

**2003  
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 – 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.

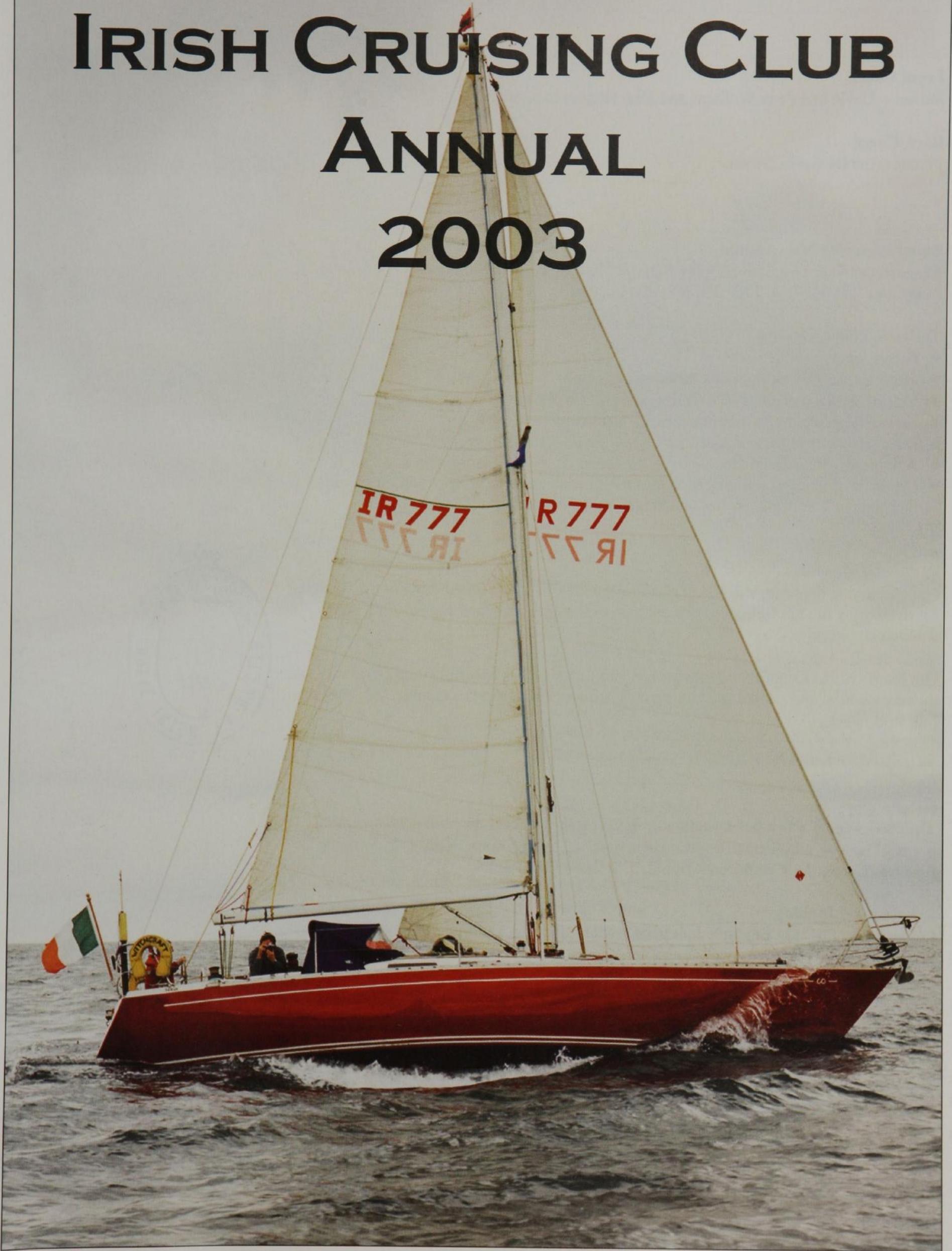
Good cruising. Write and let us read about it.

**Paddy Barry, Honorary Editor.**

21 Belgrave Road, Monkstown, County Dublin.

Tel: 01-280 0820

# IRISH CRUISING CLUB ANNUAL 2003



*Witchcraft of Howth*

*Photo: Kevin Dwyer*

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**Front Cover**

*Reiver* – David and Peter Williams and John Hughes in Scotland.

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**Back Cover**

Photos taken by Kevin Dwyer.

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**Submissions for 2003 Annual**

To reach the Honorary Editor, Paddy Barry, 21 Belgrave Road, Monkstown, Co Dublin (telephone 280 0820) by 15th October 2004 at latest.

The Hon. Editor requests:

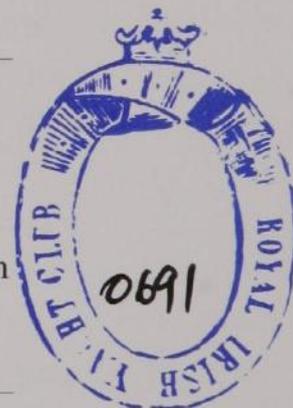
- Fewer 'snaps' – better pictures
  - More upright (portrait) photos would be welcome
  - If using digital camera set it to 'print quality' (300 dpi)
  - All digital photos to be accompanied by 'hard copy'
  - Does anyone read the Index of Past Logs? Should we dump this page?
  - And please, please read the 'Notes for Contributors'! There are changes to it each year.
  - Originals of photos submitted with logs have been passed to W.M.Nixon for possible inclusion in The Book. He has undertaken to return them to all! – *Hon. Editor*
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Our continuing thanks to Bill Rea for organising the Christmas distribution of the Annual, for overseeing the inscribing and presentation of the Club Trophies and ensuring their subsequent return!

Our thanks to Pat Conneely of Typeform Repro Ltd. who has cheerfully and efficiently taken the raw material and transformed it into what we see. Pat retires this coming May. We wish him well.

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# Irish Cruising Club Annual 2003

## Contents

	Honorary Secretary's Report .....	iv	
	Challenge Cup Awards .....	v	
	Obituaries : Kevin MacLavery 1936-2002.....	vii	
	Billy Smyth 1921-2002.....	viii	
	Michael Snell .....	viii	
	Index of Cruising Grounds .....	x	
01	Arctic highs and lows .....	John Gore-Grimes .....	1
02	<i>Waxwing</i> homeward bound .....	Peter and Susan Gray .....	11
03	Trailing and sailing to West Cork .....	Grainne FitzGerald.....	19
04	Norway at last – <i>Sundowner of Beaulieu</i> .....	Roy Waters.....	24
05	A lovely Shetland cruise – <i>Twayblade</i> .....	Jonathan Virden .....	31
06	Almeria to Faro with <i>Mary P.</i> .....	Cormac O'Carroll .....	37
07	<i>Beowulf</i> heads east .....	Ann Woulfe Flanagan.....	41
08	South with OARs .....	Colin Chapman.....	45
09	'The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain' – <i>Daedalus</i> .....	Tim Barry .....	50
10	Exploring the Balearic Islands .....	Tony Toher .....	56
11	A voyage to a desert island .....	Hugo du Plessis .....	58
12	<i>Beowulf</i> cruises from North Portugal to Mar Menor in Spain..	Bernard Corbally .....	60
13	<i>Aven</i> – A Gallic Reprise .....	Robert Barr.....	65
14	<i>Pylades</i> goes to the Faroes .....	Fergus Quinlan.....	70
15	Beagling with boats .....	W.M.Nixon .....	74
16	A passion for Cowes .....	Dianne Andrews .....	78
17	Under seven bridges – and the English Channel revisited ..	John Clementson .....	82
18	<i>Reiver</i> in Scotland, Orkney and Shetland .....	David and Peter Williams and John Hughes ..	87
19	<i>Misty</i> cruise to the Morbihan .....	Trevor Wood.....	92
20	Scandinavia .....	Eleanor Cudmore.....	94
21	Yerra g'wan, so – <i>Witchcraft</i> , Atlantic Islands .....	Ed Wheeler.....	102
22	Sun-Wise round Ireland .....	James Nixon.....	109
23	Back to the beginning: <i>Réalta</i> in the Scottish Isles .....	Adrian and Maeve Bell .....	116
24	<i>Gentle Spirit</i> explores the Welsh coast .....	Harold Boyle.....	119
25	Three week family cruise to sunny Scotland .....	Paddy McGlade .....	122
26	<i>Brandon Rose</i> : Ireland to port .....	Brendan O'Callaghan.....	126
27	The maiden voyage of <i>Pilgrim Soul</i> .....	John Keating .....	134
28	On <i>Carrigdoun</i> to the Azores and back .....	Bill Walsh .....	137
29	From Adria to Roundstone .....	Paddy Barry .....	141
	DUNN'S DITTIES.....	Spread through the logs .....	also 149
	List of Past Officers.....		156
	List of Award Winners .....		157
	List of Members .....		162
	Members' email addresses.....		170
	List of Yachts.....		171
	Notes for Contributors.....		Inside front cover
	The Challenge Cups.....		Inside back cover

# Honorary Secretary's Report

The Committee's election meeting in January admitted eleven new members and Barbara McHenry was elected as an honorary member in recognition of her support over the years for the Hon. Secretary, Cormac McHenry. The names of the new members are on the panel below this report.

At the AGM on the 21st February, I took over the role of Hon. Secretary from Cormac McHenry. Cormac had held the post for thirteen years and the Club was very fortunate to have someone of his calibre looking after its affairs. The handover went smoothly and I am only just starting to realise how much effort he put into the Club.

As an extract from the minutes of the AGM was given in the Spring Newsletter, I shall not repeat the details here except to say there was a good discussion on the membership structure, which is being followed up with a changed emphasis on new member applications.

The Annual Dinner was held in Killarney in March and, as we now expect of this event, was a great success. About 250 people attended the dinner – a nice number for the location and the evening. The 2004 Dinner is to be held at the Slieve Russell Hotel in Co. Cavan on the 27th March.

The Committee decided that control of the library in the Royal Irish Yacht Club should revert to that club, as it was not being used by our members. The books and charts belonging to the Club were donated to the RIYC's collection. However, our members continue to be welcome to use the facilities of the library and to avail of the dining facilities as heretofore.

The last Committee meeting of the year was held in Crosshaven in October. One of the suggestions welcomed by the Committee was to set a guideline on the length of time members serve on the Committee at any one time. This will lead to a gradual change in its make-up, as we do not want a mass exodus of the present group of Committee members who have served the Club very well. However, it will allow for other members to become involved and make their contribution to the Club.

As mentioned in the Autumn Newsletter, the Club's database has been upgraded to allow for the inclusion of mobile telephone numbers in the Members' Handbook. Also, we can include the LOA in metres of members' yachts. So, please

check your details and send me on any changes. We are also able to communicate by email, which will simplify the sending of circulars. About 200 members presently are on email. Please keep me abreast of any changes to your email address to ensure that you do not miss out on circulars, and let me know if you sign on to email.

The Committee decided to appoint an Hon. Archivist to collate the Club's records and memorabilia, and Barbara McHenry has volunteered to fill that role. Brendan Bradley is presently trying to collect the various memorabilia.

Winkie Nixon is writing a follow-up to the very enjoyable "To Sail the Crested Sea", which should be available early in 2004 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the Club. It is a limited edition publication for members and attendees at the 2004 Cruise-in-Company. It will be distributed to members on publication.

Gary MacMahon is organising for the logs from the last ten years of Annuals to be put on the Club's website, to facilitate the planning of cruises. It is also intended to develop a Notice Board on the web site. Topics that might be covered could include;

Members seeking crew or crewing positions;

A list of reputable professional delivery skippers and those members willing to undertake deliveries;

A section for members wishing to buy or sell yachts or yachting equipment; and

A section for those members willing to make available charts, etc., and for those seeking charts.

The Committee would be very interested to receive suggestions from members on the development of a Notice Board, and to hear from anyone interested in developing and maintaining such a site. Please communicate with the Committee through me.

As the activities of the regions in 2003 were covered in the Newsletters, there is no purpose in reporting on them here, except to say that the Club and its members were very active during the year.

Wishing all members "Seasons Greetings" and a great 2004.

*Ron Cudmore, Hon. Secretary*

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE Officers and Committee 2003-2004

Commodore:	Arthur Baker (South)	2nd Year	East	North	West	South
Vice Commodore:	Peter Ronaldson (North)	2nd Year	Leo Conway	Ronnie Barr	David FitzGerald	Donal Brazil
Rear Commodore:	Tony Clarke (West)	2nd Year	Grainne FitzGerald	Hugh Kennedy	(ex-officio)	Chris Bruen
Rear Commodore:	Cormac McHenry (East)	1st Year	Peter Killen	James Nixon	Brian Lynch	Donal McClement
Hon. Secretary:	Ronald Cudmore	1st Year	Barbara McGonagle	David Park	Gary MacMahon	David Tucker
Hon. Treasurer:	Brian MacManus	2nd Year				

### New Members

Kevin Cronin	Alan McGettigan
Anne Hughes	Patrick McGlade
David Jones	Kyran O'Gorman
John Keating	Fergus Quinlan
Nigel Lindsay-Fynn	Gregg Taylor
Barbara McCormack (hon)	Nicholas Wright
C. St. J. Sullivan	

### Deceased members

Jack Coffey	George McCann
Harry Cudmore	Peter Morck
Jim Dempsey	J.D. Pearson
Bob Hutchinson	Frank Sheridan
Harry Knott	William Smyth
Kevin MacLavery	Michael Snell
Brian Tucker	

# Challenge Cup Awards

## Hugh Kennedy

When I was asked to assist the Club by deciding which awards should be given to the writers of the logs submitted for this year, I was, of course, greatly flattered. To receive copies of the logs, and thereby to have a preview, was very pleasing though, to a certain extent, it may dilute the excitement at receiving a copy of our Journal in the immediate pre-Christmas rush. What I did not fully appreciate was how exacting it would be: because, comparing the adventures and attainments and successes of so many of my fellow members, I felt in some ways humbled by the multitude of the enterprises which have been so successfully undertaken by our fellow members.

To make an assessment of the intrinsic value of each of the individual logs and to compare one with another, is indeed difficult, but I have derived enormous benefit and pride from sharing the experiences of all of our fellow members and their crews in the successful exploits which they have achieved over the past months. One can only be enormously gratified to appreciate that the icebergs and ice flows of the Antarctic were visited by one members, and the ice flows and ice caps of the Arctic were explored (not for the first time) by another. In between, in the North and South Atlantic, in these islands, in Scandinavia and in the Mediterranean Sean, the Irish Cruising Club Burgee has flown with distinction.

Having carefully read and considered all the logs I have decided that the premier award should go to John Gore Grimes, for what may well be his final trip to the Arctic. To a less ambitious sailor like myself, it is very attractive for John to reveal his private misgivings and concerns, when he took his ship safely out of the menacing ice flows. His entry is awarded the **FAULKNER TROPHY**.

There were many interesting and exciting logs which might well merit the award of the **STRANGFORD CUP** but, after anxious consideration, I have decided to award it to Eleanor and Brian Cudmore. They were away for nearly 12 weeks and visited 9 countries.

Peter and Susan Gray have continued their circumnavigation of the world. It has been a pleasure to meet them on their visits back home during their period away. In their last log, "Waxwing Homeward Bound", they made a passage from Terceira (Azores) to Kinsale and logged 1141 n.miles. I award them the **ATLANTIC TROPHY**.

Diane and Tom Andrews are very enthusiastic racing sailors, but they also involved themselves in good passage sailing in order to participate in Cowes Week: the Andrews' family were clearly anxious to participate in 2003 again. The trip there and back involves a passage of 500 miles and, in order to merit sponsorship, they had to submit an essay indicating why they



wanted to compete in Cowes Weeks, involving five words: "Passion, Commitment, Creativity, Contribution and Courage". They brought international recognition to their accomplishment of sailing their boat "on its own keel" to Cowes where they competed in *Amethyst* with their usual enthusiasm. To Diane and Tom, I award the **GULL SALVER** in recognition of their distinction in Cowes Week.

There were several logs that could well have deserved this trophy and on careful reflection I have decided that the **ROUND IRELAND NAVIGATOR TROPHY** should be awarded to Brendan O'Callaghan for his "Brandon Rose Ireland to Port". This was a very detailed and informative account of a successful navigation, complete with good photographs, port details and interesting accounts of meeting with other members ashore. It is a very entertaining and instructional log.

There were several entries that would have qualified for that trophy, and indeed for the cruise in Scottish waters, and after

### AWARD WINNERS

**THE COMMODORE** awards **THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP** to the **JEANNIE JOHNSTON PROJECT**.

**THE EASTERN COMMITTEE** awards **THE DONEGAN MEMORIAL TROPHY** to **SUSAN & PETER GRAY**.

**THE WESTERN COMMITTEE** awards **THE ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY** to **FRANK LARKIN**

**THE NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** awards **THE WRIGHT MEMORIAL SALVER** to **JAMES NIXON**.

**THE SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** awards **THE WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP** – to be announced.

The award for **THE BEST DUNNS DITTY** goes to **JOHN BOURKE**.

much deliberation, I have decided that the **WYBRANT CUP** should be awarded to Adrian and Maeve Bell: Back to the Beginning: *Réalta* in the Scottish Isles. (Unfortunately, they met with only two weeks of indifferent weather of the entire 2003 high summer period).

William M. Nixon submitted *Beagling with Boats*. It was interesting, amusing and full of historical and whimsical information: but from it William, Georgina and Aidan Tyrrell, having stored and watered *Witchcraft of Howth*, set off for Glandore where they acted as “mothership” for the Howth 17 footers returning to Howth on Tuesday 15th. Subject to judicial review, I have decided that this log merits inclusion for the **FORTNIGHT CUP**, and I so award.

The **WILD GOOSE CUP** is to be awarded, at the Adjudicator’s discretion for a “log of literary merit”. To me all of the logs had literary merit but in from Adria to Roundstone a good story, replete with whimsical comment, which entitled the log submitted by Paddy Barry of *Ár Seachrán* to this trophy, and I so award.

The **ROCKABILL TROPHY** is for a cruise which involves an exceptional feat of navigation and/or seamanship”. I found the log written by Ed Wheeler a sheer delight. It could have qualified perhaps for several other awards, including the previous one. I read with increasing anxiety how, single-handed, the Skipper of *Witchcraft* was falling foul of an anchored French ketch with which a violent collision was obviously imminent. Having extricated himself from this predicament, he modestly recorded that “hoping that it hadn’t jammed the rudder, I came back for a third and successful attempt at anchoring”. I felt cold sweat breaking on me when I read what was about to happen but, I feel that Ed does merit the

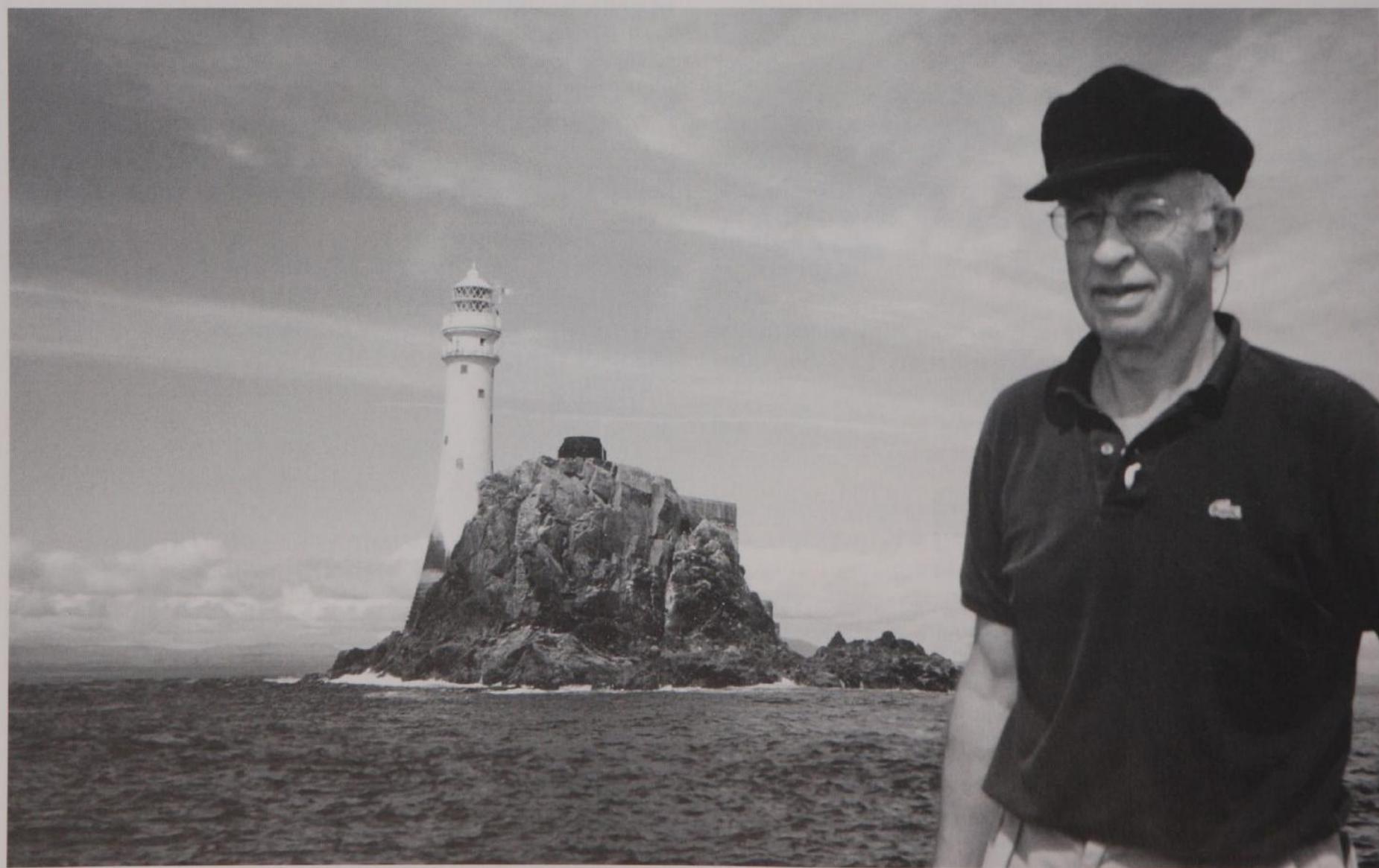
award for a feat of exceptional seamanship having extricated himself from the situation (in which he should not have got into in the first place).

Many years ago another Club had asked me to make an award of trophies for cruising and sailing. I prefaced my general award with a reflection that we all try our best but some have less constraints of time or of crew availability, or of the size and capability of a ship boat in which to make the cruise. Nowadays, cruising involves greater and greater organisation, of support from families, and availability of stores and transport etc. and at ... times.

For sheer enjoyment I decided that I would use the “absolute discretion” to award the **FINGAL TROPHY** for the log which appealed to me most in that respect, and so, the winner is, Grainne Fitzgerald, for her very entertaining account, *Trailing and Sailing to West Cork*, of a joint trip by sea and land, from Dun Laoghaire to Cape Clear and back. This log deals discreetly and amusingly with all the great and small trials and tribulations with which skippers and crews are faced, be the boats large or small!

The **PERRY GREER BOWL** is to be awarded to a person which has submitted his or her first log. The log selected could have qualified for a cruise in Scottish waters, and involves a frightening episode with a very large ship in a dense fog bank. I award this prize to Paddy McGlade for his log *Three Week Family Cruise to Sunny Scotland*.

In conclusion, my great disappointment is that I could not have awarded the prize to each of the contributors. The logs were all interesting, educational and entertaining in their various different presentations. We all owe them our thanks and appreciation.



Our Commodore, Arthur, can walk on water!

# Obituary

## Kevin MacLavery 1936-2002

Kevin MacLavery – sailor, traditional musician, master craftsman, teacher and naval architect – died suddenly in December 2002 at the age of 66. He became a member of the ICC in 1961 after skippering the 18ft LOA Belfast Lough Waverley *Durward*, which he owned with his younger brother Colm, on a round Ireland cruise from Carrickfergus. It tells us much of the breadth of Kevin's achievements and many interests that this very competent cruise, made without any fuss, was representative of just one of many different activities – afloat and ashore – which he pursued throughout his life with a passionate yet civilised enthusiasm.

A son of the Rathlin writer Michael MacLavery, who was a headmaster in Belfast, Kevin went to Queen's Belfast, and then to Southampton for his degree in naval architecture. His early activities in boats had been largely self-taught, and this led to an innovative 'why not?' approach. Having become the first person in Northern Ireland to achieve an Eskimo roll in a kayak – he did it in a

swimming pool – he then simply set off alone one day, and paddled his kayak across the North Channel to Scotland.

He was to be keenly involved with the introduction of modern dinghy sailing in the north during the 1960s. But as well he hankered to take his own keelboat offshore, and he and Colm bought the decidedly worn Belfast Lough Waverley *Dauntless* – of 1905 vintage or thereabouts – at bargain price. She needed re-fastening, so in his meticulous way, Kevin removed the original screws and nails and renewed each one, first by putting in an ordinary steel screw which he tightened home to 99.9% before removal, and then by putting in the final matching brass screw, which could be secured to 100% with minimal risk of shearing.

This detailed work took time, so *Dauntless* was not launched until the following February. But being in prime condition, she was readily sold when the Waverley to which Kevin really aspired – the "new" *Durward* built by Bertie Slater of pre-war materials at Bangor Shipyard in 1948 – came on the market. At eleven years old, she needed some attention, but the MacLavery brothers made her immaculate, and turned her into a perfect little cruiser. With a seamanlike lid over the fore end of the cockpit and a boom tent for nights in harbour, they made many extensive cruises, their third hand for the round Ireland venture in 1961 being Michael Clarke, who now sails with Lough Erne YC. *Durward* could be crowded and damp after a rough passage, but once at anchor with the tent in place, they had a novel way of drying the floorboards. A judicious drizzling of methylated spirits and a controlled conflagration did the trick.

Kevin was game for anything around boats, and in 1972 he was Ireland's representative in the International Finn at the Kiel Olympics. He continued to do his basic training out of Carrickfergus – not always a hospitable place for someone with his surname and background. When a suspicious local longshoreman demanded to know what the letters "IR" signified on his Finn's sail, Kevin



Kevin MacLavery making music aboard *Asgard II*.

cheerfully assured him that they meant "International Racer". He became a surveyor for BIM, and this led to the high level of personal fulfillment which he was to find as Principal of the new National Fisheries College in Greencastle in Donegal in 1978. It was no sinecure, but Kevin was the man for the demanding job.

His sailing meanwhile continued. He navigated a Fastnet for Davy Park ICC in a Mike Henderson-designed 27-footer, the smallest boat ever to complete the race, which they somehow slipped in under the RORC radar – the lower size limit was raised just as soon as they'd finished in Plymouth. He built himself a Folkboat, and as his new career took him to a home for his family in Moville in Donegal, he played a leading role in founding the thriving Moville Boat Club. His interest in music if anything increased. He made the most beautiful half models. He designed the pretty training ketches for the sea scouts. And he was particularly enthusiastic about the Sail Training Brigantine *Asgard II* – on which he was a popular Watch Leader – setting in place the innovative scheme whereby trainees from the Fisheries College sailed on the ship.

Kevin MacLavery lived courageously and with kindness. He was a lovely man.



The 18ft LOA Belfast Lough Waverley OD *Durward* in Sheephaven in Donegal in the latter stages of her round Ireland cruise in 1961. Photo: Kevin MacLavery

WMN

# Obituaries

## Billy Smyth 1921-2002

William A "Billy" Smyth, a member of the ICC since 1960, died in Devon on November 2nd 2002 aged 81. A Belfast lawyer, his active sailing began in childhood, and then in 1947 he became a member of Royal North of Ireland YC at Cultra where – like many other ICC members before and since – he was much involved with the Fairy OD class. However, he also went offshore almost immediately, crewing for A.R. Dale Harris on the 15-ton gaff cutter *Anolis* from Dun Laoghaire to Torbay in 1948.

Although busy building a career in law in the public service in Belfast, he lived for the time when he could own his own cruiser-racer, and in partnership with his twin brother Brian he bought the attractive 1924-built 34ft West Solent class racing sloop *Suvretta*, which they modified into a fast if wet cruiser-racer. At a time when Belfast Lough had few if any harbours with genuine shelter, *Suvretta* was an enthusiastic participant in the regattas, her crew spending weekends on the boat despite the uncomfortable anchorages, although Billy's enthusiasm for the post-race partying was such that he sometimes minimised the time spent rolling on a mooring.

Yet beneath the convivial exterior, there was one very determined cruising man. He went frequently to the Hebrides, and by 1960 had been elected to the Irish

Cr C, an organisation he loved dearly. He served on the committee, and was a regular participant in ICC events. Meanwhile, at Cultra he played a key role in the revival of the North Channel Race to the Clyde, and raced it many times.

In 1962, *Suvretta* was replaced by the roomier 33ft *Wynalda* (built Dublin 1953) – they won the Round Ireland Cup in 1963. Then in 1976 with the acquisition of the Moody 33 Moody Blue, he brought South Brittany within his cruising ambit. Yet even then, few of his fellow ICC members were aware that this seemingly easygoing and most sociable of shipmates had some very clearcut cruising plans for his retirement.

He retired from the law at age 60, and early in April 1982, precisely on time to maximise tax benefits – with just hours to spare, as it happened – he arrived in Howth with his new Freedom 40 cat ketch *Velma*. And away he sailed, eventually departing Ireland from Cork, bound initially for the Mediterranean. For the next nine years, his home was afloat, and in recognition of the quietly determined and successful way in which he went about it, he was awarded the Strangford Cup in 1982.

But 1982 was only the beginning of it. By 1983, he was in Turkey, by now a



Billy Smyth aboard *Velma*, April 1982.

Photo: W.M.Nixon

shrewd judge of whom to take as crew – some stayed with him for more than a year. By '84, he had reached the Canaries, and in '85 *Velma* was west across the Atlantic. Working his way up the east coast of America, he settled for a while in the Chesapeake, where another boat took his fancy. She was the 36ft circumnavigator *Globe Star*, cutter-rigged, built in steel, in which he returned east across the Atlantic in 1990.

That summer, he returned to old haunts on Ireland's east coast, but his brother Brian having married and settled in Devon, Billy Smyth made Dartmouth his final home port, where he lived aboard for some years. From time to time, he came home to ICC parties, if anything even more the same seemingly easygoing and sociable self as before, and certainly not as inclined for a spirited debate as he had been in his youth. But then, he had made his point. He was a gallant cruising man.

WMN

## Michael Snell

We first met Michael and Rosalind Snell when cruising off Mallorca with mutual friends in the early seventies. We were immediately taken with Michael's warm personality, wide general interests and knowledge of world affairs. Thereafter, for the next 30 years, we were very good friends. Michael had a great interest in people, especially those he met cruising. He liked nothing better than inviting them on board, asking them to sign his red visitors' book and getting on with the general banter. His usual greeting was "All well?" – which he obviously was.

Born in 1924, Michael retired early from farming in the West Country and came to live in Ballintubber in East Cork. His house looked over the oyster farm at the back of Cork Harbour, and he could see his mooring before moving his boat to East Ferry Marina. He became

involved in country pursuits and made many new and lasting friends in north and east Cork. The Snells also owned a successful racehorse called "Jack's the Buoy". When this horse won some important event, Rosalind often appeared for the presentation on TV, since Michael was invariably away cruising. When Michael came to Ireland he brought a new Nicholson 32 called *RuINETTE*, which he cruised around the Irish coast and across to Brittany. Later he bought *Golden Harvest*, a nearly new Bowman 40 that was for him the perfect yacht. He took her to Sweden and Denmark, returning to Ireland via Scotland. He later cruised extensively on the Irish south and west coasts, in Brittany and around the eastern Mediterranean. His magnum opus was the classic transatlantic winter circuit.

We were lucky to be invited to join

Michael and Rosalind for fortnightly periods over the years. A kind and generous host who enjoyed good food and wine throughout his life. Michael was an experienced skipper and a keen observer of flag etiquette. He much enjoyed attending Club gatherings and we frequently met up at January Boat Show dinners.

Michael's family must miss his cheerful presence as we all do. He was buried on a Saturday afternoon in May 2002, within sight of the Irish Sea. He had died suddenly at around 9am the previous Sunday, sitting in the sun in the cockpit of his yacht, with his fitting out completed meticulously as always. He was poised to start a cruise up the west coast of Ireland to Scotland. What better end could a true sailing man ask for?

RJF



Leonard Curtin, Brian Kemmy and crew promenading on Canale di S. Marco  
*and splendour, splendour, everywhere*

*Photo: Kevin Dwyer*



Hon. Editor, all at sea!

# Index of Cruising Grounds

Reference numbers: The first two digits of the reference number refer to the year of publication while the latter digits refer to the log number in the Table of Contents of that year's annual: eg 89.11 – Annual of 1989, Log no. 11

Aleutian Islands	93.04, 02.23
America – North	88.16, 89.18, 90.02, 92.01, 92.06, 92.22, 96.23, 96.25, 99.05, 00.02, 02.23
America – South	88.14, 88.16, 94.21, 96.02
Antarctica	97.25
Arctic	89.02, 90.04, 92.20, 94.06, 98.02, 98.07, 99.06, 00.16, 01.04, 01.23
Atlantic Crossing	93.01, 93.02, 97.04, 97.31, 97.08, 98.18, 99.15, 00.04, 00.14, 01.01, 01.17, 02.02, 02.06
Atlantic Islands	88.16, 89.10, 89.05, 89.07, 90.07, 90.10, 90.20, 91.19, 91.13, 92.05, 92.11, 93.02, 93.13, 93.15, 94.11, 94.13, 95.14, 95.18, 96.07, 01.12, 02.19
Australia	88.13, 01.18
Baltic	90.08, 91.22, 92.13, 96.09, 97.11, 00.10, 01.20
Brittany	88.05, 88.06, 88.07, 88.18, 88.19, 89.11, 90.03, 90.09, 90.12, 90.17, 91.15, 91.18, 91.08, 92.21, 91.06, 92.07, 92.17, 92.23, 92.25, 93.12, 93.19, 93.22, 94.20, 94.18, 94.01, 94.16, 96.13, 96.20, 96.21, 97.10, 98.13, 01.15, 01.09, 02.10, 02.16, 02.32, 02.13
Caribbean	88.11, 88.14, 89.19, 89.07, 90.02, 90.05, 90.06, 90.10, 90.12, 93.02, 94.03, 95.08, 96.14, 97.12, 97.18, 98.10, 99.15
Channel Islands	89.15, 90.22, 94.20, 95.19, 95.23
Chile	88.02
Clyde	91.11, 95.21, 02.14
England – East Coast	90.16, 99.20
England – South Coast	88.08, 88.20, 89.15, 90.03, 90.22, 93.20, 94.12, 94.25, 94.17, 95.11, 96.28, 97.02, 97.05, 01.08
Faroe Islands	93.06, 96.15
Greenland	92.01, 93.01, 95.02, 98.12, 01.04, 01.13
Hebrides	89.13, 91.16, 91.09, 91.13, 00.19, 02.11, 02.02, 02.18
Holland and Belgium	89.03, 90.16, 92.13, 94.12, 97.14, 97.23, 01.06, 02.24
Iceland	91.13, 93.18, 94.06, 97.01, 97.17, 99.03, 00.21, 02.01
Ireland – Circumnavigation	92.12, 94.02, 94.14, 94.07, 94.10, 95.01, 95.05, 95.15, 95.24, 96.06, 96.08, 96.10, 96.04, 96.18, 99.04, 99.08, 99.14, 00.06, 00.10, 00.17, 00.18, 01.25, 01.03, 02.04, 02.12, 02.21, 02.08
Ireland – North Coast	91.09, 91.20, 92.26, 93.14, 93.17, 00.03
Ireland – South West Coast	90.18, 91.10, 91.07, 92.02, 94.07, 94.09, 96.01, 96.13, 97.20, 01.24
Irish Sea	88.03, 88.21, 92.09, 92.18, 93.14, 94.25, 94.16, 95.03, 98.01, 98.16
Mediterranean – East	93.08, 93.09, 95.04, 95.16, 96.11, 97.03, 98.06, 00.09, 01.10, 01.07, 02.05, 02.31, 02.33
Mediterranean – West	91.04, 91.02, 92.16, 93.08, 93.09, 94.07, 94.15, 96.05, 97.06, 99.07, 01.02
Normandy	90.16, 94.17
Norway	93.08, 94.08, 94.06
Orkney Islands	90.13, 91.14, 93.07, 01.05
Pacific	93.21, 94.05, 98.04, 99.11
Portugal	89.06, 90.07, 94.04, 94.23, 99.20
Russia	93.08
Scandinavia	88.12, 89.02, 90.04, 90.08, 90.13, 92.20, 96.09, 96.12, 96.22, 96.26, 96.17, 00.10, 00.25, 02.27
Scilly, Isles of	88.19, 89.15, 90.03, 90.17, 91.10, 96.27, 96.16
Scotland – East	90.15, 95.17
Scotland – West	89.04, 88.09, 89.13, 89.14, 89.16, 90.15, 90.21, 91.14, 91.16, 91.20, 91.09, 91.17, 92.19, 92.24, 93.11, 93.17, 93.20, 94.10, 94.22, 95.06, 96.03, 96.19, 97.09, 97.15, 97.16, 97.19, 97.24, 98.09, 98.14, 98.17, 01.11
Shetland Islands	90.13, 90.15, 91.14, 92.08, 93.07
Spain – North Coast	90.07, 90.12, 92.14, 92.15, 92.21, 93.05, 93.13, 93.16, 93.19, 95.10, 95.22, 96.24, 97.07, 97.21, 98.03, 01.19, 02.22, 02.13
Venezuela	88.14, 88.16, 90.19, 94.03, 96.02
World Cruising	91.03, 92.10, 94.24, 95.07, 95.12, 00.12, 01.18, 01.22

# Arctic Highs and Lows

## John Gore-Grimes

*Arctic Fern* is a 44 ft. Najad sailing cutter with a 100 h.p. auxiliary diesel engine. The bow section, stretching back to the mast, is made of kevlar and is designed to do battle with troublesome arctic ocean ice.

Our departure from Howth was on 17th July, 2003 on a wet and miserable afternoon. We were six on board and our first objective was Akureyri on the north coast of Iceland. Nico Gore-Grimes was aboard. He had sailed with me in 1998 when we failed, yet again, to get to Franz Josef Land but succeeded in getting properly stuck in sea ice for six days. My cousin, Adrienne Roche (daughter of renowned sailing parents, namely the late Joe and Terry Roche) joined us. Adrienne had circumnavigated the world on *Spirit of Hong Kong* in the BT Challenge of 2000/2001. She is a most accomplished sailor. Rob Harris was introduced to me by Nico. Rob is a big fellow who sometimes threatens a "high elbow", but his apparent toughness is completely betrayed by a very open and smiling face, which like the Irish sun in August 2003, never ceased to shine. Karen Rudd is a Howth Sailor who is an experienced short distance sailor. She was determined to learn more. She has a remarkable capacity for sleep but it never interrupted her duties. She proved her ability on the helm by consistently clocking up the fastest speeds. Our sixth crew member was Gary MacMahon, an ICC member, who is known to many both as a sailor and as the master of our Club's website. Within the first few hours at sea I asked him what he felt about the voyage and his reply was; "Ah! Not great. It is a bit like licking honey off a razor blade".

Our sailing to Iceland was often without sails. We had a light following breeze which, from time to time, perked up and allowed us to hoist the main and roll out the genoa. The first two days were wet and foggy and having passed to the west of Barra Head we approached St. Kilda and entered Village Bay. There was a windless roll in the bay which would have made anchoring uncomfortable. We pressed on towards the northeast corner of Iceland. The spinnaker took us across the sixtieth parallel but the wind which filled it did not last for long. Fulmars glided by, missing the pulpit by inches and pilot whales swam close to the hull.

The east coast of Iceland remained unseen although, at times, it was less than half a mile away. It was obscured by the dense fog. We had to maintain a radar watch as industrious Icelandic fisherman worked hard to harvest their crop. As we closed Langanes Point we were determined to see Iceland but we were just one cable from it when we saw its cliffs and heard the screeching of kittiwakes. We crossed the Arctic Circle at 15.32 on the afternoon of the 23rd July and pressed on into Eyjafjordur to see its dark rain-swept mountains fall down to the waters edge. A majestic whale rolled out of the fjord as we entered it. We tied up, outside the Akureyri small-boat pier having logged one thousand and four n.m. Gary left to return to Ireland at this stage.

We sailed from Akureyri on the afternoon of the 26th July having met and said farewell to a gallant Alaskan sailor from Kodiak named Adam Lalich, onboard his sturdy steel yacht,



THE FAULKNER CUP

THE CLUBS PREMIER AWARD

*Vamos*. Adam spent the last two years wintering in Kinvara. He has sailed extensively on the east coast of Greenland and has visited Svalbard and Jan Mayen.

Our course to Ittoqqortoormiit (Scoreby) was a pinch west of north and the wind was northeast. Considering the wind was only twenty to twenty-five knots, the seas were high and short but, all too soon, the distant wave crests were lost in the fog and rain. On Monday morning the wind was gusting thirty knots and the rain passed straight across our eyes. We were close hauled and could not point the Scoreby entrance between Cape Brewster and Cape Tobin, which offers a very narrow aperture when approached from the south. We sighted the white glare of three grounded bergs before we saw the dark earth of Cape Brewster. We anchored some at 22.10 on Monday night the 28th July in thirty-seven feet off the rising shore of Ittoqqortoormiit. Its Greenlandic name means "a place where there are many houses". The shore dogs howled and some well wrapped Greenlanders moved purposefully from house to house. The rain poured down and the wind whistled its doleful



Waiting for the ice to open.

Adrienne Roche



Enjar Mikkelsen hut at Alabama.

*John Gore-Grimes*

tune in the rigging. We had logged three hundred and thirty eight n.m from Akureyri.

Ittoqqortoormiit is at 70° N. There are five hundred and fifty inhabitants in, what must be, one of the most isolated communities in the world. My last visit there was in 1985 when the citizens opened fire at *Shardana* with rifle shots. We were too stupid to move on and eventually they gave up. What was once a "wild west" town without a sheriff, has now been utterly civilised by the Danes and by the influence of tourism. No girls came out to our boat at 02.15 to knock on the hull and to offer a tempting encounter with the words; "You me? Me you? You me? Yes?". The small circles of Inuit, passing the bottle from hand to hand, is no longer to be seen. The incredible mess of rubbish, gas bottles, pampers, smashed outboards and all kinds of waste, have been cleared up.

We reported to the harbour master, Jens Bernlow, who was surprised to see us. He told us that the authorities knew nothing about us. We should have registered. We should have received a permit, which, he explained, takes three months to obtain. We should report in, punctually, four times a day. I did not know about these measures and in 1982 and 1985 no officials had ever troubled us. Jens was reasonable about our failure to comply with MRCC Groennedal but he handed me pages of regulations and told us that we could be in serious trouble.

For future visitors to Greenland by yacht, it is important that the Greenpos System is fully understood. It is a mandatory reporting system where all ships (and that includes yachts) must report their position every six hours. They must give their course, speed and actual weather information. The system is primarily used for search and rescue purposes. It has

been in operation since 1st of December, 2002 and all shipping, within the Greenland fishery zone, are obliged to report.

You have to send in your voyage plan and get a permit before you arrive in Greenland. I understand that this will also require production of evidence that you carry comprehensive rescue insurance. I should say that the rescue insurance, this year, cost me €3,400. I am told that registration takes up to three months so you need to prepare well in advance. As soon as you enter the Greenland fishery zone you are obliged report to Greenpos-S.P.

Because the system is a search and rescue system it is important that when you join you must continue to report every six hours and, if you are more than half an hour overdue with your report,

Greenpos are obliged to request the missing report, and if nothing is heard, Greenpos will start a search and rescue mission. That is why you need rescue insurance.

We sailed from Ittoqqortoormiit on the afternoon of Wednesday 30th July in bright sunshine but with a cold breeze. Thinking back to 1982 and 1985, when I last visited Greenland, I can definitely say that we did not experience the same cold as we had done in those years. The air temperature has risen considerably in the intervening eighteen years.

We ran into heavy fog between 70° 06' N and 71° 05' N. We did a radar watch but, on this occasion, we did not expect to see shipping. The icebergs presented a good radar target and we plotted our course through them, at times coming close enough to see them in order to gauge their actual size and to compare them with the radar image. We were soon comfortable with the scale of the bergs identified on radar.

As we approached Antarctic Harbour the fog suddenly



The skipper worrying about the way forward (we did in fact force our way through that narrow lead behind me but went from one pool to the next and then we had to wait).

*Adrienne Roche*

cleared just north of 72° N. The harbour is a large natural harbour but it is an uncomfortable anchorage. The shore at the head of the bay is shoal for a long distance and, although there is depth on the north shore, a southeast wind sent rolling waves and lumps of ice onto the gravel shore. A landing would have been difficult. None of this prevented Rob from rigging up his fishing rod to fish for the fish which were not there.

We crossed the entrance to Davy Sound to arrive at Cape Simpson. We later passed Cape Young with the lofty Mount of God's Mercy towering behind it. We passed the entrance to the stunningly beautiful Franz Josef Fjord and soon Cape-Hold-With-Hope was abeam. We held with hope in an ice free sea with eighteen knots of following wind and blue sky above. Further inland behind Clavering Island, Captain Clavering, aboard Parry's ship, the *Gripper*, found a community of Inuit living there, in a land which must have been as remote as the mountains of the moon. This lost little bit of humanity, comprising men, women and children, numbered only twelve. When Gael Hamkes Bay was revisited fifty years later, the little group had perished leaving many relics and vestiges behind them.

We anchored off the military base at Daneborg at 22.55 on the evening of Friday 31st August, having logged three hundred and two n.m. from Ittoqqortoormiit. The huskies howled their bright night cries. The chill wind blew from the shore.

Next morning, Nico, who had been appointed chief negotiator, went ashore to H.Q. to announce our arrival. It had not been missed and, at first, the officer in charge was a little distant and was visibly upset when Nico explained that we did not have a permit. He told us that we were "contrary to



Nico and Rob using ice crowbars to widen the gap.

*John Gore-Grimes*

regulations". He was uncomfortable and unsure. He telephoned a military lawyer in Copenhagen. Nico produced my Icelandic Honorary Consul identity card, as he handed over the crews' passports. It seemed to do the trick and the conversation with the lawyer from Copenhagen was shorter than it might have been.

"I should have put you in jail. You are in breach of the regulations but the lawyer said it would be embarrassing and that you should go away and make sure that you do not land anywhere else in Greenland. Everywhere on this coast is a protected National Park area."

I walked past the howling huskies which were firmly chained up in the same order as they pull the winter sledges across the snow and ice. It was a bright day but the cold wind whistled through the fences of the dog pound some distance above the shoreline. I walked up to the small scattered graveyard. There was one big white cross which dominated the others. The inscription was plain and it read;

'Eli Knudsen. 13th July 1913 to 26th March 1943. Died for his country. Corporal in the Sledge Patrol. May he rest in peace.'

Greenland was of strategic importance in World War II. After the Germans invaded Denmark on 9th April, 1940, trade and communications with Greenland ceased. The German army and navy did set up weather and transmitting stations on the east Greenland shore which they used to assist German submarines in their attacks upon Allied convoys passing through the Denmark Strait on the way to Murmansk. A German station was planned for Daneborg and a second, larger station was constructed at Cape Sussi on Shannon Island. In June 1941 the Greenland Patrol was



Coming in to ice at Koldeway island.

*Adrienne Roche*

organised. Eli Knudsen was a member of the Greenland Sledge Patrol when he encountered a German landing party at Daneborg. Knudsen was killed. His two comrades were captured but, later, they managed to escape.

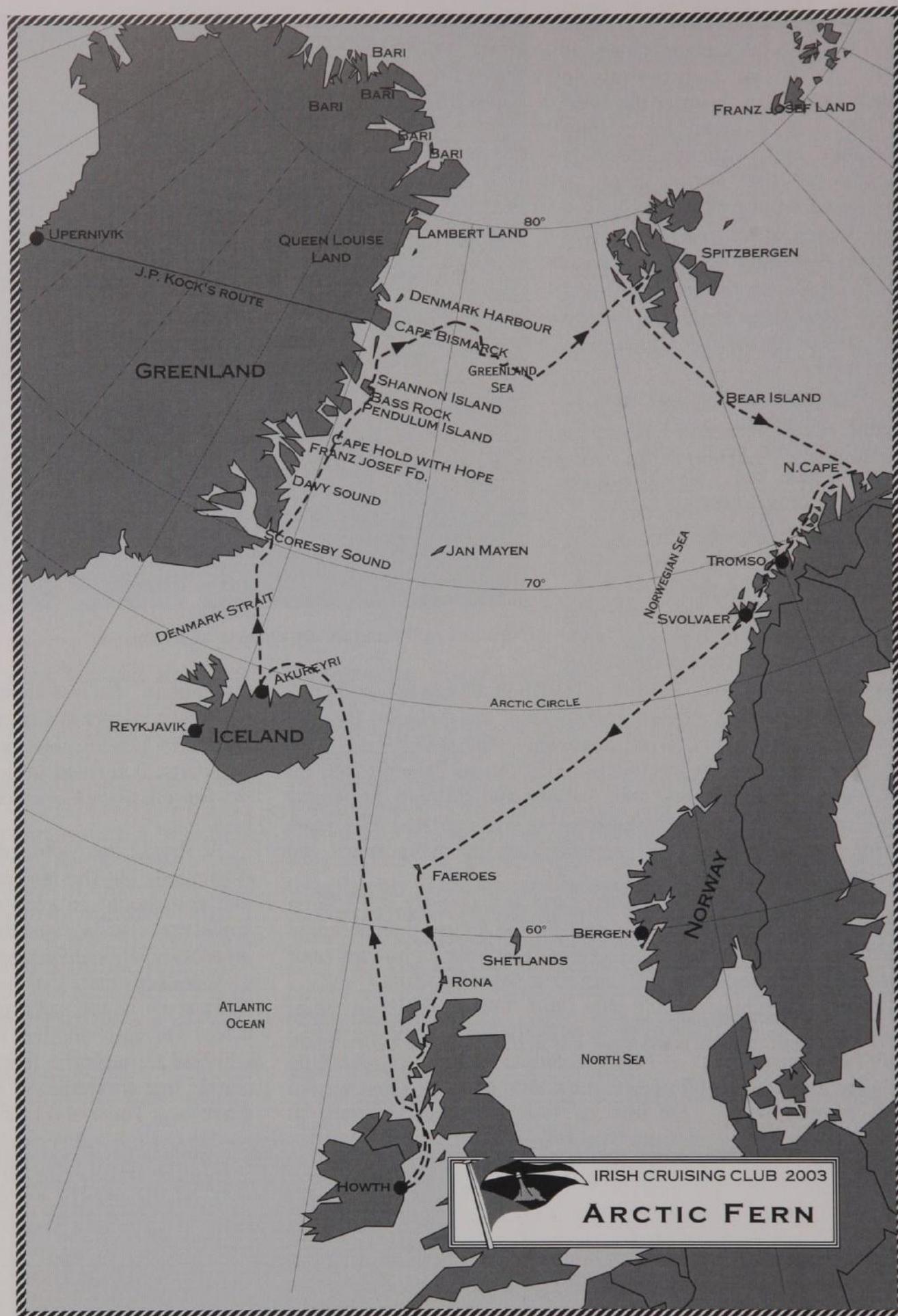
We motored away from Daneborg at 21.00 on Saturday 2nd August. We met some ice off the headlands of Cape Herschel and Cape Borlase Warren, but it did not obstruct our progress. There was more ice at the south end of Little Pendulum Island ( $74^{\circ} 37'N$ ) which slowed our speed for a while.

Clearing the ice we passed Bass Rock at the north end of Little Pendulum Island. We rounded Cape Pansch ( $75^{\circ}08'N$ ) on Shannon Island at midday on Sunday 3rd August. We moved cautiously into Alabama Harbour having logged one hundred and one n.m. from Daneborg. The charts for the area have no soundings and with a retreating glacier nearby, we felt sure that the seabed is speckled with spiky rocks.

Five miles north of Alabama Harbour and just before we reached the Cape Sussie, Nico spotted a hut ashore. The dinghy was launched and we rowed to the stony beach to discover the place where the Danish exploration vessel, the *Alabama*, had been crushed by ice in 1909. The hut had been built by a carpenter and a seaman with the help of two returning explorers, who were later rescued. Ejnar Mikkelsen and the engineer, Iversen lived in that hut for two years before being rescued.

In 1876 the Danish Committee for the Geographical and Geological Investigation of Greenland was formed and it was the Danes who, properly, mapped the east coast from Scoresby to Cape Morris Jessup at  $83^{\circ} 39'N$  (Greenland's most northern cape). They also completed the east coast map from Cape Farewell to Scoresby Sound.

There was another explorer who had laboured hard in north Greenland. This was Robert E. Peary, an engineer in the United States Navy, who worked towards solving some of the important Arctic geographical problems between the years 1886 and 1909. In that latter year, Peary claimed, and his claim is widely accepted, that he was the first person to reach the Pole accompanied by Matthew Henson and four Inuit companions. Although Peary's claim is sometimes disputed, his courage and stamina cannot be questioned and in 1891 he had lost eight toes from frost bite. But it also remains to be said that no other great arctic explorer was guilty of such inaccuracies as Peary. In his exploration of the north and northeast of Greenland he failed to distinguish between ice covered water and ice covered land. His inaccuracy about Greenland and the northeastern coast was



a serious error which inadvertently led to the tragedy of the 'Danmark Expedition'. After a difficult journey in 1900 Peary wrote:

"In this journey I determined conclusively the northern limits of the Greenland Archipelago, or land group, and had practically connected the coast southward to Independence Bay, leaving only that comparatively short portion of the periphery of Greenland lying between Independence Bay and Cape Bismarck indeterminate."

Relying on Peary's statement, the Dane Mylius Erichsen took on the task to chart the coast from Cape Bismarck  $76^{\circ} 57'N$  to Peary's cairn at  $82^{\circ} 37'N$ .

After the first summer Erichsen, Hagen and Bronlund had travelled seven hundred miles by sledge. The second sledge party, lead by Lieutenant J. P. Koch, reached Denmark Harbour at the end of June. Erichsen, Hagen and Bronlund continued

into the unknown west, to explore the non-existent Peary Channel. Summer came and went and the winter swooped down in September. The wind that swept wildly in from the north chilled the party, which had returned to the Danmark, with a hint of distant tragedy. Koch and his party tried to locate the missing men in October, but were forced back by wild winds, snow drifts and temperatures below  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$ . They set out again in March and sledged almost two hundred miles from Danmark Harbour to Lambert Land, moving from one food cache to the next. They found a small cave and cleared away the snow that blocked its entrance. Inside they dimly made out a stiff huddled human figure. It was Jorgen Bronlund. At his feet were his diary and Hagen's maps safely enclosed in a bottle. His diary was written in Greenlandic, except for the last page which was in Danish:

"Perished 79° fjord after attempt to return over inland ice in November. I arrived here in waning moonlight, and could not go further for frozen feet and darkness. Bodies of the others are in middle of fjord off glacier (about two and a half leagues). Hagen died 15th November, Mylius about ten days later".

In 1909 the 'Alabama Expedition' (1909 to 1912) set off to Greenland with the main purpose of finding the bodies of Erichsen and Hagen. The expedition was led by Ejnar Mikkelsen, who on his eventual return, confirmed the full story and importance of Erichsen's work.

The ship which Mikkelsen and his companions travelled on was the *Alabama*. It was a small ship, by normal exploration standards. There were eight men aboard and the *Alabama* eventually landed at Alabama Harbour on Shannon Island. Mikkelsen set off, at once, to Lambert Land and arrived at the cave where Bronlund had been found. He erected a cairn over Bronlund's body.

There is a case to be made to rename Greenland's most northern cape, 'Cape Jorgen Bronlund', in place of the present 'Cape Morris Jessup'. Morris Jessup was Peary's main backer and, from all that I have read of him, I conclude that he was a manipulative self-seeker who did not earn the honour of having Greenland's most northern cape named after him. On the other hand, the extraordinary courage of the Inuit Bronlund, has never been properly acknowledged by the Danes.

In March the following year, Mikkelsen set out again with the engineer, Iversen, each with a dog drawn sledge, travelling to Danmark Fjord and then, by Peary Channel, to the nearest settlement on the west coast. Without Erichsen's diary, they did not know that the Peary Channel did not exist. Another party of three, set off to Queen Louise Land, to explore the circumference of the nunatak discovered earlier by Alfred Wegener. This party was led by Lieutenant Laub and it was their intention to return to the *Alabama*. Laub's party were forced back to the *Alabama* in May to find, to their horror, that the ship had been crushed and lay between the ice floes off a small stony beach. The carpenter and the seamen, who had been left behind, were camping on the beach. Altogether they laboured to salvage planks and supplies. They erected cairns on Shannon island and on Bass Rock, just to the north of Pendulum Island. They filled them with reports of what had happened. A sealer found the cairn on Bass Rock and came to their rescue. They built a house from the timbers of the *Alabama* and stocked it with supplies in case Mikkelsen and Iversen should return. Realising that, if they stayed, they would only diminish much needed supplies, they returned home with the sealer.

Mikkelsen and Iversen reached Danmark fjord and found caches at the edge of the fjord with notes left by Erichsen and Hagen as to how they had discovered that the Peary Channel did not exist and that Navy Cliff was connected by land to

Peary Land. They renamed Independence Bay, Independence Fjord and explored two fjords which they named Bronlund's Fjord and Hagen's Fjord. Hagen's Fjord is a significant fjord which has an impressive glacier at its head. To the east and southeast of it, is Mylius Erichsen Land, but the Danish chart of the area does not indicate Bronlund's Fjord. Mikkelsen, in his heroic search, had found two messages but did not locate the bodies of Erichsen and Hagen.

On their return, their last starved dog died in Lambert Land. Mikkelsen was crippled with scurvy and Iversen had located a depot which Koch had laid down for Erichsen, without which they too would have perished. They were so weakened that they had to abandon everything, including the precious diaries, in order to make it back to the *Alabama* on Shannon island. When they reached the island they were alone. They found the deserted hut. All was silent but the hut was empty save for the note and the supplies left by their comrades. They wintered there in Alabama. Next summer they went to retrieve their papers. They found everything except what little was left of Mikkelsen's own diary, which had been eaten by a polar bear. They returned to Alabama and spent a second winter there and, in the summer of 1912, they were picked up by a vessel sent to find them and they returned to Copenhagen. The importance of the 'Alabama Expedition' cannot be understated. By the recovery of the Erichsen and Hagen papers, which had been so loyally preserved by Bronlund, and by its own sledging trip, the true outline of northeast Greenland was disclosed.

We had seen an ice chart in Daneborg and an ice observer from an aircraft based at Daneborg told us that he had flown to Danmarks harbour ( $76^{\circ} 48' \text{N}$ ) the day before. He and the ice chart, indicated that there was no ice between Daneborg and Danmarks harbour. At 22.00 we were threading through sea ice and, by midnight, we had been pushed east by closing leads and could no longer maintain a northerly course. The ice was unexpected and Great Koldewey island looked dark and forbidding. The wind was starting to moan as it blew over the hummocked sea-ice at twenty knots. We could not set the sails because the leads between the floes were narrow and as confused in direction as the maze at Hampton Court. A democratic discussion took place as everyone gave their views as to whether to proceed to the north or go to the northeast towards Isfjord in Svalbard. The ice to the north did little to encourage us and, if we were to continue on that route, we would simply have to come back south again. The ice chart told us that there was a large ice-field of six tenths ice which had drifted south from the Arctic Ocean to separate Greenland from Svalbard. It was located above  $77^{\circ} 30' \text{N}$ . We were already just north of  $76^{\circ} \text{N}$  but if we went much further north, our route to the east would be completely blocked. The ice chart indicated no ice at our present position and one tenth ice with some four tenths ice between us and Svalbard. The ice chart was incorrect on both points. As we tried to move north we were consistently pushed east by long walls of impenetrable ice. In the end it was the ice and not democracy which made the decision for us and we entered the co-ordinates for Cape Linne, which is at the southern end of Isfjord in Spitsbergen, as our next waypoint. The distance to Longyearbyen from the Great Koldewey island is four hundred and eighty-eight n.m.

By 07.00 on the morning of 7th August we seemed to have cleared the worst of the ice and we sailed for fourteen hours with the main and genoa set in relatively open water, passing around some large ice-floes and many small bergs. At 21.00 hours the sea temperature was plus  $2^{\circ}\text{C}$  and we rolled in the genoa and dropped the main. There was a lot of ice about and the fog enveloped us in minutes. We were motoring blind at very low speeds and we tried to look for leads on the radar. Much of the ice was no more than a foot or two above the

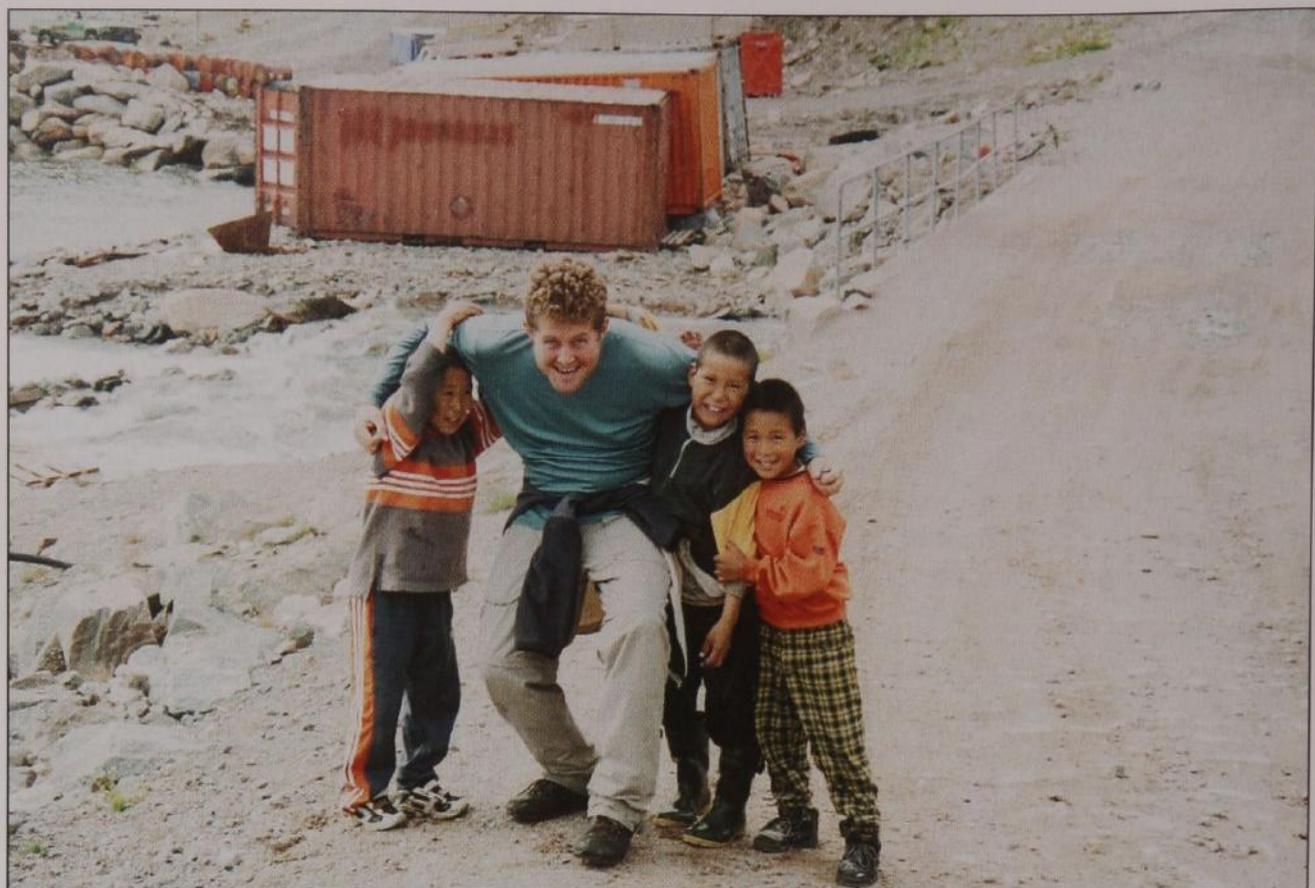
surface so that no clear picture emerged on the radar screen. We found a small pool and pulled in. We put the anchor out on the ice floe. It was 02.15 and we walked a little distance over the ice to see if we could find a useful lead. There were none. There were, however, polar bear paw prints in the snow so I kept the rifle close by. The air was freezing and the rigging on the boat was soon covered with ice as the damp fog swirled around us.

We were stopped for two hours when Nico noticed that our small pool was getting smaller. He also noticed that the lead which we had come through, to get into the pool, was closing. Rob was optimistically fishing with rod and line in four thousand feet and it took him a little time to reel in his hooks. When he came onboard he was fishless. We moved away

cautiously and kept the engine running slowly in order to keep the boat in open water. Visibility was no more than fifty feet and there was no opportunity to make progress.

By 13.00 on Tues. 5th August we were stopped and unable to move. The air temperature was  $-8^{\circ}\text{C}$  and the fog was dense, damp and freezing. We had hoped that the afternoon sun might burn off the fog, but that was not to happen.

A lead opened two hours later and we followed it, zig-zag, for three and a half hours covering an astonishing 1.5 n.m. Every hundredth of a minute was a joy and every minute of a degree was a miracle. We dared not think in terms of whole degrees, and we were not even particularly fussy if our miserable progress crossed longitudes or went up or down latitudes. Any progress felt better than standing still. At 00.45 on 6th August we stopped again in a small pool. Our entry lead had closed and there was no way out. Nico went aloft and confirmed the worst. This was a black situation. There was an unspoken anxiety and, when I was asked questions as to what



Rob and the kids in Ittoqqortoormiit.

*Nico Gore-Grimes*

we should do, I could offer no solutions. More questions followed and I had no answers other than to say:

“Wait and see”.

I checked my insurance certificate to see if it was still in date and tried to remember ice lessons which I had learned in previous years but nothing occurred to me. I consoled myself by recalling the words of our Alfonso, King of Castille:

“If I had been around at the time of the creation, I would have made some useful suggestions for the better arrangement of things”.

And then I wondered if things would have been better if I had taken up horse-riding or perhaps flying aeroplanes, as a young fellow. Although I never contemplated disaster during this summer's ice experiences, the fact is that we were lucky to get out of the ice, eventually, without losing the boat. The other side of stubbornness is stupidity and between one thing and another, I am afflicted with generous helpings of both. It may not be sensible to allow yourself to get caught in sea ice but, in spite of fear and tribulation, there is a rewarding side to it. The might, strength and energy of massive ice floes are inspirational. There is a spiritual magnificence about ocean ice, which has been fashioned by nature without man's intervention. In places, it is piled up to forty feet above sea level, the result of some great battle between two giant ice floes which went to war many years ago when they collided as they fought for the best seat in the house. There is a crazy and violent disorder about it which is both beautiful and threatening. By far the best moment of sailing in ice is the moment when you get out of it. In an instant, the anxiety is gone and you are left with golden dreams



Bergs passing Ittoqqortoormiit.

*Adrienne Roche*

and memories of the low arctic sun illuminating ice pools at midnight.

There was ice forming on the surface of a pool in which we found ourselves as the air temperature dropped to  $-14^{\circ}\text{C}$ . We made two attempts to break out but, on each occasion, in spite of a huge team effort on the part of everybody, we got nowhere. I had been up for long hours and found it difficult to put my head down. When I tried, I was up again in minutes to see if any change had occurred. It is extraordinary how sleepless hours, in these conditions, do not translate into fatigue. That comes later but, in ice, the cold air, the subconscious effort to keep any hint of alarm well disguised and the constant pressing anxiety, all combine to overcome tiredness.

I rang the Norwegian Met Office in Tromsø and spoke to the ice officer, Signe. Although the news which she gave us was not encouraging, her sing-song accent was immensely cheering:

"You are very very unlucky. I can see your position on the satellite. No! No! I cannot see your boat but you are in a small area of thick concentrated ice and you should try and move to the southeast which will give you the best possibility of getting out into open drift ice."

I asked how big the 'thick concentrated ice' was and she replied:

"Oh, about fifty square kilometres. It will break up you know!"

I asked if that would be in 2003 or 2004 and she replied:

"I could not really say when."

I told Signe that the surface water, in our pool, was frozen and she seemed surprised about that. At 16.00 on Wednesday 6th August we attempted to escape from our exclusive ice pool. We failed and we tried again at 18.00 but that failed also. At 19.10 Adrienne spotted an open lead and directed us through. We went from one pool to the next but at 19.50 we were stopped again. At 20.45 Karen spotted another lead. It looked narrow but my humour had disimproved. I placed the bow into the opening of the lead and Nico and Rob jumped onto the ice with heavy sharpened ice picks. They hacked away the ice which held us. I put the revs up to three thousand five hundred and Nico and Rob pulled the bow to port as they stood on the ice heaving a rope which was attached to the anchor winch. *Arctic Fern* complained. It was a horrible noise. It was a noise which no owner would like his insurers to hear.

All of this effort was rewarded and the boat charged ahead once it was released from the firm grip of the ice. Nico, in particular, had worked like a demon, hacking through the thick ice, to widen the lead. We were elated and it must be said that we did work hard as a team to push, shove, hack and drive *Arctic Fern* forwards, mainly to the southeast, until eventually at 05.05 on Thursday morning 7th August, we found ourselves in open water with one tenth ice and occasional patches of two tenths. We threw the C.Q.R. onto an ice-floe. We took some corks out of wine bottles and turned up the music. We were  $76^{\circ} 21' 11'' \text{N}$ ,  $9^{\circ} 22' 79'' \text{W}$ . It was flat calm and the arctic sunlight danced on the water's surface sometimes colliding with chunks of drift ice which passed by. We danced like the dervish. We played cards and all losers had to go for a swim among the bergy bits. It was a shivering, shrivelling experience for the men. Karen just shivered. The water temperature was plus  $2.2^{\circ}\text{C}$ . Pilot Roche, although a consistent loser at cards, did not swim on this occasion.

We pulled up the anchor from the ice floe at 14.30. I think we had some sleep but, for how long, I cannot say. It was a beautiful arctic day and we moved south, as advised by the Met Office in Tromsø. All went well with the mainsail providing the power until 21.30 when we were suddenly surrounded by ice again. The sail came down and we started the engine. We

experienced some very slow and trying navigation until midnight. By that time there was an ice barrier, varying in width between two cables and, in a few places, two tenths of a cable. On the other side of the barrier was open sea. We were in calm waters but just to the east of us we could see the waves of the Greenland Sea crashing against the ice barrier and sending spray high up into the air.

On this cold morning, just after midnight, on 8th August, I did not have to ask for volunteers. Pilot Roche had her bottom in the bosun's chair and Nico and Rob hauled her aloft. She stayed up there for an hour and fifteen minutes in a freezing northerly wind, without complaint and gave excellent hand directions as we moved along the wall of ice searching for an exit. I was driving and Rob verbally passed on Pilot Roche's hand signals. She found a way out. A place where the Greenland sea had breached the barrier. We took her down in case we bumped her off the mast. A collision with the ice was inevitable if we were to get out.

Adrienne had identified a narrow twisting gap which was about two hundred yards in length with a loose piece of ice in the middle of it. The gap was no more than four feet wide and *Arctic Fern* has a beam which is just in excess of twelve feet. I pointed the bow into the opening and throttled up to three thousand five hundred. Nico and Rob shoved the ice with the poles and once the passage was wide enough, we literally shot out into the open sea. An involuntary cheer went up. We were in the sea with real waves to rock the boat and no more ice to trouble us. It was a tremendous feeling. The measured distance, as the crow flies, from the point where we had first entered the ice, to the exit point, was one hundred and thirty two n.m. The G.P.S. distance over the ground was an astounding two hundred and thirty eight n.m.

In spite of all the ice which we had encountered, the undeniable, sad fact is that, the polar ice cap is facing meltdown. If I was not so old and rusty, I would love to have been the first person to circumnavigate Greenland in a sailing boat. This is a challenge for a younger person and I only hope that someone reading this account will do it first and claim the honour for Ireland and for the Irish Cruising Club. It is just about possible, although certainly not without considerable risk, to get to Cape Prins Knud which is a couple of degrees south of  $82^{\circ}\text{N}$ . In another few years Cape Jorgen Bronlund (presently called Cape Morris Jessup) will be achievable. After that, when the summer ice clears, (and that is not too far off), Robeson canal, Hall basin and Kennedy canal will open up and allow passage into Nares strait and Smith sound. At the present rate of melting, it is possible that the arctic could be virtually free of sea ice, during the summer months, by 2080 so that the second challenge, after the circumnavigation of Greenland, is to sail to the North Pole. Although we were in open water, sea temperature remained at plus  $2^{\circ}\text{C}$ , which is a certain indication that ice is about. We passed bergy bits and drift ice and by 04.00 we could see a line of the 'white menace' to the north and northeast. We steered east but as more and more ice surrounded us we were forced to steer south. At 08.00 we were surrounded again but escape, on this occasion, was comparatively easy. We pushed through and broke out of a narrow line of ice and re-established a course which was a few degrees to the south of east. Our speed was impressive with many hours of eight knots plus. While Karen was on the helm I saw a surge of 11.6 knots on G.P.S. By midday the temperature was plus  $6^{\circ}\text{C}$  and by 15.00 the ice line was some distance away.

On Friday 9th August at 02.00 our course took us close to the ice once more and we were forced to the southeast for a while. Our ocean friends, the fulmars were plentiful and little auks played about close to the ice. At 10.00 we crossed latitude  $77^{\circ}\text{N}$  and, at last, we could record that there was absolutely no



Taking to the high ground in search of a lead.

*Nico Gore-Grimes*

ice in sight. It was cold out there but the wind maintained. We made fast progress through dark grey, damp conditions.

At 23.20 we sighted Prins Karl's Forland which was distinctively clear by midnight. The long narrow Island used to be black and white in 1980 but it is now almost entirely black and much of the snow covered ice has melted. It is no longer as dramatic as it used to be.

We tied up outside two other yachts moored to a small and rather delicate looking pontoon in Longyearbyen at 07.30. We had logged seven hundred and ninety one n.m. between Alabama and Longyearbyen.

Svalbard, like Greenland, has tightened their regulations and, if you intend to sail anywhere, other than Longyearbyen, you must write in advance to the Sysselmann's office to obtain permission. You will need to file a route plan giving them the names of the places which you intend to visit and the approximate dates. On arrival in Longyearbyen, you will be asked to produce evidence of adequate rescue insurance. The waters adjoining the Svalbard archipelago are conscientiously patrolled by both the Sysselmann's yacht and the Royal Norwegian Navy. If you do not have permission you will be ordered to leave Svalbard's territorial waters.

We cast off from Longyearbyen at 19.55 on Tuesday 12th August. It rained and the fog stuck to the spiky mountains of Svalbard like a heavy grey mantle. We turned south for Svalbard's most southern land, Bear island. By midnight we were in dense fog. We motored on a flat oily Barents Sea and these conditions prevailed throughout Wednesday 13th of August. We kept a constant radar watch but we were in an empty ocean.

As we approached Bear island, the fog suddenly cleared and the sun came out. We anchored in

Herwichamna at 10.50 on Tuesday 14th August. We had logged two hundred and seventy-three miles from Longyearbyen.

We sent Nico ashore to do the negotiating and he returned to say that there were a total of nine meteorologists on the island. They were happy to allow us to use their shower facilities and their recreation room. We walked ashore to look at the ruins of an old hut which had been the headquarters of a German whaling company. We walked across headland and came upon a fine sandy beach. I don't recall ever having seen another sandy beach in the Arctic. Graves of long dead whalers were dotted about the headland. We turned to the Norwegian quarters and learned that last year, in the winter months, when the ice surrounded the island, there were one hundred

and thirty-five polar bear sightings. Walrus are now rare but the arctic fox is a frequent visitor, and it is to be seen close to the kitchens of the Norwegian Met Station.

We left Bear island at 14.40 that afternoon and sailed southeast towards the North Cape. By 20.00 we sailed as the wind gathered a little strength from the northwest. On Friday 15th August, the sea temperature rose fairly rapidly to 11.9°C. We crossed 73°N at 08.20 in the morning and by 18.10 that evening we were moving south of 72°N. At 23.00, the ever-observant Rob, sighted a dark cloud which turned out to be the North Cape. At 04.10 on the morning of the 16th August, we were abeam of Helnes and 06.00 we tied up at the North Cape town of Honningsvåg. We had logged five hundred and thirty n.m. from Longyearbyen.

I have made six summer visits to Honningsvåg since 1989 and have, at times, spent more than a week at a time there waiting for the ice to open to allow a landing on Cape Flora on the southern tip of Franz Josef Land. Although we got close, the ice never fully obliged our passage and our attempts to reach



Huskies tied up at the military base at Daneborg - the cross in the background is the grave of Eli Knudsen.

*John Gore-Grimes*

Franz Josef Land in 1989, 1998 and 2000 were all spectacular failures. In the course of fourteen years, we have made good friends in Honningsvåg and in particular, the Petterson family and also the Ohlson family.

We tied up we were greeted as old friends by Svein and by his son, Sten Arne. Svein kindly lent us his fuel card and we were able to fuel the boat at the small boat dock. If you cannot fuel there, the fuelling in Honningsvåg is quite difficult. You have to cross the bay and, by appointment, arrange for fuel with the Statoil Manager whose appearances and disappearances are much the same as the activities of the Scarlet Pimpernel. Having done the maintenance and restocked the boat, we enjoyed a really fine meal in Sten's restaurant which looks out over the harbour. On the night of the 17th August, we were invited to dinner by the Petterson family. As we came into the restaurant, we saw a note on the door which read:

"Sorry we are closed for a family celebration."

Sten Arne and his wife Triona did all the work and we had what can only be described as 'a viking feast of supreme quality'. There was plenty of wine to accompany the food. It was said that the vikings got their courage before battle by drinking plenty and eating magic mushrooms. I cannot say if the mushrooms were magic, but the crew of *Arctic Fern* were full of courage that night. After dinner, we attended a civic reception at which Svein made a great speech emphasising the value of friendship and presented each of us with Honningsvåg badges. It was then declared that I have been made an honorary citizen of Honningsvåg.

We cast off from the pier at Honningsvåg at 22.15 on Sunday night, bound for Tromsø. The journey is more west than south and includes passages through fjords and islands. It has always been engaging and beautiful passage. The planet Mars rose above the horizon and it looked almost as big as the moon.

We tied up at the small marina in Tromsø harbour at 04.25 on Wednesday morning, 20th August, having logged one hundred and seventy seven n.m. from Honningsvåg. Tromsø is a delightful town and all the better for the summer sunshine. At 69° 45'N, Tromsø is more than 6° north of the arctic circle, but on Wednesday and Thursday, it's citizens walked about in short sleeve shirts. At night, groups of ten to fourteen young university students tied themselves together with a long line, wrist to wrist, and ran about the streets in high good spirits. The real chaos started when they went into the pub for a pint.

We headed south from Tromsø at 00.15 on Friday 22nd August. The passage to Svolvær in the Lofoten islands has been described in our annual many times and, in my opinion, it is the second most beautiful fjord passage that I have experienced. I would have to give the first prize to Prins Christian Sund in south Greenland. Nevertheless, Topsund, Raftsund and Trollfjord are places of astonishing beauty. Although we saw some commercial traffic but we did not see a single sailing boat between the North Cape and the Lofotens.

We were lucky to find a berth on the pontoon in Svolvær, which is often overcrowded. We tied up at 06.50 on Saturday 23rd August, having logged one hundred and fifty-eight n.m. from Tromsø.

We left Svolvær at 09.30 on Sunday 29th August with a generous northerly wind. We had the choice of making for the Shetlands or for the Faroes. The slant looked better for the Faroes. As you go south from the arctic, it usually pays to bank some westing, in order to avoid the worst of a beat when the wind blows from the southwest. We had fine sailing with full main and genoa, down along the Lofotens, as we headed southeast towards the Faroes.

During Monday afternoon the wind started to increase steadily and it wasn't long before it was blowing a steady seven



The crew, Rob Harris in front, Nico Gore-Grimes to his right, Karen Rudd behind the genoa and Adrienne Roche to the right.

John Gore-Grimes

and gusting eight. At that stage, we slapped in three reefs and rolled in a good helping of genoa. By 02.00 on the morning of Tuesday 26th August, it was blowing a steady eight and gusting nine. At times, we saw gusts of forty four knots but the boat kept going as she purposefully cut through the waves which frequently washed right over us.

These strong winds stayed with us until after midnight on Wednesday 27th August. In each hour, we consistently exceeded eight knots. *Arctic Fern* achieved two hundred and four n.m., in twenty-four hours which was the fifth time that the boat had done this since I first acquired it in 1998.

At 14.32 on the afternoon of Wednesday 27th August we recrossed the arctic circle. We had been north of it for four weeks and six days. The wind strength lessened on Wednesday afternoon and we were driving along in a force five, blowing from the north. We reset the full main and rolled out the genoa.

We were soon talking to the friendly, if unhurried, operator of the Torshavn Radio and he gave us useful berthing directions. We tied up in Torshavn at 05.25 on the morning of Thursday 28th August having logged six hundred and seventy three n.m. from Svolvær.

There is a small sailing club beside the pier. The Tourist Office hand out keys that allow you to use the showers at will and also the washing machine. There is a small charge.

We cast off from Torshavn at 10.30 on the morning of the 29th August. It is absolutely crucial that you put to sea between two and three hours before high water because, by doing so, you will get an eight hour tide which should take you down to Akraberg head. We travelled the forty-six n.m. in just under five hours, at an average speed of 8.1 knots.

South of the Munken Rocks, the wind was light and we motored down longitude 6°W. It was dark at 22.00 and shortly after midnight on Saturday 30th August the Northern Lights gave us a magnificent display, flashing across a star-studded sky. The entire passage from the Faroes to the north of Scotland is noticeably tidal and we had tides both fair and foul to contend with. We reached the barren rock, named Sula Sgeir which had an active apron of white foam around it. We counted ten people wandering about the Rock with coffee mugs and

binoculars. Occasionally they would either duck into or out of a green tarpaulin which was stretched between two high rocks. They paid us no heed and, indeed, they did not trouble to return our cheery waves. We concluded that they were a particularly hardy bunch of ornithologists, albeit gloomy ones.

Being unable to land on Sula Sgeir, we turned to the east and headed to Rona, arriving there at 14.10. As we approached, a helicopter landed on this green island, on the landing pad just beside the lighthouse on the summit. Nico, Rob and I, launched the dinghy and rowed ashore. It was a steep climb up and we hauled the dinghy after us. We climbed to the summit. Two engineers from the Northern Lighthouse Board were working on the lighthouse generator. They had been landed by helicopter and would be collected the next day.

Adrienne and Karen were content not to land and we set off for the North Minch. We passed Tiumpan Head at 00.30 on Sunday 31st August. We motored over flat water to Neist Point. With a fine following wind we set the spinnaker and ran by Oigh Skeir, the Cairns of Coll, Lunga and the Dutchman's Cap. We struck the spinnaker as we arrived at Staffa and stood off at Fingal's Cave. We rowed into the cave, taking turns to do so. I had not landed there since 1954. We spent the night quietly

anchored in Baila Cliadha, which is a small attractive anchorage between Gometra and Ulva. We had logged three hundred and eighty three n.m. from Torshavn. We pushed onwards on Sunday afternoon. We had a brief stop on Iona and spent the night tied up at Scalasaig on Colonsay.

We left Scalasaig at 10.10 on Monday 1st September to take the tide south through the Sound of Islay. We picked up an H.I.E. mooring at Ardmish Bay, Gigha. We sailed from Gigha at 07.00 on Tuesday 2nd September and tied up at Howth Marina at 06.30 on Wednesday 4th September. We had been away for seven weeks and had completed a journey of four thousand six hundred n.m.

In Howth, the special branch were there to greet us. Nico handed them the rifle for safe keeping. I made Nico a present of that rifle after the target practice on Rona. He has been badly bitten by the "ice bug". Nico is a cool navigator which is just what you should be in ice. He will most certainly return. Rob will probably go back once his boilers get up enough steam. Adrienne, who candidly admits, that she jumps in feet first and thinks of the consequences later, will return, if the opportunity arises. Karen is cured. As for me, well, as I have often said before: "I will never go back to the ice again!"

### **Richard Cudmore writes of cruise to Brittany in *Toirse***

**A**fter a disastrous cruising season last year due to bad weather, where 2002 found *Toirse* tied to a mooring buoy for a week in Hugh Town, The Isles of Scilly.

I decided to dream for the winter. That dream culminated in ten glorious weeks off the coast of Brittany this year. Skipper and crew (Ron Cudmore, Tom Kirby, Alan Rountree and Tony Casey) set off from the R.C.Y.C. on May 31st to what was to be a great trip. Good southeast wind to start was not what we wanted, but it was pleasant sailing. Excitement started the following morning when the batteries went dead and the engine would not start. We were about 40 miles off the Scillies, so we had to sail the rest of the way to the Scillies where we picked up a mooring at 01.00hrs. It was a good test for the navigator (hon. sec) and better for my sailing skills. After getting the battery charged we set for France. More southeast wind. We arrived at Le Stiff, Ushant on 3rd June. Our accountant Tom hired five bicycles (61.00 each) to get to Lampaul for dinner. After some RNR, crew port hopped via Camaret, Loctudy, Lorient (Ron left). Arrived at La Trinite on 8th June where the rest of the crew left. Being on my own until the 15th, before Kate, my wife, would join me I decided to go to Ile de Houat for a few days. On the second day I had the Harbourmaster and four other people from yachts on board where they drank a litre of Paddy. They had no English and I had no French. It was rather interesting. I went back to La Trinite on the 15th to collect Kate. The next day we returned Ile d'Houat where I was christened Captain Paddy. From there we went to Belle Ile, Pornic, Ile d'Yeu and Les Sables d'Olonne. Kate had to go home and my sister Mary and Mary Morrison joined me for a week. From there we went to Bourgenay, St Martin on Ile de Re and on to La Rochelle for the next crew change. The two Mary's went home and my daughter Jacqui and three friends joined me for the next week. We visited St Dennis on Ile d'Oleran, Ile d'Aix, St Martin and back to La Rochelle. The next crew to join me was my brother Fred his wife Mary and two sons. We went back to St Dennis, St Martin and on to Les Sables d'Olonne. We got in at 14.00hrs and they were at home in Cork for 22.00hrs that evening. Next to come out to me was sister Mary (again) Tony



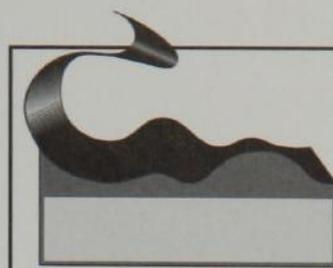
Tony Casey, Tom Kirby (ICC), Ron Cudmore (Hon. Sec. ICC), Skipper Richard Cudmore (ICC), Alan Roundtree (ICC).

(again) and Margaret Casey. From there we went to Ile d'Yeu, Crouesty and into the Morbihan as far as Vannes. Mary left and Kate came back out. From there we went to Port Tudy on Ile de Groix and on to Lorient where the Casey's left. Kate and I went to Concarneau and then Kate had go home again. I left there by myself for Audierne and then to Morgat. A few days later my brother Peter and two friends came to bring the boat home. We had to go to Douarnenez to buy a couple of bottles of wine. Then to Camaret and Lampaul where we had to say good bye to France. On the way to the Scillies we had very bad fog on the shipping lanes, thank God for radar. We picked our anchor at 22.00hrs in Tresco northeast wind force 4-5, full moon and tied up in Crosshaven for 18.00hrs. What a way to finish a dream.

24 different ports · 20 different crew · 1049 miles.

# Waxwing homeward bound

## Peter and Susan Gray



### THE ATLANTIC TROPHY

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

### The Atlantic – Cape Town to Dun Laoghaire

It took us five months to make the 7000 miles northwards up the Atlantic from Cape Town to Dun Laoghaire but *Waxwing* did insist on stops along the way – St Helena – Ascension – Brava in the Cape Verdes – the Azores as well as Kinsale and our actual time on passage was only sixty days with eighteen days at sea the longest stretch. We enjoyed (and sometimes endured) mixed weather – especially near the Equator and in the Doldrums. Here is how it went:

We had kept *Waxwing* in South Africa for fifteen months and used her as our base while we did a fair bit of “land cruising” there and in the bordering countries Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Zambia and Swaziland but the Atlantic season was wearing on and we reluctantly waved goodbye to this fascinating area on 24th February having come to the conclusion that we and our boat were as ready as we would ever be for the ocean after our long break in marinas, anchorages and ashore. Besides which a long awaited weather window was beginning to open up.

It is prudent to wait for suitable conditions for rounding the Cape of Good Hope (from east to west especially) so we took advantage of a narrow window even though it meant leaving Simons Town on the False Bay (east side) in the middle of a dark night. Thus we missed a good view of the fabled cape from the sea but were compensated by an easy passage and conversations with groups of seals who, as we like to imagine, had gathered to wish us farewell, responding to our greetings with a honk, honk, honk until we left them astern.

The morning dawned and as the light grew Susan commented on how wet the aft part of the cabin sole had got and it proved that a fair flow of water was emerging from the Blue Water Shaft seal. We had examined it in Simons Town and the bolts on the facing plate had not been tightened properly. Soon fixed but the incident did suggest that our pre-passage check had not been as thorough as it should have been so we put into the marina at Hout Bay, about 15 nm south of Cape Town. We didn't discover much but we did enjoy another five days of socialising with friends who live in that attractive place.

As it happened, conditions for the passage to St Helena got better by the day and we enjoyed a glorious, effortless, down hill ride with nothing very exciting recorded in the log except the sighting of a whale which surfaced uncomfortably close and played around for a while before heading off on whale business. It was about six or seven meters long. Also Susan hooked a fine fish – the last to be caught on our voyaging although we continued to try all the way home. The 1700nm passage took us twelve days or an average of 141nm per day which is flying for *Waxwing*.

En route we crossed the Greenwich Meridian and we were back in the western hemisphere which *Waxwing* had last seen in November 1997 when we crossed the International Date Line on passage from Tonga to New Zealand.

### St Helena

A lovely and interesting place to break the Atlantic crossing. We stayed a week and got all we needed to replenish our provisions, water and diesel. We ate ashore a few times in Anne's Place and Donny's place – hardly gourmet but good enough and enjoyable in the company of Alec *Gladys May* (UK) and Bernie and company from *Happy Hippie* (Guernsey). Alec has one leg and sails single-handed. Later on he skipped out Ascension and was 51 days at sea from St. Helena to the Azores. At time of writing he has taken a break from ocean wandering and is resting in the care of Mrs Harrington in Lawrence's Cove.

Although the St Helena holding is good, the anchorage is almost always very rolly and it was quite an adventure getting ashore. Leaving a dinghy at the jetty would have been difficult but the locals had laid on a small ferry (well mainly for the small fishing fleet but yachts were welcome to use it – cost GBP 1 per person per day for as many trips as you wanted)

The drivers very skilfully rode the considerable surge at the jetty so that even Alec with his one leg was able to grab the hanging rope and step ashore as the ferry rose to jetty level before dropping a meter or so again. It was all about timing and somewhat miraculously no one fell in – at least not when we were there.

A highlight of the stay was a well informed and fascinating conducted tour of Napoleon's modest house. Our guide told us that the great man was not deliberately poisoned as was thought for a long time, but succumbed from the arsenic in his hair dressing and in the paste used to hold the wall paper in his bedroom as well as from boredom.

Our taxi took us on round the island, the driver proudly pointing out what he thought might interest us and showing us where there are plans for a luxury hotel and sports complex and an airport. He didn't think it would ever happen and meanwhile the people and a few tourists must use the regular ship service from Cape Town or the UK.

Although the land is quite fertile in the centre and we saw a few cattle and sheep, sadly almost all food is imported except for a minute quantity of fruit (especially mangoes) and vegetables grown in an amateurish way in gardens and sold in the tiny market in Georgetown, the capital and indeed the only town. Mind you, the produce was of excellent quality when you could get it and Susan was soon well known there and welcomed on her daily quest for eggs and fresh fruit and vegetables.

The people are a mix of African, Asiatic, English and French which has not produced a particularly handsome population except for the occasional ravishing young girl not yet broadened in girth but we found one and all to be friendly and helpful and proud of their English (not British you must understand) heritage and language – spoken with a BBC announcers accent.

We would have stayed longer only one night the rolling in the anchorage got so bad that we were nearly thrown out of our bunks so we set off in the dark.



Sunset over Chapman's Peak near Cape Town.

### Ascension

Our next passage was a short five days for 700nm down wind again to Ascension which is also British owned but has a large US military base and tracking station for Cape Canaveral. It also has a BBC world service relay station and a substantial RAF base and airfield. The RAF fit in a few tourists on their weekly flights (there are no commercial flights to the island) and there is quite a tourist trade.

On arrival at the anchorage, we were greeted by the crew of *Happy Hippie* (heading for Brazil) and Phil, Laura and one year old Josh on *Jade* from South Africa and whom we had first met there in Knysna. They were on the way to the Med; had made friends with some local people running sports fishing boats (a big tourist attraction); had been given some fish and invited us to a BBQ aboard their sizable catamaran to share the catch. There we met Zack, a youngish Azorian who works in Ascension during the northern winter and goes home to Horta for the summer to work on boats there. He promised us a warm welcome when we got to his home.

On passage, our alternator had started to act up. Instead of following the advice in books to look first for a loose or corroded connection, Peter started a complicated investigation that took him no where. An electrical engineer at the RAF station listened patiently to the list of symptoms and action taken and suggested, politely, that it most likely WAS a loose or corroded connection. And so it was and it was soon fixed. A similar problem was found in the Solar Panel wiring and soon they were again churning in their usual fourteen amps. Long distance live aboard cruising is not always about lazy

days enjoying sundowners as one wafts over a calm sparkling sea or with friends in a quiet haven – especially if one rushes into unnecessary work instead of using one's noggin.

We did some touring by rented car to the damp interior to collect free bananas growing beside the road and belonging to no one and then on to a lovely secluded beach (inappropriately named Comfortless Cove) where we swam in the sunny spells between the showers. There was an interesting cemetery near by which was started to accommodate the several ratings and officers of the HM's sailing ship *Bonito* who were put ashore here to die when they contacted yellow fever. Others followed and all are commemorated with simple wooden or rock headstones. The place was well cared for.

We were lucky and indeed privileged. It was egg-laying time for the giant Greenback turtles. We spent an absorbed couple of hours watching these magnificent creatures in the pre-dawn light struggle up the beach, dig holes in the sand, lay their eggs and, clearly much relieved, hasten back to the ocean for a bit of quality time with their waiting mates before swimming back the thousands of miles back to their homes off Brazil. They will return next year to the same place The surviving hatchlings from the eggs left behind will follow along later.

We stayed six days, took on some more diesel in jerry cans and filled our water tanks from the heavy rain that fell on our last night and which we collected on deck by plugging the drain holes in our scuppers and running it to the tanks via a fitted pipe and filters. We also catch water on the solid cockpit "roof" which is designed for that. It also carries our solar panels, our Air Marine wind generator (noisy but very productive), and our radar scanner as well as providing protection from sun and rain



St. Helena ahead.

– essential in the tropics even if it does cut out a direct view of the stars directly overhead.

### The Equator, the Inter-Tropical Convergence Zone and the Doldrums

The weatherman at the RAF station on Ascension advised that the ITCZ was currently lying stationary south of the equator and was an even 200nm deep right along its length instead of tapering from east to west as is more usual. So we decided to take the shortest distance and head north to cross the equator at 020 degrees west rather than 300–400nm further west as is often suggested. Well we may have been right or we may have been wrong but what is certain was that the ITCZ decided to move north with us and we endured its conditions for five or six days instead of the two expected. Flat calms, sudden squalls, heavy rain, electrical storms became the order of the day. Although the frequent lightning flashes never came nearer than 14 or 15 miles, we lost count of the number of times we reefed and shook out the reefs and started and stopped the engine to try and get through this quite unpleasant time as quickly as possible.

We crossed the Equator just after 01.00 on 31st March a little to the east of our chosen spot in temporarily near perfect conditions. It was a lovely clear star-lit night and we reached along on course for Horta – now only 2358nm miles ahead. We allowed ourselves a tot of Black Bush to celebrate our return to the northern hemisphere. We offered one to King Neptune but he declined our invitation to come aboard.

Next day, it was calm so we revelled in a mid-ocean swim but alas, the pleasant conditions did not last for long and the ITCZ, with malice we thought, kept pace with us and it was a



Harbour at Furna, island of Brava, Cape Verdes

few days more before we cleared its unsettled conditions. By then, we were encountering strong northeasterly winds with big lumpy seas which set *Waxwing* well to the west of our intended course which was to take us close to the Cape Verdes and on to the Azores.

Fifteen days out from Ascension and with Horta still a long way ahead, we found ourselves 200nm west of the Cape Verdes. We had had several days of banging into the seas and making slow progress. At one time, when morale was a bit on the low side and we wondered for how much longer we and *Waxwing* could endure the conditions, we actually gave serious thought to breaking off and reaching in comfort to the West Indies to work our way back to Horta along the well worn route via Bermuda. A long way round but perhaps the quickest – and safest – way home we thought for a while but eventually reason prevailed and we decided to visit the Cape Verdes instead even

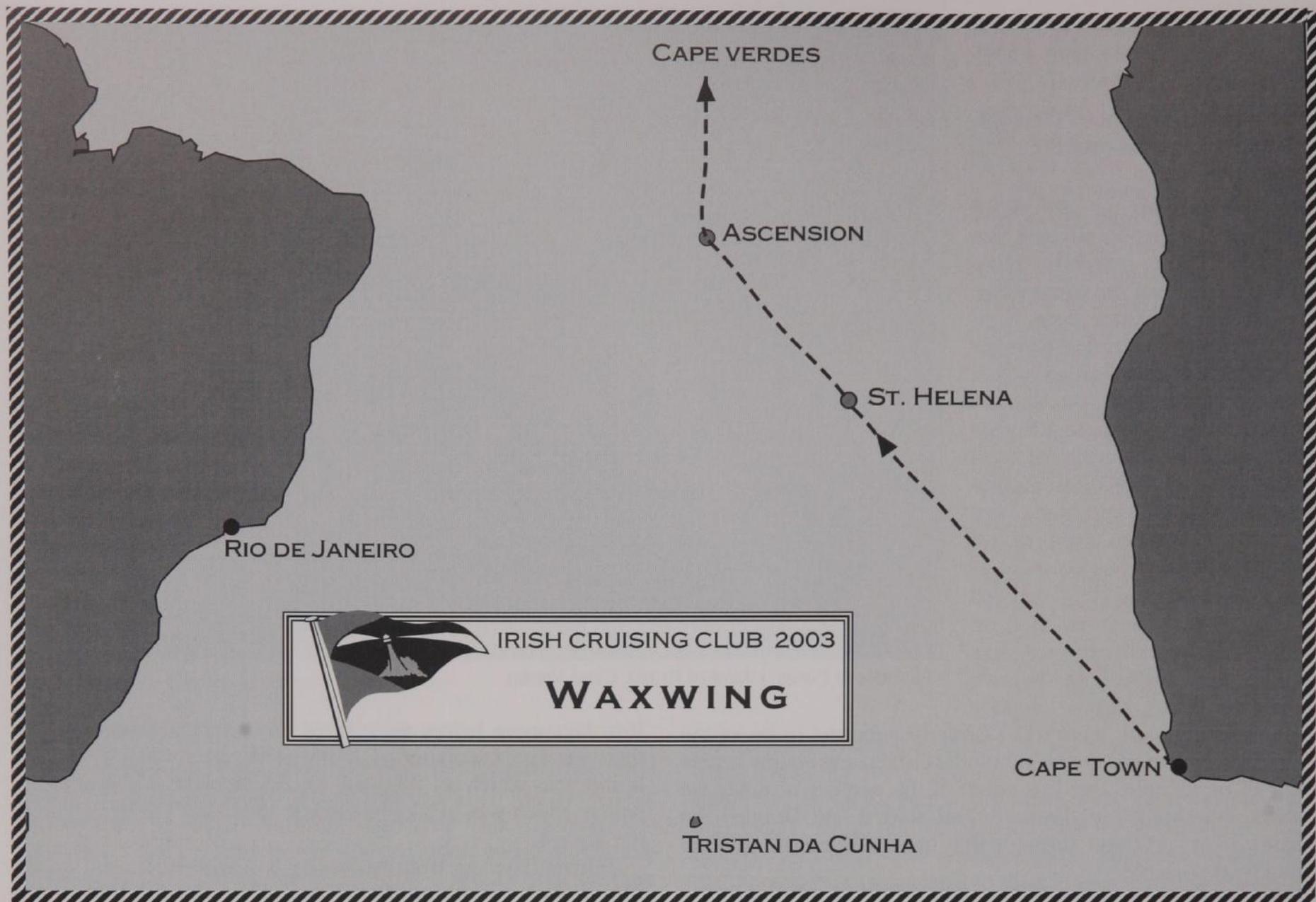
though it still meant continuing to beat into head seas. We had never been there and were not likely to get another chance and besides which it was only 200nm instead of over 1500nm to Horta. So we tacked on to port and headed east. On 11th April, we dropped anchor in the little harbour at Furna on the island of Brava, the smallest and most southwesterly of the archipelago.

### Cape Verdes

Village water-front man Albert swam out and greeted us in almost perfect English. He advised a stern line ashore, obligingly swam in with it and quickly made it fast with an expertly tied bowline. Charts were kindly lent by friends who'd been there, done that for a month-long circumnavigation. The decision as to which way evolved from the length of time various crewmembers could devote to the



Aboard *Irish Mist* at Sandy Cove, Kinsale.



cruise. We were welcome to stay as long as we wished. What a change from the tedious procedure we had experienced in many other countries.

The people of Brava are in the main fishing or peasant farming folk but their standard of living looked good. They, and the children especially, were attractively dressed and looked well fed. Houses were generally well kept and there were quite a few fine buildings – a legacy of Portuguese occupation way back. When the whaling industry started to decline, there was substantial emigration to North America where many descendents still live, returning regularly to visit or retire. So there is a fair amount of extra spending money around and quite a few English speakers.

We had dropped in to Brava for a short rest but, such was the enchantment of the island, we stayed for eight enjoyable days. We found the people somewhat reserved at first but as they got used to us we were greeted as we strolled the village, did a little shopping and joined the good natured early morning queue at the bakery for lovely fresh-baked bread.

Some of the fishermen set their long nets in the harbour from small rowing boats. One of the crew snorkels and chases the fish into the net. On a bright, clear, morning as we sat in the cockpit having breakfast, we were encircled by a net and wondered were we going to be sent packing when, the fishing over and the net recovered, a boat came alongside. It was only when the crew passed us some lovely little fish (and all they catch are small) and declined with a smile to accept any payment, we understood that we were not in the way and were truly welcome.

Public transport is by aluguer – privately owned open backed small utility trucks. If there were a few passengers they were buses and inexpensive but if you wanted one for yourself they became taxis and were quite expensive. We made good use of the bus service and enjoyed the views and the chat as we

wound our way up the Alpine-like road to Nova Sintra, the capital of the island perched high on the mountain side.

There we met Daniel Gomes Miranda (now where could we possibly have heard the Gomes bit before?), the Shell manager on the island. He spoke fluent English and, as the bank was closed, exchanged Euro for Escudos at the official bank rate as well as giving us some excellent advise about eating out on Brava. In consequence, one day we walked the eight kilometres from Sintra to the fishing village of Faja on the west of the island where we enjoyed a splendid lunch at Jose and Brigette Andrade's "upmarket" restaurant and guest house. Susan revelled in the luxury of a shower there and we both rested on their shaded patio, recovering from the lunch and the walk, until Jose was ready to drive to Sintra on business and give us a lift. We had only discovered after lunch that the aluguer did not run to Faja and we were not enthused at the idea of walking back up the long hilly road or of paying a hefty taxi fare so Jose's lift was much appreciated. We then took an aluguer (we were the only passengers but were charged only the lower fare) from the town down to Furna and back to *Waxwing*. It had been a great day and as a bonus we had seen the beautiful anchorage at Faja.

#### On passage Cape Verdes to the Azores

The distance to Horta was just 1500nm, but en route we decided to make our Azorian landfall on the southeastern island of Santa Maria some 100 nm nearer. We logged about 1200 nm and took 12 days.

On this leg, we used a French Route de Rhumb chart. Once we had got used to it, we found it helpful and easier to be able to plot position and course and distances from the latitude and longitude lines drawn in curves right across the chart using a simple ruler (or any straight edge) instead of a plotter or marching a parallel rule to the edge. Strangely enough details were still easy to read.

We were not able to get much joy from our SSB/Laptop weather programme and relied (as indeed we had since the Equator) on the daily French bulletin as translated by Trudy (Atlantic Maritime Net operating from Barbados) who used both radio and internet to compile her report. Tropical Storm "Anna" caused some interest for a while but, as tracked by Meteo France, she stayed well over towards the Caribbean and finally fizzled out – or so they said. In actual fact, she had whistled westwards across the Atlantic and gave a hard time (a few knockdowns) to boats up ahead of us. We will never be sure if, had we kept going, we would have reached the Azores ahead of her but certainly the delay of our happy sojourn in Brava kept us well out of Anna's way.

Just before midnight on Wednesday 23rd April we "closed the loop" when, at 23°20' north 27°10' west, we crossed our track of 24th November 1995 from the Canaries to St Lucia. We had thus completed a circumnavigation in a leisurely 7 years and 5 months.

However, as we had always considered the fulfilment of our dream would be when we arrived back in Ireland, we did not have any special celebration although Susan did cook a cake next day and called it a "Loopy" cake. Peter might well have cooked it but it was not "PC" (Peter Cooking) day. Incidentally, when ashore "PC" changes into Peter Catering which, as he is a reluctant chef, means a meal in a restaurant.

We continued to experience changeable conditions with discouraging head winds and seas when we were unable to hold a course for Santa Maria interspaced with spells of close reaching over long, easy, rolling swells but also calms which we motored through. In any event, we needed to charge our batteries now and then as earlier we had managed to poke a fishing rod into the carbon blades of our Air Marine charger which had been supplying much of our demand. Naturally enough they shattered. The fishing rod showed not a mark. With the pitching and rolling, our solars were not working all that well either but progress was reasonable, we had plenty of diesel and the Azores was not too far ahead so crew morale was good aided by Susan's magic catering. We ate well but kept strictly to our "on passage" ration of a glass of wine or a beer per day.

On the early evening of April 30th, we dropped anchor in the little harbour of Vila Do Porto on the southeast island of Santa Maria in the Azores and slept and slept and slept. It had taken us 66 days to get from Cape Town – 42 days on passages and 24 days ashore. We had worked our way over 5500nm up the Atlantic and it was only 1500nm to home with the anticipated pleasures of the Azores to come first.

### **The Azores**

We stayed in this delightful area for two months and visited four of the islands as we made our way northwest to Horta and then cruised with friends who came to visit us. Prices in marinas were about 30% of those in Ireland and costs ashore were modest (about 60% or even less of Irish prices), the people relaxed, friendly and ever helpful and the scenery stunning.

On our second morning in the Vila Do Porto anchorage (no marina there), our friendly Maritime Police officer and tourist advisor, Mendes, called us on our VHF at a respectable hour and invited us ashore at our convenience to complete entry formalities as we had arrived from a foreign port.

Customs and Immigration were quickly and easily dealt with in his office on the pier and then Mendes drove us up town in a Maritime police car to be met by, and warmly greeted by, the Harbour Master and his clerk. There we were relieved of a purely nominal sum of Euro for parking in the harbour for as long as we wished. Both the Harbour Master and Mendes

invited us to let them know if anyone in the town, (perched on the top of a high cliff – a bit like a larger version of Dunmore East) was not as helpful as they were expected to be to visitors. Apparently remedial action would be taken but we never had any cause to complain. We felt good about our welcome but suspected, wrongly as it turned out when we visited other islands later, that the people of this small island were a bit exceptional in their friendliness.

The town had some lovely buildings in the old Portuguese style with their much-loved tiles abounding on walls, floors and pavements. Restaurants in the town itself were not great but later we found one a few kilometres away that was the essence of gourmet. However facilities, including free internet access, were more than adequate, English is spoken by most people and it was a relief to be able to work in our own currency again and get as much as we needed from ATMs. All in all, we felt happy that we had made a good choice in deciding on Santa Maria as our first European landfall.

We quickly got a mobile phone and email sessions organised and phoned home to advise our safe arrival and to start to set up visitor arrangements. We heard then that Susan's sister Heather, who had not been well, had died while we were on passage and out of touch so our joy in our safe arrival was tempered by grief.

We enjoyed strolling the attractive town but also rented a car for a couple of days. Driving on the narrow twisting but well sealed roads was an adventure in itself but we were well rewarded in seeing the tiny, lava rock covered, dry-stone walled enclosures in which vines were successfully grown and we also gazed in some wonder at a farmer using a horse drawn plough.

### **Sao Miguel**

After eight days and feeling rested and in tune with the land again, we day sailed the 54 miles to Ponta Delgada on Sao Miguel where we were to meet another of Susan's sisters, Gail Varian, who was to cruise with us as far as Horta. We berthed *Waxwing* at the fine marina but surprisingly, we had to complete full customs and immigration formalities again. The Azorians are enthusiastic Europeans (possibly the new found access to the Regional Development Fund has something to do with it) but government officers in the larger ports are obviously not going to give up their jobs that easily and were not impressed by arguments that we had already checked in at Vila Do Porto.

Flights connecting to Dublin via Lisbon (the only way) were difficult to get at short notice but the pleasant staff in TAP (Air Portugal) office spent hours on solving our need – and at the least cost – so we were able to get home for two days and say our farewells to Peter's much admired sister-in-law Pat who had died unexpectedly.

Gail flew in the day after we got back to Ponta Delgada and we met her at the very fine Club Naval (a private yacht club but with the public welcome to use bar and lounge) which offered an attractive bar and bar food at prices even lower than the low low prices up town.

We joined forces with German friends Astrid and Dieter off *Windlease* and rented a car for a day which was sufficient for having a good look round the island. We climbed down to some seawater hot pools but discovered that, other than at low tide, they are filled with cold water so we did not venture in. Other than that, we contented our selves with strolling the town and admiring the fine buildings and well stocked shops and generally relaxing.

Gail's time was limited so we were soon on our way to our next island – Terceira – some 95nm to the northwest. It was too far to make it all in daylight so we decided on an overnight passage.

## Terceira

We arrived at the marina at Angra on the south coast at 08.00 on 17th May after an easy sail. The marina pontoons are fine but the shore facilities had not yet been completed so it was a bit of a building site. This did not worry us and we were soon exploring the town which, as with most towns in the hilly Azores, offered quite a climb to its highest point along narrow cobbled streets between picturesque well maintained buildings – a good few of which are cafés with their tables spilling out on to pavements and streets and restaurants offering really good food. The harbour is dominated by a massive fortification fronted by lawns and walks and we spent time there both now and later when we returned with other guests. There is a lot to offer the visitor and, as we found everywhere in the Azores, service was courteous, efficient, helpful and friendly making it a pleasure to eat out or go shopping and no one seemed to mind if one just poked around and didn't buy anything.

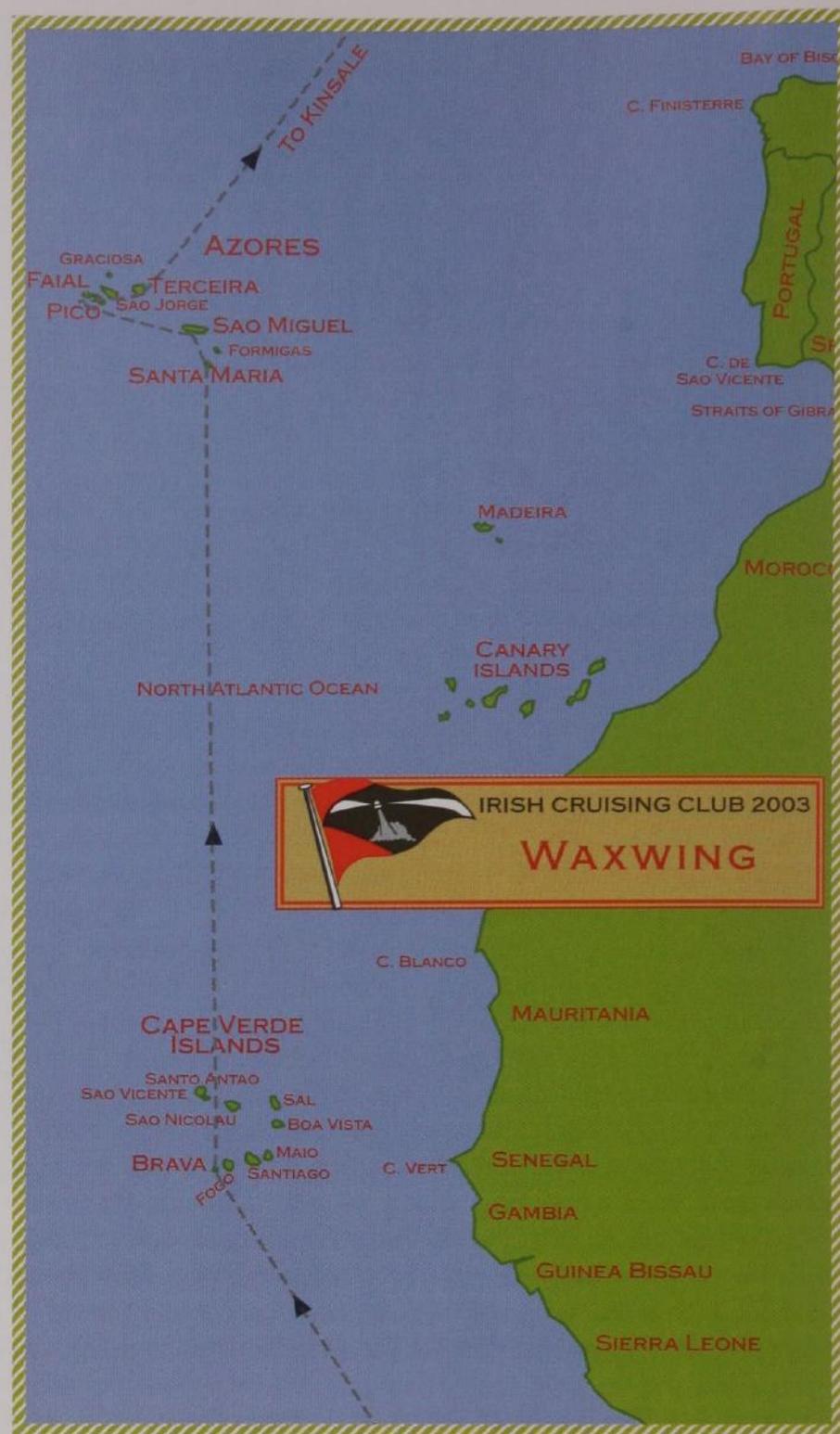
Eating out was a good and inexpensive experience and we tried, with enjoyment, a local dish of a sort of stew served in a ceramic bowl which kept the food piping hot right to the end. Here again we found concern that visitors should feel that they were getting good value for their Euro when our waiter advised that one bowl would be more than enough for three (which it certainly was) instead of selling us, as he might well have done, two or even three bowls. Long may that attitude last.

## Pico

We left Angra at 05.30 on May 25th so as to be quite sure of making the 66nm to Madelina in plenty of time for a sundowner in that lovely anchorage which is only just 5 nm short of Gail's departure point, Horta on Faial where we were also to pick up our next guests, Richard and Helen Wheeler. We had some good sailing at first but the wind died as we passed up the channel between Pico and Sao Jorge to the east and we motored for some hours.

There is no marina on Pico but, in any event, we like to avoid them when a good anchorage is convenient and Madelina became a favourite place later in our Azorian cruising.

Next day, the ladies took a taxi up to the start of the walk on Pico (after which the island takes its name) which is claimed to be the highest mountain in all Portugal. They returned in late afternoon with a bottle or two of the local wine (a bit thin but



drinkable) and a bottle of a really lovely blackberry liquor – organic of course.



Our Aries does its thing as we clear Table Bay.

There was time to reach over to Horta (40 minutes under Yankee alone wafting over a smooth, clear, sparkling sea) and we were soon at the berth – amidst the super yachts and feeling a bit small and scruffy by comparison – allocated to us by the friendly and efficient marina staff. Yes, we did have to complete customs, immigration and maritime police formalities yet again but these services were all conveniently located in the marina building and the officials were so friendly and pleasant that it would have been an unreasonable person who created a fuss and spoiled their fun.

It is worth mentioning that we never bothered again to report in (except to marina Receptions of course) and no one took any notice of us although we were told that, strictly speaking, all crew

changes had to be advised and forms completed in every port. In the marinas at Angra and Praia (both on Terceira) we think the form they filled in on our arrival may have been copied to the authorities but certainly we did not have to “do the rounds” as at Ponta Delgada and Horta.

## Horta

Horta is a popular meeting point for yachts crossing the Atlantic in both directions or simply cruising from Europe and the marina is busy especially “in season”, when boats returning from the Caribbean or crossing from the US to escape the hurricane season and spend the summer in the Med or back home in northern Europe, crowd in. Numbers seemed to be far in excess of capacity but no one was turned away even if it meant rafting along the quay.

Facilities have not yet expanded to meet increased demand and we had quite a walk to the old part of the marina to shower or visit the loo or to have a drink or a coffee or a snack in the well run and clean marina café. Nevertheless, we preferred the café there to the much vaunted and popular Café Sport overlooking the harbour.

There we had a great reunion with fellow voyagers on the Cape Town to Europe run *Jade* and *Gladys May*. They had arrived weeks before having left the Ascension area much the same time as us and, neither having SSB working, had become a bit anxious about our tardy arrival. When we told them about our sojourn on Brava (Cape Verdes) they were envious but relieved to see us all the same.

Gail departed and Richard and Helen arrived. The days flew by what with touring the island by car and with parties at the café and in restaurants and aboard *Waxwing*. *Megawatt* (Phillip and Sue Watson – ICC) came in one morning on her way back from Antigua sans the owners but with Robin Hennessey, Dave Dwyer and co. Looked like a party was brewing but they were rushing to catch a plane so a quick hello and good bye was all there was time for. However a bit of a party did just happen to happen when Ed Wheeler and his son James on *Witchcraft* (ICC) put in for a day or two as part of an Azores-and-back cruise. We also met David Gould, *Yvanna*, from Dun Laoghaire who joined in the shore-side fun.

We went cruising again after four days but returned twice to leave off and collect visitors from home and to do some business with the excellent and helpful people in Mid Atlantic Yacht Services and in the shops and restaurants.

## Cruising the Azores

Rather than take any reader who has persevered this far and has the stamina to continue through our several comings and goings between the islands and back to Horta, we will content ourselves with mentioning just once each place visited and endeavour to convey the highlights and the spirit of our cruise.

In all, we spent two months in the Azores exploring just three of the central group of islands as well as the more southerly Santa Maria and Sao Miguel early on while we made our way to Horta.

We had several sets of visitors from home and we quickly came to the conclusion that Horta was

not the best crew exchange place if one wanted, as we and they did, to experience as many islands as possible. All flights are via Lisbon and there is only one each day to and from Horta whereas there are three from Praia Da Vitoria on Terceira.

However, the overriding factor was the changeable weather as the Atlantic lows chased other across the archipelago in quick succession bringing with them strong northwesterlies – right on the nose for trying to get back to Horta from Terceira or up the west side of Pico. There are also tidal currents in the area which, though not particularly strong, could not be ignored especially as they assisted the wind in setting up a fair old sea. That said, the Azores is still a great place to cruise and we would hope to return.

## Guests

Our guests on this cruise were Gail Varian (Sao Miguel to Horta), Richard and Helen Wheeler (Horta and back via Pico and Terceira), Robert and Hazel McDonnell (Horta and back via Pico and Terceira), Jack and Aileen Craig (Horta to Terceira) and Tansey Millerick (Terceira).

## Distances between harbours (in nautical miles):

Horta (Faial) to Madelina (Pico) – 5

Madelina (Pico) to Velas (Sao Jorge) – 17

Madelina (Pico) to Santa Cruz Das Ribeiras (Pico)– 28

Madelina (Pico) to Angra (Terceira)– 66

Angra (Terceira) to Praia da Victoria (Terceira)– 13

## Harbours visited

**Horta** (3 times) as commented on already and as follows.

**Madelina on Pico** just across the narrow channel from Horta soon became a favourite anchorage for first and last night stops (no worries about getting guests back in time for flights home) but for longer stays as well or when the wind was a bit too strong for making to the other islands. Besides which it is a delightfully clean and picturesque harbour and village with views over to Faial and with Pico mountain providing a breathtaking backdrop. Shelter from any wind is good but swell from the northeast and southwest runs along the coast of the island and finds its way into some parts of the anchorage calling for an occasional move for comfort. We were surprised that so few yachts called in – preferring the flesh pots of Horta



Landing stage, St. Helena

and, for some reason, the overcrowded marina there. Good places to eat ashore were soon sussed out with the locally-caught prawns of enormous size grilled and hung on a skewer voted the best of great offerings in a number of restaurants.

On Pico, we also stopped over at the village of Santa Cruz das Ribeiras on the southwest coast but found the holding difficult as the ground was covered with large boulders. Ignore, at ones peril (as we did) sound advice to use a trip line and you may have to dive (as Peter did) to dislodge the anchor. There are a couple of other harbours on Pico. We looked at them while on a land cruise and, while the villages were pretty and attractive, we did not think they offered much in the way of comfort or shelter for a yacht at anchor.

One day when, with the wind blowing strongly from the southeast (which would have been on the nose for the most part), we judged it too far to sail from Madelina to Angra in daylight, and we thought to try and break the passage at the small harbour at Velas on Sao Jorge. Our RCC guide suggested it would be sheltered in that wind but it proved otherwise so without bothering to anchor we returned to Madelina disappointed but having enjoyed a lovely day's sailing as we reached along at speed under reefed main and Yankee – *Waxwing* at her most comfortable and responsive with our Aries relieving us of the chore of steering.

Planning to get guests back to Horta in time to catch homeward bound planes became a bit of a worry and depleted some of the pleasures of good long stops at Angra and Praia on Terceira. In the end, we gave up when Aileen Craig discovered she could change her tickets to depart from Praia instead of Horta and that there were more flights to Lisbon each day and we advised Tansey Millerick to join us there. That took a lot of tension out of things and we wished we had thought to work it out much earlier.

We have mentioned Angra and the marina earlier so lets move on to Praia. The marina there is inside a large, well protected commercial harbour but the docks and associated traffic are a mile or so away and do not intrude on a lovely location close to the small town. Facilities at the marina were first class and the staff warmly welcoming and helpful. The town is as picturesque as any in the Azores and has good restaurants. Although we rented cars from time to time to tour the island, we also enjoyed bus trips round the island and across to Angra where we visited and re-visited a favourite restaurant there. There is plenty to do and see but we will leave details to be read in the tourist brochures.

Tansey was with us during our last week there and we did one short day sail down to the southeast corner of the island where we found a lovely little anchorage behind Ilheu da Mina (more a rock than an island really). The water was clear and inviting and we thought to swim, replace the anode on our Maxprop and give *Waxwing's* bottom a bit of a wipe over. Unfortunately, a flotilla of nasty looking jelly fish decided to drift in on the flooding tide so we decided to abandon our in-the-water plans. Tansey kindly went down with wet suit when we were back at the marina and did the necessary.

There is a large supermarket uptown for provisioning and diesel and water are available at the marina so we decided to make Praia our departure point rather than going back to Horta as originally intended. We were having a relaxed and enjoyable time so saw no need to stretch our cruising by also visiting Corvo, Flores or Graciosa beautiful and interesting as they are reputed to be. There was just too much sailing involved.

### **Praia to Dun Laoghaire**

All too soon, it was time to set off on the last ocean crossing of our wanderings. We more or less kept to the rhumb line,

experiencing most of the time a mix of winds from 25 knots on the nose to flat calms but, with the help of our engine, we made reasonable progress more or less in the desired direction.

Apart from seeing a few ships bound west (some of which either responded to a VHF call or contacted us first) and a cable-laying vessel whose captain kindly warned us to keep well clear of his operation, we did not record any great excitements.

In Praia we had made friends with Brian Bell (originally from Dalkey but living in the UK for many years) and his crew on *Small World*. They were heading for Crosshaven and left the same day as us. They made great radio companions on the crossing and also passed on messages via their email link using SSB. Thus we were able to give Keith Hunt (ICC) regular updates as to our eta Kinsale. As a matter of interest *Small World* initially took the more northerly course recommended but had much the same conditions as us.

As we came towards the Irish inshore weather areas we transferred our attentions from Trudy's Net to Valentia Radio, first contacting them on SSB and getting a warm and helpful response. A little later we transferred to VHF. They told us the weather looked good for a landfall on the morning of Friday 19th July before starting to break later in the day. We emailed Keith accordingly.

The gods smiled on us towards the end and we had just lovely sailing for the last 24 hours with 15 knots from the southwest and we drove *Waxwing* as hard as we could to try and make our eta work out. It was an emotive time when, in the growing light of a beautiful early dawn, we saw the land of West Cork stretching away to the southwest and knew the Old Head would soon appear.

As we rounded the Old Head and steered towards the harbour, we met some boats cruising west whose crews waved at us cheerfully. We were nearly home. We saw more boats that did not seem to be heading anywhere in particular until we realised that Keith had organised a welcoming flotilla. He was on *Seadrifter* with John and Libby Petch and, after firing a "finishing" gun, they and the rest of the flotilla escorted us behind Sandycove Island where we dropped anchor at 10.00 after a crossing of only ten days for the 1141nm logged.

We felt greatly honoured to find *Irish Mist*, dressed overall and with our Commodore Arthur Baker and Marjorie waiting to greet us and host a champagne party for the assembled crews which included our son Stephen and daughter-in-law Fenella plus three very young grandchildren who had come out in the Sandycove House Drascombe.

Thank you Arthur and Marjorie for your wonderful welcome and your generous hospitality.

Later, we went on in to the club marina and later still there was a great party in Sandycove House, hosted by Susan's cousins Michael and Bridget Garvin for family and friends. We rested in Kinsale for five days just relaxing in that great place but also enjoying the continuing hospitality at Sandycove House and at Keith and Poppy Hunt's. A wonderful time indeed.

Alas, seemingly all too soon, the weather set fair for the passage to Kilmore Quay and stayed that way for Arklow and on to Dun Laoghaire where the members of the Royal St George turned up in Dalkey Sound and afterwards in the Club in unbelievable numbers to give *Waxwing* a great welcome home on that lovely sunny Sunday afternoon.

We had sailed *Waxwing* round the world starting from the club and arriving back just under eight years later. It has been a fantastic time.

# Trailing and Sailing to West Cork

## Grainne FitzGerald



### THE FINGAL CUP

AWARDED ENTIRELY AT THE  
ADJUDICATOR'S OWN DISCRETION  
FOR THE LOG WHICH APPEALED  
TO HIM MOST

In May 2000, after a lengthy search, we finally bought a boat we could call our own – *Mountain Mist*, a Trapper 300 (26 foot). With the ink still wet on the contract, we were raring to go. However, we had already made plans to join Dave FitzGerald on *White Heather* for the Classic Malts Millennium Cruise in Scotland, a tortuous journey for my pint drinking man. The following year, ready to brave it alone, we headed north to Carlingford, Ardglass, Portaferry and a week pottering around Strangford Lough. Brimming with enthusiasm, we had no sooner returned than we started planning for our 2002 cruise to West Cork.

In mid-June 2002, having spent weeks checking charts, cruising guides, tides etc., we were all ready for our initial hop to Arklow on the first Saturday of our two week cruise. The forecast, sadly, was far from encouraging, so we decided to wait until the next forecast – and then the next. The long range forecast proved even more depressing, so we ended up spending a couple of wonderful stress-free days (punctuated by the trials and tribulations of the green army in Japan/Korea) in Dungarvan, Kinsale and Glandore – all of which we reached by car!!

To make up for it we decided to take a week or so off later in the year, but it never happened. A Trapper 300 is just a little too small, somewhat “flighty”, and unpleasant for long hops in anything over Force 6.

Loath to give up, we were determined to “have another shot at Cork” in 2003. This time, we decided to bring *Mountain Mist* as far south as possible over the June Bank Holiday weekend prior to our actual holiday, which was to start two weeks later. Hopefully, this way, even if the weather at the beginning of the holiday did turn bad, at least we would already be on the south coast. *Mountain Mist* can be very snug even in adverse conditions (as long as we are in a sheltered spot).

While still making plans we learned that during the year my sister, Trisha, and her German partner, Uwe Jung, had added an Etap 22i to their fleet of two aging surfboards, and joined a sailing club on the Main River south of Frankfurt where they live. Eager to sail on open seas, they decided to “trail” their boat, *Escapade*, to Ireland where they would spend a week in Kinvara with Mum and Dad. Here, they wanted to get in some sailing around Galway Bay, before joining us (by road) in Glandore.

All went according to plan, and on Friday, 30th May at 21:00 hours, we set off from Dun Laoghaire, a team of two – Grainne FitzGerald and Chris Curry – heading for Kilmore Quay. Unfortunately, the wind was southerly, Force 3, so we motor-sailed. This, however, rather than being a disappointment, gave us a chance to play with the new “toy” we had bought during the winter – an auto helm. I had almost forgotten how necessary it is to have one when cruising, and we certainly wouldn't have attempted an “overnighter” without it. It was a lovely clear evening when we left and at mid-night, having passed Greystones, we started regular watches.

The wind, meanwhile, had become very calm (which suited us fine), but at around 03:00 hours, somewhere off Arklow, a

thick fog rolled in and visibility must have been down to a few yards – thank God for the GPS the previous owners had left with the boat!! By 06:00 hours, thankfully, the fog had cleared and the wind was up to Force 4 (still southerly). It was, nonetheless, still a damp, cold and generally unpleasant morning. An hour later, it gradually started to brighten up and we decided to give the engine (and auto helm) a bit of a rest. We were now inside the Arklow bank and had to beat in towards the Wexford coast, yet it was nice to be sailing at last. Unfortunately, by mid morning, having spent a couple of hours making only 3 knots with wind and tide against us, the niceness went out of it and we resorted to motor-sailing again. At 11:00 hours with Rosslare abeam, the tide once more (miraculously, as planned!!) turned south. As we sailed inside the Tuskar Rock and around Carnsore point, the sun was shining and a couple of porpoises had come to join us. At just after 13:00 hours we arrived in Kilmore Quay, tired, but content with our first overnight, two-handed, trip.

Ashore, after a bit of a snooze, we let the chef at Kehoe's do the cooking, before turning in for an early night. The outlook for the following day was for S.W., Force 5 or 6, so we decided to wait for the 05:57 forecast before making any significant plans. As it turned out, long before the alarm woke us up, the rain did. A filthy morning – rain, strong winds and bad visibility. Though an improvement was forecasted for later that day we agreed not to go to Cork. A longer stay in Kilmore Quay called for some deliberation; the ensuing costs for nearly two weeks posing a serious threat to our entertainment budget. Hence, our priorities established, we set our sights on Waterford instead.

While far from being “fair weather” sailors (if there's any such thing in Ireland) we were, for the sake of comfort, still reluctant to set out in such wretched conditions. Putting our faith in the promise of more congenial weather, we dallied until early afternoon, when finally, true to word, the rain stopped, the sun came out, and the wind dropped way down to Force 2 or 3.

Although this was later than suited because of tides going up to Waterford, we cast off and headed for Hook Head. Despite bright sunshine and fairly light winds, the seas were very lumpy with big swells, circumstances that led us to concede, for once and for all, that a Trapper 300 really is not the most suitable for cruising. Subdued, but not discouraged, we rounded Hook Head at 18.00 hours and an hour or so later, entered the river where the waters became gloriously calm and peaceful! We motored for two further hours enjoying a changing landscape, the final stretch being very slow as the tide was now against us.

On arriving at the marina we discovered no one in attendance but a couple of locals and an English visitor, who saved the day with a helping hand and a spare key. I learned that the marina only has someone in attendance from Monday to Friday (9 – 5), so we called the following Tuesday, after returning to Dublin, to say we would be leaving *Mountain Mist* there for 10 days! Waterford turned out to be an ideal place to



Enjoying the sun as *Escapade* is towed by *Mountain Mist*.

abandon the boat with the bus depot (a very regular service) just a few minutes walk away.

On Saturday 14th June, the start of our official holiday, we were driven down to Waterford on a fabulous sunny day. On arrival we failed, yet again, to make contact with the representative from Waterford Co. Council, Dick Fanning, who was busy with the Mayor, greeting the Special Olympics team. Conscientious sailors that we are, we dutifully left a message saying we'd be in touch! That afternoon was spent sorting ourselves out and, in spite of all the drinking money we'd saved by staying in Waterford, after a tasty meal on board we opted for an early night in order to catch the tide next morning at 08:00 hours. The forecast was for S.W. Force 3 to 4 (surprise, surprise – the direction we were heading in), and, to add insult to injury, though the following morning was beautiful, there wasn't a breath of wind. Refusing to let this dampen our spirits, we were rewarded with a wonderful trip down the river. While it's out of the way for most people heading to or from Cork, if you ever get a chance, I would strongly recommend it. The marina is very safe and the shower facilities in the nearby Tower Hotel's leisure center are excellent.

By 10:00 hours, we were off Dunmore East and the anticipated Force 3 breeze had arrived, a stroke of luck, as it turned out, as the engine had unexpectedly started making some rather alarming vibrating sounds, now that we had reached quite a big swell. Gladly, we hoisted the sails, but, as if providence hadn't played enough tricks on us, the wind dropped again some time later, leaving us no other choice but to start up our sickly engine, but not exceeding 3 knots to reduce the vibration.

At 15:00 hours we perse-

veringly set the sails once more, but although the sun stayed out and the wind never rose above Force 3, it was a very lumpy, uncomfortable trip, which even turned the preparation of soup and a sandwich into a monumental task. At 17:00 hours, off Knockdoon head, it was back to motor-sailing for the umpteenth time. We had now been out for nine hours and our progress was much slower than we had hoped. It was mid-night before we eventually chugged into Kinsale. As we were unable to contact anyone in either the Kinsale Yacht Club or Trident Marina, we continued on to Castlepark Marina. When we arrived there, it was in complete darkness, forcing us to "feel" our way around with a torch in an effort to find a vacant berth. The tide, at this point, was just an hour off low tide and very

shallow, so we were literally inching our way along. Chris, who'd been squinting into the blackness, suddenly shouted from the bows, 'Slow down – it's a bit shallow!' I replied 'Yeah, I was just thinking that my...' Thud.

Since then, I've discovered that when Chris (a man who enjoys living on the edge) says, "slow down", he usually means, "stop!" What I had seen glistening like water in the moonlight just a few feet away was, as it transpired, mud – lots of it. In a frenzy of nocturnal activity, we did our best to reverse out, but the sludge had us so firmly in its grip that we finally capitulated – 10 feet from a lovely cosy berth and a mere 50 yards from a frothy pint! We spent the next hour dolefully watching people leave the pub until eventually the lights went out, first in the bar, and then upstairs after the landlord had spent some time counting his takings. When all hopes of a pint ashore evaporated, we drowned our sorrows on board with a couple of glasses of wine, and after a few one-hour watches,



*Mountain Mist* rounding the Fastnet Rock.

eventually crawled into our bunks at 03:00 hours.

We discovered on shore the next day that the marina office was closed for a week, and subsequently nearly ended up getting locked out as we didn't have a key, the notice not being visible to the naked eye until we were within 10 feet of the office with the gate firmly clicked closed behind us. With assistance from a fellow traveler, and to avoid further difficulties, we quickly beat a hasty retreat and found a grand berth on the Trident Pontoon.

Our original plan was to spend Monday "popping" around to Glandore, where we were to meet Trish and Uwe, but all things considered, we just could not face it (we were, after all, on holiday), so we asked them to meet us in Kinsale instead. At midday, they trundled into the harbour with their trusty Etap 22i in tow and an hour later had slipped it into the water and were berthed next to us at the Trident pontoon. To celebrate, we had a meal that evening in the White House followed by a hilarious singsong in the bar, performed by the singer songwriter Dessie Walls, the song 'Stress Management' being Chris's favorite. Impatient to start our cruise "in company", our strategy for the following day was discussed in detail, a plan which was soon rethought when the forecast predicted a Force 5 to 6 for the next 24 hours. As Trish and Uwe's boat is even smaller than ours, we decided it best to stay in the vicinity and maybe go for a sail around the Sovereigns and into Oysterhaven instead. The forecast for Wednesday 18th was even worse, with a gale warning, so we took advantage of the fact that we had Uwe's car and went for a drive up to the 'Old Head' instead, which we discovered was being "baby sat" by a large number of Garda due to a dispute over rights of way with the Golf Club. That evening we had



Chris, Grainne, Trish and Uwe in "Tropical" Glandore.

what was to be the first of many lovely meals in the cockpit of *Escapade*, followed by a drink in the Kinsale Yacht Club.

On Thursday, 19th June, with a forecast of S.W. 5 to 7, becoming N.N.W. 3 to 4 in the afternoon, we put in a couple of reef and headed off at 10:30 hours. We had a very fast, enjoyable sail out to the Old Head with *Escapade* keeping well up with us. However, having passed the Old Head, we had to beat into the wind, which did, as forecasted, decrease to Force 4, but continued to come from the S.W. By early afternoon the tide had turned against us and we felt we would simply never get past the Seven Heads (can there really only be seven?) Meanwhile, Trish and Uwe, who were now way behind us, were beginning to get a trifle edgy. *Escapade*, as mentioned, is a trailer-sailer with an outboard in the well, and not really suitable for long hauls and high swells, however, unwilling to give up, they kept plugging on. By 19:00 hours we still had not reached Galley Head and were making only 2-3 knots, so we contacted *Escapade* to say we were turning our engine on, and suggested, at this stage, that they might too! Trish, not without a tremor of apprehension in her voice, informed me that they'd had their engine going full blast for hours and just didn't seem to be getting anywhere.

As it happened we did, very quickly, leave them behind and at 20:00 hours, as we were approaching the entrance to Glandore, we decided the check out the mooring situation before going out again to lead them in. *Escapade*, originally equipped for inland waterways, doesn't have GPS and as Trish and Uwe had had no previous experience of sailing in the dark, it wasn't long before my mobile phone was ringing! It dawned on us then, that the entrance to Glandore was right under the setting sun, and very



Trish and Uwe on board *Escapade* in Cape Clear.

hard to see when approaching from Galley Head. We immediately turned around and, as they were still quite far out, darkness had, indeed, fallen by the time we got in. Later, we joked that *Escapade's* navigation lights were superfluous – the whites of Trisha's terrified eyes were sufficient to guide us to them!

“Avoiding Adam and hugging Eve” we pattered into the harbour only to discover all the visitors' moorings now occupied. We're not sure if *Escapade's* crew thought we might try moving on to somewhere else, but I have certainly never seen anyone throw down an anchor so fast in all my life! It had been a very hard trip, but, nevertheless, we were all able to appreciate the beautiful moonlit night before finally turning in.

The next day was once again gorgeous and sunny, and we quickly decided to take advantage of the novelty of good weather. We had a mid-morning “jar” outside the Glandore Inn, where one can sit high up at the sea wall and look down through palm trees onto the harbour moorings. With the German flag fluttering on *Escapade*, one visitor was heard saying ‘Gee, they are some sailors to come all that distance in such a small boat’. Wickedly leaving them in blissful ignorance, we then strolled over to Union Hall for lunch. That evening, we had a scrumptious “Fish and Chips” meal, once again in the Glandore Inn – there really is nothing like real fresh fish.

On Saturday 21st June, we departed Glandore at 11:00 hours for Baltimore. Just a couple of short “hops” from our most westerly destination, the wind had at last gone around to the southeast, Force 5 to 6! We beat out to Adam with reefs in both our main and jib, but took them out as soon as we turned west and had a spanking run past the Kedges to the entrance of Baltimore. On turning northeast towards Baltimore village, we were way over-canvassed, but luckily didn't have to far to go. With no visible berth on the pontoon, we tried unsuccessfully to contact the marina, but left a message before dropping anchor. Some time later they got back to us and suggested we berth alongside an English Moody. Trish and Uwe decided to stay on the anchor. They have a tiny dinghy and were anxious to show off their rowing skills. That evening on board *Mountain Mist*, we had a super Mexican meal (fajitas), cooked by Chris, before going to Bushes Pub where we were delighted, (for once) to find a TV showing the opening ceremony of the Special Olympics. It was a great evening's entertainment. While rowing back to *Escapade* in the darkness, Trish and Uwe blinded us with technology by using a remote control to switch on a lamp hanging from their boom.

The forecast for the following day, Sunday, 22nd June, was variable 2 to 3, but actually turned out to be N.W. Force 4 to 5. Although the inside passage to Schull may have been more sheltered (and interesting), we decided not to take any chances on what can be a tricky passage and chose the Gascanane Sound route instead. Again, we had a fairly bumpy passage in our little boats, but it was a sunny day and a very pleasant sail, even if it did mean beating most of the way. This time, we managed to get visitors' moorings which are situated a considerable distance away from the pier. Rowing ashore against a stiff breeze left us soaked to the skin and more exhausted than the trip from Baltimore itself. The pains you go through for a pint.

That evening, we planned to have a meal in the Courtyard restaurant, but discovered it had closed down. After checking out the other restaurants (about which we knew nothing), we decided to go “cheap and cheerful”, and settled for a very passable pizza before doing the rounds of the pubs (including Newman's which is under new ownership!).

Next morning, we rowed ashore once more as we needed to get Gas (which we found in the local Spar supermarket), before

heading out for our own little “Fastnet Race”. It seemed our luck had turned when, once more, it was a lovely warm and sunny day, with N.W. Force 4 winds. We swapped cameras before setting off at 11:40 hours on a nice steady reach out to the Fastnet Rock where, having completed our obligatory “photo shoot”, we turned away towards Cape Clear's north harbour.

On arrival, there were already a couple of boats on the deeper berths, and although I have been there with as many as 60 boats rafted up together, we did not really want to tie up alongside this time. A local (the resident taxi-driver and a native of Dublin), assured us we would have enough room in front of the ferry's berth and that if we went aground at all, it would only be for a short while. We tied up, with *Escapade* alongside, and, while not doubting the local's word, we quickly checked the tides to be on the safe side, before heading off to explore the island (and watering-holes). His calculation was correct and later, with just inches under our keel, the tide turned. I should mention that *Mountain Mist* draws 1.5 meters and there were neap tides at the time. Meanwhile, while keeping an “eye” on the tide, and enjoying the sun and a sandwich, first one and then a second ferry came in. As the huge vessels bore threateningly down on us, we suddenly began to seriously doubt the local man's information. With the cheese and ham butties stuck in our throat, we watched as the skipper deftly maneuvered the looming craft into position, with 6 feet to spare! Agreeing that the ferryman's skill and dexterity called for a toast, the four of us hurried to the first of Cape Clear's three pubs. It was a quiet evening on the island, yet tired after another day of intoxicating fresh air and breathtaking views from the cliff tops, we were glad that the subsequent pub crawl was only a short one.

On Tuesday, 24th June, after a leisurely morning, we departed at 12:30 hours for Glandore. The forecast was for variable 3 or less, and on departure it was very calm, overcast, but looked like clearing. At 13:00 hours, though the clouds had dispersed, it was still flat calm. Confident that a light breeze would come up further out, we continued on. By 14:30 hours, with the Kedges abeam, there still wasn't a breath of air. As *Escapade* only has a small tank, Trisha and Uwe were, by this time, slightly concerned that their fuel supply might not last until we reached Glandore, so, sickly engine or not, we decided to throw them a line and watch as they lay back to enjoy the sun.

Despite the lack of wind, however, it turned out to be an interesting passage. Every now and then, perhaps confused by the sound of the engine, seals popped up and observed us inquisitively. Once, our attentions drawn by a strange puffing sound, we turned to see the smooth back of a whale arching out of the water, and later, the dorsal fin of what was probably a small shark, zigzagged along *Escapade's* hull. For once, Trisha and Uwe were quite content not to be perched on their surfboards.

At 16:00 hours, passing Toe Head, the wind increased at last, so we cast off *Escapade* and started, due to the many strung out fishing nets, to sail a slightly crisscross course back to Glandore. At 18:30 hours, with sunburnt noses and shoulders, we picked up moorings just outside the harbour. We finished the day with a well-earned meal and drinks ashore.

Next day, having agreed to leave *Escapade* in Glandore, (no, please, not the Seven Heads again!!) Trish and Uwe joined us on *Mountain Mist* for the return trip to Kinsale. We departed from Union hall at 11:30 hours having motored over there first for diesel, supplies and ice. It was cloudy, but warm when we set off under engine for Galley Head in a light southerly Force 2 to 3 wind. Hoping to finish our holiday under sail, we all rejoiced when the breeze picked up allowing us a comfortable

reach as far as the Seven Heads. After that, alas, it was back to our still somewhat dodgy engine and a course zigzagging around the numerous fishing nets, which lay in our path. Looking forward to a cosy berth and a shower, we arrived in Kinsale at 18:00 hours to find the Sovereigns Cup in full swing and, as a result, all marinas full. Confronted by the uproarious celebrations of victorious fellow seafarers, and the fact that our end-of-holiday mood was somewhat mellow, we decided against rafting up. Instead, we pulled up long enough to dump Trisha, Uwe and their rubber dinghy onto the fuel berth at the Trident Pontoon, waved a brief greeting to fellow ICC members, Eric and Margaret Hill, who were sitting snugly in a berth at the Trident, and promptly motored straight back out of the harbour.



The Skipper takes a break.

Trish and Uwe, who had left the car in Kinsale, then picked up their trailer and returned to Glandore, and *Escapade*. There, they would remain one more night before slipping the Etap out of the water at Union Hall (excellent slipway for trailer-sailers) and setting off for Germany via the Rosslare and Dover Car ferries. We continued on to Crosshaven alone, sailing most of the way, and arrived, after a long day, at 23:00 hours. Though our initial plans were to take us further along the coast before we ran out of time, for now, this was to be as far as we would get. The engine was, at this stage, no longer reliable and rather than ending a lovely, although not entirely hitch-free, holiday with a technical disaster, we agreed to stay put.

We contacted fellow ICC member, Chris Bruen, who greatly assisted us by suggesting we use the good services of Salve Marine to check out our engine. After initial examinations of the engine and prop shaft, above and below the water, the diagnoses was that the engine mountings had collapsed or to put it another way – Mountings Missed!

Continuing on our journey by boat was not an option, coupled with the fact that we were due back to work the following Monday. We made arrangements to leave the boat at Salve Marine in, as it turned out, the capable hands of Vitza, who over the next two weeks repaired the boat by building new brackets and replacing the mountings. Before returning to Dublin we spent a very enjoyable evening in the Royal Cork Yacht Club, where we met a retired couple from Essex who were on an extended holiday, and ended the evening aboard their Hallberg Rassy, for a nightcap. We returned to Dublin the following day by bus with arrangements to return when the boat was ready for our sail back to our home port.

Some time later, on 18th July to be precise, we drove to Waterford on the first leg of the journey to collect our boat, left our car at the long-term car park and then bussed our way to Crosshaven, availing of the generosity of the Bus Eireann drivers who refused to collect any fare due to an industrial dispute with their employers. On our arrival at the Salve Marine we met with Vitza, settled our account, and then went for a meal and a quiet drink in the 'Moonduster' bar. With strong winds to continue for the next 24 hours we caught up on some domestic chores aboard *Mountain Mist* and later went to see the movie 'Veronica Guerin' in Douglas where we bumped

into some old friends who joined us for a meal and delivered us back to Crosshaven.

The following morning at 07.00 hours we were off at last with the wind S.S.W. Force 4, bound once more for Waterford. Having discovered the Royal St. George cruise was heading for Kilmore Quay on the August bank holiday weekend, we had already decided to break our journey in Waterford, return home, and start the 'George' cruise from there. Passing Roches Point and heading N.E. the winds, although from the S.W., had reduced to Force 3. The seas after days of strong southerly winds were mountainous and progress under sail very slow but enjoyable. After eleven hours, motor-sailing most of the way – an ideal test for our repaired engine – we reached Dunmore East and once more headed into calmer waters, arriving at the Waterford marina, where we quickly tied up, had a meal, collected our car and made our way back to Dublin.

In order to meet up with the "George" cruise, we traveled by bus back to Waterford and, having already paid our fees for the two long stays, we departed on Saturday 2nd August at 10:25 for Kilmore Quay. The winds were southerly Force 4, and although we sailed most of the way, at 12.30 hours with Dunmore East abeam, we motor-sailed to Hook Head as the wind was now on the nose. After rounding Hook Head we had a wonderful sail, reaching Kilmore Quay at 16:00 hours. That evening we joined our fellow club members for drinks aboard *Rhinegold*, followed by a meal in the Silver Fox.

Early the next morning, at 07:00 we departed for Dublin. With southerly winds Force 4 to 5, at last we had a very fast, very satisfying sail. However at 18:00, with the wind increasing, the tide against us, and the allure of Wicklow, just around the corner, we decided to spend a quiet night there. Some hope!! On arriving, we found 50 boats rafted up alongside the quay wall, and the East Coast Championships in full swing. Although tired, we couldn't resist joining the activities. The following morning, Monday 4th August, with flat calm seas and bright sunshine, we motored back to Dun Laoghaire, without even taking the sail covers off!! At 12:30 we picked up our mooring, happy to have *Mountain Mist* back in Dublin, all in all – the whole experience, with it's ups and downs, and many surprises, planned or otherwise, made for an enjoyable West Cork cruise.

# Norway at last – *Sundowner of Beaulieu*

## Roy Waters

*Sundowner* is an Oyster 39, built in 1980 and which we have owned since 1999. Our boat is used mainly for family cruising, the family being wife Susie and teenage sons Geoffrey and Robert, who have been with us since they were babies. On earlier cruises across the North Sea to Denmark, northern Germany and Sweden it had been our intention to call at at least one port in southern Norway on the way home but every time the weather defeated us. This time we would try for Norway direct, come what may!

As on previous long cruises planning started at an early stage, especially since there were a number of other people involved and we would have to be at certain places by certain times. In other words there was an itinerary but an itinerary does mean that one has to keep moving even if at a leisurely pace and one does not get stuck in the first attractive “port of lost cruises”. However it was planned as a leisurely cruise and not a race to see how far we could get in as short a time as possible!

As on previous Scandinavian cruises the Boyd/Simonsen family were involved. The Boyd family of Helen’s Bay in Northern Ireland are very closely connected with the Simonsen family in Denmark as a result of two marriages and Virginia presently lives in Odense with husband Soren and their four children. Soren is a recently qualified medical doctor and was now on a six month period of duty at Sandnessjoen in Norway, just south of the Arctic Circle. Also involved was our close friend Elizabeth Rufer from Basel in Switzerland, who travelled by train and ferry to join us in Norway for two weeks. Finally for the outward passage to Norway we had Chris McFerran, another ex-Commodore of RNIYC and his nephew Tom.

An unusual feature of our present cruising is that eldest son, Geoffrey, now 19, suffers from Friedrich’s Ataxia and is now confined to a wheelchair. He can move about on the boat without the chair since there are so many handholds but getting on an off the boat can be difficult. Alongside a marina pontoon it is possible and alongside a quay wall it is also possible since we put him in the bosun’s chair and swing him ashore on the main halyard! On this cruise we never once anchored and only once picked up a mooring. In fine weather the wheelchair can stay on deck, otherwise it stows in the “workshop”, accessible from the cockpit.

We were very lucky with the weather this time and it seems Norway had the best summer weather for many years while we were there. I suffered from sunburn and prickly heat rash and that was before the heatwave arrived. There was virtually no pure sailing for the simple reason there was little or no wind and what there was was almost always “on the nose”. The worst weather and sea conditions we met were on a three hour passage between Oban and Craobh Haven, when there were nasty seas and poor visibility in rain off Easdale.

### Stage 1 – The passage to Norway

Departure from our home port of Bangor was at 0945 on Sunday 29 June and we covered the 65 miles to Gigha in just

over eight hours. Here we spent a rolly night on a mooring since the wind became NE and occasionally quite fresh. There was no attempt to launch the dinghy and go ashore but we had a splendid home made pork stew for supper and a bottle of wine to go with it. The next afternoon found us alongside a pontoon in Ardenraive Bay, opposite Oban and some crew members went over to visit the town on the free ferry. Geoffrey could not even get ashore for a shower since although alongside a pontoon shore access was via an old and wobbly ship’s gangway and totally impossible for him to negotiate. However during the winter I had installed a small colour TV and video in the saloon and he was quite happy watching the tennis at Wimbledon. The favourite video we had on board was “The Perfect Storm”! Most of his “showering” was done on board and I had fitted a number of additional handgrips in the after toilet to make life a bit easier for him.

We were under way by 0600 the following morning to cover the 73 miles up the Sound of Mull, round Ardnamurchan Point and up the Sound of Sleat to Kyle of Lochalsh. Here we got an alongside berth on the pontoon outside the hotel at 1630. There are excellent public toilets here and even Geoffrey managed a shower with some assistance. Since the hotel provides the



*Sundowner* under full sail but little wind

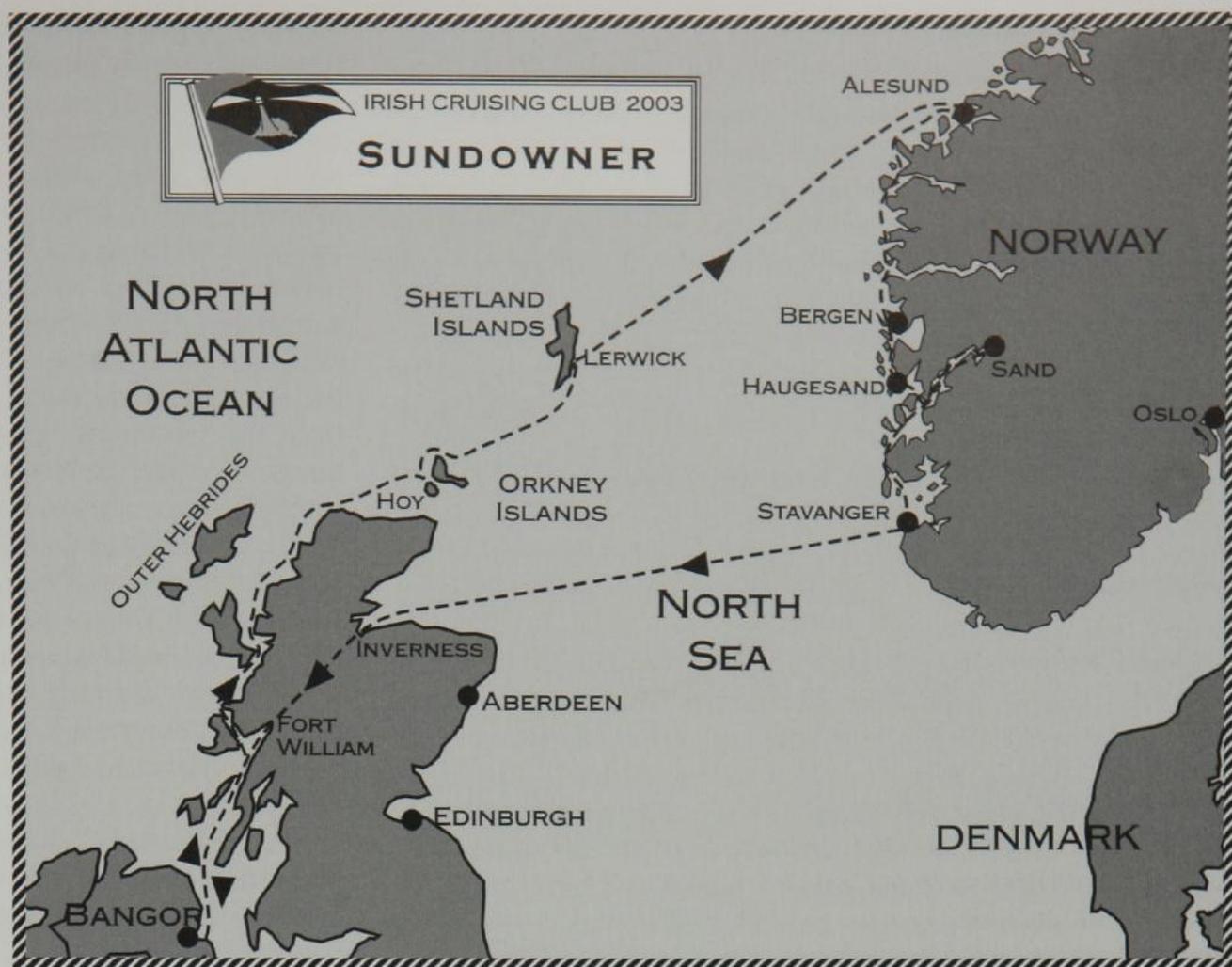
pontoon for free we were duty bound to dine ashore there and wheelchair access was no problem.

We had two more ports of call on the west coast, Lochinver and Kinlochbervie. These are both major fishing ports but with the decline of the fishing industry they are virtually devoid of fishing boats. At Lochinver Chris and I walked as far as the nearest shops and the result was our first supper of haggis, "neaps" and potatoes, enjoyed by all. Friday 4 July saw us underway at 0400 for the 75 mile passage to Stromness in Orkney, the time of sailing being dictated by the tides at Cape Wrath and in the approaches to Stromness. For most of this passage there was little wind but there was enough sea to make for an uncomfortable motion.

Two years ago we discovered that a pontoon had been installed in Pierowall Harbour on Westray and the harbour master told us of grand plans for marinas and pontoons throughout Orkney. When planning the cruise I had discovered a website entitled "Sail Orkney" which showed splendid marinas at both Stromness and Kirkwall, plus pontoons elsewhere – all to be fully operational for the summer of 2003. We therefore proceeded straight into Stromness to the site of the new marina, to find a breakwater but little else and construction still very much under way! As on our last visit we ended up alongside a fishing boat against a high quay wall and supper was a carry out from a nearby restaurant! The marina would be finished by October but the one at Kirkwall had only just been started. We had better luck the next day at Pierowall where the pontoon was certainly still there and we received a warm welcome from Mr. Rendell, the Harbour Master. The toilets here were also satisfactory and usable by Geoffrey with considerable help. We obtained some excellent crab meat from the local fish processing plant!

Sunday 6 July saw us actually "sailing" some of the way to Fair Isle in quite beautiful weather! We were admiring the scenery off the island when what appeared to be a naval vessel approached us but this turned out to be the HM Customs & Excise cutter *Searcher*. In short order their "rubber duck" was launched and we were boarded by a search party. It was soon established that we had neither drugs nor illegal immigrants on board but the paper work involved seemed to take forever and reminded me of being boarded by Spanish Customs a few years ago off Gijon. *Sundowner's* ship's papers were all in order and we all produced our passports as proof of identity. That little episode over we were able to berth alongside the quay in North Haven. This harbour has been much improved and should be safe even in a northerly wind. That night it accommodated six yachts, plus the local ferry. *Twablade* of ICC was one of them but I didn't see anyone to talk to except a heavily bearded gent who was not very communicative.

The next morning it was on to Lerwick where while there is not yet a marina there is a new pontoon in the small boat harbour. As on our last visit there were numerous Norwegian flags flying on yachts and one kind Norwegian in one of their traditional type craft let us berth inside him directly on the pontoon. For the intrepid Norwegians who make it across the North Sea Lerwick is an obvious desirable destination with its



cheap food, drink and available "duty frees" compared with their own high prices and State regulated liquor stores. That evening we all dined ashore at the nearby Queen's Hotel and celebrated Susie's birthday, a day late.

We had now been out for over a week and it was time for a "lay day". For Geoffrey it was a visit to the local leisure centre and its excellent handicap shower, the laundry was dealt with and we took on more stores, including the all important "duty frees". The Lerwick Boating Club was as hospitable as ever. There was now a modest "low" somewhere out to the west and the chance of some stronger winds but on 9 July we motored to Out Skerries in a flat calm, 20 miles closer to Alesund than Lerwick. This is a fascinating place and like most of the Shetland Harbours there have been recent improvements, including an excellent small toilet block on the quay. During the night the wind freshened from the south and there appeared to be some nasty seas outside the harbour, confirmed by two other yachts which came in, one Dutch and one Norwegian. We had another "lay day" and that night we were presented with four modest salmon from the nearby fish farm processing plant – apparently too small for the market but excellent for our supper!

We departed Out Skerries at 0940 on Friday 11 July and reached Alesund at 2000 the next day – under 36 hours for 234 miles and we only had one night at sea. Most of the many oil rigs were passed during daylight on the first day. The wind was favourable but we still had to motor sail and as usual in the North Sea, or rather the Norwegian Sea in this case there were "humpy" seas, which made for an uncomfortable motion. The spectacular coastline of Norway was visible long before we made our landfall at the offshore island of Synoea and the approaches to Alesund were quite impressive. The small boat harbour in the centre of town was chock full, mainly with motor boats and it seemed there was some sort of rally in progress. We spent the night outside three other boats but next day when the rally departed, headed by an ancient steam boat, we got further up the harbour and ended up directly alongside the pontoon outside the Metz Bar/Restaurant, with excellent public toilet facilities and all shops close at hand. We were impressed with our first port in Norway!

## Stage 2 – Four weeks in Norway

On the Sunday evening Chris and Tom departed for Bergen on the coastal ferry from where they crossed to Newcastle on the Fjord Line ferry and thence home. *Sundowner* remained on this berth at Alesund for the next ten days and the only damage we suffered was a broken stay on the ship's side ladder! We made friends with a Norwegian pair on board a Nicholson 38 just ahead of us on the pontoon, who were from Arendal in the south of Norway and were on their leisurely way home after a trip up the coast to the Lofoten Islands. They would be there for the next several days and would keep an eye on *Sundowner* while we were away.

The "away" bit was that we boarded the coastal ferry for a return trip up the coast to Sandnessjoen to visit Simonsens. They were all there just prior to Soren's completion of his contract and the start of another one at Sand, about 40 miles inland from Stavanger and well up the Sandfjorden. Sandnessjoen is some 300 miles north of Alesund and we did not have the time to get there and back in *Sundowner*. Anyway it was time to do something of the tourist bit! In the two days before we embarked on this trip we cleaned the boat, dealt with the laundry and did other domestic chores. I spent some £300 on about 20 Norwegian charts in their 200 series on a scale of 1/50,000. Without these I would not have attempted many of the inshore passages we followed on this cruise. Even so these only covered the area between Alesund and Stavanger, including the inland fjords. We already had John Armitage and Mark Brackenbury's Norwegian Cruising Guide and a Norwegian publication called "Ferie & Fritids-Havner" which we had obtained through the Norwegian Tourist Office in London. Apart from the main text in Norwegian it also has sections in English and German. Any other available guides or pilots are in Norwegian only. We enjoyed carry out suppers from a nearby Chinese restaurant and from the Metz Restaurant, which we were right alongside.

Now a word of warning for any boat going to Norway with an LPG installation on board. We have always used the French "Camping Gaz" and have never had any difficulty in obtaining replacement containers in the UK, Ireland and several Continental countries. I assumed the same would be the case in Norway, but not so! It took a lot of effort and an expensive taxi ride to a gas depot to discover that Camping Gaz, Calor Gas or any gas system used elsewhere are not obtainable in Norway. The containers and regulators are completely different and are peculiar to Norway. I ended up having to buy one of their containers and the regulator to go with it but before we left Norway I was able to sell them back to a gas depot for half the price they cost.

One other point about Norway is that there is little rise and fall of the tide. We were used to the Baltic with its virtual "no tide" but as in that area there can be a rise and fall of the water level due to meteorological and other conditions. I think the maximum rise and fall anywhere at Springs is about one metre.

We boarded mv *Vesteralen*, one of the older ships in the coastal fleet, at Alesund at 0900 on Wednesday 16 July, and after about nine hours at sea we were

back in Alesund! In the summer the north bound ferries make a trip up the nearby Geriangerfjord and since it is one of the most spectacular fjords we were glad to be on board for this. At 1930 we departed Alesund for the second time, this time heading north and after calls at six ports on the way reached Sandnessjoen at 0345 on Friday 18. Here we spent what was left of the night at the Rica Hotel before Virginia and children called for us later in the morning. We went off to their flat, overlooking the harbour for lunch and since Soren had a free afternoon we all went off on a motoring trip around the area in two cars. We were duly impressed by the scenery which apart from the mountains includes quite lush vegetation and neat farms anywhere there was tillable land. The weather remained hot despite the fact that we were almost at the Arctic Circle! After a full night at the Rica Hotel we departed Sandnessjoen at 1330 on Saturday 19 and this time we were on board mv *Richard With*, one of the newer ships in the fleet. After calls at the same six ports we were back at Alesund at 2345 on Sunday 20. Here our Swiss friend Elizabeth was waiting on the quay for us, having travelled from Basel by train and ferry over a period of about two days. We were back on board *Sundowner* by 0030.

The Norwegian Coastal Voyage or Hurtigruten is an interesting operation and could be the subject of a whole article in itself. It has operated continuously for over 100 years with only minor interruptions during the War and apparently only one casualty. Started originally as an essential lifeline between coastal communities, especially in winter, in more recent years it has become a major tourist attraction. The full round trip takes 11 days and starts at Bergen EVERY day at 2000, so this involves 11 ships in service at any one time. It is over 1000 miles north to Kirknes on the Russian border and there are 35 ports of call on the way, with the same on the return voyage. There are only a few points where the ships are in the open sea, most of the route being through the innumerable passages and channels on the Norwegian coast, with the innumerable rocks and islands always close by. One of the passages on our bit of the route was only 40 metres wide with tight turns, overhead bridges and electricity cables to add to the interest. The latest ships in the fleet are 15,000 tons gross, carry 1000 passengers and have a beam of 21 metres. I expected them to be RoRo ships, but no. The all have what is now an old fashioned



Off Ardnamurchan Point Chris McFerran on watch.

method of working cargo via ship's side doors, ramps and hoists. They actually carry very few cars and only very small commercial vehicles. The small amount of general cargo they carry has to be on small pallets and is handled by small fork lift trucks. Obviously the tourists provide the bulk of the income and the prices charged are far from cheap! Food and drink in Norway is normally about twice UK prices while on these ferries it is more like three times! We did notice some RoRo and LoLo cargo ferries on the coast and numerous small cargo vessels with their own loading and discharging gear, which I thought were modern versions of the famous Clyde "puffers" and which used to operate on the west coast of Scotland.

There must be hundreds of island and other remote communities on the coast of Norway and there are certainly ferries of all descriptions to serve them, from conventional "push me pull you" RoRo vessels to high speed passenger vessels of all sizes. In *Sundowner* we sometimes found ourselves alone in a channel only to have a ferry suddenly appear from what seemed like a hole in the rocks, shoot across our bow and disappear into another hole in the rocks. In recent years, probably with oil money, there has been much bridge building and overhead electricity cables are everywhere!

However back on board *Sundowner* at Alesund we spent another day in this delightful place before heading south for Bergen at a leisurely pace. Our crew now consisted of myself and Susie, plus Elizabeth and Geoffrey. We sailed on the morning of Tuesday 22 July on our longest passage for this part of the cruise – 53 miles to Moloy. We followed various inshore passages before having to go out into the open Norwegian Sea to get round Stadlandet. Stadlandet must be the Norwegian equivalent of say our own Ardnamurchan Point on the west coast of Scotland and while it has a bad reputation in severe weather we went round in fine weather with only light airs (on the nose of course) and a moderate swell. I have even read somewhere of a scheme to drive a tunnel through this peninsula so that small craft do not have to go out to sea!

Moloy is another coastal ferry port and is a sizable town, as is Floro which we reached the next day. At both places we managed to get a berth directly alongside a pontoon in the "smabathavnen" but either the access gangway or steps made it difficult to get Geoffrey ashore. Our first small out of the way port was the next day, 24 July, when we reached Askovoll and



On passage between Alesund and Bergen Roy and Geoffrey on watch.

here as we found as in other such places the "smabathavnen" really was for small, mostly motor, boats. The marina layout and finger pontoons were only suitable for boats up to perhaps 30 feet in length. However there was a short mole with room for two boats our size and a kind Norwegian moved his motor boat so that we could get directly alongside. Here also there was a small toilet block and while it did not have a handicap shower we managed to get Geoffrey ashore.

The next morning we headed further south and since I had noticed the local, quite large, RoRo ferry used a narrow channel south of Askvoll we headed out that way. We were in the middle of this channel when either Susie or Elizabeth, or both, shouted out "cables" and I immediately went full astern! Well in fact there was about 25 metres clearance under these cables and we only need 17. I just hadn't studied the chart carefully enough! Even with very big clearances, when approaching bridges or overhead cables it always appears that our mainmast will never get underneath! After more interesting passages and spectacular scenery that day we entered the Sognefjorden, which is the longest and deepest fjord in Norway. Since it is over 100 miles long with numerous side fjords we were not going all the way in only to have to come out again. We elected instead for a place called Lervik and the pilot book indicated that it had a smabathavnen. The approach was very pretty but when we reached Lervik the limited drawing in the pilot book did not appear to correspond to what we could see visually! We therefor approached very carefully and even managed to berth on an outside pontoon, with our bow taking up some of the space on the next one. The locals were all very friendly and helpful. Well the Lervik we had arrived at was not the one shown in the pilot book which was a much bigger place south of Bergen! This Lervik, however, proved to be very satisfactory. Geoffrey was able to get ashore twice and we all had supper ashore on the veranda of the Lervik Motel, overlooking the harbour. The toilet block ashore was also excellent. It was here and elsewhere that Elizabeth went walking ashore and came back with lots of wild blueberries, picked from the hedgerows. They were excellent. Like the fish in the coastal waters wild blueberries abound in Norway and are there for the taking!

The next day, Saturday 26, we made our shortest day passage, all of 14 miles to a place called Dingja on an island



H.M. Customs board us off Fair Isle

just south of the Sognefjorden entrance. Again with local help we managed to berth on an outside narrow finger in the smabathavnen, this time with only the front half of the boat actually alongside. There was little ashore except a small shop, which was closed and some sort of hostel, which had little to offer. Tinned fricadillas are available all over Scandinavia and come in various shapes and various combinations, but they are basically meat balls. That said they are far superior in taste and quality to any tinned meatballs available at home and they are great for a meal at sea when conditions are not at their best. We left Norway with a good stock of tins, despite the price, and even have them sometimes for supper at home!

On Sunday we motored a very scenic and interesting route south and west but I noted in the log that there was only one bridge and one lot of power cables today. We ended up in the harbour on the island of Fedje, which is almost but not quite an offshore island. Our berth was alongside a redundant fish processing factory which was now some kind of hostel and also houses the tourist cum harbour office. The family which operated this arrangement also had a nice sideline in a workshop which produced splendid pewterware and their showroom was an instant magnet for Susie and Elizabeth. There was a busy RoRo ferry from somewhere on the mainland and being within easy reach of Bergen the island was obviously a popular holiday island. We inspected the local restaurants but they were very expensive and not wheelchair friendly.

Despite all the mountains we had excellent coverage on our mobile telephone nearly everywhere. The bills for same when we arrived home are another matter!

Monday 28 July saw us on the last leg of only 35 miles to Bergen and there were numerous routes we could have followed. Of course we followed what seemed to be the most scenic one! From Fedje we crossed what was shown on the chart as the main north/south shipping channel to find our way through the usual maze of islands and rocks to what is called the Radsundet and which is a long NW/SE channel. It leads into the Kvernafjord, which leads into Salhus and from there it is a straight forward run for the remaining ten or so miles in the Byfjorden to Bergen! At the north end of the Radsundet where the channel was very narrow and picturesque we passed close to innumerable holiday homes on the shore, many with their private pier or jetty and there were several creeks off the main channel with similar arrangements. Having checked the route on the chart carefully for bridges and overhead cables there was an island at the southern end of the Radsundet with a narrow channel on either side. What appeared to be the main channel and well marked also appeared to have an overhead cable with a clearance of only 15 metres, so we had to try the other channel. A larger scale chart would have been a help but we just proceeded very slowly and got through safely to rejoin the main channel. After a few more bridges and high cables we got into relatively open water for a clear run to Bergen where we entered the Vagen or designated small boat harbour at 1530. It was crowded, with not a clear berth in sight and we ended up outside a smaller Danish yacht right at the Bryggen or old part of town with

its picturesque old wooden buildings just across the quay. There are no pontoons here but after some conversation the Dane was only too happy to let us berth inside him so that we could get Geoffrey ashore by means of the bosun's chair and main halyard.

We now had three days at Bergen waiting for son Robert who was due to arrive on 31 July. We enjoyed our stay and the tourist trips included a ride up Mount Floyen on the cable railway and a visit to the Bergen Aquarium. Good toilet and laundry facilities were available. We ate on board but this included some of the offerings from the nearby fish market and one night we had a splendid carry out from the Yangtse Kiang Restaurant. The quayside was thronged with tourists all day long and late at night there was much noise and revellery further up the harbour. While some distance from the "facilities" we had a relatively quiet berth! The weather continued hot and humid until the day Robert arrived when there was a brief spell of wet and windy weather. We were now under some pressure to get to Sand by Sunday for our next meeting up with Simonsens, In the meantime they had packed up at Sandnessjoen and were travelling by car plus trailer south to Sand, a tiring two day journey.

That afternoon the rain eased up somewhat and after topping up with diesel we departed Bergen to at least make some progress southward. In fact we only motored 14 miles to Hjellevstad, which is close to Bergen Airport and indeed still close to Bergen. We entered one of two marinas in a heavy rain shower to find that we were at the Bergen Yacht Club. It was very quiet here, with hardly anyone about, apparently because it was a holiday weekend. However the showers and other facilities were available and there was an "honesty" box in which to deposit the mooring fee.

On the Saturday morning we were under way by 0800 to motor the 60 miles to Haugesund. Unlike recently we were mostly in comparatively open water but any wind was dead ahead as usual! We followed a somewhat "long way round" route to enter the Smedasundet from the south. This is canal like channel through the town and here we found a berth for the night alongside a derelict wharf. Elizabeth and Robert walked into the town and came back to report that it was very quiet with very few people about. However they did find a Chinese restaurant and came back with a carry out for supper.



Alongside in the quaint little harbour at Jelsa.

On Sunday 3 August we covered the remaining 47 miles to Sand, to arrive there at 1400. Draw a line between Haugesund and Stavanger, about 30 miles to the south and to the east of this line there is a vast complex of islands, channels and fjords stretching up to about 50 miles inland. One could quite happily spend a whole season in this area alone. As it was, we followed the most direct route we could find to the Sandfjord, which turned out to be very pretty, especially the first part. At Sand there was a marina but it appeared to definitely be a smabathavnen and we berthed on a somewhat exposed pier, subject to swell. However before long someone appeared from the yacht club, which runs the marina to tell us they had a "deep water" berth which we could use. This turned out to be a short pier with a "T" head and was just right for us. For a modest fee we also got an electricity supply and use of the clubhouse facilities. We were also in the middle of town! Simonsens soon showed up having arrived late the night before. Soren's contract as doctor here did not start until some time in September but the local authority had already provided him with a brand new house, built on a hillside and with a superb view across a deep valley to distant mountains.

We departed Sand on the afternoon of Tuesday 5 August with ten persons on board, including baby Emily, who was not much more than a year old. We had all the Simonsens, except Sarah, who stayed behind to take care of the dogs, and all the Waters family plus Nicholas. Motoring for 29 miles got us to the island of Rossoya where we eventually got a berth alongside the pier. This is another very pretty place and obviously popular with the locals. It was splendid for walks ashore and for fishing but there were no pubs or other such diversions for our teenage crew members! With so many people on board catering was a major operation and supper was basically a large pot of Norwegian fricadillas!

The weather continued hot, dry and calm and the next day we motored to the Lysefjorden, another of the more notable fjords. We went as far as the notable Prekestolen or Pulpit Rock which towers some 2000 feet above sea level, and the nearby spectacular waterfalls. The night was spent on the pier at the island of Langoy, which is only a few miles from Stavanger but it could have been miles from anywhere. Here there was some success with the fishing efforts. In particular Robert went off on his own in the dinghy and came back with an eight pound cod! Virginia was the expert who dissected this beast and we had it for supper with carrots and potatoes.

On Thursday we headed back for Sandfjorden but stopped at the pretty village of Jelsa near the entrance. Here we spent a couple of hours alongside the quay for a minor crew change. Sarah arrived by car from Sand to join us for a brief trip and Virginia with baby Emily returned to Sand – someone had to look after the dogs! Nine miles south got us to the island of Talgie where we were able to berth on an outside pontoon at the small marina, another very pretty place with limited but adequate shore facilities. Here some crew members went swimming and we even tested our manoverboard recovery system from the end of the mizzen boom. Geoffrey was the guinea pig and he did not enjoy it!

On Friday it was back to Sand for the last time. Robert spent the night ashore and with only three of us left on board we were able to clean and tidy the boat somewhat! Topped up with diesel and water we departed for Stavanger at 1230 the next day, with only our family crew plus Sarah and Nicholas aboard. The hot weather and calms/light airs prevailed and 1745 found us berthed outside a large Dutch yacht in the Vagen. Like Bergen we were right in the middle of town and the harbour was very crowded. Soon after arrival the remaining Simonsens turned up by car, complete with loaded trailer, and we had yet another crew change. We were left with our family crew, plus

Soren and Nicholas, while Virginia and all other Simonsens, including dogs headed off to catch a ferry to Denmark on the way home to Odense. Stavanger on a Saturday night was very lively and Robert and Nicholas soon headed off to find some action. They had limited funds which did not last long in this expensive place and they were soon back! A Chinese restaurant close by on the quay provided an excellent carry out for supper.

### Stage 3 – The passage home

On Sunday morning we were up at 0700 and under way by 0800 for the 340 mile passage to Inverness. The hot weather continued and so did quite thick fog in the approaches to Stavanger. We found our way out to sea with the help of the radar and the GPS and by 1000 we were clear of all the outlying rocks and islands. It was goodbye to Norway and we simply set a course towards the Moray Firth. A light breeze actually filled in the SW during the afternoon so we set full sail and reduced the engine revs. We even had about four hours under sail alone! Later in the day the drive belt of the autopilot broke and we had a 20 minute stop while I took off the steering wheel and fitted a new one. Norwegian fricadillas for supper!

In these light conditions the watchkeeping was easy and we did four hour watches with Robert and myself on one watch and Soren and Nicholas on the other. Susie was well occupied with housekeeping and cooking, and attending to Geoffrey's needs. Despite the light weather there was a nasty lumpy sea for most of the night and much of the next day and the boat's motion was not pleasant – typical North Sea. We passed several oil rigs during the night and the next day but there was little



View of the pulpit rock from *Sundowner* in the Lyse fjord.



"Local" crew and north sea crew at Stavanger. Baby Emily, Jamie, Nicholas, Nickoli, Virginia, Soren, Robert, Susie and Sarah, plus dog. Geoffrey could not get ashore and Roy took the picture.

other shipping traffic except for the occasional fishing vessel. On the evening of the second day at sea we could see the Scottish coastline somewhere near Rattray Head and during the night we closed the south coast of the Moray Firth, once again in virtually calm conditions and thankfully no sea. The only notable thing was that on the second evening at sea a number of dolphins kept us company for what seemed hours!

On Tuesday 12 August we rounded Chahony Point at the entrance to Inverness Firth and proceed in with the flood tide to pass under Kessock Bridge and reach Clachnaharry Sea Lock on the Caledonian Canal by 0930. This was the sixth crossing of the North Sea in a yacht for Susie and me, twice in *Melandy* and now four times in *Sundowner*. It was certainly the easiest crossing we have had to date!

We were let into the sea lock right away and after a safety inspection of the boat and her documents by the lock keeper we reached a pontoon in Muirtown Basin by 1015. The weather in Inverness was hot and humid! We remained at Muirtown all day while our two Danes tried to arrange a passage home. This proved difficult, with all available flights apparently full. In the end they set off on foot with all their gear for Inverness Station, but ended up hiring a car to drive to Glasgow, spent the night there and got home the next day, via, I think, Hamburg.

We intended to start the canal transit the next morning but we had another day at Muirtown due to the gates of the top lock in Muirtown Flight being jammed open. Clearing the lock took a team of divers all day and I gathered that the usual causes of a jam are supermarket trollies, bicycles, bedsteads and anything else you can think of. On one previous passage we had to wait a whole day while the whole flight was drained and emptied of rubbish.

Anyway we got moving on the morning of Thursday 14 and made it down Loch Ness to the bottom of Fort Augustus where we spent the night, and had an excellent supper ashore at the nearby Bothy Restaurant. The next morning we were in the first

upwards locking and alongside a pontoon near the top lock by 1030. The toilet facilities on the Caledonian Canal are being improved slowly but they still have a long way to go to reach Norwegian standards. However a brand new toilet block had just been opened by the top lock at Fort Augustus and this included a handicap shower. We had inspected this there previous evening and now we managed to get Geoffrey ashore for a shower. Underway again by lunchtime we made it as far as Laggan Locks before tying up for the night. We were in no hurry now and had plenty of time in hand.

Saturday saw us reach the top locks at Banavie, where we again moored on a pontoon and went to check out the Moorings Hotel, half way down the locks. Wheelchair access was satisfactory and it even had a handicap

toilet so we went there for an enjoyable supper. Sunday saw us locking down "Neptune's Staircase" and after some delays we made it out of the sea lock at Corpach by 1400. A four hour passage by the usual route down Loch Linnhe and inside Lismore Island got us to Oban by 1800 where we found a vacant berth on a pontoon at Ardenraive Bay. That evening we had excellent Fort Augustus haggis, "neaps" and potatoes for supper. Also now that we were back in the UK the television was back in business and we sat up late watching "Titanic"!

By now the weather was definitely breaking and Monday saw strong SW winds and frequent heavy rain showers. It got worse during the day and we just stayed put. Robert and I went over to Oban on the ferry for minor shopping including fresh pork cutlets for supper. On Tuesday morning the wind was down considerably, but still strong and we waited until 1200 before deciding to push on the 20 miles to Craobh Haven. On this three hour passage we met the worst conditions of the whole trip, with very nasty seas off Easdale and poor visibility in the rain! Anyway we were soon alongside a pontoon at Craobh and that evening had our last meal ashore at the nearby pub.

The early forecast the next morning was such that anything could have happened and the weather situation was very unsettled. However it was near calm at Craobh so we sailed anyway at 0600 to see how far we could get towards home. There were various possible boltholes on the way, including Craighouse, Gigha, Ballycastle and Glenarm. As it was we never got more than SW5 and even set the headsail for a while. We had got the tides mainly in our favour and we made very good progress south. We left all the boltholes behind to reach Bangor at 1900 – 13 hours for the 96 miles from Craobh Haven.

Our total time away from Bangor had been 52 days and we had covered 1764 leisurely miles at an average of 6.1 knots. It had been a splendid cruise!

# A lovely Shetland cruise – *Twayblade*

Jonathan Virden

**T***wayblade* is a classic 32 ft. design by Alan Buchanan, built by Harry King in 1961 and rebuilt and refitted in 1982 by John Hill and Ian Nicholson. Simplicity and ingenuity replace complication where possible. But the march of electronics has invaded us, although well behind others. The wiring defies all but the resident gremlin, the owner, who put it together (or made the tangle, which is all the worse for a failing memory). But it all worked all the time in 2003.

The cruise of *Twayblade* in 2003 was the second part of a scheme to visit Shetland taking three years. At the end of 2002 we had laid up at Ardfern after disappointing passages from Plymouth round the west of Ireland, with two different crews. Ardfern was a good base to start and finish the cruise because it avoids the relatively long trek from and back to our normal mooring at Cargreen. Also it allowed the possibility of some cruising in northwest Ireland, another favourite part of the world, on passage in each direction. The 2002 season ended with a prayer for more favourable weather in 2003.

That prayer was answered in spectacular style. It was almost unbelievable that we were only held up for one day by adverse weather, in a quite pleasant place. Really adverse wind occurred only twice and for only a few hours each time. Our plan for the cruise was for me to sail *Twayblade* with friends as far north as conveniently practical and leave the boat for a week while I went home to catch up with affairs, principally the garden. Thereafter my wife Joy and I would sail on to Shetland and cruise there until return became wise. Then we would come back to Ardfern through the Caledonian Canal. We set out without knowing where we would come to for the interval, but with the general idea of pushing on when the wind allowed.

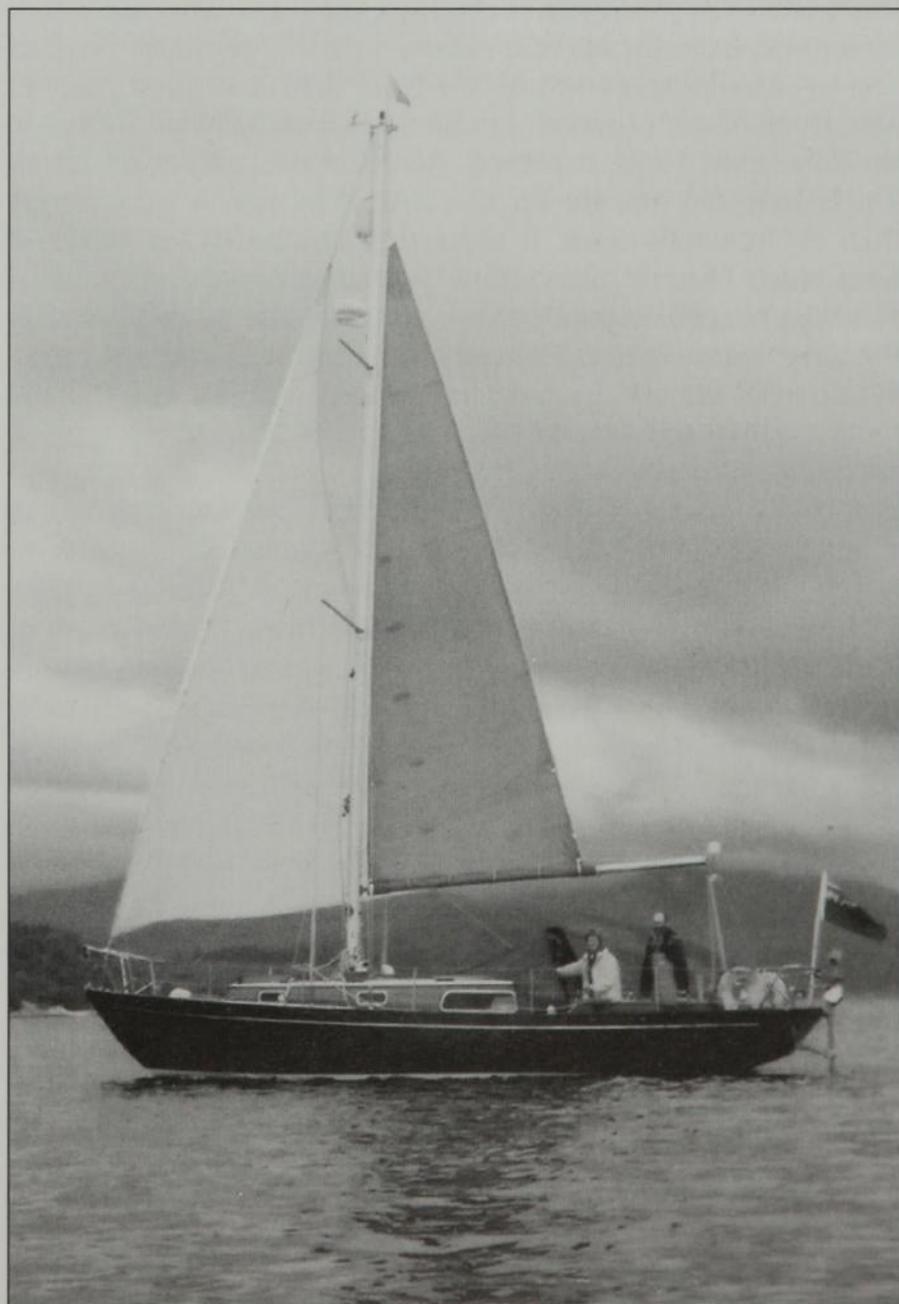
I left home on 27th May with a loaded car. *Twayblade* was afloat at Ardfern when I arrived. While at Ardfern *Twayblade* had had some major repairs to the heel of the deadwood and the lower rudder fittings and some other long-term maintenance. She also had a new hood, which gives much more light below. By Monday 2nd June she was recommissioned and ready for cruising.

I collected my crew, Michael and Belinda Devenish, from Oban and we left Ardfern at 1130 on 3rd June. Not knowing this part of Scottish waters I was thoroughly apprehensive about the tides in the narrow places. We passed through Dorus Mór at slack water and the Sound of Luing with a favourable tide and good visibility. We missed the charted rock in the middle of the southern part of the sound. So, apparently, does everyone else. All day the wind was rather variable, mostly S. or SE. Force 4. We sailed across the Firth of Lorne to the Sound of Mull on a flat sea. There had been nothing to disturb the open sea for many days. We anchored in Loch Aline and spent a very quiet night there.

On 4th June we sailed to Isleornsay (Skye), with following winds most of the way, over calm seas, past Ardnamurchan with the tide and then the Small Isles. Rhum and Skye were looking wonderful with clouds and grey colours in the

mountains. The elderly engine, with its new injectors, drove us when the wind failed.

During the night there was rain and blustery wind. The anchor was well stuck in good mud. In the morning of 5th June we timed our departure to catch the last of the flood through Kyle Rhea. We saw a dozen seals in the narrows and wondered why they gathered there. By 1000 we were sailing under the Skye bridge against a small tide, close-hauled with full mainsail and big genoa. The wind had backed to southwest and occasionally reached 25 kts. We were just able to maintain the same tack to Portree, passing between Scalpay and Raasay. This was the third day of favourable winds and we were making better progress than might have happened. In Portree we picked up a vacant mooring. The crew went ashore for supplies and to see the harbourmaster. The latter advised them that the mooring we had picked up was the only one in the harbour which he knew to be of extremely uncertain security.



*Twayblade* ICC – Loch Sunart Scotland Yr 2000

We swiftly moved to the visitors' moorings, which are further from the quay.

Both Michael and Belinda are excellent cooks and were doing all the commissariat. Although we were eating very well on board they kindly took me to a small restaurant on the quay for a good dinner of local fish. To return to *Twayblade* I had to row them back one at a time because the wind had made the water rather too splashy for more than two in the dinghy. During the whole of this season the outboard was never used once. I like the exercise of rowing the dinghy, even when the conditions are unfavourable. Also I greatly prefer to avoid the trouble of setting up the outboard and then re-stowing it at the far end of a quarterberth. Although I distrust outboards deeply, they usually work for me when asked nicely.

After a vigorous night of rain and gusty wind (max 27 kts. recorded) we left on 6th June at 0715 and sailed to Stornoway. We had a dead-run up the Sound of Raasay with Force 5, goose-winged under full sail with main guyed and genoa boomed. By 1130 the wind had increased, so the main was handed and the genoa towed us along famously. Approaching the Shiant islands we met stronger winds, up to 30 kts. for a while, but not from forward of the beam. About 2 nm south of the islands we met very big irregular seas that caused some fairly wild sailing, on a beam reach with swerves. By special request from Michael we went between the Shiant Islands, but did not linger there to avoid being held up later by adverse tide. There were large groups of puffins on the water and a helicopter was ferrying building materials to the islands. The sea was very smooth as we sailed to Stornoway in a moderate SW breeze.

In Stornoway we were directed to a berth in the little marina. We counted our luck because the harbour was full of fishing boats for the weekend. (The key-card for the marina is obtainable from the harbour office, a small door at the back of the main building, accessible 24 hrs.). This was good place to take stock of our progress; in fact we had come much further in the time than I had expected. Also I wanted a day to check *Twayblade* and prepare for the next steps which were bigger than the previous ones. It seemed possible that we might at least reach Orkney. Stornoway has the advantage of plentiful shops and excellent public showers (two in the toilet block near the quay and more at the leisure centre, about 15 minutes walk). While I did the checks and sorted charts Michael and Belinda took a bus to see the standing stones at Calanish. They came back most impressed with the stones.

I paid a visit to the office of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency. This was most interesting. I gathered all sorts of information about communications north of Scotland. They told me about the extent of the defence firing ranges north of Cape Wrath. These are not all set out on a chart and they are not defined in any way I could find in the Almanac. We usually listened to the marine safety information broadcasts on VHF, but often found it hard to get the detail of the best channel to use. We also found that UK Navtex was wholly undetectable in north and west Scotland whereas the Irish and Norwegian signals were much better.

As the forecast continued to suggest that there would be more southerly winds for several days it became apparent that we might go much further than originally envisaged within ten days. So we left Stornoway at 0810 on 9th June after 12 hrs of calm and heavy dew. We thought we saw a minke whale just outside the harbour. The sea was placid while we motored easily towards Cape Wrath with the Autohelm steering. It was grey and overcast, but the visibility was excellent. At 1410 a light breeze came from north and we were able to sail close-hauled and gently for the rest of the day. In the evening the wind freed us onto a beam reach for all the night to an idyllic



Joy and Jonathan Virden – November 2002 River Party Oxford

landfall on Orkney in the morning. That was one of the easiest night passages I can remember. We each kept watch, 2 hours on and 4 hours off. It was hardly dark at any time. After a beautiful clear morning the wind failed at 1220 on 9th June. We motored round the north of Westray into Pierowall harbour. The pilotage for Papa Sound was made quite difficult by the fact that we had to look up-sun for the church on the leading line. On that line the church seems to be obscured by another building, not recognisable as "church". The forecast had suggested a period of more wind from southeast, so we anchored at 1410, as far southeast in the bay as depth permitted. The position gave promise of good shelter from all but seas from eastnortheast to north.

We were very pleased with progress and went ashore. The late afternoon and evening were almost Caribbean; very warm with blue sky and clear air. We walked among fields and rabbits and oystercatchers; not so far as the cliffs full of seabirds, but with great views of the other islands. The disappointment was that we were quite unable to locate either the advertised store or the pub. There was just no sign of them.

A point to note about Pierowall harbour is that the holding where we were was a very good mixture of sand and mud. We stayed there for two nights because the wind blew from eastsoutheast at up to 30 kts for much of 10th June, with rain in the morning. We stayed on board and devoured books. In the afternoon the weather broke up to occasional squalls, followed by sunshine and a very quiet night.

By special request of the crew our next port-of-call was the island of Sanday. Belinda's grandmother had spent 1894 there when she was 6 yrs old, with her clerical uncle, for her health in the clear air. So we left Westray at 0610 on 11th June and, partly sailing and partly motoring, went to Otterswick Bay on Sanday in very clear air. Michael and Belinda went ashore to look for records of her great great uncle while I remained on board. They found much more information than they had expected (and an excellent shop). He had served and built the church with the spire shown on the chart, but which was demolished in 1993 (pilot books please note!). When they returned we were a good deal too close to the bottom and the drying reef about a cable northwest of the slip.

From Sanday we sailed to Fair Isle with much assistance from the engine. The wind was from aft, but not enough to fill

the sails most of the time, finally dying altogether. The surface of the sea was not quite peaceful especially 5 nm. south of Fair Isle where the sea had a surface like a seventeenth century painting; all little points everywhere. After 4 hrs motoring we went alongside the Dutch yacht Warber at 2110 in North Harbour, Fair Isle. There was complete peace. Only the fulmars nesting on the cliffs broke the silence.

At 0515 we were woken by the huge noise of the Fair Isle ferry, *The Good Shepherd IV*, starting up to embark a large party of visitors, presumed to be twitchers (bird watchers). Michael grabbed his chance and went for a long walk round the north of Fair Isle. He returned with enthusiastic travellers' tales of lighthouses, and birds with murderous intent from which he had escaped. These were great skuas defending their nesting area.

At 0840 on 11th June we left the quay at Fair Isle and went to Shetland. The wind was variable in strength from Force 4 down to nothing and there were big showers passing over. I allowed our track to wander a few miles east to compensate for the afternoon tide west-going south of Sumburgh. By 1410 we were east of Sumburgh Hd. and there was no wind at all. While we motored over a calm sea admiring the land in the clear air I made contact with the harbourmaster in Lerwick. He was not very forthcoming about a place to go alongside because he was expecting an annual invasion of several tens of yachts from Holland, to be followed by a similar number from Norway. However he indicated a perfectly good spot in the Albert Dock near his office and the centre of town. That suited us very well. The Lerwick Boating Club, whose key is issued by the harbour office, has excellent showers and laundrette.

I was amazed about how well this "delivery" cruise had gone. We had come as far as we had dared to imagine in lovely weather and had a day to spare. Discussion with the harbour office revealed that the local marina association might be able to find a spot where *Twayblade* might be left for ten days. Once I had made contact with them it turned out to be both possible and the best thing to do. I became an instant member of the association, paid the fee, and paid for two weeks mooring and got the key for a returnable deposit. Further we had the pleasure of making friends with Gerald Freshwater and Ian Horne who are part of the organisation of the association. They came to sample our special version of apple wine. We got less sleep than was needed because it did not really get dark and the company was such fun.

Meanwhile my most civilised and enthusiastic crew Michael and Belinda had fixed their passage back to Kent. Michael is a most able deck hand, even managing to start hoisting the pulpit rather than the genoa. After we had put *Twayblade* safely on a pontoon at the Gremista marina they left by ferry in the afternoon of 12th June. I spent one more night on board, making all secure, and followed them to Kent next day.

On 23rd June Joy and I flew north to join *Twayblade* again. We were delayed at Aberdeen for two hours while the bad weather lifted enough to permit the flight to Sumburgh. We could not banish visions of the worst of Shetland weather. After we finally landed through the low murk we were taken by a most helpful taxi driver to the supermarket and then to the harbour office on the way to the marina. There we found the boat in good order but completely sodden, and with no signs of chafe of warps. There had been some extremely rough and wet weather while I was away. It took two days to dry out the interior, including the need to bail out the gutter, which catches internal drips above the quarterberths and the engine box.

We spent all the morning of 24th June drying as much as we could in the fresh northnorthwest wind and recommissioning. We motored back to the Albert Dock at midday. The sunny afternoon was spent shopping and preparing to sail to wilder

places. Tommy Duncan arrived as had been predicted by those who had been there before. His great service to us was to arrange for a partly retired mender of inflatables to come to look at the ancient Avon. After 35 years the one of the valves which had not given trouble before seemed to be irretrievably open. He took the whole thing away and brought it back two hours later having done a perfect job. Against his mild resistance I probably over-paid him, but it was worth every penny. In the evening Tommy returned, once in working clothes to see that all was well, and again after supper in tidy clothes. He brought a frozen seatrout of considerable size that made three splendid meals for the two of us. He was welcome for a long time that evening, putting down as much of the apple wine as was not quite safe. Ian Horne and Sue joined us; he had come to collect the key to the marina. Later Gerald and Lynda came for a natter on the quay. We went to our bunks after midnight.

On 25th June we finally filled water and diesel (from the chandlery below the harbour office) and departed from the dock at 1000. It was strange to escape from so many helpers and new friends and go back to the flat calm open sea.

We motored round the north of Bressay to visit Noss. We anchored in the middle of the north part of Noss Sound and rowed ashore against a very distinct tide. Having been met by the guardian of the island bird sanctuary we walked round the island taking about three hours. This was the first magic of the islands. The visibility was good, the sunshine clear and warm, a light breeze came from SSE and the birds were there on the cliffs and the rabbits were everywhere.

We went back on board and set sail for Out Skerries at 1550. We sailed on a broad reach almost all the way in a light SE breeze under a benign clear sky with some high haze. There was wonderful visibility as we approached the leading line from the south of Out Skerries at 2000. Once inside the narrow entrance we looked for space to anchor. However a passing boat directed us to one of the big trawler moorings in the middle of the harbour saying that it would not be needed for many weeks. The harbour was still. We had supper and fell into bunks, quite exhausted.

We spent two nights at Out Skerries. It was sunny and almost still. We went ashore to walk on the hill and across to the northern beach. This was the best place we visited this year.



*Twayblade* June 2003 – Joy Virden at Muckle Flugga

On 27th June we sailed north again from Out Skerries towards Fetlar on a gentle following breeze. It became clear that we might be able to go all the way to Muckle Flugga in one easy day. So we went through Bluemull Sound with a good strong tide but a flat sea and slowly up the west of Unst, timing the speed for easy tides at Muckle Flugga. Great colonies of birds were on the cliffs and islands. It was sunny and calm although the clouds were down on the tops of the hills. We beat round the north of Out Stack and into Burra Firth to anchor at 1720. We had accomplished our main aim. Now we had time to enjoy ourselves on the way back to Ardfern.

Next morning the wind had backed to eastnortheast. However we went ashore to walk round the nature reserve on Hermaness to see Muckle Flugga and the birds from a different angle. The wind increased while we were ashore so the return in the dinghy was uncomfortable. We immediately left Burra Firth, under engine until we could bear off enough to clear the Skaw roost off northeast Unst; the rough water was quite visible. Once clear of fierce water we sailed gently to and through the north entrance into Balta Sound and anchored at 2115. It was overcast and rather cold.

On Sunday 29th June we had the luck to meet Herbert Priest, who kindly took us by car to the supermarket at Haroldswick and the Heritage Centre and the Unst Boat Museum. We spent a long time there as would anyone interested in the sea. We walked back to Balta harbour and Herbert came to dinner on board.

We left Balta Sound on 30th June thinking we would aim for somewhere on Yell. We had a most lovely day beating south inside Fetlar and on to Yell Sound with occasional use of engine when wind failed. We passed through Yell Sound at 1700 with a following tide and flat sea and great visibility, as it had been all day. Just as the tide was turning at 1935 we anchored in Burra Voe and all fell glassy still. On 1st July we left Burra Voe at 0955 to catch the tide round the Point of Fetharland, with visibility of 2 nm. The air cleared and there was very little swell or chop from the open ocean. We motored south past the red cliffs, past stacks and bays. We saw seals basking in the sun just where the excellent tourist leaflets told us to expect them. There was enough wind to sail at 1420. A close reach took us to Ura Firth and we crept into Hamar Voe past the fish farm to anchor where the mud is so soft that the echo sounder gave no sensible reading. There was a cold gusty wind that night and low broken cloud next morning. For all this part of the cruise I was anxiously waiting for the benign weather to break down.

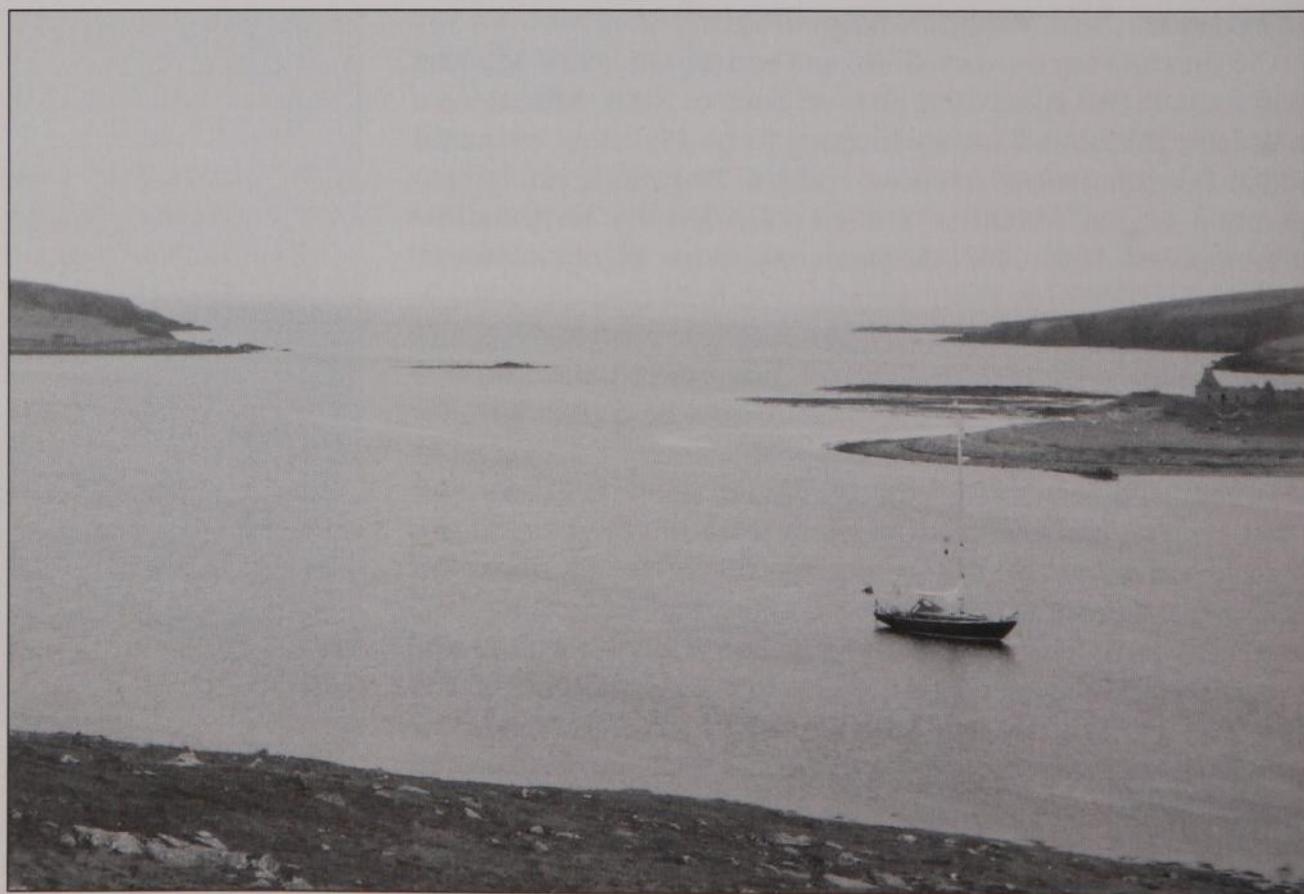
On 2nd July we stirred late and sailed to Brae in Busta Voe. An easy beat in tranquil waters took us to the anchorage near Detling Boating Club. That just gave us enough shelter from northeast. We went for a walk to Muckle Roe and Roe Sound. We had showers at the club and watched the evening races of a great mixture of boats. From Brae we sailed to Papa Stour. Sailing gently down the Voe was perfect cruising even if the low clouds obscured the tops of the hills. The calm water and the easy effort of sails, diverting wind to our purpose, all working harmoniously together. After

some confused northerly swell we passed through Papa Sound which was all quiet. The passage between the rocks at the entrance of Hamna Voe was tense because we could see some of the rocks but not where the water was deeper and there was a 20 kt. cross-wind confusing the surface. We anchored near the north shore and walked to Virda Field, the high point, finding sundews (insectivorous plants) on the way and hollow cliffs and blowholes on the way back. Next morning we walked the other way and found the inhabited part of the island before sailing to Scalloway. The wind was from north and the tide was favourable for almost all the way. Again we passed extraordinary rocks with the occasional seals sunbathing in the bright sunny day.

Scalloway was our last port in Shetland. We were alongside the visitors' pontoon at the Boating Club where beer and showers were welcome. 5th July was still and warm all day. We did laundry and much shopping and some minor tourism. We prepared for the last part of the cruise, sorting charts and filling all containers, except diesel though we had enough of that. Curiously, Scalloway is devoid of any filling station, and we were there on the weekend day when the fishermen's coop., which do have diesel, was shut. Both Tommy and Herbert came to see if there was anything that they could do to help.

We left Scalloway at 0810 on 6th July. There was little wind and some high cloud cover. The Atlantic was smooth. Occasionally we hoisted a sail but it did not pull. The southwest coast of mainland Shetland was clear; we could see Fair Isle from 32 nm., and Foula away to starboard. The tide was going to be favourable in the afternoon but we were well south of Sumburgh Head before it showed any favours, about an hour and a half after the tidal stream atlas had indicated. This difference had been noticeable for all the time *Twayblade* was near Shetland; I checked the times for error most carefully. By 1425 a light and consistent breeze came from south f3. We beat to Fair Isle and were alongside a Swedish yacht in north harbour at 1750. It was raining lightly, washing away the accumulated salt.

The other yachts left in the morning and we went alongside the quay, using some large fenders which seemed to be provided for public purpose. We walked to the south lighthouse, stopping at the shop and museum. Then to Fair Isle Knitters to order jerseys of our own individual design. We



Hamna Voe Papa Stour Shetland July 2003

passed along the west cliffs on the way back, very close to nesting puffins and other birds. It was cold and drizzling when we got back to *Twayblade*. In the evening we went to find some archaeology. The Iron Age promontory-fort just south of the harbour has a colony of puffins that allowed us to come very close as they had their evening gossip on the edge of the cliff. We sought, with unconvincing success, a "burnt mound". To do that we had to follow a road passing some arctic terns. They objected to us being so close to their nesting area, flying very close to us from behind.

From Fair Isle we half motor-sailed and half beat to Stronsay; a slow day with f4 and mixed skies, partly overcast and a lumpy sea for some of the time. At Stronsay we anchored between the pierheads at Whitehall for the night but did not go ashore. At 0640 we left Stronsay in flat calm and motored SSW to pass the Pentland Firth about 10 nm. east of Pentland Skerries. By 1515 we could sail gently and were alongside the southeast end of the fish quay at Wick at 1740. The duty officer was very helpful and took our lines and showed us where the showers were.

On 10th July we left Wick at 0610 with the intention of reaching Inverness as soon as conveniently possible. When it blew at all the wind was highly variable until 1400. Then the wind rose very quickly to 27 – 32 kts. from southsouthwest, exactly the direction we were heading. To find shelter of any sort we might have had to make a major diversion. That wind also kicked up a sharp steep sea. Having taken down the big genoa with considerable effort we motored hard against all the elements for 6 hours to reach Cromarty Firth. Even at Cromarty there was no shelter as the wind was blowing exactly parallel to all useable shores. However Cromarty Harbour Control was very helpful and relayed my suggestion to the harbourmaster at Invergordon that we might find an adequate anchorage there. The message came back that we might indeed go alongside a commercial quay there if we left early in the morning. So for an hour we drove to Invergordon against that wind, past the drilling platforms, wondering in what way their cables stretched out under the water. This little part of the cruise was off any chart I had, other than a small scale road map, and was straight up-sun and spray so we could see very little detail. Our instructions were to berth opposite the lifeboat in the entrance to the harbour. We could see no lifeboat and made some false approaches, being occasionally guided by the harbour master over VHF. Eventually we found the lifeboat; its superstructure had been hidden behind a small building on its quay. The shelter under that quay was excellent for a very windy night. We were extremely grateful to the authorities for taking us in.

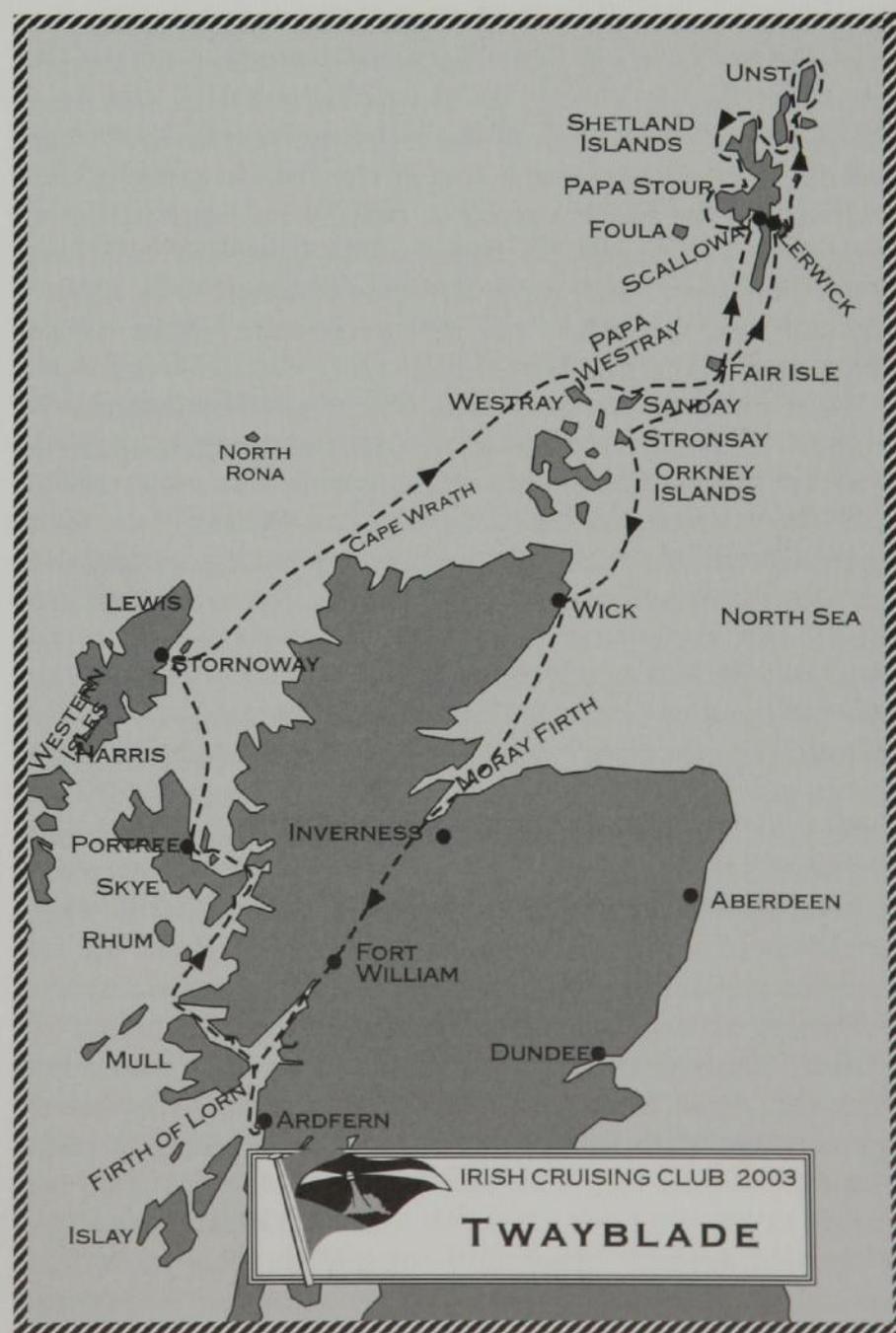
We left the sheltered quay at 0640 and sailed down wind to the entrance to Cromarty Firth. Then we resumed the hard motoring against the same wind of 22 – 27 kts to the Chanonry narrows where there was a stretch of quieter water. But round the corner the seas were very short, steep and stopping. It was slow rough going until we came close to Kessock bridge. On request the sea-lock at Clachnaharry was ready for us to enter, crossing the tide at the entrance from a surging and turbulent sea. Naturally the keeper was standing at the right place to stop us going down the wind blowing straight into the lock; the alternative was the gate, shut at the other end! To our great relief the outer gates shut.

Having checked into the canal and berthed at Seaport marina, we resumed the civilised progress of the cruise. Joy bought three big fenders, which *Twayblade* has always lacked. Although I had some experience of locks and canals this was new to Joy. We followed advice from others which was to enter locks behind all the others. This worked extremely well, especially going up. The first lock at the Muirtown flight filled at 1100 on 12th July, a lovely sunny day. On our way to the lock

we passed *Siolta* RCC, with McKean's, Taggart's and Guinnesses on board, coming the other way. We regretted not having more time of day to pass with them. The lock was nearly full and we were put in the middle, tied alongside *Tacoma* a Swedish yacht from Stromstrand and we had nothing to do until we parted at the top of the flight.

The change of colour of the countryside was sudden and amazing. From rather dull but often subtle colours of bleak coasts the contrast of brilliant luminous green grass and trees and shrubs of many textures was profound. In company with others we went over completely tranquil water as far as Dochgarroch for the night. We went alongside *Tacoma* again and they came on board for a prolonged cocktail hour with the last of the apple wine and much cheerful conversation. Early next morning we set off early in clear sunshine and flat calm. Once on Loch Ness we had the whole loch to its misty end to ourselves alone. After we had rinsed the genoas in the loch we could just sail gently. It was quiet apart from a lone piper who might have been there to welcome us. After an hour other craft appeared. All morning we beat very gently under the cloudless sky, and then motored to Fort Augustus to be there in time to have dinner ashore. I paid a brief visit to *Quaila* ICC having found them near the locks.

There were a great number of craft wishing to go up this flight of locks on 14th July, with much discussion about who would go in which group. We were again extremely lucky; having been alongside the barge *Fingal* for the night as were two other yachts, as far from the locks as possible, we were allocated the slot to go with them in the second group, after *TS Royalist*. Of the five groups which made the "up" passage that morning the other three were as full of yachts or small motor





Clachnamarry sea-lock Inverness

cruisers as possible. It was hot while we walked *Twayblade* between the locks as part of the show for tourists. We motored along Loch Oich and Loch Long and stopped for the night at some pontoons near Gairloch. Next morning we went on to the top of Neptune's staircase, the flight of eight locks. We had to wait for a couple of hours while two groups came up. Then we went into a very crowded lock at 1230. There was very little room and I had to guide *Twayblade* to the middle at the front row with few inches to spare. Again we were alongside a bigger yacht that did all the work. It was very hot and there were some midges. From the bottom of the locks we went on to Corpach and did some revictualing before joining the last group to leave the canal in the late afternoon at 1630. With some sailing we went down Loch Linnhe to anchor off the west shore at Ariseig, about a mile from the Corran ferry pier bearing 171°T. Again it was still and the valley and mountains from where we had come were all hazy in the evening.

Next morning the dawn was full of glorious colours. We weighed anchor at 0745 having avoided the strongest tide in the narrows. For the first couple of hours there was some variable wind. By 1045 the tide was with us at 2kts. We really wanted to reach Ardfern that evening in daylight, but that meant we had to get into the Sound of Jura before 1330. The wind was most messy and uncooperative and was not consistent from any direction. We had a good reach for half an hour past Shuna and into the Lynn of Lorne, but often there was no wind. This all delayed progress until I was fairly sure we would have to wait before passing through Sound of Luing. However the sea was quite calm and we motored hard from 1230 and went through the Sound of Luing just as the contrary tide was becoming turbulent. As we moved forward the swirls and upwellings kept newly appearing a couple of cables ahead of us as the tide gathered speed. But we pushed through fairly comfortably.

Passing east of Coryvreckan was interesting. The pull of tide is clearly marked on the chart and it was very conspicuous how the water draws a boat towards that hole. By 1600 we were approaching Dorus Mór with the tide playing plenty of tricks. The wind was no help. The alternatives were to go a long way up tide to get into Loch Craignish round the islands or to try to go straight through. Ahead of us we saw a motor yacht being washed sideways and going very slowly. *Twayblade's* maximum speed is a little under 7 kts. and that is with full

engine power in flat water. The water was fairly flat as it poured through the gap, but I noticed that it was not going straight through. So we went very close to the rocks at Craignish point where there was an eddy going with us. Until, of course, we had to venture into the stream or hit the rocks. We very nearly did not get through, but by sliding across the current we gradually reached water that was not going quite so fast. For about ten minutes the transits came, and fell back, and came again, and the engine was going at its limit. The gains gradually outnumbered the losses. It was by far the most exciting part of our cruise. Half an hour later we had reached the still water of Loch Craignish. Under mainsail only we drifted up to Ardfern in great tranquillity and warm soft sunshine. So ended a most wonderful season of cruising for *Twayblade*.

During this cruise I became convinced that there is no need to go outside the limits of latitude and longitude of the British Isles to find pure cruising under sail. Our islands only lack a bit of warmth. The southwest can be like the Caribbean. The north can be like the roaring forties. For sheer danger try Connemara on a dark and windy night if that is what you like. There are rivers and mud and swatchways in the southeast. There is the chance of isolation among the islands of the northwest. One can play tag with the tides in the Bristol Channel or in Scotland or in the Thames or Channel Isles. Of course there are other ways of cruising; warm tradewinds in the tropics, or scraping ice near the poles, or the lifestyle of the eastern Mediterranean, or wild coasts of the Americas, or dodging pirates in the South China Sea. But I see them as extensions of pure cruising. There is plenty of both stillness and excitement to be found in the variability of home waters.

#### Summary of cruise of *Twayblade* 2003

Date		Distance	Elapsed time		Engine time	
June	To	N. Miles	Hrs	Mins	Hrs	Mins
3rd	Loch Aline	35	5	55		30
4th	Isleornsay	50	11	15	2	45
5th	Portree	28	5	15		20
6th	Stornoway	51	9	45		30
8th/9th	Pierowall	135	30	0	8	0
11th	Sanday	18	3	10	2	50
11th	Fair Isle	34	7	35	2	0
12th	Lerwick	40	8	40	5	30
Gap						
25th	Noss Sound	7	1	30	1	30
25th	Out Skerries	18	4	30		20
27th	Burra Firth	33	7	20	1	0
28th	Balta Sound	15	4	0	1	55
30th	Burra Voe	33	10	20	2	45
<b>July</b>						
1st	Ura Firth	28	7	5	4	45
2nd	Brae	13	3	20		40
3rd	Papa Stour	14	3	0		15
4th	Scalloway	21	4	40		30
6th	Fair Isle	38	9	40	6	40
8th	Whitehall	40	10	25	6	25
9th	Wick	52	11	0	0	25
10th	Invergordon	63	15	35	9	15
11th	Clachnaharry	21	6	35	5	15
12/15th	(Cal.Canal)	50	15	0	12	0
15th	Ariseig	8	2	30	1	0
16th	Ardfern	46	9	0	5	0
<b>Totals</b>		<b>891 n.m.</b>	<b>207hrs 4.3 kts</b>		<b>82hrs 39.60%</b>	

# Almeria to Faro with *Mary P*

## Cormac O'Carroll

We joined *Mary P* at Almeria about 200Km east of Malaga. While many are familiar with the Almerimar marina about 30km west of Almeria, the Yacht Club Marina in Almeria was where we joined, this marina is well described in the cruising club pilot RCC, it is not a large marina and has few enough visitor positions. We arrived quite late on Saturday evening having made the drive from Malaga in two and a half hours, we had very good directions and arrived easily at the marina and security was good. Our next priority was to eat, it seemed we were a little late and eventually got a good old reliable Chinese. As we walked back in the balmy night air the youth of the town were gathering on one of the waterfront parks for their Saturday night fiesta, this was a very safe public rendezvous with plenty of drink from the off licence and apparently no rowdy behaviour at all.

On Sunday we awoke to a light westerly wind which strengthened to a gale by lunchtime. We prepared the boat as best we could, but since it was Sunday no supermarkets were open. A French boat that came in during the morning gave us a bleak outlook for the next few days, the guy on the marina indicated that Wednesday was the earliest we could expect to leave, none the less we continued to prepare for our cruise west.

In the three days we were in the town many boats were refused entry by the marina manager, because of bad weather. He directed people to Almerimar to the west, however since that was where the gales were coming from it was not a good option, the alternative was to wait in the outer commercial harbour.

Given that we were not going anywhere we began to prioritize our activities, the first item on the agenda was the Munster v Leicester rugby match, we found to our horror that the very central Irish Bar Molly Malone's had no intention of showing rugby, they did not cater for 'English' football, and since the city is a genuine Spanish city rather than a Costa Blanca Tourist town there were no venues we could find with rugby on TV. Panic and depression set in, try another marina there might be some Brits who might know where the rugby was being shown. We drove west to Aguadulce a small marina and resort to the west about 10 miles, no joy. We tried big hotels, small hotels, and various other establishments without any luck, we settled for 'watching' the match by text with scores and updates being sent regularly by Garrett who was watching the TV at home in Dublin. It must have been a strange sight to see 4 people jumping up and down as the texts arrived.

On Monday we did the shopping for the boat, a good Supermarket was walking distance from the marina. In the evening we visited the old Moorish castle the Alcazaba where there was free entry to European citizens something Duchas could consider in Ireland. The old town of Almeria is a wonderful web of narrow streets, driving is an adventure and it was all the more adventurous because the police were closing down the traffic for Holy Week procession, while we were trying to get back to the marina to park. The procession was on a scale you would never see in Ireland. We passed the marshalling area at the Bullring at about 19.00hrs, we went to

the Molly Malone where the viewing stand was, expecting that the parade would pass by about 20.00hrs, it was actually 22.15hrs before the first float passed by and it was midnight when the procession finished. All the Parishes were visited and all the trades and industries were represented. Each huge float, led by a standard bearer, was carried by about 40 people accompanied by a band and a number of attendants in silk and satin robes and penitents, the air was heavy with the smell of incense and candle wax, it was a really impressive sight and obviously a very important event in the holy week calendar. The streets were being power-washed as we walked back to *Mary P* at about 01.00hrs, hoping for a start in the morning

Tuesday was not to be the departure day, the French man was right on Sunday. We had various other tasks still to complete before being ready to depart, however one aspect of the town that we really enjoyed was going to the La Rieja for lunch which lasted from 14.30hrs to about 16.00hrs, very civilised. Today was to be our last lunch in Almeria as we wanted to make an early start on Wednesday and get west towards Gibraltar.

Wednesday April 16th Almeria to Gibraltar. It was our intention to be away at first light, which we had guessed would be about 07.00hrs, however it was pitch black at that time so we turned over and only got going at 09.30hrs. Having visited the fuel berth it was 10.30hrs as we motored out into the bay in a flat calm sea on a hazy April morning, our advised destination was Benalmadena west of Malaga. The day progressed and as we were making good time and had a good forecast the skipper decided with everyone's agreement to make a night passage and arrive in Gibraltar on Holy Thursday morning. We actually landed at 12.30hrs on the Queensway Quay holding berth awaiting customs clearance out of Europe and into Gibraltar.

The passage had been very pleasant we had occasional glimpses of dolphins and a pilot whale. Our course was planned to keep us comfortably off shore, so there was little traffic in the 26 hour passage, we saw two other sailing boats and about three freighters during the night, as dawn approached we did see a very fast unlit craft heading from the north down towards Africa and thought it was suspicious! The night watch, four hours with two up ran 22.00hrs to 02.00hrs, 02.00hrs to 06.00hrs, this got everyone through the night OK without too much hassle, lots of hot chocolate and sweets and conversation. As we approached Gibraltar there was poor enough visibility, at about 09.30hrs a hint of green was seen in the clouds this was our first view of the Rock. Thirty minutes later we had an excellent view of Gibraltar and point Europa, this was just at the same time that the sausages and eggs were ready for Breakfast. As we approached we got out the straits pilot to consult our marina options, as it happened we need not have bothered since Queensway Quay seems to be set up for short stay passers by like ourselves and *Rambler* who had been in one or two days earlier.

The Straits Pilot is a really useful little book to have and it would be recommended anyone visiting the area to pick it up or borrow it for their trip. Clearing into Gibraltar was a puzzling



Neil McCormac and Mary-Clare at Queensway Quay, Gibraltar.

ritual, felt like arriving on the “mainland” in the old days, however it was fast and efficient and we did declare the two cigarettes and the 1/2 bottle of Gin we had left. We were directed to our assigned berth, but we happily tied up in the one opposite because it was easier and in no time at all we were reviving ourselves in the Jolly Parrot where we considered our next moves. The next day was Good Friday and everything would be closed so we decided we would move again on Saturday weather permitting. Next on the list was to get exposed to the sights of the Rock and the peculiarities of that place called Gibraltar.

Shopping of course is what it's all about but even Good Friday is strictly observed and with the exception of a few Indian shops, all the main stores were closed for the day. The cable car was closed so we negotiated a rate for a taxi tour of the island. The taxi drivers are very cultured and will give you a potted history of their little country, somewhat like the Killarney jarveys do once they get you into the jaunting car. The tour was worthwhile for the views and the visitor attractions; the Baboons were a big hit. The famous levantine cloud hanging on the top of the rock, the caves and the old tunnelled fortifications were all impressive and worth the visit. The old town had a number of interesting street names and pubs, we liked SCUD St. but could not find the Three Martyrs pub, though we did see where Nelson was carried ashore after the battle of Trafalgar. One interesting Irish Pub, on Lynches lane, that did not sell Kilkenny beer had the rules for the Ladies of the Orange Lodge displayed in a glass case.

On Saturday having listened to the weather forecast we decided we were not going anywhere. We had to go shopping and apparently that is what people go to do in Gibraltar. The buses pour in through the frontier, it seems its mostly English holidaymakers who visit looking for UK brands and electronics, we saw few German or Dutch. Very visible in the town on Saturday are members of the Jewish community who

appear to have a large population on the Rock, there is also a very visible Mosque just north of Point Europa so religiously everyone appears to be catered for. We restocked the cocktail cabinet and ate aboard on Saturday night we did make a sortie to Casemates Square but found that the pubs there were not inclined to stay open too late at this time of the year so we were back aboard at a reasonable hour looking forward to getting underway again in the morning Easter Sunday.

Sunday April 20th Gibraltar to Cueta. On Easter Sunday morning it was all systems go for North Africa and the Spanish enclave of Ceuta was our destination. As usual we had an early start, first eyes were opened at about 09.30hrs! By the time we left the fuel dock at 12.15hrs we had good humour, good visibility, and a robust wind abeam, we set off under sail with our large tricolour flying on the stern. Traffic on the crossing was light, we were concerned about crossing the shipping lanes as none of us had sailed in this area before but we had no difficulty, as most of the ships we met were fast ferries crossing from Gibraltar or Algeciras to Cueta. There was one warship on station in the middle of the straits and they did a personnel exchange with another warship passing into the Mediterranean.

Arriving at Ceuta was made all the more exciting since there was a fast ferry trying to leave as we were trying to go in. Needless to say we stood off until it was clear to enter and when we did we were greeted by a Spanish navy vessel all dressed with flags flying. Marina administration was excellent, we were signalled to a berth and Neil docked *Mary P* expertly next to a pair of long stay Germans who by their manner appeared to have left European society years ago. One of the men said later that he had lived aboard for the past twenty years but was now packing it in to go and live in Portugal because the Mediterranean was too crowded, in his 20 years he had never sailed outside the Med!

As we rigged up the water and power a Welshman appeared with a cable adaptor we could borrow, it is one thing everyone comes across, different marina different plug! He also was a long stay resident and admitted that he did not speak to Germans, however he did invite us to join him for a pint in the Dubliner which we intended to do. We had taken the evening to walk the city as we planned to stay on Monday weather permitting, but our walk took too long and by the time we found the Dubliner he had finished his pint and gone. As Irish pubs go it was the most authentic one we came across on the trip and the beer was good too. After a few beers there we enjoyed an excellent meal in one of the waterside restaurants, here again the food and wines were terrific.

The town is well worth a visit, there is a great deal of development going on on the waterfront and it is a very busy tourist ferry port. Apart from the new buildings it is also possible to see what the old town was like before it became a popular visitor attraction as the side streets and old buildings reveal the echoes of Franco's Spain and of the pre EEC era. The yacht club is not impressive by Spanish standards largely because the present premises is now under a new motorway being built along the promenade, but the security is good and the facilities are reasonable.

Monday April 21st Cueta to Vilamoura. An early start was called for because of the morning forecast, the wind was from the east, we had no option but to go. On a journey like this if the wind is going your way you have to go with it. We set off on the longest leg which was also the most varied and adventurous. Leaving the Med for the Atlantic, leaving Africa for Europe, and leaving Spanish Territory for Portugal's Algarve coast. We slipped out of the marina in Cueta at about 12.45hrs making directly for the mid-strait traffic lane as this was also the part with the most favourable outgoing current, The Straits Pilot as I have already mentioned is an invaluable companion on this leg

of the passage. While we were eating breakfast in the cockpit in the middle of the straits of Gibraltar a flotilla of Spanish coastal patrol boats painted in desert camouflage colours of tan, sand and olive came so close that they could smell our rashers.

It was a busy day we heard a may-day from a ditched American Harrier jet on a training exercise over the bay of Cadiz, the crew was recovered safely, but there was more to follow in the night. Our destination was Vilamoura in Portugal, we were planning an overnight which would take us across the Bay of Cadiz having passed Cape Trafalgar at about 15.00hrs with an easy 22kt wind abeam. This wind held up for the afternoon taking us through to sundowners and dinner at 20.30hrs. 22.00hrs saw start of the night watch Des and Cormac did the first leg there was a good deal of inshore traffic, some of it we felt may have been the salvage for the downed aircraft which we heard about earlier in the day. The winds stayed steady and did not get much over 25kts, soup, tea and chocolate marked the 02.00hrs watch change. When Neil and Mary Clare took over there was a threatening darkness in the sky to the southwest and distant thunder was heard occasionally there was no dew and we were enjoying a really good night sail. Although there was not much moonlight it was possible to get occasional glimpses of dolphins alongside the cockpit. At about 05.30hrs the sparks began to fly – literally! A heavy black sky had rolled in quickly bringing a big wind shift and a rain sodden squall accompanied by fabulously scary fork lightning. This got all hands on deck in double quick time, however the squall passed through quickly. We checked the instruments, all were still in working order and there was no damage from the lightning which had hit the surface far too close for comfort. At the 06.00hrs watch change we felt we were still on schedule for arrival at Vilamoura for about noon. There was still plenty of thunder and lightning, and a few squalls came through, but because we now had some daylight these did not appear to be so threatening. The weather continued to deteriorate for the rest of the morning so that by the time we entered the mole at Vilamoura it was distinctly nasty outside and we were all quite happy to tie up have a good breakfast and take a little rest before moving onto our allocated berth.

We moved onto our pontoon later in the afternoon where once we tied up, showers laundry and lunch were the priorities. Pontoon facilities are excellent as this is a purpose built resort known more for its golf courses than its sailing marina. Marina security is good, each crew gets a plastic access card for the pontoon gates that lead directly onto the main waterfront area of the resort which is lined with restaurants, gift shops and bars. Supermarkets are one block in from the dock area but are in easy walking distance. Access to the beach is easy, there are marina launches which will collect you and take you to the other side in order to avoid what could be a very long walk. Don't need to say how good the beaches are and the beach bars are well stocked.

Our weather prediction was that Wednesday was also going to be an unsuitable day for going west so we began to familiarise ourselves with Vilamoura. Louis Figos bar appeared to be the most

pleasant venue, especially since the first programme on the TV was a profile of Munster rugby ahead of the big match at the weekend. We also made it the venue to watch that great Man U Real Madrid game which was really entertaining especially the 3rd goal of the hat trick! We were also beginning to consider at this point our last stop, where would we call it a day and make our arrangements to return home.

Thursday April 24th Vilamoura to Lagos. We set off for Lagos in really flat calm conditions, it looked as though we would not get much sailing for the day and as it turned out we didn't. However it was an ideal day to learn the geography of the Algarve coastline as we passed just off shore of the main resort towns, some of which looked attractive, others you would try to forget! We saw the classic Algarve coast of caves, coves and cliffs, these plus the sun of course, were the original reason for the growth of tourism on the Algarve coast.

We contacted Lagos marina as we approached the town, the directions on the pilot were good. You are required to land on the holding berth first and book in before going through the lifting bridge to the marina basin. We were tied up on our berth for about 16.30hrs. With live music playing in a bar at the top of the pontoon what else could you do – we took time to consider our position and have a drink. We were now in Lagos, our agreed going home point five days ahead of our plan so the question was what next? A number of items combined to provide an answer. Firstly we wanted to be able to watch the Munster match on Saturday, secondly the farther we got from Faro the more difficult it would be to get back for the morning flight on Tuesday morning. Most people suggested that an overnight to Cascais outside Lisbon should be our next leg, so we planned to leave on Saturday after the European Rugby Final. That settled we set out to explore the town of Lagos, and find a suitable place for dinner.

We had arrived on the anniversary of the revolution and this was marked at midnight by a fireworks display the likes of which we had not see before. It was brilliantly choreographed with a music score played on large speakers set out along the promenade, the whole event ran for about twenty five minutes. There was also a big open stage with bands playing Portuguese folk music and everyone on the streets enjoying the festival. Lagos is a historic town with an ancient seafaring tradition there



Early morning en route to Gibraltar.



Des, Mary-Clare and Neil crossing to Cueta from Gibraltar.

is a large monument to Henry the navigator, it was a big shipbuilding and trading centre in the mid 14th 15th centuries with its own slave market. The beaches are spotless and safe there are small boat tours that will bring you out along the coves and grottoes to the southwest of the town. The town itself is full of restaurants and gift shops. Good supermarkets and chandlery are walking distance from the marina which is immediately adjacent to the Railway station which has a good and inexpensive scheduled service to Faro, about two hours away by train.

We were not the only boat on the marina wearing a big Irish tricolour, even this early in the season we met a number of people from the northern counties of Meath Louth Cavan and

Donegal who keep their boats or have an apartment on the marina. One man we met had signed up for one of the new apartments that very day. Another couple we met invited the crews of both Irish boats to visit. We also entertained our guests on the *Mary P* where we got the low down on details such as where to watch the match and advice on what our next moves should be in terms of getting around the corner and making progress towards Bayona. Friday was a rest day and we went to the beach, did tourist things, got the presents etc. Saturday morning we discovered we had a problem with Des's leg it had become infected by a small scrape he got in Gibraltar from jumping over a wall! He needed to have a doctor examine it. Our new acquaintances were very helpful

and drove Des and Mary-Clare to the Doctor whose pronouncement was that Des should not work the leg for three days at least and it needed serious antibiotics and rest. This ruled out any more sailing and pretty much settled our agenda for the next few days. We watched the rugby match in the afternoon it was not great either. Overall we did not have a good day on *Mary P* or in Munster. Neil made arrangements to head home early on Sunday morning and the balance of the crew Cormac Des and Mary-Clare stuck it out in the wonderful Algarve sunshine for two more days before tidying the boat and taking the early train to Faro and our flights to Stansted and Cork.

**Andy McCarter writes of the launch of new Foyle berthing facility Derry City Centre**

The need to earn a few bob necessitated work which interfered badly with my cruising plans for Gwili 3 in 2003 although we did manage to spend five glorious sunshine days in west Donegal in early August and

also made it to the "official launching" of a new berthing facility on the Foyle in the city centre at Derry. This is a super job which can accommodate 40-50 boats with secure, sheltered docking right in the middle of Derry convenient for all shopping, restaurants pubs and general sight-seeing.

It is the brain child of the indefatigable Aideen Corr who has been responsible for so many of the recent maritime initiatives in the northwest including bringing dozens of cruise liners to Derry and Donegal over the past few summers.

The trip up the well-marked channel takes a couple of hours and gives one time to admire the magnificent hills of Donegal to the west rivalled by the equally impressive County Derry bank to the east. Visitors are asked to call ahead on Channel 12 to the Port Control office at Lisahally where temporary berthing is available to facilitate pick-up of a smartcard which can then be used to operate the security gate and electrical supply at the actual berthing pontoon located on the other side of the Foyle Bridge just in front of the spectacular Civic offices. Water and fuel can also be purchased from the port office.



The new Foyle berthing facility.

# Beowulf heads east

## Ann Woulfe Flanagan

July 6th 2003. Robert Fowler, ICC, Joan McLaren and myself headed out of Dublin Airport to Faro (Portugal) – rather dazed from a very enjoyable R.St.G.Y.C. Regatta dinner the night before. In the Baggage Hall of Faro Airport we met up with Wendy Fowler who had flown in from London. Our taxi driver misunderstood our directions and half an hour later we were nearing Vilamoura. With a lot of arm waving he turned around for Vila Real de Santo Antonio Marina on the River Guadiana (the border between Portugal and Spain).

In the blistering midday heat we found the marina office just about to close for siesta. A very pleasant woman told us to go down to boat and pay later. The marina is a very pleasant of the linear variety just sectioned out of the river. Bernard had warned us that there was a “fierce” current through the marina and we consequently found *Beowulf* trussed up like a turkey with springs and double warps at the furthest end of the marina. She was looking a little forlorn and dusty with fenders covered in old trousers and towels to protect them from the red paint on the nextdoor boat.

We had some careful planning to do – two weeks to Puerto Deportivo de Benalmadena circa 214M. Gibraltar was a must but with stories about the straits and easterly winds meant we had to give ourselves time for delays. An added problem was that Barbate was the only sheltered marina some 37M before Gibraltar.

It is very important to leave Santo Antonia at slack water HW + 1 hour so all was ready by 10.30 and we slipped out into the river watching for lobster pots as we left the marina on our way to Mazagon. The wind was NE F1 going up to SSW F3/4 so it was motor sailing most of the way arriving at 17.10 into a very large well protected marina – accessible shelter at all times with the entrance WNW up a 10m dredged channel 339 degrees which bears away NW to Huelva industrial complex on the river – Rio Tinto/Rio Odiel. But beware of Merchant ships – the largest one we had ever seen passed down the channel dwarfing everything just before we were leaving. There is a good waiting quay and a very fine modern marina building. The usual paperwork and passports and a letter to sail in Spanish waters – also had to sign for gate key – €12 deposit. There were a lot of free berths. There were very good facilities at the end of a modern two storey commercial and restaurant complex. Walked into town, a long way and we became more and more depressed as we trudged up the hill, the dirt and slapstick buildings all around

us. It appeared to be a low priced thriving resort. Eventually we reached the town which had a shopping area, a lot of restaurants, a bazaar and a good supermarket. We could not wait to get out of it. We did notice an open air church on the way back. An enjoyable meal on board cooked by Joan in the more aesthetic surroundings of the marina.

There are a few marinas to choose from in the Bahia de Cadiz but we had heard that Real Club Nautico de El Puerto de Santa Maria was well worth a visit. We left Mazagon at 11.00 on Wednesday 9th with the wind SSW to WSW F1/2/3 and motor sailed our way down the coast to the Sherry country – close to Jerez. We sighted a Tuna net mid-afternoon. After 7 hours and some 40M we motored up and down Cadiz bay wondering why the marina was blocked off by floating barriers. After much consulting of books and the photograph it took the artist in Joan to work out the coast line and realise that we had mistook the entrance to the naval base as we were rather naughtily, despite the new chart, relying on the plotter which we then discovered had the marina symbol in the wrong place!! This yacht club marina is another linear one with 100 berths situated in the River Guadalete in the heart of El Puerto de Santa Maria. We tied up on a hammerhead at 18.40. Two very friendly men (one club staff) came to assist and said it was OK for one night, €30. We found a Sherry warehouse, bought some sherry and enquired about restaurants. Apparently the Bar restaurants were reasonable. We found the pleasant ‘Bar Dorada’, Avda. de la Bajamar 26. Tel. 956 85 52 14, doing brisk business.

This was such a lovely town that we spent most of Thursday 10th wandering around absorbing the atmosphere. Then there



Ann Woulfe Flanagan and *Beowulf*. Puerto de la Duguesa.

was a swimming pool to cool down. Robert booked dinner in the Club restaurant, upmarket, very few there but wow the cuisine, Robert's steak filled the plate, us three girls had excellent fish but were not adverse to helping Robert finish his truly succulent steak.

The weather was still set fair as we set off on Friday 11th for Barbate at 09.50. The wind was SE to SSE 4/5, and again we motored sail into an uncomfortable/tiring sea.

Puerto Deportivo de Barbate. There are dire warnings of very large Tunny nets near the entrance to Barbate. These appear not to be too much of a problem if one is going into Barbate and they are well marked. Although fully lit, on a bad night they might not be so much fun. We rounded the SW Mole and headed west for the inner harbour which provides shelter from the strong levanter (east wind that can blow in the Straits of Gibraltar). This is a busy fishing port and a large marina. At 17.45 we prepared to go along side the waiting quay but were waved on into the marina and beckoned into a berth by a man on a scooter, 47M. A couple of Sherries later Robert and I went up with the paperwork only to find the office closed (we should have gone around the back!). No key so it was climb around the gate. There is a good facilities block near by. There were quite a few English yachts waiting to head down to Gibraltar, one with a broken gearbox. The wind was favourable for next day, SW. It was a long walk into town past a fun fair and amusement arcade which provide unwanted noise entertainment well into the morning. We stayed on the edge of the town and found a quite place, Restaurant Teraza. Tel. 956 43 09 48 by the sea.

Saturday 12th dawned fine and everyone was excited to get off for the last hop to Gibraltar. We sorted the paperwork €23 plus W and E and departed at 10.50 in order to catch the west going current in the straits. There were a few yachts ahead of us and we kept well inshore, more interesting to watch the coastline go by, unfortunately the visibility was not the best. The wind SSW F4 but again we motor sailed to keep up our speed in a lumpy sea. Joan and Wendy served an excellent all inclusive rice dish and the sun came out when coffee was served. At 13.45 Tarifa (southern most point) abeam, an exciting moment. At around 15.00 we sighted the north coast of Africa to starboard and then altered course to head into Gibraltar bay.

We approached Gibraltar in great anticipation, the wind was gusting as we treaded our way through the massive ships at anchor in the Bay. Much discussion as to which marina, the book says Queensway Quay Marina will clear passports by 'phone – not for us. There was a strong southerly pull as we approached the breakwater and we had to keep heading north so as not to get swept down onto the south pier (A head) 38M.

As we booked into the marina we were asked "had we cleared Customs" – "no". We then lead the charge of yachts to the Waterport Wharf on the north mole opposite the western end of the runway. The customs procedure was very straightforward. Robert was asked if we had firearms etc. etc. I turned around and there was Paddy Barry, ICC from his new "Italian acquisition" in transit back to Ireland. Then a Diesirae, RIYC (on delivery trip) arrived in – three lots of Irish Passports in a few minutes.

We found our berth beside *Apeha Plus* and settled in to rather a tight slot with assistance from marina staff. A few yachts later and the Marina was full. It is very convenient to the quayside restaurants and the centre of town – a short walk away. The downside is that there was a lot of movement when ships went by out side the breakwater. We asked our neighbours and a couple from *Eidar* a HR 42 for drinks. The staff at the Marina office were very helpful, £10.95 sterling, and there are excellent facilities in the same building, another storey is being added. We set off to explore walking up through the Ragged

Staff Gates to the top road passing by the Cathedral of The Holy Trinity and in to the main street. We had a very good dinner in *Chez Nous* opposite our berth. Luckily I had sterling as the exchange rate was terrible for cash.

On Sunday we headed for the Cable car and up to the top of the Rock to visit the Rock Apes who were up to all sorts of mischief, attacking bags and they took a camera. We walked all over the area and also visited St. Michael's cave deep into the rock. It was very hot and humid but well worth a visit. A return drinks party on *Eidar*.

Joan left us on Monday 14th for Malaga Airport and it was decided to push on to Sotogrande. We had heard that Gibraltar was not worth visiting but we were very anxious to do so and found it a very a pleasant place steeped in history with a lot to see and were sorry we did not stay two days.

Departing Queensway Quay at 12.20 we headed out into a WSW F5, moderately rough. The view of Gibraltar from the south is most impressive and we could also see North Africa. As we passed Europa Point lighthouse, a great moment – we were now heading into the Mediterranean. The sea was so confused that we tacked rather than gybed, and then had a rather difficult run up to Sotogrande, arriving at 16.10 and all of 16M under our belt.

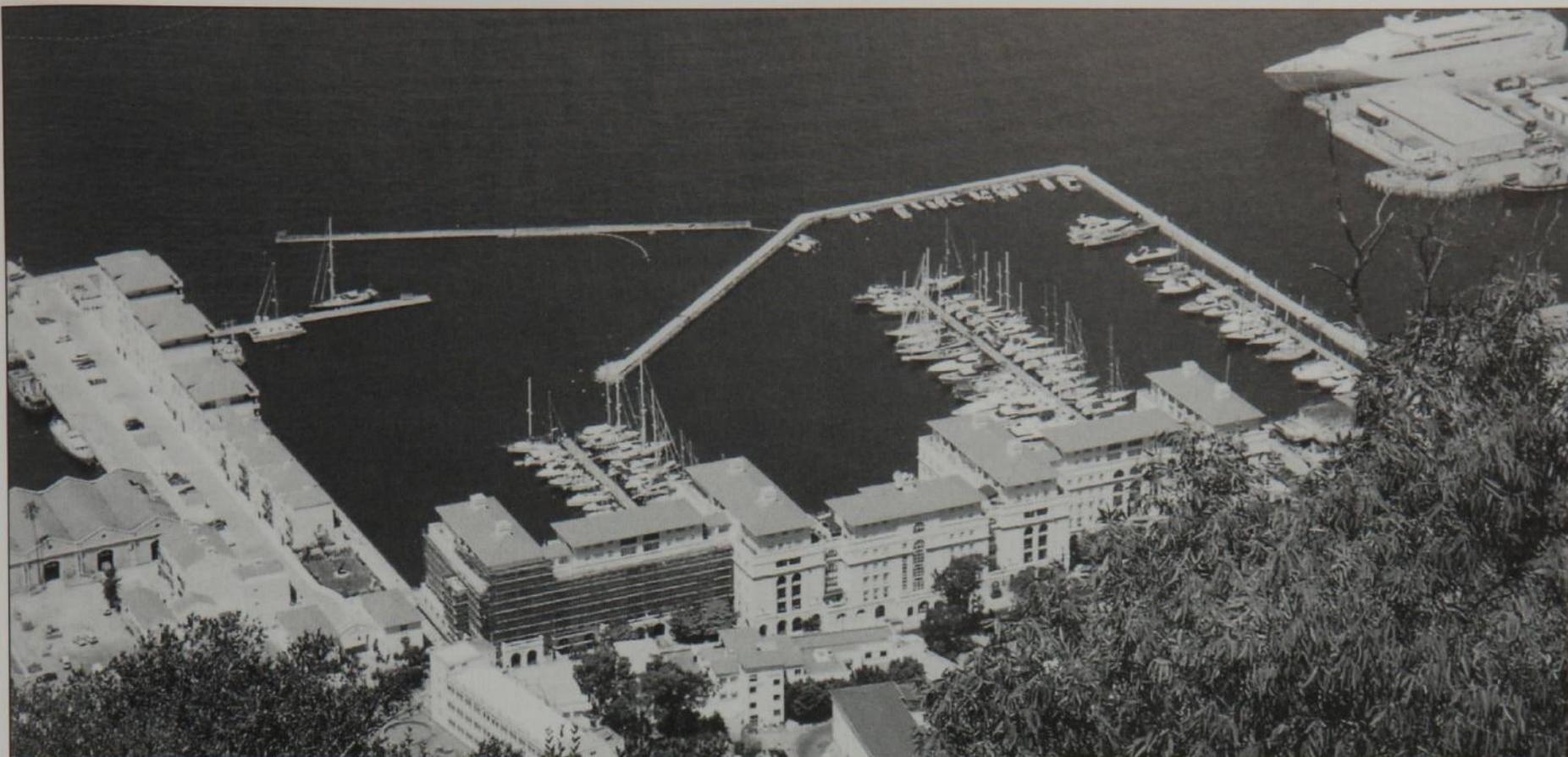
Sotogrande is a large new marina resort with modern apartment blocks and the large Hotel Club Maritimo. We took advantage of the convenient fuel berth. No spaces for our size despite the marina being half empty and we had to pay for a 20m berth €63 and a €95 deposit for a special electric adapter. We asked one of the marina staff, from Birmingham, why all spaces – they are privately owned and they apparently cannot rent them out.

Nearly all the berths in marinas are fore and aft and the mooring lines are handed to one. There was a small, adequate but pricey supermarket also a pricey well stocked Chandlers. Wendy cooked us a delicious steak dinner. This is not a an essential place to visit, it would be better to go on to Puerto de la Duquesa some 5M further on or to have stayed another night in Gibraltar.

Tuesday 15th. We left for Puerto de la Duquesa at 13.00 and motor sailed the 5M up the coast, sods law the wind gusted up as we approached the south facing entrance. A very pleasant marina, with a waiting quay/fuel berth. Staff very helpful with good English, €29 per night, a bottle of wine and key rings, €20 deposit for electronic key. This area is worth a visit, some Irish and a lot of English boats. There is a large yard where John Crebbin ICC has *Alannah*. The old village of Castillo de Duquesa is a short walk along the beach away from the tourist area. We had an excellent dinner at Antonio Tel. 952 89 02 45. Unfortunately the Castle was closed.

It was planned to leave *Beowulf* for Bernard in Puerto Deportivo de Benalmadena a further 35M up the coast but the crew struck. Rumours abounded that it was very expensive and we were informed impossible to get a space, and certainly not to leave a boat. A telephone call was made to Bernard more or less saying that Duquesa was a better bet, much more reasonable at €29 per night and a space was available. The deal was done and we received another bottle of wine. Robert, Wendy and myself were very happy and able to enjoy the rest of our stay without anxiety. There was a Festive on Wednesday evening when the statue of The Virgin Carmen is taken from the church and put on a boat and processed out to sea to bless all the boats dressed overall with garlands.

On Thursday 17th we took a trip up to Puerto Deportivo Jose Banus to visit Fiona McCann, a friend from the RIYC. Motored all the way up in very hot and flat calm conditions. Arrived at 13.09 and tied up alongside the east side of Dique de Benabola near fuel station and the control tower which is a fine



Queensway Marina, Gibraltar.

building. Every conceivable detail was required and when a space was eventually found – the bomb shell €73 a night – the berth was on the Dique de Lavante opposite the control tower. The berth number and space did not correspond, so we just tied alongside and were eventually told it was OK to stay. It's a 1,000 berth marina with some mega motor yachts and we counted less than 30 masts amongst them.

Numerous phone calls and Fiona and a friend Nida Trainor arrived on *Beowulf* whence we set off to visit Fiona's apartment 10/15 minutes from the town but as we were the furthestmost point from the town it was a long walk but well worth it. Great views and three swimming pools to choose from.

On the way back to Puerto de Duquesa on Friday Wendy spotted a Sun fish – sunning itself on the top of the water. The round trip was 33.6M.

Saturday was spent cleaning *Beowulf* and Wendy kindly cleaned and greased the four cockpit winches.

We sadly departed on Sunday 20th after a great sun holiday, temperature up to nearly 40° with high humidity which was very trying at times. There was the added attraction of breaking new ground. In all we travelled 214M nearly all of which was under horse power rather than sail power.

On Saturday 9th August Bruce Lyster ICC drove from Malaga and Patrick Temple, Philip Black and myself drove from Murcia (San Javier) to meet at Almeria Airport. It was a €20 taxi to Agudulce. The Promenade quayside was humming and we had a good dinner in one of the numerous restaurants. The Marina Office was open so I paid for our berth €20 as we wanted to leave in the morning.

Bruce was unfortunately only able to spend four days with us and we had 141M to cover to reach the next change over which was in the Mar Menor. This came about as Garrucha only takes up to 12m boats thus the next place would be San Jose but it was full and Bernard Corbally had to sail back to Agudulce.

Our plan was to head for Garrucha circa 57M and if we did not get a berth we could anchor.

Sunday 10th. The shower block was key operated – just as well as patrons were still leaving the Night Club and the surrounding area was not very pleasant. We told the Marina Office that we were leaving and they asked that we radio them as we left the harbour. The weather forecast was for ENE F2 – F3/4 – on the nose. At 10.00 we departed and put out the main to stabilise ourselves and motor sailed with the waves slowing

us down every now and again. The sea did calm down around 17.00. At 18.45 and 57M completed we approached the Inner harbour of Garrucha. There were a lot of yachts at anchor but we noticed that the NE corner of the broad commercial quay wall was empty and a catamaran was heading over so we followed and tied up behind them. Almost immediately the Guarda Civil arrived with forms and “only one night, you leave by 10.00”. Then a Port official arrived – again “only one night”. Beside our berth was a fish box from Wrights of Howth! It is a pleasant town and we walked past a funfair and along the new promenade where we watched a 7-a-side football match and had an enjoyable meal in Paseo Maritimo. Tel. 950 460278.

On Monday 11th following a large Supermarket shop we slipped our lines at 9.43 for Mazarron some 37M away. It was very calm NW F1/F2 and very sunny, everyone trying to find some shade. Bruce was browsing through the Pilot and noticed there was an anchorage off Cala Bardina. As we had time and with the intense heat the prospect of a swim was very inviting. We anchored a little away from the beach in weed. All was very pleasant until we noticed that we were dragging. We managed an hours sail before arriving at 17.05 in Mazarron, and took advantage of fuel on the waiting quay. We secured the last visitors berth at the end of the ‘T’ pontoon, €33. The shower facilities belong to the Club and no key required.

Tuesday 12th began with some house work – I started to defrost the fridge with saucepans of boiling water, Bruce suggested the hair dryer and proceeded to finish the job, much quicker.

We left at 10.15 for Cartagena, a very light breeze heading us yet again. A peaceful but very hot trip – all of 16M and arrived at 12.30 – stood by to let a naval vessel enter – it is a naval, commercial and fishing port. The marina was quite full. The Marina Office is in a fine Yacht Club building on the first floor very pleasant staff with good English, €20 per night. 110M travelled in 3 days. There is a swimming pool, but it is for members only. There is quite a turnover of yachts here and we met three couples who were heading for the Canaries and Caribbean. A very hungry crew set off at 15.00, the height of the heat, to look for lunch and explore this beautiful ancient city. We found a restaurant in the shade on Canon Street which served a three course meal for €7. This city dates from about 243 BC when Hasdrubal developed it and there are many



Beowulf in Sotogrande with Gibraltar in background.

Roman ruins there today including the theatre. Hannibal started his expedition to cross the Alps from here. This city is well worth a visit, good shops and supermarket. As this was Bruce's last night we had an extra special dinner on board with drinks beforehand in the Club.

On Wednesday morning we spent a couple of very interesting hours visiting the fascinating Naval Museum and learning more about the first submarino, Peral. Bruce then departed by Taxi to collect a hire car and drive to Malaga.

Patrick, Philip and I tidied up and had a reasonable Dinner at the Mar Nostroom by the Marina, €76.00 They departed on Thursday. As we had not reached the Mar Menor Derek, Caroline and Vicky Jago joined me here. They were delighted to see Cartagena and with their hire car it was great to get to beaches and the large out of town supermarket.

We spent Friday 15th enjoying this lovely city and swimming.

On Saturday 16th we motored 28M, with virtually no wind and very very hot, up to the Mar Menor which is an inland sea, approached by a narrow canal and lifting bridge. Puerto de Tomas Maestre is a very sheltered marina on the south side of the canal, €40 per night. We arrived at 17.15 and anchored off as the bridge opens every two hours on the hour. At 17.50 we joined the throng of yachts heading home.

On Sunday we spent the day sailing around and anchored off one of the islands, the area is full of brown jelly fish, non stinging! but there are fenced off areas for swimming.

See Bernard Corbally's chart.

Summary		
From	To	Miles
Puerto de Santo Antonio	Mazagon	32
Mazagon	Puerto de Santo Maria	40
Puerto de Santo Maria	Barbate	49.8
Barbate	Gibraltar	37.4
Gibraltar	Puerto de Sotogrande	15.7
Puerto de Sotogrande	Puerto de la Duquesa	5.5
Puerto de la Duquesa	Puerto Jose Banus	17
Puerto Jose Banus	Puerto de Aguadulce	16.7
Puerto de Aguadulce	Puerto de Garrucha	57
Puerto de Garrucha	Puerto de Mazarron	37
Puerto de Mazarron	Puerto de Cartagena	16
Puerto de Cartagena	Puerto de Tomas Maestre	28
	<b>Miles travelled circa</b>	<b>352</b>



Wendy and Joan aboard Beowulf in Queensway Marina Gibraltar.

# South with OARs

## Colin Chapman

I was in Paradise warm in my bunk. It was only a month after midsummer and more than two more weeks of cruising left but nature called for a trip to the heads. I sleepily pulling on my Musto jacket and boots I decided not to use the heads as it would wake the Cabin Boy in his bunk nearby so I gingerly opened the starboard hatch and dragged myself on deck. "Oh Hell Paradise has frozen over". It was 26th January and we were anchored in Paradise Bay on the Antarctic Peninsula.

It all began two years earlier over a bottle of wine in the Azores. I had rashly talked of going to South Georgia to pay my respects to Sir Ernest Shackleton. "Mrs Tiggywinkle" (Sue Thatcher) who was sitting opposite me said "If you go I will come with you" "Pandora" (Pat Waller) also volunteered. Very quickly we found our "Cabin Boy" Alan Taylor the Commodore of the Ocean Cruising Club.

The "Fifth Man" Martin Thomas another OCC member was added a month or so later after we had found a yacht to charter and changed the course to the Antarctic Peninsula.

Our average age was over 60 years so we christened ourselves the Old Antarctic Reprobates (OARs).

Being a loner and preferring single handed sailing I was apprehensive about being cooped up with six other people in a small boat in probably uncomfortable conditions for a month or more. Nearly all of us owned our own boats and were accustomed to being "Skipper". All five OARs are strong minded people and some very successful in their fields. This was a recipe for friction. We all expected problems however I am now happy to report that we are all still pulling together and firmer friends than before our departure



On watch in a blizzard off Brabant Island 30th January 2003.

Pat Waller



Northanger alongside Deerhound in Crosshaven 1st September 2002

Alan Taylor

We contacted Skip Novak and investigated what he had to offer with *Pelagic* but then we made contact with Greg Landreth and Keri Pashuk who were prepared to take the OARs south. They were at the time extracting themselves from a winter over in Ellesmere Island in the Arctic and wanted to go south again. Their boat, *Northanger*, is a 54ft Damen II Ketch with lifting keel specifically designed for high latitude sailing.

We quickly built up a rapport with Keri and Greg, agreed terms and persuaded them to come south via Crosshaven. Towards the end of August we inspected our quarters.

*Northanger* is divided down below by her centre board casing. Up forward there is a workshop and diesel burning heater, chain locker and storage lockers. There

are two tiers of bunks (four in all) down the starboard side and two double cabins on the port side. The saloon accommodates of a large table, which can seat eight people with reasonable comfort. A kerosene two ring stove and oven lies forward of a sink and draining board on the port side and on the starboard side there is a navigation station and forward of that the heads.

There are two companionways port and starboard at the forward end of the saloon.

The deck has a small entirely enclosed coach roof over the forward end of the saloon but no accessible hatch. A very small entirely open cockpit is aft right on the transom with wheel steering but really only room for two crew who get little or no protection from the weather but if clipped on are entirely secure. The fifteen feet or so from one or other of the hatches to the cockpit over the coachroof is somewhat hazardous as there are winches and the mizen sheet traveller to negotiate

*Northanger* was equipped with HF, GPS, Radar, Echo sounder and Laptop computer for weather maps but nothing very sophisticated or unusual. The concessions to high latitude conditions are really confined to the lifting keel and the diesel burning heater. On deck, four long warps with wire strops are stowed so that *Northanger* can be secured from fore and aft quarters as well as on an anchor.

She also carried two dinghies (one a rib and the other a normal inflatable) these were powered by heavy outboards stowed on the transom and below respectively.

We joined *Northanger* in Ushuaia (Argentina) on 6th January after three days of acclimatisation and victualling. In the late afternoon of 7th January we sailed west down the Beagle channel to Porto Williams (Chile). The scenery was superb with high snow capped mountain forests growing down to the shore and very few signs of habitation outside the town

we had left. The passage from Ushuaia to Porto Williams took about 6 hours. We arrived in Porto Williams in the gathering dusk wriggling into a creek at the eastern end of the town to raft up alongside other yachts moored to an old wrecked ship that served as a Club, pub and BBQ platform.

There were some eight or ten other yachts moored in Porto Williams nearly all steel and varying in state of repair. Nearly all were the property of "Live Aboard", hoping to raise money from a charter round "the Horn" or south. The next evening we met many of them as we barbequed Argentinean Beef over an open fire on the deck of the Yacht Club hulk.

There was a happy atmosphere at Porto Williams with yachts and their crews waiting to round the Horn or go south or returning from their recent adventures. Many nationalities mingled but the majority speaking quite fluent English and most of the males sporting beards.

This leads me to comment on clothing, perhaps the most important item of equipment for comfort and survival. We had equipped ourselves with Musto thermal inner layers and a variety of mid layers, HPX oilskins and survival suits; sea boots of varying varieties and fur lined boots to wear down below. Warm hat, balaclavas and sun hats were also a must. Gloves proved to be the most varied and in almost all cases a failure in some respects. Either too cumbersome, not sufficiently waterproof or just not warm enough. Shore boots were heavy duty walking boots and ski touring boots.

Excess luggage was a necessary expense!

On Thursday 9th January we set sail for the south having checked out of Chile. The passage down the Beagle channel was interesting as it involved avoiding kelp and occasional squalls followed by patches of calm. The first penguins were sighted, a novelty that was to become common place when we reached the peninsula.

We anchored in Lennox in heavy rain and with low pressure systems on the weather maps indicating that patience would be required. I felt rested and out of touch with the mad world. Nature predominated; food warmth and rest with plenty of reading ensured a happy ship

On Friday 10th it blew very hard and we lay at anchor waiting for a window for our dash south across the Drake Passage.

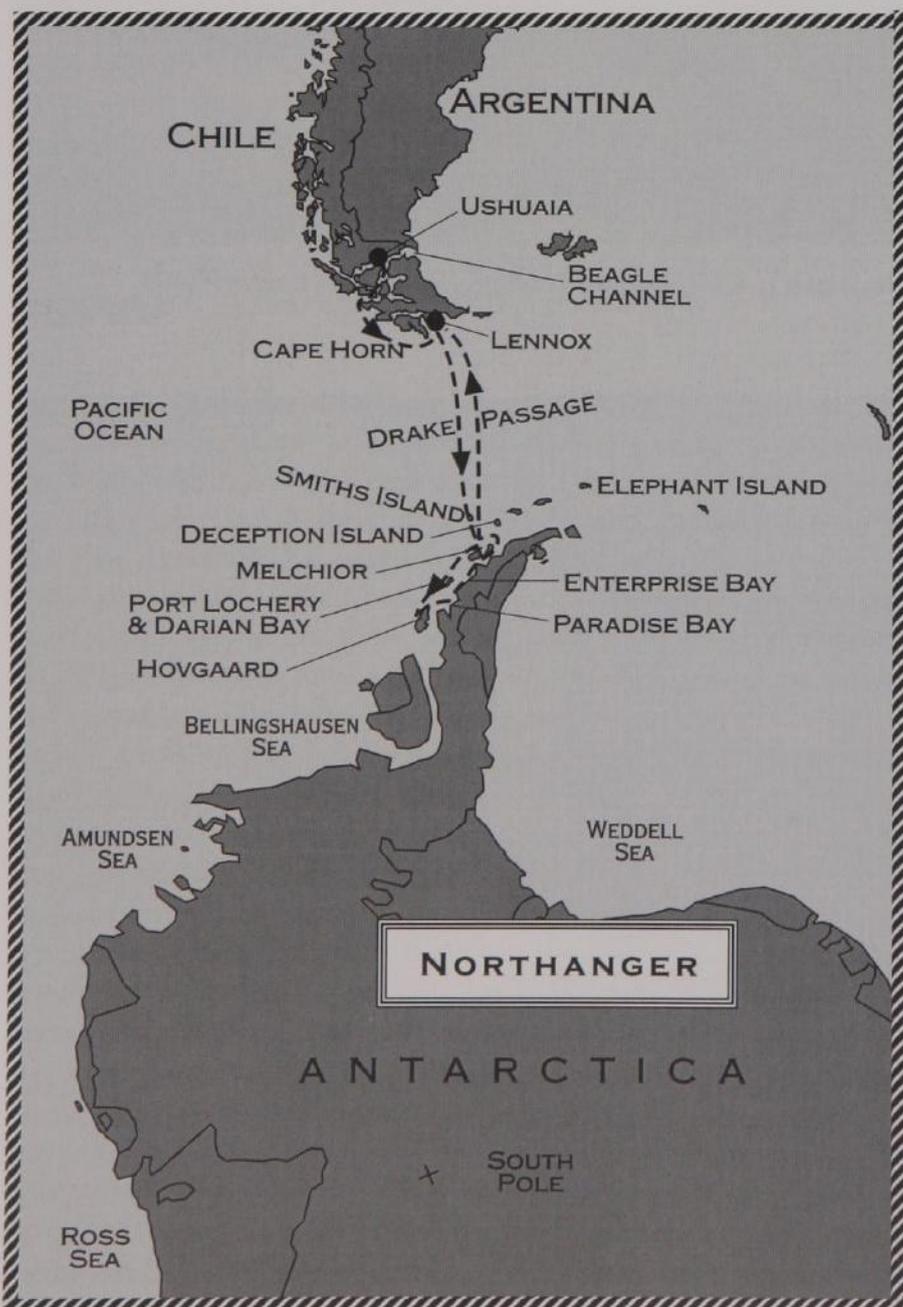
On Saturday 11th we sailed in a fresh northwesterly wind. Genoa and Mizzen but no main produced a good six knots down to Cape Horn. Complex profiles of islands and mountains made it difficult to judge distances despite good visibility.

At 1730hrs the weather maps coming in from the Chilean Navy stations predicted more gale force winds and within a very short time we were heavily reefed and heading back to the shelter of the islands behind Cape Horn. The wind rose to force nine very quickly and we were only making one or two knots to windward. In the short period of darkness we crept into Caletta Martial and laid a heavy anchor and a lot of chain just off the shore fringe of kelp. Anchor watch was the order so that despite being in a shelterd bay watches were stood on a short handed basis.

We remained storm bound for three days although two shore parties in survival suits managed to stretch their legs and get safely back aboard with more fresh water.

At last on Tuesday 14th the wind eased and forecast looked promising so that at 1800hrs we raised anchor and stood south past the Horn again. Dolphins dancing round the bow, cameras clicking as each of us was profiled passing the Horn.

Over the next few days we were enthralled by Albatross, Cape pigeons, Skuas and an infinite variety of petrels. As we made our way south the wind gradually died and the motor came more and more into use. Our watch system settled down.



Keri and Greg rotated on a six hour basis and we did two people on two hour watches between four of us so that there was always three people on watch and every fifth day one person dropped out of the watch and became "gopher" responsible for cooking and washing up but subject to keeping the watch fed was free to sleep a full night.

Early on the morning of the 18th January we sighted Smith Island our Antarctic landfall. With very little darkness and a clear sky, haze and light cloud at first obscured the 7000 foot summit that Greg on an earlier passage had been the first person to have climbed.

As we motored slowly in warm sunshine down the coast of Smith Island Greg pointed out where he had landed and climbed an ice cliff. We cracked a bottle of champagne to celebrate our arrival and it was warm enough to eat on deck. Whales blowing inshore and small bergs and brash ice appeared for the first time. A moment that will be remembered by all of us for a very long time.

The following morning we nosed into a little creek on the Melchior Islands at a disused Argentinean base and laid four warps ashore in case it blew or an iceberg decided to drift down into our hideout. The scenery was spectacular with the glaciers turning pink in the early sunrise.

Later that day I went ashore with Alan and Pat where we encountered Fur and Weddell seals lying in the sun and a colony of Chinstrap Penguins.

It was warm with a strong sun shining down into crystal clear water. I couldn't resist a very quick swim.

The next day we started further south and spent several hours in the close company of two humpback whales. Giant icebergs several miles long with flat tops slowly drifted north after breaking off nearby ice sheets. It was all indescribably beautiful and the watch system was largely forgotten as we all wanted to be on deck most of the time in case we missed some example of nature's greatness.

It is difficult to put into words the beauty of the scenery on a clear sunlit day. Rising out of a deep blue sea ranges of mountains covered in ice and snow with occasional black rocks protruding. Steep ice cliffs marking the ends of huge glaciers tumbling into the sea. The sea itself being dotted with bergs of every size and shape you can imagine ranging from vast flat topped and steep sided chunks of ice shelves that had broken adrift to old bergs that had been lashed by wind and sea rolled over and broken with fluted ribs of ice. The underwater portions of the bergs were visible though the aquamarine green of the adjoining water. Small pieces of brash ice floating sometimes haphazard, sometimes in long clusters, where they had been congregated by action of wind or tide. Soaring above the cliffs of ice and rocky foreshore sea birds darting between the shore and the sea and popping up and down like bouncing balls penguins. Then breaking the surface with a mighty puff whales, dolphins and seals popping up to add to the variety. All quite unspoilt by man.

Visibility was very good and we could see ranges of



*Northanger snugly secured in Hovgaard 24th January 2003.*

*Colin Chapman*

mountains islands and drifting bergs in every direction. At times we seemed to be motoring into a dead end and at the last moment a gap would appear between the bergs showing a passage between islands. We were threading our way down the channel towards Port Lochery, a British base where we arrived on 20th January anchoring close to a large colony of gentoo penguins who kept up a constant chatter and produce an interesting smell.

We spent many happy hours photographing them and whale bones on the shore until a small Russian liner came in to disturb our solitude and disgorge thirty or more tourists.

We decided to move to another more remote anchorage, Darian Bay where we had to feel our way in very close to the shore with our keel winched up. This proved to be a very safe and comfortable haven from where we could launch a skiing expedition. We climbed on skins for three or four hours to get a wonderful twenty-minute run back in perfect conditions. It was definitely worth bringing our skis all that way and no one fell down a crevasse so that there was no need to use the ropes and ice axes we had carried. Again the weather was kind and we had drinks on deck in the evening without having to wear more than two or three layers. The snow conditions had been nearly perfect although it had probably not snowed for several days and some of the slopes had been in bright sunshine for almost twenty hours each day.

Darian Bay demonstrated the advantages of a lifting keel as outside the bay beyond the rocky bar there were several large bergs aground which improved the shelter and because of the depth of water rendered us safe from being crushed by ice. A possible place to winter over if one was mad enough to want such an experience. Instead of twenty or more hours of daylight in winter there would be little or no daylight and solid ice all around.

Having ensured that the liner had departed, we returned to Port Lochery to visit the British base which was manned by Peter Milner and Amanda. An historic site the first British Antarctic base is now preserved by the Antarctic Heritage Fund. We bought post cards, photographed the quarters where

the scientists lived and we learnt a little about life there.

Time to go further south down through Lemaire Channel (the Kodak Crack) to Hovgaard anchorage where we again donned skis and the Fifth Man and I succeeded in getting up a mole hill to look across a sea of icebergs.

The snow was poor and the skiing difficult but well worthwhile for such a magnificent view.

Keri photographed us for the OCC journal and then we sadly turned north as time was passing and we wanted to visit so many more Peninsular anchorages.

A brisk sail with difficult navigation between rocks and icebergs brought us up to Paradise Bay. As the wind dropped and the sea calmed the reflections of the ice cliffs bergs and mountains produce a most photogenic arrival. The first anchorage proved too exposed and we the moved closer to an old Argentinean Base.

A French yacht was moored snugly at the head of the bay and had, we learned, procured fuel to get them back across the Drake from the abandoned Argentinean base nearby. Once again our lifting keel showed it's value as we wriggled into shelter. Then we stood for the first time on the Antarctic mainland I photographed the Cabin Boy and the Fifth Man for their Yacht Club, The Royal Lympington, while seals lay lazily by and penguins strutted down to their natural element, another moment to remember.

Greg and Keri were in two minds as to our next anchorage as we agitated to get to Deception. Headwinds forced us to shelter again this time in Cuverville, which proved an interesting place with another large colony of Gentoo Penguins. One evening when working ashore there collecting water under an ice cliff I had a narrow escape as a huge lump of ice broke



In company with humpback whale 20th January 2003.

*Colin Chapman*

off the cliff beside me and crashed onto the beach. If I had been ten feet to the south I would not be writing this log!

The next anchorage proved to be very interesting indeed. Enterprise bay is an old whaling station with a wrecked whaler alongside which we moored. Fur seals enticed us and the wrecks of small boats preserved by the dry cold added to the interest. It had once been an important haven for the whale hunters. Now quite deserted. Ashore amongst the wrecks of three flat bottomed fish-carrying skiffs of about twenty feet long we found several fur seals. A difficult scramble through deep snow brought us very close indeed to a fine bull who began to object to intimate photography.

Next day we laid course for Deception Island despite Keri's mounting anxiety about the impending return passage across the Drake. As the day wore on the wind headed us and conditions deteriorated with flurries of snow cutting visibility and a mounting sea. At 2030hrs Greg gave the order to put the helm down and we reluctantly abandoned our course for Deception and turned back towards Melchior.

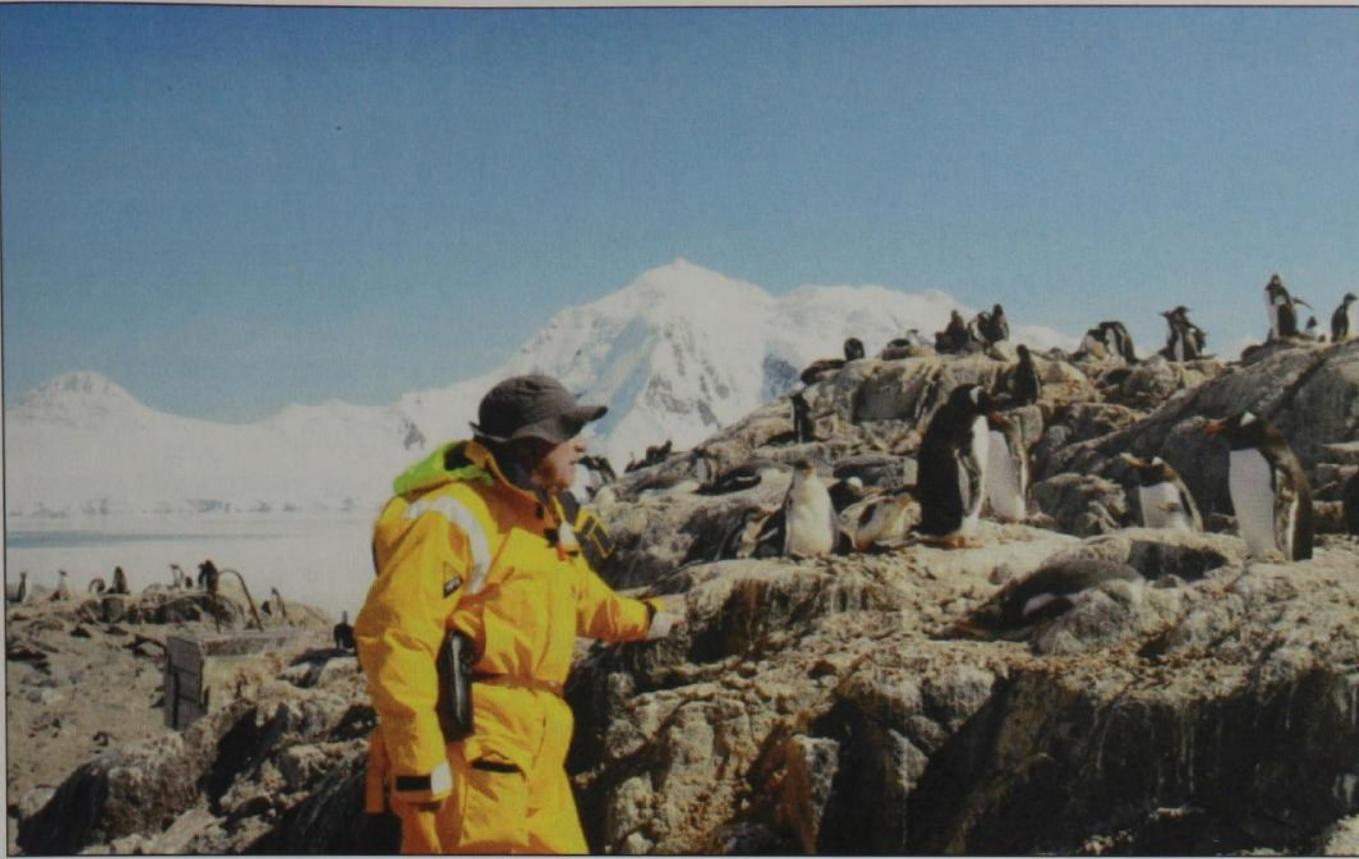
That night as it got dark the snow drifted into piles on the deck. The visibility was poor and the sea was littered with bergs and growlers. Those on watch had a hard task spotting dangers and grouping towards the end of Brabant Island where we could expect shelter. As it turned out the blow passed and we finally motored back into Melchior in bright sunshine to rest and prepare the ship for the Drake.

As it happened the Drake proved docile even though the wind tended to be on the nose and some noisy tacking disturbed my sleep on my night off as 'gopher'. Throughout the passage we had



Northanger in Melchior Argentinian base 19th January 2003.

*Colin Chapman,*



Chatting to my friends the Gentoo penguins 21st January 2003.

Colin Chapman

eaten very well on Argentinean Beef and Patagonian lamb and our fruit and vegetables lasted out in the cold temperatures.

The passage ended with a glorious reach past Lennox into the Beagle Channel.

Celebrations at Porto Williams preceded the last leg back to Ushuaia.

It was a surprise to find how tired we were when the adrenaline stopped pumping and the luxurious beds in the Las Malvinas hostel remained static all night.

The OARs rested having logged 1562 miles through icy waters.

The subsequent adventures in the Brazilian jungle are a tale for another day.

**David Park writes about some gentle cruising on *Alys* in the Algarve and SW Spain**

We wintered *Alys* ashore last year in the new yard at Lagos in the western Algarve. The yard is called Sopromar and is run by two pleasant young men. There is a good chandlery, loo and shower, so you can live aboard and do your own fitting out. We launched in early May and retired to Lagos marina (no hardship—a lovely place) to await the arrival of our crew. Jack Wolfe (ICC) and his friend John Pierse, who lives in Faro, joined us aboard for lunch one day and there was much merriment.

Our crew Aidan Tyrrell (ICC) arrived in mid-May having hitched a ride south with Ed Wheeler (ICC) in *Witchcraft of Howth* and there was more merriment for several days. Hilary, Aidan and I then wandered slowly east, day sailing and visiting many of the places we had visited over the past few years. We went southeast as far as Puerto Santa Maria in the bay of Cadiz where there is a fine yacht club with its own pontoons. The town is a grand place to buy sherry in one of the numerous bodegas – €6 for two litres! We took the local ferry across, for the day, to the old city of Cadiz and had a bus tour and lunch there. The bay of Cadiz is a windy area and it certainly lived up to its reputation.

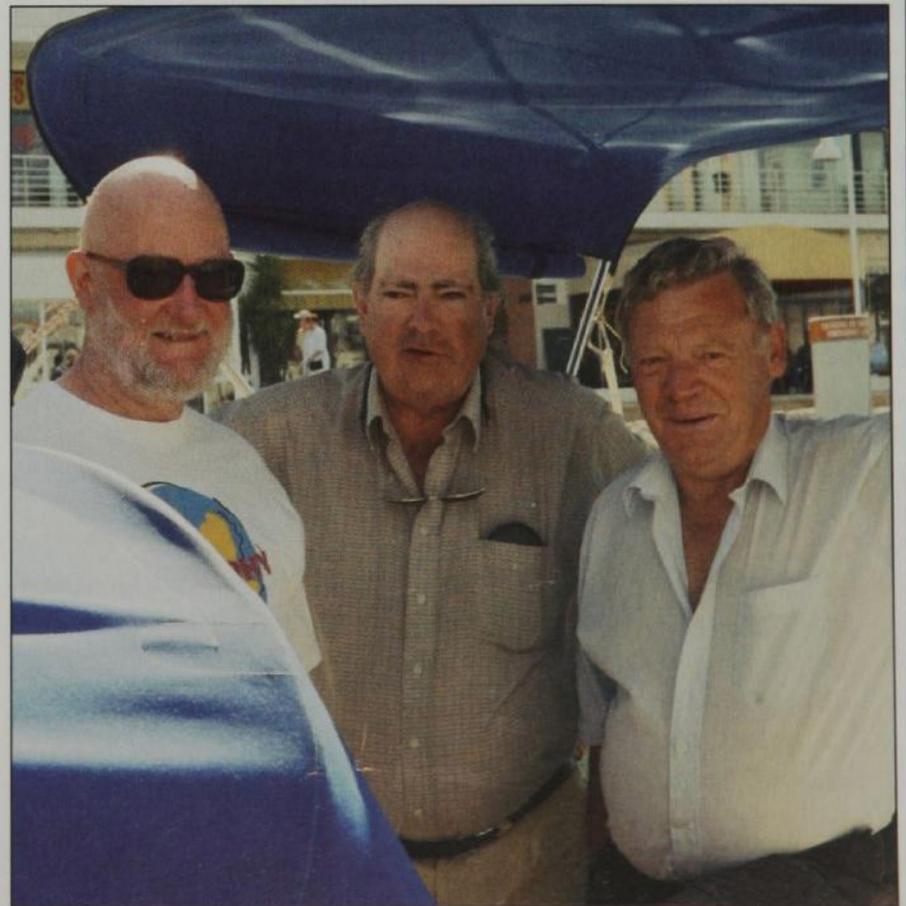
In early June Aidan left us in Vilamoura for home and we were joined by old colleagues and sailing friends Stephen and Lesley Garvin from Armagh. We went up the River Guadiana, which separates Spain and Portugal, 20 miles to Sanlucar de Guadiana; a small town on the Spanish side. We had a long climb up to the old fort here. Again we repeated quite a few of our previous ports in Spain and Portugal notably El Rompido in Spain which has some interesting pilotage to enter and one exceptional restaurant “La Patera”.

At Ayamonte, at the entrance to the River Guadiana, we picked up old friends from Bangor, James and Maxine McConnell. We again took them upriver but this time to Alcoutim on the Portugese side. After some more gentle cruising we returned to Ayamonte to watch a spectacular bullfight and leave our friends off.

Hilary and I wended our way back slowly to Portugal and left the boat for two months in the new marina at Portimao.

We returned to Faro in September and John Pierse kindly put us up for the night and then ran us to the boat. My eldest son Michael and his wife Liz joined us for four days and we anchored for a night in the lagoon at Alvor; a lovely spot with a reasonably unspoilt small town. We then returned to Lagos marina and the family departed by train to Faro. Cormac and Barbara McHenry (ICC) were here on *Island Life* and we pleasantly socialised together on several evenings.

In late September we lifted *Alys* out at Sopromar for the winter and flew home. A gentle summer’s cruising and all in all covering approximately 600 miles.



ICC Rally, Lagos, Portugal. Ed. Wheeler, Aidan Tyrrell, David Park.

# 'The rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain'

## – *Daedalus*

Tim Barry

The original plan for the summer of 2002 had been to introduce our yacht, *Daedalus*, to the delights and beauty of the west coast of Ireland. *Daedalus* is a Dehler 41CR built in 2000 in Germany and fitted out in Zaandam in The Netherlands. She is a comfortable, cruising sloop equipped with a fully battened mainsail, a self-tacking furling foresail, a gennaker for the more enthusiastic of our crew, and a Yanmar 48HP engine to power her if all else fails. Although she was purchased with cruising in mind, she moves at a reasonable speed under both sail and power. During 2001, we collected *Daedalus* in Zaandam and sailed her to our mooring in Schull, Co. Cork.

There is not much that can be written in praise of the 2002 summer. I invited Clare O'Reilly from Wicklow, and Sheila Gale and Martin Hopton from England to join us at the beginning of August to impress them with the wonders of our unspoilt Connemara coast. I did not have a specific aim for a cruise, as I believe that cruising plans always need to be adaptable. However, I had hoped to reach the new harbour on Tory Island, as we had not visited that unique and barren island for a number of years.

The log for the first two weeks of August refers to perfect Irish summer conditions of fog, mist and rain, with the occasional gale. Still we had struggled north, but made it no further than Achill Sound before we started to run out of time. Clare had caught a bus from Roundstone to Dublin on the way up, and on 13th August, we waved farewell to Sheila and Martin who caught the ferry from Kilronan on Inishmore to Rossaveal, en route for Shannon, and their return to England.

This left me with a crew of my wife, Judie, and our youngest daughter, Sophie, to contemplate the future. We had seen little sun for two weeks and the forecast indicated that the next gale, along with heavy rain, was imminent. Sitting out a gale in Kilronan Bay was not appealing, and the attraction of a bath at home was overwhelming.

How could we make this dream come true?

A fast sail up the bay to lock into Galway harbour at high water, and the hire of a car, ensured that we were at home for that luxurious bath that evening. Hopefully the next time we visit Galway the planned marina will have been built and the water treatment plant on Mutton Island will also be finished. In August 2002, there was still a lot to be done.

**THE PLAN.** Five days, and two gales, later we returned to continue the cruise. For the weekend we were joined by another daughter, Emma, our son, Edward, and a friend, Zita Dennehy, amongst others. The lock gates at Galway opened at noon and as soon as we put to sea the sun appeared at once. Not only did it shine, but it was warm as well!

A few bottles of wine encouraged a lively and imaginative discussion. It became clear that if the skipper would prefer to sail in better climatic conditions, a crew would be available, willing and able to assist in any related project! Plans were instantly laid. Emma had a cooking engagement to honour, Edward was entitled to a holiday and Zita was a free-lance gardener – and nobody would want a gardener in September!

*Daedalus* sped south to Schull, and phone calls over the following week confirmed that my crew remained enthusiastic and anxious to join me in crossing the Bay of Biscay at the beginning of September.

We foregathered at the Waterside restaurant in Schull for a final and excellent Irish dinner, before waving goodbye to Judie and casting off at 2200 on Saturday 31st August. By 2330 we had returned! The steering was worryingly loose and the autohelm refused to function. In desperation I called on Edmund Kruger, the owner of Rossbrin Boatyard, for assistance. We did not know that this Sunday morning was the morning directly after the Schull Harbour Sailing Club's laying up dinner – loud noises and sudden movements were not appreciated! He was not able to solve the problem with the autohelm, but spent a long, hot Sunday dismantling our steering gear and tightening the offending bolts. His valiant efforts are still much appreciated.

In order to save precious time, it was decided to head straight for Cork, where the agents for autohelm are Dunmast Ltd, and to be there for first thing the next morning. We cast off at 1600 and anchored in Roberts Cove, two miles south of Roche's Point, at 0100 on the Monday morning to wait for the flood tide into Cork Harbour. Colm of Dunmast had been warned by Judie to expect us, and appeared as soon as we tied up to Penrose Quay, in the middle of the City. A failed computer chip was diagnosed, and as there was not a new one in stock, we were lent a second-hand replacement to act as a temporary solution. Judie would be able to bring the new chip with her to Spain by plane. The service from Dunmast was excellent and, after a pub stop at The Bosun in Monkstown for a late lunch, we were finally able to depart.

**THE PASSAGE.** Our progress in the harbour may have appeared somewhat erratic to the outsider, as we calibrated the autohelm with a slow 360° manoeuvre off the Spit Bank. At 1700, Roche's Point was abeam and we settled into our sea-going routine. Throughout the trip we were to have a gentle, following breeze, and, as the objective was to get as far south as possible within our two weeks time span, we motored whenever the speed fell below four knots. Sadly this was a regular occurrence, although in light airs we were also able to set the gennaker for extended periods, and certain crewmembers were able to enjoy the uninterrupted sunshine on the foredeck. Watch keeping on beautiful clear and sunny days did not prove to be a problem, and we split the nights into four two-hour sessions starting after the evening meal had been finally cleared up by around 2300.

At 50°N we passed into UK waters, approximately 110 miles west of Lands End. Within an hour we were 'attacked' by a plane belonging, we assume, to UK customs. This flew out of the sun at mast height a mere cable astern – one solitary pass and the plane disappeared back to the east towards England. Were they searching for drug smugglers or asylum seekers? Luckily, we were going in the wrong direction to hold their attention for too long.

We had always planned that Judie would join us as soon as

we could contact her with details of our landfall. The magic of the mobile came into its own at 0230 on Friday, September 6th, when Spanish Telecom came into range. Judie may not have appreciated this early morning call, but the next day was able to organise a seat on a plane to Oporto. From there she took a one and a half hour taxi ride north to Bayona, where we could meet her later that evening. For the last night of our Biscay passage, we were escorted by a school of phosphorescent dolphins dancing alongside us. Throughout our passage, accompanying dolphins had been a continual delight.



Ouch! Zita This is going to hurt.

**N.W. SPAIN.** Cabo Finisterre was abeam at 0630, and at 1400 we dropped anchor off the Playa Arena de las Rodas on the Islas Cies, just in time for a late lunch at the beach restaurant. Here we met by chance the Labour T.D., Michael D. Higgins, and, as the leader of his party, Ruairi Quinn, had recently announced his retirement, we urged him as to why he was not a nominee in the forthcoming election for a new leader: a wistful and dreamy look came over him. Perhaps the interrogation was not what he expected on his summer holidays! He was, however, more forthcoming on the subject of the state of the harbour in his Galway constituency – a matter on which we were both authorities!

We tied onto the refuelling pontoon at the Monte-Real Club de Yates at Bayona at 1930, at precisely the same time that Judie arrived in her taxi from Oporto, and just as the King of Spain was handing out the prizes for the local regatta. After the marina manager had recovered from the excitement to allot us a berth, we repaired to town for a celebratory dinner (without the King)! This was followed by a glass or two of Carlos III, the local brandy. The waitress produced a brand new bottle which we demolished before the golden oldies retired happily to their bunk (under the watchful eyes of the Spanish Secret Service), leaving the young to meet up with the crew of *Norvatis*, recently arrived from Kinsale.

The following morning, Judie and I went ashore for breakfast, blissfully unaware that some of the crew were still AWOL. The staff of a local nightclub had left and securely locked up at closing time, leaving one crew member happily asleep in the loo! The Guardia Civil were called in to assist in the 'breakout' and crew returned with severely throbbing heads to very little sympathy! It was obviously desirable to leave before another night of debauchery and in order to protect all livers from more permanent damage. When some semblance of sobriety occurred later in the afternoon, we departed with the intention of making an overnight passage.

**PORTUGAL.** This plan was thwarted upon crossing into Portuguese waters when, to paraphrase William Wordsworth,

... all at once I saw a crowd,  
[The flags of hosts of lobsterpots];  
Beside the [yacht, among the seas]  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle in the Milky Way,

They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margins of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A [sailor] could not but (dismay),  
In such (solemn) company:  
I gazed – and gazed – but little thought  
[The panic] the show to me had brought.

It was dusk, we were motoring and it was clear that the mass of lines and pots was incompatible with a revolving propeller. We changed our plan and aimed for the nearby harbour at Viana do Castelo. A dredger circling as it worked in the entrance complicated our entry. We anchored east of the breakwater and to the west of the No.2 port buoy, away from the dredger's manoeuvres and out of the main channel into the town.

Given that both the dredger and fishing boats caused rolling throughout the night, there was no difficulty in making an early start at first light. Our aim for the day was to reach Oporto before nightfall, were the concerted attack on our livers could recommence. We enjoyed a boisterous entrance to the Douro with the help of four knots of tide. The rocks and sandbanks at the entrance leave no room for error but once these are negotiated, the three-mile trip up the river to the town centre is a delight.

Oporto, like Cork, is another European city obeying the edict from Brussels to sort out its waste water system. As a result the miles of quays resembled a building site. Space on the quayside is limited by the requirements of commercial traffic, including ferries and river cruisers, and there was only one space available for visiting yachts, unfortunately occupied by a smaller, 35ft British vessel. The occupants, however, seemed content to remain alongside the quay with us outside them, which was a bonus as the rise and fall at that point of the river is over four metres. There was time enough to explore the city, and, even though it was a Sunday we were able to sample the produce for which it is famous, before dining ashore. Once again the young were left to discover the nightspots and judging by the inharmonious renderings on their return at 0430,



*Daedalus* becalmed.

they were not disappointed with what they found.

Clearly I was not going to have a lively crew in the morning and they were still nursing sore heads when I took advantage of the slack water at low tide to depart. The distance to Cabo de Sao Vicente, the southwest corner of Portugal is 260 miles and, apart from a brief lunch stop in Cascais at the mouth of the river Tagus, we covered this non-stop over the next forty-eight hours. We dropped anchor for a leisurely lunch and swim on the Wednesday afternoon, under the fort in the Ensenada de Sagres, our first port of call on the Algarve.

By coincidence another daughter, Joanna, was on holiday thereabouts and came on board for the next few days with her friend, Ciara Matthews. That night was spent in the marina at Lagos, and the next day we relaxed with a gentle sail to Alvor, a further six

miles along the coast. This has an interesting, unmarked, but dredged channel through the sand-banks, which leads to a fairly small and crowded anchorage. We noted both on the way in and out that there were plenty of yachts ready to play 'follow my leader'. In hindsight, this appeared to be the sensible option, as they were able to take avoiding action when we stopped suddenly on the sand! Alvor is one of the prettier villages on the Algarve, but even here it is necessary to ignore the adjacent high-rises of a purpose built resort.

Our fortnight was coming to an end and Edward was the first to leave. To shorten his trip to Faro Airport, we thought that a pleasant sail up the six-mile Canal de Faro was warranted, and this time we were assisted most of the way by an efficient buoyage system. These aids failed however at the channel's end where an unmarked spit extends into its middle. The anchorage had limited attraction, being crowded, over half a mile by outboard motor to the 'Porta Nova' town quay, and under the flight path of Faro's very busy airport. It was also susceptible to the wash of passing fishing boats.

On Saturday 14th. September, we awoke to find that we were enveloped in thick fog. The return to Vilamoura, where we intended to leave *Daedalus* until the half-term break, was facilitated by one of the wonders of modern technology, through our chart plotter. This removed a little of the fear factor of navigating along an otherwise featureless coastline in such poor conditions.

Vilamoura marina served its purpose, as it is huge, safe and has every possible facility. We had no difficulty in arranging a berth for as long as we wanted and it is an ideal marina for access to the airport at Faro, with direct flights to both Cork and Dublin several times a week.

Daughters Brigid and Sophie, as well as their friend, Ashley Holland, returned with us on Saturday, October 27th. I was quite relaxed to hire a car for the week if the conditions proved unfavourable, and to use it to explore the hinterland of the Algarve, whilst using *Daedalus* as a floating caravan. Luckily, we were blessed with a perfect, 'Indian Summer'. The usual shopping for bikinis, sun glasses, etc. delayed our departure and we progressed only as far as the harbour entrance at Faro by that evening. Not willing to repeat our trip up the Canal de Faro, we anchored in the eastern, Olhao channel, behind the



Naomi, Edward, Brigid, Judie, Sophie and Ashley at the Club Nautico Seville.

Cabo de Santa Maria lighthouse. This proved to be another unsuccessful anchorage as the channel was used throughout the night by fishing boats passing into and out of the busy port of Olhao.

Matters improved the following day as we progressed to the Spanish/Portuguese border at the Rio Guadiana. The pilot book recommends that arrival be carefully planned to arrive at slack water as there are serious overfalls at the entrance, particularly when the ebb is running. We could observe breaking seas in all directions as we approached from the west, which was not surprising as we had arrived two hours earlier than planned due to a faster than expected trip down the coast. However, there appeared to be plenty of water as we approached the first channel-marking buoy. From here we could get a good view of the entrance and the whole channel, and felt brave enough to attempt it. The entrance was exciting and not for the faint-hearted, but was perfectly safe and, as expected, the depth did not fall below 4 metres. Just up the river from the entrance there is a marina in the Portuguese town of Vila Real de Santo Antonio. This marina has a narrow entrance and is subject to strong tidal crosscurrents. Another marina has been recently built in the old fishermen's basin at Ayamonte, on the Spanish bank, which will no doubt be a fine marina when complete, but at present the facilities provided in portacabins are merely adequate.

**S.W. SPAIN.** The Rio Guadiana is navigable for about twenty-five miles upstream from Ayamonte, but there is a suspension bridge two miles north of the entrance, which, the pilot records has a clearance of just twenty metres at high water (twenty-two at low water). As our mast is twenty-one metres high, I was not inclined to risk potential damage to the electrical equipment at the top. However, subsequently we met a German, who has owned a riverside farm upstream for many years, and he was adamant that the bridge was built with a minimum clearance of twenty-four metres. It is supposed to be a beautiful river upstream and therefore would be worth visiting on another occasion, if our German friend's facts prove correct.

The following morning I carefully checked the tide tables to ensure that we would leave at the perfect time. The morning was calm, the water slack, and the neap tides suggested a



Zita and Emma gambling on the Bay of Biscay

trouble free exit. Nonetheless overfalls extended for three miles from the estuary of the river. After a night at the marina in Mazagon we proceeded east to the mouth of the Rio Guadalquivir. Here there is a dredged channel five miles long at the entrance, stretching from the El Perro buoy to the wonderfully named town of Bonanza.

A large proportion of the gold and other treasures looted from the Aztecs in the 16th. Century by the Spanish conquistadors was landed at Seville, at the time possibly the most important and richest city in Spain. For the inhabitants of Bonanza to partake in this wealth they only needed the occasional ship to be wrecked on the rocks at the river mouth. Of course, I would not suggest that they encouraged this activity, but the effects of this occasional bounty has ensured that the town's name remains a permanent feature of our vocabulary to this day, almost 500 years later.

High tide at Seville, which is a further fifty miles up river, is some four and a half hours after



Our phosphorescent friends

Bonanza, giving a favourable current for about nine hours on the flood. There are just fifteen navigational buoys on this whole stretch of river, and the general instructions are to remain in mid-channel and not to cut any corners. Although there are apparently numbered beacons on each bank, they were not of much use as they are frequently hidden by untrimmed foliage. The river is also extensively used by commercial shipping going to or coming from the industrial ports at Seville, and a close watch needs to be kept for these, as they have right of way along the river due to their size and limited manoeuvrability.

We realised that without the certainty of seeing the lit beacons we would be unable to progress up the river after dark. By dusk we had covered twelve miles and a look out was posted for a suitable anchorage. A bend in the river where net fishermen were moored on the starboard shore gave us a restful night at anchor, under perfectly clear skies with no nearby lighting to interrupt the perfect night sky. The current was again in our favour at dawn and so at first light we weighed anchor to arrive at the lock below Seville by midday.

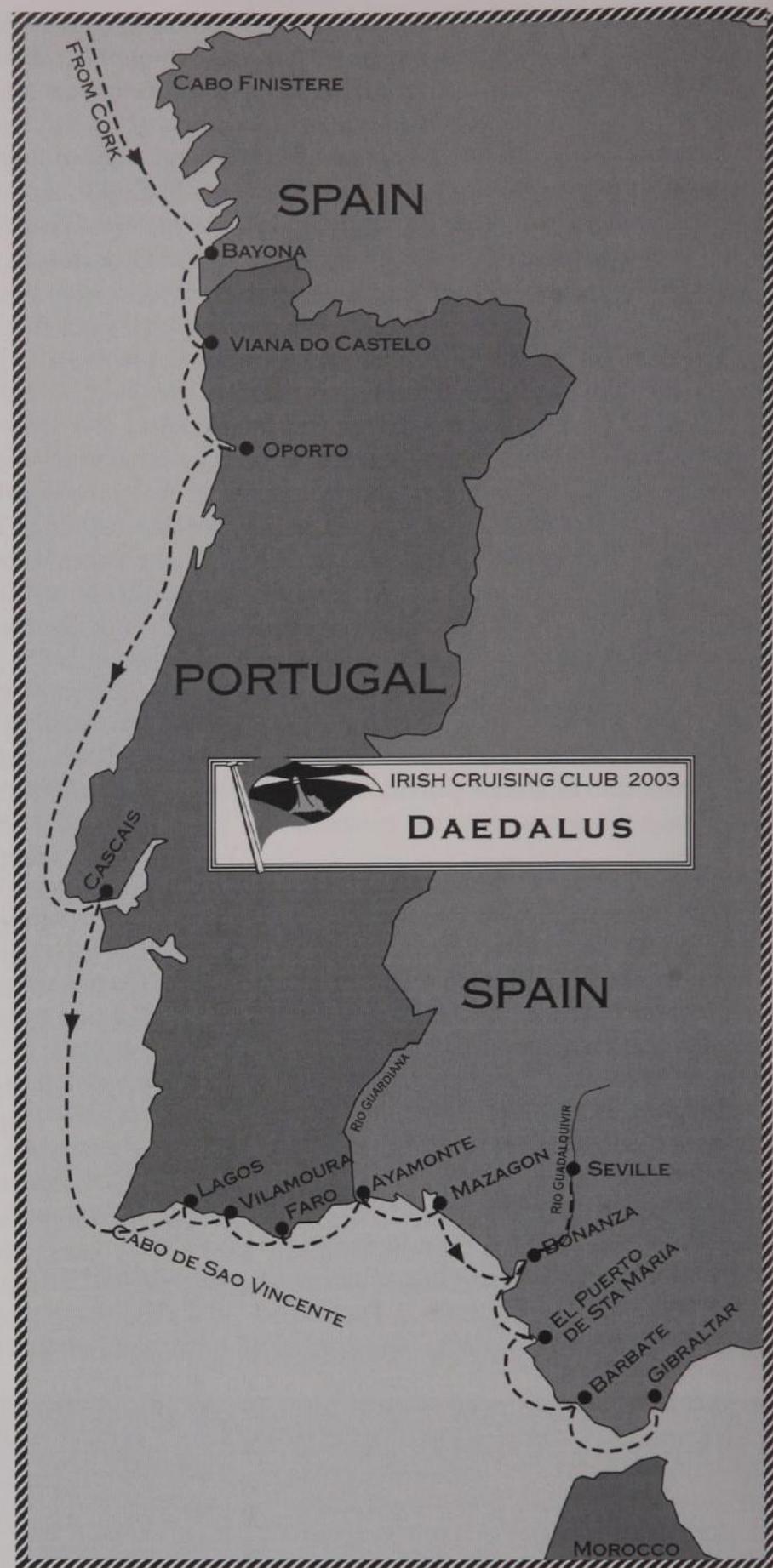
The main attraction of the Guadalquivir river is its highly varied bird life particularly on the lower reaches where it passes through one of Spain's most famous national parks, La Donana. Further upstream, it meanders through farmland with the occasional farm building, and cattle and wild horses, but little sign of villages or human life. The occasional commercial ship on the river just served to highlight the wildness of the surrounding countryside.

We set the engine at 2,400rpm and the total time for the 50 mile passage from Bonanza was just six hours. When returning with an even faster flowing ebb and the same revs., the passage time was reduced to five hours. The lock at Seville operates for pleasure craft every three hours, and once negotiated, there is the choice of an adjacent marina, which is about three miles out of the city in a semi-industrial wasteland, or the marina of the Club Nautico, within a mile of the city centre. To make use of the facilities of this latter marina, it was necessary to wait for the opening of the Puente de las Delicias, which occurs twice daily at 0800 and 2000hrs.

We were made most welcome by the club although it caters for fewer than thirty yachts, and must quickly fill in the peak season. It is used more as a 'Country Club' by the Sevillenos, and has extensive other facilities, including rowing, canoeing, dinghy sailing, as well as other non nautical activities such as tennis courts, swimming pools, restaurants and bars. Many of the other visiting yachts were live-aboards, who had chosen to overwinter there, some with a view to reserving a prime position for the following season.

We had arrived on October 31st, and had hoped for a major 'All Saints Day' fiesta, but in this city the major fiestas are celebrated either side of Easter. Seville is nowadays a major university and tourist city, as well as being the capital and major city of the region of Andalucia. Thus it boasts a large variety of shops, restaurants, and bars, and even has a bull ring with a museum of bullfighting for those with an interest in blood sports! The city also has a vibrant street life, evidenced by a mini-fiesta of street music and theatre when we visited. For history lovers, it has the third largest cathedral in Christendom, with a bell tower which was originally the minaret of a mosque; and a mass of old narrow streets and buildings particularly in the 'Alhambra' district, the old Moorish part of the city. From Seville, Sophie and Ashley departed to return to their own academy of learning, but crew numbers were maintained when Edward returned with Naomi Godkin to join us for the next leg of the journey.

After three days we were sad to leave Seville, and checked that the bridge would open as expected at 2000. In theory, the



lock two miles downstream should have opened an hour later, but as there was no sign of life and no response on either the RT or the mobile phone, we tied onto the pontoon of the adjacent marina for the night. We cast off before dawn to arrive for the first lock opening at 0700. En passant, in the lock, we noted that *White Heather* (ICC) had advertised her visit in 1999. Unfortunately, we were not similarly equipped to add our signature to the graffiti!

We caught the first of the ebb, which carried us rapidly down river accompanied by a enormous amount of flotsam. This carried us as far as Bonanza, where we anchored for lunch before bucking the flood for the last few miles out to sea. We were in good time to continue down the coast to the Bahia de Cadiz and spent the night there on the hammerhead of one of the pontoons of the Real Club Nautico at El Puerto de Santa Maria.

This is the port from which the produce of Jerez is exported and the sherry bodegas still line the harbour. History relates that, in the sixteenth century, the English were unable to wreak

havoc on the port of Cadiz because the sailors found the liquor in this town and drank themselves to a standstill! With the record of my crew, I was fearful that history would repeat itself! I need not have worried: sherry proved not to be their favourite tipple.

At Cabo Trafalgar, twenty miles south of Cadiz, a cork popped from a bottle of champagne and a toast to the 'immortal memory' was drunk. We spent that night in the vast under-utilised marina at Barbate and lunched at anchor the next day off the Cabo Tarifa, the most southerly point in Spain, and indeed continental Europe. From here we progressed to our final destination of Gibraltar.

There are three marinas in Gibraltar and we chose Queensway Quay purely on the basis that it is furthest from the runway. At the beginning of November there is a large transient population especially of yachts en route to the Caribbean. We left *Daedalus* afloat there for the remainder of the winter. Coincidentally, we had arrived in Gibraltar on referendum day, when the population of twenty thousand were being asked whether they would welcome joint sovereignty in the future between the U.K. and Spain. No doubt our own politicians would be envious of the electorate's 99% rejection of this proposal on an admirable 80% turnout at the polls!

Throughout our trip in the autumn of 2002, we had enjoyed uninterrupted sunshine in Portugal and Spain, but to the north of us conditions were very different. Flooding was devastating northern Spain and much of western and central Europe. Indeed Ireland suffered the wettest October since records began,

proving that the decision to head south was not mistaken. Clearly Bernard Shaw knew what he was talking about when he wrote 'the rain in Spain stays mainly on the plain'!

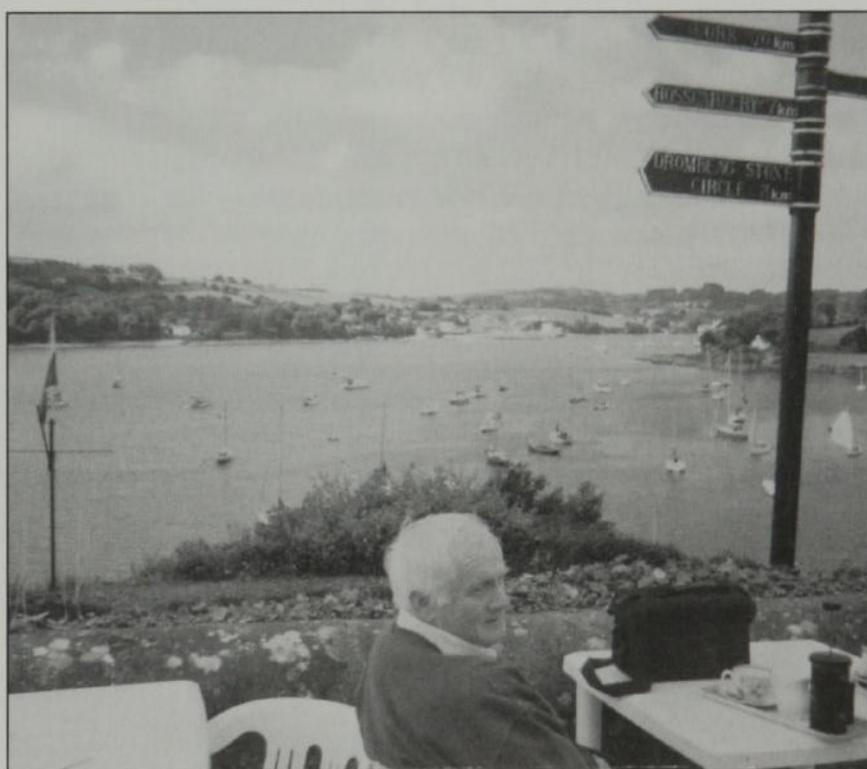
	Distances		Engine
	Miles	Hours	hours
Schull/Roberts Cove	51	9	9
Roberts Cove/Cork/Monkstown	21	4	4
Monkstown/Bayona	590	93	38
Bayona/Viana do Castelo	25	4	4
Viana do Castelo/Oporto	42	7	3
Oporto/Cascais/Lagos	270	46	35
Lagos/Alvor	6	2	1
Alvor/Faro	43	7	2
Faro/Vilamoura	21	4	4
Vilamoura/Capo de Santa Maria	14	3	2
Capo de Santa Maria/Ayamonte	32	7	3
Ayamonte/Mazagon	34	8	5
Mazagon/Sevilla	73	13	8
Sevilla/El Puerto de Santa Maria	58	11	8
El Puerto de Santa Maria/Barbate	35	6	5
Barbate/Gibraltar	31	6	6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1346</b>	<b>230</b>	<b>137</b>

### Leonard Shiel writes of *Gay Gannet's* celebration cruise to West Cork

Forty years ago, *Gay Gannet* a Sterling, was built in Brixham, Devon. Twenty five years ago we became the proud owners. To celebrate these two events, and indeed our own forty

years and more of sailing together, we took her back to West Cork for five and a half weeks of sheer pleasure, the highlight of which was the Glandore Classic Regatta, a unique event in the sailing calendar. A committee of great talent and enthusiasm create an unforgettable week. "Its like a children's party, everyone goes home with a prize! " Someone commented. As we stood on the tiny pier in this truly beautiful place, we overheard two children chatting "It's the Queens boat" one said. "Yea, but I don't think She's on it", the other replied. Looking towards Adam and Eve, it was no bad guess! *Isros*, the mother ship of the Fife Cutter the *Solway Maid* lay at anchor. *Clio*, the other Fife Sloop was also anchored near by. These magnificent yachts were quite at home among the many other boats in this spectacular harbour. The variety was endless. Ketches, Yawls, Sloops, Cutters, Cork One Designs. Some loners, like the Long Island Mackerel Boat, the Clyde Honeybee, (not unlike our Sterling) or the Falmouth Oyster Dredger. Six Hare Island Sloops. And with all that the committee were hosting the Howth 17's National Championship! !

Memories? The full fleet sail past on Sunday – all colour and excitement. Fuchias and ferns. The warm wall outside The Glandore Inn and Hayes Bar, bright morning, noon or sunset! Fireworks and dancing there with Rockin' Gerry where grown men and women became teenagers, and everyone knew the songs. Seafood and steaks in the Glandore Inn. The people, the welcome. We could go on and on! And



"This says it all." The Skipper, Glandore 2003.

for the rest of the month we did indeed do so, meandering as far as Castletownbere and all places in between, connecting with family here and there. Lawrence Cove, Mizen, Crookhaven, Cape Clear, Sherkin, Schull, Baltimore, Long Island. Back to Kinsale, Cork Harbour, Crosshaven and East Ferry where thoughts of home reluctantly crossed our minds. Waterford Harbour and another fireworks display eased the pain of departure. Pretty Kilmore Quay, familiar Arklow, and home. Once again, our beloved *Gay Gannet* had taken us to paradise and back.

# Exploring The Balearic Islands

## Tony Toher

Temperature 27° C; sun 12hr/d; wind NE 3/4; no tides; no currents – a daydream? No, the Balearic Islands in the autumn : the holiday of a lifetime.

I chartered a Beneteau Oceanis 36 out of Ca'n Pastilla and with friends John Somers, Frank Callanan and Eugene Gleeson and set off on Sept 12th – destination Isla Cabrera, 18 n.m. SE of Palma, a nature reserve under Military Control. Permits must be obtained in advance and vessels may only berth at the fixed moorings provided. (Minor details: blew out mainsail clew and auto helm belt kaput.)

Virtually a deserted island, Cabrera is unique in the busy Mediterranean area, a tiny garrison, one small Cantina where Hector, (an immigrant – from Argentina,) serves delicious toasted bocadillos and vino ad lib. Steep rough tracks allow exploration of the island and its unique maquis-type flora. A monument commemorates thousands of French Prisoners of the Peninsula War who were left here to starve to death.

Sept 14, Our 24hr permit has expired so we return to Palma. Royal Yacht Club's 1000 berth full but we are allowed to tie up outside the splendid clubhouse. Very splendid, but the barman shut up the empty bar when he saw us!

Next stops are Andratx, a dull place and Puerto Soller, a superb landlocked harbour. Taxi to the delightful mountain village of Deja (missed out Valdemossa) F. and E. dep. 18th on the quaint tramway to Palma and home.

Sept 20. John and self make a wonderful passage along the 27nm of 3000ft cliffs of the NW coast, passing the incredible Torriente de Pareis. Entered port of Cuitadela, Menorca by night (58nm 9½hr)

Our next destination was Mahón (Mao, Mallorquina, both

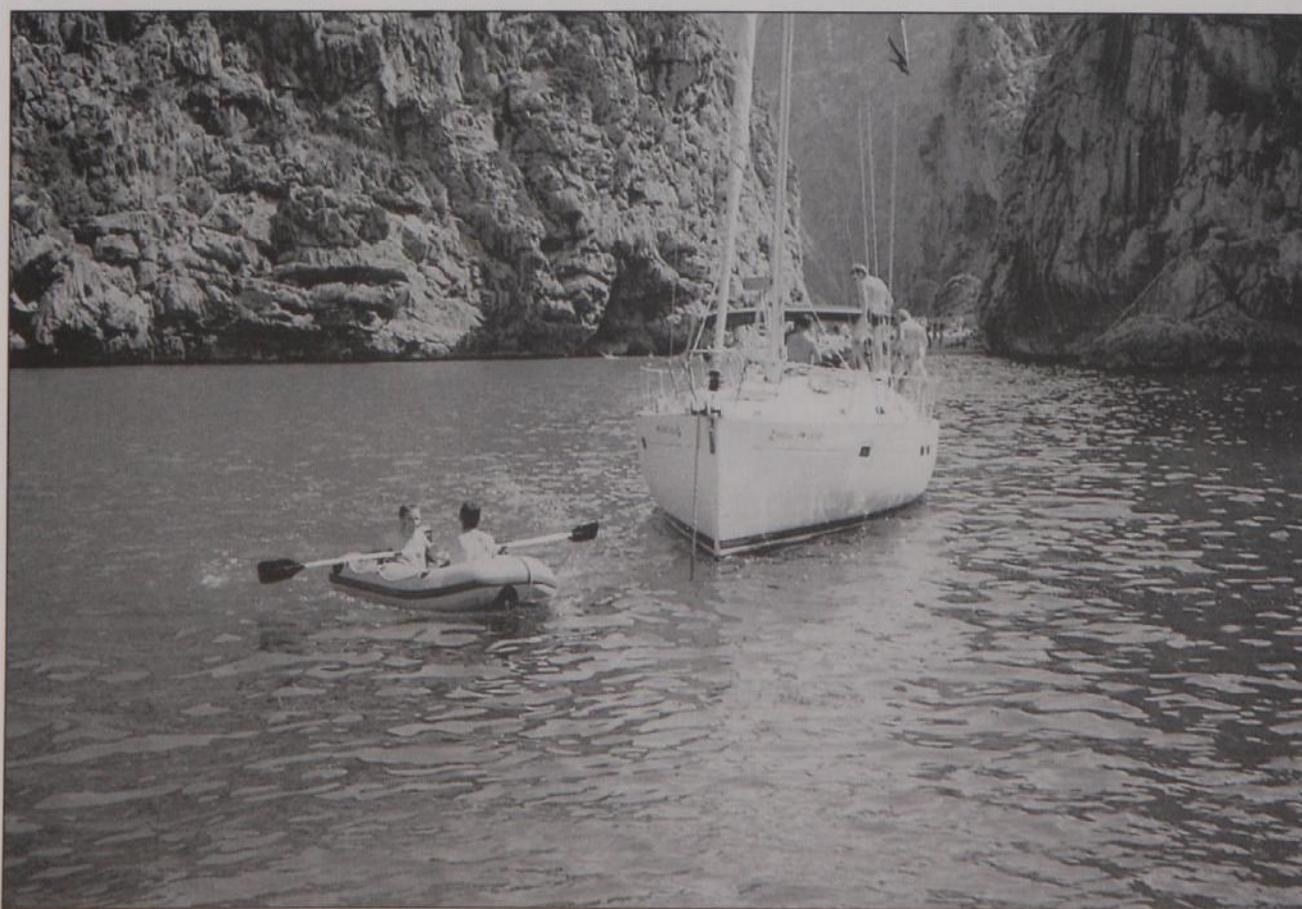


Crew, John Somers, Frank Callaghan S.C. and Eugene Gleeson at the Cantina on Isla Cabrera.

pron. maungh) one of the great seaports of the world. A Royal Navy base for 100 years the city has many reminders of this period, not least mayonnaise sauce. We berthed stern-to along a main street and it was amazing to see gigantic cruise ships passing a few meters abaft our stern in 20m of water and apparently doing a hand-brake turn! Truly a wonderful harbour.

The archaeology of Menorca is hugely interesting especially since DNA tells us we carry their genes. Colonised c. 4000 BC there are traces of the mysterious 'sea peoples' who left monuments called talayots(towers), taulas (t-shaped standing stones and navetas (tombs like the Galerus Oratory)

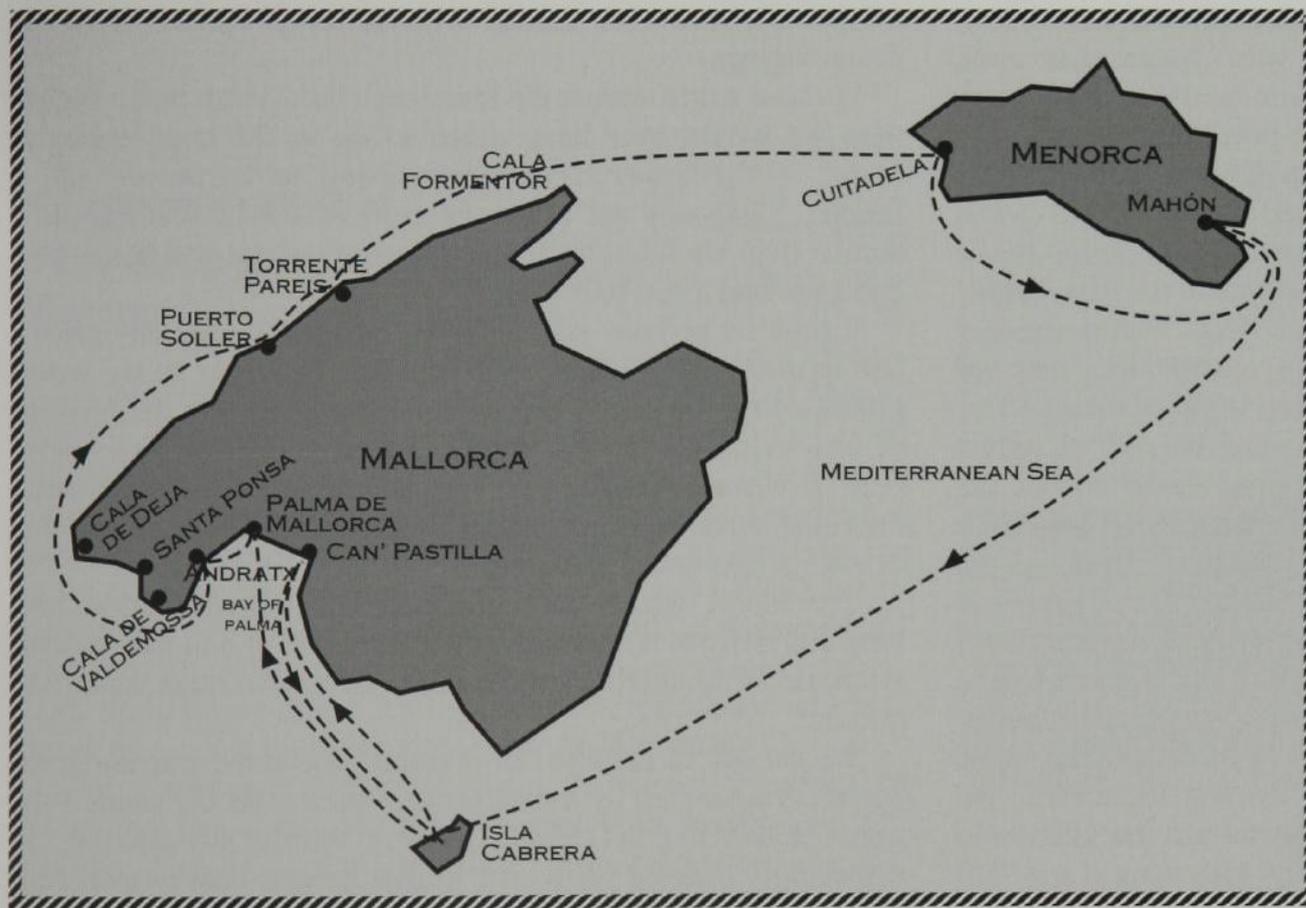
Our time ebbs away: we cannot forget our enchanted isle and decide to return to Cabrera, an 86 n.m. passage. John and I love night navigation and we dep. at 22.00 hrs. We con our way thru the great harbour, tensely watchful, communicating softly like commandos on a raid. Trouble strikes as we 'take our departure' from the light on Aire Id, 5nm S of Mahon at 23.45hrs. We find the battery will not charge without the engine and the Autohelm and plotter fail. We had not allowed for 19hrs extra motoring so we set up 2-hour watches. (we had



Torriente de Pareis.



The great 3000ft sea-cliffs of the NW coast of Mallorca stretching 27nm from Puerto Soller to Cabo Formenter.



Summary of Log		Sept 13 – 26, 2003
Sept 13	15.00	Shakedown sail – Bay of Palma
Sept 14	11.45	To Cabrera
Sept 16		To Andratx
Sept 17		To P. Soller
Sept 18		P. Soller, T. Pareis, Cala Deja. Soller
Sept 20		P. Soller – Cuitadela, Menorca
Sept 22		Cuitadela – Mahón
Sept 24		Mahón – Cabrera
Sept 25		Cabrera – Santa Ponsa
Sept 26		To Can' Pastilla

sufficient diesel – but who trusts gauges?). And so we sailed on joyfully, in the footsteps of Odysseus, on the wings of a glorious Levanter. NE 3/4 as, at 07.20 CET, 'dawn spread her rosy mantle over the wine-dark sea'.

After 10hrs or so we encountered a confused sea which made steering difficult; strange, because the said Levanter had been blowing steadily for days, VHF cover was very local so getting weather data was a constant worry to us, spoiled as we are by the excellent Irish met service. Much later we discovered a wonderful private French co. METEO CONSULT, but internet or fax would be needed. Mobile cover was superb so a Nokia 9210 could have been used.

Santa Ponsa was our final port of call and revealed lazy planning! Club Nautico Santa Ponsa charged €87 for one night (interesting, the beam of the Beneteau increased the charge.) We could easily have anchored off if we had planned ahead – instead of planning a night out!

All in all a truly wonderful fortnight. It should however be noted that fair winds are rare in the Med. Comd. Ernie Bradford writes (in 'Ulysses Found', Century 1987)

'Few seas are more irritating to the sailor. For days on end a complete calm falls, only to be succeeded by a thunderstorm, or a sudden gale that is too strong for the canvas. This in its turn may take off after a few hours, leaving no working breeze behind it, but only an uneasy calm with an awkward sea and swell'

After four charters I would suggest that an Autumn voyage would be preferable to high summer and

would avoid intense heat of the summer sun.

Total Distance 374nm, Days at sea 17, Night hours 10.

# A voyage to a desert island

## Hugo du Plessis

I have been so spoilt by our beautiful empty harbours of the West and later the warm tropic seas of the Caribbean that modern suburban sailing holds no attractions. So I have dug out my archives and submit an account of an unusual voyage, if one can call it that, which my wife and I made to a desert island some years ago. At least it would be a change from the usual accounts of daring voyages or gourmet restaurant crawling.

I wanted to see the Greek Islands before they were blighted by tourist development. I had a good cruising yacht and could have sailed there. But that would have taken three months and it was already June. Too late in the year to start. My business had just been sold. Next year I would probably be tied to a job. It was now or never. Despite never having done it before I persuaded my wife Joyce to go camping. She did have some apprehensions. Her father had always stayed at good hotels. Sordid campers were quite beyond the Pale in her family.

All went well as we made our way down through Germany, Austria and Yugoslavia as it then was. Joyce was even beginning to like it. As well as being Communist in those days, Yugoslavia was rugged and somewhat primitive, for this was forty years ago. To visit it at all in those days was an adventure almost unknown today in the packaged tourist world. Most main roads were no better than gravel tracks often carved out of the hillside with a sheer unguarded drop to the sea below. Driving along the coast was also tantalising. Warm sea and beaches galore. There were tempting islands too, not far offshore – but we had no boat and no way to get to them.

Greece was better, at least the roads were. We did the sights. Ancient Thesalonika, saw Mount Olympus the abode of the Gods in the distance, Athens of course with the Parthenon by moonlight, camped on the plain of Thermopylae tried out the desperately uncomfortable stone seats in the theatre at Epidaurus and were disappointed by Olympia. We tried hard but unsuccessfully to acquire a taste for retsina wine and were invited to a local barbecue of delicious suckling pig. The menus in the better class restaurants, the ones with tablecloths, were hand written in Greek and quite incomprehensible. We preferred the cheaper ones where you went into the kitchen to see what was cooking. You might have no idea what it was' but if it smelt good ...

Sightseeing was exhausting and hot. Athens was having a heat wave and even the Greeks were complaining. It was not long before we were again seeking the sea. In the Peloponese we were once more camped right beside the beach, a primitive informal camp in an olive grove where a crude screen round a hole in the ground proudly but falsely claimed it was a WC. The water was raised from a well by a donkey walking round and round. Or when the donkey was not there by some husband whose wife, rather literally, had the whip hand.

We spent several days recovering from being 'tourists'. just swimming and sunbathing. But there, a little way off shore, was an island. A real uninhabited desert island. (I hear it has now been improved by building six enormous Mafia owned hotels – but this was in the days when distant parts were still romantic). It was tempting. But how could we get to there? It looked no

more than a few hundred yards. Even so that was too far to swim – for us anyway – and we would have to take food and in particular we must take water. We had no boat. Or had we? All we really needed was a raft of some kind. Why not use one of the air beds. Then if one of us got tired, Joyce in particular as the weaker swimmer, we could rest on it or just hang on. Moreover it would carry those vital bottles of water, not chilled like the water everywhere in Greece straight from the camp Kelvinator it is true but what did that matter as long as it was water. The ancient Greeks survived for centuries without refrigerators. Admittedly they probably drank wine. We could even take a camera – the cheaper one anyway.

Next morning, full of enthusiasm, we launched the ship, which we formerly named Lilolita (The association with Lilo and air was pretty obvious and Lolita just seemed to fit. We had recently read the book, or was it the film). The essential stores for life support were loaded with as much care as if for an ocean voyage.

In those warm waters we found we could swim much further than we would ever have dared to do in the cool waters at home. Nevertheless it was comforting to know we had a liferaft. Distances are always deceptive and it was certainly further than we thought. Joyce did use it to rest and hang onto, and I too had a rest half way.

It took us perhaps half an hour. As captain and navigator I had to allow for a slight cross current. Then our trusty vessel grounded on the beach and we waded ashore, like the pictures of true explorers in days of old before ports and docks were built. It was not exactly a foreign shore but it was still a thrill, the same sense of achievement as one's first Channel crossing or even a first ocean crossing.

The island, which we found later was called Orixion, was long and narrow, about half a mile from end to end and perhaps a couple of hundred yards wide, with a low ridge along the middle.

We set off to explore. In popular adventure stories, desert islands are peopled by naked savages so we did the same. Who needs clothes in a hot climate anyway. We had sweated our fill, respectably dressed for a city, in that Athens heat weave. Half way across we suddenly came face to face with the island's only inhabitant. We could certainly claim later that the inhabitants spoke a strange language we could not understand – not that we could understand much Greek anyway. It was a donkey.

Over the hill was a long sandy beach completely deserted. This was really the idyllic desert island. We lay on the hot sand and when it got too hot, cooled off in the sea. After a while we were disturbed by the put put of an outboard motor, and then around the point came a rubber dinghy with two people, a man and woman. This could be a bit embarrassing. Our costumes were back by the boat and as the camp was the sort of place where they were optional anyway we had brought them only as an afterthought. But we needn't have worried. As soon as they landed on the beach, some way away, it was clear they shared our ideas of what to wear on a deserted beach. Also of what to

do and were soon doing it. They had no interest in us or even knew we were there.

There was no shade and after several hours the heat really did become too much and by then we had drunk all our water. It was time to return to civilisation, or what still passed for that ancient Greek tradition in the modern world. We walked back to the harbour where we had landed. There was a slight breeze that side bringing a refreshing coolness and we lingered. I was lying on the air bed when there was a sudden pop and loud hissing. The heat of the sun had raised the pressure and under my weight as well the Lilolitaire had exploded. Not as catastrophically it is true as the fate that befell my great-great grandfather who was master of an East India Company's ship when the powder magazine blew up. But it had certainly sprung a serious leak and there was no doubt it would founder long before we reached the further shore.

Now we were in desperate straits. It would be stretching the point to say we were shipwrecked but we were certainly marooned on a desert island with no water or food. Joyce rushed across to get help from the pair with the dinghy in time to see them disappearing round the distant point. She came back almost in tears. We could not hope to last long in that heat. By this time tomorrow we would probably be dead, painfully from thirst. We had told nobody where we were going. The tent and van were still in the camp of course, but if anyone did think

we were missing they were as likely to steal everything as tell the police. The owner of the olive grove was a real ruffianly looking fellow, shifty eyed, swarthy, with a black moustache and hooked nose.

Joyce was adamant she would not be able to swim back without the Lilolitaire. We would lose the camera too and the sunglasses. As the stronger swimmer I might just be able to reach the shore and get help. But she burst into tears at the thought of being left alone. Suppose I didn't get there. Suppose I was eaten by a shark. Suppose I drowned. What hope would there be for her then?

It was time for some serious thinking as I lay on the wreckage of our faithful ship. But I am an engineer and I reckoned that if we simply turned the air bed over so that the burst part was underneath the Lilolitaire would retain enough air to float. It might even support her. It would certainly be something to hang onto.

The idea worked perfectly. Half an hour later we were staggering ashore, back to our tent and long cool drinks, well fortified with our last bottle of Yugoslav slivovitch..

But I certainly found the sun baked, stony ground was hard that night without an air bed. I was also a lot closer than I would have liked to what the previous occupants of that site had left. The smell of goats was overpowering.

### Ed Wheeler writes of *Miss Molly* going to Dundrum

As usual, the short autumn cruise of the RUGC (Royal Ulster Geriatrics Club) was hosted by J. Russell O'Neill, Grand Panjandrum of Donagh-

adee, on *Miss Molly*. The crew consisted of Michael McKee and Ed. Wheeler. As ever, we tried to visit places little known (at least to ourselves). Leaving Ringhaddy on 3rd October, we processed to Annalong to inspect the new pontoon. This is now a most hospitable place. It has plenty of water at the pontoon. The HM advises entry and exit from LW +2 hours. On arrival, one is given a key to the ramp and to the heads and showers. The latter, although a distance away, are quite space-age, with finger-touch control over all functions, which is more than could be said for the crew of *Miss Molly*.

We timed our departure from Annalong to arrive at Dundrum bar about 1½ hours before high water. The ICC Sailing Directions describe a bar buoy and various channel buoys and stakes, but these are now conspicuously absent. Black mark to the Hon.Compiler. The heading for entry of 330° on the castle on the knoll should be followed from at least ½ nm out, as we found shallow water when approaching on a direct line from Annalong. An audience of Atlantic and Common Seals lying on a sandbar watched our cautious approach with interest. Inside, we found good water in the narrows but just inside the main lagoon, this dropped away rapidly. It is possible that there is a winding channel, but we didn't find it and had only a few inches under us until we approached the town pier. This is now built up with twee apartments and grannie houses and surrounded by black railings and lamp-posts, so it is hard to identify from seaward. Depths alongside are considerably less than shown on the chartlet. We lay on the NW side of the pier, but dried out nose-down owing to soft mud under our forefoot. It would be better



*Miss Molly* at Dundrum. Lying alongside the outer face would be better.

to dry out at the SE end of the outer face of the pier, where there are timber piles and stone steps. A long enough plank to span two piles (about 3M) would be advisable.

We had Hobson's choice for departure. First light was ½ hour after high water, so we had to leave either in the dark or on a falling tide, and chose the latter. We took the sand just short of the narrows, but managed to bull our way through and then found plenty of water for the rest of the passage. According to a local, we were the first yacht to visit Dundrum this year. *Miss Molly* draws 1.25M and has a reasonably long keel. Dundrum would be less than ideal for an ICC Rally but OK for bilge-keelers.

Going back into Strangford Lough, we paid the price for such a late trip by getting a good bashing from a very cold northwesterly, which served us jolly well right.

# *Beowulf* Cruises from North Portugal to Mar Menor in Spain

## Bernard Corbally

Having launched *Beowulf* in Povoia de Vazim, with Ann Woulfe Flanagan (ICC), Robin Clapham and Kinross Burke on board, we headed south on Tuesday 20th. May.

We spent one night in Leixoes, where we enjoyed a delicious meal in the "O'Degrau do Castelo" restaurant. After a 06.00 start on Wednesday, we sailed quite a bit of the 62M. past almost continuous sandy beaches to Figuera Da Foz. Kinross took sun sights and worked out running fixes, while the skipper caught up on his sleep and Ann maintained watch. It was slow work clearing the marina paperwork. We were in time to purchase a few of the superb roasted splayed chickens, which are sold in a small shop up the street just south of the market building.

We were attacked by a plague of flies, when we approached the shore en route to Nazare, and quickly headed out to sea. The marina is in a lovely location, extremely well protected and can be entered at any time in all winds. The office staff were very friendly and most helpful. It was noted as a good place to winter on our return journey (One hour bus ride to Lisbon). We fed cheaply and well in the "Alauria Restaurant".

The shoreline was now mostly cliffs as we motored south to Peniche with negligible wind and under a clear blue sky. We moored to the visitor's pontoon at 18.15 to find the marina gate locked and the office closed. Having established that Robin could climb around the gate, we found a good modern restaurant on the sea front almost opposite the marina. We were not impressed by the marina or by its facilities, but the town behind the waterfront was full of narrow cobbled streets and many attractive little squares. Kinross sadly had to leave us here

We motor-sailed down to Cascais on Monday, in light variable winds and glorious sunshine, and booked into the expensive new marina for two nights. After a pleasant stroll about the attractive town, we dined well in "Sagres", a delightful street restaurant in Rua Das Flores. On Tuesday, we purchased "Tourist Bus Passes" (€7 each) and made a very worthwhile visit to the impressive and extremely photogenic Pena Palace. That evening, Owe Hegstad, a sailing friend dating back to our cruise in Norway in 1994, entertained us in his luxury pent-house flat overlooking the bay.

We were lucky to be allocated a private berth in Sesimbra Marina on Wednesday. It was a jewel of a place, almost entirely devoted to colourful fishing boats, with just a couple of pontoons recently installed for pleasure boats. There were no facilities and only a pretty basic Bar/Restaurant in the harbour area. It was a 50 cents bus ride to the village, which was a delightful place to explore with cobbled streets, which we followed to an enticing fruit and vegetable and fish market. The village fronted on to a beautiful sandy beach, which was overlooked by the ruins of a Moorish Castle.

The weather was dull and cold with a view-blocking haze as we reluctantly left Sesimbra on Thursday and headed for Sines. It was actually raining when the skipper was roused from his siesta by an anxious crew who informed him that they had altered course towards an object in the water that they

suspected might be a body. The potential implications flashed through the skipper's mind as he shot up on deck to sight a floating coloured box!

Friendly marina staff assisted us into a berth in the relatively new marina. Our paperwork was cleared with commendable efficiency as we were proudly informed that Sines was the birthplace of Vasco da Gama. It is now a port for large freighters. The marina is located in a pleasant location on the other side of the protected bay and a short walk away from the town. It was a nice place to be and the marina charge was very modest. We booked in for three nights the first of which was very squally with very heavy rain.

The sky was a uniform grey and there was no wind as we cast off at 06.00 on Sunday and headed for Cabo de Sao Vicente. The sun, which was shining out of a clear blue sky at 11.00, contributed to our enjoyment of the remaining passage to the lovely Sagres Bay (63M). We anchored off the beach in 7m.

On Monday, we made a short expedition to Baleeira Bay, where we anchored, with a tripping line, between the harbour beach and the long beach outside it. After a sunshine lunch in



*Beowulf* in Povoia de Vazim.

Kinross Burke



everyone as we enjoyed superb views of sandbank countryside and were entranced by the sparkling sea all around us. The passage between the sandbanks to the inner waterways was fortunately well buoyed, as there was a fierce current. We were making our way along the north side of the island, when we sighted about a dozen yachts anchored just before Ponte de Carvao. It was lunch-time and the location was fabulous, so we decided to join them in the anchorage. At 17.15, a large rib unloaded crew on to all the other yachts and, within minutes, they all sailed away. Being somewhat apprehensive that they might have had some warning, we also weighed anchor and motored round Ponte Cais, where we joined a collection of yachts in the chart-marked anchorage. We were in a huge beautiful lagoon, surrounded by impressive sandbanks with Olhao Town silhouetted against the skyline and a few small dwellings visible on the island.

The following morning, we followed a trawler through the buoyed passage to Olhao Town. The buoys were widely spaced and not easy to sight, but the sandbanks were mostly visible. We had to keep very close to the outer pontoon of the new marina as we headed west to find the entrance. The Visitor's berths are alongside the inside of the same pontoon and are not yet serviced with water and electricity. There is no facilities building. Access to the pontoon was through a missing panel in the security gate! Never-the-less, we were in a delightful location and the small town had lots of charm. The local people were celebrating the 200 years anniversary of the expulsion of Napoleon's militia from the town by all the town's artisans. There was bunting everywhere and the crew witnessed an impressive pageant of all the different trades that had participated in the event. We had a superb view of a dramatic



Fred cooks steaks on a disposable barbecue at Campello.

*Bernard Corballs*

fireworks display that night. It was well worthwhile climbing the steps of the historic church tower in the town centre in order to enjoy the panoramic view of the inner waterways and sandbanks.

The tide was right to leave Olhao after lunch on Tuesday and to enjoy some gentle sailing en route to Tavira, which we were advised not to approach below half tide and preferably one hour either side of high water. The entrance to the inner waterways is a narrow unbuoyed gap between sandy islands. The anchorage is to port at the entrance to the Tavira Canal just past the small village Quatro Aguas. Yellow buoys, some of which were submerged at high tide, mark the shallow area off the north bank. We had to move quite a distance up the canal to find an anchoring spot with safe swinging space and outside the main canal channel. We managed to get our anchor trip line jammed between our rudder and the skeg, which took us an hour to sort out with the aid of the dinghy, our boat-hook and a sharp knife!

We took a hotel taxi up to Tavira Town (€5) on Wednesday and spent a most enjoyable morning as a tourist in the historic town. The "Na Igreja de Santa Maria" church with its 13th century portal particularly impressed us. We were back on board in time to weigh anchor at 15.30 and be clear of the inner waters before high tide.

We arrived at Ayamonte Marina, where we thought that we had a reservation. They were completely full and directed us back across the Guadiana River to the Villa Real de Santo Antonio Marina on the Portuguese side, where we were fortunate to be allocated a berth. Because of a very strong current through the marina, one is seriously advised



Skipper at work.

*Robin Clapham*

not to move ones yacht except at slack tide. We enjoyed an excellent farewell dinner in the Doca Recreio Restaurant (Tel. 81-513-038).

*Beowulf* was tucked away here in a safe berth until co-owner Ann Woulfe Flanagan joined her on 6th. July. With Robert Fowler as skipper they brought her round Gibraltar to Puerto de la Duquesa, where the author rejoined her on Thursday 24th. July. Norman Long (ICC), Larry Martin, Ann B. Martin, Brian Taylor and Diana Allen accompanied him on board. We were all delighted with the venue and stayed for two days.

On Saturday, we motored along the coast to Jose Banus Marina (17.2M.). The only berth that they could offer us was for a 20m. boat, which cost us €193.47 for two nights! We were certainly in a very up market area, where the promenading in the evening was mostly in designer clothes and the cars included several Ferraris and Rolls Royces. The marina was packed with very expensive motor cruisers and only a few yachts. The marina office was protected by security doors and a security office, yet there was no security gate to our pontoon! We were delighted to get out of the place on Sunday when Fiona and Des McCann invited us up to their apartment for a swim and buffet lunch. That evening, Des brought us up into the hilly hinterland to Benahaus, which is a beautiful old stone-house village. We had dinner in the highly recommended Los Abanicos Restaurant.

Impressive mountain scenery dwarfed the high rise development as we moved along the coast to Benalmadena (24.8M.), which is a modern private marina backed up by a vast Moorish style development of flats in multi-storey buildings. We were reluctantly allocated a berth on the clear understanding that it was only for one night. We spurned the selection of restaurants in the development in favour of the Club Nautico.

We left Benalmadena at 06.00 on Tuesday after some difficulty in rousing the night watchman to recover our €50 deposit on the electrical plug adapter required for the marina. The weather was dull and threatened rain, with fog to start with, as we motored towards Marina del Este (50M.). It was a boring passage in negligible wind and we were delighted to arrive to a most friendly welcome at 13.40. We had arrived at a beautifully designed modern marina in a fabulous location.

After four most enjoyable days in Marina del Este during which we hired a car to visit the Alhambra in Granada and the extremely impressive prehistoric caves at Nerja and made a

tour of the old Sierra Nevada villages, we reluctantly moved on to Almerimar (47M.) on Saturday, starting in the dark at 06.00 in order to arrive early and be more assured of a marina berth. The artificial marina is part of a huge modern self-contained holiday-resort development and appeared to be well run. The price was very reasonable, the facilities were excellent and a plug adapter was supplied free.

We cast off at 09.20 on Monday and headed for Aguadulce (18M), where we were allocated a berth on the long breakwater pier. The marina is located in super position under impressive mountains, the staff were friendly, the facilities were good and the Club Restaurant served excellent meals. We were very happy to be here. We took a taxi (Jose - Tel. 605-083-440) on Tuesday to visit the Alcazaba Fort in Almeria, which was erected in 995 and is reputed to be the greatest surviving example of Almohad military architecture. We were not impressed by either the staff or the place, when we checked out the marina. On our return to Aguadulce, we anchored *Beowulf* off the local beach to escape the heat in the marina and have a refreshing swim.

Hoping to leave the boat for a while in San Jose Marina, we set forth for there on Wednesday morning (25M.) but they had no suitable berth available and turned us away. We had not realised that it was such a small marina and that there were only a few berths for yachts of our size. We returned to Aguadulce and were allocated an excellent berth opposite the Clubhouse, where we left her to be collected by Ann and her skipper Bruce Lyster (ICC)

The skipper rejoined *Beowulf* in the Tomas Maestro Marina in Mar Menor on Thursday 21st August with a car that he had hired for two weeks in Alicante. Erica Corbally, Patricia Mathews, David Radmore and Malcolm Bramble accompanied him on board. We were delighted with the venue, which was isolated from the main La Manga tourist areas and very attractively developed. Most of the huge marina is very new and is well laid out with excellent facilities and plenty of free car parking. There are nearby beaches both on the Mar Menor and Mediterranean sides of the peninsular.

On Saturday, the men made a sailing expedition into Mar Menor and anchored off Perdiguera Island for sardines and sangria in Rosaria's. A launch service is available by calling the restaurant on Channel 9. We enjoyed the experience so much that we persuaded the girls to join us for a repeat expedition on Monday. On Tuesday, we sailed back up the coast to Cartagena (24M.), which is a town well worth visiting. We booked into the marina for two nights (very cheap) and were given access to the Yacht Club but not to their swimming pool.

There were forecasts of high winds on Friday. So, we drove to Las Cannas, which is located in a nature reserve west of La Manga and has a very fine uncrowded sandy beach. There was a big sea running which provided great fun frolicking in the surf.

We headed off for Torrevieja (13M.) on Saturday, timing our departure to catch the 12.00 bridge opening (every 2 hours on the hour). The girls went ahead by car to check the berth situation while we enjoyed some gentle sailing. The visitor's berths in the Real Club Nautico are on the



Benalmadena Marina

Bernard Corbally

outside of the outer pontoon and are reputed to be subject to considerable swell. We fitted strong mooring springs and had no problems despite quite a bit of wind. The Club was very welcoming and had excellent facilities including a swimming pool. We enjoyed a really good Chinese meal in the highly recommended Ni Hao Restaurant opposite the Club. We drove to Orihuela on Monday to view the cathedral and castle, but discovered that everywhere is closed on Mondays!

We cast off at 09.00 on Tuesday and motored quickly to Santa Pola (13M.) in the hope of getting a berth despite having been told impossible on the phone. The girls arrived at the yacht club just before us and were told that they could fit us in for one night only. It is a small marina with only private berths, few of which could accommodate our size. So, we considered ourselves very lucky. Only the Club Office was open. The rest of the impressive premises were closed for the winter. The town was uninteresting but we did enjoy an excellent meal in the Batiste Restaurant on the harbour front.

It was only 10.8M. to Alicante on Wednesday. The girls discovered that the Club Real was completely full with boats on moorings waiting for a berth. We berthed at the registration pontoon of the main marina and were allocated a berth for a 15m boat. It was an excellent berth in the NE corner of the marina with a clear view of the promenade and of the very imposing castle on the top of the hill, but it was expensive! We were very impressed by The Nativity Scene Museum in San Agustin St. The girls cooked us a delicious roast pork dinner on board.

The crew departed on Friday and were replaced by Ann Woulfe Flanagan, Peter Davies, Stuart Allen and Fred Rogerson (ICC). We sailed to Campello (10M.) on Sunday and liked the place so much that we booked our berth for three days. The marina is relatively new and is in a lovely location with great views of mountains. The staff was friendly, the facilities were excellent and there is a good sandy beach close by. We set up our Tinker Traveller for sailing and had a lot of fun. We took a Taxi to the Canalobre Caves on Tuesday, which brought us through some delightful mountain scenery.

As we headed up towards Altea on Wednesday, we started to enjoy our view of the coastline. Beaches under cliffs were interspersed with unobtrusive villages and the background was beautiful mountain scenery. Even Benidorm, with its collection of skyscrapers, was dwarfed by the mountains behind it and looked good. We arrived in Altea at 19.10 and were delighted to be welcomed into our berth by Stephanie and Tom Cook (ICC), who were there, with their daughter Vanessa in *Sandy Ways*. The marina has been built in an artificial harbour and is well

equipped with a lovely Clubhouse and swimming pool (€3 pp/day). There are sandy beaches on both sides of the harbour.

On Thursday we walked up to the Basilica on the top of the hill and enjoyed magnificent views of the whole area. We stopped off on the way down for a memorable tapas lunch. With a F3 on the nose, we motored on to Moraira (11.8M.) on Friday and were very favourably impressed by both the location of the modern marina and the neat style of the small town. After making up at the fuel quay, we were allocated a visitor's berth on the inside of the breakwater. It was important to know that the marina water is not for drinking and should not be put into the ship's tank. Drinking water is available at the fuel quay for a modest charge. Brian Ranalow was already waiting to join the crew. Brian has been holidaying in this area for many years and is an authority on local cuisine. Fred departed by taxi.

We stopped for a swim and lunch behind the Isla del Portichol en route to Javea (11.3M.) on Saturday. This is another very attractive marina and fishing village in a lovely location. We were made very welcome at the Club, which has a popular restaurant and a small swimming pool. Peter signed off here. It was about a mile up hill walk to the small town, where we admired the fortress church located in a small square in the old part of town. We took a taxi back to Moraira to search for Ann's hat, which gave Brian the opportunity to bring us to La Sort Restaurant (Tel.965-745-1350) for another outstanding meal.

Ann and the skipper investigated the modern boat-shaped church near the harbour for mass on Sunday. We were both tremendously impressed by the architecture. We then sailed back to Altea, experiencing a few welcome drops of rain en route and real rain as we arrived. We subsequently learned that sudden fierce squalls had hit the coast just west of Alicante.

We continued our return journey on Monday arriving at the reception pontoon in Alicante at 16.50. Brian's sister-in-law invited us for a drink in her flat overlooking the marina before joining us for dinner in the Nou Manolin Restaurant.

We spent Wednesday night in Torrevieja before continuing on to Tomas Maestre Marina in Mar Menor, where *Beowulf* has been moored for the winter. It was the end of a fantastic summer cruise, which brought us to 42 different berths and anchorages and involved 31 different people as crew. It was not the navigation but the logistical planning that constituted the major challenge for this cruise. Our total mileage was less than 1300M. However, we had planned for a leisurely cruise with the emphasis on having fun and all the crew participated in making this come true.

### Wallace Clark writes again of 'Ware bars and oysters'

An outing by curragh on Strabreagy showed how its dangerous bar has moved from the south to the north side of the entrance. It now lies close to the Five Finger Point. Anyone intending to enter would be advised to first examine the new course from where the Knockabenny Bens, easily reached by car from Malin Village, give a fine bird's eye view.

Strabreagy oysters are established on the north side of the inner bay. Very tasty they are, but some of the bedstead type stands on which the baby oysters lie have vertical spikes sharp enough to puncture a curragh and even a dinghy. They are marked by posts but these are hardly 'conspic', so give a good berth to the north shore. As a place to sail small craft at high water and approach wildfowl at any time in surroundings of rare beauty it remains unrivalled.

TIDES. Later came a curious request from Robert Law who is married to my cousin Ashy at the splendid site of Rosnaree overlooking the Boyne. A big-time film is to be made of the battle. The crossing by William's Army (just upstream of the handsome new roadbridge), depended on the time of low water. Could this be checked? The office of the Astronomer Royal provided the age of the Moon on First July old style, which equals Twelfth July new style. An old Irish Coast Pilot provided the tidal establishment of Drogheda. This is the time of high water at full and change of moon and used to be shown on most Admiralty charts. I have occasionally found it useful when without tide tables. Maybe we should list this info at the back of our sailing directions? Then a correction by guesswork. How much later is the tide at certain points on the river Boyne than at the town of Drogheda? Advice from anyone with local knowledge would be helpful. You might even get yourself a job as an extra on the film!

# Aven – A Gallic Reprise

Robert Barr

I readily concede that in the realm of retirement from the sea (or at least from boat owning) I have the propensities of Dame Nellie Melba – farewell cruises have become a way of life in the past decade. However, with 73 on the clock, the final curtain must fall at the end of this season. What should I do to shuffle off the mortal coil as it were? For me the question answered itself. La Belle France in June; the north of Ireland and west of Scotland in August and the south before the end. These have been my favourite haunts and a last scamper around each would be great.

This log tells the story of the French odyssey to La Rochelle. *Aven*, my beloved Nicholson 35, is in the top of her form, save only that her Neco self-steering is unreliable and mostly didn't work. I have finally located the problem and hopefully it will be sorted out at the end of the season. A lack of self-steering did not seem to be important as I had, or thought I had, a strong crew of five for the outward passages. They included Alan McGettigan, Brian Keane and Philip O'Dwyer. My intention was to have an opening leg from Dun Laoghaire to Newlyn and then a passage to Camaret. Thereafter I envisaged day sailing until final passages home. In the event fates intervened. We cast off from the RIYC on Saturday, 31st May on a warm and sunny late afternoon. The sea state was beginning to get troublesome and the wind was SSE 12 gusting 20 kts and rising. A long dead beat commenced at Bray Head. My consort's admirable steak and kidney pie marked the end of normal galley service for several days. Over the next 14 hours a big sea built up with murky rain and visibility down to a couple of miles. By 13.40 (Sunday) when we reached the Tuskar the wind was SSE 30 gusting 40 kts., but soon afterwards there was some improvement. I was also encouraged that the Dublin Coastguard Radio shipping forecast outlook indicated that, although we could expect fresh to strong southerly wind, it was tending to veer southwest to west and the weather would clear to occasional showers. This prompted me to have a pause at Kilmore Quay and avail of the promised SW on Monday morning. However, there was another overriding reason for the change of plan. My fifth crew member had become seriously ill with an internal infection. He could not go on and in the event required hospitalisation. Dinner at the Silver Fox and a splendid welcome from Nickie Cullen did much to lift the spirits.

Early next morning (Monday) we set off for Concarneau in company with Greg Kelly and his Omega 46, also heading for France. The weather was cheerful with a hint that there might be some sun later on. However, the wind was firmly in the south and later backed SE. The local Land's End forecast shortly after midnight indicated SE locally 7 or gale 8 in the west. The passage had turned into another hard slog on the nose in a big sea. The only good thing was a favourable tide in the approach to Land's End. I decided to cut our losses again and head for Newlyn where in the early hours of Wednesday we tied up to a trot of yachts on the lifeboat side of the Williams pier. A planned marina has not yet emerged.

Newlyn is one of my favourite ports and we have had much kindness there. Andrew Moxon, the harbour master, is an old

friend who has smoothed a few problems over the years. This time he arranged for diesel to be delivered by launch. It was a great help. The ladies of the Mission to Seamen looked after us as well as ever and lunch in the ancient Tolcarn Inn had lost none of its joy.

By 1700 hours we were ready for another beat to Camaret. This time the sea was less troublesome and the wind was S 15 – 20 kts. We could not fetch the Chenal du Four and were about eight miles off our rhum line. The resultant tack lost us the benefit of the tide through the channel. We reached Camaret on the evening of Thursday. Little had changed. It is in many ways an ideal introduction to Brittany and it was good to be back again. We were beguiled into a new bistro near the butt of the main pier which was a mistake. It was our own fault for being lead astray from the Styvel which has always done us proud. Later on we met Archie O'Leary and the crew of *Irish Mist* who were on their way home to Crosshaven after a good Breton cruise.



*Aven* in repose at Belle Ile.

Philip left us for home next morning and we headed for Concarneau. Until the islet of Trevennec we were hard on the wind and contending with a now familiar big sea. From there on conditions moderated and after the Raz de Seine, which was quite docile, we were at last off the wind and full galley service was restored. We made good time and as the sun was setting we tied up at Concarneau marina. The heavy-duty large visitors' pontoon runs from the marina entrance to the granite pier where the facilities are situated. It forms the extremity on the fishing port channel side. Boats may tie up two abreast along its length inside but not on the outside. It is an easy, readily managed facility. Better still for us, there were not many visitors when we arrived and there was space directly alongside the pontoon.

Concarneau is one of the oldest and most attractive maritime towns in Brittany. It combines the best of new and old. The main marina is well equipped and not too large. There is a good relationship with the adjacent fishing port – one of the biggest in France. The ancient walled Ville Close is something of a tourist trap but contains much of interest including a major maritime museum. The old part of the town around the port is almost undisturbed and has retained its characteristic charm and *joi de vie*. The heart of it is a large cheerful enclosed food market. Another major attraction is one of the most agreeable restaurants I know in France – Chez Armonde on the seafront near the marina. I was uneasy when I learned that it had recently changed hands but there was no need for concern. It is better than ever and suffice to add that we came back specially on the return leg. It should not be missed. There is also an interesting post-script. The previous owner, who is in semi-retirement now, has a creperie next door which is superb even by Breton standards. Would that we could translate both of them to Dublin! Apart from excellence, their prices are such an improvement on what we have to contend with at home.

Sunday was a Rest Day and the centre piece was dinner with my old friend, Marie Claire Rougeulle, the widow of Jacques, in her delightful house on the Aven river. We met again some family and friends and we talked about cruises shared in company many times over thirty years. Maritime friendships and memories have a unique dimension. Monday was also a Friendship day. Our destination was Port Tudy, Ile de Groix, for a special occasion. We found that the marina has been extended in the harbour outside the lock gates of the original. Visitors are provided with accommodation there in deep water and are no longer dependent on the tide. Subject to availability of space, it doesn't matter now when you arrive at Port Tudy.

The special occasion was our Cruise Christmas Dinner – a traditional annual event. Four more old friends joined us for the banquet – Guy and Laurence Tonnerre and Joel Tristan and his wife Christienne. We were glad to find that Guy is still mayor of Groix and that affairs of state have not been allowed to encroach on his perennial joyful disposition. The smoked salmon, spiced beef, plum pudding and brandy butter had all travelled well and a memorable night evolved.

The weather too had improved out of all recognition and, apart from one spectacular tempest,

warm sun and mostly agreeable wind became the norm for the rest of the cruise. On Tuesday morning we headed for Sauzon in Belle Ile. In course of the passage we had an unexpected piece of great good fortune – albeit disguised. Les anges gardienne maritime sometimes organise vital assistance in strange ways! I was down below heating some soup when the boat gave a sudden lurch as the helmsman took last second action to avoid a lobster-pot marker. The soup shot down the back of the cooker making quite a mess. However, the intervention of our celestial minder became apparent in course of the clean-up when I discovered that the heavy duty rubber gas pipe into the back of the cooker had become worn at one part from occasional rubbing against the edge of the base. It was not yet worn through but not far from it and that disaster was waiting to happen. The pipe was duly repaired and a risk of explosion was avoided. It was a salutary reminder that gas piping and fittings should be checked regularly.

There is no marina at Sauzon, but there are about a dozen fore and aft visitors' moorings in the outer harbour. (The inner one dries out.) As soon as we arrived we were met by a young man in a rib who escorted us to our allotted moorings and took our lines – a cheerful, efficient service which justified the charge of €11. Two years ago we discovered a splendid little restaurant called Roz Avel near the village church. Dinner in its garden was a delight. Sauzon in the setting sun lived up to its reputation as the most beautiful maritime village in France. Next day (Wednesday 11th) the wind was back on the nose again for the passage to Port Joinville, Ile d'Yeu, but there was only 8 – 10 kts of it and we made good progress under engine and main only.

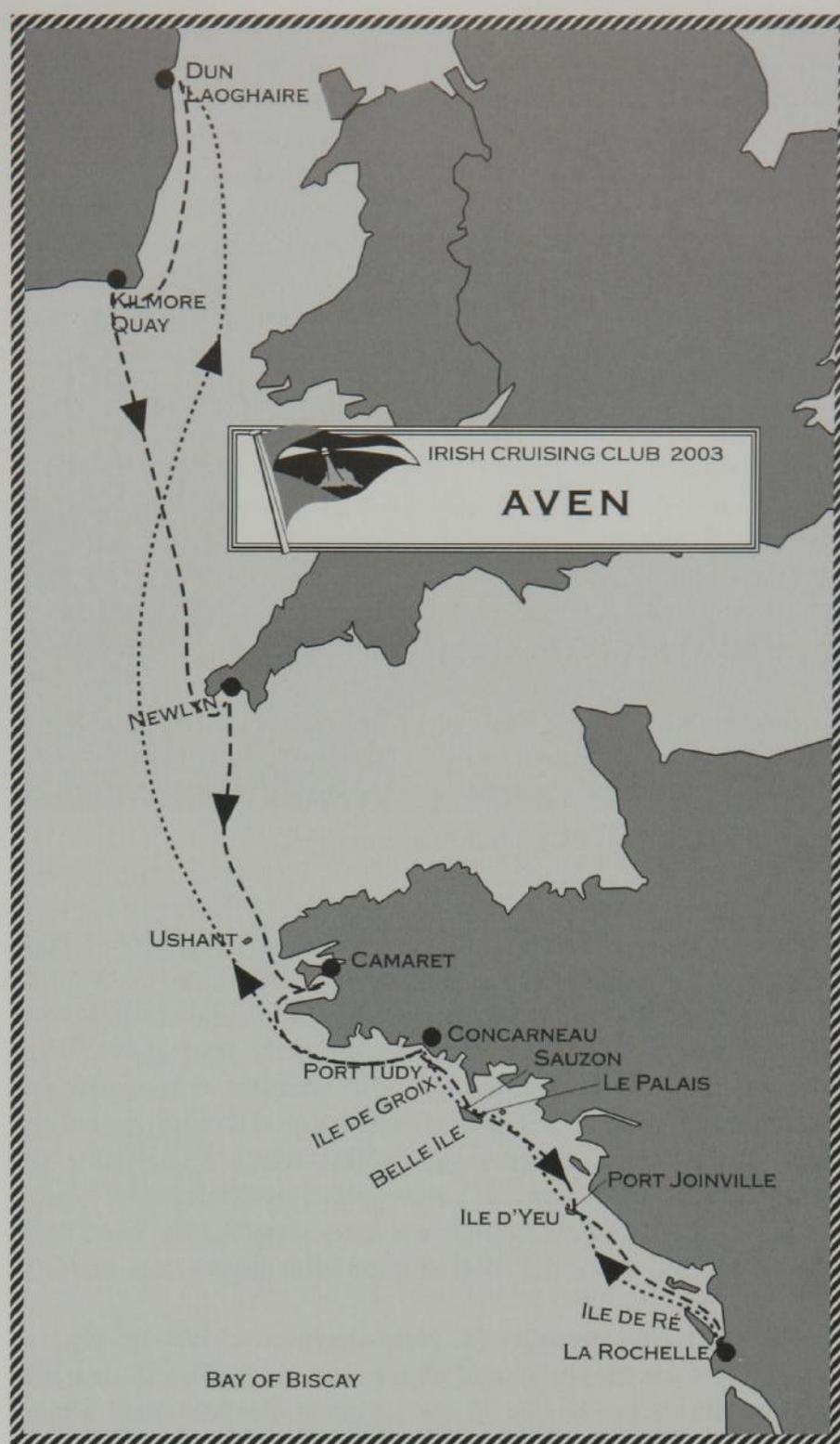
Port Joinville is a fair sized fishing port and the only town on the island. Marshall Petain was banished to Ile d'Yeu in 1946 and lived out his days there in exile. His faithful batman remained with him to the end. He was a kindly soul who then became proprietor of the Hotel du Commerce where he established a little museum dedicated to his master and proudly displayed his baton, sword, uniform, medals and other memorabilia. This was a brave gesture at the time because Petain, as leader of Vichy France, had many enemies in the post-war era. The patron's wife was austere and less kindly, a severe woman of middle years, all in black with hair in a bun at



Your scribe and Philip O'Dwyer in a moment of tranquility.

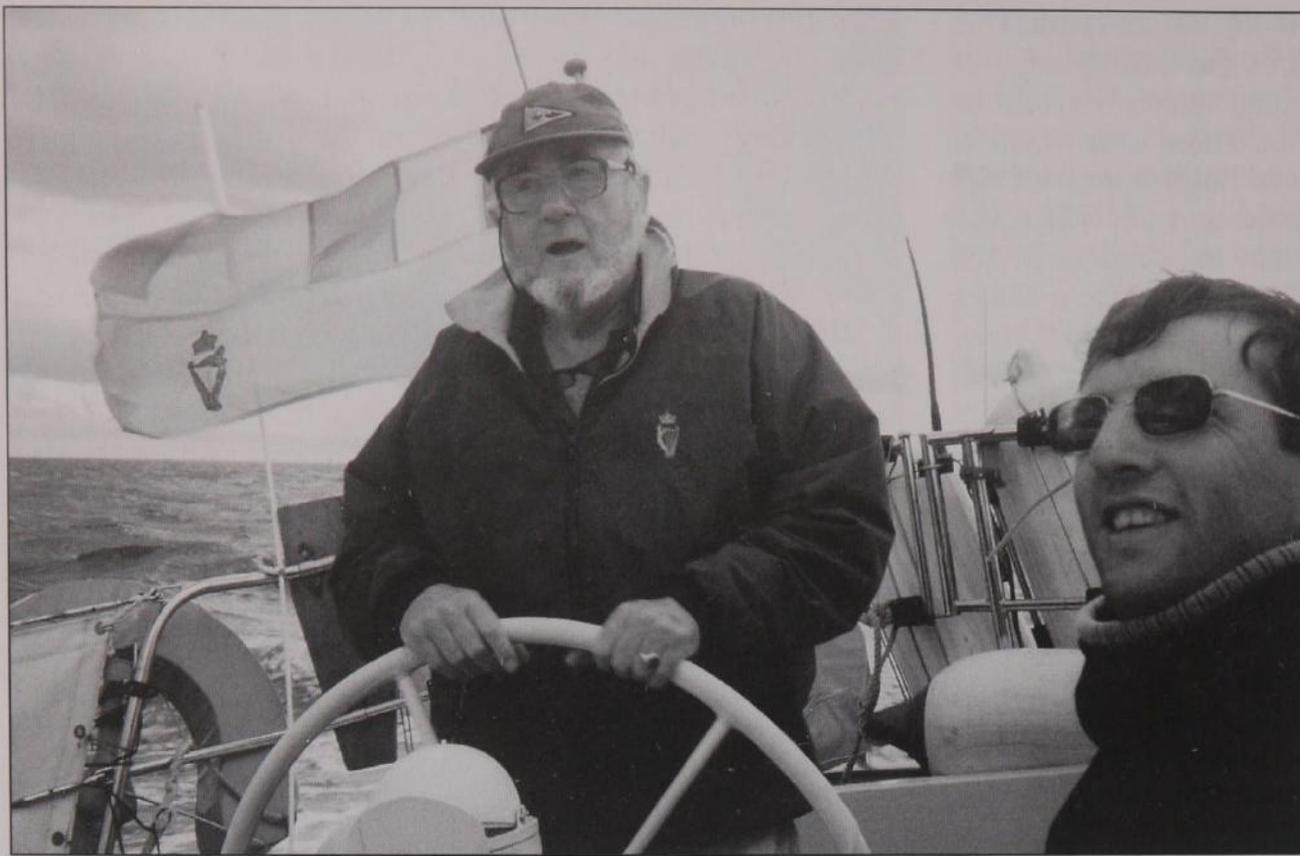
the nape of the neck. She had charge of the dining-room. One year in May, which Madame regarded as the trailing edge of winter, we enquired from the patron about dinner. He told us that his wife would look after us upstairs. There were seven in all as we had been joined by three from an English boat we had met in Concarneau. The owners were father and son – Sam and Super Sam. The unusual feature was that the purpose of the dinner had been to celebrate the son's 60th birthday. Super Sam, a formidable octogenarian, was well named – dapper, agile, ageless and much devoted to women. The dining-room was empty and Madame was not pleased to see us. We were an unwanted intrusion into the tranquillity of winter. We enquired about the possibility of oysters, lobsters, longoustines or even crabs but without success. She agreed reluctantly to provide soup and some form of undefined fish. However, revision was quite literally at hand. As she passed behind Super Sam's chair he, with what I am sure was an unintended reflex action – the habit of a lifetime – tweaked her bottom. The transformation was profound. It seems that Madame's bottom had not been tweaked for an age. She smiled at Super Sam and all of our preferred options were thereupon included on the menu. In the end it was a memorable feast. In this age of concern about sexual harassment I sometimes think of Madame and her apparent view that not all tweaking should be discouraged. Sadly, the Hotel du Commerce is now the Hotel des Voyageurs and the faithful batman has joined his Marshall. Perhaps Madame and Super Sam are on a heavenly cloud re-living a moment of bliss... Ile d'Yeu is special.

It was great to find that another major attraction there is as good as ever – the marina. It has been extended since my last



Pat O'Dwyer and his bird.

visit about ten years ago, but is still of modest size. There is a convenient visitors' pontoon and the facilities are excellent. As before, the most agreeable feature is that the staff are exceptionally friendly and helpful. There is a fuel pontoon at the entrance. I expected it to be in operation on arrival, but it closes at noon in June. However, when I explained to the Captain that we had to leave by 6.30 hrs. the following morning he sent for the diesel man who re-opened just for us. As to price; 98 litres cost €104. The marina charge was €17.50. Showers etc. are open from 07.00 to 20.00 hrs. and there is no charge in that regard. Thursday was warm with a slight sea and a gentle northerly of 10 – 15 kts. Alan left us for the first ferry to the mainland. Brian and I set off for La Rochelle and had an uneventful passage of 63 miles. It had been intended to break it at Les Sables d'Olonne but loss of time in the early part of the cruise had to be made up at its expense. In late afternoon we arrived at the vast marina, Les Minimes, about 2 miles from the town which has a capacity of nearly 4,000 keel boats. I am told that it is the largest in Europe. It was great to find Pat and Joe O'Dwyer there to meet us when we arrived. At the Capitainerie visitors are allocated berths. We found that the fingers are too short and the space is cramped. There is a strong temptation to seek accommodation in one of the two small marinas in the town centre which I had used on an earlier visit. However, there are tide limitations there and I am told that presently there is little available space. A swim at a nearby plage helped to combat 35°C. Many people regard La Rochelle as one of the



Your scribe and Joe O'Dwyer off the wind at last.

most delightful places in France. Guarded by Huguenot towers it has retained its attractive shape and joyful disposition despite being a major tourist centre. Dinner at L'Aunis, rue St. Jean du Perot, was pleasant but not exceptional. On Friday 13th, having bid farewell to Brian, we had another early start at 06.30 hrs heading back to Port Joinville. The weather was warm and overcast but with a spectacular red rising sun. Full genoa and main gave us an encouraging 7.8 kts SOG. Eventually, the strong sun was too much for the modest northerly which gave up the struggle and the engine was necessary for the final three hours. We tied up at the marina soon after high water at 16.50 hrs.

Port Joinville presents no great problem either entering or leaving despite the shoal area which surrounds the entrance, but corners should not be cut. From the north, the Mayence S buoy and a large water tower near the harbour entrance give a course line of 225° degrees m. which avoids the danger areas. The entire harbour vicinity comprises shoal ground ranging from 0.9 to 4 metres at LAT. However, at half spring tide or better there is a least depth of 3.5 metres along the course line to which I have referred. On numerous visits over the years I have had no difficulty entering or leaving.

I enquired from the marina lady where she would recommend us to dine. She told me that she couldn't answer that question but that she would write down the names of four restaurants in order of her choice. The French are a very sophisticated race. Her number 1 was Les Bafouettes (Tel 025 – 1593838 – booking advisable) – an elegant bistro in the old town behind the harbour. It was superb – another jewel to add to the French collection.

In the middle of the night all was peaceful in the marina when suddenly an incredible ferocious storm broke over Ile d'Yeu like Armageddon with the sky lit up by constant lightning to the sound of continuous thunder as loud as doomsday and all accompanied by great wind and cascading rain. It was a fantastic and for me unique experience. It had been very warm and humid for the previous several days. No doubt that created the storm ingredients. It ended in about three hours after which the temperature had dropped about 12 degrees or more. Next morning the residue of the storm was a deeply overcast and threatening sky with occasional flashes of lightning and heavy showers when we cast off for Belle Ile. The wind was back on the nose NNW 20 – 35 kts. After a few hours it moderated,

veered to the NE and a warm sun was restored. We were back to full main and genoa again.

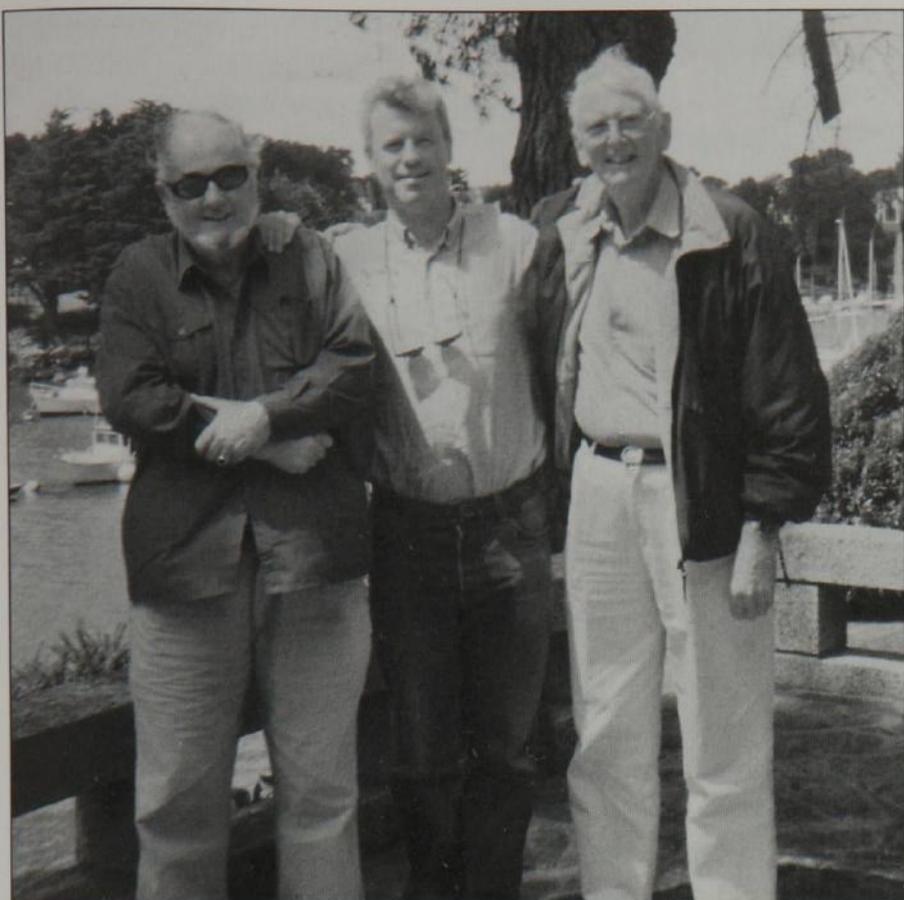
During the passage we had an unexpected guest – a racing pigeon. Pat fed him and he perched on the end of the boom. Another agreeable event that afternoon was the coaxing back to life of the Neco self-steering gear. It performed well for a few hours but then reverted to sinful habits. I suspect that the problem now is quite small but locating it has defeated several experts so far.

Le Palais, the principal town of Belle Ile, dominated by its vast Vauban fortress is a delightful place – once you have become safely installed. There is a small marina secured by lock gates which is not popular because entering and leaving is limited to a short period around high water.

Most people prefer to avail of visitors' moorings at the outer harbour despite the difficulties they present at busy times. The facility was well filled with boats when we arrived. However, a man in a rib from the Capitainerie helped me to back *Aven* between two yachts. He brought our stern line to one of the chains hanging down the quay wall and the forward line to a buoy we shared with two other boats. This manoeuvre becomes very exciting if the car ferry from Quiberon arrives with Gallic élan in the middle of the operation. However, the post-script gin and tonic in the cockpit watching other boats going through the same experience is a satisfying reward.

Having regaled the O'Dwyer brothers about the delights of La Saline, one of my favourite French haunts, which is a good walk out of the town, I was distressed to find when we arrived that the new proprietors were not able to have us – booked out they said. Madame la proprietrice, who had presided at La Saline for so long would never have sent us away. C'est la vie! Eventually, we found solace at Le Grand Café Atlantic at the harbour. We had a very pleasant meal in agreeable surroundings. It included the best moules mariniere I have had for years.

I looked forward to a long night of tranquil sleep. But it was not quite so. In the early morning it transpired that our pigeon had adopted the role of parrot and had cast me as Long John Silver. I woke up to the sound of beating wings and found him walking around my shoulder. Another problem with him was incontinence. After breakfast he left us and a major scrub-down was necessary. We spent an interesting morning ashore at the market in the town centre before casting off for Concarneau once more. In course of the passage I learned of a major problem. Another member of the homeward crew was to join us at Lorient or Camaret and he would replace Joe O'Dwyer whose medical duties at Brighton required him to leave us at Newlyn, a fact I had known from the beginning. However, it emerged that our new man had just been taken to hospital without warning and his appendix had been removed. It was too late to find a replacement. Very kindly, Joe saved the day by offering to stay with us until Dun Laoghaire, but in order to give him time to return to England before the following Saturday we would have to sail home directly from Concarneau. The intention had been to take in Lorient, Camaret and Newlyn en route. I was glad to accept Joe's proposition as a crew of two in the event of adverse conditions on a 230 mile



Self, Alan McGettigan and Brian Keane at the Rougeulle house on the Aven River.

passage from Newlyn might be light for the job – specially in the absence of an effective Neco.

The end result was departure from Concarneau direct to Dun Laoghaire in the late afternoon of the following day (Monday 16th). With a good deal of luck this would suit the tides at Land's End and Tuskar and would not be too difficult at Ushant. The plan also allowed time to introduce the O'Dwyer brothers to the delights of lunch at Chez Armonde. When we were leaving the marina there were two other Irish yachts on the visitors' pontoon – *Keala* from the N.Y.C. and Trevor Woods with Fred Hanna and others from *Misty III*.

At the outset of the passage the weather and sea state were kindly enough but the wind was not – N 15 gusting 25 kts – another dead beat to the Ar Men whistle buoy. In the event the wind relentlessly headed us until at last it backed W and then SW 25 – 30 kts. as we approached Land's End. We had made good time and still had over two hours of favourable tide there.

### Wallace Clark writes of favourite places

No launch for *Agivey* in 2003. I had a leg badly hurt in a car accident in February and would have been useless on any foredeck. Stephen Clark, my trusty co-owner, was ill too. But a little exploration was possible. I managed to join my old galley shipmate Alastair Scott for a few days in his 27 foot Nicholson *Ceana*. He had sailed her single-handed from Skye round Ireland – his first major voyage as skipper. This took a sensible three months on the Irish coast, so some of you will have met him – and if lucky heard him on the pipes or squeezebox. After an apprenticeship sailing to Iceland with Willie Kerr he found coastal problems solvable! *Ceana* is as good as only a Nic. can be, beautifully laid out above and below. And in spite of a Yamaha below the cockpit Alastair had made almost all the way under sail. We had a good passage to Rathlin, with stop for a noon balloon in Couraghy Bay just inside the Bull – bearing for the anchorage is highest point of Inishowen head a bit left of west white headland of the bay about 260 degrees

*Aven* responded well to a full main and partly reefed genoa. The wind increased to SW35 – 40 kts and both sails were reefed to accommodate the wind and a big sea. Later on Wednesday conditions moderated but the wind was still gusting 25 kts. Our boat speed was 6 kts. plus through the water. The fates were with us and at 02.00 hrs. on Thursday we were abeam Tuskar Rock with almost two hours of favourable tide to spare. Conditions moderated further as we headed up the Irish Sea. But tranquillity was not to last. The weather Gods had one final blast in store for us. That week the Sigma 33 European championship was being held in Dublin Bay. On Thursday morning a race which had started quietly ended with a F9 WSW and racing in the afternoon was cancelled. We encountered that freak storm (which had been unheralded) as we entered Killiney Bay. We ended up clawing our way to Dun Laoghaire harbour and the safety of the marina. But, all in all, it was great to manage 6 kts. average speed for 408 miles in the final passage. A long line of French endeavours had had an appropriate finale. I was well pleased and indebted also to a short-handed crew on both legs who made it possible.

### Summary

Ports and Anchorage	N. Miles	Hours Sailing	Hours Motor Sailing
From Dun Laoghaire to			
Kilmore Quay	120	15	7
To Newlyn	227	29	15
To Camaret	126	16	11
To Concarneau	66	8	5
To Port Tudy, Groix	31	2	4
To Sauzon, Belle Ile	24	4	–
To Port Joinville, Ile d'Yeu	55	–	10
To La Rochelle	63	–	11
To Port Joinville	62	4	7
To Le Palais, Belle Ile	52	3	7
To Concarneau	47	–	9
To Dun Laoghaire	408	42	26
<b>Total</b>	<b>1,281</b>	<b>123</b>	<b>112</b>

true in 5 fathoms (to hell with metres!), sand, out of most of the tide. An ideal temporary anchorage.

Another voyage was a fifteen minute ride in a RIB to Inistrahull from the slip at Malin Head pier. This one is silting a bit and needs half tide to float a big RIB. There are two other excellent slips – Strabreagy Bay, north side just inside second narrows, and also at Port na Ron on south side of Malin Head so the area is well served for trailer sailers. On arrival at The Hull I was shown *Magowan's Back Passage*. The entrance is just SW of the Light, a couple of nicks west of Portachurry. It is for calm weather only. In a two foot westerly swell and force one wind Paddy Magowan drove us into a tortuous rock-bound gut no more than 12 feet wide penetrating almost a hundred yards into the interior. Lurid layers of coloured rock decorate the walls. It is at the foot of a row of sharp ridges on a steep descent and must be almost inaccessible from land. The Fish Finder showed lots of big 'uns inside. but we left them for another time

A fascinating place on the right day, on others a death trap!