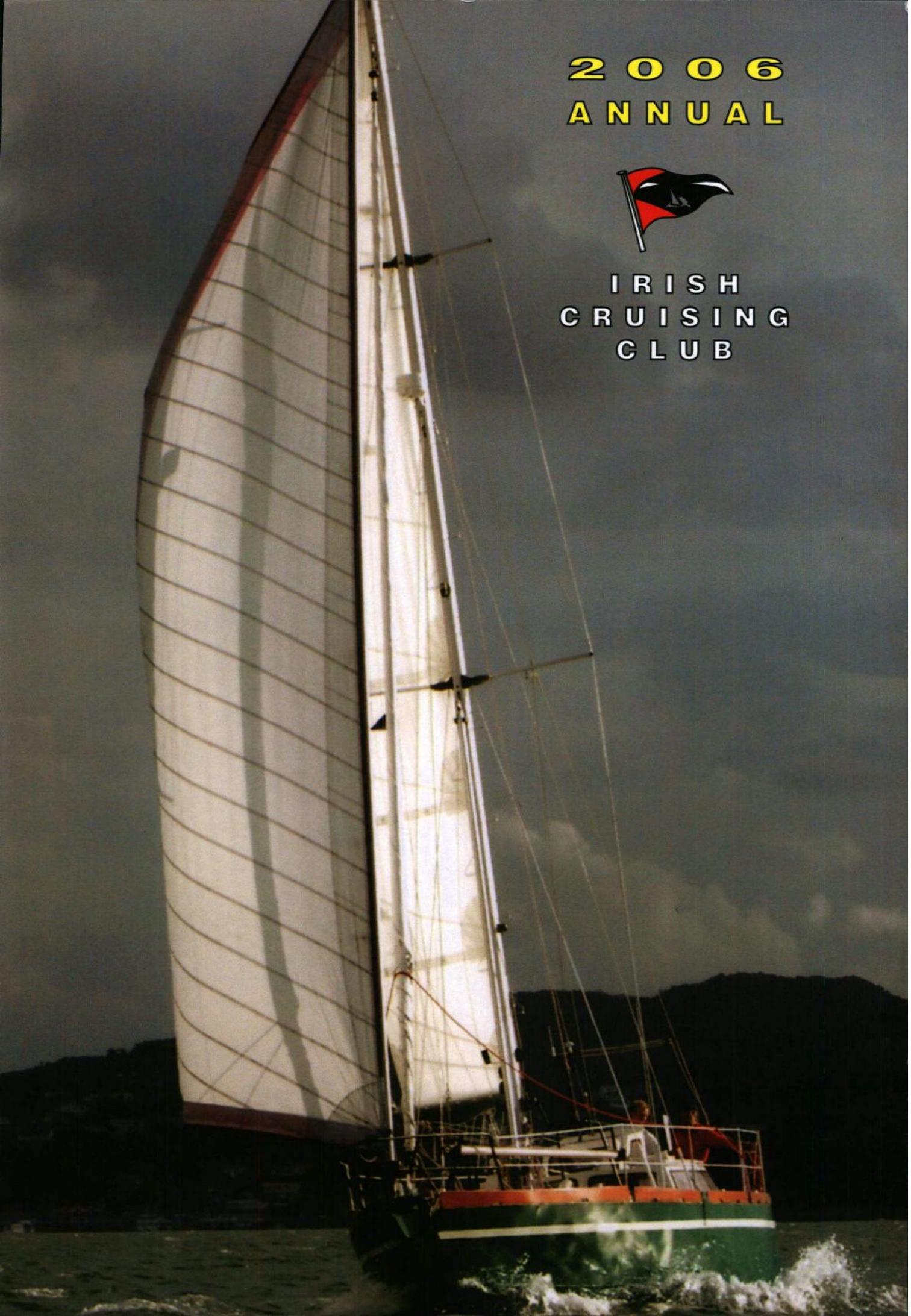


**2006
ANNUAL**



**IRISH
CRUISING
CLUB**



Notes for Contributors

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

Due Date

To achieve Pre-Christmas publication, we must have your **Submissions by October 15th 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 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 ...

Don't set anything in Capitals.

Use *Italics* for ships' names.

Clock times should be on the 24-hour clock, with a full-stop in centre, eg 06.00, and not followed by hrs.

Place Names should be correctly spelled, and not in italics or caps.

Compass Bearings should be in numbers.

Wind Speed expressed should be mean-speed.

e.g. We departed 06.30, sailing 235° true, in a northwest 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.

Boat speeds should be in knots, not kn. or knt.

Distances at sea should be in miles, not nm, NM, nautical miles, or m.

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

IRISH CRUISING CLUB ANNUAL 2006



Homecoming. *Hylasia*, Ivy and Henry Barwell

Photo by Nigel Barnwell

Irish Cruising Club Annual 2006

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

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Front Cover

Mike Alexander's *Katielok II* off Russell, New Zealand.

Back Cover

Ile d'Ouessant – La Jument (Creac'h in background). Photo by David Williams.

Submissions for 2007 Annual

To reach the Honorary Editor, Chris Stillman, 3 Thomastown Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.
(Tel. 01 285 2084) by **15th October 2007 at latest.**

Notes from the Editor:

I would strongly request that contributors read the “**Notes for Contributors**” (page XIV) very carefully and follow the suggestions. A very great deal of editorial time will be saved. In particular there are 5 points which cause the most trouble:

1. Please use italics for the names of boats.
2. Do not use italics for the names of places.
3. Please use the word miles for distances at sea this is taken to mean nautical miles, so please do not use abbreviations such as NM, or nm.
4. Because of the variety of regions that are being visited, I would like to make a special plea for **accuracy in the spelling of placenames** used in your submissions. 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 optional i or y used in Greek names and the seemingly vowel-free names in Croat).
5. Good photographs make a great contribution to the Annual, and we have substantially increased 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 and their crews are always welcome but **be sure to provide a caption** clearly indicating the 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”.

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.

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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 below.

As an extract from the minutes of the AGM, which was held at the Royal Irish 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 Limavady and, as usual, was a great weekend. Over 200 people attended the dinner, where the guest speaker was Wallace Clark.

As the activities of the regions in 2006 were covered in the Newsletters, I shall not comment on them except to say that the cruise-in-company to the north coast of Spain was very well supported and a great success – even if the weather was less than welcoming!

There is now a permanent showcase for the Club's memorabilia in the Centenary Room of Howth Yacht Club. Have a look if in the area.

Wishing all members a great 2007.

Ron Cudmore
Hon. Secretary



Detail from the new Fastnet Award

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Officers and Committee 2006-2007

Commodore: Cormac McHenry (East) 2nd year
 Vice Commodore: James Nixon (North) 2nd year
 Rear Commodore: David Tucker (South) 2nd year
 Rear Commodore: David Whitehead (West) 1st year
 Hon. Secretary: Ronald Cudmore 4th year
 Hon. Treasurer: Myles Kirby 1st year

North

John Clementson
 Alan Leonard
 Connla Magennis
 Derek White

South

Arthur Baker (ex-officio)
 Dan Cross
 Eleanor Cudmore
 John Daly
 Dermot Lovett

East

Grainne FitzGerald
 Clifford Hilliard
 Joe Phelan
 Ed Wheeler

West

Brian Kenny
 Gary MacMahon

Non-Committee roles

Treasurer – Subscriptions: Brendan O'Callaghan
 Chairman – ICC Publications Ltd: Ed Wheeler
 Editor – Annual: Chris Stillman
 Editor of the Sailing Directions: Norman Kean
 Editor – Newsletter: Gary MacMahon
 Webmaster: John Clementson

Functions Co-ordinator and Club Accessories:
 Barbara McGonagle
 Club Trophies and Distribution of the Annual:
 Bill Rea
 Archivist: Barbara McHenry

New Members

John Banim
 Graham Chambers
 Ivor Cherry
 Peter Coad
 John Delap

Stephen Garvin
 Michael Holland
 Lynn Johnston
 Andrew Killen
 David Killen

John Madden
 Alan Markey
 Gary Marshall
 Trevor Marshall
 Vera Quinlan

Frank Ranalow
 Edward Rea
 Patrick Ryan
 Clive Scott
 Michael Wood

Deceased Members

Elizabeth England
 Bob Gilmore
 Cyril Kilgrew

John Moore
 Robert Morehead
 Derry O'Brien

Robin O'Donoghue
 Kevin O'Farrell
 Mungo Park

Ross Pilling
 Marshall Pritchard
 Pat Whelan

Challenge Cup Awards

Mike Balmforth

Being tasked with reading every word of over 40 logs has meant that I have travelled far and wide in my imagination, to places familiar and new. It has been a delight, and some compensation for being unable to go cruising myself during the last two years.

It has also been a problem. The quantity, quality, and variety of logs creates a difficulty for the adjudicator: there simply are not enough awards to acknowledge the endeavours, both at the helm and at the keyboard, of so many members. This year's crop of logs was a splendid one, covering many of the main cruising areas of the world, and ranging from major voyages to family holiday cruises.

The ICC is fortunate that the tradition of log writing is holding up so well, as this is not the case with some other cruising clubs. This is due in no small part to the quality of this Annual, which thanks to a succession of hard working editors has always provided members with a very interesting publication, and one which they can enjoy before all the memories of the past season have faded.

The FAULKNER CUP. Mike Alexander's log of a long cruise around the Tasman Sea aboard his Albion 36 steel cutter *Katielok II* is the first log he has submitted to the club, and this ten month voyage during which he explored the eastern seaboard of Australia, parts of Tasmania and New Zealand, and returned to virtually his starting point, is outstanding, as my award of the ICC's premier trophy signifies. Few of us have the time to undertake such a voyage of discovery, so it is good to read about someone making the most of the opportunity. It is in the epic tradition of the trophy.

The STRANGFORD CUP. Our Vice Commodore James Nixon has recently caught the Arctic bug, and was awarded this trophy two years ago for his first foray to icebound land and seas. This year his self-confessed obsession with the voyages of Lord Dufferin prompted him to return, this time to organise a meet for our sister organisation, the Royal Cruising Club, in Iceland, and also to circumnavigate that island. His log is a lively account of how he met his objectives, which also included visits to the Faeroes and St Kilda. A tale of remote places, indeed.

The ATLANTIC TROPHY. Peter Killen's log of his trip home from South Africa via most of the Atlantic Islands is a quietly understated but very interesting account of another successful voyage aboard *Pure Magic*. It is a good sequel to last year's Antarctic adventures, and a worthy winner of this trophy. Also, the voyage was completed in time to enjoy a half season in West Cork. That's what I call planning!

The FORTNIGHT CUP is also about meeting objectives, but within a time limit. Alan Leonard's expedition aimed to climb Foinaven, a major mountain in northwest Scotland, and just a few miles south of Cape Wrath. In days gone by this would have been impossible during a windless fortnight, but thanks to

the internal combustion engine *Ariadne* completed a near 800 mile round trip in 15 days. And, yes, they did climb Foinaven!

The ROUND IRELAND NAVIGATION CUP attracted no contenders last year, but this year a classic circumnavigation by a classic yacht is the well deserved winner. It was John Delap's first major cruise in his newly acquired Nicholson 43 *Sceolaing*, but he had the reassurance of knowing that his new boat 'knew the way' round Ireland very well! Members who have been busy sailing to the ends of the earth, and who have not been round Ireland for years, will enjoy revisiting our classic anchorages – in print.

The FINGAL CUP is the adjudicator's self-indulgence, for he can either follow either his fantasies or his memories when selecting this winner. In this case it was memories of Baltic cruising in *Greenheart* that were evoked by Peter Haden's *Papageno* cruise to the Baltic, which also encompassed most of the British Isles. I can reveal that starting from Ballyvaughan for Helsinki earned bonus points, or as they tell you in that part of the world: "If I were you I wouldn't start from here"! En route *Papageno* transited the English Channel and the Kiel Canal, visited Bornholm and the Baltic States, and returned via the Gota, Trollhatten and Caledonian Canals, or as they say in other parts of the world: "the full bhuna"!

The ROCKABILL TROPHY might otherwise be called the Disaster Averted Cup, being awarded for exceptional feats of navigation and/or seamanship. 2006 was a quiet season, both in terms of incidents and weather (and if you know different you should have written about it), but John Clementson managed to pick a windy moment for his single handed English Channel crossing and a foggy one for his onward passage to Ireland from the Scillies. His solo trip with *Faustina II*, however, was successfully accomplished in conditions that would have been testing for a full crew.

AWARD WINNERS

THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP for outstanding contributions to Irish sailing: No Award.

WRIGHT SALVER: Awarded by NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE to JAMES NIXON.

WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP: Awarded by SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE to JOHN PETCH.

DONEGAN MEMORIAL TROPHY: Awarded by EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE to GRAINNE FITZGERALD.

ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY: Awarded by WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE to PETER HADEN.

GULL SALVER: for distinction in an International event by a member sailing his/her own boat. No Award.

THE "FASTNET" AWARD: For an outstanding achievement in sailing by a person or persons from anywhere. No Award.

DUNN'S DITTY SALVER: Awarded to DAN CROSS

The WYBRANTS CUP is of special interest to an adjudicator who lives in Scotland and has done much cruising in Scottish waters. Harold and Vivienne Boyle's cruise aboard *Gentle Spirit* encompassed areas that many folk take years to visit: they spent time in the Clyde, the West Coast, the Outer Hebrides, and the Orkneys, returning by the Caledonian Canal. A comprehensive Scottish cruise.

The WILD GOOSE CUP is awarded for a log of literary merit, acknowledging the difficulty in writing a log as a work of literature! John Madden's log of his swift cruise to Norway and back from Loch Swilly on *Bagheera* is both an entertaining read and is written offering considerable insight into real or imagined shortcomings of Norwegian social life and of his long suffering crew, or should that be the other way around! Scandinavia is not the easiest place to be a free spirit, but John and friends seem to have proved you can get away with it!

The PERRY GREER BOWL is presented for the best first log, and Ian Stevenson's account of his eight week Biscay cruise aboard *Raptor* is an excellent one of a workmanlike cruise which took in some of northwest Spain, some of Brittany, and gave a lot of people pleasure in the process. It was also his first

long cruise with *Raptor*, one that required logistical as well as sailing skills, and also the discipline needed to compile a good account of it all.

The GLENGARRIFF TROPHY rewards the best cruise in Irish waters, and Alan Markey's log of *Crackerjack's* cruise in West Cork shows what can be accomplished with a mixture of experienced, inexperienced and young family crew without, most importantly, putting the latter off sailing for life! Cruising did not begin as a family occupation, but the improved comfort and capability of modern yachts has changed all that, for the benefit of future generations of ICC sailors.

Cruising is defined in the Oxford Dictionary as "sailing for pleasure making for no particular port", but this year's logs perhaps indicate otherwise. ICC members undoubtedly sail for pleasure, but with definite objectives in terms of passages and ports, and with definite success in achieving those objectives. Perhaps an alternative ICC definition of cruising might be "Sailing efficiently to maximise the pleasure of passage-making and the enjoyment of new destinations". That is what the club logs illustrate, in good measure.

THE FASTNET AWARD – TERMS OF REFERENCE

The Irish Cruising Club has commissioned a new trophy named the **Fastnet Award**.

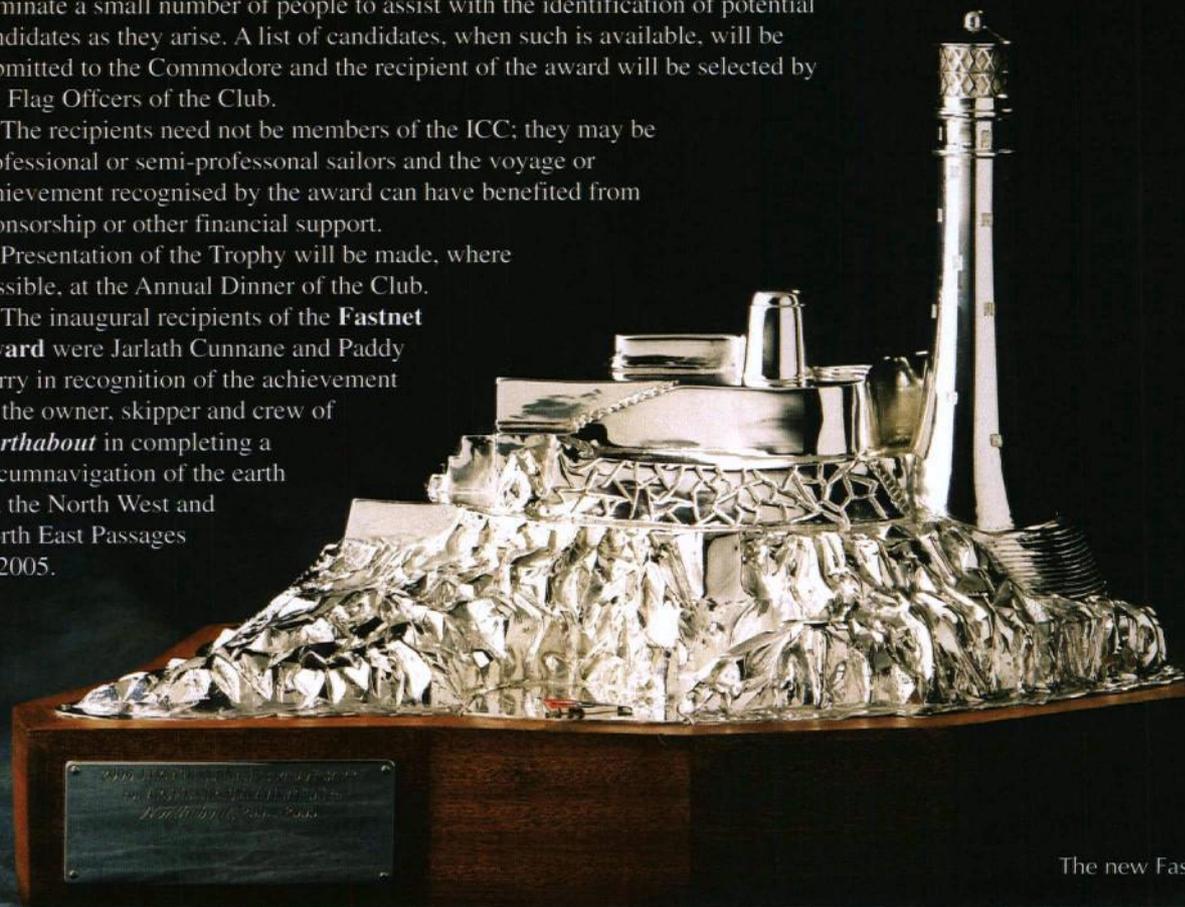
The **Fastnet Award** is a perpetual trophy which will be held by the Club on behalf of the recipient(s) for 12 months. It will be presented not more often than annually but it is not anticipated that it will be awarded every year.

The **Fastnet Award** will be made for exceptional achievements and for excellence in or closely related to cruising under sail. The Commodore may, at his or her discretion, nominate a small number of people to assist with the identification of potential candidates as they arise. A list of candidates, when such is available, will be submitted to the Commodore and the recipient of the award will be selected by the Flag Officers of the Club.

The recipients need not be members of the ICC; they may be professional or semi-professional sailors and the voyage or achievement recognised by the award can have benefited from sponsorship or other financial support.

Presentation of the Trophy will be made, where possible, at the Annual Dinner of the Club.

The inaugural recipients of the **Fastnet Award** were Jarlath Cunnane and Paddy Barry in recognition of the achievement by the owner, skipper and crew of *Northabout* in completing a circumnavigation of the earth via the North West and North East Passages in 2005.



The new Fastnet Award

Mungo Park

An Appreciation

Cruising with Mungo was a combination of pure entertainments comprising fascinating European history, tales of combat in North Africa, farming in East Africa & his great, great grandfather's exploits in West Africa. Of course, this being Mungo, two continents were not enough, India was in there too, not least because he was born there in Calcutta on 1st September 1920. Cruising with Mungo was, also, a great learning experience as he generously gave of his deep knowledge of a lifetime of sailing whilst encouraging responsibility at the first sign of ability.

His father, Cecil, was the Senior Branch Pilot of the Hoogli River Pilot Service, a part of the enormous Ganges delta. He had joined the Royal Navy as a 12 year old midshipman on the *Conway*, a wooden 4 decker moored in Liverpool. He suffered ear damage when a gun blew up, was discharged, transferring to the Merchant Navy where he officered square riggers and twice rounded the Horn in sail before the turn of the 20th century. Cecil married a Jameson from Seamount House in Malahide where Mungo was reared by his mother and maternal grandfather.

Mungo's grandfather, Adam, was commissioned into the Royal Irish Regiment and stationed in India from where he led the 18th Regiment as the Heavy Camel Brigade, when ordered to the relief of Gordon besieged in Khartoum, in the Sudan in 1885. He was eventually killed in a skirmish with the Sudanese Maahdi in 1892. Adam's father, a Scot named Archibald, was a colonel in an East India Company militia called the Madras Europeans, which were essentially a bunch of mercenaries, mostly Irish and mostly from Dublin. They eventually became the Royal Dublin Fusiliers when the British Government took over the governance of India from the "Company" in 1859 after the Indian Mutiny. The Dublin Fusiliers were transferred back to Dublin, and the Park family with four children arrived in Ireland.

Mungo was educated at Rugby and intended to study Modern Languages at Oxford. In preparation, he spent the winter of '38-'39 in Heidelberg from where his father ordered him out to Paris in late spring, and then home. At the outbreak of war on the 3rd September 1939 he joined the Irish Guards as a guardsman, but was soon sent to Sandhurst from whence he was commissioned back into the Guards. After the failed Narvik landings in 1940, Mungo became adjutant (the youngest in any Brigade of Guards) and eventually saw action with the British Expeditionary Force which, with the Americans, landed in Tunisia in 1943 to roll back Rommel. Mungo, in a truck travelling at night was seriously injured when it hit a landmine, killing his driver. Invalided out in 1944, after a long convalescence he went to East Africa with Bill Stirling (of SAS fame) to set up a company, but eventually settled in Kenya in 1950, running a sisal farm. However, a parasitic infestation got the better of him and he had to return to Ireland in 1953, which he duly did, though now accompanied by a new wife and child.

Mungo, invited to join Dudgeon & Co. as a stockbroker, bought a house in the Baily, a half-share in *Vandra*, a Dublin Bay 24, and joined the Irish Cruising Club and Howth Sailing Club. He sailed *Vandra* enthusiastically for the next several years racing on Wednesday nights out of Howth and immediately sailing over to the "Irish" to have her in position for



Thursday evening racing in the Bay. Race weeks at Hunter's Quay in the Clyde provided plenty of stories and some good racing. *Vandra*, however, was not his first boat. When he was sixteen his mother had made him a present of a half-share in the *Marguerite*, a beautiful old gaffer and sister ship to the *Eithne*, similar to the Howth 17, though larger. In 1962 he bought the Mermaid no. 7, *Ruby*, to teach his children to sail. With *Vandra* sold he bought *Kittugani* which he used for cruising to his holiday home on Castle Island in Schull harbour. He won the Strangford Cup in 1971 for a cruise to Denmark, Sweden and Norway with his good friend Mikey Spring-Rice whose aunt Mary Spring-Rice was a crew member on Childers *Asgard* when running guns into Howth in 1914.

Kittugani, was then replaced by *Tam O Shanter*, which was rapidly rated up to join the 1973 Irish Admiral's Cup team along with Dennis Doyle on a previous *Moonduster* and Otto Glaser's *Tritsch Tratsch*. Mungo's was the best performing yacht of the three and won the Gull Salver for first Irish boat home in the Fastnet race.

The beautiful *Gay Gannet* followed in 1976 to be replaced by the Nicholson 345 *Joliba* bought off the drawing board at the 1979 London boat show. He raced the ISORA series with great enthusiasm for six summers and still managed to fit in two Biscay races from Cork to Bayona in 1980 and '84. With *Joliba* sold, the next boat was the Sigma 36 *Black Pepper* in which he achieved his great victory when, in 1990, he won the Brent Walker European Challenge Cup in a splendid race from Brighton to Cadiz whilst in his 70th year. *Twiga*, a Royal Sovereign 35, was his swan song. This was a ketch and a design he had spoken of for many years. In this vessel he carried out a repeat of his 1971 cruise to Denmark, Sweden and Norway though now in his 76th year.

Of course, good racing needs good administration, and Mungo did more than his share to promote the sport through the Royal Alfred Yacht Club. He was a flag officer for 17 years and Commodore for four. During this period the "Alfred" played a big part in developing offshore racing in the Irish Sea and was instrumental in founding ISORA.

Mungo had a most remarkable memory for names, faces and songs. Many a long night passage was eased by the recitation of limericks of which he seemed to have an impossible number, sung in his own inimitable way; or, when cruising the Spanish coast, tales of Wellington's peninsular war, an interest of his; and he had that absolutely wonderful gift, that of making friends. But in the end, I think, he liked nothing better, after a hard passage when snug on an anchor, than to sip a glass of Jameson and tell yarns to a willing audience.

Joe Phelan

Index of Cruising Grounds

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Australia	88.13, 01.18, 06.16
Baltic	90.08, 91.22, 92.13, 96.09, 97.11, 00.10, 01.20, 04.15, 06.09, 06.35, 06.41
Brittany & Biscay	90.03, 90.09, 90.12, 90.17, 91.15, 91.18, 91.08, 92.21, 91.06, 92.07, 92.17, 92.23, 92.25, 93.12, 93.19, 93.22, 94.20, 94.18, 94.01, 94.16, 96.13, 96.20, 96.21, 97.10, 98.13, 01.15, 01.09, 02.10, 02.16, 02.32, 02.13, 04.04, 05.04, 05.07, 06.06, 06.15, 06.18, 06.24, 06.25, 06.34, 06.43
Caribbean	90.05, 90.06, 90.10, 90.12, 93.02, 94.03, 95.08, 96.14, 97.12, 97.18, 98.10, 99.15, 05.20, 06.23
Channel Islands	89.15, 90.22, 94.20, 95.19, 95.23
Chile	88.02, 04.03
Clyde	91.11, 95.21, 02.14
England – East Coast	90.16, 99.20, 06.34
England – South Coast	89.15, 90.03, 90.22, 93.20, 94.12, 94.25, 94.17, 95.11, 96.28, 97.02, 97.05, 01.08, 04.06
Faroe Islands	93.06, 96.15
Greenland	92.01, 93.01, 95.02, 98.12, 01.04, 01.13, 05.23
Hebrides	91.16, 91.09, 91.13, 00.19, 02.11, 02.02, 02.18, 04.05, 05.09, 05.15, 05.28, 05.35, 06.05, 06.14
Holland and Belgium	89.03, 90.16, 92.13, 94.12, 97.14, 97.23, 01.06, 02.24, 05.34
Iceland	91.13, 93.18, 94.06, 97.01, 97.17, 99.03, 00.21, 02.01, 05.19, 06.20
Ireland – Circumnavigation	95.01, 95.05, 95.15, 95.24, 96.06, 96.08, 96.10, 96.04, 96.18, 99.04, 99.08, 99.14, 00.06, 00.10, 00.17, 00.18, 01.25, 01.03, 02.04, 02.12, 02.21, 02.08, 04.11, 04.21, 04.26, 05.30, 06.42
Ireland – North Coast	91.09, 91.20, 92.26, 93.14, 93.17, 00.03, 04.19, 06.30
Ireland – South West Coast	90.18, 91.10, 91.07, 92.02, 94.07, 94.09, 96.01, 96.13, 97.20, 01.24, 06.10, 06.19, 06.28, 06.39
Irish Sea	88.03, 88.21, 92.09, 92.18, 93.14, 94.25, 94.16, 95.03, 98.01, 98.16, 04.13, 05.10
Mediterranean – East	93.08, 93.09, 95.04, 95.16, 96.11, 97.03, 98.06, 00.09, 01.10, 01.07, 02.05, 02.31, 02.33, 04.14, 04.03, 05.06, 05.12, 06.07, 06.21
Mediterranean – West including Adriatic	91.04, 91.02, 92.16, 93.08, 93.09, 94.07, 94.15, 96.05, 97.06, 99.07, 01.02, 05.05, 05.13, 05.18, 05.24, 05.26, 05.36, 06.02, 06.11, 06.19, 06.36, 06.38, 06.40
Normandy	90.16, 94.17
Norway	93.08, 94.08, 94.06, 05.14, 05.22, 06.16
Orkney Islands	90.13, 91.14, 93.07, 01.05
Pacific	93.21, 94.05, 98.04, 99.11
Portugal	89.06, 90.07, 94.04, 94.23, 99.20, 05.08, 06.01, 06.31
Russia	93.08, 04.27
Scandinavia	88.12, 89.02, 90.04, 90.08, 90.13, 92.20, 96.09, 96.12, 96.22, 96.26, 96.17, 00.10, 00.25, 02.27, 05.02, 05.16, 05.27
Scilly, Isles of	88.19, 89.15, 90.03, 90.17, 91.10, 96.27, 96.16
Scotland – East	90.15, 95.17
Scotland – West	89.04, 88.09, 89.13, 89.14, 89.16, 90.15, 90.21, 91.14, 91.16, 91.20, 91.09, 91.17, 92.19, 92.24, 93.11, 93.17, 93.20, 94.10, 94.22, 95.06, 96.03, 96.19, 97.09, 97.15, 97.16, 97.19, 97.24, 98.09, 98.14, 98.17, 01.11, 06.22
Shetland Islands	90.13, 90.15, 91.14, 92.08, 93.07
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, 06.27, 06.37
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

Past Officers of the Irish Cruising Club

Commodores

1929 H. M. Wright
 1942 A. W. Mooney
 1950 M. A. Sullivan
 1953 J. B. Hollwey
 1954 R. P. Campbell
 1958 F. Cudmore
 1960 H. W. S. Clark
 1963 P. H. Greer
 1966 R. L. Berridge
 1969 J. D. Faulkner
 1972 R. H. O'Hanlon
 1975 D. N. Doyle
 1978 J. H. Guinness
 1981 P. J. Bunting
 1984 C. J. FitzGerald
 1987 J. Gore-Grimes
 1990 H. P. Kennedy
 1993 D. Nicholson
 1996 L. McGonagle
 1998 M. McKee
 2000 D.H. Fitzgerald
 2002 A.R. Baker

Vice-Commodores

1929 H. P. F. Donegan
 1941 A. W. Mooney
 1942 H. E. Donegan
 1947 P. O'Keelfe
 1948 M. A. Sullivan
 1950 J. B. Hollwey
 1953 R. P. Campbell
 1954 B. C. Maguire
 1956 F. Cudmore
 1958 H. W. S. Clark
 1960 P. H. Greer
 1963 C. Riordan
 1965 W. H. D. McCormick
 1967 J. D. Faulkner

1969 D. N. Doyle
 1971 R. H. O'Hanlon
 1972 P. J. Bunting
 1974 G. B. Leonard
 1976 J. M. Wolfe
 1977 A. D. Macllwaine
 1978 P. J. Bunting
 1980 G. Kenefick
 1982 C. J. FitzGerald
 1984 L. McGonagle
 1986 J. Gore-Grimes
 1987 H. P. Kennedy
 1989 D. H. B. FitzGerald
 1990 Arthur S. P. Orr
 1993 Brian Hegarty
 1996 Michael O'Farrell
 1997 Arthur Baker
 1999 T.C. Johnson
 2001 Donal Brazil
 2002 Peter Ronaldson
 2004 Cormac McHenry

Rear Commodores

1929 H. R. Wallace
 1930 A. W. Mooney
 1941 H. E. Donegan
 1942 D. Mellon
 1947 H. Osterberg
 1950 K. McFerran
 1951 R. P. Campbell
 1953 B. C. Maguire
 1954 F. Cudmore
 1956 H. W. S. Clark
 1958 P. H. Greer
 1961 C. Riordan
 1963 W. H. D. McCormick
 1965 R. L. Berridge
 1966 J. C. McConnell
 1968 J. H. Guinness

1970 R. H. O'Hanlon
 1971 R. J. Fielding
 1973 H. Cudmore
 1975 J. M. Wolfe
 1976 A. D. Macllwaine
 1977 J. M. Wolte
 1978 G. Kenefick
 1980 M. McKee
 1981 J. Gore-Grimes
 1983 L. McGonagle
 1984 M. McKee
 1986 H. P. Kennedy
 1987 M. R. Sullivan & D. H. B. Fitzgerald
 1988 B. Hassett & D. H. B. Fitzgerald
 1989 B. Hassett & A. S. P. Orr
 1990 Clayton Love Jnr & D. J. Ryan
 1992 Brian Hegarty & David Nicholson
 1993 Michael O'Farrell & David H.B. FitzGerald
 1994 Michael O'Farrell & P. Walsh
 1995 L. McGonagle & P. Walsh
 1996 Arthur Baker & Jarlath Cunnane
 1997 J. Cunnane & P. Ronaldson
 1999 P. O'Sullivan & J.C. Bruen
 2000 J.C. Bruen & P. Ronaldson
 2001 P. Ronaldson & P. Killen
 2002 T. Clarke & P. Killen

2003 T. Clarke & C. McHenry
 2004 J. Nixon & G. McMahan

Honorary Treasurers

1929 W. MacBride
 1948 G. B. Moore
 1964 N. Watson
 1973 L. Sheil
 1979 R. Shanks
 1984 D. O'Boyle
 1993 D. Brazil
 2001 A. Baker
 2002 B. McManus

Honorary Secretaries *

1929 H. B. Wright
 1933 D. Keatinge
 1935 R. P. Campbell
 1937 K. McFerran
 1941 D. Keatinge
 1944 M. F. Hally
 1948 T. J. Hanan
 1960 P. D. Morck
 1965 A. Dunn
 1977 P. J. D. Mullins
 1981 B. Hegarty
 1990 C. P. McHenry
 2003 R. Cudmore

* NOTE: From time to time there were acting Honorary Secretaries; the names listed are where the incumbent has held office for at least one year.

AN APPRECIATION

Admiral Sir Anthony Morton GBE KCB

Tony Morton died in May this year, aged 82. He had become a victim of Alzheimer's disease in 2000. Joining the Irish Cruising Club in 1970, he was very much an out-port member, living in the south of England. We rarely saw him at the club's various events as he was much abroad at sea of fulfilling various appointments on shore and abroad. He won the Stangford Cup in 1985 for a cruise in *Sun Foon* from Port Grimaund in the South of France through the canals to La Rochelle and on to Bursden, mostly single-handed. In 1989 he won the Round Ireland Navigation Cup, this time in *Lamorna III* for a totally single-handed effort done in three fortnightly tranches.

He joined the Royal Navy through Dartmouth in 1941. Spending much of his early service life on the Russian convoy route, he finished the war in the Far East where he witnessed

the Japanese surrender in Tokyo Bay. He was in command at Londonderry as Senior Naval Office Northern Ireland in 1968 and was promoted to rear-admiral in 1971. Every senior Naval Officer Northern Ireland in 1968 and was promoted to rear-admiral in 1971. Very senior appointments followed both at home and overseas and eventually promotion to full admiral. In retirement he was closely interested in various naval charities. A memorial service was held in the Church of St. Ann, HM Naval Base, Portsmouth, to which the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh sent representatives.

Anthony Morton was also a member of the Royal Yacht Squadron and the Royal Cruising Club. Reportedly "a hard man to crew for" he was described by a friend as a "monastic bachelor very much married to the sea".

A.S.P.Orr

Marie Claire meanders in Spain and Portugal 2005/06

Sean McCormack

As reported in Dunn's Ditties in the 2005 Annual, *Marie Claire* was left on the marina in Vilagarcia for the months of July and August 2005 while I went home to attend to some domestic chores. This is a popular and secure marina in the Ria de Arousa which is one of several Rias that make up this increasingly popular cruising area of Galicia.

Marie Claire is a Beneteau First 30 designed by Andre Mauric. She is a sturdy and sea-kindly boat that had extensive upgrading in preparation for this extended cruise. She is very much at the smaller size range of yachts sailing these waters and consequently requires tidy habits during long term cruising.

Vilagarcia to Faro in the Algarve, September 1 to November 10, 2005

Starting the second leg of our cruise, Michael McHugo, Rear Commodore of Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club, joined me for the first week of September 2005, on a very leisurely short hop down to Bayona, calling to Porto Pedras Negras, Isla Ons and Sangenjo. *Marie Claire* again went out to the magical Islas Cies.

During our stay in Bayona and after dinner one evening we had a nightcap in a small bar where we saw a notice behind the bar to the effect that the Ireland v France game was on TV. We both wished to see this game which was on the next evening, Wednesday September 7. We had earlier checked out several bars without success, to see if they were showing this crucial soccer match. Next evening, we arrived full of expectations for the game, to find a near empty bar and no game on TV. The sign was still behind the bar, but on checking, found it was for a Rugby International that had taken place last winter. What a let down!

After Michael departed, I was on my own for a few days and I went out to the beautiful and remote anchorage of Ensenada de Barra which is about three miles northeast of Islas Cies. The beaches here and in the adjoining Ensenada de Limens are unspoiled and stunning with good walking in the dunes and the pine scrub behind the beaches. I discovered that this area is popular with naturists and the young ladies present in no way detracted from the vista!

Killian and Brid Halpin joined me in Bayona for the period September 15 to October 4. During this time, after leaving Bayona, in summary, we visited Viana do

Castelo, Povia do Varzim, Baia de Sao Jacinto in Ria de Aveiro, Figueira da Foz, Nazare, Sao Martinho do Porto, Peniche, Cascais and Lisbon/Rio Tejo. The sailing was mixed with a very fresh wind on one day and light to moderate winds on most days resulting in a fair bit of motor-sailing. We also had bad fog on a couple of days and the new chart plotter was worth the cost on one day alone, getting us safely into Sao Martinho do Porto in a real peasouper.

During our passages south we particularly enjoyed our two day at anchor stay in the Baia de Sao Jacinto. All the surrounding area is very flat with a large number of salt pans. An incredible number of people spent Saturday and all Sunday night fishing from the pier that separates our lagoon anchorage from the Canal de Sao Jacinto. It was beautiful here at anchor and all the more memorable for the beef stew produced by Killian and washed down by nice Dao wine. The beef had been marinating for 24 hours in three-quarters of a bottle of red wine. What a waste of good drinking wine! On Sunday morning after a look around the small town where there are a number of small shops and restaurants we bought combined ferry and bus tickets to the very attractive city of Aveiro, population 55,000. This is a beautiful city with many canals and attractive buildings. We had a self-service lunch in a modern shopping centre where your full plate was weighed and you paid accordingly, €15.60 per kilo. This system was new to me. There was a huge open air, second-hand goods market taking place during the afternoon in a carnival atmosphere. There was a large selection of merchandise of every description



Marie Claire in Almerimar marina

Photo: Sean McCormack

and if you were into collecting memorabilia this was the place to be.

One of the highlights of the year for me was the private guided tour of the Sandeman Winery in Porto on the river Douro. This was arranged by Edward Dillon & Co. Ltd. the Sandeman Irish agents and my former employer. This historical area of Vila Nova de Guia with the closely clustered Port Warehouses climbing steeply up from the Douro should not be missed if you are in the area. Later, despite the sampling and hospitality, we took a bus tour of this architecturally beautiful and historic second city of Portugal. I had not been to Porto or indeed Portugal before and I fancied the idea of taking *Marie Claire* up the river for the visit, but this had to be aborted as the river mouth was temporarily closed due to major protection works at the entrance. We spent two days in Porto, travelling by bus and electric train from Pova do Varzim. We had left *Marie Claire* here on the marina after hearing that Leixoes marina was closed due to an Oil Refinery fire which badly damaged this popular marina. There is a lot of infrastructural development under way in this area, with new motorways, electric train lines and many other schemes, helped by EU aid.

In Figueira da Foz, three days after Porto, *Marie Claire* was diagnosed with what was called "Gin Deficiency" in other words, no gin on board. A replenishment of many items on board, saw us in the local supermarket which was out of gin. We then went to the large covered market within a quadrangle of shops facing the marina which seemed to sell everything except spirits. Mr. Halpin appeared in a state of shock, and shortly afterwards was nowhere to be seen, but about 20 minutes later reappeared clutching a 7/8 full bottle of local, cheap gin. In desperation, he had gone to a small restaurant in the market, where the girl spent ages in the store trying unsuccessfully to find a bottle of gin. Recognising a sad case, she then parted with the in use, opened bottle, from behind the counter for the sum of €8. Normal service restored!

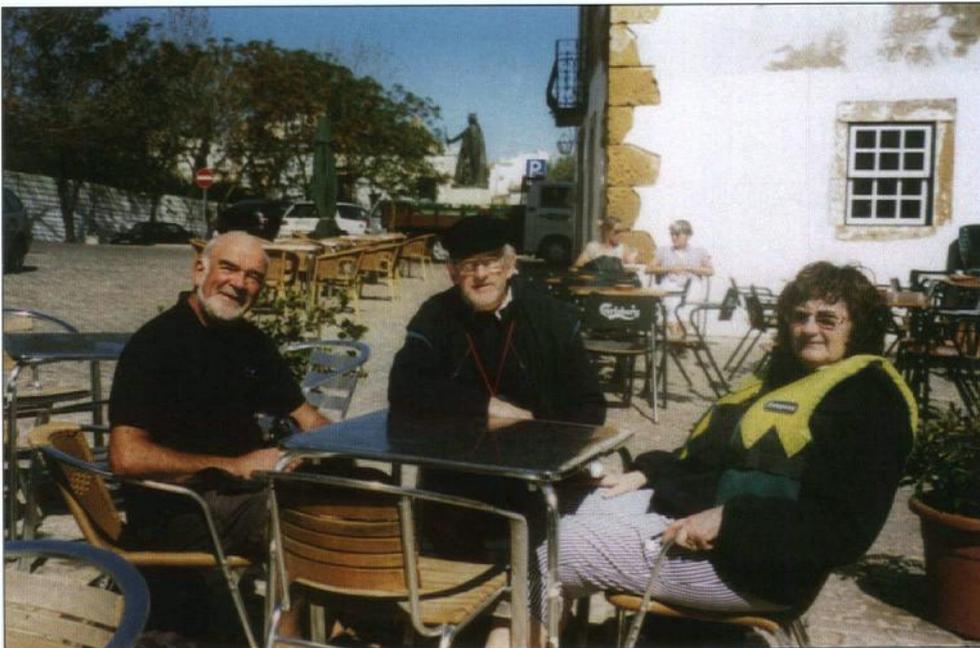
Nazare was our next port of call, from where the three of us went by bus to Fatima. In Killian's case I suspect this trip was in thanksgiving for deliverance from a gin drought! A not to be forgotten trip at a time of year when the crowds were a lot smaller than at the height of the season.

Another highlight was taking *Marie Claire* up the Rio Tejo to the heart of Lisbon and anchoring for lunch near the now closed Expo marina. The passage under the massive Ponte 25 de Abril suspension bridge and taking photos from the river of the 16th century Torre de Belem monument and the very impressive Monument to the Discoveries will always be a cherished memory. Another photo opportunity was while passing close to the tied-up QE 2 on our way up river. On our way back we noticed the sign saying not to approach closer than 50 metres and it would be my guess that the Portuguese naval ship anchored close by in the river, paid close attention to this small yacht flying the Irish flag and ignoring the sign. The next day we again visited Lisbon this time by train from Cascais. Much of the city was rebuilt following a serious earthquake and fire in November 1755 which left over 40,000 dead. We took a bus tour which revealed a lovely city with impressive squares and buildings and proud of its maritime past.

We found the large new marina in Cascais very convenient for getting the excellent train service into Lisbon and for crew changes. The 44 bus runs every half-hour from outside the train station in Lisbon to the airport. I made a quick three day trip home during this time. Cascais has the reputation of being the most expensive marina in Portugal, but as we were there off season I only paid €64.74 for our seven night stay. The town itself is a 15 minute walk from the marina and is pretty with plenty of restaurants and shops of every kind including a large Jumbo supermarket behind the train station. The Halpins and I were taken by car one evening to the highly recommended Mar do Inferno Restaurant which is a fish restaurant about a mile the opposite side of the marina from the town. The Halpins left in Cascais to be replaced by John Ahern complete with his trademark guitar and the restaurant was so good that we booked for John and myself to dine there four days later, to celebrate his arrival.

We departed Cascais on October 8 making calls into Cozinhadouro Bay, Sesimbra, Sines, and then a fabulous overnight sail to Lagos in the western Algarve. We rounded Cabo de Sao Vicente about three miles off, shortly after dawn on October 13, without any problem, getting into Lagos at 08.40. The night passage from Sines to Lagos was sailed in a northwesterly 3-4 under a clear, starry and 2/3 moon sky, in a sparkling sea and with little shipping to worry about. We met Jim Menton, *Caranja*, ICC who was wintering here and also fellow Howth Yacht Club members Tony and Rita Breen. This is a popular and large marina with all facilities, including excellent hard-standing storage and services provided by Sopromar.

The Portuguese Atlantic coast, unlike Galicia in the northwest, is low lying, with mile after mile of long white sandy beaches, washed by giant Atlantic rollers making this a coast to be treated with respect. No cosy inviting lunch-time stop coves here. Other features of this coast and indeed the Algarve coast are sandbars at



Sean, John and Emily in old walled town, Faro

many harbour entrances, making entry in heavy weather difficult or even dangerous. Swell is a significant factor also and gets equal prominence with wind strength and direction in all shipping forecasts.

We were now in tourist country, with the Algarve coast of high-rise hotels and apartments stretching over 80 miles to the east. Long white sandy beaches prevail, with some spectacular cliff scenery, giving way at the eastern end to lagoons and low lying marshy grounds and nature reserves – staging posts for migrant birds. Restaurant menus appear in five or six languages and every second person is speaking English. You can even buy your Irish newspaper on day of issue.

After two days in Lagos we headed back west to Enseada de Sagres, where we stayed only half an hour due to swell, before moving round the corner to a more comfortable Baleeira. We then headed back east to Portimao, where John Ahern and his wife Emily, who had joined us a few days earlier, left *Marie Claire*. On my own now for a few days, I made calls to Alvor, Albufeira and Vilamoura, where Vincent and Patricia Dromey joined the ship.

The next 10 days, the last of this stage of the cruise, saw us make landfall in Tavira, Ayamonte (Spain), Vila Real de Santo Antonio, up-river to Alcoutim, Ilha da Culatra and finally back to Faro.

The shallow anchorage in Tavira is connected to the town by a 2km causeway flanked by salt pans, and by the Rio Gilao which at high tide is navigable by dinghy. On our return from town after dark we discovered *Marie Claire* lying at an acute angle, making boarding and for Patricia, starting to prepare dinner, a challenging affair for an hour or so. We were anchored as per pilot instructions and can only conclude that silting has reduced depths.

The 22 mile trip up the Rio Guadiana that divides Spain and Portugal on the south coast, while flying both courtesy flags, was a great experience. We found it low-lying, very rural with just the odd house on either side. Navigation required concentration with a careful eye on the echo sounder and taking the river bends wide. We tied to a pontoon in Alcoutim on the Portuguese side and later took a very small ferry over to Sanlucar de Guadiana on the Spanish side, cost €1 each. Next morning we were awakened by a cock crowing. This area is recognised as a bird watcher's paradise and goats appear the prevalent farm animal. Memories of a country childhood! We encountered a lot of debris, especially tree branches, reeds and bamboo canes in the upper reaches of the river. Before departing Alcoutim, we spent some time clearing a large accumulation of debris from around the rudder. Returning down river, we again went into the very tidal marina in Vila Real de Santo Antonio. The staff are very helpful here and assist in the tricky berthing.

On Monday evening November 7, near high water, *Marie Claire* was guided from her Faro anchorage by Bruce, the owner of the Quinta do Progresso boatyard where she was to lie-up till the next

stage of the cruise. This was up a meandering and near-drying channel, where she was lifted out and placed on a cradle. This is a cheap, rather basic but secure hard standing area, close to the train station and city centre. There are about 80 yachts wintering here with some liveaboards. I go back out at the end of March 2006 to prepare for launching and then hopefully, heading east into the Med. to continue my retirement cruise.

A few observations on the trip so far. Fog can be a problem on the Atlantic coasts of Spain and northern Portugal. I found a very poor or non-existent Navtex signal on the whole Portuguese west and south coasts. We encountered a lot of lobster pots, particularly off towns and harbours. Some were well-marked with coloured flags, mainly on the west coast, but on the Algarve coast the markings were generally poor and in many cases, notably in the eastern Algarve, non-existent. From October 1 to May 1, the Portuguese marinas apply their winter rates which are only about one third of their high season rates. Boats wintering afloat with the owners on board, are a striking feature of the Algarve coast. I was fascinated with Portimao in particular, where large numbers appear to have gathered with signs up publicising forthcoming events and meetings. Nearly all have bicycles, wind generators, solar panels, and many have satellite dishes installed. On one long pontoon I saw at least 50 bicycles, not very nautical I say, but I'm sure the owners would say very necessary. Spain and Portugal do not have a reduced price for marine diesel like Ireland and the U.K. but then if the EU has its way we will not have it much longer either. In both countries diesel is very slightly cheaper than the Irish non-green rate.

Total mileage for this second part of the trip was 708 miles and another 31 anchorages visited.

Faro to Gibraltar, Morocco, Costa del sol and Costa Blanca March 29 to July 5 2006

March 29 saw me back out in Faro to spend a week getting *Marie Claire* ready for launching. John and Emily Ahern arrived on April 3 and we launched the next morning at high-water and were guided out to the Faro anchorage by Bruce the yard owner.

The next day, after provisioning, we headed east to Isla



Killian, Brid and Sean in Seville

Cristina marina and then over the next few days to Mazagon and Chipiona. Chipiona was our departure port to head up the Rio Guadalquivir to Seville to enjoy five days of Easter in this fabulous city.

Marina Yachting Sevilla was the only one of three city marinas with space available at this busy time of year and this was reflected in the marina fee of €29 a night for very basic facilities. The local taxis did well from us, as we were about 3.5km from the city centre and with no public transport.

John and Emily left the boat here to enjoy two nights in a Seville hotel and to soak up the Easter atmosphere. I was joined for the next two weeks by Killian and Brid Halpin of Howth Y.C.

We enjoyed Seville, taking a city bus tour and watching some of the many processions through the streets that take place all through the Easter period. It was 05.00 before we got to bed on Good Friday morning. Many thousands took part, as over 100 gilded pasos (floats bearing religious images) are carried or pushed through the streets by religious confraternities dressed in their hooded church attire, many in bare feet by way of penance. The highlight of the Easter period is the early hours of Good Friday morning when emotions run high as the images of the Virgen de la Macarena and the Virgen de la Esperanza of Triana emerge from their churches. Many hundreds of thousands are seated or stand at every vantage point covering the various routes. On Easter Sunday we attended a televised con-celebrated Mass in the Cathedral with a cardinal, four bishops and numerous priests.

During this period we hired a car and drove to El Rocio, famous for its annual Romeria, which sees almost a million people converge on this village where the streets and squares have only a sand covering. Many pilgrims travel from all over Spain, some on gaudily decorated ox-carts, to visit a statue in the church, believed to have performed miraculous healings since 1280.

Early on the Monday morning, men from nearby Almonte fight for the honour of carrying the statue in the procession, and the crowd clambers on to the float to touch the image.

After lunch, we motored the short distance to Parque Nacional de Donana.

This park is ranked among Europe's greatest wetlands. Together with its adjoining protected areas, the park covers in excess of 185,000 acres of marshes and sand dunes. As the land was never suitable for human settlers, wildlife was able to flourish. In 1969 the area became officially protected. In addition to a wealth of indigenous species, thousands of migratory birds stop over in winter when the marches become flooded again, after months of drought. The beautiful Pink Greater Flamingo thrives in the salty lakes and marshes here. The lynx, a shy nocturnal animal, is one of Europe's rarest mammals and about 60 pairs of Spanish lynx have found refuge in Dodana.

Killian's knowledge of Seville, El Rocio and Donana was infectious and contributed greatly to our enjoyment over this five-day Easter period.

Contrary to the Pilot information, we found the down river tide much longer favourable, resulting in a distance of 50 miles compared to 58 miles on the up river leg.

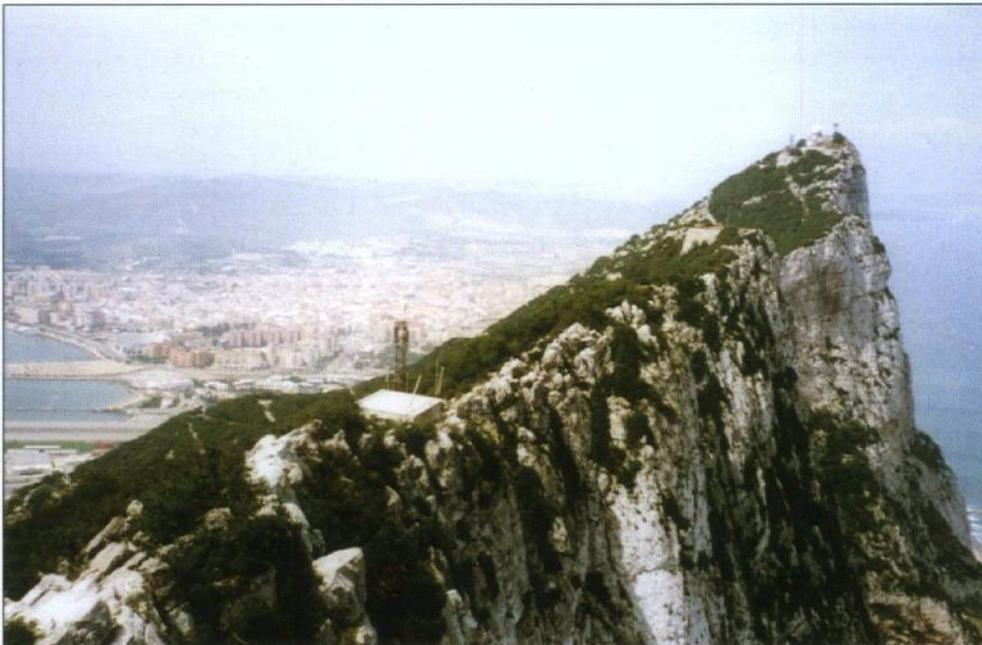
Back in Chipiona again, a bus visit to nearby Sanlucar de Barrameda, the home of Manzanilla wine, was obligatory. Satisfied with the quality, we had lunch and explored the town which has expanded greatly in recent years.

The next nine days were spent in a leisurely exploration of the Bay of Cadiz. We made calls to Rota, Porto Sherry, El Puerto de Santa Maria, and finally Cadiz itself. Porto Sherry is fine if you require serious work on your yacht, otherwise give it a miss as it is a soulless place, with many partly-completed buildings still standing after many years. We liked Rota with its narrow quaint streets and were lucky to attend the annual Flamenco Dress Parade exhibition which takes place annually about a week before the local Feria. This was a spectacular, colourful and exotic show, with music, free food and drink, held in a large roofless building. It is a joint effort by all the dress shops in the area. Also in Rota, we were lucky to meet with the chief poet of Wales, Gwyneth Lewis and her partner Layton from the yacht *Jumelia*. She is a very well-known lady with numerous books to her name.

Another good stop was El Puerto de Santa Maria from where we spent two days exploring Jerez and again checking the quality of the local brew.

The Halpins left us here on April 27 and we were joined the same day by Vincent and Patricia Dromey. That evening and night we attended the local Feria, which was a huge local carnival, very noisy but most colourful. All the local businesses and organisations had hospitality tents and despite the large crowd there was not a hint of trouble.

We spent a day in Cadiz and the same in Barbate, before dodging the heavy shipping in the Straits of Gibraltar, to arrive in Ceuta. There was a strong police presence here and we saw them dealing with six Moroccan men, who were obviously caught trying to get in to the EU illegally. The Spanish have pumped a lot of money into this enclave of North Africa and it shows everywhere in stark contrast with Morocco itself three or four



Gibraltar – a view from the top

Photo: Sean McCormack

miles down the road. We enjoyed our three night stay in Smir marina in Morocco and had a fascinating two days exploring the markets of Tetouan. Another world and a very helpful and friendly people.

On May 4 we had a very fresh sail in a good force 5 westerly across the Straits and into Bay Marina in Gibraltar, where we were given the last available berth. We spent three days here and found it both dirty and noisy. The old Sheppard's marina is now a building site while the new one is not yet opened. We found it expensive apart from diesel, and off-licence drink. Paying for water in the marina no doubt contributed to this impression. The cable car trip to the top and the Barbary Apes were the obligatory touristy things to do. All well worthwhile, if only for the views of three countries and two continents. From the top I counted a total of 29 ships at anchor.

We departed Gibraltar on May 7 and the next five weeks were spent on a very leisurely cruise of the Costa del Sol meeting up with friends in Benalmadena and Almerimar. Other ports visited during this period included, Sotogrande, La Duquesa, Estepona, Puerto de Jose Banus, Marbella, Fuengirola, Puerto de la Mona, Motril, Puerto de Aguadulce and Almeria where my wife Mary joined the ship for two weeks. A day trip by bus to Ronda was memorable if only for the mountain scenery on the way. A trip by train from Almeria to Granada for two days to celebrate Mary's birthday was certainly worth doing, as is getting away from the coast to experience the real Spain.

This period also had its frustrating times, as I waited five weeks to have a replacement antenna delivered from the UK by Nasa Marine, and in the end I had to arrange to have it delivered to my home in Dublin. Also an oil seal ordered from a local Yanmar agent failed to arrive, and all the information I could get was that it was on 'Back Order'. Luckily I was not harbour-bound while waiting delivery, and in future I will consider sourcing in Ireland and have it brought out by the next crew.

In the period June 13 until I went home on Wednesday July 5, I had the company of a number of friends for periods of from 7 to 10 days. Some of the ports checked out, during this time of leisurely coast hopping, included Garrucha, Aguilas, Mazarron, Cartagena, Los Nietos and Thomas Maestre in Mar Menor, San Pedro del Pinatar, Torrevieja, Alicante, Altea, Moraira, Calpe and Villajoyosa. We also made many swim/lunch anchor stops which were particularly enjoyable despite the constant problem of easterly winds and swell.

An overnight anchorage at the protected Island of Tabarca was a wonderful experience. The island was once an old pirate base. When they were driven out, a small fortified village was built to give it future protection and was then garrisoned by



The Church at El Rocio

Photo: Sean McCormack

Spaniards who were exchanged prisoners of war. The inhabitants have lived a very frugal, isolated life, depending on a small fishing fleet for survival. Nowadays, the hordes that arrive daily by ferry, mainly during the months of July and August, has resulted in a few large and out-of-character restaurants near the harbour. Thankfully however, the old walled village remains untouched. It is a small island with lovely walks and the snorkelling is particularly good.

I wished to take *Marie Claire* out of the water for the seven weeks I was at home, but found a surprising reluctance to give hard-standing facilities. Eventually I settled on Campello, where *Marie Claire* sits in a cradle until I go back out on August 21.

A few observations on the Costa del Sol and Blanca. Much more crowded and expensive than the Atlantic coast and the Algarve. The just-opened Norman Foster designed marina in Puerto de San Pedro del Pinatar, wanted €41 for a 10 metre berth, which was €1 more than Thomas Maestre in Mar Menor. These are high season rates, normally, June, July, August and part of September. At the other end of the scale I paid €6.14 in the marina in Mazarron on June 18. I suspect a factor in pricing is competition from other nearby marinas, and the availability of suitable safe anchorages nearby. I was also surprised at the relatively small number of boats at sea even though the marinas were all full with about 80% power boats.

The vast area of plastic covered greenhouses in the eastern end of the Costa del Sol is a real eyesore. Anchoring overnight or indeed during the day on this coast is nearly out of the question due to lack of coves or protection from the predominantly easterly and southerly winds we experienced. The situation improved somewhat on the Costa Blanca.

When I return late August I plan to head north as far as Barcelona and then winter somewhere on this coast, before heading east next year to The Balearics, Sardinia and Corsica. During this part of my cruise another 58 anchorages were visited, and only another 867 miles covered. This is how retirement should be...

Rafiki heads north up the Adriatic

Bill and Hilary Keatinge

Rafiki is a 42' Aphrodite ketch built in 1987 and owned by us since 1998. Our Log this year comes in two parts, the good and the bad, and chronologically the bad comes first, so here goes:

How not to Fit Out

Inevitably it comes to every boat owner – I would like to think we are not the only ones – that year when everything goes wrong: breaks, leaks, or expires. In April 2006, in Aktio Marine, Preveza, (Greece) such a period befell *Rafiki* and owners. On the face of it things looked good, our travel arrangements worked well, the enormously heavy bags had not incurred any charges, the hire car was waiting and *Rafiki* looked great with her newly painted Awlgrip carmine red stripes glistening in the sun. There was a new toilet seat, new Lofrans windlass, new saloon windows, well what more could one want?

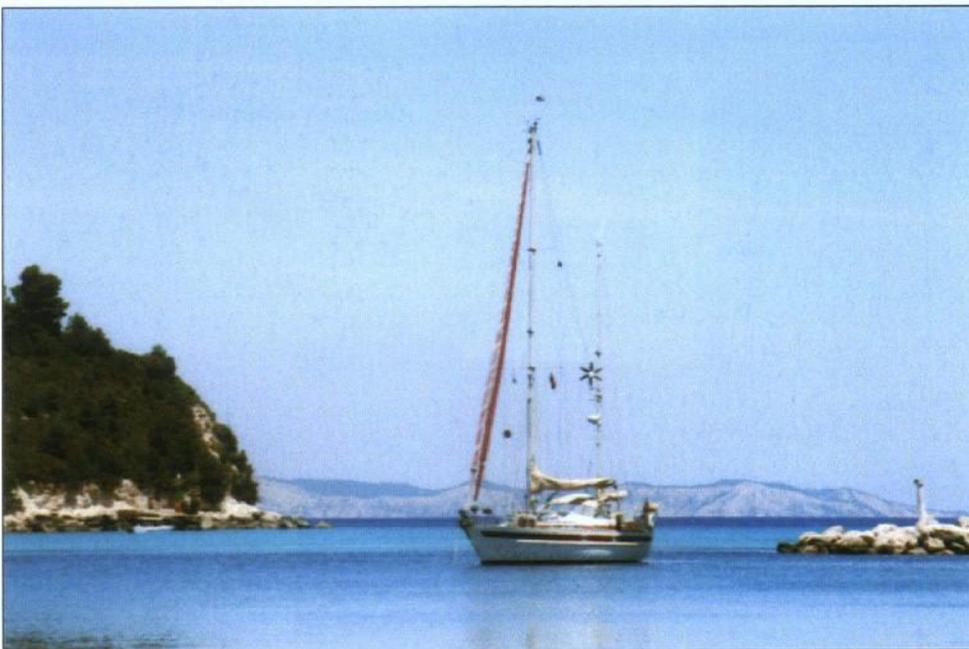
It began with a drip, the evidence looked alarmingly like the water tank, plus the fresh water pump had totally seized. Not to worry, we would go on our planned land cruise of ancient sites and the Aktio team would see to the modern workings of *Rafiki*. Good news... the leak was from the gauge into the tank and that was easily resealed. The boat was still on the hard. "Best to fill the water tank right up and check". Chatting away I took the water hose across the boat, opened the deck fitting, water in.....shout from Bill on the ground – black looking overflow streaming down the new antifouling – water into full diesel tank. End of the world? Well not quite but pretty close. Ours is one of those boats designed by persons who go no closer to boating than the drawing board and there was no drain or

inspection hatch on the fuel tank so it required some ingenuity to a) access and b) inspect. By draining half the tank and after several checks it was deemed in the clear, a modern water dissolvent chemical was added to the next 160 litres of diesel, just in case.

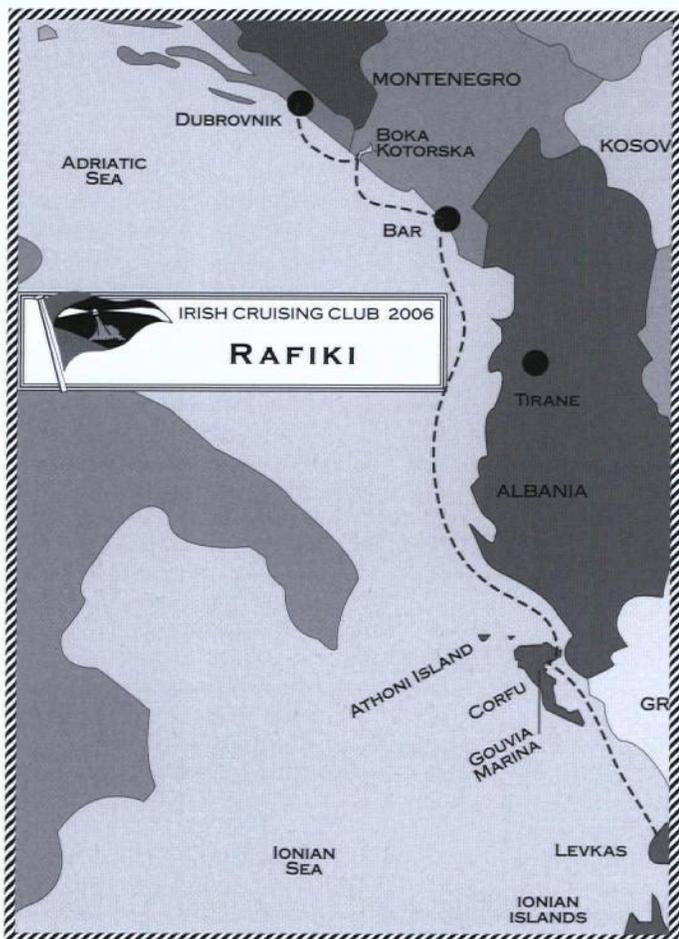
The boat was launched, the engine run for three hours and all seemed well. Wind piped up but we had only 0.3 miles to go across to the town quay where the new chain and anchor would be properly stowed. With some difficulty in the fresh afternoon breeze, we were pushed off the lee side of the slipway and Bill called that I should have the anchor ready for launching, just in case... correction... have the anchor and chain ready for launching NOW, the engine had failed and the shallows were only a couple of cables downwind. I found the end of the chain, tied it round a cleat but as it was not round the gypsy, not stowed in the well, it did the inevitable and ran at that frightening speed that only 60m of 3/8ths galvanised can. Unfortunately when the chain *snapped* out that last few links, my hand was between it and the anchor-well door – result, blood everywhere – on the new windlass, the teak decks, me. But there was some consolation, we were well anchored, with plenty of scope. Help was summoned, a dinghy launched and Vasso (from the yard office, originally trained as a nurse) drove me off to the hospital in Preveza and quietly saw that this totally non-Greek speaking, blood spattered foreigner was well looked after. Six stitches later I was back on board to sit it out with Bill 0.1 miles off the shore until the wind abated and we could be pushed back to dock.

Now the tank would have to be completely drained and it was later the opinion that the water dissolvent had worked not just on any remaining water but on years of muck on the tank bottom as well. We were encouraged to go and see more ancient sites, especially as the injured one was pretty incapacitated, not to mention the poor psychological state of both skipper and crew. Several hundred kilometres and ditto of digital photo frames we returned for a second launch, another tankful of diesel and... yes, we made it safely 0.3 miles to the town quay.

We were dogged by more problems over the next few weeks but all was not doom and gloom. The *Oleander of Howth* fitting-out and early-cruise-crew (Brian with Messrs Bryce, Bourke and Bunting) gave much support, Mervyn Hall on *Baily of Howth* gave council from Nidri (and lined us up in front of a big screen for the Munster final) and on Saturday



Rafiki's favourite Ionian anchorage – Lakka, Paxos



very peaceful and once through the weed, good holding. North to Corfu and Gouvia Marina: here we were fortunate to have been given the name of Klaus Meyer (6947072616 or 2661091632) who helped us with our final (for the moment...) two problems. On Friday 2nd June, victualled, wine and watered we checked out of Greece at the marina, without hassle.

We had two destinations in mind, depending on the conditions, Brindisi or Bar in Montenegro (from Gouvia 115 and 170 miles respectively). We plotted a waypoint about 67 miles from the northeast corner of Corfu which would be the deciding moment. We would keep 13/14 miles off the Albanian coast for safety and estimated that at 6 knots it would take 28 hours. We also had the option of breaking the journey by overnighing in the small island of Orthoni, 40 miles north of Corfu, always keeping in mind that the main anchorage is open to the south; from there it is 87 miles to Brindisi and 145 miles to Bar. Two considerations came heavily to mind: 1: the weather generally, and, 2: alternative shelter should a strong northerly come in. We had almost too many forecasts, some contradictory (Greek VHF, Navtex, German Long Range, Text forecast (for UK mobiles) and the Marina Internet forecast). We hoped to sneak up north on a west-southwesterly, but what we did not properly take on board was the importance of 'isolated thunderstorms' mentioned on the Navtex. On balance it seemed the low pressure on the west side of the South Adriatic was moving northeast, hopefully giving west-southwesterlies before the standard northwesterly returned. The barometer was rising slowly. We estimated a weather window in our favour of about 36 hours.

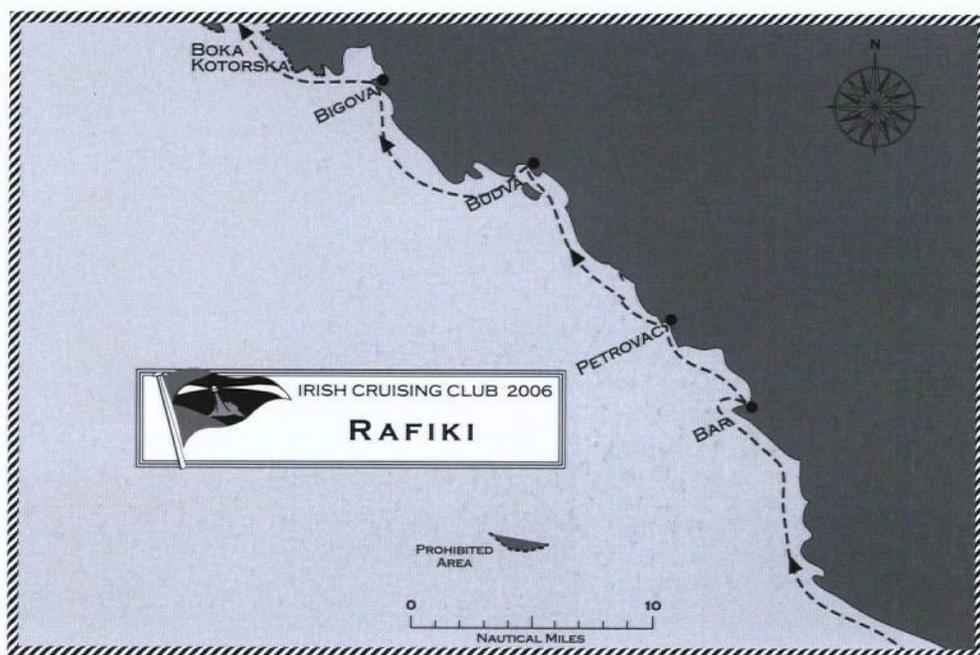
Passage to Bar, Montenegro – 2nd/3rd June

Not wanting to arrive anywhere after dark if we could help it, we left at 10.00 into a cool and very light northerly. We hoisted the main as we cleared the end of Corfu and got a little help from the northerly. More west in the wind by 14.00 but even lighter; there was mention of gales in north and central Adriatic. As we headed north to our midway point we crossed tracks with a Dutch X boat heading for Orthoni, we would cruise in company with them later. By 18.00 the wind was southwest force 2. Vodafone Albania was sending welcoming texts and at 19.20 with all working well, including the Autohelm (one of our earlier problems), we decided (early) to head for Bar and 'Waypoint 19' showed 105 miles to go. A light

13th May the first gathering of the Greek ICC Chapter raised their glasses to the Club on board Terry Johnson's *Nyabo* at the marina in Levkas. To this event Mervyn arrived in his new toy, a sinister grey 22ft ex-Commando rib, powered by 150 horse inboard engine; the rest of us were in walking range. An excellent evening was had by all.

Leaving Greece

After much soul-searching we have decided to head to northern climes again, 2006 is our ninth season in the Med and maybe the overwhelming flood of charter boats and the lack of decent sailing are getting to us. *Rafiki* is heading for Slovenia and a truck awaits her there mid-October when she will be transported to Breskens in the Netherlands for the winter. So at the end of May, with some regret, we bade goodbye to the Ionian and headed first for Gouvia Marina in Corfu via one of our favourite anchorages Lakka, on Paxos. Here, as we are unlikely to want it for some time, (ohhhh dear... if ever again), we can publicise the best spot in the bay: as you enter the harbour, skirt the shallows turn sharply to port and drop your hook just within the shelter of the small groyne out from the picturesque old school. There is much less swell here and apart from the watertaxi we have always found it





Monasteries in the Gulf of Kotor, Montenegro

wind came up from dead astern and we took down the main and were making 6.7 knots under engine. We had an excellent dinner and by 22.00 we settled into 2-hour watches, Bill taking us up to midnight.

At this stage, far out to the west lightning was flickering but the moon and stars looked down through some light but very high cloud. The staysail had been rolled out which helped to steady us and the revs were cut to 1900. By 02.00 the wind was force 4 plus. In the gusty conditions we rolled in some staysail as we uneasily watched four thunderstorms strung out to the west. By 04.00 and there was no escaping it, fast astern a big thunderstorm was heading our way. Thunder and cracking lightning, "Noddy" the Nokia was turned off and put in the oven for safety; oilskins, lifejackets and harnesses on for the two of us. Heavy rain, big roly seas, gusts up to 30 knots, a violent storm. An hour later and the wind was south-southwest force 2, but squalls came and went; we were wet, miserable and working hard at the wheel as we motor-sailed north with 38.7 miles to our destination. Even the dawn was reluctant to break and there was little light until a feeble grey, chill, damp day appeared about 07.00. The wind was shifted to the east and our speed both through the water and across the ground was 6 knots plus. We were now closing the Montenegrin coast and the wind piped up to force 5/6; agreeing that we were not purists, we continued to motor-sail. But there was no respite as we approached the entrance to Bar, the easterly was up to 30 knots and the seas, left over from the previous night, were even bigger than before. We rolled round the headland with its distinctive storage tanks, unfriendly white caps sitting menacingly on the hills and then at 11.00, almost on the dot, unbelievable peace, and finally, friendly

welcoming hands and joker boat to help us alongside at the marina. They told us later that we had looked quite 'tired'!!

Montenegro

The check-in was slow but friendly and we had to purchase a month's sailing permit, which with other taxes amounted to €80.00; we had to check in and out of each port we visited, a bore but not too much of a hassle. More storms came through the next day as the bells of the Orthodox churches rang out for the celebration of Pentecost and we were glad we had no pressing engagements. The Dutch boat *Xtraordinary* came in and had tales of gales and waterspouts round Orthoni and an even more rugged trip. They spent one night in Durus (Albania) and had to pay an extortionate amount for a permit and Peter actually got out his

hacksaw to make the unfinished quayside a bit safer for his lovely boat. We heard recently that the Albanians have said they will not permit any yachts in their waters for the next couple of years.

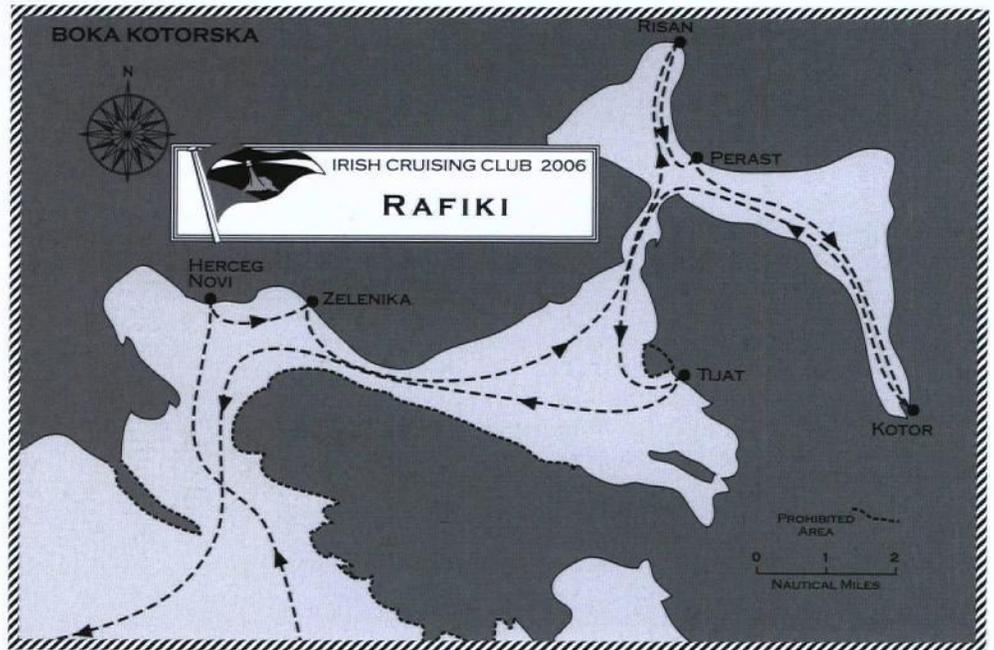
'New' Bar is a pretty utilitarian town, not a place of great architectural wonders, but it had been almost completely destroyed in the 1979 earthquake. With the Dutch couple we hired a taxi and went up into the hills behind to visit 'old' Bar. A completely different other-world feel about it, the Muezzin called out from one of at least two mosques and we had lunch in a tiny, spotlessly clean and very oriental restaurant which served Turkish style mezzes and no alcohol. The Turks conquered the area in the 16th century and the ties are still strong. A short walk uphill and we wandered round the remains of a city that also saw rule under Byzantines, Slavs and Venetians. 1979 took its toll here too but those Middle Ages



Menace over the marina at Bar, Montenegro

buildings are not so easy to shake down and restoration projects are in hand.

It is 16 miles up the Montenegrin 'Riviera' to Budva. We had no wind at all and motored passed Sutomore and Petrovac – both resort towns with long beaches, hotels and impressive mountain backdrops behind. One can anchor but there is little or no shelter and the gusts can be violent off the mountains. We did not stop at Sv.Stefan but it did look idyllic; this tiny rocky island once harboured those fleeing Turkish invasions and it was built up on the proceeds of raids on Turkish ships. Today it is given over to the tourists (You can find a 4-bedroom apartment there for about €70 a night). One can anchor off the beach on either side of the isthmus, good in settled weather but again there is not much shelter. The approach to Budva is simpler than the Pilot makes out, the islet of Sv. Nikola is left to starboard and two sets of lit buoys mark the channel; there is a sector light on the shore (this we could not test as it was full daylight). Visitors are accommodated on the old town quay, laid lines, power and water but not a great deal of space, we were squashed in between two power boats and had to ignore the squeaking fenders of the monsters on either side. A building with Harbour office and facilities was being built and should be finished by now. The old town is delightful, very well restored after the earthquake and given over to up-market boutiques and jewellery stores inside the walls, plus restaurants and stunning views. Like all this coast there have been many influences, early Christian, Byzantine, the Venetians of course and in the early part of the last century the Austrians. There were busloads of tourists during the day – mostly French during our two day stay.



An even calmer day (Variable force 1-2) for our 16 miles motor to the entrance of Kotor; this is guarded by three castles, one on the islet in the middle. The western peninsula, Prevlaka, is Croatian and being very strategic, ownership is still disputed; we kept to the Montenegrin side going in. This large bay, (or should one call it a fjord?) is in three parts joined by narrow (about 0.5 mile) passages. The first centres round the busy town of Herceg-Novti, not very good for yachts but close to the ship wharf at Zelenika which is now little more than a customs post and we can recommend this for checking in or out. The shoreline on the southern side is interesting with its submarine holes and naval remains and at least one little village with a taverna. We hear that the Irish are busy seeking out holiday homes in this area as it opens up. Through the first narrows at Kumbor to the second bay, with the town of Tjijat at its heart; this is largely military, so one should keep the camera discreet and on the north side there is a working shipyard. So far, interesting, but nothing to prepare one for the third bay. Through the second narrows, stiff head wind, gusting 25 knots, watch out for the ferry... and then... what a panorama. A wall of bare, steep, high mountain dwarfing the shoreside towns, it just takes your breath away when you emerge and come face to face with it. The bay is like a butterfly, Risan lies at the top of the northern 'wing', Perast holds position in the middle and Kotor at the end of the southern side is still not visible. The bay narrows as it falls south to Kotor itself, and once you turn that final corner it is very protected. There are laid lines and power and water on the town quay, €34 a day, but no facilities; it is possible to anchor off in about 10m and this we did on our third night. Kotor is wonderful, another walled city, owing much to Venetian influence. There are several very attractive squares, lined with palaces, where you can wile away the time and the Roman Catholic cathedral of St. Tryphon (consecrated on June 19, 1166) is one of the oldest and most beautiful examples of Roman architecture along the Adriatic Sea. It contains a treasury of artifacts. There are spectacular ruins of a mountain-top castle which can be visited by the very fit and a church and viewpoint halfway up for the *would-be-fits*; the colourful bustling market beckons daily just across the road from the quay and we enjoyed a meal at the Galleon Restaurant which overlooks the water a short walk away.

On day three we cast off from the quay and had a potter round the bay. The star attraction for the photographer was



The Adriatic is not all plain sailing. Hilary on watch

undoubtedly the two monasteries perched on two tiny islets opposite Perast. The Monastery of St. George (he really did get around....) & the Perast cemetery perched on a natural island, while the Church of Our Lady of the Rock is built on a pile of stones built up by the faithful over the centuries; it has special meaning for sailors in distress. We had a look at Risan, a tiny impossibly crowded harbour and we decided the Roman villa would have to wait for another day. We anchored off Kotor for our last night and had a wonderful view of the illuminated path up to the castle. We came alongside at Zelenika (12 miles from Kotor) to check out, there are very large ship-sized rubber fenders and the bollards are quite far apart – long lines were needed. Forms were stamped and €10.00 was required (not quite sure for what, maybe a Sunday tax!). There were white caps in the distance as we made across to the Prevlaka headland and we rolled out the genoa in the hopes of a run north and we did have a few minutes under sail, but typically, only 13 before the wind died and we rolled north under engine to Cavtat in Croatia.

Croatia

Cavtat we were told is a much easier place than Gruz to do the paperwork for Croatia and it is. This is a small lively tourist town and very crowded – at 16.05 we got the last slot on the quay and, we were lucky that there was little swell, it can be very nasty in the prevailing wind and the better option is to anchor off if possible. It is strongly advisable, should I say: *essential*, to make landfall in Croatia at a designated Port of Entry, fly the Q flag on arrival and make straight for the Harbour Office. A cruising permit for one year cost just under €200 (1,660kuna) and one has to state how many crew are due to join the boat (calculated on double the number of berths + 30% – so *Rafiki* with seven berths could have 17, we think...). We understand that we only have to check in again when crew are joining and leaving us. The Port Police patrol the anchorages checking on papers and it is not unknown for owners to find themselves making court appearances and paying heavy fines for not having all in order.

So, paperwork completed, we headed for the big ACI Marina up the river at Dubrovnik, our base for trips into the

city. Here we had need of the Services Department and they were very prompt, helpful, and professional and even had a sense of humour! The leak in the freezer's salt water cooling pipe was soldered on the pontoon, and the gunge in the freshwater engine cooling was flushed through; this being the continuation of a very long saga which involved a €750 new calorifier, which we are sure we did not need.... But we are older, wiser and poorer now! Along the pontoon in their permanent berth George and Lynne Ralston were also flying the ICC flag feeling less than *Insouciance* as they waited for repairs to be completed before they set off for the Ionian.

The next few weeks were spent in the southern part of Croatia, among the islands of Mjlet, Brač, Korčula, Hvar, Solta. We mostly anchored (our favourite spot being off the Monastery on the island of Badija, very close to Korčula); we know that the big marinas are likely to be full at weekends which are change-over days, except for the Marina at Marina, (easy for Split airport) which is operating from day to day under the threat of closure and ACI Palmizana on the tiny island opposite Hvar which is more likely to be busy midweek. There are very big charter fleets (hundreds of cheap Bavarias) and one needs to be 'on watch' as they come to roost in the evening, this can be amusing watching – if you are not threatened. For our midsummer break we took the boat out of the water at Marina Frapa at Rogoznica, this is by far the cheapest and safest option. We hope that the midsummer madness (mainly speaking Italian) will have peaked when we return late August, then we will move slowly north to Slovenia via the Kornati Islands and Venice.

<i>Some Chart Distances</i>	<i>Miles</i>
Levkas – Corfu (Gouvia)	70
Corfu(Gouvia) – Bar	165
Bar – Budva	16
Budva – Kotor (entance)	16.4
Kotor (entrance) – Kotor town	15
Kotor/Zalenika – Cavtat	36
Cavtat – Dubrovnik	12

Pat Lyons writes about a novel and exciting way to attend a rugby match

In May I was invited to join a group of fellow Munster rugby fanatics to sail to Cardiff to attend the European Rugby Cup final between Biarritz and Munster on Saturday, 25th, aboard Adrian Power's (RCYC) Jeanneau 49, *Windhover*. The weather in the week leading up to departure was atrocious, and some serious doubts as to whether we would make the trip at all, were voiced. With the weather abating somewhat on Thursday 18th, we departed Royal Cork at 20.30 with a revised cruise plan that had us bound for Milford Haven. This was to save us some 10 hours in uncomfortable conditions, with British Rail acting as relief vessel for the remainder of the journey. The crew comprised Adrian Power (Skipper – RCYC), Tony Mahon (RCYC), Brian Curtis (Cobh Sailing Club), Kevin Horan (Monkstown Bay Sailing Club) and myself. The trip to Milford Haven took some 14 hours, with southwest wind speeds averaging in excess of 35 knots, with the maximum gust recorded at 45 knots (T). Facilities at Milford Marina are excellent.

The match result brought an end to over ten years hard journeying by an army of Munster fans and made our voyage seem tame in comparison. We returned to *Windhover* after the game and departed for Cork on Sunday morning. The early part of the return leg featured southeasterly winds of force 5 to 6, but, as forecast, veered to a northwesterly direction by midnight gusting again to force 8, with wet and cold conditions. We arrived back in Cork around dawn on Monday morning after a difficult if somewhat satisfying passage. Overall mileage logged was 270 miles, over a total of 32 hours at sea.

Harry Donegan – A Remembrance

In 1930, a year after the foundation of the Irish Cruising Club, the first edition of the club's "Sailing Directions for the South and West Coasts of Ireland" was published. This was compiled by the first Vice Commodore, Mr H.P.F. Donegan. In 1946 his son Harry ("Young" Harry) revised and greatly amplified the text and plans. The care and precision which he brought to this work made it a model for subsequent Club sailing directions. In a dedication to the publication, Lord Riverdale of the Royal Cruising Club advised yachtsmen cruising in the south and west of Ireland to "take this book in your hand, pay heed to prudent seamanship and try it yourself, with gratitude to those who have taken the trouble to compile it. You will bring back

good memories." So excellent and comprehensive was this book that a revised third edition was not published until 1962. Sadly "Young" Harry was not available for this next edition; he died tragically in a boating accident in 1947, at the age of forty-one.

The following essay on "Young" Harry Donegan is written by his son Brendan, to whom I am deeply indebted for his permission to print it; it was originally published by the Hudson Review in 2001 and is re-published here with the author's full copyright permission.

I am also indebted to Donal Lynch and to Iain McAllister who drew it to my attention.

The Editor

The Punt

Brendan Donegan

Not even submarines lurking off the Irish coast during World War II stopped my father, Harry Donegan, from raising sail and going out to play with the wind. He was a lawyer, but his passion was sailing, and he lost no opportunity to share it with his wife and six children. Every Saturday during the summer he would take us sailing in Cork Harbour or in the ocean off the southern coast. Personal use of cars was forbidden because of a petrol shortage. He found devious ways to work around these wartime travel restrictions as he drove our black Ford Prefect, loaded with children, the twelve miles between our home in Cork and the village of Crosshaven, where our sailboat was moored. One of my earliest memories was hiding down behind the car seats when my father drove through the villages of Douglas and Carrigaline, and watching him don his official-looking Maritime Inscription cap that made him look like someone going about important wartime business.

Gull, the family sailboat – or yacht as we called it then – was anchored at a mooring in the Owenabue River about 100 yards out from the Royal Munster Yacht Club – now the Royal Cork – in Crosshaven. She was an elegant, white, gaff-rigged cutter, forty-seven-feet long. To get to her, we would use a dinghy or "punt." This small wooden rowboat with a lapstrake hull had a snug seat in the stern, one in the middle where my father sat to row, and another near the bow where I loved to sit. From there I could see where we were going, and I knew that I would not get wet if my father "caught a crab" – accidentally skimming the oar blade over the water instead of going down deep. He would make two trips to bring the whole family out to *Gull*. If the punt was fully loaded, the waves would sometimes lap close to the gunwales. We were warned time and time again to never stand up in the punt, and always to be careful in and about it.

One year after the war, when I was six, my father bought a black sailboat named *Sibyl* which had a scarlet bottom and its name inscribed in gold leaf on its overhanging stern. Black boats are considered unlucky. When she was being built in 1909, *Sibyl* fell off her blocks and killed the foreman of the boatyard. But my father wasn't superstitious. He bought her because she was a good boat for taking his family sailing on Saturdays and for winning races on Sundays.

My father was known as a careful sailor who steered his boat clear of treacherous rocks and tidal races, and who prudently reduced sail when the winds came up. Unlike many of the members of the yacht club, he never took a drink while on the water or even while on land. I never remember him ever raising his voice in anger or in fear. He was, as my mother described him, "a perfect gentleman" – unlike his own father, also a sailor and a lawyer, who was renowned for his belligerence.

I loved to go sailing with my father. I enjoyed feeling the force of the wind as it filled the sails, and the heeling of the boat in the gusts, the up and down movements as we rode the waves, the creaking of the mast and the rigging, the smell of the varnish and the tarred hemp ropes, and the sounds of the waves breaking back from the bow as the boat forged its way ahead. I especially liked to sit in the cockpit and watch the punt towed behind, following faithfully, bouncing left and right as it danced in *Sibyl's* wake.

I mastered how to bring the punt alongside by pulling hand-over-hand on the rope, or "painter," attached to a ring at its bow. I learned to tie my knots, especially the difficult bowline. I discovered how to recognize when a squall was about to hit *Sibyl* by the telltale "cat's-paws," ripples of wavelets that the wind made on the water.

Gentleman sailor

When heavy squalls came, my mother would herd the younger children below into the cabin, out of the way. My older brothers would clunk along the deck above, hauling on lines, and shouting to each other in the wind as they struggled to douse the flapping sails. The angry water rushed by outside the portholes, surging up on deck. My father stood firm in the cockpit, silhouetted against the sky, his eyes intensely focused on the sails, as he nestled the tiller under his arm to keep the boat on course. With his yachting cap, his collar and tie and his neatly trimmed moustache, he was the essence of a gentleman sailor. I felt secure when he was at the helm. I knew that he would bring us through all this commotion and deliver us safely home.

Sailing on Saturdays was a special treat because it was the only time, with the exception of the Sunday evening meal, that

we, the younger children, spent with our parents. During the rest of the week, we were under the control of a nurse who kept us out of the way by taking us on long walks on fine days, and confining us to the nursery with a linoleum floor on those frequent Irish rainy days. My memories of my father in my earliest years are all connected with sailing. It was my only view into his life.

Sometimes he would take us out to sea though the narrow neck between the lofty headlands of Carlisle and Camden Forts and out beyond the hungry rocks near Roche's Point lighthouse. If the winds and tides were right, we would sail to Robert's Cove, or to Myrtleville, or to Fountainstown, or to my favorite, Ringabella. We would anchor off and row ashore in the punt and have a picnic on the beach. I would make castles with turrets, moats and drawbridges in the firm white sand until the tide came in and swept them away.

When the day was done, we would return to the anchorage off Crosshaven. In those long lightsome Irish summer evenings when the sun doesn't sink until after ten o'clock, the family would linger onboard at the mooring. While my mother made tea on a Primus stove and prepared egg sandwiches, I would climb into the punt, making sure that it was safely tied on with the painter. This was my lifeline, my umbilical cord to my father's boat. Taking hold of the oars, I would row the punt around and around in circles, imagining that I was captain of my own craft. Lying back listening to sounds of water lapping against the hull, I loved to watch the other sailboats moored in the river. When the tide was flooding in or ebbing they would all line up like soldiers in a parade. When the tide turned they would fall at ease, lying this way and that way. The tall, sleek, sky-blue sloop, *If*, was nearest; she always seemed to turn with the tide first. The white ketch *Marchwood Maid* was moored further up the river near *Setanta*, with her dark brown hull. *Elsa*, owned by Uncle Tom, my mother's older brother, lay in the deeper water near the mouth of the river.

The tang of seaweed

Looking ashore to Crosshaven, I could see the smoke lazily rising above the slate roofs from the town's many chimneys. Snatches of conversation carried out across the water, especially when mothers called out to their children to come in for their supper. I watched the cormorants – "billy divers" we called them – dive for fish between the moored boats. I heard the sharp cry of the curlew on the foreshore of Currabinny across the river from the town. If the tide was out, I could smell the tang of seaweed and the musky odour of the mud flats, and hear the clicking sounds as the barnacles and mussels closed up their shells. As the daylight began to fade, I watched from afar as the townspeople ashore prepared for the night. One by one the upstairs windows lit up. Just as the sun was about to go down, a slight tug on the painter ended my solitude. My father would pull the punt back in so that the family could go ashore.

When I went to bed after a long day sailing, I could still feel the movement from the boat in my head. I would fall asleep gently rocked into my dreams by the waves. One night, however, I had a frightening nightmare. I was alone, standing up in the punt, crying out, and the punt was drifting slowly out

to sea. I had no oars to row with, and worse still, no painter to throw to anyone. I woke up bolt upright on my bed, terrified and wailing loudly. My mother and father rushed to my room and said that I had the nightmare because I had eaten a big supper too soon before I went to bed. Food was the culprit. Boats in our family could do no harm. Certainly they could not be blamed for night terrors.

One morning when I was seven and a half, I awoke to hear my mother sobbing loudly in her bedroom. It was early July in 1947. We were at a summer bungalow near Myrtleville owned by my mother's family. My father and my eldest brother Jim, who was thirteen, were away on *Sibyl* on a race between Dun Laoghaire, near Dublin, and Clyde in Scotland. By the time I got dressed, my mother had left the house. I looked out from the living room bay window that faced the sea and I saw her about half a mile away on the cliff road that leads to Fountainstown, walking slowly with her brother Tom. He had his arm around her shoulder. When they returned, all the children were gathered and bundled into Uncle Tom's streamlined American car. My mother sat silent in the front seat.

We drove away, and I still didn't know what was going on. About a mile up the road, just past Myrtleville, we pulled over to the side. I recognized my Uncle Frank's car, an Adler with its running boards and big headlights, which had stopped on the other side of the narrow road. My mother's sister Pat came rushing to the passenger's side of our car, and opened the front door and hugged my mother. They were both crying. I had never seen grown-ups cry before. I saw a single tear on the windshield. I stared at it for a long time. A diamond sparkling in a field of gloom. It didn't move or flow. Tears are supposed to stream down the face, I thought. They don't just fly through the air.

I asked my ten-year-old sister Hilda sitting beside me in the back seat to tell me what was going on.

"Daddy fell out of the punt," she said.

I had seen people fall out of a punt before, so I naturally assumed that he just got wet.

"Didn't he climb back in?" I asked.

"No" she said.

At seven and a half, I was too young to know what dead was, that death was forever.

I didn't miss my father at first. The focus of grieving was on our mother; she was the one who had lost her husband and companion. She was the one who wore widow's black. No one seemed to notice that the children had also lost their father. That was an era of large families in Ireland in which children were to be seen and not heard. Like others at the time, I saw myself part of a monolithic group of six children, not as an individual entitled to his own feelings and emotions, or to any special treatment or consideration because his father had drowned. Each of us had to learn to cope with the loss in his own private way.

I tended to withdraw. Rather than travel home in the afternoon with my father-full schoolmates on the bright and airy double-decker buses in Cork, I would pick my way, all three miles of it, through docklands, alongside the grimy wall of the Bandon Railway Station, with its shrieking steam engines, around by the acrid tanks of the Cork gasworks, along lonely backroads and dark lanes, through a misty quarry and



Old Harry and Young Harry aboard *Gull*, manoeuvring before the start of the Falmouth-Clyde race in July 1936.

Picture from *To Sail the Crested Sea* by W.M. Nixon

across damp fields. I retreated to the shadows, content to be an outsider looking in.

It took me years to put together an accurate picture of what happened out on the water the night my father drowned. His death seemed to be shrouded in secrecy. Neither my mother nor brother Jim would talk about it. This was something that the younger children didn't need to know. I had heard some vague story about someone standing up in the punt, causing it to capsize. Ten years later, I read newspaper accounts of the accident and the inquest that followed.

In the darkness after midnight on Saturday, the fifth of July, my father, my brother Jim and the other three crew members were returning in the punt to *Sibyl*, anchored 400 yards from the shore in Dun Laoghaire Harbour. They had been ashore for a meeting to plan the race to Clyde. The waxing moon was hidden behind storm clouds. A westerly gale had hit the area earlier in the evening, and there was a severe chop in the Harbour. About halfway out to *Sibyl*, my father decided to turn back.

Capsized

When the punt was being turned around, two large waves came over the side in quick succession. The punt filled and capsized, throwing everybody into the cold water. With five people clinging to the rounded bottom, it rolled over again, tossing my father away from his only handhold. One crew member, John Cottrell, swam ashore for help, and another held my brother Jim, a non-swimmer, against the heaving, upturned keel. A passerby on shore heard the cries for help, broke a window in a yacht club, grabbed a pair of oars, slipped a punt in the water and rowed out to where he heard the shouting. He passed Cottrell on his way out. "For God's sake, get out there as quickly as you can, or they will all drown," he said. By the time the rescuer reached the upturned boat, my father had disappeared. He had panicked and thrashed about and gone under. An all-night search failed to find him. Dragging efforts the following two days were fruitless. Five days later, fishermen hired by my Uncle Tom found his body in their trawl nets near the mouth of the Harbour. He was only forty-one.

The newspaper account of the inquest remarked that my father was a strict teetotaler, and that, even though he was deeply involved in sailing all his life, he had never learned to swim. My mother always told us after his death that he used to teach swimming. Maybe she did not want us to know that he had some blame for his own drowning.

At that time in Ireland, it was not unusual for those who worked on the water not to be able to swim. The coastal waters are savagely cold, even in the middle of summer, and are not enticing for casual swimming. There were only two heated public swimming pools in the country. Moreover, even if one could swim, hypothermia would set in quickly if one fell in. On the west coast of Ireland, where the Atlantic roars in, the fishermen who went out in frail boats didn't learn to swim because they knew that if they went in the water they would die shortly from the cold, even if they could stay up. Why then prolong the agony? Each fisherman's family on the Aran Islands, near Galway, had different knitting patterns on their sheep's-wool sweaters so that they could easily identify a body when it eventually washed up on the shore.

My father's death sucked the oxygen out of my mother's life. At thirty-eight, she was left with six fatherless children. Nevertheless, she grabbed the helm of the family and held on steadfastly, guiding her children forward in life. Jim was groomed to take over my father's legal practice. The two girls were sent off to a boarding school in Dublin. My younger brother and I were sent to Mungret, a Jesuit boarding school near Limerick. We spent six long years there, far from the sea. Most of my fellow students were from the countryside or from

small towns – sons of farmers, creamery managers or bank managers. They wanted to talk about ploughed fields and hurling matches. I wanted to talk about the sea and sailboats. At the end of each term, all of them had fathers whom they could go home to and argue and tussle with. I only had the father whom I had constructed in my mind.

For years after my father's death I sometimes thought I would see him on the crowded sidewalks of Patrick Street in Cork. Once I saw someone who looked like him, with his receding slicked-back dark hair, and his deep-set eyes, and I followed after him, first at a distance and then close up, only to find that it was not him after all.

There were many reminders of my father and his sailing activities in our home. In the drawing room, each corner was filled with silver yachting trophies. Pride of place was given to a rose bowl which my grandfather had won in 1925 for finishing third in *Gull* in the first rugged 600-mile Fastnet Race along the southern coasts of England and Ireland. My father, then nineteen, was part of his crew. On the walls throughout the house there were watercolors and photographs of *Gull*. In the garden there was a weathervane on top of a flagpole that indicated the wind direction to my father every morning when he woke up. A large closet in my bedroom was filled with my father's books on sailing, navigation and the sea. I would pore over these for hours on end seeking connection, any connection, with his world. Even without him around, the spirit of the sea and sailing still remained within the soul of the family.

Sibyl was sold shortly after my father's death, but we kept the punt. My older brothers would take us out in it occasionally. Once, when I was nine, I sneaked the punt out on a stormy day, persuading my younger brother to join me. I had no oars because I thought I could propel the punt with a primitive sail that I had assembled. Mercifully, the sail contraption collapsed and fell overboard before I even got it up. However, I soon lost control of the punt. The currents swept us along near the shore and we were in grave danger of being driven hard onto the rocks. But for the quick action of some swimmers at nearby Poulagorm, who wrestled with the lunging punt and plucked us from it before it crashed into the rocks, both of us would surely have drowned.

Crosshaven

During summer days as a teenager, I would sometimes ride my bike the twelve miles to Crosshaven just to look at the sailboats moored in the river alongside the village. I would gaze for hours over the six-foot-high wall that ran alongside the road that skirted the water, watching as families prepared their boats, raised their sails, caught the wind and ventured out into the open waters of Cork Harbour beyond Currabinny pier. Sometimes, at the end of the day, I would see these sailboats return and tie up at the moorings, and the crew row ashore, satiated from their day's sailing.

Once I saw *Sibyl* anchored in the river. She was visiting the Harbour for a week. When my father died, the family "sold the boat away," to someone in a distant port. I saw the familiar black hull, the bowsprit, the gaff rig, the extraordinary long boom that over-hung the stern by a good ten feet, the varnished spars, and the wood rings that held the mainsail to the mast. I remembered when my father once climbed those rings when we were moving under full sail to free some tangled rigging aloft. As he came down the mast, I thought he looked like an angel descending from heaven. From the shore, I could just make out *Sibyl's* name in gold-leaf lettering on the stern. If I squinted my eyes tight enough, I could also see the cleat near the stern where I used to attach the painter from the punt.

I couldn't get any closer to *Sibyl*. A high wall, a rocky shoreline, a wide band of mud, and a deep channel lay between

me and her. How I yearned just to clamber aboard her just once more, to go down into her cabin, to eat egg sandwiches onboard, to drift on a punt underneath her stern, to hear the waves lap against her hull, to look back at the village and to go sailing again.

When I was sixteen, I was involved in another boating incident on the River Lee near Blackrock Castle, further up the Harbour. A friend invited me to go sailing in a dinghy, again on a stormy day. He thought that I knew how to sail because I came from a sailing family, and I thought that he knew how to sail because he owned the boat. We were both wrong. We found that out as soon as we raised the sails. A gust came and capsized the boat and threw us in the water. Clinging to the upturned hull, we cried out for help. Luckily it was daylight and there was another boat nearby. As it drew near, I urged the people onboard to hurry up. "I can't swim," I said. My secret shame was out.

Three times under and you drown

While clinging to the hull of the upturned dinghy, I went under the water once. Three times under and you drown. I panicked and I grasped at the air above me. My friend reached out and guided me back to a handhold. Two more times under and I am gone. Water filled my nose and mouth. It must have been like that for my father as he gasped for his last breath. I was struck by how easy it was to slip under, how easy it was to die by drowning. I learned that day that death doesn't always have to be some grand finale, some great final heroic act ending a long life. It can come to visit when one is just doing something else.

The punt was finally brought ashore and laid upside down against a garden wall at our home in Cork. Over the years it deteriorated from lack of use. The varnish peeled, the frame began to crack, and it was eventually reduced to a heap of rotting wood. As the punt fell apart, so also did my drive to search for my father. I was still left with a black hole that I could not see or touch, but I could sense that a part of my spirit was disappearing into it.

I became absorbed in the prose of living after my years at boarding school. After architectural school in Dublin – learning to build larger sand castles – I married, had three children, and began a restless moving that took me to Britain, Canada, the United States, back to Ireland, and back again to the United States. Busy seeking my own life, I had little time to dwell on my father. And I had no opportunity to become involved with the poetry of sailing.

Twenty-nine years passed after my father's death before I went sailing again, when a blithe-spirited fellow architect, Wayne, took me out for an afternoon on his 26-foot sailboat on the Chesapeake Bay. Until then, I was aware of only two ways to go sailing. One way was on smaller dinghies, between 10 and 18 feet long, which seemed to capsize frequently. I feared drowning too much even to want to step onboard those unstable crafts. The other way was to sail on 40-to-50-foot boats, the size my father and my uncles owned, solid and steady, with deep lead keels. These, however, were so expensive that the only way to acquire one would be by inheritance, as my father had, by marrying a woman of means, or becoming a captain of industry, three options I sensed were no longer available to me. Wayne showed me that there was a way in between, that there were boats that were small enough to be affordable but large enough to have deep keels and stay relatively upright, even in the heaviest of winds.

Sailing with Wayne, it all came back to me in a rush. Those sights and sounds that were imprinted in me as a child began to surface. I could feel again the pressure of the winds on the sails and the gentle heeling of the boat in gusts. I saw the cat's-paws on the water. I heard the sounds of lines rattling against the

mast. I recognized the smell of the tarred hemp, and I watched the wake behind the boat with familiar pleasure. I was transported to my early days of sailing in Ireland.

Shortly afterwards, I bought my own sailboat. Only 19 feet long, she had a deep keel and was stable. She was known as a "forgiving" boat, allowing her crew to make mistakes without tossing them into the drink. I christened her *Gazelle*, learned to sail on her, and took my wife and children sailing nearly every weekend. Even the onset of a hard winter did not slow me down. In late December, I broke through a thin sheet of ice on the Magothy River with the bow of my boat so that I could eke one more day of sailing on the Chesapeake Bay. Come early March, I was the first out as soon as the ice receded.

Learning to swim

And I learned to swim. It wasn't easy. I signed up for adult swimming lessons at a local college. All went well until we started to learn to swim in deep water. Every time we advanced beyond the six-foot mark, and the sky-blue bottom of the pool began to fade away beneath me, I panicked. I flailed about, trying to reach the side of the pool. My instructor could not understand. Sure, I had learned the breathing, the strokes and the kick quite well, but something deep inside was blocking me from crashing through that deep water barrier. My body would let me go, but my imagination held me back. The rest of the class graduated to the deep end, while I hung around the shallows or clung to the side of the pool. I tried other classes at the YMCA and at community pools, but no matter how hard I tried I could not avoid panic as soon as I moved out of my depth.

One day I went to a pool with my teenage daughter Sarah, an accomplished swimmer. She swam alongside me as I cautiously moved out of the shallows, inches from the side wall. As the water deepened, she swam underneath me so that she could watch my stroke and kick. Having her down there, between me and the bottom, poised ready, like a dolphin, to nudge me to the surface should I sink down, gave me great confidence. I concentrated on my breathing, my stroke and my kick, and forgot about the deep water. I made it to the other end of the pool. And I did it again. And again. My father's drowning had engendered a fear of deep water in me, but it was my own daughter – someone he never knew – who released me from it.

Wayne invited me and another friend to join him on an offshore cruise between the Chesapeake Bay and Newport, Rhode Island. After we passed through the Chesapeake and Delaware canal and down the Delaware Bay, we set up a watch system for the 48-hour ocean passage between Cape May and Block Island. Each of us would sail the boat alone for four hours while the other two rested.

I remember well when I stood the 8 p.m.-to-midnight watch on the second day. We were sailing northeast in a fresh wind out of the northwest. Wayne and the other crew member were sleeping below. I could see the white five-second light on the Montauk Point lighthouse on the tip of Long Island off to the left. At sunset, the wind freshened and veered to the north. I trimmed the sails for the new wind direction. The waves grew taller after I passed beyond the shelter of Long Island. In the distance, straight ahead off the bow, I could see the loom of the green five-second light of the Block Island lighthouse. The full moon rose just after the sun went down, its shimmering reflection laying a carpet for me to sail on. The sailboat glided over the waves with the grace of a thoroughbred. Fluorescent plankton shone like jewels in the breaking bow waves. It was a beautiful night for sailing, and I was at the helm, holding my own in the open sea. I wished that my father could see me now.

Reconnecting with my father

All alone on deck, I remembered those early days of sailing with my father. I could imagine what he saw as he sailed along his beloved rocky Irish coast, so similar to the Rhode Island shore nearby. I could feel how he felt as he confidently sailed his own boat with his family and crew all snugly asleep in their bunks below. For a brief moment, I had a deep sense that he was there on the boat beside me, guiding my course. It was an intense feeling of communion with him. I was beginning to reconnect with my father. I felt that I was receiving part of his mantle. Now I could sail some of his unfinished journeys, and live out some of his lost tomorrows.

I felt so enriched by sailing that night that I continued at the helm for an extra two hours beyond my watch. Exhausted but exhilarated, I did not disturb the sleeping crew members until we reached the entrance to Old Harbour on the east side of Block Island.

After this experience, my enthusiasm for sailing increased exponentially. I bought a 27-foot Swedish sailboat and named her *Dark Rosaleen*. She was designed for sailing in the open ocean, and I made a number of coastal passages in her. Within two years, in 1980, I took part in the 750-mile Annapolis-to-Bermuda race. With a crew of four, which included Sarah, my daughter, then seventeen, we survived a fierce, three-day storm. We arrived in St. George at the tail end of the fleet. Last place did not bother me. This was my Fastnet for my father.

My father had named me after St. Brendan the Navigator, a ninth-century Irish abbot reputed to have sailed with twelve monks to North America in a boat made of cowhides. I knew that I had not inherited St. Brendan's saintly attributes, but I took to his navigation with a passion. I discovered the joys of celestial navigation. Like my father, I began teaching navigation to sailors going offshore. I navigated on other boats in other ocean races. Within ten years, I had sailed on the ocean the equivalent distance of two Atlantic crossings. My father had named me right. All I needed now were the twelve fellow monks as crew.

Out in the Atlantic, beyond the Gulf Stream, I would often

look down at the cobalt blue water, just a few feet below the deck, and realize that my greatest fear was that I would drown. No matter how much I practised swimming, I could not know for sure if I would stay up for any length of time after falling overboard until that moment actually arrived. But then my greatest drive was to go to sea, to court the very danger of drowning. Somehow it seems that our passions are often driven by our fears, and our fears are often driven by our passions, both living side by side barely millimeters apart within us.

Over the years, even though I was enjoying sailing, I sometimes became concerned about my obsession with it. It often enveloped me. I began to wonder whose life I was living. Was I limiting my own potential because of my determination to live out what I believed to be my father's unmet sailing journeys? Was I trying to sail only in my father's wake? Was I too fated to drown just like him because I strove so hard to mimic his sailing life?

I pondered these questions on July 5, 1997, the fiftieth anniversary of my father's death. I wished to pay homage to him by making a short overnight cruise from Baltimore to Fairlee Creek on the Eastern Shore of Maryland in my sailboat *Nora Barnacle*. My wife and our Australian terrier joined me. Dogs on sailboats need to be taken ashore twice a day to do what they need to do. Near sundown, I took him to a nearby beach in my punt. Returning, I paused about halfway out to *Nora Barnacle*, anchored 200 yards away. It was just about this far from shore where my father drowned. I rested on my oars, and listened, and thought. I could hear the water lapping on the sides of my punt. I watched quietly as the other boats in the anchorage swung on their moorings. I could see the wafts of smoke from the Independence Day barbecues at the Great Oaks Yacht Club ashore. In the shallows, there was the gray form of a great blue heron. I was back again in the punt in Crosshaven. I was the happy, curious, seven-year-old boy.

As dusk darkened, I rowed slowly and thoughtfully towards *Nora Barnacle*. Reaching up, I tied the painter to her stern, attaching my lifeline, my umbilicus, to my own boat.

We left the painted buoy
That tosses at the harbour mouth,
And madly danced our hearts with joy,
As fast we fled to the south:
How fresh was every sight and sound,
On open main or winding shore!
We knew the merry world was round,
And we might sail for ever more.

Tennyson "*The Voyage*"
(from 'A service of Thanksgiving to commemorate the
life of Mungo Park'. 8th September 2006)

Bangor to Stornoway and Back – Twice!

Sundowner of Beaulieu

Roy Waters

Since my retirement from active employment eleven years ago we have spent the whole of July and August of most years on lengthy cruises. While not in the same league as the Gore Grimes, Nixons and other friends, who seem to have a fixation to head north for the ICE, Susie and I have done four extended trips to Scandinavia and one to Northern Spain. This involved our previous boat, the Nicholson 32 *Melandy* and more recently the Oyster 39 *Sundowner*.

This year for various reasons we decided to stay in home waters and in particular the west coast of Scotland. I am getting older and competent crew for North Sea and other offshore passages are hard to come by! Our own offspring are of little help. *Sundowner* was asked to be the committee boat at RNIYC Regatta on 12 August so our plans had to include the boat being home for this date. We also had friends and relatives wishing to visit us and so they would be accommodated at the end of July. We therefore split the season in two, with two cruises on the west coast.

Almost forty years ago my first and second west coast cruises were on board *Sarita*, a 1912 built “gentleman’s yacht”, then owned by George Lennox and both cruises were from Strangford Lough to Stornoway and back in two weeks. At some time Susie had made similar cruises on board Trevor Boyd’s *Moidart*. This year Stornoway would again be our outward destination, with various ports of call outward and homeward. Anyone knows that without a predetermined

destination cruising can be very indeterminate and liable to “ports of lost cruises” Tobermory is one such port!

For our first cruise we had two crew, Susie and myself, and we were generally blessed with fine weather and light winds so that we completed the course! In many ways it was great to have just the two of us on board, especially with regard to the catering!

The preparations seemed to be no less than for a major cruise – storing the boat and getting all the gear on board, securing the house and taking the cat to the local kennels the day before departure.

We departed Bangor late morning on Saturday 24 June and motored up the Antrim coast with the tide behind us to reach Rathlin Island by 16.10. Here we were impressed by the pontoon, installed since our last visit, and moored on the outside of a “long distance” Dutch yacht. However there was room alongside the quay in the inner harbour where we had been before, and we moved in there for the night. Home-made meat loaf and fresh broccoli for supper.

Sunday 25 was all calms, light airs and sunshine! We departed at 11.25 and just over three hours of motoring out round the Bull Point Lighthouse and northwards found us at Port Ellen, Islay. Since our last visit a small marina has been established here and we found an alongside berth. A walk ashore took little time before we had tinned Irish Stew, potatoes and carrots for supper.



First Cruise: *Sundowner* in the inner harbour, Rathlin Island

Before departure the next morning Susie had time to visit the local butcher to buy a haggis and a “neep” to go with it. Haggis and “neep” is wonderful food and something we enjoy anywhere in Scotland. There was little wind and the tide was “fair” for the Sound of Islay, so that was where we headed and visited the Ardmore Islands on the way. We had been here many years ago when there was a PUB, but which seems to have become some sort of youth hostel since then. We viewed the seals on the way out through the “canal” but noted that there were few seabirds about. We sluiced up the Sound of Islay at a satisfactory rate and went on to Scalasaig on Colonsay, where we berthed on the small boat section of the ferry pier for the night. Another yacht berthed outside us before long. A walk



First Cruise: Neist Point, Isle of Skye, Abeam

ashore and up to the hotel for a drink was a satisfactory end to the day. The editor does not want any more menus recorded in logs so I will not say what we had for supper!

Tuesday, 27 June was again fine and sunny with little wind and once we were free of the outside boat we were on our way north via the Torran Rocks and the Sound of Iona. We viewed the tourists on Staffa – “been there and done that years ago” and headed on to reach Canna Harbour for the night, where we anchored among about six other boats. We did not inflate the dinghy and go ashore – “been there and done that years ago”. However from the cockpit it was interesting to observe the improvements to the ferry pier and the restoration of the Catholic Church for use as some kind of interpretation centre.

Wednesday saw similar conditions and we easily made it to Loch Dunvegan past Neist Point and on the west coast of Skye. Here we picked up a visitor mooring and spent another peaceful night on board. There was good TV coverage here and we watched the goings on at Wimbledon! Thursday put in the rest of the distance to Stornoway in about six hours with the tide to help and we berthed at the marina at 12.40 on Thursday 29 June – end of outward passage! At this point we had not even taken the sail covers off the main and mizzen, and had occasionally unfurled the headsail, but generally there had been light winds “on the nose” or no wind! A Chinese carry-out for supper and more Wimbledon on TV ended a pleasant day.

We remained in Stornoway until Sunday 02 July because of course when the wind did fill in it was from the south with strong to gale

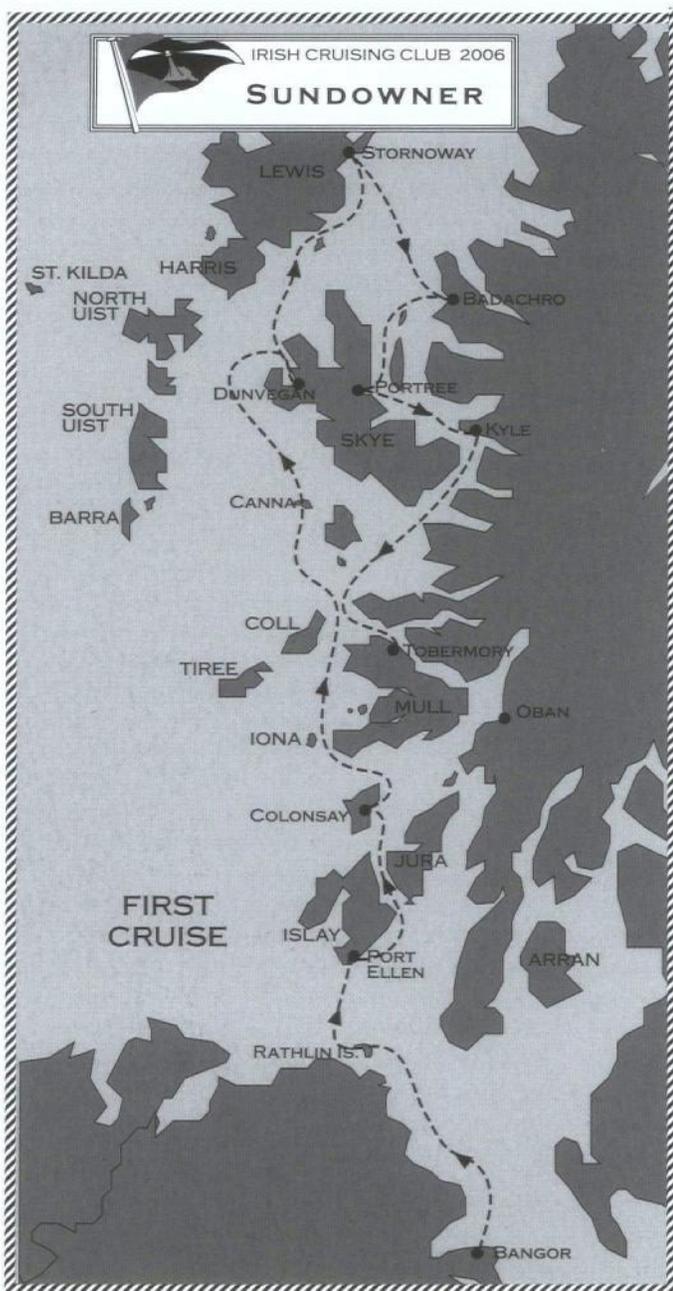
force on Saturday. We met *Scilla Verna* with James Nixon and crew heading for Iceland, we watched more of Wimbledon and availed of the single public shower in the town centre. This is a very adequate plate and is now *OPEN ON SUNDAYS!* However you still cannot arrive or leave from the island of Lewis by public transport on Sunday and you cannot get the Sunday newspapers until Monday morning. Nevertheless it is a pleasant place to spend a few days!

Departure from Stornoway was on Sunday 02 July and we motored the 37 miles across the Minch to Badacro on Loch Gairloch to anchor for the night. Television coverage here and mobile telephone coverage was good so we had contact with the outside world.

I would mention that there was plenty of smoked salmon on board and even Swedish meat balls, obtained from the Co-Op in Stornoway! A leisurely start the next morning got us across to the west side of North Rona, where we looked into the secluded anchorage at Arcasaid Mhor. We had visited here many years before, when Susie had found a very desirable “des res” on the shore and mused about the possibilities of restoration and occupation! It now appeared that the “des res” has been restored and occupied since our last visit and perhaps the owner has a helicopter to keep in touch with the outside world. We continued on to Portree, where we picked up a visitor mooring for the night to enjoy more of Wimbledon on the television and communication with the outside world. Other than that we remained in our own little world aboard the boat!



First Cruise: Soren, the Viking Captain, and Nicolai at Oban



Tobermory, with only the two of them and their new dog on board!

Susie's birthday on 06 July saw us cover the 53 miles to Tobermory in 7 hours 25 mins. The weather was becoming a little unsettled but we had a fine passage down the well-named Sound of Sleat and took birthday photographs when Ardnamurchan Point was abeam! We picked up about the last free visitor's mooring in Tobermory Bay quite close to *Rose Marie*, and after various comings and goings by dinghy, there was a splendid birthday dinner on board that boat, produced by Maureen.

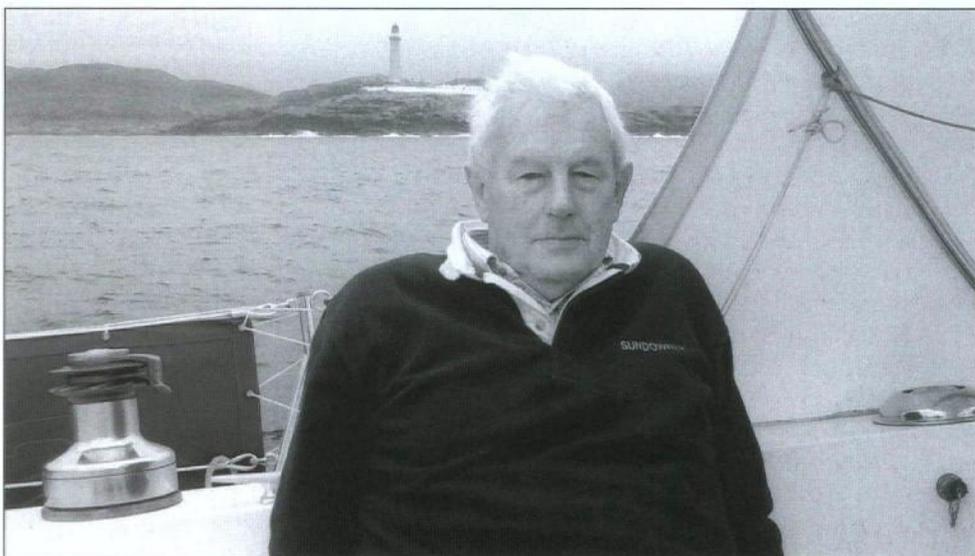
Friday 07 July and we all met ashore for morning coffee. The forecast was for northerly winds, and freshening. The Andersons, with their new dog (I believe two excursions ashore to do the business each day are necessary) decided to head south and so did we. About four hours got us down the south of Mull to the marina at Kerrera, Oban, where we had another excellent dinner, this time on our boat. *Rose Marie* departed south two days later and we remained at Oban. This was the end of our first trip to Stornoway, since with a few days in hand we were now awaiting the arrival of a Viking invasion. Having travelled by various means from Odense, Denmark, they arrived on Monday, 10 July and quite suddenly, instead of two, we had seven people on board.

Total Distance	419 miles
Total time under way	58 hours 25 minutes
General Average Speed	7.17 knots
Total time on cruise	14 days 04 hours 55 minutes

Soren and Virginia Simonsen and offspring have sailed with us several times before, especially in Scandinavian waters, and Soren, who is a Danish doctor working in Norway, has crossed the North Sea and Bay of Biscay with us. Virginia Boyd Simonsen is from Helen's Bay and the Boyd family are lifelong friends. The connections would take several pages to explain! We were now going to let them loose on *Sundowner* for about two weeks while we returned home to deal with visitors.

The weather went a bit unfavourable but we got some time out in Kerrera Sound and outside Kerrera for crew training and familiarisation with the boat. I was happy that they could cope and not wreck the boat for us! Susie and I returned home by

Next day saw us on the pontoon at Kyle of Lochalsh and here we stayed for two nights, since after several in-transit visits to this area, I was now determined to travel on the scenic Kyle railway line to Inverness and back. This we did on 05 July as a first birthday present to Susie for my enjoyment, but she enjoyed it as well! It was interesting to cross the Caledonian Canal for the first time in a train, having been through the canal in a boat on many occasions! We were now in contact with close friends Terry and Maureen Anderson on board *Rose Marie of Cuan*, who had made it from Strangford Lough to



First Cruise: Off Ardnamurchan Point – The captain in a relaxed mood



Second Cruise: Sundowner by Lock No. 4, Ardrishaig, Crinan Canal

advantage to carry a current Calmac ferry timetable on board when on the west coast of Scotland. Next morning, less than five hours saw us cover the remaining 30 miles to Stornoway, and this included passing under the Scalpay Bridge, which at 20 meters clearance was no problem, but bridges always look impossible until you are safely through! The wind remained northerly about 5 plus, and we were glad to be alongside a pontoon in the small marina by 14.00 on Saturday 19 August

The weather was reasonable until Tuesday 22, when Elizabeth arrived that evening after a long tiring journey from Basel, Switzerland, then of course the wind went into the south the next day and blew up to force 6, so we stayed in Stornoway. Four and a half days in port but they were a pleasant few days with all the facilities close at hand, except on Sunday when virtually everything was shut for the day. However the public toilet was now open on Sunday – a change from a few years



Second Cruise: Serious work in the Crinan Canal!

ago! Jorgen did a lot of walking and even went to the expense of a bus ride to see something of the Isle of Lewis. Susie and I had done it all before, or would have done it again this time! In many ways our boat could now be thought of as a holiday home with the advantage that we could change location to stay at various pleasant locations rather than be stuck in the one place!

On 21 August we celebrated my 70th birthday with an excellent supper ashore at the Digby Chick restaurant, one of the more up-market features of present day Stornoway.

Beside us in the marina for the first two days was a 30 ft motorboat flying a funny flag. At first I thought it was Icelandic but in fact it was Faroese and Jorgen

soon made friends with the two extrovert gents on board. He could speak their language and they were soon abroad for a glass of Irish whiskey, which we just happened to have. They were also a travelling tourist office for the Faroes and we were left with numerous leaflets about these islands. The boat struck me as being more suited to inland or limited coastal cruising, but they had sailed from the Faroes and circumnavigated Ireland. They were now on their way home and as soon as a suitable "hole in the weather" occurred, off they went, at only six knots due to some engine problem! Another visitor was a single-handed structural engineer in a Drascombe lugger, little more than a camping dinghy, who had voyaged from Newcastle-upon-Tyne via the Forth and Clyde Canal and was on some sort of self fulfilment expedition. I don't think he was sure where he was heading for.

We knew where we were heading for and got away at 06.30 on Thursday 24 to motor across the Southern Minch and into the Inner Sound. The wind was of course "on the nose" southwest 4 to 5 but at least it was down on the day before and we made good progress, reaching Kyle of Lochalsh by 15.45 to find a vacant berth on the pontoon.

There is now an up-market seafood restaurant in the old refreshment room on the nearby station platform. Susie was determined to sample this, and we did, and it was very good!

The Coastguard weather forecasts are now so good and so frequent that I now hardly ever listen to the Radio 4 forecasts in home waters and seldom refer to the Navtex, except for Malin Head, which is very good! Met Eireann

forecasts have always been renowned for being very good, especially with fishermen and they should know! Anyway I was up at 06.00 the next morning to listen to Stornoway Coastguard and we were all up at 08.00 to depart Kyle at 08.30 to carry the first of the tide through Kyle Rhea and on down the well named Sound of Sleat. Light airs for most of the way, unlike many previous passages! Ardnamurchan Point was abeam by 14.00 and this time we did not bypass Tobermory, picking up a very convenient visitor's mooring at 15.30. There were a number of photographs taken off Ardnamurchan this time, as on the first cruise. Well it is nice to have photographs of crew members, with the lighthouse in the background! We inflated and launched the dinghy so that Jorgen and Elizabeth could go ashore and explore the town, a first visit for both of them. Susie and I rested!

On Saturday 26 we recovered and stowed the dinghy and then covered the 25 miles to Oban in just over three hours, with little wind and much engine, to find plenty of vacant berths at Kerrera. On Sunday the forecast indicated very unsettled weather with fresh to strong winds from the west and the south so we decided on a return home via the "inside route" i.e. another Crinan Canal transit! Therefore the next morning we motored the 25 miles to Crinan, with the wind "on the nose" of course but a good tide behind us. We locked into the canal at lunchtime and got as far as the top locks at Cairnbaan before having to tie up for the night. It was a wet miserable evening and there was no incentive to go ashore and walk down to the hotel!

We had some company on this passage with a boat based at Ardrishaig and a crew who were very canal experienced. We locked out at Ardrishaig at lunchtime on Monday 28 and motored the short distance to East Loch Tarbert to spend the rest of the day on the pontoon at this pleasant spot. Again a first visit for Jorgen and Elizabeth. Here Frank Smyth and a trainee crew on board *Slioch* arrived alongside us and there was some socialising that evening. Next morning *Slioch* departed for Campbeltown and we followed them out. The wind was fresh to strong from the west. We set headsail and mizzen and made rapid progress down the inside of the Kintyre Peninsula in smooth water, reaching Campbeltown by



Second Cruise: Son Robert and Viking Jorgen in the Crinan Canal

14.50. We had some difficulty berthing on the lee side of the pontoon in the strong wind. *Slioch* came in later, stopped for a meal, and sailed for Bangor that evening. The weather forecast was for all sorts of "nasties" but I was not keen on a night passage in perhaps bad conditions with our very limited crew. We dined ashore at the Ardshiel Hotel and returned for an early night. The wind whistled in the rigging!

I woke up at 05.30 the next morning to find that it was flat calm. We would depart forthwith and were under way by 06.00 to beat the weather to Bangor! In fact we had an easy passage with the wind never more than force 4 from the west and then south, but with plenty of "nasties" forecast. We covered the 50 miles in 6.5 hours and were glad to be home in Bangor by 12.30! The rest of the day was spent in decommissioning and cleaning the boat.



Second Cruise: Elizabeth – off Ardnamurchan Point Again!

A Leisurely Cruise to Brittany

Jim Slevin

To quote Clare Francis I still experience that intoxicating mixture of fear and fascination which, despite many temptations to remain land-bound, always lures me back for just one more voyage. For the last seven years I have planned to revisit Brittany one more time but having sailed down the west coast many times I have been frustrated by weather, time and crew availability.

Donal Tinney from Sligo, Richard Browne from Westport and myself put the stores on board and prepared *Testa Rossa* for departure on the evening of June 23rd. Saturday morning was bright and sunny with calm sea and little wind so it was with a light heart that we took our leave of Mullaghmore. In these conditions progress was rapid under power. We took the opportunity to pass inside the Eagle for a change and save a few miles. We put the anchor down in the sheltered anchorage at the southern end of North Inishkea. Donal and Richard went ashore and took some photographs of ancient stones with Celtic carvings. When they returned, we cooked up and enjoyed some of the liquid stores.

Next morning, the wind piped up and we had a very pleasant sail down to Inishboffin. Since the holding is notoriously bad in this beautiful anchorage, we picked up a mooring having first cleared it with a local fisherman. We launched the dinghy and made the short crossing to the ferry pier. We availed of the showers at the Doonmore hotel and washed the inners with a few pints. As we had a supply of steaks on board with diminished shelf-life, we went to retrieve the dinghy to find it jammed under a girder of the pier, trapped by the rising tide. Since we did not have the pump with us, deflating it was not an option. Donal and Richard managed to free it somehow and we

learned a lesson to take extra care and study the state of the tide when tying to piers that are not closed on their perimeters. Having dined on board, we returned ashore to sample the hospitality of the newly rebuilt Day's Hotel. It is certainly impressive but in our opinion the design lacks the appropriate island atmosphere. Monday dawned another great morning and with the wind still from north-northeast, we set the spinnaker for a fast run down to Kilronan on Inishmore. En route, the L.E. Emer came over to get a closer look and hooted their horn to show their approval before steaming north. On arrival, we picked up a mooring. We had plenty of time to walk around and look at a few of the menus. We opted for the American Bar which in addition to serving food did offer really excellent pints. There were considerably fewer tourists on the island this time compared with our last visit two years ago. The evening was good and when we were satisfied, we returned to the boat and prepared for an early start the following morning.

Fine weather and flat seas

True to form we left Kilronan next morning for the trip to Kerry. Fine weather and flat seas meant more motor-sailing. The dolphins found us when passing through their usual haunt just four miles south of Gregory Sound. At the entrance to Dingle, Fungi put in his customary brief appearance. Johnny was on hand to direct us into a berth in the almost full Dingle marina at 17.05. We had time to get cleaned up and showered before adjourning to the Armada restaurant for dinner. We noticed that a number of the restaurants had special promotions, maybe a sign of scarce tourists or increased competition. I hope that it was the latter. Wednesday was another bright

morning but the wind had increased to 20 knots from the southwest which meant that we had to punch slowly into wind and sea until we had Hog Island abeam. We were then able to free the sheets and race down through Dursey Sound with help from the tide. This was the first day that we saw rain since leaving Mullaghmore.

We tied to a pontoon in Lawrence Cove at 21.45 in the approaching dusk. Donal had timed the food preparation well and we were able to do the cooking justice. We even managed a couple of pints in the only pub on Bear Island before it closed. This a very attractive marina, tucked in among mature trees with an abundance of wildlife. One could certainly tolerate the above-average charges but the facilities leave a lot to be desired. One other downside is that



Alongside Harbour I.O.S. Port St. Mary

Photo: D. Gray

you have to walk the most of a mile uphill to get a mobile phone signal, which, when you have to repeat it a number of times, can be trying. Thursday was meant to be a rest day but as luck would have it, we spent the day servicing the aft heads and the attendant outlet pipe. The interior diameter of the pipe had been reduced by a build-up of salt deposits to half of its original width. Cleaning and re-routing the pipe was both tedious and time consuming, taking up most of the rest day for Donal and Richard, bless them. With the job completed and tested we retired to Kitty's restaurant where the fare was excellent. Kitty's standard has improved dramatically and we had numerous offers of second helpings. We had chosen Lawrence Cove for crew change because there is a frequent ferry service from there to the mainland. The last ferry departs at 20.30 and our crew were not due in Pontoon until 21.30 so we had to motor over the few miles to pick up Peter Mc Hugh and Davy Gray from Mullaghmore when they arrived. Though it was late, Richard drove Davy's car back to Galway while we returned to our berth and introduced the lads to that one pub.

We left next morning in ideal conditions with bright sunshine and a nice sailing breeze from the southwest. All was well with the world as we observed the Mizen and later the Fastnet lighthouses. After four hours, the wind faded and we reluctantly turned to start our motor only to find that the starter motor, would not turn the engine. We deliberated on the different options and reduced them to two. Without an engine and the necessity of obtaining mechanical help, our best onshore option was Kinsale. The other option was to find some method of getting the engine going again. Davy volunteered to attempt this task, on condition that the rest of us remained in the cockpit for the duration. After 80 interminable minutes he popped his head up and said try it now. With great anticipation I turned the starter key and on the first attempt, the engine started. The cause of the problem was that the solenoid was not moving freely so Davy had cut a slit in the forward and aft end to allow him to lubricate it with WD 40. The starter gave no further trouble for the remainder of the voyage.

Saturday was warm and sunny and with a favourable wind we made good progress to the Isles of Scilly where we picked up a mooring in the harbour of Hughtown, St. Mary at 20.05. The dinghy was pumped in record time and we went ashore to seek some food.

As we had spent the previous night at sea we were very hungry, and visited five restaurants in the space of 20 minutes to be turned away by each one saying that though it was not 20.30, that was their latest time for taking orders. On our way through the town we thought that we were in luck when we spotted a fish and chip shop only to find that he had everything put away. As a last resort, we walked to the far end of the town where we found a very good restaurant called the Boatshed, which is what it had been before Pete and his wife Charlie, having been helped by the State's Government, spent £250,000 creating a very agreeable ambience. They serve excellent food from a comprehensive menu up until 21.30. They particularly welcome Irish sailors. It is only a short trip by dinghy from the moorings to their

premises as it is located on the beach beside the lifeboat slipway. Cider drinkers need to be cautious, as the cider they serve has "strong" written on the bottle but our crew say that is an understatement.

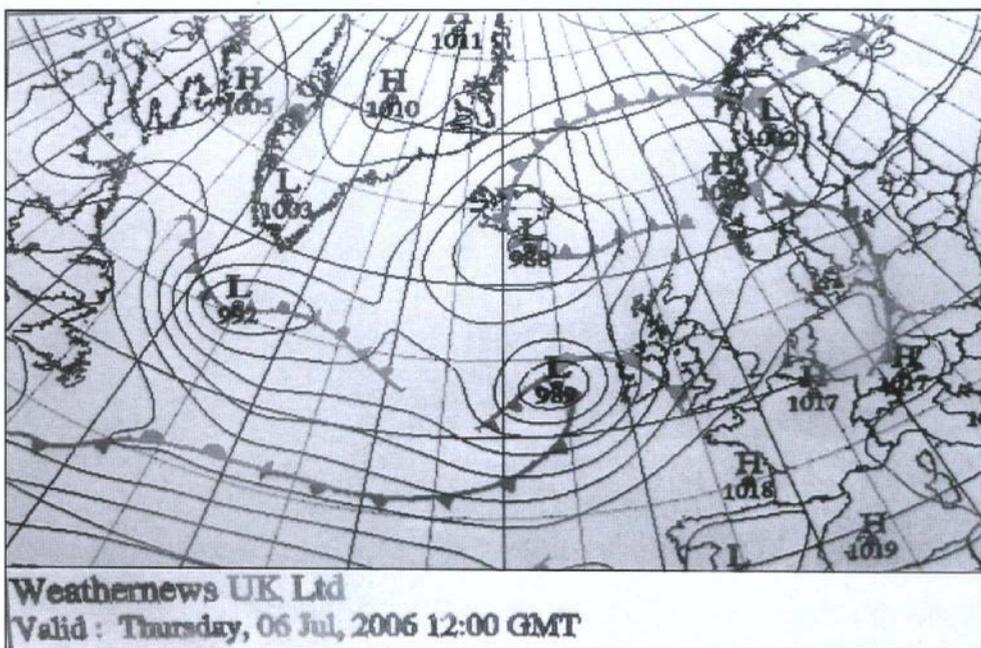
Thunder and lightning

The following morning with a gentle breeze and azure seas, spirits were high as we approached the French coast. Keeping an eye on and crossing the shipping lanes was quite easy when we became practised at timing the large ships as they rapidly passed by. The last time I visited France, we passed down the Chenal de Four was during the night, so this time, as we approached in the dusk, we did not anticipate any problems. However, one should always be prepared for the unexpected. Dusk became ominously dark and then the lightning started. Interspersed with thunder showers which eliminated all visibility, it continued for the next three hours. Though frightening at the start, we became accustomed to it after a while and tended to view it as spectacular entertainment before it ended. It was an impressive arrival in France and we were relieved to tie up to a pontoon in Camaret at 03.15.

Monday was very hot and windless, and taking the sun was restricted to short periods. We did some shopping and investigated the possibility of securing a new starter motor. With our limited knowledge of French, we encountered some communication problems. The local people were very helpful and eventually we made contact with the main Ford dealer in Brittany to find that they did not have the part that we required, in stock. In the evening we concentrated on other matters and dined at a lovely restaurant on the promenade, finding the French food prices much more competitive than their Irish counterparts.

Next morning it was time to take on some fuel. This proved to be both a slow and unusual process. The office is quite some distance from the fuel pump and you have to go first to the office, then fuel up at the pump and then return to the office to pay for the Derv you have taken on. While waiting on the pontoon I had the pleasant experience of meeting up with fellow ICC member Michael Wood from Tralee on his way home from the ICC rally in Spain.

When we eventually took our leave of Camaret, we discussed going to Benodet, but due to work commitments of



Reason for return to Isle of Scilly

Photo: D. Gray

the crew we decided on the more leisurely option of Morgat, an attractive, quiet marina with recently refurbished superb facilities. We dined in a very good seafood, seafront restaurant called Au Pied du Port. We had an early start from Morgat having decided to take advantage of the settled conditions and proceed north with a favourable tide.

We were really surprised at the number of yachts that we met in the Chenal de Four going south and making rapid progress against the tide. We could only conclude that they had identified an eddy in their favour on the east side of the tide which was now against us. The long approach seemed longer into L'Aber-Wrac'h but the early start meant that we arrived soon after lunch and managed with difficulty to tie up to a pontoon in the small marina. The existing marina is really designed for craft of less than 30 feet. However the good news is that they have started building a new marina. We decided that if the wind freshened, we would not be safe or comfortable on the pontoon so we moved out to a mooring buoy. With the use of a water taxi up till 22.00 included in the mooring fee, we were much happier. A point of interest is that a berth in Morgat costs less than a visitor's mooring here.

To compensate for our mooring off the pontoon, we found the natives not only friendly but helpful also. We asked a man on the street if there was a supermarket nearby and he told us that the village was approximately one and a half kilometres from the marina. Without being asked he offered to take us in his car to the village. When we got to the supermarket we purchased stores for the return voyage. As it was our last port of call in France, we took the opportunity to stock up with some wines also. The lady owner of the supermarket agreed to drive



Crew in attendance at Lawrence Cove

Photo: D. Gray

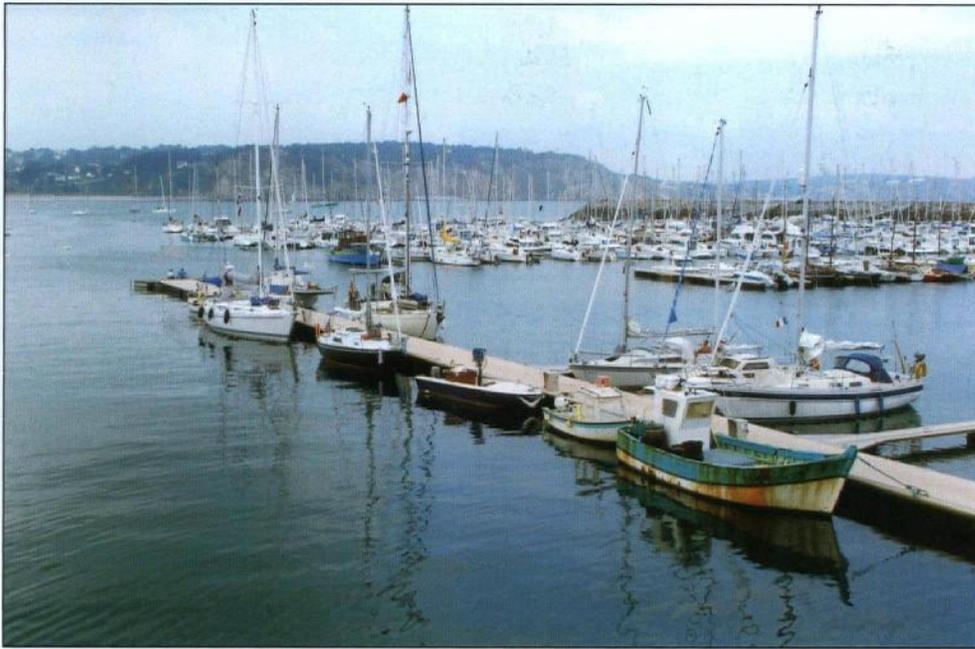
us back down to the marina. Unfortunately, patience is not her strong suit and with all the pressure, we left the most essential stores behind, only to discover this when the transport had departed. Davy kindly offered to retrieve them. The water taxi delivered diesel in cans and the goods to the boat, and afterwards we enjoyed an excellent meal in the restaurant beside the marina. At less than €19 each for three courses, we were indeed very contented. I have looked at charts of the north coast of France many times in the past but have been deterred by the very rocky coastline and the fact that so many of their harbours dry out. It was gratifying to find one on this occasion that was available at all stages of the tide. I would guess that when the new marina is completed, it will become very popular with UK and Irish sailors cruising Brittany.

We left the French coast early on Thursday morning to pick up a buoy in the Isles of Scilly at 23.20 the same evening, a distance of over 112 miles. We dined on board and settled in to a well-deserved rest. We left again next morning just after 06.00. We had only just cleared the Isles, when Davy showed a photograph he had taken earlier of the synoptic chart in the harbourmaster's window. It showed an intense low pressure tracking towards the south coast of Ireland. An immediate decision was taken to return to Hughtown and wait for finer weather. Peter hired a bicycle and did the grand tour of St. Mary while we spent some time in the internet cafe studying the weather patterns for the next few days. We were happy to be enjoying the sunshine while avoiding force 8 to 9 winds we would have encountered, had we not taken the decision to return. It was great to enjoy the hospitality of the Smyths and their crew of *Slioch* for



Working hard in Castle on Port St. Mary I.O.S.

Photo: D. Gray



L'Aber-Wrac'h marina

Photo: D. Gray

afternoon tea, demonstrating that ICC is alive and well. We discussed the weather and plans for the voyage home. They were going up the Irish Sea to return to their home port in Strangford Lough. As we were going to be in Hughtown for three nights, we visited a different restaurant each night and on the final night we dined at the Castle. Both the view and the food were superb. Prices were reasonable and we certainly would return there again.

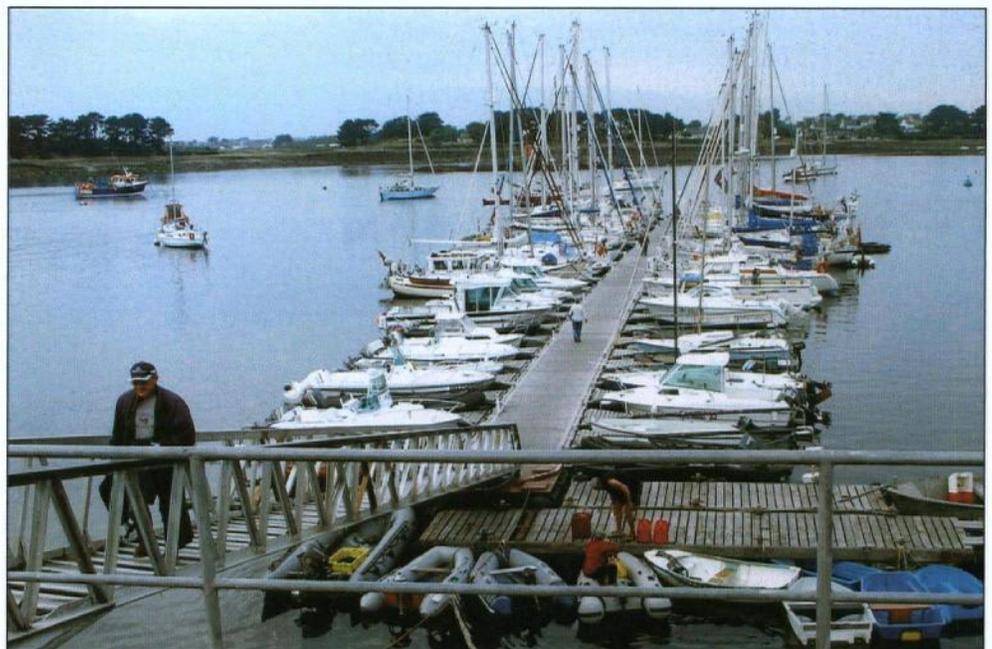
On Monday morning we left Hughtown at 05.30 with 15-20 knots of wind from the south-southwest, well worth waiting for. Though we had intended sailing back to Mullaghmore, having lost three days, crew time constraints and the need of a new starter motor dictated Bangor as our final destination. We had a splendid passage from the Isles of Scilly to the Tusker, logging 162 miles in 24 hours. During the moonlit night, we had the company of some boisterous dolphins while there were only a few trawlers fishing that part of the Celtic Sea. Quite a change has taken place from the time some years ago when one could spend more than half of the passage avoiding trawlers. We contacted *Slioch* on the VHF and found that they were a few miles ahead of us, rounding Wicklow Head.

We tied to a pontoon in the small Arklow marina. It was dirty when I last visited three years ago but it could only be described as filthy now. I am amazed that the Health Authorities allow untreated sewage to be blatantly pumped into the river, and accumulate in the marina downstream. It is clearly a danger to public health and must affect business in what is otherwise a very attractive area. A serious outbreak of some disease is waiting to happen, and then something will get done.

On Wednesday morning, we

restaurant that evening. The pub is approximately a mile and a half from the marina but well worth the journey.

Friday maintained the good weather, but again, with calm conditions which gave us a great opportunity to appreciate the coastline and identify the anchorages and small harbours along our route. We motor-sailed the last part of our voyage up through Donaghadee Sound to tie up in Bangor marina at 13.45. All told, we had travelled 1,181 miles, enjoyed, with the exception of two days, dawn to dusk sunshine. The azure-coloured sea were never kinder and we wet the foredeck only once off the Kerry coast. We visited many different anchorages and marinas. We sampled a wide variety of food and washed it down with many fine wines. My final comment is that cruising should be like this at least once in a lifetime.



A pleasant morning in Morgat

Photo: D. Gray

Corfu and its Islands to Port

John Bourke

Oleander of Howth has cruised the Mediterranean for a decade or more. In 2005 however, her owners Brian and Betty Hegarty both suffered ill health and the boat languished for a full season on the hard at Cleopatra Marina, near Preveza in western Greece. By 2006 however things had taken a turn for the better, and a shortened summer programme was planned. Brian drove down with Bud Bryce, as is his wont, to Brindisi in Italy, and took the ferry across to Igoumenitsa. This is a short drive from the boatyard. I followed to Preveza by air on 7th May finding much work done, but more still to do before we could put to sea.

We met up that day with Bill and Hilary Keatinge who had just launched *Rafiki* from the yard down the road. However their engine had decided to stop after a few hundred yards, followed by an argument with the anchor chain. Hilary had hurt her hand quite badly. However local medical attention had been excellent and it would heal. We offered sympathy and wine at the local taverna, most unfairly called the Greasy Spoon but quite good in reality.

We stayed in the excellent boatyard accommodation and by the 10th we were ready to launch. The bad thing was that it rained that day. The good thing was that Bud and I were allowed to stay on board as the travel lift trundled through the yard to the launching dock. I had never been allowed to do that before and it was a great thrill. Small boys become big boys; little else changes.

We stayed alongside overnight. On the next day the sun reappeared, staying thus for the balance of my stay. We motored the short distance to Levkas and berthed stern to the town quay. There was still work to do, particularly in the

forward heads which was blocked. We decided to replace the exit pipe as the easiest solution, but being unable to extract it, had instead to excavate a two year old accumulation. Poor Bud spent most of the day working in the smallest room, but was in the end successful and an instant candidate for gratitude, gin and canonisation. We threw out a wide selection of our out-of-date provisions and replaced with new. Finally we replaced the netting on the rail to contain various Hegarty grandchildren later on.

We knew that Terry Johnson was cruising close by in *Nyabo*, and a get-together of the Eastern Mediterranean Chapter of the Club had been mooted. After some texting this occurred on the lovely sunny evening of 13th May. We, the Keatinges, Terry and his crew and Mervyn Hall enjoyed a splendid party on Terry's spacious afterdeck in Levkas marina, and afterwards at "Eh Zhn" restaurant, one of the best in town. Mervyn had already launched *Baily of Howth* at Nidri, and in the meantime had added to his fleet duly arriving in a fantastic ex-Naval 150 HP single diesel RIB, designed to carry a dozen fully equipped Marines at speed. What style!

The next day, ex-Commodore Peter Bunting arrived to join us. Brian had sailed with him on the Europa Round the World Rally in 1991/92. He had barely put his gear on board when coincidentally Alan and Penny Spriggs turned up for a chat, having been participants in the very same event. There followed much talk of fleet happenings on Pacific Islands and other far-flung places.

On the 15th, the boat was ready for the first cruise of Brian's 2006 campaign. We returned to Preveza at the entrance of Amvrakikos Bay, a substantial inland waterway and onwards inside the bay to the charming small town of Vonitsa. An excellent breakwater and harbour facility has been built there under an imposing old castle. Being the start of the season there was ample room to berth. The taverna on the front which we selected was clearly pleased to see such early arrivals.

The next day we had our longest passage of 40 miles to Gaios on the island of Paxos, where we again berthed stern-to in the middle of the town. Brian says that Gaios is one of the loveliest harbours in all of Greece. He should know, having visited most of them. It certainly is special with a wide variety of shops and tavernas. Several ferries a day bring day trippers from Corfu and other places. There is much good-natured tourist bustle until they leave again, when peace returns. Six o'clock drinks in the



Brian Hegarty and John Bourke relax at Mouvia Marina, Corfu

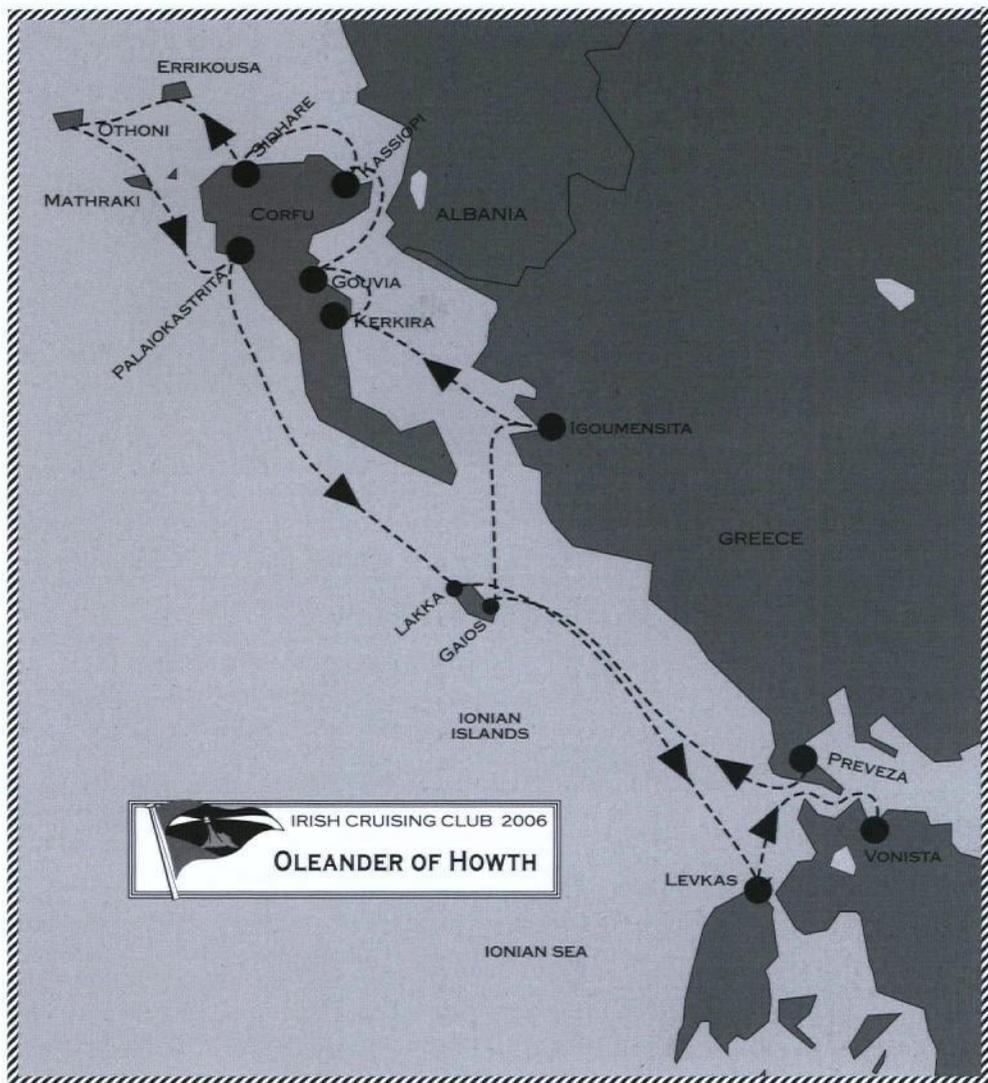
cockpit then followed, while Brian advised on the right taverna for that evening.

On Wednesday 17th we proceeded to the bay just outside the busy port of Igoumenitsa where we anchored for a quiet evening, being the only boat there. We put some pies in the oven, brought out from Ireland in 2004 but not thrown out, as Glanbia said on the tin that they were good to 2007. Good they duly were, washed down with local red wine, which seems to get better year by year.

Then on the 18th it was back to the crowds at Corfu, where we berthed at the yacht club harbour at the southern end of the great fortress which guards the approaches. A salad lunch was prepared on board with local white wine, even more improved year by year. After a statutory rest, we proceeded to dinner at Restaurant Rex which is Brian's long term favourite in this lovely old town. It was as good as ever but at Dublin equivalent cost, having already become accustomed to about half that level.

After such extravagance we went round the corner on the 19th to the fishing and commercial harbour where we could obtain various boat items, including the right glue for fixing the punt which was leaking very slowly on the foredeck. Also Brian needed to negotiate ferries for his return journey in July. Business done, we anchored for lunch off a small island on our way to Gouvia Marina. This is a well-run facility with a good restaurant, coffee shop, ablutions, a supermarket and a large fresh water swimming pool with bar. Many berth holders fly down to their boats and just stay. We on the other hand swam, dined and pressed on the next day.

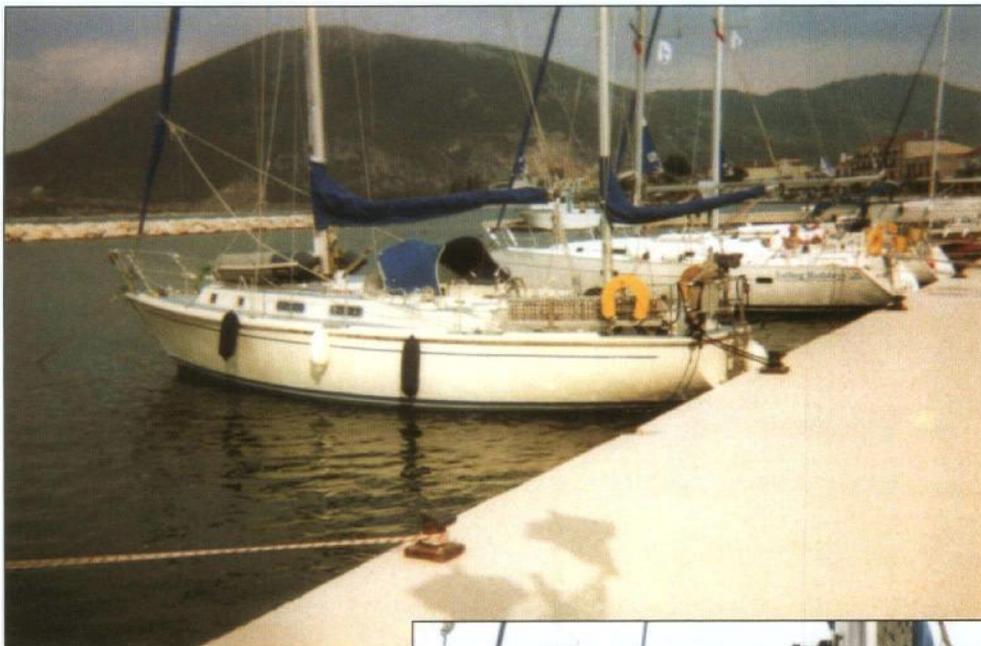
Proceeding up the east coast of the island of Corfu, we looked in to Ay. Stephanos with a view to anchoring there. However the breeze was blowing straight into the harbour so we went on round the corner where there is a pretty and up-market little holiday village called Kassiope. The harbour has limited space for berthing however, and Brian had never before managed to stay. We thought we had a space next to a Dutch 42-footer. "It should be fine," the kind Dutchman said, but halfway in, we stuck. He must have found a special keel hole just feet away. We tried again at the end of the entrance pier and succeeded. Then we also managed to tune in to the BBC for the European Cup final between Munster and Biarritz, and were thus able to savour that nail-biting and splendid victory. The taverna just above the pier wall provided an excellent meal after which the youngsters, Bud and myself, combined age 141, went to a pub and watched the Eurovision song contest on a big screen, over an Ouzo or two. Brian and Peter had excused themselves saying that they were tired. Creeping quietly on board later we fully expected to find them in their bunks, but there they were on either side of a half empty Ouzo bottle,



living and reliving their round the world adventures. Some people will never learn sense, thank goodness.

On Sunday we plugged into a stiff breeze across the north coast, stopping for lunch under Ak Rodha Head which gave good protection in a very pleasant and scenic spot. Later the wind diminished, and we went on the short distance to Sidharion where we anchored off the beach, as the harbour is very shallow. Later we saw a line of eleven day-fishing boats leave the harbour in a line with apparently no human intervention. Finally a person did appear in the first one who then proceeded to moor them one by one standing up to his waist in the water. In the morning he reversed the process. We never did discover why, but it was all very clever.

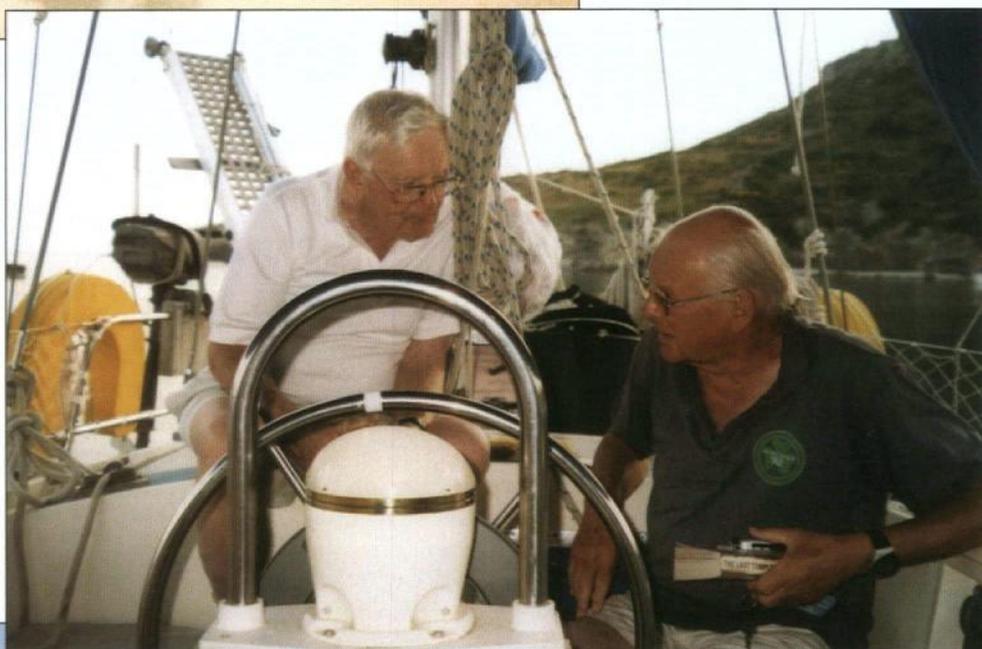
There are three inhabited islands off the north coast of Corfu. *Olander* had often anchored off one of them for the night before the passage to Italy. We decided to explore. The first was Erikoussa, just nine miles away. We tied alongside in the harbour, a fisherman moving up most kindly to let us in. The quay space was full of building materials and a truck kept arriving, loading up with sand and gravel before departing inland. An official then arrived in a car and apologised to us for all the activity. Apparently all building materials have to be brought in by June 15 ahead of the holiday season. We were the only boat there, but another from the UK did come in later and lay outside us. They had been somewhat lost in a sea mist just a few miles away and had been quite concerned. Apparently these sea mists are quite common on the island, and later on one did come in briefly and hid the harbour from the rest of the



Oleander at Vonitsa

island. We had beers in the only pub we could find and dined on board. I went for a walk along the shores of this lovely quiet island, population about 80 in winter and several times that in summer. We were told that the main visitors are Americans of Greek origin. The national tradition of returning to the "family island" remains strong.

Tuesday 22nd brought us to the second small island of Othoni, where we tied alongside the ferry pier with about two inches to spare under the keel. I could stand up in the water a few feet away. A



Brian Hegarty and Peter Bunting discuss the South Seas



"On the Edge" – *Oleander* stern to at Kassiope

number of boats were at anchor. Swimming was warm and delightful. There were two tavernas by the beach, and a well-stocked shop. The population is about the same as Erikoussa with a similar seasonal influx. Again there were lovely walks and a profusion of flowers, reminding me of the Scilly Isles.

On Wednesday we went to our third island of Mathrakion, unsure as to whether we could stop there. We were pleased to find a brand new harbour, very functional, pretty, well-protected, and with a shiny new taverna just above. However there was not a soul to be seen. We speculated as to which wedding, funeral or similar event had gathered in the entire

population. We remained alongside for some hours, lunched, walked around briefly and left none the wiser, returning to the west coast of Corfu and the spectacular holiday resort of Palaiocastrita. We berthed alongside the outer harbour wall at Ormos Armou nearby, comfortable in a flat calm. A westerly breeze would have made it untenable. A profusion of tavernas and pubs was located nearby as we were back in a serious tourist place. We picked one overlooking the harbour and picked well.

On the 25th we faced our second longest passage, all of 33 miles back to Paxos. A brisk

norwesterly pushed us along merrily to the lovely harbour of Lakka in the north of the island where we anchored and cooked omelettes for supper.

On the next day we revisited Gaios, involving no great hardship. I went swimming in a little cove just outside the town where I met an English couple who had been coming for years. They fly to Corfu, catch the ferry and stay. I think that we may do the same when cruising days are over or less available.

Returning to Levkas on Saturday 27th at the end of our cruise, we found Betty, two sons and a grandchild well installed at the Ionian Hotel, having enjoyed



Mist coming across Erikoussa



Entrance to Maios Harbour on Paxos

pumping session was no great hardship. Coincidentally, while visiting some fourteen ports we had not used the punt at all. This was a benefit of being so early in the season, added to the mild and pleasant weather at that time of year. Moreover, we had shown that in those waters, one does not have to travel big distances to visit and explore a wide variety of interesting places, old and new.

Thank you Brian and Betty for so many cruising years, and welcome back.

the pool and the familiarity of the town. Having cleaned and polished our batchelor ship, Peter, Bud and I then moved into the hotel for the night, while they came on board their beloved family yacht for another season of cruises.

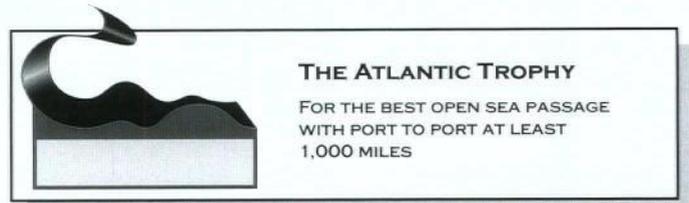
I had been quite unsuccessful in glueing the punt. Too much of it was unglued. Brian accordingly visited one of the many chandleries in Levkas, who asked if it was a certain make which always came unstuck after some years in the sun. It was indeed and replacement was indicated, but one to fit the deck space allotted could not be found. Brian decided to carry on with what he had as the occasional



Alongside and afloat (just) on Othoni

The Final Furlong... *Pure Magic's* Cruise Home

Peter Killen



We, Joe Phelan, Bill Walsh, Robert Barker, and myself, departed the Royal Cape Yacht Club, Cape Town, on 28th February 2006 at 08.00 to the good wishes of friends, old and new, on the dock. We were bound for St. Helena, 1,700 miles north and were slightly apprehensive, for we knew it would be rough until we had reached the southeast trades. Furthermore, we had not been seriously at sea for quite some time, and reckoned there would not be much eating for the first few days – and we were right!!

To go back a little in time, the previous year we had left *Pure Magic* at the Royal Cape Yacht Club in the care of a club member named Stephen Victor, who had cared for her as if she was his own.

We had also left a ton of gear including sails, dinghies etc., with another friend of mine named Frank Gormaly in his office basement, where they remained warm and dry for the southern winter.

Kathleen and Richard Hooper, members of the Royal St. George Yacht Club, Dublin, had entertained us royally one evening in their lovely holiday home and had ensured that we certainly would not starve for our first few days at sea!

Twenty-four hours out from Cape Town and the log reads “no drink, still queasy!” However, two days later, everyone was sitting up and frisky, with log entries commenting on the quality of the cuisine.

By 4th March, we were into trade wind sailing and thoroughly enjoying ourselves, and on Saturday 11th March at 06.30, we arrived in Jamestown Bay, St. Helena and anchored

about two hundred metres offshore in about 12 metres of water. As we anchored, a huge whale shark came swimming around the boat just below the surface of the crystal clear water, eying us up as he circled. He seemed to be nosing our anchor chain and hull and looked absolutely captivating!

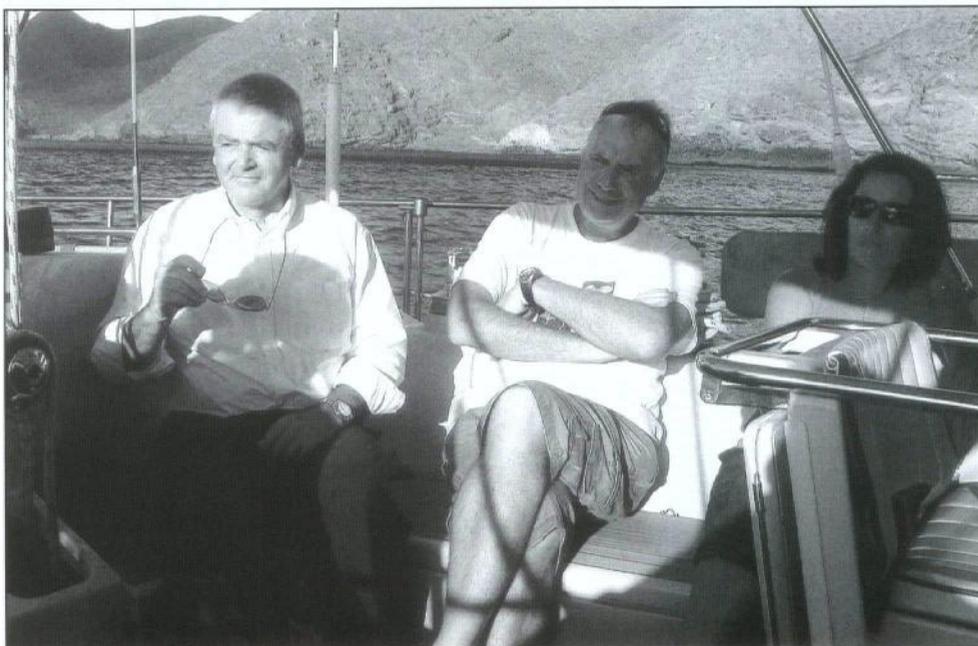
St. Helena is a British owned island and has a population of five thousand, made up of locals (referred to as “Saints”) and expats.

Having first checked in with the police, we headed for the tourist office.... which was, we discovered, closed for the weekend. We had hoped to visit Napoleon’s house but were told we would have to book a day in advance. This meant Tuesday at the earliest, by which time we would be gone, so that was out! We hired a taxi and took a tour of the island, which included a drive by the house. We got the driver to stop, peered over the hedge, which wasn’t too high, and decided to hop over it for a closer look, much to the dismay of the taxi man who pleaded with us not to or we would all end up in the clink!!

To digress, I’d say he was not joking, for I have never seen so many police per capita. In Jamestown, there were double yellow lines and marked out parking bays to beat the band and woe betide anyone illegally parking! Also the local jail looked busy. We could see, through the barred entrance door prisoners using the payphone, or talking to their wives/partners through the grill.

The pubs in Jamestown appear to be strictly run, and anyone barred from one is barred from them all!! This is accomplished by having the offender’s photograph nailed to the wall with his name and details of his misdemeanour listed! If someone has been especially naughty, a court can legally ban him from being served alcohol anywhere, including an off-licence, for a specified length of time. Expats (even house owners) can also be banned from the island, only to be readmitted upon application and at the authorities’ pleasure!

We had a great tour of this enchanting island, which is very lush. Strangely, we found that few of the inhabitants cultivate any crops, with the result that they rely on imports via a supply ship from Cape Town, which calls every two or three weeks. There is no landing strip, so this is the only method of travelling to and from the island. Whilst we were there, there was a



The Governor, Mike Clancy and Lindsey Moore, St. Helena

Photo: R. Barker

shortage of potatoes and lettuce. Where else too would you get a "bacon buttie" in the tropics!

During our visit, we met one of the government officials. He was a most interesting person and told us he was on his last year of duty there. Of all the places at which he had been stationed around the world, this was his favourite and he was hoping to arrange for a second tour of duty there. He has a young wife and child, and we asked him how they liked it there. He assured us that his wife absolutely LOVED the island and the life. He also mentioned in passing that the Governor might like to come out and visit *Pure Magic*, so we invited the Governor, our new friend and his wife and child to come and visit the next evening.

At the appointed time, they duly arrived, and as the wife climbed aboard, she said "Thank God I'm off that bloody island even if it's only two hundred metres offshore and on a boat!" She turned out to be great fun.

The Governor, Mike Clancy, told some great stories, including one about Jonathan, the giant tortoise, who lives in the grounds of the governor's residence. Jonathan is over one hundred and sixty years old, and has some female tortoises as companions. It seems that the old geezer still harbours hopes of fathering a few offspring, but so far, despite his best efforts, has had no luck. The Governor told us that during lovemaking sessions, the racket can be quite something and that from time to time, the randy old gentleman capsizes at the crucial moment and has to be righted as he finds it impossible to do so himself.

We departed St. Helena on Tuesday 14th March bound for Ascension Island seven hundred miles distant and on 19th March, arrived off the island, pre-dawn, heaving-to until sunrise. En route, we had had a fantastic Paddy's day dinner cooked by Robert. We dropped anchor in Clarence Bay off a magnificent turtle beach called Long Beach, just outside the surf line. The thunder of the surf was truly intimidating.

Ascension Island is really a large volcanic cinder cone (with a little vegetation in the centre) and is thirty-four square miles in all.

It is administered by the British, but has an American airbase, which is called "Wide-awake Airfield," named after the thousands of Wide-awake Terns who settle there. The base was built during the last world war, and is manned by American personnel. It has been used as a missile tracking station and also was used to track the Apollo space missions. The RAF also uses this airfield, and will fly in tourists from time to time depending on available space on their aircraft.

The total population is approximately one thousand, comprising UK officials, RAF and American air base personnel, and civilian "Saint" workers. The tourists who do make the journey to Ascension seemed to us to be made up mainly of people either with an interest in the Greenback turtles, which lay their eggs on Long Beach, or are interested in ornithology. Any we met were linked to various universities, though this is not the case for all of them.

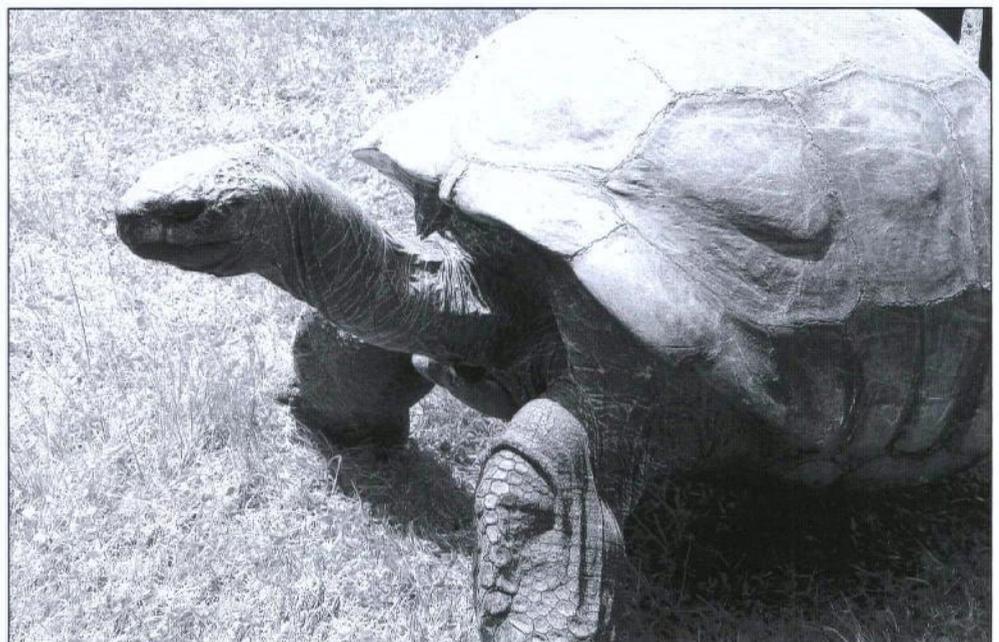
We were told it seldom rained,

but as we anchored, there was a downpour of monsoon proportions... the first in seven months!

We spent two days there and certainly kept busy, with amongst other activities, a four hour walk in the blinding heat, and a couple of visits to the Saint's Club, which was a bar for the civilian workers. On our first visit, we wandered in to the large two-roomed bar, which had big windows with no glass in them. There were lots of people standing or sitting around, including a sheep who sauntered over to where we sat, hoping to cadge a few crisps (or a drink). As she potted off chewing our crisps, the bar man emerged from behind the counter like a jet and evicted her before she knew what had happened. She took great exception to such behaviour, and stood looking in the doorway, before finally disappearing. Shortly afterwards, one of our crew was heard to say sadly "Aw, we forgot to get her name or phone number!"

Landing at the pier, from the dinghy in the huge swell was an "interesting" experience. We always got wet during the exercise, so packed our clothes into waterproof bags and came ashore in our togs. The pier at which we landed is narrow, with steps up from the platform on to a much higher pier. There is a bar stretching above and across the edge of the landing place, with ropes dangling from it, and the idea is to stand in the dinghy, holding the painter, and as the two metre swell crests, grab the rope and step nimbly ashore still holding the painter of the dinghy, which in the meantime has dropped once more. The rest of the crew can then vacate the dinghy one by one on each subsequent swell.

We had got reasonably good at this, until whilst attempting our third landing in a bigger than usual swell, things went horribly wrong. A group of American service men were leaning against the rails of the higher pier, watching our approach with interest. I was at the bow and as I stood at the crucial moment, ready to grab the hanging rope and step ashore, the crewman behind me thought I was about to fall overboard and grabbed a fistful of my togs! I couldn't go forwards or backwards and had one foot on the pier. As the swell subsided, the nose of the dinghy lodged on the pier, whilst the rest of it disappeared vertically. The crew directly behind me was clinging desperately to my togs which were heading rapidly for my ankles, the



Jonathan, St. Helena

Photo: Robert Barker



Peter, Bill and Joe outside Government Buildings Ascension Island

Photo: R. Barker

next crew had fallen backwards, and was clutching the driver, who had his arms wrapped around the outboard, hoping he wouldn't fall overboard. The next wave sorted out the situation and we finally made it ashore...crimson faced... as we headed past the chuckling soldiers and made a beeline for the bar. There was a touch of the "Last of the Summer Wine" about our antics, but it really didn't matter for we were having a ball!

Every morning, we could see the tracks in the sand, which the Greenback Turtles had made as they hauled themselves up from the surf to lay their eggs. We were asked not to use torches to watch them laying at night, so contented ourselves by watching them as best we could by the light of the stars.

We upped anchor on Tuesday 21st March bound for the island of Sao Vicente, Cape Verde Islands, 1,630 miles distant, crossing the Equator on 24th March, and finally dropped anchor off the town of Mindelo on Sunday evening 2nd April. This passage had seen us sail out of the southeast trades, into the Doldrums, and finally into the northeast trades i.e., head banging for one and all. However, overall, we were fairly lucky and did a fair bit of motor-sailing.

Mindelo was as nice as ever. Caesar, who had just missed out on the job of boat boy, the previous time we were there, was duly appointed to look after the boat and equipment, and really did a great job, helping us in lots of different ways during our stay.

Whilst we were there it blew hard for most of the time, with the wind funnelling down through the hills...straight offshore...whipping up a wet chop and also carrying clouds of fine dust over the harbour and down the coastline. Indeed, in the sailing pilots, there are stern warnings that the islands

may not be visible until one is nearly (or already) aground in the shallows, due to the amount of dust in the atmosphere. On the way to Sao Vicente, we had passed within three miles of the island of Santiago, which has high mountain peaks; we never saw a thing!

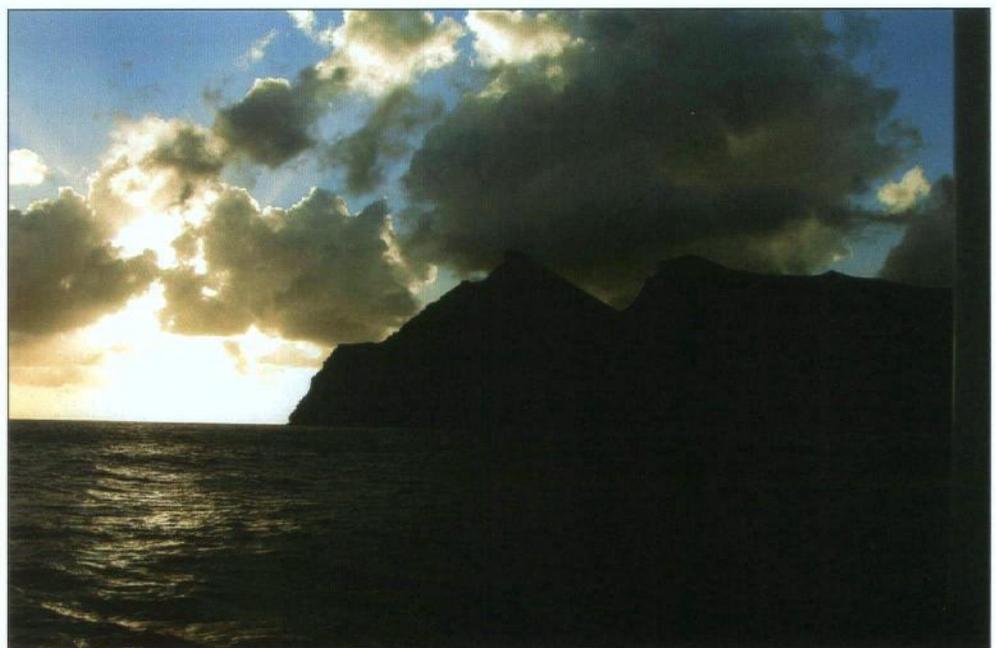
On the first evening there, with an offshore wind gusting over forty knots, and the Club Nautico Bar calling, Joe said he felt it wasn't very seaman-like to consider heading for the shore in a small dinghy. We all agreed, put our clothes in waterproof bags, our togs on ourselves, and having made sure that *Pure Magic* was safe, headed for the watering hole as fast as our two and a half h.p. outboard would drive us.

Mindelo proved to be just as nice and raffish, windy and dusty, as we remembered it to be, and we

thoroughly enjoyed our three-day stay there. We walked, swam, and revisited the tiny "Pica Pau" restaurant, which is the front two rooms of the owner's house. He and his daughters run it, and they gave us a really memorable seafood meal.... even better than the one served to us two years ago!

We reluctantly tore ourselves away and on 5th April, set sail for Ponta Delgada on the island of San Miguel in the Azores, some 1,260 miles north. Our spirits were not greatly lifted by departing into a stiff northeast thirty-five knot breeze, which kicked up a nasty sea.

Two days later, the wind had eased, the sun was shining and life was enjoyable. All in all, we had a good trip to the Azores, despite the fact that the wind was on the nose for all of the time. The only respite we got was when the weather calmed sufficiently from time to time, and allowed us to motor-sail in comfort.



The approach to St. Helena

Photo: Robert Barker

One idea which we stuck to religiously all the way up the Atlantic, was to fiddle with the ship's clock, so that sunset was never before 22.30. This meant that we always had dinner at 20.00. in daylight and hopefully, sunlight. The corollary was that in the tropics dawn did not break until somewhere between 09.00 and 10.00 in the morning, but who cared since there was only ever one person on watch at that hour?

With about 200 miles to go, one night our engine stopped suddenly, whilst we motor-sailed. We waited until sunrise, hoping for the best, and sure enough, a dip over the side proved that we had a large quantity of net wrapped around the prop. Some energetic sawing with a sharp bread knife soon had the obstruction cleared, and we were on our way once more, reaching Ponto Delgado on Easter Sunday 16th April.

A point that struck us was, that during our entire voyage to the Azores, once we had cleared Cape Town, we spotted only two ships in nearly six thousand miles of sea, and they were both near the Cape Verdes. I certainly would not like to be hanging around in a life raft waiting for a lift!

We spent three days and enjoyed every moment of it here, touring the island on mopeds. The scenery is soft and mountainous, with long-extinct volcanoes, in the craters of which are tiny villages. The people are most friendly and as one described the island... "Very like Ireland plus ten degrees."

There are lots of villages dotted around the coastline – all very pretty and of course being a Portuguese possession, the architectural origins are obvious.

On 19th April, we departed for La Rochelle 1,200 miles away and, of course, straight upwind, and finally arrived on



A crater on the island of San Miguel Azores

Photo: Robert Barker

Friday 28th. There we left *Pure Magic* with the Amel people for a bit of "tender loving care", and in early July Bev and I returned there once more, to meet up with her brother, John and his wife Maureen who were on holiday from Australia. We had a great local cruise with them, visiting amongst other places Rochefort, an enchanting little port, and having said a sad goodbye to them both, we departed La Rochelle for the last time this year, on 18th July, bound for Ireland via the beautiful Breton coast.

Our trip back to Bere Island, Bantry Bay was leisurely and lovely and on Saturday 29th July, we arrived at Laurence Cove Marina to a great welcome from family and friends.

West Cork was wonderful this summer, with perfect weather, and it was not until early Friday morning 15th September that *Pure Magic* was finally tied up to her berth in Howth Yacht Marina, just over two years since our departure and twenty four thousand miles later.

To try and sum up. The whole odyssey has been a great adventure, only made possible by the help of all who sailed with me, and by the unstinting support of our wives and families, particularly when one realises the length of time we were away from home (nearly twelve months for three of us). It has been a humbling experience to meet so many different people and see so many varied countries and islands. The highlights must be Antarctica, South Georgia and the Beagle Channel, but even as I type this, a myriad of other magical places crowd into my mind.

The only question now remaining is ... where to next?



The Governor's Residence, St. Helena

Photo: Robert Barker

Stockholm to Amsterdam

Donal Walsh

Our summer cruising is usually on *Lady Kate* our bilge-keeled Moody 31 based in Dungarvan, our cruising range confined to what can be comfortably achieved in a three week period by a family crew. This summer we were invited to sail *King of Hearts*, a Swan 44, from the Baltic to Lymington, an offer we readily accepted as it gave us an opportunity to experience new cruising grounds. We joined *King of Hearts* in Stockholm on August 2nd. My crew were Mary Walsh, Brendan Walsh, and Michael O'Neill. Her owner Andrew Wilkes who, together with my sister Máire Breathnach, had sailed the boat to Turku in Finland and participated in the Swan Nautor anniversary regatta, would be on board for a few days and then return home. We were to sail the boat as far as possible towards her home port of Lymington.

Ryanair carried us cheaply and efficiently from Dublin via Stansted to Stockholm. As I had not sailed aboard before, Andrew and I went through a detailed handover exercise, during which I learned how things worked, and was shown where various items of equipment were stowed. The others were ashore exploring Stockholm and we caught up with them

later. We were moored in the Wasahamnen Marina close to the city centre, and just beside the Vasa Museum. Andrew would spend a day or two with us, and then fly from Skavasta to return to the UK. Máire would follow a few days later at Copenhagen. Because of the time spent "learning the ropes" I had little time ashore but I enjoyed the short visit. The plan was to get south to Nyköping, the closest harbour to the airport and drop Andrew off to catch his flight.

Máire and Andrew have sailed *King of Hearts* extensively, including a circumnavigation of South America (ICC log 03/2004). Michael is excellent company and has sailed with us on and off over the years. Although more at home on a mountain than on the deck of a boat, he is a brilliant cook and produces fine meals in what seems an effortless way. I was delighted when Brendan agreed to come with us on this trip. He has plenty of seetime to his credit, but being a very active GAA player, was reluctant to travel initially, as he would miss some matches while we were away.

The following day, in brilliant sunshine we left Stockholm to start our journey south. Baltic marinas are generally of the box variety, lines to two posts or a buoy astern and moor bows on to the walkway. Wasahamnen Marina is very tight, and the breeze made it look like an impossible task to extricate *King of Hearts* from her berth. I was glad that Andrew was onboard for this initial manoeuvre.

Soon we were making our way east along the main channel towards the Stockholm archipelago – the Skärgård. A turn to starboard a few miles from Stockholm takes one southwards into the Skurusundet and onward to Baggensstaket a long winding gorge through lovely wooded banks with the added attraction of some fascinating intricate pilotage. Here at the narrowest and shallowest point we met a ferry coming from the opposite direction – the rule is simple, yachts keep out of the way of ferries – *King of Hearts* at close on 2.5m draft probably had greater need of water than the ferry, but they bully their way around a bit. Not knowing our draft and probably not caring either he huffed and puffed and blew, while Andrew at the helm ever so politely wrongsided the channel markers, attempting to keep out of his way. I thought, ... "What a bully, Wait till the new management takes over"... the ferry slipped by and we went back to enjoying the scenery.

Reaching wider channels we made sail. Effortlessly, despite the light breeze, *King of Hearts* was soon making better speed than under power, and for the rest of the holiday her performance under sail continued to amaze me. The sun shone, the sea was calm and sparkling, the spinnaker was hoisted, handed, and set again. All this as we dodged between rocks and islands, through clean fresh country and ever changing scenery. The silence of sailing and the absence of marine motorists added a reverence to the experience. Sailing is the way to travel here. The narrow passages between the islands demand great care and I feel it is essential to have copies of the Swedish charts to pilot successfully in these waters. We found the Båtsportkort series of chart packs are particularly useful. Andrew had prepared well and there were more than sufficient



King of Hearts in Holtenau Lock, Kiel.

charts and pilot books aboard to navigate safely. The preferred route is buoyed and clearly marked on the chart, but caution is still required – it is said that if you can see a rock or danger then the authorities think there is no need to mark it. As the evening closed in we chose a cove called Soviken expecting to anchor in isolation for the night. We were surprised to find about a dozen boats already at anchor and despite our best attempts we could not get our anchor to hold in the limited space that remained. I think that the anchor was coming down on smooth rounded rock so typical of this area and no hold was to be found. Nearby, just before it got really dark we found a little jetty at Ankarudden, and were able to get alongside for the night. Máire took command of the galley and we dined well.

Maybe a country influences one's lifestyle, here you just couldn't stay in bed, it was better to be up, and all hands were turned out at 06.00 next morning, Máire had an early morning swim, Brendan even got a five-mile run in. Soon *King of Hearts* was southbound again through the islands, bound for Nyköping where Andrew was to leave us. Again we had idyllic conditions and enjoyed a wonderful sail until we were off the harbour entrance from where we motored the remaining six miles to the quay. It was to be a pierhead jump, I was at the helm, Andrew amidships, was ashore just as we came alongside, I felt a resistance and thought aloud "ah f*#k we're aground". Judging by his whitened image, Andrew, now ashore and helpless on the quay, must have had different thoughts running through his head as he watched us head off without him.

It was another hour before we were back at the harbour entrance, our course now took us past Oxelösund where we discovered a marina and landing place, and found that we could have saved ourselves a lot of time making the drop off there, it being almost the same distance from Skavsta Airport. In fact either of these harbours is ideally placed for a crew change if using the Ryanair network. We carried on again, sailing quietly through narrow rock strewn channels in brilliant sunshine and a light following breeze. We overnighted at a marina at Tyrislöt attached to a campsite and were charged 50SEK about €5. The place was crowded with holidaymakers but we learned that the permanent population in winter reduces to about five and that the sea freezes and there can be up to a metre of snow. Hard to imagine on the day we visited. Here also I had my first swim in the sea in 10 years, I found the water saltless and surprisingly warm.

The following day Sunday August 6th, Waterford was to meet Cork in the All Ireland Hurling semi-final – Brendan had to at least listen to the match or better still see it on TV. We hoped we would find a big screen Irish pub, and needed to be installed there by 17.00. The large town of Västervik lay south of us and looked like the best bet. We were away early and had a great run carrying sail all the way to the marina entrance. As soon as our lines were secure, Brendan bounded ashore to enquire as to our best option for the match. He returned with a rather crestfallen face, no Irish pub, no big screen. There was however wireless internet in the marina. Michael our IT man, soon had Radio Éireann online and we were listening to live commentary of the match.

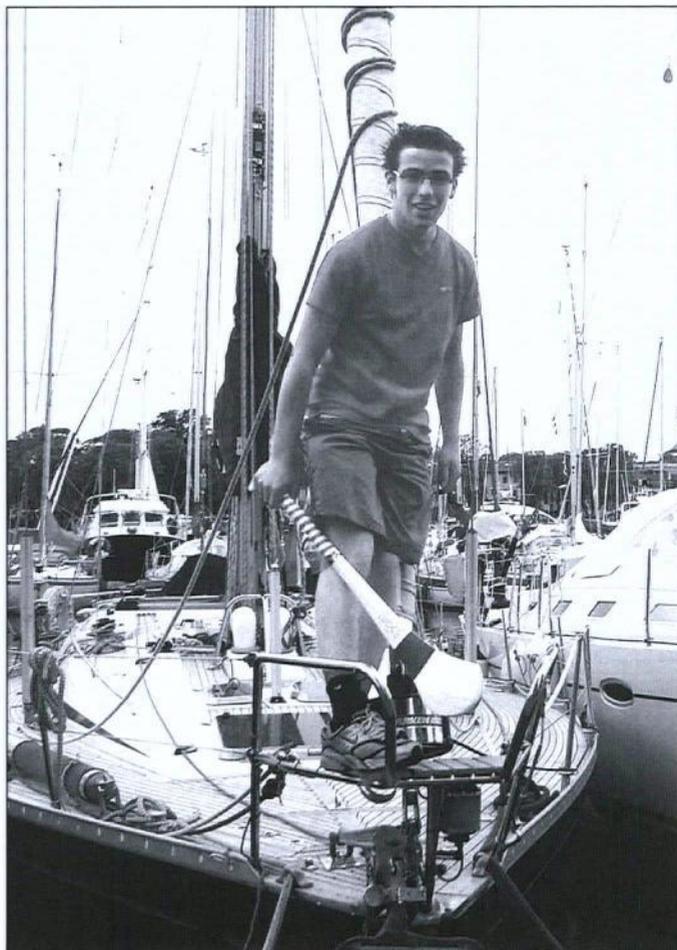
The best was still to come, Setanta Sport were streaming live video for \$10. We got to see the match after all. The result was a disaster, Waterford lost by a point. I thought I would have to send Brendan for counselling afterwards.

We exited the southern limit of the Archipelago on our next passage towards Kalmar making our way south between the island of Öland and Sweden's east coast. On this passage of 75 miles we passed under the Öland Bridge, the longest in Sweden and one of the longest in all Europe. It is 6,072 m long, supported on 156 pillars, and has a hump at its western end

which gives a clearance of 36 m for shipping. The yacht basin in Kalmar is a charming place with lots of character. Boats lie bows on to the quay with stern lines to buoys. Ashore there was open-air line dancing, a festival-like atmosphere, and little evidence of a pub culture. We lay alongside the quay wall, and we adjusted our lines for the night, it struck me how different sailing in the Baltic is compared to home, there is no tidal rise and fall, there are no tidal streams, and compass variation is almost zero.

A later start than normal next day – I wanted to see some of the town and there is a particularly interesting castle. Mary and Michael stayed ashore to explore and would join us by bus later in Karlskrona. On our way south we came across a large number of wind-generators both at sea and ashore. We rounded the southeastern tip of Sweden at Utlangen and then altered for Karlskrona arriving just after dark. The last bit of the approach channel, close to the cross harbour ferry terminal, is a bit tight, particularly in the dark. Karlskrona is the Swedish Naval base, and there is an interesting maritime museum well worth a visit. In 1981, the Russians grounded one of their submarines here while "observing" Swedish naval manoeuvres.

Our next passage was overnight to Copenhagen. We left Karlskrona at 16.00 and once clear of the entrance, headed for Sandhammaren headland. Initially we were unable to lay this course but the wind freed later allowing us to manage it. During the night there was a spectacular electrical storm to the east with plenty of lightning. It was great to watch and fortunately caused little concern as it was a long way from us. Approaching Denmark the wind fell off and we motor-sailed. Shortly after, a rattle developed in the shaft/sterngear. This was a shock and a disappointment, Andrew had a similar problem on his northward passage, and lifted the boat in Finland and renewed



Brendan going ashore to avenge Viking pillage in Ireland.



Brendan, Michael, Andrew, Mary, Máire

the drive-couplings on the engine. Thinking we might have to lift *King of Hearts* to inspect for damage, we opted for a marina at Brøndby, in the southern suburbs of Copenhagen. Although a bit distant from the city centre, it had a crane of sufficient capacity. Approaching this marina we encountered fishing sticks, large numbers of stakes driven into the seabed to which nets are attached. These can be both hazardous and confusing. It is easy to mistake them from a distance as being a navigation marker, and the nets prevent passage through them and in our case forced us to make a large detour.

Máire left us in Copenhagen and we spent a few days sightseeing. We took a day trip to Helsingore, and crossed by ferry to Sweden, took a train to Malmo, and returned to Copenhagen via the Øresund bridge tunnel. Having consulted Andrew, we decided against lifting *King of Hearts* and to carry on south, minimise the use of engine and keep to low revs. We were now bound towards the Kiel Canal, and as we sailed past



Donal with cruise liner in Kiel Canal



Brendan at Harlingen

the southeast corner of the island of Mons, we viewed the famous chalk cliffs, which were a welcome change from the flat land and monotonous shoreline to which we had become accustomed. The wind was freshening as we approached Klintholm, our chosen stopover for the night. Klintholm is a nice marina but there is little else here apart from a small well-stocked supermarket. It blew strongly during the night and early next day. Nobody was moving and we thought we would lose a day. Checking the charts, I found that there was a passage between Falster and Sjælland, which I had previously decided against, as there are two bridges close to our draught, and the approach channel only carries 2.8m. By taking this route we would get better shelter and not be delayed. In the afternoon the wind dropped off, we put in two reefs before we left the berth and headed to sea. A short beat of about 12 miles brought us to the entrance to Groensund. We had been advised to be careful here, the entrance channel is narrow. Long mooring chains on



Scramble for sea lock, Kornwerderzand, Netherlands



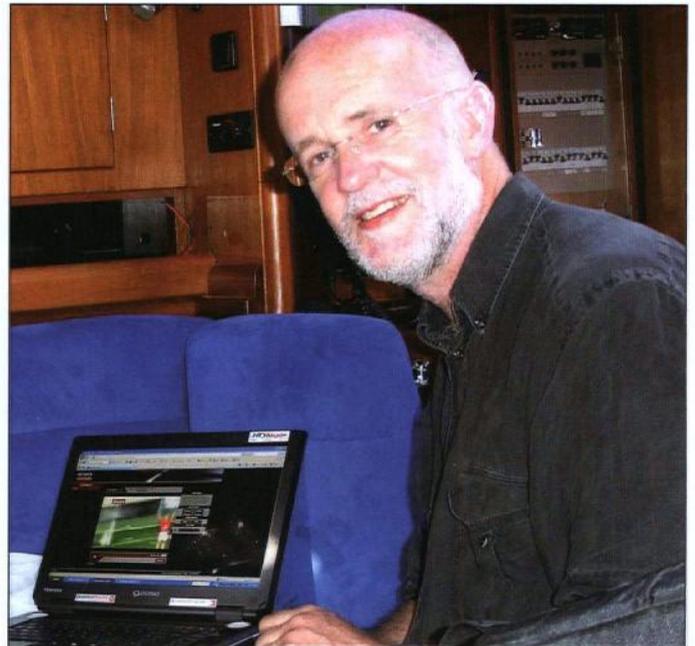
Máire and Mary, Amsterdam

the channel buoys allow them to drift a bit too far in strong winds. The secret is to keep close along the windward line of buoys. Once in the channel we carried the wind more freely, and we had a pleasant sail to Stubbekøbing. Here we entered the commercial dock, and lay alongside some other large yachts already there. This seemed a nice little place but we didn't stay long enough to explore it. There were some pretty Baltic Traders alongside, which were returning from a rally in Rostock.

It was raining very heavily next morning. The inside boats wanted to be away. We moved to let them out and decided to keep going. There was little wind so we slowly motored eastwards passing under the bridges. Later the wind freshened, soon we were under reefed main and jib in a beam wind, and making great progress. This was to change. We had to alter course, heading south along the east coast of Langeland, bringing the wind dead on the nose. We tacked and beat our



Ferry at Baggenstaket, Sweden



Michael hacked onto Waterford v Cork match from Croke Park

way down the channel in a strong breeze, which gusted to 50 knots at times. There were some heavy showers and the drops really hurt. Despite the rain, this was exciting sailing. What a difference a few feet in the length of a boat makes. On *Lady Kate* this would have been pure hardship and a most unpleasant experience. Every wave hits the target. On *King of Hearts* most of the waves were spent by the time they reached the helmsman. It was also a strange feeling experiencing waves that contained no salt and didn't sting.

Our final night in Denmark was spent in the marina in Spodsbjerg. In the strong wind and lacking full power it was a



Close encounters in Kiel Canal

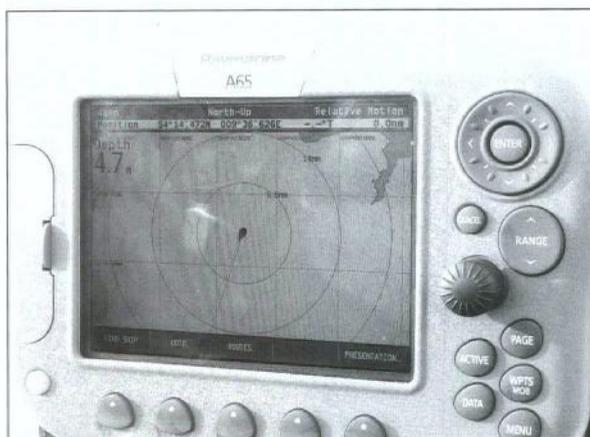
hell of a job to moor in the box berth as the approach was very tight. Thankfully there were some willing souls onshore to help with the lines. By morning, the wind had died and the sun shone. We intended taking a rest day, but the conditions were right and we were off, bound for Kiel. As we approached Kiel, there was a noticeable increase in traffic and we encountered many ships heading in and out of the canal. It was dark when we finally got into the approaches and here we encountered a yacht race with the huge fleet all showing us a port light as they headed to sea. We put in to Laboe, a marina on the east side of the harbour entrance, and visited the U-Boat museum and memorial there next day. Later we crossed to the Holtenau locks for the canal transit.

Canal control is very efficient and little time is lost locking in. Head for the lock showing a white occulting light and go straight in. There is only about 300mm. of level change when entering from the Baltic side. Canal dues are paid in Holtenau and for *King of Hearts*, @ 13m it cost €13.00c. The canal is 100km. long with no locks other than those at both ends. We overnighed at Rendsberg a delightful town, with several marinas, the last one being closest to the town. Mary indulged in some retail therapy here, prices being much lower than in Scandinavia, and all agreed that we could have done with a bit more time here.

Apart from the traffic, the canal is very monotonous. Our deck level was so low that the banks on both sides prevented us from seeing the countryside beyond them. We were amazed by the volume of commercial traffic using the canal. Traffic control is very well-organised, there are a number of wide sections or passing places where some ships are stopped while others pass by. Yachts, provided they keep out of the way, are largely ignored. Constant attention is required here and a sharp lookout must be kept for the numerous ferries darting back and forth from bank to bank. It was really interesting to be so close to these large vessels in such a narrow waterway. A cruise liner we encountered was so near that we were able to speak to some passengers on deck as they passed alongside. Michael was to leave us next day so we spent the night just inside the lock at Brunsbüttele, ready for an early start in the morning. We dined ashore at an excellent restaurant close to the locks, from where we watched the ships pass.

For the first time on the cruise we now had to factor in tides and tidal streams. We had been warned that it was important to catch the tide in the Elbe estuary and we were fortunate that the timing of the ebb, which started about 09.00 coincided with our departure, especially as we could not run our engine at full power. It was calm outside the lock. We motored northwards passing Cuxhaven to port, and despite the stream, it was a long time before we were clear of the sandbanks and shoals and could set our desired course to the west. The plan was to sail parallel to the coast along the inshore traffic zone. There were only two harbours that we could possibly use on the German Frisian islands, at Norderney and Borkum, and both of these were close to the limits of our draught. They had a further added disadvantage that in order to clear the offlying banks one has to sail well to the west, before altering southeast to pass between the islands and enter harbour. We therefore decided to make a long passage and carry on to the north of Holland. The

wind picked up and soon we were sailing, but as it freshened it swung round and steadied dead on the nose. By evening we were beating our way along the narrow coastal corridor and as night settled in we were well reefed down on both main and jib. It was a long hard sail that night, plenty of wind and rain. At one stage, the moon broke through the cloud and we saw a moonbow or lunar rainbow. We found out since, that moonbows are rare because moonlight is not very bright. A bright moon near to full is needed, it must be raining opposite the moon, the sky must be dark and the moon must be less than 42° high. Brendan relieved me at the helm and I catnapped in the cockpit when I could. At some stage while checking the plotter my glasses went over the side. I carried a spare pair with me so this was not a major setback. However when I reflect on this incident, an image of a bespectacled crab with a beaming smile, prancing gleefully along the bottom of the North Sea comes to mind. At dawn checking the plot I reckoned we were still about 12 hours out of Harlingen. We would have to get plenty of westing in to clear the Westergrouden Bank. Looking onshore, we could see the buoyed channel we had to get to, and with no apparent hazard in sight it was frustrating not to be able to sail directly to our objective. The banks are dangerous here and it is foolhardy to take shortcuts – another time we will have great fun here in *Lady Kate* especially with her bilge keels. We turned the outer buoy, brought the wind on our quarter, and we were off. We covered 30 miles in three hours, an exhilarating passage through sandbanks and shoals. At these speeds, we diligently observed the marked channel. At Harlingen we were directed to the yacht basin, bridges opened effortlessly as we approached, closing with equal efficiency.



Ship on land! Close-up of plotter showing *King of Hearts* position in Kiel Canal

Harlingen is a typical Dutch town, with lots of canals and pretty streets and well worth a visit. Realising that we could not now get to Lymington within the confines of the time available to us, we decided that we would leave *King of Hearts* in Amsterdam. We advised Andrew and Máire so that they could arrange to be there for the changeover. I had to book some flights and needed an internet connection – one was available in the library, but it was closed, so I strolled around looking for an internet café. Internet and coffee were low sellers in this café, it was more like a tobacconists, with many exotic varieties of weed available. Micheál Martin's smoking ban would add an interesting dimension to this culture. Later in a nearby street I was approached by a weird character who advised that I should have a tattoo done and showed me samples of his art. Eventually I got away and took refuge in a pub. We spent two nights in Harlingen, and although the wind was still fresh it was out of the northwest and would be favourable for the passage to Amsterdam. We chose the inland route via the IJsselmeer and Markermeer. Our departure was delayed, the onshore westerly wind had raised the sea level so much that the storm gates were closed and would remain so until the tide dropped below the flood alert level. Just outside Harlingen is the Boontjes Bank, which must be crossed at high water. The channel over it is well-marked but shallow. Once clear we set a reefed jib and ran quickly in the fresh breeze. Next, we had to transit the Afsluitdijk, which prevents the North Sea flooding inland. There is a lock at Kornwerderzand, which allows access to the

Ijsselmeer, and because of the delay in leaving Harlingen it was thronged with boats. Once the gate opened there was a mad scramble to get in, we were the last and were lucky to make it at all. Outside the lock we set the jib and made such great speed that it wasn't worth the effort to hoist the main, given that it would have to be lowered again to transit the next lock at Enkhuizen just 20 miles ahead. The Ijsselmeer is well buoyed with channel marks and safe water buoys, and there was plenty of water for *King of Hearts* despite her draught. Interestingly, when we were a few miles off the shore, apart from some tall chimneys and buildings there was little land to be seen, very different from the familiar high coasts of Ireland. Enkhuizen looked a lovely town, a stop here would have been great, but we preferred to take advantage of the fair wind. Alone we locked through to the Markermeer and ran the final 25 miles to Amsterdam. At the edge of the city we had to pass through a bridge and another lock, and then made our way to Sixhaven Marina, just across the river from Central Station. It was dark when we arrived and the place was full, and I really mean full. All the berths were occupied and all the manoeuvring space between the berths was full. I never saw anything like it before, we squeezed into a space in the fairway, got a few lines ashore, and kept a low profile for the night. Next morning it was chaos, some boats were leaving, others like us needed a berth. Spaces vacated by departing boats were pounced on by those staying longer. Management insists that a boat cannot be left unattended before 12 noon unless it is in a proper berth. Maybe we pounced a bit faster than others, and soon we were secure in a box berth. From Sixhaven there is an almost continuous free ferry service to Central Station from where all other city

transport can be accessed. We had two days which were spent seeing the sights – window-shopping here takes on a new meaning and is very enjoyable. We took a flight to Cork, Máire and Andrew returned and sailed *King of Hearts* back to Lymington.

Our cruise covered almost 1000 miles, and apart from the Kiel Canal, and some other short distances, it was mostly done under sail. I enjoyed the experience of a bigger boat – she was faster, drier and generally more comfortable than what we are used to. There was less use of the engine, and much more sailing was done. The sailing was superb, as a result we tried to go too far some days. If we had been in *Lady Kate*, there were times we would not have gone to sea at all in conditions such as we experienced, let alone beat to windward for so long.

Nowhere did we have any encounter with officialdom – police, customs, and other officials, seemed not even the slightest bit interested in us. What freedom – long may it last. Marinas generally were great value, particularly in the Baltic, several nights we paid €5-€7, once in Denmark we paid €28 and we averaged about €12. Kilmore Quay wake up! We carried Swedish and Danish charts which are excellent. The guide to Sweden's nature harbours, although published in Swedish, gave us access to many delightful anchorages that otherwise might not have been attempted. Brendan surprised me, despite his interest in hurling in recent years, none of his sailing skills have been lost. It was a great relief to have a young fit person aboard to help with the sail handling, and he was well able to handle *King of Hearts* particularly on the night off the north coast of Holland.

Stuart Musgrave writes of A Swallow Tale

We left Crosshaven on Saturday, April 29th at 1.00 bound for the Scillies and then on to La Trinite sur Mer in Brittany. *Tillygreig* is a Dehler 41, built in 1998 and owned by me since 2004. On board were Dominic O'Sullivan, Colum O'Sullivan (no relation) and Val Cosgrave. For both Val and Dominic it was their first overnight on a passage. The weather was kind and blew ten knots from north. We estimated we would reach the Scillies at breakfast time. We split into two watches, doing three hours each, with Sully (Column) and Dominic on one and Val and I on the other, starting at 21.00. Dominic and Sully retired. Sully had cooked that evening and, in fairness, he is very good but he uses absolutely every pot and implement on board! So it took us a while to do the wash up.

At dusk, about 21.30, as Val and I were talking in the cockpit, a swallow flew straight from the stern and landed just under the spray hood. It just sat there. I moved my hand slowly towards it and then stopped about six inches from it. I hadn't been so close to a wild bird since I was in the Galapagos Islands in 2002. It stayed for about a minute, then flew off astern and then wheeled and flew straight down into the saloon! It was dark down there except for the light from the radar and the red companionway light. I said to Val "did you see that?" He said "I did, but I think it flew out again." We spoke about it for a few minutes and then other things came to the fore.

We changed watch at midnight with a handover of a mug of tea for the boys. I came back up at 02.30 to write up the log and see what had happened whilst I was asleep. I decided to let Val sleep on, as it was fairly calm and we had put the motor on. I went down for some biscuits which I had hidden, as Sully eats everything, and from past experience I knew that if he knew I had Jaffa Cakes on board, then they would have been gone by the time I got on watch! They were in a box on the saloon table. I lifted the paper that was covering my hoard and saw the swallow in the corner. I thought it was dead. It didn't move so I lifted it but I could feel it was warm, and put it back in the corner of the box, with a piece of bread and an egg cup of water, and went back on deck. At 06.00 when the boys came back on watch, I told them not to touch the box on the table.

I couldn't sleep so I was back on deck at 07.30. The light was up and I was telling Val about the swallow and went to have a look. It was still there. I brought the box up into the cockpit and put it on the table. I gently lifted back the newspaper covering there was our swallow, up on his feet and having had his breakfast! He did a quick walk about the box and then took off. He flew around the boat once and headed of north. The sense of loss was palpable!

I didn't get back to Baltimore until July. But as I arrived at the house there, I noticed a swallow had built a nest above the door.

Now I just wonder if..... !

Indigestion or regurgitating the anchor

Hugo Duplessis

Last year I swallowed the anchor when I sold my Conway *Samharcin* in Trinidad. But iron rations are indigestible. The cure was to buy another boat and in December I found a small motor-sailer in Rosbrin which I reckoned would be suitable for my geriatric old age.

Crimson Rambler 3, as she was renamed after my first small cruiser, in which I made an adventurous cruise to Ireland almost sixty years ago, is a Colvic Watson 23 ft motor-sailer. A chunky seaworthy looking boat with roomy accommodation and a wheelhouse. She sails to windward quite well if you don't mind pointing at sixty degrees and, according to the mackerel line, making twenty degrees leeway, plus the veering of the autopilot wondering where it is supposed to be going. On the other hand it does better than any racing yacht under power. Oh the luxury of going to windward with a nice wheelhouse and no need for an armour of waterproofs! Why has it taken me sixty years? This is the sensible way to go, especially after twenty years of "duck's back" sailing in warm seas.

Bad weather delayed fitting out and I had to go back to England to speak at a conference on osmosis, (and promote my book *Fibreglass Boats*), before some essential work had been finished. It was mid July before I got back. Not much sailing season left. To hell with painting. No barnacles will grow now. I told the boatyard to stick the mast back up and throw the boat into the water as soon as possible. I also wanted to get the boat round to Bantry where it would be much more convenient.

There were further delays, trying to sort out the rigging furling systems. After ten days I abandoned the Profurl jib furling and hanked on a smaller jib. It was now the first of August and I still had to get round The Mizen and, unlike the previous week, there was a weather window. It was time to start working up, to use a naval expression. Or in other words find out what didn't work.

Not wanting to tackle The Mizen immediately in an unfamiliar twenty year old boat my first stop was the familiar haunt of Crookhaven, a beat to windward in a light south-westerly. No, that's not quite right. For beat, read motoring. Crookhaven was more crowded than earlier days, notably the celebrated occasion on one of the 'Boozy Cruises' when John Guinness went into O'Sullivan's and asked for a "Guinness for Mr Murphy and a Murphy for Mr Guinness".

Nothing like cruising to find what works and what doesn't. That night it was all the cabin lights. They recovered next day. I think that like so many Cork yachties the boat was frightened of going round The Mizen into the waters beyond, marked on charts as "Here be Monsters".

I have been round it many times (including in thick mist taking bearings on the beacon with a handheld tranny radio), but never has it been so beautiful. It was a lovely calm, sunny morning and I was away early. The cliffs shone in the sun and beyond, the Bearra mountains were misty blue against the clear sky with Mount Brandon peeping over the top.

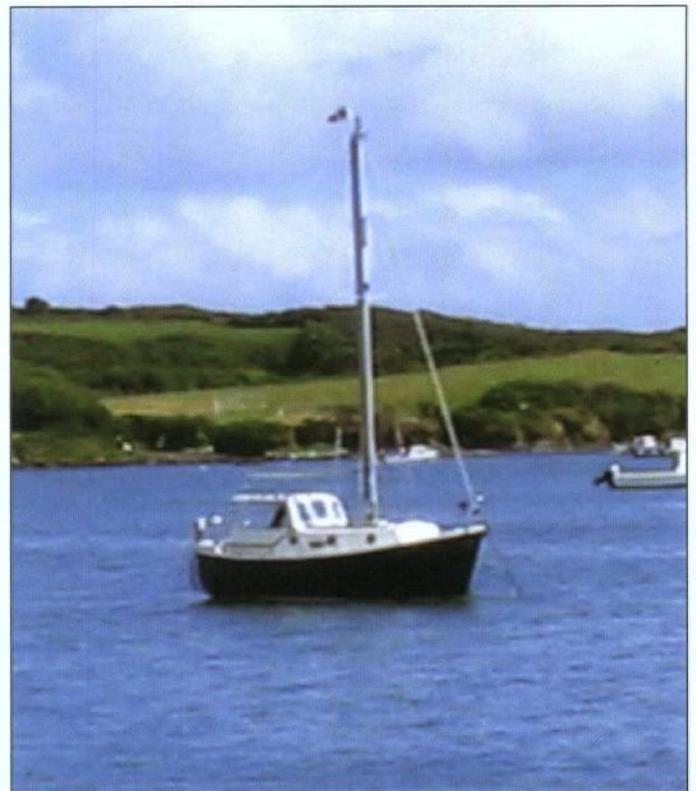
Three Castles Head, Sheeps Head, passed by before turning into home waters of Bantry Bay, twenty years almost to the day

since we had taken our departure in misty overcast conditions bound for our "Islands of Dreams" beyond the sunset.

It was going to be a hot day. I believe it was a record but at sea one does not notice that. Unlike those exotic tropical islands, sunbathing at sea in Ireland is not a common feature. I was buzzed by a Coastguard aircraft (never knew they had one) evidently surprised see a fat old man dressed, or rather undressed, in Caribbean style.

On schedule, almost – wonderful what you can predict under power – I was greeted by Johnny Crowley and shown to a mooring. "Home is the wanderer, Home from the sea". Well not exactly because the original boat had been left in Trinidad.

I had intended to join what used to be the annual 'Ocean Race' for dinghies and anything else to Castletown for the regatta. It used to be a good party. But where are the dinghies now? Instead, there was supposed to be a Club gathering at Lawrence Cove. So only two days later, I set off again. But the weather had changed. Southwest and raining. (Oh the joy of a wheelhouse and no waterproofs – or rain down one's neck!). I was worried about the new dinghy. It had no proper towing eye and I was using some dubious line picked up cheap at the 'Beaulieu Boatjumble'. It was also getting uncomfortable so I headed for another old favourite, Zetland Pier, a small, well-sheltered quiet spot, not mentioned in 'S & W'. (There are just



Crimson Harbour 3 – just launched. A nice little cruiser for a geriatric

too many in Bantry Bay for the book to mention more than the larger ones).

Next morning it was still raining. Best place was in my bunk with a book. Also a good place to see where the deck and hatches leaked. Never believe those experts who claim fibre-glass decks cannot leak!

When it cleared I motored on to Lawrence Cove but found no Bantry club members there, although several ICC boats. Lawrence Cove now has a small marina. I hate marinas. In my view they are overpriced, overcrowded, overnoisy slums, with no privacy. Suburban cruising for suburban minded people. So in my usual custom I anchored off. The main benefit of marinas, to my mind, is that they attract yachts away from the lovely still quiet anchorages which do not have them, and where any other boat within a hundred yards is too close. And so it seems to be. Thank heavens that in Ireland we still have so many beautiful little harbours where one can anchor and be independent in the true style of cruising.

It was another lovely hot day and I walked to the end to see if the guns of the old battery were still trained on my house at the head of the bay. They were. (An enquiry at the National War Museum in London produced the information that it was within range of a 9 inch gun, although now more likely to be hit by a bird's nest than a shell!)

Civilisation has reached Bere Island. There are now cars and traffic problems. Instead of cars being balanced precariously on a couple of planks across a launch, there is now a car ferry, able to carry even lorries and caravans.

Seeking peace and quiet I left for Dunboy, finding it empty. But not for long. Two charter yachts came in but left after a couple of hours to be followed by a large French charter catamaran which had evidently lost one of the engines and could only turn to port if pushed round by its dinghy. Dunboy is a bit small for that sort of manoeuvring, but they did just manage to miss me.

But peace and quiet? 'Development' has struck. The dramatic ruin of Puxley's house is being rebuilt with tower cranes and all the noise of a major building site. What I wonder will the future bring? Jet skis? Water skiers? Speedboats? I suppose there will have to be a marina too!

On Monday morning work started. I left for somewhere quieter. Lonehart, another old favourite, was completely deserted in contrast to marina ridden Lawrence Cove just over the hill. But quiet? Out of luck. The army firing range was in action. But at least they stopped for dinner and went back to

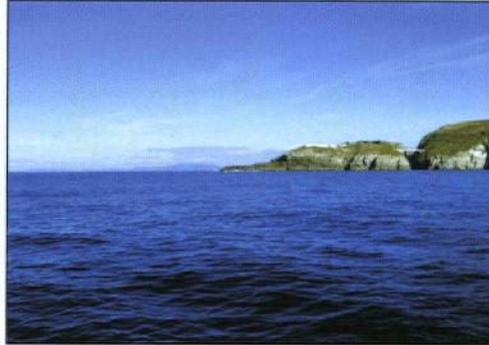
barracks at a reasonable hour – which is more than one can say for a marina near a popular pub.

Then back to Bantry. Six harbours in seven days was fair going for a first shake-down cruise. Several more short cruises followed, Adrigole, Glengarriff and others, a dozen or so without having to leave Bantry Bay, and there was still a dozen more. That is one of the joys of living in such a wonderful cruising ground. It goes to show you do not have to sail far to enjoy good cruising.

Because of the delays and inevitable problems with a new boat, I had only a

month of this new style, geriatric cruising. Some improvements are needed to bring the boat up to cruising standard, but these short cruises showed *Crimson Rambler* is going to be what I wanted, an easily handled, comfortable, little boat for geriatric cruising.

In early September I returned to England. I had a long shopping list for the Southampton Boat Show. Johnny Crowley hauled the boat at the Bantry Bay SC. And was I glad when ten days later the BBC shipping forecast said "Fastnet, Violent Storm, force 11". That is only one stop short of hurricane! In fact it was the ex-tropical corpse of Gordon. The cloud pattern that evening from a Hampshire moor looked remarkably like the patterns I had seen in the Caribbean, the distant hurricane wall, with all hell let loose a few hundred miles away. I have yet to hear if the forecast was right.



Mizen Head, 3rd August.
Why are people so afraid of it?

Come my friends,
'Tis not too late to seek a newer world.
Push off, and sitting well in order smite
The sounding furrows, for my purpose holds
To sail beyond the sunset, and the baths
Of all the western stars....

Tennyson - *Ulysses*.
(from 'The unlikely voyage of Jack de Crow',
by A.J.Mackinnon)

C'est Formidable Cruise

Rome, Gighlio, Elba, Corsica, North Sardinia and return Fiumicino, Rome

Paul Clandillon

The commencement of our cruise with skipper Paul Clandillon and crew Patricia and Susan Clandillon is delayed somewhat this year by the Public Examinations, and Susan's Junior Sailing Course, essential for the keen laser 4.7 sailor!

Tuesday 18th July: We arrive at Porto Turistico di Roma, a 1km long new marina on the coast some 40 kilometers distant from the centre of Rome. A travel-worn but happy crew, we find the vessel in good shape, all sun covers in place, and apart from evidence of coral growth on waterline and below, all apparently in order. The main sources of boat degradation would be strong sunlight, and a salt/sand mix thrown up by southerly storms. Also, water-suspended mud is thrown up when the river Tiber estuary outflow is whipped up by northerly gales. In comparison with the foregoing, red sand rain is a minor irritant! Dutiful winter maintenance have ensured that these happenings are cleaned up from time to time during our visits.

Wednesday 19th July: We are all keen as mustard, sails are bent on, and with bikes re-commissioned from under their canvas cover on the dock, crew are dispatched to fetch provisions (Pat and Susan, great work)

Thursday 20th July: I try a very early morning cleaning of waterline from quay, find my efforts ineffective, so I have an on-the-water session in the Zodiac, much closer to the work!

Friday 21st July: With Tom Cooke's Sierra Aircard (Sandy Ways, ICC) for the laptop successfully topped up by the nice staff in Vodafone at Fiumicino, I am back in time for lunch on the boat. We are anxious to set sail due to the settled conditions and do so at 14.00 local, heading northwest 315° true for Santa Marinella, 25 miles away on a rhumbline.

Weather allowing, and it did oblige, there is a good anchoring spot just outside the harbour mouth, and anchoring is achieved easily with the inaugural deployment of the new Anchor, a 20kg Lewmar Delta.

Saturday 22nd July: The passage is made this morning 36 miles 308° true to Monte Argentario, a prominent landmark, the shoreward end of the Tuscan Archipelago.

We fuel up at Cala Galera, on the south side of this peninsula. Thence it is a short distance to anchor off the beach in four metres depth south of Orbitello lagoon. It proves to be a night of northeast wind and the anchor holds well, a source of great satisfaction. The Brittany pattern anchor supplied with our Dufour 36 Classic sloop has not been successful in Mediterranean bottoms. The sand is very fine and compacted in the Mediterranean and needs all the weight over a single point to achieve penetration of the seabed initially. Perhaps it is because the Brittany anchor has two flukes that it skids without digging in. It is still on board, rigged as a kedgie.

Sunday 23rd July: 06.00: Our time departing for Isola Giglio 15 miles bearing 273° true, once the Punta di Torre Ciana is cleared away after four miles. We enter and berth in this compact harbour with assistance from the obliging, young and beautiful crew of the power craft in the next berth. They then use our humble "Mr Bricolage" plank to get ashore. The Harbourmaster asks us to leave after our shopping is completed,

due to high season space pressures. We went southwards to Cala Delle Caldane. There in six metres indicated depth we slide our anchor off into an abyss as the depth quickly drops to 40 metres. The 10mm chain cable jumps the windlass gypsy and all chain escapes with much nylon rope as well. Attempts at retrieval are hampered by the cut-out operating on the windlass. Efforts to hoist by hand are ineffectual in the timescale perceived. We drift southwards towards rocks and high cliffs. In an effort to improve our lot we motor northwards up the cala. We manage to foul another large classic Italian yacht's cable, and have no option but to ask to come alongside him to sort matters out. Fender mats and canvas covered fenders appear as if by magic. The giant windlass on this gentleman's craft is employed with gusto and soon, by him sending down another anchor to snag ours, all is retrieved. His able family crew soon have us put to rights and advise us genially that anchoring hereabouts is not for the faint-hearted! We are most grateful and pass a square green bottle to help show our appreciation. It is deemed unnecessary, but accepted with grace. We put to sea, considering ourselves less of a danger to others whilst underway! A short passage of 10 miles bearing 52° true brought us to Pt. Lividonia, a further two miles southeastwards bringing us into the lovely harbour of Porto Santo Stephano.

Monday 24th July: We have been since last evening at Santa Stephano, near Monte Argentario. This is a fascinating area, like Howth head, formerly an island. Two lagoons and causeways connect the area to the mainland and to the old Roman town of Orbitello. A good public bus service connects the towns in this area.

Santo Stephano is tucked into the northern face of this high outcrop in the Tuscan Archipelago, which includes Elba and Giglio, Giannutri, Monte Cristo, and Pianosa. Some are still off limits as penal colonies. In Santo Stephano, we gain a free berth with water hose nearby. The Guardia Costiera and the Harbourmaster visit, both leave satisfied, having interviewed us the previous year! We receive a warm welcome from the dive and cruise boat operators, with whom we share these communal berths. I think they remember our narrow rudimentary "passarelle" plank more than any other feature. The quay wall is high, ship style.

Tuesday 25th July: 05.40: We cast off for Elba, and Marina di Campo 41 miles distant course 297° true. A fine morning brings us wind of 6 knots northeast, a smooth sea, so 7 knots groundspeed is achieved easily. At 12.45 we arrive at Golfo di Campo, a large bay. As expected the small marina is full of local boats, no chance at all of a berth. A short time later, the anchor has obligingly buried itself in fine sand in 6/7 metres depth. A delightfully big anchorage with lots of swinging room. Susan (aged 14) and skipper hire a windsurfer for €15 for the session of 1 hour and opine that this is not bad value at all. The entire crew (3), the Zodiac's full payload, visited the town of Marina di Campo in the late evening and find it thronged and vibrant; nice craftwork on display at the many street stalls. Susan splashes out on earrings! Then it is back to *C'est Formidable*, lit up by official anchor lamp and backed up by a white LED

bicycle lamp to aid identification amongst all the other darkened vessels. A wonderful peace hangs in the air with the various scurrings of rubber ducks and crews just perceptible, such is the resolve of all the boats concerned not to spoil such a magic evening.

Wednesday 26th July: 08.00: Our second day at Marina Di Campo. We rise early and I use the snorkel and mask scraping manfully at the boat's bottom, and soon have cleaned off all the starboard side. Tired from this exertion, I resolve to leave the port side till another day. Thence to shopping ashore. New red shorts purchased at the market, not cheap, but good quality. Susan buys a

Roxy brand bag, label very important! We have a nice lunch ashore in a small café near the marketplace. Later we swim off the boat, leisurely coffees following, best china produced! A siesta may not be an Italian word, but we partake of one anyway.

16.00: All crew refreshed, Susan and skipper try out a Hobie catamaran; confirmation of Susan's sail training quickly becoming apparent as we come on the wind. We enjoy this Hobie Cat so much we resolve to do it again another day.

Thursday 27th July: 06.45: We now have to tear ourselves away from the beauties of Elba. This tranquil island proving in the end to be our favourite island of all those visited this year.

Plain sailing

On passage, 35 miles almost due west to Bastia, on Corsica, this year we have a flat sea, nil wind. A marked contrast to last season when 40 knot gusts battered us on our approach to the coast.

12.45: After usual diesel purchasing and being extremely polite we are granted a berth in Port Toga. The Main Harbour or Vieux Port, is completely full of visitors. One big advantage of Port Toga as the alternative is its proximity to a large "Geant" supermarket, which as a bonus offers air-conditioned relief from the scorching midday sun.

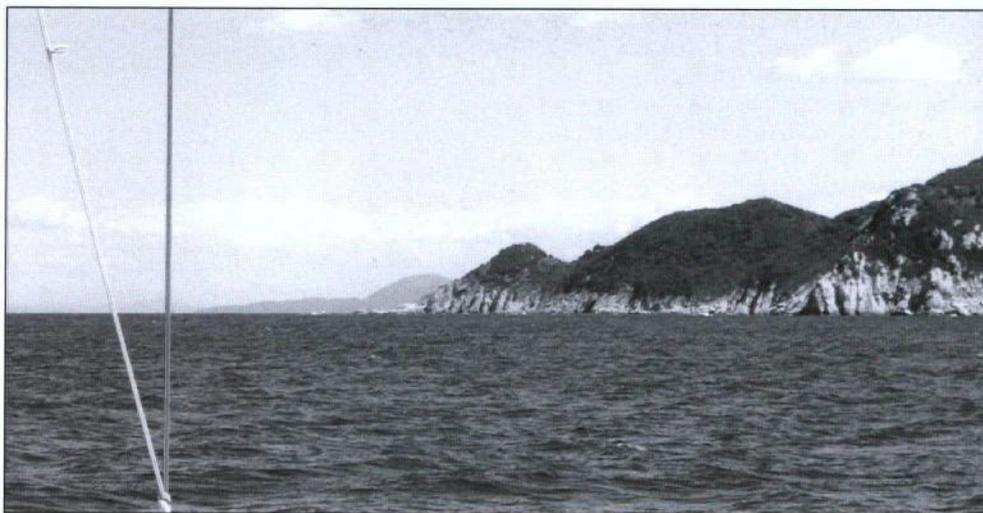
Friday 28th July: 07.45: Bound now for Solenzara some 50 miles southwards hugging a flat coastline reminiscent of the east coast of Ireland, with the exception that the mountains inland are far more jagged in appearance.

As we escape the heat of Port Toga (the high harbour wall traps warm air), the glass is falling. We encounter off Alistro, an empty yellow pedalo, and circle it for signs of life.

None are evident. We resume our track, pondering whether or not to report this find. Within 10 minutes a French yacht does report the sighting, so the decision is thus removed.

At this point we must explain that to help make a success of the cruise we must avoid for the time being, the west coast of Corsica, instead taking the southerly track down the east coast. This is because the weather from the Gulf of Lion is currently reaching the west of Corsica, and thus causing a high swell and winds of gale force. This effect is not making itself felt on the east coast south of Bastia.

At 15.30 we arrive at Solenzara where nice staff help us moor up in a rather confined space, we are glad there is little wind at this juncture. There are several rather small shops, and an internet "Café Jean". Go up the main street up the hill and turn left after about 200m. However today no internet is working in the area, a disappointment for Susan, an MSN and BEBO user of note!



Off port

From Solenzara, I learned later, it is possible to hire a car, and to go up the mountains to a place where there are waterfalls and pools, and to swim and disport oneself amongst some very beautiful forest surroundings.

Saturday 29th July: A short 20 mile passage is made to the Baie de San Ciprianu. We deploy 30 metres of our 10mm chain in 4.5 metres, as a thunderstorm is in progress. 30 knots of wind in the afternoon gives us renewed confidence in the Delta anchor which has not budged. Later we go around to the Golfe de Porto Vecchio, the next inlet southwestwards rounding Punta San Ciprianu in the process. Seawater quality is not good here at the head of the Golfo. We go ashore, make a mental note of the word "Sushi" inscribed upon a restaurant. A trip on the "petit train touristique" brings us up to the old town which is very charming. A street market offers local art. One abstract work, appeals, and despite misgivings about its size, aircraft wise etc, we raid an ATM machine and make a purchase. In the evening, we descend to our previously identified waterfront restaurant. Susan orders the sushi and we have deliciously prepared sole fillets with trimmings, preceded by stuffed, breaded mussels. We really are enjoying the French cuisine in Corsica even if a Japanese menu has crept in as well!

Sunday 30th July: 06.15: We depart, having studied the weather, and decide that if the straits permit, we will head west for Bonifacio. However our alternative route to shelter will be east of the La Maddelena group of islands in Sardinia a 26 mile run almost due south.

This latter destination becomes the reality, as, though the Iles Lavezzi are on our track, they are dangerous when any swell is present. So, sadly, they are not an option. We fly along with a beam wind 7.2 knots over the ground, comfortable enough, and by 10.30 the same morning we are snug in Port Lungo, at Isola la Maddelena, moored to a bright red mooring buoy, one of many at Porto Massimo, a small luxury hotel hideaway for a fortunate few. We are not surprised to be visited later and asked for €30 which we pay without demur, as the wind is still a rather strong and gusty 23 knots from the west, and is searching us out through a gap in the hills. A beautiful setting to be savoured, we go ashore to mingle with the hotel guests and enjoyed the peaceful and luxurious ambiance, and have a "gelato" in the peaceful small marina area.

Monday 31st July: 0600: Our departure time from Porto Massimo on La Maddelena. We find that our next planned stopover, Porto Cervo is full. A trial drop of the Delta anchor there proves unnerving as, due to overcrowding in the anchorage we swing too close to rocks and other vessels to allow for a change in the wind. Sadly we give up, and instead

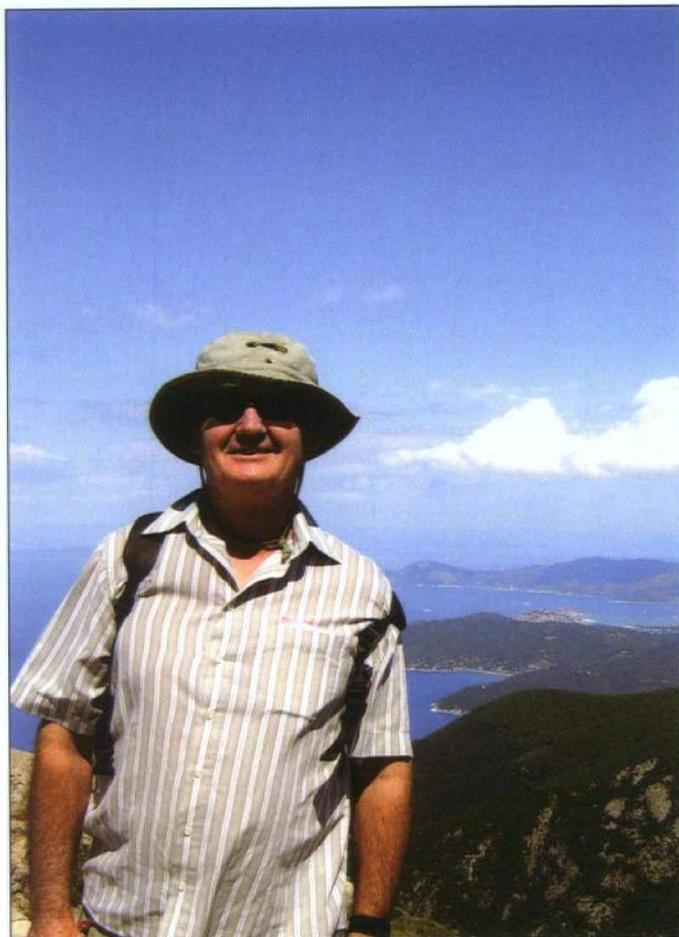
thread our way through islands and rocks (both hidden and visible) until we gain Cala di Volpe. Many superyachts lie here in the roadstead; helicopters, and multiple tenders are aplenty. There we insinuate ourselves well up the harbour and find a good anchor spot in four metres depth.

Luxury at last!

We use our little water taxi to go ashore and are confronted with ultimate luxury of a very high standard, and some very lucky pampered guests having an evidently super time. Service appears excellent, the staff almost outnumbering the guests. I think to mark the occasion with perhaps a coffee at the circular bar area. The lattes are nice and I believe the coke is also. We are glad the surroundings justify the cost! A presidential style suite with own pool and own Jacuzzi totalling 1500 square metres in area may be rented from about €24K per night at this Hotel di Volpe. An encouragement surely to many of you to become not only the presidents of major multinational corporations, but also, just to be on the safe side, perhaps the presidents of a small countries. This ambition realised might put one on safer ground when settling the hotel bill!

Paintings by Italian artist "Dogge" are nicely displayed in the upstairs Gallery. Marilyn Monroe as a theme, she has never looked as lovely as depicted thus, embellished so finely by the artist. €3.5k would secure quite a large piece. We speak to the curator, who turns out to be the artist's wife. Conversation warms, and also the curator. Ireland, so far north, we explain, would not be a suitable backdrop for this type of work and thus, alas, the works, however beautiful, would not sit easily with our collection.

Tuesday 1st August: 07.30: The anchor having been weighed without incident, we have a nice beam reach at 5.6 knots until Cabo Figari. As we round the Cape, photo opportunity is lost when wave and wind lash our faces as our course changes towards Olbia upwind about seven miles away in the distance. I regret that we have retired the sprayhood for the summer cruise! The spray hurts it is so bad, and large ferries appear from time to time from the Golfo Aranci a relatively new ferry port tucked into the northern coast of the Golfo di Olbia to add interest! We have for the first time, to root out the oilskins to preserve our own hides. Wind gusts reached 37 knots and howl



Me

as *C'est Formidable* bashes her way up the long bay. Entry to Olbia harbour is between two quite restricted marker buoys, with shallows either side, and the presence of an outgoing, very large ferry does not help the confined situation, some other fast motor yachts are using the tactic of driving at the bow of the ferry and veering at the last moment. Once this "Gates of Hades" moment is past, the rest of the journey up the large harbour is uneventful the many fish farms being readily identifiable in daylight. Our remaining problem in the strong winds is to dock safely. After much cruising about and one unsuccessful attempt to gain a corner of the harbour, we slowly draw alongside a Bavaria 44 centre-cockpit yacht already alongside. The skipper is really nice to us and helps us attach ourselves securely to his vessel. A lovely guy, Michael, from Munich, who worked for the Government there in Information Technology, writing programs so that citizens could have access easily to things like weather on their mobile phones. Michael or 'Micha' as his wife addresses him had cruised this coast for many years, so was good on weatherlore. The wind sets in determinedly, fuelled once again by a disturbance in the Gulf of Lion. A



At anchor



Waterspout

decision to stay for a few days is helped by the modest charge made by the harbour. The €14 demanded is paid by buying a stamp at the tobacconist (“tabbachi”) and affixing this to your Harbourmaster’s form. Then you hand in same with the harbour office. Simple and effective, once you have located his office, a bit remote. No water or electricity on the quay. Solar panels or windcharger are essential. I hire a car at Olbia airport, a short bus ride away. The europeacar office in Olbia never opens, it is a sham. We are delighted to get a Megane estate 1.6 TDI diesel. A roomy vehicle, we fill it up twice with bottled water for the boatwater tanks, once for ourselves and once for Michael, our Munich friend. This is the second time in a few years I have been befriended by Munich residents, and find them charming and most agreeable folk.

Sunday 6th August: Having toured about with our hire car, visiting Porto Cervo, so as not to miss the extravagance there, and also La Caletta a safe marina 20 KM to the south, and the city of Sassari, which is well inland, we are happy to leave back the car at the appointed time. We feel that we need to head for Bonifaccio to complete our planned cruise. We have a rather long 50 miles uneventful passage through the

channels of the Isola La Maddelena island group, and gain Bonifaccio entrance in rising swell and wind. Once inside, the weather is not felt, and we wait nonchalantly at the end of the second finger until a space becomes available. A bit of determination is needed to secure a berth, such is the level of competition. A very busy and delightful place, dockside restaurants sell simple fare at good prices. Later, whilst admiring a supermodern sailing ship, and drawn away, I am unfortunate enough to fall over a large planter that the bifocals fail to discern in the dark. Making a sudden change of course on the dockside is inadvisable. Various parts hurt afterwards, but at least the Harley Davidson that I grabbed during my unscheduled descent, only rocked and do not fall over onto me as well! “Harleys’ really rock” anyway don’t they!

Monday 7th August: 10.30: “Monday Monday” sang Mama Cass. I am stiff and sore today but more comfortable at sea, where the waves and motion provide invaluable physiotherapy at no extra charge. It is goodbye time for Bonifaccio, Napoleon’s onetime home. 13.30 Having left Bonifaccio we thread our way through various obstacles for 13 miles and now are at Golfo de Santa Amanza on the southeast coast of Corsica. We photograph Bonifaccio as we leave, its wonderful natural cliff sculptures marking our way southeastwards on the first leg of our short journey. Navigation takes precedence after that, as safe water has to be found, between the off-lying islands and our passage closer to the shore.

At 16.40 we anchor in the idyllic Golfo de Santa Giulia, recommended by Michael, our Munich friend from Olbia. Curiously and coincidentally, we are rammed by another German yacht. He catches all his guardrails on our bow roller, and suddenly there is the dreaded pop, pop, pop sound as stanchions uproot like skittles. His stanchions, not ours, I might add with relief.

We are undamaged, perhaps a slight bending of the bow roller, nothing else. The German skipper, stoutly built and florid faced in contrast to our other friend, rows over and apologises haltingly. I accept this rather stiff apology (he explains he did not see us!) and he disappears again back to his vessel. Using the binoculars surreptitiously 20 minutes later, I espy that remarkably, all the stanchions are back in place, as are his guard wires. We do not meet again!

Wednesday 9th August: Our next landfall northwards is



Not real

Baie de San Ciprianu. We have a peaceful afternoon and evening against a backdrop of darkening clouds.

By 01.45 we are in the middle of a big thunderstorm, all the crews of neighbouring yachts switch on navigation lights and we all run our main engines. The noise is deafening, the wind has gusts of 50 knots, and everybody attempts to maintain station over their respective anchors by motoring around to save the chains from snatching and snubbing and possibly damaging bow rollers or indeed, parting.

At 03.00 the storm has abated, luckily without the wind direction altering from offshore. The myriad strikes of lightning have been spectacularly bright, and useful in lighting up the melee.

Further sleep is now impossible due to the after effects of strong coffee consumed during the storm. We set sail due northwards and after 16 miles once again gain Solenzara, where the internet connection now works at Café Jean!

Thursday 10th August: 09.30: We set sail from Solenzara for Taverna/Campoloro 32 miles away, which we bypassed on our way south. 15.15 Having arrived in Campoloro, the berth is a reasonable €29. There is contact with Ireland via the Salle de Internet ashore, part of the marina complex. Susan is a happy girl, and disappears for two hours to catch up with friends online. A relaxing sort of place; sailing school, small shops and supermarket. The water quality is very poor in the marina, and we do not know the reason for this. Berths are on the small side as usual in French-type marinas.

Friday 11th August: 08.00: We leave Taverna bound for Bastia 24 miles distant. At 10.30 from an otherwise smooth sea, dark clouds begin to pick up the sea and immediately the water begins to fluff up. A tight spiral zooms downwards from the clouds and funnels water upwards to the heavens. As soon as one spout is finished and breaks down, another quickly forms. My only experience of this phenomenon was observed from the top of Three Rock Mountain as a child, when my father pointed one out to me over Skerries, so good was the visibility that day. The newspapers then (1954/55) reported cabbages and galvanised shed roof material 200 feet in the air.

Tempered by this recollected knowledge, I am most anxious to steer a course away from these objects, but have only two nautical miles separating our vessel from the shore to the east. My relief is palpable and complete when this performance circles around to the south of us (being originally off the port bow to seaward) and disappears from view inland, where no doubt the water supply becomes unavailable and the process doubtless stops. Sea surface temperature is about 27 Centigrade, quite sultry, with about 33°C air temperature. Local newspapers have photographs of the trombe d'eau as it is termed, on the front page next day, recording that the phenomenon was never experienced this far north before. We got about 6/7 good photos of these as the sea is flat except in the vicinity of a waterspout. We took off all sail and the bimini at an early stage as a precaution.

At 11.45 we are safely ensconced in Bastia, with a deteriorating weather forecast. As usual I fill with diesel first as I find it aids conversation. I enquire about weather next, then a berth, only to be told the marina is full! I look crestfallen and hang about the fuel berth. Soon I am offered a doubled-up berth outside a French yacht, and accept this kind offer with alacrity. The French boat help us to secure. They are normally berthed in Port Napoleon du Rhone, but live in Paris/Marne. Nice people, they disappear by bus to the other side of the island. We do likewise the following day and have a great bus trip through the wine district of Patrimoine, to St Florent, where the waves are crashing in, and untold numbers of yachts are rocking to their anchors. The sky however is clear and we enjoy our visit. A comfortable lunch is partaken of at a café in the main square.

Filled rolls, delicious paninis, and liquids of choice. No anchor to worry about today, it is nice to use the bus sometimes to further the reach of one's knowledge of an area.

Sunday 13th August: 08.45: We are leaving Bastia. Other sailors on the quayside shout words of concern about rough passage and to be extra careful.

Rough departure

It proves to be our only opportune weather window, and despite having a rough confused sea to contend with, the wind stays mostly aft, a godsend in the poor sea state. We notice that the worst of the motion occurs as we depart the shelf contour of Corsica at 150 metres depth and reach the deeper, 500 metre water of the Corsican Channel. This roughness is curiously enough not repeated as we gain the corresponding shallower shelf off Elba, and we reach the harbour at Marciana Marina without incident, that is until the big fight begins.

As we now recount it happened thus:

We find that the other boat owners for whatever reason are not in good form, grumpy, if you like. We wish to tie up 5th boat out in the trot to avoid anchoring, and a lot of complaining and moaning issues for a while. I put out long lines ashore and then hope to rest up for a while or even stay. Later as evening approaches, a generator is perched on the quay by a small motor-boat owner and begins to operate. Another man, then comes up to the first and belts him all over the face, breaks his opponent's glasses and draws blood. The generator operation ceases.

We are not amused by this type of behaviour and resolve to depart at first light, shocked by the general antics and poor humour of a large proportion of the boaters. Last year this port is the highlight of our cruise, so we seem to have hit an unlucky patch this time around. It is a free harbour also, and perhaps this factor is likely to bring its own problems.

Monday 14th August: 06.00: We depart Marciana Marina, thank heavens in view of the conduct of the boating fraternity, bound for Porto Ferraio the largest and most useful harbour of Elba. This is a short trip of some eight miles and it seems idyllic, ghosting along with about 10 knots of breeze with a perfectly flat sea. Early mornings sometimes reward here in the Central Tyrrhenian Sea, but quite often they are not as calm as in Ireland for the particular hour.

"Sylvester and Tweetybird"

08.30: The anchor is down now in 3.5 metres mud in Portoferraio. Using the rubber-duck to get ashore, we have hopped on a bus at the central bus station, and have taken the cablecar up to Monte Capane, to find that the view of mainland Italy, Pianosa, Gighlio, and Corsica, is incomparable and we are delighted with our outing, taking many photographs in the process. The "Sylvester and Tweetybird" type cages used by the "Cabinovia" are just for two persons, and quite excitingly primitive, although relatively new. I am glad we are all used to ski lifts and chairs. A lovely day having been had by all, we are back on board after our mountain ascent, tired and happy to sleep early.

Tuesday 15th August: It is a national holiday today so we go ashore for a quiet ramble around the ramparts of Portoferraio. Delightful "caffè freddo" is availed of in a nice leafy square. No fashion shops open, an economical day out!

Wednesday 16th August: 07.50: We awake to sound of voices and southerly winds of gale force. The anchor has dragged and once our rudder is freed from another yacht's anchor marker, helped cheerfully by its owner, our Patricia recovered the anchor in excellent fashion, and we take shelter under some woods in a more easterly part of the harbour,

pending moderation of the gale. It is a "burrasco", a full gale in Italian Met office terms.

Subsequently, during the morning many more yachts drag their anchors, some manned, some with crews ashore at the time, and the Guardia Costiera together with the Ormegiatori or boatmen, keep a watch and rescue those most in danger. All becomes calm again later, and we re-anchor in our original spot, waves and smiles of camaraderie come from many other crews similarly afflicted during the blow.

Thursday 18th August: We treat ourselves to a berth in the Vieux Port, only to be ejected almost as soon as we have everything secured properly. Apparently, the proper procedure is that one circles the centre of the harbour until called (from 11.00 onwards).

We humbly apologise and leave immediately to join the thronged, circling vessels. No sooner have we taken up position than we are called back again, and moor up, first of the bunch. No obvious logic can be applied here, and some disquiet is apparent amongst the skippers of other craft! Many get berths, some have to go back to anchor. It could have been a factor that we have been out there for three days and in the storm, before seeking a berth in this most crowded harbour.

€80 is charged and it feels worth every penny. There is high pressure fresh water to hose the salt off persons and boat. Soon *C'est Formidable* is looking resplendent again. The many restaurants lining the quay focus our minds upon the rewards due, we feel, after enduring our enforced anchoring spell. We begin to feel revived and human again. A small gratuity to the ormegiatori to show our thanks for their assistance is deemed proper by all aboard and our man is duly located and accepts our thanks swiftly.

Friday 18th August: 12.00: We lap up the last bit of luxury, that of being moored to a quay, we fill our tanks, and it is off with us to a destination supposedly elsewhere on the southeastern side of Elba. The winds and seas both develop other ideas however and it soon becomes apparent that an easterly course away from wind and sea will be more practical and comfortable. Suddenly it is "Goodbye Elba, Hello Italy!"

Punta Ala on the mainland 20 miles to the west is chosen, and having covered the somewhat rough and confused distance across the Golfo di Follonica, we anchor just to the north of Punta Ala. A small but inconvenient swell rolls in from the west. Patricia prepares, in difficult circumstances, a nice meal, but the motion at rest afterwards is lumpy and not conducive to sleep. We enter the marina and employ our usual tactic of filling the diesel tank to the brim. This intended outcome is interrupted as I hear a small metallic crack from the autohelm release lever. As a result I cannot dis-engage the motor. Pan-Pan is conveyed orally or aurally to the shore attendants, who are somewhat mystified by our antics in their marina. All becomes clear to them eventually, and we are allocated a space near the travelhoist, and deemed worthy of one scant hour's worth of repair time, no charge sought.

There not being a spare for this particular part on board, we have to resort to grinding a sail needle into the required format. This is pressed into service, and seems ok.

Night passage

However, the Marina Capitan still will not let us stay for the night. We re-anchor, but feel discommoded by the swell. Another attempt to sneak in to the marina is thwarted, although others succeeded by devious means unknown. We decide on a night passage to Marina Di Grosseto 13 miles to the southeast course, and have a rather spooky time threading our way through large ghostly lumps of rock until we are well south of Punta Ala. It is now question of keeping awake until Grosseto is raised. The entrance is complicated by giant fairground lights

and effigies dancing to-and-fro. By dint of great concentration and doggedness and aided by electronics, we squeeze between the narrow entrance lights at 23.00 and are fast asleep at the fuel berth by 23.30.

Saturday 19th August: A sleeping Grosseto is left behind at 06.30 and with our presence overnight remaining oblivious to the absent marina staff, we cannot make a payment in this rather expensive marina. By 11.30, after a smooth run, we are in our usual comfortable berth at Santo Stephano. We like this workaday port, with its fishing, diving centre, good chandlery, restaurants, good shops with fresh vegetables in abundance. It is remarkable that no charge is levied in the berths near the big yellow crane and a definite bonus during a longish cruise of five weeks. These berths fill quickly in early afternoon, and there is a limit of four or five yachts. This is because the working vessels must embark passengers and provisions daily. There are few "pendilles", one uses the anchor normally, and one places the stern of the vessel to the quay. Yachts with a high sheer to the bow may prefer to moor stern facing out.

Sunday 20th August: A day of rest and recuperation.

Monday 21st/22nd August: More recuperation and repairs!

Tuesday 23th August: Having departed Santo Stephano, we are now anchored off Porto Ercole, on the southern side of Monte Argentario, prior to setting off southwards. The best anchorage is nearer to Cala Galera, a newish very big marina with lovely shops. The skipper finds he has not brought his sandals ashore after longish duck trip, so walks barefoot and soon buys sandals for little from one of the boutiques. There are good travel hoists and a big winter storage yard.

Thursday 24th August: 08.40: We weigh anchor without incident. Despite a perusal of the up-to-date *Paginas Azzure* (Italian version of *Livre de Bord*) we find no harbour between Cala Galera (Monte Argentario) and Civitavecchia 31 miles to the southeast, but some vessels seem to do a disappearing act, out of our sight inshore. A big curve in the coast on this section means one loses sight of the land rather more easily as the background is getting lower all the time. There may be a new port on this coast, time will allow further research into this mystery. In any case we enter this big commercial harbour of Civitavecchia at 11.00 and get a good berth at the Darsena Romana from the President of the Circolo di Vela, who remembered us from our last visit. A quieter town than imagined, facilities are good. Shopping by Susan – nice dress purchased.

25th August Friday: 07.30: Depart Civitavecchia, a large liner preceding us out. We enjoy an uneventful trip along the low coast. Once Santa Marinella is abeam this is the last bit of characterful coast until Anzio, south of Rome. At 12.10 we enter the Fiumicino in smooth conditions. After a wait for the various bridges to let us through, we gain our objective and moor alongside a short distance away from Tom Cooke's Oyster 36 Ketch *Sandy Ways* this vessel looking comfortably ensconced mid-trot. Another Irish-flagged vessel, *Nocturne*, has a crew aboard from Schull. They have just bought this fine Tayana 37 type long keeler. Susan is delighted to have the company of other Irish children and soon they make expeditions to the beach and the very large shopping centre "Parc Centro Leonardo", where all the cool kids' "fashion label" outlets are found. (Locals kids dress in their latest gear on the no. 5 bus to this place).

End of the cruise

It is the end of the cruise: menial tasks follow, some of which charterers may escape: clean the boat inside and out, wash the bilges, covers over the hatches etc.

Sails put away, dinghy put away, outboard motor put away. Electrics off, so sad to be leaving you *C'est Formidable*, but

safe in the capable hands of Michele and Anna of Constellation Nautica.

Apart from our little excitements, all went well. *C'est Formidable*, our Dufour 36 Classic performed as well as ever she did, and the new anchor quickly paid for itself, giving us peace of mind in the many beautiful anchorages we visited. We logged 485 miles and visited 30 ports.

Weather forecasts are broadcast continuously by a cyber voice over VHF channel 68 in Italian and English. Sometimes you get the gale concurrently with the warning!

The local weather is not predictable to any extent ahead of time, as local phenomena arise without warning. Great care is therefore needed in assessing weather information, when cruising short-handed. In this regard we were greatly facilitated by Tom Cooke's kind loan of a Sierra Wireless PCMCIA card, working on the GSM and GPRS networks (Mobile Phone Networks). This gobbles €25 tranches of cash, but is an invaluable tool for accessing online weather. With practice, the

costs could be reduced (use a blank home page and know the exact http:// address of the page within the site).

In conclusion, I have found that the great number of Italian vessels that are stored ashore and up rivers, make massed voyages out to the various islands in July and August, so berths are normally full in these months.

Despite this, great good humour is normally maintained, and the Italians are very kind and ready to help if something goes wrong – such as when we had seven other anchor chains over our own chain! On this occasion a local skipper helped us for two hours, lifting chain after chain clear for us. He urged the purchase of a special trip hook for this purpose, with a becket welded to the side, which capsizes the hook with a second line when needed, much like the operation of an excavator bucket. This device I was able to obtain locally, and hope to have it at the ready next season.

Finally I would like to thank sincerely my small but efficient crew of Patricia and Susan for being so energetic throughout and thus making the cruise so successful and enjoyable.

Leonard Sheil writes of *Gay Gannet's* Clyde cruise

July 14th and it was time for *Gay Gannet's* annual cruise. This year, with her skipper and mate, she would seek out the secrets of the Clyde. Glimpsed at

on previous cruises, it was time to let her share them with us. With short passages, no deadlines, perfect weather – (boat, aged 43, crew's combined age 145) it was the stuff of dreams!

Leaving at 06.00 we rounded Baily for Ardglass. Next afternoon motored to Bangor. Left 10.50 for Campbeltown on 16th. Motoring. Clear skies, light winds. Lumpy in North Channel, set jib. Arrived 20.30. Destination last visited by crew 1976!!



The skipper leaving East Loch Tarbert

For three weeks we drifted, sailed or motored up and down each and every loch we could find! East Loch Tarbert, Loch Ranza, through the Kyles of Bute to Tignabruaich, Loch Riddon, Rothesay and Holy Loch. To Loch Goil, deep into Loch Long and back to Holy Loch. Then Loch Gareloch, and Rhu, down to the marinas at Kip, Largs and windy Troon, where we eventually got a weather window to make the passages back to Bangor, Ardglass, and Dun Laoghaire.

Highlights are many, not least the startling beauty of Scotland in perfect weather. Afternoon heat at silent Ormindale. Early morning off Tignabruaigh, waiting for the first sounds of life. Man walking dog. Silence. Soft murmur of engine, as lone white van approaches over a distant hill. Holy Loch, watching the evening sun as it slowly dips between indigo mountains near midnight, mirroring itself in the golden waters. Early morning, a rush of fish-shoals create showers of diamonds. All the time in the world. Morning sunlight at Loch Goilhead, dancing across field and mountaintop. The scent of old-fashioned flower gardens. Peace. Children fishing at sunset off pontoon. Bicycles heaped. Laughter, fading to silence, as they make their way home before dusk. Mysterious Loch Long. Surrounded by regiments of firs, mirrored in the deep water below. Four hours of quiet, sailing under jib. Silence, save for sound of bow cutting through water. Time is our own. Later, the challenge of the North Channel as the winds and seas build up to remind us of other times and places, and to warn us not to become complacent, to know we have been given the greatest highlight – a precious memory of the Clyde to cherish forever.



Gay Gannet moored at Loch Goilhead

Alakush Dips the Flag

Chris Stillman



As *Alakush* was approaching the Old Head of Kinsale this summer, we saw a fine sight – seven ships of the Irish Naval Service sailing out from Kinsale in line ahead. Michael Branagan manned our ensign and as each naval boat passed us, dipped the flag. The first of the navy boats was taken by surprise but recovered quickly and returned the signal. The second missed it, but the others each in turn dipped to us as we dipped to them. A rare event to be able to exchange courtesies with so many of our navy boats.

Guide Dog

St George's Channel at walking speed

Norman Kean

A lonely bay on the broken and tideswept coast of Dyfed. The first faint glimmer of dawn shows in the sky to the northeast as the black-clad men on the beach, weary after a long day and only two hours' sleep, begin carrying the heavy boxes to the water's edge. But where's the boat? She should be here by now.

In a narrow cove on Ramsey Sound a mile to the south, a yacht's engine rumbles into life, then dies, and there is silence punctuated by muttered cursing. A fine time this for the alternator to pack in. There's a spare on board, but we'll be late for the rendezvous. A shadowy figure climbs the mainmast, but finds no phone signal.

The men on the beach are worried. They only get one shot at this, and they can't hang around much longer. They trudge up the hill, but find no phone signal. A light appears in the Sound. They flash their van's lights – once – twice. No reply. But then another light, and this time their silent signal is answered by a single off-on from the yacht. They're here! A muffled splash and a rattle of chain as she comes to anchor in the bay, and her dinghy putters quietly to the beach. The vital cases are loaded.

The sky lightens, and the watching curtain-twitchers throw down their binoculars in disappointment as they read Irish Sea Kayak Challenge on the side of the van. Five two-man kayaks push off from the beach, and wait in the lee of St David's Head while the yacht weighs anchor and heads over to join them. It's half past five, flat calm, and it's going to be a scorcher.

Regular readers of this column may recall that four years ago *Xanadu* minded a rowing boat from Courtnacsherry to Cornwall. Well here we were playing mother duck again. The idea of paddling across St George's Channel for charity had been born over one pint too many in a Kilkenny pub, and one thing led to another, and they got in touch with us, and we're always up for that kind of thing. The kayakers were from all over Ireland, and they were supremely fit and well-trained, but they didn't have a whole lot of sea experience. Their baptism in the art was well-attended though – it was overseen by two Bishops and a scatter of clerical gentlemen, who have a permanent station on the coast of Dyfed. At six in the morning, avoiding the North Bishop and a particularly inconvenient and jagged Clerk was a major preoccupation. The first hour and a half was spent paddling hard to the north, while going sideways and making good due west. If you have to pick your weather, and you have to start at five in the morning, you can't pick your tide.

"OK, boys, fuel stop, gather round." This is Ross, sports instructor, on board *Xanadu*. He was supposed to be in a kayak but he'd fallen off a staging and hurt his back several weeks before, so he was relegated to support team.

"Willie?"

"Lucozade."

"Lee?"

"Banana."

"Paul?"

"Just water."

What follows could be confused with a food fight. Flying

sandwiches, fruit, plastic bottles. Expertly fielded every one. Nothing landed in the sea. Whatever about paddling a kayak, never play cricket against these men.

Ten o'clock. "*Xanadu*, this is Rosslare Coastguard Radio, link call for you." That'll be the local radio station for the interview (we'd explained the ins and outs of ship-to-shore calls to them).

"She says she'd like to speak to Tom Kennedy."

"That's a bit awkward, you see Tom's in a kayak a hundred yards behind us, and he's blind, and we can't just hand him a phone. Tell her she can speak to Ross Harding, he's on board here."

"Go ahead *Xanadu*, you're through."

The problem with live radio interviews on the phone is that the station calls you and then puts you on hold until they're ready to talk to you. So for the next five minutes, half the Irish Sea was treated to Kilkenny & Carlow Local Radio's morning show relayed on VHF Channel 23, and a story about a woman from Thomastown who'd been ripped-off on tickets for a concert at the Point, but the coastguards cut them off before we found out if she got her money back.

Two of the kayakers were blind. Tom Kennedy was in the back seat with his buddy Jimmy Fitzpatrick in front, and Tom was keeping perfect time with Jimmy's paddle stroke although he couldn't see it. Tom is a marathon runner, and he did the Liffey Descent, when they open Poulaphouca Dam and hundreds of canoes run the rapids to Dublin. At one point Ross came across Tom hanging from a tree.

"Are you OK, Tom?"

"Yep, fine."

"Where's your paddle?"

"Dunno."

"Where's your boat?"

"Dunno."

"Are you sure you're OK?"

"Yes, Jimmy'll be along in a minute."

"OK then, see you later."

Mark Pollock went blind at the age of 19. Mark ran the North Pole Marathon, and he'd just finished an Iron Man (marathon, 10k swim and 100k cycle in rapid succession) and so was feeling a bit stiff that day. Mark makes his living as an inspirational speaker (an expression he can't stand). He once gave a series of lectures as part of a Diversity course to Merrill Lynch staff in New York – middle-class white American males to a man – and he was talking about the things you have to get used to when you can't see. Like going to the gents' toilet holding the arm of your (male) friend and not feeling embarrassed by the obvious misinterpretations going on around you (laughter from the audience). After the lecture Mark asked his host if it had been OK. "Yeah, yeah, great, fantastic, only next time could you maybe, you know, leave out the gay reference?"

Diversity. Hmm.

Four o'clock. "*Stena Lynx*, this is *Xanadu*, we're with the

kayaks and we're two miles on your starboard bow. If you hold your course you'll be well clear."

"Thanks, we'll stay well out but mind our wake, we put up a pretty big wave."

"OK, the lads'll enjoy that but thanks for the warning."

"Look out lads, breaker coming."

"Yeee-hah!"

"Richard, behave yourself, you can't ride that all the way back to Wales."

We had let the ferry companies know in advance what we were doing, and we were putting out a bridge-to-bridge safety message with our position, course and speed every hour or so.

Five o'clock. "Xanadu, this is *Stena Europe*. What's your current position? A lot of the passengers have been asking how you're getting on." Aw, isn't that nice? They must have been telling the whole ship on the PA. "And by the way you may be interested to know that today a group of ten kayakers are paddling across St George's Channel to raise money for charity. If we're lucky we'll see them, and we'll let you know if there's a chance. The junk food restaurants on A, B, C and D decks are now serving, and today's movie is *Titanic*. Have a nice day, and thank you for travelling with Stena Line."

Six o'clock, and six miles to go. The kayakers have been going continuously for twelve hours, and the Tuskar is finally abeam after an interminable time in sight, but we can't let them

relax because the south-going tide is picking up and the *Isle of Inishmore* is coming up astern. What the paddlers don't know – but we do – is that Rosslare lifeboat is coming out to meet us. That did the trick.

Seven o'clock, and we're herding cats in earnest. Willie and Lee head straight for the nearest sandy beach. The rest look confused and split the difference between them and us. We do the frantic mother-duck act, with the foghorn quacking away. Eventually we round them up and head for Carne where families and cameras are waiting on the beach, and they lead us for a change. "Left a bit lads, stay left of the rock..."

Job done.

Thanks to the kayakers for giving us the opportunity to join them and share the craic. Thanks to Barryroe Co-op who gave us our diesel, to CH Marine for the free loan of a 16-man liferaft, to Mike and Dai of St David's lifeboat for pilotage advice and the use of their mooring, to David Maloney, DLA, and coxswain Brendan Pitt for bringing out the Rosslare lifeboat, and to Mike Nicholas, RNLI mechanic at Rosslare, for the permanent fix on our alternator bracket.

At the time of writing the kayakers have raised €20,000 in sponsorship for the Children's Medical Research Unit at Crumlin Road Hospital and the National Council for the Blind of Ireland.

Congratulations.



Jimmy and Tom concentrating hard

Outer Hebrides and Orkney with *Gentle Spirit*

Harold and Vivienne Boyle

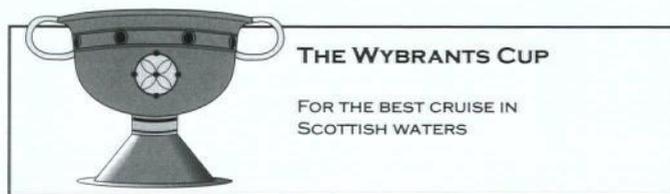
In the summer of 2005 we decided to head north, taking in the Clyde area for three weeks in June and then making our way to Oban. We planned to be away for two-and-a-half to three months in *Gentle Spirit*, our 38ft Hallberg Rassy, hoping to reach St. Kilda, Stornaway and the Orkney Islands.

During the last week of June we based the boat in Oban Yachts Marina at Kerrera Island. The facilities have been much improved after considerable expenditure and the new owners treated us very well. We travelled home for a few days, attended to some tasks, and returned to Oban on 30th June with Robert and Eileen Logan who were joining us for the first three weeks of July. Harry Mussen, who was to come for ten days, arrived on Saturday, 2nd July. On Friday the met office had issued a strong gale warning and we were worried that the Oban-Kerrera ferry wouldn't run on Saturday!

However, all was well and Harry was able to get across to us, albeit we had to stay at the berth until Monday.

On 4th July we left the pontoon at 09.50 bound for Canna. By 10.10 we had the engine off and were enjoying good sailing in a southwest 10 knot wind. It was a sunny day with very good visibility and the surrounding scenery was stunning. Within two hours we had a change to lighter winds and we had to motor-sail. We passed Ardnamurchan lighthouse at 15.35 and were approaching Rhum by 16.55 when we had the company of porpoises, below and alongside. We arrived in Canna Harbour at 19.15, anchored in 5m of water, and noted two 43ft Nicholson's in the bay.

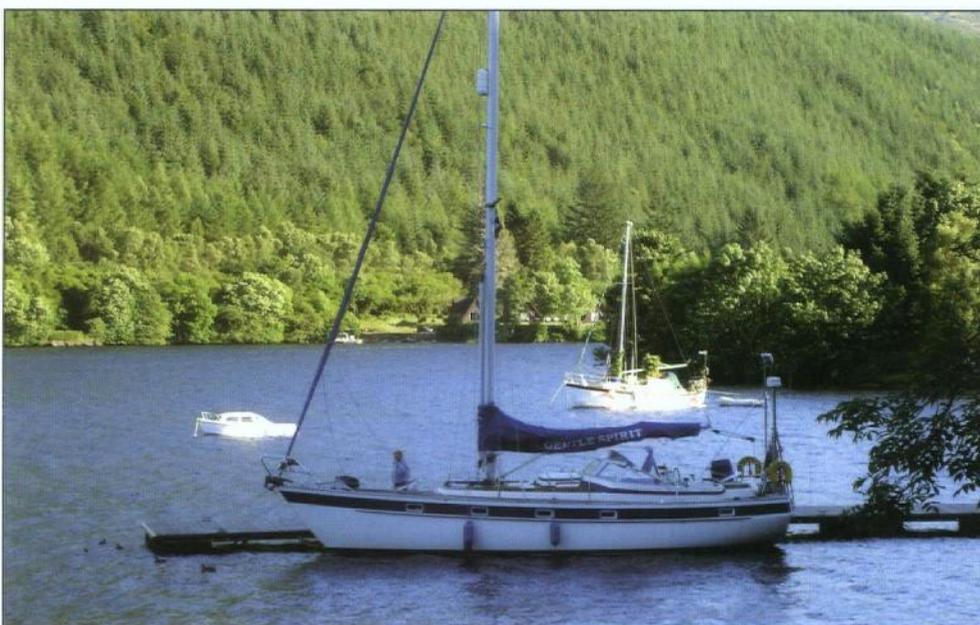
Following a tranquil night we weighed anchor at 10.00 and,



Chapel built by Italian POWs

once out of the harbour, set a course of 289degrees bound for Lochboisdale in South Uist. The trip was quite uneventful but the sun shone from 13.00 and we had a most pleasant few hours. By 15.30 we were in Lochboisdale, tied to a HIBA mooring – we got the last one of four. The dinghy was pumped up and the men went ashore for a few provisions and to book the hotel for a meal. In the evening we all got ashore for a really good dinner at the hotel, which has new owners and has been undergoing renovations and improvements.

Although it rained during the night, the next morning was fair and quite sunny so we went ashore and took the bus to the Co-Op in Daliburgh. After some good shopping, we were picked up promptly by the bus and returned to Lochboisdale where we had an excellent bar meal at the hotel. While ashore we noticed how the air was so clear, bright and fresh, and how the terrain resembled parts of Donegal. Harry called into the community Internet point and was able to get a print-out of the weather situation for the next five days. This was one of several such points available throughout the islands in local community centres.



Gentle Spirit in Loch Oich



Canna Harbour

A donation gives time for forecasts and e-mails. We returned to *Gentle Spirit*, made ready to move, hoisted the main sail and left the visitor's mooring at 15.00. Once out of the Loch, a course of 020° was set to enable us to enjoy a tight reach and a cracking sail, achieving over 7 knots at times. It was a glorious, sunny day and we arrived at Loch Maddy, North Uist, at 20.15, picked up a visitor's mooring and settled down for our evening meal. We noted that *Tertia*, another ICC yacht was moored ahead of us.

On Thursday, 7th July, we awoke to a damp, misty morning. The guys went ashore and the gals used the time to attend to a few chores. After lunch, we availed ourselves of the showers at the hotel and walked around the town, visiting a local Craft and Community Centre in which the work of local children in tracing the "The History of the Stones", was displayed. A return bus ride to Loch Maddy afforded us the opportunity to see the area, which, yet again, was devoid of trees and resembled parts of Donegal. Nevertheless there was a magic and a sense of mystery about the Outer Hebrides. We had a very good evening



Norse mill and kiln

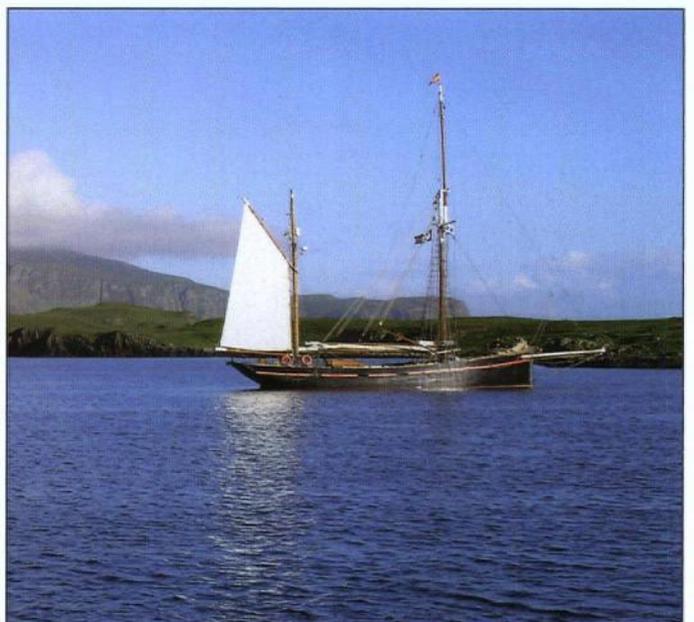


Butte of Lewis lighthouse

meal at the hotel, followed by our own singalong with Vivienne at the piano, and eventually returned safely to *Gentle Spirit*.

The next morning was also cloudy and misty but we made ready to leave and at 12.10 we cast off the visitor's mooring and by 12.45 set a course of 047degrees bound for Scalpay. The wind was from the south-southwest at 15 knots and with headsail only and a rolling motion for the boat we motor-sailed at 6 knots. Sadly, with the weather conditions that prevailed, it was not conducive to head to St Kilda and we decided to leave it for another time. Making lunch in the existing conditions was a major challenge but with some nifty balancing at the wide belt in the galley, food was produced! We rolled uncomfortably but with the tide in our favour we did 6.3 knots and by 17.00 we arrived in the North Harbour at Scalpay in Harris. The yacht *Tidechaser*, a Nicholson 43 that we had seen in Canna, was sharing the anchorage. In view of the weather, this had been the most unpleasant day of our journey so far, but the breathtaking seascape of the location made up for it.

Morning came all too quickly and we had to make a 08.00



Canna Harbour

start. We weighed anchor and motored out in poor visibility and moderate seas. At 10.20, on a course of 030degrees, we were abeam of the Shiant Isles, motor-sailing with headsail only, but achieving 7.5 knots over the ground. At 12.20 we were 3.2 miles south of Stornaway harbour, the rain cleared, visibility was good and at 13.15 we berthed alongside the barge ANA. Ahead of us we noticed *Caelan*, Brian Black's ketch. We learned later that he was preparing to go to Iceland and indeed departed the next morning; we hope he made it ok.

After lunch the gals walked into the town to make enquiries about facilities and resources. The laundrette had closed, but the dry cleaners near Sommerfield's would do a service wash and dry. Close to the harbour we located a toilet block with one shower. We visited the tourist office and also booked an evening meal at the Cala Hotel.

The next morning, Sunday 10th July, was quite dull, but after breakfast Harry and Robert went off to buy some papers. All the shops were closed but the churches were open, and there was no chance of getting the papers. Sunday in Stornaway is so-o-o quiet that it gives the town an eerie atmosphere. However, after lunch we all went for a walk to Lewes Castle. It was a most imposing building with dramatic views over the harbour and beyond, but although, unfortunately, it is in a poor state of repair, the grounds were being prepared to be the venue for the forthcoming Festival of Gaelic Music. We found out that the Cala Hotel opened in the evening so we booked for dinner.

On Monday 11th July it was a bright, warm morning and there were promises of a good day. Robert phoned a car hire firm at 08.20 and got a response, so we hired a people van for the day! Once the chores were completed we set off mid-morning to do a tour of the Isle of Lewis, taking an anti-clockwise route. "Boyle's Tours" included the airport peninsula, Port Ness with its turquoise and azure water, Butt of Lewis lighthouse and a very good lunch at the Cross Inn. In the afternoon we visited the Gearranan Blackhouse Village, the Norse Mill and Kiln, the Callanish Standing Stones and from there, back to Stornaway. We had good weather all day and the views were absolutely stunning. We were amazed at the number of hamlets we saw and at the people living in such a remote place. In these parts very few trees grow, there are many sheep but only a few Highland cattle as the ground is quite barren. It was very appropriate that we had all enjoyed such a wonderful day, as it was Harry's last day cruising with us.



Standing stones (Callanish) on Lewis

At 06.00 on the morning of Tuesday, 12th July, Harry, in the company of Robert and Harold, made his way to the ferry to depart for Ullapool. We were also due to start our passage to Orkney and so we left Stornaway at 09.00 and headed to Loch Eribol on the north coast of Scotland. By 10.00, in a southerly wind, with headsail only, we were sailing at 7 knots. By 12.00 the wind had dropped and we were rolling along towards the cape. It was murky weather with a slight drizzle and at 13.20 we altered course to 049degrees for Cape Wrath. As it was neap tides, we reckoned it would only be 3 knots against us after 14.00. By 18.00 we got some sunshine as we rounded Cape Wrath, close in to the cliffs in rough seas – very dramatic! At 20.15 we safely anchored in the lagoon-like Loch Eribol and settled for the night.

Next morning we weighed anchor at 08.45 and glided out of the Loch only to be met by a west-southwest wind at 15 knots. We motor-sailed with headsail only on a course of 060degrees and with the wind on the stern we again had the rolling motion of the boat. By 12.00 the wind was up to force 6 and we continued to roll along. At this stage we had 26 miles to go, and we had to be in Hoy Sound at 16.00. By 15.00 we were at the island of Hoy with the Old Man clearly visible, and we had 5.6



Inner harbour, Stornaway

miles to run. At 15.50 we turned on to a leading line of 104degrees, gybed the headsail and surfed our way in through the Sound – we just made it! We berthed alongside at the new pontoon at 16.50 and walked into the town of Stromness. It is a small, grey town nestling in a natural harbour that saw so much activity in the last world war. The pontoons were opened in 2004, with very good showers and laundrette available.

We stayed in Stromness from 13th until 18th July and during this time we hired a car for three days so that we could go on tour. As the weather was wet and humid, it seemed a better option to see the sights by car rather than boat. We toured West Mainland, East Mainland, saw some of the small islands, visited Kirkwall, Neolithic sites Norse sites, the World War



Vivienne and Harold in the mill

Two POW camp for Italian prisoners and saw some of the sunken ships. The land was verdant, there were plenty of cattle and sheep in these low-lying islands but there were no trees. Our few days in the Orkney Islands came to an end with a fine day, bright and warm in the morning, cloudy in the afternoon, so we departed at 15.00 and piloted our way through Scapa Flow with the east-southeast wind at 040degrees off the port side, motoring at 10 knots. At 17.00 we tied up alongside at Lyness Pier on the east side of Hoy to lie there for the evening to await low water for our departure southwards the next morning. We had two visitors who came to welcome us – but that's another story!

On 19th July Robert, Harold and Vivienne were up early and we left the pier at 04.00, hoisted the mainsail and set off on a course of 193degrees. We had Cantick Head abeam at 04.30 with the wind from the southeast, force 1 or 2, and our course was 152degrees. The tide was starting to run east, the visibility was more than ten miles, so we changed to 165degrees. It was then 05.30 and Vivienne went off duty for a time. At 06.10 Duncansby Head was abeam and we were achieving 9.7 knots. Continuing to go well we had Noss Head abeam at 07.30 when Vivienne surfaced to make the bacon butties for breakfast!

From that time onwards we were expecting the wind to go back to the northwest, but it never did, and we had to motor-sail down the North Sea, an uncomfortable passage, which was very cold. All day we anticipated a wind shift but it never came, so when we turned into the Moray Firth and had a fair sailing wind we appreciated the good sail that lasted nearly an hour! At 17.45, abeam of Cromarty Forth, we lowered the mainsail and by 19.55 Kessock Bridge was in sight. We passed under it and turned to port to enter the harbour, and tied up alongside a short, tight berth. Our passage had taken 17 hours and we just had the energy to toast the success of the trip, enjoy an evening meal and fall into our bunks for an early night.

Next morning at 10.00 we locked into the canal at Clach-

naharry and soon were tied up in Seaport Marina. We stayed there for a few days, so that we could explore Inverness and check travel arrangements home for Robert and Eileen. During our visit we discovered the Mustard Seed restaurant that had great views of the river and served excellent food. We left Seaport Marina on Friday 22nd and went up to Dochgarroch, and that evening we had a very good meal in a small restaurant beside the loch.

On Saturday we decided to go across Loch Ness and had sunshine all the way over but the wind only filled in when we were six miles from Fort Augustus, so no sailing! By late afternoon we had tied up on the west side of the locks at Fort Augustus. The best way of dealing with the boat rising through the locks, was by walking the boat through. Robert and I were selected for that task and we had great fun with all the tourists who were observing our efforts. The following morning we departed and, close to lunchtime berthed at the pontoon on the north side of Loch Oich. From there we walked to the Watersports Centre where we had a super Sunday lunch sitting in the glorious sunshine and wonderful scenery. Next morning Robert and Eileen had to pack and left by taxi at 12.30 to go to the airport at Inverness to catch their flight home. As it was a pleasant day, Harold and I left the pontoon at Loch Oich and motored across Loch Plocky. We arrived at Gairloch and received good information and help from the lock keeper. In the evening, acting on advice given, we had a most wonderful meal and evening at the Old Pines Hotel overlooking Ben Nevis. The bonus was that we were kindly collected and delivered back by the owner!

Next day we left Gairloch and arrived at the Reach at Corpach, and the following day being Wednesday 27th July we got to the Sea Lock. We were into the last stage of our passage, and on the Thursday left Corpach Sea Lock at 10.05 in light winds to motor-sail with headsail only. At 11.15 we switched the engine off, to use the headsail only, to slow us down to wait until slack water, when we could pass through the Corran Narrows. We had a pleasant, quiet sail passing Shuna and Port Appin pier and arrived at the pontoons of Dunstaffnage Marina. We were allocated a very tight berth – it was the beginning of West Highland week! Once we had settled, we toasted our very successful passage taking in the Outer Hebrides, passing Cape Wrath, visiting the Orkneys and sailing south on the North Sea to Inverness and the Caledonian Canal.



Gentle Spirit at Clachnaharry locks

Brandon Rose during 2006

Brendan O'Callaghan

The generally superb weather during 2006 helped towards great fun, enjoyable sailing and marvellous cruising. The first outing of the season was a week in West Cork in early May with three friends – Charley Ryan, Bill Sheane (both KYC) and Cornishman Chris Ball. A heavy-weather start meant we only got as far as Courtmacsherry on the first day, but the upside of that was a magical walk to the Point of the Wood through the ‘full-on’ bluebells, and great music in Pier House with Bandon friends. In improving weather we sailed on next day to Baltimore and had the rare privilege of being able to tie up on the pier with only the Sherkin ferry for company. We had a pleasant meeting in Bushe’s (where else?!) with Dan Cross and Stuart Musgrave (both ICC) whom I met later in Bilbao. As Chris had never sailed in West Cork previously, it was mandatory to round the Fastnet. This we did before mooring on the newly extended pier in Cape’s North Harbour, where once again we had only the ferry for company.

Tuesday was to be a contender for my most enjoyable day of the year (Menday). In glorious weather we strolled to South

Harbour. En route we met Mickey O’Driscoll, driving a small dump-truck. After 40 years at sea, from fisherman to master, he was now back home on Cape again. Around noon we left under a blazing sun and cloudless sky. The mere trace of a breeze helped ghost us along. A G’n’T (or was it two?) provoked an outbreak of music and the ship’s accordion was produced to accompany some lovely songs. It took us nearly four hours to drift 10 miles before tying up on Goleen pier (a first for me). We rambled ashore at ease and visited a hostelry or two, or three (‘tis hard to think of everything!). In the evening sunshine we motored carefully to Crookhaven and picked up a Co. Co. mooring. Unbelievably, there was only one other yacht there. Later we ‘dinghied’ ashore for a look at the church of St Brendan the Navigator and to see the Fastnet sending “its beam across the wave” before visiting O’Sullivan’s for a nightcap which, strictly speaking, we didn’t really require!

During the following idyllic day we visited Schull for provisions, anchored just east of Horse Island for lunch, and anchored for the night southeast of the new pier on Hare Island. Bill met a friend who invited us to his house on the island where we had a BBQ in superb company. On the Thursday, we motored carefully in foggy conditions into Baltimore through North Channel, anchored off Sherkin and strolled around the Island. In continuing foggy visibility we sailed on to anchor in Castle Haven before a pleasant meal in Mary Ann’s.

Next day, we paid a quick visit to Blind Harbour, nudged our way over the bar at the east end of Squince Harbour, north of Rabbit Island – not a lot under our keel, close to low water springs – went ashore in Glandore and later picked up a friend’s mooring in Union Hall. In the last hour of the flood we ‘dinghied’ up to Leap and checked things out at Connolly’s and The Leap Inn, then went back down to Union Hall on the first of the ebb before going ashore there for an excellent meal in Dinty’s. All in all, not bad for just one day!

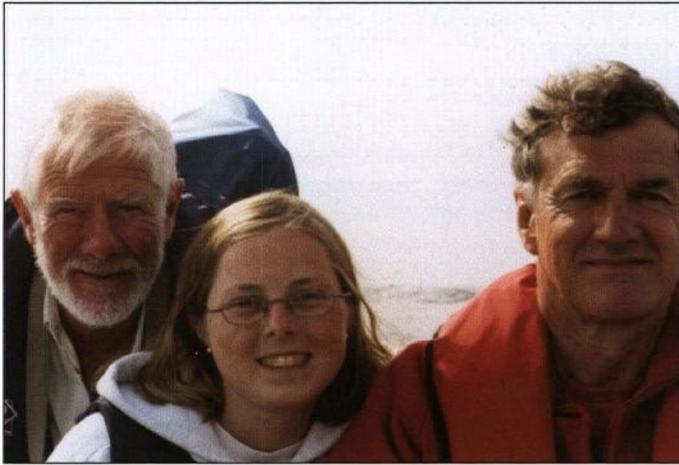
Finally we had a very pleasant sail back home to Kinsale helped by favourable wind. We tied to our pontoon in full sunshine after a wonderful and memorable week, as good a week afloat as I can remember in a lifetime.

* * *

Brandon Rose participated in some of the ICC Cruise to Pais Vasco during June/July. With long-standing friends Philip McAuliffe (ICC) and Stephen Connolly and first-timer Niall Coughlan as crew, we sailed directly from Kinsale to Santander in just under four days. Niall left after a week and we were joined by musical crewmember Adrian Buckley. After restful days in pleasant Santander, we cruised gently eastwards stopping at Laredo and Castro Urdiales before meeting up with the ICC fleet in Bilbao on Wednesday 28th June. The *Brandon Rose* crew did its best – musically – to enhance what was a memorable visit to Bilbao and the splendid Real Club Maretimeo del Abra y Real Club Sporting. John Daly (ICC) was extremely helpful, not to mention imaginative, in making a repair to our roller-reefing gear, which got us home without a

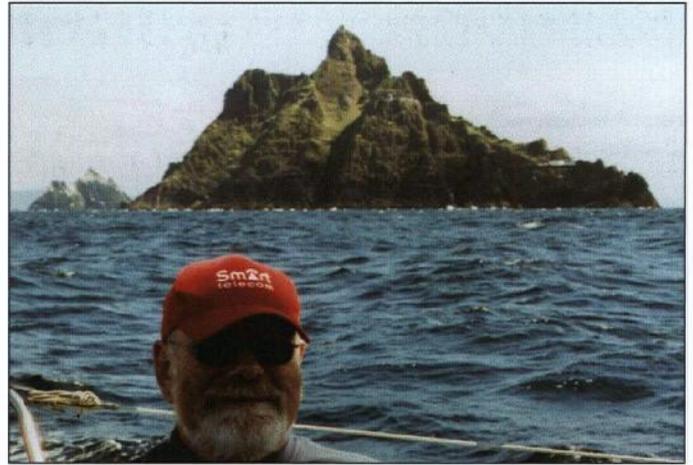


Brandon Rose at rest in Le Palais (Belle Ile) en route from Pais Vasco to Kinsale



L to r: Tony O'Callaghan, Blaothin O'Callaghan and John Crabtree (Spain to Kinsale)

glitch. We had our main crew-changeover here and my daughter Blaithin, my brother Tony, and John Crabtree joined me for the return trip. Having given the new crew an opportunity to see the Guggenheim, we left Bilbao and continued eastwards, visiting the beautiful ports and towns of Bermeo, Elantxobe, Lekeitio, Mutriku and Zumaia. We fetched Le Palais (Belle Île) in about two days of fresh to strong wind between northwest and north-northwest. We visited Île de Groix and later found a good pub in Loctudy on the Sunday for the World Cup final, and Zinadine's moment of madness at the end of a glorious career. We motored all the way from Loctudy to Camaret in light breezes or total calm. Passing through the Raz de Sein in virtual calm, we watched the sea boiling at half flood against a moderate swell from the northwest. Not the place to be in the wrong conditions for certain. We stopped overnight in Camaret where Nick Wright (ICC) called to say hello. The town was en fete for the Tour de France à la Voile and the much be-flagged fleet was in port for a few days. Continuing towards home we left next day to avail of helpful tide in Chenal de la Helle. Light northerly wind prevailed initially dying away almost completely. We met a heavy stream



Tom Kirby circumnavigating the Skelligs on a sunny summer Sunday

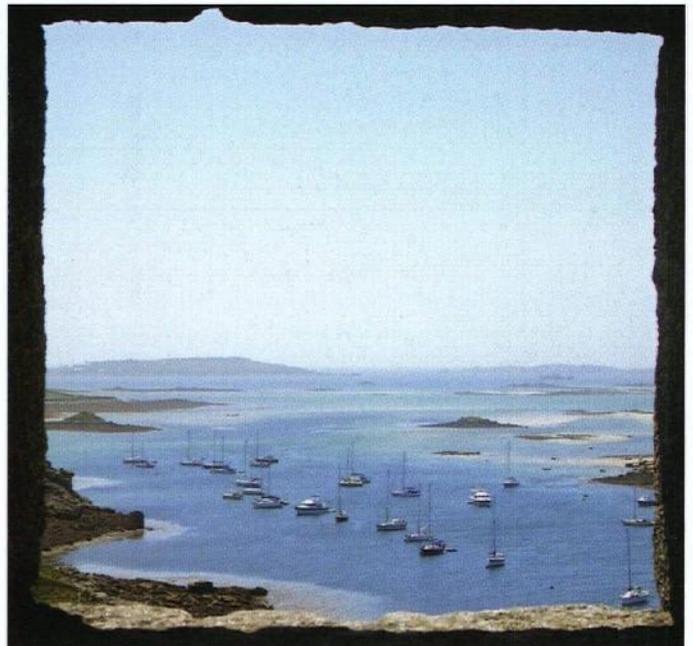
of shipping all the way across the English Channel and motored overnight, under a full moon, to anchor in The Cove, between St Agnes and Gugh, Isles of Scilly. We survived a bracing swim over the side and had great difficulty retrieving our anchor (caught under the submarine power cable?). We motored into St Mary's Harbour, had a most wonderful reunion with the extended Edwards and Ball families and their friends, enjoyed a sumptuous BBQ in the Edwards' garden at midday, and after sundowners at the Ball homestead we returned on board at a respectable hour. Up and away early next day, we had an absolutely delightful sail, in an unflinching northeast force 4, all the way home to Kinsale where we arrived at 07.00 on Saturday 15th July. In the four weeks, we had logged 1,264 miles, and visited 16 foreign harbours – nine of these for the first time.

* * *

At the end of July, with my son Hugh, Andrew O'Donnell and Don Sinclair on board, *Brandon Rose* once again passed the Bulman Buoy at the mouth of Kinsale Harbour and,



Brandon Rose crew gets a feel of the locals in Santander. L to r: Brendan O'Callaghan, Philip McAuliffe, Stephen Connolly and Niall Coughlan



Bryher Sound, Isles of Scilly, on a summer's day
Photo: Tony O'Callaghan

after punching into an ugly sea off the Old Head, we spent the night recovering in nearby Courtmacsherry. It was a week of poor weather, which gradually improved as we went west and eventually north. With wind on the nose for the whole week, we beat the final 40 miles from Derrynane into Dingle in the week's best day's sailing. A crew change there saw Majella, my wife, daughters Una, Bláithín (again) and our eldest grandchild, Paddy, join Hugh and me for a week of beautiful weather in Dingle. After they left, Tom Kirby (ICC) joined me for the delivery trip back home. Sunday 13th August was one of the loveliest days of the year and we clocked 51 enjoyable miles to Castletownbere, which included a circumnavigation of the Skelligs. The following day was even more idyllic. We enjoyed a leisurely morning visit to Adrigole, lunch in Lonehort Harbour, and the slowest passage I have ever made around the Mizen Head. In continuous sunshine and a barely perceptible westerly breeze, we had our evening meal in the cockpit accompanied by songs, and the ship's orchestra of guitar and box, and drifted at speeds sometimes touching 3 knots to North Harbour, Cape Clear. A lively music and song session followed in Ciaran Danny Mikes, which included, inter alia, five guitarists strumming along together. This was another day to

challenge for my "Menday"! Tuesday brought a return to poorer weather and a forecast with northeast force 4/5 in prospect. Not great for getting back to Kinsale. We called into Baltimore, met *Ann Again* (Brian and Eleanor Cudmore – ICC) as we approached the marina, and enjoyed lunch in the Jolie Brise with Johnny (ICC) and Catherine Murphy before heading on eastwards. A PanPan from *Man of all Seasons*, taking water very fast 10 miles south of us, was immediately picked up by the Coastguard who declared the situation a 'Mayday'. As we were on the point of responding, *L.E. Ciara* sped to the rescue from a position only minutes away. The Baltimore Lifeboat was launched without delay, two close-by fishing boats also responded and quickly all was well after the navy put a powerful pump on board. In less dramatic fashion, we continued motor-sailing in the gathering gloom and light wind, which turned northeast, and tied up in Kinsale in time for a quick pint in KYC before closing time.

In all *Brandon Rose* logged over 1,700 miles during a glorious season. Many old friendships were tested but survived, and a few new ones were forged. May the spirit of adventure, which must be what drives us to do the things we do, always remain with us.

Frank Hand writes of A Hat-trick of Countries

The Northern Adriatic is a not often cruised area, far up and far away, near nowhere. Or is it? On a nice day the cities of Trieste and Grado (Italy), Koper, Izola and Piran (Slovenia) can be seen from the Gulf of Trieste. Venice is not far away, nor is the beautiful old town of Rovinj in Croatia. A nice day's cruising could take in breakfast in Trieste, lunch in Izola (the local white wine, Malvaja, is a must) and a pleasant night in Umag, famous for its good food. Three countries in one day and dining out for about a third of what you are used to!

The Italian lagunas require patience and careful navigation and are less challenging to shallow draught craft. Slovenia offers two substantial marinas at Izola and Portorose, with a smaller one at Koper. The Slovenian coastline is about 46 km. long, 23 cm. per head of population, to quote jokingly the local yachting journalist Matija Goran, a close WMN equivalent! The Croatian coast from Umag down to Pula is well served by the state controlled ACI group and also by a number of private marinas.

The cost for cruising in this part of the Mediterranean varies a fair bit. Italy, exceptionally, does not apply annual charges. For an 11 metre yacht, expect to pay approximately €112 for "lights" and tourist tax per annum in Slovenia. Croatia charges about €206 for the same but with a considerably bigger cruising area. Marina fees and individual harbour costs are extra in all cases. Slovenia will join the euro-zone in 2007 which should simplify money comprehension and exchange. Croatia, as with most Balkan countries, accepts the euro as a matter of course.

It is interesting to note that the bogymen stories about the Croatian paperwork are not altogether correct. The infamous "crew list" which should be provided at the commencement of cruising (2.3 persons allowed per berth per annum) is flexible in as much as names can be added progressively and are not required up front, as is generally believed. Essential everywhere, but especially in Croatia, are valid passports, the boat's registration certificate, insurance and the International Certificate of Competence (the ICC, usually referred to as the "driving licence"!). Generally speaking, if the paperwork is right then all is well. A friendly attitude will also help. At the moment, Ireland is "worshipped" for her economic success – true! In fact, the Irish economic model is being discussed as the way forward. Many Croatians, therefore, have a surprising knowledge of all things Irish.

Useful languages, apart from the native tongues in Slovenia and Croatia, are Italian and German. English is not dominant in these areas, for once, but is generally understood and used when needed by the locals. Do not be too surprised to find a local policeman bi-lingual in Italian and Slovenian or Croatian, as well as being fluent in German, French, English and Russian.

As far as being near nowhere, low cost flights will take you from Dublin straight to Trieste and Pula for less money than a train ticket to Killarney!

Around the Tasman Sea

Mike Alexander



THE FAULKNER CUP

THE CLUB'S PREMIER AWARD

Aug 28 2005. Janice and I were back in Scarborough, Queensland, where I had left *Katielok II* the previous year. Despite being out in the sun all that time, she was not looking too neglected.

The first thing was to organize somewhere to stay. I had suggested the nearby caravan park, as the most convenient, but fortunately for me, it was full, otherwise mutiny would have been close! We found a flat, not too far away, and moved in quickly before I was allowed to change my mind.

Monday, the boat was moved into the marina's work area and Tuesday we started in earnest. Each time I go back, I find it all takes at least three times as long as I had expected to get everything done and this time was to be no different. I never learn!

Still, we did take time off at the weekends. On the first one we went to The Riverfest, an annual jamboree along the river in Brisbane. The main event was a huge firework display set up on bridges and barges. We went early, had a picnic, and got a great spot to see it all. The spectacular show was opened and closed with a low-level fly-past by an F-111, with full after-burner on, resulting in a huge flame squirting out the back of it. Very impressive in the dark! On Sunday, we were given an enjoyable tour of the city and surrounds by Richard Kennedy, a friend who has been out here a long time, before we headed back to the next week's work.

Wednesday September 9 and the first of the crew, Patricio from Mexico, arrived, to be put straight to work sanding and painting anything that was not moving too fast, and on Friday, we got the boat back into the water. Back to Brisbane, on Saturday, for more sightseeing. Patricio stayed in town, coming back on Sunday (with a hangover) accompanied by Richard and Mike Adams, a local, who kindly gave me copies of his charts. Brisbane is fronted by Moreton Bay, a fairly shallow area with lots of channels amongst the mangroves to the south, so good charts are necessary.

Work continued, and with Fred, from Canada, arriving on the 18th the crew was complete. On Sunday, Richard and Veronica, his partner, came out and we all helped to celebrate his birthday with the local seafood and just a little wine ...

By the end of the following week, having arranged insurance, involving a survey, getting a cruising permit from Customs (beware Australian bureaucracy) and fighting a losing battle trying to programme my computer, we were, apart from the computer, ready to go cruising.

On September 24 we left Scarborough to head for Manly, on the southern side of the Brisbane river where we met up with some friends I had made on the Pacific crossing a couple of years previously and had a night out with them.

On September 26, we finally left Brisbane motoring through the mangrove swamps in some very narrow channels to Southport, from where one can exit Moreton Bay and enter the southern Coral Sea. When we arrived, we had a problem with the anchor chain, it had been too long in the locker and the links kept kinking and locking themselves in the hawsepipe. In the end, we had to use the other rode and next day take out the

hawsepipe to get at the kink, but we had it done in time to leave for a short sail to the next river, the Tweed in the afternoon. The two lads crossed over the dunes to have a go at surfing in the meantime. This is a great coast for surfing but this also means one has to be careful entering or leaving the rivers. They all have bars and with any swell running in over an ebb tide, can be very dangerous. I had already spoken to one guy whose engine mount had broken when they fell off a wave leaving a river on the ebb, so always tried to be very careful with my timing.

The Tweed River is very shallow with depths not much more than 1.5m. but our centreboard made it quite possible to motor up the river the next day. We tied up at a very small dock where there was just room to turn our 36ft length around. It being just over the dune to the ocean, the lads went off surfing again whilst I stayed and relaxed, but they came back soon after having been dumped on the sand too many times. We headed back down the river and left for an overnight sail to the Clarence River and Iluca. With a fair wind and the East Australian current under us, we made good time for the 90 miles arriving at 07.00. Here we found a large harbour about two miles from the entrance and stayed a couple of days, going for walks in the small rain forest nearby and trying some more surfing. We also found that we could get free showers in the nearby caravan park, provided we chose our time and entrance carefully! One can go up this river for more than 20 miles before a bridge gets in the way, but as the countryside is pretty flat we decided to head on to Coff's Harbour about 70 miles further south. Afterwards I was told that it would have been well worth doing. Can't win! This was a quiet day sail, using the engine with some help from the sails, arriving mid-afternoon. After a pint in the nearest pub, which shut shortly after 21.00, the lads went over the hill into town proper to see if there might be more action and came back at 08.00 having found plenty. Saying they would be back after a quick swim, they disappeared and fell asleep on the beach for the rest of the day! That night the wind got up and blew at 40 knots from the south, so we stayed, which gave me time to fix a problem I had been having with the self-steering.

By 5th October the wind had dropped and was forecast to go back to the northeast, so we left early for the 180 miles to Port Stephens. The wind soon arrived and we had some good sailing through the night, but early the next morning it dropped and for the last few miles we motored, arriving at 11.00.

Port Stephens is a huge area of water, bigger than Sydney Harbour, with some nice bays and rivers emptying into it. At the marina we got some fuel and found that we could stay till 17.00 for free, so some shopping and telephoning was done. We were also allowed to use the showers, the most luxurious ones I have ever seen, with water jets coming at you from every direction. There were some courtesy moorings in the harbour, orange colored, but later when I picked up what I thought was a faded one, the water police told me to shift. We tried a couple of places here, the second, called Tea Gardens, was a nice village. We had to anchor some way down the river because of

a low bridge, and with wind against tide, it was sometimes very wet getting there in the dinghy. We stayed for an extra day whilst another southerly gale passed, preceded by some heavy rain. Whilst waiting I introduced the crew to boiled eggs and tinned sardines, not together, but new to both of them. What to do with a boiled egg had them both puzzled, and the sardines were treated with great suspicion!

Bound for Sydney overnight

On the 10th we were on our way again, this time for Sydney, another overnight sail with a good breeze to start with and a beautiful starlit night as we passed Newcastle, but by dawn the wind once again dropped and we motored through Sydney Heads around 08.00 with another 100 miles under the keel.

My daughter, Liz and partner Noel, who lived at Watson's Bay, near the entrance, had arranged a mooring just in front of Doyle's, the famous fish restaurant there, so we tied up and went ashore for a big breakfast. I had thought, as we were leaving, that we were a bit close to the other boats, but had not paid too much attention. I came back later to be greeted by an angry Ossie who left me in no doubt that we were and that I should move. NOW! We moved over to the other side of the anchorage and stayed for 10 days whilst the two lads made the most of the big smoke and I spent too much time trying, once again unsuccessfully, to get the computer going. Nevertheless, we still managed to have a couple of nice days sailing with some friends in Sydney Harbour. One of the days, we put Noel in the dinghy so he could take some photos as we sailed in front of the Opera House, but we didn't allow enough for the wakes of the passing ferries, nor the strength of the wind and current. Drifting fast, he tried to grab a navigation marker but missed, and a hurried rescue had to be made. Despite this, he still managed to get some good shots. Later, we tried to raft-up with some friends for a picnic, but the wake of the ferries put paid to that pretty quickly also.

In 1770 Captain Cook after anchoring in Botany Bay to the south, sailed past the entrance to Port Jackson, (named after a Secretary of the Admiralty who spurned the gift, changing his name shortly after to Duckett). The first fleet, with convicts from the overcrowded hulks lying on the Thames, arrived in 1788, where Cook had anchored in Botany Bay but, Captain Arthur Phillip, the commander and then first governor, found it

too desolate and went to look elsewhere. Port Jackson was, at the time pretty desolate also, but a much finer anchorage with fresh water so he moved the settlement there. It was then, without a doubt, a grim place with barbaric and sadistic punishments meted out for the least of offences. Now it is one of the world's great cities and the harbour, with the iconic structures of the Harbour Bridge and Opera House, and the bustle of the ferries at City Quay, a great place to be on a sunny afternoon.

By October 19 it was time to move on again and we had also decided that if we wanted time in Tasmania we had to travel a bit quicker, so the next stop would be Eden, at the southeastern corner of Australia, 200 miles away. The wind and current were still with us, and we had another good sail, if a bit "rolly" at times, arriving just before midnight on 20th. We took a mooring in Snug Cove for the rest of the night, moving on to the wharf the next day. There was a lot of surge alongside the wharf, and the fishing boats were being brought up short, quite severely. However we were informed that the banks owned most of them, they didn't move, and we should make ourselves comfortable outside one of them. Which we did for the two days we spent there. Another nice little town, mainly dependent on the fishing industry, which like elsewhere is having its difficulties. The pubs also shut very early!

All along the coast, both here and in New Zealand, there are volunteer coastwatch stations, with whom one can log on, and they will alert the SAR services if you need, or if they don't hear from you after your ETA has passed. Here we also found out that their stations have showers so were doubly grateful.

The next leg was the Bass Strait, which has a bit of a reputation, but the forecast was for light winds, strengthening the next day, so, on October 22 we left Eden and headed south. We passed Cape Howe that evening, and the following morning the wind duly arrived. By the afternoon, we were sailing fast in warm sunshine. During the next night I noticed a long line of phosphorescence trailing behind, checked that none of our ropes were trailing overboard, and realized also that we didn't even have a rope that long. It was indeed a rope we had picked up somehow and in the morning, after a struggle to get hold of it, we were unable to pull it in, so cut it, but then couldn't detach it from under the boat. Still, as it wasn't fouled around the prop we tied the ends up tight and continued. We kept moving quickly until the following evening when the wind eased so started motoring again. Later that night there was a bang from underneath, as the pot, or whatever, parted company and fell off, but it wasn't until later that the rest of the rope caught on the shaft. Luckily, the shaft still turned and we were able to continue motoring. We were now approaching Triabunna (on the east coast of Tasmania) in drizzle and fog, which as morning dawned, became heavy thunderstorms. With G.P.S. and some help from radar (not the greatest aid in rain), we passed south of Schouten Island and, as the skies cleared, made our way up the river to this very neat little village. Here I found that, though the prop shaft turned with all the rope around it, reverse had no effect, but we did just manage to stop in time! 320 miles in a little less than three days.



Katielok II at Sydney Opera House and Harbour Bridge

Not too slow. The next two days were spent doing a few running repairs, walking in the hills and doing some research on the local brews. Cascade, the oldest brewery in Australia becoming the favourite, but the pub shut even earlier here (20.30), so research was limited.

28th October and time to move on, just a short hop across the strait to Maria Island and Chinaman's Bay. This island was a jail farm and logging camp in transportation times. Now it is a heritage area and wildlife reserve where colonies of some endangered species, including a small kangaroo, have been installed. These are doing well, judging by the numbers we saw on a short walk that evening. The plan was for the lads to go on a long hike the next day, but by morning it was raining hard, with the wind set to blow from the southwest. The bay was very exposed from this direction, so we moved the 30 miles to Fortescue Bay, on the mainland. I chose the wrong place to anchor and we spent a rather uncomfortable night, moving the next morning to Canoe Cove on the other shore where a dredger had been sunk to provide shelter from the swell for another long since finished logging operation. This was a lovely spot in clear water, warm enough to swim and laze and oysters for the picking. I had a nice walk out to the headland from where there is a great view of the stacks around Cape Pillar, so named for the islet of that shape off the southeastern corner of Tasmania.

The next day we went around that corner to Port Arthur, which was the main jail in the colony, when this was the dreaded Van Dieman's Land (the place had such a bad reputation that in the end the name was changed to Tasmania, to encourage more settlers to move in). The site was chosen for its position on an isthmus, and thus easily guarded. In its day, it must have been a terrible place for the majority of prisoners. By 1845, the idea that harsh physical punishment leads to reform, was giving way to the use of psychological methods. A separation block was built and here quite extraordinary methods were used to isolate the poor convict from contact, either visual or audible, with any other person. The worst being the cell where there was no light at all. In it, even with the door open, one could see nothing, nor lie down. Needless to say, it drove most mad but some admitted to being cured. By the time the prison closed in the 1860s because the government decided it was too expensive to maintain, the people left were, in the main, mentally and/or physically broken. Some didn't have it so bad though, William Smith-O'Brien M.P. was convicted of high treason for his part in the 1848 rebellion, and sent there, but a convict was sent up to his cottage (still intact and in good repair) every day, to cook and clean for him.

The main block burnt down in a forest fire in 1897 and all that remains now are the walls, but the officers' quarters are still standing and for them and their families, with the convicts, pretty much slaves at their beck and call, life must have been pleasant enough. Nowadays the whole site is a big tourist attraction. A lot of the transported convicts were skilled craftsmen and there were some good architects, so throughout the old convict settlements there is a fine legacy of lovely sandstone buildings, particularly in Hobart.

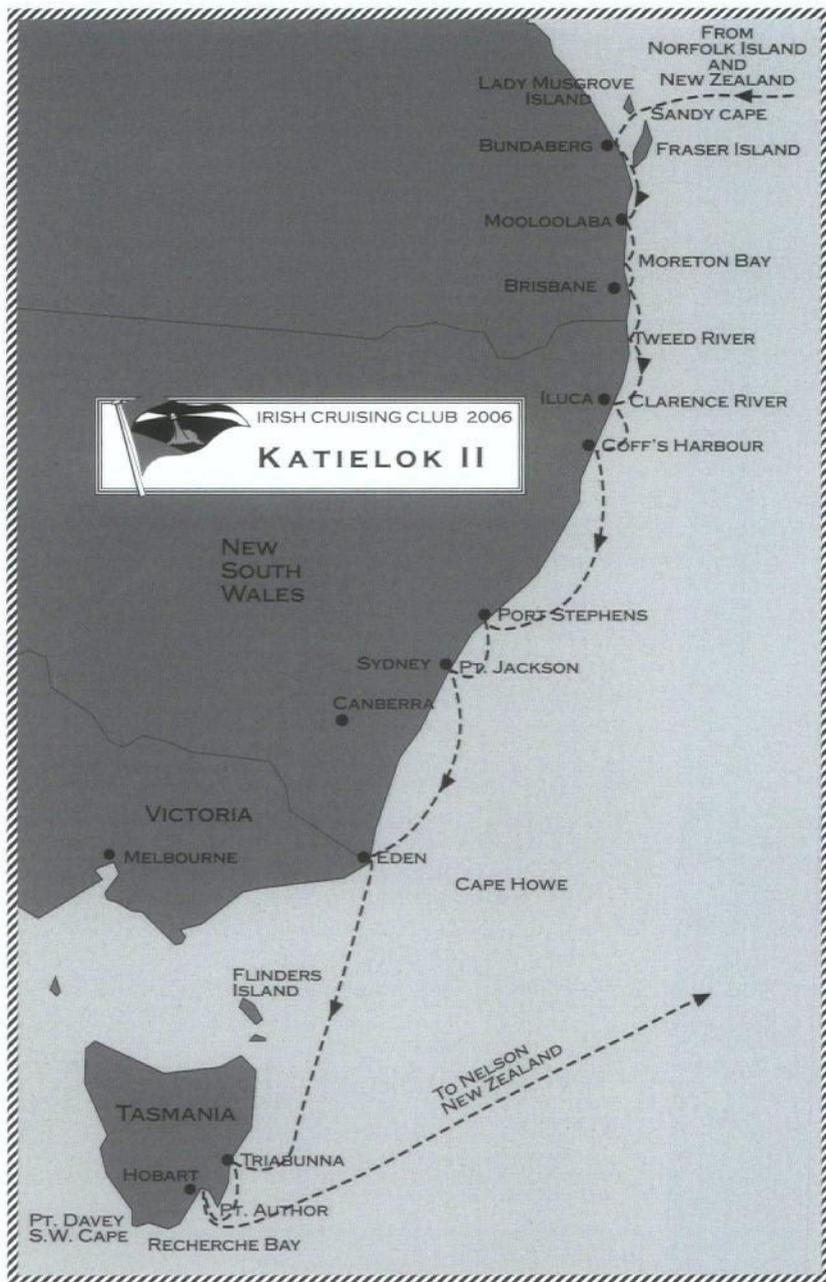
November 2 and time to move on around Cape Raoul. The cliffs along the coast here reminded me of North Antrim, and we had some familiar heavy gusts coming down from them. As we neared Nubeena, the next port of call, the rain came down and we had to navigate on instruments to find our way to the entrance. Once in, it cleared enough to get to the pub for happy hour, three pints were ordered but, two pints and a schooner, which is a mite smaller, were served. We got very black looks from the barmaid when we queried the measure, so contented ourselves with it being half-price. Next day started off with a lot of wind and more strong gusts coming off the cliffs as we left to cross Storm Bay for Hobart under just genoa, but as the wind dropped we fired up the motor rather than hoist more sail. Not that it made much difference, by the time we were in the Derwent River there was no wind and, once again we arrived in rain, to be let into Constitution Dock with the raising of the old cast-iron bridge, dating from way back. All commercial traffic used to land here before the big extensions to the docks. Now, this is where the smaller entries in the Sydney to Hobart race party on arrival, and here, we found a fishing boat built in the fifties by John Devoy, at Portavogie. It was sailed out after a few years fishing in the Irish Sea, apparently not the only one to do so.

Next door, the Victoria Dock, built at the same time, is still a busy fishing port. It is a bit difficult to get on and off the boat here as there are no ladders but, it is right in the centre of the city with lovely buildings all around, so we stayed, rather than move to The Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania about two miles out of town. Just as well it was very sheltered, that night a fierce gale swept through with over 70 knots recorded. We put out our staysail boom as an extra fender board plus all our fenders. Even against the wall, we had quite an angle of heel in the heavier gusts. Next door their board was broken in half and a good chunk of rail torn off. I lost my ensign, having, like most, got too lazy to lower and re-hoist it everyday. Served me right!

In the morning I met a lovely lady, Penny St. Leger, and later, her partner, soon (as I discovered) to be husband Jeremy. In their boat *Rosinante* they had sailed via Cape Horn to Europe, and back to Tasmania via Cape of Good Hope. Now they took me under their wing and gave me lots of advice about



Tide sluicing through French Pass, New Zealand



God's Island, as they call it (not without reason, I found), and mountains of charts for both here and New Zealand.

Hobart is the second-driest capital city in Australia, sheltered, as it is, from the west by Mount Wellington. I had a good day's climb to the top for magnificent views of the city, Derwent River and Storm Bay out as far as Tasman Island. Back in the city I fell in with a tour bus outside the Cascade Brewery, (shut on Sunday), with an amusing guide recounting some of the inside gossip of old Hobart. Here, once more, a lot of my time was taken up with trying to get my computer to do what I thought it should do, again, frustratingly, not very successfully.

November 10 and I had had enough, so armed with Jeremy's new sailing guide we headed for the Entrecasteaux Channel. The names of the islands, channels and bays here all reflect the early European explorers, their sponsors, navigators and ships. If their order of arrival had been different by just a few weeks, who knows, Australia might have been a Dutch colony and New Zealand French!

The original idea was to try to get to Port Davey, around the corner from southwest Cape, remote, beautiful and only

accessible by sea. In the meantime, waiting for a decent forecast, we would stop in a few places on our way to Recherche Bay at the southern end of the channel. The second of these was Deep Hole which had been another logging camp. They brought the logs to the shore by rail to be shipped out. The line, a bit of platform and the buffers, all very rickety, but still there, run right out to the water's edge. Good brakes must have been necessary. On a bluff close by is a memorial to those who perished when the *George III* ran on the rocks, after a passage out from London with some 200 convicts. Nobody would give the order to open the hatches, in case, I suppose, those who got ashore ran away. 197 of them, left locked in the holds, drowned.

In the evening we went over to Southport, and were taken to the local watering hole by a couple of fishermen from the abalone and cray fishing boats, waiting for the season to open. A highly regulated fishery that seems to pay quite well. Onwards next day to Recherche Bay. There is a beautiful sculpture of a right whale and calf here. All along these shores, whaling was carried out from the shore, until the offshore fleets had practically exterminated them. Logging then became the mainstay of the economy. There was an interesting article, published in a local newspaper during World War II, about a family whose menfolk had gone off to fight and left the mother and two daughters to keep the operation going. At the time, access was by a rough track from the nearest town, and it took the reporter two days to get there. He finally found them building a railway 15 km away, operating and maintaining the locomotive and hand sawing the trees and logs, whilst talking about the dance they were going to that night, a 10kms. walk back towards the town. They were back in the woods next day. Tough ladies!!

Time was beginning to run out, the lads had booked their return flights from Auckland for mid-December and as the forecast was for the wind to stay westerly we decided to forego Port Davey and head back to Hobart to get ready for the Tasman Sea crossing. On the way we made a

trip up the Huon River, during which, using our updated guide, we ran aground and had to wait three hours for the tide to float us. Should have stuck with the older version! This valley takes its name from the famous pine used extensively in boat building but now very hard to find. On the way down, we visited the wooden boat school at Franklin and admired the high quality of the work on a 32ft. motor-sailer being built. We arrived back in Constitution Dock on November 19.

The West Indian cricket team were in town for a one-day match against Australia, so I had to take the lads to see this, to them a strange game, and try to explain it. Not sure that I succeeded, but we enjoyed the afternoon and they promised to introduce it to Mexico and French Canada on their return.

Again I was embroiled in a battle with the computer, but managed to get away to see The Royal Botanical Gardens one lovely afternoon. I especially liked the small display about the Sub-Antarctic Islands, in a pavilion dedicated to Mawson, giving some idea of the enormous amount of sea and bird life dependent on these tiny oases in the southern ocean.

Now we were waiting for a westerly forecast, but lows kept passing to the north, instead of south, giving northeasterly

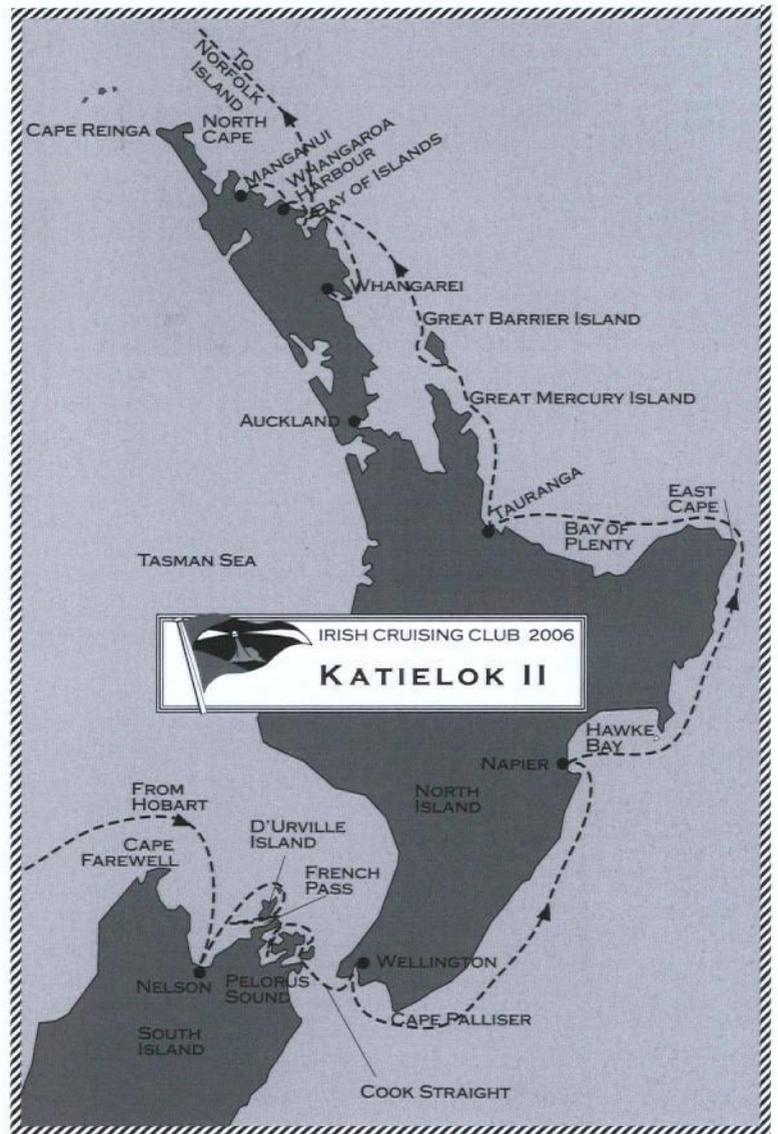
winds. Not what we wanted at all. On December 1 it seemed that we might get a bit of north wind, so we cleared Customs and headed down the Derwent river once again, but the wind stayed northeast and in fairly miserable conditions we passed Tasman Island that evening. The first couple of days we were pushed southeast in drizzle and fog. After crossing 46 south, we tacked north, and the next day had a nice sail in the right direction, but the barometer was dropping fast and, sure enough, we were hove-to that night with a lot of wind and big seas building. Just after dawn, there was a big bang and we came out to see the shattered remains of one surfboard left on the port rail, the extra water and fuel cans strewn around and diesel all over the deck. Closer inspection revealed three stanchions attached only by the lifelines, but the wind was dropping and we were able to clear up the mess and be on our way again fairly quickly. A couple of good days followed, even allowing us to swim, but then the wind backed to the northeast and the night of 11/12 was, again, spent hove-to, this time going backwards.

Next day we tacked inadvertently, started the engine to push us back around and in the process got a sheet wrapped around the prop. This time it did stop. The wind dropped, but the seas did not and anxious as the lads were about missing their flight I would not let them go over the side to free it. Later the wind increased, but stayed northeast for the next two days only allowing for very slow progress. Finally, it dropped on 15th and Fred went over the side to free the prop. Pat saw what he thought was a shark but was, in fact, an inquisitive seal. By this time Fred was out of the water, not convinced, and also worried that even if it was only a seal it still might take a lump out of him. It took some time to get him back in to clear the rest of the rope! A slow, unpleasant, 1,200 miles 16-day trip was finished in flat calm and we arrived in Nelson at 02.00. Despite the hour, the very efficient New Zealand Customs and Quarantine services were there to welcome us and take away all the suspicious foodstuffs, like honey, milk products and meat I had bottled.

Nelson, situated on the north coast of South Island between the Able Tasman Mts. to the west and the hills around the Marlborough Sounds to the east, has one of the most pleasant climates in New Zealand. The marina is close to the city centre and the town itself has lots to offer. Pat and Fred busied themselves with their travel arrangements and, deciding to stay a couple of days in Auckland before flying home, they booked seats for the 18th. Unfortunately the surviving surfboard was too big to go on the small aeroplane taking them to Auckland, so had to be sold. Even so, Fred got a reasonable price for it.

Janice, who had been waiting in Wellington, was due to arrive at the same time. Unbeknownst to me, Wellington airport was closed with fog, but waiting on my own in the near-deserted terminal. I was asked if I was waiting for someone, and told that the flight was unlikely to arrive that day. Small airports, even though this one had two terminals, are very user friendly.

It was too close to Christmas to try to get any repairs done, so Janice and I decided to go for a cruise to D'Urville Island and the Marlborough Sounds and left on December 22. I joined the Tasman Bay Cruising Club in order to use their club moorings in this area. The \$100 subscription (which included a very fancy logbook) was worth it, even for the short time we used them. The depths in the sounds close to shore are deep, and anchoring with enough swinging room to allow for the



sometimes strong gusts coming from every direction off the hills, was disquieting to say the least.

Christmas thunderstorms

The night of Christmas Eve was to prove the point, despite gusts of 60 knots, heavy rain and thunderstorms, we were nice and comfortable on a club mooring in Greville Arm on D'Urville Island. In the morning Ron and Jacky from *Deliverance II* came over to help celebrate, after which we had a sumptuous supper of smoked salmon and duck washed down with produce from the local wineries. The weather relented during the afternoon and St. Stephen's Day we sailed around the north of the island and had a pleasant couple of days in Port Hardy going for some walks along the main ridge of the island, with spectacular views on either side. We then crossed back over to South Island and spent a pleasant couple of weeks in Pelorus Sound, so named after the ship from which the first survey was completed. The sound is only 42kms. long, but with 370kms of shoreline, a great cruising area. The weather was mixed and we were stuck for a few days in Havelock at the head of the Sound. The New Zealand Hang-Gliding Championships happened to be on, so we spent a day on the top of the hill watching, but not trying. One of the conditions for a lift up the hill was to drive one of the vehicles back down, quite scary coming around some of the corners on the farm track, but no damage was done.



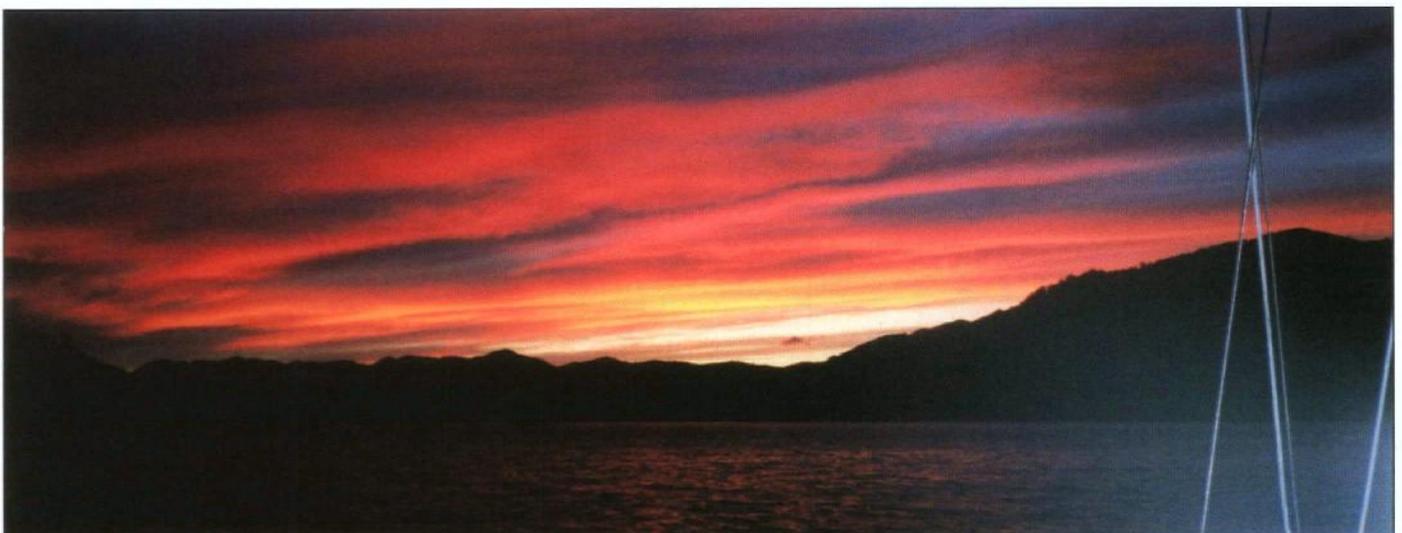
What do Richard and Mike not understand?

On the way back to Nelson we went through French Pass, between D'Urville Island and the mainland. So named after Admiral D'Urville who went through in 1827. It is very narrow with a big rock in the middle and tides running at 6-7 knots. At the time, with the boats and equipment they had, it must have been nerve-wracking. Now, with accurate tide tables and a reliable engine, in good weather one can relax and appreciate the view.

January 10 saw us back in Nelson and over the next month we got the boat sorted out and the repairs done. This being a major fishing port, everything we needed could be easily sourced. The labour was skilled and the prices a good deal cheaper than home, but as usual, it all took much longer than hoped. We finally left Nelson on February 13 to go to Wellington, stopping on the way in Queen Charlotte Sound. On Valentine's Day, navigator, Janice, using a travel guide and road map, got us to a swank resort with moorings in Endeavour Inlet. I took the hint and booked us in for dinner. The Maitre'd, from Kenya, recognised our flag, having been to Glenstal Abbey, and kindly, the expensive reserve wine we had ordered was only charged at the ordinary rate. Much appreciated. A long walk on the famous Queen Charlotte track cleared the head for the next day's run across Cook Strait. The day dawned clear and calm, we had studied the tides and managed to get it right, so despite its nasty reputation we had a very pleasant crossing. We spied a large sail coming slowly up behind and then a helicopter appeared flying right over us. Was this our welcome? No. The boat behind was *Pirates of the Caribbean* coming to the finishing line of The Volvo Round the World Race. The helicopter pointedly got between us to take photos of them before, as the wind got up, they disappeared up the channel to the city. We arrived considerably later!

Time for what we thought, would be a quick respite from living on the boat, so we moved ashore to stay with Lorna Lovegrove, a friend who had moved out here some years back. Wellington is a city squeezed between the harbour and some steep hills behind, resulting in the downtown area being quite compact. They have almost finished redeveloping the docks and it is a pleasure to walk around, when it is not too windy. From my experience it certainly lives up to its name, the Windy City, much more so than the other one, Chicago. We were glad to be off the boat, the marina was open to the north, with no breakwater, and so quite rough at times. Even to the extent that one of my mooring lines snapped!

Sunday 19th was the date for the restart of the Volvo race, so we took a few friends out to watch. These boats are seriously



Sunset at Tauranga, New Zealand

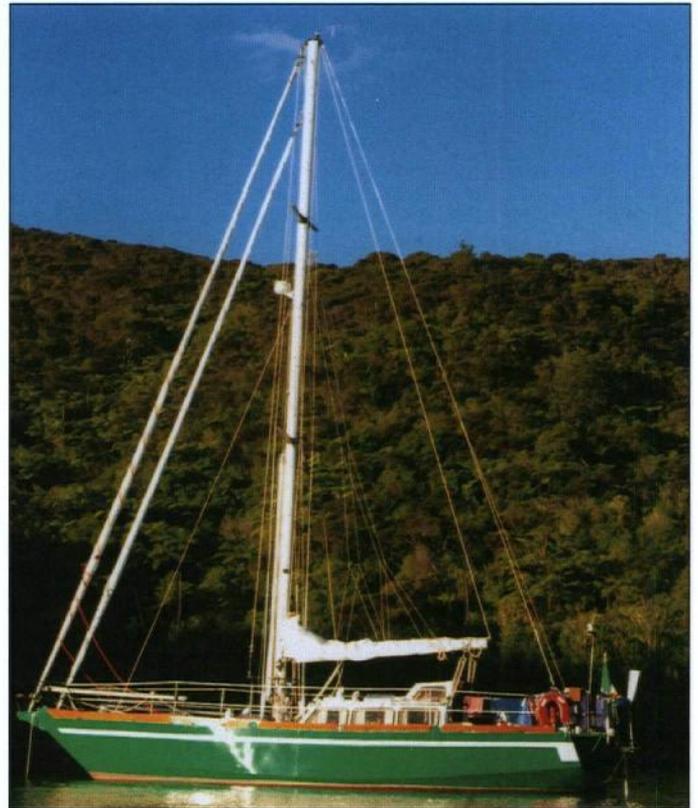
fast, by the time we had gone a couple of miles direct to the third mark, they had passed it and were heading out to sea. I met someone later who had followed in a speedboat doing over 15 knots and was unable to keep up.

Departure postponed

Our next leg was northeast along the Wairarapa (east) coast of North Island with no shelter before Napier, 210 miles away. The forecasts were for strong to galeforce winds from northeast, so we waited and in the meantime explored the city and took advantage of the theatre festival that was starting. It seemed, on the 25th, that there was a chance of the wind going around to northwest and then west during the night so we cast off. I had just hoisted the main, with two reefs, when Janice pointed out that there was a tear for some 2 metres along the leach, so the departure was postponed. We decided to go to another marina, a long way out from the city, but much more sheltered. It was also closer to Lorna's house. On Monday, I took the sail in. Looking it over with the sail maker, we decided to go for a new one, after all it was nearly 20 years old and had got me all the way here. On Thursday I collected the new one. Good service, I thought, and reasonable. Two days later, I got a call in the morning to say that the small genoa had partially unrolled, during yet another, gale. We rushed out to the boat and found the genoa in bits. Back to the sail maker who this time had the repair done the next day! However, with continuing strong northeast winds forecast, a comfortable place to stay, and the theatre festival on, it was not difficult to be persuaded to idle away a bit more time here. It also allowed our new crewmember, Rachel, to catch up. From Dublin, Rachel was on her OE (overseas Experience) as it is known here, and I found someone who finally got my computer to talk to the G.P.S. so the time was not wasted.

Sat. 11 March and we were on our way, at first in a calm, but during the evening the wind got up from the northwest. We had a very rough night, but at least the wind was offshore and we could use it. By mid-afternoon the wind had gone around to the south and with two reefs and most of the genoa we made good time for the 210 miles, to be in Napier just before midnight.

One of my new stanchions had been bent whilst in Wellington, by the fishing boat in the next berth. The skipper was from Napier and had given me the name of a fitter, whom I called in the morning. He told me to take it off, collected it and



Peaceful evening in Whangaroa Harbour

had it back to me the next day. No question as to me paying, he knew the fisherman and would collect from him. My telling him was enough!

Napier was flattened by an earthquake in 1931 in which 250 people died. It was rebuilt and is now one of the world's finest art deco cities. Well worth a visit.

Having got away from the Wairarapa coast the weather became much more pleasant, and the next leg around East Cape to Tauranga, 270 miles away was done with light winds over calm seas in sunshine, with a bit of help from the engine. From here, Janice was teaming up with Lorna to do some overland touring. Rachel and I, joined by Nizzy, a Kiwi friend, left the

next day and cruised north visiting some of the offshore islands along this part of the coast. This area is very cruiser-friendly with lots of interesting places to stop. Great Barrier Island, so named because it shelters the Hauraki Gulf from the ocean swells, was my favourite. Nizzy flew back to work from here. We stayed a couple of days in Tryppena, walking and hitching over to a magnificent beach one day, to go for a swim. We then moved on to Port Fitzroy, a very scenic sail, and another lovely anchorage. Here we had another walk and swim, this time underneath a waterfall.

We were to meet up with Janice and Lorna in Opuia, the Bay of Islands, 90 miles away, the next day, so left for a pleasant overnight sail on March 24. This was where I arrived when I first came to New



Constitution Dock, Hobart, Tasmania. Boat built by Johnny Devoy in Portavogie, 1949



Katielok II off Russell, New Zealand

Zealand nearly three years previously and had had a major overhaul done. Almost like coming home. That day and night it poured. With four of us on board it was damp and overcrowded and I think Janice and Lorna were glad to see the back of us and continue their touring.

The weather got back to normal on the 29th, and Rachel and I left for the Cavalli Islands about 25 miles away. Near here lies *The Rainbow Warrior*. This was the Greenpeace ship the French Secret Service sank, in Auckland Harbour, to stop them interfering with their nuclear testing in the Tuamotus. The wreck is now a famous dive site. There is also a memorial in the shape of whalebone, on the headland overlooking the islands. Very shortly after anchoring here, a neighbour came over and presented us with a large snapper, greatly improving that night's menu.

We made another stop in Whangaroa Harbour, before meeting up with Janice and Lorna again at Manganui. I tried to tuck in to a spot just above the last mooring and promptly went aground, but as it was so sheltered we stayed there. Just as well, since that night the rain with some wind returned, so much so that the next morning the dinghy was more than half full. The bad weather was soon over so, with Nizzy who had also rejoined, we set off to retrace our steps to the Bay of Islands. This time we got a mooring off Russell, the Pakeha (European) first capital of New Zealand. The local Maoris objected strongly to the British presence and chopped the flagpole down four times before, finally, a steel one was erected. Captain Cook stayed here awhile in 1769 and there is a fine working model of *Endeavour* in the local museum. The next day we left to make our way to Whangarei, stopping for a night in another lovely natural harbour at Whangamumu.

In Whangarei I had the boat hauled, and left to make a quick visit home, returning on May 19. I put the boat back in the water on May 29 and was lucky to find Caroline, a Dutch girl, looking to do some sailing, to come with me. The following Monday, June 5, we cleared Customs and set off down the river for the 1,500 mile passage to Queensland. We had some nice weather for the first few days with light winds and lots of sunshine. Norfolk Island was not far off our direct route, so we

headed there to see if we could stop for a day or two. It was never more than doubtful, as there is no harbour and nearly always heavy surf. The island was originally a place where the more troublesome convicts were sent from Sydney and served as a farm for the main colony. It was not until the beginning of the 19th-century that Sydney was able to supply its own needs. As we approached, I spoke to another yacht, having an uncomfortable time lying off the beach with two anchors out and rolling heavily.

The forecast was for a northerly gale the next night, and whilst the island might provide some shelter from that, I decided we would be better off at sea, so a moonlight glimpse of the coast was all we had before setting course for Bunderberg, our port of entry to Australia, 900 miles away. The forecast was accurate and we spent the next night hove-to, but the wind never got above about 45 knots and

dropped in the morning, when we were soon on our way again. We now seemed to be in the southeast trades, and the wind, varying in strength from strong to calm, stayed pretty much on the port quarter for the rest of the trip. A period of heavy showers made the approach to the coast a bit more interesting. We completed the trip in 13½ days, arriving at 02.00 on June 19.

Entering Australia was traumatic. I had thought that, having informed Customs (with all the usual details of crew and boat) of our intended arrival before we left, that that would be sufficient, but now found Immigration was another thing altogether and I had entered without a visa. They immediately slapped a \$3,000 dollar fine on me. Worse still, despite an appeal, they refused to lift it. Others beware!

A couple of days were spent in the town further up the river, and we visited the Bunderberg Distillery. Their liqueur rum, only available in the shop, had the taste buds tingling and \$35 out of my pocket pretty quickly!

Bunderberg is situated at the southern end of The Great Barrier Reef. Two of the nearby atolls can be entered, Lady Musgrove Island and Fitzroy Reef. We spent a couple of days at each. Diving off the first, we were lucky and encountered a large manta ray and some turtles, but at Fitzroy the wind was quite strong and with the long fetch across the lagoon, it was not a comfortable place to be.

Further south is Fraser Island, a huge sand dune some 90 km long by 15 wide and over 50m. high. We stopped in a couple of anchorages, enjoying, at one of them, a long walk to a quite beautiful fresh water lake in which we swam, before walking around it. From where we were, it did not look too far, but there were a lot of blind corners, so the walk took a lot longer than planned.

For some time I had been thinking of selling the boat, so was looking for a place. Mooloolaba, our next stop seemed to fit the bill. After a hair-raising exit through the surf to the open ocean, south of Fraser Island, we arrived there on July 6 and soon after, *Katielok II* was in the hands of a broker and I was, rather sadly, on my way home.

The Norway Trip

John Madden



THE WILD GOOSE CUP

AT THE ADJUDICATOR'S DISCRETION
FOR A LOG OF LITERARY MERIT

Ten years ago on 16th June 1996, a few weeks from my fiftieth birthday, we set off on *Scottish Flame*, a chartered boat from Largs, and spent a glorious five weeks sailing around Ireland. God has been relatively kind and now I approach sixty. Don't feel it and certainly don't look it. Meantime I was lucky enough to get my own boat, *Bagheera*, and was looking for somewhere that it could take me to. I had thought of Norway before. We tried, a few years ago, to hire a boat from Sleat, but the American Cruising Club were over and had hired everything available. This then had to be the year. When anyone talked to us about sailing to Norway a look of disbelief usually followed. People have the wrong idea about it. It is not all within the Arctic circle. In June there are few, if any, icebergs. The weather is generally OK. The beer is, to be sure, dearer than at home, but Norway is surprisingly close, as even a cursory look at the atlas will confirm. It is certainly closer than France from Lough Swilly, and a lot closer than Spain or Portugal. Anyway, we had done the south before and there is something about going north that appeals to me. As I have written before, planning in these trips is everything, and for this trip planning started last September. Charts were the first thing to be organised.

The only cruising guide available is *The Cruising Guide to Norway* by Mark Brackenbury. He is the same man who has co-written the Scottish pilots but this book is quite out of date. The Norwegians publish an excellent guide to their huge coast line called *Den Norske Los*, but sadly this is no longer published in English and even our Navigator's excellent Norwegian might not be up to the intricacies of Norwegian local dialects. His Norwegian also proved a problem when it was his round, but that is another story. Mark Brackenbury recommends the Norwegian charts for the inshore waters and the Fjords and so we bought these, plus Admiralty passage charts, from Scotland to the Norwegian coast. When the Navigator saw the excellent Norwegian charts, he was highly impressed by the delineation between the land and the sea. No one said anything, but we all wondered had he seen this delineation as clearly as he might have on previous trips. One thinks back to dodging inside Sanday! So the navigation was sorted by Christmas. The crew were more or less press-ganged and that only left the boat. Cometh the hour, cometh the screwdriver!

Bagheera is a 39ft Jeanneau which is in its adolescent years. It has got over foolish ideas to be the fastest in the fleet, and is now quite happy to show its long-range capabilities. The crew, however, have left adolescence long behind. We have a foredeck man who is a grandfather, and his other claim to fame is that he is the only member of the crew not to have spent a night in jail. Be that as it may, we are older and wiser now. The inner forestay had been replaced, the winches stripped and greased. My friendly steering wheel squeak, which kept me company at nights, had been abolished. And finally everything got itself together for a departure on, coincidentally, 16th June 2006, ten years on. It has always been the Skipper's habit to take out the Lord High Admiral for a meal the night before one of these trips and so I did. The boys met in the Railway Tavern

for a spot of merriment and slept on board. To please the vexillologists, I had crept over to the marina (Fahan marina, home of the Louth Swilly Yacht Club) the previous day to fly the Blue Peter. Little touches mean a lot, and vexillologically, I aim to please.

So I arrived at the marina at 09.40 and woke the crew. As we cast off, the disconsolate face of Micky was there to see us off; an unfortunate double booking had kept him shore side. Also there was Paul Gallagher who had enquired as to a suitable memorial to us if we didn't get back. The thoughts of the deal he had struck with his local monumental mason clearly lit his face.

So we slipped out of the marina at about 09.50. The crew was as follows. Me as Skipper and Admiral, The Vice, The Rear, The Count McNulty, the Chief Chef, P Corr, Pat Heaney and the future son-in-law (again) Brendan. The weather was overcast as we made our way to Dunree which was to be the last mark before heading on a course of 00.05 west toward the west of Islay, and on to pass Tiree and Coll to starboard, and then hit the Little Minches with Barra to port, followed by the evocative Sea of the Hebrides. As I have often written, planning is everything. A recent article in *The Daily Mail* on holidaying in Norway had mentioned the cost of alcohol in that fine country. Fifteen euro a pint was mentioned, and that, more than maelstroms, had given us pause for thought. So we calculated how much we should carry with us. During the daylight hours a few beers are sufficient but at the skipper's bedtime, nothing will do but a couple of large Powers and a smoke. We further calculated that the weight of the alcohol to see us through Norway would be about a quarter of a ton (Imperial). I bought with me seven litres of Powers and The Count bought a further three. This should sort out The Hebrides and possibly also Orkney. We stored the Powers and the beer aft to keep the bow up and the crew happy. As Skipper I chose the watch that I prefer and opted for the eight till twelve with The Lord. At twelve we were relieved by Norman and Brendan, followed at four by Frankie and Pat. Paddy was up 24/7 with crudities and drinks. Enough of the domestic arrangements, for this after all is the official log of *Bagheera's* Viking revenge trip. The wind was from the southwest at between 12 and 18 knots. This had previously been arranged with my sainted aunt Maureen, an eighty-year-old Loreto nun who has a hot line to God's weather department and worries about her less-saintly nephew. At midnight, as the Admiral checked the ship's cellars, we were at 56°41.4N – 007,20.5W, 12 miles southeast of Barra head. Not bad for half a day. We had moderate visibility, the wind from the south at ten knots and no traffic in sight. At 23.00 there were some fishing boats as we passed twelve miles to the east of Barra and a few hours later at 04.30 we were at 57°06N – 007°05W, 4.4 miles east of South Uist. It was getting bright but raining. 191 miles to Westray.

By 11.00 the following morning, we were approaching the Shiant Islands in the North Minch. At this stage surely entitled to a sprig of heather in our bonnets! We left them to starboard at shortly after noon, heading for our way-point a couple of miles



Larvik

southwest of Cape Wrath. The word Wrath has nothing to do with angry seas or sudden death; it is merely a Viking word for a turning point. At 16.20 we passed the lighthouse on the Point of Stoer, in a light drizzle with 109 miles to run. As we passed it the smells of exotic spices filled the cockpit as Paddy cooked a special from Ken Hom's Chinese cookery book, Chinese Hebridean style. Possibly we took our eye off the ball as the foresail made an 'egg timer' and all hands were sent forward to sort it out. Soon after that we passed Cape Wrath and at 22.30 we were nine miles northeast of it with only 66 miles to run, doing 8 knots. At 01.00 we were 13 miles south-southeast of Sule Skerry in a 12 knot southerly, which the boat was enjoying, and at 03.50 we were 2 miles northeast of Brought Head lighthouse. There are two ways into Westray's main town, Pierowall. The southern route through the Westray Forth between Rousay and Westray which is tricky, or pop around the northern end, Bow Head and head south between Westray and

it to cook. Westray is a place for walking and bird watching, neither of which pursuits I am remotely interested in. After dinner, we were driven back to Pierowall where I became Pope for an hour or so to entertain the locals. The next morning, the crew went on a tour of Viking remains. There had been another island nearby, but during a particularly bad storm, it had been blown over the top of Westray and landed in the cemetery where it can still be seen. Must have been quite a night. The senior crew-members do not do tourism. A planning meeting was held in the Pierowall hotel between The Admiral and The Rear. Bad news on the e-mail. A low is building off Rockall and Bailey and heading our way. The plan was to sail to Lerwick in the Shetlands and from there to Bergen, but with this forecast we decided to skip the Shetlands and the heady delights of Lerwick and to depart immediately for Bergen. We left Pierowall at 17.00 bound for Norway.

A dullish evening, the wind north-northwest at 12 knots as we headed into the North Sound towards North Ronaldsay, Sanday to the East. We passed the lighthouse at North Ronaldsay at about 20.30 intending to swing more or less westward towards Fedje on the Norwegian coast. The Norwegian coast is an interesting place. A long chain of offshore islands guards it, and between these islands and the coast is a huge protected waterway known as the Skaergard which in English, means the protected waters. Fedje, some thirty or so miles north of Bergen, is the main entrance for shipping through these offshore islands. Anyway, a while to go before Fedje. We spotted the first two lobsterpots off North Ronaldsay but missed the third, which wrapped itself around the keel, but fortunately missed the prop. We cut it free and continued on with a sigh of relief. At 00.48 we got the BBC shipping forecast.



Bergen

A deepening Atlantic low 400 miles west of Baily moving east to Viking and becoming southeast 6 to 7. For Fair Isle, where we were, it was suggesting southeast 5 to 7, perhaps gale 8 later, visibility moderate to poor, but out in Rockall severe gale 9 or storm force 10 and heading our way via the hills of Donegal.

I think that it was on this night that Paddy really excelled. Chicken country-style from the Ken Hom Chinese cookery book. Paddy had come on board the night before we left. He threw out the wok that he had bought for the boat some four years earlier, along with all the pots and pans and replaced them all with gleaming new ones. Paddy had ordered 'no waves please' as he dashed about the cabin, scattering various spices into the new wok. Steam was heading sternward perfumed by aromatic spices and dead birds. The meal, when ready, was the best I have ever eaten on a boat. (And I kept it down.) Dinner over, we passed Fair Isle at about 01.00 doing a steady 6.4 knots heading towards The Hole, the sea between Fair Isle and the Shetlands. The gulls were sleeping on the sea as we sighted Sumburgh Head with 189 miles to run. A big mistake which I blame myself for. We should have made 60N – 00.00W a waypoint but I didn't think to do it.

We passed the meridian at 09.15 and 60N at 11.15. 12.00 saw us 133 miles from Fedje doing 6.5 knots with all sail set. At 16.00 we were down to 104 miles from Fedje sailing with a perfect southeast wind of 12 knots and at 22.00 we passed through the oil fields. These rigs are huge structures, much bigger than off Kinsale, like small, brightly lit towns in the middle of nowhere. We were trying to out-run the weather system, which was steaming our way. The BBC forecast at 00.44 for Viking, North Utsire and South Utsire was suggesting southeast 5 to 7, gale 8 at first. At 02.00 we got the gale as we passed the Troll Alpha oil field. It was very rough but both the boat and the crew handled it well. An hour later, a beautiful sunrise at 03.30, revealed Norway on the horizon. Very severe sea conditions

with steady gale force winds gusting to 42 knots. It was overcast and raining hard with very lively seas when we finally got to Fedje at about 08.00 and the entrance to the Hjeltefjorden. There was a little traffic about, as ships turned north and south up and down the Skaergard. We headed south, in Norwegian waters at last, towards Bergen. The weather softened, the rain stopped and the sun came out, as did the red wine. We were entitled to a minor celebration! It was a little less than 40 miles to Bergen. Down the Hjeltefjorden until the large island of Store Sotra lies to the west, then swung south east between Litlesotra and the Hjelteskjer light on the southern aspect of Askoy, then northeast up the Byfjorden for a couple of miles and there is Bergen to starboard. Since Fedje, we had been very impressed with the Norwegian landscape. Loads of holiday homes, each proudly flying the Norwegian flag were in evidence. Each with a private landing stage and motorboat.

Even to an amateur geologist this place is obviously glacial. The power of those glaciers, that could drive seven hundred foot deep furrows in the ocean floor, must have been immense. Fortunately, we had a professional geologist on board, young

Brendan, and we were treated to a short discourse on the difference between Geology and Geomorphology, the finer points of which, sadly, escape me. However you can read his textbook some day.

There are no buoys in the fjords. It is too deep to anchor them. However they are thought to have the oldest, still functioning system of navigation marks in the world. They are called Vardes. Over here, we would call them perches. Not unlike railway signals, they sit on rocks and islands with little horizontals indicating the safe course, and are thousands of years old.

Despite their high taxation, the Norwegians seem to live well. We were unsure of the best part of Bergen to pull into and unwittingly chose the very best part by following the locals. We pulled into the Vagen, a narrow inlet into the centre of old Bergen, known as the Bryggen, and so, at last, we tied up in the centre of Bergen at about 15.00, roughly 46 hours after leaving Pierowall. Norway is a lot closer than you might think, less than one hundred sea hours and we have made it.



Repositioning at Stavanger at 02.00

Now we can relax a bit!!

And relax we did. The PPP in Bergen is named, and possibly owned, by some overpaid football chappy whose name I cannot remember: something like Oblomov. Anyway its handy. Once safely navigating the main road between the water and the pub, we were in. A pint in Ireland costs about €3.50 for which you get 568mls of beer. In Norway you get 400mls for up to €11.00 which would make a pint in Ireland roughly €15.62 – and yes a calculator was needed for that. A few quiet pints, or parts thereof were had, as we felt that we deserved them. Norman retired to the boat to do some reading as did Pat. Poor Brendan joined them an hour or so later, to collapse onto his bunk moaning that he was "too young for this business".

Bergen is surrounded by mountains. It is an impressive city, famous for its torrential downpours. It is said that it rains on 275 days a year, but I hadn't told the crew that. According to the guidebook, a tourist disappointed by the local weather, hailed a small boy and asked him when it stops raining. The boy answered, "I don't know, I'm only twelve!" So we had a shower. The footballer's pub had a roof so we were OK. That

night, we went to a nearby fish restaurant, which was excellent, apart from the Irish Coffees at €350.00 each. (Rough approximation.)

Bergen in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries was one of the four major cities of the Hanseatic League, a trading block dominated by the Germans. They built the Bryggen and traded from there throughout the world. They kept themselves pretty much to themselves to the extent that they were forbidden to marry the locals. Bergen has many fine museums charting the city's history, but needless to say we visited none of them. We spent the next day strolling around, had a couple of beers and another decent dinner. As we were here a day earlier than expected, having skipped Lerwick, we decided to leave early the next morning to see the town that Lerwick probably came from, Larvik.

Before we left, we saw a side of Norman, not often seen at home. He is a hat fetishist and spends a large part of his holiday money on them. In Bergen he bought 'Paddington Bear's' hat and the rest of the crew vowed to find him the blue duffel coat and yellow wellies that will complete the outfit. He also has a charming 'Village People' look-alike hat, for what purpose we dread to think. Two folk hats for The Admiral and St Pat completed his purchases for today. Norman is famous for his liking of Freedom Fries, but this a new aberration. Hormonal possibly?

The Lukksund

We left Bergen at 06.30 on Friday 23rd June for Larvik. I had read that the way to go was through the Lukksund as it is meant to be the most scenic route, and although the weather was misty and damp we decided to try it, although it demanded a considerable detour: but we may never sail to Norway again, so we went for it. After Bergen we sailed west down the Byfjorden and then at Stongi turned due south between the island of Litlesotra and the mainland. After about three miles this fjord bifurcates around the north cape of the island of Bjoroyna and we headed southeast towards Grimstadjorden doing a magical shimmy to parallel the east coast of Bjoroyna and the mainland until we reached its southern neighbour, the island of Tyssoyna, before getting into the comparatively open waters of the Raunefjorden. From there it was southeast in fairly unwelcoming weather through the Bjornafjordyn passing the light at the southern end of the mainland at Rontinfangen to head to the fjord between the island of Tysnes and the mainland, the Lukksund. I am sure it would have been nicer if the sun had been shining. It was not. The clouds were down to about two hundred feet but none the less it was worth the effort. The only images of this place that I was able to get before we left, on Google, were of a German submarine coming through here (on the surface.) (After the war.)

Leaving the narrow confines of the Lukksund we entered the relatively spacious Hardangerfjorden, the sea and the sky still uniformly dull grey. We speculate about the twenty three hours of sunlight that the natives have here in the summer; they must get extremely miserable in the twenty three hours of darkness during the winter. Our track is now southwest between Husnes on the mainland towards the southeast of the island of Stord and our destination, Larvik.

Larvik on first acquaintance appears to be a very dull town. 'The Lonely Planet' damns it with faint praise. "It is larger than it is attractive." A small marina with a few fishing boats and a couple of yachts affords a very easy entrance and we tie up to a solid, concrete pontoon. The PPP in Larvik is strangely not very Norwegian but Chinese. The lady in charge is about my own age of thirty-five, but has not aged as well as my goodself. However she knows how to pull a beer and the food is good. Disconcertingly, whenever she comes to our table, she starts to

giggle uncontrollably. We are not sure if it us or a Chinese thing. After dinner we stroll away from the harbour and find the night life which is surprisingly good. A decent pub and Norwegio-Irish relations are cemented in bibulous fashion. After a few expensive beers, we pop down to the boat for an educative evening about black holes and how we are God in the future. Must get a new Rear.

The following morning, after a fine breakfast, we set sail for the town of Haugesund. This was to have been our second stop and I had Googled it extensively during the lonely winter months as I crouched over the office computer, between hacking patients. Haugesund is a little like a Nordic Venice. The fjord runs through it and there are side fjords branching off in either direction. Again, everyone seems to have a boat and there is a lot of traffic.

We had left Larvik and passed down the Bomlafjorden under main and engine passing the Ryvarden light at about 10.30. An hour later we were tied along side Haugesund's main street at about 11.30 local. This was our second Sunday away from home. Disappointingly, the PPP is uphill and a good two hundred yards walk from the boat, but we all managed it and were served excellent beers for the rest of the day by the lovely Agnita. Sadly, they had no Sky TV so Ireland v Australia had to be missed. Haugesund's main claim to fame is that this is where Marilyn Monroe's parents came from. There is a charming statue of her on the waterfront. There is also a charming statue of a rampant goat on the main street, which Frankie has to be pulled off.

Dubliners on the juke-box

A reminder of last year's trip to Gibraltar as we found the Lord Nelson pub. As soon as they heard our accents, the Dubliners were on the juke-box. One would think that three weeks away from the pressures of work would go by at a snail's pace, but holiday-time seems to be at a somewhat revved up speed. Something to do with relativity I'm sure. Anyway Brendan had to leave us in Haugesund and fly back to Ireland and work. We would miss his informative discourses on how Norway was made. Brendan was to have been replaced by Admiral Og, but a crisis at work rendered him suddenly unavailable, so we had to ring Mickey Morrison in his summer residence at Malin Head, Malin Head Hall. Fortunately it was Mickey himself who answered the phone and he was on the next available flight. He was to land at the local airport and the nearest place we could find to meet him at was the very sleepy town of Kopervik, a few miles down the coast. We weren't expecting him till after three so we all had a lie in, explored the town, said goodbye to Marilyn and Agnita and set off late morning, well, at about 10.00. Glorious sunshine and a quick run down the fjords between the Mainland and the island of Karmoy. Kopervik lies in a little bay on the east coast of Karmoy. It doesn't get a mention in 'The Lonely Planet' at all and Mr Brackenbury seems confused by its charms, describing it as both pleasant and rather dull in the same paragraph. The wall on the main road looked accessible enough, but then we saw the small visitors' pontoon, and tied up there in company with two or three other yachts. It was by now after eleven. The Norwegian sailing guide is extremely accurate. Kopervik is pleasant and dull. The Rear and I clambered through the bushes that separated us from the road and strode manfully into town. The main street is full of dress shops, souvenir shops and hairdressers. The Admiral had been coiffed before departure, and had no need of either dresses or souvenirs, so we sought directions to the nearest hostelry. Whether it was our Norwegian or their English, the directions were contradictory: however we saw a lot more of Kopervik before we found the

solitary PPP that graces their fair town. The good point of the PPP in Kopervik, that sunny morning when we eventually found it, was that it had a balcony overlooking the fjord. The bad point, the really bad point, was that it was closed and not to be open until the late afternoon. Back down the torrid streets, back past the hairdresser's and back past the souvenir shops, and back to the relatively alcohol bountiful *Bagheera*.

Mickey Morrison is a lovely person. However he has his faults. As the Laird of Malin Head he has felt absolutely no need to move with the times. He has always eschewed modern technological devices, and in particular has seen no need at all to own or use a mobile phone. He is not the only member of the crew to travel in this way, The Rear having similar problems to the square of ten. I have some sympathy with him on

this issue. I have long held the view, to the annoyance of my wife, that they should not even be called mobile phones. They are not mobile, in the sense that you and I are. They are portable. Portable or mobile, Mickey is not familiar with their inner workings. It is for this simple misunderstanding of modern communications technology that he has not received my urgent text, requesting a top up of the Powers supplies. I was not to know this as we sat on *Bagheera* in the afternoon sun, watching the Ryanair flight descend over our heads to a landing at Haugesund airport. The man at the pontoon waived any fee when he heard we were just waiting for a friend to join us. (Rathmullan please take note.) At 15.00 Mickey joined us. He had not received my urgent text. We showed him how to use the phone, which he immediately switched off. At this stage the fridge is in good form, the Powers well hidden and there are plenty of provisions on board, thanks to the hard work of the Purser whose intimate knowledge of Norwegian supermarkets grows by the nautical mile. Next stop Stavanger. A slight delay ensued as the Vice decided whether this was to be a 'Paddington' or a scary 'Village People' day. A compromise, widely welcomed by all, was his 'little Dutch boy with his finger in the dyke' hat, purchased in the local dyke shop. In summary, Kopervik great pontoon, awful PPP.

Goodbye Kopervik

Anyway, goodbye Kopervik. We sailed out past the PPP, its balcony now festooned with merry revellers singing Norwegian folk songs in glorious harmony, as they raised their expensive glasses to our Irish flag as we turned south, down the Karmsundet, towards our next destination, Stavanger. While in planning mode, during the winter, I had debated whether to go to Stavanger which lies at the base of the Byfjorden or go west to the far side of the peninsula to Tananger. The advantage of Tananger is that it is to the west, thus maybe saving us some time on the trip to Scotland. However, Norwegian friends have advised us that Kopervik is more exciting and that Stavanger is the place to go. So having left the southern aspect of the island of Karmoy, we shimmied southeast between the islands of Kvitsoy and Mosteroy through the Kvitsofjorden, into the Byfjorden. As we sailed into the port of Stavanger, we were passed by the P+O cruise ship *Aurora*, coming out. I hope to be

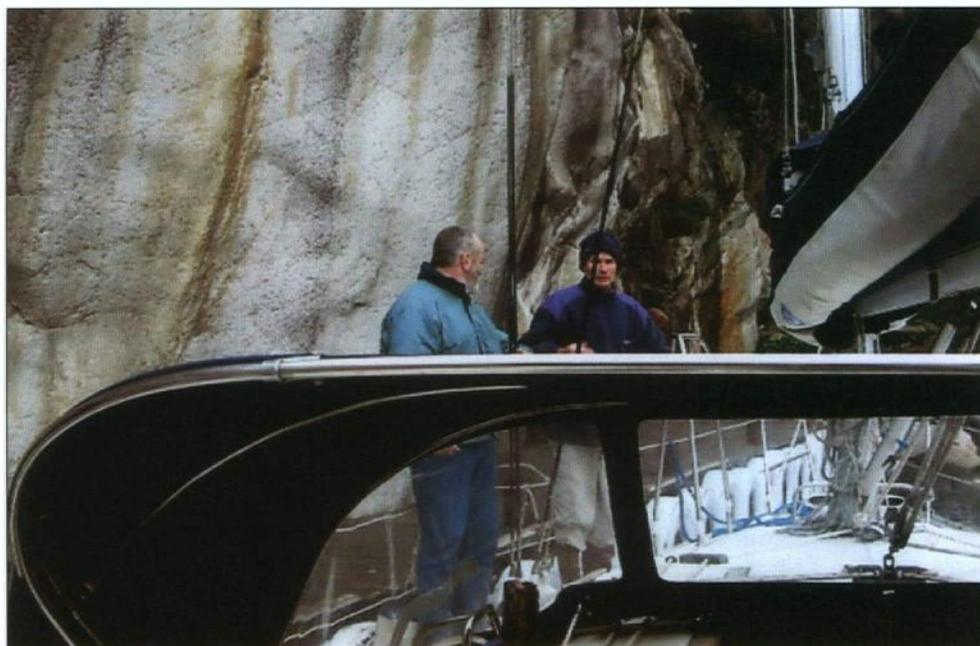


The Lysefjord

on *Aurora* this October. Sailing up the islanded channel, we were overtaken by a large ferry, the *Princess Raghilde*, whose wash caused some consternation in the galley. We tied up against the wall. There was a small marina in front of us but it looked very full and tight. Along the wall, at regular intervals, were signs in Norwegian. We suspected they may mean "no berthing" but hoped for the best. As we had come up the inlet, we had noticed huge floating barges with giant screens and cheering crowds, and had suspected some sort of children's entertainment. Not so. It was the Norwegian ladies beach volley-ball finals. Apparently the men's finals were not drawing the same sort of crowds. So the usual night followed: a few beers followed by an excellent meal.

Night of the midnight sun

It being the night of the midnight sun, we stayed up late, perhaps too late considering our average age. In fact most of us stayed up most of the night and this was just as well for at about 01.00 we were ordered to move the boat as a ferry needed the berth. I moved the boat to the ladies volley-ball court, thinking that this might give us a ringside view of those sweaty athletes the following morning. Not allowed. Norwegians in mackintoshes had apparently booked this space and we were ordered away in a fairly peremptory fashion. There was nothing else but to shimmy into the very overcrowded marina, where the only space was rafted out beside a blue hulled *Comfort 42, Meltemi*. To say he looked nervous as we approached would be to understate his body language. When we denied that we were a charter boat, he relaxed, took our lines and invited us on board for a beer. His name was Harald, a German Count, (not the McNulty type.) He was related to both the Swedish and Norwegian royal families and had owned *Meltemi* since 2000. Since then he has clocked up 33,000 miles, 15,000 of those single-handed. He was there with a friend, waiting for crew for a race starting this Saturday, to Denmark and Sweden. His wheel had been specially made by a craftswoman out of different woods, and cost £15,000 and took a year to make. I told him that it would be missing in the morning. He raced from Rhode Island to the Kiel Canal, keeping Fair Isle to starboard in 2003 and had 68 knot winds. He was nervous, but had two professional lady Whitbread sailors on board, who told him that



Tied alongside the The Lysefjord

this was nothing, relax. He came third. I Googled him when I got home. Harald Graf von Saurma-Jeltsch is indeed an international yachtsman of some renown. We suspect he may own, or at least be involved in, the management of *Comfortina*. An interesting meeting with one of the Norwegian volley-ball's senior members brings us up to speed on the rules of this fascinating sport, and we vow to take a look in the morning.

Came the dawn

Over to the volley-ball courts. They are surrounded by dirty old men in raincoats with small cameras. However we push our way through to the front as the girls practice their routines. A bit like the ladies doubles at Wimbledon apart from their attire, which is far more suitable to the climate here. Apparently one country's team objected to the skimpy bikinis and were threatened with expulsion if they covered up. Waiting for the service, the two receiving girls await in a crouched position. The one nearest the net has her hand behind her giving signals to her partner as to strategy. Apparently the referees (male) are paid to oversee this. If Frankie and I were not responsible for the crew, we would have enrolled immediately. But common-sense prevailed and a specially convened committee of *La Federation Internationale de Volley Ball* rejected our applications. A rather intemperate text message from the Vice summons us back to the boat. The plan for today is to sail to a spectacular beauty spot, the Lysenfjorden, about fifteen miles away and we set off at about 11.30. The Rear asks to be woken when the scenery arrives. It was overcast as we threaded our way through the many islands before reaching the relative safety of the Hogsfjorden and headed southeast.

The Lysenfjorden is indeed spectacular. It is mentioned in all the guides. If on foot there is a rock, the Preikestolen or Pulpit rock, which sticks out in eponymous pulpit style over the fjord beneath, with a 604 metre drop to the water. We are happier in the water than above it, and cruise up the fjord between towering granite cliffs. An hour or so into the fjord, we spotted a little vagen or possibly a little vik to starboard and pull in under a cliff on a small pontoon. A worried chef chased us away as he was expecting a tour boat, but there is another welcoming pontoon a couple of hundred metres away. Here we stop, unhindered, and have a picnic of cold meats and fish, salad and

a choice of fine wines, thanks again to Paddy Corr. Life cannot get much better than this. Even the beer was frozen in the cans.

After lunch we meandered further up the fjord as there are some waterfalls up there that the book says are worth a look. They are but as we approach them, quite close to the southern cliff face, smoke billowed from the engine compartment. After a moment of consternation, we realised that it was only the compressor that powers the fridge that had burnt out. Afterwards we reckoned that an insulated bag had sat on the thermostat and had encouraged the compressor to overdo it. That was why the beer was frozen solid. While we worked this out, we had hoisted the jenny and coasted even further up the fjord. A good job it hadn't been a serious engine problem as radio coverage in here might not have been good and we

were quite a long way from facilities. We turned back the way we had come, exited the Lysenfjord and turned back into the Hogsfjorden. The wind had risen to about 22 knots and was just off the nose, so we had a good sail back to Stavanger. The following day, we were to depart to Scotland, so decided that it would be a good idea to find some diesel before retiring for the usual pre-bed jollities.

There are about nine marinas in or about Stavanger and not one has a diesel pump. I know, because I was in them all and some were rather tight. The Vice's enquiries in Hiberno-Norwegian received several conflicting directions as to where diesel might be found. As darkness fell, (about October) we were finally directed to an island off the city, called Vassoy. The harbour there was tight, shallow and diesel-less. Hungry and thirsty by this stage, it was about 20.30, we decided to return to Stavanger for the night. The Vice had spotted a marina which operated like a car park, the "Spanska" marina. Drive in and buy a ticket. Our boat has a 13'4" beam. Fortunately the space between the tiny fingers in this spot was 13'5", so there was plenty of room. The tumblehome obscured any sight of the fingers on either side, as they were only about six inches wide. Getting ashore was like crossing Niagara on a tightrope. A ticket machine dispensed a ticket that we stuck on the side of the boat in case we were clamped. BP Explorer is berthed nearby. I had been on this Whitbread boat in Cape Town in 2001. A restrained night, as tomorrow we really have to find some diesel and cross to Scotland. The real world of work and families awaits. Surely with all these boats about, someone must sell diesel.

The next morning we left the Marina at 10.40 showered and breakfasted. We took a small detour to have a look at the *QE2* which was just around the corner. We had made some more enquiries and found that Vassoy, which we had visited yesterday, was indeed the right spot. We had assumed that the harbour we had been in was the only one, but there was another tiny spot around the corner where we filled up. Norman bought another 'Village People' type hat. Watches were adjusted to BST and we finally departed Norwegian soil at 11.00. By 14.00 we were 7 miles southwest of the island of Kitsoy and we gave

normally walk about thirty miles a week. Jim did not know this and followed him. Nine miles later they arrived in the hotel, exhausted. Jim remembered a hill in Kenya that he visited once, "The hill that opens the cow's bowel." He didn't know, until today, that there was a Scottish equivalent. The best meal of the trip was interrupted by a text from Norman, in Dublin, that there was bad weather expected. A quick meeting decided that we would run for Donegal at first light. However this was Thursday on Colonsay, and Thursday on Colonsay is quiz night. Jim is an extremely erudite person. His knowledge of English literature and poetry is exceeded only by his grasp of mythology, so we were quietly confident of showing the natives that we Irish are not so thick. Ten years ago, again on a Thursday, we had sat at the same quiz and been humiliated. Tonight would be different! And so it seemed for a short while; till about question twelve. "Who is the Greek God of War? Jim frowned and grimaced but did not know the answer. We lost.

Back to the boat and ready for the morrow

We set off early in golden sunshine and a fair wind. The weather was so good that at lunchtime I had a shower and went to my bunk. Wakening at about 17.00 I opened the door to see where we were on the GPS and was pleased to see Inishtrahull to port. I got up to see truly nasty conditions. Very lumpy seas, a foul tide and a speed over the ground of about 2 knots. We were under engine only, and crept at a snail's pace to Dunaff Head and the shelter of the Swilly. Once around the head, we were able to hoist sails again and raced to Rathmullan, accompanied by dolphins as we passed Kinnegar bay. We tied up at Rathmullan at about 23.00 and raced to the PPP for pints. Some friends were there and we chatted. The barman let us stay till 02.00. Nightcaps etc.

The following morning, Saturday, twenty-two days since departure, we sailed across the Swilly, into the marina and the Yacht Club for a minor celebration.

Work tomorrow, sadly. The Rear's daughter gave us a lift

Owen Branagan writes of his adventures in South America

Having handed in my thesis with huge sighs of relief from my parents, and before the quiet murmurings of suits, shirts, and sensible attire, accompanied by the dreadful word 'responsibility' could intrude, I decided to slide away for a two month early career break. Before you raise an eyebrow, student life can be tough enough, so I felt some 'r'n'r' was due. Off I escaped to South America!

I started my travels in Paraguay, then heading from the Iguazu Falls in Northern Argentina, to Buenos Aires, Valdes Peninsula, El Calafata, across into Chile and Puerto Natales, and while trekking in the Torres Del Paine National Park in Southern Chile, I ran into an Englishman, Tom, for the fourth time.

We decided to do a kayaking trip down the Serrano River, for three days doing about 120 kms. The two guides supplied the food, tents, equipment, and prepared everything.

The first morning, Tom and I found our two English-speaking guides at a canopy on the quayside, north of the Serrano. The experience was truly intimate with just four people. I'll never forget Tom and I fumbling around like idiots in hysterics, while trying to squeeze into the wetsuits! All the gear was very necessary for the freezing, icy cold water.

With quite a fast flowing tide pushing us down-river, we glided along the Serrano with great ease, as far as Lake Tyndall. When encountering a small weir en-route, we had to portage and then have lunch ashore. Being paired off with one of the guides in a two-man kayak, made it very sociable and very interesting, and less tiring. Romano was a mine of information, constantly pointing out birds, animals, fish and glaciers, and explaining their place and relationship in the environment.

The first night we camped beside Lake Tyndall, near a swamp where there were a great number of trees to shelter us from a strong wind, and the Chileans prepared a beautiful chicken and pasta meal for us. However, before I had my plate in my hand, there were hundreds of mosquitoes swarming in our faces. Tom and I freaked out as the mozzies had more of our dinner than we did! We subsequently lit a great big fire to exterminate the pests!

The second day we paddled up to the Tyndall glacier, where we had the opportunity to set foot on the ice surface, have lunch there, and see the inside of a small glacial cave. The way the dirt marks the smoothly eroded walls of the Tyndall glacier, make parts of it look like some posh style of chocolate covered ice cream. That second night, the Chileans found us a very picturesque place to camp, further down off the main river. Romano made Tom and I our first Pisco Sours, which were a real treat! Pisco is a brandy made from grapes. South Americans add pineapple and lime juice to make this one of the most popular cocktails, and usually serve it in a glass with a frothy head. Romano then took out the tiniest travelling guitar I had ever seen, it couldn't have been more than two feet long, and sang some South American folk ballads. As a singer and guitarist, I also took a turn and sang a few Irish songs.

Our final day brought us face-to-face with the Greiner glacier, which is actually crushing down over the mountains, towards the southern part of the Rio Serrano. In the future, this huge glacier will further widen this part of the Serrano. We finally made the finishing line at the entrance to the Bernardo O'Higgins Park, where we took the ferry back to Puerto Natales. It was here, for the first time in three days, that we saw other human beings.

A Curate's Egg in Biscay

The cruise of *Twayblade* in 2006

Jonathan Virden

After a year without going afloat, *Twayblade* sailed to the Basque Country in 2006. The stimulus was to join the Irish Cruising Club's rally. It proved to be a mixed cruise. There was rarely any favourable wind; on many days the conditions were just sufficiently contrary to make each hour rather tense. On the other hand the organised events in Pais Vasco (Basque Country) were extraordinarily good. And there were some very pleasant days on the way home.

My niece Lucy joined as crew on 10th June. This was her first time cruising with us. She has the agility and balance I lost before I started sailing 40 years ago. She also has the huge advantage of professional knowledge of navigation, sense of direction and meteorology. Next day we motored from Plymouth to St Mawes for a night. This made a bit of westing before crossing to Brittany. After doubtful weather forecasts we left Cornwall on 12th June and sailed slowly to the Chenal du Four. Next morning we just cleared the Chenal with the last of the tide. We had motor-sailed for some hours in extremely heavy rain and bad visibility. For some of the time the radar could just detect the coast but there was nothing but blank rain

shadow for two miles all round us. On the way to Camaret we were warned off the course of a submarine returning from exercises. We assumed that it had a torpedo stuck in firing position and gladly kept out of the way.

For one day we enjoyed some of the usual delights of Brittany. On 15th June we sailed through a quite peaceful Raz de Sein and on towards Belle Ile hoping that the wind would allow us to fetch directly. We had idyllic sailing in the afternoon. A persistent but rather variable anticyclone over UK gave a northeast wind force 3-4. The sea was calm. The sky was blue blue, the definition of sky blue, with a few vapour trails. The sails were just full enough to make us reach easily towards Pte de Penmarche. There was a hazy strip of France on the horizon and the inevitable distant hum of humanity. Lucy slept.

Later, the forecast made us decide reluctantly to sail overnight towards Les Sables d'Olonne. It indicated wind north-northeast force 4-5. However the real wind proved to be nearly east and up to force 6 gusting force 7 and we had a very uncomfortable night without being able to point in any really useful direction. That was the last forecast I heard with understanding for several weeks! On the following day we retired to Port Joinville on Ile de Yeu. We found a good place in the marina into which *Twayblade* just fitted.

During the next day I studied the problems associated with going south to the Basque Country. These are twofold, unavoidable, and probably account for the comparative rarity of visits to that pleasant cruising ground. The first is the lack of places of refuge, or to stop for a night. Once south of the north tip of Ile d'Oléron the only stops are the Gironde and Arcachon before Capbreton at the north part of the French Basque country. This is 143 miles. The shore is nearly all uninterrupted sandy beach, with sand dunes and pine trees behind them, wholly exposed to the wide Atlantic. There are some small holiday resorts, each with an inlet, but of no use at all to a cruising yacht.

The two possible places to stop with shelter have major tides and shallows at their entrances. All pilot books warn against entry unless all the conditions are favourable, particularly including swell, tidal flow and level. For the stranger this limits the safe time for entry to about three hours in every 12 and with no more swell than about 50 cm. For pure passage-making this puts them on the list of refuges labelled "try-to-go-in-if-you-are-lucky-to-be-there-at-the-right-time".

The other hazard is man-made. The French military use the sea areas from Gironde to Capbreton (125 miles) and up to 40 miles offshore as a testing ground for missiles, bombs and gunfire of all sorts. Entry is prohibited and is widely advertised as dangerous. Occasionally it must be very dangerous! There are various means of finding out what is going on, and where. This involves telephone numbers which do not work well from the sea. Navtex gives some detail of the areas and general warnings, but nothing to guide useful decision. We found Navtex to be extremely unreliable in that area. There is a strip of sea 3 miles wide close along the shore which is not in the



At St. Jean de Luz

Photo: Joy Virden

a TR to the coastguard who said that they would relay it to HMCG.

School of dolphins

A beautiful day. Blue skies. BBC gave a southerly force 3/4 for South Utsire. By 17.00 we were 286 miles from Inverness but had slowed to 5.5 knots. A school of dolphins came alongside at 23.30 but efforts to photograph them came to nothing. Midnight had us at 58.45N - 003.19E. The BBC at 00.48 confirmed that the high was still with us and forecast south to southeast winds at 4 or 5 and possibly 6. Mickey had come for just one reason, a decent sail and he admits that he got it. A reach all the way from Norway, through the various oil fields, with a constant southerly, saw us re-crossing the meridian at 16.00. By midnight we had only 87.3 miles to run and at 05.00 we were in the safe confines of the Moray Firth. Home, or half home? We still had a run up the Firth on a dull grey morning with 54 miles to get to Inverness. Still, there was a sense of achievement, as we knew that the potentially difficult bits had been accomplished. At 13.00 we checked in with the Coastguard and they relayed our safe arrival to Stavanger Coastguard. Under the Kessock Bridge, its strong tides swirling past its piers, and a little swing to port to find the entrance to the Caledonian canal at Clachnaharry Loch. There were a couple of boats manoeuvring off the Loch's entrance, as there were already two in situ. However, in true yachty friendship, we were both beckoned to raft alongside. Once in, we decided to go for a pint. The first proper pint since leaving Westray. Strolling towards the PPP, we pass a scale model of the *Titanic* in the hedgerow. He is now in trouble as my quote from *The Times* shows. Upstairs to the pub. Strangely, the barman recognised us as being Irish and insisted that we drink Guinness. I am quite happy with this stricture, but The Rear got a tad paranoid and we were forced to leave. Leave we did and walked a good half mile to the Clachnaharry Inn. A fine meal, a lovely smoking area, and the night was made for mine host when The Count showed him how to make proper Irish Coffees. (Cheaper here.) In return he gave us (me) a selection of miniatures of the local brew and the pub's teashirt. I wear it every Sunday. A nightcap on board. We were to lose two members of the crew on Sunday, in 48 hours. Norman the Navigator and the sainted Pat had to return, one to work, guarding the coast, and the other to a life of indolence. Neither of them had been in Loch Ness before, a deficiency in their lives I agreed to correct.

The following morning we headed southwest towards Loch Ness. First lock under the road bridge at Seaport. In this lock there was a Scottish couple, he with bagpipes. We asked him to play some laments and he promised a few tunes south of the lock. South of the lock, we had a concert for several miles as we followed him and his pipes, close astern. A great evening which bought out the latent Scottish in us all, as we sailed down the winding canal to Tomnahurich and the next swing bridge. A few miles to Dochgarroch and a lock, our second of the twenty-nine on the Canal. After that it is only a mile or two to Loch Ness. When we got there, we had a

force 8-9 on the nose. As the Loch widens to the south at Dores, we remembered our last visit there three years ago, when we met the man from the city who had left his highly paid lifestyle behind him to find Nessie. He has been there fourteen years now, glued to his telescope.

Nothing to report

I had done the Canal before and remembered a nice hotel on the southern bank where we had stolen some heather for the bow. We tried to find it, and a few times reckoned that we had. As it turned out, we were in the wrong loch. However we did find the Craigdarroch Lodge Hotel. Like all hotels it has its plusses and minuses. The main minus is that it is at an elevation of about 600 feet; the second was that it was a searingly hot day and one of us has had two events, cardiovascularly speaking. The Skipper felt another coming on, but when we reached the welcoming bar at the summit, huge fires were burning in every room: the windows opened to let out the heat. Hotel policy was the explanation. Nonetheless a hotel much to be recommended. The Rear and Mickey made a simple navigational error and climbed some five or six hundred feet above the hotel before they recognised its roof in the trees far below. Not happy! We had had an addition to the crew the previous day, one Jim McCarroll, an eminent Veterinary Surgeon. Because the boat was fairly full he had stayed in a B+B in Inverness the previous evening, but joined us for dinner in the Craighdorrach. An excellent dinner followed by a rapid descent to Loch level with the usual nightcaps, tied up to a cliff with 15 metres under us.

Bestest friends

The Count does not normally drink whiskey. "Don't let him near the yellow man" is the constant plea from his friend, the Chef. Tonight he went for it. Big time. He slept-in on the port seat in the cockpit, Mickey taking the starboard one. After a few drams of the yellow man, the Count sings in his sleep. A melody of songs past and present. "Four green fields to Limavady" seemed to be his favourite, accompanied by political conjecturing. Mickey hit him over the head, repeatedly, with a full litre bottle of water, but to no avail. In the morning, they were not speaking to each other, though the Count seemed not to be at all upset by this. In fact, he still seemed to be unnaturally happy. On the way back to



Entering the Lokksund



Lock Keeper, Fort William

Dochgarroch, they made it up, embraced in a very manly fashion, and declared themselves the bestest friends in the whole wide world! A sad moment at Dochgarroch, where we lose Norman and Pat and await the arrival of The First Sea Lord and scourge of Admirals, Mrs Pauline Madden. (For new readers, I am known as The Admiral – its a long story.) I had been absent for her birthday on June 29th, so we decked the cabin with flowers and holly, and cooled a couple of bottles of Sauvignon Blanc. First Sea Lord quietly impressed. Into Inverness by taxis that night for a fine dinner, nightcaps back on board etc etc.

Came the dawn

Norman and Pat departed for the airport. Handshakes all round. Jim and I sat in the cockpit in hot sunshine listening to Gregorian chant from Ampleforth. The boys had gone into Inverness for a look around. The occasional boat floated past and life was good. The Lady Admiral's barge arrived at about 15.00 with extra supplies of Cabernet Sauvignon, and Happy Birthday was sung by all hands. Shortly afterwards we departed back to Loch Ness. Past Dores once more and its financial monster watcher, and on to a place we had stopped on our last trip down the Loch, Drumnadrochit. Drumnadrochit is a little private harbour which nestles under Castle Urquhart. It is small and it is shallow. There is a pier at its entrance to which we tied, ignoring the "Do not berth" signs. At the other side of the inner harbour there was potential space if we shifted a couple of small motor-boats. This we did and made a fairly perilous fifty metre trip to tie alongside, just before the two Nessie Hunters came in to tie up for the night. A couple of drinks in the cockpit were interrupted by that ferocious Scot, "*Culcoides Impunctatum*", the Scottish Biting Midge. Apparently there are

over 1,400 species of midge: only a few bite but here they all do. Retreated into the cabin, while we waited for the courtesy bus to bring us a couple of miles to the local hotel for dinner. A reasonable dinner it was, followed by nightcaps enlivened by Jim, who had bought a version of "Call my bluff" to entertain us.

The next day we headed off down the Loch in lovely weather. We passed through Fort Augustus with its old Benedictine Monastery. Here was the busiest lock with the boats tightly crammed five abreast. We were next to a German yacht whose crew kept singing "Gut morgen, Sunshine" in a very cheerful way. And then through the nicest part of the Canal, between it and the entrance to Loch Oich. This, a heavily wooded area, and is very beautiful. Down Loch Oich and into Loch Lochy, and then into Lower Loch Lochy we eventually tied up for the night just in front of the Gairloch Loch. (Lots of Lochy thingies.) From there via taxis to the Lochy Inn for dinner in juke box surroundings, under the commanding presence of Ben Nevis. An army officer scaled the mountain earlier this year and hasn't come back. The local mountain rescue boys cannot find him: they reckon his body is concealed, in camouflage gear, in a crevice. We were told that it can snow on Ben Nevis 365 days a year. The European mountain bike championships are to be held there this year. I do not intend to take part. Back to the boat at Gairloch for the night. The following morning, an idyllic trip through the woods to Banavie Top Basin, a golden eagle swooped across our path. Baking hot weather, though this did not stop Paddy spending several hours in the launderette doing the crew's washing. He uses Omo bought in Norway. Norwegian Omo is called Omo but pronounced Urmu (probably). At 14.00 we descended Neptune's Staircase unaccompanied. We got through it in under two hours, and were charmed by the most beautiful lock keeper on the planet. Down into Corpach and a small night on the town.

Irn Bru

Pauline needed to catch the train to Glasgow airport the following morning. We checked the timetable very carefully but forgot that we are in Corpach and not Fort William. She missed the train and an expensive taxi ride ensued. After exiting the sea lock we headed down Loch Linnhe in sunny conditions, both sails up. A lovely day. The plan was possibly to go to Loch Melfort, then to Craobh Haven, followed by a last night bash in Port Ellen before the transit home. While passing through the Corran Narrows, we realised that we were making better time than expected. So we changed the plan and cut out Loch Melfort, and went directly to the Cuan Sound and up to Craobh Haven, arriving at about 15.00. Due to staff shortages the bar didn't open till 17.00 so we had an orange juice and an Irn Bru!! A very good nightcap and etc followed with soccer on the box.

A day still in hand or so we thought. Instead of Port Ellen and home, we decided to go through the Corryvreckan and out to Colonsay for the night and from there down to Port Ellen and home. As we approached the Corryvreckan, our speed dropped and I thought I might have miscalculated the tides. However once in, we speeded up and sped through at 10+knots. A dull day but calm. Then heavy rain came on and the visibility was poor. Thank goodness for GPS. We entered Scalasaig on Colonsay in mid afternoon. Part of the pier is now boarded with wood for visiting yachts but there was a boat using that part, and the rest of the pier is unsuitable for leaving a boat unattended. The other boat, luckily, was leaving, so we took his place. The Rear and I got a lift the two hundred yards or so to the hotel, while The Count took the rest of the crew on a walking tour. This is his job at home in Derry, and he would

exclusion zone. It was rumoured that patrol boats would keep any part of the strip clear of passing vessels if any test firing went across it.

We clearly had to use the strip and see what the nights brought, if we did not happen to be able to use Gironde or Arcachon to stop for a while.

From Port Joinville we set out on 17th June with a bit of pressure from time. We had to be in Hondarribia by 22nd June to meet Joy off a train from Paris. After a humid, murky day of sailing slowly most of the time, we anchored just after dark in Anse de Mortrain. This is a shallow bay on the south side of Ile de Ré at low water. At high water the anchorage is well offshore. It was dark and at the prevailing state of tide we had to use great caution. We used all the electronic aids in approach to the point to anchor. That place has an anchor on some charts just outside a prohibited zone on the seaward side. The position was 46°09.73'N-1°28.44'W on both GPS readings, to be approached only on 321° True. It is exposed to all winds, sheltered from swell at low water from east through north to northwest by reefs and of doubtful holding on rock. We spent a peaceful night there.

When wind allowed on 18th June we sailed past Ile d'Oléron and the entrance to the Gironde in hazy visibility. This took us to 45°14.21'N and 2 cables from the beach. There we anchored in 7.6m. and over good anchoring sand. The small swell from the open Atlantic made a most uncomfortable night. The tidal flow probably aligns the boat to be broadside to any small swell.

The next day was similar. The visibility was very poor. The sandy beach was visible at one mile with dunes and a topping of trees further behind. This becomes uninteresting quite quickly except perhaps to a dedicated geographer. Otherwise it serves as an obstacle for which a good book or need for sleep serves well. The wind was very variable. That day's passage took us to 44°03.62'N and we anchored off the beach again, rather than sailing on, because there was too little wind. The log says "very bad night for sleeping. The chain was snubbing in big jerks, later more rain and very heavy violent rolling".

The next day was better. We left the anchorage in mist on a glassy calm sea. We motored for 11 hours to Hondarribia with a short interlude of sailing gently at the end of the passage. The visibility became better. The last hours were improved by a visit from the French Customs. The two boarders were led by a tall and potentially humorous soul with quite good English; his scribe was out of his element. While sailing gently with them we found the necessary papers. We conversed about world affairs as if there had never been conflict between England and our nearest neighbours across the channel. In fact they boarded us so close to the Spanish border that I was almost sure that they had exceeded their powers. However at their departure, with lots of mutual compliments, their leader made splendid entries in our visitor's book. "Beware of Spanish wine", and "see you in Arcachon" which proved to be impossible.

So we came to the hospitable marina of Hondarribia in good time. *Twayblade* was given the honoured berth beside the bridge to

the office. This allowed me to make unusual photographs of her in cruising mode from above. After nearly two weeks at sea and always moving on we sought a laundrette. These seem not to happen in that part of Spain, not in marinas nor in towns nor anywhere. *Twayblade* only carries human washing machines unlike some of the large ICC yachts.

The great size of most modern cruising yachts always gives me surprise. The design seems to be an apartment or cottage or house inside a shape derived from a wedge of cheese like a racing yacht. Modern motor cruisers seem to be tropical apartments with aggressive triangular panels attached, but somebody must love them.

On 22nd June we collected Joy off the TGV from Paris in French territory at Hendaye. She was on a "high" after retirement parties. In the evening the Commodore of the Irish Cruising Club, Cormac MacHenry RCC, invited all present crews to an opening event on the pontoon near *Island Life*. Many came and had to be spread out when the pontoon submerged.

23rd June was spent in the search for any laundry. Eventually Joy and Lucy found a dry-cleaner's shop which did have a sufficient service. In the evening everyone walked to the restaurant on the other side of the town. The Basque style of dinner was interesting. There were many small courses (sometimes very small!) and it all added up to a splendid meal. The wine flowed and the service was excellent. Lucy was in great demand as one of the few between the ages of 20 and about 50.

Next day we took the bus and train back to Hendaye via Irun to put Lucy on the TGV for Paris, London and Norfolk. On the way back to *Twayblade* we explored Hondarribia. It was the first town we had seen in that part of Spain; it has many interesting corners. In the afternoon we went to the beach and sat in the sun. We spent a domestic evening putting all in order for local cruising.

San Sebastian

On 24th June there were thunder showers and very little wind. We motored to San Sebastian in patchy rain and poor visibility. We could only see the leading marks for San Sebastian as we left next day; they are grey posts, in the middle of the right hand green gap of three big houses, in the middle of the bay. A



Jonathan at Port de La Meule on Ile de Yeu

Photo: Joy Virden

very helpful English speaker from the club guided us to a mooring. Through the rain we took "Otero's" water taxi to the harbour landing and squelched our way to the yacht club. The club has fine rooms, especially a covered balcony overlooking the bay and the staff were very friendly. Once back on board the thundery rain continued. During the night and morning the slight swell made *Twayblade* roll hugely.

The next stop was at Zumaia. We motored all the way over a rolling irregular sea. The day became brighter and ended with a warm clear sunny evening. On 26th June there was a lunch party organised by the ICC. Grainne FitzGerald did a wonderful job in fixing the marinas and restaurants, with some help from her father David who knows the area well. In the town we found a market where we bought cheese and other regional delicacies. We also discovered that local phone cards are a much cheaper way of speaking to UK than any mobile phone. There were enough public phone booths in all the towns for our needs.

From Zumaia we motored through patchy mist and some clear air to Bermeo. We just squeezed into a berth which was really too small for *Twayblade*. Luckily neither of the owners of the two boats we blocked came along. This is another lively town with pretty buildings and plenty of places to eat and drink. On 28th June we motored to Bilbao over a glassy grey sea. We never saw the major hills behind the coast during this cruise; low cloud or haze obscured them for all the time we were in the Basque Country. It was rumoured that it rains there on more days than in the west of Ireland. The coastal land is certainly very green and lush.

The ICC gathered in the marina at Las Arenas. This is part of a sports complex and club run by the local government or Chamber of Commerce. It has swimming pools and a gymnasium as well as the big marina and service area for yachts and space for all small craft. The final dinner of the rally was held in the restaurant in the club. This was another splendid affair where Joy and I were invited to join the commodore and his guests. They were the chairman and chief executive of the club and their wives, and they had been very helpful in the plans for the rally. Naturally they spoke excellent English, which was most convenient as we have no Spanish. They were very good company.

Guggenheim Museum

That was the end of the rally. But a bus was fixed for next day to take a good number of participants to the Guggenheim museum. This is an extraordinary building, well known throughout the world and well worth seeing. The exhibitions were a mixed bag. An amusing display of huge curved steel sheets filled one hall. An exhibition of the best of Russian art of all sorts from each of the last seven centuries was good to see, but induced saturation too easily. We came back to the boat by metro. Bilbao has been transforming itself from a city dominated by dirty heavy industry into a modern clean city. There is still much to rebuild, but there is much to do and see now.

Bilbao was the furthest point of this cruise. On 1st July we motored out of the enormous harbour and tried to sail eastwards. After a couple of hours, with rising headwind, we retreated to Plencia. This bay was wonderfully peaceful and sunny when we anchored in the eastern side of the bay. There were many other yachts and a crowded beach. But it proved to be a real googly. In the late afternoon the wind came from the northwest straight into the bay at 20 knots. Almost all other yachts decamped rapidly. After moving twice we found a mooring with just enough depth, just sufficiently sheltered from the swell in the northeast corner of the bay behind a short sea wall. This little calm area was the only place where a jet-skier

would practise his fast turns for a very noisy and wash-making couple of hours. The wind came at us from every direction. Thunder and heavy rain followed. It included some 20 minutes of fierce hail with hailstones up to 12 mm across. It sounded as if all sorts of damage was being done to the deck and was extremely noisy.

After the violence we had a quiet night. There were no visible effects of the hail. We left with no wind and hazy visibility of about two miles. For part of the way to Getaria we motor-sailed, occasionally seeing the coast. The engine ran for all of the eight hours until we were alongside a big ketch in Getaria. There the Capitania issues a card for a deposit, which allows access to the showers in the same block. A huge new fish-processing plant between it and the harbour has overwhelmed the yacht club. This is a very lively, strongly "Basque-independence" town with much social life. All along this coast all the local boats fly Basque flags. Many boats also fly Spanish flags. So the etiquette is very political. It varies widely from place to place and is quite unpredictable for any visiting yacht. Getaria is a good place to see the life of this part of Spain.

St Jean de Luz

From Getaria we motored in grey mist over a slight sea which made *Twayblade* roll. We came to St Jean de Luz and anchored southeast of the marked channel to Socoa beaches and the sailing school. We went ashore for French supplies and spent a pleasant evening on board. Before we could leave on 4th July we had to free the chain from a serious obstruction. The anchor was free to lift on the tripping line, but the chain was caught under the edge or corner of some obstruction. We did get free after various manoeuvres but it took half an hour. The obstruction is $\frac{1}{4}$ cable south of the buoyed channel from the main channel to the centre beach of the sailing school, and close to the 3m mark on the plan in the Pilot (p41). It is extremely unyielding, so it is not chain or cable.

After that adventure we sailed part of the way to Capbreton in a light headwind which became a stronger northerly. The approach to Capbreton looked formidable and the strong ebb tide made it interesting. However once in the huge marina all became good. There were plenty of free places to go alongside close to the entrance. People at the office were very friendly; a bottle of local wine was among the gift pack. Better still was the laundrette and showers across the road and the fish market at the top of the pontoon. The capitainerie building was being re-built. This place has all a visitor could want except that the big supermarket is a long walk beyond the range of the marina ferry.

We spent two nights at Capbreton. We left early on 6th July with the plan to stop at Arcachon. As we left on the ebb tide we met extremely heavy breaking waves at the entrance and were probably lucky not to hit the bottom. To get away was pure hard motoring; there is much merit in having a somewhat over-powerful engine. We set sail at 08.10 and sailed well for four hours. The wind shifted and we used the engine from time to time. Unlike during the passage south the visibility was good. We passed the entrance to Arcachon at 18.45, but there was a two-metre swell and we would have had to wait for four hours for fairly safe entrance, so we went on overnight again.

I have little but memory to rely on for the next 24 hours. When making a passage with few features other than changing numbers in the GPS very few entries are made in the written log. As electronic navigation increases as a proportion of the effort, more of it seems to be carried in my head rather than on paper. Even details of wind and visibility do not get recorded.

While sailing at night Joy and I work two-hour watches. This pattern just allows some good sleep. In the morning the

beach was still there. Around midday we passed the Gironde gently motor-sailing. The weather gradually became benign, warm and sunny. Rounding the north end of Ile d'Oléron was wonderful; at last we could sail in quietness. We made our way to the marina at Minimes close to La Rochelle. The channel approaching La Rochelle is not deep but we saw a minimum of 3m. close to low water neaps (French coefficient 47). This huge marina was so over-crowded that we could only berth outside a big Bavaria yacht on pontoon 6. Our draft of 1.8 metres was a tight limitation in that marina even at neap tides! But the organisation of berthing was well done by the girl and the computer in the arrivals office.

France lose to Italy

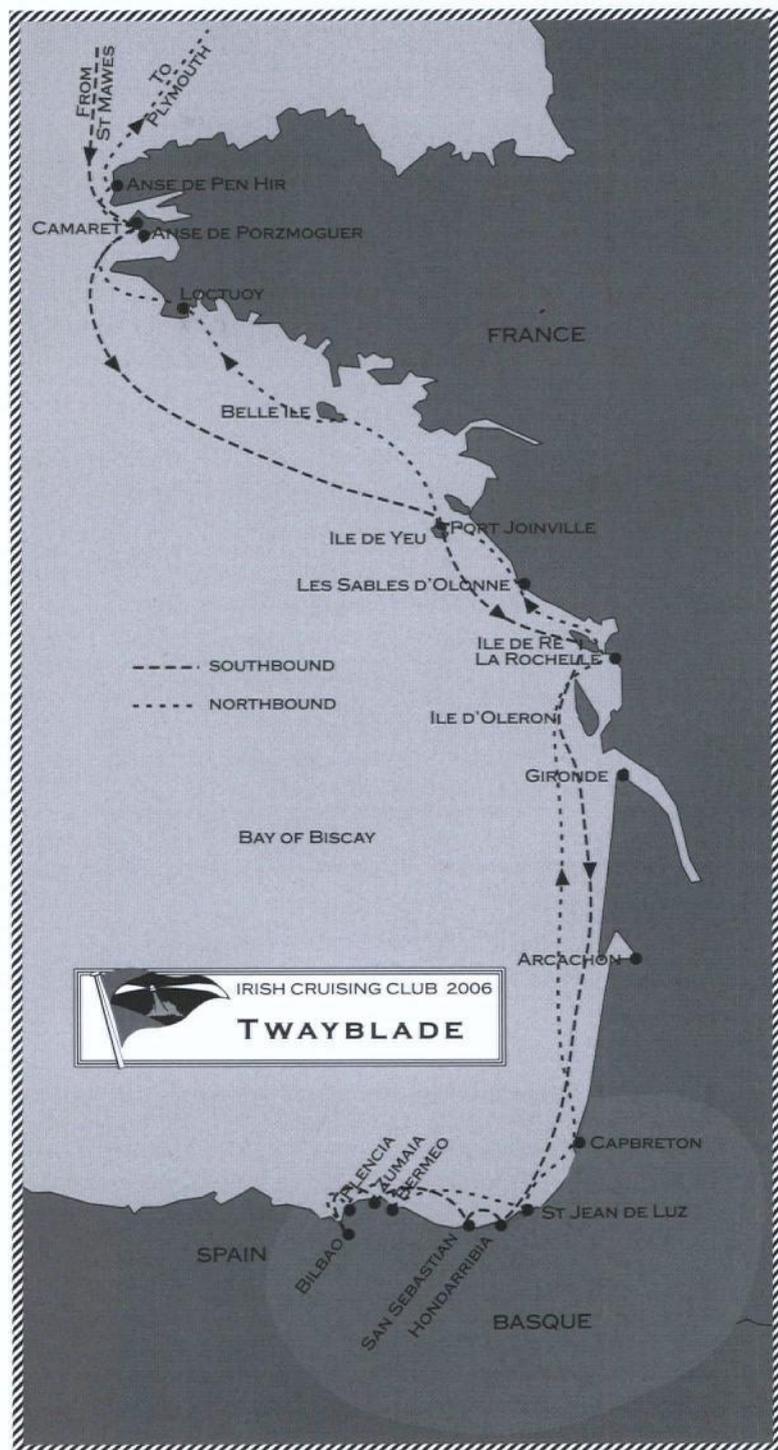
We spent 8th July in the company of some French friends who have a holiday house on Ile de Ré. We went to them by bus rather than risk a messy entrance and crowd at the harbour at St Martin de Ré. They drove us to several little ports and places on this holiday island during a very happy day. The next morning was spent in servicing engine, sails and rigging. This was made easier by the presence of major chandleries at the east side of the marina, about 15 minutes walk from the pontoons. After noon we sailed and motor-sailed and motored to Les Sables d'Olonne taking eight hours of mixed progress due to variable, light and nearly contrary wind. I booked into the marina during the World Cup final between France and Italy. I was hardly noticed as we were allocated a berth at the furthest end of the extended marina. Two hours later there was a deathly hush all over France after they had lost to Italy.

At this stage of the cruise we 'marina-hopped' rather like caravanning along the coast. Almost all possible places where one might have anchored thirty years ago seem to be covered by marinas full of glaring white anonymity. Other than with the ICC we saw only four burgees during more than five weeks. One was RYS, one was RCC and two were Clyde Cruising Club. Also the small number of lovely French yachts of traditional design we would have seen ten years ago has diminished to invisibility in the avalanche of tired designs.

From Les Sables d'Olonne we motored over a flat sea to Ile de Yeu. It was sunny and we read or sun-bathed while electric Charlie (auto-pilot) and the engine did the work. The noise of 1500 rpm was the only flaw. We could just see patches of civilisation like pustules on the black and golden coast at the horizon. The wind came from all directions, according to the instrument recording the pitch and roll of the boat. We made most of the wind as we went. Earlier we had headwind of 2.5 knots and were making 5 knots of that!

I wrote a lament for the cruising in South Brittany. The charm of anchorage and village has gone. Most of it vanished under dispossession by mass access to shiny white plastic and the seaside. The ports still have Café du Port and Bar des Pêcheurs. Now they each have a dozen inseparable restaurants and places of attraction for bored visitors. Each place has one goal in mind; asset stripping the flocks of two-legged ants in exchange for mediocre, forgettable services

We spent three nights in Port Joinville. One day was spent simply being stopped in a nice place, with the alternative of facing a contrary wind. The fabled fish shop is amazing. The next day had the same unhelpful wind so we hired bicycles. The



whole distance around the island is about thirty kilometres. So we sought invisible archaeology, medieval castles, pretty ports and the sights of a pleasant island. And we had some gentle but greatly missed exercise, much of it off tarmac.

Difficult departure

Our departure from Port Joinville was difficult. The wind, the short pontoons and the close lee shore combined to make trouble. We escaped without too much damage to any party and with somewhat bruised ego. For most of 13th July we beat to Belle Ile, just not pointing high enough to fetch directly. We anchored in the company of several other yachts in Port en Dro, just south of the eastern tip of Belle Ile.

14th July gave us the best day's sail of the cruise. The wind was variable but no further forward than the beam. In the hot

hazy afternoon we hoisted the spinnaker and made rapid progress in a light breeze. We came to Loctudy, were met by a boatman and seen into a berth. This being 14th July we expected local celebrations, so we walked into the town and found a small restaurant. By the time we came out the fireworks were finished, unlike my previous presence of the same date in 1974. On that occasion I had anchored in an almost empty estuary (no moorings or marina then), and the fireworks were enhanced by a couple of yachts' out-of-date pyrotechnics. One of these had whizzed around the anchorage at masthead height.

From Loctudy we motored, with occasional help from a sail, on a nearly glassy sea. When we were a few miles south of the Raz de Sein the wind returned at 20 knots from 020° T a most unhelpful direction. The tide carried us through the Raz into a rough patch during which a tear appeared in the genoa. Having escaped from the rough patch we motored straight into the wind to Anse de Pen Hir against a lumpy irregular sea. This bay provides good shelter from east through north to northwest. Several other yachts were there all shearing about on their anchors.

Navtex springs to life

The tides were awkward for going north. We left at 06.50, went between most southerly Tas de Pois and took the last of the north-going tide past Pointe St Matthieu to Anse de Porzmoguer. This was an idyllic bay with calm and sunshine, as the weather had been all morning. Another yacht with a burgee was there. It was going south and left an hour after we dropped anchor at 08.25. After three weeks of blank the Navtex suddenly sprang into life and gave us a full forecast although about 12 hours out of date.

At 13.45 on 16th July we set off to cross the channel. We motored for all but three and a half hours out of the 31 hours it took to reach Plymouth. There were two events to note. Joy was

on watch during the night when we came to a place where seven ships were to be watched as we crossed a shipping lane. Most, but not all, were clearly going to miss us. But to keep track of all of them was becoming difficult as they were quite close together. I came on watch to see a potentially difficult situation developing. At that moment our new AIS Radar was worth its weight in gold. It instantly revealed the fact that one of the ships was probably a rogue and was quite likely to run us down. We avoided it and I am sure it never saw us and would never have changed course. Notably it was clear that all the ships were broadcasting as required for the AIS Radar to work effectively.

The second event in mid channel was different, but parallel. At 12.00 on 17th July we were sailing slowly and a large vessel, I suspect a new cruise ship on trials, approached. It came on a course relative to us likely to pass very close. As we had sails set with which it was not easy to tack, the dilemma arose about what to do. It appeared to slow, perhaps to allow us to pass ahead of it, but that was extremely uncertain. The ship, "Constellation - Celebrity Cruises" was definitely not broadcasting AIS radar information. And it caused us much trouble. During the afternoon we sailed slowly back to Plymouth over a calm sea.

We anchored in Barn Pool. This is almost a home base for us. We went up the Tamar River to our mooring on 17th July having gone 1198 miles in 290 hours at sea, of which 55% was with engine.

Twayblade was built in 1961 by Harry King & Sons at Pinmill to design of Alan Buchanan. She is 32 ft overall, a Bermudan sloop and has Volvo Penta MD11C engine. She was partly rebuilt in 1982 by John Hill under supervision of Ian Nicholson. The electronic revolution has gradually invaded her, but the rest remains very simple and some of it elegantly old-fashioned.



ICC at Hondarribia

Photo: Joy Virden

Crackerjack's wanderings around West Cork

Alan Markey

Combining our annual holiday and our first family cruise was always going to be a very delicate balancing act. My two girls, six and eight years of age, are full of enthusiasm, but little sailing experience bar hops around Dublin Bay and overnights on a marina. My wife Helen, who has sailed on and off over the last few years would not class herself as a competent sailor and was anxious about spending most of her holiday in such a confined space. We decided that the best plan would be to sail to a base, which allowed the girls to spend time with cousins and friends, then, after the relations had gone home, we would spend some time cruising.

Crackerjack is a Bavaria 31 which we purchased at the beginning of 2005. We previously owned cruiser racers, which inevitably became more racer cruisers and were hardly used for cruising at all. She is a very comfortable with good accommodation for her size and is well equipped for our requirements.

The sailing plan was essentially in three parts 1) make the passage to Schull, 2) cruise around part of West Cork, and 3) have a leisurely sail back to Howth. This is what transpired:

On July 6th, leaving Howth for Schull at 08.30 we had a reasonable forecast of a southwest 2 to 4, which should have meant a fetch down the Irish Sea. The crew consisted of myself, my father Jimmy Markey (ICC), Frank Dillon and his wife Dee. Frank and I have completed a number of Fastnets and Round Irelands together with Kieran Jameson on *Changeling* and he is great company on board. Dee had never done a long passage before, but had done some day sailing.

We carried the tide to Wicklow but unfortunately the wind was not from the southwest, but was right on the nose. Up to



L. - r.: Erica, Helen and Aoife en route to Baltimore



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Three generations leaving Kinsale. Jimmy, Erica and Alan

this point, we had motored as the wind was light and the sea calm. On route to Wicklow, we saw two large racing yachts competing in the Round Ireland race and given the size of the boats, I am sure that they would have expected to have finished a day or so earlier.

At Wicklow Head, the wind picked up and we started to slam into the waves, so we hoisted the main and motor-sailed. Still slamming and making little progress, we unfurled the jib and switched off the motor, which was more comfortable than motor-sailing.

While we tacked past the Head our progress was extremely slow and we decided to furl the headsail and switch back on the motor. With all these sail changes we forgot the 12 o'clock rule and did not get a beer till nearly 13.00. For the rest of the afternoon we plugged the tide while the wind strengthened from the south.

At 20.00 the tide was again in our favour and we rounded the Tuskar at 23.00. True to form the wind almost simultaneously veered into the west and was quite gusty. Dee and I were

on watch; considering the conditions Dee was doing well for her first overnight passage.

At about 11.30 next morning, Jimmy woke me to say that the engine was losing power. This had happened a bit earlier and they applied the five minute rule, in which time it rectified itself. This time it didn't. We cut the engine and sailed into a 20 knot westerly wind with a reefed main and jib. Fortunately, it was very bright and sunny so the sailing conditions were favourable although we were making slow progress. With *Crackerjack* being a light to medium weight boat, getting the sail balance right is very important. A little too much sail and she will lose control by pinching into the wind and too little she will not point well. All in all, beating is not the boat's favourite point of sailing and particularly, in anything over 20 knots.

The engine needed to be checked, so we headed for Crosshaven. We rang Donal McClement (ICC) who kindly put us in touch with Hugh Cassidy, a local mechanic who would check our engine when we got to Crosshaven.

Out of fuel!

In the meantime, we tried to find out what the problem was. The fuel gauge suggested that we could have run out of fuel. The tank carries 90 litres and this gives about 40 hours motoring at 2200 rpm in normal conditions. Even though we had only motor-sailed for about 28 hours we thought the consumption may have been higher given the lumpy sea conditions and the fact the wind was on the nose all the way. In any event, I did not believe that we were out of fuel, and thought that a more likely explanation was that as the boat heeled, some dirt from the bottom of the tank may have blocked the filters. The engine had only recently been serviced and the filters were replaced, so this seemed to be the most logical explanation. I put the reserve fuel into the tank which made little difference on the fuel gauge, which was more a function of the angle of the boat rather than a lack of fuel. While I was confident that there was more than sufficient fuel to get us to Crosshaven, I decided to continue sailing and motor into the marina. None of us were mechanically minded and would not have been able to change the filters if needed. I did not relish the prospect of sailing on to the Marina at Crosshaven particularly as it would have been a beat against the tide. Fortunately we were spared that ordeal, and arrived safely at 19.30, 35 hours after leaving Howth.

On arrival at the R.C.Y.C. we had a fantastic barbeque which was just what was required. Later that evening, we were joined by some more Howth boats who came into Crosshaven, as the weather had deteriorated.

Hugh Cassidy arrived early on Saturday morning and gave the engine the all clear. It appears that our problem was an air block due to a lack of fuel going into the engine as a result of the boat's heeling angle. We refuelled and planned to leave at 10.00.

Our plan was still to get to Schull and return to Dublin by train for work on Monday morning, however, it was looking less likely. The forecast was for a westerly force 6 backing to a strong gale from the south or southeast which made staying put the preferred option. However, we could not leave the boat in Crosshaven, as Cork Week was about to start. We decided to head for Kinsale and leave the boat there for the week. Even if we had been able to get to Schull the forecast for the next few days was for strong winds from the south and I felt *Crackerjack* would be safer in the shelter of Kinsale marina rather than on an exposed mooring in Schull.

It took 3½ hours to get to Kinsale in miserable conditions with 30 knots of wind on the nose (again) and heavy rain. After showers we had a late lunch in the Kinsale Yacht Club, and were joined again by some more boats seeking shelter from the

weather. We had a fantastic meal in Max's Bistro and Frank got some bubbly to celebrate Dee's first offshore passage. It was a great achievement for Dee; she revelled in the adventure that would have put lesser mortals off sailing for life. It was not the best advertisement for sailing in Ireland.

On Sunday morning we got a taxi back to Cork and returned to Dublin by train.

The following Friday evening the family arrived in Kinsale by car. Holiday fever was in the air. I hoped the delivery trip was not a sign of things to come. Jimmy, with my mother Marie, had arrived earlier that day. After a nightcap in the yacht club we headed to the boat to get some sleep. Erica who had just finished a mini sailing course was determined to sail to Schull with us, while Helen and Aoife would go by car.

The next morning Jimmy, Erica and I left Kinsale at 09.30 in beautiful sunshine, with a light south to southeast breeze. We motored the whole way as the wind was very light. We spent most of the trip trying to keep Erica entertained because we got the dreaded "are we there yet?" even before we had passed the Old Head. She was given the role of navigator and constantly watched the plotter telling us when we were off course. She then found her new CD "Hits for Kids" which we listened to repetitively from Galley Head to Schull. It was worth it to keep her happy.

In glorious weather, we passed through Gascanane Sound then between Middle and East Calf Island into Schull harbour. As we entered the harbour, an alarm went off and in the panic we assumed the engine was overheating, but quickly realised it was a PAN PAN alarm from the DSC which I had not heard before.

By 17.30 we had secured *Crackerjack's* mooring and were heading to shore. In the dinghy we had one very proud Grandfather completing the first passage with both Son and Granddaughter.

Stunning weather

Over the next week we used *Crackerjack* primarily to ferry children, aunts, uncles and grandparents to Crookhaven, Baltimore, Cape Clear and Castle Island for picnics, lunches and playing on the beaches. A house was rented for the week, to ensure that neither Helen nor the kids suffered from boat fatigue. The weather for this week was stunning, with temperatures reaching the late 20s and one day peaking to 30°C. This was West Cork at its best and would have been ideal cruising weather, but unfortunately, there were too many people, so the boat was turned into a floating kids club for the week.

As we said goodbye to cousins and the comfort of the house, the sky seemed to cloud over, or was that just our imagination. We packed up provisions for the boat and headed over with the girls. On board we got ourselves sorted and then decided to head back to Schull on the dinghy. Conditions in the harbour had changed and the choppy sea decided to teach us a lesson, which resulted in four dripping wet Markeys arriving on the pontoon. Thankfully a bag of clothes had been left in the car, so a quick change in the car park was the order of the day. Valuable lesson learnt, always wear wet gear when in dinghy.

Sleeping arrangements was the next big issue to be tackled. Over the next few nights we played what can only be described as musical bunks. Everyone slept in a different bunk every night, "because she fell out of that one", "she kicked me in that one", "there wasn't enough room in that one", etc. etc. After about five nights we got it right.

On Monday 24th July we said goodbye to Schull and headed to Baltimore. The weather was overcast but the trip went smoothly. Tying up to the pontoon in Baltimore proved to be one of the rockiest nights we had. Helen did not sleep, which

made the start of the next day very delicate. We left Baltimore on Tuesday at 11.30 and headed out of the harbour towards Glandore. The conditions on the passage were windy, creating a chop in the sea. We harnessed the girls into the cockpit, but Aoife was very unhappy and tension was in the air. Helen was on full-time child watch, as Aoife made all the signs of getting sick. While Helen nursed Aoife the sea-sick bug transferred itself to her. I had visions of the cruise finishing in Glandore. To steady the boat we unfurled the jib, which increased the speed by an extra knot. After the Stags everything settled down and Helen took the helm and brought us safely into Glandore. Thankfully we were all smiling by the time we arrived. We enjoyed a wonderful dinner in the Glandore Inn and walked up to Casey's for a nightcap. On deck in our sleeping bags we relaxed with the "Children of Lir" book and decided it had been a good day.

Wednesday was to be the longest passage, Glandore to Kinsale. We dropped the mooring at 07.30 and hoped that it would be an hour or so before the children woke, but within seconds they were up. Huge black clouds on the horizon meant Erica and Aoife put on their wet gear over pyjamas. The glamour of sailing! With the family safely tucked in under the sprayhood, I took the helm and got wet. What a Dad will do to ensure the family will enjoy cruising. Half an hour later and rounding Galley Head the rain disappeared and everything dried up. Breakfast was being called for, so I worked the galley while Helen helmed to the Old Head of Kinsale.

The kids finally got dressed as we rounded the Old Head and we arrived at the Marina at 14.00. This was the longest time spent at sea by the Markey family and definitely the maximum bearable. We were all "Old Maid" and "I Spied" out by the time we arrived in Kinsale. Ice-cream all round when finally tied up.

The logistics of this trip meant we had left the car in Schull, so I had to make my way back to collect it. This trip consisted of a bus to Cork City, another bus to Skibbereen and a taxi to Schull. I did ring a taxi company in Kinsale and got a price from Kinsale to Schull, but decided the money could be used better in Fishy Fish Café, and it was. On my return, the kids had scrubbed the decks and tidied up. The girls had caught some crabs which they kept in a bucket, but found out how the food chain works when they put the fish they caught into the same bucket. Crabs eat fish. They weren't impressed with the wildlife and threw the contents of the bucket back into the sea.

The remaining few days in Kinsale were spent playing on the marina or in the dinghy while the evenings were spent sampling the gastronomic delights of the gourmet capital.

The final part of the holiday was returning *Crackerjack* to Howth. Helen and the girls returned by car. For the sail back I was joined by Brenie Connor (ICC) and again by Jimmy. The forecast was for south to southwest 6-8 with heavy showers. We had a quick crew meeting in the yacht club and decided to leave for Crosshaven. We left Kinsale at 15.00 and headed for the Bulman. We hoisted a reefed main under the lee shore and quickly made our way towards Crosshaven with a fresh south-westerly breeze. It was a great sail with beautiful sunshine and clear skies. On arrival at Roches Point we were escorted into the harbour

by four very playful dolphins. It was a pity the kids were not on board to see this as they had not seen a dolphin in the previous two weeks. That evening we had a great meal in Royal Cork Yacht Club and returned to *Crackerjack* for a nightcap.

At 07.00, after a quick breakfast we left Crosshaven for Kilmore Quay. The forecast was for south-southwest force 4-6 with heavy showers. With a reefed main we made great progress towards Kilmore. However the sea was again very lumpy and it was quite difficult to steer a consistent course. Just past the entrance to Waterford harbour, during a change of helm, we had a sudden involuntary gybe which resulted in the mainsheet ripping out the gear throttle. Fortunately, the engine was still in gear, but only at 700 rpm. We got out the manual and with some lashing managed to rig a jury throttle system, but could not go below 700 rpm or take the boat out of gear. After a review of options we decided to continue to Kilmore, despite the less than ideal conditions for entering the harbour.

Due to restricted manoeuvrability, we entered the harbour with fenders and lines on both sides and aimed for the hammerhead on the marina. As we approached the marina the outside boat which we intended to tie along side started to leave. We had too much way on to come alongside any other part of the marina, so we decided to motor into the wind to reduce speed (hopefully) and tie alongside the trawlers. Once we were alongside and had secured a spring we immediately cut the engine.

As soon as we were tied up, the harbour master told us that we had to move because the trawlers would be leaving early the next morning. Once we explained our difficulties he was very sympathetic and gave us the mobile number of the local Marine Engineering Company. The engineer told us that he could do nothing that evening, but promised to have a look at it on Monday morning. We then got changed and headed to the 'Silver Fox' for dinner.

True to his word, the engineer arrived at 09.30. He dismantled the lever, took the bits back to his office to either fix or replace the broken parts. Unfortunately, it was not possible to fix, so he showed us how to use the cable rods without the actual gear lever. While this was a bit cumbersome it was sufficient to get us home.

By this time we had missed the tidal gate and decided to have lunch in Keogh's, and leave on the evening tide. Luck was still not on our side, as the whole town was without electricity for the day, so the choices for lunch were very limited. At 19.30 we left Kilmore and made our way across Patrick's Bridge and



Crackerjack's crew take a break in Crookhaven

around Carnsore Point. The forecast was for southerly 5 to 6 veering west overnight.

We caught the flood tide at Carnsore and carried it almost to Wicklow Head. We were in the lee of the land, which made the sea very flat as we made our way up the coast. However, as soon as we got to Bray Head we got the forecasted weather with a westerly wind gusting over 30 knots. Fortunately the rain kept off, until just outside Howth, we had a huge squall with over 40 knots of wind and rain that came at us sideways. Thankfully, it only lasted a few minutes.

Di Gleadhill sends this account of a day at sea, which is excerpted from an upcoming book on the author's travels in Kamchatka, published by Odyssey Books & Guides, www.odysseypublications.com

Diana Gleadhill writes of Avacha Bay, Kamchatka

Avacha Bay is stunningly beautiful. A huge natural harbour on Kamchatka's pacific coast, surrounded by mountains and volcanoes. We were spending a gorgeous day after a rather sleepless night. It was sunny, warm and calm, so off we went for a day at sea. The visibility was perfect and we could see the two great cones of the volcanoes, Koryakskaya and Avachinskaya which last erupted in 1991. These two volcanoes tower over Petropavlovsk to the north only about 30 kilometres away, while south of the bay stands the perfect cone of Viljuchinskaya. The town itself, as far as we could see, didn't have one redeeming feature. No one seems to notice, or care about the pot-holed streets filled with rubbish and rusty iron bits. Half-finished – or started – buildings augment the appalling drab, crumbling housing blocks, the residents of which fear earthquakes much more than the threat of nearby volcanic eruptions. It was, to our eyes, a most unattractive town in the most fabulous setting.

We went down to the harbour where there was a boat waiting to take us off for the day. Some Japanese had joined us who thought they had the boat to themselves, and had brought along three young, rather pathetic, prostitutes! We fairly mucked up their plans, and boy they let us know it by being downright rude. Nothing daunted, we set off in the neat little fishing boat with a lovely, very friendly captain, bringing far more helpers than we could really have needed, all obviously taking the opportunity for a sunny day's free outing. We picked our way past two small yachts and an assortment of rusted hulks. Old, holed rowing boats on the beach, and piles of chain, scrap-iron and sundry abandoned items were the remains of what passed for Petropavlovsk's yacht club.

We made our way out to the open sea drinking Russian cognac with our driver, and exchanging stories. The coastline here is rocky and wild with some extraordinary high rock

We were tied up on the marina in Howth at 12.30 after a slightly longer trip home than we expected.

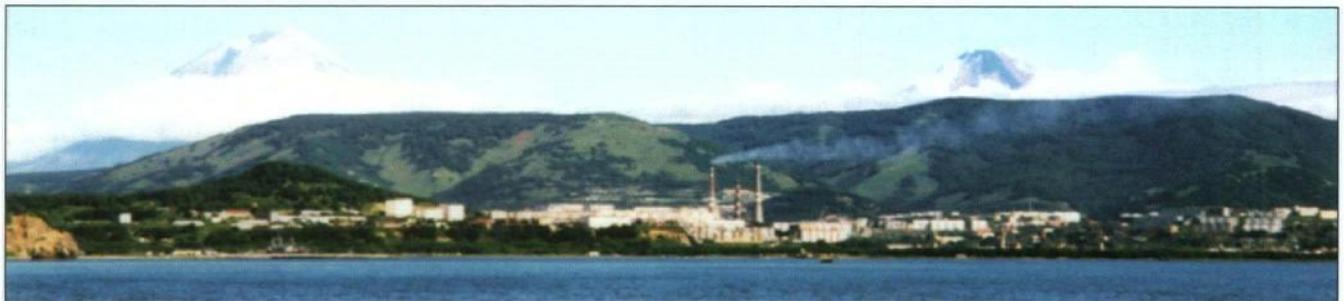
Every aspect of the trip was a great experience. The primary reason for the trip, the family holiday paid off, it's on the agenda for next year. I also learnt a huge amount about *Crackerjack* and the mechanics of the boat and feel far more confident now. All I can say is thankfully none of the complications experienced on board happened during the family part of the holiday, otherwise we might not be doing it again too soon.

formations standing up out of the sea which have been given such names as "The Three Brothers", "The Devils Finger" and "Three Granny Stone". Trawling up and down the coast, we started fishing, with Elise and me both managing to catch fish, as did some of the crew. Needless to say the grumpy Japanese had their thoughts on other pastimes. We saw loads of cormorants, puffins, gulls and masses of grey and bearded seals, then to our huge delight, on top of a high rocky stack, we spied a pair of sea eagles with, so far as we could see, at least one chick in their nest.

When the captain decided we had enough fish we motored off, and proceeded to a little beach of black sand at Tikhaje Bay, where, the water being so deep, we were able to get close enough in to go ashore, along a gang-plank from the stern of the boat to the beach. A fire was built and on it we cooked a delicious sort of bouillabaisse. Everyone mucked in and helped, with the little local girls giggling and chattering to everyone. By this time even the Japanese had become resigned to our being around, and were being a little bit friendlier, even having the odd bit of conversation with us.

What a lovely day we had. On the way back to harbour we both had a go at steering the boat, letting our imaginations run wild as we watched the Japanese gents take it in turns to go below with the girlies. I understand that nowadays the Japanese make a habit of taking group holidays to Eastern Russia, Vladivostok in particular, in order to enjoy the pleasures of the local prostitutes!

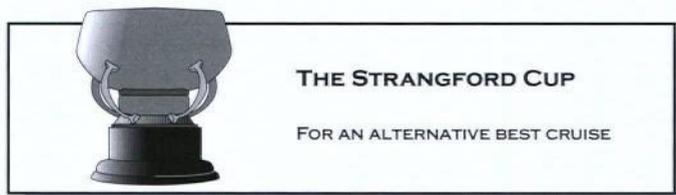
On our return to the hotel, we decided to have a quiet libation in our room before facing the uncertainty of our evening meal. However, amazingly and totally illogically, the keys are kept on unnumbered locks in the lobby, so it's wey-hey, happy-go-lucky-dip time when you go to collect your key. The local handyman was called and he tried to open the door using the same key, unsurprisingly to no avail. Eventually we had one handyman, the girl from the dining-room and the manageress all standing round giving advice. I vacillated from total irritation to finding the whole pantomime hysterically funny. Finally, someone had the brilliant idea of trying some of the other keys until we found one that fitted and put a blue elastic band on it. Maybe it will be there tomorrow and maybe it won't!



Petropavlovsk with Avache and Koryatskaya volcanoes

North Atlantic Motor Cruising to Iceland, Faroe and some Festive Islands

James Nixon



In 2004 we sailed north to Iceland, Jan Mayen and Svalbard in an attempt to follow the route taken by Lord Dufferin in 1856 as described in "Letters from High Latitudes". In 2005 we returned from Norway and *Scilla Verna* underwent a major refit. My obsession with Lord Dufferin persisted however, and as 2006 was the 150th anniversary of his voyage in the *Foam*, we should mark this in some appropriate way, preferably in Iceland. As we planned our voyage, the Royal Cruising Club also gave me the task of organising a celebratory "Meet" and encouraging as many cruising people as possible to join us.

Lord Dufferin was arguably the first truly amateur yachtsman to go cruising in northern latitudes, but he is also remembered fondly by the Icelandic people. He helped to describe Iceland in the mid-19th century to an avid Victorian audience. His book appeared in many editions and translations.

In addition he became the second Governor General of Canada in the 1870s at a time when famine was causing great distress in Iceland. He helped many Icelanders to settle in Canada, and there is still an Icelandic speaking community, with its own newspaper, near Winnipeg.

Scilla Verna came through her refit successfully, though, as is often the case, she was launched a few weeks late, and we did not actually get out for a sail until the day of our departure from Bangor on Saturday 24th June 2006. The first part of the cruise was as far as Stornoway. This has proved to be a suitable place for crew change as there are regular flights. I was joined by my son Alexander and friends Paul Bryans (ICC), John Witchell, Patrick Temple (RCC), and Joe Cosgrove. The latter two are lively Trinity students who lived up to some extent to James Joyce's definition. They became known as the gannets as their appetites were insatiable. Just before leaving Bangor a two-litre tub of Maud's ice-cream (a poisonous-looking mixture of green and vanilla) was devoured by them to my amazement.

We set off on a fine evening and had sailing trials in the middle of Belfast Lough, and then headed north in very light weather, which was to be a feature of the cruise. Under motor we carried the ebb through the North Channel and anchored for breakfast at Craighouse on Jura. Later we went on, in continuing light sunny conditions, motor-

ing along the lovely coastline through the Sounds of Luing and Mull, to pick up a mooring in Tobermory on Sunday evening 25th June.

Paddy went swimming and running, as the rest of the crew shopped and viewed this pretty village that has been transformed by the children's television programme "Balamory". Next day we had much motoring and a little sailing in sunshine through the Sound of Sleat, with the Cuillins spectacular to the west on Skye. That evening we picked up a mooring in Plockton, a delightful spot and my first time there. The following day we had time for walks ashore and then continued north in calm and sunny conditions. We motored to the Summer Isles where we moored in the Cabbage Patch at Tanera Mor. John Witchell knew the owners Bill and Jean Wilder, and we were entertained royally. We walked around the bay as Paddy swam across it. He is as fit as a butcher's dog.

Wednesday 28th June was another calm sunny day and we motored west across the Minch. On the way we saw many NATO warships that had been on exercise, and on radio we overheard one conversation in an American accent which stated "we have hit you with bombs, bullets, missiles and torpedoes and you are sunk. We have superior technology, you are dead. The voices I hear are phantom"! Unfortunately the reply was not audible from the other vessel. We were able to hear remarkable sonic noises through the hull at this stage.

That evening we found our way into the narrow entrance to



John Clementson, Ed Wheeler and cod off northwest Iceland

Loch Mariveg just south of Stornoway. The weather was starting to break at this stage, but we had a fine walk ashore, and later the next day proceeded to Stornoway after some successful mackerel fishing off Loch Erisort.

Friday 30th June was wet and windy and Alexander had to return to London. We were taken on a grand tour of Lewis by friends Bill and Audrey Spiers (RCC). We visited a restored "black house" as well as the Callanish standing stones and the amazing Carloway Broch. John Witchell left us on the Saturday and we were joined by Sally Bryans, Paul Bryans' daughter, fresh from a yachtmaster's course in Australia.

A fresh southerly was blowing all that day and a cold front moved through as we completed our preparations for the leg to Iceland. Lord Dufferin had also used this port on his voyage. We left early the following morning and motored in flat calm for almost 24 hours. I noticed that one of the batteries was overheating and was in danger of boiling. There was an acrid smell probably of hydrogen and sulphuric acid, and a significant risk of fire or explosion. We stopped the engine and exposed the batteries to allow them to cool. Later I was able to contact, by satellite telephone, the electrician who had fitted a new charging system, and we were able to return to the old system by a simple disconnection process. No further problems were encountered, and we later topped up the batteries that had lost a little fluid. Electrical fires on yachts have become more common I gather, and one needs to be careful of monitoring the systems that we install.

At this stage the breeze started to freshen, and we then enjoyed about 48 hours of very brisk sailing in quite strong conditions, fortunately on the port quarter as we sped towards Iceland. Sally was aware that she was now in the North Atlantic, somewhat different from the Great Barrier Reef.

We continued on our course and the rather confused seas settled as we closed the daunting south coast of Iceland. By 04.00 on Thursday 6th July the Westmann Isles were in sight and we arrived in sunshine into the main island Heimaey where we berthed, after just under 100 hours passage, 46 of which were under engine!

Heimaey is a very active fishing town and the shelter was greatly improved by a fortuitous flow of lava about 40 years ago. It almost closed the entrance, but made it even more secure in bad weather. The people are extraordinarily friendly, and I was able to get help in sorting out a problem with the holding tank and a fuel problem with the engine. At one time on the quay we had the dynamic local plumber, a farmer and his mate with tractor, tanker and slurry tank suction equipment, an elderly expert diesel engineer, a manic child who insisted on climbing the rigging, two policemen, one of whom was a locum customs officer, the harbour master and several distinguished RCC members who were en route to the "Meet". We cleared customs for Iceland in a very relaxed manner.

Eventually we left Heimaey heading for Reykjavik on Saturday 8th July, and had some wonderful sailing the following morning. The volcano Hekla was clearly visible with its icecap, as were the spectacular glaciers further east along that coast.

We rounded the Reykjanes Peninsula with spectacular plumes of steam arising in many areas, and we could see a power station ashore as we passed close in. This part of Iceland continues southwards as the mid-Atlantic ridge and marks the junction between the European and American tectonic plates. The Icelanders have learned to capture some of the energy on land from this wonderful natural resource.

At the north end of the peninsula near Keflavik airport we

had a bit of a bumpy ride in a tide rip, and then in a very cold north-easterly we thumped across Faxaflói, the great bay to the west of Reykjavik. The visibility was extraordinary and we were able to see Snaefellsjökull, about 60 miles to the north. This is the icecap on the active volcano that Jules Verne used as the start of the "Journey to Centre of the Earth".

On Sunday evening 9th July we berthed in Reykjavik visitors' harbour and our lines were taken by Anthony Browne, Commodore of the Royal Cruising Club, and others who had already arrived for the party.

Here further changes of crew took place, with John and Ann Clementson (ICC) joining me. Paul and Sally Bryans returned to take part in Cork week. The two splendid young Trinity students Paddy and Joe left me on the Thursday, and the following day I was joined by Ed Wheeler (ICC & RCC), his son James, and nephew Keith Gadd.

Icelandic friends came aboard, including Magnus Jonsson and Geir Gislason, who have helped many cruising people in the past. Egill Kolbeinsson was there too: he was the local organiser of the "Meet" and was able to overcome all problems with apparent ease.

The celebrations to mark Lord Dufferin's voyage started on Wednesday 12th July with a reception at the Presidential Residence, Bessastadir, where we were made very welcome by the President, His Excellency Ragnar Olafur Grimsson. That evening we had a splendid banquet on the Island Vithey close to Reykjavik harbour. Dinner was memorable for the quality of the food and the wine for its extraordinary price.

The following day the visitors (who included Lady Dufferin) enjoyed a coach journey inland to follow the route taken by Lord Dufferin. He bought 26 Icelandic ponies for the purpose. We visited Thingvellir, Geysir and the spectacular waterfall Gullfoss. Back in Reykjavik that evening we were entertained to a reception in the British Embassy. The Ambassador, Alp Mehmet, pointed out that not only was it the 150th Anniversary of Lord Dufferin's voyage but it was also the 30th Anniversary of the end of the Cod War! The Icelanders who were present were tactful enough not to point out the result of that struggle.

We had to abandon plans for a "raft-up" on Saturday 15th July and instead next day we sailed a few miles to the island Therney where local yachtmen helped us have a most enjoyable "raft-up" at which seven RCC boats took part. These included *Assent*, in which the indomitable Willy Ker had sailed single-handed. He is of uncertain vintage, but probably an octogenarian, and the author of the 3rd and latest edition of the Cruising Notes published by the RCC Pilotage Foundation on Faroe, Iceland and Greenland. *Assent* was the smallest boat there but the most visited.

After all the celebrations in Reykjavik we left on Monday 17th July and motored north on a calm, overcast day. We were heading for the Vestfjorder (the west fjords) and our route passed close to Snaefellsnes. The icecap was barely visible in cloud, and we continued across Breithafjörður to our farthest west point at Latrabjarg and then on to Ísafjörður. It was a pity to have to motor all the way along this fine coastline but Ed managed to catch a large saithe and an even bigger cod, and Alexander telephoned with the news that Kate was expecting our fourth grandchild!

John and Ann left us here, taking a bus back to Reykjavik with a detour by ferry to Flatey in Breithafjörður. We discovered that text messages are a very efficient way of keeping in touch as they travelled south.

Thanks to the help of Siggí Jonsson, whom I had met here before, Ed and I were taken fly fishing in the nearby lake. We

were promised arctic char but did not see any. We were delighted to identify some red-necked phalarope. These are extraordinary little waders that swim, and can walk on the lightest of weed on the lake edge.

Later that afternoon we motored in fog across the Ísafjardardjúp and out of fog suddenly into a fine westerly breeze which brought us to the anchorage at Hesteyri. This settlement is normally deserted in winter but in summer the houses are reoccupied for a few weeks. The boys went walking ashore where there appeared to be considerable camping activity. The area north of the Ísafjardardjúp is a national park and the icecap Drangajökull was clearly visible to the southeast from our anchorage.

We set off next day Thursday 20th July to head north and eastwards rounding Straumnes and eventually had some pleasant sailing before a westerly and passed Horn, the most eastern of the headlands in this spectacular peninsula.

We continued eastwards in a very cold wind straight from Greenland, with low cloud and poor visibility. Early the following morning we sailed through a fleet of small fishing boats near Olafsjördur, and turned south into Eyjafjördur. This long inlet leads to Akureyri, the second largest town in Iceland. We opted not to go there and instead berthed at the delightful island Hrisey on the morning of Friday 21st July. This had been a pleasant if cold passage during which we saw minke and orca.

The island was in festival mood as were several islands on this trip. We enjoyed the hot baths and an excellent little jazz band that was playing in the pub. The average age of the players was at least that of Ed and me, and we were invited to dance by the delightful wife of the guitarist. That evening many visitors arrived at the island by ferry. They were met by a fleet of tractors acting as taxis. We spotted some distinguished elderly Fergusons still in good working order: a little touch of Ulster near the Arctic Circle.

The following day my son-in-law James Somerville arrived by air at Akureyri. This is about 20 miles further south and he took a taxi to Dalvik, a little fishing harbour near Hrisey, and we met him there that morning. We were able to take on fuel, water and had our last big Icelandic shopping expedition. I recommend this good harbour with all services close by. Throughout Iceland and indeed the Faroes there is a problem in obtaining diesel from the fishing boat fuelling berths. The local boats all have accounts with the fuel suppliers and we found that our credit cards did not work. Negotiations usually won through in the end, and the quality of the diesel was always excellent.

We then set off northwards in sunshine and in quite thick fog at times, motoring and sailing towards the Arctic Circle. We berthed that evening in the fine little harbour at Sandvik on Grimsey, the attractive island that straddles the Arctic Circle.

On a wonderful clear night near midnight, with the pink sky reflected in the calm sea we walked northwards. A signpost indicates, allegedly, the Arctic Circle. Willy Ker considers that it

is a few yards short of the Circle, but nevertheless we stood on it and looked south to the spectacular north coast of Iceland about 30 miles away. A range of snow-capped mountains stretched to east and west. In the calm conditions we could see shoals of herring appearing on the surface, with large flocks of fulmar, arctic tern and kittiwakes hovering above: quite memorable.

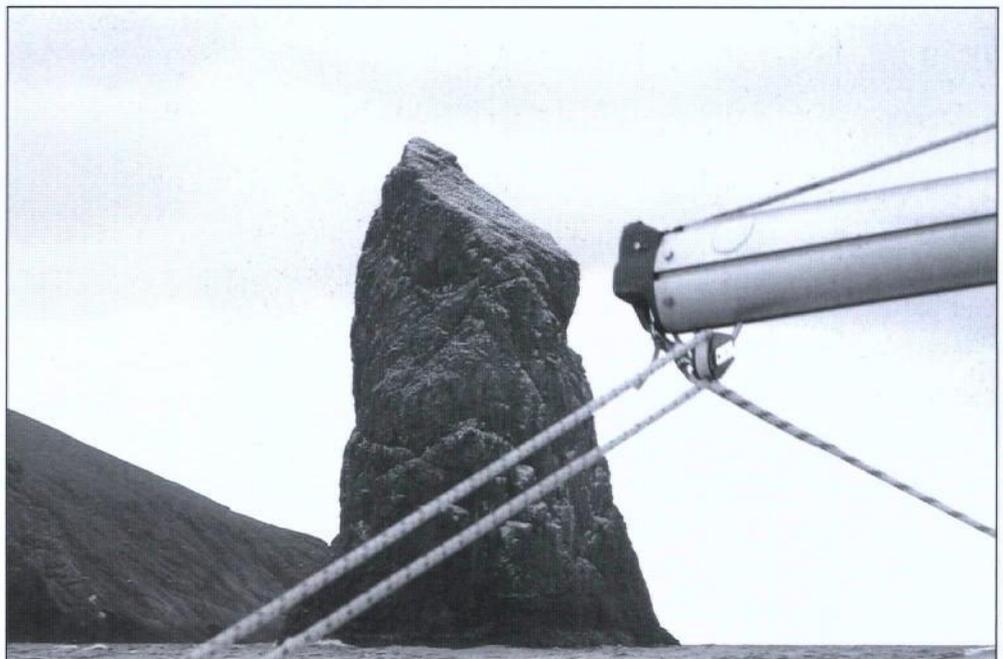
Next day, again in fog, we motored eastwards around Hraunhafnartangi, the most northern headland on the Icelandic mainland, and just to the east is the fine harbour at Raufarhöfn where we berthed for the night. The fog suddenly cleared as we berthed at the visitors' pontoon.

This was our departure point for the Faroes and we left later the next day in very light easterlies, motored out to the end of Langanes, and then came onto course for the Faroes. Despite our optimism, no breeze of any value filled in, and we motored the whole way from Iceland to Faroe.

We berthed in Westmannhavn early on Thursday morning 27th July, 381 miles from Raufarhöfn. We waited for a fair tide in Westmannasund, and later that morning sped south and then northeastwards and berthed alongside the quay in the Vestaravag at Torshavn, the Faroese capital.

We had discovered from "Lonely Planet" that Saturday 29th July is St Olav's day, the national holiday in the Faroe Islands. The partying seemed to start on Thursday 27th. The following day we watched the festivities with bands, choirs, church services and general jollification. Many were dressed in the elegant traditional costume. During the afternoon a great rowing regatta was held, with islands and communities racing against each other in beautiful traditional boats. The crews of oarsmen and women numbered up to ten. The enthusiasm and level of competition was intense and the large crowd ashore was passionate in support.

Sadly we had to leave the following day, Saturday 29th July, and we departed in very thick fog, having discussed the weather forecast with the helpful harbour office. Thankfully visibility improved as we weaved our way southwards, but with a rather poor forecast. We berthed at Tvøroyri in Sutheroy, the most southerly of the Faroes, and were delighted to find the little gaff cutter *Grace* with Patrick Reilly aboard. We had met



The mighty gannet-covered Stac Lee



James Nixon in the plumber's van, Western Islands (Portaloo?)

him in the Westmann Islands on our way to Iceland. He was cruising without any engine or electronics except a small GPS. We were made very welcome by the harbour master, showers were made available in his office, and no charge was made for our stay.

After a gusty night we set off the next day, and attempted to fish at the entrance to the fjord. One small gar was caught which proved to be delicious. "What sort of fish is it, Ed?"



Ann Clementson, Christine Taggart, James Nixon, John Clementson and Sandy Taggart in the Fish Soup Café, Reykjavik

"It's a gar"
"A cigar fish?"

In a confused sea we motored and sailed south past the Munken and Flesjarnar Rocks about 3 miles south of Sutheroy. There was quite a nasty race there despite the light wind. Further south we passed a large oil-rig which appeared to be operating on the edge of the continental shelf. Eventually a northerly breeze filled in and we ran southwards towards St. Kilda.

Our landfall on this group of islands was spectacular from this direction, and we passed close to Boreray and the huge Stac Lee and Stac an Armin. Stac Lee is the largest gannetry in the world and was especially striking with its sloping upper surface white with these beautiful birds. Hirta, the impressive largest island, lay ahead with Soay to the west. We came round to anchor in Village Bay just before noon on Tuesday 1st August, almost exactly two days from Sutheroy, 249 miles covered.

Having read Iain Rutherford's "At the tiller" many times, I had been trying to reach St Kilda for

years so it was a great thrill to arrive there. We anchored on what appeared to be a sandy bottom. The wind was gusting down off Conachair and the other mountains to the northwest but we paid out considerable scope and set the mizzen with a couple of reefs to try to hold *Scilla Verna* head to wind. After a big late breakfast we went ashore and were disappointed to find that the "Puff Inn" is now closed to visitors. Evidently a stag party visited the island last year and caused damage. The

company that now runs the tracking station for the Ministry of Defence have decided that visitors are no longer welcome in the bar. We were able to buy postcards and the St Kilda tie. Ed and the boys went walking and I strolled through the village meeting some of the people involved in restoring a few of the cottages. There is an impressive little museum in one of them. As always the skipper was a little nervous about his vessel in these conditions and I kept her in sight at all times.

Ed identified a St Kildan wren but we did not see any of the indigenous mice. There were many Soay sheep being subjected to genetic analysis by earnest research workers. Great skuas hovered overhead, reminiscent of buzzards in appearance.

We were alone in the bay initially, but a fishing boat from



The crew of *Scilla Verna* overlooking the "Cabbage Patch" at the Summer Isles

Stornoway was working lobster pots in the region, and she spent the night nearby. Later a Polish yacht came into anchor also.

Sadly, we had to leave the next day, and in more pleasant conditions we ran southeast under mainsail and goose-winged genoa towards Barra. This was the best sail of the whole cruise. We sailed very rapidly through the Sound of Barra and berthed alongside the quay in North Bay, Barra in gathering darkness. As we came south we started to notice the onset of shorter nights: autumn was in the air.

Martin Lawrence states that there is a pub at North Bay Barra. We eventually found it after walking for about 2 miles. It would have been quicker to have launched the dinghy and gone across the inlet, as we could see the pub from our berth. The walk was very therapeutic, though we were disappointed not to hear any corncrake, which we had heard were returning to the island. They probably had moved south ahead of us.

The next day we motored and sailed towards Coll and had some successful fishing for mackerel just north of Gunna Sound. We then went along the southeast coast of Coll to Arinagour, where we anchored at the head of the bay.

Ashore, we met university friends of James in the pub, and we found that yet again we had landed on an island celebrating some event which was not clear, but the enjoyment was considerable.

After a quiet night at anchor we woke early to find that the wind had moved to the south. It was raining and the anchorage was becoming uncomfortable. The forecast was not promising and, despite our wish to go west of Mull, I opted for a rapid passage across to the north end of Mull and then south along the Sound of Mull. The day was enlivened by us becoming

involved in a fleet of about 200 yachts, beating south as part of the last race in West Highland Week. In miserable damp conditions we continued motoring all that day and just caught the south-going tide in the Sound of Luing. The forecast continued to be unpromising as we approached Crinan, where the sea-lock was open, and we were beckoned in. It was too tempting, so we berthed for the night in the basin beside the hotel and pub, where we dined well, and slept even better, knowing that dragging was unlikely to occur.

We continued to obtain unpromising forecasts but next day we motored in almost flat calm conditions as far as Gigha. Later that evening we left to catch the south-going flood at the Mull of Kintyre. Despite the forecast of force 5 to 6 we motored in light winds virtually the whole way back to our home port Bangor, where we berthed at 09.00 on Sunday 6th August. We had been away for 6 weeks and a few hours and covered 2415 miles and had 13 nights at sea.

It was a cruise that had several aims, the Lord Dufferin celebration being the important one. I may have at last laid my obsession with this talented man to rest, but he did take *Foam* to the Baltic in 1854...

Cruising the Icelandic coast, and particularly getting out to Grimsey was a great thrill, and the Faroe Islands did not disappoint. The landfall at St Kilda was especially pleasing, but it was a pity that we had to do so much motoring.

As always a good and willing crew is an essential part of any cruise and I was well served this year. I continue to underestimate the considerable energy and appetite of the young. Like Damon Runyon and money, I feel it is good to knock around where youth is in the hope that it may rub off sometime.

The Piccolino Cruise : 2006

From southwest Italy to Corfu and the Greek Mainland

Edi Keating

On Friday 14th July I arrived at Lamezia airport on the southwest coast of Italy, to be greeted by my good friend Len Curtin. The prospect of spending the next couple of weeks cruising on Len and Marys' boat, a Moody 38 called *Chain*, to Sicily, across the "foot" of Italy, and continuing on to Corfu and the Greek mainland, had all the makings of a most interesting and exciting cruise. This cruise would be quite different to my previous couple of years' cruising in Northern Scandinavian waters. Accompanying Len at the airport were Vivienne and Derek White, who had just finished cruising around the north coast of Sicily on *Chain* and, as luck would have it, they had hired a car to continue their holidays exploring this part of Italy. Their kind offer to drive us to Lamezia Marina was most welcome and gratefully accepted.

After a farewell drink with the Whites, *Chain* departed Lamezia Marina and headed south for our first port of call, the marina at Gioia Tauro, which is located in the Gulf of Gioia, and when completed will be one of the largest container ports in Europe.

The afternoon was sunny and with very little wind, motor-sailing, we passed many very interesting hillside villages and manicured vineyards and at around 18.00 we entered the outer basin of the port. We headed for the entrance to the inner basin where the Yacht Club Marina is located. Accessing it is a bit like approaching the entrance to Barlogue in West Cork, difficult to see until you are practically upon it and the presence of a large container boat anchored nearby did not help the situation.

On entering the inner pool we unsuccessfully tried to contact the club on the vhf. Heading for a vacant berth on this small marina, we tied starboard-to and paid a visit to the marina clubhouse to seek permission to stay overnight, only to find the clubhouse locked and nobody around. As the marina is some distance from the town we brewed up while waiting for the marina manager to visit, and had just sat down to our evening meal when a gentleman approached the boat. In very good English he curtly asked us if we were English and that we should not be here as this was a private marina. Len apologised and explained how we had read about the marina in Rod Heikell's *Pilot on Italy* and that we had tried to contact the club on the vhf. He explained that as soon as we had tied *Chain* alongside we had visited the clubhouse only to find it deserted, and by the way we were Irish, not English. At this stage his attitude changed completely, he welcomed us to the marina, informed us that the berth owner was away for the weekend, asked us to fill out a form at our leisure and would 15 euro be alright for the night. After a welcome like that we completed the form, paid our dues and settled down to a pleasant first evening in Italy before preparing for an early start the next morning.

Saturday morning we awoke to a beautiful sunny, cloudless sky, with light northwesterly winds and flat calm seas. At around 07.15 we slipped the marina and headed south under sail for the Straits of Messina, en route to our next anchorage,

under the shadow of Mount Etna in the harbour of Taormina in Sicily.

Rounding Point Perlo at 09.00 in lightening winds, we entered the Straits of Messina made infamous in Homer's "Odyssey". The Straits, lying between Sicily and mainland Italy, is a tidal inland sea between the Tyrrhenian Sea and the Mediterranean Sea, and the continuous movement of tidal waters over the irregular bottom produces "overfalls". This movement creates areas of turbulence with swirling whirlpools and moderately confused seas, even on fine, windless days.

This sea is one of the richest fishing grounds in the Mediterranean, with an abundance of swordfish. En route we passed by a number of swordfish boats at work. I remembered reading about the peculiar swordfish boats with their "spotters" sitting on top of an incredibly high mast, from which location they steer the boat, while down below their harpoonist precariously perches on the end of a long bowsprit. Swordfish sleep during the day and hunt at night thus allowing the swordfish boats to silently approach the sleeping fish and once spotted the harpoon performs its deadly chore.

Lucky with the weather

We were lucky that the weather was calm as the day passed uneventfully. We traversed the Straits, busy with cargo boats and ferry traffic, passing by a number of small whirlpools full of swirling rubbish and horrendous numbers of blue plastic bags, towards the harbour of Taormina in Sicily.

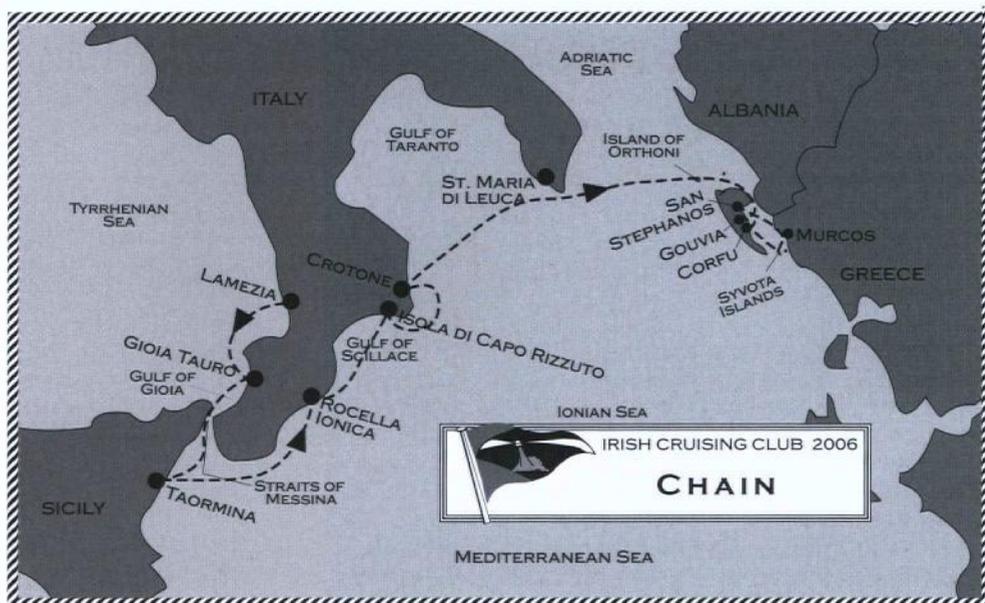
Taormina is located at the foot of Mount Etna. It is a hillside town with an attractive waterfront of restaurants and shops, clustered around a curved pleasant harbour with a spectacular view of the famous volcanic mountain. As the town came into sight, Mount Etna was completely covered by thick cloud. Once anchored we went for a swim in the crystal clear waters before settling down to a tasty risotto, a bottle of fine Italian red and some traditional Irish music. At around 20.00, enjoying our wine and listening to the music, we heard what sounded like flares going off. Looking towards Etna we noticed this strange fire-like light peeking through the now thinning clouds, to discover that the noise we had heard was Mount Etna erupting. Here we were, anchored in Taormina Bay, watching the spectacular show of fireworks and lava pouring down the mountain-side of Mount Etna, providing a magnificent welcome for me on my first night in Sicily. It is at times like this that I wish I had brought my old Practika camera and zoom lens with me instead of the now convenient pocket digital camera.

On Sunday morning at 07.30 we weighed anchor and set sail for the town of Rocella Ionica, located on the toe of Italy. In light northwesterly winds, on a calm sea and a beautiful sunny morning, we left behind us a clear view of Mount Etna with puffs of smoke emanating from its summit, passing by a "sailing" style cruise liner waiting for its passengers to arise and view this spectacular mountain. About an hour or so into our sail we passed by a school of whales off our starboard bow, acrobatically performing for us until we interrupted their performance by changing course. We continued on our heading

for the southernmost tip of Calabria, and our next anchorage in the town of Rocella Ionica, located on the western side of the Gulf of Scillace.

Entering the port of Rocella Ionica the first impression one has is that it is not a particularly fashionable place, however, berthing in this town is free. It seems, to the benefit of the marina dwellers, they could not agree among themselves as to which department should collect the marina fees. Approaching a vacant berth, a rib with two members of the Guardia Costieri aboard insisted that we tie to the quay wall rather than occupy the vacant berth. This request seemed very strange to us at the time, however we certainly were not going to disagree with them and did what they asked. Settling down to a gin and tonic we had a surprise visit from Vivienne and Derek White, and a further surprise when we discovered that the Guardia here have a "sense of humour"; they had put us in the berth of the biggest trawler in port. No argument from us, we moved to the berth we intended *Chain* to occupy in the first place, and finished our refreshments before heading for the very popular restaurant next to the marina. A very pleasant evening of good food and inexpensive wine was spent with Vivienne and Derek in the company of the very loquacious and friendly locals.

After breakfast we bade farewell to the Whites again, and headed for the Gulf of Scillace our next marina in the town of Crotona. As its name refers, the Gulf of Squillace, or the Gulf of Squalls, did not disappoint. We left Rocella Ionica on a cloudy day at about 11.00. In a westerly force 3 wind and a moderate sea we hoisted our sails and entered the Gulf looking forward to a good day's sailing ahead. For the next four hours sailing downwind at 5 to 6 knots *Chain* took on the task as we relaxed with 'auto' on the helm and enjoying a refreshing cup of tea, when all of a sudden the boat stopped dead in the water. We looked up at the sails, which were now shaking violently and the wind that had been driving us had suddenly changed



direction and was now heading us. Len had come across this phenomenon before so the order came to drop the sails pretty sharply and was attended to immediately without question. We powered up before noticing the lines of breakers appearing on the sea and heading rapidly towards us. What was most disconcerting was, not alone were we entering a turbulent and confused sea ahead, but the wind that now headed us was blowing in the opposite direction ashore about three miles away – an amazing sight!

Motor-sailing into a short turbulent sea of 1 to 2 metre high waves and a variable wind is most uncomfortable. For the next five hours in these unpleasant conditions, we made the decision to head for the nearest town of Isola di Capo Rizzuto rather than spend the next 4 to 5 hours in rough seas, high winds and rains. Anchoring in the lee of the land and fatigued from our journey, we decided not to go ashore that evening and settled down to a hearty meal on board. At around 21.00 the wind moderated and the sea calmed, in what was turning out to be a pleasant moonlit night. I made the decision to sleep in the cockpit, under the stars on this beautiful warm night, looking out at the other anchor-light lit boats, the returning trawlers with their catches, the deserted sandy beaches, and with a feeling of being totally at peace with oneself.

The next morning we set out for our original destination, the town of Crotona, which is around 20 miles away from our anchorage. The morning was grey and in a freshening wind we rounded Capo Rizzuto, motoring into a force 6-7 variable wind and a building sea. We spent the next 4 to 5 hours being "tossed about" in 1 to 2 metre waves, with the "odd" higher wave lifting us well out of the water as we headed for the sanctuary of Crotona Harbour. At around noon we entered the calm of the breakwater-sheltered harbour of Crotona and berthed stern-to on the quay marina. For the next 30 hours the wind maintained its strength and the sea refused to calm so we settled down to exploring the town and its hostels.

One of the best restaurants we found was a type of Italian 'tapas' restaurant called Mamma Mia's (what else!), the food was excellent, they spoke very good English, were very friendly and best of all it was exceptionally cheap – a return visit was the order of the day.

Crotona itself is like a lot of towns in this part of Italy, a bit unfashionable and run down, but what it lacks in attractive architecture it makes up for in friendliness and atmosphere. The tradition of Mediterranean townsfolk dressing up at night and promenading along the sea front, meeting family and friends



Len, Mary, Edi and Ann relaxing in Murcos



Leaving Taormina, Sicily with Mt. Etna in background – Edi on helm

for friendly banter or sipping drinks in the many local cafes, is lovely to behold. One never felt threatened at any time, nor did we see any misbehaviour from the many young people sitting about, a most pleasant experience! Even during a visit from Fabio Carnavara, the Italian Captain and World Cup Winner, in his luxurious motor yacht, brought very well-behaved crowds onto the marina, as well as the many different Guardia Departments, army and navy personnel, to welcome their idol to their town. Signore Carnavara generously responded to their hero worship and an altercation with a local trawler when he had occupied the trawler's berth was soon forgotten, and made the trawler skipper famous enough to live on free drinks and meals for the rest of his life – but that is another story.

On Wednesday 19th July the wind moderated and the sea calmed down. This change was predicted by a delivery crew on an adjoining new 45 foot Jeanneau, who were also heading for our next port of call, the port of St Maria di Leuca on the heel of Italy, a distance of approximately 74 miles away across the Gulf of Taranto. At 17.30 we slipped the marina in Crotona and headed east to St Maria di Leuca in the company of our friendly delivery crew and a ketch who accompanied us in our first overnight trip of the cruise.

Although the sea was quite rough later on that night and the wind headed us for the full journey, we passed St Maria di Leuca at 07.00 the next morning. At this stage we made the decision to change course and continue across the Adriatic toward the Island of Orthoni, the northernmost tip of Corfu and the Greek mainland. The forecast for the day was for much the same weather we had for the previous days, moderate to rough seas, force 4 to 5 winds and, as normal for most of this cruise, the wind heading us. Later that afternoon, as the Island of Orthoni came into view, the wind died down and the sea calmed until entering the anchorage to the south of the island, when all hell broke loose. From the hills came this howling wind of around force 8 to 9 making anchoring very difficult. That night shore leave was cancelled for all 14 boats at anchor in the lagoon and the restaurants ashore who depend on the 'boat people' had an early night.

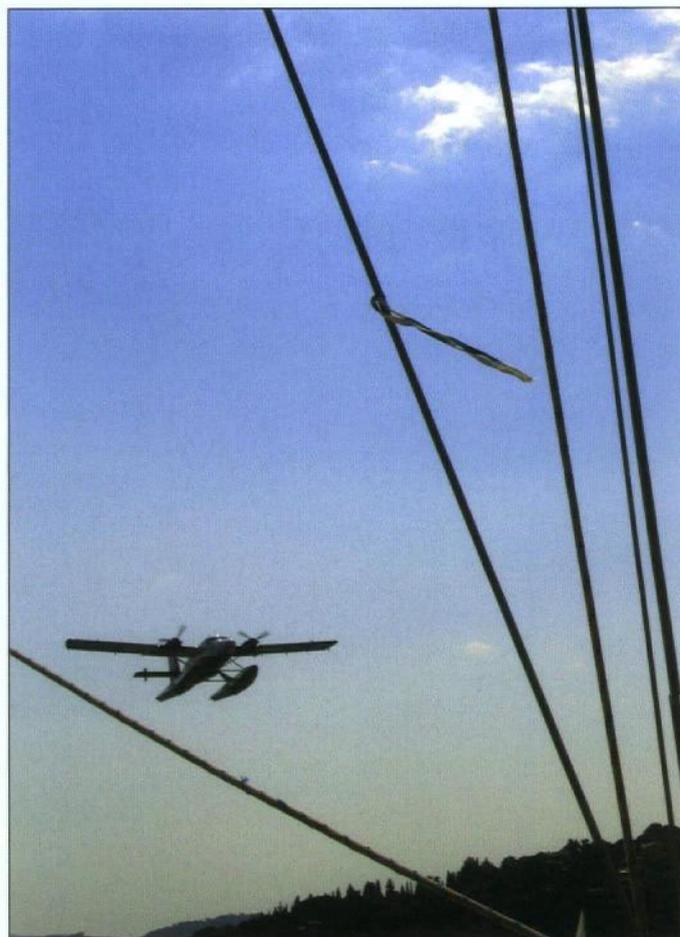
Sailing off the anchorage in light winds on a beautiful sunny morning, we sailed east-southeast passing the Island of Etrusci and into the Corfu Channel. The Corfu channel narrows to one mile across from the Albanian coastline. What is most

interesting to see are the numerous modern highly coloured and well designed villas on the Corfu landscape in contrast to the 'grey soviet style' tenements constructed along the Albanian coastline, the difference between the two countries one mile apart is unbelievable. Sailing down the channel we headed for the marina at Gouvia, where we were to spend the next couple of days recuperating and looking forward to welcoming our wives, who were flying into Corfu Airport that evening.

Entering the channel to Gouvia harbour at around 16.00 we were astounded to see a seaplane taking off and heading directly for us. To our relief it took off approximately one hundred meters ahead of us and passed almost directly above us a little over two masts high, and we have the photographs to prove it. Startled, we headed for the

marina on the port side of the harbour and were met by the marina manager and his well-trained staff who took our lines.

Gouvia Marina has excellent facilities, spotless showers and toilets, a laundry, a supermarket, an excellent and very reasonable ships' chandler, and best of all a swimming pool with a waiter service to the poolside tavern and restaurant. The next couple of days were spent 'chilling out' around the pool



Seaplane taking off at entrance to Gouvia harbour

Gouvia Marina



Greek Tall Ship *Star Clipper* passing our anchorage of San Stephanos in the Corfu Channel

Our anchorage in Corfu



during the day and sampling the restaurants of Kontokali, one of the two adjoining villages, at night.

On Sunday 23rd July we left Gouvia Marina and headed for a lunchtime anchorage and swim on the island of Vido. This island, located midway between Gouvia and Corfu was an ideal stop-off before heading to our anchorage in Corfu harbour that afternoon. The island of Corfu, over the centuries, has been occupied by Romans, Byzantines, Normans, Venetians, French, Russians and British, before becoming part of Greece in 1864. The architecture and landscape throughout reflect the many influences brought about by these occupations. We spent a pleasant afternoon and evening strolling around the maze of tiny streets, our wives exploring the many shops and 'Rivoli' style elegant boulevards, before retiring to one of the many restaurants in the town. Drinks, later that evening, in the local club overlooking the harbour, completed our first trip to Corfu and a promise to plan a return visit in the near future.

The following morning we headed south to the Syvota Islands just off the coastal town of Murcos on the Greek mainland. Len had been there on previous occasions and has a favourite anchorage located between the islands. We spent the next two days swimming and enjoying the local restaurants. The evening's entertainment was provided by the antics of a

middle-aged Italian super yacht owner, with a young partner and kids, who continually overruled his paid crew to do absolutely daft things. We nicknamed him Poppa Piccolino and as all good cruises have a song, we thought that the song Poppa Piccolino should be this year's cruise song for *Chain*, as all of us, for some strange reason, knew the words.

On Thursday 27th July we headed back north, passing Corfu and Gouvia, towards the small anchorage of San Stephanos. San Stephanos is a small village located in an inlet surrounded by about 20 houses, 2 supermarkets, 6 restaurants and two tavernas. We anchored there for the next two nights in blissfully calm conditions approximately 30 metres from the beachside restaurants and town. We spent these last few idyllic days swimming and relaxing in the beautiful weather enjoying our first trip to Greece.

To Mary and Len, whose hospitality is legendary on *Chain*, our thanks for the invitation. For Derek and Vivienne, I tried the empty wine bottle on the head trick and not only was I ignored in one restaurant but we were practically asked to leave in another. I suppose in the words of that well known northern comedian - "It's probably the way I ... wear it!".

Barbara McHenry writes of seeing Venice by boat

At Christmas 2005, Bernard Corbally contacted Cormac to invite us to join himself, Erica and Anne Woulfe-Flanagan on *Beowulf* for a cruise to Venice at

the beginning of June. There was a slight complication, *Island Life* was in Seville with a deadline to be in Hondarribia by mid-June for the ICC Rally. So immediately after the Annual Dinner Cormac set off on his single-handed trip up the Spanish and Portuguese coasts and I spent the next two months day-dreaming about Venice, its canals and its historic importance in the Eastern Mediterranean and hoping adverse weather would not delay him. Finally on 3 June Aer Lingus brought the Corballys and myself to join Anne and the boat in Lido di Jesolo, about 15 miles north of Venice, and Cormac flew in from Santander via Rome with Ryanair.

The following day, after a big shop ably organised by Erica and paid for by "kitty" (a new concept for a single-handed sailor), we set sail for Venice. The coastline was very flat and uninteresting but soon we were in the Lagoon and it felt magic. Big cruise ships appeared over the tops of trees, pilot boats darted to and fro, motorboats potted about enjoying the sunshine, and finally as we approached our destination in the heart of Venice, we saw gondolas and vaporettos of all types. Having moored without stress in a small and very attractive marina at the island of San Giorgio Maggiore, thanks to *Beowulf's* bow thruster, I feasted my eyes on the opposite shoreline, on a Turneresque vista of pink sky, the Piazza San Marco and the Doge's Palace. That night we consumed more of Erica's shopping, and the following day set out by vaporetto to start our sightseeing. Our first port of call was the Guggenheim Museum on the banks of the Grand Canal, and here "kitty" paid for our entry (and all subsequent sightseeing). Cormac enjoyed what he considered a very painless method of sightseeing and wished he could transfer "kitty" to *Island Life*. Next day saw us immersed in history, with visits to St Mark's and

the Doge's Palace. That evening "kitty" treated us to a very pleasant Vivaldi concert in one of the local churches. The following day was spent in the footsteps of The Merchant of Venice with visits to the Rialto, very lively, and the Ghetto; very moving. That evening we managed to tear ourselves away from Erica's marvellous Italian shop and eat in a new fish restaurant, where the old shipbuilding areas are metamorphosing into tourist attractions. The glass-making factories in Murano, together with a hunt, eventually successful, for a bottle of Bailey's for a Venetian contact, kept us occupied on the Thursday. The McHenrys embarked on a fruitless but instructive search for wall lights in opaline glass in Murano, to learn this is no longer made due to its arsenic content. That night we attended a party on a converted tugboat moored close to a derelict boat yard so getting there was something of an obstacle course. Our host was our Venetian contact who had organised a berth for us in the marina, and spoke very good English but Erica shone with her knowledge of Italian, while the rest of us struggled or latched on to English-speaking expatriates. It was a most enjoyable experience and we also learnt of some of the downsides of Venetian life, e.g. when ill, transport to hospital is by ambulance boat, with all that entails for a very ill person, and the tall narrow houses have no lifts, so if you are elderly... The following morning Erica and I inadvertently circled Venice by vaporetto and saw the vast car parks on the outskirts. No cars can come into the city and all shopping has to be done with large shopping bags, and transported home by vaporetto; no such thing as bringing the car to the supermarket.

That afternoon we reluctantly set sail in a very nice breeze for Lido di Jesolo. The following morning Cormac headed off at the crack of dawn for his early morning flight to Santander, *Island Life*, and the Rally. It was a wonderful week, the boat never heeled over, I experienced the joys of a bow thruster and felt privileged to have experienced Venice by boat.

Motor Boating to a Mountain

(with some good sailing on the way there and on the way back)

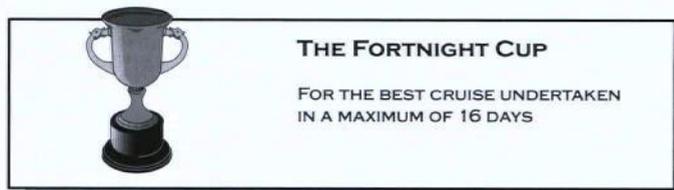
Alan Leonard

Having been introduced to the delights of "Munro-bagging" by John McCrea on a walking holiday in May, I began studying maps and charts, looking for Scottish Lochs with Munros within accessible distance of an anchorage (for the uninitiated, Munros are Scottish mountains over 3000 feet, so named after Sir Hugh Munro who listed them in 1891. First to climb them all, some 10 years later, was the Reverend AE Robertson). One problem is that in these post-metrication days, a Munro is no longer a mountain of 3000 feet but one of 914 metres, which doesn't have quite the same ring about it. I became fascinated by one mountain, Foinaven, near the Head of Loch Inchar. The map showed this to be 914 metres yet it was not on the list of Munros. How could this be? The answer is that 3000 feet turns out to be 914.4 metres so this mountain failed to make the grade by just 0.4 of a metre. Nevertheless, it read well in the guide books, and given its proximity to the most northerly sea loch on the west coast, it seemed to be a worthy objective for a cruise.

On Friday 14th July, Colin Leonard, John McCrea and I went on board *Ariadne* (Starlight 35) at Whiterock, and motored south down Strangford Lough, stowing gear as we went. Off Marlfield Bay there was a nice breeze and the main was set, but when we left the Narrows the wind was only 4-5 knots southeasterly, and the reality is that what was described in the log as motor-sailing was just motoring, but the main happened to be up. At times the wind would rise a little, the genoa would be unfurled and we would enjoy a few minutes of sailing, before the wind fell again and the speed dropped to below 3 knots. genoa furled, engine on again – this was to be the pattern for much of this cruise. By the time we got to the Copeland Sound the tide was against us, so we anchored in Chapel Bay, at 20.30. There seemed to be little point in sleeping all night and waking with the tide against us again, so we had a few hours rest and got underway again at 01.30. The transit to avoid the Rid rock was a little hard to follow in the dark! We held the compass bearing till well out in the Sound, anxiously aware that it is perfectly possible to be on the right heading, and still be swept onto the rock! Motoring across the mouth of Belfast Lough and past the Maidens, a light easterly breeze filled in. It veered southerly and we had a couple of hours' good sailing before it dropped and the engine went on again. In the Sound of Jura it filled in again and we even had the spinnaker up for a while, but inevitably after a couple of hours, the wind fell and we motored all afternoon and evening in calm conditions, to anchor in Loch Aline at 20.30. The log recorded "Good day but only sailed for 4½ hours. Some motor-sailing but mostly motoring. Fantastic visibility."

Fine sail

Next morning we had a fine sail up the Sound of Mull either broad reaching or running goose-winged in a 20 knot southeasterly. We made fast alongside in Tobermory at 11.00 and took on water and a few stores. The man at the fuel dock asked if we wanted some fuel, but I declined on the grounds that we had plenty in the tank. I was later to bitterly regret this



decision! We spoke briefly with Douglas and Lillian Smith on *Jigtime* (Sister ship). The following exchange shows the difference in perspective when your cruise is limited to a fortnight "Jigtime – We are picking up our son in Oban next week. *Ariadne* – We are picking up our son in Ullapool the day after tomorrow"! Underway again, we had a fine reach out to





Ariadne in the Crinan Canal

Ardnamurchan, where we set the spinnaker for a run past the saw-toothed Sgurr of Eigg and up the Sound of Sleat. By the time we were off Doune, the southwesterly wind was up to 25 knots. We gybed off Isle Ornsay and off Glenelg and then handed the spinnaker. As we went through Kyle Rhea, the wind suddenly increased to 30 and then to 38 knots. We were glad we had the spinnaker down! Initially, we thought it was just the wind funnelling through the Kyle, but as we shot out into Loch Alsh it was apparent that the wind was here to stay. We quickly pulled down two reefs. A shackle on the boom vang broke, like a gunshot, when we gybed. We were relieved to find a vacant substantial looking mooring off Kyleakin. It blew hard that night. To be honest, it had been forecast but I had found the forecast hard to believe as the glass was steady at 1032. *Quaila* (CCC & ICC) was on the next mooring, but in the conditions we had no communication and she was away before us in the morning. Next morning (Monday 17th July) after a leisurely start we got underway at Kyleakin and motored out under the bridge. It was grey and a bit damp but there was a moderate southwesterly wind. We motored for the first hour or so (to charge the batteries) to the Crowlin

Islands, where we went close inshore to have a look at the narrow anchorage between the islands. We then set the main and boomed out the genoa to run up the Inner Sound. The wind eased for a while off Loch Torridon, but soon returned. We had started the day with no particular objective in mind and off Loch Gairloch by 15.00 and with the prospect of a foul tide at Rubha Rèidh, we decided it was far enough and headed in, to pick up a mooring in Badachro. A kindly fisherman came by and advised that the owner of the mooring might be returning that evening, and recommended another one far further in than I would have dared to go without local knowledge. It was a much shorter row ashore to the Badachro Inn, where we spent the evening. We had an excellent meal and enjoyed meeting Ian and Caroline Bashford, new owners of *Calypso*, formerly owned by friends John and Rosie Moorehead, in Bangor Marina.

We were now well on target for meeting David (recently returned from a walking holiday in the Swiss Alps) and his friend Iestyn, also a mountaineer, in Ullapool on Tuesday afternoon, so once we had motored round Rubha Rèidh we were content to drift, with spinnaker up, across the mouth of Loch Ewe. After 6 mackerel had been caught, the spinnaker came down and the engine went on. We went alongside a fishing boat in Ullapool, where the Harbour Master was cross with us for not having sought his permission first of all. He was placated when he heard that we were expecting crew members off the bus at 15.30 and would be leaving immediately thereafter. David and Iestyn on board, we left in the lightest of northwesterly breezes and motored through Horse Sound, past Achiltibuie, through Dorney Sound and into the anchorage at Tanera Beg where we shared the anchorage with only one other yacht, a fine Nicholson old timer. We anchored in a different part of the bay, so as not to intrude on their privacy. This is my sort of anchorage, totally landlocked, with a narrow channel through the rocks.

Wednesday 19th July began with a moderate southeasterly breeze and leaving the Tanera Beg anchorage by the west entrance we were soon making good progress. Unfortunately after half an hour the wind died and the engine went on yet again. It was a clear day with not a cloud in sight and a good view of the most amazing mountainous skyline. As we approached Rubha Stoer we were treated to a spectacular



Wester Ross skyline just north of the Summer Isles

display by a large pod of dolphins who gambolled around us, criss-crossing in front of the bows and in the wake. Previously I have only seen such a display when far off shore on an ocean passage. From time to time throughout the day the wind teased us, increasing just enough to set sail and stop the engine, only to drop again as soon as we had done so. We anchored for lunch in Port na Eilean, Handa, which is a very narrow gut with little swinging room. After a good walk ashore we continued motoring northwards towards Loch Inchar and our objective. It was worrying motoring so far north in calm conditions, wondering when the high pressure would give way to a succession of lows, leaving us with hundreds miles to beat into strong southerlies to get home! As we entered Loch Inchar the engine spluttered a bit and finally stopped just as we anchored at Rhiconich at the head of the Loch. The sailing directions warn of shoal water in the centre of the Loch and recommend anchoring on the north side but the approach to this is encumbered with mussel farming, so we anchored on the south side and found good depths well up towards the head of the Loch, off the Burn.

Friday 21st July was devoted to the ascent of Foinaven. We had to walk a couple of miles by road before taking to the fields, across a small river valley and up a ridge leading to a minor top from which a fine ridge walk led to the summit. The GPS seemed to suggest that it was 917 metres but no doubt the surveyors know better! It was a hot day and on the way up the main problem was not midges as we had expected, but clegs. Fortunately as we got higher we left them behind. The views at the top were spectacular, both of the north coast and Loch Eriboll with Ben More away to the east, as well as the west coast. The true mountaineers, David and Iestyn, wished to

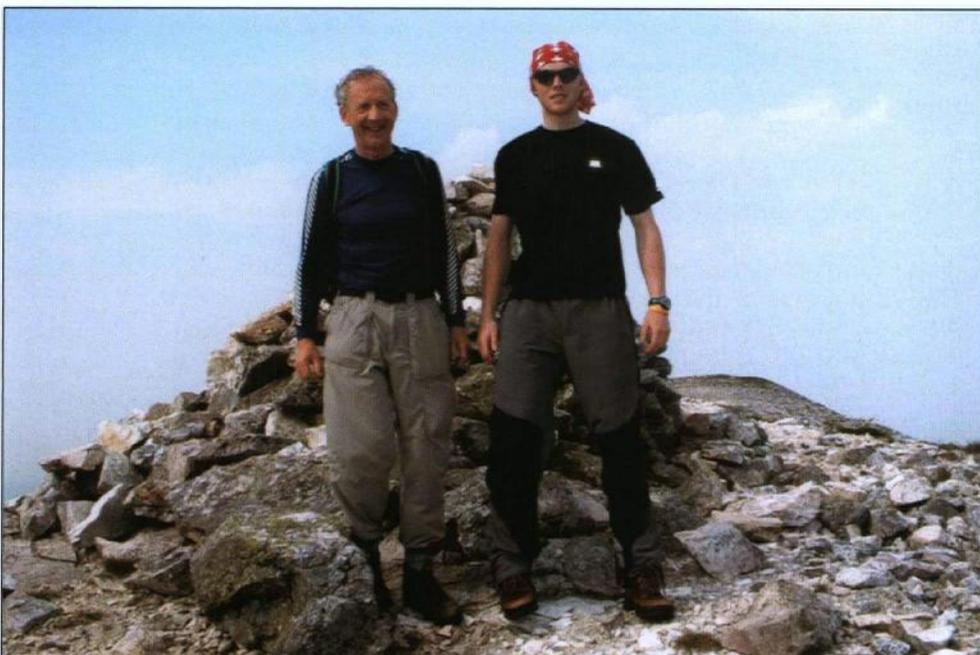


Sunset in Loch Inchar – entrance to Loch Bervie in the distance

spend time at the top to commune with the mountain, while John and Colin set off along a ridge to the south to another top. I set off for a more leisurely descent! Back on board in the late afternoon, tired and footsore after 12 miles and 3000 feet of ascent, it was time to investigate the engine. The cause of its failure was immediately apparent – we had run out of fuel. Colin went by dinghy and outboard to Loch Bervie and purchased 20 litres of diesel. That evening and next morning I spent several hours between the cockpit locker, underneath the quarter berth and finally getting a mouthful of diesel fuel at the engine, before the fuel system was bled and the engine restarted. How bitterly I regretted not buying some more diesel, when we had the opportunity, in Tobermory! We then motored to Loch Bervie where we took on another 100 litres of diesel, water and stores. Colin incensed the local shop keeper by buying provisions direct from the wholesale delivery van right outside the shop! After showers, followed by fish and chips in

the Mission to Deep Sea Fishermen, we left Loch Bervie at 14.30. It was hard to believe that in just over a week from Whiterock we had achieved our objective, now we just had to get home. Although the barometer was over 10 millibars lower it was still very settled and steady at 1025mb. The day followed the by now familiar pattern of mostly motoring but some motor-sailing. We made fast alongside in Loch Inver that evening. The log reads “Meal of the cruise so far without doubt! Colin is in the wrong profession ...” Alan and John went ashore to pay the harbour dues and walked round the bay to the Loch Inver Larder to buy pies (venison and cranberry, for the next day’s lunch – see www.piesbypost.co.uk)

We now needed to make serious progress to the south. It was a shame to be rushing past the many



Alan and David at the top of Foinaven

fine places we had passed on the way north, but time did not allow for further exploration. Although there was a light to moderate northwesterly, the apparent wind was never sufficient to give us adequate speed and despite intermittent attempts at sailing throughout the day, mostly it was motoring. At 16.00 the log read "Wind favourable but light. Visibility good. Crew bored and frustrated or reading. Progress mechanical." So we continued, down the Inner Sound and Crowlin Sound into Loch Alsh and through Kyle Rhea, to anchor at Isle Ornsay at 21.50.

Leaving Isle Ornsay next morning (Sunday 23rd July) as the wind freshened from the south, we feared that the day of reckoning might have arrived. Initially the windward sailing was pleasantly fast in flat seas but both wind and seas gradually built during the day. However it freshened only to the extent that one reef was required, and we had a spanking beat until we could weather Ardnamurchan and ease the sheets to reach into the Sound of Mull. We picked up a mooring in Tobermory late that afternoon, the log reading 58 miles as opposed to the direct distance of 40 miles. We had an excellent meal ashore in 'Javiers' that evening on Iestyn's recommendation.

We had a chilly, but gentle beat down the Sound of Mull (wind southeasterly 3) as far as Lismore where the wind died, so we motored into Oban and picked up a mooring at the north end of Cardingmill Bay. Iestyn went ashore to get a train to Glasgow, the rest of us went shopping and sightseeing in Oban. That evening we motored south down Kerrera Sound, past Sheep Isle and Fladda into the Sound of Luing and through the Dorus Mor to Crinan. The sealock was closed when we arrived so we picked up a mooring off the hotel for the night. After an 8 hour transit of the Crinan Canal, we had another gentle beat down to East Loch Tarbert next evening. It is a great advantage to have fit young men on board for the canal!

Next morning it was more motoring in calm conditions. By now it was all so familiar – wind up, sails up – wind down, engine on and sails furled. Having rounded Ardlamont Point, near the north end of the west Kyle, the breeze filled in and we had a good sail, including short tacking through the Narrows at the Burnt Isles. Towards the south end of the east Kyle the wind eased again and the engine went on to motor round Toward Point and up the Clyde as far as Inellan, where a 15 knot southwesterly allowed us to sail round Cloch Point and across

the Clyde towards Rosneath point. We followed *Drum* across the mouth of the Gareloch to Rhu Marina, handing sail as we went. We berthed beside *Zubanubi*, a Starlight 39, whom we had met on the Cruise in Company two years previously. I went ashore to visit my sister Elizabeth England, who was convalescing in a nearby nursing home after a hospital admission. Back on board there seemed little point in staying the night in the marina, when there was a favourable tide and only a light southerly. I still feared the retribution of a strong southerly, for having had the audacity to motor so far north in calm conditions! One night-watch scribe waxed lyrical in the log "Many constellations clear, the plough particularly so" and "The eastern sky has been brightening, but now clouds sweeping across from the west have started to block the sunrise". If you choose the right watch a night passage certainly makes it easier to get past Ailsa Craig – it's ahead when you turn in and when you come on deck again for your next watch it's well astern. Later in the morning a breeze filled in and we enjoyed a close reach, and later a fetch, to Bangor, where we made fast in the marina at 15.00. Our last day, Friday 28th July followed now the familiar pattern of motoring down the County Down coast, through Donaghadee Sound, past Skulmartin and inside Burial Island. At the North Rock we got a bit too close inshore and had to make a rapid alteration of course. How easily familiarity can breed contempt. Inside the South Rock and the Butter Pladdy, at last we got a slant and got the engine off, but had to tack out at Ballyquentin Point. The apparent wind was very light in the Narrows, but the tide carried us in in the usual brisk fashion. Inside the Lough the wind was a 15 knot southerly and we ended the cruise with a fine run up the Lough, to pick up our mooring off Whiterock just after 17.00.

Although I did not log the engine hours meticulously, I do not think that I can recall a cruise when we used the engine more, and certainly not one when we ran out of fuel! Once again, I have cause to ponder the role of the diesel engine in our modern way of cruising. It certainly allowed us to achieve our objective, which we would not have done otherwise, but I do believe that it behoves us to sail whenever possible. With the exception of the occasional hour here or there when laziness prevailed, I believe that we did so.

**Michael Branagan
writes of "anything but
morning sickness"**

The corncrake may well have been calling out up west this year, but down West Cork way in a heat wave, the first call of the day aboard *Alakush* as we headed for the cockpit and breakfast was "have you got your sun cream on?" West Cork was at its best, we had it all to ourselves those first weeks of June and the sailing was excellent. We did get the spinnaker out but not the oilskins, need more be said?

The new galley worked a treat and we had some pretty good nosebags ashore as well in the new Fishy Fish in Kinsale, Maryanns in Castletownsend, as always excellent crab salads don't come any better than on the quay in Crook, and Johnny Wolf cooked us a superb lobster dinner at his beautifully restored rectory on the Ilen river.

Other special memories: a field full of the most spectacular wild orchids outside Crookhaven, rum punches in warm sunshine in the cockpit, mouse-droppings optional, and an idyllic overnight in Barlogue, definitely a John Hinde moment.

Evenings aboard and the second great cry of the day would ring out, "have you taken your pills?" Out came the collection of small, slim, white seven-day tablet dispensers, so useful to all those with problems relating to plumbing vitals or giblets, who then got very excited with the snapping open of lids, this accompanied by the chorus of "what day is this?" Things would really go into overdrive at the sight of all these shapes and colours and frenzied discussion would follow, taking in all matters medical from symptoms to milligrams, side-effects to scars, a neat swerve to the health service, and a shimmy later, gets you back to politics. What a way to round off the day!