

Lydia returns to Scotland

Trish and Joe Phelan

And so it's back to Scotland again for our 2013 cruise. Trish and I intend spending about six weeks up there and will be joined by our son and grandson for a short cruise in the Clyde.

The weather forecast for later in the week doesn't look too promising, so we decide to try and get north for a couple of days before the really nasty stuff comes in. We depart Howth for Ardglass at 07.30 on 19th of May. It's a calm dull morning, wind from northeast, and not the forecast east to southeast! By 13.00 the sun is out, it's warm, time for shorts and T-shirts! No other boats in sight. By 15.00 both sun and wind have gone, so it's engine on and full speed to Ardglass. At 17.50 we are tied up in a very empty marina. A Scottish sail-training ship offers us a pot of shrimp which they had left over from a fish box given to them by a local fisherman. We cook the shrimp and eat royally for dinner and lunch the next day.

We depart Ardglass at 07.30, having got a forecast of northwest force 3 to 4, rising 5 to 6 later. Our original plan was to head to Glenarm, but with a long term forecast of 4 or 5 days of strong N winds we decide to change our plan and head to Bangor. We had a cold dark but dry sail into a force 4 which came right from the mark. The boat reefed a dream and handled very well. We arrived in Bangor marina at 14.40, dieselled up and were no sooner in our berth than we had a visit from Peter Ronaldson. He joined us for a leisurely lunch.

The forecast looks appalling for the next 4 to 5 days, so the next day we head off by train to Belfast, and take the Hop-on, Hop-off bus tour of the city. Very interesting, but we didn't have enough time to see Stormont properly, so we'll return tomorrow! Despite strong winds the day was sunny and dry. We joined Peter and Evie Ronaldson and Stanton Adair at RUYC for their curry night- a very pleasant evening!

We head back into Belfast the following morning, have a good tour of Stormont in lovely sunny weather, lunch in town and return to *Lydia* for dinner.

Since we are still stormbound, we decide to take the train to Derry/Londonderry for the day. It took almost 4 hours from Bangor, along a beautiful coastal panorama. We walked the historic walls of Derry, had lunch in the old city and then walked over the Peace Bridge, where preparations were in full swing for a BBC concert at the weekend. We met Peter Ronaldson on our return, who told us that he was working on his boat and had clocked 42knots in the marina! The marina staff had got 49knots!

Another windy day in store, so Joe decides to return to Dublin to sort out a couple of problems with his OU course – where would we be without the bus pass!? Trish stays behind to stock the boat, as it looks as though we may get away tomorrow. Stanton Adair

has suggested that we should join a mini-cruise to Scotland being organised by the marina – there were 12 boats originally but the number was now down to 4. He invited us to a wine and cheese in the marina tonight. There we met the other participating boat owners, including Tony Weston and his wife Gina. A very pleasant evening was had by all and plans to leave for Campbelltown at 10.00 the following morning are confirmed.

Saturday, 25th May, five boats depart in company for Campbelltown (Stanton Adair had taken the previous evenings tide). It's a lovely sunny day, wind force 3 to 4 southeast. The wind stayed constant all day and we made good time, at 15.30 we are 5 miles from the waypoint, east of Sanda. We had a smashing sail into Campbelltown, where we tied up at the pontoon at 18.50. A very pleasant drinks session on *Mandolin Wind*, hosted by Gina and Tony Weston, was followed by a smashing dinner in the newly refurbished Royal Hotel. An unpleasant forecast meant that plans for the following few days were reassessed, some boats heading for home and others going further up the Clyde. We decide to head straight for Portavadie the following day, rather than stopping at Lochranza.

We depart Campbelltown at 11.45 having first watched the local half- marathon race. The wind is light from the southeast and we sail nicely along. A group of 20 dolphins accompanied us for a while, mostly bottlenose, but an occasional common dolphin as well. The wind increased during the day, so we had a smashing sail in a force 4, with the barometer dropping all the time. At 18.00 we tied up at Portavadie, which was quite full, with lots of boats from the Scottish series opting to stay there. The restaurant was full so we ate on board, then up for the ceilidh! – took part in the local reel, then having collected a bag of ice for our fridge, which had ceased to function, we made a quick dash in lashing rain for *Lydia*. The heat turned on, we were soon cosy, on a terrible night!

We went walking the following day, did various boat chores and ate in the restaurant that evening. Next day, we departed at 11.00 for East Loch Tarbert, a trip of 3.64 miles! All of the boats from the Scottish series had departed, so the town was quiet. We paid a visit, as usual to the local fish shop and the shellfish shop at the ferry terminus, so we dined like lords on magnificent Scottish seafood!

Next day we set out for Troon at 08.30. There was a light north-easterly wind. Around midday we changed our mind and headed for Largs. We had a nice sail under main and jib and tied up in Largs at 13.45. I managed to get the fridge sorted out there, after much searching a blown fuse was the problem.

We blew up the dinghy the following morning while we were still on shore power. We departed Largs for Millport at 10.30. There was no wind, so we motored all the way. At 11.45 we picked up a visitor's mooring, using our new Handy Duck mooring hook for the first time – it worked a treat! We took the dinghy ashore and went for a long walk. I thought I was seeing things when I saw a sign in the fish and chip shop for “deep fried chocolate chip muffins”!

We slipped the mooring early the next day and got under way for Troon, motoring all the way. We were meeting Trish's cousin Nora and her husband Frank. They joined us on *Lydia* for lunch and we caught up on all the Scottish family news.

Saturday, 1st June was the start of our family cruise in the Clyde. Our son John and his 13 year old son Finn left their house in Howth at 7.30 and we were sailing out of Troon harbour at 11.00! The wind was southwest force 3 to 4. It was dull and overcast and inclined to rain. We had a smashing sail and tied up in the inner harbour in Rothesay at 15.45. We did the mandatory tour of the Victorian toilets, then went for a long walk and ended up having a fine dinner at the Victoria hotel. After dinner Trish and I went to visit another first cousin, Michael and his wife Monica and caught up on all the news from that side of the family.

The following morning we did a tour of the castle in lovely sunshine, then had coffee in town prior to an 11.00 departure (after the ferry) for East Loch Tarbert, via the Burnt Isles.

At 14.15 we rounded Buoy 47 off Ardlamont Point, when Finn noticed one common dolphin circling the buoy continuously in a clockwise direction! After 10 minutes we gave up watching this odd behaviour and headed on. We tied up at East Loch Tarbert at 15.30. We had an excellent dinner in the Starfish restaurant. I heard the first cuckoo of 2013 today!

We had decided to spend another day in East Loch Tarbert, so Trish did some shopping while John and Finn went on the ferry to see Portavadie. We had dinner in the Anchor hotel.

We had a good 1.5hour hike up beyond the castle, had crab rolls which we had bought in the village for lunch. We called at the fish shop and bought scallops, prawns, smoked mackerel, and kippers. It's a beautiful sunny day as we depart East Loch Tarbert at 13.15 for the Burnt Isles. There's no wind, so we're motoring. We saw three harbour porpoises off Ardlamont Point, but no sign of the dizzy dolphin!

We anchor in 5.4 metres in Balnakailly Bay. There is one boat there when we arrive, but they hauled their anchor shortly afterwards. John and Finn went off exploring in the dinghy. When they returned we had an excellent dinner in the cockpit, comprising seafood starter, followed by chicken curry and rounded off with strawberries, washed down with a nice chilled white wine!

The next day dawned dull and wet. At 9.15 we hauled the anchor chain (which had a star fish on it!) and set off for Troon. At Ardrrossan the wind filled in from the southwest and we sailed to Troon. John treated us to dinner in Scott's restaurant in the marina. We had an early night, as a taxi was ordered for 6.10 the following morning – John had to get back to Dublin and do a quick turnaround down to Kinsale for the SB20 Southernns!

It was a great cruise with the family – the weather was warm and we got a reasonable amount of sailing during the five short days!

At 10.45 we filled up with diesel and departed Troon for Loch Ranza. It was a lovely sunny day, with very little wind from the northwest. We picked up a mooring buoy at Loch Ranza at 16.00. Our mooring duck worked a treat, however the extension handle (not part of the purchase) split and we lost the end part including the retrieval gadget.

We went ashore, had a long walk and decided, having checked the forecast to stay an extra day. We cooked on board, and were still sitting on deck at 10.00 pm. We got out the boots and rucksacks for the following day. We made sandwiches and departed *Lydia* at 10.00. We followed the coastal path round the Cock of Aaron. This involved a lot of scrambling as the tide was in. At Laggan cottage we took the track over the mountain to Loch Ranza (260 metre ascent) and when we arrived there we had pints of cider in the hotel, sitting in brilliant sunshine – a lovely finish to a six hour hike in glorious weather! We ate on board, dinner in the cockpit, and were still watching the sun go down at 10.00 pm.

We slipped the mooring buoy at 08.25. There was no wind until we got outside, then we had a steady south easterly force 3 to 4. We had a smashing sail to Otter Ferry, where we picked up a mooring at 13.00. We went ashore in the dinghy and had an hours walk. We booked dinner for 19.30. We got wi-fi and got an up to date forecast. This helped us decide to go into the Crinan the following morning. We had a very pleasant dinner, sitting outside in the sunshine.

We slipped the mooring at Otter Ferry at 9.15. It was a dull, dry morning with little wind. We tied up at the pontoon at Ardrishaig at 10.30. We entered Lock 1 and did the paperwork for the canal licence. We were delighted to hear that a new system was in place for short-handed boats. We flew a yellow, Crinan flag and this informed the lockkeepers that we were short of crew. They asked us to stay on board and tend the ropes, while they did all the work on shore. This system worked a treat and there was no extra charge on top of the licence fee.

We tied up after Lock 4 (Oakfield, at Millers Bridge). From there we walked into Lochgilphead and did some shopping. We had a visit from a couple from Clontarf YBC, who thought we were on a friend's boat. They were moored in Ardrishaig and wanted to hire bicycles to cycle the canal. We were able to point them in the right direction and off they went. We ate on board, and the forecast rain started in earnest, as did the midges! Despite nets on hatches and the vents plugged they still managed to get in! Our original plan was to spend 3 or 4 nights on the canal, do some walking and visit the museums, but maybe the midges will change our plan!

We departed Millers Bridge at 8.10 and went through locks 5, 6, 7, and 8 in company with a Scottish boat who were heading for Puilladobhain. We turned the boat around and tied up at the pontoon just beyond Cairnbawn. It was dry initially, but the rain had started by the time we were tied up. We had a late, leisurely breakfast at 10.30! The Clontarf couple called for coffee on their way back from Crinan. We then went up for soup (and Wi-Fi) to the

Cairnbawn Hotel. It rained all afternoon – no chance of a walk or museum visit! We went back up to the hotel for dinner. We met up with a couple from Manchester who keep their Hanse 34 at Ardrossan – only 5 hours on the motorway! They came back to *Lydia* for a nightcap. They left about midnight in torrential rain. The midges are back- even worse tonight! It's definitely out to sea tomorrow!

We got up early for the 8.10 forecast. We departed Cairnbawn at 8.30. We waited on the pontoon at lock 9 for at least an hour in the lashing rain. We went through all 5 locks on our own – it's much easier going down! At 12.00 we are at Crinan. We went through the last two locks with a very nervous lady skipper and her husband on a Hunter 27 – they were heading for Ardfern. We tidied up the boat and set sails. We sailed through the Doras Mor and tied up at Craobh Haven at 15.15. We filled with water and washed the boat (to get rid of the midges!), had showers, did laundry, then ate on board. After dinner we did our usual tour of the marina, into the pub for one drink, then back to *Lydia* to put up the tent and turn on the heat! We had excellent Wi Fi on the boat in this marina. The forecast for tomorrow is not good!

We had a text from our son John early next morning to say that his father in law had died after a long illness. Now we had to find a way back to Dublin for the funeral on Saturday. The marina manager, Jim, in Craobh was most helpful, making lots of phone calls and eventually suggesting that we should take the Kintyre Express, which is a 12 seater enclosed rib that runs daily from Campbelltown to Ballycastle, weather permitting. The cost was £60 return per person. We investigated this option and decided to go for it. We got the 7.30 school bus from the marina to Lochgilphead. A wait of 30 minutes saw us on the bus to Campbelltown. We had time there for a coffee before the rib took off at 12.30. The weather was on the verge as regards strength of wind, so we had a bumpy ride, getting to Ballycastle at 13.45. Then it was onto Ulster Bus (with the bus pass!) to Belfast and we transferred immediately to an express coach to Dublin. We got the Dart home and were in Baldoyle at 21.30- a long but interesting day.

We decided to return to *Lydia* by the same route. There were no suitable buses on the Kintyre peninsula on a Sunday, so we intended doing the journey on the Monday. However the rib wasn't running on Monday due to a scheduled engine service, so Tuesday was our return day. We were fortunate not to have chosen the Monday, as that was the day of the arrival of the G8 delegates in Enniskillen and there were huge delays in Belfast on all routes. We got back to Craobh at 19.00 having taken a taxi from Lochgilphead as we had missed the last bus connection. We ate in the restaurant at the marina and got sorted out for departure the next day.

We departed Craobh Haven at 09.00 on 19th June, took the tide through Cuan Sound, and then set sail for Kerrera. With full main (and a preventer!) and the jib goose winged we made great progress and tied up at Kerrera marina at 12.40 after a very pleasant sail. We went into Oban and restocked the boat.

We departed Kerrera the following morning at 09.00 for Tobermory. It was a dull drizzly morning with little wind; however the wind did fill in from astern, so we sailed in the rain, all the way to Tobermory. It rained all day and the forecast for later in the week was for strong winds, so we abandoned our plans to visit Iona by sea, and instead decided to see it by local bus the following day. We were up early to catch the 07.30 bus to connect with the ferry bus at Craignure, then to Fionnport, and thence by local ferry (10 mins) to Iona. We had met an English couple on the bus who had a motor boat on the pontoon at Tobermory, and had decided to follow the same route as ourselves, so we spent the day on Iona with them. We had an interesting tour of the site, in brilliant sunshine and which included a visit to John Smith's grave in the attached graveyard. He was the leader of the Labour Party and had died suddenly in office. His untimely departure allowed one Tony Blair to become the new party leader. John Smith was born and reared in a little village, Portnahaven, by the Rhinns of Islay which we had visited three years previously and from whence we picked up this little bit of information. The morning's exertions were followed by a fine lunch in the local hotel, before we started our return bus journey to Tobermory. Our friends from the bus, Hilary and David Inmann, came on board *Lydia* for drinks that evening after which we visited their boat for a nightcap – a very pleasant day. We also bumped into Sheila and John O'Reilly from HYC on *Wild Again*.

The forecast for the weekend is horrendous, so we book onto the pontoon at Salen, up Loch Sunart, and also into the hotel for dinner on Saturday night. Having done some shopping, we departed Tobermory at 11.10 and had a pleasant sail up Loch Sunart until the wind died. We stopped for lunch in 86 metres depth in the middle of Loch Sunart! – sunshine, total stillness, quiet – what more could you ask for? After lunch we continued our lovely trip up the loch and tied up at the pontoon at 14.30. We reversed in to face north, the expected wind direction. This was our first visit to Salen and we were very impressed. The pontoons are of a very high standard, with water and electricity. The toilet block and shop are a work in progress and should be ready for next year. The welcome we got was amazing and we will be back! The rain started as soon as we tied up, so we walked quickly up to the hotel for an excellent meal in their restaurant. We met Elaine and Tom Hendry from the CCC who were also hiding from the weather – they came back to *Lydia* for drinks. The tent is up and heat is on, we've doubled up on mooring warps, so we're snug for the expected weather!

Sunday was very wet and windy, but we were very sheltered. An unexpected asset was marvellous wi-fi on the boat, so we only put our noses outside for pre-dinner drinks with our CCC friends of the previous night!

Monday dawned bright and cool after the strong winds of Sunday. We should have got up earlier and walked to the top of the nearby hill, which would have given us marvellous views north to the Small Isles and Skye, but we didn't! – Another reason to return! The mackerel are in- we saw some locals catch 3 or 4 off the pontoon on Sunday evening. Now we are on our way to Tobermory to meet up with the Michael's on *Mystique of Malahide*. We

motored down the loch and got some nice pictures of Dickie Gomes's 100 year old yacht *Ainmara*. At the entrance to the loch we rolled out the jib and had a fine sail to Tobermory, arriving there at 14.10. It almost looked like HYC, as not only *Mystique*, but also Sean McCormack's *Marie Claire 2* and the O'Reilly's *Wild Again* were also tied up! We went shopping in preparation for our trip home, then went for a long walk, arriving back in time for a marvellous dinner on *Mystique* with Robert and Rose Michael, their daughter, Lucy and her partner.

We departed Tobermory at 09.15 for Puilladobhain. It's a dry, dull morning, with the wind on the nose to start, but by midday it has freed and we have a fine sail to the anchorage. There is only one other boat anchored, and three others arrive later – virtually empty compared to previous visits! The sun came out in the afternoon; we walked over to the Bridge over the Atlantic, for a few drinks, then back for dinner on *Lydia*. We have an early start tomorrow, to catch the tide and hopefully make Port Ellen tomorrow evening.

We haul the anchor at 07.30 in Puilladobhain and head for Port Ellen. We breakfast along the way. The sea is smooth and it is a sunny morning. At 09.10 we are through the sound of Luing, with a maximum speed of 10.8 knots. Its engine on/off, combined with full main and jib, depending on the vagaries of the wind. Passing the Corryvreckan, we have the engine at 1,800 revs and are doing 12.5knots! A short time later we can kill the engine and are still doing 10.8 knots under sail through the Sound of Jura! The wind strengthened as we approached Islay and we had a smashing sail into Port Ellen, tying up at the pontoon at 15.45. It's a lovely evening, so we go for a walk, pay our harbour dues on the way and return to *Lydia* for dinner.

We depart Port Ellen at 07.15 for Bangor. It's a dull wet morning with very poor visibility. We put the main up with one reef and with the help of radar and AIS we keep an eye on lots of fishing boats which are not visible in the conditions. At 10.50 the stream finally comes with us. We are doing 11.5 knots with a reefed main, the engine at 1,900 rpm and a stream of 6.6 knots helping us along! At 14.30 we're off Larne, it is still raining; there is no wind, so we add a 10 litre can of diesel to the tank. We're making good time, so we may keep going for Ardglass, rather than stop at Bangor. At 16.30 we're outside Mew Island, motoring at 2,800 rpm, doing 2.1 knots with a 5.0 tide against us! At 22.15 we decide to anchor north of Ardglass, in Benders Bay, just north of Guns Island, in 3.1metres of water. Still calm, but at least the rain has stopped!

We hauled the anchor at 07.15 and set sail in a westerly wind, force 3. By 09.15 this had increased 4 to 5 south-westerly. We are making very poor progress, in a very uncomfortable sea, so we decide to turn back and sail with jib only into Phennick Cove marina in Ardglass. We are under no time pressure, so this seemed like a good idea. We tie up at the marina at 11.00 and realise we were in for a few days in Ardglass as the forecast for the following couple of days is heavy and on the nose! Joe got down to some studying; we shopped, ate

at the golf club and waited for a favourable forecast. Unfortunately, there are no walks around Ardglass that do not include long stretches on a very fast main road!

We departed the marina at 07.40 on Monday 1st July. There's a left over sea running, with a west south west wind force 3 to 4. We motor sail with main only, on a dull grey morning. By 13.50 the wind has freed and we sail to our berth in HYC tying up there at 17.45.

And so our cruise to Scotland on *Lydia* came to an end. We had 10 very good days weather at the end of May/beginning of June, otherwise it was typical Scottish weather, but for the most part it was dry and we had very few midges, apart from the two monsoon days in the Crinan! Our cruise was curtailed by our unexpected return to Dublin. On the plus side we had good sailing, unlike later in the summer. We used 136 litres of diesel and covered 762 miles during our six and a half week cruise! Plenty more still to see in Scotland – we'll be back!

Photographs attached

- 001 *Lydia* at Campbelltown, with Bangor Marina cruise
- 022 *Lydia*, at inner harbour, Rothesay
- 054 John and Finn in "The Reading Room"
- 082 *Lydia* at Loch Ranza, Isle of Arran
- 101 *Lydia* at Millers Bridge, Crinan Canal
- 116 Trish and Joe at Craignure, Isle of Mull

***Lydia* 2013**

Stops on cruise

Howth

Ardglass

Bangor

Campbelltown

Portavadie

East Loch Tarbert

Largs

Troon

Rothesay

East Loch Tarbert

Burnt Isles

Troon

Lochranza

Otter Ferry

Millers Bridge (Crinan Canal)

Cairnbawn

Craobh Haven

Kerrera

Tobermory

Salen

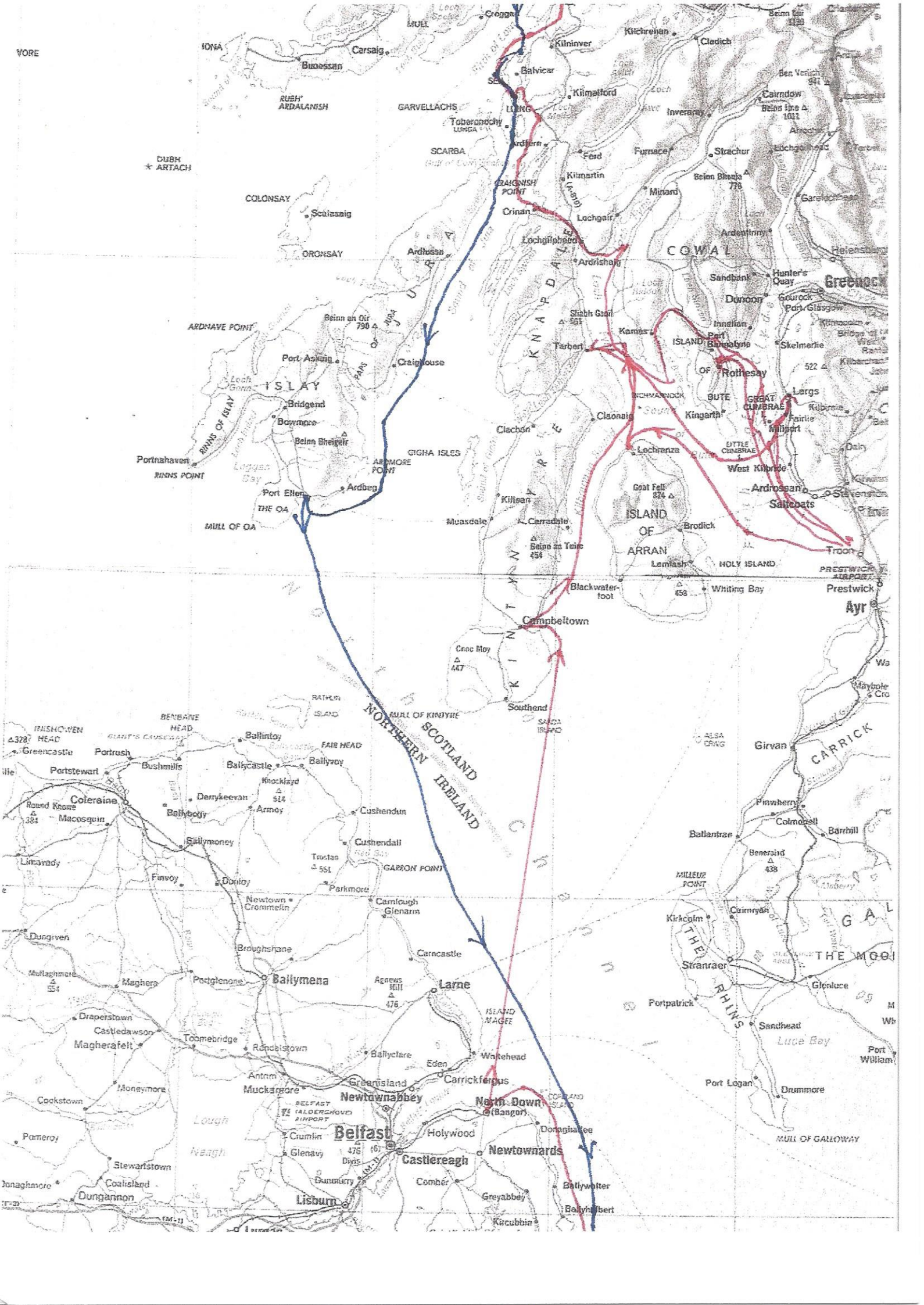
Puilladobhrainn

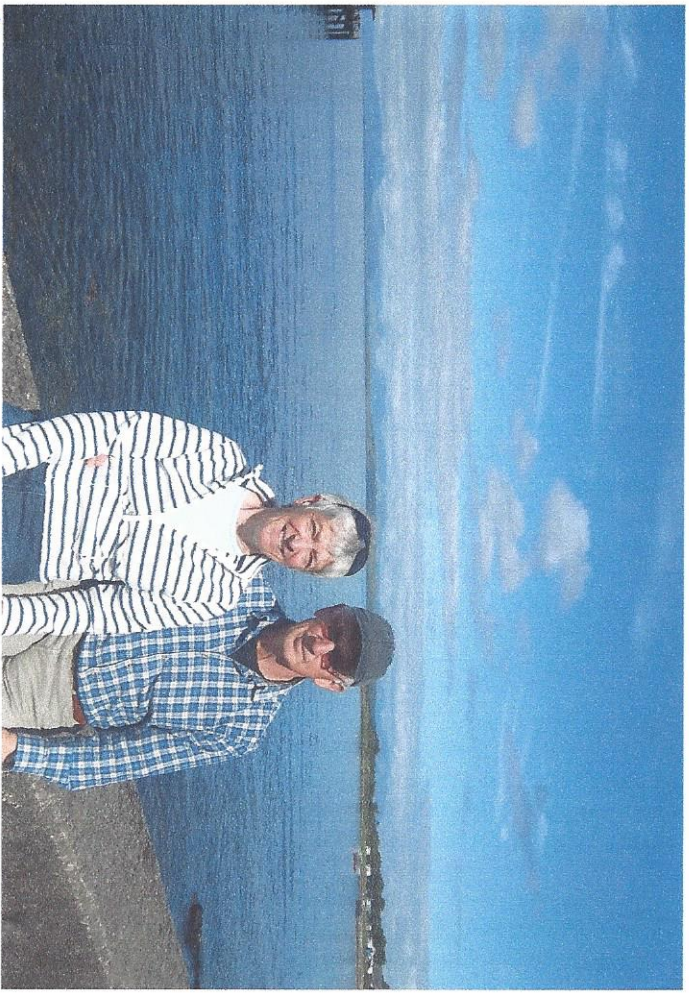
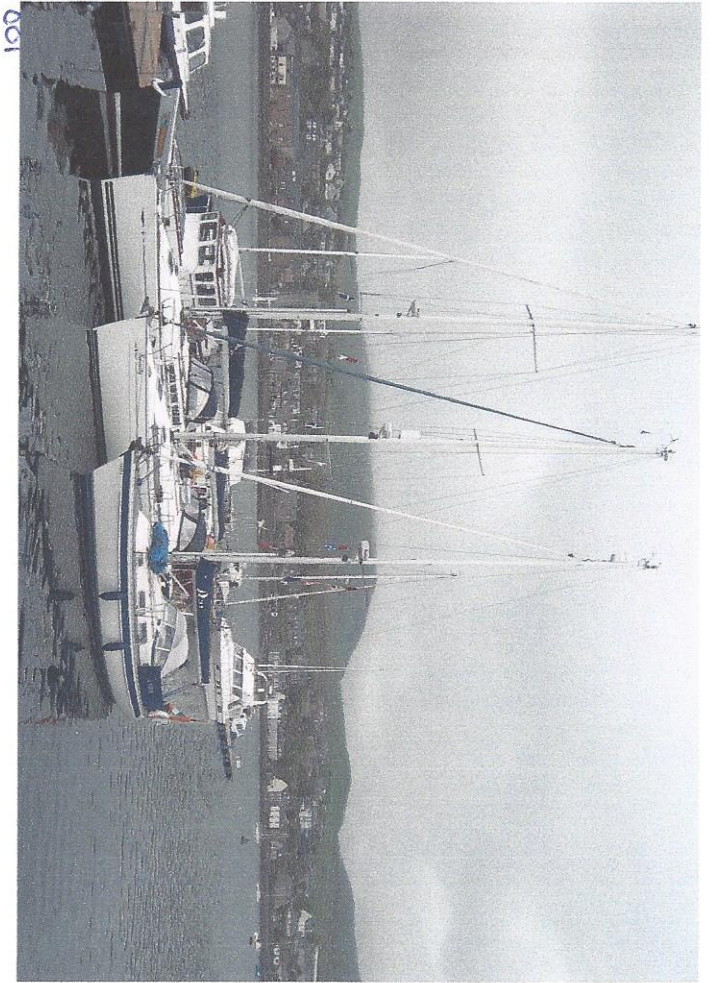
Port Ellen

Benders Bay

Ardglass

Howth





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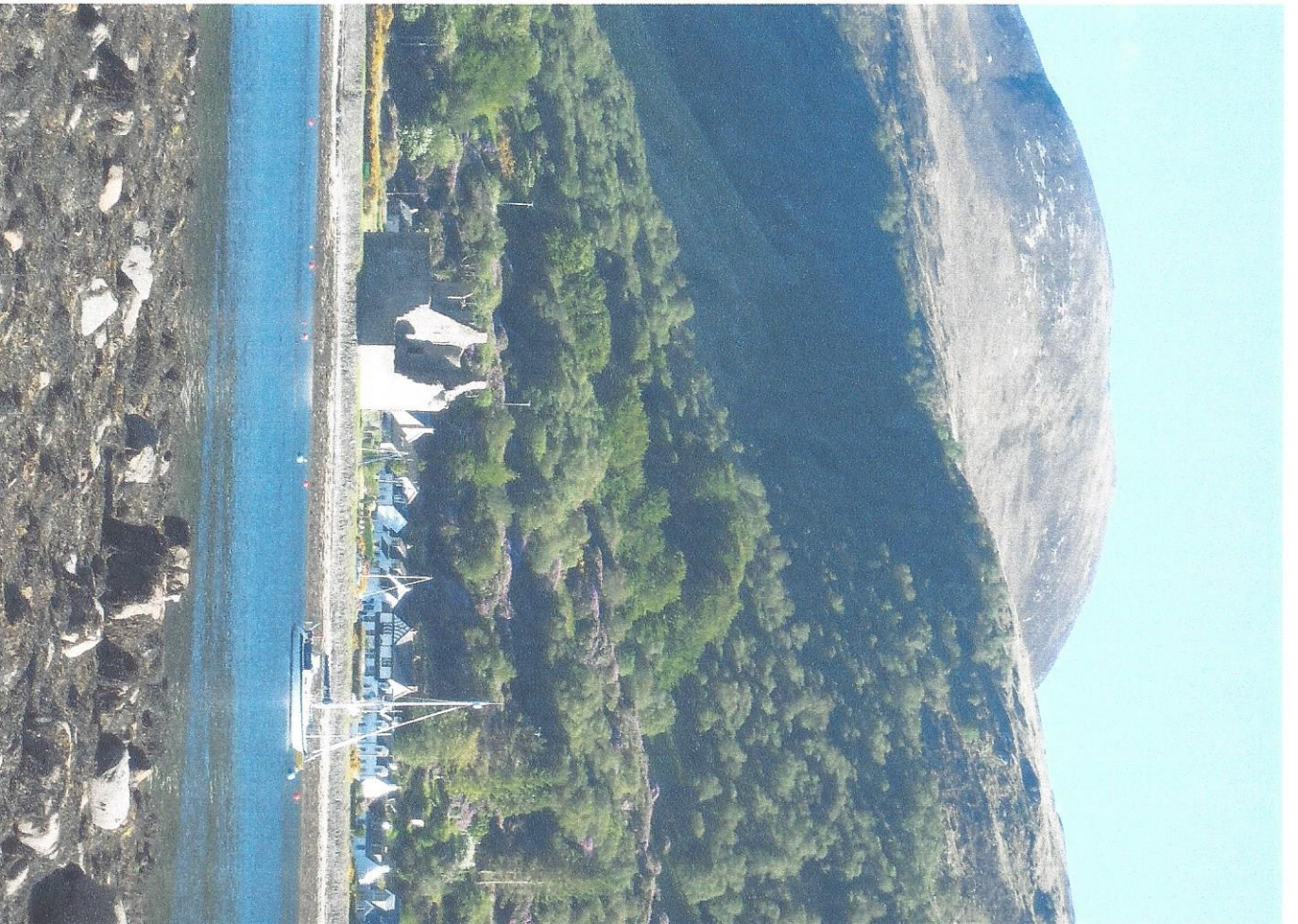
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001



101



082