

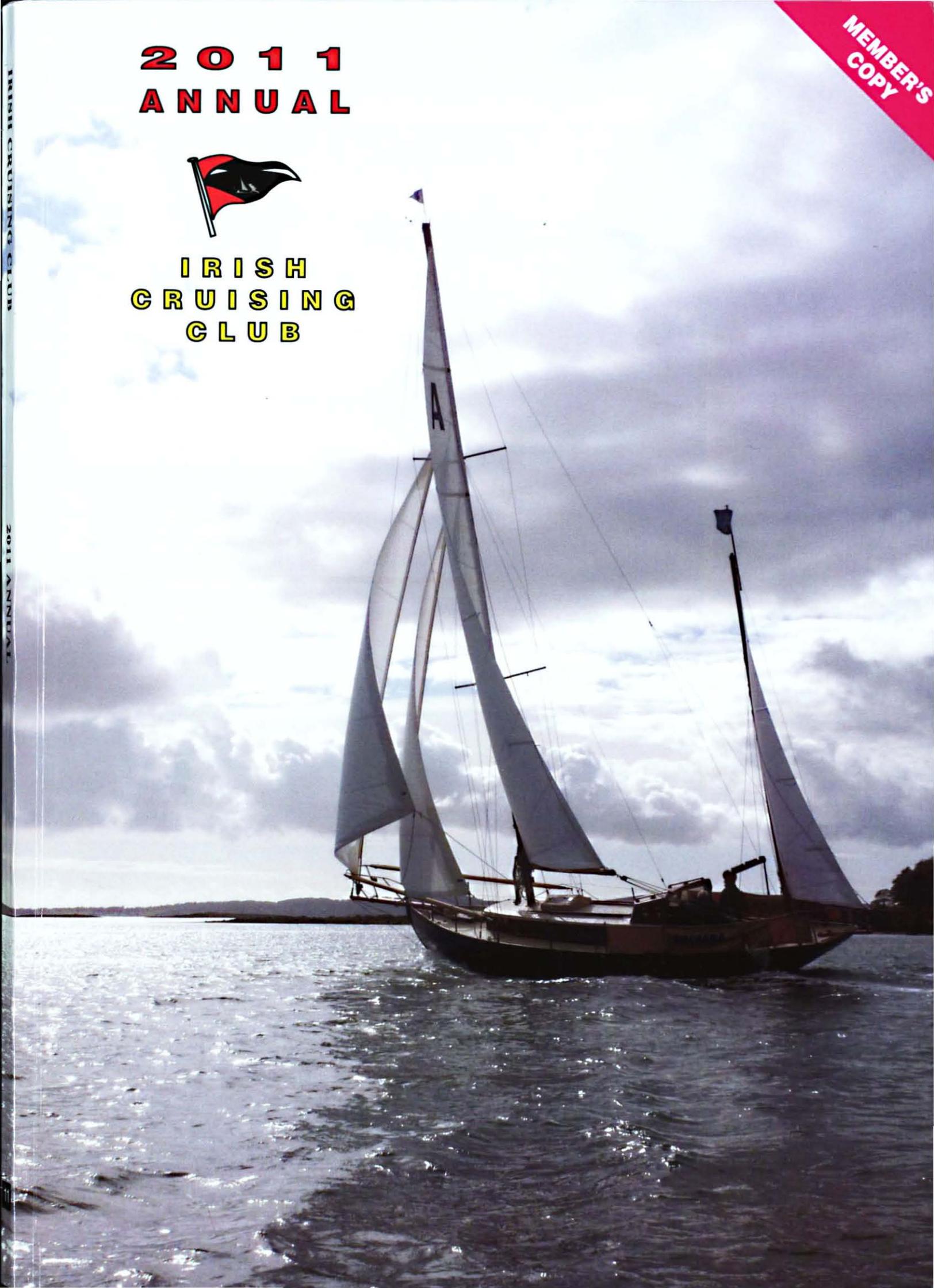
2011 ANNUAL



IRISH
CRUISING
CLUB

MEMBER'S
COPY

IRISH CRUISING CLUB
2011 ANNUAL



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Front Cover: *Ainmara* on Strangford Lough, 20th September 2011. *Photo: W M Nixon*, (See story page v)

Back Cover: Edi Keating's *Chain* alongside at sunset in Mourtos, Greece.

Submissions for the 2012 Annual

To reach the Honorary Editor, Chris Stillman, 3 Thomastown Road, Dun Laoghaire, Co Dublin;
Email stillmac@tcd.ie. Tel. 01 2852084, by 15 October at latest.

Please note that contributions received by the Editor after the closing date of October 15th may not be accepted for publication. (an exception may be made if the 15th is a Saturday or Sunday – time will be extended to the following Monday).

Notes for Contributors

Logs

May be typically 2000-5000 words, major cruises up to 7000-10,000.

Should be submitted on Disc (CD or DVD) or memory stick, Apple-Mac compatible, in Microsoft Word.

Label your disc with (a) your Name: (b) software name and version. **The disc must be accompanied by two typed copies, in double spacing and single sided.**

Log titles must include the name of the author and the name of the area cruised.

Track charts in draft form for non-Irish waters are desirable, **but should be simplified and submitted on Google Earth maps.** (simply write your cruise details on a print of the Google map, and submit the map as an attachment).

Summaries (including such items as dates and durations of passages, multiple crew lists, and detailed track charts) are optional. Please send to the Editor with your log, **but note that due to space constraints it may not be possible to publish it in the Annual. However they will be included with your log in the Club Website archive.**

Photographs: send about 1 photo per 800 words. Digital photos on disc are preferred, though hard copy pictures are also acceptable. (They will be returned only if requested). Please ensure that captions are provided for all photographs. Digital cameras should be set to 'Print Quality' (300 dpi).

Photographs which illustrate the places visited in a manner useful to other members are appreciated. Pictures of members and their crews are welcome, but be sure to indicate the names in the caption (in the sequence shown on the photograph). Upright (portrait format) photos will be welcome.

All logs will be entered for Awards, unless requested otherwise

Dunn's Ditties

May be 200-500 words; anecdotal and illustrative of cruise highlights (or lowlights) or a cruise summary.

Editorial requirements

Please adhere to these in-house conventions:

Spelling: please ensure the accuracy in spelling of place-names: use the spelling given on your charts, and be careful of accents etc in names in languages other than English (for example ä, ü, ø, optional i or y in Greek, vowel-free Croatian etc.) Do not use italics or capitals for place names.

Use Italics for yacht and ship names; (do not use capitals, " " or ' ')

Clock times should be on the 24-hour clock, with a full stop between hours and minutes (e.g. 06.30 and **Not** 06.30 hrs)

Compass bearings should be in numbers - see example below

Wind speed expressed as mean-speed - see example below

Wind direction given in full, and in lower case - see example below

Example: We departed 06.30 on June 7th, sailing 235° true, in a northwest force 4 which later veered to north-northwest force 6, bound for 54°30' north 06°13' west. **Do Not** use ENE, WSW, F 4, etc

Boat speed should be in **knots**, not kn, kt, knt

Distances at sea should be given in **miles**, not m, nm, nautical miles.

The Editor may limit the material to be published, and may consult the Editorial Subcommittee

Our thanks to Bill Rea for organising the Annual's distribution and to Ann Woulfe-Flanagan for overseeing the inscribing and presentation of the Club Trophies, and ensuring their subsequent return.

Thanks especially to Pat Conneely of Typeform Ltd, who has cheerfully and efficiently taken the edited material and transformed it into the Annual as we see it.

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IRISH CRUISING CLUB ANNUAL 2011



Brian Black's *Séafra* approaching Stremoy in the Faroe Islands.

Irish Cruising Club Annual 2011

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NOTES FROM THE EDITOR

It has been agreed that the List of Members and List of Boats should be omitted from the Annual, both on the grounds of privacy and because they are available to members both in the Irish Cruising Club Yearbook and on the Club website.

I also regret the due to limited space, tables of passage details, crew lists and detailed track charts may have to be omitted here. However these details will be made available with copies of logs lodged on the Club website archive.

Honorary Secretary's Report

This year the Committee elected 12 new members, whose names are listed below. The process of assessing membership applications receives a great deal of attention from the Committee and changes in the application process have been introduced to improve the quality of information about prospective members, thus facilitating informed decisions to be made about applications.

Two long-standing members of Committee, Grainne Fitzgerald, Honorary Secretary, and Eleanor Cudmore, Rear Commodore and the ICC's first lady Flag Officer, attended their last committee meeting in March. The contribution and commitment of each will be missed.

The AGM was held in March at the National Yacht Club, 110 members attending. The meeting approved two rule changes, relating to changes in the membership application process, referred to above.

Peter Ronaldson retired as Commodore after three busy years which covered the Canal du Midi cruise; the ICC/RCC

cruise to Azores; the all-Ireland rally in Rathmullan; the presentation of the Fastnet Award to Bill King in Galway, just before his 100th birthday, which was a joyous occasion; the Clyde Cruising Club cruise in Scotland; the Shannon Rally in 2010; and the ICC Annual Dinners in all four Regions. The incoming Commodore, David Tucker, congratulated Peter Ronaldson on his contribution to ICC and the great work that he had done, supported by his wife Evie, in the three years of his office. The new Commodore recognised that there is a need for caution in troubled financial times and did not anticipate major changes would take place during his term of office.

The Annual Dinner, organised by Eleanor Cudmore and her team, was held in Killarney. It was a lively affair with a wide range of activities over the weekend to provide interest for all. The dinner was attended by 242 members and friends.

The main cruising event this year was an excellent rally in Brittany, ably organised by Dan Cross and Stuart Musgrave, which is reported elsewhere. Some 31 boats attended, with 130

OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE

Flag Officers and Committee for 2011/2012 elected at the Annual General Meeting 2010

Commodore	David Tucker (South)	1st Year
Vice Commodore:	Joe Phelan (East)	1st Year
Rear Commodore:	Alan Leonard (North)	1st Year
Rear Commodore:	Frank Ranalow (West)	1st Year
Hon. Treasurer:	Tom Fitzpatrick	4th Year
Hon. Secretary:	Cliff Hilliard	1st Year

North	South	East	West
John Clementson (6th Year)	Bill Brady (4th Year)	Peter Courtney (4th Year)	Peter Fernie (3rd Year)
Connla Magennis (8th Year)	Dan Cross (7th Year)	Robert Fowler (3rd Year)	David Whitehead (7th Year)
Stanton Adair (2nd Year)	John Daly (6th Year)	Alan McGettigan (2nd Year)	
Graham Chambers (1st Year)	Len Curtin (3rd Year)	Richard Lovegrove (1st Year)	

NON-COMMITTEE ROLES

Treasurer- Subscriptions: Alan Leonard	Web Editor: John Clementson
Hon. Admissions Officer: Bill Brady	Club Trophies: Ann Woulfe-Flanagan
Chairman ICC Publications Ltd: James Nixon	Club Accessories: John Massey
Editor-Annual: Chris Stillman	Distribution of Annual: Bill Rea
Editor-Newsletter: Noel Casey	Archives: Barbara McHenry

STOCKISTS OF SAILING DIRECTIONS

Arthur Orr (North)	Guy Johnson (East)	Arthur Baker (South)	Olaf Tyaransen (West)
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DECEASED MEMBERS SINCE ANNUAL 2010

<i>February:</i>	Alistair McMillan , Howth, joined 1968
<i>April:</i>	Aidan Dunn , Dublin, joined 1963
<i>May:</i>	Wallace Clark , Co. Derry, joined 1951
<i>July:</i>	Robert Mollard , Glenageary, Dublin, joined 1969
<i>July:</i>	Bill Hosford , Cork, joined 1974
<i>September:</i>	Stuart Nairn , Crosshaven, joined 1987

NEW MEMBERS ELECTED ON 18TH FEBRUARY 2010

Alex Blackwell (Westport)	Carmel Kavanagh (Sutton, Dublin)	Peter Mullan (Downpatrick, Co Down)
John Coyne (Galway)	John Killeen (Galway)	David Sargent (Sutton, Dublin)
Mick Delap (Greenwich, London)	Oliver Lynas (Newtownards, Co Down)	Robert Torrens (Bangor, Co Down)
Bruce Fennell (Carlow)	Justin McKenna (Dalkey, Co Dublin)	
Oliver Hart (Oysterhaven)		

members and friends at the functions in Isle de Groix and La Trinité.

The regions ran a busy programme of events, both on the water and ashore. The North and East Regions held a joint Rally in Strangford Lough, organised by Alan Leonard. The South region held a summer muster in Baltimore and an Autumn Raft-up in East Ferry. The East had an interesting muster in the Grand Canal Basin, attracting much attention from residents, while the North had an end of season muster in Troon.

The ICC website at www.irishcruisingclub.com was extensively upgraded and continues to develop under the guidance of John Clementson, who is assiduous in keeping it fresh with a range of Club news, information, photographs and interesting notes on maritime matters. It is a must for members who want to keep up to date with ICC activities.

While the weather in these waters was mixed, this did not inhibit members in making the most of sailing opportunities.

*Cliff Hilliard
Honorary Secretary*

ICC Committee 2011 – Killarney, March 2011

James Nixon John Clementson
Dan Cross David Whitehead Peter Fernie
Connla Magennis Robert Fowler Peter Courtney
Dick Lovegrove (insets) Alan McGettigan
John Daly Graham Chambers Len Curtin
Cliff Hilliard Stanton Adair Bill Brady Alan Leonard
Tom Fitzpatrick David Tucker Frank Ranalow Joe Phelan



Wallace Clark M.B.E. D.L.

1926 – 2011

When Wallace died on 8th May of this year, our hearts' barometers fell, and the mournful cry of curlews made full the evening air. His funeral, overseen by his son Bruce, was a celebration of life full lived. On that day one heard words like courage, loyalty, generosity, leadership and friendship. All well used, and with great sincerity.

I remember when visiting Wallace, Miles and crew, when *Aileach* anchored at Malinbeg Harbour under mighty Slieve League. It was 1981, and the Galley *Aileach* was on her way north to Scotland from Mayo for The Lord Of The Isles Voyage. Wallace was skipper, and 64 years old, but slept out on the open boat. He outpaced his crew up the steep steps of the harbour, and he well-twice their age. As always, he met you with an almost thumb-dislocating handshake. You knew where you stood with a man like that!

In 2009 he was awarded the I.C.C. Rockabill Trophy, a premier prize for superior seamanship at the Rhinns of Islay. His boat *Agivey* had to battle her way over An Coire (the Cauldron) through great overfalls to gain entry into Portnahaven. It was so turbulent he had to rope his cousin Ros Harvey to the mizen mast step.

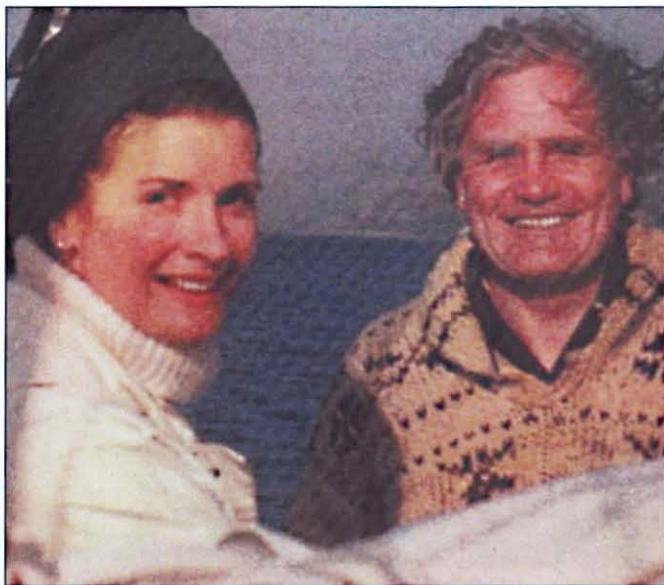
His last cruise was in Croatia with his usual crew in the Autumn of 2010. He had the great pleasure of sailing with his grandson Finnian on that occasion.

His many friends in the ICC, RCC and Freres de la Cote will miss him dearly. His loyal crew will still meet at his old

family home, now Artara House Hotel at Upperlands, to raise a dram. Stephen Clark, Graham Kane, Rikki Butler, Billy Paterson, Arthur Porter, Lewis Pursur, Ron Leniston, Tony Trail and Des Moran will also have a noon balloon.

We have lost our captain. Our thoughts are with his wife June, his son Bruce, (Miles deceased), his grandson Finnian and granddaughter Georgiana.

DM



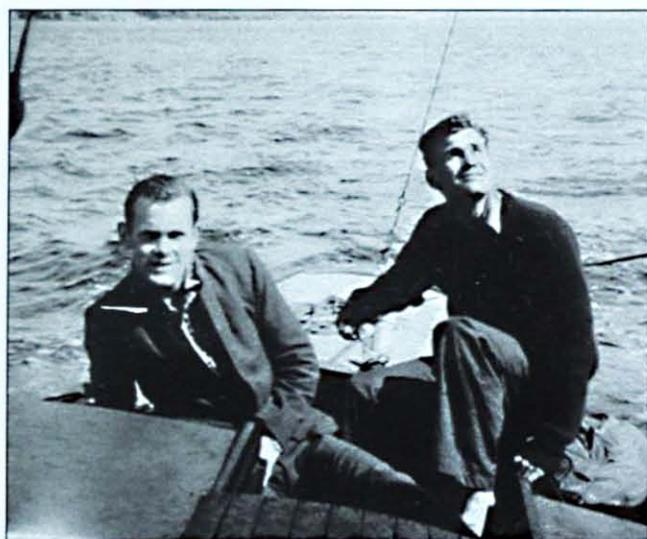
June and Wallace.

Wallace Clark

Wallace Clark, a member since 1951 and our Commodore from 1960 to 1963, brought a breath of fresh air to a club which had formerly been almost exclusively linked to Ireland's main sailing centres. He didn't come from a family with any direct sailing traditions or maritime connections at all. Some parts of his life, such as a career in the linen business at the family's mills in the relatively remote village of Upperlands, were pre-ordained. But his passion for the sea was more mysterious. His maternal kin, the Stuarts, included a couple of Admirals. But neither parent, nor any other immediate forebear, was any sort of sailing enthusiast, let alone one who aspired to cruise in small boats.

Yet from boyhood he was determined to get afloat. Initially this was on the limited sailing water provided by the dams around the linen mill, which had been in business since the 1730s. As a schoolboy in England, while visiting an exhibition in London with his father, he was entranced by one of the displays – a complete clinker-built sailing dinghy which was on show with a manual on how to sail. Boat and booklet were promptly bought, and delivered to Upperlands in time for the next school holidays.

Island Dam, the largest of the five little lakes at Upperlands, provides 12 acres of sailing water. With attractive wooded shores, a tree-covered island, and miniature headlands and bays, it was an ideal cruising prep. school. His self-taught sailing was often alone, and with no other boats around there was never any question of racing. Other than sporting displays against sailing fishing boats at regattas off the north and northwest coasts, he never raced as a skipper at all in his long sailing career. But after catching the end of World War II with sea experience in the RNVR, in 1949 he gained useful offshore skills with a Royal Ocean Racing Club event to La Rochelle in France as crew on the Belfast Lough-based 15-tonner *Anolis*. For Wallace Clark, the most interesting part was the cruise home along the Brittany coast



Wallace (right) on the helm, with his cousin Gordon Clark, sailing *Caru* off the Donegal coast in the early 1950s.

and back to Dublin Bay, and the experience reinforced his desire for his own seagoing vessel, however small.

The nearest sea to Upperlands was Ireland's rugged north coast, and the even more challenging northwestern seaboard. But by 1950 he was regularly sailing these north and northwest coasts in his own small 3-tonner, covering more than a thousand miles in all. At that time, neither coasts had significant sailing activity, thus every venture had an element of exploration to it, and he began accumulating the local knowledge which to make his later work in the area of sailing directions and local history so useful to fellow-sailors.

By 1951 he had something a little larger, the 1899-vintage gaff cutter *Zamorin*, a Loch Fyne-style 28-footer built by the renowned John Hilditch of Carrickfergus. Portrush was nominally his home port, but he developed a lifelong ability to select suitable mooring locations where the boat could be safely left at the end of a weekend cruise, rather than being restricted to returning to the home port. It was an essential skill long before the era of visitors moorings or strategically-located marinas, and it added to his already extensive range of friends and acquaintances living along the coast, for much as he enjoyed long periods afloat with little company, ashore he was gregarious, providing entertaining and increasingly erudite company.

With the energy of youth, he cheerfully disregarded the fearful reputation of Ireland's Atlantic coastline among the Northern Ireland cruising establishment (they almost invariably cruised in the accessible and sheltered Hebrides), and set off in 1951 to sail round Ireland in this small craft no longer in her prime of life. Visiting yachts were an extreme rarity on Ireland's west coast in those days, so the young crew made a formidable impact in the anchorages and islands they visited, and for their skipper it was the beginning of an enduring enthusiasm for Europe's most remote coastline.

When they reached the south coast and sailed into Cork Harbour, they were welcomed as heroes, and *Zamorin's* crew in turn were impressed by the high level of sailing activity – both racing and cruising – which was an integral part of life in Cork. The Crosshaven welcome reinforced his growing involvement with the Irish Cruising Club. He had been elected a member at the beginning of the year on the strength of his cruises with the 3-tonner, and his remarkable 1951 circumnavigation of Ireland was marked with the award (you don't "win" cruising trophies) of the Faulkner Cup.

However, the cruise had revealed *Zamorin's* limitations, and by May 1952 he'd bought *Caru*, a good-looking and much more modern McGruer-designed bermudan sloop, built in 1938. Despite *Caru* being only six inches shorter than *Zamorin*, she had much less accommodation through her slimmer lines, but was more seaworthy and very much faster. He wasted no time in utilizing this performance, with a 1380 mile cruise from Portrush to Brittany and back. His achievements with this able little slip of a boat were prodigious – in 1953 he took her to Norway, and then in 1954 he made his second round Ireland cruise, receiving the Round Ireland Cup, and adding to the experiences which

would eventually become his seminal book, *Sailing Round Ireland*, which was to be published, after further extensive cruising on the Irish coast, in 1976.

He was also a frequent sailing visitor to the Scottish west coast and islands, in time building up an intimate knowledge of that complex cruising area which was to be rivalled only by his knowledge of the Irish coast. That Irish insight was being put to good use with his considerable active input into the developing coverage of the Irish Cruising Club's two volumes of *Sailing Directions*, which in time would cover the entire coastline in regularly up-dated detail, an achievement in which Wallace Clark's contribution was unrivalled.

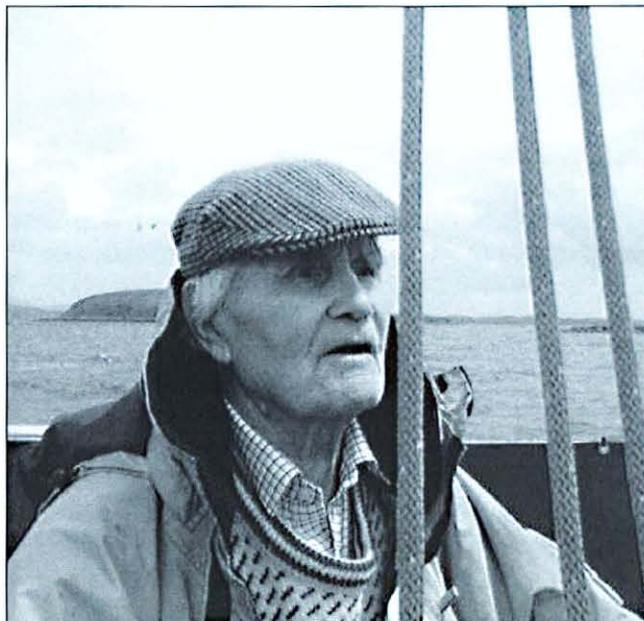
He was also active in the ICC's administration, joining the committee in the 1950s, and ascending the officer ladder by becoming Rear Commodore in 1956, Vice Commodore in 1958, and the Club's most youthful Commodore in 1960, just nine years after becoming a member, the first Commodore from the north. He led by example. By this time he had moved up in boat size to the 36ft Bermudan yawl *Wild Goose*, designed by Maurice Griffiths and built in 1936 in Suffolk of the very best materials.

She was the yacht with which Wallace Clark was to be most intimately associated. He was by now married to June and with a young family. But instead of this limiting his sailing, he showed what could be done with energy and imagination by the careful selection of cruising areas which could accommodate all family levels of enthusiasm and ability, while at the same time feeding his own delight in remote islands and hidden anchorages. The west coasts of Ireland and Scotland provided endless opportunities, and so too did Brittany, but as well for a period during the 1960s he based the boat in the Mediterranean and brought a fresh eye with his writings on coasts and islands far from his usual home port.

At the same time, his interest in the history of ancient boat types used in the narrow but often rough waters between Ireland and the nearest Scottish islands was continuing to develop, and in 1963 he played a central role and was the sailing master for a re-creation on its 1400th anniversary of the voyage from Derry to Iona by St Columba, using a 30ft sailing currach built in Donegal. The five day voyage in this completely open boat was successfully completed despite headwinds. Later, his unique experience in sailing large currachs led to his being a crewmember for part of the *Brendan* voyage of Tim Severin in 1976, while his fascination with the boats of the Celtic seaways was carried a stage further with the building of the Lord of the Isles galley *Aileach*, based on a mediaeval general purpose sailing vessel depicted in a stone carving at Rodel in the Outer Hebrides, which was re-created by boatbuilders at Greencastle in Donegal, and sailed under Clark command from Galway to the Western Isles and Stornoway.

His attractive writing style became more widely known through magazine outlets and several books. A convivial shipmate, he much enjoyed the gatherings – particularly the informal and spontaneous ones – which a shared love of sailing the sea inspired.

After many years, *Wild Goose* was replaced by the 31ft fibreglass motor-sailer *Agivey*, which provided a skipper facing into his eighties with the convenience of an easily-



Wallace on Des Moran's 29ft *Annette* in Clew Bay, July 2010.

maintained hull which had a good sailing performance, and the shelter of a wheelhouse, while he much enjoyed the fact that the substantial diesel engine was the marinised version of the standard London taxi motor, which meant that spare parts could be sourced at very attractive prices.

Sustained by many friends from ashore and afloat, his zest for life continued despite personal setbacks which might have dismayed a lesser man. However, time took its toll, and in January 2010 aged 83, he felt it was time to sell *Agivey* and become boatless for the first time in seventy years. But there were still opportunities for sailing, and during the summer of 2010 he wrote with delight of cruising with three old shipmates – Des Moran ICC, Rikki Butler ICC, and Graham Kane – on a chartered yacht in Croatia, joined for a few days by his grandson Finnian.

The account of this sun-drenched cruise in the 2010 Annual is classic Wallace Clark – insights into local history and nautical habits, interspersed with the frequent conveyance of a sense of enjoyment, and filled with useful information for fellow sailors. He concluded:

"Best thanks to my shipmates for helping hands when I looked like wobbling off those narrow gangplanks, and support all along. We hadn't seen a newspaper or watched TV for a fortnight. Hope we'll manage to go again".

It was not to be. He was knocked down by a truck while walking near his home, and despite an heroic struggle against many painful injuries, he died in early June 2011 aged 84. He has left an extraordinary legacy of historical and maritime interest, all infused with his own unique character. Wallace Clark is much mourned in many areas of life. On the short journey from the church to the graveyard, his funeral at Upperlands paused – as he had wished – at the little lake where his intensely personal sailing career had begun, to be nurtured for more than seven decades through his own irrepressible enthusiasm for the sea and its most challenging coasts.

WMN

Index of Cruising Grounds

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Clyde	91.11, 95.21, 02.14, 08.13, 08.28, 09.17
England – East Coast	90.16, 99.20
England – South Coast	89.15, 90.03, 90.22, 93.20, 94.12, 94.25, 94.17, 95.11, 96.28, 97.02, 97.05, 01.08, 04.06, 07.24
European Waterways	08.09, 08.16, 08.24
Faroe Islands	93.06, 96.15, 09.35, 11.18
Greenland	92.01, 93.01, 95.02, 98.12, 01.04, 01.13, 05.23, 09.15
Hebrides	91.16, 91.09, 91.13, 00.19, 02.11, 02.02, 02.18, 04.05, 05.09, 05.15, 05.28, 05.35, 06.05, 06.14, 09.02, 09.24, 09.09, 10.06, 10.11, 10.20, 11.11, 11.15
Holland and Belgium	89.03, 90.16, 92.13, 94.12, 97.14, 97.23, 01.06, 02.24, 03.23, 05.34, 10.13
Iceland	91.13, 93.18, 94.06, 97.01, 97.17, 99.03, 00.21, 02.01, 05.19, 06.20, 08.10, 11.12
Ireland – Circumnavigation	95.05, 95.15, 95.24, 96.06, 96.08, 96.10, 96.04, 96.18, 99.04, 99.08, 99.14, 00.06, 00.10, 00.17, 00.18, 01.25, 01.03, 02.04, 02.12, 02.21, 02.08, 04.11, 04.21, 04.26, 05.30, 06.42, 07.25, 08.23, 10.24, 10.12, 10.36, 11.08
Ireland – West Coast	03.08, 07.03, 07.08, 09.18, 11.21, 11.33
Ireland – North Coast	91.09, 91.20, 92.26, 93.14, 93.17, 00.03, 04.19, 06.30, 11.25
Ireland – South West Coast	90.18, 91.10, 91.07, 92.02, 94.07, 94.09, 96.01, 96.13, 97.20, 01.24, 06.10, 06.19, 06.28, 06.39, 08.19, 09.18, 11.14
Irish Sea	88.03, 88.21, 92.09, 92.18, 93.14, 94.25, 94.16, 95.03, 98.01, 98.16, 04.13, 05.10, 07.14, 07.21, 08.18, 10.31, 11.09, 11.16
Mediterranean – East including Aegean	93.08, 93.09, 95.04, 95.16, 96.11, 97.03, 98.06, 00.09, 01.10, 01.07, 02.05, 02.31, 02.33, 04.14, 04.03, 05.06, 05.12, 06.07, 06.21, 07.05, 07.10, 07.26, 07.27, 07.28, 08.04, 08.40, 08.29, 09.03, 09.08, 09.22, 10.08, 10.19, 10.29, 11.13, 11.19, 11.29, 11.31
Mediterranean – West including Adriatic	91.04, 91.02, 92.16, 93.08, 93.09, 94.07, 94.15, 96.05, 97.06, 99.07, 01.02, 05.05, 05.13, 05.18, 05.24, 05.26, 05.36, 06.02, 06.11, 06.19, 06.36, 06.38, 06.40, 07.02, 07.23, 07.31, 08.29, 08.39, 09.10, 10.01, 10.15, 10.16, 10.21, 10.27, 11.07
Normandy	90.16, 94.17
Norway	93.08, 94.08, 94.06, 05.14, 05.22, 06.17, 07.07, 08.17, 09.20, 10.02, 10.23, 10.28, 11.02, 11.20, 11.30
Orkney Islands	90.13, 91.14, 93.07, 97.09, 01.05, 08.22
Pacific	93.21, 94.05, 98.04, 99.11, 10.03, 10.34, 11.32
Portugal	89.06, 90.07, 94.04, 94.23, 99.20, 05.08, 06.01, 06.31
Russia	93.08, 04.27
Scandinavia	88.12, 89.02, 90.04, 90.08, 90.13, 92.20, 96.09, 96.12, 96.22, 96.26, 96.17, 00.10, 00.25, 02.27, 05.02, 05.16, 05.27, 10.28
Silly, Isles of	88.19, 89.15, 90.03, 90.17, 91.10, 96.27, 96.16
Scotland – East	90.15, 95.17
Scotland – West	89.04, 88.09, 89.13, 89.14, 89.16, 90.15, 90.21, 91.14, 91.16, 91.20, 91.09, 91.17, 92.19, 92.24, 93.11, 93.17, 93.20, 94.10, 94.22, 95.06, 96.03, 96.19, 97.09, 97.15, 97.16, 97.19, 97.24, 98.09, 98.14, 98.17, 01.11, 06.22, 07.04, 07.09, 07.11, 07.17, 08.05, 10.24, 10.17, 10.22, 11.01, 11.06
Shetland Islands	90.13, 90.15, 91.14, 92.08, 93.07, 10.26
Spain – North Coast & Galicia	90.07, 90.12, 92.14, 92.15, 92.21, 93.05, 93.13, 93.16, 93.19, 95.10, 95.22, 96.24, 97.07, 97.21, 98.03, 01.19, 02.22, 02.13, 05.32, 06.27, 06.37, 07.15, 07.29, 08.35, 09.19, 09.33, 10.05, 10.10, 10.33, 11.17
Spain & Portugal	08.20, 08.25, 10.09, 10.32, 11.24, 11.28, 11.30, 11.34
Venezuela	88.14, 88.16, 90.19, 94.03, 96.02, 04.03
World Cruising	91.03, 92.10, 94.24, 95.07, 95.12, 00.12, 01.18, 01.22, 07.18, 08.08, 11.22

Past Officers of the Irish Cruising Club

Commodores

1929 H. M. Wright
 1942 A. W. Mooney
 1950 M. A. Sullivan
 1953 J. B. Hollwey
 1954 R. P. Campbell
 1958 F. Cudmore
 1960 H. W. S. Clark
 1963 P. H. Greer
 1966 R. L. Berridge
 1969 J. D. Faulkner
 1972 R. H. O'Hanlon
 1975 D. N. Doyle
 1978 J. H. Guinness
 1981 P. J. Bunting
 1984 C. J. FitzGerald
 1987 J. Gore-Grimes
 1990 H. P. Kennedy
 1993 D. Nicholson
 1996 L. McGonagle
 1998 M. McKee
 2000 D.H. Fitzgerald
 2002 A.R. Baker
 2005 C. McHenry
 2008 Peter Ronaldson

Vice-Commodores

1929 H. P. F. Donegan
 1941 A. W. Mooney
 1942 H. E. Donegan
 1947 P. O'Keeffe
 1948 M. A. Sullivan
 1950 J. B. Hollwey
 1953 R. P. Campbell
 1954 B. C. Maguire
 1956 F. Cudmore
 1958 H. W. S. Clark
 1960 P. H. Greer
 1963 C. Riordan
 1965 W. H. D. McCormick
 1967 J. D. Faulkner
 1969 D. N. Doyle
 1971 R. H. O'Hanlon

1972 P. J. Bunting
 1974 G. B. Leonard
 1976 J. M. Wolfe
 1977 A. D. Macllwaine
 1978 P. J. Bunting
 1980 G. Kenefick
 1982 C. J. FitzGerald
 1984 L. McGonagle
 1986 J. Gore-Grimes
 1987 H. P. Kennedy
 1989 D. H. B. FitzGerald
 1990 Arthur S. P. Orr
 1993 Brian Hegarty
 1996 Michael O'Farrell
 1997 Arthur Baker
 1999 T.C. Johnson
 2001 Donal Brazil
 2002 Peter Ronaldson
 2004 Cormac McHenry
 2005 James Nixon
 2007 David Tucker
 2009 David Whitehead

Rear Commodores

1929 H. R. Wallace
 1930 A. W. Mooney
 1941 H. E. Donegan
 1942 D. Mellon
 1947 H. Osterberg
 1950 K. McFerran
 1951 R. P. Campbell
 1953 B. C. Maguire
 1954 F. Cudmore
 1956 H. W. S. Clark
 1958 P. H. Greer
 1961 C. Riordan
 1963 W. H. D. McCormick
 1965 R. L. Berridge
 1966 J. C. McConnell
 1968 J. H. Guinness
 1970 R. H. O'Hanlon
 1971 R. J. Fielding
 1973 H. Cudmore

1975 J. M. Wolfe
 1976 A. D. Macllwaine
 1977 J. M. Wolte
 1978 G. Kenefick
 1980 M. McKee
 1981 J. Gore-Grimes
 1983 L. McGonagle
 1984 M. McKee
 1986 H. P. Kennedy
 1987 M. R. Sullivan & D. H. B. Fitzgerald
 1988 B. Hassett & D. H. B. Fitzgerald
 1989 B. Hassett & A. S. P. Orr
 1990 Clayton Love Jnr & D. J. Ryan
 1992 Brian Hegarty & David Nicholson
 1993 Michael O'Farrell & David H.B. FitzGerald
 1994 Michael O'Farrell & P. Walsh
 1995 L. McGonagle & P. Walsh
 1996 Arthur Baker & Jarlath Cunnane
 1997 J. Cunnane & P. Ronaldson
 1999 P. O'Sullivan & J.C. Bruen
 2000 J.C. Bruen & P. Ronaldson
 2001 P. Ronaldson & P. Killen
 2002 T. Clarke & P. Killen
 2003 T. Clarke & C. McHenry
 2004 J. Nixon & G. MacMahon
 2005 D.Tucker & G.MacMahon

2006 D.Tucker & D.Whitehead
 2007 C. Magennis & D. Whitehead
 2008 C. Hilliard & B. Kenny
 2009 C. Hilliard & E. Cudmore
 2010 J. Phelan & E. Cudmore

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. MacManus
 2005 M. Kirby

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
 2008 G. Fitzgerald

* 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.

Challenge Cup Awards

Peter Ronaldson

Having had the pleasure of asking someone else to take responsibility for adjudicating the logs for the last three years it came as something of a shock but a pleasant surprise when the Commodore asked me to take on the task this year. I must admit that until now I never really appreciated how difficult and demanding, but at the same time how enjoyable, a job it is.

Once again our members have sailed to the four corners of the globe and have recorded, each in their own way, their experiences, good and bad, all of which contribute so much to the fascination and attraction of cruising in small boats. Logs submitted covered everything from circumnavigations of the world to coastal and river passages relatively close to home, from tropical to arctic conditions and everything in between – which is all exactly as it should be in our Club. The very range of places visited, types of boat sailed and conditions encountered combined with the high quality of presentation makes any adjudication a very subjective process and I'm sure many will have their own view of my choices! Several logs competed for almost every trophy and some logs could have won several trophies: I am deeply aware that every author puts a vast amount of time and trouble preparing their logs and regret that many excellently written logs of fine cruises will go unrewarded apart from the satisfaction of having contributed to the only published record of our activities.

Finally I must repeat the sentiments that Brian Cudmore expressed last year. Log adjudicators come and go – they have a short lifespan of one year and are quickly forgotten – but the real strength behind the Annual lies with our Hon Editor who puts in a huge amount of work in a very short space of time to ensure that it retains and improves its quality and remains the very best publication of its type available anywhere – and we have it in our hands by Christmas every year! We owe him a huge debt of gratitude.

I make the following awards:

THE ROUND IRELAND NAVIGATION CUP. Only one log of a circumnavigation was submitted this year but it was a very special one describing **Donal Walsh's** 27 day circuit of the island in *Lady Kate*. Readers will appreciate that this was a difficult and emotional cruise even to contemplate but Donal wrote a very readable and interesting account full of useful information. He wrote of good sailing, mixed weather, eleven anchorages or harbours new to him out of 32 visited, and only having the wind on the nose for 15 miles. He fully deserves his award.

THE ROCKABILL TROPHY. I have taken the liberty of including pilotage in the definition of "navigation and/ or seamanship" in the award of this trophy which recognises an exceptional feat in these arts. The title of **Norman Kean's** log "Where the Rocks Aren't" neatly describes his ambitious mission. In his relentless pursuit of accurate information to include in the Club publications Norman visited over 125 anchorages, harbours and passages between Galway and Bloody Foreland. He recorded many places not previously surveyed, corrected inaccurate information much of which has found its way into electronic charts, found uncharted rocks and secret passages and even discovered an unrecorded overhead ESB cable the hard way – thankfully without disastrous consequences.

Norman's efforts contribute massively to making our coast a safer and even more enjoyable place to cruise and he has recorded it all in a witty and readable account for which he is awarded the Rockabill Trophy.

THE WYBRANTS CUP. Three of the four competitors for this award chose to cruise in May and early June which is traditionally regarded as the best time to enjoy long daylight hours and benign winds on the beautiful Scottish coast. Sadly this year their optimism was misplaced and they spent their time fighting gales, rain, mist and general unpleasantness with some fortitude and I suspect that there will be fewer Dublin sailors in Scotland next year! The fourth competitor enjoyed much better conditions in July and had a much easier time and made a most competent and enjoyable cruise but my choice for the trophy is **Dick Lovegrove** who wrote a delightfully cheerful account of a 14 day cruise in often miserable weather, interspersed with some great sailing, in which they achieved several objectives, failed to achieve others but managed to keep himself and his crew in good spirits with the assistance of some of the best Scottish Malts.

THE FAULKNER CUP. Once again the destination of the Club's premier trophy has provided the adjudicator with a difficult decision to make. **Fergus and Kay Quinlan** in their sturdy and trusty *Pylades* have continued their "Origins Cruise" this season from Papeete to, appropriately, Darwin in Australia covering some 8300 miles. Their log is a fascinating read dealing not only with the many challenging navigational and sailing problems encountered but, because they were not in a hurry, also with the varied human, political and religious aspects of the many cultures they encountered in their travels through the islands of the South Pacific. During their time in New Zealand they received the terrible news that several fellow cruisers with whom they had become friends during their voyage had been either murdered or taken hostage by Somalian pirates which obviously affected them deeply. Their final account when they return home will be required reading for anyone considering a similar voyage and I feel that Fergus must once again receive the Faulkner Cup.

THE FINGAL CUP. This trophy is awarded for the log which appealed to me most and I have to admit that I found every one of the logs appealing in some way or another, particularly those which visited wild, mountainous and lonely places such as Norway and Alaska. *Young Larry's* cruise through the islands and wilderness of Alaska and Canada had the added bonus of many encounters with the local wildlife while the grand finale of sailing under the Golden Gate Bridge into San Francisco harbour and using Alcatraz as an anchor transit took some beating! **Maire Breathnach's** log is at the same time informative, atmospheric and lively and wins the Fingal Cup.

THE GLENGARRIFF TROPHY. Six logs qualified for consideration for this trophy which is for the best cruise in Irish waters. Each had a character of its own and one author very interestingly compared his cruise with his first similar adventure exactly fifty years previously. Comparisons between the "well found" cruiser of 1961 and one of 2011 were very sobering! I cannot however look beyond the wonderfully written series of pictures in words that is the log of new member **Mick Delap** who describes in fascinating detail and verse a skilfully executed cruise in the diminutive gaff cutter *North Star* from Valentia up the west and along the north coasts to Rathlin and finally to Troon in Scotland. Once you start to read the log it is impossible to put it down and he fully deserves not only the Glengarriff Trophy but also the **THE WILD GOOSE CUP** for a log of literary merit. I can't help feeling that this is precisely the sort of log that Wallace Clark had in mind when he presented

the trophy and I hope he would have approved of my choice of winner.

THE PERRY GREER BOWL. Encouragingly six "first time" logs were submitted by new or nearly new members and their quality augurs well for the future of the Club and its Annual. Areas covered ranged from wet and windy Scotland to a circumnavigation of the World. **David Jones's** account covers the first 1663 miles of his intended trip to the Med in *Tidal Dancer*. It was all taken at a reasonably leisurely pace and took in the Scillies, Cornwall, the Channel Islands, Brittany, Galicia and Northern Portugal and is full of useful information as well of amusing – and sometimes painful – personal anecdotes. I look forward to reading the continuation next year and he richly deserves the trophy.

THE FORTNIGHT CUP. Many cruises which qualify for this trophy nowadays are relatively leisurely one way trips. Few start and finish in the same port and even fewer start from Kerry, make a non stop passage through a gale to Brittany, suffer the hardship and privations of an ICC Rally while there and then sail back to Kerry. **Neil Hegarty**, aided and abetted by Paddy O'Sullivan – who won't see eighty again – and others did just that in Paddy's 10m *Samphire* and there could not be a more worthy winner of this trophy. The one gesture to seniority on board was that those over eighty were excused watches during darkness!

THE MARIE TROPHY. Three cruises in boats less than thirty feet LOA qualified this year and each proved that size is not a barrier to making a good cruise. All had their fair share of drama from engine and electrical failure at inappropriate times to mystery leaks which in a small boat can quickly become threatening. Once again I had a difficult choice to make but I have decided to award the trophy once again to **Sean McCormack** who took his widely travelled *Marie Claire* from Howth back to her birthplace in Saint Gilles Croix de Vie taking in the ICC Rally on the way. The weather was far from helpful much of the time and a few lessons were learnt about the dreaded diesel bug but they still managed to log 1368 miles and visit thirty one anchorages and ports.

THE STRANGFORD CUP. The completion of a circumnavigation of the world by an ICC member is a massive achievement and cause for celebration. In March 2011 **Stephen Hyde** in his Oyster 56 *A Lady* dropped anchor in Grenada having left Cork in June 2009, taken part in the ICC/RCC Azores Rally, the ARC and finally the World ARC. Not being satisfied with this he

CLUB AWARDS

THE JOHN B. KEARNEY CUP awarded for outstanding contributions to Irish Sailing: To **Jerry Smith**, skipper of the dive-boat *Wave Chieftain*, who found and rescued five crew members of the supermaxi yacht *Rambler 100*, which lost a keel on 15 August off Baltimore while competing in the RORC Fastnet Race 2011.

THE WRIGHT SALVER awarded by THE NORTHERN AREA COMMITTEE: To **Sam Davis**, in recognition of his single-handed voyage from Strangford Lough to the Canaries, Cape Verdes, Jacare, Mar del Plata, Port Harburton, Ushuaia, Puerto Williams, Cape Horn and north through the Patagonian Channels to Puerto Montt.

THE ARAN ISLANDS TROPHY awarded by the WESTERN AREA COMMITTEE: To **Fergus Quinlan** for his achievement in the circumnavigation of the globe on *Pylades*, due for completion in 2012.

THE WATERFORD HARBOUR CUP awarded by the SOUTHERN AREA COMMITTEE: To **Dan Cross** for the organisation of the Brittany Rally 2011

THE DONEGAN MEMORIAL TROPHY awarded by the EASTERN AREA COMMITTEE: To **John P Bourke** for his contribution to Irish and international sailing, both racing and cruising.

THE GULL SALVER for the highest-placed Irish Yacht in the RORC Fastnet Race: To **Bruce Douglas**, *Spirit of Jacana*.

THE FASTNET AWARD awarded by the Flag Officers of the Club for exceptional achievements and for excellence in or closely related to cruising under sail: **Not awarded**

DUNN'S DITTY SALVER awarded for the best Ditty submitted: To **James Nixon**, for his 'Siphoning Syndrome'.

then sailed up the east coast of the USA and is now in Maine with 36395 miles under the keel. The voyage illustrated perfectly what is possible with good organisation and management in a timescale that would have been impossible before the advent of organised rallies and it gave Stephen and his various crews – many of whom were ICC members – the chance to experience ocean voyaging with all its highs and lows and most of all the sheer pleasure and excitement of making landfalls in exotic and some not so exotic places after many days at sea.

During his voyage he made at least ten passages of over 1000 miles, three of which were made in 2011. I think it is wholly appropriate that in addition to receiving the Strangford Cup, Stephen should be awarded the ATLANTIC TROPHY.

Skipper Kearney

WM Nixon

Launched from Murphy's Boatyard in Ringsend in 1912, the 36ft yawl *Ainmara* was designed and built in his spare time over eighteen months by John B Kearney (1879-1967). From a docklands family, he was a shipwright with Dublin Port and Docks Board. But his flair for design and innovation meant that for many years he was the real brains behind the engineering development of the harbour. He was also a self-taught naval architect of considerable talent, and had been designing and building small sailing boats since the age of seventeen. *Ainmara* was his first proper yacht – seakindly, a pleasure to sail, and surprisingly fast, she had all the features for which his designs became renowned. With the slightly larger yawl *Mavis* which he designed, built and sailed between 1925 and 1952, he became Skipper Kearney, a respected figure in Irish sailing, included on the first list of

Irish Cruising Club members in 1930. As for *Ainmara*, she went through several ownerships north and south, and became associated with many ICC members.

In 1966 she was bought by Dickie Gomes, whose cruises to Biscay and Norway were recognized with ICC awards. But in 1984 her hull was punctured on shoreline rock armour when she broke from her moorings at Portaferry, and for the next 27 years she was in the shed in the Gomes farm at Ballygarvan. However, with her Centenary approaching in 2012, *Ainmara* took centre stage and was re-launched in July 2011. After an appropriate period to allow her excellent pitch-pine planking to take up, she has been sailing again in all her accustomed style. The Down Cruising Club's lightship was also built in Dublin in 1912, so *Ainmara's* Centenary Party will be held at the lightship at Ballydorn sometime in 2012. Everyone who has ever had anything to do with this fine cruising yacht over the past hundred years is invited to attend. The small matter of being dead will not be accepted as an adequate excuse.

(See front cover photo)

Dunns Last Ditty

Charles Dunn

My father died this year. He took with him my childhood MICC memories. Throughout my childhood, he was ICC. He was honorary secretary for 17 years. Our home was the club. Our phone was the ICC phone. Our sitting room floor was covered with hand-drawn cruise maps of members log submissions. For several years, the unawarded silver cast lighthouse of the Rockabill Trophy adorned the cabinet.

The Gestetner machine poured out pages of carbon copy, to be manually sorted and enveloped by us. Letters, notices, corrections for the ICC Directions. The Directions themselves filled our bookshelves. Members called to our door to collect them, in days when postage was expensive. Sure you will come in and have a drop while you are here, and tell us of your last cruise. An American arrived in a rented car from the airport, could he stay the night in the ICC clubhouse?

I was young when my father explained the honorary part of being secretary, that his non payment was made up for by the fact that it was an honour to serve ICC. Indeed it was an honour for us to grow up in the shadows of ICC members. Paul Campbell hauled us along to Malahide, to take soundings of the estuary for the Directions. The shifting sands of Malahide fairway had to be redrawn annually. In Arklow, a (then) expensive aerial shot of the harbour entrance confounded Directions users because a fishing vessel chose that moment to block the entrance. Paul sailed us southward in *Verve*, and we tacked back and forth across the channel in his yawl until he got better photos for the next edition. John and Jennifer Guinness kindly took over sales of the Directions, a transfer of a very big workload. Members too numerous to mention, my father remembered them all. Forgetting their names did not mean he forgot their contribution.

The RORC kindly sent copies of their annual to our ICC home, and together with the ICC annual, our childhood reading skills were honed on cruises to far flung lands. Paul Campbell cruised to claim Rockall by planting a Tricolour, and his crew dined in dress suits on high before diving from the summit to swim back to *Verve*. The doctor, as Rory O Hanlon was known in our house, sailed *Meermin* to Iceland, returning some 700 miles minus the bowsprit from the teeth of a northern ice storm. John Gore Grimes went even further with the Spitzbergen expedition.

My father worked hard, but he went to sea too. Other kids played rugby, we spent the weekends cruising to Arklow, Wicklow, Douglas, Holyhead, Carlingford. And then when November came and boats had been lifted, long before marinas were born, the doctor called on my father to sail his gaff rigged *Meermin* to Port St Mary. A mid winter cruise, no less, to stock up with turf. For one's stove must be fully stocked, you never know when you might have to cruise at short notice.

Graduating from a compass stowed in a tin biscuit box on the floor of his Flamingo (it got them to the Crinan Canal), my father learned his craft before sailing schools were born, on *Salterello*, *Shortwave*, *Anasu*, and *Eblana*. He taught us to dip our ensign for navy ships (and they always responded),

and we morse-coded anyone who would listen (and many replied). He transmitted SSB radio before VHF arrived, and learned electronics on one of the first Radars in Dun Laoghaire. He taught us to recognise code flags and club burgees from around the globe, and traditional skills of flag etiquette.

He served many years on ICC and ISA committees, bridging the growing racing fraternity with the established cruising community. As the annual pile of cruise logs increased, he noticed a significant change. Bigger boats, more holidays, and high tech electronics was spreading the Irish fleet further abroad and growing the average size of yacht. He believed that ICC still needed to recognise the achievements of many family and short cruisers rather than becoming a club for a few grand expeditioners. Thus was Dunns Ditties born, a simple request for members to submit a short article where they had not an entire expedition to report on.

For him the core of ICC was the members. After 17 years in office, he knew them all. ICC rallies were like family gatherings, he recognised everyone and spent much time preparing for the events. Boy Scouts events, some called them. Sailing Instructions issued in envelopes which had been sealed in our sitting room. "Sail direct to Carlingford from Greenore, and obey all instructions en route". Most boats sailed direct and thus failed the test. Only one boat responded to the plan – an anonymous fishing boat anchored mid route, flying code flag "O" (I have a man overboard). In the hilarity of the aftermath, the extent of the planning that had gone into the event was forgotten.

Another ICC rally called for each anchored yacht in the fleet to launch their tender, and to row to the commodore's yacht. Each was required to bring something from their yacht to give first aid to a crew with a broken leg. Crews presented Aspirin, Plasters, Splints. I understand that the winners award actually went to the one who arrived with a bottle of Whiskey.

One of his last official duties was to interview, during a rally, an applicant for ICC membership. The applicant, an experience yachtsman, was asked what code flag he would fly if whilst sailing single handed he needed to abandon the helm urgently and head below deck to the bathroom. Silence filled the air. The applicant feared an incorrect answer. My father feared any answer at all, lest he would have to pass judgment. "I should look it up in my ever present copy of REEDS Nautical Almanac", came the reply. Fortunately, I hear that the applicant Dick Lovegrove was subsequently accepted as a member.

For my father, ICC was about exploring, learning. And having fun. A shy man ashore, he welcomed anyone afloat. But he always had a special welcome for those who flew the burgee with the Fastnet lighthouse. Because he learned his art with you, his friends, and you helped him live his dream – to sail the crested sea.

Aidan Dunn

RIP April 2011

Rupert and his/her pals go to Scotland again

The ups and downs of cruising in the Western Isles

Richard Lovegrove

Ever since our successful first cruise to Scotland in 2009, the talk on *Rupert*, our Sigma 33, had been of going back. On that occasion we had just passed north of Ardnamurchan and had immediately turned south again, so, although we were technically entitled to wear the heather on our pulpit, there was a feeling on board that this wasn't quite the thing and that it would be good to return and do it properly the next time. As ever, in 2011 the compromise with our racing programme meant that the time available for cruising was limited to two weeks and because we particularly wanted to take part in the Dun Laoghaire Regatta, and I had to attend a family wedding in Toronto, the only real window for cruising was very early in the season.

There was the usual flurry of activity to get *Rupert* into cruising mode and those of our readers of a more nervous disposition will be relieved to hear that we finally entered the 21st century and fitted a chartplotter! So it was that the evening Friday 28th May found *Rupert* in probably the best cruising condition she had been in during the ownership of Paddy Varian and myself, and also found regular crewman Gavin Arnold, eminent Councillor Derek Mitchell, and myself, together with our respective (and respected) spouses sitting down to dinner in the Royal St George Yacht Club with a planned departure time of 00.00.

Weatherwise, the build-up to our departure had been pretty hectic too. There had been severe gales in the preceding week (we were to see the appalling damage they had caused as we went northwards) and a planned meet-up on the west coast of Scotland with Ian French (ICC) and the crew of *Teal*, who had left a week before us, already looked in jeopardy. As we sailed through the pier heads at Dun Laoghaire under No 3 and a small reef the forecast was for force 5-6 overnight, decreasing to force 4-5 and then increasing again to gale force near the north coast on Sunday, but at least the direction was helpful. On



these occasions, my cruise plan is pretty simple: get to the intended cruising area as quickly as possible and maximise your time there. And so, on this occasion, the intention was to head north and keep going until we either got there or had had enough. It was breezy, with a lumpy sea and it was very cold, but at least we were making good speed in the right direction. The motion made cooking, eating and sleeping difficult and my sleeping bag must have shrunk over the winter. At least that is the only reason that I can think of why I had such trouble getting in to it!

Shortly after passing the South Rock, instead of dropping as forecast, the wind got up and headed us. We took in two full reefs. Right on cue, the wind died altogether! So, down with the headsail, and on with the engine only for the wind to quickly build again and gust to 35 knots from dead on the nose. This was becoming an awkward passage. As we emerged from the Copeland Sound we were hit by a torrential rain squall which drastically reduced the visibility and also my resolve to stick to the cruise plan. I could see the comfortable lights of Bangor in my mind's eye. But, the crew were made of sterner stuff and Glenarm was the minimum they would settle for, particularly with a full gale threatened for the following day. Just south of Lough Larne we met *Teal* heading southwards. A short, shouted exchange confirmed that she had met some grim weather and had decided that discretion was the better part.

We finally tied up in the friendly little marina in Glenarm at 18.30. It had been a hard enough eighteen hours sail and we were tired, but we had at least got as far as was reasonably practical and we knew that we were in the right place to sit out the gale on the following day. After we had tidied up, we made our way to the Bridge Tavern, which looked a bit rough, and where the barman looked like a refugee from the wrestling ring, but which in fact turned out to be very friendly, and the barman provided us with the menu for the local Chinese takeaway and allowed us to order in our supper and eat it with our pints. It was three tired (but happy) bunnies who hopped in to their bunks when we got back on board.

When we resumed consciousness the following morning, it was, as predicted, really stonking. The wind was offshore but even so the tops were being blown off the waves and the Clyde Coastguard forecast confirmed that we were going nowhere that day. The big surprise was that it was warm and sunny and after a leisurely breakfast we strolled around the coast to Carnlough, which has a pleasantly prosperous air about it. Coffee in the Londonderry Arms was followed by a walk up to the old quarries and the Cranny Falls which were genuinely spectacular in the glorious sunshine. We taxied back to Carnlough that night and enjoyed good pub food and a friendly welcome in the Glencoy Inn.

Monday 30th May dawned a beautiful



Gavin (L) and Dick search for gas on Gigha

day with more sunshine and a pleasant breeze, but our efforts at a quick getaway were thwarted when the gas cylinder ran out and I discovered that the spare was empty. (Now, I wonder which racing nutter was responsible for that? Sadly, I know the answer!). The efforts of Billy McCoy, the ever helpful marina superintendent, to find us a replacement were unsuccessful, and as we motored out past the colony of delightfully comic Black Guillemots which nests in the old walls of the marina, we resigned ourselves to cold fare for a while. Never mind. This was one of the good days. The wind came and went, the Mull of Kintyre looked splendid in the sunshine and we had a delightful passage to Gigha, eventually picking up a HIDB mooring in Ardminish Bay at about 16.30. I even managed to squeeze enough gas out of the old cylinder to make hot drinks on the way, but sourcing a replacement was obviously a priority. Once ashore things got off to a bad start when we read the notice on the restaurant at the head of the jetty to the effect that it had closed at 17.00 and wouldn't be re-opening until Wednesday. Things got worse, and I was really in the doghouse, when we reached the shop to find that they did stock Camping Gas cylinders but they had just sold out. Fortunately, my star ascended slightly when we visited the very pleasant island pub which is run by the Community and which not only serves good beer (the Ember 80/= was a special favourite) but also served excellent scallops, halibut, smoked duck and venison! After dinner, and in a further effort to make the crew overlook the fact that there would be no sausages and black pudding for breakfast tomorrow, I initiated round one of the "2011 Rupert Scotch Whisky" challenge. This resulted in a win for "The Isle of Jura" and a mellow crew returning to *Rupert* after a good night!

And Tuesday dawned the way Monday had finished, in glorious sunshine. The forecast suggested that it wouldn't last long, but it was too good to waste, so as soon as the cold breakfast was over, we dinghied ashore and had a hike over the hills. We got slightly lost and very mucky but it was worth it for the beautiful air and stunning views.

Another glorious day

Back on board we sailed off the mooring at 11.00 and headed northwards up the Sound of Jura. As most of you will know, this is a spectacular stretch of water with the mighty Paps to the west and the entrances to Lochs Coalisport and Sween to the east. It was a glorious day and with the wind from the west at 12 to 19 knots, *Rupert*, wearing her full main and a No 2, revelled in it. With a fortuitously favourable tide (I hadn't bothered to check it) we were making nine knots over the ground at times. It really was lovely sailing.

I spent a lot of time playing with my new toy, the chart-plotter. At the head of the Sound, as one picks one's way between the Dorus Mhor to starboard and the Corryvreckan to port, it pays to know where you are. But on this sparkling day, with the tide rips looking like Christmas tinsel, these potentially turbulent waters were as benign as they get and I even squeezed the last drop of gas out of the cylinder to heat some soup to go with lunch! All too soon we were in the calm back-water of Loch Shuna and entering the marina at Craobhaven.

This is a fine marina (although it had suffered quite serious structural damage in the recent severe gales) with all facilities, including camping gas! That night the staff in the restaurant was still smiling and friendly and we ate well, despite the fact that they were enduring a power failure and their coffee maker had just caught fire! To round off what had definitely been a good day, Bowmore was voted the jury's choice, which was interesting because this peaty whisky from Islay had not fared so well two years ago. When we emerged, we were again in

mellow mood and ready to face the rain which heralded the gale forecast for the morrow.

Wednesday duly dawned the way it meant to go on. It was a miserable, grey, misty, damp day, which the cynics and pessimists amongst us might have called "typically Scottish". The wind was lifting the flags at the marina and it was very cold. The optimists amongst us kept talking about the arrival of a much forecast high pressure system and were sure that the weather would clear and settle in the afternoon. The pessimists were right – it didn't!

Because the optimists included the Skipper, we made a plan to have a lazy morning and to leave about 15.00 to sail to Puilladohran, with the intention of dropping an anchor there for the night, sipping gin and fine wines in the cockpit, bathed in evening sunlight while discussing the novels of Thomas Hardy and the films of Milos Forman. In fact the first part of this plan worked pretty well, and now equipped with several gas cylinders, we had a large and pleasantly unhealthy breakfast, and entertained some other Sigma owners who were also sitting out the gale. But by lunchtime there was no sign of any improvement, and a sombre mood settled over the marina when Clyde Coastguard broadcast a Mayday Relay about a small open boat which had left Craobhaven the previous evening with two men on board, and which hadn't been heard of since. Later, a rather bedraggled couple in a large Westerly berthed beside us and announced that they had encountered 37 knots of wind on their way from Gigha. This put the matter beyond discussion and I announced that it was time for Plan B.

In fact from that moment everything, except for the weather, started to improve. The two missing men were found safe and well, taking shelter in some isolated spot with no phone coverage, and Derek, Gavin and I enjoyed a good hike across the hill to Ardfern and back. Much later, when we emerged from the marina restaurant again and it was still lashing rain and blowing hard, we congratulated ourselves on our decision making, jumped in to our bunks and slept the sleep of the just.

When we woke, the wind had dropped considerably, but that apart, the day didn't look much different from its predecessor. It was still grey, misty, and drizzly. However this was to be a day for the optimists. Having done the homework on the tides, we left Craobhaven at 10.30 and motored past Loch Melfort to Seil Sound and then around Torsa to Cuan Sound, where we arrived by design at low water. This was new territory for me and it was fascinating. There is a typically Scottish small community clinging to the shore, a ferry plying between Seil and Luing and some of those terrifying power lines which, the Guide assures you, you will pass under with metres to spare, but which make death by firing squad look preferable when you get close to them. I am also sure that the Cuan Sound can be a pretty fearsome place with wind against a strong tide, but at slack water it was a pussycat and I am pleased to say that apart from a slight sloosh from an eddy at the western end there is nothing of interest to report.

Puilladobhráin

A day later than planned we dropped anchor in Puilladobhráin and as we relaxed over lunch and a glass of wine, a little ray of sunshine, the first we had seen for two days, permeated the saloon. Instantly spirits rose. Derek and Gavin were first time visitors to this beautiful anchorage, but I had been there with Eric Hill and Brendan Bradley in the Dublin Bay 24 *Fenestra* way back in 1968 and had always planned to return. Later we walked ashore and visited the "Bridge over the Atlantic" and "Tighan Truish" (the house of the trousers) and later still in glorious warm sunshine we sailed up the Sound of Mull with a nice breeze and the tide under us and slipped in to the last available berth on the marina at Tobermory. We had had a

lovely day on the water, the high pressure had finally arrived and the optimists were on top. But for how long?

Two years ago we had arrived in Tobermory too late in the evening to eat at the Mish Nish, but this time we had no such problem. Apparently the bar and the restaurant are now managed by different people but we enjoyed both. The restaurant has been smartly refurbished and we enjoyed certainly the most sophisticated cooking of the trip so far, with the sea food being really excellent. After dinner, and back in the traditional bar, Derek pointed out that, with the exception of weather forecasts, we had not listened to the radio or seen a TV since we left Glenarm. We had not the slightest idea what was going on in the world or whether the euro had finally collapsed. He also pointed out that we would find out soon enough when we put our cards in an ATM! And, after due deliberation and much soul searching, that night's "Rupert" was awarded to Tallisker.

Change of weather

But this was to be a cruise during which the weather did not stay settled for long. Although Friday morning dawned warm and sunny, by lunchtime the forecasts were already predicting that the high pressure system, which had been so long in coming, was pulling away to the west and there was a strong-wind warning in operation. We cast off about 14.00 with no very definite idea of where we were going, except that we were headed north. There was a crew change planned for Arisaig for the following night, so we wanted to find somewhere which would leave us with a short passage to there. As we rounded Ardnarmurchan, the sun was still shining but the wind was rising and we had a lovely sail. Also, we got a forecast from Stornaway which suggested that the wind would veer to northerly overnight and drop to force 3 or 4, so the decision was made to go to Eigg in the Small Isles where the anchorage appeared to have good shelter from the north. When we approached, the anchorage was smaller than I had expected from the chart, but as we were hesitating an elegant little ketch arrived and took up a mooring. I hailed the helmsman and he confirmed that he was a resident and he gave us some assistance in dropping our hook in the optimum position. At the time we anchored, the wind was northwesterly and was strong, cold and gusty. Truth to tell, the anchorage is very confined, and I was never very happy there.

With hindsight, that would have been the time to leave. However, as the evening went on, the wind veered to northerly and we were quite comfortable with the open channel of South Bay astern. Even so, I wouldn't have been comfortable leaving *Rupert* unattended and the decision was made to defer a landing until the next day and to eat on board. This was a good decision because the wind continued to veer. At 23.00 we set anchor watches and at 01.00 I decided that we were lying dangerously close to the stone breakwater which protects the slip and had to call the others to raise the anchor and move. After this, I was cold and very tired and Derek relieved me on watch. When I woke again it was daylight and the good news was that the anchor hadn't budged. The bad news was that the wind had increased and with a strong wind warning again in operation, it seemed to me unlikely that we were ever going to be able to go ashore and relax enough to enjoy it. So, at 05.30 I decided to cut our losses, weigh anchor, and head for Arisaig. It had been an unpleasant night. Definitely one for the pessimists.

Once clear of Eigg, Gavin and I actually had a very pleasant sail. The wind probably was blowing about force 6 from the northeast but with the number 3 up and with a just a touch of engine we were making a handy six knots in the right direction, in bright, if chilly, sunshine. We also managed to time our arrival off Arisaig at just before high water.

The old guide books didn't have much good to say about Arisaig. The Admiralty West Coast of Scotland Pilot said that "this tortuous channel, being full of rocks, is dangerous to enter..." and the 2002 edition of Imray's "The Yachtsman's Pilot" describes it as "One of the most intimidating entrances of any anchorage on the West Coast...". In fact, as the modern guides go on to point out, the local boatyard, Arisaig Marine, has done an excellent job in providing port and starboard perches which make the channel easy to follow in all but the worst visibility. At one point the depth drops to 1.5 metres at low water springs, but for us this wasn't a problem and we were soon in the attractive and well-sheltered bay, picking up one of the many moorings laid by Arisaig Marine, for which we paid STG£12.50 and which, after the discomfort of the previous night, seemed like a bargain.

The day remained breezy and sunny, and after breakfast and a bit of a kip, we took the dinghy ashore and climbed to the top of the small hill behind the town from where the views are spectacular. On the way down we passed through a large herd of cows and their calves and we were in the middle of them when we realised that they were protected by a very large bull. Derek, who was wearing a very attractive red ensemble became a bit nervous, but we explained to him that the saying about something being like "a red rag to a bull" is only an old wives tale. It is isn't it?

As the only facility of its kind in this part of the world, Arisaig is well worth knowing about and, of course, it is only five hours from Glasgow on the West Highland train line which has been voted the best railway journey in the world, so it really is an ideal place to leave a boat or for a crew change. *Rupert's* new crew of my son Philip and Paul Conway arrived on cue having thoroughly enjoyed the views from their carriage window. All five of us sat down to eat a pleasant evening meal in the "Old Library", complete with pints and wine which we enjoyed so much that when it came to adjudicating on that night's "Rupert", we ran in to a minor difficulty in that we forgot to write down the name of the winner which became known as "Brand X".

Sunday 5th June produced another beautiful morning. We were up early to bid farewell to Gavin and Derek and by 10.30 we were winding our way back down the marked channel towards open water. With a good night's sleep behind them, the sun shining, and a gentle breeze, the new crew had every reason to be optimistic. We had taken some soundings ashore and the unanimous opinion was that our next port of call should be Muck. By repute it is the nicest of the Small Isles and also boasts an excellent restaurant with its own fishing boat and which serves wonderful seafood. When the wind died completely the engine came on and it was not long before the hook was going down in the attractive harbour. Philip went ashore in the dinghy and came back with the news that there was a notice advertising the restaurant at the head of the pier saying that booking was not necessary. The decision was made to have lunch and a snooze and then go ashore for a walk and a meal.

Rejection and dejection!

When we surfaced, everything had changed. The forecast had said showers, but now the clouds were down and it was teeming rain. The walk was cancelled, but undeterred, at 18.30 we donned full oilskins and got in to the dinghy with thoughts of scallops, langoustine and possibly even lobster to the fore. The attractive curl of turf smoke coming from the chimney of the cottage which serves as the restaurant added to the sense of anticipation. From the lobby, we could see nicely laid up tables with shiny wine glasses in a cosy dining room and I had just struggled out of my oilskin trousers when a lady appeared in

the doorway and abruptly announced that there was a local function on that night, that they were fully booked and that the other restaurant on the island was also closed because the owner was attending the function! Our pleading looks cut no ice and it was a wet and dejected crew that trudged back to the harbour and got back in to the sodden dinghy. Back on board, Philip worked wonders with the ship's stores to produce a fine pasta bolognese, and this together with several G & Ts and a bottle of wine went some way to revive our spirits, but the pessimists were probably on top as we went to bed early with the rain still drumming on the coachroof.

In fact, it was lucky that we got some early sleep, because at 01.00 I looked out to find that the wind had swung through 180° and that once again we were lying with our stern very close to a rocky lee shore, and also to the bow of a Contessa 32 which had come in late in the evening and anchored rather too near to us for our comfort. On the plus side, the wind was light and there was no sea running, but nevertheless it was a weary skipper who climbed into his oilskins again to take the first anchor watch. At least we had got ashore, however briefly, on this island.

The rain did eventually stop and when we left Muck at about 10.30 the next day, there was enough blue in the sky to make a pair of sailor's trousers, as my mother would have said. In fact, the day continued to improve and Paul brightened it further when he told me that he had spent his time on anchor watch reciting French irregular verbs in the past subjunctive mood and re-writing the story of Ernest Shackleton and Tom Crean so that having undergone horrendous hardship to reach South Georgia and then struggled over the icy mountains to the Norwegian whaling station, they were told that there was a local function on and that it was fully booked!

With two of the last three nights spent on anchor watch, I was determined to get a good night's sleep, which meant either a mooring or a berth alongside. The cruising guide says that Arinagour on Coll has visitors moorings and bikes for hire so our plan was to get there for lunch, have a run ashore and if we liked it, to stay the night. We had another lovely sail. We were actually beating, but in a flat sea we were making 6.5 knots in a 12 knot breeze and *Rupert* is such a pleasure to sail in these conditions that the engine only went on as we followed another yacht in to the natural harbour. We looked for the moorings and when we couldn't find them, I hailed the other yacht which had dropped a hook in the meantime, only to be told that the moorings hadn't been laid yet this summer. Ah well! About turn. Up with the sails again and another cracking sail right in to the moorings at Tobermory. Down sails. On to the pontoon. Up with the overboom tent and on with the kettle just as the rain started spilling again!

It was a good decision to go back to Tobermory. It was a delight not to have to think of anything except relaxing. The crew who, of course, had not been with me when *Rupert* was there the previous week wandered off, and I pottered about, doing the little jobs that owners enjoy doing on their boats. In due course we all met back on *Rupert* for a G & T before heading for the Mish Nish where we enjoyed another good meal followed by a pleasant couple of pints, in the genial company of Justin McKenna (ICC) and the crew of *Birmayne*. I had been in contact with them by phone at various times during the past week, and now it was good to meet up with them and exchange experiences. Back on board, I slept like a log!

We were now definitely homeward bound, and on the next day, Tuesday 7th June, I wanted to cover some ground but also wanted to see Staffa, Iona and Tinker's Hole, all of which we had sailed very close to two years ago but hadn't seen at all because of dense fog. The morning was dull and a little bit drizzly as we sailed out of Tobermory, but once again the day

improved to become bright and sunny with a sparkling breeze. It became one of our best days and a definite one for the optimists. With full main and the No.1 we made great time following the coastline out of the Sound of Mull and southwards. We diverted slightly to sail around Staffa and to peer in to Fingal's Cave and then we romped on towards Iona. The navigation through the Sound of Iona requires some care and I am very glad that we had had the sense not to attempt it in the pea soup we experienced two years ago, but this time, on a gloriously sunny evening and, of course, complete with our new chartplotter, we had no problems. We were just about to drop anchor in Martyn's Bay and go ashore on Iona, when I started to think about where we were going to spend the night. I had always intended to go to Tinker's Hole, but never having been there previously and having seen the flotilla of yachts heading in to Puilladohran in the late afternoon, I suddenly became concerned that it might be overcrowded and decided to make straight for it, with the intention of returning to Iona the next day.

As it turned out, I needn't have bothered. We threaded our way through the rocky entrance to find it deserted with the exception of an English yacht which was tied to a ring in the rock face. This is an anchorage of legend which I had always wanted to visit and now effectively we had it to ourselves. It was a chilly but beautiful evening and whatever the weather was doing outside, inside we were totally protected. For the one and only time on this cruise, although we were well wrapped up, we sat in the cockpit and had a couple of drinks while Paul produced a marvellous meal. We had had a wonderful day's sailing and achieved one of my main objectives for this cruise.

But as I have said previously, this was not to be a cruise for relaxation and resting on one's laurels. I was last to go to bed and just as I was getting in to the scratcher, I heard a broken transmission on the VHF which I thought said something about



The entrance to Tinker's Hole.

a new gale warning: "Gale Force 8 for Sea Area Malin", but I couldn't be sure. I sat up to hear the 23.10 forecast, but again, after the initial call on channel 16, I could hear nothing on the working channel. Probably not knowing was worse than knowing, but in fact I slept well until 05.00. However, when I woke my head started buzzing and I decided that we needed to go, and go quickly, in order to get to somewhere where we could ride out a gale in relative comfort. The crew responded heroically to their early morning call and to the news that their visit to Iona was going to be postponed for another year. Ten minutes later, the anchor was weighed and we were tip-toeing our way out of Tinker's Hole and through the Torran Rocks. Once outside, a call to Clyde Coastguard confirmed that a northerly gale was expected soon.



The anchorage at Muck with the restaurant we didn't get into on the left.

It was another cold, breezy, but otherwise beautiful morning. We set the full main and the Number 3 and had another crackling sail to Colonsay and once again I saw magnificent scenery which I had missed two years ago. We were also lucky in that we saw a yacht leaving Scalasaig as we were approaching, and when we arrived we had the place to ourselves and could tie up alongside the pier. The icing on the cake was that for the last couple of miles we were accompanied by three magnificent large dolphins which leaped and displayed all around us. They even followed us in to the harbour and as we were tying up, all three jumped in to the air together, bumping off each other and falling back in to the water, as if to say "Don't stop now, guys. Come back out and play".

Philip and I spent the afternoon walking around the island in the chilly sunshine. When we returned to *Rupert*, as forecast, the wind had swung in to the northwest and was increasing. The pier is not a very comfortable berth and already we were experiencing some scend, but I had spotted some very large fenders in a pile of marine debris at the head of the pier and when we requisitioned two of these and put them in place we were lying quite happily. I was just getting in to my party dress to go ashore to the hotel for dinner when two other yachts came in. The larger anchored off but the smaller came straight in

alongside *Rupert* in what, given the existing scend and the forecast, I thought was a rather peremptory manner. I am ashamed to say that my response was less than wholeheartedly welcoming, but very shortly they were secured in a most seamanlike fashion, and I actually think that their heavy stern line, which was brought well back on the pier, had the effect of damping our motion. I am pleased to say that I had the opportunity to make amends when we met up with the crew after dinner in the hotel.

In the very pleasant Colonsay Hotel we had one of our best meals of the cruise and afterwards in the comfortable bar we resumed the serious consideration of Scotch Whisky. After the first round, Glenkinchie was a definite winner, but the judges were taking their work so seriously that another round, a round of personal favourites, was called for. Paul ordered Glenlivet, his own personal favourite, and Philip and I both ordered the "Isle of Jura". This had been the winner in one of the early rounds of the first week, so of course Phil hadn't tried it, and I was anxious to check that the early voting hadn't been a mistake. It wasn't! By the time we were walking home, it was lashing rain and the gale had arrived in earnest. But we were secure and we all slept well. I wonder why?

On Thursday 9th June, we had always promised ourselves a fairly relaxed start because the tide in the Sound of Islay didn't turn in our favour until about 11.00. By the time we cast off, it was still windy and of course bloody cold, (Paul later described it as 'two hat' weather!) but the rain had stopped and some blue sky had appeared. This was to be another day for cracking on homewards. With the tide under us and under main alone, we swooped along the Islay shore, touching ten knots at times. Once out of the Sound, we turned south, set the number 2 and continued to make rapid progress across a lumpy North Channel, finally making fast at the marina in Ballycastle at 18.30. It had been another great day of sailing and when I look back on this cruise, whatever about Fortune's other slings and arrows,



Derek (L) and Gavin at the Bridge over the Atlantic.

and in between the three gales, we had some superb sailing. And, amazingly, we only tacked once!

I had only been in Ballycastle once before, with Brian Craig (ICC) on the way to Iceland in 2005. It is an attractive town with a pleasant small marina which seems to be well run by a friendly young harbour master. He recommended that we should do our drinking in Bakewell's Bar which is immediately opposite the entrance. I like to think that that advice was more important in times only recently gone by than it is now, but in any event we were well received and had a pleasant couple of pints in comfortable surroundings. The following morning I had a run up the town to do some shopping and found it bustling, neat, clean, and prosperous looking. Like Glenarm, it makes a handy place to overnight or to wait for a tide.

And so our cruise was really over. We caught the tide on Friday morning and had a long day's sail to Ardglass followed by another long and uneventful passage to Dun Laoghaire, where we tied up on the marina outside the Royal St George at 18.45 on Saturday 11th June, almost exactly two weeks after we had left. My abiding memory of this cruise will be of the

cold and of the persistently unsettled weather which never really allowed us to relax completely. But I will also remember the joyful sailing, the excitement of visiting new places, the challenges and the way we met them, the wonderful company, the fun of cruising a small boat with a good crew, and of course, the skill and fortitude which went in to the selection of the "Rupert" award for Scotch Whisky, which this year goes to... "The Isle of Jura", with the runner's-up prize going to "Brand X"!

Needless to say, by the time we returned to Dun Laoghaire, the optimists were well in the ascendant and the discussions about our next trip to Scotland have already begun.

Epilogue

Two weeks later, *Rupert's* season came to an abrupt end when she was hit and seriously damaged by a port-hand yacht at the start of a DBSC Thursday evening race. She had to be lifted out of the water very shortly afterwards and, at the time of writing, I have finally accepted that she will not sail again this season. At least we got our cruise in although the heather on our pulpit didn't last long!

Alan Leonard writes of a short cruise to Scotland

Various family commitments this summer meant that I could not embark on an extended cruise like last summer's "Norwegian Odyssey". Having had a most enjoyable ten days back in Norway with Adrian and Maeve Bell in *Oisin Ban*, I was keen to have at least a short cruise in *Ariadne*.

Connla Magennis and I set off on July 13th. Motoring north in calm conditions inside the South Rock, we passed *Granuaile* anchored off the North Rock. She had men ashore to refurbish the beacon – they were erecting scaffolding as we passed! After a night in Bangor, we continued motoring north in a calm sea. Off Fair Head, we found the tide running strongly against us, at least an hour earlier than suggested by the diagrams in the Sailing Directions. Scend entering Church Bay made the pontoon berths uncomfortable, with *Ariadne* snatching at her warps, so we moved off to anchor in the lee of the west breakwater.

Next morning, we proceeded west along the south shore of Rathlin, to take advantage of the west-going eddy. I'm not sure about the eddy, but at least we didn't have a foul tide! We saw the rock shown on the chart clearly – it lies off a basalt outcrop, flanked on either side by limestone cliffs. We then rounded the west end of Rathlin, allowing the flood to set us back to the east. A light breeze meant we could motor-sail towards Islay, then bearing off up the sound of Jura and up Loch Swen to Tayvallich. Next day, we had a pleasant sail in warm and sunny conditions up the sounds of Jura and Luig and across the Firth of Lorne. We were going to miss the tide at Duart, so ran off to Oban, where we took a mooring at the north end of Cardingmill bay.

After a run ashore on Sunday morning, that afternoon we reached up the Lynn of Lorne in a stiff northwesterly, an exciting sail in strong tide, into Loch Creran. No doubt it is picturesque, but we saw little of it in the mist.

It was now time to turn south. We had a fine reach down both Lynn and Firth of Lorne, but ran out of wind off Sheep Isle. We were short of time to catch the tide in Cuan Sound, but were reassured that several other yachts were heading in at the same time. Turning the corner at the Cleit Rock, we met three yachts coming out. The consensus seemed to be that it was slack water! We had a look round Shuna Sound and Loch Melfort before making fast in Craobh Haven for the night. Next morning, we made the lengthy voyage (!) down Shuna Sound to the Dorus Mor, then up Loch Craignish to Ardfern. Then, after an early start to catch the tide in the Dorus Mor, we motored down the Sound of Jura in poor visibility.

We passed a ghost ship, drifting north in the mist – she was either a small yacht near at hand, or a large yacht, much farther away. Interrogation of the AIS revealed that she was *Gitana* – 30m! We were lucky to get a mooring in Port Ellen as the marina was completely full and many yachts were at anchor, gathering for the Classic Malts Cruise. Watching the antics of some crews tying up or anchoring led to the formulation of "Leonards Law of Mooring" – The competence of the crew is inversely proportional to the level of shouting.

On Thursday 21st July, we had a great broad reach and strong fair tide to Glenarm and next day a nice reach and run to Carrickfergus, where I was leaving *Ariadne* to have some work done, while I was away in the States.

North from Bergen. Another Norwegian

John Madden

A ship is safe in harbour,
But that's not what ships are for.

William Greenough Thayer Shedd.

There is a man who lives in Buncrana, County Donegal, near where our boat is berthed, whose nickname is "The Norwegian." The reason for this is that when asked what he would like to drink next in his local, he invariably says "another wee gin." We had sailed from Bergen south to Stavanger in 2006 and enjoyed it very much and so this year decided to go north. I had also been on a family cruise on P+O's *Ventura* in the same area in 2009.

We left Fahan marina in Lough Swilly at 10.00 on Thursday 23rd June. There were four of us aboard *Bagheera*, myself, Norman Fullam the Vice, Frankie Gallagher the Rear and Count John McNulty. Paddy Corr, *Bagheera's* resident chef had resigned and John took his place. John "I don't do hunger" McNulty is fond of his food, and promised that whatever else might happen, we wouldn't starve. The plan for the first day was to go to Tobermory about 111 miles distant. The weather was good with light northwesterlies. By midnight we were entering the Passage of Tiree and we reversed onto a pontoon at Tobermory at 06.00. Norman's house is called 'Iona' and he and John took the opportunity to visit the island of the same name and also took in a tour of Duart Castle with both sea eagles and golden eagles overhead. Frankie and I watched the tennis. The following day, Saturday, we had a small electrical problem looked at before leaving at midday for Stromness. The wind had backed to the southwest about force 5, and we made steady progress at an average of about 6.5knots. Our first sighting of Orkney was at 14.00 the following day, about 48 miles distant. It started to rain shortly after that and the visibility closed in. However, we still managed to keep our speed up and eventually arrived at Stromness at 21.20. I had pleasant memories of Stromness, having been there in 2003. However the pubs seem to have got a lot noisier since then. The best place for a drink now is upstairs in the Stromness Hotel. Up there we met a party of divers who were diving in Scapa Flow. At the end of the First World War, over seventy German warships had been interned there. Ludwig von Reuter, the German Admiral in command was afraid that they would be used against Germany and one weekend ordered that they all be scuttled. They are still there and a mecca for divers. We bought a very well written account of the event, "The Grand Scuttle" by Dan Van der Vat. Well worth reading.

If you do not get the tides right in Orkney, you won't be going anywhere. The best times to leave were in the middle of the night or at 15.45 the following afternoon. We have left places in the middle of the night and had done so the last time we left Stromness. This time we left at 15.45 We had cleared the various sounds and channels by 19.00 doing up to 12 knots. The forecast for Viking was for a northwest 5-7, occasionally 8 in the east dropping to 4, variable later. When we were through, it was very calm with the wind on the nose. We motored, passing 23 miles south of Fair Isle at 03.00. The following day was uneventful apart from having to alter course for a ship called *Atlantic Explorer* which was towing a seismic array. We passed the Meridian at 20.50 and got the sails up as the wind had backed to the north. Heavy rain and lumpy seas for the remainder of the crossing. Everyone fairly wet and miserable. We had intended to enter the Skjaergard, Norway's protected

inland waterway at Fedje as we had done before, but a look at the charts showed that entering just south of the island of Tekslo would save a few miles. We did this, shadowed by a Norwegian coastguard vessel, and eventually tied up at the Bryggen in Bergen at 16.20, having given an ETA of 16.00 to Shetland as we left. We were tied up to a local sailor in a forty-foot Bavaria. He said that if we had just crossed the North Sea, we deserved schnapps, and produced four glasses. He then told us that Bob Dylan was playing later that evening about 150 metres away and that tickets were still available. As the log notes: Welcome to Norway.

Our Garmin GPS was state of the art when I bought it in 2002. However Garmin have upgraded their product and the new charts will not work in my machine. My old Garmin has charts from Iceland to Morocco and I refuse to make all of these redundant by buying a new one. My electronic chart runs out about forty miles north of us so I bought some paper charts at the diesel dock in Bergen, before sailing back into the Skjaergard, and turning north towards Fedje. We were making very slow progress with wind and tide against us, no more than 2 knots. We were overtaken by *Ventura* with its thirteen bars and a population of twice the size of the town where I live, with thirty-seven tons of ship per passenger. Because of our slow speed, we decided to divert to the hamlet of Kallsøy on the island of Herdla. There is plenty of water at the small stone pier. The only bar and restaurant was closed for the summer holidays but we spotted a golf club and thought that it might have facilities. The owner of the club explained that he could not sell us a beer but that he could give us one. This he did and we had a long chat with him about the island's history, particularly in relation to the large Luftwaffe base that dominates the northwest of the island.

We left Herdla at 07.20, bound for Ålesund. Weather was good. Hot and sunny but no wind. This had changed by lunch-time with an increase in wind strength and moderate to rough seas. At this point someone noticed that the top of the inner forestay was unravelling, probably due to the pounding it had got in the North Sea. We bore off to the east to further assess it and headed for Bulandet. Bulandet is a tricky place to get into, as it sits in the middle of an archipelago of hundreds of islands and large rocks. Thanks to Norman the Navigator, we got in. There was a rally there of local motor boats. (Everyone in Norway is given a motor boat at birth.) The local PPP was fifty metres away and sold food although there was only one choice on the menu, a stew. A very helpful local fisherman made a couple of phone calls for us and arranged for us to meet a rigger tomorrow evening in Florø. All the motor boats had Norwegian ensigns on the stern and all the buildings ashore also flew the Norwegian flag. Although it was still very bright at 21.00, all ensigns and flags came down as one. The following day was Sunday, 3rd July. We left Bulandet at noon and arrived at a marina at Florø at 15.50. It was a private marina and we were directed to the public one on the northwest of the island. The rigger arrived at 19.00 and we had a new baby-stay by 20.00 for €160. I don't think that you would get service like that at home on a Sunday. Our neighbours were members of the Royal Norwegian YC and one of them joined us for night caps. A man in his early seventies, he had started life as an F-5 pilot and ended as an ENT surgeon and senior medical officer in the Norwegian Air Force. Membership of the Royal Norwegian is



Ålesund.

open to all to conform with national sporting regulations and currently has about 4000 members.

The following day we left Florø at midday for the short trip to Kalvåg. Our Norwegian friends had advised us that it was a nice spot and so it was with a PPP some twenty metres from the boat and very good food. The Norwegians were there ahead of us on *Rebecca* and *Iwa*. After eating, we left again at 16.20 headed for Måløy. The scenery was magnificent and the weather perfect and we arrived at 19.30. Måløy was well worth a stop. We had an excellent dinner and then back to the boat for nightcaps. Our destination the following day was to be Ålesund and to get there we had to go around the Statlandet. Also called Norway's Cape Horn, The Statt is similar to the Mull of Kintyre but without a Crinan Canal. It is a very dangerous place for shipping in the winter. To get around this the authorities are planning a tunnel through it suitable for large ships. We had no problems and once we rounded it called into a small inlet, the Statvågen, where we had been told only an idiot could not catch any fish. An hour later four idiots resumed the passage to Ålesund with more sea eagles soaring overhead. There were snow-capped mountains to starboard and fjords branching in all directions as we approached Ålesund, arriving at 19.30. Ålesund claims to be Norway's most beautiful city and it is indeed very beautiful. It is bisected by a river and is extremely picturesque. There are hot showers and as many restaurants and bars as one could want. In one bar a young man asked me for a cigarette; I gave him one and asked where I could buy some more. He replied that he didn't know as he never bought them. Cigarettes are €13.00 a packet in Norway.

We spent two nights in Ålesund leaving at 09.00 on Thursday 7th July, destination Kristiansund. We thought that on the way we might stop at Bud and perhaps have a Bud in the PPP, but because of light winds didn't pass it till 15.30 so turned into the Hustadvika finally tying alongside at

20.15. Kristiansund was disappointing. One rather mediocre bar and restaurant seemed to be all that there was in walking distance. However the next morning, we found a book shop that sold charts and bought the remaining ones that we thought that we would need. We now had forty-four new charts and stowage was a problem. We left at 13.30 bound for Rørvik. This entailed an overnigher. The weather was poor. Rough seas and driving rain followed by heavy fog. Thank goodness for radar and AIS. Apart from the weather the trip was incident free and we pulled into Rørvik at 15.00. Rørvik is a fairly quiet spot. A couple of fast-food restaurants and a very quiet hotel. The best place to eat there is in the Norweg museum which has stayed open later than usual to cater for passengers on two Hurtigruten ships. We just spent one night in Rørvik as we had another overnight trip the following day so left at 09.40

on Monday, northbound through the Inderleia, an inland waterway similar to the Skaergard. We left in warm sunshine with sea eagles all around us but the weather deteriorated. A storm followed us out from Rørvik with menacing dark clouds and lots of thunder and lightning. This was followed by heavy rain which cleared as we passed Brønnøysund at 18.00. The sun came back as we passed the magnificent Sjusostre mountain on the island of Sandnessjøen at 23.00. We crossed The Arctic Circle at 04.38 alerted to the fact by a sculpture on an island about a quarter of a mile to its south. The Norwegians call it the Ice Circle. I and Frankie had a beer to celebrate and a bottle of champagne when the other watch came on duty at 06.00. Our next port of call was Engen in the Holandsfyord. Engen appeared to consist of a small pontoon and a shed. However, through the rain, we could just make out the Svartisen glacier which is why we had come here. Norman, the Vice, borrowed a bike and cycled to the glacier returning to the boat with a bag of glacial ice. He then imparted two good bits of good news. Firstly that he had a bottle of rum and a bottle of ginger and



Engen.

secondly that hidden in the trees was a bar and restaurant which was to close at three. After a couple of rum and gingers we had an excellent lunch. My copy of the Norwegian Cruising Guide was printed in 1996 and shows the ice from the glacier coming almost down to sea level; today it is 600 feet above it.

We were now 95 miles from the Lofoten Islands our destination. However it was now the 11th July and I had an appointment in Inverness on the 24th with my wife and daughter who were coming through the canal with us. God may not deduct from one's lifespan that time spent sailing, but my wife might, so we reluctantly decided to head south the following morning.

We left Engen at 06.00 and had an uneventful sail down to Sandnessjøen arriving at 15.15. We met a local in the PPP whose friend had been badly beaten in Dublin so did not stay long. The plan for the next day was to travel through the fjords, back to Rørvik for another meal in the museum. Unfortunately, we didn't arrive until 21.30 and the museum was just closing so we ate on the boat and left again at 23.00. The electrical problem resurfaced and we had no nav lights, so back to the pontoon for repairs and off again at 02.00. Brekstad, on the island of Ørland, was our next stop for an overnight stay. There is a fine hotel near the ferry terminal. We used Brekstad as a jumping off spot to visit Trondheim, some thirty miles inland. Trondheim used to be Norway's capital. It is a very cosmopolitan city with all possible facilities. Like Ålesund it is bisected by a river where one can tie up. However one has to get past a railway bridge to do this and it only opens sporadically. There is a large marina just outside the bridge with plenty of space for visitors and just a 2km walk to the city centre. We still had a hankering to see Bud, so having spent the night in Trondheim, we left at 16.30 to go back to Brekstad in glorious sunshine. We overnighted in Brekstad and left the following morning at 06.10 for Bud, arriving at 20.15. Bud is a tiny place with just one fast food place that also served beer, (but no Bud). A picturesque fishing village with a population of about 800, but very quiet.

Our plan was to get as far south as Florø. This was quite a way away so we decided to break the trip by going back to Kalvåg. We left Bud at 06.00 and rounded the Statt at 17.45 in sunshine and light variable winds. We arrived in Kalvåg at 01.00. It was twilight and the harbour was very crowded with motor boats. There was only one yacht that didn't have a few boats rafted outside it and we came alongside them as quietly as we could. It is certainly a small world for this yacht was *Oisin Bawn* and we spoke briefly with Maeve and Adrian Bell, when we were leaving the next morning at 09.15. We got to Florø at 11.10. We had been there on the way up and knew where the facilities were. Heavy rain kept us from too much exploration. As I mentioned previously, I had to be in Inverness at the weekend to meet my wife and daughter so we were going to use Florø as departure port for Scotland. We left at 06.00 again. Conditions deteriorated in the afternoon with a northwest force 7-8 and large breaking seas. By early evening the weather moderated and at 21.00 we had 110 miles to run to our destination, Lerwick on Shetland. I had never been to Shetland before and it provided a handy spot to break the journey. As we approached the harbour we looked for masts that would indicate where we would aim for. Then we spotted them; quite a lot of them, the Tall Ships were in! We rafted-off outside another yacht and went to explore Lerwick which was in holiday mode. Norman Fullam was to leave us in Inverness to be replaced by Mickey Morrison for the last leg home. Mickey's son, Conal is the skipper of one of the tall ships, the *Moosk*, a 1906, 58 foot, gaff rigged yawl. We looked him up. His was the first boat to reach Yell and he was rewarded with his own weight in local produce. Unfortunately, he is quite



Norman collects the ice.

slim. The *Moosk* was restored by a doctor and rented to Cremyll Sailing, a Cornish charity. The rental, if asked for, is one peppercorn per annum.

The following day a northerly force 6 was pressing us hard onto our neighbour, a friendly Norwegian. All Norwegians seem to be very friendly. The harbour master seemed a little concerned with the force of the wind on the crowded pontoon and arranged for two ribs to pull us off sideways. We left Lerwick at 10.20. It was bumpy but the wind was behind us. The forecast was for a force 8, but the weather system was moving east away from us. However, it delayed the departure of the Tall Ships by a couple of days and stopped a cruise ship from visiting Lerwick. The wind didn't go above force 7, with the seas moderate to rough. At 06.00 the following morning, Saturday the 23rd, we were abeam Wick and abeam Cromarty Forth at 14.20. I had said a couple of times on the trip, that when we got to Inverness, we were as good as at home. Never count your chickens. We entered the sea lock at Clachnaharry at 17.10. John threw the stern rope to the lock keeper. We were going forward very slowly at the time and I put the engine into reverse to stop her. The boat bounded forward. I made a couple of futile attempts to engage reverse before hitting the wall at the end of the lock. Nobody was hurt and there was no third party damage to anyone or anything, so it could have been worse. It could have happened approaching *Oisin Bawn* or in a crowded lock. However it does make the quote at the top of this log slightly ironic. There was a gash in the bow, and the pulpit and furling systems were badly damaged. We crept cautiously to a waiting pontoon at the far side of the lock, before moving to a pontoon in the Seaport marina the next day.

Norman left us to be replaced by Pauline, Jane and Mickey. We went a mile or so up the canal to Caley Marine where their engineer replaced a broken split pin in the gearbox. We were

advised not to use sail as the stem head fitting and chain plate were damaged. The gash in the bow was at the level of the chain locker so did not threaten the integrity of the hull. I was determined that this would not be allowed to spoil the trip and we had a very enjoyable couple of days in the canal. The ladies departed on Wednesday 27th July and we departed Neptune's staircase the following morning exiting the sea lock at 10.30. We popped through the Sound of Cuan and arrived at Craobh Haven (Crookhaven?) marina at 18.00 and had a very enjoyable evening. The following evening saw us in Port Ellen in lovely warm sunshine from where we made for Portrush the

next day arriving after four and a half hours under engine. This was to be our last night and we celebrated it appropriately.

Instead of going back to our home port we went to Coleraine where the facilities for repairs would be far better and we arrived there at 15.35 on the 31st July after the ten mile trip from Portrush. We had covered 2535 miles and at the time of writing with a week of September remaining, *Bagheera* is now about to go back in the water, repairs completed, and finish the trip. Because of the accident, much of the season was lost. We only exited the marina at Fahan twice in 2011, yet did more miles this year than we had ever done before.

Just fifty more to go.

David Whitehead writes of a rare find

In June, in an attempt to get to Brittany aboard my recently acquired *Moody 27 Mystic*, with Peter Fernie as crew, we found ourselves in Milford Haven where, after replacing

a failed solenoid on the starter motor I had turned back from a passage to the Scilly Isles when only 15 miles out, due to the discovery of an unidentified ingress of water. The delays occasioned by these problems meant we missed our weather window, and with strong southerly winds forecast I decided to leave the boat in Lawrenny Yacht Station, some miles up the Cleddau River. From there Peter and I could get to Pembroke Dock, Peter for the Rosslare Ferry myself to take the train to Falmouth and join up with John Bourke for the Cruise in Company.

On the way up the river I spotted an interesting looking wooden Bermudian cutter with a short bowsprit, a graceful sheer, an elegant counter and a low and inconspicuous coachroof. Always interested in this sort of boat I steered over to pass close by and found her name to be *Driac*.

This was most interesting as she is one of a pair of boats of that name originally owned by one of the most adventurous cruising skippers of the 20th century – one A.G.H. McPherson. McPherson was the accumulator of one of the largest and most famous collections of maritime art and his collection was bought by the shipping magnate Sir James Caird, who presented it to the British nation, and it now forms the nucleus of the art collection of the National Maritime Museum at Greenwich.

McPherson then took up cruising at well over the age of 50 and had *Driac* (Caird spelled backwards!) built by Camper and Nicholson in 1930. *Driac* is 30 ft LWL and 42 ft LOA and McPherson cruised her as far as Lebanon, visiting most shores of the Mediterranean and back to the UK, a long and adventurous cruise in such a small vessel in 1931/32. As a result of this experience McPherson decided that *Driac* was TOO BIG FOR EXTENDED CRUISING!!

As a result he sold her and had *Driac II* built – 25ft LWL and 32ft LOA. In this vessel he sailed over 45,000 miles and over the next six years visited over 100 countries accompanied only by his faithful paid hand, Bill Lengh. These voyages included an Atlantic circuit with side trips to Iceland, the Faroes, Cape Verde Islands, Mexico, Miami, Bermuda and the Azores in 1932. In 1936 another voyage was undertaken to Haifa in the Levant, then through the Suez canal and across the Indian Ocean, visiting the Laccadive Islands and Columbo



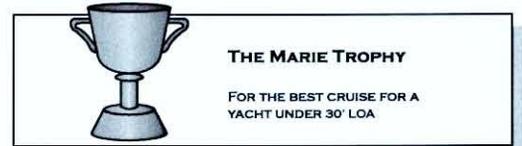
Driac.

before crossing the Bay of Bengal to Singapore, the Phillipines and Indonesia and then back across the Indian Ocean to Durban. Here he decided he had had enough cruising, so he gave *Driac II* to the faithful Bill Lengh and took the steamer back to England!

Not quite finished, he managed to talk himself into the RNVR in 1939 and after escaping from Holland he found himself navigating one of the "little ships" back to England from Dunkirk!

His remarkable logs are all published in the Royal Cruising Club Journal and are well worth the read.

Marie Claire returns to the French Atlantic coast to explore and party, but then gets bugged!



Seán McCormack

The plan was to spend six weeks exploring the Atlantic coast of France as far south as La Rochelle. This was to include a sentimental return visit to Saint Gilles Croix de Vie, where I proudly took delivery of a spanking new First 30 just over 29 years ago. Somewhere in the middle was the ICC Brittany Rally 2011, with time beforehand to prepare and more importantly, time afterwards to recover. I was joined by long-time cruising friends Vincent Dromey who was doing the full cruise with me, and John Ahern who was doing the first part and to be joined in France by his wife Emily as soon as we arrived. Another friend Peter Quigley was joining us for the final two weeks.

We departed Howth at 17.50 on June 9th and as there was very little wind we motored all the way to Saint Mary's in the Isles of Scilly, with the exception of about one hours sailing. On the way we made brief tidal stops in both Wicklow and Rosslare. Sunday June 12th produced strong winds confining us to our Hughtown mooring buoy. We got away the next day in calm conditions, motoring nearly all the way to L'Aberwrac'h, where we arrived 08.25 Tuesday. The following morning was wet and miserable as we headed for the Chenal du Four in a southerly force 4 and rough sea. I was concerned about the likely conditions as we beat through this passage, but in the end the sea was less than earlier, and poor visibility meant that we saw very little going through. We arrived into Camaret at 13.10 and tied up at the outer pontoon to get fuel from the self-service station. John paid for it by credit card which he then inconveniently dropped into the dock unnoticed.

The morning of June 16th was bright for a change as we departed Camaret at 07.40. The sea was still on the rough side as we approached the Chenal du Toulinguet and afterwards we had some good sailing as we headed for the Raz de Sein, which posed no problem, and then rounded Pte de Penmarc'h, to take us into south Brittany and on to Concarneau. The next day was wet with some strong winds, so a day in port attending to some chores was required. Pat Lyons ICC on *Stardancer* was also on the marina and I went to say hello. A rather hassled and stripped to the waist Pat emerged to explain that he was in the middle of trying to sort out a serious freshwater leak on board. We later met up with him and his crew in a local bar and a pleasant time was had by all.

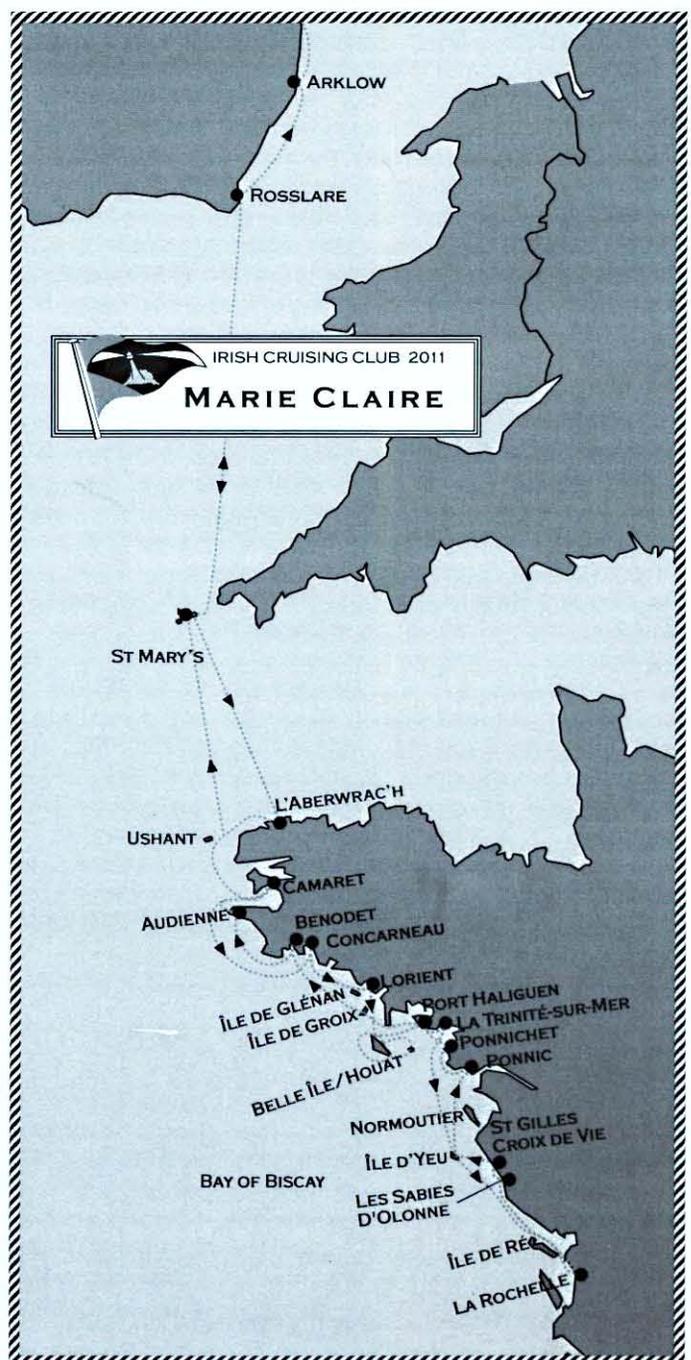
On Saturday June 18th, we departed Concarneau with Port Tudy on Isle de Groix as our destination. It was blowing fairly hard and with a fairly big sea, but as the wind was on the quarter, we enjoyed a fantastic and exhilarating sail to Port Tudy, where we arrived at exactly the same time as the ferry bringing John's wife Emily from Lorient. During our four night stay there, John and Emily checked into a local hotel, as things were getting a bit crowded on *Marie Claire*.

Our early arrival in Port Tudy was to join up with the other 30 ICC boats in the Brittany 2011 Rally. As this event is fully covered elsewhere, I will not go into detail, except to say a special word of thanks to Dan Cross, Len Curtin and Stuart Musgrave for all their hard work in making this such a huge success.

Over the next few days after Port Tudy and with John and

Emily back on board, we made calls to Lorient, Sauzon on Belle Isle, Tréac'h er Gourhed on Houat, Le Palais on Belle Isle, Port Kerel on the south and Ster Vraz on the northwest coasts of Belle Isle. The weather was now more settled and these few days were memorable, especially Sauzon, Houat and Port Kerel.

On June 27th, we rejoined the rally for the barbeque on Ile Houat. John Ahern of the *Marie Claire* crew, was to the fore when it came to music and song, and his rendition of the





Marie Claire in La Rochelle.

'Fender Song', is still talked about much to my embarrassment. *Marie Claire* received a prize for 'something or other' as the caption under the presentation photo in the club's Photo Gallery says. Dan Cross in his rally report says it was for the best-dressed boat. To help clarify the award for ICC members, the recollection of the *Marie Claire* crew may be helpful. John says it was for the smallest boat at the rally. Vincent says it was for John's musical contribution. Emily says it was for the boat with the largest and gaudiest battle flags. As for the skipper, he is prone to memory loss when pressed to take yet another glass of wine!

The next day we went to La Trinité sur Mer, where the fleet was assembling for the final function on Wednesday 29th. After the rally ended, John and Emily left for other hotels in the area, while Vincent and I lost no time in taking advantage of favourable winds to get south. Our first call was to the beautiful anchorage of Anse des Vieilles on the south coast of Ile d'Yeu. The wind was light for a few hours after departure, but then picked up giving us great sailing to the anchorage, where we arrived at 21.15, covering a distance of 65.8 miles. The next day, Friday, gave us good sailing for a few hours, before having to resort to the motor again, on the 50 mile leg to Saint-Martin-de-Ré on the north coast of Ile de Ré. Here, after passing through the open lock gates, we were directed to a berth in the Bassin à Flot, right in the town centre. This was a great berth as we were close to everything and the place was really buzzing. We were berthed right beside La Martinière, the island's famous ice cream parlour, where queues form from midday. We were so lucky as the Bassin à Flot is currently being extended, is closed to visiting yachts and only opens after works cease for the week-end. The pilot describes it as one of the most attractive harbours in west France and a magnet for visitors with its Vauban fortifications. These hold a prison from where convicts used to be shipped out to the penal settlements in French Guiana. We really enjoyed our two night stay here, despite paying €16.60 for two beers in a quayside bar.

On Sunday July 3rd we locked out for the 14.5 mile trip under the spectacular, two mile long curved Ré bridge to La Rochelle. This marina is in an ancient fortified port, with its impressive twin towers entrance, right in the city centre. La Rochelle, with its elegant shops housed in some of France's finest historical arcaded buildings, a variety of museums and dozens of cafes and restaurants, is a big tourist attraction.

We departed La Rochelle at 08.50 on July 5th and now

heading north, we had reasonable sailing for a few hours. It was raining and miserable as we arrived into Quai Garnier marina in Les Sables d'Olonne, which probably explains why we found it very quiet. Later after dinner on board and the rain had ceased, we enjoyed two beers in the busiest bar around, with a mainly young crowd. The next morning as we were leaving, we motored into the nearby, massive Port Olona marina. This is the main centre of yachting activity in Les Sables d'Olonne. Craft of every shape and size are here and a great variety of onshore facilities.

I took delivery of *Marie Claire* in Saint Gilles Croix de Vie in April 1982 and I have not been back since. In the meantime there has been a great amount of development in the area and I would not recognise it at all, apart from the marina and hard standing areas. As we arrived on July 6th

about an hour before low water and with a fresh southwesterly wind, I was a bit concerned about the entrance. However we got in with no problems and were given a berth.

Next day we were away at 09.25 with our destination Port-Joinville marina, Ile d'Yeu, where we arrived at 14.05 just before strong winds set in. On the morning of Saturday July 9th there was a mass exodus from the marina as the weather improved. We enjoyed a pleasant sail in light winds to the anchorage of Bois de la Chaise, on the northeast corner of Normoutier. The following day saw us tied up in Pornic marina. Pornic was in fête as the Sail France yacht race was due in port. There were large crowds around watching specially laid-on sailing activity in the river to entertain the public. This involved up to fifteen kids displaying their sailing skills in Optimist dinghies, in an incredibly small area. As well as each yacht having its own support team, a large tented village offering every facility and all sorts of entertainment added to the colourful scene. In the late afternoon we met Peter Quigley, who was joining us for the remainder of the trip, off the train from Nantes.

The next three days took us to Pornichet marina, Port Haliguen marina on the southeast end of the Quiberon peninsula, and finally a visitors mooring in Locmaria on Ile de Groix. The twenty visitor moorings here are quite close together and we also touched bottom for about half an hour at low water.

With a good forecast for Bastille Day, July 14th, we were away at 08.40, motor-sailing in light winds to Iles de Glénan. Everyone on board had expressed a desire to call here, if at all possible. About eight miles offshore, the low Glénan Islands enclose magical bays and lagoons with clear, shallow water and white sand beaches. Popular spots have plenty of visitors' buoys, but there are secluded hideaways where you can lie to your own anchor. It was a beautiful morning as we approached the archipelago, which can look tricky on the chart, but its north edge is fairly easy to approach from either Bénodet or Concarneau. All the moorings were taken in the popular La Chambre inner pool, behind Ile St Nicolas. As the ebb falls away, a sand spit uncovers between St Nicolas and Bananec, while the islets and banks to the west merge together to enclose La Chambre as a sheltered lagoon. After careful tidal calculations we anchored, making sure not to repeat the grounding of my first visit here some years ago. It was magnificent here with the white sand and clear water; just add a few palm trees and it could be the Caribbean. We enjoyed the boarded walk around

St Nicolas, which gave us sufficient thirst for two beers in Les Viviers bar, perched above some shellfish ponds next to the ferry landing. A great day, and a quiet, non fireworks Bastille night at anchor.

The next morning brought us to Bénodet, where we tied up in the marina for half an hour so Vincent could get fresh bread for lunch and also to take on water. We then passed under the Pont de Cornouaille bridge with its 30 metre clearance and swinging right, continued up river as it narrowed and twisted between steep tree-covered banks, with some magnificent chateaux peeping out on the fast-flowing tidal river. A vacant mooring provided the setting for a tasty lunch. Later the rain came as we made our way back down river, in contrasting conditions to our earlier up-river passage.

The following day required careful adherence to the various transits required to safely enter the Port of Audierne. During the passage from Bénodet, we experienced strong winds as we slowly beat round the Pointe de Penmarc'h on a grey afternoon. We could not help contrasting the conditions with the Pilot comment, of its being the gateway to the sun and the start of south Brittany and its warmer weather. Not today I'm afraid to say. We were now keen to be getting north as time was running out, but the northwesterly wind conspired to ensure we stayed a second night. Not the worst place to be weather-bound, as it has good facilities all very close at hand.

After a quick supermarket visit on Monday July 18th we left at 10.15. We motored west into a fresh westerly wind, so as to arrive at the Raz de Sein at slack water. Despite slack water, we encountered a small area of overfalls and I would not wish to be here in bad weather or the middle of the tidal stream. Soon we were able to sail and we enjoyed a great sail all the way to Camaret. The forecast for the next week was most depressing, showing a continuation of northerly winds. This resulted in a five-night stay in Camaret and a late return home. After two

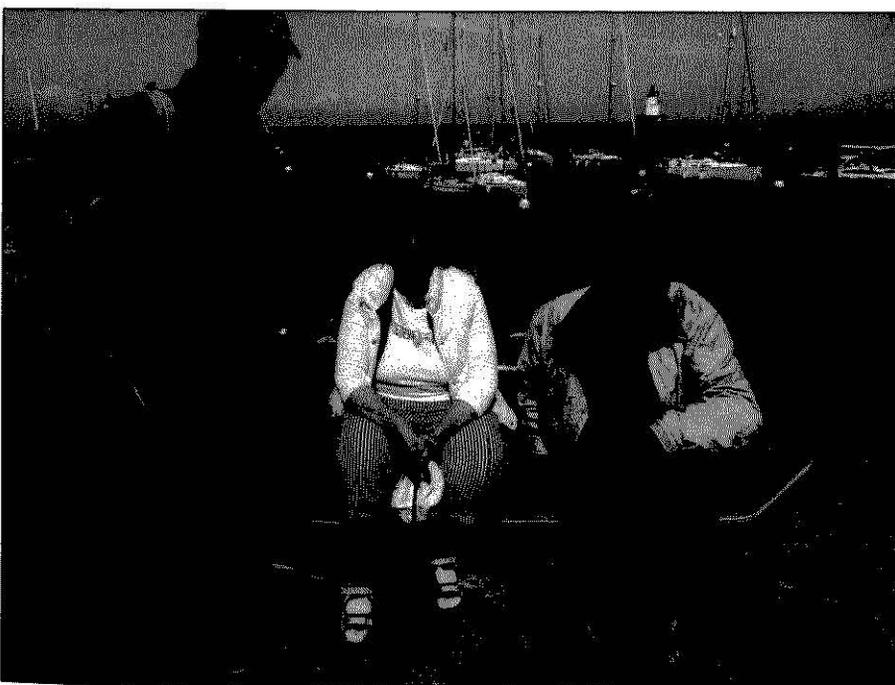


The answer to every cruising sailors garden back home.

nights in the Port Vaubon marina we opted to move to the nearby Port du Notic marina, which was considerably nearer to town and its facilities. By the end of the five days together with the two on the way south, we certainly knew Camaret. However it had one last pleasant surprise in store for us. On our last night here a night of festivities was planned and a large, old traditional sailing ship was anchored in the harbour as a stage for the musicians. The evening concluded with a most impressive fireworks display. Camaret we forgive you!!

Away at 06.40 on Saturday July 23rd to catch the tide through the Chenal du Four and set our course for the Scillies. The wind was light from the northwest, so it was more motoring. During the afternoon we had the company of five dolphins for about ten minutes. As I was lying in my bunk at about 17.00 and thinking that we would need to refuel in the next hour, the engine suddenly lost power and was shut down by Peter and Vincent. After refuelling it would not start and trying to bleed the system failed to produce fuel or air bubbles. On removal of the primary filter, it was found to be blocked with a thick gunge. All efforts of blowing and sucking with the Avon pump and a plunger failed to get the fuel to flow. It was obvious that we had a serious blockage in the fuel line that we could not resolve at sea.

We had no option but to start sailing in the light winds. Fortunately the breeze picked up during the night and we made good progress in the direction of the Isles of Scilly. In the early morning when we were about five miles from our destination, the wind went very light and the fog closed in. This was a serious situation, as many members will be aware that all approaches to any of the anchorages here are rock strewn. After about two hours we had arrived at St. Mary's Sound, which is very foul. To get through, we now had several tacks in about three knots of wind and fifty metres visibility. I was below keeping a close eye on the chart plotter



John, Emily and Vincent in Sauzon.

and AIS, when I realised that it was time for yet another tack. As I got to the cockpit, the small islet of Biggal appeared out of the fog about thirty metres away. We all required showers after that! We ghosted up under full sail to a free visitor mooring in Hughtown, St Mary's at 12.05 having covered 127.6 miles from Camaret. What a relief to arrive safely.

As this was a Sunday, we had to wait until next morning to make contact with a mechanic and when we did we found he could not come until Tuesday morning. These delays were becoming a cause for concern, as Peter in particular had work commitments back home. I picked up Mathew by dinghy at 08.30 and his initial attempts to solve the problem were unsuccessful. The fuel tank would have to be drained and removed and the fuel line possibly replaced. With the tank successfully removed, he then succeeded in clearing the fuel line. He took the tank away for cleaning and discovered a live diesel bug, which he claimed we had picked up in the previous three weeks. Having a refitted nice clean tank was a relief, as was the sound of a working engine. On advice, I had started using a diesel additive this year and I suspect part of the problem was the effect this had had on years of a build-up of deposits in the tank. Previously I never found any contamination in the primary filter during servicing. So my advice is if you start to use an additive, as many now do, it is important to start with a clean tank. Mathew told us he dealt with quite a few similar problems this year. During our two-day stay in St. Mary's we did get in some coastal walking and checked out two local pubs, where we met up with Tony Clarke ICC on *Zephyre*.

We finally got away at 13.50 on Tuesday July 26th motoring into a light northerly wind. We had a lovely bright night at sea but still motoring after a full two weeks of northerlies. We arrived at the Tusker just as the tide was turning north, but as we would not have enough fuel to motor to Howth, we put into Rosslare for 45 minutes to fill a container. Later, having run out of favourable tide and in wet conditions, we tied up to the pontoon in Arklow at 00.50. Three hours later in the rain, we commenced the final leg to Howth in the continuing light wind from the north. After about two hours there was a sudden increase in the wind, requiring two reefs in the main and a much reduced head sail.

Thereafter we had a hard sail to Howth in a rising sea. We were all exhausted from our headwinds and engine difficulties of the previous days, as we arrived in Howth at 10.40.

Conclusions

We were unfortunate with the weather which was often unseasonably cool. Frustrated by the lack of wind at times, we were eventually thwarted by two weeks of headwinds as we tried to get home. My guess is that we motored for up to 70% of the distance covered and with diesel costing €1.50 litre in France, this resulted in record fuel expenditure for *Marie Claire*. However, it was a great experience despite the weather and fuel problems. The highlights were the ICC Rally, Ile de Ré, La Rochelle, Iles de Glénan and Bénodet/Odet river. Thanks to John, Emily, Vincent and Peter for their contributions. Thanks also to my long suffering, non sailing wife Mary for 'holding the fort' during my seven week absence.

Brenda Kelliher writes of October on the Chesapeake

Possibly the best time of year here ... glorious sunshine, warm breezes, few power boats in the way, great sailing! Many people take a few days off to go cruising, anchoring in sheltered creeks, close to the beautiful trees changing color and reflected in the clam waters, fish rising, great blue herons fishing. I sail *Lark* as much as possible in these days while the water is warm, the upper reaches of the Severn almost deserted.

It is Annapolis Sailboat Show time as well, the little historic city is jam packed with visitors from all over the world, and the floating docks handle crowd queuing to go aboard large Oysters, Jeanneaus, Hinckley's ... all the builders of cruising yachts are here. Some racing boats too, but not so many. All the gear-makers, and sail-makers are here too, even specialized companies just for classic celestial navigation, bow-thrusters, all kind of niche products and services! Definitely more on display this year than for 4 years, and sales are improved too.

Hundreds of cruisers anchor off Annapolis, or take a city helix mooring, (more secure in the local muddy bottom) for the Show, and many different clubs (including OCC) have parties this week.

A special event that coincides with the Sailboat Show is the Good Old Boat Regatta. This is very gentle racing and rallying over 2 days at Mill Creek opposite Annapolis, fleet entries capped at 100 boats! Good Old Boat magazine (www.goodoldboat.com) has pioneered a movement across

America to honor and enjoy classic sailboats from the 50s and 60s, mainly old Alberg and Sparkman and Stephens designs. At the Show, boat builder Bob Haney exhibited two good old boats he has restored in his thriving yard up on the New York Finger Lakes ... www.sailithaca.com ... and many sailors stopped with delight to see these modest boats looking better than the day they were launched in the 1960s. (Lark is an Alberg Ensign from 1964).

These are sailors on their way south – either through the Intracoastal Waterway (ICW), or making their way slowly down to Norfolk to wait for November 1st and clearance to head for the Caribbean. Insurance companies have tighter and tighter rules, based on boat and skipper, as to when boats may go offshore as October is still hurricane season! Although we can get an early nor'easter which is nearly as nasty! November two years ago, 3 of us delivering a Hallberg Rassy 41 from Newport to Bermuda had 3 days of Northerly Force 8 to 9 and half a day of Force 10! Not forecast!

The Great Schooner Race is finishing as I write (Baltimore to Norfolk) <http://www.schoonerrace.org/> and many of these old and modern boats are also on their way to the Caribbean for the winter season.

Soon it will be cold, I will secure *Lark* on her moorings for the winter. She will be just off our community dock, close to neighbors docks, but she will swing freely in the ice which forms for about 6 weeks, her stout hull no problem. Most of the good old boats on the Severn, such as the many Alberg 30s, spend the winter in the water, maybe at a dock with a bubbler to keep the ice from forming, or swinging on moorings waiting for early April to sail again!

Alchemist visits the Dalmatian Islands

Robert Barker

Alchemist, with her crew of Robert, Pat, Bill Walsh and John McSweeney, set sail from Valetta in Malta for the central Adriatic to visit some of the Dalmatian islands, on the 10th July 2011. The weather was fair with a westerly wind of no more than 10 knots. The wind increased during the day to 15 knots and we motor-sailed towards Sicily. By 06.00 the next morning, the wind had again disappeared to a zephyr and we were joined by three dolphins playing in our bow for about 20 minutes. We were very pleased to see them as we had seen no dolphins, turtles or tuna last year. By 19.25, we saw tuna leaping into the air, pursued by another pod of dolphins who diverted their attentions to us for ten delightful minutes. The morning of the 12th dawned with little wind as we tracked along the toe, foot and arch of Italy's boot.

Sancta Maria di Leuca is a nice welcoming port just on Italy's heel and we decided to pull in at 11.30 to fuel up. We had travelled 293 miles in 48 hours. Our pilots were out of date in positioning the fuel dock which is now to the left on the harbour wall just past the red harbour light. The large flags signal its presence and they also supply (free) water. They handed out lazy lines and we tied up stern-to. Hours of opening are 08.00 to 20.00. After fuelling, we asked if we could stay for three hours to lunch, shower and tidy up and they led us to a berth on the marina. After a very pleasant sojourn in Leuca, at 15.30, we set our course (352°) for Cavtat, just south of Dubrovnik – a total of 176 miles. The forecast from Split Radio was not favourable to us, with wind of 15 knots on the nose. There was a disturbed, lumpy sea for some two hours around the headland of Capo de Castrignano which is the extreme tip of the heel. We gritted our teeth and motored into the confused seas. Then we noticed that the forehatch was open! Sheets and cushions were hauled into the cockpit to dry them in the afternoon sunshine. At 23.10, 40°21.95 north, 10°29.53 east, we were stopped by a high-speed 'Policia Finanzas' vessel that did not show on the radar. Their spotlight blinded us and they rattled something at us in Italian. Pat, in her very best pigeon Latin, explained that our defaced ensign was, in fact, an Irish flag and that we had four people on board and were travelling for the purposes of holiday. After a bit of consultation and some further examination of the flag, they turned off the light, threw us a cheery 'Pa bene' and shot off back into the darkness.

On the 13th at 13.00 we belatedly spotted a large sheet of pale blue plastic as it disappeared under the bow and, inevitably, ended up around the propeller. We stopped immediately, before it had a chance to wrap too tightly, and Robert went over the stern with goggles and flippers. He managed to unpick it with a boathook and the crew took advantage of the break to throw out lines and have a welcome dip in the cooling waters. During the afternoon, we had a number of sightings of turtles, just poking their heads above the water. The clear water displayed their hard shells and little legs paddling away from us. We were a little concerned at our slow progress and the likelihood that we would arrive in Cavtat in the dark. We need not have worried. The full moon lit the place up like a silver spotlight and we glided into the Quarantine Quay at 23.30, where we stayed for the night. A couple of welcome cooling beers were consumed to celebrate the 458 mile trip which had taken 3½ days.

On the 14th we were instructed to conduct our immigration business quickly and move away from the quay. The Berthing Master in Cavtat is young and very aggressive and certainly

more interested in the massive motor yachts that frequent the place than he is in scruffy scuts like us. "You cannot stay here! You must have an agent. You must have booked in at least 7 days in advance. You must have emailed to give your details." However, he has a couple of very amiable assistants, and they are the boyos to do business with if you can. They managed to find us a tiny slot between two gigantic 80 ft. motor yachts for 24 hours, so we spent a nice day on the quay, cleaning up, dining, watching the talent and generally enjoying the attractive little town. Berthing was pricey (€250 per night) and power, water and rubbish disposal were extra, but we reckoned it was worth it. Checking-in to Croatia is a prolonged and expensive (€255) business and we had to do a bit of scurrying between the police, immigration and harbour master – all in different locations. But the people are friendly and pleasant, so it was no real hardship. Catherine Walsh joined us, having flown into Dubrovnik Airport – a 15 minute taxi ride away.

There is a nice swimming area just along from the quay and we noted that it seems *de rigueur* for every woman (regardless of age, size, religious belief, or faith in gyms) to wear a bikini. Pat and Catherine felt distinctly over-dressed! Back on board, we had drinks with Gary O'Callaghan, an Irishman who works in Dubrovnik with the IMF and he regaled us with data on the current economic state of Croatia. Our laughter, consumption and loquacious conversation flowed well into the night.

On the 15th July we were due to leave the quay at midday, but that time came and went while we watched lots of anchor knitting as the massive motor cruisers pulled up their anchor chains only to discover that they were fouled. We were surprised at the difficulty that the mainly professional skippers had in berthing and leaving Cavtat. But it led to hours of happy ogling for us. At 14.00, we slipped out gingerly but, thankfully, without incident – much to the disappointment of the audience along the quay. We motored around to Uvala Tiha, which offers safe anchorage, is just behind Cavtat and is free! We dinghied ashore and caught the ferry to Dubrovnik. It is a beautiful city and has been lovingly restored after the siege by the JNA and Montenegrins in the autumn of 1991. Pat and Robert walked the walls, which they deemed to be worth the exposure to the blistering sun.

On the 16th, after a walk ashore, some maintenance (cleaning the hull and repair of windlass control, fenders, valve in the heads and outboard engine). We left the anchorage at 12.20 bound for Lopud. We had a swim and some lunch at Sunj Lopud and then motored around to the more secure anchorage of Uvala Lopud where we dropped anchor just opposite the quay. We ate on board and enjoyed the magnificent sunset on warm balmy calm seas. We drank health to Victoria Barker, who had just passed her final exam for the MRCPsych and is now a fully fledged psychiatrist. We also drank *bon chance* for Emma Walsh, who was just about to swim the Alcatraz Race for charity.

The 17th saw Robert and Pat up early for a walk across the island and the rest of the crew joined them ashore for breakfast. It is a lovely little town with one church for every ten inhabitants. (Only kidding – but there are a lot of churches!). Lopud used to be a favoured summer home for many of Dubrovnik's noble families and the remains of their crumbling palaces are still to be seen. It used to have a population of 4,000 souls – now it is 400. They have a nice shady promenade with lots of restaurants and some under-stocked tourist shops. We were

excluded from the main church by virtue of our indecorous attire! No short sleeves and no shorts. Wow! Is this the 21st century? We explored the Rectory, the Botanic Gardens and some of the historical churches and chapels. Then we upped anchor and headed northwest for the island of Sipan – the largest and least-developed of the Elaphite Islands. We motored the 7 miles, coming through the narrow gap, under the overhead wires, into the beautiful, narrow, wooded gut that is Sipanski Luka. Although there was space on the quay, we decided to anchor off to allow us to swim and stay cool in the hot sunshine. The wind rose in the late afternoon and Robert and Bill devised a kedge anchor for the dinghy as some of the other boats' tenders were surging against the quay wall. We dinghied ashore and came back with great hilarity as the not-so-young-as-we-used-to-be crew belly-flopped into the dinghy, which had softened in the cool night air.

On Monday the 18th, a very pleasant walk ashore around the perimeter of the gut, then fresh bread for breakfast from the little general shop. At 11.00, we raised the anchor and set sail for Mljet, the next island in the chain. It is really a sylvan haven with two saltwater lakes, providing the focus for the Mljet National Park. Odysseus was supposed to have holed up here with the nymph Calypso, and Mljet also claims to be the 'Melita' where St. Paul ran aground on his way to Rome and was bitten by a viper. In fact, the locals told us, the snake problem was so bad that they had to import a number of mongooses (or is it mongeese?) from India to deal with them. We called in to Sobra en route for Pomena to get fuel. The pilot does not mention it, but they also have (free) water if you buy diesel. It was tricky enough coming alongside as the fuelling dock took two boats alongside but there were protruding rocks fore and aft. Pomena was hospitable and three of the restaurateurs offered us lazy lines to tie up. We fancied a meal ashore so we selected the best looking restaurant (based on the instant, expert scrutiny of the crew as we rocketed astern with stern lines and boat hook at the ready). Power and berthing were free provided we ate at his restaurant. We concurred



Alchemist in Shrivena Luka.

willingly. 'What about water?' we asked. 'No water.' sez he. 'What about the next fella?' we asked. 'No water anywhere.' It transpired that water is expensive and rationed and has to be purchased on the town quay, opposite, from the Hotel Odisej. So we decided to stay for the night and shimmy across in the morning. Lovely dinner and a very friendly service. On the next day, we motored across and the harbour master signalled us into a space, with lazy lines. The fee for the day was €42 and water cost €11 from the Hotel. We asked the harbour master about power. He is a public servant, but he had clearly positioned us opposite the Restaurant Pomena and informed us that, if we ate there, we could get power for nothing. He recommended the food so highly that we suspected some family connection. After a light lunch, we hired bikes and cycled off to the National Park. The cycle route took us around the stunningly beautiful lakes and our entrance ticket (€11.50 each) included a boat ride across the lake to St. Mary's Island where the 12th century Benedictine Monastery is well maintained and offers refreshments and an opportunity to have a swim. We showered on board at the back of the boat in our expensive water and really enjoyed our dinner at the Restaurant Pomena. We were serenaded all night by a local singer who insisted in regaling us with 'Whiskey in the Jar'. The forecast was for a 30 knot wind overnight, so we applied extra lines and prepared ourselves for a broken night.

Next day, the 20th, the wind was still howling, but by early afternoon it had decreased to 20 knots. Someone had 'borrowed' our hose fitting and, seeing our distress, a local man gave us his 'spare' and refused to accept any payment for it. We stuck our nose outside the bay to see if we could comfortably reach Lastovo, but some of the crew did not feel terribly well in the high seas, so we turned tail and scuttled back to the town quay for another night. The wind rose again, but slowly abated overnight.

On Thursday the 21st we took advantage of the last chance to explore the lovely National Park and had an early morning hike along the lake side trails. After breakfast, we set sail at 11.00 for



City wall, Dubrovnik.



Korcula Marina.

Lastovo, course 258° with 11 knots wind from the northwest. It is an archipelago of 45 virtually uninhabited islands. It is remote but self-sufficient in food, and is a National Park since 2006. Until 1990, it was closed to foreigners owing to its importance as a military outpost of Communism against the evil capitalist empire. We headed for Skrivena Luka – which means Hidden Harbour. But for the trusty plotter, it would have been almost impossible to spot the entrance until the little lighthouse came into view. It is almost perfectly protected from all quarters and is a gorgeous place to drop an anchor in sand and have a peaceful night. The Rossaporta Restaurant has a pontoon which has drinking water and 2 metres depth, but we decided to anchor and enjoy the opportunity to swim, row about and generally relax in the wonderful sunny azure water. The restaurant was excellent and we thoroughly enjoyed our meal there.

We awoke on the 22nd with the northwesterly wind whistling around us. It seemed to increase as the sun rose and the steep saucer shape created a katabatic effect. We decided to stay another day and defer our planned departure for Triluka on Korcula, even though our anchor had dragged and we had moved back some 100 metres while we slept. We carefully reset in sand, unimpeded by weed.



Michael has a small beer!



John, Robert, Pat, Bill and Catherine.

Up early again on the 23rd, having kept an anchor watch overnight. We had dragged a little again. The wind had gone around to the southeast and we were relieved that we had not spent the night at Triluka, which is sheltered from all directions but the southeast. Pat rowed ashore and took a walk around the perimeter of the Hidden Harbour taking photographs. On the way back, she clambered up into the enormous wooden lookout chair that must have been built for a giant!

One of the crew needed to consult a medic, and others needed a good dispensing pharmacist, so we decided to change our planned visit to Vis and we set sail in 20 knots southeasterly wind for Korcula and the town of Vela Luka. We had grey cloud – which was the first time we had

seen such a phenomenon since leaving Dublin at the end of June! However, the sailing was great, with wind on the beam and we arrived at 15.00 after 20.5 miles. Since our pilots were published, the town quay has put out lazy lines and there was room for us to tie up stern-to. Power and water are available and the harbour master told us that we could shower at the Hotel Dalmatia for 20 kuna (€3). Vela Luka is a pleasant, if plain, town with all supplies and facilities available. Pat and Catherine went to the chemist to get the various medicaments required for ailments mentionable and unmentionable. The dispensing pharmacist was positioned behind toughened glass barriers and spoke very little English. A fair queue gathered behind the girls as they tried to describe the symptoms discreetly in sign language

and pigeon Medicalese. The chatter in the queue subsided until there was complete silence while this confidential consultation was conducted. Soon the queue joined in the mime with diverse contributions ranging from loud Croatian to more sign language and some competent English. Eventually the girls tottered out with a large bag of medicines, creams, pills and sprays to the cheers and happy nods of the customers and pharmacist. [It is worthy of note that this combination did have the desired effects on all the afflicted.] That evening, we had a huge thunderstorm with rivers of water gushing along the streets. The forecast was for very unsettled weather with a deep trough moving through from west to east.

Violent thunderstorm

Sunday the 24th July and we arose early and walked around the harbour to the end of the bay. The fruit and vegetable market, baker and butcher were open from 07.00 and we joined the queues to stock up. Just as we finished shopping, we had another violent thunderstorm with torrential rain and spectacular electrical displays. Our neighbour was a New Zealand farmer called Kerry Farrand, who told us of his experience on the previous afternoon trying to get into harbour. He had gusts in excess of 50 knots and was nearly knocked down. With thunder still rumbling about, we decided to stay put and he stayed in the cockpit, drinking coffee and regaling us with his adventures. He was a kiwi farmer who made his money on green kiwis (as opposed to the golden ones). We watched as several other boats came in and we noted that the crews were fully clad in oilskins and boots – not a normal sight in those parts! In the evening, we had yet another electric storm with buckets of rain. We tucked down into the saloon and dined on board very happily.

Monday the 25th – the Feast of St. James – an excuse for the local dance troop to perform a traditional dance. The sun shone and although the wind was still fresh, the sea was flatter. The forecast was for northwest winds, so we decided to go eastwards along the south coast of Korcula to the small harbour of Brna. According to the pilot, we could tuck into the small narrow gut, Uvala Kosirina, to the west of the town, or anchor in the main harbour off the quay. We tried Kosirina, but the wind had increased and the entrance was exposed so we moseyed around to the town. The pilot talks of shallow depths beside the quay, so we gingerly inched in and found that there was some 4 metres, but with a rather threatening looking ledge. We decided against anchoring in the harbour which was a spider's web of lines and anchors. We dropped out a bow anchor and came stern-to on the quay with good clearance between the stern and the ledge. The passerelle was at an angle of 45°, but our agility on the plank belied our advancing years!! The Harbour Master was more anxious to sell us his olive oil and home made wine than to collect the harbour dues, but he managed to collect €46 from us for power and berthing. We demurred at the extra €10 for water, so he shrugged and said that it was switched on anyway! We had a stroll around, but that evening we again locked ourselves into the saloon and ate on board as torrential rain lashed outside.

At 07.00 on Tuesday 26th Pat and Robert, going ashore for a walk, were greeted by a gang of fairly aggressive local men, who indicated that we should clear off as a large vessel was coming alongside. We indignantly waved our receipt from the Harbour Master, ignored their persistent gestures and walked off determinedly. However, we watched proceedings from a little way around the harbour. A large fishing boat came gliding into the bay and we could see the crew inspecting the quay with binoculars. We were ready to rush back to *Alchemist* if there was any sign of the fishing boat attempting to squeeze us. But the fishermen dropped their tender and unloaded boxes of fish

which were transported to the quay for distribution to the loud, garrulous crowd of local dealers. The Harbour Wallah and a local big-wig with a BMW arrived and handed down their plastic bags to be filled with fish. When they were satisfied (no money changed hands), local women pushed forwards with their plastic bags, but the signal was 'NO' and they wandered off rather disconsolately. We had our breakfast in the cockpit, watching the fishermen, and they drank their beers watching us, until the heavens opened again and drove us down below and them back to their mother ship. At 12.00, the skies cleared and we paddled over the wet decks to cast off in a southeasterly wind of 10 – 15 knots bound for the town of Korcula. We had, on advice, pre-booked a space in this busy marina which is situated right under the old town. We managed nicely to manoeuvre into the very narrow space in the marina, which would be very tricky if there was any kind of wind.

We spent a lovely day and a half exploring the old town. We engaged the services of a walking guide who gave us a most interesting couple of hours pointing out the architecture and explaining the history. The town is shaped like a fish with a spine and bones running offset left and right, from the backbone. The streets on the right are straight and designed to channel the summer breezes and keep the town cool and the streets on the left are dog-legged to disperse the winter Bora. Ostensibly the birthplace of Marco Polo, Korcula is trying to attain the coveted UNESCO status of City of Special Cultural Interest. There are lots of restaurants here ranging from very posh to simple pizza places.

On Thursday the 28th we paid the marina fees (€170 for two nights) and set off for Polace on Mljet. We arrived after 15.6 miles into the perfectly sheltered bay on the northwest corner and dropped the anchor in 12 metres of mud and sand. Overnight, we had an electric storm with heavy rain and gusting wind and only occasional claps of thunder, that lasted for 6.5 hours. We kept an anchor watch, but all was well.

At dawn on Friday the 29th the rain had stopped and the cockpit dried out enough for us to have breakfast sitting and watching the spectacle of two chartered catamarans doing pirouettes around each other. They had anchored the previous night and tied up together and clearly their chains had plaited together as they danced around all night in the storm. We headed back for Sipanski Luka and dropped the anchor, watching carefully as the wind rose from the northwest. The skies remained clear and we swam in the choppy windy conditions, glad to see what we hoped was the end of the rain. The wind dropped to 15 knots and we had a more comfortable night than the previous one.

Expensive Cavtat!

Saturday the 30th, we were up early for some swimming before breakfast. Anchor aweigh at 10.00 bound for Cavtat, using the inshore route this time. The wind was northwesterly – 17 knots. We had a lovely sail all the way to Cavtat, past Dubrovnik. Gigantic cruise ships were moored and their orange and white shuttles ferried the thousands of passengers ashore to Dubrovnik. We tried in vain to see if there was space for us at Cavtat, but they were again full of enormous motor cruisers, the smallest of which was 75 feet. We anchored at Uvala Tiha and dinghied ashore to complete the paperwork for Bill and Catherine, who were flying out on the morrow. We asked the Berthing Master if he would have a space for us the next day to disembark the crew and take on the new crew. He told us in no uncertain terms that he would not have space for people like us who could not afford the 'very expensive cost'. We suggested that it would only take a half an hour and he said that he might concede 6 minutes on the Quarantine Quay, but that if we stayed any longer he would charge us a lot of money! Back to

the dinghy we discovered that a bearing was fading in the outboard and so we had to limp back carefully. We had a great night as the Cavtat Festival was in full swing with parades, dressing up, local break dancing, trapeze artists, music and general drinking and festivity. Great fun!

Sunday the 31st, we were up early to see Catherine and Bill off for their taxi. We were now very short of water and hoped that we might be able to sidle into the Quarantine Quay to fill up. Michael and Mary McCann arrived off their Dublin flight and, before they were able to unpack, we brought *Alchemist* around to the quay for water and to register them on the crew list. The town quay was packed with mega yachts and we chucked out the bow anchor and reversed into a small space on the Quarantine Quay. Luckily the two assistant berthing masters were there and we told them that we wanted to clear customs and take on water. 'Customs, yes. Water, no.' they told us. Apparently we could not get to the water points on the quay, because it was only available for the big boyos. Pat pointed to the water point on the Quarantine Quay. No – that is owned by the local ferries and we couldn't have it. We must have looked utterly dejected and bewildered. A couple of minutes later, they came back and told us to look casual and nonchalant until the local ferry had gone out. About ten minutes later the ferry crew came back to their boat and took off. We swooped on the hose and lashed the water into the tanks, watching carefully in case another ferry came in. With relief we thanked our two guardian angels and skeddaddled out of there! Cavtat is definitely a place with attitude beyond its talents, but there are enough local good guys to overcome the toxic king pin. More festivities, including a spectacular firework display that night.

Dubrovnik

On 1st August we went to Dubrovnik with Michael and Mary and had a very worthwhile guided walking tour of the town. Back on board by 17.00 and, as we had been warned of an impending Bora that night, we stayed put and dined on board.

We had breakfast underway on the 2nd and headed for Sipanski Luka. There was a light wind along the islands. The Navtex was forecasting northeasterly wind and the harbour master gave us northwesterly. The difference is critical in these waters. During the afternoon, the wind got up and we anchored just off the ferry quay. A number of boats came in and some had difficulty with holding in the sand and weed and had to re-set a number of times. By evening, the wind abated somewhat, but it came up again, so we kept a watch overnight. However, holding was solid and wind never got up beyond 15 knots. We filled our fuel tank from the containers and headed off at 11.00 for Sobra on the 3rd to re-fuel. The fuel dock was busy and we tied up and took our containers to the pumps. After 90 litres had been issued and we were about to load up the containers, Robert suddenly noticed the colour of the fuel. He jumped ashore and checked which pump had been used. They had given us Petrol! Lots of scurrying and consultation, during which John took a flying leap at the large gap between the boat and the wall and just missed falling in. He had a nasty gash to his leg which was quickly dressed while the fuel was put back into the tank and Diesel issued – a near-disaster narrowly averted. We sailed along the tree-lined shore of Mljet headed for Polace and arrived 14.10. It was a beautiful evening and John, in spite of his injury, made us a delicious curry. The Park Rangers came alongside, but our tickets from the previous visit were still valid and we did not have to pay again.

We had another couple of days in Pomena and enjoyed the hiking delights of the National Park on our tickets. On the 5th we set off for Lastovo and tried again to set anchor at Skrivena Luka. This time we were successful!

On Saturday the 6th we motored in flat seas with no wind,

into Ubli, arriving 11.00. The marker buoy on the rocks at the entrance is missing, so great care is necessary to stand off and watch the depth. Ubli is an entry and exit port and we wanted to top up with fuel and water before setting sail for Malta on our return journey. The fuelling dock is small and access is restricted and there was a queue of Italian boats all scrambling for fuel. It was really chaos, so we tied up alongside a motor yacht, filled the tank from containers and walked in to fill up our empty containers. To add to the chaos, the entry dock for Police and Customs is at the entrance to the fuelling dock and there were a dozen boats all milling around there, trying to tie up and go ashore and complete paperwork. Pat joined the queue for Police while the containers were filled. Eventually the containers were filled and Pat was still in the queue for the Police. It took 45 minutes to process the first person. Back on board *Alchemist* it was decided to stand off and drop an anchor and wait. In all, the process of checking out from Croatia took 3 hours and 20 minutes. That included time for the police officer to read the riot act to the milling, loudly chattering Italians who pushed and scrambled in the queue. Her themes were respect, authority, litter, serious demeanour and patience! As before, the documents had to be stamped by the Police then over to the Customs and then over to the harbour master and then back to the Police – all in blistering heat! After all that, the police officer's rubber stamp would not work, so our passports could not be stamped. However, she wrote an essay on one of the documents, which I guess we will now have to produce should we ever wish to come into Croatia again!! Pat then rushed around the little supermarket to get some stores for the trip back to Malta and collapsed in a little puddle of melted blubber into the dinghy.

The Hotel Luka Viela was a welcome sight and they welcomed us with a drink of slivovitch, lazy lines and directions for the power, showers, water and restaurant. We were lucky and got the last place for the night and we made the most of the facilities, washing ourselves, the boat, preparing dinners for the next four days and digging out the oilskins and lifejackets and harnesses.

Arrested off the Italian coast

On Sunday the 7th we set sail for Malta at 06.00. Our trip home was marked by strong winds – up to 40 knots at one stage and big lumpy seas. The engine started playing up, demonstrating signs of fuel starvation, until, with a 27 knot wind on the nose, it packed up completely. Fortunately, with a marine engineer on board (Michael McCann), we were able to diagnose the trouble as dirty fuel filters. This involved eliminating the possibility of some fouling of the propeller which meant Robert jumping off the back of a leaping stern into high seas. Having replaced the filters and re-primed the engine we got underway again and had no further engine trouble. In the middle of a windy night, just off the Italian coast, we were stopped again by the immigration officials and, after a couple of aborted attempts to board us in the rising and falling seas, we were 'arrested' i.e. instructed to follow them into Sancta Maria di Leuca for questioning. As we meekly followed them towards the coast, Mary had a cyclonic tidy-up – straightening cushions, hanging oilskins, squirting dettoi on surfaces and eau de cologne on the crew. By the time we submitted ourselves for inspection, we were polished and pristine. They had information that we had 13 illegal immigrants on board, but their inspection of the boat and of our documents soon satisfied them that they had the wrong vessel! We were stopped again the following night, but this time, they just shouted a few questions and allowed us to proceed.

It was with great relief that we entered Grand Harbour Valetta at 10.00 on Thursday the 11th after a really wonderful sojourn around the Dalmatian Islands.

Cruising with an Older Admiral

Henry Barnwell

Although I had sat through a long cold winter listening to the Barnwell family, (now numerous enough to crew three offshore racing yachts), planning where the Admiral and I would cruise to in 2011, my heart wasn't in it. You see, I had earlier stumbled upon a series of secret emails which confirmed my worst fears; the Admiral was about to direct that I sail her to Brittany for the ICC rally in late June. However, just before Easter week I learned that *Hylasia* may have a sickly engine needing a new turbo and possibly a new bearing. The Admiral's ambitions would knock on the head my surreptitious thoughts of gaining another season out of the engine, before she suspected anything.

I waited until she revealed her plans, before hitting her with the engine problem. "I am not sailing to Brittany with a dodgy engine no matter how much you love it," the Admiral spoke with conviction. "Ivy, try to understand that just because a bearing might be a little rough doesn't mean the whole engine is knackered, I think I can fix it," spoken with much less conviction.

"Henry, you kept our old dinghy engine running on chewing gum and wire coat hangers for years without ever really fixing it, don't do that to the Yanmar."

That was that, a couple of days later I ordered a new fart box, but not before I had a go at reducing the Admiral to my level. "Ivy, I had a think about the boat engine and what you said and the result was a brain-wave. I have a plan that could result in my getting one at a 50% discount." "Hen, do you think you might be having another turn?" "Not at all, do you remember when I bought *Hylasia*; she was registered in my name?" "That was a long time ago." "Correct, but nobody complained. Well, since then I had to change the ownership to our joint names to satisfy some bloody so-called political, short-term, American fad." "Henry, you are definitely having a turn." "No I'm not, I did it like a man, and now I get my reward. If you own half the boat don't you also own half the engine? Which means you get to pay for half of any replacement." "I don't own half of any stinking Yanmar diesel

engine and never will if I have my way, why don't you just buy a new engine?" she sounded and looked so convincing.

Which is what I did, but although the engine was delivered in early April, we had still not finished with the snag list as the June Rally commenced, at which stage, and despite employing two mechanics, I had spent enough time on the project myself to have built the engines for the *Titanic*. Sometimes it is very difficult to spend money in this country. This has to be the only place in the world, where a mechanic could summon the client five times to go down to the boat, to say if the gear box is working properly. And not feel embarrassed.

The Admiral took this surprisingly well, huffing and puffing a bit for a few hours, something about having looked forward to meeting her friends in France etc; before publishing her plan B, which was West Cork. We invited along two grandsons who have sailed with us before, Oisín Horgan aged fifteen and his cousin from Limerick, Conor Ryan who is thirteen.

We set sail from Dun Laoghaire (where it now costs more to park your car than it does to park your boat) early on the last Monday in June. The boys had the mainsail and our brand new McWilliam genoa, of which more later, set before we cleared the harbour. In the pre-dawn glow, Dalkey Sound treated us to a spectacular display of aqua dancing by the Bullock Bottle Nosed Swimming Club. The wind, blowing out of the north, freshened to about twenty knots which set us a little conundrum in that we had to gybe our way down the Wexford banks. We left the engine running to help with the running-in period. Almost exactly twelve and a half hours later the boys tied up the yacht in Kilmore Quay, or Flag City as some visitors have recently become wont to refer to it. Broadly speaking, the signals we could interpret on the boats read something like this:

Keep clear of me; I am manoeuvring with difficulty:

My vessel is "healthy" and I request free pratique:

I am dragging my anchor:

I am armed and in the service of Her Majesty (jackstaff):

The vessel is in commission and the owner is aboard: and on the same vessel,

The vessel is out of commission and the owner is on board:

Crew should not defecate in the bilge when the ship is in port:

Crew should not copulate with the galley staff in the bilge, there is a risk of clogging the pumps:

Ladies of the night should leave the ship before sunrise:

Ice cream is now on sale:

The owner is not in the yacht club represented by the defaced ensign:

There was no sunset last night:

There was no sunrise this morning:

And now we all have access to the World Wide Web; goodness only knows how we learned without it.

The VHF crackled early next morning, "Papa, Papa I have a beautiful cod, janey it is really beautiful, I have never seen



Family send-off.



Henry entering Dursesey Sound.



Oisín with his beautiful cod.

anything so beautiful." It was Oisín, who had been out in the dinghy since shortly after dawn with Conor. He sounded as though he had just met the most beautiful young mermaid on the south coast. When they returned, they had a week's supply of cod, codling, coal fish and mackerel. The biggest cod weighed just over two and a half kilos. With fresh crabs and lobster tails for starters (kindly donated by local fishermen), we devoured the cod that night. I noticed before going to bed, that the boys had upgraded the accommodation for the fishing rods,

reels, hooks and maggots to the main saloon; even the Admiral would hardly give out about falling over rods again.

A couple of days later we shook the boys out of bed early and steamed out of F.C. bound for Kinsale. The wind took a while longer to get out of bed and when it did, it blew fitfully from the northwest. The only good thing about the weather that day was that the temp was a little above freezing. We had to leave the engine running for most of the day which confirmed an opinion long held by Ivy and me, which is that cruising in Irish waters can be frustrating. There is either too little wind or not enough. Even a well-found yacht rarely has enough to complete an entire passage under sail alone. The plan which we normally use to deal with this is to sail to somewhere in between and drop the hook for the night. It also helps if you have retired. That day the boys kept us at it though, believing as they do, that there are buckets of cod in

Kinsale. Paul, the Marina manager in Kinsale Yacht club made us so very welcome. So much so that I had to put it to the Admiral. "Do you think Paul is so kind to us only because we are now nearly wrinklies?" No response, just that all-conquering look.

Next morning the VHF lit up again, this time it was Conor, who announced a beautiful cod, within a few grammes of the weight of his cousin's Kilmore cod. He even went one better, catching another one a few minutes later. Close to noon, when they had returned, the fish covered the finger to which we were tied. We dined well that night, as did half of the other cruising crews in the harbour.

The next day being warm and windless gave the Admiral an opportunity to order the yacht confined to port, whilst she took her credit cards (plural) for a walk around the town. The next sentence was censored. Kinsale remains one of her favourite ports for airing her cards.



The Rose of Tralee.

The forecast for the next day, Sunday, was for light winds again, as the high pressure area held fast. Nevertheless, we let go early and tried our very best to sail most of the way (often barely exceeding three and a half knots) to Baltimore where we picked up a mooring. The west Cork harbours have been so inundated with little-used private moorings (usage confined mainly to first two weeks in August) that one has little choice. Most of the well-sheltered anchoring-spots have been taken; worse still a new disease is beginning to afflict Cork. It is called OBTM, or one boat two moorings. That's true; we actually came across two couples each with two moorings in their home port. Each couple only owns one boat. I sometimes dread the thought that I might be still alive when the Celtic Tiger makes his long-delayed comeback. Anyway, it blew for the next five days from all quadrants of the west, accompanied by very heavy rain at times. We did make it ashore most days, but sometimes it was tricky enough.

The village was like a ghost town at times; even the popular drinking dens were very quiet. Our first night ashore found us dining in a restaurant which had some nice half bottles of wine advertised in the window and again on the wine list. When we had ordered the dishes for dinner and then turned our attention to the wine list, we were told that all the half bottles ran out last summer. When that happens abroad, our experience has been that the owner kinda gets it into his brain that he has cocked up. He then serves a full bottle but charges for a half one, leaving it to our honesty to only consume half. But not so in Ireland, where the client is offered the usual "take it or leave it option," gruffly. We need to do so much to bring our creaking hospitality sector up to scratch and will never do it like that.

On the Friday of the near-gales week the boys had to leave ship. Oisín to join his school pal in Portugal and Conor to join his parents in Rosslare. We missed them very much as we had again become full of admiration for such fine young seamen. Each of them from a different planet compared to the one where Ivy and I had tried to teach ourselves to sail, whilst looking after four youngsters on a tiny bilge-keeler with buckets, spades and sails, in that order. Oisín comes from the marvellous youth programme in the Royal St George, which I am convinced will eventually produce an Olympic medallist. Ger Owens from that club won two races in the Beijing Olympics. Our own Conor Ryan has done the ISA course with the ULAC in Killaloe and has been very well-groomed. Both boys have a great tolerance of discomforts such as gales, thunderstorms, fog, freezing rain, starvation, dehydration, sleep deprivation and almost anything else nature can throw at them. One morning, Oisín had promised to take me ashore in the dinghy for "de paper", when I became a trifle hesitant, "Oisín, do you think we can make it ashore without having to swim?"

A proper sailor

"Of course Papa, that's nothing compared to what we race in at the 'George'. I should have had more cop-on; the young lad frequently swims during the winter in Sandycove and has done so since he was a toddler. Whether it is raining or snowing, the first thing he does when he steps on board is to kick off his shoes. Even when it is blowing a fresh northerly he generally completes his watch bare-footed in nothing more than shorts and t-shirt. A proper sailor.

Ivy and I started up before lunchtime next day, on our own again, (which always seems like a pleasant place for us to be) and steamed all the way to Schull, using the "inland channel", where we picked up a visitor's buoy. During a pre-dinner stroll around the town the Admiral's razor-sharp portable radar picked up a new Spanish restaurant where Jay Bourke's cafe used to be. It is called Casa Diego, where we had the best and most reasonably-priced dinner of the cruise. The wine was

delicious and about half the price of the other restaurants in town. I ordered a dessert which only cost €2.50, it was lovely. The waiters, who were all Spanish, were happy to SERVE us, and there were enough of them to avoid the dinner being spoilt by long delays. That's the good news, the bad news being that the town has still not solved the impossibility of a visitor parking a small dinghy with reasonable safety. This is a major problem for the town traders. There is no harbour master, as such. We were told that the council advertised for one but nobody presented. They then ran into the government ban on "recruiting" which they tried to circumvent by offering the post to existing staff, no joy there either. In fairness you should know that a couple of years ago the Sailing Club installed a floating pontoon which extended the existing hopelessly-inadequate one shoreward, but some local fishermen pointed out that it needed a foreshore licence and it now swings idly on a mooring buoy. If yachties cannot park their dinghies they will eat aboard and shop at the next port. The taxpayer has paid for at least twelve visitors moorings in Schull. What is needed to fill those moorings will cost nothing extra. If that means issuing a foreshore licence, so what. Why should it be so difficult to kick-start marine projects in Ireland?

Almost thirty years ago, Ivy and I were struggling to reverse into a difficult berth between trawlers on a Greek island. The fishermen were too busy to help with our lines and our kids were ravenous to reach the shore. No problem, we heard a shout which heralded the harbour master running down the quay. He ordered one of the fishing boats, which had already unloaded, out and then stood by until we were snug in an alongside berth. He was smart, we bought six dinners that night in the local taverna and the same the following night. And don't tell me he owned the taverna, because he didn't. Sometimes I think that as a nation we are not really that bright.

We were now close to the first and most important engine service, which we decided to do in Lawrence's Cove marina. The wind was northwesterly and light. Although we did our best, we only achieved about fifty per cent of the passage under sail. Before leaving home we had taken the trouble to pack all of the bits and pieces, although it still took the two of us most of the morning to complete the task. I really turned on the charm with the Admiral, praising her to the heavens as she conquered spanner after screwdriver, but I am not sure if she is stupid enough to take over the task of maintaining the engine, whether she owns half of it or not. I suspect not. At least I gave it my best shot. Next day in a flat calm, we started up our lovely new engine and steamed to Derrynane, where we haven't been for about thirty years, picking up a visitor's buoy. It was sunny and warm enough for me to venture into the sea, the Admiral kept her uniform on, using the pathetic excuse that she had forgotten to pack her bikini. On the morning of our second gloriously sunny day in that port the 'phone crackled into life bearing instructions from our eldest son and weather guru Nigel, to sail to Dingle without delay. And how right he was, as usual. Nigel and his younger brother Patrick are probably the two prime reasons that enable two oldies like us to continue to enjoy sailing long after retirement. No matter where we have found ourselves in the world Nigel always seems to have a near-professional grasp of meteorology. We have laptops, iPhones, radios etc. (like most other boats) but nothing can match the interpretation Nigel can put on a forecast. For his part, Patrick has the mechanical brain. We have reached the stage now where if anything, whether serious-looking or not, breaks, we just call Pat, before attempting to go near it.

For the next seven days, we had, free of charge, the coldest, wettest and meanest set of near gales, full gales and severe gales we have experienced, anywhere. The wind howled so much that if I wasn't half deaf already I would be now. On the

second day of this torture, I fought my way along the seafront in full ocean gear (with boots) to buy "de paper" and enjoy the morning reading in my favourite Dingle cafe. There would be no enjoyment that morning, the headlines upset me greatly. I love children and found it difficult to read excerpts of the Cloyne Report which had been released the day before. It was worse than shocking. My head sank and I had to fight hard to avoid shedding a tear as I read page after page of the most depraved behaviour and cover-ups involving those who had the audacity to call themselves men of God, and sadly still do. They certainly helped the gale and rain to destroy my day. What have those animals done to my country? Having to "beat" to weather to reach the boat, after the coffee, was difficult enough that day, without having to carry a burden as wicked as that.

Huge harbour in Knightstown

On the seventh day, the wind and rain began to ease a good bit, inviting us to take a hurried farewell of our minder Peter O'Regan (a great ambassador for the marina) and sail south searching for the entrance to Valentia Harbour. There was enough wind from the north to carry us southwards under genoa only. Our intention had been to pay our first visit to Cahirciveen, but the hawk-eyed Admiral spotted seagulls standing on the bar and that was the end of that. In truth, at about the same time, we had spotted a huge harbour wall fronting Knightstown. The Admiral couldn't believe it, nevertheless we were soon tied to the outer wall, there to discover the water and electricity stands were sterile. No matter, we had escaped joining the seagulls' party. "Never knew there was a huge harbour in Knightstown, did you, Henry?" "No." "Who owns it?" "Don't know." "It is very close to Dingle and Cahirciveen marinas."

"Correct." "It is on an island and you know Henry that marinas on islands, dependent on ferries, seem to have difficulty attracting permanent clientele anywhere in the world." "You know that and I know that but did anyone tell the fellow who built the harbour?"

In the meantime cruising folk should know that they now have an inexpensive berth (without services) from which to explore the magic of Valentia Island. Long may it last.

We ate a leisurely breakfast before pushing off in a freshening northerly. This was to be one of our more enjoyable sails, we had been tipped off by Nigel that the wind would continue to freshen so we only set the genoa, turned on the auto-pilot and sat back to enjoy the warmish sunshine. Our boat speed hardly dropped below seven knots all day as we lapped up the wild life in glorious 3D technicolour which included; a solo killer whale (quite a rare sight), a sunfish, lots of bottle-nosed dolphins and dozens of gannets which fished with such frenzy that there were times when we began to think their leader must have picked up a nice line in cocaine recently.

A chat with the dolphins!

We have lost count of how many times we have risen at sunrise (not this morning though) dressed slowly, sipped our tea (even in a warm climate) and then put the boat under way. If there be any wind at all, there is usually a rush to be first to kill the engine, when Ivy always disappears below to cook rashers and eggs and to percolate the first coffee of the day. We normally spend the rest of the day without needing to speak except when necessary, and seem to have developed the perfect harmony between us and with our environment. Sometimes we look at each other as sunset approaches; it is a very special kind of look that seems to say, the night will be just as pleasant, but in a different sort of way. On passages like this Ivy will frequently stroll forward to the foredeck to talk to her friends, the bottle-nosed dolphins. This may explain why we seldom sail with crew, other than the family. Each time we do it, the wonder

grows that we have both been so lucky as a couple, to have embraced a sport which has delivered to us, such incalculable joy.

Meanwhile the Sound of Dursey approached at seven and a half knots.

"Are you going outside Henry?" "No" "But the tide is adverse." "So! my guess is that the strong tide here only extends over a short distance and we can handle that." "If you must, I'll furl in the genny so, you start the box." "Why the engine, I can easily sail through here?" "Don't be stupid, already it looks like you will need to gybe and if so I could do with the engine if a genny sheet catches on the dinghy, on the foredeck or something else." "And if it does a thirty-nine horse-power engine is not going to be of much use."

At that stage we were in the narrowest part of the sound with an adverse current no greater than one and a half knots, with our boat speed well over seven knots. The sea state was a little bumpy with a boiling cauldron a couple of metres from our port-hand bow (the reef). But, we have seen cauldrons before.

"Gybe ho," I called, trying so hard to impress the Admiral.

The gybe was silk smooth, the boat speed was still high and the current had dropped to less than one knot. "What was wrong with that Ivy?" "Nothing." "You have to understand that the notoriety of this sound is a little exaggerated. The quickest current I ever saw here, in the old days, was just above four knots. We were making over seven knots when we gybed and that nasty current only lasts for a little over one hundred metres. After that the tide dies down quickly to a more normal speed. It is a place to respect but not to fear and I always knew you wouldn't cock up the gybe, you are not an Admiral for nothing." "Funny ha! ha!"

For a micro second I was actually conceited enough to think that the Admiral looked a tiny bit proud of her wrinkly that evening.

As Nigel had predicted the northerlies persisted when, forsaking all other ports, we headed for Schull there to re-visit the Casa Diego restaurant. The morning after another splendid dinner was foggy and rainy. We stayed put. Sunday morning found us still enveloped in fog, if anything a little more dense. However, following a chat with Nigel, who asked "why the hell do you have radar anyway?" we steamed out to find about one hundred metres visibility and little wind. Neither of us is great with the radar, however, we managed to reach the Gascanane Sound without running into anything solid, where the sun appeared, and another northerly wind blew up, this time gentle. We shut down the engine and helmed our way, sometimes at only two knots, to Glandore, where we arrived just in time to really enjoy the second half of a Squib race.

There has been an active club in this port for some years called Glandore Harbour Yacht Club. This beautiful harbour holds a greater claim to fame, however. It is the birthplace of Don O'Donoghue who has done more to put this beautiful village on the sailing map of the world than anyone else. In 2006, in Cannes, in a fleet of over one hundred of the fastest Dragons ever assembled, he emerged fastest of all taking the Régates Royales. And this after no fewer than five days of the most intensive competition imaginable. To put this in perspective one has to try to imagine the effect one hundred and eight top class Dragons would have if ever assembled in Glandore. I can't even imagine the start line without feeling nervous. Not happy with taking this Grand Prix event from under the nose of a dual Olympic gold-medallist. O'Donoghue then went on to lift the much sought-after 2008 Edinburgh Cup. The dragons were once much more common in Glandore, and it could be that there is something in the stout they drink in that part of Cork, because just down the road is the birthplace of Tony O'Gorman and Conor Doyle, both of whom stamped their

names on this class many years before O'Donoghue. If Glandore was in the French Department of La Vendée I would wager a few euro, that there would be some sort of public recognition of O'Donoghue's feats, perhaps a plaque in the marina of Les Sable d'Olonne or something like that. But Ireland? Well, we don't really rank sailing at all, do we?

Heading home

We were by now firmly on our way home and felt like a good sail, but the tide was very awkward for Kilmore Quay. We had a think about Youghal, then Ardmore, then Helvick before finally deciding on Ardmore for the night. We didn't go ashore but spent a comfortable night on a visitors mooring before setting the full mainsail and genoa in a tricky-enough breeze (all over the place) early next morning. The new genoa really pulled its weight, powering the boat to over eight knots in about 15 knots of northwesterly breeze. Certainly Des McWilliam did a great job with this sail, which although we specified a cruising sail, Des read my mind well and has managed to build in a good close-hauled shape. Also the material gives us that priceless asset in long-distance cruising which is the ability not to collapse too early in light breezes, deep in the troughs. At least we were able to spend money somewhere in Ireland.

"That's a lovely breeze Ivy, can we sail into the harbour", was how I greeted the approach channel to Flag City. "Absolutely not, don't even consider it," the admiral barked. "If I had the boys on board, they'd do it." "Only 'cos you have them as mad as yourself." "Or because I trained them properly." I had to get that in.

And so it was as we again prepared to enter Kilmore Quay, but not before the only seaport in Ireland without a pub, presented us with another conundrum. There was a race in progress with quite a few boats flying the signal "I have retired from racing."

Yet all of those boats earned a result. Strange that, could be the town desperately needs a good pub.

The Admiral soon had all the latest gossip on board about Kilmore, including the fact that "*Lively Lady*" another German Frers design had recently sailed to Dun Laoghaire in nine and a half hours. Skipped by Derek Martin's son Rodney, the yacht is reported to have touched thirteen knots frequently. I know that Derek, who has been ill of late, will have been very proud to have received this news, and even though our boat is about two metres shorter on the water-line this puts us firmly in the wrinkly class. I think I might have difficulty navigating at that speed. Of one thing I am certain; the Martin family has brought great credit to the Irish Cruising Club.

The Admiral also learned that one of the two mariners in the marina, Peter Devereux, planned to retire in September. Peter had a long career in the Naval Service and the Merchant Navy spanning forty-three years but in my opinion he really excelled himself when the marina was built. His good nature, helpfulness and a wide range of marine skills endeared himself to many a struggling yachtsman. Peter made a huge contribution to much-needed tourism in Kilmore, always managing to fit the last boat into a "full" marina, no matter how late at night. He will be greatly missed.

By contrast our passage home took two hours longer than *Lively Lady* and had a lot of engine assists as the Americans say. Even so, I was proud of the Admiral as she stepped ashore with the warps. Maybe she no longer looks like a challenger for a place on the Olympic long jump team, when we dock. But her ability to continue to accompany me when other women have long ago resorted to knitting for excitement has further endeared her to thirteen young sailing grandchildren, and in the heel of the hunt, what could matter more?

Chris Stillman writes of Sea Stacks, Sea Cliffs, but where's the Sea

If cruising along the western coast of the Black Sea, it is well worth visiting the Bulgarian port of Varna. The town itself is of considerable archaeological interest, but some 20 kms inland is a most amazing feature – a line of low cliffs with beautiful sea stacks. The rock is a sandy limestone, full of fossils, and the stacks curiously cylindrical. The cliffs are riddled with caves, with stacks forming between them, and individual stacks can be seen for some distance away from the cliffs. But where is the sea which created them?

The answer lies in the history of the Black Sea. Towards the end of the last great Ice Age, a huge fresh water inland sea called Lac Mer covered vast areas of what is now the Black Sea and land to the north of it. It was filled by melt water from the huge Arctic ice caps. As the ice melted, and the flow diminished, around 10 to 15 thousand years ago the lake shrank to a much smaller size, leaving its cliffs perched well inland, and exposing very large areas of land covered in cultivatable lake-floor sediment. People settled and farmed along the shores of the lake. Then came disaster for them – the Mediterranean Sea was by then at a higher altitude, and 5500 years ago broke through the Dardanelles and flooded into the lake – spreading out again over the farm lands and driving out the population. The new sea level was then the same as the Mediterranean, and the coasts were still lower

than those of the Ice Age lake, so the ancient sea cliffs remain on dry land.

The whole area is a UNESCO recognised site, known in the Bulgarian tourist literature as "The Fossil Forest" and details of its location can be obtained from tourist information offices. Recognition by scientists of its origin as a coastal feature is quite recent, and most of the local literature has not yet caught up.



Varna seastacks.

West Scotland - Outer Hebrides - no, actually the Clyde

Ian French

At the outset may I say that I will email all members of the AICC to let them know when *Teal* is going cruising next year so that they can avoid the dates and the appalling weather that seems to track us on our cruising adventures!

After a failed attempt to get to the Scilly Islands last year (we ended up in West Cork), the crew voted to go north to Scotland this year and try our luck at exploring the Outer Hebrides over 2½ weeks. Much reading up, planning and studying of air and ferry timetables was undertaken in preparation for the cruise. The timing during the second half of May was a little early but the weather is usually fairly good in May and June. Isn't it?

After all the usual last minute preparations Ken Price and I set off from Dun Laoghaire on Thursday 19th May. The first entry in the log is 'clear skies, rising barometer'. So far so good. We had a great sail to Ardglass where we discovered that our tightly-packed fridge wasn't working. The prospects of a fridge full of rancid food accompanying us for the next two weeks was not appealing, but as luck would have it we managed to find 'Wee Hughie' who was a fixer of industrial refrigerators. We persuaded him that our need was much greater than the job he was working on in a factory, and in no time with the aid of leak detectors and gas we were up and running again.

All this was done just in time to set sail again and to catch the best of the tide for Glenarm. What a great sail we had in a force 5/6 northwest going conveniently southwest as we passed Belfast Lough. Here the other two members of our crew joined us – Maurice Brooks who lives in Co. Down and Henry Irvine who had been fishing in Mayo.

The following day was murky, with a force 5/6 from the south forecast. After much debate we decided to forget about going to Ardfern, our next planned port of call, and make a run for it up the inside of Mull of Kintyre to Campbeltown. The idea was to go through the Crinan Canal and on up to the Hebrides. It is a short journey to the Mull of Kintyre but in a force 7 gusting 8 from south and very poor visibility it proved to be a challenge. There were enormous following seas and

with just a pocket handkerchief Genoa out we got flattened a couple of times. After a very bumpy ride up the east side of Mull we got thoroughly soaked and were very glad to reach Campbeltown.

Next day, Sunday 22nd, we listened to the forecast and the omens were not good. However the wind was in the west so we were sheltered and we set off in a brighter showery day. The wind was force 5/7 gusting 34 knots, so a small amount of genoa and the motor brought us fairly swiftly up to East Lough Tarbert, a pretty town with a snug marina.

The forecast for the next day was very bad so a decision was made to stay put in Tarbert. It is just as well we did! It blew 60 mph, trees were up-rooted, slates were flying through the air and there was a prolonged power cut. It was extremely rough even on the marina with spume flying through the air.

It was still blowing a gale the next day so we gave up the idea of sailing and went by bus to the wonderful Inveraray Castle, the seat of the Campbell family. The castle was very



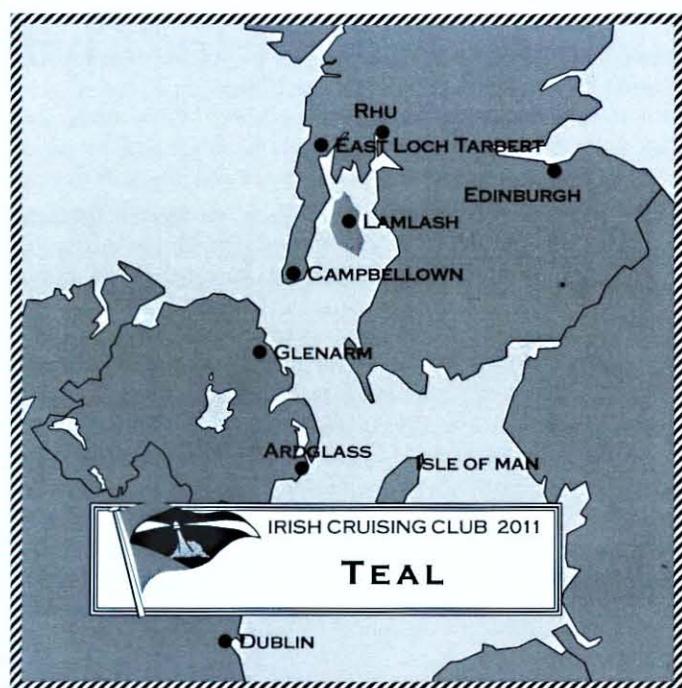
Skipper (Ian French) back at Bailey.



60mph wind L.Tarbert.

interesting, and our horticultural expert Maurice was vocal in his knowledge and praise of the plants in the garden. The only problem was that the power was still out, so the basement and more importantly, the coffee shop was closed. Walking the long walk back into the town we were all decidedly peckish and in need of refreshment. To our dismay all of the restaurants and coffee shops were closed due to the outage, so we were extremely grateful to an enterprising shopkeeper who made us up a sandwich and gave us a bottle of water! Back in Tarbert we had a pleasant evening, with excellent tapas in a converted barge, followed by dinner in one of the good local restaurants in the town.

After listening to the forecasts and looking at 'Windguru' on the computer that evening a conference was called. It was clear that there was going to be no break in the weather and gales



were predicted every day for at least a week. So very reluctantly we decided to forget about the Outer Hebrides and even going through the Crinan Canal. The decision was to go for the only other option – staying inside the Clyde where at least there would be some shelter.

The next day off we set, leaving Tarbert in a southeast wind that rapidly increased from force 4/5 to 5/7. We were bound for Rhu Marina which, being near Glasgow was a convenient place for a crew change. It was another awful day; dull, raining, a big sea and a headwind all the way down Lower Lough Fyne. Having rounded Ardlamont Point we entered the relative tranquillity of the Kyles of Bute with the wind behind us. Not for long; when we rounded Burnt Island at the top of the Isle of Bute the wind was on the nose again – force 6/7 from the southeast. Passing Rothesay we thrashed on round the corner into the Clyde, where we freed off and had an exhilarating run with just a small amount of genoa up in 30-35 knots of wind. As soon as we arrived in Rhu Marina the wind dropped! To warm ourselves up and dry out, dinner was had in a nearby pub, where monstrous amounts of food were served washed down by pints of the local brew. It was great value but none of us could face the special offer of ‘2 mains for £10’!

At this stage we said a goodbye to Ken Price, who was joining Paddy Barry for a trip to Iceland but was having his schedule badly knocked about by the weather. Unfortunately Henry Irvine was suffering from a pinched nerve in his neck, and he decided to go home with Ken. It was not an entirely sinking ship as Graham Miles joined us to make the crew up to 3.

According to the forecast there was going to be no let up in the weather so we decided to start making our way back home. The next morning we left Rhu in brighter weather but with an increasing northwest wind. With reefed main and genoa we had an exciting sail down the Clyde at great speed. Out in the wide open expanses of the Firth of Clyde the wind increased to force 7/8, so instead of heading on for Campbeltown (our intended destination), we decided to duck back into Lamlash to get out of the gale. There was good shelter there and a welcome visitors mooring. Supper was had ashore in a quieter pub in the rather sleepy village.

Next morning we left Lamlash early bound for Glenarm with the tide in the Northern Channel in mind. The forecast was for more wind – west 4/5 increasing southwest 5/7. It did not look good, but we had the option of taking refuge in

Campbeltown if worse came to worse. Rounding Pladda Light House at the foot of Arran we turned 232 degrees for Glenarm in a westerly force 4, backing south. We were motor-sailing with reefed main and genoa, passing well south of Sanda Island off the Mull, when we were relentlessly pursued by a Seacat ferry bound for Larne – he only altered back to his proper course at the last minute! For a change, the wind did not increase as forecast and in due course we were all glad to see the Irish coast come up – Rathlin Island then the Antrim Hills. The wind piped up a couple of miles off Glenarm and we just made it into the marina in time. We got lucky this time, using the 6 hour weather-window to get across the Channel!

The tide dictated an afternoon departure from Glenarm so a very pleasant morning was spent in the delightful gardens and the coffee shop in Glenarm Castle, the Earl of Antrim’s residence. Back aboard we set off in pleasant weather for Ardglass one hour before high water in a light southwest wind. 3½ hours out, the wind veered west increasing to force 5/6 in showers, and we sailed on a broad reach at great speed. Off Black Head on the north side of Belfast Lough we passed Dick Lovegrove in *Rupert* going north to Scotland. We exchanged greetings over the radio and I wished him better luck with the weather (and it turned out he was somewhat luckier!)

It is hard to cover the entire distance from Glenarm to Ardglass on one tide so we had to plug against it for the last couple of hours down the Ards Peninsula. Morale was greatly improved by the skipper’s sausage and bacon butties, in deteriorating weather crossing the entrance to Strangford. We entered Ardglass under the guidance of the most helpful and diligent marina manager who stayed up until 22.00 to usher us into our berth.

Monstrous sea

Next morning I was not popular with the crew for getting them out of bed at 06.30. Outside the harbour it could not have been worse – force 6 from the south-southwest and a monstrous sea. We unanimously voted to go back into the Marina and wait for the weather to improve and the wind go into the west.

It didn’t, so we spent the day walking around Ardglass and enjoying a very good meal in a nearby fish restaurant that was advertised in the marina. It offered a taxi there and back. Could not be better!

It proved to be a wise decision to wait until Monday, when we had a light southwest wind and a pleasant sunny day. Things got even better when the breeze freed off and we made 6½-7 knots across Dundalk Bay. The wind fell away and we motored back to Dun Laoghaire, making a diversion to Rockabill to see the Roseate Terns, and to the northern shore of Lambay where we saw the huge gannet and guillemot colonies in the cliffs

Some stats – 400 miles on the log, 11 days cruising instead of a planned 18, gales on 7 days (6 consecutive) and very little diesel burnt.

An adapted Percy French line ‘Stornaway, well you’ll never get near it’ comes to mind. I suppose we were spoiled by our previous visit to Scotland two years ago, when we had excellent weather, and I think on reflection the chances of getting to the Outer Hebrides were always going to be pretty slim. Despite the weather we all had good fun, some good sailing and we got to see the Clyde which we had not visited before.

You won’t believe it but a late season 10 day visit to Anglesea and the Menai Straights was curtailed to 3 days by a warning on the 2nd day from the harbour master in Caernarfon “if you didn’t get out of here tomorrow you will be here for a week“. We went!

As I say I will let you all know when we are going cruising next year.

A short cruise in Sicilian waters

David Whitehead

While recuperating following an operation in the Galway Clinic I discovered that the charming Italian consultant Fabio, who performed my surgery was a sailor and kept his boat, *Clarín Oyster* (a Bavaria 50) in Sicily, where her home berth was in the marina Vila Igeia in Palermo; of which city Fabio is a native. On several occasions Fabio suggested that I should borrow *Clarín Oyster* and make a cruise in Sicilian waters. It was not until this year that I was able to take up this generous offer – when John Bourke told me that the Royal Yacht Squadron was planning a one week cruise in the Aolian Islands and suggested Marie and I should participate as their guests. Fabio agreed to the suggestion that he should join too and later indicated he had promised some aviator friends to join him in a cruise in the same area in March but that this had been scuppered following Ryanair pulling out of Trapani airport, which was being used by NATO airforces for launching attacks on the Gadaffi regime in Libya, and he indicated that he would like to bring “the boys” with him on this occasion.

It was agreed that Fabio would position the boat at Milazzo and that we would all fly into Palermo on Saturday 10th September and proceed to Milazzo in a minibus to join the yacht. John and I were a little taken aback when Fabio indicated that we would be nine or ten aboard – especially as John had indicated a rather smaller number to the RYS cruise organiser! However on the day of arrival in Palermo Fabio’s wife was taken with a very serious illness and Fabio had to return to Ireland post haste – but not before he had taken Marie, me and “the boys” to a supermarket to buy an initial load of stores and arranged for his brother Antonio to ferry us to Milazzo in the rented minibus. Later, upon enquiry he told me that his wife Rebekah had undergone a “life-saving operation” in Beaumont Hospital but thankfully was recovering well.

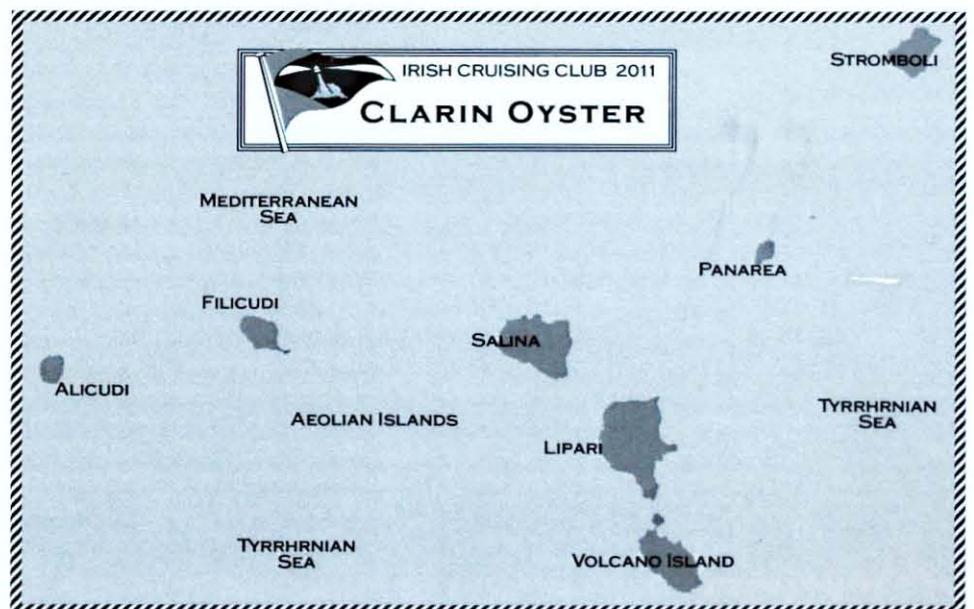
Anyway we and “the boys”, Jarlath, Jimmy, John and (somewhat surprisingly) Maria, introduced ourselves to each other and the selfless Antonio – who had been shanghaied by Fabio at literally an hour’s notice to drive us to Milazzo. The road, about 200 km of it, consists almost entirely of tunnels and viaducts and would have cost more than our bank debt to construct in Ireland! With some difficulty Antonio located the marina and we found the boat and loaded ourselves and the stores aboard and had a welcome Gin and Tonic at about midnight.

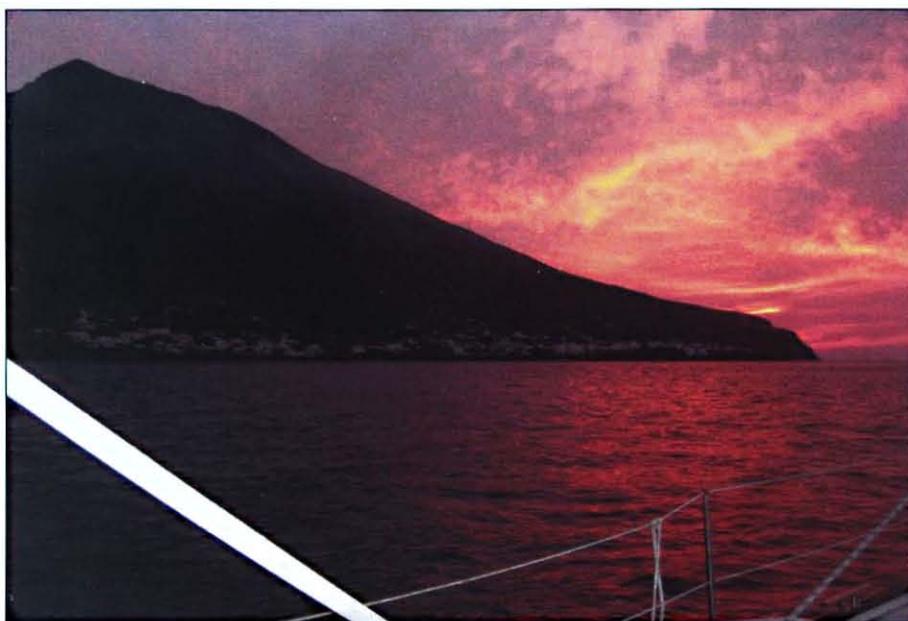
Upon inspection we found *Clarín Oyster* (CO hereafter) to be very commodious with a large saloon and galley and no less than five double cabins and three heads. Thus all nine of us fitted in comfortably with Maria ensconced in the large double berth forward, the Bourkes and ourselves in the two aft doubles and the three Galway aviators in the two double passage cabins. CO is regularly chartered out and her minder in Milazzo (another Fabio) promised to return on Sunday morning to finish cleaning her up and show us the ropes – which he duly did. So after paying off the marina – an eye watering €120 for one night – we set off closehauled to a light northerly breeze bound for our first island –

Lipari. After a lovely sail past Vulcano with its smoking crater looming through the haze, we docked into the Marina Pignotare for the night and had a pizza ashore.

“The boys” had never been been on a sailing vessel before and were on a steep learning curve but were energetic and willing helpers who thankfully already knew port from starboard and forward from aft. The following morning we were contacted by the RYS cruise leader Nigel Southward, who advised us we were in the wrong marina – so we motored across the bay to Porto Salvo and tied up among the other RYS yachts (mostly chartered). The Bourkes took a taxi trip around the island, the boys went into town and did some shopping (mainly liquid), Marie went for a walk and I flaked out for a sleep! In the evening we were all invited for drinks and canapes aboard the Oyster 82 *Starry Night*, whose crew of several lads and lassies all appeared to hail from Crosshaven! This was followed by an RYS organised dinner at the Kashbah Restaurant which consisted of a lot of excellent wine and a very large number of courses. The RYS do not approve of crews sitting together so we were well mixed around.

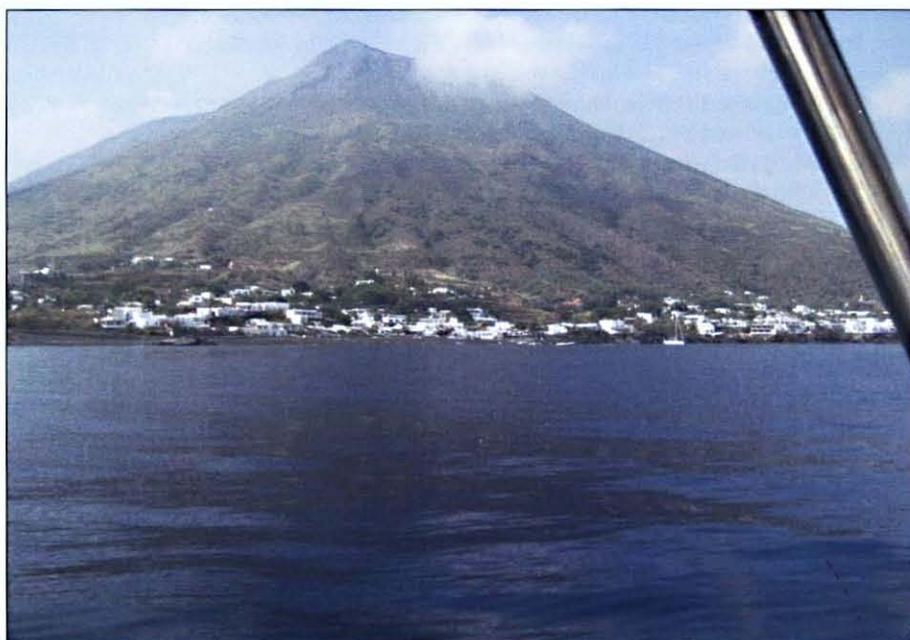
The next day, Tuesday, we left under engine for Stromboli – passing up the west side of Panarea where we anchored in a delightful cove on the northwest corner of the island and had a refreshing swim before proceeding to Stromboli where, on Fabio’s advice we picked up a mooring (€50 per night!). Then, leaving the inflatable on the mooring at sunset, we motored around the north end of the island and positioned ourselves among a large fleet of yachts, RIBs and tripper launches to watch the spectacular eruptions of the volcano which actually comprises all of Stromboli. And very spectacular it is too, with thunderous explosions of red hot lava bursting into the night sky followed by the glowing ejecta tumbling down the mountain flank to fall hissing into the sea. As a geologist I might not have been much impressed had it not been for the twinkling lights of the daring and athletic tourists who were descending on the narrow path from the crater to the town. Actually it is a very stiff climb as the crater is at an elevation of nearly 900 metres. We returned to the mooring, had dinner aboard and slept the sleep of the just and weary (not to mention the G and Ts).





Stromboli at sunset.

Wednesday morning saw us motoring south again to Panarea, where we anchored for lunch and a swim in an idyllic cove at the south end of the island – which we shared with *Skat* (Nigel Southward RYS) and a handful of other yachts. We were interested to see two tripper launches disgorge hordes of swimmers into the water and trusted they were keeping a good headcount. Later John received a cryptic message from Nigel Lindsay-Fynn (RYS and ICC) to raft up with *Eleanda* and *Skat* at 18.00 in a location 1¼ miles due east of Panarea. This turned out to be in a shallow pool about a mile in diameter surrounded by rocks and small islands – evidently the remnants of a former island volcano which had blown up in a violent eruption in the (geological) recent past. Apparently



Stromboli village.



ICC/RYS Raft up – John, Heleen, Margaret, Marie, Nigel and David aboard *Eleanda* at Panarea.

swimming in the water turns silver jewellery black, showing that the volcano – while invisible – is still there and sulphurously active! Anyway we had a grand ICC/RYS Aolian islands raft up, lots of drinkies and much blather aboard *Eleanda* before proceeding back to Panarea, where we moored stern-to – with some difficulty – for the second RYS dinner of the cruise in a restaurant, ‘Raya’, on the waterfront. After the ordeal of the last function “the boys” did their own thing in the town. Panarea is VERY upmarket – Dolce and Gabbana land for sure and a major contrast with Stromboli which is very much undeveloped!

On Thursday morning we departed early – again under motor – and proceeded to the island of Salina, to the southwest of Panarea, where we anchored outside the harbour for a swim.

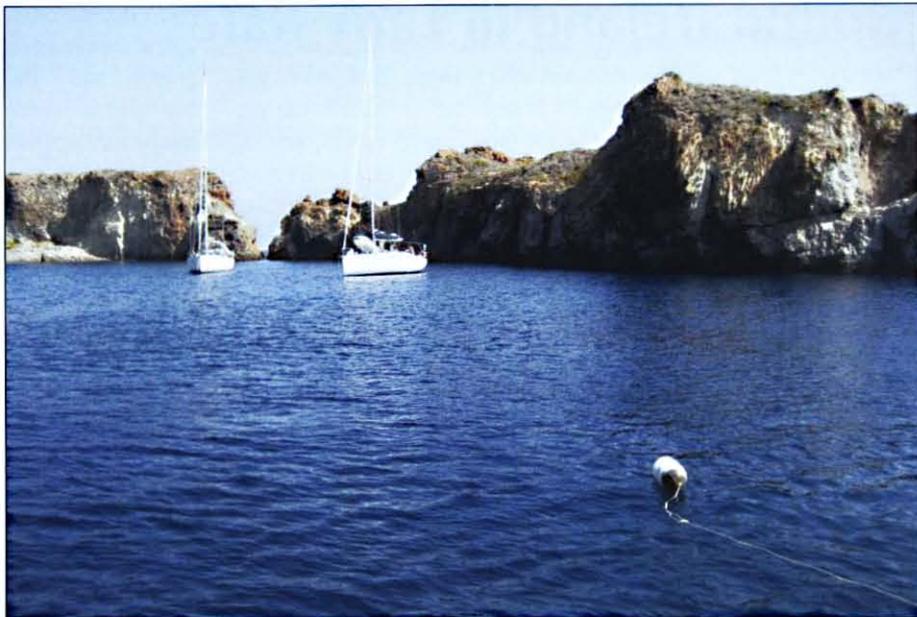
Unfortunately Jarlath got a bad jellyfish sting so he joined a shopping party who were dropped off in the Marina (the only one in the islands) and fortunately found a chemist shop where he obtained relief from a very painful sore. Underway again after picking up the shoppers we motored around the south side of Salina where we finally found a sailing breeze which wafted us gently to our last Aolian island – Filicudi. We entered a small bay on the north shore at the west end of the island and picked up a mooring with difficulty, as it had no buoy rope. CO has very high freeboard and for some reason unbelievably stiff steering. A couple of lads off an English chartered boat came over in a dinghy and passed a rope through the buoy ring for us. The mooring owner then arrived and collected his €50 fee! This seems to be the going rate in the

islands as it was the same as what we had paid in Stromboli. With great difficulty we got ashore – the first party of four in the inflatable – which had a bad leak and an outboard that had clearly not been used (or serviced!) for some time – it took a major effort and lots of WD 40 just to get it off the pushpit bracket. Once ashore we cajoled the mooring owner to pick up the rest of the party in his RIB (very easy – Jarlath just slipped him €20!). Filicudi could not be more different from Panarea – but would easily be recognised by anyone who has visited Tory Island. However it is hard to find bad food in this part of the world and our lack of the local patois meant there were some mild culinary surprises but in compensation John found some very drinkable wines. The trip back to CO after the dinner was even more fraught as the dinghy had developed an air leak in addition to the water leak and the outboard had completely packed up. It was however managed by paddling (there were no rowlocks that we could find) and all got back aboard safely but with many wet feet and bottoms!

We made an early start the next morning as we had to cover 75-odd miles to Palermo. It was glass calm and the bus taking us to the final dinner of the RYS cruise was due to leave the Marina at 19.30 – so we pressed on. We motored around the south coast of Filicudi and past the almost perfect cone of Alicudi, the most remote of the Aolian islands which was described in our Rough Guide as “the end of the road” – evidently by an author who has never been to Inishtrahull! It was hot and windless all day and the only distractions were the other RYS yachts passing us on the way and the innumerable buoys apparently moored to the bottom in no less than 1500 metres of water. Each of these had a solar-powered light attached, so they are evidently tended at night when they would be more easily visible – but how they are moored and what they are catching was a mystery to us. In early afternoon the high mountains of Sicily loomed through the heat haze and at 18.00 we arrived at the entrance of Marina Vila Igeia. Here we made contact with Fabio’s local boat keeper Filippo – who appeared on the pontoon on his bicycle and then disappeared and went into silent mode on his mobile. However we fuelled up and were eventually led into a berth – about the tightest fit either John or I have ever seen!

We cleaned and dressed up (VERY smart casual according to the RYS instructions!) and went off to the final dinner which was held in the only Michelin one star restaurant in Palermo, called ‘Bye Bye Blues’. Once again there were many courses and many wines – the entertainment enlivened by being able to watch the food under preparation in the kitchen on a large Plasma TV in the Dining room! And so back to the yacht – where the “boys” had done a good job of washing down and cleaning up before heading off to a restaurant in Palermo.

On Saturday we and the Bourkes joined the RYS party on a tour of the ecclesiastical wonders of Palermo followed by an excellent lunch in the prestigious Palermo



Bathing cove - Panarea.

Rowing and Canoeing Club which, among other attractions, has its own (very private) beach. After an exchange of burgees and some brief speeches it emerged that the club was to have made a challenge for the America’s Cup – and indeed there were two AC yachts parked on the hard in the marina – but for some unexplained and mysterious reason this had been abandoned.

After the lunch a visit was made to the 2500 year old Phoenician/Greek/Roman/Norman site of the city of Sagasca – with a magnificent Phoenician theatre and a complete but never used Doric temple, before arriving back on board so late we were too tired to eat. The “boys” had left the boat in a good state of cleanliness and decamped to a B & B for their last night. We left for the airport to fly home at the ungodly (but warm) hour of 04.00 on Sunday.

So ended an interesting short cruise in waters none of us had visited before and among islands that I for one had always wanted to visit. Glorious sunshine, marvellously varied islands, good food and drink, milk-warm limpid waters and friendly and helpful people together with a fine ship and good company made it one to remember.



Filicudi harbour and village.

Round Ireland in *Lady Kate*

Donal Walsh



On a Sunday morning in April Mary lost her battle with cancer and passed away. In one stroke I lost my shipmate and ship's mate. Although she had insisted that *Lady Kate* be launched and sailed as usual, there wasn't much enthusiasm for a long cruise. But the chance to get away for a bit of quiet reflection was attractive and as Brendan had some free time before starting work, we decided to go round Ireland.

We had a shakedown sail to Waterford to see the tall ships and had planned to get away next day but the forecast was so bad we had to postpone our departure a few days. It didn't matter to us which way we went as we had already done it in both directions before. Living on the south coast you go eastabout or westabout, I imagine Dublin yachtsmen think north/south about. Brendan and I left Dungarvan on Thursday 7th July and the fresh westerly wind on our transom dictated it was to be eastabout route. It was a lively enjoyable sail in the kind of wind *Lady Kate* likes; we made a fast passage in reasonable weather and later that evening we were alongside at Kilmore Quay. The wind remained fresh during the night but by morning it had moderated. This didn't really matter to us as it was a following wind and had the promise of a good day's sailing. By 09.00 we had cleared the harbour and were well on our way bound for Carnsore. There was still some east-going stream left and I was keeping close up to the shore to avoid the strongest ebb. Rounding Carnsore, and heading north the wind slackened, but now we had the flood stream under us and we still made good progress. We made Arklow that evening and went alongside the pontoons in the river.

Next morning was even better. The sun shone and what wind there was, was on our quarter again! A passage through Dalkey Sound brought us into Dublin Bay. Wanting to go somewhere "new" we headed for Poolbeg, this was to be *Lady Kate's* first visit to Dublin. We went alongside at the yacht club and Brendan went up the mast to rig some flag halyards. He was just back on deck when one of our neighbours enquired if he would fix a problem on their mast, this was followed by a request from another nearby yacht and up he went again.

We were delighted to be of help and enjoyed the pleasant company afterwards. On Sunday morning we had arranged that some visitors including my daughter Emma would join us for a day sail. It was a fine day with light wind but it didn't matter much and was a good day out. After a sail round Lambay Island, we headed into Malahide and watched the Waterford hurlers get hammered by Tipperary in the Munster Final.

Twelfth bonfires

There was very little wind next day and so it was a motoring day. We passed close up to the Rockabill and watched a big well-fed seal laze about on the rocks. Later that evening we were off Annalong and went in for a look. The pontoons described in the pilot book are ashore on the quay and as the harbour was very congested with local boats we decided to go on to Ardglass. It was the eve of the Twelfth and all along the coast one could see the bonfires marking the occasion. Next day we were bound for Bangor but stopped into Donaghadee for a look on the way. There were lots of people ashore on the

Copeland Islands celebrating the Twelfth and the party seemed to be going well as we passed by. In Bangor we took some time out, took the train into Belfast and stopped off at the Transport museum on the way. Back aboard later that evening we were lazing about in the sun when we thought we could be making a pleasant passage northwards in the fine weather. Despite having to plug the stream we headed off in the late afternoon and eventually finished up alongside at Glenarm Marina just as darkness fell.

From Glenarm we made the relativity short passage to Rathlin and as this was our first visit we spent a few hours ashore walking around the island. Nobody warned us about the hills, it was up and down all the way, they don't do flat ground here. Returning to the boat we decided that we would cross to Ballycastle for the night.

In the morning it was flat calm but there were very strong winds forecast. We headed west thinking of Greencastle for our next stopping point; off the Foyle the wind still hadn't picked up so we carried on westward. At Malin it was freshening out of the north and I was reluctant to enter Lough Swilly, as it would mean a long slog out against the wind. With the wind abeam we carried on and made Fanny's Bay in Mulroy by late evening. The visitors moorings here were excellent – new stout chains fitted with pick-up buoys. When we woke the wind was still fresh although there was a bit more west in it than yesterday and I figured on getting around the Bloody Foreland before we were pinned down by the impending gale. One always thinks that the wind will be more favourable when you turn a corner yet when you do the wind is always still on the nose. We were just about able to lay our course and slipping inside the Bullogconnell Shoals made a passage through Owey Sound and finally into Burtonport.

Weatherbound

We lay alongside some other yachts by the harbour wall and the wind was so strong that it was a major effort to get the raft close enough to get ashore. We were weatherbound for two days. When the weather moderated we moved to Aranmore, picked up a mooring at Leabgarrow for a few hours, then went south through the sound and anchored in Rossillion Bay for the night. This would allow us to get away in the morning without the tidal restriction of Aranmore Sound. Brendan had to get back home so we needed to be somewhere served by the bus network, a check on the internet showed that he could make it from Killala to Dungarvan in one day's travelling.

Now we were bound for Killala – another new port for *Lady Kate*. In some ways the entrance is similar to Dungarvan. There is a bar, and as it was only just after low water when we made our approach, there was some broken water at the edges. The soundings we were getting showed that we would cross safely. Inside it opens up into a sheltered pool where we anchored and waited for the tide to rise. Later we were able to negotiate the rest of the channel and tied up alongside some fishing vessels where we had a peaceful night. Brendan left early next morning and once he was away I got *Lady Kate* to sea. The wind was fresh northerly and it was pretty miserable until I cleared

Killala Bay and laid off westward. With the wind abeam *Lady Kate* was off. I had planned on stopping at Broadhaven bay but the sailing was too good and the plan changed. After clearing Erris head I slipped inside Carrickhesk and Eagle Island and carried a fair wind southward, passed inside Inishglora and the Inishkeas, and taking advantage of the smooth water, easily made over 7 knots at times. I couldn't resist the urge to keep going – there would be many long winter nights and this would be a passage to remember. I took the passage between Carrickakin and Achill Head and encountered strong downdraughts gusting from the high land, which were not a problem as the wind was in my favour. I stood on for Clare Island and picked up a visitors mooring off the harbour after a passage some 75 miles over 13 hours memorable sailing.

It was almost flat calm next day and I motored to the mouth of Killary Harbour but did not go in, opting for an overnight in Inishboffin instead. The names of the rocks here are interesting – O'Malley Breaker, Michael Moran's Rock, John Kenneally's Rock, Conolly's Rock, Pat Foley's Rock – and I wondered what do you have to do to get a rock called after you? At Inishboffin there was a spare mooring available, which I used and avoided the trouble of anchoring. From Inishboffin I left High Island to port and then made a course for Joyce's Sound. I have been through here before and there is no big deal about it once you identify the passage correctly. This would definitely be a bad place to get a rock called after you!

Eamonn was to join me later in the day and would come by bus from Galway, so I spent some time checking bus timetables on the internet, figuring the best place to meet. Lettermullen was served by a Saturday evening bus from Galway and *Lady Kate* could be there by late evening. I entered Casheen Bay and anchored close to the bridge at the limit of navigation in the upper reaches of Coonawilleen Bay. There was a sailing race in progress as I arrived and in the light wind the competitors were doing their damndest to outdo each other. One boat was paddling with a bucket over the lee side out of sight of the other boats. Another was sculling furiously with the tiller in effort to get more forward motion. Ashore, I met Eamonn off the Galway bus. By now the sailing race was finished and we encountered the sailors once again in the local pub. I was surprised to find that Irish was being spoken by almost everyone and it wasn't long before we were included in the conversation. When I mentioned the boat working the bucket to leeward – “Tá sé ceadaithe” and as for sculling I was informed – “Tá sé sinn sna rialacha” later when I enquired as to why it wasn't a triangular course I was told “Ní bionn ach dhá mharc againn agus suas síos leat agus an ghaoth leat I gcónaí” It was a lovely enjoyable evening and we felt very welcome there.

Poteen raid

There was thick fog in the morning and as we needed to get some supplies we headed across to Kilkiernan. Navigationally this was no problem but there was a risk of collision with other craft and we made regular sound signals as we proceeded. There was a berth at the pierhead and we went alongside and stocked up at the local shop. As we headed south I recalled an old photo which I had of a poteen raid by Gardaí on Inisherik Island. We anchored, went ashore and found the deserted house where all this drama had taken place many years ago. Back aboard we headed to sea again bound for Kilronan on Inishmore. Here we made onto a visitors mooring, went ashore and managed to see the end of the Waterford Galway match.

Our next passage would be a long hop to Dingle and I would have liked to have taken some fuel and water before proceeding. I enquired from a taxi bus driver if he could direct me to the tap. He knew “nothing at all about it” but could bring me on a “tour of the island” and show me the fort. I felt all he really wanted was to turn me upside down and see what fell from my pockets. There was no point in hanging around any longer. It was mid-afternoon; there was a fresh northerly wind, too late now to head south to Dingle.

On the chart Liscannor looked attractive – we had not been there before, – and although it would be low water when we arrived there would be a sheltered anchorage just off the pier. After skirting the north shore of Inismean and Inisheer we sailed close up along the Cliffs of Moher and delighted in the scenery. Ahead of us a passenger vessel was making its way towards Liscannor. Her draft on AIS was 1.6 metres and when her radar position showed she was alongside we thought it must surely be possible for *Lady Kate* to enter too. Inside it was very tight – it was dead low water – we got alongside the ferry and were able to lie afloat all night. It had to be an early start and we were away by 06.30 next morning. There was a good breeze to start with, but as the day wore on the wind died and soon we were motoring across the mouth of the Shannon. It was still calm as we transitted the Blasket Sound but by 20.00 we were alongside at Dingle marina and ready for the bright lights.

The dying tiger!

Almost all next day was spent replenishing supplies, and filling up with fuel and water. In the late afternoon we headed south again, bound for Valentia. Visibility was very poor but it was a short passage taking only two and a half hours to complete. In Valentia we found a very comfortable berth with good facilities alongside a half-completed marina – a legacy of the dying tiger? Taking a lay-day we rented some bicycles and toured the island. It was very interesting; we visited the slate quarry and tetrapod tracks, but we encountered some horrendous hills which were hard work. At sea again next day it was calm enough to do a circuit of Skellig Michael after which we went through Dursey Sound before finally dropping anchor in Castletown Bearhaven.

Now for the first time since leaving Dungarvan the wind headed us and we had to beat south to Mizen Head. This wasn't too bad as we were able to get a bit of a lee from Sheep's Head and Three Castle Head before scraping round Mizen. Then the tide was with us and the wind freed and we made great speed. Just as we picked up a vacant mooring in Crookhaven the rain came, it turned into a miserable evening, we had a quick run ashore but given the weather we were happy to get back aboard again. By morning the rain had cleared and the sun shone, there was little wind. Making our way along Long Island Channel we encountered the Calves Week sailing fleet and even spotted some Dungarvan faces aboard.

A brief look into Schull and then on again to Baltimore, which we reached just as the race was finishing. There was great activity ashore and we met up with our friends from Dungarvan. We crossed to Cape Clear next morning and went ashore briefly. The wind picked up while we were there, and so we headed off bound eastwards for Glandore. This was a lovely sail in a fresh following wind. At Glandore we were unable to get any supplies so we crossed to Union Hall and spent the night there. The favourable wind continued through the next day and we made another great passage all the way to

Ballycotton. Although we were now in our home cruising-ground it was *Lady Kate's* first call to Ballycotton in 6 years – how fast time passes. Poor weather was forecast so we got away early and headed home on the last leg of our circumnavigation. Again it was a great sail in a following wind and *Lady Kate* performed well. By the time we got to Helvick Head the rain had arrived and it spoiled the sailing. We missed the tide in Dungarvan and had to anchor for a few hours before we could get onto our mooring in the town quay. Our journey had taken us 27 days in which we covered 960 miles. We visited 32 harbours, 11 for the first time. We lost 2 days to strong winds in Donegal but otherwise only had the wind dead on the nose for about 15 miles from Castletown to Mizen which was very unusual for a sail in Irish waters.



Donal at Waterford Tall Ships.



Brendan at Rathlin Island.



Mayo coast

Mystic's shake-down cruise

Peter Fernie

Unexpected water flooding across the cabin sole is never an encouraging experience – with darkness coming on, a less than helpful tide, a lee shore and to cap it all, a bilge pump which has just decided to go AWOL, decisive thinking is called for.

The plan was to accompany David Whitehead on his recently purchased *Moody 27, Mystic* from Malahide to Wicklow and thence, leisurely, to visit offshore islands: Skomer or Skokholm and Lundy in Pembrokeshire, the Scilly Islands and then Île d'Ouessant and Île de Sein, before meeting up with the ICC Rally in either L'Orient or Île de Groix. A highlight was to be a fish supper in Padstow, chez Rick Stein. No hair shirt stuff – more a gentlemanly progression.

Mystic despite a less than active previous 3 years, was in good shape – a fine suit of white things, a recently serviced engine. Electrics and instruments OK. A brand new fire extinguisher. Fuelled and victualled, we were ready to go. Only the weather didn't know it was mid-June. We beat down the coast to Dun Laoghaire in frostbite conditions – this was not T-shirt weather. A welcome stop at the RStGYC for lunch and to warm up before heading on for Wicklow.

We sat around an unseasonable yet welcome open fire in Wicklow Sailing Club and planned an early departure to catch the start of the south-going tide at the north end of the Ramsey sound off the Pembrokeshire coast, but "The best-laid schemes o' mice an' men, Gang aft agley".

The following 06.30 saw a brace of flat batteries – over-enthusiastic use of a mobile phone charger suspected. New starter battery purchased and installed. Departure postponed to 14.00. The passage to Wales was uneventful, and fortified by a curry, we didn't notice the cold. The wind fell and we congratulated ourselves on the foresight to install the new battery. Motor-sailed through the night. Having decided we were going to be too late for our south-going tide through the sound, we set an alternative course for the South Bishop, which we rounded at 06.00 in a sunny if cold morning. Three hours across St Brides Bay brought us to the tiny hamlet of Solva where we anchored in 4-5 metres behind the large rock island at the entrance. A short stop for a late breakfast and 2 hours in the bunks.

One of the beauties of small boats such as *Mystic* is their Spartan nature. No pressurised water, no showers, plotters, radar or other complications – only a fold down chart table and a basic Garmin. Far less to go wrong. Except.... I had forgotten the debatable joys of manhauling an anchor. No matter – it serves to ensure you set the anchor right the first time.

Refreshed, we plotted a course for the Jack Sound between Skomer and the mainland. We started the engine – or at least we didn't, the new battery notwithstanding. We investigated, changed batteries around, measured voltages, checked fuses and finally gave the starter motor what is known in the trade as a welt with a lump hammer. Whichever one of these procedures was successful, it was difficult to say – the engine started.

Jack Sound reads dreadfully in the rather old Imray South West pilot, we had – full of caveats and cautions. The author should venture to the Joyce Sound or the Blasket Sound for real excitement. We rounded St Agnes Head into Milford Haven on a cold gloomy evening and tied up alongside the fixed floating pontoon off Dale village NW of the roads.

Saturday was to be a gentle day – explore the Cleddau river as far as we could towards Haverford west and in the evening depart for Padstow in Cornwall, all the better to experience the fish supper. We were at this point becoming somewhat paranoid (as one does) about the engine. "We'll just see if it starts". Of course it didn't and no end of our feeble ministrations or entreaties could get it to give even a feeble splutter.

As we looked across the nearby moored yachts, we caught sight of one which was almost a copy of R.T. MacMullen's *Orion*. "He never had engine problems" we mused – his biggest problem seemed to be taking on sufficient coal. Our white things still worked of course and in our RT MacMullen state of reverie we briefly considered sailing to the Scillies and France (as he undoubtedly would have done). But then, we further reflected, he didn't have to contend with Traffic Separation zones and one of the busiest seaways in the world. We settled for a sail up to Neyland Marina where we were promised the services of a marine engineer for the coming Monday.

Neyland Marina is interesting in that it occupies the site of the former Isambard Kingdom Brunel sponsored transatlantic port designed to link up with his famous Great Western Railway. A pleasant few hours can be spent following the Brunel trail on the quay. Other than that the village had all the enthusiasm of Llareggub – no Bank or ATM in the vicinity and hardly a soul on the streets. The Co-op provided the most excitement.

The weekend passed – it rained and blew – we were happy to be in the marina. 'Twas on the Monday morning, the engineer came round – and said "new starter motor" which he ordered and installed very speedily the next day. We revictualled and refuelled – we tried the engine several times –



Searching for the elusive leak.

our paranoia evaporated. We were finally on our way – regrettably Rick Stein would have to wait for another time – meanwhile the weather had changed for the worse with a southerly forecast all the way to France and not much time to dally by the wayside.

The course was set for St. Marys – the watches were settled – the ebb from the Bristol Channel was pushing us well over to the west – in a few hours the flood would bring us sweeping down the Cornish coast. We motor-sailed slowly into a south-westerly wind. The chorizo stew had been a great success, all was at peace as I did the washing up, we tacked – and then there was the slosh of water over the tops of my shoes.

“Did we pump the bilges today?”

Up to now we had remarked that the boat was especially dry and we had not had to pump bilges on a regular basis at all. In fact we had only just spring-cleaned them and cleared the limber holes for want of something to keep us out of the pubs. A few strokes of the bilge pump should suffice – and then the spindle of the bilge pump sheared. Not good. Fortunately we had a stirrup-type pump and a bucket and we were able to keep pace with the water now sloshing over the cabin sole. It was not prudent to continue – we had no wish to appear in the next RNLI newsletter.

We turned round back to Milford Haven as darkness fell. Following the buoyage as far as we could we headed into an inky black Dale Bay. Using only the Reed’s chartlet of the

harbour, we reckoned 10 minutes at 300° would bring us to our favourite unlit pontoon. With palpable relief we tied up at about 01.00. The water ingress seemed to have slowed and we now had doubts about our judgement to abandon the passage. There were no obvious leaks. We monitored the water in the bilges as we sank ... the best part of a bottle of Bushmills before turning in and reassured ourselves that should the boat sink overnight at least we could easily step out on to the pontoon.

The next morning we checked all the sea cocks again and late in the day located a leak in the engine exhaust which solved our problem. The bilge pump was fixed to everyone’s satisfaction. We were ready to go yet again but by now our putative timetable was in shreds. I had meetings in England the following week – David was due to meet Marie in L’Orient in three days. We decided to leave *Mystic* on a mooring in Lawrenny Haven further up the Cleddau river. So we had an enjoyable day learning and practising the arcana of windvane sailing up and down the river. The skipper climbed the mast – impressive.

We departed our various ways. Our two-week cruise to France had indeed, in Robbie’s words “gang aft agley”; nevertheless we had enjoyed some sailing and some new places. We had encountered a number of new experiences and had learned a lot about *Mystic* – all good. We had pottered about on boats for about 10 days, with convivial company and a sufficiency of food and drink.

That’s a success in my book.

Norman Kean writes of Lecky’s *Wrinkles*

Wrinkles in Practical Navigation was a standard text – indeed the standard text – from its first edition in 1881 to its 23rd in 1950, and was required reading for merchant and Naval cadets all over the world. Its author, Captain Squire Thornton Stratford Lecky, was an Ulsterman, born in Bangor in 1838. His family owned Ballyholland House in Bangor and Castle Lecky near Limavady.

Lecky went to Gracehill school in Co. Antrim, and ran away to sea at the age of fourteen, aboard the barque *Alfred* bound for Calcutta. He served in square rig, the (pre-Mutiny) Indian Navy, and with the Inman, Holt, and Pacific SN lines. He became an expert on Pacific waters and uncannily adept at detecting uncharted rocks. He sailed as a guest aboard Lord Brassey’s *Sunbeam* on her circumnavigation, but left her at Buenos Aires and (for the want of better employment) shipped for Calcutta as Bo’sn on the *City of Mecca*. His evenings were spent, however, teaching the captain and officers the finer points of navigation.

He became Commodore captain of the American Line in 1878, and in 1884 (after the publication of *Wrinkles*) Marine Superintendent of the Great Western Railway. He was a Fellow of both the Royal Geographical and Royal Astronomical Societies and one of the Junior Brethren of Trinity House. He corresponded frequently with the eminent physicist Kelvin, whose inventions revolutionised navigation. Lecky died in 1902.

Wrinkles is a substantial doorstop of a book – by the third

edition in 1895 it had reached 750 pages, and it got bigger. But Lecky’s style was tremendously readable and down-to-earth.

On the phenomenon of semi-diurnal tides:

“...[it] proves an effectual poser to many who, from want of the key, consider the matter as contrary to common sense. Touching the latter, it must be allowed that common sense is a first-class thing in its way, and happy are those who possess it, but, unfortunately, it is not always equal to unravelling intricate problems, of whatsoever kind: if it were, then it follows that the nation need not pay so much for Board Schools, nor in fact foster education in any form. The moon’s attraction undoubtedly causes both tide waves, and, absurd as the idea may appear to many, the fact is capable of sufficiently easy explanation, which we will now attempt.”

On the accuracy of charts and the unthinking faith sometimes placed in them:

“...during the time the western part of the Strait of Magellan had to be navigated with fearfully imperfect charts, it was a regular thing to hear recounted, with a face as long as the main to’bowline, how in such-and-such channels the compass had ‘jumped’ two points or so, and had nearly put them on shore. It was no use attempting to convince the narrator to the contrary. These ‘jumps’ are never heard of now: the magnetic phantom who delighted in these pranks has been exorcised by the modern

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surveys... which shew that the previous charts were sometimes whole points in error."

On the need for meticulous care of a sextant:

"There is a proverb that 'you should never lend anyone your horse, your gun or your dog.' It applies also to the sextant, only more so. Bear it in mind, dear boy."

On calibrating a sextant, ashore, using an artificial horizon:

"Avoid the neighbourhood of waterfalls, mills, factories, foundries and shops of workmen generally....Again, a place open to the public is objectionable, from the number of idle curiosity-mongers who are sure to surround the party, and, without intending it, make themselves very disagreeable by ignorantly getting in the way....For these sort of expeditions, select handy men who have some gumption."

Footnote to the section dispelling the widespread notion that – for obscure astronomical reasons – afternoon sun sights were intrinsically less reliable than forenoon sights:

"To keep up the traditions of the sea, some few men are still in the habit of 'making the sun over the foreyard' as soon as 'one bell' is struck; which perhaps – according to the amount of 'northing' in the grog – has a tendency to render them a little uncertain in their movements later in the day."

On the consequences of confusing compass roses on the cheap commercial (so-called "blue-back") charts of the time:

"The manner then in which compasses, true and magnetic, got mixed up and sprawled all over the shop was something wondrous to behold. The arrangement could not have been better calculated to give rise to mistakes at critical times – indeed the writer has known it to do so. The vessel referred to got on the rocks a few miles to the eastward of Queenstown, but luckily bumped off again without springing a leak, though her bottom was dented in like an old tin pot. The skipper was on the bridge, using a chart with a compass compared with which a spider's web was simplicity itself. As might be expected, he got confused with the jumble of lines, and ashore she went. The writer was on the after-wheelhouse at the time, and the first bang sent him flying down on top of a pompous-looking passenger."



The principles and guidelines laid down by Lecky remain as valid today as when they were written 130 years ago. But many of the technological miracles of his time are now to be found only in maritime museums. Some of the scientific theories he quotes have also earned their place in the great museum of superseded ideas:

"The atmosphere, or invisible air-ocean extends for many miles above the earth's surface....Beyond this is the luminiferous ether – an extremely fine imponderable fluid, supposed to pervade all space."

(The non-existence of a "luminiferous ether" had actually been demonstrated by experiment in 1887 – before Lecky's third edition was published – but that was not generally accepted by scientists until the publication in 1905 of Einstein's Theory of Relativity. Kelvin was one of the hardest to convince.)

On the shape of the Earth, and tidal slowing of its rotation, quoting the physicist P.G.Tait:

"...We say, then, that because the earth is so little flattened, it must have been rotating at very nearly the rate as it is now rotating when it became solid. Therefore, as its rate of rotation is undoubtedly becoming slower and slower, it cannot have been many millions of years back when it became solid, else it would have solidified into something very much flatter than we find it. That argument, taken along with the first one, probably reduces the possible period which can be allowed to geologists to something less than ten million years."

(The catch is that the Earth largely isn't, of course, solid. Its true age is now considered on much better evidence to be 4.6 billion years. The estimate of ten million was made by Kelvin, which is probably why Tait, and Lecky, regarded it as so authoritative. But what a clear exposition of the (then) received wisdom.)

A couple of more-than-slightly tongue-in-cheek tributes to traditional weather prophets, whom Lecky regarded as little more than pure charlatans:

"From time immemorial the weather-wise have had their weather-signs, and among them in great profusion are to be found the habits of birds, beasts and fishes. Most people know what to expect when swallows fly high or low, donkeys bray, or seabirds are found far inland. Spiders, gnats, ants, and more particularly leeches, exhibit indications of weather fluctuations; so do bees, which cannot without peril be peeped at over a hedge forty yards off when weather of a kind they dislike is imminent; it is a case of the coming bee and the going man." [footnote: The writer has sixteen hives in his garden, and ought to know.]

"Some rustic weather prophets are very amusing: ask one whether it will be a fine day tomorrow, and he will look in his mug, slowly shake his liquor around, take his pipe from his mouth and say oracularly, 'Weather isn't what it used to be.'"

Of the Southern Cross:

"To 'Cape Horners' it is a circumpolar group, and at its lower culmination is of course seen upside down, a phase of position which still further detracts from its merits and dignity as a cross. Nevertheless, romantic young ladies love to gaze at it whilst the waters ripple by the side of the ship. The effect is enhanced if a good-looking young officer should happen to be close by to explain matters celestial."

Aleria's third crossing of the Atlantic

Alex Blackwell

In 2008, a decade's worth of planning and a lifetime of dreaming came to fruition. Much to our friends' surprise, consternation and horror, my wife Daria and I made the big move, selling up in the States to go sailing. We had found a 'new' boat on Chesapeake Bay, one of our favourite cruising grounds, that we thought would take us anywhere we wished to go. She is a Bowman 57 cutter-rigged ketch.

Aleria's maiden voyage took us first southward to the mouth of beautiful Chesapeake Bay, and then northwards offshore for a 300 mile leg to New York City, from where we sailed past the southern tip of Manhattan where the Twin Towers once stood, up the notorious East River and past Hell Gate, where many ships have reportedly been sunk in unspeakable tragedies. From there we continued on to our home port in Long Island Sound.

On June 1st 2008 we moved back aboard and headed north to Maine on the first leg of our trip home to Ireland. Our final port in North America was the northwest arm of Halifax Harbour. During the night of August 16th 2008, we hoisted our Q flag and made landfall in Ireland, anchoring briefly off Clare Island to await a favorable tide to negotiate inner Clew Bay.

The following year we moved aboard on October 1st and finally departed from Clew Bay on October 3rd, 2009 sailing south to the Ria Corcubion in Galicia, and thence down the Atlantic coast of Iberia to Doca Alcantara, half way between the city of Lisbon and the town of Belem in Portugal. Then we turned right towards Madeira. The 450 mile passage took us just three days. From there we sailed to the Canaries and from there to the Caribbean. On Christmas Eve we dropped our hook at Bridgetown, Barbados.

From there we sailed northward through the Lesser Antilles, and over the next seven months we migrated steadily northwards hopping from island to island, settling in to the itinerant cruising lifestyle and leaving the baggage of 'normal' life behind. Our final stop was in St Martin where we provisioned for our return to Ireland.

Returning Home – Caribbean to the Azores

We had had enough sun. I know this sounds ungrateful, but we 'had' to go swimming by 10.00 every morning as we simply started to overheat. The first month of heat was wonderful and we soaked it in, after that we northerners started to wear down. We had also had enough parties. Forget about Antigua, which we dubbed the social epicentre of the Caribbean, it had been a rare evening when we were not socializing – either on our boat, on another boat, or with a group of friends ashore for a picnic or in a restaurant. It was time to go back out to sea and "chill out". It was also coming close to hurricane season and we needed to head north.



Aleria spinnaker

Our first two days out were glorious, with 15-20 knot wind close-reaching along the rhumb line exactly toward our next destination in the Azores. As opposed to several of our friends, we chose the direct route instead of first heading north to Bermuda and then across. It was exhilarating averaging 9 knots of boat speed over ground – if we could keep this up, we would be there in no time. Of course a gale soon crossed our path and stalled. The winds grew stronger, and the seas grew much bigger. We had sailed right into the southeast corner of a trough attached to a growing low pressure system parked over Bermuda hundreds of miles to our west. Friends of ours were to spend four days hove to off Bermuda sitting this one out while others were stuck in Hamilton unable to leave.

We too hove to for about 30 hours. We then sailed northwest rather than northeast to catch the southwest flow on the other side of the trough. Once there we had a few nice hours of reaching when the wind died unexpectedly and we had to motor for the next 30 hours in search of wind. And so it went. New low pressure systems

were springing up all over the Atlantic. It seemed that every one of the boats in our fleet of Northbound Net vessels that joined together for communication by long-range radio (SSB) had its own gale system forming nearby. In addition to the boats around Bermuda, two boats in our loose group were stalled close to the Caribbean. There were no highs – no Bermuda high, no Azores high.

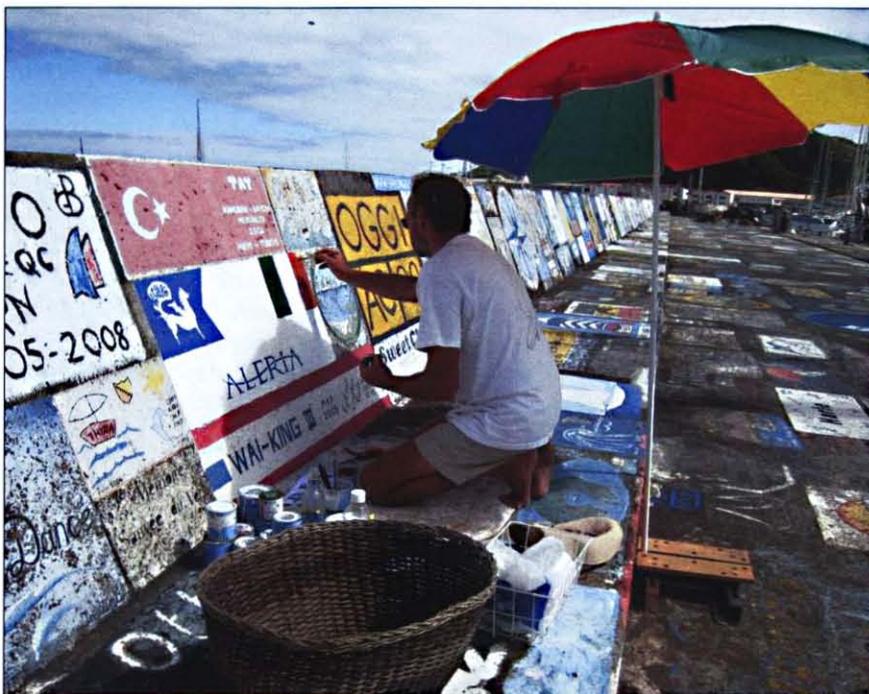
When the wind calmed down to 25-30 knots we did well with Aleria sailing along at speeds of up to 11 knots. Unbeknownst to us, the Azores high was taking shape after all. It suddenly appeared on the grips just to our north – directly in our path. As hard as it had been blowing, the wind died completely. We started motor-sailing at our most efficient RPMs. We had about



100 miles to cover in ten hours before the high expanded and we still had 675 miles left to go to landfall.

We did make it. In fact, our last few days sailing were among the most glorious we've ever had. For three days, we were in consistent 10-15 knot trade winds; just what we had expected for the entire crossing. The sea presented us a long gentle rolling swell in brilliant sunshine and cool air temperatures. Dolphins came to visit us every day in large pods of diminutive, playfully leaping creatures. Whales meandered past. During the day, we flew the spinnaker. At night, we reduced down to the yankee, which would allow one person alone to jibe if needed. It was fantastic. We wished it would never end.

As we approached Horta, on the island of Faial, we could make out a perfectly arranged European style village along the shores of a very protected harbour. We soon settled into life in Horta and it became abundantly clear



Horta Sign.



flag, a black cat, and our names and year of visit. Our passage was documented, hopefully the gods were appeased, and our journey could continue.

After a few days we left at sunrise heading for Angra do Heroísmo on the island of Terceira. We later learned we missed the arrival of Jarlath Cunnane on *Northabout*, for whom we had been waiting, by less than an hour. We passed lovely Pico Island in the most beautiful morning light. Pico is known for its vineyards surrounded by walls of lava rock. The wines produced there are quite drinkable, and their vino verde (green wine) is a uniquely refreshing, almost-sparkling white wine. Running parallel to Pico we passed the island of São Jorge, known for its beef and cheeses. Both

Fin whale.

Mid-Atlantic raft-up.

that we were back in Europe and loving it. Gone was the hot climate of the Caribbean. Instead we had cool clear air with hot sunshine by day, and crisp evenings. The Azoreans are such warm friendly people that we were instantly at home in their environs. The architecture is charming, the cultural roots are varied, and scenery naturally dramatic. And it is green - very, very green. In fact, they compare their islands to Ireland, with winter weather equally as wet but measurably warmer. It is so nice to see green again after the arid Caribbean topography. We felt very much at home.

In Horta there is a tradition of harbour graffiti, where each boat does a painting in memory of their visit. I set up a studio alongside the wall and painted the *Aleria* logo, our white seahorse personal signal, the Irish



are of the highest quality. Between the wines, the cheeses, and the meats, we were in seventh heaven, as all were readily available (and cheap) in Angra.

Angra was the first European city in the 'New World'. Its cultural heritage has earned it the reputation of a UNESCO World Heritage site, and the feast of São João Batista— St. John the Baptist— was about to begin. With it come the running of the bulls through the streets, parades, concerts on the quay and throughout the city, bullfights in the arena, arts and crafts expositions, and street food fairs. So despite an uncomfortable surge in the harbour, we deployed a spider web of dock lines and enjoyed the event.

Our Last Leg – Azores to Ireland

The wind turned southwesterly after several days of northerlies, which meant we had a weather window for a possible straight shot up to Cork riding the gradient between the Azores high and the tail of a low. Indeed, we made great headway. At about the halfway mark the wind abated and a pod of sperm whales greeted us in the morning.

Shortly after that, to our great surprise, we were hailed on VHF in the middle of nowhere by some friends we had been cruising with for the past eight months. They had secretly plotted a course to intersect ours to wish Daria a happy birthday! Fenders out. Docklines out. It was a birthday party at sea! *Aleria* would keep sailing along at 3 knots while they motored alongside in their catamaran and rafted up. We all sang, drank champagne and ate cake.

Underway again and a few short hours later we were surrounded by a large pod of fin whales. Much bigger than *Aleria* they swam alongside and in our bow wake, dove under our boat and even crossed our bow. What an amazing day!

As we crossed our outbound track and completed a circumnavigation of the Atlantic Ocean, we tallied up the figures.

Since we left our old home port in the US, we had sailed more than 15,000 miles, visited some 20 countries including 24 islands and countless anchorages.

Our first port of call in Ireland was Crosshaven. From there we continued along visiting Kinsale and Glandore. There we took a long walk and soaked in the scenery as well as the soft Irish air. Little did we know that while ashore a fishing vessel from Union Hall across the bay would T-bone *Aleria* otherwise safely anchored in the harbour. When we returned, the skipper of the massive trawler came alongside and hailed us: "I might have brushed your boat a bit".

When we looked over the side, our hearts sank. There was significant damage. *Aleria's* hull was stove in above the waterline, the deck was crushed, and there were scratches and bruising all along her side. It must have been quite the violent collision. A lighter modern vessel will likely not have survived. The fisherman was thankfully honest and he was insured. Our poor cruising kitty *Onyx*, who has been sailing with us for ten years, was traumatized, quaking under the covers and would not come out for several hours. We are actually quite glad we were not on board when it happened.

We limped our way home with our insurer's blessing. The anguish subsided as the Guinness and Bulmer's flowed and *Aleria* sailed bravely on. We called into several more lovely ports on the way north to Clew Bay and resolved to return soon.

As we entered our home waters passing Clare Island and spotted majestic Croagh Patrick on Clew Bay's southern shore I turned to Daria and simply asked: "What were we thinking to leave this beautiful place?" We had forgotten how beautiful the sky looks when the clouds are roaring past. In the Caribbean sunshine, where every day is the same as the one before and the ones to come, things just don't stand out as much. Yes, the blues are amazingly blue and the greens are uniquely green, but they never change there. Here in Ireland, everything changes from moment to moment.

David Beattie writes of the Ups and Downs in Mare Nostrum

We had an uneventful season with *ReeSpray* in 2011 merely cruising from Malta to Corfu and back via southeast Sicily, south Italy and a couple of Ionian islands. However, two events stand out:

On passage from Crotone in Calabria southwest towards Syracuse in Sicily, where we got almost to the top of Mt Etna, we were intercepted twice on one night (three hours between incidents) by an unlit fast motor-boat which shouted aggressively at us in Italian – indecipherable, especially over the roar of her engines – and blinded us with her floodlight. With no navigation lights until the last moment and with searchlight ablaze, she approached on the port beam at high speed with no warning, only veering-off after a collision seemed inevitable, and maintained station on the starboard beam shouting at us, and then less than two metres dead astern of us such that we dared not reduce speed. We lit the deck floodlights but the intimidatory attitude and shouting continued. I suspect she may have been Italian Coastguard attempting to identify our ensign, but don't know as it was impossible to see or to hear her. Given that we were displaying our name on

both sides of the boom, our name and port of registry on our stern, our Irish tricolour inclusive ICC ensign, and transmitting speed, course, name, dimensions, call sign and MMSI on AIS, it seems strange that she couldn't have hailed us properly by loudhailer or VHF, or even boarded us so we could have satisfied ourselves that they were official and not criminals. All in all quite frightening and completely unnecessary intimidation. I have written to the Italian Ambassador to Ireland seeking an explanation.

Having been invited to the opening of the Malta boatshow, we were entertained to supper by Richard Gabriel, Commodore of the Viking Sailing Club. This thriving club, based on the old Haywharf is next door to the boat-show marina. The club was running a charity 60 hour continuous-sailing marathon in Laser 16s in aid of a local charity. Following a donation from the *ReeSpray* kitty the five of us were invited to take part, and managed to race two Laser 16's back to *ReeSpray's* berth at Sliema. Beating around Manoel Island and across Marsamxett Harbour in the dark, taking lifts off the ramparts whilst dodging naval patrol boats and avoiding passenger ferries in the balmy autumn darkness was memorable.

To Harris for dinner

David Williams

High water in Strangford was in the early afternoon so *Reiver* set off from Whiterock at 15.30 into a strong cold southeasterly, with the hope of leaving the Lough before low water. The bar was still quite lively so we slipped out inside the Bar Pladdy and into Knockinelder Bay for the night, which left us free to make use of all the north-going tide next day. Our trusty Bruce anchor failed to hold and we discovered a large round boulder jammed in its mouth which took some considerable effort to dislodge. We settled down and conducted the first round of the Ballymena whist championship after dinner.

We heard a corncrake calling near Quintin Castle in the quiet sunny morning, before we set off inside the old South Rock lighthouse two hours before the north-going tide started. The asymmetric spinnaker was put up as we passed the Feathers but 2.5 knots was all we could manage. Progress was poor so reluctantly we put the engine on after lunch and motored outside the Copelands to Glenarm, arriving at 18.30. The resident black guillemots amused us with their antics in the evening sunshine while we sank a few Guinness. Some guillemots climbed up on boat covers and slid slowly down the slope for amusement.

Monday 4th July, Independence Day and Terry's 65th birthday! Again we started early for a fair tide, with a fresh southeasterly breeze, aiming to be just short of Fair Head when the tide turned. We celebrated Wee Terry's passing into senior citizenship (and took every opportunity to remind him of the fact throughout the cruise!) by breaching a Christmas cake which had been preserved for the occasion. We had a speedy reach across the North Channel, surfing frequently and clocking a maximum of 9.2 knots. On the approach to Gigha we heard *Sunset Song* over the VHF requesting assistance as their engine had failed and they were aground in Ardmish Bay. We reduced sail to jib alone as we passed Cara and on entering Ardmish saw *Sunset Song* just north of the jetty, bouncing gently in the waves. Shortly after we picked up a mooring, a fishing boat arrived to pull the casualty off the beach. VHF communications were slightly hampered by the fishing boat skipper's thick South African accent, however he swiftly did the job using his winch, and departed in less than an hour with many thanks from the casualty and Coastguard. In the increasing wind and slop coming in from the east we put the tail of the anchor chain onto the mooring, before we settled down for a bumpy night.

Next day the very strong easterly continued, so we decided to stay put. Only two boats moved during the day, I think heading to better shelter in West Loch Tarbert. After lunch we had a sleep to prepare ourselves for the evening's hotly contested rounds of Ballymena whist.

Wednesday turned out better so we went ashore on Gigha, visited the old church ruins and graveyard and bought some very expensive milk from McSporrans. At the art gallery we were harangued by an islander who was clearly unhappy with how the Island Council ran the now commonly-owned island. We left after an early lunch and had a pleasant, slow sail up the Sound of Jura, where we spotted a porpoise with her pup and loads of gannets. We anchored behind Carsaig Island after avoiding a clam dredger which was 'ploughing' all the bays, and that evening Chef George consolidated his lead in the Ballymena whist championship.

The tide dictated an early start next morning, to take us

swiftly through Dorus Mór and the Sound of Luing. The anchor was raised at 06.15 and we set off in light conditions, sailing whenever we could but mostly motoring to an old favourite, Puilladobhain. We tried the asymmetric set to lee from the removable sprit for a while, but it really needs to be flown with the clew to windward, or put on a pole for direct downwind work. After a late lunch we had a snooze before going ashore and crossed the hill to the Bridge over the Atlantic. We had a quiet evening aboard where George increased his lead and became invincible in the card championship.

Another early start, we left at 06.00 for a good gentle sail up the Sound of Mull, to arrive at 11.30 in Tobermory, which now has vastly improved facilities. Initially we went to the fuel berth but the purveyor of diesel was most uncooperative and wouldn't rouse himself for the small amount that we required; about 50 litres. Eventually Terry carried a jerry can down to *Reiver*. Not amused, we moved to a pontoon berth beside a three-storey gin palace which blocked the view. That evening we had the first Chef's night-off in the Mishnish, with delicious scallops all round and a few pints of Belhaven Best, a reasonable substitute for the discontinued Tennents Amber.

We departed Tobermory at 08.00, a lie-in for us, without being charged for parking, and headed into a cold northerly, motoring to Ardnamurchan with a clear view of all the Small Isles before us. Once round the headland we were able to make sail and bear off for Loch Moidart. We gingerly edged our way in through the many rocks and half-way in met *Maggie May*, also from Strangford (Quoile Yacht Club) coming out. We had a short conversation on the VHF but had to pay attention to the tricky pilotage, even so we went round an extra rock and were in quite shallow water for a while but got away with it because it was at the top of the tide. Some time after we had anchored off the jetty at Eilean Shona, in front of the super Tioram (pronounced Cheerum) castle, a yacht motored on the falling tide across the sand bar, round Riska island and out beside the castle. George said 'he must really know what he is doing' and I replied 'don't you believe it', just before the yacht went firmly aground on the sand bank to the south of the castle! We dinghied over to explore the castle while the yacht dried out completely. We won't mention that the yacht was called *Shindig* and re-floated at about 22.30. Keeping with tradition, George selected a sprig of heather (actually a large bush) when ashore for *Reiver's* bow as we were now north of Ardnamurchan. That evening the skipper succeeded in whittling down the Chef's Ballymena whist lead a bit.

Sunday 10th July was a cold, wet, misty day and we slowly left beautiful Moidart at half-tide so the pilotage was easier and headed north, made sure that we didn't go near a dangerous offshore rock, and headed for Arisaig. We picked up one of the numerous moorings after negotiating the tortuous but well-marked channel to the yachting centre. The highlights of a rather dull rainy day were a very fine replica pilot cutter on a mooring nearby, and spotting *Orca*, the large yacht that plagued us last year by dragging its anchor incessantly in our vicinity. We were highly amused to see that *Orca* seemed to be sporting a new anchor this year; I wonder why?

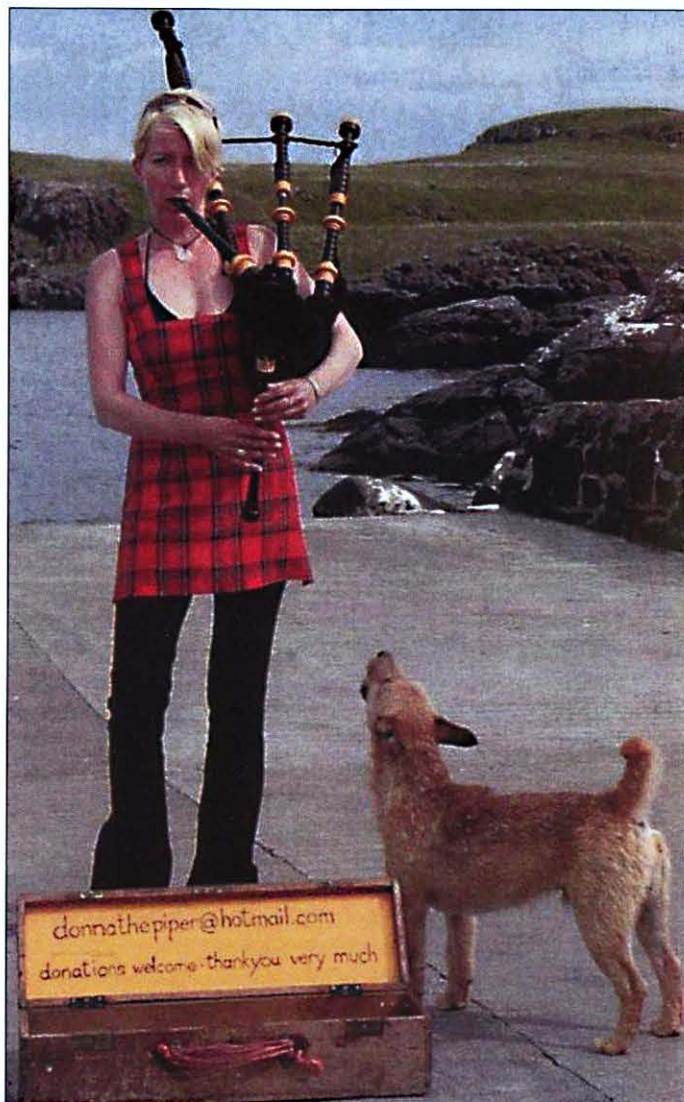
Monday was still damp, so there was no enthusiasm to go ashore in Arisaig and George thought that it was time to set *oeuf* to Eigg and was *eggstatic* when we arrived and *shelled out* for an *eggcellent* tea and a scone at the pier head, served by Donna the Piper and a girl from Indiana who hadn't mastered

the currency. Nobody in the establishment seemed to be at their best as they had been up all the previous night at a stag 'doo'. It was now bright sunshine so we explored part of the island, inspected the rusting hulk of the steam boat *Talisman* while being lit upon by numerous clegs, and saw a big bird (probably a sea eagle) soaring high above the trees.

We sailed next morning northwards past Rum and Soay into a freshening northerly, up the west side of Skye to Dunvegan. The navigator made a note to replace chart 1795 as the latitude, longitude and other details are unreadable in places! We motored the last bit, which was slow because of wind over a vigorous tide at Dunvegan Head where we saw a lone minkie whale. Once clear of the head we had a nice reach down the very large loch, past Dunvegan's unimpressive castle and picked up a mooring opposite the hotel. We went ashore after dinner for a few rather nasty beers at the small hotel which was filled with German and Spanish guests.

Wednesday 13 July was a beautiful morning and we went ashore to shop before going down to the disgustingly smelly fish pier, eating wild raspberries on the way, and were buzzed by some RAF fighters flying at very low level. The tide was suitable to enter the Bay Channel at Rodel, Harris so we set off across the Little Minch under full sail. We made better time than expected so had to slow down to allow the tide to make enough at Rodel. A yacht under jib and engine sped across in front of us, went straight for the channel and got stuck on the way in but soon freed itself. We judged the depth indicated by the Pillar Rock in mid-channel and entered, parting the seaweed, with about 300 mm clearance, then picked up a mooring. We went ashore to organise showers (the second of the cruise!) and book dinner at the hotel. A much cleaner crew assembled at the bar before dinner for some more not very nice beer, and conversed a while with Donnie MacDonald, the very welcoming owner. The meal was marred by an over exuberant and over attentive eastern European waitress with an armour-piercing voice; however the food was delicious but exhausting as we waded through piles of mussels, scallops and crabs.

We left Rodel at 07.00, near the top of the tide on a cool and cloudy morning, and had a lively and very enjoyable sail across the Little Minch round the north of Skye. As we approached Rubha Hunish we saw in the distance a three-masted tall ship under full sail which it soon shortened due to the increasing wind. As we were approaching Rona we were accompanied for some time by a large pod of dolphins, and were glad to enter



Donna the Piper at Eigg.

Acairseid Mhór in the worsening conditions. We anchored behind the island at 14.30 and moved to a slightly better position at 15.00. George asked to be excused anchor duties; this request was granted as long as he didn't give up cooking!

We went ashore and walked up the island to the trig point while being frequently attacked by large swarms of midges. That evening the skipper clawed back some of George's still massive Ballymena whist lead by winning four games in succession.

We motored out of Rona and sailed slowly down the Inner Sound to Loch Carron and arrived in a wet Plockton, where we picked up a mooring. We went ashore, landing at the very convenient pontoon and walked about in the rain, then went back to the boat. The rain continued so we didn't go ashore again and continued the whist championship.

After a very wet night we left early to ensure a fair tide under the Skye Bridge. The barometer was in a nose-dive but no big winds materialised. We motored most of the way to Kyle of Lochalsh taking care to give the shallows which catch submarines a wide berth. After sounding the inside of the pontoon with the lead line we



George Wylie, Terry Needham, David Williams, at Gigha.

moved inside and cleaned the boat in preparation for my brother Peter and crew's arrival. In the afternoon we went up the town, booked the crew handover dinner in the Waverley restaurant, and had showers in the public loos which charge 50p for a towel, excellent service. George was directed to use the girls' side, however he emerged unscathed. We had drinks aboard when the incoming crew arrived, then a super meal at the busy Waverley, which was enhanced by the very pleasant and efficient waitress/maître d'. Kyle of Lochalsh has nearly everything going for it, handy for passing yachts, good road to it, pontoon, showers, large Co-op just up the hill and an excellent restaurant, but no decent pub that we could find, certainly not the hotel.

We left by car early next morning to catch the HSS home.

As always on a cruise to the west coast of Scotland we achieved a number of 'firsts', namely: Knockinelder, Carsaig, Moidart, Arisaig and Eigg. We had no particular ambitions and just went where the wind blew us (mostly) which is what cruising is all about. The Ballymena whist champion was



Puilladobhain.

George and the final scores were: George 12, David 6 and Terry 2.

Where can you get decent beer in Scotland now that Tennents have fallen on their own sword?

David Taplin (ICC) writes of a short cruise in the Inner Hebrides

This was effectively a delivery cruise, with an old friend from rugby days over fifty years ago in Birmingham, and a new friend – both experienced and from Manchester. The delivery was

from Inverkipp Marina to Craobh Marina, Scotland in a well found Nauticat 42, a deck saloon yacht with large electric winches, a potent engine, in-mast furling mainsail, two furling headsails and a well stocked "wine-cellar", in unexpectedly sunny weather and a gale only on the last day.

Our first day, June 11th, we started at 08.00 in a southwest force 5. At 15.00 we responded to a Mayday from Clyde Coastguard and turned back to Arran Island where a motor launch was in trouble, standing down when the inshore lifeboat secured a tow, then rafted out on a pontoon in Campbeltown at 19.30.

On June 12th we departed at 07.15, rounding the Mull of Kintyre in sunshine with a northeast force 4/5 and picked up a visitors mooring at Craighouse, Isle of Jura at 18.00. Supper in the friendly Jura Hotel, with, by happenstance one of my former research students from Canada (1969) who was on a nostalgic trip to his boyhood haunts.

Next day through the Sound of Islay to an anchorage at Ardalanish, Tuesday through the Sound of Iona around Staffa and Fingal's Cave to another splendid anchorage at Rhum, leaving on Wednesday in a force 6 but returning to stow the cruising chute and then onwards to Loch Nevis (Tarbert) with a truly astonishing and very clear sunset behind the Cuillins (which I had climbed in 1957 with my brother John).

We planned to sail to Coll next day but in fact Thursday evening found us anchored in Loch Sunart at Loch na Droma Buidhe. Friday June 17th was our last day sailing and we tacked down the Sound of Mull in a southerly force 6/7 with

one gust over the desk reaching 50 knots, taken in comfort by the Nauticat thence through Cuan Sound arriving at our berth at Craobh Haven at 19.00.

Truly a wonderful and utterly memorable one week cruise in the western isles of Scotland (~350 miles). Now boatless after owning eight excellent boats over the past forty years, in 2011 I have also sailed in Vancouver, Canada to Snug Inlet, Gambier Island with my son Toby and his wife Ann in a chartered Catalina 34, catching a full load of Dungeness crabs for a feast at anchor; in San Francisco on a chartered Island Packet 34 with my son Justin and grandson Cole circumnavigating Alcatraz; and in southwest England with my sailing mentor from Oxford days on his Jeanneau 39i from Mayflower Marina, Plymouth. A pretty good sailing summer indeed, so far.



Searching for Saints – Skellig to Iceland

Paddy Barry

*“I am the wind over the sea,
I am the ocean wave,
I am the voice of the sea,
I am the seven-horned ox –”*

Begins the Song of Amhergín, thought to be the earliest Irish poem; before the coming of Christianity.

The idea came from Breandán Ó Cíobháin, scholar/anomast from Ventry, Co. Kerry; to venture by boat to places where early Irish monks had left their mark, physical or literary; and to gain some appreciation of their spiritual values.

It was his neighbour, my old friend and shipmate, farmer/fisherman/poet Danny Sheehy from Ballyferriter, who put it to myself – and away we went on a magic carpet of delight, planning, making contacts and getting our own crew together. Or team, rather than crew, because we would be a mixture of archaeologists, poets, historians, musicians and sailors.

Our route would start at Skellig, take us up the Irish west coast, Inner Hebrides, Orkney, Shetland, Faroe and south coast of Iceland; returning via St Kilda and Outer Hebrides. We'd start on the feastday of St Brendan, May 16th, as you'd know, and finish on MacDara Island, Connemara on his feastday, July 16th.

With a boatload of Lidl food, divided into fortnightly bags, and duty-free from Connaughton (undivided!), on we left Dublin on Friday April 29th heading south for Kerry. Aboard with me were Ken Price, my son Cathal and his friend John O'Regan. A fresh easterly blew us down the Irish Sea and, by morning, past Carnsore; just as well, as the engine was decidedly smoky and temperamental. Ballycotton, normally with good shelter, was too open to the east wind. So we continued, making into an outside berth at Kinsale's Castlepark Marina, as the engine stalled.

Leisurely we rose before then having a rough half day of it. In big following seas and rain, we didn't much enjoy the coast of south Cork and were relieved to round Kedge Island and get into the shelter of Baltimore, tying alongside at Con Minogue's pontoon. Saturday night in The Algerian was lively, John's singing playing no small part; himself and Cathal next day getting the Skibbereen bus away and back to work.

Ken and I watched Donal O'Sullivan work his quiet expertise over the next few days on the fuel injector pump, and injectors, fixing a very coked-up engine; the timing having been about 20 degrees out.

Still the wind blew hard from the east. Ken left, Rory Walsh arrived, then Peter Gargan and Paddy O'Brien, a week of hill-walking in Kerry in mind, with Cahersiveen as a base. The departure from Baltimore out the North Sound and to The Mizen was lovely, before we had to reef and then reef some more, tacking downwind by Dursey, Skellig, round Valentia and up the well-marked Caher River to the marina. (Knightstown Marina, unfinished, is a 'no-go'). Next morning a southerly gale blew, we doubled our shore lines and gazed in wonder at the magnificent offices of the 'decentralised' Legal Aid Board, political patronage gone mad – at our expense!

Over the following days, bent into the wind, we walked the hills around and east to Glenbeigh, before making the short sail over to Dingle and doing the Brandon ridge and down Cosán Na Naomh (footpath of the saints); our Pilgrimage now begun. Paddy and Peter left.

The 'Immram' team gathered, or 'Iomramh' in modern Irish.

This is the name given to the peregrinations of those who, following Old Testament and then North African Christian Coptic practice, sought solace in hardship and isolation in the desert. The Irish, not having such, took to the 'desert of the ocean'. Ourselves, unlike those, were very definitely not going to 'let God steer' and our comfort, frugal enough though *Ar Seachrán* can be, was in a different league. Inauspicious though was our beginning. Zero out of three, we were to fail on our first three intended destinations.

We left Dingle at 07.00 on Monday, May 16th, but with a westerly force 6 blowing, there wasn't a hope of making our planned landing on Skellig. In Blasket Sound we rolled out $\frac{3}{4}$ of the headsail. The day was not at all enjoyable for many as we lashed along, doing about 7 knots in the beam seas, Rory heroic in his tending of the several (sea) sick. Slyne Head came abeam about 20.00, 2 miles off and just visible in the mist. We turned east at The White Lady, in towards Clifden and, as darkness fell, anchored by the Errislanan fish cages. Snug within, the Eberspacer dried ourselves and our gear – one of our more successful winter jobs had been the removal from the heater of the ducts and just letting it blow full whack straight out into the main saloon.

Our crew plan had been for 6 aboard, with 8 by exception and for short periods only and the optimistic assumption of good weather. We were now 8, with four of us, Breandán Ó C., Donal De Barra, historian (and cameraman as it transpired), Danny and myself being in for the full trip; Ruadhri Ó Tuairisg, Pat Cunningham, archaeologist Finbarr Moore and Rory being for shorter stay.

St Feicín's High Island was to be our next stop. The morning wasn't too bad at all. We motored out to Cruagh Island and headsailed it over to High Island in poor visibility and a heavy swell. Standing off, the north-east landing looked possible, but inadvisable with our numbers, etc. The northern landing had breaking surf. So again we had a 'no-go'.

Island for sale

Laying off outside Inish Shark, the day picked up. With visibility improving, The Bills and Clare Island could just about be seen. But by Achill Head it had closed in again, with rising wind. Black Rock and Dubh Oilean (which had been for sale at €1m!) could just be seen. The anchor went down off the beach at Inis Gé, north of Rusheen; 40 miles done, no sea sickness today, and all in better form for a fine dinner.

Donal had killed a pig (I omitted to say that he's a farmer from west Clare), the greater part of which he had salted and brought aboard, together with a huge round of cheese. Both were to provide both pleasure and sustenance for many a long day. Indeed this type of food, would have been what early monks might have had.

Inish Glóra was next, or dare I say, was to be next. We rose at 05.30 to go the inside route up the 7 or 8 miles to anchor. Not a hope. White water drove skyward on the rocks west of Inish Gé. With some trepidation, and thankful for chart-plotters, we went to sea. At Erris Head we considered going into the shelter of Ballyglass, but the Belmullet, Channel 83 forecast of southwesterly force 6 gave us comfort. So we continued, it being 80 miles downwind to Arranmore Light. The naval vessel *LE Emer* passed and we spoke. Everything fine, us under half rolled headsail, as she, and presumably we, disappeared into the troughs, it now blowing a constant 30 knots plus, gusting 46

– was this a new interpretation of force 6? In fact there now was a gale warning. At 17.30, Arran Light was abeam. We spoke to Glen Head Radio, rounded Torneady Point, close hauled towards Ballagh Light and then motored the channel into Burtonport Pier. We were glad to be out of that weather, even as it still blew rough inside at the pier.

In O'Donnell's that Wednesday evening for us it was subdued pints (and The Queen on TV). We planned a layday, then setting out on Friday for Colonsay. I'll shorten our story. For 8 days we lay in Burtonport, doubled lines, as the wind blew, never less than force 7, gales all-round (with a force 10 / 11 on Monday May 23rd). We visited Glenveigh National Park, Inisfree, Arranmore, drank endless coffee and were most hospitably treated by Oscar Duffy and Liam Miller. They, with the local dive club, had recently discovered two wrecks off Rutland, one thought to be a French 1798 vessel and the other a 1588 Spanish Armada vessel, on which archaeological investigation has begun.

On Friday, May 27th we left, sailing pleasantly towards the north-east, Errigal, Muckish and then Sliabh Snacht falling behind. Rory, Finbarr and Pat had left, Donncha Ó hÉallaithe had joined. Our 'programme' was now of course in bits. Dr Ian Fisher, Scottish Antiquarian, had been due to meet us a week earlier in Colonsay. The visibility closed, we sailed too far east over towards the cliffs of Islay and as evening fell, 21.00, got in to the north side of Scalasaig ferry pier. There is a yacht berth; but a tight spot, with an uncomfortable surge. At the Hotel, still serving, we heard that Ian was waiting for us and ready to come aboard.

Colonsay, and its adjacent Oronsay, had for us the special interest that it may well be the famed Hinba. Hinba, geographically uncertain, is where St. Colmcille (called Columba by the Scottish) is recorded as meeting St. Brendan. Scholars have long puzzled over its location, described by Adomnán, Abbot of Iona and biographer of Colmcille, as being on the sea-route from Ireland to Iona. Kevin Byrne's book, *Lonely Colonsay, Island at the Edge* goes into this, as does Ian's more authoritative *Early Christian Archaeology in Argyll*.

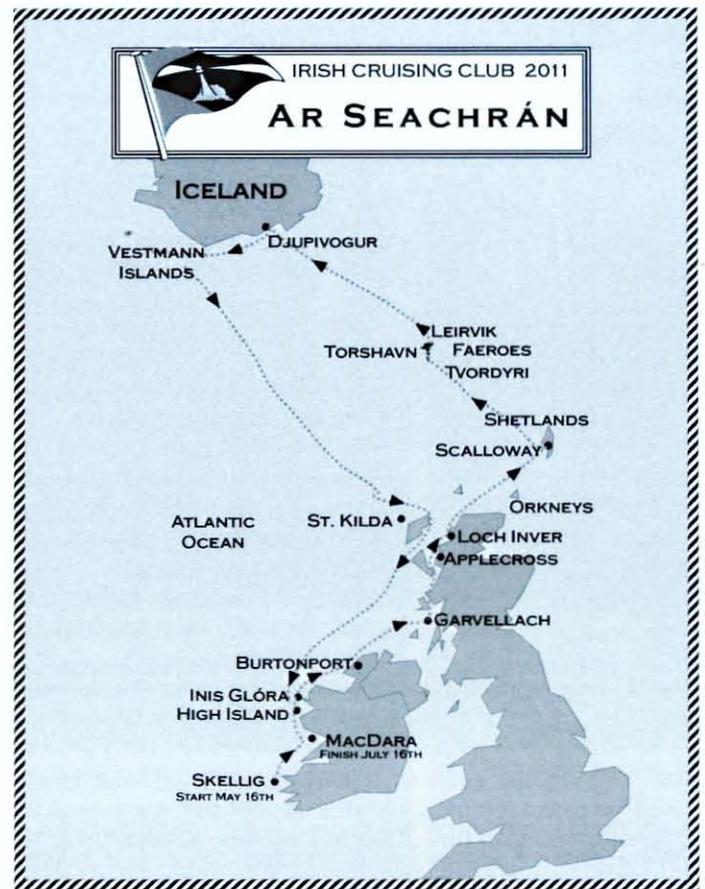
Even though the weather was now fine, the surge at the jetty made further stay untenable. Eileach An Naomh, the south westernmost of the Garvellachs (Garbh Oilean – rough island) was next for us, distant 15 miles on this sparkling day. The anchorage is good only for settled weather and even keeping the boat jilling about offshore a dingy landing would have been too dodgy. As we drifted slowly by, Ian, unfazed and in delightful manner, described the beehive cell, other constructions and his earlier excavations there. The northern island, guarding the entrance to Loch Linne, he said had been an outpost of the Clan MacDonalds with their war-galleys. God knows how they landed, as the cliffs look steep all round.

Iona bypassed

Iona was to have been our next stop, an important one. However, it had been apparent that there would be a swell in that anchorage also; not a good one at the best of times. So to cut our losses, and try to make up lost time, we made for Oban, passing two yachts gale-driven onshore and waiting for spring tides to haul off. We tied in Kerrera marina, all snug and with the heater going, before taking the ferry over to town – and last ferry back, 23.10 – good for discipline!

Next day, the wind howled, as forecast, and we stayed put. Liam Miller texted "Inisfree. northwest force 8-9".

Ian took a few of us out to the back of Kerrera, behind the Richardson Monument, to view Clyvernoch, a monastic settlement, inconspicuous grassy 1-metre high ridges (from the Gaelic 'Cladh A Bhearnóg', from Mearnóg, better known to us as in 'Port Mearnóg', yes, Portmarnock, County Dublin).



Danny, in his ramblings, had met the Canon at Oban Cathedral and told him of our 'pilgrimage'.

"Do ye pray together?", said the Canon.

"No, but we drink together", said Danny.

Ruaidhri and Donncha left, their fortnight being up.

The forecast still was for lively unsettled weather, but generally from the west or southwest. Tomorrow we would go for Mallaig, stopping at Eigg. A glorious day it was, under sail up the Sound of Mull, round Ardnamurchan and in to the pool off the slip at Eigg. The café area was busier than ever I've seen it, The Sgurr, high basaltic outcrop behind. We were however for Kildonnan early medieval church. Within its walls Ian elucidated. This is built on the site of the earlier one where St Donnan was martyred. Ian made it seem as of today as he recounted, carefully distinguishing historical fact from conjecture, and ancient stones from newer; Donal in the meantime recording all, still, movie and sound.

Back on board, our minds abuzz, we sailed across to the mainland, the Cuileans a jagged skyline to the west; Mallaig harbour, and railway terminus, ahead of us by evening. There Ken re-joined and Ian took the train for Edinburgh.

From Mallaig we sailed pleasantly through the Sound of Sleat and under Skye Bridge. Over to the west of us was the island of Pabay. This was for us the first of many 'Papay's', 'Papa's and 'Papi'l's, all having their names given by the Norse Vikings when they came upon the *Papar* monks or signs of their presence. However our destination now was Applecross, location of the monastery of St. Mael Rubha, formerly of Bangor, County Down. Over the winter we had made excellent contact with their Historical Society and both they and ourselves looked forward to meeting. The anchorage at Poll Creadha, south of the village is marked, but on the chart looks open to the west. And, alas, greatly alas, there was yet more strong westerly forecast. So we passed by a couple of miles offshore trying to make as much ground as possible. All day we sailed north in a force 4 to 5, with the forecast giving a force 7



Dingle, Predeparture. Pat Cunningham, Ruadhri Ó Tuairisg, Fionbarr Moore, Breannán Ó Beaglaioich, Danny Sheehy, Paddy Barry, Rory Breathnach, Donal De Barra, Breandán Ó Ciobháin.

Photo by Seán Mac An tSíthigh

or 8 later. That evening, Tuesday May 31st, with glorious Suilven mountain as backdrop to the east and rain approaching from the west, we tied to the fine pontoon at Loch Inver. Don O'Driscoll, formerly from Ballycotton, Cork, came aboard. Now a wildlife warden here, it turned out that his father and an uncle of mine (and Donals, we're first cousins) from Fermoy had been great friends.

That night the wind howled and the rain lashed. Next morning Breandán Ó C. said he was leaving, which he did.

Scotland's Fawly Towers!

The nearby Caledonian Hotel must surely be Scotland's worst ever. Serving Tea & Toast, reluctantly, the waitress then took the butter out of her pocket! Happily, further up the village was lovely, and friendly. This was as well, because we had to wait two days there before getting to sea again.

Having recovered much of the lost time, we were in time trouble again. Breannán Ó Beaglaioich, musician, had been waiting for us in Orkney, where we had three or four places we wanted to visit, Papa Westray in particular. But, we were expected in Shetland 3 days hence and Breannán had gone on to there.

On the Friday we left Loch Inver, in now ideal conditions, 180 miles to Scalloway, intending to skip Orkney. We had good fast sailing all day, round Cape Wrath and running off to the north-east with poled headsail. About 23.00 we were off Papa Westray, the 'roost' (tide) being with us. We had the option of going in to anchor and doing a 'dawn runaround', then continuing. "Keep going?" said I, nobody demurred. Our log records "00.15. Dark & Wet. Wind 20-25 knots abeam. 2 reefs, no headsail. Distance to Scalloway. 69 miles".

The night remained dirty, but with us. By 10.00 on Saturday we were at the entrance, passing a trawler lately gone on rocks - 'returning crew fatigue', we later

heard. We tied at Scalloway Boat Club pontoon.

Previously we had made contact with John Smith, Shetland Heritage Officer and with Adalene Fullerton of Papil, West Burra. Between them they did us proud. John showed us around the Papil churchyard and Incised Celtic Cross Slab; a copy, the original having been taken to the National Museum. That Saturday evening, in their restored crofthouse, we had storytelling, singing and music, theirs and ours, Brendan B. on his melodeon - what energy!

On Sunday, we rested, John driving us round and giving us the local rundown. We saw the base used by the Norwegian 'Shetland Bus' seamen during the war, and met some of the 120 Irish RoadBridge guys who are building a gas terminal there; identical to that which they had built near Rosport, Mayo, but with none

of the objectors hoo-ha.

We had hoped to land also on the nearby island of Papa Skerry and on Papa Stour, but Faroe was calling, and the sailing weather looked good. Sunday evening, 22.00, we made our goodbyes, the forecast was light variable or southwest. 3-4, becoming northerly and freshening force 7. With a passage of 180 miles to the northeast we didn't want to be part of that.

We motored through the calm night, a sliver of new moon showing silver; but by morning the glass was falling and the Navtex was giving gales for MetArea 1. Northeast Sector. That would be us! Hopefully we'll get in ahead. And to put a damper on things our battery indicator was showing no-charge. At 7½ knots we eat up the miles in the flat sea; later in the day rolling out the headsail in an easterly breeze and easing the revs. At 18.00, Land Ho, at a distance of 33 miles. Two hours later, the Faroe Islands were spread out and visible before us. And by 22.00 we tied up in Tvordryri, main town of Suderoy island, had dinner (Danny had now taken charge of the galley) and found a pub.

A later scribbled note in the Log says - "Glenfiddich back on Boat - finished it".



Steffen Stummann Hansen, near Leirvik, Faroe.

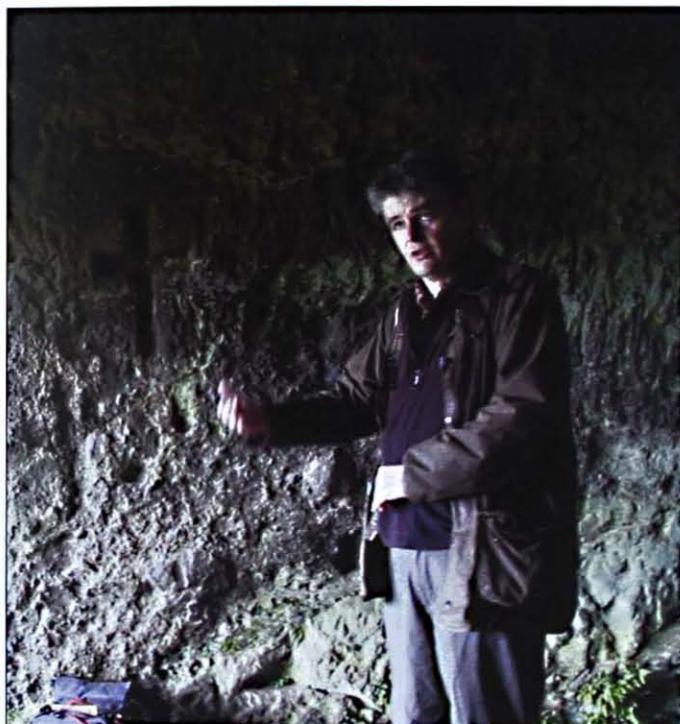
Photo by Donal De Barra

Tvordyri. Tuesday June 7th. Slow rise, damp day of hang(over)ing around. Early to Bunk.

Wednesday. Rain lashing, wind still gusting. Late breakfast. A local mechanic (Rumanian, married in) fitted new alternator belts – problem solved, in a most helpful manner.

Steffen arrived off the Thorshavn ferry; Dr. Steffen Stumman Hansen, Senior Danish Archaeologist, now living in Faroe. Over the winter we had been in very good contact, discussing our Immram tour of Faroe and where we might best go, never realising that he was going to guide us all around. This he did, and more. In the various places, he set up transport and had local experts waiting for us. In Suderoy, Hans and Fionnbjorn, took us to their village of Hovi, their Museum, where they laid on a meal, at The Place

Jonathan Wooding, in Seljaland Cave, Iceland. The incised cross is dated to 795 AD. *Photo by Donal De Barra*



Ian Fraser, at Kildonnán, Eigg.

Photo by Donal De Barra

nearby island of Nolsoy, where the jawbones of a 30 metre bluefin whale arch over the village entrance. On board and playing were Faroese classical musicians. Back in Torshavn, it was a pity we had to leave; but in Faroe the tides rule and we were due in Leirvík on Stemman's island, Eysturoy. He, of course, could drive there. Tunnels now run between most of the islands, extraordinary.

Hardly arrived, Steffen took us across the island to the village of Gotu, old boats and buildings, hospitable people, singing the old songs for us and giving us the most fantastic Faroese meal.

Leirvík has the exposed remains of a Viking longhouse farm, but our interest was in the earlier Christian mounded enclosures, unexcavated so far, but probably Irish. The discourse between Stemman and Jonathan took wings. Happily

of the Irish – a field down by the sea, and of course many Viking remains.

Torshavn, the capital remains focussed on the fishing industry, but appears much more prosperous than in 1987 when last I had sailed in. There are cafes and shops now, more like Denmark. In the harbour there is an extensive small boat marina. Our interest in this area was centred on Brandansvík, Brendan's Bay. The dominant feature is the more recent cathedral, now desecrated with a horrible sheet-metal roof. There also we met Joannes Patursson, who showed us round his centuries-old farmhouse. That night boatbuilder Micheal Muller, friend from 1987, entertained us in his house to a Faroese dinner.

Also on board with us now for the next couple of weeks was Dr. Jonathan Wooding, historian/author, from the University of Wales.

In a big local schooner, we visited the



Journeys End. Clifden. Donal, Paddy, Frank, Liam and Danny. *Photo by Treasa De Barra*

distracted we were by the hospitality, meals and music in both Stemman's and Eric's houses. Eric, irrepressible, runs a very modern fish factory, whose main product, fish heads, he ships to Nigeria. Generously he wouldn't take payment from us for a couple of hundred litres of diesel we filled; "Nigeria will take care of that"!

The 250 mile passage to Iceland was glorious – for the first 24 hours, good sailing, sparkling seas. However the change was brutal. The wind went ahead, strong and cold, very. With about 80 miles to go, we motored into it making only 2 to 3 knots. Was this weather going to last, to get worse, or to blow over? Ken and myself discussed it and agreed to suffer a little, raise the revs and try to get on in out of it. And yes, suffer we did, for 12 hours, cold, wet and banging into the seas. What relief to see the sharp mountainous outline appear. The seas flattened. Spirits recovered and the cooker went on.

As we went into Djupivogur, banter resumed:

"The journey up to Iceland is worth a verse or two,
Strong winds blew from the Arctic, a tester for our crew.
But *Ar Seachrán* shouldered all the seas and through the seas did run,
'Twas a lovely sight comin' up the fiord, we had reached the midnight sun."

(with thanks to MB, aboard *St P.*, 1990)

Going in, now Tuesday June 14th, we passed the location of our interest here, the island of Papey; but left it for later. Frank Nugent was ready to come on board. He had been trekking/camping for the previous week; too early in the season, he had found. Many of the tracks were still unpassable and the huts not yet opened. Ken would be leaving.

The main Icelandic on-board arrival was Gunnthor, Rev. Gunnthor Ingason, Lutheran minister, of substantial stature and presence. He couldn't do enough for us. Over the next days we visited, by road, various Papey sites along the barren seashore. The climate had been better in the Irish monks' time. It certainly wasn't great during ours; with noontime temperatures of 7°, the locals said it was the worst summer in 30 years.

We called to Hofn, the only other harbour on this ironbound coast. At Thorbergur Cultural Centre we stayed overnight for a Conference on pre-Viking Christian settlement, Jonathan being principal non-Icelandic speaker. My brief contribution began with St. Colmcille's exhortation – "Oh, what joy to sail the crested sea, and watch the seas beat on the Irish shore". ICC people should recognise the quote! Danny spoke of Christian and pre-Christian belief on the Dingle peninsula, from whereof some of Iceland's earliest inhabitants had come. Frank sang and Brendan played.

Our 200 mile passage westward to Vestmann Islands wasn't bad at all. The Low Pressure systems were all to the south, giving us easterly wind. Heimaey is the capital, in fact the only populated place, and that heavily devastated by the volcanic eruption of 1973. The lava run had nearly blocked the harbour entrance. The nearby ground is still warm under the soles of your shoes.

Photographer/Journalist Gisli Oscarsson enthusiastically took us in charge, bringing us around and showing us early Norse buildings, The Irish Well, a Celtic Cross carved into the rock behind the town and the grass amphitheatre where 25,000 of Iceland's young gather for a music festival each July. The 'high' for us was our visit to the Seljaland Caves over on the mainland. Within are carved many crosses of Celtic type.

Recent excavation and midden analysis has established an occupation date of 795 AD.; that is 79 years earlier than the first Norse settlers in Iceland are recorded, being the year 874. In Iceland these dates are quite 'political', the majority having preference for a Viking ancestry. But there is no doubt about the fate of Irish slaves, called 'Vestmann' by the Norse. Following an uprising, all slaughtered.

Gunnthor and Jonathon were leaving for Reykjavik, Brendan also. Liam Ó Muirthile, Aosdána poet and sailor, had now joined. So we were five on board for the southward journey, first leg being 500 miles to St. Kilda, with its Cill Bhréanainn. Without any pressing schedule or upcoming crew changes, we could afford to pick our time, to take our time. However looking at the upcoming weather charts, now seemed as good as it might be for our south-easterly passage. The forecast gave us:

Day 1. Northerly. F.4. Great.

Day 2. Northeasterly 3. Still Good.

Day 3. Northerly 1.

Day 4. Southeasterly 3 or 4.

OK, so we'd have to motor in near calm on day 3, and take our chances with the back end of the passage. Let's go!

It was as forecast on Day 1 and 2, with good and pleasant progress. Late on Day 3 the south-easterly came on with a vengeance. We lay hove –to for the night, decided that St. Kilda would be untenable, even if we could get there. With two reefs, we lay off for the Butt of Lewis. The autopilot (ST 7000) packed it in, mechanical failure of the steering arm; and we too had sore arms by the time we got into Stornaway.

What day was it? Sunday, of course! Never the best day of the week in that dour town, though much improved.

Pleasantly we coasted southward sailing in flat water, first calling to unfriendly Loch Maddy and next to Loch Boisdale on South Uist. On Papey Island nearby, walkable at low water, we scrambled round the monastic ruins, with diminishing enthusiasm. We'd had about enough. Some local people kindly invited us to a 'house ceilidhe'; very nice, but not unlike a meeting of the parish council.

Normally one would never pass Barra but, with a good forecast and the usual 'end-of-cruiseitis', we made onward for an overnight on Tory, then to Boffin. Approaching, Liam in his notebook a-scribbling, never were the hills and islands so clear. Achill, Nephin Beg, Clare Island, The Reek, Mweelrea, Inis Turk and the Bens were resplendent. "All right now lads, books away" says I. Ignored I was, and much embarrassed and delighted when, after tie-up, L. Ó M. passed me the fruit of his musings:

Cuair chollaí na mBeann sa spear	The sensual curves of the peaks in the sky
Á bpógadh le dúil na súil	Kissing them with eyes desire
Ag teacht na farraige.	Coming across the sea.

Next evening, Tuesday, July 5th, we anchored in Ardbear Bay, outside Clifden. Family and some friends gathered, happy us all.

Later in the week *Ar Seachrán* went round Slyne to Roundstone. On 16th, MacDara's Day, a gale blew any chance of the Annual Mass there, and our landing. A few of us met in Carna anyway, and in Seamus Breathnach's house, had lunch and a few tunes.

So much to digest!

From Sardinia to Turkey with *Safari of Howth*

Carmel Kavanagh

Farewell to Sardinia

On Wednesday May 25th Ken and I threw off our lines and departed Alghero, Sardinia where *Safari of Howth* our Halberg Rassy 42E had spent the winter of 2010-2011, finally getting underway on the 1,200 mile voyage to Kusadasi in Turkey.

At 10.25 we headed out past Capo Caccio, turning north towards the Fornelli Passage 25 miles away. The sun was shining, the sea flat calm with 10 knots of wind from the west. It couldn't have been better for the first sail of the season. After transiting the rather shallow Fornelli Passage, we spent our first night in the marina of the delightful holiday town of Stintino.

The following morning we awoke to dense fog and stayed in port until it had burned off. By mid-morning visibility had returned to normal, so we headed out to Castelsardo, 20 miles further along the coast, motoring in windless conditions. The trip passed without incident and we were soon berthed in one of our favourite ports with its 12th century Genoese Citadel perched high on the mountainside.

On Friday May 27th we awoke to learn that a gale warning was forecast for that area over the weekend. As we were already pretty familiar with Castelsardo and its delights from previous visits, we decided to head for Santa Teresa di Gallura, 30 miles away, without further delay. From there we would head across the Tyrrhenian sea area to Fiumicino on mainland Italy.

Santa Teresa di Gallura

Upon our arrival in the rather up-market marina of Santa Teresa di Gallura, we were delighted to discover that the nightly charge for a berth during May was €10 for *Safari*. This doubled for June and again for July before hitting the high season price of €80-€100 per night for August. During our storm-bound stay, we visited the port of Olbia on the east coast by bus, explored Santa Teresa on foot and had a great time with some friends, Peter and Doreen, from the marina in Alghero, who were also sitting out the bad weather in the marina.

By Sunday the strong winds and the choppy seas had calmed down in the Straits of Bonifacio, so we decided to hop quickly across to take a peep at Bonifacio itself before leaving that part of the world. During the summer of 2010, although we had had sailed extensively around Corsica we had never gone into Bonifacio because it was either overcrowded or too windy for an approach. The twelve-mile trip across was trouble-free which made a pleasant change. Its location on top of the cliff was pretty spectacular viewed from the sea, but we did not linger too long as we found it very touristy and pricey.

Gales and more Gales

On Monday June 1st we made our first attempt to head east for Fiumicino, an overnight trip of 137 miles. We set out at 06.30 to get safely through the Straits of Bonifacio before the usual mid-day wind kicked in. 3 hours later, as we motored past the beautiful Maddalena Archipelago, a new gale warning was issued for the entire western Mediterranean. We decided to err on the side of good sense and caution and return to Santa Teresa.

What a wise decision that turned out to be as one of the worst gales we had ever experienced hit Santa Teresa that afternoon. The downpour that accompanied the gale force winds was so dreadful that we thought the entire town and the

marina along with it would be swept out into the Straits of Bonifacio!

However, by 09.00 the following morning, as if by magic, all was calm and sunny again and all the yachts that had sought shelter in Santa Teresa began putting to sea. After comparing a number of forecasts, we, too, decided to head off at 12.00. Oddly enough it was as if the storm had never happened. The sea conditions were fine. In the early part of the trip we got a nice lift from a northwest 3-4. However, by 17.00, the wind had died off altogether and the sails were back in their covers. We re-hoisted them later on when some wind returned and were at least able to motor-sail through the night, accompanied for a while by a very playful school of dolphins.

Automatic Identification System (AIS)

Our first night passage of the season was a most pleasant experience due mainly to the recently installed AIS. Being able to see the Closest Point of Approach, Speed and Course of all commercial shipping is simply brilliant. It leaves one free to concentrate on other targets manoeuvring in the vicinity, of which there were none on that particular night. This has put an end to my fear of sailing in the dark and of crashing into targets which are, in fact, miles away. It also guarantees uninterrupted sleep for the skipper when I am on night watch!

Arriving in Fiumicino

25 hours after leaving Santa Teresa, we were off the entrance to the Fiumicino Canal in perfect conditions. As Constellation Nautica lies up-river of the 2 lifting bridges in the canal, we had to wait 7 hours for the next opening. There are only 2 openings each day during the week, at 06.30 and 20.00. Weekend times are different. Luckily we had thought to book a berth in Darsena Traiano on the seaward side of the bridges to await the opening. It was well worth the €20 they charged as we could now relax for the rest of the day and catch up on some sleep.

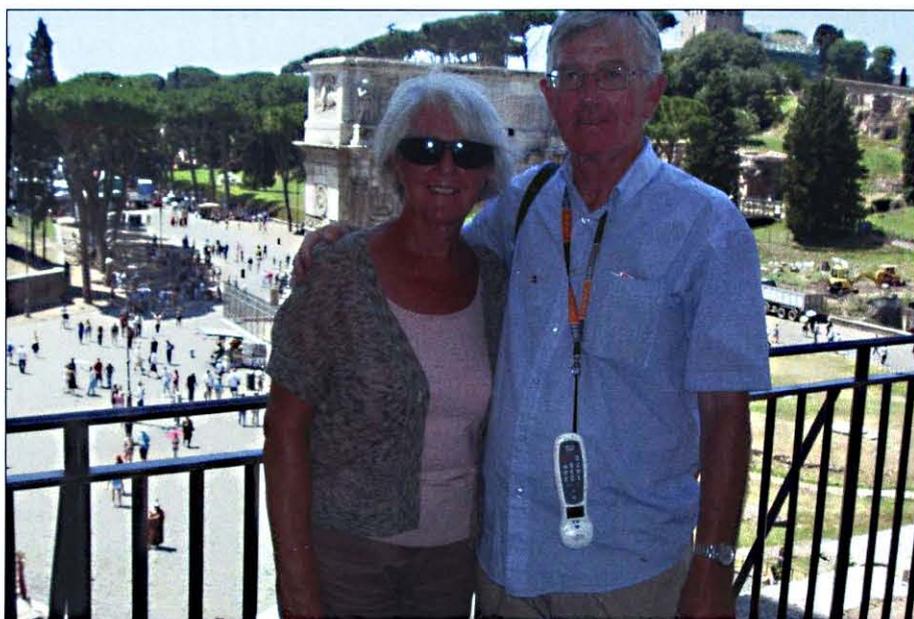
During the afternoon, we wandered up to Constellation Nautica and arranged for help to be on hand upon our arrival later that evening, as berthing in the 2-4 knot current might require some extra hands! At 19.50 sharp we exited the Darsena and in the company of another few boats transited both bridges and rafted up at Constellation Nautica in a very strong current without incident.

Constellation Nautica – Fiumicino – Rome – Naples

We had decided to spend the entire month of June at Constellation Nautica so that we would have plenty of time to become acquainted with the delights of Rome. At €240 for the berth plus €80 for water and electricity for the month this represented excellent value for Italy, which is famous for the outrageous prices charged by the marinas during the summer months.

Fiumicino itself could not be described as a “des res” district, with its fish and flower markets and constant air traffic overhead, but we loved it! It was quirky and real and had all the facilities cruising folk could wish for.

The staff in the boatyard, headed up by the owner, Renzo, were super friendly. The facilities were more than adequate and included a washing machine for clients' use. The bus stop which serviced the airport and the metro into Rome was just outside the gate, and a large supermarket, EMME PIU was literally across the road with the option of a Eurospin (a Lidl-



Carmel and Ken exploring ancient Rome.

style supermarket chain) a kilometre away and there was a choice of 2 chandleries.

However most satisfying of all was the collection of interesting cruising folk. There were visiting yachts from Ireland, England, France, Spain, the Netherlands, Canada and the United States with a few Italian boats thrown in for good measure! A lovely atmosphere prevailed with lots of exchanges of information and hospitality. Like us, all were using Constellation Nautica as a base for exploring Rome.

During the month we visited as many of the wonderful sights as possible, which included an unexpected Euro Gay Pride Parade. We, and a friend from Ireland happened upon it while visiting Circus Maximus and the Colosseum. We didn't stay for Lady Gaga's free concert but we did enjoy the fun and madness of the parade itself.

We also marvelled at the ruins of the ancient port of Rome in nearby Ostia Antica and took an overnight trip to visit Vesuvius, Pompeii and Naples. Whereas Pompeii and Vesuvius most certainly impressed, we were delighted not to linger too long in the filth of Naples. In spite of the best efforts of a pickpocket, we were delighted to depart Napoli Centrale with Ken's wallet still intact and head back to the safety of *Safari* in Fiumicino.

The month of the pump

Our stay in Fiumicino was not all sight-seeing and fun. The hand pump in the galley broke while Ken was trying to tighten it, and then the pressurised water pump decided to go out in sympathy on the night before a non-sailing boat-guest was due to arrive from Ireland. Out came the hose and buckets while we awaited delivery of 2 new pumps. We were without running water on board for the five-day stay of our visitor. The month of June became known as "the month of the pump" on board *Safari of Howth*. There are definitely times when I really do not like that boat!

Meanwhile, the month of June was drawing to a close. The raft was breaking up with the boats all heading off to

different destinations: Tunisia, Greece and England to name but some.

Our plan was to head for Turkey as fast as possible because of the crowds that would abound in the marinas and anchorages in Italy and around the Greek islands during the high season months of July and August.

Fiumicino – Vibo Valentia

At 09.00 on Saturday July 2nd, we departed Fiumicino and headed back out to sea. A good 'ole swell was awaiting us with the wind unexpectedly from the southwest which ensured that we rocked 'n rolled our way down the coast towards our destination, Vibo Valentia some 255 miles away. We planned to position ourselves there for going through the Straits of Messina into the Ionian. With the ever-changing winds, we soon found ourselves sailing along at 7 knots on a lovely broad-

reach. It was delightful until a gale warning was issued at 14.10 for the Central Tyrrhenian sea, east side, which is exactly where we were!

Circeo

Upon checking the Cruising Guide, San Felice at Circeo seemed like a reasonable option for shelter. We phoned to check if a berth would be available. One was, and we proceeded to fork out €110 for a night in one of the worst marinas we have ever visited. The facilities were dire. There was obviously no need to maintain them as the place was full of very posh, expensive motor yachts with no doubt top-class luxury facilities on board for the use of the bejewelled Mafiosi-looking owners who were strutting up and down the pontoons!

The wretched gale never materialised but our Dutch friends from Fiumicino did and the evening passed pleasantly in their company.

The following morning, we decided on a very early 05.30 departure for Vibo Valentia which was 195 miles further south. We hoped to be snugly tied up in a new berth by nightfall the following day. The wind, when it did come up, was supposed to be from the north but was in fact right on our nose. Our speed of 4.8 knots was fairly miserable. By 09.00 we were close-



A tight squeeze in the Corinth Canal!

hailed and barrelling along at 6.3 knots in a very bumpy sea with lots of spray cooling us down!

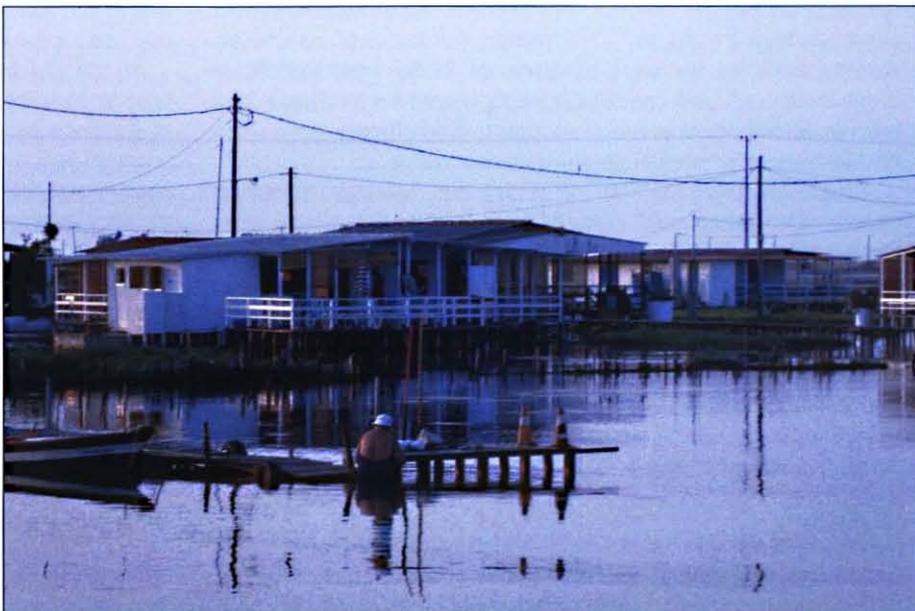
The forecast bore absolutely no resemblance to the reality of the conditions. It was so uncomfortable that we had doubts about going on through the night. But by late afternoon, conditions had greatly improved and we eschewed the option of another €100 night in an Italian marina! We now know that most Italian marinas cater essentially for the super-yacht, ginpalace class of boat and not for humble cruising yachts like *Safari of Howth*. That night turned out to be peaceful but we were kept busy with the many ferries that were plying their trade up and down the Italian coast. With the help of our trusty AIS, they posed no threat at all even when passing within a mile or so.

By 16.00 the following day we were making our approach into Vibo Valentia heading for marina Stella Del Sud which had come highly recommended. It was an affordable €40 per night with wonderful 5* facilities. The owners, Angela from Canada and her Italian husband, were an absolute joy to deal with. Ryanair flies into Lamezia just 20 kilometres away which is making Vibo Valentia an increasingly popular overwintering spot.

Vibo Valentia – Cephalonia

After 2 very enjoyable nights in the marina, it was time to stock up and fuel up once again and head for Greece. We had decided to head straight for Argostoli, the main town on Cephalonia which was 300 miles away.

By 10.15 on Wednesday July 6th we were fuelled up at a cost of €299 for 200 litres of diesel and ready to go! The light wind from the northwest enabled us to hoist the sails and motor-sail the 11 miles along that magnificent stretch of coast past Tropea before rounding the corner into the Straits of Messina. On our approach into the Straits we deeply regretted not having a camera with a really powerful zoom, when we spotted some amazing-looking boats engaged in fishing for swordfish. Because of the very long sprits extending from the bow and the fact that they were busy fishing, we had to stay a



Fishermens' houses in Mesolonghi.

safe distance off, well beyond the range of my trusty little compact!

By 16.00 we were well into the Straits, motoring along on the east side. This is a super busy corner of the world. At one point we had 2 of those amazing swordfish boats astern, a hydrofoil thundering northward and a couple of cargo ships passing to starboard, not to mention the ferries criss-crossing in front of us between Reggio di Calabria and Messina in Sicily. We were glad of the excellent visibility! It was a heady moment, finding oneself literally sailing between Scilla and Charybdis, the Homeric equivalent of a rock and a hard place. Things remained pretty hectic and busy throughout that first night with lots of targets heading up and down to the Adriatic and back and forth to the Aegean.

It was during this time that we first picked up a transmission on channel 16 asking all vessels to respect the United Nations embargo on Libya. It brought that very unsettled situation so much closer to home.

The passage passed quickly with some great sailing and of course the inevitable motor-sailing. By 11.15 the following morning, July 8th, we found ourselves docking at the quay wall of Argostoli, the main town on Cephalonia which in recent years was made famous by Captain Corelli and his mandolin. We duly reported to the Port Police and after signing-in and paying a fee of €15 each for the transit log, our very own Greek experience began!

The Greek experience

We spent 3 nights on the quay wall of Argostoli with no facilities. This was followed by 3 nights in the marina in Mesolonghi with wonderful facilities and a further night on anchor there. Another 3 nights were spent in the marina at Itia near Delphi, once again with no facilities. Our Greek experience also included a failed attempt to visit both Loutra on Kythnos and the island of Mikonos.

It was certainly cheap in Greece – about €9 per night in Argostoli and Itia, paid to the Port Police and just €22 per night in Mesolonghi marina. So cost was



Safari of Howth alongside in Argostoli, Cephalonia.

not an issue but the chaotic state of the nautical facilities most certainly were! Calls on VHF mostly fell on deaf ears, even distress calls, as we were to discover. There were no phone numbers to call and check if a berth would be available in a marina. and if one was lucky enough to find a berth, there were no facilities or personnel on shore to take a line.

There seems to be lots of unfinished marinas. It would appear that when the money ran out so did the marina developers. It's a shame to have the basic infrastructure in place but have it all fall asunder because no-one will take responsibility. It seems such a waste of potentially great cruising facilities!

The people themselves were welcoming and friendly but seemed very fed up with their situation. They were particularly sympathetic to us when they heard we were from Ireland, another sinking EU ship!

Argostoli – Mesolonghi – Itea

We enjoyed our stay in Argostoli which is a small tourist resort with a delightful town square which came alive after dark. The cafes and restaurants were packed with locals mingling with tourists while small children took over the town square creating a really lovely cheerful and happy atmosphere.

Mesolonghi was a huge delight situated as it on a lagoon surrounded by salt marshes. It is accessed from the sea via a buoyed channel and the many fishermen's houses on stilts create a very special landscape. We loved it and would definitely return and consider overwintering there. The marina which is owned by a Dutch-Greek partnership was very much an exception to the general rule of marinas in Greece, and is well on the way towards achieving excellence.

We went to Itea in order to visit Delphi which was to be the highlight of our stay in Greece.

It was on our way up to Itea that we heard a pan-pan call on Channel 16. When it was repeated a few minutes later with greater urgency, we responded even though it was difficult to sort out what was being said. We soon established that it was a nearby French couple trying to speak English, so I, at least, was able to communicate with them in French which was a great relief to them. We motored across the bay to their aid. Their engine had failed and so had the wind, so they were drifting fairly helplessly towards the cliffs. They had already launched the anchor in an effort to slow down the boat and were about to launch the dinghy to try and tow the boat away from danger when we appeared.

As luck would have it, they got the engine going again as we approached but we stayed with them until they had reached the safety of the harbour in Itea. The disturbing fact was that no-one but ourselves answered their call, in spite of a large Port Police presence in nearby Itea and the presence of a very high-powered rib in the marina which had Port Police in large white lettering along both sides.

Itea itself was an interesting stopover and of course Delphi, which was only a short bus ride away, was simply amazing. In spite of the proximity of Delphi, there were few tourists in town so we were able to enjoy a small taste of the Greek way of life. Nice food, good prices and friendly people was our verdict after the three-day stay.

We had now reached Monday July 18th and planned to go to Port Corinth from where we would go by train into Athens to visit the Acropolis.

We departed Itea at 10.00 and covered the 36 miles to Port Corinth, which is at the entrance to the Corinth Canal by 15.45, motoring all the way. We heard on the VHF that a convoy was about to transit the canal from the Corinth side. We made a quick decision, called the Canal authorities on Channel 11, and

before we knew what was happening we had paid the fee of €205 and were exiting into the Aegean Sea!

So off we headed for another night at sea. Athens would have to wait for another time. We planned to arrive at the island of Kythnos by early morning and spend a few days there in Loutra. Until we left the island of Aigena to starboard, we were pretty busy dodging targets of all shapes and sizes because of the proximity of the port of Piraeus but soon we were free of all traffic and the rest of the night passed peacefully in flat calm, windless conditions, aided by plenty of light from a full moon.

Next morning we arrived at Loutra on Kythnos but finding it choc-a-bloc we quickly retreated and decided not to seek out an anchorage but rather press on to Kusadasi which was 135 miles away. During the day we realised we would have to check formally out of Greece so decided to divert to Mikonos for that purpose. Upon our arrival there at around 17.00 after the usual mixture of sailing and motor-sailing, it, too, was full and there was no-one either in the marina or answering on VHF with whom to discuss options.

By now we were feeling more than a little fed up. We knew Greece would be busy in July but not this busy and were taken aback by the whole lack of communication.

Without too much agonising, we decided to head back out to sea rather than look for an anchorage and sail through the night to Kusadasi. We would surely find a way to check out of Greece officially at a later date. The Meltemi was blowing fairly fiercely from the northwest, but as we were heading east the 25-30 knots of wind enabled us to enjoy a cracking sail during our last night at sea and so we soldiered on!

Kusadasi

With the Straits between Mikonos and Tinos behind us, the bumpy sea and really strong wind eased somewhat and Safari barrelled along through the night towards Kusadasi with a silent engine for a change, averaging 6.5 knots. After a pretty busy night with a good favourable wind and plenty of traffic, we arrived in the Setur Kusadasi Marina at 11.00 the following morning on Wednesday July 20th.

What a relief to arrive in a marina which answered on VHF, sent out a dinghy to meet and greet and had plenty of help on hand for berthing. We were home!!

Kusadasi has proved to be a really excellent choice for overwintering the boat. Contrary to popular belief and the law of the land, our boat has never been checked for holding-tanks of any kind, although we do have an operational black water holding-tank on board.

The marina is run by a group of friendly but highly professional staff. There are workshops close-by which can handle most jobs. The price is right at €2,850 for a 12-month contract for *Safari of Howth*. Within the marina complex there is a swimming pool, laundry and many excellent restaurants. A branch of the major Turkish supermarket chain, Migros, is located just outside the entrance gate. There is pretty good security in evidence.

Izmir airport is a 50-minute bus ride away and boasts direct flights to Dublin from May to September. The A2B bus takes you there for a mere €9.50 each. This online coach service is super efficient and represents great value for money!

Kusadasi itself abounds with restaurants and shops. It is unashamedly a major holiday resort but the holiday-makers don't impinge on the life of the boaters living in the marina in any way. There are lots of very interesting cruising folk from all corners of the earth with whom to exchange information and stories at the Orient café in the evenings! There are no end of things to do and places of interest to visit. Most of all, there is a magical cruising ground on the doorstep.

There are many delightful anchorages in the bay of Kusadasi

itself and over on the Greek island of Samos. 30 miles in any direction will take you to either a wonderful anchorage or a first class marina. Since July we have been over to Samos 3 times, have gone north to a lovely marina in Sagcik and south to Didim. We have visited the great sites of Ephesus and Didyma. I must admit that we could happily spend the remainder of our lives exploring the wonderful archaeology of Turkey, dropping the hook in some of its great anchorages or simply enjoying the luxury of some of the best marinas we have ever been in.

I am so enthused that I am now taking Turkish classes here in Dublin AND we play Okey, a really popular board game in Turkey. Turkey has turned out to be a fascinating destination and already we are looking forward to our return in March 2012.

Yacht:	<i>Safari of Howth; Hallberg Rassy 42E</i>
Skipper:	Ken Kavanagh
Crew:	Carmel Kavanagh
Ports of call:	
Sardinia:	Alghero, Stintino, Castelsardo, Santa Teresa di Gallura
Corsica:	Bonifacio
Italy:	Fiumicino, Circeo, Vibo Valentia
Greece:	Argostoli, Mesolonghi, Itea, Kythnos, Mikonos
Turkey:	Kusadasi

Peter Haden writes of visiting the Galician Atlantic Islands National Park

Yachts sailing the Atlantic coast of Spain will not want to miss a visit to the beautiful islands south of Cape Finisterre, most of which are included in the Galician Atlantic Islands National Park. These include Isla Salvora, Isla Cortegada, Islas

Ons and Islas Cies, and some surrounding rocks with beaches. To sail in the waters surrounding these islands requires registration of your boat with the authorities and then further permission to anchor and go ashore each time.

In theory this can be arranged by the yacht owner by downloading the registration form from the website www.iatlanticas.es and sending it to the National Parks office with required documentation, well in advance of departure from home. In practise this does not happen, and I have reports from OCC and ICC members who have tried and failed despite phone calls, faxes and e-mails, as well as even visiting the National Parks office in person.

The successful way to get your registration, is by asking for assistance from one of the marina offices that you plan on visiting, in Galicia, long before you reach the area. Coming from north, a good marina would be Club Nautico Portosin www.cnportosin.com. Coming from south, Monte Real Club de Yates at Baiona. www.mrcyb.es. Both of these yacht clubs have good English speaking staff who will help you.

Contact the yacht club well in advance and ask them to help you obtain registration of your yacht. Send them the following documentation, by fax, or you can mail photocopies:

1. Ships registration document, showing all details.
2. Owners passport.
3. Owners sailing certificate (eg Yachtmaster, Intl Skippers Certificate or anything similar).

The marina office will fax these to the Parks office, and the registration certificate will be issued in about one or two weeks or perhaps longer out of season. This certificate will contain a number, unique to you, that along with your passport number will be your password and allow access to next stage.

Note that the Registration certificate will be sent to the marina office, who will hold it for you. Every two years, the renewal will automatically be sent to the same marina office, and without any separate notification to you. The Parks office will not enter into any correspondence on the matter.

There is no fee, and also the marina offices do not charge for the service.



Anchorage at Islas Cies 2011

Photo: Laura Lagos

Now you have permission to sail in the waters around the islands.

To get permission to anchor or land, requires further permission, but this is very easily obtainable at the time of your visit, automatically from the National Parks website www.iatlanticas.es. Any marina office will happily and quickly do this for you, and print it out, without any charge. Simply hand in your National Parks registration certificate, password, number of persons, date, and name of intended island(s) to visit.

Is all this red tape necessary ?

YES, and of course it is the law.

At Isla Salvora and Isla Cortegada you will NOT be allowed to even step onto the pier without presenting the paperwork to the warden.

The island groups of Ons and Cies are not as rigorously patrolled, but observation of your boat is likely. The authorities are both reducing the number of yachts and ferry visitors each year, and extending the National Park area, and becoming much stricter about implementing the regulations.

In 2011 there were reports of heavy fines being issued to local boats that blatantly ignored the regulations.

Is the trouble worthwhile ?

YES.

The islands are absolutely beautiful, have good anchorages, and are an essential part of the experience of cruising this coast.

I will be happy to answer any queries, help in anyway, and to give names of personal contacts if wanted. e-mail: peterhaden@gmail.com

Lydia cruises the south coast

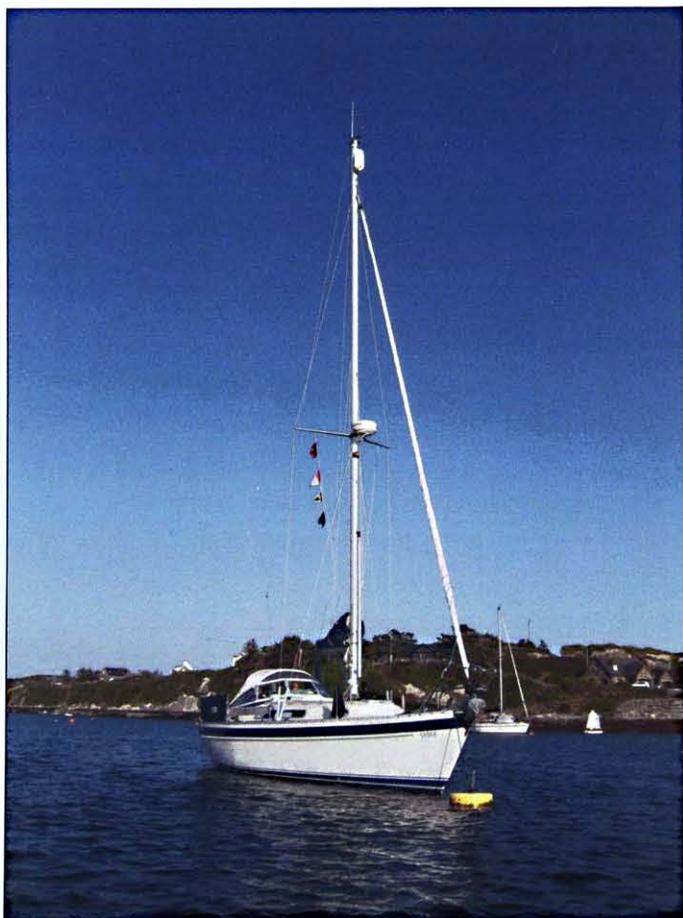
Joe Phelan

Our plans for 2011 were to cruise to West Cork, calling at some previously unvisited anchorages and marinas for approximately five weeks, starting from Howth, in early July. We had invited the previous owner to join us for a week, starting in Crosshaven on Saturday 9th July, then our son and his family would join for a week, and finally another friend would meet up with us for the end of the cruise.

In order to be in Crosshaven in time to meet Steven Lines, (the previous owner), we had given ourselves plenty of time and were ready to leave Howth at any stage from Sunday 3rd July. However, the weather dictated otherwise. Strong southerly winds were the order of the day until Thursday; however there was a very short window of about 8 hours on early Wednesday, so Trish and I left Howth at 02.30 on the 6th and motor-sailed with one reef to Arklow, where we tied up in the marina at 08.00. A lovely sunny morning called for a large celebration fry-up – the cruise was under way, even if the weather forecast looked as though we would be in Arklow for at least a couple of days!

Our deadline for getting to Crosshaven was fast approaching, but there was no let-up in the weather, so Wednesday and Thursday were spent in Arklow, however it did look as though we might get away on Friday. That proved possible, so we departed Arklow at 09.15 in a southeast force 2 and rain! By 11.30 the wind went into the west, so we set the main, amid further heavy showers – we had 1.9 knots of foul tide.

An SCW promised force 6 southwest to northwest for our



Lydia in Crookhaven.

area! Before long the wind was in the southeast and the tide came in our favour – wind over tide producing huge seas off Carnsore Point. Our original plan to continue to Cork was abandoned and we tied up at Kilmore Quay at 20.30. We had dinner and went to bed planning an early start for the following morning.

We departed Kilmore Quay at 06.00 on Saturday for Crosshaven. We soon had the engine off and had a lovely sunny sail for a few hours until the wind died and we were back to motor-sailing. Our first guest was due to land at Cork airport at 13.30, so we were under a bit of time pressure! We got in touch with Steven and suggested that a tour of Cork would be a good way to put in the afternoon. We were in contact with the Murphys on *Aldebaran* and agreed to meet up for dinner. At 18.35 we tied up at RCYC, just giving us enough time to shower and change and make for Cronin's for a good dinner and very pleasant company.

After two fairly hectic days we decided to have an easy day on Sunday. After taking on water and provisions, we set off at 12.40 for a tour of Cobh and the river Lee, finishing up in East Ferry at 16.30. We dieselled-up there and Steven and I went exploring in the rubber dinghy. Pints in the restaurant were followed by a lovely dinner on board – a great seafood spread of fresh prawns and smoked salmon, which Steven had picked up the previous day in the English Market.

As Steven was with us for just a week, our plan was to get as far west as possible before turning back to be in Kinsale for the following Saturday. We departed East Ferry at 08.15 for Barlogue in near calm conditions. As we motor-sailed round the Old Head of Kinsale we saw three harbour porpoises. In the early afternoon we were surrounded by a huge number of dolphins. Steven had never had this experience before, so lots of photographs were taken and the dolphins stayed with us for a good half hour. We anchored in Barlogue at 16.00 in 2 metres and went ashore for a walk up to Lough Hine. It was a beautiful evening, so we dined in the cockpit, watched the local seal and thought we'd had too much wine when a small wizened-featured man, by name of O'Donovan, arrived alongside in a currach asking would we like to buy some live crabs from him! We got instructions how to cook the crabs, which we did straight away, then left them in a large saucepan in the cockpit to be dealt with later!

Trish and I had an early morning swim (we couldn't persuade Steven to join us!) to whet the appetite for the full Irish breakfast which we enjoyed in the sunshine, in the cockpit! We departed Barlogue at 10.45 for Crookhaven, having promised Steven that we would round the Fastnet en route. We sailed for about an hour, but as the wind dropped we motor-sailed while all three of us tackled the crabs. A nice, cold, white wine went well with the crabmeat and garlic mayonnaise. The "must have" photograph of rounding the rock was achieved just as the wind filled in, the jib unfurled and the engine turned off.

After the rounding with the wind from the west-northwest we had a brilliant upwind sail into Crookhaven, Steven tacking us up the mooring. We picked up a buoy at 16.15 and were surprised that we were the only boat on the moorings! Pints in O'Sullivan's, followed by dinner ashore finished off a great day.

We departed Crookhaven at 10.20 for Baltimore. We met up with *Aldebaran* south of Long Island – they were heading round Mizen to Adrigole, then on to Lawrence Cove.

We saw puffins and harbour porpoises en route, then through the back entrance to Baltimore before tying up at the pontoon on Sherkin Island at 13.15. We had motored all the way in calm, sunny conditions. After lunch we had a lovely three-hour walk around the island. We finished the day having drinks in the sunshine at The Jolly Roger, followed by a splendid seafood dinner inside the pub.

09.30 was our departure time for Glandore, however the forecast was not good for the following days. Tried some fishing off Glandore with no success, then we motored inside and picked up a mooring in Union Hall while we had lunch. The traditional boat regatta was taking place in Glandore and we were delighted to see a previous boat of ours *Golden Eagle* taking part in the Squib race. We sailed off the mooring (another first for Steven!) in Union Hall, skirted the racing fleet and headed for Kinsale – due to the bad forecast we had changed our plans to place ourselves closer to our final destination. A southwesterly wind of 10 knots and a favourable tide gave us a smashing sail and we dropped anchor in 4 metres in Sandy Cove at 19.30.

We hauled the anchor at 10.30 the next morning and headed for Kinsale Marina. We were rafted on the outside, but got a very small, tight berth on the inside a few hours later – we just got the tent up before the wind and rain started in earnest. We ate at Vista (at the marina gate) and were then joined by our next-door neighbours from home, Breege and Killian Halpin, who were also weather-bound in Kinsale. More drinks back on their boat finished up the night.

Saturday 16th July was a bright, windy, sunny day. Steven and I walked to Charles Fort, while Trish did laundry and shopping, in anticipation of the new crew who were due in that evening. After lunch we went with Steven, who was catching the 15.45 bus to the airport. Our new crew arrived at 18.00 – our son John, his wife Maureen, Finn (age 11) and Cait (age 6). After dinner ashore we all hit the bunks.

The weather did not allow us to get off our marina berth until the following Wednesday. Luckily the family had a car with them so they took off to places like Fota in order to keep the children amused. On one dinner ashore, Finn was very adventurous and ordered 6 oysters, followed by prawns and finishing up with chocolate mousse – the following day was interesting! John and Maureen took the opportunity to go off for a night away while the old folks babysat!

Finally on Wednesday at 14.50 we manoeuvred out of our very tight berth and motored all the way to Sandy Cove! The family spent the afternoon ashore and in the dinghy.

The following morning I was joined for a dip by John and Finn – it was very sharp! After breakfast we departed Sandy Cove for East Ferry; with the jib rolled out we did 5.5 knots for an hour before the wind went dead ahead. We stopped for lunch and some unsuccessful mackerel fishing. As usual we had to time the kids on the helm, such was their enthusiasm to steer! We arrived at East Ferry at 15.30, filled up with diesel and tied up for the night. The family enjoyed the dinghy and the dinner in the Marlogue Inn.

Friday dawned a lovely sunny day. We had a slow start, with a fry-up and lots of dinghy time before we departed for Crosshaven at 11.15. John got a taxi to Kinsale to pick up his car. We had a last family meal together in Cronin's, a few pints in RCYC and off to bed.

Next morning was pretty hectic, as the family were continuing their holidays in Terryglass, while Trish and I took the train home so that I could finish up some business! We got the laundry sorted and the boat put to bed for the few days, then waved goodbye to the family and caught the bus to Cork and on home by train, Luas and Dart.

Despite the weather, the family week was a success. Six

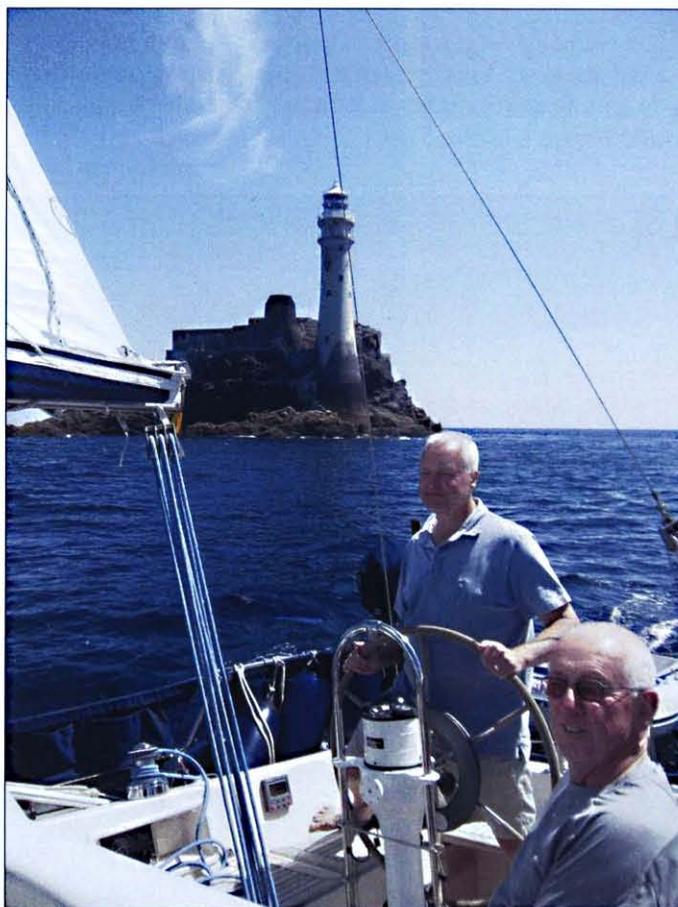
people on a 31foot boat was challenging for all. We ate ashore three nights, but otherwise ate on board. We definitely could not have survived without the tent and heating – summer in Ireland!

On Tuesday 26th July we took the train and bus back to Crosshaven, accompanied by Aideen Sargent who was our final crew-member for the end of the cruise. We spent the afternoon shopping, collecting laundry and getting the boat ready. We ate on board that evening and then had pints in RCYC where the National 18 championships were in full swing.

Wednesday 27th July was wet and miserable. We departed Crosshaven at 15.30 for East Ferry, once more. The rain had stopped and it was drying up a bit! Trish and I were celebrating our 44th wedding anniversary that day, so we ate in the Marlogue Inn.

We left next morning at 10.00 bound for Youghal and had a fine sail for a few hours before the wind dropped and went into the east! With the tide also against us it was time to motor again. At 16.00 we anchored in 3.8 metres north of Ferry Point. It was now high tide, so we had an interesting evening watching the sandbanks appear on all sides! I slid an angel (7 kg) down the anchor chain to lower its angle as I had a minimum laid out.

At 07.00 the following morning we hauled the anchor and set off for Dunmore East. We had a gentle northeast wind for the first three hours and made great progress. After that the wind came and went and we eventually arrived at Dunmore East at 14.30. As the tide was right we decided to continue on up the Waterford River. With a strong tide with us we made great time and tied up on the pontoon at Waterford at 16.45. It was quite an experience being tied to a pontoon with such a strong tide sluicing past. As the Spraoi festival was on we decided to stay for the weekend. We ate on board on Friday night, and then went ashore for pints.



Steven, Joe and Fastnet Rock.

Shopping and laundry

Saturday morning was shopping and laundry time. We then took off to follow various street events – music, drums, mime – great atmosphere everywhere and it stayed relatively dry. We also visited the Bishops Palace Museum and Reginald's Tower and learnt a lot about the history of Waterford, thanks to lots of plaques on various buildings and streets. We ate in the Glanville Arms Hotel that evening and decided to stay for the advertised music session. It didn't start until nearly 10.30 and we didn't last very long!

Sunday was a wet, grey, misty morning. We got the papers and had a large fry-up (again). When it dried up we did a bit more exploring and then went to an Afghan kite-flying display, which was quite amazing.

We had decided to continue on to New Ross on Monday 2nd August, so with two hours to low water we left Waterford marina at 12.15. We contacted the bridge and it was lifted for us at 13.10. It was an interesting trip with the tide so low. We had contacted the marina in New Ross in advance and tied up as instructed on the hammerhead at 15.15.

The sluice of water on the marina once the tide turned was quite something.

We then went to visit the *Dunbrody*, which we had last seen when it was being built in 1995.

Trish and I did some shopping and ate on board. Aideen had made contact with a friend in New Ross and after dinner in town they both came back to *Lydia* for drinks.

We were under way the next morning at 09.00 and had a bridge lift at 10.20 – once again very efficient with no waiting around once we had given a little bit of notice. It was a totally different trip from the previous day, high water hiding all the mud banks.

We had a great sail from the mouth of the Waterford River to Kilmore Quay where we tied up at 15.20. Shortly afterwards *Aldebaran* arrived in and tied up very close by.

We had contacted the Veale's, old friends of ours who have a holiday home on the cliffs at Bastardstown, about three miles along the beach to the east of Kilmore Quay. We agreed to meet up with them for dinner in the Crazy Crab that evening. They

were quite delighted to join us, as they were escaping from 7 grandchildren for a few hours! We had a very pleasant evening and agreed to walk to their place the following morning to catch up with their daughters and offspring.

Trish and I set off along the beach about 11.00, dodging in among the rocks to start with as the tide was still quite high. 45 minutes later we were at Bastardstown and decided to go for a swim while the weather was still dry. Local scallops cooked to perfection by Eddie and served with black pudding followed a nice hot shower.

The whole family then walked along the beach to Kilmore Quay, and down the marina to visit *Lydia*.

The crews of *Aldebaran* and *Lydia* had been invited to afternoon tea by local ICC member Ivan Sutton. We spent a very enjoyable hour chatting and watching the world go by from his beautiful lounge overlooking Kilmore Quay.

The weather was quite bright and sunny for these few days and we decided to delay our return to Howth until Friday 6th. We did lots of walking, had a joint dinner on *Lydia*, and generally chilled out and enjoyed ourselves.

07.00 was the optimum departure time (well maybe 06.00 would have been better!).

Glad to be home!

It was bright day but cold, with wind changing from northwest to northeast, light or calm. The engine ensured that we almost got to Wicklow Head before the tide turned against us! At this stage the wind also went into the south. We had a cold uncomfortable trip back to Howth and were all glad to tie up on our marina berth at 20.50.

We felt we had achieved our objectives to try some new anchorages and marinas. We had managed (with some difficulty) to meet, as arranged, with our crews! Despite the worst week's weather of the cruise, the family seemed to have enjoyed themselves and are keen to repeat the experience!

As usual, *Lydia* performed superbly. We had no boat problems and found that she accommodated three crew-members very comfortably, and the family of six quite adequately. Here's to next year's cruise.

Mick Delap writes of a scary experience in Ards Bay

Sheephaven's Bannigorm Bay and the Ards peninsula, are every bit as pretty as the Sailing Directions suggest. But when we anchored *North Star*, there was still a troublesome swell, so after an afternoon walk ashore, we decided to shift round into Ards Bay. We'd been told of a rarely used mooring in mid-channel, off the Friary, and by 18.30 we were on it. It was a lovely sunny evening, and as we enjoyed it, a rare Grey Phalarope paddled by, followed by a more distant Great Northern Diver. Bird watcher heaven! By the time we turned in, the spring tide ebb had started. I sleep in the forepeak, which always magnifies every gurgle, creak and groan past the bows. But it seemed more than usually lively as I dropped off – to wake, literally with a bang, at 23.35, as the boat somehow shouldering her way up-tide against a rush of swirling water, caught against the buoy, strained, heeled, then released herself with an almighty crash, to rush forward again until the long suffering mooring line brought her up all standing with a great twang – and the whole process started again. Judy and I peered groggily over the side, hanging on as *North Star* porpoised about ever more violently. We clearly had to get off the mooring, and fast, before something carried away.

It was pitch-black, and approaching dead low-water. I flipped on the echo sounder and chart plotter, thanking my stars that their rarely-used low level illumination was working, started the engine, and plugged in the Aldis lamp (still working, too). As I cast off, Judy, not so experienced as I was to *North Star's* vagaries under power, couldn't turn her downstream across the swirling ebb. I took over, got her round, handed back the helm, and conned us out, using a combination of depth readings, our inward track off the chart plotter, and a considerable helping of good luck, as we raced past rocky ledges that seemed to tower over us close to port in the dark. In what seemed like seconds we were looking up at the absurdly tall Bar Rock beacon, with a swell breaking round the seaweed at its base – and minutes later were catching our breath, back at anchor in Binnagorm Bay. Looking back now, it seems that Sheephaven, after a run of south westerlies, is more prone to swell than we had expected, and you need to anchor or moor well out of the main tide in Ards Bay! I'd had a similar, though not as dramatic, experience in Ards Bay two years previously, when we had been tide rode on the ebb, and a strong northeasterly had repeatedly pushed us up to snub against our own anchor chain. I'll not overnight there willingly again, at least for a while!

Discovering the Shiant Isles

Justin McKenna

*There's a pub in Tobermory
That tells a mighty story
Of mystic tribulations on the sea
Well, tonight it heard a shanty
From 4 men on the ranty
One of whom was dying for a pee*

The story of St Columba resonates in the history of Scotland and Ireland. To the Irish he was a nobleman, a scholar, a plagiarist and a monk. To the Scots he was more than a monk, he was a saviour and the founder of their Christian Church. He was their Patrick.

As a leader of men he established his monastery in Iona and from there his mission took hold. His followers continued a tradition that began in Ireland, marking these people out as saints and scholars. It is claimed that they wrote what we call the Book of Kells. But added to a reputation that involved absolute austerity was a conviction in the power of prayer and a dedication to the eremitic way of life.

In the 6th century AD Europe was in the throes of the Dark Ages. Ireland was a source of enlightenment and monks were attracted from all over to seek this sense of purpose and direction. They populated the islands off the west coast of Ireland. The evidence is there on Scellig Michael and Inis Turk. The Western Isles of Scotland were a challenge to the monks of Iona, and, although monastic remains are not common north of Mull, they are there if one digs. Those early Christian monks followed the geese along the North Atlantic seaboard, north to the Arctic Circle.

That gradual northerly settlement was ultimately arrested by the pervading Norse tide. The Vikings probably found the golden treasures of these isolated enclaves and traced them back to the Emerald Isle but in so doing they removed any overt signs of those hermit dwellings. What they left behind was a Scandinavian seed that distinguishes Scots Gallic from Irish and stamps place names that are peculiar to the Hebrides and the Highlands.

There was a spirit of pilgrimage aboard *Birmayne* as we embarked on our journey north from Dun Laoghaire. We even had a Scandinavian aboard to temper any missionary zeal that might erupt. However, Jorgen Andreasson is not your average Viking. He's not into rape and pillage. Instead he devotes his many talents while aboard to radio communication and electronics.

Don Roberts, the ship's cook and general factotum did his early praying on the Scelligs. Don, with a background in books, indoctrinated us with stories from St Kilda. We were ambitious then with thoughts of distant discovery. Our wings would be clipped.

I was the first mate. My paternal ancestors hail from Gougane Barra in the hills of County Cork. I had been to Iona and was fired by the lustre of escape and exploration.

Paul Dobbyn was our skipper. He was born somewhere south of Mellifont. His mission was to get us to Scotland in time for the kick-off of the final of the Heineken Cup between Leinster and Northampton.

We would later be joined by Pat Kelly. He hails from Clonmacnoise and brought a certain west-of-Ireland enchantment to proceedings aboard ship.

Mike Tyrrell was our motorcycling visitor who crossed the bridge at Skye and slept aboard, but never sailed. I'm not sure

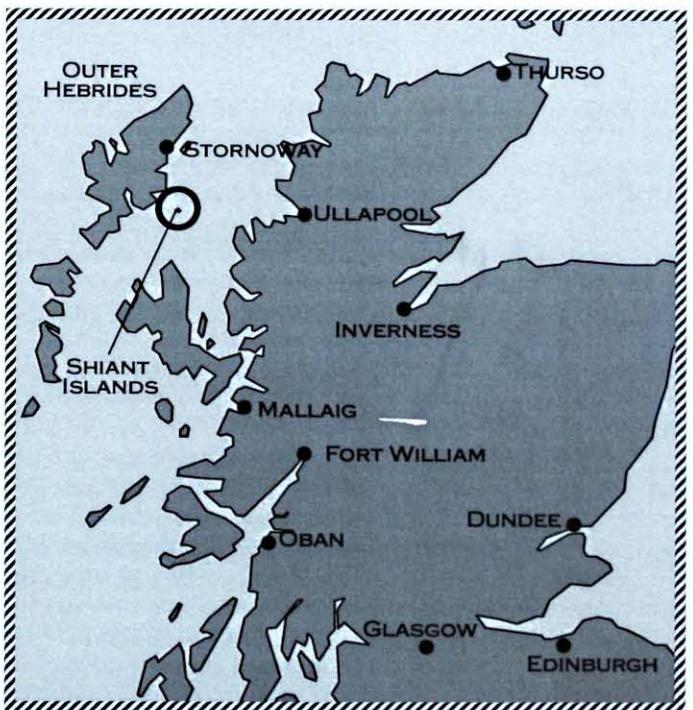
with what monastery he is associated, probably some Protestant outfit in Dublin.

Unlike the early missionaries, we had a crystal ball that predicted the weather for a good 5 days and it wasn't good. Time was precious as we counted days off work. Our plan had been to take in Douglas and Glenarm en-route before beginning our assault on the Scottish Isles. We had a fair weather window of 24 hours as we set sail on Friday morning, so the decision was to go for it. The kick off was 19.00 on Saturday evening.

Sure enough the wind got up as we rounded the Mull of Kintyre just after dawn. At midday we screamed through the Sound of Islay with the wind abaft blowing 32-38 knots, gusting 44 with 2,500 rpm on the thumper and we were doing just 3.5 knots over ground. Once we hit Tarbert Bank we chased the Great Race past Scarba and into the Firth of Lorn, arriving at Kerrera Island opposite Oban just after 18.00. The 19.00 ferry brought us into Oban 17 minutes late for the match. Had we missed anything? Leinster were 12 points down and heading for disaster. Then, 16 points down, as Johnny Sexton ran past the camera in the tunnel at half time to give his team mates a bollicking.... Resurrection! The second half made the previous 12 hours of rain, wind and spray worth all the effort.

As predicted, on Sunday we were grounded – gan seoilig – so we put on our boots in the morning and went for a Highland walk around Kerrera taking in the majestic views of the Isle of Mull.

The newspaper headlines decried “Scotland a No-Go area as 100 mph gales cause chaos”. That was Tuesday. Oban took the full force of a mighty storm on Monday. Paul, Don and I hired a dinghy and headed off to see the sights of the West Highlands, and, in Fortwilliam, we bumped into Martyn Riley, the Laird of Ardvourlie Castle on the Isle of Harris. Martyn was an acquaintance from another sailing adventure and he extended an invitation to *Birmayne* to visit the castle and maybe take a trip to the Shiantes.



Location of the Shiant Isles.



Birmayne.

The Shiant (pronounced Shant) Islands comprise 3 verdant outcrops of about 600 acres located in the Little Minch, 5 miles southeast of the Isle of Lewis in the Outer Hebrides. Once inhabited, they are now home to 2% of the world's population of puffins, 3 flocks of sheep, and a large family of black rats. Adam Nicholson, the owner wrote his book 'Sea Room' in his bothy on Eileann an Tighe. It tracks the history, geology and wildlife of the islands.

More of that later. Meanwhile, back on Mayhem Monday the storm was full on. Jorgen, whom we had left aboard at the marina, began his journey back to Dublin. He had booked a flight out of Glasgow to make it back for his daughter Jenny's graduation on Tuesday. The 11.00 ferry to the mainland was to be the last one that day. He made the train station in good time and it pulled out on regulation. A couple of miles down the track the fun began. The train encountered a tree across the track. They backed her into Oban to pick up an engineer with a chainsaw, and started again. The wind howled and the rain descended as that chainsaw was put to use 13 times before the engine with its bedraggled passengers limped into Glasgow, too late for the Ryanair jet that took off without Jorgen. He took forced lodgings in a local 3- star. To add to his woes, Iceland's annual volcano was spewing ash all over the place and the following day's flights were cancelled. Somewhat dishevelled, Jorgen took his seat at the ceremony beside Anne Marie the next day, after an expedition by bus, trains, ferry and taxi.

While Jorgen was struggling with his vicissitudes the storm was taking its toll



Birmayne at anchor in Scavaig.

back at Oban. In all, 13 boats were cast adrift on Oban Bay, losing their moorings. One small yacht shook its mooring to float a half a mile across the bay, ending up inside a vacant berth alongside the pontoon at the Kerrera marina. An astounded marina manager stood on the jetty to receive lines from the ghost ship. During the day, rescue operations kept all local mariners at full stretch. 4 boats, that I counted, lay sadly on their sides among the rocks that surround the town of Oban. *Drum*, a former Round Ireland record holder, was one of them and efforts to refloat her resulted in 3 crewmen swimming on to the same treacherous rocks. No



The author in the Cuilinnns.

injuries were suffered though. As a result of the storm, Caledonian McBryne suspended all sailings and the hotels and B&Bs in the vicinity filled to capacity.

Arriving from our peregrinations we found a scene of turmoil: carnage in the bay and madness ashore. *Birmayne* remained out of reach, tied up to a battered pontoon in the marina on Kerrera. We sulked and set off in search of overnight accommodation. This was no easy feat as we eventually settled for shared beds in a poky but comfortable lodging high on the

hill overlooking the town. A midnight Chinese meal saw us to bed.

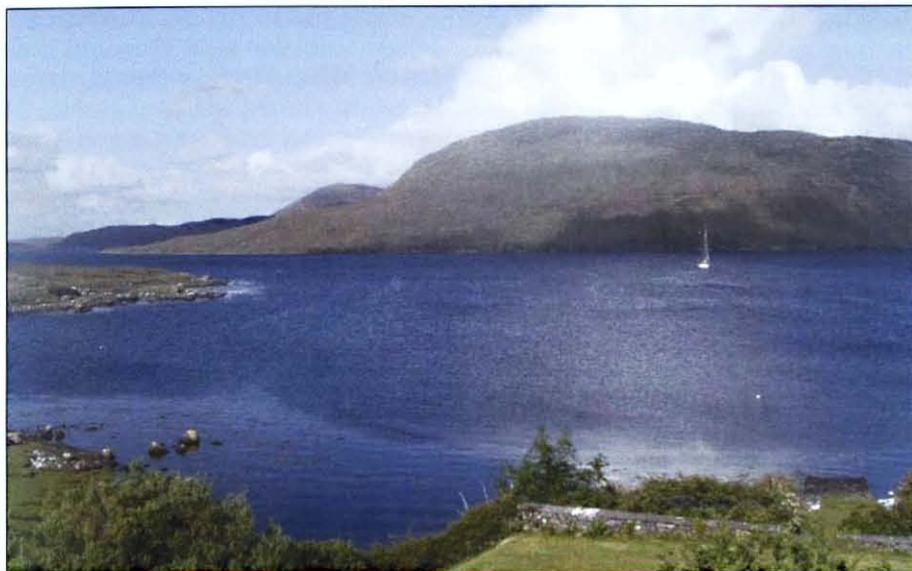
Tuesday was another blow-out. Our plan on Wednesday was to drive the hired car to Mull and visit St Columba's monastery on Iona. However the ferry was full, so we handed the Panda back and the skipper said "Sod it, let's go sailing".

The boat had suffered no damage worth talking about. It was great to be back on the brine. Damp, yet exhilarated; Paul, Don and I steered a passage up the Sound of Mull and pulled in to the beautiful port of Tobermory. Mishnish is the pub of choice on the seafront and with another depression descending it was a welcome shelter with a warm open fire and a few local ales.

Famous for its otters we failed to spot



In front of the Sea Room.



Loch Seaforth.

one during our stay. We managed to explore the dramatic environs, nonetheless, and I was rewarded with a close-up encounter with a golden eagle. He was too quick for my camera as I clicked the memory into a folder of my brain.

Pat Kelly arrived in the afternoon, having spent the day before in Oban recovering from an all-night celebration in Dublin of Bob Dylan's 70th birthday. He was now fresh and ready for action. We would soon need his vim. We analysed the weather patterns and decided that we would risk a passage to Loch Scresort located on the Isle of Rum, a shelter, it appeared, from the imminent westerlies due to blow force 4 to 6 the following day.

We, therefore, cast off at 09.00 on Friday and sailed around the point of Ardnamurchan. Kinloch Castle on Rum was inviting, with an interesting history and well-known hotel fare. We never made it ashore, as the wind got up to force 8 and the anchor refused to hold. We spent some hours in the driving rain and fading light hauling the anchor on a reluctant windlass. As we gradually shortened the chain she drifted all the more. Eventually,

we succeeded, and with the helpful words of a seafarer on a working vessel close by, we were guided on channel 69 to the sandy area before the ferry jetty. For the sake of caution we maintained a watch for the night and weighed anchor early in the morning in advance of the ferry sailing.

Out in the Sound of Rum the wind was up again. The 2 reefs that were permanently in the main were not enough to prevent mischief as a crew member, injudiciously positioned, took a blow from the mainsheet. Winded rather than wounded, we took it handy up the Sound of Sleat, catching the tide just after noon. The wind was blowing force 7 from the southwest as we scooted under reduced power past Glenelg and on to the Kyle of Lochalsh.

Mike the Bike

Mike the Bike was there to greet us. We pulled in with a view to bringing him aboard but once again the anemometer recorded 40 knots of wind and we had a hard job pushing off. The pontoon was in bits so we crossed the sound to Kyleakin



The storm in Oban.

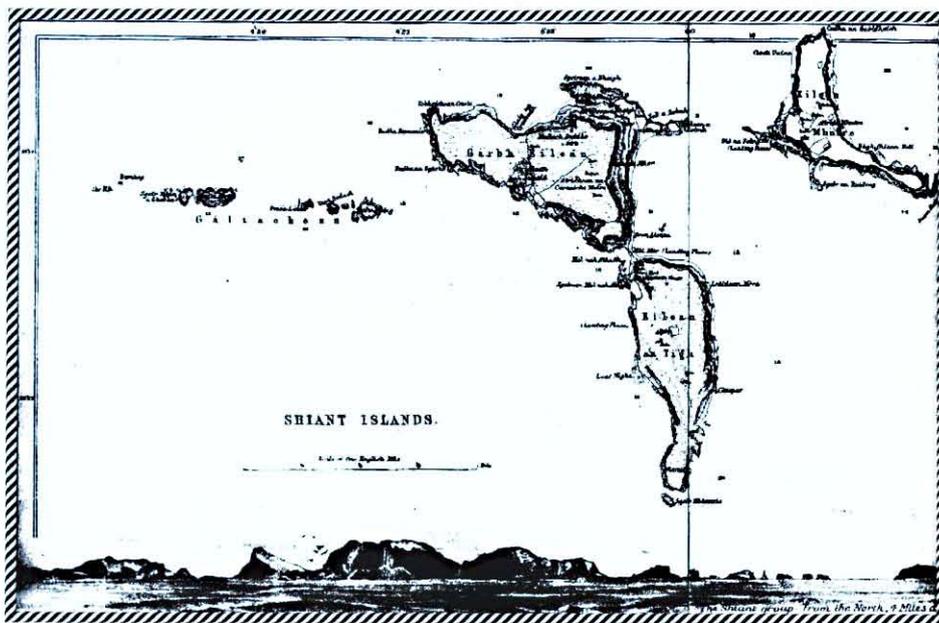


Chart of the Shiant Islands.

beneath the Skye bridge where we picked up a familiar mooring (we were there in 2010). Mike came around on the bike and we were able to launch the tender for the first time, this time welcoming him aboard.

Don cooked up another delicious meal of roast pork as we contemplated our pilgrimage. The computer screen displayed a synoptic harbinger of more of the same medicine. What sinning had we committed to deserve such a penance?

During a walk to the mainland on Sunday Don was first to voice the suggestion that we abandon *Birmayne* and take the ferry to Lewis. After all, we had an invitation to a castle. It was, by now, blowing a gale a day and the agreement was unanimous.

Martyn met us on the quay in Tarbert on Monday. He ferried us to his Pile in the Kyle where we met another house guest, Emer from Ireland. We were shown our 4-poster beds as we settled in for a convivial evening. Paul and Mike hired another car. Don did a loaves and fishes on 7 lonely chops. The 10 bottles of wine and the bottle of gin we brought were not going to go very far! Martyn, in front of a glowing fire, regaled us with shanties of local lore and escapades out at sea. He introduced us to the Shiant Islands and Don and I eagerly booked our passage aboard *Dragon*, Martyn's First 44.7, as the next day promised a break in the weather.

Ardvourlie Castle overlooks Loch Seaforth, one of the longest sea lochs in all of Scotland. The boat was moored on the loch and we set off early in the morning, motor-cruising the 8 mile stretch to the Minch. We then cut the engine and continued on a tight reach straight to the Shiant Islands. Conditions were calm with the forecast for wind later. Shortly after midday we dropped the anchor and launched the tender, setting foot on one of the very few landing places. There are 3 islands in all, Eilean an Tighe, Eilean Mhuire and Garbh Eilean. Each has high cliffs on the northeast side populated by puffins, guillemots, terns, fulmars, skuas and shags. There were thousands of them. It would have been enough to sit on deck and watch them through field glasses but we had to go ashore.

There are no Pictish remains to be found but 3 early Christian sites exist beneath the soil. The most interesting artefact to have been unearthed here is a sleeping stone with a discernible cross on one side. It was used as a hard pillow. One very similar to it was found on Inis Murray off the coast of Sligo. Norse invaders seem to have driven the monks away and a more substantial settlement of farmers took its place. At its

height there were 40 families resident and these mysteriously disappeared in 1770. Until the 1950s a shepherd lived on Eileann an Tighe where there still stands a wee house down on the beach facing southwest.

Our time on the Shiant Islands was all too brief as we were forced to beat a retreat before the next weather trough. Indeed, by the time we reached Loch Seaforth we had 24 knots of breeze across the deck. This continued to increase as we made it to the moorings an hour later. Martyn brought Emer ashore on the tiny one man rubber duck a quarter of a mile away. Don and I foostered around while we waited for Martyn to return. An hour passed and no sign. We could get no phone signal. The ship's radio worked, but as we also had the handheld it wasn't much use. We rummaged for food and found some chocolate, cheese

and a bottle of chardonnay. When Martyn eventually arrived, after having replaced the sheer pin, the wind was honking gale force. Our journey to the castle seemed interminable as the miniscule dinghy with its 2.5 horse outboard motor drove its way into the gathering waves. As we pounded from one wave to the next the water poured over the sides. Bailing seemed futile as we gradually submerged. But the engine kept going and we made it ashore, wet to the core.

Paul prepared a dish of pasta for dinner that evening on a magnificent 6 door Aga. We wine and dined sharing stories of the day gone by and listening to the raging storm outside. It continued through the night, all the next day and into the one after. Martyn and Emer left for Inverness on Wednesday morning leaving the 5 of us incarcerated within, for there was no going out. We bid adieu to Ardvourlie, to Seaforth, Harris and the Shiant Islands on Thursday. Thank you, Martyn, for your kindness.

The wind had moderated by the time we stepped onto *Birmayne*. The batteries were strangely flat so the generator came in handy. That night we watched our first sunset in 2 weeks. Mike and Pat headed back to Dublin leaving Paul, Don and me to circumnavigate the Isle of Skye.

Absence of harbourmasters

On Thursday we sailed into Portree where, once again, we were joined by Martyn. Our visit coincided with the Isle of Skye pipe festival. 80 pipe bands were assembled in the small town. What a noise! We tried our hand at ceilidhe dancing. Don is a natural. A feature of our sailing experience north of Ardnamurchan was the apparent absence of harbourmasters. Maybe it had something to do with the time of year. Portree was an example. We called the harbourmaster on the radio on arrival but were left to pick up a mooring of our choice in the absence of a response. We had our own tender so did not have to rely on local transportation. Ashore, we were directed to his office but it was shut. We had no reason to complain as the savings were spent on liquids of a digestive nature.

We were four again as we hoisted sail on our way up the Sound of Raasay. Full sails this time, none of your old reefs. The weather was positively benign as we rounded Rubha na hAiseig and turned past Uig Bay. The wind died to nothing. We started up the engine and before too long the water-pressure alarm sounded. The mystery of the flat battery was explained. The fan belt had come apart and the alternator shut down preventing the battery from charging. We had it fixed in 30

minutes and resumed our journey to Dunvegan, where we picked up a mooring opposite the regal Dunvegan Castle, home of the MacLeod family for 800 continuous years. We were escorted in by a pod of dolphins. It's amazing how those creatures can lift the spirits. Another gorgeous sunset followed in a blissfully calm sea loch and a pleasant meal aboard after a ramble in the countryside.

The next day we set sail for Scavaig, running past MacLeods Maidens standing proud out of a flat sea. The mighty Cuillin Mountains looked down at us as we slipped through Soay Sound to Loch Scavaig. The pilot book describes this anchorage as one of the most dramatic to be experienced anywhere in Europe. And so it was. The Cuillins boast the only Monroe in Scotland to require ropes for ascending. As we lay at anchor surrounded on 3 sides by 3,000 feet of semi vertical rock we could not contain a feeling of awe. We took the tender ashore and went for a wander along Loch Corruisk, an inshore lake, then a scramble up a ridge to fully capture the immensity of the hills. It was a challenging climb and an even more interesting descent putting Don's newly invigorated heart to the test. A pool lies within the entrance area; the chart datum gave us 2.2 metres of depth and, although there were three sizeable vessels inside it we did not feel brave enough to risk low tide beside them, so we stayed outside and boarded just as the threatening rain fell from the darkening sky.

Late that night, Martyn and I stayed awake chatting over the dregs of a bottle of whiskey when we felt a thud. Up on deck in the pitch black made all the more ominous by the dark shadow of the sheer walls around us, it was raining persistently and the wind had turned 180° from the north to the south. I'm not sure that we had drifted since the anchor alarm on Martyn's iPad did not go off, but the rock was nervously close. We lifted the hook and moved a couple of cables before dropping it again. Paul did not sleep well that night and roused us early in the morning.

Elusive otter

Predictably, the wind was up again and the reefs were back in as we headed for Armadale Bay to deposit Martyn who had to return to Portree to retrieve his car. We pushed on, now three for the remainder of the cruise. Conditions were fresh but pleasant that day and we made for Tobermory motor-sailing close to an adverse breeze. As we entered the harbour we were greeted by a different sight from our previous visit. It was full of crafts of all descriptions. There we met fellow ICC member, Dick Lovegrove with his crew of Philip and Paul. They were also finding things a little challenging. We exchanged stories in Mishnish over a pint or two, and on the way back to the pontoon we kept our eyes out for the elusive otter, but to no avail. Before we departed in the morning we paid our harbour dues, the first in 10 days.

Our journey south had well begun. We travelled down the Sound of Mull retracing our boat path through a murky sea. We took a right at Duart Castle, the seat of the clan of MacLean and pointed for Luing. South of Luing was Scarba where we could pick out the house of George Orwell. To starboard was the infamous Gulf of Corryreckan where the timing of the tides is critical. In fact, at Craignish Point, we dropped to 2 knots over ground despite 2,500 rpm from the propeller.

Then, in the shelter of the bay, all was calm as we enjoyed the late afternoon sun. Ardfern Marine Centre was 5 miles up the loch. The sails were doing nothing so we dropped the main and furled the genoa. Lines were prepared and fenders out portside as instructed by the marine official over the radio. Isn't it funny how the unexpected can derail a well-laid plan? As we came

within sight of our overnight berth on a hammerhead in the marina, moving at 3 knots the unexpected happened. A submerged rock almost 2.5 metres below sea level leapt up and struck the base of the keel. The vessel pitch poled and I was tossed into the air. On my return to the deck my forehead met the pulpit guard-rail coming in the opposite direction. Crack went a rib as the rest of my body came to a halt over a mooring post.

Lochgilphead Hospital is located within sight of the Crinan Canal, a water feature I had not planned on visiting, but it was beautiful nonetheless. Apart from the absence of a bit of gel coat and a slightly bent rail, *Birmayne* was none the worse for wear. No seafarer worth his salt should be seen without a scar from a few stitches to tell a story and so I'm telling you mine now. Anxious to avoid coughing and laughter we regrettably avoided the pub that night.

We proceeded gently down the Sound of Jura next day paying careful attention to the tides. All was uneventful until we came around Rathlin Island. I was not much use on the foredeck so Paul went up to lower the main in preparation for our arrival in Ballycastle. While there he decided to replace a tattered Scottish courtesy flag with a red duster. We were crossing what is known as the MacDonnell Race. I could see that the sea ahead was somewhat turbulent but I did not expect the suddenness of our encounter. Paul was taken by surprise. Without a lifeline, he had no option but to cling to the mast while the boat pitched, rolled and heaved in a frothing sea. Anything below that was not fastened hit the floor. Then, as quickly as it came upon us, it subsided and we entered the tranquil waters of Ballycastle Bay.

It was one of the tightest marinas we were ever in but we fitted, just. A neap tide guaranteed us 70 centimetres at low tide. Don decided to treat us with a feed of cod and chips. Our visit to Ballycastle was cursory so we departed next morning early to catch the tide around Fair Head. So strong was it that we scorched around doing 12 knots over ground. The trip to Bangor, as we averaged 10 knots, was the fastest recorded passage in a log that is now a decade old. The weather, by now, was almost summery. We even discarded our thermal layer. We ate ashore that night for only the second time, and Don entertained not only Paul and me but the entire clientele of the Salty Dog restaurant.

The next leg was the last. It was the only day of the entire cruise I did not wear my oilskins. During the wettest cruise of our collective experience the south of England endured a drought of Somalian proportions. In order to time our arrival in Dun Laoghaire we were obliged to set off at 04.15. We travelled the 90 miles south over a glassy sea by motor only. We picked up breaking news on Morning Ireland that Brian Lenihan had passed away, the end of a different voyage and, for Ireland, a milestone. I was able to phone ahead and warn the welcoming committee that we would be throwing a line over the George pontoon at exactly 18.45 and so it came to pass just 3 Fridays after the one that saw us embark.

Next time, turn right!

Our pilgrimage north to the Western Isles of Scotland and the Shiantas was an achievement. We travelled up like ancient Irish monks in search of penance and returned in triumph like Norsemen fully purged and hungry for material succour. In the interest of social harmony, in search of a perfectly tanned body, and in anticipation of total mental respite, it was decided, over a banquet-style dinner that night in the Royal St George Yacht Club, that next time out of Dublin Bay, *Birmayne* would be turning right.

Two “Romantic” Cruises

Harry Whelehan

After an idyllic cruise in Scotland last year in May/June Liz and I were fired-up to edge *Sea Dancer* around Ireland this year, a decision on which way to go would await weather forecasts closer to our departure date.

We had bought *Sea Dancer* five years ago – a Sun Odyssey 32 – as a boat for us to sail as a couple, and suitable to enable Liz, who was only introduced to sailing when we married in 2004, to learn “the ropes”.

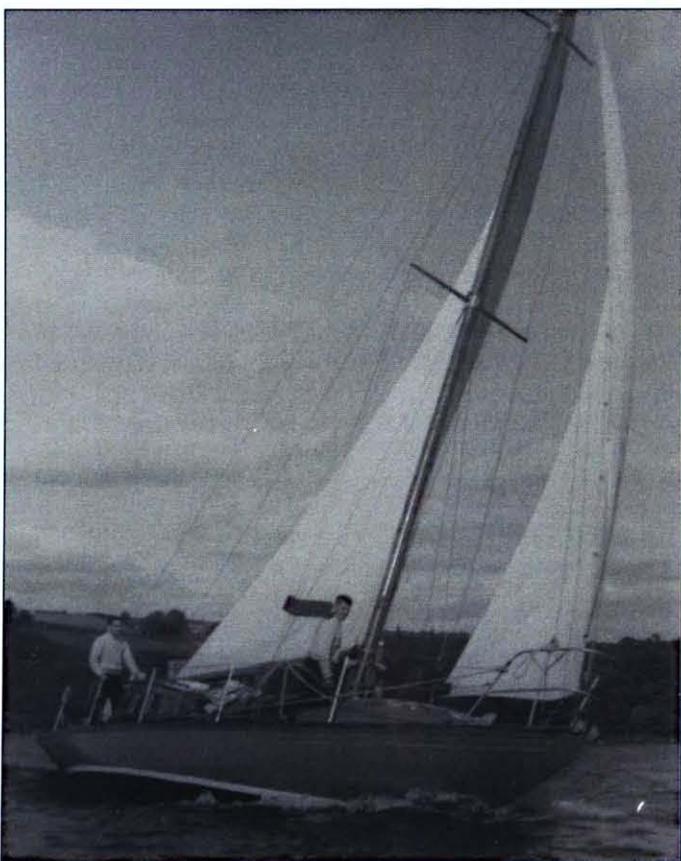
Having, over the years, been indoctrinated by W.N.Nixon’s mantra – “your cruise doesn’t really begin until you put 100 miles between your home port and the boat,” we decided to deliver the boat to Kilmore Quay or Coleraine, depending on which way weather sent us, where we would leave her on station for the commencement of our cruise proper, as we had to be in Dublin for a family event on May 21st.

The plan was to crew the boat ourselves but to have crew to join us for the west coast leg of the cruise, and fortunately, as it turned out, there was a lot of flexibility built into our plan for crew changes.

On May 7th we left Howth, a force 6/7 was blowing from the southeast and was forecast to last for 3 to 4 days, so it was an easy decision to head north. Nick Healy joined for this delivery trip.

We screamed north and tied up in Coleraine Marina, about 3 miles up the river Bann at 19.00 on May 10th having called to Ardglass, Bangor, Glenarm and Ballycastle.

Excellent train connections got us to Dublin and back on May 22nd, but alas our luck with the weather had changed and we were stormbound with westerly gales, which reached



Brynoth the sloop.

violent force 11 at one stage. We were indeed very lucky to be snug on our marina berth 3 miles inland.

On June 1st the wind moderated somewhat, but strong westerlies were still being forecast to last indefinitely. By now there was a touch of cabin-fever aboard, so we needed to get to sea. There being only the two of us on board, the big decision was taken to “about turn”, retrace our steps and pick up Robert and Pat Barker at Howth, rather than Galway or some point on the west coast as had been originally planned.

The revised plan was to approach the west coast via the Irish Sea and west Cork.

We left Coleraine at 07.00 on June 1st and having cleared the barmouth we set half the genoa with a fresh force 6 on our starboard quarter. We roared into Church Bay on Rathlin at 11.45, and we spent a lovely day there, visiting inter-alia the Western Light House and the stunning bird colony.

We made our way to Baltimore, carrying a fresh westerly all the way, calling at Bangor, Ardglass, Howth (where the Barkers joined us), Arklow, Kilmore Quay, where we were three days stormbound (now a village with no pub), Crosshaven and Kinsale (where the Barkers disembarked). We arrived in Castletownsend on June 11th as another gale was forecast to last for 3 days. It was a wonderful comfort, as I was trying to sort out the anchor and select a spot to drop it, to be hailed by Liam Bohane (ICC) from *Ocean Sapphire* offering us his spare mooring for as long as we needed it ... we did indeed need it. The west-northwest gale blew until the 13th and so we had lost another 3 days! However we did enjoy a few outings to Mary Ann’s, and, through the kind intervention of Diarmuid of Atlantic Services in Baltimore, got a mechanic aboard to sort out an engine problem with great speed.

When the gale moderated on June 14th we slipped around to Barlogue and Lough Hyne and viewed the ebb tide making its magic through the narrows. Liz felt that this extraordinary feature fully lived up to the “billing” that I had given to it.

We then went on to Baltimore the same day. Sadly the forecast was for strong west-southwest winds and rain for the coming days, and we were now low on stamina and running out of time. It had been our intention to be back in Howth by midsummer’s day. We decided to visit Sherkin Island using the ferry (as the wind did not favour either anchoring off or lying on the pontoon) and let Baltimore be the second turning point of our cruise.

We made our way back to Howth calling at the same ports as we had visited on our way south, except that we bypassed Castletownsend and called at Glandore and Dunmore East, arriving home as planned on June 21st.

We never got to the west coast, and we hardly had a day without a gale warning, or a small craft warning, but we did manage to sail almost 800 miles in 34 days and visit 15 different ports/anchorages. The winds were very fresh and almost all of our sailing was done at over 7 knots, sometimes surfing past 10 knots, using half-genoa or less. At no stage was I sorry that we were not on the west coast. While the winds were at the limit of what we could handle on our own, we did make sure that the wind was off the land before we put to sea.

The ICC cruise to Brittany probably explains why we didn’t meet any ICC boats cruising in these waters, though I did spot *Narnia* (Derek Jones ICC) in Kinsale. But we didn’t connect with any of her crew – maybe our members have largely deserted Irish waters for warm water and blue skies?

As we slogged around the coast in our little plastic boat, in relative comfort, mostly with a crew of just two, my memory brought me back 50 years to my first-ever cruise, when I was 17. I had been a crew member on *Brynoth* owned and skippered by Ross Courtney, racing out of Howth.

Brynoth was then one of the “princesses” of the east coast, and one of the fastest racing boats in Dublin Bay. She was a Clyde 30, 43 feet overall, originally gaff-rigged, with an overhanging boom and a bowsprit, designed by Fife and built in 1904. She had been converted to a Bermudan sloop and fitted out as a cruiser-racer in the late fifties. Peter Courtney (then in short trousers) was the other young’un on the crew. The full crew consisted of Ross, John Pearson, Dick Malcolm, Kevin Mackay Peter and me. She needed at least four crew to handle her.

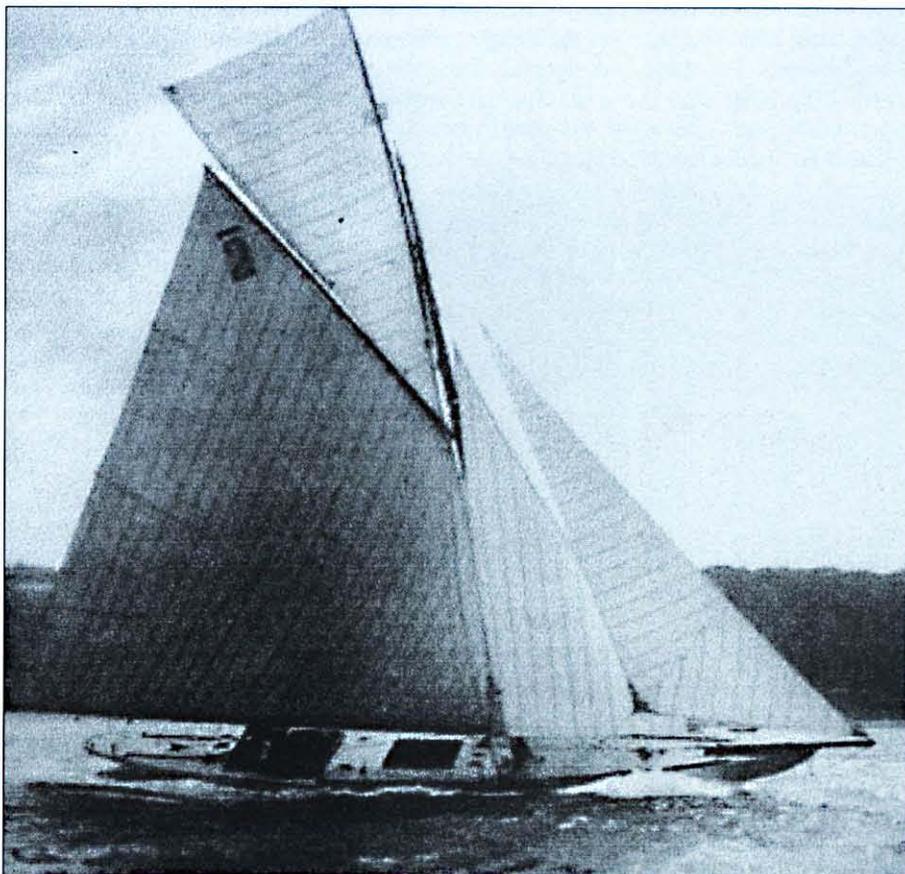
The Cruise was to be to Scotland, and was anticipated by Peter and myself with huge excitement.

When the departure day arrived, the wind was blowing 6 from the northeast, and forecast to continue for days. The adult crew members convened in the Howth Motor Yacht Club, and decided to abandon Scotland as a destination and head south instead!

The next morning, our cruise commenced and took me to the same ports that we visited again this year on the east and south coast.

The difference in the places we visited, and in conditions on board our boat, and the improvements in boat and equipment design, have made cruising in these relatively challenging waters so much more agreeable and safe. It is both chastening and encouraging to compare the well-found cruiser-racer of today with the well-found “cruiser-racer” of 1960.

On *Brynoth* (which by the standards in 1961 was a very well-found ship), we did NOT have: autopilot, electric windlass, VHF, Radar, GPS, fixed chart table, refrigerator,



30-linear rater, as *Brynoth* was originally rigged.

depth sounder, wind indicators, winches. except for the genoa sheets, a shower or a reliable diesel engine!

We DID have: a temperamental petrol engine which had no reverse gear, block and tackle to haul halyards and mainsail, hank-on cotton headsails, manilla rope sheets, and the rigging was galvanised wire-hand spliced.

Navigation was effected by use of admiralty charts, a patent log, a lead line, tide tables, an Almanac and a new fancy invention of the time an RDF ... which only seemed to confuse matters! The navigation lights were oil burning and mounted on boards on the rigging. Our wet gear was very primitive by the standards of today, and it was not the practice to wear life jackets on deck. Below deck conditions were damp, and stowage space was scarce and difficult to access. The bilge pump (manual) required attention every two hours

The accommodation consisted of two quarter berths, two saloon berths, and two pipe cots slung among the headsails in the forepeak.

There was not even one marina on the coast, the rubber dinghy hadn't been invented, so we carried a clinker wooden dinghy on deck, going ashore was a nightmare, not to mention coming back aboard! There were very few restaurants on the coast, and the variety of fresh food available in grocery shops was limited in the extreme, though this may not have mattered since in pre Mary Robinson Ireland neither men or boys did much cooking, so the diet aboard ranged from “the fry” to cooked ham or cans of “bully beef.”



Liz and the ebb from Lough Hyne.

We had a wonderful cruise, in what was to us and everybody else a beautiful elegant ship, the weather was rough, conditions below were very basic and significantly different to those we now experience, and shore life was a basic pub, but we felt no privations and I have the warmest memories of that cruise, which positively recruited me to the cruising fraternity.

By way of footnote I should add that as we were discussing our turn for home on that 1961 cruise, in the pub in Glandore the night before our departure, Ross measured off the distance from Glandore to Dunmore East from a map on the wall of the pub and made it 103 miles. He there and then decreed that we would depart Glandore for Dunmore at 05.00 next morning, and thereby qualify Peter and myself for membership of the

ICC – one 100-mile cruise then being the qualifying requirement! This decision led to a very premature celebration in the pub that night, and also to a very bad-humoured departure from Glandore at daybreak.

Alas the next day as we drew Ballycotton abeam, Ross went to the chart with his dividers and try as best he could he couldn't make the passage any more than 98 miles. And so it was 17 years later, in 1979, before I managed to join the ranks of the ICC under a significantly more stringent standard!!!

What outstanding characteristic have these two cruises in common? One thing only – they were both “Romantic” – but Romantic in very different ways!

Olaf Tyaransen writes of A short voyage on the Thames

The message from Fernie was cryptic and as with most communications from Peter, came in the form of an order. “You must visit Trout Inn at Godstow”. We pondered the meaning. Perhaps

Fernie had taken up a new position with the Tourist Board. Maybe he even owned shares in the establishment. Who could know; he moves in mysterious ways. I pressed the delete button.

The four of us were in a pretty little town called Benson in the heart of Oxfordshire. We were about to collect our rented motor-cruiser in which we proposed to cruise the Thames as far as Oxford. This far up-river the countryside is fairly unpopulated and we looked forward to a pleasant late autumn sojourn. The crew consisted of Ray O'Toole, an old friend with whom I had cruised for a number of years in the Aegean, along with Peter Fernie and John O'Donnell, Des Thorpe, a Royal St George stalwart who also owned a barge on the Shannon, Charles Lyons and me. Charles was essentially the reason for our voyage. In his early eighties he was a skilled boat builder of vast experience. In his youth he had spent many years on the Thames but eventually retired to Ireland. He had returned to visit his old haunts; this was to be his ‘Swan Song’. I, being the least experienced, was the skipper.

Our first sight of the *Tango Ten* was, to put it mildly, inauspicious. We gazed at her as the rain beat upon her decks. Not a pretty sight, the best that could be said about her was that, like a caravan, she was functional and like a lot of river boats she had too much top hamper ever to be eye-catching.

We were introduced to her by Kev, one of the yard-hands. Like most professionals whom I have met over the years it was obvious that Kev did not have much time for amateur seamen. This was evidenced by an expression which suggested that he had encountered some vaguely noxious smell together with a tendency to talk very slowly when explaining things. For our part we immediately assumed an air of competent nonchalance as he took us through the ropes.

As it was now quite late we decided to head downriver to Wallingford to spend the night. Watched by the crew I stood on the flybridge and ordered them to cast off. Pushing the control ahead I was then able to manoeuvre the vessel head-first into the opposite bank, allowing them to conjecture as to whether I proposed to take a short cut through the fields. Kev, for his part appeared to have swallowed the fag-end dangling from his lower lip. As the boat slid back into the water I was able to turn the vessel's head to starboard and bounce gently along the bank to the lock. Passing through the lock we came

to Wallingford where we managed to lasso a bollard and moor for the night.

Wallingford is an historic town full of castle ruins and other sights well worth seeing. We quickly found the 16th century George Pub and proceeded to investigate its range of locally-brewed ancient beers. My contretemps with the riverbank was quickly forgotten and full of enthusiasm we looked forward to tomorrow and better things.

The following morning I awoke to the sound of large birds stamping on the deck overhead in hobnailed boots. I eschewed breakfast and repaired to the fly-bridge watched by the crew as they noisily chewed their muesli. The previous evening we had decided to head for Abingdon so as not to tax ourselves on our first day, and so eventually we set off.

By this time I had discovered the bow-thruster, a magnificent addition to any motor-yacht, enabling even the most fledgling boat handler to avoid the sniggers of onlookers as one approaches the quayside. Needless to say this greatly improved my confidence. We nosed gently into the first lock. One of the Thames lock-keepers stood on the quay. Neatly dressed, competent and invariably pleasant they add immeasurably to a river cruise

For as long as I have sailed with Ray his dress has been broadly unchanged, varying only with the weather. Reading from north to south it consists firstly of a battered navy skipper's hat of greenish hue, embellished with a decrepit ICC badge of uncertain vintage. Below this is a faux-designer t-shirt, one of a selection which he picked up in the souk in Marrakech. Heading further south there is a natty pair of shorts paired with a decrepit pair of weathered dubs of indeterminate colour. This look is not achieved easily. Coming alongside Ray stepped ashore bow line in hand. The lockkeeper eyed him up and down. “On your 'olidays then Sir?” he asked Ray respectfully. We passed quickly through the lock and proceeded up-river.

The countryside on either side of the river is most attractive, verdant and interesting, with picturesque villages and hamlets on either side. We passed through Day's Lock and proceeded towards the pretty little village of Clifden Hampden, distinguished by the Barley Mow, an ancient thatched pub nestling beside the bridge. On through Culham Lock to Abingdon where we moored beside the Anchor Pub.

Abingdon is an ancient town packed full of interest. In St. Nicholas church is a monument to William Lee who died in 1637. From his loins he had issue of 200 less 3. Whilst of course there was no electricity it nonetheless was an

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Galicia again, why not?

Peter Haden

After the winter lay-up, mid-May found me back at the helm of *Papageno* slipping gently down the via de varada (railway line) at the Lagos yard into the unseasonably warm waters of the Ria de Vigo. The yard was founded in 1915, and many of the old traditions, craftsmanship and way of doing things, continue. The engineer came aboard to check everything, Alfredo Lagos Jr. himself helped me get the sails on, and soon I was on my way across the Ria to Cangas dodging an enormous incoming cruise liner (whoops!), on the way.

The small marina, right in town, is efficiently managed by the ever-friendly Bea and her mariners Pepe and Juan. Most berths are privately owned, but there is some space for visitors. A chandlery (efectos navales) just across the road, will supply anything you want within a couple of days, if not in stock.

We know the town well now, and Moira and I use it as our base for summer cruising. Our established pattern is to alternate a few days in the marina with a week cruising one of the rias, and so on. On top of this I get two or three weeks at each end of the summer to indulge my love of single-handing and pushing the boat harder than family considerations allow.

Cangas is a most interesting town, and behind the seafront with some unsympathetic building, is a warren of narrow streets, granite houses with outside stairs, old fashioned shops, cafés and tapas bars.

Several noble houses from the late 19th century tell of an earlier prosperity based on fishing and canning. These houses are all being restored and cared for with attention to their special Galician double windows and decorative balconies.

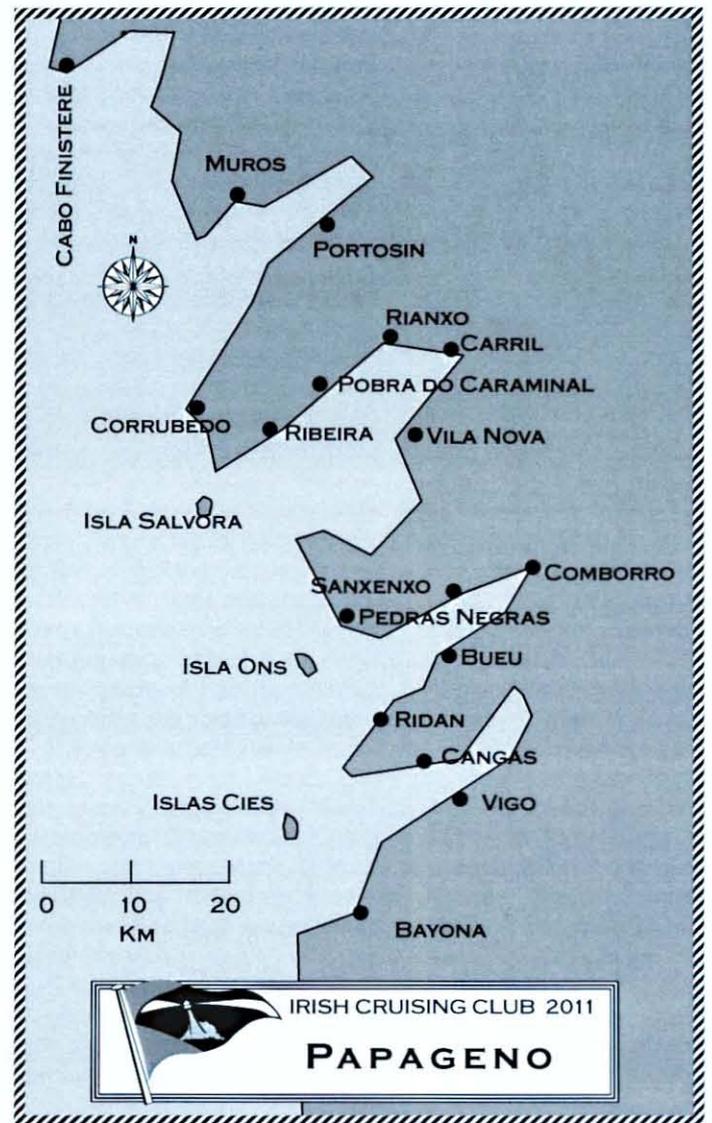
Whilst there is still employment in fishing, canning and refrigeration, the town with its magnificent sheltered beach and gentle climate, is gaining tourists who prefer it to the hotter parts of Spain, and an increasing number of Vigueuses (inhabitants of Vigo) who come over on the frequent €2 ferry service. We love fresh fish, and Cangas has one of the best markets in Galicia.

The ever friendly fish ladies (pescantinas) compete with their banter, and will wash and prepare the fish any way you ask. It is often so fresh that a not unusual occurrence would be to see a large black sole, or perhaps a huge conger eel leap from the counter in a bid for freedom. Our favourite butcher, Claudio, also has a stall here and besides a supply of good veal has introduced us to delicious cordero lechazo. This is suckling lamb, that is so tender, it needs only a minute in the pan.

On Tuesdays and Fridays farmers come in from the surrounding countryside with their vegetables, fruit and flowers; a most colourful scene.

The most interesting building is the church, dedicated to St. James the Moor-slayer. It was started in the fifteenth century, sacked by the Turks, rebuilt and then survived the 19th century wars and the Civil War. It is full of interesting statues, and pictures and even includes a flashing lighthouse. Local ladies in large numbers compete with huge flower arrangements. Outside, a large memorial to the Falange supporters of General Franco survives, despite the wishes of the recent Socialist government.

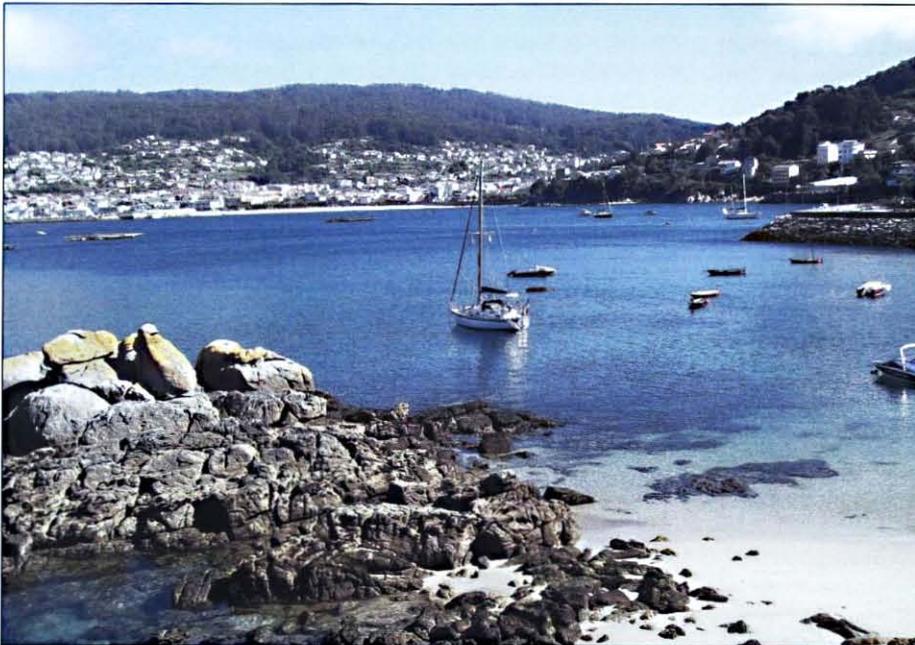
After a few days getting the boat ready I sailed for the beautiful Islas Cies, where so early in the season I had the anchorage to myself. Then an easy downwind sail into Baiona where I knew I could buy an English language newspaper, though not the Irish Times. At the stylish Monte Real yacht



club, I left a note for Joe and Mary Woodward ICC, *Moshulu III*, who had not yet arrived for the season. Manuel and Conchita Perez, *San Roque II*, keep their boat there, so I had someone to talk to. Next day friends Muncho and Jacqueline Dardel (OCC) arrived in their beautiful red *Haliotis 38 Guanahani*, and after dinner on *Papageno*, we headed for the club house, sank into the enormous leather arm chairs with a bottle of Alberino, and like everyone else in Spain, watched the classic football match of the year: Barca v Man Utd. (Barcelona won 3 - 1).

Two days later a steady southwest wind brought the opportunity for a cracking sail back across the Ria de Vigo to anchor inside Cabo Home for a swim and lunch and then on to Cangas. There seemed to be more water than usual in the bilge and two days later I sailed over to the boatyard at Bouzas where the engineer found a corroded fitting on the domestic water calorifier, which he replaced, after siesta time. Further improvements were suggested, but we agreed it would be all right to leave this until the next lay-up.

Moira was due in a few days time, so after a couple of sessions at the local dentist, a haircut and lots of cleaning, the remarkably cheap and efficient Spanish bus service took me to



Beluso.

Santiago de Compostela. Arriving early, I was able to enjoy an excellent feast of tender pulpo and a bottle of wine (Alberino of course), in the bus station tapas bar.

Moira had brought out three days' *Irish Times*, which were enjoyed over the next week, as well as all her own news from home. Friends on the pontoon, marina staff and local shopkeepers all welcomed Moira "home", and after a few days we sailed for Baiona. There are two possible approaches from the north, and I usually take the shorter Canal da Porta, although this should be avoided near low water springs if there is any swell running. At Monte Real yacht club, it took a while to find *Moshulu III* hidden under great bouquets of flowers. Joe and Mary soon appeared to welcome us and explain that the flowers were to honour their 50th Wedding Anniversary.

Fog kept us in port a day longer than planned. Moira said we were not sailing until the fog-horn on Monteferro was silent. But by lunchtime a gentle wind from the south had filled in, slowly lifting the fog, and under all plain sail we made our way



Cangas.

north towards Porto Novo. The wind died in the afternoon and a good-looking yacht passed. It turned out to be Colin and Freda Hayes, *Saoirse of Cork*. They went on to anchor so we didn't meet up. Although hidden until the last minute, the port can be found by simply heading directly for the huge sea defences of Sanxenxo. The entrance is quite narrow, and in summer there are often ferry boats coming and going, so care is needed.

On the first mooring an Irish tricolour flying from Rob and Mairead Allan's Nicholas 38 *Conche* welcomed us. This is also a favourite port for Mandy Stokes and Pat McCarthy's *Clipper*, and we were to meet both yachts several times during the summer.

The club house and facilities have been greatly improved with an excellent restaurant upstairs overlooking the bay and the beach. Moira reported the club launderette to be first class. Maria in the

office recommended us to go to the amazing new supermarket "Supercor" which is part of the El Corte Ingles chain. This together with the local market is the best place in Galicia to provision.

A bar across the street from the marina has its own vineyard, but restricts purchase of their excellent Alberino to three bottles. Anxious to beat the system, we took turns in buying at different times over the next two days, and soon had *Papageno's* wine locker well stocked. The bottles were laid next to the hull, below the water line, keeping them almost at drinking temperature. Two days later, after a climb up the very steep hill and a Sunday church service in a delightful and packed capilla dedicated to Santa Cristobel, we sailed west and northwest to anchor off Melide beach, on the northeast corner of Islas Ons. The gentle wind pushed us at only 2.5 knots, but the sea was flat and blue and we didn't have far to go, and there was all afternoon to enjoy it.

After a swim and some tea, laziness set in, and just the genoa was unfurled for the last three miles to Pedras Negras. A handsome yacht heading south passed and seeing the OCC burgee at the masthead, I just managed to pick up the name *Whanake* with my binoculars and a reference to the OCC membership book revealed the owners to be Chris Cromey and Suzanne Hills, and their boat a New Zealand built Robertson Cutter that had circumnavigated before they bought her. Next day I was able to e-mail them and we met up two weeks later for lunch and many amusing stories.

Approaching the harbour at Pedras Negras I called up the marina on channel 9 following correct procedure as taught at home, and in Spanish.

"Hola Pee tur" came the reply, followed by the sound of an outboard engine revving up, and the sight of a rubber dinghy coming round the harbour wall at high speed to lead us in. A great welcome.

Pedras Negras is a very well-run small marina surrounded by little coves and beaches. From the terrace above the clubhouse, especially near sunset, there is

a spectacular view of the islands all the way south to Baiona.

We had arranged to meet Muncho and Jacqueline Dardel *Guanahani* and already I had the permission for us all to visit Islas Salvora and see the bird life, but a strong north wind had become established and we thought leaving *Papageno* unattended at anchor off the island might not be wise. Instead we took the board walk from the harbour above the shore. After about two miles this becomes a walk through grass and wild flowers skirting the army summer camp with its old guns protecting the Ria Arousa approaches.

The path then led us through pine woods. up to a quiet road and downhill to the harbour. A refreshment stop at the very comfortable Hotel Mar Atlantico was proposed where the Olleros family who own the hotel gave us a great welcome. Two days later *Guanahani* sailed for Ria Arousa, and we returned to Cangas.

A significant birthday was approaching, and after a week in port we sailed again for Monte Real yacht club, Baiona for the "Corpus holiday weekend". Our daughter Elizabeth, on a posting to Palestine, had pre-arranged that we were to have dinner at the club as a birthday treat.

Michael and Julie Rowan, *Ark Angel*, were in port and traditional sundowner hospitality commenced. They too have come to love and appreciate this cruising area and we were soon swapping accounts of favourite anchorages and places to visit.

Corpus Christi is a big holiday in Spain and there is a tradition of decorating the streets near the church with flowers, in preparation for the procession. The work starts three days ahead with the drawing of religious and local symbols in chalk on the road, whilst enormous numbers of flower petals are picked and sorted by colour. For green edging large quantities of fennel are soaked and then rubbed and twisted to form a light rope, whilst at the same time creating a distinctive aroma. Starting on the Saturday evening and finishing on Sunday morning the artistic work of laying the flowers is done and then they are carefully sprayed with only a mist of water to hold them in place. We sat at a small cafe watching the work whilst the proprietress alternated between serving us, and laying flowers.

After four days, we headed north again, directly to Pedras Negras, where Moira had booked us into the Hotel Mar Atlanticos for two nights as a special birthday celebration. Delicious dinners, real hot baths, fresh water swimming pool and a surprise present of champagne, replaced the sometimes more simple life of seasonal liveaboards.

Alan Rountree, *Tallulah*, sent a text saying that he was weatherbound in Inisbofin. A few days later in Valentia he sent another text to say he had been warned to look out for "a whale big enough to eat half a house". With northerly winds blowing down Biscay for the next week, we invited him to come down to the good weather, but the next we heard he was in Kinsale.

From Pedras Negras, Ria Arousa, the



Laying the fennel decoration.

largest of the Rias Baixos is only round one low-lying headland, and in light conditions we motored to the ria's head at Rianxo to await arrival of Onora Lynch and John, who sail with us every year. Although we berthed in the small marina, which could generously be described as "adequate", we could have laid against the harbour wall on the seafront.

Rianxo is a pretty little town, and is being developed as a centre for Galician culture. There are attractive squares and some sensitive restoration of old buildings. The parish church is dedicated to Irishman St. Columba and has a huge flight of granite steps good enough for the famous scene in the 1925 Russian film "Battleship Potemkin". A good restaurant recommended by Mandy Stokes sorted out the first night's requirement.

Next day a gentle sail across the Ria for a swim off a deserted beach, then into Vila Nova where we were greeted as long lost friends by Marcello the Brazilian marinero, who speaks perfect English.



Sheltered anchorage Corrubedo.

As we sat on board having lunch, a dinghy came into the harbour and hailed us. It was Dan and Jill Cross *Yoshi*, who had anchored outside.

The small marina here is well kept and has a boatyard and secure storage area. The mariners have a habit of leaving the VHF on full volume through a loudspeaker. We dealt with this annoyance, by creeping into their office and turning down the volume every time we passed !

The small town has adequate shopping, a beautiful church, and over a footbridge a good choice of beaches. It is also the best place to stay for visiting Cambados, centre of the wine-growing district, and only ten minutes by taxi.

Ribeira

Improving weather took us towards Ribeira and its very busy fishing harbour. This is an excellent shopping town, with a large supermarket only five minutes from the marina. The beach alongside seems to go on for ever. After a good dinner at the club house we enjoyed watching the unloading of fish from a queue of trawlers, and the late night auctions announced by siren. Huge refrigerated lorries sped off into the night to markets in Madrid and other cities.

Islas Ons beckoned for a lunchtime swim next day and then with a wind building from the north, and Onora at the helm, the blue and white cruising chute brought us into Ria de Pontevedra.

The plan had been to go into the naval dockyard at Marin, home of the naval academy, for a look around, but the weather deteriorated and in heavy rain we motored the last mile into the magnificent new marina at Comborro. The rain was persistent and although Dermot and Margaret Lovett's *Lonehort* was on the same pontoon, nobody was in any mood for visiting.

There are numerous restaurants close by, and from previous visits we knew that the best value and best food is to be found at the first along the narrow seafront street. The owner told us that he had been trained in Switzerland.

Time was running out for Onora and John, so next morning in driving rain we plugged the five miles back to Porto Nova, taking an hour and a half to get there. After a while motoring up and down outside the pontoons, and with no answer to the VHF, a mariner appeared on the balcony of the club house in full oilskin dress, pointed to a berth and disappeared back to his shelter. We didn't see him again !

The sun doesn't stay hidden for long in Galicia, and soon clothes were hung out to dry. A magnificent dinner that night in the club house with a window table and views in every direction, completed a satisfying week in good company.

Manoeuvring in and out of marina berths, a few times I had had slight trouble engaging forward gear, but did not take the matter too seriously. A year earlier new cables had been fitted and I presumed these needed to be adjusted. But now on the way south to Cangas, the engine revs did not seem to produce quite their corresponding boat speed.

Deborah and John O'Dea, *Toby Too*, from our home village of Ballyvaughan were in port and welcomed us with a surprise birthday cake and party. We met up a few days later for a quiet night at anchor off San Martin, part of the Islas Cies. John had had a minor mechanical problem on *Toby Too*, and introduced me to an excellent English-speaking Romanian mechanic "Costine", who diagnosed a gearbox problem. A service kit had to be ordered from Madrid and between one delay and another we were tied up for twelve days. But every day was warm and sunny and the opportunity was taken to give five coats of varnish to all the exterior teak, and to paint the decks. Chris and Suzanne, *Whanake*, whom we had seen a few weeks, earlier came over from Vigo to have lunch aboard. They had hauled out in the Lagos yard for a minor refit. Having left Oban two

and a half years ago, and bound for New Zealand, they admitted to being in no hurry.

To our great surprise, they informed us that their past winter had been spent in Galway Harbour, as well as a week in Kinvara only ten miles from our home.

The most important public holiday in Spain is the Feast of St. James on July 25th. Usually we go up to Santiago de Compostela for the celebrations, but this year we said we would see what happens in Cangas. We were rewarded with superb choral singing and a remarkable display of traditional dancing and music in the middle of the midday mass. Outside the forty strong local Banda Musica Bellas Artes gave an hour long concert of Spanish and classical favourites.

Donal Morrissey, *Rebound*, called to say he was just across the bay in Punta Lagoa, so we took the ferry over to see him. Another day we took the bus over the hill to Aldan for the annual Virgen de Carmen parade, mass and procession of all fishing boats with the statue, and flowers to scatter in memory of lost fishermen. This is a very emotional ceremony and many quiet tears were shed during the traditional singing of the *Salve Maritimo*.

Alfredo and Marguerita Lagos organised a summer garden party at their lovely old house high above the Ria de Vigo. About twenty of us, including family, John and Deborah, and Chris and Suzanne, sat down in the shade of the trees, to consume generous quantities of Cordero al Espeto (barbequed lamb) followed by a delicious dessert of mirabellas (plums). The wine flowed in the warm sun, and the traditional Galician party drink of queimada was brewed and shared around.

A few days later Costine had the gearbox rebuilt and refitted and *Papageno* motored smoothly out into the ria. A fair wind brought us to anchor off Islas Ons where, in the clean and clear water, I took a quick look underneath as Costine had advised. Three miles later we were in the marina at Pedras Negras. Eduardo is in charge of mechanical things and is also the local diver (submarinista). I wanted him to check all around the propeller shaft, but as it was a very hot day he said he didn't want to put on his heavy wet suit and that he would do a lift out and back in for the same charge of €54. This was accomplished next morning fifteen minutes ahead of the promised time and a few small bits of net and fishing line were extracted. Probably these were the remnants of the cause of our troubles.

Magic island

Joe Dundon a regular crew member, and Mary, joined us for a week, and using Pedras Negras as a base we enjoyed brisk sailing in superb weather to the islands where long walks and swimming filled out the days. A longer day found us in Ria Arousa at the magic hidden island Ilha Guidoiro Aeoso. This is a classic desert island with a sandy beach all the way around, and clear blue water. I had been told there are now some restrictions on visiting the island, but had been unable to learn the details. Our photograph was taken, but nothing further heard. Returning to the marina, we met Donal Morrissey, *Rebound*, with a strong crew of male friends. Later that night in the clubhouse one of his crew entertained us with a half hour take off of Tommy Cooper that had us rolling around with laughter.

Two days later with guests departed, we motored in slack conditions to the small fishing village of Meloxo. The approach is through extensive fish farms and a few unfriendly rocks. The first part of the harbour is crammed with fishing boats, each with an ugly crane for servicing the fish rafts. As the water shallows there is a pontoon and moorings for small boats and tenders. Further on is a beach used for careening. We circled around for a while and eventually got the hook down in some sand. An elderly and friendly fisherman rowed over in his tiny

boat to give us some advice, delivered much to our surprise in English.

Ashore we found two bars, a tiny shop and not much else. A monument, probably something to do with the civil war, had been chiselled clear of its inscription. Back on board we were enjoying a sundowner when I sailed Gerry Burke, *Aisinmear*, a Freedom 30 with an unusual cat ketch rig, and he dropped his hook close astern of us. It started as a "Join us for a glass of wine", but several bottles later and an impromptu meal prepared by Moira, had helped us sort out all the political problems back home. *Papageno* touched the muddy bottom during the night and at 08.00 with a falling tide, we crept out with a depth reading of just 1.5 feet under the keel.

There is a tiny anchorage just inside the northeast headland of Ria de Aldan where we stopped for our morning coffee, then past the long ridge of Islas Cies and into Ria de Vigo and home to Cangas. A popular saint in Spain is San Roque. His statue can be seen in most Spanish churches and can be identified by the presence of his loyal dog Melampo. Bunting from the capilla above the town forewarned us of the holiday. *Toby Too* had arrived into Cangas, so John and Deborah joined us on the warm Sunday morning for outdoor celebrations, choral singing and a colourful procession around the neighbourhood with the statue and local gaitas (bagpipe) band.

Singlehanded sailing

After the weekend, Moira flew home, and singlehanded I headed out to the islands and then picked up a sea breeze to bring me deep into Ria Aldan. In the village there are a few places to eat and especially good shellfish at a simple restaurant in a shed on the pier. Unusually, the old Franco flag with its black eagle can be seen flying. The water in Aldan is said to be warmer than anywhere else and I enjoyed a good swim to the beach and back.

Next morning the wind was picking up from the south, exactly as needed, giving me a pleasant run to Islas Ons and the usual swim off Melide beach. By the afternoon the wind was force 6 on the quarter providing a fast run to Pobra do Caraminal. Rounding up to take down sail, I had a quite close encounter with a fish raft and then found good holding close off the marina, sharing the anchorage with two Dutch yachts.

It was two days before the wind settled down and then I headed up the ria to Carril. The tiny harbour was full, so the hook went down outside between the harbour entrance and the nearby National Park island of Cortegada. Carril is a pretty village that has been completely absorbed into the outskirts of the large town of Villa Garcia, and after a walk about and coffee in the attractive main square I rowed back out and set sail, bound for Ribeira.

In the middle of Ria Arousa is Isla Rua. This island of red rocks has a lighthouse and surprisingly a source of fresh water. It can be seen from most parts of the ria, and is an easy and useful reference point for eyeball pilotage. Rounding the island I made to anchor off Ribeira but there was the dreaded boom boom (music?) coming from beyond the beach, heralding some festival and the probability of no sleep. Mr. Volvo was cranked up to 3200 revs and we fled.

The plan was to make my way north as long as the wind was favourable. It was about ten years since I had been into the fishing village of Aquino. The approach has been made easier by the erection of a new large red cage-shaped marker on the most southerly rocks opposite the strong pillar Pedras de Sargo at the entrance of Canle do Norte. The harbour is quite shallow and I had the choice of tying up alongside a fishing boat at the quay or anchoring off the boatyard slipway. I chose to anchor, later regretting it when *Papageno* touched bottom whilst swinging during the windy night. Since my last visit the port

has been spoilt with unsympathetic development and I learnt later that it is considered to be an unfriendly place. Leaving at 08.00 next morning, I motored in a light breeze up to the well-sheltered anchorage at Corrubedo and some breakfast.

Rowing over to the beach I was met by an English-speaking resident who keeps a log of all visiting yachts. Although it was now late summer, he said *Papageno* was only the third Irish yacht to visit this year.

The weather had considerably improved and in the afternoon I took a walk through the narrow winding streets to the beautiful beach with its surf and famous moving sand dune. Because the sand shelves very slowly and stretches well out into the bay, the water is perfectly clear and the colour of exotic holiday brochures.

"Free marina"

An early night and early departure followed. The wind was slack passing Corrubedo lighthouse, but soon filled in from the southwest giving an easy run up the ria and into Muros. There was a light mooring not far from the main slipway, so having temporarily secured onto that, I rowed into the harbour to see what was happening about the new long-promised marina. Clearly it was not finished, but a Dutch yacht and a small English live-aboard type yacht were berthed. The only information I could get was that there was nobody to say I could stay, and nobody to say I couldn't, and nobody to collect any charge. Ten minutes later I was tied up in the "free marina". Even the Spanish customs boat was taking advantage of the facility, and soon two friendly officers came over to check my papers. They told me that their principal task is to prevent smuggling of cocaine from Columbia. Galicia with its indented coastline is the favourite point of arrival of this drug into Europe.

Don Bodegan close by, served me the usual excellent fish dinner, and next morning fresh fish was being sold at open air stalls only yards from the boat. The town with its delightful colonnaded seafront, avenue of smoke trees and balconied paseo is a popular call for many yachts despite the poor holding. The new marina is buried well within the existing harbour area and does not detract from the special atmosphere of this place.

Cheap gas

Two days later the wind was from the south at 20 knots, making the passage across the ria very roly poly, and forty minutes later I was glad to be allocated a berth facing into the wind at the excellent Portosin marina. Carmela in the office gave her usual enormous welcome. The town has improved a bit, though shopping and eating out opportunities are few. Civic improvements to the main square including planting of trees are giving a better feel to the place, despite the gross over building of seasonal apartment buildings of no architectural value. A welcome development is new management at the ferriteria, resulting again in the availability of Camping Gaz. At a price of €13.65, it is half the price at home and less than half the price in the UK.

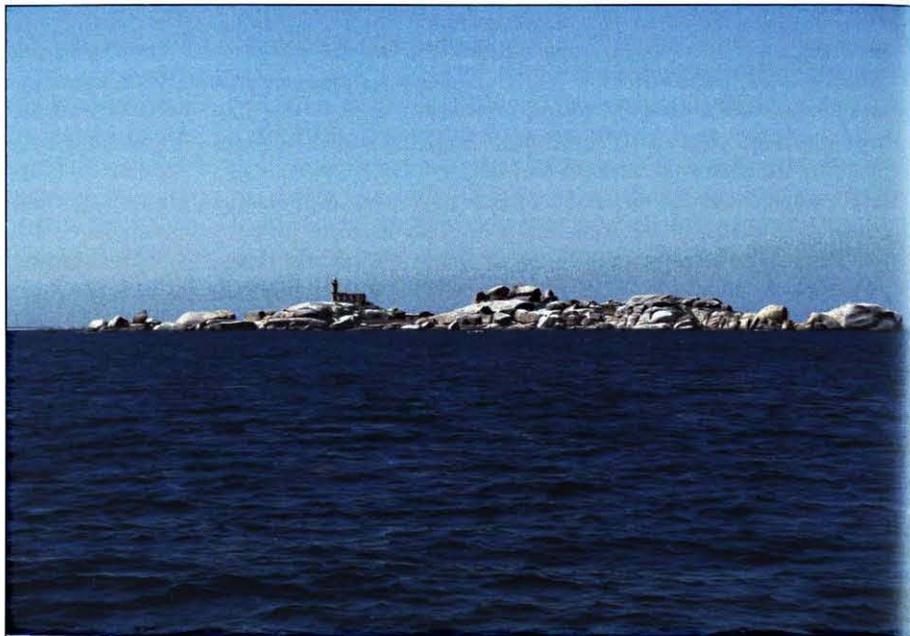
After three days a welcome wind change and warm weather provided conditions for good sailing southwest down the ria, round again into Ria Arousa. We anchored in Pobra do Caraminal, and had a quiet night on a free club mooring off Ribeira.

A last visit to Pedras Negras got the batteries recharged, and a morning sail brought me round the headland to anchor off the busy resort of Sanxenxo. Arriving on the crowded beach the man renting paddle boats took care of my dinghy. After shopping and some lunch, the cruising chute was hoisted, and at less than two knots I made my way across the ria. A yacht with huge sails and 12 crew members all in light blue shirts, came towards me sailing at about 10 knots. It was *Telefonica*,

one of the Spanish Volvo racing boats, out for an afternoon training session. With an improvement in the wind, the cruising chute now billowed well out. My destination Beluso, has limited space with many small boats on moorings, fish rafts nearby and a harbour wall. I was wondering if I would have enough room to round up. All went well, and soon the hook was firmly in sand, close off the small beach. This is my favourite anchorage, better sheltered than it looks, and as there is no road passing nearby, it is always quiet. The water is especially warm for swimming. There are two beaches and an upmarket restaurant. A first time visitor might consider entering the small marina, but the berths are all privately owned. The presidente (commodore) of the sailing club, Pepe, is of Irish descent through his grandfather who emigrated to the USA, and married a Spanish girl.

Next morning, motoring out to the ria, a fast, heavily-armoured and military-type customs boat came alongside for a good look at me. After a minute or two and an exchange of friendly waves from all five of the crew, they accelerated off at some tremendous speed. By lunch time I was anchored off Islas Cies with twelve other yachts and went ashore for a swim and walk. On return I found that *Papageno* had dragged, even with most of my chain laid out. I could have re-anchored, but with the wind increasing, I made over to Barra, inside the nearest headland where there was perfect shelter. One other yacht shared the large anchorage, *Corsair* from Scotland. Later, the owner Andrew Russell rowed over with an invitation to join him and his wife Patricia for a tasting of his large selection of malt whisky. The night went on late !

It was foggy next morning, and there was a lumpy sea and not much wind. I motored over to Baiona and anchored. Monte Real yacht club was overwhelmed with racing yachts and crew from all over Spain, preparing for the biggest race of the year, XXVI Trofeo Principe de Asturias, and Crown Prince Felipe were expected any minute. The lawn was covered in tents and tables for dinner. Joe and Mary Woodward were preparing



Isla Rua.

Moshulu III for winter storage and even so, kindly invited me to lunch on board and we filled each other in on the summer's sailing stories.

Two days later, the anchor came up at 13.00 and with 20 knots of wind astern, *Papageno* swept out of the harbour at 7 knots in close company with two classic yachts. I really didn't want to get mixed up in the racing, but with 80 boats filling the bay, and a racing buoy dropped on my course, there was no choice. Everything went well until a line of the larger boats came towards me and suddenly all tacked, I spotted one narrow gap through them and made for it, somehow just managing to avoid a gybe. Friendly waves from the crews sitting out, assured me I had not interfered. As I was the only yacht towing a dinghy, everyone knew I wasn't racing !

Cangas came into view and suddenly I felt a great sadness that the summer sailing was finishing. *Papageno* didn't want to round up, and I didn't want to reach for the halyards and sheets. A ferry coming round the harbour wall quickly relieved me of such thoughts, and five minutes later marinero Pepe had me secured in the usual berth. After three days, I motored over to Bouzas and on the afternoon tide Alfredo Lagos hauled *Papageno* back up the via de varada for her winter rest and some tender loving care.

Unlike other years, we rarely saw any yachts from North America, and certainly there were fewer boats from the UK. French and Scandinavian boats were in good numbers and Moira counted fourteen Irish boats this year, We heard of another three. It had been an enjoyable summer for sailing. Lots of sun and warmth, and just a few cool days and rain. The Azores High never settled in much until mid-September just as I was going home. We try to sail always with the wind, and this year the predominant north-easterly alternated frequently with a day or two of southerly. This gave us more choices of destination and more comfort, but a little less sun. But of course it was in complete contrast to the continuing stories of rain back at home.



Wet day at Porto Novo.

Faroes in Sunlight

Brian Black

The voyage with the Faroe Islands as our objective began in the classic manner – good companions, a favourable wind, a fine anchorage and ... a lifeboat rescue. Superstition based on many seasons of hard experience prevents me from talking about a plan, that's a sure way to amuse the sea-gods who like nothing better than a chance to spoil a cruise. So I prefer the idea of deciding on somewhere I'd like to go, make the necessary preparations and then go for it.

With *Séafra* – my Voyager 35 – stowed and made ready for sea, Ed Wheeler and I set off from the lovely little marina in Glenarm on July 13, expecting to rendezvous with James Nixon ten days later off the Atlantic Airways flight to Torshavn. To begin with the going was easy and the wind light but steady enough to fill both main and genoa. All too soon the early promise of a sailing breeze fell away to oblige the assistance of my brand new 43hp Beta. We settled down to a watch-routine of four hours on four off during daylight, and at six knots, the miles slipped quickly past. The familiar sights of Rathlin and the Mull of Kintyre were soon astern as we motor-sailed along the west coast of Islay. With the night watch now changed to three on, three off, the regular flash of Skerryvore kept us company through the night. A smudge to the west soon turned into the Outer Hebrides and as we pressed on up the Minch, the wind filled in again to give us another fine sailing breeze.

By mid-morning the chain of outer islands had taken on a defined shape as we slipped past Barra, the Uists then Harris. The forecast was offering a deterioration in the weather but as night fell there was no hint of change, so we settled for the Shiantas spend the night, close inshore in the lee of a causeway between the islands, lying to the anchor – that all too soon would be our undoing.

With time in hand for our rendezvous with James, there seemed little point in volunteering for bad weather, so it was into Stornoway to let an Atlantic depression sweep through complete with strong winds and rain. As our arrival coincided with a visit from the Tall Ships on passage to Lerwick, the harbour master suggested we should anchor until the following afternoon when the fleet would be on the move, creating space

alongside the Esplanade Quay. No problem there I thought, letting the anchor go with its tripping line attached. Sure enough, a wet and windy night followed but we lay snug as you like, our sleep only a little disturbed as *Séafra* snubbed on the anchor chain or rocked occasionally in the gusts. There was good reason to feel secure, the anchor had foul-hooked something big and unmovable on the sea-bed and no amount of heaving and hauling was going to shift it. Another call to the harbour master, this time to ask if he could put me in touch with a diver. Speaking with the confidence that only a Hebridean lilt can infer, we were told not to worry. 'Leave that to me and we'll get something sorted out,' he said. Reassured, Ed and I had another cup of tea, looking with interest at a large Severn Class lifeboat coming round the corner. "I wonder what that's all about?" mused Ed, as a huge bow loomed over us complete with a foredeck crew in crash hats, three more on the side-deck and another group on the flying bridge. His question was answered with another query, this time from the lifeboat. 'Are you the yacht in trouble?' bellowed a loud hailer. Denial was futile, so we meekly handed over the tripping line to the foredeck crew. A quick jab astern from the lifeboat's mighty engines and the anchor was free, looking like a safety pin against the bulk of her bow. I glanced ashore. The inevitable crowd of rubber-neckers was gazing at us, no doubt happy for a little entertainment on an otherwise uneventful morning in Stornoway. There was nothing for it but to do the honourable thing, we put to sea. Well actually all we did was motor along the headland looking for a suitable fishing spot, I reckoned by the time we returned our little embarrassment would have passed into history.

We had all been to the Faroës before, James aboard *Tir na nÓg* in 1966 and Ed on *Witchcraft of Howth* in 1993. I had used Torshavn for crew changes on several occasions before pressing on to Iceland or further north, but had never spent any serious time exploring the islands or getting to know the people. Added to that the weather had always been grim, wet and windy with plenty of fog, so I reckoned that by allowing couple of weeks for the visit, there was a good chance of



Séafra.



James Nixon.

finding some favourable conditions and who knows, even a chance to see what the islands actually looked like.

With the depression gone through, we were soon on our way, making the most of a spell of fine settled conditions, although once again the forecast predicting a downturn in the weather. It was mainly a case of motor-sailing with just the occasional breeze to give the engine a rest and remind me what a sailing boat should feel like. In fact *Séafra* is a delight to sail, mannerly and fast enough, but with the added advantage of a deck saloon to see the world go by when the auto pilot is doing the work and you are keeping watch from below, snug and dry.

“The hens are laying...”

As we raised the Akraberg lighthouse on the southern tip of Suduroy late on Thursday the mobile, which had been silent since leaving Scotland, sprang into life with news from home. A burst of expletives from Ed caused me a moment of concern ‘Well that’s typical. Typical,’ he said, ‘the hens haven’t laid an egg for ages and the moment I turn my back they’re churning them out.’ With a clutch of hens at home giving unreliable production, I had a moment of fellow feeling. Anyhow with two hundred miles run since Stornoway we put into Vágur, Suderoy, the first Faroese port of entry on the way north, around midnight. This was where we had the first lesson in the Faroese temperament, the people of these islands do not bustle, everything seems to happen at a civilised pace. The harbour master suggested we lie alongside the dock out of the way of the commercial boats, then after a phone call to arrange a fuel delivery, provided us with a print-out of the weather for the next few days. The customs officer drove thirty kilometres to check our papers, expressing little interest in our bonded stores. It was all very civilised and devoid of hassle, perhaps a sort of subconscious reaction from humans determined to exude calm in contrast to the ferocious tides that sweep around and through the Faroes.

One can arrive at places like Vágur or Torshavn without too much of a problem with the tides, but there is no way you will sail around the islands without the flow in your favour. This is set out in alarming detail in the Faroes Tidal Atlas, a graphically illustrated production that has been dubbed ‘the Red Scare Book’, which you ignore at your peril. The moon’s phases are taken into account and the calculations seem to have been derived from some sort of composite involving high water Dover and high water Reykjavik. How the information is acquired however is not important, what is vital is that you base your passage planning firmly on the facts. Six knots of current is common with tide-rips off headlands, eddies and overfalls await the unwary, and if the wind is against tide, you really do not want to be there. I was fortunate to have Ed with me; many years ago during a previous visit aboard *Witchcraft of Howth*, Winkie Nixon was so impressed with his mastery of its contents that he proclaimed Mr Wheeler the ‘keeper’ of the Red Scare book.

On this trip I was happy to leave the navigation to Ed and found little complaint with the announcement that the next favourable tide would be 11.00 the following day, giving us time for a stroll around Vagur. As an introduction to the Faroes, this is a perfect location. A short hike up the hill and you have an amazing panorama of cliffs and sea-stacks running north. In time we were to learn that although the vista was superb, it was modest compared to what we would experience as we moved up and around the islands.

Light winds came and went, giving us occasional spells as a sailing boat as we moved on past the Dimuns the following day. These extraordinary little islands stand out starkly against the back drop of the next main island to the north, Sandoy. Litla Dimun is so steep sided that even the resourceful Faroese, who will build a farmstead almost anywhere they can graze their sheep, have left it devoid of human presence. It resembles a



grass topped Ailsa Craig with vertical cliffs, while its neighbour Stóra Dimun is more fertile with plenty of grass for a flock of sheep providing they have high-end climbing skills. Our stop-over was Sandur, the harbour on Sandoy, which we ghosted into late in the afternoon after a spot of fishing off the island of Skúgvoy. By now we had adjusted to the scale of the islands, eighteen altogether and all within a range of sixty miles or so north to south which meant that there was plenty of time to move short distances slowly between places of interest.

Somehow Mykines has been stuck in my mind for years, perhaps it comes from Shaun Davey's wonderful composition called the Brendan Voyage which creates in music a re-enactment by Tim Severin of Saint Brendan's sixth century epic voyages around the north Atlantic in a skin boat. So it was a little disappointing to find that as we neared Mykines in about fifteen knots of wind, which seemed fine to allow us ashore on the island, the sea-state was in fact very agitated, white and broken, thanks to the current which put a landing out of the question. Mykines is world renowned for the bird colonies that nest on its sea-cliffs. Some estimates put the puffins alone at around a quarter of a million birds. Add to that the guillemots, fulmars, razorbills and gulls and it's little wonder that from a distance the sky seems as full of life as a Scottish hillside at the height of the midge season.

The Faroese look on any form of life as a potential food source and these enormous flocks of sea-birds along with their eggs and chicks represent a sustainable annual harvest. The same philosophy towards this natural abundance applies to the cull of pilot whales each year, which in the past has kept remote communities alive. Clearly modern life and supermarkets within driving distance mean that this is no longer the case but the cull, or grind as it is known, has deep cultural significance for the Faroese who defy world opinion and persevere with the slaughter.

Tunnels and bridges

We had arranged the rendezvous with James for July 26th so the time had come to be on hand for his flight. Tórshavn does not in fact have an airport so all flights land on the nearby island of Vágur where an airstrip was built during the Second World War to assist the Allies in the fight against Hitler. Many of the islands are connected by an amazing network of tunnels and the occasional bridge so with classic Faroese pragmatism it was a no-brainer to provide a good bus and ferry service linking towns and villages throughout the archipelago. Docking in the fishing harbour at Sørvágur meant that James had only a five minute taxi ride to join the boat. We had secured to a narrow finger pontoon amongst a fleet of sturdy fishing boats that were clearly not going to sea that day, according to a local fisherman the peak of the season had not yet arrived. The Faroese Department of Fisheries allocate a total of four thousand days a year to the inshore fleet which is then shared out, mainly for long-line fishing. This seems an agreeable and workmanlike approach to harvesting from the sea, certainly to judge by the evident prosperity of the fishing communities around the coast it is a policy that works well without exploiting the stocks to extinction. If the European Community was ever open to learning from others, this example of sustainable fishing could teach them a thing or two about how to manage the resources of the sea.

James brought with him a book that is required reading for anyone interested in the life-style and customs of the Faroes – it is 'The Atlantic Islands' by Kenneth Williamson and although now out of print is still available on the internet. This bible of information takes you in depth through every aspect of life on the islands. Whoever got the book before breakfast ran a significant risk of getting a thump with the frying pan if he as much as framed the words "... did you know?" With the

accumulated wisdom of my knowledgeable companions on this trip, one had to be smart to sneak in a "did you know ..." without making it obvious that your latest gem had just been culled from a furtive reference to 'The Atlantic Islands'.

We left Sørvágur with hopes rising for a visit to Mykines but once again the seas around the island were too disturbed to risk any attempt at landing so we set course for Vestmanna, a mere twenty miles or so distant. This is one of the features of a cruise in these islands, you don't have to go far for a change of scenery and somewhere new to explore. Vestmanna itself probably derives its name from the early Celtic voyagers, because it is taken to mean the 'stream of the west men' suggesting that it is the site of a settlement of early Irish monks, possibly even Brendan himself.

Ignoring the fact that the Faroese economy is based on fish thereby suggesting fish-rich waters, I had stowed *Séafra* with selected tins of Marks & Spencers best so that we could eat well wherever we happened to be. The fact that most tins came home unopened testifies to Ed's skill with rod and line. Previous experience with anglers has not endeared me to the species, they seldom produced much that was edible but did manage to leave hooks fouled in sheets and winches, and bits of fish left concealed until the sun revealed their stinking presence in some corner of the cockpit. I am now a convert – what could beat fresh-caught cod, seasoned with herbs and fried lightly in crispy batter served with home-grown spuds from a County Down field ... or cod Provençal, or cod bake, or cod curry – it takes a long time to tire of fresh, line-caught cod.

There was a dark side to the cod experience however. On one occasion a fine four-pound fish looked like it would provide the evening meal but when it emerged from the oven was virtually inedible. We talked this over with a local fisherman a couple of days later who explained the problem. He said the fish was in poor physical condition because all it had to do was hang around the salmon cages near to where Ed had hooked it, whereas a wild fish would be swimming most of the time, building up its muscle tone, and its flesh was tainted due to its diet composed mainly of the detritus of food concentrate and salmon effluent that collected around the fish-farm cages. This is theory and not necessarily a fact but it was certainly the view of the guy we spoke to.

Viking burial ground

The weather kept up and one delight followed another as we moved around the islands. As we passed the west coast of Stremoy on our way to Eidi we looked in at Saksun, a tiny hamlet set in the most wonderful natural amphitheatre with crags on three sides and a tidal lagoon called Pollurin fed by the Dalsa river on its western side. To carry the tide round the headland at Stakkur, and avoid the overfalls that would accompany a four knot flow in the opposite direction, we had to forgo a landing, but I hoped for compensation by getting ashore at Tjornuvik at the mouth of Sundini Fjord. I had earmarked this as a must-do for several reasons. As the site of an ancient Viking burial ground it has interesting archaeology as well as being a possible location for a settlement of Irish monks in the 6th century, and it is where Tim Severin anchored the *Brendan* back in 1978. As we rounded the corner heading into to the small bay of what must be one of the most beautifully located villages anywhere, the swell immediately put paid to my hopes of getting ashore, there was nothing for it but to head across the sound and put into Eidi for the night.

It blew stink the next day, the wind turning the fjord into a white maelstrom, so we did what all sensible sailors do in those circumstances – nothing. Well actually we went for walks, dodged the rain squalls and generally potted about, at the same time making strategic decisions about onward progress.



Séafra at Enniberg.

We could have gone to Tórshavn when the wind abated, for St Olaf's Day, the main cultural event in the Faroese calendar, but that would jeopardise circumnavigating the islands to the north and east which are seldom visited by yachts. In the end the decision was easy, we would make the most of the time we had ear-marked for the Faroes and press on. This paved the way for what to me was the highlight experience of the entire voyage, the sea-cliffs at Enniberg at the northern end of Vidoy. These plummet 740 metres from summit to shore making them perhaps the tallest direct-drop cliffs in Western Europe, I've even heard some claims that these are the highest cliffs of their kind in the world.

As we closed with Enniberg, the most northerly point in the Faroes, the seas flattened out. After a frantic burst of pumping, the dinghy was ready to launch and off I went to get the pictures that tell the story before a tide-rip could develop making photography impossible. I paddled off to get into position for 'the shot', James and Ed sailed *Séafra* into the frame but just as the composition was about right, down came the mist blocking out the summit of Enniberg. Without its upper storeys, Enniberg looks a bit like any other steep headland but it doesn't take much imagination to sense the true wonder of a small boat, an empty ocean and these truly magnificent cliffs on the rare occasion when a picture of them is possible.

There are some things that truly transcend international frontiers and the Massey Ferguson tractor is evidently one of these. All around us were the villagers of Svinoyarvík, raking the hay and making it ready for winter feed when suddenly there was James, deep in animated conversation with a somewhat bemused farmer's wife. Neither had a word of the other's language but what they had in common was a small red/grey tractor, at least James was trying to explain that he had one as well but to judge by the puzzled look on the lady's face, he wasn't getting the message across and all the arm waving and pointing, while impressive to the audience, didn't seem to cut it.

We worked the tides round to Klaksvík the following day, going right up to the shore for an eddy when the stream turned foul. In the harbour, a hail from the deck of a fine old restored working schooner invited us to lie alongside. This was the *Dragin* which had been bought by the present owners for the Faroese equivalent of a couple of euro when she was decommissioned. Ten years and well over a hundred thousand euro later she was the pride of the six men who had brought her back

to life as a sailing boat that had just recently returned from Iceland.

Departure for home was from Vágur where Ed and I had arrived ten days previously. The Atlantic depression with its associated wind and rain that held us there for twenty-four hours had gone through and although the conditions were calm, there was dense fog and a lumpy left-over sea. Ed had predicted the tide to run strongly south in our favour as we cleared Suduroy but what I had not expected was the fierce set across the south end of the island and onto the Munken Rock. At one point I had to make a 40 degree alteration over a period of about twenty minutes just to get back on course.

There was some wind, then no wind, some motor-sailing and from time to time a fair breeze to carry us towards the Butt of Lewis. As dawn broke in a clear sky on the second

day of the homeward leg, the tiny isle of Rona showed on the port bow. The temptation was too much. James volunteered to look after the boat while Ed and I went ashore for a couple of hours of walking, bird watching and generally soaking in the atmosphere of this lovely but lonely island.

It was Stornoway again to top up on stores and then to head off down the Minch. We motored past the Outer Hebrides in an evening light that could only be described as magical – why do we go to faraway places when there is so much beauty on our doorstep? But then it happened. I was just settling into my bunk when the engine note changed, James and Ed noticed it as well. I lifted the engine hatch and to my horror saw that the bilge was full of water. With the speed of near-panic I checked the engine hoses, they were fine, so too were the sea-cocks. The electric pump was getting doing its bit as someone worked away on the hand-pump and soon the bilge was dry again with no further ingress – but where had the water come from in the first place?

Puzzled but slightly more relaxed we talked it through and then James came up with the explanation – the bilge pump must have siphoned. While motoring, the outlet had gone below the waterline and when I ran the electric pump to scavenge the bilge, more out of habit than necessity, and because there was no non-return valve on the pipe, I had created the conditions to turn the pump into a siphon. Needless to say, this problem has now been dealt with.



Ed with dinner.



Approaching Stremoy.

Next day my daughter Sarah and her marine-surveyor husband Colin aboard their Nicholson 32 *Courante* met us at Bunessan on the western corner of Mull, for a few jars and a meal. They were heading back to Helensburgh where they live so it was a brief but happy rendezvous. I told Colin about the flooding incident and, unprompted, he diagnosed the cause as siphoning, a problem that could be resolved simply by drilling a small hole into the outlet pipe to allow air in and prevent the water from being sucked in in the first place.

Some wonderful sailing took us down past Colonsay, on into the Sound of Islay and then the North Channel. We anchored off Carnlough to let the tide turn in our favour and fetched up alongside the new yacht pontoon in Strangford harbour mid afternoon Saturday. We parted company with the good feeling you get after a fine cruise.

Faoes 2011 pilotage notes

General

Navigation round the Faroes requires preparation and prudence. Severe weather and poor visibility must be expected at any time and conditions can change very quickly. Sea states can become horrendous owing to strong and erratic tides and uneven

bottoms. As a minimum, yachtsmen should carry the RCC Pilotage Foundation volume Faroe, Iceland and Greenland, 3rd Edition, and the local detailed tide atlas *Streymkort* (AKA the Red Scare Book), available from Jacobsens Bokahandil, Torshavn. Also available from this source is the *Almanakki*, a comprehensive local almanac, which contains the tide table and moon's meridian passage information, on which the *Streymkort* is based, together with much other useful information. The Admiralty Pilot *North Coast of Scotland* includes the Faroes and is recommended. Essential charts are UKHO 117 *Foroyar Islands* and 3557 *Plans in Foroyar*. More detailed coverage is provided in Danish charts, which are obtainable through Imray, Laurie, Norie & Wilson.

Suduroy:

Vagar is a completely secure harbour with deep water and plenty of berthing alongside. Showers and laundry are available in the green building above the harbourmaster's office. Keys are kept in the shop in the same building on the street side.

Vagar:

Sorvagur now has an enclosed harbour on the south side, with pontoons. It is the most convenient place for a crew change, as it is only 1.5 miles from the airport. There is a bus service to and from the airport. The bus driver was most obliging and went out of his way to leave our incoming crew to the harbour.

Stremoy:

Saxhavn (Saksun) on the west coast of Stremoy is mentioned as a possible temporary anchorage, but is very exposed to the west and would require a long period of settled easterly winds to subdue the constant roll which we found there. Similarly, Tjornuvik on the north-east corner of Stremoy was very subject to swell and would be uncomfortable in all but the quietest conditions.

North East Group:

In contrast, the conditions in the northeast islands were calm when we visited and we were able to anchor swell-free overnight at Svinoyarvik on the east coast of Svinoy. Holding is good in sand. Anchor in about 7m off the southern quay. Svinoy is almost as remote as it gets in Foroyar, but has no facilities.

Ann Woulfe-Flanagan writes of an alternative *Beowulf* crew cruise on *Ann Again* in Cork

togetherness on their yacht *Ann Again* in the lovely harbour of Cork.

The train from Dublin was booked for Gail Varian, Geoffrey Sarratt and me for Monday September 12th, Peter and Phil Pearson drove from Wexford. We travelled during the remnants of Hurricane Katia, arriving in Cork to find it was still far too windy to go on board, so we went to the

As *Beowulf* was back in England the usual September crew could not enjoy the delights of Turkey or the Greek Islands. Eleanor and Brian Cudmore (ICC) stepped into the breach and kindly asked us to enjoy a whistle stop tour and

Cudmore's to stay the night. Following lunch we had a sight-seeing tour (and a history lesson from Peter) to Monkstown Castle and on to Kinsale and Charles Fort. It was then back for a delicious 'onboard dinner' ashore before retiring.



Cobh 2011 from Left to Right – Ann Woulfe-Flanagan, Peter Pearson, Geoffrey Sarratt, Eleanor Cudmore, Brian Cudmore, Gail Varian and Phil Pearson.

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Ann Woulfe-Flanagan writes of an alternative Beowulf crew cruise on Ann Again in Cork

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Tuesday afternoon was deemed 'OK' and the stores and ourselves were loaded on board at the Royal Cork Yacht Club. We motored up to Drake's pool to satisfy Peter's curiosity and enjoyed the quite surrounds. We then rolled out the genny and potted out to Roche's Point Lighthouse in a force 6/7 but a relatively calm sea. Dolphins were spotted in the distance. It was then a pleasant sail back in the harbour and up towards East Ferry, where we wended our way in the dusk between the foreboding tree-lined shores. A buoy was secured near Rathcoursey East and we might have been in Turkey, no houses around and all to ourselves; the silence under a full moon was magical. Sleep came easily following one of Eleanor's excellent dinner's of "crowns of lamb" with all the accompaniments, a dessert to die for, good wine and plenty of chat.

Dropping the buoy on Wednesday morning was slightly delayed by a sticking roller-main, but once Eleanor went up the mast she soon had it freed. It was then a gentle drift down East Ferry with an ebb tide to Cork Harbour and we then tacked our way up to Cobh, where we could not but fail to notice the Queen Mary 2. As soon as we closed the shore there was the great sight of the local primary school out on a fieldtrip, scouring the shoreline. We berthed at a private

restaurant pontoon behind the QM2 and had coffee and drinks ashore, then headed to the new marina at Monkstown for a peaceful lunch, taking in the sights of Spike Island, Haulbowline etc. Brian and Eleanor's daughter Ruth and her 5 year old son arrived with extra provisions for the G & T's. It was a quick sortie back down to Cobh to watch the Q M 2 depart, before motoring gently up the river Lee to Cork city, accompanied by Ruth and her dog jogging along the old railway-line path alongside the river.

It was a most interesting and historic trip and we also had some commercial traffic to contend with. We docked on the new Port of Cork Marina which is right in the centre of the city, which can be accessed at all tides and is a short walk from the train station. Thus it is a quick step to the Market Lane Restaurant on Oliver Plunkett Street. where we had a most enjoyable farewell dinner, entertained by a scantily clad group of nurses celebrating their graduation. The men were having palpitations.

On Thursday, sadly, Gail, Geoff and I had to take the 9.30 train back to Dublin. Goodbyes were said and a taxi whisked us to Kent Station. Peter and Phil were able to enjoy the potter back to Crosshaven.

All in all this was a splendid trip admirably hosted by Eleanor and Brian and it also brought back memories of the great times we have shared over the last few years sailing in the Mediterranean from Sardinia to Turkey via Italy, Sicily, Croatia and the Ionian Sea.

Olaf Tyaransen writes of a short voyage on the Thames

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extraordinary achievement. In St.Helen's are the Long Alley Almshouses built in 1446. The windows are a fascinating sight. Constructed of English oak with wonderful workmanship they have distorted over the years but remain wonderfully impressive.

The following morning we left Abingdon for the short passage to Oxford. Leaving the lock I drove full ahead at about five knots. At this point the river is quite spacious and I quickly bore down upon an extraordinary looking vessel to port. It resembled a small caravan mounted on a floating platform. At the stern was an enormous outboard, which lifted half the vessel out of the water and crouching over it, jammed into the small well, were two people. As I approached, giving it quite a large berth on the port side, it cut across my bows. At the same time a lady in an enormous hat, rather like a topper started to screech obscenities at me at the top of her voice. She was encouraged in this by Ray and Des, Charles being too much of a gentleman. As a wise man once observed, the mildest tempered people when on land, become violent and bloodthirsty when in a boat. I slowed down and altered to port whereupon Des shot on to the fly-bridge holding a book in his hand and wagging his finger at me. It appeared that I should have passed to port, which I have to confess was completely unknown to me. This was explained to me by Des using his handbook of Rhine River barges to point it out. I must say that I thought that what was done on the Rhine should have stayed on the Rhine but to no avail. I deferred to experience.

We reached Oxford quite soon and moored below Folly Bridge in the heart of the town. It was a wonderful situation

surrounded as we were by nubile young maidens jogging on the tow-path and pulling eights on the river. It was wonderfully frolicsome and we spent a marvellous night in the local hostelry. The following morning we left Oxford to return to Benson.

It is probably time to say something of the boats on the river of which there were are myriad types from the oddest looking abortions to the three-tiered gin-palaces known as Streatham wedding cakes. Of all of these, hire boats such as ours, occupied the bottom rung of the ladder whilst the narrow boats were definitely the aristocrats. They had changed little in design from the 19th century working boats used to transport goods along the rivers and canals of England. Long, narrow beamed steel vessels, they were immensely attractive in a functional way. Most of them were kept immaculately with polished brass, gleaming paintwork and gaily painted flower pots located on top of the long superstructure.

As we were waiting in the lock one of them approached. Standing in the bows was a statuesque figure of a woman reminding one irresistibly of Ford Madox Ford and his images of Victorian working men and women. This one had thighs of hewn oak and arms like a prize fighter and stood motionless in the bows. In his usual helpful way Ray immediately leapt ashore to help one of the gentler sex. Ignoring him completely she flicked a line over the bollard with one hand whilst with the other she took up the slack. She took her pipe out of her mouth and drowned a passing beetle as she spat deftly. Ray stood in awe.

All too soon we arrived back at Benson, our cruise over. It had been an enjoyable four days. Charles had achieved his long held ambition and, like the water rat, we had discovered that there is nothing better than just messing about on the river.