



ICC News

Newsletter of the Irish Cruising Club

Autumn 2025



Dear Member,

I hope you have enjoyed the summer and that you were able to get in a lot of sailing. We did have several stretches of beautiful weather and I think that the overall consensus is that we did have a good and warmer than usual summer.

Once again, my thanks go out to everyone who took the time to contribute to this edition of our newsletter. I hope you enjoy the result as much as I did putting it together. As has often been the case, when I started assembling it, I feared I might not have enough to keep you interested. The result is what you have in front of you now.

Do please keep your camera/phone at the ready when you meet up with other members and jot down some notes as you plan your next adventure. Máire Breathnach will be looking forward to your logs as I look forward to your news, stories, and reminiscences.

I wish you a lovely autumn and peaceful winter. Just remember that next spring is only a few short months away!

Alex Blackwell, Editor

Submission guidelines

Editorial Preferences (*please*):

Please only use standard fonts. Do please use *italics* for vessel names. Remember to check spelling and grammar thoroughly. Please do not manipulate or retouch the images - send only the high resolution originals.

Text

Articles should be in MS Word or text format only. They may be up to approximately 500 words in length or less, with a maximum of 1,000. Please send activity updates to your regional editor for inclusion in their notes.

Images

Images should be sent as separate files - not embedded in an email or Word document. They should be in jpeg format and a minimum of 1 megabyte each. Please do not manipulate, clean up, colour correct, retouch, or crop the images. Please send the original images straight out of the camera. Please also supply captions.

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Larger files may also be sent via Dropbox or WeTransfer.

Alternatively, the materials may be put on a memory stick and mailed to:

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Closing dates for ICC News submissions:

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Front Cover: *AK Ilen* (left) *Saoirse* (right) under sail leaving Baltimore harbour
Photo by Sally Cudmore and Vincent Gruénebaut

Commodore's Letter

By Alan Markey

Since my last note following the Annual Dinner in March, the Club has enjoyed a busy and rewarding season. Regional events and summer rallies in Belfast, Bantry, and the Quoile were well supported, with excellent participation throughout.

Rear Commodore Sally Cudmore led the centenary celebrations of Conor O'Brien's return to Dún Laoghaire following his two-year circumnavigation. This took the form of a week-long Cruise in Company with *The Ilen*, starting in Baltimore and concluding at the Royal Irish Yacht Club. It was great to see that several of the O'Brien family were able to take part in the celebrations.

A particular highlight of the year was once again the *Encuentro Náutico* in Galicia, organised with characteristic attention to detail by Peter Haden. This gathering combined good sailing with warm hospitality and was undoubtedly enjoyed by all who attended.

Another milestone was the Cruising Club of America's *Western Isles Cruise*, a truly international event. A total of fifty-eight yachts and 259 members and guests took part in the cruise. Notably, five yachts made the Atlantic crossing to join the rally, including Cruising Club of America Commodore Jay Gowell aboard *Moonstone* and Vice Commodore Chace Anderson on *Bonnie Rye*. The organising committee brought together the Commodores of six distinguished clubs: the Cruising Club of America, Royal Cruising Club, Ocean Cruising Club, Clyde Cruising Club, Irish Cruising Club, and the Royal Highland Cruising Club. The combination of sailing, social occasions, and shared conversation underlined the value of these enduring relationships. Such gatherings, together with our own rallies, continue to renew old ties and create new ones across the cruising community.

I am pleased to report that our connections with associated clubs remain stronger than ever. We have been delighted to welcome to our shores guests from the RCC,

CCC, OCC, and CCA. The Western Isles Cruise provided an excellent opportunity to deepen those friendships.

It is especially encouraging that many of our international colleagues have already expressed an interest in joining us for our centenary cruise in 2029, which promises to be a most significant occasion in the life of the club.

Our members have also been active under sail, cruising widely both locally and further afield. Their accounts will be shared in the 2025 Annual which Máire has already started working on. This year's log competition will be adjudicated by Ed Wheeler, whose thoughtful and perceptive remarks are always welcomed and appreciated.

Looking ahead, I very much look forward to meeting members at the Christmas gatherings and again at the AGM, which will take place on 20 February 2026 at the Royal Irish Yacht Club. These occasions provide welcome opportunities to reflect on the season past and to anticipate the many adventures yet to come.

In the meantime, it is time to start checking charts and guides and making plans for 2026 and making a wish list for Christmas and Boat Show purchases!



ICC Conor OBrien Cruise

by Sally Cudmore



The restored AK Ilen and a pair of Dublin Bay 21s

ICC members from across Ireland marked the centenary of Conor OBrien's return from his circumnavigation with a commemorative cruise from Baltimore to Dún Laoghaire from June 13-21, culminating in a celebratory dinner at the RIYC.

The cruise began in Baltimore, where OBrien's vessel *Saoirse* was originally built. A send-off dinner at the Jolie Brise on Friday evening brought together the crews

of boats starting from Baltimore: *Saoirse*, *AK Ilen*, *Bubulubus*, *SunFast*, and *Shukuran*. Under sunny skies, *Saoirse* and *Ilen*, both designed by OBrien, hoisted sails and led the fleet past the Baltimore Beacon in a memorable sight.

After a spinnaker run to Kinsale where *ReeSpray* joined the fleet, *Bubulubus* hosted a lively pre-dinner gathering, squeezing 21 guests into the cockpit. Dinner



at KYC followed, where Vincent Murphy, historian and *Ilen* crew member, shared insights into O'Brien's life and achievements.

Sunday's leg allowed boats to choose their own destinations. *Bubulubus* opted for Helvick Harbour, a charming fishing port with a friendly (possibly self-appointed) harbour master who offered local tips and pub recommendations. A sunset drink at Tigh Mhuirthe and fresh prawns the following morning from a returning fishing boat made for a perfect stop.

The fleet regrouped in Kilmore Quay on Monday. *Bubulubus* anchored at the Saltee Islands for lunch and puffin-watching. Dinner was held at Mary Barry's pub, with a minibus ferrying crews from the marina. East coast navigation was new to some, and seasoned sailors shared tips on tides and currents—especially the trick of leaving Kilmore two hours before slack water to catch favorable eddies.

With two days to reach Arklow, *ReeSpray* remained in Kilmore to explore, while *Ilen* and *Bubulubus* sailed past Carnsore Point and anchored at Pollduff off Cahore Point. A cliff walk led to one of Wexford's golden beaches, and a detour to *Ilen* turned into an impromptu dinner aboard.

On Wednesday, *Bubulubus* anchored outside Courtown Harbour and explored by tender. Built during the famine by Lord Courtown, the harbour features a narrow stone-walled channel opening into a basin for small yachts. In Arklow, *Bubulubus* berthed outside *ReeSpray*, and was aground next morning but a gentle nudge of the engine got her off. Arklow offers convenient amenities and the newly operational sewage treatment plant was much appreciated by local boaters.

With no wind and clear skies, the fleet motor-sailed to Greystones, a modern marina surrounded by apartments and a vibrant community. The old town, cliff walk (technically closed, but accessible), and beaches were highlights.

On Friday the strong winds, tight quarters and long bowsprit made *Ilen's* departure challenging. The fleet sailed to Scotsman Bay for a Parade of Sail into Dún Laoghaire, timed precisely to match O'Brien's return 100 years earlier. Seventeen boats, including three Dublin Bay 21s, joined the spectacle. *Tritsch-Tratsch IV* carried members of O'Brien's family, and even the Irish Naval Service made a brief appearance.

The cruise concluded with a formal dinner for 85 guests at the RIYC, co-hosted by Commodores Tim Carpenter (RIYC) and Alan Markey (ICC). Silvia Murphy, O'Brien's grandniece, shared personal memories and diary excerpts. Historian Winkie Nixon spoke on O'Brien's sailing and gun-running exploits, while James Lyons reflected on the legacy of the *Ilen* and her role in the Sailing into Wellness programme.



Editor's note: for more detail, please visit the website

Inishtrahull, the Most Northerly Part of Ireland

by Pat O'Shea

In May of this year, we took *Amergin* from Kilrush to the west coast of Scotland for our Summer cruise. Onboard with me were Dom Kelly and Enda McDonagh, both experienced sailors. We left the Shannon Estuary on 13th May. With a series of day sails we reached Tory Island on the 16th, where we spent two nights. The weather was warm and the winds very light. This was my third time crossing over the North coast of Ireland and passing by Inishtrahull. On the two previous occasions the weather was not suitable for a landing, however this time the weather was perfect so we decided it would be our next stop after Tory, enroute to Portrush.



Amergin tied to Portmore Pier

In the early afternoon of the 18th, we sailed slowly into Portmore Harbour using the engine as there are rocks on both sides of the entrance. There already were a number of leisure boats tied up to the small pier, so we picked up the convenient mooring buoy a short distance out. After about an hour, a couple of the boats left and we motored in. I had read about a submerged rock approximately 8m off the pier, so we came in tight to avoid it. Our keel still managed to touch off it, so I think it is a bit closer than people say. We tied up to the pier with plenty of depth for an overnight stay.



The old lighthouse

It was a beautiful sunny day, so after lunch on board we set off to walk to the old lighthouse on the east of the island. This lighthouse was taken out of service in 1958 when a new structure was made operational on the west of the island. Ruins of the old accommodation

are still there. We signed the visitor's book which is kept in a plastic bucket inside an old cast iron stove in one of the buildings.



Location of the visitor book

Inishtrahull is 1.5km long with a land area of ~80 acres. It was inhabited by several families until 1928 and had its own school.

Later in the afternoon we walked out to the lighthouse on the western end of the island. There were lots of rabbits and the corncrake was in full voice. The island has an abundance of sea birds including shags, oystercatchers, artic terns, fulmars, and many more. We passed by the old school ruins on the way back to the pier. It was a fine structure and looked like it had a house for the teacher built alongside. I counted the ruins of 11 houses on the island.

Enda, who is a keen sea swimmer dived into the water so that he could claim to have swum in the most northerly part of Ireland.

After dinner on board, we turned *Amergin* around using warps so that the bow would be facing out of the harbour for our departure. Next morning we carefully motored out of Portmore and continued our journey to Portrush. Our short stay on Inishtrahull was very memorable with spectacular scenery, interesting walks and lots of wildlife all helped by the beautiful weather we got in May.



The old schoolhouse

The Clipper Race

by Paul McSorley

The Clipper fleet set off from Portsmouth at the end of August, crewed by enthusiastic adventurers and future cruising sailors. There is a strong Northern Ireland interest on board *GOSH* (CV27), representing the Great Ormand Street Hospital Charity.

The skipper, Oliver (Ollie) Irvine hails from N.I. and my middle daughter, Aoife, has taken a year out to join the adventure around the globe by sea.

The first leg to Port Sherry, Spain, was a tough windward beat, but with some inspired sailing they came in second and are top of the leader board.

Definitely one to watch and we wish them well.



Team GOSH with Sir Robin Knox-Johnston; Aoife behind him

Away with the Fairies

by Peter Mullan

It started many months ago with a chance encounter in a petrol station in Holywood. My longtime friend Grant told me about his new boat, a Fairy class at RNIYC.

Earlier this year my friend Lynn told me that his friend Barney had also bought one which had been restored by Ricky at Ardglass. Barney was putting a crew together. Might I be available.

Naturally I was delighted to have been asked. RNIYC regatta was my first chance to sail on this very beautiful little yellow yacht. My task was to fly the little spinnaker which is flown inside the forestay. Conditions were perfect. The club launch took us out to *Pastime* at her mooring. We had a great start, got the spinnaker to fly, (twice) and had a good mid fleet result.



New owner Barney was well pleased with our result. Tea and buns ashore before I drove home. Last Tuesday four of us turned up to sail so Barney gallantly stood down and I could sail again. Crew Davy flew the spinnaker and I for the first time in my life did the runners. We came in a splendid third. Not bad for a rookie crew. Only the owner was less than delighted as he had been sacked!

Seriously, Barney deserves great admiration for investing in the restoration of this very beautiful little ship. She will outlast and outlive all of us.

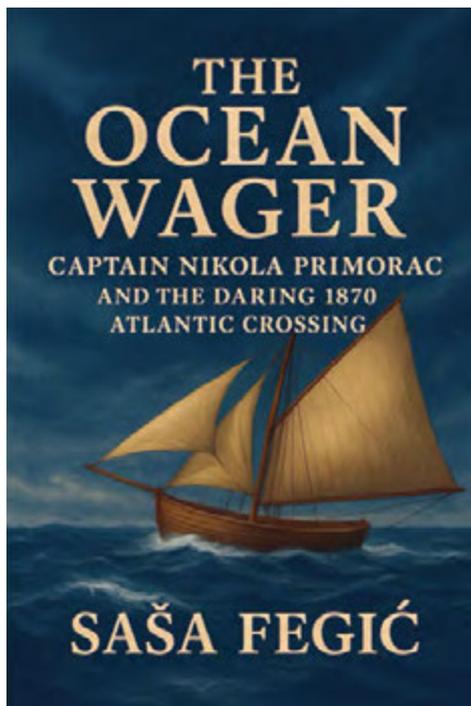
The Ocean Wager

Captain Nikola Primorac and the Daring 1870 Atlantic Crossing

By Saša Fegić

Book Review by Daria Blackwell

ISBN: 979-8284751985
77 pages, 7 BW images



The cover was designed by AI

Saša Fegić, a Croatian circumnavigator, has written and published a book about an extraordinary early ocean crossing. Intrigued by snippets of information about an Atlantic crossing by a fellow Croatian instigated by a bet made in a pub, Saša investigated various sources of information and pieced together a story that needed to be told.

It's a story that only someone who has crossed oceans could imagine and recreate. In the summer of 1870, Captain Nikola Primorac from Dubrovnik, a sailor of modest means, was in a bar in Liverpool when a man announced that you couldn't cross the Atlantic in a yawl. Nikola stood up and said he could do it. They made a wager and Nikola set about to find a boat.

He found an abandoned 6-metre (20 ft) yawl. She was originally a ship's boat of a merchantman that had sunk. Together with Irishman John Buckley, he set about restoring her and equipping her for the North Atlantic. John had the right experience and temperament to attempt such a voyage.

To honour his hometown Primorac named the boat *City of Ragusa*, as Dubrovnik was historically known. They departed Liverpool with a dog aboard after provisioning with salt rations, water in barrels, and dry bread. Ninety days after departing Liverpool, and after stopping in Queenstown County Cork, they arrived in Boston, "half-starved, half-mad, and 100% victorious." The east to west crossing had been a gruelling experience. They achieved some notoriety in Boston, but Primorac didn't do it to achieve fame, he did it because he knew he could.

The Irishman did not return with Primorac on the return voyage. Instead, Edward Hayter, an Englishman born in New Zealand, joined him on the return journey. They made it to Ireland in 36 days, less than half the westward crossing. After the adventure, Primorac resumed his life as a tobacconist in Liverpool, and ultimately died in Rainhill Asylum but the *City of Ragusa* was preserved in the Liverpool Museum.

It's a very easy read and preserves a little bit of nautical history that most of us would never have known. There's much more detail about Captain John Charles Buckley in Wikipedia. He completed at least two more Atlantic crossings sailing on the ship *Hypathia* in a trans-Atlantic race.

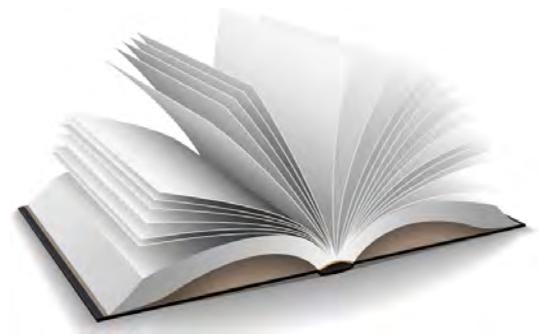
Enjoy the ICC Online

For current news, information, upcoming events, and discussions

Keep up to date with all matters ICC by following the news on our updated website. Our member-only section is chock-full of information, including our club calendar. Remember also to keep your information up to date, and don't forget to upload a photo of yourself and your boat.

Please also join our private Facebook page, where you can join in the discussions. Just search for "Irish Cruising Club" on Facebook, click on the link to the group page. Or, just scan the QR code to the right. Then click on the "join" link. (Only members will be admitted.) You will then receive notifications of new posts on our website.

If you do not wish to be on Facebook, the latest posts from there will shortly be viewable in the member section of our website.



Scan the QR code
to access our
Facebook page

Bantry Bay Cruise

by John McAleer

Over the course of a very fine day with bright sunshine, Tuesday 29th July saw the ICC fleet assemble at Lawrence Cove Marina, Bere Island. Boats had enjoyed a pleasant two-day sail from Cork Harbour, though as usual on this coastline, they were beating into south westerly winds. Pat Fleming had an exciting encounter, as can be read in his article elsewhere in this issue.

By 7 pm we had a group of twenty-five members and friends sitting down to enjoy the annual barbecue. Many thanks again to Rachel and Patrick Harrington of LCM for the use of the barbecue and for providing tables and chairs for the gathering. Everyone brought their own food and drinks, which were frequently pooled during an evening of very good spirits. The last of the revellers made it safely to their bunks around 1:30 am.

Wednesday was again a bright day. After breakfast attendees took the opportunity to walk areas of the Island or simply visit the nearby Murphy's Shop. This must be one of the last remaining traditional shops in the country, with its wooden shelving holding rows of freshly baked breads, cans of beans, and tins of Birds custard.

On Wednesday afternoon, we headed in company up Bantry Bay. Regrettably, one of the boats had to withdraw on receiving news of a bereavement in the wider family, causing us to lose four members for the remainder of the event.

Some of us rafted up at the Whiddy Island Pontoon and one yacht anchored in Glengarriff. Members also overnighted in the Bantry Marina.

By Thursday morning we had four boats on the Whiddy pontoon. Speaking of which, it is somewhat unfortunate that the Bantry Port Authority, operated by the Port of Cork, removed at least half of the Whiddy Pontoon some time ago. There is now just about room for the ferry to berth. Meanwhile, it is understood that the remaining pontoon sections are beached somewhere along the shoreline of Bantry Bay.



Members sampling local produce in Bantry

Apologies to the ferry skipper for any inconvenience, as due to our presence he was forced to berth the ferry inside the pontoon, a manoeuvre undertaken frequently during the two days with admirable skill. The berthing situation may however force a rethink of the logistics for next year.

It was agreed to abandon the planned Whiddy Island Chase on Thursday morning, as for the ICC boats to leave the berth, may have resulted in us not being able to stay on the Island overnight.

Thursday instead was spent in chats, swimming, and explorations of an Island with some very interesting history. This includes a First World War American Airbase. An odd pint and glass of wine were also part of the agenda.

Dinner was served at the Bank House Bar and Restaurant at 7 pm with an attendance of 22 members and guests. The party had been expanded by members who are fortunate to have their boat in more exotic locations and were travelling by road. Thanks to Tim and Kathleen O'Leary, we had an excellent evening, rounded off by singing and general merriment.

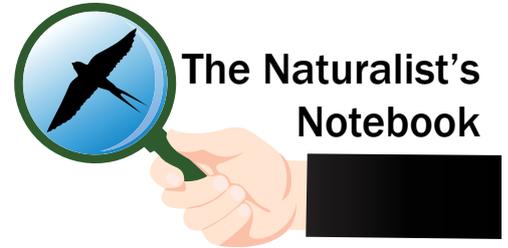
For many, the highlight of the night was a rendition of "The Goat" by a well known Cork sailing gentleman who does not need to be identified. However, I must say Tom that your interpretative goatlike actions, accompanying the song, were only amazing.

Friday morning saw everyone in a rush to start heading back around the Mizen in advance of some inclement weather. I felt sorry in saying to one esteemed member, who had three other ICC stalwarts on board, that he might have to raft up to himself in Glengarriff for lunch.

Despite some small hiccups in the programme, I think that we all had a great few days in West Cork and hopefully everyone thoroughly enjoyed themselves.



Navigational Blunders. We're Not the Only Ones!



by Bob Brown

In the last issue of our Newsletter, I described the various navigation methods employed by whales, birds, turtles, and even insects, when crossing our oceans. These methods have parallels in our own navigation, but of course nature was ahead of us by millions of years! However, as with human navigation, things can go terribly wrong.

This August, some 23 pilot whales became stranded together on the island of Sanday, in Orkney, and subsequently others were found nearby. They had been there some time and decayed, making it almost impossible to deduce the reason for the incident. And

these mishaps probably form a tiny minority of journeys (otherwise such species wouldn't survive!), we still have much to learn about why and how it happens. It is also true that most accidental arrivals are never recorded, particularly in respect of birds and insects.

To my mind, bird mistakes are easier to explain because of their mobility and the highly capricious nature of their aerial environment – weather. Deep depressions and their associated strong winds can push individuals, and entire flocks, far off course, and this is particularly the case during Autumn, when decaying hurricanes and tropical storms arrive on our side of the Atlantic



Short finned pilot whales, globally widespread. Prone to stranding when following misleading magnetic lines?

last year some 77 perished in similar circumstances. Just two examples where normally reliable animal navigation failed with fatal consequences.

In the bird world, misplaced arrivals are happening constantly – an American robin turned up exhausted in Rowallane Gardens, Co Down. The previous time I'd seen one was in Central Park, New York – in its normal range. Perhaps the most symbolic of avian navigational errors is the lone black-browed albatross reported over several years from the Yorkshire coast to Shetland, having by some accident crossed the doldrums of equatorial Atlantic from the far south. Presumably it had spent these years cruising in a fruitless search for a breeding partner.

For all the wonderous navigational abilities that marine wildlife demonstrates, there are frequent errors where individuals and groups turn up in the wrong places. Often the birds, cetaceans, and others can correct these, re-adjust to resume a proper course. Sometimes, as with those poor whales, it is disastrous. And whilst

sweeping in small birds and even butterflies from the Americas.

But this is not the only scenario. A winter high pressure system in the subarctic regions of Scandinavia and Russia can introduce north-easterly winds sweeping seabirds into our waters. Our fishing villages can be great places to look for these. Ardglass, probably familiar to many for its marina, hosted the extremely rare (for us) white-billed diver in 1986. It hung around for several days. In January 2012 a Ross's gull, with its characteristic wedge-shaped tail and hint of pink in its plumage, foraged around the harbour entrance along with about 30 Iceland gulls. Both species are normally found on the eastern coasts of Siberia and Alaska, more at home on Wrangle Island or the Chukchi Sea.

Some blow-ins are almost impossible to explain. The journal *British Wildlife* recently reported the arrival of a little white tern in Caernarfonshire last February – a sub-species normally found in the Indo-Pacific. The circumstances of its extraordinary journey remain a

mystery, and sadly the bird died shortly after, probably from exhaustion.

In the case of whales, dolphins, and porpoises, other factors are more relevant. Cetaceans utilise magnetic field lines for navigation. Peter Evans, in his *Natural History of Whales and Dolphins* reports that live strandings often occur where local magnetic lines intersect the coast; whereas they are less likely with lines parallel to coast. In other words, they were using dangerously wrong signals, effectively trying to navigate over land, and even turning landwards again after being coaxed out to sea. However, there are many other causes. Postmortems of stranded whales have suggested that



Not just any auld seagull...! A Ross's gull in Ardglass, over 12,000km (7500 miles) off course.



Stranded porpoise in Strangford Lough. A rare chance to see the neat dentition for catching small fish.

excessive infections by fluke and nematode parasites, resulting in brain lesions, may have caused irrational behaviour. Of course, some strandings of young whales result from separation from mother. Foolhardy pursuit of prey may be another cause, whilst in some cases it may be an infected leader of a pod of whales leading the others to disaster. Pilot whales seem to be particularly prone to this.

However, there may also be much more profound reasons for unexpected arrivals. Whale populations are still recovering from the slaughter of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Some species may only now be resuming their former routes, resulting in 'new' locations. In 2012 the Irish Times reported a sighting of three blue whales off Mizen Head, Cork, noting that there had only been one other such record previously. Equally, a new breeding area for blue whales has been found off the coast of Chile.

And then there is climate change. Increasing sea temperatures are likely to result in shifts of species and some habitats, and predators like cetaceans and seabirds have little option but to follow their prey. The August issue of *British Wildlife* reports two Iberian orcas off the Cornwall coast, possibly reflecting northward shifts in the distribution of their prey, Atlantic bluefin tuna. We can only hope they didn't bring their rudder-snapping habits with them.

Equally, any future changes in storminess, or the direction and intensity of storms and other weather systems may impact upon the arrivals of vagrant bird species far from their homelands or waters. It's already happening – little egrets, formerly a rare sighting in the 20th century, are now seen widely about our saltmarshes and estuaries. This is a major northern shift from their former European and Mediterranean distribution. Increasingly, common and Sandwich terns, normally summertime nesters, are choosing to overwinter with us. On the seabed, species characteristic of warmer waters are increasingly recorded in our waters, whilst cool-water ones are retreating northwards.

So, there is much to look out for here. As boating folk, with access to seas and coasts that are largely inaccessible to land lubbers, we have plenty of opportunity for sightings of unexpected arrivals. In reporting these we can contribute to a greater understanding of changes for good or ill, in our marine life. And maybe we'll get a better understanding of why some creatures make navigational blunders, just like we do.



A pilot whale carcass found at the high-water mark

Christmas at Sea

Robert Louis Stevenson

1850 - 1894

The sheets were frozen hard, and they cut the naked hand;
The decks were like a slide, where a seaman scarce could stand;
The wind was a nor'wester, blowing squally off the sea;
And cliffs and spouting breakers were the only things a-lee.

They heard the surf a-roaring before the break of day;
But 'twas only with the peep of light we saw how ill we lay.
We tumbled every hand on deck instanter, with a shout,
And we gave her the maintops'l, and stood by to go about.

All day we tacked and tacked between the South Head and the North;
All day we hauled the frozen sheets, and got no further forth;
All day as cold as charity, in bitter pain and dread,
For very life and nature we tacked from head to head.

We gave the South a wider berth, for there the tide-race roared;
But every tack we made we brought the North Head close aboard:
So's we saw the cliffs and houses, and the breakers running high,
And the coastguard in his garden, with his glass against his eye.

The frost was on the village roofs as white as ocean foam;
The good red fires were burning bright in every 'long-shore home;
The windows sparkled clear, and the chimneys volleyed out;
And I vow we sniffed the victuals as the vessel went about.

The bells upon the church were rung with a mighty jovial cheer;
For it's just that I should tell you how (of all days in the year)
This day of our adversity was blessed Christmas morn,
And the house above the coastguard's was the house where I was born.

O well I saw the pleasant room, the pleasant faces there,
My mother's silver spectacles, my father's silver hair;
And well I saw the firelight, like a flight of homely elves,
Go dancing round the china-plates that stand upon the shelves.

And well I knew the talk they had, the talk that was of me,
Of the shadow on the household and the son that went to sea;
And O the wicked fool I seemed, in every kind of way,
To be here and hauling frozen ropes on blessed Christmas Day.

They lit the high sea-light, and the dark began to fall.
"All hands to loose topgallant sails," I heard the captain call.
"By the Lord, she'll never stand it," our first mate Jackson, cried.
..."It's the one way or the other, Mr. Jackson," he replied.

She staggered to her bearings, but the sails were new and good,
And the ship smelt up to windward just as though she understood.
As the winter's day was ending, in the entry of the night,
We cleared the weary headland, and passed below the light.

And they heaved a mighty breath, every soul on board but me,
As they saw her nose again pointing handsome out to sea;
But all that I could think of, in the darkness and the cold,
Was just that I was leaving home and my folks were growing old.

A Lovely Meeting on the Way to the Bantry Rally

by Pat Fleming

Imagine you've sailed past Roches Point and are heading west. The winds, as usual, are not favourable, but at least bearing westerly so you can reach the Old Head before beginning to tack. It's going to be a long day as you're hoping to reach Baltimore tonight, so that you'll make Lawrence Cove tomorrow in time for John McAleer's BBQ.

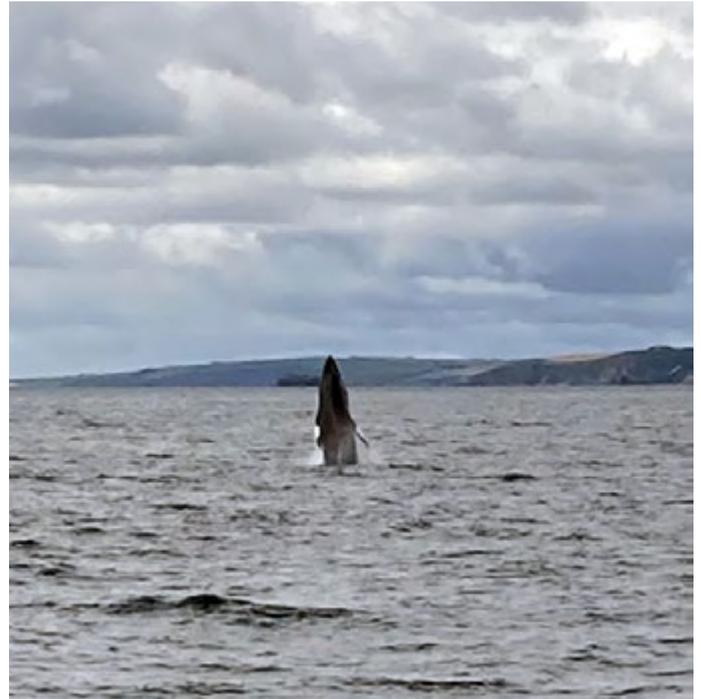
You are relaxing in the cockpit of a centre cockpit yacht. The sheeted in genny is blocking much of your view to port as you beat to the south west. The last time you checked there was nothing close enough to worry about and plenty of water under you, so you are leaving it to the autopilot to do the hard work while you and your crewmate relax and chat.

Then! The sound of a huge splash just ahead on the other side of the genny. Immediately you're thinking have you hit something? How long was it since you last did a lookout? How could another vessel get up close that quickly without an engine being heard?

Quickly it dawns on you that you felt no impact so you didn't hit anything solid, so what was it?

All the thoughts rushing through your head are only taking milliseconds, faster even than your now racing heartbeat. By this stage you have jumped out of the cockpit and are clambering onto the side deck to see the cause but all you find is a large circle of foam about 15 meters ahead and slightly off to port. What caused it? Would you have hit it? Unlikely but it would have been close!

Then a whale suddenly shoots up about 50 meters ahead off the port bow. Amazed you stare open mouthed as his body shoots upwards, almost clearing the surface. Except for on the TV you've never seen a whale breaching before. In fact you've rarely seen whales, full stop. You're holding onto the shrouds and with wide eyes you turn to your crewmate to see if he has seen it too. No words are needed as you can tell at once from the look on his face.



A minke whale breaching

Then it breaches again and again but each time further away. Now it's over to starboard so you clamber back across the cockpit to get over to the other side to continue watching, wishing you had a camera, and suddenly realise your phone is in your pocket. Stop gawking and take a photo, stupid!

Luckily you get it out in time to catch the last two or three breaches and later you have your identification confirmed by the Whale & Dolphin Group as it being a minke whale.

We were reminded that we only share the seas. If every day was like this, wouldn't it be magic?



Shukuran, Toirse 2, and Brisa de Mar at Whiddy Island.

Wandering Geomagnetic Poles

by Daria Blackwell

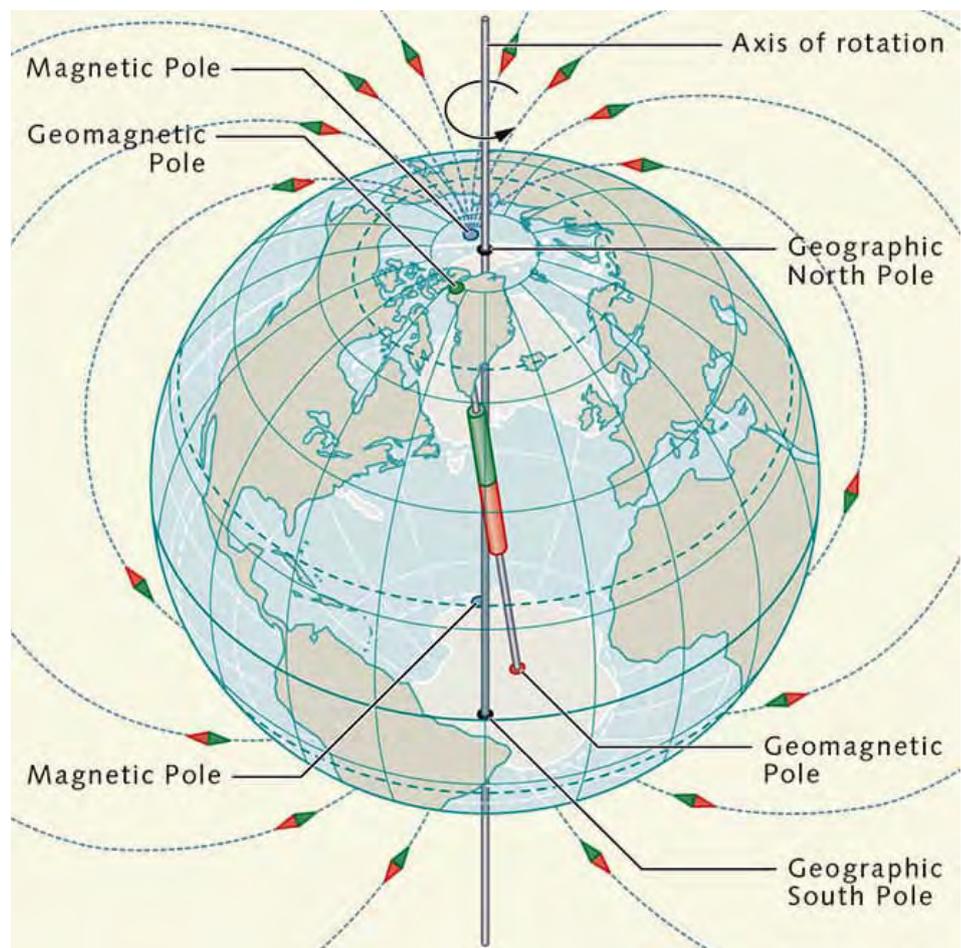
Pole shifts aren't just theories. Earth's magnetic poles are known to move. We live on a thin crust of solid rock beneath which is molten rock. The Earth's core which generates most of our magnetic field is approximately 85% iron, and moves independently from the surface plates, which is why the magnetic pole changes position.

The Earth has three sets of poles.

The **geographic poles** (North/South) are fixed points where Earth's axis intersects its surface. In the north it corresponds to the northern intersection of the Earth's rotational axis with the Earth's surface. Its coordinates are thus "90 degrees north". It is not possible to locate this point, using a pocket compass. The compass needle aligns with the **magnetic poles** of the magnetic field of the Earth. These are defined as the two points where the magnetic field lines extend into the Earth perpendicular to its surface. One of these points is located in the northern hemisphere and the other in the southern hemisphere, but their positions are not exactly diametrically opposed on the globe. Neither of them can be assigned a fixed geographical position because their locations are constantly changing.

Scientists also define the **geomagnetic poles**, which cannot be established through direct measurements but only theoretically calculated. The geomagnetic poles are where the planet's magnetic field lines become vertical (as if a bar magnet ran through middle Earth). The geomagnetic poles are located at the intersection of the axis of the bar magnet with the Earth's surface. These are very important because they form the basis of the geomagnetic coordinate system. This system is used for navigation underwater, underground, and for every mobile phone compass app. They are affected by the movement of the magnetic poles.

Currently, the North Magnetic Pole is shifting at an unprecedented rate. The movement of the magnetic north pole has accelerated from ~15 km/year in the 1990s to ~50–60 km/year recently, shifting from Canada toward Siberia. It has already moved back



*The northern and southern hemispheres each have three poles – one geographic, one magnetic, and one geomagnetic.**

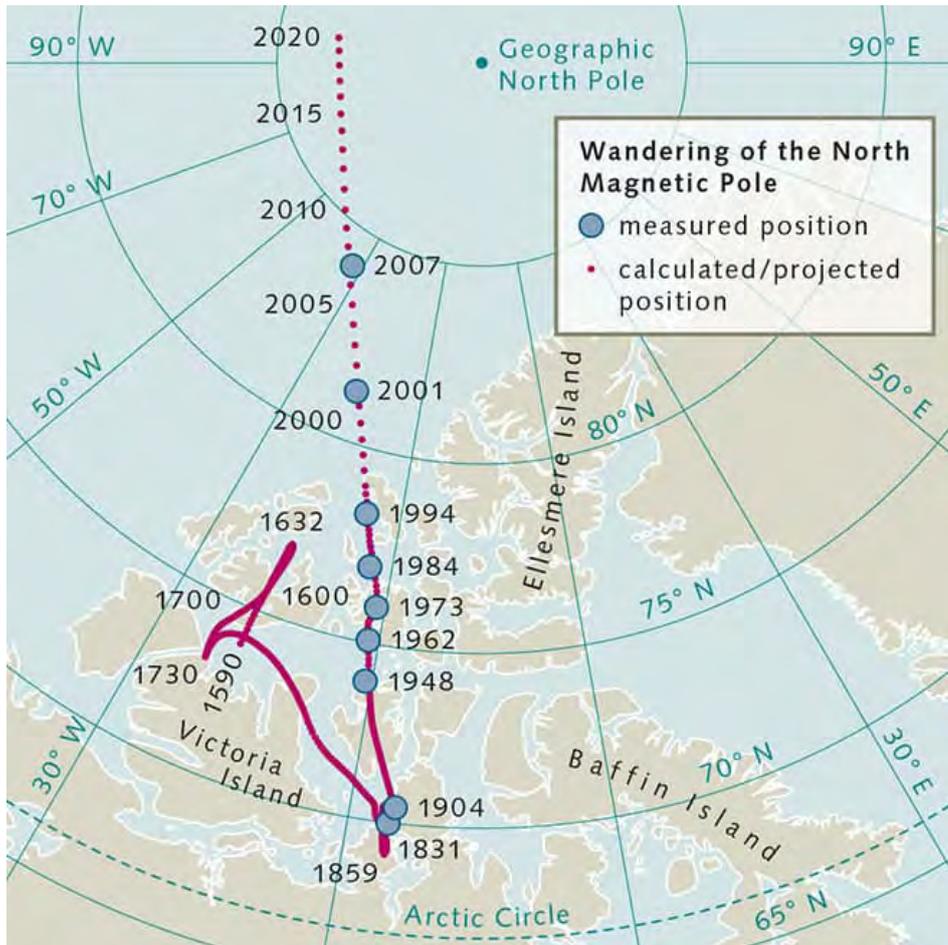
past geological north, to a place it has not been for thousands of years. The south magnetic pole drifts more slowly (~10–15 km/year) but has shown erratic motion of late. Plus, the Earth's magnetic field has weakened by 10% in the past century. The magnetic field extends into space for a distance of many Earth radii. It shields the planet from dangerous radiation and particles from outer space.

Some researchers worry this fast movement signals a potential sudden shift. Geomagnetic reversals, where the magnetic poles flip, have happened in the distant past. The last full reversal occurred around 780,000 years ago, and the most recent brief reversal, the 'Laschamp Event', happened about 41,000 years ago. Scientists believe it takes thousands of years for a complete flip allowing time for adaptation. They do not expect a flip in the near future.

There is a fascinating animation of the magnetic declination projection from 1590 to 2030 on the NOAA website. (<https://www.ncei.noaa.gov/products/wandering-geomagnetic-poles>)

Impacts on Navigation

The movement of Earth’s geomagnetic poles and its implications for navigation are fascinating. These are some considerations:



The North Magnetic Pole is constantly moving. Scientists measure and calculate its position every few years.*

Traditional Navigation (Compasses)

- As the angle between magnetic north (where a compass points) and true north (geographic pole) changes as poles shift, declination values change regionally, requiring manual adjustment. The changes are greater at higher latitudes.
- Maps with fixed declination data become inaccurate. For example, a cruiser using a 20-year-old chart of the Atlantic might face a declination error of several degrees, leading to navigational drift over long distances.
- Runway numbers indicate an aircraft’s magnetic heading during take-off or landing, based on compass degrees divided by 10 and rounded. For example, a runway with a heading of 120 degrees magnetic is designated Runway 12. Parallel runways are distinguished by an additional letter: “L” for left or “R” for right, viewed from the approaching aircraft. Shifts require periodic renumbering (for example, Fairbanks Airport, Alaska, renamed runways in 2009).

Modern Systems

- Satellite-based navigation (GPS) uses geographic coordinates, unaffected by magnetic shifts. However, backup systems or hybrid tools (for example, smartphone compass apps) still rely on magnetic sensors and require updated declination

data. Some apps update automatically, while others do not.

- The World Magnetic Model (WMM) is a data-based, mathematical representation of Earth’s large-scale magnetic field used for navigation, orientation, and heading references. It’s critical to virtually every smartphone’s map apps and is the standard navigation tool for the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration as well as the U.S. Department of Defence, North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and more. The US National Centers for Environmental Information and the British Geological Survey produce an updated model every five years. The last update of the WMM was in 2020.

Broader Implications

Species like migratory birds or sea turtles that use magnetoreception for navigation may adapt gradually to pole shifts, though rapid changes could pose challenges (a topic of

ongoing research).

So, while modern GPS reduces reliance on magnetic navigation, understanding geomagnetic shifts remains critical for accuracy in traditional methods and systems requiring magnetic orientation. Regular updates to navigational models and tools are required to mitigate most practical impacts.

Of course, one the biggest questions is whether Santa’s workshop is at the geographic North Pole and what system of navigation he uses to find his way around the world and back home in these shifting times. I’m sure NORAD has Santa covered, but who is going to assist us wandering cruisers?

*These images were produced by “World Ocean Reviews” (worldoceanreview.com) which is published by Maribus, the non-profit limited liability company founded by Mareverlag. Maribus was founded for the specific purpose of raising public awareness of marine science and thus contributing to more effective marine protection.

Grandpa, What's a Chart Table?

by Norman Kean - Part 1



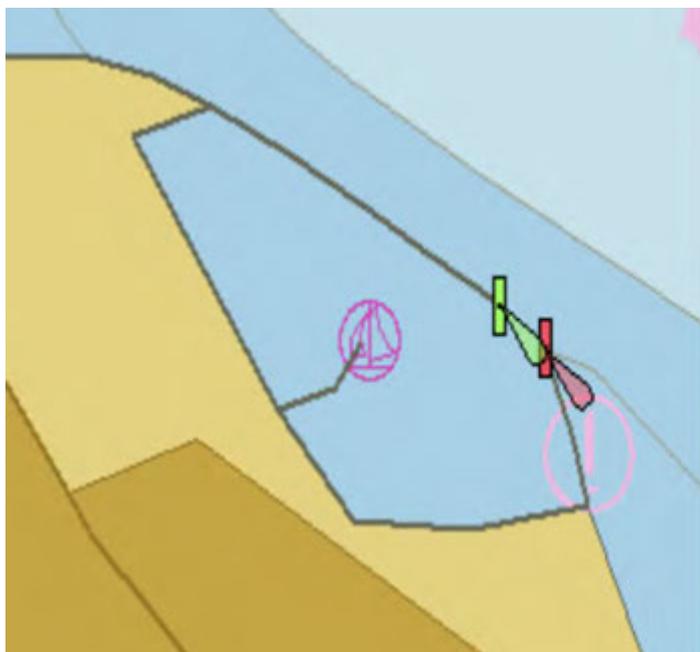
From the Chart Table

When paper charts are threatened, the howls of protest are deafening. But when there is a stay of execution, there is no resulting surge in purchases. We all love our paper charts, and we turn to them for reassurance and the big picture. But we don't buy them anymore. Their future remains shaky. And as a result we have nothing officially 'To Be Used For Navigation'. Our vector charts – Navionics, C-Map, and the rest - are not thus blessed.

Can this be fixed? Need it be fixed? 'The Powers That Be' are concerned about small-craft navigation mainly because commercial small craft must carry some kind of official charts, and cannot conceivably carry the kind of charts big ships now use. The RYA, provider of probably the world's most respected leisure-sailing qualifications, is switching its chartwork curriculum from 80% paper to 80% electronic. However, it finds it a challenge to devise

small boat with a single-point echosounder. He replied that he'd be glad of a man in a pair of wellies with a stick.

Alas, no more. International Hydrographic Organisation standards are now so demanding of precision and accuracy that the amateur survey is not acceptable. My first effort at surveying was in Fahan Creek, Lough Swilly, in 1984. It is the basis of the Admiralty chart to this day, incorrectly labelled as a "commercial survey". It wasn't commercial, it was me, in a small boat with a leadline and a sextant. I couldn't do that today – they wouldn't accept it. Even Bob Bradfield's *Antares Charts*, the gold standard for leisure craft in Scotland, are officially unacceptable as a source. (Not that Bob himself is keen to have his information used, for reasons of liability). What floats his boat (literally and metaphorically) is to



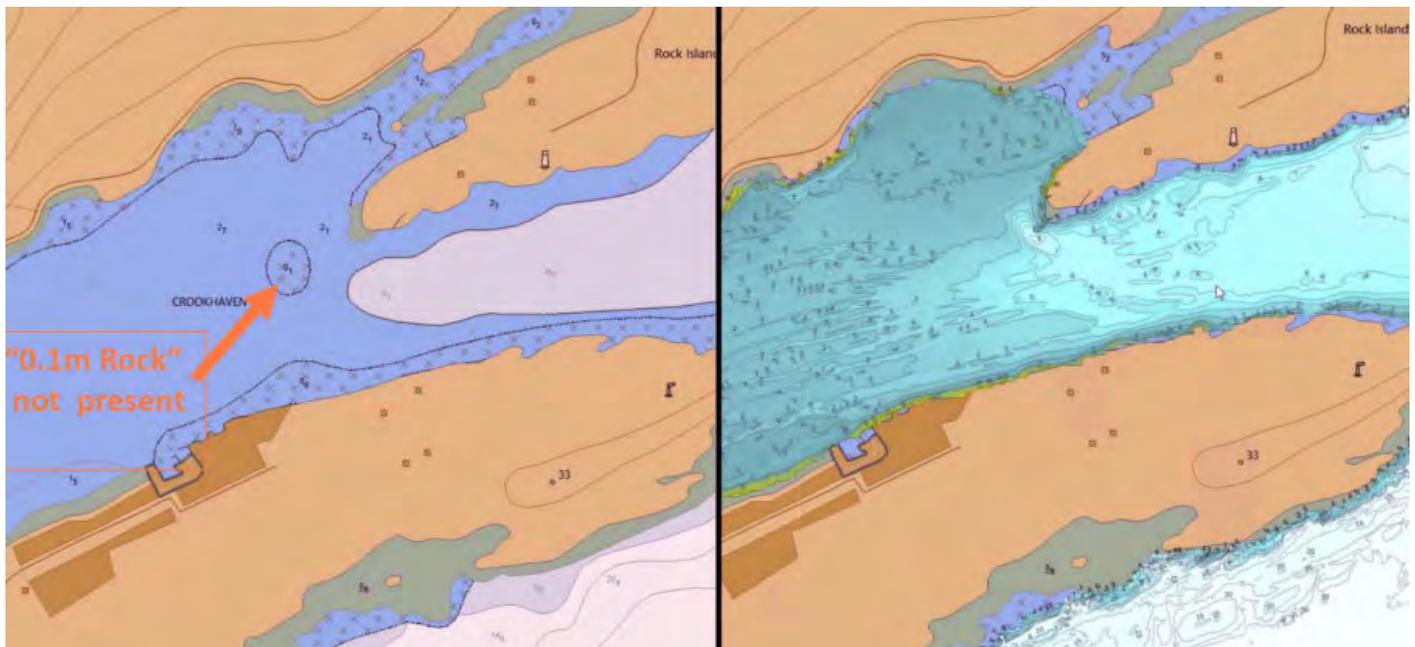
Greystones harbour: (left) an official Electronic Navigational Chart (right) a Navionics chart, not to be used for navigation*

a course when there is no common standard for vector charts which all look and behave differently. In 2021, the UK Standards of Navigation Committee asked the Royal Institute of Navigation to set up a committee to report on digital charts and display systems that would be suitable for navigation. The final report will be delivered on October 16, 2025. It so happens that the Chairman of the RIN Small Craft Group is an ICC member, Paul Bryans. For the last five years he and his team have been wrestling with the problem, and the exercise has thrown up some fascinating insights. I have been privileged to be a member of that team.

Back in 2010 I asked Roger Millard, then in charge of charting Ireland at the UKHO, if, in these days of high-tech surveying, there was still a role for an amateur in a

demonstrate that charted rocks don't exist. He has done it with widespread success in Scotland. That is not easy. The Admiralty are being friendly, but 'rules is rules'.

Paul Bryans' group has come up with many examples of the areas in which both traditional paper and modern electronic big-ship charts fail to meet the needs of small-craft sailors. In Scotland, there are examples of hazards marked on OS maps and not on the charts: rocks incorrectly charted, with correction delayed, areas marked "unsurveyed", and areas where there is no chance of modern resources ever being deployed. In Ireland, the over-exacting IHO standards have resulted in delays of (so far) up to ten years in getting vital INFOMAR data on to the charts. The INFOMAR team spend endless hours trying to resolve tiny offsets between adjoining surveys, to satisfy the UKHO.



Crookhaven: (left) an official ENC. (right) unpublished INFOMAR data, interpreted by Aedan Coffey for the ICC Sailing Directions

In Greystones (for example), the official Electronic Navigational Chart (ENC), aimed at bigger vessels, shows only the breakwaters and the central pier, whereas the Navionics chart has the full detail of pontoon layout, slipways and boatyard; presumably sourced from the Harbourmaster. (See image on left page)

The search for perfection is getting in the way of progress. We are denied access to a great deal of new and high-tech information, because for big ships it's not good enough. But big ships don't go into Dungarvan. By the time its 2015 survey gets on to the charts (if it ever does) it'll be long out of date because the sand moves. The concept of "good enough" has been lost. The Latin legal term "cui bono?" is apposite – who benefits from this approach?

And in answer to the question in the title of this article: a chart table, my dear grandchild, is somewhere your grandparents mislay their keys and glasses, and park tools and miscellaneous nuts and bolts on their way to somewhere else. It is criss-crossed by cables charging a bewildering range of devices, some of which we understand. Charts, those lovely relics of a bygone age, are occasionally spread on the cabin dining table – or clutched, cruelly folded several times, in an ageing hand in the cockpit.

The RIN team consists of Paul Bryans (RIN, RCC, ICC; chair), Kathy Hossain (RIN), Robin Baron and Alan Kohler (Cruising Association), Craig Burton (Training Manager, RYA), Conor Curtin (Operations Manager, RNLI), Jane Russell (RIN), and Norman Kean (RIN and ICC). Paul is also Chairman of the RCC Pilotage Foundation, Jane is Rear-Commodore of the RCC, and Robin and I are also RCC members.

The next From the Chart Table will describe what we recommended should be done.

**Examples taken from the RIN team's Gap Analysis*

Crew Needed

by James Cahill

The Amel ketch *Saol Nua* is on the hard in Piriápolis, Uruguay since April. My plan is to fly to Uruguay or Buenos Aires on first week of November to launch and ready her for a further voyage. The two experienced people who had committed to join and who are familiar with the boat have called off for different and entirely understandable reasons. There goes best laid plans!



However, other doors will hopefully open at this late stage. If club members are aware of enthusiastic sailors who have the time and yen to join the boat for a cruise ending in Valparaiso in early April next. Please make contact:

Phone: +353 87 695 0208 or email: seamascahill@gmail.com

Western Wanderings

by Conor O'Byrne

There was lots of interesting cruising done by Western members this summer, some of which will, no doubt, be fleshed out in full in this year's ICC Annual.



Ilen entering Dublin Bay via Dalkey Sound at the Conor OBrien rally

David Beattie reports that *ReeSpray* joined the Conor OBrien Return Rally from Kinsale to Dún Laoghaire. By all accounts, the social events organised by Rear Commodore Sally Cudmore were a great success. *ReeSpray* then joined the Cruising Club of America's Western Isles Cruise at Oban, where they spent two weeks. On the return trip to Dún Laoghaire they stopped at Bangor and Strangford where the hospitality from ICC friends was "awesome".

Peter Fernie describes his season as "a bit like the curate's egg - good in parts"! The launch of *Mystic* in Ria de Arousa went well, and he was joined by Ray O'Toole and a medical chum, Tony Martin, for EN 25, which was held in Ria de Pontevedra this year. Local weather



Mystic anchored in Cabo de Cuz, Ria de Arousa

brought very strong northerlies, which inhibited plans to sail further north after the EN 25, when Ed Wheeler had also joined *Mystic*. Issues with the heads and service battery kept them in Ria de Arousa, but they still managed some vigorous passages in fresh northerlies. In late August Peter joined Ed Wheeler in Strangford for a few days sailing aboard his new Sadler 26, *Compass Rose* [good choice Ed!]. They attended the Northern party in Quoile Yacht Club, which was excellent.



Street in A Pobra do Carmiñal decorated for Corpus Christi

Phyllis Hayes reports some enjoyable cruising around the Rias aboard *Allegra*, her Northwind 41. They had visits to A Pobra do Caramiñal, Rianxo, and the Punta Cabalo anchorage on Illa de Arousa. She enjoyed exploring the back streets of A Pobra, which were decorated with floral carpets for Corpus Christi. She also took part in the beautiful ICC river walk up to the monastery of Santa María da Armenteira.



Phyllis Hayes' Northwind 41, *Allegra*, leaving A Pobra do Caramiñal with her son Piarse on the helm

Michael Craughwell was another ICC member to enjoy pleasant cruising in the Rias of Galicia, but first he had to get there from his winter berth at Vilamoura in Portugal. After some fairly extensive maintenance work on his Jongert 20S *Orchestra* (including a replacement of the forestay) he was finally able to lift-in on May 23rd. With only two crew members on board, they set off into stiff northerlies with a 2-3m sea running against them. As his crew were suffering from mal-de-mer, Michael ended up at the helm for the majority of this 56-hour passage to A Pobra do Caramiñal. *Orchestra* joined the cruise in company (5 yachts) organised by Peter Cullen (ICC) to the beautiful town Viana de Castelo where they



Michael Craughwell's Orchestra

spent a most enjoyable weekend. They then returned to Vigo for a few days and finally had a superb dinner in San Adrian. Michael reports that the west is well represented on the marina at A Pobra do Caramiñal, with 5 of the 15 Irish boats there being from Galway. At the time of writing, they are port hopping their way back down to Vilamoura for the winter.

Closer to home Conor O'Byrne took part in the Cong-Galway race on Colm Tuohy's Flying Fifteen, *Green Side Up*. This 30 NM race claims to be Europe's longest inland waterway sailing race. Colm and Conor claimed the winner's prize for the fixed keel category, admittedly not as competitive as the mixed dinghy class. In July, Conor



Flying Fifteen Green Side Up passing by Menlo Castle during the Cong-Galway race

had an enjoyable cruise up to Killary on his Sadler 26 *Calico Jack*, where he enjoyed a few days exploring the Galway-Mayo border with his wife Áine and their seadog. They had memorable visits to Inisturk, Little Killary, and Glassilaun beach.

Alex and Daria Blackwell wound up spending the summer ashore with their Bowman 57 *Aleria* undergoing a refit. Work is progressing, but at a much slower pace than had been hoped for. *Aleria* is receiving new ports and hatches, hull and masts are being repainted, some old panelling is being replaced, along with numerous other smaller jobs. They now plan to bring *Aleria* down to Valencia in Spain early in 2026, where she will be up for sale. Once she is sold, they will begin looking for their next boat – probably with a lifting keel.

In August there was a changing of the guard at Kinavara's annual Cruinniú na mBád, with Paddy Donovan taking over as chairman from ICC's Dr Michael Brogan. There was a very fitting presentation to the



Northabout arriving at Kinvara harbour, with a special delivery for Dr Michael Brogan

outgoing chair with a special delivery of a case of good French wine delivered by *Northabout*. As members will know, *Northabout* was built and owned by ICC member Jarlath Cunnane and successfully completed both the Northwest and Northeast passages of the Arctic between 2001 and 2005. She is now based in La Rochelle and does regular cruises to Greenland. The skipper, Tobias Carter, diverted from his passage north to Greenland into Kinvara for this year's Cruinniú to make the special presentation to Dr Brogan. It was a wonderful sight to see Michael's Galway Hooker, the *MacDuach*, tied up alongside *Northabout* at the quay in Kinvara.

Louis Keating and Maeve Howard did an impressive clockwise tour of the Baltic this summer aboard their Southerly 47, *Sheeaun*. They left Nävekvärn, just south of Stockholm, at the end of May and travelled to the Åland Islands, Finland, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Denmark, and Germany. Evidence of the Russian-Ukraine war was to be seen in the Baltic with a large presence of military ships, particularly off the coast of Lithuania. At one stage they were within 10 miles of 8 NATO warships that could be seen on AIS or visually. Travelling between Lithuania and Poland they were strongly advised to avoid the Exclusive Economic Zone of Russian Kaliningrad, advice which they followed, necessitating a detour 60 miles offshore and back in again. Despite the obvious tensions they travelled completely unhindered and never had to produce a passport or ship's papers. Their only brush with officialdom was a VHF interview with the Lithuanian Coastguard on arrival and again on departure from their waters. Jarlath Cunnane and Mick Brogan joined for the last leg of their cruise, from Denmark to Bremerhaven in Germany.

Louis Keating and friends on Orjaku Island, Estonia with the Tricolour flying in his and Maeve's honour



Saoirse Homecoming Rally Departure from Baltimore, on Saoirse

by Aedan Coffee



Ilen (left) and Saoirse leaving Baltimore Harbour.
Photo by Pierce Higgins



Saoirse leading Ilen out of Baltimore.
Photo by Pierce Higgins

As mentioned elsewhere in this issue, 2025 is the 100th anniversary of Conor O'Brien's arrival back in Dún Laoghaire to complete his circumnavigation on board Saoirse. The ICC had organised a rally from Baltimore, where Saoirse was built, to Dún Laoghaire to commemorate the event.

The rally departed on the 14th of June, but unfortunately the newly finished Saoirse replica, built by Liam Hegarty and his team in Baltimore, could not make the whole journey. However, skippered by Liam Hegarty, she did leave Baltimore with the fleet and go as far as Castletownshend.



: It was a pleasure to see a hanked on jib again, it brought back a lot of memories

Saoirse's stablemate Ilen, also designed by Conor O'Brien and rebuilt by Liam Hegarty, was there and she made the complete voyage to Dún Laoghaire.

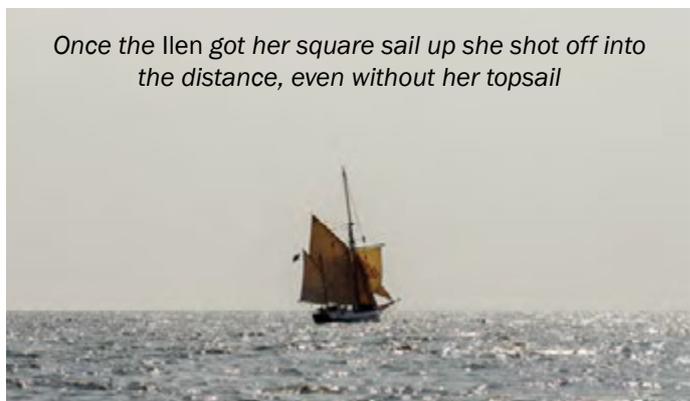
I was fortunate enough to be invited to crew on Saoirse for the trip to Castletownshend. Having got the sails up and departed the mooring, we sailed for a while in Baltimore harbour and then left in close company with Ilen and several modern boats. The wind was light and from the southwest, so we left the harbour close-hauled and then had a pleasant broad reach to the east. We were soon on our own as the modern boats hoisted spinnakers. Then Ilen hoisted her square sail, and they all disappeared off into the distance. We raised our topsail but to no avail. However, we did have a very pleasant sail to Castletownshend.



Two jibs, a large main and no winches makes for a lot of hard work



Untangling a few things before departure. Skipper and boatbuilder Liam Hegarty on the right



Once the Ilen got her square sail up she shot off into the distance, even without her topsail

Galician Grapevine

by Peter Haden

As with so many places this year, sailors in Galicia experienced a changing weather pattern. Mostly it was warm with light winds and especially pleasant in early and mid-summer.

The main event in Galicia this summer was “Encuentro Náutico”, our gathering of ICC boats in July. This was the ninth consecutive annual event and attracted an entry of 25 boats, as well as considerable publicity and local interest.

Each year we choose a port at which to assemble and this year it was Combarro where we received first class support and sponsorship from the marina manager and the local mayor. A popular excursion was to the important



Picture taken overlooking Cabo beach.

In the distance is O Grove Peninsula

L to R: Peter Haden, Monika Capeans, Manuel Capeans (Head of Salvamento), and Moira Haden

vineyard at Gran Bazan. On another day we enjoyed a challenging walk to the monastery at Armenteira led at a cracking pace by seasoned walker Tony Linehan.

Commodore Alan Markey was away representing the club in Scotland, but he asked Tony and Geraldine Linehan to represent him and of course the irrepressible Stanton and Pat Adair were also there.

Local musicians serenading the ICC fleet on the pontoon at Combarro



We are fortunate to have many local friends in Galicia. Manuel Capeans of Salvamento made sure we were well recognised throughout the summer. At the first EN dinner he presented every boat with a copy of their fully illustrated safety advice as well as his personal telephone number. The EN25 closing dinner was arranged for us by Manolo Magahof, retired captain of the Spanish Navy at a delightful restaurant on edge of the beach in the tiny village of Beluso in Pontevedra.

A full report on this year’s Encuentro Náutico will appear in the Annual.



The mayor of Poio gave us permission, the ferry ride, and guides to visit Tambo Island

A welcome and surprise visitor to Galicia at the end of the summer was CCA Commodore Jay Gowell accompanied by our Commodore on “Moonstone”. They had sailed south from Scotland. With ICC advice he left his boat in the care of our club’s honorary port officer Alfredo Lagos at Punta Lagoa marina.



Northern Notes

by Maeve Bell

With astonishingly bad timing, the balmy summer weather came to an end on the last weekend of August just when a two-venue rally in Strangford Lough was due to start on the Friday evening. In the light of a forecast of strong to gale force southerly winds accompanied by rain, Vice Commodore Julie Chambers, wisely decided to relocate to the hospitable pontoon at Quoile Yacht Club for the duration. Sadly, the weather meant that Paddy Judge, who had sailed as far as Ardglass, decided to



Ed Wheeler and Peter Fernie

return to Howth. However Ed Wheeler and Peter Fernie turned up in Ed's new boat *Compass Rose*, Andrew Kennedy arrived on the last leg of his delivery trip from Brittany via Baltimore and a further five boats completed the 'challenging' passage from their moorings to the pontoon. A delightful evening ensued with about 20 members and friends gathered in the Club conservatory.



Andrew Kennedy arrives at Quoile

the club organised with live music and a delicious home-cooked three-course buffet. Later, further entertainment was provided by Ronnie Crosby (guitar and vocals), Anthony McCarthy (guitar), Derek

Rally participants at the Quoile Pontoon



Minstrels Derek White and Ronnie Crosby

White (squeeze box), and recitations by Frank Smyth, Peter Fernie, and Ed Wheeler.

In June Peter Williams and Margie Crawford joined *Ilen* at Baltimore for the cruise to Dún Laoghaire to coincide with the 100th anniversary of Conor O'Brien's return from his two-year circumnavigation. Peter, along with about half of the crew, had been on the voyage to Madeira two years ago, when the start of O'Brien's voyage was celebrated. Accompanied for the week by Sally Cudmore in *Bubulabus* and David Beattie in *Respray*.



Frank Smyth

Ilen sailed via Kinsale, Crosshaven, and Kilmore Quay. She then spent a night at anchor at Polduff and on to Greystones marina. They made a grand entrance into Dún Laoghaire, surrounded by many local vessels dressed overall and 'escorted' by the Irish Navy.

Derek & Viv White on *Ballyclaire* took part in the CCA Cruise in Company on the west coast of Scotland, accompanied by Bob Brown and Derek Jones. Derek reports that it was mixed weather, but they were well looked after, while Bob adds that there were a few really brilliant sailing days with dolphins a-plenty, plus the odd minke whale and sea eagle. Myles and Brenda Lindsay had hoped to take part in the Cruise, but it was not to be. However, *Kandoo* did manage a 10-day cruise in the Clyde visiting two less-frequented anchorages: St Ninian's Bay and Loughgair. They had a pleasant sail home from Campbeltown with sunshine and fair winds, rounding off a very enjoyable cruise.

Paul McSorley and Rob Henshall and I set off from Sligo aboard *Maria*, a Contessa 32, as a preparatory trip for the voyage to the rally in Norway next year. They didn't get as much sailing as they had hoped, but they did



Peter Bullick and Anthony McCarthy

have a marvellous trip along the Mayo coast, anchoring at Raghly, Portacloy, Inishkea North, Ballycastle, and Aughris Hole. Inishkea North is a jewel, abundant with peace and archaeology and well worth a stop for anyone passing.



Rob Henshall on the Inishkeas

Taking advantage of the continued calm conditions, Paul managed a few days of back-to-basics cruising in *Wild Cat*, his International H-Boat, to Trawbeaga Bay. The sailing was slow and gentle and he was rewarded with an overnight in Tullagh Bay. After nearly 25 years in Lough Swilly, this was his first visit to this exposed bay [see p. 168 of the Sailing Directions. Ed]. The local pub beckoned, but the journey ashore was not rewarded; reflecting the changes in rural Ireland, it was not open weekdays.

Also in Lough Swilly, Andy McCarter stayed close to home so that he and Paddy could introduce another generation of McCarters to the delights of sailing in the Lough. However, early in the season he did fit in a week's trip to the Rias along with John Harkin and Brian McDaid to help put *Santana* and *Briomhar* back in the water in Combarro after a winter on the hard. They had beautiful weather and, with a bit of help, succeeded in getting all the hard work done in a day or so, leaving time for a brief shakedown cruise to Baiona and Vigo which was very enjoyable.

After 34 years of ownership, first in partnership with Winkie Nixon and Harry Whelehan and then solo from



Compass Rose in Arklow

2006, Ed Wheeler has parted with his Contessa 35, *Witchcraft of Howth*. She has gone to new owners in Galway and will remain in Irish waters. She has quickly been replaced by a Sadler 26, *Compass Rose*, a bilge-keel sloop more in keeping with ageing muscles. After a delivery voyage from Poole in Dorset, her running-in cruise was a jaunt to Scotland. Ed hopes to get into the places formerly barred to him by the deep keel and perilous drying-out qualities of *Witchcraft*.

Michael Park has also purchased a new boat, a Beneteau Oceanis 45, *Aquila of Down*, named after a boat that his father, David Park, had in the 1970s. He had a short shakedown cruise after the purchase around northern ports in the Irish Sea, and hopes to go a bit further afield next season.

New members Philip Hutchinson and Gary Sims both cruised in Scotland and met up in Plockton. Philip ruefully says that they were just far enough north to miss all the gorgeous weather, getting a mere day and a half of it. A further downside was being plagued by an engine oil leak which became progressively more serious. But it meant they had a great incentive to do more sailing and less motoring!

In the springtime Matthew Wright was debating with his family whether to go south to Galicia or north to Norway. Norway won and they enjoyed the magnificent fjords in matching weather. Also putting in the miles while having an adventure was Andrew Kennedy who bought a Dehler 38, *Jacada*, in Mallorca, sailed it to Barcelona, got it shipped to Brittany, and then sailed her home to Belfast via Baltimore. Patricia and Julian Morgan sailed to the Faroes and spent several weeks making their way back south down the Outer Hebrides and the west coast of Scotland.

Next up will be our programme of winter walks and the Christmas lunch at Royal Ulster YC on Saturday 6th December. Not to be missed!

Gary Sims & Philip Hutchinson



Eastern Epistle

by Harry Whelehan

It is very sad to record that our most senior Club member died on September 6th. Jack Wolfe quietly and peacefully slipped his moorings having reached the age of 101 and 4 months. Jack joined the ICC in 1959 and was, throughout his long life, a very active member of the Club both ashore and afloat.

His funeral was attended by many friends from all of the Club's regions. Despite the sadness of the occasion, there was, as Jack would have wished, a strong note of celebration of Jack's life and achievements, both at the Chapel in Dardistown, and afterwards, in Howth Yacht Club.



Commodore Alan Markey presenting Jack with the ICC House Flag on his 100th birthday

Alas, in the same week we also lost Pat Murphy, one of our celebrated members who had, some years ago, completed, over a four-year period, a world circumnavigation with his late wife Olivia in *Aldebaran*.

The Commodore on *Altaria* led the boats from the east to participate in the Western Isles cruise in company to Scotland. With him were *Conundrum* with Mike Pomeroy, *Pure Magic Too* with Peter Killen, and *Catalina* with Donal Gallagher. Other ICC boats participating were *Ree Spray* with David Beattie, *Ballyclaire* with Derek and Viv White, *Salut* with Anthony and Aisling McCarthy, *Silver Bow* with Stephen Hyde, and *Cornflower* with Tony Irwin. Judy and Jimmy Houston joined their Scottish friend Clarke Perry on his boat *Wotnot*.

This was a major event organized primarily by the CCA, but also the ICC, CCC, RCC, RHYC, and the OCC in which 58 boats and crews participated. No doubt more detailed accounts of the event and its participants will appear in the Annual. John Clementson was honoured and feted as a VIP guest of the six organizing clubs.

Apart from being heavily involved in organizing the above event, our Commodore has been exceptionally busy

both in home waters and abroad. Earlier in the season he made several trips to the Caribbean, sailing with the CCA's Commodore Jay Gowell aboard his beautiful Tayana 52 *Moonstone*. Alan again joined *Moonstone* for a passage from the Azores to Dingle as she made her way to the Western Isles cruise in company. After returning to Howth from the Western Isles cruise in *Altaria*, he rejoined *Moonstone* in Dún Laoghaire for the voyage to Vigo and will later be rejoining her for the transatlantic return to the USA.

Further south, William Morrison, who sailed his 27ft *Isobar* to NW Spain last year, took a leaf out of the book of many of our southern members and used the opportunity to visit all the Rias (except the northmost one). He ended his season with a non-stop passage to Lisbon, to lay up for the winter. During his passage he had an "exciting/interesting" encounter with the grumpy skipper of a survey ship which was towing a two-mile string of equipment and lights!!



William Morrison and Robin Hegarty enjoying the amazing weather



Isobar in the Rias - William Morrison

This autumn Michael Sadlier is taking *Varuna* from El Balis Marina (Barcelona) to Villefrance via Perpignan and across the Golf de Lyon to Marseille, where she will winter. I expect we will see a log of this voyage, if not in time for this year's Annual, hopefully in 2026.



Dermot with his passage crew

Dermot Cronin visited all nine islands in the Azores with three generations of family on board. He then changed crew and took *Encore* to Galicia in perfect sailing conditions, logging 880 miles in 5.6 days. She will stay in Cangas over the winter.

Mark Sweetnam, having overwintered *Don Carlos* in Tromsø, Norway, headed north to Nordkapp, the most northern point of Europe. There he set himself up for a leisurely cruise south along the Norwegian coast to Hardanger Fjord just south of Bergen, where she will winter afloat. I hope we will see a log of this adventure in the Annual.



Dermot's grandson Torin helming

of Graciosa. Next day saw a challenging beat to Pla Fariones, before turning downwind for a hairy goose-winged run to Arrecife where they luxuriated for two days before reaching down to the SE point of the island and anchoring off Papego beach. The happy conclusion of the skipper is that, so successful was the cruise, he is confident there will be less reluctance, maybe even enthusiasm when he seeks to recruit the same crew in the future.

Gillian Fletcher, after a number of exciting years cruising, was unable to cruise this year; however she campaigned *Cervantes* "around the cans" in Dublin Bay with considerable success.



The two Cassidy boys down below



Frank Cassidy's Blue Ocean "Goosewinged" on the way to Arrecife, along the east coast of Lanzarote

Frank Cassidy having left *Blue Ocean* in Lanzarote last year planned a family cruise with Gemma and their three children Grace 21, Hugh 17, and Johnnie 15 in those waters. The children needed some persuasion, being of that age where they consider "parents are boring"!

The cruise took *Blue Ocean* north from Lanzarote to Playa Francesca, an idyllic anchorage on the island



Frank & Gemma at Pta. Fariones, which is at the Northern most point of Lanzarote

I do hope as plans as are made over the winter for next year, that members will let me know of their aspirations for 2026 - in time for my column in the Spring Newsletter.

Sailing: To Be Enjoyed, Not Survived

by Jim Buckley

Some sailors think of their voyages as epic battles with the sea. We thought of ours more as a floating road trip with castles, concerts, sword fights, and the occasional boat repair thrown in for seasoning.

Three weeks, eleven stops. four people, zero mutinies: Not bad.



Combarro → Lagoa: Seal Trouble

Our trip began with drama: seal trouble. Not the animal kind: no clapping, no fish juggling. The sail drive seals failed, flooding the gearbox until the oil looked like a café latte. Classic water ingress.



Left: Jim and Katherine Buckley. Right Marie and Imelda, aka M&M. Both photos with Cabo São Vicente in the background

The cast of characters: myself (Captain-ish), Katherine (wife and secret boss of the boat), and our friends Marie and Imelda, affectionately known as M&M. Between them, they brought seamanship, a work ethic, culinary genius, weather skills, and personalities big enough to keep the trip rolling. Honestly, they could've left me ashore and it still would've been fine.

Castle at Sintra



So, the boat got the nautical equivalent of an emergency spa day: hauled out, seals replaced, splashed back in. Four hours total. (Anyone who owns a boat will understand the miracle of that timeframe. Normally it's four weeks. Minimum.)

Lagoa → Baiona: Just One Night (Ha!)

We promised ourselves we'd only stay a night. Then Baiona pulled out the big guns: castle, tapas, and an old town begging for a wander. Suddenly, two nights had evaporated, and our "schedule" was already a joke.

Baiona → Viana do Castelo: Festival of Lights

Arriving in Viana during the festival of lights was like sailing straight into a disco ball. Every street was glowing. Even the boat felt underdressed.

Fire at Marina Cascais





Katherine in library in Porto

Viana → Porto: Books, Wine, and Motoring (Again)

Up at 0640 (yes, there's a 6:40 in the morning too, apparently), we set off for Porto. Wind? None. Our sails hung like laundry on a still day. The engine got another workout.

Porto, however, was worth the diesel: riverside beauty, legendary wine, and the famous bookshop that looks like Hogwarts threw up inside. Crowded? Yes. Magical? Also, yes.

Porto → Figueira da Foz → Peniche: Medieval Shenanigans

Still no wind. By this point, the engine was applying for honorary crew status.

But Óbidos Castle made up for it. Archery lessons. Two-handed sword fighting. A medieval crash course in "things you shouldn't attempt after a glass of wine."

No fatalities = success.

Stayed in Peniche for 3 nights due to a yellow weather warning on Portuguese (IPMA) equivalent to Met Éireann regarding sea state. The swells were 4-5 metres at Cascais. We held off.

Nature wins again.

Peniche → Cascais: Music, Birthdays, and Fire

We sailed (okay, motored) into Cascais and stumbled into a free concert by Pedro Abrunhosa. Two hours of Portuguese rock legend energy - amazing. The crowds were really buzzing

Then came Marie's birthday. Age undisclosed, but the candles could've doubled as navigation lights.

And because we clearly weren't busy enough, a serious boat fire broke out nearby. Four boats gone, fire trucks everywhere. We watched nervously, suddenly very grateful for boring old seal repairs!

Bonus Highlight: Sintra Castle

From Cascais, we made a side trip to Sintra Castle - aka the world's most colourful fairytale fortress. It looks like several architects were given unlimited crayons and told, "Do your worst." Turrets, colours, spires. It has everything. If Disney had built it, you'd call it tacky. But standing on those ramparts, we all agreed: it was fabulous.

Cascais → Sines: Weather Has Opinions

Plan: one night. Reality: two. Cabo São Vicente had other ideas, with a swell big enough to make even seasoned sailors think twice. So, we waited. Lesson: you don't argue with swells.

Sines → Sagres → Lagos: Sailing at Last

At long last: wind! Actual, real sailing. We glided down to Sagres, anchored, and had a dinner on board worthy of a finale. The next day, we arrived in Lagos, trip complete. Eleven stops, three weeks, and not a single mutiny.

The Crew Who Made It Work

Let's be honest: without Katherine, and M&M, I'd probably still be stuck in Combarro, Googling "how to fix sail drive seals." They cooked, navigated, forecast weather, and provided enough laughs to keep morale sky-high.

Together, we didn't just survive the trip, we enjoyed the living daylights out of it. Castles, festivals, concerts, fires, and fairytale towers included.



Medieval sword training

Communications @ Sea

The game changing ascent of Starlink!

by Patrick Blaney

Reading the articles in the Spring 2025 ICC Newsletter on matters such as “Quantum Navigation” and Bob Brown’s account on the extraordinary navigation skills of migratory creatures, brought to mind discussions about communicating at sea far from land.

Until recently, long range communication at sea was primarily facilitated by SSB Radio, augmented by satellite phones using the Iridium/Inmarsat Geostationary Satellite networks. The high cost and slow speeds of that technology limited their use and utility.

SSB Radio is a part of the Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (GMDSS) established under the SOLAS Convention. For this reason, it has been a mandatory requirement for participating on circumnavigation rallies. Despite this, and because the signal propagation capabilities are impacted by many external factors, the quality and clarity of the signal received is highly variable and participating on such SSB calls takes a lot of time and diligence.

Fast forward to 2025 and the whole world of mobile communications and marine electronics has developed hugely.

Starlink was, by mid-2023, beginning to have enough satellites (>5,000) in orbit to provide near global coverage. It had also negotiated licences with most countries. In tandem the Starlink customer base had expanded to the point that the initial capital cost of the Starlink equipment and the available data packages were becoming affordable – particularly the roaming packages then targeted at the RV Market but in use on many yachts.

Ri-Rá Underway



Ri-Rá crew

While our Oyster was “in-built”, Starlink brought out a maritime product (larger antenna designed for sea conditions) with data packages designed around the typical maritime use. It’s a retail product and “plug and play” – designed for ease of use. The equipment cost (June 2025) is €1,500 and data packages are available from €300 per month. It is far less expensive than competing satellite services.

It works just like any mobile phone network, Starlink brings high speed internet connectivity (voice and data) to the remotest parts of the Ocean.

So how did Starlink get used on our Oyster circumnavigation???

Set up Groups: Most of us have WhatsApp groups on our mobile phones. We simply set up a series of groups among the fleet, membership depending on the intended use of those groups. Each group had an administrator who controlled membership and access. All that was needed was a mobile phone number and an email address for all members.

Groups included the following:

1. Position Reporting Group
2. Emergency SOLAS Group
3. Owners Group
4. Crews Group – for the professional crews on the rally

Position Reporting Group: With SSB, the network controller would spend 1 hour daily, transmitting on the agreed frequencies at the specified times, and writing down the position of every yacht. With Starlink all that was needed to achieve the same result was for each skipper to take a picture of their chart plotter screen (previously set up to display position and other required data – mostly wind speed/direction and boat speed), do so at the prescribed time (09:00hrs local) and then send that picture by WhatsApp to the Group.

Over time the information being exchanged in this group expanded, and included a summary of the previous day's weather, the sails used, and any issues encountered in the past 24 hours. This gave useful route planning information to all.

Daily Fleet Calls (using Teams/Zoom): The reception quality with Starlink was just like a video call on your phone (or PC, Laptop, iPad) and so you could see all the other participants on screen and listen in to their chats all at the same time. These calls were typically at 16:30 (local time) when all of the crew would be awake (during



The author at the on-board communications centre.

social time on passage) and before dinner time which, in the tropics, signalled the start of the night watches.

If there was one single thing which created a bond across the fleet during OWR '24 it was this daily call during which each boat would give a brief update on their progress and weather conditions, talk about ongoing repairs/breakages/issues (and get the expertise of the fleet applied to help them), and where birthdays were celebrated, funny incidents reported (e.g., a camembert

throwing competition between boats that converged in mid ocean). This became the glue that kept the fleet connected and often provided a daily "occasion" in mid ocean.

Making these calls work requires a good coordinator and familiarity with Teams/Zoom software so the technical and social aspects of managing the calls worked for all.

While the call was at 16:30 local, its actual time was set by reference to UTC to avoid confusion as boats could be hundreds of miles apart and local time might differ across the fleet.



Emergency SOLAS Group: Everybody was included in this group. Its purpose was to make the fleet aware immediately of an emergency with any boat or person.

When we were on our longest leg crossing from the Galapagos to the Marquesas, a journey of 3,500 NMs, and about 2 days out from arrival in Hiva Oa, we were alerted to a distress call. An Arcona 460 yacht had begun to sink as its rudder stock had broken free of its mounting and made a hole in the hull which they were unable to block. This yacht was not part of any Rally but was sailing across the Pacific in an informal network, many with Starlink. The Arcona broadcast an emergency Mayday. This was relayed on our WhatsApp Group and was received by many yachts, two of which were less than 20 miles away. One of these picked the crew up from their life raft just after their boat sank. This incident focussed our minds on the importance of the Starlink connection.

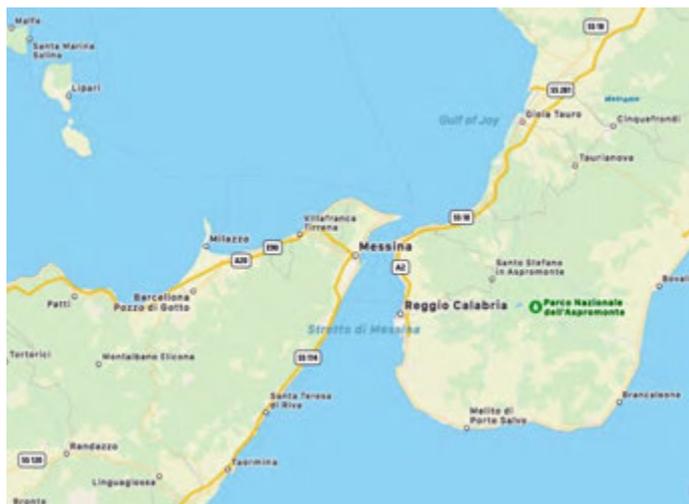
Conclusion:

In this world you may well regard having an "always on" high speed broadband internet connection at sea as anathema to the whole reason why we go cruising in the first place, but for keeping in touch, getting weather forecasts, and sharing your adventure, it was invaluable.

An evening to remember with Saverio

by Jim and Katie Corbett [text by Bill Corbett]

We landed in Reggio di Calabria on the southern tip of Italy after a long passage from Corfu as it was the only harbour in the vicinity with a diesel berth. Located in the heart of the Calabrian Ndrangheta area, it's fairly industrial but the marina is in a section of the Guardia Costiera port area, so we were well guarded. The harbour we tied up in was immediately next to a ferry terminal and trucks screeched up and down the road next to the harbour. Our expectations for dinner ashore were low.



Rod Heikell's pilot guide for the port, apart from laying out the essentials, mentioned in its last paragraph one "Saverio", a local taxi driver and general fixer. Trusting the authors, we called the number and arranged a rendezvous with the gentleman. Our skipper decided to head to the bunk early and left us to our devices. We three appeared at the marina gate at the appointed time and were greeted by a short Italian man with a towering presence and a tired Fiat Punto. Promising to bring us to a "Trattoria Tradizionale Familia", Saverio set off at a pace. The language barrier was high, but we were determined to rise above it with good humour. We smiled fervently and nodded enthusiastically and wished in many languages but Italian that he proceed to the restaurant as we were famished.

After a few minutes of thoroughly geriatric Italian driving, Saverio took a sudden left turn to a small supermarket. We gathered that the restaurant didn't open for half an hour, so would we like to pick up any victuals? When we declined, he instead began mentioning some reasonably universal words like "Pecorino", "Salami", and "Vino". Whether or not there was a question mark following these words was not immediately clear, but Saverio seemed to take our indecision for a yes and proceeded to steer his Punto down a steep concrete ramp to a set of semi-dilapidated garages. Saverio hopped out and to Mum's thorough consternation proceeded to fiddle with the door to one of the garages. Mum was now positively concerned for our wellbeing and was sending drop-

pins to Dad back on the boat, but I decided to lead the charge and follow him in.

Into Aladdin's cave! We were immediately greeted by two red vintage Fiats, stacked one above the other in a car lift. Walking through his garage led to a second garage door which led through to the beach. Here Saverio bade us sit on a bench shaded by a sailcloth and offered us beers. We accepted and then it was down to business.



The restaurant didn't open for half an hour, so would we not do the reasonable thing and purchase local goods from our local guide? It began with pecorino. "Produzione Saverio!" we were assured. He cut us a sample to try, and it was indeed very tasty, so we agreed to buy the wheel. We were fervently assured non tourist prices. Next to the salami and nduja. Then finally to vino. Samples were given, a bottle was uncorked for the trial, and we finally agreed to buy "only" three red, three rosé, and a complimentary bottle of white. All were unlabelled.



When at last our “guide” appeared to deem that we had bought sufficient local produce from him, we jumped back in the Punto and sped off down the road again, Saverio giving a constant running commentary in Italian, complete with gesticulations, beeping at undertaking mopeds and mostly keeping to the correct side of the road. We pulled up in front of our unassuming “Trattoria Tradizionale Familia”. Saverio led Mum inside by the arm and introduced us loudly to the restaurant at large as “Brigitte Bardot et al”. This was clearly a relatively common phenomenon to the restaurant staff. Rolling their eyes endearingly at him, we were brought to the outdoor terrace overlooking the Messina Straits. We had definitely been brought to a locals’ spot. A Punjabi member of staff was brought over to deal with the English speakers. We drank delicious house red and ate five different species of fish as the sun went down on the Straits of Messina, while Mt. Etna had a quiet cigarette in the background.

After paying the bill (which included a small sum for the taxi) we were collected by our “fixer” and brought back to the marina. Saverio suggested strongly that we may want croissants and bread in the morning and told me to be ready at the gate at 8am. He then proceeded to charge us an eyebrow raising final fee, one supposed for local guide services.

The prologue to all this was that before leaving the boat, Mum decided that she wanted to dress up in a dress. Crew members Jonathan and I scrambled up to our best level of respectability in what limited ways we could. So, walking back to the boat, Jonathan turned to us and with some gravity asked: “Was this all because I was dressed like an Anglican Vicar?”

An evening to remember, indeed.



Baltic Cruising

by Mark Whitaker

I cruised the Baltic Sea this summer on my newly acquired Saare 38, *Sarena*. Starting from the Helsinki Sailing Club, *Sarena* and her crew travelled to Tallinn and back before travelling west to Kalmar via Stockholm. In

Sarena alongside in Rødvig, South of Copenhagen



Travelling through the waterway at Höllviken in Southern Sweden

August, my crew and I continued west to Copenhagen, Malmö, and cruised the Danish archipelago using Svenborg as our main base. As the Summer came to a close, we travelled to Eckernförde in Northern Germany where the boat will be stored for the Winter. For 2026, I intend to return to continue to explore the Baltic Sea before turning South in 2027. I am hoping to submit a full account of my cruise for this year’s Annual.

Participation in ICC Activities

by Joe Callanan



Photograph of myself with Kalla taken in Baltimore

First of all, Dympna and I very much enjoyed the annual dinner and were both made to feel very welcome to the ICC.

In terms of my participation in the Irish Cruising Club this year, I joined part of the cruise recreating Conor OBrien's return to Dublin, organised by Sally Cudmore. I took my new boat, *Kalla*, a Sun Fast 3300, down to Baltimore where I joined the other boats. I spent a very enjoyable evening with everyone before sailing *Kalla* to Kinsale, where I attended the dinner in the Kinsale Yacht Club with Hugh Gibson as my guest. It was a very convivial evening. I single-handed *Kalla* to Baltimore and back to Kinsale. I also attended the dinner in the Royal Irish at the end of the Conor OBrien cruise with Dympna, and we both very much enjoyed the occasion.

Subsequently, I joined Mike Pomeroy on *Conundrum* and joined the ICC cruise in company in Scotland, along with the other various cruising clubs of which you already have the details. I joined Mike in Dublin and sailed as far as Carlost on the Isle of Skye. On the return journey, I departed *Conundrum* at Tobermory and flew back from Glasgow.

As regards next year's plans with the ICC, I cannot say for certain at this stage, though I will certainly endeavour to take part. My new boat, *Kalla*, is designed for short-handed offshore racing, which I intend to pursue over the next few years. However, I have retained my cruising boat, *Soothsaye of Hamble II*, so I will also continue to cruise on *Soothsaye*. With the demands of full-time

work, the next few years will undoubtedly be busy, but I hope that within a couple of years I will be in a position to take considerably more time off.



One of the American boats on the CCA cruise passing Duart Castle on the Isle of Mull

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If you forget your password, getting back into the website is easy for registered members.

Click on 'Log in' on the home screen and then click on 'Lost your password'. Enter your username. It is "FirstnameLastname" (yours, of course) or if you prefer, your email address. Click on 'Get New Password'.

You will receive an email with instructions on how to reset your password.

And while you are at it: **Pease check and correct your contact information!**

