (27 miles). This is an excellent marina and only a short taxi ride from Oban, where the shopping and restaurants are first-rate. That night we had a superb meal at the marina Restaurant "Wide Mouth Frog". Next day as the wind was still unkind we took the Caledonian MacBrayne ferry to Craignure. A good lunch at the Inn and then on to the miniature gauge railway to Tarasay Castle, home of the Guthrie family since 1858. Their herd of pedigree highland cattle looked wonderful in their natural surroundings. That evening in Oban we had a particularly memorable meal at a fish restaurant owned by the McCloud family called "Ee-usk The Fish Café" (highly recommended). Next day was spent quietly in Oban, provisioning the boat and waiting for the arrival of Paul Whelan, son of our late navigator, Michael.

Thursday 20th, the strong southerly winds having subsided, we caught the afternoon tide south through the Fladda (9.8 knots SOG) and further south to the Dorus Mór (13.1 knots SOG). Overnight was spent in the Crinnan Basin so that we could see the England-Brazil match early next morning. We departed for Craighouse (22 miles) in a fresh southerly, with poor visibility. After taking a good look to identify the narrow entrance, we picked up a visitor's mooring and had an excellent



Refreshed in Tobermory.

meal at the Jura Hotel, and a comfortable night. Next day we left early afternoon for Gigha and spent our last night in Scottish waters on another local mooring in Ardmish Bay. Some of us walked round the Gardens before another enjoyable evening and dinner at the Gigha Hotel (recommended).

On Sunday 23rd Michael had us up and on the way to Bangor at 04.00hrs, to catch the tide south in the North Channel. There were very disturbed seas for a couple of hours off the Mull in the SW Force 4, but we were soon in the lee of the Irish coast and enjoyed a good sail to Bangor, arriving at 13.35hrs (62 miles in 9hrs 35mins). That evening we entertained friends on board. We left at 07.15hrs next day for Ardglass (35 miles). We enjoyed a breakfast of Hag burgers, (a burger with fried sliced Haggis) en route, arriving at 13.10hrs in time for lunch at the local golf club. We dined off Spagbol, prepared by our new chef Paul, before our final leg back to Dun Laoghaire on Tuesday 25th June. We left at 07.30hrs in a light westerly and motor sailing until 12.00hrs when the wind freshened to W Force 4, before finally dying off the Baily; on passing Lambay we contacted Dublin Coastguard Radio to check our Barometer. We tied up at the Royal St. George Y. C. pontoon at 17.25hrs.

Despite having not made our objective of the Orkneys, it was still a most enjoyable and an interesting 25 day cruise, making the most of our time and opportunity to visit and see so many interesting sights, anchorages, lochs etc. on the way. Leaving the Orkneys to be visited another year. Scotland even with its fickle climate is always a sailing pleasure. Its lochs are safe and one is never far from a welcoming anchorage.

Total mileage 840 miles;  
Average Speed 6.15 Knots;  
Engine Hours 123hrs.



Ardmurchan heather at the Baily.

# Aiming for Iceland – A circumnavigation of Ireland

## John Gore-Grimes

Years ago, when writing an article in the ICC annual on Arctic sailing I offered a magnum of Champagne to the first person to circumnavigate Iceland during the winter months meaning from December to February. For good reason nobody took up the challenge but in 2001 we prepared *Arctic Fern* and set off from Howth at midday on the 27th of December. The crew comprised Robert Pendleton, Peter Culleton, Nick Healy and Simon Garrard. Robert and Simon are both sons in law and with this experienced crew was a new man, Johnny Kavanagh. Johnny had done practically no sailing but passed the test and although our journey was to be a lot shorter than planned he proved to be an excellent and always cheerful hand on board *Arctic Fern*.

Howth Yacht Club fired three guns as we passed through the pier heads and turned left. Few would expect *Arctic Fern* to do anything else. Many friends joined various crafts of one sort or another and accompanied us up towards Lambay but by the time we passed to the east of Lambay we were alone on a fresh afternoon with a westerly force 5.

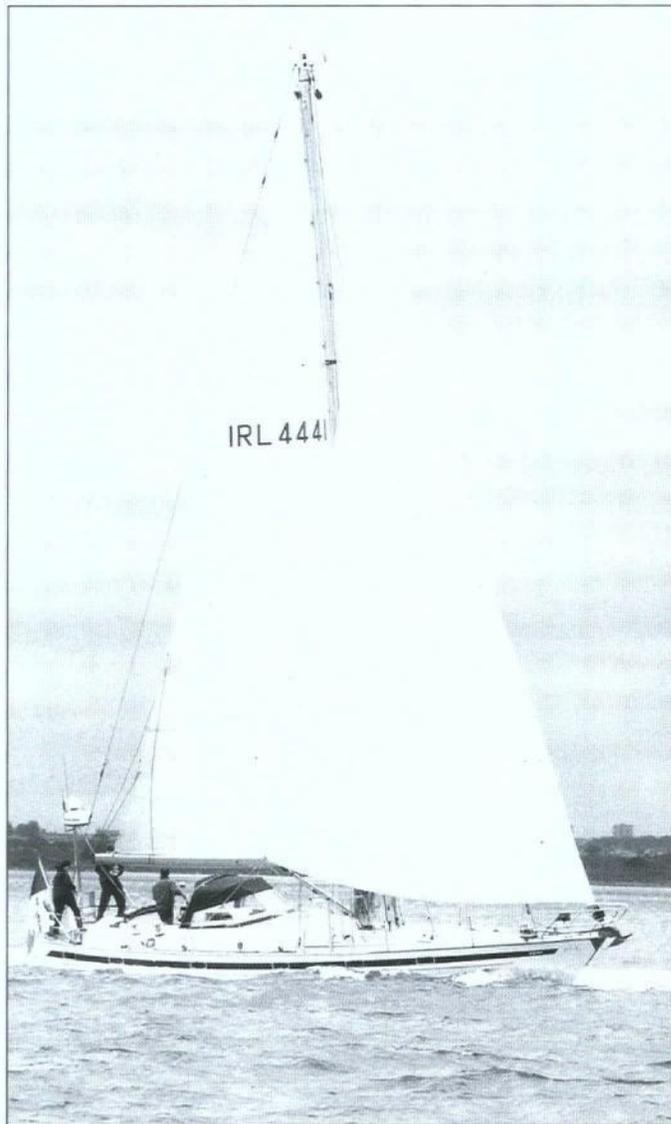
The forecast was not comforting and at the time of our departure we had been promised westerly gales. We had slabbed three reefs into the mainsail and set the inner-staysail. With these offshore winds progress was fast in flat seas as we passed the South Rock Light Vessel at 20.45. The wind was increasing and before midnight we were in a sustained force 8. Belfast Coastguard revised its forecast to a westerly eight increasing severe gale 9. We passed to the west of the Maidens shortly after 02.00 hours on the 28th of December by which time the wind was blowing a steady 9 and gusting 10 plus. The forecast was revised by Belfast Coastguard at 03.50 to a northwest force ten increasing violent storm 11, imminent. Robert Pendleton put on his survival suit and he was not to get out of it until we reached Dunmanus Bay. I still have not decided whether Robert is a pessimist or a realist.

The violent storm certainly was imminent and indeed between 03.00 hours and 08.00 hours the wind did not drop below 50 knots and was mainly between 50 and 55 knots with gusts of 60 knots. We had no sail forward of the mast and the storm trisail was set. Our progress forward, lying about 45 degrees to the wind, was between 0.2 and 0.4 knots but we could see from the chart plotter that our progress sideways was between 2 and 3 knots. We were sailing sideways into the mouth of the Clyde. Between 08.00 and 11.00 hours the wind decreased from force 11 to a more manageable gale force 8 and we started to sail again with three reefs and a small inner stay-sail. We were on the wind and progress was slow and depressing.

Johnny Kavanagh who is, by profession, a clown, kept us amused and also served cups of hot soup and toast and by lunch time he had prepared one of Reggie Revill's famous reindeer pies and we gobbled it down, horns and all.

You can imagine how slow progress northwards was when we see that at 21.25 hours on the 28th of December we were abeam of Altacarry Head on Rathlin. The distance from the Maidens to Altacarry Head is 29.6 n.m. and it had taken us 19½ hours to sail that distance.

We passed Orsay Lighthouse at 24.00 hours and the wind, which for several hours had remained at a constant force 5 to 6, started to increase on the morning of the 29th December. There was a gale warning in operation and threats of sleet and snow. Indeed, as we passed the Antrim coast the snow covered cliffs had glowed clearly at us through the dark spray-laden air. By 16.00 hours on the 29th of December the winds were between 44 and 48 knots and we were once again ahull. Reggie chose that time to call us on the sat. phone but I fear that the response that he got was both brief and ill mannered. Green water crashed across the decks and into the cockpit and the fuse box for the 220 volt system, which is located in the sail locker in the cockpit, became flooded and went on fire. We put it out with the fire extinguisher and discovered that with all the



*Arctic Fern* leaving Howth on 27th December, 2001.

Photo: Tom Lawlor



Robert Pendleton in normal gear after Dunmanus Bay.

*Photo: John Gore-Grimes.*

commotion the generator had left its mountings and was in a most precarious state. With so much motion it was impossible to do much to secure it. The winds on this occasion peaked at between 9 and 10 and there was a large sea running. At midnight our position was 55° 58' north 8° 29' west and we, meaning I, decided that any further attempt to circumnavigate Iceland was even more insane than the idea had always been. We altered course for Eagle Island and substituted the "c" in Iceland for an "r" in order to attempt to achieve a less threatening and more harmonious circumnavigation. The relief on board was immense. With the wind just aft the beam and with less water crashing across the boat the occasional song was heard in the early dawn on the 30th December. At this stage we assessed the damage done which included no radar, no chart plotter, no generator, no heating, no oven, just two gas rings, and when we reset the mainsail we found that significant portions of the mainsail were no longer attached to the mast. Later Simon was wound aloft by Robert and Nick and, with great difficulty, tied back most of the sail. Our speed was fast and Johnny Kavanagh cooked a great dinner at 18.00 hours just as a large moon ascended from the horizon skywards. The wind started to ease down to 5 to 6 and the disturbed aggression of the sea lessened. By 05.00 in the morning on the 31st of December the full moon's silver reflections danced on a relatively calm sea. Peter Culleton's log entry for 06.00 hours on New Years Eve read:

"O' what a beautiful morning, O' what a ..... " We were abeam of the Foze Rock to the west of the Blaskets by 11.00 on New Year's Eve with the aim of trying to reach Dunmanus Bay and my daughter's home there before midnight on the 31st. All four daughters and six grandchildren with friends were

staying there and when we called them during the day we told them how miserable it was pointing north and aiming for Iceland. We passed Skellig Rock at 13.00 hours and left the mighty Bull Rock behind us as we passed under Sheep Head and into Dunmanus Bay to anchor at the head of the bay at Mulroe Cove at 23.20. As we passed Boothill we had gone across to the far side of the bay and turned off all lights. All sails were down and we were not seen. Once the anchors were down we rowed quickly ashore and we ran across the fields to arrive at Boothill at two minutes to midnight. What a welcome! What a party! Hoarse voices and sore heads on the morning of New Year's Day 2002.

On the afternoon of New Years Day it was a strange contrast to stand on a still road with blue sky above watching the trotting races in Durrus. The mighty roar of the crowd as the horses rounded a bail of hay to head for the finishing post was much more comforting than the howling racket of a violent storm in the North Channel. And later, the warmth and comfort of a crowded pub put life back into perspective. I was summoned by an old friend in the corner of Ross's pub who had heard of our endeavours and when I went over to him he simply said "come over here John, till I tell you to go away".

On Wednesday we did as many repairs as possible and set off at 09.00 on Thursday the 3rd of January bound for Howth. As we cleared Three Castle Head the wind was gusting from southeast between 6 and 8 and we set a storm staysail and three reefs in the mainsail. We were pushed off to the west and into a cold grey sea with terns and gannets enjoying the conditions far more than we did. The coastal radio stations were still advertising gale warnings but once we had cleared the Fastnet Rock we were able to free sails and move fast towards the Coningbeg. Visibility was poor and we saw neither lighthouse nor land until we passed to the east of the Tuskar Rock. The yellow beam of Tuskar penetrated the wet mist as we passed through it at 13.00 hours on Friday the 4th of January.

Following winds blew us northwards up the Irish Sea and we tied up at Howth marina at 23.58 on Friday the 4th of January. Kieran Jameson was there to welcome us with a tray with six creamy pints of Guinness. What more could one ask for!

I think that I am cured of trying to circumnavigate Iceland in the winter. Robert Pendleton, Simon Garrard, Peter Culleton, Nick Healy and Johnny Kavanagh most certainly are. To them a big "thank you" for having responded both cheerfully and efficiently to what can only be described as demanding and unpleasant conditions.



Nick Healy tries to get some sleep at the height of the storm.

*Photo: John Gore-Grimes.*



Peter Culleton in the Atlantic on the night of the full moon.  
Photo: John Gore-Grimes.

#### Footnote

*Arctic Fern* could best be described as an ageing hi-tech boat. No equipment has been upgraded since she was commissioned in 1998 but there have been repairs... many of them.

Reliable and trouble-free equipment includes the anchor winch which was specified for a 60 foot boat. *Arctic Fern* is 44 feet but it was definitely a good idea to over specify the anchor winch. The Autohelm has been virtually trouble free. Again we use the model which is normally specified for a 60 footer. The main engine is 100 h. p. Yanmar which has proven to be most reliable except on one occasion, but that was our fault. The Raytheon GPS has done excellent service, the only exception being when we went north of 80°N. The satellite angles were too low up there but it proved to be only a mild inconvenience. The Furuno Radar has been absolutely reliable and invaluable. The bow thruster has been reliable and of unbelievable assistance in ice. Judicious use is required for these conditions.

Keeping communications equipment working has been costly and time consuming. We have Satphone, e-mail, web, fax and a complete Windows operation. Apart from the occasional breakdown caused by a low powered Pentium processor, it does take ten minutes to get into a website. Take for example [www.sigling.is](http://www.sigling.is) which is the Icelandic weather service site. It is well worth visiting and it is arguably the best weather site in our part of the Globe. At US\$10 per minute it costs \$100 for the quickest glimpse on this site. Drawing down the Norwegian ice charts by fax takes us seven minutes. I know it can be done at a fraction of the cost from MHF radio but our

icon offers poor reception. It has gone so silent in recent years that it is almost eerie. In 1989 we listened to the navy boys calling their loved ones through the now, defunct, Portishead Radio. There was one unforgettable piece of conversation which went like this:

"Oh Fred! Oi cant wait for you to come home. I miss your wobbly bits if you know what Oi mean. Over!"

VHF communications are usually reliable. The Loran C is of little use on the east coast of Ireland but has given reliable signals in higher latitudes. The touch screen C-Map chart system is excellent but it took two years to have it properly installed. Any chart is available on three disks. By touching the screen you can move from place to place and set a course and distance between two places or more. By drawing a little square or rectangle with your finger you can home in with incredible accuracy, to a blow up a coloured chart of, for example, Howth Harbour, and there you will see *Arctic Fern* on her marina berth. New disks are sent out three times yearly. It is not cheap to buy and it is expensive to run.

All the usual wind-speed/direction, depth, distance, etc. dials work with the usual reliability. The wind vane was blown away in the North Channel at the end of last December. By far the most useful dial in our cockpit is the XTE dial which has virtually replaced the need to steer by compass. You should however remember to keep the track up to date on long voyages.

We have not made much use of the water maker in home waters because of a fear of coming out of the shower all aglow – courtesy of Sellafield! On longer passages it has worked reliably. Once in service you have to run it every week and when it is not in use it needs to be properly decommissioned.

Electrics should be simple. Our's are not and they have caused a lot of frustration. There are four voltages available namely 220 volt, 110 volt, 24 volt and 12 volt. The oven and 2 rings on the cooker and the microwave use 220 but happily there are also two gas rings on the cooker. The electric kettle uses 220 as does the pop up toaster. Frequently, however, all of these toys have been out of commission for more hours than I care to remember. The culprit is the Panda generator which is a completely baffling installation. Electricians looking in there frequently shake their heads and walk away. Panda have no service depot in Ireland and that alone is enough to dissuade anyone from buying one. Of all the equipment on *Arctic Fern*, I hate the Panda most. If I was scheduled to die at 75, I know that I will go two years earlier, thanks to Panda.

The Eberspacher heater has been generally reliable and much to my surprise the electric winches have given no trouble at all to date. The winches are well maintained. We have not had to test the air-tight compartment forward of the mast but if we do I hope to be able to tell you that it works.

The Selden car tracks on the mainsail had been a complete disaster but we have now replaced them with Harken system. The results have yet to be fully tested.

In conclusion I would have to say that although hi-tech may seem sexy, my advice is to go for simplicity whenever possible.

# A Mechanical Misery Tour around Biscay

David Whitehead

Anticipating my retirement from full time employment at the end of April this year, I had long cherished the idea of more leisurely cruising than had heretofore been possible and developed a plan to take *Joyster* to Spain and Portugal, where, I was assured, the weather was more amenable to this activity than in our domestic archipelago. My wife, Marie warned me, with some prescience, that I was taking on too much, given that retirement required formerly stable living arrangements to be radically modified, and suggested that a modest cruise to the English West Country or the more proximate parts of Brittany would be much more to the point. As usual she was right but I ploughed along regardless and got, I suppose, what I deserved.

*Joyster* (an Oyster Mariner 35 ketch) had been carefully prepared for a longer cruise, with a full mechanical overhaul, the acquisition of a 700W/240V generator and a substantial awning – in anticipation of sunny anchorages – far from marina shore power and inclement weather. I was confident that with this preparation whatever else might befall us we would have forestalled any problems that might arise with the yacht's machinery. How wrong can you get!

The great day dawned for the first of the two phases of the cruise on Thursday 30th May. I had allowed five days to get to Falmouth where *Joyster* would be positioned for a direct passage across the Bay to Galicia, planned for mid July. The crew for this sector, in which it was hoped to visit Alderney, was myself and Marie, our daughter Siobhan and Chris Hartley. We left our mooring at Wicormarine, in the Fareham reach of Portsmouth Harbour, at 13.30 and motored to Gosport marina to fill up with fuel and water; intending to bring up for the night at Yarmouth. Once in Spithead we found a 25 to 30 kt westerly

in which we beat up to Cowes under genoa and mizzen. Off Egypt Point, with a spring ebb under us, we found 35 kts apparent and decided to divert to Cowes, where we brought up for the night at the East Cowes Sailing Club pontoon.

The long range forecast now promised northwesterly winds F6/7 for the latter part of the week, so the Alderney part of the plan was dropped and we got under weigh, bound for Dartmouth, at 04.50. A long, but generally fine day with light headwinds, which required intermittent motor sailing, saw us into Dartmouth at 22.10 where we tied up alongside the Royal Dart Yacht Club pontoon for the night. We were just in time for a beer in the club before "last orders" was called.

Saturday was the anniversary of "The Glorious First of June" and so it turned out – wonderful sunshine and puffy white clouds scudding along before an urgent easterly breeze. After breakfast in the cockpit, a quick shopping expedition and exploration (under power) of the river up to the narrows, we sailed under all lowers to the mizzen stays'l to Start Point. Blue sky, indigo sea, splendid views of the Devon coast and a lively following sea took us quickly as far as Bolt Tail where we came under the lee of the land in Bigbury Bay. Conditions were perfect for some exploration so we gingerly nosed our way into the Avon River estuary but we were unable to cross the bar and, as there was some swell nosing in, we upped helm and crossed the bay to the Erme River a couple of miles to the west. Here we were able to find our way into a sheltered anchorage, well into the river mouth with a lovely white sandy beach, sheltered by low rocky cliffs on the west bank. Amazingly we were the only yacht in the anchorage and there were only a handful of people on the beach. We had a barbecue on the beach in warm

sunshine – hard to believe this was the south coast of England this June. In the late evening sun we sailed into Plymouth and brought up in Queen Anne's Battery marina. We dined in a pub on the Barbican – very noisy – England vs. Sweden in the World Cup.

The following day we motored to Fowey in mist and fog. It was most interesting to track the various yachts on radar and to notice how different their radar signatures were. We picked up a harbour commission mooring and spent the afternoon ship cleaning and in shore expeditions. Monday was the first day of the Jubilee holiday weekend. It dawned highly unpropitious – low cloud, a quarter of a mile visibility, pouring rain and 25 - 30 kts of wind from the southwest. We donned oilskins, set the main with a reef and the blade jib on the inner



*Joyster* lifting out in Ribadeo.

forestay and put to sea to take our medicine. Outside we found a dirty lump in which we could only lay 180. We plugged into it for a long hour when, miraculously we were lifted 45 degrees onto a course which just laid the Dodman. Things were looking up! We came abeam of the Dodman at lunch time and as soon as we did so out came the sun, lighting up the soft Cornish coast. The sea also subsided as we got into Veryan Bay so – down blade, out genoa and reefs and up with the mizzen. A roaring close fetch, in which *Joyster* got her shoulder down to the work, swept us past St. Anthony and into Gillan Creek where we picked up a mooring. After a relaxed and peaceful lunch in the cockpit we sailed to Falmouth marina where *Joyster* took a rest for six weeks. In the interval the ever efficient Mary Townsend replaced a defective engine temperature gauge, fixed a small gas leak and made the dinghy outboard obey the starting instructions. I was convinced these were the last of our mechanical defects – how wrong can you get!

Due to family commitments John Bourke, who was to have joined us for the passage to Spain could not get away for our planned departure date on 20th July so, after some consideration, we decided that Marie, Siobhan and I would make our way to La Rochelle where he would join us a week later. We left Falmouth as planned with a roaring breeze at northwest, before which we rolled across the entrance of the Channel under reefed main and part rolled genoa; arriving off the Le Four Tower at dawn. What a wind for Spain was going to waste! Nevertheless we saved our tide through the Raz de Sein on a glorious summer afternoon of sparkling sea and golden sunshine and anchored for the night at Audierne – 161 miles in 25 hours. Monday dawned fine and bright and we reached down to Penmarch and then spinnakered all the way to Concarneau where we spent the night and a day enjoying Brittany, crêpes, moules, cider and all!

Plans were laid to visit Isle de Groix, Belle Ile Noirmoutier and Ile de Yeu on a leisurely course to La Rochelle – only 150 miles away with 6 days in hand – but the gremlins had other ideas!

Tuesday 23rd July dawned misty with low flying scud and a fresh westerly – we sailed under lowers at 1400 hrs and were on a roaring reach when Siobhan noticed smoke in the saloon – we were running the engine to charge batteries as we had not used the shore power in Concarneau. I dashed below and opened up

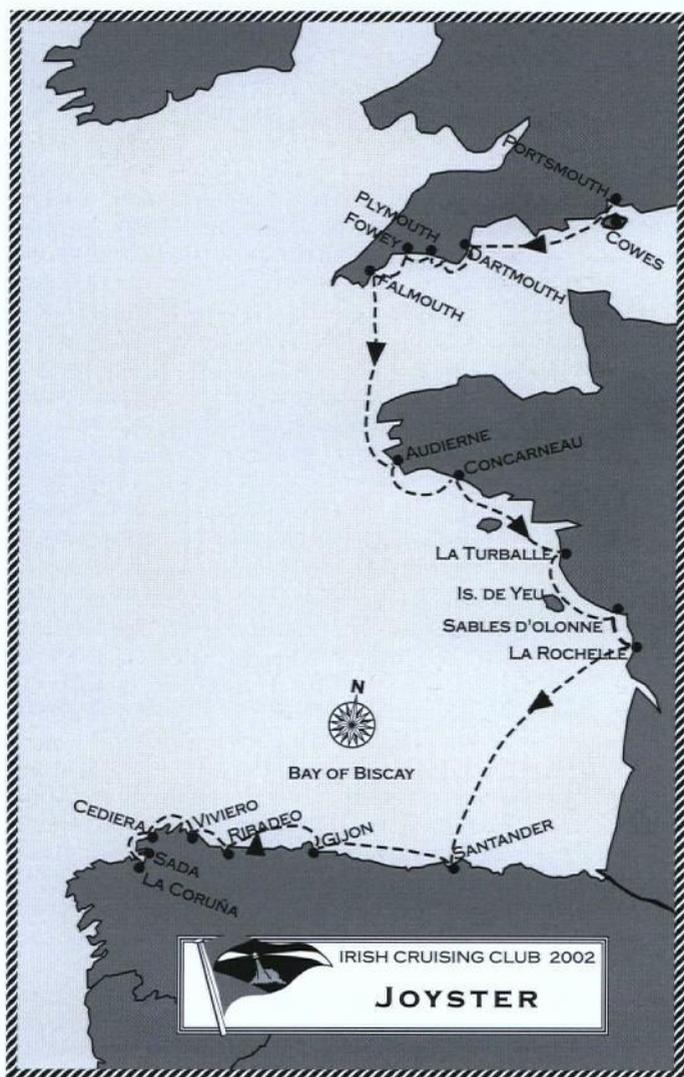
the engine casing to find a couple of flames flickering from the starter motor leads – put these out with a cloth and stopped the engine. Given that we were only six miles from Concarneau the obvious thing was to put back there to sort out the problem. The engine would not start again so we had to come alongside the outer pontoon under sail in 25 kts of wind – blowing straight off it of course – quite exciting but no damage done. We had warned the Capitainerie of our plight by VHF and they met us on the pontoon with a contact number for a mechanic. M. Vent d'Ouest arrived within 30 minutes and declared the problem to be within the starter motor which he unbolted and took away with him. He returned the next morning and said it was not repairable and quoted us for a new one (I checked this out and found the UK price was considerably higher). However it did not arrive and get installed until late afternoon on Thursday so meanwhile we enjoyed Concarneau and met up with *Beowolf* ICC and her skipper kindly had us aboard her magnificent yacht for a nightcap. As it happened the weather was pretty crummy anyway – mist and fog and drizzle and strongish westerlies.

Friday dawned calm and overcast so we set off motoring (and deck washing)- bound for as far as we could get. This turned out to be La Turballe where we berthed at 1835 hrs having motored all of the 70 miles. The weather had cleared to a glorious sunshine by lunch time but wind failed to materialise. Another early start on Saturday and more determined motoring got us to Ile d'Yeu by 1500 where we refuelled at Port Joinville. This looks like a super island – far enough offshore not to be overrun by day trippers, lovely beaches, red roofs and a higgledy, piggledy, Mediterranean looking village. Unfortunately we had to press on. We had a grand run as a freshening breeze swept us down to Les Sables d'Olonne, where by the time we made the harbour entrance it had blown up to a stiff 30 kts. Spent the night in Port Olona (huge boat parking lot) and left again early on Sunday and sailed to La Rochelle where we entered Port des Minimes (another huge boat parking lot) in close to 30 Kts of wind again at 1600 hrs. This *Vent Solaire* can get up fairly strong we found. Anyway we were back on schedule – but we missed almost all of the Brittany cruising ground.

John Bourke arrived at midnight after a tiring and much delayed flight. We spent a very pleasant Monday the old town of La Rochelle – shopping, storing ship, wining and dining in the sun – this was more like it! The long range forecast for Biscay was for three days of northwest breeze 15-17 kts so, on Tuesday morning, we set off bound towards Cape Ortelal. Thundery showers were mentioned on the French Meteo and sure enough off the north point of Ile d'Oleron we sailed into a mighty thunderstorm with all the light and sound effects and torrential rain – though nothing special in the way of wind. Around noon we were either hit, or very narrowly missed by a lightning strike. There was a huge BANG and a smell of sulphur and All the electrics went off scale and then died, the GPS did a runner and the skipper jumped out of his skin. Amazing there appeared to be no damage and after re- setting everything the electrical gadgets



The crew – Dave, Marie and Siobhan.



seemed to have relocated the plot. The bad news was the wind – which very gradually and very persistently freshened and backed so that by 0600 on Wednesday 31st July we had 25-30 kts and were close hauled and laying only about Cabo de Penas. There was a nasty lop and most of the crew (including the skipper) were feeling out of sorts. We had gradually reduced sail during the night, furled the mizzen, then put a few rolls in the genoa and finally pulled down a reef in the main – but it was still pretty bouncy out there. I then discovered that we were almost out of electricity and that no amount of engine charging would get any power into the battery. It seemed the lightning might have had a terminal effect on something. We hooked up the Honda generator to put some juice in the battery but with navigation lights burning and the other electronics it could hardly keep up with the drain rate and we were down to a mere seven volts. We were also gassing the helmsman with the exhaust!

At this point I concluded a change of plan was in order, so we bore off for Santander, where I felt sure the electrical problem could most likely be rapidly solved. As the morning wore on the wind continued to back until it was in the southwest and we would not have laid more than twenty to thirty miles west of Santander under sail anyway. We tied up alongside the Real Club Marítimo at 2210 hrs and had a good sleep after 36 hours of toughish sailing.

The RCM put us on to a mechanic who came aboard on Thursday at lunchtime, took away the alternator and returned and installed it the following morning at 1000 hrs, fully

reconditioned. The diodes had blown. The price was astonishingly low too – who said the Spanish were inefficient?

We enjoyed Santander meanwhile. The Cutty Sark race was due in and the waterfront was alive with a tented village, temporary pontoons for the boats, flags and bunting everywhere and a throng of tourist and locals down for the occasion. John found a splendid hostelry where we partook of a three hour lunch for four people with several bottles of wine for Euro 75!!! Dinner the same evening cost a little more in the old town but we could not match it at home for double the price.

Once again, we motored out of this glorious harbour bound west I thought our problems were over at last. And so it seemed as we had to motor all the way to Gijon in a light headwind, arriving at dawn on Saturday and entering the modest marina in the old town. Gijon old town is charming and is backed by a major seaside resort on the east but also by a cheerless, 1960's looking, industrial city on the south. We spent most of our time in the old town but stopped for drinks on the promenade later. Gijon specialises in very pretty female garbage collectors- all kitted out in attractive uniforms with neat little trolleys! We dined aboard and had an early night in light of a planned early start on the morrow for the passage to Ribadeo.

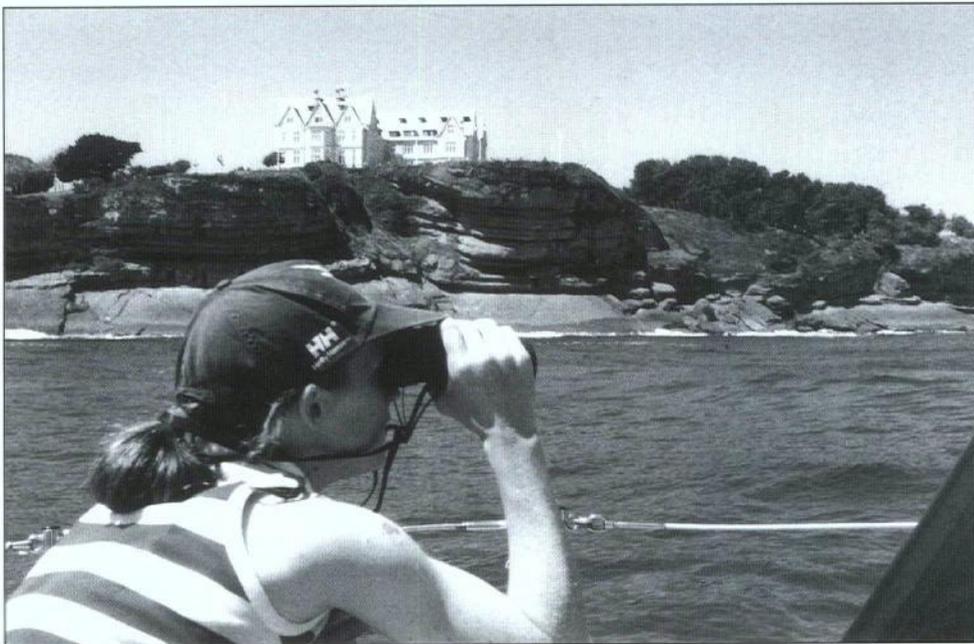
Once again we had light headwinds and arrived in this lovely little Ria (the first of the Rias Altas of Galicia) at 1815 hrs after 12 hours of motoring and intermittent motor sailing.

I was now comfortable that all the boat problems were behind us; in fact the real trouble had not yet begun. After a pleasant day and night in Ribadeo, John and I got up a 0600 hrs and cast off bound for Viveiro – weather calm and sea flat, so we were under power. As we were changing course from the inner to the outer leading lights in the Ria entrance the gear lever suddenly ceased to have any effect, while the throttle continued to operate normally. As there was a strong tide we dropped the kedge before investigating the problem. Quick checks showed that all the linkage was functioning normally so I concluded (with a sinking feeling in my stomach) that there was a problem in the sail drive gearbox. So, as soon as it got light, we lashed the rib alongside and towed *Joyster* back into Ribadeo. After breakfast we made contact with the local boatyard EoNautica and its most pleasant, efficient and helpful owner – Don Miguel. After a cursory check he concluded that we had lost the propeller!! I dived over the side and confirmed his suspicions. Miguel said we could hire a mobile crane locally and hoist the boat up onto the pier where he could fit a new prop which was ordered forthwith from Volvo Penta in Madrid and should arrive the next day.

John had now run out of time so arrangements were made for him to take the bus to Santiago de Compostela the following morning (Wednesday 7th August). The day was spent by the crew exploring Ribadeo and by the skipper worrying. John gave us a splendid dinner in the local Parador followed by drinks in a local hostelry – and so to bed.

After seeing John safely on the bus to Santiago, at 1000hrs sharp, the crane arrived on the pier and hoisted us out. Fortunately I had a spare anode on board and the prop fitted perfectly, but the fairing cone did not – and the threaded section had to be cut back on the lathe for it to be screwed up tight against the shoulder on the propshaft. Also, the centre bolt supplied was the wrong size but fortunately EoNautica had one the right size in their shop so at 1130hrs *Joyster* was lowered back into the water.

We left for Viveiro at 1400hr only for the engine to seriously over heat in almost the same location as we lost the prop! We duly returned to the pier again and after checking that the thermostat was working we located a blockage in the cooling water intake and managed to clear it by blowing air through the pipe with the pump for the inflatable. It was now too late to



Siobhan on lookout duty at Palacio Real, Santander.

make any useful distance so we stayed another night in Ribadeo – which is picturesque and well worth a stop over in any case. As it turned out this was the last of our mechanical problems; but by now we had lost an accumulated seven days of our three week cruise and it was clear that Bayona was now out of reach in the time we had left and we would have to leave the boat in the area of La Coruña instead. Moreover, as could be expected, my all-lady crew had lost a certain degree of their faith in the skipper and his boat!

On the following day we motored and sailed to Viveiro where we stayed a day and two nights in pure Irish weather – overcast and mist and continuous torrential rain. There is a useful new marina here but it lacks fuel and water. Finally the weather cleared over and we had a glorious sail along a really spectacular coastline to Cedeira, arriving at 1830 hrs, with an escort of harbour dolphins on a beautiful sunny summer evening. The real Galicia at last?

As we were now somewhat pressed for time we only spent one night at anchor in this lovely Ria and weighed at 1115 hrs after breakfast in the cockpit. The trip round to La Coruña was made motor sailing in a light headwind but with a strong favourable tide. We arrived at the Groyne at 1400hrs and tied up on one of the very rickety pontoons of the Real Club Nautico. Another glorious sunny day – summer had arrived at last. The old town was in full fête with a medieval market, fireworks and artillery fire and a huge throng of people crowding the narrow cobbled streets. We managed to find a nice restaurant, where we dined well, after a modest wait of 30 minutes (over a drink of course) in a very crowded restaurant.

Monday 12th August was the last day of our cruise proper – we motored around to Sada where there is a really excellent marina with a boat lift and a shipyard with a Volvo Penta

agency. On the way we really gave the engine a good working out – an hour at full revs. There was no sign of overheating, the battery charged mightily and the propeller did not fall off, nor did any new problem emerge as we roared along at a comfortable 7.5 kts – arriving in Sada in time for a late lunch.

The next day *Joyster* came out of the water and into a cradle in the boat yard. Tuesday was spent stowing and cleaning the ship in preparation for leaving her here until next season. In the interim the propeller fix will be officially sorted out by the Volvo Penta mechanic of the Punta Arnela shipyard. I was very pleasantly surprised by the efficiency and courtesy of all the staff at Sada and also by the low scale of charges – perhaps I had just become used to the scandalous

Solent prices over the last five years when *Eudora* and then *Joyster* were berthed in The Hamble and Portsmouth.

On Wednesday 14th we took a taxi to Santiago airport (the bus goes via La Coruña and Santiago – with changes in both places) and arrived back in London to find summer had finally arrived there too.

I cannot say I really enjoyed the cruise after the trouble started at Concarneau. I had to spend too much time and nervous energy dealing with the mechanical and electrical problems, looking for mechanics and so forth. In addition, because of all the lost time we had to skate rapidly over places we had planned to have time to see. Moreover by the time we got through all the problems we had missed the cruise objective of Bayona – which always leaves a feeling of incompleteness.

Still, between 30th May and 13th August we saw twenty harbours ports and anchorages and covered 1,170 miles by log. We had only four nights at sea and, apart from the two long passages when it blew hard, generally light, mainly adverse winds.

In retrospect a better plan might have been to hang around in western Brittany and for John to fly into Rennes or Lorient and then make passage straight across the Bay to Cedeira or Coruña. This would have given us two seven day mini cruises with a passage in the middle. On the other hand it was really nice to have seen La Rochelle, Santander, Gijon, Ribadeo, Viveiro and Cedeira which none of us had visited. We are now looking forward to the opportunity of more relaxed exploration of Galicia next season.

I recall that when I told Donal Morrissey that our plan was to sail from La Rochelle to La Coruña he said to me; “I hope you have better luck than I did – it’s a hell of a corner to get out of”.

# A short visit to the Clyde

Jim Slevin

We were spoiled last year with the great weather and excellent cruising conditions on our cruise south to Dartmouth and the Channel Isles. This year we agreed to let the wind decide the direction of our cruise. On May 17th, Peter McHugh from Mullaghmore, Brian Rogers from Omagh, and myself went on board *Testa Rossa* in Bangor marina. Having stowed our gear and provisions, we pulled out the charts and with the wind direction uncertain, we opted for a visit to the Isle of Man. We got up at 0400 and having breakfasted, we left Bangor an hour later. When we left the harbour the rain was coming and there was a fresh wind from the SE so we changed course for the Clyde. We enjoyed a good sail in rough conditions for the first 20 miles, but were forced to put in a tack just south of Sanda to avoid the overfalls and offlying rocks. As the wind died off we motorsailed the remaining 32 miles to arrive at Campbelltown pontoon in the early afternoon. We tied alongside a Moody 33 called *Hebridean Flame* on charter from Largs. The skipper told us of their unfortunate experience the previous night. They had been sailing off the Mull of Kintyre when their mainsail had blown out in 34 knots of wind. To make matters worse they could not get their engine to start due to a faulty starter motor and they had to call out the lifeboat to tow them into Campbelltown. We dined at the Argyll Arms Hotel in the middle of the town where the food was good though plain. I have visited Campbelltown on a number of occasions and while it offers good shelter and reasonable mooring fees, it has few other attractions.

Next morning we made a more leisurely start at 1150. The wind was still blowing force 6 to 7 from SE so we reefed down once more. The sailing was exhilarating as in the gusts the wind

speed touched 45 knots and our speed through the water was 13 knots at times. My only concern was that we might broach when we turned to enter harbour.

We were lucky to get some shelter from the cliffs when we approached East Loch Tarbert entrance to get the sails down and enter the marina. The approach is most attractive with the vibrant colours of the plants in full bloom. I have often seen this marina much busier at this time of the year but the weather must be the reason for the lack of visitors. When we had showered and cleaned up we took a stroll around the harbour to the Columba Hotel which overlooks the harbour entrance. There we enjoyed an excellent dinner and we commend the cuisine to our fellow sailors without any reservation. On Monday, with the wind still blowing hard from the south and gusting, we reluctantly left the attractive anchorage. Reefed down, we motorsailed into it at a painfully slow pace. We were unable to ease the sheets until we cleared Little Cumbrae Island. The last leg provided more exciting sailing with the wind on the quarter. Largs marina, though enlarged since our last visit, was virtually full but we were given a berthholders vacant berth. The facilities there have always been good and the provision of the Nardinis restaurant in the complex is an appreciable addition. With the weather wet and windy, a visit to the town was not inviting so we took advantage of the early bird specials which was a three course dinner for £7.50. We also visited the yacht club bar which was deserted except for ourselves.

Next morning, we delayed our departure from Largs until 0945 to allow Peter to do some chandlery shopping at the marina. A pleasant morning with blue skies and light winds, though still from the south. We really enjoyed moving under full sail again and tacked over to Holy Island before turning towards Troon where we secured to a pontoon at 1530. Troon has a much smaller marina than Largs but compensates in many other ways. To begin with, it has a well stocked chandlery shop with prices for some items 20% less than their competitors. The town is only 10 minutes walk from the marina and there is a good pub only 5 minutes away called The Anchorage. They also serve excellent food. In addition there is a ferry service from the port to Belfast while Prestwick airport is only 5 minutes by rail. Ryanair fly from there to both Belfast and Dublin making it a good place for crew changes or use as a base for cruising in the Clyde. On Wednesday we left Troon to sail to



Ailsa Craig from east.

Photo: J. Slevin



Skipper and Brian on *Testa Rossa* at Troon marina.

*Photo: P. McHugh*

Girvan. We set a course for Ailsa Craig. The wind was again gusting to 45 knots from the south so we reefed down, but after two hours hard sailing, we had only fetched Holy Island once more. As there is a sand bar at the entrance to Girvan, our approach was governed by the tide so we decided that with the prevailing weather conditions it would be more prudent to return to Troon and wait for a more suitable day.

up in Bangor marina at 1845. We always gain experience when sailing and this was the first time I have spent 5 days in one port. It was also the first time I remember the wind blowing hard from one area.

However, we did enjoy the challenges and some very fast sailing.

We were due back in Belfast on Friday as Brian was committed to attend a wedding on Saturday. It continued to blow and gust from the south for the next three days. We listened to every forecast but there was no respite. Brian took the ferry to Belfast on Friday and he was lucky that there was a sailing as they encountered force 10 southerlies in the Irish Sea and he told us later that everyone on the ferry was sick except himself! On Saturday, my son Paul came over to join us for the return voyage. On Sunday morning we departed Troon at 0700 having spent 5 days there. It was a complete change from the preceding days, the sea was flat and there was little wind so we motored along happily with the autopilot on and opened a bottle of wine to celebrate the return of sunshine and blue skies. We tied

# Reaping the benefits of the Class 4 Ticket

Capt. Peter J. Mullins

Readers of the 1998 ICC Annual may recall a few words I wrote about the new "MCA Class 4" ticket which I took at the Warsash Marine College in Southampton. Since then, this qualification has become known as the MCA Master of Yachts up to 3000 grt with not more than 12 passengers. The ticket, if I may call it, has become the bellwether in the industry and one which owners and insurance companies will look for in Captains who apply for a position in today's growing fleet of mega yachts, whether private or commercial.

Last year I decided it was time to put my hard earned ticket to some use and, rather than look for a permanent position, I set out to explore the relief skipper market, a position I like to call "Guest Captain". The industry has changed greatly since I turned from Poacher to Game Keeper some twenty years ago. Back then there was a fraction of the yachts afloat with professional crews as there are today. In the early 80's a Swan 65, an Ocean 71 or a Nic 70 were big yachts. Typically these vessels were crewed by skippers and their girl friends. The nesting syndrome would inevitably arrive, soon followed by the pitter patter of little feet and they would leave the industry and return to or look for a shore based job. Some of course stayed on, deciding to make yachting their chosen career and have now moved up the tonnage ladder and are today's mega yacht captains. Twenty years ago the captain's salary on a 20M sailing yacht might have been \$1750 per month plus his chances, with no security of tenure. Today, should he be running a 55M motor yacht he is probably taking home upwards of \$15,000 a month, with benefits, bonus and an employment contract. On board a small yacht the captain's job is mostly hands-on, working as engineer, deckhand, steward and possibly even cook. As the crew size increases, so the captain's job gradually shifts from worker to manager and supervisor. The larger the yacht, the more complex the operation, and the captain must be skilled in administration,

personnel management, accountancy and diplomacy. The only constant is ship handling, perhaps the easiest part of the job.

A few years ago I was asked to fill in as relief captain on a 92ft. S&S designed Camper and Nicholson ketch called Victoria of Strathearn and indeed Brian Smullen ICC and I delivered her trans Atlantic and a short account of that passage appeared in this column. The owner has since built the third generation of the same name and I was delighted to receive an email from her captain to inquire whether I would be interested in helping with the delivery from Tahiti to Antigua in November 2001. Victoria is a 40M ketch built in New Zealand by Alloy Yachts and designed in the spirit of tradition mode. She has in-boom furling and carbon rigs by Marten Spars, the top of the main mast being 48M from the water. She draws about 3.9M, carries 13 tons (13,000L) of fuel, is powered by a 750 Hp (558kW) MTU V12, and has 2 x40Kw generators. While essentially she is a power up vessel (i.e. the need to run a generator 24/7) she can run silent for up to 18 hours at a pinch. She is run with a complement of five, Captain, Mate, Engineer, Cook and Stewardess. The passage from Tahiti to Antigua is essentially uphill and against current all the way and we were expecting the worst. We had to make the Antigua Charter Brokers Show, so time was of the essence. Murphy and Sod took a well-earned vacation and we experienced light airs all the way and relied heavily on the good offices of Mr. MTU and his assistant Dr. Diesel. Leg one to Marquesas, a distance of 780 miles, was completed in 3 days 3 hours at an average speed of over 10 knots. A quick pit stop of less than 24 hours for fuel and we were on our way for the long haul to Galapagos. This leg of some 3,100 miles was completed in just over 15 days at an average speed of 9 knots. This distance was way in excess of our estimated range under power but with fine tuning of the variable pitch prop and reducing generator time we made it with 1500L still in the tanks, and we actually sailed sans motor for about 36 hours. Another pit stop in the Galapagos, and 24 hours later we were bound for Panama, 875 miles away which we made in a little over 3 and a half days. A night transit of the canal in the company of a large car transporter and we were bound for Antigua. This leg could have been a toughie but Murphy was busy with a hurricane to the north which sucked all the wind out of the Caribbean basin and, in light SW'y air, we scampered to Antigua, 1,200 miles in less than 5 days. Victoria made the Charter Boat Show with ample time to spare and enjoyed a busy winter season. After the Classic Regatta the captain took a well-deserved rest and asked me to take over again for a few months and bring the yacht north. I was on from 1 May to mid-August and took the boat north to Camden, Maine, back to Newport, RI, cruised Long Island Sound and the Islands and delivered her back in Boston. For the first time I got to enjoy some stunning sails, record breaking passages and three full gales. Antigua to Bermuda, a logged distance of 948 miles in 3 days 18 hours at an average speed of 11.7 knots all under sail. Bermuda to Camden Maine, 770 miles, 2 days 18 hours 11.3 knots. It was during this leg that we experienced two gales with sustained winds in excess of 40 knots. With staysail



Victoria of Strathearn 92 ft. S&S.



*Inspiration* 5,600 h.p.

set and a heavily reefed mizzen *Victoria* handled like a dream with little or no discomfort or fear down below. She is a credit to her designer Bill Langan and her builders. She reminded me of a well loved hunter I once owned which could well be described as having "Good looks, sure of foot with a good turn of speed and, above all, no vices".

In the business of being a "Guest Captain" one must cover all the bases and not just get tarred with the "Sail Boat" brush. One can easily fall into this niche so when the opportunity came up to relieve the captain on the 50M motor yacht *Inspiration* for 2 weeks I jumped at the chance. From 1988 to 1995 I ran a motor yacht so I was not totally all at sea if you will excuse the pun. *Inspiration* ran with a crew of 10 and took 10 guests. Enter a completely new world of yachting with bars on your shoulder, first officers, chief and second engineers, chefs and sous chefs, a chief stewardess and other lesser mortals. *Inspiration* is the biggest Broward motor yacht built to date and is powered by 2 X 2800 HP V16 engines. Weighs in at nearly 500 tons and cruises at 13 knots and tops out at 20. The job of the captain is almost entirely an executive position. Keep the dirty side down, don't let anyone get hurt and keep the show on the road. Like any ship you rely entirely on your officers, don't change a thing, and keep the peace amongst the crew which is probably the hardest thing. It was an enjoyable experience and the rewards are excellent with the added bonus of having one's own salubrious accommodations, usually situated on the third floor, with bedroom and bathroom en suite and office attached!

By August of this year I had started to build up a bit of a reputation in the relief world and was thrilled to get a phone call via satellite from the expedition motor yacht *Turmoil* who was beset in ice trying to make the NW Passage from west to east. In 2001 she made it through unassisted from east to west, the first mega yacht to accomplish this feat. *Turmoil* is well known to our Hon. Editor Paddy Barry and his *Northabout*

crew; they met up many times in '01. Two days after handing *Victoria* over to her full time captain I was bound for Dutch Harbor in the Aleutian Islands of Alaska. *Turmoil* is just over 150 ft. in length and weighs in at over 500 grt. She is built on the lines of a trawler, with Four Seasons Hotel accommodations below. She is powered by twin Cat 3508's and cruises at between 12 and 13 knots in all but the worst weather, which typically gives daily runs of over 300 nm. When I joined the ship she was refueling, she carries about 40,000 gallons, and we left immediately for San Diego, California, 2,500 miles distant, which we made in just over 8 days in a mixed bag of weather. She remained in San Diego for two weeks while all the crew took a well-deserved break and some yard work was accomplished. The next leg took us to Panama,

a distance of 3,000 nm, through the canal and on to Ft. Lauderdale for another 1,200 miles.

As soon as the lines hit the dock, I will be heading north again to Newport Rhode Island to take *Victoria* to Ft. Lauderdale in time for the big in-water boat show as a display exhibit of New Zealand craftsmanship and the designers, and then on to the islands for the winter. One of the requirements of the MCA class 4 ticket is to log sea time in order to keep currency, not unlike a flying license. Doing the math in the year November 01 to November 02 I have logged just under 25,000 sea miles. As one is paid on a per diem basis there is not much time given to sight seeing; however it does give one a quick overview and whets the appetite for another visit some day.



*Turmoil* 150 ft.

# A North Brittany cruise on *Beowulf*

## Bernard Corbally

Having enjoyed virtually non-tidal sailing in the Baltic Sea in 2001, it was decided to explore North Brittany in 2002 and enjoy the challenge of navigating with up to twelve metre tides. The crew, Erica Corbally, Brian Taylor, Diana Allen and Robin Clapham, arrived by car to join the skipper at St. Malo marina in the late afternoon of Thursday 6th June. The marina is reached by turning to port after locking into the Bassin Vauban. We were berthed right up in the far right hand corner of the marina, directly in front of yacht club "La Societe Nautique de la Baie de St. Malo". We were also close to the marina office building, where adequate facilities were accessed by a door lock code (no seats on loos!).

The historical maritime walled city of St. Malo, was founded in the 6th century. It was 80% destroyed by bombs in 1944 and subsequently rebuilt, as it was, using the original plans, which had been smuggled out of the city during the German occupation. There were plenty of enticing restaurants, but the food and service in "La Princess Anne" was particularly outstanding.

On Friday, Diana drove us to Dinan, which is another well-preserved walled city. It is located above the River Rance and is full of fascinating old buildings including the most impressive 14th-century "Duchess Anne Tower". A very steep street, lined with beguiling shops, leads down to the riverbank, where many yachts were moored. The sea lock into the river is about ¾M above St. Malo and the flood tide can be carried all the way to the upper tidal lock at Le Chatelier. Only yachts drawing less than 1.3m. can navigate the last 3M to Dinan.

We cast off in the marina at 08.00 to join several other yachts that were waiting for the first lock opening about 2 hours before local high water. Diana and Erica, having heard the forecast of NW F.4, were happy to drive around to our destination St. Quay-Portrieux (32M), which can be entered at any state of tide. It took some time for a freighter to clear the lock before the yachts were allowed to enter at 08.40. We then enjoyed some fun sailing close to lots of islets and rocky shoals as we passed through Chenal D'Erquy, then north of the Evette buoy and south of Les Comtesses and Rohein Lt. Ho., heading for the Roseliere Buoy marking the southern entrance to Port d'Armor marina. Although we experienced some sunshine, we also endured a few drops of rain during the passage. We were slightly apprehensive of a depth of 1.4m. on our chart as we approached the marina at close to low water. But it was not a problem as we registered a minimum of 2.5 m. and arrived safely at the Visitors' Pontoon No.7 at 13.50, where the girls were waiting with our lunch. The marina was quite spacious with excellent facilities. Erica and the skipper enjoyed a delightful cliff walk along the coast north of the marina as far as Pointe du Semaphore before dining on board.

Sunday was also wet and windy and was appropriately designated a rest day, which we used to drive to the attractive seaside town of Binic. We were not impressed by the small tidal marina and pleased that we had left it off our itinerary. Au Vieux Logis Restaurant provided us with an excellent lunch, which extended well into the afternoon.

Monday was a dull overcast day with occasional quite heavy showers. Customs & Excise paid us a visit at 13.30 and, having checked passports and ship's papers, wished us rather better weather for the rest of our holiday. We filled up with fuel at

15.00 and then headed out through the north passage making for Paimpol (16.5M). The girls decided to drive ahead to ensure that there was space for us in the marina. A WSW F.5 wind allowed us to sail most of the way to the conspicuous white square tower "L'Ost Pic". Moderate visibility and showers prevented us from enjoying views of the coastline. The Anse de Paimpol dries out for almost two miles from the harbour. So, we made sure to arrive about an hour before high water and found the lock open with a green light for entry. There were ropes hanging down the lock walls, which were very convenient for securing our yacht. We motored straight ahead out of the lock to moor on Visitors' Pontoon A, immediately after the entrance to Bassin No.1 and almost opposite the harbour office and facilities building.

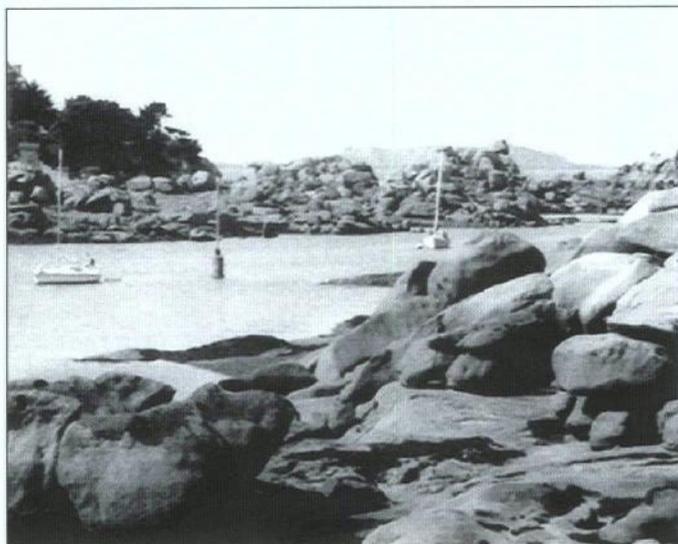
Tuesday was a rather better day with sunny spells. It was market day in town, which we welcomed for replenishing ship's stores. We also found a very pleasant cliff top walk to the south of the harbour. Having listened to Ireland beat Saudi Arabia (3-1) on the radio, we celebrated uptown with a superb dinner in "Au Vieux Logis" restaurant (Tel. 02.96.73.3556).

We reluctantly locked out of Paimpol at 07.20 on Wednesday in order to take the inner passage round Pte de la Trinite and Pte de l'Arcouest and inside Les Piliers into the Chenal de Ferlas at close to high tide. The scenery should have been fabulous, but with heavy mist and poor visibility, we had great difficulty in even sighting the buoys and were mighty grateful to have radar and a plotter linked to our GPS. Once through the Chenal, it was an easy passage up the Riviere de Pontrieux up to Lézardrieux. We berthed briefly in the outer marina before being allocated a berth in the newer inner marina, which we entered over an automatic sill, which is open about three hours either side of high water. We had arrived at a delightful location for our breakfast. It was less than ten minutes walk, through a short cut, up the hill to the very pleasant small town. The crew decided to walk back to Paimpol



Erica takes the helm.

Photo: Bernard Corbally.



Anchorage under Chateau de Costaeres at Ploumanac'h.

Photo: Bernard Corbally.

to collect the car while the skipper caught up on his lost sleep. We dined extremely well that evening in Auberge de Trieux.

The car was put to use again on Thursday to bring us to fortress town of Guingamp, which has a history dating back to the 14th-century. There were many impressive granite buildings and lots of half-timbered houses to be admired. We thought that the Italianate Fountain in the Place du Centre was particularly beautiful. Little remains of the ramparts and of the castle, which Cardinal Richelieu had demolished. We found Creperie Du Roy to be a super place for lunch. We then drove the very pleasant tourist scenic route "Circuit de Falaise" and called in to see the interesting ruins of the Abbey de Beauport on our way back to Lézardrieux.

The crew lingered over breakfast on Friday, understandably reluctant to set forth once again in poor visibility. However the fog lifted a bit at 08.45 and we set forth against a 1kt. tide to head for Brehat Island. The sun was shining when we picked up a white visitor's buoy in La Corderie Bay, where there was only one other yacht at anchor in the bay despite the availability of seven buoys. We enjoyed a magical few hours relaxing in this most beautiful anchorage and then lunched in the cockpit before casting off for Tréguier at 13.47.

The sky was becoming overcast and threatened rain as we headed for The Moisie Channel at the start of the flood tide, with our kedge anchor ready on the counter as a reassuring safeguard. We kept well clear of the Cain ar Monse Reefs and then followed a route close inside several drying shoals, which provided some excitement for the crew and kept the skipper on his toes. We were anxious to be through the Passe de la Gaine, inside the impressive Les Heaux Light House (48m.), before the tide really picked up against us. The North Brittany and Channel Pilot provides very detailed guidance to this route, which we followed very carefully, particularly as the shallowest part of the passage dries about 2m. mid-way between two green beacons. However, our most nail-biting bit was easing our way through the narrow gap between Les Duono Reefs and the Pont de la Gaine port mark, when our depth went down to ½m. below the keel. Everybody breathed a sigh of relief as we cleared into the deep water approaching the Pen ar Guezec at 15.20 and sighted the prominent white La Corne Lt. Ho., marking the entrance to the narrow Tréguier River.

Despite somewhat inclement weather, our passage up the river was delightful. The scenery became quite rural as we carefully followed the buoyed passage between mud banks. Most yachts should be able to reach the Tréguier marina at any state of tide, but we were glad to have a bit of tide under us as cleared the last bend and crossed a shallow patch to reach the

marina. We moored on the north side of the nearest pontoon, a few slots in from the end. The fuel berth was a few slots further in on the same side. The tide runs strongly through the pontoons. Brian and the skipper bussed back to Lézardrieux to collect the car.

Tréguier is a traditional marketing town with narrow streets in the old part, which are lined with medieval timbered buildings, some of them leaning out over the street. The main square is dominated by the huge 14th-century St. Tugdual's Cathedral with its magnificent 205ft. open-work spire (18th century). The cathedral is reputed to be one of the most beautiful Gothic buildings in Brittany and certainly impressed us. The fine stone quays below the marina were used to berth sailing ships in the old days.

We went for a superb countryside drive on Saturday, following the scenic tourist route "Circuit de Anjone". We stopped at Plougrescat to marvel at the bent spire church and wondered how the architect could have lived down such a prominent mistake! We also visited Rocha Jaune, where we found a tiny local restaurant that served us an excellent fresh seafood lunch. We stopped to admire magnificent rocky coastal views at Pointe du Chateau, Port Blanc and the Treguignec Beach. A gourmet dinner in the highly recommended Auberge de Tregor completed a memorable day.

The original plan to spend Sunday night at Ploumanac'h was modified at Brian's suggestion to investigate alternative destinations with proper marina facilities. Perros Guirec (22M) was identified as ideally suitable and the girls decided to drive there ahead of us to check the berthing situation. We cast off at 07.20 in order to allow plenty of time to arrive at about high tide, mindful that the lock would only be open for about an hour either side of high water. Everybody participated in the navigation as we headed out of the Tréguier River and took the Grande Passe outside Iles D d'Er. With 2½ kt. tide against us and a WSW F.4 almost on the nose, we had to motor quite hard and monitor our track carefully to keep on a safe course to pass between the Pierre a l'Anglais and Le Corbeau buoys. Having rounded close to Chaussee Des Renauds it was a straight-forward passage to Anse De Perros. The harbour master had told the girls to warn us not to arrive later than 12.00 but we were more concerned about arriving too early! We approached the port through the Passe de l'Est and having easily identified the Pierre du Chenal Tower, we passed north of Cribineyer and headed straight for the Jetty du Linkin, which we rounded to approach the marina lock gate at high tide. The gate looked extremely narrow and we were very glad not to have to cope with a cross current as we motored straight through into the marina at 10.55. We joined with Majella and Brendan O'Callaghan (ICC) from *Brandon Rose* in a waterfront bar to watch Ireland play against Spain and then mitigated our disappointment with a few sociable drinks.

Monday was a gloriously sunny day and we drove round to Playa de Trestraou to join a boat excursion out to Les Sept Iles. It was a wonderful trip during which we were brought very close up to colonies of sea birds and seals, before being landed for an exploratory foray on Ile Aux Moines, where we walked up to the top of the hill to view an old fort. The views of the surrounding islands and rocks were fantastic. On the return journey, we were brought close in to Ile Renote and then along the rock strewn coast past Ploumanac'h back to Trestraou bay.

As we cast off in Perros Guirec marina at 12.10, the skipper, while allowing for the wind direction, misjudged the strength of the tide across our berth in the opposite direction and had to be strenuously fended off the neighbouring yacht, fortunately without damage to either boat. Passing inside the Bernard and Legonet rocks, we motored against a WNW F.4 to pick up a white Visitor's Mooring right under the dramatic and beautiful Chateau de Costaeres on Ile de Costaeres inside the entrance to Ploumanac'h bay. We stayed for a cockpit lunch while we enjoyed one of the most enchanting anchorages in France, seen

at its best in sunshine. We were completely protected and there were magnificent views in every direction. We calculated that we would touch bottom at low tide. Whereas, if we crossed the sill and rafted up to a pontoon in the inner harbour pool, we would just stay afloat

Although sorely tempted to stay where we were, we set forth for Trébeurden (10M) at 14.20. Erica took the helm for a spell and experienced what it is like to be soured by spray as we crashed through a moderate sea. We sighted lots of enticing sandy beaches as we stayed well outside the coastal reefs to arrive at Trébeurden at 16.00. Our depth-sounder registered 3.5m. over the weir gate as we entered the marina, where we were delighted to see *Tam-O-Shanter* with Anne and Brian Kenny (ICC) on board. The gate opens at least 3½ hours each side of high water but may only have 1.6m. clearance over the sill when it opens and not much more on the approach! The Visitors' Pontoons are G & F, where we measured 1.8m. at low water, which had us just touching the bottom. We were located close to fabulous beaches and the local restaurants were good, but we were unable to buy fresh bread for breakfast. The loos were not nice. The girls bussed back to Perros Guirec to collect the car.

The marina Master advised us not to attempt to leave the marina until 10.30 on Wednesday 19th June, which left us 4½ hours to catch the last lock opening into Morlaix at 15.00, 1 hour after high water. We crossed the weir exactly at 10.30 with 0.15m. under the keel and motor sailed against a 1k. current, slightly helped by a north F.2 breeze. At 11.10, Robin sighted very disturbed breaking water dead ahead and took prompt evasive action. The skipper hurriedly checked our position on the chart to discover that a 7m. shallow patch was causing the disturbance and we went back on track. We were approaching the Chenal de Tréguier at 11.50 and were soon sighting the buoys marking the approach to the Rade de Morlaix and hoping to reach the Morlaix lock on a rising tide. We slowed down when the river began to narrow just beyond Dourduff village. Here the buoys ended and we had to be vigilant to spot the channel markers, sometimes on the banks, which were pretty close together, after we passed the Locquenole moorings. We were about 1M below the road bridge (33m.) and opposite a small boatyard, when the helmsman steered inside a buoy, which looked like a mooring buoy for the boatyard. We came to an abrupt stop in mud and were unable to reverse out, even by rocking the bow with our bow-thruster. Maybe the buoy was marking the channel! There was a set of red transit marks on our port side, which were positioned to assist the passage down stream, but these were sighted too late by the skipper.

There was only ¼ hour left before high water, so we needed to get free quickly. The dinghy was inflated and launched within minutes and the kedge anchor put on board. Robin suggested that, instead of setting the anchor, we might be able to pull ourselves off the mud by putting a line on the buoy. However, in the process of putting the line on the buoy, he inadvertently knocked the air plugs out of the dinghy, which began to deflate. In the meantime, we tensioned the line and



Morlaix river at low tide.

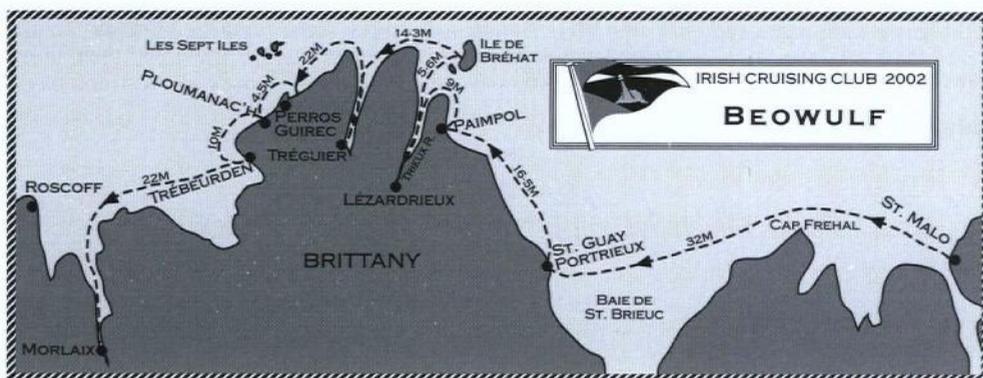
Photo: Bernard Corbally.

found that we were hauling the buoy back to us. Robin found himself in a predicament, as he was unable to free himself from the buoy with the anchor in the dinghy, which was filling up with water. We responded vigorously to his urgent exhortations to wind him and the buoy back to us as fast as we possibly could! Having got Robin safely back on board, the skipper rowed out and set the anchor, but it just pulled through the soft mud. At this point, Brian contacted the girls by cell-phone and asked them to seek help urgently. A passing small yacht kindly set our anchor well back astern of us in the centre of the channel and we were just beginning to tension up, when the Harbour Master arrived in a launch. Having asked us to buoy our anchor, he got to work pushing and rocking our bow while we revved up our engine in reverse gear. We were unbelievably exhilarated as we began to ease backwards into the main channel. He then led us slowly and safely up to the lock, which was open awaiting our arrival. After a jubilant reunion with the girls as we moored to a pontoon on the east side of the river, the skipper visited the harbour office to present our most efficient saviour with a token of our gratitude. We dined in the excellent La Maree Bleue Restaurant in Rampe St.

We were delighted with our choice of Morlaix as the venue for our change of crew. There was a wonderful atmosphere about this 16th century city, with its streets of historic stone buildings, which made it a delightful place to end two weeks of exploring the delights of North Brittany. It was also a safe place to leave *Beowulf* for co-owner Ann Woulfe-Flanagan to join her with another crew that would take her round the coast to Brest.

The tidal range had certainly been a major influence in the timing of our schedule and on our selection of places to visit in Brittany. Images of dried out estuaries and of approaches to

marinas are likely to haunt us in our dreams! Despite quite a lot of inclement weather, we all enjoyed a fantastic holiday, which was tremendously enhanced by being able to readily explore the hinterland in Diana's car. Our memories of superb restaurants and excellent modestly priced wines are most pleasantly savoured. We would highly recommend North Brittany to any fellow ICC members who have not already cruised these parts.



# A Modest Scottish Exploration

## Ed Wheeler

**W**itchcraft having decided to stay obstinately at her berth in Howth, my friend, mentor and bon bibeur Russell O'Neill sprang into the breach with typical generosity and insisted on laying on a special cruise à deux in *Miss Molly*, his Sadler 32 of many years standing and lying down. Starting from Donaghadee in early August, the obvious venue was Scotland. For some time, any cruising I'd done in Scotland had been of the "Let's go as far as we can in the time available" variety and we had always been in too much of a hurry to explore interesting places closer to home. This cruise gave us an opportunity to put this right.

An early start made the best use of the tide and we carried it from the Gobbins to Rathlin. We encountered dense fog as soon as we left Donaghadee Sound and saw nothing of the Antrim coast, apart from a brief glimpse of Muck Island, until the fog lifted enough to see Fair Head and ease our approach to Church Bay. We regaled possible traffic with blasts on a CO2 horn, eked out with tuneful post horn gallops on a hunting horn which the Master kept aboard for emergencies. A flat calm ensured that our failure to stock up with diesel at Donaghadee became a subject for discussion. Arriving at Rathlin and making fast in the inner basin, we were met with a glorious hot, sunny afternoon. I took myself off for a walk through the heather while the Master sought diesel in McQuaig's licenced premises. Complicated arrangements were made with someone on a mobile phone, who was to leave a supply in cans at the head of the pier on receipt of a further phone call "later on". Unfortunately, "later on" the phone remained unanswered. We cannot vouch for a reliable source of diesel on Rathlin.

Flat calm and fog persisted next day, delaying our departure somewhat. Under power, we headed for the Sound of Islay. We noted for the benefit of the Hon. Compiler, E & N Coast Sailing Directions, that what should have been a favourable tidal slant up the east coast of Rathlin was no such thing. Plans changed after the Master contacted a certain former Commodore ICC by mobile phone and was assured that diesel was available from itinerant construction workers in Port Ellen, the medium of exchange being "a few pints". Port Ellen was new to me and has a convenient pontoon with fresh water supply (but no diesel). The town seems pretty run down and the main hotel is boarded up. The rendezvous for the construction workers was

another hotel but there was no sign of life. Being too mean to buy taxed diesel at the garage, we left without any. We cannot vouch for a reliable source of diesel on Islay, or most other islands, either. We fetched up on a visitor's mooring in Craighouse, Jura, for the night, where we found the same situation regarding diesel. In fact, diesel is available on most islands but from a mobile tanker, which expects you to be able to take thousands of gallons. Nozzle sizes would be too large and flow rates too fast for dispensing to yachts in any case.

We had a cracking sail next day up the Sound of Jura to Crinan, where we at last found diesel, alongside a rickety fuelling pontoon at the boatyard. Leaving immediately, we scraped through the Dorus Mór with the last of the flood and took a mooring in Easdale, from which we were promptly ejected by a launch. Asking where he recommended anchoring, we were told "Puilladobhrain". He must have been from the local tourist office. Anyway, Puilladobhrain was its usual idyllic self and we dined ashore at Clachan Bridge on excellent venison stew au Drambuie with an assignation next morning with Mike McKee to look forward to.

Exactly at 11.00 as arranged, a trim Westerly Griffin, *Carragheen*, came alongside and we were invited aboard by Messrs. McKee and John Stevenson to luncheon at a saloon table laid with crystal glasses and linen napery. Highly civilised. Overnighting in Loch Aline, the next morning we beat up the Sound of Mull to Tobermory, much to the disgust of the Master, who disapproves of beating. In Tobermory, we picked up a visitor's mooring near Denis and Margaret Johnston in *Trininga*, who plied us with gin and lent us charts of the west coast of Mull. Dinner ashore in the excellent bistro at the Carnaburg Hotel, rather a find.

The next morning, 10th August, was calm again. Armed with Denis's charts, we confidently approached the Treshnish Islands through the north entrance at LW and anchored for lunch and a quick exploration (by me: the Master, as always on such occasions, sacrificed his opportunity for an energetic scramble on the rocks to the need to look after the Ship, chambré and sample the luncheon wine). This was the other wonderful summer day of our cruise. Threading our way out of the SE channel, we fished for a while but, not having much success, the Master noticed a 4 fathom patch on the chart halfway to Gometra and put a GPS waypoint on it. We duly yachted over and watched the depth come up on the echosounder, when we stopped and put over the rod. Before the weight could get to the bottom, we filled a bucket with mackerel and pollack. We looked into Acarseid Mhor on the NW tip of Gometra, a bottle-shaped anchorage with good shelter from everywhere except the northerly quadrant, where the wind was. There is a reported anchorage on the north shore of Loch Tuadh called Port Rainich, which is described as being hard to find. Despite the best efforts of our GPS, we couldn't find it at all, so the CCC Directions aren't wrong about that. Sorriby Bay on the south side was very exposed, so we sailed out of Loch Tuadh, which was rather a disappointment, and round to Gometra Harbour on the south side of the sound between Gometra and Ulva (we found it's pronounced *Gómetra*). This was very sheltered, which was just as well, as it came in to blow hard from the NW and rain heavily. However, we did find a rock which just covers at HW exposing itself very near our stern, rather more to the south than shown on the



Anchorage at Treshnish Islands, looking east.



The Master and the flambé.

chartlet. Excellent dinner of mackerel braised with olive oil, garlic, ginger and dry vermouth.

This being a leisurely stroll of a cruise, we bestirred ourselves late next day, allowing the wind and rain to reduce to acceptable levels before sailing across to Loch na Lathaich, on the north side of the Ross of Mull. Bunessan is at the head of this loch and we took a mooring off the now defunct boatyard to the west of the village. This was the place where Para Handy sent Hurricane Jack ashore with money to fill the ship's milkcan. He returned much later, penniless, with no milk but leading a goat, which terrorised all on board, ate the captain's trousers and subsequently turned out to be a billy. Not wishing to take any chances with livestock, we prudently stayed aboard.

The Sound of Iona next morning was in sparkling form and we motor sailed through before paying off in a moderate south breeze for a fetch inside the Torran Rocks. Fearsome in appearance, the Torran group are really a pussy-cat in settled weather, as there are good leading marks and the worst ones break visibly in the swell. Scalasaig on Colonsay provided a swelly berth at the root of the ferry pier, but the inner harbour was a tad crowded and tidal and would have restricted our time of egress next day, so we used good springs and had no problem at the outside berth. The Inn fed, showered and bantered us well. We noticed on this cruise that the pubs and hotels all served good food and wine at very reasonable prices compared to Ireland, often featuring local produce such as fresh fish or venison. On my walk, even the notorious "Mudges" of Colonsay, which were once "that large and bold" that Para Handy had had to throw stones at them, left me alone.

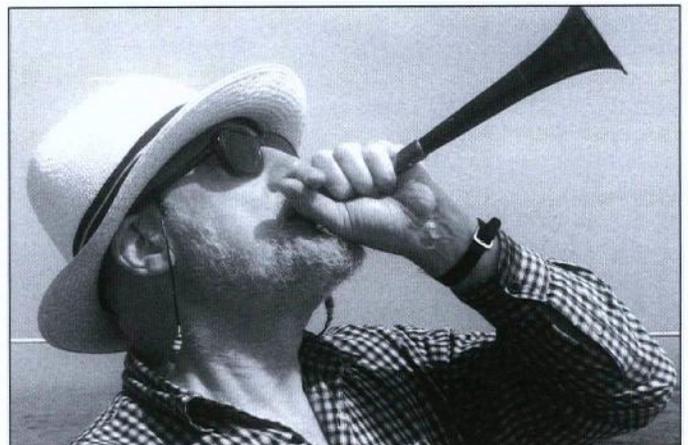
This was not the case in Loch Tarbert, Jura, our next port of call. Neither of us had been there before. The Outer Loch is wild and grand, with just one isolated but very large house visible. The first narrows, Cumhan Mhor, we were able to enter against the ebb. Waiting for the tide to negotiate the second narrows, we anchored off the cottage to the NE side of the inner loch. Going ashore to "Water at burn", I found cockles, mussels and oysters and gathered a when. The water from the burn was cold, brown with peat and just right, I thought, for use in a small personal distillery. The Master being allergic to clams, and cockles being a class of a clam, we ingested the shellfish on the instalment plan. But not before the Master prepared his Dish of the Cruise, namely steak flambé au whiskey Irlandais. Preparing myself with an extinguisher, fire blanket and making sure the forehatch was open for a quick getaway, I watched this performance in some awe.

Unfortunately, the steak part of the meal had become rather gamey, not to say, off, during its protracted stay in the now iceless icebox, so the Master's efforts, visually impressive, were olfactorily less so.

Predicted LW was 17.00 but we found the ebb still flowing in Cumhann Beag, the upper narrows. Pressing ahead regardless, we took the ground for a while and sounded ahead with the dinghy. There is a succession of leading marks for Cumhann Beag but the fourth set appeared to be missing. Lifted with the rising tide, we got up to the broad pool at the head but found the best anchorage occupied by moored estate launches. We had expected this, since we had been overtaken by several on the way up, all containing expensively Barboured parties – as this was the day after the 12th August, there may have been a *Lagopus Lagopus* connection. Anyway, we found that outside the moorings, there was either no water or water too deep to anchor, so we dropped back down to a point in the narrows out of the run of tide, wonderfully sheltered and totally peaceful. When I went ashore for photographic purposes next morning, the mudges took their tribute in lumps. I had intended to investigate the little cairns which are scattered in huge numbers over the hills thereabouts but fled back to the dinghy instead, bald head covered in a thick sludge of dead mudges and sweat.

The forecast predicted strong to gale force south winds later, accompanied by heavy rain. We hoped to stay ahead of the arrival of this cocktail but didn't and bounced uncomfortably through the Sd of Islay with a roaring tide behind us and a confused air/sea/rain interface in our teeth. Port Askaig, although quiet, was not an option and there isn't a foot of quay space not occupied by berths for the two ferries or the lifeboat. Conditions improved as we emerged from the sound and we were just about able to lay the south point of Gigha, where we took a visitor's mooring. Triple warps provided security but there was sufficient east in the southerly gale which blew all night to give us a bumpy repose. Next day dawning bright and brisk, we looked forward to lurching ashore and the Master launched the dinghy in preparation. I was aroused from meditation by cries on deck of "Quick, quick, the \*!\$%\*& dinghy's gone!"; we cast off all lines and set off in pursuit. Already the Avon was nearing the ferry slip, which, of course, had a ferry and large audience in a perfect grandstand position. We swooped, got it, no lost it, 360 deg turn, got it again and managed to avoid the indignity of grounding on a falling tide on a lee shore. Ashore for lunch at the hotel and then showers in the facility at the head of the dinghy jetty. Pilotage note: make sure you take plenty of change into the shower, which is coin operated. The Master failed to observe this precaution and emerged copiously soaped but not rinsed.

And so home to Donaghadee after an unambitious but curiously satisfying cruise in which we once again realised that you can spend a lifetime on the west coast of Scotland and always find something new.



Fog in the North Channel !

# Breton beginnings *Intrigue*

## Noel Kidney

Port-La-Vie marina in St. Gilles-Croix-de-Vie is strategically located close to the town centre and the railway station. It is a large marina and well equipped with boatyard and syncrolift. This is the delivery point for completed yachts from the Beneteau factories in the area and we found *Intrigue*, Bryan Sheridan's new Oceanis 473 on the boatyard pontoon at the SE extremity of the marina, close to the centre of town. An exciting moment! Bigger than we had expected and spanking new!

My own cruising had been limited since parting with our Westerly Griffon *Dulcibella* a couple of years ago after 16 years of coastal and inland cruising, with our young family. Dublin Bay racing had kept me occupied and with appetite whetted by the many ICC members' logs on the area I was delighted with the opportunity at last to enjoy the area at first hand!

We had arrived from Dublin to collect *Intrigue*, which had been commissioned and ready to go and bring her back to Dun Laoghaire. The crew was myself, Bryan, with family Melissa 18, Andrew 17, Mathew 11, my own son Brendan 16 and Michael Cavanagh.

Mike was a late addition to the crew and brought with him engineering skills, which were invaluable as the extent of mechanical and electrical systems in the boat became evident. An experienced racer (used to getting home for his tea each evening!) this was Mike's first long distance cruise.

Bernard Gallagher, who had travelled out to commission the boat, managed only to demonstrate a few of the many features on the yacht which he followed by hosting a celebratory dinner on the quayside across the river from the pontoon.

July 12th. A day spent familiarising ourselves and equipping and victualling *Intrigue* for the delivery cruise home. Our hired car was very useful as we visited the local chandlery 3 km inland and the shopping centre on the edge of the town. Massif Marine had most of what was necessary to complete our cruising inventory with the important exception of compressed air bottles for the lifejackets to replace those left at home due to aircraft regulations.

In hindsight, prior notice of our requirements to the chandlery would have been a good idea and in this instance would have saved us from buying new jackets, which was the only option left to us at that stage.

We left St. Gilles next day in sunny weather at 10.30 on a falling tide at half water. Making our way down a narrow unfamiliar river, each side lined with marina pontoons in a 2kn current on a 15m boat on its inaugural outing presented its own special moments!

Outside the harbour, with the Pilours Buoy astern, we initialised the B&G navigation system by doing two 360s, hoisted full sail and with a marvellous surge *Intrigue* came alive and was soon heeled over majestically under way for Ile d'Yeu in W.N.W. Force 5-6. It was a lovely surprise to find so much boat and so much sail so well balanced!

We were to find the relatively minor differences between the twin boat compasses, the complex B&G integrated navigation system and the handheld GPS confusing and we settled early on for the convenience of the hand held Garmin for navigation until the youngsters explained the technology to the wrinklies!

Making 9.5kn we reefed and reduced headsail in a freshening breeze with little reduction in speed. Our passage planning had not been so optimistic! Port Joinville advised us to hold off for a couple of hours for water depth and we made for sheltered water at Anse des Vieilles near the southeast corner of Ile d'Yeu which seemed an attractive venue for lunch. Reducing sail for the approach the skipper's foreboding enquiries led to the inevitable realisation that as we were reefing we had fouled the propeller with a trailing sheet. The limited space in Anse des Vieilles would have made anchoring to clear the propeller without engine uncertain and hoisting sail we made a long slow beat against tide for Port Joinville. At the Sablaire buoy out side the harbour it remained too choppy to dive to clear the prop and having called for assistance we took a tow into the marina at 19.20.

NK took a quick dip in the calm, and relatively clean marina waters to clear the prop of what was a short length of rope. No damage. Lesson learned.

The marina in Port Joinville is on the east side of the town and forms a separate part of a harbour fairly clearly divided between ferries, fishing boats and pleasure boats. It was so busy! We had arrived the evening before Bastille Day and the town, which is quite small, was filling up with locals and holidaymakers arriving on the ferries from St. Gilles. There was a uniformed men's brass band marching up and down the quays, a somewhat out of tune local school band conducted by their teacher in the town square, and the harbour wall and the streets were crowded with people. A busy, festive and very Gallic atmosphere. The night was capped with a spectacular fireworks display over the Port, which was launched from the outer harbour wall.

Port Joinville with its brightly painted buildings and fresh faces from the windy Atlantic weather reminded me of Jacques



The log takes shape. Your scribe watched by Brendan Kidney and Mathew Sheridan.

Tati's black and white Monsieur Hulot film comedies from the 1950s.

Bastille Day. We awoke to find some of our English neighbours on the marina had received damage to sail covers from falling fireworks. Fortunately we were spared. Anglo French relations in this marina were not at a high point for the French National holiday! After showers, a visit to a boulangerie and clearing the filters on the bilge water system, we departed Port Joinville at 09.30 on a falling tide in wind N.N.W. Force 4 and set course 325° compass for Belle Ile. It was motor sailing for most of the day, the wind and tide moving back and forth enabling changing tacks into the headwind.

Tide took us on an 's' curve, up to 4 miles from our line at one stage. Passing beyond Pointe de Kerdonis at 18.00 we then spotted a capsized hobiecat well off the island, which appeared to be in difficulty, and offered assistance, which was accepted. However as we made our approach with one last effort from the crew righted themselves and looking a bit washed out sailed into one of the many beaches lying on our approach on this felicitously named island.

Arriving at Le Palais at 19.25, just after the ferries had left, we streamed into the inner harbour in a line of yachts queuing to pass through the inner harbour lock gate, which opens for 2½ hours on the top of the tide closing to leave a non-tidal pool which was packed with yachts. Newcomers are so vulnerable in these situations particularly after a long day at sea with a blood sugar and alcohol deficit. We were directed to the western quay, which had a ledge below the pile cap beam, which was potentially hazardous as boats fell and rose in the limited tidal movement. Management was not helpful!

Much tweaking with ropes and fenders followed by the end of day g&t in beautiful evening sunshine.

Fast food for the kids who obligingly returned to keep an eye on the boat, and a full blown fish dinner for the elders in a local restaurant 'La Saline' we had seen mentioned in a 1992 Yachting World. It occurred to us that we had not been the first such yachties to arrive on foot of this magazine article!

As with the previous night we had a fireworks display and street parties until late.

Le Palais is a beautiful place; the town sits under the Citadel on the other side of the harbour and does not appear to have changed much since the British who, having captured it in 1761 exchanged the island for Nova Scotia in 1763! It is a busy place with traffic and music from quayside restaurants late into the night.

Michael rose early for a walk around the Citadel from which he watched a flawless dawn. The crew having showered and paid the statutory visit to the boulangerie we left at 09.30.

Unexpectedly a lifting pedestrian bridge lifted in response to pedestrian needs every 5 minutes or so creating potential chaos to the waiting fleet. Holding a 15m boat in position during the scramble to leave the inner harbour would have been so much more difficult without a bow thruster!

The weather pattern had settled into a stable high on which we, unfortunately, were on the east side. Extending our technological range we downloaded forecasts from the British Met office, augmenting French Meteo printouts, which were available from the marinas each morning. A second high had now appeared which looked set to provide us with light headwinds and settled fine weather for a few days.

We once again motor sailed for most of the day in a light N.N.W. breeze and, having considered and decided against anchoring in the Isles de Glenans, made for Concarneau, where we tied up at 17.50 inside the breakwater. Dinner on board, shopping and a pleasant evening stroll through La Ville Close, which juts out into the harbour, providing a dramatic backdrop to the marina. Concarneau was the home of Eric Tabarly a

sailor with rockstar status in his own land and we came across a number of references to his name and achievements on our brief visit to the tourist trail. Cleanest and best value showers here so far. €2 for 6 mins.

July 16th. Left at 08.10, under age crewmembers comatose. Nice beam reach to Ile aux Moutons, then motor sailing towards the Raz in a light breeze and clear weather. Passing the Spinec and Cap Caval Buoys and Pointe de Penmarc'h with its impressive lighthouse at 11.45, we sailed on full main and genoa across the Baie d'Audierne. As we neared the Raz de Sein the wind dropped and we motored on a foul tide into fog looking for our turning point – the La Plate Buoy. Out of the mist a number of yachts appeared, careening down on the light winds with the fair tide. We sighted La Plate at 14.00, tide swirling around it and surprisingly quickly we crossed the Baie de Douranenez. At 17.00 we reached Pelen buoy watching local yachts confidently sailing inside rocks at Le Corbin, Pit Leac'h and Le Pohen to avoid the tide. We arrived at Camaret marina at 18.00.

Camaret-sur-Mer is a small town on the south side of the Avant Goulet de Brest. It is popular with yachts making passage as it offers convenient shelter between the navigational complexities of the Raz de Sein and the Chenal du Four. We moored at the marina de Plaisance inside the harbour breakwater third out on a trot of smaller boats – in less settled weather this would have been a more difficult exercise in a boat of our size. We met *Stormbird* RSGYC and skipper Carl Bessler with crew including Conor Foley also about to return to home waters.

We needed fuel for our Channel crossing and found the fuelling berth at the top of the first pontoon with restricted space for manoeuvring. Fuel in Camaret is only available for short periods in the morning and evening when the marina office is open. There is a credit card facility described on the fuel pump for out of hour's use in which our Irish cards were of no avail.

Showers in Camaret were available beside the marina office and also further along the quay. Using the former we found them adequate – €2 coin 50c change.

Our farewell dinner before leaving France was in a Pizza/Seafood restaurant L'Abri du Marin overlooking the harbour and reached by steps from the quayside road. This proved adequate to all tastes on board.

July 17th. Departed Camaret for our channel crossing at 12.30 in a light north. Force 3 on a falling tide. The balance of advantage lay with motoring against the tide through the Chenal de la Helle leaving Ile de Beniguet to port in pleasant weather with good visibility rather than waiting for a fair tide. Passing Les Vieux-Moines navigation mark under the Pointe de Saint Mathieu at 13.00 we saw the full tide against us. We made surprisingly good progress, our 78 hp Volvo driving us comfortably through a calm sea with little vibration. We passed between Rouget and its western counterpart Grande Vinotiere at 13.35 to enter the Chenal de la Helle with strong tidal drift now to the southwest. With unseemly haste the skipper ordained ships time as BST as we made good progress past Ouessant and out into the English Channel.

The wind was on our nose N.N.W. Force 4. We found motor sailing was more comfortable on the short sea and gave us a further knot or so in return for the extra distance travelled, which we were happy to settle for.

We tacked into tide along the northeast edge of the traffic separation zone, which we could not have entered without motor sailing head to wind so that we would cross it at a right angle. The zone was being policed with Ushant Radio industriously calling vessels on their radar requesting identification. There was little shipping about.

As we cleared the separation zone the wind went round and we were able to sail on starboard across the Channel, our track on the chart beginning to show an impressive 's' curve across the ebb and flow of the Channel tide as we neared St. Mary's.

Our bow navigation lights failed at 22.00. We had checked them to confirm they were in order on handover and again in the morning before leaving Camaret and we found the prospect of continuing a Channel crossing without them an unappealing one. Mike checked out the problem to find it was due to a short in an inaccessible part of the wiring. Already 30 miles out, we determined to go on with anchor and steaming lights showing. A one hour rotating two man plus one child watch system was devised allowing Bryan or Noel to be in the cockpit at all times.

At 03.20 a stern light which had been on our port quarter for some time moved and opened up red and green lights and appeared to come towards us with separation between red and green opening up. When it was a half a mile or so away we gybed so as to clearly move in a different direction. The vessel, which we could now see was a trawler, continued to turn slowly on its own length, probably taking in nets or pots, and we gybed back resuming our course. A timely reminder of the stresses of night sailing! In fairness and given they probably were watching us on radar the absence on our nav lights must have been no less confusing for them.

Dawn saw the outline of Penzance followed by the hill of St. Mary's, the ebbing tide curving us gently to Spanish Ledge, the entry mark for Hugh Town where, at 08.30, we picked up what appeared to be the last of the visitors' moorings in a harbour crowded with yachts.

Awoke at 13.30 and after a leisurely breakfast and a clean up of the boat went ashore by dinghy and explored Hugh Town. Dinner in the Bishop and Wolf Pub where the owner having taken orders went down to the harbour to get the fish!

*Stormbird* arrived in the evening having sailed for most of their crossing due to engine failure.

We take marina access for granted these days; our to-ing and fro-ing in the dinghy in Hugh Town using paddles brought back memories of wet backsides and searching in the dark for the boat on our return.

St. Mary's has a timebound feel about it, filled with English tourists, mostly elderly, who have come to visit the gardens at Tresco and walk the beaches and headlands. The Isles of Scilly form part of the Duchy of Cornwall, the inheritance of Prince Charles, and the Island retains the somewhat submissive and ordered character associated with such an arrangement.

Yachts were arriving and leaving all day and vacated moorings were quickly taken. The old nautical expression 'roads' was so appropriate, the mooring area resembling a supermarket carpark on a busy day! The yachting facilities were fairly basic but, we felt, as developed as they could be without affecting the character of the place. A particular limitation is that water and fuel is only available from the pier twice a day (when the ferry is gone). And then only on the basis that you can not land on the pier, the ladder having been removed to discourage yachts from staying tied up longer than necessary to fuel. The fuel hose is passed down from the pier to the boat and payment is made by putting the required amount into a purse suspended on a string! The purse did not accept credit cards!

The crew retired early.

July 19th. Fueled and watered, we managed a 10.30 am start on the final leg of our journey. The weather remained settled and we continued our ascent of the east side of the high pressure system which had been sitting over us for the previous week. Leaving St. Mary's and the Eastern Isles to port, we sailed out to find the wind in its customary position – on our nose!

Wind was N.N.W. Force 2-3 the weather continued to be gloriously sunny... perfect sailing weather but not enough wind to get us home in time! So, more motor sailing, with a break when Mathew, Andrew, Melissa and Brendan went fender riding as we towed them behind the boat at low speed. Even in the perfect conditions it was a scary how long it took to go back for them when they fell off!

Shortly afterwards Bryan spotted a turtle about 1.5 m long swimming close to the boat, at that size it must have been over 40 years old, no mean achievement in these surroundings.

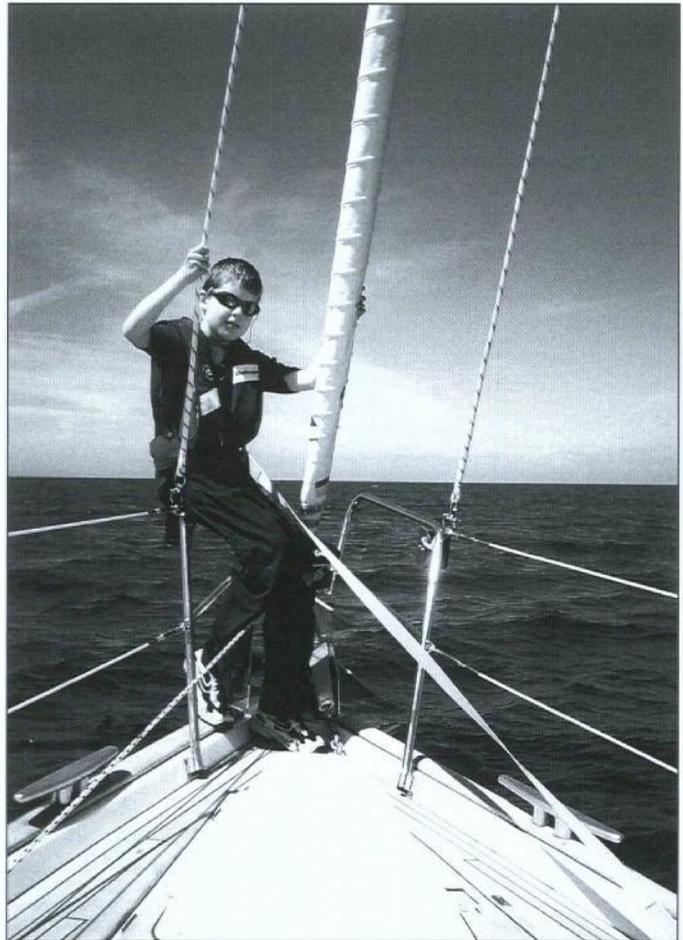
The watch system was revised. Mike, Bryan and myself each taking 2 hour watches, the kids taking 2 hour watches staggered through ours, much better, as we were now able to take 4 hours sleep at a go!

Our navigation lights had stayed on since early afternoon and we were confident as the sunset that they would stay working. Alas! no sooner had the sun set the problem reappeared and we were under steaming and anchor lights again.

We set a course curving between the Tuskar Rock and The Smalls separation zones.

St. George's Channel and the Irish Sea had considerably less traffic than the English Channel and the night was clear and calm, good conditions for astronomy talk! The wind backed and came up a bit and we switched off the engine (at last!) at about 02.45 to sail in a Force 3 through the night and early morning. We cleared the north end of the Tuskar separation zone at 0900 and, now being able to lay the South Arklow Buoy motor sailed against 3kn of tide arriving at 13.50..

With the tide with us we swept past Wicklow Head to arrive at our berth in the Dun Laoghaire marina tying up at 18.50.



'Cool dude' – a well-secured Mathew Sheridan (II) motor sails for the Isles of Scilly.

# Alys to the Algarve via The Azores

## David Park

We wintered *Alys* afloat in the marina at San Sebastian, La Gomera in The Canaries and Hilary and I flew out in late April to find all well. We needed a bottom scrub and as there is no travel lift at San Sebastian we tried the yard at Santiago, which is 5NM to the west but they stated they were full as did the yards at Los Cristianos and Los Gigantes on Tenerife.

The kindly marina girl finally rang the fishermans cooperative yard at La Restinga on Hierro, the smallest and most westerly of the Canaries, and they agreed to lift us out

And so on 5/5/02 we sailed to Restinga and had the usual hammering in the Acceleration Zone (AZ) between the islands; the wind rising to F7 in minutes. We sailed, fully reefed, the 55NM in just over 9 hours; an average of 6KN. Restinga is a small unspoilt fishing village but unfortunately the yard had no toilet or shower facilities so we stayed at a basic pension which was only 100 yards away. We stayed a week here, doing all our own work and it was cheap; our stay, a power wash and the lift in and out was only Eu.172. Hierro is a very beautiful island untouched by the tourist industry. We took a taxi around the island, which can be done in one day, stopping for a drink at the new Parador and then visiting the spectacular pine forest in the centre of the island. And so in mid-May we motored back to Gomera and once through the AZ and it's large sea, it was flat calm.

Our impressions of the Canaries are mixed. They are difficult islands to sail in due to the Acceleration Zones and their accompanying high winds and seas. Some of the marinas are full and others, like Gomera, are rapidly filling up with Spanish yachts and motor cruisers. It is easy to envisage a time when there will be few berths available for visitors

Aidan Tyrrell (ICC) joined us in Gomera and we left, bound for the Azores, on 28/5/02. As expected, we had high winds in the AZ areas between Tenerife and Gomera and north of La Palma. For the first 48 hours we had pleasant sailing, on a beam reach, making good 215 NM but then the wind increased, went into the north, giving us a dead beat to windward. On the 5th day the wind steadily increased to F7 and in unpleasant conditions, we hove-to for 7 hours. On the following night we were again hove-to for another 8 hours. On 5th June we anchored at Vila do Porto, on the island of Santa Maria, on a wet miserable morning. By log we had sailed 732 NM, the rhumb line being 668NM; a slow, somewhat fraught passage, that took 8 days.

Santa Maria is a beautiful

unspoilt island and we again took a taxi around it and also visited the Met. Office at the airport who were most helpful in giving us an up to date forecast.

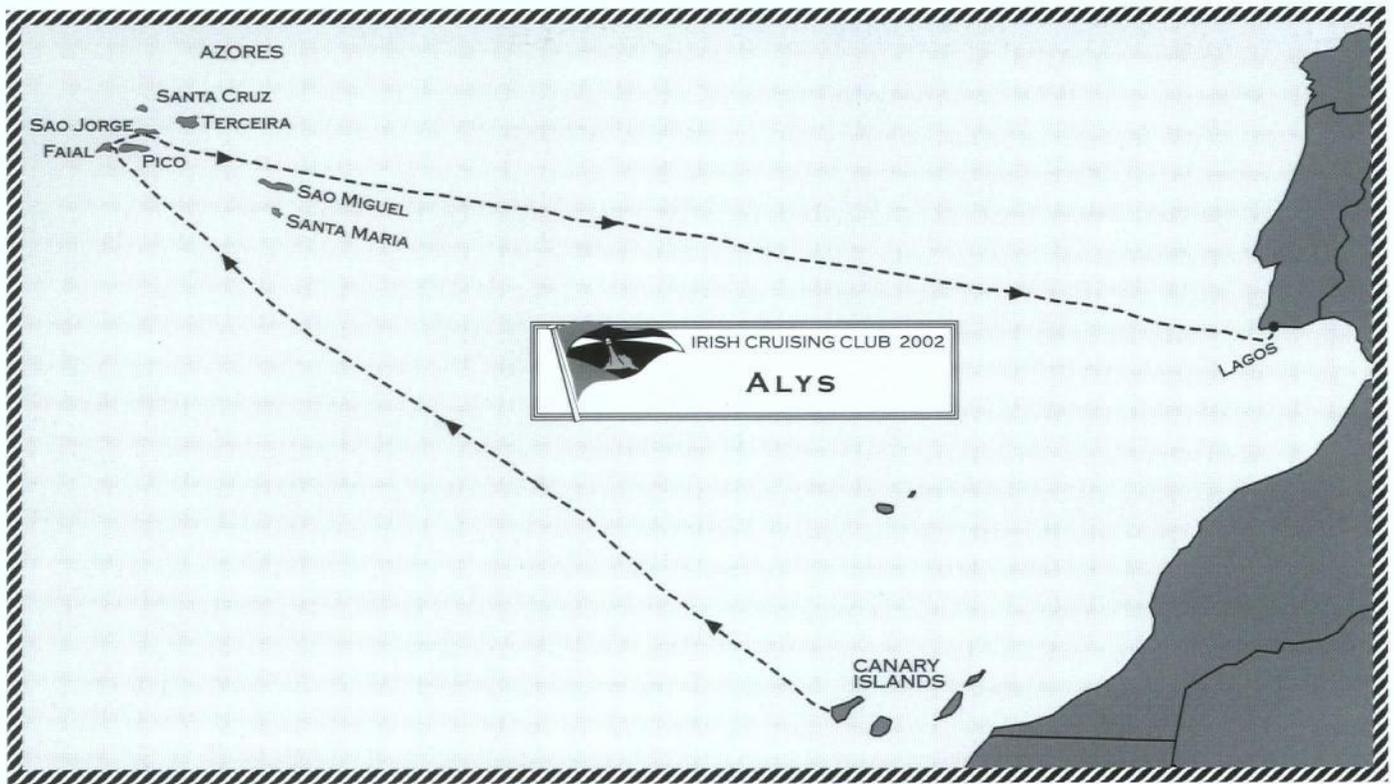
We then sailed north, 55NM. to Ponta Delgada marina, on the largest of the Azorean islands, Sao Miguel. We were stuck here for 9 days as it blew F7-8 from the west and rained most days, some continually. The Azores High had deserted us but we consoled ourselves by watching the World Cup and even had a trip to the cinema.

On 17/6/02 we made an overnight passage of 150NM. to Horta on the island of Faial. Aidan had not been here before so we took a taxi to the west end of the island to see the lighthouse, which had been moved inland, following the volcanic eruption in 1957. There is a fascinating small museum now there which explains, with contemporary photographs, the history of the eruption. The hydrangeas were all coming into bloom and mixed with the wild red roses, the effect was quite stunning. Our wall painting at Horta marina, done by my daughter Julia in 1994, needed restored and this years date added. It had lasted well after 8 years. We took the ferry from Horta across to Pico and had a pleasant taxi run around part of the island visiting a bodega and a small whaling museum.

Aidan was to fly home from Sao Miguel so we left Horta for Ponta Delgada on 17/6/02. The wind now decided to go into the SE, increased to F5, bang on the nose and after 7 hours sailing we had only covered 18NM. Fortunately there was an anchorage on Pico, Lages, sheltered from the SE where we stayed the night. The following morning, the wind was still fresh from the SE so we ran back to Horta. Thankfully Aidan



Carolyn Minnis, David & Hilary Park.



was able to change his ticket and flew home from Faial on 26/6/02.

Peter Minnis (ICC) and his wife Carolyn joined us in Horta on 2/7/02 and we had several pleasant days there. One excursion, by taxi, took us to the NW corner of the island where a Swiss man had a superb small restaurant in a lovely setting. The supermarket in Horta is vastly improved since we were last here so we vittled the boat well for passage to Portugal.

On 4/7/02 we sailed, 21 NM, to the anchorage at Velas on the island of Sao Jorge. We took a taxi around part of the island next day where wonderful cliff views are interspersed with lush inland meadows supporting large numbers of cattle. The island

is famous for it's cheese and we visited one of the small factories. One of the remarkable things about the Azores is the individuality of each island; each so different and so much to see.

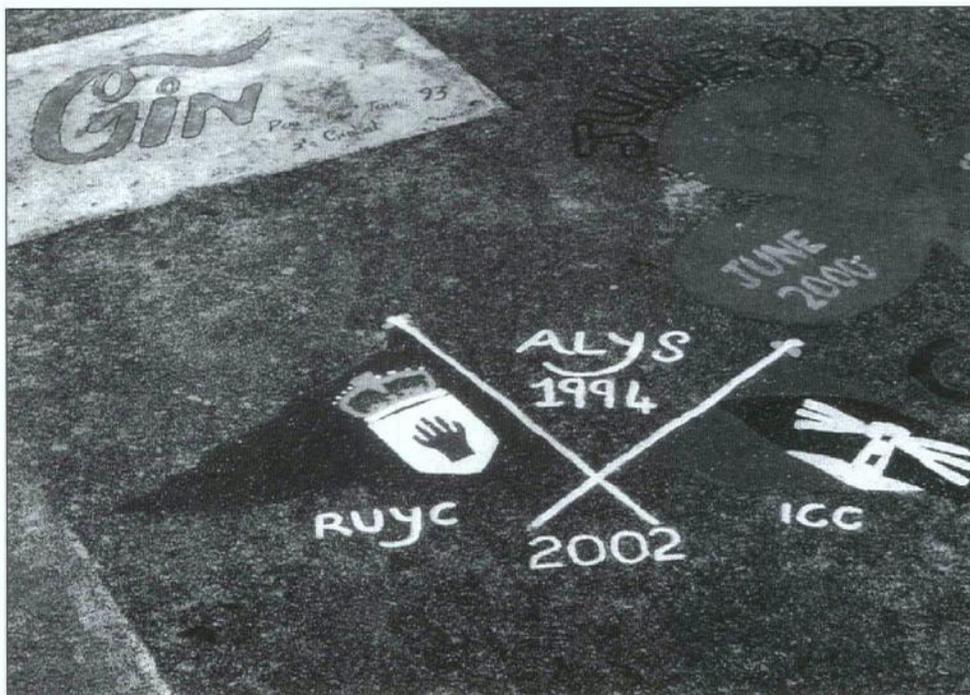
We left Sao Jorge on 5/7/02 bound for Portugal. We had grand sailing for the first 4 days, beam reaching at a rate of knots, but on the 5th day it blew F7 and we were again fully reefed. Still we managed 148 NM. in this period. Following this we had good runs of 135 NM. and 127 NM. but on the 7th day it again blew very hard and that night it freshened even more and we hove-to for 14 hours. At daybreak we opened out a small crack of genoa and that evening rounded Cape St. Vincent in the dark.

We tied up at Lagos marina at 0100 on 14/7/02 – 925 NM in just over 8 days, an average of 4.6 knots.

We flew home for August and then out again in September to Lagos where we had *Alys* lifted out for the winter. There is now a new efficient yard and travel lift at Lagos.

So what happened to the North Atlantic weather this year? We met yachts arriving in the Azores who had F 7-8 coming from Bermuda and had broken shrouds and torn sails. This is usually a windless passage. Then we were gale bound in Ponta Delgada and had two rough passages to and from the Azores. And one of the wettest summers on record in Europe.

The experts say the Azores high slipped south this year. But why?



Wall Painting, Horta.

# Gourmet Cruise to the Islands

## Colin Hayes

Having acquired the yacht of my dreams, a Najad 520, *Saoirse of Cork* (formerly *Laragh*) from fellow ICC member Noel Smith, late last year, I decided during the Winter, to start the 2002 season with a cruise to foreign parts.

I would not normally embark on such a cruise on a newly acquired boat, but having also bought my previous boat from Noel, I knew that it would be seriously well maintained with every wrinkle thoroughly ironed out. In saying this I am absolutely ruling myself out from buying his recently acquired Farr 56 when he has it "readied for market".

A few e-mails later I had an enthusiastic crew of close friends who were champing at the bit to leave Crosshaven early on Friday 3rd May. Donal McClement (ICC) our navigator for the trip, joined Dan Cross (ICC), Nick Musgrave, and Eric Geary and we left the Royal Cork marina at 11.40, fully stocked with all the necessities.

We lunched on Chicken Kiev courtesy of Marks and Spencer, and motor sailing in almost calm conditions we were averaging about 8.5 knots in bright sunshine and had an ETA somewhere in France of about 1900 hours on Saturday.

Generous gin and tonics with all the trimmings preceded a memorable dinner as we watched the sun sink into the western horizon.

A cloudless night and oily flat calm with a gentle swell, lulled us to sleep and at dawn, as we passed to the east of the Scillies, in the light of a quarter moon, we unwrapped Clonakilty black pudding, streaky bacon and sausages, supplied, vacuum packed by O'Driscoll's of Ballinlough and these with roasted tomatoes, toast and poached eggs accompanied by Barry's tea set us up for the arduous day ahead.

We were determined to have dinner, in France, on Saturday evening and we had to make a decision as to where we could get to in time. Still no wind but the Yanmar was performing without missing a beat. During the day we spotted two beautiful square riggers heading up the Channel and some excellent Spanish Rose helped us with a lunch of fresh pasta from Iago's in Cork's English Market, accompanied by my own freshly prepared Ballycotton prawn and bacon pasta sauce.

Our plans for the evening were still fluid but our ETA at Camaret was 2200 hours and the thought of missing dinner in France was too much to bear. As a result Ushant was the spot and we picked a visitors moorings in Lampaul just after 1800 hours local. A passage of 29 hours was not too shabby from Crosshaven and the thought of our first French food gave us the energy to explore the town before deciding where to eat.

Ushant has long been a place for cruising people to avoid and although the approach is a little intimidating the advent of GPS makes it quite easy. The harbour is well sheltered and indeed I think the only conditions that may be difficult are a southwesterly gale but even then there is a small Island/Rock half way up the bay that would provide good shelter. The Island rewards the visitor and we can recommend it to anyone.

Walking up from the well built pier, reminded us of Cape Clear, but with a larger population (900) and some very interesting shops, bars and hotel / restaurants. After much searching and copious quantities of Pernod (tastes much better in France than at home for some reason?), we settled on a local bar with a family run restaurant overhead. The meal was delicious and inexpensive and we finished up back aboard at 2230 for an early night and a final game of "Last Card" (a

stupid but addictive card game that even a simpleton can play) was played, during which Nick fell asleep.

Sunday morning showed signs of promise with a blue sky and a northerly breeze. We dropped the mooring at 0700, bound for Concarneau arriving at 1630 having again motored most of the way in beautiful sunshine. We toured the town, stopped in a rugby pub to discuss the recent Munster win at Béziers and our chances in Cardiff with Leicester later in May. The old walled town is a gem, with beautiful shopping and excellent eating-houses. We checked out a petite creperie and had a memorable evening meal, washed down with very decent local wine.

As this was to be a cruise of the Islands, our next destination was Ile de Groix, but not before the



*Saoirse of Cork* at her summer mooring in Sneem, Co. Kerry.

Photo: Colin Hayes