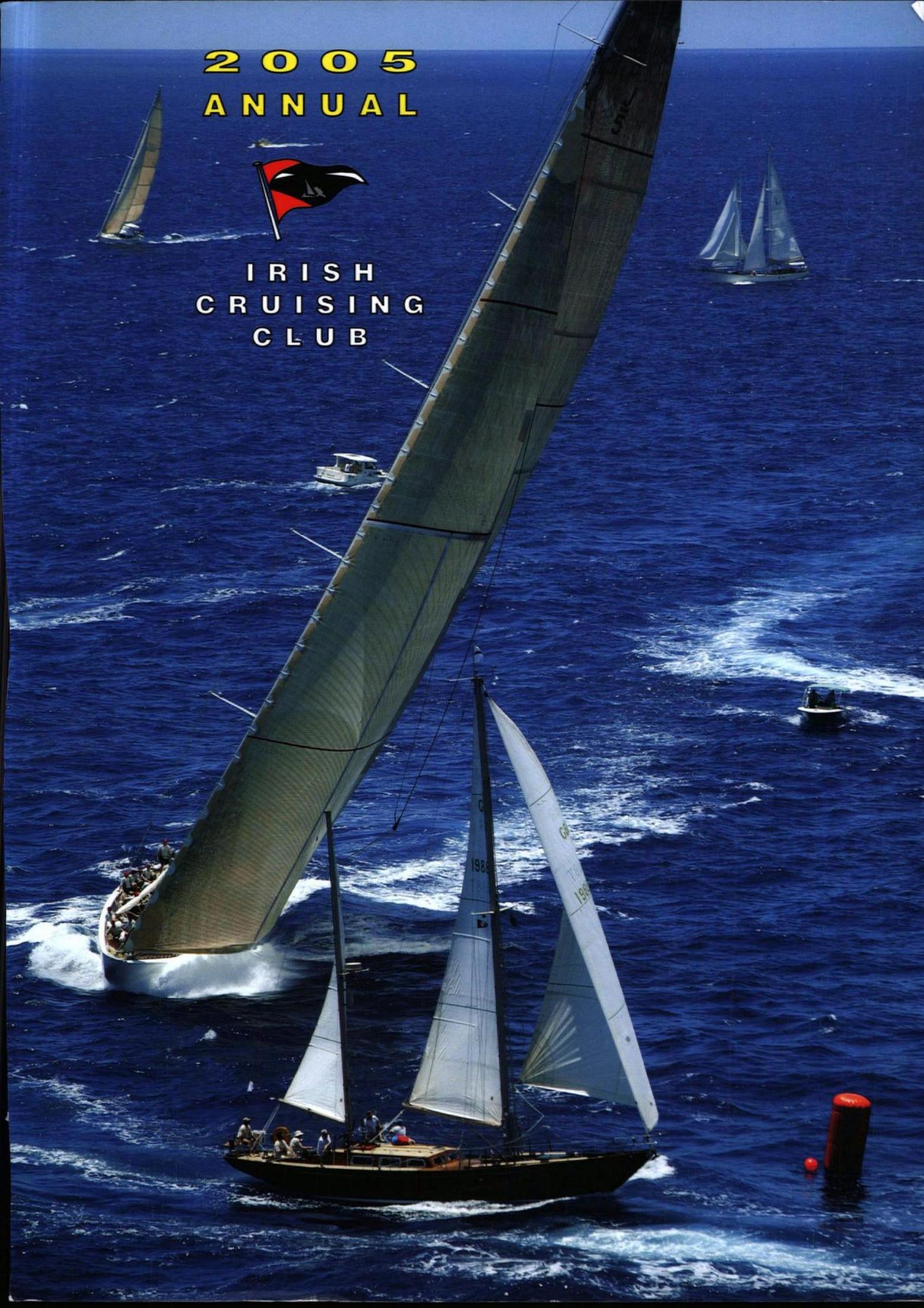
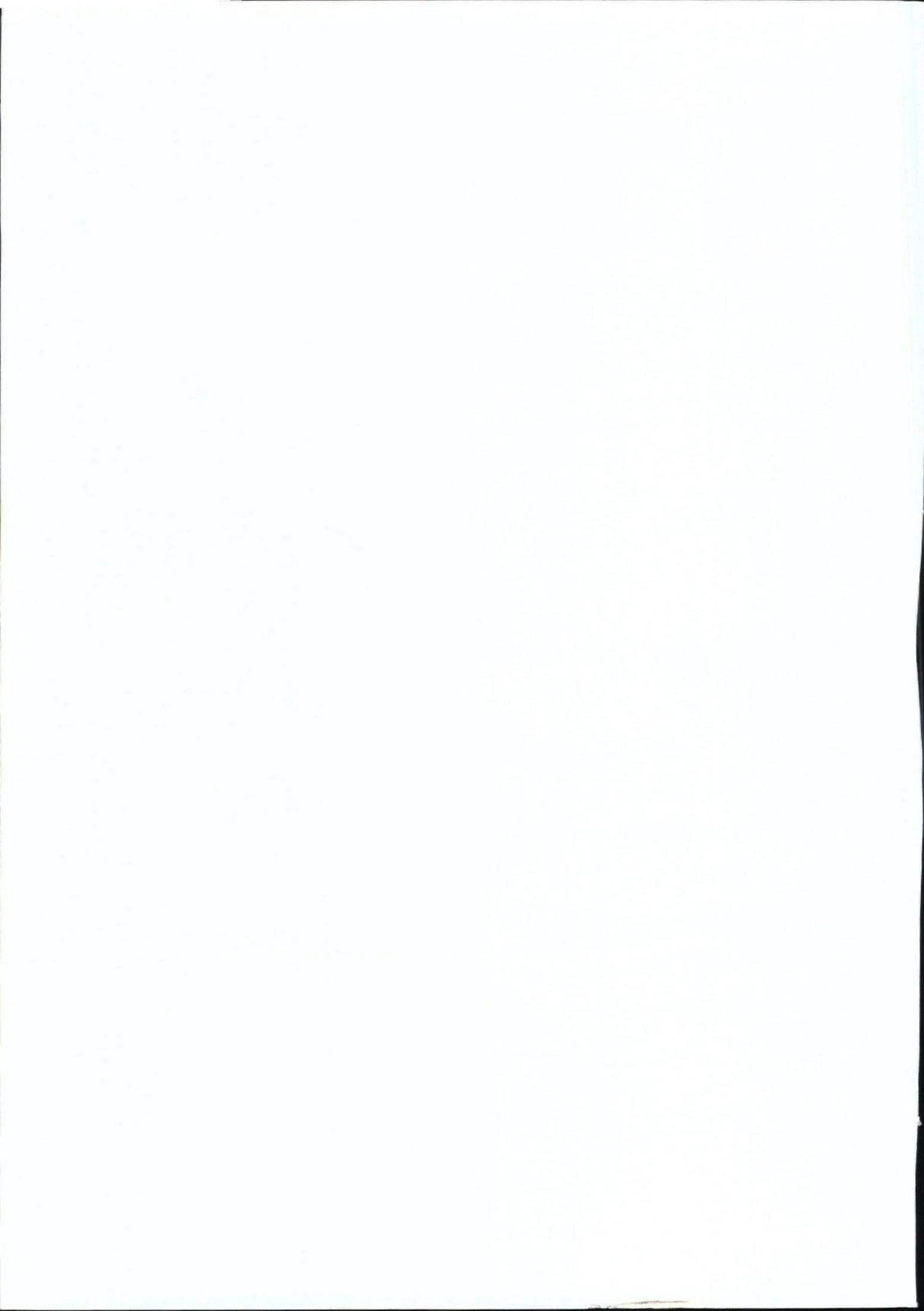


2005
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IRISH CRUISING CLUB

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2005



Hal Sisk's *Peggy Bawn* off Bannow Bay.

Photo: John Colfer

Irish Cruising Club Annual 2005

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Thanks to Leo Conway for the literary gems scattered through the Annual.

Published by Irish Cruising Club Publications Limited
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For private circulation

Front Cover

Cuilaun at the mark just ahead of "J" boat *Ranger* in the Antigua Classic Series. *Photo: Brian Cullen*

Back Cover

Penguins check the shore line on *Pure Magic* on Cuverville Island, Antarctica. *Photo: Robert Barker*

Submissions for 2006 Annual

To reach the Honorary Editor, Chris Stillman, 3 Thomastown Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.
(Tel. 01 285 2084) by **15th October 2006 at latest.**

Notes from the Editor:

This, my first experience of editing the Annual, has been a fascinating introduction to the splendid contributions of members who have sailed, quite literally, to some of the uttermost parts of the Earth.

- Because of the variety of regions that are being visiting, I would like to make a special plea for accuracy in the spelling of place-names used in your submissions. It appears that some countries, such as Croatia, Greece and those in the Baltic region, seem to present particular problems. Please use the spelling given on your charts, and be extremely careful of accents, umlauts, and alphabetic letters used in languages other than English; (for example: å, ü, ø, in Scandinavian or German names, the apparently option i or y used in Greek names and the seemingly vowel-free names in Croat).
- Good photographs make a great contribution to the Annual, and we are steadily increasing the number that are printed in colour. In particular I would appreciate pictures that illustrate the places visited, in a manner useful to other members. Pictures of the members' boats and their crews are always welcome – but be sure to provide a caption clearly indicating names (it is surprising how often a sequence of names written on the back of the photo are the wrong way round when viewed from the front!). Concerning the format, more upright (portrait format) photos would be welcome, and please follow the **Notes to Contributors:** if using a digital camera set the image to print quality (300dpi). All digital photos on disc must be accompanied by "hard copy".
- I would also repeat the plea to read the **Notes for Contributors** (page x) with care. These do change from time to time with changing technology in the publishing and printing trade, and the timetable for production of this Annual leaves little room for errors.

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.

Origination

The 2005 Annual was typeset, mainly by direct input from text on word processor discs, pages formatted, all illustrations scanned and placed by Typeform Repro Ltd., Portside Business Centre, East Wall Road, Dublin 3. Telephone 855 3855.

Printing and Binding

ColourBooks Ltd, 105 Baldoyle Industrial Estate, Baldoyle, Dublin 13. Telephone 832 5812.

ISSN No. 0791-6132

Honorary Secretary's Report

The Committee's election meeting in January admitted twenty new members. The names of the new members are on the panel attached to this report.

As an extract from the minutes of the AGM, which was held at Howth Yacht Club, was given in the Spring Newsletter and is on the Club's website, I shall not repeat the details here except to say that the meeting was well attended.

The Annual Dinner was held in Limerick and, as usual, was a great weekend despite the weather leading to the cancellation of the boat trip down the Shannon. Nearly 250 people attended the dinner, where the guest speaker was Donal McClement.

As the activities of the regions in 2005 were covered in the Newsletters, I shall not comment on them here except to say that the Club continues to be very active.

It had been hoped to have a permanent showcase for the Club's memorabilia in Howth Yacht Club in 2005 but getting a cabinet made is proving more difficult than originally envisaged.

Wishing all members "Season's Greetings" and a great 2006.

Ron Cudmore
Hon. Secretary



A clutch of commodores with the *Combined Commodore Vessel* at the Lough Erne Autumn Rally: New ICC member, Christopher Thornhill, ex RCC Commodore; Cormac McHenry, Commodore ICC; Arthur Baker, ex-Commodore ICC.

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Officers and Committee 2005-2006

Commodore	Cormac McHenry (East)	1st year
Vice Commodore	James Nixon (North)	1st year
Rear Commodore	David Tucker (South)	1st year
Rear Commodore	Gary MacMahon (West)	2nd year
Hon. Secretary	Ronald Cudmore	3rd year
Hon. Treasurer	Myles Kirby (co-opted during the year)	

North
Alan Leonard
Connla Magennis
David Park
Derek White

South
Donal Brazil
Chris Bruen
Eleanor Cudmore
Dan Cross
Arthur Baker (ex-officio)

East
Leo Conway
Grainne FitzGerald
Barbara McGonagle
Ed Wheeler

West
Tony Clarke
David Whitehead

Treasurer – Subscriptions: Brendan O'Callaghan
Chairman – ICC Publications Ltd: Leo Conway
Editor – Annual: Chris Stillman
Compiler – E&N Directions: Ed Wheeler
Compiler – S&W Directions: John Petch, Jim Lyons, Norman Kean

Editor – Newsletters: Gary MacMahon
Web Manager: Gary MacMahon
Webmaster: John Clementson
Club Accessories: Barbara McGonagle
Club Trophies: Bill Rea
Archivist: Barbara McHenry

New Members

Owen Branagan
Paul Bryans
Rory Casey
Tony Casey
Paul Clandillon

Brian Craig
Desmond Cummins
Patrick D'Arcy
Nicholas Gore-Grimes
Nicholas Healy

Beverly Killen
Jim Lyons
Rachel MacManus
Eoin McAllister
Justin McDonagh

Stuart Musgrave
John O'Donnell
Shane O'Loughlin
Christopher Thornhill
Olaf Tyaransen

Deceased Members

Jim Donegan
Harry McMordie

John Russell
Noel Smith

Molly Tomlinson
Bill Watson

Challenge Cup Awards

Brian Hegarty

When the Commodore approached me about being this year's log adjudicator, I was pleased and looked forward to the task. I enjoyed reading through the many fine logs, though I am conscious that the 2005 Annual, when I receive my copy, may be less exciting than usual!

It is interesting how over the years the patterns of logs submitted seem to have changed. Cruising to distant shores predominate over cruising in local seas. For example for 2005 there is not a log for a cruise around Ireland, while cruises on the coast of Norway have been popular. Hopefully, members are not discouraged from recording local cruises by reading mainly of cruises to far-flung places.

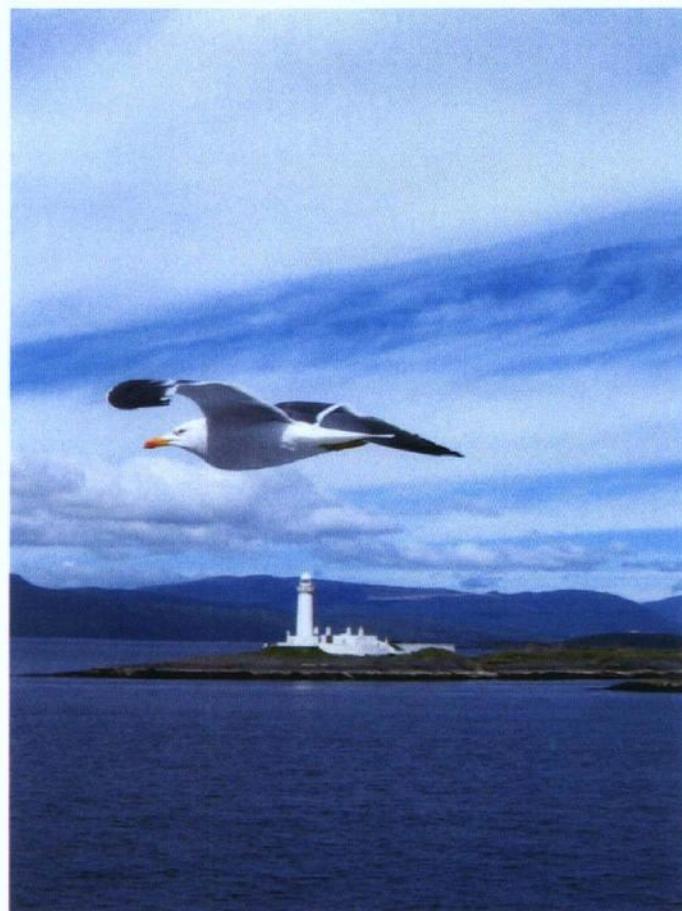
Most members, if not all, will be aware of *Northabout*'s successful completion of Paddy Barry and Jarlath Cunnane's adventurous passage north of Russia, from the Bering Strait to Norway. I have not seen the log of Part 2 of this venture, and so have not considered it in adjudicating the logs. Elsewhere in the 2005 Annual members will read how the Commodore and Committee are responding to this endeavour in an appropriate manner.

The FAULKNER CUP, our Club's premier award, goes to Peter Killen for his magnificent cruise to South America, the Antarctic, Georgia and on to Cape Town. A decision easily reached as it stands head and shoulders over all others. His is a lively account of a well-organised and planned adventure. Their visit to Deception Island is gripping, to say the least, as are many other instances on their voyage. I had the good fortune to attend an illustrated talk by Peter about this cruise at Howth Yacht Club; I commend it to our members should they have the opportunity to hear and see it. He and crew faced many testing sea and wind conditions which they, and Pure Magic, handled successfully.

The STRANGFORD CUP is cited as being for an alternative best cruise. This was a difficult decision, as a number of cruises were in contention. However my ultimate choice was to award the Strangford Cup to Brian and Eleanor Cudmore for their cruise in *Ann Again* to the Lofoten Islands, north of the Arctic Circle. Sailing from Crosshaven and back in 79 days covering almost 4,000 miles, travelling via the Orkney and Shetland Islands to Bergen, Norway, they have written a most interesting and informative log. For some of their cruise, they had three on board, but for a little over half, they were just two – a most able couple!

The ATLANTIC TROPHY goes to Marilyn Kenworthy for her "Flica Odyssey" – a gentle Atlantic crossing with the ARC in November/December 2004. I note that Brian and Eleanor Cudmore figured in this passage, as did Donal McClemont - a strong crew! Seventeen and a half days from Las Palmas, Gran Canary, to Rodney Bay, St. Lucia, West Indies, brings back good memories for me.

The FORTNIGHT CUP is awarded for the best cruise in a maximum of 16 days. Bill Rea, who minds and organises our Club's trophies, took his Shipman 28 *Elysium* on a grand cruise



AWARD WINNERS

THE COMMODORE awards **THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP** for outstanding contribution to Irish sailing: **PADDY BARRY** for ten years of service as Honorary Editor of the Annual.

WRIGHT SALVER: Awarded by NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE to **BRIAN BLACK**.

WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP: Awarded by SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE to **BILL WALSH**.

DONEGAN MEMORIAL TROPHY: Awarded by EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE to **HAL SISK**.

ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY: Awarded by WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE to **DAVID FITZGERALD**.

GULL SALVER: For distinction in an international event by a member sailing his/her own boat: **BRIAN SMULLEN**, for success with *Cuilaun* in the Antigua Classic Series.

THE "FASTNET" AWARD: For an outstanding achievement in sailing by a person or persons from anywhere in the world **THE "NORTHABOUT EXPEDITION"**

DUNN'S DITTY SALVER: Awarded to **ELEANOR CUDMORE**.

to Lorient on the Biscay coast of France in 15 days, covering 472 miles. Without hesitation he is awarded the Fortnight Cup for a well-written, enjoyable and amusing account of his journey, with the help of his daughter who was the ship's engineer – how unusual!

THE ROUND IRELAND NAVIGATION CUP. As mentioned already, there has been no log presented for a Round Ireland Cruise in this year 2005, and so this award remains "on the shelf" so to speak. A pity!

THE FINGAL CUP is to be awarded entirely at the adjudicator's discretion for a log which appeals to him/her most. For me, this award goes to Clive Martin, who with his wife Mary, had cruised on the Dalmatian coast of Croatia on board *Beowulf* with Bernard Corbally and Ann Woulfe-Flanagan. "Croatia with a Nautical Walking Stick" brought back for me many memories of a coast I know so well. The coastline Skradin to Dubrovnik has to be one of the finest cruising grounds in the Mediterranean.

THE ROCKABILL TROPHY is awarded for a cruise which involves an exceptional feat of navigation/seamanship. "Greenland Again" by Brian Black earns this award. In a fine cruise from Strangford to East Greenland and back via Iceland, Brian had to deal with two testing situations: first, getting clear of virtual entrapment in the ice at Scoresby Sound, and secondly, weathering a storm on their return passage from Iceland to Scotland. In a delightfully written log, we are taken through these two testing situations in an obviously well-found and seaworthy craft.

THE WYBRANTS CUP is for the best cruise in Scottish waters. It was difficult to decide to whom this award should go, but after due deliberation, Alan Leonard's "Sleighride round

Skye" earned the Wybrants Cup. There was no loitering on this cruise of 14 days in which they covered 668 miles, an average of 48 miles per day!

THE WILD GOOSE CUP. Awarded for what the adjudicator considers is a log of literary merit. I do not know whether this adjudicator is qualified to make such a judgement, but Dick Lovegrove with "All at sea on passage to Iceland" gets this award! He has given an amusing account of a passage from Dun Laoghaire to Reykjavic, Iceland. Beneath Dick's light-hearted pen is a serious vein, which makes for a fine account of an excellent passage.

THE PERRY GREER BOWL is for the best first ICC log, and goes to Robert Barker for his "Alchemist in search of the Knights". Robert's log was the only one qualifying for this award, but a worthy contender none the less. Having crewed with Peter Killen for much of his cruise, Robert then decided to take his Sweden Yachts 37, *Alchemist* to Malta for some sun sailing. A fine long passage, which leaves him poised on the doorstep of the Mediterranean's finest cruising grounds.

THE GLENGARRIFF TROPHY is awarded for the best cruise in Irish waters. Whilst some members may have cruised in Irish waters none have submitted a log of their activities. A pity really because it means no award this year of the Glengarriff Trophy.

Having completed my adjudicating, I would wish to say that I have enjoyed the many logs I have read. I would like to have been able to give awards to a number of excellent logs which have "missed" on this occasion. Members will appreciate them none the less. Hopefully next year we may see logs of cruises in Irish waters.

THE FASTNET AWARD

The Committee of the Irish Cruising Club has created a new Award named: **The Fastnet:** This is to be awarded for "An outstanding achievement in sailing by a person or persons from anywhere in the world".

The first recipient of this award is The *Northabout* Expedition.

It is a source of great pride to our club that *Northabout* has successfully completed what can only be described as an outstanding achievement, a circumnavigation of the globe above three of its continents, never dropping much below latitude 70 degrees and having to round the northern equivalent of Cape Horn, Cape Chelyuskin, at a latitude of 78 degrees north. All the seas traversed can be blocked at any time by ice and for a substantial percentage of the total distance of 14,000 miles the depth is less than 4 metres, putting their vessel out of reach of the few rescue vessels which operate in those desolate waters.

Northabout was launched in June 2001 to start the transit of the North West Passage which was completed in the following three months. That achievement was recognised by our Club by the striking of gold medals for all the crew.

Not content with their achievement, they did not turn for home via Alaska and the Panama Canal, but decided that "since they had gone so far they might as well go the rest of the way around the top". So off they set in July 2004 for the North East Passage. This was to take them north of Asia, around Cape Chelyuskin and back to relative civilisation in Murmansk which is just south of the 70th parallel. However

by September they were about to be iced-in and so decided to lay up for the winter in Khatanga.

July 2005 saw *Northabout* out of its winter berth, around Cape Chelyuskin, past Archangel'sk and into Murmansk. Then it was "just" down the Norwegian coast, across the North Sea and around the north coast of Ireland to bring her home to Westport.

This expedition is, *per se*, outside the guidelines which apply to existing Club Awards, which are presented for cruises to which Corinthian parameters apply. It could not have been achieved on this basis, and so support was required. Our Club, at the end of the first season's voyage to Khatanga, made a donation to the funds of the expedition to assist with the substantial expenses associated with overwintering there. This entirely unsolicited gesture has been greatly appreciated by those involved.

In recognition of this outstanding achievement your committee decided to create a new award to be named The Fastnet and the first recipient will be the *Northabout* Expedition. We hope that in future years there will be other outstanding achievements in sailing by a person or persons from anywhere in the world, which will merit its presentation.

With the award will go our heartiest congratulations on the achievements of this expedition to our members Paddy Barry, Michael Brogan, Rory Casey, Jarlath Cunnane, and Eoin McAllister.

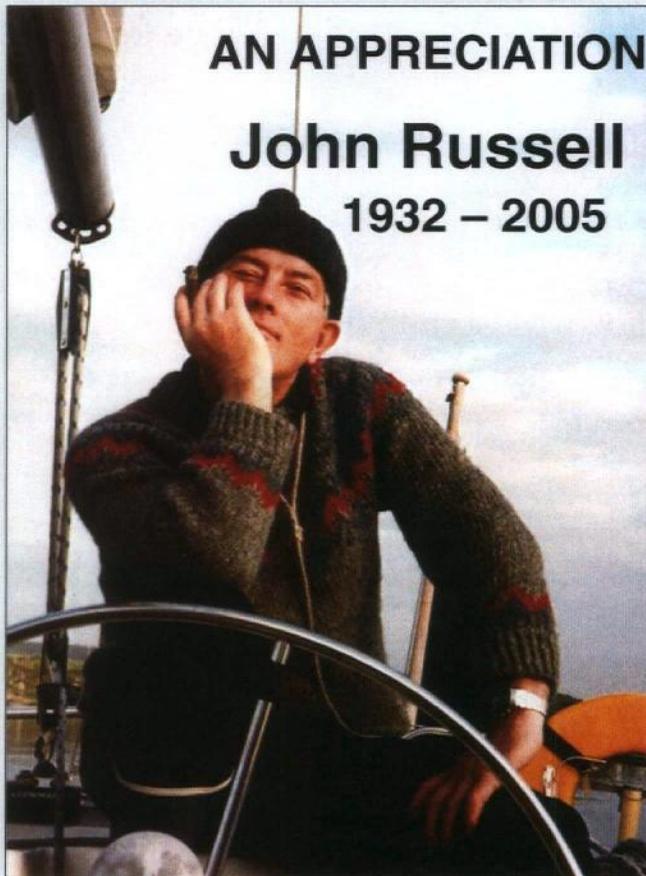
Cormac P McHenry
Commodore

October 2005

AN APPRECIATION

John Russell

1932 – 2005



In a lifetime which he himself described as “devoted to sailing”, John Russell competed, cruised, coached, administered and sought generally to improve the quality of the sport.

As a dinghy sailor in the 1960s he won the Irish Enterprise Championship and the Helmsman’s Championship. On retiring from dinghies, he was recruited along with the late Kevin McClaverty by David Park (ICC) for an offshore campaign including the 1973 Fastnet in the little Spinner, *Aquila*.

John made a major contribution to improving standards of race management. He had even greater impact as a coach and mentor – from helping Harold Cudmore Junior in the late 1960’s through to Gerbil Owens and Ross Killian in their recent 470 Olympic campaign. He had a lengthy association with the Irish Optimist Class and played a key role in staging their 1993 European and 1997 World Championships in Northern Ireland.

As a civil servant he had responsibility for many of the regeneration developments in Belfast. John suggested inviting the Tall Ships and masterminded the hugely successful visit in 1991.

In 1991 he volunteered to sail with the Ocean Youth Club. He spent three years as Northern Ireland Governor of the OYC and was involved in buying *Lord Rank* for Northern Ireland when the OYC was reconstituted.

John had a lifelong enthusiasm for cruising and had been a member of the ICC for 40 years. In the 1950s and 1960s he was a regular member of the crew on *Sarita* and the Clyde 8 metre *Helen*, owned by the Greens also longstanding members of ICC. While his two children were growing up, he regularly took the family to Scotland in the motor cruiser *Lorna Doon*. He often spoke of the cruise which he and Joan made in *Kirmew*, the 5 ton Robert Clark design, with her owner Tommy Taggart who yearned to go to Stornaway: the challenge of getting across the Minch in a small yacht which had to be pumped every hour and safely home again remained with him for life.

From the mid-1990s he and Joan were wonderful shipmates aboard our Starlight 35 *Realta*. John loved to helm and would happily spend hours steering with great skill and sureness of touch. Unfortunately he had already cruised almost everywhere on the Irish and Scottish coasts and finding a new anchorage to visit was a daunting task. But our Millennium cruise to St Kilda, the Roags, on the west coast of Harris, and around the Butt of Lewis met even his demanding standards.

John was very much a family man and very proud of his son John and daughter Alison. He and Joan made a superb team and together were an outstanding example of the combined total exceeding the sum of the parts.

Adrian & Maeve Bell

Index of Cruising Grounds

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Spain – North Coast & Galicia	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, 05.32
Venezuela	88.14, 88.16, 90.19, 94.03, 96.02, 04.03
World Cruising	91.03, 92.10, 94.24, 95.07, 95.12, 00.12, 01.18, 01.22

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 at latest.**

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 must 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. Overlong logs will be heavily edited.
- 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 highly 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. **Digital photos on disk are welcomed, provided they are accompanied by hard copy. If using digital camera set it to 'print quality' (300 dpi).**
- **Do NOT send:**
 - Emails, Slides, Albums, or Logs without a floppy disk.
 - All logs will be entered for Awards, unless requested otherwise.
 - Photos will be returned only if requested.

Dunns Ditties

Dunns Ditties should be anecdotal in nature, illustrative of a cruise highlight – or lowlight – or a cruise summary. 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, with a full-stop in centre.

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.

Send submissions to:

Chris Stillman, Honorary Editor

3 Thomastown Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin

Tel. 01 285 2084

Retirement and Antarctica

Peter Killen

What a way to start retirement! And what a stroke of luck that both Joe Phelan and Robert Barker were also recently retired and free to come to Antarctica too!

The planning, off and on, had taken us about eighteen months, and during that time, Bev and I had decided to purchase an Amel Super Maramu, which we named *Pure Magic*. She is a fifty-three foot ketch (glass fibre) and proved to be perfect for the job.

On 3rd August 2004, Bev, Joe, Trish (Joe's wife) and I departed Bere Island, having first taken part in the 75th ICC anniversary cruise.

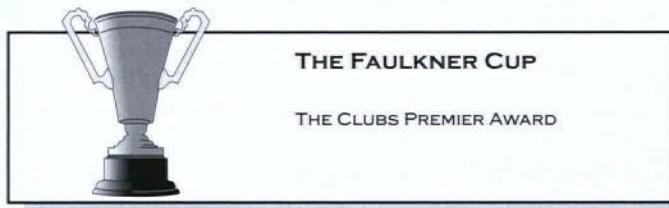
After a leisurely cruise down the eastern Atlantic, visiting Portugal, Madeira, the Azores and the Canaries, we reached the Cape Verde Islands which were the real starting point for the long sail across the ocean to the Antarctic.

On 4th October we left Sancta Maria on the south coast of Sal with our next planned port of call Mar del Plata, south of the Argentine capital Buenos Aires, approximately four thousand miles away. After various comings and goings our crew now consisted of myself, Joe Phelan, Robert Barker, Bill Walsh and Robert Michael. We had great sailing, thoroughly enjoying the trade winds, before arriving in the Doldrums, where we practically had a melt-down. To cool down, we had the odd swim, hoping against hope that there was nothing close by looking for a decent snack!

En route, the discussion gradually centred on the fact that "mightn't it be a pity to miss Rio De Janeiro, given that we were going to be passing there and that it nearly cut the journey into two, two thousand mile legs?" Common sense prevailed, so we did pull in for three days, having done two thousand seven hundred miles. What a wonderful natural harbour! What a dangerous city and what a lot of officialdom! Whilst the crew enjoyed the sights, I sweated away at various authorities' offices. Nevertheless, it wasn't all hard work and no play!

Three days were more than enough and on 26th October, we headed for Mar del Plata one thousand two hundred miles further south. The trip was uneventful apart from two happenings. The first was a vicious line squall, which hit us at 40 knots, early one evening, and then proceeded to blow as a full southerly gale of 45 knots for all that night. We hove to until it had blown through and were lucky it was the only Pampero to hit us en route.

The other happening was that Robert Barker saved the day by



mixing the last of our booze in a teapot, to make a delectable cocktail. It consisted of orange, grapefruit and pineapple juice mixed with rum and brandy, and all popped into the freezer for a time prior to drinking it. Magic!!

On Wednesday 3rd November, we arrived in Mar del Plata and tucked into the small marina belonging to the Yacht Club Argentina. We all loved Argentina. Mar Del Plata is a lovely relaxed town, and is a very popular tourist resort with Argentinians getting away from the summer heat of Buenos Aires. The population swells from half a million to one and a half million in high season.

We stayed there for three weeks and during that time, Joe, Robert Barker and Bill travelled up to the Mendoza region for ten days. Robert Michael and I headed home, he for good, I for ten days. Given the current exchange rate between the Argentinian peso and the euro, it is incredibly cheap to live there. For example, a wonderful meal in a really good restaurant cost us €13 per head including really good wine (lots).

Interestingly enough, in the marina at Mar del Plata, the number of long distance yachties was far less than up north. Also, in general, the boats tended to be tougher and well prepared. There was much serious fitting of extra drums of rope in preparation for the severe winds further south thus allowing boats to be tied to rocks or trees ashore in addition to anchoring, since the profusion of kelp makes anchor dragging a frequent occurrence. We had four drums of warp, each line measuring 200 metres in length. Two were nylon and two were polypropylene. The idea was the polypropylene rope would float and so would be easy to pull ashore, whilst the nylon rope



Brian McManus and Hugh Barry, as we enter the Le Maire Strait.

Photo: Robert Barker

was stronger, but would sink, thus was harder to pull long distances. As it turned out, the mix proved very good, for once we were in the Antarctic peninsula, we found tying ashore with the nylon rope good, since it sank and thus did not snag bergy bits and drifting ice.

Apart from topping up the stores, we also had to reinstall the cooker, which had broken loose at sea during heavy weather. Bill and Robert B. accomplished this with great skill.

Hugh Barry and Brian MacManus joined us whilst we were here, and on Tuesday 23rd November, we departed Mar del Plata bound for Ushuaia, in Tierra del Fuego, thirteen hundred miles away. The trip south was really enjoyable, the weather was kind and the bird and sea life became progressively more fascinating, with dolphins, cape petrels, skuas, albatrosses and finally, penguins.

At 03.00 on Tuesday 30th November, we were doodling about, near the entrance to the Le Maire Strait, waiting for the tide to change in our favour. This can be an evil place, in strong winds against tide, and there are many accounts of sailors having a truly horrific time here. However, for us, as dawn broke a perfect morning unfolded with bright sunshine and a fine sailing breeze. As we cleared the strait and entered the Southern Ocean for the first time, the scene changed quickly and dramatically and we experienced really severe hail-filled thunderstorms. We could see giant williwaws marching along the surface of the water under the cliffs of Tierra del Fuego, picking up the water in huge spirals, which made the Carlingford Kettles look like a dolls' tea party.

We soon tucked into the entrance of the Beagle Channel and at 20.00., anchored in a protected bay named Puerto Espanol, one thousand one hundred and eighty miles from Mar del Plata. It was a beautiful isolated spot, with good holding. The next morning we spent the day exploring, during which Hugh found a stone hand axe. The following day, we motored/ sailed another eighty miles up the channel to an anchorage named Bahia Relegada, about two miles west of Harberton, where the Bridges family (the original white settlers/missionaries) have their ranch.

We tandem anchored, for the first time. This method of anchoring employs two anchors. We used spade anchors, which we found to be excellent. The first was aluminium. This was shackled to ten metres of chain that was in turn shackled to the

crown of the main stainless steel anchor. Also, a longer length of line (about 16 metres), to be used as a trip, ran between the anchors. Once dug in, there really was no shifting us, for we stopped with a jolt!

On Sunday 5th December, we finally arrived in Ushuaia, to a warm welcome from the liveaboards there, having first circumnavigated an island named Gable Island. This was an interesting exercise, since it necessitated us wending our way up some seriously narrow channels (a boat width wide), with up to 40 knots of breeze up our stern, and the engine in reverse to try and slow our progress and keep steerage.

In Ushuaia, we tied up to a wooden jetty belonging to the AFASYN Yacht club. Here everyone was rafted up to one another on both sides of the jetty, hoping the wind wouldn't blow too hard from the broadside. Sometimes we were lucky on our side, with the wind blowing us off, other times less so as the wind swung! All in all it could be quite exciting, for the wind, which seemed to be forever blowing, often reached speeds of up to 50 knots in squalls.

Here Hugh, Billy and Brian departed for home, but not before having had some great evenings in the "Banana Bar", and some wonderful meals in a selection of restaurants dotted around Ushuaia.

Ushuaia is a great spot, very lively and of course, nestling under the backdrop of the Andes, with the Beagle Channel in front, very beautiful. It is a very important tourist destination for hikers, climbers and people who are embarking on cruise ships to visit the Antarctic. It is also an important port of call for ships cruising the Chilean coast and the Beagle Channel.

In the run up to Christmas and the tourist high season, there was plenty happening including one evening, a huge firework display, followed by the switching on of a huge artificial Christmas tree made up purely of lights. This was situated on the top of a hill between the channel and the town.

Having said goodbye to the three lads, it was then time to welcome their replacements in the form of my sons David and Andrew who together with Sean Colbert and Mike Alexander, arrived for the trip to Antarctica. I had originally planned to have six crew for the trip south, but when I discovered that Mike was available, since his own boat was in dry dock in Australia, I invited him along. He proved to be worth his weight in gold.

Prior to leaving Ushuaia, we had time to talk to some of the yacht skippers who have charter yachts and bring people to Antarctica. These guys also do trips around the Horn, some go to the Falklands and all will cruise the Beagle Channel. They were very helpful with their knowledge; although they all had steel or aluminium boats and some raised their eyebrows slightly at our glass fibre boat. David had also muttered with some trepidation, on his arrival, that he didn't see much glass fibre around either! We got really invaluable advice on good anchorages in the Antarctic Peninsula, including chartlets with waypoints noted, which were especially drawn up for us, from Giorgio Ardrizzi and Mariolina Rolfo. These we found to be really accurate and, therefore, invaluable.

Giorgio and Mariolina are a



The Beagle Channel.

Photo: Robert Barker



lovely Italian couple, who have lived on their boat *Saudade III* in Patagonia for the past eight years and have written a cruising guide to Patagonia, which apart from being a work of art, is acknowledged to be undoubtedly the best ever published. Everyone, including ourselves, who have used it, swears by it.

We departed Ushuaia on 14th December bound first for Puerto Williams, Isla Navarino, on the Chilean side of the channel, in order that we could get clearance for the trip south. This was necessary, as we would be sailing in Chilean waters until clear of the channel. Puerto Williams is like everywhere on the Chilean side, controlled by the Chilean navy, and is a small base. It also boasts the most southern yacht club in the world. It is named the "Mikalvi Yacht Club", and consists of an old sunken ship (German in origin), which has been converted into a very comfortable clubhouse. Everything below water level is flooded, but above on deck you walk (or stagger) about as the ship is permanently canted at a twenty-degree angle.

The bar, which has a great wood burning stove blazing away and belting out the heat, also serves a fantastic but lethal concoction called Pisco Sours which goes down beautifully and innocently, and then explodes! We had a wonderful night there and among an eclectic bunch of sailors and hikers, met the owner and crew of an Oyster 66, named *Magic Dragon*. The owner's name was Stephen Thomas and he was a very friendly guy. They had just sailed down the coast of Chile and Patagonia and were going to spend Christmas in Ushuaia with his wife and son, who were going to join him there from the UK before departing southwards for Antarctica. Sadly, we never did meet him again, for he was killed near Port Lockroy, in Antarctica, having fallen through a crevasse on a glacier, shortly after we had departed from the same location. It was a huge tragedy for his family. His zest for life and adventure was truly infectious, as was his good humour. Reading reports of the accident, later in the newspapers and the OCC journal, it was very obvious that he had been greatly liked both by friends and business acquaintances alike.

On Friday 17th December we finally departed Puerto Williams and headed for Puerto Toro approximately thirty miles south. This is the most southern settlement in the world. The local Chilean naval man stationed there took our lines and tied them to the wooden jetty, for us. Here we had a final walk over the hilly terrain, in the rain, before retiring to the boat for a meal and a final good sleep.

The forecast for the next few days was good. Bear in mind that wind speeds of up to 120 knots,

around Cape Horn, were recorded whilst we were in the Beagle Channel and you will realise that we were being careful to wait for a good weather window to enable us to get clear of the shallow waters around the Cape, which cause the huge waves.

Our first destination was to be Deception Island in the South Shetlands. The log reads "depart for Deception on a lousy wet day, wind on the nose, forecast a bit dodgy, but not more than 35 knots for the passage across the Drake" The crossing was surprisingly good, with us spotting our first berg three hundred miles south of Cape Horn, and we finally encountered snow and fog as we reached 60°S 63°9' west.

On the evening of 21st December, we sighted land at first thinking it was a huge berg. It turned out that it was Smith Island 48 miles distant and 6,000 feet high. We next spotted Livingston Island and Snow Island off the port bow. All three islands were pure white and ghostly looking. The wild life was magnificent since we were surrounded by cape pigeons, albatrosses, storm petrels, the odd whale and, of course, lots of bergs, growlers and bergy bits. The whole scene looked truly magnificent in the evening sunshine and spirits were high with everyone looking forward to a smooth landing in Deception Island. Mike Alexander, an old sailing salt, cautioned us all. "Take care", he intoned, "Murphy, the evil bastard, will be listening! Don't encourage him!" Andrew and David, who had sailed with Mike before, were inclined to agree. The rest of us just laughed!

Wednesday 22nd December at 05.30 and the wind was blowing 40/45 knots from the mark (Deception Island). We were having the devil's own job motor sailing through extremely nasty seas, not helped by the fact that it was snowing



Ushuaia, during a williwaw.

Photo: Robert Barker

at times and it was hard to spot the growlers amongst the waves. Progress was painful and Mike was muttering, "I told you so!" Finally, at about 06.30 we were abeam Neptune's Bellows, the entrance to the flooded interior of Deception Island, which is a dormant volcano. The caldera is about five miles by three miles, and the entrance is about 200 metres wide, with a large barely submerged rock slap bang in the centre. The Antarctic Pilot recommends leaving it to port, thus one has to hug the cliffs on the starboard side of the entrance as one enters.

There were two problems facing us;

1. The entrance was more or less downwind.
2. The forecast was for the gale to last for up to two days.

The chances were that we would be storm bound, right up to Christmas day, at sea.

I outlined the problem to everyone and gave them the options i.e. Heave to or have a go at getting in, which I was keen to try, having first sailed past the entrance and having had a good look. The vote was to have a go.

First we all got into our ocean gear, made sure the washboards were shut tight, clipped on, and turned downwind. With Sean Colbert calling the waves to me we headed for the entrance, with a scrap of jib out and the engine running. The worry was to stay close to the wall without hitting it in the surf, and keeping clear of the rock in the centre.

Neptune's Bellows is a very apt name, for we shot through like a cork from a champagne bottle. In the maelstrom through which we surfed, there was as much air as water under the bow of the boat, resulting in the echo sounder's transponder becoming decalibrated and reading zero! That gave us a few thoughtful moments. Suddenly, we were through and motoring in still water. As we cleared the entrance and headed for the anchorage marked on the chart as Whalers' Bay, the wind hit us hard once more. And the bad news was that whilst it had been 40/45 knots outside, it was 50 plus inside! The reason was of course, because of the hot air rising in the crater.

We clawed our way to the anchorage and let go the anchor and 60 metres of chain, in three metres of water. At this stage it was getting up to 60 knots in gusts and there was grit and snow flying in equal quantities. Visibility was bad and getting worse. We didn't even slow down as we dragged our anchor through soft mud, and as the crew struggled to retrieve it, they were having their eyes cut out by the stinging ash and dust.

We finally got the anchor stowed and started to slowly motor up and down the length of the caldera, trying to keep to the weather side. This was extremely difficult given the wind strength, and we were having to keep the engine revs high and therefore use precious fuel. Circling the caldera with us was a small cruise ship the *Ushuaia*, which we occasionally saw through the driving snow, but mainly watched on radar. They gave us an up to date forecast, which confirmed that conditions would not improve for maybe up to 30 hours. We had also heard an Argentinian naval vessel named *Castillo*, broadcast their position, in the caldera, and finally, I called her up to ask where they anchored. They replied that they were anchored in 70 metres of water. I then asked would they mind if we tied up astern of them and they immediately gave permission.

We felt our way to the southwest corner where they were located and were very happy indeed to see them loom up out of the murk! We were soon tied up off their transom on the end of 40 metres of warp and could finally shut down the engine at 12.00. As Joe wrote in the log "to put it mildly, the crew were mightily relieved!"

Two points. Whilst we were motoring, I had managed to contact the B&G agents in France, on the satellite phone, and had explained that the echo sounder was malfunctioning, we had no visibility, were in a full storm in a volcano crater in Antarctica, and that the crew were not at all happy. They came up trumps, and talked me through the recalibrating sequence over the following twenty minutes and thus we got our echo sounder working again!

The other point was that during the motoring sequence, I had spotted two humpbacked whales, right beside the boat and shouted to the others to come and have a look. No one was remotely interested!

The Argentinians, who were on re-supply duty and were servicing an Argentinian research base on the island, could not have been more helpful. We remained tied to them until 16.00 the following day (23rd). We had an anchor watch throughout the period, as had they, and we both checked the warp every 30 minutes throughout that period, adjusting it at both ends to avoid fraying.

When we were finally leaving, we passed them a special bottle of Jameson with our heartiest thanks. They for their part insisted we accept a present of a bottle of very good Argentinian wine, in a lovely ship's bag.

An addendum to this story is that subsequently, Tracy Edwards, with major sponsorship, organised a "Round the World Race" for large catamarans starting and finishing in Dubai. This race was passing south of us as we sailed from the Cape Horn area to South Georgia at the end of February. *Cheyenne*, ex *Play Station*, lost its rig having rounded the Horn not two hundred miles from us. It was taken in tow by our good friend the good ship *Castillo* of the Argentinian Navy, destined for an eastern Argentine port. During the three-day tow, the skipper and watch leaders were entertained on board. Turns out that one of the watch leaders was Gordon Maguire, one of the world's top ocean racer helmsmen and a fellow member from Howth Yacht Club,



Bow line to the Argentinian naval vessel *Castillo* in Deception Island on 23rd December 2004.

Photo: Robert Barker

though now domiciled in Australia. On learning he was Irish, the captain of the *Castillo* produced our (unopened) bottle of Jameson, which the trio promptly attacked. A small world!!

With lots of waving and smiles, we parted company and headed for another anchorage named "Telephone Bay", which Georgio had told us was a hurricane hole. This anchorage would not have been accessible during the storm as it was straight downwind, with a very shallow and narrow entrance, and besides, the French Caledonian yacht *Zazie* was already there, with shorelines stretching across the entrance!

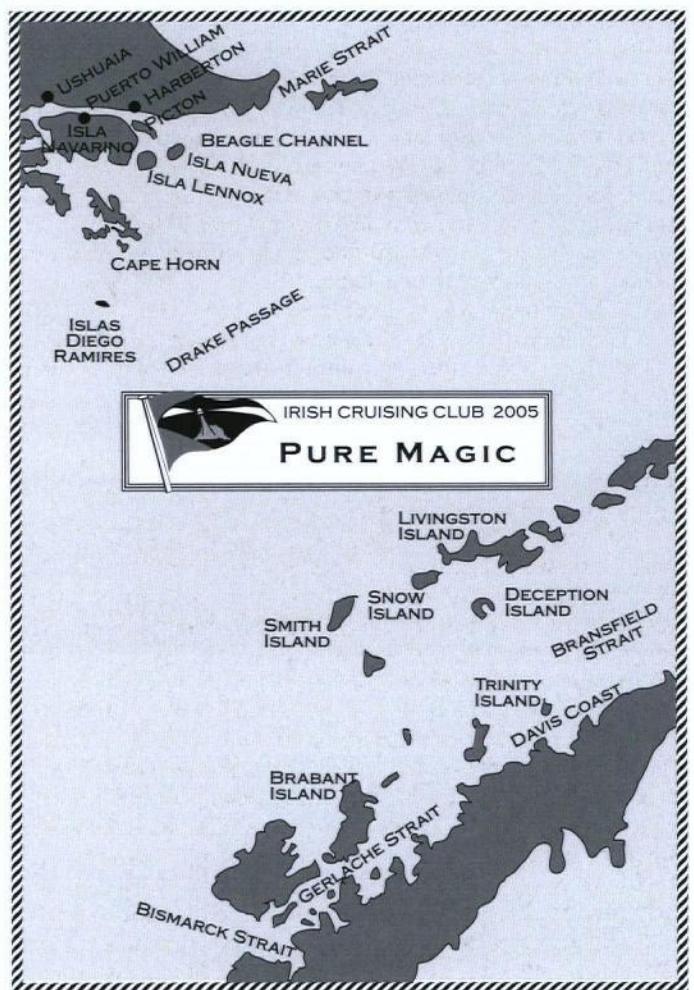
We finally tied up next to them, with four lines ashore. They are a great family. Sophie (the skipper), Herve, her husband and their children Arthur and Antoine aged 10 and 12. They also had a French friend named Donnie, who had joined them for the Antarctic leg of their trip and who teaches painting in Paris. He used to practically freeze to death sketching and painting ashore!

Friday 24th December was spent fuelling the boat, some minor sail repairs and some good walking ashore. We also decorated the main saloon – complete with a Christmas tree, which lit up when we had the generator running, and had lots of tinsel everywhere. David had also brought a selection of CD's with Christmas songs on them, which we popped into the radio. That evening, we donned Father Christmas hats and armed with presents, gladly took advantage of *Zazie*'s invitation to drinks on their boat. The kids had christened us "The Seven Dwarfs" ("searching for Snow White", their father had added). *Zazie* was celebrating Christmas on 24th, a la French custom.

The best thing to do is to quote from the log of 25th December. "Christmas morning dawned bright and sunny, with no wind. Had a wonderful breakfast cooked by Andrew (omelettes, fried potatoes etc). Then we all rang home – great to talk to them all. Next a swim (15 seconds) showers all round and clean clothes. Great! Next pressies exchanged – great fun – then in lovely sunny weather a one and a half hour hike. Views magnificent! *Zazie* departed prior to hike, I'm sure we'll meet them in Enterprise Island, further south. Christmas dinner was prepared by Robert B and was perfect. Mum's (mine) plum pudding went down a treat. Then a video, cigars and bed. A really perfect day, with everyone happy!"

On Sunday 26th we set sail for Enterprise Island, approximately 115 miles south in the Gerlache Strait, and we arrived there on Monday 27th having had everything from gusts of 45 knots to sunny calms. We tied up along side *Zazie* and a large charter yacht, which is based in Ushuaia, all of us nailed to an old whaling hulk. We all had lines ashore to hold us off one another. This was to protect the boats in case there was a fall of ice from the surrounding cliffs, which could cause large waves.

The anchorage was very protected, and we used the rubber dinghies to explore the surrounding islets, which had a fascinating amount of whaler debris including some old abandoned whalers, quietly rotting away. It was interesting to see the way in which they had been built, rough wood and flat bottomed. One could understand how the ship's carpenters could quickly build and repair them.



Quite honestly, hunting whales in such as these would have put the fear of God into me!

Next stop was off to Cuverville Island (at 64.32 S 61.59 W). We had a lovely motor sail to this destination in glorious sunshine, nudging through ice and marvelling at the white land and ice in a deep blue sea, with the odd whale, lots of Weddell seals and penguins surrounding us. We really felt privileged.



Christmas Day in Telephone Bay, Deception Island, Antarctica.

Photo: Robert Barker



Admiralty Brown Base, Antarctica.

Photo: Robert Barker

Each of the anchorages we planned to visit, had been, as already mentioned, recommended to us by Giorgio and Mariolina, and we had passed this information on to *Zazie*, so it was no surprise that we should meet up from time to time during our trip south.

Our route brought us south through the Polata passage with Nansen and Brookland islands to starboard, then through Wilhelmina Bay, north of Emma Island into the Errera channel, through 7/10ths ice and finally we anchored off Cuverville Island, in clear water. The holding was not great, so we had the usual lines ashore. This worked reasonably well, although with the wind and tide, we did encounter problems with bergy bits catching our warps. We finally sorted this out by using our nylon lines, which sank and therefore did not snag the drifting ice.

Again some hill walking and dinghy exploration was a fascinating pastime. Each evening, before we bedded down, we hauled the dinghies (two) on board in case they were punctured by seals (in particular leopard seals) biting them. Whilst at anchor, a German cruise ship turned up and disgorged a large number of passengers, by rib, who also went walking. They looked a little incongruous dressed in matching deep red oilskins and lifejackets!

Speaking of cruise ships, there were quite a number of them, most based on the design of a large ocean-going trawler. These mainly operated out of Ushuaia and carried between 75 and 100 passengers. They were very well run and the passengers really did get a feel for the wilderness they were exploring. There were occasionally much larger cruise ships looming up, such as the *Bremen* which carried up to 500 passengers. We realised that we were fortunate in being able to

experience the loneliness and isolation of the Antarctic in such a boat as ours, for we could creep in to sheltered anchorages and areas far too shallow for them to venture near. Nevertheless they all could not but have enjoyed their experience. One thing that used to amuse us was that there was obviously an agreed system in place, for all the ships used to keep in touch with one another, to ensure that they did not sight one another! We used to hear them on the VHF radio, talking to their counterparts and confirming their location, so that each ship's company could enjoy the splendid isolation of wherever they were. Leaving that aside, we found many of the ships' officers most helpful with forecasts and particularly ice conditions, which they relayed to each other as needed.

Before leaving Cuverville island, we climbed to the highest point and had a magnificent view over the surrounding sea and land, stretching miles into the distance in the clear southern light, with not another soul or ship in sight. On 31st December we pushed on south to Paradise bay, so named by the whalers of old and if such a tough bunch should name it thus, you can imagine its beauty.

Our route took us through the iceberg and ice-strewn passages between the islands of Ronge and Danco, and down the mainland, past the Argentinian base named Admiralty Brown (empty at that stage, but due to open later during the summer). This base, incidentally is named after Admiral Brown, the founder of the Argentinian navy, who hailed from Mayo. Just past the base, we turned port into a small and very protected cove named Skontorp Cove. In order to gain access, we had to cross a shallow bar, between two sand spits guarded by sheer cliffs. Once over the bar we anchored in a deep pool surrounded by stupendous ice cliffs, rumbling away, as bits of ice fell off them. Behind them towered the mountains soaring



Tied to a whaling hulk in Enterprise Harbour.

Photo: Peter Killen

into the sky. In the distance the sound of avalanches never seemed to cease. Indeed from time to time we could actually see them.

We anchored and tied ashore in crystal clear light and water, with not a breath of wind. It was indeed a hurricane hole! Our New Year's party was a total sell out! You couldn't have got a ticket for love nor money! Music, more lovely food by Robert B., excellent wine and the last cigar shared by three of us. The wonderful thing about Antarctica is that like the Arctic in summer, it never gets dark. However, as the sun sinks low behind the mountains, and a huge moon rises, when the weather is perfect (as it was that night) you feel as if you have died and gone to heaven – maybe I had!

Given that we were in very cold water 1-3 degrees, the water maker worked at only half strength, and also used a fair bit of our precious fuel, we used to collect as much fresh water as we could, whenever possible. In this particular cove, there were some good falls of fresh melt water coming from under the ice cliffs. Often it was quite dangerous to fill the containers, as one had to duck in under the ice cliffs, thus incurring the possibility of getting caught in an icefall. This location was just such a place, but the crew managed to collect two hundred litres before we reckoned discretion was the better part of valour. We also checked the rigging up to the mastheads, and fuelled up. The fuelling up took some time, since because the diesel was so cold, it was like pouring treacle into the tank. Once there, it fared better, since the engine room, where the tank is located, is warmer and also the tank is lagged.

On 2nd January 06, we departed Skontorp cove and headed for Port Lockroy, via Bryde Channel and across the Gerlache Strait and through the north entrance of the Neumayer Channel. The forecast was nasty and visibility wasn't good with frequent snow showers. We found it hard to find the right channel entrances as we were holding well off a lee shore, which looked very inhospitable with a lot of glacier fronts and a good deal of brash ice.

We arrived in Port Lockroy and headed for the anchorage recommended by Georgio. It was totally blocked with fast ice, which was a great pity, for it was well sheltered and with good holding. We finally managed to get the anchor wedged in on the third attempt next to a rocky finger in about 25/35 knots of breeze and with intermittent snow showers, and headed into the British Antarctic Survey Station which is now a museum named Port Lockroy situated on Goudier Island.

This base was built in 1944 and was used to gather weather information and monitor German activity. After the war it was used for scientific research, and when BAS (British Antarctic Survey) finally relocated in 1962 it was closed and fell into disrepair.

The U.K. Antarctic Trust took over as custodians in 1994 and it was renovated and reopened as a museum in 1996 and staffed by a BAS field party in summer. There is a post office located there, so we all sent post cards home (which eventually arrived) and, of course, bought the obligatory T-shirts etc!

During our stay, *Endeavour*, a small German operated cruise ship with 100 passengers dropped anchor right beside us and had to keep their engine running in order that they might hold station. I called the captain up to ask why he was anchored so close to us, given that there was tons of room in the bay. His reply was that we were in his spot! A real touch of the German swimming towels around the pool we felt.

Anyhow, they turned out to be very helpful friendly people, and most efficient. They gave Joe and Sean, whom they had collected from *Pure Magic* by RIB, an up to date weather fax, which was studded with lows all around Antarctica, but which seemed to show a weather window of a few days.

Our intention had been to head on south through the

Lemaire channel (otherwise known as the Kodak Crack) to the Ukrainian base at Vernadsky, but this was not to be, for we had spoken to the cruise ship *Bremen*, which had tried to get through and who told us that the passage was completely blocked with ice.

On Tuesday, 4th January, we departed for Ushuaia, leaving Anvers Island, and the American Palmer Base, to starboard and through the Bismarck Strait. The trip back was mixed. One serious problem was that our heating system broke down for twenty-four hours and in the freezing water and air temperatures, the boat rapidly became an icebox! Luckily Robert B. and Sean were finally able to get it working once more much to the relief of everyone, for we were all looking like Michelin Men, we had so much clothing on! People were in their sleeping bags with lots of clothes on, including woolly hats and with their breath condensing on their faces!

We got some good northeast winds for a sizeable part of the trip, which pushed us well to the west of the Horn as we plodded north. This we were delighted with, for when the prevailing westerlies kicked in, as we knew they must, we would have gained plenty of westing and could bear off without missing the entrance to the Beagle Channel. The other thing we were careful to avoid was arriving in shoaling water off the Horn in the middle of a severe gale or storm. With this in mind, we actually slowed the boat down as the wind began to free us, whilst still in deep water, in order to wait out a low, which was swinging through.

We got back into the channel on 9th January, in driving rain and squalls of up to 45 knots. We had finally seen some very big seas, one of which, unusually for us, completely filled the cockpit and emptied within fifteen seconds. The boat handled all that was thrown at her beautifully.

Given that we had entered the channel on the Chilean side, in order that we could stay in the lee of the land and had left Picton Island to starboard, the Chilean navy station at Puerto Williams insisted that we check in there first, rather than continue on up to Ushuaia, which is in Argentine waters. This was really no great hardship, so we tied up next to the trusty Mikalvi once more! The log reads, "Arrived in Puerto Williams, calm, warm, pleasant". There was a rush for the bar and the roaring hot stove!

The following evening, we were safely docked in Ushuaia and having had a very happy re-acquaintance with "the Banana Bar", we waved goodbye to Mike, Andrew and David, before setting off on a cruise through the Beagle Channel, basically circumnavigating Isla Gordon, going up the northern passage of the channel and returning down the southern arm. The local yachties call the route "Glacier Alley" and we moved in and out of the most magnificent fjords and coves, anchoring in spectacular spots. Apart from one occasion, when we met up with two other yachts – both of whose crews we already knew well – we had the places to ourselves.

The most spectacular included Fiordo Pia and Seno Garibaldi where we motored to the snout of the glacier. Whilst in Seno Garibaldi, as we headed up the fjord, we came across a herd of up to 100 sea lions who were parked on ledges in the cliffs. Each of the bulls was guarding his harem and there were pups galore rushing around. Overhead, a couple of turkey vultures were perched on rocky outcrops, hoping for the best. The noise was deafening and the smell was awesome, as we nosed the boat towards the cliff edge in over 100 metres of water.

The weather ranged from flat calms in warm sunshine, to howling gales in driving rain and changed so quickly that one always had to be on guard and have plenty of lines ashore. The glaciers were awe inspiring, but from accounts we had read of

how the glaciers looked in the past, global warming was clearly evident.

One thing, which saddened us greatly, was the fact that we were enjoying the wonderful country, which had been the land of the Yamani Indians for seven thousand years. From time to time we came across traces of middens, i.e. grass covered mounds of shells, which over the years, had grown in places where they had regularly camped each season. These mounds had obviously been attractive places on which to sleep, since rainwater would have quickly filtered away and kept the ground relatively dry. Now, in the space of not more than one hundred and fifty years, since European settlers first arrived, they have been all wiped out by a combination of imported diseases, including measles and smallpox, and from being hunted by ranchers. Only their memory remains.

There is a wonderful book written about them, by a chap named Lucas Bridges, called "The Uttermost Part of the Earth". Lucas's father was an English missionary who arrived in Tierra del Fuego with his family in 1871. He and his family developed a great rapport with the Indians and learnt their language and customs. They did their best to protect them, as settlers moved in, but ultimately, to no avail. There really was a poignant sense of loss and desolation, as we looked at locations along the channel, where Darwin, in his diary, had described his sightings and meetings with them.

We finally dropped Sean off back in Ushuaia, having checked out of Puerto Williams, for the sixth and last time, and whilst waiting for the next crew to arrive later in the week, decided to visit the Bridges' family estancia (ranch) called Harberton in Bahia Relagada. It was well worth a visit, for it also houses a museum, which has an excellent display of whale, dolphin, seal and bird skeletons, together with pictures of them, which outlines a clear description of their habits and background.

Early next morning, I awoke to total stillness and brilliant

sunshine. Joe and Robert were still fast asleep but given the fact that the west wind was, for once, not blowing, I decided to set off straight away on the 35-mile trip west to Ushuaia. An hour or so later we were well on our way up the channel, still in a flat calm, when I decided to head for the "restroom" and left the boat on autopilot. You can imagine my shock when we gently came to a soft stop. It felt like we had hit a very large lump of kelp. I shot back into the cockpit and discovered that the boat had gone hard starboard and had slowly stopped in deep mud on the side of the channel.

It was all so quietly accomplished I couldn't believe it! Joe and Rob were standing beside me with their eyes out on organ stops muttering something about me "being a worthy nominee for the next Darwin award". Among previous recipients of this award – normally awarded posthumously, was the owner of a camper van, who, whilst driving down a highway in the USA, put the van in cruise control and went to the back to make a cup of coffee! Having reversed out, I nipped over the side to make sure that all was right. The bottom of the keel hadn't even been scratched.

I subsequently wondered if I had left the autopilot on "standby" but when it happened again, twice, when definitely activated, I accepted that it was a glitch in the software. I also read an article subsequently in one of the sailing magazines which mentioned it, although it only ever happened us when motoring. We in fact had been absolutely steeped, for all around us had been rocks and cliffs – how we had found the only bit of mud for miles around beats me.

Having collected our crew in Ushuaia, made up of John Marrow, Pat Barker and David Owens, we victualled the boat for the Cape Town leg with, amongst other things, five sacks of spuds so many indeed that the French yachties christened us *Puree Magic*!

On Wednesday 11th February, we departed Ushuaia bound for South Georgia, just over 1,000 miles away, waved off by our yachtie friends. The night before we had had a final dinner in a wonderful French restaurant – high in the hills behind Ushuaia – named "Chez Manu" with the crew of *Zazie*. What lovely people they are! We had also bade goodbye to the owner of the Banana Bar whom we had got to know rather well during our visits to Ushuaia since early December. His face fell somewhat when he realised we were off for good – for I'd say turnover plummeted!

Before leaving, Steve, the skipper of *Pelagic Australis*, Skip Novak's boat had marked our charts with the anchorages he recommended in South Georgia and warned us about the williwaws, all very welcome and helpful advice.

We had a fine fast sail to South Georgia, with no problems, broad-reaching all the way with winds of up to force 7, wonderful sailing! With about 130 miles to go we encountered some good-sized tabular bergs and a good 40 knots wind. The boat behaved beautifully despite very confused, and occasionally, large seas.

On Thursday 24th February, we arrived into Elsehul harbour in dense fog, using depth sounder and radar, for the G.P.S charts were not at all accurate, and anchored in about seven metres of water. Elsehul harbour is a deep inlet in the cliffs. The noise from shore was deafening as seal pups and king penguins called – the pups for their mothers, the penguins to each other. There were thousands of them dotting the shoreline and up the cliffs in the scrub grass.

We went ashore in the dinghy armed with paddles and hockey sticks expecting to be attacked by mature seals. These however, had all departed, apart from a few bulls. The furry seal cubs were making a racket calling for their mothers, but given that they were weaned, they had been abandoned to their own devices and would have to fend for themselves. Hungry



Seno Garibaldi, Beagle Channel.

Photo: Robert Barker

would finally drive them out to sea to fish for themselves. For now, as we moved up the beach amongst them, they would make little lunges at us bearing their teeth and then would flop away. They were thoroughly appealing but I was very glad their mums and dads had departed, for I wouldn't have fancied being attacked by them! The advice is, if dealing with an adult, not to betray any fear, and hold your stick out in front of you in the hope that they go for that. The last resort is to whack them. The other problem I believe is that as you vacate one seal's territory, you move into another's, and the whole sequence starts again!

The King penguins and a scattering of Gentoo penguins were fascinating – absolutely without fear and beautiful creatures. The ever-present skuas were keeping an eye out for anything dead around the place and of course there was lots of other bird life.

Early next morning we again crept out of our anchorage and headed east down the coast bound for Gritviken whaling station where we were to check in, approximately seventy miles distant. En-route, warship HMS *Dumbarton Castle* passed us, and called us up to wish us well. They were en-route for Gritviken also, so chances were that we might well meet up with them, there.

We arrived in King Edward Cove, Gritviken, and tied up at a dilapidated wooden pier, which is no longer connected to the shore. To the starboard of the pier were beached the rotting hulls of two whale ships named *Albatross* and *Dias*. On the shore, in front of us, was the museum, which is managed by Tim and Pauline Carr. They are a legendary couple, who for many years sailed far and wide throughout the world in their engineless Gaff rigged, 28 foot, 100-year-old cutter named *Curlew* before settling down in South Georgia.

We were met on board by Ken Passfield, the harbourmaster and government representative, who made us most welcome and provided us with a wealth of information. He is also a long-distance single-handed sailor. Gritviken is a fascinating natural harbour and it is here that the British Antarctic Survey Station is located. It is a beautiful location belying its bloody past for it is here a Norwegian whaling station was opened in 1904. From then until its closing in 1965, they slaughtered 175, 250 whales. In fact, whales were so plentiful in the first two or three years of "operation", they did not have to leave the bay to get their catch.

That is but a distant memory now – and so too are the whales. Some scientists think that the memory of the hunting has been passed down in the gene memory of the whales. They certainly give the bay a wide berth nowadays.

The mountain chain stretching down the length of South Georgia, with its snowcaps, is awe-inspiring. Up on the hill, clearly visible to the left of the whaling station and just a short distance away, is the neat white fenced cemetery where Sir Ernest Shackleton lies. The next morning, in wonderful sunshine, we made our way past the pretty Norwegian church, through the seals and penguins, to the graveyard to pay our respects, and remember this wonderful leader and man. The setting for his last resting place could not be more appropriate or inspired. We were all very thoughtful as we stood around the grave, reading the simple inscription on the headstone, and looking at the mementos on the grave.

Then we went to meet Tim and Pauline who greeted us warmly – and asked after Paddy Barry ICC – who had obviously made a great hit with them when he visited there. The museum was full of fascinating memorabilia relating to the time when South Georgia was an important whaling centre and of course lots of memorabilia and documents relating to Shackleton.

We had a great hike that day and were invited to a drinks

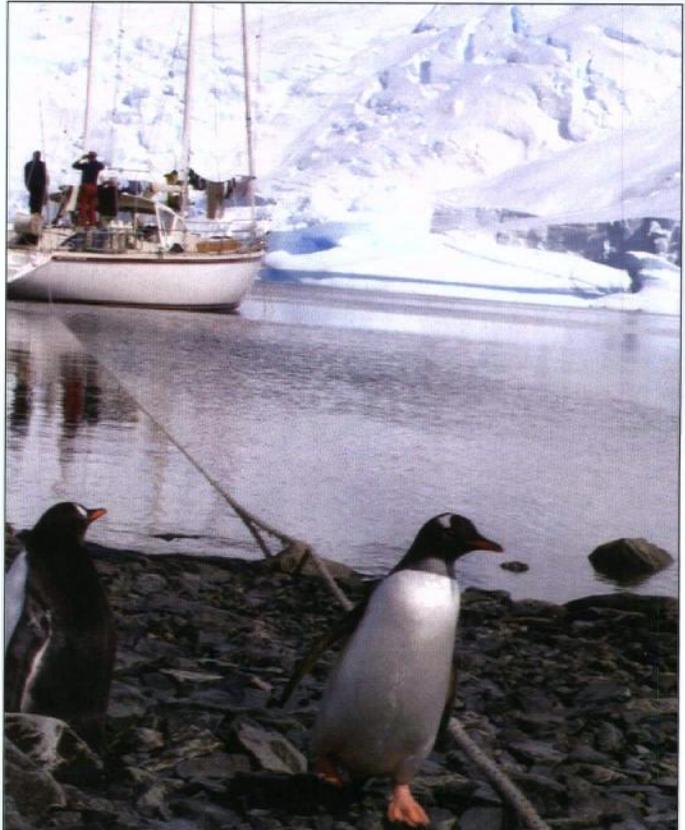
party, hosted by Ken Passfield, in his apartment, where we also met some really interesting people, including members of the crew of the warship, HMS *Dumbarton Castle*.

Apart from the graveyard in Gritviken, we understood that there was a cemetery situated at another derelict whaling station in Leith Harbour, Stromness Bay, about fifteen miles west. Pat Barker had a colleague at work, in D.C.U. whose grandfather, a whaler named Michael Smith, had been killed in an accident in 1930, aged 47. The colleague's mother then aged 4, is still going strong. We checked with Pauline Carr, who had a list of the graves on the island and she did have a record of his grave, and where it should be. We headed off the following day and finally anchored in bad holding, surrounded by kelp, not far from another beautifully maintained cemetery, also surrounded by a white picket fence and near it, on the shore, thousands of fur seal pups frolicking in the water and penguins standing to attention, on the beach.

There were very strong williwaws roaring down the valley and I decided to stay on board the boat, for fear we would drag, and let the others go ashore to investigate. John Marrow stayed with me and the others pushed off with instructions to make it as quick as possible. They rapidly got ashore and found the grave, which had a bronze plaque, inscribed with Michael's name. It also stated that the captain and crew of the whaling ship the S.S. *Coronda* had commissioned it. They photographed it and returned, none too soon, for we were dragging in severe gusts.

The trip was well worth while, however, for Pat was able to email her colleague with the information and her reply made moving reading, since both she and, in particular, her mother were overjoyed.

En route back to Gritviken, Pat mentioned that one of her eyes was giving trouble. She had had a detached retina, once before, in the other eye, and felt that this was going the same way. We got back to Gritviken and as we had been invited to a



Penguins check our shore line on Cuverville Island, Antarctica.

Photo: Robert Barker

party that evening in the BASS (British Antarctic Survey Station) by Allie, the station commander, we felt we would be able to ask for some medical advice from the station doctor.

Allie (an Australian) welcomed us and introduced us to a selection of her colleagues. They included scientists and maintenance/boat people of all nationalities, including Sarah Clarke, an Irish girl from Dublin, who is the chief scientific officer, currently stationed there. Many of them, including Sarah, stay for a two-year stint, without leaving. Pat also met Jenny, the station doctor and was able to arrange a consultation for early the following morning. The diagnosis was that it appeared that the retina was beginning to detach. This was not good news, for it meant that Pat had to remain in her bunk, during the remainder of our passage to Cape Town, whenever the weather was rough and at night.

We finally tore ourselves away from Gritviken and our new friends and first motored close to a huge glacier called the "Nordenskjold Glacier" in brilliant sunshine. The view was stupendous, with the glacier in front of us and the mountain peaks soaring overhead. Next we headed east along the coast to Ocean Harbour, a narrow long inlet, where we anchored in sand abeam of the wreck of an old three-master (with the masts still standing). Her decks were covered with nesting shags and the whole scene looked vaguely surreal in the misty evening light.

We walked the beach some distance inland, past the survival hut and some huge bull seals, wallowing in mud baths. They didn't take a blind bit of notice of us! Surrounding us was the usual bits and pieces of equipment discarded by the whalers. In

the distance, we could see a herd of reindeer, established by the whalers as a food source.

This was our last contact with South Georgia and Cape Town was 2,600 miles away, for on 1st March we headed for Africa. The trip to there was uneventful, we had fine downwind and beam winds for most of the way, sometimes strong, sometimes light, but overall good sailing. The weather gradually warmed as we slowly tracked northeast and we finally shook ourselves free of the huge tabular bergs, which in the early stages of the trip cropped up on radar (particularly at night it seemed) with monotonous regularity. We found it strange that we never came across bergy bits or growlers on this leg.

On Saturday 19th March at 01.30 we arrived at the Royal Cape Yacht Club, in thick fog to discover that there was a party in full swing in the club and that we were most welcome there. So what could we do but attend? It would have been rude not to! Also the usual problem had occurred, for the beer had run out on board long since.

The following week was also a whirl, checking in, getting Pat looked after – thankfully everything went well and by the Tuesday morning she was operated on and was as good as new. We also had to empty, clean and winterise the boat, since I intended to leave her here till the following February '06.

As I finally headed for Ireland ten days later I left *Pure Magic* in good hands and well snugged into a safe berth, scrubbed, polished and waxed, looking as well as when I had first collected her in La Rochelle. She had really looked after us so well and was due a good rest after the hectic 15,000 miles in seven months.

Len and Hazel Sheil write of West Cork Wanderings 2005

In July once again *Gay Gannet* found her way down to West Cork, to participate in the Glandore Classic Regatta which happens every two years. Her third time there, she was beginning to recognise boats and indeed people. To be in Glandore at any time is a joy, but to be there in perfect weather for this regatta is beyond compare. Think of the Italian lakes, think of the Norwegian fjords, and you are getting close. On the way down she had sailed up river to Waterford to see the Tall Ships, and had a fine berth on a pontoon from which a family gathering watched them sail out to sea. As you know the race did not start as there was no wind, but nevertheless she headed out the eight miles to view them as they waited at the start line. It was party time all round. Now in Glandore, *Gay Gannet* entered the races with great enthusiasm, and the light conditions were very suitable for the Skipper and mate, who helped her to win several prizes!! The Skipper was heard to say "*Gay Gannet* is down by the head with Waterford Crystal!!" Which only goes to show you can't keep a good boat down, in spite of age and retirement – and that goes for the Skipper and mate also! Later again she sailed on down to Kinsale, to enjoy all that that lovely town offers, and further to Crookhaven, out around the Fastnet, then in a fog bank, which was quite impressive indeed!! She stayed for several nights on the pontoon at

Sherkin, where her Skipper and mate wandered down fuchsia lined country roads, and wished these days would never end! And now she's back in her home port, back to the everyday, but like her owners, perhaps she also stops now and again to dream of times past.



Leonard Sheil on *Gay Gannet* in Glendore Bay during the Classic Regatta 2005.

A Scandinavian Odyssey

Sundowner of Beaulieu, 2005 – A Gastronomic Cruise to Southern Scandinavia

Roy Waters

Sundowner is an Oyster 39 centre cockpit ketch, built in 1980 and has served us well since 1999 when we “upgraded” from our faithful Nicholson 32 *Melandy*, which again served us well for 20 years.

This was our fourth cruise to Scandinavian waters and the planning for it began last October! In 2003 we had cruised the coast of Norway from Alesund south to Stavanger and this area is known as “Fjord Norway”. We now planned to start where we left off last time and cruise south and east from Stavanger to Oslo, and then explore the Swedish Western Skerries as far south as Göteborg. One good reason for our visits to Scandinavia is that we have very close friends in Denmark through the Boyd family of Helens Bay who had cruised extensively there in *Moidart*.

We now learned that there was to be a 25th wedding anniversary party in Denmark on 6th August and since Susie and I were invited the plan had to be amended to take in this party. As before, there would be several crew changes along the way and the planning had to take account of when people could join us and their available time.

In the end twelve people were involved although only Susie and I were on board for the whole time. The maximum at any one time was five. Finding willing and able additional crew for the North Sea passages was difficult and for the return passage we had to recruit from mainland Europe i.e. Denmark and Switzerland! The final passage plan was produced in May and called for departure from Bangor on 2nd July, with return on 22nd August. In the event this is exactly what happened and the secret is to allow plenty of time for delays due to bad weather and other circumstances! Also to keep to schedule there inevitably has to be a great deal of motoring and indeed there was very little pure sailing anywhere on this cruise.

The logistics of preparing for a cruise of this length are quite something for us and the last few days before departure were quite hectic.

I think that with my advancing years this will probably be our last “big” cruise of this nature! It would be nice to just walk out of the house, lock the front door and go where the winds take us with no deadlines to meet!

On Friday 1st July Susie and I plus our stalwart North Sea man, Chris McFerran spent the night on board the boat at Bangor Marina. The weather was fine but the forecast dreadful! We departed Bangor at 04.00 on Saturday 2nd, still in fine weather but by 10.10 we were securely moored in

Ballycastle Marina as the wind increased to southwest force 7 or 8 in the North Channel. At least we had made a start and got the first 43 miles behind us! Home-made meatloaf with trimmings for supper on board – a good start on most of our cruises! Later in the day the wind was fierce but abated quite a bit during the night. I was up at 05.15 and with a more promising forecast we departed Ballycastle at 08.30. We had a fast run across the North Channel and up the Sound of Jura to reach Oban by 18.50 where we berthed at Ardentraive Bay. Ashore for showers in the refurbished toilet block, supper on board of home-made pork stew with trimmings and early to bed.

With the schedule in mind we were up at 03.45 and departed Oban at 04.00. It was a fine dry morning with only light airs and we easily motored the 28 miles up Loch Linnhe to reach Corpach by 08.00. On occasions like this I enjoy sardines on toast for breakfast at about 06.00 and on this occasion Chris joined me in the feast! We got into the sea lock of the Caledonian Canal right away and with this early start we reached the top of Fort Augustus locks by 17.10 where we tied up for the night. Ashore for showers at the adjacent toilet block followed by M&S curried chicken and rice for supper. There were about eight assorted Swedish yachts nearby whom we gathered were on a Scottish cruise in company and had made their landfall at Whitehills on the Moray Firth. They had a barbecue ashore that evening on the grass and the next morning it was as clean as if they had never been there. The Caledonian Canal is “twinned” with the Gota Canal in Sweden (which we have transited and fully recommend) so perhaps that was one reason for their presence.



Departing Stavanger – Susie steering and Queen Elizabeth II arriving.

Up at 08.00 on Tuesday 5th but did not get into the locks until 10.45. Chris had time to visit the Fort Augustus butcher for haggis. McDougall's haggis is one of the best we have ever come across. Despite the delay we got down Loch Ness and the rest of the way to Muirtown Basin at Inverness by 17.45 where we berthed at the marina. We were back on schedule! Showers ashore in the still-to-be-refurbished toilet block and of course haggis and carrots for supper – beautiful! Wednesday 6th was a scheduled day in port with laundry sessions in the toilet block and essential shopping at the close by Co-op supermarket. Chris walked into Inverness and booked supper for four of us at the Mustard Seed restaurant. This was to be Susie's birthday dinner, having reached a magic number of years today. Earlier there were presents and cards which had been smuggled aboard during the logistics operation. John Melvin, from Bangor but living and working in London, arrived at 13.30 and we now had our outward North Sea crew on board. Supper at the Mustard Seed was excellent.

Up at 08.00 the next morning we visited the fuel berth before heading for Clachnaharry and the sea lock, where we locked out with three other boats at 11.30, and set off on the 90 mile passage to Peterhead. The tide was against us for the first two or three hours but we made good progress under engine in light airs and calms to reach Peterhead at 01.00 on Friday 8th July. Having been here a number of times we had no trouble finding our way into this huge harbour and the small marina tucked into one corner. Later that morning we took a taxi into town, about two miles away where Chris was determined to locate a source of duty free stores. This we found but the source was only geared up for commercial ships and large orders. In any event the prices of beer and wines were just as cheap or



Entering Sotokanalen, Hunnebostrand, Norway.

cheaper off the shelf at Morrison's supermarket and we were not after spirits. Morrison's also provided a family sized cottage pie for our supper and after showers at the excellent toilet block it was early to bed once again.

The 05.30 forecast on 9th July was fine for us – high pressure building up and only light favourable winds expected. We departed Peterhead at 06.00 and the 255 mile passage across to Stavanger took just under 37 hours and was totally uneventful. We carried full sail most of the time but without the engine it would have been a very slow passage. Most of the oil and gas rigs were passed in daylight but they are so well lit up that they are no problem at night and show up well on the radar. We reached Stavanger at 18.50 on Sunday and berthed on the quay in the Vagen Basin, exactly from where we had departed for home two years ago and right outside the Peking Palace Restaurant. Excellent Chinese carry-out for supper! The boat remained at Stavanger all day Monday and Chris and John departed at 09.00 to catch pre-booked flights home. We were on schedule! The laundry was dealt with at the close by toilet facilities but the main task was a visit to the local chandlers to purchase Norwegian charts in their 200 series, some 14 in all to cover the coast to Oslo and on down to the Swedish border. While Norway is very expensive the charts were actually each about £2.00 cheaper than the equivalent B.A. charts in the UK. I am not into electronic charts but even if I was I would not attempt all the scenic inshore passages on this coast without these large scale paper charts. We did not come here to simply go out to sea between ports! I spent a couple of hours sorting out these charts and laying off tracks through the various channels. On our previous visit to Norway I had purchased as many charts to cover



In the Blindlea, Norway – Virginia, Susie and Soren.



In the Swedish Western Skerries.

Alesund to Stavanger and one day during the winter Michael Murphy from the Royal Irish Y.C. phoned to say he had read my article in the 2003 ICC Journal and was planning a similar cruise. He came to visit and I offloaded these charts at something better than half price.

Our crew was now reduced to two for about four days – Susie and myself. We had Norwegian salmon from the nearby fish market for supper and decided that it was much tastier than that obtainable at home! On 12th July we departed Stavanger at 08.05 and motored the 53 miles round the coast to Egersund in mainly light airs. This is one part of the Norwegian coast which is relatively plain with no inshore passages. We had some fog on the way out, during which we encountered the *Queen Elizabeth II* on her way in. We were in the approaches to Egersund western entrance when the wind quite quickly filled in to about west force 6 and brought more fog with it. This is a narrow entrance and we hove to for a while but with no sign of clearance we bore away and headed for the southern entrance which is wider. The fog did eventually lift and we found our way in, and noticing a Statoil fuel berth stopped there at 17.00 to top up on diesel before entering the “creek”. Any free berths there appeared too small and the fingers too short for us so we moored on what appeared to be a commercial quay along with a number of other boats. There were no facilities and we were some way from town so we just stayed on board and had tinned chicken and mushroom pie for supper. No showers!

Next day we motored or sailed on south and east and in favourable conditions got as far as Mandal – 64 miles in 8.5 hours. Again this was an open sea passage a mile or two off the coast. Here we managed to find a vacant undersized berth and managed to

squeeze in – just. When the Norwegian pilot books refer to a “smabat havnen” they mean just that and for boats not over about 30 feet! We had showers ashore and Susie produced corned beef hash for supper – one of my favourites. On Thursday 14th July we departed Mandal at 07.45 and covered the 26 miles to Kristiansand in four hours by lunchtime. The guest harbour and outside pontoons were crowded with boats but we berthed alongside a steel Nauticat who was not leaving today. We soon had another boat moored outside us. Ashore for showers and laundry later followed by M&S chunky steak, potatoes and carrots for supper.

The next morning we ended up alongside the pontoon with three other boats outside us. The whole place was packed with boats but it

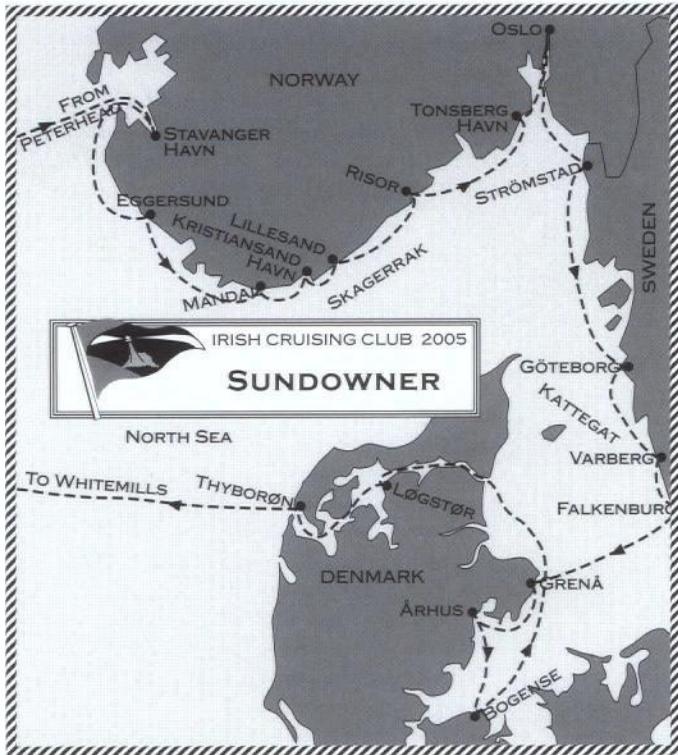
is a major ferry port and apparently popular for crew changes. The town is pretty and we duly explored it that morning.

Our own crew change occurred that afternoon when Virginia and Soren arrived from Denmark together with three year old Emily. The three older children did not join us on this occasion. They had motored from home to Hirtshals in the north of Jutland, parked the car and come across to Kristiansand on the fast ferry. We departed Kristiansand at 15.40 and motored the 19 miles to Lillisand via the Blindlea. This is one of the most scenic and sometimes very narrow inshore passages in this part of Norway and is a must for any visiting yacht which has taken the trouble to get this far! In places we were passing close to people’s front doors and looking into their houses! We arrived at 18.40 and found a berth on a pontoon some way out of town. Fresh chicken breasts in wine, new potatoes and carrots for supper.

From here on it was to be intricate inshore passages all the



In the Blindlea.



way until we got south of Göteborg in Sweden. Careful marking and plotting on the charts was necessary and I freely admit that a hand held GPS in the cockpit along with the chart in use ensured that we never got lost! On 16th July we spent just under seven hours covering the 45 mile inshore route to Risør – all very interesting and scenic and after a reconnaissance trip around the harbour, berthed outside four other boats at the mole. The inside berths and pontoons were definitely for smabats. All ashore in due course for showers at the local toilet facility and supper on board was M&S chicken masala with rice. Sunday 17th July saw us motoring the 14 miles to Kragerø where we berthed alongside the wharf for about two hours. An interesting place but no shops open and we proceeded onwards, looking for an interesting anchorage. Soren, who is really a “local” was on the lookout for an interesting place and we looked at at least one which was rather crowded and we moved on! We ended up in Langokilen, a tight remote and very scenic anchorage and this was the only occasion during the whole cruise where we actually ANCHORED! Our new electric anchor windlass, fitted last winter, performed admirably! Other boats were moored to the rocks, either end on or sideways on plus two others at anchor, but we were happy at anchor. Soren has sailed with us many times and previously sailed with Trevor Boyd and family in *Moidart* after he met Virginia. He has a liking for remote and exotic places and without him I do not think we would have visited the remote Danish outpost of Christianso. On one passage in the approaches to Kalmarsund in southeast Sweden he wanted us to visit a remote and small man made harbour on the island of Uitklippen. In the prevailing weather conditions and said island being surrounded by rocks I talked him out of it and we proceeded on to Kalmar which is a beautiful Swedish town!

At Langokilen there was some swimming off the stern of the boat in idyllic conditions. Even three year old Emily took part but I declined! More chicken breasts for supper with celery and rice. The next morning Soren got us out of this idyllic hole without hitting anything and we went on to Valle, all of two miles, where we tied up for a couple of hours for shopping at the Spar market. On then towards Oslo Fjord with a look in at

another “hole in the rocks” – Vakersholmen – but too many boats in there already and no room for us to anchor. We reached Tønsberg at 18.15 and got alongside an outer pontoon in the guest haven. Weather hot and sunny all day and only light airs. All ashore for showers and then supper on board, this time local fishcakes with trimmings – very tasty!

The Simonsens were having a happy time with us but decided they really must get home to prepare for the party on 6th August. On 19th July we were under way by 09.00 and on the last leg to Oslo with some interesting narrow passages and bridges to negotiate before we got out into Oslo Fjord. We reached Oslo by 16.00 and found a berth directly alongside an outer pontoon in the Aker Brygge Marina. We were two days ahead of schedule and here we remained for a week. The marina was expensive but had all facilities and was virtually in the middle of town! The Simonsens departed that evening on the overnight ferry to Hirtshals to pick up their car and return home. Susie and I had time to relax a day before the next visitations! After some difficulty I located an Admiralty chart agent and was able to get Swedish charts covering from the border to well south of Göteborg. A pilot book in Swedish was also a good buy since the drawings and photographs were excellent.

On Thursday 21st July, our eldest son Geoffrey arrived together with his carer and they spent five nights at the reasonably close Rica Victoria Hotel. Geoffrey is confined to a wheelchair and is no longer able to go sailing with us. However a happy time was had by all and there were visits to most of the tourist hot spots including the Fram Museum and the Maritime Museum. In the evenings we ate ashore at one or other of the numerous waterfront restaurants on the Aker Brygge. This area was once a shipyard which has been redeveloped and is certainly very lively. With my liking for trains and trams I had several enjoyable journeys on the Oslo tram system and the local Metro.

On Monday 25th July our younger son Robert showed up together with girlfriend Jenna and a mountain of gear, including a large suitcase. We already had a suitcase and bag for them, put aboard before leaving Bangor! Geoffrey and carer Jamie flew home the next morning and we departed Oslo to head south.

We reached Strömstad in Sweden which is just on the border by 1750 to find a very crowded marina but we managed to berth outside three other boats on a pontoon. Ashore for showers and a little exploration but supper was on board – Norwegian meat balls with trimmings and another one of my favourites! Next day it was on south following all the interesting and scenic inshore passages and we reached Hunne Bostrand by 16.45 to berth outside three other boats at the quay. Everywhere in the harbour was very crowded and the toilets some distance away. Here the dinghy was inflated for probably the only time on this cruise and Robert took Jenna off on a tour of the harbour. They had to find something to eat ashore but Susie and I made do with fresh salmon and trimmings on board.

On 28th July we were under way by 09.00 from the middle of a trot of six boats at the quay and followed other boats south through the Sotekanal and thence through more interesting and scenic inshore passages including the middle of towns such as Kungsham, Gullholmen, Kyrkesund and Marstrand. There was a constant procession of boats of all descriptions in both directions and careful attention was necessary at all times, both to the charts and other boats. We were definitely on the “M1” of the Swedish Western Skerries and indeed on the Swedish charts the routes are shown. We did notice on the few open stretches that there were far fewer boats and concluded that many of the local boats never go to sea! They don’t have to since there is such a vast area of sheltered water available! We noticed the

Some Notes and Thoughts on Cruising – Then and Now

Roy Waters

Bureaucracy

In four extended visits to Denmark, Sweden and Norway I have yet to meet a Customs or Immigration officer. On our first visit to Norway (non EEC) we flew a yellow flag at the crosstrees for some days before a harbour official asked me what it was and then told me to take it down.

The harbour authorities and marina operators are equally "laid back". I have never yet had to fill out a form or answer questions about the boat or those on board. You just pay your money and collect a sticker or tag to attach to the boat. There are ticket collectors in some places but some even have parking ticket machines where it is a case of "pay and display".

The harbours and marinas in Scandinavia are basically "free for all" and when under pressure for space we noticed that visiting boats often just ignore "reserved" notices. You just roll up and park wherever you can!

However one sunny Sunday afternoon in 2003 off Fair Isle we were boarded by a gang of UK Customs officers from a smart and well armed Customs cutter. We had no drugs and no illegal immigrants on board but the questioning and form filling took for ever. We had a similar experience off Gijon in northern Spain a few years ago but when it was all over the boarding gang told us that they were only the "sea" Customs and when we entered the port I had to report to the harbour office and go through exactly the same procedure all over again with the "shore" Customs! No doubt some other members have had a similar experience. I believe Portugal is worse but I have never been to Portugal!

When we went into Whitehills on the Moray Firth, on the way back from Denmark this year, I mentioned to the harbour-master that we had two non EU nationals on board and to be on the safe side I filled out an "entry" form, which he then faxed to the Immigration Office in Aberdeen. While we were departing from Whitehills the telephone rang (the telephone always rings when something critical is going on!) Susie answered it and it was the Immigration Office in Aberdeen. We had a USA citizen on board and must fill out a special form for her (in the past she has been close to deportation more than once!) She told them that she had been officially resident in the UK for about 35 years and had been married to the Captain of the ship for nearly 25 years. That appeared to satisfy them and we went on our way!

Marinas and shore facilities

When I first got involved in serious offshore cruising and racing in the mid 1960s, marinas and their facilities were virtually unheard of in our part of the world. Most yachts in their home ports were on a chain mooring and not always in a sheltered and safe place as was the case at RNIYC Cultra. When cruising one visited anchorages and got ashore by dinghy. Any place where a local hotel would offer baths or showers to visiting yachtsmen earned stars in the pilot books! Other than that crews generally remained unwashed and if everyone smelled the same you never noticed! It is perhaps a

sign of the times that on our recent Scandinavian cruise, with over thirty ports of call, we only anchored once. The dinghy was only inflated and launched once so that young crew members could go for a "jolly" around a harbour! However, with my advancing years I am just as happy to be marina based and to be able to step ashore off the boat in ports of call! Many of the Scandinavian ports involve berthing bow-on to a pontoon or pier and to this end many of the local boats have split pulpits and even bow ladders to facilitate getting ashore. I also have noticed that many of them have very little in the way of "ground tackle" and very insubstantial stemhead fittings!

While the Scandinavian marinas are generally informal and with no paperwork, in home waters it is more normal to call ahead by telephone or VHF and be allocated a berth. This is fine if you know the marina or have a numbered plan of it, or if the pontoons and berths are well marked! This was not the case in Craobh Haven this year when we arrived in somewhat adverse conditions. With the help of other yachtspersons we found that the allocated berth was already occupied but managed to get safely into an adjacent berth

With ladies on board the toilet facilities ashore are all important and on arrival anywhere the first thing is to check out the facilities. Are they free and if not do they require coins or tokens. In this case what coin or token is required and how many minutes do you get for one? What about the laundry facilities and are there instructions in English?

"Red" Diesel, Gas and Credit Cards!

With the possibility of "red" tax free diesel being denied to pleasure craft in the UK and presumably the ROI as well, so far as I can see this has already happened in Scandinavia and happened in Spain some time ago. We paid what appeared to be filling stations prices for DERV in Norway, Sweden and Denmark and in Thyborøn, Denmark we could not even visit the fuel barges in the commercial fishing harbour. The tourist office lent us a trolley and 10 litre cans to obtain DERV from the nearest filling station!

We use "Camping Gaz" and have had no trouble obtaining refills anywhere in Europe until we went to Norway, where nothing they have is compatible with anywhere else! On our first visit we had to buy a local bottle of gas, plus regulator, outright but I managed to sell same back to a dealer for half price before we left. This time we carried extra bottles which kept us going until Denmark. Incidentally the bottles you get there in exchange are newly painted and sometimes even wrapped in brown paper, not the rusty items you pick up at home!

Like the GPS navigation system, credit cards are undoubtedly the "best thing since sliced bread" provided you are sensible and don't run into debt! We have paid for nearly everything by credit card on our cruises until we got to Denmark, where with some exceptions they will only accept CASH! We once filled up with diesel at Thyborøn before sailing for home but were then delayed for an hour while the pump attendant ran Susie to a bank in his car to obtain CASH.

same thing five years ago in the Swedish Eastern Skerries in the Baltic. We made it to the small marina on Björkö Island by 17.15 which was less crowded and very pleasant. More Norwegian meat balls! We were now only 12 miles from Göteborg.

Two hours the next morning got us to the Lille Bommen Marina in the centre of Göteborg and here we passed an outgoing boat to find that a pontoon berth marked "Over 12 M" was vacant and beat another boat to get there first! This was exactly where we had berthed five years ago after transiting the

Gota and Trolhatte Canal system! By evening the marina was packed tight with plenty of double and triple banking! John Clementson of *Faustina II* (RNIYC and ICC) came to say a brief hello but sailed almost immediately. This was the only other ICC boat we met the whole cruise. There were very few British boats and I don't think any Irish ones at all! Anyway we were on schedule and Elizabeth Rufer from Switzerland arrived later that afternoon having spent about the last 24 hours travelling by train from Basel! Elizabeth is not a sailor but has sailed with us a number of times including a somewhat adverse North Sea passage! The two young ones disappeared somewhere up town and the rest of us had a satisfactory supper at the nearby café on the quay

Sunday 30th July was spent in Göteborg on various activities. My own special activity was a No.11 tram trip to Saltholmen and back in the south of the city. Here there is a huge marina and ferries operating to many of the off-lying islands. The heavens opened during the day with heavy rain plus thunder and lightening! Baked fresh salmon, potatoes and broccoli for supper except for those who are fussy eaters, while the rain continued to pour down! We did not get away until 11.30 the next morning due to crew problems but made it south to arrive at Varberg by 18.40 – 45 miles. After the first couple of hours we were out in open water with only isolated rocks and buoys to check off on the way, and a very notable reduction in other traffic!

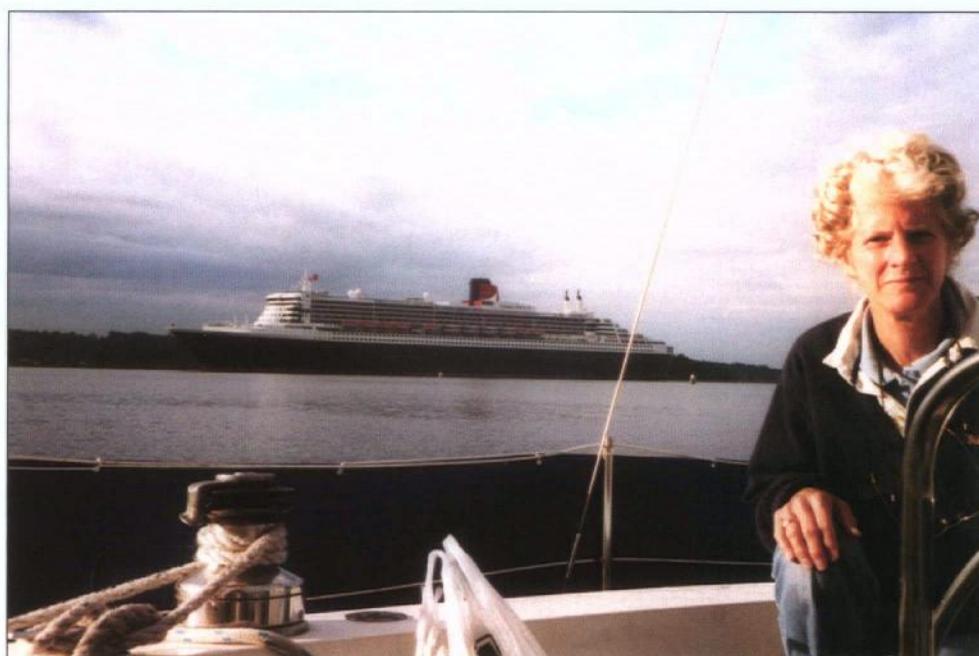
We berthed outside one other boat at the visitor's quay and it was much less crowded than recent ports! Next day it was another easy 20 miles south to Falkenberg where we found a "smabat havnen" at the local yacht club. After an attempt to moor in a reserved berth we were directed on to a pier right at the yacht club and effectively blocked their dinghy slipway. Here we spent a quiet night with the facilities close at hand. The young ones were still doing their own thing, and were really on a "cruise" rather than being crew members. The rest of us were still dining very well on salmon and/or meatballs!

The next deadline was the party in Denmark on 6th August and on 2nd August we left Falkenberg at 09.00 to cross the Kattegat to Grenå, a 60 mile passage. We had wind from the southwest, quite fresh and with a nasty sea so that a possible call at Anholt Island was not made. I had no large scale chart and the approaches are apparently difficult across off lying

sandbanks. Reaching Grenå at 17.45 we found it as crowded as on our last visit but managed to berth outside a very smart German yacht on the outer quay. Chinese carry-out for the passengers and corned beef hash for the rest of us! Ashore for showers as usual. There was now a day "in hand" so we visited a new port for us – Århus. The German inside us had said he was leaving at 06.00 so we woke him up at 06.00 and left first. The 42 miles to Århus took until 12.15 when we came upon another crowded harbour. Unusually for this part of the world there was a berthing master ashore who directed us into a pile mooring with our bow against the quay wall and closed to the local boat club and facilities. Århus is a major and very busy Danish port but once out of the harbour area it was a pretty town. Århus citizens are reputed to be very "thick" but we did not find this to be so. We had a very pleasant supper at an upstairs restaurant overlooking the yacht harbour. The next morning we covered the remaining 41 miles to Bogense on the north coast of Fynn, mostly motoring from buoy to buoy and sometimes through buoied channels. The waters around Denmark are very shallow, especially in the Kattegat, and without careful navigation it is not difficult to run aground! At the huge Bogense marina we found a vacant space between pile moorings and bow on to a fixed pier, a common arrangement in this part of the World but for us it is a matter of finding piles that are at least 4 metres apart! This was the end of our outward passage and here we remained for four days. While the town is about a mile away the marina has very good facilities and the restaurant above the marina offices is to be recommended. Friday 5th August was rest day but we visited the town for exploration and shopping – last here in *Melandy* in 1996! Fresh Danish friskadellers for supper on board. The weather was "wet and windy" but should be dry tomorrow!

Saturday 6th August was Party Day and we were all up at 07.00 and on our way by bus and train to Odense. Robert and Jenna were staying with the Simonsens and then flying home on Monday so we got rid of one large suitcase and other luggage which had been occupying the pilot berth! At Odense Station we met up with several members of the Boyd tribe who had come from various directions and ended up at the Simonsens in good time for a smorgasbord lunch. This was the start of a monumental garden party which went on all day and well into the next day as far as I know. There were tents and caravans all round the garden but Susie and I had very good accommodation at a B&B in open country not far away. The highlight in the evening was a spit roast whole pig which had been cooking away all day, plus innumerable delicious trimmings. The beer and wine flowed freely!

The B&B provided a very good breakfast but we had a second open air breakfast at the Simonsens before we headed back to Bogense with Elizabeth to await the arrival of two crew who were joining for the return North Sea passage. With the departure of Robert and Jenna, Susie set about a major boat-cleaning operation with the assistance of Elizabeth before the new crew arrived later in the day. Benjamin Krahnenbuhl's mother is a close friend of Elizabeth's. He is young and fit and a computer nerd working for a Swiss watch company. He



Departing Oslo and *Queen Elizabeth II* arriving.



In the Limfjorden, Denmark, passing windmills – Susie, Rory and Jorgen.

had also done some sailing on a charter boat in the Mediterranean. Jorgen Fibiger is a friend of the Simonsens with sailing experience and crossed the North Sea with us five years ago. However he is not much younger than me and like me also retired. Soren was longing to come but just could not take any more holiday! All went ashore for supper at the marina restaurant.

After a visit to the fuel berth the next morning we were under way at 08.15 and put in 69 miles of motoring to get back to Grenå by 17.40. The aim now was to try and get ahead of schedule because of Benjamin's time limit. We had some sail up in the light south and west winds. Meatballs for supper on board and ashore for showers. Up at 05.30 on Tuesday 9th August to find a fine morning and only light airs. Under way at 05.50 to head for the Limfjorden and get as far as possible that day. We passed Hals Barre at 10.55 and were in the Limfjord an hour later to pass through the opening bridges at Alborg at lunchtime. Good progress continued until about 17.30 when we were proceeding along a narrow buoys channel between sand-banks. The sun was in our eyes and there was a stationary vessel ahead partly blocking the channel. The helmsman got confused and the result was that we got out of the channel and ran aground on a sandbank. The stationary vessel turned out to be a fisheries research vessel and Jorgen, who spoke to them, said they considered it was their fault that we ran aground. They therefore came and pulled us back into "deep" water and we proceeded on through the Agger Sund lifting bridge to reach Løgstør at 18.30. This was an interesting little place to spend a night with the yacht berths being in the entrance to a canal. We even got directly alongside the quay. A mixture of lasagne and spaghetti bolognaisse

for supper! Good facilities almost beside us.

Wednesday 10th saw us on the last leg to Thyborøn but the weather was now going "down the drain". A fresh west wind freshened more during the day. Through the Oddesund lifting bridge to face force 7 to 8 "on the nose" for the last couple of hours of "open" water to Thyborøn. In these shallow waters the seas become short, steep and nasty and there was some serious pitching and plenty of spray flying aft. Benjamin was not feeling well and I think having second thoughts about the North Sea! Anyway we reached Thyborøn at 1730 and found an alongside berth in the Nørre Inderhaven which is the yacht part of this large harbour. There were a number of other yachts here including some under the Red Ensign, and some of them old

gaffers with lots of young people on board. These had all been at the Tall Ships event at Fredrikstad, near Oslo, and were on their way south to Holland for some other event. One was the old French pilot cutter *Jolie Brise*, built in 1913 and famous for many long voyages but mainly for winning the first Fastnet Race and two subsequent races. She was in beautiful condition and belongs to a school in Wiltshire! There are two excellent and very informal restaurants right on the quay and we all went there for very upmarket fish and chips. Showers and laundry also very convenient. The wind howled in from the northwest all night and the breaking seas in the Thyborøn "Canal" (the way out into the North Sea) were pretty to look at as long as you were safely in the harbour! These seas were also breaking over the harbour wall.

Next day the wind kept going at northwest 7 or 8 and no boats attempted to go to sea! Trips ashore for shopping, laundry, showers and some sight-seeing. I must recommend the



Through the middle of Marstrand, Swedish Western Skerries. Susie is concentrating!

local Spar since it accepts credit cards, not generally welcome in Denmark! No boats, yachts included, attempted to go to sea today and the close by restaurants got plenty of patronage again this evening. No change in the weather on 12th August so on my instigation we all went to Lemvig on the train, about 15 miles to the south. A pretty place, with its harbour on the Limfjorden, unlike Thyborøn which is more comparable to an Irish or Scottish fishing port. In the evening the British yacht *Ice Maiden* went to sea after various tribalistic rituals with other young crews and of course a large crowd gathered on the sea wall to watch her progress out of the "Canal". The next morning I was up at 06.30 to look at the weather – no better – and noted that *Ice Maiden* was back alongside and all battened down. There was no life on that boat until later in the day. We topped up with diesel today as had some of the other boats. Five years ago we went to the fuel barges in the South Harbour, which the fishing vessels use, but not now! No "red" diesel for pleasure boats any more! The Tourist Office provide a four wheeled trolley and six 10 litre containers which you then take on a 20 minute walk to the nearest garage and fill up from the DERV pump. We did two trips and the price of diesel worked out at about Stg. £0.85 per litre which was actually cheaper than we had paid at Bogense Marina. The cheapest diesel we obtained this cruise in Scandinavia was at Egersund in Norway.

In the afternoon we had a visit from Robin and Wendy Boyd and their two small children. Having been at the Boyd/Simonsen party they were still in Denmark on holiday and not far away. We all had supper ashore in one of the adjacent restaurants, and when they left they took Elizabeth with them to begin her train journey home to Switzerland via Simonsens in Odense. We now had four crew members on board for the return North Sea crossing – 1 Danish Viking (Jorgen), 1 Swiss Computer Expert (Benjamin), 1 American (Susie) and 1 British (me) – an International crew!

That evening *Jolie Brise* and some other old gaffers departed into what was still quite a fresh northwest wind and the usual crowd on the sea wall watched them make it out to sea. Once clear of the approaches they would have a favourable wind. The wind went down overnight and the forecast was even for some easterly wind. We departed Thyborøn at 07.00 on Sunday 14th August and headed out in light airs on the direct course to the Moray Firth – west-northwest – with mizzen and headsail set, plus of course the engine! This did not last for long and we were soon close hauled on the starboard tack and heading for about Aberdeen or points south. Suffice to say that the first two days of the crossing were uncomfortable even though we never had more than about force 5 wind – "on the nose". This time most of the rigs we encountered were passed at some distance off. Susie did well to produce hot food, Danish meat balls one night and M&S chunky chicken the next. We kept watch, ate and slept and that was about it! When the sea moderated we appreciated the dolphins which came to visit and Jorgen would insist on going forward to hang over the bow and talk to them!

That meant someone had to sit in the cockpit to keep an eye on him.

We made our landfall at Kinnairds Head at lunchtime on Tuesday 16th August and by now it was flat calm! We would have reached Inverness at about 03.00, so telephoned the new

marina at Whitehills and went in there for about 4 hours. It is accessible at all states of the tide but is very "tight" with little room to manoeuvre. It is of course an old fishing harbour. We were made very welcome, made use of the facilities, had supper and went to sea again at 20.45. We then spent an hour looking for a reportedly broken down jet ski in an adjacent bay at the request of Aberdeen Coastguard. Some other boat came out of Banff to its rescue and we were stood down! The night passage to Inverness was quiet and uneventful and we reached Clachnaharry Sea Lock at 08.00 as intended and got in at 08.10. By 10.00, having topped up with diesel we were on a pontoon in Muirtown Basin and here we stayed for the rest of the day, and the next day. On Thursday evening we all met at the Mustard Seed Restaurant for another excellent meal. Benjamin spent the night in a hotel and departed for Switzerland early the next morning. He had survived the North Sea but somehow, despite being teetotal, his nose had turned a bright red and he was worried about the reception he would receive back at work! There were now three of us left on board for the remainder of the passage home.

We started the canal transit on Friday 19th August as soon as we could get into Muirtown Locks. Thereafter progress was very good and we made it to the top of Fort Augustus Locks before the canal shut down for the night. Fort Augustus haggis, carrots and potatoes for supper – of course! On Saturday we made it to Corpach Basin and spent the night there with supper ashore at the nearby Tradewinds Pub, which was full of noisy locals. The forecast was now looking ominous for mid week and so we pressed on as fast as possible. We were out of the Sea Lock by 08.20 on Sunday, bypassed Oban and got to Craobh Haven by 15.45 in worsening conditions.

We managed to get into a tight berth with the help of other sailors – the marina staff were no help, made use of the facilities and had supper ashore at the closeby "Lord of the Glens" It was a wet miserable evening with a fresh southwest wind.

Up for the Clyde Coastguard and BBC forecasts at 05.15 and it looked good for today with wind northwest 4 to 5 but some "nasties" brewing up to the west. We were under way by 06.00 and covered the 96 miles to Bangor in about 13 hours, reaching our berth in the marina by 19.15. We spent the night on board rather than go home to an empty house and had tinned chicken pie and tinned beefsteak pie for supper!

The decommissioning took all next morning with several car trips to and fro but we were home by lunchtime. Jorgen spent a week with us before returning home to Denmark, with two days in Dublin on the way. The cruise had gone according to plan and we had kept to our schedule – departure on 2nd July and return on 22th August!

Total Time On Cruise	51 Days 15 Hrs 15 Mins
Total Time Under Way (Ex Canal)	12 Days 08 Hrs 15 Mins
Total Distance (Ex Canal)	1892 Miles
General Average Speed	6.39 Knots
Total Distance (Inc Canal)	2012 Miles

Joyster in Macronesia

David Whitehead

Macronesia – also called Macronisia – is a name given to the North Atlantic islands of the Madeira, Canary, Azores and Cap Verde archipelagos. Some authorities also include the islands of the south Atlantic; Fernando do Noronha, Martin Vaz, Isla Trinidad, Ascension, St Helena and the Tristan da Cunha group. This makes sense geologically as those islands, both ancient and modern, were also formed by volcanic action along the mid-Atlantic rift. I had not come across this term before a planned visit to some of them inclined me to take the RCC Pilotage Foundation guide to the Atlantic Islands more seriously than I had previously. Now that I have discovered the term I am happy to use it as it provides the sense of the coherence we felt ourselves about *Joyster*'s cruise in 2004/2005.

Last season (2004) my wife Marie and I sailed *Joyster* from Vilagarcia in Galicia – where she wintered in the marina – to Cascais in Portugal. There our son Duncan joined us after a tortuous journey from Ibiza where he had been at a stag party. For several days Cascais had experienced strong and blustery winds with 40 knots being quite common and 30- 35 the norm. We went out for a look one day but turned back after a couple of hours, having found the course for our intended destination of Porto Santo, one of the Madeira group of islands, to be close

hauled in 30-35 knots apparent wind with a 2.5 m swell and a lumpy sea. This weather pattern showed no sign of letting up so after several days of it we decided we would leave the boat in Cascais and return later in the summer to continue the cruise.

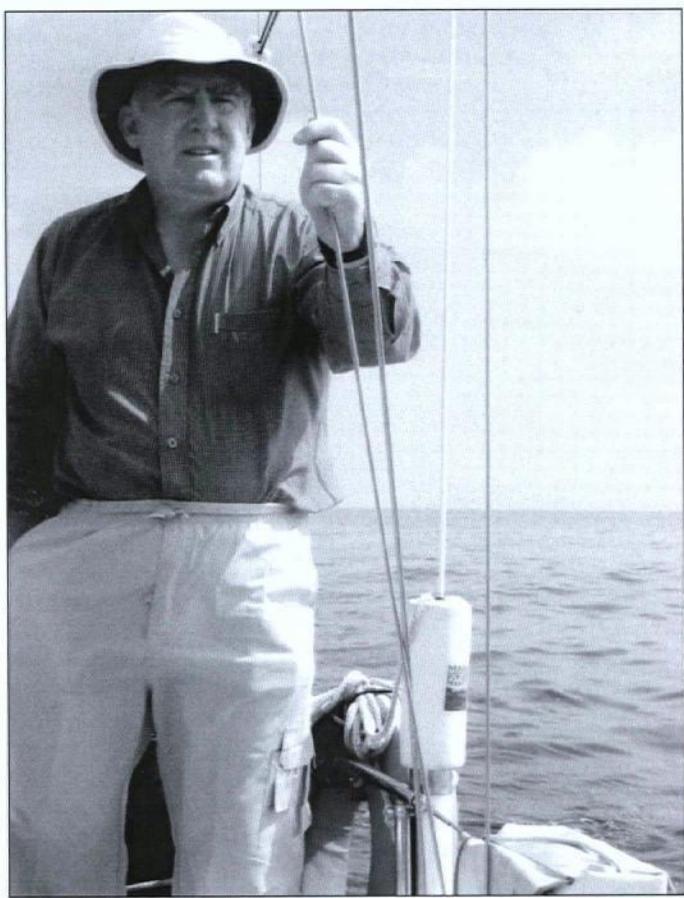
In early September 2004 Keith Hunt, Duncan and I returned to Cascais, stored and fuelled the ship, had a great dinner and left for Porto Santo in a flat calm at 09.30 on 5th September. After a few hours of motoring we found a moderate breeze at northwest force 3/4 in which we could just carry the mizzen staysail on our planned course. For the next few days we had the sort of passage that one normally only dreams about, a close to beam reach in glorious sunshine and a slight sea just ahead of the beam. We ate well, drank well – but in moderation of course – enjoyed the sun, sea, sky and stars and made daily runs of 31, 128, 145, 132 and 102 miles. In all we motored for only 18 hours, most of it on the day before landfall when the wind dropped very light. We made out Porto Santo just before midnight on 8th September. As there were reported to be a number of unlit ship mooring buoys close to the harbour entrance we dropped the main and trickled along for the remaining hours of darkness so as to enter the marina at first light, tying up alongside at 07.45 on 9th September.

After a couple of days in Porto Santo, where we "painted ourselves in" on the harbour wall, toured the island by rental car and basked in the sunshine we moved on to Madeira – having another perfect sail in a light easterly – 31 miles – and berthed in Quinta do Lorde Marina at 17.30 on 11th September. We spent a couple of days as tourists and whetted our appetites for more of Madeira before closing down the ship which was to be left afloat in Madeira over the winter. Duncan and I left for home while Keith headed for Porto, Portugal, to walk the Camino de Peregrinos to Santiago de Compostela.

Memories of this passage will linger long and resurface often – it was pure magic.

Marie and I spent the month of February 2005 aboard in Madeira but the weather was generally awful. We had five days of continuous rain, seven days of gales or severe gales and 10 days of mixed rain, wind, fog and low scudding cloud. There were substantial snowfalls on the highest ground and travelling around the island was seriously impeded by numerous landslides blocking the minor roads. That left only six days of decent weather, two of which we spent on Porto Santo where we basked in glorious sunshine while Madeira itself was shrouded in cloud and rain. Still we enjoyed some good walking on the cliff paths and along the levadas, played each of the three golf courses, dined and wined well and took the mandatory afternoon tea in Reeds Hotel. Our favourite place was the Casa Velha de Paliero – now owned by the Blandy's who have sold Reeds to the Simplon-Orient Express group. Casa Velha is elegant and comfortable, has lovely gardens, splendid food and impeccable service. It is relatively inexpensive by Irish standards.

Madeira is notable for the extent and excellence of its motorway network – constructed largely of long tunnels through the ridges and stunning reinforced concrete viaducts over the intervening valleys. A good half of the thirty or so of



Joyster's skipper.

these bridges would dwarf our Liffey valley crossing in scale and length – and there are no tolls whatsoever. With a population of 230,000 Madeira has a far better motorway network than Ireland and it was built in only a few years for a few hundred millions of euros. John Bourke observed that the advantage of bridges and tunnels is they do not involve having to buy much land from farmers with relatives in Government; nor do the Madeiran authorities have to negotiate endlessly with different County Councils, Town Commissions nor a multitude of local and alien pressure groups!!

Unfortunately the shore facilities in Quinta de Lorde were still under construction and, while they look as if they will be world class when they are finished, we had to make do with primitive showers and toilets in cold and draughty Portakabins.

I returned to Madeira with John Bourke and Keith Hunt on 25th May 2005 to find the weather in top form. We picked up a rental car, dropped our bags on *Joyster* and drove into Funchal where we watched the bizarre victory of Liverpool in the European Soccer Championship, at the English pub, and then ate well at the restaurant Gaviao in Avenida Santa Maria. The following day was a public holiday and the boatyard was closed so we spent it visiting the spectacular “Swiss Valley” and driving over the island to the trout hatchery at Ribeiro Frio where we had an enjoyable walk along the Levada and an excellent lunch of grilled sardines.

On Friday 27th *Joyster* was lifted out for antifouling in Canical and this was accomplished using a truly gigantic boat lift – apparently the most powerful in Europe. *Joyster* was completely dwarfed by a machine that could hoist a 500 ton coaster. I was worried about how it would cope with our sail drive but a snorkel-equipped member of the boatyard team positioned the slings and in no time we were safely ashore. The lift-out was very expensive but the yard explained their charges were a result of the cost of operating the enormous boat lift, normally used for big Tunny boats and small coasters. If there is a next time I would go to lift out in Porto Santo where there is a normal, yacht-sized, boat lift and the charges are more normal.

The next day, Saturday, while we bought stores for the trip in the a supermarket in Funchal (not knowing there was one much closer in Machico) Joao –the marina captain – antifouled *Joyster* and by mid afternoon we were back in the water. John



Cliff walking, Punta San Lorenço, Madeira.

and Keith motored her back to the marina. On this very short passage back the temperature gauge indicated the engine was overheating so John stopped the motor for 15 minutes to let it cool down. By the time Joao had got out the Marina RIB to tow them in the temperature had dropped back to normal and John restarted the engine and motored back to the marina. This was a portent of a problem that revealed itself the next day when, after topping up the fuel tank, I lifted the floorboard to check the tanks were full (there is a sight glass in the top of the fuel tank) and found to my horror that the bilge was full of salt water! A hurried inspection revealed that water had sprayed

around the engine compartment and following this up I discovered that the exhaust hose had split. We returned to the pontoon and the ever helpful Joao promised to take us into Funchal first thing in the morning to obtain replacement hose.

Joao turned up at 08.30 and with Keith and I in attendance visited four engineering establishments and treated us to coffee in two cafés; in all of these establishments he was recognised and warmly greeted – before finding the correct item in the Yacht chandlers at Funchal marina. Stopping only for another coffee in his sister’s restaurant in Canical, where Keith also acquired two cooked chickens, he had us back at the boat by lunchtime and after lunch we replaced the defective hose. A man well worth knowing in Madeira, Joao also owns the



A quiet corner in Porto Santo.



No – it's not West Cork! Coastal scenery on San Miguel.

whaling museum in Canical and as an ex whaler himself regrets the passing of this activity which, on the Atlantic islands we have visited in recent years, was lately regarded as an adventure sport like big game hunting, rather than an economic activity.

This being Monday 30th May we were two days behind our planned schedule – which had not allowed for the fiesta or the exhaust problem and this meant that we had to abandon our plan to spend the first night at Porto Santo as I was anxious to get away towards the Azores.

The wind was northeast force 6 and, we set out with a reef in the main and a few rolls in the genoa and, following Joao's advice, with the idea of rounding Punta San Lorenço and leaving Madeira to port. This turned out to be a bad plan! There was a nasty tide race off the point and an ugly sea, so after falling off one wave with a mighty crash we upped helm and ran off along the south coast of the island in about 30 knots of wind until we passed the Airport whereupon it dropped to zero and we had to start motoring. Clearly there is an acceleration zone between the east end of Madeira and Porto Cruz which is not mentioned in the RCC guide. We had a grand evening motoring along the coast enjoying the spectacular mountain scenery and the myriad twinkling lights which lasted until midnight when we cleared Punta de Pargo and sailed out into the true wind – which turned out to be northeast force 5/6 with a lumpy sea.

We had two days of this and it was uncomfortable sailing until we were 100 miles clear of Madeira when the sea became much more regular. None of us had great appetites and the cooked chicken was invaluable, as galley work was difficult and both John and I took a day or so to get our sea legs back. Keith is of course immune and did

great service in making sure we were all adequately fed. Still it was go-ahead weather and we made runs of 45 hours on 30th May (eight hours sailing) 148 on 31st and 141 on 1st June. We then ran out of the wind altogether as we sailed under the Azores high and the following day was all motoring for a run of 140 miles in a flat calm sea with welcome warmth and glorious sunshine followed by a brilliant night with the sky glittering with stars. We tidied up the boat, did maintenance jobs and ate well. The light on Pta de Castelo on Santa Maria – the most easterly of the Azores – was raised at 03.00 on Friday 3rd and we had a pleasant sail into Ponta Delgada under full sail – close hauled in north-northwest force 2/3 slowly backing southwest. We tied up alongside in Ponta Delgada on Sao Miguel, which was pretty full of

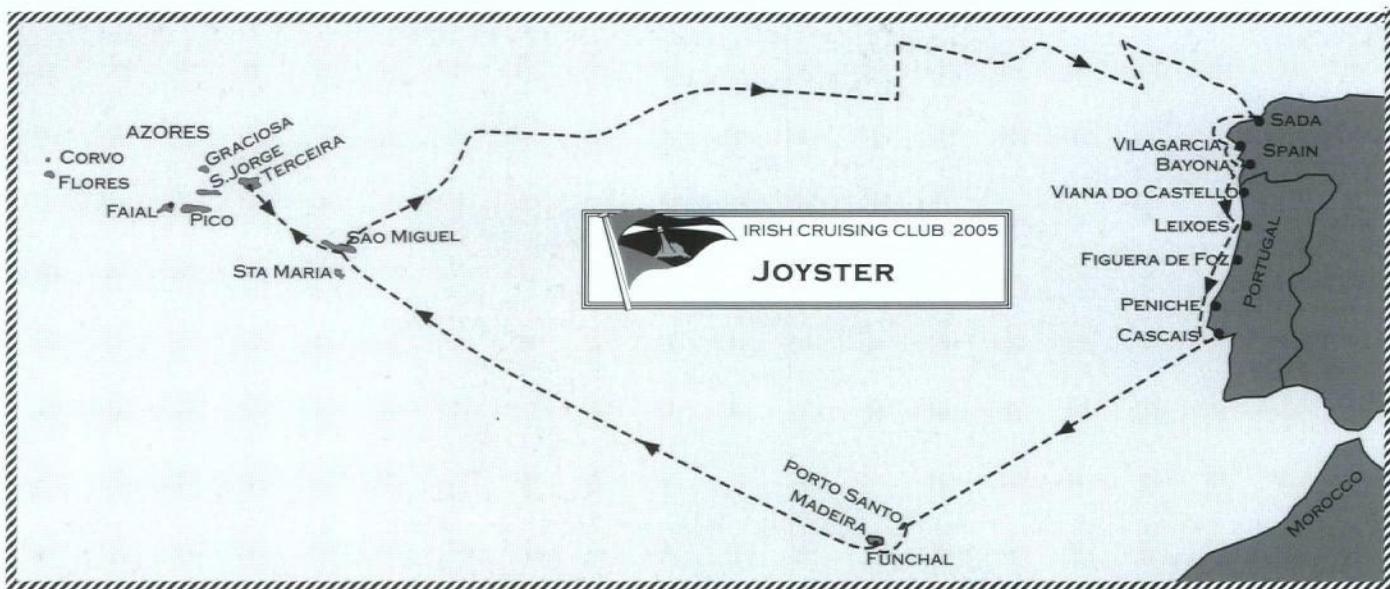
yachts, at 16.00 with a last day's run of 102 miles. We found this part of the ocean fairly unfrequented and sighted few other vessels.

We had a pleasant couple of days in Ponta Delgada marred only by Keith's inability to accept that finding a place to watch the first Lions/All Blacks test match was not a mission that could be accomplished at 07.30 on a Saturday morning in the Azores. Inevitably Keith met up with old friends from ocean-racing days (the Bagnall brothers – once Fastnet race winners) which led to "one last beer" several times in the perversely spelled "Skipers Bar" on the marina. We rented a car and toured parts of the Island. It was a fascinating experience and it came as a big surprise to discover that there is a tea plantation on the north coast of Sao Miguel where quite excellent Orange Peko tea is grown, processed and sold.

Sao Miguel – especially parts of the north coast is scenically comparable to North Devon or Cornwall and there are some



Joyster – Porto Santo drops astern.



parts which could equally easily fit into West Cork. There are, of course, the usual volcanic features – calderas, hot springs, fumaroles and volcanic lakes. In one of hot springs where the water is at boiling temperature you can have your lunch cooked in the volcanic spring. All the ingredients are put in a can and buried in boiling mud for an hour or so! We passed up on this and had a conventional lunch in one of the many small towns along our route instead.

There are also features of Sao Miguel (and other parts of the Azores) that provoke memories of childhood in rural Island – such as donkeys on the road with a milk churn or creels slung on either beam, or pony carts with churns of milk waiting in a long line outside the creamery. Still the roads are surprisingly good, if not up to Madeira standards, and the scenery is soft and pastoral with lovely coastal views. The climate is not unlike our own but with higher temperatures and somewhat longer hours of sunshine than we normally experience at home and mist, drizzle and rain are less frequent than we normally experience.

John caught a flight to Horta from Ponta Delgada airport – where we were surprised to find there were direct flights to Boston and Montreal on the annunciator board. After John got away on his flight Keith and I left back the rental car, explored the town further and had a grand meal in the restaurant “Fair Play” which was good value with a free starter of delicious, deep fried black pudding – a speciality of the Azores.

Joyer left the Marina just before midnight (to avoid another day of marina charges!) bound for Terciera. It was flat calm and we motored for the entire passage – taking care to avoid the volcanic bank of Joao de Castro – where the sea floor rises from 2000m to 7m and there are frequent underwater eruptions with floating pumice etc. We arrived at Angra de Heroismo at 15.00 after a passage of 100 miles.

I had chosen Angra at the suggestion of the Commodore and I can only say his judgement was impeccable. The marina is excellent, the facilities are complete, modern and clean, the charges are modest and the location of the marina at the bottom of the main street of the delightful “city” of Angra de Heroismo is ideal. All this turned out to be important as we ended up spending three weeks there.

It came about like this: we arrived at Terciera on Monday 6th June and Marie was scheduled to fly into the island the following evening with Keith departing on Saturday. This gave Keith and I a day to clean up the boat to “Admiral’s Inspection” standard, rent a car and find a good restaurant before Marie arrived. Then we planned for us all to explore the island leaving Keith at Lajes airport to fly home on Saturday morning, after

which we intended to visit some of the other islands of the central group, before returning to Terciera to link up with the passage crew of Duncan and Paddy Ryan. The next few days were unscheduled, to use as seemed best, before Marie flew home from Terciera on 28th after which the three of us would sail to Galicia visiting Sao Jorge and Santa Maria on the way. As so often happens at sea – where nothing is certain – things worked out differently!

Before Keith left we toured Terciera, exploring the lush interior of the island and swimming in the (very cold) surging waters of the rock pool sea bathing places. We descended into the crater of a volcano with its underground lake, (claimed to be extinct – but as a geologist I noted that there are very active hot springs close by which would give me cause to believe that rumours of its death were exaggerated). We visited and smelled the sulphurous steam at the hot springs, and climbed the mountainous west end of the island – where there are extensive lava flows that only just predate colonisation. We walked up and all around Monte Brazil with its World War II anti-aircraft battery still intact amongst the drifts of wild mint and fennel and visited the tiny chapel perched over the harbour. We looked out over the sea towards Sao Jorge from the old whaler’s lookout place high on the vertical cliffs on the southern point of the island, and generally marvelled at the abundance of wild hydrangeas everywhere along the roads and hedges. We were haunted by similarities of the island to parts of the west of Ireland of fifty years ago – the network of small stone wall enclosed fields, the herds of cattle and bales of hay – agricultural practice here seems to be very similar to that at home, right down to the cattle being driven along the roads to milking each evening.

With the upcoming midsummer fiesta, the “Joaninos”, centred around the feast day of St John the Baptist, crews of workers arrived at the marina and started to erect lights, loudspeakers, flags and banners, stalls for dispensing food and drink and all the signs of a major party. As a part of the preliminaries we heard of a street bull-running to take place in nearby San Mateus, which we duly attended – not without some trepidation. It turned out to be a lively scene with a big crowd, food and drink stalls, candy floss machines and much excitement. These events are not without hazards and we heard there is usually a fatality every year and so it turned out – a recently returned expatriate dying after being gored by one of the bulls.

On Monday 13th June Marie said she was not feeling well. I knew from experience that to even mention this she must really

have been in a lot of pain and suggested she see a doctor, however she said she would just take it easy for a couple of days in the hope it would cure itself. She seemed to have picked up a chill or infection and it completely knocked her out for the next ten days, and there was no way we could consider going to sea until she recovered. As it happened the following day the early portents of a gale appeared in the form of a falling glass, calm and torrential rain. Over the next few days a heavy gale developed and we were happy to be snug in our marina rather than in Horta where, due to the large number of yachts present, we would most likely have been either at anchor or rafted up four or five abreast along the wharf. The gale finally cleared over by Friday and as Marie had still not fully recovered and with Duncan due to arrive on Tuesday (21st June), it was clear that we were not going to have any chance for more island hopping.

Marie really only got back to 100% fitness the day Duncan arrived. Paddy Ryan was due to arrive in forty-eight hours and Marie was flying out three days later – so, as the great fiesta was about to come to a climax I decided that the best thing was to bow to the circumstances, stay in Terciera and enjoy the party! This turned out to be a good choice as the fiesta was quite memorable and as events were centred around the Cathedral and Marina we were either very close to the action or on the stage itself and we enjoyed it all greatly.

There were parades with riders in period costumes on horseback, agricultural processions with livestock, carts and farm machinery and concerts in the marina every night – some of them with really good bands. Inevitably there was also one dreadful singer who repeated the three songs which comprised his total repertoire as long as a single member of the audience applauded the last number, unfortunately for us it was not until 5am that the audience lost heart! There was an excellent open air fashion parade and a really spectacular laser show and fireworks display all centred on the marina where we had grandstand seats.

We managed to obtain tickets for the last day of the Corrida. None of us had ever been to a bullfight before and the Portuguese version where the bull always survives (but not necessarily the Matador!) seemed a good introduction. It was a most interesting occasion and by reference to the popular acclaim we guessed the final score was a draw – Bulls 2, Bullfighters 2. The result reflected the first bull refusing to leave the arena after being “killed” and the entire bullfighting staff being run a merry dance by him for 20 minutes or so. The last bull was a definite winner over the Matador who failed twice to place his “pic” in the bull’s shoulder to represent the “kill”. He was then well and truly tossed over the bulls shoulder – ending the contest with his uniform in tatters and in bare feet. It was very good entertainment and good value for money. We were in the “sol” seats while the assembled dignitaries and the band were in the “sombre”; as the bullfighters prefer to work in the shade the latter get the better view. We enjoyed the spectacle but I am not sure I would want to see the more bloodthirsty Spanish version.

On 23rd June we spied an Irish ensign in the marina which on investigation turned out to be flown by *Pylades* ICC. As she hails from our own home village of Kinvara, Co. Galway this was some coincidence. She was about to commence the last leg of a fourteen month Atlantic honeymoon circuit under the command of Vera Quinlan with her husband Peter Owens as deckhand and cabin steward. Needless to say there was a good party aboard *Pylades* and a return match at home on *Joyster*. We later learned we had just missed another Galway boat which also called in at Terciera on her delivery trip from the USA.

Eventually the party ended and we stored up ship for the

passage back to Europe. Having dropped Marie at the airport we had a last drink and cast off at 16.30 on 28th June bound for Ponta Delgada where we planned to top up with fuel and were hopeful of a visit to Santa Maria before heading for Finisterre. We cleared out of the bay under motor and set all sail to a nice breeze from south-southwest but no sooner had we done this when the engine – which had been left running to top up the batteries – showed clear symptoms of some illness and eventually stopped and refused to start again. We checked for water in the filters and air in the fuel system without success in all attempts at restarting the engine, so, being only six miles out, I elected to return to Angra to get it fixed. The marina staff were very helpful and assisted us back to a berth with their RIB (it being flat calm in the sheltered bay) and arranged for a diesel mechanic to meet us on the pontoon.

The mechanic apologised that he could not attend to us until the next day as he was on his way to a party, but promised he would be with us at 08.30. He actually turned up at 13.30 – by which time we had obtained the services of another mechanic called Carlos. He was most apologetic and said he had been very ill as a result of having eaten a bad prawn (um gamba mala!) the previous night!! This explanation made us feel really at home!

Carlos came aboard at about 11.30 and checked the fuel filters – which he declared OK. He then held a conversation with the engine and concluded that its problem was a leak in the low pressure fuel hose! He promised to return with a replacement hose the following morning – which he duly did. At my request he gave the engine a thorough inspection and pronounced everything to be in order. We had another “last drink” and sailed for Ponta Delgada at 19.00. It was flat calm at first and we motored through a glorious warm starlit night until we picked up a great breeze from northeast at 04.00, which brought us roaring along the south coast of Sao Miguel where we tied up at the fuel dock in the marina at 10.15 on 30th June.

Having lost two days as a result of the engine problem, with very light winds being promised by the intense development of the Azores high over our route and Duncan having an immovable date in Cologne on 15th July, we reluctantly decided we would have to miss out Santa Maria.

On 1st July we sailed from Ponta Delgada at 11.15. We had glorious views along the south side of the island and took our departure from the Azores at Punta de Madrugada at 20.00. That evening with a mirror calm sea, a slight swell and a crystal clear atmosphere at sunset I saw the “green flash” for the first time. We also first noticed a pair of Cory’s shearwaters which accompanied *Joyster* for the entire passage and left us only when we sighted Spain. From 11.15 to 24.00 the day’s run was 83 miles.

2nd July was fine and sunny – wind mainly northwest force 2/4 – course 060° – day’s run 168 miles with engine assistance.

3rd July was again fine and sunny with the wind gradually veering from northwest to northeast and increasing force 4/5, bringing us fairly hard on the wind on the starboard tack making about 340°-350°. We hove-to for dinner and put fuel in the tank before resuming with a reef in the main for the night. The day’s run 120 miles; grand sailing and skipper and crew all happy.

4th July started out with the wind at northeast force 4/5 and *Joyster* making 085° on the port tack but it gradually backed around through north to north-northwest and eased back to force 3/4 so we shook out the reef early in the morning. We spoke to *Sparta* – a bulker in ballast – at breakfast time and then enjoyed another lovely sunny day – but we were not making the course and we reefed the genoa before dinner as it freshened to force 5 again – the day’s run 80 miles.

5th July was memorable as we passed the halfway mark on



A corner of the marina – Angra do Heroismo, Terciera.

rhumb-line distance. We noticed a huge number of very strange looking jellyfish which phenomenon persisted all the way until we reached the continental shelf. Wind north-northwest to north force 4 – course 080° to 090° – fine and sunny; another grand day of sailing and a reasonable run of 120 miles more or less along our course.

On 6th July, after a few hours of a northwest force 3/4 the wind veered north and increased to 4/5, the sky clouded over and a light drizzle set in. We tacked at 14.00 and were only making 320° to 330° close hauled, bucking into a head sea. At 16.00 we received a gale warning for Finisterre over the satellite phone so we decided against a landfall south of Cape Finisterre and determined to get as far north as we could. We hove-to for two hours for dinner and a break at 22.00 and double reefed the main at midnight as it had got up to force 5/6. A great run of 160 miles must however be explained by a favourable current.

7th July – wind north force 4 at the start of the day but veering north-northwest at around noon and increasing to force 4/5. We spent the day close hauled on the port tack making about 095°. At 18.00 a strange banging noise was heard in the aft cabin and it was surmised we had picked up a bit of fishing gear on the sail drive leg. This worried the skipper for a couple of days until the noise stopped as mysteriously as it had started! Hove-to for dinner again at 22.00. The worst news was that we had developed a leaking fore hatch and virtually all of Duncan's clothes had got soaked. From here on he had a miserable time as it was impossible to get his things dried out faster than he was getting them wet again while on watch. Not making anything like the course and so a bad run of only 70 miles.

On 8th July things started to get tougher with the wind at north to north-northeast force 5/6 in which we could only make 085 to 095° and with an awkward sea which required running the engine at tickover speed to reduce leeway as the sea was stopping us dead from time to time. By midnight it was blowing a steady force 7 so we hove-to for the night on the starboard tack, fore-reaching at about 1.5 knots on a course of 320°. This allowed Paddy (who always cooked dinner and on whose watch below all the bad things seemed to happen) to catch up on some sleep. I was also able fix a leak in the exhaust system which let exhaust fumes escape into the engine

compartment and caused the smoke alarm to go off and frighten the life out of us all. Generally dull and overcast for most of the day. Barometer falling steadily. Paddy surpassed himself with a great dinner and still and all we made a run of 130 miles.

9th July – we remained hove-to until 14.25 by which time the wind had come round to northeast by north and dropped to force 5/6. We held a course of 105° on the port tack close hauled which, was the best we could do. The days run was a lousy 50 miles due to being hove-to for much of the day and going in the wrong direction.

10th July dawned clear and sunny but with the wind at east-northeast force 6/7. There was no way we could get anywhere near the course for Corunna and I decided that we should have to make for Muros, so we set off on a

course of 120° under rolled jib and double reefed main. By midday we had been headed off to 135° and then 145° and both the wind and sea were getting fairly serious. Steering had become very difficult and by midday the wind was up to force 8 and gusting over 40 knots. We received a gale warning for South Finisterre on the satellite phone which spoke of the worst conditions being off the headland and to the south with very rough sea and strong gale gusts in that area. So we hove-to on the starboard tack under deeply reefed genoa and reefed mizzen. Under this sail the vessel was lying about 50° off the wind and fore-reaching at 2 to 2.5 knots away from Finisterre. We set the storm jib on the inner forestay and rolled the genoa up entirely and then set the trysail and stowed the mizzen. To my surprise the ship now lay up about 35° off the wind and fore reached at only 1.5 knots making a course of around 320°. I was also very happy that the arrangements all worked satisfactorily as we had never set this canvas "in anger" before–although *Joyster* passage crews all get a demonstration before departure.

When this work was done we lay very comfortably although



Street bull running in San Mateus, Terciera.

the seascape was white like a winter snow scene with breaking crests and blown spray. Before the sea got up properly it was short, steep and disorganised and we took a few bad hits. As the day wore on – still in glorious sunshine with our shearwaters wheeling amongst the waves and dolphins bursting out of the sides of the rollers – the sea gradually grew bigger and lengthened out and the ship then rode in considerable comfort, only occasionally being thumped by an errant crest. Most of these she took on the starboard bow and very little water was shipped but we got one wicked blow from a wave which filled the cockpit having sneaked up on us from the quarter. We all were able to get a solid eight hours sleep. Paddy excelled himself and, with a Gin and Tonic up front, we ate a fine, four course dinner of soup, seafood with rice and fruit

salad and cream followed by coffee, cheese and biscuits. The whole was washed down with a bottle of Basalto and finished off with a glass of Madeira! After dinner we heard a Dutch coaster on Ch 16 trying to make contact with a yacht called *Tinkerbelle* from Cork which had apparently run out of fuel while on passage to Spain. We hoped they got sorted out. Day's run a miserable 50 miles – all in the opposite direction to our course!

11th July – wind gradually easing and finally settled down at east-northeast force 6 by noon – so got under way with rolled genoa, trysail and mizzen. Later, at 20.00 we set No 3 jib on the inner forestay with the double reefed main and stowed the mizzen. We had got some weather routing assistance from John Preisler in Galway who advised that we should just be able to make Corunna close hauled. It was tough sailing – bashing into a left over sea but fine and sunny. The worst event of the day was that we ran out of gin!! A very poor run of 45 miles was a result of being hove – to and going the wrong way for twelve hours.

12th July – more of the same! Wind east-northeast force 6/7 gusting over 35 knots apparent. We gritted our teeth and plugged on remembering Rory O'Hanlon's advice; "You just keep sailing until you get there!". In our case we put the engine on at tick over to reduce leeway, which is very effective. Another glorious sunny day with our shearwaters still for company and several episodes with dolphins. Paddy also saw a large whale. We sailed onto the Continental shelf in the morning and started to sight ships as we crossed the Finisterre separation zone in the middle part of the day. Despite the bright sunshine lateral visibility was quite poor and large ships suddenly appeared only a mile or so distant. We plotted our track now on the inshore chart and were just holding our line into La Corunna. We made our landfall at 17.00 and by 20.00 the sea eased off noticeably. At 21.00 we sailed clean out of force 6/7 and into a flat calm accompanied by the aromatic smell of pine trees burning in the extensive forest fires ashore, the glow of which lit up the horizon over the land as darkness fell. We dropped sail and motored towards the Torre de Hercules – now clearly visible. Day's run 145 miles.

Motoring into the Ria de Betanzas, we threaded our way between the myriad lights of the local fishing vessels, in flat calm water with the vessel upright and strangely motionless for



Kinvara Mini Rally, Azores, 2005. David, Duncan and Marie Whitehead, Vera Quinlan, Peter Owens.

the first time in a more than a week. We tied up alongside a pontoon in Sada Marina at 01.00 on 13th July. The good ship had brought us safely home from the sea. Day's run 5 miles.

We laid up *Joyster* ashore in Sada in anticipation of the Cruise-in-Company next season. Paddy and I spent the rest of the week putting her to bed and enjoying the sights and tastes of Galicia while Duncan flew off to his appointments more or less on time. Despite seeing less of the Azores than hoped for we really enjoyed ourselves. *Joyster* proved herself a confident, competent and comfortable sea boat able to make reasonable runs on ocean passages. Apart from the two engine hoses that had to be replaced the only casualty of the voyage was a broken salad bowl. I certainly gained enormous confidence in the yacht and, following the discovery of how well she lies hove-to would be most reluctant to change to a yacht without this capability.

Cruise Summary

		Distance	Time
2004			
22/6	Vilagarcia – Sta Eugenia	6.5	2h 20m
23/6	Sta. Eugenia – Bayona	30.5	5h 00m
24/6	Bayona – Viana do Castello	39.4	6h 0m
25/6	Viana do Castello – Leixoes	35.1	5h 30m
26/6	Leixoes – Figuera de Foz	64.6	10h 30m
27/6	Figuera de Foz – Peniche	54.3	8h 10m
28/6	Peniche – Cascais	42.9	6h 20m
2/7	Cascais – Cascais	8.4	2h 00m
5/9-9/9	Cascais – Porto Santo	507.0	4d 0h 30m
11/9	Porto Santo – Qta.de Lorde	31.0	7h 30m
2005			
30/5-3/6	Qta.de Lorde – Ponta Delgada	569.0	3d 23h 10m
5/6-6/6	Ponta Delgada – Angra de Heroismo	99.4	17h 10m
29/6-30/6	Angra de Heroismo – Ponta Delgada	102.0	15h 45m
1/7-13/7	Ponta Delgada – Sada	1226.0	11d13h 30m
	Total Cruise	2816.4	23d 5h 5m
	(N.B. distances sailed over the ground)		
	Average Passage	121 miles/day	
	Average speed	5.05 knots.	
	Engine hours	225 hrs = 40%	
	Fuel used	395 lt. = 1.75 lt./hr	

Joyster is an Oyster 35 Mariner ketch, designed by Holman and Pye and built by Landamores of Wroxham in 1981.

There Was A Little Ship ... To Brittany

Bill Rea



THE FORTNIGHT CUP

FOR THE BEST CRUISE UNDERTAKEN
IN A MAXIMUM OF 16 DAYS

'Il était un petit navire
Qui n'avait ja ja jamais navigué
Oh! Eh! Oh! Eh!'

*There was a little ship
That had never been to sea
Oh! Eh! Oh! Oh!*

It is sometimes nice to have an objective that will put some shape on a cruise and this year the spur was offered to *Elysium* (a Shipman 28) by the cruising section of the Royal St. George Yacht Club who planned a cruise in company to Brittany. Now, for little *Elysium* to try and keep up with the grand boats from the George would be far too frenetic for my taste and out of keeping with the gentle cruising style that I try to maintain. My plan was to leave early and let the main George fleet catch up with us in Brittany, where we could join them for one of their splendid dinners. We did manage to achieve our objective, and in the unrivalled Guy's Restaurant at Sainte Marine, on the river Odet, members of The Royal St. George Yacht Club and their French guests all joined in the refrain from *Elysium*'s theme tune for the trip:

'Oh! Eh! Matelot!
Matelot navigue sur les flots'
Oh! Eh! Sailor
Sailor sail on the waves.'

Stan Conroy has been sailing with me for more than thirty years and we are still good friends (as far as I know). We have had many adventures together and he has never let me down. Surely the greatest asset to any ship must be a crew that you can depend on and on Christmas Day last year Stan signed on once again, with no hesitation.

There was a time when *Elysium* had bunks for a crew of five

(where they all fitted I will never know) but in recent years this has shrunk to a comfortable two bunks, with a fridge taking over one of them. I visited my daughter Hazel in London on Easter Monday and I was surprised and delighted when she expressed an interest in joining her 'Old man' for the most difficult part of the trip. Within days the cushions were taken out of storage in the cellar and a bunk was created for a third hand. Hazel is a natural sailor and suddenly the prospects for a more enjoyable and a safer trip were increased tenfold.

Preparation is everything and the final week before departure was hectic; there was a major problem with the rudder together with the usual checking of stores, safety equipment, charts and a host of other items. On Thursday 2nd June Stan and I moved aboard *Elysium*, alongside at Royal St George, and my family breathed a sigh of relief as relative peace descended on the home.

Thursday is racing night at the George and, in addition the normal racing traffic, the Shipman fleet was arriving, in preparation for a race to Wicklow the following day. The boatmen were severely pressed and *Elysium* had still not loaded any bunkers. They could have told us to get lost but cheerfully found the time to look after us. Unfortunately we took our eye off the ball and made the fatal mistake of leaving some fuel from last year in the bottom of the tank. We would not have enjoyed our sailing supper so well if we had realised the consequences of what we had done.

We set the clock for 06.00 and listened to the early morning weather forecast, from our bunks. A beat in a fresh breeze was promised for vessels sailing in a southerly direction, and we did not like the sound of it. "Gentlemen don't sail to windward" is an old saying that came to mind and we had no intention of spending this lovely sunny day dressed in oilskins and heeled over to unacceptable angles. The Blue Peter had been at yardarm the previous day and we really could not stay any longer at The George; our theme song was beginning to haunt us already:

'Il était un petit navire
Qui n'avait ja ja jamais navigué'

I decided to head north, with the wind, and make Howth our first port of call. This decision had the added benefit of making an early start redundant, as the tide would not set north at the Baily until the afternoon.

While we were having our breakfast the racing Shipmen started to arrive and with much clattering and banging they set off



Stan Conroy on stand-by watch.

suitably clad in sea boots and heavy weather gear in prospect of a wet day at sea. We kept a low profile and, when peace descended once again, we slipped out of the harbour and set a course for Lion's Bay on the sunny south side of Howth Head. The tide was still running south at the Baily, so we dropped anchor at the foot of the cliffs and I opened a bottle of Muscadet (in celebration of the start of our cruise to Brittany) while Stan prepared a salad for lunch.

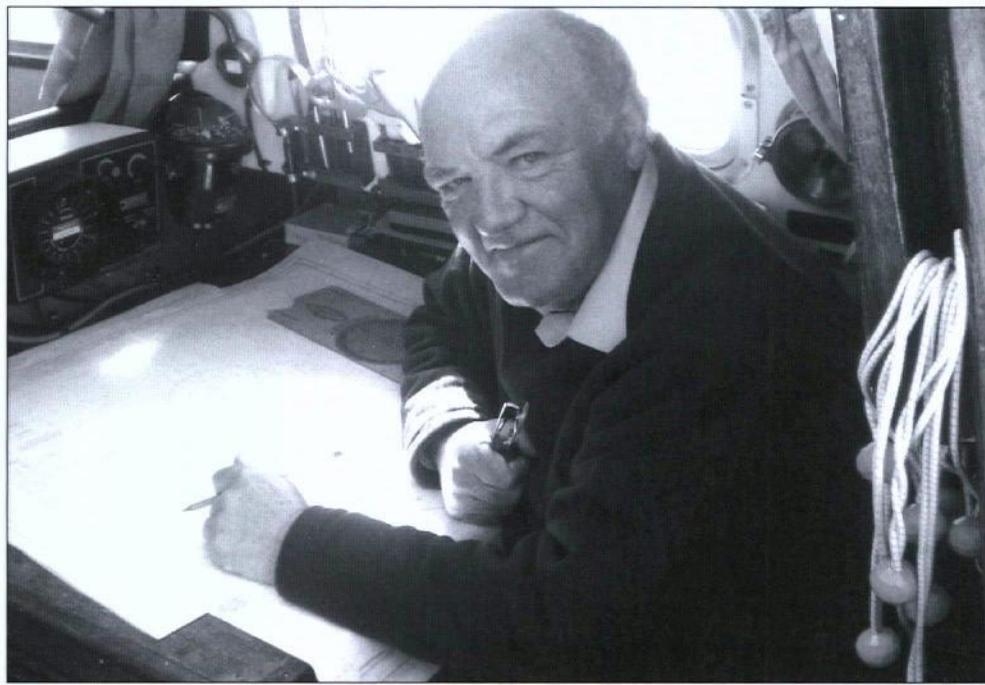
It was so pleasant in Lion's Bay that it occurred to me that we could follow the example of Donald Crowhurst and stay where we were for the duration of the cruise. We could hoist the French courtesy ensign and take a few photographs of *Elysium* with the crew in their sun hats anchored in idyllic surroundings and overlooked by several elegant chateaux on the cliffs above. When the tide turned the daydream ended; we proceed to Howth and explained to our friends there the logic of calling to Howth on a voyage from Dun Laoghaire to Lorient.

Much refreshed by our little diversion we were up at the crack of dawn. We sailed out of Howth at 10.00 in a westerly breeze that gave us a great turn of speed as we bounced along the eastern edge of the Burford Bank, on a southerly course at last. The Breeches Buoy was abeam at lunchtime and we had soon rounded Wicklow Head with the tide still ebbing in our favour. As we rounded Mizen Head the tide turned and the engine became an important factor in maintaining progress, but the fuel tank had been stirred up in the boisterous conditions earlier in the day, and gradually the engine failed. Ko-Ko (The Lord High Executioner of Titipu) would have approved of our situation as fitting punishment for the crime of negligent bunkering. We got the engine going again but entered the Avoca river with the anchor ready and on deck. (A precaution based on years of experience). The gentle wind went ahead, the flow of the river increased, the engine failed, it became impossible to sail upstream and there we were, anchored in the middle of the fairway. In due course we weighed anchor and limped into Arklow Marina, with no chance of making the ICC weekend at Wexford.

Once again we met up with the Shipman Class racing/cruising fleet and, at the kind invitation of Peter Wallis, I joined them for a very pleasant dinner that he had organised at Murphy's Restaurant, in the town.

The next day my daughter Hazel joined the crew. She had been staying at Kilkenny with my youngest daughter Gillian, who was kind enough to bring her to the boat by car. Hazel had a baptism of fire, as a member of the crew, because we spent her first afternoon on board pumping out the fuel tank and carrying buckets of filthy diesel fuel ashore for disposal. Hazel's arrival was a godsend because she is an expert with engines. She changed all the filters and bled the fuel system in an expert fashion. Eventually we cleaned ourselves up and Stan cooked us a nice dinner on board.

We left Arklow the following morning in a northeast force 4-5 that had the approval of the management. We shot down inside the Wexford banks and passed Rosslare in style with



Skipper at the chart table.

spray flying. We approached Carnsore point with the jib gooswinged and the sun shining in a clear blue sky.

*'Oh! Eh! Oh! Eh! Matelot
Matelot navigue sur les flots'*

There was a time when St Patrick's Bridge (north of the Saltee Islands) was a bit of a challenge and, when approaching it, Stan and I always recall the first time that we went across it. We approached the deepest point, with the aid of a large-scale chart, on a very accurate compass course carefully adjusted for variation and deviation. We constantly checked our position with the aid of vertical sextant angles and compass bearings in order to cross the bridge at exactly the right spot. We thought that we had got it wrong and were very alarmed when rocks suddenly appeared in the clear water beneath us; there was no going back and the tide carried us on relentlessly. We did get a fright but everything was in order and we cleared the rocks as planned. On 6th June 2005 *Elysium* had no problem crossing St Patrick's bridge. The GPS and the Autohelm looked after the course and the position and, if that was not enough, two buoys now mark the channel. Kilmore Quay was once a place to avoid but today leading marks guide the cruising man into one of the most desirable harbours in Ireland.

The mobile telephone had kept us in touch with my daughter Gillian, and her partner Kyron, as we sailed around the coast and when we entered the harbour they were there to greet us. A little while later we all retired to Kehoe's which, in spite of a change in management, is still one of the best pubs for a crew to eat and relax in a maritime atmosphere after a great day at sea.

The next morning we were sorry to hear that Johnny Synnot has retired from Kilmore Quay Marina (we missed him on channel 9) but Peter Devereaux was more than helpful, as usual. He replaced our lost diesel oil and provided us with up to date weather forecasts for the next leg of the cruise, south to Scilly. We also paid a visit to Eugene Kehoe at Hardware and Marine Supplies, which is a great chandlery and we had no difficulty in purchasing spare fuel filters and other odd items.

After lunch we went to sea again, in brilliant sunshine. We went west of the Saltee Islands and tacked up to the Coningbeg lightship. The course to Scilly was 177° true and the wind was

directly from the south so it was not long before we got fed up tacking. Fortunately the wind became very light and we had every excuse to abandon sailing and motor along the true course. *Elysium* has only got a single cylinder 9HP engine and cannot motor into a sea, so we were very lucky that the surface was sufficiently smooth to allow good progress. Ireland fell below the horizon astern and the Manx Shearwaters scurried all around us. We were truly at sea and had left all land based problems behind us for a while.

We set two-hour watches with one person always in the cockpit. Two hours on watch, followed by two hours sleep and two hours on standby, in support of the watch-keeper. The system works well on *Elysium*, as we are not martyrs to the cause and don't stay too long at sea.

It was a beautiful night with millions of stars twinkling in the heavens above. Hazel lives in London and I think that it was the first time that she noticed the Milky Way, invisible in her part of the world. Stan is our expert astronomer and always knows which planets to watch for and where to look.

At about 06.00 on Wednesday 8th June we were at Latitude 51°01'N and the wind was southeasterly force 2-3. Stan was on watch and he gave us a call; we were all soon on deck to enjoy a marvellous display from a visiting school of at least 50 dolphins, and perhaps more. They stayed with us for more than half an hour, diving beneath the bow in groups of four or five and charging in at the boat from 45° abeam. We did attempt photography but I regret that we were not skilled enough to capture the moment that must remain an ephemeral pleasure. There is something delightful, spiritual and mythological about a visit from the dolphins. They are a good

omen for a happy and safe voyage with a message of welcome into their special world of clean foam and spray from Apollo Delphinus.

*'Oh! Eh! Oh! Eh! Matelot
Matelot navigue sur les flots'*

The euphoria did not last long and at 08.45 we got back to reality and stopped the engine to check the fuel and the oil in the sump. We had been using 0.79 litres per hour overnight and calculated that the fuel in the tank would give us another 36 hours of motoring, more than enough to reach the Scilly Isles. At 17.48 the engine suddenly stopped and we thought that we were in trouble again. The light airs kept us moving in the wrong direction at a very slow speed and we were suddenly looking at a very long trip indeed.

The trouble was soon diagnosed; the diesel tank was empty! We had run the engine dry by keeping the engine revolutions too high and wasting fuel, another stupid mistake. If Stan and I had been on our own this would have been a real problem with much panting and swearing (from me) and no guarantee of success in getting going again, but we had Hazel aboard and she sorted the problem in a few minutes. We topped up the tank from our reserve supply and Hazel bled the fuel line with a display of consummate skill that would make any skipper marvel.

We arrived off the Scilly Isles at about 21.00. I have not visited the Scilly Isles before and planned to enter St Mary's by the main channel that starts at Spanish Ledge buoy. A passenger ferry from the mainland was arriving at the same time and I thought that we would have nothing to do but follow her to find the channel. We followed the big ship for some time but I could not make head or tail of the marks and rocks on our course. I realised that something was wrong and reverted to basic chartwork. I found that the ship was not entering by the main channel and had chosen a course not recommended to strangers. Following someone else is usually a bad idea.

We arrived safely at St Mary's harbour to find that there were no visitor's moorings free. It was another beautiful night and we were very comfortable at anchor in St Mary's Road, some distance from other boats. We had a very pleasant evening on board and all of the crew slept soundly.

Another beautiful day dawned and, after breakfast, a boat from the harbourmaster's office came alongside with a custom's officer on board. They were very helpful and we arranged to go alongside the fuel berth and then pick up a recently vacated visitor's mooring. We went ashore by dinghy, explored the town, went shopping at the Co-Op and enjoyed lunch in a typically British naval style tavern. We had to keep moving but the Scilly Isles are worth a much longer stay.

We let go the visitors mooring shortly after 16.00 and, after leaving the Spanish Ledge buoy to starboard about an hour later, we set a course for France.

We had another wonderful night at sea and Hazel and I spent time together admiring the stars and passing silent ships and boats with their lights burning brightly in the clear atmosphere. Light airs filled the sails and phosphorescence streamed from the bow wave as we swished through the warm night air.

It was daylight before we reached the shipping lanes off Ouessant and I am glad that I did not attempt to cross them in darkness. The continuous procession of ships going to and from every part of Europe and the rest of the world is an incredible spectacle. The French authorities closely monitor these busy shipping lanes and their radio traffic made our passage even more interesting. The inshore traffic lanes are strictly reserved for French coastal shipping, as we discovered when a Dutch warship travelling at 25 knots and planning to enter Brest from the north was forced to make a detour of at least 50 miles to



Elysium ready to go at RStG YC.



Voyager, Brian MacManus (ICC) leads the RStG YC fleet at Ste Marine.

satisfy the French authorities, who would not bend the rules and allow her to use the inshore traffic lane.

As we approached the coast a Mirage jet fighter came out to meet us and we knew that we had arrived in France. He turned sharply close to us at a very low level and disappeared inland within a few seconds.

We started to pick up buoys off the coast in the early morning but it is a long way from Ouessant to Brest and we did not reach Moulin Blanc Marina, which is east of the city, until nearly 19.00 that evening, when we put the clocks forward by one hour to 20.00. It had been a long day but a quiet evening was out of the question.

Moulin Blanc Marina is huge and a wonderful facility. We arrived on a Saturday when every type of boating activity was in full swing. There was cruiser racing in the Rade de Brest as well as dinghy racing, organised boardsailing and angling from all types of motor craft. The French certainly take their water sport seriously.

As soon as we arrived Hazel and I went looking for the showers. We found the showers but could not purchase a 'jeton' to work them. These were only available from the Capitainerie du Port, which was closed for the night. We approached some of the shower patrons but none of them could supply a 'jeton'. When we met them later they mocked us by holding their noses and keeping us at a safe distance.

Hazel and I grabbed a taxi and went to the airport to hire a car before the office closed. While we were away Stan had discovered that there was a Breton festival in full swing at the marina, with free food and wine. We followed the sound of the music that guided us to this important venue.

We found a large hall laid out with stalls manned by producers of food and wine in Brittany. Many of the participants were in traditional costume and the whole thing was very colourful. The hall was milling with people in sailing gear anxious to sample the food and wine from as many stalls as possible. Several groups in traditional costume, who sang Breton ballads and invited us all to join in the traditional group dancing, provided the entertainment. We were struck by the similarity between this music and our own Irish ballads, but the French were reluctant to agree; they are very proud and protective of their unique Breton culture. We stayed until the

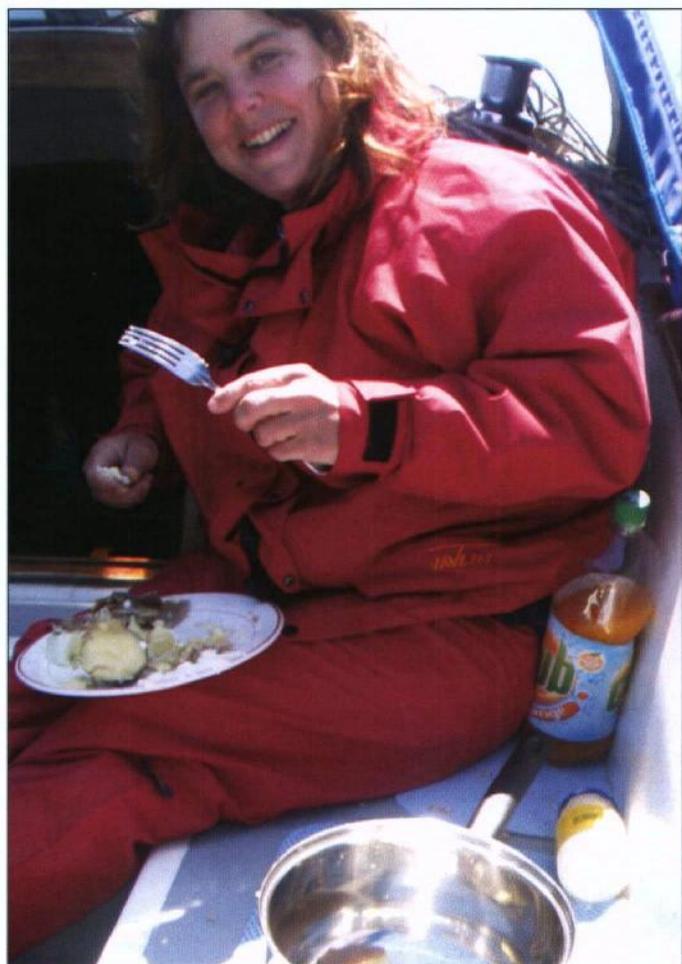
end and it had been a great evening of fun to celebrate our arrival in France.

We were struck by the fact that although everyone was provided with as much free wine as they wanted, nobody fell down or misbehaved in any way. It would be impossible to run such an event for the general public in our own country (or in the UK) without someone spoiling the party.

Hazel had to return to work in London and it was with some sadness that I drove her to the ferry at Roscoff in the early morning. She had been a great help and it was wonderful to have had her with us.

The next day Stan and I prepared to face the treacherous Raz de Sein where the old lighthouse is often pictured beleaguered by enormous waves and horrendous seas. Timing, the pilot book told us, is everything and we planned

the passage with care. We also listened to the French weather forecast for the area, but did not understand much of it. We checked the safety gear, set out in trepidation and did not allow ourselves to be lulled into a false sense of security by the blue sky and complete lack of wind. When we got to the famous old



Hazel Rea enjoying one of Stan's meals.

lighthouse Stan gave up, opened a bottle of wine and made us a salad. We could not even find one little wave to disturb the silk smooth sea.

The next port of call was Sainte-Evette (close to Audierne) where a meeting with the Royal St George Cruise in Company had been scheduled for 20.00 on Monday 13th June (You would have to admire the precise nature of the plan). We arrived and picked up a mooring on the 12th but no members of the George had arrived. We waited for them all the next day; no great hardship, I have to say, as Stan is an excellent cook and we had ample stores aboard. It was just as well that we were well stocked, as there is no shop within 5 kilometres of Sainte-Evette, something that could not happen in Ireland.

We frequently scanned the horizon but there was no sign of an Irish boat of any kind. The scheduled time for the meeting came and went. Would these chaps from the Royal St. George Yacht Club be able to find their way to France, we asked ourselves? Perhaps they were all hopelessly lost in the Bay of Biscay.

<i>'Au bout de cinq à six semaines Les vivres vin vin, virent à manquer</i>	<i>After five or six weeks The food and wine stores were gone</i>
<i>Oh! Eh! Oh! Eh!</i>	<i>Oh! Eh! Oh! Oh!</i>
<i>On tira à la court paille</i>	<i>They drew for the short straw</i>
<i>Pour savoir qui qui, qui sera mangé</i>	<i>To decide who would be eaten</i>
<i>Oh! Eh! Oh! Eh!</i>	<i>Oh! Eh! Oh! Oh!</i>

In the end we decided to ring them on their mobile telephone and discovered that they had decided to skip Sainte-Evette and make an unscheduled stop at Locudy. All was well.

We let go the mooring at Sainte-Evette on June 14th and sailed around the Pointe de Penmarc'h towards Benodet for a rendezvous with the Royal St. George fleet.

As we approached the river Odet I took a close look at Stan and examined myself in the mirror. We had a carpet on the sole of the cabin, real glass wine glasses and chilled wine in the fridge but our standard of dress had definitely slipped. We could not meet members from the Royal St. George in such a state. I let go the anchor and ordered shaves and clean kit for all hands. Rig of the day smart casual. We finally caught up with the fleet at Sainte Marine, on the opposite side of the river from Benodet, and went alongside a berth near to the cruise leader Brían MacManus (ICC) in his wonderful new boat, *Voyager*. We were still securing our lines when a berthing master arrived in a Zodiac and informed us that we were too small to moor in a berth beside the other George boats. I explained that they were our friends and he allowed us to stay until we had completed our greetings. We eventually found a comfortable berth that was clear of the swell that the larger boats had to endure, from time to time.

That evening we were invited to join in the fun at the famous Guy's Restaurant, in a beautiful setting on the quay at Sainte Marine. This was a warm-up dinner for the main event held two days later and was attended by all the crews from *Khadmasin* (Denis Woods), *Muscadet* (Ivan Sutton) and the ICC boat and cruise leader *Voyager*. *Voyager*'s crew included the ICC members Brían and Heather MacManus, Michael Buckley and Bill Riordan together with the renowned Shipman owner Richard Hooper and many more.

Both dinners were magnificent and made all the more enjoyable by the presence of a number of French guests, invited by Michael Buckley and Brían MacManus. There was much enthusiastic conversation about the enjoyment of a full French meal and I got a valuable lesson in the correct way to eat crevettes.

I had a go at teaching the George members to sing the chorus of our signature tune and got invaluable help from the French. The French reaction to us was probably a little like that of Samuel Johnson who compared a woman preaching to a dog walking on his hinder legs. 'It is not done well; but you are surprised to find it done at all'.

*'Oh! Eh! Oh! Eh!
Matelot navigue sur les flots'*

Sainte Marine is a quiet village with all the necessary amenities. The marina has showers and groceries are available within a few minutes walk through the trees that come down to the water's edge.

We blew up the rubber dinghy to explore Benodet, on the opposite side of the river. This is a very pleasant holiday town with everything available, including chandlery and spare parts for our Volvo engine. It was a wonderful hot afternoon and I treated myself to a huge ice cream chosen from a menu of mouth-watering pictures. It would be very difficult to lose weight on a French cruise, and foolish to try.

We slipped out of the river Odet at 10.00 on June 17th and left the Iles de Glénan and the Ile de Groix to starboard on our way to Lorient; both targets to explore on a future trip. Once again, it developed into a wonderful day of sunshine and light winds.

As we motor-sailed up the western channel towards Lorient The Royal St George fleet overtook us. We had a fine view of them under way as they headed for Port Sainte Catherine at Locmiquélic, on the eastern side of the harbour. *Elysium* was headed for the marina at Kernével where she will be based until next year. Brían MacManus deserves great credit for successfully leading the cruise in company and for ensuring that everyone was welcome and enjoying themselves.

There is always something to be done with *Elysium*; this time it was the alternator that was causing trouble, although not enough to spoil the cruise. The friendly staff at the Capitanerie Kernével put us in touch with Alain Taglang a willing, and overworked, mechanic. He turned up very promptly and proved to be knowledgeable, obliging and fun to work with.

The reason for deciding to base the boat at Lorient was the existence of an airport 5 kilometres from the marina with a direct Aer Arann service to Waterford and Galway. The journey home could not have been easier and was a fitting end to a pleasant cruise with the promise of further adventures in France.

<i>'Si cette histoire vous amuse Nous allons la la, recommencer</i>	<i>If this story amuses you We are going to start it again</i>
<i>Oh! Eh! Oh! Eh!</i>	<i>Oh! Eh! Oh! Oh!</i>

<i>Oh! Eh! Matelot! Matelot navigue sur les flots</i>
<i>Oh! Eh! Matelot!</i>
<i>Matelot navigue sur les flots'</i>

Date 2005	From and To	Miles	Hours
3rd June	Dun Laoghaire – Howth	8	3.5
4th June	Howth – Arklow	37	7.2
6th June	Arklow – Kilmore Quay	49	8.3
7th/8th June	Kilmore Quay – Scilly Isles	143	32.0
10th/11th June	Scilly Isles – Brest	135	26.0
12th June	Brest – Sainte Evette	34	8.2
14th June	Sainte Evette – Sainte Marine	33	8.8
17th June	Sainte Marine – Kernével, Lorient	33	8.1
TOTAL		472	102.1

Alchemist in search of the Knights

Robert Barker



After our time in the Southern Ocean as part of *Pure Magic's* wonderful trip, Pat and I both thought it would be a good idea to restore our *sang froid* to a higher point on the thermometer and decided to take *Alchemist*, our Sweden 37 11 metre sloop, south from Howth to the warm, historic island of Malta.

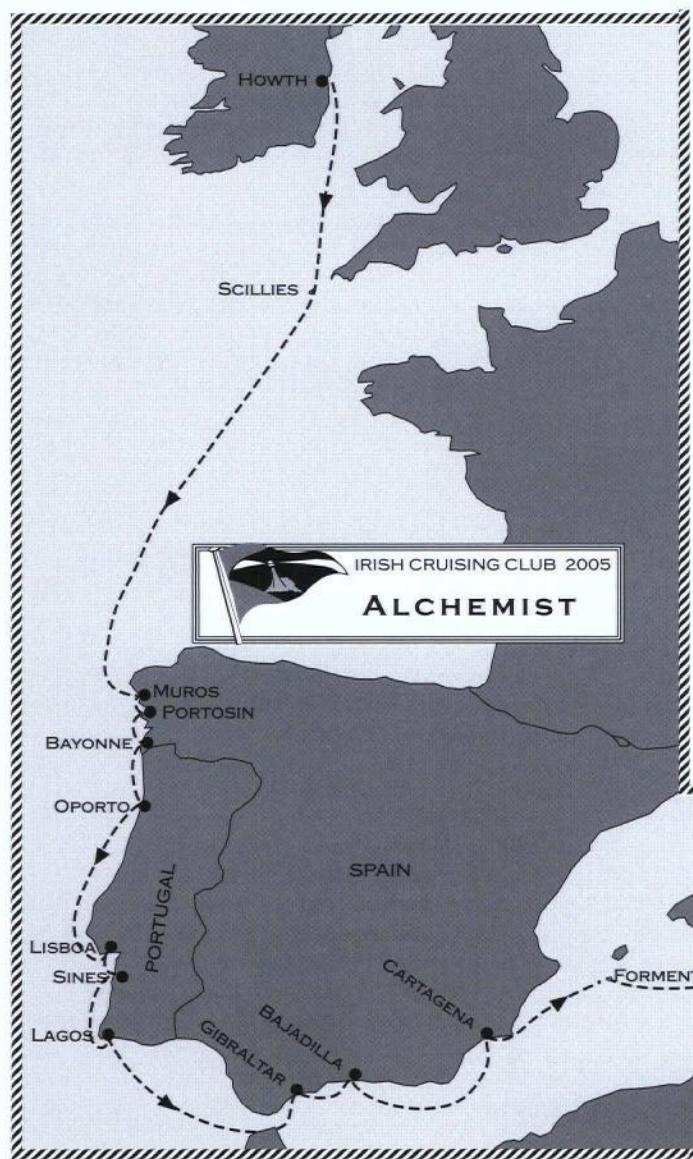
The crew comprised: both of us, Bill Walsh and John MacSweeney. We had a farewell dinner in Howth with friends the Marrows and the Michaels on the eve of our departure. Bill and John's wives also joined us to satisfy themselves that their husbands were securely on board for the six week trip to allow them unfettered use of house, car, telephone and bank accounts.

We left Howth Harbour at 06.00 on the morning of 17th June with the crew standing on the foredeck shouting "Here we go, here we go, here we go ..." and "Ole, ole, ole ...". It would

be elasticating veracity to say we were singing, but in our favour, we knew all the words!! We hoped to get south of Cape Finisterre in one hop. But the sea was bouncy and a force 5 wind from the southwest was uncomfortable and in the wrong direction! We were forced to do a bit of tacking down a grey and murky Irish Sea. Nobody had much appetite and the residue of the previous night's jollity militated against a little glass of wine. On the morrow, the skies cleared, but there was still a lumpy sea and the wind still on the nose. As we tacked towards the Scillies, Pat parted company with her lunch, neatly missing the newly polished hull. There was a general consensus that we should stop in Hugh Town overnight.

Sunday 19th – Fathers' Day! Pat made a full Irish breakfast for all the fathers. They spent the morning taking calls from their respective offspring who explained why they had forgotten to send them cards. The very helpful harbourmaster gave us a fill of fuel outside his normal hours and we set sail in glorious late morning sunshine with a good force five wind from the northwest. We all sat on deck and enjoyed the good weather and, later, a magnificent near-full moon throwing a pathway of silver across the water for us to steer our 204° course for Muros. We took two hours each on watch with six hours off and, in the galley, we operated a 'Chef of the Day' system. At 23.00 we had some traffic from US Warship – asking for our position and details of our route and advising us to steer clear of NATO military operations. We all sat up and watched fascinated as ordnance was discharged towards the French coast.

Tuesday 21st – the wind dropped off and by 06.30 we were motoring along in warm sunshine some 400 miles off the Gironde River. We had a very large school of dolphin to accompany us for some four hours until 08.00. Then a lovely force 4 from the northwest whistled up for the rest of our run around a pussycat Cape Finisterre and into Muros. Off the Cape, Bill had his breakfast in bed and looked querulously at the bowl of fresh fruit salad he was handed and asked plaintively: 'I suppose some bacon and sausage is out of the question?' We had a nice stay in Muros, sitting at anchor off the town. Unfortunately our dinghy was sliced on the rocks at the slipway and we had a rather dodgy trip back to the anchorage in a rapidly softening dinghy loaded with shopping and life-



jacketless crew. We motored across to Portosin and dieselled up, cleaned the boat, did some laundry and had dinner in the excellent Yacht Club.

We spent a lazy day and night at anchor at Isla de Cies and chatted with the crews of *Ocean Sapphire* and *Moshulu III* – both from Cork. We hiked up to the summit of the island and Robert and John were attacked by mother seagulls nesting in the cliffs. The dinghy was in serious need of a professional repair job, but with our trusty pump, we were undeterred by flaccid accessories! We spent a night at Bayonna and dressed up for dinner at the Royal Yacht Club in case King Juan Carlos came in for a pint. Sadly, we didn't get to meet him, but did get a delicious dinner and lots of pints.

On Sunday 26th, we headed south for Portugal and the fridge packed up – full of supplies we had bought at Bayonna. That was the second thing that had gone wrong and we pessimistically waited for the third! There were lots of lobster pots and fishing boats around the mouth of the River Mino and we carefully threaded our way through them. This coast has serious problems with drug trafficking and we experienced our first close encounter with a high-powered customs boat. We were waved on once they had circled us twice, peering at us through their binoculars. We pulled into the marina at Leixoes at 17.30 after a brisk sail south. The marina was officially closed but not closed! Apparently there had been a big fire on the marina the previous month and, as there is a huge oil refinery just along the coast with its discharge terminal next to the marina, the fire officer closed the place down. So there was no power or water or diesel, but the office continued to function and there were hot showers, but no charge for anything, including the use of the internet! The very cheerful and chatty customs officer who came on board to clear our paperwork explained that we should not really be there! We had not a word of Portuguese between us and the Almanac had useless words like 'wreck' and 'sticking plaster' but no verbs or joining up

words. So we could probably have said 'White alternating rock methylated spirits haze stretcher stamps', but couldn't find any simple sentences like 'Our fridge and dinghy are buggered. Is there anyone here who could fix them in English?' We all cursed our ineptitude in the linguistics department and decided to wait until we got to Lisbon to look for engineers.

Monday 27th June. We took a boneshaker of a bus into Oporto and 'did' the old city. It is a bit dilapidated but quite beguiling. We had a boat ride along the river which was entirely without commentary. Mateus rose was *de rigueur* with our riverside lunch and we spent the afternoon exploring the indubitable delights of the various port wineries, including Taylors, Sandemans, Crofts and Offleys. We tottered back to the bus, grinning happily and ignoring the helpful information gleaned from a rather serious and intense young guide in Offleys that he never drinks port because it is so strong that it just 'eats up your liver'. We decided not to tell him about that traditional cure for stomach ache in Ireland – multiple ports and brandy!! Back at the marina it started to rain, so we scuttled from the bus to one of the Yacht Clubs where they were serving dinner. We should really have gone to the boat, showered, be-perfumed and changed our clothes, but we just collapsed into the comfortable armchairs with our shopping bags, wet jackets and day-packs draped around us. Pat looked at the boys as they inspected the very posh menus. She mused, as she watched one of them scratching his leg, another scratching his scalp and the third scratching his operation scar, that we probably wouldn't be admitted to the Royal Irish in that state!! Tuesday morning was lashing rain and howling. We deferred our departure for Lisboa and tried vainly to find someone who knew anything about fridges.

We set off for Lisboa the next day and had a lovely sail with full main and No. 2 genoa in uninterrupted sunshine. Plenty of dolphin to keep us company right through the night. We waited for the bridge to open and let us into the fourth marina, which had showers and power, but no laundry or diesel. We took the lovely old tram into the city centre for a dinner of sardines, salad and unidentified 'meat'. The Portuguese we met didn't seem to have any stomach for being polite, charming and attentive to customers, but we generally got fed and watered with our slim Portuguese vocabulary augmented by lots of hand-signals, grimaces and pointing at dishes on other tables. Their cities bear considerable evidence of their pride in their past – from Vasco de Gama, Bartholemew Diaz and Henry the Navigator to recent politicians who managed to keep them out of WW2. Next day, we located a gas engineer who fixed the fridge – EUREKA! The city of Lisboa is definitely worth a visit and we enjoyed a sunny day strolling around the historic sites.

We left early the next morning and admired the *World* as we passed – a massive floating apartment block for the rich. No sign of washing hanging out on the balconies! Wind was light and we motor sailed south for Sines. The auto helm started playing up, showing 'Drivestop' and suddenly veering off madly in a drunken dive back the way we had come. Robert and Bill consulted the manual and spent two hours lowering themselves into the after lockers and accessing the rudder monitors through the aft cabin – a very nauseating activity in the high Atlantic rollers. Alas, all to no avail! This was our third (and we hoped, last) malfunction. We arrived in Sines at 18.45. It's a nice small clean marina with a very helpful manager. The ever-present customs/police chappie had his office on the marina and we had to fill up yet more forms. Our passports were inspected more in Portugal than they had been in the five years previously travelling all around the world! There were lovely simple restaurants here and we had Sunday lunch in the family-run Restaurant Mexilhao following a chaotic rearrange-



Alchemist at anchor off Nora.



Crew: John, Robert, Pat and Bill on the Rock.

ment of the seats and chairs to give us a good view over the harbour.

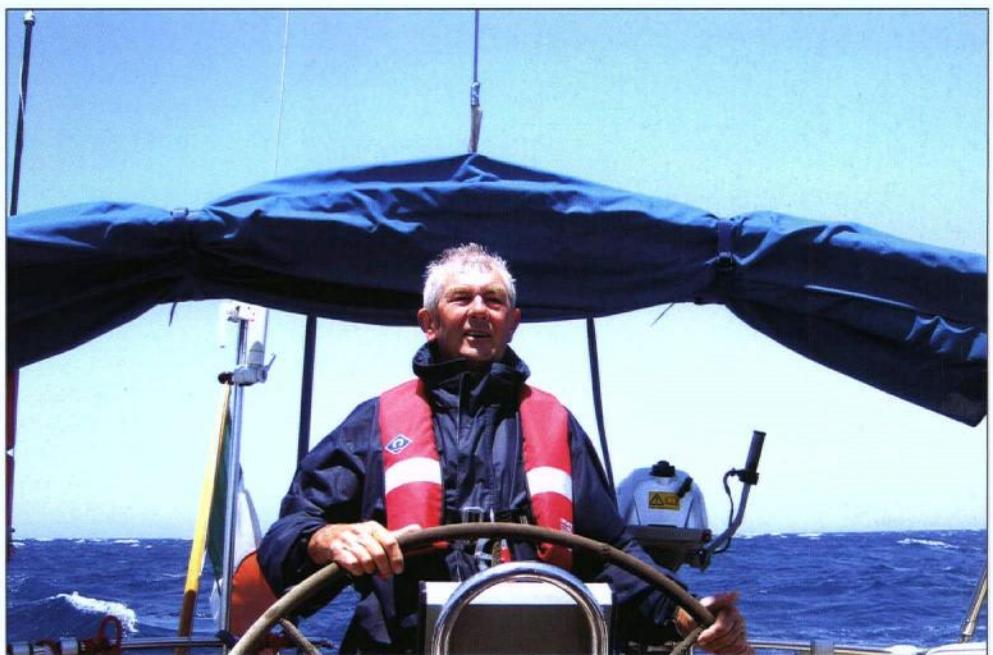
On 4th July we set off to a good forecast of force 3 northwesterly. We planned on making meals underway on our trip for Lagos. BIG MISTAKE! We were only two hours out when we got a 'near gale' warning and a warning of heavy Atlantic waves and swell. We hoped it was a pessimistic Met officer, but by Jaysus, they got it smack on. By six hours later, we had reefed 50% of the genoa and had two reefs in the main in 35 knots of wind on the beam. Nobody was able to tackle the galley, so we fasted until 16.00 when sandwiches were thrown together in horrible conditions and hurled into the cockpit like Frisbees. The auto helm had packed up completely, so we were hand steering with buckets of water washing up our arses. The wind direction instrument packed up and the catch on the aft cabin door loosened resulting in intermittent and annoying banging! We struggled to round Capo de S. Vincente in wind that was now 42 knots and we were down to a hanky on the forestay and the main reduced to hardly a slice of kitchen paper! We arrived with much relief and exhaustion into Lagos at 18.30. It's a really luxurious stop-over and all facilities are available here. Unfortunately, the Raytheon dealer couldn't fix the auto helm or the anemometer for us and suggested we ring ahead to Gibraltar and book the engineer there – if we could get into Gibraltar! We dined in the Taberna de Lagos, run by a German and serving beef and vegetables, a pleasant change from the sardines and salata mista!

We decided to skip Cadiz and on 6th July headed straight for Gibraltar. We had nice flat conditions all day, but overnight the wind started to screech again as we approached the dreaded terrors of Tarifa and the horrors of the Gates of Hercules. We got the full force of the Levant from the east with

huge confused seas, especially over the Trafalgar Bank. Nobody felt hungry and we hardly ate at all, other than a packet of Marie biscuits, some boiled sweets and lots of water. We made painfully slow progress with very little tide to help us. As we rounded Tarifa, we had a 'phone call from Russell (our son) from London. He said 'How are you?' and had to take twenty minutes of an earful about the appalling conditions experienced by his middle-aged but mad parents before he was able to get a word in edgeways to explain that he was OK and had not been caught up in the London bombings. Tarifa is reputed to be one of the windiest places in the world and supposedly has the highest incidence of suicide in the world due to wind-induced depression. Our

depression was quickly lifted once we got through the Strait when the wind dropped and tide turned in our favour which meant we were sailing along merrily at 8 knots in sunbathing conditions within five minutes of battling into wet, wild conditions that had reduced our VMG to 2 knots.

Marina space in Gibraltar was at a premium due to renovations and we were stuck stern-on to a high wall with a narrow gangplank to negotiate. It was a bit like a dive of death with much praying and cursing whenever we walked the plank. The airport runway is right beside the marina and there were several Hercules transport planes taking off up our elbows – apparently taking troops back to London to assist in the post-bomb security management. Gibraltar was really interesting. We climbed the Rock and met the Barbary Apes. In fact, they were just a gang of smelly, flea-bitten monkeys, but the locals revere them, believing that their presence guarantees the commitment of the British to the Rock. The Rock itself has wonderful natural limestone caves which were used during WW2 as hospitals and to shelter the population from bombs that never



Bill battles the Gates of Hercules.

came. There were also man made caves, created by the British to allow them to punch holes in the face of the Rock to point huge cannons at the besieging Spaniards below, in the 1740s. In Gibraltar we had our auto helm and anemometer fixed with great efficiency and without having to take out a new mortgage on our house. The banging door was also fixed – which only left the torn dinghy to be dealt with.

Getting a berth at marinas on the east coast of Spain proved difficult. We were faced with our first shock when on Sunday 10th July we decided to give our custom for the night to Puerto Banus. We arrived at 19.00 having just rolled up the sails in a force 7 northeaster, feeling very hungry and in need of a nice shower and a little stillness. We were greeted by two very smart marineros in white shorts and shirts with epaulettes on their shoulders and radios hanging out of their belts like guns. It is a very upmarket place with superyachts and megayachts gracing every pontoon. We were definitely small fry. They wouldn't even entertain us and had no qualms about sending us back out to sea in a near gale at that hour of night. They couldn't be persuaded to let us tie up at the visitors' reception pontoon or the fuelling dock – even though the fuel was closed for the night. It was like an old fashioned matron's judgement that we would mess up her nice clean ward and so couldn't be admitted to hospital! One of our number asked if, perchance, we had forgotten to empty the holding tank that morning...! Same story at Marbella and we had just reconciled ourselves to the possibility that we might have to set out to sea for the Balearics when we had a call on the VHF from Bajadilla who were able to offer us a place on their holding berth for the night. We were mighty relieved. It's a nice welcoming, new marina and we found a grand place to eat just at the head of the marina in a little local family restaurant that served great sea food to its bustling and noisy clientele.

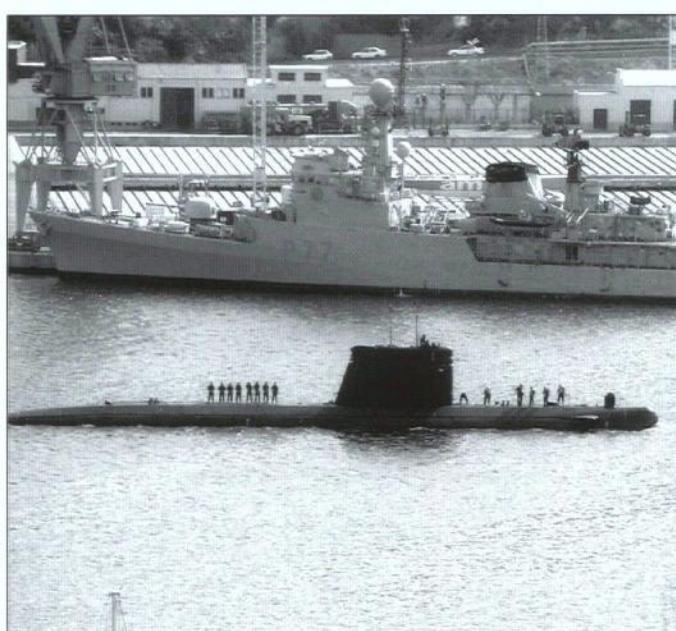
Next day we did an overnight headed for Garucha. We had wonderful displays of dolphins leaping out of the water and up and around our bows. They stayed with us overnight and looked like great phosphorescent torpedoes coming straight at us – eerie and a bit unnerving! As we passed St. Pedro Bay with its lure of a nice swim and a lunch at anchor, we succumbed. We dropped anchor at 15.30 for a couple of hours. We realised that the secluded bay in which we were anchored was populated by latter day nudist hippies with their tents, wigwams and tepees and some troglodyte types who had

gouged living space out of the caves on the cliff face or up in the ruins of a Moorish castle. We joined in the spirit of the place and immediately and repeatedly skinny dipped into the lovely clear water to cool down in the flat heat. The couple of hours extended and evening came and went and we enjoyed the entertainment from the bonfire-lit beach – some rather bizarre guitar playing, no doubt inspired by the mood enhancing fruits of their harvest. We dined and wined and threw our hats at the plan to press on to Garucha as we had some late night swims and much uproarious exchanges as the boys sported their newly acquired water pistols.

We left the anchorage next morning as the sun rose. More Guarda Civile boats buzzed us and decided that we were harmless. Something in excess of 15 dolphins came alongside and danced about the bows and leapt up out of the water. We sailed close hauled in 25 knots, and followed the guidance of the Spanish warship directing us and other shipping out of a submarine exercise zone. We crossed our fingers as we entered Cartagena and were immensely relieved to be directed into a slot on the crowded pontoons. It is a wonderful old Phoenician and Roman city and we walked around the old city in the melting afternoon heat. We enjoyed it, particularly the ice cold beers afterwards. It is a big military and naval harbour and we took lots of photos of large, black, sinister submarines coming past us with their young crew on deck saluting the warships parked across the harbour. As with all these places, it is interesting to meet and chat with other yachtmen. In Cartagena we met Peter, who had taken two years to get to Cartagena from Portsmouth and would probably stay there for another month or so and then wander on up the Med; and Lynne and Ian, two Australians who had just spent a year sailing around the world and would spend half a day in Cartagena before rushing on to the next stop. Sometimes, people sailing on their own or as a couple seem to have an insatiable need, when they get ashore, to talk to others – not particularly to listen – just to talk – and pour out a great gush of previously dammed conversational lava. We found, with four of us, there was sufficient variety of conversation and experience on board to leave us interested in meeting strangers, but not ravenous for new company.

15th July – After fuelling up and resolving a dispute with the marina office about payment (the production of receipts was critical!), we set out to sea again – 25 – 30 knots of wind on the nose! After 7 hours of tacking and being thumped around, we decided to pull into Torrevieja. It was a large port with anchorages and marinas. Very friendly reception and we found a restaurant, El Secano, on the marina that managed to get all our starters arriving at the same time, all cleared away and then all the main courses arriving at the same time and ditto desserts and coffee. We had got used to ordering dishes and just accepting whatever came, whenever it came. If we had adhered rigidly to a starter/main/dessert protocol, it would have been possible for one of us to have three dishes in front of him, while the others had nothing for 20 minutes. The tapas style of dining meant we shared all our food and got to taste lots of different dishes.

16th July: We did an overnight for Formentera – good sailing wind, but very hot and sticky conditions. Lots of jostling for sleeping space in the cockpit! We had a swim before going into Formentera. It is a tight marina to get into, but well organised. Very expensive and price does not include showers!! It is throbbing with the beautiful people and the boys enjoyed an afternoon 'ogling' the talent. It was too hot to walk to the showers, so we showered at the back of the boat – giving the talent cause to ogle us! During the blistering afternoon as we were lying low, a small decrepit metal boat wriggled in beside us flying an Irish flag. There were two blokes on board – unlikely looking lotharios, but then, who can tell? They had



Submarine entering Cartegena Harbour.

two voluptuous Spanish maidens with them and, as they touched the dock, they just ignored the rapturous thanks of the maidens, riposting loudly: 'Yeah, that's fine, youse just vamoose now and let us get off again!' We slunk back down the companionway, into the saloon and hid behind the mast, ignoring their cries of 'Jaysus, there's an Irish tub – hey! Youse lot in there – anyone on board?'

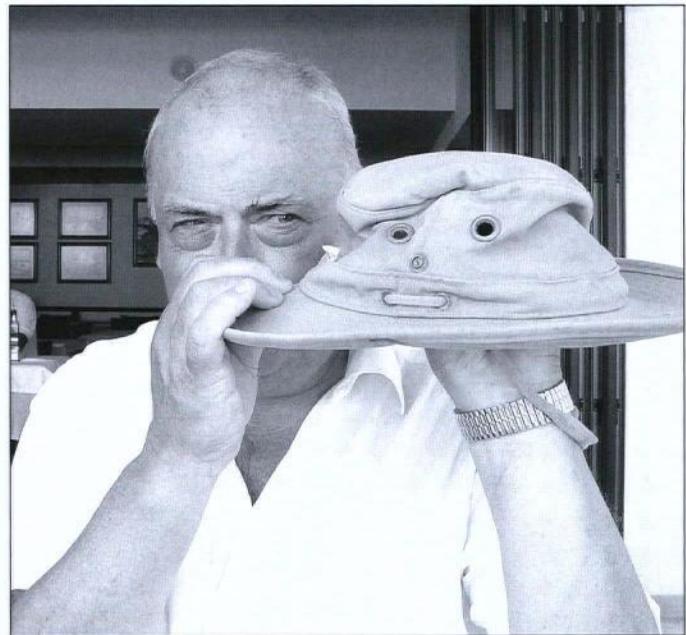
Next day, we motored out and chucked out an anchor and had a swim and some lunch. As we drained our coffees, John casually threw a bit of stale bread overboard. Suddenly it was like Jaws in the water. A foaming, splashing, gobbling gang of some sort of piranhas decimated the bread. We repeated the performance a couple of times and then dropped over the fishing line. But as soon as they saw the hook, they disappeared and couldn't be tempted back – even though we offered them some fresh bread with butter and Bonne Maman strawberry jam! Our success rate at fishing was pretty abysmal for the whole trip, actually.

We had a difficult passage over to Sardinia. Three full days and nights at sea in 28-32 knot winds on the nose and a really horrible sea. More tacking! We had all thought that cruising people don't do tacking! We beat down nearly as far as the Algerian coast to try to run from the severe gales just to the north of us. We were all a bit uneasy when we started getting a lot of Arabic traffic on the radio. We were conscious that we were off a war-torn coast and there were warnings of pirates. The VHF speaker is in the locker behind the wheel and Pat was particularly uneasy when, on her own at the wheel during the night watches, heavy breathing and obscene explicit sexual comment on Channel 16 was delivered right up her ass. Bill cooked his dinner in awful conditions. It was a very tasty combination of cold left-overs rather unfairly dubbed: 'Bill's Swill'!

We noticed sunrise getting earlier and earlier. We still had uncomfortable conditions and eggs were smashed in the galley in the confused seas and high wind. We spotted Sardinia at 09.00 and arrived, after zigzagging through the rocks into the large harbour of Vesme and pulled into the lovely little village marina, a bit north of the main harbour, at Portoscuso. Very friendly, but a trifle disorganised. The mariniera pointed proudly at the 'showers' which we dived upon enthusiastically. The 'shower' (singular) was combined with a toilet and one had to stand on the seat to have a shower. The door had been knocked down and had never been picked up. It cost €1, but there was nowhere to put the euro, so John put his euro on the window ledge and Pat followed him and took it back!

We loved the atmosphere of Sardinia and being in yet another country with yet another language to master and another set of food choices for us to sample. The boys had discovered another game to amuse themselves in the long quiet spells of life at sea. They each had Tilley hats and they discovered little eye holes that looked like eyes and a strand of chinstrap that looked like a mouth and they stuck their fists up into the Tilleys and made glove puppets that conversed animatedly and outrageously with each other. Robert had brought his hair trimmer and whenever the boys felt like they were having a bad hair day, Pat gave them a No. 2 haircut, eyebrow trim and nostril trim. Very glamorous!! We had drinks on board with Pattie and Ian Fowler from Wales and heard of their travels and travails.

24th July we sailed around to Capo di Pula in beautiful sunshine and dropped the hook at 16.00 for lunch and much swimming to cool down. The anchorage was at the ancient Punic and Roman sites of Nora. We stayed for the night and next morning we pumped up the ailing dinghy and motored over to visit Nora. Back on board we had a last swim and motored around to Perde e' Sali. Unfortunately, it had silted up



John MacSweeney and a talking hat.

somewhat since the last entry in the pilot. We touched and were reading only 1.7 m. on the forward looking depth sounder. So we quickly backed out of there and made our way over to Marina de Capitana. Wind was on the beam and we made good progress, getting there just in time to pick up Catherine Walsh. We had a real Italian pizza at the marina. The water in Sardinia is non-potable and we had been careful with our stocks, but were forced to put some water purifier in and take some on board. Great gushes of madly fizzing water came out of the taps, but we bottled it and put it into the fridge and drank it with lemon squash. It was too hot for dragging bottles of water from the supermarket!!

26th July, we set sail for Sicily and spent the day watching the dolphins and hoovering up the news from the newspapers brought out by Catherine. A nice quiet passage to Marsala until 00.35 when smoke started to pour out of the exhaust. Robert quickly stopped the motor and inspected the impeller and water cooling system. He finally diagnosed a piece of plastic or weed over the inlet pipe that had worked its way free when the engine was switched off. We all breathed a sigh of relief as there was not one breath of wind! Marsala had potable water and all services. We walked up to the old town and had dinner at a huge restaurant around the swimming pool of the Palace Hotel, immediately opposite the marina. We were amazed at the standard of service, food and drink for a very reasonable price and yet, with very few customers. Much speculation about the hand of the Mafia!!

We left Sicily and travelled for a day and a night and arrived at Gozo at 10.45 in Mgarr Harbour. It was 38°C and we just spent the day gasping in the cockpit and hosing ourselves down. In the afternoon, we took a bus to Victoria to enjoy the old Citadel and wander through the ancient capital of Gozo. Next day we sailed down to the magnificent historic harbour of Valetta and tied up at the Grand Harbour Marina. We spent two weeks revelling in the history of the knights of Malta and the WW2 remains of the heroic stand of the Maltese people. We also visited the ancient Neolithic sites and the more modern bars and restaurants and had a wonderful stay in this jewel of the Mediterranean during the fiesta season of bombs and fireworks and ancient traditional celebration. *Alchemist* is now safely ensconced in the Grand Harbour marina which will, hopefully, serve as a base in future summers for places to the east, northeast and south.

Across the Aegean – *Rafiki* goes from Kusadasi to Corinth and beyond

Bill and Hilary Keatinge

Rafiki wintered in Kusadasi on the western coast of Turkey, just east of the island of Samos. From a sailing point of view this is a useful rather than scenic area; it is very close to Izmir airport, and not forgetting the wonders of Ephesus – 45 and 20 minutes respectively from the marina. For us it was a good starting point for going west; about 200 miles, as the gull flies, to Corinth. The Setur marina and yard have long had a good reputation, though these days the action has moved south to the big centers at Bodrum, Marmaris and Gocec. By the time we flew to Turkey in early June we were on to Plan C for our 2005 season. We were too late (because of medical problems) for our ambitious plan to sail to the battle at Cape Trafalgar in October via Malta and Tunisia, and staying put in Turkey, while enticing, did not tie in with our long term thoughts of a return to northern climes. So west across the Aegean it was to be.

Bureaucracy between Turkey and Greece

This continues to be 'delicate' and one has to be sensitive and well prepared. The following notes are based on our experiences.

For Turkey: You need a 12 month Transit Log (\$30 in 2004). The documentation looks fiercer than it is in practice; it is useful to have to hand the brand and serial numbers of radar, wireless, liferaft, outboard etc. plus a crew list and details. Checking out cancels this document so you have to start again on re-entry. It is often worth paying the marina to obtain your log as the various offices are often far apart in town. No longer are details of the yacht stamped in the owner's passport. Personal visas (3 months) are now easily obtained on entry at the airport (UK£10; Irish or other EU country €10 – have the exact notes with you), however if you have a 12-month contract with a yard/marina a longer term Visa may be obtainable.

For Greece: On entry from a non EU country eg. Turkey, you need:

- 1) a valid Cruising Log (€30 in 2005) which in theory should be stamped in and out of each port (88c per stamp); in 2005 we heard the log only has to be submitted if there had been a crew change. The log we have been given to understand, is valid as long as there is space for entries (50 in ours)
- 2) a Cruising Permit €15 in 2005, this is valid for the length of stay or 12 months.
- 3) Crew lists – often two are required to include surname, name, nationality, place and date of birth, passport number, place and date of issue
- 4) Boat registration papers – original
- 5) Insurance certificate, with separate (in Greek) environmental cover; this is not always demanded, and more likely in the Athens area.

Papers will be dealt with – in this order – Immigration, Customs, Port Police

Note: There are many who keep Turkish and Greek papers current and hope for the best. Regulations and atmosphere change from year to year and from port to port.

Setting off from Kusadasi – June 9th

It was four days of steamy hard work putting *Rafiki* back into working order but we did have time to be social too. We gave our first drinks party of the season, were invited to a farewell and one warm evening we tramped what seemed like miles with friends to find "the best" fish and chips in town. Between the wonderful Tuesday street market and Migros supermarket at the marina, provisioning was easy and having spent our very last lira on cans of Efes we were ready to leave.

It was hot (28°C) and humid (68%) as we left Kusadasi for Samos; it is only 18 miles to Pithegorion. We stopped east of the town in one of Greece's many unfinished marinas*, mooring alongside. We may have to re-categorise this marina as there really was progress being made towards an official opening date. The checking-in procedure took just over an hour as we tramped from office to office. We had visited Samos previously and driven through the spectacular hills, been to the good museum in Vathi and admired the statue of



A peaceful view as we sheltered from a strong Meltemi near Katapola, Amorgos.

Photo: H.J. Keatinge

*We have been in unfinished marinas in Preveza, Pilos, Missalonghi, Trizonia, Itea, Aigina, Naxos, Santorini, Rethmion (Crete), Pithagorion (Samos).

Pythagoras still proving a point on the harbour quay.

The Dodecanese – Arki and Patmos 10th – 13th June

These are the islands closest to Turkey and right in the path of the prevailing wind, the Meltemi. Anchorages have to be chosen with care, always remembering that the gusts off the lee side of an island can be much more ferocious than out at sea. It is not an area to explore with tight deadlines as that nor-westerly can blow for days. Our first stop was under the shelter of Marathou, a small island off the southwest of Arki. There are two tavernas with about 8 moorings each; no charge is made, but one is more or less honour-bound to eat at whichever taverna one is moored at. We favour Pandelis on the northern side of the bay. Before heading back to *Rafiki* after dinner we were warned of the expected arrival of the watership – many islands rely on deliveries every few months, particularly in the drier tourist season. ETA was 06.00 which was a bit early for cruising types. Well, it blew hard all night and the dawn watership arrival was postponed. We finally had to move off mid morning and all the moorings were magically ‘sunk’. We hovered to watch *Delphi* anchor and settle into the tiny bay with the precious hose line ashore. We took shelter in Porto Stretto just opposite until three hours later we were in turn chased out of there by the *Delphi*. Next day, with the full genoa rolled out we had a great 8 miles broad reach westwards to Grikou Bay, just south of Skala Patmos. This was just to be an overnight stop. The bay is deep and open to the southeast, though the islet of Tragos gives some protection. Bill was just clinking ice cubes when would you believe it – we were told to move as a watership was coming in. This one was bigger than *Delphi*, she dropped 2 anchors, lines were made fast to the beachside trees, and the hose was trailed across the sand, over some garbage containers, and into hole that seemed to open at the base of an electricity pole; water was passing all night.

Middle Cyclades – Amorgos, Paros, Kithnos

13th – 19th June

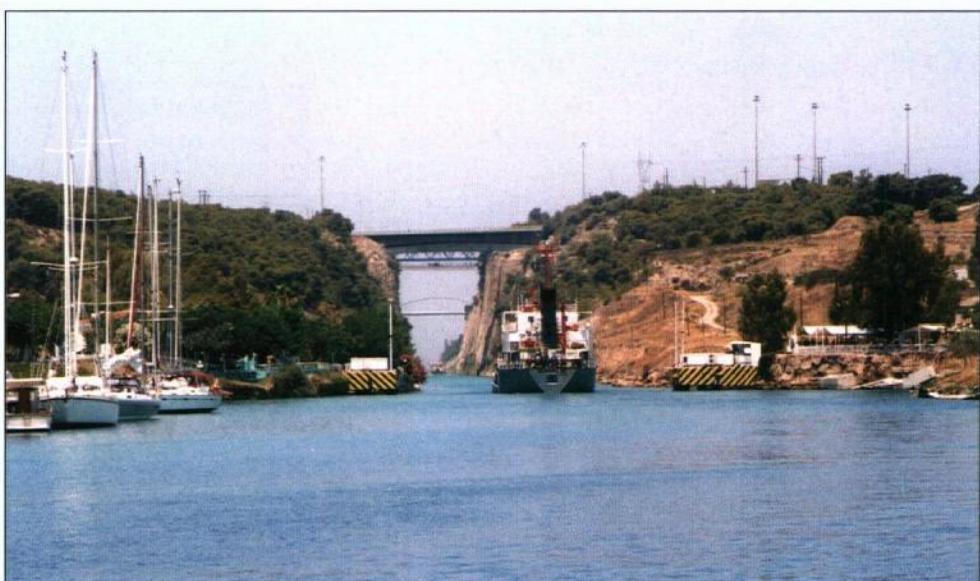
Our planned route was to loop south to Amorgos, north to Naxos or Paros and then to head northwest to the Saronics via Kithnos. Amorgos has to be treated with respect; it lies northeast/ southwest across the Meltemi’s path and the seas blow up against the steep barren rock face making it very uncomfortable indeed. We had a beam reach most of the 48 miles in a brisk northwest force 4-5, with just one 30 minute lull when we motor sailed. The town of Katapola lies on the south side of a deep bay, towards the western end of Amorgos, the shelter is reasonable as long as there is enough west in the Meltemi. We backed with a cross wind onto the quay (facing north) and it was very helpful having shore help with our lines.



Some notes on mooring in the eastern Mediterranean:

Mooring to a quay: with just two of us on board most of the time this seems to require more hands than four! Fenders, stern lines, dinghy alongside up front, passerelle set up, anchor prepared, then lining up so that the anchor can fall without fouling others and with enough chain to reach the quay – very embarrassing running out of chain – done it a couple of times; and of course coming backwards, invariably in a cross wind. We often add two further stern lines, crossed, to give extra stability in adverse conditions, plus a long spring.

Mooring in a bay: Here preparation requires the dinghy at the ready, long line – a floating line is ideal – ready for running with some in the dinghy, plastic piping to protect the line, rodent baffles; after one mouse on board these have now become a must and our first effort with funnels with their ends cut off were a cause for much mirth (probably to the rodents too....), hoping to find some more professional looking protection; and finally the crew ready with rock climbing shoes. Falling back on the anchor, check it has held, crew heads astern for dinghy, rows swiftly for nearest bit of shore, untangling line en route, shins up rocks to nearest olive tree, curses undergrowth, gets line and piping round tree, bowlines as far down as line allows – so that later release can be made from the dinghy. Back on board the line is winched in – before *Rafiki* falls down on the next anxious boat along... We like to have two lines ashore, crossed, or sometimes just one line and a bridle tied on half way. Sometimes we tie on a warning buoy half way along the line.



The eastern approach to the Corinth Canal.

Photo: H.J. Keatinge

Mooring in marinas: Most have laid lines, so once decided on bow or stern-to lines can be set, dinghy moved, boat hook ready for (often yucky) lazy line;; having the passerelle ready is usually not so urgent as help is there for the lines.

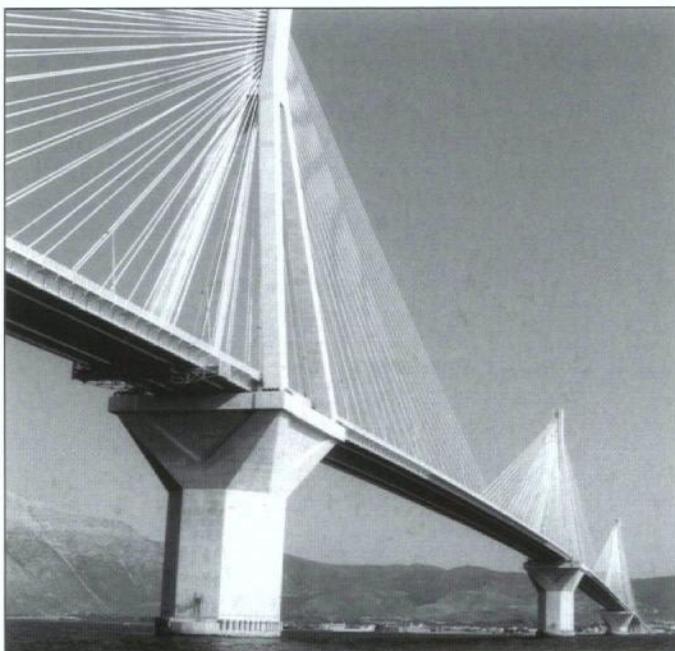
In 7 weeks we spent 6 nights in Marinas, 6 in unfinished marinas, 10 backed onto harbour walls, 3 on moorings, 12 at anchor, 10 at anchor with lines ashore. When we return to northern waters after 8/9 years in the Med we will need to add coming alongside with swooshing tide, cross wind, rain and cold!

But back to Amorgos: the island is steep, barren, dramatic and has the most picturesque whitewashed hill towns. Not to be missed (in long trousers and skirts) is the Monastery of the Presentation; it is seemingly glued on to the southern cliffs. We hired a car this visit – €15 for the day early season, and had a wonderful drive inland. Back on board things were not so great, we had a ship unloading fine aggregate upwind from us and the wind increased to force 7 gusting force 8 from the north. We were far from comfortable and as night came on we even unplugged our power line so that if the anchor slipped, or worse, we could make a quick get away. We slept fitfully and had had enough by 07.00. On advice from a local survey guy we crossed the bay to find shelter in a small bay just west of a tiny chapel. We had no dinghy blown up so the crew swam the lines ashore – no real hardship with clear water at 23°C.

What a relief.... We were sheltered and had a relaxing day as the Meltemi blew itself out.

Weather and weather forecasting:

Olympia Radio: Gives regular comprehensive forecasts and outlook in Greek and English at LT 09.00, 13.00, 19.00, & 01.00. It needs much concentration to get all the details as it is often read very fast with Greek intonation. Take heed when you hear there is High Pressure in the Balkans, Low in Eastern Med. And when the outlook gives a slight increase of north winds in Aegean Seas; both are indicators of impending Meltemi. The VHF Channels are listed in the Mediterranean Almanac and are announced on channel 16 – if you can follow them! The principle ones appear to be: 02 Corfu, 27 Cephalonia, 85 Corinth, 86/23 Saronics, 25 Cyclades, 63 Rhodes.



The Rio Bridge over the Gulf of Corinth is now complete.

Photo: H.J. Keatinge

Navtex: This has reasonable coverage but surrounded by a pile of masts, or in out of the way mountainous corners only the Navigational warnings come in. We do not have SSB but hear that this requires some fine tuning. Navtex Stations are in Corfu (K), Iraklion (H), Limnos (L).

Shipboard baragraph/barometer: These give some indication of weather fronts but in the Aegean rising or falling glass does not usually accompany the Meltemi which can come out of the blue with no warning.

German Forecast: We get short and long range forecasts with reasonable frequency on our Weatherman (also via SSB), but while another piece of the weather jigsaw, it does not always fit.

Internet: We have found Poseidon Weather Greece gives a good 3 day forecast, but as we cannot access on board we have good friends back home who text us the news!

Log entries under Motoring, Motor-sailing and Sailing were about equal for our 7 hour passage (42 miles) to Naousa Bay on the northern side of Paros. We wove our way through the islands south of Naxos, and so far so good. But as we approached the southwestern tip of Naxos serious white horses awaited us; we put in two reefs, readied for a slog north. Strangely it was only a fight to the most westerly 'bulge' of Naxos, and when clear of Ak Gaitani it calmed down and by the time we were off Naxos town the north force 5 had become northwest force 3-4 and was dropping. Our favourite spot in Naousa is in the first bay round Ak Tourkos, there are often 'day' boats which go home in the evening, the snorkeling is good as the water is crystal clear. We have code named it 'Adam and Eve Bay' as there are few if any fig leaves to be seen. Our neighbour in the bay definitely lifted the tone being the famous super yacht, *Mirabella V*. We allowed ourselves a rest day, turned pages and swam and snoozed, what cruising is all about after all.

Our longest passage across the Aegean was 51 miles from Naousa to the western side of Kithnos. With the forecasters warning of another Meltemi we could not linger any longer. We started into a lumpy sea with no wind, two hours later we had the main with 2 reefs and most of the jib as we fetched into a northerly force 5 for 31 minutes and then... Variable 1. Engine on and motor sailing the rest of the way. Coming up the western side of Kithnos we had several bays to choose from, all given a 'good shelter' tick in the pilot. The first thing that hit us though was the number of yachts and power boats around; it was some time later that we realised it was a Greek Bank Holiday weekend and half of Athens was afloat. We anchored in Fikiadha, after two attempts – "good holding once through the weed". At that stage we had a 45lb CQR and have since changed for the equivalent Delta – we find the extra weight on the tip and the wide flukes are doing a much better job, and we have now got 60m of chain which in the deep waters of the eastern Med we should have had years ago. It was an animated scene as the sun went down across the sandy isthmus to Kolona Bay. (Note: our second visit to this bay gave us much more of a problem anchoring, the wind came up strongly and as boats were dragging and manoeuvring round us we scrambled down the awning at midnight. When the wind dropped and everyone was facing every which way, our 35 metre scope and a small power boat's 40 metres meant we were in contact... at 05.45 we up-anchored and settled very peacefully in Apokriosis Bay to the east, not as pretty maybe, but much easier.)

The Saronics – Poros, Aegina, Idhra, Spetsai – 19th June - 8th July

This group of islands is very close to Athens and Corinth; they are relatively sheltered from the Meltemi being west of Cape Sounion which can be very windy indeed. Visiting the islands requires some careful planning as weekends are very busy and

it is handy to have some idea of the timing of the charter fleets pouring out of Kalamaki and other centres. We made Poros our Saronic base as there are numerous ferries to and from Pireus and the other islands. Our daughter Suzanne and her husband Eamonn joined us here; their problem was getting from Dublin without going via different airports in UK and in the end they flew Czech Airlines via Prague, this being the most cost and time effective solution. During their time with us we returned to Kithnos (see above) but with more Meltemi warnings we ruled out Milos as being too far south for return deadlines, so for Eamonn's ten days we pottered south and north of Poros.

South of Poros off the mainland corner there is a wonderful cove behind the islands of Spathi and Skilli; excellent for a swim stop if not too crowded. To the west are the popular islands of Idhra and Spetsai and a muddy bottom in the large mainland harbour of Porto Kheli. We have not moored in Spetsai harbour, it was very crowded when we looked in but we have enjoyed Ormos Zoiyria which is on the northwestern end of the island. Once, in calm weather, we stayed overnight. The gem of the area is undoubtedly Idhra – here you have to resign yourself to the press of boats – literally – and crossed anchors. "Less crowded on Tuesdays" we were told, but there was not one slot at 13.45 on Tuesday 28th June. Our crew wanted a couple of shore nights and as the most picturesque, car free – only donkey transport (and... the driving licence had been left behind in Stoneybatter!) island we dropped them off on the ferry quay and they would find us again in Poros. Rather disconsolately *Rafiki* and owners were heading out of the harbour when we noticed frantic waving on the harbour wall – a large catamaran was leaving – hot berthing it was. Our crew rejoined us for the night; I was enticed into a jewellery shop and we had an excellent dinner at the Sunset Restaurant looking out over a calm seascape. They found a small pension for their 'away' days and next day we hauled up our anchor – without hitch. Just in case, I had to hand our custom-made stainless steel hook with line and trip line, which has helped us on more than one occasion.

We returned to Poros. Stern-to, the northern quay has the plus of electricity, but the wash from the ferries has to be watched; we prefer the southern quay though these power boxes are just for show! The mooring chain which once caught so many anchors has been removed and the holding is good. There is a small daily charge, for €5 you can have all the water you want – but not at siesta time (14.00-18.00), and the diesel truck is never far away. There are a number of anchorages close by, our favourite being Russian Bay; if it is not too crowded one can 'free' anchor, but often it is necessary to have a line, or two, ashore. Close to the northwestern approach to Poros is a small sheltered cove under Cape Dana.

We felt our visitors needed some culture and from Kithnos we headed north to the bay under Poseidon's temple at Sunion. We were lucky to find a mooring which the nearest restaurant owners indicated was OK. It is a gusty harbour at the best of times and the holding is not the greatest. We moved north to spend a quiet night in Chapel Bay on the western side of Ormos Anarissou. Next stop, Aegina, this is the largest of the Saronic Islands and the closest to Pireus; so for Eamonn's return we planned to dispatch him from there as there are frequent buses to the airport from Pireus. We began a sparkling reach westwards, with our new and enthusiastic convert to sailing at the helm, then Suzanne, who seems to have inherited some racing genes from someone, took over and the crew, who have become somewhat lazy, were busy with winch handles and a touch in here and two inches out there. Off the northern shore of Aegina we noticed a large power boat head into a small bay behind an islet (Nisidha) and as it was 14.30 it seemed definitely time for a swim. We anchored in 6.8 metres, it was



Bill on 'wasp' duty with an electric gizmo. Photo: H.J. Keatinge

just lovely. And so we were very relaxed as we reached gently with just the full genoa – who wants to do more than 5.3 knots with only a couple of miles to go? The entrance to Aegina harbour is quaint with the white chapel on the western pier head; there are two options for mooring, apart from the marina which is usually completely full: the town quay or by the café inside the eastern entrance. This was our worst anchoring experience – ever! We touched the ballasting on the eastern stretch under the café; we dropped anchor too far out and did not have enough chain; the anchor did not bite; we pulled the anchor out; oh, we should add that our windlass had lost its stripper and hauling in the chain was far from easy; eventually...on our 7th attempt... we settled under the café. It was some slight consolation to hear that many people have problems in this harbour; we have sworn never to return. Once the dust had settled so did we and we had a good end-of-stay dinner with our crew at a very local taverna on the sea front past the ferries. *Rafiki* was stocked to the gunwales with excellent fruit and veg from the floating greengrocers, fish from the market and a selection from the bakery. We waved Eamonn off on the 12 o'clock ferry.

We returned to Poros where we fuelled and watered and had a peaceful night in Russian Bay. Leaving the shelter of Poros we had a competitive beat up the Methanon peninsula, onto a run and finally a reach as we headed the 12 miles west-northwest to the island of Dhorousa. The anchorage here is actually with lines ashore on the island of Angistri, but protected by Dhorousa which gives more shelter than it seems from the chart.

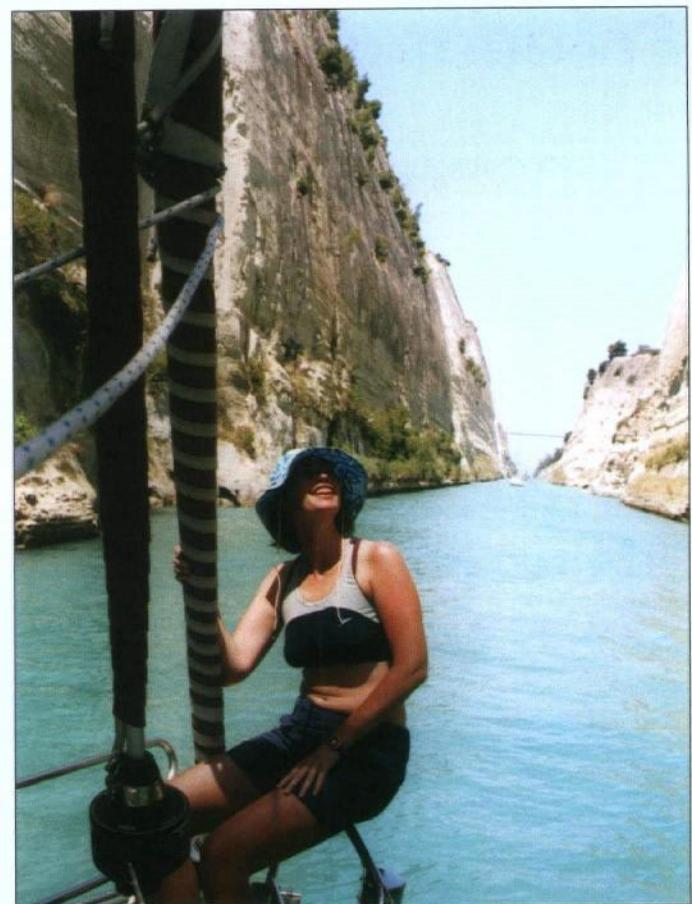
The Corinth Canal – Friday 8th July

A light head wind meant no sailing to Corinth – 20 miles; fishing line out but no fish. However as consolation we had 20 minutes of the best dolphin show we have had – ten large dolphins playing with *Rafiki*, in formation like water-spitfires, rolling, jumping, diving like the pros they are, just wonderful. We went alongside the canal office, produced our ships papers and handed over the princely sum of €150 (it is extra at weekends). There was a ship coming westwards and they cleared us all off the quay, we kept out of the way for 55 minutes for that ship and another west-bound which eventually we followed through. This was our third transit of the Canal

and the 3.2 miles between sheer limestone faces of up to 76 metres, with tenacious trees bravely rooted to minute clefts in the rock was as awe inspiring as ever.

Gulf of Corinth to Preveza – 8th-23rd July

It was Friday and we needed to be in a reasonable town by Sunday so that Suzanne could get back to Athens airport in the early hours of Monday morning, Andrikirion and Itea were the options. The gulf was very calm as we emerged from the Canal and we had to motor the 30 miles to Andrikirion. This is the site of a large military establishment; there is a small harbour – space for four or five yachts but we found it easier to anchor off. There was not much to see and next day we headed for Itea with a swim stop at Ormos Varesse en route. Typically it was a calm force 1 on passage and a nasty force 3-4 on arrival at Itea. However we were able to go alongside in the (unfinished) marina without too much trouble and we went to explore the weekend town; everything was closed from Saturday mid-afternoon, and then we managed to pick the worst restaurant in town for dinner. (Although it has no conveniences, Itea is a much better bet for visiting Delphi than the prettier Galaxidi; we have been to Delphi several times – it is a must by taxi or bus). Suzanne's last day and with taxi booked for 01.00 we decided on a nearby bay for a lunchtime swim. Ormos Anomambi was a pleasant enough sheltered bay 6 miles to the southwest; a fish farm took up much of the approach but all was peaceful until... a sudden 180° change in wind direction and in it slammed in from the southwest. It was time to leave. Under bare poles we were surfing along at over 5 knots in a force 8! As it eased to force 6-7 we rolled out a fraction of staysail and reached north briskly. We very much appreciated help coming



Suzanne admiring the awesome height of the Corinth Canal.
Photo: H.J. Keatinge



Rafiki among the jumble of boats in the Saronic harbour of Idhra.
Photo: H.J. Keatinge

alongside a lee quay. Suzanne had a long but problem-free trip home in time for work on Monday afternoon!

Further west we spent several days in Trizonia, more or less gale bound, but it was no hardship. This is another 'unfinished marina' and we put our fender board to good use alongside the unfaced quay wall. Sadly Lizzies Yacht Club is being run by a rather stressed Alison who cannot cope on her own and after an hour and a half we left without dinner; the village tavernas are simple but good. On westwards to the now finished and very fine Rhion Bridge which straddles the gulfs at Andirrion. One still has to call up the Control on Channel 13, we were told: "Leave one pillar to port and three to starboard." We had not been to Missalonghi before and it is a fascinating 3 miles up a narrow channel, passed the straw hatted swimmers at the entrance, houses on stilts which holiday makers seem to have taken over from the fishermen and on to a pool at the top. We anchored off the (unfinished) pontoons in the northwestern corner.

For our last few weeks we pottered in the Ionian doing our best to avoid the flotillas and charter boats. By mid July we were definitely ready to fly north – too hot and too crowded for comfort. During our 7 weeks we had more and better sailing than in the whole of our 2004 season in southern Turkey. Greece is seriously cheaper than Turkey (the price of whiskey is half that in Turkey and the wine is better) but it is very much more chaotic. Some of the Dodecanese and Cycladian anchorages are just lovely and far less crowded than the Ionian, for at least one good reason – the Meltemi in the Aegean. For our 5-week summer break we had *Rafiki* lifted out at Preveza by Aktio Marine, that being the safest and most economical option in this an ever busier sailing mecca. Part 2 of the season will be spent in the North Ionian.

Brandon Rose returns to La Rochelle

Brendan O'Callaghan

The plan was straightforward: two weeks to La Rochelle, crew change and two weeks to get back home to Kinsale. *Brandon Rose* sped past the Bulman Buoy off the mouth of Kinsale Harbour at 15.00 on Saturday 28th May, crewed by Stephen Connolly, the O'Byrne brothers, Walter and Mylo, and your scribe. We were sensibly reefed down in the force 6 westerly, as a turbulent weather system eased northwards. Or had it? A gale warning on Channel 26, at about 16.40 promised west force 8 or 9 for all sea areas of Ireland. Luckily for us the low, by then centred somewhere north of Malin Head, continued to head northwards, as we scooted in the opposite direction.

The wind gradually decreased during the late evening and moonlit night, and by 05.00 on Sunday, we were becalmed. We motored all day, passing through the Isles of Scilly. A splendid beef bourguignon washed down by a Mick Lynch Bordeaux, was enjoyed in the cockpit before night came down. We hosted 2 pigeons on the sprayhood and encountered lots of shipping but visibility, helped by the moon that rose around 02.30 on Monday, remained very good. Favourable tide in Chenal de la Helle helped our progress. We had a most pleasant cockpit lunch, and a sailing breeze returned as we crossed the Iroise. Songs and a tune on the ship's accordion were called for. Our wind did not last long and at 15.00 we were motoring once more, and passing through Raz de Sein in sublime sunshine. Dolphins and feeding gannets greeted us spectacularly at Pointe de Penmarc'h. By 19.00 we had threaded our way through the rocks and secured to the tiny pontoon on the east side of the busy fishing port of Le Guilvinec. Customary celebrations were the order of the night!

Next morning we shopped for supplies, visited Emile and Claudine in Les Brisants, their delectable pub close to our pontoon, learned that the French had said "non" to the proposed EU constitution and left Le Guilvinec at the leisurely hour of 15.00. It was dull and overcast with fog banks here and there. Light breeze meant the engine was required occasionally. Mylo spent a fruitless hour fishing before we carefully slipped into the La Chambre pool in Les îles de Glénan and picked up a vacant mooring just south of Île St Nicolas. Being midweek, and still very early in the season, there were very few boats there. The dinghy was inflated eagerly for the first time in our cruise and we went ashore for a stroll around the small low-lying island. We tried a game of darts, and sampled the local brew. Back on board we dined well, wined better and were snoring peacefully at a modest hour.

The dull, cloudy weather continued on Wednesday morning as we let go our mooring at 08.00. Motoring in the clammy calm, with fog coming and going, we reached Port Manech, at the mouth of the Aven, and proceeded up the river. This is another very beautiful Breton estuary, much of it tree-lined to the water's edge. It is extremely well buoyed with green and red lateral buoys liberally dotting the channel. We arrived at Pont Aven thirty minutes before high water (neaps) with a depth of 1.9 metres at the quay. We were doubly lucky as we squeezed into the only space available on the drying wall and, in addition, our space had one of only 3 ladders on the whole quay. The day improved to a lovely warm sunny afternoon. We had a very enjoyable stay in this picture-postcard town, famed for its many mills powered by the Aven, and the painting school that flourished here a century ago. Gauguin was probably its best-known member. Despite being a very obvious tourist trap, it is a very pleasant town, and still hosts several artists and galleries. When we saw the mere trickle of water through the mud and gravel at low water we marvelled at the skill of the skippers and crew of the old sailing ships that used to navigate all the way up to our quay to discharge and load their cargoes.

We were moored on Quai Botrel, and I visited the fine memorial to Théodore Botrel, in the public park opposite the quay. Botrel, famed as a poet but immortal in France as the singer and songwriter who helped keep the nation's spirit alive during the dark days of The Great War, spent much of his life in Pont Aven and was buried there after his death in 1925. Before leaving we acquired an appropriate stock of the local Cidre Fermier de Belon, which helped keep us going for a few days. "When in Rome" ... It's great stuff! Give it a try if in the region.

Our reverie in Pont Aven, which was surely one of the cruise highlights, ended an hour before high water on Thursday when



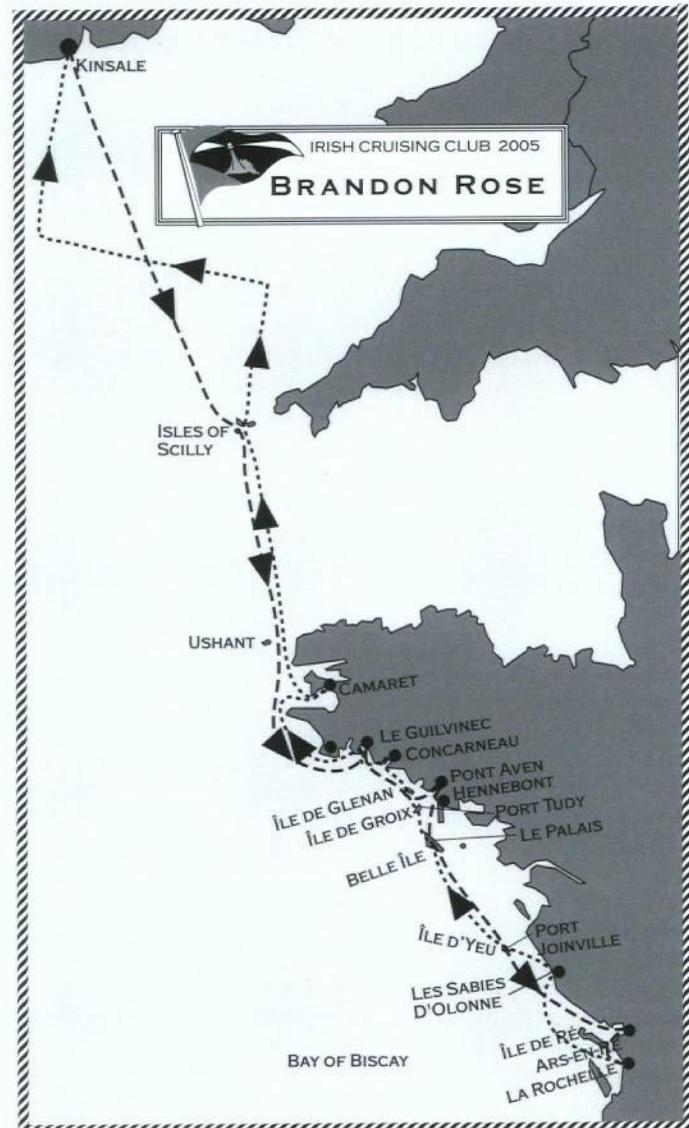
L to r: Walter O'Byrne, Mylo O'Byrne and Stephen Connolly approach Raz de Sein in good spirits.

we retraced our track downstream. Superb weather had by now become established and we soaked up the sun. In a slight breeze we ghosted along, savouring an alfresco salad. Mylo resumed his fishing efforts and caught two mackerel. Entering Port Tudy on Île de Groix in sweltering heat at 18.00, we had a very good meal in Auberge du Pêcheur, and a drink in the Ty Beudeff pub – which has to be seen to be believed – across the road.

Next morning we made a fast, wind-assisted passage into Lorient, via Passe de l'Ouest. Turning east in the centre of the harbour, we entered the Blavet River and motored about 6 miles upstream to the old and historic town of Hennebont. This attractive estuary is also very well marked by big port and starboard buoys as far as the first bridge – there are three in all – and by red and green spars from there all the way to Hennebont. The shallow fringes of the river are littered with the dead and dying skeletal remains of ancient thonniers, bleaching their bones. There is something sad but reverent about it, a bit like Camaret. We secured to fore-and-aft trot moorings in the centre of town at about high tide. While we remained comfortably afloat throughout the tide, the strong westerly wind pushed the whole line of moored boats quite close to the east side of the river at low water.

There is a good train service from here to the nearby major train stations in Lorient and Vannes and Mylo left us next day by TGV for Paris. Shortly after, we left this pleasant place, replenishing our diesel en route in Kernevel Marina, Lorient, at the rip-off price of €1.24/litre. (This was long before the September surge in oil prices). We saluted an unidentified ICC yacht entering Lorient as we left, this time using Passe du Sud. We saw the SNSM lifeboat towing in a small disabled powerboat. A beautiful day; west force 5, lively blue sea, lots of sunshine, and perfect visibility. Under genoa only, we were poored along at 7 knots to Le Palais on Belle Île. It was Saturday, the harbour was crowded and we were directed to raft up to a dive boat on the town side of the avant port. We chilled out after our energetic passage, and ate *un bon repas* on board. Walter and the skipper failed to overcome the desire to go ashore for loose pints in the bustling Le Goéland. Stephen preferred the peace of *Brandon Rose*.

As soon as we escaped from the wind-shadow of Belle Île next morning we picked up a gentle sailing breeze from southwest. A high pressure area had become centred in Biscay



and gave us gentle settled conditions for the rest of the week. The peace of our cockpit lunch was troubled briefly by the container ship *Gascogne* heading into the Loire. He altered course and passed well clear of us near the SN1 buoy. We resumed our meal and made an uneventful passage, reaching Port Joinville on Île d'Yeu at 18.30.

This island is special and is well worth a day or more to look around and scratch a little beneath the surface. But... priorities, promises and compromises! Our plan had envisaged going into the Charente River as far as Rochefort, and also visiting the islands of Ré and Aix. With these destinations in mind we left Yeu at the ungodly hour of 06.30 on Monday. Light following breezes were not enough to enable us keep up our schedule to make our tide into Ars-en-Ré, so once more we had to fall back on horsepower.

Entry into Ars-en-Ré involves following an approximately 4-mile channel across sand and rocks.



Looking seaward at low water, Ars-en-Ré.

Most of the channel dries to between 1 and 1.5 metres. It runs west at first towards two leading marks/lights and turns to port (southwest) for the final 2 miles. There are three starboard marks to guide one across the sandbank but we completely failed to spot the leading marks up-sun on our approach. (We also failed to see them when leaving). The final 2 miles approach to the town is extremely well marked with numerous lateral buoys. (Later at low water all the buoys we could see were aground, highlighting the care needed to keep to the middle of the channel). The harbourmaster regularly moves the buoys after gales to indicate the best water.

On reaching the end of the buoyed channel we entered the La Criée Marina, and encountered the most significant moment of the cruise. There seemed to be endless room in the marina and it seemed too good to be true. (The old adage “If it seems too good to be true, it is”, didn’t dawn on me until later!). I picked an adjacent convenient finger pontoon to go alongside while the two crew prepared fenders and warps. *Brandon Rose* drifted nicely alongside and Stephen, with the stern rope, jumped on to the pontoon. Immediately the flimsy pontoon sank downwards under his weight, causing him to lose balance and fall into the water. Almost instantaneously his lifejacket self-inflated. He was obviously shocked by the sudden unexpected immersion but stayed cool and assured us he was OK. Walter and I were also shocked into temporary inaction and I lost control of the boat. However all’s well that ends well. The marina was empty because it was, in effect, a building site. Two men in a workboat noticed our dilemma and came to our aid by helping Stephen out of the water into their workboat and from there back on to the pontoon. They then acted as a tug and pushed our bow to port enabling us to finally secure to the pontoon.

A few thoughts that occurred to us after the event might be worth a mention. Firstly, it was the case proven in favour of wearing a lifejacket, an in-date, properly serviced one. The element of surprise cannot be over estimated. All three of us were shocked and frozen into inaction initially. A lifejacket should be worn fairly tight-fitting and I feel the argument for crotch-straps is overwhelming. Although Stephen is a good swimmer and swims all year round in the sea near Dublin, he got very cold very fast in the water, probably due to shock. Because of the extra bulk created by the lifejacket he couldn’t get himself out of the water on to the marina. There were no ladders at all. He had initial difficulty in getting a hold on a cleat inboard on the pontoon from his position in the water. Luckily he fell in on the “far” side of the pontoon from the yacht. The additional danger of being crushed between yacht and pontoon might have arisen had he fallen on the “near” side with wind or stream forcing the boat against the pontoon.

Suitably chastened by this experience, we left at the request of the Chef du Port and went instead into the other harbour in Ars town centre, called La Prée Harbour, where we tied up in a more conventional manner.

We declared a lay-day on Tuesday and deleted Rochefort etc off our cruise plan. Bikes were hired and we pedalled to St. Martin and back in the sunshine. We recovered from the drama of the unplanned plunge by dining out no

less than three times today! With help from our neighbours we managed to extract ourselves from the lee-shore corner of La Prée on Wednesday and motored back down the narrow channel against the strong (2 knots +) flood. Eventually we got a slant on the east wind, had a powerful sail on through the beautiful Île de Ré Bridge and tied up in La Rochelle’s Vieux Port, to bring the first half of the cruise to a close.

For the next few days we became tourists in this fabulous town, steeped in French, European, religious and marine history. The weather continued warm and sunny and we swam at high water at the convenient Plage de la Concurrence, on the north side of the entrance, a short stroll from our pontoon. We met Gilbert O’Connor (ICC) and crew of *Freycinet*, just arrived direct from Strangford.

Walter and Stephen did a great spring-cleaning job on the boat before leaving. I met new crew Philip McAuliffe (ICC), George Ferguson and Tony, my brother, off planes and trains. (La Rochelle is a suitable crew-change venue with excellent Ryanair Gatwick/Cork connections and TGV to Paris in 2 or 3 hours.) Tony’s son, Anton, a student in Rennes, also joined us for the few days here. The Vieux Port buzzed with weekend activity in the continuing glorious weather.

On Monday 13th June, Anton handed us our warps and waved us out through the old towers of La Rochelle and we turned our faces towards the auld sod. Light breeze during the morning meant the iron topsail was needed, but we were able to beat in a good headwind, in the midday heat. As we approached the entrance to Les Sables d’Olonne, we saw a dismasted catamaran being towed in by *Adrien*, a Tour du Monde boat. After a pleasant meal in the marina area, we met some Irish sailors who told us Neil Prendiville (ICC) was in town and gave us directions to find him. Neil was helping a friend sail a brand-new Jeanneau from Les Sables back to Kinsale. Coincidentally it happened to be the friend’s birthday also, so a lively night was had by all!

There was tremendous marine activity of all sorts in Les Sables as we left next day. Again we had pleasant weather apart from wind direction. Another dead beat was our lot for most of the way to Port Joinville, where we had a further meeting with *Freycinet* and another pleasant stay in this special place.

Things became a bit more boisterous on Wednesday, and southwest force 6, occasionally 7, gave us a lively sail towards Belle Île. Once again the breeze died away in the afternoon and



Return crew (l to r): Brendan O’Callaghan, Philip McAuliffe, George Ferguson and Tony O’Callaghan.



Basking in the summer sunshine in the Vieux Port, La Rochelle.

we motored towards Le Palais in the gathering gloom of evening. We secured to a buoy outside the harbour and were comfortable there for the night apart from wash from passing ferries and the occasional fishing boat. The night was clear and bright, starry and the pale crescent of a waxing moon. The lights of Quiberon were a necklace across our north horizon.

In the morning we left for Île de Groix and sailed all the way in light wind and very poor visibility that necessitated use of radar. We tied up in Port Tudy in the early afternoon humid overcast heat. We hit the town for a pleasant meal in Les Alizés in Le Bourg followed by liquid refreshments in Auberge du Pêcheur and Ty Beudeff.

Flat calm meant motoring again next morning. The sea was as smooth as glass as we breakfasted under way in the cockpit. Entering the Glénan Archipelago just west of Île Penfret, we threaded our way into La Chambre once more and picked up a mooring. As lunch was being served on deck the sun broke through to give us an afternoon of sweltering heat. We swam off the boat and I removed the usual clump of healthy Breton seaweed from the prop. I thought I recognised the beautiful black classic timber yacht moored just next to us and when her crew returned on board they confirmed that she was indeed *Pen Duick 1*, the original Tabarly yacht, built to Fyfe design in Crosshaven in 1898. Also close by was *Pen Duick 2*. Both were participating with perhaps 30 other boats in an AIGI rally for the disabled. After the rally boats left to the accompaniment of blaring loud-speakered rock music, the Glénans reverted to being peacefully heavenly again! It was such a fabulous day that we all swam again, this time from the beautiful little beach on the north side of Île St Nicolas, prior to aperitifs ashore and a banquet back on board. We could clearly see the walls of the Ville Close in Concarneau 10 miles away, in the final blaze of light from the setting sun. Later digestifs were sipped under the magical light of the half moon. A song or two and a tune on the old accordion brought an idyllic day to a close.

We had a provisional meeting planned for Saturday 11th June in Concarneau with friends from KYC who were on their way south and had the good fortune to be able to squeeze into the marina beside them around noon. We also met David Tucker (ICC) on *Intrigue* who was about to leave for Kinsale, but took the time to say hello before going.

Continuing our progress homewards, we left Concarneau

next day in dense fog and flat calm. Soon the sun burned away the fog, a great sailing breeze built up from the west and we had a most enjoyable beat to Le Guilvinec. Again we had a memorably pleasant visit to the busy fishing port, chock-a-block with trawlers home for the weekend. Emile presented us with a half-hulled carved model of the local fishing vessel Roulis, crafted skilfully by himself, a most artistic and generous gift. We had an oïche cheoil in Les Brisants to rival the best!

On Monday we rose early to catch favourable tide at Pointe de Penmarc'h and pass through Raz de Sein before the south-flowing ebb set in. Our task was not helped by a northwest force 4/5 that had us hard on the wind all day; a pleasant sail nevertheless. We tied up in Camaret in good time to cook

and enjoy roast lamb on board and a nightcap ashore.

Camaret, as well as being a very convenient departure port for a channel crossing, is well served by good shops, supermarkets, and restaurants, has excellent coastal walks and sandy beaches and has the most easily accessed fuel pontoon I know of. We topped up our diesel before leaving in time to get full benefit from the morning's flood tide north through Chenals du Four and de la Helle. Just as well we had a full fuel tank as the breeze died away soon after we left Camaret and we were forced to motor all the way overnight to Scilly. Dense fog brought visibility down to 50 metres or less as we closed in on The Isles of Scilly and we almost hit Spanish Ledges Buoy before we saw it! Feeling our way gingerly into St Mary's Sound we could see neither St Mary's to starboard nor St Agnes to port. Using radar and GPS to guide us we arrived safely into St Mary's roads. As quickly as the fog descended on us it

Cruise summary

Ports	Nautical miles sailed	Hours	Date
Kinsale to Le Guilvinec	295	54	28/30 May
Îles de Glénan	16	3	31
Pont Aven	16	3.5	1 June
Port Tudy	18	5.5	2
Hennebont	14	2.5	3
Le Palais	33	5.5	4
Port Joinville	49	10	5
Ars-en-Ré	50	10	6
La Rochelle	21	4.5	8
Les Sables d'Olonne	42	9	13
Port Joinville	47	9.5	14
Le Palais	52	10	15
Port Tudy	23	4.5	16
Îles de Glénan	24	4.5	17
Concarneau	10	2	18
Le Guilvinec	28	6.5	19
Camaret	52	9	20
Isles of Scilly	130	25	21/22
Kinsale	174	34	24/25
Totals	1,094	212.5*	

*Engine was used for c. 50%

cleared and within about 3 minutes we had 10 miles visibility on all sides. We anchored in Porth Conger off St Agnes around noon. Swimming from the boat and later on the beautiful beach at The Cove, we enjoyed the warm sunshine and lazed ashore like lizards, stretched out in the warmth. A pleasant meal in the Turk's Head preceded the inevitable transfusion of pints. We spent a peaceful night in Porth Conger.

Next morning we motored the short distance to St Mary's and tied to a mooring. Our great friend, Camborne, was waiting on the pier with a welcome, and he and his wife, Di, hosted us to another memorable midday BBQ in the garden of their home, spectacularly overlooking Hugh Town. So generous were the helpings that none of us was able to eat anything at all at dinnertime. We paid our farewell respects to our hosts and sipped the customary pints in the Mermaid. Back on board, we deflated and stowed the dinghy and slept well.

With a forecast of force 4/5 from the dreaded northwest we left Scilly for home at 06.00 on Friday. The best of whatever good weather was going seemed to be in our area, considering

the Glastonbury Festival was washed out by torrential rain. Bearing the rigours of yet another thrash to windward with equanimity, we made reasonable progress towards home. Crossing the Labadie Bank, the wind had fallen to northwest force 2, and a few hours later we were reefing in force 6 from north-northeast. Early on Saturday we listened on the radio to The Lions being mauled by the All Blacks in the first Test. About 15 miles from The Old Head we had a few sightings of a whale and eventually we tied up at 16.00 in the middle of the milling masses of the Sovereigns Cup Regatta fleet in KYC.

The crew did another splendid clean-up job on the boat. Phone calls to loved ones announced safe return and a parting cup was supped.

Brandon Rose and both crews had done me proud once again. Apart from Stephen's unscheduled swim in Ars-en-Ré, we avoided drama, and enjoyed a most memorable holiday. Long may we all enjoy the good health that makes it all possible.

The Commodore writes of retirement and changing boats

expectations admirably.

I took part in the Northern Rally in Strangford Lough, held in gale force winter weather and then the East Region Rally to Wexford in even more inclement weather. Fortunately, the trip down from one rally to the other was made with our Antarctic sailor Peter Killen on board. He helped to calm my nerves as we were led over the bar and through the tortuous channel to Wexford quay by our host club's enthusiastic cruiser class captain, Brian Coulter. Afterwards Barbara and I spent ten days in Waterford on the pontoon just below the crane from which *Ring of Kerry*, my first cruising boat, was launched in 1973.

Having been well entertained by our members there, I escaped by sailing to Brittany. I made my landfall in Audierne, approaching that port from the southwest to avoid the Chenal du Fort and the Raz de Sein. Then in Port la Foret, a nice marina just east of Benodet, Barbara arrived with two of our young grandsons. It was a most enjoyable stop in what we realised had been our old camping territory before sailing took over.

Then across the Bay to Spain and down to Bayona where Barbara rejoined the boat and we were well entertained by our (almost) honorary port officers Joe and Mary Woodward. August saw me sailing down the Portuguese coast, around Cabo San Vicente and to Lagos where I spent an uncomfortable night at anchor outside the mole protecting the river entrance. Anchoring, for a stop of just one night is far more attractive for a single-hander than the hassle of getting into a tight marina berth. Lagos has the additional drawback of a bridge across the entrance which closes early in the evening. I moved on to Portimao, where I had not been before and found it to have a large, fully protected anchorage well outside the main channel with an easy dinghy trip to shore.

Then to Vilamoura where our eldest daughter, son in law and two grandchildren joined me. We had a good run along the coast back into Spain and on to Mazagon. Already I can look forward to having grandchildren crewing in the very near future!

On my own again I took *Island Life* down to the Bay of Cadiz, into the marina at Puerto Sherry where I booked in for lift out and antifouling next spring at Industrial Nautica del Sur, a yard I used previously and with which I was very satisfied. Finally, I made my way up the river Guadalquivir to a winter berth at Club Nautico in Seville. There she lies, almost beneath the orange trees on which the presently green fruit will ripen to enable me to make more marmalade on my return in January or February.

We changed from our Nicholson 31 to an Island Packet 40 when I retired in the expectation that it would provide more suitable accommodation for the visits of our growing number of grandchildren and for my extended live-aboard lifestyle. In this year's cruising it fulfilled our

Bureaucracy still rules in Portugal

Jim Menton

The Maritime Police took my ships papers and told me they would give them back to me when I got a certificate stating the yacht was seaworthy again – just because I had a problem with my propeller!

Caranja is a Moody 40ft. sloop designed by Angus Primrose with a 50 h.p. auxiliary diesel engine, which I purchased at the Southampton boat show in 1982.

I have started my third year as a “liveaboard” in Portugal spending the winter in Lagos marina. My wet gear has not seen the light of day since I arrived south of Finisterre.

Last winter I put the yacht on the hard in Soprama, the local yard, for a refit. The yacht being 22 years old needed a big clean-up, which it got. The hull and decks were restored to pristine condition as well as some other work.

When I was putting the yacht back into its berth on the marina, helped by Tony and Rita Breen – yacht *Surprise*, I engaged reverse to stop the yacht, but it went forward and demolished a water tap. Had I selected reverse or forward?

Before I left Ireland I had fitted a JF propeller, purchased from Darglow Engineering Ltd., Dorset in England, which gives the same thrust in reverse as forward – the blades turn 180 degrees. Was this the start of my troubles?

My good friend Negley Groom joined me and we left Lagos at 06.30 on Monday 20th June 2005 to go west and north up the coast of Portugal. We had an easy sail until we came to Cabo de Sao Vicente where we met northerly force 5 winds and a rough sea. We tacked our way north, the seas calmed and we arrived in Sines at 18.18 after a distance of 82 miles in 11. 48 minutes. Marina fee was €14.31 per night, the least expensive in Portugal, as the port and marina are owned by an American oil company. We stayed there on Tuesday, and at 08.50 on Wednesday we headed north for Cascais, a distance of 57 miles, arriving at 16.30, motor sailing all the way in glorious sunshine. The marina fee here is €34.19 – one of the most expensive in Portugal. We spent two nights in Cascais and at 09.30 on Friday departed north for Peniche, a distance of 49 miles, arriving at 16.40 where we got the last berth, outside on the long breakwater. Marina fee was €33.62 per night. We stayed for two nights and on Sunday 26th June motor sailed the 60 miles to Figueira da Foz in 10 hours. Marina fee here was €19.04 per night.

The following day saw us heading north for Porto, a distance of 66 miles, arriving at 19.00. We could not find anywhere to berth, but did tie up to the wall of the Cais de Estiva on the north bank about 400m downstream of the Ponte Dom Luis Bridge, as we were beckoned to do by the customs man. Up to his office and completed all the necessary documentation. When I returned I saw it was impossible to stay there for the night as the wall is used by passenger boats taking people for trips up river and we had no room to tie our warps, so we left and headed for Leixoes arriving at 20.56. Leixoes marina is officially closed as there was a fire in the refinery at the back of the marina and crude oil spilled into the marina creating a hell of a mess. This year one could go on the marina but there is no water or electricity. The marina office was open but no charge was made. The marina will not be opened again as it is

considered dangerous because of the refinery. We stayed for two nights and took a bus to visit Porto on Tuesday.

We had sailed 310 miles north since we left Lagos and time was getting short for Negley who had booked to fly back to Ireland from Lisbon. We decided to head south, as our plan was to go to Nazaré – about 100 kilometres by road north of Lisbon where Negley could get a bus to Lisbon. I was going to spend the rest of the summer in Nazaré, as it is cooler there than further south. I had spent the two previous summers there and like the place.

On Wednesday 29th June we left Leixoes for Figueira da Foz, arriving on the customs pontoon at 17.42. I did all the necessary in the customs office and as I was leaving the office I was called back and shown into another office where a form was placed in front of me and I was very abruptly told to fill it up. As I was filling out the form I enquired what it was and told it was my agreement for the yacht to be searched. I completed the form and was accompanied to the yacht by a very official customs man. I showed him around the yacht, he seemed satisfied and left. We moved to a marina berth and, as I was entering the berth I engaged reverse to stop the yacht but the yacht went forward and hit the Marina. I know I definitely engaged reverse; I was making sure since demolishing the water tap in Lagos. We tied up our warps and tested forward and reverse and all seemed to be working properly. Next day I successfully reversed out of the berth to go to the fuel pontoon and on to Nazaré. I got out of the pontoon and when I engaged forward nothing happened. I checked the gearbox and saw that the shaft was turning; I tried reverse and forward and eventually the engine was barely able to turn the shaft even at full throttle. I thought I had something around the propeller and I tried forward and reverse hoping to bring whatever was there into the cutters on the shaft. All to no avail. By now we were drifting very near the rocks at the entrance to the marina, so I called the marina for help, but by the time help arrived we had crawled our way to the fuel berth. A diver was sought but he could not come until after 14.00. Eventually the diver arrived and on his first inspection he said all was O.K. nothing around the propeller. I started the engine but it was the same and would not rev up. Now I had bad vibrations from the engine. Engine off, diver down again, could find nothing wrong. Again I tried but it was the same. Diver down again, with instructions to check the blades on the propeller. He found one of the blades was able to turn freely and was going into a paddle position when turning. By now a mechanic – Papeiro had arrived and got the Pilot boat to take us to a marina berth to await high water next day. We were only just tied up when two Maritime Police arrived. One said, “You have a problem with your yacht” and asked to see the ships papers, insurance and passports, which he examined in detail. He returned the insurance and passports but told us he would keep the ships papers until I got a certificate stating that the yacht was seaworthy again. There was not much I could do, they had guns, and so I let them off with my ships papers.

The following day Friday 1st July the Pilot boat brought me to the slip to dry out and Papeiro removed the prop and

dismantled it. He found one cog stripped on one blade and several cogs stripped in the hub. It was now about 19.30 so nothing could be done until next morning, which was Saturday.

Both Negley and I were leaving about midday on Saturday 2nd July to stay in Lisbon, as Negley was flying home and I was flying to Paris en route to Les Sables D'Olonne to help Brian Huddleston take his new yacht – *Genesis of Dublin*, a Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 40.3 from there to Bayona. Also my daughter, her husband and three grandchildren were arriving to the yacht on Tuesday for two weeks holidays. The yacht was still on the slip! I left Papeiro in charge of the yacht and he assured me it would be back on the marina for my visitors. Also he was to get a new propeller.

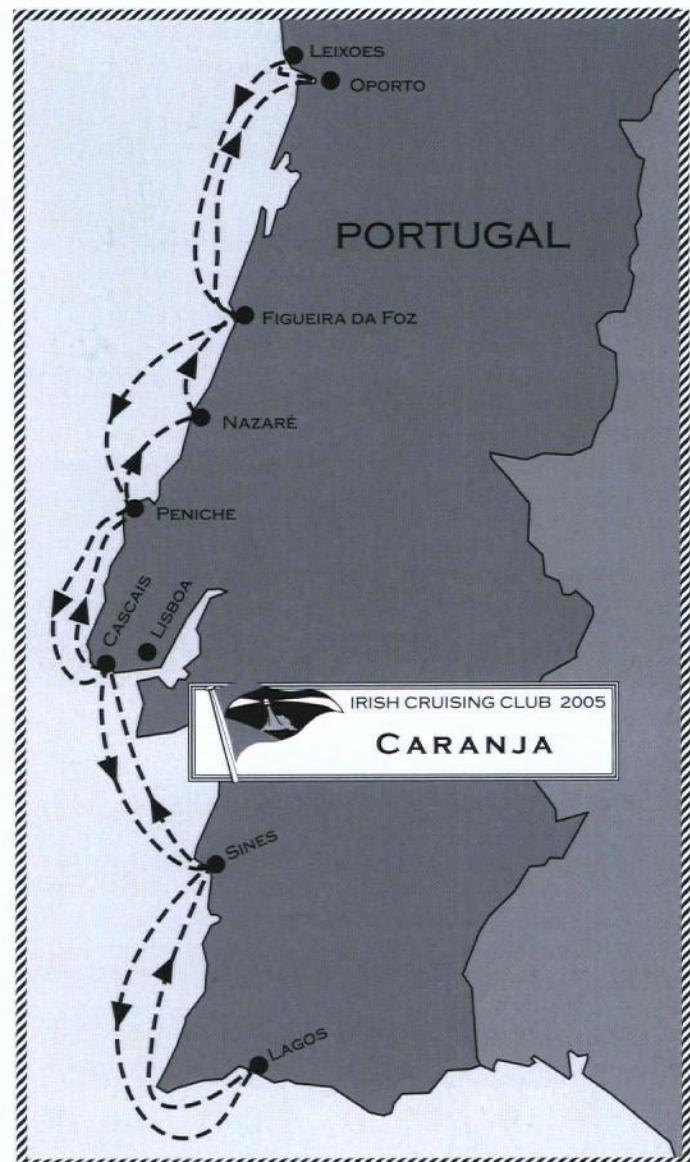
I arrived back in Figueira da Foz on Monday evening 11th July and no propeller had arrived! Papeiro told me he had sent the hub to Barcelona to get the right dimensions for my shaft for the new propeller. He would phone them next day and see if the new propeller was on its way. Next day he told me there was a problem as their propellers were in millimetres and mine was in "feet", but they were trying to sort it out.

On Wednesday 13th July no propeller had arrived so I phoned Darglow Engineering Ltd. in England to see if they had a fixed propeller for the yacht. I had all the dimensions of the original propeller, which I had given away for nothing in Lagos last winter! They had one! I decided to wait until the next day before ordering it, as I did not want to have to pay for two propellers. As no propeller had arrived from Barcelona, next day I phoned Darglow Engineering Ltd; they had all the necessary dimensions of my shaft from supplying the JF propeller, but the propeller would have to be drilled out to suit my shaft. This was Thursday 14th July. I ordered the propeller and it arrived in Figueira da Foz the next day about 16.00. Papeiro had to go to Vigo as he was skipper of a racing yacht there, so it would be Monday before he could fit the propeller. I could not do any work myself, as I understood that Papiero would give me the necessary certificate to get my ship papers back.

On Monday 18th July my visitors departed to stay the night in Lisbon and fly home on Tuesday. The pilot boat put *Caranja* back on the slip at high water and the new propeller was fitted by about 19.30 – low water. However Papiero's drills were not up to drilling the shaft for the split pin, so I would have to stay until tomorrow when he would get new drills! So another night on the slip!

The shaft was drilled on Tuesday evening, at low water, so yet another night on the slip!

At last, on Wednesday 20th July I got off the slip under my own power and Papeiro tried out the new propeller. All was well until I requested the necessary certificate of seaworthiness. He then informed me he could not supply it, so luckily, I made him come with me to the Maritime Police to get back my ships papers. Now the bureaucracy got into full swing. At first no one knew anything about my papers. This solved, I was informed that a surveyor would have to come from Lisbon and examine the yacht. There would be a fee of €50 plus expenses and it would be sometime next week, at least, before he could come. I was going mad! I demanded to see the commander, which took some time. In the meantime Papiero had calmed me down and when I eventually saw the commander I was reasonably normal. I told him I wanted to leave Figueira da Foz this year, that the yacht was not the Queen Mary and as it was a sailing boat it did not require a propeller or even an engine and that Papiero their local mechanic had done all the work and tested the yacht. All this through Papiero as the commander could not speak or understand English. After numerous phone calls, I presume to Lisbon, I got back the ships papers – after two and a half hours in the Maritime Police's office.



Now it was pay-up time. Papiero was reasonable – €125. The Pilot boat authorities wanted €149 plus I.V.A. (our V.A.T.) for each trip, four trips at the same charge as going out to a ship, as that was the only rate they had and nobody was available to make a decision to reduce the cost for each ten minutes trip. One of the marina attendants with whom I had become friendly was very helpful, and he offered to take up my case and try and get a reduced rate. After many phone calls etc. he told me to leave it until next day when he would contact whoever was not available that day. Eventually next day a rate of €40.70 plus I.V.A. was agreed for each trip. The diver was phoned and wanted €100, which the attendant advised was far too much and requested him to leave his "paper work" into the marina office. As this had not arrived by the time I left I put €50 in an envelope and left it with the marina attendant.

Marina fees – I was in Figueira da Foz for three weeks, so it was less expensive to pay for the month – €317.70. All in it cost me €1,268.69

I had made friends with Paul, an Englishman who has a business in Figueira da Foz and has a yacht on the marina there and he volunteered to sail with me to Nazaré.

So on Friday 22nd July we set sail for Nazaré – a distance of 37 miles. Wind was light northwesterly but a confused lumpy sea. We had been motor sailing for a short time when my crew got sick and spent the rest of the trip asleep in the cockpit! We



The "new" *Caranja* on marina in Lagos after re-fit.

had some sailing but most of the trip was motor sailing and we arrived in Nazaré at 15.15 and tied up on the marina.

Nazaré is composed of legend and miracle, tradition and colour, drawn against a magnificent landscape of sea and shore. All of this is expressed in the voice and soul of its fishermen and the women of Nazaré who in their typical local dress with its seven petticoats have either a smile on their lips or, clad in black, weep for their husbands, sons or fathers that the ocean has claimed for its own.

Even today the fishing nets are stretched out over the golden sands along with the wicker racks where shark and horse mackerel are dried, and the fishing boats with their pointed bows that are a reminder of the art and skill of circle net fishing, all add a touch of reality to a fantastic holiday resort.

The harbour it is claimed is never closed even in conditions in which it would be foolhardy to attempt any of those further north. This is due to the Canhao da Naxare, a deep trench that runs close offshore with depths of up to 1270 metres and stretches from Pontal Da Nazaré to the Berlenga Islands – west of Peniche. The marina is small but I never saw anyone turned away. It is about 2km from the town but there is a good frequent bus service – €0.75

It is a good place to use as a base to visit a number of Portugal's most famous places, including Fatima. Marina charges are on par with Figueira da Foz and Peniche as all three are run under the one authority.

Nazaré gets very busy and crowded in August with many visitors, mostly from northern Portugal, holidaying during the month of August. They have a saying "you must make your August"; there is a wonderful beach, which is packed during

August, but at the end of that month the place is deserted.

Nightlife starts late – very late with meals being served way past 22.00. Streets and promenades become alive with the festive air of merry evenings and into the early morning. A good meal, with a bottle of wine, for less than €20 for two people! A large beer, for €1.30!

There is a very good bus service, costing about €7 to Lisbon, and Aer Lingus fly direct to Dublin on Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday.

I flew back to Ireland from Lisbon on 30th August for a total of €136.04 and flew from Dublin to Lisbon on 13th September for a total of €119.38. I find it is often less expensive to book flights separately rather than return flights. Also it is easier to change a one-way flight, as with some airlines if the first part of a return

ticket is used the second part cannot be changed.

I have secured three €10 flights (total €24.49) Faro/Dublin, between now and Christmas. These bargain prices can be found with a little effort and the Internet.

It was time to leave Nazaré and head for Lagos where I had booked a berth for the winter. Brian and Doris Huddleston came by train and bus from Lagos to Nazaré to crew for me to Lagos.

We left Nazaré on Thursday 22nd September at 07.30 and set sail for Cascais. Little northwesterly wind, cloudy and overcast. As the day unfolded the sun came out and we had an easy sail to Cascais arriving at 16.40. The distance was 66 miles.

Next day we left at 07.40 for Sines. The wind was southwesterly but very light. We had lovely sunshine all the way and again a very easy sail, no problem having a pleasant lunch on



Nazaré beach, with harbour entrance in the distance.



Blade of JF Propeller showing a stripped cog.

the way. We arrived in Sines at 15.06 after a distance of 48.5 miles.

Sines has a lovely beach, manicured early every morning, and free showers are provided on the beach. The only drawback to Sines is the walk up a very steep hill to get to the town. There is an excellent restaurant opposite the castle, called "The Castle", where I got the best steak since coming to Portugal. It is not very impressive from the outside and in fact I have bypassed it many times before. The marina attendants are the most helpful and friendly I have ever encountered. A lovely place, well worth a visit.

We stayed only one night as we were anxious to get to Lagos so, next day saw us sailing at 07.20 in fine and warm conditions. Little wind at first but a bigger Atlantic swell than previous days. As we approached Cabo de Sao Vicente the wind and waves increased – as they always do at this most westerly headland in southern Europe. We had a fairly rough rounding but it did not last too long. Now the wind was northwest force 5 and gusting off the cliffs so we shook



Hub of the JF Propeller showing stripped cogs.

ourselves out and had a cracking sail all the way to Lagos, arriving on the diesel pontoon at 17.50 after a distance of 72 miles. We checked in, filled with diesel and went to a marina berth.

Total mileage for the summer, since leaving Lagos was 610 miles.

The marina in Lagos does a special nine-month deal from mid-September to mid-June. They also do a six-month deal from 1st October and charges are less expensive than Ireland. Three Howth yachts are in Lagos marina already for the winter. There is a club – The Lagos Navigators' Club which meets every Wednesday – no fee no formalities etc. so it is possible to meet other yachting people and one need never feel alone.

In spite of the bureaucracy I encountered this year, which was the first time in three years, Portugal is a lovely place to keep a yacht – inexpensive, sailing in glorious sunshine, not too hot in summer compared with further east, and lovely places to visit. Public transport is very reasonable and flights are now very affordable.

No man will be a sailor who has contrived to get himself into jail; for being in a ship is being in jail with a chance of being drowned ...A man in jail has more room, better food, and commonly, better company.

(Samuel Johnson)

Reiver 2005 – Islands North and South

Peter & David Williams

Reiver did two cruises this year, the first to the Outer Hebrides with a crew change in Skye and the second to the Scilly Isles.

The crews were:

Outer Hebrides: *First leg:* Peter Williams, Anne Williams, Bill Perceval-Price, Norma Perceval-Price.

Second leg: David Williams, George Wylie, Ben Williams.

Scilly Isles: Peter Williams, John Hughes, Robert Perceval-Price, John Fisher.

OUTER HEBRIDES

Peter writes:

On 1 July, *Reiver* sailed from Whiterock and headed north. First night was spent in Red Bay (Waterfoot) and then a 22 hour passage to Castle Bay, Barra, enlivened by meeting two cargo vessels at 03.00 south of Skerryvore light, which passed on either side of us about 500 metres apart – who says the seas are empty?

The evening after our arrival at Barra, we went over to Vatersay and anchored off the great beach there – where we went ashore to hear not one but several corncrakes. We were amused on Vatersay to see a car or tractor perched on top of every hummock of the sand dunes, facing down hill ready for a jump-start when next required.

Next morning we went out through the Sound of Sandray to the open Atlantic and headed north past a bare, bleak and shelter-free coast to the Monach Isles, low and rock girt and only visible by the tall (unused) lighthouse on Shillay. Once the

anchor was down we called to two fishermen who were passing to see if they had any lobsters – we got two lobsters and a bucket of crab claws in return for a bottle of whiskey. The men were living in a bothy on the otherwise uninhabited island, for the summer months.

Next day we sailed for St Kilda and arrived that evening to find the whole island group shrouded in cloud which sat on top of everything for all of our two-day stay – disappointing for Bill and Norma who had never before been to these most spectacular islands. Nevertheless we all explored and climbed and birdwatched. We anchored in Village Bay for 2 nights before departing on 10 July, heading close past Stac Lee and Stac an Armin, the two huge ganntries, watching the Bonxies (Great Skuas) harassing the gannets to make them disgorge their catch. We had hoped to sail close to the Flannan Isles, but wind, time and visibility made us head in to Lewis and we found a lovely anchorage in Uig Bay, Camas Uig.

In the morning round Gallan Head into West Loch Roag and to a little settlement called Valtos where a kind lady (a nurse) took us to the local shop (about three miles away) for some essentials. In Valtos, the sun shone for a short while – about two hours – this was when you were out basking in a heatwave. For five/six days the barometer was over 1030mb yet in all that time the Outer Hebrides were cold and overcast and sometimes quite breezy with showers. We toured West Loch Roag and anchored for the night in a gut on a small island, Vtia Mor, and next day went into Miavaig where there is a usable pontoon. Here we had a ‘knock on the door’ from Andrew McVean, a retired submariner, who said his wife was from Benburb and invited us to his house to meet her. There we all had much needed showers and other refreshment and that evening were collected by taxi and went to dinner in the Bonaventure – surely one of the most remote French restaurants anywhere. This has been recommended to us by John Russell – sadly I did not get to tell him of the excellent meal we had that night. The ‘Patron’ is married to a girl from Killinchy. (Jo Ann Ritchie)

Next day, we went into East Loch Roag through the passage between Great and Little Bernera (this passage is about 50 feet wide and makes for interesting pilotage) and round to Callinish where we visited the standing stones.

On 14 July, we had a grand run up to the Butt of Lewis but after rounding it in poor visibility, had a couple of uncomfortable hours hard on the wind before we got out of the tide race and headed south for the Eye and round into



Peter and Bill – crabs. Note the hammer.

Stornoway late that evening. Here found the town 'en fête' as a Van Morrison concert was just about to start – I am afraid we slept.

The next day, after taking on diesel, water and stores, we headed south hoping to go to the Shiant Isles, but as their owner, Adam Nicholson, says in his book *Sea Room*, they have a habit of disappearing and they did. With the wind on the nose we went into Loch Shell for the night and, again, next day the Shiants only five miles away were invisible. We eventually saw them about half a mile off through the mist but decided to go on to the north point of Skye and down to Acarsaid Mòr, Rona, one of the nicest anchorages in Scotland and next day to Portree on Skye where we had arranged a crew change. Alan Leonard on *Ariadne* was also in Portree that day.

David writes:

My son Ben, on his first cruise (apart from a jaunt to the Isle of Man when he was much younger), George Wylie and I arrived by car to a rather damp Portree, having taken advantage of the now toll-free Skye Bridge. We have been under it many times but this was a first to go over it.

Once aboard we headed north round the Aird of Skye and across the Little Minch to South Harbour, Scalpay, a bleak and now cold, wet place. The Shiants appeared briefly near the end of the passage.

Next day we headed south to a favourite place, Rodel, using the Bay Channel drying entrance on the top of the tide. The three moorings were taken so we anchored to the north side of the pool, and the Chef (George) had a early and possibly deserved night off, as we ate at the newly refurbished Rodel Hotel and got to know the owner Donnie Macdonald and his daughter (Jo), the barmaid. We stayed next day and after moving to one of the now completely free moorings, visited the Rodel church which has an early stone carving of a galley in it. There were some very trendy sheep about with orange streaked hairdos. We were serenaded that evening in the bar by a young piper with no hair at all apart from a short fringe! That night we caught about seven crabs in our collapsible lobster pot, the Chef complained that some were rather small; they made lovely sandwiches.

We slipped around the corner early next morning and entered the Sound of Harris heading for the open Atlantic. I was apprehensive about this passage as the Sound is so full of 'bricks' that there is very little water left to float in, and we had had an uneasy trip through the big ship Stanton Channel in a previous year. This time we went for the Leverburgh Channel which was much easier. The cold northerlies continued and we had a bumpy reach for the 45 miles out to St Kilda and could actually see Stac Lee and Boreray to the right of Hirta when the perpetual low cloud lifted a bit. We had a school of dolphins around us for a while but only saw one minke whale near Hirta. One cannot fail to be impressed with the wildness and remoteness of the place ($8^{\circ} 34'$ west), which should only be visited in the best of weather.

We were woken early next morning by an even sloppier swell in Village Bay and decided that, as landing was going to be difficult

and with no likelihood of improvement of the weather, we would bail out and head east again. I do not normally venture up to the 'pointy end' of *Reiver* but on this occasion lifted the anchor myself as Ben was asleep and George was excused as he was recovering from an unmentionable ailment in an unmentionable region and did not want to strain himself! I was horrified to notice that a link of the 3/8" chain had opened about six feet up from the anchor! That revelation put paid to any ideas about going to the Monach Islands and we headed back towards the Sound of Harris where help with the chain would be available, if needed, in Leverburgh. Walter der Windpilot (it can't be called George) steered faultlessly all the way. I tackled the anchor connector when we got into calmer waters and was able to shorten the chain by myself so we headed south to Loch Maddy. By this time it was very windy, still from the north.

By the time we left Loch Maddy we were getting used to this downwind stuff and broad reached with about six feet of jib unrolled to the Wizard Pool in Loch Skipport, South Uist. That evening we saw what we thought was a golden eagle soaring above the rocky mountains. Next morning we went ashore and procured the statutory clump of heather to adorn the bow. Then we ran south under full sail, goose-winged towards Barra and were eventually passed by an old 12 Metre called *Sceptre* who pinched the last mooring in Castlebay, so we had to anchor. *Sceptre* was so big she was 'wiping' the yacht behind her as she swung; maybe that was why she had gone early next morning. We filled the water tank using a huge hose at the ferry pier and set off south, passing through Gunna Sound to Gott Bay in Tiree.

From Tiree to Scalasaig in Colonsay, where we moored against the wave wall outside a large Scottish boat and got involved that evening in a pub quiz at the hotel. We met Julian Cooke and someone who had been 'baby sat' by Jack Irwin (both were members of Strangford Lough Yacht Club)! It was blowing hard from the east when we returned so we had a most uncomfortable night, bursting a fender in the process. It is best to anchor in the bay round the corner to the south.

We detoured to have a look at the Stevenson lighthouse, Dubh Artach. Then down the Sound of Islay to the Ardmore Islands and on the way saw two schools of basking sharks, most with pups; a sight I haven't seen for many a year. We



Reiver at anchor at Rodel.



Stac Lee.

wanted to go to Gigha but the forecast was for strong easterlies which would make Ardminish Bay very uncomfortable. We entered rough water at the bottom of the Sound of Islay and a cross and sleepy Ben soon emerged from his cabin soaked from head to waist!

Then across the North Channel on a reach with two slabs in the main and about half the jib out which had us constantly over 7 knots, surfing to 8.5. We helped with the steering from time to time when Walter got overpowered on the side of a wave. It blew up even harder in the afternoon so we were very glad to see Glenarm and rolled through the entrance with a 'handkerchief' of jib up. Glenarm has 5 visitors' berths and there were 24 boats in so we were squeezed in between two berthholders! The wind dropped suddenly next morning, so we left before the bottom of the tide, bound for Strangford and were motoring by the time we reached Belfast Lough where we were hooted and hollered at from the bridge of a foreign coaster leaving the channel.

Throughout the two weeks we had strong, cold northerlies all the time and some pretty heavy sailing, 410 miles in all.

Thank goodness we were not trying to go north!

THE SCILLY ISLES

Peter again:

When David got back to Whiterock on 30 July, I again stored ship and next day sailed south with Robert Perceval-Price and John Hughes on board. Off Kilkeel we picked up John Fisher, delivered out by his son in a dory, and sailed south making Wicklow late in the evening. We tied up just in time for their annual firework display to start on the end of the pier about 50 feet away, which was a great welcome and an exciting end to the day. Next day, with wind due south, in a horrible day off the banks with the short square seas of that area stopping us dead, eventually made Rosslare. The south entrance to the Irish Sea is like a shut gate when the wind is on the nose. So we prepared plan

B: a visit to the Welsh coast for next day. But in the morning the wind was northwest again so we decided to try for the Scilly Isles and after a 24 hour passage made it to New Grimsby Sound. Ashore, a visit to Tresco gardens and Figurehead museum, pub lunch, shopping and across Tresco flats to Hughtown.

It blew up quite hard in the night and with a westerly wind Hughtown is not sheltered – glad of hefty visitor's mooring. Late next day, we headed north and with the wind diminishing to nothing much, motored most of the way to Kilmore Quay on south coast of Ireland behind the Saltee Islands. John Hughes departed the next day by taxi and train to Belfast and we motored later with the tide round to Polduff a little anchorage (in calm weather) south of Arklow, to wait six hours for the tide which took us next morning up to Howth and the following day home to Whiterock, 9 August.

Total miles sailed since 1 July: 1500. I spent four nights at sea, which is what I had wanted to do, having not done an overnight passage for some time.

Leo Conway writes of Galicia and the Saltees

we were delighted to see a fine and well-protected new marina there. The warm welcome from Pablo Pouso and his family in O Lagar has not changed, and the food is as wonderful as ever. Sailor, do not pass by.

Nearer to home, the passage over St. Patrick's Bridge, inside the Saltees, is now used by many more members since the seasonal buoys were established some years ago, to mark the narrow channel across the shoal. I had been over it a number of times but had not twigged (am I alone in this?) that the buoys are about three cables east of the spits. The position of the buoys is set out with precision in the south west directions. So - if heading east, set up the buoys on 090 good and early, and if heading west, hold on 270 at least until the Kilmore Quay leading marks align. Thanks, Michael Buckley – "The Rory" reared you well.

Three Irish Sea Chapters

Jim Slevin

First Chapter

This year due to having a less than fully active knee, I decided to leave *Testa Rossa* in Bangor marina, rather than bring her around to her usual mooring at Mullaghmore, Co. Sligo. To take advantage of berthing on the east coast, I decided to explore some of the Irish Sea ports and to replace the annual two to three week voyage with three short voyages.

On the morning of May 23rd, Peter McHugh and I left Bangor and as the wind was force 4-5 from the southeast we turned north and with the genoa poled out we sailed towards the Mull of Kintyre. Once we left Sanda behind, the wind died and we reverted to the iron topsail. The over-falls off the Mull made this portion of the passage distinctly uncomfortable. However, we tied to the pontoon in Campbeltown at 18.30. The town has changed very little over the years where many of its buildings give the impression of a more prosperous past. The facilities are poor, the main attraction being the pontoon which always helps to make going ashore more pleasurable. As we had brought some decent Irish steaks with us, we dined on board and visited one of the local pubs for a nightcap or two.

Next morning, we put to sea at 09.15. The forecast gave light winds from north-northeast and these died away completely after an hour or two. Life is full of compensations, the sky was blue, the sea was a slightly darker shade of blue and all was well with the world. Peter has a keen interest in submarines and had been told that there was a base close to Rhu, so we set a course for Rhu marina, arriving there at 18.40. Lovely evening with the seals relaxing on what appear to be special water level pontoons. The marina staff were helpful in directing us to a good hostelry. We found the natives friendly and hospitable. In the morning, Peter caught a bus to Faslane to look for submarines. Unfortunately, there were none to be seen on that morning so when he returned, we set out to head south. It was a very wet morning and sea conditions were uncomfortable. Indeed progress was so slow that we considered turning into Kip marina but we battled on down against a strong southerly wind and tide to arrive into Largs marina at 17.10. We dined at Bardini's restaurant in the marina complex which is both convenient and reasonably good. It is generally busy but the service is good.

Thursday was a complete change with blue skies and a southerly light wind making another day for motor/sailing but at least it was dry and pleasant. We left Largs at 08.40, having planned to go to Girvan; this was the second year that we planned a visit to Girvan but again we had to abort the plan

as we would be approaching the entrance bar on the ebb, with less than an hour to spare. We settled for another visit to Troon, tying up there at 14.50 which enabled us to enjoy a few leisurely hours of sunshine. We took on fuel, showered and had a walk ashore. We were stormbound in Troon a couple of years ago for most of a week and agreed that we have spent enforced delays in worse places. This time, we found that they were refurbishing the shower/toilet facilities and the cleanliness side of things left a lot to be desired. As before, we dined in the Anchorage pub about 100 metres from the marina and it was excellent. On Friday, we left Troon at 06.20, with a moderate northeast wind, poled out the genoa and sailed goose winged back to Bangor marina at 16.30.

In 5 days, we visited 4 ports and travelled 236 miles.

Second Chapter

Having gone on board *Testa Rossa* on Friday evening, Derek Byrne, Donal Tinney and I, left Bangor marina at 05.40 on June 6th. Early mornings are no problem at the start of a voyage as the crew are generally fired up with enthusiasm. This was indeed a beautiful morning as we watched the sun appear over the Scottish coast. There was no wind and the sea was flat calm so all options were available. It was easier to turn to starboard and go with the tide. Can it get any better than this?

We made 9 knots over the ground, down Donaghadee Sound and then set a course for Peel, Isle of Man, to pick up a mooring there at 12.25. Having contacted the harbourmaster on the mobile we found that the cill that was under construction had not yet been completed. It was real summer weather and it got so hot that we had to take shelter in the cabin for part of the afternoon. A yacht named *Freya* picked up the mooring directly



Entering Troon outer harbour.

Photo: J. Slevin

behind us and proceeded to serenade everyone with some very good bagpipe playing. Not long afterwards, the cruise ship *Hebridean Princess* docked at the pier to another rendering of Scottish music on the bagpipes by one of their crew. This was followed by an even better effort from the yacht *Freya*. We thought for a while that the Scots were about to take over the Isle of Man. We had some steaks from home and then a leisurely meal on board followed by a trip ashore to quench the thirst. It is a nice walk from the pier around into the town.

On Sunday morning, we left Peel at 08.00 and motored down along the coast to Calf Sound. As it was flat calm and having the tide with us, we were swept through the sound to find a nice offshore breeze on the other side providing a nice broad reach up to the entrance to Douglas harbour. Following procedure, having requested permission from the harbourmaster to enter, we entered the harbour at 13.00. As the cill only opens at 45 minutes after the hour, we had to wait for some time before getting into the marina. The marina makes Douglas an attractive destination. The last time I was there, which is quite a few years ago, the conditions then were rather primitive and certainly not conducive to a good night's sleep. We availed of the showers and liquid refreshments at the Douglas Bay Yacht Club. Again a very courteous and helpful staff. We dined in Coasters restaurant, opposite the Yacht Club, I would class it as average but as it was Sunday evening, most of the other restaurants were closed.

Since the sun shone all day, we were not in the mood for complaining.

Next morning, we had plenty of time to shop and replenish our stores, so we found the large Tesco only 100 metres from the marina extremely convenient. Another glorious day, so when the gate to the inner harbour opened at 13.45 we called the harbourmaster on channel 12 and having obtained permission to leave, we proceeded out with plenty of company to a very flat sea with little or no wind. It was a relaxing run down to Holyhead with plenty of time to observe the abundant wildlife though we did have a problem with our engine about a mile from the harbour which delayed us for most of an hour. The technical and mechanical abilities of the crew proved invaluable. We tied up in Holyhead marina at 21.45, dined on board and had time for just one drink in the pleasant pub above the boatyard. On the following morning, I met the skipper and

crew of *Odd Job*, a Van de Stat design yacht from the berth beside us in Bangor marina. We went around to the fuel berth and I must say that the service was very slow though the price of 47p per litre did partially compensate for this. We have become accustomed to the fine weather at this stage so it was more motoring for the early part of the next leg, though the wind did fill in from the north in mid-morning and it was lovely to experience the gentle silent motion of the hull through the sea once more. We intended to go Port Erin but that would have meant more motoring so we opted for Port St. Mary instead. When we picked up a visitor's mooring there, the wind was gusting 33 knots and the harbour was rough. Maybe we are getting old but we decided against a wet dinghy run ashore, ate on board and had an early night.

Next morning, we awoke to find that calm conditions had returned once more. The Isle of Man was shrouded in mist, and we passed through Calf Sound before the sun burned it off. We could see the mountains of Mourne and we pointed the bow towards the native turf. We arrived in Ardglass that afternoon at 15.25. Ardglass has a magical and relaxing atmosphere; the people are both charming and welcoming. It was lovely strolling around the village, eating ice-cream in the brilliant sunshine. In the evening, we took a taxi out the two miles to Curran's bar/restaurant. The food, service and ambience were excellent. On our return to Ardglass, the crew retired to Mannie's pub which has what can only be described as uneven opening hours and an accommodating landlord. Thursday was dull but very warm so we decided on a lazy day to visit Strangford Lough which was a long-time ambition. We left Ardglass shortly before noon and sailed out to sea to pass the time while waiting on the tide at the entrance to the Lough. We did not have long to wait and everything I had read about this beautiful part of the country and the strong tides turned out to be true. We had been told that as it was race week, space would be at a premium in Portaferry, but on arrival we were delighted to find plenty of space. The harbourmaster gives great assistance in tying up, and as the river runs through the marina that assistance is very necessary. It was interesting to observe the other arrivals; as the evening progressed, the spaces began to fill up, but it appeared that the racing was at Killyleagh and only a few of the yachts were berthed at Portaferry.

In the morning, we awoke to the sound of fibreglass crashing against another surface; it transpired that a 60 foot German racing yacht on its way out of the marina had crashed into another yacht. Fortunately the damage was slight and all parties settled down. A bright and sunny morning with a light wind from southwest. After much discussion on whether to go to Carrickfergus or Portpatrick, we decided on the latter. We arrived there in the early afternoon and tied up to the pier. We paid the harbourmaster £13 for that privilege and pointed out to him that the price quoted in Reed's is £9. He showed us his price list which illustrated that £9 was for a 23ft. craft and that the prices increased for larger craft. It is an attractive village with poor facilities, and to my mind excessive charges for what is provided. We left Scotland early next morning to complete a



A peaceful morning, Peel, Isle of Man.

Photo: J. Slevin

peaceful crossing, arriving back in Bangor at 13.30 that afternoon.

We visited 7 ports and travelled 281 miles.

Third Chapter

Every year I endeavour to have a family outing, though I do not always succeed because of family holidays and often unkind weather. This year the weather was considerably better and on July 29th, my daughter Avril, son Paul and I set out from Bangor at 08.30 with a nice northeasterly moderate breeze. We went down Donaghadee Sound and pointed the bow towards the Isle of Man. The natives there must at this stage think that I have moved residence. Despite an adverse neap tide, we arrived in Peel at 16.45. Peel anchorage is exposed to northerlies and there was a considerable scend, making it an uncomfortable place to spend the night. With plenty of time in hand we moved down the coast to Port Erin which is sheltered in these conditions. Avril did the honours, cooking up a fine dinner while I attended to the strenuous task of uncorking the wine. There are only two visitors moorings in Port Erin and one of those was taken up by a local charter boat. We spent a peaceful night there and early next morning, we set sail for Ardglass, arriving there in the early afternoon.

Here was a carnival atmosphere with bright sunshine and music emanating from a large marquee in the marina, lots of children and adults around the place. We enquired where they came from, to be told the United States. It seems that the good people of Ardglass lay on a barbecue and musical entertainment every year for a substantial group of handicapped children from the US and they really enjoy their day there. It was a privilege to have witnessed it. One of the major attractions was watching the seals jumping clean out of the water at the pontoons to take the mackerel from whoever handed them to them. There were a number of craft visiting the marina that evening from Dublin. We went out to dine in Curran's that night, having made the arrangements courtesy of the harbourmaster, and were not disappointed. Next day, flat seas and no wind made the voyage to Bangor uneventful.

We visited two ports and covered 129 miles.

I hope that the Irish Sea will always be so kind in future.



Feeding the seals at Ardglass.

Photo: J. Slevin

"Nice? It's the only thing," said the Water Rat, solemnly, as he leaned forward for his stroke. "Believe me, my young friend, there is nothing - absolutely nothing - half as much worth doing as simply messing about in boats". "Simply messing", he went on dreamily: "messing - about - in - boats; messing - ."

(Kenneth Grahame - *The Wind in the Willows*)

Different Boats for Different Folks

Peter J Mullins

We all know variety is the spice of life and in my job I see plenty of variety both in the vessels I command and in the places I have the pleasure of visiting. In my last contribution to the ICC Annual, readers will recall that since earning my MCA Master of Yachts ticket, I occupy my time acting as Relief Master on some impressive vessels. Typically I log in excess of 20,000 nautical miles a year which I consider not bad duty when accompanied with the certain knowledge that there is always a finite end, when one hands the vessel back to the incumbent captain.

Between 2004 and 2005 I had the pleasure of running three very different vessels, each unique to their owners and used in very different ways. However in all cases they brought me to places most of us can only dream of and I was exceptionally lucky to be part of these various programs.

In January 2004 I was asked if I would be interested in taking over the motor yacht *Antarctica*, based in Phuket, Thailand, for a six month stint while her captain took some well overdue leave. *Antarctica* is a 148 foot Feadship of 380 GRT, built by C H Van Lent and Zooen in Holland in 1966 in the traditional style with a beautiful canoe stern. She had accommodations for 10 in the owner's party and is run with a crew of eight. She is powered with her two splendid original Deutz straight-eight diesels of only 640 hp a side, turning at a maximum of 720 RPM. These motors were originally designed as generators in U-boats during the Second World War, and would cruise merrily along at 12 knots sipping 190 liters per hour. We held

about 58,000 liters or 15,800 gallons. *Antarctica* is a lady in every detail, a joy to handle with stunning looks to boot. I joined *Antarctica* in Thailand on the island of Phuket. Thailand and indeed Southeast Asia is a fascinating part of the world and really just opening up as a cruising destination, with Burmanmar Republic and Vietnam now welcoming the cruising yachtsman. The people are probably the most friendly you will meet; the food is exquisite and the night life is not too shabby either. We cruised north to Burma where one bay is named *Antarctica* Anchorage in their cruising guide. We visited the islands off Phuket called Phi Phi and down to the island of Langkawi in Malaysia. In writing this I cannot but feel pity for all those people who suffered such terrible loss in the tsunami earlier this year. We arrived in Langkawi during the time of their Race Week, Southeast Asia's answer to Antigua Sailing Week. *Antarctica* so happened to have a Haven Twelve and a Half on deck. These delightful little dinghies are molded on the lines of a Herreshoff 12.5 with a centre board. Ours, appropriately named *Pinguina*, is varnished and as pretty as a picture, and after a quick word with the Race Committee they graciously allowed us to enter the Classic division and we did ourselves proud, completing the course of 22 miles in fine style.

Our voyage then took us across the Bay of Bengal from Banda Aceh at the Straits of Malacca to Sri Lanka and up the west coast of India to Bombay. If one thinks the Straits of Dover or Gibraltar is busy with traffic it is nothing compared to this sea lane. The vessels were nose to tail in both directions with tankers from The Gulf feeding the Pacific Rim and China with their unsustainable thirst for oil, and freighters returning with goods and cars. This gave us a feeling of security in numbers but we still kept a good lookout for pirates. Unfortunately the endless racist and defamatory chatter still exists over the VHF. We engaged pilots and an agent and lay off the Gateway to India awaiting the ownership and party to arrive. I was complimented by the pilot on my punctuality at the Pilot Ground but when I boasted this to an old Master Mariner friend he was unimpressed, that in his day of steam in the Clan Line you were expected to be on time and without the aid of GPS, chart plotters, ARPA Radar and all our modern navigation gizmos! The Gateway to India was built to commemorate the visit of King George V in the early part of the last century. This historic landmark earned its name because it was often the first sight beheld by visitors as they arrived



Antarctica at anchor off Phi Phi Island, Phuket.

in India by way of India's busiest port, Mumbai, formerly Bombay. From all accounts I am told India is a fascinating country but as far as I am concerned I missed the best part. The crew were gagging to get ashore and our agent was able to negotiate a special rate at the Taj Mahal Hotel at the Gateway. In a moment of unprecedented generosity I volunteered to take the watch and lucky for me I did as the entire crew returned with Delhi Belly and were *hors de combat* for almost a week. I had to re-engage pilots and move the vessel into the Victoria Docks to the east of the town. The Victoria and Princess Docks were completed in the 1880s and in their day must have been magnificent but today they are mostly falling apart and there were more rats, mangy stray dogs, beggars and dirt than I ever want to encounter. The graft was everywhere and everyone was looking for their "Compliment" and please no Johnnie Walker Red for these boys, Black Label, and make it a large one if you please. Eventually we received orders to meet the Ownership in Goa, so after engaging pilots yet again and distributing more largesse we departed.

The west coast of India is renowned for its fishing fleets, mostly unlit, and of nets strung out for miles supported by blocks of polystyrene with a candle. To the uninitiated this can be quite daunting at night. We arrived in Goa and anchored off the fort built by Vasco da Gama. Goa is a major port, exposed to the monsoon during the summer months but otherwise sheltered, and is a major exporter of iron ore and manganese which is transported out to freighters at anchor by lighters, round the clock. Indeed I counted 26 large ore carriers being fed constantly and as soon as they were full more arrived. Goa was of course once Portuguese and the influence is well noted though it is rapidly going the way of the rest of the Indian coast, dirty and smelly. We remained at anchor here for 10 days and as soon as the Owner and party arrived we weighed and headed for the Maldives Islands some 450 miles to the south west. This archipelago, stretching for about 500 miles, consists of a number of atolls and is renowned for its diving and resorts. The main town is Malé and once again we had to engage pilots and clear customs but there are a number of agents here who will assist you with the formalities. The islands are Muslim so there was no alcohol, however the Marlboro Reds here were well appreciated. The Maldives are a divers' Mecca and we cruised to South Malé before departing for The Seychelles which are just south of the equator off the African coast. King Neptune did his thing appearing out of the chain locker forward and cleansed those first-timers of their sins. All too soon we arrived in the Seychelles at Port Victoria the capital on the island of Malé, and the owners departed. Sadly we had no time to cruise the islands and with the onset of the monsoon it was time to lay out two anchors, stern-to the Wharf Marina. Thus completed a voyage of about 4,700 miles and at the end of May I handed *Antarctica* back to her full time captain and flew to the Mediterranean where I was back again to fill in on *Victoria of Strathearn*.

Victoria of Strathearn is no stranger to any member who has recently visited the Caribbean,

Mediterranean or the east coast of the US. *Victoria* is a stunning ketch of 130 feet (40 metres) built in 2001 by Alloy Yachts in New Zealand designed by Bill Langan of Newport Rhode Island with an interior in the traditional style by Andrew Winch.

This was to be my third season as relief having joined her soon after her launch in the Pacific in 2001. With four Trans-Atlantic, one Trans-Pacific, and 2 Caribbean – East Coast runs I have logged in excess of 30,000 miles and I would be quite happy to do them all over again. *Victoria* is a pleasure to sail, a joy to handle and in my opinion the best looking sailing vessel in her class. Once asked to describe *Victoria*, I likened her to a much loved hunter I once owned in Ireland. "Sure of foot with a good turn of speed, comfortable, good-looking and having no vices" My summer took me all over the Mediterranean from Palma to Sicily, to Italy and the French Riviera, and in November the crossing from Palma to Antigua via Gibraltar and Gran Canaria.

On this leg I had the pleasure of having ICC members Andrew O'Hanlon and Roger Aplin as part of the crew of eight and enjoyed a memorable crossing in just 11 days out of Las Palmas. An uncensored account of this crossing should appear elsewhere in this Annual; however it may well omit the fact that the planet Sirius is not the International Space Station blinking red, white and blue! In sailing these big rigged vessels one rightly errs on the side of caution, I always reduce sail at night and make liberal use of the main engine. However we managed to average in the region of 250 miles a day, which was still a far cry from my record noon to noon run under sail of 311 miles, on the 2003 crossing. Total distance logged, about 3,500 miles. I did not have long to enjoy Antigua as on arrival I was summoned to New York to take over MV *Turmoil*.

The Expedition or Research style motor yacht is at the other end of the yachting spectrum. *Turmoil* was not unknown to me as I had joined her in 2003 in Dutch Harbor Alaska, on her run back to Florida after her successful transit of the North West Passage, thus tying the knot as the first private motor yacht to circumnavigate the North American continent unaided. This was to be a full-time position, as her normal full-time captain was in Denmark supervising a new build for the owner, of a



Victoria of Strathearn fully powered to windward.

similar vessel of 210 feet (64 metres). *Turmoil* is well known to several members of the Club and indeed she has visited both Dublin and Cork in recent years. She is 151 foot LOA (46 metres) with a beam of 29 feet. (8.8 metres) and draws, fully-laden, 10.5 feet. (3.2 metres) with a displacement of 490 GRT. She is powered by twin Caterpillar motors of 820 HP (611kW) each and carries a staggering 42,000 US gallons (160,000 litres) of fuel, giving her a comfortable range of some 7000 miles. She was launched in 1996 by the yard of Palmer Johnson in Wisconsin to a design by Dick Boon and Vripack Yachting International. She is of aluminum construction to ABS, is MCA compliant, and has the lines and sea keeping qualities of a North Sea Trawler but with the accommodations of a Four Seasons Hotel. She has accommodations for 10 in the Owner's party and is run with a crew of seven, comprising Master, engineer, two deckhands, chef and two stewardesses. She has a cruising speed of about 12.5 knots in most weather giving runs of 300 miles a day or better. As the owner sponsors scientific research in the high latitudes, we extended the top deck to accommodate a helicopter which has proved a huge success.

We left Ft. Lauderdale in May and headed north, with stops in Norfolk VA, Baltimore, New York, Portland Maine and Mt. Desert Island Maine, Halifax Nova Scotia and St. Johns Newfoundland. From there we picked up the helicopter in St. Mary's Harbor Labrador and headed for Greenland. We crossed the Labrador Sea in fine style, a passage of some 600 miles and cleared in at Julianehab. For many of the crew it was to be their first sight of an iceberg and the following day we continued up Tunugdliarfik Fiord to the settlement of Narsarsuak, where we were to await the arrival of the Owner and a party of scientists, who flew in from the States in the Owner's Falcon 900. The airstrip was built by the Americans as Blue Base One in the early stages of WW2 and played a very important role in the U-boat war, and as a staging post in the transport of aircraft to the European Theater. Indeed it only closed as a US base at the end of the Cold War. It remains one of only two international airports connecting the whole of Greenland, the other being Sonderstrom, just north of the Arctic Circle, from which passengers transfer to their regional planes or helicopters. At this stage I had 10 days off while Philip Walsh, the full time Master, cruised the Prince Christian Sound region with the scientists who were investigating the Arctic Meltdown and

Global Warming. I rejoined the vessel again in Narsarsuak, Greenland and set sail across the Denmark Strait for Reykjavik, Iceland, where we spent two weeks doing routine maintenance prior to the next expedition to the Scoresby Sound region of the east coast of Greenland. I had a major sense of déjà vu being back in Reykjavik, as I last visited there in 1974 with Rory O'Hanlon on *Meermin* on our way back from the Jan Mayen expedition. How a place can change in 30 years. Iceland is a major European player with one of the highest standards of living offering excellent restaurants, bars and night life and a marine infrastructure for getting everything done on a vessel like *Turmoil*. Once again the full-time master took back command for this leg and I rejoined two weeks later to take *Turmoil* back to the States. We had a mixed bag of weather on our return trip with a gale in the Denmark Strait and another in The Labrador Sea. As we had the helicopter strapped to our back, I was a little concerned with our stability but the added weight did not seem to make any difference and we came through unscathed. We off-loaded the helicopter in Maine, visited Camden on our way to New York and on to Fort Lauderdale where *Turmoil* will be offered for sale. Total distance logged was just over 10,000 miles.

So what's in a name? Throughout my travels I am often asked where or why the name that was given to the vessel I have the privilege of running, came from. In most cases it is quite simple. *Victoria of Strathearn* is the owners' third vessel named after his daughter and the village in Scotland from whence the family hails. *Antarctica* has changed names several times since her launch in 1966. The owner is Chilean and has an estate in Patagonia. As in the case of *Victoria*, *Turmoil* is also the third vessel to bare the same name and I have often been asked "Why *Turmoil*"? So without going into too much detail I will answer the question. *Turmoil* is named after a tug, and some of our more senior members will surely recall the incident that captured the imagination and attention of the world, as this gallant vessel struggled valiantly to rescue the *Flying Enterprise*. It's a wonderful story and I will beg the editor to allow me space to give a thumb nail sketch of the events. The tug *Turmoil* was built in Scotland 1944 was 205 ft long, weighed a little over 1118 tons, was powered by two 4000 BHP Atlas Polar Diesels and had a maximum speed of 16 knots. She

was one of a class built during the war as rescue tugs assigned to convoy duty, were crewed by 27 men and had a range of 17,000 miles. On Christmas Day 1952 the U.S. freighter *Flying Enterprise* left Hamburg bound for New York. She was commanded by Captain Kurt Carlsen and carried a crew of forty and ten paying passengers. On reaching The Lizard the weather worsened; the *Flying Enterprise* started making water and taking on a list. The next day the hurricane still raged and as the list increased the Captain sent out an S.O.S., and on December 26th about 450 miles west of Lands End the passengers and crew jumped into the water and were rescued by the *Southland*. Captain Carlsen, true to the (then) traditions of the sea, remained on board. On January 2nd 1952, *Turmoil*, under the command of Captain Dan



Turmoil doing what she does best cruising Scoresby Sound, Greenland.

Parker and Chief Mate Kenneth Dancy, sailed from Falmouth to contact the *Flying Enterprise*, which up to then had been putting up a solitary fight, with the lone, heroic, almost tragic figure of her captain scrambling about on board. *Turmoil* reached the casualty at about midnight on January 3rd but the weather remained bad and, because only Captain Carlsen was on board, it took 36 hours before a tow was connected, and this only by the gallant effort of *Turmoil's* mate Ken Dancy, who jumped aboard *Flying Enterprise* to assist Captain Carlsen. The tow continued until January 9th when it parted, and the next gale arrived. By this time the *Enterprise* had a list of almost 80 degrees, the tow was reconnected, but on January 10th at 4.12 in the afternoon, only 43 miles southeast of Falmouth, *Flying Enterprise* sank. Captain Carlsen and Ken Dancy sat on the funnel then swam to *Turmoil* who had given her a lee and were back on board within five minutes. The saga had gone on for over two weeks and in the modern age of wireless telegraphy and within easy range of reconnaissance aircraft, the world was told the story of *Turmoil's* gallant if unsuccessful, attempt to save the *Flying Enterprise*, was told of the inexhaustible courage of Captain Kurt Carlsen, and of Dancy's leap to join him. An adequate story by any yardstick and a fitting reason why this wonderful little ship, on which I serve, was given her name.

I am also often asked how you manage as a Relief Master with the permanent crew. I glanced on this subject in a previous contribution and it is quite simple. You get what you are given, you continue to run the vessel as it has been run and try not to change a thing. Crew on today's mega-yachts are totally professional. It's a career just like any other. Gone are the days when kids, and I use the term lightly, sign up to fill in a year or two before taking up their chosen profession. This is borne out

by the fact that my boatswain and deckhand on *Turmoil* are 22 and 20 respectively, both have their RYA Yacht Masters Ocean tickets and are accumulating sea-time before taking their Officer of the Watch tickets (OW), and being eligible to sit their Masters tickets once they reach the age of 24. I do have a protocol to which I try to adhere. Firstly I am not on board to make 8 or 9 of my next-best and closest friends. Like them, I am here to do a job and I insist that safety never takes a holiday. Secondly if you think of doing something then do it; your first thoughts are usually right, whether it means taking a reef or calling the "Old Man". In a close-call situation and before making any decision, put yourself on the witness stand. I always remind my crew this is still meant to be fun, I have been a professional yacht captain for 25 years and I am still having fun, the day it ceases to be fun, is the day I hang up my sea boots or perhaps more appropriately in my case today, my bridge slippers. As Master I have a duty to impart my knowledge to my crew, all of whom are under 30 years of age. Once they have earned my trust I allow them to handle the vessel but before doing so I give them my well-rehearsed spiel that "In giving you the privilege of handling this vessel, I am not, and I repeat not, assigning you any quasi captain's responsibilities", which translated into deck speak for their benefit: "The buck stops with me!" So life has made a full circle and I can only thank my old mentor, the late Rory O'Hanlon who taught me so much and trusted in me. Now, I find myself the mentor, and it gives me much pleasure to see my crew progress in the industry and go on to run some of the fine mega-yachts of today. Finally, I recommend, that on bouncy boats, gentlemen should sit down to pee!

Sean McCormack writes of Marie Claire in Galicia, northwest Spain

Early retirement at the end of April opened up the opportunity of fulfilling a long-held dream of leisurely cruising in warmer climes.

John Ahern and myself took

Marie Claire from Howth to Kilmore Quay. We had planned to leave Howth on Friday 27th May, but due to southerly gales we did not get away until 02.20 Sunday 29th. We were joined in Kilmore Quay by Vincent Dromey and Nathaniel Caffola for the non stop trip to La Coruña.

We got away from Kilmore Quay on the Tuesday evening at 22.25 in a light southerly breeze that freshened the next morning and went into the southwest and stayed there for the next 3 days. I never saw wind so steady in direction for so long. 90 hours close hauled on starboard gets very tiring especially in a lumpy sea and at times the wind was very fresh and conditions on board were difficult. We tacked on to port for a few hours to keep clear of the TSS off the Scilly Isles and again later to get west of the Continental Shelf which we had just failed to clear on starboard.

In the Bay of Biscay dolphins were the only company we had. Nothing on the VHF and we saw only 1 yacht, no trawlers and very few ships until we got to the northwest corner of Spain.

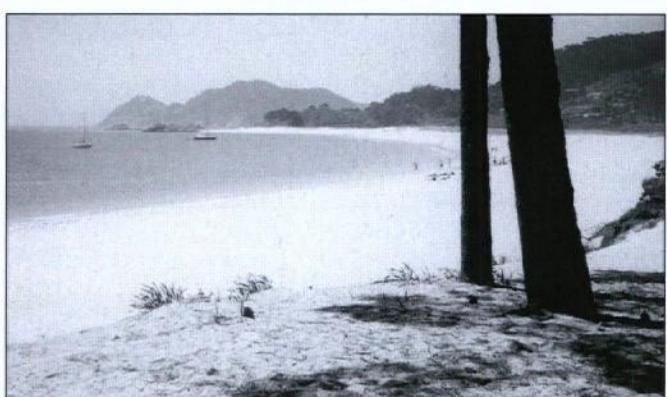
We got into La Coruña Marina at 13.30 local time on Monday 6th June.

Passage time Kilmore Quay to La Coruña 134 hours 05 minutes.

Distance travelled 693.2 n.m.

Average speed 5.2 n.m.

Having spent 4 days relaxing and doing repairs in La Coruña we spent the next 4 weeks cruising the area at a very



Marie Claire and *Ocean Sapphire* anchored off Playa Rena das Rodas, Islas Cies.

relaxed pace. We explored Ria de el Ferrol, Ria de Betanzos, Ria de Muros, Ria de Pontevedra, Ria de Arosa, Ria de Camarinhas, Ria de Vigo as well as Bayona and the Islas Cies. Bayona was a great stop and lived up to its richly deserved reputation. The 3 days we spent out at Islas Cies were an unforgettable experience and not to be missed by anyone cruising this area. We took the bus another day and explored Santiago de Compostela which is well worth giving up a days cruising for.

John, Vincent and Nathaniel left during this period to be replaced by Jim Stewart for the final 3 weeks.

Some of the Rias reminded me of West Cork and Kerry and are beautiful. A great cruising ground with a wide choice of anchorages and marinas in sheltered waters. The people are

continued next page

friendly and helpful but you hear little English spoken. Another feature of most of the rias, are the hundreds of Viveros or mussel rafts anchored in great masses.

ICC boats and members were very much in evidence during our cruise. *White Shadow* was tied up in Portosin Marina with the Nicholsons away. In Bayona we met Terry Anderson in *Rosemarie of Cuan*, Dan Cross in *Ocean Sapphire* and Joe and Mary Woodward in *Moshulu*. In La Coruña I met Reginald Revill, fellow member of Howth Yacht club who was doing some jobs on *Jabberwock of Howth*.

I flew home on 5th July leaving *Marie Claire* on the marina in Vilagarcia. I was back out again on 1st September for 10 weeks with a plan to winter ashore in the Algarve and then hopefully next April head into the Med. to explore some more.

Over 5 weeks of leisurely cruising covering a total of 1096 n.m. it was still less mileage than three of my previous three-week cruises to areas like the Hebrides and the west coast of France. Retirement is obviously forcing me to slow down – and about time too I can hear some of my crew saying.

Ann Woulfe-Flanagan writes of Beowulf going "camping" in Sicily

Italy, hot and fed up from a very tiring train journey from Naples. Our faithful taxi Albanese Giuseppe (phoned from the train – Tel: 347-5572100) was waiting for us.

Unfortunately Robert would only be a week with us, thus we needed to start our trip as soon as possible as we were to move *Beowulf* as far west as feasible along the north coast of Sicily.

The crew spent Sunday morning in Tropea, a lovely hillside town above the new marina. I do not think Tropea knew what hit it – the shops were devoured and it was quite a fashion parade back on board.

Stores were bought from a small supermarket at the foot of the cliff and Tuffet organised Antonio to drive the stores and her back to the boat.

Lipari is 32 miles away and following a pleasant motor sail and fine sunset we arrived at 21.00. I was glad to have been there previously in daylight in May with Bernard Corbally. We crept around the breakwater and found plenty of space on the first pontoon. Since my last visit the portacabins for the facilities had arrived on the floating pontoon. We thoroughly enjoyed the delightful town some 20 minutes walk away.

From here it was an uneventful trip of 52 miles to Cefalu on the north coast of Sicily, save that we picked up floating

pumice between the islands of Vulcano and Lipari. This is a great city to explore and we spent a day relaxing and swimming on the lovely beaches. We were tied up beside a group of Austrians and they were ordering beer and wine from a man on a scooter from a local supermarket in the town. Tuffet jumped on the back and sped up the hill into the arms of a policewoman. She did arrive back safely.

The forward gear was continuing to give some trouble and Robert was worried about finding a suitable place for we girls to spend the second week "camping". It was decided to try for Terrasini some 21 miles from Palermo, a 50 miles trip for us. It is a fine harbour full of large sardine-fishing boats. We tied up to a central quay wall and the forward gear was decidedly dodgy.

There is a Coast Guard station, and immediately a young Coast Guard rating appeared and asked for ship's papers and one passport. We were then told that we could not stay on the quay wall – but could for one night. We explained that our gear box was not good and needed a mechanic.

In order to satisfy ourselves that this was the best place to stay we set out on Friday 17th June to explore Balestrate between Terrasini and Castellammare del Golfo. There was just a large breakwater and a quay wall; it will be a fine sheltered marina when completed. We did not like the look of Castellammare, and anyway it was too far from the Airport.

Back in Terrasini we organised the mechanic whose family turned out to own the new pontoon and he moved us over to the hammer head where we took up a lazy line and dropped an anchor due to the surge from strong west northwest winds.

Sadly Robert had to leave on Saturday and Deirdre and I went in the taxi to Palermo airport some 20 minutes drive. We hired a car and later in the week went to Segesta, an hour away, to view the Greek temple and theatre.

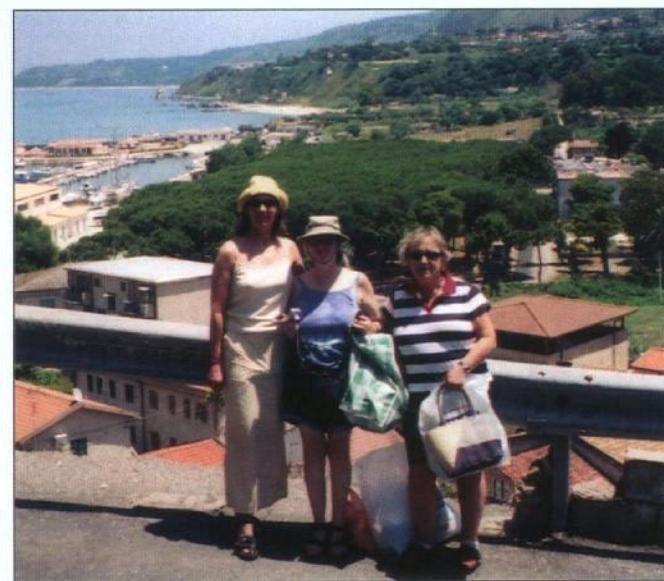
Terrasini is an old town with many small supermarkets and some very good restaurants, plus a large supermarket and a high-quality shopping street. Tuffet found the Museo Archeologico di Terrasini and learned that they hosted concerts, one of which we attended.

Elizabeth met a local family, the father was a policeman in Palermo and we joined them for coffee outside their house. He warned us not to wear any jewellery when going into Palermo. We all went in on Sunday and it was a fine place without the crowds; aworth a visit. It is one hour by train – the station a hot 30 minute walk from the harbour, or 1½ hours by bus from the top of the town.

The Hotel beach was in good order and we swam and sunbathed every day. The other beaches were being cleaned up by the time we left.

The gear box was attended to!

I would recommend this town as a change of crew stop. It is very convenient to Palermo airport – Ryanair direct from Stansted or Aer Lingus to Naples and an internal flight.



Elizabeth, Ann and Tuffet after the shopping spree in Tropea.

Photo: Deirdre Leonard

The Sporadic Journey of the Lotophagi

Peter Fernie

Preamble

One of the finest logbooks I have ever seen was in a glass case in the engine room of the old *Queen Mary*, now moored and immobile in Long Beach, California. It was either Royal Folio or Imperial Folio in size, leather bound with dark maroon covers. It was open at a typical day. Line after line of exquisite copperplate handwriting detailed the hour by hour history of one of the mighty *Queen Mary* turbines. Dozens of these impressive volumes had been sold with the ship when she was paid off – and all for the princely sum of £1.

I was reminded of the clarity of the *Queen Mary* engine room logs as I attempted to decipher some medical cacography of our much humbler and smaller yacht log.

Radar (I, myself), the usual amanuensis of the annual Greek cruise, was stuck in Germany earning a crust and the Lotophagi (the majority of whom are of a medical persuasion) had started without him. “Be sure to keep a log”, they were admonished. And so they did ... for 4 or 5 days.

To be fair, the numbers are legible – Lat. and Long. and NM and north, south, east, west are no problem. The problem is with the words. I put it down to the fact that medical folk have developed a cryptic style of writing to inhibit the average customer from knowing what they are all about.

The log appeared to be gobbledegook. “Head churl queried in market”? “A meaningful bunch powered by US induct” – and then the ominous “Hand fight. Dipped sand. Stabbed ear. Gin”

This didn't sound like a Lotophagi cruise at all.

Introduction

The Lotaphagi are a diverse group who believe that sailing in May can, and should, be more than wellington boots in Galway

Bay – hence for the last few years they have decamped to various Greek or Turkish cruising grounds in the spring. The Lotophagi this year comprised: Ray O'Toole aka ROT (ICC) our leader and I.C. Admin & Logistics; Peter Fernie (aka.Radar) (ICC) botanist; Olaf Tyaransen (Killick) (ICC) a walking Larousse Gastronomique; Eoin Bresnihan (Ahab) continues as our totally incorruptible Purser; Niall Murphy (Omphalos) who can be relied upon to regurgitate fascinating facts about where we are, and Donal Curtis (the Doc) Ships Surgeon. Finally this year we were rejoined by Peter Mason (the Child) who had managed to park his gas platform somewhere to the north of Brazil and told the crew to look after it carefully whilst he was on holiday.

This year there was to be a movie of the Lotophagi adventures as ROT had purchased a digital video camera and had been practising all winter – now we could bore our friends and relations not only with thousands of digital photographs but with the movie as well. We might even do a musical in future years.

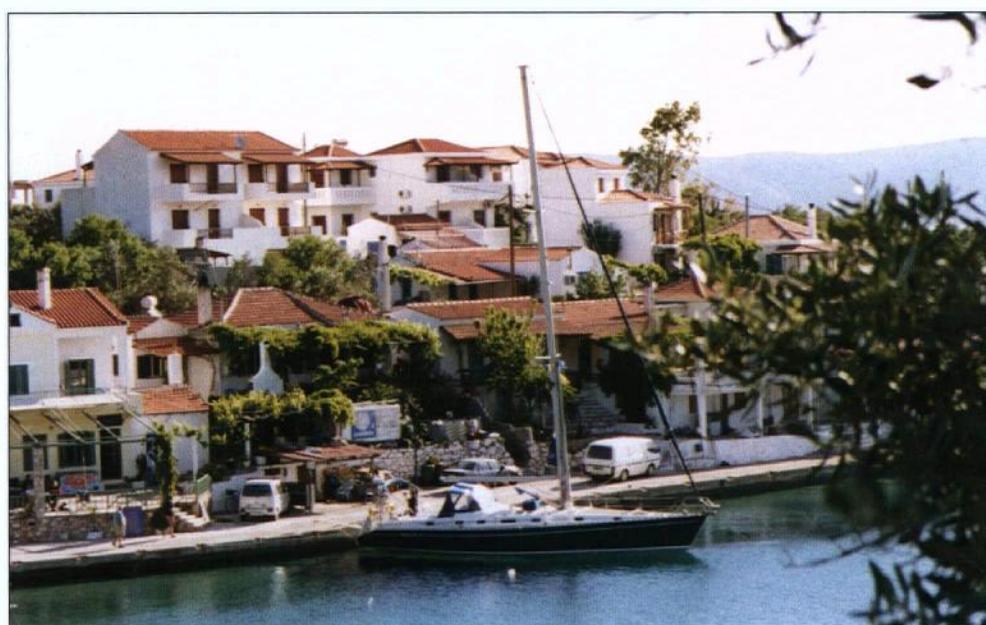
The cruising ground was to be the northern Sporades. The boat was to be collected in Lavrion on the southeastern tip of the Attica peninsula. The mission – a cruise up the west coast of Nisos Evvia, the long island to the east, which almost seems to be part of the mainland, visit as many of the northern Sporades as time permitted, before returning to Lavrion via Skyros, the so-called windy island.

It all started well – the Lotophagi, less Radar, arrived in Lavrion to collect *FCF*¹, a 51-foot Greek facsimile of a Baltic 495 in which we have sailed for the last 3 or 4 years. The name is awful but the boat is ideal for the job, provided that you are not totally dependent upon electronic navigational impedimenta – which are occasionally equivocal (not unlike, one must admit, most of the crew).

The main problem at this juncture was that *FCF* was not in Lavrion as expected but in Piraeus some 35 miles to the north. The log is silent as to the responsibility for this blunder. At least no one could blame Radar ...

May 3

Hurrah. The boat is found and is victualled and is heading southeast in a light breeze towards Cape Sounion at the tip of the Attica Peninsula. The original plan has been modified. The log, deciphered, records that at 15.00 the wind has freshened from the south and they took the second turn left after Sounion. The night was spent alongside the quay in Korisia, in



“We tied up stern-to in Stena Vala, N. Alonnisos.”

1. See ICC 2004 Annual for the derivation of this unusual boat's name.

Limin Ay.Nikolaou on the island of Kea, one of the northern Cycladic Islands. The bay is a very safe one and proved so last year when we made for it in the teeth of a gale. Surprisingly for such an idyllic location, it was formerly a major coaling location for steamers going from the Black Sea to Western Europe. All that remains are the ruins of an old coal bunker.

The log is uncharacteristically silent about the evening meal or the usual goings-on. The conclusion is that either there were no goings-on or no one thought them worthy of mention.

May 4

A passage from Nisos Kea to N.Andros. The log has become even more laconic. 'Gavron (N.Andros) 22.5 miles. Wind north-northeast 2-3. Tied up alongside sin'. That looks more like it.

May 5

A passage from N.Andros to N.Skyros which began at 08.00, generally in southwesterlies, 7-10 knots. Nothing else happened apart from "an inability to gut a mandarin before the briocole" and something about "a large wind farm" Perhaps it's in some sort of medical code. This could be a very succinct log.

May 6

A definite improvement with a clear intention to produce a chronological informative log readable to the layman. 'Departed Skyros at 08.00 in light variable winds'. A "meaningful"? lunch was taken in Ormos Agnonda which is a small enclosed bay 2.5 miles east of Ak. Miti on the south part of Nisos Skopelos. As the afternoon progressed, the chef fell asleep (so nothing new there then) and the wind increased to 15-20 knots from the west. Fortunately the planned destination was Skiathos Harbour, on Nisos Skiathos, which is well protected from the west. The Lotophagi awaited the arrival of Radar who had travelled by various transports from Munich.

May 7

Radar arrived about midday from Agios Konstantinos in an uncharacteristically grumpy mood, having been travelling non-stop by plane and bus and ferry for the last 30 hours, with a sore throat, and conjunctivitis. Immediately he complained about most things, including the weather which had taken a definite turn for the worse, likening it to Galway Bay in mid-April. Pausing only to charge him with a large G&T, we raised sail at

14.00 for the next island, Alonnisos, in a cold northerly force 4 and a grey lumpy sea. The afternoon was spent listening to Radar's barely credible tales of rabid hounds in a deserted Athens bus station at 04.00 that morning, and the unexciting progress of the British general election. As we approached Alonnisos the wind dropped which increased the comfort level and by 18.10 we were tied up stern-to in Stena Vala, a small cove about midway up the east coast of the island and opposite the southern end of Nisos Peristeri. This whole area around Alonnisos and the northern Sporades is a marine park and Stena Vala has a small veterinary station, the purpose of which is to rescue and rehabilitate injured Mediterranean Monk Seals, which are now an endangered species.

Only two of the tavernas were open at this time of the year and it appeared that both of the proprietors had assisted us to tie up, which caused a dilemma as to where we should eat, not wishing to upset either of the congenial prospective hosts. Fortunately one of the tavernas was coffee and cakes only, solving the problem. The food in the remaining establishment was above average – in fact Killick thought so much of the starters he had 5 of them. Radar was in raptures about their potted plants and bored everyone.

May 8

Sunday dawned warm and sunny and we walked around the headland to the north taking in the prominent church and the clean sandy deserted strand. Over a morning coffee we sought local information as to whether the Monastery on the neighbouring Nisos Pelagos was still inhabited. "No" we were emphatically told, the general opinion of the locals being that monks were no longer the hardy souls they were in the old days, and preferred the flesh pots of the tourist centres, to a life of frugality and contemplation. We sort of concurred that Irish monks were much of the same nowadays, although privately admitting Skellig Michael monks would have regarded Nisos Pelagos as a wimpish sort of asceticism in the first place.

Lunch was to be across Ormos Vasililou on Nisos Peristera, a barely separate island to the west. We anchored in 10 metres in the north arm of the large bay on the west coast. What should have been a peaceful idyllic spot was disturbed by a Greek lady conducting a conversation with, one assumes, her husband who was cleaning his boat. Nothing unusual so far except that he was on the shore whilst she was about half a mile up the hill, and possessed of a stentorian voice which would have quelled armies. The Pilot warns that the head of the bay is foul; we were not prepared for the fact that it seems to be a dumping ground for unwanted white goods and ceramic sanitary ware which shimmered through the pellucid water. We half expected to pull up a bidet or Hoover twin tub at the end of the lunch pause.

The afternoon was a lazy relaxed slow sail in light breezes some 13 miles to the north to stay the night on the uninhabited Nisos Kiri Panayia (also called Nisos Pelagos). Despite the warmth the visibility was good and we could make out the trio of graduated Khalkidiki peninsulas, Kassandra, Sithonia and Akti, the latter with the prominent Mt Athos, some 40-50 miles to the north.

We were due to stay in Ormos



Donal Curtis, Ray O'Toole and equivocal navigational impedimenta.

Planitis to the north of the island. A narrow entrance leads into a large bay which is reputedly safe in all conditions. Mason, who was only moderately impressed, thought it a bit like Muckle Flugga – this reduced even Killick to introspection. We anchored at 16.15 in the south lobe of the bay in about 10 metres with a good sandy holding.

The only other boat in the bay was a large catamaran flying a German ensign. Killick and the Doc disappeared below to cook up the evening's feast whilst Radar scrutinised the neighbours. When it transpired that they were launching a sea-borne assault to ascend the steep 300 metre ridge to the west of the bay, he vainly attempted to cobble together an Irish expedition to plan a counter-assault from the south. The Lotophagi, being much too circumspect to be drawn into Great Powers rivalry, suggested that he do it alone and that if he really wanted to impress the Germans he should swim to the shore with his boots in his teeth. Radar sulked and contented himself with imagining mountaineering catastrophes whilst viewing the ascent through the glasses.

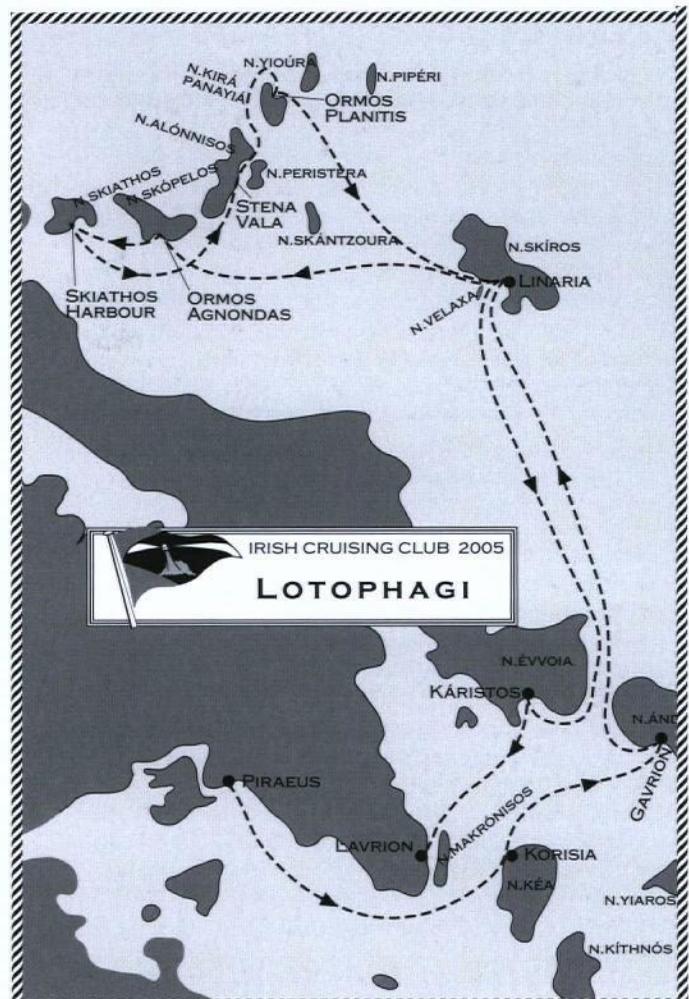
The evening meal was something of a magnum opus involving two prima-donna chefs, and a chicken stuffed with all manner of local root vegetables, before being flambéed in ouzo. (The Doc maintained that this was best local practice). Co-chef Killick took umbrage that the starters were eaten piecemeal by the now ravenous Lotophagi. Local difficulties notwithstanding, the evening was a great success – even Radar forgot about the supposedly successful German ascent of Mount Planitis. It is difficult to beat a peaceful anchorage on an uninhabited Greek island.

9 May

The plan was to visit the aforementioned deserted monastery on the east of the island. Radar who has one of those nerdy diaries with all sorts of useless nonsense in it, declared that it was the Feast day of St. Pacominius, the founder of communal monasticism and 't'was thus appropriate. Unfortunately there was a southwesterly swell into so called Monastery Cove which precluded anchoring and taking a line ashore. Mason, the Doc and Radar formed a landing party whilst the rest of the crew motored off after promising to return to collect them ...later.

Precipitous steps are cut into the rock by the landing stage and a steep walk of several hundred feet up a rough track brings one to the monastery. The external gate was on the latch and a notice reminded you to close it afterwards, to exclude the feral goats from the gardens. Surprisingly the vineyards looked quite well tended and watered. The monastery door was open and we entered a cool cobbled courtyard covered overhead with a lattice work of ancient vines. The silence and sense of peace was palpable. We found ourselves conversing in hushed tones as we investigated the old olive press, and the wine tramping vat. The views to the northeast of Nisos Prasso and Yioura with Mount Athos in the far distance were magnificent. Heikell however, had spooked us by all this talk of a "lonely and haunted place inhabited by a big black bull". Suddenly, as if on cue, a tall angular and cadaverous bearded monk carrying a petrol-engined brush cutter, appeared around a corner, giving us a fearful start. I suppose we expect the grim reaper at some stage – but not with a petrol-engined scythe. The truth became clear – the monastery is not uninhabited and a single monk keeps the place in order, sells a small line in religious artefacts and offers weekly retreats for those really wanting to get away from it all. Sadly, and to our embarrassment, we had not brought any money with us, not expecting to find anywhere to spend it and were unable to purchase the hand-made artefacts on offer. He didn't take Visa. If you visit this uninhabited island in the future, take some money with you.

FCF was standing offshore and presently collected us and



the punt (after a simulated MOB drill to collect the thwart). We departed for Skyros at 11.00 in a brisk southwesterly which didn't last long enough. Before lunch, Killick gave a rather pompous lecture on the Great Schism. As with most of Killick's lectures, everyone gives the impression of listening, with a sort of thunderstruck expression. On a different level, Mason, who can whistle with his teeth and fingers, and could knock seagulls out of the sky at 2 cables, gave a masterclass in whistling techniques. It is sad to report that there were far more takers for the whistling than the Great Schism lectures. Despite large volumes of puffing, blowing and red faces no one got near emulating Mason's decibel output.

The northern entry to the main ferry port of Linaria, on Skyros is made more exciting and shorter by the passage between Nisis Velaxa and the main island. This passage, with the impressive name of Dhiavlos Valaxou is reputed to be "scary" but is about 1.5 cables wide with mean depths of 3.5-4.0 metres. It's not a patch on the Joyce Passage or the Dursey Sound for scary – even the ferries use it.

On the subject of ferries, the arrival of the evening ferry into Linaria is something of a spectacle. As dusk falls and the ferry begins her final turn and reverse into the quay, a taverna on the other side of the harbour blasts out the opening few bars of Richard Strauss's "Thus spake Zarathustra" (or the tune to 2001 AD if you're not a music buff). As the music reaches a cacophonous climax, the ferry skipper enters into the spirit of it all, with hooters and sirens and puffs of black smoke in time to the music. Most satisfying, uplifting and free. We are thinking of suggesting it to the Dublin Port Authority.

After our arrival in Skiros at about 14.00, Killick was seen in protracted and surreptitious negotiation with some fishermen

on the quay. We advised him reasonably firmly that we intended to eat in the restaurant a good 11 paces from the boat, that coming evening, lest he be considering some oeuvre of fishy magnificence. He disregarded us and proceeded to create sea urchin soup. If the taste was but a minute fraction of the grotesque aroma coming from the galley, this would have been too much. The evil smelling concoction seethed below and Killick, who has no shame and would eat anything that slithers, gaily told us that this was some sort of local bonne-bouche and involved sea urchin gonads, a glass of white wine, sauted shallots and saffron. "Be sure not to add garlic as it destroys the delicate taste". The description was bad enough but the smell and attendant nausea had the Lotophagi wishing we were back with the Great Schism.

We ate in the restaurant. Killick had no ill effects and trechered with abandon as usual. His end of the table looked as though someone had dismantled a car there.

10 May

There was still a lingering hint of sea urchin gonads about the boat which really precluded going anywhere outside the harbour. We took a bus to the big town Skiros and walked up a steep higgledy-piggledy assemblage of streets and alleyways to the imposing Venetian Kastro, with fine views over the north of the island. The only disadvantage is that there is a Greek Airforce base in the north of the island and jets roar just overhead frightening the sheep (and the Lotophagi). We came back via the newly-built, EU-funded marina on Achilles Bay and from the bus, were able to see the rocks and reefs surrounding the marina which, as we all know, keep out the visiting yachties and saves it for the local fishermen. The entrance also opens in the direction of the northerly meltemi which might be considered less than ideal. Thus is European VAT spent.

Later that day our leader was taken away in a 4x4 jeep by a rather attractive lady harbourmaster (harbour-mistress?) under the guise of outstanding harbour dues or some such nonsense. We were all envious. He returned, not having paid the dues as he said she didn't have any change, and he had to go back again. He is not normally like this.



A rough track brings you to the monastery on Nisos Pelagos.

11 May

To make up for the indolent day in port yesterday we were out of Linaria at 06.50 bound for Karistos, back on Nisos Evvoia, some 65 mile distant. We sailed and motor sailed on and off and by 13.30 we had the lighthouse on Nisos Mandhilou abeam. The Doc and Radar had been bleating since lunch that they were hot and wanted a swim so we moored about 1 mile east of the 14th century Venetian fort or Bourtsi whilst they splashed and frolicked and generally irritated everyone else.

Karistos inner harbour was full of fishing boats and the harbour police directed us to what appeared to be the ferry terminal – we subsequently discovered that the ferry to Rafina on the mainland no longer operates and is a local bone of contention. Karistos in consequence is now something of a backwater which makes it all the more pleasant, although it seems as though it is a major summer holiday destination for Greeks. The town is laid out in a Germanic grid pattern commissioned by the Bavarian Prince, and subsequently King, Otho. For once, we followed the guide books and ate in the Cava d'Oro which is in an alleyway off the sea promenade and had possibly the best value meal of the entire cruise. Seven Lotophagi were liberally fed and wined (in our usual industrial quantities) for a total of €72. Dix points.

12 May

Two hours is really all you need to know Karistos. The Venetian fort is substantial but could do with some heritage funds. The museum is sepulchral, dusty and manifests a stygian gloominess. It seems a shame to disturb them all. In front of the museum is a massive steam-driven road roller which was forged and manufactured in Leicester during an age when English steam technology was unparalleled and exported around the world. It is gently rusting away. (The steamroller, that is.) Radar returned triumphant with a cutting of white Hottentot fig. (*Carpobrotus edulis*).

Our departure from Karistos was delayed as the Doc did his Star Trek dematerialisation trick for 90 minutes or so. Search parties were dispatched in all directions but he had disappeared in what was really quite a small place. He was beamed down again and was located gently meandering from the north, wondering what all the fuss was about. The log doesn't recall who suggested his nom de guerre should be changed to Meanderthal Man.

The day had clouded over with little wind and we motorsailed back to Lavrion stopping for the final lunch in Ormos Angelistros, an open bay on the east coast of Nisos Makronisi, the thin long island lying parallel to the Attica coast. Meanwhile the GPS sensing the end of the cruise had finally joined its comatose electronic companions.

Our last on-board lunch is always indeterminate – I was going to say al fresco, but that seems far too ordained for the sort of event it is – as we always end up stronger in some comestibles than others. The Doc however is a master of conjuring up meals from the most unpromising ingredients and, to his credit, and to possibly make amends for his earlier dematerialisation, created a wondrous sort of eggy souffle quasi-pudding which

included, at least, eggs, salami, cheese and pimento. At 16.30 we hauled the anchor for the last time, and replete and dozy we motored gently back to Lavrion.

Lavrion is a massive shock to the system after a succession of small islands and harbours, being a major industrial and mining port. Now it also appears to be a staging post for gargantuan motor yachts belonging to Arab princes and the like. We were berthed about 200 metres from such a behemoth which was connected to a Caterpillar generator that would probably have been sufficient for Malahide's electricity needs, and which kept us awake for most of the night.

Serendipitously, we were berthed next to a trawler yacht, the *Connda Venessa*, built in Malahide Marine some 30 years ago. Even more coincidentally, Killick had helped build and deliver her to the first owner, a certain Count Arkens, who was a functionary at the Court of the King of the Belgians – (really – I'm not making this up). The yacht was now looking a little care-worn, having spent the last few years cruising with a Scottish Lady in the Red Sea.

She was currently for sale. Although she had only an excuse for white flappy things, she had a big ship's bell which could be polished daily and rung self-importantly at every opportunity. We would cruise the world. Our imaginations took flight.

Sadly, despite much enthusiasm, the remaining ship's funds were not sufficient for the purchase – they were barely sufficient for a meal in the restaurant at the entrance to the yacht harbour. As a total contrast to the previous evening, the meal was the most expensive and least satisfactory of our peregrinations. Nul points.

End of cruise

We managed to cover 10 islands including Evvoia and the Sporades and some of the Northern Cyclades – winds were light this year and weather was mixed. Food and Wine and Company were as ever excellent. We sailed about 25% of the time covering a total of about 350 miles over the 10 days. We handed the boat back with considerable unconsumed drink – a worrying development. ROT promised us that the movie would be spectacular and he would get the 'rushes' out in a week. We have tolerated this David Lean persona so far but if he brings a clapper board in future...



A higgledy-piggledy assemblage of streets and alleyways in Skiros.

Post script

Radar finally managed to decipher 'Hand fight. Dipped sand. Stabbed ear. Gin.'

Quite obvious really – 'Wind light. Dropped sails. Started engine'.

*"Wouldst thou" so the helmsman answered, "learn the
secrets of the sea?
Only those who brave its dangers comprehend its mystery.*

(Longfellow)

Pottering round Sicily and down to Malta on *Beowulf*

Bernard Corbally

Crew: Ann Woulfe Flanagan, Robin Clapham, Yvonne and Leonard Little, Jim Howe, Erica Corbally, Richard Wheeler, Helen Wheeler, Stuart Allen, David Kingston, Allen Cole, Derek Taylor, Peter Davies.

Having spent a few days commissioning *Beowulf* after wintering in Tropea (South Italy), with Ann Woulfe Flanagan, Robin Clapham, Yvonne and Leonard Little as crew, we set forth for Porto Rosa on the north coast of Sicily (52 miles) on Monday 16th May. Despite negligible wind, we experienced an uncomfortable roll and our visibility was impaired by a heat haze, which ruined our view of the coastline. A sharp lookout had to be maintained for freighter traffic and the many working fishing boats. Only two yachts were sighted in the distance. We were met at the marina entrance by a rib and escorted right up the marina to a very tight berth between mooring posts. Fortunately, there was negligible wind while we were berthing. Porta Rosa is a new, very large, walled-in marina development with thousands of villas and many blocks of flats. Despite an attractive layout and a friendly welcome, we found the place somewhat soulless. A friendly café bar on the marina front provided us with light refreshments. We sourced a few basic stores in a small shop behind the café, where we found a staircase to take us up to the office on the first floor. The secretary highly recommended the Saporee Restaurant for dinner, if we did not mind walking 3 kilometres round to the west side of the marina entrance. However, the place was closed, so we were delighted to find a good Pizza Restaurant near our berth that was still open.

Tuesday was a lovely warm clear blue sky day, with

visibility good enough to see the Aeolian Islands in the distance at about 023° true. A light east-northeast breeze picked up at about 13.00, which allowed us to sail for almost an hour as we headed for the southeast side of Isola Vulcano. The island looked quite desolate, with a lighthouse and just a few scattered houses on the steep hillsides which swept down to rock cliffs. We anchored for lunch in the bay just north of Porto de Levante at the northeast tip of the island. It was a delightful location with a splendid view of the smoking volcano. Fortunately the prevailing wind saved us from the sulphurous fumes that are sometimes experienced in this bay. There were three other yachts in the anchorage, including one that had unsuccessfully attempted to berth in the tiny harbour. This is a good place to anchor if one wishes to climb the volcano, but we decided to head for Lipari (4 miles).

We arrived in the Pignataro Marina at 16.09, where an attendant directed us into one of many vacant berths on the new inner visitor's pontoon. Water and electricity were available but there were no shore facilities. It was a good 15 mins. walk into town. Silvio Corrieri's taxi (Spoke some English! Cell Phone 0039-338-5632921) brought us to the Da Bartolo Restaurant, which served us good pizzas.

Silvio took us on an interesting tour of the island on Wednesday and provided us with copious information about the volcano and the pumice stone industry. We checked the weather forecast at 06.00 on Thursday and were easily persuaded by expected force 7 winds to enjoy the island for another day. Philip and Elspeth Shirtcliff (*Brighton Belle*) joined us for refreshments and an exchange of sailing yarns. They advised us about the Filippino Restaurant, where we enjoyed a splendid late lunch after our tour of the fort and its museums.

We departed from Lipari at 06.11 on Friday and headed out through the Bocca di Vulcano for Cefalu (53 miles). There is a nasty reef on South Liar Island, which we monitored carefully as we motored out into a west-southwesterly force 5. We got a glimpse of smoking Volcano before heavy rain squalls reduced our visibility. We took a lot of seawater over our decks as we attempted to maintain a course of 240° magnetic. Eventually, at 10.00, we managed to motor-sail more comfortably at over 7 knots to arrive at Cefalu at 14.10. A large concrete jetty behind the breakwater divides the harbour, with guest berths for yachts on concrete spurs off the south side. Considerable care was needed to avoid mooring lines as we slotted into a vacant berth. There is plenty



Derek Taylor, Bernard Corbally, Allen Cole in Siracusa, Sicily.

Photo: Stuart Allen

of anchoring space south of the jetty. (One yacht had dragged ashore!) The marina is delightfully located under an impressive mountain crag called "La Rocca" on which sits the megalithic Temple of Diana. Medieval walls surround rather sketchy fortification at the top. It was a 20 minute walk round to the attractive cathedral town on the other side of the crag.

Leonard hired a car on Saturday and drove us up into the hills. We briefly explored Petralia Sottana and enjoyed refreshments in a friendly open air café by the cathedral before motoring on to the delightful hilltop village of Petralia Soprano. After an exploratory walk about, we enjoyed a superb local-fare lunch in the highly recommended "Trattoria da Salvatore".

Jim Howe joined us on Sunday and Leonard and Yvonne left after an excellent farewell dinner in Lo Scoglio Ubriaco Restaurant, which is in a superb position overlooking the sea.

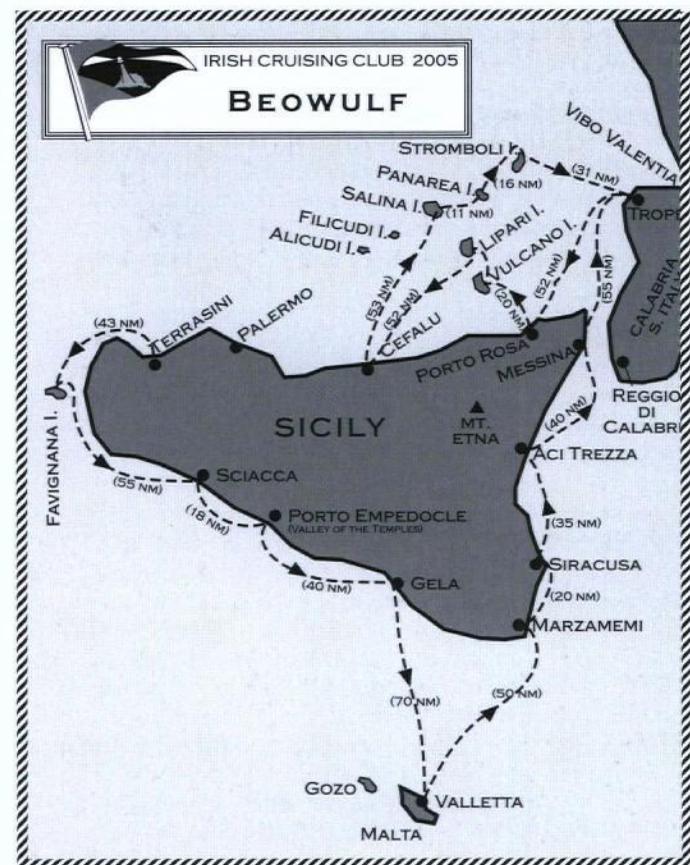
There was a red ball sun on the horizon as we cast off at 05.35 on Monday to head for Salina Island. (53 miles). Difficulty in getting into reverse gear nearly got us into an embarrassing situation, as we eased our way out of our tight marina berth. It was an uneventful passage over mirror calm water, except for a very large porpoise which surprised us by leaping clear out of the water right beside our boat and a shark fin, that was sighted about 5 miles southwest of Salina. We moored up to the breakwater well up inside the marina. It was a delightfully peaceful village location with a separate harbour for ferry boats. The Portobello Restaurant, overlooking the harbour from the first floor, served us an excellent dinner accompanied with highly recommended Caravaglio white wine. John FitzPatrick, an ex-colleague of the skipper, arrived on a charter yacht and joined us for a natter about local anchorages.

On Tuesday, we hired a couple of open three-wheeled buggies to tour the island. They proved to be extremely uncomfortable, very noisy and decidedly hairy on corners. A slipping clutch on one required it to be pushed up hills. It also got a puncture in a bogey wheel, which curtailed its performance. It was an experience not to be repeated, but we did get to see quite a bit of the sparsely populated island.

We headed off for Panarea Island (10.5 miles) on Wednesday morning and anchored in Baja Mi Lazzese, where we were soon joined by five other yachts. It was a lovely unspoilt place to stop for a swim and cockpit lunch. We then motored round to the main commercial jetty at S. Pietro, where we saw two yachts at anchor north of the pier. The place did not look very enticing and we sailed on to Stromboli Island (16.7 miles), passing round the north side to view the lava flows. A small cloud above the dramatic volcano may have been smoke and we thought that we could see steam rising where the lava flow reached the sea! We joined four other yachts at anchor in about 20 metres just south of San Vincenzo commercial jetty. Ann and Robert swam ashore and the skipper was just about to join them, when Jim sighted a jellyfish. The skipper was out of the water in a flash and then noticed that there were lots of small jellyfish and some strange stick like objects, which occasionally moved through the water. These sea-snake creatures had orange coloured tips on spines that stuck out all round their bodies throughout their entire length, which varied in length up to about 3 metres.

Soon after we set sail for Tropea (31 miles) on Thursday morning, the engine over-heat alarm sounded off due to a lack of cooling water. There was no wind, so we rigged the deck-wash pump to feed directly into the water filter, which allowed us to motor for the remainder of the passage to our berth in the marina.

The crew departed at Tropea and the skipper was joined by Erica Corbally and Richard and Helen Wheeler for a two-week



boat/villa holiday in Calabria. We hired a car to explore the mountainous hinterland, which we thoroughly enjoyed. Except for a beach excursion and a one night visit to Vibo Marina, *Beowulf* remained in her berth until Ann went out to bring her to Terrasini on the northwest coast of Sicily.

On Saturday 26th June, Stuart Allen, David Kingston, Peter Davies, Allan Cole and the skipper joined *Beowulf* in Terrasini. Having taken a load of stores on board, we got away at 09.20 on Sunday and headed for Isole Egadi (43 miles). The wind being light and variable, we motored along at a comfortable 6 knots and enjoyed a fabulous sunny day. Having rounded Capo San Vito, beautiful mountain scenery swept down to red sandy beaches with very little habitation in view. We passed close outside the Assinelli Rock during lunch and then dodged round the low flat Isla Mavone to head for the harbour on the north side of Favignana Island. As we approached the harbour, a small very fast fishing boat approached us on a collision course. The crew insisted that we head towards the west end of the Island, where we must pass outside two yellow buoys before heading back towards the harbour. We suspect that they were protecting a Tuna breeding ground.

The approach to the marina, which was tucked in behind the main harbour, was quite shallow. We were instructed to drop our anchor well out before mooring (stern-to) to the outside of a jetty, which was protecting the marina. We were in a lovely location with a splendid view of the impressive fort on the top of Monte Santa Caterina before us and an attractive small town (rebuilt in 1600s) on our land side. There was even a small beach for the crew to enjoy a swim, which they did after a pleasant walk about in the town, which had several nice squares and a few impressive churches. We selected "La Tavernetta" restaurant near the church in the main square, for dinner and were delighted by both the location and its sea-food menu.

We departed at 08.50 on Monday under yet another clear blue sky, but with sufficient wind to enjoy a sail round the east of the island. The coast south of Marsala Point was flat and

uninteresting with a very rocky shoreline. Care was needed to avoid shallow sandy reefs off the coast and several charted fish farms. No other yachts were sighted. We moored alongside Brian and Christine's Moody *Nouvelle Sarabande* on the outer pontoon in Sciacca Marina, which is owned by a sailing club that charges visitors a nominal berthing fee. It was a pleasant friendly place to be, but there was not much of interest ashore. Stuart cooked a delicious chicken dish for dinner.

After a leisurely cockpit breakfast, we cast off at 10.10 to head east in search of the Eraciea Beaches west of Cabo Bianco. One other yacht passed by as we were anchored for a swim and lunch. The white limestone cliffs on Cabo Bianco Point were impressive as we headed for Porto Empédocle. We could see no sign of a mast as we entered the harbour and were entertaining thoughts of having to press on to Licata, when we rounded a corner to sight a single pontoon with one empty berth. We had no sooner berthed than the Port Captain arrived to deal with paperwork, the Pontoon manager arrived to collect €35 and a friendly taxi driver (Ciroso: Tel. 360284462) arrived, who offered to drive us to The Valley of the Temples (Agrigento). We booked the taxi for a most interesting and enjoyable evening visit to the temples, when the atmospheric temperature was cool and the tourist crowds had dwindled. Dinner on board was followed by delicious ice creams at the Café Bar opposite our pontoon.

The harbour was a bit smelly, which encouraged us to make an early start at 07.00 on Wednesday to head for Gela (40 miles). We anchored for a swim and lunch off a nice beach just west of Pte. Delle Duerocche. (There are lots of popular beaches west of Licata). After lunch, a southwesterly force 4 wind allowed us a couple of hours enjoyable sailing. The entrance to Gela Harbour is subject to localised silting, and one is advised to approach with caution and only in calm conditions. Our depth went down to 2.8m. as we eased our way in and round to the pontoons behind an inner breakwater. The skipper enjoyed a siesta while the crew went for a swim and then struggled up a long hill to shop in the supermarket. They located the Pizza Trattoria for a very reasonably priced good meal (slight smell from drains, otherwise excellent).

We made another early start at 06.45 on Thursday to complete the 70 mile passage to Malta at a reasonable hour. We passed a gas platform and five waiting tankers as we headed out to sea. By 11.00, we were enjoying delightful sailing with the wind on the beam. A lot of commercial traffic was sighted, but

only one yacht heading in the opposite direction. We failed to contact Manoel Island Marina (Valletta) on the radio and did not have their telephone number (+356-2133-8589), so we just moored in an empty berth at 18.08.

We enjoyed two full days in Malta including a very pleasant excursion to Mellieha Bay, where we anchored for a swim and lunch. The beach looked very crowded with umbrellas etc. We also explored the historical fortress town. However, the highlight of our visit was definitely the Black Pearl Restaurant (run by Alex and Marie Pipionelow), where we dined on all three nights. Nobody wished to try another restaurant!

David Kingston and Peter Davies left us in Malta and Derek Taylor joined us. We arranged for a road tanker to top up our fuel tank and rather wished that it had been emptier, when we discovered that the diesel was half price on orders over 400 litres.

We left Manoel Island at 06.45 on Sunday and motor sailed through an uncomfortable lumpy sea for Marzamemi Marina in east Sicily (50 miles). It was an uneventful passage, with only one yacht sighted, until we encountered a tidal rip off Porto Palo and the wind suddenly backed from north to east. We observed three other yachts heading the same way as we approached the harbour and, conscious of sometimes limited berth availability, we upped our speed to stay ahead! However, they were going elsewhere. Rocks piled up on both sides of the marina entrance looked quite formidable as we made our approach. A marina official directed us to one of the many vacant berths, which had water and electricity. The shore facilities were very basic and there were only a few small shops on the far side of the bay. Although the scenery was uninteresting it was a pleasant relaxing place in a rural environment and we enjoyed our stay. Alan prepared a delicious chicken breast dinner accompanied by a fabulous plum sauce and a powerful Sicilian red wine (Nero d'Avola). Ice cream with Corsican Muscat wine completed a memorable feast.

The boat looked like a Chinese laundry as we cast off at 09.55 on Monday and headed for Siracusa (20 miles). Enjoying a leisurely sail at about 3 knots we seized the opportunity to deploy our hull-scrubbing brush. This amazing device is operated by two ropes and is held against the hull by water pressure created by the boat's forward motion through the water. As it is moved up and down and along the hull, it scrubs off slime and small barnacles leaving a clean anti-fouled surface.

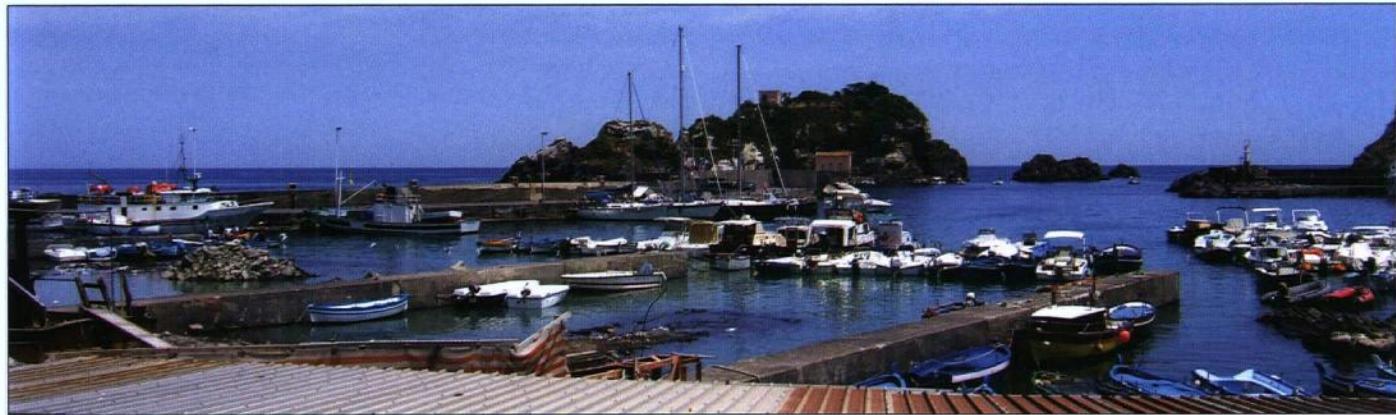
We anchored off a small beach in a nice little bay behind Coognina Point for a swim and some snorkelling before enjoying a sunshine cockpit lunch. Initially, the anchor appeared to be well bedded in, but it began to drag through hard packed gravel. We let out a lot of chain and monitored the situation.

Siracusa is in a huge, almost enclosed, bay where there is lots of protected anchorage. We passed a large cruise liner, anchored off the town, as we approached the marina. There were several yachts anchored, with stern warps to the quay, along the stretch just before the marina. This facility is free but subject to quite a bit of swell in an on-shore wind. We decided to continue on into the marina where laid moorings were tailed back to



Beowulf in Favignana Island.

Photo: Bernard Corbally



Aci Trezza.

Photo: Bernard Corbally

the pontoons. Electricity and water were available and there was a basic unisex wash-house facility beside the floating marina office. We had to dodge water splashing over the pontoons as we made our way ashore to explore the impressive old fortress town. It was an extremely interesting place to be and we would very much have liked to stay a few days. Derek cooked a delicious sea bass for dinner followed by baked banana with hot chocolate sauce. There was little incentive to eat ashore when we had such gourmet chefs on board!

We met up with Bill and Ann Marie Egan on *Golden Eye*, which they had moored off the quay. Bill and the skipper had fun extrapolating the data from old tables to determine the favourable time to pass through the formidable Messina Straits.

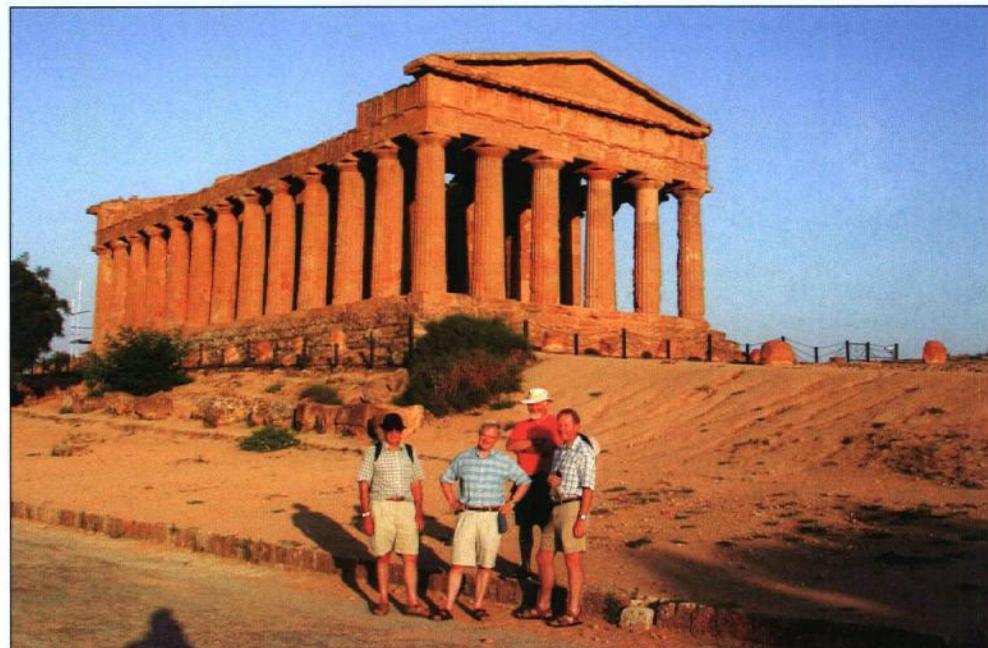
Since we were anxious to visit Mt. Etna, we knocked up our young Italian neighbours at 07.10 to remove their warps from *Beowulf* so that we could set forth for Aci Trezza (35 miles). We had been advised that it was an unspoilt village with a very pleasant harbour and that it was very convenient to the mountain. When we arrived at 12.05, we found the narrow entrance to the tiny harbour tucked in behind the conspicuous Cyclopi Rocks. We dropped our anchor as far out as we dared and backed up to the jetty, which we saw to starboard as we entered. We were alongside the only other yacht in the harbour (French), but another joined us later. The rest of the harbour was full of small boats. It was indeed a delightful place.

With great language difficulty, we finally managed to contact a taxi (Cell Phone: 0039-347-292-2569), which brought us up to the cable car base on Mt. Etna. It was a lovely drive with spectacular views of the clouded mountain. An excellent dinner in Trattoria Verga da Gattamo (Tel. 095-276342), was accompanied by copious quantities of a delicious unlabelled local white wine at €3 per bottle. Granitas and ice creams in the harbour-side café bar completed a really good day.

We were a little concerned by a falling barometer as we cast off and weighed anchor without problems at 09.10 on Wednesday. Motoring at 7.5 knots, we enjoyed sporadic views of Mt. Etna through drifting cloud. The coastal terrain was mountainous with scattered small villages. A blowing whale

was sighted at 12.55, which eventually dived with a flourish of its photogenic forked tail. Soon afterwards, we were suddenly hit by a fierce squall and a rapid increase in wind from the northeast. It was almost on the nose and we were motor sailing when our engine revs suddenly dropped to 2000 and could not be increased. We thought that something might have partially snagged our propeller and pressed on. Ominous black clouds were filling the sky and the barometer was falling, so we were a bit apprehensive as we tacked our way up towards Messina. Fortunately, the wind backed to the northwest and enabled us to reach the marina at 17.20, before the weather deteriorated. The place was looking very full when a marina launch appeared and found us a tight berth inside the outer breakwater. It took us a while to suss-out the marina security gate system, which involved pressing a bell. The heads and showers were pretty basic and heavy harbour traffic rocked us quite a bit. Derek produced another excellent dinner for the weary crew.

Following a recommendation by the marina staff, we cast off at 07.15 and headed for the Straits. The destination within the harbour, of incoming ships, was difficult to determine and we were particularly conscious of the shipping lanes as we approached the narrows. We passed close to a traditional swordfish boat with a very long bowsprit and a man at the masthead. We managed to avoid whirlpools and tidal races and were through the dangerous part when the engine revs dropped again. (Stuart had checked that the propeller was clear!)



Stuart Allen, David Kingston, Bernard Corbally, Allen Cole at the Valley of the Temples, Agrigento, Sicily.
Photo: Peter Davies

Fortunately, we were able to sail and were making quite good progress when we sighted a tornado water spike under a dark cloud to the west of us. We were glad to see it disappear. We were disappointed to see a lot of dumped rubbish floating in the sea off Vadura. The engine worked perfectly when we switched it on at midday due to dropping wind. We arrived back in our Tropea berth at 13.00.

Although it was a short cruise, we got to lots of interesting places, experienced some fabulous sailing and enjoyed many sumptuous meals both ashore and on board. Despite checking the engine throttle cable, changing the fuel filters, checking for water in the fuel tank and checking the air filters, the engine revs continued to be a sporadic problem for Ann when she was taking the boat around the south of Italy to Brindisi.

Roger Aplin and Andrew O'Hanlon write of working their passage aboard a super-yacht

Honorary Secretary for many years. He is a professional Captain with MCA Class Four Certificate which allows him to take charge of large yachts power and sail, up to 3000 GRT with a maximum of 12 guests.

In 2004 Peter was relief Captain on *Victoria of Strathearn* a British Registered beauty. *Victoria* is head turner with classic lines, all creature comforts, but more to the point a sailing boat. She was built by Alloy Yachts in New Zealand in 2001 to the highest international standards in terms of quality and safety. She was designed by Langan Associates. John Langan had previously been the head designer at Sparkman Stephens.

Victoria is 130.41 feet overall, waterline 97.77 feet, 25.27 beam and draws 12 feet. She displaces 166 tonnes. She is fitted with a 750 MTU Diesel, 2 generators, wadter makers, air conditioning and a host of navigation and satellite communication equipment from a 32 flat screen to a built in Magimix. The deck and bright work are to the highest standard all in teak. Below the guest accommodation is panelled in walnut and provides luxury accommodation for 6 to 7 guests and 5 crew. Whilst on charter her crew comprises captain, engineer, Bosun, chef and stewardess. Above the deck towers two carbon masts, the mainmast is 164feet hight and in-boom furling all hydraulically operated. All sail heads and sheets are hydraulically operated also. This is push button sailing but do not underestimate the loads and the damage that can ensue if powered winches are used carelessly and in particular if sheets or halyards snag. There is little or no feedback from a large powered winch. All deck systems are also push button, headsail winches, halyards, boom vangs and runners. Main and mizzen sheets run to captive winches in the bilge.

I agreed to join Peter in Palma Majorca on 28th October. Peter flew from his home in Fort Lauderdale to relieve the full-time master, Simon Farmer for the passage. Peter has delivered *Victoria* on two previous occasions across the Atlantic and across the Pacific as well as undertaking a number of charters in the Mediterranean and Caribbean. He knows her well.

My job was to be deck hand, stand at my watch and do my share of cleaning, and chamoising. At Dublin Airport I met Roger Aplin, fellow ICC member who was on his way to sail with Max McMullan and Eddie Hartigan for a long weekend in Majorca. Peter asked them over to visit *Victoria*. Roger was hooked. It was agreed subject to a pink ticket from Jane, that Roger would meet us in Las Palmas in a week.

We set sail from Palma with a compliment of 7 for Gibraltar to bunker 14,000 litres of diesel for the voyage. It was anticipated that we would try to average 10 knots on the passage. Our first night at sea provided a good 25 to 30 knots on the quarter. we had a magnificent reach down the coast of Spain. I will always remember being on watch with Peter when the wind freshened to 30 knots and the remaining five

November 2004 – *Victoria of Strathearn* – Palma to Antigua, 3,860 Miles.

I met my old friend Peter Mullins at a post wedding lunch in Co Meath in July last year. Peter is a well known member of the ICC having held the post of

members of the cres were watching a DVD as if there was little or no wind outside!

We arrived in Gibraltar where Peter demonstrated his professionalism docking 130 feet in a 30 knot crosswind blowing offshore. Thrusters fore and aft are not very effective above wind speeds of 25 knots. We refuelled, saw the monkeys at the top of the rock, had dinner ashore and set sail the next day.

After a two and a half day passage we met Roger in Las Palmas. We took on more diesel, victuals and Schweppes tonic for Peter's home in Antigua would be Great Circle to the west rather than the normal more southerly route towards the Cape Verde and the trade winds. Our course would converge with the easterly trade winds after a few days. The crew quickly became our friends. Roger, Peter and I have had many good sailing experiences in the past and there is no doubt our voyage aboard capped them all. We laughed till we cried and the remainder of the crew joined in and in no time we were a very happy ship The daily routine of life aboard a large yacht includes freshwater washing down at sea each day, polishing all stainless components using everything from rags to cotton buds, internal cleaning, daily maintenance and planned maintenance.

The engine room is checked very hour and a half. All engine and generators operating systems are constantly monitored and recorded. Ted the relief engineer had a schedule of maintenance duties to undertake during the passage. The bosun Toby's duties includes sail and rigging repairs and overall responsibility for everything above deck. The ongoing supply of superb food kept our spirits high. No baked beans on toast or tinned stew on *Victoria*! Lunch and dinner, weather and light permitting, was served on deck; presentation 100 A1 at Lloyds!

We averaged approximately 240 miles per day. One morning Peter presented us with a very bright object in the sky. He and Patrick his second in command told us this was the international space station. We believed them for about a week until we were told it was in fact the planet Sirius.

We had a variety of light winds, a little rain and some days of magnificent trade wind sailing with full sail up touching 13 knots. We always reduced sail at night and relied heavily on the motor as this was a passage and *Victoria* had a deadline to make. Peter issued written invitations to all crew members to a mid-Atlantic party. Hollywood Pairs was the theme, even the owner got an invitation by e-mail, but due to pressure of business he had to decline! We caught a dolphin (not flipper) during the day and this was served up as sushi with pina coladas to set the theme. Not much pain! The only sign of mutiny was when the ship's engineer, in an effort to conserve fuel would only run the generators for battery charging and cooking and therefore the air conditioning was switched off for approx two days! We still arrived in Aintigua with 1,100 litres out of a total of 14,000 litres.

After ten days of good sailing, a good deal of motoring and a lot of fun, we all stood out by the rail in uniform as we entered Falmouth Harbour. *Victoria* looked magnificent alongside the new jetty to be joined shortly by the J Class *Endeavour* and a host of large mega yachts for Show Week in early December.

A trip always to be remembered. Thank you Peter.

Lessons from Lower Latitudes

James Nixon

Last year we set out in *Scilla Verna* to follow the route taken by Lord Dufferin in 1856 in his schooner *Foam*. In "Letters from High Latitudes" published a year later, he describes the very rapid passage south from Spitzbergen, and almost coming to grief on Røst, the most western of the Lofoten Islands. He ends this stirring tale with his departure for home, overland from Copenhagen.

I came home by air, leaving *Scilla Verna* for the winter at Skattora, just north of Tromsø at 69°42' north. I left her in the care of Båtsenteret, the boatyard at this new marina. Leaving a boat through the Arctic winter was a new experience, and some useful lessons were learnt from that, and on the voyage homewards along the Norwegian coast and beyond.

I visited in April to check on progress and found that although all deck snow had melted, the spectacular surrounding mountains were still covered, and there were skiers about. During the winter a friend, Inge Elaissen, had cleared snow from the deck and centre cockpit, and I was to learn from a problem that arose from this. As we had decided to leave the boat in the water, the boatyard staff had been assiduous in closing all sea-cocks and putting anti-freeze into the lavatories and sinks. Thanks to the gulf stream the sea does not freeze, but the air temperature drops to well below zero. However the centre-cockpit drains pass through sea-cocks in the engine compartment, and these were closed also.

The problem was only noticed when we lifted the liferaft from the locker under the cockpit sole. It is a heavy brute in an unwieldy canister, but it seemed excessively so, as we heaved it into position on the quarterdeck. The cause became obvious when I reached home and left it in for servicing. When opened, the engineer reported that it was full of sea-water and therefore unserviceable, but I tasted the water and it was fresh, almost certainly from melted snow. The cockpit locker must have filled with melt-water which then leaked into the canister. The liferaft is now back in service.

The second lesson was "read" by the Russian Government. On the journey home I had hoped to go northwards and east around Nordkapp to the White Sea and Arkangelsk, and then through the White Sea Canal to St Petersburg. Vladimir Ivankiv, in St Petersburg, who has been of great assistance to yachtsmen entering Russian waters, had been working on my behalf. All visas had been arranged up to about two weeks prior to our proposed departure, when the Russian government changed regulations without warning: any passage through a waterway by a foreign-registered vessel would

now require a chain of requests starting from me to the Foreign Office in London. The request would then pass to the Russian Foreign Ministry and thence in turn to the Russian Ministry of Transportation, the Provincial Government in Karelia, and finally to the Karelian Department of Transportation which would issue the permit to enter the canal at Belomorsk near the Solvetski Islands. Obviously there was not enough time to arrange this, so sadly I abandoned those plans, and looked forward to a voyage southwards along the spectacular Norwegian coast.

Jarlaith Cunnane (ICC) and Paddy Barry (ICC) had hoped to use the same canal in continuing their voyage through the North East Passage from Alaska in *Northabout*. I explained to Paddy that I was having permit problems, but he told me to just turn up at the first lock and demand entry. As a diplomatic wimp I have to express a little relief that they did not do this either, but were forced to leave Russian waters at Murmansk and follow us to Tromsø.

The third lesson was geographic. We left Tromsø in late May and came south in cold blustery conditions through the "Lofoten Chain" to Svolvær, the attractive capital of this archipelago. Trollfjorden is spectacular and worthy of a visit, despite the cruise ships and rock graffiti. The temperature rose slowly as we motored and sailed across the broad Vestfjorden to Bodø, and along the complex leads and sounds of the inner passages on this coast, protected by the "skjaergard" of offshore rocks and islands. We would particularly commend the lovely and relatively undiscovered island of Bolga.

Further south we crossed the Arctic Circle. The geographic lesson is that the globe-like metal sculpture on *Vikingen* is in fact about one minute of latitude south of the circle. It is not a



James Nixon, John Witchell and Russell O'Neill toasting their return south of the Arctic Circle.

point of any navigational significance, but this did not stop us raising a glass in celebration on a sunny morning as sea eagles soared above.

Crew changes are a problem for all non-single-handed skippers, and we experienced lessons from transport difficulties. The first occasion was at Sandnessjøen, just south of the Arctic Circle, where John Witchell and Russell O'Neill (ICC) left for home. They had helped greatly in re-commissioning *Scilla Verna* and bringing her out of the Arctic. This busy town has an airport, and Keith Seybert flew in via Stansted, Trondheim and Brønnøysund further south on the coast. Unfortunately his luggage remained in Stansted. I was able to fit him out with spare oilskins and warm gear, and we sailed south that night to reach Brønnøysund just after midnight. We kept in touch by mobile telephone with the local airline Braathens, to tell them where we had reached. Thankfully the Norwegians have developed a very efficient mobile network, so much so that we learnt that pay telephones were no longer in use. We had to keep moving, and eventually the errant luggage was safely delivered at Rørvik, the next good harbour to the south. Full marks to Braathens.

The same situation arose later when Paul Bryans (ICC) joined us in Stornoway from London, where his luggage stubbornly remained. By the same technique, the Stornoway airport staff arranged for it to be delivered by taxi to Scalpay North Harbour, as we moved south. The mobile telephone network coverage is less than "Norwegian" in the Outer Hebrides.

Another lesson was one that I had nearly forgotten. When leaving Sandnessjøen I noticed a familiar rattle when reversing under engine, and I feared that one of the two anodes on the propeller shaft had worked loose. They had been put on by divers in Tromsø. The efficient harbourmaster in Brønnøysund was able to contact a diver who went down and said that "the anode is loose and I have tightened it thoroughly". I asked what had happened to the second one and he said there was only one! Obviously one had dropped off and the other loosened, and the re-learnt lesson is to ensure that divers know how to apply sacrificial anodes properly. These were the good quality MG Duff devices that had never failed for me before. It was still cheaper than lifting the boat out.

A minor communications lesson was learnt after a couple of wet weather-bound days in Rørvik. Despite more fresh southerlies being forecast we went southwards the next day and motored in horrible conditions across Folda, the large exposed

bay south of Rørvik. Norwegians treat this area with great respect as there have been many shipwrecks.

As we approached land to re-enter the inner sound at Grunnan, through the murk we saw a yacht which I thought was Brian and Eleanor Cudmore in *Ann Again* (ICC). We failed to make contact and conditions were miserable as they bowled northwards under reduced headsail only. Eleanor confirmed later that indeed it was them, but their VHF was switched off! A pity as we have regular contact on ICC committee business, and we met no other Irish boats in Norway.

An aesthetic lesson: Ålesund is a gem. Continuing southwards, we berthed in the Brosundet, in the centre of this city. Keith and I had time to enjoy the art nouveau delights of this historic town while preparing *Scilla Verna* for the North Sea crossing. The centre was largely destroyed in a fire in 1920 but has been restored almost entirely in 'art nouveau' style. Brosundet is a convenient berth from which to explore and shop, and there is a bracing walk up the hill to the north of the city to a viewing point. Crew change was efficient and Michael McKee (former Commodore ICC) and Ed Wheeler (RCC & ICC) joined us by air, landing at Vigra airport on an island to the north of Ålesund. A rapid bus journey through two tunnels delivered them to the centre of the city quickly.

The next lessons arise from my failure to read instructions. We had a calm exit from Norway, leaving Ålesund by the lovely Vartalsfjorden, and resisting the temptation to dally at Geirangerfjorden further inland. Leaving the coast heading for Shetland, the wind freshened from the southeast and we had quite a boisterous passage that night, enlivened by spotting an orca. The confused sea, fresh wind and fog persisted into the next day as we approached the oil-rigs in the middle of the North Sea.

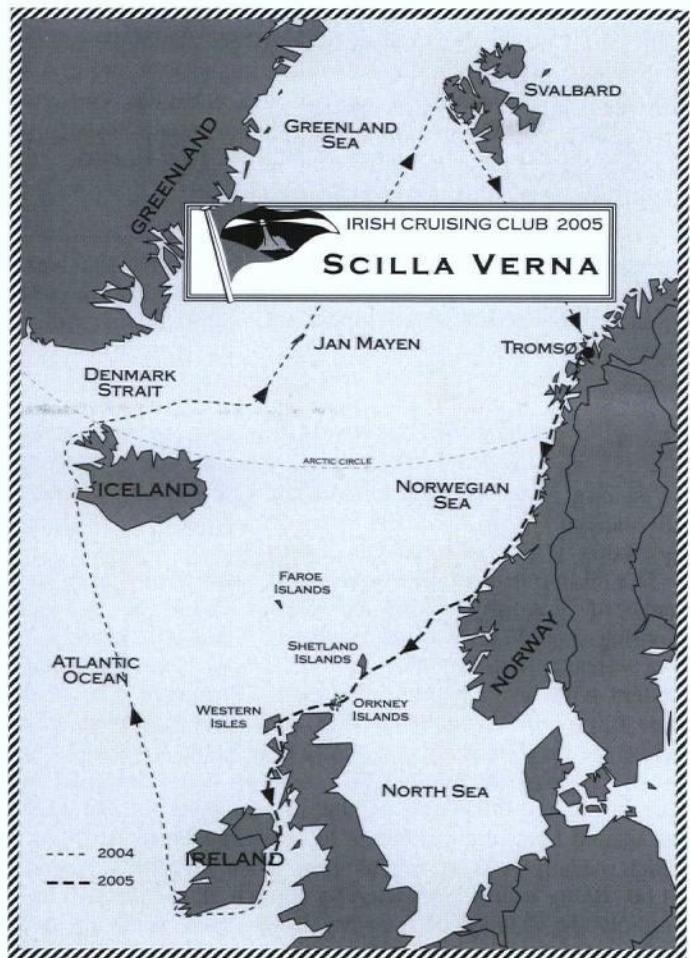
Near the Snorre rig a RIB appeared out of the fog at great speed, manned by Norwegians wearing survival suits and armed. Their leader was cross with us for not contacting them by radio. We then realised there was a problem with our VHF. Also we learnt that we should have contacted them before approaching within twenty miles of the rig. During our shouted exchange the fog lifted slightly and we were able to see the huge concrete legs of the rig, but its platform remained invisible. After hailing grovelling apologies we sped on, though they continued to shadow us for a time. The British Brent rigs were passed without any such contact.

Equally delightful in its own way is Fair Isle. After Shetland we crossed in fog to North Haven, on Fair Isle, and spent two days exploring this attractive island. It is owned now by the Scottish National Trust and is an important ornithological site. I had been there before, but the crew, now including Peter Minnis (ICC), had not. We were able to see and feel the attentions of the many arctic and great skua, and we used the recommended trick of keeping a stick overhead to reduce the accuracy of their attacks. Keith was able to start his return home to Ireland using the Shetland ferry, the *Good Shepherd*, and thence by air from Sumburgh on Shetland.

From Fair Isle we sailed to Stronsay in the Orkneys and then on to Kirkwall. Our departure from these islands provided yet another lesson. We had been weather-



North Haven, Fair Isle



bound in Kirkwall and I felt under pressure to leave as we had connections to make at Stornoway. After assessing forecasts and barometer, and studying (some) directions and tidal information, we departed from Kirkwall shortly after midnight. On a dark night with the gathering ebb, I opted for Eynhallow Sound to make our departure westwards. All proceeded well and rapidly until we approached the western entrance, where in the early dawn gloom we could see a line of breaking water. It was across the whole sound to Eynhallow, the islet in the centre. We had, correctly, chosen the south side of the islet, but the appearance was worrying. Ed was navigating and I shouted below to ask if he thought we were on the right track, and as we entered the breaking water another shout became more anguished. The depth decreased to about four metres, but this may have been caused by turbulence. Little water came aboard, and suddenly we were out into the calmer and deeper waters to the west of Orkney. Unhelpfully, my old edition of the Clyde Cruising Club Sailing Directions was at home, and later I read of the dangers, with its phrases like "hazardous" and "no one without considerable experience of the area should..." These directions do have a helpful diagram, but the prudent navigator should use Westray Firth further north. Ed did read the Admiralty Pilot but did not mention this as he "knew it would put me off from doing it". Perhaps the skipper should beware of selective reading by adventurous (however experienced) crew.

A pleasant lesson was that the west coast of Scotland remains a marvellous cruising ground. After the Orkneys, we enjoyed solitary splendour in Loch Laxford, with Arkle and Foinavon close by, two of the bold landmarks on this mountainous Sutherland coast. We then crossed the Minch to Stornoway where Michael and Peter left us, and we were joined by Paul Bryans (ICC) whose problems with luggage have

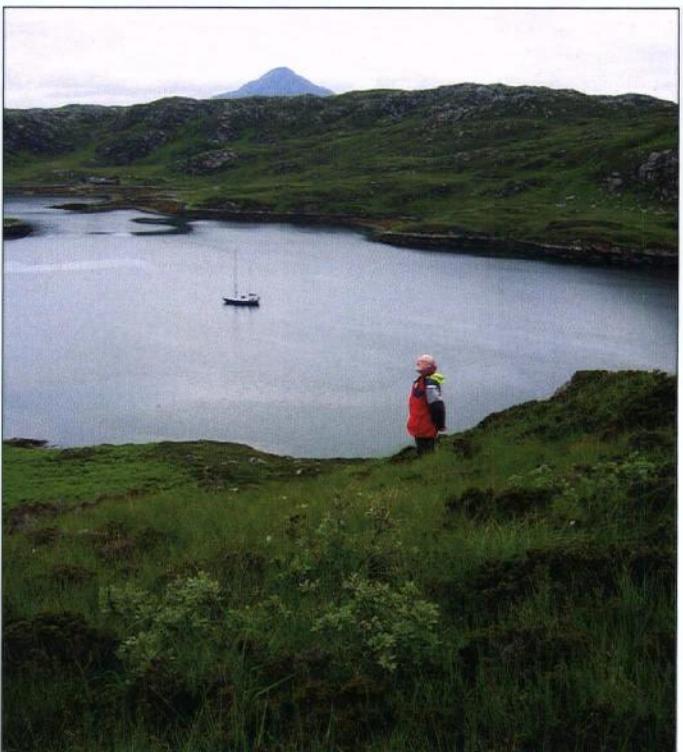
already been described. Here also Russell O'Neill (ICC) came back for more.

This was a final link to Lord Dufferin who had anchored in Stornoway in *Foam* on his way to Iceland, and rode out a gale that "increased to a perfect hurricane". He records the resultant sad loss of life in the local fishing community. His passage further north was stormy too.

In calm sunshine we berthed alongside Willie and Elizabeth Dickinson's elegant *Tertia* (ICC) at the fish quay, and entertained and were entertained by Peter and Dinkie Fairlie on *Pinnocchio* (CCC). The pontoons further up the harbour had been damaged in January storms (as had also happened in Kirkwall). While in Stornoway we were given the benefit of his great experience of the Outer Hebrides by Bill Spiers (RCC), with advice about trout fishing and special anchorages. We had lonely and lovely nights in Risay Sound in Loch Leurbost, and in the Witches' Pool in Loch Mariveg. After Loch Maddy we had a fine sail back across the Minch to Loch Harport on Skye, the mizzen staysail making its first appearance since leaving Ireland. We were alone again in sunshine at Acarseid Mhor on Gometra, another secluded anchorage to the west of Mull. My favourite remains Bagh Gleann nam Muc, the bay on the north end of Jura, open to the "son et lumière" of Corryvreckan. After a spanking reach to Craighouse, we dropped Paul off at Port Ellen to fly home from Islay. The little airport is a short taxi-ride from the village.

Our final anchorage was in the bay at Sanda at the south end of Kintyre. This little visited spot gives good shelter and holding in all winds except a fresh northerly. There are fine walks, and storm petrel nest there. Bird-watchers are frequent visitors. The island's owner farms sheep, and has now opened a friendly pub which we had helped "christen" on an earlier visit. As a result this haven will probably become more popular as a good temporary anchorage when making a passage through the North Channel. Later Nikko and Andrena Duffin joined us here in Rathlin (ICC) on their way north.

Next day in calm conditions we motored south on the flood the forty miles to Bangor. *Scilla Verna* was safely home after a



Ed Wheeler in contemplative mood at Loch Laxford. The distant mountain is Arkle.

memorable two-year voyage. This year she had covered another 1510 miles, again much of it under engine.

She has since been lifted out for a re-fit. Time, heat and cold have taken their toll especially on the teak deck, and this provoked debate aboard. Russell's remark: "I would think twice before lifting that deck, James. Teak doesn't grow on trees you know", still makes me smile.

Chris Stillman writes of a Gulet cruise in the Cyclades

This year, following a great week of sailing in the Outer Hebrides with Jennifer Guinness, Alex Booth and Jennifer's grandson Harry, in Jen's new *Alakush*, a Sabre 427, I, together with my wife Helen and twenty others, took to the warmer (though just as windy) waters of the Aegean. This was a two-week commercial cruise run by Westminster Classic Tours, with professional skippers and crews of three. Nine of us sailed in one Turkish 'Gulet' named *Arif Kaptan B*, the others in a second Gulet, the *Yaselam*. Our cruise took us from Kusadasi to Bodrum, on the eastern coast of Anatolia, via a circuit of the Greek Cyclades Islands.

The *Arif Kaptan B*, so named because the owner of the *Arif Kaptan* has two sons, who sail respectively the *Kaptan B* and *Kaptan C*, is a motor yacht, a shallow-draught ketch of about 26 metres length, equipped with a powerful Leyland diesel engine, (manufactured under licence in Poland). Much of the cruising is under motor due to the pattern of winds which in summer usually involved a northerly "Meltemi" wind from about 10.30 to 16.00, then flat calm. The boat is fully equipped with sails, and whenever the course is well off the wind and the sea reasonable, will sail. On our cruise both inner and outer jib were used on occasion, but in fact almost all the distance was made under engine as the wind was far too strong and often from dead ahead or on the beam, a situation in which the sail acts more to stabilise than to drive, since the boat tends to roll rather heavily in a beam sea.

Our cruise took us on an anti-clockwise voyage from Kusadasi to Samos, Fourni, Mikonos and Delos, Paros, Naxos, Ios, Santorini, Astypalea and Kos to Bodrum. Throughout, the wind was from the north to northwest with no let-up in the afternoon and evening, and for the first week was continuously from force 5 to 7, though becoming somewhat lighter in the second week. Much use was made of the shelter provided by the lee of the larger islands, but some of the open sea passages were distinctly vigorous. The toughest passage was the short one from Paros to Naxos which necessitated sailing about six miles dead to windward, then a beam reach of eight miles. Our sister ship pitched very heavily on making the turn and had to retire to Paros with some damage to her refrigeration unit and



The *Arif Kaptan B*.

Some lessons were learnt or re-learnt. The most important truth of all is, as always, that none of the planning, nor the doing, nor even the reminiscing would have been possible without a good boat and a willing, able, and often agreeable crew: John Witchell, Russell O'Neill (twice), Keith Seybert, Ed Wheeler, Michael McKee, Peter Minnis and Paul Bryans.

accommodation on the after deck. It seems that she was trimmed differently from our boat with all her water storage – about 5 tons – well forward, whilst ours was in two balanced saddle tanks amidships – a much better trim for these conditions. Docking at Naxos was a nightmare – as usual the technique was to drop the anchor offshore, then reverse the boat in to the quay and moor using stern warps from both quarters. Here fierce offshore gusts caused trouble, plus a riding turn which jammed making the boat unmanouverable till cleared. Ironically the warp subsequently snapped showering us all with fragments of rope.

Not all our arrivals were as dramatic and in many cases we anchored comfortably. However one other fascinating mooring should be mentioned – that in Santorini. This island is a volcano with its land curving around a huge circular caldera with water depths of around 400 metres. The land rises 300 to 400 metre sheer cliffs, which fall equally steeply below sea level, making it virtually impossible for a yacht to anchor. Instead we moored to a massive buoy, designed to take substantial liners or a number of smaller boats. We were the second boat in a semicircle of five attached to our buoy, which made it an interesting exercise when we came to depart 04.00. Being rudely awakened by a torch shone through his porthole the skipper of the very large motor yacht on our starboard side was persuaded to slacken his warp so that we could sail over it and escape.

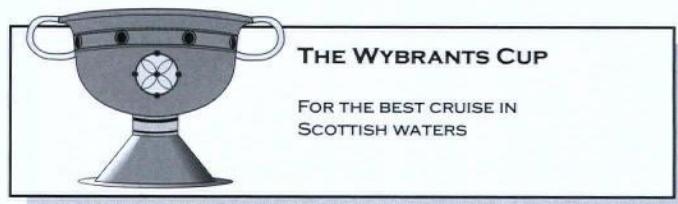
The Aegean is a magical place: there is an almost visceral demonstration of the history of this ancient region to be seen in the contrasts between the elegance of the remnant gleaming white marble classical Graeco/Roman architecture, the brutality of the massive brown castles of invading medieval barons and rapacious merchants, and the cosy domesticity of the clustered white cubic houses and blue-domed churches of today's islanders.

The objective of the cruise was in fact archeological tourism, to visit the antiquities which abound on the islands – evidences of the highly sophisticated civilisation which existed here from almost 2000 years before Christ to several centuries after. For me, as a retired volcanologist, the most fascinating was Santorini which was the site of a very active commercial port in the late Bronze Age, until the largest volcanic eruption in recorded time took place in 1645BC which literally blew the centre out of the island and created the huge caldera. Today the centre of the caldera is occupied by an active volcanic cone which is growing all the time – its last significant eruption was in the 1950's. For others on the cruise, the ancient Greek towns and temples dating from the Bronze age to the Roman, the remains of castles built subsequently by the byzantine, Genoese and Venetian rulers, and Knights of Malta provided an equal fascination. Not to mention swimming off the boat in cool water, and wandering through the attractive small towns and villages at which we stopped each night.

There is no doubt that for the retiring yachtsman who has had enough of beating into green seas and is looking for an easier life, this is the way to do it. Fine scenery, comfortable beds, superb food, and a skipper to take all the hard decisions. What more can you want.

A Sleighride Round Skye

Alan & Colin Leonard



Wednesday 13th July

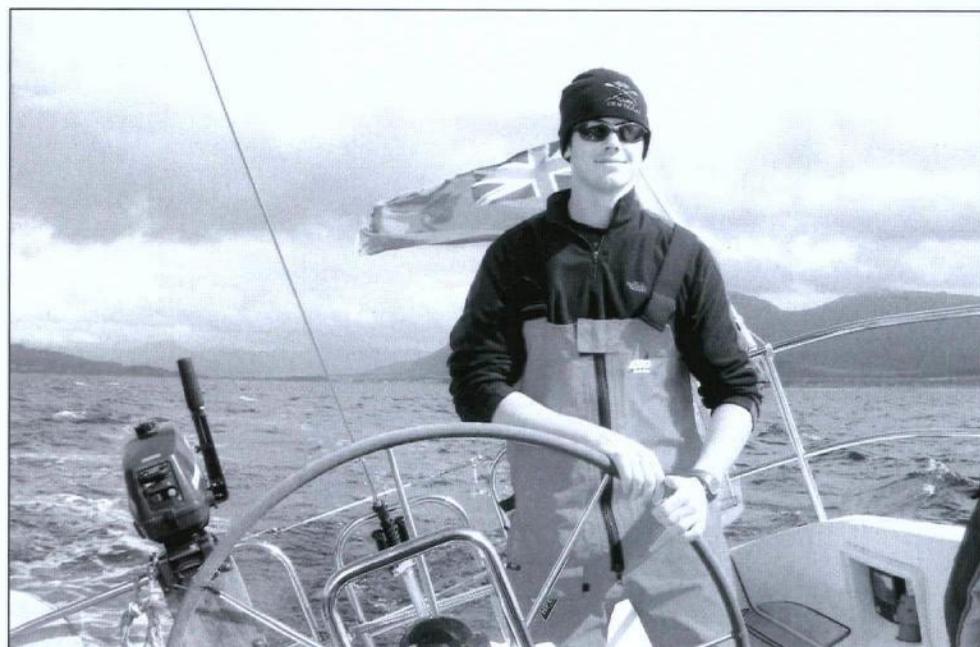
Alan and Colin Leonard, John McCrea and Ken Smart were aboard *Ariadne* (Starlight 35), on her mooring at Whiterock, by 10.00. We motored south down Strangford Lough in calm conditions, stowing as we went and were sorry for the crews racing in Strangford Week, who were struggling to get round their course. As we left the Lough, Colin recorded "Just according to script, Dad gave his standard theory on tides on the way north – 4 hours of weak foul tide on the Co. Down, coast and then strong fair tide through Donaghadee Sound, past Muck, and on up the Co Antrim coast". We set sail, but to no avail. Shortly after, the genoa was furled and the iron topsail started. We motored for the rest of the day. Off Skulmartin rock, we saw five large fishing boats dredging, we thought probably for clams. Off Whitehead many birds were seen diving and the presence of fish was suspected. A line was deployed, but no luck, the failure being attributed to our speed and the lack of a big enough weight to sink the lures.

As we reached Glenarm the tide was still in our favour and with settled conditions (Bar 1030 Mbs) it seemed wise to press on. We eventually anchored off Cushendun for the night. A 4.30 start was planned for the next morning. The log recorded "John – groan. Colin – my time!! Dad and Ken – wise and indifferent". Log 67 miles, mostly motoring.

Underway from Cushendun at 04.30 as planned, we motored north past Tor Head. Setting a course for the Sound of Jura, there was little shipping around. I have to confess that we only crossed the separation zone at right angles when some traffic came in sight. At 07.30 the log recorded "Grunts from aft cabin develop into apologies for not getting up and helping". By 11.00 we set the main and genoa to a light southwesterly and pretended to enjoy the drizzle. Off the south end of Jura, there was a localised patch of 20 knots which we used to sail into Craighouse, where we picked up an HIDB mooring. Log reads "This so-called democracy is going to be a problem, as demonstrated by indecision as to what soup to have with the sandwiches". After lunch Colin, ever the fitness enthusiast, went ashore for a run while Alan and John pretended to enjoy a walk in the rain. Back on board, we decided that the Isle of Jura Malt would not be sufficient compensation for wasting the southwesterly breeze which now seemed to be blowing, so we got underway at 16.15. Unfortunately by the time we were clear of the Small Isles the wind was not adequate. We decided to forego the pleasure of drifting up the Sound of

Jura in the rain and reached across to the McCormick Isles and then up Loch Sween to pick up a mooring in Tayvallich at 20.00. Log 68 miles, again mostly motoring.

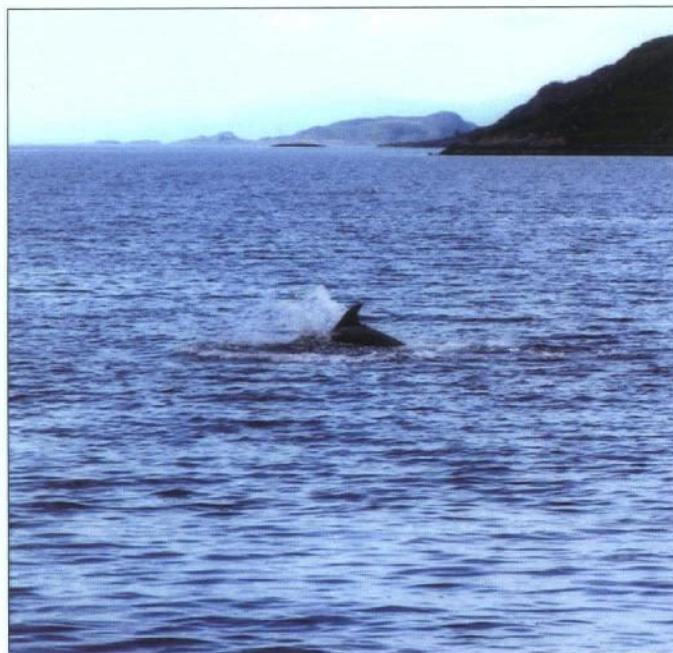
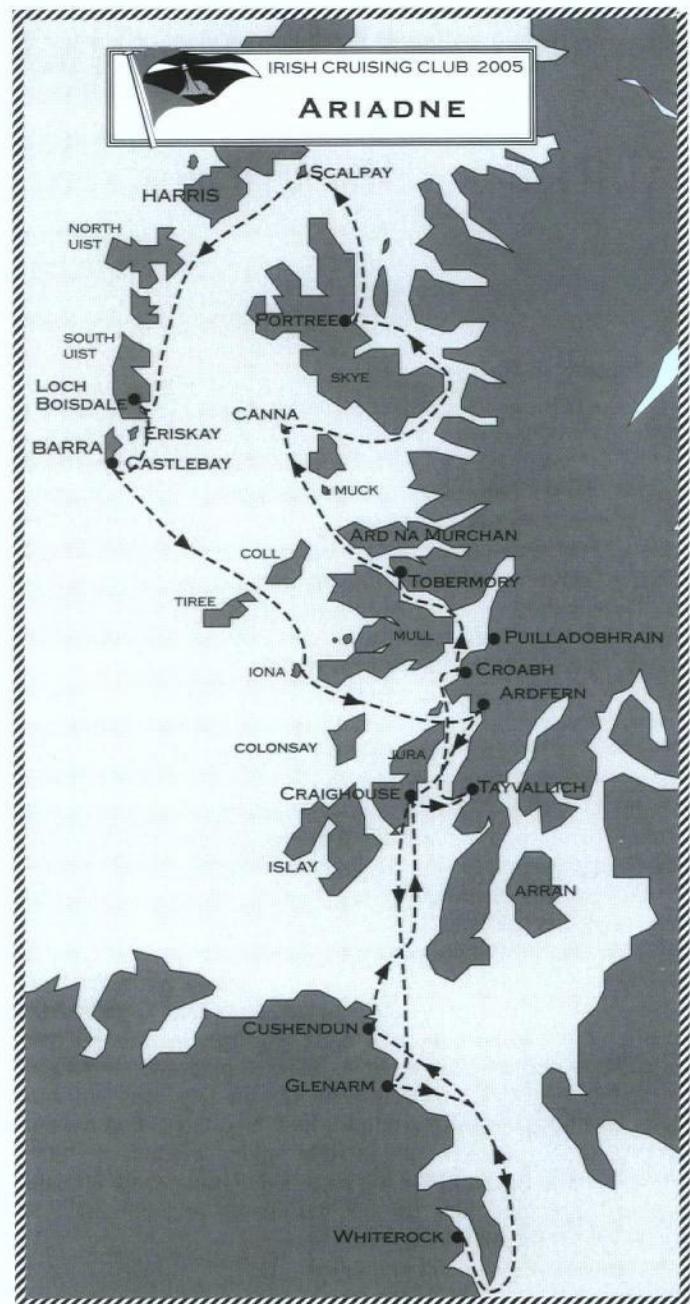
Friday 15th July. Another early start, though this time at 06.00. We motored out of Loch Sween, again in calm conditions. Motoring into the anchorage at Eilean Mor for a look, we recalled a previous occasion when the owner of a small French sloop hailed us to say "Monsieur, zer is a rock over zer". The day followed the by now familiar pattern of motoring, punctuated by occasional attempts to make way under sail, to no avail. Watching the wildlife was the main activity and a debate ensued as to the difference between shags and cormorants. Passing Craignish Point at 10.00, we made fast in Craobh Marina at 11.00. I enjoyed my usual walk around the Marina and drooled over the immaculate varnish work on *Saboo*. Readers may recall that on last year's Cruise In Company she won a special award for "The Yacht with whom I would most like to share an anchorage". John returned from the shop with oysters, in addition to less exotic provisions. Underway again at 16.00 to take the evening tide through Cuan Sound, it was a pleasure to beat against a light northwesterly, assisted by a lift at just the right moment. We headed for Easdale Sound but the wind died just as we entered it, so engine on again. We motored north inside Sheep Isle, to anchor in Puilladobhrain at 19.00. After dinner (complete with oysters) we decided to forego the pleasure of walking over the hill to the pub as the fish were rising. Five mackerel were hauled aboard in short order. Disaster – no oats (with which to coat them for frying). Log reads "Civilisation and oats become top priority". Log 41 miles, again mostly motoring.



Colin, the happy helmsman. Kyle Rhea astern.

Leaving at low water in calm conditions, we motored close inshore to look up Clachan Sound to the "Bridge over the Atlantic". We also had a look at the Dun Horses, which lie just off a conspicuous gravel beach, just north of Puilladobhrain. It was reassuring to note that a straight course from Puilladobhrain to Kerrera Sound comfortably clears them. They would only be a hazard if beating close inshore. Motoring across towards Duart Point, at this stage I felt that the log would be entitled "Motor Cruising Round Mull". Once into the Sound of Mull, fortunately at the Grey Rocks a breeze filled in and we enjoyed a fine beat up the Sound in 12-15 knots apparent. Discussions ensued about convergence zones and the lee bow effect. Colin wrote in the log "Dad winds me up, John laughs and Ken says - I need to see the diagrams". We picked up a visitors' mooring in Tobermory at 13.00. We rushed ashore for oats (and other provisions) and fried the mackerel for lunch. The fitness enthusiast had his usual run while John and Alan walked to the Ru Na Gall light. Ashore for a meal that evening, we were taking off our oilyies in the porch of the "Anchorage" when I was hailed across the restaurant "Alan" - as if it was across the bay. There were Jack Wolfe, Jennifer Guinness and Alex Booth. After dinner, it was a pleasure to go on board the new *Alakush* for a nightcap, and to admire her. Log 28 miles. At last some good sailing, but still plenty of motoring.

Sunday 17th July. Underway at a more civilised hour we set the main and genoa off Ru Na Gall ... and then there was wind! but the damp remained. We also gained fog and poor visibility into the bargain. By 12.30 we were well off Ardnamurchan Point and democracy again posed a problem. Did we harden up for Castlebay, continue reaching for Loch Boisdale, or ease sheets for Canna? Fortunately, influenced by a lumpy sea, good sense prevailed and we eased sheets for Canna. Broad reaching in the lumpy sea, unfortunately before we could rig a preventor, the slamming boom carried away the jam cleat on one of the traveller control lines. I later discovered that we are not the first to whom this has happened and that the aluminium mounting plates have been replaced by stainless steel. There were gaps in the day's log, as the instruments went down for a while. The damp has got in somewhere! The shelter of Canna harbour brought welcome respite from the sea running outside, albeit punctuated by the noise of heavy



A dolphin in Loch Craignish.

machinery, working at an extension to the Ferry pier. Log 33 miles, sailed all day.

With a forecast for a fresh southwesterly air stream we were again faced with a decision, whether to go on out to the Outer Isles - which perhaps seemed to be the obvious decision - or to go back to the east and up the Sound of Sleat - which we did. As is usual for Canna, the anchor brought up huge amounts of weed. We had a storming reach north of Rhum with a reef in the main and almost hit a basking shark. There were two others nearby. Round the Point of Sleat at 12.00, we shook out the reef and boomed out the genoa to run up the Sound of Sleat. We listened with concern to Mayday traffic when a 20 foot vessel with a rope around its prop was near the rocks south of Armadale. They were probably too far upwind for us to be of any assistance and it was a relief to hear that the Mallaig Lifeboat was with them in 15 minutes. As we roared up the Sound there was a sense of foreboding as great dark clouds rolled up astern. With 36 knots of wind and a strong fair tide, we fairly shot through Kyle Rhea. As we sailed close-hauled under Kyleakin Bridge on port tack, we were surprised to be passed by a yacht on a reciprocal course, also apparently close-

hauled, but on starboard tack! Strong rain squalls marched through and approaching Scalpay, we pulled down a second reef in the main. Between Raasay and Scalpay the wind eased again and the reefs came out. We eventually picked up a mooring in Portree beside *Reiver* (SLYC & ICC). Log 64 miles. Good sailing!

After a brief run ashore (during which scallops were purchased) we got underway at a civilised hour. The sailing directions warn of squally conditions off the north coast of Skye, in southwesterly winds, and despite going well offshore we certainly found this to be the case, alternating between motoring in calm conditions and staggering in the squalls. The cliffs are impressive with large basalt columns, like the Giant's Causeway and Staffa. We took our departure from the northeast corner of Skye at 14.00 and by 15.00 were off Fladdachauain. We passed *Reiver*, who had left some time before us. I was relieved that the visibility was good at this stage, as making our way through the rocks in the North Minch with a strong cross tide in poor visibility, would not have been fun. Glas Eilean Lighthouse came up dead ahead but the wind headed and freshened. We crossed the entrance to Scalpay Sound to Rudha Crag where we handed sail and motored under the Scalpay Bridge, to anchor in North Harbour at 17.45. Log reads "Great sail. Single port tack brought us from Kilmaluag nicely in under the lee of Scalpay. Scallops – fry lardons of bacon – get pan very hot – add scallops, lemon juice and pepper!" Log 47 miles.

Wednesday 20th July. After a good blow during the night, Colin recorded that breaking out the anchor was better than a weights session in the gym! Wind westerly 15-20 knots. Off the Glas Eilean Light we set the main with one reef and a few rolls in the genoa. Conditions were grey but we had a spanking reach. Democracy came to bear again and at each anchorage we decided "It would be a shame to waste such a good breeze". Loch Rodel, Loch Maddy and Loch Skiport all were shunned as we reeled off the miles. Eventually at Loch Boisdale we decided enough was enough and picked up a mooring at 17.15. Usual run/walk ashore in the evening. Log 60 miles. Great sailing!

After a leisurely morning, we drifted a little further down the Minch to enter the well marked Acarseid Mor, Eriskay, where we picked up a mooring at 13.30. After a walk on the white sand Atlantic beach, later in the afternoon we had a pleasant gentle reach in a moderate northwesterly to Castlebay. The Norwegian cruise liner *Black Prince* was leaving, just as we arrived. We picked up a mooring at 19.30, next to *Alakush*. It was a pleasure to have her crew on board, to return the hospitality. Log 23 miles, gentle sailing.

Friday 22nd July. Colin writes "Ken and Dad remain on board. John and I chastised them for not washing. £2 a shower at the Youth Hostel but worth every penny. We also provision, have a look round and importantly buy some Hebridean toffee". Off Muldoanich at 12.00, we set main and genoa to a moderate northeasterly in conditions which were sunny but cool. Again, democracy was brought to bear. Close reach for Tobermory or broad reach for Gunna Sound? Common sense prevailed and



Sunset in the Bull Hole, Iona.

we broad reached. The visibility was amazing. Skye, Rhum and Eigg were visible most of the day. At Gunna Sound there was a 2 knot adverse tide but it mattered little, as the boatspeed was never below 7.5 knots. Through Gunna Sound by 18.00, both wind and sea eased, so the spinnaker was hoisted for an excellent reach, south of Dutchmans Hat and Staffa, before bearing away into the Sound of Iona, where we anchored in Martyr's Bay at 20.30. We moved across to the Bull Hole for the night. This was my first visit to the Bull Hole, having previously anchored in the Tinker's Hole. We were captivated by the colour of the rock in the sunset, before a beautiful starlit night. Log 65 miles.

Next morning, we motored back to Martyr's Bay, anchored and went ashore for sightseeing. It was calm, warm and sunny. We were back aboard and underway at 12.30, a bit later than planned. The tide was still running south at the anchorage but by the time we were at the south end of the sound, it was running at almost 6 knots against us. It was only just possible to make over it. I was relieved to see that two other yachts made the same miscalculation. Eventually we broke clear and motored out between the Torran Rocks and the Ross of Mull, to head for the north of Jura. Calm, hot and sunny, we motored all afternoon to anchor in Bagh Gleann na Muc at 17.30, to wait for the tide. The time was passed fishing, and one hardy crewmember even went for a swim! Underway again at 18.45, we motored through Corryvreckan in calm conditions. Deceptively, it looked as if you could have rowed across it! Through the Dorus Mor, we made fast alongside in Ardfern at 20.30. Log 37 miles.

Sunday 24th July. Underway in Ardfern, we were amazed to see dolphins right in the anchorage. As we motored south down Loch Craignish, we were treated to the most amazing display by 20 to 30 dolphins which gambolled around and ahead of the boat, and further away were breaching and landing on their backs. Once again, we motored all afternoon in calm conditions with great visibility, enjoying the scenery. We rescinded the previous decision, not to visit the same anchorage twice, and anchored at Craighouse at 16.30 as it seemed to leave us best positioned to cross the North Channel the following day. Log 25 miles.

We were underway from Craighouse at 07.30. The day was grey, but not unpleasant, though the wind was only 5 knots,

southeasterly. We had occasional periods of good sailing when it freshened a bit, punctuating long periods of motoring. By the time we were off Garran Point the tide had turned against us, but by then it was not too far to Glenarm, where we made fast alongside at 15.45. In the next berth was *Spirit of Dacquiri* (Nicholson 35) owned by friends of John, Bruce and Jennie McKee. A convivial evening ensued, interrupted by hauling Bruce up his mast to attend to a halyard. Log 52 miles, Mostly motoring.

Next morning, we left Glenarm at 08.00. The Log read "Wind gusting 6 knots (!) northeast, cold. All in all, fierce weather conditions." Once again we motored all day in calm conditions. Ballygalley Head, Muck, across Belfast Lough, Donaghadee Sound, Skulmartin Perch, inside Burial Isle, out side the Plough Rock buoy, and the North Rock, inside the South Rock and Butter Pladdy, it's all so familiar. We did have a brief sail up the narrows but finished the cruise as we had begun by motoring up the Lough, cleaning ship and stowing gear to go ashore. Log 58 miles.

This cruise gave me cause to think about the role of the diesel engine in our modern way of cruising. We had great sailing from Tobermory round Skye to Iona, but on the way there and the way back, motored almost all of the time. Had we to cruise in the way that our forbears did, with either no engine,

or an unreliable one, who knows where we would have got to. Not very far I suspect.

Summary

- | | | |
|------|---------------------------|-----------|
| 13th | Whiterock – Cushendun | 67 miles |
| 14th | Cushendun – Tayvallich | 68 miles |
| 15th | Tayvallich – Croabh | 41 miles |
| 16th | Croabh – Tobermory | 28 miles |
| 17th | Tobermory – Canna | 33 miles |
| 18th | Canna – Portree | 64 miles |
| 19th | Portree – Scalpay | 47 miles |
| 20th | Scalpay – Loch Boisdale | 60 miles |
| 21st | Loch Boisdale – Castlebay | 23 miles |
| 22nd | Castlebay – Iona | 65 miles |
| 23rd | Iona – Ardfern | 37 miles |
| 24th | Ardfern – Craighouse | 25 miles |
| 25th | Craighouse – Glenarm | 52 miles |
| 26th | Glenarm – Whiterock | 58 miles. |

Total 668 miles

At the very last moment he appeared, laden with large bags, which he threw at me.

"Whats all this about, George?" said I. "Something I've forgotten?"

"No" said he. "I coudn't stand any more of it. This is my gear. I'm coming too".

George, it transpired, had abandoned banking - for ever.

(Weston Martyn –*The Southseaman*)

Baltic Reprise

John Clementson

The facts about our cruise to the Baltic in *Faustina II* in 2005 are simply stated. There were four main phases: the first was from Bangor to Kiel; the second, cruising in Denmark; the third, cruising in Sweden; the fourth, the return to Bangor from Göteborg. This log describes our voyage in general outline and highlights some of the things we saw and the things we learnt that might be of use to others passing that way.

Phase 1: Northern Ireland to Kiel, 8 - 20 June

We left Bangor on 8th June to go to Kiel in Germany via the Caledonian Canal, down the east coast of Scotland and England to North Shields, across the North Sea to Helgoland and then through the Kiel Canal to Kiel where we arrived on 20th June. It's over 160 miles from Bangor to the Caledonian Canal at Corpach – far longer than I always imagine it to be. It took two days for us (Ann, and my friend Bruce from the Newtowndars SC) to get to the canal with a night at anchor en route. We stopped there in the Sea Basin for a day, in glorious weather and in sight of Ben Nevis, to get the faulty engine-stop solenoid diagnosed by the very helpful Corpach Boat Yard.

The Caledonian Canal

The Canal is 60 miles long and has 29 locks and 10 swing bridges that are operated by canal staff. It incorporates 3 lochs, Loch Lochy, Loch Oich and Loch Ness, the latter comprising more than a third of the total 'canal' length. It takes at least two days to transit – but it's worth taking a little longer. Mooring places en route are free and the Seaport marina at Inverness offers one night free (per year).



It cost £184 to take our 40 ft Bowman one-way through the canal and I initially thought 'how expensive'. However as we went through and I saw how well it was all kept and how helpful the staff were I changed my mind. It's good value – and the return trip in the same year cost 'only' £129 as returnees get a discount.

We all thought that the least attractive part of the canal was Loch Ness. The canal sections are generally very scenic as are the areas around the locks as the keepers vie for top prize in the gardens competition! There are many places to stop for a meal ashore or to 'overnight'. We had particularly good meals on each transit at the 'Bothy Bite' at Fort Augustus – a suitable overnight stopping place en route.

At Inverness it is easier to moor alongside the wall between the marina and the road bridge rather than in the marina, which has very few unreserved slots. A large co-op and other stores are close by, so victualling is easy. The city centre is a 20-minute walk away. Buses to and from the airport arrive there, which makes it a good place to change crews. That evening we walked about a mile along the canal to the village of Clachnaharry (near the sea locks) to eat very well at the recommended real-ale pub, the 'Clachnaharry Inn'. Ann left us next morning to fly home – she very sensibly had no intention of crossing the North Sea with us.

Bruce and I left the canal and headed for Peterhead, but soon decided to stop earlier for the night at Buckie instead. Buckie harbour



The harbour at Helgoland. Yachts go alongside in the enclosed harbour (centre right).

has high walls but the harbourmaster was there to take our lines. He made us welcome and drove us into the bleak looking town to look for a meal. It seemed to offer chips or chips. We had chips. It's that sort of place. Next day we went on to Peterhead with its adequate marina (£16) from where the town is a good 30 minutes walk. We next called in at Eyemouth, which I have heard well spoken about. Take it as you find it! For us it was less than brilliant. We had a problem finding somewhere to moor and there was no reply from the harbourmaster. I had to land Bruce to move a RIB to make space. The town is 'alright' and close-by. There was no water easily available and no electricity. By chance I came across a deputy harbourmaster who wanted to charge us £21 for the privilege of an overnight stay. Only after complaining about the lack of facilities etc. did the charge get reduced to £16 – still too much in my view.

There is no great scenic interest on the voyage south as we passed Aberdeen in the gloom and entered English waters at Berwick-upon-Tweed. We sailed 'inside' the Farne Islands but poor visibility meant that we were able to see very little. I had looked forward to a view of Lindisfarne but everything was dull and grey. We reached the Tyne that afternoon and, having cleared our entrance with the harbourmaster, made our way 2 miles up-river to the Royal Quays marina. We entered through a lock, which was efficiently done, and over the radio we were directed to a mooring. This is a fine marina with excellent facilities (£24 per night plus a power card). We needed some marine items; I ordered these from a firm in Newcastle and they were delivered as promised before we left. Nigel, from the Newtowndars SC, arrived to join us here and we had a superb meal in North Shields at the 'Magnesium Bank' pub, about 20 minutes walk away along the river.

We left for the 400-mile North Sea crossing next day. The first 12 hours or so were a bit rough and no one felt too well. Then things improved and we had a good sail. The three of us stood 4-hour watches and that worked well. The crossing was uneventful and late in the afternoon of the third day we found Helgoland. It appeared out of the haze only two miles ahead of us and we went alongside the berthing place for visiting yachts in the outer harbour. Folks back home were telephoned to announce our safe arrival. (I have very mixed feelings about mobile phones. Without doubt they are the greatest boon when

organising crew changes but always being in touch (when in sight of land at least) severely detracts from the 'getting away from it all' feeling that I enjoy so much about cruising. I should enjoy hearing any member's 'mobile phone story' on the ICC website!)

We spent about 24 hours on the island, now mainly famous for its duty-free status. Hordes of day-trippers arrive each morning and depart in the afternoon laden with booze and perfume. I stocked up the boat's gin supplies and then walked around the island to look at the breeding colonies of sea birds on the cliffs at the northern end of the island. Since I had last walked around the island some 18 years ago the path has been covered in tarmac – otherwise it looked much the same.

In mid-afternoon, in order to catch the tide, we left Helgoland and crossed to the southern side of the buoyed channel into the River Elbe. On the way we passed through great areas of what looked like red sand floating in the water, but we soon realised that we were seeing an algal bloom. In the gathering gloom the flood tide swept us quickly up to Cuxhaven marina where, despite the late hour, the harbourmaster was present to let us into the showers.

Next day we made our way up-river to the Brunsbuttel entrance of the Kiel Canal (more properly known as the 'Nordostsee Kanal'.) Along with several other yachts we waited to be called to enter. As ever with our German friends one has to accept that no one will queue and everyone will try to get in first. So it happened here. We got in to the huge lock safely, together with a long barge and were soon locked through into the canal.

The Kiel Canal

The canal is 60 miles long with a lock at each end. The locks must not be entered until you are called in. Fines can be imposed! The canal passes through flat terrain from Brunsbuttel to Kiel. Yachts must motor throughout though sails may be used to supplement the engine. Movement after dark by pleasure craft is not permitted. Passage can be made in a single day. The transit cost us only €18.

The canal is not very exciting but it's quite attractive. There are no 'long' views, only what is on the banks. At Rendsburg, about

two-thirds along the length, one passes under a transporter bridge over which I had taken my car many years earlier. It seems to be out of commission now.

There are only a few places en route to stop. We pulled into probably the prettiest and quietest of them, the lake called Flemhuder Meer. Not much of this is deep enough for a yacht but there is sufficient space for about 10 boats. The next day we went the remaining 10 kilometres to the locks at Kiel where we paid and were let through into Kiel Bay and the Baltic.

30 minutes later we were moored at the British Kiel Yacht Club where in the late 1980s I had worked for 3½ years. 'Going back' can often be disappointing but this visit was a delight. It was great to see the same enthusiasm for the job that I remember so well. The club,



The Wilders Plads marina in the heart of Copenhagen. It was like parking a car!

although a military establishment, welcomes visitors and does all that it can within the restraints of its work to provide assistance. The showers are excellent – and ladies, they have a bath for you!

Another bonus was that our visit had been carefully timed to coincide with Kiel Week (always the last full week in June). This must be one of the world's biggest regattas. The racing takes place out at sea away from most spectators but there is much else to see and do. One day we counted at least 25 Tall Ships, those with three or more masts, and many more two-masted Baltic Traders and similar. These go out from the harbour each day and make a spectacular sight. Ashore there is a fair called the Kiellinie that stretches along the seafront for well over a mile where one can eat food from cuisines from all over the world and watch concerts and go on fair-rides. It's huge, great fun – and it stops each evening at midnight – dead!

Ann rejoined the boat here and Bruce and Nigel left by train to go to Berlin whence they had booked a cheap flight home.

Phase 2: Denmark, 23 June - 15 July

After four days, on 23rd June, Ann and I went north, spending the first night in Schleimunde, the estuary that features in 'The Riddle of the Sands' shortly after Carruthers joined Davies on *Dulcibella*. It's flat all around and featureless, but the anchorage opposite Maasholm we shared with a few others, was big and protected. Then we were into Denmark and we went first to Marstal on the island of Ærø. This is quite a small and elongated harbour. In the attractive town there is a wonderful maritime museum that has pictures and artefacts that describe the ships that were built here and which sailed from here to fish on the Grand Banks and elsewhere far away. Photos showed the harbour jammed with these boats.



Our first, and most difficult, rock mooring. The two other boats came after us.

Danish marinas

Firstly there is, in my view, no point at all in buying a pilot book for Denmark. At every harbour the harbourmaster will supply you with three free books called 'Sejlerens Havneløds'. These provide a good chartlet and an aerial photograph of all Danish marinas and harbours. The text is in Danish and German but it is quite easy to work out the essentials.

Secondly, very few marinas have anyone on duty during the day so don't use your mobile to ring ahead to make enquiries. Just get in, find a place and wait until the evening when a harbourmaster may appear. Some marinas have automatic pay stations for the mooring and for electricity. The machines (and the harbourmasters) issue plastic or sticky paper tags that have to be attached to the boat for checking.

Thirdly, the universal method of mooring in Danish marinas is to go bow first between two piles. The bow is attached to the shore and a line is taken from each quarter to one of the piles. The essential is to drop a loop over each pile while passing it on the way in. It is well worth watching the locals do this to see how elegantly and easily it can be done. (If I were to offer advice it would be to not deploy any fenders until you are through the piles and to take a line from each quarter forward to the widest part of the boat from where it can most easily be deployed over its pile – and concentrate on the windward pile.) However many, even most, of the piles will not permit a boat wider than about 2.70 metres to get through. One has to learn to judge the width! Happily some harbours have an alongside wall where larger boats can moor, though this may involve having another large yacht or motorboat alongside.



Hazel Barr and Ann Clementson go rock hopping.

If Marstal was interesting (and it was) then our next stop Ærøskøbing, reached via 5 or 6 miles of shallow but well marked channels, was a delight. There is a new marina but if your boat is over 35 feet then go on into the nearby harbour where there is ample wall space. The town is a blast from the past and the inhabitants have self-imposed a ban on any incompatible development. The houses are small, half-timbered, multi-coloured and most have a bicycle or tall



hollyhocks (or both) against the wall. The church here, as in Marstal, has model ships hanging from its ceiling in memory of seamen lost at sea. Here too is a museum of ships in bottles, hundreds of them, all made by a local enthusiast, each well worth seeing. Walking round this beautiful town is something everyone should do, and we did.

Over the next five days we nearly circumnavigated the large island of Fyn clockwise, bypassing Sonderborg, sailing along the Als channel to the long shallow inlet at Dyvig where we anchored for the night. A severe gale warning next day caused us to take cover at Årøsund where we assembled our folding bikes and went for a long ride inland. We bought some delicious strawberries from a farm shop just up the road.

It was after lunch on the following day before the wind moderated. We made our way through the channel that lies between Middelfart and Fredericia to Bogense where, despite a very strong cross wind, we made a very polished arrival between the piles. We doubled all the windward ropes and hung in there until the morning as the wind rocked us violently.

Next day I was very pleased with myself as I thought that I had found a place on the chart that looked perfect for a nice solitary anchorage. This was at Korshavn, an inlet just south of Fyns Hoved, the most northerly point of Fyn. Needless to say it was a popular spot but it was pretty and we went ashore and walked for many miles. We stayed there at anchor all the next day and then rounded Fyn Hoved and went south to Nyborg. We had to go under the Great Belt (Storebælt) Bridge. The span that yachts use is 18 metres high. I double-checked the height of our mast and it came to 16.5metres. Ann went below as we got near the bridge, convinced that we were about to lose the mast. It looked close, and it was!

David and Valerie, old friends of mine, joined us in Nyborg. With them we went to Svendborg with its barn-like castle and re-visited Ærøskøbing for a wander. Then we went along the channel towards Marstal but, some way along it, took a more northerly route, to Rudkøbing. We moored in the harbour rather than the marina (in error!) but it was certainly a more interesting place to be. We ate out here as we did several times and found the prices not a lot different to those in UK – and the standards were generally high.

On passage next day we had trouble with the engine starting system and so we diverted to Nyborg to get it fixed. The next night we anchored off the marina at Karrebæksminde (don't

worry, there is no test on these names!) before we made our way up the east coast of Jutland and The Sound (Øresund) towards Copenhagen. We rang ahead to the marina in the centre of the city. The harbourmaster happened to be there and told us that he had no spaces free but he could take us after 14 00 the next day, 8th July. While talking to him he told us about the underground bombs in London and that set us all to ringing all those we knew who might be in London.

I decided to go to Flakfort which is an island made to defend Copenhagen against the British in the early 19th century. It was basically a big earth gun turret with a moat all around it built about 4 kilometres from the city. Now it is a perfect base for yachts and provides a picnic retreat for the city 'yotties' at the weekends. The people that we met there were amazed to know how we Brits had even heard of the place. Of course it's in the pilot books. The weather was perfect and we had a very pleasant scramble around the fortifications and had showers ashore.

Next afternoon we crossed the shipping channel to Copenhagen and took a mooring in the crowded but very conveniently sited Wilders Plads marina. This was very similar to parking in a street but with water instead of tarmac! It is well placed for visits to the rest of the beautiful city. We used our folding bikes (in a city that caters very well for cyclists) to see the Little Mermaid and other sites, we went by tourist boat around the canals (and later enlarged on that in our own RIB), and of course we had an amusing but quite expensive evening in the Tivoli Gardens. We just loved Copenhagen! In the busy season particularly it would be wise to contact the harbourmaster well ahead and book a place in the marina.

Our friends left us here and Ann and I had another night at Flakfort before heading north to Helsingør with its 'Hamlet' Kronborg Castle. That is only a 15-minute walk from the marina. Its Shakespearian relationship is its main interest but it's worth a walk around. The town is pleasant too.

The weather had turned vile and we had electrical storms and lashings of wind and rain. It was therefore no hardship to stay there for two days while a mechanic who was fluent in English fixed an electrical problem competently. There is also an excellent chandlery at the marina.

Phase 3: Sweden, 16 July – 10 August

On Sat 16 July we headed north for Sweden with a heavily reefed sail plan. We made slow progress against big seas and strong winds and quite soon I decided to divert to the small harbour at Mølle on the Kullaberg peninsula on the west coast of Sweden. The wind was from the northwest and the harbour entrance faced northwest – and I had a long look before attempting the entry. We made it safely and then found that the harbour was full. We tied the bow to a pile and hung there to think about it! Then I tried to go alongside two other yachts but that was hopeless, as they were really much too small to take us. The harbourmaster came to the rescue by suggesting that we jammed between two piles, pointing at the wind, where there was only a RIB moored. We did that and kept the boat steady with the stern anchor and a line ashore. That worked well and we were able to get ashore over the motor cruiser in the next 'bay'.

Mølle is well worth a visit for the walking. The Kullaberg peninsular is a superb nature reserve park. The walk to the lighthouse at the end is about 3 kilometres and is beautiful. There is a road but also a path beside it, which goes through the woods. The town itself was quite lively. When we arrived there was a fête with the usual stalls – but the soap-cart racing for boys of all ages was more fun! We spent a very pleasant full day there walking and waiting for the wind to subside. We had taken advice on possible stopping places further north and so

when we left we headed for an anchorage behind the island of Malö. Ideally this would involve tying to a rock with a stern anchor deployed but we were new to that system and for now I preferred to anchor.

We watched carefully as other boats come up to the rocks to moor to see how it was done. I would recommend anyone to do the same before trying it. The local sailors do it with a nonchalance that makes one feel very amateurish! It's not the easiest thing for two somewhat elderly people to do, but before long we were making a reasonable job of most landings.

After a blustery night we headed north towards Göteborg (or Gothenburg). We had hoped to get into the marina of the Royal Göteborg Yacht Club at the mouth of the River Göta some 5 miles or so from the city centre. It had been highly recommended but it was totally full and so we motored up-river to the Lilla Bommen marina, which is as near the city centre as it is possible to get.

Swedish marinas

They are nearly all private and they may or may not have room to take you. Most slots are personally owned. There are however many 'Gasthamns' marked as such on the charts and clearly signposted in situ. It is rarely difficult to find somewhere to moor overnight or for shopping and most marinas seem to have power and water available. Most of them have alongside mooring for bigger boats (i.e. over 35ft LOA).

Lilla Bommen is a Gasthamn and its superb ex-naval officer harbourmaster will always somehow make room for another boat. It lies under the prominently ugly 'Lipstick' building designed, we were told, by a Scotsman. This marina is a very handy crew-changing place – and it has an excellent laundrette. Buses from the City airport (where the cheap flights land)

Cruising in Sweden

Two publications are necessary for happy cruising in Sweden. The first are the chart folders called Båtsportkort. These are really excellent and essential if one is to cruise the rock-strewn coasts of Sweden with any degree of confidence. The second is a book of rock mooring places in Bohuslän, the west coast of Sweden, (Tre Vektor i Bohuslän) produced by the Swedish Cruising Association. This contains chartlets and aerial photographs of the sites that the Club have set up with mooring spikes. The book is rather clumsily indexed but the contents, once understood, are useful. The problem however is that these sites can become very crowded.

The normal method of mooring in Sweden is to take the bow in to a rock, leap ashore and tie-up to a hook pushed into a crevice or to a spike already there. We used some of the sites from the book but by looking carefully at the charts it is possible to find one's own rock mooring places as many of the rocks go straight down into the water with adequate depth to bring the boat's bow near enough to jump ashore with a hook and rope. The special hooks with rings can be bought at any chandler in Sweden.

Plenty of people anchor too but rock moorings or marinas are more favoured.

The tradition of 'Allemandsrätt' (Everyman's Right) means that one can land and walk anywhere in Sweden (and I think Norway too) subject to sensible provisos such as not interfering with people's privacy, respecting crops and animals, etc. There are hundreds of islands to explore on this coast – most are rocky though some are covered in woods and fields.

arrive barely half a mile and a pedestrian bridge away from the boat. The huge 'Nordstan' shopping centre is just over the said bridge and buses and trams leave from nearby to take one to, amongst other places, the Liseberg Park (a better form of Tivoli Garden). I don't think anyone would call Göteborg a beautiful city but it's worth a few walks.

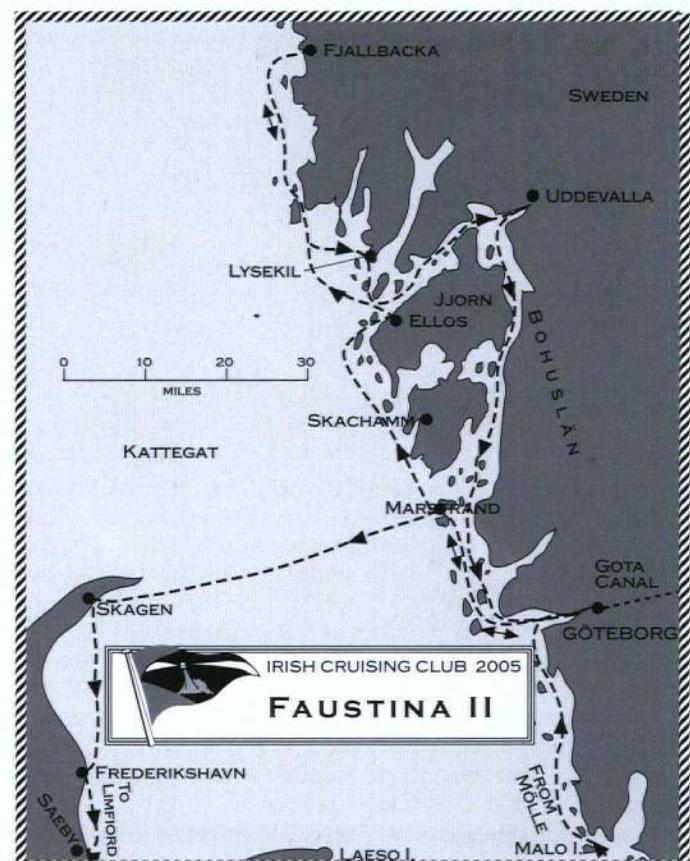
Over the next few weeks we did three crew changes from Göteborg. The first change involved Ann's son, Chris Bunting (ICC), with his 5-year old daughter Anna together with his niece Isabel to keep Anna company. With them we went north into the wonderful Bohuslän archipelago visiting the island of Marstrand with its huge fortress that looks out over miles in every direction. Marstrand is the Cowes (some say Burnham) of Sweden where people go to holiday, to sail and to swim. Good fresh fish, fruit and bread can be bought on the island and the mainland, a 3-minute ferry ride away, has a good conveniently placed supermarket.

We moored in marinas and against rocks and in a week we got as far north as Ellös where the Hallberg Rassy yachts are made. Chris wanted to see where they made the boat that his father Peter (ICC) bought to sail around the world in 1992/93! We circled inside their marina (to show them a quality boat!) but they were all on holiday.

We had had a great week with a lot of rock scrambling, walking, ice creams and meals ashore.

Our next crew change brought Hazel Barr (ICC) and Patricia Clarke for two weeks. We covered much the same ground north of Göteborg. Going north we followed what might almost be called a road through the rocky islands. There are only a few routes inside the islands and these are well buoyed and marked. You pass through channels with attractive villages spread along each side, squeeze through narrow gaps between rocks that you can, and often have to, go so close to that you can touch them as you pass.

In July the traffic density is extremely high, with yachts under full sail and high-speed motor cruisers giving no quarter





Looking north from the rock plateau above Fjällbacka, Sweden.

as they manoeuvred through the passages. In August the main holiday period is over and there are already fewer boats around. Nevertheless, en-route north, we couldn't stop at Marstrand as their big regatta was in progress and the marina was congested. But it was easier to find a good uncrowded rock mooring elsewhere. We got as far north as Fjällbacka, which is probably best known in Sweden for being the birthplace of Ingrid Bergman. The town, about 30 miles south of Norway, has a huge marina and is backed by a 74metre-high rock that has steps up it leading to wonderful panoramic views.

On the way south again we diverted to take the long arm in to the east that leads towards Uddevalla, around the large island of Orust. I thought that this route might be a mistake as it is quite a lengthy diversion and if it were to be dull then we would have wasted at least a day. It turned out to be a delight. The shores of the mainland and the islands are covered with trees and the scenery was generally more pastoral than the offshore islands. Lovely houses dotted the shore and the sailing scene was all less frantic than outside. We found a couple of attractive and safe anchorages. We rarely sailed very far in a day preferring rather to relax and perhaps take a walk or, occasionally, eat ashore. The weather, which earlier in our holiday had been fine and sunny, had over these last few weeks turned duller. It rarely rained but we didn't get too much Baltic sunshine either. No deep sun tans!

Phase 4: Göteborg to Bangor, 10 – 23 August

Back at Göteborg again on 10th August, the ladies left and David and his son Tim, and Stuart, all members of the Newtownards SC, replaced them. They had all asked to help me with the return passage in order to get some passage-making experience. I allowed them only a few hours to look at the city and then we headed north to Marstrand, where we stopped while they walked around and looked at the fort, and then on north to a rock mooring. I felt that they should get some idea of the nature of the archipelago before we left Sweden.

We sailed over to Skagen in Denmark next day. I went as close to the northern tip of Denmark as I dared. The Skagerrak and the Kattegat meet here and it is shallow a good way offshore. We could see people wading out for several hundred metres – trying to reach Norway perhaps?

Skagen harbour contained many Swedish boats loading fuel and duty free goods. Stuart and I visited the highly recom-

mended museum with wonderful paintings from the late 19th century artists' community that formed here to make the most of the Skagen's renowned special light. That evening a fish restaurateur accepted our challenge to do his best for DKr100 and he gave us a feast fit for a king – to the obvious envy of the other customers!

Next day we went south and entered the Limfiord, the natural cutting that divides the northern tip of Denmark from the rest of the country. There was a fresh wind and I had to make several attempts at mooring alongside a German yacht in Hals. The crew had a long evening at a splendid local pub but all were present and correct when we set off along the fiord next morning.

Limfiord

The fiord is about 75 miles long from Hals to Thyborøn. There are six bridges to pass and five of them have to be opened to allow yachts to pass through. The fixed bridge has 26 metre clearance. The time of the next opening is displayed on each bridge. Boats have to fly an 'N' flag at half-mast to show that they want the bridges to open. The 24-chart folio 'Dänemark 4' produced in Germany by Delius Klasing, which covers the north of Denmark's western coast, and Limfiord is recommended. Included is a booklet with the plans of all the harbours, waypoints and more.

Waiting for the bridges to open can severely prolong the transit time but we were reasonably lucky. We reached Ålborg after a couple of hours and passed fairly speedily through the opening road and rail bridges. We needed bread but as it was Sunday we thought that might be difficult. Nevertheless we moored in a marina and Tim and I went off and found what we needed about a mile away. We left again at 14.30 and after passing another opening bridge at Aggersund we stopped at 18.00 for the night at the delightful marina at Løgstør. The marina is built in the entrance to an old canal and we were lucky to find an alongside slot into which we fitted with inches to spare. The town was an interesting place with an obvious pride in itself.

The scenery in the Limfiord varies from quite dull to a bit less dull especially when the sun doesn't shine. The channel is often narrow and well-buoyed but the water, albeit usually quite shallow, often spreads out for a mile or more on either side. The land is flat and so the views are short. There are lots and lots of wind generators.

We reached Thyborøn at the western end of the fiord having managed to sail for only about 2 hours as the wind had been, as ever, on the nose. We had to rush to reach one bridge and made it, mainly as there were only two boats wanting to go through and they waited 5 minutes for us to arrive. The channel leading to Thyborøn is long and very narrow but we arrived safely and took a berth at the very northern end of the harbour. This is a snug berth with few facilities though there is a supermarket quite nearby.

We listened carefully for the weather forecast, which offered west force 4 becoming southwest force 4 or 5. Our required

course to Peterhead was 280° and so we really didn't want anything with 'west' in it! Next morning, 16th August, David managed to find a Shell man to sell us diesel from a barge in the fish harbour and then, with the boat prepared, we were off across 400 odd miles of the dreaded North Sea again. At first we bore off to the south and later tacked back northwards – and by 18.00 we had made good a mere 44 miles. We hove-to to cook and eat our evening meal. That night was wonderfully clear and for an hour or two we had a gibbous moon brightening the dark.

Our second day at sea dawned grey with a fluky wind. We motored for a few hours and then we ran into thick fog for an hour or so. Then the wind went to south-southwest force 4/5 and suddenly we were flying and even required a reef in the Main. The waves were big but on the beam and easy. That evening from my bunk I heard David and Stuart discuss which of the oilrigs ahead to leave to port and which to starboard. They sounded confident and so I went back to sleep. We sailed well for most of the third day and so it wasn't a hard decision to bypass Peterhead and go directly on to Inverness. Fraserburgh was abeam at midnight but then the wind died on us and we had to motor along the Moray Firth. Our fourth day at sea was cold. We were off Buckie at 06.30 and Lossiemouth at 08.30.

At lunchtime we anchored off Fort George in order to enjoy our food, before making our way with the tide past Inverness harbour entrance to the Caledonian Canal entrance at Clachnacarry. The Seaport marina had padlocked all its power outlets since we had last visited and now produced a full A4 sheet of instructions about how they should be used before they would unlock ours. The world is going mad!

Sheilah Bradley (RNIYC) joined us next day and Tim had to leave us. We took 3 days to pass back along the canal. In each loch the wind was against us but David quite properly insisted that we should sail. Tacking in the narrow Loch Ness in a brisk breeze is hard work! Somehow it was always I who did the winch work! Hmm. Fortunately the wind died enough to warrant a stop near Urquhart Castle. However the canal transit was fun and generally relaxing. We spent the first night on the pontoons below Fort Augustus. Next day we went through to Loch Oich and stopped to look at the fountain of the Seven Heads (the scene of a gruesome happening several centuries back). We ate Sheilah's kind offering of smoked salmon and

then watched as about 16 ladies and gentlemen of a certain age who had paddled about 8 canoes, all lashed together, upwind to this point, headed out into the loch and raise their umbrellas to go away downwind under 'sail'! Wonderful. That night we anchored at the west end of Loch Lochy. It was a still evening and we had a stunning view across to Ben Nevis. A combination of drinks, an excellent curry concocted by the jovial efforts of David and Sheilah, and music by the Buena Vista Social Club made it a memorable evening.

Next day the forecast was for southerly force 10 winds! We hotfooted off towards Corpach but we had to wait for over an hour to enter Neptune's Staircase, the flight of 8 locks near the west end of the canal. The only people in sight were very damp and windswept Japanese and German tourists who had paid to get there! Clearly there was no sense in leaving the canal with that wind expected and so we moored on the Reach one lock away from the Sea Lock at Corpach. We made the most of our enforced stay by eating out at a very decent pub nearby.

The wind strength peaked to hooligan level at about 03.00 and all next morning it remained strong from the southwest – exactly the wrong direction for us to go down Loch Linnhe. We kept hoping and expecting the wind to veer to the west as the deep low went north, but it didn't. We had to decide by 1400 whether to leave or not as the Sea Lock, because of low water, couldn't be opened after. At 13.45 we decided to go. We motored hard against the wind and happily the tide was with us as we passed the Corran Narrows. We went by Port Appin at 17.30 and reached Dunstaffnage gratefully at about 19.00.

We were away again next morning at dawn (05.40) and with the wind still southwesterly, albeit quite light and always promising to go to northwest, but not doing so, we motored nearly all day and reached Bangor at 22.30 on Thursday 25 August.

The cruise had lasted two months and three weeks. I had been on board throughout but had been joined at various times by 13 others. It had all gone reasonably to plan and if the weather was latterly not as good as it might have been, at least it hadn't been too bad. For me the voyage had been a return to the Baltic cruising grounds that I had sailed around 15 or more years ago, and returning to see them again was a delight. I hadn't been on the Caledonian Canal before. I had enjoyed it all.

Hugo du Plessis says: Don't leave it too late

a live-aboard had been a wonderful time. But then my life changed. My sister died leaving me her house in Lymington to clear. Then I suffered from a broken heart which meant hospital and an operation. Finally it was simply age and the cost of a boat which had become too big to handle, too expensive to run and too far away to make enough use of.

The obvious thing was to sell the boat. Easy enough in Cork or Dublin you may say but not in Trinidad. Customs forbid sale to Trinis unless a huge tax is paid. Market to foreigners abysmal. After trying for three years the only offers (2) had been beneath contempt, and even then one was halved after a brief look by a local surveyor who was not only the most incompetent I have ever known but also the

most crooked. I had had trouble with him when I was surveying there myself and if I had known he would not have been allowed near any boat of mine. But these things are hard to control when five thousand miles away.

So something had to be done. The options were to keep trying to sell and accept a ridiculous price, and goodness knows when that would be, meanwhile paying charges because for safety I had the boat ashore. Safety did not include two robberies and being put on top of a termites nest. While it is true they do not eat fibreglass, except to enlarge clearance around a screw hole to get inside, they can eat plenty of everything else. An interesting study in biology which I would have preferred was on someone else's boat.

The other alternatives were to ship the boat back for sale, the best place being Britain, preferably Southampton which would have been convenient to Lymington where I am still clearing my sister's house. It offered the best chance of a quick sale but Solent expense meanwhile. The major

continued next page

problem is that everything is now containerised. Any load has to fit the module of a 40 ft x 8ft container and that includes the mast. A 36 x 12 ft boat with 45 ft mast therefore requires four container spaces – and anyway shipping companies just don't want to know you. The only shipping line went to Felixstowe which meant road to Lymington or unloading, launching which would mean transport to a boatyard, fitting out because the boat had not been afloat for three years and probably some shipping damage, then 300 miles sail round and hauling out again. The daily rate for a berth in the Yacht Haven there is now nearly as much as the annual rate was costed to be when I started it forty years ago!!

Cheapest, on paper, and also, on paper, the most convenient was the special yacht carrier ship. Float on with mast up, dump straight back in the water. But it only sailed once a year and it went from Tortilla. So this meant waiting another year until I could sail there, right the other end of the Caribbean, nearly 1000 miles. There would be a lot of expense just to do that too, plus a time factor and I learnt years ago not to predict an arrival date.

Of course the obvious way was to sail back. That was how I had got to the Caribbean in the first place. But that had been twenty years ago. I am not like my old friend Helen Tew, sailing across the Atlantic when near ninety. Even though younger I reckoned I would now be too much of a liability, and had strict orders from my family not to even think of doing it alone. Unfortunately they did not offer to help – but that is the way when children have jobs and families and have not the consideration to produce grandchildren of an age to be a useful crew. The boat would also need a good refit. New rigging, new sails. Expense of a crew. It would certainly not be a cheap way, even then the only way to get back to Ireland. Shipping to Ireland had soon been ruled out. No shipping line went there. It would mean unloading and reshipping in Jamaica and Miami and somewhere in Europe, which seemed an even surer recipe for damage and theft – if the boat ever got there at all.

Strange to say every option worked out at around the same price when everything was taken into account, and that everything factor was the difficult part. There plenty of scope for nasty surprises. But all seemed to be around £10,000, or US\$ 18,000. Perhaps one or two thousand difference, soon absorbed by storage and other unknown charges. Prices were always quoted in \$ and as time went by the estimated costs did become more favourable. One major uncertainty was VAT. I found that my papers of thirty years before might not be accepted which would have made nonsense of all the planned cost.

In the end, determined to do something this year I opted to ship the boat back via Felixstowe and negotiations and quotations and the many difficulties were beginning to look possible. Then I was lucky to get a buyer. Terrible price, although the best yet, but against that I could put the saving on shipping and months of storage and tarring up for sale in Britain. The buyer was local but a foreigner so we could forget the tax. By then it was his worry anyway.

Now the problem was that I still had the accumulation of twenty years living on board, plus the equipment tools,

spares – well you know what a blue water cruiser is like. I also had all my survey equipment, records and years of research into fibreglass boats too. Reference books. There had been two editions of my book Fibreglass Boats, and in those twenty years I had written ten other books of which I had the manuscripts (but not any publishers). So there was a load of stuff to ship home and a weight or paper alone. Books alone weighed half a ton. No wonder the waterline had crept up and up. I filled two big crates and forty one cartons, mostly strong beer boxes until the barman ostentatiously locked them up. I reckoned it was over a ton and even then half was left behind, as I keep remembering now. As for when I got to Piarco airport with what I had packed in my kitbags on the last day, and the repacking in the middle of the booking in hall into another bag so that a strong porter could even lift them – and the excess baggage I had to pay – the less said the better! Much to my surprise after three anxious months and frequent e-mails, everything turned up.

Sadly yachties are not what they used to be. You know the real old yachtie – never pass a skip without looking to see if there was anything useful inside. A sale of boat jumble would be gone in a morning. Its all these 'ere marinas what have done it. Attract a different class. Wrong sort. Too much money. If they want something they go to a chandlery to buy a new one instead diving into their foc'sle lockers. Nobody would buy what I was unloading. Couldn't even give things away. All useful stuff, based on the experience of sixty years cruising – modern cynics might say the collection of sixty years. Plus past years of owning a boatyard, charter fleet and a chandlery myself. I had the best collection of shackles in the Caribbean! Too good to dump. Nothing for it but to take it back. A stand at the Beaulieu Boat Jumble next April or the car boot sales beckoned.

And not forgetting the next boat of course. Oh yes there is going to be a next boat. Big motor and warm wheelhouse. Smaller of course. Probably no room for my charts of half the world. Kept at Bantry too. Couldn't possibly afford the Solent and anyway who in their senses would want to sail there now. Everywhere crowded. Noisy motor boats. Nowhere worth sailing to, just one crowded marina to an even worse one. Not like our wonderful empty Irish harbours where even one boat is a crowd – and I know plenty within half a days sail where there is simply not room for more than one.

Luckily the orphanage took clothes and tins. But when I left the boat was still surrounded by piles of what had been thrown out – unfortunately the boat was still ashore. The useful pieces of wood that had been picked up, pipes, bits of metal – you know, just the thing you want when trying to mend something in one of those lovely quiet harbours far from anywhere.

Well I got rid of the boat which was the main thing, despite many mixed feelings and regrets, mainly about the end of a way of life that had ended anyway. But I really think it is simpler to sail back – either way round, take your choice. The moral of course is 'Don't leave it too late'.

But who would be in a hurry to leave Paradise?

Tall Ships Waterford 2005

Captain Michael Coleman

Master Replica Barque *Jeanie Johnston*

As I sit by my window overlooking Cork Harbour, writing up this log, the first of the autumnal gales is sweeping over the harbour. The windows are rattling as they do in most old houses and the raindrops are belting off the panes of glass. Roches Point in the distance is obscured in a hail squall sweeping through. It is indeed a dismal scene. To increase the comfort zone I light the fire, pour myself a tot to put me in the writing mood, and my thoughts drift back to the marvellous summer just past, memorable in many ways.

Two years ago I passed north of sixty north, in age terms that is, and since then I had been looking around for a new challenge, so when the opportunity arose to take over the command of the *Jeanie Johnston* on a seasonal basis I grasped the opportunity with both arms. After all, opportunities like this only come by once in a lifetime, if at all. I took early retirement and took over the *Jeanie Johnston* on June 1st 2005 at Cork. As the ship had been laid up for the winter months, a lot had to be done to bring her back into commission including dry docking, however after ten days of hectic activity she was ship-shape and ready to go. The plan for the season was to do sail training cruises around Irish, UK and European coasts, open to the public in museum mode during the various coastal festivals and regattas, and of course the highlight of the season was to be the Tall Ships Festival in Waterford during the first week of July.

The ship earns income in three ways including sail training voyages, opening to the public in museum mode when in port, and thirdly hiring out for corporate events in port or at sea if required. It takes but two hours to convert the ship from sailing mode to museum mode, and when converted, the entire 'tween deck closely replicates the conditions which existed on the original famine ships, during the mid-19th century.

Our first sail training cruise of the year was a 3-day voyage from Cork to Dublin where we were open to the public for the Dublin Docklands Maritime Festival, organised and hosted by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority. This minor tall-ships festival is now an annual event and proved very successful.

Out next port visit was to Whitehaven in Cumbria, located on the mainland about forty miles northeast of the northern point of the Isle of Man. Whitehaven is one of the oldest ports in Britain and was at one time second only to London in trade terms, the trade being coal. For many years the vast bulk of coal imported to Dublin came from Whitehaven. Unfortunately when the coal industry died so also did Whitehaven port and the town fell on very hard times indeed. But now, after several years of rejuvenation and investment, the port has a bright future based mainly on the leisure activities. The lock gate has been restored and the old docks have been brought back into use as yacht marinas. To any sailors sailing in the Isle of Man area, Whitehaven is well worth a visit; also it is only just over 100 miles from Dublin. There are three excellent visitor attractions in the town, namely the mining museum, the beacon which gives an audio-visual history of the area and the Rum Story which traces the history of this fiery spirit. Also of course it is the gateway to the Lake District, probably the finest area of natural unspoilt beauty in these islands. Our visit coincided

with the local Maritime Festival, the attendance being one hundred thousand, very impressive for a small town. The locals are a friendly warm-hearted people and we all felt welcome. The Maritime Festival is organised by Ger Richardson, a man of boundless energy and enthusiasm.

Whitehaven is also famous for another reason. The American privateer John Paul Jones raided the town in 1778. However, the raid was not very successful. The attractiveness of local alehouses proved too much for the raiding party who numbered about thirty. After several hours of revelry their goals became blurred and after spiking a few cannon overlooking the harbour and an attempt at firing at a few ships moored in the port they beat a hasty retreat just before the local militia arrived at the scene. These events are referred to locally in a light-hearted way as the last invasion of England. The local town council pardoned the said John Paul Jones a few years ago, and the town is now adopted by the United States Navy. A reception was held on board one evening attended by many U.S. Naval Officers and other personnel to commemorate these events. Our visit was both enjoyable and successful, the locals visiting the ship in their thousands.

The highlight of the season was without doubt the Waterford Tall-Ships Festival, which took place during the first week of July. By any yardstick the festival was a truly spectacular maritime celebration, probably the finest ever seen in Ireland. The huge turnout of the finest tall ships from 25 different countries, crewed by 3,000 sailors, was indeed a magnificent sight to behold, a sight to quicken the pace of any sailor's heart. The forest of masts, spars and rigging lining both sides of the River Suir in the heart of the city was truly unforgettable. The logistical challenges this presented to the Waterford Harbourmaster, Captain Phillip Cowman, and his team was huge, but all rose to the occasion magnificently. The sight of so many splendid vessels (over 20 Class A ships alone) gracing the quays of the historic Viking port will live long in the memories of the crowds of well over three hundred thousand who attended the festival. The festival concluded with a spectacular fireworks display on the evening before the parade of sail which was special, even historic. The parade was led by the three Irish square rig vessels: *Asgard II* captained by Colm Newport, followed by *Dunbrody* captained by Tom McCarthy, followed by *Jeanie Johnston* captained by yours truly. It was a magic moment when the ships closed up off Duncannon Fort for a photo-shoot. It was indeed a marvellous maritime experience, and to have been there leading the fleet was special indeed – one of life's golden moments. Many organisations were involved in the logistics of the event and they all did a wonderful job; among them were the local pilots, the R.N.L.I. and the Coast Guard, the Air Corps who provided a fly-past, and the Army who provided a 21 gun salute at the Reviewing Station at Dunmore East. Irish Lights provided the lights tender *Granuaile* as a start ship and last but not least the Navy provided the L.E. *Aoife* under the command of Lt. Commander Martin Brett as a guard ship, to accompany the race fleet to Cherbourg.

This was to be the very first occasion when a Tall Ships

Race was to have been started from an Irish port. The fleet had previously visited Cork, Dublin and Belfast. However, this race start was not to be, to race we needed wind – and wind we did not have. It looked as if the ships had become bonded to Waterford. After five attempts to start the race, the race officers postponed the start until noon the next day and shifted the start line 60 miles to the southeast. The entire fleet motored overnight, it was a surreal experience motoring on a mirror like sea, with the multi-coloured ships' lights reflecting all around the horizon, and the moon surveying the scene overhead. We got our start the next day but only just, the lightest of northwesterly breezes having set in. The breeze never really filled in and remained a frustrating force one or two, at best. The *Jeanie* is no greyhound of the seas, but in very light conditions she can hold her own, the big boys did not have the wind either and could not claw away from us. After twenty-four hours racing we were placed 4th in our class and 8th overall. A big cheer went up on board when I announced the positions on the Tannoy. The race was called off the next day at 06.00 and the fleet advised to motor to Cherbourg. The final results put us down towards the back of the fleet; even so there were several notable names behind us. We were well pleased with our efforts, it is after all a fun event and participation is everything.



Misty morning in Cherbourg. L to r: *Asgard II*, Ireland; *Jean de la Lune*, Scotland; *Jeanie Johnston*, Ireland. Colin Archer type in foreground.

We arrived in Cherbourg on the morning of Bastille Day, July 14th – the French national holiday. Another three-day maritime extravaganza followed, marvellous hospitality as only the French know how, and boy, they do love their tall ships, especially traditionally built timber vessels. The *Jeanie* was the focus of much attention and favourable comments; thousands visited the ship.

The *Jeanie* did not continue on to Newcastle, but sailed back to Cork instead. The Dublin Docklands Development Authority was in negotiations to purchase the vessel and it was rightly decided to keep the ship close to home. August was taken up with weekend visits to Dingle, Galway for race week, Schull, Cobh, Dublin and a return visit to Whitehaven calling to the Isle of Man en route. The sail training season concluded with a ten day return cruise from Dublin to Brest in France – all-in-all a very successful and enjoyable season.

The *Jeanie* has now put three successful seasons behind her and this augurs well for the future. I handed the *Jeanie Johnston* over to the Dublin Docklands Development Authority at noon on Friday September 23rd; it was a bitter-sweet moment, but I am sure all in the best interests of the ship. We all feel that the D.D.D.A. will prove to be good owners of the ship and will continue to sail her. We, the permanent crew wish them every success, they have all our good wishes. Now where is that bottle, it is surely time for another wee dram.



Barque *Jeanie Johnston*, oil on canvas by Kenneth King.

I Sailed Three Seas Around Italy

By Beowulf

as recorded by Ann Woulfe-Flanagan

It is Tuesday 23rd August and I have been very bored sitting unintended in Tropea marina in Calabria, South Italy for the last six weeks. At last my crew of Eleanor and Brian Cudmore, Gail Varian, Peter Pearson and Ann Woulfe-Flanagan have arrived. Great excitement all-round and they bail-out to a favourite restaurant up the town – Pinturicchio, Via Bardano near the Cathedral (Tel. 0963.603452).

The new arrivals, like everyone else, love the old town perched on the cliff top, and as it is still the summer season there is a bus, otherwise it is shanks mare up 189 steps.

Following the reconditioning of my gear box in Terrasini, Bernard had reported it was making a noise going in reverse and slow to pick up. The Volvo mechanic finally arrived on Wednesday evening to say that the clunking sound is OK or at least will not do any damage. He also looked at my diesel and said “ha” that pink colour is not sold in Italy any more.

Thursday 25th dawned fine and the “stocking up” was at the local shop by the steps to the city, and was delivered by Antonio before he started his sight-seeing boat trips. At 13.30 my mooring was slipped, I said farewell to Tropea and headed out into my first sea – the Tyrrhenian – south towards the Strait of Messina. The wind was southwest force 2 and following a pleasant motor sail of 31 miles we arrived at 18.30 at the delightful looking little town of Scilla just northeast of the Straights. I noticed a ripple on the water which now replaces the whirlpool which existed before the 1783 earthquake. There was a quay wall on the west side with debris lying off it. An Austrian yacht and a motor launch were tied up; as we approached, Peter Pearson who speaks good Italian was able to understand the owner of the motor launch being not too polite about telling us to off. At this time it was discovered that following putting the engine into reverse and then into forward, black water and smoke emitted from the exhaust. The crew eventually discovered that this was a flattened air intake.

There was nothing for it but to turn back and motor to Bagnara Calabria arriving at 19.30 and I was delighted to slide alongside the Danish yacht *Santana* whose owners were taking her back through the French canals. This is a large fishing harbour protected from the west by a high concave breakwater. There is one restaurant and no shop. The water was dirty and plastic bags abounded.

The following day began with another lovely morning and in order to catch the tide at the Straits I departed at 09.15. After 9 miles I approached the Straits with

trepidation as I listened to the stories of Scilla ‘the Render’ and Charybdis ‘the Sucker-down’ being read out. Perhaps slightly disappointed I shot through with just some agitation seen on the water as a reminder of the great whirlpools which can still cause problems. Ann had read of a 62 foot racing yacht being pushed backwards out of one during a night race.

Heading across the Straits I was dodging the ferries between Reggio di Calabria and Messina. We had a look at the marina with a view to examining the gear box; there seemed to be no room and with the wind filling in from north; force 3/4, it was sails unfurled and I sped down the coast towards Taormina Roads. The jib was eventually boomed out thus I covered 36 miles in 4½ hours. As we approached Taormina, smoke was spotted on the hillside above the town and below the castle a helicopter was scooping water up and depositing it on the fire.

We looked into the three small coves of Mazzaro Bay, S. Andrea Cove and Isola Bella but none was deemed suitable for an over night stay. They were small, surrounded by rocks and had packed beaches. Finally rounding the headland of Capo Taormina into Taormina Bay or the Gulf di Naxos, we saw a beautiful bay where everyone else had anchored and we did so close inshore under Mt. Tauro, in 9 feet of clear water.

There was no obvious landing place for a dinghy and so a flat rocky area beside a wooden bathing platform, which turned out to belong to apartments, was chosen. Following a short walk along the stony beach an exit was found, up through a private house; the real exit is through a tunnel under the road. From here the Interbus coming from the train station takes one up hairpin bends, with breathtaking views of the bay, to the bus station.



Down-wind sailing – Eleanor, Peter, Ann and Brian.

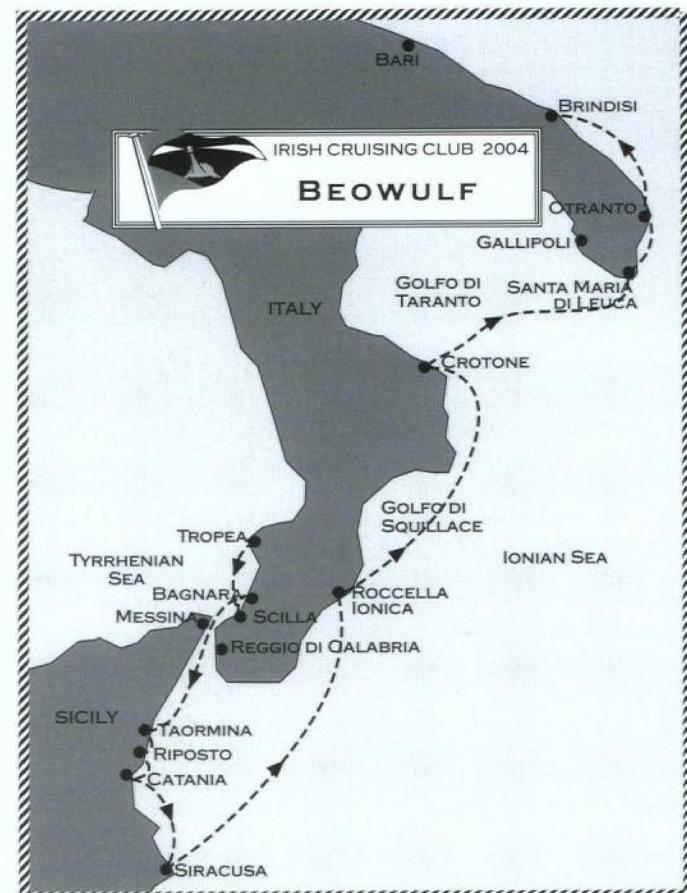
Photo: Gail Varian

This is a fine town retaining much of its medieval character and it is a short walk up to the bustling main street of Corso Umberto I. The crew had an enjoyable dinner followed by a hair-raising walk back down to the sea by the main road (no pavement). Luckily Gail spotted a taxi – otherwise they might have been mincemeat!

Saturday 27th dawned bright and for the crew, following a swim it was back up town to shop and explore. They took the bus from the bus station up to Castle Molo/Mt Tauro Square for morning coffee. This was another fine panoramic drive up to a bird's eye view of the town and back up the Straits. A taxi was taken to the Greek theatre at the end of Via Teatro Greco where the crew split up; Peter and Eleanor to shop, Brian to come back and keep me company; Gail and Ann wandering around marvelling at this massive structure, remodelled by the Romans in the 1st century AD. Thanks to the Roman arches collapsing, it has fine views of Mt. Etna. On the way down to the beach there was more stocking up, with yet more delicious fruit and vegetables and in particular ripe figs. They also met a man cleaning out black sea urchins; they had quite a sweet taste.

Following another swim the anchor was weighed with difficulty at 17.00 and we motored for Riposto some 10 miles south arriving at 19.30. Here there is an outer harbour and a fine large inner harbour, with the big fishing boats on the eastern breakwater, and the marina extending from the shore and the northern breakwater. The marina office is at the entrance to the inner harbour and the marina was occupied by a gigantic motor cruiser. We tied up to an empty pontoon – to learn afterwards that this was for the mega yachts and we should have called on Ch 77 for a berth. After much communication Ann was brought over to the marina office by RIB to fetch a step-down electric adaptor and electronic key to turn on the electricity and water. It had been a sunny evening and Mt Etna was in her prime with a long line of smoke reddened by a magnificent setting sun. This is now a full marina and it is supposedly secure – push buttons to get out and in – but gates can be left on the latch.

The crew dined at the restaurant Bistro'del Port which was part of a restaurant complex, excellent food if a trifle short on quantity. There was a pizza restaurant and an ice cream parlour which was tried with much hilarity.



On Sunday morning Eleanor and Peter reported on an excellent fish market and following Gail and Ann's trip to the marina office they bought sardine-like fish, which were cleaned in front of them, amongst the shouting and clamour of a busy market.

Eleanor finally dragged us out by 12.30 and we motored for Catania some 23 miles further south, on a flat sea hugging the coast which was at first very residential and then rural.

Our lunchtime anchorage for a cooling swim was Cap Molini with one other yacht. It was then on to Catania a large working port.

There was 'no room in the Inn' – all four yacht-club marinas waved us away and we were told to anchor stern-to the quay wall. On our second attempt over 55 metres of chain was laid out and our stern lines were taken by men fishing for octopus. Having pulled ourselves well away to allow for the 'surge' the dinghy had to be used to get over to two large tyres hanging on the quay wall to climb ashore. The Port area is secure with gates and a guard so we felt fairly safe. Dinner was one of many gourmet meals cooked on board by Eleanor, Gail and Peter. Brian and Peter went off to explore the town. No one heard them return!

The three girls decided to make an assault on Mt. Etna and as it was being debated how to get a taxi, a police launch came in beside us.



Three young girls are we on Mt. Etna – Gail, Eleanor and Ann.

They kindly went off to find a phone number and then ended up phoning for the taxi. €50 per person – could he speak English – a little. Brian and Peter opted to explore the town and take care of me. The rest of the crew reported back that the taxi driver was a pleasant man; he told them they must take the gondola up the mountain and agreed to wait for them if they wished to go on to near the top. It is over an hour's drive up to the cable station.

The cable car gave a good all-round idea of the vast expanse of lava rock and sand spread out below, dotted with coloured flowers. It was very cold at the top and they were glad to hire padded jackets for €1.50 each, and then took a 4 x 4 WD bus up to the next stage and a walk with a guide for €21 each. They said this was very impressive with the 4 craters puffing steam. The guide dug down to find very hot lava which he poured water on – hisssssss...

In every town we called to, they sought out the impressive cathedrals, churches and squares and marvelled at the rich and varied architectural and cultural identities. Catania was no exception and although it looks run down due to the threat of Mt. Etna erupting the city is worth exploring. The Piazza Duomo and Cathedral are particularly fine.

Peter and Brian could not find the correct gas bottle or fitting, a new one fitted in April had corroded, but they did find a good chandlers near the port entrance and a superb vegetable and fish market, and there are many small fruit stalls in the street parallel to the harbour.

On Tuesday 30th the crew were up early to explore the market and a real delicacy of gutted sardines was purchased along with many other goodies. They had a quick coffee in the cathedral square where they met a young girl, L. Herriott, whom Gail had known when her family had lived in Dalkey. She was at a dancing school and hoping for a part in a new dance group.

They lifted a very muddy anchor at 10.00 and motored out under an overcast sky. The wind was variable between force 1 and 2 and eventually as we approached Capo Panagia heavy rain started with thunder and lightening lighting up the sky. The sardines cooked by Peter were the best they had ever tasted.

As we approached Siracusa we could see the walls of the Castello Maniace, but what was that in front of us – we motored through a flat calm patch of brown water resembling that of 'yester year' at the back of the west pier or off the back of Howth, Ugh! The Pilot does warn that the old town can be a little smelly.

Care is needed to avoid the Scoglio del Cani rocks, which are just awash, 300 metres east of the old town. We continued to round the impressive walls of the Castello Maniace into the expansive bay where some large yachts were at anchor. We avoided the Grand Harbour town quay due to on-shore wind surges. There were about 5 mega motor boats anchored stern-to and some yachts.

We headed for the yachting marina and I was snug by 15.30 and had a satisfactory 36 miles under my hull. As we were lunching in the sun a policeman and woman arrived for ship's papers and all the passports, which were processed on the dock. This marina was filthy, and plastic bags abounded but the facilities on a floating pontoon were adequate.

Needless to say the crew set off to explore and found a town map at Syrako Porta Marina Tourist Point just inside the city gate. They found Piazza Archimede where they had coffee and admired the 20th century fountain of Artemis the Huntress surrounded by handmaidens and sirens by Giulio Moschetti. It is a short walk to the amazing Piazza del Duomo which is dominated by the Cathedral that not only has traces of a Doric temple dedicated to Athena – early 5th century BC but an altar built by the Siculi three centuries earlier. They spent some time

here before walking around to absorb the atmosphere. They dined well in the Trattoria Aromiedo, Via Gemmellaro, 8 – Tel. 0931 69701, and experienced for the first time a buffet appetiser.

Wednesday 31st August was our long day passage from Siracusa to Roccello Ionica, 110km in 16 hours. We had a brief sail from 08.45 to 09.30, and the rest was motor sailing. It was a very painless passage but as we approached the harbour at 21.15 we were troubled by two sets of very bright lights to starboard that we eventually worked out were fishing boats working in pairs. The radar was a help at this point but none of the crew recognised the dredger lights on our port side just outside the harbour wall. I suppose it was the last thing they expected to see. There is mention of a sand bank under the water partly obstructing the entrance which now appears to have been dredged. Once inside the harbour-mouth there is an unlit Marina pier-wall on the port side. We had no trouble with any swirling current (which is mentioned) and we tied up at 22.10 to a finger pontoon on the inside of the outer breakwater, intended for yachts over 14 metres. A HR 42 *Flower* on her way from Greece, tied up beside us. We were now well into my second sea, the Ionian, and again many plastic bags seem to live on the surface.

A well-deserved dinner was quickly prepared and then Ann went off to find bread – a long walk around the marina to the Pizza restaurant, which was in full swing at midnight. Success – they had bread and quite a stock of basics including wine. A search party was being organised as she returned.

The marina here now appears to be finished, and there was water and electricity on the Quay wall. As we arrived so late and left early we do not know if there is any charge.

At 07.00 on Thursday we quietly sneaked out into a lovely still morning heading to Crotone. The wind was west force 2



Young couple jiving in Crotone! Eleanor and Brian Cudmore.

Photo: Gail Varian

but at 13.30 it rose to east-northeast force 3/4 and gave us a very choppy sea – the Golfo di Squillace living up to its name. At 14.00 a large mammal with white speckled underside was alongside for a few minutes. By 16.00 we were passing through the nature reserve to the south of Crotone. At 17.30, following a frustrating trip with the wind heading us at every change of course, we entered this fine harbour and were directed to Porto Ulisses on the eastern breakwater where we tied up stern-to beside a new HR 43.

Peter and Ann went off to find a new gas cylinder walking along the very smart revamped shelf quay; the whole port was full of yachts. The fish market was still open and the crew found themselves in a busy town with plenty of vegetable shops and supermarkets, and a gas shop was eventually tracked down in the central square. Every trip ashore was an excuse to come back laden with goodies, in particular figs. Following this trip Gail had to make ‘fig’ jam. A fruitier recommended “Maide Mara” on the sea front for dinner and it was good – excellent steak and pizza by the metre. The whole bill was €109 for six people. Then the crew joined with the rest of the promenaders and drifted along to listen to a live street concert; this was an entertaining evening.

Friday 2nd September was another early start and 07.00 saw us heading for Gallipoli across the Golfo di Taranto. We avoided the oilrig and rolled out the main but with the wind at northeast force 5 and a lumpy sea it was an uncomfortable ride. At 09.30 we had to take avoiding action as a trawler was travelling backwards hauling his nets. Dolphins were sighted on the port side at 10.00 and also jelly fish. By 10.30 it was decided to give up on Gallipoli, and free-off for Santa Maria di Leuca, tucked in under the Capo of the same name. By the time lunch was served the wind had backed to west-northwest force

4, the sea was calmer and I managed 4 hours of good sailing – but it was still very hot and humid.

By 19.30 we were approaching the entrance of Santa Maria and were glad to see the 48.5 metre lighthouse, before the port and starboard marina lights had been spotted. The shoal patches mentioned at the entrance to the harbour seem to have been dredged. There was plenty of room and we went stern-to on an outside pontoon at 20.20 having covered 83 miles.

Unfortunately a nasty job had to be attended to – the aft heads pump was sticking, and Brian and Eleanor bravely set to and replaced the pump unit. This did not solve the problem. Brian tried to rod the pipe inside and Ann went over the side with a diving-tank to rod from the outside, but to no avail, thus Bernard and his crew later bore the full brunt of they problem.

This is a fine large marina dominated by the lighthouse and two large flat-topped buildings. Since we had come in late we were only charged for one night. The facilities are tucked away beyond the road entrance and barely adequate. The crew found a small supermarket up the steps opposite the entrance to the marina. Since we had missed out Gallipoli this was a ‘lay day’ and as it was so hot we motored out, like the locals, to the back of the pier to enjoy a swim in clear water.

While I was filling up at the new fuel dock on the port southern breakwater, the crew were recommended a restaurant at the head of the marina and it was a pleasant walk for them around over two bridges. They had an enjoyable time and thought about a coffee in the yacht club but it was just closing. Instead they strolled through the stall-holders flanking the marina.

Following the fresh bread run, we left at 10.00 on Sunday 4th September for Otranto. I was now entering my third sea, the Adriatic, and we coast-hopped looking at the limestone cliffs with impressive caves, which can be visited in calm weather. The land was terraced above with stone walls and looked very like the Burren. At 11.00 having rounded Gagliano del Capo we set course for Capo Otranto arriving at 13.45.

The northeast breakwater in Otranto has been extended and the port and starboard buoys are now well inside the port area. The works mentioned in the pilot in the southwest corner have been completed and there is a marina for small local boats. The hammerhead pontoon of the local Lega Navale in the southeast corner had one space left and as we were waved into it, Ann dropped a fender overboard “oops”!

This is a magical town, houses built mostly of sandstone clustering under the Aragonese castle; well worth a look around. It was an important port during the Crusades and in 1480 the Turks attacked with devastating consequences. There is a magnificent cathedral, the interior is 11th century and built to a basilica plan. It has an indescribably beautiful mosaic floor which covers about 800 square metres. It depicts figures from mythology, the tree of life and the signs of the Zodiac etc. The crypt is held up by forty-two monolithic marble columns, topped by different capitals. A must to see.

The crew then became part of the crowd watching the festival of the “blessing of the fishing boats” when the statue of Our Lady is borne out to sea on a fishing boat and wreaths are thrown into the water. She was brought ashore very close to us and processed around the town. The crew had a good dinner overlooking the harbour, and the whole experience was topped off by a spectacular firework display from the quay wall.

At 06.00 the following morning the wind whipped up east-northeast force 6 and pushed us hard against our port neighbour. This lasted about an hour; the sea was very disturbed and no one felt like leaving. Andrea Caricato on Astrea, a Bavaria 42 gave us a good forecast and we both



Going home from Brindisi.

Photo: Gail Varian

decided it was OK to leave for Brindisi at 10.30. Peter had borrowed a bicycle to post cards and had to scamper aboard.

For once the wind was with us, southeast force 4, and I sped up the coast surfing down the waves in sunny weather. It was not to last – thunder was heard in the distance to the south and by 14.30 it had begun to rain, the wind increase to force 5/6, the seas grew larger and the thunder was overhead. The washboards were put in and Eleanor, Peter and Ann settled in for a wet watch and Gail produced delicious sandwiches. We were very wet and when Brian and Gail took over there were gusts of over 30 knots.

As we entered the enormous harbour of Brindisi, with its fine Fort Castello del Mare dominating the outer harbour, the rain had stopped and I was slammed into neutral by Brian as he had spotted an enormous plastic sack in the water. The large stone monument and lighthouse with a statue of Our Lady is shaped like a rudder and is very conspicuous near the entrance to the inner harbour.

We decided the quay wall was too public to leave a yacht as this was crew change-over time, and headed to the marina on the north shore where we were directed stern-to the quay wall of the Lega Navale Yacht Club.

By the time we had dried out it was too late to take the ferry

to the town, and the crew had a very good meal at the Ristorante d'Capitano in the marina. The highlight was the buffet antipasta. The shop owner organised a mechanic for us but I am afraid it was not to be and the crew ended up heading for town. It is another interesting city, the end of the Appian Way from Rome, marked by an elaborate capital up a flight of steps by the harbour. Our first stop was a café set up as a Mussolini shrine. It poured rain as Peter and Gail sought out the train station for times to Bari for flights home, while Brian, Eleanor and Ann stayed dry drinking yet more coffee. An Internet café expedition was interesting, as ID is demanded. One was eventually found so that Gail and Ann could book their hotel in Venice. They found a fine pedestrianised shopping street which needless to say attracted attention.

Eleanor and Brian did sterling work keeping me on the straight and narrow. In all I travelled 550 miles to 10 different ports, all of which had their own merits, and I would recommend a trip to this area. Brindisi is a good change-over port – can be reached by Ryanair from London or to Bari, with a good train connection.

I hope the new South Italian Pilot is published soon, as many of the harbours have been upgraded and entrances dredged, which makes the area far more attractive for cruising.



Foam, Lord Dufferin's schooner.

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