

AROUND IRELAND 2015

Wild Again

7th June,

We departed from Howth with Katrina2 at 08-20 hrs on a beautiful summer morning; we had high hopes and great expectations; and looking forward to a leisurely cruise around Ireland.

They say if you want to make God laugh, tell him your plans.

Our passage plan was to travel around Ireland in an anti-clockwise direction; our first leg was to Ardglass, arriving at 17-20hrs in perfect conditions, so far so good.

Departed for Bangor at 12-20 on 8th, the forecast was 3 to 4 from the n/w, but once past the South Rock the wind went on the nose and as we entered Copland sound we hit the ebb and were met with deep confused seas from all directions that lasted most of the way down to Bangor marina. We arrived at 18-45hrs cold, sore and very wet, a taste of things to come!

9th, departed for Glenarm, lovely weather and flat seas, and had a great welcome from the staff.

Rested up for a day, loaded up with diesel and checked out the boat for damage etc., all was well.

11th, had a lovely trip to Ballycastle, but the wind was on the nose and stayed on the nose for almost our entire trip around Ireland.

We stayed in Ballycastle for two days; the wind was on the increase and the weather cold.

We visited Rathlin and Portrush while we waited for better weather.

14th at 09-30hrs we left Ballycastle for Greencastle and again the wind was on the nose and running at force 5 with gusts, creating lots of overfalls.

We turned downwind for Greencastle in a following sea, when suddenly there was a loud bang; luckily we were clipped on, because the tiller pin of the Autohelm had sheared in two and the boat then broached hard.

We got onto the new pontoon at Greencastle at 14-00hrs, the tide runs very strong across the pontoon and when the tide turns, it gets very uncomfortable, but non the less we were delighted to get a berth.

14th at 09-00hrs we left for the Downings in Donegal, we were concerned about Inistrahull Sound, having suffered on two different occasions while passing through the sound.

The trip was beautiful, flat seas and sunshine, arrived at the Downings at 16-00hrs. It's a lovely safe harbour and the town is close by, but previous storms had ripped out the water supply on the pier. Diesel is available on the pier; the phone number can be got from the local fishermen.

The weather then turned for the worse and got very cold, especially at night,

(It got down to 6 degrees at times). We were weatherbound there for 4 days and then on 19th at 08-00hrs when the winds had eased a little, we left for Teeling Harbour. Teeling is located on the Atlantic side of Donegal. It's a very long coastline and made longer by the cold strong winds which persisted on the nose.

Once on passage our level of visibility dropped to around 500 metres and the clouds almost touching the sea; we passed Aranmore and could barely make out the shoreline and we would have missed it entirely except for the breaking waves on the cliffs.

We arrived at Teeling at 20-30hrs, cold, wet and tired, the latter part of the journey was in fog, fine mist, very cold and with very little visibility, (totally exhausting), we were glad to see that Katrina 2 who was travelling in company with us had picked up a visitors mooring and so we were able to raft up together for the night.

We left Teeling at 08-00hrs on the short passage over to Mullaghmore; the morning was bright with a breeze on the beam, excellent. Arrived at 10-00hrs

The harbour was full and a triathlon was in full swing. We were looked after by members of the yacht club who had forfeited their berth, so that we could lie alongside the pier. They showed us great courtesy and drove us several miles to a garage so that we could replenish our diesel.

We stayed on for another day, but having arrived in springs and because we were near the top of the slip when we dried out, we were afraid of being neaped.

On the following morning the 23rd, at 09-40hrs and at the very top of the tide we left visible furrows in the sand as we departed, it was a very close call.

We had a long passage ahead and once again the wind increased and the sky's descended down to the seas. When we rounded Eagle Island at 20-40hrs we started to lose the light. Our destination was Frenchport, the entrance is quite narrow and a big sea was breaking right across the rocks at entrance.

It was now low water and not for the faint hearted, but once inside, it opens into a beautiful, tranquil lagoon and a very safe anchorage and well worth a visit.

24th We awoke to a bright sunny day and 09-00hrs and we headed off with flat seas for Inisbofin.

We stayed outside Clare Island and headed down to the eastern end of Inisbofin, then through the reefs and then west again, up to Cromwell's Castle, this is where the paper chart came into its own.

Rock hopping with a chartplotter is not wise. The chart showed a submerged rock on our port side and the chartplotter did not! And so, just 50 metres to port a pinnacle of rock appeared and disappeared as we sailed past.

Once again we arrived at low water. We then rounded the castle; the entrance is blind and narrow and there is a regular ferry service, we have AIS fitted and could monitor the movements of the ferry and a trawler inside, which was a great comfort.

We dropped anchor inside at 17-00hrs, our next destination was Inismore, and once again the sky and the sea's merged, all grey and cold, (at this stage I thought I was going colour blind).

24th, at 08-00hrs we crept out around the castle, with very little visibility and again using the AIS to make sure that there were no surprises, (but there was a surprise), there was a tiny bit of blue in the sky!! And it grew and grew, the seas went from grey to blue and the wind went on the beam, (bliss). We arrived into the new harbour on Inismore at 16-00hrs, just as the forecasts announced gales for the next few days.

This suited us quite well, we had planned to stay a few days to see the island and it turned out that this was their Annual festival weekend, complete with Currach racing and street music.

We had small craft warnings right up to the 30th, and it took just one look at the water crashing over the cliffs 'to make us sit tight. It just became a matter of choosing which establishment we should give our custom to every evening; they all had WIFI and an adequate supply of good beer.

1st of July

A break in the weather was forecast, possibly only for 36 hours, so at 06-55 we slipped out between the Islands through a high swell of white foam that appeared to be about a meter thick and stretched from island to island, it was nerve wracking, the strong eddies seemed to snatch the boat and swing us towards the rocks on either shore and the best speed we could make at that time was 4 knots, it seemed forever before we got clear.

We arrived in Fenit at 16-30hrs, and once again having to rely on Radar and AIS; a lot of the time we lost sight of Katrina 2, who was only a half a dozen boat lengths away.

We were informed that we were the first visiting boats of the season, (small wonder). And also that the weather was about to turn for the worse!

We decided to get up early and check out the conditions and make a dash for Dingle. So at 06-00hrs on the 2nd, the weather still held out and away we went, heading due west so as to get in the lee of Mount Brandon. Once under Mount Brandon the katabatic winds kicked in with spray and white water everywhere, it was like all the seasons at once, the rain swept out of Smerwick harbour sweeping by horizontally, it was stinging and yet I was getting sunburnt on the back of my neck.

Once we entered Blasket Sound we caught the full strength of the wind and the start of the flood on the nose, we managed to make 3 knots against the wind and tide and when we slipped the corner we were able to pick up the wind and tide all the way to Dingle.

The entrance to Dingle is blind, but we could pick up AIS from 3 boats, (no problem) until we entered the narrows, these 3 boats turned into 9 Fungi sightseeing boats who, had no respect for the rules of the sea, even Fungi seemed scared, because he nearly jumped into our boat then disappeared from sight.

We stepped ashore at 13-45hrs and were well met by the staff; they took our diesel cans, filled them and returned to our boats.

We spotted Deep Thought on one of the pontoons; they were heading around Ireland clockwise. I hope they got better weather than we did. The weather blew gales right up to the 8th, but gave us lots of time to enjoy the pubs etc.

9th July

The winds eased once again, so at 06-15hrs we set out for Bere Island, but once again the wind increased, slowly at first, then it increased to 33 knots in gusts, so with a quick check with Katrina 2 we opted to head for Knightstown, which meant downwind with a big sea and with the visibility getting worse by the minute. We crept through the surf and into the new harbour in Knightstown and once again we were just in time to shelter from a force 9 which lasted for two days. Knightstown is a fantastic safe refuge and was FREE.

It rained solid for the two days and unfortunately it was the towns Annual Festival with lots of visitors around and (all soaked to the skin), and to make matters worse it blew to severe gales until the 12th, bad enough for a 35 metre yacht to seek shelter.

At 08-00 hrs on the 12th we crept out to take a look at the seas and decided to push on through the big rolling seas down to Dursey Head and around to Laurance Cove.

We had a smooth sea and following wind all the way from Dursey to Laurance Cove, arriving at 15-30hrs. Once again the wind increased and the rain commenced, but we were delighted to get a snug berth, there are few places as pleasant to hole up in.

14th at 08-00hrs we set out for Sherkin Island, (flat seas, no rain) can't believe our luck.

We bucked the tides at Mizen Head and had wonderful views of the Fastnet all the way to Sherkin Island and we managed to get a berth on the pontoon. We had a lovely meal in the hotel, followed by a few creamy pints, (heaven).

15th at 08-00hrs, we woke up to mist, no wind and a glimpse of a sea otter, the start of a lovely day, our next stop was Kinsale and it turned out to be one of our better days. We arrived at the yacht club marina at 15-00hrs, just in time for the next batch of severe gales.

We stayed in Kinsale until the 19^h; the weather was awful with heavy rain and howling winds, almost nonstop throughout the time we were there.

19th at 09-00 we departed for Crosshaven, once again the seas were flat and the skies turned blue, it was a lovely trip all the way, arriving at 12-00hrs and stayed at Salve Marina.

We departed on the 22nd complete with a new crew member, who seemed to bring good weather with him, (great). We anchored at Helvic Head and crawled into Dungarvan on a rising tide and were delighted to see the new pontoon, which is a big improvement on the old one.

We arrived at 15-45hrs, having departed Crosshaven at 09-45hrs. We stayed overnight and departed the next morning on the tide at 09-40hrs for Kilmore Quay, arriving at 16-00hrs and were greeted by a dog and its owner, Joe Nolan of HYC, who had arrived just before us from Waterford and who wisely stayed on in Kilmore for a few days after we departed.

We departed on the 24th at 09-00hrs, the forecast was force 4 to 5, from the North West, and it was overcast with poor visibility, the recipe for a miserable passage, (déjà vu)

Once we went over Patricks Bridge the sea and sky slowly merged, the visibility dropped to about 400 metres. It was difficult to pick out the pots which were everywhere.

Suddenly we were caught up on a very heavy rope; we slapped the boat into a quick burst astern and then waited while the wind pushed us astern, the rope was then on the rudder blade and its own weight and the mass of barnacles carried it down off the rudder, we thought that we were lucky to get away so easy.

Our luck ran out at Carnsore Point, the tide had turned and the wind went into the East and then increased to force 6 with gusts, we got battered all the way to Arklow.

(So much for the new crew bringing good weather)

We arrived, cold, wet and miserable at 18-00hrs, but a trip to the town and a hot meal and some creamy pints salved all wounds. Danny, our new crew had to be back in Howth for the weekend and departed home that evening, said that the trip was great? And I believed him.

The next morning at 10-00hrs we set out for Greystones, arriving at 14-00hrs, another perfect trip, unfortunately, once again bad weather was on the way, the next day turned out

to be the coldest wettest July day on record. The Dart beckoned to us, pointing to a cosy house and a warm bed, at this stage we needed no prompting and complete with our free travel passes, we headed home for the night.

27th July, once again we were back on the boat, the sun was out and the promise of a pleasant trip back to Howth, we waited for our son and grandson to arrive on the dart and at 12-50hrs we set out, the weather changed slowly and half way across the bay a series of line squalls hit us until we got into the lee of Howth Head, then hit us again, from the Nose of Howth right up to our berth on the marina.

Our trip took seven weeks, we covered 1,025nm and are still talking to each other.

John and Sheila O Reilly.

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