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Troon Cruising Club 1955 – 2010

Yearbook Number 26 : 2010

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Commodore's Welcome



It is a pleasure to welcome you all to the troon cruising club's 2010 yearbook. One of the great things when joining Troon Cruising Club was receiving a yearbook of the past year's sailing activities which is an inspiration to attempt and emulate the exploits of past adventures.

This year there are members' exploits from the Western Isles, Ireland and cruising around the Baltic sea. I have heard that our yearbook is a most sought after read by non members and has turned up in faraway places.

On behalf of the club I would like to thank all our advertisers and recommend their services to you.

I would like to thank everyone who has taken the time to contribute to the year book and congratulate all the prize winners.

This is the first year with Doug Lamont as new editor of the yearbook and I would like to thank him for his efforts. It can be no easy job coming in and filling Jim Goodlad's boots. A happy retirement and thank you to Jim Goodlad ably assisted by his wife, Margaret over the years producing the yearbook.

I would like to wish everyone fair winds whether you are sailing in home waters or further afield and if you have a story to tell please put it in print for next year's yearbook.

George Whiteside *Commodore*



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Convenor's Reports

Retiring Commodore's Comments

It has been a year of great activity around the club with a number of projects that have been ongoing for the past few years seeing excellent progress. Our slipway has seen major upgrading work undertaken and the result is a vast improvement. Further work is required to complete the project and it is planned that this will happen in 2010. The compound has also received a make-over with 100 tonnes of new stone chips having been laid. My sincere thanks to Kyle Stewart and everyone who has played their part.

Unfortunately plans to undertake preventive maintenance on the hoist were dealt a blow when it was discovered it had at best three years of working life left. As the hoist is such a vital part of the running of the club the purchase of a replacement is already in process and will be discussed in greater detail later in the meeting.

The clubhouse kitchen / galley has also had an overhaul and is now in an even better position to cater for future lifts and social events.

Membership has fallen slightly however almost every berth is occupied and my thanks to our Moorings Convenor, Jack Gairns, for his continuing hard work in this area.

The financial status of the club is still as sound as ever. However, the unforeseen need to purchase a new hoist, an additional tractor and an increase in routine expenditure (due to rising gas and electricity charges and a reduction in bank interest earned) has led to the committee proposing an increase to subscriptions for the first time in five years.

Reports from our Cruising, Racing, Social and Finance Convenors will follow later but I'd like to take this opportunity to give special thanks to Gillian Swan and Ewan Black for the amazing job they have done with our social programme this year.

It is with great sadness that I have to report the deaths of two of our members in the last year. Bert Niven, a longstanding member who sailed on Seamew, and John Bowman, who owned Spirit of the Wind, both passed away earlier in the year. Our thoughts and sympathies go out to their families.

A number of committee members are retiring this year. Iain Gairns, Doug Lamont, Jack Gairns and Gillian Swan are all stepping down and my thanks to each one of them for their many contributions to the club. I'd also like to thank all committee members for their support and hard work during the past 12 months. In addition my appreciation and thanks go to Babs Henderson for her support and ability to keep me on the 'straight and narrow' during my year at the helm.

Finally, I'd like to thank everyone who has supported me during my year as Commodore. It has truly been an honour and a privilege and I hope that the same support will be shown to our incoming Commodore George Whiteside. I wish George, and you all, the best for 2010.

Fair winds...

Robin Ferguson

Finance Convenor's Report

The financial report for the year 2009 showed an overall deficit of £3,800 compared to a surplus of £2,000 for the previous year. The club membership continues to hold at a steady level with only a small decrease in full members. The number of berthing fee received remains at 117.

On the smaller recurring items in the accounts

- Our bank interest income significantly dropped in the year , to be expected due the economic environment.
- The yearbook make a small income this year

The ongoing expenditure in the year continued much as in previous years

- Gas and electricity appear a bit higher than last year, but this is partly due to the underestimation in the costs by the provider for last year.

This year we continued to maintain and improve the clubhouse and ground for the use of the members and as such spent £7,000 to this end. Major work carried out this year included:

- Clubhouse renovations – redesign of the galley, and external work on guttering etc. (£1,600)
- Continuing work on the slipway (£2,230)
- Dressing of the compound in new chips (£1,480)
- Steel work and tyres for the hoist and work on tractor to ensure they continues to be usable (£1,800)

During the work that was performed on the hoist in the past year it was determined that the current hoist has an estimated life of about 2-3 years.

The club were made an offer by Don Lindsay that his company could make a new hoist at a very reasonable price. Much work has been done on the design of the hoist which I believe is on view tonight.

This offer from Don has a limited window of opportunity so the council decided to take advantage of the offer.

The hoist build is estimated to be in the region of £10,000. This quote takes in the services and expertise of a number of club members who are providing their expertise at a very competitive price.

This is a significant spend for the club and is being funded from the clubs reserves.

Finally — As is intimated in the agenda for the AGM the council are proposing an increase in subscriptions and in berthing rights.

This is the first increase in the subscriptions for a number of years. Despite there being a continued increase in price levels in the economy generally, this has not until now been passed on to members.

With the continued commitment to maintain the club facilities and equipment, specifically the hoist it is felt that some increased contribution is required so as not to continually decrease the long term reserves of the club.

Since most of the improvements directly affect the boat owners it is felt reasonable that the largest percentage increase is applied to the berth holders. As such it is the proposal to set the new levels at – Full membership £60; Associate member £18; Berthing rights £60.

Helen Thompson



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Convenor's Reports (continued)

Cruising Report 2009

The Opening Muster on May 2nd/3rd heralded the start of the 2009 cruising season. Ten boats made their way to Largs Yacht Haven in very pleasant conditions despite the forecast for strong winds the following day. Largs Sailing Club provided an excellent meal for just short of 40 people which everyone thoroughly enjoyed. Thankfully the strong winds did not materialise the following day giving a good return trip for most.

The Kingscross Muster on June 6th/7th coincided with the Mullach Mhor and Hamilton Rock races. However easterly winds precluded the use of the normal anchorage and both Lamash and Brodick were similarly vetoed. Millport therefore became the destination of choice and around 30 people enjoyed the barbeque on one of the Eileans in the evening before sampling the delights of the George Hotel later. The good weather held and a pleasant sail back to Troon followed on Sunday.

Later the same month on the 20th/21st we had a new destination for the Club. Instead of the usual cruise and Swan Trophy race to Wreck Bay, Kyles of Bute, which has been so often a non-event in recent years, we went to Portavadie. However for the first time this year the weather was considerably less than perfect. A fresh north westerly wind was the order of the day which meant a punishing beat for the racers and an uncomfortable motor sail for the cruisers. Despite this 5 boats did make it to Portavadie where arrangements had been made for the hire of Portavadie's barbeques which were delivered to, and later collected from the beach outside the marina. We were pleasantly surprised at the high standard of the new facilities in the marina and as always, the helpfulness of the staff. All this and the berthing was cheaper than Tarbert and we didn't have to raft up! The return journey was altogether different with little or no wind which made for a relaxing sail back to Troon.

The Rothesay Muster took place on July 4th/5th. Disappointingly despite light winds and a good forecast only three boats attended this event. However the duty Harbour Master agreed to turn a blind eye to our disposable barbeques which allowed for a very pleasant evening in the marina. The following day had glorious sunshine and little wind. Hopefully we will have better turn out for this venue next year.

Both the Lochranza/Carradale Muster on July 25th and the Tarbert Muster September 5th were cancelled due to adverse weather. The Race did start for the Tarbert weekend but was re-routed to Rothesay as the weather deteriorated further.

The Closing Muster on September 19th/20th was again held at Largs. Despite a damp start the weather brightened up and a fair breeze gave 12 boats a good sail. Largs Yacht Haven provided their customary flotilla rates and berthing that kept us all together making it convenient to socialise amongst the boats. Once again the Sailing Club excelled with their now usual good hospitality. A moderate southerly wind meant a slight beat back to Troon the following day. This was the end of yet another successful muster and also marked the end of a season blessed with much improved weather on last year. Let's hope this marks the start of a trend for 2010.

Iain Gairns

Racing Report 2009

One of the conclusions following the 2008 racing season was that we had too many races in the calendar and boat owners were finding it difficult to make the time available and also get crew for the programme.

The spring series and the autumn series were programmed for four races and this probably proved to be too few as inevitably some of the races were not started or completed due to adverse weather conditions.

A frostbite series was not initially included in the racing programme but this was subsequently added and was successful although again the four race series was probably too few.

Certain of the passage races did not take place due to adverse weather conditions or the reports of possible adverse weather conditions.

For 2009 it was agreed that we should re-introduce two classes for the inshore and passage racing but this subsequently proved to be non viable on most occasions, due to the number of boats taking part and it is unlikely this procedure will not be adopted for 2010.

The Wednesday night pursuit races were reasonably well supported but the number of boats participating was generally lower than in previous years. The weather conditions did play a part in reducing numbers but we would encourage boat owners to come out and sail on a Wednesday night as this is a reasonably easy introduction to racing particularly on the short course and it is an excellent way of improving owners experience and technique by sailing in the company of other participating boats.

In an attempt to encourage more members to come racing we did try to organise a race for novice racing skippers but this did not take place due to lack of owners wishing to take part. We will be looking into other ways of trying to assist owners in getting more experience, improving their and their boats sailing performance and achieving more confidence in boat handling.

The majority of the racing prizes were presented at the Annual Dance in December and the remainder at the racing meeting held on the 18th January.

I would like to thank the members who acted as OODs and my committee for assisting me during the year. In particular I would like to thank John MacKinnon who was the previous Racing Secretary and whose knowledge advice and assistance was invaluable in helping to run the Racing Section for 2009.

Ken Stott



Social Report

Looking back at the social events of 2009 at TCC. The first thought that comes to mind is where did the year disappear to?

We started off in the kitchen of the clubhouse on Sat 28th March –Lift in day. A busy day when many boat owners, crew and helping hands are all ensuring that the day goes by and each boat is back on the water ready for the new season ahead.

With all these people about there is certainly a high demand for the bacon and egg doubler or maybe sausage to get through the day, so the galley was kept really busy. Plenty of donations of soup, baking and volunteers helped make this day a success.

We then had the Mediterranean evening in May and the 50th Anniversary race BBQ in July. The Mediterranean evening was well attended by many members of the club. Various dishes brought along by all members who seemed to enjoy the night. The bartenders kept the wine and beer flowing too. The 50th anniversary race BBQ was held on the evening of the 11th July. The weather held out which was great and we managed to have BBQ outside rather than in. The BBQ's were kept busy all evening keeping the chefs Kyle and Hamish in demand.

Again the turnout of members to both these social events made them a success.

The summer months disappeared quickly and the planning of the winter programme was starting to take shape.

The members evening was held at the beginning of October. Members past and present came along mixing and sharing experiences of sailing and also getting to know one another.

On the 17th October the galley had an early start -Lift out day. Gary and crew taking the helm and getting the early shift underway in the kitchen. The baking and soup contributions were again greatly appreciated, as were the volunteers who took their turn in the galley and Agnes Gairns keeping the 'till' in check all day.

The tickets for The ceilidh dance disappeared quickly and we had a great turnout - 86 people. The meal and service at The South Beach was excellent. The prize giving was held to and this seemed successful.

Raffle prizes were donated by P&O, Alpha Crane, Hillhouse Quarry, McConnechys, Kyle Chandlery, Conway Hair and Beauty and not to mention those prizes donated by the club members.

The children's party was the last event before Christmas and this was held in the clubhouse. Everyone had a great time.

Many thanks to Sally, Gary, Agnes and George for making this a success.

The Burns supper took place on Friday 29th January 2010. We would like to thank John McKinnon for organising this event Robert Burns himself would have enjoyed the poetry, songs and speeches that were given on this evening by the members of the club.

Ewan and I would like to thank everyone who has volunteered their time over the past 12 months in making the social events such a success. All the events would not have been a success without the help given. Special thanks to Babs for being at the other end of the emails and phone calls when an answer was needed to many questions.

This year of Social events is now at an end for myself, Gillian. Ewan will continue in post and will offer the new incumbent much experience and support and I am sure that this year's calendar will be just as successful as the last.

Gillian Swan and Ewan Black

Clubhouse Convener's Report

Two major projects were achieved during 2009. An upgrade to the galley with a new hob and oven installed, and new handrails fitted at front door.

No significant problems this year. Minor plumbing leaks, light bulbs and switch replaced, and the payphone should now be working. Any problems let me know.

Thanks to Bill for continuing to look after the day to day running of the galley supplies – tea, coffee, biscuits, etc. Also thanks to Ewan and others for helping to decorate the clubhouse for Christmas, and not least Jack for his plumbing expertise.

Thanks to everyone who has let me know when things needed attending to. Please continue – my mobile number is 07752 096019.

The next task is to decorate the clubhouse. All budding painters and decorators welcome!

John Haston



Ken Andrew being presented with the 2009 Club Championship Trophy.



Margaret and Jim Goodlad received the Redwing Trophy and Jim, the John McFarlane Award for 2009.

Burns Supper Photographs



Robbie Gemmell addresses the Haggis...



...and receives a tasty reward!



Peter Evans and Angus McFarlane provide a musical interlude



2009 Commodore Robin Ferguson welcomes members and guests.

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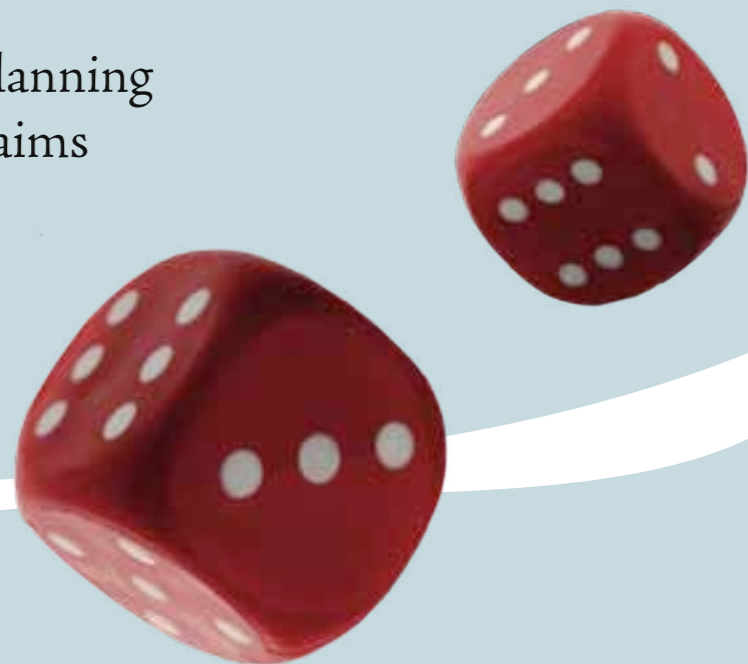
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TARRAGON 2009

Agnes Gairns

Tuesday 19th May

Another year and another log, but where oh where does the time go! Agnes is not going round 'The Mull' or driving up to Arisaig but going in *Tarragon* up through the Crinan Canal. We are in company with Bill and Kath Stewart in *Sahona*.

The forecast sounded really good, 3/4 knots and slight sea. We left Troon harbour just before the fast ferry at 9.45am but unfortunately *Sahona* had to wait on its departure. Kath and I agreed the forecast was rubbish. The sea was anything but slight with a three foot swell plus being very choppy. It was also very overcast and grey which did not help my moral one little bit, or the way my tummy was feeling two hours later. Thankfully it abated after that and it was a much more pleasant sail. We made good timing with an average of 5.8 knots. The wind did drop a bit and the engine had to come into commission.

It was very nice tying up to a pontoon at Portavadie at 3.30pm. They have berthing for 230 boats and the new office, toilets, showers and laundry room opened just three weeks ago. There is also a bar and restaurant which is all very modern. Kath said the toilet and showers are like a 5 star hotel, especially as they have under floor heating!!! Luxury self catering apartments are also planned for 2009/10.

Wednesday 20th May

Up smartly and we all availed ourselves of the excellent facilities before heading off at 9.45 (again) and made our way up to Ardrishaig. A super sail, wind in the right direction and a slight sea — great!! It even stayed dry all the way up.

We joined another boat in the locks and went as far as Cairnbaan. After dinner we had a stroll up the canal side and admired the lovely maintained houses. Some of the gardens were a mass of colour with beautiful azaleas.

Thursday 21st May

After a very peaceful night we were up sharp to continue our journey up the canal. Just as we were leaving the rain came on and stayed with us half the way to Crinan. The canal sides were very pretty with bluebells, red campion, ragged robin, primroses, wood sorrel etc. The sun did come out later which made things much more pleasant. I was sure a swan was going to attack the boat at one point and refused to get out of our way. I'm sure I missed it by a hairs breadth. A fisherman walking up the footpath pointed out its mate was sitting on a nest nearby.

We were a tired lot by the time we reached Crinan basin. I had forgotten what hard work the Canal was. Mind you, being 10 plus years older since the last time might have had a lot to do with it!

Sahona is tied up next to us and no doubt we will be planning our next move soon.



Friday 22nd May

Awoke to blue sky and sunshine and was pleasantly surprised after heavy rain during the night. The views all around were very picturesque in the morning sunlight.

We were in the sea lock and on our way by 10.15 am. The gentle wind and calm sea gave us a super sail all the way up to Loch Spelve, arriving at the anchorage four hours later. The sun stayed with us all day although there was a distinct chill in the air. Jack spotted a dozen geese on the opposite shore line, but were too far away to identify them. Two very large herons have been on the nearby shore for ages. Since our arrival here a cuckoo has let us know of its presence too.

Saturday 23rd May

What a change since yesterday, mist right down over the hills and wet, wet, wet. It didn't encourage me to get out of my sleeping bag very much, so I just stayed where I was and read my book for a while. It has been a miserable grey, wet and windy day. We thought about moving on to Loch Aline, but decided against it. Four other yachts joined us in the anchorage this afternoon.

It is now 9pm - and it is much calmer with even some blue sky making an appearance. I've just noticed Mr Heron is back at the edge of the loch. Even he was hiding away all day, and I haven't heard the cuckoo once.

At least Jack has had a productive day with fly tying. He had been thinking of a fishing trip up to a hill loch but quickly changed his mind when he saw the weather this morning. As it was, we could hardly see the hills for the low lying mist.

Sunday 24th May

Oh good, the hills have reappeared. We were on our way by 10.30 am and after the sheltered anchorage we were experiencing gusts of 22/24 knots as we sailed out of the loch. Once out, we were then getting wind over tide and had a very roly-polly hour and a half on our way to Loch Aline. As I looked down the Sound the sea and the sky were beginning to merge. The surrounding land started to disappear too and the rain also started!!!! We have been fortunate enough to have been able to sail most days since leaving Troon.

Oh, what a pleasant sound, I was hearing terns. It was so nice seeing them on Green Island again in the Sound of Mull after the past few years of it being deserted. It had a ghostly feel about it then as we sailed passed.

Because of the rain we decided to delay having something to eat until after we had anchored. After lunch Bill and Kath came over and joined us. Unfortunately Sahona's anchor wasn't very happy with the huge bunch of kelp it was in and decided to move on its own!! Luckily it was spotted and Bill went to the rescue. The forecast changed after five so we both upped anchor and moved to the other side of the loch. After dinner we adjourned to Sahona for the evening. It was dry when we went over but very wet on our return.

Monday 25th May

It was a very peaceful night but misty hills yet again this morning, plus drizzly rain. Nearly all the boats started to head off about 11 o'clock, us included. We were one of the later boats to leave and as we were about to pass the slip the ferry came round the corner. Jack did a quick

U turn to let it in - didn't want to argue with it! With the result Sahona was now quite a bit in front of us. With the visibility being so poor Bill couldn't see us, so called us up on the VHF to see if we were OK or had turned back. It was a shame the beautiful scenery was kept well hidden in the mist. Shortly after leaving Loch Aline we saw three porpoise going south and then a seal popped its head up to say hello. The rain stayed with us all the way up to Tobermory. An otter has been swimming around the pontoons and at one point was very close to Tarragon. I wasn't quite quick enough to hand Jack his camera before it dived - shame.

Kath and I had a walk up to the shops this afternoon and I was amazed at all the changes. I'm quite sure about half the shops have new management and products. The new showers are £2 a time plus 50p for hairdryer. Berth holders can code in a number for entrance to the toilets, but it is 20p for non mooring or berth holders. By the way, Jacks comment on to-days weather was 'Christ its dreich!'

Tues 26th May

Sunshine and showers with strong gusty wind greeted us this morning and it has been the same all day. The washing is drying gradually after being in and out a good number of times.

Bill headed of for gas this afternoon and discovered it has changed premises as well. Grocery shopping was on the agenda for Kath and me too. The Hebridean Princess arrived to-day at the pier and it looks as if it may be staying overnight.

Jack has been doing battle with the galley tap and discovered the problem wasn't what he thought it was initially. Thankfully we now have running water yet again. We treated ourselves to fish suppers tonight, which suited Kath and me just fine.

The weather has been mixed all day and it has got colder as the day has gone on.

The heating has been on a lot in the past week and we are all wishing the weather will improve very soon.

Wednesday 27th May

There was very heavy rain during the night but thankfully it is drier this morning. Kath and I ventured up to the shops for bread and milk. We had hoped to get newspapers too, but unfortunately they do not arrive until 12 o'clock. After lunch we collected the papers then had a 'granny' sail over to Drumbuie. The sun came out which made it a very pleasant afternoon. I even managed to sit outside with my cuppa. This was only the second time so far this holiday I've been able to do this!

We were reluctant to go round Ardnamurchan because of the forecast of rough or very rough! Hopefully by tomorrow things will be a bit more settled. At the moment there is hardly a breath of wind (10pm).

Thursday 28th May

Guess what, we're still here in Drumbuie. Mist down over the hills, drizzly rain, strong gusty winds, oh dear, it sounds all too familiar! Forecast for tomorrow saying a slight drop in wind strength, we will wait and see.

All told, there are now 13 yachts at anchor including Este with John and Janice Halliday.

I've just caught up with yesterday's paper, oh such a busy life this sailing lark. By the way, it has nothing to do

with all the chatting to Bill and Kath! Needless to say we are going over to Sahona this evening. It was another good night, with John and Janice there too for a chat and refreshment.

Friday 29th May

It is not really surprising we haven't ventured out to-day either. There were only five boats left in the anchorage when I got up at 8 o'clock. I did hear some leaving at 6 o'clock. We can actually see the hills to-day and they have been bathed in sunshine. Blue sky has stayed with us all day too, but the wind was strong and gusting up to 28 knots. It was such a lovely change being able to be out in the cockpit, but had to stay in the shelter of the spray hood out of the wind. Great day too for getting the washing dried, also the sleeping bags out for a good airing. Kath and Bill are just about to arrive to spend the evening with us.

Saturday 30th May

Where, oh where is all this wind coming from? We were all up really early to set off, until we heard the forecast at 8.10am. They were still talking about rough seas and strong winds. Again it has been gusting up to 27 knots. The plus side being, it has stayed sunny all day, so that in itself cheered us up. There are now 13 boats in the anchorage tonight.

Sunday 31st May

All together now. 'Oh what a beautiful morning' with blue sky, warm sunshine and a slight sea. Great!

All up and off by 8 o'clock and headed over to Tobermory to restock supplies and fill up with water. The cruise ship 'Black Prince' was in the bay and the tenders were busy ferrying people ashore.

We left at 10.15 and on our way to Moidart. It was very much a 'Granny' sail for the first three hours and then the wind disappeared altogether and the engine had to go on. We saw a Minke whale just as we approached the entrance to Moidart.

The rhododendrons are out and it is very picturesque. In the evening we were over on Sahona for a barbecue, which was all very pleasant sitting in the evening sunshine.

Monday 1st June

Dare I say, we have had another beautiful day. Jack



decided to go fishing up to Loch Blain and came back with two lovely trout which we had for dinner. Kath came over to Tarragon for a chat while Bill polished the topsides of Sahona. After lunch the three of us went for a spin in Bill's dinghy round to Tioram Castle. We were amazed to see an oystercatchers nest on the pebbles next to the path going towards the castle. Luckily we didn't stand on the two eggs as they were so well camouflaged. A cock and hen pheasant were strutting around very close to us which was very unusual. It was as if they were pets and used to people.

Tuesday 2nd June

Left Moidart about 10 o'clock to make our way to Arisaig. It was really beautiful in the morning sun. Nice slight sea but unfortunately the wind was on the nose so we had to motor all the way. Jack and I saw a Minke whale again but it was some distance away. There have been a lot of shearwaters around this area and also some guillimots.

After lunch the four of us headed for the village for some bits and pieces from Spar. Then we treated ourselves to some ice cream and sat on a bench and enjoyed our cones, sun and the lovely view.

The wind started to get up just as we were approaching Arisaig and has gradually increased as the day has progressed. It is now 9pm and it is still gusting up to 23 knots.

The new boat shed is now completed at Arisaig Marine. It was only a shell when we were here last year. There is also a nice new café and gift shop. The new office is in the same building as well as toilets, showers and laundry facilities.

Wednesday 3rd June

It was a windy night but thankfully it had calmed down by morning. We did some cleaning jobs before joining Bill and Kath ashore for lunch. The hotel no longer does bar lunches so we went to the Rhu Café instead. We could all thoroughly recommend it after a super meal. The portions were all very generous. We all had something different and each one was more than ample. So much so, we didn't have room for ice cream today - what a shame!

The wind picked up again as we returned to our boats. By late afternoon the gusts were up to 29 knots. As it is still blowing like mad and white horses showing it will be a 'stay at home' night and not a visit to Sahona.

Thurs 4th June

The 'Sahona taxi' picked us up and we headed ashore. Firstly to check with the office to see if we could stay another two nights as the forecast is awful, 5/7 possibly gale 8. Who wants that on their holidays, certainly not us?

We decided to go to Mallaig and got the 10am bus at the post office. The breeze picked up but the sun shone most of the day. After we had a lovely lunch at the Harbour Café we headed up the hill to behind the Health Centre to a vantage point to see the Steam Train leaving for Fort William. Someone waved from the train and naturally we waved back and that started the ball rolling with lots of the other passengers doing likewise. That was with the exception of the folk in the last carriage which was the 1st class one! Kath said it felt like being one of the 'Railway Children'.

We made our way back down the town and as we



Gavin Maxwell's cottage is now looking very run down and sad.

were watching a seal being fed by one of the fishermen the fire engine passed with its siren blaring. On our way back to Arisaig we discovered it was a grass fire they were attending caused by the Steam Train!

Friday 5th June

Different direction to-day as we went again with Shiel Buses but this time to Fort William. The sun shone all the way there which gave us some beautiful scenery to enjoy. The new road is now completed and what a difference that makes. I'm really sorry I won't be driving home on it — well, not quite! There was still some snow on the top of Ben Nevis and it looked very majestic in the sunshine. It looked very different on our return journey as the top was shrouded in clouds. It rained a little on the way back to Arisaig but we were really lucky to get back to our boats before the heavy rain started. The forecast is still the same for tomorrow unfortunately, and it has been quite cold to-day too.

Saturday 6th June

It is another bright day but with a very cold north easterly wind. Kath and I went over to the village for supplies and papers and were lucky to get the last two Expresses. On our way back we went into the café for coffee with Jack and Bill and met up with a couple from Dalry. Their faces were very familiar and we were sure we had been in their company before but none of us could think where it was.

We had lunch back at the boat then Kath and I went ashore again to make use of the laundry. While the wash was on we went for an ice cream and sat and enjoyed the sunshine. It was then back to put the wash in the dryer and we then decided to take a walk round the village. There are quite a number of new builds going on throughout the place. I decided to make soup before going over to Sahona for the evening. The wind died down considerably after dinner thankfully.

Sunday 7th June

Jack went up to the office to make arrangements for us to leave Tarragon for a few days as we are going home for a family celebration at the end of the month.



Sahona was over at the pontoon for water and then both boats were ready to leave just before 10am. Another bright day but with a little more cloud around and with a slight sea we made our way to Sandaig. It was a very pleasant sail all the way up and surprisingly only a few other boats around. There were four boats in the anchorage when we arrived but two left shortly afterwards to catch the tide going through Kyle Rhea. It was a very peaceful night even although they were talking about occasional sixes!!

Monday 8th June

A beautiful morning and after a leisurely breakfast we went ashore for a stroll. We saw the plaque for Gavin Maxwell and the cairn for the otter of 'Ring of Bright Water' fame. The cottage is now looking very run down and sad. I was amazed at all the different patterns and colours of the stones on the beach. We then went back to Sahona for morning coffee and enjoy more sunshine.

Set off for Kyle Rhea just after lunch but a little more cloud had appeared by then. We are on the pontoons at Kyle of Lochlash. As we arrived we received a lovely welcome from Nigel from the Atlantis the glass bottomed boat.

The Alba Explorer, the Ocean Youth Trust for Scotland boat is also here. It is so big it is taking up two thirds of the pontoon.

We managed to get in at the back and Sahona is at the side next to the gangway.

Tuesday 9th June

Another bright morning and we are all off to the Co-op to get more supplies.

Bill wanted to get out before the Atlantis returns from its first trip of the day as it was quite tight when it was along side. Bill and Jack had turned Tarragon earlier to make it easier for us to get out from the back of the pontoon especially as the tide was going down

I was a busy wee bee last night and cleaned the entire cockpit, windows etc – big mistake! It was lovely and calm inside the bridge, but oh! what a different world on the other side. What a horrible sea with wind over tide and a much stronger wind than forecast. The next two hours were anything but pleasant and now windows and cockpit have more salt on them than before! We are on buoys in Churchton Bay and getting bounced all over the place. I'm very much hoping it quietens down before bed time. We were hoping to see the new slip here completed but there is still tugs, barges, cranes etc. plus the big house is derelict and without its roof. It is a shame as it takes away the beauty of the anchorage which still has four visitor's buoys.

Forgot to mention the toilet and shower block at Kyle is still excellent. It is very clean with lovely hot water and shower time 15 minutes plus towel all for £1.40. You can also have a tour of Scotland while you are there with all the pictures and postcards on the walls.

Wednesday 10th June

Oh, what a rolly-polly night. It is the first time we have experienced these conditions here.

It was another lumpy sea all the way up to Portree, with the wind still on the nose. Sahona's engine decided it didn't want to 'play ball' and gave Bill and Kath a bit of a headache half way up the Sound, but pleased to say they arrived here safely. It is still bright, but cold with it, as we still have a northerly wind. As we are on the old mooring buoys, and well over in the bay, we are getting quite a bit of shelter thankfully.

Thursday 11th June

We awoke to a much cloudier sky this morning. We all went ashore after chores and met up with Kath's nephew and his girlfriend. They all went off in Grant's car in the hope of finding a new filter for Sahona's engine. Jack and I then had a look round the shops and bought a paper. We then headed for the wonderful bakers shop and treated ourselves to some lovely cakes and pastries. It was then next door for some lunch. The rain came on as we

were making our way back to the pier. We took shelter in the doorway of the RNLI. station and had a chat with mechanic there until the rain went off. I had left some washing out but fortunately the wind picked up and the sun came out, so I eventually got everything dried. The rest of the day was spent reading and snoozing!

Have just heard a Pan Pan coming through and a vessel in the Sound of Sleat is taking in water. The Mallaig Lifeboat is heading their way.

Friday 12th June

It turned onto a beautiful day and we headed for the town yet again. We met up with an ex-cruising club member and had a chat. After that we enjoyed an ice cream while sitting in the square watching the world go by. Lovely! It sound as if we are becoming addicted to ice cream, but we aren't really --- well I don't think so! After lunch and chores it was sunbathing time. Bill and Kath came on board after their trip round the north of the Skye with Grant. They couldn't have had a better day for seeing the views. The four of us had a lovely meal ashore in the evening and afterwards had a stroll to see if we could find where old neighbours of Bill and Kath's stayed. We did find the house but it looked a bit 'shut up' as if they were away. Quite a number of the gardens around that area were really beautiful, with some very exotic plants and flowers. Unfortunately the midges came out to play, so we didn't linger, and made a hasty retreat back to Sahona for the rest of the evening.

Kath and I could only get a signal on our mobile phones at high tide. There is a charge of £5 for the use of the pontoon during your stay in Portree. The inner moorings have now a 10 meter restriction on them, which didn't surprise us as we found them quite close to each other last time we were here.

Saturday 13th June

I could hardly believe I was hearing rain on the coach roof when I awoke this morning, after having such a lovely sunset last night. Our mustos and wellies had to go on for our trip back down to Kyle. It was sad leaving Bill and Kath behind but they were planning to go a little further north and we had to get back to Arisaig. We've all had a really good time together and it was great having their company.





As we were coming down the Sound the Cullins disappeared in the mist and rain. Needless to say we got our fair share of it with some really heavy downpours. We are tied up to one of the mooring buoys at Kyleakin and the sea is as slight as it was all the way from Portree. What a pleasant change from our northward journey although it was in sunshine! It is now 9.30 pm and we have a lovely calm, sunny evening with a beautiful sunset over Raasay which is framed by the Skye Bridge.

Sunday 14th June

We walked along to our usual wee shop only to discover it had closed down. Fortunately another has opened further along the road and we were able to buy milk and papers there.

Jack and I were all set for a lovely quiet afternoon, but sadly it wasn't to be. The peace was shattered by the arrival of two jet skis and two speed boats, and I really mean SPEED boats. What a racket and wash they created. I was even more dismayed to see none of the four on the larger of the boats were wearing life jackets, but absolutely horrified to realize there were two wee tots in the boat as well. Needless to say they didn't have any on either! It certainly didn't break my heart when the smaller of the boats ran out of fuel, at least there was a LITTLE less noise.

There is a lovely sunset looking west, but it is pouring on the hills in the opposite direction

Monday 15th June

Jack was not too happy, as he struggled with the floor covering in the heads. It had started to rise so had to be taken off and re glued. The problem was getting it dry enough on the underside to stick.

After topping up with water and getting more supplies at the Co-op at Kyle of Lochalsh we headed for Kyle Rhea at 12.30 to catch the tide. We also had a chat with Nigel just before we left. It was a lovely sail all the way, until we were nearly at Loch Nevis, and then, oh boy, did it RAIN. It came down whole water, and then some!!!! Luckily it began to taper off just as we approached the moorings at Inverie.

We went ashore to the Old Forge for a meal and met a couple from Ipswich. They arrived at the mooring a little later than us but had been sailing since 8am. They come

up to Scotland every year with their yacht and had been here for four weeks already.

Tuesday 16th June

We heard the forecast first thing this morning and it wasn't very encouraging with it going up to 5/7 and possibly gale 8. The boat was already booked in at Arisaig from the 17th but we decided to high tail it down there a day early. Could you blame us?

It is 8pm at the moment and would you believe it the strong winds haven't arrived as yet.

Showers had been mentioned, but it has stayed dry all day. To-morrow will be clean up and packing day.

Wednesday 17th June

The wind well and truly came with a vengeance and stayed with us all night and continued throughout the day. It was accompanied by heavy rain and blustery showers all day long. The wind changed to the west, so now unfortunately, we are getting the full benefit of the fetch. We were so pleased we didn't require to go ashore and were able to stay here nice and dry even although we are getting bounced about quite a bit.

The hills were covered in mist this morning but are now silhouetted against dark menacing looking clouds. A little earlier when we were getting blinks of the sun there was the most beautiful rainbow.

All packed up for a quick departure in the morning.

Thursday 18th June

Susan arranged for the work boat to pick us up at 8.45am as our dinghy was staying on Tarragon. I was so, so pleased of the lift as it was still pretty wild. Home by bus – Arisaig to Fort William, then boarded Glasgow bus half-an-hour later. We were in Glasgow 20 minutes before getting the x77, and arrived at 3.35 pm in Ayr. Not bad going, and much less tiring than driving!

This has been the driest holiday I've had on Tarragon for years. I wonder what the weather will be like for me next year?

Agnes



Guide book to accompany the ten-fathom Chart of the Clyde and Western Isles of Scotland

Some 10 years ago when I was clearing my parents' house in Monkton, I came across a pilot book entitled grandly : 'Guide book to accompany the ten-fathom Chart of the Clyde and Western Isles of Scotland.' Published in Glasgow in May 1904 by James Brown & Sons, how it came to be there I couldn't be certain. My father was a keen sailor but he certainly wasn't that ancient. In all probability it came from the estate of Col JW Hamilton of Arn Hall in Whiting Bay who owned the Clyde 8 Metre no. 7, 'Thora' to whom my paternal Aunt was house keeper and where my father holidayed between the wars. This is also where the family passion for sailing started; boyhood summer days sailing in the Clyde with the professional skipper as the old Colonel took less and less interest in Thora. I have in my possession a napkin ring, the 'Steersman prize' for Col. Hamilton in the Clyde regatta of 1933. Thora foundered in the North Sea in 1980 on her way to a regatta, fortunately without loss of life so she had an interesting career.

More interestingly, the comments in the book and the spelling and language are of a different era albeit only a hundred or so years ago. The 'Mull of Cantyre', 'Loch Swen' (Sween) and the 'Gulf of Coirebhreachain' are referred to. Clearly the maritime activity in and around the Clyde was considerable at that time and the general directions still hold good with respect to hazards etc.

Here's what it says of Troon, I'm sure the racers will find the advice on Lady Isle useful... Ken Andrew

Lady Isle, of small extent with two towers in it, lies 4 ½ miles N.N.W. from the piers of Ayr. It is surrounded by shoal ground, which in some directions extend 3 and 4 cables from its shore. Within Lady Isle there is a detached bank half-a-mile long, having on its southern end 15 feet, with 7 fathoms between it and Lady Isle, and 7 to 8 fathoms between it and the shore. Kilwinning tower on, with the outer perch at Irvine N. by E ¾ E, clears the eastern side of this bank.

Troon Rock, situate about 1 & 1/10 miles W.N.W. from the west point of Troon Harbour, has 3 ½ fathoms over it at low-water spring tide.

Troon Harbour, which is the easiest access of any harbour on the Ayrshire coast, is artificially formed on the eastern side of the projecting point, dividing Ayr and Irvine bays, a pier or breakwater having been run out upwards of 1000 yards, enclosing a space between it and the spit, which space is again divided between an inner and outer harbour. In the outer harbour there is ample quayage for discharging and loading cargoes, with cranes and modern appliances, sheltered from north-western winds by an extensive pier and provides security for vessels of moderate draught.

In the outer harbour is a tidal dock, 370 feet long by 260 feet wide, entrance 40 feet in width and having 20 feet on the sill at H.W.S.T., that depth being the same in side the dock at low water; there are also two graving docks of 275 feet and 368 feet in length, and 37 and 48 feet in width respectively. Connected with these there is a large yard for the building and repair of vessels. Coal is exported to a large extent, each berth having a 30 ton steam crane alongside. Stores of all kinds can be supplied. Glasgow and South-Western Railway has large sidings around the dock and harbour for the loading and discharge of coal & c. Special bye-laws are in force as to vessels carrying carbide and calcium. Vessels arriving from infected ports have to obtain pratique before entering the harbour.

Exports are coal, pig iron &c., valued in 1900 at £129,675; Imports, timber, iron, sulphur, chrome and limestone, £120,344. Vessels entered 1477, tonnage 239,432 tons. Tugs are always to be had. Signal for attendance – Pilot jack by day, two lights at night. Lifeboat

stationed at Troon; railways station, post office, hotel.

The entrance at low water springs has a depth of 14 to 15 feet, and in the outer harbour the general depths is from 11 to 12 feet. Five steamers can be comfortably berthed alongside in dock. The inner basin used as a timber float dries at low water, and has an entrance 49 feet wide.

Population in 1901, 4,764, but during the summer months is more than doubled by the numerous coasting houses and bathing quarters, with sandy beach, besides golf links, etc. In West Bay there is a hospital for seamen.

DIRECTIONS. – In making for Troon Harbour from the southward caution is required to avoid the rocky ledge which fringes the western edge of the retaining works, the clearing mark being the Kilwinning tower in line with the outer perch of Irvine bearing N.E. ¾ E. Care must be taken to round the red buoy on its western side, and from thence the pier end may be passed close to, but should be compelled by the direction of the wind to stand over in the vicinity of Mill Rock, every care must be taken to avoid that danger. (See Lights and Signals, Nos 593,593, Brown's Almanac).

Mill Rock, of small extent, half a mile N.E. of Troon west pier, and about the same distance from the shore, dries one foot and is marked on its southern side by a 'black buoy.' The northern edge of the shoal and foul ground lying westward of Troon spit is marked by a red buoy in 3 fathoms, nearly 2 cables W. by N. ½ N. from Troon west pier.

Lappock Rock. – Beacon red, tower surmounted with a ball. This rock dries at 2 feet, lies midway between the entrance to Troon Harbour and Irvine harbour bar perch, and nearly in line between the two. This rock is one mile from the nearest shore, and is steep-to in its northern side. A vessel will pass outside all danger by keeping Ayr steeples in sight outside Troon Harbour.

Barassie, a wayside station on the Glasgow and South-Western Railway, 3 miles north of Troon. This select watering place is known by the local cognomen of New Kilmarnock, from its being generally occupied by merchants and their friends from the town of Kilmarnock; it possesses a fine sandy beach, and the visitors are much interested in their own circle; no village here.





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Following last year's disastrous season when our 'cruise' through Crinan was curtailed by a NE Force 5/6/7 combined with an overheating engine off Sgat Mor, two nights holed up at Portavadie, a retreat to Millport and a further two nights holed up at Largs with winds gusting to over 40 knots down the hill leading to home on Thursday three days early, 2009 began auspiciously with a pleasant early shakedown overnighter at Kings Cross on 20th of April.

Here Colin suggested that we should take the boat through Crinan to Ardfarn prior to our sailing week in June, to give us a decent interval west of Kintyre, since he was under a lot of pressure as senior registrar in Intensive Care at Yorkhill, and needed a good break.

Monday 18 May

Our start was delayed till 12.30 to let CJ do his post-shift handover and get himself down from Glasgow. With a S 3/4 occ 5 forecast, we fuelled up with 43l. of diesel costing £48 now that the red diesel concession is no more (would have been cheaper at Morrison's!) and set off on a spanking sail across Irvine Bay with two reefs in the genny and one in the main. As the wind rose from 14 to 18-20 knots off Ardrossan (where else!) and veered SW, we double reefed the main in short confused seas. Colin was exhausted after just coming off four 14 hour nightshifts, and I had made the elementary mistake of spending too much time below in the first half hour of the trip, so the prospect of corkscrewing our queasy way up Loch Fyne for the next five hours in 20 knot winds was an unpleasant one and we opted to motor-sail past the Cumraes and Garroch Head.

Happily, and unusually for Loch Fyne, by 1700 the wind had dropped to 10-12 knots and backed southerly with calming seas. There were very few other boats out, we only saw six or seven, no doubt discouraged by

the heavy squally showers dumping on Arran and the Cowal Hills, through which we motored unscathed before finally copping the edge of a big one passing south of us off Sgat Mor. By this time the wind was astern but we were too tired even to unfurl and sail on genny alone - just keen to get to Ardrishaig.

Tied up in the sea lock at 20.00 after mooring up on the outer pontoon to discover a notice saying 'unsafe - do not moor'. Turns out that this is a 'health and safety' issue because it doesn't have a handrail! Tell that to any marina in the country!

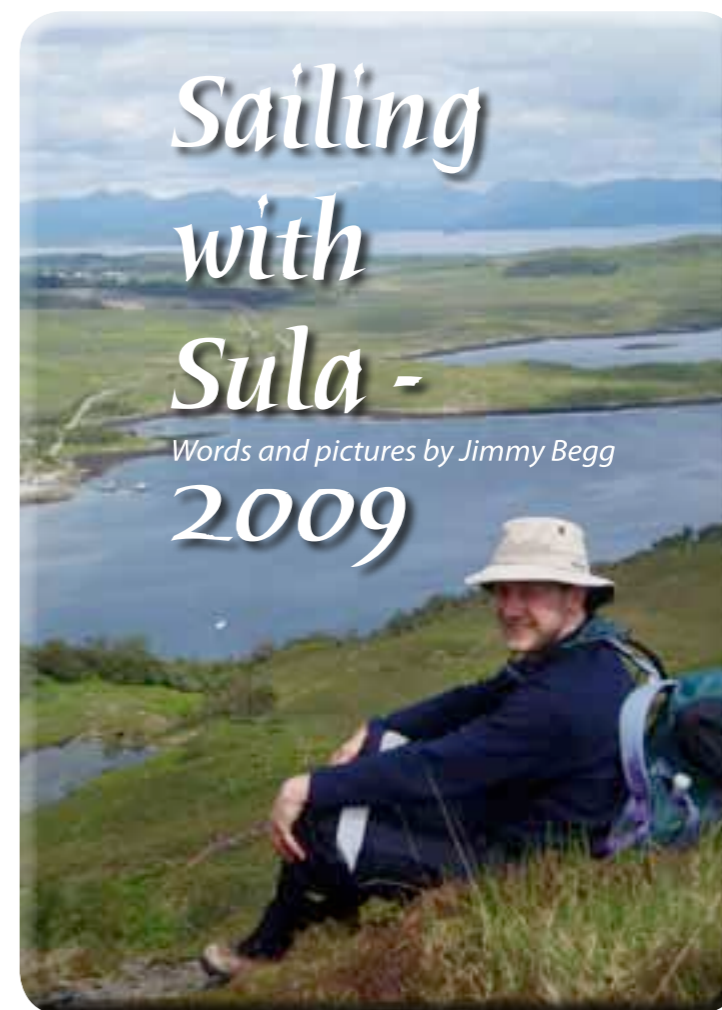
Anyway, Colin rustled up a

to Glasgow from Campbeltown!

0900 - Transited the canal in company with a 45-footer with 4 crew, which made Colin's lock-work a lot easier while I controlled warps from the cockpit through blocks fore and aft. A useful tip from the lock keeper to keep the stern warp the same length and feed out or shorten the bow warp made things even easier. Never too old to learn! We made good time and exited Crinan sea lock at 15.30 to arrive on the visitor pontoon at Ardfarn at 16.45.

Over the phone I had assurances from the office that they could order a taxi for us for Lochgilphead, but when

I went to book in and pick up the courtesy tender (with a huge outboard), I was given the number of Alistair McDonald who did local taxiing, who would be able to take us - if he was available! Fortunately he was - but we were cutting it a bit tight and he would pick us up at 17.30. By this time it was 17.00 and we still had to find C10 mooring, unload all our stuff and get back to the jetty with the tender. Disembarked at 17.29 just as the taxi arrived! Alastair turned out to be a pleasant chatty retired farmer who taxied as an interesting hobby job - and was going down to Prestwick Airport next day to pick up an Irish fare from Dublin. Sounded a bit Irish - getting a £5 flight with Ryanair and then paying £150 for a taxi to Ardfarn! It cost us (Colin) £23 from Ardfarn to Lochgilphead, but we got there with



CJ, Loch Spelve and the Mamores

hotpotch of couscous and tinned mince, with Pringles before and fruit for afters which left us happy and content, and ready for the deep sleep of the exhausted mariner. Distance run = 40nm

Tuesday 19 May

Nae pressure, but we have to get right through the canal to Crinan and then up to our booked mooring at Ardfarn - in time to get a taxi back to Lochgilphead and the 18.40 last bus

time to spare for a fish supper on the seafront while waiting for the Glasgow bus. Refilled with 16l. diesel at Ardfarn, ie 1.2l per hour - for 13.5 hours motoring - not bad! Distance run = 15 nm

Sat 6 June

Colin got back from a week in Rome, Sicily and Lipari only last night - so by the time I got the bus to Glasgow, he picked me up at Buchanan St, and we did a shop at Sainsbury's, it was

early afternoon by the time we set off for Ardfern. Rather than cut loose and rush to catch the flood through Dorus Mor, we sensibly opted to get everything shipshape and Bristol, and stayed overnight on a spare pontoon berth where we had loaded up and which was vacant anyway. Paid £218 for 19 days on the mooring (£11.50/day) and they didn't charge us extra for the pontoon. Boat fine - apart from a burst carton of orange juice in the storage locker, which had covered the floor with liquid mould and gave CJ a couple of hours unpleasant cleaning up before he could store all our provisions. Distance run = 0

Sun 7 June

Left at 1020 and motored down the main channel to pass through the Dorus Mor in slack water, giving CJ the opportunity to practise using the back bearing of Garbh Reisa and the Hotel. There was a cool 10 kt N/NE breeze, but brilliant sunshine and superb visibility for the Sound of Luing where our SOG rose from 4.8 to 8 knots as we passed Fladda light at 12.50. A 14 knot wind against a 3.5 knot tide produced no problems - only raising a 2ft wave as we hit the races south and north of Fladda.

Topping Seil Island, with the wind now northerly we were able to raise sail, tack towards Puillobhain then beat for the entrance to Loch Spelve. A huge bulk carrier en route to Sanda quarry announced to all vessels its restricted ability to manoeuvre due a 7.5m draught as it sailed up the broad Firth of Lorne in 70 metres of water. For Sula, pilotage at half-spring tide through the narrow entrance to 'Spelvie' in 5m seemed to pose less of a problem despite meeting a yacht on its way out.

There seemed to be more fish farm buoys than five years ago, but it was easy to pass through to the peace and solitude of our favourite anchorage in the north west corner. After a wee snooze in the sun Colin produced a delightful meal of Thai chicken, mange-tout and rice. No other boats - the only sounds being the clamour of a restless flock of greylag geese, the piping of twitchy oystercatchers, and the distant reversing call of a greater yellow forklift at the fish farm away on the far side of the loch. Distance run = 30nm

Monday 8 June

In a quandary. Due to pick up Fiona in Oban tomorrow at 13.00. Do we leave this lovely sheltered anchorage for a few hours sailing up and down the Sound of Mull, only to then have to search for another anchorage for the night within three hours of Oban. Since these were few and far between - and it was such a bonny day with less wind than forecast, we opted to stay and take a walk via Ardura and the monument to Dugald McPhail, Bard, then walk to the southwest arm of the loch along the road to Lochbuie. A very pleasant 9 mile leg-stretcher, with ravens, redshanks, and sandpipers for company.

On the way back we climbed to the top of Cruach Ardura (217m) for fantastic views of Loch Linnhe, Sound of Lorne, Ben Nevis, the Mamores, Glencoe and Cruachan, the Mull hills, and the ferries and dot-yachts on the Sound of Mull. Delighted to find a Painted Lady (of the butterfly variety!) flitting about the summit and posing for Colin's camera. There has been a major invasion of this species migrating up from N Africa this spring and I have already sent off several records to the Butterfly Trust from Ayr.

Back on board, CJ fitted up the new radio/CD player and more mundanely I wired up the new Rule-800 bilge pump. After a superb mouth-watering lamb tagine (enough for four - eaten by two) we relaxed and dropped off to the sweet sound of the Bueno Vista Social Club. Distance run = 0 Walked = 9 miles

Tuesday 9 June

Left Spelvie at 10.15 in 4 knots of wind and motored via the Sound of Kerrera to rendezvous with Fiona who was arriving at Oban on the 13.00 bus from Glasgow. Disappointing trip for wildlife with only one seal and no porpoises or baskers spotted on a glassy sea. Our first time on the 15 new yellow visitor mooring buoys set on the south side of the bay next to yacht moorings. (£12 per night or £2 for 30 minutes on the landing pontoon to load or take on water). Panicked momentarily when we couldn't spot the old blue buoys off the church on the north side! Anchored in the middle of the bay was an old familiar sight - the Black Prince - on

which Helen and I had a wonderful transatlantic cruise to Faeroes, Iceland and Greenland in June 2006.

Colin went ashore to meet Fiona and do a 'shop' for the next few days while I topped up the fuel and water tanks and blethered with the skipper of *Amity* a former Navy Moody 33, who kindly topped up our biscuit box with eight caramel wafers from Tunnocks with whom he has a connection. Told him it brought back memories of being an impecunious medical student only able to afford one a week as a treat!

By the time Fi and CJ were back on board it was already 14.30 and we had to decide on making the most of the rest of a bonny day. Our original intention if Fiona had got an earlier bus was to head for Colonsay, but leaving at this time would have meant a late evening landfall after a long slog, and that was not what we were here for. Opted to motor down to the Garvellachs for a gander and perhaps retrace our route to Puillobhain for the night, from where we could either go down the Sound of Luing, or west of Jura tomorrow, depending on the forecast.

Through the sound of Kerrera and past Insh Island, we had to adjust our heading to counteract the strong NW flood tidal race past Dubh-Feith and Bogha Nuadh, which dropped our speed to 4 knots before regaining the south-flowing ebb close into the Garvellachs which carried us down to Eilean Naoimh - the Saint's Island. By now it was 17.15 and getting on a bit, so we entered the temporary anchorage just long enough to have a look at the ancient chapel and beehive cells through binoculars.

Since it was going to be a long haul back up to Puillobhain, and the 24-hour forecast had improved from North 4/5 to NW3/4, we opted to spend tonight in the Black Isles just NE of the Garvellachs and chance a run down the west of Jura tomorrow. By chance, *Popadil* a 35' Raasay running up from Colonsay on its cruising chute opted to do the same and we followed her in to a small, idyllic and remote anchorage well protected from all winds except north and east. Only room comfortably for three or four boats overnight, but apparently it is a favourite spot for daytrip yachts from Croabh and Arfern.



Dinner was a delicious risotto from CJ and Fi, after which we climbed to the top of Eilean Dubh Beag to photograph a wonderful Mull sunset and watch the progress of another small cruise ship heading for Oban past the Garvellachs. Couldn't think of her passengers having any better a time than us - especially when Colin spotted a young stag - six pointer in velvet - just down the hill, which stood obligingly photogenic as they both took snap after snap. Just how did it get from Jura to this remote island - cut off by Corrivreckan, Grey Dogs, and Sound of Luing? Eventually the midges beat us into a hasty retreat back to Sula. Distance run = 33nm

Wednesday 10 June

Awoke to a beautiful still calm morning, flat seas and a 2 kt SW wind - and learned the answer to our stag puzzle, as it decided it was fed up with the presence on the island of two Labradors from *Popadil*, leaped into the water 50m from the boat and swam across the narrow kyle between E Dubh Beag and E Dubh Mor, scrambled ashore and bounded up the heather hillside of the larger island. Good swimmers, deer must have been crossing from Jura to Scarpa, to Lunga and the Black Isles for centuries.

We set off at 09.05, the calm conditions luring us down the west coast of Jura making 5.6 knots, with an option, if we made good time, of getting through the Sound of Islay on the last of the tide and across to Gigha. However, as we progressed, the ebb through Corrivreckan took 1.5 knots off our speed. By 12.10 we were off the shoals of Shian Bay and down to 4.2 knots and it was obvious we

would not make the Sound till 13.40 - an hour into the north flowing tide. The wind had also picked up to 10 knots from the NW.

If we went into West Loch Tarbert now we would miss the new 1410 forecast and be in a radio black spot thereafter, so we slowed down to 3.5 knots and followed the 50m contour close inshore, with good views of the raised beaches and sea caves - and an occasional deer on the skyline. Off the mouth of the loch with the wind rising to 14 knots, we raised sail for a reach across to Ruvaal Light and back, but had a problem when the main halyard wrapped round a U-bolt at the mast head and by the time this was freed we only had 45 minutes of sailing. With the forecast 'variable 3-4' now racking up to NW 5 and unpleasant lumpy seas, we were glad to drop sail and run for the shelter of Cuan Mor where at 15.00 we anchored west of the reef in company with *Scherzo of Brae* a 32' Nicholson, with a 15-17 knot wind singing in the rigging.

Shortly afterwards, we were joined by *Kolibri*, a big French ketch from Brittany, which had come down from Tiree after Skye, Lochmaddy and Barra. As he set his anchor I shouted over - 'Regardez la grande roche!' as he motored back dangerously close to the submerged reef. He acknowledged, and shortly after, motored forward again hauling his anchor to reveal he had fouled our chain! He managed to free it and re-anchored to the north of us and very close, I shortened our chain a few metres as a precaution. We tended to swing together in the wind with no risk of touching, which allowed a bit of chat - in French of course. This was their second trip to Scotland - last year they had done the Clyde, and this year

his mother and father had flown into Prestwick and he had picked them up at Troon. Most impressed by the beautiful Scottish islands, but had not managed to see any 'cerfs'. Told him we had seen several on the Jura hillsides. Also advised him that this was a radio blackspot for weather forecasts.

Too breezy to go ashore in comfort so we sat down to another fine meal by master chef Colin. By 22.00 the wind had dropped to 6-8 knots and we snuggled down happy in the knowledge that the worst of the winds might be over for our trip to Tayvallich tomorrow. Distance run = 23 nm

Thursday 11 June

Some hope! By 08.00 the rigging began to hum again as the wind rose to 12-14 knots in the anchorage - and I had no radio comms. We would have to head to the outer loch and suck it and see. 'Allo, Sula!' It was our Breton friend. 'Voulez vous le meteo?' He had used his satellite phone to pick up the forecast, from an American source I think. 'Oui, bien' I replied, fetching a pencil and paper. 'A onze heures, c'est treize noeuds nor-ouest - a treize heures, c'est quinze noeuds; a quinze heures c'est dix-sept noeuds nor-ouest' So we were going to get a force 4-5 NW down the Sound of Islay... shouldn't be too much of a problem - and a good sail across to Loch Sween. *Kolibri* was heading for Port Ellen and then on to Dublin. We planned to leave at 10.30, two hours after high water, calculating that by the time we were through the Sound of Islay we would be almost at the start of the flood tide up the Sound of Jura, which wouldn't be too strong - but wind against tide for the two-hour trip across to Knapdale.

Weighed anchor on schedule to find that now we had fouled *Kalibri's* anchor! Thank goodness we had the windlass, which took the strain as Colin and I used the boathook to lift her chain and slip it off our hook. First time we'd done that, and it brought home the need to get an old-fashioned wooden-handled metal boat hook instead of our impractical telescopic metal and plastic one! This incident was gratefully acknowledged by Monsieur, who shouted across that if two anchors caught each other twice - they loved each other! On hearing this piece of old Breton

nautical lore we laughed, waved, wished them 'Bonne chance et bon voyage' and departed.

Hugged the north shore using the white back transits since all the rocks were still submerged by the tide. *Kalibri* followed us out and then suddenly turned sharply to port on a course straight across the rocks - till it dawned on me he would be using his chart plotter - which was a damn-sight more accurate than our pilotage, careful though we were.

With the NW wind rising to 15-19 knots we motored to the sound entrance then set a two reefed genny and enjoyed a lovely broad reach and run at 5.5-7 knots first on starboard then gybing to port tack right round to Na Cuiltean Lt, the square tower just south of Craighouse. Here the wind got up to 19-20 knots but we thought it might just be funnelling through the sound or off the Paps. Sadly not! With the dip of the Loch Sween entrance visible on the horizon we set a course past Na Cuiltean which would pass to the right of Skervulle Lt in mid-channel as the wind rose to a steady 23-24 knots, gusting to 26-27 at times. So much for Force 4-5! (NB Sound of Jura or Loch Fyne - if the forecast says Force 4-5, always be prepared for a Force 6!)

Then the roller-reefing halyard jumped off the drum and I had to go forward to ease it back on as Colin brought us to windward and took the strain off the sail. Now with a double-reefed main and four reefed genny, Sula rode the wind-against-tide waves very well. They were not more than 2-3ft but gave a short chop and some spray. Still concentrating on steering for the Loch Sween entrance, we passed Skervulle Lt, close enough for good views of a common seal basking

on the low smooth rounded rock. This should have rung alarm bells at the time, but shortly afterwards, puzzled about individual identification of the low isles to starboard, ill-defined against the Knapdale landscape, I took a GPS fix and discovered that the flood tide had moved us half a mile north and west of track.

With the wind still 22 knots, we hove to, downed sails and motored through a lumpy confused tidal race to pass safely round the bottom of Eilean Mor and reach the safe passage to Loch Sween, west of En nan Leach. It was a delightful run up Loch Sween past the impressive ruins of the Castle - all the more relaxing since we were now out of the weather. Even more delightful were the Fairy Isles just north of Tayvallich - occupied by a single yacht down from Craobh Haven - where we anchored behind Sgurr Buidhe in total shelter, surrounded by old native woodland right down to the shoreline. The song of woodland birds was everywhere, and a pair of common seals lay hauled out on rocks 100m away while their half-grown pup splashed around savaging and worrying clumps of seaweed. Round the corner, 400m away on a small wooded islet, was an osprey's nest, which we probably would never have seen had the skipper of the other yacht not told us he thought they had found an osprey's nest.

Colin and Fiona prepared another fine meal - Devils on Horseback (a starter of prune wrapped round with bacon and grilled) and a tuna fish pasta bake. Fiona, who seemed to start off the trip with an attitude problem - 'Huh, I'm on holiday...I'm busy reading...do it later...' was pulled up for it tonight when - after washing all the pots and then cleaning spillage

all over the cooker - I asked her what was to be done with the remains of the tuna pasta bake. 'You can put it in the tupper ware container,' she replied from the depth of her book. 'I'm putting it nowhere' I retorted - with feeling! After that, she realised she was fully part of a crew and not simply a passenger. Colin and I were also 'on holiday'.

Lessons learned! 15 minute fixes are essential in F5/6 wind v tide on a running tide. Don't rely on aiming for a fixed landmark. In future we would also head well south of Loch Sween - towards Knapdale Point - and then run north parallel to the shore on the clear approach to Loch Sween west of En nan Leach. The strong tides and submerged rocks around the McCormaig Isles are too unpredictable for safe passage between them - although our original intention was to pass east of En Mor anyway.

Distance run = 39 nm

Friday 12 June

What a difference a day makes! Awoke to stillness and sunshine and went on deck to read and quietly watch wildlife, letting CJ and Fi sleep on until 09.30. There was nae hurry since the N flowing tidal stream did not begin till between 13.50 and 14.50. After a late breakfast, we turned left and had wonderful views of the huge stick nest, with the osprey helpfully perched and posing for photographs on a nearby dead branch - brilliant! We then took a turn into Tayvallich harbour. What a beautiful setting. John Hall has his summer mooring here - and now I know why. No sign of *Hallmark* - probably up round Skye by now, enjoying this anticyclone. Nearly all moorings, but there are three

visitors' buoys and some room for anchoring west of the central reef. But I'd prefer the Fairy Isles anytime.

After yesterday, Colin was a bit apprehensive about passing between Corr Eilean and the foot of Danna Island due to strong irregular tidal streams and the hidden presence of the Corr, Dana and Keils Rocks either side of the seven cable wide channel, so we aimed to get there about an hour before the turn of the tide, when the currents would be much less powerful. In addition we set clearance latitudes - safe if we kept between 55°55.4' and 55°56'. Even so, passing north of Corr Eilean on a bearing of 312°, over a space of 15 minutes we were pushed northwards 3 cables and had to head 270° to offset the eddy and clear Danna Rock.

The CCC Sailing Directions are not very clear. They show 2.5-4kt N, S, NW, and SW currents around the islands, but don't make it clear that these apply to the N-going flood, and reverse with the S-going ebb - or do they? Will have to ask John Hall how he works these tides - probably just barges through!

Anyway, we didn't hit anything hard, headed out to Corraig nan Daimh, and turned north for pleasant motoring on flat seas all they way to Crinan sea lock where we arrived at 16.00 in time for a push through the canal to the pound beyond Dunardy Bridge. After a much-needed shower and dinner, the prospect of being savaged to death by Hielan midges on a three mile round trip for a Friday night drink at Cairnbaan Hotel, proved too much for the crew to contemplate. Colin's infected ingrowing toenail, which he has been nursing since before his trip to Italy, was also giving him a bit of bother. (I'll probably go home from this trip on Sula smelling of TCP rather than diesel!) It wasn't helped either by the pair of them racing like dafties to close sluices and open lock gates at the start of our transit. They did slow down after a wee while. Fi quickly got the hang of it and the sight of her wee 5'2" frame 'manfully' shoving away on her own at stiff heavy lock gates gave me a sair back just watching her - a real crew-member now.

Having been told that locking through starts at 08.30, and with Troon our ultimate destination, we sensibly opted for any early night. Distance run = 26 nm

Saturday 13 June

Moored strategically close to the loos and shower, naturally I was up early. I'm naturally up early every morning! The waterways men were also there early - to tell us that they were having to send water down the system to Crinan where levels were low overnight, and that we would not be able to start locking through till 09.30. This was a blow to our tight ETA schedule for Troon, but we spent the time productively getting kit packed and things tidied up - as far as humanly possible with these two on board!

Departed Dunardy at 09.45, made quick progress to Cairnbaan and began the descent. Couldn't believe our eyes at the size of the huge sailing barge emerging into the Cairnbaan pound from the lock. 110 years old, the *Het Leven* just managed to squeeze past us (well I'm exaggerating a bit!) and I'm only glad we did not meet her in the narrow series of bends leaving Crinan. Can only imagine the panic in skippers' faces as *Het Leven* swings round the blind corner and comes face-to-face with three forty-footers in convoy from the sea lock! Asked the lock keepers if they have a 'wide loads' policy like on the roads, with advance warning to other users of oncoming heavy vehicles - apparently not - you've got to face what comes! Seems daft, considering the confusion and disruption this could cause, when a little foresight could make things much easier.

We reached the sea lock at Ardrishaig by 13.15, in good time for Fiona to be picked up by her friend - and cart eight bags of rubbish to the skip - and for Colin and me to leave the sea lock at 13.55 in company with a 47' Norwegian yacht en route to Campbeltown.

Expecting a S/SE 3-4, we were surprised to encounter a SW 10 knot breeze, which rose ominously to 18-19 knots as we passed Sgat Mor at 1600 into a fleet of over 30 close-hauled big yachts racing towards Tarbert from the direction of the Kyles of Bute. Probably a racing muster from Rhu or Inverkip. Considerately, we threaded our way through them, motor giving way to sail, naturally.

We then set the main to give us a good extra half knot motor-sailing and keep our speed at 5.5-6 knots for the long haul to Troon. With my mobile phone batteries flat - and

relying on CJ's mobile to contact Helen to tell her of our late departure and ETA - maintaining speed became even more imperative when I glanced down at the chart table and I saw him fouterin' with his own phone - also deid! We were annoyed on several counts. If we had got away early at 08.30, we could have enjoyed a cracking sail at 4-5 knots all the way down from Ardrishaig. If the mobiles (or one of them) had been working we could have told Helen we might be 1-2 hours late and still sailed part of the way. But, as always, when you are tied to a tight schedule, whether it be time or tide, the pleasures of sailing must give way to the practicalities of the diesel engine.

We made good time and arrived off Troon at 21.00, having seen the P&O Fast Ferry depart just beforehand. Borrowed John Lewis's phone on the pontoon to ask Helen to come and collect us - and bring her boy and his dirty washing home for laundry and a sleep - before he going back to Italy on Monday to deliver a paper to a paediatric conference in Verona. Distance run = 45 nm

All in all, a great trip in great weather. We visited three new anchorages and the kids saw the Garvellachs and the west coast of Jura for the first time. As always, we made some mistakes and learned from them. Sea wildlife was disappointingly poor, with only a few seals and three porpoises seen during the whole trip. The time spent sailing was also poor, partly due to flat calms, partly due going the wrong direction for the wind, and partly due to time constraints.

Sailing = 9½ hours
Motoring = 50 hours
Total Distance = 251 nm
Fuel Consumption = 70 L
= 1.4 L/hr

Postscript - Wed 1 July - Heading home from an overnigher at Brodick - in 3 hours on a rum line between Brodick and Troon we saw at close range, pair of porpoises with baby, two puffins, manx shearwaters, a grey seal, a basking shark - and lastly - a minke whale 1.5 miles off Troon. Why bother leaving the Clyde!





We'd been out for the winter doing all the usual bits plus fitting a calorifier to give us hot water from the engine, which on a motor-sailer is warm for a lot of the time.

Lift-in was uneventful and nothing leaked, but running the engine on the pontoon berth to warm the water unfortunately caused the prop to catch a trailing rope, pulling the coupling apart and bending the shaft.

A fine start to the season you would think, but with the resources of TCC available, there was hope on the horizon.

First thing to do is shrug off the dismay and assess the damage, so over to the drying grid.

The prop was biting into the rudder, so it had stopped quickly! The remains of the flexcoupling were removed but the shaft cannot be removed with the rudder in place, so Norman provided a means of lifting the engine to slide the shaft forward. Unfortunately the engine hit the underside of the bridge deck before there was enough room to ease the shaft out.

A group of us dug a hole to drop the rudder (having moved the boat back on the tide) and after much grinding and sweating, the rudder and shaft were free, and the holes plugged.

The shaft went to Linco along with a spare length of stock which had been tested for size (metric shaft – imperial bearings). The prop went to Paisley and was gauged and cleaned for free, while Kath waited!

We went home knackered looking forward to a long sleep and lie-in due to the nervous and physical energy we had expended over the last few tides.

No such luck. Don was on the phone first thing in the morning to arrange delivery of the straightened shaft, which coincided with low water, so by lunch time, the shaft was back in place, rudder hung, and the boat towed back to it's berth using the dinghy. All the nasty show-stopping bits had been done in double quick time, we just needed a flexible coupling, 1970's style... You couldn't achieve a miracle like that in any other club I know about.

Thanks very much all you engine lifters, hole diggers, bolt grinders, precision engineers, mud wrestlers, donors of time and materials. You know who you are. Hopefully I'll be spared long enough to repay you!

ASAP did what it says on the tin and came up with a coupling to match the original and after some minor adjustments we were ready to test. (a few times!)

The log reflects it all:

Sun 5th Oct

'mast down and start emptying boat'

11th May

'Trip round Lady Isle to test engine shake out sails etc.' We could now realistically think about a cruise.

Discussions were already ongoing between Agnes and Kath, the real decision makers on Tarragon and Sahona, so we were to head West via Crinan – a peaceful chug through the countryside for a couple of days, and then anywhere, but including Skye, where we had some family history to look up. So...

The offending party - note the rudder damage



Ready to drop the rudder



Tue 19th May

'Towards Portavadie' – yup, we got there without incident, (I think I'll rattle through the itinerary until anything out of the ordinary happens, as we only have one lifetime). Rain and gusty in the canal, a few locks and the girls are 'cured'. No need to spend the beer money on this again for a while! Overnights at Cairnbaan and Crinan, then a nice sail to Loch Spelve where we cleaned the canal bits off the hull.

To Loch Aline — where an unmanned Sahona dragged anchor. We were on Tarragon when our boat looked as if it was shrinking. At first, we thought it was Jack's whisky, but common sense prevailed, so I went and got it back.

To Tobermory — in very poor vis, motor, lights and radar on, lots of traffic, no incidents. Stayed two days.

To Loch Drumbuie — for four days, stuck due to poor weather.

To Tobermory — to dump rubbish, take on water, then to Loch Moidart which is a MUST if you're in the area (see title photo left, Castle Tioram). We explored ashore while Jack went fly-fishing in a hill loch for supper. Catch rate was one per three hours, so spaghetti for Sahona's crew! – two days.

To Arisaig — on mooring, weather poor, so stayed five days. Played our 'jokers' on the bus – free trips to Mallaig and Fort William. Tuned up outboard carburetter again, seems smoother.

To Sandaig bay — good anchorage. Gavin Maxwell and Enda the otter memorials here.

To Kyle of Lochalsh — on pontoon. If you're going on to Portree and/or Lochinver you can buy a pier ticket here valid for any 'Highland Harbour' which means you won't be annoyed by harbourmasters demanding cash later.

To Churchton Bay — (free mooring) engine died en-route, emptied water trap and bled system.

To Portree — engine died again, tacked up the sound and sailed to mooring, Tarragon standing by.

Changed primary filter, found gunge and wrong 'O' ring, so should be fixed. Our nephew and his partner here camping, so we go for car runs etc.

The 'Tarragons' had to return home for a while and decided to leave the boat at Arisaig so headed South while we visited old friends in Portree, staying for six days in all.

To Fladday Harbour — two days, barometer plummets...

The barometer records the approach of another depressing depression



Fladday Harbour looking North



Crowlin inner anchorage showing the reef which covers. Ashore the associated outcrop is not the obvious one – there is a bigger one out of the picture to the left.



To Portree — on 'our' mooring for two days of gales.
 To Acarsaid Mhor — two days. walked to Trig point, first one in over 40 years! Knackered.
 To Sheildaig — Torridon, hotel mooring. Nice meal
 To Acarsaid Mhor again — concerned about battery No. 1 condition, swapped with No. 2 To Portree — we have to get home for a few days as visitors are due from Africa. Arrange for long term use of mooring and lift ashore. Bus from Portree to Prestwick via Glasgow – beautiful run in fine weather and a saving of £138 (return) on the tickets!
 Fri 10th July
 How time flies! Back to Portree on bus after a fortnight at home. Battery No. 1 cell 6 dud. Swap with No.3 Visit friends again. Two days.
 To Crowlin Islands — via Pol Creadha and Pol Domhain (just for a look) inner anchorage.
 To Plockton — anchored near moorings beside a boat we had last met in Formentera. 2days
 To Kyle of Lochalsh — two days. Bought battery, petrol and gas.
 To Isle Ornsay — two days. Full of moorings! Anchor at far side. F/V Aquila capsized near Bo Faskadale close to us. Listened on 16 & 00. Very moving. Three lives lost.
 To Arisaig — then out again, as we had just missed Tarragon. Caught up with Jack in Loch Drumbuie.
 To Loch Aline
 To Dunstaffnage — where we are meeting family for a few days. Jack heading south for home.
 Bus to Oban and Creagan, sail to Connel - pick up a buoy in furious tiderip just to go for a pint!
 Oil and filter change. New solenoid for windlass. Six days in all.

To Ardinamir — excellent anchorage, our first visit.
 To Ardfern — as weather poor. Three days, then decide on canal as weather southerly ad infinitum. More misuse of beer money! Plus cost of hired help this time, However, hired help was magic: contact Hugh Kirk on 07717396755
 Crinan, Dunardy, Ardrishaig, weather diabastrical. Eventually ...
 To Tarbert — on new pontoon. 2 days Visit friends.
 To Wreck Bay — three days. Joined by Riff Raff.
 To Rothesay — new harbour, three days poor weather. Still with Riff Raff.
 To Millport — on mooring.
 To Troon — 13th August.



Sahona Cruise Statistics

Logged – 525 nautical Miles
 Engine hours – 120 hr

The calorifier (remember it?) heated the water ok but lost the heat rather quickly, so it probably went back to the engine. Fitted a non return valve but still unhappy. Thank goodness I didn't decommission the gas water heater otherwise we would never have got past Portavadie!

Sahona and Tarragon at anchor with a large ketch in Loch Moidart (courtesy J Gairns)



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The Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta 2009

The Dun Laoghaire (pronounced "Leery") Regatta was held on 9th to 12th July 2009 and is an annual event with Volvo Cars as the main sponsor for several years. They come from Scotland, England and Wales as well as visitors from elsewhere in Ireland. The racing is organised by four clubs – Royal Irish Yacht Club, Royal St Georges Yacht Club, National Yacht Club and the Dublin Motor Yacht Club. The first two have bow-tied waiters and interiors like four star hotels. All crew are given electronic pass cards, which enable them to enter all four clubs during the regatta. A daily news-sheet was circulated giving news of the days racing on one side and social news and gossip on the back.

This year there were 450 entries in 27 classes ranging from IRC classes 0 to 2, many one designs such as Sigma 33s, J109, J90, Cork 1720, SB3 (the biggest class), Flying Fifteens, Squib, Fireball, Ruffian, as well as local classes of Glens, IDRA14 and Howth17. The boats are split into 7 fleets, with the smaller boats racing near the harbour and the larger keelboats to the north of the buoyed channel into Dublin. Après-sail events included discos, live bands, folk music, competitions, fun fair, pig roasts and beer tents.

My son, Iain, has been crewing at the weekends on *Carmen II*, a Benetau 36.7, based at Helensburgh. The owners, Paul Scutt and Alan Jeffries, were 2006 national champions in the Sigma 33 class. Due to work commitments of some of the regular crew, I was invited to join them for the regatta. The ideal crew number for competitive sailing of the boat is 10. This comprises helm (skipper), main sheet/backstay, tactician/timing, genoa trimming/tacking(2), mast, foredeck, spinni guy, pole up/down, halyards and spinni repacking.

The boat was lying at Bangor Marina, having competed in the CCC Bangor race the previous weekend. I travelled to Stranraer on my bus pass on Tuesday morning, took the morning Stena Cat to Belfast and then the train to Bangor. The afternoon was spent tidying the boat and shopping at Asda for stores before treating myself to an evening meal at the 'Salty Dog' a restaurant near the marina.

The skipper, (Paul), my son Iain and Colin Rawson (from Prestwick) flew from Glasgow to Belfast after work, arriving at the boat at 10pm. We were joined by a local Sigma sailor, Paul Prentice, and his 13-year-old son for the night sail to Dublin, a distance of approx 90 miles.

We cast off at 11pm under engine and mainsail into a lumpy northerly swell and a forecast NW F6. It was dark by the time we reached Mew island where we had decided to take the narrow buoyed inner channel past Donachadee.

Paul P's local knowledge was invaluable as we skirted rocks, reefs, wrecks and shallows at 9 knots dead downwind. The steep following swell and the 30 knot wind made steering tricky and we had a couple of broaches. (It's only when the boat stops that you realise how strong the wind actually is!) At 2am all but Iain and myself retired leaving us on watch. The wind had moderated to 20 knots and the swell much less in the lea of the Ards peninsula. We also had a big moon to aim at which saved us peering at the compass. By 5am, a grey

dawn had appeared, no land in sight and we were starting to nod off, so we roused Colin and Paul P, put the kettle on and had hot drinks before retiring to our bunks.

The wind continued to drop during the morning, we passed some fishing boats and the Irish Fisheries protection

plane gave us a couple of low level passes. We entered Dun Laoghaire harbour just after midday Wednesday and tied up at the Royal Irish Yacht club pontoon where we were joined by another Clyde yacht *Animal* an Elan 37, with Saturn Sail's John Highcock aboard. The remaining members of our crew arrived during the evening from Dublin Airport and three in a hired van with more stores and kit. We rented a room with 12 bunks at a nearby Spanish run hostel, a short walk away and next door to a friendly pub. A delicious in-house meal of Scottish venison was prepared.

The first race was on Thursday afternoon but we went out in the morning to practice tacking and spinni gybing and to check the North Sails No1 genoa after repair following damage during May's Scottish series. No conversation was allowed on the boat during the race on any subject not related to the boat, the race or matters relating to them. In the afternoon a 1½-mile windward leeward course was set in a shifty 10 knot westerly. Our fleet consisted of the big boats in IRC0, our class IRC1 and the J109s. There were about 30 boats in each class. We got a decent start and managed to stay in clear air for most of the race, the crew work was good and we finished 4th. Prizegivings took place daily at pre-arranged venues.

On the Friday the racing for our fleet was a short offshore race round the headland into Howth Bay. Winds were easterly and light but fortunately the tide was in our favour. Many boats sailed well out where the wind was slightly stronger, but eventually lost out as the wind veered north of the headland and we finished 3rd. The afternoon race was on a course back round the headland but was mostly a beat. Local boats *Kinetic* and *Rockabill* were leading our class, with *Carmen II* third.

On the Saturday, there was a gale warning for the Irish Sea area, but the organisers hoped to get the races run before the wind picked up in the afternoon. Unfortunately a sea mist preceded the weather system and the morning race was postponed for over an hour before the visibility increased sufficiently for the racing to take place. It was quite scary to be sailing with mainsail only around the committee boat with 90 other boats and visibility down to 100 metres. The wind speed at the start of the race was about 20 knots easterly and increasing so it was decided to use a smaller flatter headsail for the race. As a result we were a bit underpowered at the start of the race and lost a lot of ground. The boats that had managed to start on their big genoas eventually all had to change to smaller sails as the race progressed and the wind increased to 29 knots. This was done during the downwind legs of the windward/leeward course while the spinnaker was set, so no time was lost. We finished in the middle of the fleet but were down to 8th in class. The afternoon race was cancelled, so we spent the day sampling the Guinness at €4 pint at the various yacht clubs and beer tents.

Our racing area for the Sunday was in the bay to the southeast of Dun Laoghaire in sunshine with a gusty westerly wind coming off high wooded ground. The windward mark

19th and overall down to a disappointing 12th in class. The atmosphere on board was pretty bad and even the sight of the Irish entry for the Volvo round the world race *Green Dragon* returning home failed to lift our spirits. Its skipper, Ian Walker, presented the day's and overall prizes in the evening.

Back at the pontoon, we replaced the racing sails with cruising sails ready for the journey back to Scotland. Life raft, spare anchor, spray hood and all the other pieces of kit that had been removed to lighten the boat for racing were loaded. The boat was being taken to Crinan ready for West Highland week by skipper Paul and three of the crew, including my son Iain, and we waved them off late afternoon. The van departed shortly afterwards intending to meet the boat at Crinan and return the crew to Helensburgh. Fiona, the driver, had then to return the hired van to Paisley before going home to Stirling and to work on Tuesday! The remainder of the crew, Alistair, Colin and myself took the shuttle bus to Dublin Airport and flew Ryanair to Prestwick, where I got the train to Ayr.

I very much enjoyed the experience of sailing on a competitive boat in a large competitive class. The Regatta was extremely well organised and reported on RTE radio and in the Irish Times newspaper with photos. The results were



Carmen II



Relaxing after a race



Looking for the start line!



The Volvo Open 70 Green Dragon

was laid just 100m off the beach. The starting guns and flags were at 4 minute and 1 minute intervals before each start and due to us being well away from the committee boat we got the timing wrong and were about 200m behind the line at the start. Any boat that failed to cross the start line within 4 minutes was given DNS! In an effort to catch up we beat up the right hand side of the course instead of the left where the majority of boats were, but it was to no advantage. To compound our errors we sailed up the right on the next two beats as well and fell further behind, eventually finishing

available on-line within an hour of the race finish. As always, the Irish were extremely hospitable and you always got a 'How are ya?' from every one you met. My only problem was that my dodgy knees didn't respond well to all the leaping and crawling about during tacking. Oh well – we all have to suffer for our sport.





ROSLAND VOYAGER

Tony Gallagher

Roseland Voyager left Kirkcudbright at 1430hrs on Sunday 14th June shorthanded. Her owner, Chris and TCC Associate Member Tony Gallagher set off to sail non stop to La Coruna, Northern Spain in order to satisfy the RYA requirements for the Yachtmaster Ocean qualifying passage.

The third member of the crew declined to leave with us and in so doing had not left us enough time to find a replacement so it would be 4 hours on and 4 hours off with dog watches, and hot bunking. The trip was to be the first leg of an extended summer cruise along the north coast of Spain to Gijon then across the Bay of Biscay to Les Sables-d'Ollone, France and returning to Kirkcudbright, by way of various stops in Brittany, Newlyn and Milford Haven. A journey of some 1900 nautical miles. This would take approximately 6 weeks and my wife Janette, would fly to an airport near La Coruna and join us for the rest of the trip.

14th -16th June
The forecast for the first part was for southerly winds F3 or 4 in the Irish Sea. There was a low to the west of Ireland going slowly north with an occluded front trailing south and west. The Azores High was further south. We experienced light winds and fog until south of Dublin. The visibility came down to a quarter of a mile but with radar we had no problems. We motored south against light winds for a total of 45 hours. The wind then settled on the nose (SSW to SW) and increased in strength. When the seas also started to build there was no choice but to head towards the SE and abandon our intended course which was to intercept longitude 80°W. The forecast for Lundy gave S/SW5 to 7 with 8 later and the front was now a trough. In order to give the boat and us a breather we hove to.

17th June
The wind was now a steady F7 gusting 8. We remained hove to for the next 12 hours and during this period the barometer dropped 3.1mb over three hours and then rose 4mb over five hours. After the trough went through, the wind went WNW 5 to 6 and we were able to sail SW although we had drifted some 18 miles due E of our original hove to position. During the morning we heard the Irish Coastguard answering a pan pan message* which indicated that a yacht had been dismasted with two persons on board. Falmouth CG then asked for information regarding a PLB which had been activated overnight from a yacht in a position not distant from us. (I immediately checked my own PLB and it wasn't me!) Also during this time Falmouth CG were trying to contact a missing yacht l'Actuel** with 2 persons on board. As we were thinking about all this, we responded to a general call from Falmouth CG and were requested to go to the last known epirb position of a 10.5m French yacht Bruin Express. With engine on and in a now moderating sea we headed E wondering what we would find but when we arrived we were given another position.

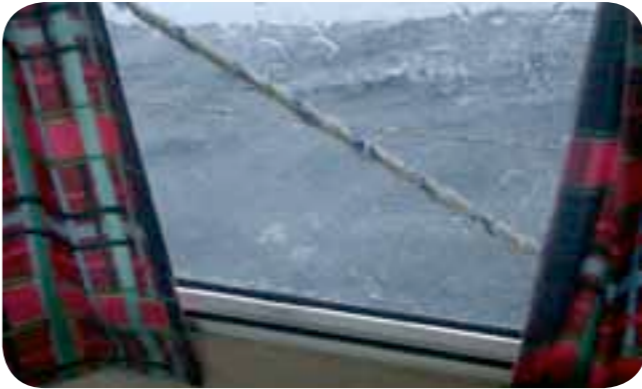
This time we were to rendezvous with the St Mary's (Scilly) Lifeboat. When we met them it was fully dark but we could see their searchlight in the distance. They were given yet another position to go to and we were stood down. (They contacted the yacht at the new position and it was found to be dismasted with 2 persons on board.) We continued on our way but by this time both of us were completely knackered and we were a further 10 miles off our course and N of Scilly. Watches were of flexible duration after this.

18th June
The wind steadied from W5 and we motored to miss the Traffic Separation Zone to the W of Scilly. The forecast indicated W3 to 4 later so that definitely cheered us up. Later that day we were sailing and just about to eat a welcome evening meal when I banged my head, caught by an awkward swell, and while I was being patched up we were challenged by HMS Iron Duke (Type 23 Frigate) which had emerged two miles distant from behind some large swells (naval ships are not painted that colour for nothing) and was pointing their bow gun*** at our port quarter. We were asked for details including home port and destination and they may have taken a bit of time locating Kirkcudbright but after some minutes they steamed off, but not before wishing us well.

19th June
This morning closely buzzed by a French spotter plane, we had our picture taken. The roller reefing jammed but we seemed to sort out the problem. The forecast gave a N gale in Fitzroy later. We were motoring in light winds in N Fitzroy. There was still a fair swell from the NW as we prepared for the forthcoming gale (meal, sea sick tablets, snacks made up and sleep) but were happy to hear the Radio 4 long wave forecast at 1755 hrs. giving the gale in S Fitzroy with N/NW4 to 5 (3 in E) in N Fitzroy.

20th June
The barometer was high and we were sailing comfortably (relatively) overnight with one reef in the main with preventer, and a full genoa. The wind was NE4 and the swell was also from the NE. Lots of shipping around. The forecast again indicated we would be OK and the gale would be in S Fitzroy. The wind however increased and we got down to three reefs in the main and a small genoa. The genoa jammed again so the mainsail was stowed and this left a small genoa only.

21st June
With wind and sea on the port quarter we were still going



The first gale

too fast and slamming. We cut the genoa sheets and rolled it up doing careful 360s. The storm jib was hoisted and speed was maintained at a more comfortable 3 knots for most of the remaining 80 miles of the passage. The barometer stayed high but by now the wind was NE6 to 7, occ8. The wind peaked at F8 for a time around 1600hrs and we berthed in La Coruna at 1950hrs having logged 791 miles in 7 days 8 hours.

Conclusion
Unfortunately, only three better days were experienced on the passage with weather and sea state playing a major role in general comfort and the original plan of heading to position south of Cork at longitude 80°W then heading due south was not achievable. 'Heaving to' had previously been adopted successfully by each of us but this was the first time over such an extended period. In hindsight we may have been better to deploy the storm jib during the initial heaving to as such a lengthy period must have strained the roller reefing even though being routinely maintained and the top swivel having been renewed previously. I found the large swells distracting at first regarding sextant use, both with balance and obtaining a suitable horizon. While sightings could only be taken on the clearer days (and nights) the experience and results were very satisfying. The non-attendance of the third crew member proved to be a real factor in our disrupted routine especially during and after the involvement with Falmouth CG. I had sailed with the owner previously and we were able to work together to ensure that watch keeping was as flexible as necessary.

- Example of current requirements for RYA Yachtmaster Ocean Qualifying Passage —
- Open to candidates who hold RYA/MCA Yachtmaster Offshore Certificate of Competence.
 - Ocean passage as Skipper or Mate.
 - A minimum non-stop distance of 600 miles run by the log.
 - Sailing yacht must have been at sea for at least 96 hours and must have been more than fifty miles from land continuously for a period of at least 48 hours or for a distance sailed of 200 miles.
 - Hold current first aid qualification.

It should be noted that these requirements may change from time to time.

Tony and Janette Gallagher have been TCC members for three years and keep their Westerly Merlin 'Barbill' berthed in Troon Marina. They were previously members of



The storm jib became our good friend

various sailing clubs on the Solway with Tony having been Commodore of Kirkcudbright Sailing Club for a three year term. They have sailed together for 30 plus years without a cross word and regularly act as crew for deliveries and longer distance sailing such as the passage described above. They would be pleased to be of assistance to any members contemplating such trips.

* In Lifeboat (Autumn Issue 2009) details of Baltimore Lifeboat rescue of a father and son team near Fastnet.
** L'Actuel was later found near the Azores with the crew missing.
*** A recent news report showed the that same bow gun of HMS Iron Duke sank a ship off south America which had been carrying a large cargo of drugs — scary!)



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Talisman 2009

Martin McArthur takes us on three trips round the West Coast cruising grounds



Part 1 Cruise to the Isle of Man

This year, instead of one long cruise (to France), we opted to stay within UK waters and explore places that we normally sail straight past. Our cruising this year consisted of three parts; Isle of Man, Cardigan Bay, then Tobermory to Carlingford. In general I hoped to go to as many 'new' ports as possible, and during the course of the season we visited 53 harbours, 20 of these for the first time.

The very first time I visited the Isle of Man, six years ago, I spent a very uncomfortable night, rolling all the time, on a visitor's mooring outside Peel harbour and as a result had never again stopped at the IoM, sailing straight from Portpatrick to Holyhead and vice versa and taking anything from 17 to 26 hours, usually overnight. Having read about the new marina at Peel I decided to give it another try, in fact we would circumnavigate the island stopping at Peel, Port St Mary, Douglas and Ramsay.

We set off on Monday 18th May, stopping overnight at Girvan before going on to Stranraer which has a nice new marina – small but adequate and not too far from Tesco. This was the first 'new' port to us. Next day took us to Portpatrick where Willie Ramsay, harbour master, was not collecting harbour dues, due to some dispute or other regarding refusal to pay by long term harbour users. Willie reckoned that it was unfair for visitors to have to pay while others were not! Despite the temptation to stay (for free) we pressed on to Peel where we found a brand new marina, efficient communications with harbour control and friendly staff. The harbour can be controlled from the Peel office or, out of hours, by Douglas harbour control using CCTV and VHF. Access is HW +/- 2 hours, when the flap gate is down. The bridge is opened, on request, after a call on VHF.

After three days at Peel we set off, via Calf Sound, for Port St Mary where we went alongside the wall in the outer harbour. There were other yachts rafted up (3 out and 2 out) and, between them, a space on the wall. As I headed for the ladder I asked the skipper of one of the

yachts why the space was vacant? His answer was that a charter boat skipper, who had gone to sea recently, had claimed that he had an agreement with the harbour master for exclusive use of this space. Later the harbour master denied that there was any such agreement!

Having suspected since the Mull of Galloway, that I had picked up a poly bag or some such on the prop, causing the engine to perform poorly, I wanted to dry out while at Port St Mary. Next day we moved to the inner harbour where I was able to have a look at the prop. All that was visible was a few long strands of seaweed, they were fairly tightly wrapped round the shaft – maybe the cause? Certainly the engine performance had improved following a short spell on max revs while passing through Calf Sound so maybe we had caught some particularly tough seaweed and it gradually broke up. Need to think about a rope cutter!

Next day there was a brisk breeze (F4/5) from the north west as we set off for Douglas. We made good speed with just the full genoa, on a run at first until we had crossed Castletown Bay and rounded Dreswick Point, then a broad reach towards Douglas. Only a mile from the harbour entrance a huge gust (F7) struck us, causing Talisman to heel sharply and screw up to windward. Loose gear, stuff we thought was secure, flew all over the boat – the electric kettle flew across the cabin, narrowly missing Anne! Even after turning head to wind I had a struggle to furl the sail and now it was also raining very heavily. Eventually we turned back on course and passing the entrance to the harbour where, north of Victoria Pier, in the calmer conditions and motoring in slow circles, I set about tidying things away, refurling the genoa which had been furled so tight that there was two feet of sail still to be furled and no more furling line on the drum, and making ready to go alongside. Once sorted out I called Douglas harbour control on VHF and was requested to "get clear of the fast ferry that is about to move"! I was reminded that I should have called harbour control before entering the harbour as there was commercial traffic to be considered. As it turned out the ferry was not leaving the

harbour, merely moving from one berth to another. I was directed to go to the waiting pontoon, tucked away in the corner next to Battery Pier. The pontoon was already occupied by two yachts – taking up enough space for three – and I was just able to squeeze in at the inshore end with about one third of Talisman sticking out beyond the end. The wind remained strong, pinning us firmly on to the pontoon, and the rain poured down – welcome to sunny Douglas! In the comfort of the cabin I renewed contact with harbour control, firstly apologising for barging into his harbour unannounced, then requesting a bridge opening so that we could get to the marina. The bridge is opened at fixed times and I was advised of the time for the next opening. I had some doubts about my ability to get Talisman off the pontoon if the wind continued to blow as strongly. While we waited for the appointed time we were visited by a young lad from the marina staff who advised me where we would be in the marina. At the appointed time we got a call on the VHF saying that the bridge was about to open and advising us to be in position to make as fast a transit as possible. Despite my misgivings I was able to extricate Talisman (backwards!) from the pontoon without too much trouble and we made our way towards the bridge. In the marina I found the space allocated was fairly short and very tight! Only just over enough room using only slim fenders on both sides. The finger was also very short, extending to just over half way along the boat. The marina is very close to Tesco and not much further to major shops in the town centre. Showers are another thing entirely, £3 for a three minute shower – and the first 30 seconds are warming up – barely enough time to shower, no time for luxuriating!

Departure from Douglas was interesting! Firstly a VHF call to harbour control, note time bridge will open, watch other yachts prepare to leave, see some yachts leave berths with still 10 minutes to go, enquire about order of departure and be advised that there is no order, first come first to go! Decided to join yachts hovering close to bridge, manoeuvre to be closest to bridge without hitting either bridge or other yachts, lots of tight turns, sudden reversal of engine, then as luck would have it, we were first out. Throttle wide open as following yachts are catching up and the channel is not overly wide. At last there was enough space to alter course towards Ramsay, our next port of call.

The passage to Ramsay was unremarkable, although sadly we were apparently sailing away from a large school of basking sharks located just west of Douglas. We could hear, over VHF, tourist boats calling each other with reports of sightings. On the approach to Ramsay there was no response to several calls on VHF, but the harbourmaster was on the quayside to advise us where to berth. We were directed to a space alongside the wall, between a yacht and a catamaran already moored there, and tied up, port side to. It looked fine and presumably the harbourmaster knew that it would be ok? Later we were to find this spot a little less than entirely comfortable. When the tide had receded we lay heeled at an angle of about 3 or 4 degrees out from the wall. Not serious, but not as good as being straight and level. The reason was that Talisman's port keel was on a firm flat base close to the wall and the starboard keel was in a groove, presumably cut by previous occupants (most likely one or more of the fishing boats also tied up in the

harbour). We were lucky, the yacht astern of us canted over to about 10 degrees! During the following night the wind picked up from the east setting up a swell that ran into the harbour, causing Talisman to move about a bit. The motion was not severe but, coupled with the tilt when dried out, I was quite pleased to be leaving Ramsay.

With the fresh easterly wind we made a fairly fast passage to Kirkcudbright, so fast, in fact, that we had to wait two hours, in the Dee estuary, until the tide was high enough for us to navigate the bouyed channel up to the marina. We only stayed one night in Kirkcudbright and pressed on next day to Drummole. Once again we had to wait until the tide rose before we could enter the harbour. Not a particularly attractive place and, when the tide receded, there was a strong smell! We were rafted alongside 2 other yachts, both of which looked as though they had been there for some time. Next day, as soon as we were afloat I was pleased to depart from Drummole and make our way back to Portpatrick.

The passage from Portpatrick to Troon was via Girvan, to fill up with fuel. We arrived at Girvan about two hours before low water and needed to be refuelled and out again as soon as possible. Reeds almanac recommends not attempting entry to Girvan at LW +/- 2 hours. Fortunately at neaps, and with Talisman drawing only 1.2 metres, there was just enough water for us to depart and head for home.

We had been on board for 15 nights, spent 11 days at sea and visited 12 harbours, six of these for the first time. The weather had, for the most part, been good with the exception of the strong wind and heavy rain at Douglas. Not a bad starting cruise for the 2009 season.

Part 2 Cruise to Cardigan Bay

Following our successful cruise to the Isle of Man I was looking forward to our exploration of Cardigan Bay. We set off from Troon in mid June heading for Holyhead via Portpatrick, Peel and Port St Mary. I was welcomed at Holyhead marina by Gwyneth who said "summer must have started, Talisman is here"!

We spent a couple of days at Holyhead, topping up stores from Tesco and the Co-op and waiting for favourable conditions to sail to Beaumaris. Our first attempt was not good, before we reached Carmel Head, just south of the Skerries, the westerly wind, blowing F5 and against the west going tide made conditions quite uncomfortable! We had sailed just 11 miles when I decided that we should return to Holyhead. Next day the forecast was for a slight reduction in the wind, so off we went again. The sea state was still quite lumpy but we were able to make progress along the north coast of Anglesey – there were fewer cups of coffee made that morning and I received a few complaints from down below! Once past Point Lynas both wind and tide reduced and the remainder of the passage was much calmer.

By the time we reached the entrance to the Menai Strait, at Puffin Island, the wind had dropped to a light breeze and we motored to Beaumaris where we picked up a vacant mooring. Interesting task, picking up a mooring, single handed with a tidal stream running at over 2 knots!



Beaumaris, looking north from our mooring

The following day we had a late start as we did not have to reach the Swellies, between the Menai and Britannia bridges, until high water slack, and there were only 10 miles to go to Victoria Dock, Caernarfon. As we approached the Menai Suspension Bridge, despite the fact that it was nearly slack water, we experienced a fair amount of turbulence in the water, no waves, just swirls and whirlpools, causing Talisman to alter course quite significantly. The autopilot could not cope and I had to take over steering until we were south of the Britannia Bridge.

Between the bridges we passed the infamous Swellies Rock, but as it was high water we could not see the rock, just the south cardinal mark.

Navigation through the Swellies at slack water is not overly difficult, buoys and leading marks, described in the pilot book, are easily seen and followed. I would imagine the passage could be much more difficult at other stages of the tidal stream, at night or in bad weather.

From the Britannia Bridge the channel opens up and the water is no longer disturbed by unpredictable swirls and eddies. Unexpectedly, on the north shore, just south

of the Britannia Bridge, there is a statue of Lord Nelson. And, just another mile on, is a very impressive, grand house, Plas Newydd, home of the Marquess of Anglesey, with neatly manicured lawns between the house and waters edge. Approaching Caernarfon (title photograph) the deep water channel narrows and the effect of the tidal stream becomes more noticeable. As we approached the entrance to Victoria Dock Talisman was at an angle of about 45° to our line of approach and, as soon as we were in the harbour entrance, had to turn sharply to starboard before we hit the wall!

Victoria Dock is a small compact marina with a depth of 2 metres, maintained by a flap gate that opens at HW +/- 3 hours. The marina is set in a redevelopment of an old harbour with smart new buildings on the waterfront and a Morrison's supermarket only a short walk away.

It is also possible to moor, in the river Seiont, under the walls of the famous castle. Access to the river is via a swing bridge, opened on request by VHF.

Leaving the Menai Straight it was necessary to follow closely a buoyed channel to clear the Caernarfon Bar. The buoys are moved whenever the channel shifts and up to date information is essential to make this passage if visibility is restricted in any way. We were fortunate to have a clear day and were able to follow the channel easily.

Our next port of call was Port Dinllaen, not so much a port, more of a sheltered anchorage. Here we sailed past the vacant RNLI mooring and went on to pick up another mooring. No sooner than we were secure I observed another yacht tie up to the lifeboat mooring!

Next day we sailed for Pwelli, passing through Bardsey Sound, one of the many 'tidal gates' on the eastern side of the Irish Sea. The sound can be quite rough but we were able to pass through at low water slack and had no problems whatsoever.

Arrival at Pwelli (first port in Cardigan Bay) the entrance was not as clear as appeared on the chart, the pilot book, or Reeds Almanac. Fortunately a local yacht offered to lead the way and all soon became clear. Why, I do not know, but I did not like Pwelli marina (maybe because it was the most expensive marina, at £22.75 per night, I had ever been in?) and consequently left next day, heading for Port Madoc.

The approach to Port Madoc is along a buoyed channel, at some parts with buoys on one side only. As I was to find out, it is essential to stay close to these buoys, even those you fail to spot! I had navigated the channel successfully (despite the flooding tide flowing across the channel at right angles) until I reached the penultimate starboard hand buoy I failed to see the small (temporary) red mark, tucked in close to some moored yachts, and headed instead directly towards the ultimate green cone mark. Big mistake! Fortunately the bottom is sand so we took the ground quite gently. But the tide was flooding in fairly fast and was pushing Talisman further aground. By some heavy handed use of engine (max revs) and rudder (hard to port) I was able to turn Talisman to face in the direction of deeper water. Then by rapidly moving the tiller from one side to the other we gradually floated off. The whole event lasted only about 10 minutes but seemed to take forever and I had visions of spending the night high and dry! Less than half a mile further we arrived at the Port Madoc Yacht Club where we were made very welcome and tied up at their pontoons.

While 'crabbing' across the channel (strong flood), between buoys numbers 7 and 11, I had the impression that my one remaining autopilot had acted in an odd fashion. I was too busy keeping my eye on a transit, watching the echo sounder and counting the buoys to take time to investigate. Once safely alongside I discussed the autopilot situation with Anne and she suggested that it may be wise to buy another as we were now using the spare. I knew that there was a Raymarine agent back at Pwelli (shouldn't have left so soon!). On the phone he said that he could not repair either of my Simrad tillerpilots but he had a Raymarine tillerpilot in stock and could possibly repair another Raymarine I had on board (this one had failed a couple of years ago). On enquiring at the yacht club regarding the best way to get to Pwelli, either bus or train, Bob, the club steward offered to lend me his car! He even gave me the keys that evening, as he would not be at the club until later in the morning. My visit to Pwelli was successful and I returned with a brand new ST2000 having left the other for repair. Two days later the repaired autopilot was delivered to the boat. I now have four tillerpilots, two serviceable Raymarine ST2000 and two Simrads, one a TP22 (awaiting repair) and a TP20, functional but makes funny noises and is suspect following some questionable operation on our approach to Port Madoc.

With the autopilot situation now well under control we were ready to leave to continue our cruise of Cardigan Bay. Unfortunately the moderate weather, that we had enjoyed for nearly a week, abandoned us and we had to wait another 3 days before the wind dropped to a forecast F4/5 from the northwest. This would be fine for the passage to Barmouth, our next destination, and would be a broad reach most of the way. Because the wind had been strong, from the same direction, for the past few days, we had three or four foot waves on the starboard

Below is a rough sketch showing buoyed channel into Port Madoc (**NOT TO BE USED FOR NAVIGATION!**). Distance from Fairway Buoy to Port Madoc Yacht Club is about 4 miles.



Menai Suspension Bridge from the north



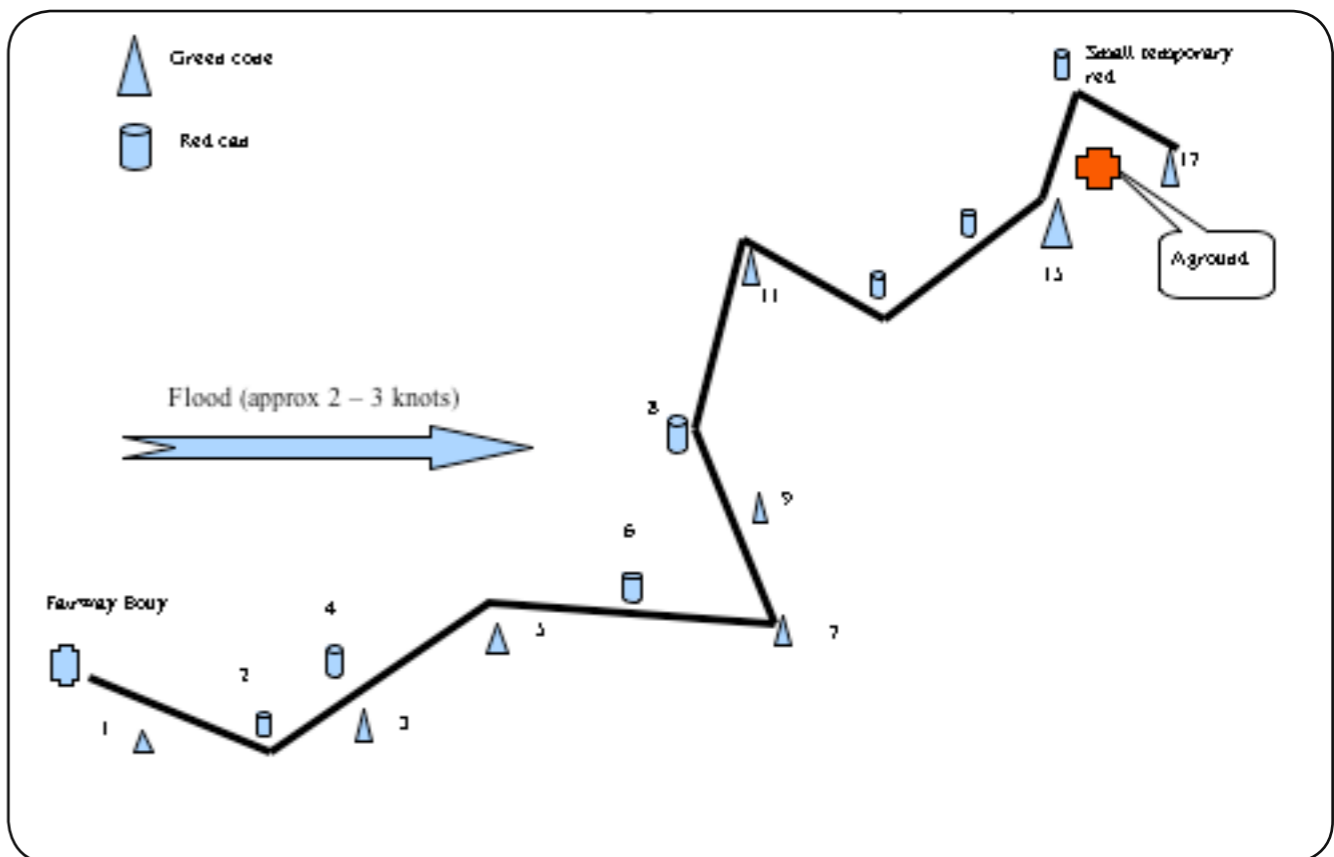
Britannia Bridge from the Swellies



Swellies cardinal mark



Admiral Lord Nelson monument



quarter and we rolled and pitched all the way. There was a minor panic when Anne saw smoke coming from the area around the engine. I stopped the engine immediately and opened up the engine box. There was definitely smoke, but the source was not evident. Next I checked the rear of the engine, I suspected that the smoke was coming from the exhaust. As soon as I could see the back of the engine it was evident that there was a lot of oil spattered around the engine bay – and no smoke from the exhaust. Another check at the front of the engine revealed that when I had dipped the engine oil, in the morning, I had failed to put the dipstick into the hole – it was down the side of the engine and the oil was coming from there and some had fallen on to the exhaust manifold. My excuse, the dipstick hole on a Yanmar 1GM10 is not visible so the dipstick has to be replaced by feel. I have been a lot more careful since! As most of the oil had gone from the sump, we were close to a serious, and very expensive, failure, that from the cockpit I would not have detected until too late!

The approach to Barmouth was beam on to the seas and we rolled severely until rounding the harbour wall. Once inside all was calm and we motored to a vacant spot alongside the wall. Once more, as in Ramsay on the Isle of Man, we suffered from a deep groove under our outboard keel and Talisman heeled over to nearly 10° when the tide receded. Next day we moved to a slightly better place where we only heeled by 6°! Barmouth is very nice, a holiday place with a decent size Co-op and a welcoming Yacht Club where showers were available. In the evening I went up to the yacht club bar and found the place full of ‘grey haired gangsters’, 98% ladies, playing bingo! Would TCC get much response if we laid on bingo? Another feature of laying alongside the wall in Barmouth, with a north westerly wind blowing, was the amount of

sand that came over the wall. By the time we left there was about 3/16 of an inch of sand all over the deck. There is still some sand on board, tucked away in inaccessible nooks and crannies!

After two days in Barmouth we set off again, this time towards Aberystwyth. We had to wait at anchor, for 4 hours, off the harbour until the tide rose to a height that would allow us to enter. Once secure alongside I discovered this marina, despite being in an attractive location and close to all the local facilities, beat Pwhelli for price, it was now the most expensive marina we had visited. For a 26 foot yacht the charge of £21.06 per night, was high enough, but to charge a further £3.00 per night for shore power added insult to injury! The weather intervened again and we had to stay at Aberystwyth for 3 days.

By now we had lost six days by staying in port to avoid strong winds. Our plan was to return home by the end of the first week in August, before our pills ran out. I still intended to visit Aberaeron, New Quay and Cardigan but would most likely have to miss out a few places on our way home.

At Aberaeron we tied up alongside the wall and once more suffered from drying out at an angle when the tide receded. One thing this cruise has proved is that there is more to drying out comfortably than having bilge keels – a flat resting place is also necessary! Aberaeron is a very attractive small town and we spent two very pleasant days there.

Our plan had been to sail westwards to Cardigan via New Quay, but the wind stayed in the north west and was forecast to increase. This would make New Quay uncomfortable at least, and entry into Cardigan difficult, so I decided that we would return to Aberystwyth where, despite the cost, we could shelter from the forecast strong

winds. We stayed in Aberystwyth for four more days!

I had intended to leave on the early morning high tide, so that we would arrive at Holyhead before dark, but the forecast was still not good. As the day progressed it became clear that the weather was much better than expected so, late in the afternoon, we set off, to sail overnight, to Holyhead. We motored seven miles out to the west cardinal buoy marking the shallow water of the Cynfelyn Patches and as we turned northwest towards Bardsey Sound set sail on a close reach. The wind stayed with us until after midnight, just as we reached Bardsey Sound, where we had to motor at full throttle against an adverse tide. At one stage we were making 4.5 knots through the water but only 1.2 knots over the ground! Eventually we made our way through the sound into Caernarfon Bay as the tide slackened, then turned in our favour. Arriving in Holyhead at 09.30 we had made the 73 mile passage in just over 15 hours, nearly 5 knots average, very good for Talisman!

From Holyhead back to Troon we were retracing familiar ground, calling at Port St Mary, Peel (where we spent a further week waiting for the wind to reduce) and Portpatrick on the way. We had been away from Troon for nearly eight weeks, logged 540 miles (553 over the ground) and visited 17 ports (eight of these for the first time).

Part 3 Cruise to Tobermory and Carlingford and several places in between!

Our third cruise was to have no planned objective, we would make our way (meander really) to Campbeltown. Once there the wind would decide the direction our cruise should take, if southerly we would go north and maybe get further north than Tobermory, if northerly we would go southwards and cruise the eastern Irish coast, possibly as far as Dublin. The only limit set was that we should be back home by the end of September.

We set sail for Rothesay on Tuesday 25th August. I was interested to see the development of the inner harbour. Last time Talisman was in Rothesay the inner harbour was a building site and was running into problems with shifting harbour walls. As we approached the entrance the first new aspect became visible. Traffic lights. And they were set to red. There was no ferry on the berth, nor was there a ferry anywhere near. The problem was resolved by the skipper of another yacht, also approaching the harbour, he called harbour control on his mobile phone. He reported that when he asked why the lights were at red he was asked ‘are they?’ Almost instantly the lights changed to green! Entering the inner harbour I was impressed by the completed works and surprised how empty the pontoons were.

After two days in Rothesay we set off for Portavadie via the Kyles of Bute. We managed to sail, close hauled, most of the way to the ferry at Colintravie. Thereafter the wind was ‘on the nose’ and we motored down the West Kyle until we rounded Ardlamont Point where we could set sail once more. Portavadie marina and the shore side buildings look very impressive, the formal opening ceremony had taken place only two days before we arrived. Staff were friendly and informative, but there is

very little beyond the marina and I was told that if we needed any shops, the nearest were, by ferry, at Tarbert. The weather, that had been very good, deteriorated. Strong winds from the south west and bursts of heavy rain.

The forecast, when we set out for Campbeltown, was for F5 south westerly. I reckoned that provided we stayed close in to the Kintyre shore we could avoid the worst of the waves. This worked very well, except for a short stretch south of Skipness, where the wind was blowing parallel to the shore and with a fetch of about four miles had created waves of about three feet with very little distance between. Talisman does not cope well with short sharp waves and at times our speed dropped to less than 2 knots. As we progressed southwards the wind veered a little (main sail up) and the strength decreased, so speed increased. On arrival at Campbeltown I was surprised to find that there were hardly any yachts on the pontoon and was told, by the Berthing Master, that the numbers of visiting yachts had been low all summer.

As the wind was blowing from the south west when we left Campbeltown our next port of call was to be Ardmish Bay, Gigha. We must have had the smoothest passage we have ever had while rounding the Mull. Despite a moderate breeze the sea state was slight and, once round we were able to set sail all the way to Gigha. I was pleased that there were unoccupied moorings at Ardmish, odd that they were those closest to the exposed rock between the moorings and the ferry slipway!

Next day we continued to cruise northwards, calling at Ardfarn, Kererra and Tobermory, stopping two nights at each place. On the way to Kererra, from Ardfarn, we were given a significant boost in speed as we passed through Dorus Mor. The log showed that we were making about 4 knots, the GPS said that we were making 10.2 knots! This favourable stream continued on into the Sound of Luing and on to north of Easdale. The distance travelled, over the ground, was 25 miles (20 miles on the log) and we covered this in less than five hours!

For a few days the weather had been threatening to become much worse. I had downloaded a synoptic chart from Grib US that showed a very deep low approaching Scotland, from the Atlantic. Wind strengths were predicted to be anything up to F9/F10. We had thought about going further northwards, possibly as far as Kyleakin via Mallaig but the prospect of very bad weather, worse as we went further north, made the decision easy – we would retreat south!

After only one night at Tobermory (we had paid for two) we headed back to Kererra where we spent two nights tucked in safely on the shore side of the pontoons (near the old jetty) and behind an enormous Halberg Rassy (what a great and very expensive windbreak!), listening to the wind whistle in the rigging and feeling Talisman shake as the mast and rigging were struck by ferocious gusts.

Two days later the wind moderated and we were able to sail, via Cuan Sound, to Craobh. The only complaints I got were as we crossed Easdale Bay towards the entry to the sound. We were beam on to the waves and rolled all the way across. In the sound all was calm and I was no longer berated about my inability to make the boat stay flat!

Next day we sailed from Craobh, initially towards Craighouse, but made such good progress, initially helped



Talisman (leaning) in Aberaeron

again by Dorus Mor and then by a favourable tide, that we sailed past Craighouse, on to Port Ellen at the southern end of Islay. I liked Port Ellen, in attractive surroundings there are a couple of shops (Co-op and Spar), pubs, an Indian take-away and a very good fish and chip van sited close to the marina.

We sailed south to Ballycastle, Glenarm and on to Carrickfergus. I had never been to Carrickfergus before and was pleasantly surprised to be given a free night in the marina. All I had to do was pay for the first night on arrival and the second night was free. We were also only a moderate walk to Tesco. Next port of call was Bangor. We only stopped there to be in position to sail to Portaferry, in the entrance to Strangford Lough. We had to arrive at Ballyquintin Point not long before high water, about 10.30, in order to take the last of the flood up to Portaferry. We departed from Bangor at 07.35 and made good progress, but when we arrived at the entrance the tide was ebbing! I should never have trusted my electronic gizmos, I should have relied on the good old fashioned Admiralty tidal Stream Atlas, and Reeds Nautical Almanac. As I had shaped our course to enter Strangford Lough we were now much closer to the entrance than I had ever been and well within the range of the overfalls caused by the tide ebbing from Strangford. I could see the rough water and could also see smoother water only one third of a mile ahead. I should have gone to Specsavers! Had I gone only one mile out to sea I would have spared us a severe shake up! It only took a short time, although it seemed longer, to cross the overfalls to smoother water. More complaints from below decks! Change of plan, we set off towards Ardglass where I intended to refuel before crossing into the southern Irish Euro zone. A few years ago red diesel was sold, in cans, at Ardglass marina. Now you have to go to the commercial fuel selling company and carry the cans back to the boat. Fortunately I was able to borrow a trolley and another 25 litre can to transport 30 litres of fuel to Talisman.

From Ardglass I intended to head for Dublin via Carlingford and Malahide. At Dublin I hoped to reach the pontoon located, on the Liffey, in the city centre. We left Ardglass at first light, in order to arrive at the entrance to Carlingford Lough towards the last of the flood, and arrived at Carlingford marina in the early afternoon. Initial impressions of the marina were that it was somewhat dilapidated, a pontoon badly tilted over, power boxes held together with bits of rope and sticky tape. Access to the shore was via an old ship, on which there was a sign indicating that showers were on the ship. I looked – very primitive! From the appearance of the run down pontoons I did not expect to pay much to berth there and was unpleasantly surprised to be charged €28.00 per night and had to buy a card for shore power – only available at €10 or €20! This was now the MOST expensive marina we had ever been in, with the poorest facilities. The nearest shops were in Carlingford, a 20 minute walk from the marina. I think that if ever I return there I will go into the (drying) harbour, at least that is closer to the town.

Once again we were trapped in port by forecast strong winds, I see from my log that the forecast was for SW F5/7 occasionally F8 later! This kept us in Carlingford for three

days. During this time I learnt that if we did make it to Dublin we would not be able to reach the city moorings, as the opening bridge was under repair and would not open for the foreseeable future. Having been deprived of my main objective and with the end of the month fast approaching I decided that we would start for home as soon as weather permitted.

The forecast when we left Carlingford was F5/7 from the south west, but there was no mention of occasional F8. We would be running before the wind and would be under the lee of the land. Stopping overnight in Ardglass we again set off northwards, arriving at Strangford Lough during the flood. Taking the opportunity we diverted into Portaferry. This was to be the last ‘new’ port this season. We made the short passage from Killard Point to Portaferry at high speed with nearly 3 knots of tide pushing us through the Narrows. Portaferry looks a bit sad, though it must have been an attractive small town in times gone by.

The remainder of our return home was (mostly) unremarkable. We stopped at Carrickfergus, again taking advantage of the ‘buy one get one free’ (BOGOF) and stayed two nights. We stopped at Glenarm on our way to Campbeltown and crossed the North Channel in moderately good weather with a westerly F4. As we rounded Sanda to the south, the wind increased and crossing Sanda Sound was somewhat rough. By the time we arrived at the pontoon at Campbeltown it was raining, the wind was blowing strongly and the north side of the pontoon was full of yachts, rafted three out. These were sailing club yachts temporarily evicted from their moorings while a new sewage pipe was being laid. There was one space on the south side, we came alongside the pontoon and, assisted by yachtsmen from the yacht ahead of us, got my lines ashore. While I was adjusting the warps and setting springs I caught a foot in a rope, or was it a shore power cable? Off balance, I put my other foot in a big dollop of bird droppings (must have been a bird dog!) and slipped. Both my feet went into the air and I came down heavily on my tail. OUCH! It was still sore over two weeks after the event!

My painful tail kept us in Campbeltown for another day. The weather was miserable, strong winds and constant rain. It was still raining when we left Campbeltown, on the last day of September, and visibility was very poor, down to a two or three hundred yards. Things improved as we approached Pladda, to the north I could make out Holy Island and Ailsa Craig was, occasionally, visible to the south. About an hour out from Troon I spotted a ship, on AIS, coming out towards us, from Ayr. Looking up his details (another useful feature of AIS) it appeared that his destination was supposed to be Campbeltown. His heading would have taken him to Lamash, but not Campbeltown. I resolved to keep a close eye on him and soon after he had passed south of us he altered course, turning towards Troon. Calling Troon Harbour Control I was advised to stand off. We watched one ship leave then waited while the other took an interminable time to reverse into the harbour. Eventually we were given clearance to proceed and we made our way to TCC and the end of the 2009 sailing season.

Claire Louise II

Where did she go?



Hamish Boag

From the moment I stepped aboard Claire Louise I understood the level of affection held for the boat. There are a few reasons including: the pedigree of her former owners (Bob Assur / Mark Broomfield), the extensive cruising log which took many TCC members to some very far off places and last but not least the fact she is an absolutely great boat (OK so I am a bit biased).

The sailing has been more sedate and localised during the past four years but Claire Louise seemed at home on the wall mooring with occasional ventures around the Clyde and I really welcomed all the hints and tips from around the club. Gary Muir has a lot to answer for.

Incidentally, I have only twice been in bother with computers and both because of Claire Louise.

The first occasion was when buying the boat and I innocently did a Google search on the word “Hustler”. I was hoping for a few words on “Bermudan Sloop” or “Classic Don Pye design (of Holman & Pye), “rugged, great sea boat” etc, etc. I did find all of those, but I was not prepared for a further 10,000 hits on various adult sites

(honestly, I haven’t checked them...all)

The second instance was earlier this year when after much heart searching we accepted challenge of new job and life in the Inverness area. At the final decision stage, my wife Ruth suggested we start checking out places to stay. Within 15 minutes I had printed a web review of the new Inverness Marina not realising Ruth had been talking about a new house! Priorities, eh!

So, in the midst of house move, major job changes and general complete chaos we had the fun of planning a ‘relocation cruise’.

Condensed highlights of the trip:

Head to Ardrossan for a lift out and check over. As we left Troon Harbour (after a send off from George H and Jack G) I realised how special TCC is. Do you appreciate the place?

The trip was due to start on 8th June and after some last minute snags we were good to go. I understand a yacht should have a skipper clearly in charge and so we were doubly well off with the ship’s complement (myself and son Duncan) both thinking we

were in charge.

Left Clyde Marina just managing to avoid the Arran ferry on a day with stunning viz all round from Ailsa Craig right along Arran. I reflected that my three favourite Clyde spots are Sanda Island, Caladh harbour and Holy Loch, the latter down to fact that the Marina is a stone throw from Robertson Yard where I played as a kid and where my Grandfather worked

On first tack the winch sort of fell apart then the auto pilot failed so we have some work to do! (Both repaired without much fuss)

Spent an hour sailing alongside Drum off Garrothead with her crew practising sail hoists. We matched her all the way although had the slight advantage of engine power adding to the wind.

A bit nervy heading into sealock at Ardrishaig more because of the waiting 50 to 60 tourists ready to film our every move. The upmarket Slainté bar was a good stop for the crew darts/pool challenge (I was a convincing runner up).

Perfect day for canal transit with warm sun and loads of colour from rhododendrons. Cairnbaan sounds like the Caribbean but isn’t though from Dunardy rolling bridge it was literally downhill all the way and we made Crinan by 1500 sharing with five other yachts including beauty of a Fife being restored. Chatted to Alistair a former TCC member who was sailing back from Rome in *Koala*.

Locked through a bit early for tidal gate at Dorus Mor. Met with very deceptive flat water hiding loads of mini whirlpools and eddies. Bow unexpectedly dug right in bringing us to a shuddering halt before popping up and getting back on track! Time for some fresh underwear.

Sound of Luig navigated OK and hang a right for Fladda light. Views through Corryvreckan with Jura and Scarba were stunning. Past Fladda with the tide and made good speed along south end of Mull (keeping clear of the new cardinal mark at Bono rock!) then close inshore between Insh Island and Easdale.

Lismore in sight early before we even approached Kerrera and we eased up the Lynne of Lorne past Port Appin towards Shuna. Recommend the trip ashore on the water taxi for interesting shower cabin at Lhinne Marine then back for cook’s latest creation. (Asleep at 1830!).



Shuna in Northerly not ideal so it was good to leave by 0500 with Loch Lhinne great even on cold grey morning with just *Claire Louise* and one lobster boat. Sun came through as we picked out the entrance to Corran narrows then through at 9.1knots SOG (thanks to Bob Johnson's patience at the RYA night classes)

Contact with BWB on Ch74 and at Corpach ushered past outgoing yachts into the sea lock and sped through to Neptune's staircase. This was a bit daunting and at first hurdle I got in a fankle with the mooring warp only to see the outboard ripped off the (very strong) bracket and into the canal.

Retaining line saved the day (well done to Neale and Archie for fitting this) and allowed instant recovery of the outboard also providing an adrenaline rush all round. Duncan did great job working *Claire Louise* and we were happy to get to Banavie where Noggin (my brother Colin) was joining us. After clean up and drying out the outboard started first time and ran fine! Noggin victualled the boat and then we filled 12.5l of diesel into our 10l can – still trying to work this one out! Met the crew of *Odyssey* (UFO 31) also on a one way trip but from Sunderland to Maryport. They

were short of west coast information which we were able to give and they donated us a Martin Lawrence east coast guide to add to the inventory! Nice one.

Ben Nevis was stunning with amazing views from the canal – all its rock face opened up (and also Carn Dearg to Aonach Mor). Deer and birds of prey spotted before two tornado jets from Lossie passed so low overhead it was incredible.

Sailed up Loch Lochy to reach Laggan ten minutes before lunch which was obviously too much for the lock keeper after his strenuous morning so we endured 90 minutes baking in the sun – life is tough!

At Fort Augustus we joined the downhill elevator, easy after the uphill struggle. Duncan and Noggin were substitute canal horses walking us through the locks and chatting to the throng of people around. The A82 road bridge opened on cue and we took overnight stop with great facilities ashore. Plenty visiting boats including Faeroese crew on adjoining massive motor cruiser with a slightly bigger fuel bill and more vodka than us. Visit from Ruth on her way North which was great.

Dochgarroch via Rock Ness (Dores

music festival) was our next target. At Inverclair we were overtaken by the Holyhead Trent Class Lifeboat, which then called Aberdeen Coastguard to confirm passage route. In that instant I realised we had left Clyde Coastguard behind and moved into new territory.

Nessie was out of sight but a few tourist boats created waves around Urquhart Castle. Duncan broke out the cruising chute at Dores and we gybed back and forth for an hour listening to the Rock Ness noise. Remind me not to buy a ticket for next year's event.

Noggin negotiated the canal entrance, avoided the weir then in to Dochgarroch with Ruth and Seonaidh as reception committee – with champagne and lunch. 179nm and 6 days that blurs into a great relocation voyage.

We took advantage of the great one month BWB canal ticket and Neale and some Uni pals managed a three day 'booze cruise' ending up at Inverness Marina (carefully negotiating entrance to the river).

Looking to 2010 we are planning some more exploring around Moray Firth (we have already been officially welcomed by the dolphins) with pipedream being a Kirkwall visit. Will keep you posted.



Mark Holbrook can't resist the lure

Prologue the First

Five hundred years ago the monks of Waverly Abbey near the town of Farnham were worried. Messages had been sent to their abbot from all directions of the compass seeking help as the combination of Cardinal Wolsey's greed and the needs of his King to divorce the Spanish Catherine led to monasteries being dissolved and their monks displaced. As far as was possible the brothers continued with their routine of praying, farming and tending the carp they used for food in the nearby pond. Eventually the dissolution of the monasteries reached sleepy Farnham – the monks left but the fish stayed.

Prologue the Second

Fifty years ago a bookish, plumpish eight year old gazed in thrall at his new split-cane fishing rod – twice as tall as he was – and its shiny multiplier fishing reel, this was clearly what birthdays were all about and the friendly next door neighbour was speaking to his Mother about taking him on his first fishing expedition at four in the morning the next day.

“Dawn is best at the pond by the Abbey and although all the swims with any chance of catching a carp will be taken by the time we get there I am sure that we can find him a nice 6 oz. roach for his first fish.”

Pre-dawn glimmer with soft drizzle found the boy and the man walking the half-mile track to the carp pond at Waverly. The pond was not large, perhaps an acre, fringed by bushes and in each gap between the bushes a fisherman had set up what appeared to be a small camp with an enormous green umbrella – some with canvas side pieces – a garden chair and a primus stove for making endless cups of tea. Each had at least two rods in rests with their lines stretched out into the mist on the pond. Every so often one of the fishermen would pick up a catapult and shoot whatever bait they were training the big carp to take into the swim. The idea seemed to be that for perhaps as long as a month you fed and convinced 'Old Rolly' (or whichever of the resident carp you were after) that purple dyed boiled baby potatoes were the only thing to eat and then one day you presented him with one with a hook in it. Half an hour later 'Old Rolly' had his picture taken with the grinning fisherman on the bank and then he was returned to the water to begin the process of being convinced that eating yellow-stained bread paste was why he was put on this earth in the first place. Coarse fishing was obviously a patient and somewhat pointless business.

“Now son, you have no chance of landing one of the big carp with that wee rod and we haven't done any ground-baiting so you have a go at the roach. A size sixteen hook will be about right and a piece of bread paste about the size of a pea.”

The boy gets bored quickly. He is meant to cast out the small lead weight with the impossibly small hook just below it and leave it for the roach-fish to find it on the bottom but he keeps on bringing in the line 'Just to see' if there is a fish on the end of it yet. As he brings in the line for the umpteenth time - irritating the friendly neighbour who is after (red potato dumpling eating) carp – the tiny hook buried in its 'pea' of bread paste passes under the belly of a sleeping 18lb pike and imbeds itself.

The boy feels a wee tug, convinced that he has caught a bit of weed again he tugs back and is then surprised by the weed pulling him back – hard.

The pond erupts as the pike, now seriously awake, jumps four foot into the air to try and rid itself of this annoying, painful pull in its belly. The freshwater shark is obviously convinced that jumping is the way to deal with this problem as he continues to do it for the next hour and a half which is the length of time that it takes the boy to bring in the fish, long past the time that all the other fishermen on the lake give up the day for lost, since obviously no self respecting carp is going to eat anything – yellow, red, purple or green – whilst all this noise and fuss is going on.

The boy is fascinated by the fish and particularly its impressive set of teeth but cannot understand why all the men have left before they had a chance to see what he had caught. He also cannot understand why the pike doesn't count – why does it matter where the hook was? To him it seemed a fish was a fish and this one was huge. The disappointment when the kind neighbour explained to his parents that the big pike couldn't be counted because of the 'foul hook' was crushing. He never picked up the fishing rod again.



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Subject of Interest

Temptation

‘Rain Again’s’ neighbour on her winter berth on H pontoon at Lagos, Portugal was a 25 foot motor boat with a cuddy and out-riggers used for holding trolling lines for her keen fisherman owner and as I took her lines he extolled the virtues of the ugly looking scorpion fish his day’s fishing had produced.

“Don’t you ever put a line out the back when you are sailing? I’d give my eye teeth for a chance to fish some of the waters where you are going.”

I explained that sailing short-handed to the Azores was likely to generate enough excitement all on its own without towing a piece of plastic behind for 800 miles which would probably only catch a wretched seagull, anyway wasn’t six knots or so a bit slow?

“Not at all, what you want to do is to fish on the surface, just about two boat lengths back, the fish are drawn to the disturbance and if at all possible you need a teaser to draw it to your lure. The thing to do is to buy a really decent reel when you go back to the UK, you can get the rod and the lures here, but you need a really decent reel. What’s your budget?”

I wasn’t convinced but said I would think about it. As far as budget was concerned I smiled and said *‘Well, How Much is a Fish Supper*?’* as I turned back to my boat.

The next day another neighbour was expertly adding more coats of varnish to his impossibly beautiful Giles 44 ‘Timari’. I asked him if he ever fished.

“No, nasty messy business, all that blood and scales all over the place.”

How right you turned out to be my friend, but ‘Rain Again’ is not as beautiful as ‘Timari’ and somewhere inside the bookish, plumpish boy wanted another go.

Preparation

Half an hour on the internet yielded two things: an Amazon listing for the ‘Cruiser’s Handbook of Fishing’, available for next day delivery, and a package deal of a boat rod and multiplier reel at the Glasgow Angling Centre for £26 reduced from £96. A couple of clicks secured the book whilst I was going to have to go to the east end of Glasgow to pick up the rod and reel.

In the comedy ‘Chewing the Fat’ there is one sketch where an out of work actor gets a chance at a bit-part. The outcome is always the same, the bit-part is simple but the actor cannot keep to the script, he has to ‘interpret’ the part, make it bigger than it is, with disastrous results. He also delivers his lines in a mono-tone thick Glaswegian accent. I have lived in Glasgow now for thirty years and have no problem with the accent but you need intonation to give you something to grab hold of – if it is in a monotone there is nothing to help you find the beginning of a word or phrase. The gentleman in Glasgow Angling Centre could have been that actor as he spoke rapidly in his mono-tone. Eventually I grasp the fact that my £26 rod/reel combination is going to fall apart as soon as I hook anything vaguely resembling a tuna. It dawns on me that I am going to have to part with £50 or thereabouts for a reel and mono-tone makes the process as painless as possible. I then enquire about what I should tie on the end. I am taken over to a wall fifty foot long covered with shiny colourful lures. I mention the word ‘Tuna’ again and somewhere in the mono-tone that comes back I hear a word that sounds like ‘Muppet’.

‘Excuse me, did you say Muppet?’

‘Mono-tone, mono-tone, mono-tone ‘Muppet’.

It turns out that a ‘Muppet’ is a pink plastic squid, I buy a packet of three convinced that a Fish Supper and a Tuna Fish Supper no less is now just about automatic. The ‘Muppets’ cost £3 and equated favourably with the cost of a Fish Supper for two.

Thankfully I never did buy the rod since despite the fact that Mr. Monotone was convinced that a glance from a tuna would make it disintegrate Mr. Ryanair apparently classes fishing rods as dangerous weapons and forbid their carriage. Now the stern of ‘Rain Again’ is graced by two very substantial stainless steel equipment masts on which the business ends of all my toys are mounted so I decided that one of these would double as my fishing rod. Given that most conventional fishing rods have some ‘give’ in them which my 4” stainless mast was unlikely to have under even the most extreme provocation available in the fish world I routed the line from the reel mounted on the pulpit through a dock-line snubber and considered my fishing installation complete.

‘And God Sent a Great Fish’

Once through the shipping lanes off St. Vincent I settled down with my box of Glasgow acquired lures to find that the Muppets possessed neither hook nor any method of tying them onto the fishing line. Consultation of the excellent Bannerot publication which, until that point, had remained in its polythene packing, revealed that modern lures are sold separately from hooks and such in order to provide greater flexibility. Flexibility in my case meant that the Muppets were just brightly coloured plastic squids with no fish killing abilities whatsoever. Luckily the biggest, shiniest, heaviest (500g) lure that the Glasgow Angling centre had available had also grabbed my eye as had some 3” long plastic ‘wiggling’ fish both of which sported most formidable hooks so I cut a hole in the body end of one of the muppets, slipped it down over the 500g lure as instructed by the Bannerot book, threw it over the side and let it out about 100 yards (so much further and deeper than I had been told since I was concerned about catching any seagulls) and assembled my implements of destruction consisting of a gutting board, tomahawk, a gutting knife, a gaff and a marlin spike. The Bannerot’s spoke of an ice pick but since ‘Rain Again’s’ cold storage facilities are modest I have never needed a pick to access my packet of frozen peas so a marlin spike would have to do. It would be out of place to explain why I carry a tomahawk but the Bannerot’s assured me that monsters of the deep would soon be attaching themselves to my line and I felt some personal protection was in order. (Of these I have to tell you that as events unfolded swinging a tomahawk at 3am in the dark when beating into a brisk force 6 is inappropriate, the gutting knife was seriously too small, the gutting board had been packed away at the bottom of a locker and the gaff was absolutely indispensable.)

Life on board settled down, uninterrupted by any denizens of the deep. The log ticked up the miles, contrary weather came and mercifully went, and the monitor wind vane (my very, very favourite piece of kit) steered us towards Santa Maria. Once a day the wee boy inside the middle aged man prompted a winding-in of the line to make sure that nothing had committed suicide at the end of it. Dawns and dusks, (Bannerot assured prime fish time)

came and went until we were within 50 miles of land. Either I had to catch something the next dawn or note a ‘duck’ in my log. What could I do? Then the word ‘teaser’ came to mind, sure enough the Bannerot’s had a definition as being something to attract the fish, the teaser would draw the fish to it and not being something recognisably edible in itself the fish would then take the next edible looking thing nearby – thoughtfully provided by the angler a couple of feet back complete with hooks.

I had no ‘teaser’ my muppets had attracted no attention from anything as far as I could see and the big lure was now rusty. It was then that the Chinese came to the rescue.

I am sorry for declining to indulge in an aside to explain why First Nation weapons of war appear on my boat but now I really do have to explain a peculiarity of the Portuguese tax system. For some reason, not understood by any of my Portuguese friends, Chinese nationals are allowed to run shops in Portugal without paying any tax for five years. After five years another member of the extended family takes over and so relieved of tax ‘Loja Chines’ proliferate in Portugal much to the dismay of local shop keepers. The variety of stock is incredible in these establishments, we went in to buy some batteries and came out with a present for my crew’s two year old grandson: soft plastic sea cucumber in day-glo pink with a ball that would run up and down inside the interior of the creature and light up with a chemical light when you shook it. Teaser I thought, self-illuminating I thought.

The sea cucumber was requisitioned with promises of replacement and it was seized onto the line three foot from the end with a ‘wiggler’ (also made from silicone but in a more subdued shade of green and with a pair of 1” hooks protruding from its body) made fast to the bitter end. The line goes over the side – this time two boat lengths back- where it ‘pops’ occasionally from the surface.

One cup of coffee worth of time later the clutch on the reel screams and then goes quiet, I wind in to find resistance but ‘dead’ – heavy resistance as if I had hooked a sack of potatoes. I wind in and then the clutch screams

out again and the sack of potatoes comes alive. No leaps but deep, deep dives. I reef the yankee and carry on sailing at about 4 knots. On the next retrieval I see the fish as a streak of silver but it is very, very lively and no doubt very, very cross. I slacken the clutch on the reel a little thanking my advisors for their insistence that I procure a good one and let the fish run again. Next time in I worry about the fish fouling the stationary prop with the line so I start the engine and run the prop slowly expecting that fish will stay away from the prop and if not then the rope cutter will at least stop me being fouled. With gloves I grab the line paying attention to the Bannerot’s admonishment to ‘palm’ the line without using thumbs in case the fish runs again and a twist in the line takes your thumb off. I draw the fish to the side of the hull and not knowing really how to use the gaff I strike upwards just aft of the head and up he came and so did a whole geyser of blood. Pools and rivers of the damn stuff with blood running from the gunwales in a manner that would do Patrick O’Brian proud. I thought salt water removed blood - try telling that to my sheets, guys, boom-brake, sprayhood. So exhausted, alive and haemorrhaging fish on deck, me on top of it to stop it going back into the water and trying to work out how to give it a shot of whisky in the gills (with hindsight the only way to do this is to have a syringe or atomiser ready) so instead it got my marlin spike in its head. More blood, purple this time. I rest.

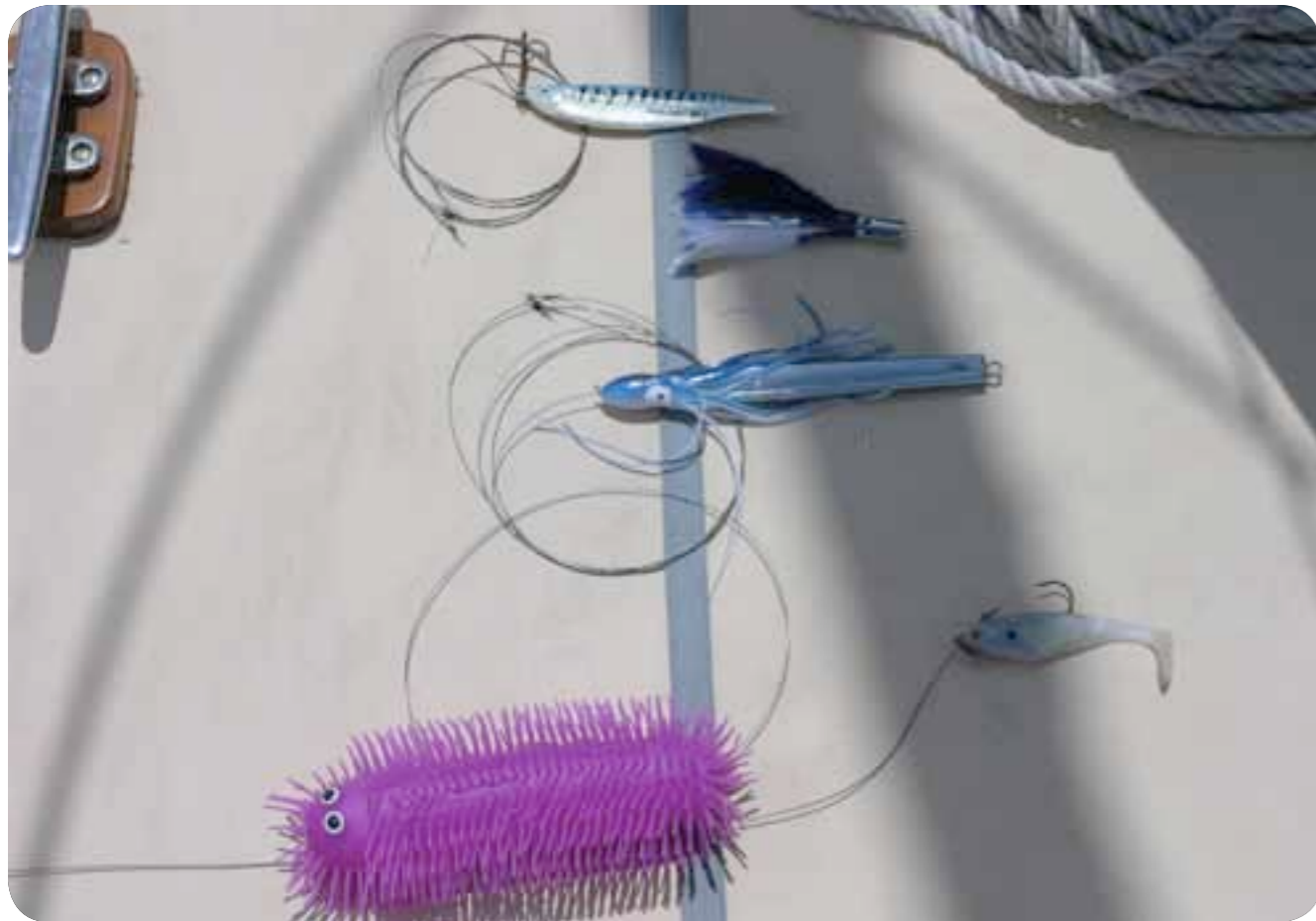
Fish damn well wakes up and makes a very determined effort to get back to the watery element with my spike in its head, a five foot long gaff in its side and surely most of its blood on the deck and over me.

Withdraw spike, stick in another part of the brain hoping to address the more male right hand side bit as opposed to the passive left hand bit with a serious dig around in there in case two spikes in the brain did not convey the right message. Fish expires.

It is very dark and so I switch on the deck light so that I can start to sort out a serious mess involving me, blood, sick (I do not like blood and certainly not lots and lots of it) more fishing line than I care to recall, two marlin spikes a gaff and a very significant fishing hook somewhere.

It looked bigger in the dark, Honest!





'Chinese day-glo sea slug in the foreground, then wiggler, muppet over 500g lure, jet-head and a spoon (front to rear) on the way back the muppet hooked a white marlin sadly not landed due to severe disagreements with crew over merits of its foot long spear being on board!'

As the light goes on we could see we were surrounded by hundreds of tuna, no line required! A gaff in the water and you would have a fish and it stayed like that for another hour. No wonder there are no tunas round the coast of the Azores they are all out there having a party.

So, fish wrapped in canvass, tied to the samson post in a manner reminiscent of 'The Deer Hunter' with a eight pointer strapped over the hood of a 4x4 and in we go to Santa Maria to close a deal. Man takes warp (after the usual drama of boat sideways on to pontoon) and gets 20kg of tuna as a tip with the request from us for 'dois bifes de atun' in return. In very short order we get two 'prime fillets' of red meat from the muscles on either side of the spine which, after rinsing off even more blood, could be steaked.

The Eating

Fresh tuna is wonderful, I considered sashimi but recollections of nearly losing my marlin spike and the concomitant blood stains prompted more disguising of the late fish's flesh. I recommend the following:

With olive oil fry two diced onions in a frying pan until the point where they start to crisp. Add two generous shakes of balsamic vinegar then consider how nice it is going to taste if you add more and add another two shakes. Add three tablespoons of maple syrup and cracked

(not ground) black peppercorns. Reduce over a low flame.

Warm a metal pan over the hob and add more olive oil, place in the tuna steaks and then cover with the onion reduction, seal with aluminium foil and place in a pre-heated oven for seven to eight minutes, remove, turn the steaks, replace the foil and return to the oven for another seven minutes. Serve with spiced onion chutney.

The Lessons

- > Buy the best reel you can with an adjustable drag.
- > Use a snubber to further help with the strain of a striking fish.
- > Use a 'teaser' which is not meant to look edible – instead it is meant to draw attention.
- > Fish close to the boat – itself a big teaser – on the surface with the lure 'popping' from the sea every minute or so.
- > Look for action in the lure. In the photo Jet heads finished with feathers are for fast sailing (8 knots and above) but are useless at slow speeds. Wigglers worked well for me.
- > Buy a good gaff. I would never have got the fish up without it.

'The Cruisers Handbook of Fishing' by Scott and Wendy Bannerot published by McGraw – Hill ISBN 0-07-134560-4



BALTIC WANDERINGS 2009 — KEN AND SHIRLEY MARTIN

Shirley and I returned to Isis at Oskershamn on the Swedish East Coast where we had laid her up at the end of last season. A convenient flight on 29th April took us to Stockholm-Skavsta, which is only a three hour bus ride from the boat. We were met by friend David Jamieson with his folding bike, which Shirley immediately commandeered for the few kilometres to Isis.

David's boat, *Clisham*, a Young Sun/Westwind 35, normally berthed in Ardrossan, had already been launched and he offered us accommodation aboard her until ISIS was in the water. So began the May holiday weekend with re-commissioning after the winter lay-up. Nothing major this year so we were all completed and ready to launch on Monday, 4th May. Mast lift at Oskarshamn can be DIY and having lowered a couple including *Isis*' last year, we practised raising *Clisham's* on Friday and *Isis*' the following Tuesday.

Our shakedown started on Friday, 8th, with a sail through rocky inshore passages to anchor close to Figeholm where strong winds pinned us down for 2 nights before we enjoyed a very fine sail, c.57nm, all the way across to Visby on Gotland where we had a bit of a problem berthing in 20+kt winds – our stern buoy mooring procedures have subsequently improved...

We spent the best part of a week in Visby and used the local bus to visit the harbour at Burgsvik near Gotland's Southwestern extremity – not an approach for the faint hearted in strong winds. Visby itself is a World Heritage site with amazing church ruins and surrounding fortified walls and ludicrously expensive cafes although there is at least one cheapo plastic café where coffee & bun are only 9SEK (about 75p!). Gotland also boasts 95 medieval churches still in use; some of which have fascinating wall paintings, fonts and gravestones. About ten are within relatively easy cycling reach of Visby as are other historic sites and places visited and studied by Linnaeus, Professor of Medicine and Botany. Gotland's Spring flowers and shrubs were a wonderful sight and we enjoyed listening to the Skylarks as we wandered about.

Lickershamn, Lauterhorn and Farosund Smabaats-hamnen were our next ports of call for cycling to more kirks, limestone pinnacles and across to the island of Faro whose small Kyrk has an interesting family memorial painting and another commemorating an epic seal hunt when the ice broke up around the hunters and they were carried across the Baltic to mainland Sweden from where they all returned home to Faro without loss of life. Ingrid and Ingemar Bergman are both buried there.

The long passage, 85nm, across to Ventspils in Latvia was our next challenge which saw us leave Farosund at 02.45 following the very well lit passage out to the open sea and into dense fog under radar. This was more of a motor-sail in very light winds that lasted all the way into Ventspils Marina, another Hanseatic Port, a former ice-free port for the USSR Baltic Fleet and a major oil export port. This was where we once again felt we had made the right decision to join the Cruising Association. In many foreign ports the CA have established Honorary Local Representatives and we met our first HLR in Ventspils, Nigel Luther who, with his Russian wife Svetlana, took us all shopping at the local super market and helped us greatly in many ways by giving us a flavour of what life is like in a former Soviet State. Another CA boat, *Sea Griffin* was tied up next to us at Ventspils and we all enjoyed a very sociable evening on their boat.

Ventspils Marina



Oskarshamn Lift-in



Visby Cathedral



Lickershamn Pinnacles



Ventspils "Blue Cow"



After topping up with water and fuel we crept out of Ventspils in fog so dense that the Ventspils 'Blue Cow' standing on the harbour wall couldn't be seen; fortunately other marks were just visible close to and once clear of the approaches, there being no local traffic, we could relax a little as we headed for Montu in Estonia, just inside the Northern projection protecting the Gulf of Riga. *Sea Griffin* had set off earlier and was already berthed alongside so we tied up against her as the harbour wall needed a ladder from her deck to allow one to reach land. The pontoon that had once been available for visiting yachts was lying ashore...

Montu harbour



There is an expensive c.£40 Estonian Cruising Guide in English that infers there are abundant yacht facilities but we had been warned that in Estonia any place where a rowing boat could be tied up might be classified as a suitable yacht facility but some such places should be viewed with great caution and a better guide would be the CA Publication '*Harbours in the Baltic States*', which is regularly updated.

The coast around the Gulf of Riga looks at first glance to offer many opportunities to anchor but as yet the nature of the bottom is, to say the least, uncertain and at this time it might be safer to stick only to the limited harbours described in the above CA publication and updates despite some of them offering limited protection.

The forecast we had for the Gulf of Riga via Stockholm Radio/Swedish Met. was for increasing NE so we decided to head South towards Ruhnu, one of Estonia's many islands, review the situation there and decide whether to continue on towards Roja, a former fishing port South of the Southern projection guarding the entrance to the Gulf of Riga. Throughout the day there was nothing Easterly about the wind and we had the worst day of the whole season bashing Southwards, eventually tying up in Roja after 10.5 hours covering 40nm. Of significant interest during the day were the International Mine Sweeping Exercises; the French Warship *Sagittarius* gave a warning on VHF and then a count down to a massive explosion...we hoped we were sufficiently clear!

Another CA boat *Lunar Eclipse* was also berthed alongside in Roja but left early the next morning. After a wander around an older local resident introduced himself as the CA HLR, Oswald. He had been contacted by the HLR in Riga to look out for Lunar Eclipse and instead he found us, which turned out to be a real treat. Oswald collected us in his car after lunch and there followed a wonderful introduction to this part of Latvia. Had it not been for his efforts we would have come away with far less knowledge of just how much there is to see and discover within this corner of Latvia.

The Kolka Light House is about 5Km offshore and was constructed during the winter when vehicles could cross on the ice! It was the first Nuclear Powered Light House (subsequently decommissioned with Swedish aid). Not far away from Dundaga Castle is a memorial to 'Crocodile Dundee', Arvids von Blumenfelds who fled Latvia during ww2 and made his living hunting crocodiles in Australia! Nearby is a memorial to the 'Collectivisation' period of Latvia's Soviet oppression and much more. At first glance the Latvian shore is nothing but trees and sand – you need to have time to explore beyond.

Roja Harbour



Kolka memorial



Sliteres Lighthouse



After having battled down to Roja *Sea Griffin*, wisely headed North to Kuressaare, but also experienced very strong headwinds! we were headed further South towards Riga, which was a principal objective with the marina of Andrejosta 15nm up the river Daugava – Arthur Ransome's Racundra's 3rd Voyage took place around here – and we berthed alongside at 20.00 after c.57nm.

We spent almost another week exploring around Riga on foot and by tram; there are many wonderful Art Nouveau buildings, historic churches and sobering museums and cemeteries. We bought a book on Latvian History in English from the local Chart Agent and enjoyed free concerts in the churches. The Market in Riga is quite an experience being sited around and within five huge Zeppelin hangars. It is probably the largest in Europe!

Riga Park



Riga Art Neauveau



A very slow train took us out to the suburbs of Sigulda where we enjoyed walking amongst the Chestnut and Lilac blossom, visiting ruins and some sandstone caves. There are many fine sculptures and monuments throughout the city centre parks, which were full of trees and flowers in bloom. We could easily have spent much longer in Riga and would urge folk to visit soon before it becomes further developed in the modern idiom endangering the World Heritage status of this historic Hanseatic port which in Soviet times was their third most important industrial centre.

Sigulda Walking Stick Park



Snail Sculpture



Gutman's Ala



From Riga we headed back North to Ruhnu where there is an excellent small marina with short finger berths and wi-fi freely available (free wi-fi is a feature of most Estonian marinas/ports) as well as showers and toilets. It also has a lighthouse built by Eiffel and sited on the island's highest point. We cycled to the oldest wooden 'Swedish' church and onwards to the island's Northern end but couldn't stop for long because of the mosquito attacks – in fact Ruhnu was the only place we experienced this throughout our summer trip! The Swedish community fled in front of the Russian WWII advance, taking the church bell with them and it has yet to be returned.

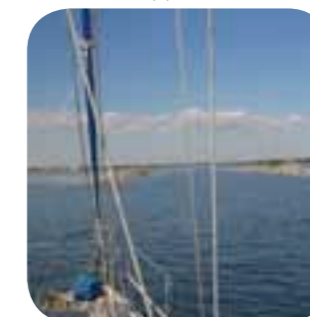
Ruhnu Marina



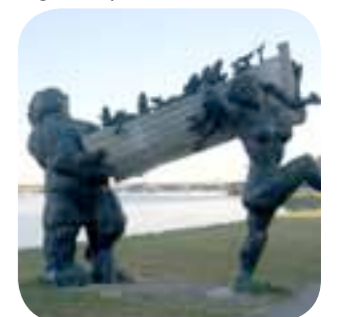
Kuressaare was our next port of call after leaving Ruhnu's shallow and rocky approaches. A slight navigational error took us over a shallow patch which could have been avoided if we had tracked between east cardinal marks rather than between safe water marks. *Isis* did not ground on that occasion although we wondered just how well the dredging had been done of the 2nm approach channel contained between training walls of piles of boulders where some of the marks were off station and another mark was being re-positioned as we crept along to berth bows to the quay with the now familiar stern buoy. Oscar, another CA HLR and harbour master, welcomed us and provided much useful local information. In plain view from the small marina (about four visiting yachts when we were there) is the Kuressaare Episcopal Castle, unique in being the only intact medieval fortress in the Baltic countries and well worth spending a long afternoon to explore.

We cycled to the other small marina at Roomassaare for morning coffee and back along a cycle track through the reed beds to a twitcher's hide and back beside the Castle after buying books on Estonia, a slightly more sensitive wi-fi antenna and further supplies of peanut butter.

Kuressaare approach



Legendary Suur Toll & Piret



A day was spent exploring around the area by car, visiting ancient fortifications, a meteor crater, churches, a potential anchorage at Koigustu (a former mined area, now open to navigation...) and other small guest harbours none of which was useful to us since access was barred by the Muhu-Saaremaa causeway.

Another 60nm passage took us into Virtsu on the Eastern Shore at the Southern end of the notorious Moon Sound. The wind was c. NW F5 as we arrived and the approach to the pontoon finger berths is one that under the prevailing conditions I should not like to repeat. There is little room for manoeuvre or error – you just have to get a line fixed ashore asap almost regardless of hitting anything. As it was we missed berthing to port and were blown to stbd with Shirley securing a line onto the wobbly pontoon first time – short fingers – and we were the only boat there. Fortunately, a ferry was berthed across dolphins affording

Trapezoidal Gravestones



7th/9th Century carving



some shelter from wind and waves. There is a pile of rocks close astern the moorings.... the saving grace was the minimal charge if we left within 12 hours, which we were pleased to do in quieter conditions at 06.00 the following morning. Maybe Virtsu will be developed to give better shelter and an easier approach in the near future.

Haapsalu was our next port of call where there had been great trouble with access to the Haapsalu Yacht Club being apparently blocked by the Grandholm marina next door. Damage had been done to a visiting yacht's rudder by ground chains securing a pontoon and a very narrow and shallow passage was hoped to be dredged for early June, 2009. In any case the approaches from Moon Sound are shallow and rocky enough but the 'Danger' signs and 'casually' placed east cardinal marks had me a bit wound up passing to the East as one should most ECM but not this one! Luckily we did not ground and berthed alongside, aft of a rather elegant Finnish motor yacht.

Before we had my birthday celebration meal in the yacht club we met the HLR, Henry.

We cleared the Northern end of Moon Sound gently under engine and via Dirhami, where we berthed

Virtsu 'Marina'



Lohusalu Marina



alongside the harbour wall because the pontoon was not in use, we spent a couple of very expensive nights in the well appointed Lohusalu marina where we enjoyed our first sauna with another British couple, Ken and Elizabeth. They head South while we continue on to Tallinn, Pirita and berth at KJK, the Kalevi Yacht Club; Pirita was Soviet built for the 1980 Olympics.

Tallinn is yet another World Heritage site and has a wonderfully reconstructed town centre surrounded with ramparts studded with many towers. We found it busier with tourists than Riga and overall, we preferred Riga, although Tallinn has the outstanding Nevsky Cathedral

Russalka monument



Nevsky Cathedral



and the Peter the Great Palace in Kadriorg Park. The old theatre in the centre serves excellent 'Russian Red Soup'. We enjoyed cycling past many monuments on the way into Tallinn and spent days wandering around the narrow streets and alleys, enjoying an Organ recital in St Nicholas' wherein there are treasures to view including a 'Dance of Death' tableau by Bernt Notke. Another, more extensive, is found in Lubeck, yet another Hanseatic Port. Access to concerts, museums and churches in Tallinn is more expensive than Riga.

Whilst in Lohusalu our son's partner, Debbie phoned us to let us know her Graduation date on 29th June; she had finished her Strathclyde Pharmacy course with flying colours and two prizes! Flights are booked in Tallinn to fly to and fro from Helsinki but we have to wait a couple of days until the weather ameliorates for the passage to Finland.

We had another great sail across to Helsinki, 44nm, and berthed alongside at Suomenlinna or Sveaborg – yet another World Heritage site – 'The construction of the sea fortress on the islands just off Helsinki in the middle of the 18th century was the most extensive building project during Swedish rule (under the control of architect, Lt Col Augustin Ehrensvard). When it was complete, its military shipyard was one of the biggest dry docks in the world and centres of know-how at that time. At the end of Swedish rule the fortress was being compared with the maritime fortifications at Gibraltar. The sauna was included in the berthing fee and there were separate male and female rooms wherein one could gently smoulder until some macho Finn threw yet more ladles of water onto the fire and I wimped out before I passed out!

Now that we were in Finnish waters, there appeared to be a significant change in pilotage. There were many more marks around, complicating the narrow passages and much greater traffic, although mainly in 'deeper' channels, although I should qualify what 'deeper' might mean. Routes within Finnish waters are clearly marked on the charts but further inquiry leads to 'minimum depth' and 'maximum authorised draft'! I understand that some passages are swept to a particular width and that should one go aground whilst following a track with authorised depth sufficient for your vessel's draft, the Finnish Government will pay for repairs to damage sustained! If I remember correctly we stuck to minimum charted depths of 1.8m....occasionally one has to take account of 'waterstand' where due to atmospheric conditions or drought, the 'normal' water level may be increased or decreased – NavTex announces these and for the Southern Baltic there was notification of the 'waterstand' being reduced by 60cm. Another thing to note is that Finnish navigation marks do not have 'tops' – cardinal and lateral marks have no triangular top marks or cans/cones! You just have the colours to check. Everywhere

Dry dock



HSS Classic Fleet



was very well marked and any grounding we sustained was due to 'pilot' error – the helmsperson not being given explicit instructions or cutting corners – now where is that article about Westerly keels...?

By now you will understand about CA HLRs and having contacted Helsinki's HLR we were lucky enough to acquire a finger berth at HSK marina where we left *Isis* for ten days after exploring Helsinki for almost a week. The trip home was exhausting but the graduation ceremony and dinner and seeing our family made up for that and we had time to recover before we headed back to Helsinki in early July to find *Lunar Eclipse* also berthed in HSK after their trip to St Petersburg.

The nature of the second part of our summer cruise was quite different: no long passages and many anchorages amongst the Finnish, Aland and Stockholm archipelagos. Head winds predominated and motor sailing became the norm. The locals were seen to tack but even they made disastrous mistakes and we saw one large Finnish yacht so hard aground on a rocky patch clearly marked by a NCM – there was a narrow passage but he had missed it - we wondered how the yacht might be re-floated - air bags or by Chinook?



Aground Korpoström



'Classic' Restaurant



Stenskar anchorage



Jungfruskar

Both Shirley and I had picked up a 'Noro Virus' type bug and we were quite unwell for a few days but were able to enjoy the narrow passages through to and beyond Barosund where we anchored in the first pool just beyond the 1m charted patch.

The island scenery in this area is quite beautiful, particularly within the Turku Archipelago with many lovely anchorages. We would like to have explored further before we headed South Westwards into the Aland Islands. The passage from Jungfruskar to the Soda/Salso gap was probably the most scary of the whole season: we left the anchorage due to strong Southerlies being forecast and had barely cleared the island when dense fog shrouded the rest of the trip, mostly under sail, until we were safely anchored in Bono On in the Aland Islands. Chart plotter and radar earned their keep as did the binoculars despite tired eyes and the ferry waited until the strong winds arrived and the sky cleared about an hour after arrival.

We managed a bit of a sail up a Northern arm of the Lumparn to Kastelholm before spending a few days berthed in Mariehamn East from where we walked and cycled across to Mariehamn West to view the Clyde-built 'Pommern' and the Maritime Museum and its Scottish (inc Wm Denny) exhibits. Our brief exploration of the Aland Islands ended at Rodhamn where morning rolls were delivered in a brown paper bag complete with weather forecast and smiley face. A choppy 34nm passage brought us to the delightful Swedish island of Arholma where we were able to use the Swedish Cruising Club (SXX) 'sticker' provided by the CA to allow us to tie up to SXX mooring buoys, which are laid all around the Swedish Coast.



Pommern

The Stockholm Archipelago allows for many different passages through the islands and we made good use of SXX buoys and anchor as we meandered Southwards stopping for morning coffee aboard or ashore and continuing onwards after a lunch stop before or after a walk across the islands. We decided to bypass Stockholm as it was now high season and put into Bulando after Rodloga, Moja and Galno Hemflagen. We visited the SXX harbour at Malma Kvarn where our walk ashore resulted in both of us picking up 'ticks' – it's worth noting that the Swedes take TBE very seriously and vaccination timetables for May through to August are posted around the area. Both of us were vaccinated a year ago in Troon.

After Dalaro, Uto, Huvudskar and Nattaro we put into Nynashamn to re-stock and take on more fuel. We braved the Dragets Kanal which provides a stunning short cut around Landsort – the canal is very short and narrow – one way traffic with no passing place, you wait your turn and

hope that no jet ski or similar is heading towards you! From a distance we viewed the huge ironworks of Oxelosund – handy for RyanAir – but unattractive, and continued through to Arkosund and several days later berthed in Vastervik where we might have lifted out had it not been for our Oskarshamn arrangements.

We now decided to head out for open water and cross to the island of Oland, which was less than 20nm from our winter berth.

To our surprise the visitor's facilities were closed down at Grandkullaviken, which serves as a ferry port between Oland and Gotland. The next day we moved on to Byxelkrok and spent five nights there, stormbound – it's tenable in a SW but then suffers from surge and snatching bow lines – we doubled up on both stern buoys and mooring lines and were safe if not comfortable and were able to leave the boat and catch the bus into Borgholm on a Saturday which just happened to be British Car Rally Day! We also cycled to the Troll Forest and it was there that a ranger told us that there had been a collision between two Swedish ferries and one had to be withdrawn from service and replaced by the Oland to Gotland ferry, leading to the closure of Grandkullaviken.



Huvudskar



Draget's Kanal



Avalon of Alba – Oxelosund



Vastarvik Tourist Office



British Car Rally - Borgholm

After the short passage across to Oskarshamn we arranged for lift out and lowered the mast with help from a Dutch couple also over-wintering there. After one night on the hard we caught the bus back to Skavsta and RyanAir delivered us to Prestwick. This year's Baltic wanderings were over and planning for next year's trip to the Swedish High Coast could now begin!

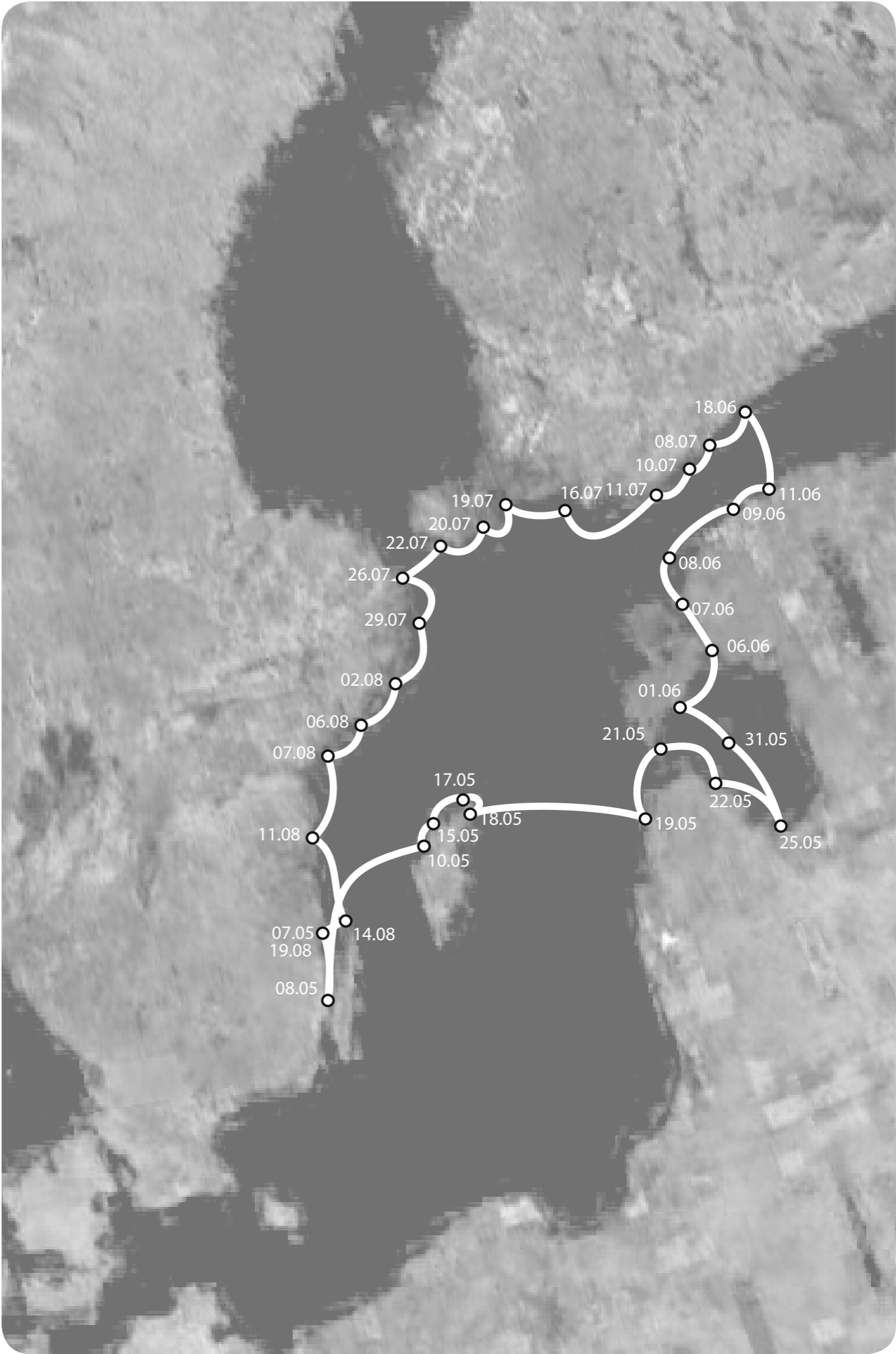
Technical Information

We covered 1163nm according to the Log and 1223nm according to the GPS. Throughout we used a Standard Horizon 300i Chart Plotter and the C-Map Max charts for North & Baltic Seas – a few anomalies were brought to light but overall the detail was outstanding and sufficiently accurate. Swedish Coastal Pilots in English were extremely useful as were the *Finnish Sea Scout Natural Harbours* guides (in Finnish) for the Aland Islands and for the (Southern & Eastern) Finnish Archipelago. We should have bought the 3rd Finnish Sea Scout guide for the Turku (Abo) area for another 63€! The RCC Baltic Pilot is also useful but having to cover such a wide area cannot provide the necessary detail – it is also overdue for revision.

Once again we made good use of SSB for weather through Winlink and email through SailMail. Wi-Fi is becoming more widely and freely available and weak signals might be enhanced by use of an additional external antenna. The 'BullDog' windscreen mounted antenna we bought in Kuresaare was a great improvement over the pcmcia card previously used but there are even better currently available, such as the Wave RV or DIY wi-fi can!



Troll Forest



ISIS Baltic cruise route (Note not all anchorages are shown - there were just too many!)

Bali Voe's

IRISH CIRCUMNAVIGATION

Jim and Margaret Goodlad

Our summer cruise around Ireland was not quite what we expected. Margaret took a lot of persuading that it was a good idea but the MetOffice were forecasting heat wave conditions (and some of our members who went North to the Outer Hebrides or Shetland had some lovely weather).

We set sail on the 8th June - later than planned - so headed for Holy Isle for the night. We had our new copy of the South and West Coast of Ireland Pilot, Irish tide tables, very useful with the Pilot, some charts borrowed from Geoff Barber, large quantities of tinned food and Guinness (this lasted the trip. Guinness was €2 a can in Eire and €4 a pint in the pubs). We also had accounts of circumnavigation from past yearbooks by Roger Lightbown, Rena Donnelly and Geoff Barber.

The trip started well with good weather and not a lot of wind. Our diesel tank was full with last year's cheaper diesel and we had a container with 25 litres. The tide was running strongly in the North Channel and we sailed crab-wise at an angle of 30° to Ballycastle. We had decided to sail clockwise around Ireland - which was a good choice a winds were mainly SW along the West coast. Ballycastle was our starting off port where my son (and three grandchildren) stay.

We sailed on 12th June across to Rathlin Island for the night before heading south on the 13th. Zoomed out of Rathlin Sound at 9 knots over the ground still doing 6 - 7 knots until past Glenarm Marina. Then we were hit by squalls and heavy rain. Our first stop was Brown Bay just outside Larne. Calm sunny anchorage when we arrived but noisy jet skiers zoomed around the bay but with southerly winds forecast it seemed an ideal spot. In the early evening we were hit by a violent thunder storm so jet skiers

disappeared. The wind went North during the night - most uncomfortable.

We had a southerly wind on the nose all the next day and visibility closed in going past Donaghadee - chart plotter and radar magic! When we turned into Strangford Loch narrows the wind dropped and the sun came out. Stopped for the night at Portaferry Marina £17.

Portaferry is a nice base with good walks, a fine aquarium and a castle overlooking the marina. Interesting marina to manoeuvre in with tide flowing through at up to 7 knots,

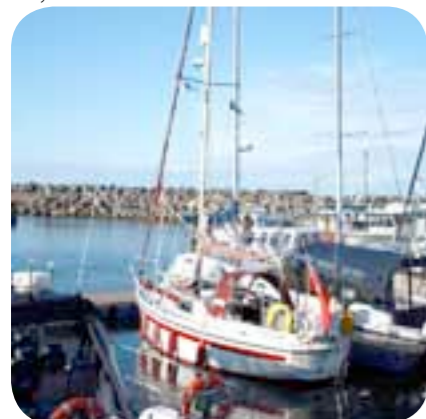
Next day we motored across to Audley Roads and picked up a mooring. Visited Castle Ward (NT) - a fine country house with lovely gardens and again enjoyable walks. The original owner, Lord Bangor, was one of the better landlords and looked after his tenants during the famine. A wild night tugging at the mooring and buoy banging the bow (later we found out this was just cans of Guinness rolling in a for'd locker). In the afternoon we motored up to Quoile Yacht Club and picked up a visitor's mooring.

Another wild day. Ashore in the afternoon for a walk but had to be back for 1630 as he gate was locked at that time.

Friday 19th June we motored down to Killyleagh for stores and tied up to a pontoon beside the yacht club. Nice town with impressive privately owned castle. Very Protestant town with Union Jacks everywhere. We learned a lot of Irish history on this trip.

Very gusty conditions and dinghy flipped twice as we motored up the lough between islands to Down Yacht Club tying up to a pontoon fixed to their clubhouse - an old light ship.

Ballycastle Marina



Tidal turbine, Strangford Narrows



Down Yacht Club





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St John's Point - on of Ireland's colourful lighthouses

sailed at 3 - 4 knots to Kilmore Quay arriving a 2232.

Kilmore Quay had much improved since our last visit on Beeswing ten years ago. Smart new harbour office with uniformed staff and new showers and washing facilities. There is splendid fish shop with a great variety of fresh fish. Also a large chandlery which was like an Aladdin's cave! Spent money there! We were only charged for a short stay at the marina as we had arrived so late €20.

Friday 26th June we sailed for Waterford at 1420. Poor visibility at first until after we passed Hook Head. Sun bathing weather as we motored up the River Suir past Dunmore East. River Suir was very interesting and we were glad not to meet this container ship (below) in the narrower parts. We anchored for the night in the King's Channel at 1910 - a quiet meander loop off the main river. Very quiet with birds singing and herons entertaining us.

Next morning we motored up to Waterford past all the private berths to the visitors pontoon - €20. The local yacht club run the pontoon at weekends and having given your mobile number the gate is opened by dialing it. Unfortunately this didn't work (or another number we were given) - so we didn't go ashore in the evening. We managed to visit the Cathedral, Museum of Treasures and Reginald's Tower (dates back to Viking times). Next day we joined a city walk which was excellent. The Waterford Crystal factory is now closed but I believe there is still a showroom. Another walk in the afternoon then returned to anchorage in King's Channel at tea time.

On Monday 29th June we enjoyed a sunny morning watching the herons and egrets before sailing at 1155 with the tide. We passed the entrance of the River Barrow up to New Ross. Advance notice is necessary to open the railway bridge. This is meant to be a very interesting trip. We managed some sailing today but lowered the sails to motor up the tortuous channel to Dungarven.

Chart plotter and Irish Cruising Club Sailing Directions were essential. We passed a yacht on the way in that we thought was at anchor - she was aground! Then after feeling pleased with our navigation prowess I ran aground on shingle when looking for a mooring. Backed off and moored for the night.

We sailed next day at 0930 heading for Cork. Torrential rain for two hours dampened our spirits but once out in the open sea we managed to sail for a while before the wind went ahead then we ran into fog! Fortunately this cleared as we arrived at the entrance of Cork Harbour. We tied up at the boatyard Crosshaven at 1945. We stayed three nights at Crosshaven - €16 a night. On Wednesday 1st July after some boat maintenance we took the bus into Cork and lunch at the English Market. A very extensive indoor market. It rained all day and we visited a variety of churches. Cork is a very attractive city much of it built on an island in the river.

Next day we again took the bus to Cork but continued on the train to Cobh. There is a fantastic museum about emigration from Ireland with sections on the Titanic.

Cobh had a special interest for me as my grandfather sailed in here on the barque 'Falls of Dee' in 1885. They had picked up the pilot on December 24th when a gale blew up and they ended up in the Bay of Biscay. They docked on the 8th January! We were told that when the pilots came to leave the transatlantic liners to return to Cobh it was often too rough - so they got a trip to New York and back. My uncle also visited Cobh when second officer on the Aquitania.

When back at Crosshaven I spotted this yacht (below) but didn't find the owner. Obviously ex Blue Star Line like myself. I served as 4th and 3rd Officer on the sister ship - the Paraguay Star for 4 trips to South America.

We topped up with fuel (€0.70 a litre) and sailed on Friday 3rd July for Kinsale only 17 miles away but against the wind doing 2 - 3 knots. Rather expensive marina at Kinsale €23 plus €4 harbour dues. No harbour dues on third night. We had an outside berth the first night which was a bit choppy but moved further in the following nights - very peaceful.

We really liked Kinsale and stayed three nights. The strong wind warnings helped to keep us in port. Kinsale also goes back to Viking times and was an important port - particularly for wines and spirits. Irish emigrants developed vineyards in France, California and in Australia. Hennessey brandy was Irish owned. We did a guided town walk in Kinsale which was excellent. More history was learned and the pivotal Battle of Kinsale against Irish and Spanish forces. The British won and Ireland was to remain a 'protestant' country for over two hundred years. A massive Fort Charles guards the entrance to Kinsale.

Constrained by her draught



King's Channel River Suir near Waterford



A yacht with a familiar name



Glandore Harbour - one of the many lovely anchorages around Ireland's coast

There are many good walks around Kinsale. The weather was mainly dry and sunny at times but nothing like the heat wave at Wimbeldon. During our stay in Kinsale the Irish Met office was forecasting 6 - 7. We found their forecasts very good - you have to know your headlands as these are used to define areas of forecasts.

On Monday 6th July, with more F7s forecast, we decided to sail the two miles to Sandy Cove just west of Kinsale entrance. This was a delightful anchorage and well sheltered.

Sailed on Tuesday 7th July for Glandore Harbour. Good reach until past the Old Head of Kinsale, then close hauled, then motor sailing again. It was just ten miles off this headland that the Lusitania was sunk in 1916, then past Galley Head (shown on cover of ICC Sailing directions).

Glandore is a lovely anchorage and we pumped up the dinghy (only third time this trip) and went ashore for a long walk. It was on the way to Glandore that a floater appeared in my eye. Next day further black dots appeared which became worse as we sailed west. We thought Baltimore a good place to get medical advice as there was the town of Skibereen nearby. We sailed into Baltimore Harbour past 'Lott's Pillar' and managed to get a berth at the pontoon. We asked where the nearest medical centre was and we were told in Skibereen and a bus left in ten minutes. We were dropped off outside the medical centre. I was then referred to a lady ophthalmist in Skibereen who arranged an appointment with Cork University Hospital next morning (9th July). We caught the early morning bus to Skibereen next day, then on to Cork. We were dropped off outside the hospital and I was seen very quickly and laser treatment fixed a tear in my retina. I also have a cataract in my only eye so we did wonder about abandoning

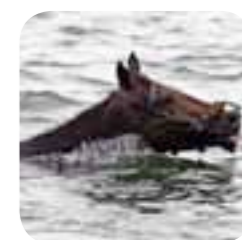
our trip. The surgeon told me to rest for two days - which we did on a mooring in Baltimore harbour with another gale!

The treatment I received in Ireland was marvelous and I can't praise the Irish Health Service more. The surgeon even gave me his mobile number in case I had any further trouble when sailing north up the west coast.

That evening I heard a seal blowing off the pontoon and went out to see the seal but it was a horse! Several horses were being taken for a swim behind a small boat - one at a time. Is this why Irish Horses win so many races?

There was a lot of activity in the harbour during our two rest days with many dinghy races and a lot of young people sailing.

Monday 13th July. Rather a wet and windy morning but the rain stopped and the sun came out as we motored out of the north entrance of Baltimore Harbour north of Sherkin Island. Rather tricky navigation until all the islands identified. We motor sailed the 5 miles down the coasts of Sherkin and Cape Clear Island getting protection from the heavy SW swell. Tied up in North Harbour Cape Clear Island at 1300. We sat in the cockpit with a Guinness and



One of Jim's Irish seahorses



A Galway Hooker

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sandwich enjoying the warm sunshine. We thought we would be quite near the bottom at low tide but with bilge keels this is not a worry. A 40ft French yacht came in and tied up astern of us. We tried to point out that there was little water at low tide. He told us his draught was 50 cms and seemed amused at our concern. Lovely island to walk over with views of the Fastnet Rock only five miles away. Very interesting heritage centre – with deck chair washed up from the Lusitania. Bodies from that ship were also washed up – some distance from her sinking off Kinsale Head. Ended day with a nice meal at *An Siopa Beag & Sean Ruas* restaurant.

have the most amazing beehive cells (rather like those on the Garvellach Islands).

There is no anchorage near the Skelligs but small motorboats nudge into the small pier then lie off. We contented ourselves with a slow one hour drift past. The cells and oratory could be clearly seen from the boat.

Reluctantly we started the engine and headed for Valentia harbour. We passed close to Little Skellig which has the world's second largest gannet colony (over 20,000 pairs).

There was meant to be a new marina at Knightstown, Valentia Island but only the breakwater was in place so



'Ireland's teardrop', the Fastnet Rock seen from Clear Island. Clear Island inner harbour inset

Fascinating Island with a population of one hundred but with several holiday homes it is busy in the summer months. There are two summer schools for young Gaelic speakers.

Tuesday 14th July. We sailed at 0915 after a torrential rain shower. Any ideas of a sail around the Fastnet rock were soon forgotten as wind and sea were from the south west and ten foot swell. This was not a comfortable sail as we headed for Mizen Head (the SW corner of Ireland), We ploughed into one wave and water came down a mushroom vent which was underneath the dinghy! Visibility was poor all day and progress slow. We had our engine running on low revs to help steering.

The 10 foot swell and rough sea eased after Mizen Head. We passed through Dursey Sound and at last got out of the swell for a bit. A cable car crosses the sound and is the main link to Dursey Island. Yachts with high masts should check the height - especially when the cable car is crossing. It has the capacity for six passengers or one cow!

We arrived off Darrynane but couldn't see the entrance - which was somewhere in the many rocks where seas were breaking. We were about to give up when Margaret spotted the beacon. The entrance was narrow but opened up into a beautiful anchorage - very sheltered.

Next day was fine and sunny, but we had a head wind as we headed for Skellig Michael. The Skelligs are amazing islands lying off the Valentian coast. Greater Skellig (Michael) was occupied by monks in the 6th century and

we picked up a visitors mooring near the entrance to the harbour.

Sailed out past Valentia radio and weather station which we hear about so often on the shipping forecasts. I found the weather forecasts from the Irish Coastguards very good - and very useful this trip. Reception was excellent all around the Irish coast. It was a short sail to Dingle with very little wind. Fungi the dolphin did not make an appearance (boat trips guarantee an appearance) but we saw him on the way out chasing a tourist boat. This is a very bonnie part of Ireland.

We had a walk ashore and bought delicious fish for tea. Dingle is a fishing port. Then refuelled (54 lt - €40. Marina €18.

Little Skellig with one of its inhabitants



Next day we took a bus to Tralee to visit the museum which has a section about Tom Crean the Antarctic explorer who was with Scott on the Terra Nova expedition - he was one of the men who wasn't picked for the final journey to the Pole. He was also with Shackleton on Endurance including the trip on the *James Caird* from Elephant Island to South Georgia and the walk across South Georgia. He retired to this area after World War One.

Tom opened a pub in Annascaul where we stopped for a meal on the way back to Dingle. Called the South Pole Inn it is full of memorabilia of the Antarctic.

The museum was most interesting and had a section on William Melville from nearby Sneem. He ran away to London leaving his father's pony and trap at the station. He eventually joined the police, helped to track down Fenian bombers, was a bodyguard to Royalty and became the first head of MI6 - hence 'M' - still used for the head of that service (James Bond take note). The museum also has a very impressive medieval street.

We decided to head on to Fenit Marina before the big jump to the Aran Islands. This was not far by land but 44 miles by sea. This was not a nice sail in rough seas and head winds until the Blasket Islands. These are meant to be very beautiful to visit but with rain, wind and poor visibility at times we pressed on to Fenit. As we headed north the wind was abate the beam and sailing would have been pleasant apart from the roly sea and rain. We past Smerwick Bay where two TCC boats had spent unpleasant nights in previous years. Much calmer after passing the Maghree Islands. Arrived at Fenit at 2200 - spirits up!

Fenit is a most unusual marina. The harbour is built on to Greater Samphree Island and a new breakwater protects the marina. It is linked by a long causeway to the mainland. A popular place for tourists who walk out to the island. The causeway was lined with parked cars and many people fishing from the causeway. Cost €23 a night.

An impressive statue of St Brendan whose voyages included trips to the Orkney Islands, St Kilda, many other Scottish islands and a voyage to the Faeroe Islands. He founded many monasteries. The island of Bute is said to be named after him. Fenit is an exporting port for cranes made in Kilarney. These are exported all over the world and the 500 strong work force have full order books. One of the few Irish industries not hit by the recession.

20th July was our wedding anniversary and as we would be at sea we decided to celebrate the day before and had a most excellent meal at the West End Bar & Restaurant.

Our 58 mile sail north to the Aran Isles was still a bit lumpy. We motor sailed to Kerry Head then sailed all the way

across the Shannon estuary to Loop Head. We then dropped the main and ran on engine.

We did not see the cliffs of Morar due to poor visibility. The swell did not leave us until in between Inishmore and Inishmaan. An east to south east gale was forecast so we anchored in the SE of the bay on Inishmore for a quiet night.

Next day was a lazy day recovering from the 13 hour sail. We moved across to a mooring off Kilronan Pier in the afternoon.

Inishmore was the most touristy place we visited with a dozen minibuses and 10 pony and traps meeting the ferry. They also had hundreds of bikes for hire - only £5 and £5 deposit. We hired our bikes before the ferry unloaded its visitors.

We cycled out to Dun Aengus which is a magnificent circular ancient iron age fort reduced to a 'U' shape by cliff erosion. Dun Aengus is one of several iron age fortifications on the island. We found the round Dun Eocha, away from the tourist track, very spectacular. A great day out ending with a concert at the Arts centre and a fine steak at Joe Wyatt's Bar.

The Aran Islands, like The Birren on the mainland, are composed of limestone with very thin soils. Many impressive outcrops of limestone pavement. The thin soils are protected in small fields. Seaweed used to be mixed with the soil.

On Thursday 23rd July we set sail for Inishbofin 43 miles away. We rounded Slyne Head at 1745 and picked up a mooring in the lovely Inishbofin anchorage at 2025.

Wind rarely dropped below 30 knots - very unpleasant. Forecast next day force 7 - 9 from SW. In the evening wind dropped and backed but was gusting up to 31 knots next morning. As the wind was down by lunchtime we went across to Burtonport for fuel.

Sunday 2nd August we refueled in the morning - 65 litres - €37, then sailed at 1140. Fine sunny day with little wind as we motored north with the jib out. We anchored off Gola for a late lunch.

We arrived in Tory Island at 1715 after a short 21 mile voyage. The harbour was almost empty - maybe in was the dire forecast for the next day?

Monday 3rd August forecast had changed and no gales. We hope to go to hotel for meal and possibly shower. A double negative! No showers - all ensuite - and no meals the kitchen was closed - even guests must go to the only cafe for meals after a continental breakfast. We think there were financial problems after owner was sued when he demolished a ruined house and used area as a car park! Great walk to the cliffs at the north of island.



Dun Eocha, Inishmore

Next day no gales but forecast still not good. Walk around lighthouse and to Telegraph Hill. We had moved boat into the corner of the harbour which was more sheltered. Tory island is a 'U' shaped harbour sheltered from all directions.

We had hope to have a meal at the cafe but they wouldn't take plastic and waitress wasn't sure about cheques - we had run out of Euros! Another meal aboard. The weather turned nasty during the night with waves and spray coming over the harbour wall. This lasted all the next morning with wind gusting to 34 knots. We couldn't believe it when the ferry went out ploughing into a head sea - poor passengers. Once again we loved our visit to Tory Island and this time we met 'The King' who is elected and was a local artist.

Tuesday 6th August was still very windy in the morning but a good forecast. We sailed at 1331 for Malin Harbour arriving at 2048. Passed inside the Garven Islands and at a critical stage the echo sounder failed (found out later a loose wire). Chart plotter certainly helped here.

On the way in there seemed to be a lot of black buoys in the water and only when we got nearer we realised they were young folks swimming. Never had to navigate through a crowd of swimmers before!

Sailed next morning at 0550 as the fishing boats were leaving. There was not much wind but we had the tide with us and made a quick passage to Ballycastle arriving at 1220. Circumnavigation complete!

Inishbofin anchorage with the mountains of Connemara behind



Tory Island ferry

Roy and family came down to welcome us back - they had doubts we would complete the circuit - and we celebrated with local fish suppers. The offer of a real bed was too tempting and we abandoned ship for two nights.

Bought 26 litres of diesel next day (£22.25) then had dinner at Roy's with bottle of champagne. Deirdre sung us a special song and presented us with a congratulatory certificate. On Sunday we all went for a walk at Port Braddon and back aboard for the night. Three of the tall ships had stopped at Ballycastle on the way to Belfast and two came into the harbour. Monday 10th August we set sail with the tide for Kingscross. We had thought of going to Sanda but north winds were forecast. We anchored at 1721 and after a meal had a walk ashore. Good to be back in the Clyde. Tuesday we arrived at Troon at 1305 after nine weeks away, seven gales, bad and good weather, some wonderful places visited and many memorable moments.



Bali Voe Irish's Cruise Statistics

*Total 968.3 nautical miles
Circumnavigation Ballycastle to Ballycastle 855.3 nm.
Furthest point from Troon - Valentia Island 483 nm.
Diesel used 345 litres £250 (Cheapest Burtonport €0.43/litre, tax on diesel is different in the Republic)
Marina dues - £408 (20 nights). Cheapest Crosshaven boatyard €14, Ardglass £16. Most expensive Arklow €28 (cheaper in the harbour) and Kinsale €27.*

Tom Crean...



...and the pub named in his memory.



Margaret off the Blasket Islands



Near disaster off Islay



Andy Keating

I enjoyed a wonderful single handed summer cruise which was full of first class sailing along with a near disaster for good measure. The scenery up the West coast of Scotland is amazing and I really got to appreciate the strength of some of the tides. Using them to my advantage really helped push me along at up to 12 knots at times. Sailing alone can be quite challenging. The solitude can become wearing and a lack of companionship to share experiences, sights and thoughts with trying. An extra pair of hands is also very useful, from reefing the main sail to making a cup of tea. The tiller can often feel like wearing a ball and chain. On a positive note the desire for companionship whilst coastal cruising is easily met in ports and anchorages. Sailors are a hospitable group who are always willing to lend a hand or offer you company especially when they see your sailing alone. Being quite new to the sport single handed sailing really enabled me to face my fears and push myself a lot harder which has given me a lot more confidence. I had to learn to anticipate what could happen and plan for contingencies.

From a challenging point of view there is also something really satisfying about sitting in the cockpit after a long days sail, beer in hand, pondering over the days events in the knowledge that you did it alone. I wish I was able to dedicate more time to sailing and travel further afield. Unless I strike it lucky with the lottery however (which I don't even do), it'll need to wait until I retire. Its very difficult to say what my favourite part of the cruise was. I've decided to share a couple of things with you. My favourite sail, favourite Islands & near disaster in that order.

Favourite Sail

My number one sail was coming back from Rhum, around Ardnamurchan point to Tobermory. It was a beautiful summers day with a wind speed of 20-25 knots from the west (beam reach). The wind was consistent and dependable saving me the inconvenience of having to reef the main. As I neared the lighthouse at Ardnamurchan point the swell really picked up and I found myself surfing down large waves. I was sailing very comfortably at 6 knots making up to nearly 9 knots off the waves. Looking South West I could see Coll and Tiree in the distance. I was sorely tempted to change my plans and head for Tiree however I appreciated that the excellent visibility made them look a lot closer than they really were and therefore continued to Tobermory. As I passed Ardnamurchan point, heading east towards the Sound of Mull I goose-winged all the way to Tobermory, rarely dropping below 6 knots in good time to enjoy a few beers and some chat in the local pub.

Favourite Island

My favourite Islands without doubt were Colonsay and Oronsay. I spent the night alongside the pier at Scalasaig in front of the ferry terminal. Again I was lucky with the weather as this isn't possible in certain conditions. I spent the evening exploring Colonsay and headed to the monument at its highest point. The views were breath taking. The following day I sailed the short distance to



Top left – Eagle at anchor off Oronsay's near tropical beaches with Islay and Jura in the distance

Above – Celtic Cross at Oronsay Priory

Left – Paddy found a perfect bolt-hole



Oronsay where I anchored just off from the boathouse on the east side of the island. The beaches were almost tropical and I remember thinking that the only difference between the beaches there and the ones in the Caribbean were the countless sheep walking along the shore. I had the whole place to myself and enjoyed the morning diving off of Eagle into the sea and relaxing. I also went ashore to get a panoramic view from Oronsays highest point (Beinn Oronsay). The views from the top were amazing. There is an old priory on the island that is worth a look. It is quite a historical ruin with a lot of stone carvings. Rather than take the conventional route down Beinn Oronsay I decided to climb a steep cliff with an almost vertical drop down to the Priory. I was about half way down the cliff when I became aware of two birds flying below me. Not being a bird twitcher I thought they were crows squawking at me in quite a distressing manner. I realised that something was not quite right. At this point I could hear an angry voice from the priory shouting up at me 'Get away from there!' Oops!! I thought to myself. I climbed back up the cliff face and headed to the priory by the conventional route. On reaching the priory a man who I can only describe as looking like Grizzly Adams came to greet me. I asked him what the problem was. He gazed at me and realised straight away that I'd just stepped off of a boat and apologised for shouting up in such a manner. He thereafter began to explain that the two birds which I thought were

crows, were indeed a very rare breeding pair of *Red Billed Choughs* who's eggs were in the process of hatching. He was from the RSPB and was worried that I was there to steal their eggs. We had a good laugh about it and he went on to tell me about some of the other rare birds on the islands. I could have easily spent the whole day/night anchored off Oronsay however left mid afternoon bound for an anchorage on Loch Tarbert, Isle of Jura.

Near Disaster

I planned to head back around the Mull of Kintyre from Port Ellen, Islay on the 16th. Up until this point the trip had been first class without any hitches or adrenalin fuelled moments, well nothing serious anyway. This however was all about to change. The weather forecast for my return passage was force 3 variable becoming S-SE 4-5 later. The following 24hrs was 5-6 S-SE occasionally 7. I decided that I had 24 hrs to make it safely around the Mull before the weather changed for the worse and headed off at 0930 to catch the tide. All went well to start with. Visibility was very poor due to thick fog but apart from that Eagle was sailing well. About 6 miles offshore the wind picked up to a force 6/7 occasionally 8 and the seas became increasing rough. I double reefed the main and had half my jib out. My gut feeling was the forecast had been 24 hours out however rightly or wrongly I continued on towards the Mull. In hindsight I should have listened

to my gut feeling and turned back. The seas state became very rough and the wind continued to increase. The wind direction was SE, right on the nose therefore I was beating as far up wind as I could. Eagle was getting bashed about all over the place and I began to feel really uneasy. I thought about turning back however my stubborn eagerness to succeed took over all sense of reason and accountability. I carried on regardless of the conditions. The visibility was still extremely poor and the wind/ waves continued with great force, thrashing me about. Shortly thereafter Eagle came crashing off a huge wave. I heard an almighty bang. I thought for a brief moment 'Hang on, I'm not flying a spinnaker'. I soon realised that the forestay bolt attached to the deck had snapped and the roller reefing/jib was blowing about in the wind like a huge bedraggled kite. I quickly snapped my harness to the Jack stay and headed up the port side of the deck in order to drop the jib. As I did so the boat continued rolling about in the waves and I struggled to hold on being literally thrown about all over the place. Thankfully I always keep my Swiss Army knife in my pocket which enabled me to quickly loosen the shackle and quickly dropped the jib which caused it to drop into the water. It was subsequently dragged underneath the boat and it took all my might to haul it back on board whilst the boat was still sailing forward. The jib was covered in antifouling from the hull and obviously soaking wet. I threw it into the cockpit and secured the forestay as best as I could using a spare line of rope I keep handy in the cockpit. I immediately turned the boat around and headed back to Port Ellen leaving the main sail up. I didn't realise at this point how lucky I had been not to lose the mast. Keeping the main sail up on route back to Port Ellen may have been a crucial factor. The wind at this point coming from behind me probably helped to keep the mast upright. It was only when I was tied safely alongside that the events of the last couple of hours began to sink in. I had been very lucky. Within an hour of arriving back I heard a mayday call on the radio. A yacht had got into serious difficulty with persons overboard in the water. I also saw

Eagle's Summer Cruise 2009		
5 June	Troon to Lamlash	16.1 miles
6 June	Lamlash to Cambeltown	27.2 miles
7 June	Cambeltown to Gigha	52.0 miles
8 June	Gigha Bay to Craobh	42.1 miles
9 June	Craobh to Loch Aline	44.7 miles
10 June	Loch Aline to Rhum	46.9 miles
11 June	Rhum to Tobermory	28.8 miles
12 June	Tobermory to Oban	29.2 miles
13 June	Oban to Colonsay	33.0 miles
14 June	Colonsay to Loch Tarbert (Jura)	16.6 miles
15 June	Loch Tarbert to Port Ellen	32.5 miles
16 June	Port Ellen to Campbeltown	11.9 miles
	(returned to Port Ellen)	
22 June	Port Ellen to Troon	71.3 miles
	Total	428.9 miles

three very large (40ft+)yachts coming into Port Ellen for shelter with dishevelled crews elated to be back on dry land. I concluded that my technical problem had probably been a blessing in disguise as it forced me to do what I should have done anyway and that was run for cover. Unable to buy the bolt on Islay I caught the ferry back to the main land and buses back to Troon. The replacement bolt cost me £15. Such an insignificant thing the demise of which had potentially unthinkable consequences. A couple of days later (after taking ownership of my 7 week old Springer Spaniel "Paddy") Paddy and I headed back to Islay where I sailed Eagle straight back to Troon. Eagle is coming out of the water this year. My number one priority is to change all fixtures and fittings relative to the security of the mast.

Last word, for those looking to loose weight I can recommend single handed sailing. I lost over a stone in weight in under 2 weeks!



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John Bowman

Spirit of the Wind

1944 – 2009

John was born in Irvine on 23 September 1944 and as a young lad took an interest in Irvine harbour which led to him becoming a Sea Scout under the leadership of Reg Simms.

'To get from the north end of Irvine to the harbour was quite a walk, so a bike was required and it was the harbour connection which helped out, as John started as a message boy with Hannah's General Store at Irvine harbour. This period established John's love of boats and vehicular motion.

He served his time as a joiner with Bone and Shields, High Street, Irvine, becoming a fully qualified tradesman in 1966. John's love of cars was to the fore during his apprenticeship and early tradesman years as he owned a triumph TR4, in which he once gave me a lift... I was never to ask again!

He left Bone and Shields in 1970, went to Clydeside for big-boat building but developed itchy feet after being on the QE2 on which he sailed on its maiden voyage as it was still being fitted out.

This led him to South Africa and finally to Australia. For the next five years John travelled the east coast building houses and also working in a boat building yard fitting out luxury motor cruisers from 35-55 feet. It was while doing this that he became involved in the aftermath of the tragic Sydney to Hobart race. John was part of the crew which recovered the yachts abandoned or damaged during the storm.

He returned home in 1979 due to his father's illness and worked at his trade. It was at this time his interest in cars brought him into contact with Scott's garage in Kilmarnock where, having bought his first boat (Offcut) as a hull and deck, he fitted it out, finally launching it in 1983 and joining Troon Cruising Club in the same year.

It was in 1991 that John finally gave up the trade and started on the North Sea rigs as a storeman.

Over the next 15 years John gained further promotions becoming responsible for all spares and equipment that was required on a rig. Offcut's cruises extended around the Clyde and up the West coast with many friends crewing and enjoying his company. John also crewed for David Croft-Smith when he helped deliver David's boat to the Mediterranean. One of his many friends was Sheena McGill who John married in 1999. This was the year after Offcut was sold and John was now the proud owner of Spirit of the Wind, a Tradewind 35.

John and Sheena both had a love of the west coast, tending to shun marinas, preferring remote, sheltered anchorages where the beauty, peace and quiet gave John a chance to relax,

John's career as service supervisor came to a sudden halt in July 2006 when he had a heart attack aboard a rig. Although he was flown to Norway and was in hospital within four hours John never fully recovered and unfortunately had further medical complications requiring further, more frequent spells in hospital over his remaining years.

John was always willing to help the club and its members in any way he could and Spirit was always the first boat volunteered to lift masts whether John was there or offshore.

John passed away on 15 March 2009 and he is missed as a club member and friend. Our heartfelt condolences and sympathy are extended to his wife Sheena.

George Hunter



PIPING ON BOARD

Make your own piping and give your deckhead lining a professional finish

Over the years the addition of new deck fittings with their associated backing blocks has meant that the pvc covered ply deckhead panels in the forecabin of my Griffon were a poor fit to the coachroof. (Fig 1). I could get rid of the resulting unsightly 4mm gap by either reducing the thickness (and strength) of the backing blocks or by filling it with matching material. As a 'drooping' Westerly owner and one who refuses to discard anything that may possibly have a future use, I decided to use leftover pvc headlining to make my own piping.

1. Remove the deckhead panel to be 'piped' and measure the length of piping required and add 10 cm or so at each end. Lightly stretch a matching length of firm cord along a piece of unused skirting board or similar. Cut a length of pvc lining material to size width ratio to the cord of approximate 1:10 (if using 6mm cord the pvc should be 60mm wide) Remove the foam backing from the pvc and lay it centred, finished side down underneath the stretched cord (Fig 2). Having regard to the safety instructions apply by brush a contact adhesive to both the pvc and the cord (I used Evostick TimeBond).

2. When dry, pinch the pvc up and around the cord ensuring that the cord does not lift away from the board in the process (Fig 3)

3. Remove the newly created piping from the wood board and nip the entire length with a pair of pliers (Fig 4) to make sure that there is no air pocket behind the cord. Allow 24 hours for the glue to achieve its maximum strength.

4. The piping can now be 'cut an danted' to accommodate curves in the shape of the ply panel (Fig 5). Allow 10 cm for a return at the starting end and use 6mm stainless staples to fix the piping along the edge of the panel to be trimmed. Where shaped to the ply the tails of the 'cuts and darts' should be stapled as well. If your ply panels are 4mm rather than 6mm then you will need to glue the piping into position. At each end make the returns at 90° and staple the ends of the piping 30mm in from the edge of the ply to 'bury' them above the reinstated panel.

5. The finished piped paneling is clean, tidy and professional looking (Fig 6). Additionally it is very satisfying in the knowledge that some of your clutter has finally been put to good use which, with luck, will also reinstate your credibility with the first mate!

Doug Lamont

Figure 1



Figure 2



Figure 3



Figure 4



Figure 5



Figure 6



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Best wishes to Troon Cruising Club

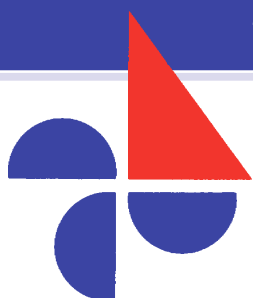


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