

# *Puffin & Blowin'*



## *Ariadne in Scotland, 2005*



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## **The 2005 cruise of the yacht *Ariadne*, a Rustler 36 crewed by Graham & Dairne Rabbitts**

We left in early May, and returned in mid September having covered 2165 miles. This year, we in addition to help and encouragement from many friends, we received specific support from C-Map UK, who provided us with NT+ chart cartridges to circumnavigate the UK. In return, we agreed to record actual tracks into interesting harbours using a small plotter that C-Map provided (in addition to our main navigation plotter).

We failed to get to St Kilda, but we did make it to the Shiant Islands and Orkney. An unplanned trip through the Caledonian canal proved to be one of the highlights. We even had to be rescued by the RNLI.

So far as the general conditions and weather are concerned, I can do no better than quote Frank Cowper from his book 'Sailing Tours Vol 5', published in 1895.....



## Overture

In 1895 William Cowper, who cruised Scotland in a 50ft gaff ketch with no engine, wrote.....

"After a day of reeking wet, when all sea and land are blotted out in one grey pall of rain, while the fierce wind sweeps chill and biting out of the murky west it may chance that at eventide there comes a break. A pallor steals across the gloom, a primrose gleam of coming light, a rosy flush mayhap spread across the throbbing waves. The mists curl up like smoke, the veil is drawn away, and there before the weary rover of the sea, sodden and listless with long hours of drenching rain, rises a fairy picture .A scene of loveliness unveiled, so dainty, so perfect in shape, and colour, and tone, that all the soaking past is as a dream, and one blesses heaven for granting such sights to the weary sons of men. [But] for cruising such as I intended ..... Scotch weather is most trying

Such are the sights of the Highlands; but to enjoy them something must be suffered. Beauty like this is rarely shown except to those who are ready to dare much and endure more"

Sailing Tours Vol V, 1895

I couldn't possibly put it better! He did not have any of the advantages we had. To help us we used

- Imray Pilot books by Martin Lawrence
- Clyde Cruising Club pilots
- 'Scottish Islands' by Hamish Haswell Smith
- 'Isles of the West' and 'Isles of the North' by Iain Mitchell
  
- Imray charts
- Numerous old Admiralty charts donated by David and Mary Bailey, and loaned by David Colquhoun
- C-Map NT+ cartridges used 'live' in the on-board plotter and on the PC  
using C-Map PC Planner NT+ software for passage planning and preparing charts for this Log
- Icom Weatherfax displayed on the PC to produce 120 hour ahead forecasts
- Raychart software to display Raymarine grib weathermaps for 3 days ahead
- GSM mobile phone for text messaging and occasionally getting ECMWF Internet weather.
  
- Monitor windvane
- ST4000T tiller pilot

And much more. One can only admire what Frank Cowper achieved.

## Getting Away: 7th May

Our departure had been delayed by two weeks by a long list of frustrating and trivial delays, many of which were my own fault. They included a long delay in getting the new weatherfax to work properly, a failure of the gas kicker that had to be repaired, rebuilding my old laptop operating system and fitting the additional plotter to enable me to record tracks for C-Map,

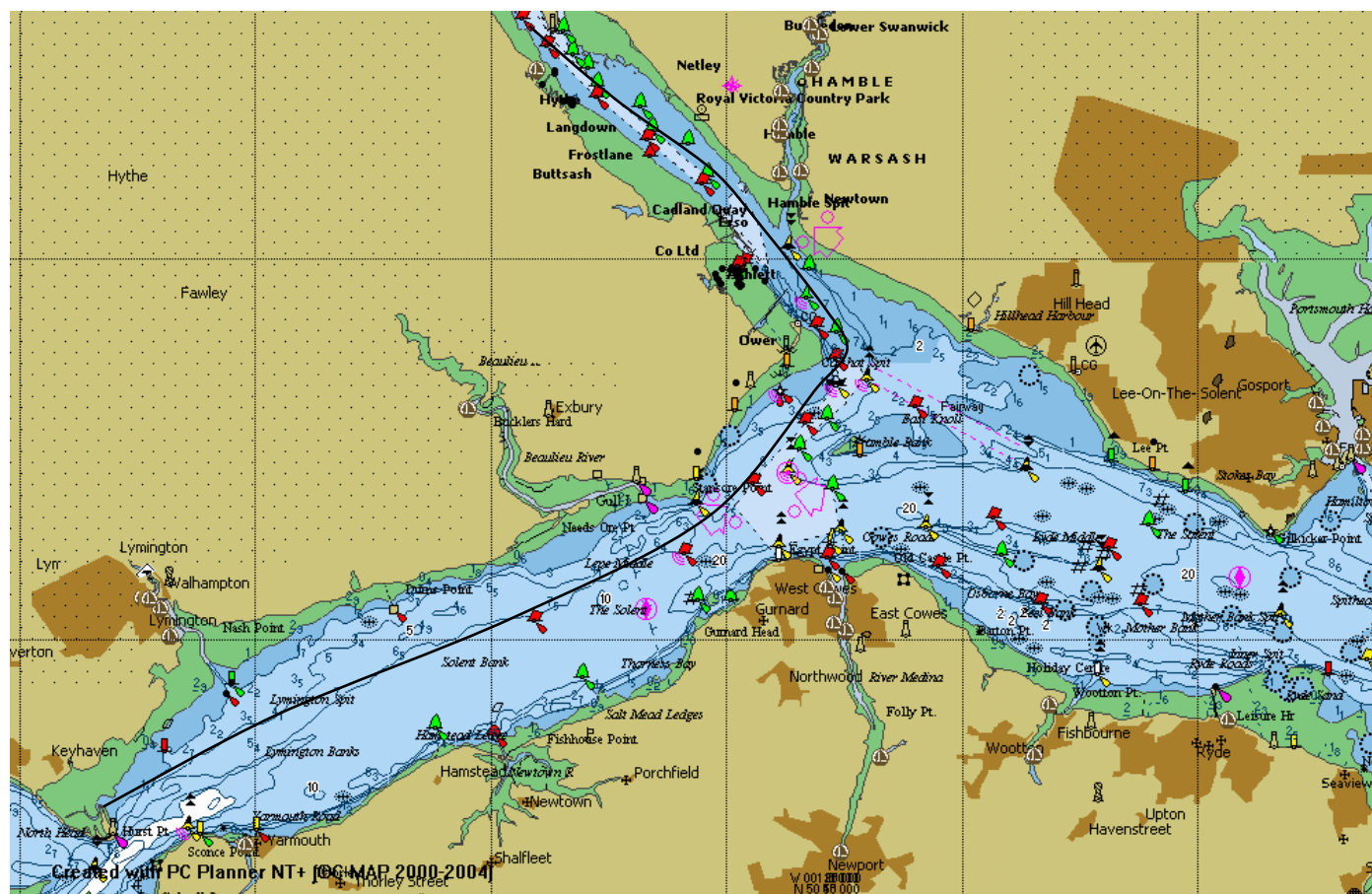
The winter programme had been ambitious, with the fitting of a new fridge unit being the biggest task. I had also decided to fit weatherfax so that we could get weather maps when neither mobile phone nor Internet cafes were available.

Our original plan had been for me to depart early (mid April) with Dairne joining after she had dealt with all our tax forms and seen her cousin Tony and his wife Chree when they arrived from New Zealand. In the event we left the day after they had visited.



Ariadne and Santana launching

Despite the delay, I felt quite content with the fit. The fridge seemed to be working well and using a lot less power; the weatherfax was functioning - I just had to learn how to use it! The old computer was set up to drive the weatherfax, and as it has a better soundcard than the new computer, the result is excellent. Moreover, a visit to Carphone Warehouse established the new computer with a gprs connection which, coupled with OnSpeed data compression is giving a fast Internet connection (well relatively!). A brief shakedown cruise to Chichester had satisfied us that other gear was functioning properly. A particular delight was that re-pitching the propeller (from 12.5 inches to 13.6 inches) had given us another half knot in almost all conditions. We are also experimenting





with using Henleys Propeller grease instead of antifouling to keep the propeller clean. This is a New Zealand product which they swear by.

Having loaded most stores the previous weekend, we had only to put on the final clothes and perishables before we were ready. But shutting up the house for several months is a slow task, and it was not until mid evening on the 6th that we were finally on board with everything stowed - absolutely exhausted. Even then we discovered a few things left behind, and David Colqhoun took me home and back via Shamrock Quay to replace a new lifebuoy light that was not working.

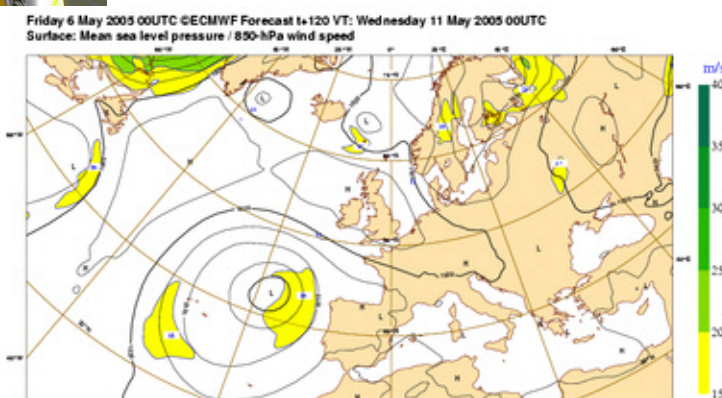
By 1100 on the 7th, we were away, running down Southampton Water under reefed main, and fetching down the West Solent. It was quite breezy, gusting to 27kts apparent, so we opted to go into Keyhaven for the rest of the day. It was clear that the channel into Keyhaven had changed over the winter - we later learned they had cut the spit back several metres, and placed buoys to guard the shallows off the end.



Keyhaven at low tide - close to the birds!

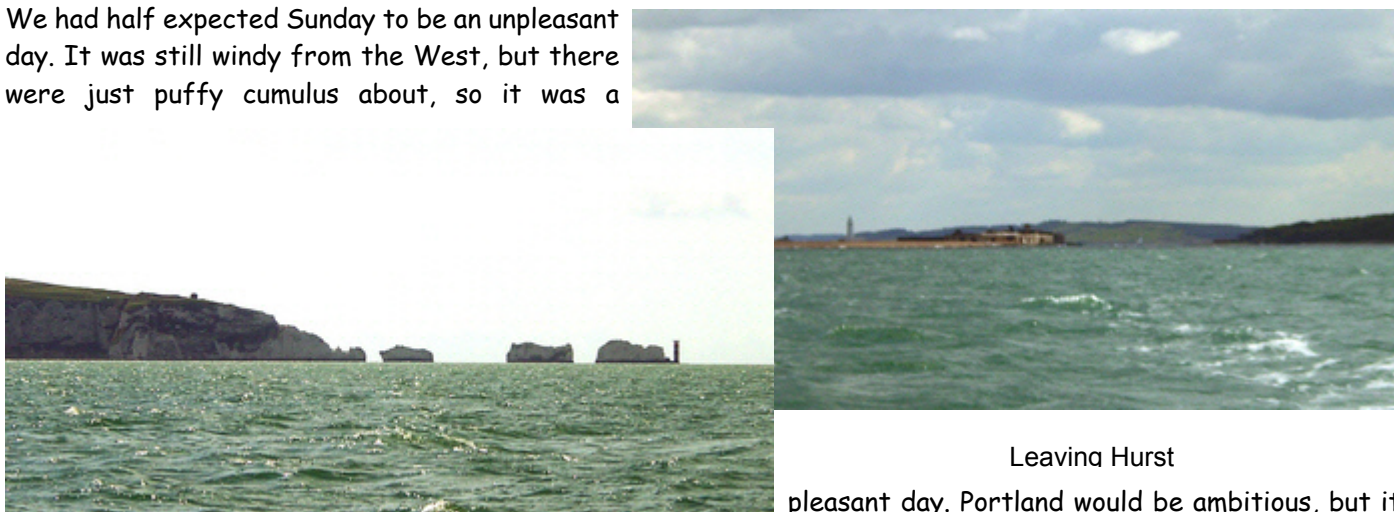
We slept all afternoon, and dined on Dairne's pre-prepared lasagne. It was a real pleasure to have ice in our gin!

The weather prospects were good, though we were expecting one more day of blowy weather before the wind moderated and shifted into the east via north. The picture below shows that, although we were experiencing brisk W winds, we could expect the wind to go round into an easterly sector by Tuesday.



### **Keyhaven to Poole: 8th May**

We had half expected Sunday to be an unpleasant day. It was still windy from the West, but there were just puffy cumulus about, so it was a



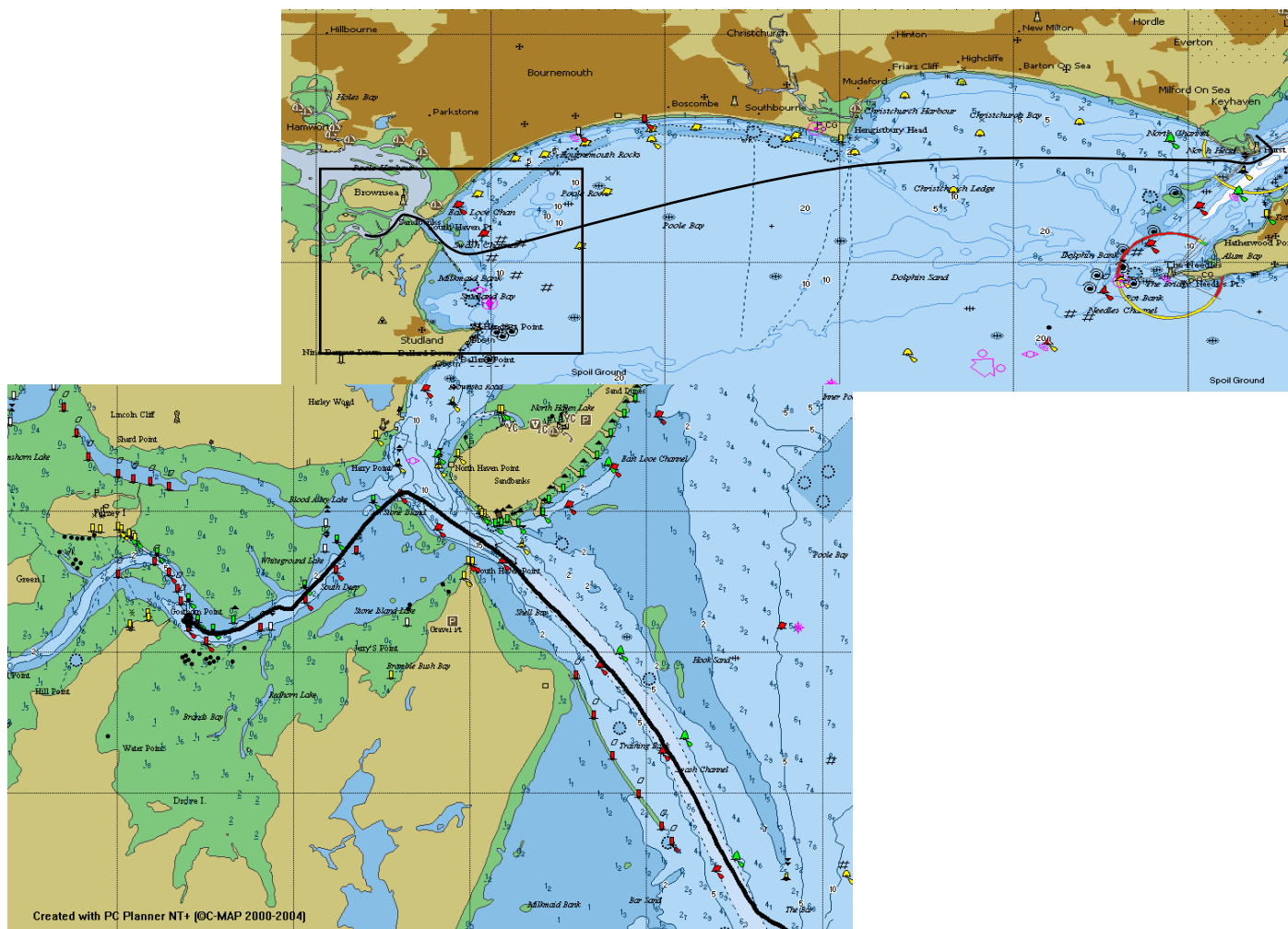
Passing the Needles

Leaving Hurst

pleasant day. Portland would be ambitious, but it would help to get a bit further on. We just motor-



sailed under double reefed main to South Deep in Poole. I also successfully recorded the track in using the special C-Map plotter.

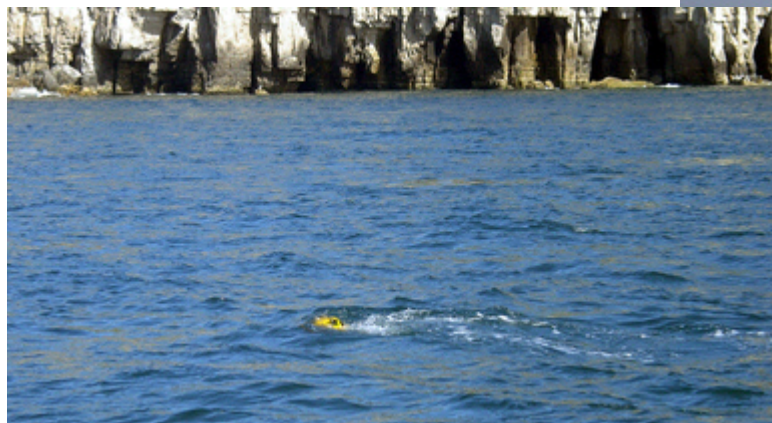


### Poole to Farnmouth: 9th May (133.7M)

A promising forecast of N to NE moderate winds tempted us to set off at 0745, motoring clear of the harbour before raising the main off Studland. Although there was a moderate breeze we knew we had to keep motoring to counter the foul tide, the aim being to catch the inshore eddy in Weymouth Bay to arrive at Portland as the tide started to set to the West. It was a pleasant morning, and we made good progress, except for a short period off Anvil Point where the foul tide reached 3kts for half an hour.



Poole from South Deep - Brownsea I on left



Looking back from Swanage toward Old Harry

Strong tides passing Anvil Point

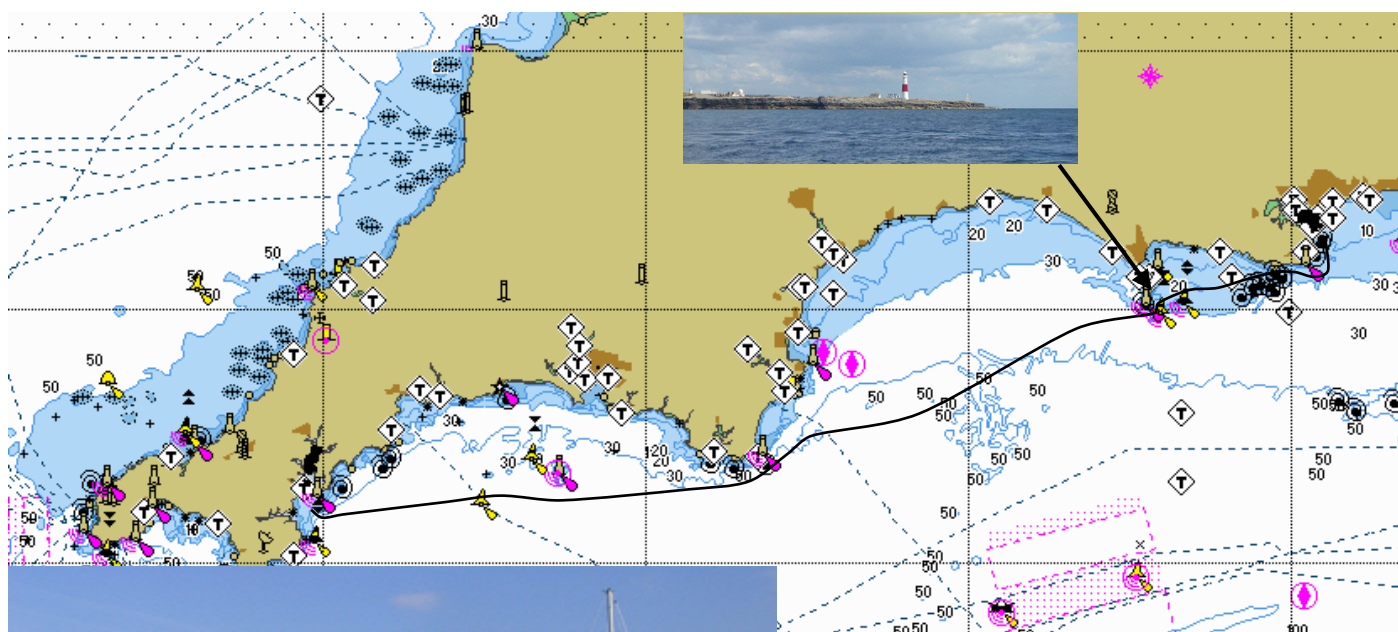


We kept close inshore, and did find the eddy about half way to St Albans Head. This was looking good!

As we approached St Albans, a range safety boat came alongside and advised us that Lulworth range was active, so we would have to head seaward into the foul tide. It probably cost us half an hour. We slipped inside the Shambles Bank and were swept toward the tip of Portland, confidently expecting that we would be able to stop the engine and sail in a comfortably veering Northerly wind. But as we approached the Bill, the sea breeze filled in, not from its normal Southerly direction, but from the Southwest - dead on the nose! We decided to keep motoring. This patch of good weather was not expected to last long and we decided it was important to get as far west as possible. The sea was docile, and by setting off first one way, then the other we were able to get a little help from the mainsail.



Passing close to St Albans



St Mawes

By 2100, we were 3 miles West of Start Point when a gentle northerly breeze replaced the sea-breeze. At last! The engine could be stopped. Gradually after a few fickle moments off Salcombe, the breeze filled in till we were obliged to reef main and genoa, This land breeze lasted till 2330 when full sail was restored.

Gradually the normal gradient wind restored itself from slightly east

of North. There followed a storming beam reach where the speed rarely dropped below 6.8kts. We passed 3 miles South of the Eddystone, and stormed across Plymouth Bay passing several miles South of the Dodman to arrive at St Anthony's light at the entrance to Falmouth just as the sun rose again. By 0615 we were secure on a visitors buoy in a very peaceful St Mawes, beautifully protected from the freshening Easterly wind. Then we slept.



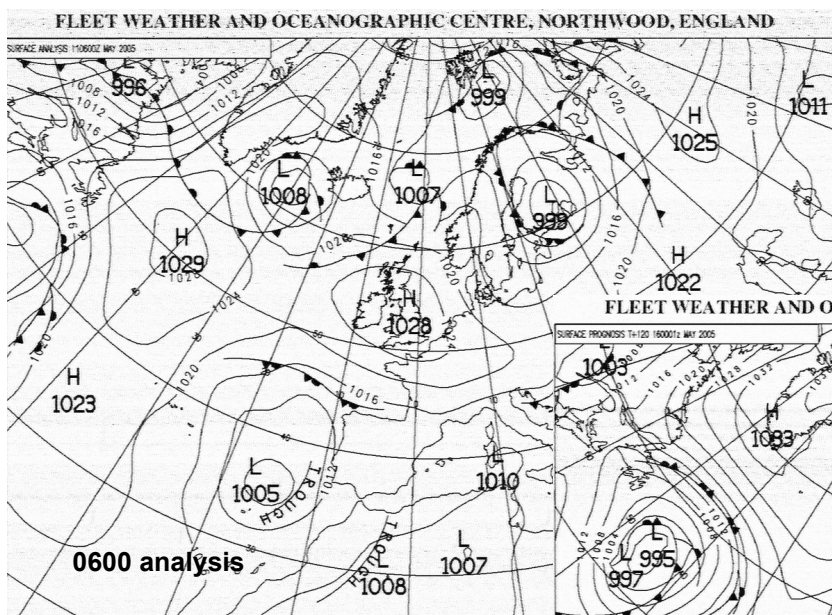


### ***Hiding in the Fal: 11th-15th May***

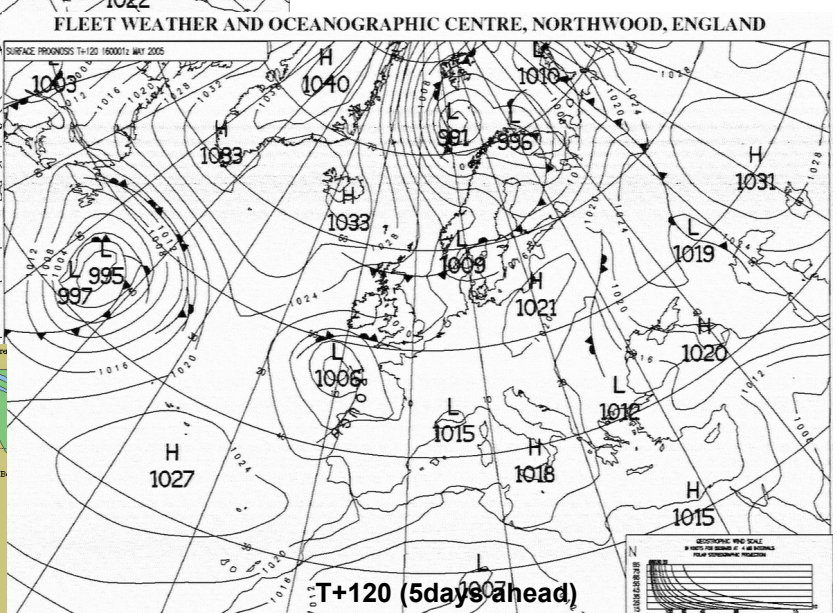
A leisurely start meant we were trickling over to Falmouth under genoa by 1000. Although the wind was due East, there was quite a popple on the water near the town marina, so we moored on the end where there was a bit of shelter. With the weather set to deteriorate, we reckoned we could stay one night, but would want to go to a more sheltered spot for the real blow the next day. We had a bit of shopping to do, but failed to replace our portable radio, there being no suitable shop left in Falmouth! The routine shopping went well, though, and I managed to get some engine oil at Trago Mills - a source that would never have occurred to me had it not been suggested by the marina staff.

It was obvious that we had caught up with the CA rally fleet - we were later to see *Blue Matisse*, an MYC boat on the rally anchored up the Fal.


By now I was getting really good weather maps from Northwood (RN HQ) over the weatherfax. They cover a huge range of types, some of which are all Greek to me, but the basic surface prognosis goes out to 120 hours ahead, so one can get a good forward view.



Overnight the wind freshened, making the boat jump about a bit, but at least we were not being pressed onto the pontoon. Nevertheless, with the weather set to worsen further, it was time to go. We motored up the Fal recording a C-Map track as we went.



Once past Turnaware point there was a lot of shelter. We explored right up to Malpas, but considered the best shelter was on the new visitors pontoon just above Tolverne. Indeed it was so sheltered that the wind generator did not work and we would need to run the engine to top the batteries after a day or two.



MAP 2000-2004

To our delight, two boats joined us, one of which was *Midday Sun*. We first came across *Midday Sun* at Lawrence Cove in Bantry Bay, some 2 years ago. Anne and Marc are true live-aboards, working in the winter, and sailing all summer in their Tradewinds 35. But it is only when you get to know them better, that they begin to impress - there is nothing showy about the way they live.

Marc is an experienced shipwright, who also holds masters tickets (which did still not exempt him from the RYA\ICC exam!). His boat is right in every department, and it is clear as you talk to him that even in an area



strange to him, such as the Fal, that he has talked to the locals, and worked out all the pilotage details for himself. He gave us transits to find the best anchoring location off Ruan creek; and had observed ospreys and peregrine falcons over the nearby woods.



Little details on the boat show the thought that continuously goes on - such as the Perspex overlays on the skylights to effectively give double glazing for the winter months! Each also had an acrylic picture that Marc had done, looking like stained glass.

Anne is a delight. She had to be persuaded to bring out her portfolio of paintings, which were all impressive.



Midday Sun, Marc and Anne



They had wintered in Falmouth, and were preparing to go to Spain in company with David and Sarah (whose boat *Natian* is a venerable Nic 35 in up-together condition). They had met a yottie who has bought a house in Spain, and has said to Marc that if he can get there, then there will be work - an offer Marc cannot refuse.

It is the calm, unpretentious competence that impresses. What a delight it was to meet these two again! Maybe they will go on to cruise the Atlantic. Maybe we shall not meet up with them again. We can only hope that they have blue skies and calm seas. They deserve them.

Marc is superstitious, and was very keen to shed a rabbit that had been given to Anne some time before. As we had forgotten to bring Monkey with us on this trip, we happily accepted rabbit as a member of our crew, and as a valued memento of meeting up once again with two of the nicest people in the sailing world.





The social round started with tea on *Natian*, followed by after supper drinks on *Ariadne*. The next day we all repaired on board *Midday Sun*. The clouds were scudding over the treetops, but it was nearly still down at river level. This was a comfortable place so we just stayed and sat out the weather. I took the opportunity to check the oil level in the engine, but it was OK. We started having problems with the cabin heater, and at one point the main fuse was renewed. It seemed OK after that

The weather patterns were confusing. At first it seemed we would get a settled spell midweek, then it appeared that a series of depressions would arrive and spoil that idea. In the end, we reckoned we could get moving on the 16th, and perhaps get to the Scillies before the bad weather set in, and wait there for the wind to swing from a northerly slant to a more useful south westerly. *Midday Sun* and *Natian* moved down river to the Percuil River on the 14th. Their plan was to store on the next day for their trip across Biscay. We stayed on another night.



Dairne and Rabbit

On the 15th, we left the pontoon at 0930, and motored gently down to Falmouth. The town marina still looked uncomfortable, and as all we needed were supermarket items (especially a corkscrew, our Screwpull having fallen to bits) and fuel, we opted to go up river to the Falmouth marina at Penryn. There we fuelled up before settling into a comfortable berth for the night, and from which we were able to do a bit of shopping and washing.

Over lunch in the marina restaurant, we met up with David Sadler (who has another Rustler 36, *Spirit of Rosinis*) and his son Jon, who was working as a waiter in the restaurant.

### ***Falmouth to Newlyn: 16th May [39.2M]***

It was quite still as we pulled away from the marina at 0815. We knew we would be early on the tide at the Lizard, but the tides were very neap, and this would give us the option to go direct to the Scillies if things went well. By

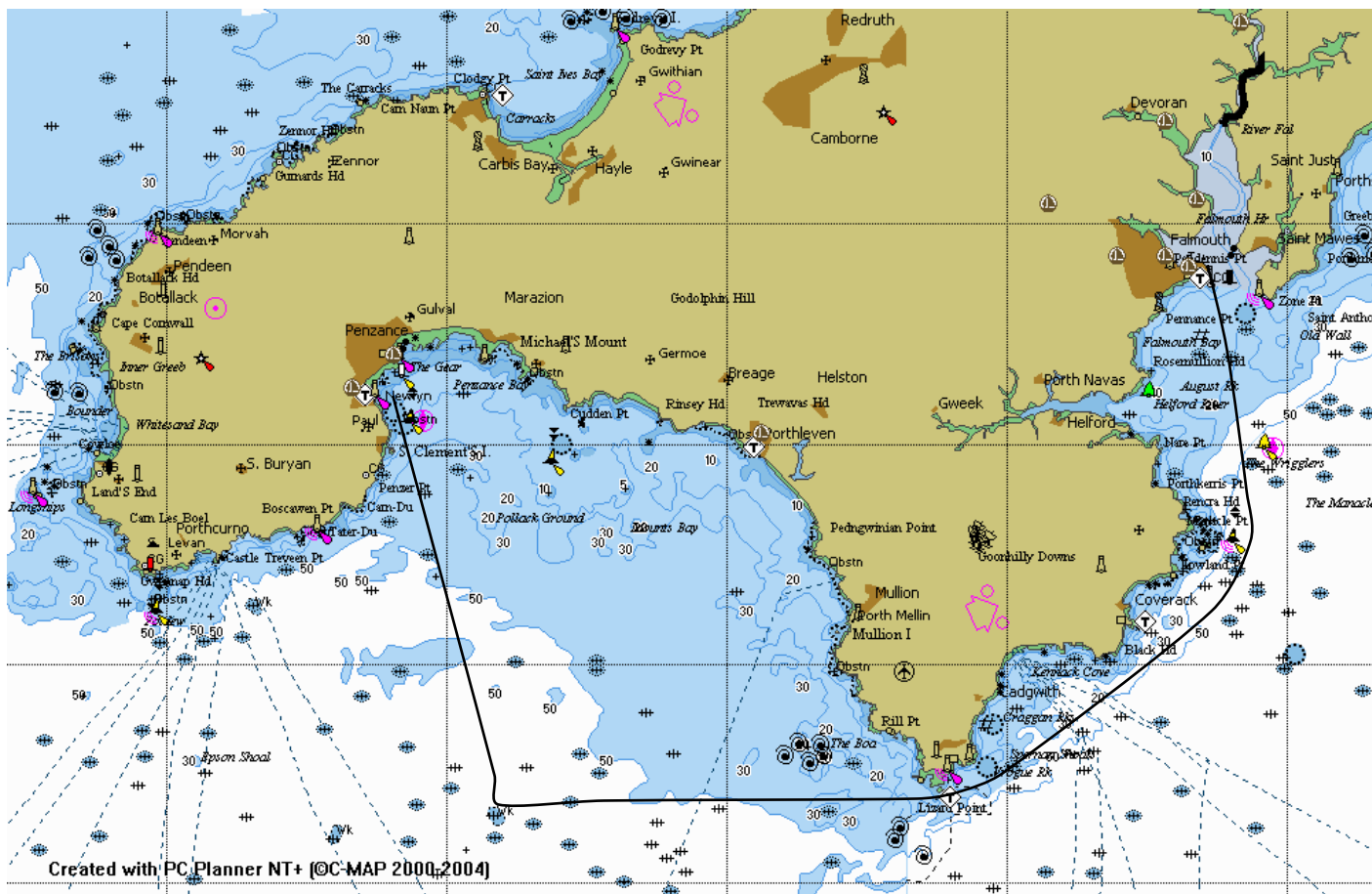


Approaching the Lizard in benign conditions

0930 the engine was off and we were running gently past the Manacles towards the Lizard. This only lasted till 1030, when the engine went on again, and we motored for several hours round the Lizard, which we passed at 1 mile distant at 1200 (an unusually small distance off, but possible in the quiet conditions). By 1230, a new breeze filled in from the NW, so we could sail, just about laying the Scillies.

It did not last, however, by 1400 the wind had faded, the engine went on, and we headed toward





Newlyn, where we arrived at 1615. It amazes me that with the collapse of fishing they have so far made no effort to accommodate leisure craft. We made fast outside a catamaran outside two fishing boats at the bottom of a



Above: St Michaels Mount  
Left top: Approaching Newlyn  
Left Bottom: the long trot at Newlyn



difficult ladder. Shortly afterwards, two boats on the CA rally moored outside us. We had been moored next to *Safran* in Falmouth and they told us that they had had a very uncomfortable two days in Falmouth Town Marina. We were glad we had gone up river!

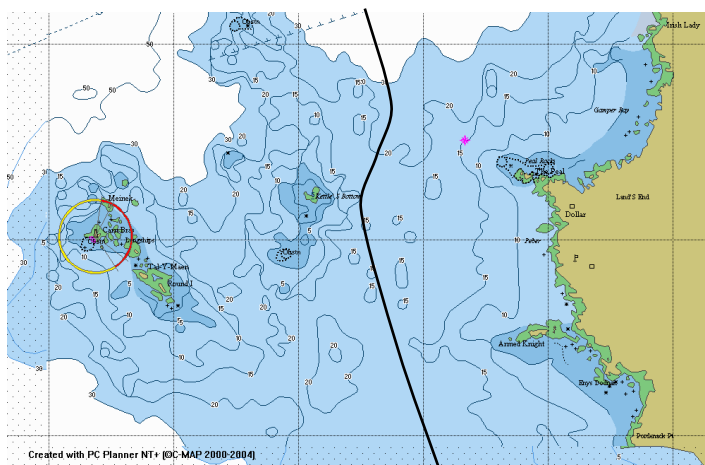
Our thinking was that we would go out to the Scillies the next day unless conditions appeared favourable for a bid to get to Milford Haven. In the event, it seemed better to go direct to Milford Haven.



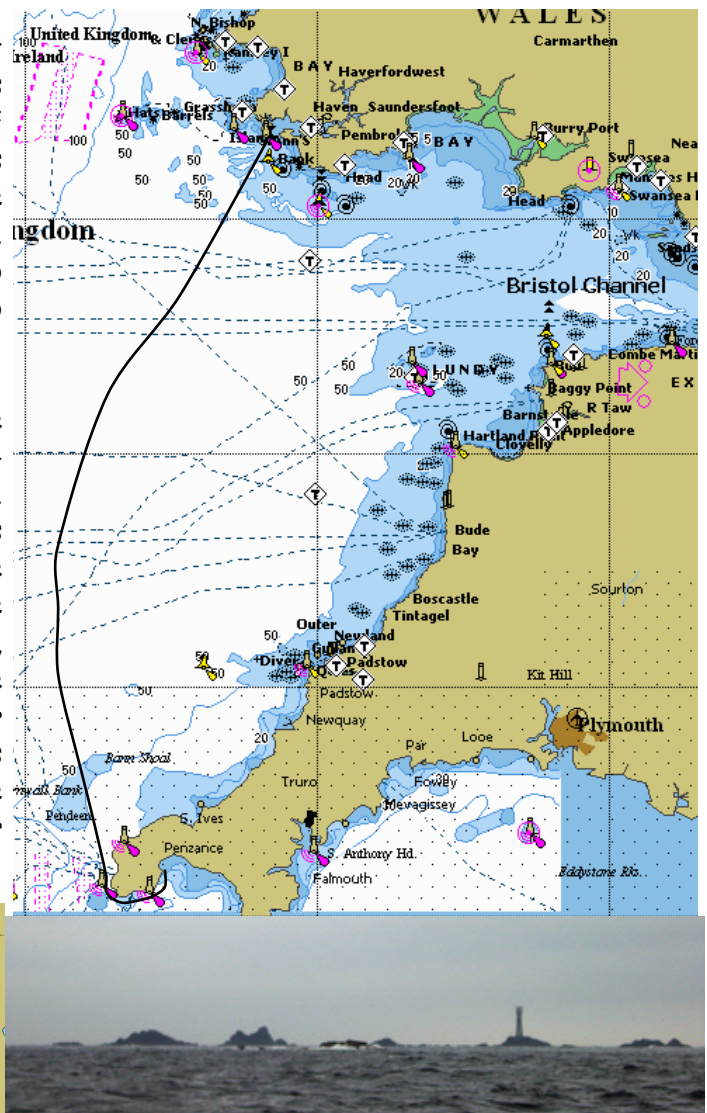
## Newlyn to Milford Haven :17/18th May [116M]

The CA boats and ourselves departed at first light at 0510. This would guarantee a favourable tide to Lands End. Outside it was grey, with a brisk N/NE wind of about F4. It was nearly a run for the first couple of miles before we could gybe safely and head up towards the Runnel Stone buoy, which we reached at about 0630. Thereafter we were close hauled, having opted to attempt the passage inside the Longships and then on to Milford Haven.

All went well until the Longships were abeam, but for the next hour the sea was very lumpy with occasional overfalls and it was necessary to roll the genoa and motorsail. We kept this up for over an hour until Cape Cornwall was well abeam. We then found that it was more comfortable to sail with 2 reefs in the main and several rolls in the jib. Milford was still 93 miles away at a course of 019°M, whereas we could only lay about 355°M. However, the forecast was for the wind to veer from NE to SW or even S and moderate, so we decided to keep going. It was certainly sparkling sailing, even if a bit rougher and more lively than we had expected. Dairne had to lay down for a couple of hours to stave off seasickness.



The passage inside Longships



Passing inside the Longships

By mid morning the wind had started to veer and moderate, and we were up to full sail, bashing along at a good speed. Indeed our average for the whole trip would be 5.3kts, which was surprisingly good considering the slow progress we had made in the rough seas round Cape Cornwall.

By 1300, the wind was really starting to fade, and it headed as well, so at 1330 we gave up sailing and started motor sailing. Gradually the wind faded and the seas subsided so that by 1800, it was almost glassy calm. No sign of the promised S-SW.

At 2000 we were joined by the Bristol Channel dolphin pod - probably the same one we had seen when southbound a couple of years previously. It was now just a matter of plodding along under engine. At about 2200, Dairne saw some strange lights. As our radar heading was out by about 30° it could not be relied on. All it showed was an image that, by making an approximate correction we could







identify as one of the CA boats about 3 miles to the East. Otherwise, there were no targets within 6 miles. But these lights were very bright for several seconds, then would disappear altogether for a minute or so. We never did work out what they were.

In the course of this passage, both Dairne and I were slightly concerned at the rumble coming from the propeller, probably the rope cutter.

At midnight we encountered another smaller pod of dolphins, and there was some phosphorescence to illuminate their trails. Shortly after that we picked up the Skokholm light, and eventually St Annes Head and the massive leading lights for

Milford. We piloted up the harbour, turning into Dale where we anchored at 0245. The chain had tumbled in the chain locker and this took some time to sort out. During this time the engine was ticking over. When I went astern to pull the anchor in, there were clouds of steam. I had been concerned that the engine was 'roaring' a bit as if it did not have enough cooling water. This looked serious, but a solution would have to wait till we had had some sleep.

The CA boat, *Safran*, anchored about 100 metres away.

### **Milford Haven: 18th May - 6th June**

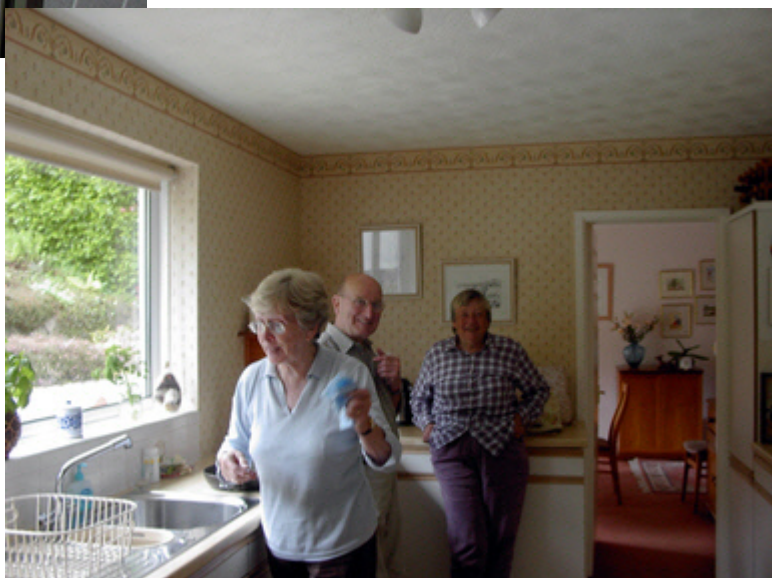


By morning the wind had already reached F6 SW, but the Dale anchorage was very comfortable. At 1215 we weighed anchor and reached under a genoa with a couple of rolls in along Milford Haven toward the town marina. At times we were doing 7kts in the brisk wind. We had to stooge around a while before following two trawlers through the lock on free flow, to be directed to a good berth tucked under the harbour wall.

I was still concerned about the flow of water to the engine. The water pump was dismantled, and found to be in good order, the impeller was

changed 'just in case'. Flow was checked right through to the injection point. I spoke to Peter at Marine Power, and he advised what to do. There was just a possibility of an obstruction in the heat exchanger. I arranged for an engineer to visit on the Friday - we were going to be stuck here by the weather which was getting steadily worse, with gales forecast for Lundy and Irish Sea at various times.

Our good friends Bill and Nan live at Neyland, a couple of miles away. They collected us from the boat, and we spent a pleasant evening with them







Bill's back garden from the kitchen

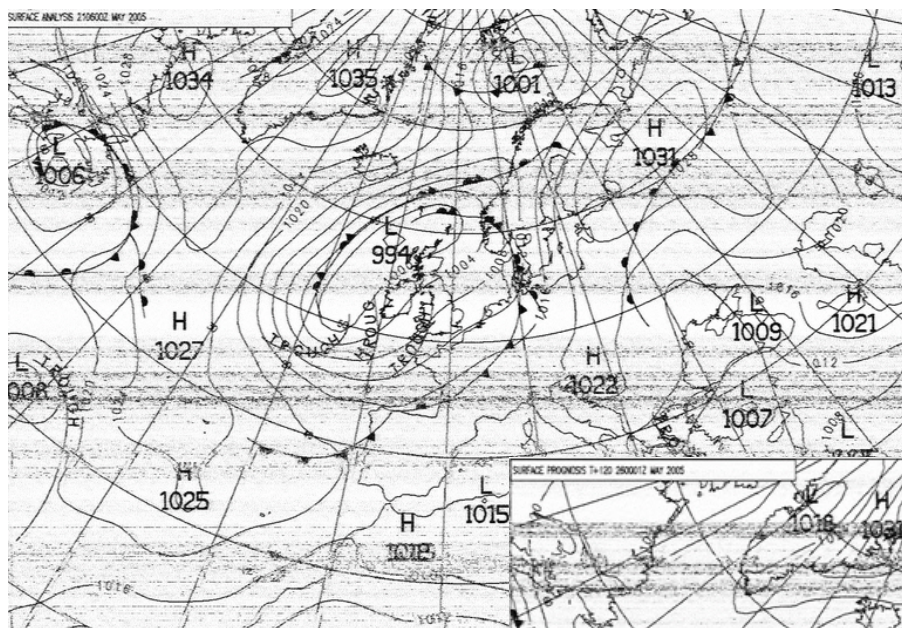
that included hot baths. They have a lovely house and made us very welcome.

We returned to the boat on Thursday evening, after taking Nan and Bill out for an excellent meal at the Charthouse restaurant on the quayside. During the evening on board the Eberspacher cabin heater cut out. Next morning, it cut out again, this time terminally. After several phone calls I established that the nearest agent was in Swansea. This was serious. Indeed, I was so depressed we quite seriously discussed abandoning the cruise and going back to the Solent.

The engineer arrived on Friday afternoon, and was satisfied that there was sufficient cooling water for the engine, and no obvious problems. I accepted this judgment, but resolved that if the situation worsened, I would dismantle the heat

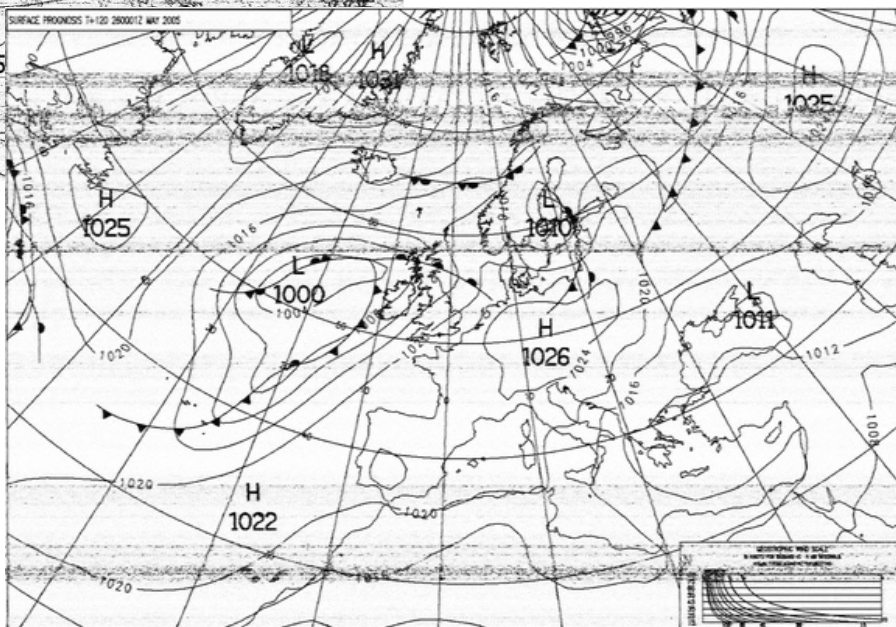
exchanger and give it a clean out. The other bit of good news is that he was prepared to remove the cabin heater and send it away to be serviced by a company that they claimed was quicker than the Swansea firm. Even so, we would be stuck here for about a week. We decided to relax and enjoy the rest!

The weather continued to deteriorate with gales forecast for both Saturday and Sunday nights. On this basis we decided to stay in the marina until at least the Monday, then possibly go and anchor at Dale until the heater had come back.



The weather map above shows the weather at 0600 on the morning of Saturday the 21st.

The one on the right shows that even by the following Thursday, the situation is unlikely to be much better!





Perhaps it is a sign of advancing years, but we were content to sit in the harbour, read, watch a DVD (Harry Potter) and just chill out. On the Monday, Nan and Bill picked us up again, and we enjoyed a pleasant afternoon and evening in their company, staying once more at their lovely house and enjoying the luxury of a hot bath. They could not have been more kind. But they are busy people, so we got Bill to run us back to the boat on Tuesday so that we would not impose too much of a burden.



We had hoped to go up river, but I first needed to be sure that the heater was being progressed, and also the weather was so unpleasant in the mornings, that we stayed put - even though the afternoons were, on the whole, pleasant but windy.

By Tuesday, we knew the heater had arrived at the service company, but it was not until the Thursday that we established that it would



probably be despatched on the Friday, arriving at Milford on the Saturday. There was a chance it could be fitted on the Monday, even though this was a Bank holiday.

In the meantime, we organised our social life. Adjacent to us was a motor sailer which Gerry was restoring. He willingly accepted an invitation to join us for a glass of wine on the Tuesday,



Galatea leaving Milford

bringing two bottles of his own. It was a long session! We retired to bed not wanting to be bothered with supper.

There was a small boat along the pontoon, and another CA boat in the marina, so we arranged evening drinks on *Ariadne* on the Wednesday, and had a return match on board *Galatea*, the CA boat on Thursday. The small boat was called *Shy Talk* - DO NOT SAY IT QUICKLY! Don was delivering



Shy Talk leaving Milford



her to Banff, a long single handed trip for a Leisure 21. *Galatea* was on the CA rally, sitting out the weather as we were (plus our other obstacles).

They decided to leave on the midday lock out on Thursday and we watched them go, having warned them that, from the weatherfax, Saturday was not looking nice.

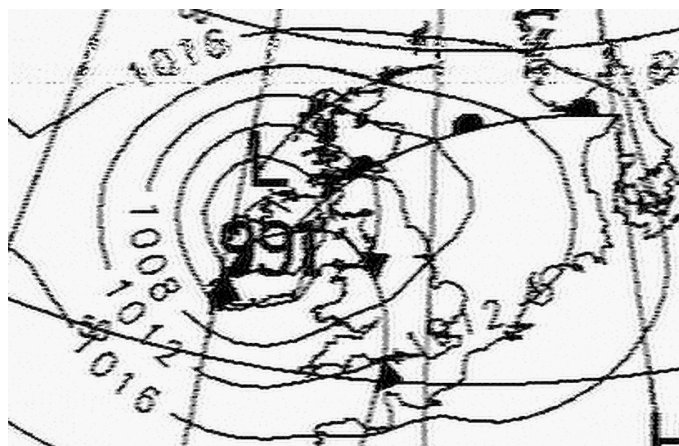
During Thursday afternoon I tried my new gprs Internet connection with OnSpeed compression. It was nearly as fast as my old computer at home. Very satisfactory! This enabled us to get some Raymarine and ECMWF weather to compare with the weatherfax. The result was promising. If we could get away on the next Tuesday, the prospect was for a period of settled weather.

On the Friday morning, we went out on the free flow at about 0830 and motor sailed up the river to find a secluded anchorage where we could hide from the bad weather on Saturday. Milford Haven is a large, meandering waterway which, once past Pembroke Dock, turns into peaceful wooded valleys. We found a quiet buoy just opposite Lawrenny from which we could watch the weather unfold.

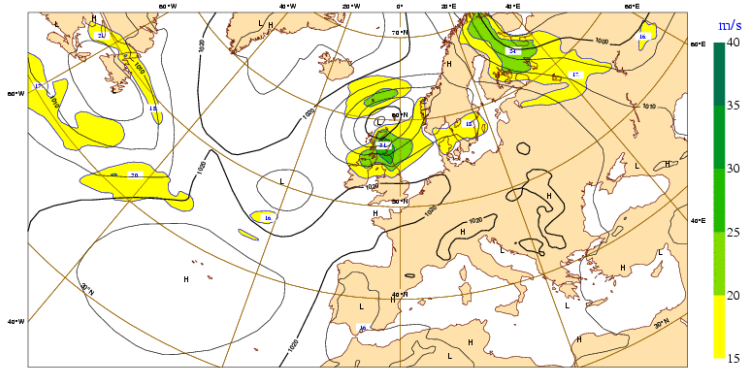
In the event, it blew hard during the night (as forecast), and even well up the river, the wind over tide effect was such that I stood an anchor watch until the flood set in at 0315 on Saturday morning.

In the morning we received a text message from *Galatea* that they had arrived safely in Arklow. I was relieved that they were safely in harbour because the wind was clearly going to blow for quite a few hours yet - there was even a F9 gale warning for Irish Sea. My prediction to 'beware Saturday' was proving to be wise.

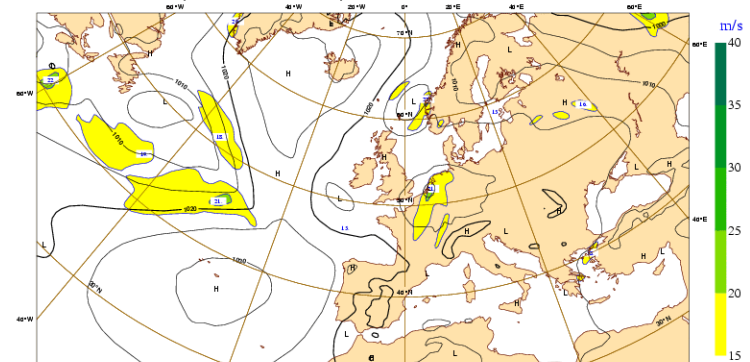
The map below indicates the vigorous depression that was affecting us at 0600 on Saturday morning.



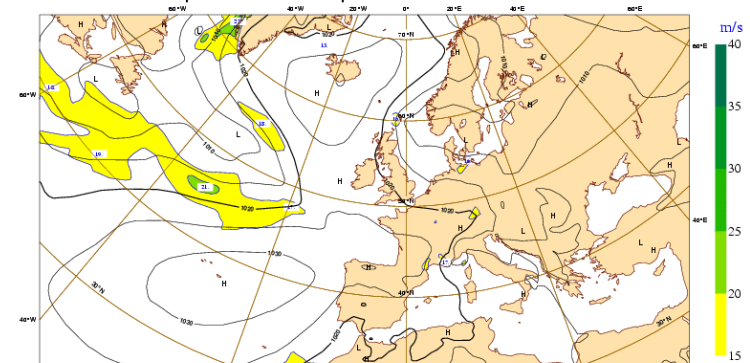
Thursday 26 May 2005 00UTC ©ECMWF Forecast t+072 VT: Sunday 29 May 2005 00UTC  
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed



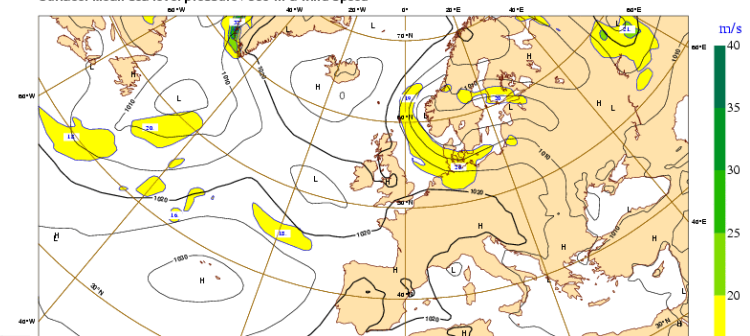
Thursday 26 May 2005 00UTC ©ECMWF Forecast t+096 VT: Monday 30 May 2005 00UTC  
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed



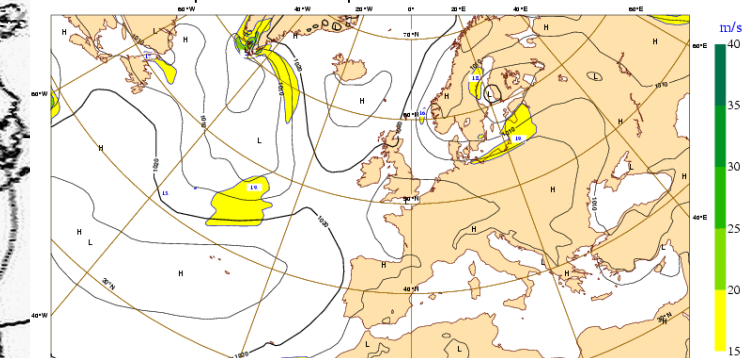
Thursday 26 May 2005 00UTC ©ECMWF Forecast t+120 VT: Tuesday 31 May 2005 00UTC  
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed



Thursday 26 May 2005 00UTC ©ECMWF Forecast t+144 VT: Wednesday 1 June 2005 00UTC  
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed



Thursday 26 May 2005 00UTC ©ECMWF Forecast t+168 VT: Thursday 2 June 2005 00UTC  
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed





It blew hard all day on Saturday. (We later learned that the racing at Milford Haven had been cancelled). The wind veered a little, so was coming off the near bank making the mooring more comfortable than it had been during the night. We made no attempt to do anything except occasionally check that there had been no chafe on the mooring strop when we were surging about during the ebb tide periods.

On Sunday morning, I went over to the boatyard in the dinghy as the tide was flooding and inspected the area next to the scrubbing grid as a possible drying out point. The grid itself was unsuitable, the beams being unprotected concrete



Good shelter on mooring near Lawrenny



Drying out at Lawrenny

at a fairly wide pitch. At first, the yard owner was not too keen, but he eventually agreed I could go on the wall when I made it clear I would require no assistance from his staff.

When I started the engine there was no cooling water at all! I checked the inlet strainer, and the engine started with adequate water, but the slight 'roar' indicating less than perfect cooling was still there. Not good!

At high water, we went alongside the wall with 0.7m under the keel ( the evening tide was due to be larger), drying out comfortably as the tide fell. The boarding ladder I had bought dangled below the normal boarding ladder, and supported on each side by dinghy oars enabled me to get on and off the boat. This allowed me to check the stern gear. There was a piece on monofilament hanging off, so it is clear it had tackled a net. Otherwise it was in good condition. We were of the opinion that the the 'rumble' we had heard motoring over the Bristol Channel had reduced, so I decided to leave the rope cutter in place. We also checked the engine seacock and confirmed, as I had suspected, that it was completely clear.

At 2200hrs we floated clear. Once again the engine did not produce water until I had disconnected the inlet water pipe and reconnected it. This performance was repeated the next morning when, after a quiet night, we started to motor down to Milford to catch the free flow at the lock. (The wind had switched back to Westerly, so we could not beat against the current in the light breeze).

I was in Windjammer Marine when the Eberspacher was delivered back by courier. Hopes rose until Andrew, the engineer, came to fit it during the afternoon, only to discover that it had been seriously damaged, either when



being packed (which we suspected) or in transit. He also changed the inlet pipe to the engine which I suspected was somehow getting blocked, possibly through delamination. That did not solve the problem, so I rang Peter at Marine Power, who promptly put a new pump in the post. It arrived the next morning, and once it had been fitted, the engine was restored to full health. 2 down and one to go. We now had an engine and knew the rope cutter was OK. But the Eberspacher had to go back. This was getting depressing, but there was no real way out.



Gentle day for trip back to Milford Haven

In the meantime, the weather had been vile so we did not mind being stuck too much. During this period there were 2 days of fine gentle SW winds when we would much rather have been at sea. Our friends Nan and Bill returned from visiting grand-

children, and unhesitatingly invited us back to their house for the night, again. We had a lovely evening, and another bath! But I wanted to be back on the Saturday as we had asked the company to try and get the Eberspacher back. Also, Nan and Bill had been very kind and we were concerned not to out stay our welcome.

It did not get back, so we had to sit it out through another weekend. Very, very frustrating.

Meanwhile, we received a text message from Neil, asking where we kept the window key for our house. When we rang him, we learned that he had arrived with family to use the house for a few days only to discover an overwhelming odour. Somehow, Dairne had managed to switch the freezer off. Shellfish, a duck, mince, and all other contents were in a seriously bad way. We were mortified, and rang Betty (Dairne's mum) to arrange for her to take them out for a Chinese that evening. I did manage to create the following ode:-

There was this young geezer  
Who emptied the freezer  
And stuck all the goo in the bin.  
He felt very glum  
Because his Mum  
Had committed the cardinal sin  
Of cleaning it all with a grin  
And a song;

Pulled the plug from the wall  
But the plug was wrong!  
The fridge was fine  
But the freezer should have been on line  
Instead of unplugged.  
So the contents glugged  
And made a frightful pong.

When this was texted to Neil, his advice was 'Don't give up the day job'!

We were also in touch with other boats. *Southern Cross* had reached Orkney and was stuck by strong easterlies before getting on to Shetland and Norway. The *Misties* had got their boat through the Caledonian ready to start their season; *Passager* was about to set off to catch us up from the Solent. And David was sailing *Santana* round the Solent. We did not press him to join us!!

At long last, it seemed as though a high was going to build over the UK giving settled weather, Could we get going to take advantage of it? Was this the beginning of the real summer? We were now well into June and we were reluctant to give up in case we missed some outstandingly good weather in Scotland. I remembered that in the famous summer of 1976, we had storms and gales right up to mid June until the weather switched to summer until September. We could only hope!



## Milford Haven to HolyHead:7th/8th June [116.3M]

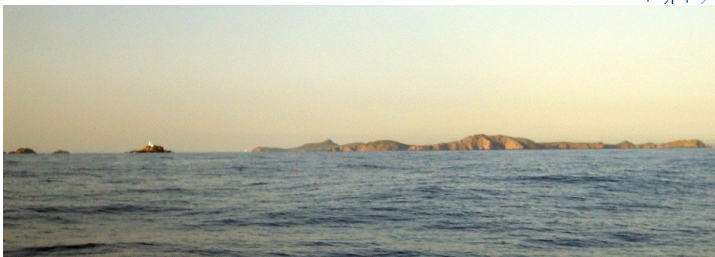
After 3 weeks, we were on our way again, locking out at 1630 and proceeding straight out between Skomer and Skokholm.



Leaving Milford Haven



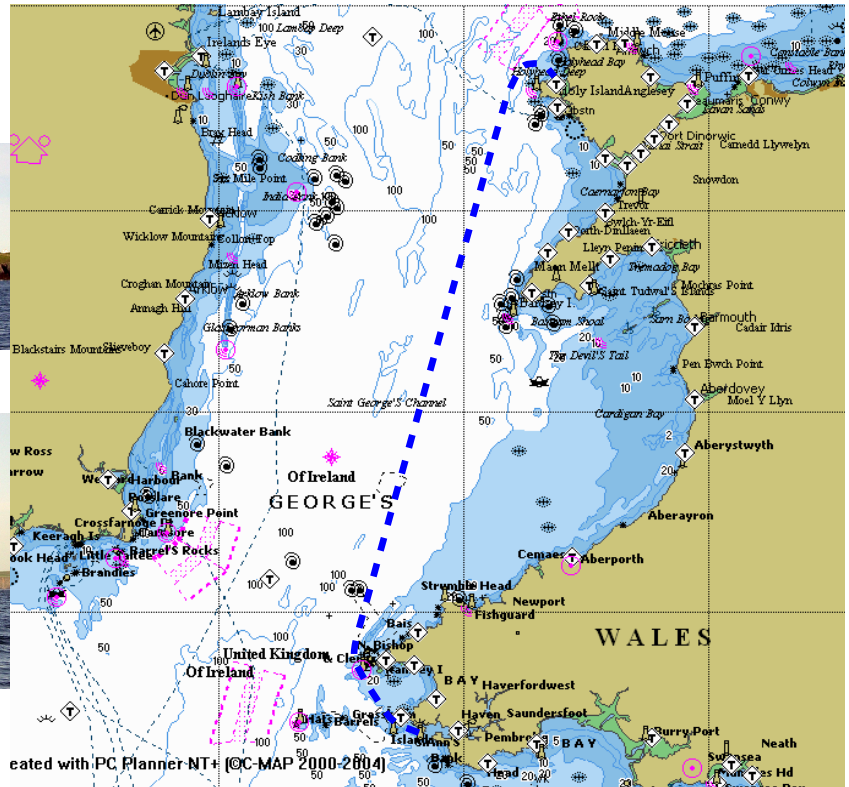
Skomer



Passing South Bishop

By 2000 we were near the South Bishop, motoring northward. Dairne was on watch when she twice saw a large pod of dolphins, but with insufficient light to get photographs. Our own autopilot was still working - just. By setting it on the Monitor, the loads on it are massively reduced, although it does tend to hunt a little. We were very lucky to have been loaned a spare ST4000 pilot by Robert who has a Rustler 31 at Milford. He had come on board just to look at a Rustler 36, but when he heard that our autopilot was suspect, he promptly loaned me his spare ST4000. He had never met us before, and it was an amazing act of trust as we were to rely on his autopilot for most of the rest of the cruise. Our gratitude cannot be overstated.

As sunset finally arrived, it looked like we were approaching a fishing net, but it turned out to be a row of guillemots pretending to look like a fishing net!



Autopilot on the Monitor



Sun rising over Llyn peninsular



Easing up the coast as night fell we could see the Strumble light, and shortly after midnight, Bardsey light, which stayed with us for a long time until at 0700 the sun rose over the mountains on the Llyn peninsular



Brisk wind over tide off South Stack, Anglesey

By 1115 we were handrailing round South Stack, and the wind arrived quickly building to a strong SW 4/5. This was just as well as we encountered a vicious adverse tide from the Stacks until we turned into the harbour. It was an enjoyable sail, if slow because of the tide.

It was 1330 by the time we made fast in the Holyhead marina.

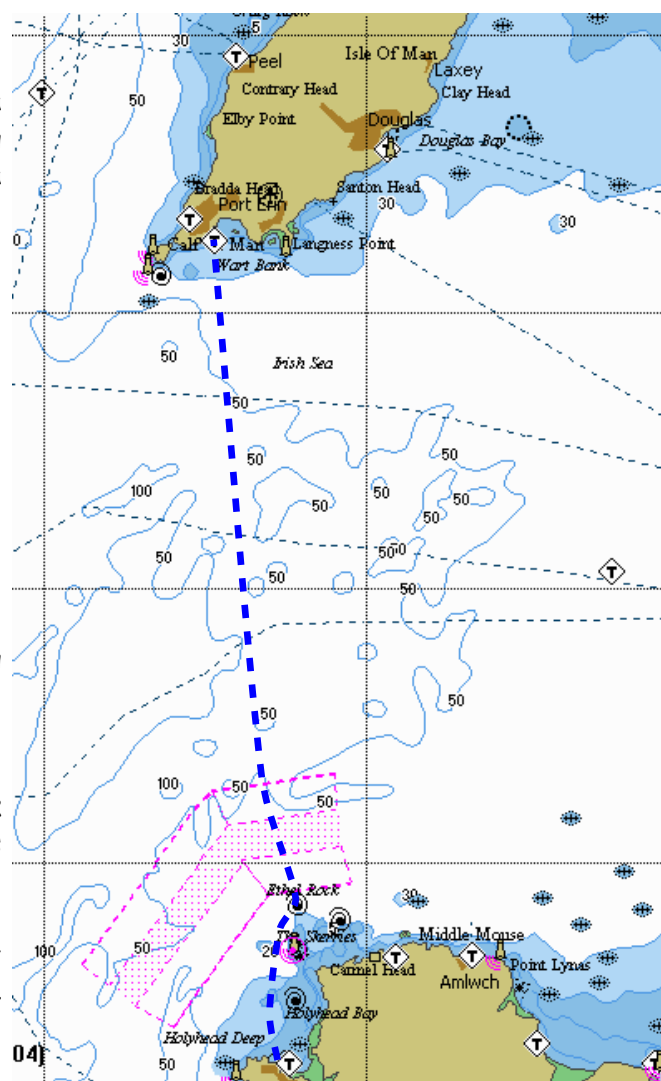
### ***Holyhead to Port St Mary IOM :9th June [45.1M]***

There is little in Holyhead to make one stay, so after a quiet night, we refueled and set off by 0850, motor sailing under a grey sky over a calm sea, with Snowdonia as a backdrop.



The Dublin ferries were charging by as we left, heading north to a convenient place to cross the TSS at right angles. Through the morning we motored on a flat sea with limited visibility. But by 1300 we were able to sail in a gentle W3 breeze. This lasted until 1700 when the engine went back on to motor into Port St Mary where we picked up a visitor's buoy at 1740.

We had never visited the Isle of Man before, so thought we might stay a day or two. It had been a long day, so we had a quiet evening on board.





## Port St Mary to Ardglass :10th June [34.1M]



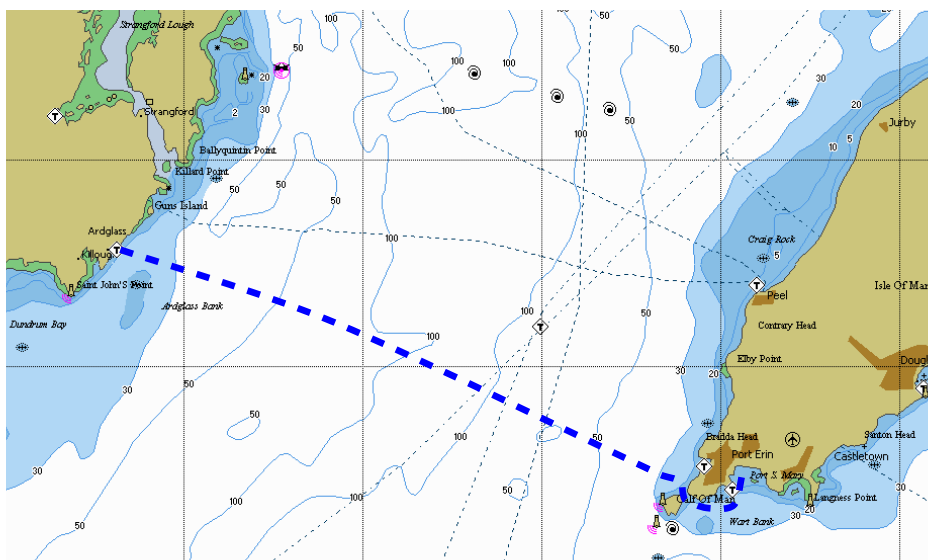
Views of  
Port St Mary



Our weather maps and the VHF forecasts were indicating northerly winds, ideal for Port St Mary which is rather open to the south. This encouraged us to go ashore and explore, with the prospect of staying for a few days. The town was quiet, partially because it was the last day of the TT races. Port St Mary is an attractive little town, though there are some rather strange holiday flats developments around the bay.



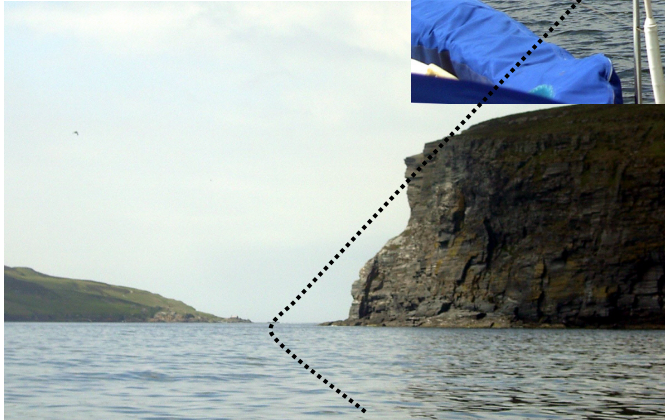
Inevitably, the Post Office was at the far end of the town, which tested Dairne a little. On the the way back we stopped at one of the pubs for a pleasant lunch. As we sat there, a southerly breeze (probably a sea breeze) started to fill in. It was a lovely, sunny day, and the wind direction was quite suitable for going over to Ireland. As it freshened, it was clear that it would soon give quite a lot of movement in the harbour. We decided to get back on board and set off, even though we had already paid for the second night.





Working our way round the corner into Calf Sound was interesting, with the water being quite rough. Once through, however, the sea quickly settled down and it became a fast reach towards Ardglass, the course being set to arrive slightly up tide.

Calf Sound



Halfway across, we saw a yacht proceeding under spinnaker only - and what a strange sail it was, with all kinds of slats and pockets. We spoke to the boat on VHF, and it turned out that this rather strange sail had survived the ARC, when more conventional spinnakers had failed.

We like Ardglass, it is small, unpretentious, and conveniently located.

Our original plan had been to press on to Belfast and beyond, but with the prospect of being stuck by weather in the rather costly Bangor marina, we opted

instead to go up in-  
to Strangford to see if we could find *Tamaray*, another Rustler with whom we had only been in email contact.



Approach channel at Ardglass



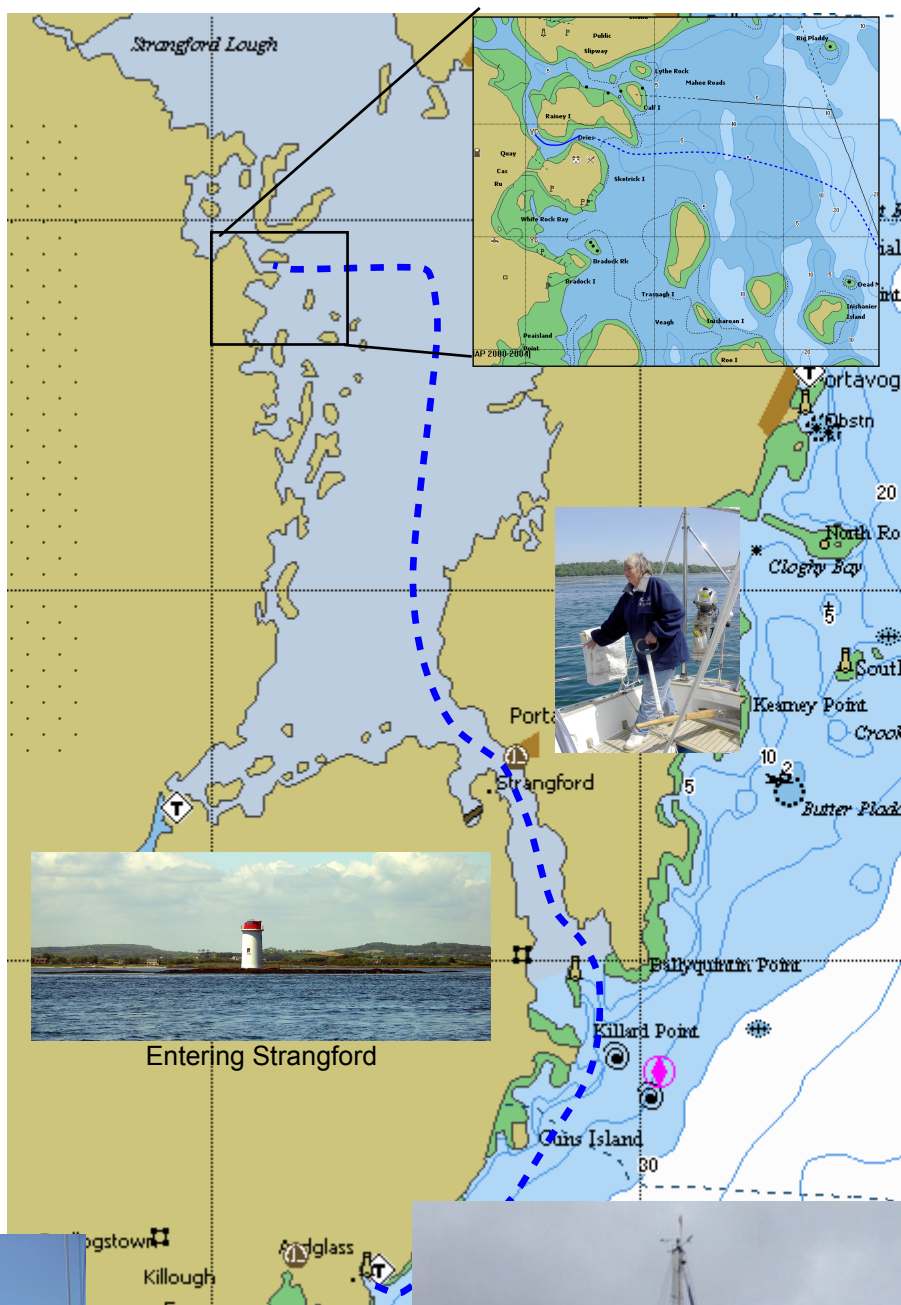
## Ardglass to Down CC, Strangford Lough :11th June[21.3M] and 12th-14th June

Provided you get the tides right, going into Strangford Lough is easy, but exciting as the tide swooshes you in through the narrows, passing the Routen Wheel, a large natural whirlpool usually visible on the surface.

Although we got it right through the narrows, I was concerned to be at Down Cruising Club at slack water, but I misread the pilot book. The result was that we hammered up the length of the Lough under mainsail and engine, the shaft making quite a loud clattering noise at about 3000rpm.

As we eased in through the narrow channel that approaches Down CC light-ship, we realised that the tide was still flooding hard, which necessitated a smart 180 degree turn before we were swept into shallower water beyond the club ship. However, the current enabled us to ferry-glide elegantly alongside.

We were immediately made welcome, being invited to a party due to take place at the Club ship that night. We were also informed that Jim and Joan Miskelly in *Tamaray* (another Rustler 36) were due to come alongside within the hour.



Down CC

Once *Tamaray* turned up, Jim and Joan Miskelly acted as if they had been expecting us! Their own plans were just abandoned, and they devoted the next 2 days to looking after us - taking us to their home; shopping; and a tour of the area. We could not have been

made more welcome. Jim also persuaded Nigel, a very busy local engineer to investigate the rattle in the stern gear. We dried out on the scrubbing berth and I had a good look, but could see nothing wrong. Nigel changed the stern gland packing, and eventually diagnosed a slightly bent propeller shaft. He did not consider it dangerous, but



Tamaray



advised restricting rpm. We found that by keeping below 2300rpm, the rattle was minimal. This still gave us a still water speed of just over 5kts.

Jim had retired from his first career (running a newsagent shop), rebuilt the cottage he had bought, and decided to take on another job. So once the weekend was over we could only say thankyou by entertaining Joan to lunch at Daft Eddys on Sketrick Island.



Down CC approaches

After 3 days being royally entertained, we were ready to move on.

The approaches to Down CC are shallow, narrow and twisty. So we left near slack water, and motored down Strangford Lough with a stiff breeze dead on the nose to spend the night on a buoy at Audleys Roads, just above the narrows. It would have been unpleasant to carry on as a SE breeze against the ebb in Strangford Narrows can produce a wild and dangerous wind over tide situation.

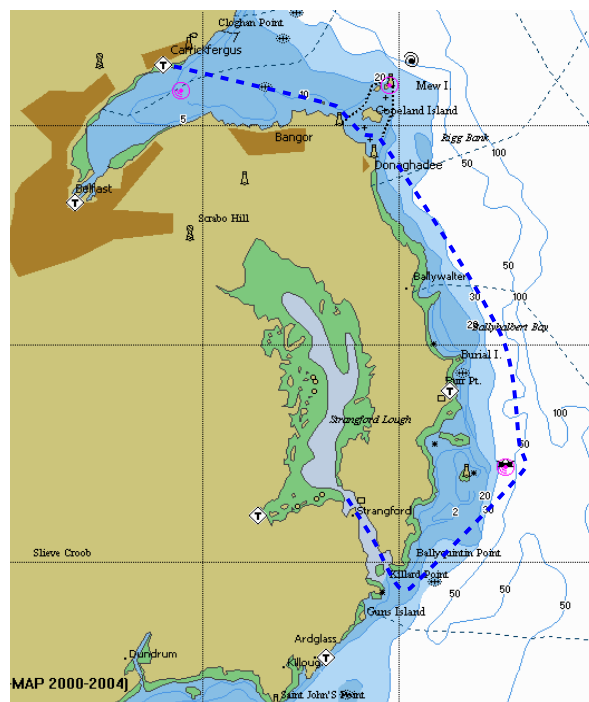
### **Strangford Lough to Carrickfergus :15th June[40.3M] and 16th-17th June**

We had a lazy morning waiting for the tide to turn, setting off at 1320, and motor sailing through Strangford Narrows.

At Bar Pladdy, the engine went off, and we were sailing on a very broad reach with 2 reefs in both main and genoa. At South Rock lightship, we gybed, and thereafter the reefs were gradually released until, at 1750, the very light wind swung round into the NE putting us on a beat. But the wind continued to fade, so by 1820, we had to put the engine on, and motor through Donaghadee Sound and across the bay to Carrickfergus, where we made fast in the marina at 2100.



South Rock Lightship





We had come across to Carrickfergus at the invitation of Annie and Ken Baird who had recently bought Kittiwake, and ex services Rustler 36. Once again we were to experience an overwhelming welcome at the hands of the Irish. We were shown round Belfast, which is a very attractive city, quite contrary to the impression so often purveyed by the media.

We also had a look round the local area, including a fascinating tour round Carrickfergus Castle, which has an unexpected and long history, often playing a pivotal role in the relationship between Northern Ireland and England.



Carrickfergus marina



Carrickfergus Castle



Carrickfergus Old Harbour  
Seen from the castle





Kittiwake on her launching trolley

We also had a look at Kittiwake in the yard at the yacht club. She is being coated with the new copperbot product. It will be interesting to learn how well it works.

After a couple of days, the winds were moderating, allowing us to move on. I had always regarded the next leap through the North Channel as one of the most difficult of the cruise to Scotland. The tides can be vicious, and even if the tide is with you, the sea conditions can be severe. So it was amazingly good news from Annie and Ken that a new marina had been developed at Glenarm. This moves you nearly 20 miles closer to North Channel, making it easier to get timing relative to tides right. Glenarm is hardly mentioned on the pilot books. It must be one of Ireland's best kept secrets.

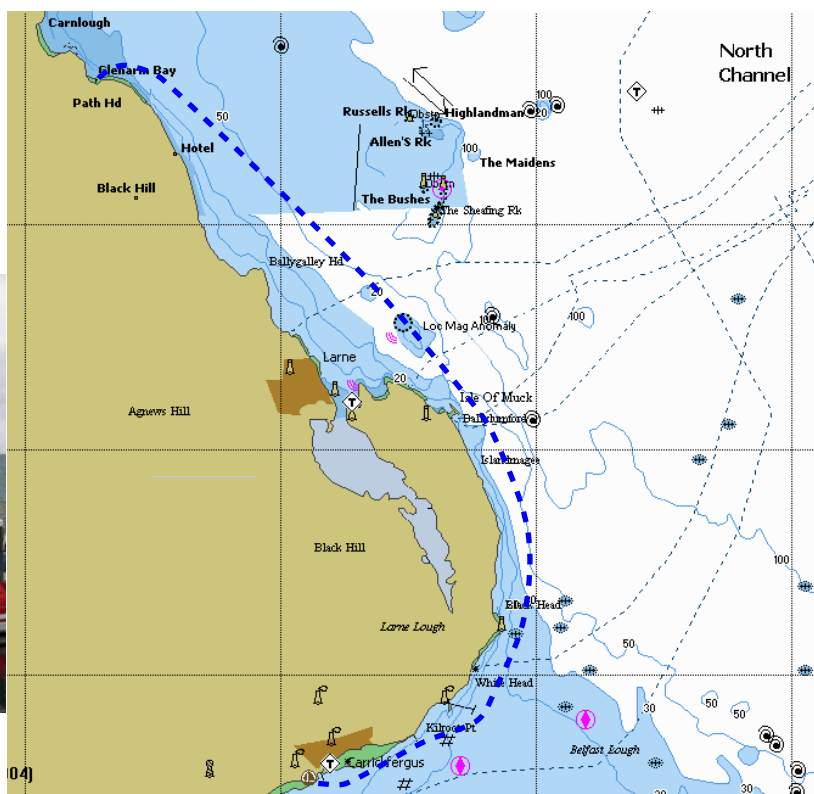
### ***Carrickfergus to Glenarm:18th June[10M]***

This was a grey, still day, so we were motoring from 0815 when we set off until 1020, when we were able to sail on a dead run, poled out.

By 1245 we were alongside the pontoon in Glenarm.



Glenarm



The marina is tiny, there being room for only 6 visitors berths, but the harbourmaster manages to tuck boats in somehow. On a busy weekend, this could involve finding spots for 20 boats. Various devices, including rafting up, and tucking a boat between boats on finger piers all have to be resorted to.

It is a sectarian fact of life that it is not a good idea to fly a red ensign in the alternative port of Carnlough just up the coast.

There are a few shops in the village, but we had stocked up at Carrickfergus, so there was little direct need.

During the night there was a fierce thunderstorm which we hoped would clear the air, but when we woke the next morning, there was still a lot of very low cloud and dubious visibility.

## Glenarm to Gigha:19th June[38.4M]

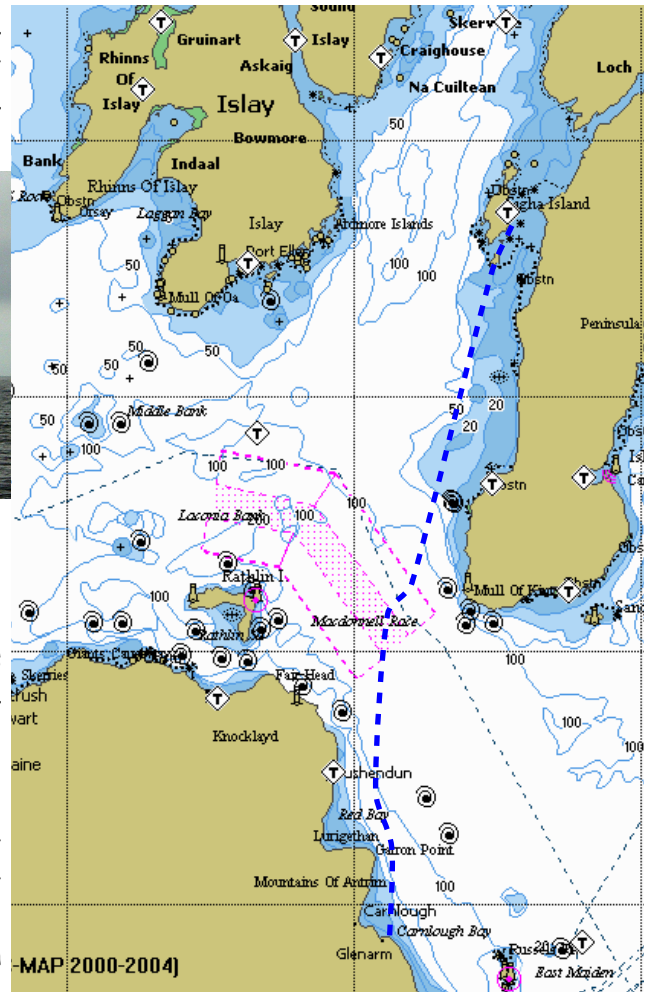
To make the best of the tide, we were away at 0815. There was only a F1 Northerly wind, and visibility was poor. There was no alternative to motor on into the fog. Gradually it turned into a very low cloudbase and we were able to just see the headlands below.



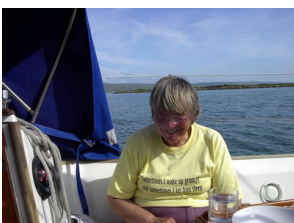
North Channel

Our track took us into the central zone of the TSS which is a really awkward feature of North Channel - all the more irritating because it is so little used.

By 1030, the wind had backed to NW and increased a little. Also we needed to bear away to cross the TSS lane nearly at right angles. This enabled us to sail for an hour or so, but once across the lane, we soon found the wind heading again. In order to make Gigha on the tide, the engine had to go on again.



Ardminish, Gigha

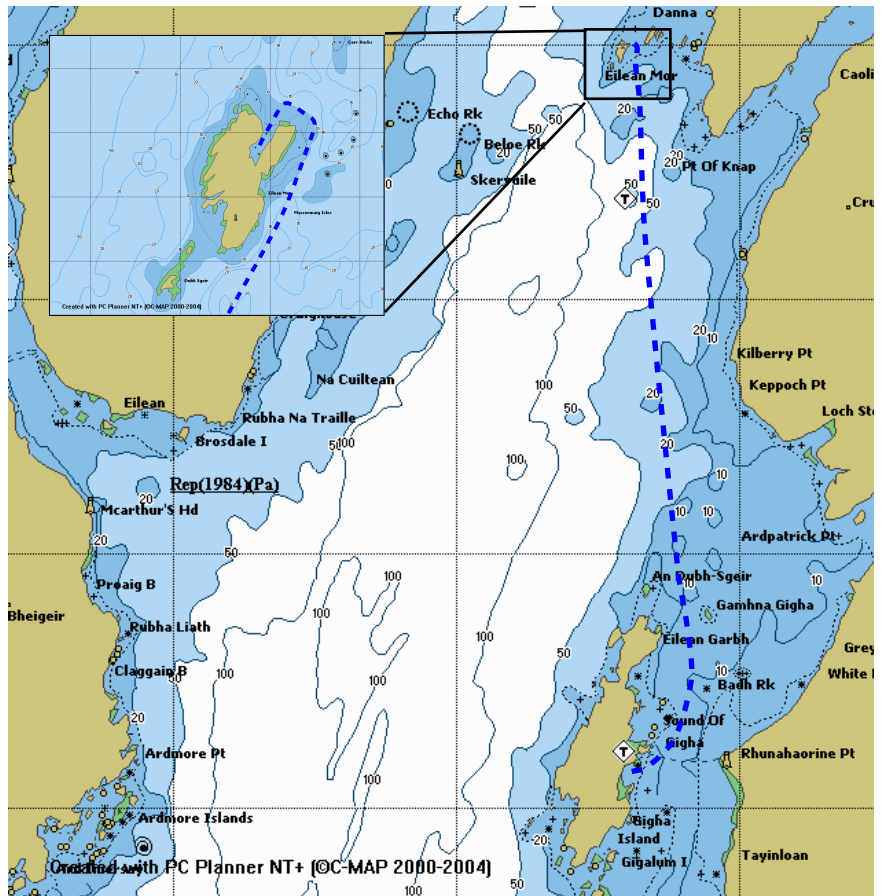




## Gigha to MacCormaig Isles:20th June[13.2M]

Originally, we had intended to visit Islay, partially to meet up with Iain Mitchell, the author of two excellent books on life in the islands of the Hebrides and to the north of Scotland. However, Iain was away working in Edinburgh, and the wind and tide had made Gigha an easier destination. On the 19th, the wind was SW 3/4 which would have given a beat to Islay. Moreover, the outlook was for stronger winds, making problematic our plan of going up the Sound of Islay to visit West Loch Tarbert on Jura, and then to proceed outside the islands to Mull or Barra.

Perhaps we should have stuck to our guns, but the delay in Milford, and the concern over the prop shaft had dented our confidence, so we abandoned such plans, and decided to proceed up "the motorway" (Sound of Jura - Firth of Lorn - Sound of Mull), a route which is used by most yachts.



The MacCormaig Isles are low lying

As the wind was favourable, we opted to go on instead of exploring Gigha. It was a short hop to the MacCormaig islands, which had been recommended to us by Jim Miskelly.

Leaving a 1000, we made sail, and worked our way carefully between the rock patches that littler the space between Gigha and the mainland. It was gentle run to the MacCormaigs, where we entered the tiny natural harbour of Eilean Mhor ('Big Isle') and anchored, initially setting a stern anchor using the fisherman, a length of chain and the ankrolina flat warp kept on the pushpit for such occasions.

It is an amazing little anchorage, and the island looked interesting, so we pumped up the dinghy and went ashore to explore. Next to the anchorage is a little bothy, and further across the island is a small ruined chapel. There are other interesting features on the island, but the chapel represented Dairne's walking range. It felt wonderful, at last, to be exploring a Hebridean island. We were walking mainly on wet, lush turf among a magnificent display of wild flowers, and past occasional banks of wild irises. The slightly peaty smell of wet soil, and the occasional squawk of a seabird completed the picture.



Ariadne anchored in the MacCormaig Isles



Back on board, we enjoyed a peaceful evening, and turned in. By midnight, the wind had picked up a little and freshened. I could foresee difficulties in recovering the stern anchor if left till morning, so at 0130 I recovered it, and adjusted the main anchor in the hope that we would have enough room to swing, which meant using less than the ideal scope.





## MacCormaig Isles to Ardantrive, Kerrera: 21st June [36.2M]

Stowing was complicated. We had to stow the fisherman, the chain, the dinghy, and so on. We motored slowly in circles staying in the lee of the small island. It took nearly an hour, but by 0845 we were on our way. The broad reaching wind was gusting to 23kts, and pushing against the south-going tide.



Passing Corryvreckan

It was a spectacular broad reach with 2 reefs in the main and full genoa. The water was pouring in through Corryvreckan, and the combination of gusts and tidal swirls made it necessary to hand steer. After passing Corryvreckan, the tide gradually picked up in our favour.

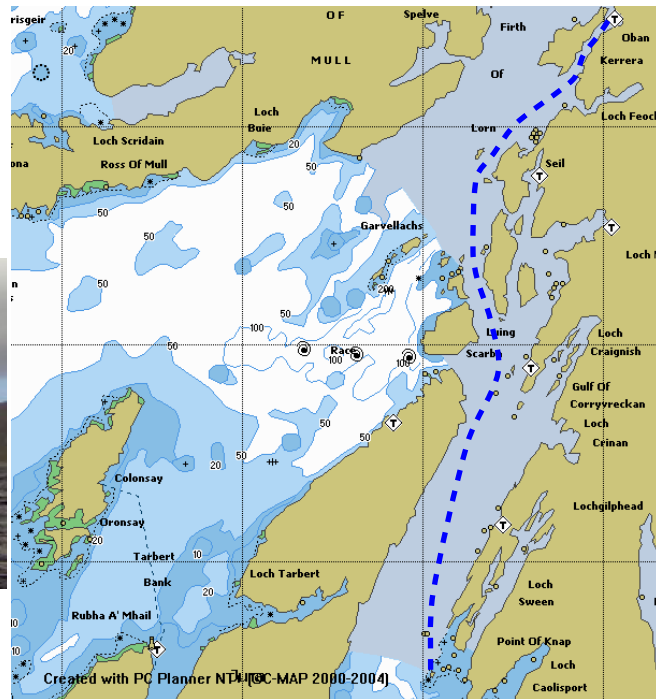
By the time we reached Fladda Sound, we had a really good tide push. As we passed Easdale close inshore, we bore away onto a near-dead run, and the genoa was rolled away. Passing Puldoran, we had to run by the lee to get to Sound of Kerrera, in quite a lumpy sea, the wind blowing more or less straight up the Firth of Lorne.

By 1420 we were alongside the pontoons at Ardantrive, now know as Oban Yachts.

Two berths away, there was another Rustler with a Dutch flag. It turned out that the owner was just completing his cruise to the Hebrides. He had had pretty dreadful weather. The following day he would be going back to Croaibh Haven marina where he keeps the boat.

And who should turn up? None other than Jim and Joan Miskelly away on their annual cruise. Inevitably, the three Rustler crews got together on *Ariadne* for a pleasant evening swapping tales.

I had also discovered that I had managed to lose my Scotland West cartridge. A call to C-Map had resulted in one being sent to the marina shop (Nancy Blacks in Oban), so the next day, I went over on the ferry to collect it, and do a bit of shopping. Jim and Joan went on up the Sound of Mull early next morning, but we felt the conditions would improve later in the day, so we hung on till the afternoon.



Fladday, with Scarba behind



Dairne helming through Fladday Sound

## Ardantrive, Kerrera to Loch Drumbuie:22nd June[25M] and 23rd June

It was still quite blustery when we departed at 1330 using reefed main and genoa. The fetch across the Firth of Lorne was fast, and not too rough. On passing between Lismore light and Lady Island we were able to shake out the reefs. Partly because we could bear away a little, and partly because we were in the lee of Mull.



Lismore Lighthouse



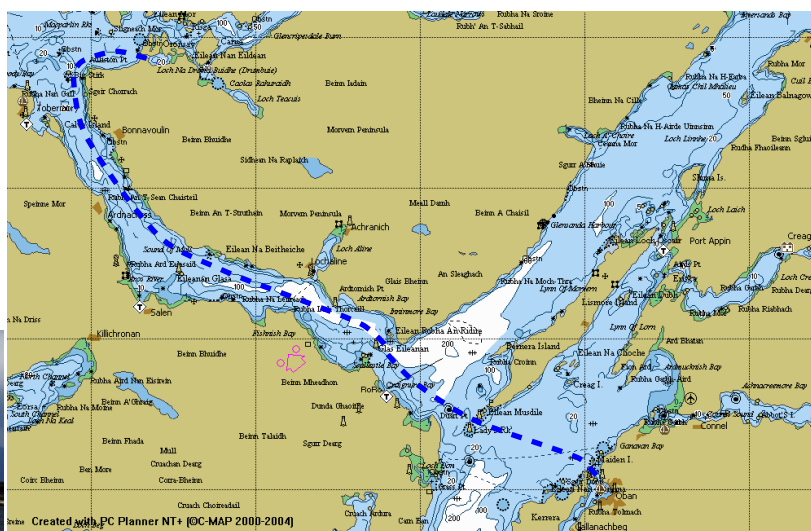
Mull



Inside Loch Drumbuie



Sea Jade's 'conservatory'  
Right: Ariadne in Drumbuie



The Sound of Mull is straightforward pilotage once you have decided on which side to pass the islands. We went between Glas Eilean and Sgeir nan Gobhan.

It is worth noting that the Sound of Mull is about the same size as the Solent from the forts to Hurst. It was quite busy, by Scottish standards, and we probably saw a dozen yachts altogether!

As we approached Loch Drumbuie, we gradually closed on another yacht running under main only, and we gradually realised that this was *Sea Jade*, another Rustler belonging to Peter and Maureen Bates. We knew them from our previous cruise, and some Rustler events they had attended. We followed them into Loch Drumbuie and anchored close by.

An invitation for drinks on board *Sea Jade* evolved into dinner inside the wonderful 'conservatory' they had had made to cover the cockpit. Their two Red Setters flopped around the boat, and were gentle, friendly company. It always amazes us how many people sail with pets, especially dogs. We like other people's pets as you can hand them back after fussing over them - rather like grand children.

The party eventually expired at 2 am. It had been good to meet up with them again. Maureen bubbles enthusiasm, and Peter has a quiet sardonic humour. This was illustrated when I related the story of Dairne's tail comb falling into the cockpit drain. I explained that I used to use plastic pan scrubs to prevent such an accident, but Dairne had

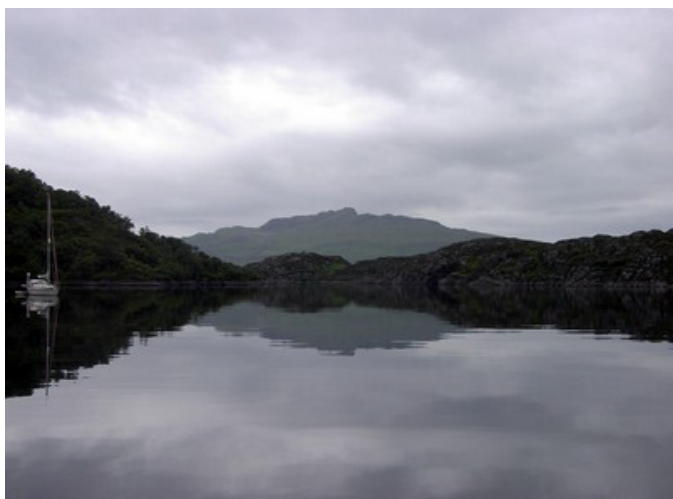




objected on the grounds that they quickly became mucky. Peter had the perfect Scottish answer, as illustrated - he uses golf balls! Apparently they will stay put in all but the worst weather.



Dairne, Maureen and the Setters on Sea Jade



Early morning in Loch Drumbuie



Setters taking Maureen and Peter for a walk



Scottish drain plug!

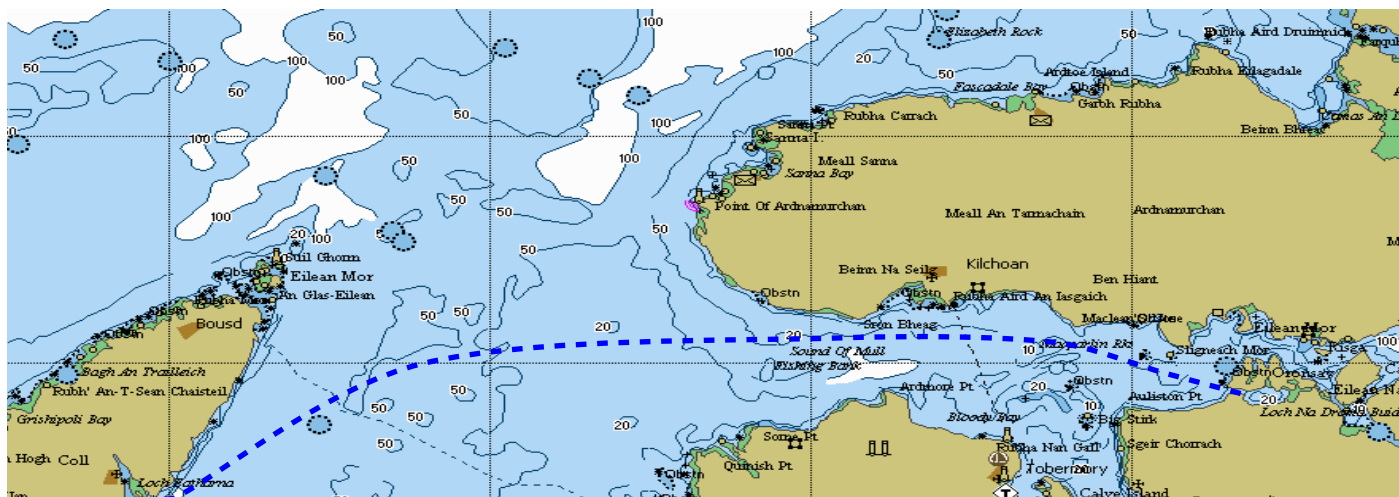
The following morning, we found that the anchorage we were in was slightly exposed - it had been chosen as being near to a good place to land and take dogs for a walk!

Also, the best corner had been rather full. As a few boats left, both *Sea Jade* and ourselves moved to the corner. We watched the ritual of taking dogs for a walk, which was followed by Peter and Maureen coming on board *Ariadne* for lunch.



Loch Drumbuie anchorage

## Loch Drumbuie to Arinagour, Coll:23rd June[18.7M] and 25th June



Our hopes of going on to Canna, which we had been unable to visit on our previous cruise, were thwarted by forecast of a NW wind, so we opted instead to go to Coll. *Sea Jade* was off to Tobermory, then would try to go north from there.



Arinagour, Coll

It was a simple and straightforward passage, although we had to motor most of the way to Ardnamurchan before being able to sail. Thereafter, it was just visual pilotage into Arinagour, the main harbour on Coll. We had intended to anchor, but we were advised by another yacht that a third yacht was dragging with no one on board! So we retreated to one of the HIE buoys. As these are free, the only penalty was a slightly longer trip in the dinghy to go ashore. As it was blowing a bit, and forecast to do so the next day, we opted to have a lazy afternoon. Leaving Dairne on board, I went ashore

briefly to find out what had changed since our last visit. The answer was Not Much! - except that the restaurant that had just opened the last time we visited Coll was not operating (we later learned that it had changed ownership and was basically being run down. A pity). I was also reminded that the post office only opens in the late morning; and that the village store carried an amazing range of stock. I also checked out the menu at the Coll hotel.

The next day dawned brisk and breezy. We watched the ferry come and go, and the yachts departing. It is always fascinating to speculate on where the boats are heading next, especially in a place like Arinagour where one can see the course they take when outside the harbour.

After lunch, we went ashore for a long stroll along the roads to get some flavour of the island. It was one of those cases where some form of transport would have been helpful. It proved too far to walk right across the island, and we even accepted a lift back to Arinagour from the hotel staff who were on a day out. This happened to be the day of the Coll half marathon, so we watched the start amid what was almost a fete atmosphere.



Exploring Coll





We adjourned to the Coll Hotel where Dairne enjoyed the best seafood platter she has had since we lived in Jersey. No sooner had we finished our meal, and strolled outside than we bumped into Jim and Joan from Tamaray. They had arrived during the afternoon, now getting close to the end of their brief cruise. Inevitably this turned into a small party sitting in the sun in the hotel garden. They then went into the hotel for their meal while we went on board. Plans to meet up on Ariadne later were thwarted by a freshening breeze.

By SMS text message, we learned that our friends Mike and Rosemary were about to start a cruise in their Sadler 34 from its base at Ballahulish. Their aim was to go up the Sound of Mull, and north to the Inner Sound behind Skye. On that basis, we decided that we would try to meet up with them, even though this meant

abandoning, yet again, our hope of going to Coll. Instead we would head for the Sound of Sleat.



A Happy Wanderer!

### ***Coll to Isleornsay: 26th June [38.9M]***

To make the tide, we were under way shortly after 0600. *Tamaray* was still on her buoy, with no one around, so we slipped quietly away. For an hour, we motored up the coast of Coll on a flat sea with a grey overcast and no wind.



Morvern

Then we had some gentle sailing for an hour until we were just north of Ardnamurchan, the key headland at the top of the Sound of Mull.



Eigg



We motored gently past Muck and between Eigg and the mainland, the lurking bulk of Rum lying to seaward and capped with grey cloud. Eventually, by 1030 we could sail once north of Eigg. It turned into a steady broad reach all the way to Isleornsay on Skye, halfway up the Sound of Sleat. By 1500 we were anchored in this well sheltered harbour.



Isleornsay light



## Isleornsay to Plockton: 27th June[19M]

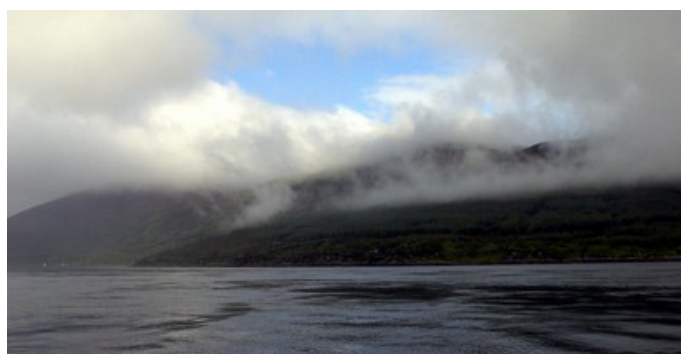
We knew that Mike and Rosemary had made it to Tobermory, but we decided to go on to Plockton and wait for them there, partly because we needed some stores that we could collect at the new supermarket that Rosemary told us had been opened at Kyle of Lochalsh.



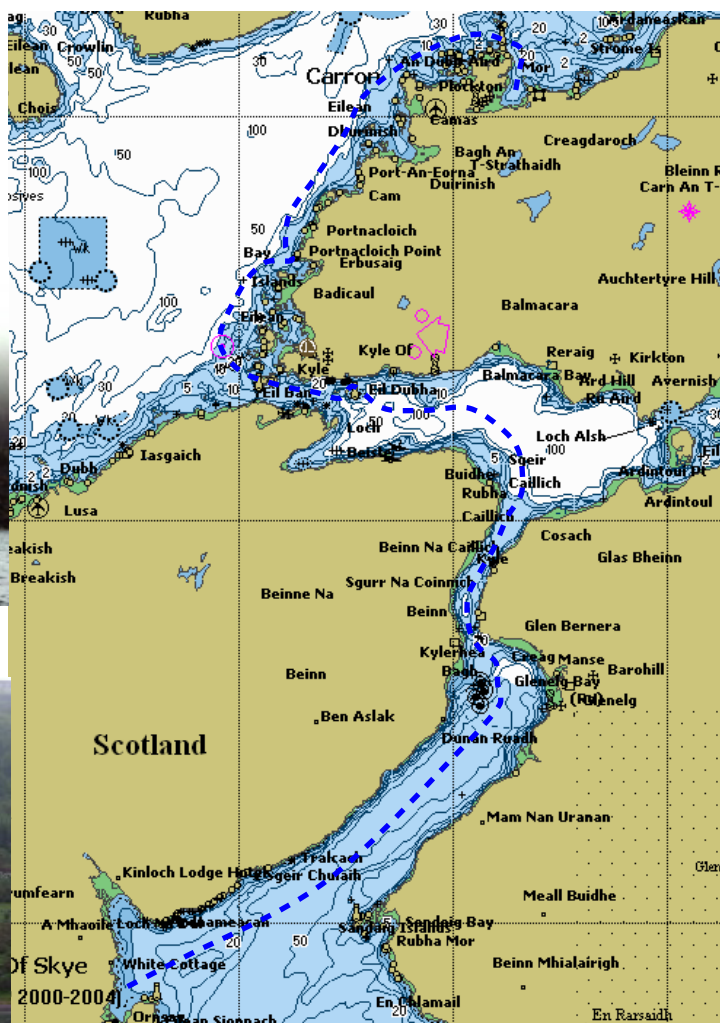
Skye shore visible under low cloud



Kyle Rhea



Skye Bridge



Dairne had had a disturbed night, so at 0715, I weighed anchor as quietly as I could, and left Isleornsay under main only. There was a very low cloudbase - possibly less than 200ft - and visibility was less than a mile. But with the help of the plotter, and occasional glimpses of the Skye, the SSW3 breeze took us gently toward Kyle Rhea. As we entered this narrow, twisty part of the route, the current picked us up till we were doing 8kts over the ground.

By 1000 we were alongside at Kyle of Lochalsh. Last time we were here, we had picked up the only load of tainted water during that cruise. We checked carefully before filling the tank, but the water was quite sweet.



Lunch anchorage at Port Carn



Plockton

A quick trip up the hill to the supermarket enabled us to leave at 1315. We motored under the Skye bridge, and turned away toward Plockton, diverting into Port Carn to anchor for lunch. The holding was nit brilliant, but in the settled conditions, it was adequate for a lunch stop.

It was a short pilotage hop round the corner past Cat isle. Plockton does tend to have a lot of weed, so we found a visitors buoy to which was attached a label telling us that we could pay at the shop, the pub or another place I cannot remember. This is typical of Scotland where so much is done on trust. It meant getting the dinghy over the side and rowing ashore,

but it is a pleasant place so the task was not onerous, and by choosing the pub as a paypoint, a pint of draft bitter was the prize.

We were delighted when at 2030 *Misty* appeared and we went on board for drinks with Mike Rosemary and Alastair after they rafted alongside.

Plockton is a most attractive setting. It has an ambience that is different to anything else we would experience on the cruise. The village may be a bit 'touristy' but it is none the less pleasant for that.



Early morning at Plockton



Loch Kishorn viewed from near Plockton



The map is a nautical chart of the Outer Hebrides, Scotland. It shows the Mainland, North Harris, and South Harris. Key locations labeled include: Upper Toft, Creag Langall, Na Fimhairan, Rona, Obstn, Applecross Moor, Rubha Na Cloich Naine, Eil. Meall Mor, Rubha Na Lachan, Ard Na C, Fu Na Lachan, Little Rls, Rubha Na Guaine, Applecross Bay, Milton, Camusteel, Eil. Nan Naomh, Culduie, Poll Domhain, Toscaig, Eil. Na Ba, Aird Mhor, Eil. Beag, Eil. Meadhonach, Eilean Mor, Rubha Na H. Uamha, Loch Camas, Aird Dhibhidh, and Plackton. The chart also shows the Sound of Raasay, Brochel Bay, Beinn A' Chapuill, Inver Raasay, Meall Darnach, and Dun Cam. Depth soundings are provided throughout the water areas. A blue dashed line indicates a recommended route. An inset map in the top right shows the location of the Hebrides within the British Isles. A small photograph of a sailboat is included in the bottom left corner.



A photograph of three people on the deck of a boat. On the left, a man wearing a brown hat and a dark shirt sits at a wooden table. In the center, a man with a grey beard and a light blue t-shirt stands with his arm around the seated man. On the right, a woman wearing a blue cap, sunglasses, and a light blue t-shirt stands smiling. The table in front of them holds several items, including two cans of Coca-Cola, a bowl of food, and a glass. The background shows the blue water of the sea and the white structure of the boat.

Ariadne - photo:Rosemary Cubitt

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Misty

After lunch we had a gentle beat across the Inner Sound, through Caol Rona - a narrow sound between Raasay and South Rona, ending up in Acarseid Mhor which remains our favourite Hebridean anchorage. Afternoon tea was in *Misty's* cockpit.



Dairne beating through Caol Rona



Ariadne in Acarseid Mhor

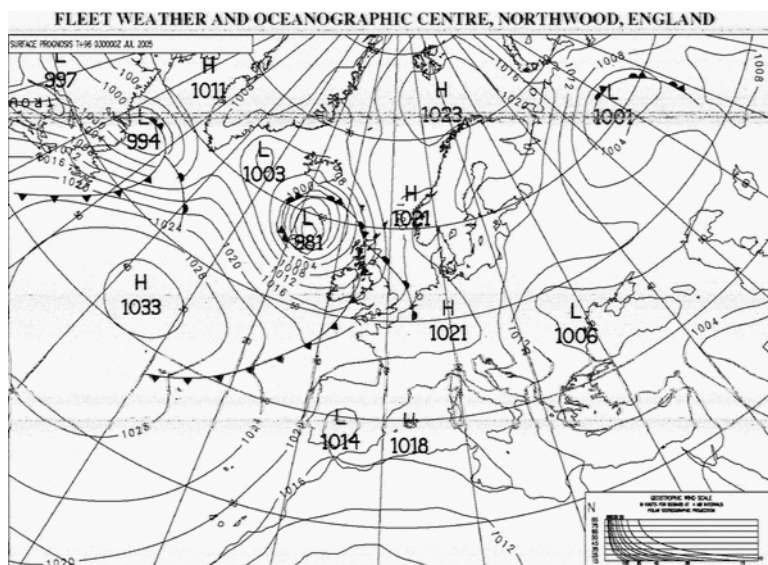


Acarseid Mhor remains our favourite Hebridean anchorage



## Acarseid Mhor to Lochmaddy: 29th June[49.3M]

Weatherfax was giving indications of severe weather in a few days time, possibly in excess of force 8, probably S or SW in direction. This was before such weather was mentioned in the VHF outlook. One option would have been to stay put in Acarseid Mhor, but we would have been there for about a week. Instead we opted to take advantage of the calm before the storm to get out to the outer islands. We reckoned that there would be well laid buoys in Lochmaddy, so that became our target.







Ariadne anchored in Lochmaddy

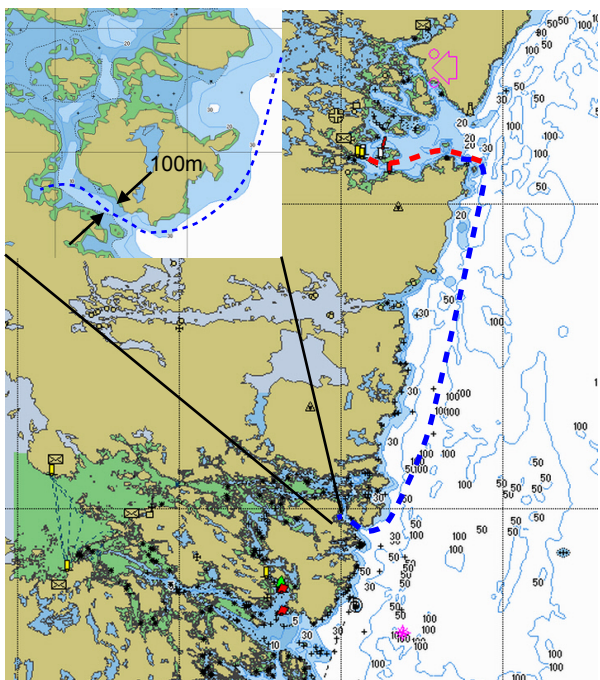
They were on their way to the Faroes. We were able to show them the weather outlook, and they reckoned they would be able to hole up in Stornoway for the gale. We can only hope they had a successful voyage as they left the next day.



Praxis en route to Faroes

### ***Lochmaddy to Acarseid Feallach (and back): 30th June[20.9]***

In 2001, we had met in Acarseid Mhor a small converted Drascombe that had arrived from the Outer Hebrides in a F6. The owners claimed they had come from a harbour that was even more perfect than Acarseid Mhor. From their description I had identified this as Acarseid Feallach, which is pictured in the latest Imray Hebrides Pilot by Martin Lawrence (but not even mentioned in the CCC pilot). As it was just down the coast we decided to go there.



In the event, the wind was SE 4/5 giving a nasty little beat. Using the plotter we worked our way among the rocks and into this remarkable, secure anchorage. However, the weather was deteriorating quite rapidly and I did not fancy this remote lonely spot during a severe gale so, without even anchoring, we circled round inside the harbour, then made our way back outside and enjoyed a pleasant reach back to Lochmaddy where, at the top of the harbour near the ferry terminal we made fast to a secure looking HIE buoy. Later, in discussion with the owner of *Cornish Lady* moored on the next buoy, we were able to confirm that the buoy had been serviced.



Acarseid Feallach entrance  
(looking out)

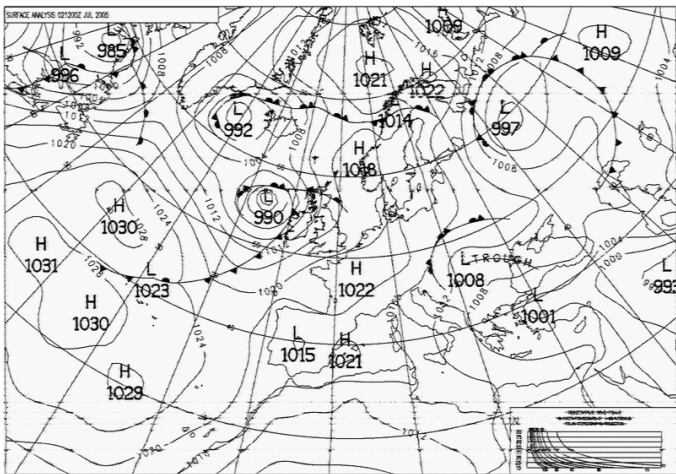


Ariadne and Cornish Lady at Lochmaddy



## A gale in Lochmaddy: 1st - 3rd July

We had a day clear before the storm would hit us, so we were able to explore a little. The tourist office at Lochmaddy had some fascinating books about gaelic history. Just outside, 10 yards along the road, was the only place in the area where a mobile phone signal could be obtained.



Actual weather at noon on 2nd July

bright idea of making the local junior school the 'curators' of the museum and the interpretive texts had all been prepared, and in some cases, illustrated by them. In a back room, Dairne found a collection of old photographs and she spent a couple of hours just going through them.

Back on the boat, we entertained the owner of *Cornish Lady*, who turned out to be a rather taciturn loner, but he was interesting once he was confident enough to open out a little. His possessions were mainly his boat, a caravan and a dog. He had ascertained that the moorings off the pier at Lochmaddy had been serviced which was comforting. I also

removed the genoa to reduce windage during the gale. It was then just a matter of waiting and watching the CalMac ferries come and go.

During the morning of the 7th, the wind backed right round into the SouthEast, and freshened. This was the direction where we were exposed to the largest fetch, and for a time, the water across the loch was flecked with white, and the boats were lurching to their moorings in the gusts. At this stage, we were lying with our stern uncomfortably close to a large rock. Had the mooring given way, we would have no time to do anything.



Ashore at Lochmaddy

There are a couple of shops in Lochmaddy for essentials such as bread, but it is not exactly a metropolis. It does, however, have a museum and art gallery/shop which turned out to be fascinating. Somebody had had the



Stern rather close to the rock



Cornish Lady



Barometer dropped 12mb in 4 hours



As the warm front arrived during the evening, the wind veered, the cloud came down low over the hills, and the whole sky had a really foreboding aspect. I pointed out to Dairne that there was at least a small beach downwind of us now if we broke loose. We were a little better protected, by the new wind direction, although the wind was still noisy in the rigging.



CalMac ferry built for the Little Minch weather

It was full dark by the time the barometer really started to plummet at more than 2mb per hour, with increasing wind. It must have been at about 0300 that it was at its worst, the wind howling around the boat in the gusts. We observed 45 kts on the anemometer, and it is probable that gusts exceeded 50kts at the peak of the storm.

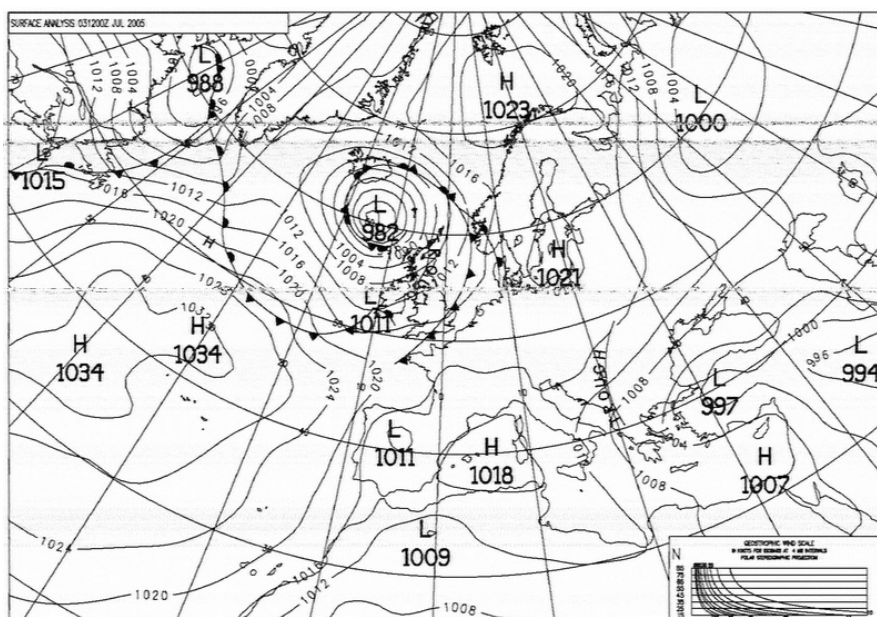


Hornpipe as the storm approached

By morning, the wind had veered further into the west, and the sky cleared as the depression fled away to the north. Although it was bright, there was still a stiff wind blowing, and we reckoned that there could still be some sea outside, despite the shelter of the coast. On that basis we sat out the rest of the day waiting for conditions to moderate.



Hornpipe after the wind had veered and the storm had passed



Actual weather at noon on 3rd July, after storm had passed



## Lochmaddy to Scalpay, Harris: 4th July [25.4M] and 5th July



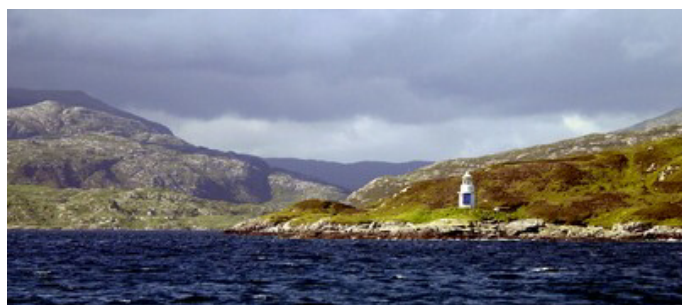
There was still a brisk breeze from the SW, making the trip along the inside of the Outer Hebrides nearly a dead run.



Sound of Harris

It was easy going, but fast sailing, even passing the Sound of Harris, which is an extremely complex set of passages through the islands. Fortunately, we did not have to attempt the passage as the weather was not at all settled enough to consider visiting the Atlantic side of the Hebrides.

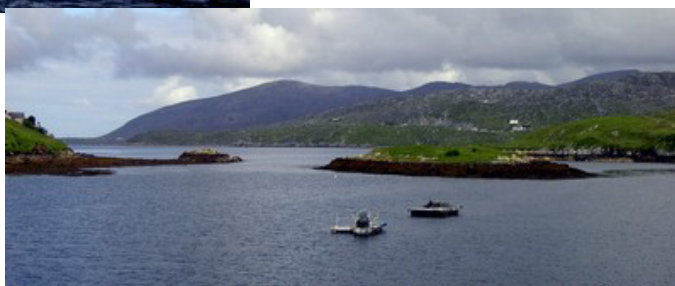
Once past the Sound of Harris, the islands take on a new character. Unlike the Uists and Benbecula, which have very few hills of any consequence, Harris and Lewis are mountainous.



Scotasay

Scalpay is well sheltered from all directions, and is an attractive town on an island, now linked to Harris by a bridge with only 20m

As we had been running almost dead before the wind, it was a relief to turn into the Loch Tarbert. We took the lazy, and safe, but longer route round the top of Scotasay before entering the natural harbour of Scalpay, where we anchored at 1830.



Scalpay entrance



Ariadne anchored at Scalpay

air draft (I estimate *Ariadne* is 17.5m to the top of the aerial). It has obviously been a thriving community, with many fishing boats (mainly after prawns) and there used to be a tweed factory and shop, but sadly this has closed down, the buildings now being the local 'supermarket'.



Scalpay Pier



On board Amica

On the 5th July, we went ashore for a look round. As the island is rather hilly, we were unable to really explore far beyond the village - though we could have caught a bus to Tarbert had we been so minded!

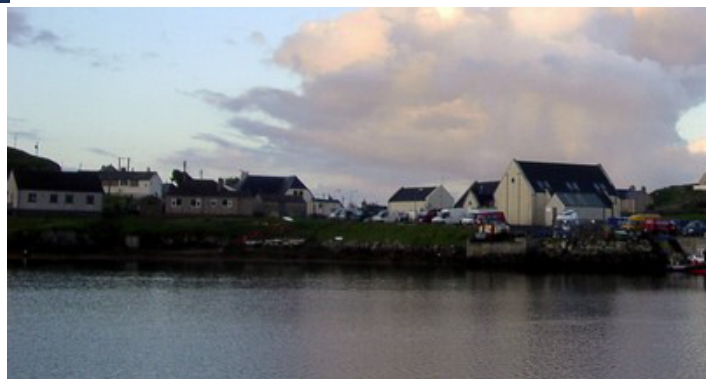
Back on board, we noticed that *Amica*, a wooden sloop that had also sat out the storm in Lochmaddy had anchored near us. When Pat and Val Watson invited us aboard, we were happy to accept. It turned out that they were also from the South Coast, and were on an extended exploratory cruise not dissimilar to our own, but they had fewer luxuries on their boat. It made us feel rather decadent.



Fisherman's shed at Scalpay



2 general views of Scalpay





## Reference Books



This is probably the best place to pause for a moment, just before I take you to the Shiant Islands, to consider where we got a lot of our information.

While formal pilotage data came from the superb Imray pilot books by Martin Lawrence covering all of Scotland, and the Clyde Cruising Club volumes, the visitor needs more information. Where there are formal 'tourist' sites, it is common to find leaflets and in the tourist offices, one can buy books that explain the history and culture. I particularly enjoyed a book of essays by John Lorne Campbell, who used to be the owner of Canna, who had spent a lifetime collecting Gaelic memories.

'Sailing Tours' by William Cowper throws an interesting light on this area. In volume 5, he describes his cruise to the area in 1895 in a 50 ft gaff ketch with no engine. His book also describes some of the history, and extremely gory it can be. But, inevitably, Cowper is a bit selective and seems to concentrate on battles on the mainland.

By contrast, Hamish Haswell Smith has produced what can only be a labour of love. His book, simply titled 'Scottish Islands' describes the ownership, history, geology and ecology of some 600 Scottish Islands. This book was our constant companion when visiting the islands. The book is a delight to own - and the latest addition has more colour than the example shown above of the Shiant Islands. I would not like to visit any Scottish Island without this book.

Iain Mitchell's books 'Isles of the West' and 'Isles of the North' are accounts of cruises in the Hebrides and Northern Isles, but they give a particular insight into life in the Islands which can be enlightening.

For the Shiant Islands, 'Sea Room', the book written by Adam Nicholson who owns the Shiant Islands is a worthwhile, if rather strange account of their history.

## Scalpay to the Shiant: 6th July [11.3M]



Scalpay Bridge - 20m air draft

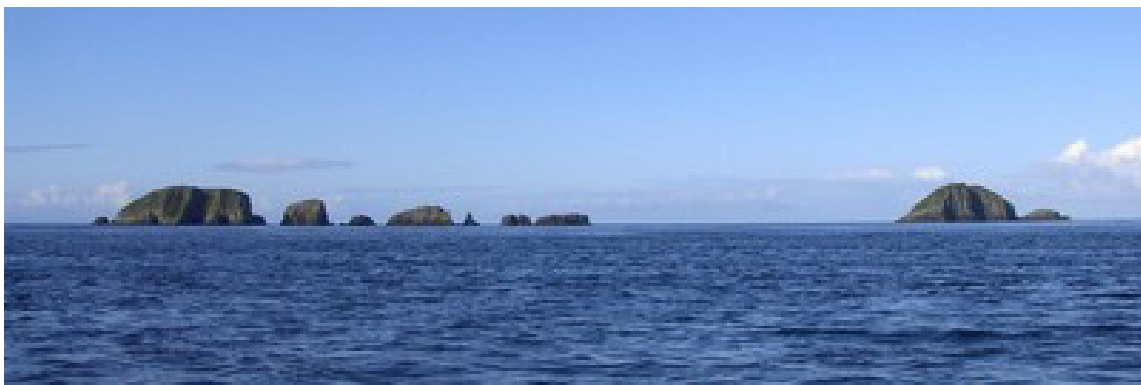
We woke to find a still morning. This looked really promising for us to achieve at least one of our 'goals' for the cruise - a visit to the Shiant Islands. We had read the book by Adam Nicholson who owns the Shiant Islands. It is a rather strange book, almost a love letter to the islands, if that does not sound too strange. But the book does convey an atmosphere. I particularly wanted to see the columnar cliffs, and hoped that it would be as good a bird sanctuary as suggested by Nicholson's book. In the event it surpassed all expectations, partly

because this day turned out to be one of those rare still, warm, sunny Hebridean days, with the green of the hills and the blue of the sea in brilliant sharpness after the recent rains. .

Motoring out through the sound to the north of Scalpay meant going under the new bridge. A gap of 2,5m looks incredibly small when viewed from the cockpit looking up, but we passed safely under. Soon we were clear of Scalpay and motoring across the Minch crabbing across the tide.



Harris coastline



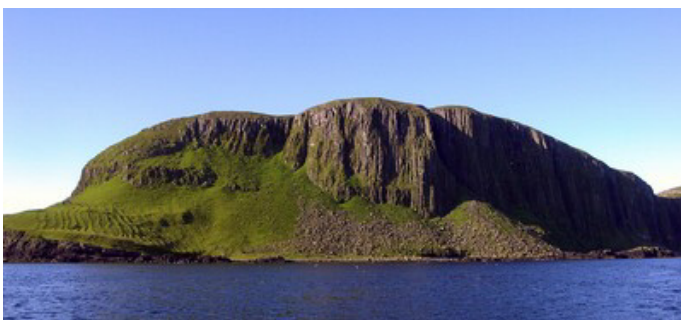
The Galtas - guarding the Stream of the Blue Men





Hexagonal columns on the cliffs of Garbh Eileann

Because I wanted to see the columnar cliffs, we took the slightly less direct route round the north side of Garbh Eilean, passing the forbidding Galtas, a row of fang-like rocks that straddle the tideway between the islands and the mainland. Looking at the chart, it is clear that the sea bottom here is very uneven, and not very deep in a few places. In strong winds and tide, this area can become turbulent. According to Nicholson, it is known as the "Stream of the Blue Men". In rough weather according to legend, the Blue Men may board your ship and challenge you with a Gaelic riddle. If you are unable to answer, in Gaelic, then you will be grabbed and taken to the depths. It is the kind of legend that is born out of tragic truths, some of which are described by Nicholson, including the discovery of an ancient torc (or bracelet) that was recovered by a fisherman in this area.



Garbh Eileann

The columnar cliffs are similar in structure to Giants Causeway in Ireland, and the columns on Staffa near Fingal's Cave. However, the Staffa columns are some 10m high, whereas those on the Shiantas are 50 m. Rounding the NW corner of the islands, these impressive structures appeared, heralded by an ever-increasing mass of seabirds, resting on the water, diving, flying round the cliffs and generally making a lot of noise!

Finally we could see the natural arch described by Nicholson, and after rounding the point we could make for the stone beach that links Garbh Eilean with Eilean an Tighe, and is the only easy landing place. However, the holding is not brilliant here, and if I were to stay overnight, I would feel obliged to stand an anchor watch in all but the most benign conditions.

For an hour it was sufficient to just sit in cockpit in awe of this place and its population of puffins, guillemots, cormorants, and fulmars.



Ariadne anchored in front of natural arch, near the landing place



The Landing Place



Galtas viewed from Eilann an Tighe



Amica anchored at the Shiants

At first, we were not alone in the anchorage. A vessel that looked like a survey or research vessel (registered in Denmark) was also there with a party exploring ashore. They left after an hour, but I was concerned that they may have been representing one of the meddling government agencies or an NGO seeking some new reason to plant a designation on these wonderful islands. At the time of our visit, Nicholson had managed to avoid any designations, or management plans. He argues, with some justification, that his ownership has prevented development of the islands, but he has allowed access to anyone caring to get themselves to the islands. He argues that formal designation would attract attention and the idea of notices regulating activity and 'interpretation boards' - all likely outcomes of a 'management plan' - would destroy the feeling of wilderness. [Later I did email Adam Nicholson, setting out my concerns regarding the survey ship, and received a warm reply, thanking me for my interest, and for the positive remarks I had written in the visitors book in the bothy on the island].

From watching the anoraks from the survey ship, we knew that it was rough scrambling to even get off the beach, so Dairne opted to stay on board. Going ashore in the dinghy alone, I made my way up onto the low bluff at the north of Eileann an Tighe, and looked back at *Ariadne* looking peaceful, but vulnerable in the anchorage. I had neither the energy, nor the time, to climb to the top of the island, but I was able to walk the short distance to the only surviving building on the islands - a small bothy that is fitted out for two or three people to stay on the island eking out a basic existence, using water gathered from small spring pools near the house.

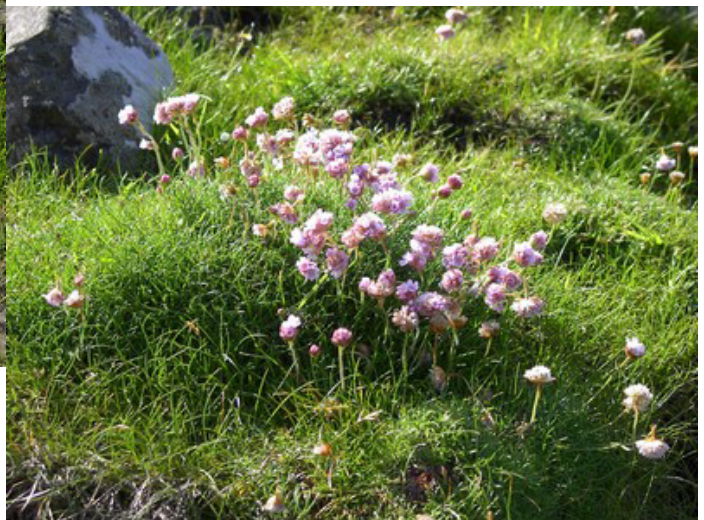
Walking back, I could see the steep slope - almost a cliff - that would need to be climbed to get to the top of Garbh Eileann to where the puffins had their burrows. It would have been daunting when I was a lot younger and fitter than I am now.

The bothy was not locked. On the table inside there was a visitors book in which I wrote something like "May you always keep the islands wild; and keep the NGOs and bureaucrats away". I did not stay long, returning to the beach, and getting back to *Ariadne* just in time to see *Amica* arrive and anchor near us. I rowed over, and they returned with me to *Ariadne* for a light lunch.





Visiting the Bothy on the Shiant Islands  
(Eileann an Tighe)

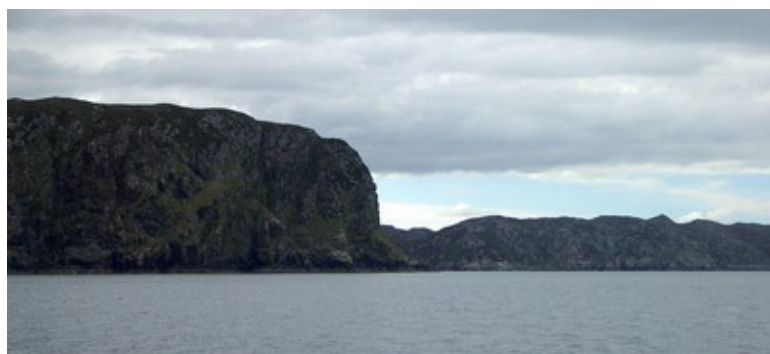






The islands keep changing shape as you move around them, so we had new views of them all, especially Eileann Mhuire the third of the islands that in years gone by supported a large flock of sheep.

Apparently landing on Eilean Mhuire is tricky.



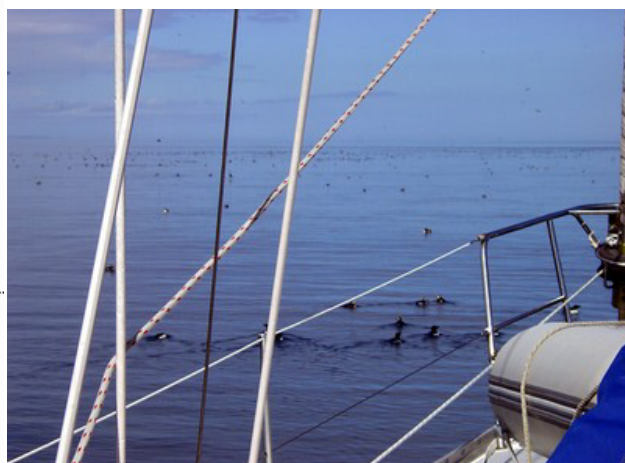
Kebock Head

It was tempting to stay in this strange place, but this day of complete calm was an aberration; it could not last. So we decided to carry on toward Stornoway, stopping for the night somewhere in Loch Erisort.

We watched *Amica* make her way out to the south and towards Skye. Then we weighed and started to motor northwards, passing through massive rafts of puffins and guillemots. It was a truly amazing sight.



Eileann Mhuire (Above)







Bottom: Loch Erisort

## Loch Erisort to Stornoway: 7th July [7.5M]



Stornoway harbour entrance

This was just a short mid-morning hop into Stornoway where we found the fuelling berth before seeking space. Stornoway is still dominantly a commercial harbour focusing on the ferries and fishing rather than leisure. The marina is too small, and the fingers too short for modern cruising yachts.



Ariadne in Stornoway

We had a look at the marina berth suggested by the harbour office, then called them to say it was not suitable. They then suggested we lay outside a motor yacht on the harbour wall. Though less than satisfactory, this worked out reasonably well in practice.



Stornoway

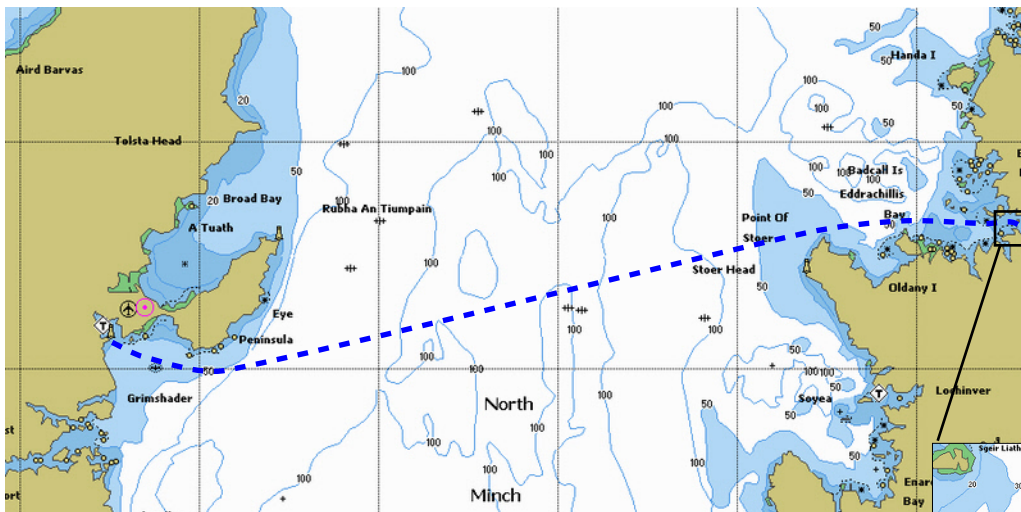
We had not been near major shops since Oban about 2 weeks earlier. There was a small Coop supermarket on the quay, but its range was restricted, so a visit to the new supermarket a quarter of a mile away was called for. We also needed a new gas cylinder, and the stockist was adjacent to this supermarket. It meant two trips, but our collapsible sack barrow prevented the chores from being too onerous.

On the way back from the supermarket, I found a small shop selling kippers, and a good restaurant for the evening.

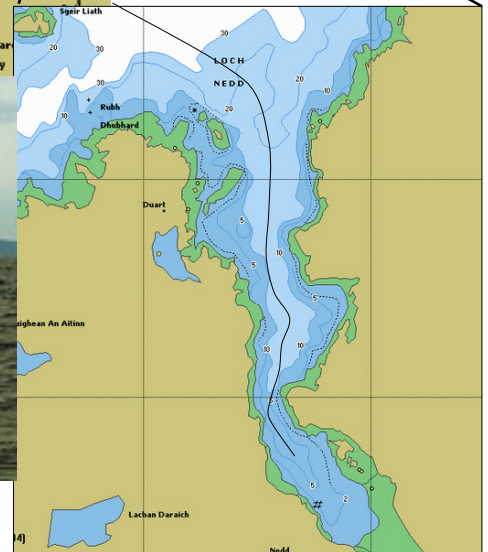
Without doubt, Stornoway is a pleasant, clean city, with excellent facilities. The restaurant was also good. The town was getting ready for a major folk festival, but we would have had to stay at least four more days to join in, and I was not at all sure how the harbour would cope with a further influx of yachts.



## Stornoway to Loch Nedd: 8th July [40.5M]



It is all Libby Purves' fault. When she sailed round Britain with her young family, they had a bad beat from Lochinver past the Point of Stoer, finally finding shelter in Loch Nedd. "God Bless Loch Nedd"! Was her concluding comment. We felt we ought to see if it really was that good. It was.



Spectacular Sutherland mountains



Old Man of Stoer

Our voyage to Loch Nedd was much better. Dairne was tired, so I got going at 0745, making sail as we left the harbour. The SSW F4 wind made for a fast passage in a moderate sea.

By 1300 the Stoer Head light was approximately SSW at 4M. Approaching the mainland coast we could see the mountains surrounding Loch Broom, and the magnificent Sutherland peaks of Stach Pollaid and Cul Mhor, though we could not identify Suilven.

We had had a sparkling reach, but by 1330, as we approached the Old Man of Stoer (a spectacular rock column) the wind had died, and we had to motor the rest of the way, feeling our way into Loch Nedd and anchoring at 1600.

Loch Nedd is a complete contrast. In the approach, the great Sutherland peaks dominate the view giving an impression of great scale and wilderness, but once inside, the low wooded hills obstruct the grand view and the Loch feels snug and safe and quite small.



Approaching Loch Nedd





Loch Nedd anchorage

The most striking feature, having spent a couple of weeks in the outer islands, is the existence of quite dense woodland, trees being quite scarce in the islands.

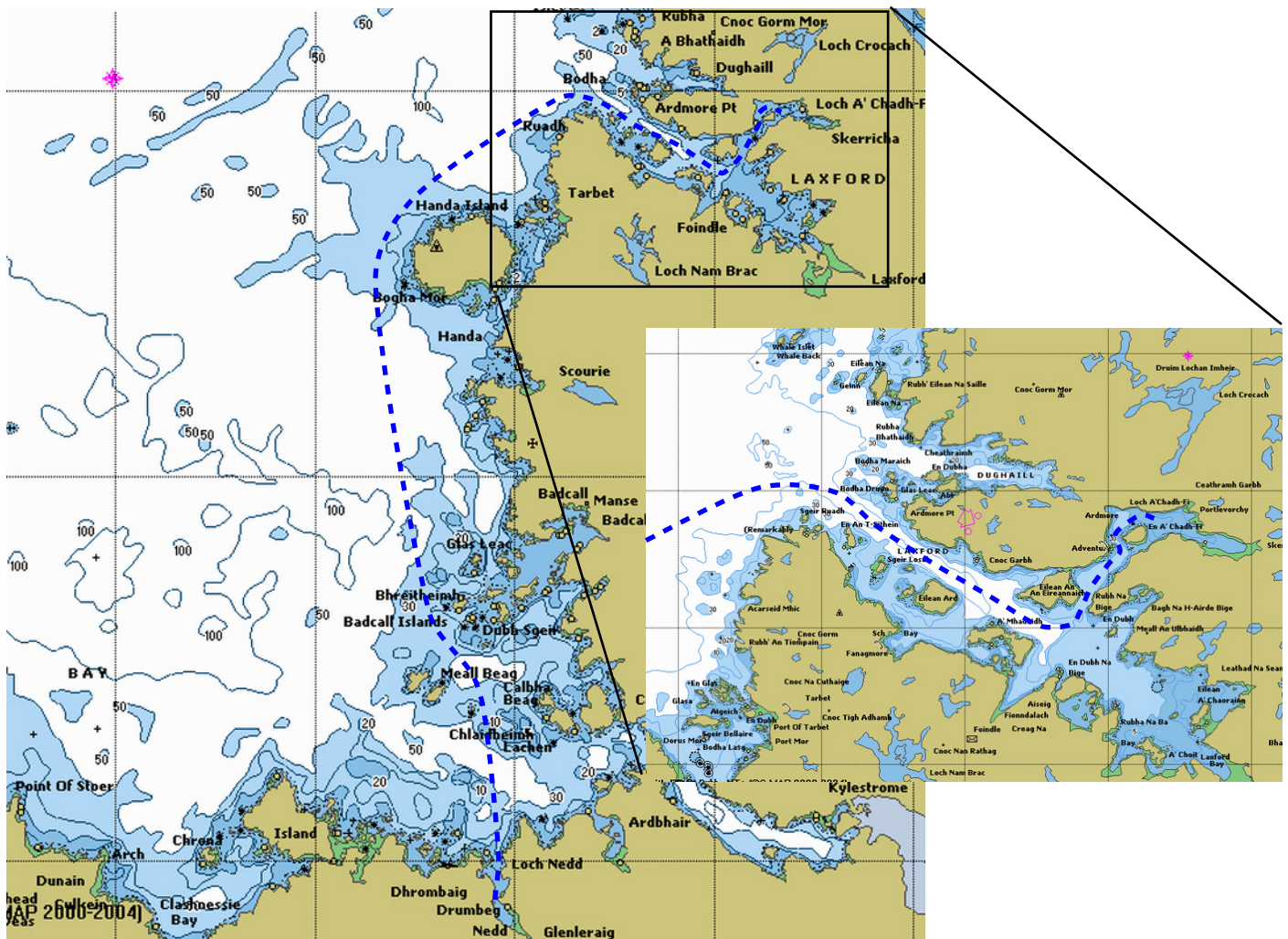
There seemed to be quite a bit of local fishing activity in the area, but we could not identify a village centre so contented ourselves with observing from on board.

At first we could sit in the cockpit, but gradually the cloudbase came down and it started to rain.



Loch Nedd - looking seaward through narrows

### Loch Nedd to Loch Laxford: 9th July [15.4M]



Once again, we could foresee a deterioration in the weather over the next few days. While Loch Nedd was snug, we did not want to miss the opportunity of reasonable weather to move further north. Our friends in *Southern Cross*, had told us of the secure anchorage behind the island next to John Ridgeway's Outward Bound centre in



Loch Laxford. We knew it would be rather bleak and remote, but it looked pretty secure so we opted to head for Loch Laxford.

It would not be a long passage so a departure at 1020 allowed a leisurely start to the day. However, it took some time to weigh anchor because the bottom of Loch Nedd is not scoured by tide or river and is therefore a soft silt. It was experiences like this on our previous visit to Scotland that had led us to fit the deckwash pump.



Point of Stoer viewed between Badcall Islands



Deckwash pump

Although quite short, the passage required some careful pilotage, as it wandered through the Badcall Islands, found its way past Handa Island, and into Loch Laxford itself. The coastline here looked bleak and rocky, and it would have been quite tricky to identify the entrance to Loch Laxford were it not for the electronic chart plotter. It is frightening how much one comes to rely on these modern devices!



Passing Handa Island



Rocks close either side entering Loch Laxford

The passage up Loch Laxford wound its way round various byways until we were snug behind the island off Ardmore. This anchorage is a convenient depth, sheltered on all sides, but bleak, the grey, almost white gneiss rock supporting only tufts of vegetation. However, as a place to sit out strong weather, it could not be bettered.

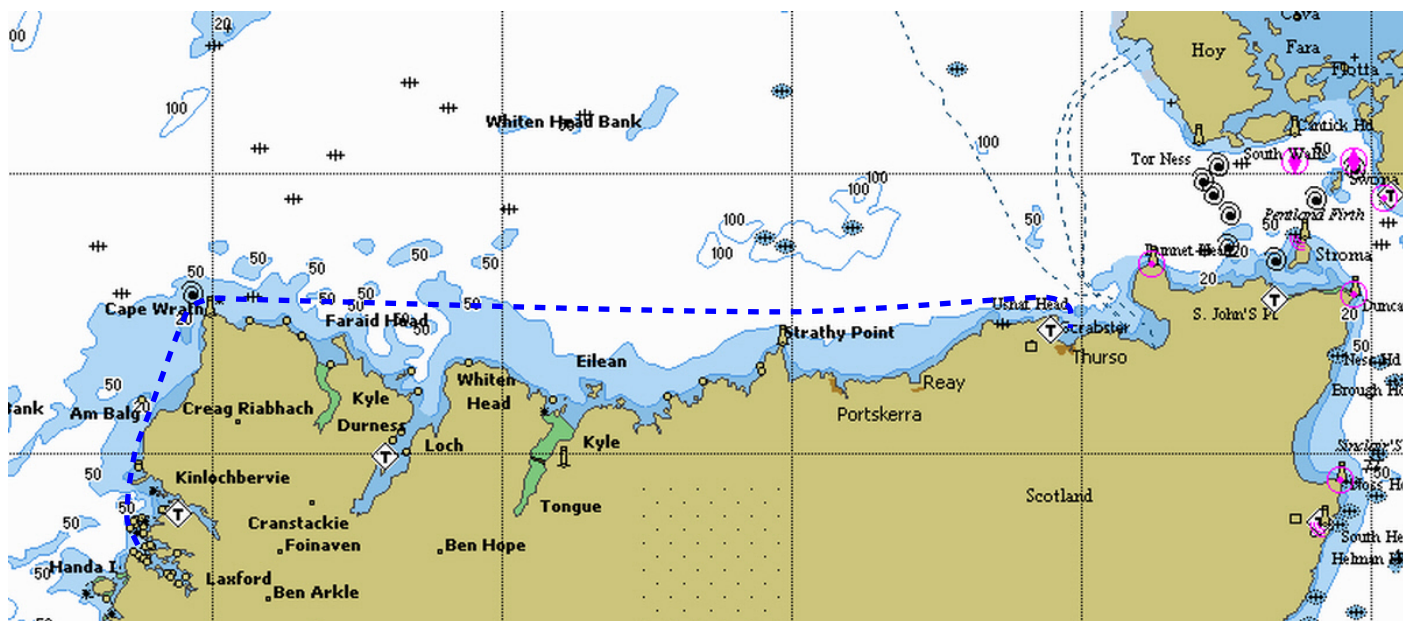


John Ridgway's Ardmore Centre



Ariadne snug in Loch Laxford

## Loch Laxford to Scrabster: 11th July [61.1M]



We sat out a day of rain, low cloud and wind. It gave us a slight insight into the problems of living in northern Scotland in winter. It must be very bleak, and very long. We at least had the advantage that daylight lasted a long time, even though we were a month past the longest day.

Despite a forecast of poor visibility we decided to move on past Cape Wrath. The prospect was for reasonable winds and a slight to moderate sea, both major plus factors in the decision to go. Once round Cape Wrath, we could always opt out into Loch Eriboll if it did not seem prudent to go on to Scrabster.



Am Balg - half a mile off the coast

So it was at 0515 that we started out on what would be a long day. To be sure of making the tide at Cape Wrath we had to motor sail despite a pleasant SSW F3 wind. We stayed fairly close to the coast, passing



Stack on the mainland shore opposite Am Balg

inside Am Balg, an ugly looking rocky outcrop only half a mile off the coast. By doing this we should, according to the pilot books, pick up an eddy going up to Cape Wrath. Of more interest was yet another amazing rock column on the mainland shore just opposite Am Balg. The cloud and mist were very low - probably less than 50m - but visibility at sea level was not too bad. However the result was that



Approaching Cape Wrath





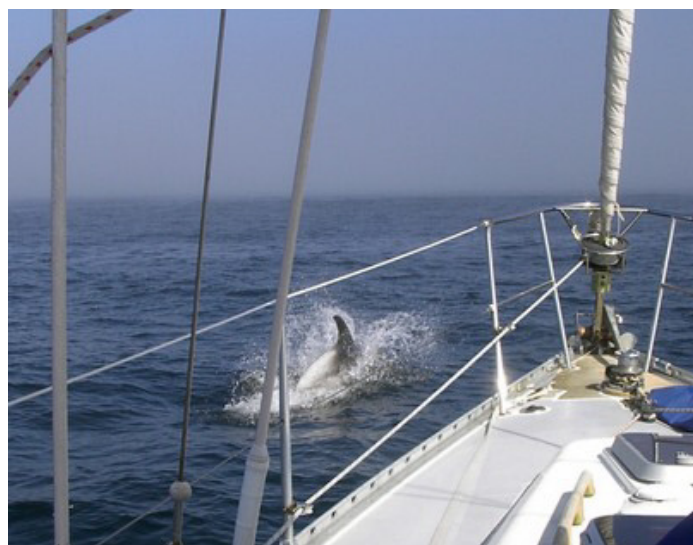
Cape Wrath

we saw little of hinterland behind the immediate coast as we motored past Sandwood Bay. Gradually we eased up toward the headland. We had come a long way to reach this point and it was, in one sense, disappointing not to see the Cape. However, the low cloud hung down the cliff face, and created a really dramatic aspect.



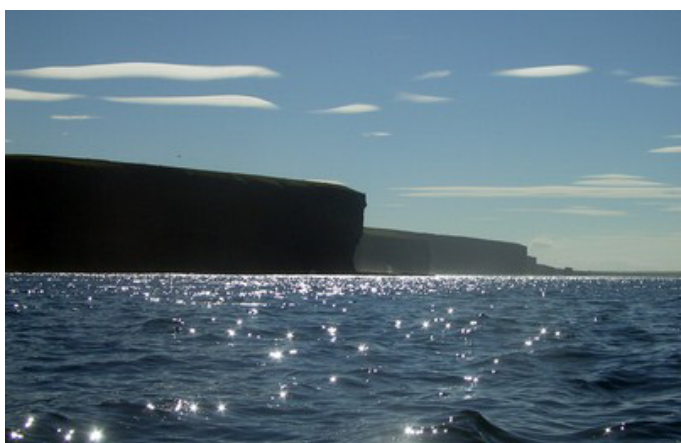
Emerging from fogbank near Durness

Rounding this headland close too is a little tricky because there is a rock patch lying only a couple of cables NNE of the headland itself, and the tide can sweep you toward it. However, in the event, the rocks were clearly visible, and we were able to pass easily between them and the mainland. However, some of the expected eddies did not materialise, so for a time progress, still motorsailing, was slow.



Dolphin? - unusual colouring!

Then, to our amazement, within 15 minutes, the cloud base lifted, and within minutes we were motoring under a blue sky. Looking back we could see the cloud and mist clinging to Cape Wrath, but we had, for the moment left it behind. As a result we had quite good views of Loch Eriboll and Durness. But an hour later, the surface



Holborn Head, looking West

visibility deteriorated, and we were motor sailing in 200m visibility and sunshine. Probably the visibility at masthead height was several miles, but we didn't bother to check it! It was during this period that we were visited by two large dolphins with strange markings. By dolphin standards, they were large, but small for Orcas, but, on balance, we believe they were common dolphins.

The visibility returned as we approached Holborn Head which made the business of rounding it to enter



Scrabster

Scrabster relatively easy. We were safe alongside by 1700.

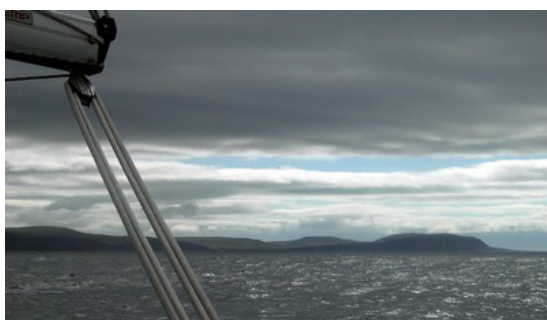
Scrabster turned out to be a pleasant working port which had adapted to become the main ferry port for the Stromness service, as well as catering for yachts and fishing vessels.

This had been a quite strange day. The weather had changed from poor to pleasant; back to poor; and finally sunny. The visibility had been disappointing, so we had seen little of the coast, but had had good views of Durness and Eriboll. The day illustrated well the saying that if you do not like the weather in Scotland, wait a few minutes and it will change!

We were now faced with the Pentland Firth. Reading the pilot books would tend to make anyone stay away - but we were used to that. Clearly the area demanded respect, so I spent some time looking at tides and times. We decided that by leaving during the morning, we could cross well to the west of the worst of the race (the Orkney word is 'roost').

### **Scrabster to Stromness: 12th July [21.5M]**

It was a grey day when we cast off at 0710. We were motorsailing, confidently expecting the breeze to fill in from the west. To avoid being set into the Pentland Firth we made out to the west a little before turning towards Hoy, where we expected to pick up an eddy for a while, then possibly foul tide as we approached Hoy Sound, hoping to find the current turning in our favour. Well, it sort of worked out like that, but.....



Approaching Orkney



When the breeze eventually filled in the water was so turbulent that the wind was shaken from the sails, and we had to keep the engine on. As we closed Hoy, the tide started to pick us up, but after a few minutes we crossed a kind of tide boundary after which the tide went foul. Moreover as we passed the Old Man of Hoy, the reflected waves from the cliffs made the seas very confused again. Indeed, it was difficult to steer and hold the camera steady - it was so rough that Dairne just had to look after herself, and I was hand steering because the pilot or the Monitor simply could not handle the conditions.





Old Man of Hoy



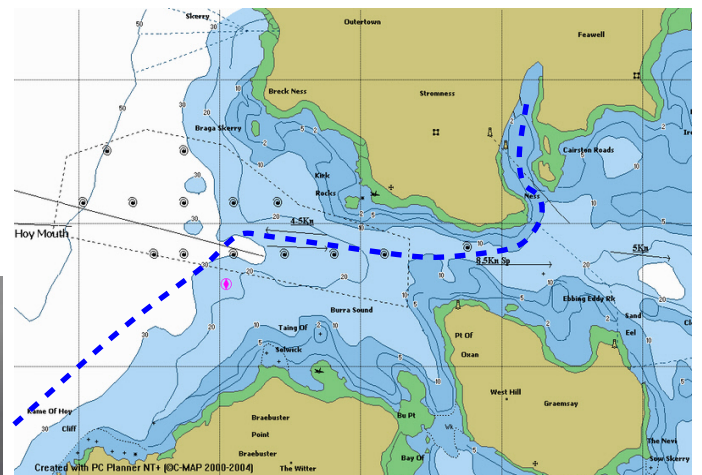
Hoy cliffs - almost 1000 feet high



Hoy from Hoy Sound

It was important to make the turn into Stromness at the right moment as the tide was, by then, starting to swish us past the narrow entrance to the well protected harbour.

Despite the problems, this was an impressive passage, the Hoy cliffs being among the highest on Great Britain (nearly 1000 ft). It was a relief to turn into Hoy Sound and put the seas more on the quarter. Gradually the tide turned in our favour, and we were able to concentrate on pilotage towards the lights on Graasey.



Stromness marina

## Orkney Mainland (Stromness): 12th-18th July

We were ready for a break. Since the enforced delay at Milford Haven we had had only the odd layday, mainly due to weather. Now we were in a safe harbour, with good facilities nearby, and a large island about which we knew almost nothing. We knew that our friends on *Southern Cross* had toured the island by car, and we also had been advised by them not to bother with Kirkwall, especially if there was likely to be some north in the wind. (We were still in touch with *Southern Cross* by text and knew that they had made good progress, eventually reaching Bodo near the Lofoten Islands in Norway before turning south. Their success made our efforts seem quite tame.)

Talking to *Isabella*, a Moody 36 on an adjacent berth, we learned amazingly that she had come from Fawley near Southampton. They told us they had hired a car to explore the island, and this seemed an excellent plan. My conversation with *Isabella* was overheard by another recent arrival, *Auguste* from Hamburg. Horst asked whether he could share the hire car as, being 70 years old, he had no wish to start driving on the left! So we were to spend a few days in company with Horst and Edi. This involved visiting boats for drinks or meals at various times. We really enjoyed their company.

Hiring the car turned out to be quite amusing. The owner of the company said he did not have a car to spare for the two days we wanted, but "I don't want to let you down, so you had better borrow my car". So for £28 per day and an exchange of letters authorising me to drive his car, we had our wheels.

Horst and Dairne had both ticked off the things they wanted to see on Orkney, and their choices fitted well together. We would have 2 days, of which the first would concentrate on the main archaeological sites, while on the second day we would look more at the area surrounding Scapa Flow.

In all we were to spend a week in Stromness, the weather being wet and windy much of the time. However, the island - known simply as Mainland - was so interesting, and so gentle that it was a restorative break.

The pictures tell the rest of the story.

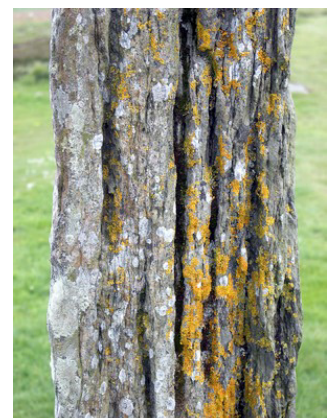




## Stenness Standing Stones



## Ring of Brodgar







To the west, America; to the north the Pole



With weather like this, we were glad the boats were safe in Stromness.



## Skara Brae

This site is more than 5000 years old - quite a lot older than the pyramids in Egypt.



The site was covered for over 4000 years, being exposed by a freak storm at the beginning of the 20th century.





*The Earl's Palace*



*Kirbister Croft Museum*



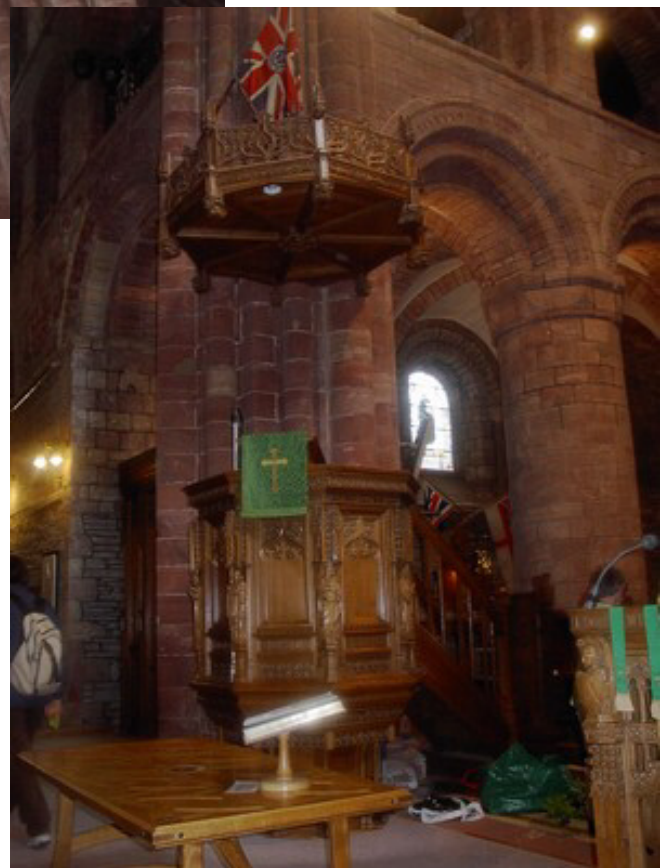


## Corrigall Farm Museum



## ***St Magnus Cathedral, Kirkwall***

This magnificent building is 800 years old.

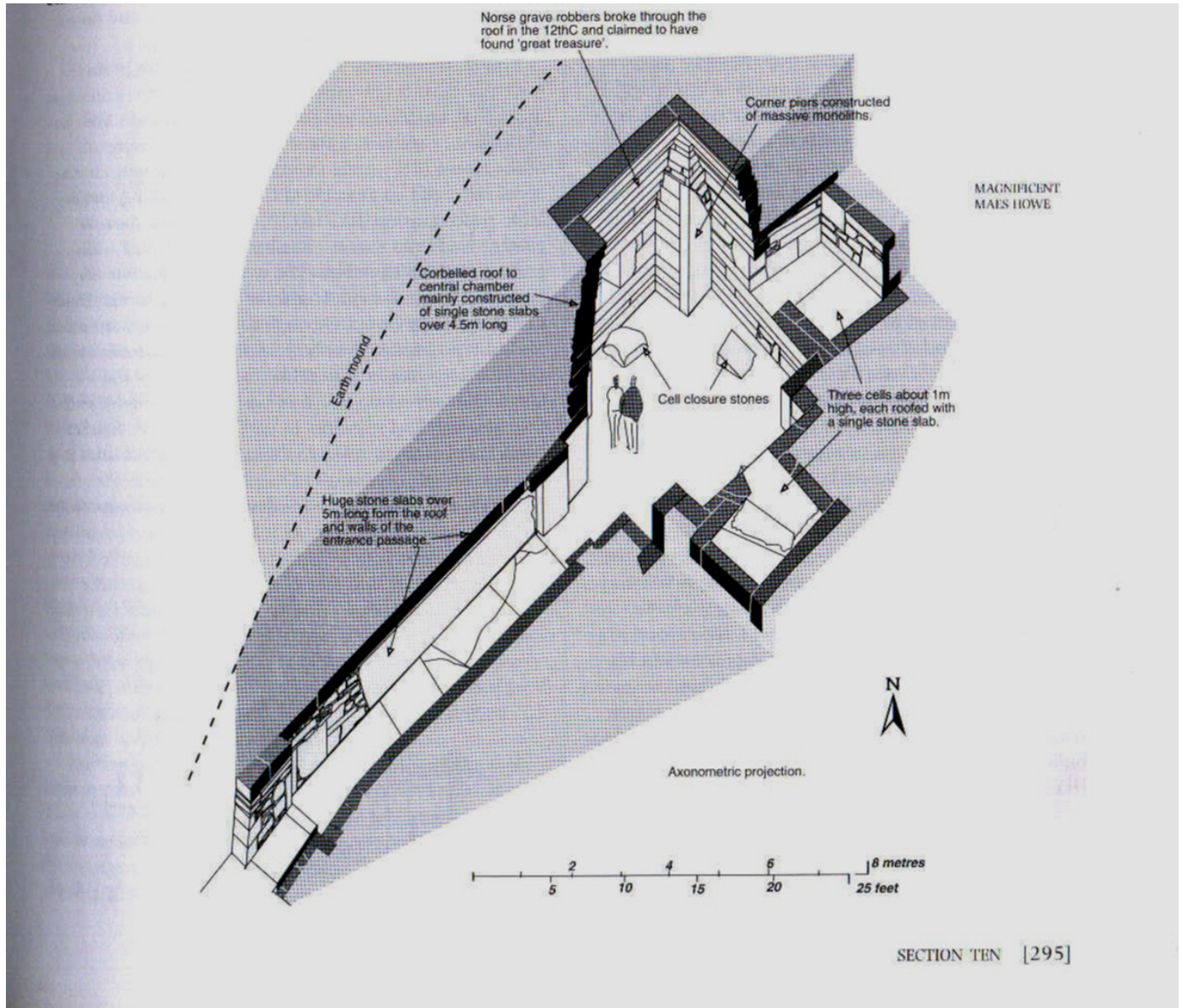






## Maes Howe

Photographing in the eerie tomb of Maes Howe is not permitted, so I have taken the diagram from Hamish Haswell Smith's *Scottish Islands*. You enter along the tunnel to the strange chamber in which there are ancient inscriptions in a kind of runic script. The corbelled roof of the chamber is made of massive slabs of stone, and the door is arranged to pivot so it can be moved easily, despite its weight. It is a marvel of intuitive engineering.





## Scapa Flow



The 'Churchill Barriers' link the smaller islands on the eastern edge of Scapa Flow. They were built to stop submarines creeping in. While they do make the smaller islands more accessible, they make passage to the northern Orkney Isles much more difficult.

While one is very conscious of the scuttled German fleet, there is actually very little to see. This is a view looking across Scapa Flow toward Hoy. Stromness is hidden by the hill behind the ship.



There seem to be quite a number of active crofts in Orkney.

## Edi & Horst Depart.



Edi & Horst

One of the pleasantest aspects of cruising is the way in which friendships happen by chance. As already explained, we joined up with Horst and Edi for a few days, two of which were touring the area by car. As usual we were embarrassed by our total absence of German and their competence with English. Their boat, *Auguste*, was extremely well equipped, and it was clear Horst and Edi had tackled some major cruises. This year they had sailed from Hamburg, through the Caledonian, up the west coast of Scotland, around Cape Wrath to Orkney.



They were now leaving to go to Wick, collect two grandchildren, then they hoped to sail to Shetland and Norway before returning to Hamburg. The weather was to conspire against them, and it would be remarkable if they managed to achieve that programme.

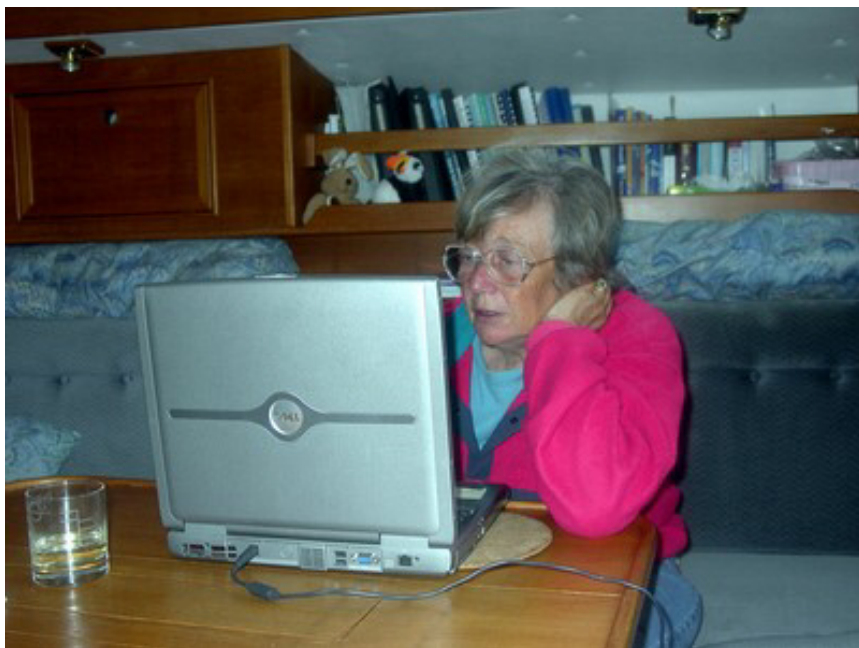
It was therefore amusing to hear Horst express his concern at anchoring! Apparently there is not much need for anchoring when cruising in his home waters. This was a sentiment we were to hear again later from a Dutch yacht. It just shows how different styles of yachting can be.





## Stromness

In addition to the two days of driving around, we had several other days, mainly just resting and hiding from some rather unpleasant weather. Gradually we found our way round Stromness.



It is not a big town, but it has all the essential features, including banks, essential shops, and what could just about be called a supermarket. However, it was the small shops, like the local butcher, and bread shop that really appealed. On the quay, there was a stall inside a warehouse that sold some seafood, from which we twice obtained Westray crab meat.

The ferry terminal contained an excellent tourist office from which we obtained a lot of information, and the puffin looking over Dairne's shoulder in the photograph. He took over the running of the yacht.

We also watched the comings and goings of the ferries, and also the local craft. These yoles - see photo - are clinker built miniature Viking longships with spritsails.

Walking through the town we found little gift shops, a library with a free internet connection, and (right at the far end of the village) the Stromness museum in which we spent a couple of happy hours. Apart from quite a lot of High Seas Fleet objects recovered from Scapa Flow, there were some fascinating exhibits about the man who invented inflatable dinghies, and another local who effectively opened up much of west Africa. What more could you want on a wet day!



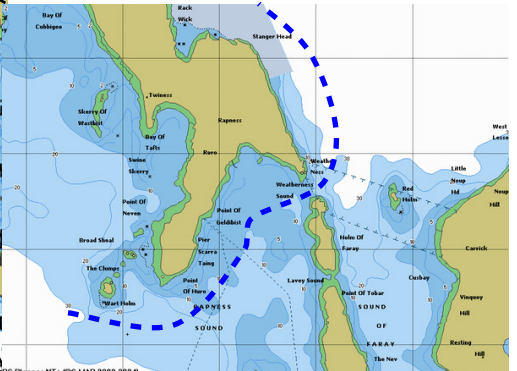
But we were also quite happy to rest on board, watching the weather develop on weatherfax (Graham), or playing bridge on the computer (Dairne). We also exchanged visits with Horst and Edi. Frankly, after nearly 2½ months of battling our way north, we were glad of a week off, a complete rest. The courtesy, and helpfulness of everyone we met in Orkney encouraged us to stay. It is a truly delightful place, with its own character and charm. We would like to go back.

But after a week had gone by, and after we had said farewell to Horst and Edi, we were ready to move on.

## Stromness to Pierowall, Westray: 19th July [50.7M]



Passage planning round Orkney is very demanding, and that also applies to passages that do not involve tackling the Pentland Firth. In particular, getting from Stromness to the northern isles offers two possibilities. One, which I seriously considered is to go south through Scapa Flow and round South Ronaldsay before heading north along the eastern seaboard of the archipelago.



This is a long journey, probably requiring an overnight stop. Tide times are critical. Of course, it would have been easier if the south eastern isles had not been joined by the Churchill Barriers, but they are there and force this long detour.



Breaking shoals in Hoy Sound

Westray Sound. The option of a stopover at Rousay was discarded because Eynhallow Sound and its roost are reckoned to be particularly difficult. Even having negotiated Westray Sound, one has to tackle the narrows at Weatherness.



Dangerous shoals off Wart Holm, Westray Sound

So the only option is go up the Atlantic coast of Orkney (incidentally passing Yesnaby which has just been pictured). This involves going out through the roost (race) in Hoy Sound, then getting the timing right some 20 miles later to tackle the roost off West Holm in



Kitchener memorial on Marwick Head

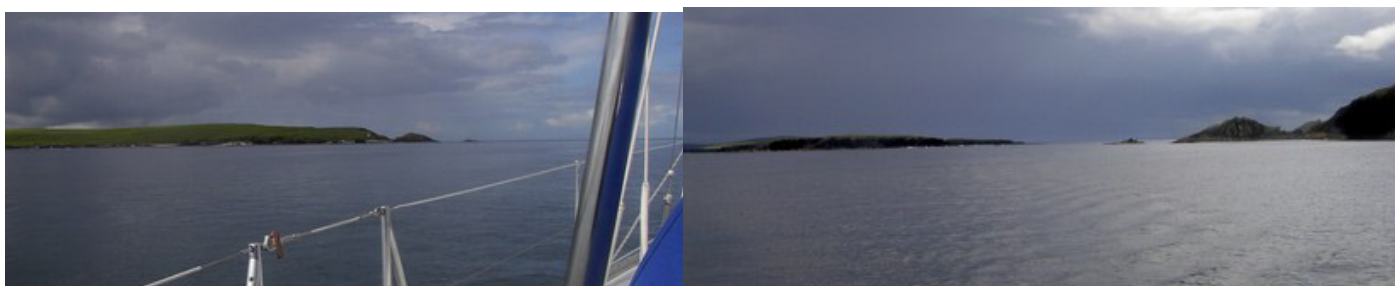
At least this route gave one a peaceful fetch for the last 7 miles or so in the lee of Westray, whereas the third alternative route of going up the west side of Westray not only increased the time exposed to the Atlantic swell, but threatened greater problems of



timing when tackling the roost between Westray and Papa Westray.

The roosts are only dangerous at certain states of the tide. At first I could not confidently find a departure time that would bring us safely through the roosts at the right time, but I was assured by the disabled owner of a yacht from Lossiemouth, who had regularly visited the islands, that the passage I proposed was feasible. As Solent sailors, we are used to strong tidal patterns, but Orkney really is something else.

After a week off, we were suffering from Harbour Rot, so there was some tension when we set off from Stromness at 0630. The tide in Hoy Sound was slack, but we quickly encountered the Atlantic swell left over from the previous days of bad weather. There was a light breeze, but it was necessary to motor sail to maintain the speed needed to keep to schedule, important for reaching the roosts at safe times. The reach up the Mainland coast, past Yesnaby was in a sizeable beam swell which we could see exploding up the cliffs less than a mile downwind. Gradually the coast changed as we approached Marwick Head, easily distinguishable because of the Kitcheners memorial (He was the only WWI general to die a violent death). As we curved round Brough head into Westray Sound, the swell, at first, became more comfortable on the quarter, but the tide was against us, which though expected, was stronger than anticipated. We worked over to the Westray side to avoid any possibility of being caught in a roost, but the wind against tide effect meant that the seas were short and steep.



Weatherness Sound

We were looking for Wart Holm, a low lying island with a rock ridge stretching out towards our proposed track. Eventually we found it, and edged our way past the ridge on which there were some really unpleasant breakers.



The Westray Ferry - always a good 'pilot'



Approaching Pierowall, Westray

Then we could turn round the southern tip of Westray towards Weatherness Sound. We were now sheltered from the swell, which was a huge relief, and we could

concentrate on the precise pilotage needed to get through Weatherness Sound, which is both narrow and shallow. Once through, we could turn to the NW passing outside the Skelwick Skerry, clearly breaking. Then we could turn direct to Pierowall, dodging the odd fish farm on the way.

Pierowall is a tiny harbour, with a few pontoon berths that constitute the 'marina'. At 1800, we made fast after a long, tricky, but very satisfying passage.



Ariadne and Isabella in Pierowall

## Westray: 20th-21st July

The next morning, it was blowing hard, as had been expected. We were pleased to be snug in a safe harbour. We decided to have a lazy time, except that we rang the Cleaton House Hotel who offer to collect yachtsmen from the harbour, and deliver them back after their meal. This generous offer was typical of the kindness (and ingenuity!) of the Orkney folk. The meal was not cheap, but it was good! By the time we were ready to return to the boat, only the landlord was available to take us back to the boat.



Noop Head



Cliffs at Noop Head

Early next morning, we spoke to *Isabella*, the Moody from Fawley. It seems that their initial plan had been to go down the east coast on the way back, but they had decided to go back round Cape Wrath and work their way back through the Hebrides. I offered them choice of our charts and pilot books. Fortunately they did not take too many as we were later to opt for a similar plan! We were surprised at their decision to leave on the 21st as it was blowing quite hard from the NW. We reckoned they would have a rough trip as far as Cape Wrath although the weather was due to moderate thereafter. (When we got back, we learned that they had indeed had a very rough trip as far as Cape Wrath, but good weather for a period thereafter).



For our second full day on Westray, we decided to hire a car so Dairne could get round a bit. We had learned from the tourist literature that we should contact Dorothy, and this was confirmed by Tommy, the harbourmaster. Eventually I got through to Dorothy, who arrived the next morning with a battered Renault diesel estate car. She drove us back to her croft, and

explained the controls. She did not even seem interested in seeing our driving licences, and there was no paperwork. Just £24 hire for the day. Even the charge for diesel was waived when we took the car back relatively early.



Noltland Castle (above and left)

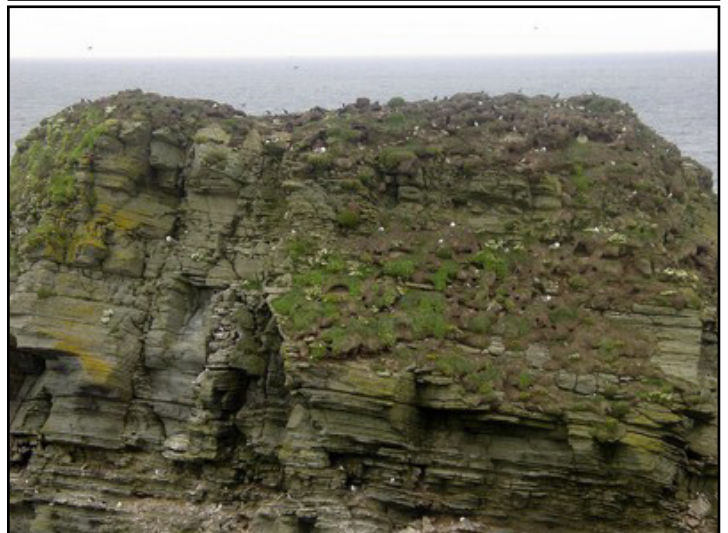




Isabella butting her way though the roost in Pa-  
pa Westray Sound



Castle O'Burrian



Unfortunately it was a longish walk along a windy clifftop to see the puffins, so Dairne was unable to get to Castle O'Burrian. Graham juts took the pictures.





After our tour round Westray, we followed the advice received from *Southern Cross* by text message. We contacted Tommy again and asked him if he could help us find some lobsters. He suggested going to Westray Fish Processors on the quay. They sometimes had lobster he said, and if so, they would pop them in their crab cooking



tanks for a few minutes, as he was sure we would not have on board a pan big enough. If that didn't work, he had some other ideas, and if necessary he would cook the lobsters for us. In the event, Westray had sent their lobsters to Kirkwall only a couple of days earlier, but the manager suggested we spoke to a guy working on a small fishing boat. He turned out to be a semi-retired fisherman who still traded in lobsters. Asked

if he could provide some lobster his reply was "200kg if you wish". After chatting back and forth a bit, he said he would look in the tank when he got home, and find either one big, or two medium lobsters, and give them to Tommy to cook for us. When I asked about payment, I offered him a £10 or a £20 note. He took the £10 note and promised he would let Tommy know if it was more. Three hours later, Tommy came on board, willingly took a dram, and reluctantly asked for an extra £1.50 for the lobsters. They were an exquisite meal eaten on their own with a garlic mayonnaise dip Dairne made.

I also asked Tommy about harbour dues. We had discussed this earlier. He had assumed that we had bought a weekly ticket when in Stromness (these 'tickets' apply in any Orkney harbour - a week was about £55). I told him that we had done so, but it had run out. Tommy did not have his book with him, so I paid him for 3 nights in cash, and left him to do the paperwork later. All very casual, and above all, very friendly. We would miss Tommy's friendly and helpful craic.

Conditions looked suitable to start moving south the next day, but I was slightly concerned that the wind had been NW for a day or so, and this would be likely to present a large swell once we got clear of the lee of Papa Westray. We would soon find out.



## Pierowall to Shapinsay: 22nd July [19.6M]

Where next? We needed to head south. Having read Iain Mitchell's book, *Isles of the North*, it was Shapinsay that got my vote.

We left at 0745 to make the tides work properly. As expected, there was a considerable swell as we came clear of papa Westray, which continued until we approached Weatherness, where we gybed and went through into calmer water.

Thereafter the tide just got stronger and stronger as we swept past Eday to port, Egilsay to starboard, closing the Shapinsay coast and picking up the magnificent transit of the corner of Shapinsay on St Magnus cathedral in Kirkwall to take us through the narrow gap between Shapinsay and the Vasa Skerry before rounding the corner and turning into Elwick Bay on Shapinsay and passing Balfour Castle where we found a visitor's buoy for the night.



Balfour Castle, Shapinsay

It seems Shapinsay had a benign laird who tried to develop his crofters into modern farming. His castle, Balfour Castle shows he also had a sense of position and status, but he did seem to have some genuine concern for his crofters,

It had been a good day, but after an early start, Dairne caught up on sleep.



Puffin in charge - looking after Dairne



## Shapinsay to Wick: 23rd July [39.1M]

It was not a very nice day, but the weather was going to get worse, so we opted to get back to the Scottish mainland. At 0735 we dropped the buoys and headed east, enjoying a pleasant reach till we reached Mull Head at the end of Deerness where a lumpy sea led us to start the engine.



Departing Elwick, Shapinsay

Visibility was poor, probably a mile or two at most, and we motored past Copinsay then headed slightly west of south towards Scotland. We were slightly concerned that the ridge of rock to the SE of Muckle Skerry would throw up rough water. There was not much swell, but the line of rock was quite clear when we reached it, the water being quite definitely rougher, indicating that it could be a nasty place in bad weather, even though we were well clear of Pentland Firth.



Approaching Wick

By 1300 we were off Duncansby Head, though it was only vaguely visible in the mist. It was just a matter of keeping going until we entered Wick where we made fast at 1515.



Wick Harbour, tucked onto the town



Ariadne in Wick - a difficult. high ladder

Although apparently snug, we heard later that strong easterlies can produce a dangerous swell inside the harbour. This has prevented the harbour from developing yacht facilities. The walls are high, the ladders difficult.



## Wick... and back: 24th July

Our first attempt to move on was to end in ignominious failure.

Motor sailing about 4 miles S of Wick, in a light breeze, full main on a dead run, 1 kt of favourable tide and a 1 metre swell, we hooked into a creel (Crab pot). It was well wound round the prop.

We managed to get the main down, but with the wind, tide and swell all expected to increase, there was little choice but to call a Pan Pan on the vhf to Aberdeen coastguard.



A welcome sight when you need it!

They tasked the Wick lifeboat to come to our assistance.

They successfully grappled the pot line and pulled it free. We drifted free while they recovered their grapple, which seemed to take considerable effort. It must have been something more substantial than a couple



Lifeboat recovering its grapple

of creels. Moreover, although there was a pickup buoy, at not time did I see a proper marker buoy.

The lifeboat agreed to tow us back, even though it meant a slow trip at 6 knots. It was a comfortable tow all the way into the harbour where we were transferred to an alongside tow before being put on the wall.

I wanted to dry out to -yet again - inspect the stern gear to make sure all was well. The assistant harbour-master directed us to a portion of wall where we could dry out and examine the stern gear (for the 3<sup>rd</sup> time!!).



Close in to grapple the pot line



The tow back to Wick

At first all went well, but as *Ariadne* took the ground nice and level, the stern was on firm ground, the toe of the keel went on sinking in.



Drying out, bow beginning to go down

The fenders, which had settled so well when the keel first took the ground, rolled off the corrugated sheet piling of the quay; stanchions started to scrape across the sheet piling, and the wind generator leaned ever closer to the quay. Eventually, the Coastguard officer was holding the wind generator blades to stop the unit rotating and jamming on the quay.

With the harbour staff and coastguard standing by, we waited anxiously until 0100hrs when with the water less than a foot below the stowed anchor, the bow lifted. By then a small swell had started to work in, and there was an uncomfortable half hour until *Ariadne* had sufficient buoyancy to take the strain off the stanchions and fenders.

This had been probably the most unpleasant episode of the whole cruise. The only plus point was that at dusk I saw an otter swim across the harbour.

As we floated we went into the inner harbour, made fast, and caught up on sleep after a rather stressful day. Indeed we stayed in the harbour all the next day to fully recover.

Eventually, we were at least 25 degrees bow down. The fenders had fallen off the corrugated sheet piles, stanchions were taking unusual loads, and even the wind generator was close to the quay.

The local Coastguard officer had insisted that if there were more problems, I should call him, so I did. When he had seen the situation for himself, he called the harbourmaster. We seriously discussed the possibility of calling out a mobile crane and putting a strop under the bow. In the event we decided to hang on.



Dried out, with toe of keel sunk into mud

Angle exceeded 25°



## Wick to Lossiemouth: 25th July [42M]

We wanted to visit Mike and Rosemary at their home near Inverness, but I also wanted to avoid going too far into the Moray Firth (for example into Cromarty Firth) leaving a major passage to Peterhead. We also needed a harbour where the boat could be left unattended for a day or two. In the end, we chose Lossiemouth. Whitehills looked like a good alternative, but would have made Mike drive even further to pick us up.

We left at 1015, and soon settled into a dead run, poled out. We were just able to work round the edge of the Beatrice oilfield without gybing.



Lossiemouth entrance

As the day wore on, the northerly wind freshened and the swell built up to over 1 metre. Then I called the Lossiemouth harbourmaster on the mobile phone and he confirmed that the swell on the bar was still safe. In the end, we rolled the genoa as we approached the harbour, the depth dropping to only a few metres under the keel, with the swell starting to curl into breakers as we gybed and surfed in though the narrow entrance. Exciting!

Once inside, we rattled the main down, and shimmied through the wave break part of the harbour. The inner harbour had been almost totally converted to marina berths, there being only one berth for fishing craft to unload. Even the fish market, which looked fairly modern, is apparently unused, except as a village hall for dances!

We found the berth to which we had been allocated and, for the first time since Stromness, we were able to connect to shore power, which meant we could maintain the fridge while we were away visiting Mike and Rosemary.

One quickly became accustomed to jet fighter bombers doing circuits and bumps at the nearby RAF base. Throughout daylight hours, the (fairly) gentle background noise of jets was just about constant.

The next morning, Mike and Rosemary came to collect us and took us to their home for a couple of nights.



Lossiemouth is very snug - once inside



## Lamington: 26th-28th July



Chez Cubitt

Apart from comparing notes, we were given a tour of the area, especially looking at Cromarty Firth, the Eastern end of the Caledonian, and the coastal area. In particular a shallow estuary known as the Fleet teemed with wildlife and colour.

Mike and Rosemary live at Lamington, 20 minutes drive north of Inverness, and set well back into the countryside. They have lived there for many years since Mike made his career in the great North Sea rig building boom based on the Nigg yard in the Cromarty Firth.



Rosemary, Dairne, Graham, Mike



Fleet

While we were there, I was keeping an eye on the weather. It persisted with strong NE winds, which would undoubtedly be building up a large swell, making the passage from Lossiemouth to Peterhead uncomfortable. ECMWF indicated this weather would persist for at least a week. After Peterhead we would face a leg of nearly 100 miles to the Firth of Forth where the only deep water harbours would require a significant diversion, or require a lee shore approach in a big swell to places like Eyemouth.



Walking at the Fleet



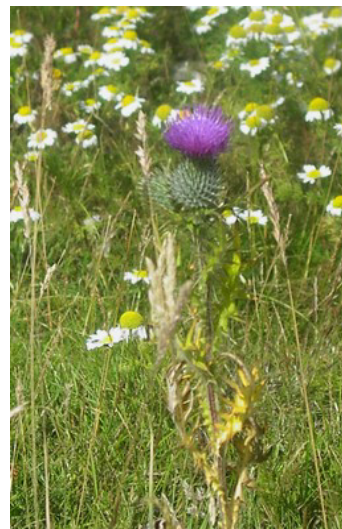
Seals hauled out in the Fleet

Our original thinking in planning to go down the East coast was to stay under the lee of the Scottish and English coasts. This was not the case, certainly in the short term. Moreover, apart from visiting our old sailing



area in Northumberland (Holy Island and Amble), there were no other attractions on the East coast. Legs would be long, and the ports had no specific attraction. One factor to be weighed was that the shortest distance back to home was definitely down the East coast. Indeed, once you get North of Skye, it is shorter to return to the Solent via the Pentland Firth and the East coast than it is to go back round Lands End.

I lost a night's sleep reflecting on this and cursing the fact that I had given *Isabella* some of my West coast charts, and the East of Ireland pilot book. I concluded, however, that we had more than enough information still on board to go down the West coast. Moreover, we were well positioned to duck down the Caledonian canal where we would certainly have favourable winds for the transit of the main lochs, including the 20 miles of Loch Ness. The next morning I set out my reasoning to Dairne, who agreed.



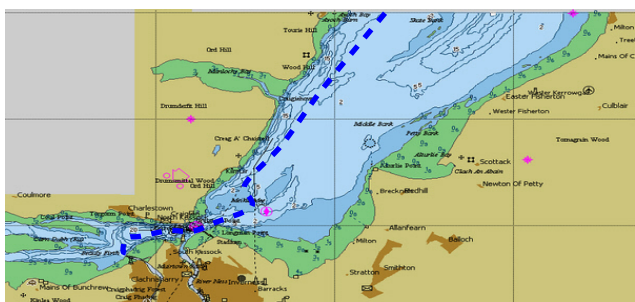
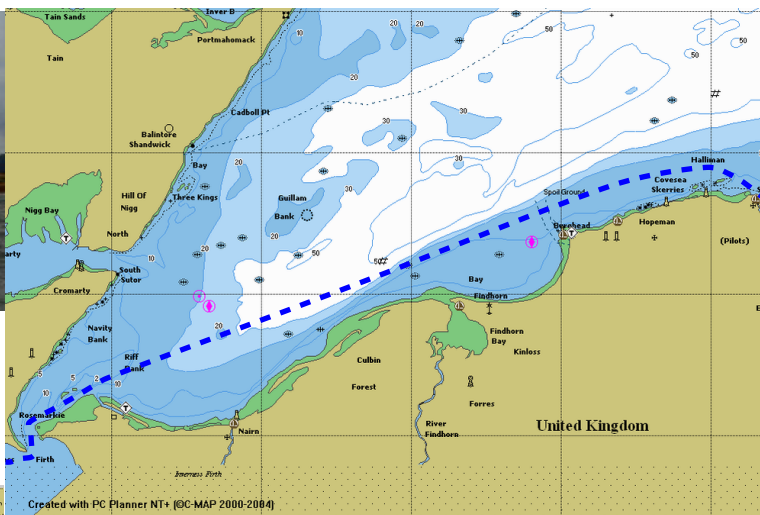
The Fleet



## Lossiemouth to Inverness: 29th July [42.4M]



Entering Inverness Firth



The excitement started before we even left Lossiemouth. We wanted to have the mainsail hoisted before leaving the harbour (There was a brisk northerly F5 and quite a swell outside). It could not be done on the berth (except possibly by dropping astern from the pontoon and hanging off the finger pier); the dock we were in was across the wind, so was not suitable; the other dock was smaller, but we decided to

give it a try. In searching for enough distance to get the main up, I went too far into the dock, right into the portion where it was even narrower. Realising this I immediately tried to do a 3-point turn (which turned out to be an 8-point turn, with precious little distance to spare at either end). In a F5 wind, with a long keel boat, this was, to put it mildly, tricky. But we got away with it, got the main up, lined up with the entrance and opened the throttle, and shot out into the waves, hardening up until we were well clear of the shallows and the near-breaking swells before tacking away to the east.



Inverness Bridge



Waiting in Clachnaharry Sea Lock

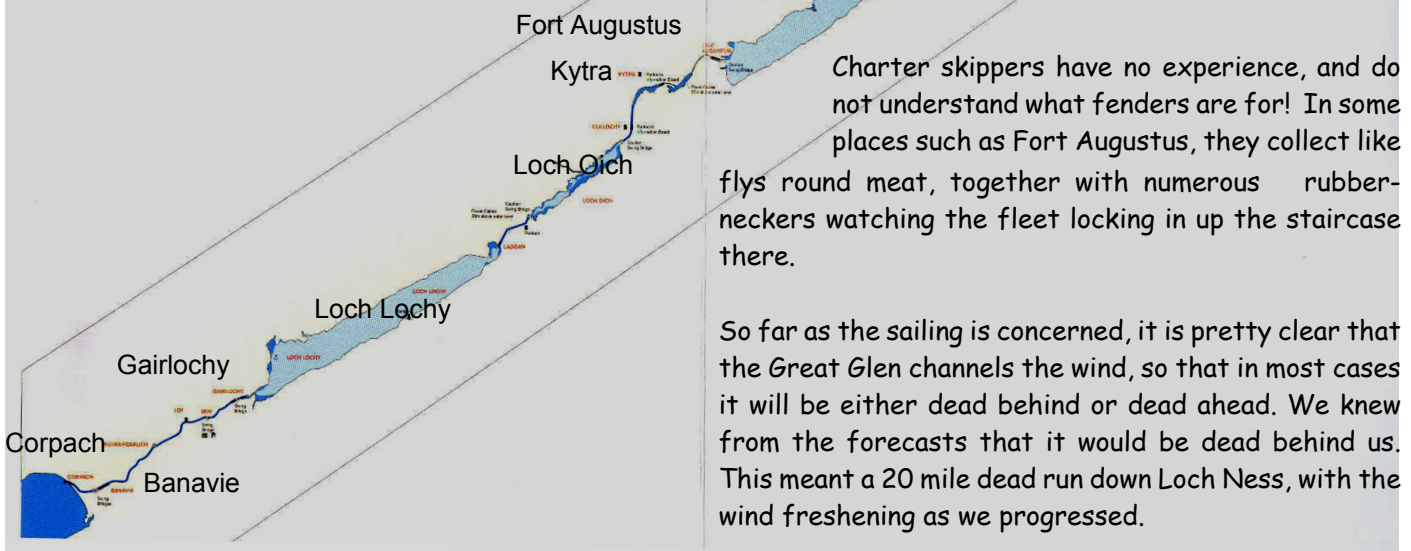
There was a big beam swell and we found hand steering the best plan as we charged along the coast. Entering Inverness Sound turned out to be fairly straight-forward but the C-Map chart breakdown of Inverness Firth was far from ideal and difficult to interpret (hence the rather odd charts above). But we made our way up past the Inverness bridge direct to the waiting berth at the entrance to the Caledonian Canal in the Clachnaharry sea lock. A short wait, then we were taken through into the basin, past the road bridge, up another lock and we were on our way. We got clear of the mayhem at the end of the canal, going to the next swing bridge at Tomnahurich where we enjoyed the peace and security of inland sailing for the night.



## The Caledonian Canal: 30th July - 1st August

### MAP OF THE CALEDONIAN CANAL

Transiting the Caledonian Canal, which transits the Great Glen, a geological fault that divides Scotland in two, turned out to be an unexpected highlight of the cruise. The cost of £155 seems a lot, but it does include berthing fees for up to 7 days (although a fairly quick transit like ours only involved 3 nights). All the locks are manned by Canal staff, who assist with the warps. Very few commercial craft use the Canal, except for a number of passenger 'cruise' ships of various sizes. The biggest risk in the canal is posed by the charter fleet.



Charter skippers have no experience, and do not understand what fenders are for! In some places such as Fort Augustus, they collect like flies round meat, together with numerous rubber-neckers watching the fleet locking in up the staircase there.

So far as the sailing is concerned, it is pretty clear that the Great Glen channels the wind, so that in most cases it will be either dead behind or dead ahead. We knew from the forecasts that it would be dead behind us. This meant a 20 mile dead run down Loch Ness, with the wind freshening as we progressed.

There is little wave protection at Fort Augustus, and it was uncomfortable for the two hours we were there. In fiercer conditions it must be fun watching the charter boats there.

The trick is to avoid the scrums. Many people stayed overnight at the top of the lock staircase in Fort Augustus, but by motoring for only 20 minutes more, we found a berth at Kytra. Although there were no facilities there, it was very peaceful.

Loch Oich at the top of the canal is quite different to the others, being shallow (though well buoyed) and wooded. Then, going down the west side, after transiting Loch Lochy, the canal winds its way to Banavie, where there are plenty of pontoons and where one can stay the night with grand views of Ben Nevis before dropping down the 8-lock Neptune's Staircase to Corpach and then out into Loch Linnhe.

Altogether, the Canal and Lochs are 60 miles, involving 29 locks and 10 bridges, with the highest point, Loch Oich, being 106 feet above sea level.

The standard of information, and the helpfulness of the staff are worthy of comment. It is just a puzzle why this canal is relatively good value, whereas the much shorter Crinan canal, with many fewer facilities, is almost the same price.

In the next few pages, the pictures tell the story.



Tomnahurich Bridge



Loch Ness (above, below & left)



Fort Augustus Locks



Kytra



Kytra (Below and left)



Loch Oich (Above, below and right)



Man-made part of the canal







Loch Lochy



Aldarian in Loch Lochy



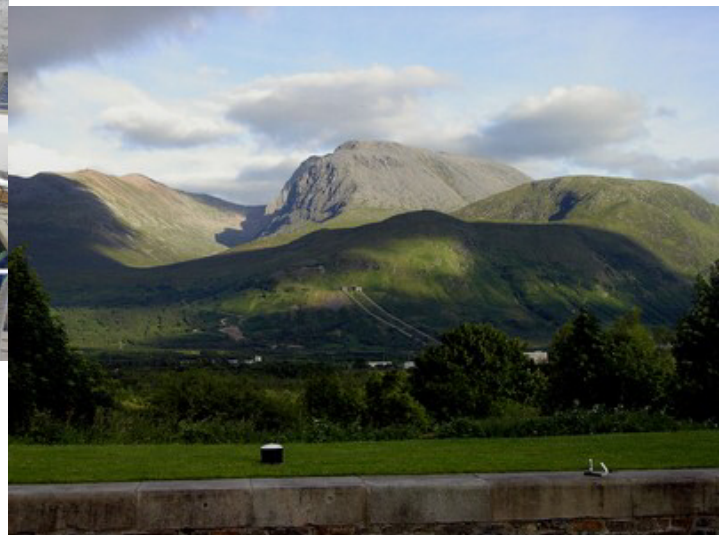
Loch Lochy



Alongside at Banavie (above)



A good lunch!



Ben Nevis from Banavie





Calisto, our partner through the locks



Leading the fleet to Corpach



In the lock at Corpach

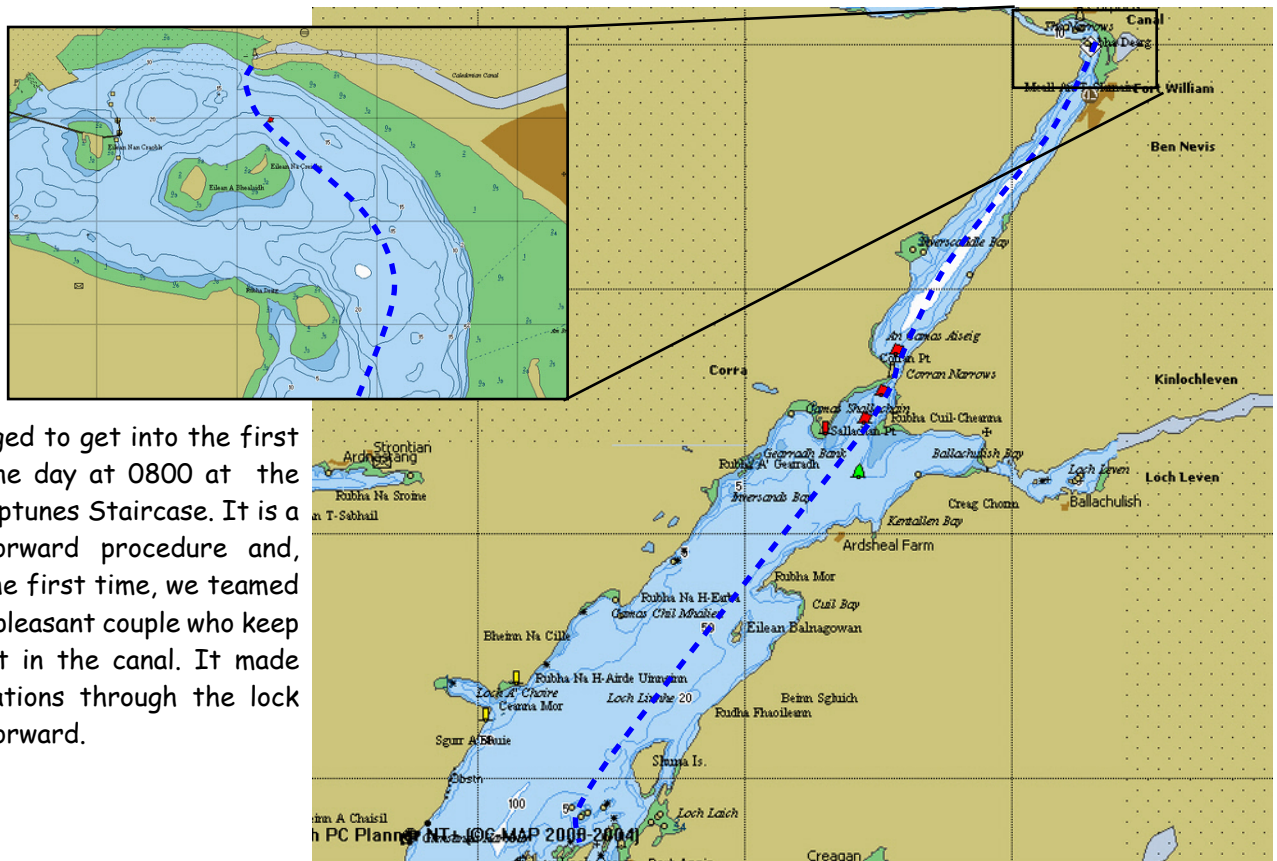


Leaving the canal



Looking back along the Great Glen

## Corpach to Port Ramsay: 1st Aug [21.8M]



We managed to get into the first lock of the day at 0800 at the 8-lock Neptunes Staircase. It is a straightforward procedure and, not for the first time, we teamed up with a pleasant couple who keep their boat in the canal. It made the operations through the lock straightforward.



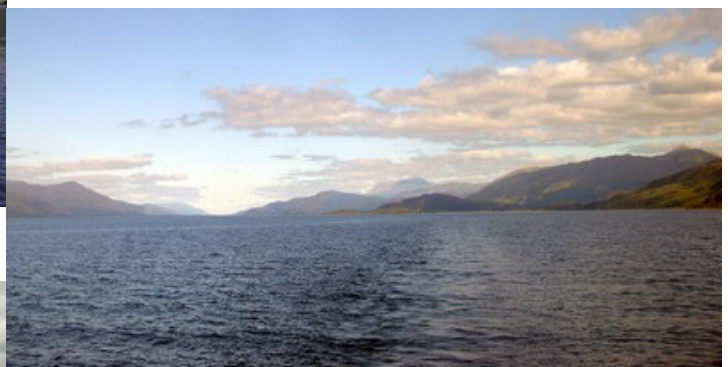
Corran Narrows



Looking into Ballahulish

Once clear of the Corpach lock, we motored down Loch Linnhe, past Corran Narrows, and on to Port Ramsay at the top of Lismore.

Port Ramsay is a rather grand name for a quite well sheltered anchorage among the rocks, but with no



Looking back along Loch Linnhe

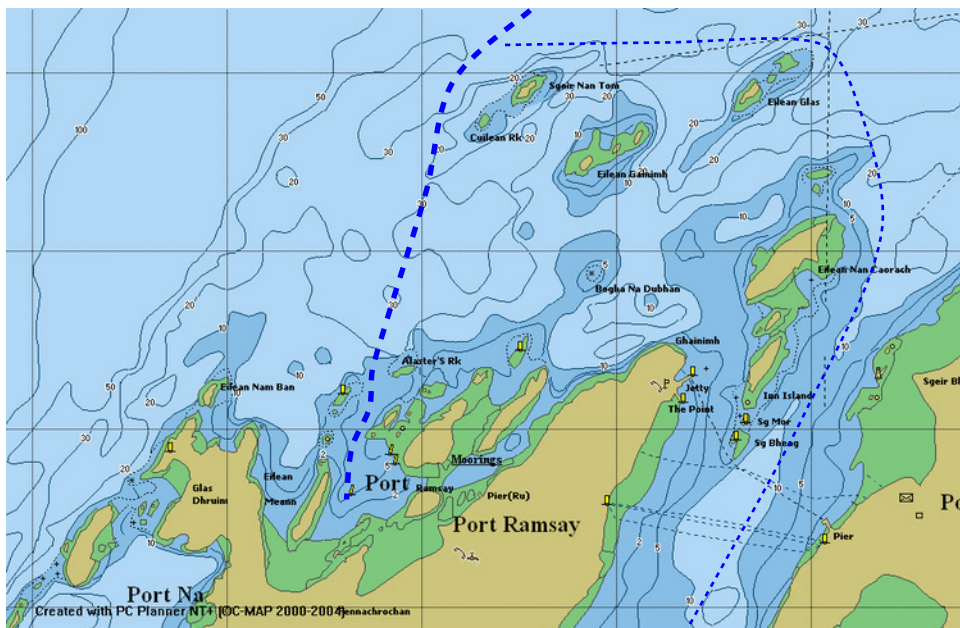
facilities. We knew the weather was due to go nasty for a day or so, so we settled down to watch the weather go by. In fact it was a surprisingly delightful anchorage with the wind in the west. We could look back up the Great Glen, and to the north where the hills of the Morvern peninsular dominated the skyline, but the scar of the quarry at Glensanda was not visible. We really enjoyed our brief stay, even though we did not go ashore.



## Port Ramsay: 2nd August

There are several little nooks and crannies that can safely be used as anchorages in Port Ramsay. We used what is probably the largest, and we shared it with one fishing boat and a yacht - quite busy by Scottish standards.

The pictures show the generality of the view. As we arrived it was quite sunny with little wind, but by the morning of 2nd August, it was grey and windy with low cloud. We rarely saw heavy rain throughout our stay in Scotland, even though the sky often looked threatening as on this occasion.



Cottages at Port Ramsay

This village was an important producer of lime, and lime kiln structures can still be seen.

On one of our Admiralty charts we could see the course plotted by *Santana* from Port Ramsay toward Oban. AS she had taken the cautious route outside the islands to the NE of Lismore, we followed suit, though we later observed the high-speed crew boats servicing Glensanda using the channel closest to Lismore.



Port Ramsay



Port Ramsay



Dramatic weather over Morvern

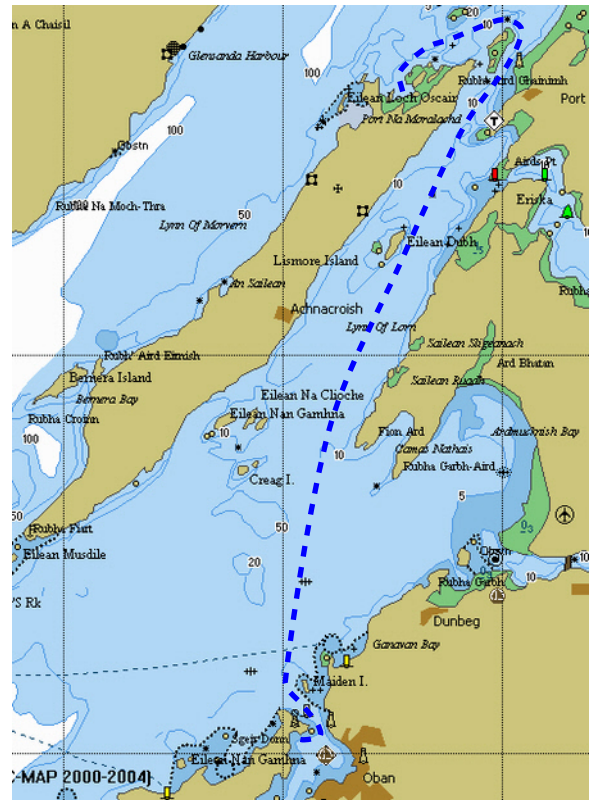
### ***Port Ramsay to Oban (Kerrera): 3rd Aug [11.9M]***

Having weighed and motored round the top of the offlying islands, the wind was just too fine to lay the course., so we kept on motoring until we were through the Lynn of Lorne. The few degrees course change made sailing possible. There was a brisk breeze and it was a good, if short, sail before we entered the channel into Oban and turned into the marina at Kerrera

There we had a brief trip ashore for stores, and stayed overnight before going on to Puldoran then next day.



Oban Yachts Ardintrive marina on Kerrera, Oban





## Oban (Kerrera) to Puldoran: 4th Aug [6.6M]

Although this was only a short passage, there was a strong SW wind blowing straight up the Sound of Kerrera. It was quite a hard plug down the Sound under engine, with the main doing little more than steadying. Once clear of the Sound, the chop kicked up in the Firth of Lorne made it necessary to motor sail short tacks to windward to keep moving. Closing towards Puldoran we could see the sound leading up to Clachan Bridge, sometimes known as 'the bridge over the Atlantic'.



Lord of the Isles in Sound of Kerrera



Clachan Bridge - Bridge over the Atlantic!



Puldoran leading marks

close to capacity. It was our first visit to Puldoran on this cruise. It really is one of the most wonderful boltholes, accessible from many directions.

We were anchored by 1030 and spent the day hiding from the strong wind, and watching the comings and goings. *Calisto* arrived. She was the sloop we had 'buddied' coming through the locks of the Caledonian. We enjoyed entertaining Kitty and Hugh during the evening.

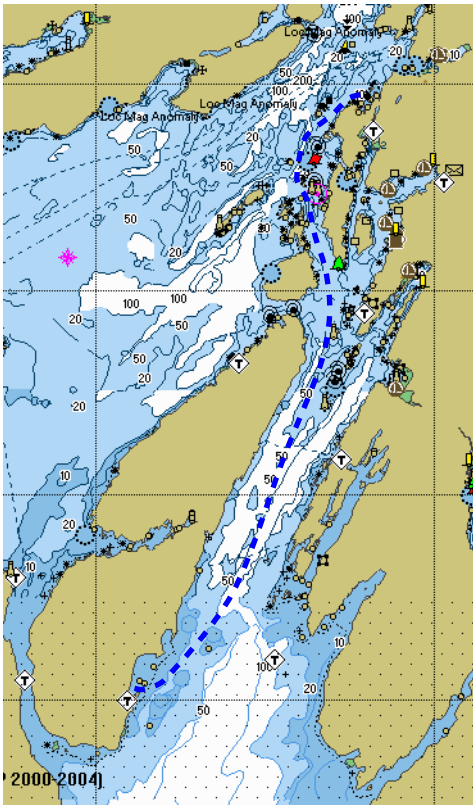


Puldoran

'Puldoran' has varied spellings, the most usual of which is 'Puilladobhrain', but I use the simpler phonetic version.

We were pleasantly surprised to find that the leading marks into Puldoran had been repainted, making them much easier to see. Once inside, we found quite a few boats already there, but the best spot had just been vacated. By evening, there were more than a dozen boats there, which must be getting

## Puldoran to Craighouse: 5th Aug [29.2M]



It was one of those days with dark clouds interspersed with brilliant sunshine, and a fresh breeze. After cleaning the silt off the chain, we were away at 0730, motoring clear of Puldoran and hoisting sail.



Puldoran

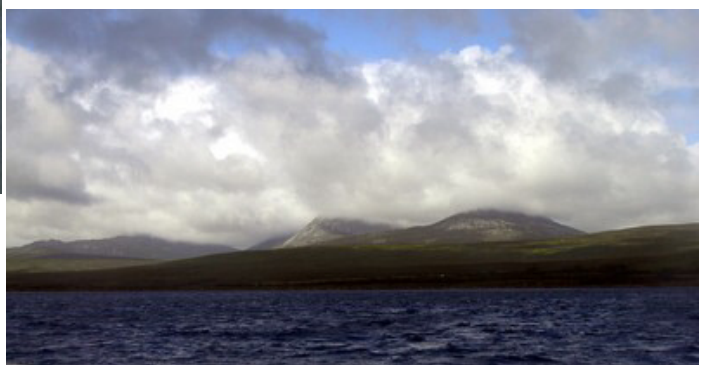
We could just lay along the coast until at Easdale we were able to free sheets and head for Fladda Sound. The tide scooped us up and we flew along on a reach. The wind was gusty, and was too strong for the autopilot to handle, and too shifty for the windvane (Robert's replacement autopilot did not have the long cable needed to run it on top of the Monitor windvane



Dairne weighing anchor -  
note brilliant sun, but dark cloud background



Fladda



Paps of Jura



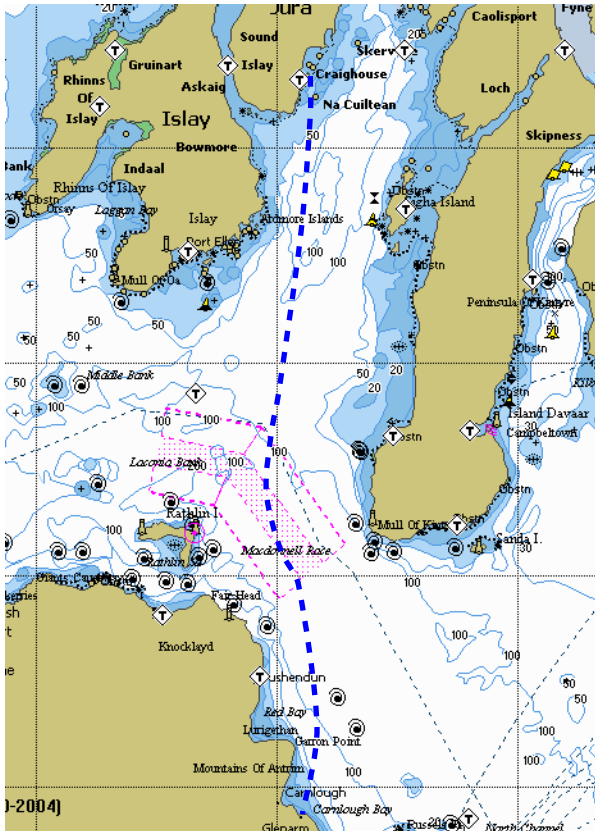
Craighouse and the Jura distillery

which would have been the ideal answer). The result was hand steering all the way, but that did not matter because it was such fun to be sailing fast on a reach in flat water. At our best, we were doing 9.5 knots over the ground and the average over three hours was 8.3.

By 1230 we were on a buoy in Craighouse, watching the cloud scud over the Paps. Although the log showed 29.2M we had covered 33.3 over the ground.



## Craighouse to Glenarm: 6th Aug [46.9M]



We had hoped to spend some time around Islay, or perhaps go back to Gigha, but a number of factors, including a short settled spell of weather, and the prospect of catching up with *Polynya*, led to a decision to go straight across North Channel to Glenarm.



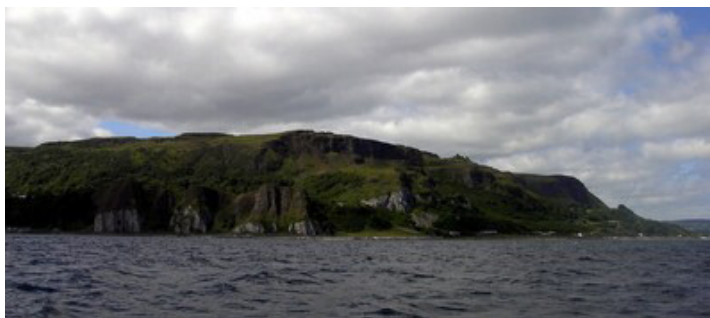
Ominous sky

Leaving at 0600, with an ominous looking sky, the light breeze was initially unfavourable, but shifted into the NW as we passed the Sound of Islay, enabling us to sail for a while, but it soon fell light and we motored in a relatively calm sea until we reached the TSS where we encountered a F4 westerly breeze for a short while. The sky remained overcast, but the wind soon dropped a little and we needed some engine help to maintain the speed needed to make the passage on the favourable tide.

The tide picked us up, and we flew over the ground, maintaining 8.2kts over a 2 hour period. As we passed Fair Head, we were able to kill the engine and enjoy the last 4 hours of sailing, getting alongside at Glenarm by 1415.



Fair Head



Antrim Coast



Glenarm

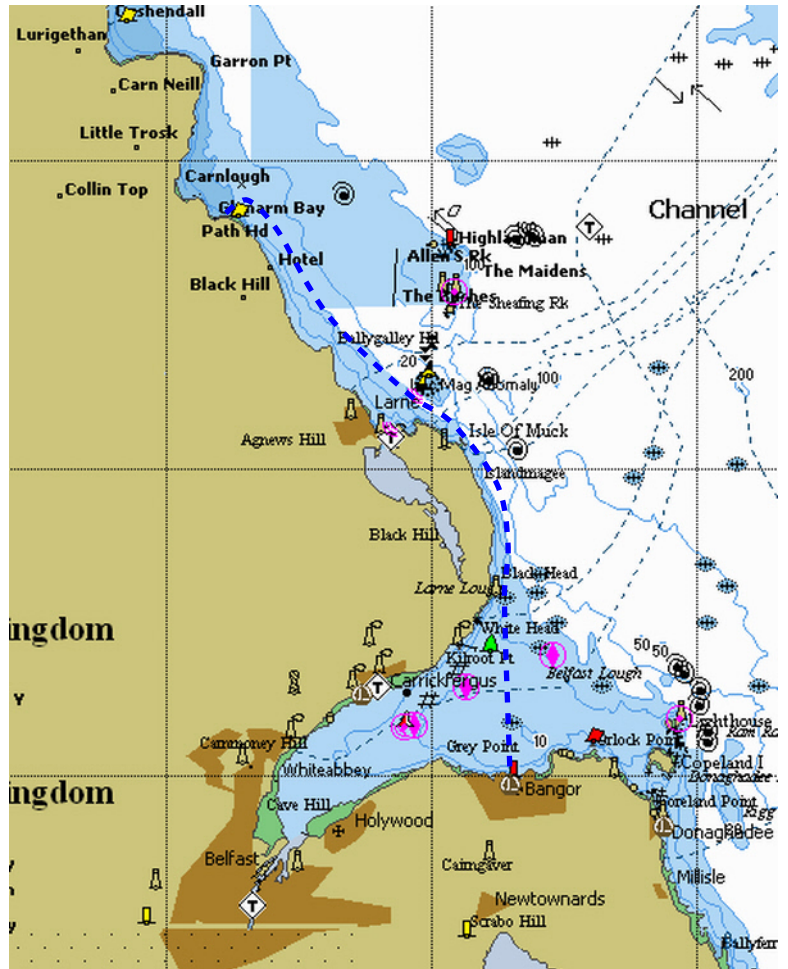
It was interesting to see the Antrim coast - it had been blocked out by low cloud and fog when we went north. For the last hour we had a bit of foul tide, but had got past the area where the adverse current would have been a serious barrier to progress.

### **Glenarm to Bangor: 7th Aug [17.5M] and 8th August**

We established that *Polynya* was in Bangor, but intended to go on to Strangford the next day. We could not catch up that distance, but with a little judicious texting, we were able to mobilise both *Tamary* and *Kittiwake* to organise a pub rally for the four Rustlers for the 8th. We would go to Bangor, where in the evening, Ken and Annie Baird would pick us up and take us by car to Strangford. Meanwhile, in Strangford, Chris would link up with Ken and Joan Miskelly. Believe it or not, it worked!

Leaving Glenarm at 0755, it was just a gentle run down the coast to Bangor where we made fast at 1300. We had time to do a little shopping and washing. We also met up again with *Safran*, a steel 40ft cutter we had last met in Milford Haven. They had been on the CA rally, and had gone as far as Orkney before abandoning the rally and returning to the west coast. They planned to leave their boat in Bangor over the winter.

On the 8th, we were picked up in the evening, and had a most enjoyable evening, ending on *Polynya*, before being delivered back to the boat again. We hope the Northern Ireland Rustlers feel a little less isolated now.

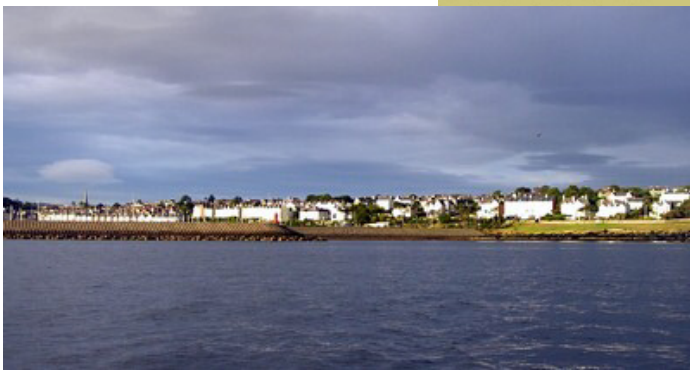
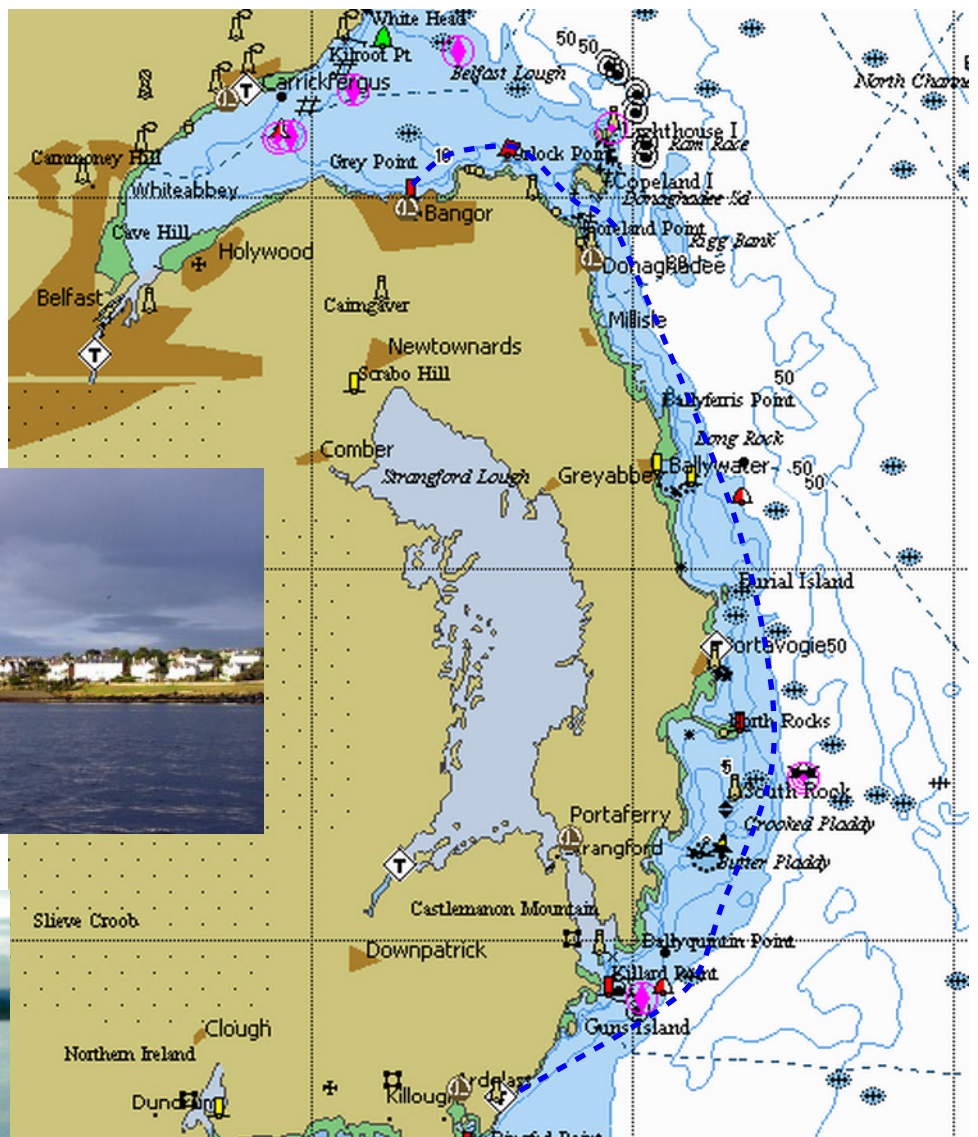




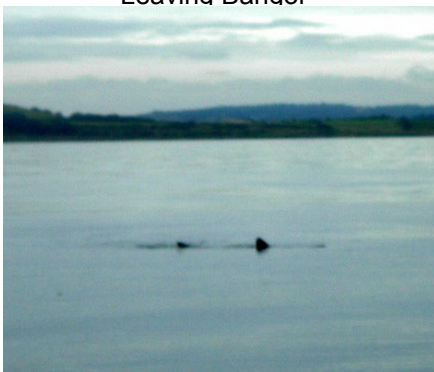
## Bangor to Ardglass: 9th Aug [30.6M]

After fuelling, we were away at 0650, motor sailing among rainbows with a NW2 wind.

There was a strong favourable current through Donaghadee Sound inside the Copeland Islands. We just plodded on in a flat sea, passing a mile inshore of the South Rock lightship at about 1000hrs.



Leaving Bangor



Basking Shark



Sally Seal



Entering Ardglass

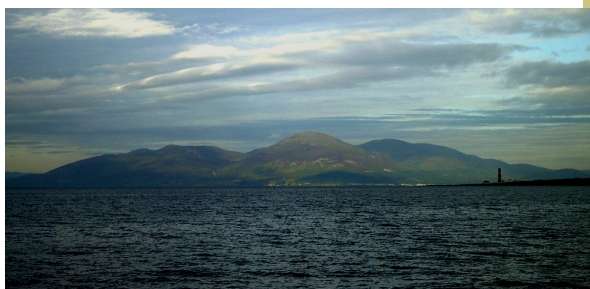
At last we managed to catch a couple of mackerel as we plodded down towards the entrance to Strangford. As we approached, we saw a basking shark that had obviously found a plankton patch. It circled the same spot, obviously hoovering them all up.

It was a short hop across the entrance to Strangford to find the way into Ardglass. Having made fast we watched the ritual of feeding Sally the Seal. Apparently, one of the locals goes out and catches mackerel, which she accepts with alacrity.



## Ardglass to Howth: 10th Aug [55.2M]

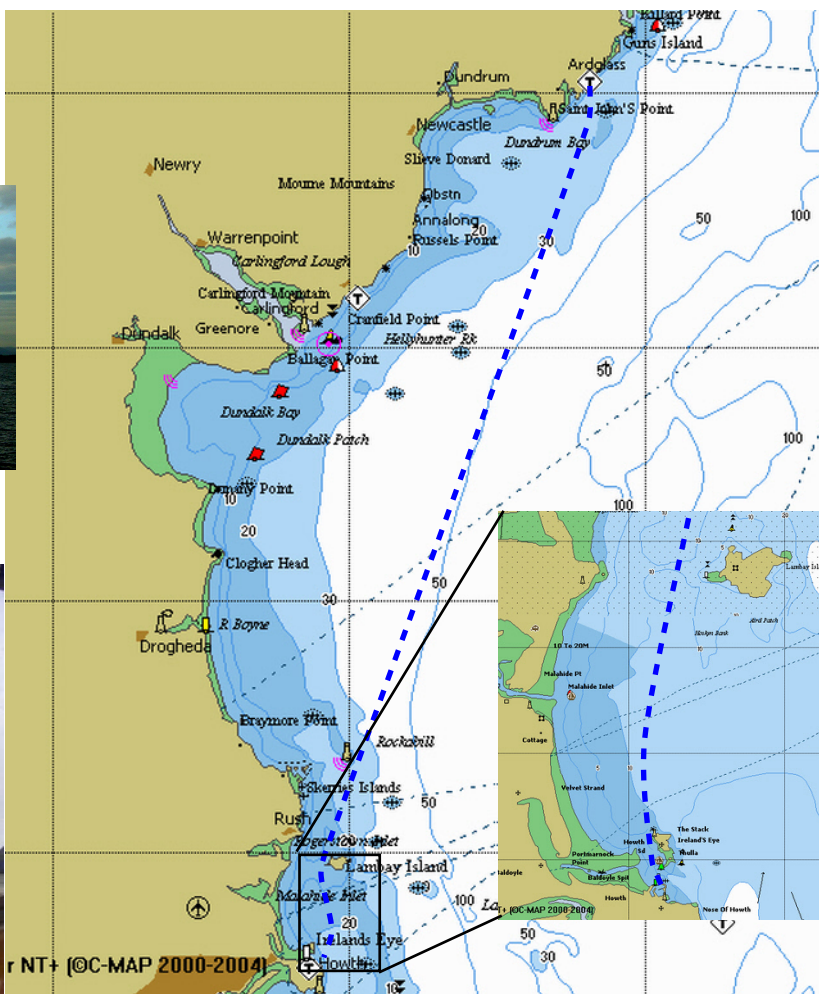
Away at 0740, with the prospect of a moderate NW wind. It did develop an hour later and we were just able to deploy the cursing chute as we crossed Dundrum Bay.



Mountains of Mourne



Nearly 7kts under Cursing Chute!



An hour later, the wind moved round to SE, very light. The cursing chute was lowered and we were again motorsailing.

At 1120, there was another shift, this time to W F2. We tried sailing once more, a little while later, but generally we had to motor.

At 1400, 10 miles NE of Rockabill, a small whale broke surface only a few yards ahead, went down straight away, and was not seen again.

The wind was now tending to sea breeze from the east, so the course was shaped inshore of Lambay Island to avoid the wind over tide chop that was developing.



Rockabill

We were surprised to see quite a port development on the island, but we still have no idea why it is there.

The course took us inside Ireland's Eye, the small island off Howth. As in many places in Ireland, there is evidence of the British occupation on the form of fortifications.



Lambay harbour



We were alongside the marina in Howth by 1815. The fleet was leaving for the evening race. Howth YC is probably the leading racing club in Ireland. There must have been 40 boats for this midweek evening event - there were 12 from the marina 'bay' in which we were moored.



Approaching Ireland's Eye from North



Fort on Ireland's Eye



Ireland's Eye viewed from Howth harbour entrance

Apart from the 'day off' for the Rustler rally in Strangford, we had been pushing fairly hard since leaving Oban, so we decided to have a few days rest at Howth. I explored the fishing port, with a view to finding a suitable restaurant, but discovered instead that there were numerous fish merchants, so we opted to cook our own. On the first day we had prawn tails for

lunch, and monkfish in the evening soured in a coriander marinade bought from the same shop. The next day we had a huge panfull of mussels for lunch and a beautiful cod fillet for supper. We chose to buy from the merchant we saw most locals using.

A trip up to the village involved Dairne in quite a climb up the hill, but it enabled us to check our emails at the library (free of charge). This was also a good opportunity to get some ecmwf weather maps, and check out the state of our bank account using internet banking.



Howth village church



Monkfish

The village is small, but has all essential supplies. Quality is good but the range of choice is a little limited. It is also a good place for visiting Dublin by train as the station is only a few hundred yards from the marina.

With a large area of high pressure sitting off southern Ireland, there was little immediate risk to the weather (although winds were brisk, typically F5/6), but the indicated winds suggested that if we took our first choice route via Arklow and Kilmore Quay, the long leg to the Scillies would be a dead run. From text messages we knew that *Passager* was in the Isle of Man heading towards Milford Haven. Also, we had reason to go back to Milford to see if there had been any progress on the disputed repair to our Eberspacher. We therefore opted to go direct from Howth to Milford Haven..

## Howth to Milford Haven: 14th/15th Aug [115.3M]

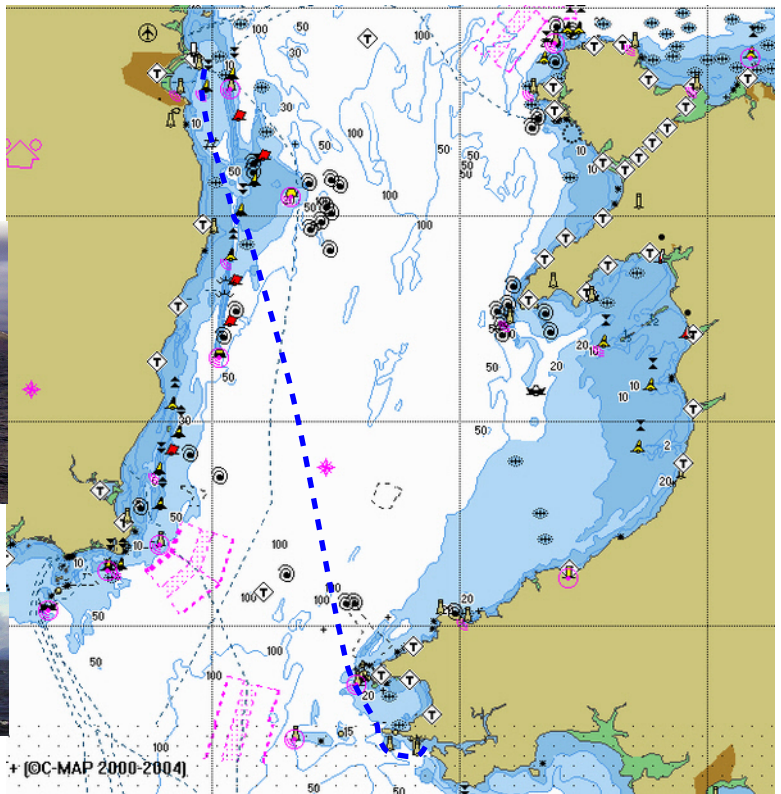
It was a blustery morning when we left Howth at 0605, setting a reefed main and with several rolls in the genoa. Once clear of the headland, we gybed and settled into a broad reach across Dublin Bay and inside the off-lying banks.



Brisk reach - Dublin Bay



Arklow Bank wind farm



This was exhilarating sailing that lasted much of the morning, although the wind slowly moderated, all the reefs having been shaken out by 0930.

The wide passage between the India and Arklow Banks was easily negotiated, the new wind farm on the Arklow Bank providing useful reference.



By 1315 the wind had faded altogether, and the engine had to go on. Perhaps this attracted the dolphins that swam round the boat for half an hour. It was a very large pod.

At this stage we seemed to have problems with the fluxgate compass, and we kept course using the magnetic bulkhead compass. Strangely, the problem sorted itself out a couple of hours later, and it did not reappear for the rest of the season.

It was a case of just plodding away all afternoon and evening in fairly calm water. The true wind was on the port quarter, but the apparent wind was much more abeam. The permanent foreguy was invaluable in keeping the rig steady. By 1145, the South Bishop light was abeam. The tide remained favourable until 0100 as we were approaching Skomer. If the tide had not been very neap, the foul tide would have brought us to a halt, but we just managed to work our way slowly down past Skokholm before turning towards Milford Haven. On this segment our SOG was down to 2kts at times.

As we picked up the leading marks into Milford, the Rosslare ferry came steaming out at speed, forcing us slightly off line, but that was soon resolved, and we entered the harbour, turned into Dale and anchored for the rest of the night at 0410.

After a morning catching up on sleep, we went into Milford on the 1230 lock, making fast at 1300. Our good friends Nan and Bill, who live at Neyland near Milford, came on board for afternoon tea with part of their family (Alan, wife and children). Bill and I managed to seriously damage what was left of my birthday bottle of Talisker.



The children really enjoyed exploring the boat, especially being hoisted up the mast a short way in the bosun's chair.

Meurig at Windjammer Marine welcomed me like a prodigal son returned. He had no contact from the company concerning my Eberspacher, even though he had done business with them on other matters since. He was beginning to hope that they would accept responsibility and that there would be no further action.

During the evening we got in touch with *Passager*, the gaff cutter from Marchwood YC that had been in Scotland. They had left Milford Haven more an hour after we arrived, although neither of us had noticed this. They were hoping to anchor at Dale for the night. We arranged to meet there the next day.





**Dale: 16th August**

By lunchtime both *Passager* and *Ariadne* were alongside the pontoon at Dale, which made moving between the boats easier. An enjoyable afternoon was spent visiting each other's boats, and comparing experiences in Scotland.

*Passager* is a ferro hull, but the care and attention to detail that Mike and Janet have put into renovating her demolishes most ferro myths. She is cosy and beautifully finished, inside and out.

Unfortunately, Mike had some pressing domestic problems that meant they had to leave in the early evening to make the passage direct to Penzance. We opted to wait until the following morning when we reckoned there could be a little breeze. The outlook for



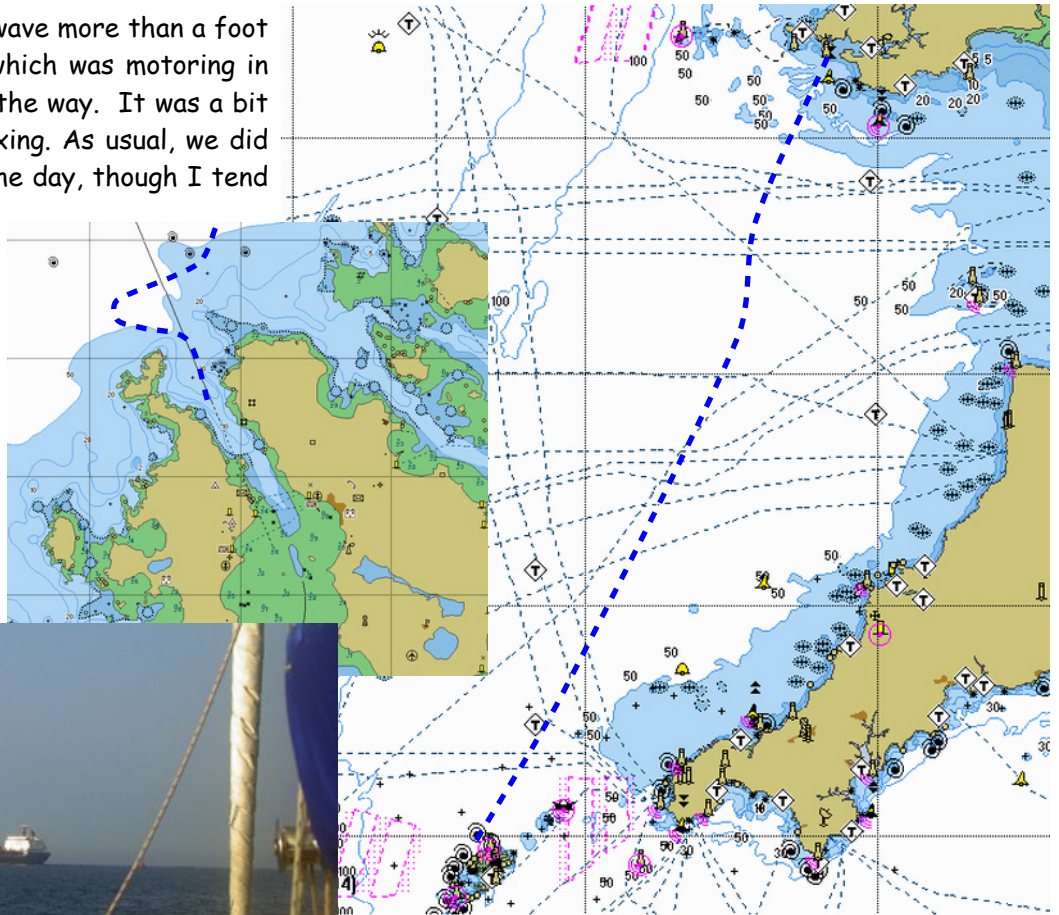
the days after that was for rather blustery weather. So we were faced with a choice of motoring in docile weather, or having a storming reach. Maybe we are getting old; perhaps it was the end of a long season; perhaps we did not relish arriving at the Scillies in a rising wind and sea on a lee shore. Despite the fact that most of our passage down the Irish Sea had been motoring, we opted for the soft passage.





## Dale, Milford Haven to New Grimsby, Scillies: 17th/18th Aug [118M]

We probably did not see a wave more than a foot high throughout this trip which was motoring in virtually still conditions all the way. It was a bit tedious, but relatively relaxing. As usual, we did not stand watches during the day, though I tend to rest a little in the afternoon before taking the 1600-2000 watch. Dairne covers 2000 to midnight, then I take over till about 0600 depending on the weather and the timing. In this case Dairne was up to assist with the arrival at new Grimsby at 0540.



Leaving Milford Haven

During the trip, we were entertained by 3 dolphins for a short while. Despite this big empty sea we had to alter course for a beam trawler.

One of the more amazing sights was a line of buoys, spaced about  $\frac{1}{4}$  of a mile apart. Each 'buoy' comprised two large buoys about 5 metres apart linked by a pickup buoy, a real trap for the unwary, especially at night.



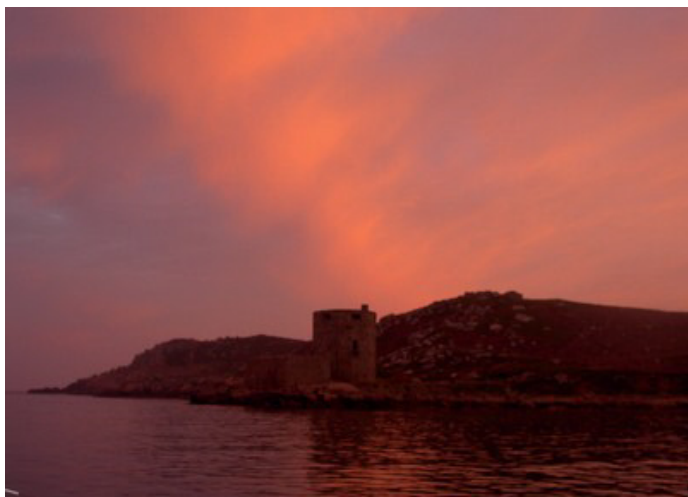
Lone dolphin



These buoys would be very dangerous at night

In the afternoon we were visited by a lone 'dolphin' - at least it appeared to be a dolphin.

By midnight, we were about 20 miles north of the Scillies. In front of us we could see a veritable christmas tree of light, apparently stationery. Among all the lights it was not possible to make out the nav lights. In the end I called Lands End Coastguard and asked if they were aware of a survey vessel or similar in the area (I did not want to tangle with, for example, a towed array). They advised that the ship was the *Betsy*, a coaster carrying out engine repairs, I was then able to speak to *Betsy*, make sure she knew we were



Dawn over Cromwells Castle

there and that she was happy with our course. Despite that, as she got under way, I had to call her again as she initially started steaming straight towards us!

Half an hour later, a small vessel -motor yacht or fishing vessel - approached on a course that would take her from Lands End towards Cork. She was the give way vessel, but if I had not done a 360° turn, we would have collided. Altogether an eventful night! But it was not over yet.



Hangmans Rock



Cromwells Castle

As we closed the Scillies, we raised Round Island light, in the right place and at about the right time. But on the VHF I overheard an exchange between a fishing vessel trying to land an injured crewman at St Marys in the Scillies. He was clearly having considerable difficulty

with dense fog among the islands. So I slowed down deciding that I would not attempt to enter New Grimsby until first light (now, course, much later than we had been used to earlier in the year and in much higher latitude).



Bryher

Even at reduced speed, we were there too soon, so a dogleg to the west was made to wait until 0500 when we slowly crept over Kettle Bottom past Shipman Head into New Grimsby watching both radar and plotter as well as keeping a good lookout. The visibility remained at more than 3 miles until we had passed the head when we just ran slap into a wall of fog in which visibility was no more than 25 metres. Using the plotter we crept in until we made out the ghostly shape of another boat somewhere between Cromwell Castle and Hangman's Rock. We circled a couple of times, then picked our spot and anchored.

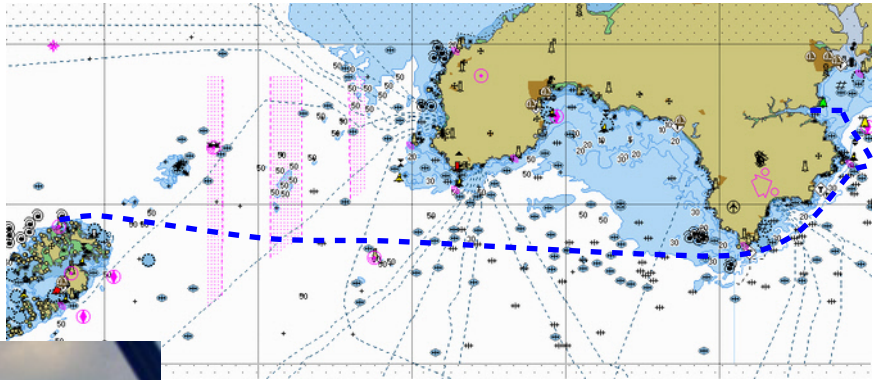
Within half an hour of anchoring, the visibility improved as a crimson dawn spread across the sky behind Tresco, and we could see that all the buoys were full. While our anchor was safe enough, we knew the wind was forecast to increase from the north during the day, so the position in which we were anchored would be vulnerable to swell. We noticed one boat making ready to leave, so we weighed, and took over their buoy immediately. Once safely stowed, we retired to catch up on sleep.

By late morning, when we woke, the wind had filled in from the NNW and was increasing. It would reach F6 by the late afternoon, as forecast, building a large swell outside, some of which worked its way into the anchorage. The wind was due to moderate a little the next day, then strengthen again for a few days. We therefore abandoned our original intention of staying several days in the Scillies in favour of taking the weather window to reach Falmouth after having a full layday in New Grimsby.



## New Grimsby to Helford: 20th Aug [68.1M]

After dropping the buoy at 0800, the main was hoisted, and Ariadne motor-sailed out to the north into a steep swell that was quite confused, even when clear of Kettle Bottom. It was fully 30 minutes before it was safe to bear away and start broad reaching past Round Island in a NW4 wind.



Reaching away from Round Island



St Martins Daymark

At first it looked as though we would be seriously headed off, but gradually the wind shifted so we could lay the Manacles buoy. We stood on for another mile before tacking in to the Helford. After passing August Rock buoy, *Ariadne* came under the shelter of the coast, the sails were lowered, and we motored to a sheltered anchorage in Durgan

Thereafter we had a sparkling sail, heading more or less due east, leaving the daymark on St Martins well on the starboard quarter.

By 1300, Wolf Rock was abeam, having safely passed the end of the TSS. The tide was then foul, but we were able to keep up a good boat speed so that by 1700 we were rounding the Lizard and advancing the waypoint to the Manacles. The breeze was now freshening again, and a reef was called for. As it was pulled down there was a graunching sound from the boom - the bottom slider was jamming. The situation was such that the reef was becoming urgent so it was forced in. This was the first gear failure (other than the engine and the heater) during the entire cruise.



Ariadne reaching fast



Liz



Wolf Rock



## Durgan: 21st August

Helford has a mystical quality. The soul is refreshed after visiting this wonderful haven. It has that magical mixture of rugged beauty and peace; lack of bustle. It feels secure as an anchorage (although it can be uncomfortable if the wind is due east). There is always a coming and going of boats, some small, some piloted by youngsters. But there are also great classics, or local gaffers.



Looking to seaward from Durgan

When the wind is not in the east, the anchorage at Durgan, just inside the entrance is just clear of the main tide run and offers a useful resting place for the cruising yachtsman. On this occasion we spent two nights there giving us day to just absorb the atmosphere of the place.

The dream of sailing your own boat past the Manacles into the Helford had been with me since before I was a teenager when it had featured in a boys adventure book. The other details of the story have long since been forgotten, but that image was probably the first time I determined I would own a cruising yacht.



Durgan



Durgan

I could do with annual dose of the Helford to restore a sense of calm. Unfortunately that is difficult to achieve when we go the Brittany, and we had not visited the Helford for 2 years. I needed this day.



Dawn moon over Helford Passage

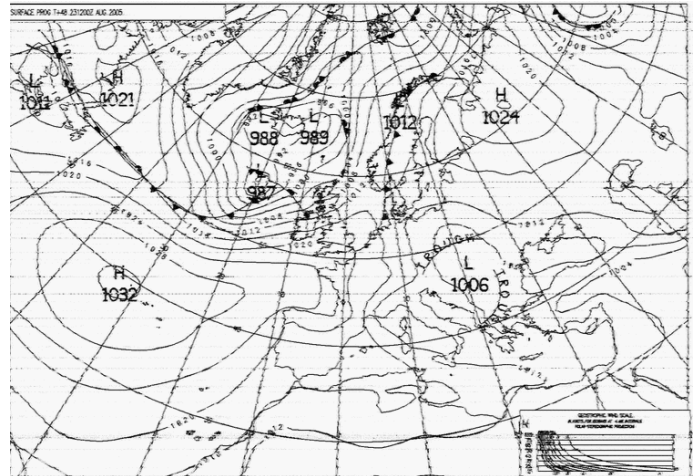




## Helford to Falmouth and Ruan Creek: 22nd Aug [7.5M]

Just as when we had gone north, the weather was set to deteriorate, and the obvious place to go was up the Fal. The top weather map shows the weather expected on the 23rd. First, however, we needed a few stores from Falmouth., which we could lay on one tack, spilling the main in the NW 4 wind rather than reefing.

Falmouth Yacht Haven, the town marina, was very busy, it being the tail of their peak season. So we anchored off, launched the dinghy, and went ashore.



As the photograph shows, the tide was quite low and at least one person anchored a little too close to the quay!



Low tide off Falmouth



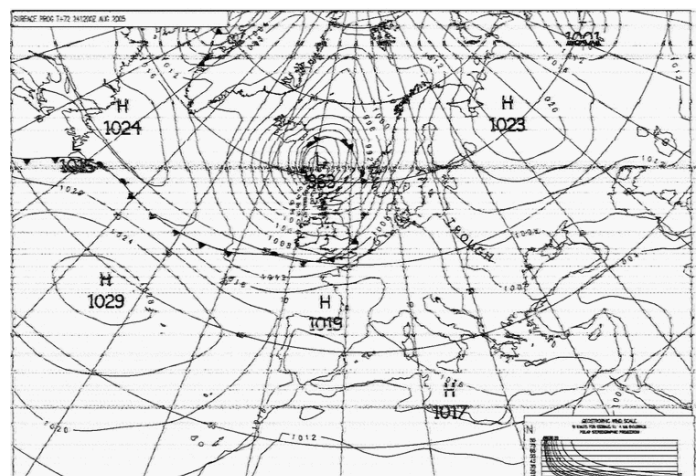
Falmouth Yacht Haven was very busy

By mid afternoon, we could motor sail up river against the freshening NW wind. The reefed main was needed to give some drive through the short chop in the estuary. Our plan was to go up to Ruan Creek pontoon where we had sat out the Spring gale, but as we passed the King Harry Ferry, we saw a familiar looking Tradewinds. It was *Midday Sun*, back from Spain. Marc indicated that the conditions at Ruan Creek were untenable so we turned round and followed him to the Turnaware pontoon where we spent the night. In fact, it turned into quite a party as we exchanged experiences from the season. Marc had not enjoyed Spain that much, and had decided to turn back before getting too far south of Cape Finisterre.

The next day the wind had backed to west, but was still strong as shown in the lower weather map so we went up to Ruan Creek where we spent one day on the pontoon, and another at anchor. By the 26th, the wind had backed to SE, still quite fresh. This had been a sustained gale, and looking at the weather maps, we were glad not to be in Scotland!



Upper Fal



## Social stay in Falmouth: 26th -28th Aug

Since parting company at the Rustler Rally in Strangford, *Polynya* had changed crew, Francoise having to go back to work. They had sailed to the Isle of Man, then on to Dublin to await Francoise's return. They had then had a very fast, rather wild sail direct from Dublin to Falmouth, where they were now anchored off the Yacht Haven. They had invited us to join them at a dinner for the Ocean Cruising Club members to be held at the Royal Cornwall Yacht Club on the 27th.

So we made our way down to the Yacht Haven, and managed to find a berth on the end of the pontoons. There were quite a few other cruising yachts of substance that had also arrived for the OCC dinner. We were invited on board *Polynya* for drinks with Chris, Francoise and their other crew members.

On the 27th, the *Polynya* crew joined us for lunch, and in the evening the RCYC launch picked us all up from the pontoon and took us to what was an excellent evening.



St Mawes Castle

Meanwhile, *Passager* arrived at the anchorage, having resumed her cruise. Mike and Janet were hoping to visit the North Brittany coast on their way home. Because of the let on their house, they were not in a hurry to get home. In the event, the weather did not permit their French expedition, and we would meet up with them again later.

On the 28th, we motored over to St Mawes, the wind now having an easterly component. There we went ashore and took a taxi to Portscatho to see Hilda, a family friend who had not been too well.



An 8 metre in St Mawes

We kept in touch with *Polynya* and worked out that we would both be leaving for Newton Ferrers the next day.

Meanwhile, we watched the activity in the harbour. Falmouth always manages to show some glorious classic yachts.



Dairne and Hilda



## St Mawes to Newton Ferrers: 29th Aug [36.8M]

Motoring clear of St Mawes past St Anthony's Head, just after 0900, we found a light NW wind, so we kept motoring over a flat sea until 1100 when we were off the Dodman. By now we knew that *Polynya* was about an hour astern of us.



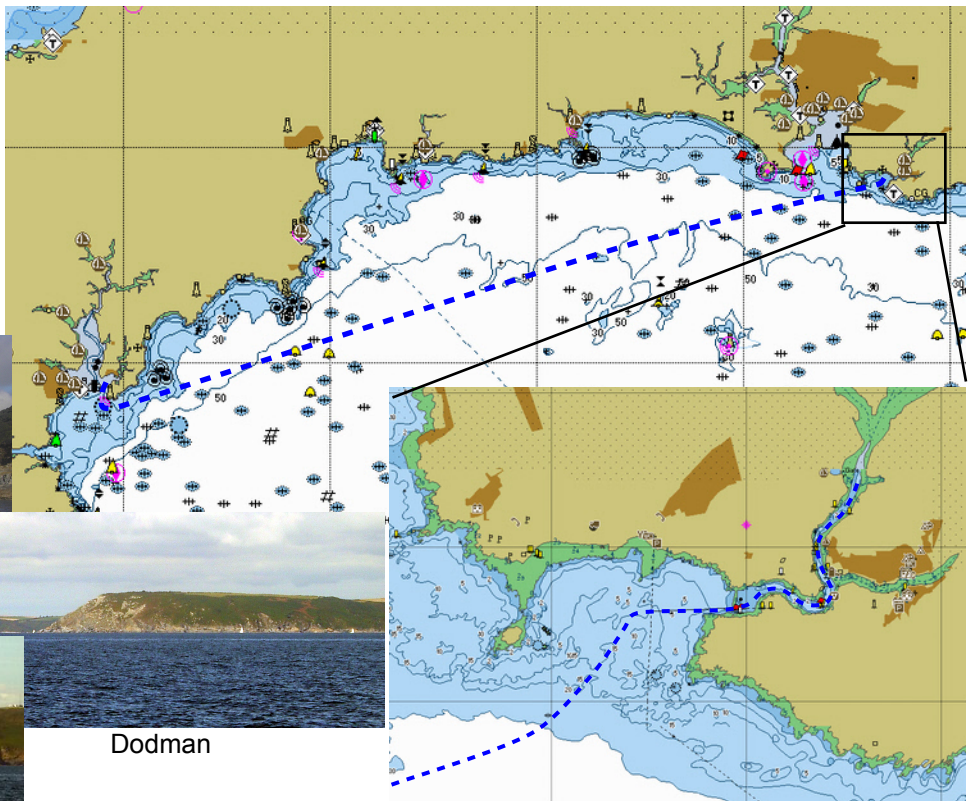
St Anthony's Head



Rame Head



Dodman



The wind was fitful, but it gradually settled in the SW, so we tried the Cursing chute which we were able to carry for 5 hours, passing north of the Eddystone. Strangely Rame Head at the entrance to Plymouth Sound did not show its distinctive shape until we were almost into the Yealm - it must have been a trick of the light.



Mewstone

The wind died when we were half way across Plymouth Sound so we handed the Cursing chute and motored the rest of the way, curving round the Mewstone to pick up the clear transits that guide past the spit at the Yealm entrance.



Yealm entrance



Yealm approach

As it was a Bank Holiday weekend, we were not surprised to find the visitors pontoons pretty full, and no spaces on the visitors buoys. So we went up the river to Kitley and found an empty buoy for the night.

*Polynya* was meeting friends, who had booked a buoy for them lower down the river.

## Newton Ferrers to Salcombe: 30th Aug [29.1M] and 31st Aug

We woke to a quiet misty morning, with the promise of a fine day. However, we knew the weather window was only good for a couple of days, so we decided to press on with the aim of getting to the Dart before the weather broke.



Upper reaches of Yealm

And while one must admit that beating against the tide is foolish, it was such a nice day that we enjoyed the sail to Salcombe, even having to pull down a reef for the last couple of tacks after we had passed Bolt Tail.

During this short, enjoyable sail we passed the 2000 mile mark for this cruise.



River Yealm



Bolt Head, the entrance to Salcombe

Salcombe was its usual busy self, with trippers everywhere on crowded beaches. We anchored off the town for the night.

The next morning, I went ashore for a replacement gas cylinder and a few other odds and ends. This was a classic situation where our little folding barrow was invaluable. It is all very well to carry the empty cylinder the length of the town, but the full one seems to get

heavier every minute on the way back unless you have a barrow.

It was blowing fairly hard all day, so we moved to the anchorage above the bag. There we found 2 other Rustlers. We were invited alongside *Sophie* and had a drink on board with Hugh Towers and his wife. Then, after anchoring, we were invited to go aboard *Spirit of Rossinis* to compare notes with the Sadlers. They had been in Brittany and were on their way back to Falmouth where they now base their boat.



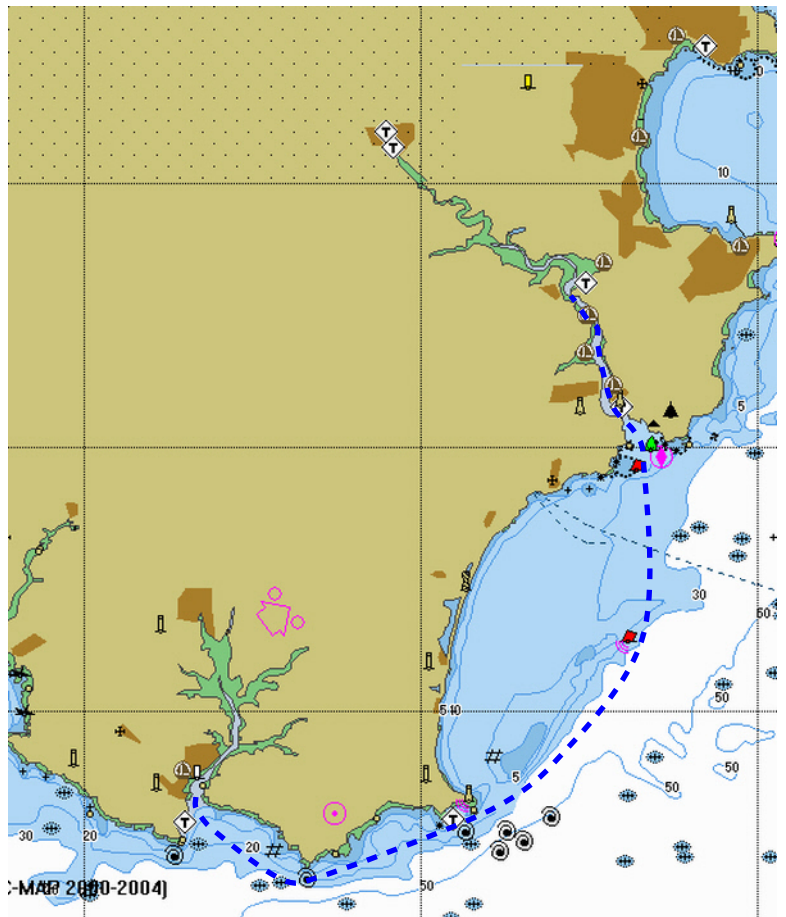
## Salcombe to the Dart: 1st Sep [22.6M] and 2nd-5th Sep

It was a curious forecast. W/SW 4/5 backing S/SE 3/4. On this basis we might be able to push on over Lyme Bay. In the event, we left Salcombe at 0600, passing Prawle Point by a couple of cables an hour later.



Looking back to Prawle Point

There was a lumpy sea outside that required the foreguy, and insufficient wind to sail in the slop, so we motored to Start Point. We decided that the conditions were not pleasant for going on so we altered to go into the Dart. We were able to sail slowly outside the Skerries bank towards the Dart daymark once Start Point was sheltering us from well, finally motoring into the river, collecting fuel at the barge, and proceeding on to Dittisham where we found an empty buoy.



Ariadne approaching Dart daymark



Dart entrance

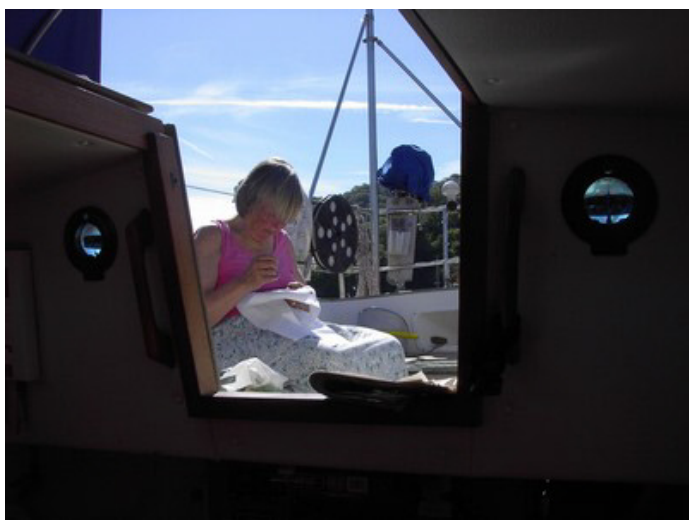


Ariadne at Dittisham

We now had to wait a few days for the wind to turn away from the SE quadrant. But as we like Dittisham, it was no hardship. Dairne can always find plenty to do, but it was here that I made the mistake of walking up to the village shop, and buying a newspaper that introduced her to Sidoku which has since become an absorbing passion! We also had regular visits from a wagtail on the scrounge. He would walk round the cockpit, and even across the bridge deck looking for crumbs.

On the morning of the 3rd we motored down to Dartmouth for stores.

Our plan had been to anchor in the pool there, but it was so gusty and unpleasant there that we went back up to Dittisham.



Dairne busy relaxing



Our regular visitor



Greenaway, opposite Dittisham

That afternoon, *Passager* arrived, and we spent a pleasant evening rafted together at Dittisham. Mike and Janet still harboured ambitions to go to France. We were beginning to feel the effects of harbour rot, and decided to push on the next day when conditions seemed to be benign, if not particularly favourable. *Passager* would stay on a day or two more. We also learned that *Polynya* had had a very uncomfortable trip back to the Solent.



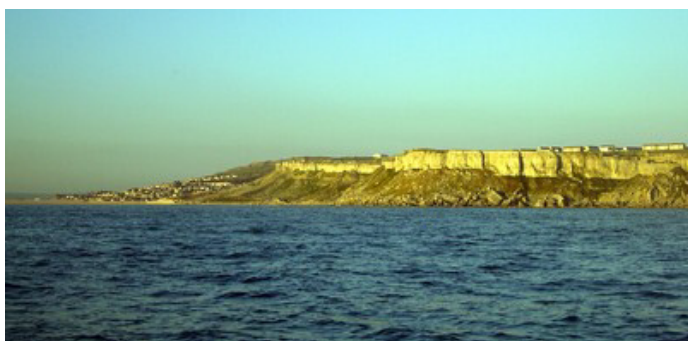
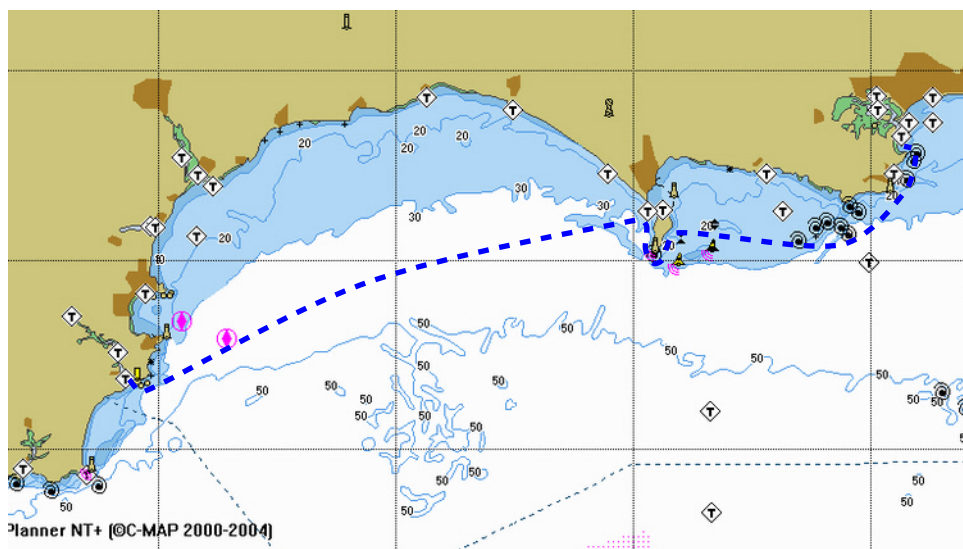
Passager arriving at Dittisham



## Dart to Studland: 6th Sep [68.4M]

If we hung on for another day, there was the prospect of the wind going SW. But that is what the forecast had been telling us for days! So we decided to push off anyway, expecting light winds, but not from a particularly helpful direction. And so it proved.

Even leaving at 0950, we were expecting to be early for the tide at Portland but we plugged steadily on. By 1400, the slant of the wind allowed us to show a little headsail, pushing the boat speed up during the foul tide period to 5.5 knots.



West side of Portland

By 1800 we were approaching the inshore end of Portland Island, but it was not till nearly 1900 that we started to pick up the eddy that swept us out toward the end of Portland Bill. Passing very close to the tip of the Bill, looking up at the cairn and the lighthouse, we turned sharply inshore once round. The tide diagrams in Peter Bruce's book 'Inshore along the Dorset Coast', give a lot of invaluable information about the eddies round Portland at various states of the tide. However, it did not show the strong adverse tide we encountered for the first quarter mile after rounding.

Once clear of that, however, the eddy he predicted was found, and we started the long curve across Weymouth Bay, rather further to seaward than we wanted because the Lulworth Range was active with night shooting.

Eventually the main Channel stream turned in our favour, and by 2030 we were going fast over the ground outside the St Albans Race, past St Albans, and up to Old Harry where we turned into Studland. By 2300 we were anchored in Studland.



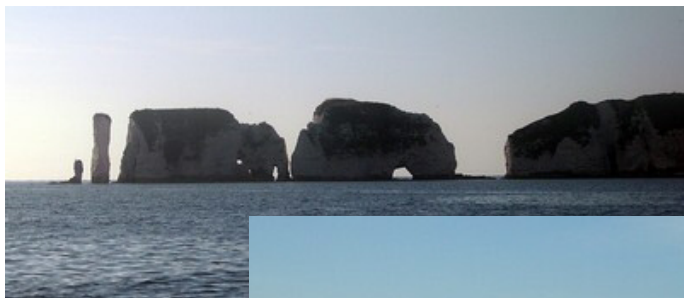
Portland Bill



Old Harry (picture taken the next morning)

## Studland to Keyhaven: 7th Sep [14.1M]

The tides take no prisoners. Even though we were in sight of the Needles, we still had to be away at 0800 in order to catch the tide.



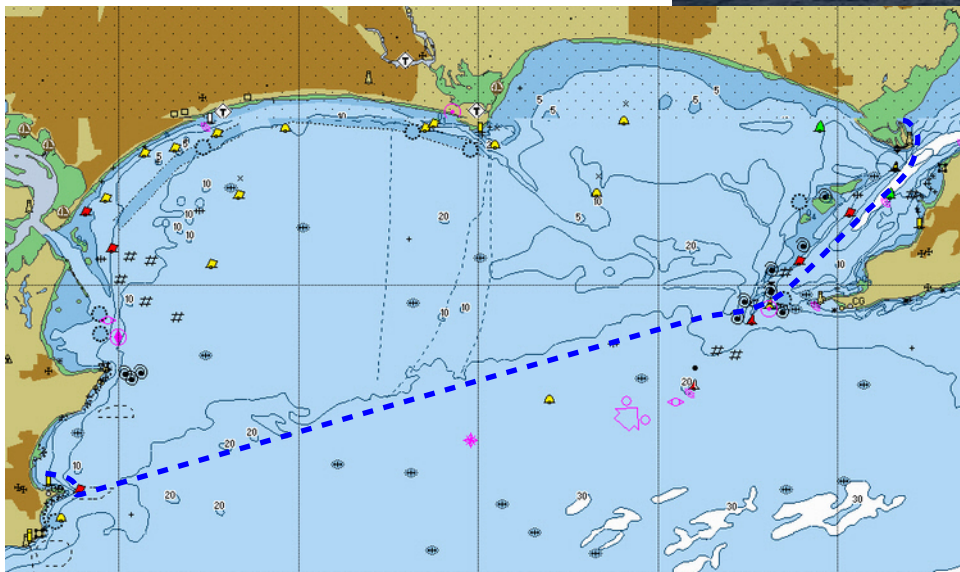
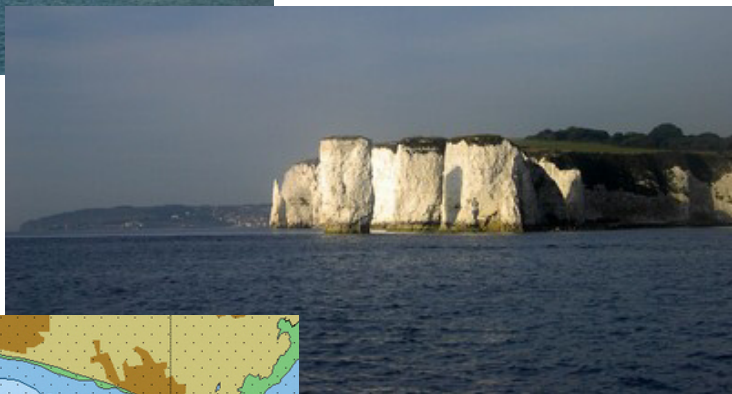
2 views of Old Harry and (far right) the Purbeck cliffs towards Swanage



It was a pleasant, quiet morning, so we took advantage of the conditions to motor close to Old Harry to take some pictures.

Then we sheered away, tried the Cursing Chute, which killed the wind completely, and motored the rest of the way to Keyhaven, passing Hurst into the playpen of the Solent at about 1100.

We like ending our cruises at Keyhaven. It has probably the most remote feel of any Solent anchorage.



Left: Bridge Buoy  
Right: Approaching Hurst





## Keyhaven to Newtown and Chichester: 8th-11th Sep [25.7M]



Solent tides proved we were home

On the way we found a mackerel shoal, so Dairne baked 8 of them to share with *Passager* that evening anchored off East Head. Janet managed to rustle up a magnificent bread and butter pudding.

On the 11th, we had a pleasant fetch back to Marchwood in a NNE F4 wind, with a few tacks needed in Southampton Water.

The cruise had covered 2167.5 logged miles.

*Passager* had overtaken us and gone into Newtown. We popped over to Yarmouth for stores and water, then went alongside *Passager* for lunch. We had a lot of notes to compare, but the strongest common ground was that none of us really wanted the cruise to stop. But we knew the season was coming to an end.

The next day we sailed - well, little more than drifted - to Chichester to join the Marchwood YC rally at Thorney Channel. As we drifted gently toward Chichester, we were able to get some pictures of each others boats with sails up.



Marinated mackerel



Above: *Passager*  
Right: *Ariadne*



## *Epilogue*

As at the beginning of this Log, it is appropriate to allow Frank Cowper to summarise the general impressions of a Scottish cruise.

"Looking back on the experiences of a cruise ... in Scottish waters, I think what strikes me most is the provoking nature of the country. The beauty of the scenery is unquestionable. So exquisitely lovely are the lochs and Sounds of the mainland and the Western Isles that, as one thinks of them, there comes a devouring longing to rush off to them again to be once more sailing among those glorious waters, where mountain glen and towering peak rise grandly abrupt or mysteriously wild from the mirroring depths below where warm sun glows on a wondrous wall of marvellous hues, brilliant in gold and purple and dazzling green, all mellowed and flecked in opal light as the grey mist floats up from some darkling corrie, and melts in the smile of the sea and sky as they blend together in radiant blue beneath the midday sun - and to see them at their best, there is nothing like a yacht"

Once again, the time has come to set an anchor....

.... and reflect that we can never go back to any place 'for the first time'

Graham & Dairne Rabbitts

*Ariadne*



