

Scottish Cruise on Lydia, Summer 2010

By Trish Phelan

Having bought a 15yr old Hallberg-Rassy in 2009, the plan for this year was to sail to Scotland, spend a couple of months cruising and finish up by participating in the Clyde Cruising Club's Centenary Rally which was scheduled for the last fortnight in July.

Howth to Ardglass - 16th May

As usual, preparations dragged on, but eventually, the electric windlass and the other final items were completed and we set sail on Sun 16th May for Ardglass. The crew were Joe and Trish Phelan and Steven Lines, a Londoner and the previous owner of Lydia. He had agreed to sail with us from Howth for 10 days ending up in Troon. As the boat was previously sailed in the shallow waters of the east coast of England, and Steven had never been to either Ireland or the west coast of Scotland this was a whole new sailing experience for him! The wind from the WNW was about 10knts and Lydia sailed beautifully until the wind died at 15.20hrs and we motor sailed the final three hours into Ardglass.

Ardglass to Glenarm then on to Rathlin

Departure from Ardglass for Glenarm was at 8.30 hrs on Mon 17th. Winds of less than 5knts from the west originally, then southerly and finally south easterly, meant that we motor sailed all the way to Glenarm. We saw seals and harbour porpoises on the way. We ate on board and had a relaxed morning on Tuesday as our departure time was 12.30 hrs to take full advantage of the tide. With a forecast of a SE force 5 we rolled out the jib and flew up the coast. It was a beautiful sunny day and we passed Fair Head doing 9.5knts. As usual the wind increased as we approached Rathlin and the ferry arrived at the same time! We finally were nailed to the pontoon and took off for a walk and a few pints at the local hostelry!

Rathlin to East Loch Tarbert

The next morning we left Rathlin for East Loch Tarbert watching seals and eider duck as we departed. A light SE, later S and finally SW wind meant we mainly motor sailed but did get two splendid hours sailing before we got to Sanda Sound. We arrived in East Loch Tarbert at 18.50hrs and tied up on the new fingers of the marina. It was a dry, but dull evening, as we repaired to the Anchor for pints and food!

As we were well on schedule to make Troon in time, we decided to stay an extra day in East Loch Tarbert, catching up on shopping and laundry, had a walk to West Loch Tarbert, ate at the Vic and bought some great seafood for the following days dinner. The town was looking splendid, getting ready for the Scottish series, due to start the following week.

Tarbert to Burnt Isles

We departed Tarbert at 11.30hrs for the Burnt Isles in the Kyles of Bute. Dense fog and flat calm meant we motored, watching the radar continuously. At 15.30hrs we anchored in Balnakilly Bay, having investigated two other anchorages, and deciding on this one. The new windlass, with remote control, worked like a dream. The fog lifted and we had this magnificent anchorage all to ourselves for a few hours - we were joined later by two other boats. We ate in the cockpit - fresh crab and scallops, accompanied by white wine - in glorious sunshine! Steven was in heaven! - He had never spent a night on anchor in Lydia before!

Balnakilly Bay to Troon

Dense fog and flat calm greeted us in the morning, but the fog began to lift in a surreal way showing just the tops of the surrounding islands. By the time we had breakfast over and anchor up, visibility was good and an hour later a light southerly wind filled in. It was a beat all

the way to Troon, but it was a lovely sunny day and we were in no hurry! We saw lots of harbour porpoises on the way and came upon a small number of boats going our way, who were obviously racing, so we had to join in, tack for tack!

Steven was on the helm, and he became a little concerned as we approached the cliffs (we were still in 50m!). My answer was that he should tack when the depth below 40m! Steven who is used to sailing in 2m depths fell about the place laughing! The wind died away in the late afternoon so we motored the last few miles and arrived in Troon at 17.00hrs. We ate in the very fine marina restaurant that evening and met Mary and Geraldine Moran and families who were there for a family wedding.

The following morning we dieseled up, took on water and then said goodbye to Steven who was catching a Ryanair to London. Spent the afternoon shopping, general maintenance, washed the decks, and left the boat shipshape, as we were departing for Dublin early the following morning, where we had a few days at home before our younger son, his wife and two daughters started on their journey to Australia.

We returned to Lydia on 28th May, intending to go round the Mull of Kintyre the following day, but an adverse forecast changed our minds and we spent the extra day shopping, and caught up with some maintenance. After dinner in the marina we met the crew of Alakush who were on a delivery trip, bringing the boat back to Howth.

Troon to Port Ellen, Islay

At 06.30hrs on 31st May we left Troon for Islay, motor sailing in light E winds. We rounded the Mull of Kintyre at 12.30hrs and a couple of hours later picked up a F3 SE wind which lasted, or even increased all the way to Port Ellen. There were huge rollers on our approach, but by 18.00hrs we were tied up on the pontoon, just ahead of seven other boats that arrived very soon after us! This island laid out our plans for the summer - if we liked a place we stayed! We spent 5 days in Islay, walking,, taking local and post buses to all corners of the island, and generally relaxing.

A visit to the Laphroig distillery one day was followed by a day on the buses - we ended up on the post bus which took us to the tiny village of Portnahaven and Port Wymess - it all looked like one village to us, but not so to the locals! - They even have different entrance doors to the local church! The following day we did a six hour hike to the American monument on the Mull of Oa - this was erected to commemorate the sinking of the Otranto and the Tuscania.. Back in Port Ellen we visited the local butcher, where we bought among other things, the RNLI hamburgers! - They contained seaweed and were very tasty!

Port Ellen, Islay to Craighouse on Jura

More shopping at the Co-op and butchers preceded our departure for Craighouse on Jura. Beautiful sunshine all the way, but not much wind gave us a pleasant motor sail and we picked up a visitor mooring at 15.10hrs. There was only one other boat in the bay, but by 19.00hrs all 16 moorings were full! We had dinner in the cockpit in glorious sunshine. I went for a swim (more of a dip really!) We decided to stay an extra day in Craighouse and spent the day mooching and reading.

Craighaven to Ardfern - 7th June

We left Craighaven at 07.30hrs on 7th June for Ardfern, glorious sunshine, but flat calm. Abeam Crinan we saw skuas, puffins and lots of seals. We also saw the "Puffin Billy" as we motored up the Loch towards Ardfern. We tied up at the marina at 12.30hrs.

The following day was again sunny, so we spent the day getting a diesel leak sorted out and ordered rope for a mooring chain. We had a splendid meal ashore in the local hotel. On Wed 9th we got the local bus to Oban, to check out possibilities for leaving the boat there, while we would go back to Dublin later in the cruise. We got a library ticket to facilitate printing boarding passes at a later date, also got bus and train timetables, and did some shopping - a very informative day!

Ardfern to Craobh Haven - 10th June

Departure for Craobh Haven was at 10.45hrs on Thurs 10th June. We had a great sail in a cold NW F3 through the whirlpools of Dorrus Moir, investigated a few anchorages on the way and tied up in Craobh Haven marina at 13.45hrs. Glorious sunshine but cool! We dished up, did laundry, caught up on emails (thanks to wifi in the pub!), had dinner in the cockpit, then up to the pub for beers!

It was cold and overcast the next morning, so we decided to stay put and walk over the hill to Ardfern. This took about an hour in each direction. We had a picnic lunch on the shore at Ardfern, before walking back over the hill and then out to the end of the causeway at Craobh Haven - great scenery!

Craobh Haven to Kerrera - 12th June

On 12th June we departed Craobh Haven for Kerrera in a NW F4/5. Sailed under jib only up Kerrera sound and got the last berth in the marina at 17.00hrs. Ate in the island restaurant - very good!

After a full night of rain it eased a little, so we took the 10.00hrs ferry to Oban, went shopping at Tesco, had fantastic seafood sandwiches at the kiosk at the ferry terminal and bought scallops for dinner! Rain still falling! Ferry back at 12.10hrs. and it was time to put the cockpit tent up to keep out the rain! Did a 2.5 hr walk (in the rain) to the ferry terminal on Kerrera, and then back for seafood dinner in the cockpit (with the tent up!)

Kerrera to Dunstaffnage

Trish took the 10.00hrs ferry to Oban to go to the library to print our boarding passes for our trip home. Departed Kerrera for Dunstaffnage at 12.15hrs a distance of 7.11 nm! Reversed into the berth to take advantage of the brilliant sunshine. Disappointed to learn there was no wifi, the pub/restaurant was closed indefinitely and they were charging £3 per night for electricity on top of the marina fee. Met Conan Breslin, his wife Annie and son Harris, who are living on a Dutch boat in the marina, while he is doing a 6 month locum at the local Marine Institute. Conan is originally from Howth.

Dunstaffnage to Tobermory

We departed Dunstaffnage for Tobermory in beautiful sunshine, but cold - we can see snow on the high mountains! We sailed about half of the trip, as the wind was on the nose despite the SW forecast! We arrived in Tobermory at 16.40hrs and opted for a marina berth, with shore power and wifi for £20 rather than a mooring for £14!

Next morning started with dense fog and flat calm seas. We decided to stay an extra day in Tobermory and we set off on a 14km walk to Ardmore Point. Cooked dinner in oven and prepared for trip to Coll on the following day.

Tobermory to Arinagour, Coll - 17th June

We departed Tobermory for Coll at 10.15hrs on 17th June - very misty, but flat calm, so we motored all the way. We saw lots of basking sharks on the way, some of them very close!

Visibility gradually improved, and Azile, one of only three cruising boats in Bray, called us on the VHF. They were just departing from Arinagour, which was our destination. We picked up a mooring at 14.10hrs. We got the dinghy out, motored ashore, and investigated this magnificent island. We ended up in the Coll Hotel where we had a pint and booked a meal for the following evening.

Next day was sunny and breezy. Went ashore, and did a four hour walk on the north side of the island - magnificent, but very exposed to the onshore breeze. Got back to Arinagour to find our dinghy blown onto the rocks! We rescued it without any damage and decided to cancel our dinner booking as it was blowing very hard. We had an interesting trip back out to Lydia and were very glad to cook on board as it was now blowing 6/7 NW!. The following day was cold, but wall to wall sunshine, and a forecast of NW F5/6 occ 7! We had a very lazy day reading and relaxing, not being able to get off the boat!

The man collected the mooring fees early (he had missed the previous evening!) - we negotiated four nights for the price of three! He had spent three months fishing in Howth in the past! We rowed ashore, and went walking to the south end of the island, past the airport. We had our packed lunch near the beach on the south west corner of the island. We were surrounded by corncrakes - it was a surreal feeling! Walked back to Arinagour, tired after a 5 hour walk and rowed back to Lydia. On our way we passed "Ocean Gypsy" with Jen and John Crebbin on board. We arranged to join up for dinner in the hotel, preceded by drinks on their beautiful new boat. A very good seafood meal and pleasant company made for a very enjoyable evening!

Arinagour to Tobermory

Departed Arinagour the following morning for Tobermory. We tied up on the pontoon for three hours to do laundry, shopping, wifi, and get water and diesel.

Tobermory to Loch Drumbuie in Loch Sunart

Departed at 17.00hrs for Loch Drumbuie in Loch Sunart. Anchored in 5m, a beautiful place and great weather to spend the longest day of the year! As Joe rowed around in the dinghy, taking photos, he was hailed by a Scots man (George) in a boat called Kermit, and invited to come and celebrate mid summers day with a dram! What an evening! - George and Catherine (a young German woman), produced, beer, whiskey, wine, tasties, which we enjoyed on deck in a flat calm cloudless dim. Around midnight we heard an owl and also bats. More owls were hooting as we rowed back to Lydia. A memorable mid summer's day!

After a slow start we decided to stay an extra day in this glorious anchorage. We invited George and Catherine from Kermit to join us for dinner on Lydia. All, once again in the cockpit til midnight, had a good evening!

Loch Drumbuie to Loch Aline

We took up the anchor at 10.10hrs, heading for Loch Aline. We sailed in a SE F3/4, with one reef in the main and anchored in Loch Aline at 15.00hrs It was a dull day, but dry. The following morning a screaming gull attracted our attention. It was mobbing an eagle, sitting preening itself on a branch of a tree about 100m away. When it eventually flew away it was identified as a sea eagle, by its startling white upper rump/tail. We walked into the village later, anticipating a shower at the dive centre, but despite the place being wide open, there was nobody around!

Loch Aline to Kerrera

We departed for Kerrera the following morning. This was our marina of choice to leave Lydia

while we came back to Dublin for a few days. After an overnight on the marina we took the train from Oban to Glasgow and then on to Prestwick - a lovely train journey - and then Ryanair back to Dublin.

We had 6 weeks in Scotland

We had more than six glorious weeks weather in Scotland, but that is about to change! Due to a terrible forecast, we decide to change our reservations and come back to Lydia on Friday 2nd July. There is a big low in the Atlantic, south of Iceland - wind is on its way! We did a big shop in Tesco's, are advised that ferry may not run due to F8 forecast. We watch Germany beat Argentina in the restaurant on Kerrera - we're all wearing full oilskins as the rain lashes down and the restaurant (a marquee) feels as though its about to take off!

We never left the boat on Sunday - very glad to be nailed to a marina! Rain +++, F8 increasing F10 forecast! Got a text from Sean Mc Cormack of Marie Claire - he is on a mooring in Loch Boisdale in South Uist - not a pleasant experience!

We watch quite a few DVD's and read lots of books over these few days, also go walking on Kerrera, despite the weather. We walked the circular route of the island each day - it takes about 4hours - we got soaked most days and it was very windy, so it wasn't possible to make plans to move on.

On Thurs 8th Marie Claire arrived in Kerrera. We were invited for drinks on board to hear of their adventures. The following night Sean and John Ahearne came to dinner on Lydia - John brought his guitar and entertained us with many fine ballads and we all enjoyed a CD of Antarctic ballads, which was the favourite music of the evening!

It is still raining and blowing next morning. We decide to go for a hike to clear the heads! It rains for the next 20 hrs without a break! It looks like a break in the weather, so we go to Oban to do a final shop. We then watch the World Cup final in Oban - with a Dutch daughter-in-law we have to shout for Holland, but the better team won!

Kerrera up Loch Linnhe to Poll Doireann

On Mon 12th July we finally leave Kerrera after dieseling up. We went up Loch Linnhe to have a look at a couple of anchorages which we might use at a later date, and then headed on for Poll Doireann which we reached at 14.20hrs. There were seven boats anchored when we arrived, very soon there were 23 yachts and many motorboats! It was a beautiful day in this magnificent anchorage! We even had a piper doing his practice for 15mins in the early evening! We spotted two otters halfway to shore about 50 m from the boat! Later we discovered that the name Poll Doireann meant "The pool of the otters"! Marie Claire arrived later and after dinner we all repaired to Ti na Truise where we enjoyed pints and had a tour of the Bridge over the Atlantic. It was very dark on the return journey and despite torches, we got caught in quite boggy areas and unfortunately Sean lost his camera with all his cruise photos.

Poll Doireann to Craobh Haven

We departed the following morning for Craobh Haven, where we caught up on laundry. We had drinks on a HR 53 belonging to a Canadian, Fred Mc Kay - an interesting evening.

Mon 14th July was very windy and a generally unpleasant day. We walked over to Ardfern and decided we were lucky to be on the sheltered side of the headland! We had drinks at 18.00hrs with Viv and Harold Boyle on Gentle Spirit, a HR 38 and fellow ICC member. Thurs 15th started very wet. We sat off for Melfort Pier, had lunch in the Mermaid, then cleaned the hull

from the dinghy, and arrived back to Craobh at 16.00hrs. We had drinks on Lydia with Brian Cudmore and Gerry Donovan.

Fri 16th was calm to start but strong winds later. We cleared out the cabin for Bev and Peter Killen who were joining us the next day for the CCC centenary cruise. We ate in the marina restaurant that evening.

On Sat morning we walked over to Ardfern to register for the cruise and pick up our cruise pack. We sorted out the last minute shopping and sheltered from torrential rain!

Bev and Pete arrived at 16.00hrs. After they had settled in we ate in the marina restaurant that evening.

Craobh Haven to Ardfern Marina - 18th July

On Sun 18th July we departed Craoibh Haven to join 183 boats at Ardfern Marina for the opening dinner of the rally. We were rafted up outside five other boats, but with the marvellous organisation and help of the marina staff there were no problems. Dinner was a long drawn out affair - it involved queuing for two hours to collect food - thankfully it was a glorious evening and the wine was flowing, so it was a very sociable occasion!

Anchored in Loch Aline

Mon 19th was an early start as one of the boats inside us, was taking part in the Tobermory race. Once again the marina staff excelled - with their help we were soon free from the trot, and decided to keep going (in the rain) as the prospects of getting back in were fairly slim! By 11.15hrs we were anchored in Loch Aline. The rain had stopped and a full Irish breakfast was the order of the day. Later we went for a walk ashore, where we visited the gardens of Ardtornish House and walked the estate. On our way back we stopped for drinks on Christina of Howth, where we had a pleasant hour with Brigid and Richard Mc Caffrey, before returning to Lydia to cook dinner.

Loch Aline to Loch Drumbuie



Building a Sunflower Raft in Loch Drumbuie

On Tues 20th we departed Loch Aline at midday to motor (in the rain) to Loch Drumbuie for

the formation of a sunflower raft. We arrived at 14.50hrs in glorious sunshine (lucky again) and due to great organisation once again, we were tied up in place at 15.10hrs! A very pleasant afternoon followed, with more than 160 boats closing the raft at 18.00hrs. The raft broke up at that stage and we went and anchored in the Loch. We had dinner and then the crew of Blackjack from Dunmore East came onboard for a few drinks.

Loch Drumbuie to Tobermory

We departed Loch Drumbuie the following morning for Tobermory, with a forecast of N F5-7! We tied up on the pontoon, but as the wind increased it became obvious that we could not stay for the night. We burst a mooring rope and the boat next to us had damage to their fairleads, so it was time to go! We anchored behind Cuvee Island at the east end of Tobermory Bay in 13m depth. A much more pleasant anchorage meant that we could eat, drink and sleep in relative comfort. We motored into Tobermory next morning, got diesel, shopping, and wifi, before setting off for Coll at midday. We had a nice sail to Coll in an N F3, and arrived in Arinagour at 15.45hrs. We went ashore, ate in the Island Café, had an hour and a half's walk on the island, a pint in the hotel, then back to Lydia. We were having problems with our outboard engine, which was sounding very sick, so Pete and I worked on it and it revived a bit!

Tobermory to Castlebay on Barra



Basking shark off Mull

We started Fri 23rd with a swim - very cold - a dip really! Up anchor at 08.50hrs our destination Castlebay on Barra. We had porridge on the way and then saw basking sharks and lots of seals in Gunna Sound. We had a mixture of sailing and motor sailing and anchored in Castlebay at 16.50hrs. Dinner on board was followed by Pete and I going ashore for a pint. On their way back we rescued Tam O'Shanters dinghy which had gone adrift! Rain greeted us next morning - got the tent up to give us some protection! Went ashore, did some shopping. Had lunch in the Heritage centre, and then went for a swim, sauna and shower in the local sports centre. We then visited Kisimul Castle, went back to Lydia for a ziz before going ashore for dinner at the Craigard Hotel, followed by drinks at the Castlebay Hotel.

Anchored in Vatersay Bay

The next event was a beach barbecue on Vatersay beach at Barra in the Outer Hebrides. We motored through Fishermans Passage, anchored in Vatersay Bay and went ashore for a walk to

both beaches, then up the hill and visited the monument to the 400 people who drowned when the Annie Jane was shipwrecked in Sept 1853. Once again, following some pretty awful weather, the sun shone for the event- what a barbecue! Scottish steaks, Langoustines, burgers, sausages and corn, washed down with excellent wine! Music from the Vatersay Boys went on long into the night!

Vatersay Bay to Canna

We sailed to Canna the next day, saw three Atlantic White sided dolphins (very acrobatic!) and a humpback whale on the way, We spent two days there, after we eventually anchored securely on the fifth attempt! Canna has 19 inhabitants and boasts an excellent restaurant! We walked the island on the second day, and saw lots of skuas. Strong winds meant that lots of boats were dragging, so as it was our 43rd wedding anniversary, Trish and I rowed ashore while Pete and Bev stayed aboard - we did bring them back Sticky Toffee Pudding as a token thank you!

Canna to Tobermory

We had a good downwind sail from Canna to Tobermory in very poor visibility. We rounded Ardnamurchan at 15.30hrs and tied up on the pontoon in Tobermory at 16.45hrs. The following morning we got water, diesel, and stores.. Then we sailed to Loch Spelve for the Mussel Fest - marvellous vats of mussels in different sauces prepared by a chef from Edinburgh - beautiful evening, but at last the midges had caught up with us - not bad after 11 weeks in Scotland!

The final dinner was in Kerrera - we were lucky to get a marina berth and not be rafted out. We had splendid pre dinner champagne with Sandy and Christine Taggart. This time it was a taste of the sea - unbelievable spread! Great night!. All good things come to an end!

Left Kerrera for Gigha, Bangor, Ardglass and home to Howth

We left Kerrera at 7am on 31th July for Gigha, then on to Bangor, Ardglass, and had a smashing final sail to Howth, doing an average speed of 6.4 for the days sail.

Thus ended a most enjoyable cruise. We did 905 miles, had six weeks of glorious weather, before the normal Scottish summer returned in July!

Lydia performed beautifully. She is a marvellous sailor and we found her very comfortable to live on for the summer, even when we had four crew members on board for the CCC rally. A most successful cruise - can't wait for next year!