

## Sligo, R.O.I. World Championship 2006

Once upon a time George, Nikki, Alan, Angela, Jilly, Bob, Chris, Maureen, Roger, Sue, Ron, Pam, Megan, Callum, and Buster, set out on an overseas adventure.

This adventure involved everyone arriving at Sligo, in Ireland, in time for a major sailing event at the end of July. Some took a leisurely route taking in the sights on their journey, others rushed to make it just in time. But all was well and they all met together at Sligo Yacht Club as arranged, together with three boats.

The sailing event was the 2006 GP14 World Championships being hosted by Sligo Yacht Club. For the helms of two of the boats this was to be the first time they would experience sailing at a large dinghy championship event. What a complete contrast to club sailing on the Blackwater estuary.

For the first part of the week the whole fleet of 111 boats raced together in a qualifying series of 5 races, and was followed by 6 races with the fleet split into Gold, Silver and Bronze flights based on the qualifying race results.

As it turned out the event was to prove very challenging, with the first day's sailing cancelled due to severe weather. The quote from the official press release says it all: "...took his fleet of rescue craft and



**Awesome conditions!**

*mark boats out to the racing grounds in winds reaching 30 knots. These very strong winds allied to big rolling waves meant that it was unsafe to race."*

This was followed next day with some very exciting sailing involving some deft spinnaker work downwind on large rolling seas. By dinghy standards they were very large and needed to be treated with great respect. The press release quote said:

*"Monday morning also began with strong winds but down to 20 knots so the entire fleet went on the water for race 1."*

And after 2 races; *"As the wind was continuously increasing there was no further racing that day."*

Day 3 was blown out again

with gale force 8 winds promised and which duly arrived.

By this time Ron and Pam decided that the awning on their caravan should come down before the whole lot was blown off the cliff top.

Day 4, Wednesday, was more benign and the fleet was able to complete the qualifying series with 3 back to back races. Best results from the first 5 races were 46th for George and Jilly, 57th for Roger and Megan and 61st for Alan and Ron.

With 111 boats the fleet was split into three flights of 37 for the final series of 6 races. Our intrepid heroes at this stage were in 63rd, 73rd and 75th positions overall. George/Jilly and Roger/Megan were to sail in the Silver flight; and nothing like pressure then with Alan and Ron heading the Bronze flight.

With three races scheduled to run on each of the final two days, the weather forecast promised perfect sailing and thus it proved.

In the Silver flight George/Jilly finished the day with 23rd, 29th, and a 5th. Roger/Megan had 28th, 36th and 33rd. Deciding to save their best for the last day Alan/Ron settled for 14th and 24th, then were, very unfairly in their opinion, black flagged for a false start in the third race. The lesson here is that if you are going to be over the line at the start, make sure you are hidden in the bunch with your sail number obscured from the race officer's gaze.

On the last day having just got away for the first race the wind died away almost completely as fog descended on the course. This was the opportunity for Alan/Ron to play their trump card. Instead of following the fleet into the fog and no wind, they sailed way out to the right of the course taking advantage of the tide and the little wind that remained around the edge of the fog. This great stroke pulled them right through the Bronze flight and well up to the leaders of the Silver flight. What a tactical master stroke!



**Very brave boys and girls!**

However the race officer had other ideas and as the wind gradually filled in from a new direction the course was altered and shortened. Having crossed what they thought was the finish line our intrepid pair stopped for a comfort break and a little light refreshment. It should be noted they were not alone in their belief.

Observing the rest of the fleet sailing on towards a large boat flying a blue flag and discussing this with a fellow competitor they then proceeded to take a look at what was happening. Passing by the

anchored yacht a sound was to be heard. The outcome was a 24th placing.

What does a blue flag on a rather large anchored boat signify?

It would appear to mean Committee boat on station at the finishing line.

With time running out on the final day only two races were sailed by the Silver and Bronze flights.

By combining the results from the qualifying and final series the overall positions for the Tollesbury trio were George/Jilly 20th and Roger/Megan 36th in the Silver flight, and Alan/Ron 9th in the Bronze flight.

Overall the adventure was enjoyed by all. Acquaintance was made with many sailors from across the UK and Ireland. Already questions are being asked as to the date and venue for the next world championships due in 2009.

The enthusiasm shown by these dinghy sailors including those very new to the sport bodes well for the future of Tollesbury Sailing Club.

**Ron Laurie, Rear Commodore**

*Editor's Comment: Any sane person would have gone down the pub. A truly remarkable effort by our girls and boys.*



**George & Jilly, Alan & Ron, Roger & Megan –  
Tollesbury goes to Ireland**



*Silly goings on at the party.  
Happy New Year Everybody!*

## Girls on the helm

**This is your chance to show all the guys out there how girls do sailing...**

As some of you might know, mid season last year we gathered some girls who were interested in getting afloat. Even though we didn't manage to get on the water due to adverse wind conditions, we had a few dry/theory sessions and some seriously good food.

Everyone is quite keen to make it onto the water this year to have fun, explore the coast, and learn more hands-on stuff about sailing (theory and practice). If there is anyone out there who has been looking at the water longingly, but never plucked up the courage to actually get out there or never had the opportunity to get into a dinghy, this is your chance! But don't think this is just aimed at beginners; any woman above the age of 18 years is wel-

come as long as you are a club member and you can bring a buoyancy aid or life jacket.

For all you out there who need a bit more of a sailing challenge, I'm looking for people to help with the teaching/instructing side. The only requirements are sufficient sailing experience, a calm manner and an appetite for some yummy food. Perhaps there are hidden talents for future RYA instructors out there. In addition we are looking for boats we can use for our water sessions.

We are planning on meeting approximately once a month. There will be a bit of background information before going afloat on a pleasant – not too wet or windy – Saturday (see dates below, for definite dates please refer to club handbook). There might also be an opportunity to work towards a RYA recognised sailing certificate if

people are interested.

I hope this has got your sailing juices going. Please contact me if you would like to be involved in any way. There will be posters on the notice board in the club house for further information later on in the season. I'm looking forward to seeing you all on the water!

**Annikka Meier  
(tel: 01621 868993)**

## PROVISIONAL DATES

<b>14th April</b>	<b>Mersea breakfast</b>
<b>30th June</b>	<b>Picnic Corm. Island</b>
<b>28th April</b>	<b>Sailing session</b>
<b>28th July</b>	<b>Sailing session</b>
<b>19th May</b>	<b>Sailing session</b>
<b>8th Sept</b>	<b>Mersea breakfast</b>
<b>2nd June</b>	<b>Bradwell dash</b>
<b>29th Sept</b>	<b>Sailing sessions</b>

## Boat-aholics Anonymous

*Meetings every Tuesday 7.00pm  
behind the container.  
Bring old copies of PBO!*

## WORK PARTIES TO COME

Ladies' changing room

Men's changing room



Yellow Peril  
Soft area - yard



*Due to lack of space in the newsletter,  
Nigel Cowell's account of his trip around the coast of Britain  
can be viewed on the TSC website in its entirety.*

## Cruising

A disappointing year as the cruiser racing and social calendar fell to pieces. Lots of reasons for this, none of them good. Andy Hobden cobbled something together for us, incorporating TSC races and TCC races and then promptly stole all

the pies, along with Robin and Jean Kemp.

Of note: Rumpty, flying the club flag, under Erica and Lorraine won the Ladies' Race, HURRAH!!!

Smartie Pants stole third place in the TCC Wallet Long Race, under Chris and Kim, DOUBLE HURRAH!!!

## WINNERS

### *Cruisers*

Crouch Cup - Andy Hobden - Tongue Twister

Ted Heard Cup - Robin Kemp - Polo IV

King's Head Cup - Andy Hobden - Tongue Twister

Ladies' Race - Erica Clarke - Rumpty

West Cup - Robin Kemp - Polo IV

Ocean Maid - Robin Kemp - Polo IV

### *Dinghies*

Leavett Trophy - Ron Laurie - Solo

Spring Cup - Allan Hawtin, Ron Laurie - GP14

Spring Cup - George Rogers, Jilly Wilkinson - GP14

Admiral Wyatt Cup - Roger Palmer, Megan Rogers - GP14

Russell Memorial Cup - Allan Hawtin, Megan Rogers - GP14

Shingle Head Trophy - Chris Parsons, Sarah Todd - GP14

Bob Frost Cup - Roger Palmer, Megan Rogers - GP14

Mystery Plate - George Rogers, Jilly Wilkinson - GP14

Gurton Memorial Trophy - Chris Parsons, Jenny Leonard - GP14

Crew Shield - Allan Fairley

Apollo Cup - Jilly Wilkinson - GP14

Legerton Memorial - Martin Smith, Jenny Leonard - GP14

Green Man Cup - Bill Jeffery - Enterprise

RNLI Pennant - Ron Laurie - Solo

Vic Tate Trophy - George Rogers, for being George.

# Purge on Parking

Things are looking better in the yard, more room, less clutter.

Chris Peet and Ron Laurie are in the process of chasing non-payers and removing unclaimed (disowned) items. This is the cheapest place on earth to park your boat/dinghy. So pay up on time please.

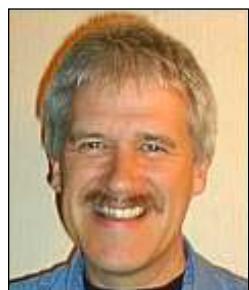
Money Saving  
Boating Tips  
Take up Golf!!!

## Page Four Pin-Ups/Heroes



Gilly Willson steps down from committee and social office after years of sterling effort, giving her time freely and enthusiastically. We all thank her warmly and hope that she will continue to enjoy the club. She will finish in a flurry with neeps and tatties at the Burns' Night on 2nd February. So you can all thank her personally. Well Done Gilly.

Geoff Vote also steps down after a long and happy association with the club. He has in the past been, amongst other things, newsletter editor, social secretary, Vice Commodore, Commodore, safety boat co-ordinator, batman, superman, what hasn't this man done! He will be sorely missed and we all owe him a pint. Cheers Geoff.



# Dinghy review

Looking back over the seasons result sheets we have had some fabulous weather, only once or twice having not enough or too much wind. The tide times were not so convenient perhaps causing a slight dip in numbers, however, 10–12 boats has not been unusual for the races with good turnouts also for all the picnic/breakfast excursions. For the first time everybody has taken their turn at OOD/rescue boat duty, Bob Wilkinson has again been the backbone of the support boat rota, we all owe him a big thank you. A real highlight this year has been watching the cadets in their Toppers etc, Gary and his team of helpers are doing an exceptional job for the club.

Some Cadets and their parents are getting involved in the dinghy racing. Please do ask if you want to sail as there are always crewing opportunities. Several boats have changed hands: Nick and Val now have Malcolm's GP and new members John and Lynn have been sailing Gary's (ex Roger's) GP. The

dominant class in the club in terms of numbers are now the GP14s, in some respects this is a positive move but I feel it is important to encourage the single-handers especially the Lasers sailed by some of the younger club members. I think we need to have some separate trophies and continue to think about setting suitable courses for these boats.

A significant development this year has been the number of visits to other clubs to compete in open events etc. The long-term success of the club does depend on promoting a well-supported sailing programme here but the trips away do enable us to gauge our own ability and to inspect the facilities at the places we visit. We have been to Leigh-on-Sea, Marconi, Papham (Langstone), Staunton Harold (Derby), and Sligo (ROI); while we are never going to win it is clear that the best boats in the club can at least hold their own. This expertise will filter down and in the long-term benefit all who sail here.

TSC has now been noticed by the GP14 association and been asked to put on an open event as

## Laying Up Supper

I think that the Laying-up Supper caught people out this year! A little more advertising would have brought out more of the members! But, hey it turned into a lovely night. Excellent food, all on time, friendly staff and a nice venue. I thought the roaring fire was very welcome. Some say the dance floor was a little small, that just meant that you had to dance closer, no harm in that! Generally a good night was had by all and the ladies all looked gorgeous.

See you next year.

part or the Eastern Area travellers series – the date is Saturday 1st September. This is a bit of a challenge but we will give it a go, it won't be a huge event but we can expect 10–12 visitors.

Yet another first this year has been the winter series, again we have been fortunate with the weather; clearly we need to include this in the 2007 calendar.

The usual planning /OOD/cox'n meetings will take place in the New Year, Ron is going to lead a session on the rules in perhaps February. Don't forget to keep the first weekend in March free if you need to stock up again on burgees at the Dinghy Show.

In conclusion, well done and thank you to everybody who has supported the dinghy sailing this year, we have a great club and a fantastic place to sail. We will finish the changing rooms too eventually!! Any comments/suggestions to me please (and winter parking fees to Chris Peet)

**George Rogers 869729**

## DAIRY DATES

**February 3rd - Burns' Night**

**February 10th - Alex's Quiz**

**February 23rd - Talk Night**

**March 24th - Sloe Gin Competition**

**March 27th - Ron Laurie's talk -  
How To Cheat Honestly!**

**Sept 29th - Sailing Sessions**

# Commodore's Corner

(December 2006)

Well, it's certainly been an eventful year!

One of the warmest and longest summers on record with, by and large, fine weather meant that there was ample opportunity for some really good sailing. The only exceptions possibly being a rather too windy Mersea Week and a dodgy May bank holiday which caused the combined Tollesbury Clubs cruiser fleet to get somewhat scattered along the English, Belgian and French coast rather than assembled in Calais as was originally planned. However, true to form, the Tollesbury crews still managed to have a good time on both occasions.

The arrival of Stag Two, the big RIB, cunningly acquired on permanent loan by cadet parent Kevin Todd has meant that the cadets have been more active than ever and the train-

ing supplied by the RYA regional coaches have allowed them to hone their skills to an impressive level.

The dinghy fleet had an equally good season which, in fact, is continuing due to the winter series. For the GP14 sailors the summer culminated in a fantastic (but wet) week at the world championship at Sligo in which they gave a good account of themselves. No doubt you can read more about this elsewhere in this newsletter.

Unfortunately, the cruisers did not manage to race much this year but plans are afoot to remedy this situation for next year. So please, you cruiser sailors, do come out with us next year, you know you like it!

George and his volunteers restored the toilet block to its intended use rather than the (junk) storage facility it had become and I understand that the gents is still relatively

free of foreign objects. This is probably mainly due to George being fiercely protective of this space...

Talking of restoration (no, not the Granary) I am sure that all of you know that this year was the club's 70th anniversary and that Frances had the bright idea to invite HRH The Princess Royal to come and open the (non-existent) disabled facilities.

I for one agreed, thinking that HRH would never accept, and slightly

panicked when she did. As I am sure you agree, the visit was a huge success and the clubhouse looks a lot better for the experience. This is due to the hard work of a lot of people who gave up a lot of their sailing time but few more than Graham Elcock and Peter Church who spent most of their waking time in a race against the clock.

Obviously the improvements to the club came at a cost and although we could afford the investment it would be much appreciated if membership and boat parking dues can be paid promptly to ensure that the club remains on a secure financial footing.

On the social side I have to report that, after years and years of organising fantastic events, Gill Willson has decided that the time has come for others to have a go. Thank you for everything Gill, we'll miss your energetic input and organisation.

The plan is to have at least one social event on a regular Saturday each month and ideas are most welcome. We will run most of these as fund-raisers for the club and to help realise other plans such as further car park improvements and, yes, the central heating. Do support your club by coming to these events and by popping in when the bar is open.

As usual there will be posters in the club house and around the village to advertise the activities and of course there are always the emailed signals to keep you up-to-date. For you that don't know, you can subscribe to the signals on our web site [www.tollesburysc.co.uk](http://www.tollesburysc.co.uk)

I'd like to finish with thanking all those that have helped make this another successful and fun year. I could name them all but you know who they are or at least you should.

See you around.

**Kees Spitters - Commodore**



**HRH The Princess Royal inspects the cadet fleet and signs the TSC Visitors' book. (photos: Tim Cornell)**

# Around Britain with Nigel Cowell in Anahita 111

## **Part 1: Tollesbury to Inverness**

The idea to circumnavigate Great Britain first arose when my sister in the Isle of Man announced that my eldest nephew was to be married in August 2004 in Douglas on the Island. I soon realised that Anahita would be ideal for a base there as Douglas has a new marina complete with a half tide gate, pontoons, electricity and water.

Anahita 111 is a 35ft, 1972, Halberg Rasse NAB 35. Sloop rigged with long keel she has a 75 hp Volvo MD21A diesel engine and is fitted with Bow Thruster, Radar, Chart-plotter, VHF, Log, Depthfinder, Wind Instruments and electric windlass. She carries a small rib in davits and a six person life raft in a canister. She has 7 berths, we try to only use 4 when cruising, a pressurised hot and cold water system, complete with calorifier, shower, 2 ring gas stove with oven and grill and a fridge with ice box.

Plans were made and I purchased the relevant C-map charts, at a good discount at the January Boat Show, and John McKay, who had completed the same trip over the two previous years in his 33ft Nauticat 'Naila' offered me virtually all the charts and pilot books I needed. I purchased a storm jib and cruising chute from North Sea Sails, New Rib and Outboard from Marine Maintenance and, to keep the wine chilled, a cool box / freezer to supplement the fridge.

The first leg was to be from Tollesbury to Inverness and Peter Church of Carpediem fame was to be my crew. The two of us have, over the years, completed many long delivery passages together including from Tollesbury to Dublin on David Mcaslan's 1905 classic old cutter rigged gaff ketch, and it was Peter who did the delivery trip on Anahita 111 when I first acquired her four years ago. He knows the boat well, especially the cooker. (If there was a trophy for the best sea chef, I am sure that Peter would win every time).

At 7.00am on Thursday 29th April 2004 Peter and I departed, 24 hours late due to the weather. I was conscious of the fact that we had one week to reach Inverness - the return flights had been booked with Easyjet and there were no

refunds! Wendy, Harry and Fran were there to see us off, Photos' were taken and we departed into the gloom and rain. There was no wind so Harold (The Automatic Helm) steered the boat. It rained all day and, with whatever wind being on the nose, we just motored but made good time. We were passing Lowestoft when the sun finally came out, but still no wind as we enjoyed Leavett's best Rib Eye steaks with all the trimmings and a good glass of wine to wash it down. We entered Yarmouth Roads with the new wind farm right alongside the main channel. Whilst the wind turbines are a complete eyesore so close to land they make good navigational marks, the official buoyage being lost against the backdrop of towers.

By midnight we had reached West Sheringham Buoy and headed out across the Wash. The wind picked up again and was blowing force 4 to 5 with the odd gust up to 30 knots right on the nose. Out to sea we could see at least five huge gas platforms and during the night ships were passing us in both directions, probably to and from the Humber. Whilst we were safely cocooned in the cockpit with the awning fully fastened all round, it was very cold and, due to the motion of the boat and the constant spray coming right over the dog house, we slept little. We went seaward of the banks off of Spurn Head, across new sand hole then set course for Flamborough Head which we passed at 11.45 am. Then the "Sea Fret" came down and at times visibility was down to 100 yards and along this stretch of coast it's essential to keep a sharp look out for there are hundreds of lobster and crab pots between Filey Brigg and Whitby.

We arrived off of Whitby harbour entrance two hours before low water. The northerly swell was running straight into the entrance between the piers, no room for mistakes, and with an eye on the depth sounder we made the decision to enter. 2500 revs on the engine and we stormed in! It was a lock to lock battle on the wheel as each passing wave tried to push the boat into the groins beneath the piers and while the depth didn't go below 2.5 metres, with 1-2 metre rolling waves

behind it was impossible to guess how shallow it might have been in the troughs. Safe, we tied up at the fish quay at 5.30 pm some 36 hours after leaving Tollesbury. We had logged 213 miles, at an average speed of 5.9 knots and used 30 gallons of diesel. The marina in Whitby is above a swing bridge and we had to wait until midnight to proceed, it only opens for two hours either side of high water every half hour depending on demand. We were both tired and hungry, it had been too choppy to cook the planned meal, and we had had to make do with snacks, sandwiches and cup o soups. A quick walk round the quayside led us back to a bistro adjacent to where we had moored up. Come midnight the bridge opened and we proceeded up to the marina. We were lucky, even this early in the season it was nearly full but we found a berth and crashed out.

The next morning, Saturday 1st May, we set about refuelling. Fuel is available from the harbour master's office at the marina but you have to carry it down to your boat in cans, quite an arm stretcher. The bridge was due to open at 12.30 and we followed the local racing fleet out. The wind was still blowing from the North but had eased to 12 knots and though there was a steep swell running into the harbour it was much easier than when we entered. It was a nice sunny day, a rhumb line course was set for Peterhead 353degrees. The autohelm did all the work as we had to motor, and whilst the main was up it was only marginally set and was more of a steadyng sail in the swell. By early evening the wind started to decrease and by midnight it was flat calm, we were able to have four hour watches and sleep, but even with the cockpit canopy fully closed it was bitterly cold, probably just above freezing. (I put an Eberspacher on my mental shopping list). The next morning, still flat calm, we had seen no other vessels during the night but for the rest of the day we were accompanied by porpoise, dolphins, seals and hundreds of sea birds. We saw just one fishing boat which seemed to want to cut us up even though he was trawling in circles! Then, 30 miles from Peterhead, I noticed that the electric power was failing. First the autohelm failed, then the electronic chart. I turned off everything except the vhf and navigation instruments, but by the time

we reached Peterhead the domestic batteries were flat. Once plugged into shore power everything seemed ok and I put it down to a loose fan belt. We had logged 175 miles in 28.5 hours at an average of 6.1 knots.

The marina in Peterhead is the most secure marina that I have ever visited, not only do you need a key to enter, you also need a key to get out! The harbour master was off duty but luckily a family who lived on their boat in the marina, and who originated from Mayland, helped us out. They drove us into the town and arranged for us to be let back in upon our return.

Peterhead is a commercial port and a prison town, an exceedingly depressing place. There are no wine bars, no restaurants nor pubs that served food, all are of the spit and sawdust variety and drunks were staggering round even though it was only 7.00pm. Eventually, though, we saw a fleet of smart cars parked down an alleyway outside an Indian restaurant where we had a superb meal.

The next morning we had to fuel up again only to discover that the fuel barge had been removed for the winter and in its place was a huge gas rig that towered over the marina on the other side of the wall. An ocean tug had arrived to take it out into the North Sea and its departure was imminent, they were just waiting for high water. The commercial port harbour master directed us to proceed to Smiths' fuel depot in the fishing harbour where we were fuelled up direct from a roadside tanker. Another 150 litres of diesel but this time at nearly half the price of that which I bought in Whitby. At 10.00 am we cleared the fuel depot and set off for Lossiemouth. It was a crisp sunny morning but with 12 knots of wind from the North West, we had to motor sail again. At 11.30 we rounded Rattray head into the Cromarty Firth where the wind increased to 20 knots. On we went passed Frazerborough, Kinnairds Head, Troup Head, The Bow and Fiddle Rock finally reaching Lossiemouth at 8.00p.m. We had logged 61 miles in 10 hours. Lossiemouth is a lovely place, a complete contrast to Peterhead, and the marina is a converted fishing port. Again, no harbour master on duty, but we were lent a key by one of the locals moored near to us with the request that we put our mooring fee in the honesty box and leave

the key in his cockpit. Shore power was free of charge! Into the nearest pub, which was full of American Air force personnel from the local air base, where we found that all the tables were topped with glass covering charts of the area - including the final leg up to Inverness! As I didn't have a chart for this leg, only a pilot book, as we downed our pints we memorised as much as possible.

Departing the next morning at 7.00 am to ensure that we arrived at high water at the Caledonian Canal entrance, with a Southerly Wind of some 15 knots we were sailing at last. Or so I thought. An hour later it rained and the wind dissipated to nothing. Once again we were motoring. We arrived at the Clacknaharry lock entrance at Midday and had to wait for at least half an hour whilst another vessel came down through the locks. Whilst waiting I discovered that my camera was not working and all the pictures taken from Tollesbury to Inverness were lost! That was not the only shock. Before we were allowed to proceed I had to buy a licence, a staggering £275+ £55 in Marina fees for one month though this did also cover the Crinan Canal. A further half mile brought us to the Seaport Marina where Anahita was to be left and where the staff were most friendly and helpful. Shore power was provided and we were moored in front of the cctv camera outside the marina office.

We had logged 481 miles since leaving Tollesbury with 81 hours actual sea time averaging just under 6 knots, though these figures may be slightly inaccurate as I do not know if the trip meter was still working when the batteries failed. We now had two days to spare before the plane home and the delights of Inverness awaited us. Unfortunately there weren't any! But we were saved by the Clacknaharry Inn, in the village of Clacknaharry at the entrance to the Caledonian Canal where one of the most welcoming landlords that I have ever met dispensed a superb house malt!!!

#### **Part 2: Inverness to Troon**

The second leg of my around Britain voyage was to be from Inverness to Troon via the Caledonian and Crinan canals. And with Wendy, Jack & Harry as crew this was to be a family

friendly trip. On the first morning, in bright sunshine, we left Seaport Marina entering the Muirhead locks at 9.45 am. As we cleared the locks at 11.00am and proceeded along the canal we passed a huge cruise ship called Lord of The Glens, purpose built to fit the locks with just inches all round, which was being boarded, as we discovered later, by American Tourists. All the locks and bridges on the Caledonian Canal are automated but manned by lock keepers who take your lines where necessary. We were aiming for Fort Augustus at the far end of Loch Ness. The scenery here is spectacular and it's hard to imagine that the water in Loch Ness is deeper than anywhere in the North Sea. Passing Urquart Castle, with no time to stop, we arrived at Fort Augustus at 3.30pm. Tying up on a pontoon at the bottom of the locks, we set off to explore the town which was heaving with tourists from the world over. A very picturesque town with plenty of bars and cafes, we enjoyed a drink sitting on the edge of a lock. Harry and Jack bought "SEE YOU JIMMY" hats complete with red hair, it was their attempt to emulate the locals, and later that evening the cruise ship, Lord of the Glens, arrived and discharged its mainly American passengers.

The next morning we had to wait for the ship to clear the locks before any of the pleasure craft or yachts were allowed to proceed but were under way by 9.30, had cleared the locks by 11.00 am and reached Loch Oich by 12.00 midday. This is the highest point above sea level at which we would be navigating and, incidentally, holds the British record for the largest Wild Brown trout caught on rod and line (it now hangs on the wall of the Clacknaharry Inn). On we went through the next loch, Lock Lochy, from where we had a clear view of Ben Nevis, Britains' highest mountain, which was capped with snow even in May. Days' end saw us at Corpach Basin at 5.30pm where we discovered that there was no electricity - and the domestic batteries had gone flat. This was obviously more than a slipping fan belt but fortunately I had a fully charged engine battery to keep us going.

Clearing the sea lock next morning in mist and rain, there being no wind we motored out into Loch Linnhe bound for Oban. Visibility was

poor but luckily there are no obstacles other than the narrows at Corran Point where it is recommended that you go with the tide. Oban is a natural harbour hidden away between the Isle of Kerrera and the mainland but Ardantrine Marina is actually in a bay on Kerrera opposite Oban. It has all the usual facilities, other than a club house, and a trip in the water taxi over to Oban takes 15 mins. We arrived at 2.00pm just in time to see the water taxi leave but assumed that it was a shuttle service. Wrong! It was a 2 hourly service with the last return at 8.00pm. With 4 hours to sample Oban we were lucky enough to find an excellent waterside wine bar on the quay.

The next morning 2nd June 2004 we left the pontoon at 9.00 am. It was sunny, hot and flat calm, which suited us because we were bound for the Crinan canal. Our passage was to take us through the sound of Luing. The chart was a mess of rocks and the tidal streams in places are extreme, with eddies and counter flows all over the place. But we had no problem as we passed the entrance to the infamous Gulf of Corryvreken with the most extreme part being as we passed between Craignish Point and a little Island called Garbh Reisa where the GPS fluctuated between 8 and 1.5knots. Four hours after leaving Oban, though, we were locked into the picturesque Crinan canal and enjoying lunch in the hotel restaurant.

After lunch, having explored everything of interest, we moved on, with the lock keepers seeing us through from the basin into the canal, and from here on we had to operate all the locks ourselves. Well done to Wendy and the boys who did extremely well. Whilst the next 3 miles were very picturesque it took nearly three hours to reach Cairnbaan, the highest point, because of the number of locks and as we were about to enter the series of locks at Cairnbaan, the bridge keeper came and informed us that he was finishing for the night. We must stay where we were until the morning. Fortunately, there was a hotel with restaurant at the bottom lock and we opted to eat there that evening after having jumped into a taxi to visit the nearest town for supplies. After leaving the hotel to return to Anahita we discovered that Scottish Plague, the "Midgies". Thick black swarms of them constantly attacked us and back on board

we had to shut all windows and close all zips on the cockpit cover. Even then they didn't give up. Luckily I had adequate supplies of insect repellent to fight them off and the next morning the decks outside the hood were black with their bodies.

And so we set off along the the final 3 miles of canal to Ardrishaig Basin. It was wet and miserable again but we were in no rush and stopped for a break just before the final decent into Ardrishaig where the boys had spied a swimming pool and opted to go swimming. We tied up in the basin at 3.00 pm with just one lock between us and the sea. Although the basin was fairly full of vessels we were well looked after and an electricity supply was found for us to recharge the flat batteries once again, (and for Wendy's hair dryer!).

It was the 4Th of June when we locked out from Ardrishaig in light rain and Wendy had woken up with a severe rash which went all the way around her waist. At first we thought it was midgie bites but as Wendy was feeling very unwell we were worried it was more serious. This was the first day since leaving Tollesbury on which we were actually able to sail but, because I was now anxious to get to Troon as soon as possible, I still motor sailed. The wind was NW 4-5 and our course was SE and when we arrived in Troon, the sun was shining. After checking in we asked for the local doctor only to find that he was off duty. Following a referral to the NHS help line an immediate appointment was made for Wendy at the nearest hospital, about seven miles away. There she saw the duty doctor who diagnosed shingles and it was then back to Troon to find a dispensary, there wasn't one at the hospital, and a course of medication was started. (It took some time for Wendy to recover, probably the best part of three months). Anahita was to be left here, in Troon, for six weeks and it was lucky that I had pre-booked as at the end of this period it was the Troon Open Golf Tournament and the Marina fills up with corporate yachts of all sizes, mostly big! However they did me a good deal and prorated the berthing fees out of their three month rate. (More next Newsletter to - Man and Falmouth, Ed.)

If columbus had an advisory committee, he would probably still be at the dock. (Arthur J.Goldberg)

### **Part 3: To Man and Falmouth (nearly)**

On the 18th of June Peter Church and I returned to Troon. It had been an early flight and Wendy had driven us to Stansted at some ungodly hour, the plane touching down at 8.00 am. Being the last day of the open golf, Troon was like a closed town, Police and road blocks everywhere. Luckily the taxi driver was able to take us straight to the Marina with most other motorists being diverted and routed elsewhere. We prepared Anahita for departure and got in our supplies from the local supermarket. We had the latest forecast, wind SW 3-4, increasing 5 then decreasing 2-3 SW, right on the nose. The plan was to sail to Douglas on the Isle of Man via Bangor in Belfast Lock. However, as the day progressed the outlook for the following two days worsened. The forecast was for the wind to go SE 5, possibly reaching 7 -8 SE at times. I knew then, that if we went to Bangor there was every possibility that we would get stuck and miss our flight home from the Island so I made the decision to go straight to Peel on the West side of the Isle of Man. There are all tide moorings along its breakwater, although the inner harbour does dry. The first few hours were a real slog, just wave bashing but, by the time we reached the infamous North Channel, the wind eased and we headed South towards the Mull of Galloway which we passed at 21.00 hrs. All the ships instruments had died, no wind speed or direction or log or trip meter. The cursor on the electronic chart had put us on land as we passed Portpatrick, but, fortunately, we could see our destination - albeit 20 miles away. We arrived at Peel at 00.40 hrs in a flat calm with clear visibility. But the domestic batteries had once again gone flat and as there was no chance of charging them up on the breakwater, it was a nightcap and off to bed. Leaving Peel the following morning at 08.00 hrs, it was bright sunshine and still flat calm. The scenery along the SW coast of the Island is breathtaking - sheer cliffs into deep water for most of the way and I took Anahita close into Niabyl Bay to show Peter the one roomed thatch cottage that my grandparents had lived in. It now belongs to the Manx Museum and was used for the setting of the film 'Waking Ned'. I now realised a long held ambition to take my own boat through the

Calf Sound, a tide race between the main island and the Calf of Man where the currents reach 6 knots or more. Here the GPS indicated that we were doing 9.7 knots so the boat speed would have been around 6 knots. On past Spanish Head, where it is believed several ships of the Armada were wrecked, past the Chasms and into Castletown bay. The next headland is Langness Point, another tide race where we touched 10.6 knots! We were now heading North up the East side of the Island to Douglas where we arrived at 11.40 am, just over three and a half hours from Peel. Not bad going but we had the tide with us all the way.

The old drying inner harbour has been converted to a marina with the building of a half tide gated sill. We only had to wait a short time before we tied up on what would be Anahita's berth for the next 48 days. Peter and I now had three days to kill before our flight home so I hired a car and took Pete on a guided tour of my Birthplace as well as to see my relatives. (Pete suggested we hire push bikes - then he saw the hills!!). We had not been in our berth for long before Graylag, from Tollesbury, arrived. She is now based on the North Wales coast though her owners have another yacht still berthed in Tollesbury. We were now plugged into mains electricity so the batteries were able to recharge but I decided to have a marine electrician check out the alternator. None being available I took the alternator off to bring it home with me. (As it turned out there was nothing wrong with it, the problem was elsewhere. Was it the diode? Was it the battery management system? It turned out to be a faulty crimped terminal within the wiring loom - but it took a marine electrician from the Penzance Dry Dock Company several hours to find the fault). That same afternoon the SE gale did indeed arrive - and with a vengeance and I was thankful that we were tucked up safe in harbour.

The next leg was to be a marathon, Douglas to Falmouth. My crew was Eddie, an old sailing pal on whose yacht I had sailed from Emsworth to the Med. We cast off at 6.00am on 6th September with an excellent forecast for our intended passage, 4-5 NE or E. but it was flat calm and sunny as we cleared the breakwater. Then, when I

set the course, I discovered that the auto helm had stopped working. We found two faults, the exciter bulb in the giro compass had failed and there was a suspect power supply but, having made the decision to carry on, I diverted to Holyhead, 50 miles due south. As the breeze increased we set the new cruising chute for the first time and we actually sailed for six hours, a record on this trip to date. As we were crossing the separation zone off the NE of Wales, some 10 miles from Holyhead, the fog came down but, luckily, there appeared to be no commercial traffic. With a very careful watch on the radar we arrived in Holyhead at 3.20 pm, 9 hrs after leaving Douglas. Here, again, the staff at the marina were very helpful and found the local marine electrician but he was too busy to look at the autohelm until the next day. Anxious to be on our way, we set about trying to find a 6v bulb. Finding this impossible in Holyhead we used a 12v, of which I had several. Whilst the lumens were decreased it appeared to work and we jury rigged a power supply within the main control panel of the autohelm which worked perfectly.

We set off at 7.00 am the following morning, again with the wind in a favourable direction (it was forecast to be E or NE 3-4) although it was flat calm until midday when the breeze picked up to 15 knots as we cleared the Lleyn Peninsular into Camarthen Bay. As we were sailing along we were called up by Channel Control and requested to alter course by 10 degrees to clear a military exercise in the bay. Sadly, though, we never saw a plane, ship or submarine nor heard any vhf transmissions and after 4 hours we were thanked for complying and advised that we could resume our original course. But by then I had reached the decision to go outside of the Smalls because of a warning of a faulty light on Stockholme and Skomer islands. We passed the Smalls at 1.00 pm and continued on course for Lands End. At this time the Coast Guard started issuing strong wind warnings between St David's Head and Lands End, still between E & NE with sea state slight or moderate.

At 04.00 hours the power went down on our domestic batteries! It was still dark, the wind was 20 knots gusting up to 30! We had no instruments,

no compass light, no autohelm, no nav. lights, no chart plotter. We were reefed down and ploughing along at 6-7 knots, then disaster! I jibed the boom, the topping lift broke at the mast head, the main sheet fitting on the end of the boom broke, the boom smashed into the cockpit hood and snapped one of the stainless support stays which then hit Eddie across the side of his head knocking off his glasses. Luckily he was not too badly hurt but he had a massive egg on the side of his head and his glasses were totally out of shape. I managed to furl in the remaining main sail but we could not recover the boom in the dark so we motor sailed with just the jib. At first light I managed to recover the boom and jury rig the main sheet once again so that we could use the main sail. I then set about trying to restore power to the domestic batteries. This I did by 08.45 using the power in the 200 amp engine battery.

The wind continued all day at between 20-40 knots with the Coast Guard giving the sea state as 'slight to moderate' as we crossed the Bristol Channel. But the seas were huge with constant seas washing over the decks of Anahita and the wind driving the water and spray between the cockpit hood and the comings making the inside nearly as wet as being on deck albeit out of the wind. To Quote Eddie "If this is slight or moderate what do they consider to be rough". We reached Lands End at 6.00 pm and went as near as possible to the cliffs to get out of the wind and we actually went inshore of the Runnel Stone picking our way around the rocks but in calm waters. We then had another problem, we had to take in the furling genoa but because it had wound on so tight on the foil the reefing line ran out before all the sail was in. As we followed a fishing boat into Mounts Bay the remaining bit of jib was flogging itself to death and there was nothing I could do. It was still 40 miles to Falmouth so I crept up into the Bay and followed the coastline towards the Lizard. At 10pm when we were just three miles from the Lizard South of Mullion cove I noticed that we were losing power on the engine battery and I called Falmouth Coast Guard for their advice. I advised them of our situation and they recommended not to attempt to round the Lizard as the seas off there were very rough but to turn round and proceed to

Penzance, 'with caution', as the harbour entrance was at the down wind end of the bay. We reached Penzance at 11.00 pm to find the lock into the fish dock closed. However the lock keeper shouted "30 minutes" at us and we tied up alongside a fishing boat in the outer harbour with the engine running. We had now lost all power and were not able to advise the Coast Guard of our arrival, the hand held VHF not being picked up. We finally tied up in the fish dock at midnight, the harbour master and lock keeper were most helpful, and there were stormbound yachts rafted out up to four deep on three sides of the harbour. I was then at last able, with the kind use of the Harbour Masters' VHF, to advise Falmouth Coastguard of our arrival . This leg was to be the longest of the whole voyage with forty hours at sea covering 250 miles.

The next day I was directed to the Penzance dry dock Company, the local marine engineers, and left the problem of the charging of batteries with them. We tidied up the boat, removed the genoa, fitted a support prop to the cockpit hood, assessed the damage to the boom fittings and left Anahita, rafted four boats out, in the care of the Harbour Master. Then for the long haul back to Tollesbury via Reading where Eddie lived. I did the trip between Tollesbury and Falmouth four times in the next three weeks and returned with Eddie to Falmouth as soon as the electrical repairs were complete and the sail repaired. I winched Eddie up the mast to reconnect the topping lift, made a temporary repair to the boom, filled up with diesel and water and prepared to leave. We started up the engine and cast off the yacht on the outside of us when the engine just stopped. We hastily retied all the lines and cursed. It was air in the fuel lines. Despite the efforts of a friendly diesel engineer on the next boat we could not cure the problem which we ascertained to be the lift pump. No problem. I had a spare on board and it was duly fitted but still no luck and, by now we had missed the tide. The next day we decided to return home with the old lift pump to see if I could get it repaired or replaced. Both Eddie and I had to be back at work and it takes a whole day to travel from Penzance to Tollesbury. I had not been home very long when I had a call from the engineer in Penzance to say that he had sorted out the problem with the lift

pump and that Anahita was up and running again. Relief!!! A new lift pump from Volspec would have cost £300! (In the next newsletter, homeward bound, Ed.).

For if the sea is the enemy, the ship is also your home and you must protect it as best you can. (Douglas Reeman)

#### **Part 4: Penzance to Tollesbury**

I returned to Penzance on 30th September having checked the forecast before leaving as this next leg was solo. I cast off at 3.30 pm with a very pleasant NW -3. I was aiming for Brixham and everthing on the boat was working, inluding the autohelm, essential for solo passages. I passed the Lizard at 7.40 pm with very little wind but very sloppy seas, just motor sailing, and at 01.15 am I passed the Eddystone lighthouse, rounding Start Point at 05.45 am. By 08.00 am. I was tied up in Brixham after a 14 – hour trip covering 91 miles.

A week later I was back in Brixham with Eddie, again, as crew. The forecast was SW 5-6 decreasing 5 and we cast off at 01.15 hrs with 12 knots of wind in the right direction and motor sailed to keep our speed up. By 08.00 hrs we were south of the Portland Race and wind speed was 20 + knots. We sailed with just the main up, averaging over 6 knots boat speed. We had debated about going on the inshore route past Portland Bill but estimated that we would have been too early for the tide and with a strong wind I decided to go the off-shore route. It was a fantastic sunny day, perfect sailing weather, however as we approached the Isle of Wight we picked up the forecast which gave an actual wind strength of force 7 in the Solent. We avoided the Needles channel in favour of going inside Hurst channel and whilst it was still rough the waves were much smaller than in the Needles. Then, just as we were approaching Cowes the sky darkened and we had a heavy squall with driving rain and visibility down to 50 yards. Luckily it eased as we arrived and tied up in Cowes Yacht Haven. We had logged 81 miles in 13 hours, an average boat speed of 6.3 knots. The rain continued all night but the next morning it was sunny again, though flat calm, with our destination, Brighton. We left Cowes at

08.30am a gentle breeze of 10 knots enabling us to set the cruising chute. We went through the Looe channel to save going round the Owers and persevered under sail until the wind almost died before motoring into Brighton Marina. We had logged 43 miles in 7.5 hrs. Only 5.7 knots average but a pleasant sail.

I returned to Brighton on the 13th October and, once again, before leaving I had got the weather forecast. It was SW5-6. By the time I arrived a Gale Warning had been given, SW8-9. It was just as well I did not set off, too. That night was one of the roughest I have ever spent, even in a marina. The waves crashed over the sea wall of the marina until about midday the next day. About 2.00 pm a large motor boat went out followed by a RIB and I decided to hop down the coast to Newhaven arriving just 1.5 hours later. I refuelled before berthing in the Marina and that night had a fantastic meal in the Newhaven Yacht Club which is incorporated into an Italian restaurant and hotel.

The next morning I set off at 7.00 am but had to power my way through the mud into the channel out of the harbour. The forecast was W or NW 4-5 decreasing 2-3 but it was flat calm. Thirty minutes later as I motored along the coast the fan belt snapped but I replaced it and carried on. Off of Beachy Head the fog came down and lasted all the way to Dungeness. Luckily the only vessel to show up on radar was a fishing boat off Eastbourne which cut across my bow about 50 yards ahead. Off of Dungeness a breeze sprang up, 12 knots, from NW and I passed Dover at 2.00pm arriving in Ramsgate at 4.00pm. I had carried the tide with me from Beachy Head all the way to Ramsgate - 70 miles in 9 Hours at an average of 7.8 knots over the ground, probably the fastest passage of the trip. It was up to the Royal Temple for a pint or two of Guinness and

supper in the Bistro underneath the Club House, the first time I have been able to get into this restaurant. (Highly Recommended)

16th October, the final leg, I left Ramsgate at 7.00am with a forecast of 2-3 cyclonic. It was flat calm so motoring was again the order of the day. There was a light mist and rain but by the time I reached the East Margate buoy the sun was out and I stepped down into the galley only to find that the floor was awash. Lifting the boards I found the bilge full, so I switched the electronic bilge pump from auto to manual and the pump kicked in. Although it seemed an age for the bilge to empty it was easier than by hand pump. I found that the electronic float switch had failed and the ingress of water was from the stern tube. There was nothing I could do about it until I was home so I just switched the pump on every half hour. I arrived back in Tollesbury at 01.30 pm having logged 41 miles in 6.5 hrs - an average of 6.3 knots. I replaced the float switch, repacked the stern tube and she is now as dry as a bone!! (Surely you popped in home for a cuppa first? Ed.).

For the geeks that like stats: I logged 1358 miles with a sea time of 232 hours (9.7 days) at an average boat speed of 5.85 knots. I sailed for approximately one third of the trip, the rest motor-sailing or motoring. I used 150 gallons of diesel and spent £1700 in berthing fees, add to this the air and train fares and the total cost was about £3000 excluding food and drink.

Would I do it again? Absolutely yes! It was a great experience but I would like to have taken longer and visited the Western Isles, perhaps waiting for better weather where possible and not be tied in to booked flights. One moan though, whilst Anahita is a great sea boat with a powerful engine and coped with everything, the British weather forecasting service was so wrong on so many occasions I found it hardly credible at times.