

**2007  
ANNUAL**



**IRISH  
CRUISING  
CLUB**

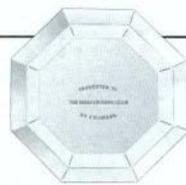


# THE CHALLENGE CUP AWARDS

Every year the Flag Officers appoint an Adjudicator to award the Challenge Cup Awards. The following are the Challenge Cup Awards:



**THE FAULKNER CUP**  
THE CLUB'S PREMIER AWARD



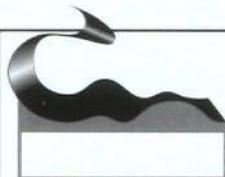
**THE PERRY GREER BOWL**  
FOR THE BEST FIRST ICC LOG



**THE STRANGFORD CUP**  
FOR AN ALTERNATIVE BEST CRUISE



**THE GLENGARRIFF TROPHY**  
FOR THE BEST CRUISE  
IN IRISH WATERS



**THE ATLANTIC TROPHY**  
FOR THE BEST OPEN SEA PASSAGE  
WITH PORT TO PORT AT LEAST  
1,000 MILES



**THE JOHN B KEARNEY CUP**  
FOR AN OUTSTANDING CONTRIBUTION  
TO IRISH SAILING



**THE FORTNIGHT CUP**  
FOR THE BEST CRUISE UNDERTAKEN  
IN A MAXIMUM OF 16 DAYS



**THE WRIGHT SALVER**  
AWARDED BY THE  
NORTHERN COMMITTEE



**THE ROUND IRELAND  
NAVIGATION CUP**  
FOR THE BEST CIRCUMNAVIGATION  
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON  
NAVIGATIONAL AND PILOTAGE CONTENT



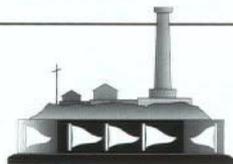
**THE WATERFORD HARBOUR  
CUP**  
AWARDED BY THE  
SOUTHERN COMMITTEE



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



**THE DONEGAN MEMORIAL  
CUP**  
AWARDED BY THE  
EASTERN COMMITTEE



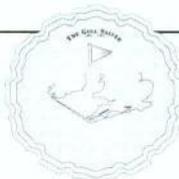
**THE ROCKABILL TROPHY**  
FOR A CRUISE WHICH INVOLVES AN  
EXCEPTIONAL FEAT OF NAVIGATION  
AND/OR SEAMANSHIP



**THE ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY**  
AWARDED BY THE  
WESTERN COMMITTEE



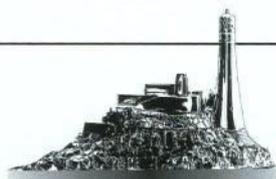
**THE WYBRANTS CUP**  
FOR THE BEST CRUISE IN  
SCOTTISH WATERS



**THE GULL SALVER**  
FOR DISTINCTION IN AN INTERNATIONAL  
EVENT BY A MEMBER SAILING  
HIS/HER OWN BOAT



**THE WILD GOOSE CUP**  
AT THE ADJUDICATOR'S DISCRETION  
FOR A LOG OF LITERARY MERIT



**THE FASTNET AWARD**  
FOR AN OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT  
IN SAILING BY A PERSON OR PERSONS  
FROM ANYWHERE IN THE WORLD

**BEST DUNN'S DITTY WILL BE AWARDED THE DUNN'S DITTY SALVER**

# IRISH CRUISING CLUB ANNUAL 2007



Malin Head, Co. Donegal

Photo by Kevin Dwyer from *Sailing Directions for the East & North Coast of Ireland* to be published early in 2008

# Irish Cruising Club Annual 2007

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#### **Front Cover**

*Alakush* (Jennifer Guinness) near Shuna, Argyll. Photo by Owen Branagan.

#### **Back Cover**

Poolbeg Marina, Dublin Port. Photo by Kevin Dwyer.

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#### **Submissions for 2008 Annual**

To reach the Honorary Editor, Chris Stillman, 3 Thomastown Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.  
(Tel. 01 285 2084) by **15th October 2008 at latest.**

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#### **Notes from the Editor:**

I would strongly request that contributors read the “**Notes for Contributors**” 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”.
  6. Even if you haven't had the opportunity to submit a log, or feel that your sailing ventures during the year do not merit a Log or even a Ditty, please do send a short description – a couple of lines – to say what you have been doing – such as holiday cruises made on sea or on rivers with a commercial company. Some members may find this useful when planning their own holidays.
- 

Our thanks to Bill Rea for continuing to organising the Christmas distribution of the Annual, and to Ann Woulfe-Flanagan who now takes on the task of overseeing the inscribing and presentation of the Club Trophies and ensuring their subsequent return!

Our thanks to Pat Conneely of Typeform Ltd. who has cheerfully and efficiently taken the raw material and transformed it into what we see.

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#### **Origination**

The 2007 Annual was typeset, mainly by direct input from text on word processor discs, pages formatted, all illustrations scanned and placed by Typeform Ltd., Portside Business Centre, East Wall Road, Dublin 3.  
Telephone 855 3855.

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#### **Printing and Binding**

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

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ISSN No. 0791-6132

# 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 (preferably CD or DVD)**, IBM or Apple Mac compatible, 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 **and the name of the author.**
- 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.

## Dunn's Ditties

Dunn's 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 Dunn's 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.

**Do** use *Italics* for yachts' and 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. See example below.

**Wind Speed** expressed should be mean-speed. See example below.

**Wind Directions** should be given in full and in lower case. See example below.

**Example:** 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; north-northwest, **NOT** NNW; east-southeast, **NOT** ESE.

**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*

# Honorary Secretary's Report

The Committee's election meeting in January admitted four new members. The names of the new members are listed in the panel below.

The minutes of the AGM, which was held at Howth Yacht Club, were given in the Spring Newsletter and are on the Club's website. As usual, the meeting was lively and well attended. The new Club rules were adopted unanimously at the meeting.

The Annual Dinner was held in Cork and was a great weekend with events organised during the day on the Saturday. Around 300 people attended the dinner, the largest gathering in recent years, where the guest speaker was Peter Bunting. The Fastnet Award was presented to Willy Ker at the dinner.

As the activities of the regions in 2007 were covered in the Newsletters, I shall not comment on them except to say that it was not the best of summers – weatherwise!

Wishing all members a great 2008.

*Ron Cudmore*  
Hon. Secretary



Mulroy Bay, Co. Donegal  
Photo by Kevin Dwyer from the forthcoming *Sailing Directions for the East & North Coast of Ireland*

## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

### Officers and Committee 2007-2008

Commodore:	Cormac McHenry (East)	3rd year
Vice Commodore:	David Tucker (South)	1st year
Rear Commodore:	Connla Magennis (North)	1st year
Rear Commodore:	David Whitehead (West)	2nd year
Hon. Secretary:	Ronald Cudmore	5th year
Hon. Treasurer:	Myles Kirby	2nd year

**North**  
John Clementson  
Alan Leonard  
James Nixon  
Peter Ronaldson  
Derek White

**South**  
Dan Cross  
Eleanor Cudmore  
John Daly  
Dermod Lovett

**East**  
Grainne FitzGerald  
Cifford Hilliard  
Joe Phelan

**West**  
Brian Kenny  
Ex-Officio  
Ed Wheeler

### Non-Committee roles

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

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

### New Members

Derek Jones  
Flor Long  
Nick Musgrave  
Tony Weston

### Deceased Members since the last Annual

Brendan Cassidy	Heather King	Adrian O'Donovan	Declan Tyrrell
Alastair Eves	Jim Macken	Andrew Stott	Michael Whelan
Tom Clifford	Anthony Morton	Pat Tisdall	

# Challenge Cup Awards

## Jennifer Guinness

As all previous adjudicators have found, being asked to sit in judgement on your fellow members is a daunting task. I must congratulate all those who took the time and trouble to write of their cruises. Without their efforts our Honorary Editor would be redundant and we would be deprived of our superb Annual. At least those who submitted logs without winning a trophy have the consolation of knowing that mine is a one-year appointment and the next adjudicator might have better taste/judgement.

Members nowadays write very competent and often understated logs covering extensive cruising areas, though comparatively few in home waters. Perhaps it says something about our dismal summer. Members who charter yachts in unusual and often exotic places and take the trouble to write accounts, should be encouraged. Maybe there is scope here for a new award.

I would make a plea on behalf of future adjudicators: Please adhere to the criteria as laid down in the **Notes for Contributors**. You may know all about your boat, but a short CV, and a table of distance travelled and duration of cruise, makes adjudication much easier. All the logs submitted here describe voyages well-planned and well-executed, with wonderful variations in size of boat and places cruised. I enjoyed the built-in history lessons en route.

So how to differentiate between competing accounts. It came down to a very personal judgement based on the logs than most evoked the "wish I had been there" feeling.

THE FAULKNER CUP, the Club's premier award, goes to Michael Holland, for his Log of a voyage from 66°N to 66°S. The whole voyage, from the purchase and fitting out of *Celtic Spirit*, to her arrival in Trinidad via Antarctica, is a masterpiece of understatement, with only brief references to the extensive planning and the conditions encountered – "relentless gales and snow blizzards".

THE STRANGFORD CUP was the award which gave me the greatest difficulty. Finally I decided to award it jointly to the skippers of *Beowulf* for their three cruises in the Ionian Sea; Bernard Corbally, Bruce Lyster, and Eleanor and Brian Cudmore. I felt these accounts, written by Bernard Corbally, Ann Woulfe-Flanagan and Clive Martin, would provide a useful record for those who plan to cruise the area in the future.

THE ATLANTIC TROPHY is awarded to Seamus Salmon for a wonderfully vivid account of his two years cruising the Atlantic Circuit. His enthusiastic accounts of places visited and people encountered made this a most enjoyable log to read.

THE FORTNIGHT CUP is awarded to Pat Lyons, for a cruise visiting ports along the west coast of Britain, and home by the Scillies, exploring some of the less visited places en route.

THE ROUND IRELAND NAVIGATION CUP is awarded to Brendan Bradley, for his leisurely circumnavigation. The fact that it was the only log submitted in this category in no way detracts from the award. It was a most enjoyable account, and Brendan is a deserving winner.

THE FINGAL CUP goes to Andy McCarter. This is awarded at the Adjudicators discretion to the log that most appeals to them. This was an account of the first half of a "retirement cruise", a voyage without too many urgent dead-lines; something I always admire and find hard to achieve.

ROCKABILL TROPHY: no award.

THE WYBRANTS CUP is awarded to Adrian and Maeve Bell. This was again a difficult choice; cruises in Scottish waters are well-represented in this Annual, but I liked the concept of friendships made afloat, and shared cruising. It seems to epitomise the cruising spirit.

THE WILD GOOSE CUP is awarded for a log of literary merit, and this goes very appropriately to Wallace Clark for his marvellously concise and evocative account of his cruise in Hebridean waters.

### CLUB AWARDS

**THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP** for outstanding contributions to Irish sailing: Award to **WILLIAM M. NIXON**.

**WRIGHT SALVER:** Awarded by **NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **ANDY McCARTER**.

**WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP:** Awarded by **SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **JOE AND MARY WOODWARD**.

**DONEGAN MEMORIAL TROPHY:** Awarded by **EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **MICHAEL HOLLAND**.

**ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY:** Awarded by **WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **SEAMUS SALMON**.

**GULL SALVER:** for the highest-placed Irish Yacht in the RORC Fastnet Race: Awarded to **GER O'ROURKE** in *Chieftain*.

**THE "FASTNET" AWARD:** Awarded by the Flag Officers of the Club to **Willy Ker** for a lifetime of achievement in sailing.

**DUNN'S DITTY SALVER:** Awarded to **WALLACE CLARK**.

THE PERRY GREER BOWL is awarded for the best first log. This goes to Heleen and Nigel Linday-Fynn. Although this is the first log they have submitted, I hope it is the harbinger of many more. It was an interesting account of a well-planned delivery trip in a new boat, with time built in for the shipyard to sort out any problems; a wise move no matter how reputable the builders.

THE GLENGARRIF TROPHY is awarded to Sal and Jeffrey O'Riordan for the best cruise in Irish waters. This was an interesting account of an enjoyable cruise, even if some of their

plans had to be adapted because of the weather.

Reading the logs brought home to me how modern boats and modern navigational aids have made our lives so much easier and drier on board. We are able to cruise further in greater comfort and safety, but as Eric Hiscock wrote of the reasons for cruising, "there is still a spice in the suggestion of danger, a feeling of achievement when a strange harbour is reached, and the endless fascination of handling a seaworthy yacht". I think all of the writers of the logs managed to convey something of that sentiment.



Fahan Creek, Co. Donegal

Photo by Kevin Dwyer from *Sailing Directions for the East & North Coast of Ireland* to be published early in 2008

# Index of Cruising Grounds

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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, 07.14, 07.21
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, 07.05, 07.10, 07.26, 07.27, 07.28
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, 07.02, 07.23, 07.31
Normandy	90.16, 94.17
Norway	93.08, 94.08, 94.06, 05.14, 05.22, 06.17, 07.07
Orkney Islands	90.13, 91.14, 93.07, 97.09, 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, 07.04, 07.09, 07.11, 07.17
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, 07.15, 07.29
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, 07.18

# 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. MacIlwaine  
 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  
 2005 James Nixon

## 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. MacIlwaine  
 1977 J. M. Wolfe  
 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. McMahon  
 2005 D.Tucker &  
 G.McMahon  
 2006 D.Tucker &  
 D.Whitehead

## 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.

# Hebridean Highlights 2007

## Wallace Clark



### THE WILD GOOSE CUP

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

*Come away, fellow sailors, your anchors be weighing.  
Come away, time and tide will admit no delaying!*

**A**givey, a 32 foot Colvic, spent the winter at ease in Ballycastle marina. Sean Morton the manager is most helpful, fees reasonable, security good. Shops, restaurants and pubs close at hand. It seems much less exposed than most berths on the Bann.

On June 4th 2007 we left Rathlin Island at 16.30. Just one hour north and it gets you away from all the fuss of storing up and stowing.

Graham Kane, self-appointed cook; Ricky Butler, professional navigator ready to click in if things get difficult; Stephen Clark, solves all engine or electronic problems (luckily there are none of any account!)

Perhaps the best crew ever. And, Boy, did I need them! Eighty last November.

Lunch stop at Gigha next day. Speed 5.9 to 6.7 knots on Ricky's GPS, as the tide varied in strength. My bottom is dirty, as sailors have been heard to remark in the best drawing rooms. Caring for June at home had left no time for a scrub but last year's International Cruiser anti-fouling seemed to be keeping her clean enough.

11.00 Sighted Mull of Cara. 13.30 picked up buoy for a peaceful lunch at dear old Gigha of multi-memories. Horlick hospitality in the fifties, garden visits and calls on Adam and Fiona Bergius more recently. Adam not afloat this year after a fall and broken ribs – we missed not seeing him.

Eileen Moore in McCormaigs at 20.00. Ashore to admire old church and tiny sunken cells, but very few birds, just pair of

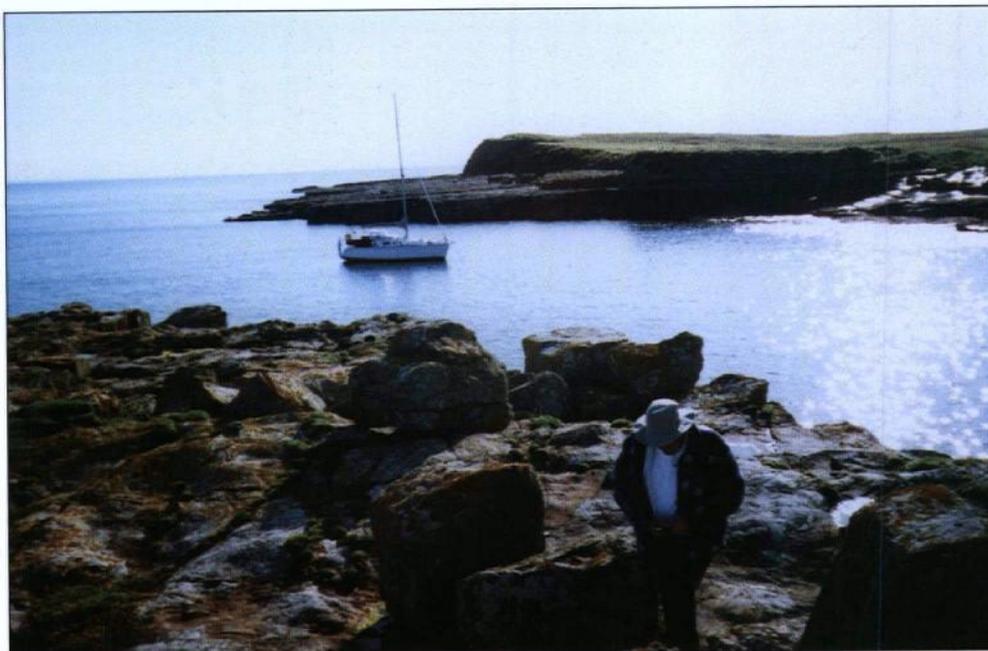
Canada Geese. Supper of tasty Johanna stew in cockpit. I used to be known as *Paddy Scupperguts*, so to keep to my reputation did it full justice. This must be the prettiest island bay of its size in Scotland. But that sunken rock at the inner end does move around a bit!

Approaching lighthouse east of Belnahua next day, saw wildest pattern of white tidal ripples and streaks ever, extending for two or three miles across most of channel, big circles where water rises out of the depths, whirlpools where it goes down, eddies and counters on either side. Four days after full moon but not listed as a particularly big spring. Very little wind but constant attention needed on tiller.

It was a relief to get past and make a lunch stop in 'Junesty' So named as she and I so often stopped there in south or west winds. It is just inside Rudha Garbh Airde at the northwest point of Ardencaple Bay. Good holding on sand. The side of the sixty foot hill which gives it shelter is an epitome of the colours for which we love the Isles. Whitey grey rocks scattered at random, tufts of lush green sward and patches of thrift between. The black mourning band below is of medium height to indicate that the swell doesn't burst in here too often. Some of the sea rocks below are draped in edible purple dulse. Never seen another yacht there so best kept under your hat.

If you feel need of company it's a pleasant half mile pull by dinghy inside the reefs to the south entrance of Pool Doran.

The sun beat hard on our backs as we sailed up the Sound of Mull. Even more forestry on the east side since last here. The baronial pink Horsemen house on Morvern above Drimin showed great activity. Maybe Henry (ICC) there for some sport but no time to find out.



Des Moran's new *Nanette* at Inishmurray in July.

### Tobermory

Blue, yellow and orange buoys. What do they all mean? Man out to collect fees with undue promptitude didn't seem to know, but had no hesitation in taking our money. Awoke at 05.00 to utter peace, like the silence after a Naval bugle call of still. Shop after breakfast and drinks in The Mishnish. Ricky got a bung, just a bit too small for our inflatable (I'd stupidly forgotten the real one). He and Stephen made up a perfectly good substitute.

Leisurely start to Eigg for the next night in south bay, later on a mooring said to be a RIB one, but ok as wind light. Not as much crack here as when Schellenberg was in the Lodge but the islander's buy-out seems to be working. Very pleasant drinks with south sea views outside the shop by the pier, and supper there afterwards.

Eigg on my face as we hit rock going north! But running slow and bounced off. 'That new pier has altered the marks', was my only excuse.

Armadale for major Clan Donald Gathering. Joined in lunchtime drinks and various festivities. Great welcome from Randal Clanranald, Andrew his son also Godfrey McDonald and Rob and Marion Parker McDonald.

With declining stamina, I found myself too tired to attend the Dinner but Graham produced 'Culinary Rembrandt' on board, and we saw some of the gang again next morning.

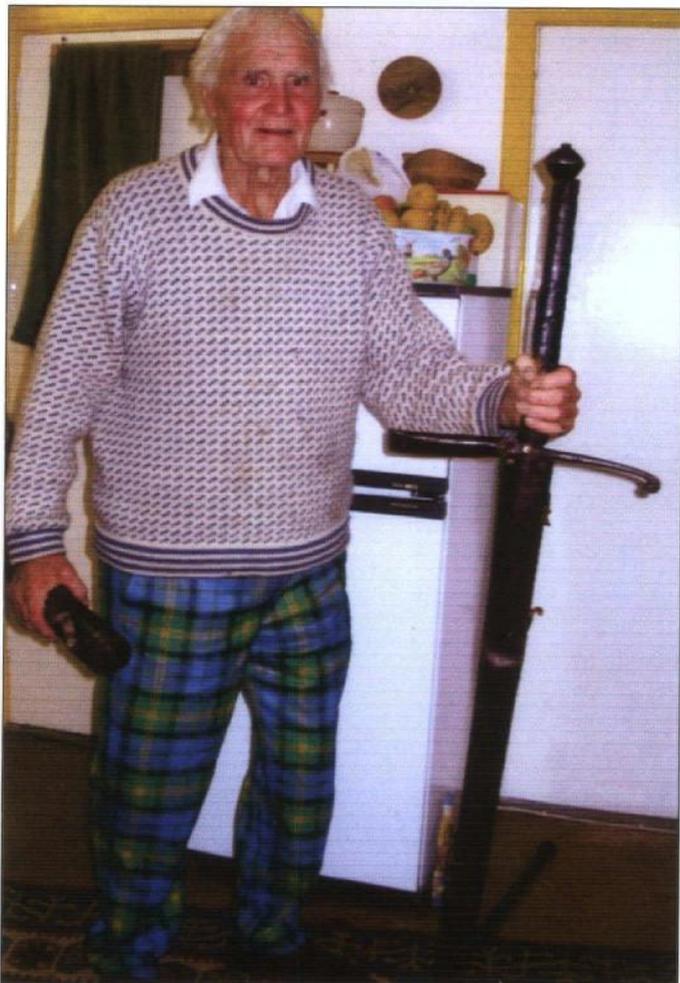
*Aileach* our Highland Galley was on show to the public afloat cared for by Crom. Isle Ornsay next day looking at its prettiest. Rhododendrons in full flower round the wee church on the east slope. A walk on shore, then dinner on board. Ian Noble at home but not on view.

Next sailed at three knots south in sunshine to Loch Nevis. Ashore at new pier for excellent dinner. The Old Forge well up to its reputation.

Ricky and Stephen had to leave next morning so left them at Mallaig Station. Graham and I headed north aiming to go round Skye anti-clockwise.

Made Raasay that night and explored the Manor House and early church relics behind it. Prunella Powell not there but she still comes up from London. As Prunella Stack she started The League of Health and Beauty near our house in Portrush so a very old friend.

Portree next day and good shopping ashore. Too rough at yacht moorings to land in morning in our inflatable. First year I haven't cruised with a fixed dinghy which would have been so much better; well worth the tow.



Wallace with Bruce's sword on Rathlin.

Weather, after days of sun and light winds, seems to be breaking.

So being short handed decided not to go on round the top of Skye. There wouldn't have been time for Outer Hebrides, much as I would love to have seen them once more. Graham has to be back at weekend, so better that we make it easy for Des Moran (ICC) to join by calling again at Mallaig.

Tried to anchor on very hard sand in exposed spot off big boathouse on southwest side of Scalpay. After four tries couldn't get a hook, even the faithful fisherman, to hold. The young laird came out to tell us we should have tried in the next camas south, and offered some frozen venison. Deer are farmed on a big scale and having done a lot of stalking, I would love to have seen a bit of the operation. But a southwesterly wind was forecast. Time seemed to call for getting thro' the narrows into Loch Alsh, so wrongly and needlessly we missed going up to the house, and went on.

Mallaig again. The wee pool inshore of the fishing boat piers seemed peaceful and little changed. Des joined us with bags of juicy steaks, chops and other goodies. Headed for an Open Day on Muck. It was low key but friendly.

Lamburgers for lunch at The Cottage. Watched a man cleverly chain-sawing bird figures, eagle and owl, from a log. Nicholas McEwan is perhaps the sturdiest character of the many Lairds I have been lucky enough to meet. Reminds me a bit of Rex Gage on Rathlin. Strong, kindly-eyes face, a competent seaman and firm hands-on manager of the island's farming economy. His son, about twenty, was there busy repainting family working MFV, and looked like a good one to take over in due course.

Sped south next day on a longish leg to Coll. This was to introduce Des to Nicholas McLean-Bristol, the Laird and his intriguing castle. The castle is such a perfect display of defensive devices that arriving unannounced one half expects a shower of boiling oil. But no sweat this time!

Welcomed to coffee and copies of his 600 page History of Clan McLean. The current most attractive feature is the circular view from a concealed gap below the conical roof of the east turret.

Inshore passage passing close west of Lunga; rafts of seabird in water. Blackback devours puffin in full view, regardless of our protests (no gun on board).

South down Sound of Iona and on to Colonsay to call on my cousin Georgina, looking very frail with MS, but cheerful as always.

The stock in her bookshop House of Lochar and her knowledge of the trade are unique in the whole west. She'll find you a hard-to-trace book with speed and efficiency.

Inshore to Corrievreckan next. Slack water calculated and double checked. Sums were right so got through with hardly a ripple. Disappointing in a way for Des who was keyed up for rows of steep breakers! Another time maybe!

Tied up at the fisherman's berth east of locks at Crinan. An eider leading four dark coloured ducklings paddled past. Nice but not unusual, only this time the fifth and leading chick was fluffy yellow. Yes, yellow! Was it an adventure the old girl had in the rushes? Or a survivor from another brood? Or just a 'sport'. Past before I could grab a camera. Would love to know if it survived. Did anyone else see it?

Got 05.20 shipping forecast. Fair winds to come, but sad that it is no longer preceded by jolly wake-up tunes like 'What shall we do with the Drunken Sailor?'

Lowlandman Bay, then Port Ellen as next stops. Really good information on fishing as done seventy years ago from Jim McFarlane. He still fishes lobsters solo in a half-decker called *Spray*. As a child he was fed on cormorants and eider! Neither popular diet in Ireland so far as I know. Horsehair snoods were

much better on long lines in old days as they twitched and made bait move around. Horses watch out.

Islay fishing boat ballast around 1860 consisted of carefully selected round stones, cricket ball size. Ideal ammo, if boats came poaching from Kintyre! Jim drove us to the beautiful new Columba Centre near Bowmore and later to the famous Kildalton Cross. Also the site where a pair of cannon were mounted across the harbour facing south to keep the French at bay. A wee magazine remains neatly tucked behind the crest. Wonderful crack and drams!

South to Rathlin for lunch for Lord Bruce with Peter and Moyra Campbell on Saturday June 25th. He arrived with three lively sons by RIB from Clyde, escorted by other RIBS from local yacht clubs.

David Bruce is a young man of great charm. He brought along his forefather's two-handed claymore which we were allowed to swing. God help anyone facing a Scot armed with it. This was the seven hundredth anniversary of Robert the Bruce's winter spent on the island. The family are sure this is the genuine location in spite of claims by Scottish localities. Two evenings of musical festivities in a marquee with songs from Frances Black and Skerryvore, a group from Lewis followed.

Graham Kane had to jump ship. Lewis Purser joined, sadly minus his very sweet Breton wife Melanie who at the last minute found herself busy at home with young. We two spent a gentle week getting as far west as Inistrahull with calls on friends at Portrush, Joy McCormick at Greencastle, Chris Tinne at Culdaff.

Fishing boat names have been a bit of a collectors item for me on this part of the coast *Spiritual Vessel* was a winner, to be seen for many years at Bunnagee Pier, Culdaff. Religious allusions are less frequent than in the past. Traces of sentiment, romance and of course family, remain. The ring of the names add to the pleasure of berthing among a friendly fishing community as one does at Greencastle:

*Deirdre, Deirdre K (Sligo), Bonny and Kelly, Paul and Stephen, Carmara, Santa Village (Clonmany), Summer Star, Green Isle, Foyle Venture, Cairn Atchil (maybe I misread this one). Stormdrift and Sea Otter* seen passing.



Portmore, Inistrahull has hardly changed since this picture of a younger me was taken in 1952. Barney Grant, on right, was a lighthouse keeper at the time.

The Hull looked green and gracious even in heavy rain, and shelter good as always in summer. The dolmen behind the School House seems to give azimuth alignments, hence calendar dates with different parts on Torr Rocks and mainland. But I haven't figured out which. At least the existence of the dolmen provides proof of early occupation, useful in the total absence of written records. The open air chapel in the lee of the rocky hillock nearby is unique; delineated only by a rock wall and a row of single rocks on three sides. An irregular flat stone serves as an altar at the western end, a cross is faintly incised on an undressed vertical rock behind it. Pause there and I think you'll get a palpable spiritual feel from the men with bare heads and shawled women who have stood here bowed in prayer, often in rain and wind, for many generations.

On an earthier note every square yard of the island is sprinkled with rabbit droppings, but the rabbits still 'no size', as Dennis Munigal at Bunnagee used to scornfully remark. The four remaining Red Deer hinds flourish. No seals appeared in the port so they may have been chased away by fishermen from the Head.

A fair wind home to the River Bann to cap a much enjoyed voyage.

*'Sailing is a sport - not war!'*

(J.B. Kearney)

**Wallace Clark writes of Thoughts after Sailing – A post-voyage Brain Haze**

Our voyage descriptions or logs commonly cover planning, preparation, landfall and departure. The pleasures of the “Brain Haze”, which hovers in the back of one’s mind afterwards, if the trip’s been a good one, is an additional pleasure. Here is the a set of impressions pencilled in the back of the log book while I was being driven home after three weeks in the Hebrides.

The first heave of the bow as it lifted to a swell outside the harbour heads.

Low green islets seen up sun, floating over quicksilver waters. Faraway blue mountains viewed over dapple seas. Eilean Casteil in the Treshnish silhouetted against a wall to wall sunset of colours as fierce as the inside of a blast furnace. Black walls of hills rising against the light. Fog wraiths five hundred feet up, blanking off the thousand foot cliffs of Skye. Barr’s peak temptingly on the skyline under a ceiling of grey cloud.

A lonely buoy off Scalpay, tilting in the swell and showing its red underbody through translucent water. Tidal whirlpools plucking at the tiller in narrows between Skye and Raasay.

A brave merganser flying tight circles over his mate to drive off predatory gulls as she swam ahead of her chicks – Like a carrier-based fighter flying a Combat Air Patrol. ‘Mother and Child’ – a female guillemot swimming two miles off the land with chick beside her. A coronet of cormorants perched on a low arching reef.

Lying at ease on deck to watch the bow pushing ripples over still water and throwing tiny bubbles to be eaten up by the advancing wave which begot them. A pairs of dolphins leaping joyfully alongside the bow for almost an hour off Coll.

Good sounds – The rattle of an anchor chain, the tap of halliards against a wooden mast, the sucking dry of a bilge pump, gulls croaking in weird chorus, seals moaning out of sight in the dusk. Best of all – the chink of glasses as a Noon Balloon is handed up on a tray to the cockpit.

All shore things remain unimportant – business, domestic or social obligations temporarily shrunk to insignificance – as if as seen at wrong end of a telescope.



**THE DUNN'S DITTY SALVER**

AWARDED FOR THE BEST DUNN'S DITTY SUBMITTED

The Middle Watch – our own navigation lights glowing softly on the sails and side decks. At dawn – an eye shaped patch of blue in a 10/10 overcast sky. Is it God taking a look at sailors below?

At the start of sunset – pools of pale blue with wee white clouds like a squashed archipelago of silvery islets over the black hills of Jura.

Sailing south from Port Ellen – high pink cumulus over Ireland ahead.

The neat ellipse of Knocklayd Mountain showing over Rathlin Altacarry flasher looking lowest at east end. The Paps hidden in dark thunderclouds astern. An empty sea, sighting during crossing only one distant boat, which is about average. As we drive home eyes which have become used to looking only at far-off views are irritated by having to focus on multiple nearby hedges and house fronts.

The green Irish countryside seems dull. Why? I think it's because it is not moving. Seen from a small boat the sea is a living thing, always in motion, changing with the light, the wind and the action of the tide. It gives health, the chance of adventure and makes more friendships than any other element. As a tree or shrub becomes much more eye-catching and attractive when stirred by a breeze, it is the constant change, the poetry of motion that is a large part of the sea's charm.

My relaxed brain is in good form to lay off a course or pick a passage through rocks, strumbles or tidal whirls, but useless for at least 24 hours for tackling office decisions or domestic dilemmas.

Brain hazes like the above can extend a cruise by staying at the back of the mind for several days. With a thousand similar they make up an important part of a priceless storehouse of memories.

**Sean Fergus write of cruising Estrellita to the southwest of Ireland**

In the very unsettled weather this year I cruised *Estrellita* to the southwest of Ireland in July/August. We visited the usual haunts before reaching Crookhaven and Schull and then returned to Carlingford. During a weather-bound day in Kilmore Quay, I read David Williams' account of his voyage to North Brittany in the 2006 ICC annual and it brought to mind an incident in these same waters in 1983.

My “crew” that year comprised my pregnant wife Karen and my three-year-old daughter Jessica. Aboard our Shipman 28, Sinead we visited Arklow, Dale, Padstow, Fowey, Penzance, Coverack, Plymouth, Guernsey, Sark and Jersey and then sailed to the Isle de Brehat, anchoring in a little cove.

Next morning we sailed up river assisted by a strong flood tide. When we reached Lezardrieux, the marina appeared full. With difficulty we moored fore and aft in a line of boats on the opposite side of the river. I rowed my crew ashore in the dingy where the harbour master kindly offered us a berth. Leaving Karen to take my lines I rowed, battling a strong tidal broadside, back across to Sinead.

Making sure the engine was running well before I freed my lines, I pushed the gear handle forward but it didn't engage and I had no drive. Instead the boat swung sideways and was pushed up the river at over 3 knots. I had no control and was completely helpless as the boat rushed sideways up the river past the moored boats. Karen saw what was happening and raised the alarm. Meantime I was speeding up the river to rocks and shallows. I then observed that the boat had swung around again and was now going astern and parallel to the end line of smaller boats. Just as I passed the last boat I was five feet off. I rushed to the bow, grabbed the bowline lying on the deck and jumped, line in hand into a small half decker. I didn't manage to cleat the line forward, but then, just as I was being pulled back I secured it on a stern cleat and *Sinead* came peacefully to rest astern. As I nursed my bruises my wife arrived with the harbourmaster, who casually explained that it was probably weed on the prop. Nothing like a bit of local knowledge!! He was right, of course, the folding prop had failed to open as it was entangled with weed.

After a couple of days we sailed back to Dun Laoghaire via the Scilly Isles. Our new baby boy arrived in October and was 'none the worse for wear'.

# Marie Claire cruises east coast of Spain, The Balearics, Sardinia and Corsica

Sean McCormack

## Part 1: 20th August 2006 to 25th October 2006

Having spent most of July and August out of the water in Campello, I arrived back on August 20 to prepare for launching and the remainder of the cruising year. I found the marina friendly and helpful and it is only a 20-minute train ride to Alicante. They do not use cradles but support the boat at six points with small square wooden pallets and then strap the boat down using two slings over the hull and tensioned using fixed rings in the ground.

I was away from Campello on August 24 on my own, heading south to the anchorage in Bahia de Santa Pola where I spent two nights. I then berthed for three nights in the convenient but expensive marina in Alicante. Here Peter Quigley and Tony Claffey joined me. We now headed north again with a night at anchor in Punta del Albir followed by a night in Marina de Moraira.

On August 31 we had a memorable, fast downwind sail to Puerto Gandia marina where we stayed three nights. We were the only non-Spanish boat here and enjoyed our stay, helped by the use of the Club Nautico swimming pool. Tony had not felt well for the previous number of days and paid three visits to local hospitals with severe pain in his neck and face.

We had a gentle sail under genoa only on September 03 to an anchorage south of Cabo Cullera where we over-nighted. A lot of building is taking place on the hill overlooking the anchorage. A dinghy club ashore, resulting in plenty of action on the water, added to our enjoyment here.

Over the next three days we visited the marina Puerto de Siles, and Pobla marina in Puerto de Farnels. From Puerto de Siles we took a taxi to Sagunto, a town with a tragic history. It is the most visited site on the Costa Azahar, mainly because of its historical monuments, which includes a well-preserved Roman Amphitheatre built into the side of a cliff. We walked up a steep hill in very hot conditions, to view the ruins of an old castle overlooking the town, which dates back to before the invasion by Hannibal in the year 219 B.C. The original town was Iberian, later Greek and then Roman. It is famous for its nine months defence against Hannibal and his Carthaginian armies. When Rome abandoned them to their fate, the citizens built a huge fire and the women, children, sick and old threw themselves into it. The able-bodied men went off to die in the last battle. The result was the complete destruction of the town and its

fortifications. Later the Romans did a lot of rebuilding, but the towns suffered destruction again during the French occupation and then the Spanish civil war.

Due to a crew change *Marie Claire* berthed for five nights in the shallow marina of Puerto Saplaya. This marina is more convenient for visiting the city of Valencia than Valencia marina, which is a bit remote and necessitates a 30-minute taxi trip to the city centre. The artificial marina consists of a series of waterways surrounded by apartments, restaurants and bars, enjoying a relaxed informal atmosphere. There is a fine beach beside the marina and buses from a nearby stop, take you into Valencia or to Alboraya, from where you can catch the frequent electric train to the city centre. There is also a huge shopping centre a few hundred metres from the marina. I was given the only free berth, beside the dinghy slip and directly in front of the small friendly sailing club. The marina is quite shallow and I went aground briefly while reversing into this berth.

In Saplaya one day, I was returning to *Marie Claire* as a fleet of Finns that were preparing for a championship were sailing out of the marina. In the distance I saw a large Irish tricolour embossed on a mainsail. The next day as they were rigging ashore, I discovered the boat was David Burrows' old boat which is now owned by a South African guy, but the Burrows name is still on the mainsail.

Michael McHugo joined ship in Saplaya on Monday September 11, and Ciaran Hughes the following day, due to missing his flight the previous day. To make matters worse for Ciaran, he had to fly home the next day due to staff problems at work. Oh yes, retirement is great!

We then spent a night in the large and unfriendly marina of



*Marie Claire* at anchor in Anse de Roccapina, southwest Corsica.

Photo: Sean McCormack



Sean, John and Emily in Maddalena marina, Sardinia.

Valencia. There was a lot of work taking place here at the entrance, which looks like a new marina or major extension of the existing marina. On the short trip between Saplanya and Valencia marina, we sailed into the new Americas Cup harbour, which was nearing completion and it was immediately obvious that money was no object here. Three pairs of these giant yachts were match racing every afternoon during our weeks stay in the area. It crossed my mind that perhaps we should be cruising this area in 2007 rather than 2006, so as to see the real action.

The following days saw *Marie Claire* again in Puerto de Siles, followed by Oropesa de Mar, and Vinaroz where Michael McHugo left for home. During the sail to Vinaroz the wind increased to force 6-7 and was on the nose for the last two hours and it was a relief to get into the tranquillity of the marina. On September 17, I was on my own for the 58 mile trip to Tarragona. I had a 07.30 start and about noon the wind freshened and was soon up to force 6 but I was always able to sail my course. It was a most enjoyable sail but it was also nice to get into harbour. Vincent Dromey came on board here and we stayed two nights.

We then stayed a night in Sitges marina. We liked it here as the resort, which was popular with the Irish 30 years ago, is unspoiled and has many interesting buildings including its large church overlooking the beach. More time was needed, and a return visit on our way back south was noted.

Our next port of call, on September 20, was Port Vell marina in Barcelona. Vincent Dromey's wife Patricia joined us here. This marina is right in the city centre and we found it very dirty, but convenient for provisioning and city exploring. The city itself is a wonderful experience and should not be missed if anywhere in the region. It would be easy to spend two weeks here as there are countless sites to see and explore. We stayed just two nights as we planned to call again on our way back south. Continuing north from Barcelona we made calls to Puerto de El Masnou, Puerto de Arenys de Mar, Sant Feliu de Guixols and Puerto de Palmos. This was to be our turning point, as I had to get back south again to El Campello, where I had booked to winter out of the water.

On September 26 we headed south again, with overnights in Puerto de Blanes, Puerto Balis, Premia de Mar, before arriving again in Barcelona. While on the beach one day in Balis, I found myself in the middle of quite a dramatic scene. Two

young lads of about 15 years of age were slowly walking by me on the beach, when suddenly from behind me, two policemen with drawn revolvers pounced on them. There was a lot of shouting and screaming as one of the policemen succeeded in getting the handcuffs on one lad. The other policeman was having more difficulty and the young lad managed to get away, running faster than the law in the soft sand. This policeman called on his colleague for help, whereupon the lad in handcuffs took off in another direction. I do not know the outcome of the incident, but it certainly provided entertainment for the small number of people on the beach.

In Barcelona harbour, on our way into Port Vell marina, we passed two large French naval vessels and one Dutch submarine tied alongside. This city marina

could only take us for one night and we used the opportunity to replenish the ships stores from a nearby supermarket. We moved for the next three nights to the marina in Puerto Olimpico, which is clean and efficient but a distance away from the city and supermarkets. During our stay here, Raftery Ahern who was in town on business, joined us one night for drinks and dinner. He is a son of John and Emily Ahern who have participated a number of times on this cruise. The Dromeys left for Dublin from here, to be replaced by Willie Finnie.

After Barcelona, we again went to Sitges, staying two nights before going to Torredembarra anchorage where we spent an uncomfortable night due to swell. Another night was spent at anchor in Playa del Pinatel, in the lee of Cabo Salou, with swell again making life on board uncomfortable in the morning.

All this swell and rolling resulted in a preference for marinas for the remainder of the trip. Tarragona marina had our custom for two nights and this was also a crew change port, with Willie Finnie leaving and John and Emily Ahern arriving.

Over the next few days we gave our business to the following marinas for one night: Benicarlo, Puerto las Fuentes, Castellon de la Plana, Pobla Farnals, Valencia and Gandia. We found Benicarlo very depressing and dreary and one night was more than enough.

The night of October 16 saw us in Denia marina where we stayed two nights, making some necessary repairs and catching up on maintenance. On leaving Denia and while getting the main up in the mouth of the harbour, we got a heavy plastic bag wrapped around the propeller. This resulted in a few anxious moments before the ever-willing John went down and cut it free. We stayed a night in Moraira marina, which we had visited earlier on our way up the coast.

Due to strong winds, our visit to the dramatic marina in Calpe was extended to two days. I used this time to service the engine and perform some maintenance work in preparation for over-wintering. We arrived in Campello on October 21 where John and Emily departed, to recover in the luxury of a hotel in Alicante.

I was busy over the next three days as *Marie Claire* was lifted and chocked up ashore. I completed the task of securing her in preparation for my return to Ireland. Not knowing where *Marie Claire* would winter when I booked my flight home, I had chosen Murcia airport when Alicante would have been far

better. Checking on public transport to the airport, I discovered that the airport was nowhere near the city of Murcia and was advised not to go there. I got a train from Campello to Alicante and then a 2½ hour bus journey to San Jazier, from where I took a taxi to the nearby airport.

### Some observations on this part of the cruise

Huge funds have been invested in harbour and marina facilities. Valencia, Sagunto and Barcelona in particular have had massive new harbour extensions built. There is a terrible sameness about many of the marinas, which are constructed out into deep water, off straight coastlines. Functional yes, but very often the basic services required by a cruising yacht are too remote, with consequential lack of atmosphere in the marina environs.

All the anchorages mentioned were overnight stops but there were a number of others that made for enjoyable swim and lunch stops. However the east coast of Spain is not blessed with islands and snug coves for carefree anchoring and not helped either by an ever-present swell. Notwithstanding these constraints, it was a most enjoyable part of the cruise, helped by glorious Spanish weather, good food, excellent and cheap Rioja wines.

### Part 2: 26th March 2007 to 9th July 2007

I arrived back in Campello on March 26 to find *Marie Claire* antifouled and everything in order. The next three days were spent getting ready to sail as Vincent Dromey, who had arrived two days after me, had only 10 days and as I would be on my own then for two weeks, most of the non-essential work was postponed to that period.

On the morning of Friday March 30 *Marie Claire* had her first sail of 2007 with a fast, broad-reaching sail north to the marina of Moraira. This was to be our departure port on the Costa Blanca, on the last day of March, for the 55-mile trip to Ibiza. We motor-sailed in very light winds to the marina in San Antonio, where there were plenty of spaces, unlike during the high season, when it is near impossible to get a berth. I understand that San Antonio is the main centre on Ibiza if you want to party all night, and it can be wild and outrageous during the high season. However, during our visit it was very civilised, most of the visitors being rather elderly Spaniards from the northern part of Spain. Not surprisingly, many premises had not yet reopened.

Three weeks were given to circumnavigating Ibiza and enjoying the splendour of nearby Espalmador and Formentera. We transited both the Freu Mediano and Freu Grande passages, which are the only two navigable gaps in the ridge of islands and rocky banks that run south from Ibiza through Espalmador to Formentera. We particularly enjoyed Puerto El Espalmador, where we picked up mooring buoys on our two overnight visits. The magnificent long white beach, speckled with a few palm trees in a wonderful wild and remote flat terrain, will be a treasured memory.

We made a swim and lunch stop at the nearby Formentera anchorage of Ensa del Cabrito, picking up one of 20 mooring buoys. Five other yachts were on other moorings. About 15



minutes later while preparing lunch below, I noticed a pink coloured catamaran very close to us. On going on deck we discovered that we were dragging quite fast in the fresh breeze, with the heavy, rather new-looking line and buoy still attached to *Marie Claire*, but obviously not to the seabed. So much for sound-looking moorings. About 15 minutes later we had to alert an arriving Spanish yacht about to pick up the same mooring.

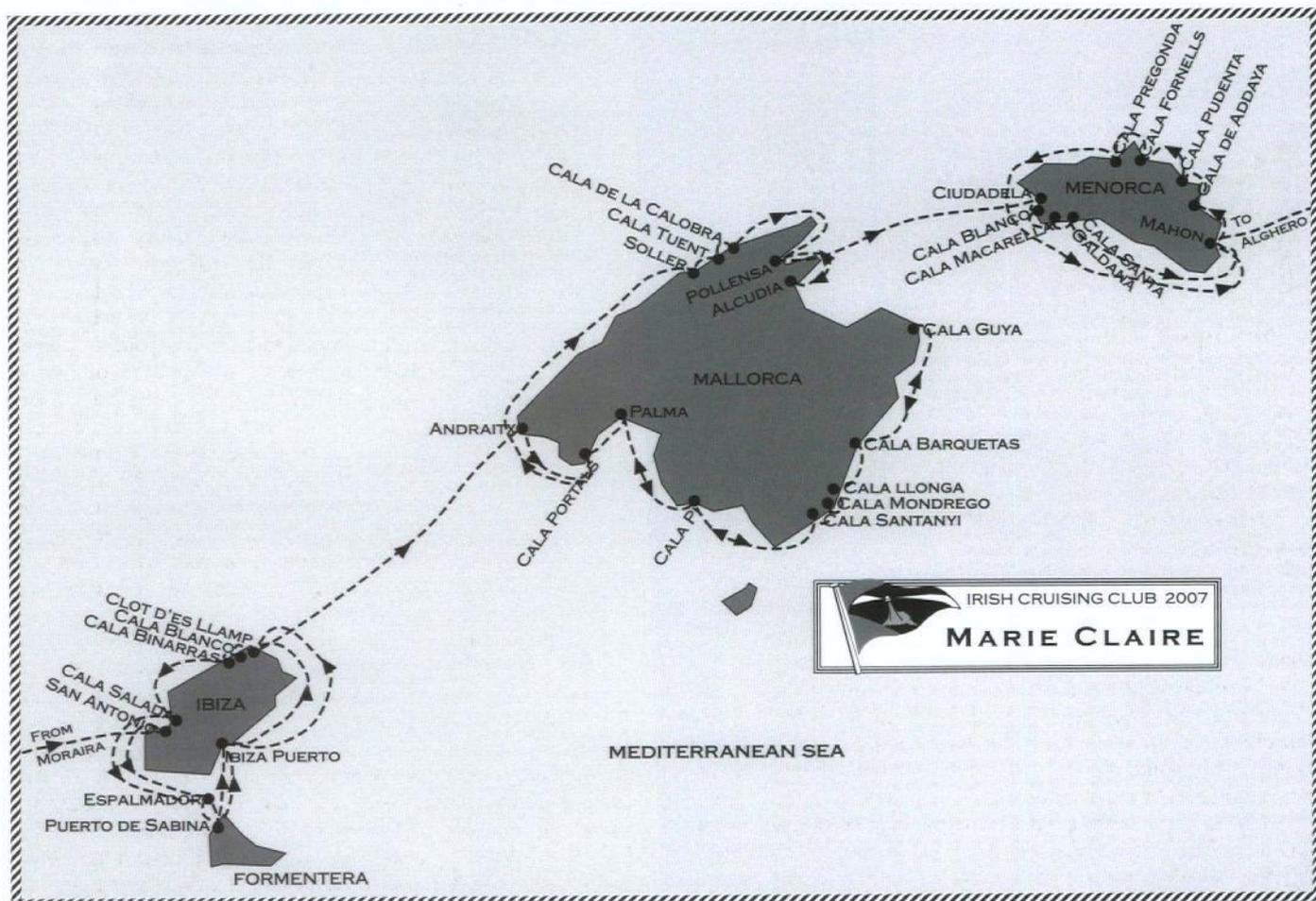
Vincent left for home while we were berthed in the Ibiza Neuva marina in Ibiza town. During the next two weeks on my own, I circumnavigated the island and attended to most of the work postponed after launching. This I did while berthed again in San Antonio marina and my six nights here was great value at €41.47. The weather while here, covering the Easter period, was awful with heavy rain and thunderstorms resulting in flooding over large areas. During a two-week period, a succession of lows covered the western Mediterranean, while Ireland basked in glorious summer weather thanks to stationary high pressure.

On my second visit to Puerto Espalmador, Adrian Stokes ICC arrived and we had a whiskey and chat on board *Dom Perignon* and arranged to meet up for dinner in a few days, at Marina Puerto de Sabina on Formentera, where he keeps his boat. He was very helpful with local information.

I was very impressed with Ibiza, particularly its mountainous north coast, covered in large areas of pine forests and its more fertile central plains. Its rugged coast boasts hundreds of anchorages, many in small beautiful calas with beaches at their heads. My three favourites were, Cala Blanco and Cala Binirras on the north coast, and Cala Salada on the west coast just north of San Antonio.

Kevin Cullen joined me in Ibiza town and we potted to Clot d'es Llamp anchorage on the northeast corner of the island. From here on April 26 we departed at 22.40 for the 48 mile overnight trip to Puerto de Andraitx, on Mallorca's southwest corner. This was completed without incident in a light southeasterly breeze, which allowed us to sail 75% of the way. While at anchor here, Neil Kenefick ICC in *Imagine* made a brief service-call while on passage to Palma and Valencia.

A very enjoyable four weeks was spent cruising around the beautiful island of Mallorca helped by Kevin Cullen, Killian and Brid Halpin of H.Y.C., Jim and Freda Stewart, and at the very end, John and Emily Ahern. Jim was a key member of my racing crew in Howth some years ago. From what I had read and heard about from friends, I had high expectations for this popular cruising ground and I was not disappointed. Mallorca,



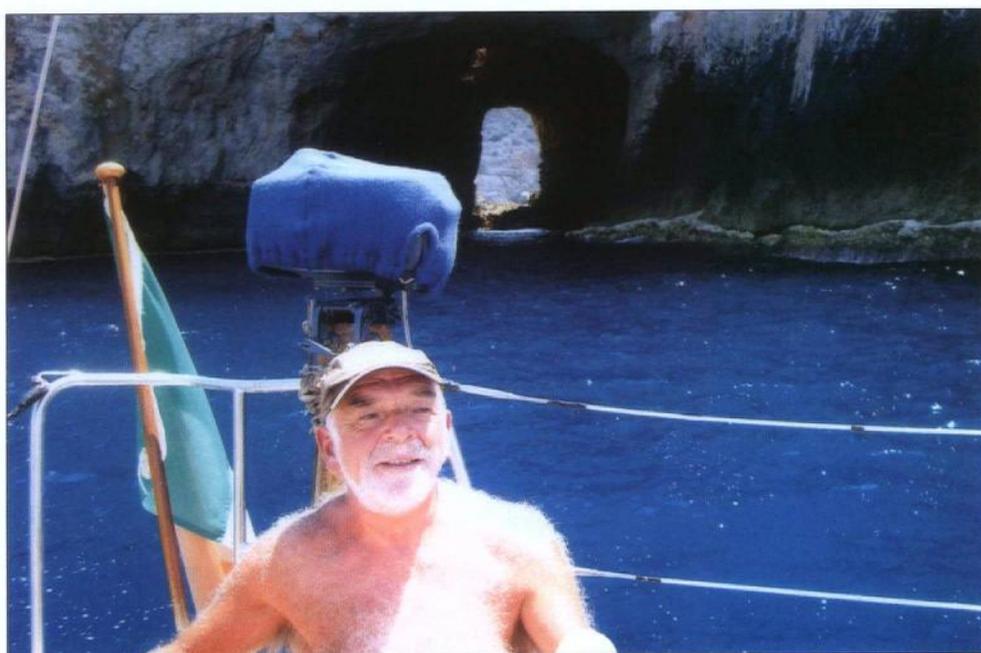
the capital of the Balearics, is the largest and most cosmopolitan of the group. Palma, the capital, is a beautiful city, well worth exploring and a visit to its Gothic cathedral is a must. Its huge harbour gives shelter to thousands of yachts in nine marinas or pontoons.

Most days involved a midday stop for swims and lunch, and then an anchorage or marina for the night. With such a choice of anchorages, and no matter the wind direction, it was

normally possible to find a secure spot for the night. Despite the vast number of boats tied up in marinas, we were surprised at how few seemed to move and how quiet most of the anchorages were. We were not complaining. We enjoyed Palma, having called there twice. We hired a car to facilitate crew changes and to see some of the island away from the coast. This proved well worthwhile and gave us a better overall impression of the island. The drive over the mountains to Valldemossa was quite spectacular, but not for the faint-hearted.

The company of a school of dolphins for half an hour one day, south of Soller, gave us all much enjoyment as they swam and dived alongside and just in front of the boat. Getting good photos proved difficult.

We had so many beautiful and memorable anchorages that I find it difficult to pick out the best, but clockwise from Palma the following will long be remembered: Cala Portals, Soller, Cala Tuent, Cala de la Calobra, Cala Barquetas, Cala d'Or in Puerto de Cala Llonga, Cala Mondrago and Cala Santanyi. Cala Pi in the middle of the south coast is memorable for other reasons. It is a beautiful but very small and narrow anchorage between high cliffs. We planned to spend the night here and had put out a stern



The skipper at Neptune's Grotto, Sardinia.

Photo: John Ahern



Isla Pregonda, Cala Pregonda, Menorca.

Photo: Sean McCormack

anchor to restrict swinging. As we finished dinner just before dark, the wind suddenly freshened and with more swell and waves rebounding off the nearby cliffs, the prospect of a restful night at anchor seemed rather remote. Both anchors were taken in quickly and we motored to the nearby Marina El Estanol, where after some difficulty in the strong wind, we secured in a vacant berth. The first of two calls to Cala de la Calobra, which is very popular and has quite dramatic scenery ashore, resulted in an anchor watch for a few hours in the early morning. Swell and some freshening of the wind was the problem here; two yachts that came in late the evening before and took lines ashore, departed, as did another that started to drag. About 05.00 things settled down again and we caught up on some lost sleep.

John and Emily Ahern joined ship on May 22 in Pollensa and next morning we bade farewell to Mallorca and set sail for Ciudadela on Menorca's west coast. This proved a good choice, as it is a most attractive natural harbour, in the form of a long narrow cala with ancient quays at its head. While we were here, there was a scare regarding a phenomenon known as *resaca* or *seichea*, which occurs under certain meteorological conditions. This can result in the sea level falling and rising by up to 1.5 metres every ten or fifteen minutes. It was only afterwards that we became aware of the scare.

On the evening of May 24 we left our pontoon berth in Ciudadela, to anchor for the night in Cala Blanca, a short distance south of Ciudadela. The next day we had a lunch stop in the beautiful but rolly Cala Macarella. We then overnighted in Cala Santa Galdana, where the Aherns' had booked into one of the Sol chain of hotels for a week. This was to be followed by a second week in a hotel in Mahon, when they would rejoin *Marie Claire*.

The next two weeks entailed a rather leisurely, solo, anticlockwise

circumnavigation of Menorca. This was completed in glorious weather and I experienced some fabulous anchorages, particularly on the north coast. This north coast provided four memorable stops, namely, Cala Pregonda, Puerto de Fornells, Cala Pudenta and Cala de Addaya. During my stop over in Cala de Addaya, work was underway on the addition of another pontoon, which will be welcomed in this popular harbour. A note in the log-book on May 31, while anchored in Cala Pudenta, would reflect many of the more remote anchorages I enjoyed. "A Swiss yacht was the only other craft in the anchorage and they left soon after I arrived, leaving me with just the company of 10 goats, while I swam, enjoyed sundowners and had dinner".

On Friday June 8, the Aherns rejoined *Marie Claire* in Mahon harbour at a pontoon below their hotel. We then motored over to Cala Taulera via the rather shallow Canal de San Jordi. This cala is a long narrow inlet between La Mola and Isla del Lazareto, which gives complete protection and consequently is very popular. Mahon harbour is a large, attractive and interesting commercial, naval, fishing and yachting port, with excellent facilities. The harbour offers the choice of marina, pontoon or anchoring facilities for well over 1000 craft. The harbour is steeped in tradition and even today there are many reminders of the British occupation. As one of the largest deep-water harbours in the , it was much coveted and changed hands six times between 1708 and 1802. The old fortifications around the harbour entrance are worth exploring and the guided walks of the Fort of Isabel at La Mola, are conveniently accessed from the anchorage of Cala Taulera.

*Marie Claire* weighed anchor in Cala Taulera at 21.45 on June 8 to make the 200 mile trip to Alghero on Sardinia's northwest coast. The weather was fine and settled with a flat



John proudly displays his prize.

Photo: Sean McCormack

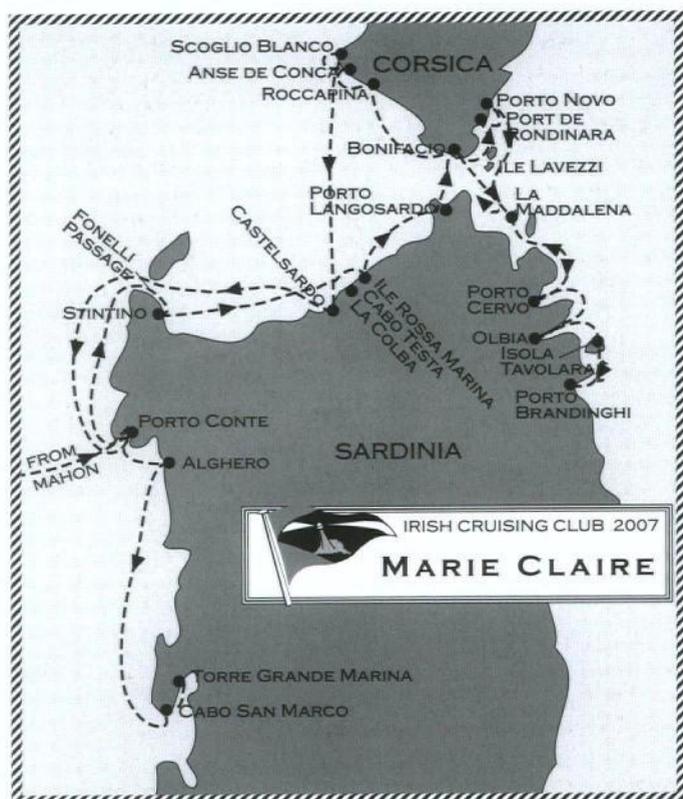
sea and we expected to have to motor the full trip. I had been in my bunk only a few minutes when at 23.30 we came to a sudden stop and luckily John quickly took the engine out of gear. It was soon evident that the propeller had fouled a very large synthetic bag. We tried unsuccessfully to remove it, working from the bathing ladder and using various techniques. John then volunteered to get into the water to try and cut it away using a serrated knife. He was less than a minute in the water when he cried out and hastily climbed out of the water. He was badly bitten by jellyfish on the upper body and was in great pain. I could now see hundreds of them around the fouling material, attracted either by it or the light from the torch I was using to aid John. While Emily attended to John's stings, I started sailing at less than one knot in the direction of Sardinia, while at the same time thinking that maybe we should be heading back to Mahon. I suggested waiting for daylight and using the dinghy to work from. However, 90 minutes after John first entered the water he was prepared to give it another try, this time covered from head to toe in swim cap, goggles, neck towel, boiler suit, gloves and socks. One extra sting and 30 minutes later most of the offending material was on the deck, and what a pile it was. It reminded me of the large container that builders have sand delivered in, when working on house jobs. I rather suspect that in this case it was farm fish-meal rather than sand. John, you are a star.

The rest of the passage went without incident and we arrived into Alghero marina at 10.10 on Sunday June 10, covering a distance of 199.9 miles. Alghero consists of an old, walled town and an adjoining modern town. It also boasts a fine sandy beach and consequently draws many visitors. The fine, sheltered harbour has recently been extended and now can accommodate over 2500 boats. Strolling through the old walled town is popular as there are hundreds of shops catering for the many visitors. After the shops, it is nice to sit and sip a coffee or beer and watch the madding throngs. We enjoyed our visit here.

We departed Alghero June 12 and dropped the hook in Cala del Bollo for a swim and coffee. This anchorage is in Porto Conte, a large bay to the west of Alghero. It is also used by the ferry-boats taking people to see the nearby Neptune's Grotto, accessed by a steep staircase. As we were not feeling very energetic this morning, we opted for viewing it from *Marie Claire*, having first rounded the headland of Cabo Caccia. The water is very deep, so we were able to get in close and take some photos. We then continued north and used the shallow and unnerving Fornelli passage, to reach our night anchorage at Stintino. This saved over 20 miles compared to passing north of Isola Asinara. The next day we crossed Golfo dell Asinara to Isola Rossa marina, where we refuelled and provisioned. The following morning we departed with the intention of making it to Bonifacio on Corsica. However the wind was light northeast on the nose and later freshened considerably, which made a change of plan prudent. We found good shelter on the south side of Capo Testa, in an anchorage known as La Colba. We were no sooner anchored than the wind fell light.

Next morning the wind freshened from the southwest, making breakfast a bit on the uncomfortable side. The 12 mile trip to Bonifacio was a comfortable reach and we were given a berth beside the quay, with shops, bars and restaurants to hand. The rest of the day was spent attending to various chores. We had a late, forgettable dinner in a quayside restaurant. Afterwards John and I climbed the steps to the old citadel going through the entrance and drawbridge, then admired the view while getting our breath back.

Bonifacio harbour, on the south coast of Corsica, is a dramatic anchorage being literally a slit in the chalk cliffs. It only opens up when you are close up to it, to reveal one of the most memorable natural harbours in the western



Mediterranean. The limestone cliffs have gradually been eaten away under the old walled town, resulting in the outermost houses ending up perched on a large natural balcony over the sea itself. Not recommended for sleep-walkers! It is nowadays a popular tourist destination and it is very enjoyable to stroll along the old quay with all its bars, restaurants and shops, but be aware of the car and motor-cycle traffic which still competes for space.

After leaving Bonifacio on the evening of June 16, we over-nighted in the lovely anchorage of Port de Rondinara, on the southeast corner of Corsica. We were anchored off the beach here and the next morning about 12 cattle shared the beach with the sunbathers until late morning. The following night saw us anchored in the south bay of the nearby deserted and wooded anchorage of Porto Novo.

Further cruising in Corsica was postponed as we set out to cross over to Ile Lavezzi and the hugely popular anchorage at Cala Lazarina. The island lies in a maze of rocks as indeed does the anchorage. The island is a nature reserve with little vegetation and surrounded by rocks sculpted into round and odd shapes, is both beautiful and mysterious. The mystery relates to the frigate *La Semillante*, which foundered in a gale off the island in 1855. It was carrying 773 French troops to the Crimean War and there was not a single survivor. In the days that followed the mangled bodies were washed ashore but only one, an officer, could be identified. All are buried in two cemeteries nearby and commemorated by a pyramidal structure on the southwest of the island. The tragedy was witnessed by the island's only occupant – a leper and shepherd, resulting in his insanity.

June 19 saw us back in Sardinian waters with our arrival in La Maddalena marina and this proved to be a good stop, as we liked the place very much. Over the next two days we explored some of the anchorages on the upmarket Costa Smeralda, looked into Porto Cervo, (no charge for looking) before arriving into Olbia on June 21 to facilitate a crew change. We were given a berth in the marina here. On checking in with the marina office, I was told that they did not have shower facilities

and the charge was €30 per night, cash only. The next day the toilets in the clubhouse were locked as they had a problem. The gentleman in charge of the marina we found to be very unhelpful and unfriendly and this was the first time since setting out on this cruise that I have had this experience. After two nights in the marina, and as Kevin and Jacinta Monks were not arriving until Monday, staying another three nights in the marina did not appeal, so I moved to alongside the old commercial pier, where about 10 yachts were already tied up. There was no charge for the three nights I stayed here. We hired a car for four days, using it to see some of the island, leave John and Emily Ahern to Alghero airport on the Friday and returning again to the same airport on the following Monday to collect Kevin and Jacinta Monks.

Got away from Olbia June 26 after five nights and anchored at the southwest end of Isola Tavolara, expecting to find mooring buoys, but instead had to anchor. We then became aware of the possibility of strong northwest winds over the following two days. We upped the anchor at 18.15 and headed for the more secure and attractive anchorage of Porto Brandinghi, which we shared with five other yachts. The strong northwest wind duly arrived and we spent two nights here, without any trouble. The wind finally eased on the afternoon of June 28 and we made our way again to Porto Cervo, this time anchoring among 20 other visiting yachts. When leaving next morning, we looked into the marina to observe a lot of washing and polishing of some very big craft. We sailed about half the 25.5 mile journey to Bonifacio and the Monks were delighted to make this call, despite the loud disco music that continued until 01.30.

Having spent the night here, we moved to the southwest part of the island, spending two days visiting three of the most wonderful anchorages that you are ever likely to experience. These were, Anse de Roccapina, Scoglio Bianco and Anse de Conca. Don't miss them if you are in this area. The next day we left Corsica to head back to Sardinia, staying the night in Castlesardo marina. The following night we anchored in Cala Tramariglio, a pretty anchorage in Porto Conte, a large bay where we had stopped previously at another anchorage. The next morning we made the short trip to Alghero from where the Monks left for home.

On my own now for the next three days, until I flew home from Alghero. In the meantime I had to take *Marie Claire* down the west coast to Torre Grande marina, which is in the Golfo di Oristano. This I did on July 6 having to motor-sail most of the 45 miles. I anchored for the night in the shallow Cabo San Marco anchorage, before the short trip next morning into Torre Grande marina. The next two days were spent putting *Marie Claire* 'to bed' in preparation for her seven weeks out of the water, while I went home to get to know my wife Mary and grand children again. I went back out again on August 27 to see some more of Sardinia and Corsica, before exploring Elba and the Tuscan islands. I then planned a short period on the Italian mainland coast, before heading for the French Mediterranean coast and a winter out of the water, near the mouth of the Rhone.

In conclusion, a few observations: The Balearic Islands, Sardinia and Corsica have proved to be a fantastic cruising area and the high point of my three years cruising in these warmer waters. We dined and wine well ashore, but especially on board. Perhaps because of the number of overnight anchorages, but also because of the selection and price of excellent produce, my guess is that we dined on board four out of every five nights. We had some good sailing but, as you would expect in the Mediterranean, more time unfortunately was spent motoring or motor-sailing. I try to avoid marinas unless weather or provisioning needs dictate, so it is interesting to compare some statistics on parts 1 and 2 of the last 12 months cruising. Finally, a special word of thanks to all the friends who participated during the last 12 months and made the cruising so enjoyable.

	Part 1	Part 2
Nights in marinas	53	46
Nights at anchor	6	43
Nights at sea	0	3
Alongside overnight	0	4
Mooring overnight	0	4
New anchorages/ports visited	36	99
Mileage	810	1499

**John Clementson writes of a six-week saunter in the Hebrides**

Our gentle adventures aboard *Faustina II* in the Clyde are chronicled elsewhere. Earlier in the year Ann and I went north for a protracted six-week saunter in the Hebrides and the adjacent mainland and islands. We were lucky with the weather – it is clear that we had much more sun than those who were still back in Ireland where by all accounts it rained mightily. Our basic plan had been to visit Stornoway and St Kilda, places that neither of us had visited before. We made it Stornoway but not St Kilda. The problem was the weather-forecasting. Without doubt the quality of forecasts this year has been abysmal, so much so that they became a joke. We would be promised one thing and get entirely another. Before setting out for St Kilda we took the unusual measure (for us) of ringing in for a forecast. We were promised southwesterly force 1 – perfect. We set off from East Loch Tarbert early in

the morning, were through the Sound of Harris by 11.00, and made good if unspectacular progress towards the island. Then we heard the morning shipping forecast – now we were offered northeast 6 to 7!! We thought about this for a while before deciding, when 20 miles short of St Kilda, that it would be prudent to turn back to an anchorage on the mainland. The midday forecast then came through – now it was to be west force 4 – hopeless. It was a disappointment but it leaves St Kilda to be visited another year. We were surprised how few boats we met this year – a fact noted by many of the hostellers that we visited. We were greatly appreciative of the warm and friendly reception that the residents gave us wherever we went, and I could appreciate how much progress has been made in improving the quality of life for the isolated communities, since I last visited the area 25 years ago or more. We really enjoyed the sailing, the harbours and lovely anchorages, and the several car trips that we made to explore inland. It was a good year for us.

# Foam goes Gunkholing in Galway Bay

David Whitehead

After six seasons sailing *Joyster* around the Eastern Atlantic shores and islands we finally got her to Ireland at the end of last season and laid up at Ryan and Roberts in Askeaton Co. Limerick. We had to replace the Saildrive seal, which involves taking the engine out, so it was an opportunity to have the engine serviced too. As usual with these things everything took longer than expected and since I did not really push to get it done, the boat was still ashore when the infamous summer Monsoon arrived in May, and when she was still ashore in early August it was obvious that it would not make sense to fit her out for the season at all.

With no opportunity for a conventional cruise I got most of my sailing aboard *Foam* which is a Hunter Liberty 22. She is a centerboarder with shallow bilge keels rigged as a Cat Ketch with fully battened sails. She has a 4 hp outboard with a solar panel to charge the battery for the tiller pilot, masthead trilight, echo sounder and cabin lighting. She has three berths, a two-burner stove and sea toilet, and normally lives on a mooring at the head of Kinvara Bay. This season my son Duncan took her up to Lough Corrib in early June to participate in the 125th Cong to Galway race, and afterwards had a mini cruise on the lake.

In late August *Foam* came back down to Kinvara and when some half-decent weather arrived we took whatever opportunities arose to go "gunkholing" around Galway Bay, and this is an account of one such outing.

At Kinvara high-water on spring tides occurs at six in the morning and six in the evening, while neaps tides are high at mid-day and midnight. In early September sunset is at around 21.00 so the best of the tide and light is made by a morning

departure. On 1st September, 08.00 was the optimum time to leave the mooring; I contacted Donal Morrissy and said I was planning to sail over to Ballyvaughan on the ebb and use the following flood to get up to Bell Harbour in Poulnaclogh Bay. We could then drop back down on the Sunday morning ebb, and have the ensuing flood to assist the passage back to Kinvara.

I arranged to pick up Donal at Ballyvaughan New Pier at lunch time on Saturday, and he would join *Foam* for the passage to Bell Harbour and for the trip from there back to Kinvara on the Sunday. The forecast was for westerly force 3-4 on Saturday with clear weather and west to southwest 4-5 on Sunday with rain and poor visibility.

With stores for the weekend aboard and with all sail set to a fine westerly breeze I dropped the mooring at 08.30 and set a course for Doorus Point at the entrance of Kinvara Bay. It was a grand sail – reaching down the harbour and out into Doorus Strait where I hauled my wind and stretched over to Eddy Island, with a fine ebb tide under my lee bow. A tack at the Eddy shore and another just west of the silted up Doorus pier on the mainland, and I was heading northwest with the full width of Galway Bay opening ahead of me, and the Tillerpilot took over duties at the helm while I got the mackerel line out over the stern. Soon I had Kilcolgan Point abeam (and my first mackerel aboard,) as we passed through the cluster of lobster pot buoys on the Kilcolgan Shoal. I stood on across the bay, with the clay cliffs of Gentian Hill and the hotels on Salthill promende showing prominently in the sunshine, and tacked when I had the outer Margaretta starboard hand buoy close aboard.

Galway Bay looked at its best that fine September morning; the blue of the sea made a deeper shade by the creamy white of the breaking crests and the spare grey hills of Black Head and the Burren rising on the Clare shore. This lively and enchanting scene I shared only with two other yachts – one running in from Black Head under sail and the other plugging doggedly west under bare poles and motor.

As I drew toward the south shore, it was clear I could not weather Finavara Point with its Martello Tower – known to Ballyvaughan residents simply as "The Battery". I picked up my second mackerel as we tacked close inshore and was soon able to weather the point. *Foam* had behaved perfectly on the beat, and I was able to make coffee on the



*Foam* at anchor off Kinvara Quay.



Poulnaclogh Bay.

long leg across from the Margaretta buoys as the Tillerpilot again took the helm.

I was not familiar with the transits for entering Ballyvaughan, which has only a narrow channel around the extensive sands of Ballyvaughan Spit, so I had taken some GPS waypoints off the chart to help me find my way in. In following these it soon became apparent that the course was leading across some very shallow water so I rounded up, dropped the sails and started the outboard. I was motoring cautiously towards my next waypoint when the water shoaled so much that I could see sun dappled, wave rippled sand speckled with white shells, through the clear green transparent water. Exactly as the GPS proximity alarm rang for my waypoint we ran hard aground!

It was nearly low water and I had no dinghy so kedging off was not an option. I waited in the cockpit over a cup of coffee as the water ebbed away and extensive sands emerged. When we had dried out I hopped overboard with the anchor and walked it out in to the deepest water nearby. Then, in the course of a bracing walk over the hard sands, I was able to prospect a route to the channel into Ballyvaughan.

This done I returned aboard *Foam* and had a lunch in the cockpit while taking in the lovely scene from Finavara to Black Head from my viewpoint at the centre Ballyvaughan Bay, *Foam* sat upright on the sand and the fresh west wind rattled the rigging against the masts.

Soon the returning tide was slapping and chuckling under the boat and presently we floated and swung to the anchor. I hauled off and motored into Ballyvaughan following the transits picked out during my walk. Donal hopped aboard from the Pier and with hardly a pause we set off for the narrow entrance to Paulnaclogh Bay guarded by its flock of cormorants on the northern spit.

Although it was now two hours after low water, the tide was still pouring strongly out of the bay and we had to motor quite hard to make progress until we cleared the entrance narrows. The channel was much in accord with the chart and we were

easily able to find our way. Once in the bay we found a calm and pastoral scene; green fields and heges speckled with white, gabled cottages, silky-calm water and the ever grey Burren rising above – all sunlit and dappled with the shadows of tall white clouds chasing each other across the hillsides.

We motored up the bay, mostly in shallow water, and found a deep pool with mussel rafts overlooked by the ruins of Paulnaclogh Castle. Then the passage narrowed and wound through interlocking points of land and we ploughed to a gentle stop in soft mud.

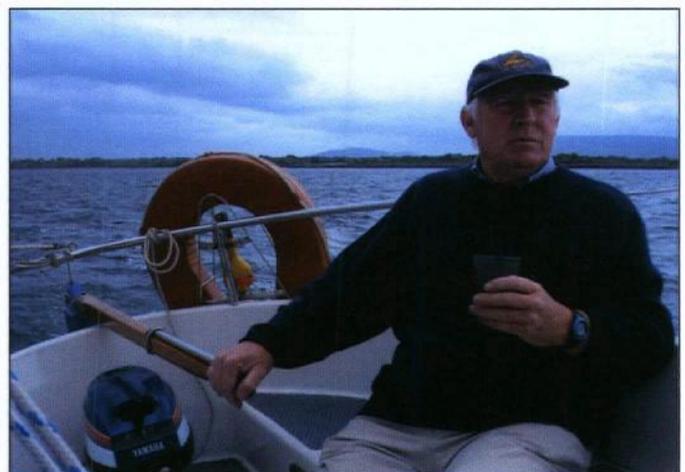
We let the centreplate down into the mud to hold the boat in position and brewed up a cup of coffee while we waited for the tide to float us again, whereupon we made a few hundred yards progress before grounding again. This procedure was repeated until we got alongside the quay at Bell Harbour in two feet of water.

Once *Foam* was properly moored to the quay we walked up

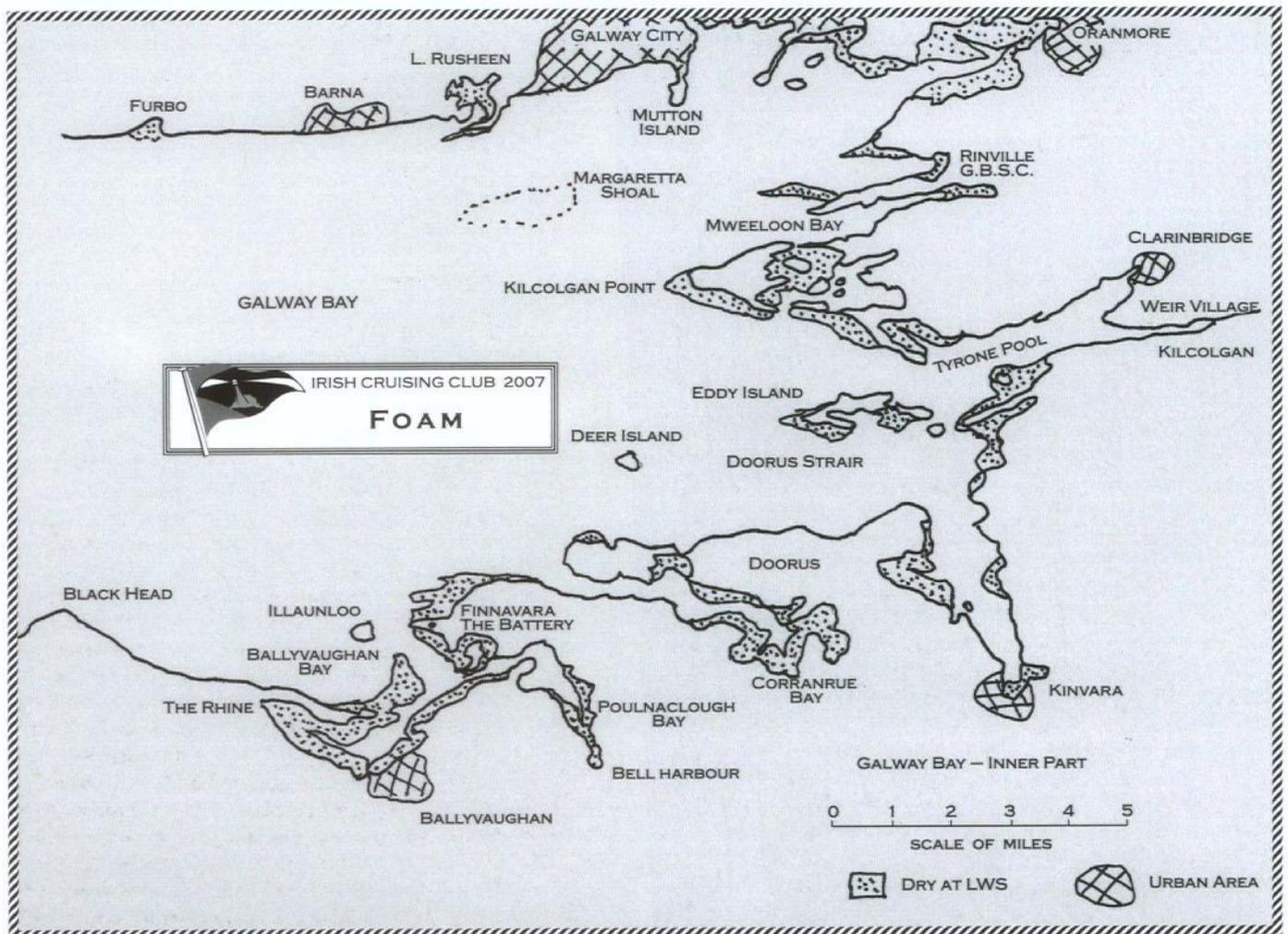
to Daly's pub and, while our pints were being pulled, checked in with Mr Kerins – the (unofficial, unpaid) "harbourmaster" – who lives next door. This duty done we had a couple of leisurely pints and then returned to find *Foam* floating high, with her waterline level with the top of the pier. We adjusted the fenders as she rose and waited for the tide to turn which it did at 21.10 – 40 minutes after high water Galway.

Brenda Morrissy arrived by car and took us home to Ballyvaughan, where we dined off her (homegrown) tomato soup and the barbecued mackerel. After dinner Donal took me back to *Foam* to bed down for the night.

I was up at 07.35 to find a strong westerly swaying the tall trees around the harbour. *Foam* floated at 08.50 by which time I had prepared and eaten breakfast, cleared up below, stowed the boat for sea, and scrubbed the decks and cockpit. Grey curtains of rain swept across the wave-ruffled waters and pattered against my oilskins as I waited on the quay whilst the water rose slowly up the stonework. The tide turned at 09.50, a foot



David at the helm of *Foam* at Parkmore, Kinvara Bay.



lower than the evening before, and again at 40 minutes after high water Galway.

It seems that around springs Poulnacloagh Bay cannot empty of water as fast as the tide level falls in Ballyvaughan Bay, so the ebb continues until the water levels equalise a couple of hours after low water. The harbour then starts to fill and the tidal turn migrates up the bay, reaching its highest level at Bell Harbour 40 minutes after high water Galway. A tide of 5.0 metres reaches the bottom of the pier about two hours before high water Galway, and rises to the top of the stonework when full. So the best time to enter Poulnacloagh Bay is two hours before high water Galway and you will arrive at Bell Harbour when there is about 5 feet of water alongside. You need to leave well before half tide on the ebb.

Donal arrived and we cast off and motored back down the bay – easy now with plenty of water – reaching the narrows at 11.30. Here we found the wind at west force 5-6 and a lively breaking sea where the ebb, pouring out of the narrows, collided with the wind-driven waves in Ballyvaughan Bay.

We set full sail and made a couple of tacks to clear the Battery, then cut the engine and eased sheets around Finnavara Point. *Foam* scudded off into the eastern gloom, rolling and surging as the swell coming in from the Atlantic around Black Head, passed beneath her. We had a moment of excitement when the kicking-strap bracket on the main failed and the boom soared into the air. Donal quickly put the helm down and hove – to while I made a repair with a strop, and we bore off on course again.

With a strong leading wind we could easily stem the west-going ebb so after briefly considering and rejecting the idea of a

lunch stop in Newquay, we set course to clear Deer Island – which duly loomed through the murk an hour later. Carrying on, we picked up the trees on Tawin Island at 12.45, then we gybed and headed over to the shore.

As we rolled and surged eastwards along Doorus Strait, the swell subsided, the grey gloom lightened and lifted, and patches of blue sky appeared. By the time we hauled our wind around the Goragh Rock and entered Kinvara Bay the sky had cleared, and the sun lit up the picturesque scene of fields, moored yachts and cottages at Parkmore quay.

We reached past the moorings and up the bay to the mussel rafts where we dropped sail before motoring to *Foam's* mooring off Kinvara Quay. We ran aground exactly as the mooring-rode came aboard.

After stowing the boat, putting on sail covers and packing our gear we had a final coffee and went ashore. When I drove Donal back to his car at Bell Harbour it was low water and the tracks of *Foam's* keels and rudder were clearly visible in the mud!

After years of sailing in bigger boats and making longer cruises I had forgotten the old maxim "The smaller the yacht the greater the fun" but this little expedition brought its truth fully into perspective. Our modest weekend cruise of 35 miles in a 4 ton 22 foot yacht, brought enjoyment and challenges equal to those encountered in passages ten times the length, in the typical 40-45 foot cruising yachts we mostly sail nowadays. It was really great fun and left me eagerly anticipating more gunkholing in Galway Bay, on the north Clare coast, the Aran Islands and in Connemara next season.

# *Faustina II* explores the Clyde

John Clementson

Of course Ann knew the Firth of Clyde quite well though she hadn't been there for quite some years. For me it was a voyage of discovery. I had some idea of what I might find, but in many respects I was wrong – it turned out to be, as I guess almost every member of our club knows, a wonderful cruising ground with much to offer.

Earlier in the season we had had nearly six weeks cruising in and around the Hebrides, trying and failing to get to St Kilda, but visiting Stornoway and many wonderful anchorages on the islands and the mainland, with other yachts few and far between. Then, after an essential two week break at home, on Friday 17th August, we headed for the Clyde. We had delayed for three days as the weather had been so bad and now we had a fine sail along the Antrim coast – for about 90 minutes, after which the wind died and we motored on to Sanda Island off the southern tip of the Mull of Kintyre. We had heard mixed verdicts on the suitability of Sanda harbour but we laid the anchor as directed in the CCC cruising directions and felt secure. We went ashore to eat at the 'Byron Darnton' Tavern and wondered where all the other diners had come from. A very few were from moored boats, some others had come from Campbeltown in a fast boat, while rather more than we thought probable were apparently in the holiday cottages scattered around the island. Anyway, it was a good evening, a very good meal, and we had a quiet night at anchor. We must walk to the lighthouse one day.

We motor-sailed the short hop to Campbeltown the next day and anchored in the northeast corner of the harbour. We went over to the marina in *Poppy* our RIB and there met Michael McKee (ICC) and John Stevenson on *Carragheen*. We managed temporarily to evade their hospitality and, enduring heavy rain, we found the Scottish Owl Centre a few hundred metres from the very Victorian-looking town centre. The owls had had their morning fly but there were plenty of wise old owls from many countries to look at. Carragheen's crew then got their chance to feed us which they did generously before we made our way back to *Faustina II*.

Next day, Sunday, was fine and sunny and the wind was southwesterly – for about 10 minutes before it went on the nose and then died. We were abeam Skipness Point at 13.00 and alongside a pontoon in Tarbert Loch Fyne at 14.30. For our 40-footer this treat cost £24 for the night plus extra for electricity and hot water in the showers. The water was free. Well, if it was expensive, at least I was at last seeing this place that so many yachts seemed to go north to from Ireland every year, to take part in Tarbert Week. There are so many Tarberts that I really was quite confused about which one they all went to. It's an attractive little port, well and attractively protected from bad weather from any direction. In fine weather we walked around the harbour and failed to get to Bruce's Castle which in any case looked not only closed but in a dangerous condition. In the morning before we left we took on 200 litres of fuel from the fish quay – well, we hadn't fuelled for quite a long time!

The wind was northerly as we motored on north. This was as

far north in the Firth that I had previously been, when many many years ago I took a boat through the Crinan Canal from Ardrishaig. Ann was very keen to see an otter on this holiday, and so it was a bit disappointing to learn that the name of Otter Spit that divides the Upper and Lower Loch Fyne is derived from the Gaelic for 'sandbank' rather than from the animal. We went as far as the bijou Loch Gair where we anchored north of the moorings and within sound of the 'Hydro' a few hundred metres away. We had an idle afternoon and a walk in the sun. There wasn't much to see. If there was, we missed it.

On Tuesday we returned south. We hugged the mainland shore and dived into several anchorages en route to see what they looked like. I decided that a return to one or more of them would be in order. In Sgat Mor anchorage we met another Bowman 40 which had been around the world and was preparing for a big reception at Helensburgh on the following day. We hovered beside them while they told us the essence of their story. However we had to collect my brother Peter and his wife Janey from Kip on the next day, and so we turned into the Kyle of Bute and made our way languidly (nice word!) past the pastoral scenery and round the corner past Tighnabruaich (and I had to check the spelling of that!) before anchoring in the fascinating wee Caladh harbour. I learnt subsequently that until the end of the war there had been a castle here. In the war it was requisitioned and it didn't survive the treatment that it received and was demolished. The island is the grave yard for the family that lived there. Now it's just a peaceful spot providing some shelter for four or perhaps five yachts. We didn't go ashore.

Next day we duly made our way to Kip, passing the wonderful old paddle wheeler *Waverley* in the eastern Kyle. Kip wanted and took £12 from us for a 65-minute stay (though apparently we could have stayed five hours for that if we had wished). We duly took Peter and Janey on board and set off under his bidding *à la recherche du temps perdu*. He had once been a part-time soldier and apparently he had spent several happy weeks on various summer camps in the area. We were to be shown around! Actually it worked out pretty well. We motored east past Dunoon and north past Helensburgh in Gareloch. The first camp was barely visible in the woods north of Faslane near Garelochhead. We sailed a little close to the submarine base and we were gently guided away by the police boat. We turned away across the other side of the loch and *en route* south again we passed our Bowman 40 friends, who were duly being escorted into Rhu by their friends. We joined in, making a noise on our foghorn for a few minutes! We then went on to take a mooring at the head of Holy Loch. It was an old but heavy mooring and we were close by a wonderful though rather rundown tug *St Budoc* that had clearly once worked in the Falmouth area. I hope she is not lost to neglect. It had been a lovely sunny day with no hint of useful wind.

Initially similar conditions prevailed next day as we went north up Loch Long. Unless you have a lot of time it's too far to go to the end but Peter had a story about how he had bravely taken a small boat and some untried young men up the loch and into Loch Goil. We had to see where it all happened. We did.



The *Waverley* paddles by in the Kyles of Bute

Actually once you are still within two miles of the Loch Goil entrance you can get a pretty fair idea of the rest stretching away to the north. I decided that a lunch break anchored off the attractive looking castle at Carrick would be good. We dropped the anchor on a convenient shallow patch a hundred metres offshore. It was indeed a very pleasant stop amid that highland scenery in the sun. Then the clouds began to gather and so we set off south again. It was about 25 miles or so past Holy Loch and Toward Point and then northwest up to the East Kyle of Bute. We anchored again in Caladh harbour so that Peter and Janey could appreciate it too.

They only had five days to spare with us so it was a bit of a rush to take in what we could. On Friday we motored down the West Kyle of Bute, around Ardlamont Point and anchored in the bay inside Sgat Mor (Skate Is) which is about four miles east of Tarbert. We went ashore for a much needed and interesting walk to a hillside with the most perfect views across Lower Loch Fyne. Quite stunning. Just to the north we could see the new and apparently very under-utilised marina at Portavadie (where the ferry from Tarbert comes in.) We returned to the boat for tea and then went across to Tarbert where we took a mooring buoy off the pontoon which cost (only!) £18 for the night. We watched a DVD 'Notting Hill' on board – how decadent was that?

Saturday was drizzly and grey. We had a fresh, west wind and that gave us a good, fast sail as far as Ardlamont Point where the weather began to improve. We anchored for lunch in Wreck Bay close beside the Burnt Islands in the Kyles (just across from Caladh harbour) – and all had a snooze! In mid-afternoon we sailed on down to close by Rothesay and then onto Kip, beside the soon-to-be-demolished huge chimney of the

world's most useless power station. We stayed overnight in the marina (£24 incl. power) and had a moderate supper in the Chartroom restaurant.

Brother and his wife left early next morning and we slipped soon afterwards with a northwesterly 3 to 4 taking us gently south, close along the Ayrshire coast with its great houses and estates, past Largs and through the passages to the east of Great and Little Cumbrae Islands. From there to Lamlash harbour on Arran is about 12 miles and at 15.30 we had entered the harbour north of Holy Island and anchored to the east of the moorings. We could have taken a mooring but in truth we didn't see it until a later boat found it! We were secure enough. Holy Island is now owned by a Buddhist order but we saw hardly a soul on the island all afternoon. We had

shipped *Poppy* on board while in Kip and we felt no great urge to launch her to go ashore at Lamlash. It didn't appear to have much to offer other than fine walks in the surrounds. One day soon...

Next day we headed for Portpatrick. Initially the wind was very flukey, but once we had cleared the southern end of Arran Island at Pladda we got a clear westerly breeze and headed to pass close to the east of Ailsa Craig, 10 miles away to the south. It's true what Ann says, 'Ailsa never seems to get closer'. However we got there inside two hours at 12.15 and marvelled at the whiteness of the seemingly millions of gannets and other sea birds perched on the cliffs. Two hours and 15 miles later we were near Corsewall Point with the sea becoming rather boisterous for a while. A further 10 miles brought us to Portpatrick entrance. I was concerned to get to Portpatrick as quickly as possible because low water was at 18.30 and there is not over much water in the entrance at that time. However it



Caladh harbour in the Kyles of Bute.

was 2½ hours before LW as we entered and all was well. I then went by bus to Stranraer to buy some gear box ATF oil and returned in the same bus with its helpful driver. Later we climbed the high wall to go ashore for an excellent supper in a pub on the quay.

We went home to Portaferry next day, Tuesday 29 August. There wasn't any significant wind and so we motored all the way on a calm sea. It's about 35 miles from Portpatrick to the Strangford bar and we were there just in time to get the last of the flood and to get into the marina at 14.00.

It had been a very pleasant 12 day voyage of discovery for me, one of recalling former voyages for Ann and one of returning to his youth for my brother! Just a really nice quiet, gentle cruise for which we were blessed with some very reasonable weather. I must go back and do it again! There's still a lot to see.



*Faustina II* in Portpatrick.

**Bill and Hilary Keatinge write of *Rafiki* returning to The Low Countries**

At the end of last season *Rafiki* was trucked from Slovenia to Breskens in southern Holland. The decision to leave the Mediterranean and adjacent waters was a hard one but after nine years it was decided a change was needed, and if *Rafiki* is to be sold in the next year or so, then northern Europe is the place to put her on the market. Besides, having lived in the Netherlands for eleven years, we looked forward to revisiting favourite haunts, discovering new ones and above all meeting up with Dutch friends. This season, however, did not get off to a good start. The Standfast yard, carefully chosen from a list of three, was a disaster. Everything was promised and little was delivered, and what was done was, by and large, done badly, rushed at the last minute, or not done at all. Eventually, wiser and poorer, we crossed the Schelde to Vlissingen.



Racing on IJsselmeer.

Summer 2007 will not go down in the records for good weather, indeed the less said about 'jet streams' the better. In spite of the rain and gales, *Rafiki* cruised the length of the country, from Zeeland to the Wadden islands. She revisited every major port on the IJsselmeer, except for Stavoren, made two 'inland' trips: to Kampen, via the Ketelmeer, and to Leeuwarden from the seaport of Harlingen via Franeker, and on to Lemmer via Sneek. We watched the traditional yachts competing in the Flevo Races and joined in two rallies with the Royal Netherlands (we have been members for 28 years), one in Rotterdam, the other to Urk. Overall, even after an absence of twelve years, we still felt remarkably at home, though what little Dutch we had was even more scratchy. During two weeks of family visits we were blessed with easy weather and there was a bonus day of summer in late September, as we prepared the boat for winter.

We did find some new marinas but the old harbours had not changed and the charges are still very reasonable compared to many places. One major improvement has been the building of the Naviduct under the lock at the Enkhuizen side of the Houtribdijk that divides the IJsselmeer; passage for boats above and cars below has been speeded up considerably. *Rafiki* will spend the winter ashore at a yard owned by Harry who looked after our boats previously (if only *Rafiki* had been delivered to him last October... but we wanted time to explore Zeeland).

On balance we had a good four months, we had some great sailing (something we had missed in the Mediterranean), the odd sparkling day, a good supply of genever in the freezer, and many rendezvous with friends. We can confirm that the 'frites met mayo' in Enkhuizen were still the best, and those in Oudeschilden the worst! We also had four weeks when the wind blew, from the north, every day, during which time we were moving north and then, when returning south, well of course, it blew from the south, but that say the pundits, is called 'cruising'.

# A Tour of the Northern Sporades

## John Bourke

After our tour of Corfu and its islands last year, *Oleander of Howth* was sold to another sailor from Howth, who happily continues to cruise her in the Eastern Mediterranean. A return to the islands of Greece in a chartered boat was mentioned at the time, and when Peter Bunting rang Brian Hegarty to ask if and when and where we might be going, he in turn rang Bud Bryce and myself and the trip was on. We all had been to the Northern Sporades, Brian many times, and we all had loved those rich and verdant islands. A special bonus was an advertisement on RTE radio to say that XL Airlines were starting a direct flight to Skiathos, our natural starting point. I got on to various charterers and XL, and in due course secured a brand new 'Sun Odessey 45' and air-tickets for a fortnight in early May.

I mentioned our plan to Hilary Keatinge at the annual dinner. She told me that a mutual friend from student days, with whom she is still in contact, has a house on Skiathos. She would see if he was going to be there at the time and if so, would arrange to reunite us. He was, and thus when we landed on Friday May 4th after a painless flight, we were met at the airport by Tim and Geraldine Angel in their old style, desert-crossing Land Rover, transported to our boat, and later brought to their house high in the hills above the town and harbour. Drinks on the balcony made it clear why they love the island so, and it was with difficulty that we dragged them and ourselves down to the sea again for dinner in their favourite taverna.

In the meantime we had met Dimitri, who demonstrated the boat and everything in it with terrifying efficiency. He did know something of our years of sailing experience in these and other waters, and he could see the grey hairs of our cumulative 300 (almost) years. Nevertheless he was going to give us the whole program. All gear and equipment was explained in logical order. He told us that if he skipped anything just because we already knew of it, this would break his sequence and cause confusion. We saluted his professionalism and listened carefully.

*Nena* had just been delivered from Piraeus. Many items were still in their packages, straight off the shelf. Nevertheless everything was there except the dinghy bailer and we were impressed. Anyone who has equipped a new boat will understand. There were four cabins, one for each of us, two forward and two aft around a big saloon. The galley took up the port side with the seating area and chart table opposite. The cockpit was spacious with twin wheels and a good table arrangement. With a roller jib and in-mast furling all led back to the cockpit, visits to the foredeck were only for recreational or anchoring purposes.

On Saturday 5th we provisioned in the small supermarket across the street. We took a democratic decision on our staple drinks, being beer, gin and ouzo. We also bought lots of water and a little food, before setting out for lunch at anchor in a bay on the west side of the island. There was a good breeze that day, and we had a fast sail to the entrance of the gulf of Volos. Inside the gulf the wind lightened, as we motored to the small island of Paleo Trikeri, a long time favourite. There is not much room

in the small harbour, but we were able to anchor and put a stern-line ashore. An early season Sunsail flotilla came in, but shortly left again. This was unusual in that in most places visited on the cruise we only shared facilities with a handful of other yachts, which gave us a lot of freedom. Also the seasonal tavernas had only just opened and were pleased to see us. Paleo Trikeri itself has two of them and we ate well in the nearest that evening.

On Sunday, Bud and I landed and explored. The island has no cars but has well-kept paths, a gorgeous little Greek Orthodox Church, and much colourful vegetation. Eventually we dropped in to the other taverna for a beer in the sun, blocked off from *Nena* by a large day-trip boat which had arrived with a group from Germany. When we returned to the dinghy, we discovered that the crew on board had slipped the stern line as the wind got up and *Nena* now lay out in the middle of the harbour. The proprietor of the taverna where Bud and I had been, seeing this, had run round, taken in the line, coiled it and placed it in the dinghy. Bud and I had noticed nothing. When we got back on board, Brian announced firmly that such consideration deserved reciprocation, so we all returned to the same taverna for a fairly long lunch.

In the late afternoon we motored to Vathoudi, a lovely peaceful bay to the southeast of the Bay of Volos, where Sunsail have a base. Most of their fleet was still tied up. I tested the water which, at 19°C, offered a brief but invigorating swim. Others encouraged while pouring their pre-dinner drinks.

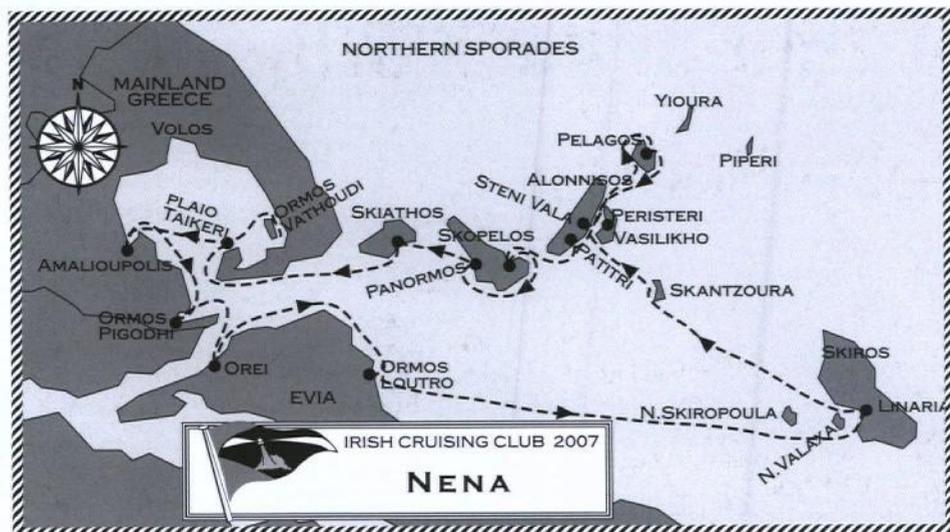
On Monday we crossed to the southwestern side of the bay and Amalioupolis where we anchored. We were the only boat. We commissioned the outboard and motored in to a row of three tavernas, all fairly empty. We chose one, but this time we did feel that we were eating the remains of the previous season, out of the freezer. We suffered no ill effects and the experience was the exception. Being early in the season cannot be totally positive. That night the wind got up and we had to re-anchor despite having put out lots of chain. The bottom there must be quite impacted, because this was the only occasion on which the anchor did not grip.

### Ormos Pigodhi

On Tuesday we visited Ormos Pigodhi, a pleasant anchorage on the larger island of Evia, for lunch and then on to the town of Orei, enjoying a nice but short sail. There is not much room for yachts but there were only two others present, and we could go stern-to. This is a bustling Greek town with good shopping and long line of tavernas and pubs. We chose a donor-kebab restaurant and the revolving column of meat was both delicious and sold-out by close of business. The next morning we tried to take on water from a tap 10 metres away on the pier. However we could find no connectors for the hose. They had not thought of absolutely everything which was a relief. We found the needful in the local hardware store, and filled up. Then we proceeded round the top of Evia, mostly under engine to a magic little cove called Ormos Loutro. On the way we enjoyed a navigator's delight, when we found an error in the GPS chart

plotter which would have landed us in the middle of a small island, if we had not been consulting the paper charts as well as looking out. Continue to be warned. I rowed ashore in the punt and explored and swam. There was a small taverna with a few locals drinking ouzo and chatting, but we decided to eat on board.

On Thursday we faced our long passage of 55 miles to Skiros. This is where Achilles was sent by his Mum because of a prophecy that he would lose his life on the battlefields of Troy. However the wily Odysseus lured him away, and thus was the prophecy fulfilled. There is little room for yachts in the port of the island, but we found a spot beside the new ferry slip. When the ferry came in we were somewhat



in the way of where she liked to put her lines. All was well however, and we went to one of the many tavernas for dinner. Unusually we had a language problem and our chosen 'shrimps' turned out to be a rather ugly dried fish. This was sorted out and the langoustines which emerged were excellent.

For our second night on Skiros we were permitted to move in alongside a fairly big fishing boat that was having work done. The main man wore a well used Liverpool 'Champions of Europe' shirt which encouraged conversation. He told us that his mother was from Liverpool and his father from Skiros. He was a fisherman and he was producing a 'brand new' super-structure on the old fishing boat, for his brother and the tourist trade. The restaurant from the previous night was his father's. We should visit the main town of Skiros on the other side of the island - his father would call a taxi. We were the only yacht in town and what could we do but accede. In the event the main town is spectacular, with white flat-roofed houses rising steadily via winding white alleyways and staircases towards the castle at the top. We went up a while, gave up and sidled into a corner taverna to recover. Later, our taxi man was waiting on time and on the spot.

For the last few days, we had noticed an increasing noise in the port binnacle when turning to port. We rang Dimitri in Skiathos. He told us how to take the top off and inspect. We also had to look up from below, which involved getting down into one of the stern lockers. The only one sufficiently slim and nimble to do so was Peter, and so despite his seniority, down he went. It turned out to be an alignment fault which caused the join between the chain and steering wires to catch on the through-hole in the fibreglass. Dimitri told us how we might adjust it, but said that if we did not mind the noise, it would be ok and he would fix it on our return. We left it, closed up, ignored the noise and had no further problems.

On Saturday we had to leave early, as our Liverpoolian friend was about to weld some new rails to keep the tourist in, and sparks would fly. The glass was still high, the sun still shone and we motored again, this time north to the uninhabited island of Skantzoura. This has a lovely protected anchorage and some interesting bird life. A hermit used to live here but his solitary life seems to be ended. The water temperature had risen to 23°C but I still swam alone. After a salad lunch we proceeded to the beautiful inlet of Steni Vala on the island of Alonnisos. Close in to the quay the water is quite shallow, and we therefore went stern-to but some distance off, landing via the dinghy. We muttered that if we only had a stern anchor we could have gone bow first. Actually we did have a stern anchor, but had not yet found it. There were three tavernas available

and we chose one where one goes in to look at all the Greek dishes before choosing. I chose a first class moussaka.

Our second Sunday was also sunny and the glass stayed high. To our surprise the small supermarket was open, clean and very well-stocked. Bud and I conducted another brief exploration, while Brian and Peter relived as usual their "Round the World days in the Pacific". Then it was onwards to another island called Kina Panoyia. We anchored in a cove guarded by an islet on the west side, with stunning water colours. The only inhabitants of the island are a diminishing band of monks. There was a small fishing boat in the bay, and we saw two people leading donkeys up the hill from the shore. The monastery must have been provisioning, or perhaps they were spiritual supplicants. In the afternoon we went on to the east of the island to the large and sheltered inlet of Planatis where, surprisingly, we discovered two yachts already anchored. Dismayed by such crowds we found a secluded spot further in near the shore. The water was now 26°C and positively balmy, but I was still on my own. Cruising in the tropics and the Mediterranean for all those years has clearly demanded high levels of water temperature before immersion. In the absence of tavernas or anything else, Brian produced another of his famous chicken dishes, and we retired early after the magic of a few ouzos, in a long flat calm sunset. Later to our surprise the wind piped up, blowing straight from the mouth of the inlet and accelerating in gusts as it came. The anchor was holding well but we were too close to the shore for an easy night's sleep and we moved our position for greater comfort. After this unexpected hardship we allowed ourselves a long lie-in and a hearty breakfast.

It was still blowing by late morning, and we had to punch out under engine into quite a big sea. Modern charter yachts have lots of horses however, and we were shortly able to set the jib for a fast sail down the south of the island, viewing the monastery as we went, standing proudly on its headland above a small harbour, flags flying, in splendid isolation.

On the island of Peristera next to Alonnisos there is a sheltered inlet with a small number of houses, called Vasilika. In the past there were a number of boats laid up here and it was all a bit untidy. We were pleased to find it in clear and clean, and we anchored for a most pleasant lunch before proceeding to the very pretty harbour of Patitiri, also on Alonnisos, where we went stern-to. There were four other yachts present, quite a crowd. The earlier winds did have their effect however, and there was a quiet lull despite the harbour walls, which lasted for most of the night. This caused a slapping noise underneath in the stern cabins, while youngsters Bud and I having sacrificed

ourselves by sleeping up front, heard nothing. This is I suppose, one disadvantage of the large internal volumes in modern cruising yachts.

Tuesday brought us round the corner to Ormos Milia, a lovely wooded cove where it appears that the beautiful people have their holiday homes. I swam and showered and washed my hair and things at the stern. The boat did however have two other showers within and lots of hot water. From there we crossed to the town of Skopelos on the Island of the same name, which has a fine harbour able to accommodate many boats. We sought a restaurant up the town with a superb view, which Brian and I had visited on our last visit, but failed to find it in the steep



Bud and Brian – a typical lunch at anchor.



duly swapped for the new hose fittings. Three years ago we had left Brian in Skiathos for a week awaiting his next crew. He had dinner every night on that occasion in a roof level tapas bar owned by a tall and lovely Norwegian lady. Imagine Brian's delight when he was welcomed back with instant recognition plus hugs and kisses. But then that sort of thing seems to happen to him all over the Mediterranean. Long may it be so.

We had a good boat, easily handled and driven under engine or sail, and most comfortable. We had sunny weather, congenial temperatures and the place largely to ourselves. We visited sixteen different ports or anchorages in only 260 miles. It is a good time of the year in those parts, and it certainly suited us.

Nena at Steni Vale on Alonysis.

white maze of steps and alleys. We settled for the waterfront and had our best meal to date.

The next day we went on a search for a well known local book by Michael Carroll called "Gates of the wind", which describes life in the islands in the 60s. We found it, and also the missing restaurant. Fittingly we proceeded to Ormos Panormos, where Michael Carroll built his house on Skopelos so many years ago. It is a stunning spot, protected in all weathers, and the house is still there. After lunch we decided to return to Skiathos with a day to spare and hang out there. This we did, returning our boat with only one missing glass,



Ormos Loutro on Evia – a most beautiful anchorage.

# Reiver 2007

## Peter & David Williams

After cruising the North Brittany coast last year we decided to go to West Brittany in 2007. My brother Peter to do the first leg and the crew change was planned to take place somewhere near Nantes.

### Outward to West Brittany by Peter Williams (3weeks)

*Crew:* Peter Williams, Anne Williams, John Fisher/John Hughes, Kate and James Brassington

Monday 25 June saw *Reiver* leaving Strangford Lough shortly after 04.00 to a grey windy dawn. At least the northwest wind was behind us as with half the jib unrolled we scooted down to our first appointment to pick up John Fisher off the pier at Kilkeel, then back out to a very bouncy Irish sea with the usual square waves, some of which came on board. Well past Howth by the end of the ebb but fed up with the bouncing, we decided to go into Dun Laoghaire. Made welcome in the Royal Irish Yacht Club we spent a happy hour exploring the Irish Cruising Club library of books and charts. I had never been in the Royal Irish before; it is an excellent place for the ICC archive. In fact I had not been into Dun Laoghaire for about 25 years.

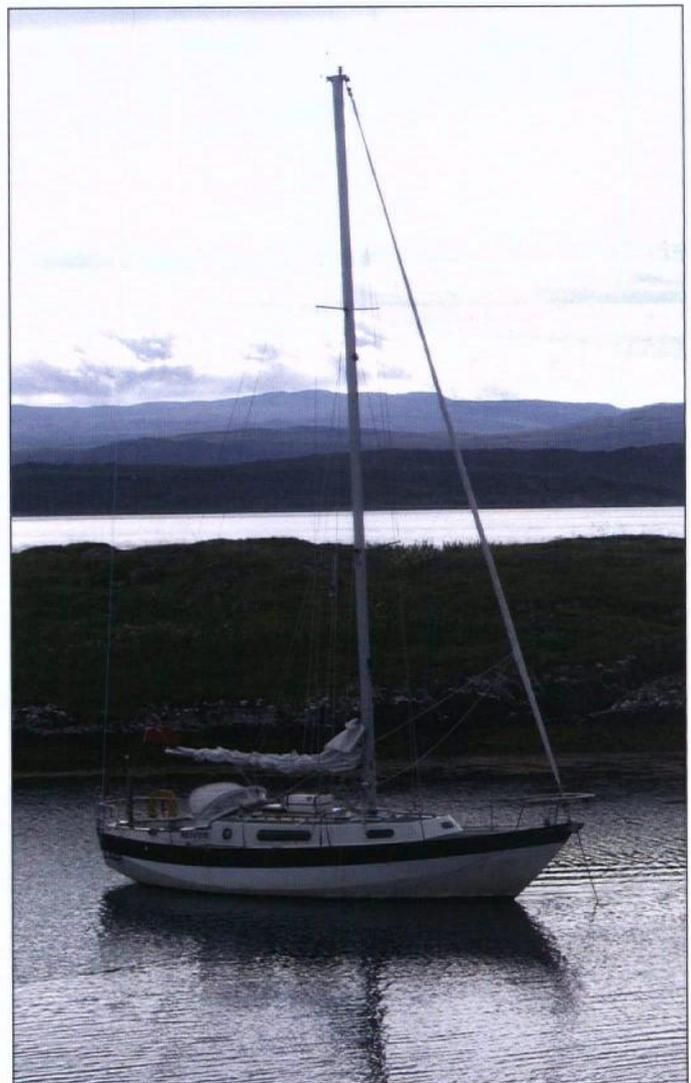
One problem which showed up was the unreliability of our compass, a 17-year-old fluxgate which had obviously had enough and could not be relied on for the rest of the season. Another was that the engine kept stopping, which we eventually traced to a fuel tank cock which was almost turned off.

Next morning we headed south, again under part jib only and decided to keep going until we reached the Scilly Isles before dark the following evening, then a night's rest and ashore on Bryher next day for lunch in the Hell Bay hotel. This is a must for all, which we discovered last year and strongly recommend; the art collection alone is worth the visit. Later in the day we crossed Tresco flats and anchored between Gugh and St. Agnes and went to the Turk's Head, the most southerly pub in UK, for further refreshment before sailing for France.

Three reefs in main and jib now, with the wind southwest and backing. We arrived off the Ushant shipping lanes in the cold, grey light of dawn and fog. We saw a few ships, luckily none too near and closed the north end of the Chenal du Four only for the fog to thicken to such a degree that I eventually decided not to continue, but to go into the Baie du Stiff at the northeast end of Ushant to wait a tide and hope for better visibility. At no time had we seen even the slightest glow from Le Créac'h light, the most powerful in Europe! Approaching the Baie cautiously in nil visibility, marking more or less continuous GPS positions on the chart, we were suddenly picked up by the vicious tide and swept bodily towards the rocks on the south side of the Baie. Yells from the helm as the Men Korn lighthouse showed through the murk far too close to lee, furious motoring and ten minutes later we were safe in the bay somewhat shaken and much relieved. Still no sign of the huge radar tower about a cable to the north of us. Not a place to be in fog. We later talked with a Belgian couple who had C-

map on a laptop and had managed to get into L'Aber Wrac'h in nil visibility, wife at the helm and husband calling 'left a bit, right a bit' from the chart table. If you know that entrance, you will know that is a good test of the C-map charts.

Next morning we slipped the buoy we had lain to, only to find that the engine was stuck in reverse. We managed to back up and pick up the buoy again and found that two little bolts had sheared, so now forward or reverse had to be selected by a crewmember lying on his stomach on the 'head' seat and reaching into the dark recesses behind the engine. We set off, again an hour late for our tide down the Chenal du Four, in much improved visibility. Past the various towers and lighthouses we were able to bear off a bit for Douarnenez. Arrived in mainland France at last! We met up with our



*Reiver* at anchor.

daughter and son-in-law who were camping in Brittany in the rain, and who were to do a change of crew run to Nantes airport the next day. Celebration dinner in a restaurant to say goodbye to John Fisher, who had a rough ride to France, and hello to Kate and James who were glad to move on board for a few nights.

Next day, while Kate and James did the airport transfer (200km), I sought out a 'mécanicien' to solve the gear-change problem, got a nice young fellow who came up with an elegant solution (lateral thinking) which he said would be 'provisoire'. I note that George Millar in his excellent book 'Oyster River', which has been reprinted and which I highly recommend, says that 'en France le provisoire dure longtemps', a sentiment that is not unknown in Ireland!

## Getting out of Douarnenez

With John Hughes (ICC) on board next day, and a strong westerly, we tried to get out of the Baie de Douarnenez and realised after a couple of hours that we could not make the Raz de Sein in time for slack water, essential in such rough weather, so we bore off for Morgat. We tied up for some lunch and a sleep, and set off, now at a slightly better angle for the Raz, and aimed for the next slack water, arriving in time this time. Other ships about were invisible in the troughs of very jumbled waves, and we were at last very glad to bear off for Audiérne, where we picked up a mooring. Still wet and windy next day but the wind now backed to the south so again on the nose, giving and a struggle to round the Pointe de Pen Mar'ch before we bore off, in fog again, to buoy-hop round the coast to the entrance to the Odet river. We went to the marina on the Bénodet side where all the exotic yachts are, and where we met *Picnic* and Tom Foote (ICC) from Galway, heading home from the Mediterranean.

A pleasant interlude next day, Kate and James came back aboard after being rained out of another campsite, so we motored and sailed up the Odet river until we stuck in 'la vase' at the top, turned round and came back down again to another wet evening.

K and J left for home next day and we sailed for the Ile de Groix and moored there to fore and aft buoys in the outer harbour. We spent the afternoon exploring the island and had a meal ashore where I sampled an 'araignée' (spider crab); a lot of hard work for very little food. Then we found a pub with a very good group singing traditional songs.

We set sail the next day with **full main and jib and no oilskins or boots** for the first time since leaving Whiterock! We were heading for Belle Ile in sunshine so pleasant that we decided to go into Ster Wenn for a lunch stop. Ster Wenn is a narrow gut on the outside of Belle Ile and a lovely place in calmish weather. Later we went round to Le Palais where we were nudged, pushed and shoved into a line of boats moored in two lines to the quay walls and various buoys, by helpful staff in ribs. Le Palais is dominated by a huge Vauban fort which houses a marine museum which we spent a morning exploring, before having lunch in a pleasant sunny courtyard restaurant, as it was blowing a very strong northwest wind outside.

To get from Belle Ile into the Baie de Quiberon you have to enter by one of several passages, again we found ourselves having to head up 30° to windward to counter the strong tide, once through the slot we had a pleasant sail to the entrance to the Gulf of Morbihan, where we were picked up by the tide and bodily shoved through the entrance, through the gut up to the Conleau narrows, and into the canal which goes in two-mile long dog-legs up to Vannes, where we were just in time to go through the swing bridge and lock in, all in one seamless two hour swoop from the open sea. Think of entering Strangford Lough and sailing up to, and locking into, the centre of

Newtownards, only much nicer and sunny. We spent a pleasant day exploring Vannes, especially the market where we did a lot of shopping, and had an excellent lunch out on the pavement (you pay more to eat outside) in a healthy miasma of traffic fumes. Later we took the ebb back down to the main gulf which is beautiful, more wooded than Strangford Lough, more like the Narrows, and absolutely full of moorings, no marinas just thousands of moorings; think of Strangford Lough with moorings everywhere out to 10 metres depth! We picked up a spare one in a bay on the south shore, for the night at Anse de Kerners.

The next day, Thursday 12 July we went out of the Morbihan with the last of the ebb, and into Port Croesty which is a huge marina and boatyard complex, where we filled up with diesel. Later we took the new flood back into the Morbihan, and finally went back up the river to Le Rocher which George Millar describes so well in 'Oyster River', had lunch there and went on up to Auray. As we would not fit under the bridge we tied up to trots just south of it, and went ashore to spend the afternoon in the lovely medieval town – in the rain. Back down the river to pick up another mooring in a different bay; Locmiquel, for our last night in the Gulf of Morbihan.

## Houat

We sailed with the ebb next day, a pleasant short hop to the island of Houat where we picked up a mooring outside the small harbour in bright sunshine, and went ashore to explore. In the afternoon we sailed the short distance to Hoëdic, where we tied up to one of the two big buoys in the small harbour to which everyone ties, bows-to and then rafts sunflower style. We ended up, 13 French boats and *Reiver*, all very matey. Beside us was a French sailing school cruiser, two girls, skipper and mate/bosun with four young lads about 12 to 15 years old who were having an absolute ball, and who were delighted to have an 'English' yacht beside them. They proceeded to ask us loads of questions; they were all expected to write a full log of their week. Such a good form of instruction/holiday, it would be nice to see it adopted by some clubs here.

The next morning was to be our last at sea, luckily a nice sunny day with a pleasant breeze as we sailed south along the French coast, very shallow here, past La Baule and continuous Riviera style coastline until we rounded the Charpentier lighthouse marking the northern corner of the Loire estuary, and sailed with the tide up to Saint Nazaire, arriving at the lock gates to the Bassin St.Nazaire just in nice time for their 18.00 opening. Entering the basin we tied up to a pontoon at the entrance to the Nazi submarine pens, a huge grim reminder of the past which I think will be there for hundreds of years. This was where we had agreed to do a crew change using Nantes/Dublin flights so we spent the next day cleaning the ship and sightseeing.

We had sailed 700 miles from Whiterock, with mixed weather and much less motoring than last year. Sails were a bit battered and some running repairs were required. I wore full oilskins and boots more in three weeks than I have in the last five seasons!

## Farther Breton by David Williams

*Crew:* David Williams, George Wylie, Stephen Powell, Ben Williams

*David's log, written with a little interference from his crew:*

We flew from Dublin to Nantes, then travelled on by airport bus, train (a TGV no less, where the guard joked about George having taken his shoes off) and finally taxi to join the boat in Saint Nazaire which is on the north side of the Loire estuary.

We found *Reiver* on a pontoon right under the German submarine pens in the locked basin. After a crew changeover evening in a crêperie, Peter and crew left next morning to fly home. We decided to stay on the pontoons for another night so that we could see the historic sights that were all around us. After shopping for victuals, we inspected the huge submarine pens and heavily re-enforced submarine lock; then walked the half mile to the enormous dry dock, which had been rammed by *HMS Campbelltown* in 1942, to prevent the Tirpitz from seeking refuge there. The size of the dry dock and the bunkers, with still visible damage, added to our sense of awe at the desperate measures taken in those not so long ago dark days. In the afternoon we visited the 1960s French submarine, *Espadon* (Swordfish), which is on display in the submarine lock. In the evening we played the first round of the Biscay Whist (same as Ballymena Whist but played in Biscay!) championship. Mosquitoes left their mark on all of us, with the exception of the chef, who they must have found to be unsavoury!

Early next morning, on the top of the tide, we went out through the small boat lock (without any charge for the three days in the basin) into the Grande Rade de la Loire and headed northwards with three slabs in the main and less than half jib. We did not know at the time that this would be the standard rig for most of the next fortnight. We were soon met by a lively Biscay swell, which caused our landlubber to retire with his first bout of motion sickness in ten years, as we rounded the Grande Charpentier light and headed for Ile de Hoëdic.

Ben retired to his bunk. We rounded the north of the island, entered the tiny Port de L'Argol and tied up with eight others to one of the two large buoys, sunflower fashion. Next morning we went ashore on the rather Rathlin- or Colonsay-like island and visited the church with a memorial to those who fell in the 1914-18 war. We were struck by so many names for such a small Island. The mozzies got us again!

After a leisurely lunch we departed (landlubber fully restored) and with full sail threaded our way through the rocks south of Ile de Houat, covering the eighteen miles to Belle Ile, the biggest of the offshore islands. On arrival outside Le Palais harbour we were met by a rather enchanting French damsel in a rib (standard practice in France – unfortunately, the rib not the damsel) and through our chef and chief interpreter George, we learned that the outer harbour was full and if we waited for an hour until the gate opened, we could get into the inner harbour. We gilled around for more than an hour and noticed that the sea-water pump was leaking. After a ferry left we were escorted through the old harbour right under the Vauban bastioned Citadel, a supposedly impregnable fort which was captured and held by the British and Dutch for many years. The defences were huge, and wall after wall went on for miles surrounding the town. We ended up alongside the road in the inner harbour with a boulangerie right opposite us. That night the roads were closed and the town began to fill up, as it was the beginning of a music festival. Stevie insisted on having his photograph taken under a signpost to Bangor! Stevie and I climbed a grassy knoll to take a few shots of the boat. The evening ended (for us) with tom-tom players outside the boat which were still going long after we went to our bunks. It was a very noisy night! It wasn't so much a case of 'the bells, the bells' but 'the drums, the drums'!

## Ile de Groix

In the morning we waited for the footbridge to open and locked out of the inner harbour, filled up with water and left, bound for the smaller island of Ile de Groix, where we were assisted in picking up fore and aft moorings in Port Tudy outer harbour. The city of Lorient was clear in the distance at the other side of the channel. It was chef's night off again and we had a super

meal, finished off with Far Breton (prune flan), in a restaurant up the town which was patronised by locals (always a good sign). The crew went ashore next morning while I fitted the spare sea-water pump. Ile de Groix was once the main focus of the Breton tuna fishing industry and the town church spire has a spitted tuna on its weathervane!

We set off in a good westerly breeze, but it rapidly deteriorated into a dead beat and the passage ended in a rather unpleasant motor into a freshening northwesterly. Twenty miles later we dropped anchor in Ile de Penfret in the archipelago, where the Glénan sailing school was founded in 1947. We had wanted to go to Benodet and L'Odet river, but strong westerlies were forecast and we wished to keep whatever westing we had, so that idea was ruled out. Next morning, our Seagull (which had just passed its fortieth birthday) powered us ashore, to visit the Glénan sailing school with its big blue tents and outside 'dunnies' which sported a slot so as not to impede the sea view while seated! Even the Penfret lighthouse had serious fortifications protecting it.

We did not have to raise the anchor until 12.30 as the fair tide for the Pte de Penmarc'h was in the afternoon. We rounded Menhir at 18.00 and in the late evening slipped up Le Goyen river into the sheltered Audierne marina, and had pontoon directions bellowed to us from a friendly chap in a pub. The dredged river was easy once we made out the leading marks (the fish shed has changed colour since the pilot book was printed!). We set foot again on mainland France for the first time since St Nazaire, 130 miles away.

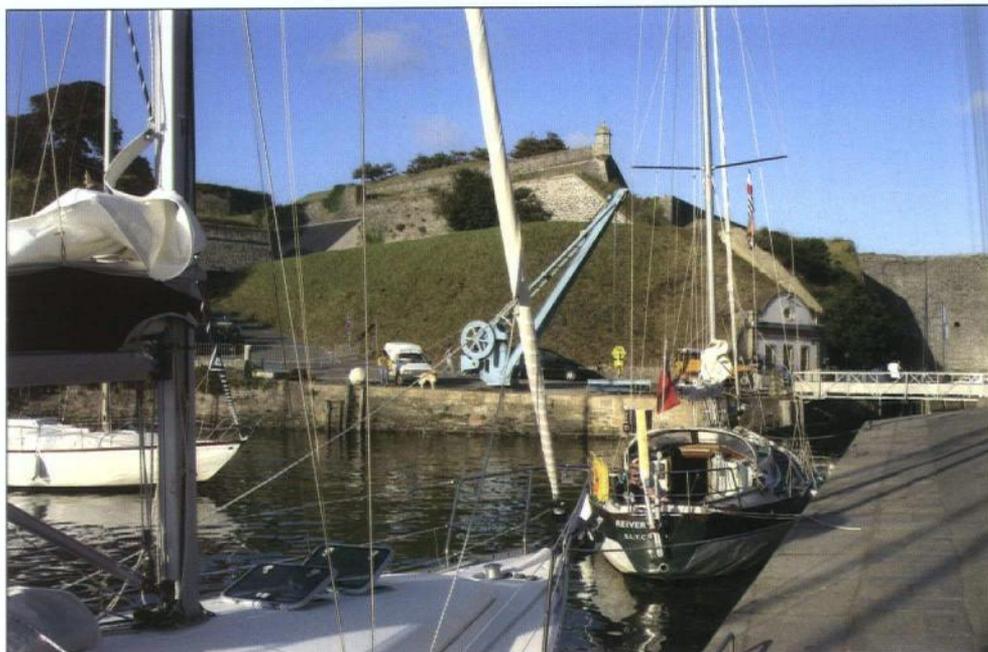
We left Audierne at 13.45 to avoid low water in the river, but this left us early for the first of the north-going tide in the Raz de Sein so we tootled westwards under just the reefed main until the tide turned. At 16.00 it let us go, and we were soon doing over seven knots s.o.g. The forecast was for a complex low, southwesterly 5-7, force 8 later. We ran towards the Goulet de Brest with a rapidly rising wind behind us, passed inside all the Rochers du Toulinguet, and rounded the headland of the peninsula to Camaret-sur-Mer. Many German bunkers overlooked the approaches like large concrete mushrooms. Glad to reach shelter, we went alongside the visitors pontoon, already occupied by a Hallberg Rassy 65 which was dwarfed by a 30 metre, Isle of Man registered yacht being delivered from Finland to the Mediterranean. We felt very small! It blew very hard that night and there was more coming (west-northwest 7-9), so two nights in Camaret seemed sensible. We had an excellent meal in the Hotel de Styvel, yes, rounded off with Far, and got soaked-through walking back to *Reiver*. Next day we used the underground washing facilities beside yet another Vauban structure, this time a tower with moat, and later took on additional cargo, mainly of bottles.

## Scilly Isles

We departed Camaret the following evening (Tuesday) at 18.00, to take the north-going tide and entered the Chenal du Four two hours later. The passage looks horrendous on the chart but it is really quite wide and easy, though wind over tide could make it a very different place from what we experienced. We saw a rather grand motor cruiser heading towards us from direction of the Scillies, Stevie gave them a wave as they passed us some three cables away, and was rather surprised to get a reply from them on their hooter as they shot by. In the late evening we could see Le Stiff radar tower on the north end of Ile d'Ouessant. The electronic compass (necessary with our steel hull) had been dropping out from time to time, and during the night it failed more frequently, so we steered mostly by the stars, as we could not see the magnetic compass one in the dark. Ben continued with his nocturnal habits which weren't restricted to the night! During my watch I saw at least ten ships

all heading east, two passing close to us. The low-lying Scilly Isles eventually appeared during the following afternoon, and we went into the gut between St Agnes and Gugh and anchored. We changed the clocks back to BST. After we had a sleep and some food, I decided that I was very unhappy with our anchorage, especially with another bad forecast, a complex low southwesterly 5-7, 8 later, so made the unpopular decision to move. We motored through St Mary's Sound and right round Bryher and its many off-lying rocks, in a large swell, to New Grimsby Sound, between Bryher and Tresco. On the way in we passed Cromwell's Fort, a change from Vauban, and picked up a mooring at 21.45. To relax we played another game of cards, Scilly Whist this time, yes, same as Ballymena Whist but played in the Scillies. George won again, despite complaining he couldn't tell the difference between spades and clubs! It blew hard again in the night, and a side swell came into the inlet. The forecast became southwest 5-7, possibly 8, 4-5 later.

Throughout Thursday morning the wind decreased somewhat and we decided that the force 8 was past, and that we would probably meet a nice 4-5; wrong! The mooring was slipped at 12.30 and we headed out into a huge swell and could see overfalls to the northwest, so we motored down the rugged coast to Round Island lighthouse, before setting sail and heading north with the usual heavily reefed rig. The heavy conditions continued throughout the first night and the 4 to 5 metre waves did not allow us to steer for more than an hour and a half each so we were rather bashed about and became short of sleep. The compass continued to drop out but a near full moon helped us steer. We saw no ships throughout the night, not even



Le Palais – Inner Harbour.

a fishing boat. Shortly after dawn we were joined by a school of about ten young dolphins, their game was to surf down the approaching wave on our weather side and dive under *Reiver*, going under the bow and between the keel and skeg. Some breached right out of the water singly and in pairs; one seemed to leave the water backwards. This went on all morning.

The Tusker Rock eventually appeared in the afternoon and the wind had gradually abated at last. I was very worried about the prospect of going through the next night without a compass as it looked as if there would be more clouds about. After a short search I found a bad connection under the deckhead and was able to renew it despite the violent motion; a great relief and it did not drop out again. We reached on up the Irish coast, and the sun set behind the wind turbines on the Arklow Banks. The next night was much more pleasant, with a full moon in the south which was like having a car with its lights on behind us. We kept the watch routine and managed about three hours sleep

apiece. There was quite a lot of traffic about, ships out of Dublin and Drogheda, and fishing boats passing back and forth across our course.

### Mourne Mountains

In the morning the Mourne Mountains appeared and we were eventually becalmed off Dundrum Bay, then had to motor the last few miles. We had missed the morning tide into Strangford, so went into Ardglass Marina at 13.50 and set foot on land for the first time since France. During the afternoon we packed and cleaned ship. We then left at 17.00 for Strangford and motored up the Lough to Whiterock, completing the 565 mile, 14 day, homeward bound leg of a 1,264 mile cruise.

*Footnote:* George was the grand champion of Biscay/Scilly Whist



Odet River — Peter, Anne, James & Kate.



Silly Isles – Round Island – Stevie & David.

series with an overall score of 23 points. Stevie and Ben were second equal and the Skipper was last with 19 points, a very close contest.

### Return to Scotland by Peter Williams

Crew: Peter Williams, Rod Brassington, Jock Workman, Rose Williams

All this cruising in foreign parts left me in need of a 'fix' of Scotland, always the best cruising ground. So I arranged a 10 day cruise to the west coast to round off the season.

A large family crew took *Reiver* round to Bangor on Saturday 11 August, catching and eating many fish.

On Sunday 12 I was joined by my daughter Rose, Rod Brassington, an Englishman keen for a first cruise in Scottish waters and Jock Workman, owner of the classic and beautiful *Ceara* which is not in the water this year.

Owing to a late start we only had four hours of ebb left, but made it to a mooring in Waterfoot, Red Bay to await the next ebb at midnight. This took us rapidly up to Gigha, where we picked up a mooring at 06.30 and had a snooze, before going

ashore for an excellent lunch in the hotel and afterwards a walk round the gardens. Later in the day we sailed on to the McCormaig Isles and anchored in that narrow gut, with a line rowed ashore. A charming spot, highly recommended, and we had a peaceful night surrounded by the beauty of the Western Isles: which is what I had come for.

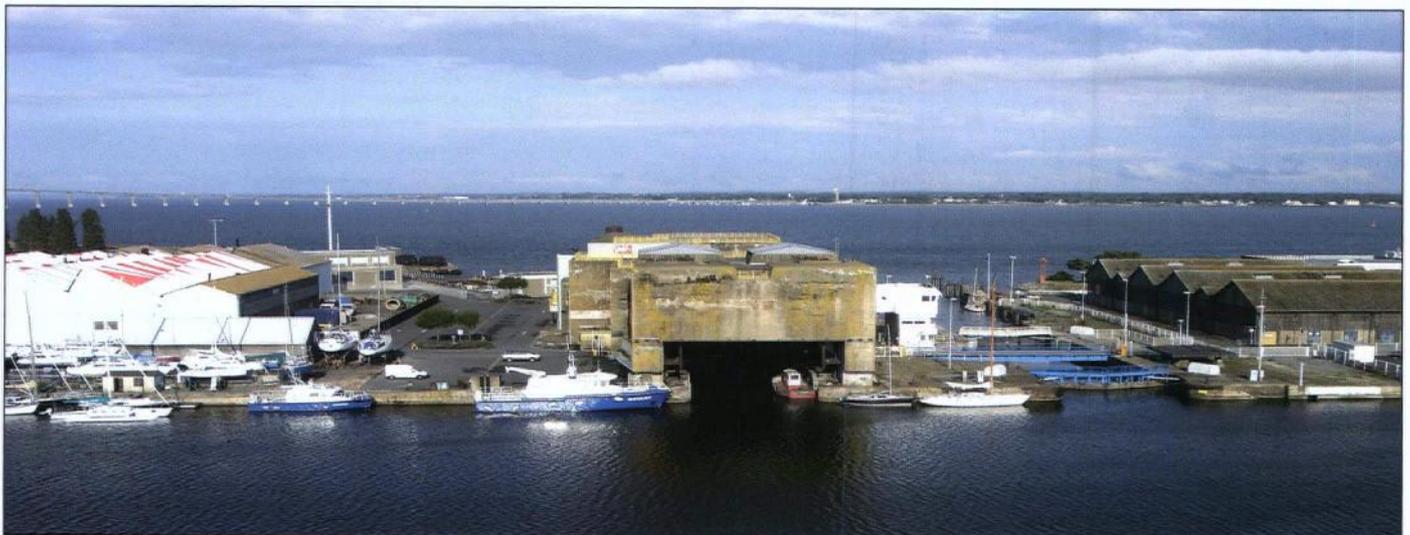
Tuesday 14 August, my 65th birthday and now in possession of a vast pension from Gordon Brown, with a joyous heart we departed heading north up the Sound of Jura; very little wind and it northwest, meant motoring right up through Seil Sound and all the way to Oban, where Rose had to get the train to Glasgow next morning at 08.15. I was therefore determined to get a berth alongside somewhere. Oban is probably the least yacht friendly town I have ever been in, so we motored

around and tried various options until we found a friendly sail-training vessel, the *Fairbridge*, moored to the north pier, who kindly allowed us to tie up outside them. We were very grateful to her crew and entertained them to drinks before walking ashore all of ten yards, to an excellent restaurant.

Next morning we saw Rose to her train, and later sailed in a now much stronger northwesterly wind hoping to get to Tobermory, but by the time we got to the southwesterly corner of Lismore we changed our minds and turned south, as it was going to be such a struggle up the Sound of Mull.

### Bridge over the Atlantic

We ran off for Puillobhain as a more comfortable option, and later walked over to the 'Bridge over the Atlantic' and had a drink in the pub. On Thursday we sailed for Colonsay, any thought of getting further west or north given up due to the strong northwesterly wind. However, for a bit of entertainment we decided to go into the rocky anchorage at Eilean Naomh in the Garvellachs for a lunch stop; it was very gusty. Later we found the pier at Scalasaig (Colonsay) quite quiet, so were able



Re-enforced Submarine Lock. Small Craft Lock to right.



Team Photo – George, Stevie, Ben and David.

to go up to the pub for dinner. It has had a lot of money spent on it lately and also provided excellent food.

Next morning we sailed through the sound of Islay and anchored in Port Mor (just round the corner from Ardmore Point) for the night.

## Rathlin

Saturday 18 and an 08.00 departure with the wind behind us but raining hard, for Rathlin, which we found in the murk and tied up to a pontoon, new this season and outside the inner harbour, with adequate depth both sides. The puffins have left Rathlin this year presumably to follow their food elsewhere. On the island we walked up and were lucky enough to find Patrick and Annette Gage at their holiday home, which the family (owners of the island from 1724 until recent times) keep, and frequently visit.

Sunday morning saw us depart to catch the first of the flood at Rue Point. With a strong north wind and under jib only we tore south touching 11 knots over the ground as we passed Torr Head and carried our tide right to Donaghadee Sound where the strong northerly seemed to have almost stopped the contrary

tide. We went right on to anchor in Knockinelder Bay at 20.00. A good passage. Next morning we departed at 05.00 and not a trace of dawn light, to take the last of the flood (actually the first of the ebb) into Strangford Lough arriving at Whiterock at 08.15, a very pleasant 300 mile cruise to round out the season.

### Norman Kean wonders where exactly are these Saltee Islands, anyway?

This may sound strange, but it is a little-known fact that *nobody knows where the Saltee Islands are*. Admiralty Chart 2740, surveyed in 1847, includes cautions to the effect that "Positions read from smaller scale charts... differ... by varying amounts..." and "The differences between satellite-derived positions and positions on this chart cannot be determined." A couple of years ago, stung by having just paid €39 for a half-size chart that apparently didn't know where on Earth it was, we put a man with Etrex in hand ashore on Great and Little Saltee, the Coningmore Rock, and the pier head in Kilmore Quay. And guess what? It was all over the place. The general sense was as usual – WGS84 positions should be adjusted east and south before plotting on the chart – but it varied from nothing to a full cable. We were told of a nice little anchorage on the southeastern side of the Great Saltee, but we found it unrecognisable against the chart and – with GPS no help to us – had to say Local Knowledge Required.

This year, emboldened by having been into Dundrum and Trawbreaga and under the East Link Bridge, we put the good ship at risk, succeeded in finding the nice little anchorage and dropped the hook in it. The water is beautifully clear and it provides a fine spot for a bit of skinny-dipping, as long as you keep an eye out for the RIBs coming round the point from Kilmore Quay. The landmark for entry is a big ridge of rock well above high water – but shown on the chart as drying, by an indeterminate amount. And the Seven Heads Rocks, to the south, are also shown as drying, even though they stick up at least fifteen feet.



The anchorage on the southeastern side of Great Saltee.

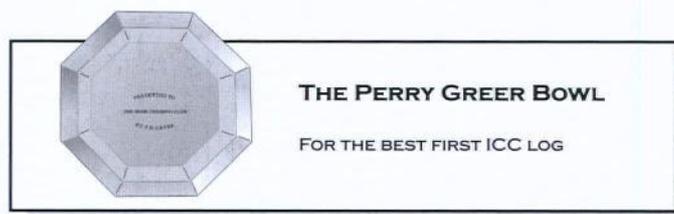
One can only conclude that on that day in 1847, Captain Bedford, Lieutenant Edye and Master Hoskyn were on leave, and that – sadly – the survey of the Salties was left to the second eleven. This may be very important, however, and it could all end in tears and huge legal bills. On the Great Saltee is a fine stone plaque declaring that these islands are the property of the Prince of the Salties, and that all decisions affecting the islands shall be made by the Prince and his heirs. In the event of a decision not being unanimous, it may be brought before the Absent Twelve, they being a dozen fishermen from anywhere in the world, and their decision shall be final. If you haven't been there, I kid you not, that's what it says.

But how can you make statements like that about a couple of islands, if you don't know where they are?

# Eleanda's Maiden Voyage 2007

Sweden via Norway to Scotland

Heleen and Nigel  
Lindsay-Fynn



**Heleen:** I am not sure where or when to begin. After all this might be just the diary of our 1,000-odd mile passage from Ellös in Sweden to Ardfern in Loch Craignish on the west coast of Scotland. But we've all read about other people's dream homes and holidays of a lifetime and with a healthy degree of cynicism, I thought *I'll never think that way and I shouldn't*. Then things changed, for this was certainly a once in a lifetime experience for both of us.

I'm Heleen and, about four years ago, my husband, Nigel, developed an ambition to commission our own new boat, not any boat but a 62' sloop that he hoped I would sail with him. We would be graduating from our 53' Najad. He got his way and after more than two years of debate, talk, sailing trials and negotiations, we signed with Hallberg Rassy in January 2006. We were committed. It was then that we learnt the delights of Ryanair to Säve, an ex-military airfield near Gothenburg, and the Sjogarden Hotel, Ellös, during our visits to the Halberg Rassy yard.

By now we have completed five trips, each packed with decisions, doubts, arguments – *Mr Rassy would never agree to that* was their best defence against our more eccentric requests – and just watching our baby grow. Today is Wednesday 13th June 2007 and we are standing in the second of our queues at Stansted waiting to pay for an awful lot of excess luggage, more than £100 as it turned out, before the third queue for security. Thank goodness this is our last trip by Ryanair to Sweden, I mutter not too softly, to nods from all in our queue. There are just hundreds of people everywhere, queuing for something or other in long snaking lines. But at the other end, it was a warm welcome, the sun was shining and that evening for the first time we climbed aboard our gleaming new *Eleanda*, so named after our two daughters, Eleanor and Miranda.

We had allowed ourselves a week to commission and trial *Eleanda* before leaving, hoping that the yard would be able to sort out any problems we might discover on hand-over. After two nights in the very simple and basic local hotel, by Friday we had unpacked enough from our boxes, which we had sent out ahead as freight, to be able to move onto *Eleanda*. That evening the first of our crew arrived, our daughter, Miranda, a well-qualified RYA Yacht Master.

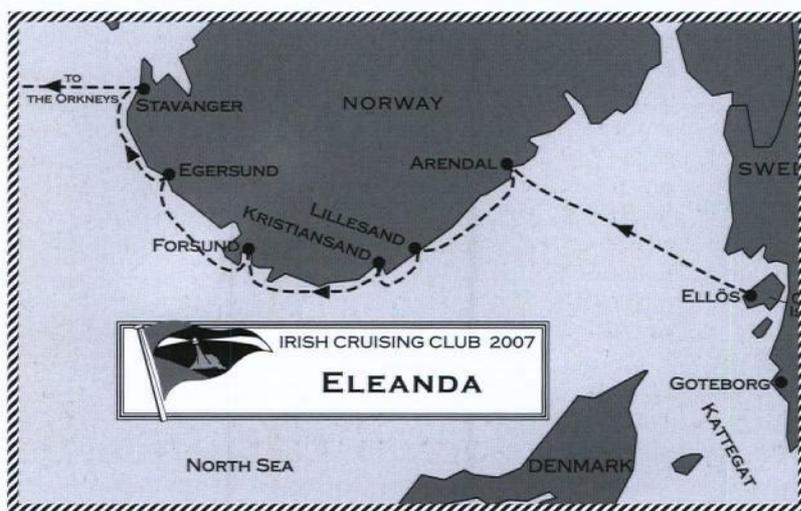
Most of the weekend was spent unpacking, stowing and learning. But Ellös proved to be very social. Najad, Malo Yachts and Sweden Yachts are all close. We met several English people, there to collect their new boats, and ICC member Des Cummins, with friend, Drewry Pearson, staying in our local hotel and travelling from yard to yard, successfully enjoying a free holiday with trial

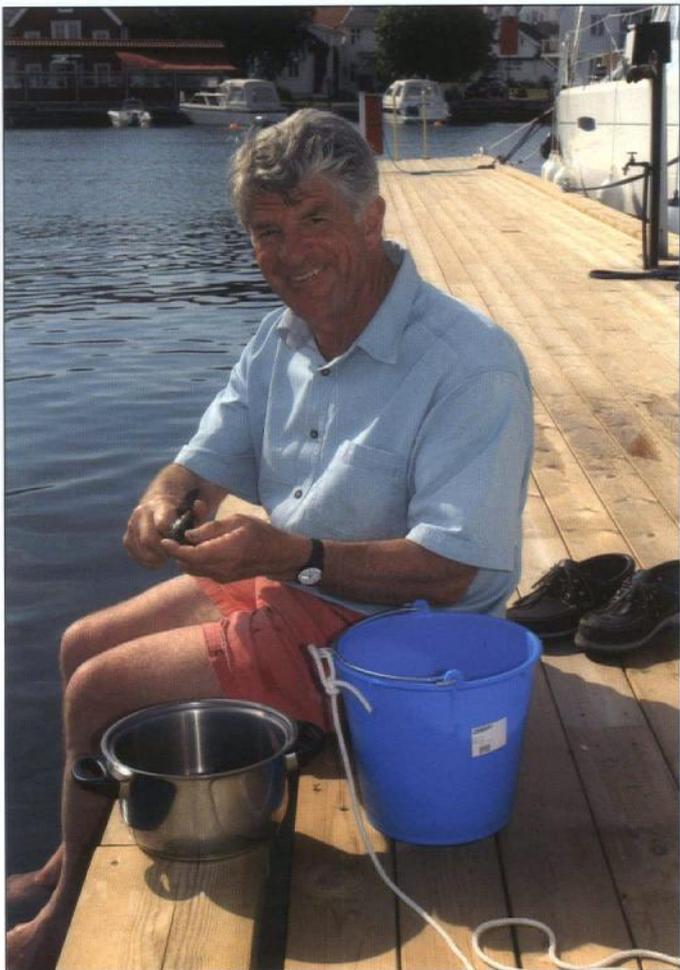
sailings! The bars were friendly and for moments of rest there were invitations from other new boat owners.

On Sunday, for the first time on our own, we sailed up the coast and then back to the neighbouring Gullholmen or Golden Island, so named since the fishermen made their fortunes from the oil extracted from herrings, much of which went to London for lamp-oil. We were hoping for dinner, but the recommended Restaurant Skottarn was closed for a wedding party. A little local shop was still open so we didn't go hungry and spent the night peacefully on the outside quay. Earlier we walked to the fishermen's lookout hut on top of a rocky hill with a stunning 360° view across hundreds of islands. We resolved to return with the rest of the crew who were to arrive on Monday, Keith Hunt from Kinsale, Roly, Nigel's nephew, from County Meath, and Alice, a friend of Miranda. And so we did, for an excellent set piece Swedish dinner, which, we discovered, is always salmon with shrimp sauce, the national dish.

**Nigel:** By Monday, most of the floorboards were up, as the yard engineers corrected last minute hitches. On Tuesday she was lifted out, as they decided the propeller was the wrong pitch for the engine. There seemed to be engineers in every nook and cranny, adjusting, changing a pump or simply looking busy. Just as suddenly, they had finished and save for the forward-looking depth sounder that refused to display on the cockpit screen, everything was perfect. We had heard that Hallberg Rassy launch so many new boats in the early summer that their final inspection standards are likely to slip. Perhaps, but once we found out what was missing or wrong, they did everything possible to put it right.

All the crew were given their jobs. But our preparations were not without incident. Keith and Roly were to inflate the





Keith preparing scallops.

dinghy and test the new outboard, after we had searched the locality for 2-stroke oil, now unheard of in the EU! Keith stood on the stern bathing platform to pass the fuel tank to Roly in the dinghy. As he leant out he grabbed the folded bathing ladder (too new for a lanyard to secure it) which swung free. With a heroic effort he shoved the fuel tank at Roly and fell headlong



At anchor at Vika in the Lysefjord.

into the water, only to resurface minus his expensive varifocal glasses. Magnetic frames would have been better, so we discovered. But Miranda to the rescue, as she dived in and retrieved them, in one go.

At last it was time to depart. All the other English-speaking boats were going south, some through the Kiel Canal, others to cruise the Baltic and a few straight home to the UK. Were we doing something wrong? We were heading for six days in Norway, across to the Shetlands and, if the weather was good enough, round Cape Wrath and down the west coast of Scotland past Skye to Ardfern. Until we got to Stromness, on the Orkneys, we were not to see another sail at sea!

I first adopted PC navigation in 1995, so we had excellent electronic charts of Norway and had also invested a fortune in local paper charts, which, in the event, were hardly used. We had been lent some 15 year-old Pilot books in Norwegian and English, with no photos or harbour plans, but dense pages of depths at wharves. Arnie, a Norwegian Hallberg Rassy owner, gave us a parting present of last year's paperback coastal tourist guide, which at least had some photos. That was the sum of our knowledge on departure!

I must mention two electronic gadgets that were new to me, both of which hugely improved our safety. The first is AIS, which displayed on our electronic chart screens the position of every ship with AIS installed. So accurate were the speeds, courses and the CPA (closest point of approach) that we never used our radar. Our Furuno AIS also transmitted *Eleanda's* AIS information, including whether sailing or under engine. The other is GRIB weather charts, which we downloaded daily from the Internet. These downloads enabled us to overlay pressure isobars, wind speed and precipitation on our charts, looking ahead at six hourly intervals for three days. We knew of any impending bad weather at least two days before any weather forecast received over the radio.

### Day 1, Wednesday 20th June

**Nigel and Heleen:** The sun was shining. There were early morning swims in a near-Mediterranean water temperature of 20°C. At 11.00 local time we said our good-byes and left the Hallberg Rassy Marina for the last time, the advice-giving umbilical finally severed. We were heading 80 miles at 292° for Lyngør, part of a group of Islands off the southeast coast of Norway. What little wind there was, was easterly and it stayed light but variable for the next six days. We motored at 9 knots, 1,600 rpm with a Gori overdrive propeller. It was perfect shorts and T-shirt weather.

Nine hours later around 20.00 we rounded the north tip of Lyngør and turned south into a narrow channel, less than 60 metres wide. Soon it was lined with small wooden waterfront houses painted in white or bright colours and with red roofs. We passed the recommended restaurant, The Sailmaker, with its own pontoon which, to our surprise, was full of boats. But a notice announced that it was opening for the summer season tomorrow! Tant pis! We came to a junction of four islands, circled to check the depth and anchored in 12 metres, straight in.

The crew had the dinghy in the

water in seconds and were off to the local waterfront bar, which soon filled with friendly locals, curious to meet their rare Irish and English visitors. Foreign visiting yachts are apparently unknown. Much later we dined in the cockpit in the never-ending dusk. Around 23.00 two official looking high speed ribs started milling around and a few moments later a massive cruise liner appeared down one of the channels! We had thought it narrow. But she slowly manoeuvred round the corner to take our arrival channel to the northeast. Happy Norwegians lined the rails clutching nightcaps and gave us a wave.

### Day 2, Thursday 21st June

We departed at 08.30 heading for Dalskilin and Lillesand. The former had been our intention for the first night until Arnie had suggested Lyngør. It was just 10.6 miles away, reached after passing between several islands, some with sawmills and ugly steel fabrication works.

Dalskilin is a tiny hidden lagoon on the mainland, not more than a quarter of a mile across and with around 5 metres depth. It has a few holiday cottages and private jetties and in the high season is probably packed, with no room to swing. Today it was deserted, with closed up holiday homes and just a few small ribs in the water. We anchored and relaxed in the morning sun, no wind. Keith even swam ashore.

After a total of 39 miles, at 15.20 we motored into Lillesand, a most attractive harbour with several visitors' pontoons, to one of which we were soon moored. Later we found reasonable shops, a chandlery and some modest restaurants. The Harbour had no showers and terrible loos. But it did have a harbour master who charged us for our one night NKr250, the only time we were asked to pay in Norway.

The two girls took our folding bikes, and found a clean freshwater lake where they could swim for the first time without fear of the Norwegian jellyfish plague. Meanwhile Keith found the underside of our pontoon was teeming with plump mussels, with which he prepared to accompany an early evening apéritif. In the moderately busy but friendly restaurant we learnt that the season would start tomorrow, when Lillesand would hold a weeklong music festival.

### Day 3, Friday 22nd June

We departed at 08.00 in flat calm and no wind. We motored out through channels between islands and ultimately to the open sea, bound for Farsund, 65 miles away, but with a stop for lunch at Udvåre, a tiny island cove with just a few summer cabins. By midday we were anchored in the centre, in 6 metres, and not much room for



Farsund.

anyone else. We could easily have stayed the night as the weather was so calm and stable. It was very remote. After lunch, what wind there was, was on the nose so we motored for 4½ hours, the last hour between islands with well marked channels but plenty of rocks, to Farsund. This small town had been well recommended and so would we. It had a marina to the west, too small for us, but we found the long stone quay in the centre empty, with plenty of depth. We moored there, next to a wide promenade and the road through the centre of town. We were told it gets very full in season, but they welcome you with a complimentary newspaper, weather forecast and croissants. We were adjacent to several bars. There was a newly renovated hotel, inevitably called The Fjord, 1 kilometre out of town, with live music. As it was Friday night and the start of the summer solstice, there were plenty of revellers in town, including our crew.



Lift-out at the Yard to change the propeller. Heleen, Keith, Nigel, Miranda.

## Day 4, Saturday 23rd June

By now the engine had done 37 hours and the engine oil had to be changed before 40. But we needed a strap wrench. Keith went on the hunt and came back triumphantly. He had met an old Norwegian sea-dog, who generously lent us his, as none of the chandlers or garages had been able to help. 30 minutes later, success, clean oil and new filters. It was market day, so we were able to buy some excellent local strawberries. All in all, Farsund was an enjoyable port of call.

Egersund, a large cargo and fishing port, had been our next planned stop. But now we heard from Farsund locals that it was best avoided by yachts, as just too commercial. There are few safe anchorages between Farsund and the inland waters around Stavanger, but Egersund is sheltered by quite a large island, Eigerö, separated from the mainland by little more than river estuaries to the north and east. Without any information except from our charts, we decided to go west of the island and try the north channel. We departed at 13.00 and yet again motored for the 48 miles to the Grunnundholmen light and entrance to the north estuary between Eigerö and the mainland. It was a narrow channel between rocks, but well marked. There were two anchorages marked on our chart, but as we motored past, we rejected the first as boring. Fortunately the second, 250m west of the Eigeröy-no-Pynt flashing red light, turned out to be an idyllic pool with a few painted cabins on the shore and a background of gentle hills with grazing cows. The local Norwegians stared with surprise as a Swedish-looking yacht, but flying the British Ensign, slowly circled round and dropped its anchor.

Tonight there would be midsummer celebrations. In all of Scandinavia, families and friends gather together for outdoor parties, at which bonfires are lit at dusk. We had hardly anchored when we were hailed by a very English voice from a rib. Would we like to join him and his family for drinks and cake when they lit their bonfire? We accepted with alacrity, and later joined a group of a dozen or so of his friends at an outdoor barbecue. Keith was soon cementing Irish-Norwegian relations. They were all very friendly and, like our new friend from England, they all seemed to work in the oil industry. There were numerous other parties along both shores, all with bonfires and barbecues. The children use inflatables and ribs rather like pedal bikes in this country. They race around chasing each other, wave jumping close to any craft that comes along. As dusk arrived, even the smallest inflatable had a stern light, a pretty sight like a host of glow-worms or fireflies buzzing around.

## Day 5, Sunday 24th June

*Heleen:* I woke up at 6.00 to another glorious day. All was absolutely quiet but for the lapping at the waters' edge and the call of birds. I felt I should be fishing but made myself a cup of tea instead and wrote up this log. No one on the boat stirred for another hour.

*Nigel and Heleen:* Today we are heading further north to Stavanger and then the Lysefjord. Yet again we are motoring. The topography was changing quite substantially. It was a flatter area, but later we could see the mountains in the distance. Eventually the wind freshened and backed to the west and, for the first time since leaving Ellös, we could sail without the engine. We turned southeast round the Bragen Lighthouse off Tungeneset, onto a comfortable reach towards Stavanger, ten miles away.

Motoring into the huge harbour, we found the small crowded visitors' marina right in the centre, and numerous docks. But in the smallest dock, the sides of which were used by the lesser tourist boats, we saw at its end, moored to the

roadside stone quay, a yacht mast. The wharf was sandwiched between the Norwegian Oil museum and the multi-storey car park for the big ferries. It was perfect, convenient for the town centre, and plenty of room for us. No one disturbed us and there were no harbour dues. The city has some wonderful historic Norwegian buildings, many of slatted and painted wood. Numerous shops, including an Express Spar, were nearby, while just to the south, the waterfront was lined with late night-bars. There was even an Irish pub. Late on that Sunday evening we went in search of a restaurant and ended up, of all places, at Phineas Fogg, one of a chain of very American-style steak bars, not the finest dining, expensive and definitely not recommended.

## Day 6, Monday 25th June

Today we said goodbye to Alice. We walked her to the ferry which would take her to Haugesund, near Bergen, for her Ryanair flight to Stansted. Soon after, we left to motor the 17 miles to the entrance of the Lysefjord, one of the most talked about tourist attractions of Norway. It was a most beautiful day, yet again no wind. Turning into the entrance we passed under the great high road bridge. The fjord was absolutely stunning, breathtakingly so, and we were seeing it in perfect conditions. Three miles in, we stopped for lunch at Vika, a small bay on the southern side and the only anchorage in the 20 miles-long fjord. Three crew went swimming despite sighting jellyfish once again. We loved this anchorage and decided to return for the night. Later, we motored up the fjord, which is 300m to 400m deep and the cliffs as high on each side. We could motor so close to the side that we feared the mast might touch the cliffs, yet the depth was still over 100m. We encountered no other boats and saw no sign of habitation except some sheep grazing low down on a steeply sloping tiny patch of grass. How did they get there? Returning to Vika, we watched a farmer transporting his sheep in a pen mounted on a small punt to his landing stage. Problem solved! Later we dined in the cockpit in the superb evening light slowly turning to the twilight of night.

## Day 7, Tuesday 26th June

*Heleen:* We had spent the most peaceful still night and early next morning, now, all alone in the early morning light, I was enthralled by the view. The sun was shining and the turquoise water, so calm, was just like a mirror. On one side there were high sheer rock cliffs and on the other, gently sloping orchards rising to mountains in the distance.

*Nigel and Heleen:* For lunch we were heading the 28 miles to the island of Kvitsoya, another local recommendation. The weather was definitely changing and we had received a gale warning. The entrance from the east to Kvitsoya was well marked with leading poles. We had been told to head past the old wooden ferry jetty, turn to port and we would find a visitor's quay on the main island. What little there was of it was full. But on the port side there was another dilapidated wooden jetty with a picnic table and barbecue, where we decided to moor. It would also have made a safe overnight stop. But we intended to go on to another island, Skudeneshaven. We lunched on board before taking the dinghy to the other bank to explore the island. Above the pretty village of traditional wooden houses is the radar tower, which monitors the shipping in and out of Stavanger, from where you can look out over hundreds of small islands and the mountains to the east. Mid-afternoon we left to motor out through the narrowest channel possible. By now the weather had deteriorated with mountainous seas and a strong northwesterly wind on the nose. Waves smashed over the deck, a good test for the new hatches and portholes. As we clearly weren't leaving for Scotland the



following day, we decided to return to Stavanger for the night, we hoped to our secret quay. It was empty. But for the first time since Sweden it was pouring with rain, so we dined on board.

### Day 8, Wednesday 27th June

As the weather continued windy and wet, it was a day for some culture. We took a tourist tour of the historic city, partly on foot and then by mini bus. We learnt that the best restaurant was close to *Eleanda* at the Norwegian Oil museum, Bolgen & Moi, tel 51939351. The museum is also well worth a visit. Shopping is excellent with attractive and unusual interior design and fashion shops.

At 15.00 we set out for the second time for our last stop in Norway, Skudenshaven. After a wet crossing under engine, we arrived around 18.30 at the adequately marked entrance channel through numerous nasty rocks. There is an outer commercial harbour, but we followed the channel, once again lined with traditional wooden houses, to the centre of the village. There were several motor boats ahead of us, milling around. We dropped our anchor in the centre of a barely large enough pool and waited. No sooner had we poured the drinks, than a large naval ship came down the channel straight towards us. It stopped within inches and reversed onto a quay. Now we really were tight. Later the harbour master in his launch politely asked us to move. He was expecting 300 boats by the next day for the annual Skudenshaven Festival; live music, famous folk bands etc. They expect 30,000 visitors when the normal population is 4,000. There was even a race from Skudenshaven to Banff, Scotland; several boats coming from Scotland would be competing. He kindly led us to a quay just 100 metres along the entrance channel. We booked into his recommended Restaurant Bessetua, which proved excellent. Attached to it was a piano bar where we ended up with coffee and several nightcaps, dancing the night away. The atmosphere was buzzy and friendly. We thought it a charming island and town.

### DAYS 9 and 10, Thursday to Friday 28th – 29th June

Despite partying the previous night, we were ready to go at 08.15. With the delay due to the weather, we had already decided that the Shetlands were no longer possible. We would head for the Orkneys on 2750 and then down the western side to Stromness, a distance of 285 miles, where we should arrive about 20.00 local time, the following day. It was a huge heavy sea. Yesterday's gale was now no more than force 6 and still diminishing, but from the west and on the nose. Nigel did not feel too good! But within a few hours the sea became calmer as the wind veered northwest.

We motored through the day and into the twilight of the night just south of the 60° parallel, passing numerous oil platforms where our mobile phones sprang to life. The sky never became entirely dark. There was always a rosy glow on our starboard side. A waning moon hung low on the southern horizon and the sun rose at 04.00. Before then, around 22.00, with 113 miles covered, the wind had veered enough to the northwest that we could motor-sail and by 07.30 the following morning we had 17 knots of wind from 350°, and turned off the engine. From then it just got better and better. We could soon see the Fair Isles to starboard and numerous dolphins played around us as we made 8.5 knots on our close reach. By midday we could see the Orkneys ahead to port and the wind continued to veer to the north and then northeast offering us a broad reach.

At 17.00 we passed through the North Ronaldsay Firth in very confused waters and, with the tide running south, on to Weathernes Sound and Rapness Sound. There followed a port reach west of Main Island until we turned into Hoy Mouth and so into Stromness Harbour and its marina where we were moored by 19.00. The crossing was 285.7 miles in 35 hours 45 minutes to give an average speed of 8.0 knots and a total distance since leaving Ellös of 734.8 miles.

The Marina manager had earlier been most helpful on the phone. He even reserved a hammerhead for us, but apologised for the lack of water and electricity on our pontoon. *Eleanda* was covered in salt and we missed a good fresh-water hose down.

Although our first impression was of a grey rather bleak town, on further exploration we easily discovered the charm. The late Victorian buildings are all grey stone, the architecture solid and strong, and the town appears to have changed little over the last 100 years. The surrounding landscape is gentle rolling hills, serene and tranquil. There is wonderful bird life. Sadly the well-known restaurant, which requires pre-booking, Hamnavoe, tel 01856 850606, was closed the night we were there and the two local hotels offered fairly basic menus, so it was dinner on board.

Keith jumped ship after dinner, to return to Ireland. We had found him an overnight ferry from Kirkwall, a short bus ride away from just outside the marina, to Aberdeen, thence by Ryanair to Cork, departing the next morning. Oh! the joys of having a reliable internet connection on *Eleanda*. Roly was also leaving the following morning by Loganair to Edinburgh and then to Dublin. But this was a more expensive option and he, poor man, was hugely delayed by the failed terrorist attack on Glasgow Airport that day.

### Day 11, Saturday 30th June

After a lazy morning of shopping and lunch anchored off in The Bay of Ireland, the remaining three of us left mid-afternoon to collect Erica, another friend of Miranda, from Scrabster, where she was due to arrive at 18.30, after eight hours travelling by bus. Sailing with a poled-out genoa past the cliffs of the Island of Hay, we couldn't believe the abundance



Kvitsoya.

of sea birds including Puffins, Fulmars, Little Auks, Divers, Guillemots, Shags, Cormorants, Manx Shearwaters and Razorbills. It was a birders paradise.

Scrabster is the relatively new ro-ro harbour next to Thurso, on the northeastern coast of Scotland. The harbour master sent two friendly port employees high above us on the quayside to take our ropes. They even invited us to stay the night. But it was not a place to stay, with metal pylons along the quay. It was blowing hard and coming along side for a touch-and-go without damaging *Eleanda* was extremely difficult. Erica was waiting there and hastily climbed down and jumped aboard.

We left immediately, heading west to sail the 40 miles to the entrance to Loch Eriboll, the only safe anchorage before Cape Wrath. The 25 knot easterly wind was behind us and we poled out the genoa for a decent run to the entrance of the Loch, where, in the gathering dusk, we furled the sails and motored. It was still a further 15 miles to the south end, the only part of the Loch shallow enough to take the anchor, where we arrived at midnight and anchored in 12 metres. We were in total solitude. It was a spooky, misty, drizzling night and it was almost dark.

### Day 12, Sunday 1st July

After the late sail, we woke to find utter peace in a totally deserted Loch with nothing but a fish farm and a few scattered crofts. It was still raining, but it was gorgeous just sitting on deck soaking up the atmosphere. We saw a camper van that had stopped and was looking at us from the shore road before he drove on, and even felt upset that he was threatening our isolation. Actually the A838, which goes all the way from Lairg to Tongue, follows both the west and east shores of the loch.

We now had no particular destination, but with the forecast was more rain and 10-15 knot east-southeast wind. We thought the anchorages on the east side of Lewis too exposed to swell. So Loch Dhrombaig was the choice, just 45.7 miles away.

After motoring north down Eriboll, we reached in a northeast 15 knot wind to the Cape, rounding it in perfectly calm waters and on down the west coast. We furled the sails at the last moment and motored between the two islands at the entrance, anchoring in tiny Loch Dhrombaig in 15m at 16.15. It was another wonderful anchorage, isolated like the previous night but too much swell, so some rocking. The two girls took the dinghy to the beach. It was raining again. They went to look

for the hotel restaurant mentioned in the pilot, walked in both directions, found nothing and returned soaking. It was dinner on board.

### Day 13, Monday 2nd July

We awoke to grey skies, but dry, and a seal lying on the beach beside us. Miranda and Erica went swimming, but there were quite a few shrieks as the shock of the 12°C water hit them. We began to feel that the great adventure was over. Rounding Cape Wrath was the last risk. Now we were in holiday sailing mode for the remaining 160 miles to Ardfern. So we enjoyed a leisurely breakfast before departing at 10.45 for somewhere not too far from Gairloch Pier, from where Erica would catch a bus back to work. It has good bus connections to Inver-

ness and other towns; so useful for changing crew.

In a calm sea we motored once again passing many puffins just floating on the water surprisingly close to the boat. By now we had chosen Badachro on the west coast of Gairloch and we motored into its narrow entrance to anchor in about 5 metres at 16.30. We took the dinghy half a mile to the slipway by the Badachro Inn, tel 01445 741225, and walked the hill and



Anchorage off Dunvegan Castle.

along the shore looking back to *Eleanda* at anchor nearly a mile away. We returned to sit on the Inn's terrace, overlooking glorious views of the bay and enjoying the warm evening air, but later suffering from midges, which drove us indoors for a surprisingly good dinner. Badachro is definitely on our recommended list. In the summer twilight we returned to *Eleanda* for coffee and Calvados in the cockpit and to watch the very red sunset. It was just so peaceful.

### Day 14, Tuesday 3rd July

We departed at 07.30 to motor the 1.7 miles across the bay to Gairloch Pier where Erica's bus was leaving at 08.00. Very gently we drifted our 62 feet alongside a twenty-something foot cruiser, moored to a floating pontoon but dead to the world. A very startled man in his pyjamas appeared at the saloon hatch as we towered over him. With many thanks and apologies for disturbing him, Erica hopped over the side onto his deck and was gone. Just as gently we reversed and motored away heading for the northwest tip of Skye and Loch Dunvegan, 43.6 miles away. On the northern coast there was a multitude of puffins and guillemots diving for food.

The entrance to Loch Dunvegan is spectacular, with a landscape of a few white cottages on the moors and rough grazing and trees down to the shore. There are rocks everywhere, but the safe channel with good depths is well marked. As the little harbour looked very shallow, we anchored off further north, in 10m just south of the great castle, which lent a dramatic atmosphere to the anchorage.

We had got there at just 12.55 and in a great hurry we took the dinghy half a mile to a hotel jetty behind the breakwater. We had booked lunch at the famous Three Chimneys Restaurant, tel 01470 511258. It was a short taxi ride to the other side of the loch and we walked in on time for our 13.30 reservation. The restaurant lived up to its outstanding reputation. But it is essential to book well ahead. We returned by taxi to the Castle, the home of The McLeod and open to the public. Its garden is outstanding, quite similar to Tresco Abbey. That evening our taxi took us to the Loch Bay Sea Food Restaurant at Stein, tel 01470 592235, which serves really excellent fresh fish and shellfish. It is less formal and less expensive than the Three Chimneys. But we would unreservedly recommend either. Had we known, we could have sailed round and anchored off for the night, as it is just the northeast arm of Loch Dunvegan, but open to the west so, we guess, prone to swell.

### Day 15, Wednesday 4th July

We were due at Ardfern on Thursday, so we chose Tobermory as a sensible destination for our last night, 68 miles away. We enjoyed a leisurely late departure at 10.55, motoring once again. On rounding Griny Head, southwest Skye, we saw seals and puffins in the water, while a vast colony of shags, cormorants and gulls were perched on the rocks. Then, real excitement, we spotted a shark which Heleen thought was a Mako or Borbeagle. Not much later, on rounding West Point Lighthouse, we saw a whale with a large black ridge on the



Alice, Keith and Miranda.

back of its head about 5-6m long, perhaps a North Atlantic Right Whale.

After passing through the Sound of Canna we found enough wind to reach Tobermory where we arrived at 19.50. The harbour is very deep and we don't like visitors' buoys with our weight and high freeboard. We managed to anchor in 26 metres at half tide, with most of our 100 metre chain laid out, meaning we needed a lot of room to swing! It is a prime tourist town and the pubs have a great selection of Scotch whiskies. But unless you like your malts rough and tasting of silage, don't try the local Tobermory distillation!

### Day 16, Thursday 5th July

And so we began our last day of the voyage and the 42.4 miles to Ardfern at the north end of Loch Craignish. We departed at 08.30 but found the anchor so well dug in that we had to turn through 180° and pull it out backwards with the engine. We motored all morning, finding the Firth of Lorne very busy with ferries and other sailing yachts. It felt like the Solent. What a change from the solitude we had enjoyed so much in northeast Scotland and the Isle of Skye and really all the way from Sweden. It was back to the madd'ing crowds. The wind was from the south but as we turned into Craignish, we could sail the last few miles to the marina where we arrived to quite a welcome from the Wilkies at 13.20.

Since saying good-bye to Hallberg Rassy at Ellös, we had sailed 1,061 miles in 16 days. We had discovered the character of and mastered our new *Eleanda*, delivering her safely to Ardfern, the end of her first leg home to Plymouth. Prior to passing Mull our route, harbours and anchorages were all new to us. We had enjoyed six days of holiday sailing in Norway, crossed the North Sea in benign conditions and cruised the north and west coasts of Scotland. We still had plenty in front of us, as we were to return to sail her down the west coast of Ireland, in lousy weather as it turned out, and on, after a rest in Kinsale, to Plymouth, a total home-coming of 2,071 miles. But this diary and log is quite long enough without including the second 1,000 miles!

# Along Memory Lane to Connemara

## Sal and Jeffrey O'Riordan

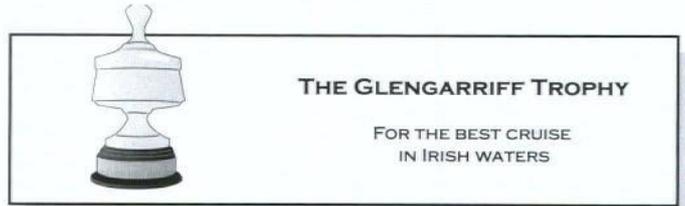
When we decided to sail up to Connemara, we hoped that, in the three weeks available, we would have plenty of time to visit many old haunts. *Adrigole*, our Rival 36, marking 20 years of cruising, came off the mooring at Crosshaven on 12th June and we headed for Oysterhaven to sort out storage. The next day we had a fast passage to Crookhaven. For once we got the tides right and GPS declared the speed over the ground as 7 knots off the Old Head of Kinsale.

Things were less good as we entered Crookhaven because we broke the gooseneck on the boom as the sail was lowered. Fortunately the sail was not damaged and we got it off unharmed. We hoped to remain undetected but subsequently we found that Clayton Love on *Golden Apple* had noticed our disability. Travelling overland from a boat is not easy if you start at Crookhaven and you're in a hurry, however a major advance is that it is no longer necessary to struggle with a call box to make arrangements. A taxi to Currabinny was the only answer, so off we went. Back in the house, searching the web revealed the source of a new gooseneck in the UK. It arrived in Cork within three days, which is pretty good service for a product that is 20 years old, and it was delivered to the boat by friends who were coming to the boat for lunch next day. In the meantime the original was repaired in Crosshaven and we got back to the boat (mainly by bus) and had it fitted within 48 hours of its breaking. So we advanced from having zero to having two goose necks in 72 hours. Every boat ought to have a spare!

Next day we rounded the Mizzen and headed north. As we did so "fitting out" continued. Some distress was caused when checking the radar produced an error message on the screen that was not in the manual, reading "bearing pulse error". There was some relief when it turned out that the antenna had not been connected, and morale was much better after that had been spotted and the radar worked. Because of the tides we went outside the Bull rather than through Dursey Sound. That gave us a marvellous view through the rock and a chance to look at the gannetry on the west side. Later we learnt something we hadn't known before. Apparently because the occupants leave for the winter, all the guano is washed off, and the rock regains its pristine appearance.

### Derrynane

As we went into Derrynane, we wondered why a lot of money had been spent on a new drying quay in the northwest corner of harbour. All three visitors moorings were occupied – two seemed to be long term-occupants. This was not quite so blatantly obvious as it had been a few years earlier, when there was part of a fish cage tied to one of the visitors moorings. We went through the motions of demonstrating that the holding is not good in Derrynane before picking up someone else's mooring and hoping they wouldn't come back that night. The third visitors mooring was occupied by *Vagrant of Clyde* with



Bill and Jane MacLaren on board. They had almost completed a seven year long circumnavigation.

Continuing north we headed into Dingle, and flattered ourselves because the harbourmaster remembered the boat, and us from, some years back. Self congratulation evaporated when we realised again that he remembered all his visitors. He is going to retire at the end of the summer and thought he would be replaced by a "couple of Polish girls in mini skirts". We didn't realise that we were going to be in Dingle for five nights due a combination of gales and gale warnings. Fortunately we were in good company, others agreeing that it was a better place to be than on exposed waters outside. It was particularly good to see *Thetis of Tamar* with Jeremy and Ann Bradshaw Smith on board. Last year they had recovered a hand-held VHF which we had left on a fuel pontoon in France, and later, during the winter, they returned it to us. One evening while they were on board along with Ivan and Mary Sutton off *Muscadet* from Kilmore Quay, it began to blow quite hard and heavier mooring lines were needed. Mary Falk was also there in her water ballasted-boat, *Q II*. She was going round the course in preparation for a single-handed race to be held later in the summer. Although the boat was 17 years old it was still highly competitive and it was designed and built especially for her. She is quite a small lady and access to the cabin reflected that. When we went on board Jeffrey had difficulty getting into the cabin, and even more problems getting back out! Later we heard that she had come second in the "Petit Bateau" series which is pretty good. While waiting for better weather we took a tourist boat out to the Blaskets and walked on the shore. The trip out was an opportunity to see the hazards in Blasket Sound, preparation which was to be useful later on.

### Weather improved

Eventually the weather improved, so the various boats that had gathered in Dingle could move off. We left just ahead of Mary Falk and noted that she was better prepared than us, having got her heavy weather gear on before leaving harbour. While she went south, we headed north. *Thetis of Tamar* followed our route up Blasket Sound. As we made towards Fenit, motor-sailing, we saw them making slow progress and thought they were "purists", sailing while we were using an engine. Later, on VHF, we heard that the lifeboat was going to tow them. We checked and gathered that their engine had failed but they were not in danger, so there was no point in our going back. Shortly after we got to Fenit they came in at 7 knots. It turned out there was a serious block in their fuel line. We felt very sorry for them because the episode had obviously been pretty stressful.

The next day we had a great sail up to Aran. As we got nearer to the Aran Islands, the weather forecast was for a northwesterly gale. Inishmore would be exposed to that so we headed for Cashla. While we were going in, four tourists boats headed out at high speed in the failing light. We were glad to be following a sailing boat towing a dinghy, which we felt meant

they were local and would know the route. We picked up a visitors mooring and tied on with a strong line ready for the blow. In the morning there were white horses in the Bay with 30 knots of wind, but it was much more peaceful there than it had been in the Scillies a few years ago with similar winds. Things had changed in Cashla Bay over the years. Sal's father, the late Bob Berridge kept his boats there, 50 years ago. Then, to lay a mooring you dragged it down a slip and a fishing boat tied on at low water. When the tide came in it could be moved to the chosen spot. At that time his was the only yacht, but now about a dozen pleasure boats are based there. Ashore are even greater changes. There used to be a shop selling potatoes, carrots and cabbage and little else, but now there are two supermarkets that are extremely well stocked. We didn't see a pony and trap but four-wheel drive vehicles abounded. It was great to see that the community was thriving, and Galway University College has a base there. When we landed in the dinghy we were greeted by a man who introduced himself as "The Harbour Master" and collected his dues and drove us in his van to the supermarket. He also said he was "The Fishmonger" and could get us fresh fish in the morning, but we didn't see him again.

### **Around the coast to Roundstone**

The passage around the coast to Roundstone taxed us, and we wondered whether a fish farm was going to obscure the leading line, "Golam Head well open north of Red Flag Island, 12 degrees", but the fear was groundless. Again we were thankful for one of the visitors mooring but they are a bit remote from the village, being outside the bar. Ashore, we were told that we could use a mooring just off the pier – a big green buoy normally used by a boat currently in the Azores – very convenient. We were glad of showers in the hotel where we had a good meal. A French couple were having difficulties with names of fish but pictures on tablemats came to the rescue: a Swedish couple joined in the discussions of the menu, contributing to a genial evening. There's no longer a butcher's shop in Roundstone, it's been replaced by an internet café staffed by a cheerful Argentinian girl.

It didn't seem to be a day for going to sea, so we hired bicycles. Going along a country lane we met a couple of fishermen salting fish to be used for bait in pots. They said that, weather permitting, they were out every day of the year, winter and summer apart from Christmas Day. Last Christmas the weather had been so bad that they couldn't go out for a week after St Stephen's day. What a hard life they had. We had a mild taste of their troubles the following morning when we went out, hoping visibility would be better outside than it was near Roundstone. It was not, so we went back while we could still cross the bar.

Next day was a lot better and we went to Kilronan. A few years ago we'd found that it was too crowded but this time, although there were a lot of people around and hordes were coming from tripper boats, life seemed more relaxed, and by 16.00 most of the tourists had gone back to the mainland. There was a regatta that weekend in the harbour. Ashore, a bouncy castle had been set up for the children on the beach. We wondered why it was being dismantled quite early and then realised the tide would be in quite soon and it would be afloat. A cheerful fisherman seemed to be running everything. He said that in the strong easterlies which had been blowing, it would be quite sheltered down to Loop Head but then in the mouth of the Shannon it could be quite rough. Apart from good advice he gave us excellent crab claws, free. Sal commented that the

horse-drawn sidecars had been replaced by horse-drawn traps, but these in their turn were now being challenged by minibuses. Another gale was expected but this time from the west so hiring bicycles was again an attractive option. Off the main road there was little traffic and the church of St Enda, which dates back to 800 AD was very peaceful.

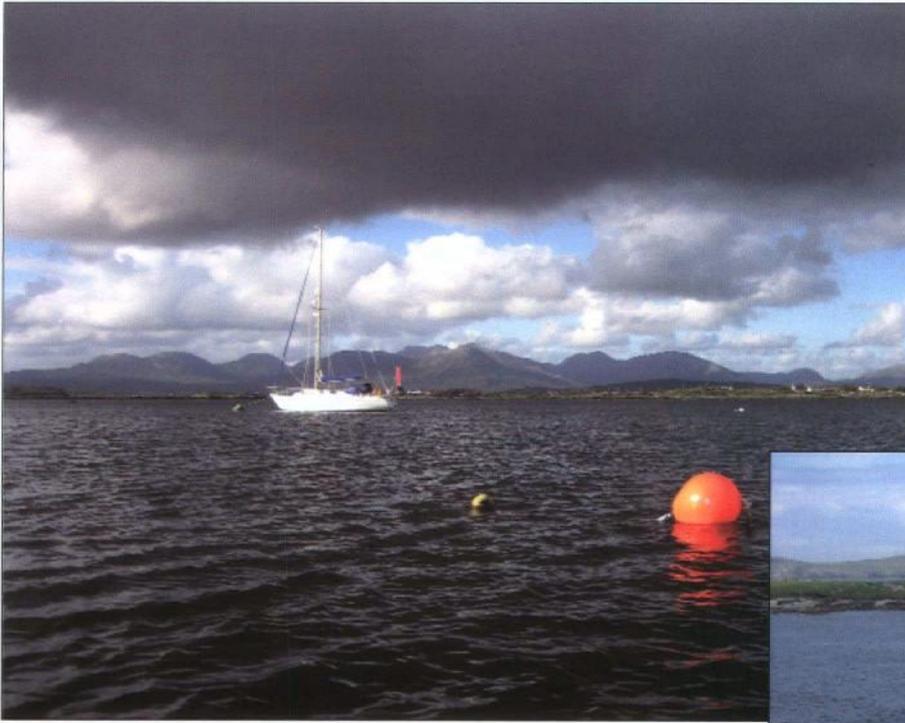
On July 1st we started south. Going out through Gregory Sound the spray spewing up the cliffs was pretty impressive. For a couple of hours dolphins swam around us, diving under the hull or weaving in the bow wave. While we were sailing along Jeffrey spoke to Bill, G4FRN, the controller of the UK maritime net on SSB, 14303 MHz. Direct contact with him near Guildford, outside London, was not possible, but a relay via another yacht, on the River Guardian between Spain and Portugal bridged the gap.

It is said that a land fall on the Brandon Mountains can be pretty impressive, but not that day. Shrouded in mist they were hardly to be seen at all. As we approached Blasket Sound things got worse. Critical hazards periodically disappeared for a while. Fortunately we had a hand-held computer with charts on it, linked to a GPS via Bluetooth. Sal followed our position on the chart telling Jeffrey where to go. Without this chart plotter in the cockpit, we would have been in deep trouble, and would have had to go outside the Blaskets. At the southern end of the Sound we lost the wind and had to motor to keep off the rocks. As we headed into Ventry it became clear that the weather forecast had become a reality – "cyclonic variable becoming northwest". We were glad of the long evenings which made it just possible to make out the mooring in the far corner of the harbour.

Next morning we headed out across the bay hoping we could make further south, but that meant being close hauled in 30 knots of wind and quite a steep sea. The immediate future looked pretty bleak, and we were glad to bear away and agree that Valentia was a great place to go. Cahirciveen was ruled out, because we felt if we went there it might be too tempting to stay in good shelter, and we would never keep to our aim of getting back to Crosshaven by 7th July, when Sal had a flight booked to London. Picking up a mooring in Valentia wasn't easy, especially when its shackle was jammed down flat and it was still quite windy. Ashore it was remarkable how little had changed in the many years that we've been visiting Valentia periodically. The people in the shop were as helpful as ever, offering to keep us a copy of *The Irish Times* next morning and getting a brown loaf for us. The restaurant looked good but it wasn't going to be open that evening.

### **Another gale warning**

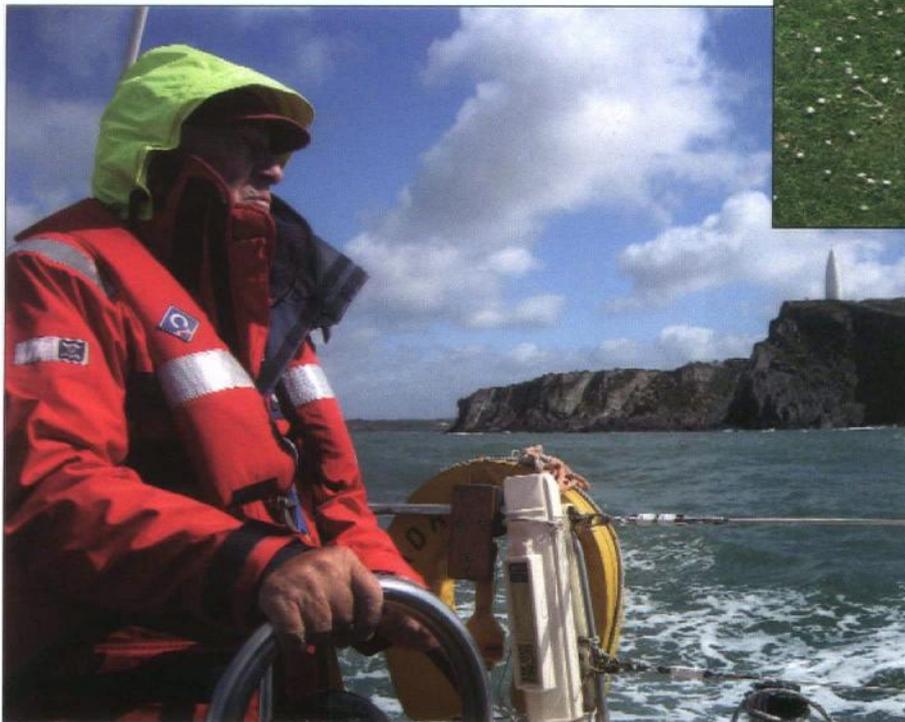
We warned the shop that we mightn't be collecting the paper, if the weather improved. Fortunately it did, though a third reef was indicated. Mostly we had 25-30 knots of westerly wind so the passage south was fast. We kept a couple of miles off the Bull and off Mizen head. Being further out from Mizen Head gave us a very different view of it from the one we usually see closer in. As we entered Crookhaven there was yet another gale warning, which seemed to be becoming the norm. Next morning a couple of boats headed out into a strong westerly wind. One of these was an English yacht, the crew of which looked pretty gloomy as they left. We decided on the "bread-making option", hoping for calmer seas next day. Overnight there was no great blow, but visibility wasn't very good in the morning as we headed out. The wisdom of the decision to leave became questionable quite quickly, as the mist closed in and Baltimore became the target. On the way in Lot's Wife wasn't



*Adrigole seen from the pier, on a mooring off Roundstone.*

visible, hiding in the clouds. By mid-afternoon the wind speed got to 53 knots and we hoped that the mooring was sound. The lifeboat rescued one boat that had broken free and towed it over to the lee of Sherkin. As the lifeboat returned to its station we talked to them on VHF and told them that a neighbouring boat had broken its main mooring line and the spare looked rather weak. They got the harbourmaster to come out in a powerful rib with four strong chaps to fix an extra rope for that boat. With water breaking over our bow, they also put an extra line on for us, for which we were grateful.

Morale was much higher next morning, as there was bright



*Jeffrey, heading out of Baltimore the morning after the gale.*



*Sal on Great Blasket Island.*

sunshine and a reasonable westerly wind. Our departure was delayed however by the difficulty in getting off the extra line which had been so valuable the day before, and we had to get help from the harbourmaster to free it. As we went east the wind eased, so much so that at the Old Head we wondered if we could shake out the two reefs that we had put in a few weeks earlier.

We made it back to our mooring in Crosshaven in good time after three and a half weeks away. We'd spent a surprising amount of time in harbour,

either because a gale was forecast or one was actually blowing, so we hadn't visited as many places as we'd hoped. However we had been able to move around the places in which we were sheltering, and get to know the land thereabouts much better, which was a great bonus. It was perhaps inevitable that when we decided to go back to Connemara, we would have statements like "look they have put tarmac on the bog road". After all Sal was brought up there. Still, we had a marvellous time, and many happy moments were recalled with pleasure, while we were going along memory lane.

# Night manoeuvres in Scottish waters

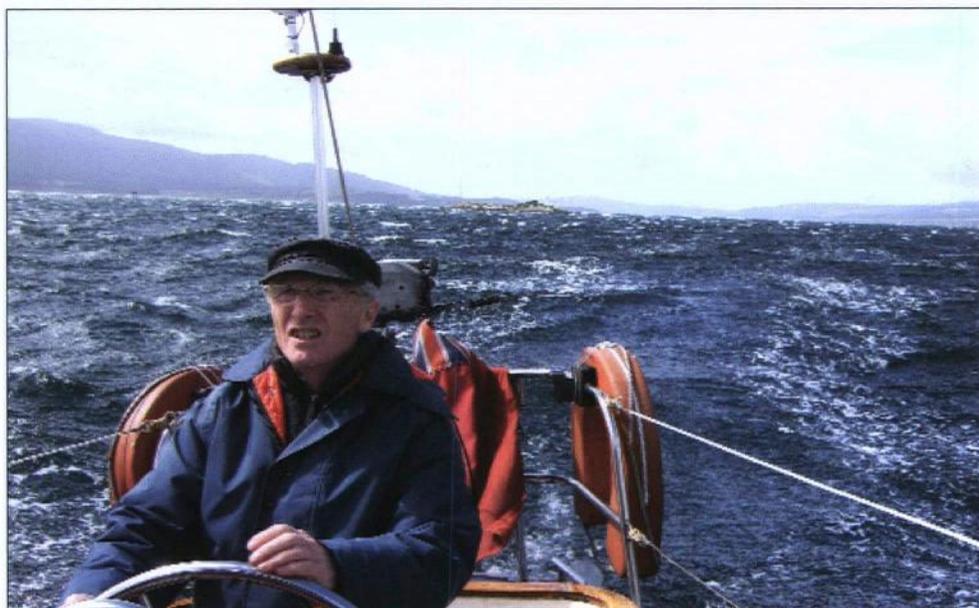
Stephen Garvin

Constraints such as crew availability and family illness made it difficult to evolve any grand plans or to seek exotic destinations this year. Nevertheless by 2nd August a ten-day window did develop.

With an established southerly air stream in place, *Fable* turned northwards on leaving Strangford Lough. Veteran dinghy sailor John Murtagh was an enthusiastic companion for the day trip to Carrickfergus. At the marina the hefty berthing fee was sweetened by the offer of a second night free – if used within one year. Stores were obtained from the nearby Co-Op supermarket – very convenient but not as good as it used to be. Tesco may be a better option but is a bit further away.

Next morning the rest of the crew assembled – Mike Cornes, a Tall Ships enthusiast from Chester, co-owner Gordon Millington from Belfast and his son Gavin who was still recovering from a nasty hang-glider accident in Africa. Four makes a full crew complement for our Van de Stadt Legend as its long cockpit leaves the accommodation a bit less roomy than on a more modern 34 footer.

By 13.00 we were off to catch the ebb in the North Channel



Retreating downwind: Sound of Mull.

with a projected overnight stop at Rathlin. Off Black Head, a very business-like Customs and Excise launch surged alongside and its cheerful Scottish crew recorded our personal details and intentions. We must have looked respectable enough at this stage for they did not come aboard. A forecast of strong winds for the following day suggested that we might find ourselves stuck for a day or two at Rathlin. By 17.00 progress was so good, with a 20 knot southerly wind and a strong tide under us,

that we decided to miss out Rathlin and continue north towards the Isle of Gigha. As the evening passed the wind strength gradually increased and *Fable* was making her full hull speed under partially rolled genoa alone. A gale warning was issued for sea area Malin but it was clear that the strongest winds would be further west.

By the time Cara Island was abeam the last of the light had gone and the apparent wind speed at the masthead was ranging between 28 and 33 knots. Rainsqualls made it difficult to see the lights on the channel buoys. I had been very sceptical about placing too much trust in the Navman chart plotter but now it proved its worth, and we made our entrance to Ardmish bay with relative ease. What the



Comforts at the Mishnish.

little black box could not do was find us a mooring buoy! The Highlands and Islands moorings appeared to be fully occupied. Eventually our spotlight picked out a vacant buoy and we approached it gleefully with thoughts of a relaxing drink and a hot meal very much in mind.

As most cruising sailors will agree, comforts often come at a price and not always on time. So it was on this occasion. The normally routine task of mooring became a challenging procedure on a dark night with a 30 knot wind and other yachts nearby. As soon as the boat stopped at the buoy the wind caught the bow and quickly deflected it. Owing to the wind noise, communication between the bow and the cockpit was almost impossible. In addition the buoy turned out to have a ring but no stop. The crewman on the bow could catch the buoy with the boat hook but could not raise it enough to fasten a line. On the fourth attempt the alloy shaft of the boat hook fractured and plan B was put into operation. With the little black box zoomed in on Ardminish bay, we found a space clear of the rocks and safely to weather of the cluster of riding lights. The anchor was deployed along with a very liberal length of chain, and comforts commenced.

Opportunities to learn crop up regularly on our cruises and this one certainly gave some cause for reflection. Given the trust that we now have in the chart plotter, I wonder if, in this particular situation, plan A should have been to anchor. Alternative strategies might have involved: (1) a more sophisticated boat hook with an automatic line fastener, or (2) a sinking bowline with which to capture the buoy. I look forward to hearing other people's experiences.

The following day we continued north, but gales were never far away and we remained in the sheltered waters of the Inner Hebrides. For those with fond memories of the Mishnish in Tobermory, I am sorry to have to report that the fish and chips served there this year were the worst I have ever had. By contrast a very pleasant long lunch was had at the Western Isles Hotel, while the wind and rain battered at the glass roof of the conservatory.

On returning to the Irish Sea it was gratifying to be able to claim our free night at Carrick marina. We delayed our departure on the final leg till after mid-day due to the tidal gate at Strangford, but we were now so nearly home that we took a more relaxed attitude to the weather forecast. What started as a gentle reaching breeze became a southerly force 6 after we left Copeland sound. Massive low black clouds covered the land mass and we heard news reports of severe flooding inland. Darkness fell before we had rounded the South Rock, and again the little black box proved its worth as we negotiated the inner passage past the Butter Pladdy. The light on Angus Rock was a welcome sight and it was great to feel the flood tide accelerate us into Strangford. Moored to a spare buoy at Audley's Roads, dinner was again later than planned but Boeuf Stroganoff and Chianti never tasted so good! Next morning we were back on our own mooring at Quoile Yacht Club.

On our opportunistic short cruise we had logged almost 400 miles, renewed our acquaintance with some Scottish islands, benefited from some learning opportunities, reinforced our sense of values regarding comfort, and enjoyed each other's company enormously.

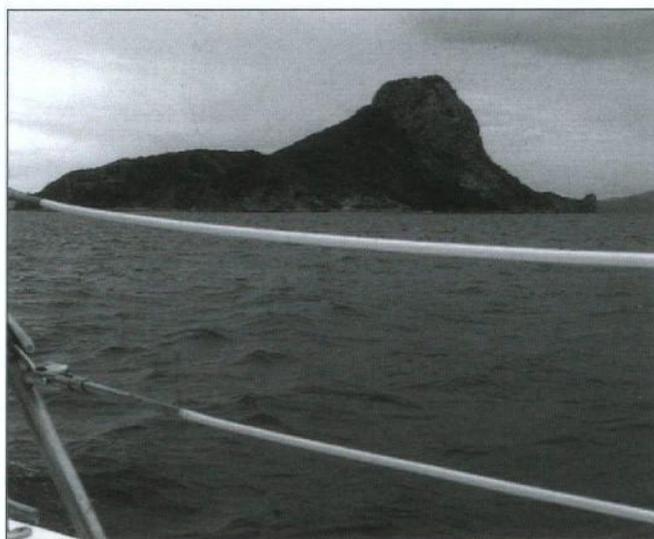
### David Beattie writes of a Sunburned Country

As our aeroplane descended into the tiny airfield at Proserpine in Northern Queensland last January, I finished yet another chapter of Bill Bryson's book describing the number of Aussie creatures that can and will kill you. Mary and I were on our way to collect a Catalina 32 sloop for eight days of cruising among the Whitsunday Islands, which lie inside the Great Barrier Reef off the north-eastern coast of Australia. It's a marvellous cruising ground with deep, sheltered anchorages, plenty of coral to see and avoid and sprightly breezes by day.

On the flight I read about poisonous spiders, the smaller the more deadly, about land and sea snakes, great white sharks, bluebottle jellyfish, box jellyfish, stingrays, stone fish and salt water crocodiles. I read about all-over stinger suits, and the need to coat all exposed flesh with four coats of sun block before swimming, in order to convince a stinger jellyfish that it was not in contact with organic material. We both adore tropical sailing, and are used to jumping over the side at the end of the day in order to freshen up before dinner, and were in the course of concluding that Bryson was overstating his case.

The local bus from the airport to the marina paused as it crossed the Proserpine River – "Just look down there, they're a protected species now" said the driver, as we stared at a mass of interlocking crocodile bodies on the riverbank below. "Population pressure is driving the brutes out to sea for food". On arrival, the briefing which focused on the local fauna, safety precautions and poison antidotes was reinforced next morning, when I scooped up a bucket of water from the sea to clean the decks and out washed two bluebottle jelly fish, that I had to sluice away with the freshwater hose.

We launched the dinghy and I got into it to check the engine. "I wouldn't use that in here, not within 3 miles of the



coast" said the boat-hand sauntering down the pontoon. "See that boat over there (pointing to a 35 footer on a mooring about 5 cables offshore). Girl was taken by a salty (crocodile) from a rubber duck going out to her two weeks ago – she hasn't been seen since."

We had a delightful week pottering amongst the islands, although dissuaded from swimming by the paraphernalia involved – in fact we saw only one person swimming from an anchored boat in the course of the whole week. One evening I hooked a Spanish mackerel on a line towed astern, just as we sailed up the bay where we planned to anchor. I was just starting to reel him in when an outline the size of the front of a VW van appeared behind him, rolled slightly to port, opened an immense mouth and fish and line were gone with only the tiniest flurry on the surface. "I don't think I'll swim this evening, I'll have a gin instead I said to Mary".

## Pierce Butler writes of his trip to Antarctica

Since I was 6 or thereabouts I have read and re-read the exploits of Shackleton and Tom Crean, and finally, 65 years later, got an opportunity to follow in some of their footsteps.

Abercrombie & Kent have a very large and comfortable cruise ship – *Explorer II* which accommodates 190 passengers and a similar number of crew. 190 is the maximum number that a cruise ship may take to Antarctica.

Following a 17 hour flight from London to Buenos Aires, and a further 4 hours to Ushuaia, which is a frontier town of 65,000 people that is located in the Beagle Channel, we boarded the ship in a snow storm – the only one we encountered on the whole trip – and after two days at sea were at Stanley on the Falkland Islands.

The Falkland Islands are hard to get to, as apart from cruise ships, the only other way is via Ascension Island and costs well over €2,500. The Argentine government will not allow the Islanders fly over their territory. The Falklands are as far from the South Pole as London is from the North Pole. They are very British, with lots of Alf Garnet types, and the islands are really not worth a visit, being devoid of trees and much vegetation.

The next stop was South Georgia, which was two days sailing in calm seas from Stanley. During the two days we heard that Harrington had beaten Tiger Woods and Ireland beat Australia 21-6.

### Captain Cook

The first landings on South Georgia were made by Captain James Cook in 1775, and he named the Island after George III. The island is about 170 kilometres long, and from 2 to 40 kilometres wide, it has a total area of 3,755 square kilometres. It is 1,450 kilometres from Stanley.

It is a most beautiful island, and home to over 2,000,000 penguins. Of the people on the cruise, some were interested in penguins, some in plant life and lichen, and others, like me and my five travelling friends, were interested in the historical Antarctica. Needless to say we visited Stromness, where Shackleton and Crean arrived after a 35 hour gruelling crossing of the Island. Paddy Barry made this crossing in 1996.

Grytviken, which was a whaling station and is south of Stromness, is where Shackleton is buried. There is a church there which seems to have survived since its erection by C.A. Larsen in 1913. In this little wooden church I found a memorial – which resembled a football – dedicated to Tom Crean, who went on four Antarctic voyages. Nowhere else we went was his name mentioned, even by the numerous learned lecturers who bombarded us with Antarctic lore.

Near Grytviken is a British Antarctic Survey base, which is permanently manned; there is also a Post Office, and new buildings are being built in this remote spot.

Readers of my vintage may be interested to know that a

more recent explorer of South Georgia was Duncan Carse, who was the voice of “Dick Barton, Special Agent”.

South Georgia is a wonderful place with penguins (7 species), albatrosses, numerous seabirds, whales, seals and immense number of birds, which together with the rugged scenery, make South Georgia a must for any visitor to this area.

The next stop was 1,280 kilometres away at Elephant Island. The spit at Cape Wild, where Shackleton’s men awaited his return (Cape Valentine), has been washed away and it was not possible to land, which was a big disappointment, more especially so when we discovered that a fellow ICC member Brian Craig, succeeded in landing there at much the same time as we wanted to.

We continued our way through the Scotia Sea to Deception Island, which has a very narrow entrance (Neptune’s Bellows). It was of particular interest because it is still volcanically active, with numerous hot springs around the interior of the caldera. The last volcano erupted in 1970. A large number of passengers swam in the warm waters of Deception Island.

I have often wondered why Shackleton did not make his way to Deception Island rather than South Georgia. The distance is shorter and while the current may be adverse, the weather would have been kinder.

### Frozen continent

We were now deep in to the frozen continent, and landed at a number of small islands. The most notable was Port Lockroy, which was at the end of the Lemaire Channel. Port Lockroy was established in 1944 and is still manned today, in the summer months. It was previously known as Bransfield House, named after Edward Bransfield, born in Cork in 1785. He was pressed into the British navy in 1803, ended up as a commander, and became master of one of His Majesty’s ships 14 years later and surveyed the South Shetlands. His was a remarkable story.

Port Lockroy was established by the British, to report on enemy activity and to provide weather reports. It now houses a Post Office, and a small gift store which make the prices in Brown Thomas Dublin look good value in comparison.

The Post Office handled 40,000 cards in 2005/06 and generates reasonable income to finance the base.

We were several more days in this area, with ice, snow, very large mountains, lots of sun and blue skies. The seas were calm and if Shackleton was around now he could have made his historic voyage by canoe.

Having said that, we then returned to Ushuaia via the Drake Passage, which was a fairly rough two days.

We flew home again by Buenos Aires, having seen the fearsome Antarctica from the comfortable decks of a very large cruise ship.

I can highly recommend Antarctica as a destination with a difference. The only time to go is between November and March.



# The Lotophagi do three canals and a bridge or two

The Odyssey continues to the Gulf of Corinth and the Ionian islands

Peter Fernie

Paradoxically the worst thing about a foreign cruise is getting there – and getting back. The purists would say that one should sail there and sail back and thereby avoid the world's airports and hoi polloi. Trouble is, the exigencies of life don't always allow the option of extended peregrinations.

Thus at 04.00, early in May, we are in Gatwick Airport, milling around like sheep in an abattoir. Gatwick is in strong contention for the worst airport in the world having seen off Dublin and Baghdad. Our fellow travellers are menacing, with shaven heads, earrings, identical shiny nylon football shirts and elaborate tattoos. The men are even worse.

The Viking is already curmudgeonly – we worry that he will cause an Incident or Unseemly Ruckus or even be arrested. He has taken to loudly referring to EasyJet as “HumiliationAir”. The hysterical airport panjandrums are waving polythene bags in our faces and bleating: “Open your passports at the photograph page”. Eventually we are sorted into geographical groups and placed on an aeroplane which sits around for a further two hours. Alarmingly a man appears with a plumber-like tool box and dismantles the emergency exit. It is not reassuring to look out of the side of an aeroplane through a big hole in the fuselage. When he has finished putting the door



Helming in relaxed mood.

back together, we make sure that he has not got any bits left over. The Viking is now in Sulk Central, having established that only two bacon rolls were loaded and both are already sold.

The good news is that the boat is lying in Kalamaki Marina, outside Athens, and is already fuelled and victualled by the advance party consisting of the Doc, Purser and Murph who had cleverly avoided the Gatwick debacle by flying to Athens via Hungary. By 15.30 we were motoring southwest through a gentle swell for Nisos Aegina, our first island destination; the botchery of the morning faded. The Lotophagescue good humour returned.

The Lotophagi are a largely Galway based group of adventurers comprising, ROT (Ray O'Toole ICC), the Viking aka Killick (Olaf Tyarensen ICC), Radar aka Ruby (Peter Fernie ICC), The Doc (Donal Curtis), The Purser (Eoin Bresnihan) and Murph (Niall Murphy). A recent addition to our band is Peter Tattersall (Royal Vancouver Yacht Club) aka Tatters, who thinks so much of us, he flies across a continent and the Atlantic to be on the cruise. Enough said. Apart



Návpaktos should be seen early on a May morning.



The vertiginous walls of the Corinth Canal.

from this fact, being a Canadian he carries his entire wardrobe in an ice-hockey bag which is about three times the size of a normal sailing bag. Hence a common cry in the morning is “Tatters ‘expletive deleted’ bag”. The Lotophagi over the last nine years have been engaged on an Odyssean quest to visit as many of the Greek Islands as possible – usually within the confines of two weeks in the early part of May. This year the plan was to sail from Athens to Kérkyra (Corfu), through the Gulf of Corinth and to take in the Ionian islands.

The boat is an Oceanis 495 which we have chartered for a number of years from Apollonia Marine in Piraeus. The worst thing about her is the name – we call her *FCF* – don’t ask. We have built up

a good relationship with Apollonia over the years and we are now able to negotiate one-way charters which has the benefit of doubling the cruising range for a two week period. Moreover, the pre- and post-cruise inventory checks are now largely perfunctory. To some extent the Lotophagi feel they have a proprietorial interest in *FCF*.

As we approached Aegina harbour a large displacement ferry was just getting under way – with a certain detachment we watched her significant wake approach the boat – too late we noticed that the Purser’s forward hatch was open. His solitary berth shipped several gallons and his carefully unpacked No1’s (sic) laid out in readiness for the evening’s festivities were sodden. The repercussions followed throughout the cruise. He became something of an expert in dismantling and reassembling a salt-caked cell-phone and we became familiar with bits of it drying on the deck.

There is a restaurant at the back of the fish market in Aegina. The tables wobble and are balanced precariously on and off the pavement. A barbecue perches at head height and is used to grill fish straight from the boats. The environmental and health police in Ireland would close the place immediately and jail the owners, and probably the customers for good measure. We have started cruises from this restaurant several times over the last few years. We ate fish in all its guises, drank immoderate quantities of red wine from those aluminium canisters, and teamed up with a boisterous party of Poles returning from a cruise. The spectre of Gatwick was banished. The Lotophagi were again in business.

### Sunday 6 May

A medical conference took place whilst the Viking went off to buy some more food. Our Purser had tripped over the life-line the previous evening whilst instructing Tatters on how to correctly board a boat in safety in the dark. He now announced that he had probably fractured a metatarsal bone in his foot. Radar, who is not of the medical fraternity, suggested a visit to the local clinic, being unable to participate in the medical jargon being bandied around. Without exception, the medics thought that this was perhaps the most inane suggestion short of amputation. “I don’t want any of that hospital crack with x-rays and doctors” was the considered response of the injured party –



Návpaktos is one of the jewels of Greece – the only yacht in the harbour.

the former consultant radiologist of University College Hospital, Galway. Such are medical folk. They are happy giving it out but just don't want to take it.

We dropped lines at 10.45 with 'nary a bandage or crutch on board, and motored through a lumpy grey sea and overcast sky to the east entrance of the Corinth Canal. The canal traffic was light and after paying the dues we followed two tankers through. The canal is spectacularly impressive with vertiginous friable walls. Massive boulders at the base of the walls are visible reminders to maintain a central course. There is a marked absence of "Kilroy was here" graffiti, so beloved of other canals and locks. Forty-five minutes through the canal and we head towards Corinth; by now a strong northwesterly wind has added to the generally gloomy day.

Corinth Harbour is small, with two floating pontoons in the centre, presumably to provide more berthing space but minimising the manoeuvring space. A number of English and Welsh yachts nullify this extra space by inconsiderately berthing alongside rather than stern on. (Is it my imagination or do English boats feel that stern berthing applies to everyone but them?). Shallows, contrary wind, no space – we would look elsewhere for crutches and elastic bandages. As Horace said (in translation) "Not everybody is lucky enough to get to Corinth".

We found an anchorage about 1.5 miles northeast of the Canal entrance, about 200 metres offshore in 4.5 metres depth. Thanks to the Viking we had provisions aplenty and as we listened to the fair voice of Suzanne Murphy, we settled down for the evening. Later that evening Radar read out an amusing vignette from "My Family and other Animals" by Gerald Durrell – appropriate reading matter as it portrays a fascinating personal view of Corfu in the thirties. The Lotophagi enjoyed this so much it became something of a bedtime routine – some of them would not settle down at all unless they were read a story. It will all end up with Ovaltine instead of Ouzo.

## Monday 7 May 06.00

More in hope than expectation we set off west for Galaxidhiou to source a crutch and bandages. By 10.00 Ak Makri-Nikolas was one mile to the north; two hours later we were moored astern. The weather had taken a definite turn for the better and Galaxidhiou dozed sleepily in the midday sun, with many of the bars and restaurants still preparing for the summer season. Bougainvillaea tumbled in profusion from walls and verandas. As Heikell says "this harbour is one of the most pleasing in the Gulf of Corinth". The tranquillity belies the history of the place as one of the prime shipbuilding and trading ports in Greece, during the 18th and 19th centuries. There is a small new maritime museum endowed by Stavros Niarchos, the Greek shipping magnate, which is worth a visit. Moreover the local pharmacy has a formidable stock of orthopaedic impedimenta – including a three-pronged crutch. We didn't buy the zimmer frame but we looked for a parrot.

Galaxidhiou is also the nearest place to visit Delphi and consult the oracle. Tatters, who had been unnerved by the 30 minute taxi journey earlier that morning, was wont to find out if he would survive the journey back. Three hours is needed to do justice to the entire site – four hours would allow an additional mooch around the excellent air-conditioned museum.

A light lunch – the Doc, who had "wanted to be alone" and had missed out on the trip to Delphi, recounted a near disaster with a swarm of bees, but they mistook him for a tree and swarmed elsewhere.

A gentle sail for the afternoon was promised with the destination of Nisos Trizónia. Once outside the lee of Ak. Andromakhi we had a lumpy sea and a westerly 3-4. Motoring was not an option; the Lotophagi prefer to avoid beating if

avoidable, usually acquiescing to proceed to whichever way the wind prefers. On this occasion there was no option – we tacked port and starboard, huddled under the spray hood and got lots of impressive video footage with which to bore our family and friends this winter. We finally made Trizónia at 19.10 after a hard fought 35 mile beat.

Nisos Trizónia is a small island barely half a mile from the north shore of the Gulf of Corinth. It seems to be a semi-exclusive hideaway for Athenians looking for peace and tranquillity. Think Roundstone and D4. Five years ago there was some unease that the new bridge across to Patras would make it more accessible. This doesn't seem to have happened. In fact at this time of the year Trizónia had a derelict and bereft feel to it. The marina is full of over-wintering boats, many exhibiting the signs of many winters and few summers. A trawler is partially submerged in one corner of the marina – fortuitously this is next to a local dump for building rubble and old refrigerators. The hotel which in the high summer was a place of gentle elegance was dark and shuttered – the concrete piers of the marina are full of large square holes, the purpose of which is unclear. Some of the holes are partially covered with wooden planks which are artfully placed so as to twist an ankle before you fall in the hole. The elaborate cast iron lampposts have either fallen down completely or lean drunkenly at various angles; few of the lights work and many have electrical wires hanging out of them. What with the square holes and the inadequate illumination, we reflected that we perhaps should have bought the zimmer frame after all.

This really must be the most dispiriting marina in Greece.

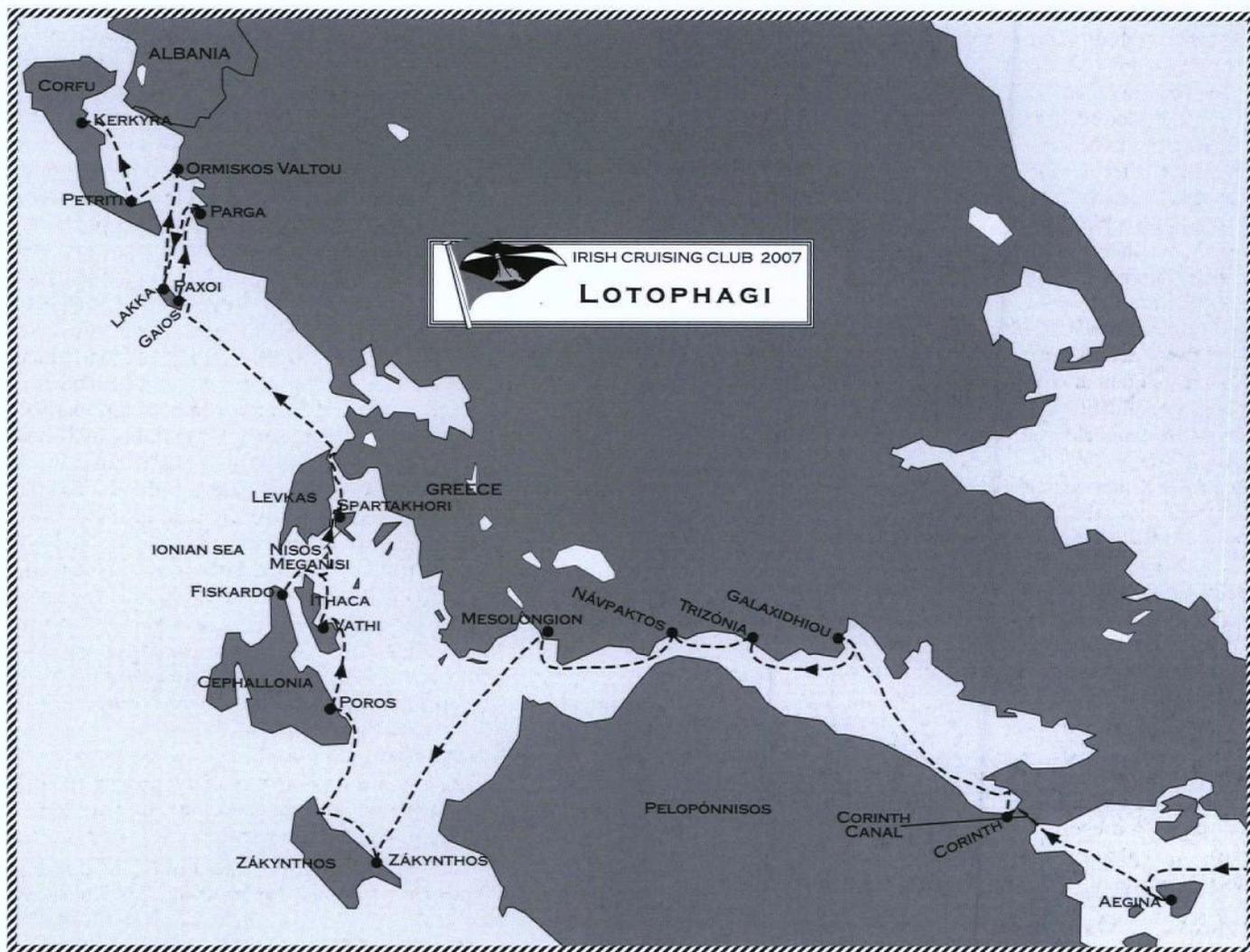
But it was compensated for by a magnificent new restaurant. The kitchens were as pristine as the marina was a wreck; the food was commendable and seven of us were amply fed and watered for €105. It was so good we forgot to record the name but it's just down from the mini-supermarket. Say Radar sent you.

## 9 May 04.00

We were alongside a sister Oceanis 495 who had told us he was departing early. We had the complicated matutinal business of lines and warps, made more so by the semi-comatose and disorientated foredeck Lotophagi, both of whom had looked on the wine when it was red and had 'sparkleth' in the cup. They, who shall be nameless, managed to entangle themselves in said warps and in no time at all were trussed together in a ghastly embrace, like two Roman retiarii. Limbs flailed – words were said. All that was missing were the tridents. The sailor departing for Corinth looked on in awe; Radar thought it hilarious; ROT got extremely CROSS and terminated the fracas with threats of grandly operatic comminations. The only person missing was Peyton who should have been on hand to illustrate the occasion. We departed at 06.00 and motored through a pellucid sea to Návaktos. The retiarii retired again in disgrace.

Návaktos or Lepanto, as it was known in medieval times, is one of the jewels of Greece and should be seen early on a May morning with the town going quietly about its business. The miniature harbour with castellated bastions and orange trees, a Venetian citadel on the hill above, make it an enchanted location. Návaktos has a resonance today – it was the site of a decisive naval battle in the sixteenth century, between the Ottoman empire and a confederation from Italy, Spain and the Papal states, during which Muslim sea power in the Mediterranean was shattered. We were the only yacht in the harbour; we breakfasted and absorbed the gentle ambience.

Five miles southwest of Návaktos is an equally harmonious structure of the 21st century, the Steno Rion-Andirion bridge



which sweeps elegantly 1.5 miles across the straits between the Pelopónnisos and Northern Greece. The bridge had an ethereal quality with the morning sun at your back. From Návpaktos it appears to float astatic over the straits. The locals take a more dispassionate view complaining that it's a rip-off and costs €8 to cross which is much more than the ferry. The Lotophagi thought it splendid and quite majestic and observed that it cost nothing to go under it.

Three hours after the bridge we were entering a strange world of shallows and houses on stilts. The dredged canal to Missalonghi is about three miles from the entrance marks, and cuts through a bay stretching 20 miles to the west with average depths of 0.2 metres. Once the outer marks are located, it is an easy passage to a dreary harbour at the northern end in which is located yet another half-finished marina surrounded by a rubbish tip. Feral dogs hunt in packs. We arrived in time to observe the briefing session for a 24-strong English flotilla bound for Trizónia and Corinth. The Normandy landings could not have been better planned. Rigid mapboards with large arrows and circles on them, delineated RV points, assembly areas, and fall-back zones. The briefing lasted for a full 60 minutes. We didn't hear them talk about paratroops but it wouldn't have surprised us.

Later that evening as we finished our meal, we discerned one possible reason for the extended briefing. A distraught lady of mature years came over to enquire had we seen her husband, who she thought might be lost, as she herself was, and did we know the general direction of the marina. Some of the less

charitable Lotophagi thought the lost husband knew exactly what he was doing.

The marina is about 2.5 kilometres from the town through a boring industrial area. The walk is however enlivened by a fenced-off compound containing redundant military hardware in various stages of decrepitude – assorted battle tanks of all nationalities vie with a Dassault Mirage and Hawker Hunter jets. There is even a large surface-to-air missile. The Doc and Radar found a hole in the fence and the latter scrambled up an armoured personnel carrier to give a passable imitation of Il Duce reviewing the troops. The Doc stated his intention of re-enacting the final scene of Dr Strangelove together with the SAM, later that evening. Thankfully, for all of us, the compound was in darkness when we returned to the boat; moreover the Doc had forgotten. We recalled later that English aeroplane spotters had once been incarcerated in Greece for merely looking at planes. Being arrested, drunk in charge of a surface-to-air missile, albeit an old one, was too awful to imagine. Missalonghi is famous for being associated with Byron who the locals regard as a national hero. What with tanks and aeroplanes and lost ladies we clean forgot to look for his statue – it is there apparently. Sorry.

### 10 May 06.55

Depart early in case the Doc remembers the SAM and his unfulfilled intention: destination Zákynthos – an ancient name now readopted for an island the Venetians called the “Flower of the Levant”. Murph, who absorbs all our various guide books and distils the essential information, recounts on passage that



The Rion Andirriou Bridge.

the famous Greek poet, Dionysus Solomos asserted that “Zákynthos could make one forget the Elysian Fields”. A drowsy response from somewhere underneath a sun-hat – “Would them fields be anything like the fields of Atheny?”

The morning was a pleasant sail to the southwest out of the Gulf of Corinth – The Viking spent a happy morning disjointing and disembowelling chickens for a feast he was planning that evening. Later he offered the entrails to Radar just in case he wanted to put a spell on someone, or alternatively divine the course.

We arrive in Zákynthos town at 13.15 and anchor astern on the north quay. A large Thompson holiday cruiser was anchored outside the harbour and a flotilla of noisy barges disturbed our peaceful location with their ferrying of passengers to and fro.

Although we were staying for only two hours to victual and have lunch, we were charged the full harbour fee of €15 and a further €25 for 400 litres of water which we thought was a bit steep. The harbourmaster asked if we were Americans after taking our money and looked a trifle sheepish when we told him we were from Ireland, presumably because the American rate is higher than the Irish rate. He didn't offer us anything back however – Radar wished that he had kept the chicken entrails. The town had been a Venetian gem, according to Laurence Durrell but was largely destroyed in the 1953 earthquake. Now it has far too much concrete to be a reconstruction, although in parts it preserves the colonnaded arcades of the earlier Venetian past. It is a floating hotel destination, and therefore inclines to gimcrack tawdriness. The proposed marina is still just that – proposed. The overwhelming feeling is that they don't want or need yachts. Don't

go to Zákynthos town unless you really want to..

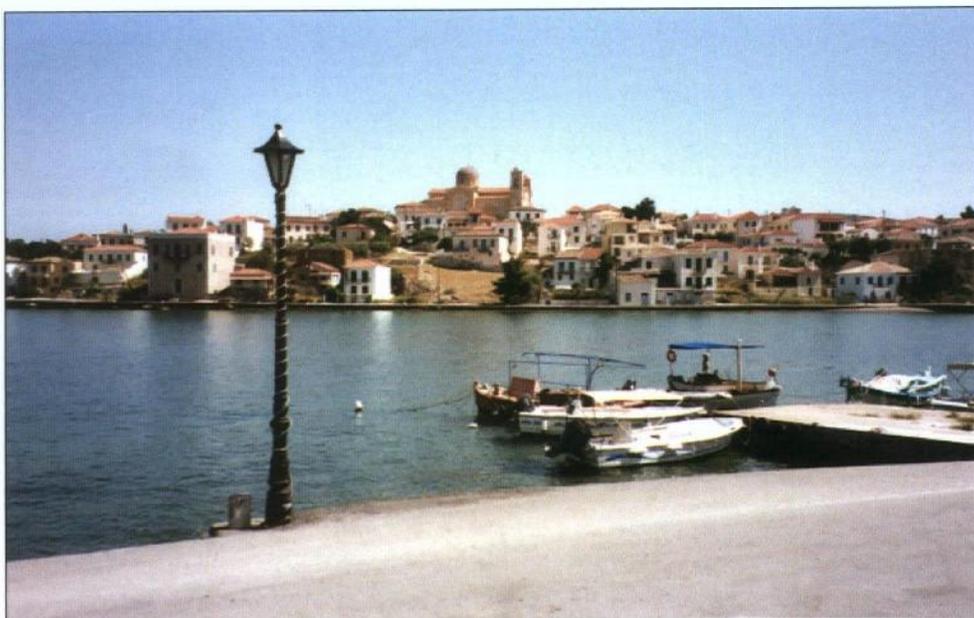
We were proposing to spend the night on an anchorage in a small bay 6.5 miles to the north – Ormos Ay.Nikólaos. Since our copy of the pilot was published, structural funds have been disbursed and a fine new quay with depths of 5.5 metres exists south of the old ferry terminal. A new restaurant accompanies the quay – even less reason now to go to Zákynthos town.

The sail north was enlivened by an MOB drill – Killick dropped his slippers overboard (“Pity he wasn't still in them” was one less than charitable remark. “Who goes sailing in slippers?” was another.)

### 11 May 07.30

There are mutterings from some of the Lotophagi about all the early starts. ROT and Radar are quite undeterred. ROT's mantra is “Ships and Men rot in port”. whilst Radar exhorts the crew to observe Homer's “rosy-fingered dawn”. The Doc doesn't join in this mutinous grumbling. He just neglects to arise until the decks are warm and first pre-lunch gins are on the horizon. We are bound for Cephallonia via the Blue Grotto (sea caves said to equal those in Capri) and the oft photographed Wreck Bay on the northwest corner of Zákynthos. The Grotto looked far too touristy with large signs pointing the way, whilst we were too early for Wreck Bay. The Bay faces west, and in the morning the alabaster-white limestone cliffs are in shadow, which detracts from the luminosity of the scene as recorded in Greek tourist publicity. It should be visited after midday to ensure the best effect.

We motor-sailed on northeast to the harbour of Poros on the southeast corner of Cephallonia and rounded Ak Sarakinato at about 12.30. A new breakwater is being constructed and a small shallow harbour is made more so. The quay to the south of the ferry terminal shows depths of 3 metres; we ran aground on the



Galaxidhiou is one of the most pleasing harbours in the Gulf of Corinth.

putty some two metres from the quay and were gently stuck. The building operations have probably silted up the harbour. The situation suddenly got worse. Having already waited for a ferry to leave, we were dismayed to see another, even bigger one appear round the point. He didn't intend to take prisoners and hooted insistently and rudely at us. ROT extricated us all with panache and we scurried out of the harbour, to anchor in 7 metres off the beach to the north of the harbour. Lunch was 'saucisson avec, avec' – yet another masterful lunch from the Viking's recipe book. Replete, we discussed the next destination – Vathi on the island of Ithaca. As well as being the alleged home of Homer's hero Odysseus, the Viking idly reminisced that seven years previously there had been an excellent restaurant run by an American lady and he, the Viking that is, ate a most delectable sardine dish which unfortunately could not be served with the usual aubergines as they were late in season that year. We listened attentively although he is like this most of the time with total recall of meals long past – he could eat for Ireland. He spent a reflective afternoon in fervid anticipation of revisiting the restaurant that coming evening, and had a sleep to refresh himself.

We sailed up the east coast of Ithaca and decided to carry out a combined land/sea assault on Vathi, the principal port. Ormos Sarakiniko is a small deserted bay about one mile east of Vathi over the saddle of a ridge. The plan was that the Doc and Radar (renamed for the operation Biggles and Bulldog) would swim ashore and advance over the hill to Vathi, using little known goat tracks and partizan cunning, whilst the seaborne force would sail the six miles round the coast. Bulldog swam ashore, pushing his sunhat, shoes and shirt in a large inflated polythene bag. The few locals around nodded amiably at the two



A strange world of shallows – towards Missalonghi.

obviously escaped lunatics. They were not the only swimmers – a pulchritudinous lady wearing very, very little emerged rather magnificently out of the sea as they were changing. It reminded Bulldog of the Ursula Andress scene in *Dr. No* – Biggles said that the rest of the crew won't believe this. (They didn't).

Vathi was quiet, almost moribund. Our only neighbour on the quay was a large British registered motor-yacht with an Antipodean crew, washing down, polishing and generally keeping busy. As we moored they warned us that they would be keeping their generator running all night and we might want to move somewhere quieter. We riposted that we might be singing all night and perhaps they might wish to move. Prompted by all this activity the Doc and ROT wandered off to the municipal garbage bins to dispose of our accumulated rubbish. The Doc was next seen head first in the largest bin, with his legs barely poking out. They returned with a selection of old Admiralty charts dating back to the sixties – our chart locker now contained an exotic selection including Ceylon (yes, that old) to Madagascar, the Gulf of Tonkin and more prosaically Berwick to Aberdeen. Ithaca has a great maritime tradition, and many merchant seamen retire back to the island having spent a life around the world – someone had obviously been house-clearing.

The Aussies continued apace at their domestic chores, whilst electric doors and passerelles moved up and down and in and out. We sat with our gins observing this frenetic activity – at one point a large crate of bottled water, which was being loaded, fell from the upper deck and reduced a small wooden occasional table on the aft deck to a heap of firewood. The crew picked up the bits and hid them, winking at us in the process. To our credit we didn't even



Radar (Peter Frnie) gave a passable imitation of Il Duce reviewing his troops.

guffaw and even pretended not to notice. The next day the crew said they had recognised our Tricolour and just knew we were fellow anarchists who wouldn't peach on them to the English owners – too right.

### May 12 09.55

It being a Saturday ROT gave the crew a bit of a lie-in, even generously allowing the Viking time for his morning gill of Metaxa in the town, which normally adds to the excitement of the day. We motor-sailed into a brisk northeasterly up the east coast of Ithaca. As we rounded the most northern point, Ak Ay. Ioannis, and set a course for Fiskardo on Cephallonia, we were freed and got the white things up for a cracking reach right up to the harbour entrance and the distinctive Venetian lighthouse.

Fiskardo is as pretty as ever but being a Saturday was packed with tripper boats and ferries. Called by some the St. Tropez of Greece, it lived up to this reputation by providing the least satisfactory and most expensive meal of the cruise. The only person who thought it any good was the Viking, who single-handedly consumed a quarter cran of langoustines and linguine. Having washed this down with a bottle of rosé and feeling at ease with the world, he proceeded to read aloud to the restaurant at large the fanciful wine notes, "Sparkling and fruity, an exceptional mélange of high notes and exhilarating explosions". In his exhilarated state he thought that the wine description could equally well refer to Radar. He then went to sleep all afternoon, and some hours later grumpily thought Radar more like a botrytised Tokay. We all thought this a load of rot and hadn't a clue what he was on about. We resolved again to forbid metaxa before lunch.

At the best of times the Fiskardo harbour is a jumble of chains, ancient and modern. We decided to depart before all the tripper ferries started to move. As it was, our anchor was fouled with a red plastic bucket, but fortunately nothing else.

The wind had veered to the southeast and we had the best sail of the cruise for several hours across a wine dark sea. Late afternoon saw us in the 0.5 mile wide channel between Levkas and Meganisi. The Doc and Radar wanted to swim off the private island of Skorprios, which still belongs to the Onassis family. The island seemed deserted, but tall watch towers and football stadium-type security lights attested to the likelihood of covert surveillance. The more adventurous of us wondered if we might land – fortunately the more cautious prevailed. The Doc and Radar had their swim by Jacqueline Onassis' favourite beach, as the sun dropped behind the trees. An elaborate building, a so-called beach hut in the shadow of the trees at the edge of the small cove looked unused and dilapidated, mirroring the fact that the principal players are no longer on the stage. *'Sic transit gloria mundi.'*

We were staying for the night on Nisos Meganisi in Spartakhorí, a well-sheltered bay on the north of the island with a developing yacht haven with good facilities and laid lines. The new restaurant on the shore has excellent food and congenial surroundings, and saves the long haul up the hill to the village of Spartakhorí. The harbour master is also the restaurant owner and general factotum and welcomed us, incongruously wearing an Irish Rugby shirt.

### Sunday May 13 07.00

We felt that our Welsh neighbours were a bit miffed over the Rugby shirt and by the time we slipped lines they had a one-hour start ahead of us. The Levkas Canal to where we were heading was nine miles to the north. The present canal is just over 100 years old although earlier canals were built in the 7th century BC by the Corinthians and subsequently the Romans.

The canal is surrounded on all sides by shallow lagoons and salt pans and is marked by perches, some with red or green triangles on top. Egrets and various other waders fish in the shallows. At the northern end is a floating bridge which opens on the hour, give or take 10 minutes. The game seems to be to let the yachtie get right up to the bridge on the hour, then when he turns around and is again a cable distant, open the bridge with much waving and exhortations not to dawdle lest the motorists be inconvenienced. We exited into the Bay of Dhermata past a fine medieval castle and a large sandbank to trap the unwary. Levkas itself has a huge marina and good facilities and is noted in recent history for being the centre of the Italian cigarette smuggling industry.

The canal takes about 50 minutes to transit and is free.

By 10.00 we were heading northwest for Paxoi against a 10 knot north-northwest wind. We stopped at midday for the Doc and Radar to have yet another pre-prandial bathing opportunity and subsequently for lunch, somewhere on the rhumb line between Levkas and Paxoi. Some of the Lotophagi I suspect, considered leaving the Doc and Radar to their fate 10 miles offshore – you could see it in their eyes. We headed for an afternoon stop in Emerald Bay, on the northeast corner of Andipaxoi, the diminutive island to the south of Paxoi. The bay is a favourite destination and was already full, as it was late afternoon. The only other anchorage mentioned in the pilot (Miniature harbour at 39°09'.3N, 19°55'.2E) was too tiny to accommodate us and is by my reckoning some 15 miles east of its alleged position in the pilot. We pressed on to Port Gaios on the eastern side of Nisos Paxoi. The harbour is guarded by two offlying islands and the channel to Port Gaios is some 50 metres wide at one point. The entrance is from the north end – the deceptive south entrance has only about 1.5 metres over the bar. As you motor down the channel around a blind right-angled bend with about 3-4 metres depth, you must have faith that the very large ferry, that departs sometime in the late afternoon, is not around the other side of the bend and heading straight for you. The only course of action in such an eventuality would be to turn round sharpish and retreat. Might has right.

Fortunately the ferry was still boarding and we were able to moor stern-to in the town centre by the main square. Having berthed successfully, we could indulge in the thoroughly enjoyable diversion of watching the quays fill up and the berthing procedures become more frenetic as places became scarcer. As it was Sunday afternoon, there was no end of loafers and idlers around to gawp and guffaw. One yacht full of hooray henrys made a particular farrago of it and the entertainment lasted a full 60 minutes. It seemed that the entire town cheered when they finally tied up.

By 18.00 all the Corfiot ferries had left and the town returned to a much quieter mien. The Viking now got up. As the cruise has progressed and the daily temperature has risen, so he has adopted a siesta type regime. Post-lunch he retires, and thus often misses our various landfalls; in consequence is never quite sure where he is, or was. Only today, he was asked his location; he temporised, his eyes frantically searching for visual clues, and after several feeble attempts at obfuscation, he announced with as much gravitas as he could summon, that we were in ..... Georges – the name of the restaurant in the main square.

Paxoi is famous for olive oil and Harrods only sell Paxonian oil. In the summer, the island is a tripper destination from Corfu and also a centre for flotilla companies in the Ionian. Gaios is an attractive town with 19th century buildings in pastel colours and tiled roofs. It is also full of cats. It seems to have been spared the earthquake devastation of recent times or maybe

they have rebuilt more sympathetically. The Doc is in something of a frenzy since Murph read out the best bits about Gaios – apparently the local museum has a four poster bed fitted with mind-boggling stirrups. Of course being Sunday the museum is not open and does not open until 11.00 tomorrow. After dinner the Doc wandered dispiritedly around the town, ostensibly looking for a bottle of ouzo – we thought he might try to bluff his way into the museum. The next morning to divert him, Radar took him for a early swim.

## Monday 14 May

Our original plan had been to sail to Parga, 10 miles to the northeast on the mainland, despite a less than enthusiastic description in the pilot – “more tavernas than you can shake a stick at”. Serendipitously a fellow Irish sailor, hearing the lilt of the Auld Sod, came around to have a quick chat with him and said that Parga and Igoumenitsa were both dumps and you shouldn't bother. He also expressed amazement that we should be allowed out without our spouses, thought the Doc looked like a Mafioso Capo dei Capi, and that the Viking was the image of Jack Nicholson, the irresistible-to-women film star. This cheered the Viking up no end. The quick chat turned into something of a verbal marathon and Radar slunk down to the chart table and sulked. We finally departed at 11.00.

Some 10 miles north of Paxoi are the small twin islands of Sivota and Nikólaos with the village of Moúrtos on the mainland. The day was hot; the temperature had been 25° at 09.00. By 14.10 the lighthouse on Sivota was abeam and the ice was melting fast, both in the gin and the coolbox. We rounded the point and anchored in 8m in the blind channel between the two islands. The Doc and Radar went for their usual swim, but on this occasion were joined by the Viking and Ho Chi Min. (Our garrulous Irish friend of the morning had also thought Tatters reminded him of the late Ho Chi Min – we thought so as well and immediately adopted this as his new nom de guerre.) Not to be outdone in the swimming stakes, the Doc and Radar were individually and vociferously boastful claiming to have swum the channel between the two islands, and somehow managing to compare this with the Hellespont.

The Doc however was excused as he evicted the Viking from the galley and performed a quite remarkable loaves and fishes act. The result was a fish risotto worthy of Rick Stein and the best tzatziki so far on the cruise.

Dramatically, whilst we were engaged on lunch, a French yacht came down the channel at 6 knots, seemingly unaware that the south end of the channel was impassable. To their astonishment, we suggested they turn round. They clearly had no charts or a pilot.

There is a large hotel in the vicinity, and anchored yachts at lunch are discouraged by ill-mannered water-ski boats and jet skis. After a leisurely lunch and doze we discussed the hazards of floating lines to motor craft before returning to Lakka, a landlocked harbour on the northern end of Paxoi.

Lakka was busy even at this early part of the season. Most boats anchor off as the quay at best has only 1-2 metres. Some use the expedience of heading for the café on the quay at about 6 knots, only to come to a stop spectacularly on the putty, hopefully within passerelle distance of the quay. The thought that came to mind was don't try this at home. The pilot recommends anchoring with a line ashore – we didn't bother and had a peaceful night surrounded by a squadron of German yachts. We just knew we would be safe.

## May 15 08.00

We are virtually the only boat in the bay – most of the German are long gone. The Viking and ROT have gone to buy victuals – the previous evening The Purser, our resident Patrick O'Brien expert, outlined the correct 19th century naval procedure for hailing a captain's cutter returning to his ship. Thinking to impress the remaining Germans we hailed our leader in the appropriate manner on his return from re-victualling. The Viking, to his eternal shame, forgot the correct response and extemporised with a camp “Hello Sailor”. I don't think the Germans understood anyway.

As we departed from Lakka, the fog rolled in and the visibility was down to two cables. For the first time ever in Greece we made use of the radar. The fog cleared at about midday and by 13.00 we had rounded Vrak Xeronisi on the mainland. We were originally bound for Plateria but the thrill seekers wanted to go closer to Albania. We headed ever north and went into Ormiskos Valtou which was a rather deserted, eerie, enclosed bay. Sandbanks and fish farms abound. The trees come down to the shore adding to the general oppressiveness of the place. Even the Doc and Radar didn't want a swim as the water was the consistency of a pea soup. A large river, the Potamos Thiamos debouches hereabouts and has created a long narrow beach delta. The GPS said the area was prohibited – Radar started muttering about Albanian pirates. Our O'Brien expert suggested that in lieu of a brass bow chaser we might use a rocket flare. We had a hasty lunch, feeling we were being watched and headed west to the port of Petriti on the south-western part of Nisos Kérkyra or Corfu.

Petriti is a little fishing port with a small number of some of the largest fishing boats we had seen. The quay has recently been extended and had 3 metres depth on the new section. The commercialisation found to the north of Kérkyra has not yet corrupted Petriti, but one wonders for how long. A sailing school operates from the harbour and there is a restaurant called Leonidas which does fish in all its forms. If you have the chance, go to Petriti before it disappears and becomes like its commercialised neighbours to the north; we all thought Petriti the works.

## May 16 08.00

The east coast of Kérkyra from Petriti to Corfu town is a monument to mass tourism and concrete. On our journey northward up the coast we did begin a halfhearted attempt to enter the harbour in Benitses “besides the large white conspicuous hotel complex”, but our heart really wasn't in it.

We motor-sailed through a flat sea and an offshore sewage slick about 4miles long.

The entrance to Limin Kérkyra and the port of Corfu Town from the south is impressive, with the Venetian citadel on Ak Sidhero and the lighthouse atop it.

Through the good offices of the RORC we had a berth booked in Mandraki harbour, which is in an enviable location on the north side of the citadel and a short walk from the centre of the town. The latest (2006) chart information had depths of 4 metres in the entrance and only 1.7-0.3 metres on the quays. The Pilot (2001) says 1.5-3.0 metres on the quays. There is no fuel or facilities other than the Hellenic Offshore Racing Club and the Corfu Sailing Club and a small bar. As we needed to refuel we regretfully made for Gouvia Marina – the Viking threw a tantrum as he had rather fancied himself posing in Mandraki. Note: the owner subsequently took the boat into Mandraki on the passage back which suggests that the chart is overly cautious.

The old harbour in Corfu is now full of tripper boats and it is



Busy crew.

not a particularly pleasant location. There is talk of constructing a marina, but we saw no visiting yachts in the old harbour. Gouvia marina is located in a sheltered bay to the northwest of Corfu town. The shelter is good as are the facilities. It is a tad expensive (€60 per night) for Greece. Although relatively new, the marina has a severe infestation of *Liveabordus Britannicus* who irritate and entertain in equal measure. Some of their boats have quite elaborate constructions of polythene sheeting and aluminium poles designed to keep the sun off; others have carefully tended herb garden on the patio – sorry, coachroof. One can eavesdrop on the cheapest place to buy potatoes or do laundry – and of course the perennial standby – how all the natives are crooked and spend their waking moments devising ways of ripping you off. That said, Gouvia is a convenient place for 1-2 days and a good changeover location: it is a short taxi ride into town. The nearby village of Kondokali is within

walking distance of the marina and has a number of tavernas and restaurants, most of which seem to have Sky TV and specialise in English football Premiership evenings, for *L. Britannicus*. Chacun tire de son côté.

Perhaps a good juncture at which to terminate the cruise.

PS. The flight back to Athens the next morning retraced virtually our course to Corfu – ROT took the opportunity of testing those Lotophagi whom he thought had not been paying attention for the last 10 days.

We covered a total distance of 470 nautical miles, about 30% under sail alone, and 50% motoring alone.

Number of islands: 13. Number of canals: 3. Number of bridges: 6

Disappointments: one of our video cameras broke down and it is doubtful whether RTE will wish to purchase the output from the second unit, under Radar's direction, as most of the footage consists of the cameraman's right thumb, his left foot or his shirt front.

The Purser's metatarsal recovered sufficiently for him to donate his crutch to the boat – who knows we might need it next year. Ominously, the medics now are talking about a much more comprehensive medical kit, but only for those with current health insurance.

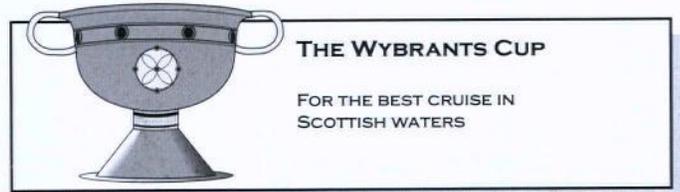
We used a recently published (2006) Admiralty folio of the Ionian Islands and the Gulf of Corinth (sponsored by Galway Maritime and the Admiralty) which was excellent once the chart numbering system had been worked out. Our copy of Heikell is now seven years old and we have noticed more amendments this year. We intend to retire this copy and buy a new one for next year – DV.

To make the cruise into a restful holiday I had shipped a cook, who assured me he had been a Naval cook, and while this did not promise a Brillat-Savarin I thought at least we should keep alive whilst at sea, and there would be no washing-up. My faith in him was rudely shaken very early in the proceedings when on my buying some melons in France he asked me how I wished them cooked. Some lobsters I bought he left out in the sun on deck, as he said to ripen, and once when I admonished him about wasting fresh water he gave us coffee for breakfast made with sea water. He told me in justifying this action that he had let it stand first to let the salt settle. In addition to being this kind of cook he was also a rogue, and I was eventually saved the trouble of sacking him by his jumping off the ship and making off with three ration books and a few readily pawnable articles.

(Anon c. 1948)

# Cementing the Entente Cordiale en Écosse

## Adrian and Maeve Bell



On a beautiful afternoon in Glengariff in July 2006 we had a chance encounter with a French crew from Brittany. After aperitifs 'chez nous' the first afternoon and a return party with them the following evening in Lawrence Cove, it had seemed like a great idea to guest on board each other's boats, as two weeks holiday did not allow sufficient time either for us to get to Brittany, or them to get to the west coast of Scotland. Next morning *Eala Bán* headed north for Dingle while they turned south for home. Like so many bright ideas hatched over a glass (or two), that was probably it.

However, emails followed, then phone calls, and finally a hamper full of goodies such as soupe de poisson, confit de canard, claret and champagne without which no self-respecting Frenchman would go to sea.

Tuesday 10 July saw Philip and Jean-Pierre arrive at Belfast City Airport. A couple of hours later we all departed for Bangor Marina in a bright yellow London-style taxi stuffed with luggage. Next morning, just after high water at 09.00, we headed north in cloudy conditions,

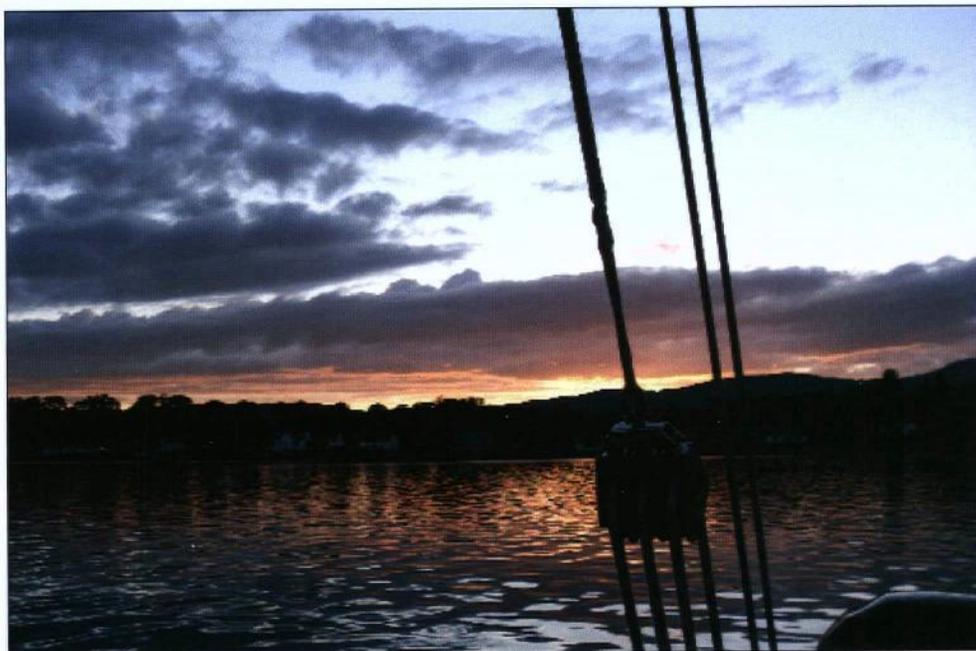


Jean-Pierre Perramant, Maeve and Adrian Bell. Philip LeHir in Arisaig with Eigg topped by cloud in the background.

under engine owing to the light head wind. By midday we were enjoying sunshine while the Irish coast was shrouded in cloud, and even managed a couple of hours under sail in a northwest 3, before resorting to engine to push us the final miles into Craighouse on Jura.

At this stage the cruise was pretty much a blank canvas, apart from the timescale of a fortnight, so the important topic over dinner was what Jean-Pierre and Philip had on their 'to do' list. It turned out to be surprisingly modest; see the area although no particular preferences, tour a distillery, eat langoustines and visit pubs. Without further ado, they made a start on the agenda by launching the dinghy and trying out the Jura Hotel while we, abandoning ideas of visiting ruined castles and early Christian churches together with remote heathery anchorages half a day's walk from the nearest house, plotted distances and rehearsed fall-back positions.

Not only was there rain and murky drizzle the following morning, but the outlook was for cyclonic 5 to 7, sea conditions



Sunset at Plockton.

### *Eala Bán*

Our new pride and joy is an Arcona 400, a modern Swedish design. While looking quite sporty and weighing 7000kg, she has proved to have a wonderful easy motion. Her fractional rig is a departure from the now ubiquitous large over-lapping genoa. There is a 110% blade headsail and a large fully battened mainsail controlled by the backstay and powerful traveller together with stack pack and lazy jacks. Down below, traditional Swedish wood reigns supreme.

moderate to rough. Not encouraging. We headed north up the Sound of Jura in an all-enveloping drizzle so thick we used the radar. Approaching Easdale in the Firth of Lorne with no improvement in the weather, we had a change of plan and headed for Kerrera where at least there was the possibility of crossing to Oban for a diversion.

Despite being a day behind schedule, the destination next day had to be Tobermory, a quintessential stop-over on the west coast, we judged. Conditions had greatly improved: the sun was out, the scenery in the Sound of Mull as stunning as ever, and the new genneker, a dashing red and white number, was hoisted. The smaller sail area and investment in a sock has greatly reduced the amount of angst which used to accompany forays under spinnaker. Tobermory was as always chock-a-block so, in their absence, we rafted up alongside a friend's Contessa 35. An hour or two later, picnicking in the sun in the cockpit (scallops and frites obtained from the van on the Fisherman's Pier), had to be put on hold as a mooring came vacant. Philip immediately jumped into the dinghy to bag it with *Eala Bán* following as quickly as we could cast off.

### Plans A and B

Despite the sunny afternoon, the evening forecast gave rise to more pessimism. westerly 5 to 7, perhaps gale 8 at first, with rain then showers sounded way too boisterous for the Minch, and even put a question mark against rounding Ardnamurchan. We got out the detailed chart of Loch Sunart purchased some years ago for just such an eventuality, to prepare Plan B while the lads went ashore to try their luck with the Tobermory nightlife.

Improving conditions in the morning led to the speedy resurrection of Plan A – to go to Arisaig and rendezvous with the new owners of our former Starlight 35. Making a cautious start with one reef in the main, we beat northwestward out of the Sound of Mull in damp squally conditions. Within half an hour the reef came out, an hour later we could ease sheets, after another hour out came the sun and up went the genneker, for a cracking good sail towards the challenging entrance channel to Arisaig. With a few extra inches under our keel (2 metres rather than the former 1.8), a large mainsail and a moderate following breeze, prudence triumphed over valour and we motored in. There was a touch of chagrin half an hour later when the Starlight bowled in under sail. Clearly an occasion to open some of the champagne prior to a four-course dinner on board, conducted in the usual mixture of English (lots), French (small amounts), and franglais. Much mirth ensued after Philip's description of himself and Jean-Pierre as "two posh frogs"!

Rising was once again a reasonably relaxed affair. The "frogs" produced half a bottle of Talisker, which they had been given by a grateful couple whose dinghy they had rescued about one o'clock in the morning on their return from the pub. This suggested that, with more northeast forecast, Loch Harport and Talisker on Skye should be the next port of call, especially as a visit to a distillery was a must-do box to be ticked. First, however, there was a window to get alongside the pier for fuel and water while the tide was high and the ferry to Eigg still at

her mooring. A handy clump of heather was raided to supply a bouquet for the bow, the traditional sign of being north of Ardnamurchan Point, and a long-standing family tradition.

### Whale Watching

Motoring out of this wonderfully sheltered bay in the sunshine was sheer pleasure, with the Sguirr of Eigg standing sharp against the blue sky, and tiny white sandy beaches glinting in the gaps between the rocks. The MV Shearwater, the local ferry to Eigg, overtook us in the narrow channel but shortly after clearing the entrance she slowed right down. Was there a problem? Suddenly we spotted it too. A Minke whale. By slowly following the Shearwater a fabulous half hour was spent sometimes as close as 25 metres to this magnificent creature. We could hear it breathe and smell its breath – bad breath as it happened; it had a terrible case of halitosis!

The light westerly and glorious sunshine not only meant a change into shorts and tee-shirts, but the abandonment of Plan A in favour of going up the Sound of Sleat. The tides suited so well that having whooshed through Kyle Rhea, where we spotted two otters, there was time to turn east towards Loch Duich to admire romantic Eilean Donan castle, a photo opportunity par excellence. The bay at pretty Plockton confirmed the generally poor sailing season; not only were there two moorings free but there was not a single boat in the area reserved for anchoring. The "posh frogs" went ashore to continue their search for nightlife and mermaids (les sirènes); married man Philip had decided that, as well as developing his English, his friend should acquire a Scottish girlfriend. Not an easy task in a Hebridean pub! Aboard, we congratulated ourselves on getting north of Skye and pondered what to do next, as the forecast of northeast 6 to 7 appeared to rule out the Outer Hebrides.

### Crossing the Minch

A loud knocking noise had us on deck at 05.45 the next morning to find the mooring buoy nudging the bow. It took only a minute or two for sleep to clear and to realise that the sun was shining and it was a flat calm. Dinghy on deck and Stornaway here we come.

Two hours later the breeze filled in from the northeast, so off went the engine in favour of a sparkling fetch up the Inner Sound. Half an hour later a heavy squall arrived without warning sending us lurching to leeward. Two reefs hastily went in the main yet thirty minutes later we were back to full sail. However dark clouds could be seen massing on the mainland, encouraging us to press on at full speed to try and stay ahead of it. Thus the next few hours were action packed with six sail changes in all, leading to a great improvement in sail handling by the time the rain finally caught up with us. By 14.50 we

### *Callinish and Carloway Sites*

The impressive monument of 50 stones at Callinish dates from between 4000 BC and 3000 BC with 13 stones forming a ring at the centre and others radiating out from it. Due to climate change, peat gradually covered the entire site for centuries but had been removed by 1857; archaeologists are still flummoxed as to its significance. Carloway Broch overlooks the entrance to Loch Roag. The construction of brochs is fascinating; these are towers built with two concentric stone walls, with the living space for both people and animals on different floors in the centre, and with stairs constructed up the narrow gap between the walls of stone. The website describes it as follows: "Think of it as the iron age equivalent of an architect-designed mansion with a garage for the Range Rover, a stable for the horses, and remotely operated entrance gates."

were securely berthed alongside the Esplanade Pier in Stornaway, enjoying a delicious late lunch prepared by Jean-Pierre to celebrate arriving in the Western Isles against the odds.

Time to tick another box as that evening a small fishing vessel tied up not far behind us and the skipper kindly provided not only half a bucket of prawns but five lemon sole. He enquired where we came from, and on being told Strangford Lough, remarked that he knew it well as he used to work on the coal boats which docked at Killyleagh town quay. Small world.

A day in port followed, during which we hired a car and set off to explore the standing stones at Callinish, and the Carloway Broch on the western shore of Lewis. Thanks to the very helpful lady in the Harbour Office we had tracked down Richard, the French former owner of the award-winning Bonaventure restaurant and one of the main reasons why we had wanted to reach Stornaway, to the Caberfeidh Hotel on the outskirts of Stornaway. That evening we enjoyed not only a wonderful meal including scallops, sea bass, salmon, halibut and kangaroo, but French conversation as well.

While the meal was delicious, the town's pubs received low marks with more black eyes in evidence than mermaids. We tried to explain that Scotland did not share the same pub culture which makes Ireland such a joy for visitors. We also indicated that, with a population of only 26,000 spread over the entire chain of islands, the chief attraction of the Western Isles is the isolation and emptiness. Clearly a small amount of isolation sans pub was going to be sufficient, so the next destination was Loch Maddy which could provide at least a small shop and licensed hotel in addition to rock and heather.

With the wind still in the northeast, we had a good run south setting the jib on our nifty carbon fibre pole and gybing a couple of times on the way. The mooring near the ferry pier provided a good vantage point to observe a family of Greylag goslings paddling around, while the leg of lamb acquired in the traditional butchers at the head of Stornaway harbour roasted in the oven.

We had now passed the halfway point and with the forecasts suggesting nothing less than a force 5, it seemed prudent to head back across the Minch. We timed our departure for Canna for late morning to avoid wind over tide; even so conditions were fresh and the seas still lumpy, with harnesses the order of the day. With the wind a good northeast 5 to 6, we were making 8 knots with two reefs in the main and half the jib rolled away. The boys were fighting each other to get on the wheel and we learnt a new colloquialism: "Qui va à la chasse, perd sa place!" Finally we motor-sailed for the last hour with the great bulk of Rum looking benign now the sun was out, and the Cuillins sharply silhouetted against a clear sky. Forty miles in six hours.

## Fingal's Cave

A quiet night followed by an optimistic forecast of variable 3 or 4 saw us heading for the Tresnish Islands off the west coast of Mull. A glorious day followed, with the wind backing sufficiently for the genneker to be set for a couple of hours before some engine assist was required to take us through the Tresnish Islands (spotting a baby basking shark on the way) and on to Staffa, anchoring off Fingal's Cave along with five other yachts. The now-calm conditions were perfect for exploring the inside of both caves in the dinghy, and for hearing the deep echoing rumble which inspired Mendelssohn to compose his lyrical overture following his visit in 1829.

Despite the number of yachts at Staffa we were on our own in Buessan, a new anchorage for us. By about 21.00 a number of small trawlers were returning to the pier to unload their catch, and we secured another half bucket of prawns for £5. Walking the half mile to the friendly pub, the Tresnish stood

black against the sunset with the sea streaked with pink, grey and silver, while on our return the warm heady scent of honey-suckle hung over the small road, and herons flapped noisily overhead making for their heronry.

West Loch Tarbert was debated as the destination for Saturday night as it seemed to be a favourite for many French yachts, but the showers and stores of Ardfern won out over the stags and stones of Jura. It was a grey day, with a 09.00 start giving us sufficient tide to motor down the sound of Iona without too much anxiety about water depth. Motoring under autopilot could have been a bit tedious but was enlivened by strongly differing opinions on how to cook the shellfish for lunch. The argument was finally resolved by the langoustines in one saucepan being cooked in the French method, ie in their entirety, while the prawns in the second saucepan were cooked as taught by a Scottish fisherman some years ago. On the plus side, there was total unanimity about their quality.

### *Fisherman's recipe for prawns*

Break the middle one of the 'feathers' which form the prawn's tail, Break off the head and carefully pull the attached gut through at the same time.; if left, it forms the black line found on the back of many cooked prawns. Add the claws for extra flavour, cover with seawater and bring to the boil. As soon as the saucepan boils, remove from the heat and decant to prevent the prawns from continuing to cook. Refresh in cold water. Enjoy.

Having scoffed the prawns we were approaching Corryvreckan, still under engine in the light conditions, having timed our arrival to take the last hour or so of the east-going ebb through the Gulf, when the chart plotter suddenly went down. Adrian disappeared below to wrestle with the electronics while the rest of us watched entranced as we accelerated from 6 knots to 13.9 knots without touching the throttle. Hardly a ripple on the smooth water. How to explain that this is one of the most notorious stretches of water in the world?

The shelter of Ardfern at the head of lovely Loch Craignish induces a feeling of security, but the five-day forecast of strong southerlies on Wednesday made the imperative of their return flight at 06.45 on Thursday morning loom larger. And there was the distillery visit to fit in. Easy decision really – head for Lagavulin next day.

Monday brought sunshine and light winds (vitesse 6 noeuds recorded in the log) with Jean-Pierre in charge of the navigation down the Sound of Jura. Entering the tiny bay at Lagavulin in late afternoon, the ambiguous instructions in the pilot book and the limited depth, 2.7 metres, created a frisson of anxiety. Guarded by the ruins of a small castle on an outcrop of rock, it is a charming small anchorage dominated by the white-painted bulk of the distillery while seals bask close by on the many rocks and Arctic terns dive and squabble. We quickly made friends with the crew of *Chamade* and discovered that Marc was a Swiss TV journalist en route to Bergen in his brand new 38' aluminium Ovni yacht.

Having made arrangements to meet the Swiss again for the earliest tour of the distillery, we mustered ashore in good time for the 09.30 start. With demand for the product running at an all time high, the plant is currently working 24/7 while employing just 13 people including the tour guides. Lagavulin makes the peatiest whisky on the island of Islay, some 35 parts per million compared with just two in some others. Be warned!

## Encounter with Vikings

Because of the prospect of strong southerlies and heavy rain, the decision was made to return a day early and leave straight



Maeve deciding if the prawn is for the Irish or French saucepan.

after the tour. Motoring carefully through the narrow entrance we were amazed to meet a Viking longship on the way in. It turned out to be the *Sea Stallion*, a replica of the huge 60' longship originally built in Dublin in 1042, on her way to Dublin from Roskilde in Denmark.

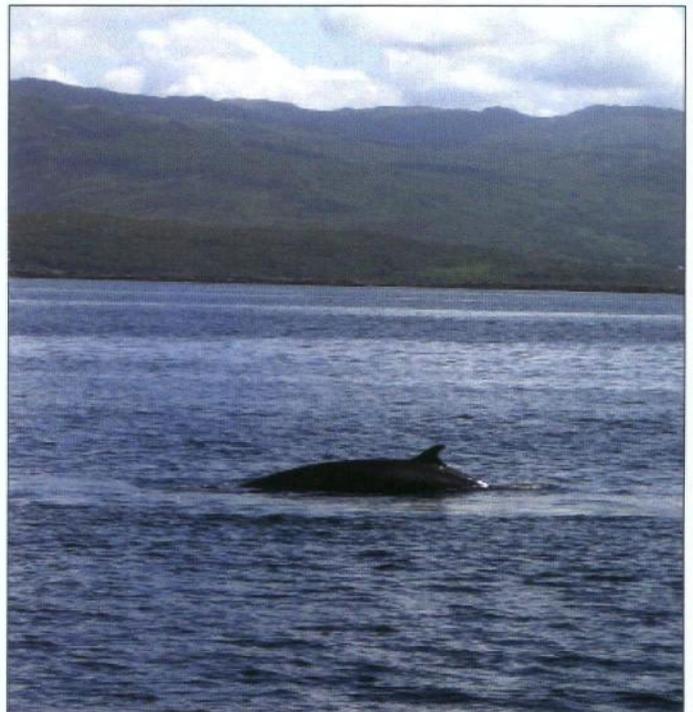
As the breeze gradually filled in to become a moderate northwesterly, we were soon bowling south under full sail in the sunshine. Shortly after midday out came the genneker and up went the speed. Finishing off our lunch in the cockpit as we closed the Antrim coast, we watched casually as a powerful RIB came towards us. Our friends enquired whether it might be the Coastguard about to board us? 'Not at all' we said dismissively, 'that doesn't happen here'. Last laugh with the French as four burly customs officers in black helmets and dry

suits surged up and proceeded to board us. One immediately disappeared below, but once there, didn't even open a locker while another filled his notebook with (presumably) vital information such as our names, addresses and dates of birth.

With Philip on the helm and the wind freshening, we had a stonking sail past the Maidens and Island Magee, clocking 9.6 knots at one stage and covering the 60 miles to Bangor in exactly eight hours from anchor up to gin down.

True to form, the lads set off for the pubs after our usual excellent dinner on board and a short visit to the hospitable Royal Ulster. Next morning they pronounced a quiet Monday night in Bangor to be superior to anything sampled in Scotland, although mermaids remained in short supply.

Grey skies and little wind meant a passage mostly under engine to Strangford Lough, something of an anti-climax after the brilliant sailing conditions of the previous day. However, arriving at the entrance at the first of the flood, a breeze filled in and we beat up the Narrows in hazy sunshine, although the engine was called on again to make the last few miles to our mooring in Quoile, safely ahead of the wind and rain. Thirteen days and 590 miles. All the boxes ticked and more. Now we look forward to visiting Brittany in company with the experts.

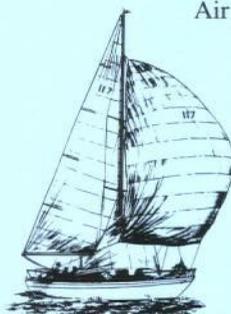


Minke whale off Eigg.

## Long Life To The R.A.Y.C.

Some fanatics love shooting or hunting,  
Race horses, too, bay, brown, or roan,  
But give me the wee bit of bunting  
Which floats o'er a craft of mine own.

The glad waters round her are dancing,  
The breeze piping freshly away,  
While the sun from her bright copper glancing,  
Slants off in an iris of spray.



Air: *Moll Roe In The Morning* or *One Bumper At Parting*

Then if you don't love with devotion,  
The voiceful, the laughing, blue sea,  
This changing, but beautiful ocean,  
You're not fit for the R.A.Y.C.

But should the light foam upward wreathing  
Fire your eye, fill your spirit with glee;  
Should the gallant breeze quicken your breathing,  
Give your hand, man, for brothers we be.

*Daniel J. O'Connell*

(Written for and sung at the dinner of the Royal Alfred Yacht Club, 27th January, 1872. Reproduced with permission from the R.A.Y.C.)

# 66°N to 66°S

*Celtic Spirit's* Arctic to Antarctic Adventure

## Michael Holland



THE FAULKNER CUP

THE CLUB'S PREMIER AWARD

### The Beginning

It all began some years earlier, following a fascinating voyage from Dingle, Ireland, to north west Greenland in the summer of 2003, and our first time to sail among icebergs and the truly spectacular scenery of this remote, sparsely populated country where time has stood still for centuries. This voyage was undertaken on my last boat, a Contest 48, *Celtic Spirit II*. She handled big seas and several storms without difficulty. However, as a glass fibre boat I felt somewhat exposed when sailing in ice conditions. Dense fog and ice regularly go hand in hand and on many occasions we would post crew at the bow to ensure that we would not collide with any bergy bits, as to do so would almost certainly lead to unimaginable consequences. Cold waters, sinking boat and no rescue facilities are not a good mix in this remote part of the world!

The experience of north west Greenland sowed the seed for many other high latitude sailing voyages, and in March 2005



Back Row: Jon Petterson, Michiel de Hoog. Middle Row: Blayne Rice, Dennis O'Sullivan, Janet King, Michael Holland, Vera O'Herlihy. Front: Ansis Dimiters.

*Celtic Spirit II* was sadly sold and her replacement was purchased. The replacement *Celtic Spirit of Fastnet*, an aluminium 72' ketch, designed by Ed Dubois and built by Pendennis Shipyard Cornwall was originally owned by a

Chilean who had her built for sailing in the Southern Ocean, and was aptly named *Beagle*. Having already sailed in the high latitudes of Greenland, a plan to sail from 66°N to 66°S was hatched, our top of the world to the bottom of the world voyage! The shake-down sail included a winter sail to Kinsale from Lymington and back again, followed in June by stage one of the voyage, to Isafjordur, north west Iceland, and a mandatory crossing of the Arctic Circle while up there. By then I had a good idea as to what modifications to the boat were needed to take us on our by now planned voyage South.

### Fit-Out / Planning

*Celtic Spirit of Fastnet* would return to Berthons Shipyard, Lymington in September for a major refit, which would take place



*Celtic Spirit* at Mutton Cove, Antarctica.

over the next eight months. Safety was to be a priority and so the yard was instructed to bring the boat up to commercial safety standards, and have her registered under MCA. In addition to this, extensive modifications and replacements were ordered.

To deal with the extreme conditions in Antarctica, we would need to change the gas supply from butane to propane, as propane freezes at a lower temperature. Of course, burners, regulators etc would also have to change in this gas change-over. The cooker itself had to be mounted more securely to take the severe pounding expected in the southern ocean seas. Next I required *Celtic Spirit* to carry both CQR and Bruce anchors (80 kgs each), and so the bow stem needed to be modified to carry both. More chain was added to both anchors and after 100m of chain attached to each anchor, we added a further 100m of Dynema line, which has a breaking strain greater than that of the chain. Specially designed rollers of Dynema lines were fitted aft and used for leading lines ashore while tying up in the Antarctic.

We had two new fixed blade propellers manufactured, (*Celtic Spirit* has two engines), which we would carry with us, and change in southern Argentina before heading across to Antarctica. The two existing folding propellers would have been too delicate to deal with ice particles. Much time was dedicated to working out how we would effect the change over of these propellers, as this work would have to be done underwater in very cold conditions. Not many volunteers for this task! As expected there are no lift-out facilities this far south. Tools were specially made to allow us to carry out this task. We also sourced an excellent piece of diving equipment from the USA. It was a small electrically operated diving compressor, which allowed two divers to go down to 10 metres under the boat without the normal diving tanks. Our heating and refrigeration systems would also be replaced. New decks were added, also a new water maker, and a complete overhaul of the masts and rigging. Carbon spinnaker and whisker poles were added, replacing the very heavy aluminium ones. The hydraulics were completely overhauled and a new electrical energy management system was installed.

Our radar was upgraded to include ARPA. As parts and technical backup would be virtually impossible to get from Argentina onwards, redundancy of important equipment was needed as much as possible, and also to avoid carrying excessive spare parts and equipment. We carried three compass types, binnacle, fluxgate and our very accurate gyro compass, with both the fluxgate and gyro being available for connection to the radar to support ARPA. Three separate GPS systems independently connected to two navigation systems and a Yeoman plotter, for use with our paper charts, were fitted. However navigation using paper charts would be our primary mode of navigation. We had three sources of weather information, Navtex, a "moving weather" software programme downloaded via the satcom, and "Skyeye" a live system of atmospheric photos received from weather satellites by its own antenna.

## Crew organisation

During the eight month refit we also dedicated our time to arranging crew. My preference was to minimise crew changes throughout the next leg of this voyage of nearly one year. Ideally I required a crew of eight on board who could commit to large sections of the voyage, and get to know *Celtic Spirit's* sailing characteristics. Successful crew would also have experienced long ocean voyages previously. A mixture of age groups was also desirable. We ended up with four very capable crew, under the age of 30, who would add a bit of agility to our crew mix, as some of us were not in the first flushes of youth!

Our printed tee shirts said it all – "crew wanted for hazardous journey, no pay, very cold, long months of misery assured, a voyage of a lifetime". This was a take-off from Ernest Shackleton's original advertisement seeking crew for *Endurance*. We had a great response from our various enquiries and chose ten crew altogether, however only eight would sail at any time. Four were Irish (Dublin and Cork), one from Latvia, two from Brazil, one from South Africa, one from Holland and one from Sweden. Eleven languages were fluently spoken between us all, and as it turned out four of them were accomplished musicians, and now *Celtic Spirit* had its own band. It was to turn out to be a most harmonious, fun loving and extremely dedicated crew, who would form the focus of attention wherever we would drop a hook. Other skills on board included climbers, surf boarders, snow boarders, scuba divers, water skiers, computer programmer, violin maker, artist, graphic designer, writer and a host of raconteurs. Younger crew also fancied themselves as sailing celebrities, who would entertain females on shore with some amazing (exaggerated) sailing stories.

## Europe to South America

We set sail from Lymington on 26th May 2006 in poor weather, and arrived Ria de Cedeira, northwest Spain on May 30th and spent a few weeks cruising around the various Rias of Galicia, which is a most beautiful and interesting part of this country. Onwards south to Portugal and up the river Douro to Porto. Porto to me is the best place to sail into in this country, and although many pilot books would discourage a sailor from sailing up this river, it is not difficult and is most rewarding. Porto is of course famous for its port. We took a day out to visit some of the famous port houses including Croft, Dows, Sandyman and Taylor located on the south bank of the river. We took another day out to recover!

An auto-pilot failure shortly after leaving Portugal meant we had to hand steer the whole way to the Canary Islands but in great sunny weather. We enjoyed this experience so much that from then on we would tend to use the auto-pilot sparingly.

By September we had reached the Cape Verdes and spent a few days at anchor in the south of Sal Island. These waters were the warmest waters we would experience during our whole voyage and registered 29.5°C. Two days out from the Cape Verdes our weather forecast showed a tropical storm force 10 building up off the coast of Africa and it was predicted to cross our path within the next 24 hours. Winds were expected to be in excess of 55 knots. We set up storm sails and prepared for our first storm on this leg. Fortunately it suddenly changed path and passed to the north of us leaving us to deal with 'only' 35 knots, big seas, tropical squalls, and tropical downpours of rain thrown in for good measure.

We crossed the equator on 26th September, and carried out the age old initiation rights associated with admitting "slimy pollywogs" (first timers) to the court of King Neptune, who henceforth would be respected as trusty "shellbacks". This ceremony involved consuming a most appalling concoction laced with human hair. Two crew members spent some time over the rail 'quietly meditating'.

Two hundred and twenty miles off the coast of northwest Brazil lies Fernando de Noronha, one of the most beautiful islands in the world. This island is one of the few places on earth that is designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and visitor numbers are severely restricted, due to its unique environmental nature. It is not an official port of entry to Brazil so our presence here was somewhat low key, as we had not officially cleared into Brazil as yet. Five days of fantastic sailing (in three days we covered 608 miles, a record to date) brought us to mainland Brazil and Salvador de Bahia, which

was the capital of Brazil until 1763. It was a major slave-trading centre and today this is reflected in its African culture, and this influence can be seen in its music and food. En route to Rio de Janeiro, on 20th October in heavy seas our mainsail ripped right up the middle, leaving us only the mizzen and the two genoas.

We arrived in Rio de Janeiro on 25th October and were fortunate to have been accepted as guests at the exclusive Rio de Janeiro Yacht Club. We had already sailed 6500 miles since leaving Lymington, and here the boat would stay for the next three weeks while some of us would leave to visit home. Rio is a most vibrant beautiful and historic city with much to see and do. It also has two of the most famous beaches in the world, Copacabana and Ipanema on which some of the most beautiful girls are to be seen. Rio de Janeiro was to be the last major city we would visit before Antarctica, and with our mainsail repaired and other repairs sorted we departed on 9th November.

## Brazil to Argentina

We would have another 2600 miles to sail before reaching the southern tip of South America and the town of Ushuaia, the most southern town in the world. En route we visited Parati, south of Rio. This is a most magnificent sailing area, made up of numerous beautiful tropical islands, and where one could happily spend months exploring. After brief visits to Rio Grande (Brazil), Punta del Este (Uruguay) and Mar del Plata (Argentina) we arrived in Ushuaia in early December having spent most of the past three weeks at sea.

During our 2600 mile voyage to Ushuaia we would notice the water temperature drop from 25°C to 5°C. Fishing was good and we were to catch mostly tuna and dorade, which provided many fine meals on board. We would sail from tropical waters into the roaring forties and furious fifties latitudes, their reputations well deserved. We would experience big seas, gales and winds from every direction. For days on end there would be no other boats in sight while another time we were tracking 27 boats on our radar at night, mostly fishing vessels but some coastal vessels, and all within a six mile radius. Care was needed as some small wooden fishing vessels carried no navigation lights and were invisible on our radar. By the forties we were seeing lots of albatross, storm petrels, fulmars, and penguins heading home southwards.

*Celtic Spirit* was to base herself in Ushuaia for Christmas, and half of her crew would celebrate the festive season on board. The boat was fully decorated in keeping with the season, including a real Christmas tree fully lit and situated on the foredeck. During our stay in Ushuaia we collected much invaluable information on Antarctica from locally based sailors, who were kind enough to provide us with many hand-drawn drawings of anchorages and sheltered creeks. There are no pilot books for Antarctica and in many cases charts are incomplete or non-existent. Many of the anchorages and havens of shelter are closely guarded secrets, as many of the local sailors make a living from bringing guests on sailing expeditions to Antarctica, and of course want their guests to have a unique experience without coming across other voyagers.

## Antarctica

On 19th January 2007 we set sail along the Beagle Canal and dropped south past Cape Horn and across the dreaded Drake Passage to Antarctica. Our plan was to arrive at Crystal Sound which lies just below the Antarctic circle at 66°30'S, 68°W. Four days later and after 600 miles of sailing we crossed the Antarctic Circle and entered Crystal Sound as the weather began to deteriorate. Our log read "very dangerous, growlers

and bergy bits everywhere, wind 28/30 knots, very lumpy seas ... difficult to see the ice". We decided to retreat and sail north to our next proposed safe haven at Mutton Cove, a small creek sixty miles away. This was to be first place we tied up Antarctica style, using two fore and aft shorelines. Our Dynema lines were attached to rubber shocks to provide elasticity.

We were to spend the next month exploring this fascinating part of Antarctica, a wilderness of ice fields, glaciers, countless icebergs of all shapes, sizes and colours. Television, books or photographs cannot capture the majesty of this unique, beautiful and unspoilt environment. Many icebergs took on the appearance of living creatures while others were the size of small towns or mountains. Thunderous explosions could be heard for miles in this wilderness from glaciers and icebergs calving, as massive chunks of ice would often break away and collapse into the sea; a fascinating sight. There was an abundance of penguins, seals and whale all around us. On land aggressive Skuas and Antarctic Terns would attack us if we came anywhere close to their territory. We were the intruders in their land and they showed no fear in letting us know. Seals were also to be respected, in particular the Leopard and Crab Eater seals who have been known to attack dinghies and inflict poisonous bites on humans.

We would also call into some of the research stations based down here and in particular we would enjoy the company of the personnel based at Vernadsky, a Ukrainian station (65°S), who threw a party for us as our Russian speaking first mate Ansis was able to converse fluently with them.

They gave us the keys to Wordie House, a museum and old base station where we would see how researchers once lived here in the most primitive of conditions. This is one of the oldest research stations in Antarctica and is credited with the discovery of the hole in the Ozone layer in 1975. We would also see in the visitor's book, the signature of Sir Peter Blake who visited here in 2001, the year he was tragically murdered aboard his boat in the Amazon, some months later.

Other base stations visited included the Argentinean base on the Melchoir Islands 64°19'S, 62°59'W, and the old British Research Station at Port Lockroy, now a museum, and also a breeding ground for thousands of (smelly) Gentoo penguins. We also visited so many other unique places including sailing in the Lemaire Channel, Peterman Island, Curverville Island, Enterprise Island, Challenger Island and Deception Island, a sunken volcanic island. We were sad to leave this most fascinating part of the world a month later.

## South Georgia

Mid February saw *Celtic Spirit* set sail from Puerto Williams, Chile and sail due east for 1300 miles deep into the southern ocean and on to South Georgia. This was to be one of the toughest sailing legs to date. It was a gruelling and miserable voyage with relentless gales and snow blizzards.

We were relieved to have arrived on South Georgia in the afternoon of 4th March and tied up alongside an old whaling station at Grytviken. One hundred meters away lay the small graveyard where Sir Ernest Shackleton was buried with his body facing south. South Georgia is a mecca of wild life with some of the largest populations in the world of Albatross, Antarctic Shags, Macaroni Penguins, King Penguins and Fur Seals. It has spectacular mountain peaks and glaciers and we spent many days climbing and walking this most beautiful and fascinating island. Two crew members fashioned a plaque in honour of Shackleton as *Celtic Spirit's* tribute to this great Irishman and presented it to the curator of the South Georgia museum. This plaque is now hanging in the small Norwegian Whalers Church behind the museum.

South Georgia was to be the last stop in Antarctica, thus



Snow storm in South Georgia.

closing the book on this epic voyage for *Celtic Spirit* and her crew. It was a voyage that took nearly two years in the planning and preparation and was to take us from the Arctic to Antarctica, a distance of more than 16000 miles.

From the cold seas of the northern hemisphere through the tropics of Cancer and Capricorn and into the cold seas of the southern hemisphere, we were to meet dozens of fascinating sailors and other people from all parts of the world, many of whom are now friends. We had sailed some of the most hostile and threatening seas of the world, while enjoying the magic of trade wind sailing through tropical waters.

For all of us on *Celtic Spirit* this has been a voyage of a lifetime. For many it has been a life changing experience and for all of us to have shared this incredible voyage it has forever bound us together as we earned our place in King Neptune's Court.

## Epilogue

We had achieved our ambition to sail from the Arctic to the Antarctic and visit South Georgia. We now set off on the last leg of our voyage back to Buenos Aires. However our trip from South Georgia took us through some of our most dangerous encounters, through thick ice fields with much manoeuvring,



Weather forecast indicating severe tropical storm.

angst, and prayer over a 48-hour period. No sleep, emergency watch systems and two crews constantly at the bow relaying instructions to the helm via walkie-talkie to avoid the menacing growlers.

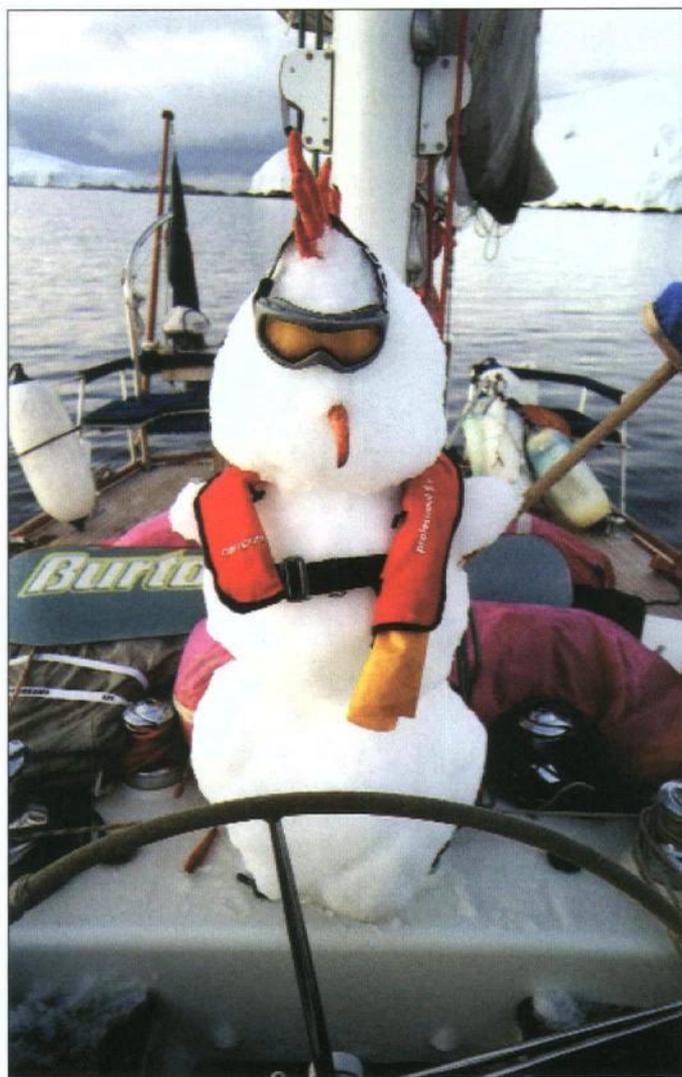
As we sailed northward past the Antarctic Convergence Zone the weather gradually improved, and soon we were enjoying the autumn sunshine of Argentina, a most welcome and pleasant change from the bitter cold conditions.

Buenos Aires was the official end of the voyage and most crew departed on their way home. The remaining crew sailed *Celtic Spirit* to Trinidad, to stay for maintenance and repairs and keep below the hurricane zone.

*Celtic Spirit* will stay in Trinidad until December where plans are now underway to sail the Caribbean and hopefully take part

in the Antigua race week next year.

After that, who knows, there is still a lot of sea out there.



*Celtic Spirit's* Antarctic snowman.



Photos - Kevin Dwyer

The best of company in East Ferry on Saturday 13 October 2007  
 at the Southern Region 'End-of-season Raft Up'. Photos by Kevin Dwyer

# Dublin Bay Twentyone-foot One-Design

## A memoir by Cas Smullen

*Editor's note:* Though this is not the log of an ICC cruise, many of our members will remember with affection the Dublin Bay 21s, and I think it fitting to publish here Cas' memoir of this Irish classic one-design boat.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, yacht racing evolved from a previous format of large, expensive, professionally-crewed craft, to one of a more popularly affordable and available nature, in the form of so-called "model" yachts competing as Corinthians, or with a minimal professional input.

This development spawned a number of local one-design classes, which included the Dublin Bay Twenty-five Footers; the Dublin Bay (later to be claimed by Howth) Seventeen Footers; The Cork Harbour and Belfast Lough one-designs and the Dublin Bay Twentyones. The latter were gaff-rigged cutters measuring twenty-one feet on the waterline, having a length overall of thirty-three feet and a beam of seven and a half feet. They had no engines but carried a "sweep", which was a large oar deployed from a rowlock, mounted in a cast bronze cleat-fitting, fixed on the covering board abeam the cockpit.

Between 1903 and 1907, seven were built in yards both at Ringsend, Dublin and Portrush, Co. Antrim.

The seven were, in sail number order:

1. *Innisfallen*
2. *Maureen*
3. *Estelle*
4. *Garavogue*
5. *Oola*
6. *Naneen*
7. *Geraldine*

The 21s became very popular on the then Kingstown waterfront and gained a reputation for being raced hard and competitively, never reefing other than to strike the jackyard topsail and taking the heaviest weather in their stride. A class rule confined each boat to one paid hand during Dublin Bay Sailing Club races but none could be carried aboard on Royal Alfred Yacht Club days, which were strictly Corinthian events. The paid hands, when racing, manned the foredeck and they took a pride in keeping their charges ship-shape and also kept a keen interest in the racing results. The cotton sails then in use were relatively delicate, new ones being carefully stretched in light airs before being used in competition. It was the practice before racing, to hoist the headsails in "stops", being rolled and then tied with rotten cotton with the jib being broken out when casting off and the fore/staysail deployed at the starting gun. They carried a "leg of mutton" spinnaker, which was set by by a grommet on the end of a long plan pole, the tapered end of which sat in a metal cup on the forward side of the mast. The spinnaker sheet was led below through the fore hatch and belayed on a cleat near the saloon sole so it didn't get much trimming. The guy was led aft to the cockpit and was the principal adjustment, the pole having no downhaul or topping lift. In heavy conditions the for'ard hand would sit on the pole to prevent it skying.

Details of the early owners, crews and their exploits are somewhat lost in the mists of time but by repute they involved yachtsmen of some character. Class activities extended along the east coast to include regattas ranging from Drogheda in the north down to Wicklow harbour.

By the late nineteen forties, despite their age, the boats remained very competitive and well maintained. The then owners were:

<i>Innisfallen</i>	– R.W. (Dyko) Morris	R.I.Y.C.
<i>Maureen</i>	– Peter D. Odlum	R.I.Y.C.
<i>Estelle</i>	– Bobby Kidney	N.Y.C.
<i>Garavogue</i>	– A.A. (Larry) Murphy	N.Y.C.
<i>Oola</i>	– Frank Thompson	N.Y.C.
<i>Naneen</i>	– Terry and Jo Roche	R.St.G.Y.C.
<i>Geraldine</i>	– Paul Johnston	N.Y.C.

The number of paid hands employed had dwindled to two, both of whom were to become waterfront institutions in their own right. Jack Brennan, later to be head boatman of renown in the National Yacht Club was the hand on *Innisfallen* and Jimmy Miller who afterwards became head boatman in the Royal Irish for many years, worked on *Maureen*.

Around that time the crews organised an institution known as the "U.F.U." This stood for Unpaid Foots (as opposed to paid hands) Union and it fostered ceremonial dinners of great pomp and hilarity held in one or other of the waterfront clubs during which the class anthem "Our Old Cow" was always rendered with solemnity and respect.

There were many characters involved in the U.F.U. including the likes of Gordon Anderson, Bill Begley, Richie Coe, Jack Coffey, Jane Cotter, Michael and Robin d'Alton, Stanley Dyke, Teddy Ender, Tony Gray, "Chaw" Halligan, Tom Hingerty, Tom Jackson, Seamus Kelly, Walter Miley, Paget McCormack, John McKinney, Arthur Odbert, Kevin O'Farrell, Michael ("Styx") O'Herlihy, Manus Walsh and a lot of others now beyond immediate recall.

Subsequent changes of ownership during that era involved Terry and Jo Roche who, having been very successful in *Naneen*, taking over *Oola*, which had been singularly unsuccessful, and after a lot of hard restorative work, proceeding to wipe the board with her in the next season. Maurice and Betty O'Connor bought *Innisfallen*, Patrick Jameson acquired *Maureen*, Ronnie Maddock and then Frank Ryan bought *Estelle*, Des Dobson bought *Garavogue*, Liam Boyd became the owner of *Oola* and Willy Maguire took on *Naneen*.

During the late forties and early fifties, a series of inter-class engagements were held with the Cork Harbour one-designs. The latter were quite similar in size and rig to the Dublin Bay 21s. They didn't wear a topsail but had a higher peaked gaff mainsail instead. In alternate years teams travelled to either venue in Dun Laoghaire or Crosshaven after Saturday racing to compete in two team races on the Sunday. Boats were balloted for, into two teams of three, and then switched around for the second race. Local knowledge always proved an advantage but generally teams were well matched.

There was an on-going debate as to which of the two classes was the faster and for years an actual match was

envisaged to decide this. When it eventually took place in 1955 it became known as the "Dunmore East Joust" and was somewhat disruptive of the I.D.R.A. dinghy week with which it coincided.

For the "Joust" *Naneen* left Howth at lunchtime the Sunday after Lambay races with Styx O'Herlihy and yours truly aboard and arrived in Dunmore East late Tuesday afternoon some fifty-two hours later. The rest of the crew travelled by road. Two one-designs, *Queridy* – George Radley, and *Cygnets* – Kevin O'Regan, had already arrived from Crosshaven. On the next day, Wednesday, two races were held in the estuary. *Naneen* won the first but was sandwiched into second place in the next so a decider was arranged for the following day. However, a gale blew up and all racing was cancelled for Thursday and Friday so an honourable draw was declared as the outcome.

As the 21 class had been promised that *Naneen* would be back in Dun Laoghaire for the following Saturday racing, she left Dunmore as the gale abated on Friday evening to make Dun Laoghaire at lunchtime Saturday just in time to compete in the usual race.

Synthetic fabric had become available for sails in the early fifties but otherwise the 21s remained in their original format until the early sixties when it was decided (questionably) that the rig was too demanding for the aging hulls and John Kearney, of *Mavis* fame, a marine architect with Dublin Port and Docks Board, was commissioned to redesign them with Bermudan rig. Some owners also believed that the investment involved would enhance the value of the yachts by "modernising" them.

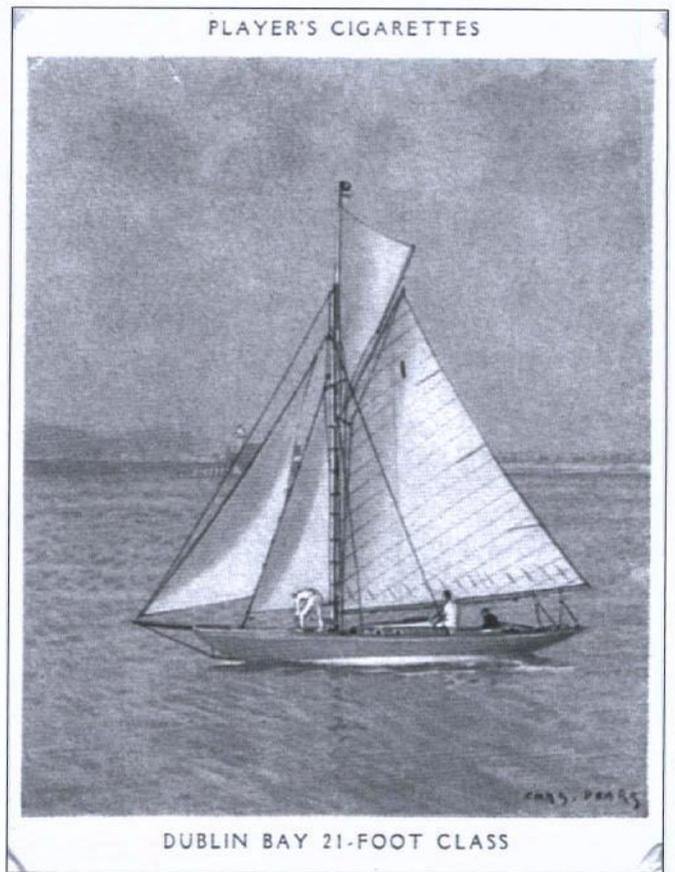
This decision was quite controversial and one of the arguments put forward in its favour was that it took too long to set the gaff rig, particularly before Thursday evening racing when time was short due to the week-day's occupational commitments. To challenge this, one crew enthusiast offered to be timed rigging a boat single-handedly in an observed demonstration. Put aboard off the Royal Irish bringing the two headsails in stops, the yacht was fully rigged, including the setting of the jackyard topsail, in only nine minutes. All that was needed to be done before casting off to race was a sweat on the peak halyard. Notwithstanding the fact that this time could be achieved by one person, the lobby for change prevailed.

The new rigs initially employed laminated timber masts, which were quite rectangular and heavy in section. These soon proved to create too much weight aloft and consequently made the boats extremely tender so they were replaced with alloy spars, which proved to be more satisfactory. The discarded timber spars were left lying in the coal harbour yard

to be held in reserve but one mysteriously disappeared and was later spotted as a new flagpole in the grounds of an Ailesbury Road embassy. Local enterprise in the west harbour area was opportunistic and active!

Later changes of ownership included *Maureen* being acquired by a consortium led by Bill Nolan, *Estelle* by Albert Foley, *Garavogue* by George Williams and later by Fionan de Barra. *Oola* passed to Michael Boyd, *Naneen* to Stephen McKenzie and *Geraldine* to Paul Johnston junior.

During the seventies and early eighties all seven boats remained in commission actively racing as competitively as ever, until the disastrous Hurricane Charlie in 1986. The resultant damage was so extensive as to require all the 21s to be carted down to Arklow for repairs to be contemplated. Sadly this objective was never achieved so they remain there to this day in a disused farmyard in the vague hope of restoration to their original glory at some future stage.



*Wednesday ... We were this day at noon about the middle of the Bay of Biscay, when the wind once more deserted us, and we were so entirely becalmed that we did not advance a mile in many hours ... This calm affected us more than a storm could have done. The sea .. rose mountains high and lifted our poor ship up and down, backwards and forwards, with so violent a motion that there was scarce a man in the ship better able to stand than myself. Our women, who began to creep out of their holes in the morning, retired again within the cabin to their beds, and were no more heard of this day ...*

(*A Voyage to Lisbon*, Henry Fielding, 1755)

# Not all plain sailing

## John Madden

This was to be the two sisters trip. One sister has a holiday home near St Malo in Brittany, the other lives in Youghal, County Cork. It was to be, as footballer chappies are wont to say, a game of two halves. The first half had its genesis last July when the elderly skipper celebrated his sixtieth with a surprise party planned by his wife, the First Sea Lord. At the party was my best man. Slightly younger than my young self, Brian was planning an extravaganza to celebrate his own sixtieth; the venue was to be the Hightown Sailing Club, situated a couple of miles south of Formby point on the estuary of the Mersey River. I had grown up in Liverpool as a contemporary of the Beatles and had almost met them once. I have not lived in Liverpool since 1964 and had always had a hankering to sail up the river Mersey; this was my opportunity. So planning commenced in the dark days of winter.

### The cruise:

#### Part One – Fahan to Liverpool

A crack crew was assembled: 'The Admiral', Myself, 'The First Sea Lord' (aka my lady wife), 'The Rear Admiral,' one Frankie Gallagher and the Admiral's two daughters, Jennifer and Jane. The First Sea Lord has been around Malin Head far too often, Ireland's Cape Horn is not a place she wants to revisit, and so we men planned to leave our marina in Fahan, Lough Swilly, County Donegal on Saturday June 2nd to sail the fifty miles or so to Portrush in County Antrim, where we would reprovision and pick up the ladies, one of whom was flying in from the UK and head off in brilliant sunshine with a following force five. Man proposes, God disposes. We arrived on *Bagheera* on the Saturday as planned. Much work had been done over the winter to ensure that all her systems were in perfect working order. *Bagheera* is a 1990 Jeanneau Suncharm, initially owned by a Cathay Pacific 747 pilot based in Hong Kong, its sail number is KH 7125 (Kong Hong??). He was transferred to the UK, brought the boat back in a box and berthed her in St Helier until



Down-wind in the English Channel.

I bought it from him in 2002. Thoughtful of impending mortality, I am making the best of her, despite still having to work, and we try and get away for two or three weeks every year.

The tides were right to sweep us out of the Swilly at about 10.00 but the forecast was for northeasterly gales. Jim, our Yachtmaster instructor of a few years previously, had tested our prudence with a series of three-day synoptic weather charts and had asked on what day would you set sail? "Never set sail with a gale warning" was the lesson that we learned from him. If you get one while you are out there, deal with it, but do not look for trouble. As pilots say, "Better to be down here wishing we were up there, than up there wishing we were down here!" So we repaired to the PPP. Had a fine meal, so my Mastercard informs me, and set off the following day, Sunday June 3rd, still with a fair tide. Lough Swilly is a dogleg, and passing Fort Dunree at the dog's knee, we were able to hoist the main. At the mouth of the Swilly, just less than two hours after departure, we got the jenny up. We arrived in Portrush after an uneventful nine-hour passage and tied up at the pontoon. Into the PPP, in these latitudes known as the Portrush Yacht Club, for food and well earned beverages. Friendly people and the pontoon had been deployed so no need for ladders.

### Ladies join us

The following morning the ladies joined us. Our next port of call was to be Portpatrick in Galloway; I had been there twice before but the last time was about twenty years ago on *Shenanigan*. Rathlin Sound was easy with both tide and wind with us, though visibility was poor and murky. We were only about five miles away from the coast of Galloway before we were able to see it. Two yachts were crossing in front of us from west to east, a frigate did a U-turn around them heading towards Galloway, before turning north to the east of us. As it passed we saw that it was one of ours, flying the tricolour with P52 emblazoned on its hull, they gave us a wave from the bridge and we replied in kind. Sadly our ensign is undippable and our profound apologies for that slight to *LE Niamh*, later googled at home. We crept into Portpatrick at about 20.00 and hit the mud, had a second go with the same result. A local advised trying again but a little closer to the cliffs, but I demurred. It was low springs, so we gave up and anchored off the entrance and treated ourselves to a very fine Portpatrick Stew, accompanied by a fine Chilean or two. I stood anchor watch and watched the lights slowly dim over the hedonistic delights of that fine Scottish port.

So near and yet so far! I set the alarm for 04.00, but woke at 03.00, roused the crew and then gave them an extra hour in bed. Anchor aweigh at 04.00, both sails up and some bouncy seas past The Mull, as dawn broke and the sun began to warm our backs.



The inner harbour, Douglas, Isle of Man.

## Isle of Man

Our destination was Douglas on the Isle of Man. Any time we had sailed to the Isle of Man before, we had gone into Peel or Port St Mary. This time we were going to try the inner harbour in Douglas. We had been warned that it might be busy as it was the 100th anniversary of the TT races and every bed on the island was booked. People were commuting daily from Liverpool for the races. We sailed around the northernmost part of the island, Point of Ayre, where it was quite windy and lumpy. Apparently it is often like this, as the wind comes down from the slopes of Snaefell.

We then made a diversion to the east before turning in towards Douglas. As we motored in, the engine stopped, although we should have used no more than half a tank. It started again when we topped it up, and we thought no more about it. In to Douglas with no incidents, and a very pleasant couple of days with friends who live there. A fine fireworks display and the Red Arrows were laid on for our benefit.

On Thursday afternoon, we left Douglas bound for Liverpool; I was raised in Liverpool and as previously stated had always wanted to sail up the Mersey. We made a much quicker crossing than planned and arrived at the mouth of the Mersey at about 03.30. We anchored until dawn, and then realised we could not get into the marina till the afternoon. One daughter had to get off to go to Scotland, so we pulled alongside the pilot boat at the Pier Head and she scrambled ashore. The rest of us spent the day snoozing until the tide rose, and then we got in. The people who run Liverpool Marina are both efficient and friendly and I would be happy to recommend it to anybody. We spent two days in Liverpool visiting friends, and flew back to Ireland on Sunday.

## The cruise:

### Part Two – Liverpool to St. Malo and back

*The crew:* The Admiral, The Rear, The Vice (Norman Fullam), Mickey Morrison, John McNulty, Paddy Corr, Pat Heaney and John Amor.

Four weeks later we returned. A couple of the boys had arrived early to stock up and check the lie of the land. We met them on an auspicious day – it was to be the last day when honest citizens could legally smoke in a British bar and it was also the day of the attempted bombing of Glasgow airport. Norman was lucky to arrive on the last Dublin to Liverpool flight, at about 17.30 before the airport was closed for security reasons. A few drinks and smokes in Liverpool Marina's fine bar, and then off to the Philly for dinner. The Philharmonic is a famous student

bar in central Liverpool. We had a decent dinner and a couple of nightcaps before repairing back to the boat for intensive planning.

Sunday July 1st, came the dawn! We stocked up with diesel and were at the first lockout at 10.30. There was a local race and there was a bit of banter between us in the lock. Our plan was to get to Anglesey in the late evening, and then fight the tide around its west coast before punching down Cardigan Bay southwards. Our neighbour in the lock, obviously a chap with local knowledge, suggested that we go into the Menai Straits as far as the bridge, tie up at a pub under same and wait for the southwest tide to fill. So that is what we did. A lovely sail out of Liverpool, taking care to give huge incoming ships plenty of leeway as they were tugged in. We followed the channel carefully, passing the shores of my childhood. These shores have changed and there is now a huge wind farm off the Wirral.

We sailed alongside the north coast of Wales in reasonable sunshine and a favourable wind, and as the evening drew in, altered to the southwest to enter the Menai Straits. An interesting place, quite a tide at the entrance with sandbanks to port. Choppy and narrow, with dusk approaching, but with the tide with us we made good speed. Past a lovely old Victorian pier which must have been a quarter of a mile long, up to the famous bridges and there on the western bank is the pub with a pontoon. On the pontoon was a yacht, *Always Smiling*, and also a marine research vessel from the University of Wales.

They were leaving so we waited for them to go and then tied up to *Always Smiling*. Its skipper was its ex-owner, a chap called Ian from Bangor in Northern Ireland, who was sailing it for its new owner. He was also the cox of the local lifeboat. He had left the lock in Liverpool behind us but had obviously beat us to Menai. He had done it by sailing through the wind farm. Must think of that the next time. The forecast at this stage was for a southwesterly 5-7. Ian came on-board for an Irish whiskey



Forestay unravelling; St. Malo.

and also to proffer some valuable advice. At the southwestern exit from the straits lie a lot of sandbanks, which shift a lot from year to year. Ian had corrected Admiralty charts, which showed shifts in these banks of several hundred yards. He advised that this passage would be dangerous in anything above a force 4 even if we had the corrected information on our GPS, which we did not. As we would have been approaching these hazards before dawn, we took the sensible option and reversed our course.

## Holyhead

Narrowly missing a large unlit mooring buoy, we popped back out of the Straits and sailed around Anglesey by night arriving in Holyhead at about 10.00. There is a fine concrete marina there and we berthed behind a large sail training ship, *Manchester Spirit*, on which was serving Mickey's young son, Cathal. Mickey and he had a chat while the Rear Admiral and I sought refreshment. Into a pub; the place was empty but mine hostess was there behind the bar berating some poor chap on the phone for an absence of manners. A few minutes listening to this, then two quick pints and away again.

A grey overcast day with a forecast of south to southwest 6-7. A slog under main and engine into an increasing wind, more or less on the nose. Across the Bristol channel where we had lost three members of our club many years ago as they sailed south to join the Fastnet race, and eventually around Land's End towards midnight in fairly ferocious conditions. Norman handed over the watch to me at midnight. We were inside the TSZ about half a mile off the coast; we could see the occasional shore light and also the Wolf Rock ahead. The weather was bad with lumpy seas and a strong wind from the west-southwest. He suggested before retiring that retreating to Dale in Milford Haven would be the thing to do if there was no improvement. However we stuck it out, and eventually got both sails up and a course laid to St Malo with a following gale.

## Full speed ahead

*Bagheera* enjoys these conditions and all day we flew down The Channel making excellent speed, arriving off St Malo at just before midnight. The thought of warm bars and cold beers had the crew in increasingly excited form. I contacted the marina on a mobile and asked for permission to come in, as the tide was right. The chap on the other end of the phone did not have great English and to be fair, my French is pauvre to say the least. Anyway he was quite clear that we could not come in darkness because of 'Sécurité'. Whether this was to do with events in Glasgow or general nocturnal manoeuvring was unclear.

Anyway, we thought we might go for it anyway. The entrance to St Malo is a rock festooned channel. We thought it safer to go up under engine, so turned it on then dropped the main and jenny, at which stage the engine decided to stop. There was shipping about, so those on deck got sails up asap and sailed out to sea. At this point the electrics failed, leaving us with no GPS, radio, lights or instruments. The GPS was down but I had a fair recollection as to where we had come from, and we sailed in that direction, away from the channel. A passing ship turned a search-light on us as we sailed out to safety. The engineer reckoned that our starter motor might be the problem, and that when it cooled down we might be able to start the engine again. He thought that this would take about thirty minutes, and encouraged the cooling process by banging it with a winch handle. Luckily for us, in thirty minutes the engine restarted and the power came back and we motored down the channel, past Le Grand Jardin and up to the harbour entrance. The marina at this stage of the tide was completely

inaccessible but at about 03.00 local we tied onto a waiting-buoy and over a well-deserved nightcap tried to analyse what had gone wrong. Analysis over night caps is not often fruitful, so a short sleep was had, and we eventually entered the marina at about 08.00 and tied up alongside the pontoon. From there to the local café where we were met by relieved sister who had expected us some twelve hours earlier.

By now it was Thursday. We were due back at base in Donegal on the following Sunday week but obviously we had some problems to be attended to before we could go anywhere.

The first problem was why had the engine cut out when the diesel tank was half full? Was it anything to do with what happened approaching Douglas a month or so previously? The marina at 'Les Sablons' has excellent engineers. One came to the boat.

## Pump failure

A conversation in fractured 'franglais' for a few minutes and he diagnosed the problem, a failed lift pump. Apparently the lift pump does little until the diesel level in the tank drops a bit, more or less by gravity, and then comes into its own, or not in our case. This is what had happened at the Isle of Man a month earlier, a clue which we had ignored to our possible cost, and this is what happened the night before. A new lift pump was fitted. However this did not explain our electrical problem. We should have had plenty of power even though the engine had failed, so there had to be a battery problem. Examination of the main battery revealed that it was dry. *Bagheera* is an old boat, 1990, and we did not know if the batteries were of similar vintage. Possibly leaving it on charge from the mains at Liverpool for three weeks was to blame! A new battery was purchased which seemed to solve all of the electrical problems. Except one, the all round white masthead light refused to light. The bulb in this had been replaced in Fahan before leaving in June and had been fine then. Mickey went up the mast to replace it and it is as well he did, for when he got up there he found that the forestay was unravelling. This had been replaced in 2004 before a trip to the south so was reasonably new. New or not, we needed a new one. The riggers said that they could give us a 7mm forestay today, or if we waited till the Monday a 9mm one. We opted for the Monday. True to their word they arrived with it on Monday, but on that Monday the wind was gusting to 40 knots in 'Les Sablons'. We could get the top of the stay attached, just, but the wind bent it so much that we could not get the deck end fitted. On Tuesday it was still quite windy but not as bad. We motored to a more sheltered part of the marina and finally got everything together at about 17.00.

The forecast was not brilliant but we had now been in St Malo from Thursday till Tuesday. Time to go. Farewell to sister and brother-in-law, and at 19.50 we motored out into the channel. A lot easier than our entrance had been. We had also said goodbye to Pat, who was staying on in France with his wife who had flown out to join him, so we were a somewhat depleted crew. Depleted but reasonably on song. As darkness fell, we were not, as we had feared, beating into the gale that had kindly delivered us here. The wind was from the south and we had a nice reach through the night and the following day. Land's End was passed, once more, inside the TSZ but this time the visibility was kinder, and we had a vague vision of Cornish nightlife. Got the weather from local radio and the forecast was not kindly, northwest 9-10. Older sister in Youghal was contacted by phone and advised against major trip to supermarket. Wine and whiskey plus some food for six cancelled. This was now Thursday and some of us had to be at work on Monday, me especially.

We now had a bad forecast and I had to take into account plan B. That was to leave the boat in Howth or Dun Laoghaire

and get a bus home on Sunday for work on Monday. Didn't like the idea of a bus and didn't like the idea of having to come back in a week or two to collect her. The chaps were great. Most of them retired in their mid-forties, made fat on the obscene profits of the banks that used to employ them. They would take the boat home, even if I had to get off in Dublin to meet my busy nemesis.

A fishing boat went down off St David's Head as we travelled north. No casualties but the boat's nets were a danger to shipping and the sea was well lit as the tidying-up operation carried on. Ports of refuge were charted as we waited for worse weather. "The Seacat is cancelled," we heard on the radio, due to forthcoming gales. Worse weather, despite RTE and the BBC, turned into better weather as we altered northwest to Howth.

Worries about fuel evaporated as we had a fast reach arriving at 14.30 on the Friday.

### Cunning plan!

Planning is all and a careful study of the tides ensued. We wanted to get home by Sunday but we did not want to spend most of the weekend looking at Fair Head. Two possibilities popped out of the calculations: either late that night or at precisely 09.00 in the morning. Tomorrow was the obvious

choice. It always is. A fine dinner in Howth Yacht Club followed while refinements were made to the cunning plan.

Came the dawn. At 08.00 serried ranks of alarms woke us. Sausage, bacon and eggs followed by a sprightly exit betwixt the piers at 08.55. This exit time was calculated to get us to Mew Island exactly one hour before the ebb. Nothing to report on the way up. A little squally north of St John's Point, and then across Belfast Lough in complete darkness with a decent moon and an aircraft doing circuits and bumps. A lovely, oily, moony night. Through Rathlin as dawn broke and another fine fry with Buck's Fizz in a flat calm: bright blue waters and a golden dawn.

Turned, reluctantly, into The Swilly. Up to Rathmullan and into the PPP, waiting for the tide. No more excuses after 15.00 and across to the marina at Fahan.

Work the next day. Hopefully, we will make Youghal next year.

### In summary

*Bagheera* left Fahan marina in Lough Swilly on Sunday 3rd June and arrived in Liverpool on Friday the 8th.

We left Liverpool on Sunday, 1st July and arrived in St Malo on Thursday the 5th.

We departed St Malo on Monday the 9th and returned to Fahan on Sunday 15th of July.

## Joining the three-score years and ten club



Alex Boothe, Sandy Taggart, Bill McKeane, Jennifer Guinness join the three-score years and ten club.

# “Smelling the Roses”... a leisurely sail Lough Swilly to Ayamonte and beyond

Andy McCarter



## THE FINGAL CUP

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

I decided on Monday 14th May to retire for the third (and probably final) time. A week later we collected *Gwili 3* from winter storage in Ardrossan, and somewhere between the Mull of Kintyre and Rathlin Island, in the chilly drizzle, we made the decision to go south! After that it was a matter of a few weeks to make some preparations and take care of various family commitments, so that we could depart Fahan in early July with the ultimate destination of La Gomera in the Canary Islands. The trip was to be in two main parts. Firstly Swilly to Seville for which we allowed nine weeks. Then a month's break back in Ireland followed by the second leg, which we hope will take us from Seville to La Gomera and possibly further, which, with luck you will read about in ICC annual 2008!

Hardened sailors could have completed our first leg in nine days but for us even nine weeks was not enough, and we didn't actually succeed in making it to Seville. We dallied here and we dallied there, and eventually on 4th September we terminated



*Gwili 3* tied up at Royal Club Nautico in Vigo.

leg one in Ayamonte, Spain, just over the border from Portugal, and went by bus to Seville in order to meet our flight dead-lines.

We took three weeks alone to go from Swilly to Dingle, which was our chosen point of departure for La Coruna in Spain, to give us the westernmost advantage in Europe to cross the Celtic Sea, mostly outside Biscay. Even though Irish weather got bad press this year, it was not the cause of our lengthy sojourn down the west coast. (We actually spent only one day stormbound in Burtonport). No! The reason was a change of attitude on my part which Paddy has been advocating for several years. She calls it “smelling the roses”, and broadly it means taking your time to appreciate some of the wonderful sights, scenery, wildlife, flora and fauna that sailing opens up to its fortunate practitioners. I'm now almost a total convert and enjoying every minute with my only regret that I didn't listen to her years ago.

So what did we get up to on our first leg? For the first time in our



Aveiro, the Venice of Portugal.



Paddy and Aideen searching for Granuaile on Clare Island.

cruising history we kept a blog which entailed uploading information and photographs every few days to a website, which family and friends could log into and view, to keep in touch with where we were at and what we were doing. The blog comprised over 14,000 words so required substantial editing and censorship to transform it into suitable reading for fellow ICC members, although this was substantially achieved by removing most of the references to eating and drinking of which, on reflection we seemed to do a lot!

### Wet and miserable

When we pulled out of Fahan Marina on the morning of 5th July the weather was wet and miserable (no surprise there), but the forecast was to improve and the wind was from the south giving us reasonable sailing to our first port of call, Tory Island some 35 nautical miles to the west, where we planned to attend the "International Maritime Film Festival". On board were myself, Paddy, and Tom Gallagher, who had been our companion on a previous very memorable cruise through the Hebrides to St Kilda in 2002. Even though Tory is considerably closer, Tom had never set foot on it let alone attend a film festival there so his anticipation was palpable. Tory has changed immeasurably in the last five years with the completion of a safe harbour (compliments of the EU taxpayer), which in turn allowed the establishment of a year-round regular ferry service to the mainland and a full-service hotel. In the summer months one now finds significant numbers of tourists who come to walk the cliffs, to watch the numerous species of seabirds, to listen to the corncrakes, to admire the Derek Hill-inspired Tory school of primitive painting (where anything goes and even I could aspire to

becoming an artist!), or just to enjoy the music and the craic in the hotel and a Club. It's also the only place in Ireland, or possibly the world, where every visitor will be greeted on arrival by a real live monarch. His highness, King Patsy Dan duly met us as we tied up outside the only other yacht in the harbour. They were from Shetlands and had come "south" looking for better weather. God help them! Nice people though and very generous with invitations to call on them if we ever came to the Shetlands, which given our present frame of mind and direction is highly unlikely. The King duly invited us to the official opening of the film festival at 18.00 that evening, to be followed by drinks and buffet in the community hall. Regrettably none of us are native

speakers (one of the problems of a northern education) and so we sat through 15 speeches politely nodding and clapping at appropriate places. We thought we spotted several celebrities, including Tom Cruise and Pamela Anderson, but couldn't be 100% sure as they were probably heavily disguised.

### "Man of Aran"

I have to say the organisation of the film festival was impressive, with island-related films from all over the world, including Ireland, British Isles, France, Japan and the Pacific. We elected to go and see "Man of Aran", the 1934 Hollywood classic, and therefore in a sort of English. Director Robert Flaherty recreates his romantic view of life for Inishman fishermen in the early 1900s and given that the film was made when it was, and special effects were in their infancy, he managed to convey the sheer power and ferocity of western storms very convincingly. The film deals with hunting basking sharks, which apparently never happened in the Aran Islands but was actually practised widely by the Achill Islanders. No



Sean and Sofia relaxing in Laxe.

amount of money or strong drink was able to persuade Inishmanners to recreate the shark hunting scenes for the movie, and ultimately the director had to send for a team of Achill men!

We spent two very pleasant days and nights on Tory, watching films and bird watching (not Pamela Anderson), before setting sail on our first little bit of "south" about 15 miles to Gola. As we untied we heard a mighty splash in the middle of the small harbour and turned to see a dolphin jumping clear of the water. This was matched by another splash as a black Labrador launched himself from the pier wall and proceeded to swim after the dolphin. I heard later that this has been a regular occurrence over several months, and that on occasions the owner of the Labrador has had to put to sea to retrieve the dog. When I see what Fungi has done over the years for the economy of Dingle, I can only think that this could be a goldmine for Tory in the years to come!

My first time on Gola, and very enjoyable it was, with sun shining and warm balmy weather, an augur of things to come. Fabulous views of Errigal as we walked across the island, counting numerous skylarks and two corncrakes. Not many people, although most of the houses showed signs of recent renovation – for summer homes I understand.

Next stop was Gortnasate pier outside Kincashla. There is water deep enough at this pier to take super-trawlers but on this occasion we were on our own and were able to admire the view of Daniel O'Donnell's luxury pad across Cruit bay, recently sold to an Irish Psychic for €3.2 million. We had arranged to meet Paddy's daughter Niamh and grandson Cian here, so they could come with us next day through Owey Sound and inside Aranmore to Burtonport, as a kind of final send off since we wouldn't see them again for several weeks. Tom also left that evening, returning to Derry with Niamh and Cian, and Paddy and I found ourselves on our own for about 15 minutes until cousin Wendy and family arrived from Portnoo to start another round of send-offs on our epic journey.

## Stormbound

Next day was the only one in the entire trip that we found ourselves stormbound. westerly force 8-9 and raining heavily kept us in bed until the afternoon, and even then we didn't go any further than the pub at the top of the pier. As we call it: 'a day for the high stools rather than the high seas'. It blew through quickly, and the following day in the early afternoon with sun shining once again, we took the flood tide through the sound of Aran to Crohy Head, round by Slieve League and into Teeling harbour to rest up before tackling the 65 miles across Donegal Bay early the following morning.

The day started off in pleasant conditions but by the time we reached Broadhaven, at the northernmost end of the Mullet peninsula, it was blowy and wet and we were very glad to find Mayo County Council still have well-maintained visitor moorings around their part of the coast. County Donegal used to have visitor moorings, but in their wisdom failed to budget for maintenance, and subsequently had them sunk or removed to avoid risk!

More sunshine next day, and we sailed round and into Rossmoney outside Westport, where we had arranged to pick up Paddy's sisters Maeve and Aileen for a weekend cruising the islands of Inishturk, Inishboffin and Clare. All three islands have had substantial work done or being done to their harbours, since we last visited. Could it be that the Celtic Tiger has finally reached the far west? We anchored off Inishturk the first night and made our way ashore, climbing the half mile to the pub with possibly the most spectacular view in Ireland. Good craic but bad Guinness! Northeasterly winds made our anchorage a little uncomfortable and consequently we decided against

remaining for the Inishturk annual regatta, and made instead for the relative shelter of Inishboffin. Cromwell's fort overlooking the harbour once struck fear and terror into the hearts of Irishmen and women for miles around, and is probably the reason that today, some 400 years later, none of these islands are Irish speaking.

Maeve unfortunately had to return for work, so after dropping her back to Westport, we concluded our mini cruise with a visit to Clare where we spent the morning looking for Granuaile's grave. We found her fort which had been turned into a police station in 1826, and even today looks in reasonable shape. The Abbey is worth the few miles walk to see frescoes dating back to God knows when, and apparently the like are to be found nowhere else in Ireland.

## Date in Clifden

We had a date in Clifden to meet with Gerry McCormack, an old friend of Paddy and Aileen from childhood days in Derry. Gerry now runs a very successful business called Connemara Safari which organise walking tours round Connemara, including the Islands. We anchored off the Lifeboat station and met Gerry ashore in the Yacht Club bar, where after a few pints we persuaded him to come back out to the boat with us for dinner. He ended up staying the night, which seemed the safest course, and I ran him ashore at the crack of dawn next morning, to resume his safari with a group of German hillwalkers.

Kilronan in the Aran Islands was our next stop, to let Aileen off to catch a ferry and bus back home, leaving Paddy and me once more on our own. The wind was light and from the east so we took the opportunity to motor across under the Cliffs of Moher and into Liscannor, which under normal conditions is untenable for yachts (not for nothing do surfers from all over the world flock to this particular spot). On this occasion it was benign, and we went ashore to view two churches at Lahinch and Enistymon, which were designed back in the 50s by Paddy's father who was at that time in partnership with Liam McCormick. We were not overly impressed. They were functional and basic, and one has to keep in mind these churches were built to a budget at a time when there was not a whole lot of money about. Corr and McCormick's round church of St Aengus at Burt, just below where we ourselves live and built some 10 years later, went on to win several awards and to be acclaimed building of the century by the Institute of Irish Architects.

A brief sojourn in Kilrush marina before crossing the Shannon and sailing through the Blaskets, completed three weeks of "rose-smelling" down the west coast of Ireland, and we found ourselves safely in Dingle marina awaiting arrival of my son, Sean, with his beautiful and charming Swedish girlfriend Sofia, before setting out on our passage to La Coruña.

We ended up waiting five days in Dingle until we had a favourable weather forecast for the 530 mile trip to Spain, and finally set off at the crack of noon in brilliant sunshine and a force 4 from the west. Longer term, the meteorological prognosis was good with some easterly but mostly west-southwesterly force 5 occasionally 6. We opted for a 4-hourly watch system with Sean and Sofia volunteering to do midnight to 04.00 (the graveyard shift) and we proceeded, under full main and number 1 genoa, to put the miles between us and Ireland.

## Fin whales

By mid-afternoon next day we had covered almost 140 miles, and the wind was blowing a good force 6 from the southwest which made me very glad we had chosen Dingle as our starting point, so that in the gusts we were able to run a little in front of

the wind without wandering too far off our course. That day we saw a yacht in the distance coming in the opposite direction. We passed within a few hundred metres and they hailed us on the VHF. Strange to hear another northern accent out there in the middle of nowhere but they told us they were the yacht *Granuaile* out of Strangford and Bangor; they had been away for thirteen months having sailed to the Canaries, crossed the Atlantic; had left the Azores a week before, and were now heading for Kinvara to meet up with some friends they had met in La Gomera. It turned out that the friends included Sean McDonagh, a friend of ours from Lough Swilly. We told them if they had any sense they would turn around and go back, and I'll bet by now they wish they had taken our advice. Shortly after this we heard a watery blow quite close by, and saw our first whale, black with fin very far back and about twice the size of *Gwili 3*. It was a magnificent sight cruising majestically across the bow about 30 metres in front of us. After that we saw several more including a group of two adults and a calf, but fortunately none of them took more than a passing interest in us and just kept gliding by at their own leisurely pace.

We were making good speed as the winds remained strong, but the swell made it uncomfortable down below, and it was difficult to prepare food beyond the odd sandwich or pot noodle. On the third day, in keeping with the forecast, the wind swung right round to the east but was still a good force 5-6 and we were able to run out to the west of our course line, so that when the wind returned to the southwest we had a bit of leeway in hand to make La Coruna. And swing it did on the last day, back round to the southwest and then blew up to gale force 8 which was not in the forecast! We reefed the main right down and put several turns on the furling genoa but still managed to keep moving at 8+ knots. It was exhilarating sailing but it also rained heavily which soaked everybody and everything.

### **Navigating across Biscay by TomTom**

Sometime during the day our GPS packed up. We had a spare hand-held Garmin but it's old, takes forever to pick up satellites and eats batteries. I also had a TomTom, and found that it was vastly superior, allowing us to get almost instant fixes which we then plotted on the chart to keep track of our progress and position. Are we the first yacht to navigate across Biscay by TomTom I wonder?

Forty miles from La Coruna at 03.00 we had no GPS, it was blowing stink, horizontal rain and pitch dark, and just when I thought "it can't get any worse," we ran into a forest of lights. Maybe thirty or forty large trawlers apparently fishing in pairs and we were in the middle of them. Thankfully Sean, a recent graduate of yachtmaster school, was able instantly to interpret the lights and pick a safe course through the fleet without fouling any gear, and two hours later the rain stopped, the sky cleared, and the most beautiful full moon I have ever seen appeared, to help shepherd us safely towards the Spanish coast. By 08.00 the sky was blue the sun was shining and we were at the entrance to Darsena Deportiva marina. The trials and tribulations of the previous 24 hours were quickly forgotten, as we hauled up all our gear to dry out in the warm sunshine and tucked into good old bacon and eggs washed down with a few beers, before collapsing in our bunks for a well-earned nap.

We recharged our batteries in La Coruna for four days, during which time I got the GPS repaired, found a sailmaker to fix a tear in the genoa and restocked *Gwili 3* from the nearby Carrefour. This was a major shock to me since everything was half the price we pay in Ireland! When I paid the bill I couldn't believe it and thought a mistake had been made but this was to be our experience all the way down the coast of Spain and Portugal, and it just brought home to us how damned expensive the cost of living has become in Ireland. I also decided to mail-

order a JRC radar from the UK, given our experience with the trawlers and the reputation which this coast has for fog. This was subsequently delivered to the sailmaker, and we planned to drive up from Vigo a few days later to pick up it and the mended sail, as well as taking in a short tour of Santiago de Compostela (all made possible by our trusty TomTom).

Before leaving La Coruña we saw two other Irish boats. *Northabout*, on this occasion skippered by Rory Casey en route to the Canaries in preparation for an Atlantic crossing, and *Island Life* with our very own ICC Commodore, Cormac McHenry on solo passage from France to Rota, where he plans to keep the boat over this winter. We were to meet up with Cormac a couple more times as we journeyed south and were grateful for his advice and craic, which included discovering a mutual interest in Irish ladies underwear in the distant past, when he worked for Glen Abbey and I with W.P. McCarter. In the 70s between us we covered the asses of Ireland's masses!

### **Galicia**

The coast of Galicia is gorgeous and we promised ourselves to come back for more extended and detailed cruising in the future. It's like Donegal but with sunshine! We made our way gently round the coast, stopping at Corme and Laxe, before continuing on to Camarinas. Here unfortunately we lost Sean, who got a call from friends in Palma looking for delivery crew for *Patches*, Eamon Conneely's racing machine, which needed to be transported from Palma to Portomaio for a forthcoming regatta. Sofia opted to stay on with us for a few days, and join up again with Sean later in Portugal. We stayed a couple of days in Camarinas which has a nice little marina with all facilities and close proximity to town, with plenty of shops, bars and restaurants that every cruising man needs occasionally to sustain life. Then frankly each little place was nicer than the last. Muros, Portosin, San Vicente, and then into the city of Vigo where we found a berth at the Royal Club Nautico a superb location with fabulous facilities, right in the city centre.

Sadly we said goodbye to Sofia as she headed off by train and bus to meet up with Sean in Lisbon, but we hoped to have the pleasure of their company again in October for our passage to Madeira and La Gomera. Meanwhile we busied ourselves with exploring Vigo in-between bouts of boat cleaning and fixing minor problems. We rented a car and had TomTom take us to the sailmaker in La Coruna where we picked up our genoa, a new bimini cover, and collected our new JRC radar which had been sent out by mail-order from UK. We toured back through Santiago de Compostela and visited the cathedral of St James, which was not designed by Corr & McCormick, but impressive nevertheless. Each year almost 100,000 pilgrims make the famous Camino walk through France and Spain to visit this place, and we felt in our own small way that we had made similar sacrifices by coming all the way from Lough Swilly by boat and car! Back in Vigo we installed the radar, using a garden rake strapped securely to the pushpit, to mount the randome. Crude but effective, and will have to do until we can get a proper stainless steel post made up in La Gomera.

After delaying our departure to celebrate the Feast of the Assumption with the citizens of Vigo we reluctantly pulled out and headed round the coast to Bayonne, where we found the town marina full, but had no problem getting a berth in the Club Nautico facilities, which although not quite matching the grandeur of RCN Vigo were still excellent. We had a drink on board *Island Life* with Cormac and Barbara who were heading off the next day to Samarkand; they were pleased to know that not only did I know this was in Uzbekistan, but also had been there on business several times.

The following morning was glorious but with little wind as we motored out in the direction of Portugal. However by



The skipper chilling out on the Guadiana River.

lunchtime the wind was up to 20 knots on our tail and by the time we reached Povoia de Varzim it was gusting 35 knots. This was to be the pattern all the way down the Portuguese coast, and actually made for very pleasant sailing, although in the afternoon northerly winds, it was really quite cold despite the ubiquitous sunshine. Entry into Portugal was painless despite all the stuff we had read in the pilot books and heard from other travellers. A complete absence of officials marked our entire time in Portugal, and the only paperwork we had were marina registration forms when we opted to go into harbour. It would appear that in the last few years the Portuguese authorities have come to accept that they are now in the EU, and that the right of freedom to travel is something to be encouraged after all! It was tempting to stay a few extra days in Povoia (marina charge €13 high season), and take the metro into Porto, but we were starting to feel slightly under pressure as we had flights booked back to Dublin from Seville, and we had barely reached Portugal with only another three weeks to go. So a decision was taken to press on and spend a few days in Lisbon instead.

We continued south via Leixos before entering the lagoon at Aveiro. We followed the pilot directions all the way up the Canal Principal to the AVELA (Associação Aveirense de Vela de Cruzeiro) pontoon where we tied up outside a local boat. This is a fascinating area of salt marshes very low-lying with a veritable maze of canals and waterways. From our berth at the pontoon we were only a ten minute walk from the town of Aveiro itself, which is known as the "Venice of Portugal". It is a bit like a miniature Venice but not as smelly, quite beautiful and very colourful, with several canals, bridges and even gondolas.

Figura da Foz ate up a few more days, as we waited for a forecast northerly gale to pass through. It was a pleasant little seaside town with a great food

market on the shorefront. We passed some of the time going by bus and train, for a very small number of euros, to Fatima (which had been a long-time ambition of Paddy's since she read the story as a child, but in terms of church architecture it leaves a lot to be desired!) and Coimbra which used to be the capital of Portugal and is home to one of the oldest (and highest) universities in Europe.

## Cascais

As soon as the forecast eased we headed for Lisbon, stopping only to anchor overnight off Peniche, and took Cormac McHenry's advice to stay in the excellent marina at Cascais which is well-connected by train to the city and saved us the day's sailing time

needed for going in and then having to come back out. Cascais in itself is worth a visit, with a very pleasant development of restaurants, bars and shops around the marina, and a very convenient overhead walkway into the old town. The train into the centre of Lisbon runs every 30 minutes and costs €3 return which is very good value, and allowed us to spend a day enjoying the city sights.

Becoming increasingly conscious of time pressure to get to Seville by September 5 we had to compromise on "smelling the roses" and departed Cascais after just a short whiff of Lisbon to sail the 120 miles to Lagos in the Algarve, with only a brief overnight stop to anchor off Sines, the last harbour before rounding Cabo St Vincent.

Finally, as we turned the corner the strong northerly Portuguese trades eased, the swell settled and the temperature went up a good 10 degrees. In Lagos marina we refilled with water, fuel and provisions for the final leg of our trip east to Seville. The following day was windless and such a scorcher that we decided to motor over to the beautiful sandy beach off the entrance to Alvor lagoon, and go swimming and picnicking for the day. This was extremely pleasant but meant we shot our



Morning coffee on Isla da Chuteras.

deadline to get to Seville under sail, and instead we decided to make for Ayamonte on the Guadiana River and leave *Gwili 3* there, while we continued on by train and bus. With the new plan made, we headed the next day for the lagoon at Faro and with some difficulty made our way up the Olhao canal, only to find the marina totally full. So we had to find our way back down the narrow channel and anchor for the night off Isla da Culatra at Ponte Cais. It looked such a charming little place that we had to take the dinghy and go ashore, and what a contrast it proved to be from the massive tourist developments all along the Algarve. This was the Portuguese equivalent of Tory Island (even the inhabitants were equally unintelligible.) No roads, no cars, beautiful!

The Guadiana River marks the border between Portugal and Spain. On the Portuguese side, just inside the entrance, is Vila Real de San Antonio and a little further upstream on the opposite side is the Spanish town of Ayamonte. Both have good marinas and both are worth visiting. We opted to leave the boat in Ayamonte primarily because we could get a bus from there to Seville and it was less tidal than the marina in Vila Real. With our berthing arrangements completed, and a day to kill before departing for Ireland, we opted to do one final bit of exploration and took the flood tide up the Guadiana river, where we found the towns of Alcoutim (Portugal) and Sanlucar

(Spain). The passage is unmarked but reasonably straightforward with adequate clearance under the huge suspension bridge and adequate depth to be found on the outside of the river bends.

There are pontoons at both villages and a one-euro ferry ride will take you on the international crossing from Spain to Portugal! We tied up on the Alcoutim pontoon since there was more space there, and the following morning were awakened by the mariner to collect his €7.50 berthing fee and ask us to move before 11.00 since they were expecting "a cruise liner". We duly moved and then took the ferry across to Sanlucar to have a nosy round, and were just sitting down to morning coffee when the cruise liner appeared, dropped anchor in midstream and then fell back onto our earlier berth in Alcoutim, where they made fast the stern and a stream of tourists disembarked. This persuaded us that it was time to go, and bidding farewell to Alcoutim and Sanlucar we headed back down river to our berth in Ayamonte.

A few hours to tidy up and then our last inexpensive meal ashore, before an early night so that we could rise early and catch the bus to Seville, and from there by Ryanair to Dublin. Two months since we set off from Fahan but in truth it seemed like two weeks. I guess that's the nature of "smelling roses".

### Ed Wheeler writes of *Witchcraft of Howth* heading south

**W**itchcraft of Howth got a thorough facelift in the Brothers Smith's fine old boatyard at Whiterock, Co. Down in spring '07. This is the last

yard I know which still uses rail-trucks in the old-fashioned way, with a transverse track and dolly to shift the trucks between lines. This is extremely efficient, as much less space is needed than that required to move modern rubber-tired boat trailers around with tractors. Kenny and Maurice Smith keep alive traditional shipwrights' skills as well and are experts in restoring wooden yachts. When *Witchcraft* arrived, her engine was u/s, but Kenny made nothing of sailing her from the mooring onto the truck for hauling out, disdaining even the use of an outboard on the yard punt. Launching in June, we bounced across Strangford Bar and up to Donaghadee to have the second-hand Aries vane gear fitted by the local stainless steel fabricator, a process which took longer and cost more than any other job in the refit.

The plan was to sail the boat to Madeira and lay her up there until November, prior to heading farther south. Eventually all was more or less in hand and my sister Diana and I set out on 6th August with a fine northwesterly breeze. The Aries failed to perform and the reason only became apparent when its servo rudder fell off – I'd left out a rather important bolt. We retrieved the (floating) rudder but it was out of action for the voyage. Our soldier's wind lasted less than two days, followed by a nearly a week of contrary winds and unsettled weather. We were on the southern edge of a large weather system which brought gales and wet to home waters. Eventually, a cold front cleared through and after some torrential rain, the wind came round to north-northwest and blew hard, raising a big lump of a swell. For comfort, we took off the main and sailed under reduced genoa, boomed out; *Witchcraft* still managed 6-7 knots most of the time, surfing down waves at up to 10 knots.

Unfortunately, we had to hand-steer most of the time. This was owing to difficulties charging the battery: when running the engine in neutral, the big Brunton Autoprop deployed itself like a drogue, spinning slowly and reducing our speed

by up to 3 knots. This was imposing an unacceptable load on the shaft coupling, which I constantly imagined was going to come adrift, allowing the prop to slide out and foul the rudder. On the other hand, running the engine in gear and fast enough to charge the battery made the boat rather unmanageable. Hence we only used the Autohelm for short periods.

On Saturday 18th August, I said to Diana "Watch out for land from noon onwards; we should be in Porto Santo by about 16.00". No land appeared, nor did our mobile phones get a signal. I thought "It's time to check the waypoint" and sure enough I'd put in 15-something west instead of 16-something west. Oh bother, I said, and hardened sheets to a booming reach up across an extremely boisterous sea, finally making Porto Santo at 00.30 on Sunday. Diana was very good about it, saying that she was delighted that I found my mistake before it was dead to windward. In Porto Santo, we dined on board an ex-ICC boat, *Safari of Howth*, a Halberg Rassy 42 which used to belong to Ian Morrison and is now the home of a Howth couple, Ken and Carmel Kavanagh, on their leisurely way to the ARC. We hauled out at the yard in Porto Santo and there she lies, awaiting the next leg.



*Witchcraft* crossing the Bar out of Strangford Lough.

# "A Beer Drinker's Guide To The Atlantic Circuit"

Seamus Salmon

## Europe

After years of dreaming, months of planning and weeks of provisioning, we were finally ready! Yacht *Sairse* (a Beneteau First 375) departed Westport on Tuesday 7th Sept 2004 in a glorious, sunny northwesterly breeze. Aboard, were myself, Mick Corrigan from Enniscrone and Robbie Baird from Westport. We arrived into Dingle Marina next morning where we set about installing the Cape Horn Self-Steering gear that had arrived a few days before.

By Friday evening, we were ready and motored west, hoping to outrun the impending gales forecast for the weekend. By Saturday morning, with 50 knot gusts blowing over the bows, we decided to seek refuge and diverted to Crookhaven, where we were to spend the next four nights sheltering from the gales that raged all along Ireland's coasts.

We finally left Ireland's shores on Wednesday 15th Sept. The day started out calm, but within 3 hours, the wind had risen to 20 knots south-southwest. It increased later to 30 knots and, for the next 3 days, it rose at times to 40+ knots, blowing us 80 miles off course to the east, prompting Michael to invent an acronym for Biscay – "Big Incessant Seas Comin' At You"!

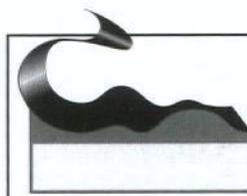
Finally, it veered to the northwest and allowed us to steer a proper course. The Biscay crossing itself was uneventful apart from thousands of dolphins and the occasional ship or fishing boat, until we were about 80 miles from Spain (Saturday evening). The traffic then increased, until at one stage, we could see 12 ships, 8 coming at us, and 4 passing us! Almost like someone turning off a switch, at 06.00 Sunday morning, the shipping disappeared.

We made land fall in La Coruña, northwest Spain on Sunday afternoon 19th September. Good going in 4.5 days. Over the next 3 days, we relaxed, slept and recharged the batteries! Oh, and discovered places where you can still buy a pint for €1.25. Being good value, we had our fill! Wednesday morning, 22nd September saw us moving west and then south round Cape Finisterre. With a fresh northerly breeze we averaged 7.5 knots all day, and were amused by a solitary dolphin who repeatedly jumped 12 feet into the air in an incredible display of acrobatics!

We made landfall that night in a sleepy, but friendly town called Portosin in Ria De Muros. Thursday 23rd, had us heading south again in a stunning day – flat seas, and running downwind in 25° of glorious sunshine. We arrived into a packed Vigo late on Thursday night, and left again on Friday morning, stopping for breakfast in Bayona.

Friday night had us in Portugal at Vianna de Castelo. The Portugese coastline is varied – in the north you get mile after mile of beautiful flat empty beaches, while in the south, it changes to mile after mile of cliffs.

After the laissez-faire attitude in Spain, Portugal seemed very formal, taking up to half an hour to process our documents in every port. Marina costs are mostly cheap varying from only €10 to €22 per night. We arrived in Oporto on Saturday evening, and spent much of the night looking in vain for an



## THE ATLANTIC TROPHY

FOR THE BEST OPEN SEA PASSAGE  
WITH PORT TO PORT AT LEAST  
1,000 MILES

Irish Pub that might be showing the All-Ireland the next day. We had to settle for an increasingly disappointing series of text messages, as Mayo eventually got hammered by Kerry!

David Baird (Commodore Mayo Sailing Club) joined us in Lisbon, for a week cruising south to the Algarve. By now the winds were almost non-existent and the temperature during the day reached 35°C. David thoughtfully brought us a present of a Scrabble board and many evenings were spent arguing over the correct spelling of words like arguing (anyone got a clue?)

Eating out was a treat, with good wine at €5-6 per bottle and steaks for as little as €8. We spent 4 lazy days in Lagos, lounging in sunshine and swimming off *Sairse*.

On Monday, 4th October, we left mainland Portugal and headed southwest for the 500 mile passage to the archipelago of Madeira.

## Christopher Columbus

Another gale on the nose slowed our journey from Portugal, but we finally arrived in Porto Santo (the smaller of the two inhabited Madeiran islands) on Friday 7th October. It's a delightful island with a golden 7-mile beach and laid-back people. Beer at only 50c for a small bottle quenched our thirst on Friday night, and we learned that Christopher Columbus had married the Governor's daughter there in the fifteenth century. Afraid that the same fate might befall my crew, we left early next morning for the 40 mile sail to spend Saturday night in Funchal, the capital of Madeira. Madeira is unbelievable – a volcanic mountain that towers out of the Atlantic with a maze-like warren of tunnels linking villages and towns. Dublin City Corporation could do worse than to bring their planners out here for a lesson on building an underground system! It also boasts the second highest sea cliffs in the world, although they don't look nearly as spectacular as those in Achill!

Apart from the natives, Madeira has become home to lots of retired English and Germans – the temperature rarely falls below 21 or exceeds 24 degrees. It is also, apparently, the newest "in place" for movie and pop stars, but luckily, nobody recognised us!

After 4 days it was time to head south again – destination Tenerife. Although the prevailing winds are northerly, you guessed it, we had southerlies on the nose for the entire 260 mile passage. Beating into the wind has become a way of life for us! I reminisce that only a few short months ago, even a trip to Inisbofin would entail planning for food etc. Now we wouldn't blink at a "mere" 250 mile voyage. Although Tenerife has many marinas, most of them are full with local yachts and we were lucky to find a berth in Santa Cruz, the capital. Robbie took a break from sailing to spend a week surfing with a friend in Lanzarote, and then went to a wedding at home. However we were joined by Claire, Ger and Christina, who had flown out from Ireland for a short break, and to take advantage of the tax-free status of Tenerife to do some serious shopping.

By now we were also beginning to recognise, and become friendly with, other yachties who were doing a similar passage

to ourselves. Mostly French, English, or Norwegian, we met only one other Irish boat so far, *Nike* from Drogheda.

After a week in Santa Cruz, Tenerife, we moved down to the south of the island to Los Christianos. There being no marina there, we anchored in a busy bay between 20 other boats about 200 yards from the beach. Boats on anchor are always more friendly than boats in a marina, and many of them have unusual stories to tell. We met Armin and Mica (living on their boat here for 8 months now), Stewart from South Africa (he went for a sail 14 years ago, and is only now making his way back home) and Peter and Vera, sailing from Kinvarra, Galway on yacht *Pylades*. Vera is the daughter of Fergus Quinlan, ICC. They got married in May and were heading to the Caribbean on a one-year honeymoon! We weren't long at anchor when a girl going by on a canoe shouted "Ce chaoi bhuill tu?" Roisin from Co Meath works in the Irish Times Bar here, and invited us in for drinks later. This was the first "real" Irish Bar we had come across since leaving home, and soon we also met Kenny and Gerry from Galway and many other Irish staff. Gerry plays in the resident band here called 'Celtic Confusion' and they really went out of their way to make us feel welcome, even taking us up the mountain for a Sunday morning jazz session in a beer garden overlooking the bay. Not a bad life!

After a week in Los Christianos, we made the 60-mile passage to Gran Canaria, where our first stop was Pasito Blanco, as we had arranged to meet Paul and Aine from Knock who were holidaying in Playa del Ingles. We also welcomed Robbie back from his sojourn at home! As anybody who has been to Playa del Ingles will know, it's impossible to walk down the street at night without being harrassed by dozens of so-called PR people, all wanting you to eat or drink in their own particular establishment. There is an area here called "The Irish Centre" which houses 20 or so "Irish" pubs, and at night it comes ablaze with a cacophony of sounds ranging from traditional Irish to Country to pop.

After 3 nights of this, we had had enough, so we sailed 6 miles west to Puerto Rico. This is also commercialised, though not nearly so much as Playa del Ingles. There is an Irish bar here called "The Crow's Nest" that sells beer for €1 a pint, and another bar that sells pints of Vodka and Red Bull for only €2.50! We hired a car and took a drive to Las Palmas, the capital, to get some boat spares and see the fleet preparing for the ARC. Of the 2 Irish boats entered this year, we met Robin Kay on his dad's boat. Robin is well known to Mayo sailors, having acted as Race Officer at many regattas, including NORA 2004.

## Cape Verde Islands

After all these weeks of acting like tourists, it was time to start provisioning *Saoirse* for the next leg. At a local Carrefour, we packed the car with everything from baked beans to beer at 16c a can (for the beer)! Finally on Saturday 6th November, we sailed out of Puerto Rico for the 850 mile journey south to the Cape Verde Islands. The first 2 days were calm with little wind. Then we had a gale for 2 days (on the nose, as usual), followed by a day totally becalmed. Every day, the temperature got warmer, and every day we were entertained by schools of dolphins and shoals of flying fish, some of whom could fly great distances with remarkable agility.

Eventually, the wind went easterly for a final 4-day reach into Porto de Palmeira, on Ilha do Sal, Cape Verdes. The Cape Verdes are situated 350 miles west of Senegal, the most westerly point of Africa, and used to be owned by Portugal until they achieved independence in 1975. They are very poor, with limited natural resources other than fishing and a fledgling tourist market. The people, however, are very friendly, apart

from a few enterprising individuals who offer to "mind your dinghy" for a fee!

David Baird again joined us for a week, and we cruised from Sal to Sao Vicente via Boa Vista and Sao Nicholau. By 23rd November, the trade winds appeared to have become established; we loaded up with 40 gallons of fresh water, 40 gallons of diesel, and as much fresh food as we could fit, weighed anchor and headed west across the Atlantic.

## The Crossing

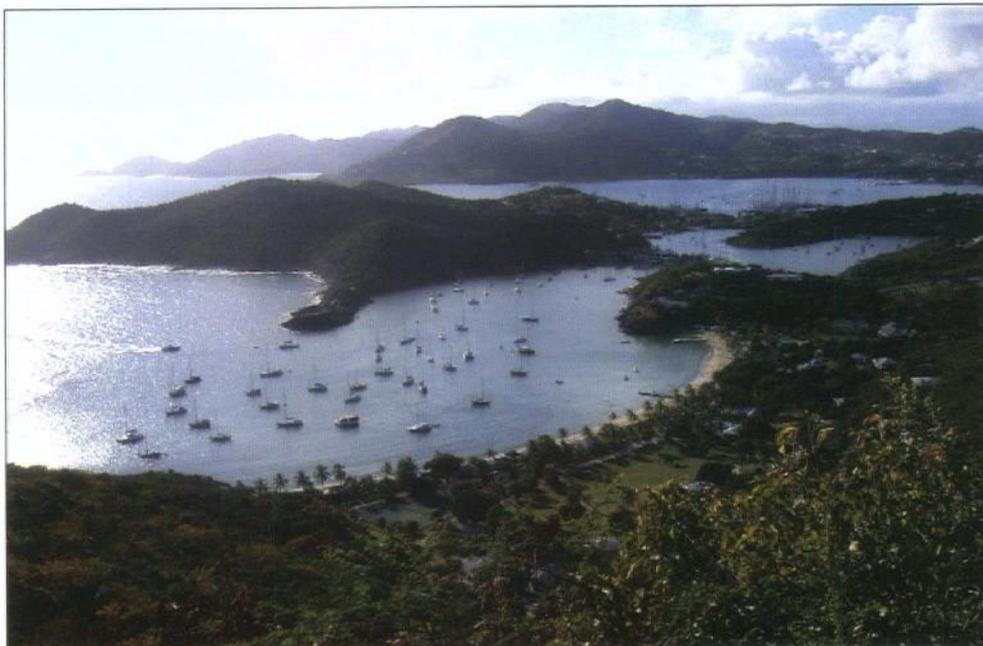
The first day was very calm with light easterlies, but gradually the effect of the Trade Winds became more noticeable. The wind direction was a constant easterly of between 10 and 30 knots. Our sail combination varied from reefed main and jenny to full main and spinnaker, with daily mileages of between 90 and 150 miles. After 3 days, we were overtaken by *Leopard of London*, the lead boat in the ARC, who went on to complete the crossing from Gran Canaria in only 12 days! Apart from this, we saw almost no shipping at all! We did 3-hour individual watches, with a 6-hour break after each watch. This system meant that our watch moved forward by 3 hours every day so the same person didn't the 03.00 to 06.00 every day. Various cooking recipes were tried with the limited ingredients available to us, and occasionally we were surprised with a dorado biting on our trolling line! Every evening we played Scrabble and our extensive book library was gradually being devoured. Our Satellite phone proves invaluable for hearing news from home, and getting constant weather updates, studiously supplied by David Baird.

At 1,000 miles out, we hove-to and all went for a swim, hoping that the sharks were on a day off, and that *Saoirse* didn't not take off without us! The only other diversion we had was the countless millions of flying fish and dolphins. The nights were magnificent, with millions of stars in cloudless skies. Lightning storms to our north occasionally illuminated the heavens, and while they were fascinating to watch, we hoped they wouldn't come any nearer.

The days, nights and miles passed by, until finally, on the morning of 9th December, after 16 days at sea, we spotted the outline of Barbados on the horizon. We proudly motored into Deepwater Harbour, behind 3 huge cruise ships, and cleared in through Immigration, Customs, and Health (we were gladly able to tick the "no" box in the part of their questionnaire that asks if any crew members had died since clearing the last port!). We motored round to Carlisle Bay and dropped anchor among the 50 or so boats anchored there, and jumped overboard to soak in the warm clear waters of the Caribbean!

## The Windward Islands

After 10 days of partying, resting, wreck diving, and soaking up the sun in Barbados, we said farewell to Robbie, who was heading on to Trinidad and Venezuela, and welcomed Claire, my girlfriend, who had come for a holiday. We weighed anchor, and headed west again for the 100 mile overnight downwind sail to St Lucia, arriving the next morning into Rodney Bay, where many of the ARC fleet were still tied up. There was lots of room in the spacious marina, which became our home for the next few weeks. We tied up alongside a large motor yacht named *Quiet Place*, and soon befriended the crew and owner. It's unusual to be served Christmas Dinner near a swimming pool in 30°C, but it takes beating! St Lucia was a relatively advanced island economically, and many Irish people have bought investment properties there. Visually, it's stunning, with sandy beaches, sheltered anchorages, rolling green hills, a challenging golf course and of course, its most famous landmark, the Pitons (2 volcanic peaks that rise 2,500 feet



English and Falmouth Harbours, Antigua.

above the sea). Sadly, it's lacking in nightlife, with little happening after 11 pm. St Vincent was 30 miles south of St Lucia, and it was our next port of call. Although the main island was poor, with little to offer (although "Pirates of the Caribbean" was filmed here), St Vincent also incorporates the Grenadines, a group of smaller islands including Bequia, Mustique, Union and Tobago Cays.

Bequia was super, with a huge sheltered bay that can easily hold 200 boats at anchor. Indeed, many boats come here for a night and stay for a month! Beautiful sandy beaches with good snorkeling was complemented ashore by a good selection of restaurants, chandleries and pubs. Luckily, our visit coincided with the annual Bequia Blues Festival, with various bands belting it out over 3 nights. We also met the crew of a large private yacht *Starry Night*, which many sailors will have seen in Crosshaven during Cork Week, at which it is a regular visitor.

Next up was Mustique – home to the rich and famous. It's a private island, owned and governed by the 100 or so people who have homes here, including Mick Jagger, David Bowie, Princess Margaret and Tommy Hilfiger.

Some of these magnificent homes are available for rent at prices ranging from USD\$5,000 to over USD\$40,000 a week! 10 miles southwest of Mustique lies Tobago Cays. This small, deserted, group of islands and coral reefs was stunning, with miles of shallow water. You can snorkel for hours in water so warm and clear you just don't want to get out!

Union Island is 4 miles south of here, and it was our last port of call in the Grenadines. Small and friendly, it was the only island I've ever been to where you can tie up your dinghy and walk 200 yards to the airport!

Sailing south from Union to Grenada, via Carriacou, we sailed over the underwater volcano "Kick 'em Jenny", which has erupted 12 times since 1939. There was still an exclusion zone around the summit which lies 200m below the surface.

### Hurricane Ivan

Grenada was devastated when Hurricane Ivan passed through it last September. Most of the houses in the Caribbean have galvanised roofs (insulation not being a priority), and most of these were shredded by Ivan. Hundreds of boats were wrecked also, and the evidence of this was still, sadly, obvious. Grenadians were a very friendly people despite years of political turmoil and an attempted American invasion!

Our engine was giving us trouble, and unfortunately we were unable to have it repaired in Grenada. We had befriended a group of Norwegian sailors, who kindly offered to tow us south to Trinidad. In the event, they towed us out of St. Georges Bay and we were able to sail most of the 80 miles before the wind dropped again the next morning, and they then towed us into Chaguaramus Harbour, Port of Spain, Trinidad on 3rd February.

Trinidad, apart from home to thousands of wild parrots and monkeys, is definitely the home of yachting in the south Caribbean with many marinas, and dozens of chandleries and specialist boat workshops. Thousands of boats were based here, or simply abandoned here, with many of them sporting "For Sale" signs. Here we were lucky to meet a boatyard owner named Kevin O'Farrell, who studied in Clongowes and whose dad was the local Irish Consul. Kevin "lent" us one of his mechanics and our engine was sorted in no time!

Carnival (Carne vale – farewell to the flesh) was the biggest annual party event in the Caribbean. It originates from the



Skipper (Seamus Salmon), Eugene Lambe, Kinvara and friends performing in Peter's Bar, Horta.

1700s when French plantation owners in Trinidad dressed up as slaves in the days leading up to Lent. Secretly, the slaves also celebrated Carnival by mimicking and satirising the colonial gentry. Nowadays, the celebrations start after Christmas, with huge Steel Pan and Calypso Bands practising for the showdown that takes place on the Monday and Tuesday before Ash Wednesday. It was mind boggling, with up to 100 bands, each with up to 1000 members, parading through the streets of Port of Spain 24 hours a day in the most elaborate costumes imaginable! Just think St Patrick's Day Parade and multiply it by 100, both in terms of size and outrageousness!

After a week of partying in Trinidad, we needed a rest. It was time to be moving on – to the pirate-infested waters of Venezuela. We had been warned by many other yachties to keep at least 50 miles off the Venezuelan coastline en route to Isla Margarita, as, over the past few years, there have been many incidences of piracy by powerful, armed motorboats coming alongside, usually under the pretext of looking for some “agua”, and then boarding and robbing the boat and it's occupants of any valuables they possess. Having your own weapons on board (as many boats do) was useless unless, you're willing to shoot first. In the event, we went 10 miles offshore and, using a 2 knot current to our advantage, did a night sail without navigation lights arriving in Margarita to the accompaniment of 1000s of pelicans early on 12th February. Porlamar Harbour was full of yachts, many of whom spend up to a year here enjoying the fabulous weather, scenery and fun. Oh, and being able to buy petrol at 3c/litre and beer at 16c/can also helps! This cheap fuel, combined with the poor economy, means that most of the cars here are 50-year-old gas-guzzling American bangers, the drivers of whom drive like lunatics! The yachties here were



Windrose performing in Antigua Classic Week.

well organised with nightly neighbourhood watches shared between all boats to deter any potential dinghy thieves. Among the yachties, we met a couple from Dublin who have been living on board their yacht *Synbad* with their three children for seven years now. Indeed, many of the long-term live-aboards here educate their children via correspondence courses, and they all claim their children were better for it! We also met up with Robbie again (he has been here since the New Year) and were joined by Vinny and Gerry (my brother and a friend from home) and David Baird, who has become a very welcome, regular visitor in every continent so far! David was excellent at honing up our Scrabble skills, and it's great to catch up with all the news from home!

Venezuela was famous for, among other things, its beauty, oil and political upheaval. Despite it's current socialist government, the gap between the rich and the poor continues to widen. I have never met a nation of people with such strong political opinions – they either love President Chavez or they think he is a crook! Inflation was rife, and officially, Venezuelans are not allowed hold foreign currencies. This has led to a huge blackmarket economy – banks will give you c.1,950 Bolivars per US dollar, but you can get up to 2,500 Bolivars per US dollar on the streets!

After 3 weeks in Margarita, it was time to be on the move again, as we had arranged to meet friends in Antigua, 400 miles to windward. On our first day out of Margarita, our jenny halyard broke, so we had to motor-sail and diverted north-east to Bequia for repairs, then overnighted again, north to Martinique. It was like being back in Europe – most of the cars were Peugeot, Citroen or Renault with everybody speaking French. And we were spending euros again for the first time in months! Unfort-



Crew member Mick Corrigan has his 3-months-old beard shaved before arriving back to Westport.

unately, we were pressed for time and only got to spend 2 days here, before sailing north again on another overnight passage, to Antigua.

## The Leeward Isles

Antigua is the centre of Caribbean sailing, with yachts ranging in size from 20' to well over 300'. Its clear waters, 365 beaches and vast array of hotels also make it a huge holiday destination for many Americans and English, as well as being a port of call for most of the monstrous cruise liners that radiate throughout the Caribbean every day.

English and Falmouth Harbours are side by side in the southern side of the island, and this was where most of the yachts and yachting activity is based. It's a hub of activity, with crews of every nationality meeting up for happy hour most evenings between 17.00 and 19.00. Many of the super-yachts have full-time crews of up to 10 people and it was interesting to meet a few of the Irish people working on them (tough life, or what?!).

For St Patrick's Day, having met Bryana and Kieran (friends from Ireland) we sailed over to Montserrat, the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean. It was originally settled by the Irish fleeing from Cromwell and it's the only other place in the world where St Patrick's Day was a national holiday. No obvious Irish people live there anymore, but most of the names were of Irish origin, like Carty, Farrell, Ryan and Sweeney. One local coloured and colourful individual I met wearing a "Kiss Me, I'm Irish" t-shirt, turned out to be a man named James Irish, who immediately agreed to change his name to Seamus Irish! Irish influences can also be heard in their music and the people were so friendly. Unfortunately, almost two-thirds of Montserrat is off-limits as a result of a volcano that started to erupt in 1995, destroying much of the southern half of the island, including the capital Plymouth, the airport and the golf course. The volcano was still spewing out sulphurous gas and the population of the island has diminished from 11,000 to 4,000 in the past 10 years. Alas, the only useable harbour, Little Bay, was even more roly than Clare Island with an easterly wind blowing, making it almost impossible to sleep, so we returned to Antigua after two nights. Antigua was preparing for the biggest event of the sailing calendar, Antigua Sailing Week. It starts off on April 8th, with the Mega-Yacht Challenge, a regatta for yachts of 100 ft or more, continues on April 14th with the Antigua Classic-Yacht Regatta and culminates April 24th with the main event! Rather than wait around, we opted to do a little more touring. Next port of call was St Barths, where the annual St Barths Bucket (a regatta for mega-yachts) was about to begin. The harbourmaster was like an air-traffic controller each morning and evening, as he co-ordinated 28 of these giant, multi-million dollar yachts in and out of their berths before and after racing. There was also a visit by the 250ft *Mirabella V*, the world's largest single-masted sailing yacht. It cost US\$50m to build, but can be chartered for only US\$250,000 a week! To give you an idea of size, its mast was 292ft high (*Saoirse's* mast was 50ft) and its mainsail was the size of seven tennis courts! Apparently, it grounded in the Mediterranean shortly after it was launched last year and cost US\$7m to repair!

Unfortunately, the €6.50 cost of a beer was rapidly depleting our budget, so we weighed anchor after the weekend and sailed the 15 miles northwest to St Martin. This island was shared by the French and Dutch with a border across the middle. The whole island was a duty-free paradise, with an enclosed, navigable lagoon and very modern facilities, it has become the power-boat centre of the Caribbean. Beer at US\$2 (US\$1 during happy hour) heightened our appreciation of this popular holiday destination!

After a week in St Martin, we headed back to Antigua where the Classic-Yacht Regatta was about to start. There we met up again with our Norwegian friends aboard *Ida*, a traditional 1938 gaff-rigged cutter (not too unlike a Galway Hooker). We entered *Ida* for the regatta, coming second in our class. The regatta itself was stunning with 50 traditional or classic yachts competing in a perfect setting of sunshine and 15 knots of wind every day. Many of these yachts were made of wood and have crew onboard whose sole job seems to be polishing and varnishing the perfect gleaming finishes!

Most of the yachts that cruise the Caribbean end up in Antigua for the sailing regattas, and will leave from here to start their return leg across the Atlantic to Europe before the hurricane season starts. But we still have more to see ...

## Barbuda

Michael took leave of *Saoirse* to help on a delivery of *Starry Night*, a luxury Oyster 68, the captain of which we had befriended over the past 5 months. *Starry Night* was headed to Portugal, and she set off on 18th April with a crew of 5. Meanwhile, I continued to stay on in Antigua where we had made many friends. The main event, Antigua Week, was about to start and the harbour was thronged with boats. Included were *Begorrah* and *Begob* (two boats chartered here by a bunch of Dublin guys for the event) and *Farrfly*, a Farr 68 owned by an Irish guy, and kept in Grenada where it operates a charter business. Parties abounded every night. Claire joined me for a couple of weeks, and we first sailed 30 miles north to Barbuda, a relatively small island governed by Antigua. For many years, this stunning paradise was leased from the British by the Codrington Family for the princely sum of 1 Fat Sheep a year. The Codringtons were long gone and the current inhabitants (decendants of former slaves) were determined to resist any further big developments. Consequently, it remains one of the few wild-life sanctuaries in the Caribbean, with millions of frigates and other threatened bird species, and miles of sandy beaches surrounded by clear blue seas. Unfortunately, the down-side is that there are no pubs or restaurants! And then there's that local sense of censorship: when I tried to buy a pack of cigarettes in the only local grocery/hardware store, I was told "we don't sell them - 'cos we don't like them!!!" (Consequently, anyone who wishes to smoke on the Island would have to import their own supply!)

We left at 06.00 next day for the very pleasant 65 mile sail back to St Barths. *Saoirse* had been there a month previously for a mega-yacht regatta, and the place was much more pleasant now that the crowds had left. There, we were delighted to meet our friends from the yacht *Bon Vivante* again. On the west side of the island, we found a beautiful deserted anchorage called 'Anse du Colombier', with lots of moorings, and we witnessed great displays from turtles and even got to swim with sting rays! After a quick stop in St Martin, we overnighed to the British Virgin Islands, clearing into Road Harbour, Tortola, early on 7th May. Finding the harbour a bit roly in the southerly swell, we motored around to the idyllic Cane Garden Bay, on the west side of Tortolla. It's a busy anchorage and popular with the local charter boats.

## British Virgin Islands

Most of the European yachts that cruise the Virgin Islands stay on the British side, because of the formalities imposed by the America authorities on the US side. Essentially, you must be in possession of a valid visa if arriving by any method other than by public transport. Invariably, this means applying to the US Embassy of your home country for an appointment, attending at the appointment, and paying a fee of up to several hundred dollars (not to mention the hours wasted queueing, on the

phone and in the Embassy). The other regular option (pursued by many of the visa-less crews of private luxury yachts) was to fly to Barbados (the only Caribbean Island with a US embassy) and do the procedure there. We tried a different approach – we got a ferry from Tortolla (British VI) across to St John (USVI) and went through emigration there. The officials there were the most courteous we had come across in all the Caribbean, and had no problem issuing a 90-day visa, allowing us to get the 20-minute ferry back to Tortolla and cruise at will among the USVI thereafter!

The USVI were very laid back by American standards, but ultra-efficient by Caribbean standards – waiters and barmen actually smile! Most of the bays were nature reserves and have visitors' moorings laid out to avoid damaging coral by anchors. All the Virgin Islands were within 4 or 5 miles of each other, and quite often in the shallower areas, the water was so clear that the bottom was clearly visible, making navigation a matter of having someone keep watch over the bow!

### Strange fish

In addition to countless turtles here, we also came across a strange fish called a remora. This scavenging fish grows to about 3 feet in length and has ribbed suckers on its forehead enabling it to attach itself to sharks, whales and turtles and get a free ride, as well as helping share their food! In one particular bay I was snorkeling in, I came across a large turtle grazing contently on sea grass in about 6 feet of water with 3 remora attached to his shell. Surfacing for air every few minutes before resuming his eating, he was totally oblivious to the remora, and indeed to myself, trying to photograph the moment!

Ann Doherty (ICC member from Westport) arrived for a couple of weeks holiday, and we entered the annual St John's Commodore Cup Regatta. Being the only non-American boat made us a popular entry and soon we had a queue of locals volunteering to crew with us! We ended up getting a credible third place in our class, for which we received, as part of our prize, a lunch in the exclusive Caneel Bay Resort (accommodation here costs c.\$1,800 per night).

We also partook in a late-night sail on board another boat to an infamous floating Bar/Restaurant called "Willie T's", where the tradition was to dive naked from the top deck to win a free T-Shirt. Despite much cajoling from all present, Anne Doherty refused to jump!

### Bermuda

After 3 weeks cruising the Virgins, it was time to move on again. For almost a month now, we had seen hardly any other European yachts – most of them had started making their way across the Atlantic after Antigua Week, to avoid the impending hurricane season which officially starts on 1st June. Michael had returned from his trip to Portugal, our visitors had left, and on 27th May we set out on the first leg of our journey home: the 840 mile trip north to Bermuda. This week-long voyage started out in extreme heat (almost 40°C during the day), and finished with us wearing shoes and raingear for the first time in 8 months!

The nights of the passage had us experiencing some incredible lightning storms, with the skies often being illuminated like a magnificent fireworks display.

After 7 days we sighted Bermuda on a cold, wet miserable morning. As its coastline was strewn with semi-submerged coral, visiting boats were obliged to radio ahead for clearance and directions (ships not intending to visit were requested to keep 30 miles off the coast). To our surprise, the Coastguard Radio Officer turned out to be an Irishman – a former Malin Head Radio operative no less. He turned out to be most helpful

and came round for a visit after we had tied up. Imagine my surprise later that evening to be welcomed into the popular Freddie's bar/restaurant by a hostess from Ballyhaunis!!!

We were joined next day by Nial Gilroy, from Enniscrone, who was to be our third man on the voyage home, and Mattie, a friend also from Enniscrone who was out for a week's holiday.

### Land of pleasant surprises

Bermuda turned out to be a land of pleasant surprises: firstly, it's not one island but seven larger (linked) islands and dozens of smaller islands. It boasts the 3rd highest income per capita and the highest golf course ratio per square mile in the world. The C-shaped archipelago was only about 12 miles long by 1.5 miles wide, meaning that all 65,000 inhabitants live less than a mile from the ocean! The unbelievable scenery, miles of pink sandy beaches, almost perfect weather (18°C in the winter, 28°C in the summer), a very favourable tax regime, and the friendliness of the people, have made it one of the most sought-after places in the world to live. So much so, that in an effort to curtail house prices, the government has introduced legislation forbidding Bermudans to sell their homes to non-Bermudans (i.e. non-Bermudans may only buy from non-Bermudans). They have also imposed a 25% tax on property purchased by non-Bermudans. Even with these restrictions, average houses sell for over \$1m to locals (with non-Bermudans paying up to \$5m!) making it beyond the reach of most citizens (the Bermudans say it'll soon be as bad as Ireland!!!). A most unusual feature of the houses here were the roofs – all of them were white! Limestone tiles covered with whitewash reflect the sun, but also apparently act as a filter for rainwater, all of which was funnelled into underground tanks and stored for domestic use, as Bermuda has no natural springs (or rivers or streams).

We hired scooters (tourists were not allowed to hire cars) and spent a few very enjoyable days exploring the islands. On our last night there we met up for many beers with Padraic Molloy from Galway Bay Sailing Club. Padraic had bought a boat in Texas and was en route to back to Galway with 3 friends!

Next day, Sunday 12th June, saw us sadly weighing anchor and sailing out of Bermuda for the 1,800 mile voyage to the Azores ...

### The North Atlantic and The Azores

We left Bermuda on Sunday evening and motored northeast into a gentle easterly breeze. By later that night we had enough wind to hoist sail and for the next week, we were able to sail a true course with the wind more or less behind us. Indeed, we had covered over 1,000 miles when the wind went back on the nose, making progress difficult thereafter. Every day seemed to get colder, but at least it stayed dry. Apart from an occasional passing ship, the only diversion we had to break the monotony was the abundance of sealife. Indeed we were quite impressed with the almost daily displays of groups of up to six whales, sometimes accompanied by dolphins. On calmer days, turtles could easily be seen, as well as millions of Portuguese man-of-war jellyfish floating by with their inflated pink "sails". Finally, on our 15th day, we made landfall in Corvo, the smallest of the Azore Islands. With little shelter, only a handful of yachts visit here each year, and we were the first this year! Although they had virtually no English (and our Portuguese isn't so hot), you couldn't have asked for a friendlier bunch of people. With a population of just 400 people, everybody knows each other and within no time, they all seemed to know us also!

Fernando, our tourist guide and taxi driver, took us on a tour of the island right up to the 2km wide caldeira (crater) of the former volcano, now with its own lakes and islands 700 metres



Norwegian boat *Ida* took the idea of lifting the dinghy on deck to prevent theft a bit too seriously!

above sea level. Afterwards, we partied until morning, with Fernando insisting we stay another night and laying on a dinner party in our honour! We reluctantly took leave after 2 nights and sailed 18 miles south to Flores (Island of Flowers). Among the many yachts anchored here, we met Eugene Lambe from Kinvarra on *Fanai*, a steel-hulled boat he built himself. Eugene is a renowned Uileann Pipe maker and player and we had our own Fleadh Ceoil in Paula's Bar, accompanied by Alex, a Frenchman sailing the return leg of a two year trip to New Zealand, (who knew more Irish tunes than myself!) Within an hour, we were joined by an old Portuguese man who also makes his own instruments – a cross between guitar and mandolin – and before long, many locals and sailors were clapping along! We left the next day to sail the 130 miles east to Horta on the east side of Faial where we were being joined again by David Baird. The Azores were one of the few places in the world where more visitors arrive by yacht than by air, with over 1,000 yachts passing through each year, and this was very evident in Horta, renowned for being one of the four busiest yacht transit harbours in the world. It was buzzing, mainly with yachts returning to Europe after the season in the Caribbean.

### Peter's Sport Cafe

As all the marina berths were full, we rafted up alongside two other yachts inside the breakwater. Every inch of wall space was covered in murals painted by the crews of yachts who have passed through over the years, many with unreal detail. There was a bar here called "Peter's Sport Cafe", which was now so famous that three shops have been set up selling merchand-

ise and memorabilia from it. It was great to meet so many familiar faces that we had crossed paths with in the Caribbean, and if profits in Peter's Sport Cafe are down this year, it certainly won't be our fault! The Azores are one of the major whale-watching centres in the world, with up to 20 species of whale and dolphin being spotted every year. Whale hunting was a huge industry here in the past, and from this developed the art known as scrimshaw. This involves the polishing and engraving of whale teeth with etchings depicting boats or other nautical scenes. Many examples of this fine art were for sale with good ones fetching up to €300 each! After four nights, we sadly left, and sailed 70 miles east again to Terciera, with a brief stopover in Sao Jorge along the

way. Angra Do Heroismo, in Terciera, is a 16th century city with a unique "olde worlde" charm. Having been declared a world heritage site by UNESCO in 1983, the authorities have been careful to preserve its historic appeal, without stunting its growth. The result is a very attractive, friendly city with old-fashioned hardware and grocery stores (with everything in shelves behind the counter) alongside modern fashion and computer stores. It also has a marina with the cleanest, most modern facilities we have ever seen. On our last night in Angra, we were invited along to a bull-running event. This is a serious adrenaline generating activity, with the bulls charging through the narrow streets of a residential area of the town. Sadly, our final day arrived. It was time to stock up *Saoirse* again and sail the final 1,200 mile leg of our odyssey.

Since leaving Ireland we have sailed more than 11,000 miles and have visited 40 different islands in 16 countries! It's been an unforgettable experience. Can't wait to do it again!!!



Example of 1,000s of strange creatures found floating in water 200 miles southwest of Ireland

# Around and about on *Ann Again*

Eleanor Cudmore

An invitation to a 60th birthday in Gigha which coincided with the North Rally, a Royal Cork Yacht Club cruise-in--company to Padstow a week later, the East Rally in between, a yen to go back to the Cullin Mountains in the Isle of Skye, the Outer Hebrides, where we planned to visit on previous trips to Norway but weather never permitted, all formed the basis of our 2007 cruising plan. So like the 'Grand Old Duke of York' up to the top of the Irish Sea and down again we went.

We set off early on Sunday 20th May and had a very chilly but easy shake-down sail to Kilmore Quay. We then overnighted in Dun Laoghaire, Ardglass and Glenarm, on way to Gigha, arriving on Thursday at midday. The birthday boy, Derek White, arrived on Friday with Viv Leonard (ICC) and Mary Curtin from Cork, on board *Ballyclare* and with friends Peter and Rosanna Ballentine on their boat, to which we were invited for a lovely birthday dinner.

The North Rally was very enjoyable, with a wonderful buffet dinner in the village hall on Saturday, and a talk about how life on Gigha was progressing since it was bought by the islanders themselves, after which we drifted back to the hotel and had a great sing-song. Boy, the northerners can sing!

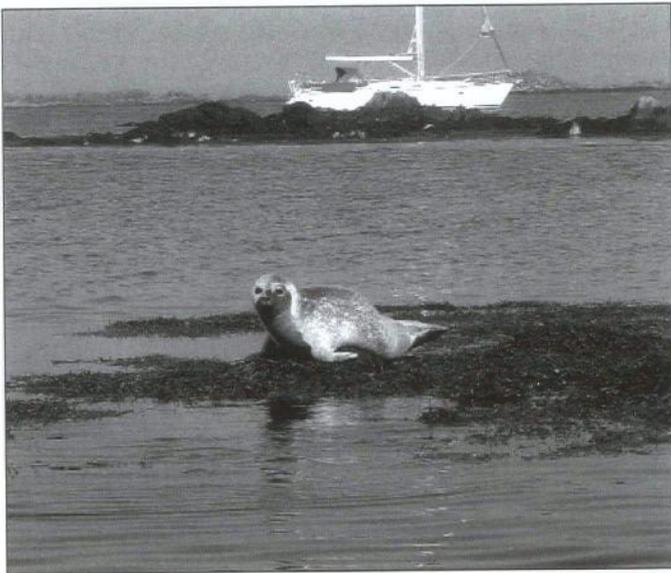


Barrs, Cudmores and Ann Clementson on Rathlin.

There was a mass exodus next morning, Sunday, with boats returning to home ports. We went to Rathlin Island and had a hairy sail around the west side in a 25 knot northwesterly, gybed with difficulty at Bull Light, reached into the little harbour and tied up to the new pontoons. *Faustina III* was here ahead of us and invited us to drinks. Hazel and Ronnie Barr were on board with Ann and John Clemenston. Next morning we all took the bus to the lighthouse to see the bird colonies, a must on a visit to Rathlin. While here we got a text message to say the East Rally in Arklow had been cancelled so we decided to go to the Isle of Man, en route to Padstow. On Tuesday we locked into Douglas harbour at 20.00 right in the middle of the preparations for the Isle of Man TT races. The population of the Island is 70,000, over 50,000 visitors came for the races, and the Isle of Man Steam Packet ferried in more than 18,000 spectator bikes for the event. In the evenings the sea front turned into a stunt-show arena and a fairground. Just a short walk away from the promenade it was quiet in the basin, except for a noise like constant thunder from the bikes. It was the 100th Anniversary of the



New pontoon at Rathlin.



Ann Again and neighbour, Ardmore Islands.

Isle of Man TT and the atmosphere was amazing. We very quickly became motor-bike enthusiasts!

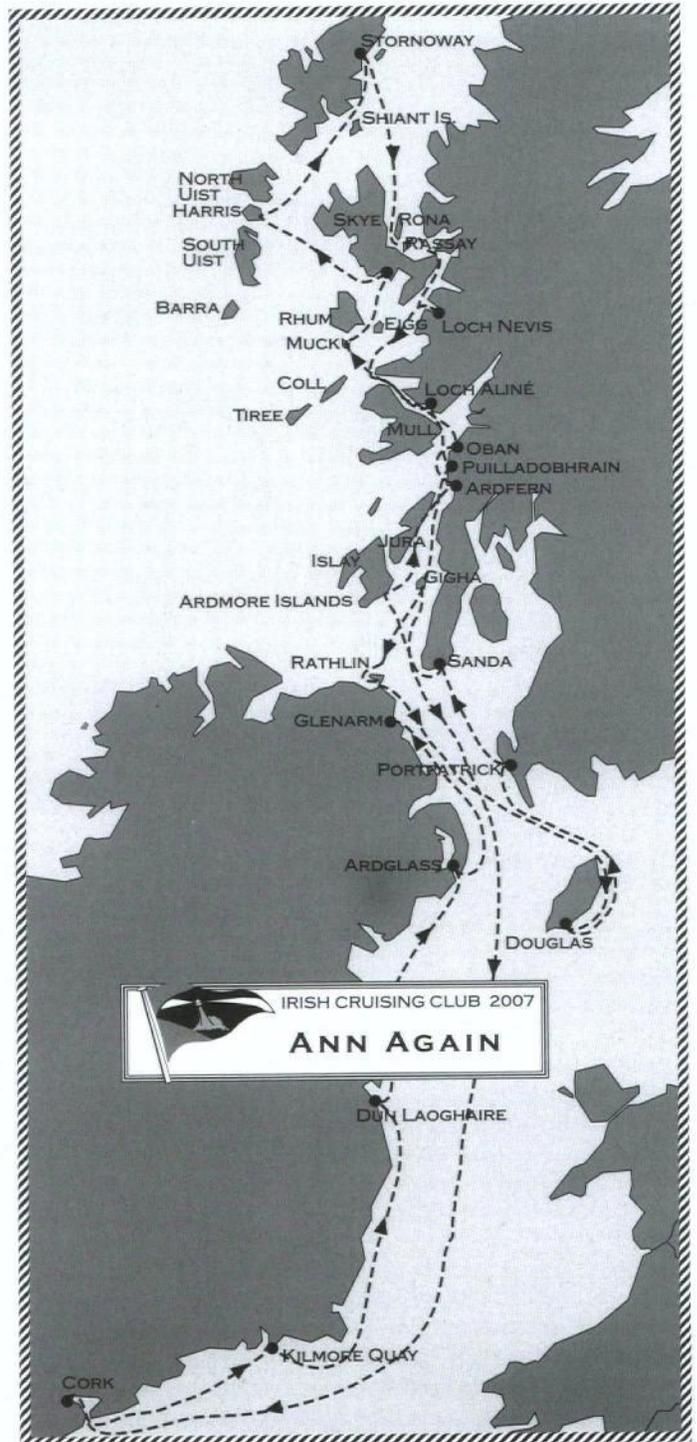
We planned on staying for two nights but the wind turned and, with southeast gales in the forecast, we stayed for seven, forgoing our trip to Padstow. With the wind still strong southeasterly on Tuesday 5th June we went north to Portpatrick, sailing through great whirlpools off the Mull of Galloway. We then went on to Sanda Island off the southeast of Kintyre, where we heard the eerie sound of seals barking late into the evening. Next we dropped our hook in the middle of the Ardmore Islands, on the east of Islay, a beautiful peaceful anchorage full of wildlife. We visited Craighouse, Ardfern and Puilladobhrain on our way to Oban, where we were meeting two of Eleanor's brothers who were joining us for a two-week cruise to the Outer Hebrides.

Monday 19th June. We met Tom and Frank off the train in Oban, and took the ferry across to Kerrera where the boat was lying in the marina. Next morning we motored out of the North Channel, across the Firth of Lorn into the sound of Mull and had a gentle sail up the sound in about 10 knot southeasterly breeze, and on rounding Ardnamurchan Point, goose-winged the Genoa and headed for Muck, the most southerly of the Small Isles. We anchored for the night, and went for a walk on this very flat island. We picked some heather to put on the pulpit, which evidently one may do after rounding Ardnamurchan Point. Back on the boat we had dinner and bedded down.

We woke to heavy rain and headed out in poor visibility, motoring north past Eigg, and Rhum and could just about see Canna in the fog. We decided to go inside the Isle of Skye because the weather forecast was poor, but as Tom says it never rains for more than eight hours, we decided to go back to our original plan and headed for Loch Scavaig on the southeast corner of Skye, piloting our way through rocks with many seals on them, right into the Cuillin Mountains, and anchored under a waterfall. True to Tom's word the clouds lifted, and we had a gloriously warm sunny evening in this majestic place. We went ashore and walked along the side of Loch Coruisk surrounded by the high jagged peaks of the Cuillins. The place is hypnotic. Walking here was easy as the rocks are smooth and rounded. Frank kept saying he was glad he didn't have to walk the peaks... a very keen hill-walker, we didn't believe him? Back on board we had a very peaceful night, just the sound of the waterfall.

Next morning we upped anchor and motored past the seals

again out into Soay sound. We hoisted the main and motor-sailed up the sound. The wind was such that at every headland we came to, it headed us. Brian was frustrated trying to find a slant to get a bit of sailing. A course to Harris, one of the more northerly islands of the Outer Hebrides, would give us a fetch, so we unfurled the genoa, set a course to Loch Stochinish and had a super sail for about an hour before the wind headed us again. Stockinish is a tiny harbour, with a small pier and a pontoon full of small fishing boats with men very busy on them. As we got closer, they dropped what they were doing, hopped onto one boat, told us tie up to it as it wasn't going out next day, and took our lines from us. When we were berthed one came back with a huge bag of prawn tails for us. Tom and Frank went for a walk while Brian and Eleanor cooked and peeled the prawns. What a feast! Next day we had an interesting northeasterly beat 30 miles to Loch Shell. There was a tide race



about a mile off the coast with overfalls that stopped the boats progress so we tacked up inside the race, hard work in 20 to 25 knots. Tob Lemreway read well in the pilot book, but it was a bleak place and we didn't go ashore. Saturday's weather forecast was more of the same plus rain, so this time we motored the 15 miles to Stornoway. Here there is a marina right at the head of the inner harbour which will only take boats up to 12 metres. We were directed to tie alongside at the Esplanade Quay. Siblings went to explore while Brian went to look at the trawlers, where he was given a present of a huge monkfish tail, which we kept for another night, as we still had lots of prawns to finish ... oh dear! Stornoway is the largest town in the Outer Hebrides and a lively one, even in a drizzle. That evening we went to the Culture centre, to a fine ceilidh session.

With the wind still from the north but much fresher, and more gales forecast, we decided to leave the rest of the Hebrides to another time and head 'inland'. We left Stornoway at 06.00 with the south-going tide, unfurled half the sails and had a super sail, albeit a bit lumpy, south to Rona, a long island lying between Skye and the mainland. When we found the arrow painted on the rocks pointing the way in, we furled and motored into Aarseid Mhor, a lovely anchorage sheltered from all wind directions. There were about seven yachts here all waiting for a break to go north. Brian stayed on board, the rest of us went ashore. We met the caretaker of the island who told us the seas are much flatter to the eastern side of Rona in the Inner Sound than in the Rasay Sound to the west, the way we were going, so we climbed up a hill from where we could see both sides. The difference was quite clear, when viewed from this vantage point. Back on board we feasted on the monkfish wrapped in Parma ham and oven baked. Aarseid Mhor has good holding in mud and we certainly shipped lots of it on the chain next morning on weighing anchor. We went through the narrow sound between Rona and Rasay islands to the flatter

seas of the Inner Sound and again under half sail, we powered south, furling before we went under the Skye Bridge, to the pontoon in the Kyle of Loch Alsh, to have lunch and wait for the tide to go through Kyle Rhea. With the tide and wind in our favour we unfurled again at 16.00 and had a lively sail, wind gusting 35 knots at times, through the very lush Kyle Rhea into the Sound of Sleat, then gybed and hardened-up for Loch Nevis. On the mainland and sheltered from the Atlantic by the Isle of Skye, this fiord-like loch has pastures and trees growing down to the waters edge, a huge contrast with the Hebrides. We sailed up to Inver where we picked a visitors' mooring. We didn't go ashore, just sat and watched the sun go down behind a mountain in these beautiful surroundings. One of the wonderful things about cruising in Scotland in June is the long evenings; it's still quite bright at midnight.

Next morning we unfurled and sailed out of the loch but after a couple of hours the wind dropped and we were motor-sailing again, south past Mallaig and on around the still-calm Ardnamurchan Point and into the Sound of Mull. We did get a little bit of sailing for the last few miles to Loch Aline, where we went right in as far as we could. We went ashore to look at the fine house at the head of the loch.

Next day was a short trip in a nice breeze to Puilladobhain, where we walked to Clachan Sound to see the Bridge over the Atlantic. An impressive structure considering it was built over 200 years ago and hasn't had to be renovated since. We drank to the memory of the islanders who weren't allowed wear kilts onto the mainland so changed into trousers here in Tigh na Truish. On to Ardfern next, and on the way we went into the Gulf of Corryvreckan to see the whirlpools, and we could see the standing wave on the western side.

Tom and Frank left us here and, sadly, we were homeward bound now. Back to Gigha we went for the night to await the tide to go south, down the Irish Sea and back to Cork.

**David Nicholson writes of a visit to Ireland by Pablo Pouso**

A visit to Ireland by Pablo Pouso and his wife Maria, owners of the Restaurant O Lagar in Pabro do Caraminal, Galicia, Spain.

Many members will have fond memories of the superb banquet enjoyed in Pablo's restaurant during our cruise in

1998. Since then Pablo has gone out of his way to warmly and generously welcome ICC crews with delicious meals.

Pablo and Maria recently made a short visit to Ireland during which they stayed with Joan and David Nicholson in Cork, and with Phil and Leo Conway in Dublin.

Their visit is recorded in this photograph, taken at the Bosun Restaurant, Monkstown, dining with ICC friends.



Left to right: Richard Cudmore, Freda Hayes, Alec Morrogh, MARIA, David Nicholson, Kate Cudmore, PABLO, Joan Nicholson, Colin Hayes.