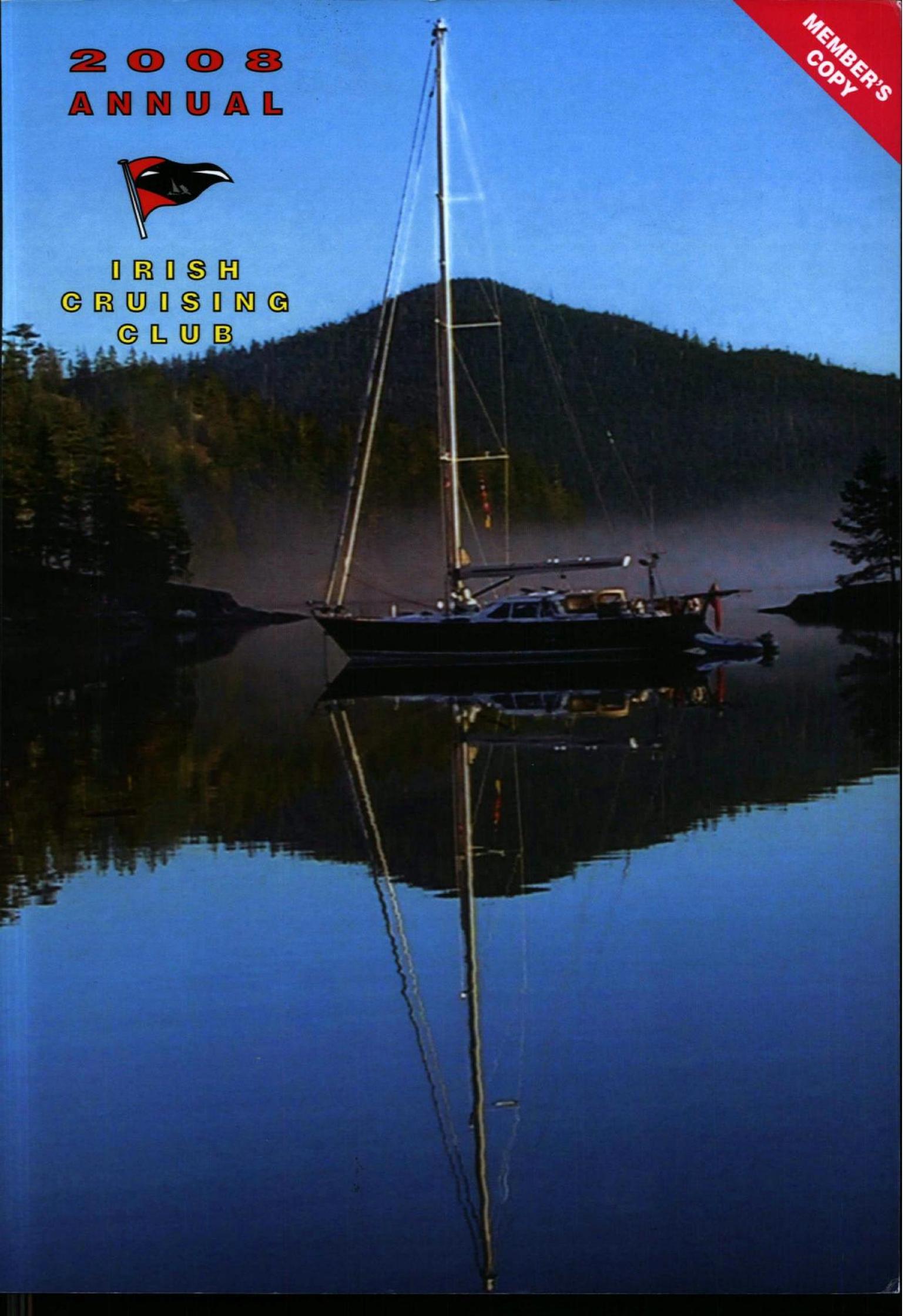


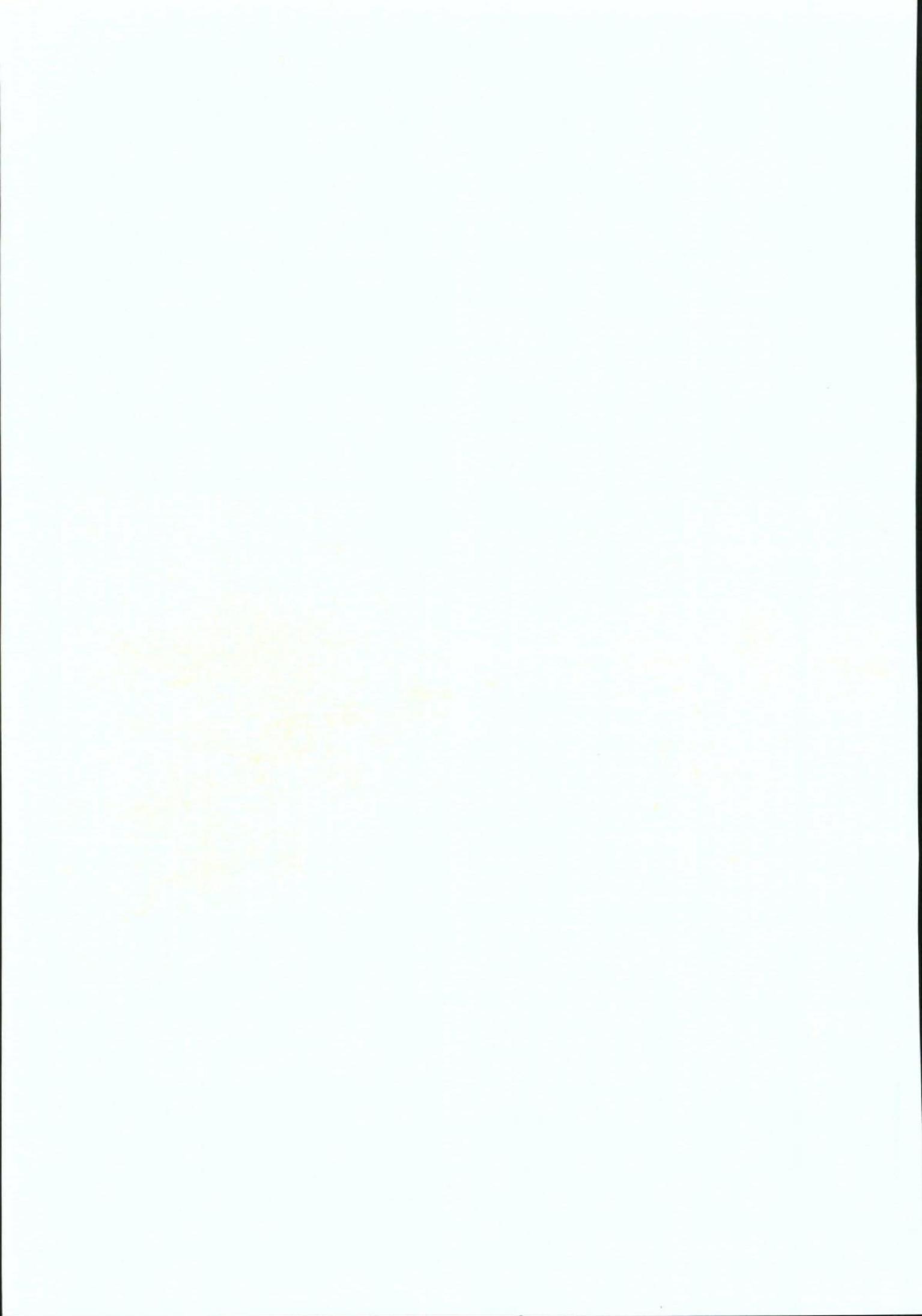
**2008
ANNUAL**



**IRISH
CRUISING
CLUB**

**MEMBER'S
COPY**





IRISH CRUISING CLUB ANNUAL 2008



At the foot of the Fonserrane Staircase of seven locks, at Béziers, Canal du Midi.

Photo by Peter Cumberlidge

Irish Cruising Club Annual 2008

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The literary gems scattered through the Annual are extracted from "Island Race" by John McCarthy and Sandi Toksvig

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Front Cover

Morning Calm at anchor in the early morning mist. *Photo: David Nicholson*

Back Cover

Inishboffin showing the new pier and dredged channel from the new South and West Coasts Sailing Directions.
Photo by Kevin Dwyer

Submissions for 2009 Annual

To reach the Honorary Editor, Chris Stillman, 3 Thomastown Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin.
(Tel. 01 285 2084) by **15th October 2009 at latest.**

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 organise the Christmas distribution of the Annual, and to Ann Woulfe-Flanagan for 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.

Origination

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Telephone 855 3855.

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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 (CD or DVD)**, IBM or Apple Mac compatible, preferably in 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 by 15th October to:

Chris Stillman, Honorary Editor

3 Thomastown Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin. Tel. 01 285 2084

Honorary Secretary's Report

Once again the year kicked off with the election meeting in early January. Nine new members were elected which brought our membership up to 539. It was subsequently decided that up to 20 new members would be elected in 2009.

The AGM was held on 8th February at the National Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire with 99 members attending and a further 70 apologies. There were a number of changes within the Committee with Cormac McHenry standing down after 18 years (13 years as Honorary Secretary, one as Rear Commodore, one as Vice Commodore and three as Commodore), to be replaced by Peter Ronaldson. Peter is no great stranger to the ICC himself, having been a member for 41 years (man and boy) and also serving on the Committee a number of times over the years. Two other Officers decided it was time to move on, our Honorary Treasurer, Myles Kirby who was replaced by Tom Fitzpatrick and Honorary Secretary Ron Cudmore, who was replaced by Grainne FitzGerald.

Presenting his report the Acting Hon. Treasurer said that total receipts were approximately €35,000 with the deficit at just under €19,000. This was due to the high cost of Printing and Postage, the ICC History Book and the Website. Total net assets of the Club were just short of €216,000. Total receipts for ICC Publications Ltd were €48,000 with a deficit of €3000. Direct costs were €42,000 and indirect costs were €9,000.

Michael McKee received tremendous support for his suggestion that with the increasing number of yachts over 40 and 50 feet, owners of smaller yachts should be actively encouraged to submit a log. Michael subsequently followed up his words with action and has generously donated a new trophy to the Club specifically to be awarded for the best log of a cruise carried out in a sailing yacht up to thirty feet overall. The "Marie" Trophy called after the boat which was the first winner of the Faulkner Cup in 1931 and which Michael owned and sailed with enthusiasm for a time in the sixties, was formally presented to the Club by Michael at the October committee meeting. It will be awarded for the first time at the AGM in 2009.

This year it was the turn of the East Region to organise the Annual Dinner, which took place in the Druid's Glen Hotel in Newtownmountkennedy, Co Wicklow. The proximity to Dublin City in no way took away from the idea that this is a weekend event and the location in a wonderfully rural setting could have been anywhere in the country. There were various activities on the Saturday, golf, visits to a couple of Gardens and for the very active – a five hour hike in the mountains near Glendalough.

The Dinner itself was also a great success, thanks to the efforts of Cliff Hilliard and his team. Guests included Sir Robin Knox-Johnston who received the clubs Fastnet Award for a

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Officers and Committee 2008-2009

Commodore:	Peter Ronaldson (North)	1st year
Vice Commodore:	David Tucker (South)	2nd year
Rear Commodore:	Cliff Hilliard (East)	1st year
Rear Commodore:	Brian Kenny (West)	1st year
Hon. Secretary:	Gráinne FitzGerald	1st year
Hon. Treasurer:	Tom Fitzpatrick	1st year

North

John Clementson (3rd year)
Alan Leonard (4th year)
Connla Magennis (5th year)
Derek White (5th year)

South

Bill Brady (1st year)
Eleanor Cudmore (5th year)
Dan Cross (4rd year)
John Daly (2nd year)

East

Bernard Corbally (1st year)
Peter Courtney (1st year)
Joe Phelan (3rd year)

West

David Whitehead (5th year)

Ex-Officio
Ed Wheeler

Non-Committee roles

Chairman, ICC Publications Ltd: Ed Wheeler
Editor of the Sailing Directions: Norman Kean
Editor, Annual: Chris Stillman
Editor, Newsletter: Noel Casey
Web Editor: John Clementson

Treasurer - Subscriptions: Alan Leonard
Club Trophies: Ann Woulfe-Flanagan
Club Accessories: John Massey
Distribution of Annual: Bill Rea
Archivist: Barbara McHenry

New Members

Ricky Butler
Patrick D'Arcy
Patrick Dorgan

Hugh Gibson
Michael Horgan
Stephen Hyde

Val Moran
Michael Park
Ivan Sutton

Deceased Members since the last Annual

Brian Hegarty
James Mulhern

Jeremiah O'Sullivan
Ralph Spence

Russell O'Neill
Dermod Ryan

Maurice O'Keeffe
Roger Bourke

lifetime of achievement in sailing. The weekend also provided an opportunity to introduce two new club publications, Hilary Keatinge's history of the club from 1979 - 2004 and the new edition of the East and North Sailing Directions, edited by Norman Kean.

The Southern Area has, for some time, been holding informal lunches during the winter months at the Carrigaline Court and so it was decided that the Eastern members would follow their lead and hold an informal lunch (no booking necessary!) in the St Stephens Green Club. It was such a success that about 12 members had to eat their lunch in an adjoining room, before joining the others, many of whom stayed well into the evening. The total number attending was about 65.

Despite the inclement weather a number of very successful ICC rallies took place. The first was the North/East rally to the Isle of Man which was organised for the UK bank holiday weekend in late May. By all accounts it was a most successful weekend with many members enjoying drinks in bright sunshine on Saturday afternoon, followed by a meal in the Masonic Hall that evening. Unfortunately some Eastern members (Hon. Secretary included) did not make it! Strong northeasterly winds would have made it a very unpleasant trip, especially as this was not a long weekend in the south, and it would have been necessary to return to Dublin on Sunday.

However, the Eastern Committee, with Peter Courtney taking charge, decided to have a less formal and shorter rally in August. The original plan was to have a raft-up off Ireland's Eye for lunch followed by a sail over to Malahide for a barbeque at the Yacht Club. Once again the bad weather meant the raft-up was cancelled but it did not stop 13 boats making their way to Malahide for a very enjoyable raft-up in the marina in the afternoon, followed by an excellent steak barbeque at the Yacht Club where we were joined by a number of other ICC and MYC members. Luckily, the tides the following morning

meant that we were able to have a bit of a lie-in before heading home, in glorious sunshine and a good wind.

The Northern members also decided to have a second rally in mid-September – this time to Audley's Road in Strangford Lough where 65 ICC members and guests, on 20 yachts, joined members of the Strangford Sailing Club for a barbeque. I understand the weather was unusually kind that evening and it was noted that perhaps God was a member of either SSC or ICC!

The South and West regions decided to have a joint rally in August but again the terrible weather took its toll and although five Southern yachts did make it for the raft-up, none of the Western did. Although the raft-up was planned for the Ilan River the freshening wind and straining anchors soon had them heading for the shelter of Sherkin and Baltimore where about 40 people gathered for dinner in The Islander's Rest for yet another enjoyable evening.

They say "a picture paints a thousand words". This being the case I would suggest that if you do not already have one, you should "beg, borrow or steal" a computer where there are many wonderful photographs of the Canal du Midi cruise, which was our final ICC rally for 2009. The cruise started at Port Cassafièrre and finished at Castelnaudary, about 150 kilometres to the west. The weather was superb and although the distance was a little further than some would have hoped for, there was the opportunity to take breaks from the boat and either walk or cycle along the pathways which followed the canal.

The last committee meeting of the year was held in Bangor on 18th October and later about 70 members from the region joined the committee for lunch. The meeting covered progress on planning for the Azores Rally in 2009 and we were given a sneak preview of the draft copy of the new South and West Sailing Directions which we are hoping will be in the shops before Christmas.

*Grainne FitzGerald
Honorary Secretary*

COMMODORES' DINNER 2007
The National Yacht Club, Dun Laoghaire, 14th December



Michael McKee
1998-2000

David Nicholson
1993-1996

Denis J Faulkner
1969-1972

Peter J Bunting
1981-1984

Hugh P Kennedy
1990-1993

Wallace Clark
1960-1963

Cormac McHenry
2005-2008

C Joe Fitzgerald
1984-1987

Unable to attend:

John Gore-Grimes
1987-1990

David HB Fitzgerald
2000-2002

Arthur R Baker
2002-2005

Challenge Cup Awards

James Nixon

It is an honour for any member of this Club to be asked by the Commodore to adjudicate on the logs, and I was pleased when Peter Ronaldson approached me just after he took office. Despite my inevitable anxieties, this has proved to be a very enjoyable exercise in spite of the urgency to meet the publication deadline. Our Club is the envy of others in that our Annual appears in time for Christmas, and all past Editors, and the present "helmsman" Chris Stillman, are to be congratulated for that achievement.

This year our members have produced 35 logs of cruises of great variety. The quality of writing seems to improve every year. I laughed aloud regularly during this task; one log provoked intense sadness. Familiar and new places were described and, as ever, mechanical, electrical and rigging problems were encountered and, usually, resolved.

Increasingly, members are leaving their boats abroad, to complete the cruise and return home the following year, or even later in some cases. In judging the logs, I regarded each one as a cruise in its own right, and assessed them accordingly, though somehow there is completeness in a voyage beginning and ending in the home port.

There are 23 logs which do not receive an award, though many are of exceptional quality, making my task very difficult. Their authors are congratulated and thanked for going to the effort of submitting logs, often in a short time.

My decisions are as follows:

The Faulkner Cup is awarded to Ed Wheeler for a highly original, entertaining and well written account of his cruise in *Witchcraft of Howth* to West Africa. As far as I can discover, this area has not been visited by a member before, and Ed has produced an interesting and informative log, describing how he coped with navigational, beurocratic, meteorological and communication problems. I have no doubt about making this award, despite the possible accusation of "special pleading" as Ed and I have been shipmates in the past and, indeed, I was aboard this year for the final leg to Strangford Lough.

The Strangford Cup goes to Michael Coleman for his long season sailing in the new, to him, *Oyster Cove*. He began with a very nasty delivery trip in February to East Ferry from Burnham on Crouch. Later in the year, after refitting, he cruised to the Baltic and back, returning through the Caledonian Canal and the Irish Sea. This was a great cruise, again with much information for those who wish to sail those waters.

This has been a good year, and I must mention three other logs as *proxime accessit*: by Brian and Eleanor Cudmore cruising from Cork to the Baltic in *Ann Again*; by Jarlath Cunnane completing an Atlantic circuit in the very well-travelled *Northabout*; and by Máire Breathnach who went to West Greenland and Baffin Island in *Arctic Tern*. Máire receives the Atlantic Trophy, listed below.

The Fortnight Cup goes to the father and daughter team of David and Grainne Fitzgerald for their nostalgic and helpful log of a cruise to the Clyde in *Ajay* in dismal weather. The usual, and some unusual, haunts were visited with lots of reminiscence by the redoubtable Dave. Few cruises qualify nowadays for this trophy but this one is very deserving.

The Round Ireland Navigation Cup is awarded to Fergus Quinlan for a most enjoyable and witty description of an unintended circumnavigation. The plan was to cruise from Kinvara to the west of Scotland, but weather forced him to keep on turning to starboard in *Pylades*. The result is a log that meets the requirement to provide navigational and pilotage information, as well as being a good read. I suppose it was the weather, but this was the sole log of a circumnavigation submitted this year.

The Wybrant Cup for the best cruise in Scottish waters goes to David Williams in *Reiver*, built by David and his brother Peter 20 years ago. This is a beautifully presented log of a cruise starting at Kyle of Lochalsh, and includes the Outer Hebrides and thence south through the inner isles to Ballycastle. Few logs qualified this year. Often Scotland is a mere stepping stone on the way further north by some of our adventurous members. We should give it more attention, even in a bad summer.

The Fingal Cup is at my discretion and it goes to John Madden for his entertaining account of a problem-solving cruise in *Bagheera* from Lough Swilly to the Westmannacyjar off the Icelandic coast, with a Faroese interlude when going north.

CLUB AWARDS

THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP for outstanding contributions to Irish sailing:
Award to **NORMAN KEAN**.

WRIGHT SALVER: Awarded by **NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **HUGH KENNEDY**.

WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP: Awarded by **SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **PAUL BRYANS**.

DONEGAN MEMORIAL TROPHY: Awarded by **EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **CORMAC MCHENRY**.

ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY: Awarded by **WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE** to **MICHAEL CRAUGHWELL**.

GULL SALVER: for the highest-placed Irish Yacht in the RORC Fastnet Race: No award.

THE "FASTNET" AWARD: Awarded by the Flag Officers of the Club for exceptional achievements and for evidence in or closely related to cruising under sail. No award.

DUNN'S DITTY SALVER: Awarded to **HUGH BARRY**.

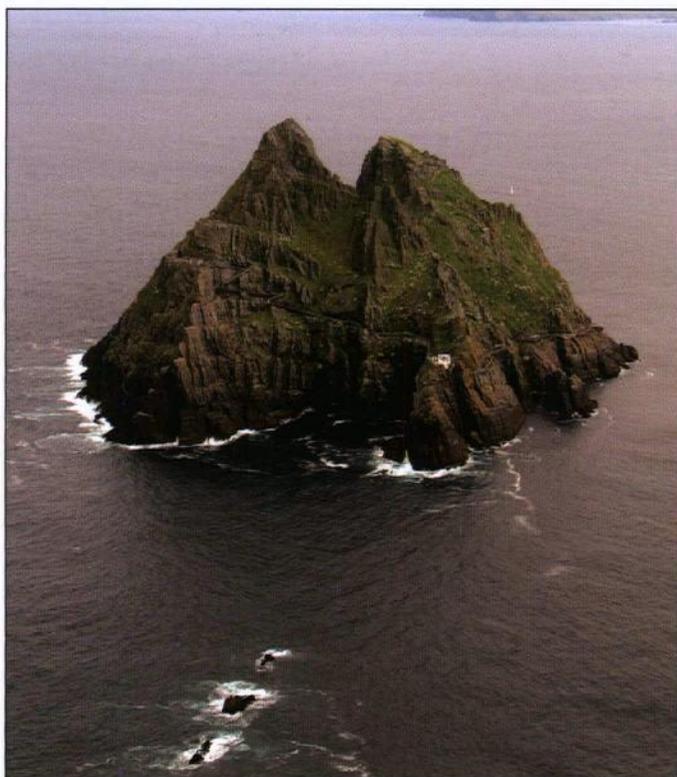
Congratulations to **AODHAN FITZGERALD** on winning the 'ROUND IRELAND' race.

The Rockabill Trophy for a cruise that includes an exceptional feat of navigation and/or seamanship is awarded to Paul Bryans for his log "A Tragic Crossing". This is a well-presented account of the ARC Atlantic crossing by *Avocet*, owned and skippered by John Thompson, with Paul navigating. John was not a member of the ICC, but this ebullient barrister was a good friend to many members, and I and many others had sailed and raced with him. He would probably have been elected to membership, and I had discussed this with him.

Paul describes the awful series of events that culminated in John's death in hospital in Barbados. The seamanship and navigation skills required after the accident were exceptional, with Paul now acting as skipper. The rendezvous with the liner and transfer of the unconscious John was achieved in very difficult conditions.

The traumatised crew then started the passage to St Lucia and encountered another emergency, during which they co-operated with Jarlath Cunnane and his crew on *Northabout* in rescuing the crew of the *Nérée*.

Many ICC members attended a memorial ceremony in January 2008 in Belfast to celebrate the life of John Thompson QC. The Elmwood Hall was full, as was the marquee outside. It was a fitting tribute.



Above: Clare Island. Below: Washerwoman rock to the southwest of Skellig Michael. From the new *South and West Coasts Sailing Directions*. See article page 66.



This log, Paul Bryan's first as an ICC member, is unique in my experience of the ICC. The boat was well prepared and crewed, yet we do not know the precise cause of the injury, nor how to prevent a similar event.

The Glengariff Trophy for the best cruise in Irish waters goes to Henry Barnwell for his delightful summary of his cruise with Ivy in *Hylasia* from Dun Laoghaire to, appropriately, Glengariff. This is an unusual log enlivened by dialogue. Weather featured strongly, and the exorbitant price of dining-out in Kinsale was mentioned. Henry is prescient: "something is crazy; maybe the Tiger needs a good long rest"!

The Atlantic Trophy for the best open sea passage with a port-to-port distance of at least 1000 miles is awarded to Máire Breathnach for her voyage to West Greenland and Baffin Island in *Arctic Tern*. This was a plucky cruise, although in a big strong boat, and is well described. It should encourage others to visit that beautiful area.

The Perry Greer Bowl for the best first ICC log goes to Patrick Dorgan for his log of a cruise from Cork to the Clyde in *Verdi III*. This was a pleasure to read, and promises well for the future, though I realise that Patrick has great sailing experience already.

The Wild Goose Cup at my discretion, for a log of exceptional literary merit, is awarded to David Beattie. This is a log of his cruise in *Reespray* from "Kingstown" to the Algarve. The title and erudition of the log compensates for the awful pun in the poor boat's name. Excellent reading!

The Marie Trophy, was presented this year by Michael McKee, past Commodore and former owner of *Marie*, for the best log for a cruise in a yacht up to thirty feet overall. Our first Rear Commodore (1929-30), Hugh Wallace, was an early owner of *Marie*, and had cruised extensively in her, including a voyage to Norway. The first recipients of the Faulkner Cup in 1931 were Messrs. Keatinge and McFerran for their cruise in *Marie*.

Only two logs satisfied the length criterion, the Fitzgerald father and daughter cruise in *Ajay* (LOA 29ft 4in) which has received the Fortnight Cup, and Seán McCormick in the 29ft 6in *Marie Claire*.

The first recipient of the Marie Trophy is Seán McCormick for his account of the voyage from Sardinia through the French canals and home to Howth. A most instructive account for those considering this route, and very deserving of this award.

Donal Walsh deserves special mention for the log of his fine cruise from Dungarvan to the Baltic in *Lady Kate*, a Moody 31 with bilge keels. She is just slightly too long to qualify!

Post script: Most of the logs follow the advice in "Notes for the Contributors" that appear in each Annual. However some do not, and I strongly recommend reading that advice before submitting a log next year. It makes the task of the Editor and Adjudicator easier.

Index of Cruising Grounds

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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
 2005 C. McHenry

Vice-Commodores

1929 H. P. F. Donegan
 1941 A. W. Mooney
 1942 H. E. Donegan
 1947 P. O'Keefe
 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. Wolte
 1978 G. Kenefick
 1980 M. McKee
 1981 J. Gore-Grimes
 1983 L. McGonagle
 1984 M. McKee
 1986 H. P. Kennedy
 1987 M. R. Sullivan & D. H. B. Fitzgerald
 1988 B. Hassett & D. H. B. Fitzgerald
 1989 B. Hassett & A. S. P. Orr
 1990 Clayton Love Jnr & D. J. Ryan
 1992 Brian Hegarty & David Nicholson
 1993 Michael O'Farrell & David H.B. FitzGerald
 1994 Michael O'Farrell & P. Walsh
 1995 L. McGonagle & P. Walsh
 1996 Arthur Baker & Jarlath Cunnane
 1997 J. Cunnane & P. Ronaldson
 1999 P. O'Sullivan & J.C. Bruen
 2000 J.C. Bruen & P. Ronaldson
 2001 P. Ronaldson & P. Killen
 2002 T. Clarke & P. Killen
 2003 T. Clarke & C. McHenry

2004 J. Nixon & G. McMahon
 2005 D. Tucker & G. McMahon
 2006 D. Tucker & D. Whitehead
 2007 C. Magennis & 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
 2005 M. Kirkby

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.

OBITUARY

Roger Bourke

1918 - 2008



The Midwest sailing fraternity lost its most senior member on 18th October 2008, when Roger Bourke died just two weeks short of his 90th birthday. Throughout his long life, Roger was a guide and inspiration to countless Midwest sailors whom he introduced to the sport. Having begun his sailing career in the 1920s, and continued sailing into his 80s, Roger was a living link between sailing in a bygone age and today. His reminiscences of sailing on the Estuary and West coast in pre-war days, and the characters who sailed in those days, were listened to with avid attention by sailors young and old.

Those who were privileged to learn to sail with Roger received a thorough grounding in sailing and seamanship that would last them a lifetime. This writer is forever grateful to Roger for introducing him to the sport at a young age. Roger owned a number of yachts before purchasing the yacht with which he is most associated, the 25 ft Lymington Slipway class, *Iduna*. He was renowned for his attention to detail and for the great care he took of his yachts. The meticulous preparation of

Iduna for the coming season was an annual ritual which was followed by Limerick sailors with a mixture of fascination and admiration, as they watched *Iduna* receiving more loving care and attention than a piece of Chippingdale furniture.

Iduna looked magnificent every season, but she was not a museum exhibit, and Roger cruised far and wide with *Iduna* on the Estuary and West coast every year. Roger was one of the earliest West coast members of the Irish Cruising Club, having joined the Club in 1940 just a decade after its foundation. He proudly flew the Club ensign and introduced many West coast sailors to the Club. He researched and contributed the Shannon Estuary section for many editions of the Club's South & West Sailing Directions. Roger was also one of six sailors who founded Foynes Yacht Club in 1962.

Roger is survived by his wife, Norma, and family. They can be very proud of Roger and his immense contribution to sailing in the Midwest, a contribution for which his many sailing friends will be forever grateful.

Frank Larkin



Iduna and Pegeen in Kilronan, Aran Islands

Photo taken over 40 years ago of the two leading west coast members of the ICC in their yachts alongside the inner pier at Kilronan in the Aran Islands. Pictured left to right were Frank Larkin, Roger Bourke, the longest serving member of the ICC up until his recent death, having joined in 1940, and David Fitzgerald, former Commodore of the ICC. The three are sitting in David's yacht, *Pegeen*, and tied alongside is Roger's yacht, *Iduna*, which he owned until he died. The photo is interesting from an ICC west coast historical perspective, in that it was a chance ICC 'meet' on the west coast of two leading figures in the ICC at a time, Roger and David, when ICC members on the west coast were few and far between.

OBITUARY

Brian Hegarty

1931 - 2007



The late Brian Hegarty in his element, on the helm while cruising in West Cork in 1992.
Photo: W M Nixon

Ireland lost a true sailor in Brian Hegarty – “The Heg” to friends and family – who died aged 76 at the end of November 2007. His enthusiasm for boats and sailing was central to his gentle personality, and he had been cruising in the Greek Isles as recently as May 2007 with longtime friends and shipmates. Although he had been fighting serious illness for some years, his passion for cruising remained undimmed through more than seven decades afloat as a club sailor, successful ocean racer, and cruiser both inshore and oceanic.

He had been quietly marking the Golden Jubilee of his Irish Cruising Club membership, having joined in 1957 on the strength of early cruising aboard Tommy Cobbe’s yawl *Charm* out of Malahide, his boyhood home. A founding committee member of Malahide Sailing Club in 1958, he honed his skills as a Mermaid owner-skipper, and served MSC as Rear Commodore in 1960. Then from 1963 onwards, after marriage to Betty Morrison of Clontarf, Howth became his home port while he worked his way up the career ladder in Guinness’s, where one of his special memories was a period as Shipping Manager, much involved with the famous Guinness barges on the Liffey

In sailing, The Heg was a tower of strength on other people’s boats, and a skilled and thoughtful skipper on his own craft, doing meticulous research on any cruising ground he planned to visit. He played a key role in several Fastnet campaigns and the Irish Sea championships in the 1960s and ’70s, including taking line honours and winning overall in the 1966 RORC Beurmaris-Cork Race as skipper of the 8 metre C/R *Orana*, owned by Johnny Pearson ICC. For several years he had a notably successful linkup with Malahide owner Noel Speidel ICC and the S&S 34 *Malaise*, and he was also in the afterguard of the internationally-campaigned *Tritsch Tratsch* and *Red Rock* (Otto Glaser ICC).

Then 1978 saw his return to ownership with the Folkboat *Alara*, with which he won several major championships and cruised extensively too – The Heg with *Alara* was the personification of the Folkboat ideal, with club and championship racing, family use, and regular cruising. Subsequently, he cruised many miles (including round Ireland) and club raced with the Achilles 9 metre *Freebird*. Then on retirement he took over the management of his brother-in-law Ian Morrison ICC’s Hallberg Rassy 42 *Safari of Howth* and began his cruising in the Mediterranean, also taking time out to sail thousands of miles in the round-the-world voyage of Commodore Peter Bunting ICC’s Hallberg-Rassy 46 *Gulkarna II*.

The combination of Brian Hegarty and *Safari of Howth* was superb. Those of us who were fortunate enough to be on board for the first visit to Venice in 1990 saw a master at work. Venice wasn’t really geared towards cruising yachts, but Heg had as usual done his work and diplomacy beforehand, and we arrived in with the new day the *The Serenissima* came beautifully awake, securing a perfect pre-arranged berth two minutes



Brian Hegarty’s Folkboat *Alara* – which he cruised every year – on her way to winning the Irish Sea Championship of 1978.
Photo: W M Nixon

OBITUARY

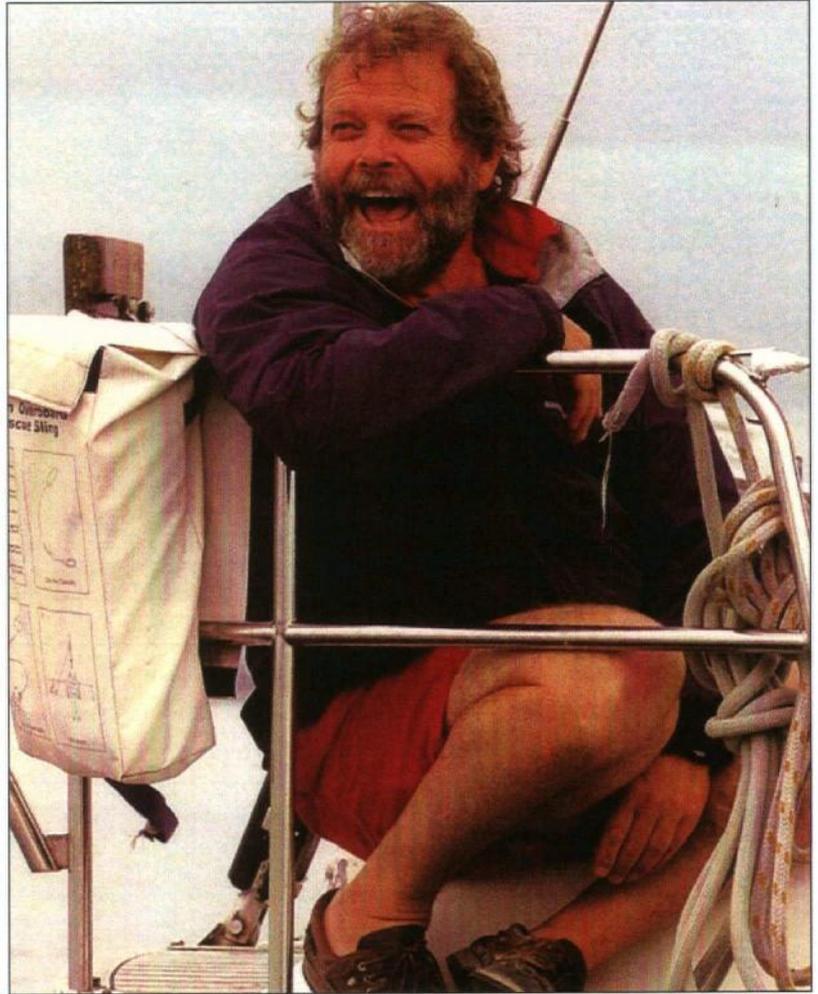
John Thompson QC

Most of you will be aware of the untimely death of John Thompson which resulted from a tragic accident on board his Oyster 21 *Avocet* during last year's Atlantic Rally for Cruisers. The incident and the events which followed it have been widely reported in the yachting press.

John was a larger than life character and I was privileged to be among his wide circle of friends in the sailing world. I know his death deeply affected us all – particularly those of us who have made similar voyages and who could readily identify with the situation the crew of *Avocet* found themselves in. He died doing what he loved doing – sailing on a powerful, well found boat and while he was not a member of the ICC I can assure you that he sailed and cruised in keeping with the very best traditions of the Club both afloat and ashore. Had he survived I am sure he would have become a prominent member some day.

John died in Barbados and because no transparent facilities were available on the island his organs were unable to be used for the benefit of others as he had wished. Immediately following his passing his widow Tina and rest of his family decided to set up a Trust Fund in his memory to raise money to enable organ donor facilities to be provided on the island so that such a thing could not happen again. I can think of no more appropriate way of commemorating John's life. Throughout the whole ghastly experience Tina says that they were treated in Barbados as one of their own and she will never forget the way they were all received on its warm shores.

Peter Ronaldson



Brian Hegarty – continued

across the water from St Mark's. *Safari's* crew became true Venetians for a couple of very memorable days.

In 1995 he became an owner again with the 36ft Westerly Conway ketch *Oleander of Howth* (he was always a Laurent Giles fan), and for the next decade cruised the length and breadth of the Mediterranean, spending six months on the boat every summer and fulfilling his belief that true cruising is about enjoyment. Each year, after weeks of sailing in the sun, he looked remarkably like the German film star Curt Jurgens, and was mistaken for him several times. In typically dry Heg style, he said that "If this Herr Jurgens insists on looking like me, that's his problem".

His cruising was in itself an example and service to fellow enthusiasts, but he also gave of his time in practical ways. Having become a member of the Irish Cruising Club in 1957, he served for many years on the committee. He was Honorary

Secretary from 1981 to 1990, Rear Commodore in 1992, and Vice Commodore 1993-96. In 1996, as the then Honorary Secretary was away on an oceanic voyage, Brian took on the task of organizing the Annual Dinner in Westport in April 1996. It was the most spectacular dinner the club ever staged, with something like 346 people attending a boisterous night.

Yet The Heg himself, while he enjoyed a party, was a quiet man. He had a gentle and beautifully modulated voice which was a pleasure to listen to, and his opinions carried real weight. Those of us who heard his adjudication of the 2005 ICC Awards at the AGM in 2006 felt that here indeed was the spirit and conscience of the Irish Cruising Club. He was a fount of wisdom on anything to do with boats and sailing, and excellent company afloat and ashore. Brian Hegarty is much missed.

The Marie Trophy

Michael McKee, a past Commodore of the club, has kindly donated a new trophy for 'The best cruise for a yacht under 30'feet.LOA'

The *SV Marie*

The history of a rather special boat

D F White

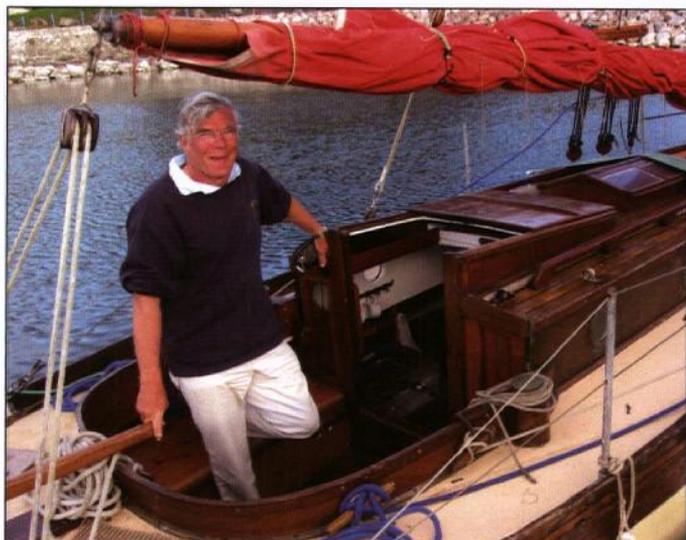
The *SV Marie* has had a long association with the Irish Cruising Club, having been owned for some 10 years by HR (Hu) Wallace of Myra Castle, Downpatrick. He was a founding Rear Commodore of the Irish Cruising Club.

Following the death of Hu Wallace in 1930, the boat was sold to D Keating and K McFerran and went back to Dun Laoghaire. Under their ownership she won the Faulkner Cup in 1931. She was later owned by Mildred Mooney's first husband, WA Richardson.

Martin Imrie of Bangor eventually bought her, it is thought she was lying in the coal harbour, Dun Laoghaire. Between buying her and coming down to sail her home she was set on fire by vandals. It is reported that Martin received a considerable rebate on the purchase price.

A year or so later, she came ashore in Ballyholme Bay in a September gale. She was rescued by Ballyholme Yacht Club and was taken into Bangor Shipyard where she lay, a sorry sight, for over a year.

Michael McKee had long coveted the yacht and following a survey went to buy her from Martin Imrie, only to discover that she had just been sold. The following year, Michael finally bought her and Bangor Shipyard carried out the hull repairs. It was remarkable that when one of the pitch pine planks was cut back to enable a longer scarph joint, the smell of resin was heavy in the air, and this after almost seventy years.

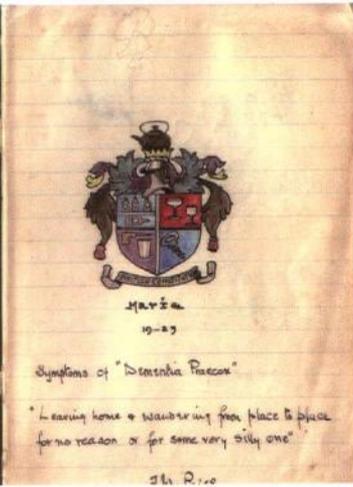
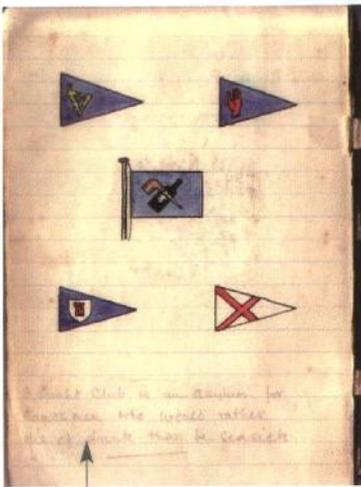


Peter Ronaldson on *Marie* in Groomsport Harbour.

After the hull was made sound Michael, with the help of Dickie Brown, rebuilt the interior and fashioned a new mast from a tree bought from JP Corry. Leich of Tarbert made a new set of tan sails consisting of jib, staysail, main and topsail. As vertical seams had been specified they had to 'false seam' thirty inch cloth as narrow cloth, was not available.



Hu Wallace.

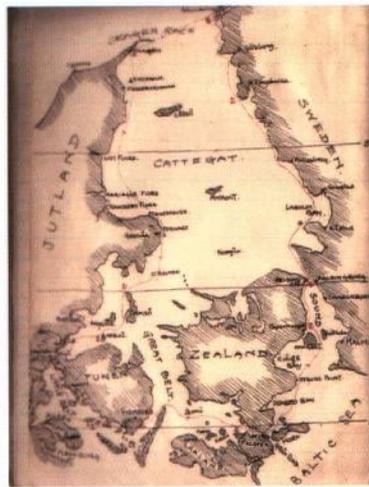


A Yacht Club is an asylum for landmen who would rather get drunk than be seasick.

Symptoms of "Dissensia Paecor"

"Leaving home & wandering from place to place for no reason or for some very silly one"

Sh R. 100



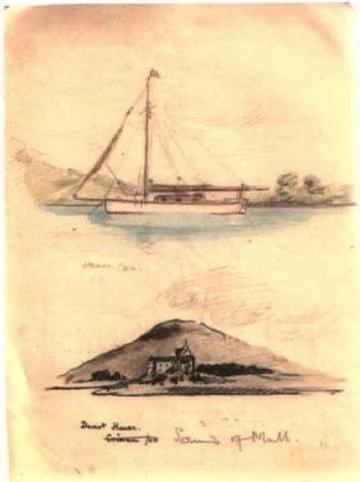
June 18th 1926.

Such a year of chopping & changing. Mackenzie could not come, he was working for some exam & had no time to spare from anxious duties in the Roberts. Roberts (last of the Saxons) could not come. Poor old chapp! He found that he could not, in decency, desert the many charming and altogether refined persons who seek to part with the fool's gold money in the card room of the R.Y.C. It must by this time be a matter of considerable surprise to the aforesaid persons that the "parting" has not been quite so decided an affair as could have been desired.

Anyhow he could not come.

SI - that tactless spirit - was sorry off the list also: as R.C. would remark - somewhat frigiously & pointing down his nose: -

"All, all are gone the old familiar faces"



Marie in Oban.

Duart House, Sound of Mull.

Right and below: Sketches by Hu Wallace taken from his log.



A Study in Mr Buchanan's Black + (D. Under) White

Weather Report at the R.Y.C.
 4th Feb 1923.
 An unsteady glass.
 Inclines to rise.

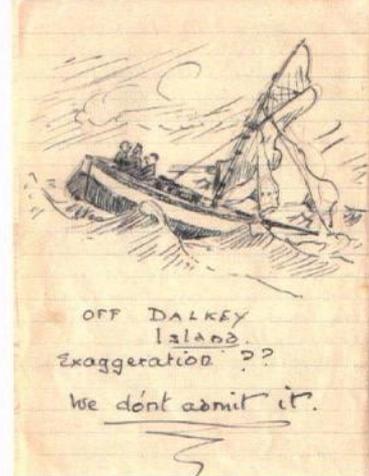


A Merciful Release.

Friday 29th June.

Having finished with the minor details of Dublin in the shape of G.P. Cullen Esq & Mr W.G. Warkley, I gave '51' a miss & after purchasing supplies, repaired aboard 'Marie' by 12:0 Midday.

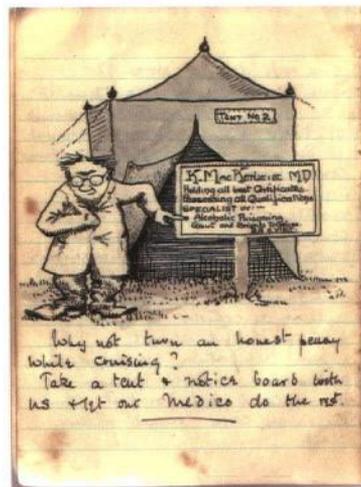
Set sail single handed 2:30 PM & having passed out of harbour lashed tiller then sat upon cabin top & smoked quietly. Marie sailed herself beautifully straight out to South Burford Buoy, turned & reached back to harbour taking 51 minutes. Came to moorings successfully had dinner then played about in dinghy until 9:0 PM. when I sat myself in cockpit & read as long as light permitted. Turned in 11:10 PM. Barometer falling.



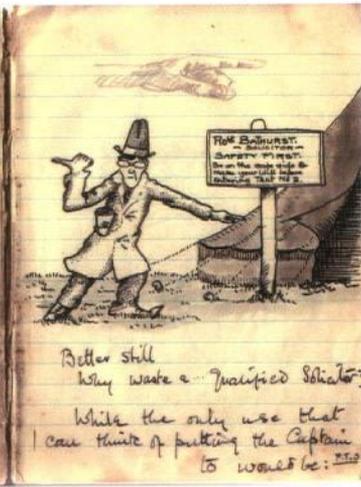
OFF DALKEY Island. Exaggeration?? We don't admit it.

Saturday 18th June.

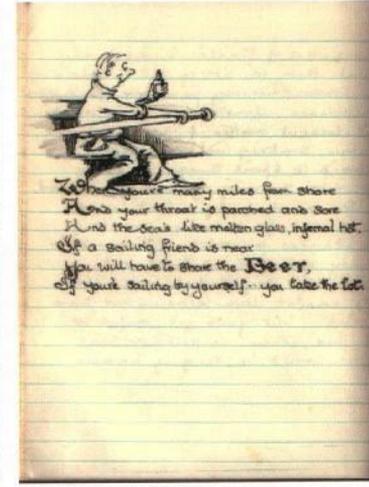
Owing to pressure of work could not spend the week end. Arrived by train 2:15 & boarded boat by dinghy. Civil B.G. arrived. We set sail. M.T.F. & Top 86 & got under way to a very slight Ely breeze. Sailed between Huggins & Dalkey Islands. had a few hectic moments off Dalkey I was also in Dalkey Sound where kind gentleman in little boat said we were charging into a perfect labyrinth of sharp rocks. Thanked him heartily & proceeded. Arrived at Moorings 2:30 PM. Set CBG ashore 9:10 PM. went ashore ourselves 9:25 & cannot have



Why not turn an honest penny while cruising? Take a text & notice board both us & let our Medico do the rest.



Better still why wake a qualified sailor? While the only use that I can think of putting the Captain to would be:



When you're many miles from shore and your throat is parched and sore and the sea like molten glass, infernal hot. If a sailing friend is near you will have to share the Beer. If you're sailing by yourself... you take the lot.

Single Handedness

No person who has sailed single handed can refrain from holding forth at length upon it. It is like six authors when they return from America & write their impressions. Abolish.

Like Mr Henry Reynolds, I became a single handed through necessity rather than the other choice.

Persons to this year I had gained a thrill whenever I sailed Marie by myself in Strongford Lough. Had I been altogether alone & not cruising in company I would not have done as recorded in these pages. I would have had proper sleep I would have done a few meals, consequently I have never had been no sense of strain & I suppose I should therefore have been able to

Although not often a race winner, she competed in every North Channel race for five or six seasons, her best result being 2nd to *Siolta* in the Clyde's North Channel race from RUYC to Tighnabruich in 1966.

Michael cruised her up the west coast of Scotland every July of his ownership and never failed to complete the cruise within 14 days, despite having no engine!

It was reported that some years after Michael sold her she was being used as a henhouse in Magheramorne near Larne.

Restored again

I am since advised by our commodore, Peter Ronaldson, that the yacht has again been restored and is currently moored in Groomsport. In the attached photograph taken this year, Peter is seen standing on the *Marie* in Groomsport Harbour.

My interest in the yacht came from reading Hu Wallace's *Marie* logs 1921 to 1930 which reside in Myra Castle library and I have extracted the details of her early history from construction up until she left Strangford Lough in 1930. The log contain many hand drawn sketches of yachts, anchorages, cartoons and landscapes, some of which I have reproduced overleaf with permission from the family.

The *Marie* was built for W O'Connor by JE Doyle of Kingstown in 1893 and rigged as a yawl. It is said that the final lines of the yacht came from the hand of Miss Doyle, JE's daughter. She was subsequently sold to Dr Cocksed of Athlone and was altered to sloop rig.

The next owner was Dr AW Baker of Dublin who bought the boat in 1903. The boat was towed on a trailer from Banagher by horse, altered again by JE Doyle, who fitted a cabin and booby hatch and transformed her back to yawl rig.

These construction details have been taken from the 1921 log as passed to Hu Wallace by Dr Baker. They also tally with the 1948 Lloyds Register.

LOA	25'-7"
Beam	7'-1"
Thames Tonnage	5t
Registered tonnage	3.5t
Official number	117.514
Registered as a ketch	

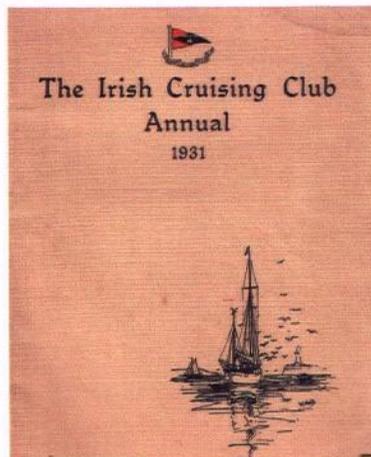
Rigged as cutter

In 1904 she was stripped of her copper by Atkinson of Bulloch Harbour and raised 1'4" forward and 7-8" all round, with extra timbers, a flush deck and a smaller cockpit. Under her copper she was very badly fastened. A new main boom, bowsprit and boomkin were fitted. Cement was run in forward.

In 1912 she was rigged as a cutter with sails by Perry of Kingstown. She carried the same rig and sails up until Hu Wallace replaced them in 1924. Sails were again by Perry of Kingstown.

The yacht was not fitted with an auxiliary engine nor did it have any provision for 'Evinruding' as the use of an outboard engine was referred to among the RIYC members at that time.

Hu bought the *Marie* from Dr AW Baker in 1921 when he was 21 years old, and cruised the yacht extensively during his short ownership. He was studying for law exams in a Dublin solicitor's practice and had become a member of the Royal Irish Yacht Club. He had also served in the Royal Naval Reserve during WWI. He described the *Marie* as 'The prettiest double-ender of her size I have ever set eyes on'



The 1921 season was spent mostly in Dublin Bay where both the yacht and new owner were well known. Visits and excursions with *Espanola*, *Verve*, and other Dublin Bay yachts with whom he had previously sailed, are well recorded in his logs.

After some months of 'near misses' and 'incidents' ranging from Wicklow Head to Rockabill, in August of that year he sailed the yacht to Strangford Lough with his friends, R G Bathurst and K F MacKenzie. The trio then made an inaugural cruise to the Royal Hotel, Campbeltown and back. He records that he was well pleased with the sea-going qualities of the yacht and the abundance of stowage space, especially of the liquid variety.

In 1922 *Marie* again cruised from Strangford to Campbeltown, and up to the canal basin at Ardrishaig. When faced with a 25/= fee for a tow through the Crinan canal, Hu decided to sail, and did so successfully. They then went to Oban, up the Sound of Mull to Tobermory, returning to the Crinan canal by way of the Cuan Sound and Lough Melford.

Following a few days gale-bound in the canal basin, they eventually sailed to Lough Ranza, Arran and then back to Strangford. A passage time of 28 days.

In 1923 *Marie* went further afield and in just over three weeks rounded the Mull of Kintyre to Gigha, on to Oban, round Ardnamurchan, and spent some pleasant days in the Kyle Rhea. They then returned back through the Cuan Sound, Lough Melford and back through the Crinan Canal. They spent a day in Lough Ranza, then to Campbeltown where they got re-acquainted with the Royal Hotel and then to Strangford Lough. That cruise started in Strangford Lough on the 7th August 1923 and ended there on the 30th August - A passage time of 23 days, all under sail!

"Light-headed" log

On 3rd July 1924, *Marie* set sail for the Outer Hebrides with H R Wallace and his regular companions. They were celebrating passing their final exams in their respective professions and the log for this year is very 'light headed'.

This time they went straight up the North Channel, past the Mull of Kintyre and on up the sound of Islay, and anchored in Port Mhor, Colonsay. The winds were not favourable for Iona and a day was spent sheltering behind the Treshnish Islands. Next day they anchored in Iona for supplies and then on to Gometra for the evening. The plan was to head out to South Uist but changing winds took them to Canna harbour. Wallace describes this harbour as "The most gentlemanly anchorage I have yet been in!"

The plan then changed with the wind and they headed towards Skye, stopping in Dunvegan, Rona, Portree, and anchored in Kyleakin.

In Kyleakin they met with a Swedish yacht called *Akka* which had sailed from Helleviksstrand in the Skaggerak, through the Pentland Firth and were on passage to the south coast of England and then back to Sweden. The owner of this other 'engineless' yacht was called Rolf Hallgren, a member of the Royal Swedish Yacht Club. They became firm friends in a very short period, and Hu accepted an invitation to cruise to Swedish waters to meet him in the following year. They cruised in company as far as Isle Ormsay, where an unfavourable southerly set in.

Marie then headed back up the Kyle Rea, to Rona and on to the Summer Isles. They had a look at Cape Wrath, and then crossed

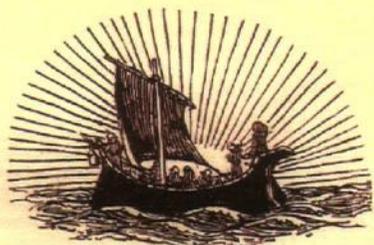
Hugh R. Wallace

Late Rear-Commodore of the I.C.C.

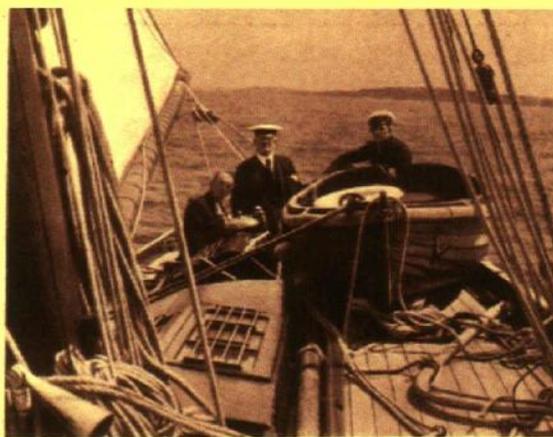
WHEN THE FLAG OFFICERS of the I.C.C. were being chosen, Hugh Wallace's selection as Rear-Commodore was unanimous. His loss was a stunning blow felt by every member, but more particularly by those who had come into intimate contact with him. Though still in the twenties he had accomplished a series of daring passages in his 5-ton cutter *Marie*, and as a member of the Royal Cruising Club he had been awarded the coveted Claymore Cup of that Club for a single-handed cruise from Brightlingsea to Strangford, through the Pentland Firth in 1928. He was an enthusiastic sailor, and his exploits were the result of his personal skill and sea-lore, and owed nothing to the aid of an engine.

In June last he purchased a 16-foot canoe yawl, which had lain in the Royal Irish Yacht Club boathouse for many years, his idea being that such a boat would be ideal in the upper reaches of Strangford Lough. Prudence would have suggested her transport to Strangford by rail, but Wallace's buoyant spirit rebelled against that course, and he set out alone from Kingstown at 9.30 p.m. on Saturday, 29th June, to sail her home. At that time conditions were favourable—light off-shore breeze and smooth water—but during the night the wind shifted to S.E. and strengthened, and many friends who had seen him set off were beset with misgivings as to the success of his venture, but were buoyed up by the hope that he had beached the boat before the sea had risen. Alas! Monday morning brought tidings which shocked everyone—the boat had come ashore on Sunday afternoon at Ballagan Point, close to Carlingford Lough, untenanted, and Wallace was missing.

That he had made a glorious bid for victory was evident. When his boat came ashore the jib was set, but main and mizen were stowed and lashed, and it would seem that Wallace had made all snug for the run across Dundalk Bay, and then, probably tired out after a long train journey on the Saturday, and an all-night passage, had dozed while sitting, and lurching overboard in a roll. Strong swimmer as he was, his chance was then hopeless. We may draw some comfort and consolation from the thought that he would have wished the end to come on his beloved sea.



4



Gull SLIPPING ALONG NICELY

Hu Wallace.



THE CREWS ASHORE AT DOUGLAS, L.O.M., WHITSUNTIDE, 1930.

Pages from the 1931 ICC Annual

to Stornaway, down to South Uist (their original destination) back to Kyleakin and on down the Sound of Mull.

On passing Oban they spotted Herbert Wright, anchored in Ardentraive Bay in Kerrera Sound and they tied alongside *Espanola* for the evening

After freeing HM's fouled anchor they sailed in company to the Crinan Canal where *Espanola* gave them a tow through. Then to Loch Ranza, the Royal Hotel and back to Strangford where they anchored on 31st July 1924. Not bad mileage for 28 days sailing.

In the summer 1925, the *Marie* left Strangford Lough and traversed the Caledonian Canal, then across the North Sea to Gothenburg to keep Hu's appointment with Rolf Hallgren in Sweden. They were well received by the Royal Swedish Yacht Club and spent the next few weeks sailing in strange and difficult waters ending up in Hellikistrand where the yacht *Akka* was based.

Marie was laid up for the winter in preparation for a joint cruise with *Akka* in the 1926 season.

None of the usual companions or associates could join *Marie* in 1926 and *Akka* had similar problems. The two yachts set off single-handed and sailed down the Kattegat, around the Danish Islands, Copenhagen and back to Helleviksstrand where *Marie* was once again laid up for the winter. The cruising ground is shown on Hu's hand drawn chart.

In 1927 *Marie* returned to England by way of the Kiel

Canal, Wilhelmshaven, Terschelling and on to a winter berth in Brightlingsea in Essex. Once again Dr. Mackenzie joined the boat for the trip.

Marie had to be brought back to Strangford Lough in 1928 but again friends and companions had other commitments. Hu decided to sail back single-handed by way of the Pentland Firth. On this 23-day trip he only went into harbour for three nights, namely Peterhead, Wick and Oban.

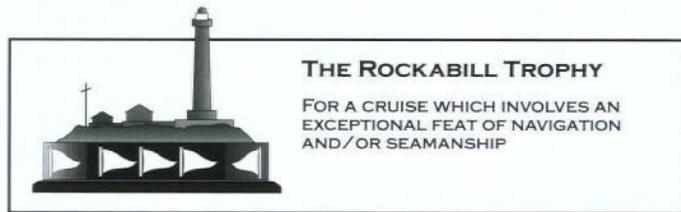
The RCC log makes a fascinating read for a North Sea / North Channel passage in a small wooden boat with tales of going backwards, dining on blue and sometimes green food with very hard sailing – not to mention navigation by sextant and a cheap wristwatch. He was awarded the RCC Claymore Cup for this passage.

Missing the tide at Strangford Bar, he made for Ardglass where he sat out another gale. When the wind moderated the passage to the anchorage at Myra Roads in Strangford was moderately easy.

The postscript of the 1928 log does not appear in any report. When *Marie* had been anchored at Myra Roads, the dinghy was launched to go ashore to the castle Hu noticed that the painter had somehow not been attached to the yacht and the dinghy was now heading down tide and down wind. With no one around to blame, it was a question of 'clothes off' and a swim ashore – what an undignified end to such a tremendous passage!

A Tragic Crossing

Paul Bryans



The 2007 Atlantic Rally for Cruisers (ARC) started with sunshine breaking through the clouds, a north-northeast wind of some 20 knots and quite a swell running across the line, just south of the main breakwater of Las Palmas harbour. On *Avocet* we chose to start at the northwestern end – not far from the inner distance mark near the shore. The crew – John Thompson (owner and skipper) his son Dan, brother Richard, David Thompson (no relation but an old sailing friend of John), Ben Burns (a friend of Dan) and me (navigator) – were determined to get to St Lucia in the shortest time possible and without any motoring (which is permitted with a time penalty). We hoisted our spinnaker just before the gun and came out on port, crossing in front of most of the fleet before gybing onto starboard. We expected to stay running for the rest of the crossing, though we doubted the kite would remain up for that long.

Two rescues

Little did we realise that this was to be a trip very much of two halves and which would involve two rescues.

This may have been the start of the race but the preparation dated back to early 2005 when John had researched an Atlantic circuit. Then at Antigua Week that April, where John had organised a group of us to charter *Northern Child* (a Swan 51), the plot was finally hatched. The Week had been great fun but John and I agreed that it would have been better if we had been on his Oyster 41, *Avocet*. The button was pushed during Cork Week 2006, which was appropriate. John and I had been at school together and he crewed for me in my *Enterprise* but we drifted apart before we met again at an earlier Cork Week. *Avocet* had suffered engine and gearbox problems on the way down from Bangor and had to be left in Crosshaven following the Week for Hugh Cassidy to put it all back together again. John bit the bullet and told Hugh to go ahead with fitting a generator and a water-maker while he was at it. Once back in Bangor an SSB radio was installed, much of the boat rewired (she dated from 1988 so was rather tired in the electrical department) and a new chart plotter fitted. Additionally, a float-free EPIRB was installed, a new liferaft fitted on the pushpit and six new lifejackets, six Lifetag MoB alarms and a large Cat “A” medical kit were put on board.

As well as sorting the boat the crew also undertook some training upgrades: John did his four-day LRC radio (to cover the SSB) and the two-day ISAF safety course; Dan (a Yachtmaster Ocean and a professional sailor) did the seven-day Medical Care at Sea course and I completed the STCW '95 “basic training” including 2½ day fire fighting course (a Yachtmaster Ocean Instructor I already held an LRC and Medical Care qualification). Ben was one of Dan’s sailing-course pupils so was very much in training mode but his spell in the Royal Navy Reserve would also prove to be invaluable; he also fulfilled the important role of “token Englishman”!

Our trip to the sun commenced on 11th July 2007 when John, Richard, David and I left Bangor for Spain. We set out in

the belief that everything was working but, of course, it wasn't. All seemed fine until the middle of the night when we suffered complete electrical failure. Since we were motoring at the time it was obvious that the charging system was not working. We started the generator and headed for a very wet Dun Laoghaire. A cracked master switch was identified and John bought a replacement switch but the wiring did not fit so we found an excellent local man who fitted it and also replaced the diode for good measure.

Late on 13th July we returned to our passage making, the rain having finally stopped. After filling up with diesel, we motored out of the harbour and south inside Dalkey Island. There we found a decent wind which took us down the coast on a starboard fetch threading our way through the off-lying sand banks. Being able to sail was a great relief since the engine sounded like a cement mixer and was also prone to overheating. The problem was the prop shaft flexed and the opening in the hull was too small; it was all very sensitive to alignment and never recovered fully from the work the previous year. The overheating was a different matter; sometimes the engine would run for hours uninterrupted and at other times the temperature would just keep rising. John slowly came around to the view that the engine would need to be replaced. We hoped to use the generator, which was almost inaudible by comparison, to keep the batteries topped up. However, we discovered a diesel leak from the generator fuel filter which we decided should be fixed before we crossed Biscay.

We therefore aimed for the Scillies where we hoped to find a diesel fitter and top up the tanks again (the diesel tank was a pitiful 26 gallons, the water tank hardly any better – a real sign of the age of the boat). We arrived into St Mary’s after lunch, just missing the fuel berth time, and picked up a visitor’s mooring amongst the French yachts which seemed to be occupying all the other spaces. We pumped up the dinghy and went ashore for a pint and to have a shower. The Harbourmaster pointed out we were oversize for the mooring but nevertheless took £10 for the day. After booking a table in the Star Castle Hotel we did some shopping and obtained an ice-cream tub with a handle which we could use to catch the diesel drips, putting off the need for the fitter. Another pint convinced us that we should press on after dinner as we did not really need either diesel or water and did not want to waste more time.

No mistaking the Bishop

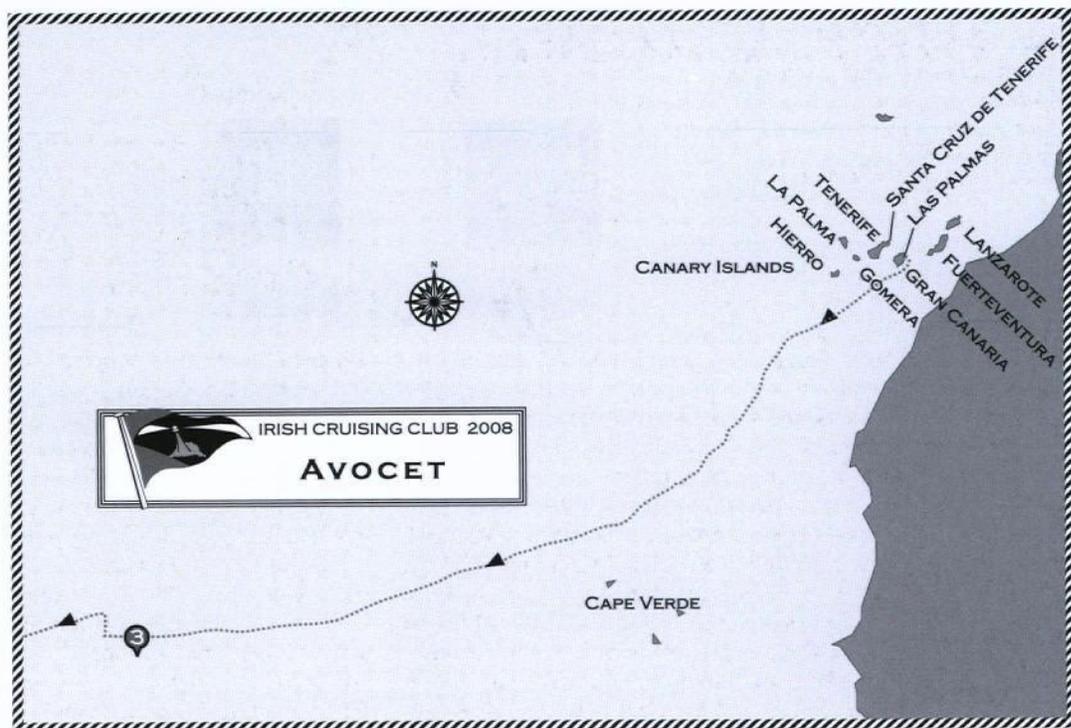
At sunset on 15th July we dropped the mooring and threaded our way out (we may have been a foot oversize but most of the other boats were as well and were all practically touching; it must be “interesting” there when it is rough). We then motored out past the Bishop Rock, the first time I had done it at dusk and I was surprised to discover that the channel buoys are not lit (they don’t want you entering at night), however, no mistaking the Bishop. Out of the channel the wind was southwest, as was our destination, so we set sail on port,

heading west and under full rig sailed into the night. The forecast was for a steady southwesterly for the next few days but I expected it to veer slightly so, being lazy, I decided to head for the Cape Finisterre lay-line, a good 150 miles out. After less than a day the wind did the decent thing and veered sufficiently to allow us to tack and almost lay Finisterre, without squeezing up too much, and in that way we crossed the Bay without any further complications. The boat sailed beautifully with hardly a hand on the wheel and no need for the autohelm. We saw little shipping and only one other yacht on the crossing but as we came near the land we had much more

wildlife nearby. This included a 50 foot whale so close on the starboard side that we could have stepped off the side of the boat on to the creature's back. Luckily Richard had seen it ahead and swerved quickly enough to avoid a direct hit which would not have been good for either us or the whale, which must have been asleep on the surface. Dolphins were more numerous and we wasted many mega-pixels on their swoops and dives as they played around the bow. Ship's time was changed to Spanish time while John and Richard were on watch, not only doing the navigator's job but depriving me of an hour in bed! As we got close to Finisterre the wind veered further and eventually we hoisted a kite and, in glorious sunshine, continued south passing the Cape at 17.00 on 19th July.

Just before midnight we entered the Ria de Arosa in northwest Spain, one of the larger Rias in the Baja area. Richard was booked on a flight from Santiago de Compostela to join a family holiday and the wives of the rest of the crew were flying in on the 21st to stay in a hotel in Villagarcia at the head of the Ria. By this stage we had run out of patience with the engine so beat our way up the Ria in a dying wind with shellfish farms in every available inshore area. It was also unbelievably cold, and felt more like the north of Scotland in November than Spain in June. Eventually at 08.45 on the 20th we found the visitors pontoon in Villagarcia Marina and tied up. I spotted two ICC burgees on empty yachts and other visitors in this marina, which is obviously a good cruising base being a short distance from the airport with direct flights to Dublin and Stansted.

After the wives were fetched and settled in we made one attempt to make a day trip across the Ria but were defeated by rain of biblical proportions and the dodgy engine, so retired to the marina bar. We then spent the next week in the Hotel de Pazo O Rial, where the ladies lay by the pool while the men spent time on and off arranging for work to be done on the boat. The local Volvo engineer worked on the engine and diesel leaks, and an electrician fitted four new domestic batteries, replacing the existing two tired units, lifting capacity from 220ah to 420ah. John also decided to lift the boat out to re-align



the prop shaft. This manoeuvre proved comical as the boat hit the end of the slip and could not reach the hoist; as it was only neaps the operation was delayed for four days, by which time there was sufficient depth for a successful lift. Still, there are worse places to be stuck with a sick boat; the yard proved to be very efficient and the town was en-fête providing plenty of entertainment. If that was not good enough, a visit to Santiago de Compostela was possible by train for the princely sum of €3.40 return.

David and I returned home with our wives on 28th July to make room for the replacement crew, who flew in the next day to take *Avocet* down to the Canaries and they duly arrived in Lanzarote on 12th August. *Avocet* was lifted out and remained there until John returned in November. In the meantime some further work was done on the boat including replacing the autohelm control unit so that it would link into the rest of the electronics (replaced a few years before).

By the time of his return John had purchased a new engine and Hugh Cassidy flew from Cork on 10th November to fit it, John and David Gomes arriving the next day. Fortunately the engine in the Oyster 41 is in the middle of the saloon so replacing it was easier than on most boats and she was re-launched on Friday 16th. The engine started for the first time the next morning and, following a brief sea-trial, she departed for Las Palmas where *Avocet* arrived on Sunday 18th November at 10.00 with John and David Gomes on board.

Avocet joined the arriving ARC fleet and found David Thompson was already there. The first oil service was carried out on the new engine and the Oyster service team provided some helpful tips and reassurance on the function of the power systems. More importantly several SSB gurus provided the input required to get the email system working; it would be needed throughout the trip for both communication and weather forecasts. Fortunately we also got one of the four Yellowbrick trackers which meant that we did not have to report in each day, although John did plan to take part in the daily SSB position exchange and chat.

Dan Thompson arrived and David Gomes returned home on Monday 19th. Dan concentrated his efforts on stowage and boat preparations including rigging and deck equipment, to pass the

scrutineering checks. This revealed that two of the new lifejackets were missing and could not be located onboard so Richard was requested to bring another two out with him. John also started to confront the big issue – food for the trip. A trip to El Corte Inglés (the main supermercado) resulted in several trolleys full of goods, which were to be delivered in 15 boxes (plus three cases of water and two sacks of spuds) to the Marina a few days later.

I arrived on Wednesday 21st from London in time to help with the final preparations and to be greeted by thunder, lightning and heavy rain overnight. I brought with me a rented Iridium satellite phone, which I had set up to send and receive emails from my laptop computer using a dedicated email address.

By Thursday I was tracking the weather and also watched the safety demonstrations. There was very heavy rain at times but at least it was dry when the 14 boxes of food arrived to be unpacked, tins washed (to ensure no cockroach eggs were taken on board), labelled and stowed in agreed locations.

On Friday morning Chris Tibbs (the weather expert, with whom I have sailed in the Mediterranean on Clayton Love's *Jap*) ran a sextant lesson on the Marina wall which I joined and ended up demonstrating to some how to use their sextants, as there was a rather large group and many were very confused! On *Avocet* our main problem was that John's laptop had crashed. It had all the software for the email system via SSB radio whereas mine ran the sat phone email system, so we might be relying on that when it was supposed to be the backup. Richard arrived late in the evening to be greeted by more rain – it seemed to be heavier at night and the wind stronger.



Avocet ashore in Villagarcia.

On Saturday morning John and I did a fruit and veg. raid on the local market. All purchases were washed and dried on deck before being packed in "green" bags, which extend considerably the period during which fresh produce remains fresh – the two sacks of spuds, however, remained unpacked and unwashed; we took the risk on those. It was a tribute to the stowage space in the *Oyster 41* that we still had space in several lockers. Last safety check was at 09.30, photo-shoot at 11.30 and skippers' briefing at 12.00. There were eight other Irish boats in the ARC and I met some of the crew of the only ICC yacht, *Mary P* (Neil Prendeville) at the briefing. I discussed the routing with John and said that I think we should follow the Trades route, i.e. southwest from Las Palmas and gradually turn right as the wind veers from northeast to east-northeast and then east. This should take us to west of Cape Verde and then straight over to St Lucia. Not as short as the rhumb line, but from the seven-day GRIB charts it looked like we should avoid unsettled, possibly calm, spells. I decided on a number of way-points on the chosen route and loaded them into the plotter and also my handheld GPS. I met Chris Tibbs and discussed our plans; he thought they made sense, at least I think that is what he said, perhaps he was just humouring me!

We also managed to find time to fill up with fuel (including 4 x 25 litre containers on deck) though we did not have time to check the water-maker, outside the harbour. Ben did not turn up until late in the evening; he had managed to lose his passport and only just got a replacement in time – too long a story to repeat here!

The ARC

The following report of the trip is an edited version of my daily reports and some of John's comments:



Richard and John leaving Bangor.



Dan, John, Richard, Paul and David.

DAY 1: THE START – SUNDAY 25TH NOVEMBER

Everything on the boat is now working including John's laptop, which is a great relief, and all tanks full and ready to go. A photo shoot has been arranged before the start for the Oyster fleet – 16 boats – and there are no prizes for guessing which is the smallest and oldest! We go out early and loiter in the appointed area but the helicopter does not appear so no photos. Wind force 6 but is forecast to get lighter.

We cross the line for the 13.00 start under spinnaker and run down the island shore in very good shape and slowly settle into our watch routine. We have chosen a rolling system of two hours on and four off. The watch leaders are John, Dan and me with the other three overlapping with us so that Ben does one hour with Dan then one with me being replaced by David and then Richard; that way there is one change every hour, so no rush for the best bunk. Since the nights are 12 hours long this system gives eight hours of sleep in darkness leaving the hot days, when sleeping difficult, for reading and dozing, cleaning and cooking. We will also stick to GMT (or UTC if you are under 40 years old!) which will slowly "dog" the watches as we cross. We also write the log every two hours when the leaders change.

Cautionary removal of the kite as the wind rose to 30 knots under a rain squall. White sails for the rest of the day.

DAY 2 – MONDAY 26TH

My birthday so cards and presents opened, birthday cake but no drink (this is a dry ship). Not many neighbours to invite round though as only a couple of other boats visible in the distance now. Progressing well in 20 to 25



Evening drinks in Villagarcia (Ruth, David, Florence, John and Tina).

knots from north-northeast so on a broad reach most of the time with a quartering sea which give us the odd soaking. Full oilskins last night but over tee shirt and shorts with Crocs (the rain runs out of the holes, which is useful). Later very sunny and warm – I think the problem is going to be how to sleep in a few days when we are farther south and it is much hotter. We run the water-maker only to find the tank is already nearly full, so go back to allowing the crew to wash. The generator is being run to charge batteries twice a day, so now settling into a routine of sorts keeping everything topped up.

DAY 3 – TUESDAY 27TH

Sunny, sea is slight (well, only a 2m swell) and north-northeast wind of 15 knots; spinnaker up and doing 7 knots at times. We

also discover that it is not a good idea to leave the forward hatch open just because it is reasonably calm. Good news is it only took an hour to dry out the bedding. First sextant sight went well – 1.7 miles out which is reasonable for these conditions. Ben has brought a brand new sextant as well (must be keen) so giving him lessons. Ben also spent much of the morning hanging out of the boat wrestling with a large catch on his fishing rod. At the noon SSB radionet – we all check in with our positions and have a chat – John was going to ask if any of the boats had a recipe for a 60lb tuna. Just in time the awful truth was revealed: Ben's catch was only a 2m length of yellow net. The email system on the SSB is working well but best reception is at night. The sat phone email is proving difficult as it keeps dropping the connection which means all the emails have to be downloaded again and again until they all come through and terminate properly. John got GRIB weather files by SSB and was thinking about

attempting a weather fax. I download seven-day GRIB files from Ugrib – GRIB.US – by sat phone. Ben finally caught a fish (a 4 lb male Dorado) which Dan cooked but as we had just eaten not everybody sampled it but those who did said it was very good (especially Ben).

DAY 4 – WEDNESDAY 28TH

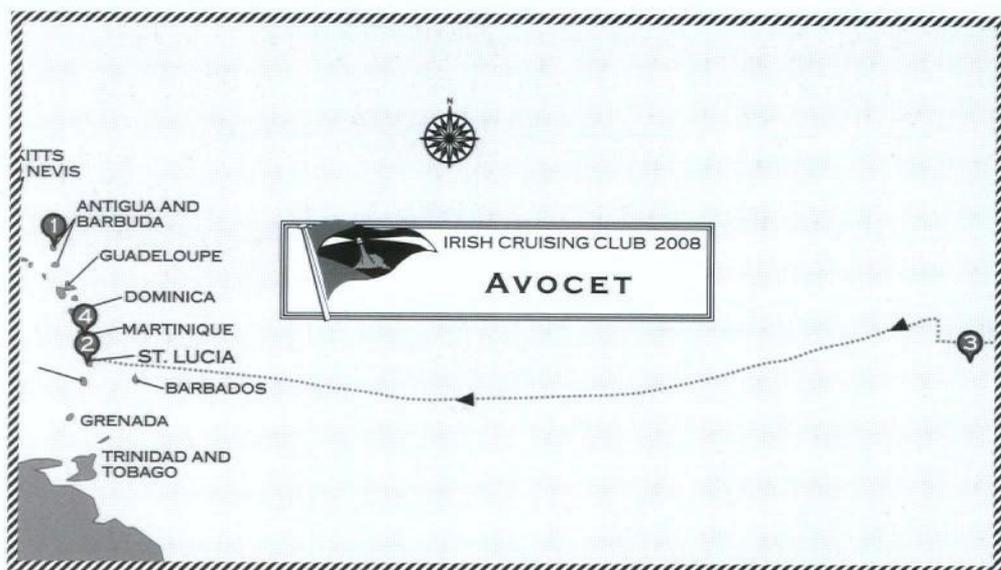
The day starts sunny but turns dull. Wind 15 to 25 knots and up and down in strength but just about same direction – northeast or east-northeast. We hoisted the spinnaker at 10.00 yesterday and are still on port gybe with the kite still up. Overnight it had been a matter of “follow that sail” as the spinnaker dictated which way we would go. The water-maker has been run to fill the tank and I have my second shower, so all is well. GPS seems to be 2.5 miles out when checked by moon and sun sights. I now realise that I had made a mistake with the green bags as they are not working as they should. Mistake seems to have been that the fruit was not totally dry after being washed. However, no major problem and I dry everything properly but we are eating through the stock rapidly in any case. We spot our first whale and also a pod of dolphin.

DAY 5 – THURSDAY 29TH

Another day and much the same as yesterday. Last night it looked as if we would be hit by a squall so we took the spinnaker down but it didn't come, so put it up again a few hours later. Now chasing it around the ocean again. We have been virtually running since the start and only gybed once since clearing the start line. We are now the farthest south of all the boats in our class and possibly of all the 240 boats. Going well – our daily runs have been: 164, 163, 179 and 176 miles but still 2,100 to go! Main problem is that the boat is rolling all over the ocean which makes sleeping very difficult and I woke with a stiff neck from my head flopping from side to side. Suspect I need to find a narrower bunk! I made porridge for breakfast (again) and came in for much abuse from the three who do not appreciate its nourishing properties, so may give up. Much reading and also sextant lessons for Ben (rest of crew not interested – seem to be satisfied that Uncle Sam won't desert us). Fortunately today's sights show GPS to be spot on. Water tanks full again after water-maker refill and generator running six hours per day. We are considering turning off the fridge for periods to save power. Very hot, as you would expect, and bright with it so I developed a headache from all the reading. Sailing at night is much easier than during the day, especially with the moon up – although that is waning rapidly and it is pitch black before it rises. At night there is no need for more than a sweatshirt and shorts as weather dry now.

DAY 6 – FRIDAY 30TH

Exciting start to the day as we shredded our spinnaker at 00.10 in pitch darkness. John had just taken over on the helm from me when we were hit by a 35+ knot squall out of a black cloud we did not see coming, which battered us for 15 minutes. As luck would have it I was in the heads – which



is not pleasant when the boat is on its beam ends. We broached and gybed all standing (after letting go the preventer) and the spinnaker wrapped, destroying itself before we could get it down. The remains had to stay up there until dawn as we could not see how to untangle it and we thought somebody would have to go aloft. Fortunately, it simply unwound and fell on deck. We now have a boomed out genoa and the autohelm is on for the first time, so all a lot less frantic, if a bit slower. We also had a laundry session this morning and showers all round, before running the water-maker to top up the tanks. Soft fruit has come to an end; only apples, oranges and green bananas left after breakfast (no porridge). Sextant lessons going well and Ben slowly getting to grips with the principles. GPS seems to be staying accurate to within a mile or so. Ben also found time to cook a meal. Progress was looking very good before the spinnaker mishap but is probably still OK. We appear to be the only boat going the traditional southerly Trades route and we have enough wind so are very happy at present – we will see if it works when we get in! However, we do not seem to have reached the Trades themselves, and have increasing apprehension that others on a more direct route have continued to carry wind that we thought might elude them. We're not quite making our chosen course and are on the wrong gybe for the expected winds – where are they? The problem of having the Yellowbrick tracker on board – and showing our course on their website – is that everybody at home knows what we are doing. Now getting emails from family asking why we are headed for Brazil and far behind the other three yachts? Have to reply explaining that this is all as planned and no need to worry – in fact we almost hit all our waypoints proving that point – while the other boats are all larger and faster: *Northern Child* is a Swan 51, *Nix* an X-612 and *Tillymint* is an Oyster 82.

Day 7 – Saturday 1st

Good news, the Trade Winds have appeared; we have now gybed and are pointing at St Lucia doing around 8 knots in 15 to 22 knots of wind. Bad news is that we are on a run under full main and boomed out genoa and rolling like a pig. Looks like this will hold for several days at least (as far as we can get forecasts). We have given up on hand steering, letting the autohelm (“Henry”) do the job which leaves more time for reading and sun sights etc. even if it uses a lot of power. Tomorrow we will pass the first 1000 miles of our journey of approx 2,800 miles so a bit of celebration there.

We have not seen another yacht since Tuesday but saw one ship on Wednesday night and a tanker on Thursday. Nothing else apart from the odd airplane light seen at night. Don't think there is another ARC yacht within 100 miles now but can just speak to them on SSB MF radio, not VHF (nothing heard on that since Tuesday). SSB is quite weak on transmit so there is clearly something not right but nothing we can do now. Sky at night is wonderful due to the total lack of light pollution. Mars looks really red, which I have not seen to such an extent before, but I am finding it difficult to identify the stars (and there are many new ones to name) due to the level of cloud cover. Flying fish are landing on deck at night but Ben is having less luck with the fishing – the fish bite off the lures or are breaking the line so must be quite large. He got one this afternoon which we cooked and ate straight away and then started cooking a meal, so no risk of starving. Suffering withdrawal symptoms from all the things I like: crisps, coke (the soft drink), coffee, booze and chocolate. Probably should arrange a medical immediately I get there (but not five hours later) as I will be totally detoxed. Sextant work is going much better and Ben making real progress. I am also getting much needed practice in. Results very good but have only done sun and moon so far – planets and stars to come. Everything working well and we have plenty of water and power which is good.

Sea water temperature is now 28.20 C.

DAY 8 – SUNDAY 2ND

David's birthday so another cake ration. Overnight we were obliged to gybe the boat again as the wind went back into the east. Not being able to lay a course better than 290° true was not good news. Later about 03.00 there was an attack upon Richard by a flying fish – standing up in the cockpit he was struck in the chest! Day's run: 190 miles (best so far) and ETA possibly late Tuesday or Wednesday week at this speed. Now at it for a week and hit 12.1 knots last night in a 35 knot squall, which was good as we had one reef in and the genoa half rolled (and poled out), with the autohelm on. So Henry holds the speed record beating the human crew best of 10.9 knots under spinnaker but in less wind! We are still reefed as it is blowing 20/25 knots and quite a big sea running, although we are doing somewhat less than 12 knots – probably only averaging about 8 knots. Latest problem is that the generator stopped again and it appears to be a cooling water issue. Dan at it for three hours (as the water pump is in the most inaccessible place – aren't they always?) before it was fixed and running with a new impellor. Good news is that we ran the engine to charge the batteries (it actually works better for that but does not produce 240v so won't power the water-maker) giving us a tank of hot water. However, the aft heads bowl almost came adrift and had to be taken apart to re-fix it. It needs to be sorted as we use the forward one for stowage of sails and wet weather gear, where we want to keep them. We are now quite clearly the most southerly boat (from emailed position reports) but we may go deeper as the forecast for up north is less wind or in the wrong direction, or both. Since *Tillymint* was only 30 miles ahead of us yesterday (and the only boat this far south) we are quite happy. It is almost too hot to go on deck during the day and too warm to sleep at night in a stuffy cabin (have to close hatches to keep water and flying fish out) until a few hours before dawn. However, sailing is now what it says in the brochure: dead downwind, every mile another one towards the destination.

DAY 9 – MONDAY 3RD

Apparently it's winter but it is so hot here at midday that going on deck is only for the foolhardy. No drama today so I spent the morning reading and giving sextant lessons. However, the generator won't start (it ran well last night) but it is too hot to try to sort out until later, when the sun will be lower. This time dirty fuel is the suspect. David re-fastened the toilet bowl in the aft heads – with the passage of time the plywood base to the heads had become soft; by 13.00 good humour has been restored to the crew. Flying fish abound but all small today and Ben has not tried fishing due to heat. We are well to the south of all the rest but the forecast is that they will run out of wind soon whereas we have 15/20 knots from due east here, and forecast is that it is to hold for us. So we are feeling reasonably happy with things at present.

Sea temperature now 29.50°C.

DAY 10 – TUESDAY 4TH

Tillymint is now apparently 120 miles to the south of us, but abeam. The rolling watch system and sticking to GMT seems to be working out well: when we started I got the last daylight watch in the evening and a nighttime one in the morning; now it is the other way round with the passage westward and with the changing local time. We put the (second) spinnaker up after lunch today but it only lasted two and a half hours before ripping – due to old age it is assumed – so now back to poled-out genoa (and gybed onto starboard). We have one more spinnaker left but will keep that for racing around the cans. We have now not seen another yacht for over a week but saw a freighter this afternoon; spoke to them on VHF but their English was not good enough to have a sensible conversation. Otherwise only flying fish (they really do fly in "flocks") as no birds out here. Worst of all, a fuel leak from the generator (now fixed) combined with a minor water leak from the cockpit (also fixed) and managed to get into the aft cabin which now stinks of diesel. We still have 24 apples and two bunches of green bananas, which seem to be taking ages to ripen, so we are unlikely to suffer from scurvy.

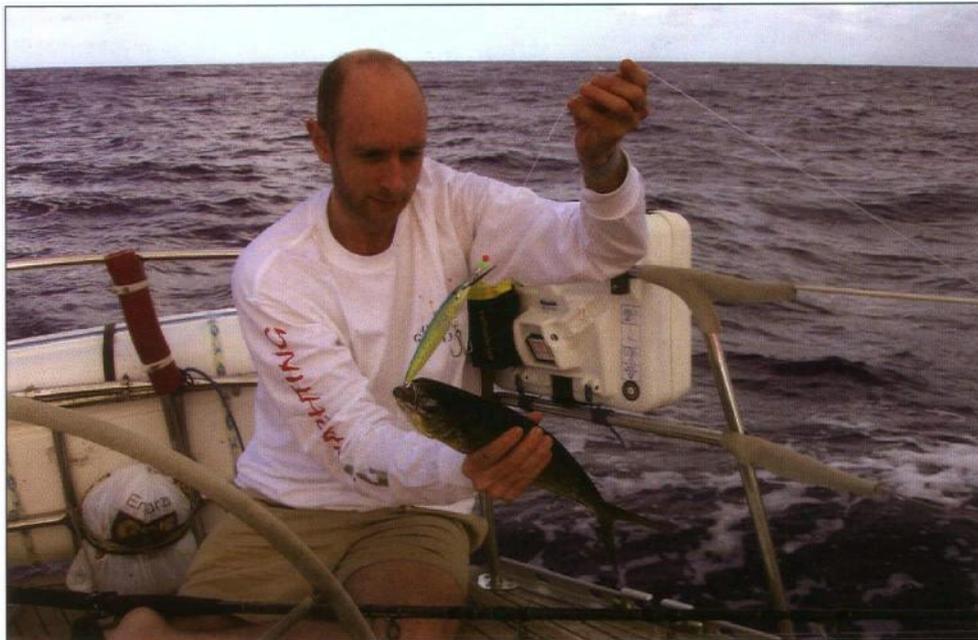
DAY 11 – WEDNESDAY 5TH

Day started badly as the autohelm has now died – the linear drive motor has burned out so it is terminal and we are back to hand steering for 1,400 miles. This is very depressing but not really a surprise as only the electronic control unit was replaced in Lanzarote, not the linear drive which had been refurbished a couple of years ago. More problems with the generator – we think we now understand the issue (poor fuel pick-up causing air locks if tank not almost full, due to excessive rolling) but managed to break a fuel-bleed screw in the process and we do not have a spare on board. However, after some schoolboy physics calculations, we work out we can run the water-maker through the inverter off the batteries. Very hot today so spent most time reading below, however, now that we have gybed onto starboard there is more shade from the main in the afternoon. As we are still keeping to GMT the local time is not 12 noon but 09.00 and in three hours it will be boiling whereas yesterday was overcast all day, which was a great relief. We hear that some boats north of us have very little wind whereas we have had wind the whole time. We pore over the position report email and conclude that we may be leading our class.

John's view on life, or a Half Term Report:

1. The middle of the Atlantic is a big place;

2. Sailing may be more popular than ever, but there's still lots of room in the mid-Atlantic;
3. Gear that lasts for 48 hours at home, may go wrong after nine days at sea e.g. the autohelm;
4. Whilst working for the solution in one part of a problem, the fact that the real problem is elsewhere often eludes e.g. the generator;
5. There's only so much tinned tuna, corned beef, sweet corn etc that a body can eat;
6. It may be 5th Dec but at midday 15°00'N 38°00'W it is too hot to go out of doors;
7. In Ireland the average temperature at this time of year is likely to be of the order of 8°C. Here the water temp is 30.3°C; and
8. No matter how hard we try, we will arrive in Rodney Bay when the pubs are shut.



Ben with first catch.

DAY 12 – THURSDAY 6TH

Very wet today and quite windy so rather unpleasant – like being stuck in a washing-machine. Could be on the west coast of Ireland except that when it rains you take your shirt off and the sea is 30.3°C. One other yacht visible now and it turns out to be *Northabout* on it's way to Guyana. I speak to Rory Casey on the VHF and he fails to understand how an Irish yacht could be "dry" (sound of Jarlath laughing in the background). We agree to meet up at the dinner in Wicklow for a chat. Gybed onto port.

John writes his prophetic final blog:

There are complaints from the passengers (crew). There were to be Northeast Trades – there aren't. The wind is in

the southeast. There were to be glorious sunny days rolling down the Northeast Trades – the weather today has been uniformly grey and wet. Not just Irish drizzle, but good old tropical rain (and I mean RAIN). Still mustn't grumble – the southeast winds have been a-plenty and the day saw a new top speed set by David at 12.3 knots. As far as the crew are concerned, I have drawn their attention to page 26A of the Brochure where it states that it may rain. They say that what has happened today is beyond rain but I have pointed to the photograph showing torrents and chaps in oilskins out in it. Don't yet fear a mutiny because the worst (best) that can happen is that I will be confined to quarters, not allowed to stand watch again and will be conducted to the nearest port – St Lucia. Here's to sunshine tomorrow, but I fear the portents are not good.

Yours, on the prayer mat, John.



Wash day.

DAY 13 – FRIDAY 7TH

Awful night with sheet lightning (so no instruments on for 3½ hours) 35+ knots wind and torrential rain. We reduced to main alone but the genoa gets in a mess while being furled. Only the three oldies on deck – John, David and me. John runs around in the dark sorting it all while David assists, and I am on the helm (tricky in pitch dark with no instruments and the compass light not working). We remain with two reefs in the main and no genoa for the rest of the day as the wind is still 25+ knots; now gybed onto starboard. Seas are quite big now – probably over 4m but a long way between crests – and are rolling us all over the place. I now hold the speed record at 13.8 knots under this



Avocet alongside Costa Mediterranea.

reduced rig – surfing on a big wave. Quite a sunny day, however, so we managed to dry things out (the deck leaks like a sieve) but no sign of much less wind. Still we are probably averaging over 8 knots dead downwind and have only 1,000 miles to go now.

At about 18.30 GMT, some 30 minutes after I had come off watch, and in position 15°23'N 43°59'W, we were some 980 miles from St Lucia and 1,090 miles from the Cape Verde Islands just about as far as we were ever going to be from land. David was on the helm and I was working at the chart table, Ben was in the galley and Dan and Richard in their bunks, when there was an enormous crash on deck, so loud that I thought we must have broken the boom or mast; I rushed on deck after Ben.

The accident and rescue

John was lying on his back on the starboard cockpit seat with one eye already black and closed while the other was slowly closing. He had a large lump on his forehead and was bleeding from a wound at the back of his head. The shock was enormous – complete disbelief followed by a

feeling of horror as the realisation of how far we were from help sank in. We started to put John in the recovery position and I checked his pulse, which seemed fast but strong. His legs were moving and resisted being pushed back, so he did not seem to have a back injury. Dan and Richard were on deck quickly and Richard took over steering the yacht which was put onto a close reach (still on starboard) to stabilise her as much as possible while sailing slowly – keeping as much way on as needed to steer a route through the waves.

It was clear that John (who was unconscious and remained so throughout) had suffered severe head injuries and required assistance which was not available on board *Avocet*. Dan focused on his father, assisted by Ben and David, while I made for the radios. I sent out DSC distress messages on both VHF and SSB followed by a voice mayday on VHF calling for medical assistance but there was no reply – in reality I did not expect one. *Avocet* was well south of the main ARC fleet so there may have been no boats within range. Meanwhile I had switched on the satellite phone, which took a couple of minutes to acquire reception. I did not send a voice message on SSB (but noticed later that the DSC distress had been acknowledged).

I called MRCC Falmouth (their phone number was one of two saved in it before leaving home) and after making a brief formal mayday report was immediately put through to a doctor in Portsmouth Hospital. He listened to my description of John's condition and the injuries (at that time I believed he had been hit by the boom which was not correct) but was not able to suggest much beyond what we were already doing. He did not waste time and recommended an immediate evacuation. I was told that Falmouth would hand over to Fort de France (the MRCC in Martinique, in whose search area we were located) who would contact us within 40 minutes. When they didn't, I called Falmouth back and spoke to a different person (change of shift). He said Fort de France had sent out an "all ships" message requesting assistance by Inmarsat (this was on the Safety NET system, part of the GMDSS) and were awaiting a response. In the meantime Falmouth had ascertained that there were no naval vessels in the vicinity, which I found very depressing as a naval vessel was likely to be the only ship with the ability to deal with a severe head injury.



ARC start line.

Fort de France called about an hour after that to say that the Italian cruise ship *Costa Mediterranea* had diverted but was 16 hours away (at her 19 knot cruising speed), they confirmed our position and a course for *Avocet* to sail was agreed. It was also agreed that they would call every two hours to update positions and progress, which they did until we made VHF contact with the ship.

Through the night the boat was helmed by Richard and me while Dan, Ben and David continued to care for John who had been secured in position on the cockpit seat where he fell (it was impossible to move him below or elsewhere). We tried to make John as comfortable and safe as possible; he was tied in place and covered by sleeping bags and oilskins then further protected by saloon seat backs which were also tied in. These prevented him moving as the boat rolled, or putting his feet into the steering wheel. The spray hood also provided some protection from the waves and rain through the night as the weather deteriorated further. Richard and I steered in shifts and got some sleep, but the others said they would stay up all night but by early morning were all exhausted and took turns to sleep. It was an utterly miserable night in all senses. *Avocet* was sailed as close as possible to the wind on starboard tack but we were only able to sail due north (the wind was east-northeast) as we remained under double reefed main alone; we did not want to press her further to keep her as upright and stable as possible. Even so, we averaged about 5 knots covering some 60 miles during the 12 hours of darkness and *Costa Mediterranea*, steering 225° true, increased speed to 23 knots (probably her maximum speed in the prevailing conditions) which combined to reduce considerably the time to meet her.

DAY 14 – SATURDAY 8TH

We saw *Costa Mediterranea* just before dawn and I spoke to the captain to agree how the transfer would be carried out. He said it was too rough to launch a boat (it was at that time blowing over 30 knots and there was a 4 to 5m sea) so *Avocet* would have to come alongside and transfer John into the starboard side "garage door", used for baggage and pilots. As the least agile Richard was on the helm while Ben and I dealt with things on deck; Dan and David remained with John. First we had to drop the main but it jammed at the gate and only dropped half way; two weeks of running had broken four of the track slides. I climbed onto the boom with a spike, and eventually Ben and I managed to force the un-broken slides past the detached slugs from broken ones which were stuck in the spring-loaded gate. The sail was lashed to the boom, using the preventer line and tied to the rail to keep it stable and out of the way. Just in time we got out all the fenders from the bottom of the deep cockpit locker on the port side.

The transfer was simply awful as there was still a large swell running in the lee of the ship and we had to lie alongside for almost 20 minutes. *Costa Mediterranea* is, at 85,000 tons, a very large cruise ship. She was launched in 2003 and carries 897 crew and 2,114 passengers, all of whom appeared to be lining the upper decks taking photographs as we approached at first light. Although we were reasonably sheltered from the wind as we closed on the ship her stern thrusters pushed us round leaving us pointing at her. Richard put *Avocet* astern but I suggested a burst ahead as we had no time to go around again; she just turned and came alongside as we grabbed their lines. This was not aided by the fact that the boom was strapped to the port rail, impeding movement down that side and also all but one of

our mooring lines were around John. Although the captain held the ship near broadside to the wind and waves, sheltering *Avocet*, we were still riding up and down considerably and being thrown heavily against the side of the ship (we could only tie on inside the garage door); there was also a severe risk that the mast, which was hitting the ship's side as both boats rolled, would come down. We heard an announcement that an upper deck was to be cleared. All the fenders were flattened or pushed aside so the hull was banging directly against the side of the ship (the bags with the two torn spinnakers were also deployed as fenders); the stanchions and life lines were bent inwards but fortunately no structural damage was sustained.

John was transferred to the ship in a very difficult and dangerous manoeuvre. Two officers (possibly including the first officer who was in charge at deck level) and two of their crew came on board *Avocet* to help with the transfer despite the obviously severe risk to their own personal safety; without their assistance the transfer could not have been completed by us. John was moved onto a stretcher and strapped down but it took six to lift him over the deck (which had been cleared) and then, as *Avocet* rose on a wave he was thrust into the hands of the waiting crew on the ship. Dan accompanied his father and was the last off the boat. We cut the lines and motored away.

The transfer was completed at 09.20 GMT almost 15 hours after the accident but well inside the original estimate. We got a round of applause from the passengers as we left. I had quite forgotten we were being watched and gave them a wave. I then took a couple of photos – I had not taken any since the accident but Dan was given some taken from the ship.

Costa Mediterranea had two doctors and the best medical facilities which could be expected (short of a large naval vessel) and it was extremely fortunate that she was going to Barbados which has the main teaching hospital for the Eastern Caribbean.

Avocet continues

We were left with four on the boat. David has been in a very shocked state since the accident and says he will not be able to help sail the boat. Richard says he is fine but looks far from it and I suspect the shock will take some time to manifest itself. I sort out a watch system for Ben (who probably is fine) Richard and me. It is still very windy and rough with a 5m sea running which is quite unpredictable in direction and which makes helming tricky but we just have to get on with it. The boat is also a complete mess, blood stains in the cockpit and battered down the port side. I carry out checks as best I can but all damage looks cosmetic apart from the bent spreader (we found out subsequently that it broke a window on the ship) and the bent lifelines. Several pillows, sleeping bags etc have to be thrown overboard as they are saturated in blood but nobody has any energy to clean up in the cockpit or below. The main sheet is still unrigged and various lines have been cut. The main is unusable due to the broken slides. I also realise we had not even opened the medical kit. It made no difference but it contained an electronic blood pressure monitor which might have made us look a bit more professional as well as giving useful information.

For the first time it sinks in that it is really rather rough. Well in excess of the conditions which would keep us in port if we had the choice, which we don't. Now also feeling quite exposed, on a damaged boat with a crew who are tired mentally and physically, 1,000 miles from anywhere. We now

expect to get to St Lucia on Saturday (eight days) as sailing more slowly under partly rolled and polled-out genoa (cannot hoist the main); the prospect is not appealing.

DAY 15 – SUNDAY 9TH

News via the satellite phone from the ship is that John is still in a coma but stable and responding to light and pain, which is better than it was when we left him.

At dawn we see a red flare fired from a yacht probably two miles away and contact them by VHF while motoring in their direction. Richard makes the comment that it is becoming surreal. Some time earlier we thought we had heard a "Pan Pan" call in French, but had not been able to make contact with or, more likely understand, the calling station. There were two on the 38' yacht *Nérée*: a man who spoke no English and a woman who spoke a little English. Richard, who speaks better French than I do, ascertained that they had broken their steering gear and were requesting a tow (which, as we were still over 900 miles from St Lucia, was not what we had in mind) or to be taken off. At that time we could not understand why they wished to abandon her as the yacht looked fine and the problem should not be insurmountable. We had agreed to take them and they were preparing their liferaft and personal effects when *Northabout* called us (they had been listening to our discussions with *Nérée* on channel 16).

Northabout were unaware of the problems we had suffered and I explained that we were in a mess following the accident. We had possibly also suffered damage during the transfer to the cruise ship, so I said we would prefer not to take the French couple on board for safety reasons. *Northabout* was some seven miles away but they had no hesitation in saying they would come over and we could then assess the situation and agree what was best. During the hour and a half it took *Northabout* to arrive, I telephoned MRCC Falmouth and reported we were standing by *Nérée*, who had requested evacuation, and we were waiting for *Northabout* to arrive. Falmouth reported this to ARC Control who sent out an email to the fleet but which had the roles and positions of *Avocet* and *Northabout* reversed. As a result of the email we received a sat phone call from a large yacht which was some distance away (it was a very poor line and unfortunately I could not make out their name) also offering to help. But by that time *Northabout* had arrived and was preparing for the transfer of the couple via their liferaft.

We stood by until the transfer was completed, which was not assisted by diesel tanks (originally offered to us) attached to the raft on long lines, before resuming our course for St Lucia. I asked if they had also rescued the wine and cheese but was told there was no shortage on *Northabout*!

(Back in Cork over Christmas, I received a phone call from Rory Casey and Jarlath Cunnane who explained that the rudder stock on *Nérée* had broken and that the yacht was leaking; also the man had a broken finger so his request became much more understandable.)

DAY 16 – MONDAY 10TH

The news on John is that he has been transferred from the cruise ship to the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados where a neurosurgeon was due to operate on him today to remove a blood clot. He is still unconscious but is breathing well and has a strong pulse but is registering only 4/15 on the Glasgow scale for response to stimulus, which is not good. Ben phones his brother, a professor in a university

hospital in Canada, to seek assistance and he arranges for a consultant neurosurgeon to review the scans when they are available and fly down if necessary. James Nixon is also contacted by the family and provides assistance as do the Bar Council in Belfast which has good contacts in Barbados.

We are sailing well and have seen a couple of yachts in the distance today. However, the weather remains simply awful. We have had cloud all day, torrential rain and 30 knots at times. The waves are totally unpredictable and some have been over 5 metres. We are now sailing at 8+ knots under boomed out half rolled genoa. A frigate bird tried to land on the mast but missed and left the helmsman and the cockpit covered by a large "present" which, I suppose may be a sign of good luck? Just over 600 miles to go which should be less than four days at this speed – possibly before dark on Friday now. We are counting down the days and just want to get it over with.

DAY 17 – TUESDAY 11TH

News from John is not good as the operation to remove the clot did not proceed due to too much swelling. The problem is it took two and a half days to get him to hospital, far too long given his injuries. The consultant in Barbados has been in contact with one in Trinidad and there appears to be no disagreement that his condition is inoperable. Richard goes to his bunk and does not reappear for 13 hours. For some time the steering has been rough/stiff and I have checked the cables (replaced last winter) which seem fine, if a little slack; not clear where the noise is coming from. Then the problem gets worse when Ben is on the helm: the whole thing seizes up. At that point it becomes apparent that the linear drive for the autohelm is the problem. Of course it has just got dark. I spend half an hour with a selection of spanners and torches, half in the lazarette (this is worse than working on the generator) before I manage to disconnect the arm from the quadrant. Meanwhile we are wallowing under bare poles.

Today has been hot and sunny with 25 knots but the forecast is for more wind and rain.

480 miles to go at noon.

DAY 18 – WEDNESDAY 12TH

We are told that John is brain dead. This is a great shock for all as we had still been clinging to the hope that he would recover.

Air lock in the water-maker – tried to fix it but gave up; too near the finish to bother as we have enough water for our needs, including washing up and showers.

Sun shone yesterday and today with only the odd spot of rain.

DAY 19 – THURSDAY 13TH

John died without regaining consciousness. It was not a surprise but still comes as a further shock for all.

We are now getting info from David about the accident and finally have the energy to try to piece together what happened. John was sitting on the port cockpit coaming with his feet on the seats with only David and him on deck. David was therefore the only direct witness but I was at the chart table, Ben in the galley, Richard in the (starboard) aft cabin berth and Dan in the port saloon berth. David was still in shock and confused on some detail, for example he said we were on port gybe but the log, and the last photo of John, taken about two hours before the accident, confirm we were on starboard.

John fell face-first across the cockpit into the starboard

seat when the boat rolled (it was under double reefed main only) and he appears to have made no sound and little or no attempt to break his fall. This also left him across the mainsheet track. As David was distracted the boat gybed (the preventer came off the self-tailing winch) and John, who had apparently rolled onto his right side, was pushed back by the main sheet and hit his head on the starboard winch. I heard one very heavy bang but Richard, directly below, heard two distinct bangs. By the time Ben and I came on deck *Avocet* had gybed back onto starboard and John was lying on his back.

Given that it was not a very big or unusual roll (we had been rolling like that for the best part of two weeks) we are no wiser on the cause of the fall.

Wind now 25 to 35 knots but it is the unpredictable seas causing the problems. Dry and sunny, very hot on board except at night. However, we are averaging 175 miles a day.

DAY 20 – FRIDAY 14TH

Only 50 miles to go to St Lucia at breakfast time so, barring problems, we should be there mid-afternoon. We are quite excited about getting in but otherwise very gloomy on board as you would expect. Now trying to make the boat and us look presentable before the wives see us.

Avocet crossed the finish line in Rodney Bay, St Lucia at 19.04 GMT or 15.04 LT (19 days three hours and four minutes from the start), and we were met by a boat carrying my wife Ruth and Florence, David's wife and we motored into a reserved berth in the marina. This has been a very sad end to what was supposed to be the start of a winter sailing season for John on *Avocet*.

As it turned out we had enough food left for another week, which was probably about right. And some 125 litres of diesel – but then it was always there to enable us to motor for four days, which we did not do. While clearing out the boat we found the two lifejackets at the bottom of a forward locker under the storm jib.



Northabout and Nérée.



Costa Mediterranea.



Northabout rescue Nérée crew.

In memory of John Thompson QC, and with much gratitude to the Captain, officers and crew of the *Costa Mediterranea* who came 300 miles out their way to help us and take John onto their ship.



Last photo of John

APPEAL FOR THE JOHN THOMPSON FUND

Following his death in the Queen Elizabeth Hospital in Barbados (the main teaching hospital serving the whole of the Eastern Caribbean) it was discovered that there are no facilities there for organ donation.

His body would have had to be flown to Florida at a cost of US\$25,000 to give effect to his wish that his organs be used following his death. Rather than doing that his widow, Tina, decided to set up a trust to raise sufficient funds to set up a transplant unit in Barbados and donated £25,000 to the fund.

That facility is now being established and hospital staff trained to undertake the work. This will, in particular, mean that people resident in the Eastern Caribbean Islands should not have to travel to the US or Europe for the sort of transplant surgery which is now considered routine in most countries.

The intention is that the fund will enable the facility to be established with the required equipment and trained staff but that the on-going running costs will be taken on through the normal hospital funding.

Donations can be made by cheque to:

**John Thompson Donation a/c
c/o Charles Stewart Esq.
Stewart Solicitors
3 Regents Street
Newtownards
BT23 4AB
Northern Ireland**

Alan Bell writes of a chance meeting in Barcelona

My wife Gillian has always insisted I wear a tie when travelling by air. Her theory being, whilst lined up awaiting check-in amongst the T-shirted and tattooed holiday revellers, the check-in person might just be looking for a suitable pair to occupy seats up front. So there I was, suitable attired in reefer and ICC tie, and feeling totally over dressed amongst the T-shirts. Credit is due to her theory which has worked on several occasions, but not this time.

We had booked a cruise on a 'White floating block of flats' called the *Silver Whisper* and were flying to Barcelona to pick up the ship. Not really my ideal way to cruise in the Med, but Gill enjoys the luxury, and some of the ports of call on the cruise I have sailed into in the past – Malta being one of them, where I bought my last boat, an Endurance 38. A memorable sail back to Ireland, with the exception of Skeeda in Algeria, where we were impounded/arrested for whatever reason ... but that's another story.

On arrival in Barcelona we had time on our hands before embarkation. Gill's Mum and Dad, Bette and Norman were with us for the week, so we availed of some lunch at the port.

Still wearing the ICC tie and in line going through the procedures for boarding, I had a tap on my shoulder from this well-dressed gentlemen. In an accent, definitely Irish and possibly Cork, he said "I recognised the tie". He introduced himself as Bill Brady, ICC. All the introductions with Eileen and Gill and Gill's parents were done and we agreed to meet aboard later for a drink

Meeting later for a drink, I thought, 'I should get some background on this guy Brady.'

A quick text to neighbour, friend and ICC member Chris Currie. An immediate reply with all the details, and goodness, he's 10 years senior to me in the club, and what's more, he's on the Southern Committee. I wonder should I salute when we meet next!!!!!!

Well, that was the start of a most memorable week aboard the *Silver Whisper*. Six Irish at the moment and later, looking at the guest list, there were another two from Dublin, John and Ann Coffey somewhere on the ship. Bill eventually found them which made up a table for eight each evening for dinner. Munster, Leinster, and Ulster all represented and the crack and chat was mighty.

All aboard by 18.00 on 29th May, and we departed Barcelona for an overnight passage to Mahon on the island of Menorca. I was up at 07.00 to savour the tranquil and beautiful surroundings of the estuary leading up to Mahon. The pilot came on board, and we berthed starboard side to which suited me as our cabin was on the starboard side.

Ashore at Mahon to view the sights and a bit of retail therapy [shopping] for the girls.

We departed at 18.00 on a beautiful sunny evening. Next stop, Malta. A day at sea tomorrow which suited me.

Planning is all and a careful study of the procedures and rules on board this fine floating hotel – and Bill was a planner. When I thought I would have a lie in and breakfast in the cabin, a phone call from Bill saying, "Bridge visit in 15 minutes". This was an interesting exercise. Even with all the technology available they still update their position hourly on paper charts, which was nice to see. No steering wheel, just a 6in joystick. Several radar screens, one with a 90-mile range. Everything explained to us by the Chief Navigating Officer, a young Polish guy. Later the Italian Captain appeared and explained we would be taking on fuel at Malta. I asked the question, 'Litres or Gallons?'... "No", he said, "560 tons" I asked "Why Malta for fuel?" His reply was... "Good house-keeping", meaning I assume that the fuel was cheaper in Malta.

Up early for the entrance into the beautiful and historic harbour. Being Sunday we stayed on board as most of Valetta was closed. A lovely lunch in the sumptuous surroundings of the dining room. I managed to speak to the head waiter, a well-spoken guy called Andrew, commonly known to us all hereafter as 'Mr. Bean'. [The TV look-alike] He agreed to reserve a dinner table for the 'Irish Eight' each evening for the remainder of the cruise.

Departing Malta bound for Taormina and then on to Palermo, both ports on the island of Sicily. We passed through the Straits of Messina in the evening while it was still daylight. Interesting, as we could see Italy to starboard and Sicily to port from there. From Palermo to Sorrento and finally to Rome where we disembarked.

Mr. Bean, being the perfect head waiter, would take a lady on each arm and escort them to our table. His 'side-kick' escorted the remaining two ladies. We just followed behind. After dinner we all retired to a small bar adjacent to the casino just large enough to accommodate the 'Irish Eight'. While the girls had a flutter, we reflected on the ups and downs of Irish rugby, Irish politics, etc, and by midnight, we four had all the problems on both subjects solved.

A memorable week, and had I not worn the tie our paths might not have crossed.



Good company.

Pure Magic's bus pass cruise to Spitzbergen

Peter Killen

Wednesday evening, 4th June, we finally loaded the last of the food, duty free and ourselves on to *Pure Magic*, and had an early night.

The crew consisted of Joe Phelan, Hugh Barry, Mike Alexander, Gerry Sargent and myself. All are ICC members and all, apart from myself, qualify for the free "Bus Pass" having reached (and passed) the magic age. I was referred to as "the young fella" being only nearly 61.

We had unfinished business, for we had tried to get to Spitzbergen ten years ago, but a combination of glorious weather, no wind, a lack of fuel to motor all the way, and a relatively short holiday period had curtailed the cruise and we had ended up rounding North Cape and heading south once more. This was s**t or bust time for Anno Domini was snapping at our heels and in my case, for one, Bev, who owns half *Pure Magic*, feels it is only fair that she should have a choice of destination for a change i.e. not a cold one!

We departed Howth at 04.15 on Thursday the 5th and arrived in Stornoway at 05.40 on Saturday the 7th after an uneventful and very nice passage.

It is some time since I was last in Stornoway and it is as pretty and hospitable as ever, with wonderful walks around the headland.

On Sunday the 8th at 10.15 we departed for the Shetlands, arriving the next evening at 20.30 in 40 knots of breeze from the southwest, and stayed put the following day as it blew a real hoooley with the wind swinging into the southeast and blowing up to a gale 9.

Wednesday the 11th saw us reluctantly depart Lerwick (complete with sore heads) into a stiff northeasterly 20/25 knot wind and the next few days were, to put it mildly, uninteresting, as we bashed our way into headwinds, bound for Svolveaer, in the Lofoten Islands.

By Saturday the 14th we realised it was going to be a waste of precious time to try and get there, as the head wind was consistently blowing at between 20 and 30 knots from the north-northeast and was seriously hampering us.

We tacked, having decided to head directly for Spitzbergen and continued slowly bashing north, seemingly forever ... one tack towards Jan Mayen land, the next towards Norway, then Greenland... Norway. One redeeming event was the spotting of a pod of Orcas, about twelve in all, on the 16th. They were busy feeding and took no notice of us even when close to us. This happened at 69.20N 01.8E, and was fascinating.

We finally reached snowy Longyearbyen on Saturday the 21st at 08.45, having sailed 1944 miles through the water from Howth.

Longyearbyen looked at its best in strong sunshine and given that it was Midsummer Day, there was a great buzz that evening, with a huge bonfire on the shores of the sund. The harbourmaster could not have been more helpful, even immediately organising a mechanic to sort out a minor engine problem shortly after our arrival.

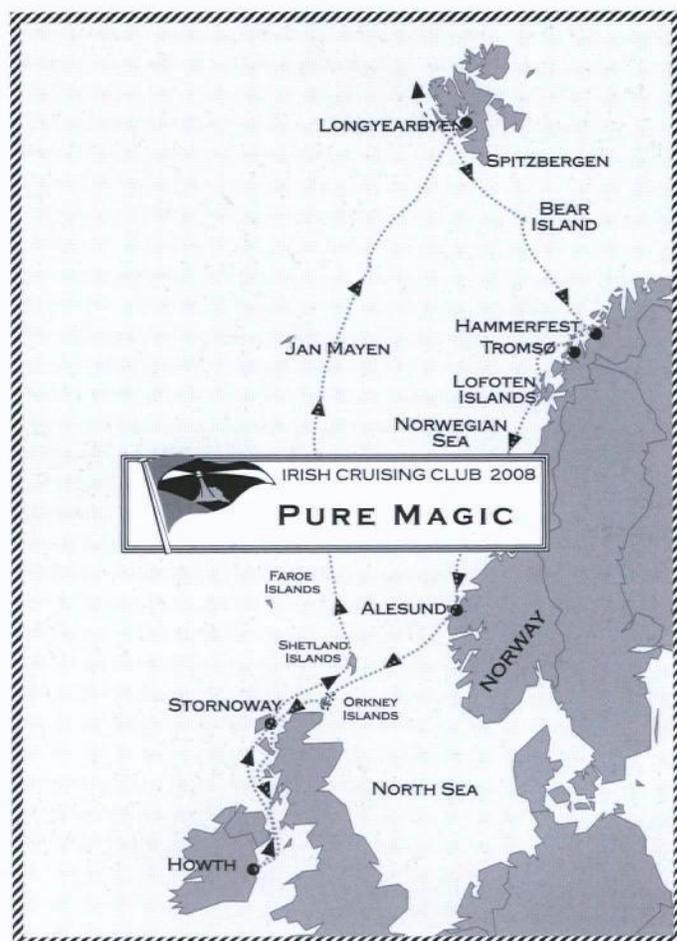
Having fuelled up, done our laundry and had a clean up, it was time to explore the surroundings including the town, pubs

and supermarket. Suffice it to say we enjoyed ourselves, before heading north once more on the 23rd.

For most of our trip north, the weather was good, although we had constant head winds, when there was wind The first location where we decided to anchor, was in an anchorage named Bullbreen, at 78.30N 12.36E. In order to access the anchorage, in a deep pool, we had first to clear a shallow bar. As it was dead low water, this proved to be impossible and we finally touched sand before turning away and anchoring in four metres in a well sheltered cove just north of the Ankereset headland next to the magnificent Dahllbreen Glacier, before heading for Poolepynten on Prins Karls Forland Island.

Here we got up close and personal to a walrus colony...lots on land and lots in the water. They really are huge animals and look quite comical when bobbing about in the water. Here we also met two Norwegians who were stationed in a hut located right next to the colony. Their task was to survey the number of trappers' huts still in existence, for trapping had been vigorously carried on for hundreds of years and was only banned in recent times.

A crew member had a swim whilst we were anchored here,





Hugh, Peter, Joe and Gerry in Stornoway.

Photo: Mike Alexander

and it was “interesting” to see how quickly the walrus appeared around the boat to investigate. Needless to say, the swimmer gave up swimming!

On north through the Forlandsrevet narrows, where the depth dropped to 5m under our keel and finally to an anchorage off an old marble quarry on Ny London, Peirsonhamna at 78.57N 12.02E. It was a beautiful windless evening and we had a wonderful meal cooked by Gerry, who originally had claimed he couldn't cook, but turned out to be a star—(wife Barbara please note and avail of!!).

It was fascinating to wander around the quarry area which had an interesting history. It seems that during the latter part of the 1920s, some enterprising soul decided that it would make commercial sense to quarry marble and sell it for building purposes in England. With this in mind he set up steam engine power, tracks, cranes, accommodation etc., and started work. The first marble of the shipment home was used to clad a building in London. Having been put in place, it promptly shattered and that was that! Because of the lack of moisture in the air, a large amount of the equipment remains in quite reasonable condition. All that inhabits the place now, are arctic foxes and reindeer, which we watched foraging about in the tundra.

Two of the dwellings have been maintained by the Sisslemann (the Spitzbergen authority), and could, I assume, be used as refuges if needed.

We pushed on north, finally reaching 79.35N in 25 knots of wind on the nose, loose ice and a nasty chop. Progress had slowed to a crawl when we decided that enough was enough, it was time to start heading south once more.

The sail south proved to be one of the most satisfying and spectacular sails I have ever experienced.

Nobody wanted to leave the cockpit. It really was like sailing through the Alps. The sun shone and the visibility seemed endless with snowy mountains stretching far into the distance.

We arrived back into Longyearbyen on Thursday evening the 26th June and had a really gourmet meal in the Spitzbergen Hotel, having passed a couple of reindeers and an arctic fox en route.

There are a few pubs in Longyearbyen, but our favourite was a pub/restaurant called “Kroa”. It had a good atmosphere, nice food and was not too outrageously expensive.

Whilst walking up town the next morning, we spotted a local who had really embraced green power, for he had hitched a dog team to his car and was careering along at a spanking pace! What a pity none of us had a camera at the

time!

Saturday the 28th we departed Longyearbyen on our way south once more, in a wind which had swung southeast and then east-northeast, gradually building as the hours went by.

Our plan was to anchor in a fjord named Hornsund, which we knew to be spectacular. However, the pilot book warned that in easterly winds, the gusts could be seriously katabatic and sure enough, as we hardened up to enter the fjord, we were gradually experiencing stronger and stronger gusts which were eventually nearly stopping any progress and throwing up a very lumpy sea to boot.

We bore off to the north of the entrance and anchored in 7 metres of water in a well sheltered spot named Dunoyane located in the midst of three very low lying islands. Our position was 77.04N 14.56E.

It was a grey cold morning and swimming was not on the agenda! The hope was that the wind would ease or swing, and



First sight of Spitzbergen.

Photo: Mike Alexander

after some hours, we decided to have another go. However, as we once more approached, the wind howled and we regretfully decided to head on south.

With the east-northeast wind continuing to rise, we stormed south heading for Bear Island in what someone described in the log as "rough seas and snow". Some twenty miles south of Hornsund, we met a line of pack ice stretching out more than eighteen miles west from the coast, and with the wind easing, we bore off looking for a way through it.

Visibility had greatly improved and as we sailed along, I thought I spotted a bear moving among the jumbled ice. I saw him only momentarily and decided I must have been mistaken, for no one else had seen him. Minutes later, we spotted some seals acting strangely, for they were porpoising through the water, close to the ice. Then we saw a large bear swimming towards them.

There was great excitement and we immediately altered course to come nearer. A member of the crew was helming and the rest of us were up at the bow taking pics. Let me quote from an email I subsequently sent to my son David who had said he couldn't understand how I hadn't taken any video footage of the bear; "Well Dave, put yourself in this scenario. We are approaching a large swimming bear from astern, when suddenly, the engine stops and the helmsman arrives up next to me. He announces that the auto helm is locked on and the boat will stop short of the bear.

Now both the bear and I know that we are doing twice the bear's speed through the water and the chances are that *Pure Magic* will shortly mount one very pissed off animal. The fact that he was snorting loudly and glowering at us only confirmed my opinion. I headed for the helm at a rate of knots, altered



Midsummer Night in Longyearbyen.

Photo: Mike Alexander

course and started the engine once more. Videoing, was the last thing on my mind!"

Interestingly, when we later visited the polar museum in Tromso, they had an article displayed, outlining what signs to look for when a bear is contemplating an attack and as we read down it we mentally ticked off the signs which tallied with what we had seen! Enough said.

We heard of a couple who last year were sailing close to pack ice, when a bear launched himself from the ice, at the boat. As he grabbed at the stanchions, the wife vanished below securely locking the hatch and washboards.

The husband headed for the mast which, luckily, had steps built into it. The bear did not manage to get aboard, but fell back into the water pulling stanchions and guard rails with him, as he disappeared. We never did hear if the marriage survived!

We reached the northwest corner of Bear Island in an east-northeast wind and anchored in a very sheltered cove named Teltvika.

We were soon ashore and had a marvellous walk along the cliffs and inland through the tundra among a myriad seabirds. The racket was something else. Gerry was repeatedly bombed by an angry skua who had for some strange reason taken a dislike to him. Maybe it was because he had chucked a stone at him, when he was first dive-bombed! We found a survival hut in pristine condition.

Thursday 1st July, we upped anchor and motor-sailed along the length of the island, under huge cliffs and sea stacks, in very deep water. One only got some idea of the scale of the scene when one realised that large gulls and skuas seemed like specks against the cliffs.

We had a fine broad reach in great conditions all the way to



Pure Magic at Teltvika, Bear Island.

Photo: Mike Alexander



Woodcarving statuary.

Photo: Hugh Barry

Hammerfest in northern Norway and tied up there at 14.00 on 2nd July.

We spent the next day sightseeing before departing that evening bound for Tromsø. En route we anchored in a protected anchorage named Pollholmen, Stjernøy, where we had a great five hour hike up a nearby mountain, before heading on south to Tromsø which we reached on Saturday the 5th.

Here, on the following Tuesday, Hugh and Gerry left the boat for home and Bev (my wife) and Trish (Joe's wife) joined us for the trip south. Tromsø, which is spread across two islands, is well worth a visit, with great hill walking and wonderful scenery. The town centre, where we were tied up has some lovely buildings and friendly people (including harbour-masters and customs personnel!).

Next stop was Svolvær in the Lofoten Islands, probably one of the prettiest parts of Norway that I have seen. The weather whilst we were here was at its sparkling best, and we had to visit the magical Troll fjord before resuming progress south.

We had some lovely cruising, although, because of distance

and time constraints, we were not able to dawdle. We did however anchor at the Isle of Renga ... warm, sheltered, sea eagles, a swim and a walk, then on to the village named Rorvik, where we holed up during a gale in "manky weather!" Then it was on to Villa Hava, where we waited for a southwesterly to blow itself out. The holding here was not great and having initially dragged, we finally got nailed in and went for a good trot ashore. There were a few traditional summer houses dotted about, all closed up, and a coal-fired light house built in 1839. We were able to climb inside up to the balcony, from where we could look over a wild seascape and thank our lucky stars that we were well sheltered! The remainder of the sail south was in southerly winds (where else) but good conditions, inside the island chain through magnificent scenery.

We tied up in Alesund at 10.00 on Saturday 19th July. What a lovely town it is ... like a mini northern Venice! Much of it was destroyed by a fire in January 1904, and was rebuilt in a very Art Nouveau style. Much of the temporary living accommodation and relief supplies were shipped from Germany on the instructions of Kaiser Wilhelm, who had often holidayed there, and was very much attached to the people and place!

Bev flew home from here, and we departed that evening at 21.30 bound for the Orkneys. The wind quickly filled in from the northeast and we had a thundering sail all the way to Kirkwall in winds gusting in excess of 40 knots at times, through the oil rigs, some of which showed up through the mist, others showing only on the radar.

We arrived at Kirkwall at 18.15 on 21st July, 333 miles from Alesund in 46 hours.

The weather on arrival cheered up remarkably and we spent the next day sightseeing by bus. I had never been here before and was enchanted by the island, which I feel to be much flatter and more beautiful than the Shetlands. Perhaps this had something to do with the sunshine!! Whilst here, I spoke to an old friend, now living in Malahide, who was born and bred on Skye and who knows the Orkneys well. Upon hearing where we were, she told me her abiding memory of the island was of an incident once, when during a huge storm "all the chickens were blown out to sea!"

From here we meandered south to Plocton, off Loch Nevis, Tobermory, Ardfern, Gigha and home, all in glorious sunshine.

We arrived back in Howth on Monday 28th July at 19.00, having sailed a total distance of 4,480 miles through the water. To date *Pure Magic* has done the guts of 30,000 miles since she was built in '04 and is still as fresh as a daisy!

I must add a very big "thank you" to Jenny Guinness for the loan of her very comprehensive collection of Norwegian charts and to John Gore Grimes for the loan of two very helpful pilot books.

Paul Butler writes of *Muglins* delayed

My plan for *Muglins* this year was to bring her to Zumaya in May, leave her there until August and then bring her around the Iberian Peninsula into the Mediterranean. This plan was delayed until August by circumstances which I think worthy of a short Ditty. It has been my habit to sail on Christmas Day and, as we had a high tide last Christmas at a convenient time, I thought that in the interests of research, I should include a visit to Coliemore Harbour in Dalkey. This visit proved so successful that we thought "why not Bulloch?". After that we were further emboldened to try Sandycove. All went well until I tried to reverse in and heard our rudder touch bottom; it was not a violent landing and I thought no

more of it. We continued sailing and duly competed in the DBSC "Spring Chickens" series on Sundays. No more was thought about the Sandycove incident, until the week before our planned Whit departure for Spain, when I arranged to have *Muglins* lifted out for antifouling. I got a phone call and was told that the rudder was split. When examined it was determined that the damage was beyond repair. Paddy Boyd quickly ordered a new one for me but it had to be made to order in Slovenia.

The Whit cruise had to be abandoned but all was not lost. One of the crew, Leo Sheehan, very quickly planned an alternative cruise to Scotland in his own yacht, Red Admiral. We had ten great days and I planned a direct passage to northwest Spain in August.

Pottering round the Ionian Inland Sea on *Beowulf*

Bernard Corbally

6th May - 3rd June

When Erica Corbally, Maureen and Ken Millington joined the skipper and Ann Woulfe Flanagan on *Beowulf* in Levkas on 6th May, the idea was enjoy some gentle sailing while revisiting some favourite island anchorages and exploring a few new ones on the Greek mainland. Since we had launched the boat at Cleopatra, where she had spent the winter on the hard, we were unable to register our new crew with the Levkas Port Authority but had to return to Preveza to regularise our paperwork.

Our first destination was Palairos (12 miles) on the mainland, where we were delighted to find a berth on the outside of the spur pontoon. Services were not yet available. (We found lazy lines installed on a subsequent visit, but the pontoon had been contracted out to a flotilla company). It is an attractive agricultural village with a spectacular mountain background, which enjoys a mainly Greek summer tourist trade. Dinner in the New Mill Tavern (Tel. 26430 41634) was a memorable experience as Kathy welcomed us with open arms (literally!) and provided us with a delicious meal. She even sent a taxi to collect the lazier members of the crew. A stony beach just north of the harbour was adequate for the swimmers on board and was just across the road from a pleasant café.

We tried a little gentle sailing en route to Kalamos, but the breeze was useless. Heading round the south of the island, we looked into Port Leone bay for a lunchtime stop. The village suffered badly in the 1953 earthquake and is now largely deserted; only the church looked in good repair. We moved on to Port Kalamos for the night and were guided into the breakwater by George, who owns the popular café at the land end. It was quite a climb up to the local supermarket at the top of a steep flight of steps! There was a nice stony beach over the headland to the south of the harbour.

It was a very short sail across to Kastos Island, where we found a truly delightful secluded anchorage just round the top of the island behind a headland; it was ideal for our lunchtime swim in crystal clear water. The tiny Kastos harbour is in a lovely location with plenty of space on the mole. The charming small village is being expanded with a lot of up-market new houses but looks as if it will remain a nice place to visit. It was a steep climb up to John's restaurant, where the food was excellent and the view out over the bay magnificent. A small supermarket has since been opened. This was the last of the new places that we visited. The rest of this mini-cruise with this crew consisted of revisiting favourite places from last year.

We managed to sail for about an hour en route to Atoki Island, where we stopped for lunch and a swim in a rather crowded One House Bay. We crossed to Kioni harbour on Ithaca for the night. This was a favourite place last year and was so popular with this crew that we stayed two nights. Unfortunately, the place is also very popular for charter fleets and one has to arrive early to avoid having to anchor. There are swimming beaches on the south of the bay, which we all enjoyed. We dined extremely well in the Oasis restaurant,

where the prawn suvlaki and baby lamb were particularly memorable. On Tuesday morning, we looked in to Frikes Harbour, which is recommended for good restaurants, but the place did not look anything as attractive as Kioni.

Fiskardho on the north of Cephalonia was our next destination, where the walk along the north coast of the bay to the Venetian lighthouse was particularly popular and the Apagio restaurant on the waterfront was really excellent. The next day, we headed up to Sivota harbour on the south coast of Levkas. Soon after we rounded the Venetian lighthouse, a frantic cry from Erica had the skipper on deck within seconds to observe *Beowulf* heading straight for the rocky shore. The Autohelm had taken an inexplicable turn to port! On arriving in Sivota, we were delighted to meet up with David Radmore, who crews for us nearly every year. He was with five friends on another yacht and joined us for a drinks party on board. Stavos restaurant on the waterfront provided us with an excellent dinner, their lamb kleftico was particularly delicious. The following day, we headed up to Spilia in Spartakhor Bay on Meganisi Island. We stopped by the large Papa Nicolis cave on the southwest coast just south of a tiny rock islet, in which it is rumoured, a Greek submarine hid during the war, but we were unimpressed! It was wonderful to revisit the highly recommended Spilia Taverna in the southeast corner of Spartakhor Bay, where we were made very welcome as returning customers, and presented with a small bottle of Uzo. Having greatly enjoyed our swims off the lovely beach beside the taverna, we walked up to explore the charming village at the top of the hill.

We returned to Levkas on Saturday 17th May, where the skipper saw the crew onto the bus to Athens on Sunday. Peter Wallace, Robin Clapham together with Clive (ICC) and Mary Martin arrived on board at 18.00 on Monday. After a mammoth shop we departed to revisit Palairos and Kalamos Harbour, anchoring just east of the tiny Epistopi harbour on the north side of the island for lunch and a swim. On Thursday, we headed down to a lovely mainland anchorage in Petinari Bay for another swim and lunch stop before moving on to Astakos harbour on the mainland for the night. Astakos is a ferry port with very limited provision for yachts, which appeared to be all occupied when we arrived. Fortunately, a customs official noticed our predicament and waved us into a space amongst large fishing boats but indicated that he was not permitted to take our lines. Watching these huge boats manoeuvring alongside within less than a foot on either side of us was quite intimidating, but they were all experts and showed no ill will towards us for being where we were! We had arrived in a small agricultural town with a sizable fishing fleet. It was in a delightful location dwarfed by massive mountains in the background. We all loved it for its local charm and most friendly people. It was a great place to sit in a dockside café and watch so much happening in front of you.

We departed for Kioni the following day, stopping at One House Bay for a swim and lunch. Four large catamarans, with a large party of youths celebrating on board, were rafted up with



Beowulf in Kastos Harbour.

Photo: Erica Corbally

several anchors on an awful lot of chain. When the wind veered through 180 degrees, they became a serious hazard and we left promptly. Kioni was yet again fabulous despite having to anchor! We revisited Fiskardho, the delightful Sikidi Bay for a swim and lunch stop and then enjoyed an excellent dinner in the Paradise Beach Restaurant (Tel. 26740 61392) in Eufimía before continuing south to Poros on Tuesday 27th May.

We experienced some difficulty in mooring in Poros, as there is a lot of shallow water to the east of the berth used by the ferry, which we wished to leave plenty of room. We eventually moored in 3 metres close by the entrance to the fishing boat harbour, where we were joined by five other yachts. The location is spectacular under high mountains and there is a bar inside the cliffs to the west of the harbour, which provides wonderful views out to sea. Unfortunately, it proved to be very popular for lots of noisy youths! When we started to take photos from what we thought was the roof of the restaurant, we were challenged by a very irate gun-toting official and ordered off what turned out to be the roof of the port authority offices! Walking up past the bar, we found steps down to a delightful beach in what was obviously the tourist area. There was a nice café/bar above the harbour with a supermarket next door that delivered to the yachts.

Making an early start on Wednesday, we headed south to Zakynthos, stopping in the delightfully secluded Kastastari bay for a swim and cockpit lunch. It was about 12 miles further down to Port Zante, which is a really huge port in a sizable town with an impressive mountain backdrop. We passed nine large moored ships as we motored nearly half a kilometre up to the north corner of the harbour where a lot of yachts were moored to the northeast quay.

Fortunately, there were two slots vacant, otherwise I do not know what we would have done! There were no lazy lines but water and electricity were available for a nominal extra charge on top of a modest berthing fee. Robin spotted the excellent restaurant Tabepna Estiatopio in the town square where waiter Tasos made excellent recommendations from the extensive menu. There was also a well-stocked supermarket close to the port.

On Thursday, we crossed over to Katacolon (28 miles) on the Peloponnese mainland, which is the recommended place for a visit to Olympia. Again, mooring looked like being a problem until we were waved into a berth marked Private Mooring opposite the enormous car park on the main quayside. Katacolon is also a large commercial port for freighters and

the odd cruise ship. However, there were no cruise ships in the port when we were there and all the quality restaurants along the harbour front were practically empty. The marina indicated by the pilot on the north side of the harbour was non-existent and its location was occupied by lots of Dutch boats, which looked rather permanent. Later on, we saw the pontoons piled up in a corner of the car park. We reached Olympia by bus and returned by train. Both the railway station and the bus stop were conveniently located on the opposite side of the car park (See Clive Martin's *Dunn's Ditty*, page 183). Robin entertained passing locals by using a disposable barbecue to cook delicious lamb chops on the quayside.

Returning to Zakynthos Island on Saturday, we anchored in Keri Bay for the night, having established that there was no possibility of mooring in the harbour nor to the outside of the mole. We did not see any of the tortoises for which this area is famous. However, we plan to return and to make a dinghy tour



Ken Millington, Bernard Corbally, Erica Corbally, Ann Woulfe-Flanagan and Maureen Millington in Spilia Tavern, Spartakhorí.

Photo: Ann Woulfe-Flanagan

of the permissible area in the Kopios Lagana Bay. We motored round to Zante harbour early on Sunday morning, filled up with fuel from a tanker and caught a bus to Athens on Monday. Ann Woulfe Flanagan arrived on *Beowulf* later that day with a new crew. *Beowulf* would remain cruising the area south of Levkas until put to bed for the winter in Kalamata in the very south of the Peloponnise.

We thoroughly enjoyed cruising in this most scenic area. There is almost always a panoramic view of numerous mountainous islands and the distances between most anchorages are short. Unfortunately, due to lots of flotillas, one has to arrive in the small harbours in the early afternoons to be reasonably sure of a berth. However, it is usually possible to anchor in or near the harbour. This means that one tends to miss the afternoon sailing breezes! We found lots of secluded bays to anchor for an enjoyable swim in beautiful surroundings, and then continue to enjoy the environment during lunch in the cockpit. To all of us, this was the essence of relaxed holiday cruising.

July 1st to 9th 2008

David Kingston records a subsequent cruise in the same area, but from a crew's perspective

A large number of Irish sailors have good reason to be grateful for the generosity of Bernard Corbally and Ann Woulfe Flanagan. For the last seven or eight years they have shared *Beowulf* with many of their friends as they have brought their boat from its original Swedish home into the Mediterranean and now across to Western Greece. One of these groups of friends is centred on Carrickmines Tennis Club and a



View from Stavos Restaurant, Sivota Harbour.

Photo: Ann Woulfe-Flanagan

Monday game, which has been going for twenty-five or more years. With Bernard, we have sailed off Spain, from Minorca to Sardinia, from Sicily to Malta and the toe of Italy and, in the last three years, along the eastern Adriatic coast.

This year, it was the same group whose voyage from Pula to Dubrovnik was recorded in the Cruising Club Annual of 2006. Stuart Allen, Alan Cole, David Kingston and Derek Taylor gathered in Dublin on June 30th to fly to Athens. Arriving there late in the evening, we had no option but to spend a night in Athens. We had 'done' the Acropolis et al last year (it is well worth doing but not every year!) so we left the city quickly behind, taking the six-hour bus journey to Lefkadha (Lefkas) on Greece's west coast. We recommend the bus journey – it takes you along the Gulf of Corinth, north over the new bridge at its entrance and on along the Preveza lagoon. The views are lovely and provide some idea of the scale and range of the Greek countryside.

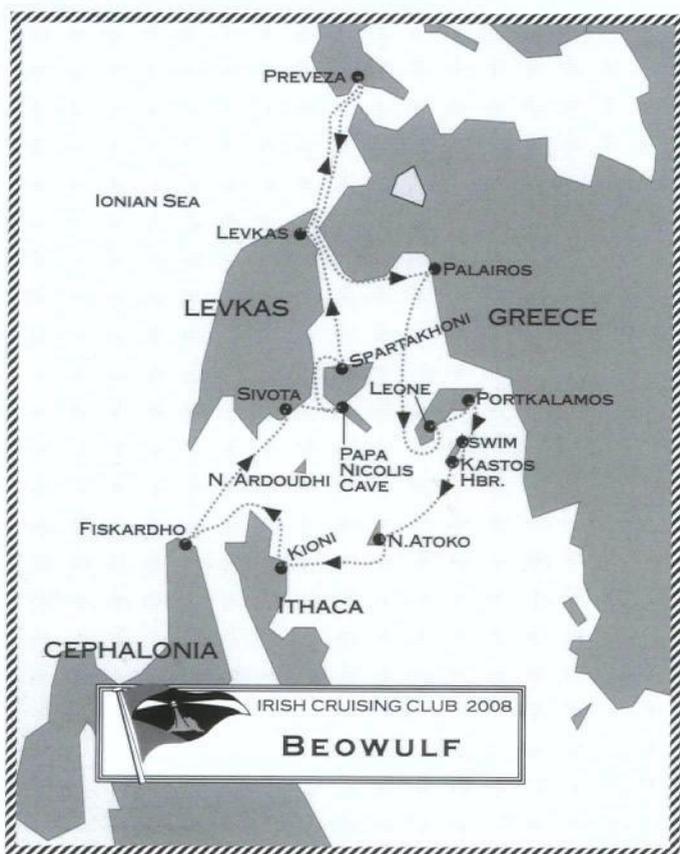
We reached the new bus station in Lefkadha at 18.30 to be greeted by Bernard who brought us to *Beowulf* in the nearby marina to get settled in. The Lefkadha marina is an extensive and fairly new facility with a swimming pool on site. We were up early next morning, ready to provision the boat for the days ahead. Derek, whose cookery skills will be remembered from our Croatia voyage, was charged with buying meat – roast lamb chosen by the skipper. Meat identification proved easier than our experience with a Pula butcher!

We soon set off south through the Lefkadha canal – marred by a rubbish dump but otherwise pleasant. We stopped for a swim in a delightful little bay just east of Ak Katali point as we rounded the corner of the mainland peninsula,



Bernard & Erica Corbally in Sivota.

Photo: Ann Woulfe-Flanagan



4th - 17th May

which a bridge joins to the island of Lefkadha. These midday swims from the boat in tranquil bays are one of the highlights of our voyages. The water is wonderfully clear and cool on hot days. There are great opportunities to snorkel – although the marine life was not as abundant as off the Croatian islands.

After the swim, we motored round to Palairos. Our initial mooring proved to be in the middle of a flotilla of charter boats so we decided to move across the harbour to a location where we knew we would be allowed to stay. In this part of Greece, moorings are usually free (no services are provided) but they do tend to be scarce in high season, and the absence of lazy lines can make them tricky for the inexperienced. One of the consequential snags – in high season at least – is the need to get into harbour early if you do not want to anchor off.

Palairos itself is a pleasant small town, little touched by tourism apart from being a base for the many charter yachts, which proliferate in these safe and warm waters. The star attraction for us (apart from alternate swims and beers through the afternoon) was the New Mill restaurant, run by Kathy whom Bernard had dined with earlier in the year.

We were the only guests of the lovely Kathy, who was assisted by two beautiful daughters, one of whom took off later on her 500cc bike for a late night swim with friends! A third daughter is married in New York and had just sent her two small children home to Granny for the summer. It must be a contrast from the streets of New York to a small Greek town, but these bilingual children seemed totally at home.

Like many Greeks, Kathy had lived abroad for years – in her family's case, in Toronto, so her English was excellent. But better still was her cooking. We worked our way through a courgette cake, flaky cheese pastries and a magnificent roast lamb, which had obviously spent all day with lots of herbs, in the oven. We also worked our way through a six litre bottle of wine (a double jereboam?) as we sat under the garden trees and got fuller and fuller. Not content with all of this (at €25 a head)

we carried away a huge 'doggy bag' of leftovers, which provided next day's lunch.

The following morning we set off for Meganisi, the largest of the satellite islands of Lefkadha. We did get the sails up briefly but sadly the lack of wind forced us back on the engine. It was a feature of the voyage that the only wind was in the late afternoon, by which time we needed to be tied up if we did not want to anchor off. This is a good reason for trying to avoid the busy months of July and August.

As the Rough Guide says, the port of Spilia is little more than a landing stage, a pebble beach and three tavernas. But this was ample for our needs – an afternoon of swimming and sun-bathing and an evening meal with our toes in the water and the sun setting in the west. Some of us did climb the steep hill to the little whitewashed village of Sparta Khoni which has spectacular views north to the other Lefkadha satellite islands and the main island beyond. We had great fun trying to identify different types of beans growing in the village's gardens.

Next morning we set off early round the northwestern tip of Meganisi and headed south along its extraordinary seven kilometre sand spit. We had a great swim stop at the aptly named One House Bay on Atakos Island. There, literally, was only one house to be seen, but the snorkelling was great despite lots of other yachts.

We continued on to Ithaki, the island immortalised by Homer's *Odyssey*. Homer describes Ithaki as being 'good for goats' – an apt description of its extraordinary shape, made up of three drowned mountains with virtually no flat ground.

Our destination was Kioni in the northeast of the island. It is a quite beautiful village wrapped round a U-shaped bay with steep sides running down to the sea. We could have spent a fascinating afternoon just watching a number of small ferries and charter boats jockeying for position as they attempted to find an elusive mooring. However, after an hour or so of boosting our egos by watching other people look incompetent, we went on round the bay to a lovely little beach. There we cooled our bodies with a mixture of swimming, beer and ice-cream while looking north east down the glorious bay. It was truly a lovely spot.

Dinner was in the *Odyssey* restaurant, where the most memorable dish was Greek yogurt and honey for dessert. Our experience of dining out was that, apart from Kathy, by far the best menu option was freshly caught white fish. It is dearer than the meat but much tastier.

Next morning we set off round the north of Ithaki to Kefallonia and the port of Fiskardo in its extreme northeast. Once again, we got the sails up only to be frustrated by lack of any sustained wind. We tied up in the busy port with big ferries constantly coming and going. Somehow our luck was not in that day which may have influenced our view of Fiskardo. We experienced great difficulty in working the complicated water and electricity facility, which involved the use of a bizarre card system that even the chandlers, who supplied it, struggled to get working.

After lunch, Alan and Stuart launched the dinghy in the hopes of visiting a beach a couple of kilometres away. Despite repeated attempts, the outboard would not start and Alan and Stuart found themselves drifting right across the harbour and into the path of the ferries. Rowing back against the wind and current while avoiding being run down was no joke! To make matters worse, the afternoon temperature had risen from the comfortable low thirties of previous days to a sweltering 38°C.

This was also the night for Derek to cook the lamb bought in Lefkadha at the start of the voyage. Derek is a superb cook but roasting lamb in a galley in 38°C is not for the fainthearted! In desperation to escape the heat, we swam off the harbour wall – but at the expense of a foot full of sea urchin spikes!

Fortunately the pleasures of eating Derek's lamb and its accompanying dishes eased our lives back to tranquility. The little port was full of street musicians bringing back youthful memories of Nana Mouskouri and Demis Roussos.

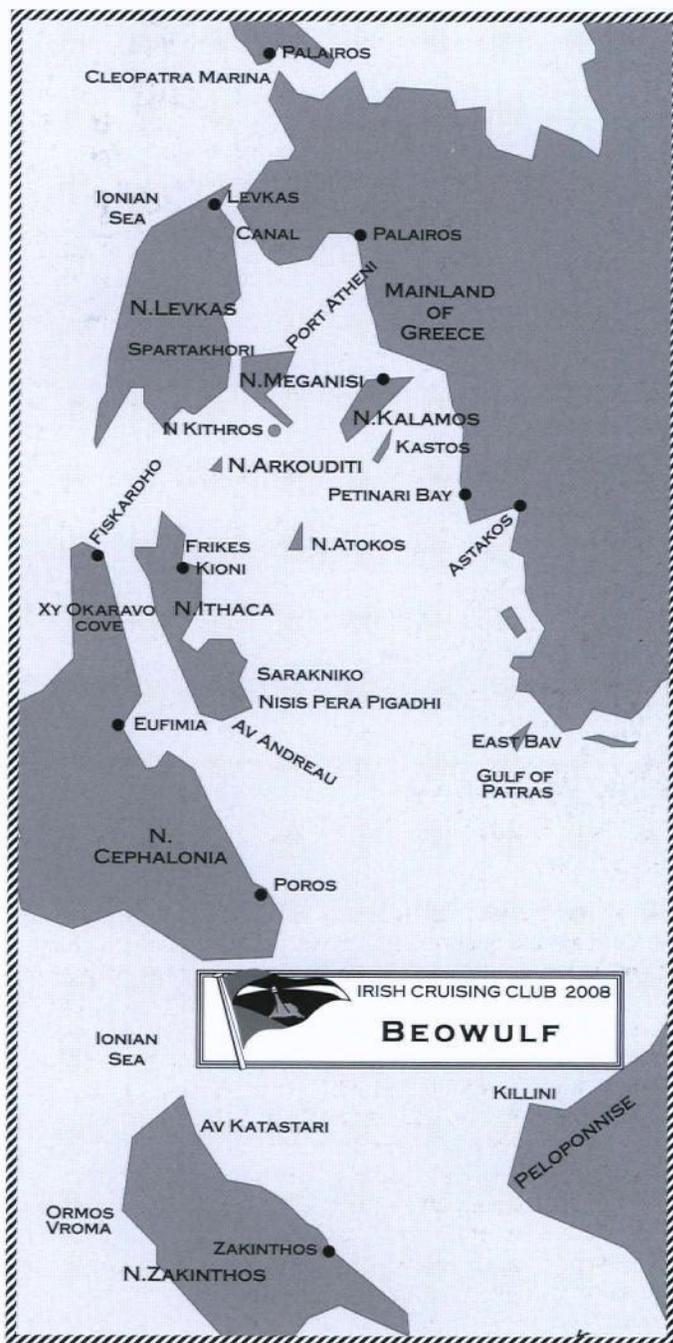
After some shopping next morning, which included finding fly swats to combat the wasp problem, which was getting worse despite various ingenious traps, we started heading back towards Lefkadha, and specifically to Sivota on its southern coast. This is an attractive port but we had difficulty finding a suitable mooring. We found the draught to be a bare two metres in places, which, with the wash created by small boats zooming up and down the harbour, was untenable. A number of ideal places were reserved by local fishing boats. However, we were fortunate to find a mooring at the southwestern end of the harbour, which was adjacent to a swimming place. We spent a lot of that day watching the "Federer-Nadal" final at Wimbledon. With rain breaks, it finished at near 23.00 Greek time but it was hard to tear ourselves away.

The following morning we had our usual early swim and breakfast before waking the Italian pater-familias next door who had casually dropped his anchor across our anchor chain on the previous evening. He had assured us that he was an early riser! The weather continued to be glorious, in contrast to the texts coming from home, telling us of continuous rain. We motored up the east coast of Lefkadha, passing friendly Meganisi and then Skorpis, the private island of the Onassis family. We reached Lefkadha town at 11.30 in time to refuel and then make the noon lift of the bridge, which connects Lefkadha to the mainland. Arriving at Preveza town, a sailor from Waterford, who happened to be passing by, took our warps. He kept his boat nearby. As ever with the Irish, we soon discovered that we had acquaintances in common. A good lunch on the waterfront allowed us to escape the midday heat before the essential shopping and booking of buses.

Bernard took pity on us all and brought us inland on the Amuvrakos Gulf where we anchored and swam – at 18.00 the water was 34°C and the air was 33°C but it was very refreshing and we enjoyed seeing lots of birds in this nature sanctuary. Derek prepared a delicious pork and cannelloni dish for our dinner as we motored back to Cleopatra Marina, where the boat was to be laid up for the next six weeks. Dinner in the cockpit under a glorious full moon as we looked across the water from our peaceful berth in the crane dock to busy Preveza on the far side of the water, was a truly delightful experience.

The next day we saw *Beowulf* being lifted out of the water by an impressive straddle crane. The inevitable cleaning and tidying of the boat followed this. The highlight of which is always the hosing of the deck and the heads, and playing like small boys while getting very wet! The lowlights are cleaning the oven and scraping the sacrificial anodes on the bottom of the boat. We did manage to swim from a very dirty beach in smelly warm water, which was hardly memorable; except as a contrast with all other swims. The skipper wisely took a siesta instead!

Sleeping on the hard was not a novelty for us and we woke up refreshed and ready for the long bus journey back to Athens and on to the airport. When we checked our flights, we were horrified to learn that our Aer Lingus flight to Dublin had been cancelled due to an ATC problem at Dublin airport. After a frantic rush we boarded an Easy Jet flight to Gatwick, where we got three hours sleep in a hotel before our final leg to Dublin. Thus ended another of our mini-cruises, which have brought us so much enjoyment and pleasure in exploring the Mediterranean. May Bernard and Ann keep *Beowulf* there for ever!



20th May - 1st June. Levkos to Zakynthos

Yacht:	<i>Beowulf</i>
Type of Yacht:	Hallberg Rassy 42
Skipper:	Bernard Corbally
Crew:	Ann Woulfe Flanagan Erica Corbally Ken Millington Maureen Millington Robin Clapham Peter Wallace Clive Martin (ICC) Mary Martin David Kingston Stuart Allen Derek Taylor Alan Cole

Reiver in the Western Isles

David Williams



THE WYBRANTS CUP

FOR THE BEST CRUISE IN
SCOTTISH WATERS

After cruising the Brittany coast for the past two years we decided to be less ambitious this year and, after a short jaunt to the Isle of Man at the end of May for the TT, return to Scotland in July and the Western Isles in particular. My brother Peter was to do the first leg and the crew change was planned to take place somewhere near Skye.

We took the early HSS to Stranraer and drove northwards for most of the day, only stopping to shop in Fortwilliam for perishable victuals and after a minor detour, when the navigator went to sleep, arrived in Kyle of Lochalsh where *Reiver* was alongside the pontoon at the hotel. We went out that evening for the usual crew changeover dinner and had a super seafood meal at the Waverley restaurant.

Next day the outgoing crew left early to return on the HSS and after settling in, committed some of Peter's rancid cheeses to their rightful place (the deep), we headed into a strong cold northerly, under motor, to a favourite anchorage, Acairseid Mhor, Rona. That evening we held the first two rounds of the Ballymena Whist 2008 championship.

In the morning a seal crossed the bay half out of the water making a lot of noise; it was possibly trying to get rid of a



Rodel crew: Ben Williams, David Williams, George Wylie, Terry Needham.

parasite. We sailed in a strengthening southwesterly wind past the Old Man of Storr and round the north end of Skye to cross The Little Minch. The Shiant's were just visible but going there was out of the question as the forecast was southwesterly 5-6 occasionally 7. Approaching Loch Seaforth, which splits North Harris from Lewis, we were joined by at least twenty dolphins that darted around the boat and stayed with us for some time.

Inside the Loch we ran past huge fish farms and, with the wind whistling round us, turned off into Loch Maaruig and anchored in the pool. The anchor bit in really hard which was a comfort in that desolate, wet and windy place. Ben took a 3 - 1 lead in Ballymena Whist. That night and through the next day the wind howled and shook the mast. The only incident that brightened our day was an eagle (golden we thought) soaring overhead for a while. We had pies, salad and homemade wine for lunch and for some unimaginable reason slept all afternoon. The second night in Seaforth was passed with the usual rounds of whist and Ben increased his lead. The forecast was still bad.



Reiver at anchor in Rodel.

The morning forecast was again poor but the wind had abated a bit so we took a chance and sailed. Once we got clear of the hills the wind was lighter than expected and we had a pleasant sail for the sixteen miles to Loch Finsbay; the tide being unsuitable to enter the pool at Rodel. In the distance we could see the Tall Ships heading northwards up the misty Skye coast. Near the entrance a minkie breached right in front of us. It was calm by the time we anchored so we had a quiet night with a lovely sunset over the rocky land.

On Thursday morning we sailed the few miles to enter Rodel on the top of the tide by the west entrance. There was no sign of life at the hotel and we feared that it was no longer open which would have been very disappointing as it is a favourite spot for us. After lunch we went ashore and found the

hotel to be open so we booked an evening meal and showers and were lent a Saab estate car to go shopping in Leverburgh and visit St Clement's church with its stone carving depicting a galley. After safely returning the free car, showered, had a beautiful meal (the scallop roes were amazing) and quite a lot to drink at the hotel. We talked in the bar to a retired marine engineer who warned us about the developments at Kallin, where we planned to go.

Next day we motored across the Sound of Harris to Kallin Harbour on Grimisay, North Uist. The harbour is undergoing an extension and the visitors' mooring, which is in the full flow of the tide, had been removed to allow a huge service barge to get in with the caissons for the harbour wall so we talked our way in with the fishermen; saying that we were meeting a friend from Benbecula (true). As it was Friday more and more fishing boats came in and as the evening wore on we ended up completely surrounded in the jam-packed little harbour with no possibility of leaving until some others left. The fishermen were friendly and later we were joined by Ben's friend, Barney from Benbecula (originally Saintfield) who is an air traffic



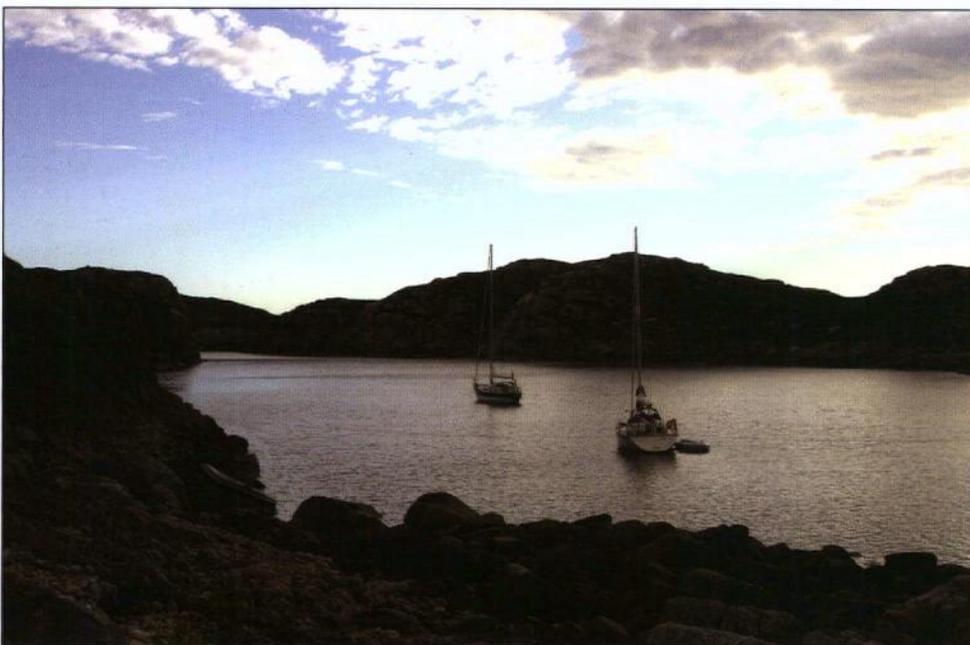
Hemmed-in in Kallin Harbour!

controller; not a very taxing job in that part of the world with about six flights and a few helicopters a day to cope with. He took Ben for a spin in his blue Nissan 350Z, 3.5 litre sports car round the islands; the roads are mostly single track and the only straights are the causeways between the islands.

When we woke in the morning we found that three boats had left the harbour; how they got out we do not know. We topped up the water and negotiated with a fisherman to use his electronic fob to fill up with 114 litres of diesel from the harbour tank. We wanted to go round to the next bay to the crab factory but it was too far to walk, and an old fisherman said 'sure take my car' so we set off in our second loan car! We bought fish and crabs from a rather nice Polish girl with freezing hands, which Ben missed because he couldn't stand the smell of fish and remained outside by the banks of scallop shells. As we left Kallin in calm misty conditions we met two tugs coming in to collect the barge. If we had been any later we probably would not have been able to leave until after they had completed their tricky manoeuvres in the narrow channel.

We arrived in Loch Boisdale under motor and were greeted by two pipers practising (they needed it!) at the hotel. A family of loons (probably red throated divers) were feeding along the shore. We picked up a mooring and went ashore (there was lots of otter poo on the grass close to the high water mark) after dinner to the village, and had a few pints in the hotel bar. Local musicians gathered; accordion, guitar, uilleann pipes and banjo. Barney and another air traffic controller (yes they have more than one) joined us too. Then three pipers took over with high decibels, killing conversation and doing the skipper's head in. Each one played indiscernible tunes far too long and just went on and on,

Evening at Tinker's Hole.



so we returned to the boat in the dark with ringing ears. I noted that we really must replace chart 1795 before we return to these parts as it is becoming impossible to read some of the numbers on the old one!

Lovely, long, gentle sail

On Sunday we motored in sunshine to Eriskay where we picked up a mooring before lunch and were entertained by a French sailor who spent ages at the top of his mast trying to free a halyard. He was issuing instructions in French to an American woman who did not seem to know very much. George asked him in French if we could help but got a negative reply. On leaving Eriskay thick fog set in for a few hours but cleared before we reached Barra. We entered Castle Bay in early evening passing Roderick and Valerie Monson's (ICC) red trawler at anchor on the way in to the moorings. We went straight to the hotel and booked a table for 20.00 and at last found Tennents 80/- (Amber) beer and managed to sink a few pints before dinner. The French boat arrived in and spent absolutely ages messing about trying to anchor in the wrong area; poor long suffering American woman! The crew said that revellers left over from the music festival were very noisy during the night but the skipper was oblivious. George had run out of prunes (the rest of the crew didn't need them) so Terry and George dinghied ashore in the morning for supplies and met Roderick and Valerie at the Co-op. It had been days since the last shop in Leverburgh but on Monday morning at 08.00 all we got were stale baps and garlic infected burgers. We then left as early as we could for the long hop across the Sea of the Hebrides. It was a lovely, long, gentle sail with all canvas up, mostly in sunshine and we saw a number of minkies, basking sharks and quite a few large dolphins on the way to Coll. We entered Arinagour late in the evening so didn't go ashore. We were woken early in the morning and relieved of £15 for the use of the mooring by a local in a dinghy; this was the only time we were charged during the entire trip.

We left Coll and motored across to Lunga in the Treshnish Isles where we anchored and had lunch. On the approach to Lunga we saw a large object breaking the surface and at first we thought it was a basking shark as it had a floppy fin or a minkie but Terry was sure it was a sunfish (mola mola), a very rare sight. We should have gone round again to take photographs but didn't as it was a showery overcast day. We pressed on through the Sound of Iona and round to the Tinker's Hole. By that time it was windy outside so we were glad to be in good shelter; put a line ashore and set our lobster pot. An elderly couple paddled past in canoes and told us that we had just missed the annual Lifeboats' 'carol singing' the previous night! After dinner all, except Terry, went ashore onto Erraid and scrambled over rocks, through bracken, brambles and bushes

round to David Balfour's beach. It is a lovely desolate place with wonderful views from the top of the hills across the Sound of Iona and Torran Rocks.

Next day we waited until the midday weather forecast before we decided to go. We motored endlessly into a horrible, wet and windy day, sometimes being knocked back to one knot, until we eventually rounded the north end of Colonsay. We decided to carry on as Scalasaig would have been untenable in the strong easterly and eventually, late in the evening, reached West Loch Tarbert, Jura where we eventually got the anchor to stick on the fourth attempt. The crew were by then tired, wet, hungry and fed up and it was very windy. There seems to be shelves of bare rock between the sand in the bay, the scale of which is so big it is difficult to relate to the chart and pilot books.

After the shipping forecast at 05.20 we left as soon as we could and set off for the Sound of Islay. Just before Port Askaig it was blowing so hard we had to take shelter and anchored in Whitefarland Bay on the Jura side. If we had been able to make it down the Sound of Islay we knew that we would not have been able to get out the southern end in that wind. We also were aware that we would have mobile phone contact in the Sound but would lose it if we got to the Ardmores so we made calls home to say that we may be behind schedule. George's phone had got wet and had to be dismantled to dry it out. That evening the weather suddenly let go and as the tide was right we slipped round to the Ardmores, much relieved. The sea at McArthur's Head was a remarkable dark brown.

'It rains on the just and the unjust ...

At 06.00, after another early shipping forecast, we set off across the North Channel for Rathlin arriving at 12.00 alongside the new pontoon. In the afternoon we went for a walk and snoozed, then went to McCaig's Bar for the last night out where we met another crew from Whiterock. The skipper announced that he was looking forward to going back to work and a sleep in; not having to wake up every morning at 05.20 for the shipping forecast! Next morning we slipped across to Ballycastle and spent the morning cleaning the boat for the incoming crew which arrived at lunchtime. That ended, for us, 14 days, 305 miles in very varied weather some of which was horrendous but there was some sunshine, which was more than some others have had. Quote from George's notebook, which I think came from Terry: 'It rains on the just and the unjust but mostly it just rains'.

Footnote: The Ballymena Whist Championship overall winner was Ben, closely followed by George; which dispels the theory that success is inversely proportional to the amount of alcohol consumed!

On Nelson's Victory the plates were square for ease of manufacture and storage. Food served on them became known as "Square Meals". Around their edges, the plates had a fiddle, a raised lip. If a sailor took more than his fair share, his food slopped over: he was "on the fiddle".

Caron comes to Carrickfergus

Harold Boyle

Our friends, Herbie and Vivienne, having inveigled us into approving the purchase of a Hallberg Rassy 42, promptly invited us to assist in the delivery passage from the Hamble to Carrickfergus.

Time was precious for us since we were also preparing *Gentle Spirit* for her summer cruise but with the help of Meta Marine we were able to select a period of reasonable weather for a fast passage.

The three crew, Peter, Harold and Vivienne (Boyle) arrived at Hamble Point Marina on Thursday 1st May only to find the new owner of *Caron* tearing his hair out since the mast had been stepped in a rush and was incorrectly set up. Consequently we could not bend on the main and genoa. Many phone calls were made to the rigger who eventually agreed to return on the Friday morning to sort out the rigging problem. On Friday, to ease everyone's frustration it was decided to have dinner at La Dolce Vita in Hamble Village and to enjoy the "Tom Jones" cabaret. In the meantime the rest of the crew got on with victualling the boat. After a most harrowing day the rig was set up but unfortunately, after the rigger left we had to vacate the berth due to the Hamble Boat Show. *Caron* was moved to Mercury Marina where the sails were bent on and the new rib was strapped to the stern. It was agreed to have a last dinner at the Marina eatery and to sail at 06.45 next day to get maximum tide lift for Brixham.

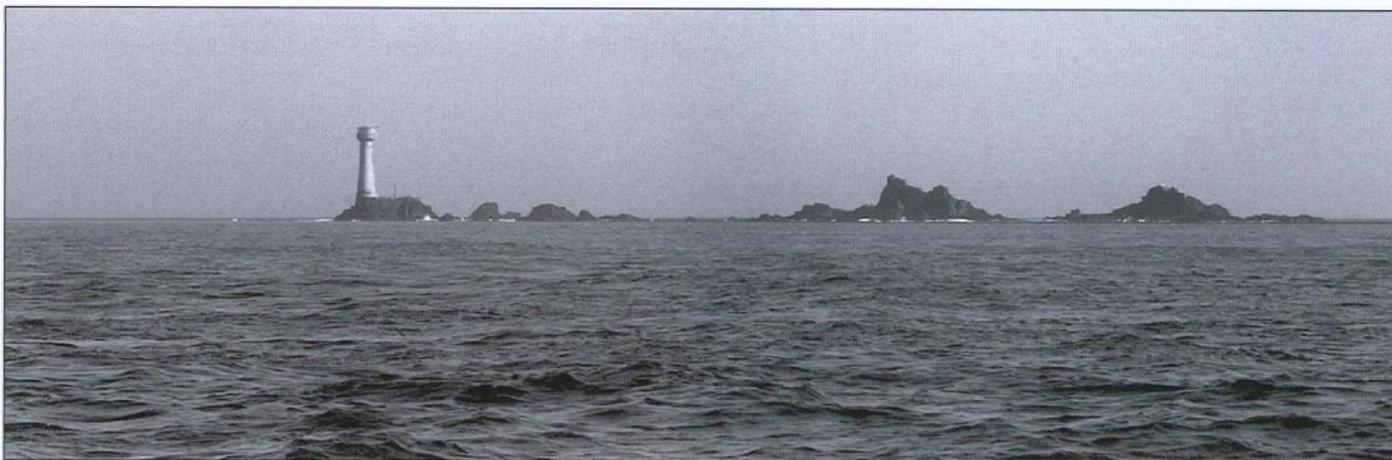
At 06.45 on Saturday 3rd May we slipped our lines and left berth B16 at Mercury Marine and motored down the Hamble. At 08.15 with east-southeast wind, the main was pulled out-but it jammed and the guys had to work very hard to clear it. As a treat for an early start bacon butties were served for breakfast-these went down very well and stayed down! Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight was abeam at 09.45 and at 10.15 with the Bridge Buoy left to port we were sailing well at 8 knots. At 12.45 we changed our course to 265 degrees and started to motorsail. An hour later the wind was southeast with a hazy sky and the seas were building. We switched the engine off at 17.00 and we were then recording a downwind speed of 35 knots and 10.1

boat speed! Fantastic-*Caron* was flying! At 19.00, we were still sailing downwind but with an uncomfortable motion in the confused seas. Vivienne then went down to prepare the evening meal and to test herself! With the food cooking in the oven we continued on for the final hour and arrived alongside pontoon D27 in Brixham Marina. We then settled down to have the evening meal and to try to have some relaxation after a hard, first day contented that we had covered 97.54 miles.

We departed Brixham on Sunday at 08.45 having had an early breakfast. We motored in flat calm towards Berry Head and then set course for Start Point where we were abeam of at 11.05. With wind north-northwest 11 knots and on a course of 268 degrees we continued motorsailing with the tide at 8 to 9 knots. By 14.00 with the wind from the west the sun was breaking through and we had a very pleasant going across Lyme Bay. We were quite a long way off-shore so there wasn't a lot to see while underway. We passed a good number of ships lying off Falmouth and by 19.58 we were alongside the visitor's pontoon in the Marina.

After dinner the guys went up to the town while Vivienne enjoyed some "me" time. She was nicely settled in her bunk, reading a book to a background of relaxing music when Peter arrived back only to say not to worry but the others couldn't get into the marina! Apparently the power had gone down and the lock for the gate could not be operated. Another yachtsman in the marina saw the predicament got into his dinghy and went to render assistance. Other younger, more athletic people, climbed over the gate!

Monday 5th May dawned sunny and bright and we departed Falmouth Town Marina at 09.00, cleared the harbour and hoisted the mainsail. By 10.00, in a light north wind we were at the Manacles, changed course to 223 to head toward the Lizard which was abeam of us at 11.10. We then altered course to 323 to head for Newlyn and motor-sailed across the bay in calm seas. However the seas got up for an hour or so before we arrived alongside a pontoon in Newlyn Marina at 14.15. What a glorious day we had and it was good to have some time in this



Longships on a kind day.



Happy crew!



Leaving the Hamble.

very pleasant town. The total mileage at this point was 205.44 and we were well pleased with our progress. To give the galley slave a break we ate at the Meadery.

Next morning Tuesday 6th May we left Newlyn in calm, sunny conditions – great for Land's End! At 09.10 we rounded the Runnel Stone and with the wind easterly 20 knots, course 315 we switched the engine off. At 09.40 course 360 we rounded the Longships sailing at 8 knots and Peter and Herbie were told it doesn't get much better than this – how lucky we were. At 11.35 our speed dropped to 4.5 knots so we had to put on the engine. However we had a few hours sailing, as the wind backed northeast and on course 018, we had a super reach at 7 knots – happy days! We had to start engine again at 15.40 to keep up speed and to our delight were shortly joined by bottle-nosed dolphins. There were quite a number of them and they gave us such a magnificent display for nearly an hour. They

came so close to the boat and it was great to have the diversion as we hadn't seen much shipping.

The first watch was Peter and Harold up to midnight. Herbie and Vivienne took over and it was cold during the night and they had to keep warm with cups of tea and cuppa soup. A couple of dolphins gave them some company during the night. They had a wonderful night sail at 7.6 knots but the tide was against them. Dawn was breaking at 04.00, the sky was changing and gradually the stars were disappearing. At this point Peter and Harold came on watch and they also had good sailing in the southerly wind.

Another glorious morning on Wednesday 7th and breakfast was at 09.00 in the cockpit. At 12.00 the wind died and visibility was down to one mile but by 14.00 it was warm and sunny, no wind, and when off Wicklow Head the tide turned. At 18.46 with northeast 7.2 knots we altered course to 007 for South Rock light ship. At 20.03 it was sunny but getting misty, becoming colder and at 22.00 we were motor-sailing and it was getting very cold. At midnight it was really dark with east-southeast 17 knots wind and then at 02.00 it was east 22 knots. After a black night at 04.00 South Rock light ship was in sight. We had a most uncomfortable sea between St. John's Point and the Calf of Man. At 06.00 we had another lovely sunrise and we were all glad it was the last one for this trip. *Caron* was raced through the Donaghadee Sound as the tide was against us. We made it and it was all calm at the north end. Because of low spring tides we could not enter Carrickfergus before 09.30 and so we docked at 09.45 well satisfied with the total passage.



Arriving at Carrickfergus.

Total	552miles
Engine	51.50 hours
Time	81 hours
Sailing	30.00 hours

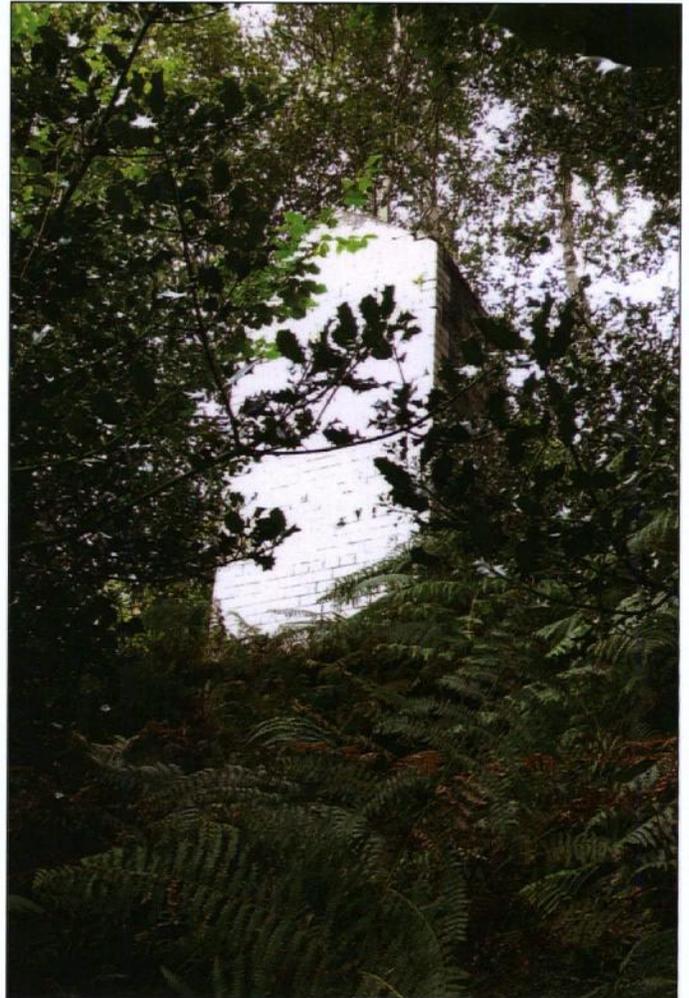
The Back Mark at Ardgroom

Norman Kean

The lovely natural harbour of Ardgroom lies on the south shore of the Kenmare River, on the border between Cork and Kerry. Sadly now strewn with unsightly mussel rafts and their associated paraphernalia, the harbour nevertheless has plenty of space to drop an anchor. The entrance lies between the Sko, Skellig and Ship Rocks, and the ancient and minimal navigational aids include two pairs of leading beacons. The back beacon of the first pair, shown on Admiralty Chart 2495 in $51^{\circ}45'567N$, $9^{\circ}50'631W$, is known to be a shy and elusive woodland creature, and many observers believe that the last recorded sighting (about 1975) was the result of a fervid imagination and an excessively good lunch.

I shall now confess that your official survey team has not in fact got round to sailing into Ardgroom recently. But September 12 being the first dry day for months, I took myself off in the van with a flask and a sandwich to check (among many other things) the Back Mark At Ardgroom. Now it is surprising how much useful maritime surveying can be done by road. It's much easier to check the distance to the shop, or – for that matter – whether the shop is still there. If you carry a leadline, you can clock the depth alongside a pier. You (probably) won't get wet, you (definitely) won't get seasick and as long as you leave the yoke in gear you won't drag the anchor. And if you want a bit of *craic*, arm yourself with a clipboard, a hand-held GPS and a camera and wander about a quiet old harbour, ostentatiously taking notes and pictures. The curtains twitch so hard they wear out their rails, and some 'oul fella' will definitely want to know what you're at.

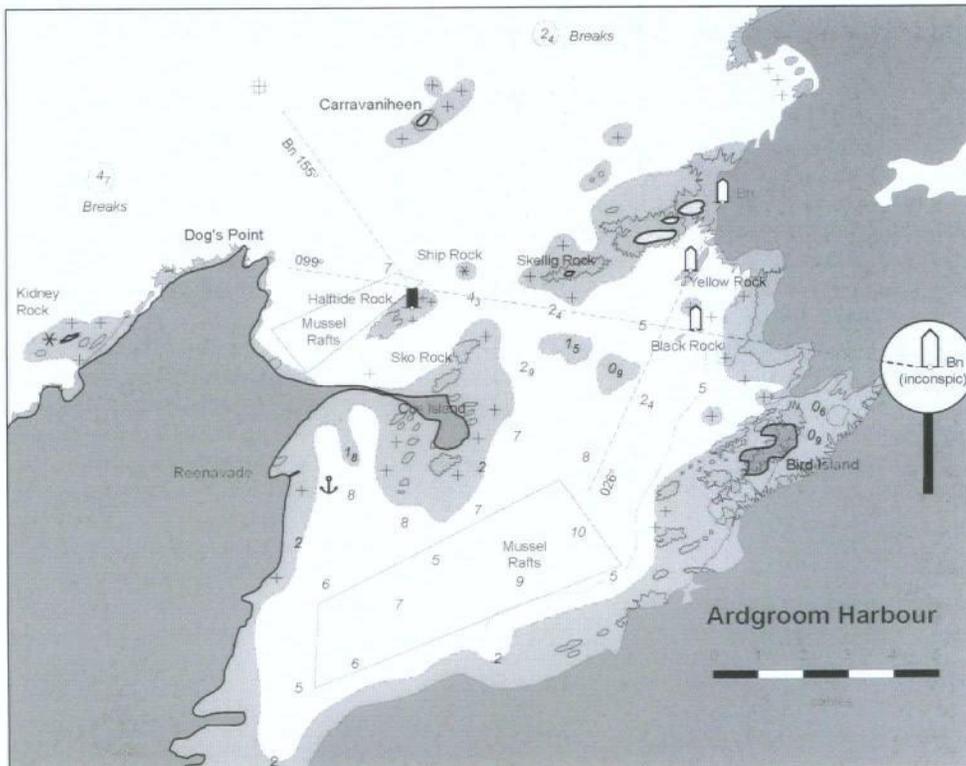
I drove down to the pier at Reenavade, on the Cork shore of Ardgroom, and looked eastwards towards Kerry across the bay. The front mark, a mile away on Black Rock, was clear. But the back mark was impossible to pick out. Was it one of those pinpoints of white peeping out from the trees? Fair enough, from this viewpoint I was 20° off the leading line, but leading marks aren't much good if you can't see them until you're spot on.



Posteriomarkus ardgroomii in its natural habitat.



Ardgroom – the front mark (left) on Black Rock, and the front mark of the second pair, on Yellow Rock.



Plan – Adapted from the plan in the 12th edition S & W Coasts Sailing Directions.

So I got into the van and drove back into Kerry, and I found it. There's a pronounced s-bend in the road, below an old school building under renovation as a house, and there, skulking just below the old parapet wall at the roadside, was the endangered species *posteriomarkus ardgroomii*. And most impressive it was, close up. Footed on a rock ledge, on a steep tree-clad slope, five feet each way and ten feet tall, a fine square stone column with a hip-gable top, its front face clad in white glazed brick. At least ten tons of materials, painstakingly carried there and assembled by some long-forgotten stonemason, and now impeccably camouflaged. "The rear mark is sometimes obscured by bushes which...are cut at intervals." Quite long intervals, apparently. There is lush, verdant, Kerry greenery everywhere, and right in front of the pillar is a lustily adolescent tree of a slightly exotic maple species, about 20 feet high.

Clearly, I was on private property. The path below the pillar led down to a house somewhere below, and I didn't pry. The gateway from the road was barred by two bits of metal gate, chained to the posts and to each other. The chains and padlocks were rusted up. There were none of the trappings of the Celtic Tiger – no cameras, no intercom, no shiny paint. But I wondered, do the people who own this place (and presumably sometimes visit it) know that there is a navigational aid on the property? What, if anything, does it say in their title deeds? Might they actually come to take a pride in maintaining the visibility of the pillar, if only they understood what it was for? Is it possible – so well-concealed is the beacon – that they don't even know it's there? And who built it, who paid for it, when, and for whose benefit?

I did some research, with the assistance of Tim Ryan, newly appointed Inspector of Local Aids to Navigation at the Irish Lights. Tim and his predecessor Robert McCabe have been doing Trojan work trying to get these things regularised. Of the 4000 or so navigational aids in Ireland, only about 400 actually belong to the Commissioners of Irish Lights, but CIL have a statutory role in supervising and auditing the provision of the other 90% by the dozens of other so-called Local Lighthouse

Authorities. These include everyone from Port authorities to marinas, County Councils and most of the fish and mussel farmers in the country. The Back Mark at Ardgroom, officially called Black Rock Rear, Local Aid number LA0559.1100, is the property and responsibility of the Department of Communications, Energy and Natural Resources, and it is now on a 3-yearly audit schedule by the Irish Lights. It will be interesting to see what happens when it fails.

I would like to suggest that the Club take a more proactive interest in these things, not only because in this particular sphere the Irish Lights deserve our help and encouragement, but also because I believe that in the broader arena, the sailing community's interests are not well represented to local or national Government, at least in the Republic. It is a curious thing that – despite the fact that 70% of the population lives within ten miles of the sea, and the major population centres are all on tidal water – this is not a maritime nation. With a

few conspicuous exceptions (such as the Irish Lights) the agencies of the State are out of their depth in three inches of water. There is much to be concerned about, as a few examples will show.

- Visitors' moorings are sited by the County Councils in some quite inappropriate and hazardous places, for example off Roundstone and outside Castletownbere.
- There is no consistent national standard for the establishment of local navigational aids. Mayo, with a ragged, beautiful but rather quiet coast, has funded 150 aids in the last five years. Donegal has 147, but most of those are older. Kerry has 64, many of them new; but Cork County Council owns only seven old and unreliable marks on its lengthy coastline, which has some of the heaviest inshore traffic in Ireland. Despite having an aggregate population of 475, none of the seven inhabited islands in County Cork has any harbour lights. The Irish Lights grant statutory sanction and specify the standard to be met, but cannot require a light to be established; the initiative and the money must come from the local authority.
- There is an embarrassing lack of waste disposal and recycling facilities in Irish harbours, and (partly as a result) fly-tipping is commonplace and dumping at sea is encouraged. Furthermore, fish farming activities often generate unsightly dumps afloat and ashore, as at Cleanderry and Glengarriff.
- There is no adequate consultation process with leisure interests when permission is granted for the establishment of fish farms and offshore energy installations. It is now possible to position wind turbines in water up to 25 metres deep, and there are proposals for wind farms in many areas of navigable water around Ireland.

Harbour works are occasionally puzzling. Last year, the DCENR (it used to be the DCMNR, but the word Marine has



It's in there somewhere...

quietly disappeared) demolished the Perch Rock beacon at Castletownbere and left the rock a metre underwater. They did this (allegedly) to reduce wave disturbance in the harbour, and they didn't consult the Harbourmaster. In other words, they removed a perfectly good light beacon and left a rather nasty navigational hazard. The waves in the harbour got bigger.

And dammit, that day in September, I didn't pack the chainsaw. So by the time you read this, I'll have to have figured out how to write directions for avoiding the Sko, Skellig and Ship Rocks without the assistance of the self-effacing, but very substantial, *posteriomarkus ardgroomii*.

Norman Long write of The Voyage of Starreck Buccaneer Six

Those of you who regularly travel the Canal de Garonne which connects with the Canal du Midi at Toulouse may know of the little branch canal known as "The embranchment de Montech à Montauban" which branches northeast from the main canal at Montech some 34 kms north of Toulouse. Few in recent years may have travelled this waterway.

The guide book for this canal states that all operating gear is rather old. It also tells you to inform the head of the Public Works Office on the day before you intend locking through and he will send someone to help.

Whilst we were holidaying on these French canals some good few years ago, it was determined that Montauban should be visited. I am not now quite sure why? I strongly suspect the entry in the log. This read "Dinner was taken; the wine was drunk".

As prescribed the Public Works Office was duly informed, the following day an early start was made along the branch line. Four and a half kilometres further on the first lock was reached. Surprise, surprise, the lock keeper had no knowledge of us at all. Well it was the Office of Public Works ... so what's different. A hearty breakfast was taken, telephone calls were made and at nine o'clock two workpersons from T.P.E. arrived to help. Over the next two and a half hours we proceeded along the canal. We admired the empty houses which were once the homes of lock keepers, we admired the diligent way the men worked to mend the lock gates and we admired the way the numbers increased until at lock seven we had a team of five men and two vans, all of which were brought into use to help us on our way.

We had named our first two helpers "Bill and Ben the écluse men". At first they seemed quite slow movers but at lock eight we discovered that Bill was a splendid athlete. In clearing the mechanism of the left gate he disturbed a wasps nest. Suddenly we saw this unforgettable man leaving Ecluse de Verlhaguet and travelling the tow path at an unforgettable high speed. Eventually we passed through locks eight and nine and carried on to Montauban. One aid to the navigation suggested that we might be able to lock into the river Tarn. This was not so. Clearly the Tarn had not been navigatable river for many many years. One of our number quietly suggested that the brochure was not quite fully researched.

We spent a fine day in the lovely town. The ladies went shopping. The only words needed were "Non" or "Cent mille francs".

That night we had a joy of a meal. Harry was concerned when he saw the chef's name on a restaurant menu. "You can't eat the chef!" He was happier when he noticed how a French mother kept her children under control. "Restricting young children beneath a table is a practice which should be more widely followed".

The following morning we retraced our journey. The écluse team were standing by. At lock seven the entire winding gear broke as we passed through; at lock five, Ecluse de Mortarieu, a section of one gate was clearly never going to close again. A FÁS works team could find plenty of opportunity if they visited this part of France. Just before noon we cleared the Ecluse de Noalhac and had clear water to Montech and the main canal. We had seen black kites, swifts and kingfishers. We had noted the animals at the side of the canal; dogs which looked up to us, cats which looked down on us and pigs that regarded us as equals.

We wondered as we left the last lock that perhaps we were the last boat ever. We had boldly been where no boat may ever go again.

Editors Note: The branch canal is now open again. The locks are all manual and boats are "accompanied along the way by an itinerant lock-keeper" [*Midi-Carmargue Waterways Guide*, 2008].

Mufida in Kenya

Michael Bourke

The first sail of the year for myself, brother John and the boatman Malau, took place on Friday 4th April 2008. *Mufida* is a 19 foot dhow with a lateen sail and the ambitious goal was to circumnavigate the island of Lamu. The reasons as always were, because it is there, to set the record, no doubt make our mark and receive the admiration of our wives.

Malau, enthusiastically volunteered to come with us. His reasons were no less than ours. He had recently arrived from the island of Pate to take up his job as boatman to Jahazi House, and as none of the other boatmen in the locality had been to sea in such a way, his status would immediately be confirmed.

So, for all these very good reasons, the idle comment of "why don't we sail around the island" became a project and ultimately reality.

Lamu Island is part of the Lamu Archipelago off the north Kenyan coast and is classified as a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It extends 12 miles north-south by five miles east-west. The main town is Lamu, which is estimated to have been in existence for 1000 years. It would have risen to prominence around the 15th century, come under the domination of the Portuguese in the 16th century, but rose in rebellion in the 17th century to become an Omani protectorate. During this time it became a centre of poetry, politics, arts and crafts as well as the slave trade. In the early 20th century, it became a British protectorate and while predominantly Muslim, sounds of singing from the church on the waterfront greet one on a Sunday morning.

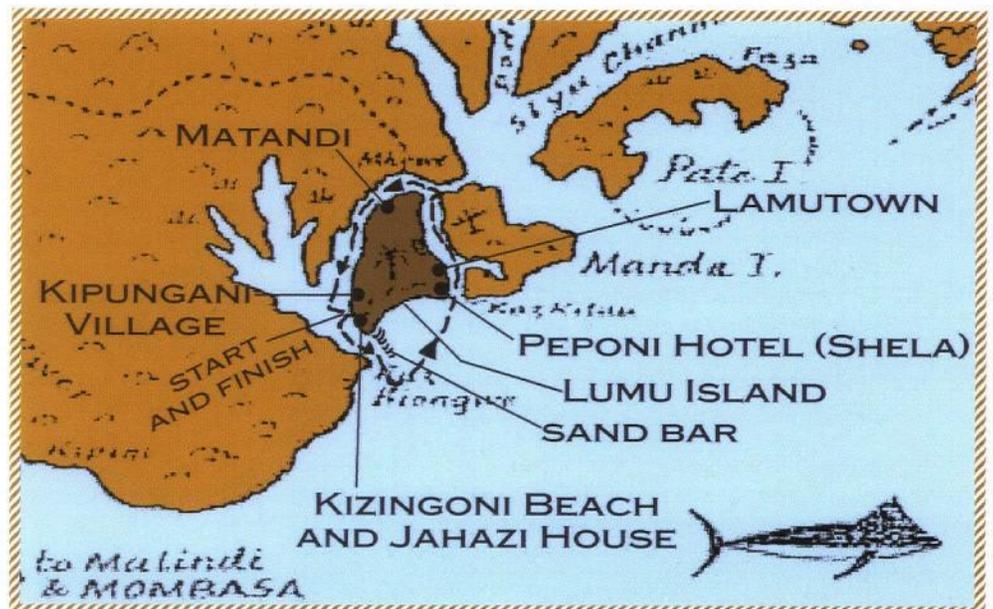
Shela, two miles up the coast from Lamu, similarly lies in the waterway between Manda and Lamu Islands. This is home to the Peponi Hotel, loved by Hemingway and a place of style, as Kenya seems capable of producing. It is owned by Carol and Lars Korschen and a must for anyone visiting the area. Kizingoni Beach is equally fantastic, instead of a hotel, one takes a house on the beach as we did. With a staff of six, every need is catered for. As there are no roads to Kizingoni Beach, access is only by boat and beach boys or other irritations, unheard of.

We set off from Jahazi House on Kizingoni Beach to circumnavigate anti-clockwise. We allowed for two hours of ebb to bring us out of the archipelago, heading south to pass beyond a three mile sand bar extending out into the Indian Ocean. With a southerly wind against the tide, we beat south and then southeast, for the next 90 minutes. The seas were short but steep and we rose to bear away on the crest, watching as the bow would sink heavily to within six inches of the gunwale, before pulling free and rising to meet the

next wall of water. It was a somewhat anxious experience, but also wonderfully enjoyable and continued until we felt we had cleared the sandbanks, which Malau explained were called Mafungu, through smiling, but slightly gritted, teeth. We bore away north at around 08.00.

Tacking the lateen sail is not easy to describe, there is a similar need to manhandle the spar as, for example, when doing a dip-gibe with a spinnaker pole. There is a way of doing it and a way of cleating one's foot to the foredeck. As the lateen spar lies on the leeward side of the mast, it has to be slipped to windward, which will become the new leeward. That is done by bringing the foot of the spar back on the windward side, the boat is put about and the spar is brought back to the bow and made fast. In that process, the spar slips forward and around the top of the mast to lie on the new leeward side. The sail and single sheet is then brought around, forward of the spar and passed back to the rear, to be cleated home on the new tack. While this happens, the boat wallows at the mercy of the sea, but when one sees it done skilfully, such as in the Lamu Regatta, it can be done quickly and efficiently. (John, Malau and I saw that, on another occasion when we followed the Regatta Race in our house longboat, 21 feet of fibreglass, pushed by 85bhp is a different story). By the end of the day, we were tired but getting better.

We ran northeast on the slack tide, this seemed much the same sensation as being in a currach off the coast of Clare in a swell, but helped along by a full sail. While trying to go in the other direction would not have been so pleasant, running in front of the seas, in the sun, watching the coast of Kenya slip by was, just as you can imagine, very pleasant. Occasionally, we would pass a fishing boat, which seemed perfectly at ease, with sails down, bobbing on the water as they heaved on their nets. Eventually, we reached Shela as the tide began to flood, making





L-r: Mike, Malau and John (in boat)

Lamu town by 10.15. This was followed by an easy reach as we sailed northwest between Lamu and Manda Islands. Passing between the two islands, even if half a mile apart, on a flood tide made the shore seem to fly past. Lamu town slid by with all its hustle and bustle, boats coming and going, barter and banter adding to the chaos, that is the town's biblical waterfront.

This brought us to Matandoni on the north side of the island, historically a famous Dhow building town. This is the point where the two flood tides meet, coming up the north and south

side of the island. Having planned to arrive at the turn of the tide, we were unfortunately there two and half hours early. Up to this point our journey had been different and idyllic, flat inland waterways with gentle breezes; the islands hidden from view by impenetrable banks of mangrove trees, emerging from the water standing proud on their roots. Our early arrival broke our relaxed harmony; we were left beating, as Malau helpfully explained once more, into the flood hoping that on this tack we had made ground, only to find we went through 180° again. Eventually at around 15.45 when the tide began its second ebb of the day, we were able to take a long tack past Kipungani our local village up to Kizingoni Beach, when we put about with a short leg to shore and

an eager welcome. In all, our trip took 9½ hours, in which we managed to have seven hours of favourable tide.

It was a wonderful safari (journey), combining sightseeing with adventure, strong seas to the east with near silent light airs and still waters to the west while beating home, never forgetting the mangrove banks encrusted with oysters, growing closer to a boat-length away, before putting in a tack. Malau walked taller as he smiled at those who had not yet risked the breakers out to sea, while John and I had a definite sense of that feeling we are all familiar with.

David Beattie writes of a Caribbean Christmas

Mary and I, with our daughter Jenny and her (now) husband Ken Joynt had chartered an Ovni 34 several years ago from Guadeloupe It seemed a good idea to do so again. This time we took a 38, and persuaded the charter company to deliver it to Marigot on French St Martin, as we would have it for three weeks. Christmas Day in Marigot was like any other day there. Most of the

restaurants were open and La Belle Place (sic) served us escargot in garlic butter followed by a splendid buffalo tartare that, when coupled with a Pomerol, made life decidedly rosy. You can keep your mince pies! We potted south. The anchorage at St Barths was jammed with boats. The wind was pretty consistently southeasterly force 6 or 7 which frustrated our plan to have a comfortable close reach out to Antigua for New Year. We got as far as Nevis and spent New Year's Eve on board in a ghastly swell, having laid a mooring and also a kedge to try to hold the bow up to the swell. It blew and lashed rain like the monsoon. We ventured ashore to a beach café to see in the New Year shortly before the roof blew off from half of the bar. The customers huddled under the remaining roof, catching drops in buckets and jugs. It reminded me of cruising in old wooden boats, only we hadn't brought a supply of heavy duty fertiliser bags! The only sensible way to get back aboard was to remove as many clothes as decency permitted, and jam them in a plastic bag! Eventually New Year was greeted by Ken and me with a bottle of Irish below decks. The locals blamed El Niño in the Pacific.

We continued our cruise and visited St Eustatius and the lagoon at Simpson Bay on St Maarten (the lock keepers are expensive and most unhelpful); the weather in the Leewards was pretty dreadful until the second week in January, but we redeemed it with a few days spent at anchor in Road Bay Anguilla. This island has really come on in the past few years and the petty crime that was all pervasive has all but ceased. The local port, customs and immigration officials, having in the past been quite menacing, appear to have realised that yacht tourism is a major part of the island's economy. From there we had a spanking sail around the north of Anguilla and bore away for Marigot, entering the marina under engine as usual and berthing in a force 6 crosswind, relying on the engine. The next morning when moving to the fuel berth there was a bang from the prop shaft and the coupling fell apart. Luckily the wind was light as we drifted in to the berth and halted alongside. I was pleased the coupling hadn't failed the previous day or we might have lost our deposit!

A salt and fresh water trip home from Sardinia to Howth for *Marie Claire*

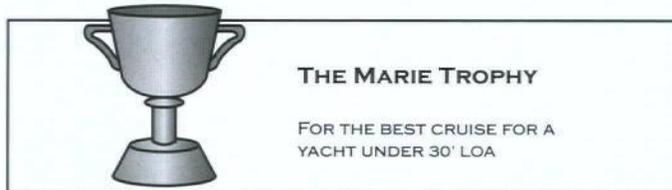
Seán McCormack

Editor's note: This log reports on two periods of cruising; the first in Autumn 2007, bring *Marie Claire* from Sardinia to the mouth of the Rhône; the second in the period April - September 2008 bringing *Marie Claire* back from the Mediterranean to Howth.

Marie Claire is a 1981 built Beneteau First 30 designed by Andre Mauric. At 29'6" LOA she is small compared to today's modern cruiser and in my four seasons of warmer climates cruising, I found this had both advantages and disadvantages. In crowded marinas a space could normally be found when the larger cruiser berths were full. On the other hand cockpit socialising had its limitations. Also on a number of occasions after taking liquid refreshments ashore, we had some difficulty in large marinas in locating her, while sandwiched between much larger craft!

Part One: Sardinia to the Rhône

Over the past three years as outlined in the last three Annuals, *Marie Claire* has completed a rather comprehensive and leisurely cruise of the western Mediterranean. In readiness for a river and canal passage through France, she was to spend the winter of 07/08, out of the water at the mouth of the Rhône.



Accordingly, over the period 27th August to 5th November 2007 we sailed her from Sardinia to Navy Services boatyard on the Canal St. Louis, at the mouth of the Rhône.

On the afternoon of Monday 27th August, Peter Quigley, Tony Claffey and myself, arrived in Alghero airport and negotiated a rather expensive taxi fare for the 50 mile trip to Torre Grande, halfway down Sardinia's west coast. We arrived at the marina just in time to enjoy a badly needed late dinner in the only marina restaurant. This large marina has excellent facilities and very reasonable rates, but is a bit on the remote side. The surrounding area is very flat and marshy.

We were launched the next morning and the rest of the day was spent getting everything back in place. Provisioning entailed an eight mile bus trip to a large supermarket on the outskirts of Oristano.

29th August saw us motor-sail the 47.6 miles to Alghero marina in light winds. The following day we made the short trip to Cala Tamariglio in Porto Conte, which we had visited previously. The next day brought very fresh conditions for the 55.9 mile trip to Castlesardo, on Sardinia's north coast. This was my third transit of the Fornelli Passage, but given the conditions it was still an anxious trip. The following day gave us a good sail to Bonifacio and we were given the last available marina berth in this most dramatic harbour. As this was Peter and Tony's first visit, we did touristy things like taking the little tram up to the Citadel and enjoying the magnificent vista of harbour and coastline. That evening we had a pleasant meal in a harbour front restaurant. The following three days saw a return visit to the lovely anchorage of Anse de Roccapina where we overnighted, a swim and lunch stop in Campomoro anchorage and then two nights in Propriano marina.

On 5th September we enjoyed good sailing from Propriano to Ile Sanguinaires, a group of islands at the northwestern entrance to Golfe d' Ajaccio. We anchored in the lee of Grande Sanguinaire, the largest island of the group to enjoy lunch. An hour later the wind had increased to force 7 and the breaking water on the nearby reefs and on the jagged and needle-like rocks, was a timely reminder of why this group of islands are called the 'blood-thirsty' islands. Not wishing to enhance their reputation we made a hasty exit through the inner passage and endured a wet and very uncomfortable sail for the 16.8 miles to the small marina of Cargese. When we left Propriano that morning, our plan was to overnight in Ajaccio, but as the sailing was so good at that stage, we decided to keep going to reduce the next day's long sail to Calvi, on Corsica's northwestern corner.

The next day in light winds, we motor-sailed the 36.9 miles to Calvi marina. The following morning as we were about to leave the pontoon, Frank McCarthy, ICC, on *Atlantic Islander*, tied up behind us having sailed through the night from the French Mediterranean coast. He informed us that we were only the second Irish yacht he had seen during his six years cruising in the Mediterranean. For the first hour this morning we motor-

sailed until a lovely southwest to west wind filled in and we had a great sail to our night anchorage in Baie de Tamarone on the north-easterly corner of Corsica, covering 48.2 miles. We shared this anchorage with three other yachts including a French flagged First 30 sister ship.

During today's passage we were aware of a piece of history to starboard in Golfe de St-Florent, on the northwest coast of Corsica. This is the location of the first Genoese round tower, built on Pte de la Mortella, which so impressed Lord Hood and the British. In 1794 it withstood a huge British bombardment from two Royal Navy ships and inflicted heavy damage on one of them. It was only captured after two days of pounding from a gun battery that was brought ashore and then only after a lucky shot, that set the tower on fire. In 1803 the British started to build a string of similar towers, now called Martello towers, around the coasts of Britain and Ireland as a defence against a French invasion. Ironically the towers were built to thwart the ambitions of a Corsican, Napoleon Bonaparte.

Next morning we explored ashore before heading to Bastia for two nights. We tied up in the Vieux Port marina right in the town centre. Tony and Peter left here for home by ferry to Livorno and then a flight to Dublin from Pisa on Monday 10th September. As I was on my own for the next 24 hours, I covered the short 12 mile trip to the anchorage of Porticcio. This was a lovely stop and a memorable night at anchor, with a clear star-studded sky and the best Milky Way view I was ever privileged to see. Back in Bastia the next day, Vincent Carrigy joined ship and later that evening we were invited on board *Alys* for drinks. Owners David and Hillery Park together with Aidan Tyrrell, all ICC, were on board and a very pleasant time was had by all.

On 12th September thanks to Vincent's arrival, we enjoyed a big Irish fry for breakfast and after a visit to the local supermarket, we got away heading for Elba. This was a 40.2 mile motor-sailing passage, in light southeasterly winds to the anchorage of Golfo di Procchio, on the north coast of the island. Elba is the largest and most beautiful of the Tuscan Islands that form a patchwork of islands between Corsica and the west coast of Italy. The next seven days were devoted to a leisurely circumnavigation of the island. The scenery was fantastic and we had a most enjoyable time, helped by good Italian food and washed down by the essential Italian wine. I don't understand why Napoleon ever left.

On the evening of Friday 14th September, while checking the anchoring depths off Naregno beach in the southeast corner of Porto Azzuro, we became aware of another yacht doing the same thing. We both appeared to conclude at the same time that the depths indicated in the Pilot Book were incorrect. As we were about to head deeper into Porto Azzuro, to the anchorage of Cala di Mola, I heard someone calling my name. It transpired that the other yacht was the recently-acquired and Mediterranean-based Dufor 35 *Wildflower* owned by friends of mine, Des and Marie O'Riordan from Dublin. Also on board were other friends of mine, Matt O'Brien and a former racing crew member Vivienne Cahill. We both then anchored in Cala di Mona right next to *Alys* that we had met earlier in Bastia in Corsica. It was amazing that three Irish boats by chance ended

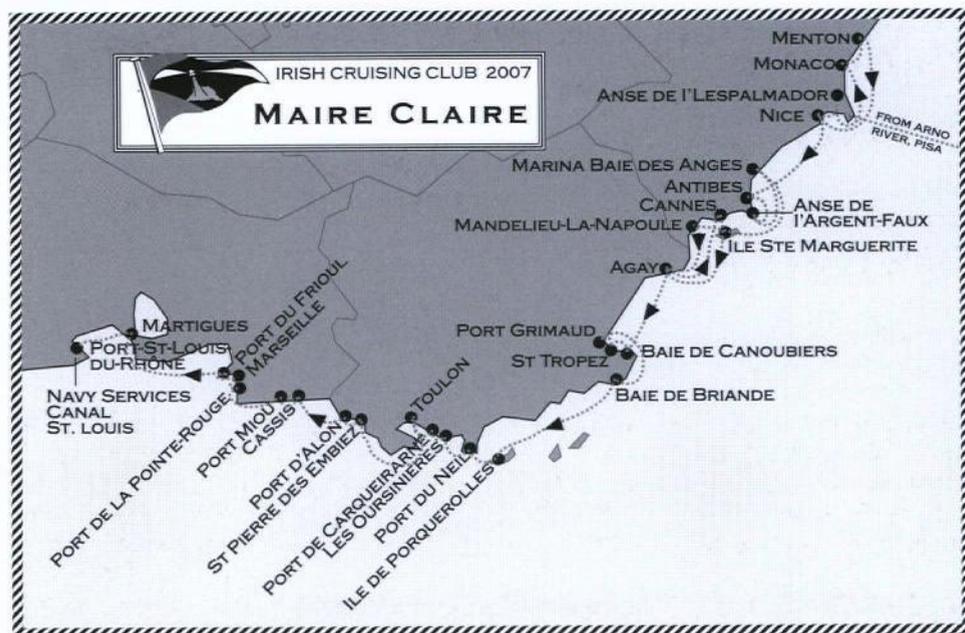
up anchored beside each other on the east coast of Elba. Later the three crews had drinks on *Marie Claire* and if this was to be repeated I would need to raise the antifouling level!

The Citadel overlooking the harbour was built by the Spanish in the middle of the 16th century and three hundred years later was used as a prison for hardened criminals. The original name of Longone was changed to Porto Azzuro to break this association and attract tourists, a ploy that appears to have worked well.

On Wednesday 19th September, we enjoyed a great reaching sail to Marina Punta Ala on the Italian mainland coast. Over the next five days we headed north. In Livorno Porto Medico we were reluctantly given a berth for one night only, where we tied up to a rather derelict dirty quay wall. This part of the harbour was not very attractive, but the long walk to the town had its compensations. Livorno (Leghorn) is a busy, attractive town doing well from all the ferry and cruise line business that it attracts. The harbour is a hive of activity from the constant comings and goings of all types of craft. It was from here in July 1822 that Shelley left on his fateful last voyage back to Lerici, in his schooner *Don Juan*.

Near miss

The next morning we decided to leave as no berth was available. As we were motoring out the northern entrance and I had just hoisted the main, when suddenly there was a sickening noise and the engine stopped. A quick look from the boarding ladder confirmed my worse fears. We had fouled a length of very heavy rope. We unfurled the genoa and commenced to sail back into the harbour but the wind was so light that our speed was never over 0.5 of a knot. A huge cruise liner was coming in the southern entrance and we presumed that it was going to turn into the harbour in front of *Marie Claire*, but it continued on straight past us, to a berth outside the harbour. When it was about 500 metres from us, we were given a few hoots and at this time I lost steerage and had zero on the log. It was a very worrying time and in the end he steered around us. Eventually we regained steerage and sailed alongside a jetty just inside the entrance. Vincent having jumped ashore, tried to pull us forward a few feet, but failed. We were aground. With the help of the boathook to push us away from the jetty, we succeeded in moving forward to deeper water. No sooner had we made the lines fast than we got a huge wash from a pilot boat leaving harbour at speed. I shudder to think of the consequences if the



wash had come five minutes earlier when we were aground. We spent about 15 minutes lying on the jetty with the boat hook trying to unravel the rope, but with little success. It was then that a local suggested that we move forward about 200 metres, to where there was a very low, steel platform which would give us a better working angle. This moving forward took some time as we had two pilot boats tied up alongside each other, just forward of *Marie Claire*. With a large bread knife lashed to the boathook, we got to work with help from two local men. About 20 minutes later we had it cut free. The agreed bottle of Jameson was duly handed over and the moment captured on camera.

We finally got away at 10.45 and motored the 10.5 miles in a flat calm, to one of the Ponte Arno pontoons on the Arno River near the town of Marina di Pisa. There are mooring pontoons on the south side of the river for over a mile, which can accommodate up to 2000 boats. It is a rather rural and quite beautiful sylvan setting, not unlike parts of the river Shannon. Another unusual feature of the river were the fish nets hanging out into the river from gantries, which were raised and lowered by the guy in charge, as a boat approached.

The wind got up very strong during the night and we had gales for the next three days. The following morning the manager suggested that we move half a mile upriver to another pontoon which was owned by the same company and which would be a lot more tranquil in the prevailing conditions. This we did and it was much more comfortable. Fortunately the stormy weather did not affect our schedule, as we had planned four days here to facilitate a crew change, with Vincent Carrigy departing and Vincent Dromey arriving. We also required time in Pisa to check out the stability of the Leaning Tower! We



Vincent Carrigy, centre, with helpers and rope.

Photo: Sean McCormack

enjoyed our visit here, especially Pisa, with its Tower, Cathedral, Baptistery and Cemetery, all located close together in a beautiful part of the city. We used the local bus service, which passed close to our berth, to get to and from Pisa each day. On the other hand the small coastal town of Marina di Pisa, at the mouth of the Arno River, is a soulless place and best avoided.

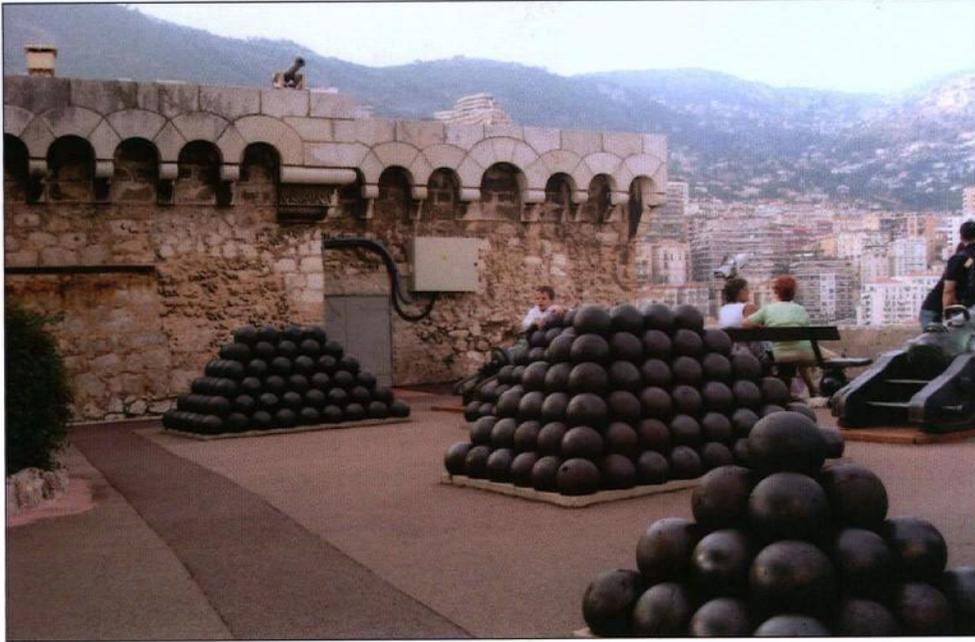
On the morning of 29th September the wind had gone light but I was concerned about residual conditions at the river mouth, which is shallow and dangerous in strong winds. I checked with the office and they confirmed where the deepest water was, and that we should be OK going out. As we approached, all we could see ahead was white breaking water and I was nearly on the point of turning back. By using extra throttle in the flatter patches, we got through, but it was scary and on one occasion we fell several feet down the back of a breaking wave. A great sense of relief on getting out, but I would not recommend a repeat. We now had a night passage

ahead of us, on this leg to the French Riviera coast. The sea was still lumpy after the recent blow, and with light winds we had to motor much of the way. During a lovely moonlit night, we encountered very little traffic and with the Italian and French Riviera coasts illuminated to starboard, it was a rather pleasant experience.

Our anchor hit the bottom at 10.15 in the beautiful anchorage of Anse de l'Espalmador, which is on the east side of Rade de Villefranche, just east of Nice. The 129 mile trip took five minutes under 24 hours. This bay is popular with the many cruise liners that ply this coast. Following a swim and lunch we went ashore to explore the town of Villefranche sur Mer. Here the narrow streets run higgledy-piggledy up and down to the harbour, connected by paths and shaded by mature trees. The



Sean, Patricia and Vincent.



Palace grounds, Monaco.

Photo: Sean McCormack

Citadel beside the harbour was built by the Duke of Savoy in 1560 to guard the port and the rade. It remains more or less intact, with pleasant walks through it and good views over the bay from its ramparts. Another objective of our sortie ashore was to find a suitable venue to watch the World Cup Rugby game between Ireland and Argentina. The agonising took place in a bar away from the harbour, and afterwards we returned to *Marie Claire* for dinner and to drown our sorrows.

The next morning we moved the short distance to Nice Harbour Marina, a fine facility right in the city centre. As it was now 1st October, our three nights here cost a total of €28.11 including great showers, a toilet pack, a Nice flag and a booklet containing a city map and information. We enjoyed our three days of city exploration and were impressed with the architecture, both modern and old, of this capital of the French Riviera. During our stay, the transport authorities were conducting trial runs on a new tram system, similar to our Luas. Vincent's wife Patricia joined us here as she did not fancy the long sail from Pisa.

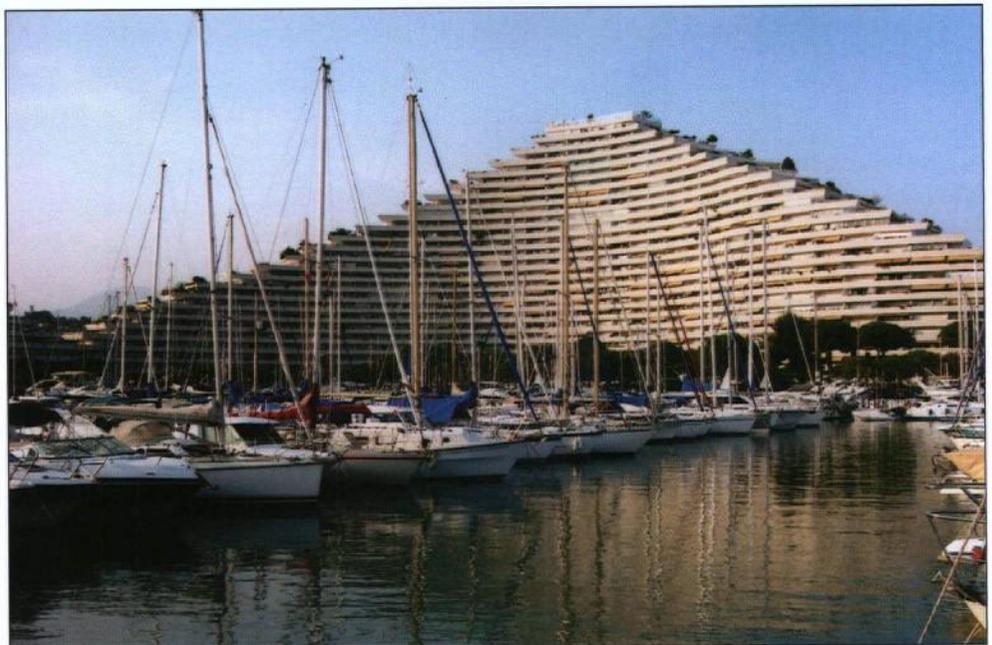
On the afternoon of Thursday 4th October, we again went to Anse de l'Espalmador where we stayed the night. The next day we continued east covering 8.4 miles to Monaco, where we tied up to the fuel/reception pontoon in Marina Port de Monaco. In the marina office, on my presenting the ships papers, I was politely informed that they did not cater for yachts of *Marie Claire's* size. They suggested that I try Fontvieille marina around the corner. I departed that office suitably humbled; they say size does not matter! Better luck in Fontvieille, where we were given a very sheltered berth which cost €62.00 for two nights. I felt like telling them what we paid in Nice, but then I did not want to risk having to move again. After all we

were in the one square mile that is Monaco and the next marina to the west was only half a mile away, but in France.

The two days we spent in Monaco were a never to be forgotten experience. In the Palace grounds looking down on either side you see the two marinas. Even the nine metre *Marie Claire* looked well tied up in its corner berth. We had the good fortune that Patricia and Vincent Dromey had friends, Joe and Grazyna, living in Monte Carlo. We met them for drinks on the first night in a Cyprian bar. The next day we were treated to lunch in the very exclusive Monaco Yacht Club where they are members. On leaving the club I was presented with two very classy yacht club publications on the club's history and activities. After lunch, all five of us went to see the Casino, the Hotel de Paris and the

magnificent grounds. The views from up here were unsurpassed. On the Sunday morning before leaving, we attended a 90 minute Mass in the Cathedral.

The following few days saw us in Menton and then a return visit to Nice marina from where Patricia Dromey left for home. We then had a swim and lunch stop in Anse de la Salis on the east side of Cap d'Antibes, followed by a night anchorage at its southern end called Anse de l'Argent-Faux. For the next two nights Marina Baie des Anges was our base, having earlier been told in Antibes marina that no spaces were available. Antibes is a huge marina, but with the reputation of not being very friendly. The next day Vincent and I took the train to Antibes, two stations down the line. We liked the town with its old and modern parts. The old town still has a harbour town feel to it and its many restaurants and tourist shops enjoy a lively trade. The marina area was quite attractive and is now



Marina Baie des Anges.

Photo: Sean McCormack

engaged largely in the servicing of the many yachts crowding the harbour. Some serious money was evident in this area.

Over the next two days we made a lunch stop at the northern anchorage at Ile Ste Marguerite, near Fort Royal. This is the fort that held its most famous prisoner, the 'Man in the Iron Mask' We then had an overnight in Marina Mandelieu-La Napoule and a lunch stop in Rade d'Agay, before arriving in Port de Cannes marina on 14th October. We were given a berth at the outer end of a new floating visitor's pontoon, which is secured to the outer end of the old fixed visitor's quay. The wash from passing craft was a nuisance and in strong winds these berths might become untenable.

During our two days in Cannes, I can honestly say it lived up to my preconceived ideas of this resort. Over the past three years of cruising in the Mediterranean, I have seen large numbers of big and expensive super yachts, both sail and power, but nothing like the numbers here. I saw a lot of water and polish being used, not by the owners themselves, but uniformed staff. In the town, a high percentage of the shops were very expensive boutiques, having beautiful window displays and prices in telephone numbers. I know it was October, but barely one shop in ten had a single customer. Vincent Dromey left for home from here, to be replaced by Willie Finnie.

On the morning of Tuesday 16th October, I decided to top up the fresh water tank before leaving Cannes marina. The water pedestal required a fitting to activate the water flow. I had two different types on board and the first one I inserted without connecting to the hose, to ascertain if it would work. It was not the correct fitting and when I withdrew it, the water came gushing out under pressure, resulting in me being saturated. I went below and put on a pair of swimming togs and tried to stop the flow with the two fittings, but without any luck. A nearby boat owner, feeling sorry for me, located the on/off valve some distance away and my unplanned shower thankfully ceased. So too did the water supply to the nearby trot of 'Gin Palaces', some of which were being hosed down yet again. I made a sheepish and hasty visit to the marina office, where I was given a small plastic fitting free of charge and normality was restored. A pity I was not told or given this fitting earlier when I checked in.

Saint Tropez

We departed Cannes at 11.15 and anchored for swims and lunch in Rade d'Agay which we had visited two days earlier. That night we dropped the hook in Baie des Canoubiers in the Golfe de Saint Tropez. This is a large bay just inside the entrance on the south side. The next morning I inflated the dinghy and cleaned off the water line on *Marie Claire* before going ashore. It was breathtakingly beautiful here, with some very expensive houses and a few more under construction. That evening we anchored outside the harbour in Saint Tropez. After dinner on board we went ashore by dinghy, to confirm the Pilot Book observation, that in Saint Tropez the women are said to be more beautiful than anywhere else, and to reveal more. Never sail without a good Pilot Book! Like Cannes, we found a serious up market resort, with boutiques such as Louis Vuitton and Dolce & Gabbana and prices at the very top end of the scale. The next morning we brought *Marie Claire* into the marina for one night, cost €29.18, and enjoyed the place immensely. This marina must enjoy a large passing trade in the high season, as there were over 100 vacant berths in the visitor's area of the marina. On our second night we enjoyed an excellent meal in a restaurant, located on a square that accommodates an outdoor market twice a week and is used on other days by elderly gentlemen playing boules.

We arrived into Port Grimaud marina at 17.05 and were

pleased to be given a very sheltered berth as very strong winds were forecast for the next 36 hours. This marina at the head of Golfe de Saint Tropez consists of three sections and has over 2000 berths. It is built on what was swampy ground until the early 1970s. It is laid out in a series of canals and islands and is most attractive, but we found it very quiet as we were now into the second half of October. We saw two Dun Laoghaire yachts tied up here, but with no one on board, *Touche VI* from R.St.G.Y.C. and *Grande Bleu* from R.I.Y.C. The strong winds duly arrived, resulting in huge seas outside and a rather dangerous marina entrance. There was now a real autumnal feel to the weather, with quite cold nights.

After two nights in Port Grimaud, we departed on 21st October, making lunch and overnight stops in Baie de Briande, Marina Port de Porquerolles, Port du Neil anchorage, Marina Port de Carqueiranne, Les Oursinières anchorage and Marina Darse Vieille Toulon. In Toulon, Willie Finnie left for home and John Ahern arrived for more punishment. This city has France's second largest naval base after Brest. Naval dockyards are scattered around the perimeter, with large numbers of blue-grey hulls tied up during our visit, including a large aircraft carrier. In the 17th century Toulon was a notorious galley slave port with a perilous and rough reputation. These galleys were manned by hardened, condemned criminals and captured slaves. In 1942, during World War II, over 60 French naval vessels were scuttled in the harbour to stop them falling into German hands. John and I visited the Naval Museum which we found very interesting and also the Cathedral. Our stay in Toulon was extended by 24 hours due to yet another gale. Because of construction works near the marina, we had no water or electricity for our two nights there, so with another enforced nights stay, we moved to the nearby Darse du Mourillon marina. I availed of this move to change the engine oil and filters in preparation for the pending six month lay up. We had heavy rain and strong winds well into the night and having electricity again was a blessing.

We got away on the afternoon of 26th October and over the following three days we made lunch and overnight calls to Marina St-Pierre des Embiez, Creux de Bandol anchorage, Port d'Alon anchorage, Calanque de Figuerolles anchorage and finally Cassis, where due to marina works we were not allowed to berth, and instead anchored outside the harbour. Later we went in by dinghy and had a meal and explored the town. Cassis is a gem of a town overlooking the harbour and vibrates with the many visitors that throng its winding streets. The town itself sits under a restored 14th century castle, nestling on a rocky bluff. A century ago many artists came here each summer. The novelist Virginia Woolf, during her many visits here, found relief from her burden of unhappiness.

Next morning after another trip ashore, this time to the supermarket, we motored round the corner to the dramatic anchorage of Port Miou. This is a long narrow calanque, one of a series of steep limestone fjords which nature has carved out of the coastline. Here we tied a bow line through a laid visitor's mooring buoy near the entrance and using the dinghy, fed a stern line through a ring in the cliff face. It was beautiful here, but we cowardly decided against a swim, as the Pilot cautioned on the coolness of the water streams feeding the calanque. The stone quarry here is closed for some time and during its life, its famous hard white stone was exported all over the Mediterranean, and many of the buildings in Marseille were built from it. When leaving after lunch, we went exploring to the head of the calanque, to find hundreds of boats tied up fore and aft on each side. These berths are controlled by two clubs. We also looked into nearby Calanque D'en Vau and Port Pin, but only the latter had any boats at anchor. A constant stream of tourist ferries call to the three calanque.

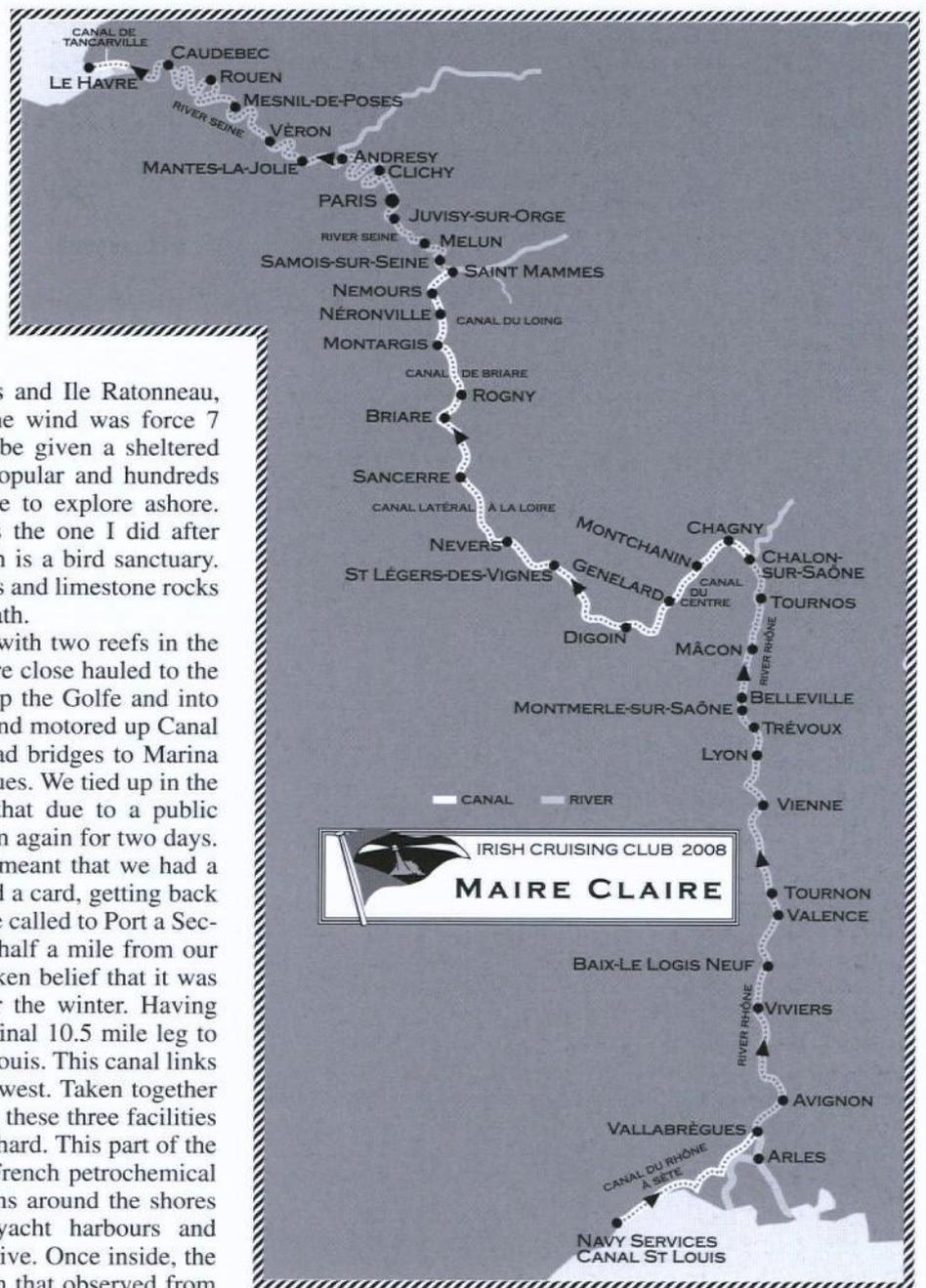
Spectacular coast

The coast from here to Rade de Marseille has some of the highest rock faces in France and is quite spectacular. As yet another gale was forecast for early next day, we headed to the nearest marina to the west, Port de la Pointe-Rouge in the Rade de Marseille. We were not impressed with this marina and its facilities, so next morning even though it was blowing force 6 we motored the 3.5 miles to Marina Port du Frioul. This is a new marina created behind a causeway joining Ile Pomègues and Ile Ratonneau, known collectively as Iles du Frioul. The wind was force 7 when we arrived and we were lucky to be given a sheltered alongside berth. Iles du Frioul is very popular and hundreds arrive every day by ferry from Marseille to explore ashore. Some of the walks are stunning, as was the one I did after dinner, to the top of Ile Pomègues, which is a bird sanctuary. There was no moon that night, but the stars and limestone rocks combined, to illuminate my exploratory path.

The last day of October saw us away with two reefs in the main and four turns on the genoa. We were close hauled to the mouth of Golfe de Fos and then a beat up the Golfe and into Port de Bouc. Here we removed all sail, and motored up Canal de Caronte and under the railway and road bridges to Marina Bassin de Ferrières, in the town of Martigues. We tied up in the only vacant berth and then discovered that due to a public holiday the Capitainerie would not be open again for two days. As we were staying only one night, this meant that we had a free berth, but as the security gate required a card, getting back in required a bit of agility. The next day we called to Port a Sec-Martiques, a huge hard-standing facility, half a mile from our marina on Canal de Caronte, in the mistaken belief that it was where I had booked in *Marie Claire* for the winter. Having discovered our error, we made the extra final 10.5 mile leg to Navy Services boatyard on the Canal St. Louis. This canal links Golfe de Fos with the Rhône river to the west. Taken together with the very large nearby Port Napoleon, these three facilities can accommodate over 4000 boats on the hard. This part of the coast is very industrial and home to the French petrochemical industry. Despite the extensive installations around the shores of the gulf, there are a number of yacht harbours and anchorages that are both useful and attractive. Once inside, the feel and appearance is quite different from that observed from offshore.

Early next morning, John got a taxi to Marseille airport to catch his flight home. Shortly afterwards *Marie Claire* was lifted out and placed in a cradle. I spent the next two days cleaning and securing for the winter, before flying home myself on Monday 5th November.

I make a few observations on this year's cruising in the western Mediterranean. Overall I was very pleased and found it to be a far superior cruising ground to the south and east coasts of Spain. I was particularly impressed with The Balearics, northern Sardinia and southern Corsica. As I avoided most of the peak season months of July and August, I particularly enjoyed many uncrowded, beautiful and secluded coves and bays, where anchoring, swimming and relaxing was a joy. I was fascinated with the French Mediterranean coast and particularly the Côte d'Azur. In Saint Tropez, Cannes and Antibes, it was pleasant to sit in a harbour-side café or bar and watch all the glamorous people stroll by and hearing their comments on some rich and famous person that they had just spotted. Marina prices on this coast were well below what I expected, but I presume this was because it was very late in the season.



Floating debris from my own experiences this and last year, continues to be a worry. This fact was again confirmed to me this year, from what I have read and heard on my cruise. From the end of September this year, gales and strong winds were a recurring feature of the south coast of France. I was aware of the reputation of the Mistral in this area, but given the time of year, perhaps I should not have been surprised at its strength and frequency. A big factor in making this type of extended cruising possible is the availability of reasonably priced flights from Dublin to many regional airports, greatly facilitating crew changes.

Statistics

Period 27th August to 5th November 2007

Mileage	975
Nights at anchor	15
Nights in marinas	51
Nights at sea	1
New ports/anchorages visited	61



Willie Finnie in Rhône lock.

Photo: Sean McCormack

Part Two: The Rhône delta to Howth

I was back out to Navy Services on Friday 25th April. The next three days I spent antifouling and doing the usual jobs in preparation for launching and demasting. Kevin Cullen arrived on Monday, just in time for Tuesday's launch. Most of Wednesday was spent getting the mast and boom ready for road transportation, which necessitated removing the spreaders, lamps etc and wrapping both mast and boom in plastic sheeting. Navy Services use Yachtservice Graf for transportation and they in turn use Chantier Naval Havre & Manche in Le Havre for demasting/remasting and mast storage.

On Friday 2nd May on completion of post launching jobs, we left our alongside berth at Navy Services and moved down the short distance to Port Saint Louis du Rhône. Here we went alongside a pontoon for a few hours to facilitate refuelling and provisioning. Later in the afternoon we went through the sea lock and tied up outside a steel yacht. We dined ashore happy that at last we were ready for the new experience of river, canal and lock work.

The river Rhône is 812 km from its source in Switzerland to where it enters the sea at Port Saint Louis du Rhône. It is navigable from Lyon to the sea, but access to the sea is via Canal Saint Louis or the big ship route Canal du Rhône à Fos, both of which enter Golfe de Fos. Thanks to over 40 years work on a ambitious plan to harness the river for electricity generation, 12 of the 14 locks are incorporated in huge dams and turbines and vast water reservoirs upstream. These locks are a standard 195m long and 12m wide with Bollene having the greatest range at 23m.

Initially I was very hesitant about taking the river and canal route home due to *Marie Claire's* 1.7m salt water draft and the very strong southerly flow of the river. However Paul Clandillon (ICC) in *C'est Formidable* and the late Stephen Malone's log in the 1997 Annual changed my mind. I found this log particularly helpful in planning this inland route and I also used his idea of a sign "Tirant d'eau 1.8m" at the bows and stern. This was respected and helped greatly.

A number of routes are available but the one known as the Classic or Fast route had the best depths at 1.8m. From the south this comprises, Le Rhône, La Saône, Canal du Centre, Canal Latéral à la Loire, Canal de Briare, Canal du Loing and finally La Seine. The total distance is 1323k with just over 190

locks. The navigation for this route is fully covered by the Navicarte Guides no's 16, 10, 19, 20, 2, and 1 in that order from south to north. I bought my set from Kelvin Hughes, Southampton. "French Canal Routes to the Mediterranean" by Michael E Briant, gives a lot of practical information and helps in the initial planning of the trip.

The French authorities require you to have a copy of "EuroRegs for Inland Waterways" on board. This Adlard Coles booklet is A Pleasure Boater's Guide to CEVNI which unifies signs, signals and procedures on the European Inland Waterways System. Another requirement is to have "Inland Waters" on your ICC (International Certificate of Competence). This requires undergoing a simple test of your knowledge of CEVNI, which in the Dublin area is looked

after by Alistair Rumball in Dun Laoghaire.

As there is no suitable stopping place on the Rhône before Arles, which is 40 km upriver and I was concerned about the strength of the southerly flow, we made a 06.50 start on 3rd May. Due to a rather dry period before our departure, the flow we found varied between 1.2 and 3.7 knots which was much less than I expected and I believe much less than two or three weeks later following very heavy rains. We arrived in Arles at 13.00 and tied up at a pontoon just northeast of Trinquetaille Bridge having covered 34.0 miles through the water. I was surprised at how little traffic there was, meeting just one large barge and being overtaken by a small motor boat from Finland. On the first part of today's leg, we had the vast nature sanctuary of Camargue to port. This park is home to herds of white bulls and the famous wild white horses. It also boasts flocks of flamingos and white egrets. Maybe it was the early hour but they were all very shy during our passage.

We stayed two nights in Arles, a fine town associated with Vincent Van Gogh and boasting many fine buildings and ancient ruins. The Amphitheatre built around 90 AD could hold 20,000 spectators and the Roman Theatre, late first century BC, could take 10,000. This is where you buy your vignette to cover your river and canal passage. It is available for a number of periods and I chose the four month option at a cost of €107.70. It should be displayed on the starboard side of the boat.

Other requirements for the transit are as many fenders as possible and I found a large apron on each side helped keep the hull reasonably clean, two bow and two stern lines, a long wooden plank to get ashore, a sturdy boathook, two iron mooring stakes and mallet for the times that there is nothing to tie to on the bank. A handheld VHF radio is required to call some of the locks which are remotely controlled.

We got away at midday on Monday 5th May and it took us 23.4 miles through the water to cover the 17 km to our overnight stop at Ecluse de Beaucaire in Vallabrègues. We had a potentially serious situation soon after securing to the pontoon here. After initially going alongside, we decided to pull the boat forward about two metres to another cleat. However, with both of us on the pontoon and underestimating the current from the nearby turbines, *Marie Claire* ended up about three metres out from the pontoon with only inches left on the bow line before it could be made fast. It took quite a time

and effort to get her back in. This was a salutary lesson. This was not the end of today's problems however. After dinner on board we decided to go ashore to inspect the lock and power generation facilities. Vallabrègues is characterised by a long balancing-reservoir covering over 1000 hectare. The dam here is the most important of French mobile dams, for this is where the Rhône reaches its maximum power. We had just reached there when suddenly there was an electrical storm and heavy rain. As there was no shelter available, we ran back to *Marie Claire*, but as I was going down the steep ramp to the pontoon, I slipped and ended up with a painful rear end for a few days.

The next morning we were the only boat in this our first Rhône lock. We were both awe-struck by its size. The floating bollards were far apart, necessitating taking bow and stern lines to the same bollard. A sturdy boathook is desirable to push off the bow or stern as the lock can become quite turbulent when filling. We tied up at a pontoon 4km north of this lock at the town of Vallabrègues where we stayed overnight after exploring ashore.

The next day we covered 26km on route to the lovely walled city of Avignon where we tied up at the town quay. We spent a most enjoyable nine days here seeing all the sights. We also took the train to Nîmes where we enjoyed the last day of a week long carnival. A bull fight was in progress in the huge Place des Arènes. We also hired a car for a day to facilitate provisioning and to leave Kevin to the airport and meet Willie Finnie and Jim Furlong who were arriving on the same plane.

We departed at 08.35 on the morning of 16th May. Over the following three days we made overnight stops at Viviers, Ecluse du Logis-Neuf and Valence. The marina in Valence is run by the local sailing club and it was their Regatta Day when we arrived. The next day we took a bus into the large and rather unimpressive town.

On Tuesday 20th we leave in a very fresh northerly wind. We enjoyed lunch at a pontoon at La Roche de Glun before arriving at our overnight stop at Tournon. We were now right in the heart of the Rhône vineyards and we crossed the river via a wooden bridge to Tain Hermitage on the east bank. Took some photos and resolved to buy some more Rhône wines! Back on board we had a call from four Irish guys staying overnight, while on their way south to Saint Tropez to a Harley Davidson Rally. We met up later in a bar for a few drinks and discovered we all knew a lot of people in common.

The next day we reached Vienne having covered 73km and gone through three locks. We moored to a fine new pontoon just south of the pedestrian bridge but it had neither water nor electricity. That night in a local pub we watched the Champions League final in Moscow between Manchester United and Chelsea. It was a nail-biting finish resulting in some happy Irish Man U supporters. Vienne is a lovely city which encouraged us to stay five nights. Willie Finnie went home during this time while Jim and I explored the city. We hired a car for two days to travel to the vineyards of Beaujolais and the Côte D'Or to the north and the next day the Côte Rôti and Condrieu came in for critical scrutiny.

On Monday 26th May we were

away at 07.35 passing through just one lock before arriving in Lyons, the second largest city in France. Here we tied up in heavy rain under trees at a quay wall close to the city centre. *Marie Claire* stayed three nights here while Jim Furlong left for home and John and Emily Ahern joined ship. A lady from a Dutch yacht moored 50 metre downstream from us called to know if we were really from Howth. It transpired that her daughter is married to Joe Phelan's (ICC) son and living in Sutton.

On the morning of Thursday 29th May we enter the River Saône. We enjoyed lunch on board after going through our first Saône lock, known as Couzon 3. This lock was a vast change from the Rhône ones having a range of just four metres and crew must go ashore to make off your lines. That evening we moored to a new pontoon in Trévoux.

Over the following three days we stayed overnight in Montmerle-sur-Saône and Port de Belleville before arriving to a fine new pontoon in Macon, but lacking facilities. We liked it here and stayed five nights.

I received a phone call from John and Emily Ahern a few days before they arrived in Lyons, to ask if I would accompany them to stay one or two nights in Taizé, while berthed in Mâcon. However after they arrived in France they discovered that Taizé did not cater for a visit of this duration, so it was agreed that we would do a day trip there by bus. On arrival, we discovered that someone in authority had a change of heart, since we were Irish, and we could stay after all. The only problem then was that we only had with us what we stood up. We agreed to stay one night and it was an experience. Queuing for very basic meals like pasta or minced meat served in a bowl and water served from a tap into another bowl, was a far cry from *Marie Claire* cuisine. We were excused washing up, cleaning or other duties because of our short stay. It is a huge complex which can accommodate from 5,000 to 6,000 during the busy summer months. We found that Germans were the predominant nationality present. Some people come back every year staying for a month or two. Maybe I should go back again for a month or more to help shed some of the extra pounds put on during this cruise!

On Thursday 5th June we logged 36km on the leg to Tournus where we got the last available space on a large, serviced pontoon and no charges. The weather was poor for our



Meal time in Taizé.

Photo: Sean McCormack

three day stay here and we dined out well on one of the nights. Because of the four seasons extended cruise, we tend to eat on board most nights. Don't tell my wife Mary, but I think my cooking has improved even if the menu is a bit on the restricted side. We can also afford much better quality wines when dining on board!

River Saône and Canal du Centre

Sunday 8th June is our last day on the River Saône and we lunched at the former Gigny lock near Ormes 4, our only lock today. That evening we arrived into Chalon-sur-Saône marina where the charge for our five night stay was €77.25. This is where the River Saône and Canal du Centre meet, and the town is very pretty due to a number of canal branches where many boats are moored. The streets are very colourful with wonderful flower basket displays. The Aherns were leaving us here, before going to a hotel in the Beaune area. They had hired a car and I joined them one day for a visit to eight well known wine villages and towns in Burgundy. Kevin and Bonnie Cullen arrived on board during this stopover.

We now enter the Canal Centre, the pure canal system with its 61 locks over a distance of 112km. This change from river to canal had me very uptight for the first day due to the narrow waterway and particularly the water under the keel. I touch bottom with a reading of 1.2m on the echo sounder and I was getting from 1.2m to 1.7m. Meeting other craft, particularly barges which thankfully were surprisingly few, was a worry, but the 1.8m sign was a great help. It was important to heed the warning given by the lock keeper at our first canal lock when he saw our sign. "Always in dee middle always" This was because of the silt pushed to the sides by barges over the years. If it was necessary to move to the side for some reason, like meeting a barge at a narrow section, or while waiting for a lock to clear or reopen after the 12.00 to 13.00 lunch break, I found that the following worked well. I would gently nose in to the starboard bank until I stopped in the mud/silt, where she would sit quite happily. I would then reverse out into deeper water, aided by my port prop-walk. The canal was very pretty with trees on each side and a lot of bird life. Most days we were fascinated by a lone heron that would take flight as we approached and then land on the bank a few hundred metres ahead, before doing the same again. Another feature of the canals was the number of closed factories and facilities beside the canal. A sign of the times I suspect with most goods now moving by road or rail.

Our first canal day, Friday 13th June, found us berthed in Chagny for the night, having gone through 12 locks, covering 19km. We were recommended Le Grenier à Sel Restaurant where we enjoyed a lovely meal at a very reasonable price.

Kevin had brought a folding bike with him from Dublin and used it from time to time when the locks were close together. The locking procedure on the canals varied depending on the lock type and some of the manual locks are currently being upgraded. These manual locks are worked by a lock keeper. The semi-automated ones have an operator who looks after two, three or four locks, going from one to the other by car, motor cycle or bicycle. Some semi-automatic locks required pulling a cord when you were ready and some others had a sensor that detected your arrival at a lock and your exit at the other end.

Our second canal day saw us transit 23 locks, the greatest number in any one day, in company with motor yacht *Glen Millar*. We had a bit of a scare today between two locks barely half a mile apart. We struck a rock in the centre of the canal while travelling at 2 knots. We then noticed a foot of a drop in the water levels on the canal banks. Just then we could feel a surge of water and very quickly the level was up again. I'm not

sure what happened but it did nothing for my confidence. We arrived to a graveyard of a harbour at Montchanin at 18.00 having covered 30km.

We were away at 09.10 on 15th June and the locks were all downhill now and consequently easier to work. In the afternoon we got stuck behind a very large barge doing only 2 knots and which took ages to get round bends and in and out of locks. Commercial traffic has priority in all river and canal locks. We tried on one straight stretch to pass but got stuck in the mud. Later in the afternoon, we came around a blind corner to find it manoeuvring into a lock. We were nearly on top of him and his wash sent us skew-ways across the canal and we were lucky to regain control in time. We tied up for the night at the pier in a rather pleasant Genelard after going through 16 locks.

The next morning was cool and overcast as we departed at 08.25. About mid morning we again caught up with our barge but soon afterwards it stopped at a bend in the canal and signalled us through. I was convinced we could not get past as there was little room between him and the bank. He obviously knew his canal as we gingerly passed inches from his hull.

Digoïn marina

We tied up in Digoïn marina at 14.45 where our two night stay cost a very modest €15.80. This period was devoted to some onboard maintenance. I also visited two car hire firms re the possible hire of a small van to take surplus gear off *Marie Claire*. The Canal Latéral à la Loire, which we were about to enter, is reputed to have the least depth and I was keen to have a fallback plan. This canal is 264km long with 54 locks and winds its way north to Briare, roughly parallel to the River Loire which it crosses three times. These "ponts-canaux" are remarkable feats of engineering, particularly the one at Briare which is 660m long.

On the 18th June we covered 15 locks and all but one were open and ready for us, thanks to each lock keeper asking if we were continuing on and then phoning ahead to the next lock keeper. The lock keepers were very pleasant and helpful and some of them were young men and women doing holiday relief. Many of the locks with their lock keepers houses are beautiful and have very attractive displays of shrubs and flowers using all kinds of nautical containers and display ideas. There is obviously competition between them and it is a joy to behold. Today we met a *Bénéteau First 30* sister ship and exchanged pleasantries. We arrived into Decize at 19.05 and just missed the last locking in of the day to the marina. We tied up about a metre off the canal bank using our mooring spikes and wooden plank.

The next day saw us reaching the junction where the canal that leads up to Nevers, meets the Canal Latéral à la Loire. After dinner on board, I took a long walk to the town of Nevers by the banks of the canal. The town boasts an impressive 15 arch stone bridge over the wide but shallow and very rocky Loire River.

The next day, Friday, required a 07.25 start to keep a 08.30 lock appointment. This consisted of a long canal bridge over the river L'Allier controlled by red and green lights, followed immediately by the 9.23m deep, double Guetin Lock. We made good progress and arrived at Sancerre at 17.45. We went aground while trying to enter the St. Thibault basin and then failed to moor to the embankment outside. We then tied up on the other side of the canal using a bollard ashore and a spike driven into the ground. For added security a breast line was taken to a disused rail track. We had planned to stay two nights in Sancerre and check out the quality of the latest wine vintage, but the mooring situation dictated a more prudent one night stay.

Longest day of the year

The longest day of the year started bright and sunny as we got away at 08.35 and made good progress to our lunch stop at Chatillon-sur-Loire. It was rather pleasant here with a number of boats moored. We got into Briare at 15.45 having crossed over the River Loire by the very impressive canal bridge designed by Gustave Eiffel of Paris fame. Here we tied up in the large basin. Our stay of five nights here cost €40.00 including water and electricity. During our stay here the weather went downhill again so we hired a car for two days. On the first day we toured Sancerre and were very impressed by the town and the surrounding hilly vineyards. That afternoon we were less impressed by Pouilly-sur-Loire the home of Pouilly Fumé. The next morning we collected Vincent Carrigy, who was joining ship, from his hotel in nearby Gien. We then drove to Nevers where we visited the Cathedral, the very impressive Dukes Palace and the Church and Convent of Saint Nevers. The Cullens were replaced in Briare by Vivienne Cahill.

On Thursday morning 26th June having departed Briare, we were in the Canal Briare. In the afternoon we arrive, to stay the night in Rogny, famous for its now-defunct seven continuous locks, built during the reign of Henry IV. Over the following three days we had overnight stops in Montargis, where a traditional boat festival was in progress, Néronville and Nemours, before arriving to Saint Mammes. The leg from Montargis to Saint Mammes, where it joins the River Seine, is known as Canal du Loing.

We enjoyed our four day stopover in Saint Mammes, which caters for a large number of live-aboards, on the greatest number of barges I have ever seen in one location. Vivienne returned home from here to be replaced by Peter Quigley, a river man and former neighbour of mine from the midlands. Before Peter arrived, Vincent and I took the train to Fontainebleau and then a local bus to the city centre stop beside the Château. Our tour of this magnificent Château and vast grounds was a memorable experience and well worth a detour if anywhere in the area.

We said goodbye to Saint Mammes on Friday 4th July and set out on the Seine heading for Paris. On this passage we made overnight stops in Samois-sur-Seine, Melun and Juvisy-sur-Orge. Many sections were beautiful, having many fine houses with carefully manicured grounds leading down to the water's edge.

Arriving in Paris on one's own boat is a very special experience. I had planned a 10 day stopover here, with a crew change in the middle, so instead of going into the marina immediately, we continued on under all the famous bridges for the enjoyment of the departing crew. Despite some showers it was wonderful experience, with plenty of photo opportunities. The Arsenal Marina is a great location for exploring Paris, close to the Bastille and very reasonable at €21.55 per night including electricity.

Our stay afforded the opportunity to visit many of the sights that previous short visits did not allow. We greatly enjoyed Bastille Day, attending both the parade and the spectacular fireworks that night near the Eiffel Tower.

Peter Quigley and Vincent Carrigy were followed by Patricia and Vincent Dromey in this crew change.

On the morning of Friday 11th July, we locked out of the Arsenal Marina and again enjoyed the trip downriver, passing all the famous sights ashore that we had visited during our stay in this fantastic city. We had overnight stops in Clichy, d'Andresy, Mantes-la-Jolie, Vèron and Mesnil-de-Poses before arriving to Rouen on Wednesday 23rd July. Today sees us going through our last Seine lock, Ecluse d'amfreville and were then

in the tidal section of the river. It was strange seeing drying mud beside us after three years of tide-less waters.

Having stayed two nights in Rouen, we made a 07.00 start on the Friday to take advantage of the tide down river. This 129km tidal section from Rouen to Honfleur/Le Havre has very little in the way of comfortable overnight facilities. This leg requires careful planning, as smaller boats will not be able to make the passage in daylight and movement after darkness is not allowed, so a stop will be required. We tied up to a large mooring barge at Caudebec and were quite happy until we experienced the wash from passing traffic, which could be quite violent. The wash from one particular barge in the evening resulted in a broken aft fairlead. Thankfully there was little barge traffic during the night.

We departed next morning on our final Seine leg. We passed under the 1400m long and 50m high Tancarville Bridge, one of the largest in Europe and also under the rather new Le Pont de Normandie. Our arrival time at the lock in Honfleur was perfect as four yachts were just exiting, and after going through the lock we had to wait just three minutes for the road bridge to lift to allow us enter the Vieux Bassin. We were right in the centre of a lovely town and a very popular holiday destination for Parisians. A number of artists were painting around the harbour and their work was for sale in the many galleries that trade in the quaint and narrow streets radiating up from the harbour. I loved it here, staying five nights before heading over to Le Havre on 31st July. Vincent went home from Honfleur and I was joined in Le Havre a few days later by John and Emily Ahern.

Our stay of seven days in Le Havre was longer than planned as the Aherns had to postpone their arrival by a few days and then because of the weekend, there was a delay in the remasting. In the end everything fell into place and I shed no tears while leaving on the morning of 7th August.

At sea again

It was good to be at sea again and sailing even if the wind was on the nose. Courseulles-sur-Mer, St Vaast and Cherbourg were our next three overnight stops. Due to stormy weather our stay in Cherbourg extended to three nights. 14th August gave us a very wet and bumpy ride to Braye Harbour in Alderney. The following day we covered 40.7 miles on our passage to St. Helier on Jersey's south coast. We stayed five nights here and explored the island by hired car. This was another crew change stop with John and Emily returning to Dublin and Vincent Dromey returning for this the final leg to Howth.

We departed St. Helier on August 20, making overnight stops at Lezardrieux Marina, La Chambre anchorage on Ile de Brèhat, before two nights in Morlaix Marina. From here we had a very fresh overnight sail to St. Mary's in the Isles of Scilly. The weather for the past few weeks had been very unsettled with fresh to strong winds on many days. However the forecast for the next few days offered the prospect of light winds, if little in the way of sunshine. This wind forecast was ideal for the plan to explore some anchorages not previously visited, in this beautiful and fascinating group of islands. The next three days saw visits to the Cove, an anchorage between St. Agnes and Gugh, Old Grimsby Harbour and Tean Sound before a final night in St. Mary's. There were surprisingly few yachts in most anchorages, which I suspect was largely due to the fresh westerly winds of recent weeks, which would have discouraged UK south coast based yachts.

On Saturday 30th August we get away at 06.20, with Padstow in the Bristol Channel our destination. This was a motor-sailing trip in light winds and sometimes poor visibility. We arrived at 18.55 while the harbour gate was still open, having covered 74.6 miles. There were a lot of visitors milling around the harbour and nearby streets. It is a particularly

attractive place and it was a pity time did not permit a longer visit. The next day gave us great sailing to Lundy Island, but with a freshening wind and the tidal race off its south coast, the last half hour was demanding. We anchored off the ferry pier in the company of two other yachts and it was very comfortable here, in the fresh westerly wind.

The next morning as we were weighing anchor, it was blowing force 6 from the southwest. We encountered very big and confused seas off the northern end of the island, which also has a tidal race. After this things settled down and we had great sailing all the way to Milford Haven, except for the odd rogue wave. We tied up in the marina here, which is accessed through a lock and is very safe and secure, with good facilities ashore.

The town itself overlooking the harbour is not very exciting, but there is a large Tesco Store near the marina.

The weather had now gone seriously downhill and after three days and no prospect of an improvement, Vincent and I took the ferry from nearby Pembroke to Rosslare and home, leaving *Marie Claire* in the marina. It was eight days later before a weather window afforded the opportunity of a few days of lighter winds for our return to Howth.

Departed Milford Haven on the morning of Saturday 13th September and made the very short hop to the pontoon in Dale, to enjoy lunch and get the timing right for both Jack's and Ramsey Sounds. Over the following three days, we made overnight calls to, Fishguard, Porth Dinllaen and Holyhead.

Our sail to Holyhead was undertaken in non-forecasted, southerly winds that increased to force 5 near the end of the passage. During the morning over a period of two hours, we were hearing Holyhead coastguard repeatedly calling *La Mouette* on channel 16 and getting no response. We were about one mile southwest of the South Stack when we noticed this very bright white light coming from the north in our direction. It was a search helicopter and came in very low circling us. Two guys were standing in the open door and waving at us to



Bonnie Cullen at Decize mooring.

Photo: Sean McCormack

go further offshore. We complied but did not understand, as the Race that forms in wind against tide conditions was not here as both were in the same direction. About five minutes later a coastguard Patrol appeared and closely circled us and then using a loudhailer, inquired if we were the yacht *La Mouette*. I presume that the reason neither called us on the radio was that they were convinced that we were in fact the missing yacht. As we rounded the North Stack we heard a relieved Holyhead coastguard speaking to *La Mouette* and as they were coming in from the north, we converged with them and went up the harbour to the marina together. I presume the confusion arose because of the similarities in size, colour and rig. *La Mouette* is a white hulled Oceanis 281. We never discovered the reason for the alarm or the radio contact problem.

The next day 16th Tuesday September, saw us make the final leg to Howth in damp and misty, summer 2008 like conditions.

Statistics

Period April 25 to September 16, 2008	
Total canal/river mileage	856.9
Honfleur to Howth mileage	816.7
Total lock	192

2008 Summary

This year was very different from my normal cruising year. Things like motoring in rivers and canals without a mast and with little water under the keel; mooring to canal and river banks and sometimes using mooring spikes and walking the plank to get ashore; no need to worry too much about wind strength or direction. It was great to do it but doing it again if the opportunity arose would not be high on my agenda. As they say "been there, done that". I missed the sailing and the swimming opportunities at anchorages. Then, when I did get the mast back up again, the weather got even worse than it was all year in France.

This four year Retirement Cruise was a wonderful experience which I will never forget. It was great to visit so many ports and anchorages and to spend time in some of the more interesting ones. I say a special thank you to my non-sailing wife Mary, for the opportunity given to me, to indulge in my sailing fantasies. I also sincerely thank the many people who joined me on *Marie Claire* over the four seasons and made the whole experience possible and enjoyable.

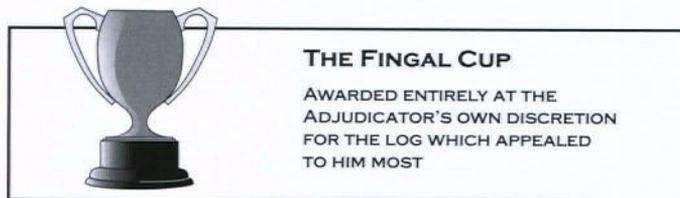


Vivienne Cahill in Montargis.

Photo: Sean McCormack

The Odhran Francis trip

John Madden



*If a man is to be obsessed by something,
I suppose a boat is as good as anything,
perhaps a bit better than most.*

E. B. White.

So, what to call this trip? The word “trip” seems to trivialise what we hope to do. The word “trip” implies a visit to the granny or a quick drive to the newsagent to buy the Irish Times. On the other hand all our other trips have been just that: “trips”. This one was to be the Round Tory trip. Out of our homeport at Fahan Marina in Lough Swilly, County Donegal to Torshavn in the Faeroes. A couple of days of R+R in said Faeroes then across to Reykjavik in Iceland. Sample the delights of the land of ice and fire and then glide past Rockall, possible planting Inishowen’s flag on its summit before coming down for a couple of days on Tory and then a triumphant return to the Swilly in time for work three weeks later. Almost, but not quite. On a previous trip from Kinsale to Dingle, which took us almost as long as this one, the Rear Admiral’s daughter gave birth to her first-born son, Matthew James Cavanagh, so we called that trip the Matthew James trip. He now has a younger brother, Odhran Francis, who is jealous of this appellation, so by special request, this is to be the Odhran Francis trip. Odhran is a very intelligent young man of circa six. He gives out to the Admiral for smoking in his house as he says I should know better. He may never see seven. Another title might be the “Three Fridays trip” as we left our three major ports on a Friday. But all of this is tangential, or even off the point, and if there is one thing I never do, that is to digress.

So picture the scene. Fahan on a lovely Friday morning. The sun shining. The wind, gentle, but obviously from the north. Fahan Marina is surrounded by hills. On the summit of one of these hills live Pat and Kate Heaney. Pat has the world’s biggest collection of screwdrivers, and is never content unless he is taking something to bits. I have bought him a Meccano set to keep him occupied for the week he will be with us. His lovely wife, Kate, has prepared breakfast for us. My own lovely wife, Pauline, en route to a wedding near Dublin, drops me, the Rear and Admiral Og at breakfast and heads off for the wedding. We have a very fine breakfast followed by champagne. Just in case there is no champagne when we get back.

Why Iceland? We were on Tory last autumn, having a sundowner on the boat, when a passing skipper asked could he borrow my crew for a trip there. After me, I said, and

immediately made plans to go there. It is handily placed for a two to three week trip and two or three of us are still working for a living. Charts were not a problem and I had those in a couple of weeks. Willy Ker’s pilot was the next purchase. He suggested getting a couple of books about the Faeroes and I had got them from a shop in Torshavn. Firstly the *Streymkort fyri Foroyar* better known as the Red Scare book, which describes the fierce currents that run through the islands. Secondly the 2008 version of the Almanakkin, which gives all the information you, could possibly want to know about the Faeroes, including the Mayor’s mobile number and lastly a book of harbour plans, the *Havneoplysninger for Faeroerne*. These books I had ordered by phone from a shop in Torshavn, called *Bookhandli*, which refused a credit card, but sent a bill with the books by return. Obviously very little fraud on the Faeroes. So we were well equipped. The boat, a 1990 Jeanneau Suncharm 39’ had new sails by Momentum. It took a while to get them, having sent a deposit on the 9th January. A Danish company with a sail loft in China. New instruments by Stowe Dataline and a Christmas present from my wife, a Simrad AIS, that we were to find very useful. Breakfast over we went down to the marina to leave. Departure had been timed for 08.00 to catch the full tide at 07.45, but in fact it was closer to 09.30 on Friday 4th July, Independence Day for *Bagheera*, when we slipped away from our pontoon finger and reversed towards the main dock. There were seven of us on this leg. Myself, The Vice, Norman Fullam; The Rear, Frankie Gallagher; The Count, John McNulty; Admiral Og Dermot Madden; Pat Heaney and his screwdriver collection and Paddy Corr, the CEO and Purser. Mickey Morrison had been due come with us, but had to cry off



Westmannaeyjar Harbour.

due to an untimely wisdom tooth problem, but was there to see us off. New sails, two days supply of diesel and a sunny sky. Torshavn, three to four days away. What could possibly go wrong?

What indeed? What little wind that there was from the northwest so as we motored down the Lough. Spirits were high. Some of the crew had dined out in Fahan the night before and slept on the boat. It is the Admiral's custom to take out the First Sea Lord for dinner on the night before departure and this I did. The Rear, finding a new sense of maturity and common sense, did likewise with his Lady Admiral. At the mouth of the Swilly, we gave Malin Head CG a TR and they confirmed that they had us on their AIS. The AIS and the new instruments had been fitted by a friend, Finbar, who works at Malin Head CG. When setting it up he had chosen to call us a pleasure craft from the menu of choices offered. We changed that to sailing vessel. This is no pleasure craft.

By 16.30 we were 28 miles north-northwest of Malin Head doing 10 knots under main and engine. The usual bizarre conversations were in full flow. The Rear reckons that we are God in the future and that we can rerun our lives by simply reinserting the disc. He also has an interesting theory that whereas we are now carbon based, it is only a matter of time before we become Silicon based, when we will be able to travel into the future, presumably doing slightly better than six knots. Personally, I feel that travel into the past is more feasible as it is surely merely a matter of catching up with it. The Rear dismisses me as an idiot. Not for the first time. Meanwhile Pat Heaney is prowling the boat looking for squeaks to kill with his screwdrivers. Must get new crew. Wharram has the right ideas about crew. At 20.55 we were 10 miles west of Skerryvore and we checked in with Clyde CG and at 22.00 we were 12 miles west of Tiree at sunset in a light easterly, still under main and engine.

The following morning saw us 3 miles northwest of Neist Point, course 027 at 6.2 knots. The wind was about 8 knots from the northeast but because of the engine use, we were beginning to have a diesel problem. We carry enough in the tank for about 26 hours at cruising revs, and about the same again in jerry cans. If the wind stays from the north, then we need to refuel. We had a choice of either diverting to Tiree or into Uig on the west coast of Skye. Luckily, we carry Martin Laurence's excellent pilots for the Scottish west coast and it gives a favourable recommendation for Uig so we turned to starboard giving way to a Calmac ferry, *The Hebrides*, and let him in before us. We tied up at a ladder on the pier and went ashore. For those not fond of ladders, by going around the knuckle of the pier, there are steps with plenty of water at all stages of the tide for a boat of our draft which is 2.05 metres. A cheery wave from the bridge of *The Hebrides* as we passed him. Anyone who knows me knows that my first port of call in a new harbour is the PPP, the pub past the pier. In Uig, this is almost perfect being called the "Pub at the Pier". Close enough. Fish and chips for seven and fourteen pints. We interpret a conversation between a bored Scottish barmaid and a German motorcyclist and having

done our bit for Germano-Gallic relations, move on, again to cheery waves from people on the pier as we left at 16.30. Next stop, Torshavn. What can possibly go wrong? A beautiful, sunny evening. The crew well fed and watered, we made our way northwest towards the Shiant islands.

Midnight saw us enveloped in fog: we were 12 miles east of Stornoway. The AIS had come into its own and we identified a Calmac ship, the *Muirneag*, crossing our path from east to west and into Stornoway, when his signal turned a purple colour as he stood down for the night. At 02.00 Frankie and myself handed the wheel over to Norman and John. The conditions being calm, Frankie and I had a nightcap. My favourite position for a nightcap is on the navigator's seat where I can fiddle with the chart plotter. With the new AIS, I now have five screens I can look at. A bit like the Multiplex in Blanchardstown. We did a 360. I made a couple of inadvised comments to the helmsman, John, when Norman announced in very calm tones that we had lost the steering. At this stage we were a mile or so north of Tiupan Head. All the engineers and special screwdriver squads were immediately assembled for an inspection of the steering gear. After the examination and a conference, it was decided that the steering gear had over ridden one of the stops, put there by Jeanneau, to stop the steering from failing. This had the unfortunate downside to making completely rigid, a stainless steel strut that apparently should be free-moving. The consensus was that this strut needed to be cut. This Admiral Og proceeded to do with a junior hacksaw. Meanwhile, Norman called Stornoway to advise them that "we had a situation". He further advised them that we were drifting south-eastward at 0.6 knots (for once the wind doing us a favour) and that we would be rigging an emergency tiller, before making for Stornoway for repairs.

The emergency tiller was attached as soon as the strut had been dismembered. It was very hard to steer by hand. The easiest way to manage it was to stand astride of it and steer by the thighs. Many ribald comments ensued as to the growth of certain muscles as The Admiral steered us in. Stornoway was once more contacted to tell them that we were once more in control. The repair only costed us 1.5 miles in drift and we arrived at the pontoon at 07.00. Martin Laurence doesn't mention the small marina in Stornoway but there is one there now opposite the conspicuous Castle of Lews. The only



Wheelless in Stornoway.

problem that I had while steering in with the tiller, was that the wheel was still there, and I almost forgot which to use when approaching the pontoon. We were met by a very helpful young man from the Harbour Master's office, who gave me a tour of the town before bringing me to sign in.

Anyone contemplating a visit to Stornoway, and it is worth a visit, would be well advised not to arrive on a Sunday before breakfast. Lewis is a conservative island although they have recently elected a Scottish Nationalist MP. It would seem to be a fairly God-fearing place and there were a lot of couples returning from various church services: the men in their Sunday best and their wives in the finest of tweeds and bonnets. The PPPs are allowed to open on Sunday but not all choose to do so. The exceptions to this rule are The Lewis Hotel, which we were into shortly after twelve. Its menu on a blackboard included Kangaroo steaks. However, we were informed that they were not fresh and moved on. We had lunch in the Caladh Inn. A self-service buffet and very reasonably priced. While eating we got a call from Jim McCarroll. Jim is a vet in Carndonagh and was to meet us in Torshavn on Monday to join us on the leg to Iceland. We told Jim our problem. The member that we had sawn through would have to be welded. That wasn't going to happen until tomorrow, Monday, so he would have to amuse himself in the Faeroes for a couple of days without us. Within a couple of minutes he rang us back. His veterinary partner's life partner is the relief skipper on the Muirneag. He advised us to go to an engineering plant in a place called Goat Island the following morning, Monday. They would do the welding and we wouldn't be ripped off. He also advised that the best pub in Stornoway was "The Trawlers".

The best pub in Stornoway

He was right about Goat Island. Pat and I took the bit there, about a two-mile walk. They charged a fiver and we gave them ten. They gave us a lift back to the boat. There were three American yachts there by now. They were introducing themselves to one another and probably on their way to Norway for the ACC cruise. The boys set about fixing the steering and we checked out The Trawler. Although Mr Hegarty had been on the spot about Goat Island, The Trawler is not the best pub in Stornoway. The best pub in Stornoway is without doubt The Coffee House. This had been a pub in the 1800s, and had been purchased by the local temperance movement to steer the locals away from the evils of drink. This early example of social engineering had been a complete failure and it reverted to being a pub in the early 1900s. Run by a charming Gallic speaking lady, it is the complete gentleman's PPP. It was here, waiting for the engineers that we read in a local paper of the proper manner of deference to harbourmaster the Queen on the Royal Yacht *Britannia*. On passing HRH, a crewmember nodded his head and then raised it again. The entire movement was to take about three quarters of a second. The protocol book, describing this, came to twenty-two pages! It was in the middle of a discussion as to whether the Admiral should be shown such respect, that the engineers, Frankie and Pat, returned to tell us that we now had steering again. We finished the pints and rushed back to the boat to resume the trip.

The tide was very low as we left the pontoon at 17.15. It was still ebbing and the river was narrow. We let the bow off and the ebb swung her around. We advised Stornoway of our departure and they asked us to check with them again at 58.30N at the Butt of Lewis as we departed their waters and this we did at 01.00. The night was wet, windy and very rough. We passed Sula Skeir one mile off at 08.00. The Butt of Lewis had disappeared. The rough weather had reduced conditions down below to a mess. At 16.00 we had 119 miles to run. We were at 60.02N, 06.34W, and were doing 7 knots under main and

engine in a northeasterly of 18 knots. We had lost a couple of days due to the steering problem. Pat and Admiral Og were flying back from Torshavn and Jim was to join us, so we were keen to get there. At midnight we were doing 6.5 knots with 87 miles to run, the weather still wet and miserable, but twelve hours later we got under the lee of Sudaroy and the sea began to settle. We had phone contact with Jim now and as we entered Torshavn we saw his lanky frame pacing the harbour wall as he photographed us coming in. We tied alongside a Norwegian ketch at 19.45, the *Opportune*.

Research on Torshavn had been patchy and misleading. There were reports that there might not be a PPP, but in truth there were many. The beer, if a little expensive, was cold and welcome. Jim had spotted a reasonable restaurant, The Rio Brava, a few minutes walk away and we had a fine meal there, then back to *Bagheera* for some intensive planning and a couple of nightcaps.

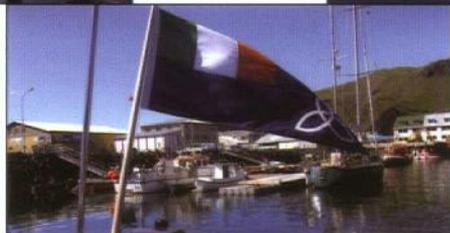
On the way from Stornoway, the bearings in the fridge compressor had gone. This meant that the beer and possibly also the food would not be in prime condition. Jim had organised a fridge expert but the bearings were unavailable so we needed ice. Frankie and I oversaw the fridge man and paid him whilst the others went on a guided tour of the island that we were on, Streymoy. The guide assumed that all his guests were English. In fact they were Scottish and Irish and when he learned this, his attitude changed. The Faroese feel a bit bitter towards the English. England occupied them during the war and a lot of Faroese fishermen were killed bringing fish to Scotland and they feel that their sacrifice went unrecognised after the war was over. The population of the Faeroes at the last count was only 46,662, and for each inhabitant, 48,000 tons of fish are landed annually. Possibly the population has changed since. Of this only 126 are Catholics. The tour went to the local Catholic Church, as there is a famous stained glass window there. It was made by Faroese artist Trondur Pattursun who volunteered to sail with Tim Severin to Canada on his re-enactment of St Brendan's voyage. Apparently, Severin was unimpressed with Pattursun until he heard that he lived in a place called Kirkjubour, otherwise known as Brandansvik, named after the eponymous Saint. Digressing again. The Faeroes are part of the Diocese of Denmark and a priest is sent out on rotation from Denmark to do a month's duty on the islands. This month it was the turn of a Fr Michael Bradley from down the road at Glenkeen, County Donegal. Small world.

First row

Anyway, whilst all this local history was being learned, Frankie and myself had become friendly with the crew of the boat we were tied alongside – a 47' ketch. The skipper was youngish chap called Runa, a Norwegian. He was accompanied by his partner and a younger woman of twenty-three whom they had recruited through the Internet. They were sailing to New Zealand. Runa had been a forest ranger. His hobby had been racing sleds with ten dogs over 1,000km distances. His boat's name, *Opportune*, is a pun in Norwegian meaning "to the port". WM Nixon, the famous writer on cruising once wrote, if I remember correctly, that the crew row will normally happen on about day seven. This day was the sixth, so ours was perhaps a little premature. Frankie had gone for ice for the fridge and eventually got a sack of it from a local fish processor who also gave him a sack of fish. Both of these he put in the fridge, but the fishy one leaked and there were a few pounds of fish all over the food. Vice unamused. Strong words exchanged. Situation solved by Runa and his female crew who got a barbeque onto their foredeck and cooked the fish. We provided the wine and a pleasant evening followed. Jim had baked one of his famous current cakes and by the end of the meal, there was



Three ensigns



not a crumb left. Into the PPP later where a Norwegian couple discover we are Irish. She is keen on Irish music and asked us to sing for her. My version of "The Mingulay Boat Song" is justifiably well known. Not entirely Irish perhaps but it brought a tear to her eye. She has invited me to be the Norwegian entry for next year's Song Contest. No more of "Norwege, null pointes"

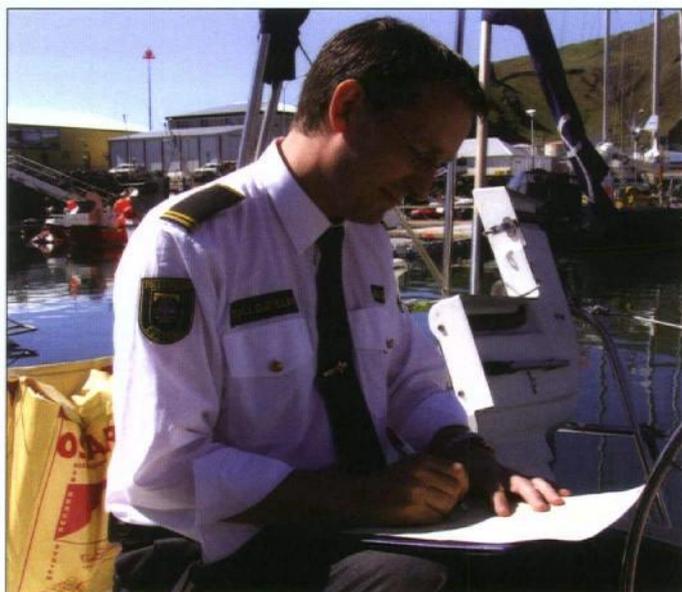
Admiral Og and Pat are to leave at first light to fly home to Ireland via Stanstead. We too hope to press on in the morning, so only a couple of nightcaps to alleviate the calm after the storm. We had met a chap on Runa's boat, Johann, who charts a sight seeing boat called the *Blue Schooner*. He advises us on the best way to avoid red scares tomorrow, and also advises us not to go to Reykjavik but to a place just south of it called Hafnafjordur. There there is a Bunratty style Viking evening to be enjoyed where horned hooligans stick swords in the wooden tables if you do not clean your plate. A better place for yachts, apparently, and only a short run into town on a bus. We agree that this is what we will do.

The following morning we slipped our lines and left at 08.45. Dermot and Pat had already gone to the airport and had not woken us before leaving. We headed south, down the

Nolsoyartfjordur, around the southern tip of Stremoy then up the channels between it and the island of Vagar. A fairly empty coast with just a few very small villages, but lucky to pass Brandsvik, St Brendan's departure point, on our way past. Jim was already beginning to impress. There is little he doesn't know about art and music. There is even less that he doesn't know about poetry, and he knows absolutely everything about Veterinary medicine. He had bought two books for the boat; one on birds and the other on whales and dolphins. He was very much hoping to see a whale. We had seen a group of them coming up from Scotland. They had been about a half mile ahead, jumping clear of the water.

Jim's whale

At midday we exited the Vestmanna Sund and were out into the open sea. A sunny day. We had both sails up doing about 8 knots in 15 knots of wind from the north and by 17.00 we had left the Faeroes 34 miles behind us but still had 445 miles to run. The following day started in much the same way. We had



Clearing customs.



The Gullfoss. (NF)

covered 154 miles in 24 hours. This was the day that Jim saw his whale and got a photo of it. Jim's oilskins are rather old. However he has one garment that everyone covets. It is a woolly jumper that his sister, in Canada, knitted for him for Christmas. It must have taken her months and many, many sheep. Jim is about 6'5" in height and the jumper covers him from eyebrows to knee caps. The original lanolin is still there by the gallon and it is completely impervious to sea water. This was his first opportunity to wear this garment as he spends most of his life in more temperate zones. I do not know Jim's sister but I would be happy to ship over five hundred sheep and a pair of knitting needles to get a similar garment. Sheep are cheap. Had we thought of it on the Faeroes, the Islands of Sheep, we all could have had one with *Bagheera* emblazoned on their left pectorals.

Next time!

Jim is obviously an expert on birds as well. Whereas before he joined us, all whitish birds were referred to as gulls, now they became Mother Carey's chickens, terns, kittiwakes and gannets forbye. But of all the birds that he introduced to us, the most fascinating one was the arctic skua. This is a large bird. It looks like a cross between a duck and the Famous Grouse advert, but with white stripes, Spitfire like, across its wings. It is a carnivorous bird. It eats seagulls and possibly dead sailors.

There are thousands of them in these waters. On the helm, thinking of PPPs, you suddenly realise you are not alone. A glance to either port or starboard reveals a skua, flying in tandem, eyeballing you from about two feet away, and wondering which one of the Admiral's eyeballs he will have first. Sunglasses are a must in these waters!

Jim continues to amaze the crew with stories of bovine brain surgery, the Borgheses' and the Ballet. He is off to Vienna after he leaves us to see the opera and to attend a sung mass in the cathedral there. What a contrast. So much culture on board and then the barrenness of baroque Vienna!

At midnight, we got the forecast. It was to be southeast force 3, increasing to 5 or 6. We were doing 6.5 knots on a course of 300 degrees with 388 miles to run. By morning, the sun had come out and we were making a steady 7 knots. All was well with the world and everyone was in good spirits. At 10.00, I thought that the throttle had increased on its own as the engine noise seemed to get louder. A second or two later, the reason for the increased noise became clear as a Danish naval



Arriving at Torshavn. (J McC)

helicopter swooped across our path from port to starboard and shot in front of our mast. We gave a wave to the three crew who were wearing orange suits. They did not wave back. They had probably spotted us on AIS or radar, and out of boredom, come to have a look. An otherwise uneventful day, Frankie remaining, sadly, still carbon based. That night the wind got up to 24 knots, so we reefed the main and jenny and by 22.00 we were just 266 miles from our destination. The wind continued to rise, it started to rain heavily and the seas were quite rough. An earlier thought was to have called into the Westmanns for a spot of R+R but we decided to leave them to starboard and head straight for Reykjanes.

Iceland

The following day progress was painfully slow. Large confused seas and squally showers had us averaging only 3.4 knots. The still hopeful kittiwakes came pouring over the swells like the Zulus at Rourke's Drift. Everyone was drenched by a combination of rain and sea with the obvious exception of Jim who was as dry as a bone in his many-sheeped jumper. At noon we got a forecast from shore base in Fahan on the sat phone. The wind was to go to the west for the next two days then veer to the northwest. We could not have got a worse forecast. Wind on the nose for the next three days all the way to Reykjavik. We



Barbeque on the *Opportune*.

decided to divert to Westmannaeyjar. We spotted our first landfall, Iceland hopefully, at 23.30 although we were a good few miles off. It was still bright and easy to see the mountains between the squalls. The decision having been made to go to Westmannaeyjar had everyone in good spirits as land fever began to set in. We should be there by lunchtime tomorrow.

The following morning, we still had rough seas and rain. The wind was from the southwest force 7-8, but we had Westmannaeyjar in sight. There are two islands to the north of the main island of Heimaey, Bjarnarey and Ellidarey. One of them we rechristened Glasheedy after the island off Ballyliffin Golf Club in Donegal, as it looked similar. To the south are a chain of islands, the most recent of which, Surtsey, appeared suddenly one day in 1963. It is a little disconcerting to be sailing in waters where at any moment an island can pop up beneath you, and carry crew, boat and all to dizzy, sulphurous heights. The sooner we are in, the better. We passed our first



The harbour at Heimaey looking back to sea. Lava on right.

yacht since leaving Torshavn going the other way under jenny and engine and diverted to have a look. We couldn't identify him but exchanged waves.

I had read a little about Heimaey over the winter and google-earthed it so had a fair idea of the entrance. On 26th February 1973, a volcano a mile or so from the town had erupted at three in the morning. Norman had come on watch at Malin Head Radio Station that morning and the night shift told him that they had picked up SOSs from the island. All 5,000 inhabitants were safely evacuated without a scratch between them. The lava flow had reduced the width of the entrance by about half, but in doing so, had left it very protected. We took down the sails and motored in tying up at the fuel dock as the only pontoon space was taken by a French Yacht. Had I remembered that we were no longer in the EU, as a proper vexillologist, I could have flown the 'Q' flag, but I forgot. It was lunchtime and there was no-one about. It was still cold and wet and not much in sight by way of a PPP. After an hour or so which we passed with a couple of celebratory G+Ts (not Slimline!), a customs man appeared. His English was excellent and he cleared us with no problems. He also organised the fuel man who topped us up. The fuel man then took me on a tour of the island in his tanker before bringing me to his office, where I paid several tens of thousand Kroner to Shell (Iceland). He then presented me with four Shell hats and gave me a lift back to the boat. Very friendly people.

This was Monday 14th July. We were directed to tie alongside a restored fishing boat, the *Blatindur*, and we motored over to it, the crew of the French yacht taking our lines. They reminded us that this was Bastille Day and invited us on board for drinks that evening. We gladly accepted. There were four of them. Michael, Jean, Guy and Yvette. Guy was a French Canadian wild life photographer specialising in polar bears and other arctic animals. They had been away from France for three months and were ready to go home. They plied us with Anis and we plied them with Powers. Both sides seemed happy and an *entente cordiale* was quickly established. Jim gave them a quick run down on French high Art and Culture and they seemed suitably impressed. We didn't want to outstay our welcome, so left after an hour or so. Back to *Bagheera* for the usual intensive planning and nightcaps. Planning on a cruise is everything- as are nightcaps.

The following morning, we caught the ferry to the mainland and then a bus into Reykjavik. As soon as we got off the bus, Frankie and Paddy became separated from the rest of us. We went to the Tourist office and booked accommodation for a couple of nights. Frankie and Paddy rang us from the Dubliner, Reykjavik's only Irish pub. We joined them there after checking in. Reykjavik is a medium sized city with a population of about 120,000, half as big again as Derry. The frozen north, it was not, with Iceland enjoying its warmest summer since 1944. We had a night in the Dubliner and a fine meal down the street, followed by a great sleep in proper beds.

Came the dawn. All this way, and not to have seen anything apart from an Irish pub would have been a shame so we booked a tour. The Golden Circle tour lasts about eight hours and takes in firstly Gullfoss, Iceland's second biggest waterfall. After that to Geysir country. The guide warns us that water which is steaming is hot, yet one young boy sticks his foot in it and is scalded. The geysirs are impressive and there is a good bar and restaurant there as well for lunch, not surprisingly called the Geysir Hotel. On then to a fascinating spot. A rift on a steep incline. The rift is where Iceland is splitting in two with the American tectonic plate moving west and the Euro-Asian one moving east. This is where the first Icelandic parliament and law courts were established a thousand or so years ago. Having

climbed to the top of it, we were a little disappointed to find that the facilities were closed.

Back to the town, and in honour of the Peace Process we had a couple in the British Pub, before going for a meal, then back to The Dubliner, and then a quicky in Kevva's spot. Closing time during the week is at about midnight, but at weekends in some bars 05.00, and in others 07.00. This was a weeknight, so back to the B+B for a couple of quiet nightcaps. In the morning Jim departed at the crack of dawn for Keflavik airport to fly to London and then via Ryanair, home. We volunteered to take his boots, his wetgear and his lovely woolly jumper home on the boat to save baggage charges. He had gone when we got up. We said goodbye to our fairly surly host and got the ferry back to Westmannaeyjar.

The ferry trip back was pleasant. We had breakfast and a couple of beers and arrived back in Heimeay in the early afternoon. We listened to music on the boat while we decided where to eat and finally picked a hotel a couple of hundred yards away. We were the only diners. It was a quiet spot. There is no night life whatsoever on Heimaey. People go there to see the birds of which there many, especially puffins. The Icelandic for puffin is Lundi, which we learned from menus. Probably gives Lundy in the Bristol Channel its name. The other pursuits there are golf and walking. I cannot play golf, therefore I sail. I don't care much for walking either as I have a car for getting me about. Outside the hotel is a post showing the depth of lava at that spot after the eruption. 1.6 metres. A couple of nightcaps and off tomorrow. Norman had downloaded synoptic chart forecast for the next few days. There was a biggish low coming our way, but of more interest was Tropical Storm Bertha which was building off Virginia.

Tomorrow turned out to be a lovely day, warm and sunny. During the night a Dutch-flagged green ketch had tied to the fuel dock, *Siobhan*. We met her crew in a local pizzeria, a young Scottish couple, he of Dutch descent. He was curious about our ensign and had checked it out in his reference book and had come to the conclusion that we were on the Irish Presidential yacht. The economy may have taken a downturn but its not that bad yet. We carry three ensigns. Our own "Inishtrahull Cruising Club" ensign, "The Lough Swilly Yacht Club" ensign and the ICC ensign. As we were departing for Lough Swilly, we were flying the LSYC one. This a defaced navy ensign with the Cross or Knot of Columcille on it. The knot or cross was taken over when Ireland became Christianised but is actually a pagan symbol, the "Triquetra", which represents the essence of femininity. He wanted to know if it was legal to put this on a flag, and noted it down for his log.

All that we needed before departure was customs clearance and gas for the cooker. I trudged a couple of miles in the heat to a garage that sold it and trudged a couple of miles back. On the way I passed a cliff of a couple of hundred feet. Two young men were demonstrating how to catch puffins by swinging from the end of a rope, 150 metres or so from ledge to ledge. No harnesses, no nets. Looked dangerous. Anyway, the thread on the new bottle didn't fit our adaptor though it was close. Two more crew were dispatched and returned with a household sized bottle and a new adaptor. Enough gas for the next two or three years. We cleared customs and left at 17.15 motoring out the channel behind a large cargo ship attended by a tug.

The tug turned back and gave us a toot as we passed. Once outside the channel we set our course for home under genoa and engine and contacted Icelandic CG on channel 27. To our north we could see Iceland's most famous volcano, snow topped Mount Hekla, and east of that, the huge Vatnajokull glacier. All well with the world; a steady 7.5 knots and Rockall on the nose.

The sun set that night at 00.15 and at the same time, the

moon rose above the bow. Our speed varied between 5 and 8 knots and we only put on the engine for 45 minutes to charge the batteries. Frankie and I saw a distinct green flash at dawn at 05.13. Apparently this should only happen at dusk, but what we think may have happened was with the waves, the sun was going above and below the horizon before it finally rose properly. Anyway, we know what we saw. Through that day we had constant sunshine with the wind, mostly from the north, at about 10 knots. A little chillier than yesterday. However our luck couldn't last and by that evening we had 27 knots of wind from the southwest which was pushing us to the east of our course, and by 23.00 we were a full 20 miles off course.

Despite the weather, conversation continued. The Count has difficulty in interpreting what a "splash" of milk in coffee means. Older hands explain that there are five smidgeons to the splash, three splashes to the half one, two half ones to the glass and two glasses to the dollop. After that, we revert to the Glasgow Coma Scale. With larger volumes of liquid, such as a wave coming into the cockpit, the Smeadley-Corr scale is used where, of course, there are seven bucketfuls to the shedload, and three shedloads to the whole kit and caboodle. Note the use of Imperial measures. The Master and crew of *Bagheera* refuse to bow to unelected officials in Brussels. The other topic of conversation is Frankie's desire to helm a boat from the inside, clad in dressing gown and slippers. Frankie is not fat and feels the cold. We discuss fitting a forward gun turret from a B52 on the bow, but this has obvious draw backs when coming alongside. The best we can come up with is a glass bubble forward of the mast. Frankie can steer from the main saloon, popping his head up into the bubble occasionally, meercat style, to get his bearings.

Jim's woolly jumper

Our crew for this leg was myself, Norman the Vice, the Rear, Frankie, the Count McNulty and Paddy the Navigator and CEO. Only two of us, the oldest two, are in gainful employment. Two others live on pensions provided by the bloated profits of the banking industry and another had decided at an early age not to become involved with the whole idea of work at all. So it was important for two of us to get home for work. The idea of going back to Stornoway, therefore, did not appeal. We were still being pushed east through the night with the wind still from the southwest at between 30 and 38 knots with very heavy seas. We were doing six hours on, six off with Frankie and I (smokers) doing 4 till 8, Norman and John doing 8 till 4. This is where Jim's woolly jumper came into its own. I had it on over the oilskin bottoms. It is a perfect sailing jumper and I must have it. I will tell him it got lost somewhere but I suppose if he reads this far I will have to give it back. Coming off watch at either 8am or pm, the routine is the same. Take off cap, take off life jacket and harness, take off jacket, take off boots, take off woolly jumper, take off oilskin trousers. Put on shoes to go to the jacks (don't ask). Go to bed, kick off shoes. Listen to engine singing "amore, amore", backed up by a Welsh female choir. Go to sleep and dream of sailing the boat at full tilt into the side of B&Qs in Tewkesbury. Reverse the process in six hours.

The next day dawned in a fairly miserable fashion. Wet and windy; southwesterlies at between 35 and 40 knots. We were still being pushed east and we were still outside our diesel window for the Swilly. At 01.00 a minor miracle happened. I was on the wheel when I noticed a small sprat wriggling on the seat behind me. Obviously washed on by a wave. I carefully picked it up and returned it to the sea saying to myself, "now I have done something for you, do me a favour in return".

Within, at most, five minutes we were able to get a bit of southing and a look at the GPS showed we could now lay the mouth of the Swilly. Who says sailors are not superstitious? Throughout that day, Monday, the wind stayed at 35-40 knots, but at least we were going in the right direction and we continued to make good speed under double reefed main and reefed jenny. At 01.30 on Tuesday we recorded a record speed for the boat of 14.3 knots. We were flying and once again there was touch of land fever or "the channels" as Norman calls it. Throughout the day the wind moderated and by evening was down to a more comfortable 20 knots. At 20.00, I went into the forecabin to get some more beer and noticed that the wooden trim which covers the inner forestay's chain plates had ripped away. Closer inspection revealed that the bolts securing the chain plates had sheared and also that it had come away from its attachment in the bilges. We decided to drop the main as a precaution. At 22.00 we filled the diesel tank and now had enough in the tank to make the Swilly.

That night was wet and lumpy and it was difficult to steer the 150 degree course that would lay Fanad Head. The night watch took down the jenny and carried on under engine only. I contacted Malin Head CG at 10.30, 30 miles out. Paddy was now on the wheel as we approach Fanad in calm and sunny conditions. The Admiral lost his cap, and the log records that Paddy did a perfect MOB procedure to recover it. At Fanad Head we rang Rita's Bar in Portsalon (074 915 9107). This is possibly the best PPP in Ireland, and if not the best is certainly one of them. We asked them to provide a tender to bring us in. They agreed and within minutes of tying to a large motor boat, we were having our first pints of Guinness for over two weeks. We had left Heimaey at 17.15 on Friday and we were in Rita's at 18.30 on Wednesday. 630 miles at an average of 5.5 knots. While we were having our pints, Big Bertha was crossing Iceland, spoiling the hottest summer they had had since the middle of World War II.

It is about 15 miles from Rita's in Portsalon to the marina at Fahan. Two nights in Rathmullan and across to the marina on Friday night. Average speed 0.3 knots. Met some Yacht Club friends in Rathmullan who provided much needed showers for which eternal thanks. The trip finished with a fine meal in the Railway Tavern Fahan, during which the Admiral's mobile was stolen. A morning swim in the marina on Sunday and a taxi home and very glad to be there.

Total mileage 1679 and no harm done.



Where to next?

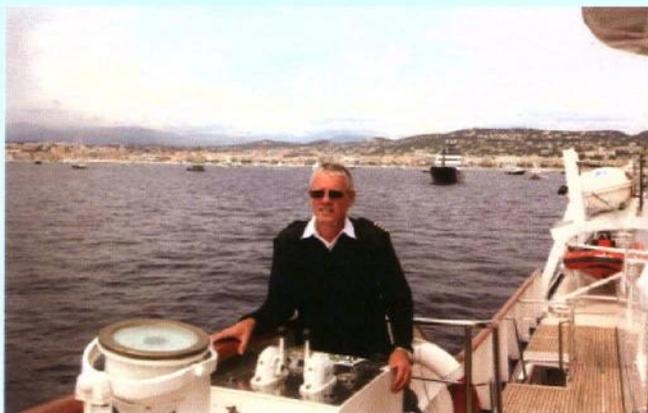
Captain Peter Mullins writes on another year in the life of a Relief Master and of being a boat owner again after a hiatus of 20 years

Once more onto the beach, dear friends

It is the first week of September and I am back in my apartment in Ft. Lauderdale Florida for the first time in over nine months, and what a joy it was to open, for the first time, my copy of the 2007 Annual. How this wonderful publication has come along since my tenure as your Honorary Secretary over 30 years ago. Indeed it was I who gave the moniker to the iconic 'Dunn's Ditty' in honor of my predecessor Aiden Dunn who first encouraged members to give a brief account of their activities. And how it has caught on and to my chagrin I believe this might be my first contribution.

Over the past year I have once again had the pleasure of running a variety of vessels, both sail and power. My year started with a delivery from San Antonio Jamaica to Bridgeport CT on the 54m (178 feet) Perini Navi ketch *Parsifal III* of 460 GRT. These splendid cruising yachts get a bad rap as they are often considered neither fish nor fowl. I believe *Parsifal III* might have broken that mould. She was designed by our very own Ron Holland and with an air draft of almost 200 feet, carried quiet a spread of sail. Unlike many of the other Perinis she is powered by a single 1500 hp Caterpillar with a variable pitch propeller giving an excellent turn of speed. We made an uneventful passage of 1450 miles, followed by a successful yard period at Derecktor Shipyard.

There followed another stint on the 40m (130 foot) ketch *Victoria of Strathearn*. *Victoria* has been well documented in previous Annuals, and, in my opinion, is still the most stunning sailing vessel I have ever had the privilege of running. We had an extended charter in the Greek Islands followed by a cruise of the Amalfi Coast, Sardinia, Corsica, South of France and finally laying up for the winter in Palma, Majorca. Since launch in 2001 I have logged over 50,000 miles on *Victoria* and would gladly do them all again, backwards if necessary!! So often in my profession, when one door closes inevitably another opens and it was while in Palma that I was asked whether I would like to run the beautiful schooner *Windrose of Amsterdam* for three months over the winter of 07/08. She was to be based in Antigua, where many will know I maintain a second home, so I jumped at the opportunity. I must admit I had little knowledge and no experience of sailing schooners so this was going to be a big learning curve. *Windrose of Amsterdam* is a stunning schooner, built in 2001 with two specifics in mind; to beat the old Charlie Barr transatlantic record and to be a successful charter yacht. To this end, in 2002 and 2005 she broke the transatlantic crossing record and during the Classics in 2002 she got line honors and beat the J Classes of *Endeavour*, *Shamrock* and *Velsheda*. But I digress as better is to follow. *Windrose* was designed by Gerard Dykstra, of *Adela*, *Endeavour*, *Meteor*, *Rainbow* and countless other Spirit of Tradition sailing yachts. She was built by Holland Jachbouw and her principle dimensions are LOL 46.3m, LWL 29.3m, Draft 4.3 and about 139 tons. Her layout is very similar to *Victoria* and indeed length on deck was the same at 40m, but there the similarity ended. *Windrose* had an additional 20 something feet of pointy bit stuck onto the bow; she was lighter by over 40 tons, had additional water ballast, carried half the fuel and water and was powered by a



Peter Mullins.

relatively small 425 hp Lugger as opposed to *Victoria's* 750 hp MTU. Whereas *Victoria* could be comfortably sailed with a crew of five, *Windrose* was somewhat undermanned with seven. She was a joy to sail on every point, fast, comfortable but a lot of hard work. Typically I would add an extra hour to every passage in order to give time to set and hand the gear. No in boom furling and only the yankee/blade was on a Reckman. The staysail was hank-on and it took the entire ships company manning sheets and halyards and more running backs than you could shake a stick at to get the sails up and set. The very enthusiastic and knowledgeable mate orchestrated this event, looking like a cross between the late Herbert von Karajan and a Whirling Dervish. We had a very successful charter season ending up with my coup de grace by winning the St. Barth's Bucket overall. What a time of it we had. Fully crewed with 30 up, we had Eddie Warden-Owen on the wheel assisted by Mike Toppa of North Sails Florida as tactician plus a star studded crew of trimmers, navigators and afterguard. Bucket races are very much a gentleman's affair with the handicaps allocated at the start as a pursuit type race, they are great fun but I must stress fun is spelt WIN and winning is grinning. Our insurers would not allow us to fly our colored sails so we were in Grande Dames class as opposed to the Gazelles, but in the first race we still managed a fourth in class and fifth overall. The handicaps were adjusted accordingly and in the second race we got a two/two, and in the third and final race we got the gun crossing the line by a nanosecond to the J Ranger. Talk about going out with a bang, the following day I handed *Windrose* over to her new Captain.

I did not have long to revel in the glories of success,



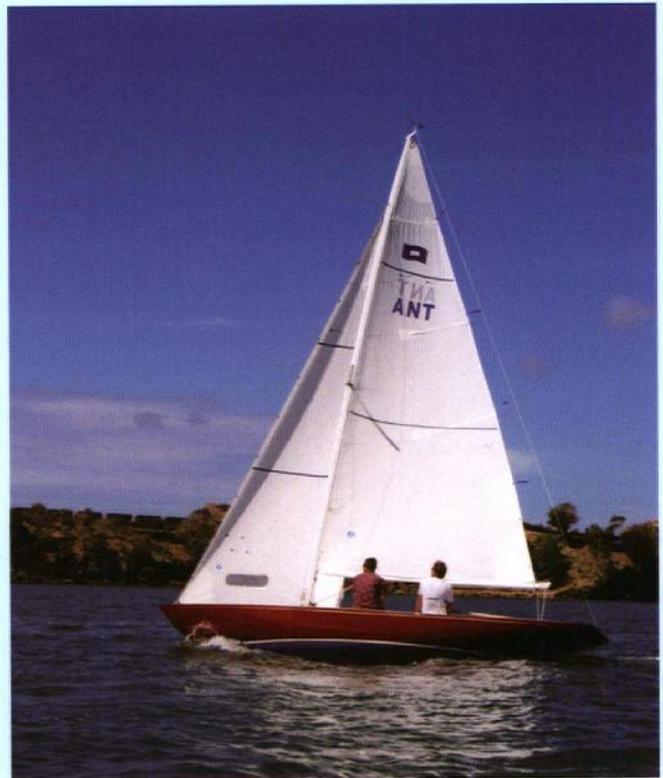
SY *Windrose of Amsterdam* fully powered to windward in the St. Barth's Bucket.

because my next assignment was to see me in Monaco where I was to take command of *MV Absinthe*. I say motor vessel because she was actually registered as a cargo ship under the Panamanian flag, and at 61.2m (201 feet) and 780 tons she was, when launched in 1973, one of the largest yachts afloat and still today makes quite a statement. *Absinthe* had a beam of 10m (32 feet) and a draft of 3.80m (12.5 feet). She is powered by twin caterpillar 1125 hp engines, carried over 120,000 litres of fuel and could cruise comfortably at 13 knots with a top speed of 16 knots. In full charter mode we ran with a compliment of 18. The deck department consisted of me as the Master, a 1st and 2nd officer and four deckhands. In the machinery space, which was manned, there was of course the Chief Engineer assisted by two oilers. On the hotel side I had a chef, a crew chef and a galley assistant. A chief steward and four stewardesses made up the balance of the crew. By law we could only accommodate 12 guests, but had a total of nine double guest cabins of which two were on-deck master suits. Our charter rate was considered reasonable at €200,000 per week plus of course all expenses. At full chat we would burn 5000 litres a day. She was a splendid old girl and I thoroughly enjoyed my three month stint, and it reminded me that one can get very used to one's third-floor accommodations, with bedroom and bathroom en suite and adjoining office, all with unsurpassed sea views from every window, and the idea of hanging up ones sea boots and donning a pair of bridge slippers can become very appealing!! During my tenure we had a viewing via helicopter, we were helicopter operational, which resulted in a very quick sale and now finds me back in Florida "Once more onto the beach, dear friends, once more" gazing eastwards in the direction of Hurricane Ike.

Those of you who have visited Antigua will all have heard



MV Absinthe 201 feet/780 tons.



Piper 24 Springtide.

of The Voice of English Harbor, the indomitable Jol Byerley who, for more years than he can care to recall, gives us the daily weather forecast and local news at 09.00. I have known and sailed with Jol since I arrived on the island many years ago, and we decided we should try and start an inexpensive one design keel boat class. We settled on the Piper 24 which has been a successful class in Scottish waters for many years and would be ideal for Falmouth and English Harbors, the leeward coast of Antigua, and in settled weather one could circumnavigate the island. These pretty little boats were designed by David Boyd on the lines of the 12 metre *Scepter* and *Sovereign* of the late fifties and early sixties. Our little boat is hull number 24, called *Springtide* and was built of GRP in 1966 by Robertsons of Sandbank. We used her hull to take a mould, and hope in time to encourage other likeminded folk to start a class. After a hiatus of 20 years, being a boat owner again is a joy, especially as I do not have to worry about crew, engines, electrics, owners and their guests!!

It is estimated that one-seventh of the Navy in Nelson's day wore trusses, due to hernias resulting from all the rope pulling and hauling.

-7 to +92

Dungarvan to the Baltic Sea

Donal Walsh

Irish weather put paid to any sailing plans we had in 2007. Four days to New Ross and back hardly justified having a boat. I resolved 2008 would be different, and decided to bring *Lady Kate* to the Baltic via English Channel, cruising France, Belgium, Holland and Germany en route. The dream continued with plans for the following years to take *Lady Kate* through the Rhine, Main and Danube rivers to the Black Sea, and return via the Mediterranean.

On Sunday 1st June at 13.00 we slipped Dungarvan. Aboard were Michael O'Neill who has sailed with me several times before, my son Brendan, and his friend Darragh. We motored with main set and autopilot steering in very light and almost non-existent winds all day. This actually suited me as we didn't have time for a shakedown sail together before departure, and made for an easy transition into shipboard routine. During the night the autopilot acted erratically doing several 360° turns and eventually gave up altogether. I had to resort to steering by hand which is most boring without wind. There was no moon, and with the clear sky the stars were bright which made it a bit more interesting. When Brendan came on watch I started to work on the autopilot. With absolutely no idea as to what I was doing, I dismantled it unsuccessfully several times, then when I admitted defeat, and decided to replace it at the next port of call – it worked!

We plugged the tide up to the Longships, after which it carried fair and I figured we would get east of the Lizard before the stream changed. All hands agreed, and we kept on for Falmouth. Once east of Lizard, thanks to Michael's culinary skills we dined superbly under a lovely warm setting sun.

At Falmouth we anchored off the Town Quay, the crew spent the day ashore while I attended to some tasks aboard. Michael lost a tooth filling during the night but we were unable to get a dental appointment for him in Falmouth, so we carried on hoping to arrange something in Plymouth. Outside there was a fresh, following breeze from the southwest and we made 6 knots easily. It was a lovely fine clear day and a great day's sailing. We overnighted at Queen Ann's Battery Marina but it is remote and a long walk to town centre. Despite contacting nearly every dentist in Plymouth, it was to be another day before Michael got an appointment. We passed the time spending an afternoon exploring the upper reaches of the harbour, to Brunel's bridge at Saltash. When we returned we opted for Sutton Harbour Marina inside the lock and swing bridge. This we found much better than QAB and nearer the town, the facilities here are excellent and I would return again. The boys had a great night ashore after meeting up with some local students celebrating their last exam night. Once Michael returned from the dentist we were away to sea, we now motored with sails set in light winds against an adverse tide.

At Start Pont the tide changed in our favour, we took the passage inside the Black Stone off Start and got into Dartmouth, to be met on arrival by my sister Máire about to depart for Greenland aboard *Arctic Tern*. We were invited to dinner, given the grand tour of this mighty craft – 67' steel ex

BT Global Challenge round the world racer – and had a pleasant evening.

We both sailed next morning, *Arctic Tern* to Falmouth and onward to Dungarvan and Greenland. *Lady Kate* headed for Cherbourg. Shortly after leaving we were hit by a massive thundershower with much lightning. It was a powerful display but because of the rain, I stayed below and left Brendan to get wet and sail the boat. Later the wind fell off and we motored through the Casques separation scheme. Our new AIS which is linked to the chart plotter worked really well here, and it was very interesting tracking the traffic around us. We finally got alongside Cherbourg at 03.30 and turned in.

After a day in Cherbourg we sailed early the following morning, carrying a great tide with us. Our intention was to anchor off Omaha beach and land. On arrival there was an onshore swell which would have swamped the inflatable in the surf, and we carried on to the remains of Arromanches Mulberry Harbour. Here I thought there would be lots of shelter behind the ruined caissons, but as we were at high-water most of them were covered, and it was more exposed than I expected. It was frightening to think about what happened in this very place, and the huge price that was paid by young men on both sides. As we passed, I silently remembered the poor forgotten souls that perished here.

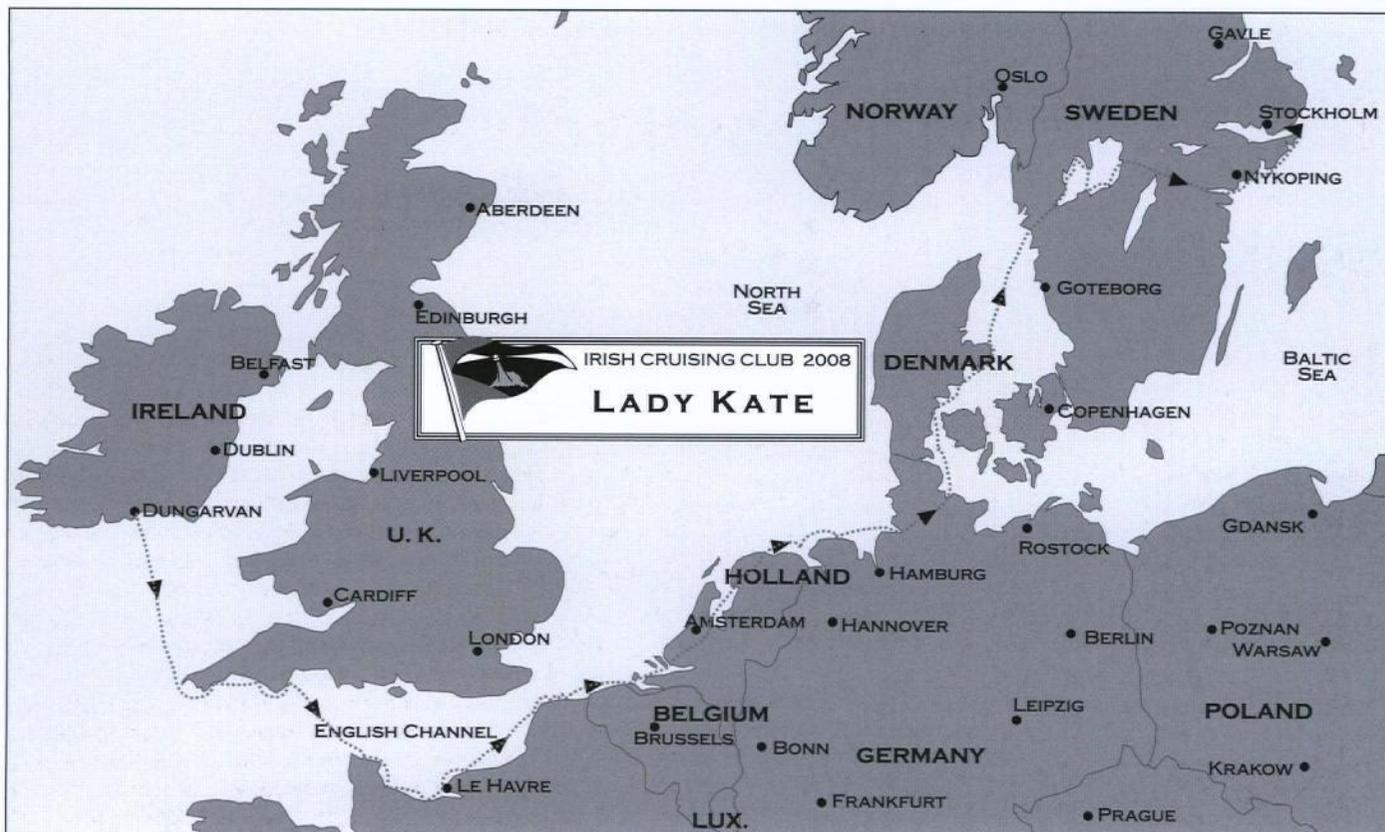
Further east lay Courseulles-sur-Mer and Juno Beach. The harbour dries completely and we were much too late to lock into the basin. Brendan persuaded me to try and get alongside and dry outside the gate. It was very tight all the way to the berth but we made it, and just as we came alongside we went aground. I thought we would leave at 06.00 but at 02.45 a fishing vessel came into the berth behind us and that was the end of any hope of sleeping. I got up and put to sea, and carrying the tide, we entered the mouth of the Caen Canal at Ouistreham. After locking into the canal, we came to the famous Pegasus Bridge which lifted for us, and then made our way to Caen. At a war museum I visited, the cashier explained that there was free entry for war veterans and wondered if I qualified. I politely declined, but quietly calculated that I would need to be at least eighty years of age to be eligible, and wondered if I really looked that old!

Le Havre

Back at sea next day we headed for Le Havre, and had a lovely fast sail in good conditions with the tide under us, crossing the Greenwich Meridian during the afternoon. At Le Havre we encountered three tugs steaming full astern against us sounding *Frère Jacques* on their fog horns, and making boy-racer style donut turns as they went by.

The chalk cliffs along the shore here are spectacular, we headed for St-Valéry-en-Caux and were very close to it before the harbour emerged from a gap in the cliffs. Inside we waited on a buoy for the lock to open and the bridge to swing. The lads had a great run ashore here and were very late home.

In the morning at the first locking I put the boat to sea. It was very cold with a northerly wind blowing. We wanted to cross



Baie de la Somme directly, as to follow the coast would have added a lot of extra distance to our route. We had to plug the tide for six hours, but when it came right we also picked up a decent breeze, and made great progress to Boulogne. Another day saw us round Cap Gris-Nez and on to Calais.

The coast here is very low lying, and there are lots of offshore banks sometimes with very little water in the channels between them. As we entered Belgian waters the tide was against us and in the freshening head wind it made for an uncomfortable passage so we opted to stop at Nieuwport. Here we were stopped by a police launch who made us tie alongside while they carried out a "safety check" on our boat. I was brought aboard to their office to present official documents. Passport details were relayed by radio to some distant overlord for processing. They checked the ships certificate of registry, requested and took details of radio operator's cert, yachtmaster's cert, ship radio station licence, insurance, and certificate of VAT paid status. The only thing unchecked was my sell by date!

Meanwhile back on board another guy checked charts – Belgian law requires that a vessel carries a chart of Belgian sand banks up to 30 miles offshore – log and flares were inspected, lifejackets were opened to check dates of gas bottles, they also checked fire extinguisher's expiry dates. When it was all over they told me that the seal on one of the fire extinguishers was broken and that this normally attracted a fine. I protested that I was an Irish-flag vessel complying with Irish legislation and fire extinguishers were carried voluntarily as opposed to it being a mandatory requirement. They were polite but firm, and after a further caution, they eventually decided to overlook it and allowed us on our way.

We entered a very large marina which was too far from the town to be of any use to visitors. Michael wanted to visit some local tourist attractions, so he stayed ashore next day and would rejoin us later at Zeebrugge. Zeebrugge is a huge commercial port with lots of traffic movements, yachts have to contact port control before entering or leaving. The marina here is very

remote from the town centre and the area surrounding the port is real dockland. When we sailed, Brendan and Darragh took a day off and stayed ashore. Aboard *Lady Kate* we had a great sail in strong following winds which required lots of concentration at the helm. Soon we were in Dutch waters, and later inside a lock at Vlissing, we found a quiet little marina. As we took the canal route north past Middelburg, we were accompanied by *Tenacious* a British sail-training vessel.

Because of the strong winds predicted to persist at sea over the next few days, we opted to take the Maast Stande Route through Holland. This enabled us to make progress every day – we would have been weather-bound on the offshore route. Once into the routine of locking and negotiating bridges this became a very leisurely way of experiencing the country and its people. It was rather slow at times while we waited for bridges to open – most rural and minor road bridges opened on demand as soon as one approached – rail bridges operate around train timetables, and bridges on principal roads only open at specific times, determined by rush hour traffic. In the south most bridges were free, further north some bridge keepers collected bruggeld, using the traditional method of a wooden clog on a string attached to a stick. Marina and mooring facilities are excellent and most are modestly priced.

Amsterdam

There were still plenty of opportunities to sail, mostly along the broader stretches of canal and in the large enclosed bodies of water. Moving north through smaller narrower canals we could see over the canal banks and look out onto the surrounding countryside which was much lower than we were. It was a weird feeling as it was so flat one could see a long way. At Gouda we were seven metres below sea level. We spent a few days in Amsterdam, moored at Sixhaven Marina across the river from Central Station. Here we had internet access and Brendan and Darragh got their exam results and immediately went on a tear. Michael left us on Friday morning to fly back to



Brendan and Mary. *Lady Kate* at anchor.

Ireland. We were sorry to see him go. We now passed through Oranjesluizen and into the Markermeer turning north for Enkhuizen.

Sailing under jib alone we made 6/7 knots in a strong southwest wind. Our next stop was Urk, a weird place – lots of visiting yachts, very busy along the quays – the locals we encountered seemed half daft, maybe it's a carry over from the time this place was an island, it could also be that we hit the place when they were fired up with soccer fever.

I had planned to head for Harlingen and get back to sea but Darragh was not feeling himself, so in order that we would continue to make progress northward we opted to re-enter the canal system, and made our way to Leeuwarden. There was lots of sailing along this route as there are lakes and wide patches of canal. The two boys went off to a music festival in Louvain in Belgium, from where Darragh would return to Ireland. I would stay in Leeuwarden for a few days to wait for Brendan to return, we would also be joined by Mary and my daughter Emma.

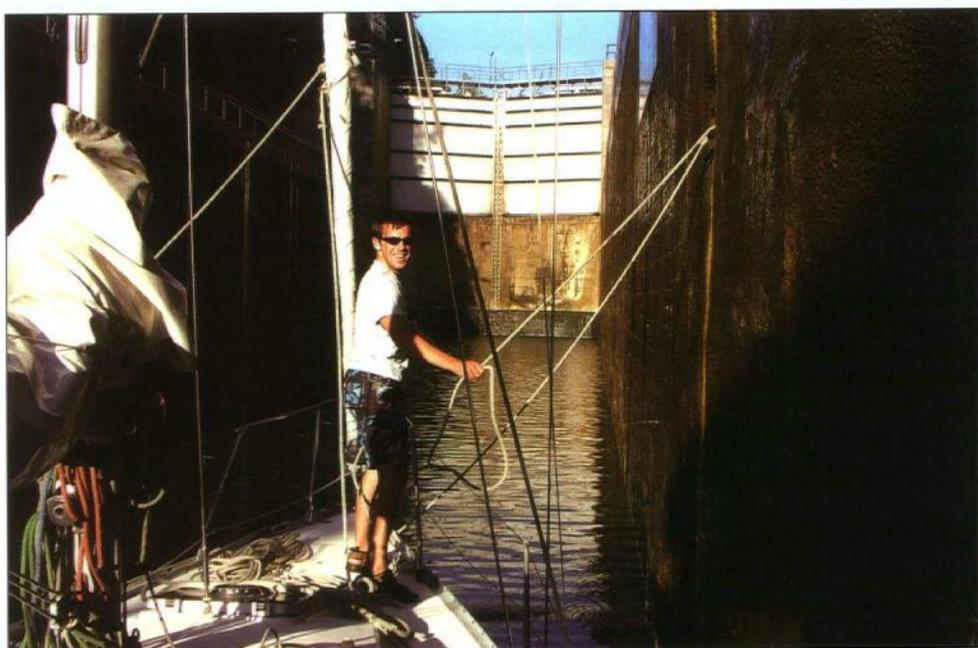
Lady Kate is equipped for cruising in remote waters, and is totally self-sufficient in terms of heating, hot water, fridge and cooking. Along the way most yachts we encountered were all-electric boats, wired for shore power they plug into in the marina outlet every night. Some skippers we saw seemed to think this so important that often the electric cable went ashore first – even before a mooring line! Electricity is normally included in the marina fee, so I decided that I would use the days in Leeuwarden to install a 220v electric system in *Lady Kate*. After two very full days hard slog the system was up and running. I bought an electric kettle, some 220v cabin lights, and a rectifier to run the fridge compressor. The results were very rewarding and

provide lots of extra comfort and will extend the run-out time on our calor gas bottles. Here I met the Irish yacht *Oriana*, returning to Ireland after several years in the Baltic.

Mary joined me in Leeuwarden and brought the rain with her from Ireland. For the first time in four weeks it rained. At Dokkum Emma and Brendan returned from the concert, and at Lauwersoog we exited the canal system to the North Sea. In the channel leading to the deeper water offshore we had to fight for every inch as the flood was very strong and the wind was on the nose. When we cleared the coast and laid off east, the wind freed and the stream was favourable, and we made a very fast passage to Borkum, one of the German Frisian islands. I thought I

would have great fun here with *Lady Kate* especially as she is a bilge keeler, but it was not to be, as we were at neaps and high water height at neaps does not allow navigation inside the islands because there is insufficient rise of tide to pass over the watts. At springs high water is around midday and is ideal for exploring the passages inside the islands. The down side of all this was that we had to retrace our steps to the seaward side of the islands. Sometimes it was up to 10 miles before we could lay off to the east. After Norderney, I made certain to have the flood with us into the Elbe, it was fantastic, we surged forward at speeds of up to 11 knots. Cuxhaven was very enjoyable and although the marina is some distance from the town, visitors are allowed use of a fleet of bicycles. The marina bar and restaurant is excellent and reasonably priced. Emma had to leave us here to return to work, alas the week she spent with us had passed too quickly.

Lady Kate was bound for the Baltic. We locked into Brunsbüttele locks at 14.00 on 7th July 2008 and steamed along the canal leisurely, spent a night in Gieselau and a second at



Brendan tending lines at Trollhättan lock.

Rendsburg. At the Kiel end of the canal we paid a €12.00 canal transit fee – cash only accepted!

Now in the Baltic we took the route through the Lille Belt along the east coast of Denmark. The best feature of our passage along this coast was the sailing, most days we had a fresh following wind and made great speed mostly under jib alone. Ashore you would die of thirst if you were looking for a pub – bringing to mind memories of the Harp ad – “Sally O’Brien and the way she might look at you” – on TV years ago. The Danes drink aboard and have a completely different attitude to drink from us at home or what we found in Holland or Germany.

At a marina in Frederica – which was very remote from the town – the harbour was managed by a robot – you paid the money into a machine got a ticket, different colours every day, and it was also numbered so that a very cursory check from shore identified if the correct amount had been paid.

At Grenaa the harbour was absolute bedlam, not a free berth in sight, we found a corner and rafted up. Within a very short time there was another raft astern, we were completely boxed in, you could walk across the harbour on boats. There would have been mayhem if there was a fire.

Our passage across the Kattegat to the island of Anholt was very uncomfortable with the wind strong on the nose, but we made good speed. From a distance it appeared very small, I made a comment that it was only a wet rock, but it turned out to be a very interesting place. Mooring is bows on riding to your own stern anchor. Most of the island is a nature reserve and there are some lovely walks ashore. Here I happened on a fishing vessel discharging catch, and bought a fine, fresh cod from the skipper for a fraction of what it would cost me in Ireland.

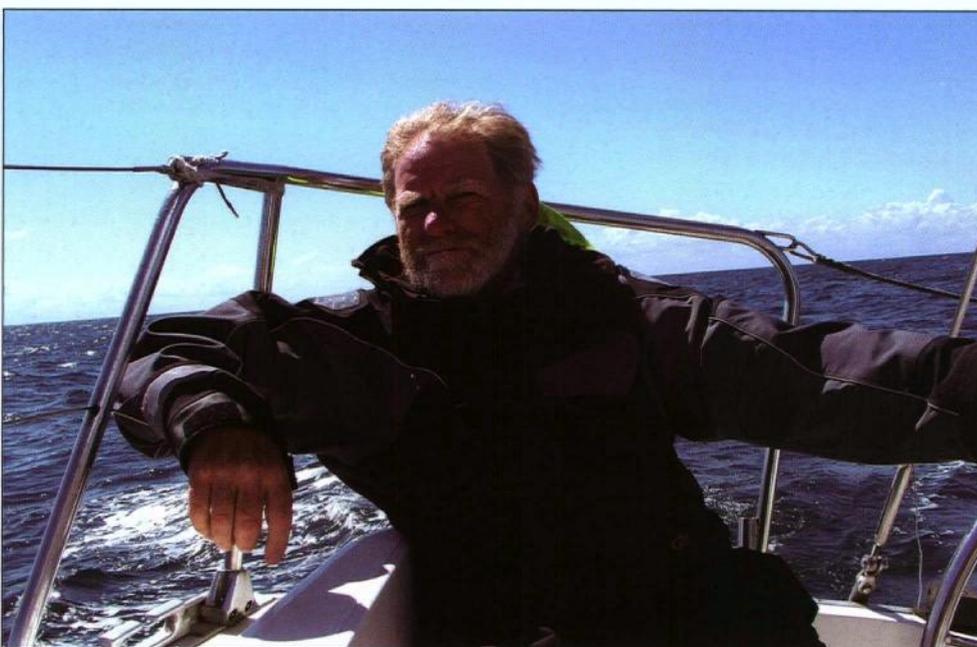


Pegasus Bridge opening.

We sailed, bound for Sweden into a light head wind that required us to motor-sail in order to make any progress, and that evening we arrived in Bua on the Swedish coast just south of Göteborg. Next we made a passage through the southern part of the Göteborg archipelago which was delightful from a pilotage point of view – light winds good sunshine – but there were loads of people and boats everywhere, they looked like ants on one rock, and yet they didn’t seem to intrude on each other too much. Up river in Göteborg we stopped in the Lilla Bommens Hamn marina right beside the opera house. Here I was able to find a guy who could refill our Calor gas bottle. It would be marvellous if our EU legislators could get their act together, and decide on a standard for gas bottles, connections, and pressure regulators, through the Union. It was so hot in the city with all the radiated heat from the buildings we decided to go upriver late in the evening to try and get a bit cooler. We turned west into a creek and found the small gasthamn of Kungälv.

As we approached Trollhättan the river became more scenic and the basin below the locks was delightful. We had little time to enjoy it, as the lock opened for us almost immediately, and once inside and secure we were going up. The vast locks are very gentle and operate with little turbulence. Inside the chamber, the walls are dripping wet and our mast did not even reach the top. There is a flight of three locks followed by a basin, then a further final lock into the canal. We explored the lock area ashore, there are some lovely walks and it was interesting to see the old abandoned locks, and how the construction of the different stages took place.

We had to move on – an important appointment awaited us – we needed an internet connection for the Waterford v Wexford hurling



Donal at helm of *Lady Kate*.

match. At an internet café in Trollhättan town, we got to see Waterford win.

A German boat came alongside early next morning and we got into conversation, I was invited aboard so that he might give me some advice on the Göta Canal. A bottle of whiskey was produced – I politely suggested that 8.30 on Monday morning might not be the best time to start at whiskey, reply “I like to know someone before we talk”. As an Irishman abroad I was representing my country, and in the interests of international relations I did my duty.

Third largest lake in Europe

We had one final lock which was effortless and quick, again another bridge and then we entered Lake Vänern. This is a huge expanse of water, the third largest lake in Europe. On the recommendation of my German friend we overnighted in a creek called Dalbergså, a lovely quiet anchorage, but there was absolutely nothing ashore. Brendan and I had a swim, later he explored ashore, and swam again. It was lovely and it was warm.

We were away early next day in a light breeze about 10 knots, making about 6 knots through the flat waters of the lake in brilliant sunshine, and after a really pleasant sail ended up in nice town called Åmål with good facilities.

Our course now took us east and then south through an archipelago to Ekenäs. We anchored for lunch but were greeted by an old battleaxe ashore who left us in no doubt as to how welcome we were. Apparently she was within her rights and could prevent us from anchoring, as the land and foreshore were private. The entrance to Ekenäs is via a well-buoyed narrow channel, through rushes into a small marina. The pilotage was interesting but there was little ashore.

Next morning in flat calm, we motored across the south side of the lake to Mariestad where Mary's brother Gerard and his wife Máire joined us. Again our visitors brought the Irish rain with them. It rained heavily next day as we headed to Sjötorp to enter the Göta Canal. There was a hefty transit fee, but considering that it included marinas and the use of all their excellent facilities along the way, it represents reasonable value. The first few locks were easily mastered and soon it was a simple routine to lock up. The secret is to run a long bow line from shore through the fairlead and the centre of the cleat on the bow, and lead it back aft to a winch. When you enter the lock you make your stern line fast as tight as possible and tie it off, as the boat rises by taking up on the bow line there is perfect control, its so easy one person can manage it on their own from the cockpit. Brendan spent most of the time ashore chatting to the lock keepers (there was plenty of keeperesses too) – mostly students who had summer jobs on the canal. We learned that we were the first Irish boat through so far this year. The final ascending lock, which is really only a water level control mechanism, is manually operated, exactly as it was when the canal was originally built. From here we entered Lake Viken, the summit level of the canal system at 92 metres over sea level. Viken to me was the best lake on the system, we got a great sail but unfortunately the weather broke and rain and wind came, everything got wet and it was unpleasant. There is some fantastic pilotage in this lake, very narrow channels with plenty of rocks, all however are well marked with buoys. The water was absolutely clear, it could be bottled and sold directly from the lake. At Forsvik we started our descent. Descending is very easy, but care must be taken to avoid the lock sill. This is generally marked with a yellow line. We transited a small lake – Bottensjön. Then at Karlsburg we entered Lake Vättern, by now the wind had increased and it was blowing a full gale with plenty of heavy rain. After venturing out onto the lake we

decided it would be a very uncomfortable passage, and we returned to Karlsborg where we spent the night.

It was dry but still very fresh next morning when we headed out onto the lake, fortunately the wind had gone round enough to allow us to lay Motala across the lake. Carrying jib only we made a very fast passage.

Just east of Motala on the canal bank lies the grave of Baltzar von Platen, who designed and supervised the building of the canal. Dropping down out of Vättern to Lake Boren there is a staircase of six locks, which despite all the hype, are easily negotiated. We motored across Boren in absolute calm conditions and entered the canal again at Borensberg. Then there was a long stretch of about 20km without any locks until we came to Berg. Here are four double locks and a stairs of seven.

We had heard “horror stories” of boats waiting for hours to get into these locks. In reality it took little over an hour to get through the seven locks, we were accompanied by four other boats for this section and then we entered Lake Roxen for a 16 mile passage across to Norsham. With very light winds we motored-sailed across the lake.

It was early in the day when we reached Norsham – a very rural village – for some reason there was little crew enthusiasm to continue our canal journey, so I was obliged to overnigh here. I went ashore and had to content myself with a long boring walk.

We now entered the final canal cut, dropped down through several locks, many of them doubles, and finished up in Söderköping for the night. There was a celebration as it was Gerard's 50th birthday and we dined ashore, this was followed by a session in a late night pub with more drinking and dancing.

The Whites left us next day for Copenhagen and onward flights to Dublin – dedicated Aer Lingus supporters! We had a lay-day as it would be our last in the canal.

Back to sea

There were three locks left before we reached the sea at Mem. Then we carried on to the mouth of the bay and north to Arkösund.

Our intention was to lay up *Lady Kate* in Sweden for the winter. I targeted Oxelösund or Nyköping as being possible locations as they are near to Skavska airport, which is served by Ryanair flying direct from Dublin. In Oxelösund we were able to make satisfactory arrangements and we searched no further. We now had another week to sail the archipelago before we returned for decommissioning. Waterford were playing Tipperary in the All Ireland hurling semi-final on Sunday and we thought our best chance to see it on TV would be an Irish Pub in Stockholm so we headed north.

Our route now took us through the southern Stockholm archipelago. We decided to travel leisurely, we stopped and swam in a nature harbour between Aspö and St Krokh – a wonderful place. We laid a stern anchor and tied the bow to a rock and stepped ashore. We then carried on to Trosa, a quiet, quaint town. Here we went right up to the limit of navigation and went alongside the quay. This was much better than at the marina outside which is a long way from the town.

The following day we sailed with a good breeze in bright sunshine stopping for lunch at the nature harbour of Ankarudden. On the chart we spotted a very interesting bit of pilotage – a route to Nynäs Viken via the Dragets Kanal. Its charted depth was 1.5m and it looked very narrow. It was magic, we crossed Nynäs Viken and exited via another narrow channel on the east side. We spent two nights at the town marina in Nynäshamn. Our course took us close up to Dalara, which looked like an interesting place to visit, and on to Saltsjobaden where we went alongside the yacht club marina. It

was Friday evening and the place was awash with beautiful people – bronzed “Boat Gods” all complete with designer sunglasses, downing cocktails. Our final leg to Stockholm was very short as we went via the Baggens-stäket Kanal. We did a circuit of the harbour by boat before going alongside at the Wasahamn Marina. This we have found to be very convenient to the bus and tram lines giving access to the city centre. Also from here one can easily visit the Vasa Museum nearby. And then there was the match! Waterford v Tipperary. On that Sunday Morning *Lady Kate* was the only yacht in the harbour sporting the Blue and White of Waterford all the others had the Tipperary colours – Blue and Yellow! We found the Irish Pub with big screen and streaming live from Croke Park. I never thought there were so many Waterford and Tipperary people in Sweden, the craic was mighty and Waterford won!

Now we had to retrace our steps to Oxelösund. Once through Baggens-stäket Kanal we headed for the nature harbour at Napoleon Viken, to meet with Axel Troll aboard Nauttii, this was another delightful anchorage. Our next passage took us back past Dalaro and Nynäshamn and we spent our last cruising night in an anchorage in Nynäs Viken. We exited through the Dragets Kanal and called again at the nature harbour at Aspö, where we lunched, swam, and reminisced on our travels since leaving Dungarvan. However there was work to be done and Oxelösund beckoned, and making our way through yet another narrow rocky passage, finally positioned

Lady Kate under the community mast crane to begin our preparations for layup. Mary became the crane driver, Brendan and I ensured that all went smoothly aboard. Two hours later the mast was on deck, all standing rigging dismantled, sails folded and stowed below.

In the morning a forklift arrived and picked us out of the water and carried us to our designated winter standing ashore. Having bilge keels proved a great advantage as it was unnecessary to construct any form of cradle or support and we were able to let *Lady Kate* stand directly on the ground – we did discover that she wasn’t level and water was lodging in the cockpit, so Brendan and I dug away some of the soil under the afterpart of the keels to rectify this problem.

Our last few days were spent preparing *Lady Kate* for the Swedish winter, we bought a tarpaulin and some timber to construct a support frame for it. We drained every drop of water inside the boat, dismantled plumbing, and winterised the engine.

Our cruise commenced on 1st June from Dungarvan and finished 85 days later on 21st August at Oxelösund – during which we covered 1878 miles and visited seven countries. We lost count of the number of bridges and locks we passed through, and went from seven metres below sea level – at Gouda – to 92 metres above – on Lake Viken at the summit of the Gota Canal.

Brendan Donegan: My Father and a Submarine

My father Harry Donegan decided to sell *Gull* in May of 1945. This elegant gaff-rigged cutter built in 1896 had served him and his father, H.P.F., well, taking third place in the first Fastnet Race in 1925, and providing an excellent platform for research for the Irish Cruising Club’s original Sailing Directions for the South and South West Coast of Ireland.

She continued to provide adventure up to her very last days in my father’s possession. My cousin Robert Morehead told me this wild story about *Gull* about ten years ago and I have no reason not to believe him.

The man who bought *Gull* was a QC from England and he asked my father to help to bring the boat from Crosshaven to Dun Laoghaire before he finally took possession. The crew for the passage included sixteen-year old Robert Morehead, an officer from the Irish Naval service and one other person.

She left her mooring in the late afternoon of May 8th 1945. The war in Europe was coming to a close and Germany was about to surrender. The coast was ringed with mines, so my father charted a course that would keep them well within the limits of the Irish water. At sundown, my father and Robert went to bunk, leaving the helm and the task of navigating on the clear moonlit night in the hands of the other three.

About one hour later, there was a loud explosion and *Gull* was lifted clear out of the water. Luckily she came crashing down on an even keel. Robert said he saw my father go up the companionway “liked greased lightning”. On deck he could see that they were well off the Irish coast, and located within the British-laid minefields. Apparently a whiskey bottle had been one of the navigation tools used by the crew on watch.

He deduced that a large fish must have nudged a nearby mine and set it off. If *Gull* had hit one directly, she’d be in smithereens by now. Without delay, my father charted a new course east along the coast, ironically in the direction of Mine Head.

Just as he was about to return to his bunk, he had yet another surprise. In the moonlight, the dark shape of a German submarine surfaced less than a mile away. Presumably the skipper believed that it was being attacked by depth charges. Then suddenly the night sky was lit up by blue flares fired off by the submarine. The Irish naval officer on board *Gull* recognised it as surrender signal.

My father did not want to become involved. What could he do? Stand by until a British warship happened by? Radios were practically non-existent on pleasure boats back then. Take the immense craft into custody and lead it through the hazardous minefield back to Haulbowline? No, he had places to go, and wasn’t about to change his plans to deal with a surrendering submarine wallowing in the swell off the Irish coast. He held his course into the night and made fast passage to Dun Laoghaire, encountering a heavy gale as he went up the East coast. Robert remembered the punt on deck filling completely with sea water.

After handing over *Gull*, Harry Donegan took the train to Limerick to pick up Babette, a six metre owned by the King of Denmark who had hidden it in Lough Derg during the war. After raising the mast at Limerick, he brought it around the coast in a hardy passage to the anchorage off the Royal Munster Yacht Club at Crosshaven.

No mines or submarines interrupted this latter uneventful journey.

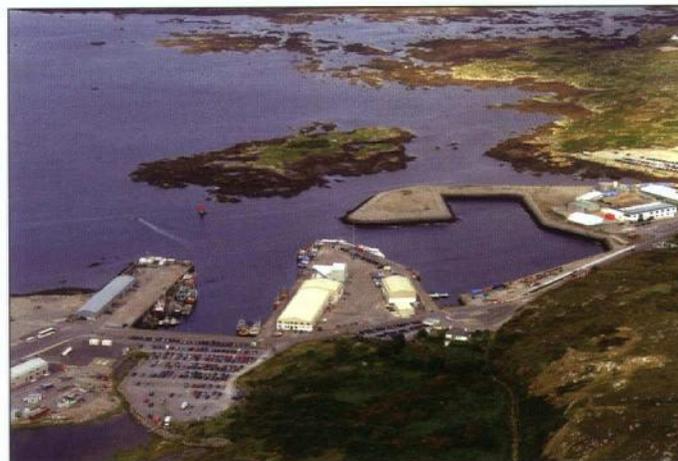
brendandonegan@comcast.net

New South and West Coasts Sailing Directions

Norman Kean

When I took on the Sailing Directions Editor's job I never imagined that I'd have to put out both books in the same year, but that's just what happened in 2008, with stocks of the 11th edition South and West looking as if they'd just about last the summer. Geraldine and I decided that (much as we'd been looking forward to getting to know Connemara better) we should really spend our time this summer in Cork and Kerry where the bulk of the traffic is to be found. I won't bore you with yet another lament about the weather, but suffice it to say it wasn't the greatest summer for surveying and photography. To cut a long story short, the new South and West should be on the shelves by the time you read this, with 170 aerial and 210 sea level photographs, 50 new plans and many of the 102 old ones redrawn. In many places where the traditional visual transits are no longer visible (or were never much good to begin with) we've provided clearing latitudes and/or longitudes instead, and (as with the latest East and North) the layout has been improved so that as far as possible the text, plan and photographs of each place are on the same or facing pages.

All photographs in this article are by Kevin Dwyer.



Extensive new dock work at Rossaveel.



New slipways at Knightstown, Valentia Island.



Westport.



Young's Island and the many rocks to the north of the Great Blasket.



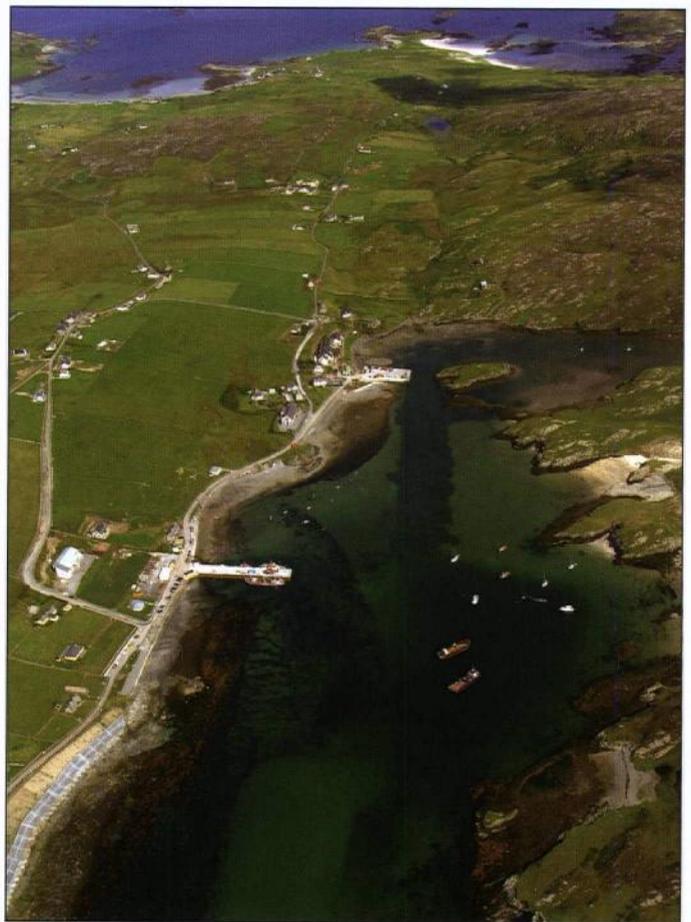
Achill Head.



Carrickrana beacon and approach to Clifden Bay.



The pier at Clare Island.



Inishboffin showing the new pier and dredged channel.



The pier at Inishturk.



Galley Head with Dollic Rock to the southwest.

From a substantive point of view perhaps the most important upgrade is at Lawrence Cove, where we did a pretty thorough resurvey. The cove is too small to be well depicted on Admiralty Chart 1840, but the chart, for what it's worth, shows a reef extending out to mid-channel from the east shore. This was reproduced on the old Plan in the Sailing Directions. In fact there is an isolated rock with a metre of water, about 100 metres off the east shore and with 4 metres of water inside it; and another rock, uncharted, with 2 metres of water, about 75 metres off the west shore opposite. A mid-channel course clears both. This is the course which the marina recommends, and which the car ferry has always followed. We have transits for it, duly photographed, and a rather fine bottle of wine from Phil Harrington at the marina for our trouble.

Many thanks to Paddy Barry, Jarlath Cunnane and others who provided much useful information on the west coast, in response to my appeal for help in the spring, and of course thanks again to Kevin Dwyer. There are 60 of his stunning new aerial photographs in the book, including those reproduced here.

It's probably just as well we didn't go to Connemara this year.

Another high altitude cruise

Kevin Dwyer

The most important thing to remember, when you are flying over the sea in a single engine aeroplane, is the fact that the engine does not know it is over the sea.

This year's wish list from Norman Kean for the latest edition of the Sailing Directions for the south and west coasts of Ireland required photographs to be taken of mainly islands from the Skelligs off the coast of Kerry to the Inishkeas off the Mullet Peninsula near Erris head in Co. Mayo. Lifejackets were worn and fortunately did not have to be used.

It is extremely difficult on this wet and windy island, to find a high pressure extending over the complete west coast, as required for this assignment. The flight plan had been prepared on 12 June and it took up to 22 August before a suitable day materialised. I phoned Brian Kenny at his house near Port Magee that morning, he confirmed that it was 'a fine day in Kerry', so I headed for Cork airport and five flying hours later had the job complete.

Your Christmas present to yourself this year, must be a copy of this new edition.

John Petch writes of old-fashioned navigators

Today every skipper crossing oceans has, at least one GPS aboard. I don't suppose they give much thought to the time it took to establish a position, in the era prior to GPS.

The first time I did a long offshore trip we had a sextant, a watch, which lost three seconds a day provided it was wound at the same time each day, and the Sight Reduction tables for air navigation. I would strap myself to the mast so that I had both hands free and the mate stood in the hatch with the watch and a notepad. I would take a sight and shout NOW and he would note the time and record the sight, when I had read it on the sextant. Because the height of eye on a yacht is fairly low we usually took five sights so that we were sure we were using the horizon and not the top of a swell. When looking through the sextant it was difficult to tell the difference, but by plotting the sights against times on graph paper, it was easy to see which were good sights and which were not. The quality of the sights depended very much on the weather conditions and the cloud cover, as often you had to grab a sight through light cloud as the sun came and went. Star sights were dependent on good visibility at dawn or dusk.

Then I went down below and did the calculations. First I plotted the sights against time, and selected one of the sights which were nearest to the straight line, having rejected any sight that was obviously inaccurate. Then to the almanac, to find the GHA and Declination for the day. Select the nearest whole number of Latitude to our estimated position and assume a position which is the same as the minutes and seconds of the GHA for the day, and this would give a whole number for our LHA. Now I could enter the tables. These tables were nearly two feet across and in rough weather it was quite tricky to read across the relevant column. Then with a couple of minor adjustments I would get an azimuth and a distance from our assumed position.

Three hours later we would do the whole thing again. I would note the course sailed and the distance run on the trailing log and then by plotting the positions on a special plotting sheet projecting the morning's sight forward by the distance run between sights, I would have a latitude and longitude at time of the noon sight.

The whole procedure probably took about two hours, but when Tamaya 77 calculators arrived, the paper work was reduced to a few minutes and was much easier to do in rough weather.

If the weather conditions were good and the sights were well done, we would have a position accurate to about five MILES. If visibility was less than ten miles, and you thought you should have arrived at your landfall, you hove to until it improved. You judged the proximity of the land by the variety of the birds, seaweeds etc.

What a difference today, when a glance at a screen tells you your position within three yards and the auto pilot is adjusted so that the COG and the bearing to the waypoint are the same. Old fashioned navigators, like me, are redundant. Until the power fails!!!

Roaming the Bonny Banks

Ajay to the Clyde

David & Grainne
FitzGerald

Our original intention had been to do the milkrun to Brittany once again, this time on *Ajay*, a 29 foot Westerly Konsort, but as Chris and Grainne only had a fortnight available, we felt that it might have been difficult to enjoy a decent cruise down there, and then get the boat back to home port again.

We decided not to be too ambitious and do a jolly up to the Clyde instead. Given the weather that was in it this year it turned out to be a wise decision. Our crew consisted of Grainne, Chris and David (Mr. Magoo) and our plan to leave on Friday night (4th July) was immediately frustrated and we had to sit out Saturday and Sunday at home listening to northerly gales.

We finally got away on Monday morning at 08.00 bound for Ardglass with a fine northeast wind, and managed to sail most of the way on a close fetch with a few hours motoring during the lulls. Sun with a few rainsqualls made it quite a pleasant sail.

We stayed in Ardglass the next day so that Grainne and Chris could explore Coney Island and Killough (two miles to the south) where Jean (Dave's late wife), had spent all of her summers during her teens, at a holiday cottage with her parents.

On Wednesday 9th July we headed out at 06.30 (to catch the tide) motoring at first in light easterly winds and sunshine. However a fairly thick fog closed in at about 09.00 but luckily didn't last long and was cleared away as the wind freshened and we managed to sail most of the way, arriving in Portpatrick in time for a late lunch in bright sunshine outside the pub by the quay.

Chris and Grainne went for a good walk in the afternoon while Dave had a good snooze in his bunk. (This became a familiar pattern). It bucketed rain in the evening and we were fortunate to have booked dinner at the Waterfront Hotel near the quay, only fifty yards from the boat.

We were also fortunate to be alongside a ladder on the quay. They had a clever arrangement for keeping the boat lying alongside the ladder, which we had not seen before. There was vertical warp secured to the ladder going from above high water to below low water through a ring on a large round fender. The idea is to take a half turn around the amidships cleat on the boat with this warp. This allows the boat to slide up and down with the tide, staying alongside the ladder at all times. Very clever.

Campbeltown

We were off again at 06.30 the following morning heading for Campbeltown in a northeast force 4 to 5. We were hard on the wind, well reefed, crossing the mouth of the Clyde. Visibility was not great with fog at times. We closed the Kintyre coast at noon immediately east of Sanda Island and just weathered the red light buoy marking Paterson's Rock and the small islets just northeast of Sanda. We put in a couple of tacks as we closed the Kintyre coast but found we were not making much headway on the red buoy, which was obviously due to a strong tidal eddy



THE FORTNIGHT CUP

FOR THE BEST CRUISE UNDERTAKEN
IN A MAXIMUM OF 16 DAYS

setting us to the southwest. Only one thing for it – start the engine and we began to make our way slowly up to the entrance to Campbeltown five miles away.

Dave recalled that twenty years ago he had been in the same position in *Partizan* but on a dark night beating down the Clyde. No GPS in those days and the buoy had no light. They spent an anxious time listening to the bell on the buoy until they got south enough to be able to see the light on Sanda and knew they were clear of all dangers.

Speaking to one of the lifeboat crew in the pub that night, he told us they had been kept busy with people in trouble in that area in the past.

In Campbeltown we found a good berth alongside the pontoon immediately east of the fishing harbour. There were very good showers available in the Aquilibrium leisure centre about 100 yards east of the visitors pontoon, as well as a swimming pool, gym and washing machine and dryers. There is also a library with Internet connection.

We found Campbeltown a very pleasant town and had a very enjoyable evening and meal in the Ardshiel Hotel, a well-preserved old-world hotel.

Mountains to climb

It was just as well we were snug here for it blew hard again for the next two days. However, Grainne and Chris found plenty of mountains to climb while Dave passed the time very enjoyably between his bunk and the pub. It's all a matter of taste.

Sunday 13th July – left Campbeltown at 09.30 and headed north up Kilbrannan Sound in a northwest force 4. Very pleasant sailing until 11.00 when the wind disappeared and we motored on to Tarbert in beautiful sunshine. The Clyde was once again looking its best, when we arrived at 13.30 and tied up alongside the long pontoon.

This was the first visit for Chris and Dave but Grainne was an old hand having done the Scottish week here during her racing days and with her guidance we found a great hotel not too far from the boat for dinner that night.

Our plan had been to venture further up the Clyde and then go through the Kyles of Bute, but we had already lost four days out of our meagre fortnight. We decided it was better to shorten our cruise and start heading in the direction of home.

However more gales were forecast for next day, so no one took much convincing to have a lie-in next morning followed by a leisurely breakfast.

Dave gallantly volunteered to keep an eye on the boat while Chris and Grainne went off and enjoyed themselves climbing mountains in the wind and rain. On their return they spotted a familiar boat which did indeed turn out to be Trevor Woods *Misty* and although he was not on board, they enjoying a drink with Michael Knatchbull (ICC) who was holidaying with Rona and their daughter, her husband and grandchildren.

Tuesday 15th July – cast off Tarbert 11.00 and had a great

day's sailing to Ardrossan with a beam wind westerly force 5 to 6 and brilliant sunshine.

We arrived at Clyde Marina Ardrossan at 16.30 to a fairly new marina, well-sheltered and still being developed, although it was already reasonably full of yachts.

After a few drinks on board we had an enjoyable dinner in a fine posh restaurant, (Cecchinis), which seemed to have just been recently refurbished using a converted stone building complete with its clock tower, right next to the marina.

Grainne and Chris went off scouting next morning and found the town a bit dreary but in the other direction was a newer part of town with a promenade, much more pleasant and, like the marina, in the process of new development.

We left Ardrossan at 14.30 next day and had a spanking sail once again in bright sunshine but with a cool force 5 to 6 beam wind.

Our destination was Girvan, a port not visited very much by cruising yachts, as the Pilot book is not very encouraging. Dave, however, was quite fascinated to visit it and we eventually found out why.

Twenty-five years ago when he did the Blue Water Trophy Race with the Clyde Cruising Club, he left *Partizan* in Troon for a week before the race, while the crew returned to Ireland for a week's work, by way of the Stranraer/Larne ferry. They hired a taxi from Troon to the ferry. The driver turned out to be a garrulous and amusing chap. When passing through Girvan his comment on the town was "You know, ye'll no make money out of a Hoorhouse in Girvan, for there's too much to be had for nuttin".

Just before our arrival at 19.00, we contacted the very



Dave on the helm – doing what he does best.

helpful harbour master on the VHF who directed us to a berth on the pleasure boat pontoon. The channel proved to be fairly shallow but we had no trouble finding our way to our berth. We were just settling down to a pre-dinner drink when the harbour-master came on board to welcome us and (as he was off-duty!) he joined us in a couple of drinks and a few laughs. He returned next morning looking very smart in his cap and uniform to collect the very reasonable fee.

It was getting late so we had our evening meal on board, followed by a few drinks ashore in a very pleasant pub just across the road from the pontoon where we were tied up. Upon our return Grainne and Chris, having first made sure that Dave was securely tucked up in his berth, went ashore for a scout around the town, despite the fact that it was one of the very few wet evenings we had on this holiday. On their return they were able to confirm what it said in the CCC's pilot book "Girvan is an attractive town in pleasant surroundings". The following morning we found that our neighbour who had greeted us on our arrival was in fact, fellow ICC member Tony Weston on his yacht *Uzume*.

We left Girvan at noon when we had plenty of depth in the harbour and on the bar. The wind was a fairly light westerly so we sailed when we could, but had to motor about half the way to Portpatrick where we arrived at 18.00.

Drinks and another epicurean delight prepared by Grainne that evening. We were planning to have a bit of a lie-in next morning, but fortunately Chris had got the early forecast and it predicted that it was due to blow up again in the afternoon, so we thought it would be prudent to leave as early as possible.

We set sail at 07.00 on a close fetch in a fresh westerly wind, to



Ajay and *Uzume* in Ghruain.



Chris and Grainne relax after a sunny sail up Kilbrannan sound.

close the Irish coast before it blew up in the afternoon. Sure enough it blew up good-oh for the last couple of hours of the passage and we were glad at 15.00 to enter Ardglass Marina, which was well-sheltered from the westerly wind.

It had been our plan to bring *Ajay* the final sixty miles to Dublin over the next two days but the forecast was for strong to gale force southwest winds, so we decided to leave her in Ardglass for a week or two and hope for fairer weather.

We were quite happy to leave her there for we found it to be a friendly and well-run marina, and not too pricey. It is not, however, an easy place to get to by public transport so we were delighted when Marian, Chris's sister offered to collect us the following day.

That night we had an enjoyable and relaxed dinner in a very nice Chinese Restaurant only a couple of hundred yards from the marina, in the knowledge that we would have an easy trip back to Dublin next day.

Marian arrived on the dot next morning. We had a good lunch at Curran Bar and Seafood Restaurant, a couple of miles from Ardglass, which was recommended to us by ICC Northern Members.

It is part of our arrangement of joint ownership of *Ajay* that Grainne and Chris are allowed what Dave calls a "romantic" weekend on their own every month or so. They availed of this on the long weekend of 2nd August and duly brought the boat back to Dublin.

According to the log it was an eventful trip down. Who believes logs anyway!!

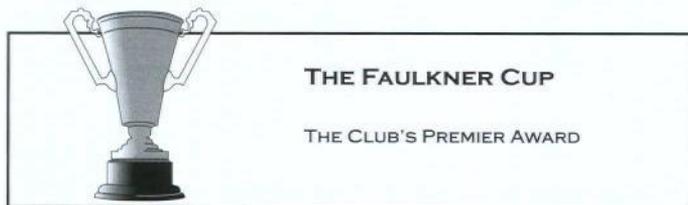
Ajay had covered 360 miles during the cruise in what can best be described as mixed weather. We did however, have some glorious sails which more than made up for the time we had spent sheltering in harbour.



Campbeltown from Beinn Ghuilean.

Witchcraft goes to West Africa

Ed Wheeler



Part 1: Ireland to the Gambia

My sister Diana and I delivered *Witchcraft* from Donaghadee to Porto Santo in August 2007 and I laid her up ashore there until late October when I was joined in Quinta do Lorde, Madeira, by John Clementson (ICC) and Eric Degerland. John brought numerous gadgets, including a patent wind scoop (which we called the Wedding Dress, on account of its elegant appearance), a solar shower, a fan, miner's headlamps and a 40,000 volt mosquito-bite zapping machine.

We left for the Canary Islands on Wednesday 7th November and called at the *Islas Selvagens* (Portuguese). They are a nature reserve and a permit is required to land. Wind and swell were blowing straight into the anchorage at *Enseada dos Carragos* on *Selvagem Grande*, so we didn't go ashore.

Arriving in San Sebastian, La Gomera, at dusk on Friday, we found it busy with boats waiting to do the ARC and we squeezed into a berth beside a large catamaran. After shipping some more stores, we left San Sebastian on Saturday 10th November at 16.30, bound for Dakar in Senegal.

After three days of light winds, mainly between northwest and northeast, the trade wind filled in late on Tuesday 13th November, in 21°35'N, 018°11'W. The windvane steering was working well and was nicknamed 'Arry Aries'. We passed through miles of yellow-streaked algal bloom and scooped some of it into a jar, regretting that we had no microscope. After dark it lit up like a torch, when shaken. At night, the phosphorescent tracks of dolphins were like a firework display. On Saturday 17th November, we gave a good berth to *Cap Vert* and *Cap Manuel*, came in past Dakar, West Africa's largest port and felt our way cautiously into the anchorage at Hann, a wide shallow bay northeast of Dakar, sheltered to north and west but open to the east. (14°43'.2N, 017°25'.2W).

Senegal is an ex-French possession which retains a strong French flavour and influence. The country is bordered by Mauritania in the north and Guinea-Bissau in the south. It is nearly bisected by The Gambia, a former British colony which lies along the River Gambia and is 30 miles wide at the sea, tapering down to less than 20 in the east. It was an early centre of the Atlantic slave trade. Senegal has a somewhat democratic regime, while The Gambia is ruled by President Jammeh, who seized power in a coup in 1994. He claims to be able to cure HIV with herbs and the power of prayer. Dissent is discouraged.

The masts of a sunken schooner loomed out of the gloom as we approached the moorings. We anchored in 3.5 metres at 03.45 and turned in. We woke to the sounds and smells of Africa. Hann has an odour deriving from rotting seaweed and fish, drains and some unspecific spicy smell. The "plage" runs for miles and is home to a thriving fish market and many colourful pirogues drawn up on the sand. Shanties extend as far as one can see behind the beach. Much-amplified calls to prayer from various minarets wafted out on the light breeze. We came ashore in a launch from the *Cercle de Voile de Dakar* (CVD), one of the two yacht clubs. Facilities include water and

wash tubs, showers, a bar and restaurant. For a modest daily charge the CVD, including the ferry service, is open to visiting yachts. Of the large, mainly French, fleet of yachts anchored and moored there, many look abandoned, sad endings to dream-world voyages. We met some people from *Voiles sans Frontières*, a group which sails to remote villages to provide medical services (<http://www.voilessansfrontieres.org/>). Later, we went into Dakar and ended up in a clothing sweat-shop on a back street, whence Eric emerged bedecked in colourful pantaloons and robes, looking rather like a minor prophet.

On Sunday we left Hann at lunchtime and sailed over to *Isle Gorée*. It is now a tourist island and is like an African version of a French "bastide" village. It has many restaurants. We lay alongside the stone jetty, rather uneasily, as there was only one bollard within reach. We shared the jetty with a pirogue and numerous small boys. I would not use this as an overnight stop, as it is open from northeast to southeast. This was the only place in Africa where we came alongside. We left again at 16.00 bound for Banjul. It being "le weekend", all the official offices were closed, so we did not trouble the authorities with our arrival at or departure from Dakar.

Banjul

Eric had a plane to catch in Banjul, so we sailed there overnight. However, a sharp lookout is required, for there were many unlit fishing pirogues. Some carry a strobe, which they turn on if they think you are getting close. Their idea of close is very close. The approaches to Banjul are straightforward. For clearance, we had to anchor off a disused shipyard southeast of the main port at an area called Half-Die (so named because half the population died in a cholera outbreak). The place is littered with wrecks. To get to the port offices, one must either negotiate a busy container depot or walk through a shanty town. Assorted loungers are on hand offering their services. I had decided that we didn't need guides but Eric, being a soft touch, had acquired two and they marched us up and down Wellington Street looking for the various offices. It was hot and dusty and nobody really knew where they were going. Eventually, we found the immigration office and got our passports stamped. The customs man was more difficult and insisted on visiting the boat. After a cursory inspection, he produced a declaration form, which for some reason I had to copy out in longhand. I thought the ship's official stamp would impress him, but the ink had liquified in the heat and splodged all over the paper, compounded by the perspiration dripping off my brow. Eventually a limp and smudged document was completed. The customs officer demanded a life-jacket for the hazardous voyage ashore in our rubber dinghy and was disinclined to give it up on arrival. He then said that, while of course there was no question of bribery, it was customary to wish him a "Happy weekend" with a small token gift. Hard cash was preferred.

Eric had to collect his air ticket from an agent some distance away. Our minders found us a local taxi. This was an ancient Japanese hatchback held together with duct tape and driven by

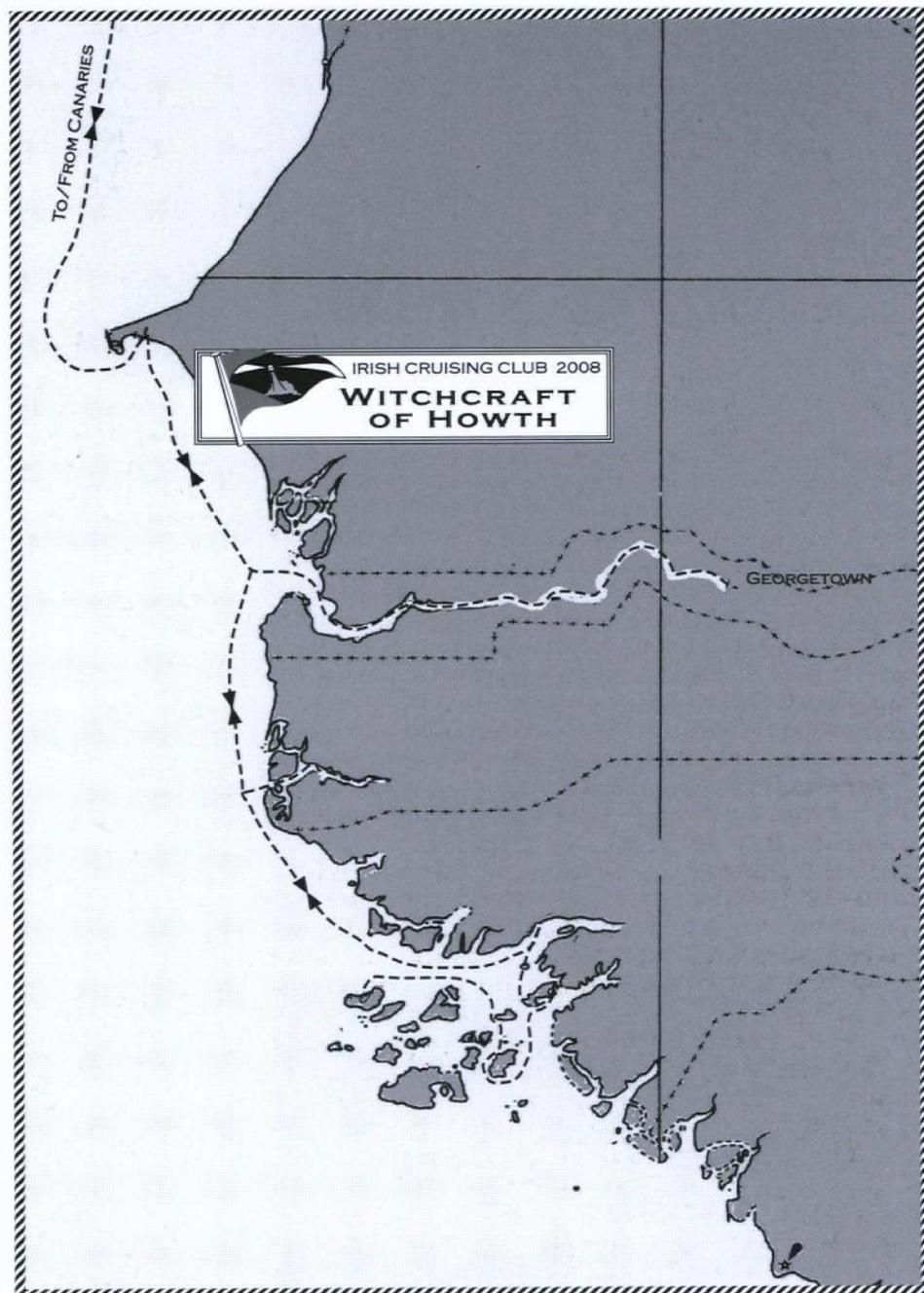
Cherno, an irrepressible character with a baseball cap worn sideways. He found ice for us at a place down a sandy track, where we were stopped by a wash-out. We had to push the taxi to turn round, as its reverse gear was out of action.

John was pleased to see the sack of ice and the arrival drinks were the more appreciated. We weighed anchor from Half-Die to go up the network of creeks to Lamin Creek. Nearly there, we cut a corner and gently took the ground, spending the night peacefully embedded in the mud. Next day, Tuesday 20th November, we had the hook down just opposite Lamin Lodge by 11.00. (13°24'.2N, 016°37'.5W). Lamin Lodge is a bizarre erection of sticks and thatch, belonging to a German who arrived there thirty-five years ago in an old gaffer which later succumbed to teredo and fire. It is a restaurant and excursion centre which caters mainly for parties from the tourist hotels and gives them a "river experience". They use pirogues, with fake ketch or schooner rig, powered by a large outboard in a well. The sole safety feature is a few cork lifebelts. The Lodge serves decent meals and cold beer. Old hands keep their plates covered when eating, otherwise the local green velvet monkeys will swoop on the choicest morsels. A little community has grown up around Lamin Lodge, including a craftsman in wood and raffia calling himself Mr. Cheap. I vainly suggested to Mr. Cheap that he might move upmarket a bit by rebranding himself as Mr. Inexpensive or even Mr. Quality. Another local industry is oyster gathering and processing. The women go out in dugouts at low water and collect the oysters growing on the mangrove roots in the surrounding creeks. Nothing is wasted and the oyster shells are either

used to pave tracks or heated in kilns and made into a sort of cement. After Eric left, John and I spent a couple of days doing small jobs and getting stores (including local "Gin" at about £1.50 a litre).

Part 2: Exploring the river Gambia

We were aground for an hour either side of low water, so it was 16.30 before we got away on Friday 23rd November. We made our way cautiously past the wrecks at Half-Die and anchored off the bank on the south side of the river in 3 metres over mud, near some more wrecks. Darkness falls at about 19.00; sunsets are very beautiful, the afterlight providing a complete palette of colours changing rapidly with the onset of night. We weighed anchor in the pre-dawn at 07.00 and motored up river, guided by Peter Jones's Cruising Guide to West Africa which, although over ten years old, still contains much useful information and sketch plans. The Admiralty chart of the River Gambia is still reasonably accurate, although all navigation aids are now missing. GPS positions become



unreliable as one ascends until, by Georgetown some 155 miles upriver, they are over one mile adrift. This, together with ubiquitous fishing nets, makes navigation in darkness rather imprudent. The wind, although contrary, was quite light and we carried a 2 or 3 knot flood tide, past the village of Jufureh. This was supposed to be the birthplace of Alex Hailey's great grandfather in his book "Roots" and is now very much on the tourist itinerary. The next landmark of note is James Island, a small fortified islet dating from Portuguese times. Jones suggests anchoring and visiting the fort, but the anchorage is completely exposed to the prevailing wind and strong tide and we didn't like the look of it.

We carried the tide up as far as Jurunka Creek, one of the numerous creeks or "Bolons" which form tributaries of the main river but are not detailed on the chart. We felt our way in, greeted by a flock of pelicans, anchored inside the bar to await the next rising tide, then crept cautiously up the creek for a couple of miles until we ran gently aground in the centre of a large lagoon. When the tide lifted us, we anchored nearby in 2.5 metres, enjoying our sundowners in utter peace and tranquility.

The blood feud between John and the ground tackle was now in deadly earnest. I always knew that the anchor had reached the stemhead by the howls of pain and rage emanating from the foredeck as the anchor and chain fought back against John's attempts to persuade the shackle through the fairlead. Anyway, after this ritual was completed, we headed on upstream. The wind blew consistently down river, so we had to motor. However, this was mitigated by the favourable current we carried: as we were travelling with the direction of tidal flow, the duration of each tide was considerably greater than that at any given point. We broke the day's passage at Madina, the ferry crossing on the main highway from Dakar to Ziginchoir, where the captain of the spare ferry allowed us to lie alongside for a couple of hours



Half Die, Banjul, The Gambia

Photo: John Clementson

while we took a taxi the 4km to Farafenni. The whole place is very busy and colourful, with queues of bush buses and "camions" waiting to cross. The highway had been asphalted in the past but the surface has fallen into deep potholes; as a result, the lorries and buses hurtle along either verge, choosing the best surface regardless of left or right, while the pedestrians and animals walk along the paved surface in the middle. We bought some provisions at Farafenni, then carried on upstream and anchored in the main river for the night.

As we got farther upstream, the water turned fresh, so we could wash ourselves and our clothes properly. The river gets narrower and the channel is broken up by islands. We anchored at midday off the village of Kudang Tenda, where we were welcomed ashore by Ibrahim, the headman's son, and by hordes of children. It is a picturesque place, with round houses built of mud and thatch and brightly coloured dugout canoes pulled up on the beach. We gave away the first of our footballs,

carried at the advice of Peter Haden (ICC and OCC), who had cruised to West Africa ten years before. Peter was very helpful, lending me charts and his OCC log. He had found that footballs and pumps were highly appreciated gifts in remote villages. We were entertained in Ibrahim's house to lunch, a meal of rice and a spicy groundnut sauce, while he showed us his most treasured possessions, charts of Trinidad and Venezuela left by a previous voyager. As we left, the children swam out to where we were anchored off the old wharf and swarmed over the dinghy. That night we anchored in the lee of Bird Island just off the main channel.

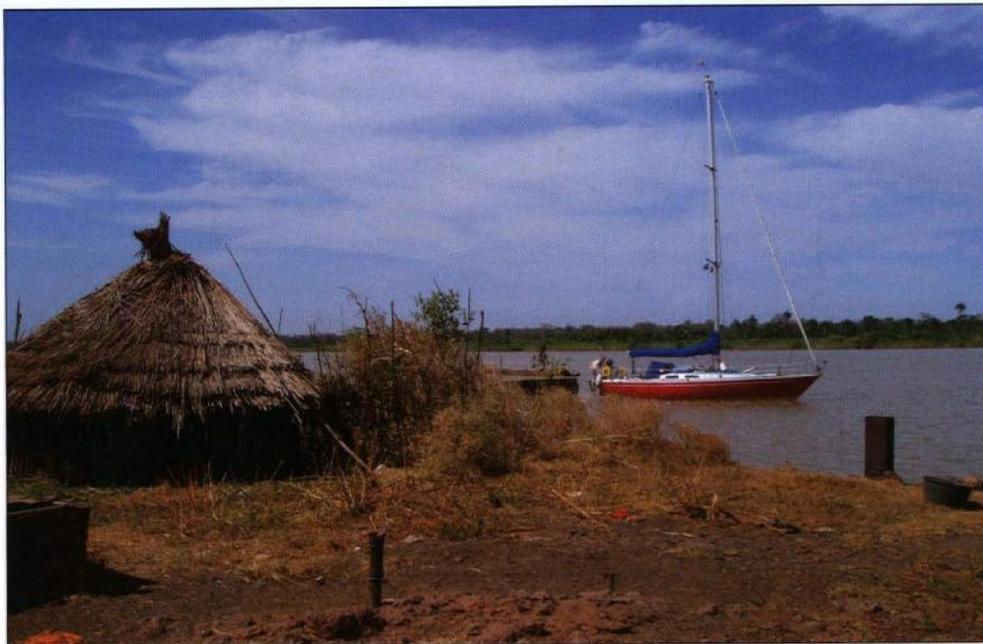
Passing the Baboon Islands, a nature reserve where landing and anchoring are prohibited, we saw hippotamuses in the stream. Passing the Kai-Ai islands, we encountered unexpectedly shallow water just inside the eastern entrance to the north channel. An hour later we arrived at Georgetown, aka Janjanbureh, where an incident in which we might have

measured the height of a new HT cable across the river with our mast was avoided by shouts of warning from the ferry, which happened to be crossing at the time. The nominal height of the cable is 6 metres, but locals say it has sagged. A man from the ferry was recruited by John to pilot us under the cable close to the north bank, where the clearance is greater. As we approached the critical point, he decided that there wasn't enough height, so we retired hastily. John was outraged at this performance. We anchored near the ferry landing on McArthur Island and became the immediate focus of much attention. John had been fretting about not having any local currency, and had arranged to have money transferred by wire to the Western Union office, the only bank with a branch at Georgetown, where it is located in an old



Lamin Lodge, River Gambia

Photo: Brian Black



Witchcraft, Kudang Tenda

colonial-style building. He collected an impressive wad of dirty, tattered banknotes which he placed in a shopping-bag, where it joined forces with sundry vegetables, fruit and fish in an interesting multi-coloured display, attracting the customary crowd of spectators, one of whom produced a parrot, which sat becomingly on John's shoulder.

We spent a couple of days there. Armed with John's new-found wealth, we took the dinghy across the river to a tourist camp on the north bank for an indifferent buffet. Consequences ensued the next day, when John came down with a bad attack of D&V. For some reason, I escaped this, although we had eaten the same meal. We had intended to go another 20 miles upriver to the Mungo Park memorial, commemorating the Scottish explorer's two expeditions in 1795 and (fatally) in 1801 across the watershed in search of the river Niger. (The late Mungo Park (ICC) from Howth was a direct descendant of the explorer. On a recent visit to Dublin, the Gambian High Commissioner held a reception to mark the expedition's 200th anniversary to which Mungo was invited, and apologised publicly for his great great grandfather having eaten Mungo's great great grandfather). Unfortunately, the HT cable prevented us taking *Witchcraft* any farther upriver and John's indisposition made an excursion by taxi or bus rather unwise. Before departing Georgetown, we were able to get diesel and water and I bought a body part from a goat, which turned out to be incredibly tough. We found that vegetables and fruit were poor in both quality and variety everywhere in The Gambia, despite the favourable climate. There doesn't seem to be much entrepreneurial spirit among the agricultural community.

On Friday 30th November, we headed downstream. We had

another brush with the shallows entering the Kai-Ai north channel, this time bumping over some obstruction on the river bottom. At the Baboon Islands we saw hippos, chimps clambering in the trees, and a young baboon which the park warden brought aboard when he came alongside. It had been orphaned, its mother probably having been killed for bushmeat, and he was rearing it himself. The baboon and John took to each other immediately. We passed the old port of Kuntaur, where the wharves are derelict, with wrecks and debris scattered around. There are some impressive dilapidated colonial buildings, evocative of a time when the area must have been quite prosperous. East of Bird Island, we came to the Red Hill of Kassang, past the masts of the passenger steamer *Lady Denham*, wrecked in 1948 (one wonders,

how?). There is a clay/sand beach and we anchored off that but found the holding poor, so ducked round the corner into the muddy channel east of Bird Island. Next morning, we climbed the hill, which is one of the few places with enough elevation to give good views over the river country. Later, passing Kudang Tenda, we met our old friend Ibrahim fishing in a leaky dugout. We gave him a copy of the ICC Journal from 2003, which has a picture of *Witchcraft* in the frontispiece. We anchored that night in the river just off Sarmi Creek.

Next day, Sunday, we woke to find a brisk northeasterly breeze blowing and sailed off our anchor, the first good sail since coming upriver, although the wind died later. We anchored east of Devil's Point but the wind piped up from the east and we had rather an uncomfortable night. At least we could sail the 18 miles passage to Mandori Creek, which had depth of 2.5 metres on the bar. This is an attractive bolon, with plenty of bird life. On Tuesday, we had planned to visit the



Buying fish, Georgetown

Kemoto Point Hotel, located on the south bank by a prominent bend in the river, and we anchored off the point. Cold beers, showers and a meal ashore beckoned. We found a man who said the hotel was closed but came with us to show us around it. It had been an ambitious project, with swimming pool, large bar and well-built accommodation, but was now abandoned, with doors banging in the wind. The hotel opened in 1992 and the village had prospered while it was there; now the people are having to get used to hard times again. Kemoto being a lee shore, we weighed, went over to the north side and up a creek called Tabirere, which is very peaceful and quite wide, enabling us to anchor clear of unwelcome winged visitors (except hornets, which find you wherever you are). We stayed there two nights.

On Thursday 6th December, we sailed out of Tabirere Creek, down river and then up the large tributary of Bintang Bolon, on the south side of the Gambia river. We tacked up the creek about 3 miles to Bintang camp and anchored on the opposite side of the creek, as the holding was poor off the camp. This place was open and served cold beers which we absorbed gratefully, but not before exploring the village, with its obligatory sacred crocodile pool. Bathing with crocodiles is reputed to cure barrenness in women but just how this process takes place is thankfully not made explicit. The next day we completed our exploration of the river, carrying a good sailing breeze down Bintang Bolon, as far as Half-Die, then motored up to Lamin Creek. Here, I made arrangements with a young chap to look after *Witchcraft* while I flew home for Christmas. Llanda is the unofficial harbourmaster of Lamin and has taken over, by adverse possession, a string of four moorings, one of which I took. Since it is completely sheltered and shelves gently to soft mud, I could leave her with a (relatively) easy mind. While I was home, he sent me text messages assuring me that all was well and his mother did my dhobi. John left at Lamin and I was sorry to see him go, for he is an excellent seaman and good company.

Part 3: South to the Bijagos

I rejoined ship on 11th January and Brian Black (ICC) arrived on the 15th. We got our visas for Guinea-Bissau at the embassy in Bakau, left Lamin on Thursday 17th January and by 17.00 were clear of the port under full sail. The wind fell light overnight but we were in no hurry, as we wanted our arrival at the Casamance bar to coincide with the start of the flood. Brian is an environmentalist and TV journalist. He is very 'green' and would not allow even teabags to be thrown overboard. Luckily, I prefer leaf tea.

The Rivière Casamance is the marine gateway to southern Senegal and is low-lying, with many creeks and tributaries. A ferry plies between Dakar and the regional capital, Ziginchoir. There is an active regional separatist movement, which erupts in violence from time to time. The rebels are supported from across the border in Guinea Bissau, which has caused sporadic warfare along the frontier region.

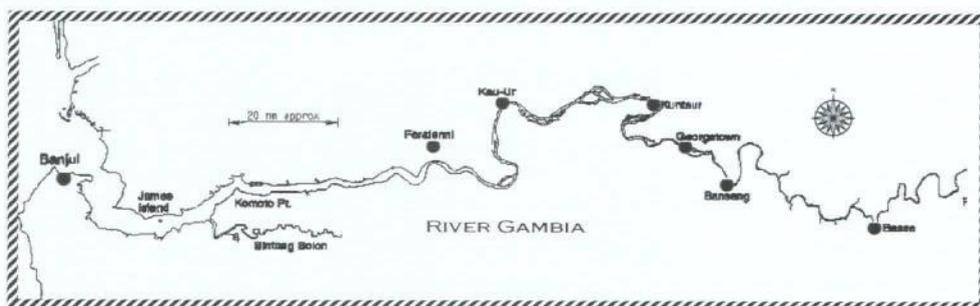
We found the Casamance No.1 buoy a mile to the south of

the charted position, and followed the marked channel from there through the Passe Médiane. There was plenty of water over the bar, although depths fell away inside until we realised that we were a little to the west of the leading line. We followed the buoys upriver for about 20 miles, carrying the flood as far as Marigot Ariandaboul (Marigot is the local name for a creek). There was 2 metres on the bar and 4 metres inside. We were followed all the way by bottlenosed dolphins. It was a short leg next morning to Ziginchoir, which is about 30 miles from the mouth of the river system. The navigable channel after Marigot Djabobel curves close to the north bank round the Isles des Oiseaux and their extensive mudbanks, where we saw our first flamingoes and many other species. Ziginchoir has a long waterfront, with pirogues drawn up on the shore and on moorings. There were 10 other yachts anchored off, all French, apart from one German. We found a space in 9 metres and went ashore at the new hotel, which has a dinghy pontoon and a water tap. Ziginchoir (locals call it Zig) is a colourful place, with a many bars and restaurants. Le Perroquet, beside the hotel, serves good meals and excellent house wine. The only downside to Zig was the smell from the fish landing places along the waterfront. Fruit and vegetables from the large market are fresh and good. It being "Le Weekend" again, no arrival or departure formalities were possible.

We dropped down the river from Zig on Sunday in flat calm conditions, pacing ourselves against a large pirogue heading for the sea. On the north bank just inside the entrance and just to the east of Pte de Djogue is a creek called Boulababène. It should have had at least 2 metres in the entrance at that state of the tide but we bounced off a couple of times and couldn't get in. We didn't fancy anchoring off the beach at Djogue as it reeked of rotting fish, so we went into the Bolon Kachiouane, west of Isle Karabane. This has a long sandbar off it, and one has to go downstream of it and then turn back up to enter the creek, holding very close to Pte de Nikine to keep enough water, after which it deepens inside. We turned in too soon and found ourselves in shallow water. Next morning, we crossed the bar via the Passe Médiane without incident. The night before, we had seen the Dakar ferry using the Passe du Nord but this is unmarked and local knowledge would be required. A breeze filled in from the west and we had a quiet passage overnight, heading south for Bissau.

Guinea-Bissau is the former colony of Portuguese Guinea. It became independent in 1974, ten years later than other countries in the region, after a long liberation war. It has had a lot of unrest and is very poor. There was a civil war nine years ago and there is an ongoing conflict on the Cacheu/Casamance border. As if this were not enough, the outer islands of the Bijagos archipelago have become a cocaine smuggling centre for the African continent. Drugs are landed from ships in remote areas of the Bijagos and then ferried to the mainland by launch or light plane, whence they are split up for shipment to Europe or back to the Americas. This situation seems to be tolerated by senior Government ministers and officials. The currency is the CFA, the same as Senegal. The official language

is Criolo, a subset of Portuguese and very little English is spoken. We heard of no other yachts during our visit to this country. The main reason for a yacht to come here is the beautiful and unspoilt Bijagos archipelago, west Africa's largest island group. It is not for the faint-hearted, as the tidal range is over 5 metres, there are strong currents through all the channels and it is strewn with rocks and shallows. All





Rivière Casamance

prudence we had to forego visiting the channels around the islands of Orango, Meneque and Oragozinho, where are reputed to be found salt water hippos. Peter Haden had explored this area ten years ago in his bilge keel Westerly Seahawk *Papageno* and had indeed found the hippos. He found the ability to "park" on mud flats useful. The text of his log of this cruise may be found on the Ocean Cruising Club website at www.oceancruisingclub.org/content/view/387/82/

It was a short sail up to the main island settlement of Bubaque, where we anchored just off the beach (11°18'N, 015°49'.8W), west of the ferry jetty, on Sat 26th January. It is deep and strongly tidal, with suspect holding. We put out a kedge into deep water, to prevent the boat swinging onto the beach at change of tide. Bubaque has basic provisions, plus fish, diesel and some fresh vegetables and fruit. We celebrated Brian's birthday here. There is a couple of decent restaurants. It is a pretty place, with more crumbling old colonial buildings. The town is built along a bluff and the stalls and bars near the harbour are lively. Bubaque is the only place in Guinea-Bissau where we saw any kind of tourism. This is based on camps here and across the straits on Rubane. Tourists are brought out from Bissau in fast launches. The main activities are wildlife watching and angling. We spent a couple of days here, relaxing. We made the mistake of making the dinghy fast to the platform under the ferry jetty. As the tide rose, the current strengthened, and the dinghy disappeared underneath. The tide was flowing at about 4 knots. A large crowd immediately gathered (why does this always happen?) and much good-natured but unintelligible advice was proffered. Eventually, we got the dinghy ashore on the rocks, boarded it and set off. The outboard could barely stem the flow and we got back to *Witchcraft* on the last few drops of fuel. On the Sunday, we were boarded by officials in a launch in which most of the space was taken up by an enormous plastic septic tank. Communications weren't good enough to ask why they were carrying it in the *Polícia Marítima* boat, so the mind was able to boggle freely. They were however able to communicate the requirement for monetary tribute, and also raided our medicine chest. They went away with our ship's papers and would have taken the passports too, except that Brian resolutely refused to part with his. Next day, we had to visit the *Polícia Marítima* office to retrieve the papers and more cash changed hands. More serious on leaving was the loss of

our kedge, which was inextricably fouled.

Our next anchorage was Ilha Caravela, the northwest island in the Bijagos group. We would have liked to approach it westwards through the channel separating Bubaque from Rubane and thence via Ilha Formosa but again our draft and lack of charts made this unwise, so we left Rubane to port and came up through the Canal de Galinhas and into the Canal do Geba. The distance is over 70 miles and the winds were light, so it was 23.00 when we rounded the west end of the long breaking bank which provides some shelter from the north. We could just see the glimmer of the breakers in the dark and felt our way in until we had about 4 metres water and anchored. Next morning, we moved to where there seemed to be least surf on the beach. This was in 11°33'.7N,

016°19'.5W. In fresh northerlies, this could be uncomfortable, but while we were there, the weather was settled, although there was some roll. There was no sign of life ashore at first but we met some wild cattle on the beach, then found an inlet, not marked on the chart, which we earmarked for later dinghy exploration. There were flamingoes and there were lots of sea birds, waders and raptors. The second day, we found a track inland and followed it for a couple of miles. We came upon the village quite suddenly, through a stand of magnificent trees. It was primitive, with thatched mud houses and women were pounding grain and groundnuts in large wooden mortars. There was a schoolteacher there who spoke some French. I presented a football and pump, which were well received. They asked for another for a nearby village, so we returned to get them, accompanied by a noisy troop of urchins.

Next day, we anchored off the unmarked creek and set off in the dinghy to explore. We crossed the bar near high water in about one metre and entered a sandy lagoon with quite deep water. This would provide perfect shelter for a catamaran or lifting-keel yacht. Upstream, the water shallowed, then deepened again, gradually changing character until we were in a deep, mangrove-fringed creek. This wound inland for at least a mile and a half. We saw lots of bird life, including enormous Goliath Herons, which flapped away in front of us like pterodactyls, and a crocodile. There is supposed to be a solitary hippo living in this area and this would be an ideal environment for him, but he kept out of sight. Coming over the bar into the sea again, I was escorted by a pair of large barracuda. Caravela is a delightful island and Brian got many good photos and video footage.

We left Caravela on Friday 1st February. Since we were in good time for Brian's flight, I decided to visit the Northern Isles, which lie at the entrance to the Canal do Geba. We headed eastward, intending to pass through the Canal de Catarina, which separates the Ilha de Jeta and Ilha de Pecixe. The Admiralty chart shows reasonable water in this passage but we couldn't find any navigable channel, so we turned back. Just after we did so, a military launch appeared and came alongside. We were boarded by five men, one soldier forward and one aft, each holding a Kalashnikov. Just in case we were inclined to argue, they also had an RPG7 in the launch. One of them took a close interest in our GPS, especially the waypoint which I had

labelled "Cacheu". We were questioned closely about our movements. They did not demand cash but they did make off with a chart, a water breaker and a shopping trolley. After this, I abandoned the idea of the Northern Isles and headed out to sea, to make the passage back to the Gambia, well offshore. With our good offing, there were not many pirogues but we sailed through a big fleet of foreign fishing vessels, lit up like football stadia. By Sunday morning, we were hove-to in fresh winds waiting for daylight to enter Banjul.

We anchored at Half-Die to clear customs, etc, but most offices were closed. I bought the largest tiger prawns I have ever seen, about ½ lb each in weight, from a pirogue. They ate very well. When the flood began, we negotiated the maze of channels to Oyster Creek, where we anchored in mid stream, near a submerged wreck. Oyster Creek has a couple of wooden jetties and some ramshackle bars. It is crossed by the main road from Banjul to Serekunda over a low-level bridge. This has enough headroom for pirogues and angling boats to reach the sea. There is a police post at the bridge, with a water standpipe. At the bridge, bush buses or taxis ply to Banjul or Serekunda and Fajara. I fell into the water at the jetty, giving much pleasure to the onlookers and ruining my mobile phone. Brian left from Banjul and my son James joined for the passage back to the Canaries.

We left Oyster Creek on Thursday 7th February and threaded our way back past Banjul, missing a turning and coming close to being neaped in a blind creek. The wind came in north-northwest fresh to strong after a while and we had a wet thrash to windward with three reefs in the main, eventually making Hann anchorage at Dakar on Friday just after dark. We left on Monday 11th February. As expected, it was a long and tedious beat to windward for most of the 800 miles back to Gomera. We had our first rain for months, with thunder and lightning. I had borrowed a satphone and told Jan that I would contact her every couple of days. Unfortunately, it didn't work, so I tried to contact a passing ship to relay a message, so she wouldn't be concerned. I called three vessels on Ch 16 before



Witchcraft sailing at Caravela

Photo: Brian Black

one answered, and kindly sent our message. In accordance with the new regulations, they do not monitor Ch 16 any longer. The passage took 8½ days and we arrived in La Gomera late on Tuesday 20th February.

I rejoined the boat on 2nd June to get to Ponta Delgada by 19th June to meet my incoming crew, David Whitehead (RCC, ICC). I was single-handed for the passage to the Azores. David is co-organiser of the 2009 Azores Meet. I sailed the 55 miles to Pta de la Restinga on El Hierro on Wednesday 4th June in northerly winds which whistled up very fresh as I approached Hierro. The marina at La Restinga is only for local boats and visitors have to lie alongside the breakwater, which has rubber coated piles, so a plank would be useful. There is surge a lot of the time and it always seems to be blowing a near gale outside. I set off from there on Saturday, bound for Santa Maria. I could also help David by doing a recce of that island, which is rarely visited by UK-based yachts.

It is about 650 miles from El Hierro to Santa Maria and in a region subject to fluky and variable winds. Sailing alone does not particularly bother me, but *Witchcraft* is not ideal for single-handed sailing, as she has a large foretriangle, heavy, fully-battened mainsail and reefing has to be done on deck. On the plus side, catering is easier and I can sing without people



Seagoing pirogue, Rivière Casamance

complaining. I am nervous about being run down, even in a little-frequented part of the ocean, as merchant ships do not always seem to detect yachts. I believe that a Class B AIS transponder would provide a lot more security.

It was calm along the south coast of El Hierro but I ran into strong northerlies again on rounding Pta de Orchilla, the southwest corner of the island, and by the end of the day had three reefs in the main and well-rolled genoa. On Sunday, I saw turtles and there were still some flying fish in 29°N. We were on the wind until Tuesday night when it freed me, then fell light and I motored for a day. On Thursday morning, a breeze filled in from the southeast and gradually freshened, veering round to south-southwest until by Friday morning it was blowing very hard with a falling glass. There was a big sea over a heavy swell and I was unsure of the status of Vila do Porto, where there was supposed to be a marina under construction. It was a dead-lee shore, so I aborted the approach and coasted round to the east side of the island to a rather beautiful bay called Sao Lourenco, where I anchored for a couple of days to let the weather settle. Apart from a bit of a roll, this was well-sheltered. It rained very heavily. There are Peixe Porco, aka Grey Trigger Fish, which are easily caught and good to eat. Tip: don't try to fillet or skin them before cooking. Vila do Porto does now have a well-sheltered marina, with lots of empty space at the moment. There aren't any facilities yet (June 2008) but these will be in place shortly. Portuguese officialdom is at its most bureaucratic here, with four different departments involved. All are very friendly and helpful. You have to go up to the Capitania at the top of the hill to fill in the forms for light dues. This process takes about half an hour and the dues are about 2. Vila do Porto is an elongated town, rising steeply from the initial climb from the harbour. There are numerous bars and restaurants. The island is gentle and undulating, with rich farmland in small fields. It has attractive vernacular houses, with distinctive bread-ovens/chimneys built onto one side.

I sailed to Ponta Delgada on 17th June in light winds. The old marina was still in use but a new one for visitors will be opened by 2009. David Whitehead arrived and we spent a couple of days going around Sao Miguel. I went aloft to replace the masthead flag halyards and we departed on Sunday 22nd June, homeward bound. Unfortunately, the heavy swell off Pta Dos Mousteiros caused the flag halyards to chafe through and I lost my burgee and staff. We had a fairly good passage home with generally favourable winds and no bad weather. Dave took over the galley, which was great. It took 8½ days for the 1,150 miles leg, with one day of calm and a total of 29 engine hours. For the final three days, we were nicely squeezed between high pressure over Biscay and shallow depressions to the north, providing good downwind sailing. We picked up a bad forecast approaching the Fastnet and scuttled into Baltimore Harbour just ahead of a southerly gale, which caused an uncom-

fortable scend alongside the pontoon at Sherkin Island, parting one of our lines. From there, we went up to Courtmacsherry, where we were royally entertained by ICC Sailing Directions Editor Norman Kean and Geraldine. We called at Helvick, then Howth, arriving there early on 4th July. Michael McKee (ICC) and James Nixon (RCC and ICC) joined me in Howth for the sail north. We returned via Greencastle, where the holding is poor, then Portaferry, completing the voyage by picking up James's mooring at Ballydorn on Wed 9th July. The total distance covered since leaving Donaghadee was 7,226 miles.

Witchcraft of Howth is a Contessa 35 designed by Doug Peterson and built by Jeremy Rogers in 1976. She draws 6'.

Witchcraft 2007/8, table of times & distances				
Passage	Dep date	Duration	Dist. miles	Eng. hrs
Donaghadee - Porto Santo	06/08/07	12d 7.5h	1,485	45
Madeira - La Gomera	07/11/07	2d 12h	305	28
La Gomera - Dakar (Hann)	10/11/07	6d 11.25h	830	33
Hann - Banjul	18/11/07	0d 17h	96	1
Up River Gambia to Georgetown & back (numerous anchorages)	23/11/07	13d 9.5h	310	50
Lamin - Ariandaboul (R Casamance)	17/01/08	1d 3h	112	6
R Casamance, Ziginchoir,				
Kachiouane	19/01/08	2d	45	11
Casamance - Bissau	21/01/08	1d 2h	103	16
Bissau - Bolama	22/01/08	0d 6h	41	6
Bolama - Isleus dos Porcos	24/01/08	0d 5h	22	5
Isleus dos Porcos - Rio de Bruce	26/01/08	0d 5.5h	20	5.5
Rio de Bruce - Bubaque	26/01/08	0d 2h	6	2
Bubaque - Caravela	28/01/08	0d 12.5h	78	12.5
Caravela - Banjul (Oyster Creek)	01/02/08	3d 3.5h	184	15.5
Oyster Creek - Hann (Dakar)	07/02/08	1d 11.5h	100	7
Dakar - La Gomera	11/02/08	8d 11.75h	957	77.5
La Gomera - el Hierro	04/06/08	0d 10h	53	5
el Hierro - Sta Maria (Azores)	07/06/08	6d 1h	757	31
Sta Maria - Pta Delgada	17/06/08	0d 11.25h	55	7.5
Pta Delgada - Baltimore	22/06/08	8d 8h	1123	29.25
Baltimore - Courtmacsherry	01/07/08	0d 5.75h	35	0.5
Courtmacsherry - Helvick	02/07/08	0d 10.25h	57	2
Helvick - Howth	03/07/08	1d 0.75h	128	12.5
Howth - Greencastle	07/07/08	0d 8.75h	42	7
Greencastle - Portaferry				
(Strangford Lough)	08/07/08	0d 6.75h	36	1
Totals:		71d 14.5h	6,980	417
<i>Note: total distance logged was 7,226.</i>				

Update notes for yachts visiting Senegal, The Gambia and Guinea Bissau

Note: See pilotage notes for updated information on navigation and facilities. They can also be read at www.rccpf.org.uk/

Introduction

Steve Jones's excellent "Cruising Guide to West Africa" was written over 10 years ago and now requires updating. It is still a very good guide to the three countries covered but some things have changed. The following notes were compiled from information gathered during a cruise in the area in November/December 2007 and January/February 2008. I have only commented on topics or areas covered in the book where changes have taken place or errors have been discovered and which I have actually visited.

General information and planning

GUIDE BOOKS:

The Lonely Planet guide to Senegal and The Gambia has up-to-date information on the main towns and cities and on things to see and do. There is also a good local bird recognition book which is worth carrying. It is A Field Guide to the Birds of The Gambia and Senegal, by Clive Barlow and Tim Wachter, from www.longitudebooks.com or good book-shops. It is useful to reconnoitre before leaving home using Google Earth, which shows a surprising amount of detail.

WEATHER:

The weather was as predicted for the dry season, rather hot and humid in November and early December, less humid and generally more pleasant in late December/January and February. Temperatures hovered around 30°-35° by mid afternoon, dropping to 20°-25° at night. Visibility varied from moderate to hazy. We did not experience any severe Harmattan conditions. Winds early in the season were generally less than we expected, becoming lighter the farther south we went. However, fresh to strong winds between northwest and northeast were experienced on several days on the Gambia River in early December. In late January, northerly winds became well-established from the Guinea Bissau border to about 19°N., after which they became lighter and more variable. No rain fell until just north of Cap Vert on the return passage in February, when some thunderstorms occurred.

CHARTS:

Admiralty charts as listed in the book are still available, but have not been significantly updated. We were unable to source Portuguese charts for Guinea Bissau. These would have been very useful. Once inside the river bars, the charts of Senegal and The Gambia were dimensionally accurate and in most cases the depth information is still reasonable valid. However, detail is lacking. There were older charts of the River Gambia which contain much greater detail but these are no longer available, unless one is prepared to rip them off the walls of bars where they are sometimes displayed. Using electronic charting from Seemap on a laptop, we found that the locational accuracy decreased markedly the farther upriver one progressed, until by Georgetown, approximately 155 miles upriver in the Gambia, the locational error was greater than one mile. One has to assume that the chartwork was not

geodetically corrected and that the charts are not referenced to WGS84. Once out of the rivers, the locational accuracy was satisfactory. However, great caution has to be exercised navigating with GPS in the rivers. This would tend to preclude night passages, which are inadvisable in any case owing to the abundance of unmarked fishing nets.

TIDAL RANGES AND DIFFERENCES:

There no longer seem to be detailed tide tables available for the River Gambia. As Steve says, tidal prediction up the rivers is something of a dark art. It is worth carrying the Volume 2 of the Admiralty Tide Tables, which include enough secondary ports on the West African coast and rivers to be highly useful.

HAZARDS:

The unlit pirogues off the coast are still a problem for night passages. They are encountered surprisingly far out to sea. The strategy of keeping farther offshore to avoid them brings one into the presence of massive fleets of foreign trawlers sweeping up everything in their path. Off the Guinea Bissau coast, there was a solid phalanx of these vessels. They seem to operate without any supervision, presumably under government licences, the revenues from which disappear into some African black hole. We heard many complaints from pirogue fishermen about the effect on their catches from these activities.

BOAT PREPARATION AND EQUIPMENT:

There is still virtually nothing available, except in Dakar, where there is some kind of chandler at or near Mole 10 in the main harbour. It is possible to haul out at the Cercle de Voile de Dakar (CVD) for essential repairs, where a couple of yachts were lying on beach trailers. Limited tidal ranges in Senegal and The Gambia, together with muddy banks and dangerous or non-existent wharves, make drying out difficult. The greater tidal range in the Bijagos Archipelago and harder surfaces make careening a feasible option for cleaning, antifouling or anode replacement. If contemplating much time in the fresh water parts of the Gambia river, you might consider the use of temporary magnesium anodes. I found that a surprising amount of galvanic action had occurred in the 3 months *Witchcraft* was in these waters and speculated that fresh water might have had something to do with it.

Spares and Provisions: Do not assume that you can easily buy antifouling paint. Diesel, petrol and lubricating oil are widely available, as is Butane gas. However, I did not see anybody selling Camping Gaz, so it is worth carrying ordinary Calor Gas bottles and regulator. There is nowhere on the coast where you can safely go alongside, except at Ziginchoir. Hence, all water has to be brought aboard by dinghy. You therefore need a supply of gerricans. The same applies to diesel. Water should be treated with sterilising tablets. An online filter for the drinking water tap is also useful. With these precautions, we had no stomach problems from drinking the water. You will always find when you go ashore with gerricans someone who will arrange to fill them and bring them back. Often this involves travelling some distance by donkey cart or



Heavy construction traffic, Ziguinchor.

taxi and may take some time. Do not grudge the payment of a few dalasis or CFAs for this.

Costs of diesel and other provisions are now much the same in all three countries. Guinea Bissau now uses the CFA as its currency. Typically, diesel cost during my trip was about £0.75 per litre. Dakar and the greater Banjul area have supermarkets, where a reasonable variety of European-type foods are available, except for durable loaves of bread, which we could not find anywhere. Towns and villages have shops which stock staples such as rice, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, cooking oil, etc. Most towns have a market selling local produce. Local fruit and vegetables are good and abundant in Senegal, much less so in The Gambia and Guinea Bissau. Meat is chancy generally, with an almost equal weight of meat and flies on the scales. Ditto fish, which is best bought fresh from dugouts or pirogues. Alcohol is widely available in Senegal and Guinea Bissau. Do not expect the wine to be Grand Cru Classé. A local gin is available in Banjul for the adventurous, which costs the princely sum of £1.50 for a litre bottle. For the suicidal, a spirit known as Cana can be found in the Bijagos. Both Banjul and Dakar have breweries, although beer can be difficult to find in The Gambia upriver, the country being largely Moslem.

HEALTH:

Malaria is the principal problem. It is widespread and Chloroquine resistant, which means taking either Malarone, Doxycycline or Mafloquine Hydrochloride (Lariam). Malarone is expensive and has to be taken daily. Side effects are mild, but it is not recommended for prolonged use, i.e. for a protracted stay. Lariam can have very severe side effects, including but not limited to severe depression, anxiety, paranoia, nightmares, insomnia and seizures. It is recommended that people try it out before travelling, to ensure that they are not subject to these side effects. As it happens, I was able to take it without ill-effects but I have known others who have suffered very badly, including permanent irreversible mental damage. I was never asked for proof of vaccination while in Africa. It is advisable to be vaccinated against Yellow Fever, as there have been recent cases in West Africa. This disease is believed to be carried by apes and monkeys, which are widespread in the cruising area covered. Vaccination against Typhoid, Hepatitis A and B, Rabies, Polio and Tetanus should all be considered. From my observations, it would not be advisable to fall ill in this area of the world. Yachts should also carry antibiotic courses and topical cream, anti-diarrhoea tablets and rehydration salts. A case or two of Delhi belly is quite likely, especially if sampling local street fare, which can be very tempting.

BUGS:

To Steve's impressive list, I would add poisonous spiders, which can inflict necrotising wounds which take a long time to heal and may require surgery. My boat minder in Lamin Creek was bitten by one of these, concealed in a tee-shirt, and had to be hospitalised. I found out about this when I asked him about a large spider, which had spun a web in the rigging of a nearby yacht. He said that all their spiders are poisonous, which you can take with a pinch of salt or not, as you choose. A frequent and unwelcome visitor was the African hornet, a large hovering beast which can give a severe sting. They are not aggressive but like to build nests. I found vestigial nests behind the switch panel below and in the cockpit. Regard all flies as potential biters. Even small house-type flies bite.

Other wildlife is as covered in Steve's book, except that crocodiles are now rare in The Gambia and we only saw one in the Bijagos. Comments about hippos apply and these animals cause more fatalities in Africa than any other. We didn't see any snakes, probably because they saw or heard us first.

OFFICIALS:

I did not meet any officials in Senegal. We entered that country three times, but on each occasion it was a weekend and Senegalese officials apparently don't work weekends. Entering The Gambia, one has to run the gauntlet of immigration, customs and harbour authority. This can be time consuming, hot and frustrating. The only official there to expect a bribe was the customs officer, who insisted on coming aboard in our tiny dinghy and demanded a present. Bars of chocolate and a few tins of soft drink did not satisfy him and he virtually held us to ransom until I paid him 100D, about £2.50. However, when we entered the country a second time, a different customs official signed us off without asking for anything. Guinea Bissau is a different matter. Visas can be obtained from their embassy in Bacau, a suburb of Banjul, without any trouble. However, once in the country, things have changed since Steve Jones's time. We made the mistake of going to Bissau town to clear in. Officials descended on us armed and mob-handed. In spite of having valid visas, I was told that our papers were not in order, we should have had some kind of permit for the boat before entry, etc. This was a prelude to the levying of "Charges" for each person of CFA1,000 per day and CFA5,000 per day for the boat. For a ten day stay, this amounted to about £90 and we were told there would be no more formalities or charges anywhere in the country. Transactions were in cash and receipts were not issued. On top of this, the only official who spoke any English demanded another CFA7,000 for a facilitation fee. However, when we reached Bolama and Bubaque in the Bijagos, each set of officials claimed that we had arrived in a different administrative zone and demanded more "Fees" at similar daily rates. The total added up to around the equivalent of £5 per day for the boat and £2 per day per crew member. As well as cash, demands were for made for "Kind", especially from the medicine chest.

NON-OFFICIALS:

People are generally extremely friendly in all three countries we visited. However, there is a "Bumster" element in the more tourist-frequented areas around Banjul and in Dakar city, who are very persistent and difficult to dislodge. I came across no instances of crime or stealing. It is now much more common for ordinary people to greet one and strike up a conversation than it was when the first edition of this book was published and this is no longer regarded as impolite. However, his comments on dress are still valid and men and women in Senegal and The Gambia do not wear revealing clothing. Shorts

are rarely worn by locals. It is best to observe this convention, although nobody will say anything if you do not.

We were advised to carry a supply of footballs and pumps and these were much appreciated in remote village communities. It is also a good idea to carry plenty of boiled sweets to give to children (although this may not be recommended by dentists).

LANGUAGE:

Previous comments on language are still valid. To add to this, we found that virtually nobody in Guinea Bissau speaks English. Because of the presence of Senegalese fishermen, one can often get by with French, at least at a basic level. We did not speak Portuguese, so cannot comment on the quality of the Criolo, the local Portuguese dialect.

COMMUNICATIONS:

The mobile phone is now widespread in West Africa and the service covers all but the most remote areas. European mobiles work in Senegal and The Gambia but not in Guinea Bissau. In any of these countries, you can purchase a SIM card and credit for a very modest sum. Make sure your mobile phone is not "Locked" if using these. Internet coverage is unreliable. There are internet cafés in Banjul and Dakar but speeds are very slow. The postal service is not to be relied on in any of these countries.

DAKAR

The currency is the CFA, which exchanges at around CFA 950 = £1.00. The only cards which work there are Visa and, to a lesser extent, MasterCard. Bank cards do not work in ATMs here or in The Gambia or Guinea Bissau. Euros are readily exchangeable and are the best currency to carry.

I am told that there is some kind of chandlery, which also sells charts, inside the harbour complex at Mole 2 or Mole 10 (check with CVD).

PORTS AND CUSTOMS:

As we did not clear in or out of Senegal, this information is hearsay; however, at the CVD (Cercle de Voile de Dakar), we were informed that one has to visit Mole 2 and Mole 10 in the harbour area in Dakar itself. The yacht can be left at the CVD.

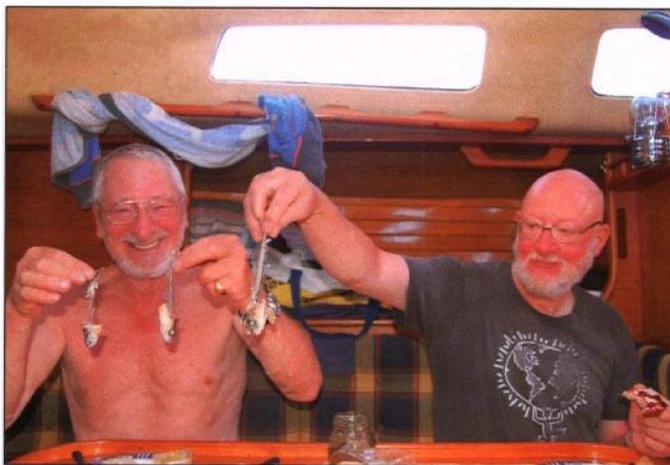
HANN:

(14°43'.2N, 017°25'.2W). If approaching the anchorage at night, watch out for a sunken schooner just east of the outermost yachts. It has just masts and the top of the deckhouse showing.

The CVD now seems to be the more active club and runs a ferry service. The cost of using the club, including the ferry service, was CFA 4,500 per day, for 2 crew. I think it has a basic charge of CFA 2,500 for the yacht plus 1,000 for each crew member. They are rather casual about this charge, at least at weekends, when the office is closed.

There is a large number of yachts off Hann beach, mainly French. Some are on moorings and look as if they have been there rather a long time. Holding seems to be quite good, in sand. It is advisable to buoy the anchor. Depth is around 3 metres all over the anchorage. When the northeast trade is blowing, there is a very fresh wind across the anchorage, up to force 6 or 7 at times. Good ground tackle and plenty of chain are advisable. You will get wet in the ferry on the way out.

Water containers can be filled at the CVD. It is usual to have a boy do this and take them out to the yacht in the ferry for you. Standard charge for this is CFA 2,000. You may have to pay a deposit of CFA 5,000 for a filter, which is returnable. Diesel



Flying fish for breakfast.

and petrol can also be obtained in the same way at the CVD, for a similar charge plus, of course, the cost of the fuel. There are (tepid) showers at the CVD and you can also wash clothes or get one of the women at the club to do it for you. The club serves basic meals and has a bar. It is rather an agreeable place.

Hann beach is a swarming hive of activity, colour and smells. The pirogue fleet lands its catch there and this is all very colourful. The market is just along the beach from the CVD and is worth a visit, although the smell of rotting fish is quite strong. There are various small restaurants in the vicinity and fresh fruit and vegetables can be bought from stalls nearby.

GORÉE

You can use the north pier there. However, most of the bollards are missing and there is usually one or two pirogues alongside. In a fresh northerly, it is untenable. I have seen yachts moored outside the harbour but this would require very settled conditions. If visiting by ferry, note that it costs a surprising CFA 10,000 return for non-residents. The island is worth visiting, for the museums, restaurants and the general ambiance, which is that of a small southern French hill village, plus goats.

DAKAR TO BANJUL

The route is quite straightforward, the only caution being the ubiquitous unlit pirogues. Going straight to Banjul requires a night passage.

THE GAMBIA

Currency is the Dalasi. The exchange rate is around D 40 = £1.00. Note that the only card which works in this country is Visa. Nothing else works, at all. However, it is easy to exchange pounds, euros or dollars during working hours. Outside working hours or at weekends, there is usually somebody who will do it from a market stall.

APPROACH AND CLEARANCE:

The approaches to Banjul have not changed. The main shipping channel is still buoyed.

The yard at Half Die is now closed. Anchor in about 4m near the moored boats off the disused yard. Do not be tempted to anchor too close, as there is a proliferation of wrecks. The Harbour Office is a blue 4-storey block right in the southeast corner of the harbour complex. Leave your dinghy on the beach near the drawn-up pirogues. You can get out of the yard through the container depot during working hours but this is dirty and hazardous. Alternatively, you have a long, dusty walk through

the shanties west of the yard and round by the road. Immigration is inside the harbour estate, past the Harbour Office and they will stamp passports there. Not all the crew need attend. Before going into the Harbour Authority, you must clear customs, which is at the next gate to the north of the harbour complex, about 200m from the blue building. They may wish to inspect the boat. Patience is required for this and they will expect a present. In exchange for this, you will receive a customs clearance paper. It is useful and impresses the officials to have a ship's stamp for these papers. Take the paper to the harbour officials, who can be found right at the top of the blue building. They will issue you with a permit for the vessel, which costs about D 700 for a month.

Having cleared officialdom, you will probably wish to remain in the area for a few days. Banjul and the surrounding towns are busy and colourful. You have the choice of Oyster Creek or Lamin Creek as anchorages and each has advantages. Oyster Creek is right on the coastal highway at Denton Bridge and it is easy to get bush taxis or minibuses from there to Banjul, Serekunda, etc. However, it is a busy anchorage with a lot of pirogue movements daily. Lamin Creek is farther from towns and shops but is well sheltered and less busy, with excellent holding. A yacht can be left there in safety.

BANJUL TO OYSTER CREEK:

Take particular care when entering Chitabong Bolon, as it is very shallow until you enter the Bolon. Hold very close to the east point. Thereafter, follow the directions carefully. Half tide rising would be best for all but shallow-draught yachts. Going towards Oyster Creek, it is reasonably easy to avoid the large false creek to starboard but coming back it is much more difficult to pick out the correct line at this point. These creeks are not shown in any detail on current Admiralty charts, so follow the pilotage instructions in the book very carefully. You will emerge into Oyster Creek quite suddenly from the winding Turnbull Bolon. Anchor south of the moorings and watch out for a nearly-covered wreck in the fairway. You will be tide-rod and holding does not seem to be particularly good. After a few days there, my anchor was bunched up with chain. There is a wooden jetty and a jumble of shacks dispensing beer or coffee and catering for the charter angling businesses which operate out of Oyster Creek. There is no problem leaving your dinghy ashore. Water is available from the back of the police post on the seaward side of Denton Bridge. You can take your dinghy right down to the beach below the standpipe but courtesy demands that you call into the police station and ask permission. The tap is very slow. Diesel, petrol and lubricating oil are available from a nearby garage. Boys at the shacks will arrange for your containers to be filled for a modest fee, plus the cost of a taxi to fetch them.

LAMIN CREEK:

This is just about accessible at any state of the tide but it is best to make the passage on half flood. A moment's carelessness or disorientation can lead to a grounding but the bottom is soft. There are many spots on the way to Lamin where one could anchor in seclusion. It is all well sheltered once under the lee of Chitabong Island. Lamin Creek is dominated by Lamin Lodge, an idiosyncratic structure on the west bank of the creek which provides cold beer and meals and caters for the river tourist and birdwatching trade. It lies down four kilometres of rough dirt road from the village of Lamin, which is on the main road to Banjul airport. Follow the directions carefully and you should have little difficulty until you approach the anchorage. Keep centre stream until about 1/2 cable downstream of the Lodge, then hold over to the east bank, leaving all the moored boats to

starboard. There is a line of two or three yachts on moorings close to the east bank. Leave these close to starboard and anchor in 3m in line with but past the end of this line. Holding is good. There is an unofficial "Harbour master" there who looks after some of the moored yachts. His name is Llanda and he is reliable. If you wish to leave a boat there, he will look after it for a very modest sum. His mother also does washing and he or other boys at the Lodge can get diesel and water for you. This has to come by donkey cart from the standpipe in the village, so may take some time. Lamin Lodge is owned by a German called Peter Loess, who has been there since the seventies, having sailed there in his own wooden gaffer, now sadly defunct. He is consequently yacht-friendly.

The River Gambia

PLANNING:

The buoyage upstream of Banjul is now completely missing, except for two buoys marking a cable crossing at Farafenni. There seems to be no fee for navigating the river, apart from the boat residence permit mentioned above. In addition to nets, there are fixed fishing installations, often built from a number of dugouts lashed together with poles. These are for prawns and shrimps and do not have any outlying nets or dangers.

The river appears to teem with fish, although we did not have much luck angling for them. You can buy fish from dugout fishermen. D 50 per kilo seems to be the going rate.

There are some concrete or timber wharves and jetties on the river, built for the groundnut trade. None of these is really suitable for a yacht to lie alongside. Many are in disrepair. Also, to repeat the earlier caveat, GPS positions are not reliable up-river. For this reason, no latitudes or longitudes are quoted.

BANJUL TO BINTANG BOLON:

The No. 6 buoy at Dog Island is no longer in place.

James Island does not really offer anything in the way of an anchorage, except in flat calm conditions. The anchorage mentioned upstream of the island is exposed to the prevailing wind and the tidal streams are strong.

BINTANG BOLON:

The entrance to Bintang Bolon is about 25m upstream from Banjul and would make a good first stop on a passage up the river.

Bintang village now has a tourist camp where one can get a meal and a cold beer. However, holding is not good off the camp and it is better to anchor on the opposite side of the creek.

BINTANG BOLON TO FARAFENNI:

The Kemoto Point Hotel is now closed, although the hotel and village are worth a visit. It was quite an ambitious project and gave employment to many local villagers, who are now sadly much reduced financially.

There is no sign of the tourist camp at Tendaba, although we did not go ashore there.

Jurunka Creek is accessible and has 2 metres in the entrance at low water. It winds up past a primitive village and into a large lagoon, with shallow water in the middle. Anchor anywhere convenient. Lots of bird life.

Tabirere Creek, a short distance upstream from Jurunka Creek, is even easier to access, with deep water inside and 3m over the bar. Again, plenty of bird activity and this creek is wider, allowing one to anchor well clear of the banks to reduce unwelcome nocturnal visitations by mosquitos. Approach all of these creeks with care, remembering that banks form naturally on the inside of bends and downstream of points.

Mandori Creek is still as described and is recommended.

The ferry crossing at Madina Creek carries the trans Gambia Highway between Dakar and Ziginchoir. You may be able to lie alongside the spare ferry at Madina Creek. The crew were very helpful. It is 4 km to Farafenni, where basic stores may be purchased and there is a market. It is something of a white-knuckle taxi journey, as the asphalt highway has deteriorated into gaping potholes; consequently, the paved surface in the middle is only used by pedestrians and animals, while the traffic, mainly lorries, thunders along the verges on either side, choosing the side with the best surface, regardless of left or right.

FARAFENNI TO KUDANG TENDA:

You can pass either side of the Elephant Island. We did not encounter many tsetse flies, although Steve Jones mentions them as a nuisance in the fresh water sections of the river.

Kudang Tenda is a traditional fishing village with friendly people. You can anchor off the concrete wharf. The son of the headman will give a guided tour of the village. His house looks out over the wharf. Among his most treasured possessions are Admiralty charts of central America, Brazil and the Caribbean (and now a copy of the Irish Cruising Club Annual for 2003).

KUDANG TENDA TO KUNTAUR:

The channel at either end of Bird Island makes a good anchorage, out of the main stream. Holding is poor off the beach below the Red Hill of Kassang. The hill is worth climbing, as it is one of the very few places where one can get a good view over the river country.

KUNTAUR TO GEORGETOWN:

You should see hippos and chimps as you pass the Baboon Islands. You may not go ashore there and the area is patrolled by wardens. It is possible to visit the islands via the tourist camp nearby on a supervised tour; however, we were unable to contact them on the telephone number given.

Pass the Kai-ai Islands using the north channel. The west (downstream) entrance to the channel is narrow but has plenty of water; however, the channel at the east end of the islands has much less depth than that shown. We slid over some kind of obstruction in the channel just abeam of the northeast end of the largest island.

Georgetown is now also called Jan Jan Buleh. There is an overhead power-line immediately upstream of the ferry crossing. This is supposed to have 16m clearance but locals say it has sagged considerably. This effectively bars the river upstream of Georgetown for other than the smallest sailing yachts.

Georgetown has declined further since the first edition. Power goes off every day from 12.00 to 18.00. There are few facilities. Water and diesel are available. Anchor downstream of the ferry jetty, leaving enough room for the ferry to turn. The Talamanca Bar and Restaurant is run by an enterprising local and is the best local bar to use.

LEAVING THE GAMBIA:

You really should clear out of the country officially; we did not, owing to the time being inconvenient and the hassle of anchoring at Half Die. There were no adverse consequences on our return.

Senegal: The River Casamance

PLANNING:

In settled weather, the entrance is not difficult, although there is usually some breaking water near the bar. An overnight passage is required to reach the bar in daylight from Banjul. It is best to cross the bar on a flood tide. Early flood is optimal, to carry the tide as far up the river as possible. Previous remarks about unlit pirogues apply.

Although the political situation is still unstable, and there was a border war in 2006 involving Guinea Bissau and the Casamance separatist movement, this does not seem to cause problems for visitors and we saw no overt military presence.

Unlike the River Gambia, the buoyage on the River Casamance is mostly still in place and maintained.

The port of entry is Ziginchoir.

Wildlife, especially birds, is prolific on the Casamance. There are bottle-nose dolphins in the river all the way to Ziginchoir.

RIVER CASAMANCE ENTRANCE:

There are three possible passages across the bar, the Passe du Nord, the Passe Mediane and the Passe du Sud. Only the Passe Mediane is buoyed. The large Dakar ferry uses the Passe du Nord, so it must have plenty of water. On the approach, the Safe Water Buoy shown on the Admiralty chart is missing. The No. 1 channel buoy is 1 mile south of the position shown. Its position in Jan 2008 was 12° 32' .5N, 016° 50' W. There is then a buoyed channel leading across the bar, with 4 pairs of pillar and can buoys. The final buoy to starboard is a red can with 2 balls, which may mark a wreck shown on the chart, no longer visible above water. From this, follow a course of 050° magnetic until you pick up the old No. 8 red pillar buoy. This used to mark the inshore end of the buoyed channel and care should be taken not to shape a course for this buoy until inside the bar. Leave the old No.8 a cable or so to port and you should shortly sight a starboard hand lateral buoy, which marks a wreck and also a 3.5m bank.

DJOGUE TO ZIGINCHOIR:

Immediately past Pointe de Nikine, which lies in the mouth of the river south of Pointe de Djogue, is the entrance to Bolon Kachiouane, the channel to the west of Isle Karabane. Since the port of entry is Ziginchoir, you may be entering this on the way back down the river. If so, take great care, as the bank extending north and west from the northwest tip of Isle Karabane is now shallower and more extensive than shown. If entering from upstream, go right past the entrance in midstream until Pte de Nikine bears approximately 145°m before turning in to the point, which should be held close aboard until inside the channel and depths have increased. Bolon Kachiouane has 8-12m inside the bar.

Jones mentions a possible anchorage in Boulababene, the creek just upstream from Pte de Djogue; however, we found depths too shallow to enter this creek at half flood.

The wreck buoy off Karabane is missing. Follow the marked channel up the river as directed.

Marigot Ariandaboul provides a convenient anchorage on the way upriver, with no particular difficulty at the entrance. The bar has about 2m on it. Note that the No. 16 is missing and the No.16b has been moved a little upstream to the edge of the bank south of Pte Djougoute. The odd numbered (starboard hand) buoys have in some cases been moved to reflect changes in the channel but it is generally well marked.

We did not enter Marigot Diagoubel but were told that Elora



Welcoming committee at Kudang Tenda

Creek, the narrow west-tending channel inside, has a village off which yachts can be left at anchor safely.

ZIGINCHOIR:

There were 10 other yachts anchored off the town, nearly all French. The water is quite deep and you will need to anchor in 8-10m, wherever you find a space. The Perroquet restaurant is still there and serves good meals and quite excellent house wine; however, the modern tourist hotel beside it has a jetty with a small pontoon and deep water alongside and a fresh water tap. They don't seem to mind people leaving dinghies there. A visiting yacht came alongside there to take water, the only place in West Africa we saw where this seems to be feasible. It would be courteous to massage the hotel management a little for the use of their facilities, although no charge was sought by them while we were there.

Ziginchoir has a good market and plenty of fresh fruit and vegetables, not something easily found in The Gambia.

I don't know anything about clearance formalities at Ziginchoir, as we arrived at a weekend and did not find any officials on duty.

Guinea Bissau

Guinea-Bissau has been in a state of economic meltdown since the first edition of this book. It had a major civil war 9 years ago and there is a sporadic low-intensity conflict on the Cacheu/Casamance border. As if this were not enough, the country, and in particular the outlying islands of the Bijagos archipelago, has become the cocaine smuggling centre for the African continent. Drugs are brought ashore in remote areas of the Bijagos and then ferried to the mainland by fast launch or light plane, whence they are split up for onward shipment to Europe or back to the Americas. This situation appears to be tolerated or even encouraged by Government ministers and senior officials, who are presumably receiving payoffs.

Another activity which is badly affecting the economy and welfare of the people is the rape of the sea fisheries. We came up against a continuous wall of trawlers fishing off the coast, mostly Korean. These trawlers come into Bissau port for R&R and fuel. What their licencing arrangements are is unclear but one has to assume that revenues from licences do not find their

way into the general economy. There appears to be no regulation of their activities and the local pirogue fishermen say that fish stocks are being badly reduced.

Officials, of whom there are many, may not be regularly paid. This is certainly the case with a schoolteacher we met in Bolama, who had not been paid for 4 months. Consequently, officials have to seek a living wherever they can get it, which leads inevitably to sidelines, bribery and corruption. All officials we met in Guinea Bissau, without exception, demanded money and/or goods and materials in kind.

These officials, on first meeting, were rather unfriendly and intimidating. As soon as money had changed hands, however, attitudes changed completely and broad smiles broke out.

We were only boarded once by a military patrol, off the Canal de Santa Caterina, and this was quite alarming, as two Kalashnikovs and an RPG 7 were trained on us. One official, who knew his way around our GPS, asked very hard questions about why we had a waypoint named Cacheu. (It was well off the mouth of the Cacheu river). For this reason, I do not recommend visiting the Cacheu area.

Apart from officials, the people are friendly and helpful. Language is of course a problem, as virtually no English is spoken. Knowledge of Portuguese would be highly useful. Religion is mainly animist or Christian, hence one encounters plenty of pigs and alcohol is generally available and enthusiastically consumed.

PLANNING:

It not necessary, nor recommended, to go to Bissau Town for clearance. The anchorage is exposed and tide-rode, the harbour is choked with traffic and wrecks and there is nowhere to leave a dinghy safely. Officials are predatory. We were charged CFA 90,000 for a 10 day stay, which we were told would cover us for the whole country, including the Bijagos islands; however, both at Bolama and at Bubaque, we were then charged again by immigration and the Policia Maritima, on the grounds that these were different administrative areas.

I did not stay in Bissau long enough to comment on availability of goods and services.

Clearance can be obtained in Bubaque and Bolama.

Virtually no buoys are still in place in Guinea Bissau. There appear to be no functioning lighthouses. The only navigational aids still visible are old stone perches and light towers, all unlit. However, the Admiralty charts of the Canal do Geba and of the Bijagos are still mostly accurate where available in large enough scale (except, as noted below, in the approaches to the Canal de Santa Catarina). Unfortunately, the Bijagos are only partly covered by detailed Admiralty charts.

A visa is necessary before entering the country. The easiest place to get this is in Bakau, a suburb of Banjul, where the Guinea Bissau embassy is located on Atlantic Road. Visas can be purchased over the counter.

The currency of Guinea Bissau is now the CFA, the same as Senegal. These can be obtained in exchange for hard currency, preferably euros. ATMs and banks do not appear to be present in the islands

THE NORTHERN ISLES:

We attempted to enter the Canal de Jeta through the Canal de Catarina. The Canal bore no resemblance to the chart and banks seem to have extended right across the entrance. We did not find it possible to enter.

BIJAGOS ISLANDS:

A deep-keeled yacht is not ideal for exploring these islands with their 6m tidal range, strong currents and lack of detailed

charts. Shallow draft with the ability to take the ground, bilge keels or a lifting keel would extend the cruising area considerably. A comprehensive spares and tools inventory, together with a good medical chest are important. It is probably not possible to have any work done on engines or other equipment.

That said, they are still a wonderful cruising ground and one quite unlike any other in the author's experience. Paradoxically, the difficulties mentioned above have meant that tourism has not yet touched the islands in any quantity. There is some tourism, especially on Bubaque, but it is as yet unthreatening and mainly involves angling and bird and wildlife watching.

BOLAMA:

The buoy marking the south end of the Restinga da Areia Branca is missing but the old steamer wreck shown on the chart 1.7 miles to its northeast is still there and makes a good waypoint (leave it well to port).

Anchor in about 6m to the north of the stone jetty, at about 11°35'N, 015°28'.2W. Holding appears to be reasonable. Tidal streams are not too strong here.

Bolama is an atmospheric place. It gives the impression of having been deserted by the Portuguese administration, which it was in 1941, but the grand colonial buildings are still there, with the old military barracks, all decaying gently. There is an enormous square with diagonal pathways and dry irrigation channels in front of the old administrative building. The main local village is outside the old town. Diesel and basic stores are available from the shops. There are very basic restaurants and bars, not for the faint-hearted. Mussolini's grand and bizarre concrete monument still dominates the sea-front, donated to the town after the crash nearby of an Italian transatlantic flying boat in 1931. Good water is available from a stand-pipe just off the beach, behind some buildings.

BOLAMA TO BUBAQUE:

This area is covered by detailed Admiralty charts and presents no difficulties.

An anchorage recommended by Jones and which we found delightful is at Ilheus dos Porcos. Approach is simple if you follow the directions in the book and the anchorage is well-sheltered, with slackish tides (11°19'.5N, 015°39'.3W). The larger island, which you anchor near, has an excellent beach and is visited only by occasional fishermen, a couple of whom we met and who shared their lunch of fish and groundnuts with us. There are various animist symbols ashore and one has to be careful not to offend the spirits by disturbing any of these. There is more water in the approach than shown previously and it should be accessible at any state of the tide, although, as always in these islands, arriving on a rising tide is to be recommended.

Rio de Bruce makes a useful passage anchorage if heading to Bubaque, as it is difficult to work round Ilha Roxa and back up to Bubaque on one tide. Approaching the entrance to Rio de Bruce, watch the GPS, as the gap in the coast is hard to spot until you are very close. Once sighted, follow the directions in the book. It provides a tranquil creek anchorage with lots of bird life. The entrance is in 11°13'.65N, 015°49'.9W.

Bubaque is not a good anchorage. Tides run through it at up to 4 knot and the water is deep. You have to anchor very close to the beach in 7 or 8 metres (11°18'.0N, 015°49'.8W). It can be difficult to get the anchor to bite and even more difficult to recover it. Because of the strong tides, a tripping line is likely to turn into a terrible bird's nest. Laying a kedge out into the deeper water to hold the boat clear of the beach at the turn of the tide is a possible option, although we lost ours when we left.



Dinghy towing dugout, Ilheus dos Porcos.

Anchor between the ferry pier and the old concrete jetty to the north. The officials' office is at the head of the concrete ferry pier and you must clear in there on arrival. Take great care with dinghy work because of the strong tides. It is advisable to land on the beach, not at the ferry pier. There is a profusion of small shops and businesses in shacks above the pier. Diesel and other basic provisions are available from these.

Bubaque has a several bars and restaurants.

BUBAQUE TO CARAVELA:

Because of the lack of detailed charts, the safest option for a deek-keeled yacht is to leave Bubaque via the Canal de Bubaque, going between Ilheu de Anagaru and Ilha do Galo and following the old buoyed channel through the Canal das Galinhas (buoys now missing), then back out into the Canal de Geba through the Canal de Pedro Alvares. It is a straightforward passage to the anchorage at Caravela, which it is feasible to enter at night by watching the GPS carefully (the passage from Bubaque cannot be completed in daylight).

Otherwise, for the more adventurous or for shallow draft yachts, the directions for Formosa above can be followed as per Plans 75 and 76.

Caravela is a highlight of any cruise to the Bijagos. It is a most attractive island, with a couple of very primitive villages on it. Anchor as shown on the chartlet, in sand, about 3.5m, at 11°33'.7N, 016°19'.5W. Holding is good. The village of Bichau is about 2 miles from the beach, ending in a wood of enormous kapok and elephant trees, from which one emerges into a village unchanged in millenia, except for the football shirts worn by the boys. The footballs and pumps we carried made a big hit here. There are no provisions to be had on Caravela.

Caravela repays dinghy exploration. There is a long (at least 2 miles) creek leading from a sand spit on the beach, with about 1 or 1.5 metres water at high water, then deepening and broadening inside. At first sandy and lagoon-like, the creek narrows and deepens as you go up, palms giving way to mangroves. It has the most prolific bird life we saw anywhere and at least one crocodile.

Caravela is an indifferent anchorage as regards swell, as it is protected from the prevailing wind only by a long sandbank, which covers at high water. Although somewhat roilly, it seems safe enough.

Craic on the Canal du Midi

Diana Gleadhill

Isit facing the slimy, khaki-coloured cut stone of the lock sides in my, by now, habitual perch on the bows ready to fling the coiled rope heavenwards to Jill who I can only just see, peering down, feet above me. The water squirts and spurts through cracks and gaps in the lock gate, then, as the sluice gates are opened, it thunders through like the Niagara Falls and boils under the boats lifting us up to be on equal terms with the rest of the world. "Push off the bows" shouts Peter, and off we go.

We are on the Canal du Midi, south of France along with 16 other boats and 91 members and friends of the Irish Cruising Club. Very sadly, just before the "off", Sandy Taggart had a stroke from which he has made a very good recovery, so he and Christine are unable to be with us, and also Brian Kenny has been ill and he and Anne had to forego the trip. We wish them speedy recoveries.

The Canal, built in the 17th century, even today is a quite extraordinary marvel of engineering. Originally built by Pierre Paul Riquet for commerce and known as the Canal des Deux Mers, it is now used mainly for pleasure boating between the Atlantic Ocean at Bordeaux and the Mediterranean Sea at Sète. In 1999 the Canal du Midi was added to the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites. The water in the eastern part of the Canal is supplied by the Réservoir de Saint Ferréol, so the water flows into the canal from near Castelnaudary east to the Mediterranean and west as far as Toulouse. We are to cover 157 kilometres and 64 locks, many of them multiples, between Port Cassafières and Castelnaudary.

John Clementson's great little cruise

Initially, John Clementson insisted he was NOT organising a rally, he was FACILITATING it! Well, he "put together" a great little cruise. Most of us flew in to Carcassonne where John had organised buses to Port Cassafières and the boats. One bus took us non-shoppers direct to the port while the other took the shoppers to the local supermarket where a great deal of time was spent buying wines and other goodies! There was some hold-up apparently, as nobody had bags for carrying the goodies. At Cassafières, John eventually briefed the skippers and we all got ourselves on board our allotted boats. On our boat we were Jack Wolfe, son Peter, and daughter-in-law Jill and myself. We should have had Jenny Guinness and Alex Booth with us, but because the Taggarts were unable to come as planned to be with Bill and Rosemary McKean, Jen and Alex jumped ship and took the Taggart's place. Some boats set off that evening, anxious to be in the fore-front of the posse, however, some of us lingered over several glasses of red wine and ate well in the little restaurant at the port.

The following day boats got under way from early morning. We were late going, having waited for, but eventually leaving the McKean's with Alex and Jen behind, annoyingly having to have work done on the gas connection to their oven. I distinctly remember we were just beside the "Cork" boat with Jo and Mary Woodward and pals, so how they ended up at the end of the trip in Castelnaudary the day before us I really don't know! It was bright but chilly as we potted along between fields of

vines and sunflowers, beneath the beautiful plane trees with their "impressionist painted" trunks, planted both for shade and the roots to hold the banks from erosion. Peter quickly spied our first kingfisher. We came to Portiragnes where Peter, Jill and I jumped ashore in search of fresh bread. We quickly encountered a lovely lady who took us under her wing to "chercher le pen" as she pronounced it and accompanied us to an obviously popular and packed boulangerie where we indulged ourselves in bread and pastries. Back on board we soon arrived at our first set of locks.

We kept going all day, having lunch on board, going through simple single locks until we came to Béziers and a long wait to take our turn for the exciting challenge of the Ecluses de Fonsérannes, a series of nine locks changing the level of the canal 21.5 metres in a distance of only 300 metres. Beside the "staircase" was another method of lifting boats to a higher level – the pente d'eau – an amazing system whereby the boat entered a "tank" of water. The doors closed, and the whole contraption raised upwards by steam engine. The upstream doors were then opened and the boat emerged gently out into the main stream again.

After the excitement of Béziers it was plain sailing – no, motoring – to Colombiers where we went into the marina beside Frank Smith and party, eventually to be joined by the McKean boat with their gas connection finally fixed. We ate perfectly adequately at L'Eclusier.

Wednesday morning took us through the 160 metre long Malpas Tunnel and onwards to Capestang, an attractive former canal port where Jill, Peter and I again went exploring to see an ancient church and do some shopping at the local market. Wherever I am in the world, I adore markets! They are the hub of the town; one finds the locals here and fresh produce of all sorts. Peter spent a fortune on delicious cheeses and I bought fruit. We then discovered that Jack and Jen had found an old pal, Ed, from Howth where he had been an engineer for the fishing boats, but some years ago had decided to forego the wind and rain of Ireland and had sailed and motored his own boat down the Shannon, round England and into the canals of France to fetch up here in Capestang. He definitely has the world sussed! He gave us some names of places to stop and said we would never make Castelnaudary by Sunday night. This possibility had now become the main topic of conversation – would we or wouldn't we? That was the question.

Bike-riding practice!

That evening we arrived in Ventenac en Minervols, to find Jen and Rosemary practising bike-riding. We moored just in front of the chateau and wine cellar de Ventenac. We, of course, did a quick tour of the cellar and made a few wine purchases. It had become a habit to crack into the white before lunch and graduate gently into the red by evening. We ate in the restaurant next door which must be the only restaurant in France to run out of vin rouge! Apparently they were closing for the winter the following week until next spring. But then I didn't think wine would have gone rotten in that length of time. Jen made

the mistake of ordering an Italian meal with pasta which wasn't good, but I had scallops in a cheese and white wine sauce which was delicious.

A tight curve in the canal a couple of kilometres west of Ventenac leads to the historic Canal Bridge of Répudre, one of the few canal bridges built by Riquet himself. It was intended to avoid damage to the canal caused by flooding of the little river Répudre. Completed in 1676, it was the first canal bridge ever built in France and is reputed to be the second built in the world. We crossed it early on Thursday morning agog at this feat of engineering. It was a strange experience to be floating so high up and able to look down the river valley beneath us. At the lock at Argens, Jen, Rosemary and I were put ashore with our bikes and off we went peddling over roots and across humps and hollows giggling like schoolgirls as we survived frequent wobbles. Arriving at Pechlaurier, we found the boats ahead queued up, waiting for the lunch break to be over when the lock would be opened again. Our long break, however, had its advantages as we were able to catch up and enjoy a glass or two of wine with Chris Stillman and crew, Derek White and crew and our commodore Peter Ronaldson with Evie, Brendan and Pamela Bradley and Peter Cumberlidge, Vice Commodore of the RCC with wife Jane. Rosemary and I crossed the canal and had some interesting chat with some Americans and other English boaters. By now we were climbing gradually, with locks to be negotiated every few kilometres. Lots of these lock keepers' little gardens were so pretty, filled with flowers. At most of the locks there was local wine and quite delicious home made fruit for sale. Our normal practice was for Jill to jump/climb ashore, I would go forward and Jack aft to throw her our warps. Jack and I both steered the boat but Peter seemed happiest being in charge, which was fine by us. The warps were thick, rough and very dirty, doing my supposed lady-like hands no good at all! "Don't forget to push off the bows" was, to Jill's growing annoyance, the inevitable order from Peter. On we went through Homps and La Redorte.

Too tired to sing!

By that evening, with rations becoming very low such was the pressure of 'cracking on' that we were left at the crepuscular (good word Peter) hour in no-man's land, so had to bivouac with a few fellow travellers also caught in the same situation. Peter is reluctant to disclose details of the precise location of the overnight stop as it was the subject of the local cell of the Resistance's "need-to-know-only" policy! We did, luckily, have plenty of cheese, eggs and wine and Jen and Jill managed to make eight delicious omelettes. As we finished our meal we could hear one of our neighbours getting into the swing with a most enticing sing-song. I looked at the others and said "Only a few years ago and I would have been hell-bent to join that party, now I'm too damn tired". For anyone who has not yet experienced the joys of the canal, a toes-up lay-about holiday it is NOT. It's jolly busy, leaping about as we go in and out of the locks.

The following morning Jen and Rosemary sped off on bikes at eight o'clock to Puichéric to do some shopping. I had been anxious to go too but not at that unholy hour. But by 09.00 I was ready to go complete with rucksack on back, hopefully to revivify the boat and save the crew from imminent starvation, so I, too, pedalled off, straight into the low sun making it difficult to see where I was going. This village, like so many in the region has kept its medieval character. As one enters Puichéric via the twisting, narrow streets you can see the last vestiges of an 11th century chateau burnt down by soldiers of the Black Prince. Meeting up with Brendan and Pamela Bradley, I was directed to a good little supermarket with a very helpful

shopkeeper and together we filled my rucksack with the long baton of bread poking out the top.

I discovered that the Bradleys were going biking for the day and they kindly let me join them. We cycled from Puichéric to Marseillette where we stopped for café au lait at a little hotel, La Terrasse, close to the tow path. It was simply lovely cycling along encountering very few other people. We stopped every now and again for a breather and to take in the views of the countryside until we arrived at Trèbes; in all about 16 kilometres. Here we met up with some of the front-runners who, like us, had lunch at the excellent restaurant, Le Moulin de Trèbes. The Bradleys continued their bike ride in the afternoon while I waited for our boat, a couple of hours behind bringing up the rear, as ever "tail-end-Charlies". Having had the morning off, I felt obliged to really work my passage on board during the afternoon.

Just west of Trèbes is the Aqueduc d'Orbeil, a small canal bridge with three arches, designed by Vauban and built by Colin and Laurent in 1688. When the canal was originally put into service in 1681, there were only three aqueducts, the Répudre, the Aiguille which enabled the canal to cross the drainage canal from the old Marseillette Lake (now dried up) and the Jouarres aqueduct. To cross the other rivers, a barrage was built downstream from the canal and the boats crossed on the river itself. These numerous waterways fed the canal with water, but in the event of a flood, they also filled it with mud. When he inspected the canal in 1686, Vauban found a canal eaten away by rain-water and heavily silted up. The condition of the canal was so bad that Jean-Mattias Riquet, son of Pierre Paul, considered closing it. However, following his inspection, Vauban launched a vast and costly improvement programme which was to last from 1686 to 1693. Drainage ditches were dug and more than 40 aqueducts put into place.

It was indeed a busy afternoon "lock-hopping" between Trèbes and Carcassonne, but more was to come the following day. We stopped for the night in Carcassonne beside our sister ship and had excellent barbequed steaks at a very busy, canal-side restaurant. We were still having to crack-on in order to reach our destination by Sunday, but many people definitely wanted to visit the old city of Carcassonne and so we decided that we simply couldn't miss out on a morning's sight-seeing. We moored the boat where we were also able to get water and found a taxi to take us in to the old city perched on top of a steep hill. This extraordinary fortified town dates back to the Roman Empire (3rd and 4th centuries AD) Used as a garrison in later years, the site fell into ruin but was restored somewhat imaginatively, at the end of the 19th century by the famous architect, Viollet-le-Duc. We bumped into some of our fellow travellers also enjoying a morning off the canal, happily wandering round the old buildings. It was such a pleasant thing to do and made us feel we would have liked to have had time to explore some of the other towns and villages. Along with some of the others, we had considered just taking our time and getting a bus or taxi to Castelnauary for the Last Supper, but now, having got this far, it seemed that we were, indeed, aiming to make a final burst and arrive in time.

Still "Tail-end-Charlies"

The rest of Saturday saw us, still as "Tail-end-Charlies", ploughing westwards through locks and under pretty little low bridges through Villesequelande and Port de Bram. We have seen by now several red squirrels, another kingfisher and, we think, a mink scurrying through the roots on the river bank. We tied up for the night at Villepinte and along with the chums (who had already been on a recce to suss out the village eateries), walked about a kilometre along a road lined with pale mauve crocuses and carefully tended vegetable gardens, to the

village and Aux Deux Acacias, the excellent local restaurant, Jack being transported, in more ways than one, by the husband of the lady restauratrice. We had a brilliant evening, everyone in good form and confident now that we would reach our targeted, ultimate destination on the morrow.

Sunday lunchtime we had a remarkable lunch party in the hot sun, on board our boat but viltled by the Commodore's excellent kitchen, and likewise the McKean's. In the afternoon we eventually arrived tired but triumphant in Castelnaudary. Immediately behind us were the McKean's, etc., leaving The Commodore to make a dramatic entrance into the Grand Basin, doing a lap of honour to a tumultuous welcome of horns and whistles from the rest of the fleet to get here, a mass of locks had been surmounted. I am still in awe of the engineering of this canal, especially so long ago being able to get the levels correct and having to build another lock in exactly the right place. We arrived just had time to wash hair and clean up before being invited on board the Clementson's boat with the Barrs and the Claphams for drinks (they had spent the day, being bored with having arrived so early, exploring upstream!) A taxi

was organised for Jack and a couple of other less mobile folk to the hotel where our dinner was held. Castelnaudary being the home of Cassoulet, the local equivalent of Irish Stew but made with haricot beans, ham, sausage and goose or duck this was the preferred menu. The chat, of course, was mighty with everyone exchanging tales of the riverbank.

I think the general consensus of opinion was that although it was a pity we didn't have time to explore the environs of the canal, we had all enjoyed it and had had a great time. The wines were all acceptable and even excellent, and the food ashore was likewise. Apart from a couple of bike incidents and the amazing survival of one or two total immersion christenings (say no more) in the murky waters of the canal, an odd blow in the wrong place with a hammer and chapped hands, we all survived the rigours of canal life. Personally, I loved every minute, to the extent that I would do a cycling holiday here and explore to my heart's content. Why, I wondered almost daily, do we put up with our dreadful Irish weather when, every single day you can have wall-to-wall blue skies and an unfamiliar, bright, light in the sky, called, I think – the SUN?



Typical Canal du Midi oval lock (unique to this canal).
All photos by Peter Cumberlidge



Will we make it to Castelnaudary in time?
(Jennifer Guinness, the Commodore, Chris Stillman)



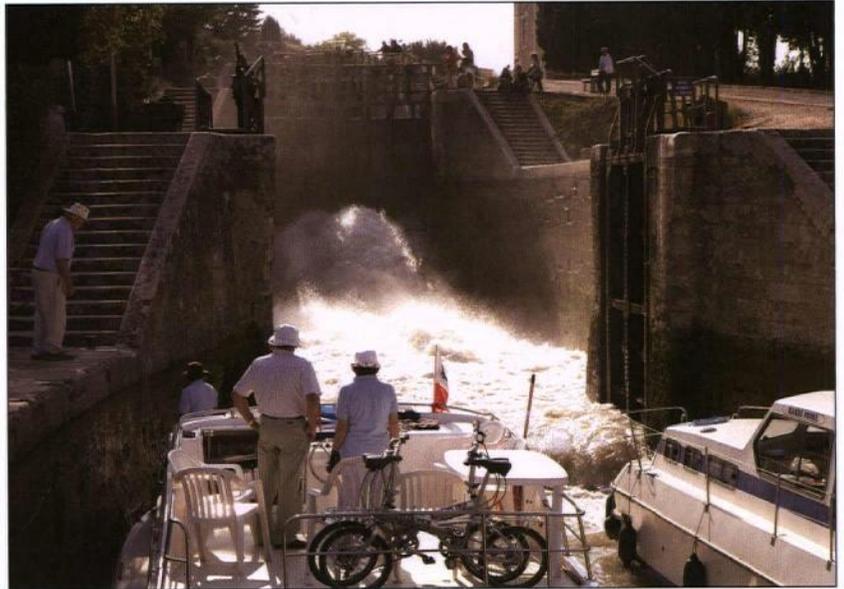
Mind your head, David!



The bow-hand strikes a pose.
(Evie Ronaldson)



In we go.



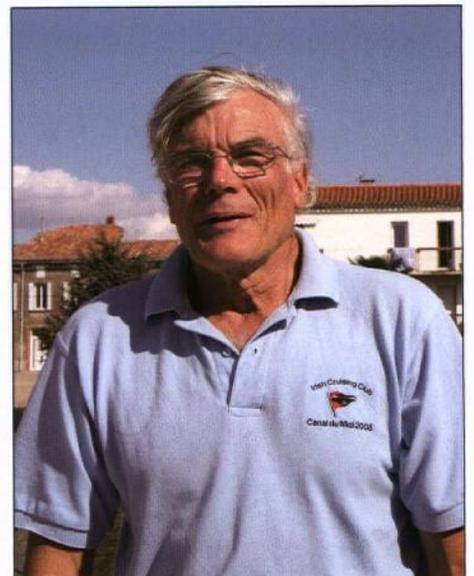
At the foot of the Fonserrane Staircase of seven locks, at Béziers.



A tranquil scene.



Lunch al fresco.
(Hazel and Malcolm Davidson, Kay and Norman Long, Chris and Helen Stillman).



The Commodore at journey's end.

Faustina II went to Norway

John Clementson

We took *Faustina II* to Norway this year. (Well, in truth, Ann flew there and back – sensible girl that she is.) It's an amazing cruising ground but it's so big that you can only attempt a small bit of it in any one year. (The statistic I like is that if you pivot Norway round on its southern-most point, the North Cape would reach Rome.) We homed in on the area around Bergen and Stavanger. The cities are 165 miles apart and lie at the very southeast of Norway. North of Bergen the coast-line tends to be rugged with the classic high-sided hills, whilst to the south the country becomes gentler – though as I will describe it has its fair share of steep-sided fjords too.

The incentive to go to Norway was a cruise in company organised by the Cruising Club of America (CCA). Initially they had planned to go to the Lofoten Islands, but reality kicked in and they opted for an easier place to charter yachts. I took *Faustina* to Bergen with my friend Bruce and my step grandson Sam as delivery crew. We/I had hoped to go via the Scottish west coast but the weather was so awful that we went via the Caledonian Canal, with stops thereafter at Wick (ugh!), Kirkwall in the Orkneys with a day exploring the 'mainland' by car taking in the ancient village ruins at Skara Brae, Westray also in the Orkneys, past North Ronaldsay (how some names resonate) to Fair Isle, and then Lerwick in the Shetlands.

We then had a reasonable crossing of the North Sea to Norway, tucking into a small bay on arrival for a sleep before going up to Bergen. Here we got to know this lovely city which is infamous for the numerous days of rain it gets every year. In this year of an especially wet Ireland and England I won't go on about it, BUT – every day we were in Bergen we had hot sun all day, both on this visit and later in the cruise. Sorry.

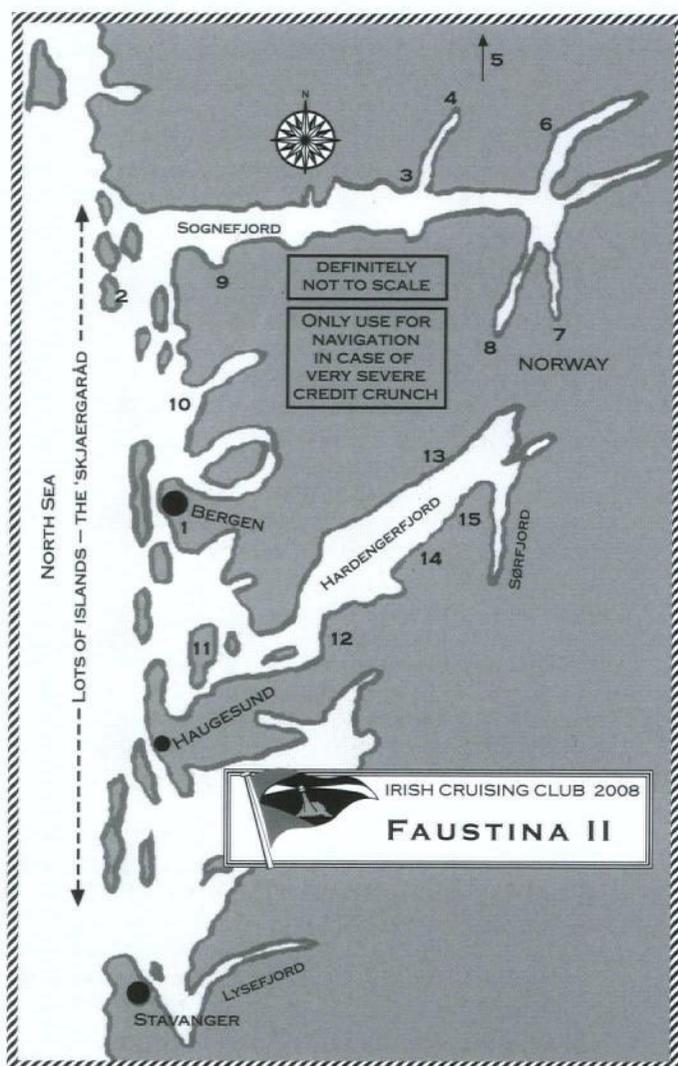
We explored the sites for a few days and then the deliverers flew home and, Ann with Jennifer Guinness (ICC/CCA) and Alex Booth, flew in and we went south a few miles to Hjellesstad, a village with a marina and the base for the start of the CCA's 'Norwegian Fjord Cruise, 12-24 July 2008'. For the record they had a large mothership (the *Loyal*) with 14 CCA members on board, eight private yachts – including *Faustina II*, *Paloma* with Clive (ICC/CCC) and Elisabeth Scott and their crew of two CCA friends, and *Pilgrim Soul* with Andrew (ICC) and Helen Curtin and their crew Ray Lovett (ICC) and Noel Kelly – and nine chartered yachts. The general plan was to explore the Sognefjord, Norway's longest (over 120 miles) and deepest (1300m) fjord.

Geography

OK, unless you know Norway well a little geography will help you keep up with what follows. The coast of Norway is very indented and there are umpteen islands and narrow passages. These are collectively known as the 'skjærgård' and mean that for much of the coastline it is not necessary to go out into the open sea. Wonderful cruising grounds but it's very difficult to do a map. So I have done a sketch to give you an idea of where the essential places are. If you want more, find a road map of Europe. Just note the positions of Bergen and Stavanger, then note where Sognefjord is and how long it is, Lysefjord at the

bottom and finally Hardanger fjord. That will suffice, but I have numbered a few other places that are referred to below. You could try joining up the numbers with a red pen as you read along!

You can leave a boat in Hjellesstad (see 1 on the sketch) over winter (no ice in this area) and some do, but it tends to be a bit exposed to the weather. I wouldn't. There are better places. From there we all went to a nearby island to eat at a very upmarket seafood restaurant which was incredibly expensive – and not that good. A bit 'up itself'. It is called 'Cornelius' and you can only reach it by sea. (You probably don't need to be told that pretty nearly everything in Norway is very expensive – especially drink. £7 for a beer is not unusual, £35 for a bottle of ordinary plonk. You sort of get used to it after a while, so I won't mention it again except to say that we took our own gin etc. and were not troubled at all by Customs authorities. You



don't even have to book into Norway even though it kept out of the EU.)

Next day we cruised north to the island of Fedje (see 2). It has a nice little bay and harbour – and it also has the watch tower that controls all the movements of oil tankers in the area of southwest Norway. They really care. Every tanker that comes inside the line of islands has a tug attached to its stern just in case the steering fails. We were given an interesting tour of the tower and its workings. We weighed anchor at 04.45 next day, set out for the Sognefjord and made our longest daily run of the cruise (90 miles) to Balestrand (see 3) with a stop en-route for lunch and walk. The Kaiser regularly used to summer here and at the beginning of WWI the locals gave him 24 hours to leave. We cleverly anchored in a nice clear spot near the rest of the fleet and then realised that it was clear because we were over an electric cable. We tried to lift the anchor to move but ... Having run a length of chain looped on the end of a line down our anchor chain we luckily cleared the cable without blacking-out the nearby villages and slunk off to a more crowded part of the anchorage.

By now we were well 'inland' and the mountains were closing in around us, stunning with their clouds draped attractively over them. The weather had been cloudy and cool and there wasn't much wind. We had to motor for most of the CCA cruise – indeed for most of our time in Norway. Next day we moved on to Fjaerland (4), a village famous (in Norway at least) for its many book shops. There were lots and they all had books in many languages – mainly English (which everyone in Norway speaks almost fluently). That evening we were guests at a reception given by a CCA member in the wonderful historic wooden Mundal Hotel built in 1891, which is full of original furniture. The hotel always closes during the winter months and the owner thinks that her furniture has lasted so long because it gets so cold in the winter months that creatures that might damage it get killed off.

Glacier Museum

The following day we went by coach to visit the Glacier Museum and the Josterdalsbreen (5) (breen means 'the glacier'), the largest glacier in Europe. The museum was a little disappointing (I guess that we all expect so much these days) but the glacier was fun despite the heavy rain. Actually we didn't get ON to the glacier – we only got below two of its 'tails' and scabbled to walk on the debris of ice and rock that has fallen off the glacier at one of them. It was a scene of some grandeur with the edge of the glacier hanging above us. We enjoyed a 'cool' day out and the walk away from the boats.

Next day we returned to Balestrand (3) and Kvikne's Hotel, the largest wooden structure in Norway – somewhat spoilt by the hideous rectangular block they have built behind it to make more rooms. We anchored again, carefully avoiding any electric cables, and prepared for the mid-cruise dinner to be held that evening in the hotel. The CCA doesn't do things by halves and the dinner, which followed drinks and a talk about the hotel by the manager, a descendant of the original owner, was excellent. The hotel is beautifully furnished with an outstanding collection of oil paintings mostly created by visiting artists from around the world. We sat at tables (jackets and ties) with a great view over the fjord. I could get used to living like that!

Back to reality on board. We set off at 08.00 into a dull day which happily brightened up as we went further east along the Sognefjord and then north-northwest up the Lustrafjord to Solvorn (6) – deep into the mountains. We anchored and then took a ferry across the fjord to visit the stave church at Urnes which we reached after a stiff climb up the hill. Stave churches are so called from the massive tree trunks around which they

were built back in the 12th century. There are 28 remaining and this one is the oldest still standing. It is quite well preserved though sadly the interior fittings have been removed whilst the exterior is renovated. We were to see another stave church later. We bought some raspberry jam here. This particular jam was disappointing but I mention it as they grow a lot of raspberries hereabouts and the fresh ones are lovely. It's strange – I wouldn't have associated Norway with raspberries any more than I had associated Iceland with rhubarb.

Then we went to Flåm (7) at the head of Aurlandsfjord. Flåm is a serious tourist trap and is justly famous for its railway (the Flåmsbana) which climbs through rugged valleys past many waterfalls to take passengers to Myrdal where they can join the Oslo to Bergen train. The line is an amazing feat of engineering. There are many tunnels and roofs to protect against avalanches and the train occasionally doubles back in

We navigate *Faustina* with C-Maps (www.c-map.co.uk) supplied on CDs. We found these charts to be of exceptional quality. We use the Australian program 'Software on Board' (SOB) (www.digiboat.com.au) to run the charts on a laptop linked to the boat's GPS. This is a good, easy to use, inexpensive program that can be downloaded from the Internet and used free for three months. It costs US\$40 for the full version and that is good value. The C-Map 'Max' chart for this area covered Shetland and the whole of the southern part of the Norwegian west coast incorporating 200 small and large scale charts – for £130 – a bargain I think.

We had borrowed a number of small scale paper charts of the area, and these were useful to see the big picture when planning ahead. We were also lent, and later given, a lot more of the *Batsportkart* charts that come in plastic folders (which are available to any ICC member to borrow on request to me). They are 1:50,000 scale which shows everything. However we much preferred using the C-Maps which had all the same detail but which were far easier to see.

I had downloaded the 'Norwegian Cruising Guide' from the Internet – it costs only €20 for the full version. Volume I which deals with cruising in Norway in general – regulations, weather, etc. was moderately useful, but Volume II that deals with anchorages and marinas was disappointing. I printed off the chapters that dealt with the area we planned to cruise. I found that the various places were hard to identify and there were no chartlets. It might be useful as a backup. At the price it's certainly worth having.

For details of local anchorages and marinas we bought *Havneguiden 3* which covers the area from Lindesnes to Bergen. It costs £50 and is currently only in Norwegian (though an English version is planned). Each anchorage or marina is shown in a photo and with a good chartlet and one can work out what most of the Norwegian means. This book took us to great spots that we might otherwise have missed, and it shows where mooring pegs have been placed on the rocks.

There is also a readily available free book, 'Ferie & Fritidshavner', produced annually by the Norwegian Coast Guard that describes itself as '*Den komplette guide for batfolk med 600 norske, 75 svenske og 12 danske havneskisser*'. There! I told you that you could understand Norwegian – though I'm not sure about the kisser bit! Um. There is a chartlet and a brief icon description of each location. A good backup to have on board.



Naeroyfjord.

180° turns. At one point the train stops by the impressive Kjosfossen (fossen means ‘the waterfall’) where we were amazed by the appearance of two Viking ladies ‘singing’ to us from the rocks accompanied by music from loudspeakers. They were getting very wet and we were really more sorry for them than appreciative of their sacrifice.

Jenny and Alex had to leave us at Flåm to return home to supervise the building of their new home. The next day was Sunday 20th July and perhaps appropriately we went by bus through lovely countryside to visit the Stave church at Borgund. This is the finest preserved stave church anywhere. The stave churches, which are all wood, are unique to Scandinavia – they are small and were not only built strongly enough to last nearly a thousand years but they have a special and unique beauty as well. They are regularly tarred on the exterior to preserve the wood. Fascinating buildings.

Returning to the boats we all cruised down the fjord and turned left into the Naeroyfjord (8). This is a cracker of a fjord – considered by many to be the most beautiful in Norway. It’s so narrow in places and at its head that cruise ships are not allowed to go into it – and that can’t be bad. The mothership *Loyal* went in and then returned to Flåm, but a few of us found a stunning anchorage in the fjord for the night and partied for a while with the noise of a big waterfall across the fjord providing local ‘ambience’.

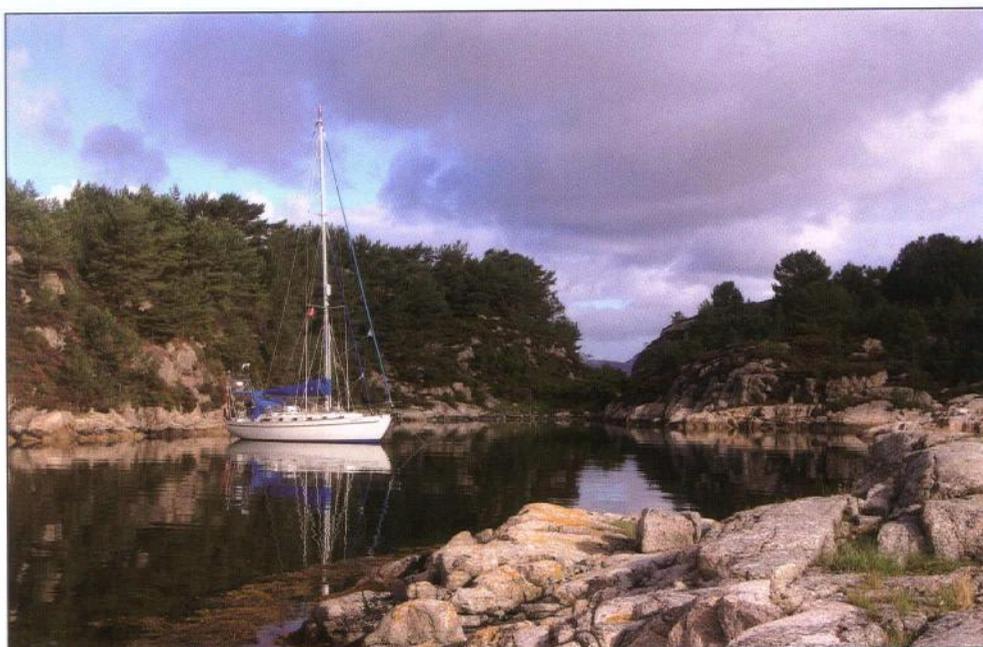
It was a long haul back west along Sognefjord next day, and that evening we left the fleet and found our own quiet night stop at Brekke (9) where we were able to go alongside, shop at a small local supermarket a few metres away and go for a walk. We had a nice quiet night before a day of gloomy weather but with interesting navigation through a minefield of

islands and narrow passages (we had deliberately taken the ‘interesting’ route) to the next collective anchorage, amongst the islands near a nature reserve (10). Then it was on to Bergen where the sun was shining brightly. After dealing with mundane matters like getting our laundry done and taking Ann sightseeing to the Bryggen, we attended the final cruise dinner at the Floien restaurant which, for those of you who may know Bergen, is the one at the top of the 320m-high funicular railway. Very smart, very expensive, quite good and great craic.

All that remained now was to return to Hjellestad (1) where those that had chartered boats handed them back. Apparently the boats were excellent. Everyone had really enjoyed the cruise, which had been well planned in great detail to provide us all with an

interesting list of venues and functions. We all got on well and we were made to feel very welcome by all the CCA members – including of course old friends Bob (ICC) and Mindy Drew who were there in their 53ft motorsailer *Night Hawk* (which was up for sale).

There was now a further extension to the cruise for those who wanted it. That was a trip to Oslo. We had opted in, and so that afternoon flew with others to Oslo (45 mins) where, next day, we were taken on a very privileged visit to the National Gallery. The cruise organiser, David Tunick, is an art dealer in New York and has many ‘arty’ contacts. He also has many friends in Norway where he has kept his beautiful 55ft S&S yawl *Night Watch* for many years. We lunched at the Royal Norwegian Yacht Club (KNS) and then visited the Fram and the Viking museums – all this in blazing sunny weather. Next day was hot again. After an in-depth visit to the Munch (‘The Scream’) museum, where we looked at its huge archives, we



A quiet anchorage south of Bergen.

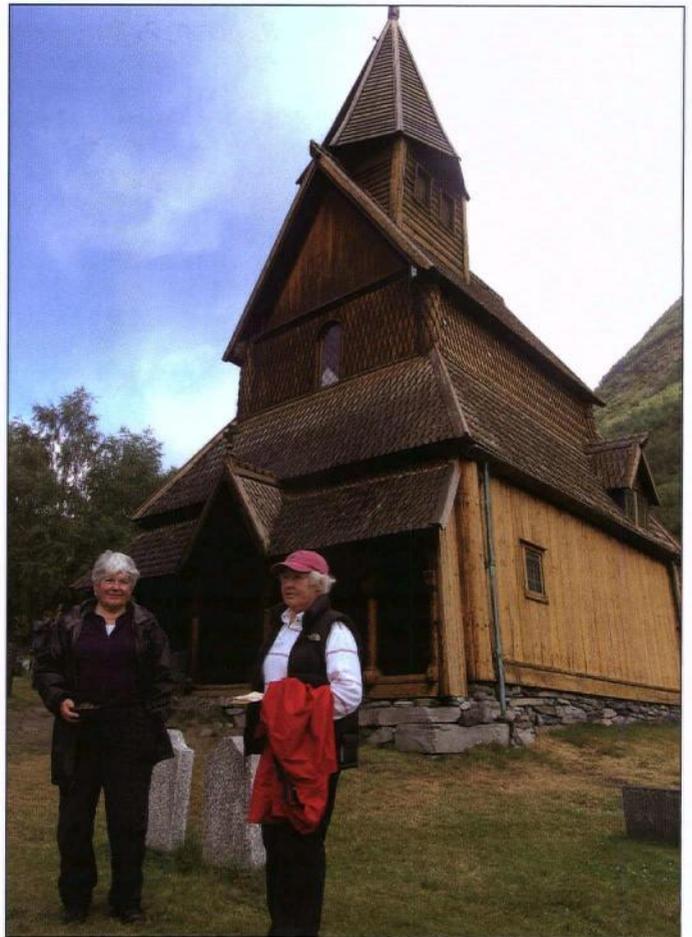
went by coach south to the Hank Yacht Club at Fredrikstad, which is very exclusive and where we were generously entertained by a former Commodore. (The King of Norway didn't come to join us.) We were taken in motor boats around the island to enjoy the scenery and to see where the serious racing takes place, after which we were given a wonderful seafood cold lunch and drinks. (It's not what you know, it's who you know.) That evening we all gathered at a well known seafood restaurant on the harbour front in Oslo, where we had a great meal of five courses and ample wine (hang the expense – we kept reminding ourselves that we can't take it with us) – our final meal with all our new friends from the CCA.

Next day we took the train (all day) back to Bergen. This is one of the 'great rail journeys of the world'. The engineering is amazing and the scenery over the second half of the trip particularly is stunning. Rail travel is not too expensive – especially if you are over the dreaded age threshold. This a highly recommended trip.

It was now 28th July and we were on our own on *Faustina II*. We now had to think for ourselves after having gone with the flow on the CCA cruise. I was due to start home with my next delivery crew on 22nd August so we had about 3½ weeks to ourselves to explore as we wished. We had intended to go north again but local advice suggested that south to Stavanger would be preferable as the scenery was softer.

We like anchoring, but in Norway it is more usual to drop a stern anchor and to tie the bow to a rock where there may or may not be a peg placed for the purpose. Most of the best places have pegs. So south we went, armed with our book of anchorages, to see what we could see.

I don't propose to describe every place we went to but some deserve a mention. We took three days to get to the Stavanger area as we were in no hurry. Only for a few miles does one have to leave the 'skjærgård' and go out into the open sea, though the area is one where occasionally there are particularly aggressive waves. We passed the busy shipbuilding yards of Haugesund and on 31st July we turned into the Lysefjord. This is rather special. It is entered under a bridge, it is narrow and standing guard over it so to speak is the stunning 'pulpit rock' which rises 600m straight up out of the water. The view from the top is famous – but we didn't manage that as it's a day's expedition and a long walk – but we did go along the bottom and later took



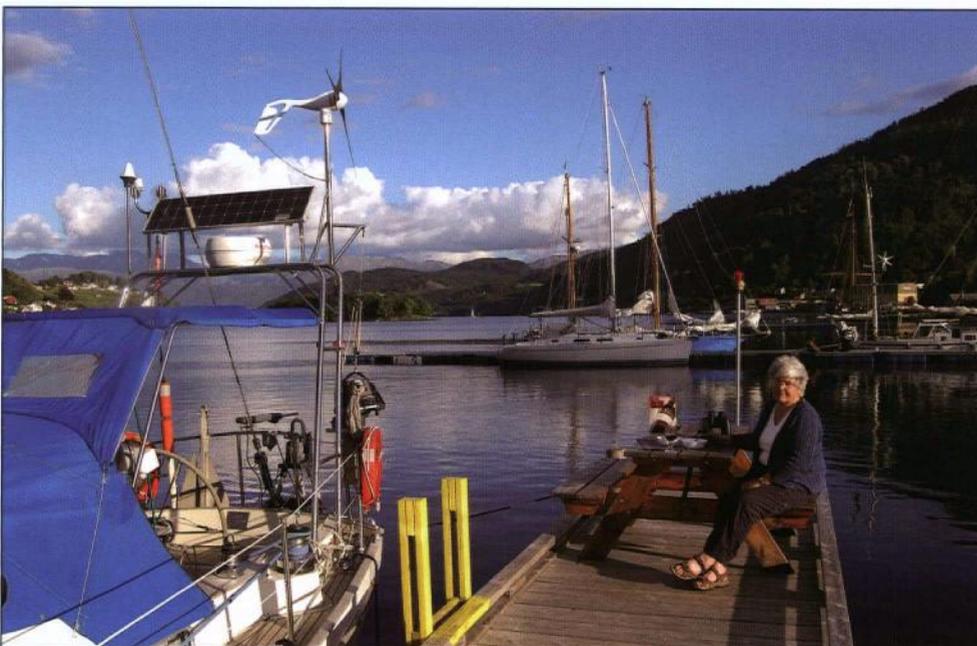
Ann Clementson and Jennifer Guinness at Urnes Stave church.

Faustina II under the Whisky Falls (so called because there was a famous picture of a man on a boat adding water from the falls to his whisky – or maybe whiskey). There was a boat there from which people were swimming – 600m of rock above them and 400m of water below them. The sun shone onto the north side of the fjord whilst the south side was comparatively dark. It's a justly famous fjord. We went to the head of the fjord and

stopped for lunch where we met 'base jumpers' from many countries who, thereabouts, have ideal conditions for their insane sport.

From there we went to Stavanger, where we tried to moor in the small marina in the centre of the city. However it didn't look good and anyway there was no light – that was all being taken by the huge cruise ship *Arcadia* moored adjacent to the marina. We went to the marina across the way on Grassholmen ('holmen' means 'the island' – and I guess that 'grass' means grass?) and used the buses to go back into the city. Next day we visited the very good oil museum and walked to see the old city with its small wooden houses. It was a bit 'arty' but nearby we found the fish-canning museum. I know, it sounds desperate, but actually it was interesting.

Like Bergen, Stavanger is a nice



Supper on the pontoon at Norheimsund.

During the time we have owned *Faustina II* we have had to change the gas supplies several times. Going to the West Indies in 2000 caused us to change to Propane (as no one supplies Butane in the USA zone which includes the WI). Then a couple of years ago we went to the Baltic and no one in Germany could deal with the fittings on our tanks – so we bought a new one with pipes. These were no use in Sweden where we had to buy yet another tank.

We have now changed to Camping Gas on the basis that it is easily available in the UK and Ireland and very much so (and cheaply) in France. However you cannot get the large screw top Camping Gas cylinders in Norway. For this trip I took six Camping Gas cylinders but it proved to be not quite enough. I had to buy a local 2kg 'Aga' tank with fittings which cost over £80.

I now have enough miscellaneous gas cylinders and fittings to start a museum! If anyone finds himself in need of any of the collection prior to going foreign, I will be happy to break it up for him.

manageable little city. You can walk everywhere that matters. You can 'do' Stavanger in two days – and we did. The weather was mostly good though we had a big thunderstorm on our last evening. We moved away in the rain next morning and went about 10 miles north to a bay for lunch and then another five miles to a nice bay where we anchored. My back was giving me grief so we stayed another day while I rested, read and listened to my iPod. A threatening weather forecast decided me to move our position and we were helped by another boat's skipper to fasten to the rocks for the night near his boat.

All was going well except that there wasn't enough wind and we were getting pretty fed up with having to motor everywhere. Nothing we could do about that but it does seem to be a downside of cruising in the fjords. We had a really dull day of motoring north, past Haugesund again, heading for our next target, the Hardangerfjord (see sketch). Passing an area where there were some huge oil rigs being constructed (or perhaps demolished), we tried several anchorages – the first was too deep and the anchor didn't hold, the second was too small. After a third failure I gave up and we went to a pontoon at Leirvik (11). It hadn't been a good day; my back was still hurting, there had been very little wind – and it had rained nearly all day.

We left at lunchtime next day and there was just enough wind to raise the sails for two hours. We looked at Rosendal (12) but there was no place to moor (though they are building a new large pontoon for next year) and I found a super little anchorage tucked away in the islands. The anchor was in 12m but we held OK. I put out a lot of chain.

Hot sun!

We motored on into the fjord and went into Norheimsund (13) where there is a marina based on a great pontoon big enough to have a house on. We put our laundry in to be done, and walked under a hot sun several kms to a huge waterfall which one can walk behind. Quite special. There is also a yard where old wooden boats are renovated. It is open to the public and it is well worth a visit. We really liked Norheimsund. We had a take-out pizza and some wonderful raspberries, sitting on a table on the pontoon in the evening sun right by the boat. The marina is operated by the owners of the nearby Spar supermarket and they are nice people who provide a good service. Several British boats were to be laid up here in the water for the winter. No winter sea ice and it is possible to see the boats by

CCTV on the Internet. It's comparatively cheap and definitely worth considering as a Scandinavian wintering place.

We went to the head of the main fjord next day, and looked briefly into the high-sided south-pointing Sør fjord before turning back. Now of course the wind came up quite strongly – on the nose – and we had to punch our way back down Hardangerfjord until we reached Jondal (14). From here next day we took a bus which carried us up a 19km windy narrow road to the Folgefonna (15) which lies at 1200m+. The Folgefonna is an ice field consisting of three glaciers, the biggest of which is a third of the size of the Josterdalsbreen which we had previously visited. However here there is a ski lift and some quite good summer skiing. The wind was fierce all day. We had lunch in the ski hut and had to wait until the bus which had brought us returned to sea level later in the afternoon.

Lashing rain

The rain was lashing down next day and we decided to go over to Norheimsund, where at least we could use the Internet in the marina (free). It took 90 minutes to get there but it was worth it. The rain stopped later and we again walked to the big waterfall, this time with a British couple who were leaving their boat there for the winter. After the rain the waterfall was even more impressive. More rain next day and I loaded some pictures onto the ICC website. Then we headed back down the fjord, diverting to look at the amazing Fureberg waterfall which cascades down under a main road. We anchored in a nice bay in greatly improved weather. It took us another five idle days to get back to Bergen, replenishing fuel and food en route at Hjeltestad and overnighing in some lovely anchorages.

On my first visit to Bergen I had moored *Faustina* in the Vagen, the old harbour in the centre of the city and near the Bryggen World Heritage site. It's a grand place to moor and we returned there, with shore-power to the boat. We spent a couple of days looking around the city (I was getting to know it quite well by now) and then, on 20th August, Ann left to fly home. Next day I was joined by Frank Hand (ICC) and his partner Alexandra who had rashly volunteered to help me take *Faustina* home. They had two days of exploring Bergen. On the second evening we were looking at the weather on my laptop in the nearby pizzeria equipped with WiFi. We had planned to leave the day after next, and to get to the Shetlands over two days and one night. Now we learnt that the weather for the second day was to be bad – so we decided to leave immediately and do the job in two nights and one day. Not ideal but better than getting a pasting.

So we left Bergen and in the few hours that it takes to get out into the North Sea we got everything ready. The first night was long and a bit 'bumpy' with the wind from the north-northwest about force 4. Lovely clear sky. By midday it was grey and cold and there was no wind until after lunch when we had enough from the south-southwest to make sail again. We heaved-to for 45 minutes to have supper. Soon after the wind and waves got up and we had a dreadful night with the wind building to force 7-8 from the south and against the tide. I managed to be sick all night (and Frank took to his bed, also sick). Alexandra played a blinder and stayed up to look after us. I reduced sail progressively, and while putting in the third slab reef in the main the luff got caught behind a mast step. While freeing this by climbing on to the boom I was thrown back on to the guard rail and hurt my back. The force of my fall was sufficient to bend the pulpit significantly out of shape. Thank God I was wearing a safety line. I took the main down completely and we went on at good pace with only half the Yankee and being steered brilliantly by the Aries wind vane. Later we got hit by a breaking wave that tried hard to wash me over board and

Alexandra had to hang onto my feet! It was all very wet and cold. Dawn was wonderful, and getting into Lerwick through indifferent visibility was even better. It is in those sort of conditions that one is glad to have a boat like the Bowman 40.

Poor forecasts for the west coast of Scotland again decided us to take the Caledonian Canal option but first we visited Fair Isle for a walk and a night's stay (with supper in the 'bird hostel') and Wick (but only from very late evening until very early dawn) where, in fairness, there is a good pontoon in the outer harbour. We made slow time through the canal with an overnight stop at Fort Augustus. We stopped overnight near

Ardfern and refuelled there next morning before going on to Gigha and then Bangor, making the most of the tides. It was very rough off the Mull of Kintyre and the wind was agin us, but we were happy to push on to get home.

I had been away for 10 weeks and had logged just over 2000 miles – an average of about 28 miles a day. We had been blessed with much better weather than those at home 'enjoyed'. We had had a great cruise with the CCA and some wonderful scenic cruising in a beautiful country with friendly English-speaking people. Sure it was expensive – but hey, we're worth it! And if we don't spend it, the bankers probably will.

Jonathan Virden writes of two cruises in *Twayblade*

Twayblade made two cruises, both of them from and back to Plymouth, with rather uncooperative weather. In May she was launched less ready than usual for going to sea. We spent several days on the mooring at Cargreen (north of Saltash up the Tamar river) partly finishing winter work and partly held up by unpleasant weather. We took the opportunity to go by car to visit local gardens and the splendid markets at Tavistock. We spent two nights anchored at Jennycliff Bay (east side of Plymouth Sound – a very good place in strong winds with any east component) and did not look out of the cabin during a wild day of northeast gale. We sailed, fitfully, to Fowey and spent three nights there walking locally for interest and exercise. We motored to Falmouth and spent three nights there, including a delightful evening on board with David and Candia Cox. We motored through patchy but sometimes very thick fog to Helford for lunch at the Ferryboat Inn with our long-time friend Hugh Davies. Finally we had a very pleasant passage all the way back to Plymouth with good wind on the beam. We had some guilt about our underachievement, but the weather had not been helpful.

Halfway through July we planned to go a bit further, perhaps Scilly and even Ireland or France if the wind blew appropriately. Before we set off *Twayblade* was lifted out for pressure washing; this made a remarkable difference to ease of progress. Later that day we sailed on a moderate southeast wind to St. Mawes for a night. Then we sailed on gently to Penzance for two nights in the wet dock and lunch at The Dolphin with my sister and her husband.



Jonathan inspecting passage grave at Bants Carn, St. Mary's, Scilly with Sampson Island in the background.



Twayblade in Gimble Porth, Tresco, Scilly

We motored all the way from Penzance to St. Martins, Scilly Isles on a quiet sunny day. We know the Scillies quite well and the forecast suggested that the anchorage in the big bay northeast of St. Martins would be good. It was new to us and it was good; good holding in sand, no noticeable tidal stream, out of line of fire from strong south and west winds and reasonable access to shop and pub. We walked all over the island between and during showers. The bad weather made us stay there for several more days than planned. Eventually we moved on to Gimble Porth (north-east Tresco). Here there is not much useable room, but it is good for perhaps three yachts when there is little or no east in the wind or swell. Three days filling out our knowledge of the island was followed by one day visiting Bryher from a mooring in New Grimsby. Remarkably, for early August, a free mooring could be found quite easily anywhere in Scilly in 2008. Thence we went to the Cove between St. Agnes and Gugh, walked round Gugh and then retreated to a mooring at Hughtown as the forecast forbad loitering in our favourite place.

We took a long walk round the north of St. Marys, eventually finding passage graves from BCE the like of which had evaded us on the other islands. The return to the mainland was planned with wind from southwest – northwest, force 4 - 6 as forecast. The actual wind was east force 3 all day so we motored hard through boisterous irregular seas until a few miles short of Helford where we could sail for an hour. After a quiet night we had a perfectly lovely, most memorable day sailing on a beam reach from Helford to Cawsand for a night and thence home to Cargreen.

Twayblade is a splendid mobile-home for West Country cruising. Next year we plan to go a bit further afield or a-sea.

Crackerjack's two lough cruise in the rain

Alan Markey

This year our summer was particularly busy and we wondered if we would get away at all. We decided to take two weeks off at the end of July and hoped the weather would give us a break long enough for a short cruise. No plans were made, after the disappointment of cancelling our Cork/Kerry cruise, due to poor weather, last year.

The children's sailing commitments meant we could not leave until Tuesday 29th July. On Monday we prepared *Crackerjack*, our Bavaria 31 for a short cruise to Carlingford and we hoped on to Strangford. The crew consisted of my wife Helen and daughters Erica (10) and Aoife (8).

Our neighbour at Howth Marina was also planning a trip to Carlingford on his boat *Sunsari* with his family for their first Irish cruise, so we made plans to cruise in company on the Tuesday morning. Planning and preparations finished we stayed on board on Monday evening and listened to the rain thunder down on the decks throughout the night. This should have been our omen of what the rest of the trip would be like. The 06.00 forecast was for the wind to strengthen later that evening, so we decided to head straight for Carlingford.

We left Howth at 09.00 in a fresh southeasterly wind of 18 knots. Fortunately, it was sunny although the sea was bumpy and there were threatening black clouds which fortunately stayed behind us for the whole passage. We made fast progress covering the 40 miles to the entrance of the Lough in a little over six hours. As a family, this was one of the longest passages to date and all fared quite well.

By the time we arrived into the marina the forecasted

weather front had arrived and it had become cold, wet and windy. We were glad to be on dry land. Not long after we arrived, Jim Slevin ICC arrived on *Testa Rossa*. He was on his way back from the Isle of Man.

That evening we enjoyed a great meal in PJs, with the crew from the *Sunsari* and got back to *Crackerjack* for an early night, although on the torrential rain for the second night woke me several times.

Next morning the forecast was terrible, south, southeast force 6-7, gusting 8 so the planned trip to Warrenpoint was abandoned. The crew of *Sunsari*, who planned to return to Howth that day, had to leave the boat in Carlingford and resort to a car trip back. They came up a few days later to sail the boat home. We caught the bus into Newry and enjoyed an afternoon at the cinema with the children, watching *Kung Fu Panda*. We were late returning to Carlingford and opted to eat in the restaurant on the marina. A number of yachts were weather-bound in Carlingford and many complained about the expensive marina charges and the relative bad value compared to other marinas. This is a shame because Carlingford is a great town and a great place to visit.

On Thursday morning, we left Carlingford at 10.00 en route to Ardglass. I planned to leave at the end of the flood, to arrive at the overfalls at the entrance to the Lough at slack water. It took two hours to get to the Hellyhunter which made the passage longer than it should have been, but at least the overfalls were not too bad.

Once we arrived at the Hellyhunter we motor-sailed in a northeasterly wind of 15 to 18 knots in very dull and grey conditions. The sail was uneventful with very heavy showers and very poor visibility. Helen and the kids were great as this was not a pleasant sail. Everyone made full use of their wet gear.

We arrived in Ardglass before 16.00 and Jim Slevin, who left Carlingford ahead of us, was there to take our lines. Even though it was only 16.00 we had to have lights and heat on down below – what a summer? I had never been to Ardglass before, and was amazed with the friendliness of the staff, quality and reasonableness of the facilities particularly compared to Carlingford. Later that evening, we had a great meal in a lovely Italian restaurant called *Aldos* and met our neighbours. They had left Strangford earlier that day on their Jeanneau 30 *Bright Eyes* and were returning to Howth.

Thursday night was the first dry



Erica gets out in the sun at last.

night in the last four, with no heavy winds or rain. Friday morning was still and bright. As the forecast for the next few days was relatively good there was a mass exodus from the marina, with boats heading in every direction.

We left at 09.00 and headed for the short journey to Strangford. I was a little apprehensive about the entrance to the Lough because of the strong winds for the previous few days, so we left at a time to ensure we arrived at the entrance at slack water. Fortunately, the wind was very light and the overfalls were benign. The only trauma was when a bee got stuck in Erica's hair and we ended up doing pirouettes in the middle of the channel as we tried to comb it out. Bee was freed, child was hysterical but we successfully berthed in Portaferry, much to our relief.

Later that evening we were joined by the Parkes family on *Cruiskeen* who were on their way to Peel, when the weather turned foul so they u-turned and tied up in Portaferry for the night. We had met them in June at the Isle of Man Rally. We also had friends travelling up by car from Howth to spend the weekend around Strangford, so we made a booking at The Lobster Pot in Strangford for 16 people. Later that evening, it was back to *Crackerjack* for a night cap, while the children watched a DVD on *Cruiskeen*.

Saturday night was spent visiting the wonderful aquarium in Portaferry, which was great for the children. The seal sanctuary was full of abandoned pups only a few weeks old. The Whiterock regatta was on and Michael Parkes suggested that we should go and join the party afterwards. He organised a mooring for us in Whiterock and we left Portaferry at 14.00. The sky was clear, but within 15 minutes the clouds rolled in bringing heavy showers and poor visibility. This was becoming the pattern throughout this trip. The racing at Whiterock had just finished when we arrived. We tied up and were kindly ferried in to the club. The marquee was buzzing with sailors and tables were laden down with sandwiches and cream cakes. Spent a very pleasant afternoon and finished it off with a leisurely motor back to Portaferry via Ringahaddy Sound admiring the yachts moored there.

After getting the forecast on Sunday, I realised Helen and the girls, would not want to make the journey back to Howth. I arranged for my brother, Jamesie, to drive up to Ardglass. He would sail back with me and Helen and the girls would drive home. During Sunday we went to Castle Ward in Strangford. The grounds are beautiful, with plenty to do. A lovely courtyard had a coffee shop, food stalls, National Trust shop and children's workshop. After lunch in the coffee shop we headed back to Portaferry. Left at 16.00 and the ebb had already started, so no great difficulties getting down the Narrows. We



Helen, Aoife, Erica and Alan 'enjoying' the weather.

enjoyed looking at the seals and no drama on board this time. The overfalls were quite bumpy considering the wind and tide. Motored back to Ardglass arriving just before 18.00.

Neil and Mary O'Reilly, on *Petrel* from Howth, arrived in beside us. Once we were all tied up we headed to Currans Bar for dinner. Again the hospitality of the marina staff was excellent, this time offering to drive us up to Currans. Meal was lovely, enjoyed a night cap with the O'Reillys. This was the last night for the whole family on board.

On Monday prepared the boat for the trip back to Howth. Girls played on the marina, catching shrimp and attempting to get a crab. Sun came out and sat in the cockpit for the first time enjoying the heat. Jamesie arrived about 17.00 and Helen and the girls left for Howth.

Jamesie and I left Ardglass immediately as he was due to work the next day, so we motor-sailed down the Irish Sea initially against the tide. I have never seen so much fishing activity and that evening and off Clogherhead we had to go through a fleet of 24 trawlers many of which were very badly lit. We eventually picked up the tide before Rockabill and for the last hour or two we sped along arriving into Howth at 04.00. As we reached home the skies opened and the rain and thunder started and didn't stop for 12 hours.

I was delighted that we managed to get away for the week. We took each day as it came and achieved a lot. The children enjoyed spending time with us, enjoying the wildlife, and there was plenty to keep them occupied on land. Helen has put in for new wet gear and deck shoes as her old ones are now destroyed due to the rain. All in all, the summer 2008 cruise was a success and we hope to return to Strangford next year for the June rally. With luck, we will have better weather.

Cruising with an Admiral

Henry Barnwell

Forty years is a long time, a lifetime for some. For Ivy and me it is just about that long since we first pushed a very small motor-sailer out of Dun Laoghaire, laden with our kids and all of their buckets and spades, bound for a cruising area which to us was shrouded by the great unknown, being the west of Ireland.

In the intervening years, we have quietly, and sometimes not so quietly, gone about our business. We have seen our four children mature, marry, pursue their own sailing careers and present to us a crew list of young Barnwells which now numbers twelve. Some more talented than others. But all loving the sea in their own way.

We have also been extremely lucky in that we have managed to sail to almost every island we had wished to explore, and to be able to continue sailing long into our retirement.

This year we decided to revisit all of the old meccas, to relearn tides and to find out how the Celtic Tiger had impacted on the gentle art of cruising.

In early June, with a gaggle of grandchildren (the cousins) and their parents waving us off, we let go in Dun Laoghaire. Later that day we tied up to the pontoon in Arklow. The tide had been less than perfect for entering Kilmore Quay.

"Arklow has improved so much since the old days Henry, don't you think?"

"Maybe, maybe not."

"Oh Henry! Don't be so hard, we now have electricity and water if we need it."

"I don't need electricity or water. In the old days we tied up in the inner harbour without having to cope with a two knot tide. Nobody asked us for €30 before we had properly settled in; raw sewage didn't float past the boat. And extricating ourselves in the morning was easy compared to this pontoon."

"Ah well, that's progress." Ivy did her best to calm me.

"The yuppies think it is progress but it is anything but me."

The next morning, a lovely breeze from the north sped us southward, with the speedo reading ten knots over the ground at times. After our long sojourn in the heat we felt frozen stiff and wondered how cold it would feel if the sun wasn't shining. The sand banks were pretty well marked by international standards and whilst we couldn't remember all of the names we did recall the positions of the buoys; roughly.

Turning the corner at Carnsore, we lost the tide, the admiral reminding me that I needed to put more effort into my homework. Anyway, the breeze held and even though we were, at times, below five knots, we were moving.

Because we have a house in Kilmore, know the area well and had once spent our summers learning to sail around Carnsore and the Saltee Islands, something seemed strange, eerie almost.

Where are the boats?

It took a long time before we sussed it. All of the ninety miles or so from Dun Laoghaire had been sailed in a marine desert. Where were the trawlers? Where were the crabbers?



THE GLENGARRIFF TROPHY

FOR THE BEST CRUISE
IN IRISH WATERS

Before we left the Caribbean we had been witness to the same thing happening there. Several island governments (too many) are making the same mistake as Ireland did all of those years ago. They are selling their priceless fish for a mess of potage, being service contracts to lift and launch the hundreds of Taiwanese satellite trawlers. Most of the islands communities don't even have the opportunity to provide contractors. Almost all of the work on the hard is done by the crews. On islands which frequently have unemployment rates as high as thirty per cent, this would be a hard cross to bear but to have to stand by and watch fish worth billions of dollars disappear? Somebody cocked up, fish and fishing are too important to leave to politicians to negotiate.

We gave our fish away for a mess of subsidies payable to the farming community, which in the one fell swoop managed to destroy both communities. How much better equipped the farmers would have been had they been allowed to develop marketing skills naturally? And how much better would the fishermen be if they were not forced to dump beautiful fish back into the sea, dead of course?

Dithering admiral!

We were given the usual warm welcome to Kilmore Quay and following a good night's sleep rose next morning to a continuation of the northerly breeze and the bright sunshine. However, the admiral was dithering. She didn't like the tides or the breeze was too fresh or some other excuse. The net result being that I had been allowed to settle into a newspaper, had just finished my second coffee and was looking forward to a lunch of fresh crab and maybe (if I was good) a glass of chilled white wine, when the command (disguised as a question) rang out. "Would you like to eat in Kinsale tonight?"

Out we steamed, into the desert again, and eighteen to twenty knots of northerly breeze, robbing me of the chance of a feed of fresh crab. I planned to get back at her for that, some day.

We did notice that almost all of the towns on the seashore had experienced exceptional growth in the ten years or so since we had sailed *Hylasia* away from Ireland.

Shortly after clearing the Hook Lighthouse we had a visitor which later proved almost impossible to persuade to leave the boat. We named her Salty Sue and allowed her to break bread with us, which had a very calming effect on this lovely female with big gamey eyes. Salty Sue was a hen racing pigeon.

Hylasia is particularly fond of flat water. Despite our late start we cleared the Bulman at 22.00 under full canvass. An hour later and my chin would have grown icicles. As we prepared to go ashore it dawned on me that we still had a visitor. Salty Sue had by this stage wormed her way as far forward as she could manage under the sprayhood. After a load of coo-coos, cluck-clucks and assorted rubbish had failed to move her, I decided to consult the admiral. A dangerous manoeuvre, as she was below preparing to 'restaurantise' herself. "Ivy, I have a bit of a problem. Sue has covered the

small cockpit in poo-poo already, and refuses to move. We can't go ashore and leave her here, she'll destroy the boat."

"Use your head Henry. Why don't you just pick her up and throw her into the air. She will fly away no bother?"

"Are you alright in the head? I'm not doing that."

"Why not?"

"Because the marina is still busy and somebody is bound to see me?"

"And?"

"And! Some gobshite will report me to the Gardai for cruelty to pigeons. Section 1,651, Paragraph 19,202 subsection 35 (b) (amended). Are you mad woman? This is the 21st century. With my luck some sailor will also be the regional secretary of the Prevention of Cruelty to Marinised Racing Pigeons' Society. It's bound to be illegal, everything else is."

A glass of Trinidad rum for the admiral and a small can of beer for me, saw reason enter the debate. "Ok Ivy, Ok, you don't have to shout, I'll throw the bloody thing off."

Stubborn bird

And that is precisely what I did, except that the bird flew once around the yacht in the gathering gloom before returning to her berth under the sprayhood. I needed another two tries before she got the message. However, the next morning I found her walking up and down on the pontoon, where she remained for the remainder of the week, as did we.

This had not struck us before leaving Ireland, but as we listened for a favourable forecast to head further west, we realised that Ireland suffers from the problem of too much or too little wind. The days when there is a fresh favourable sailing wind, with at least some sunshine, are few and far between. And so we had to steam out of Kinsale, and leave the engine running. We met up with some of the Kilmore Quay boats also heading west.

The lunchtime forecast left me in no doubt whatsoever that I should keep the engine running until we were as far up the fiord as possible in Castletownhaven. Like most other harbours on this coast the place is full of unused mooring buoys. Unused that is, save for two weeks in the summer when the hordes from Cork city descend in their hundreds, making anchoring difficult. The moorings take up the best positions.

The forecast was really ugly, severe gale from the south or southeast with very heavy rain. We so wanted to make sure we enjoyed a peaceful night. "It is beginning to blow already Henry; do you think we should pick up a buoy?"

"I don't know Ivy, I would prefer to lie to our own tackle. At least we know we can trust that, but the buoys haven't left much space for anchoring where I would like to go. Also, there is little time to contact the owners of the buoys, not all of them will be sound."

In the end, we picked up a buoy which allowed us to swing to around the corner, promising excellent shelter. We were joined by two Kilmore Quay boats *C Eclipse* admired by Mary Cullen and captained by John Cullen, and *Fearloinge* steered by Seamie Fenlon who was sailing single-handed. I think he must have a dry-land admiral. Two days later *Fearloinge* made a quick dash for home between gales but Mary and John stayed with us for no less than thirteen days and thirteen nights. That happens to beat our previous record for being stuck in harbour which was eleven days and eleven nights in Martinique a few years ago, when the trade winds had a nervous breakdown. It was horrible, absolutely horrible. We could hardly believe it. We took a taxi to Skibbereen one day to board the bus for Cork city and when we arrived there the rain was bucketing down. As it was when we caught the bus home that night. Even in oilskins I was soaked to my underpants. The admiral, who can afford much more expensive designer oilskins, was dry. She is

the only woman I know who trades her lifejacket in for the latest version every year. The staff in Viking Marine, our local chandlery, must love her.

Mary and John kept us entertained and for my part I found John had good meteorological skills and superb tidal knowledge which made up for my waning interest in tides. There were nights when we laughed our heads off. If there was anybody left in Kilmore Quay without red ears he must have been a new saint in the making. Mary complemented John's tidal knowledge by baking delicious scones every day. My estimation of my own admiral shot up as I watched day after horrible day, her battle with the deprivation of not being able to spend the day in a clothes' shop.

Apart from the proliferation of mooring buoys, Ivy and I could detect very little change in the village since we first sailed there with the children in the seventies. An ugly-looking mini housing estate off the main street and the disappearance of the wooden racing dinghies from the harbour was about it.

We were beginning to settle in to our fourteenth night when John came down in his dinghy to announce that even though it was evening, we could, if we left right now, make Baltimore before nightfall. A couple of tacks later saw us reaching into our latest harbour, before dark.

We tied up to the pontoon on Sherkin Island which was comfortable enough. The two admirals were up as dawn broke and when I arrived on deck were finishing a consultation with the tidalist. Apparently everything had already been decided which left me with nothing to do except reverse out, set the main and unfurl the genoa in about fifteen knots of westerly breeze. Oh! I almost forgot, with sunshine.

Sunshine!

Hylasia is a German Frers design with an optimum hull speed, by the 1.38 rule, of 8.1 knots. With modern technology designers can exceed this by quantum leaps, but at a price. This being that acres of canvas and a deck full of gorillas are needed to exceed the hull speed of a displacement yacht.

We prefer to sail short-handed. So, our hull speed with as little canvas up as possible and the boat almost upright is the great secret of German Frers. Also the ease with which this designer permits his boats to reach optimum speed is truly remarkable.

During the winter Ivy and I had electric winches fitted in anticipation of the day when we will struggle to set the sails. What we didn't realise at the time was that this would improve our sailing performance no end. Since sailing in the tropics we had become very lazy. We knew the sails needed trimming, we knew we could sail more efficiently but often couldn't be bothered. The electric winches cured that, now we only need to press a button.

With all of this going for her *Hylasia* gave Ivy and me a great sense of speed and security as she roared north along the rugged southwest coast almost upright. Even the sun stayed out.

As we approached Beare Island the admiral announced that she could remember Castletownbeare from the old days and would prefer to go to the marina in Lawrence's Cove. Whether this was because it is the country seat of our friends Lord and Lady Antarctica of *Pure Magic* fame, I know not, and didn't ask. The estate is in the environs of Rerrin, the island capital and often hosts visitors from this club. But not on this occasion, *Pure Magic* was in the Arctic. And people think I am mad.

Most people will believe this but a sizeable percentage will not. We had only been in the marina for twelve hours or so when I heard another horror forecast. "Easterly winds will reach gale eight or nine on all Irish coasts tonight." One of the impressions I still had of sailing in Ireland was that we did not



Happy Admiral.

experience easterly gales in July. It was already blowing too hard to turn the boat to face the wind. We just had to put up with it. The blow was so hard that I had to run the engine in reverse for a while. Anyway, who cares? The admiral took it well.

This may have had something to do with the fact that she had another request/command up her sleeve. Normally the mini-passage from Beare Island to Glengarriff is a run, but in a strong easterly it is, of course, a beat. And that is what I was ordered to undertake in the morning.

“Do I really have to put out in that Ivy, it is still honking?”

“I’m afraid you do, yes. Oisín and Conor (two grandsons) are joining us for a week tomorrow and Ciara (our younger daughter) is driving them down. It is easier for her to find Glengarriff than here. In any event, it’s only a few miles, I’m not asking you to steam back to Dun Laoghaire in reverse.”

“Yes Ivy”

The boys, Oisín aged eleven and his cousin Conor aged ten have cruised on *Hylasia* in the West Indies and in the Mediterranean with us before, and are smashing young lads on a boat. Conor has a natural engineering brain and loves wheels and cogs that move, whereas Oisín could keep two families fed with fresh fish. Ivy and I love them on the boat if only for the fact that we are never short of a dinghy drop off or collection, wherever we want to go. They pull their weight. Oisín can stand a full watch and Conor isn’t far behind.

We took them to a restaurant that night. It was wonderful, having reminded the waiter that the pre-dinner drinks did not seem to be included in our bill, to discover that Oisín had produced a €50 note under instructions from his mother (our elder daughter Fiona) much earlier in the night and paid for the

drinks. A young lad like that will always be welcome on *Hylasia*.

Shortly after dawn we sneaked out of Glengarriff at two knots in a gentle westerly breeze to beat out of Bantry Bay bound for Crookhaven, which port the boys love. Glengarriff has hardly changed at all. The hotel has enjoyed a small extension and there is now a proper restaurant in the main street, but that is about it.

The wind freshened, fog descended, it rained and we saw nothing until we were in the final approach to our destination. This passage had just about everything which we hate at sea and in addition the seas were very roly, even though we stood off the coast. At one stage I was down below trying to decide when to hang a left for Crookhaven when I began to

feel queasy. That hasn’t happened to Ivy nor to me for a long time. It really was yuk. The boys did well though.

The cousins left us in Schull, taking a bus to their pick up point in Cork along with so many happy memories. We mooched along the coast towards Kinsale, on our own again, and as we had been away for almost two months began to think of home.

Kinsale has changed a great deal since we first sailed to it. One now has a choice of marinas and no longer has to walk two and a half miles to fetch fuel. Nigel (our elder son) lugged two twenty five litre cans to a service station, half way to Cork one year. He definitely had longer arms when he returned. On the other hand some of the restaurants have gone mad. We paid more for dinner in a second class restaurant than we would in a top class one in St Tropez. Something is crazy; maybe the Tiger needs a good long rest.

Shortly after the 06.00 forecast one morning we decided we did not like the strong easterly element in the forecast. But it did say that as we neared the Hook Lighthouse it should have



Our feathered fello-traveller!

abated. Nor did we like the “very heavy rain” part of it. However, we gave it a lash and steamed down the river at six knots.

Nowhere in the world have we seen such huge swings in wind direction. We needed to make an average of seven knots to beat the ebb at Kilmore Quay. It rained tropical type rain from the Bulman until after the Hook Lighthouse, never letting up. Visibility was poor or worse. We changed direction so many times I have lost count, but for about ninety per cent of the time we were hard on the wind whether a zephyr or gale force. Just west of the Hook I fired up the engine and rolled in the genoa. We needed to get a move on to avoid grounding on an ebb tide in the approach channel. The seas were very choppy and the wind up around thirty knots from the east. One wave roared aft along the boom breaking one of the lazy jacks.

The visibility was down to two or three hundred metres and the wind freshening (it should have been abating and backing) when the engine sat down. Ivy was on watch.

“Don’t worry Ivy, it has probably sucked up some air, you steer and I’ll go down and fix it.”

I pumped the hand pump until the bay should have been full of diesel but Ivy could not start up. “Ivy I am beginning to have bad thoughts. Do you think we could be out of fuel?”

“Yeah, that’s it, definitely we are, both needles are down to empty.”

Jesus in heaven, now I had to find the spare fuel. “Could you move away Ivy I have to open your seat, stick on the pilot.”

Our main locker is about two miles deep, but eventually I extricated an ancient can of about twenty litres. In a choppy sea with a near gale on the nose I managed to pour most of the fuel over Ivy’s lovely sea boots but did get some of it into the starboard tank.



Go for it!

“That’s it she should bleed OK now.”

I went below with difficulty, as the wind was freshening, forcing Ivy to bear away from Kilmore. Visibility was now down to 100 metres and if possible the rain was worse, but Ivy was sailing brilliantly. I pumped until my fingers were sore, nothing. I then asked Ivy to use the starter motor to pump up the fuel, nothing. Good job we have good batteries.

“Henry, come up here; the clouds are lifting and it has stopped raining. I can see the Quay; we are almost at the approach buoy. What are we to do?”

Funny ha! ha! I thought, normally she tells me what to do on the boat.

“Ivy, the first thing we are going to do is to stay cool. Nobody is dead. Yet!

We have three choices, sail into the harbour, we did it once before. Turn around and steer southwest to claw off of the coast, for the night. Sail on, hoping the wind keeps blowing and make for Dun Laoghaire.

“I’d like to go back out to sea, we’ll be comfortable there. The sky has almost completely cleared now and the wind is dying. If we go on and lose the wind around Carnsore we could be in trouble. The forecast is for it to abate.” There was a good deal of sense in what Ivy said.

“Ivy, going out to sea is sensible, in a couple of hours we should have made enough offing to feel safe, but I do think I can sail into the harbour, honestly.”

“You have very little chance to make the harbour tonight; even though the ebb is advanced it is still running east. I can remember that from the old days, it will be sluicing as we approach the harbour wall. If the wind eases any more you won’t have enough way



He also serves who stands and waits!

on her to beat the tide. We could end up on the bridge. I don't want to go up on the bridge."

"I'm not going to hit any bridge. Probably Fiona and her kids are in there waiting. They'll be gutted if we don't show. Ivy I promise you I can do it, please believe me, I can I can."

I rang Nicky Murphy, one of the harbour mariners. We have known Nicky since he was a chissler helping in his father's shop in the Quay. "Nicky, we have a bit of a problem, I can't start the engine. I'm going to sail in but I will need help to kill her speed on the final approach."

"Negative, Henry, there's a bit of a sluicer running and a trawler is blocking the entrance. I'll call the lifeboat."

"Nicky, please, please listen to me, I can do this."

"Jesus Henry at least let me put them on standby, I have you in visual now, the tide is pushing you east."

"Nicky, unless the wind dies away completely, I can make it." And then I almost shouted down the phone. "No lifeboat."

"OK, you're in charge, but don't blame me. Aim for the hammerhead where I'll have some bodies, good luck."

"Henry, your idea sounds great but I am still worried." Ivy hadn't been converted yet.

"Believe me please, I can do it, it's easy."

"I am going to point her up towards the Burroughs just enough to beat the tide. When we round up to go in she'll be far too quick, so I can only give you about ten seconds to furl the genoa. With the main only she'll still be too quick so I'm afraid you'll have to move like a young one to drop the main."

Definitely mad!

"Ten seconds Hen? You are definitely mad; just tell me when you need me."

We did really well in the channel, staying close to the centre. As we made our final approach we were making six knots which speed I reckoned we needed to beat the ebb in comfort.

"Ivy we are going to make this. Look at the trawler, I can get by there. Kill the genoa, now." The admiral didn't quite beat the ten second limit but she certainly moved fast.

With the foresail down and the wind continuing to abate we were down to four knots when I called the main down. To make this easier for Ivy I pointed up to the wind for a few seconds. When I turned to look at the hammerhead our boat speed was down to three knots. I realised we had the potential to do damage at that speed and only about eighty metres in which to slow down.

Ivy then heard shouting and looking up we could make out Fiona, Oisín and his two siblings Alana and Aran, all ready to help Nicky. Twisting the wheel from side to side as we approached took another smidgeon off her; even so at two knots *Hylasia* still weighs seventeen tons. Nicky and his helpers were brilliant; they took the speed down to zero in a few metres without pulling the bow in. Oisín was on board in one Olympic-style leap where he tidied everything away for his grandparents who at this stage were tired. However, nothing is ever so simple on *Hylasia* the best wine is always held 'til last.

"Henry, tell you what, just give the key a bit of a twist, I think she'll go. Then you can move into your berth." At first I thought Nicky was joking.

"Nicky, I don't have any objection to that but if she starts I'll get up on that pontoon and hit you a box like you never had before, seriously."

"Don't mind that, just give her a twist."

I did, and of course she started, first time. But, I didn't box Nicky for his foresight. Worse was to happen before we were able to make a diagnosis in a couple of day's time.

Kilmore Quay is probably the one port we visited on this cruise which has benefited greatly by the march of time. The marina is very well managed. The shelter is excellent and the

new showers five star. Jim Power is a very good engineer and can tackle most problems. One aspect of the development executed by the Wexford County Council, of which it can be very proud is the two mariners, Peter Devereux and Nicky Murphy. Both of them are fine seamen and the energy they expend when the yachts begin to arrive in summer is awesome. The only fault we can find is that fuel is not more readily available.

Homeward bound

We slipped out of the Quay bound for home and were able to sail all the way to just north of Wicklow Head before the wind died. The fart box ran well from there until it sat down again, close to the Moulditch bank.

Same procedure, Ivy steers whilst I fiddle about below. Once again Ivy did a lot better at the wheel than I did in the engine compartment. Almost an hour passed without success, when Ivy called me up. The tide had turned adverse, we were only a hundred metres or so from the beach and the wind had died to nothing. We were beginning to make a habit of this.

Eventually, we decided the likelihood of starting up was less than the probability of drifting all the way back to Wicklow Head. "Ivy, I have a brillo idea. It's August Monday evening; before everybody starts drinking why don't we call one of the children and ask for a lift?"

"Great idea, I'll ring Nigel." The admiral wasn't long coming back to announce that her elder son couldn't get a boat and that Fiona's rib was on a trailer in her garden. "Nigel suggested that I ring Patrick."

"Go ahead."

"Patrick, our engine is down again and dad can't start it, do you think you could come out to us? We are slipping backwards."

"I'll call you back mum."

Nothing like a Trinidad rum!

Patrick rang within a few minutes to say that he had contacted Shane Gray, of "Distant Shores" fame, who is Ivy's nephew. He promised they would be with us in an hour or so leaving me with nothing to do but to pour two Trinidad rums. When I climbed back to the cockpit with the admiral's drink I was full of admiration. In no more than a light zephyr she was clawing off the beach managing to tack on her own.

Mind you the electric winches helped a lot.

Just before sunset Patrick and Shane arrived at full speed. Both of them were on board the yacht before their speedboat had come to a stop. They walked past the rum, wouldn't touch the cold beer and nearly hit me when I offered a glass of fine red. They are two highly professional young men and following a deep interrogation of your scribe they began an intimate examination of the patient. This only lasted a minute or so before Shane heaved himself backwards out of the bilge to announce that someone had switched the fuel leads on the two tanks.

Apparently, when I thought I was running on my big full tank I had in fact been running on my half empty small tank. The men had the engine running again in a couple of minutes, and before they left us to steam home, the inquest had commenced. The swapped fuel leads would explain a lot but not how Ivy had reported two empty tanks on our way to Kilmore Quay. I quickly came up with the answer to that one. She had read the gauges with the ignition turned off.

Anyway, we reached Dun Laoghaire in fine form (maybe the rum helped) to be met, as the night closed in, by Nigel, who quickly had the yacht tied up and his car winging us on our way to a well-deserved dinner.

Muglins to the Mediterranean

Paul Butler

Seven years have passed since I brought my former yacht, *Red Velvet*, back from the Mediterranean after a series of voyages over four years that brought us as far as Athens to the east. Since acquiring *Muglins* in 2003, she has been to Scotland, Cornwall, France and north Spain a number of times; but not beyond. My current plan is to bring her away for about five years, cruising each year for two weeks at Whit and for the months of August and September and leaving her at different ports each time. A delayed start this year meant that we had to make a direct passage to northwest Spain leaving on 1st August. Fortunately I had a full crew for the passage.

Nóirín and I did the entire trip. For the first part, including the passage, we had Laurence Thompson, Jackie O'Donovan, Luke Johnston, and Peter Fagan. Daughter, Cliodhna, who lives and works in Tokyo, was with us from Lisbon to Puerto de Banus and Eamonn O'Scolláin and Nicholas Butler joined for short periods in the Mediterranean.

Dave and Shirley Bieber (see last year's Annual) from Cornwall had left some months ahead of us and the plan was to join up and carry on loosely in company and to winter in the same place. I had not pre-booked winter moorings but I had booked two very cheap flights home from Valencia for 2nd October.

The six of us set off from Dun Laoghaire on Friday 1st August at 11.00. Wind was on the nose but there was not too much of it. We had the Tuskar abeam by 01.00 on Saturday the 2nd and had begun to settle into a routine much helped by the fact that we worked three hour, two person watches with a change every hour and a half. For the passage to La Coruña we had a lot of wind on the nose but none of the force 7 which was much predicted by the forecasters; indeed, our most accurate forecast was gleaned from the five day Atlantic charts which I had printed from the BBC website just before departure.

Most notable on the passage were whale sightings on three separate occasions. We failed to take photographs of them but Luke did capture one in a video sequence which I shall be happy to email to any member on request. Apart from that, we were visited by dolphins on a large number of occasions. I cannot explain it but they always give a great sense of well-being, particularly when one is far out on passage and not in the most comfortable of conditions.

We passed Torres Hercules to starboard and arrived in La Coruña at 12.30 on Wednesday 6th August after five days and 608 miles. The town, where we took a rest day, is full of excellent restaurants and has an old tram that brings one around the peninsula and past Torres Hercules, reputed to be only lighthouse that was originally built by the Romans and still in operation today. I have been there many times since my first visit

with Robert Barr back in 1984 and none of my original fascination with the place and its history has faded. Three of us had a memorable lunch which included freshly made paella, and a bottle and a half of wine at a total cost of €24.00; we have much to learn in this country and are far too tolerant of mediocre food at inflated prices. One huge coincidence was the fact that we met up with Pierre Molho and his wife, Laura Ramos, of the yacht *Chogui*, a couple from Grenoble but sailing out of Les Sables d'Olonne whom we had met last year in Brittany. They joined us for a memorable evening.

On 8th August we sailed some 48 miles around to Camariñas via Cabo Villano. The latter seems to have sprouted even more wind generators than on my last visit. Next day we had a two port day; first to an anchorage off the town of Fisterra for lunch and then on to Muros. Next day, the 10th, was another two port day. Having said our farewells to Peter, we set off for our first stop, at Ilas Cies. When we arrived the sun was shining on this most beautiful nature reserve so we anchored off the beach and had swims and a late lunch. Just as we departed there was a most dramatic change of weather as very low cloud rolled in and visibility was much reduced. This soon passed and we had a pleasant sail on to Bayona. A new marina has emerged there since my last visit. It is more convenient to the town than the RCN one. Facilities, which included free wi-fi, were excellent and we were right beside the old town. I soon rediscovered the delights of Galician pulpo. Laurence and Jackie took their leave here on the 12th to pursue a pre-planned land based holiday in Gijón (north Spain). Nóirín, Luke and I set off with the intention of going to Viana do Castelo in Portugal but, having left the Ria and turned south, we found a lumpy sea with



Benidorm.



Cabo Carvoeiro, Peneche.

5/6 on the nose, decided we were on holidays and headed back to Bayona. We left in much better conditions with a westerly wind the following morning and decided to make the 68 mile passage to Porto. We arrived in Leixões (half an hour bus or train from downtown Porto) in plenty of time for drinks and a good dinner. The following day, 13th August, was spent re-acquainting ourselves with Porto. This time we did the tourist thing and took an open-topped bus where earphones were provided for a multi language commentary – sounds trite but it was informative, enjoyable and well worth while; something we were to repeat in Lisbon a few days later.

On Thursday the 14th we spent another long and pleasant day sailing some 64 miles to Figueira da Foz at the mouth of Rio Mondego. Having gone through the usual full immigration control, we were assigned one of the many free berths in the excellent marina and had plenty of time to explore the town in daylight and to have dinner.

On Friday we sailed 35 miles to Nazaré, where we were greeted by what Reeds describes as the “British” Manager; in fact a gentleman from Monkstown, Co. Dublin who settled there some 12 years earlier. I first encountered him nine years ago when sailing *Red Velvet*; a most helpful man, full of useful information. On Saturday morning we went into town where we shopped in the very large covered market where, for example, I witnessed a fishmonger, who was selling a few kilos of fresh fish to a shopper, refuse to accept a €10 note on the basis that it was too large! That afternoon we sailed on another 23 miles to Peniche. En-route Luke and I caught four mackerel between us; they were filleted and eaten within the hour! Peniche was another good port with a large fishing fleet.



Clíodhna passing Tarifa lighthouse.

All tourists seemed to be Portuguese and we ate very well.

On Sunday 17th we headed for Lisbon. On arrival at the marina at Cascias we found, for the first time this August, that there was no space. They were good enough to contact the relatively new marina at Oeiras, about five miles closer to the city, and we were duly booked in for three nights. Here Luke was to leave. He was sad loss, but we were joined by our daughter, Clíodhna, who lives and works in Tokyo (she had flown to join us via Paris and was booked back from Malaga on 5th September – a circumstance that gave us both the pleasure of her company (and not inconsiderable help sailing) and the incentive to get a move on and make it to the Mediterranean by the end of the month. Here too on

the 19th friend and fellow ICC member, David Beattie, arrived on *Ree Spray*. We had drinks aboard *Muglins* and were brought out to an excellent restaurant by his friend, John Duggan, an Irishman who lives in Lisbon and whom we had also met when there with *Red Velvet* in 1997.

We left Oeiras at 08.15 on Wednesday the 20th and enjoyed the now familiar Portuguese northerly trades for all 51 miles down to Sines, a good spot and the only all weather anchorage (with marina) on a long stretch of coastline down to Cape St. Vincent.

On the 22nd we had another glorious day’s sailing with poled-out genoa and prevented-main all the way down to and around Cape St. Vincent. Having rounded the latter, after a fast 56 mile passage, we anchored off the beach at Sagres – close in with excellent holding in an offshore force 6.

The following morning we set off for Vilamoura. The latter was chosen for its location, not for its beauty. It is a wholly artificial creation with nothing of the character, culinary or otherwise of west Portugal. English seems to be the first

language. The next day we had a short 17 mile journey, mostly under auxiliary power, to Faro Lagoon a first for me and a well sheltered tranquil anchorage.

The following day, the 22nd, we motored (there was no wind) across to Mazagón, a convenient stop and one necessary to avoid an overnight to Cadiz.

After a further 47 miles on Tuesday 26th we were in Cadiz having made a brisk passage mostly under sail. We spent three days here, an old favourite of mine. The marina is a pleasant walk or short taxi ride from the centre of the city.

On Friday we travelled south for 30 miles to Barbate (referred to in one of my older charts as "Barbate de Franco"). This was an excellent port of manageable size, with good food and a convenient stop on the way to the Strait of Gibraltar.

Although we had originally planned to stop in Gibraltar our friends from Fowey, Dave and Shirley Bieber aboard *Crystal Eyes*, were now just ahead of us and we agreed to meet in Sotogrande on Saturday 30th. So it was that on Saturday we undertook a 45 mile passage down to and through the Strait and



Rock of Gibraltar.

up to Sotogrande. The wind (5/6) followed us all the way around giving us a wonderful sail; great scenery from both Africa and Europe with heavy shipping going through the shipping separation zone. We had a great re-union (we had not met since last year in France) aboard *Crystal Eyes*, sharing their champagne in celebration of their 36th wedding anniversary.

I must explain why our next port was to be Puerto Banus – my 60th birthday was to be on 3rd September and the port was chosen because of its convenience to Malaga airport as we were to be joined by son, Aonghus, daughter-in-law Caitriona (expecting our and her parents' first grandchild) and Nóirín's brother, Eamonn. It turned out to be, in my view, the Spanish equivalent of Vilamoura. It was by far our most expensive marina visited (€55 a night with a €139 "deposit" on a plug) and with few facilities for yachts or their crew (showers etc. were as far as one could get from the berths). English was the first language. That said (and a lot left unsaid), it was a great family occasion and we were joined by Dave and Shirley too. We stayed from the 31st until all our visitors left by the 5th, escaping the port and the worst of the heat each day by sailing to anchorages for lunch and swims each day. Last to go was Cliodhna leaving me and a very sad Nóirín alone for the first time since Dun Laoghaire. A good brisk sail for 42 miles to Caleta de Vélez soon blew the cobwebs away. This proved to be a wonderful port; entirely Spanish, mostly fishing and very good local restaurants.

Saturday 6th was a three-port day, two by choice. We anchored off the beach at Marina d'Este for lunch and went on to Motril, where there was no room save on an uncomfortable anchorage in the harbour. *Crystal Eyes* stayed and we went on to Adra where we took the last berth alongside the quay wall after 57 miles in all just as darkness descended (our first use of the Nav. lights since Biscay).

On Sunday we sailed a short 17 miles to Almerimar. I had wintered *Red Velvet* here in 1999/2000. It has very good facilities and is one of the most reasonably priced establishments in Spain. We spent an extra day here making full use of our folding bikes (Di Blasi bought in Nettuno, near Rome, with *Red Velvet* in 1999 and much used since).

On Tuesday the 9th we sailed to San José and, for the third time on the entire cruise, were told that there was no room (there does not seem to be a Spanish equivalent of the French



Noirín in Cartagena.

“désolé” which for me always takes much of the pain away!). We went on for some considerable distance to an anchorage at C. de Pedro. This is a beautiful spot (apart from the fact that it is inhabited by nudists); and it has a ruined Moorish castle. I had a lovely swim.

On the 11th we sailed to Garrucha. Again, there was no room on the marina but we were able to anchor in the well sheltered harbour within easy reach of the shore. This was yet another very Spanish port where English was not spoken and there was a good variety of restaurants.

On Saturday 12th we sailed 48 miles to Cartagena, another old favourite of mine. The town is steeped in history and traces of a lesser or greater magnitude have been left by each wave of invaders; the Carthaginians (from whom it, of course, got its name), the Romans and the Moors. Much public work had been undertaken (including the uncovering of a Roman arena and temple built by Augustus) since my last visit and the old city has many paved pedestrian streets (cyclists are tolerated). The yacht club has very good facilities, including a swimming pool with bathing deck which is open to marina patrons. We stayed an extra day and headed for Torrevieja, 48 miles further up. This is another very good town with good facilities for all. There was plenty of space as a new marina (Salinas) has opened situated to port on the way in.

The next day, the 14th, was our wedding anniversary and for which we undertook the short passage up to Santa Pola. On the way we called the RCN and I was told that they were full but that there was a new commercial marina there. It turned out that Marina Mirimar, as it is called, had plenty of space, was reasonably priced, had great facilities in a manageably sized town within half an hour of Alicante airport. What completely sold the place to me as a possible winter location (we had intended to go to Valencia) was the fact that it had something almost unheard of in the Mediterranean – not only fingers but fixed fingers (the free wi-fi connection also helped). There is 24 hour security and we saw the most helpful Mariners checking all the boats. Dave and I had a hurried consultation and decided to winter our respective yachts there.

Just before dinner on the 14th Nicholas Butler phoned saying he needed to escape the wet at home and arranged to fly over the following day to join us for a few days. Soon thereafter Eamonn did the same.

On Tuesday, with arrangements in place to return for the winter and with Nick on board, we sailed over to Isla de Tabarca where we anchored and had lunch and long swims. After that, we continued on to Alicante where we spent two nights and were joined by Eamonn. Here we saw and photographed some of the entries, including our own Green Dragon, in the Volvo Round the World Race. Crew aboard the latter on seeing our tricolour, gave a great wave; one returned with gusto: may they have a safe and successful series of passages!

Friday the 19th was yet another two-port day. On passage to Altea we could not resist a stop for lunch off the beach at Benidorm. Porto de Altea, by contrast to the former (it is only about six miles away by land) is a very quiet resort with low-level buildings and an historic town centre on the hill. Eamonn so enjoyed the place that he, despite limited time, persuaded us to spend an extra day: he met no resistance!

On Sunday 21st we sailed up to Morayra with the intention of meeting my old friend Laura Branigan (with daughter Rebecca) for dinner. However, a race was due to finish there and they very much regretted (yes, if French they would have said “désolé”!) that they could not accommodate us. We, therefore, headed south again and found room in Porto de Calpe, a small marina under a very spectacular rock with good facilities but what appeared to be a soulless retirement town.

After two days there we headed back to our final destination, Santa Pola where we tied up at 16.20 on Monday 22nd September.

As our flights back to Dublin were booked from Valencia for 2nd October, we had a bonus “holiday” aboard in Santa Pola relaxing, shopping in Alicante and putting *Muglins* to bed at our leisure. On 26th September Laura and Rebecca drove down to us for dinner to celebrate her birthday and spend the night aboard. We miss *Muglins* and, as I write (October), Nóirín has already booked a flight back for four days in November! In all we were away for two months, visited 37 separate ports or anchorages and covered 1741 nautical miles. We are booked into Santa Pola until 28th May next (Whit). It is my intention to go over for some preparation and day sailing at Easter, cruise up to France at Whit and spend the summer on the south coast of France and west of Italy wintering, perhaps at Nettuno, near Rome.

After WWII the government is alleged to have encouraged women’s magazines to produce recipes which took a long time to prepare. This meant women would have less time for anything else and spent more time back in the home where they belonged. Would have been easier to make them all cook at sea.