

A BEAT ROUND IRELAND 2009

PWLLHELI TO PWLLHELI

Sunday 7th June 2009

I left Pwllheli at 11.30 expecting it to take 10 to 12 hours to Tusker rock on the south east corner of Ireland and I wanted to arrive there with the tide going my way. It was a cold northerly, a good direction but otherwise initially quite miserable. The wind condition remained the same all the way; a good 4/5 occasional 6 ENE put me on a dead run with the main braced back and the jib boomed out and a big rolling action. I saw a great big red sun go down in the west and, as if on a string, a great red full moon rise immediately in the east. My stomach was a bit dodgy most of the way but I manage to keep it under control by a good eating routine and later with 15 minute power naps. Its amazing how these keep you going, I probably had about 8 or 10 during the night. The tide was with me as planned to round Tusker but had turned against me before I got to Conningbeg. I had many gybes over this stretch with a rising wind and it was a very powerful sail, after I turned, from Conningbeg to Dunmore East where I anchored at 09.30 hours. After a quick breakfast I slept till 12.30. The alarm woke me and I must have been deep asleep because I was very groggy and very slow to get going. I eventually managed to organise a light lunch and got underway at 14.30. The wind was still in the north east and blowing a 6 and it was a hard beat up the Waterford (River Suir) estuary motor sailing with the small jib; wind against the tide. I was making 6 knots through the water but my speed over the ground was 8 knots. Things gradually eased as the estuary narrowed and eventually it became quite pleasant. It's 25 miles from the sea to Waterford city but with the help of the flood (3 kts, more on the ebb) I arrived at 17.35. Yes, with the sails down once in the river proper I motored at my usual 4/5 knots through the water but was obviously doing about 8 over the ground.

Waterford marina is basically pontoons running parallel to the river and you grab a space where you can. There were no instructions and an electronically controlled gate, once out your shut out. So cook some dinner and go to bed.

Tuesday 9th June 2009

It took most of the morning to sort out my mooring fees and facilities. I rang the number in the pilot which turned out to be the Council offices who work from 9 till 4 and had to walk a mile or so to book in, get shower key (€50 deposit) and a telephone number to open the gate. The only way to work the gate was by mobile phone – true! A friendly local guy on the pontoon told me his friend rang him while he was visiting Dublin and asked him to open the gate because he had lost the gate number. So the guy dialled the number and the gate opened for his friend. You can open this gate from anywhere in the world providing your phone is registered on the system. The showers were in the Harbour Masters hut!! They were good once you worked out the hot water system and beautifully clean.

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My impression of Waterford was that it was very mixed; run down buildings amongst lots new investment and people down at heel among the well to do but an attractive city nonetheless. Opposite the marina pontoon there is a huge grain silo on which was an equally huge poster of a girls face. Apparently an artist put a load of these all over Waterford in one night; this is the only one remaining. Patrick, Niall's brother, took me to a real cosy Irish pub in the evening and we had an interesting and enjoyable hour, I am much more knowledgeable about hip replacement now!



Wednesday 10th June 2009



I went to Waterford glass today – very sad. I have closed a factory in the past and I could see all the signs. A beautiful place, the lawns were freshly mown and appearances were being maintained; but it was dying, they were selling off all the Irish stock, beautiful examples of wonderful work well out of my price range but nothing being made there anymore. I watched the history video and caught the bus back into town.

In the evening Patrick picked me up again and Aisling cooked a lovely meal and sent me back to the boat with a tuck box to sustain me while sailing. It was put together, I gather, largely by the children who were worried about what I could eat on the boat, bless them. They really are a very hospitable lot these Cartons, thank you very much I say.

Thursday 11th June 2009

I was anxious to get away at top tide for two reasons, firstly to catch the strong ebb and secondly I did not fancy casting off amongst other boats with 3 knots plus running under my keel so high slack water was quite important. High tide was 09.15 hours so I did my shopping on Wednesday except for fresh items, milk, bread etc. which I left to the following morning. The shop opened at 9.00 so providing I was all ready and waiting outside the shop for it to open it all fitted. Every thing worked out fine the boat was ready to cast off and the shop opened at five to nine so I was back at the marina gate at ten past. There was a man stood at the gate fiddling with his phone, “the gates not working” he said “or there’s something wrong with my phone” I checked “it’s not your phone” I said with a sinking feeling. He asked for directions to the council offices, which

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I gave him, and he set off. "That won't do for me" I thought and started looking back through my calls for the office number I'd called earlier. When I got through there was a rather urgent conversation outlining my situation pointing out that 'time and tide wait for no man' and I waited listening to agitated scurrying about at the other end. One can sympathise it was only quarter past nine they hadn't even got their coats off or the coffee made so it was very inconvenient of me to call at such a time with a problem. "Is it working now?" "no!", "Is it working now?" "NO!" "Can you get in now?" "Yes!" Finally I was off just 15 minutes late but the river had already started to flow.



It was a beautiful day and once the worry of getting away was over it was thoroughly enjoyable. The green wooded banks are interspersed with industry; a power station and a container port are at least 15 miles up stream serviced by large ships with beautiful country side and villages in between. My serene glide down the river soon changed when I reach the sea. From here it was a beat, long and short tacks, all the way to Youghal. I chanced upon another yacht going the same way at about the same speed two or three miles ahead. The old racing brain kicked in and I started to tune ET as keenly as I could. It took about 6 hours to haul her in and leave her two or three miles behind. She was older but bigger than me and probably should have been quicker but her skipper had a full mast head genoa and no reefs which meant she was

over pressed and making leeway. It certainly improved my single handed tacking and made a long beat interesting. The other thing that was interesting that day was I saw loads of basking sharks, well their fins and tails anyway.☺

When I eventually got Youghal the place to anchor recommended by the pilot was fully taken up with moorings and I spent an hour motoring about before I decided to anchor in deeper water. I must get better at this! I realised in the morning that I needn't have worried it's just blooming hard work pulling up the anchor.

Friday 12th June 2009

Slept well and late and did not up anchor till 10.00am. Beating out of Youghal was lumpy and uncomfortable and as a precaution I put the motor on to assist in powering against the tide race between Knockadoon Head and Capel Island. Actually it was not as bad as I feared and anyway the sun had come out by the time I got through and it was now a bright brisk sailing day. It was a beat all day with the big genoa on and one reef (over

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pressed at times), long and short tacks; I couldn't quite lay a course down the Irish coast and clear all dangers. I made good speed, never less than 5.5kts, and arrived at Sandy Cove, Kinsale and anchored at 18.30. Sandy Cove is a snug little anchorage but on this occasion the southerly winds caused ET to lie across the Cove and send a small swell along the Cove so she rocked from side to side all night. I slept but not well.

Saturday 13th June 2009

Up anchor at 09.20 and motoring gently out of the Cove I saw strange creatures in the water, not one but many, pink in colour with black heads and black eyes. People in black skull caps and goggles were swimming around the Island. Some even waved cheerfully, "sooner them than me" I thought; it was a choppy sea with an on shore force 4 and fleaing cold. I motored out to Old Kinsale Head, wind dead ahead; before I put any sails up but then it was an excellent sail, with sun most of the way to Castletownhend. It was a beat, or close fetch, all the way, no tacks, with the same rig as yesterday. Castletownhend is a one street village with one shop, two pubs and some typical Irish painted houses. It was peaceful and quiet and they drew a pint of Guinness or Murphy's in the traditional way; very nice for a change.

Sunday 14th June 2009

While I was anchored in Castletownhend two traditional open boats sailed in with long



bow sprits and cutter/gaff rigged. They picked up a mooring and told me that I should have done the same and not bothered anchoring. (I wish I'd known because at my first attempt all I got was weed and ended up dragging toward the shore at an alarming rate in the strong wind.) Anyway these guys, once moored, then set to erecting a tent over their boats using the bow sprit as a ridge at the bow and the boom aft of the mast, brewed a cup and generally made themselves comfortable. I'm not sure whether they slept

on board or not but next morning they were away ahead of me beating out of the bay all ship shape and Bristol fashion. Once clear of the headland it was a long beat SW down the coast and I quickly overtook the trad boats, they had neither the speed nor the windward ability. They could not follow the coast as I could and had to keep putting in a short tack. I passed The Stags and then Lots Wife (you should know what this beacon looks like) at the entrance to Baltimore and pressed on to meet an old friend who gradually rose over the horizon

Fastnet Rock



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out of the haze. I rounded The Fastnet Rock at 1500 hours and went from a close fetch to a run. The waves/swell had gradually increased in size all day and now they were big rolling ocean waves, much more comfortable than the tide induced steep waves nearer the shore. I passed Mizzen Head at 10 past four and reached Bere Island around seven, finally anchoring in Castletownbere at 7.45.

Monday 15th June 2009

Castletownbere is a town and busy fishing port with all the facilities you may require. I rose late and had an easy morning doing my shopping and looking around. The people were very helpful and polite and it was a lovely sunny day but otherwise not a lot to report. At 3.00pm I upped anchor and motored 4½ miles along the Island to Lawrence's Cove Marina. This really was the sort of tranquil retreat that people talk about in the west of Ireland. It's an entrance that requires careful navigation on the part of a stranger, but once you are in it is beautiful and secure with only space for 20 yachts, I would recommend it. Mind you there is very little there Pub/shop, that's all, but the ferry to Castletownbere was only a short walk from the marina.



Lawrence Cove Marina

While I am sailing I am leaving a track on my chart plotter showing the course I have followed; and when I was sailing into Lawrence's Cove Marina I couldn't make the leading marks fit with what the chart plotter was telling me. After my safe arrival I looked at the recorded track on the plotter and it showed I had sailed over the land to get into the marina☺!! The entrance channel is barely half a cable wide so the chart detail installed in the plotter is a bit out with reality!

Tuesday 16th June 2009

It was so sunny and pleasant in Lawrence's Cove Marina I thought I might stay a day or so but the lady at the marina said when the weather is fine get on and sail while you have the chance. She was right because the following morning the forecast was for strong winds to come so I set off. Heading due west to round Dursey Head I went inside The Bull and The Cow. The chart show a tide race here which I could see, the tide was with me and I reckoned it was navigable so I went through and it was OK☺. At this point I had to decide where to go? My neighbours in the marina were going up the Kenmare River to avoid the incoming weather this would put 70 or more miles (14 hours)



Dursey Head

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on my journey so I decided to press on to Valentia. It started a steady force 2 from the south but only for a while because the wind began to pipe up. At Puffin Island, 10 miles south of Valentia it was a solid force 5 and as I went round the north side of Valentia Island it was a good 6. That's when the trouble started; there is a southern route round the Island but you have to cross a shallow bank to enter the river Suir where I was headed so I felt safer taking the long way round. As I rounded the Island and turned south into the wind I realised it would be a hard beat but I wanted to keep some sail up as long as possible to help the engine head upwind. The navigation demands of the strange channel in the strong wind meant I was struggling to cope so I had to rely on the engine. In the heat of getting the sails down in narrow waterway with the depth alarm going off I got completely disorientated and managed to cross the shallow bank three times, each time returning to a buoy I could see where I knew the depth was a safe. Finally I worked out where the entrance to the river was and could see a port hand buoy there about a half a mile away. I was not in the deepwater channel; nevertheless I set straight for it across the bank with my heart in my mouth as the depth steadily declined. The depth alarm seemed to be clanging in my ears we were now down to 18" below my keel and going so slowly against the wind and tide. Then it was down to less than a foot and I still had another 200yards or so to go. Despite all the apprehension I hung on and suddenly the alarm switched off and I was back in deep water, what a relief! The bank I had set out to avoid I ended up crossing four times!! The channel up the river needed careful attention too but was quite relaxing compared with the tension of the previous episode.

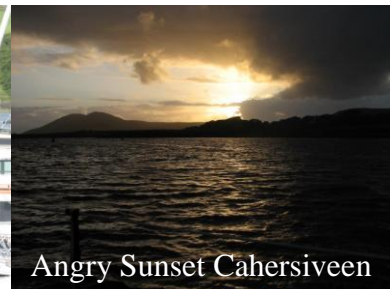
At Cahersiveen Marina the lady on duty had come down onto the pontoon and was waiting to help me moor. I always report that I am single handed as I approach the marinas and request an easy berth but rarely does anybody come down to assist. On the other hand I was invariably helped by other sailors from neighbouring yachts which was the fortunate case at Cahersiveen because the lady, so willing and welcoming, had no idea what to do

17th, 18th and 19th June 2009 STORM BOUND

I found the people in western Ireland very pleasant and helpful; they always greeted you as you pass by and if you made enquiries or asked for direction they took trouble to assist you. And so it was with Peter and Susan, with the forecast of winds of force 6-8 for the next two days, they invited me on board for afternoon tea with two friends of theirs who



Evening Skulling Practice
Cahersiveen



Angry Sunset Cahersiveen

were also storm bound. As a result of our discussion at this very pleasant occasion Peter

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came on board the next day and sat down with me giving me all his local knowledge of the best places to stop at up the western coast and how to navigate The Blaskets the next obstacle in my way. Another Bardsey with less tide and more rocks

Saturday 20TH June 2009

To get to the Blasket Sound at slack water I needed to be away from Cahersiveen about 4.00/4.30am to be comfortable. So I set my alarm for 3.30 and arose to a cold grey morning but unfortunately not enough light to see. I wanted the half light when I could see the land and marks but while the buoys were still showing their lights. I was ready long before 4.30 and waited impatiently till 5.00 when I decided I could wait no longer. Half light is a good time to enter or leave harbour when all the marks are lit and you can actually see them. The trip down the river is always easier than the first trip up, nevertheless a sharp lookout behind was essential to keep in line with the transits guiding you round the bends. When I got to the harbour I stayed in the channel this time and was honoured with the company of a school of large dolphins. I motor sailed to the Blaskets in a force 2 and a very sloppy sea after the gales, to gain time and arrive at slack water. My timing was obviously right because two other yachts hove into view and we went through line astern.

Once through The Blaskets I turned the engine off and it was a long beat into the wind all day. It wasn't all bad though; because the weather improved progressively during the day developing into a sunny afternoon and a lovely evening. At 17.40hours Pwllheli was abeam on the same latitude 52°53.11"N but I was not half way! Unfortunately the weather did not last and deteriorated through the night to a misty foggy morning with visibility not more than 100yds. The wind continued to blow out of the NW and varied between force 3 and force 5 which meant I could lay the course on a beat or a fetch with no need to tack.

Having sailed across Galway Bay during the night I had the chart plotter set at a high zoom level so it showed only a rough outline of the coast and no detail. It was 06.50hours and I was sat on the companion way steps dosing when I stirred myself and looked out the porthole. I noticed a wave break which surprised me and looking at the chart plotter it showed me well offshore, nevertheless I went to a lower zoom level to look at the detail and to my horror it showed my boat in the middle of a light house ring. I flew up on deck and there just showing in the mist was this huge rock which I had missed by less than a 100yds. Dashing back below to check for other dangers I saw that I had sailed through a gap about 300yds wide between Black Rock and its off lying baby brothers. The rocks were steep too so the echo sounder gave me no warning and travelling at 6 knots ET would have sunk very quickly. Was I lucky to miss them or unlucky to be near the isolated rocks in the first place? I don't know but generally I think of myself as being a lucky person! I certainly thought about those moments many times afterwards and now I always return the chart plotter to a zoom level that shows the detail even when I am well off shore.

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I sailed on in the mist, now wide awake, for another five hours. The visibility slowly improved and by the time I got to Broad Haven (beating all the way☺) I could see about 500yds, plenty to navigate to my anchorage at the seaward end of the bay. I dropped anchor at 12.11 on 21/06/09 having completed 185 miles since I left Cahersiveen. A short sleep, a good meal and a nights rest got me back into shape for quite an interesting morning.

Monday 22nd June 2009

Broad Haven is a deep water bay that was obviously being used by the oil and gas exploration people. A large ship in orange and blue livery had come in and anchored at the same time as me yesterday and this morning she moved further into the bay with a lot of “to-ing and fro-ing” of ships and tugs in the same colours. Then while I was having a late breakfast my AIS (Automatic Identification System) alarm went off warning me of a ‘dangerous target’. A ‘dangerous target’ is a large vessel that is going to pass within half a mile of me. As I was at anchor I went on deck ready to move in a hurry and was



Broad Haven

confronted with a large drilling rig being slowly towed towards the sea that was going to pass by a couple hundred yards away. As you can see from the picture a four poster and three poster rig was towed by.

My interest in what was going on around me delayed my departure and I did not get away until 11.30. Interestingly I thought the Bay was well protected by an elephant as shown below but I could find no reference to it on the chart.

Once clear of the bay, for the very first time, the wind gave me a pleasant broad reach. I immediately set to hoisting my furling Genaker and was able to carry it for most of the afternoon before the wind died to a dead calm by 1800hours. As I intended to sail through the night I decided to experiment with getting sleep so as it was calm I hove to for an hour – no sleep just rest. I started the motor at 19.32 and it ran until 0903 the next morning. During the night I had two more one hour rest periods (underway) and although I did not seem to sleep much I felt more rested. I rounded Bloody Foreland at 07.00 and when the wind finally came it came with a bang, 18knots and dead ahead of course! It finally settled to a force 2 easterly so with the wind against and the tide building against I put the motor on again before the full ebb got going. I anchored in Mulroy Bay two hours later at midday. The part of Mulroy Bay in which I anchored had little to recommend it apart from the shelter it provided. I did row ashore followed by a seal who seemed to be



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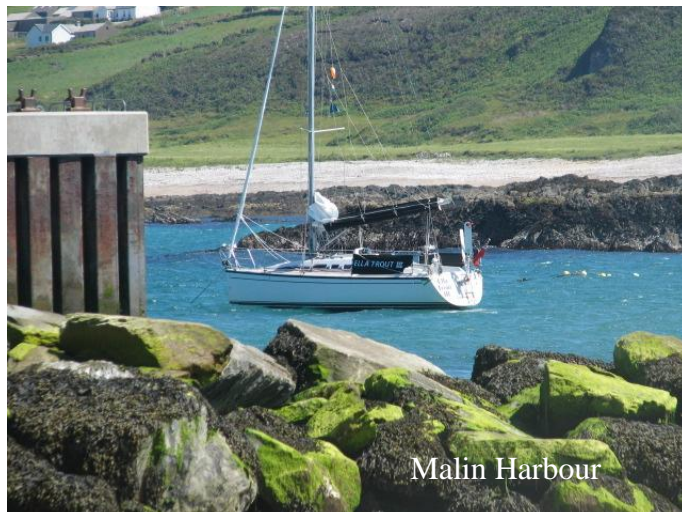
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checking up on me every 50 yards or so but all that was there was a nice sandy beach and three quite large widely spaced houses where families with young children obviously lived.



Wednesday 24th June 2009

It was a beautiful morning with no wind. I weighed anchor at 6.30 and motored out of the bay to ensure I got the tides right for Malin Head. The wind finally came in about 09.45, from the northeast, of course, force 4 on the nose so I had a period of careful juggling of tacking and navigation to get my approach into Malin Harbour right as there are several dangers to avoid. Also there were significant changes in strength and direction of the tidal stream depending where and how far off you were. It wasn't easy once I got in either; I had three attempts at anchoring in an on shore breeze before I got it right. It's



Malin Harbour

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not a place to be in bad conditions.

Malin is popular with holiday makers and there was a lovely sandy beach behind the harbour wall. I had lots of little helpers with my dinghy when I went ashore for provisions and fuel. It was remote but had a shop and what they referred to as a supermarket (I would call it a minimarket). The biggest thing there was the coastguard station on the headland.

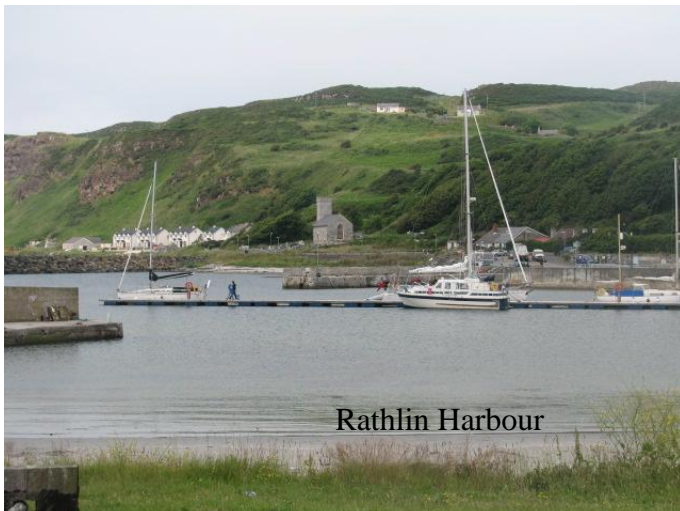


Malin Coastguard Station

Thursday 25th June 2009

It was another early start, 05.30 for 06.00 to get the tide to Rathlin. The wind was a steady easterly force 4, so another beat to windward.☺. Rathlin Island is L shaped and the tides around it are complicated, it has a whirlpool and tide races off each of its three headlands at different times. So it was important to get it right for time and safety reasons. With a sunny morning and the wind coming from the east the weather was beautiful but unco-operative. By 10.00 hours I realised I was not going to make it before the tide turned against me despite the strong breeze and a good six knots over the ground. Motoring directly into the wind would not solve the problem either as I would struggle to achieve five knots. So I continued to beat on my zigzag course but with the motor on full revolutions giving me 7.5 knots which was just enough to get me into the lee of Bull Head where the tidal streams are weak. I'm not sure whether it was the shelter from the Island or the wind dropping off but it was a beautiful sail in full sun along the southern shore to Rathlin Harbour and I tied up on the pontoon at 14.48. I spent the next three very enjoyable days on Rathlin Island and in Ballycastle.

Friday 26th June 2009



Rathlin Harbour

The first thing I learnt was the only shop did not open until about 10.30 when the ferry returned from Ballycastle on the main land bringing the fresh provisions and you should not be late or they were all gone. When the shop opened I found it was run by the Harbour Master who had collected my berthing fee the day before and who, I understand, also had various other duties. There were: two pubs, two churches, a restaurant, which was the old 'Big

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House', three light houses, one on each point of the L shaped Island and a few farmers and fishermen. The population was dramatically swollen each day by the tourists (Twitchers) who arrived on the morning ferries and left on the evening ones, all seats fully booked. Once they had gone it was very quiet with just two or three visiting yachts.

I spent the day walking and saw the inland lakes; the sea birds roosts from the cliff tops, vantage points were specially provided for the twitchers and I had my lunch by a lake full of water lilies. As I approached the South Lighthouse I could see the tide race off the point. It was quite calm and the sea was flowing like a river. Once I walked away from the harbour I only met one other person all day and he was a fellow sailor off a very old yacht moored next to me. It was a Hilyard, and old like me, in good order but showing signs of age; she was built the year I was born.

During the day I came across an old folk boat just like Ella Trout the first that somebody was doing up. Everything from the deck level down was repaired and painted but the deck and topsides were damaged and neglected. That evening what I can only call a group of farmers were wrestling the folk boat out of a tangle of harbour rubbish and long grass on a trailer made of two large lorry axles with front loader of a tractor. I watched for a while expecting it to fall over at any time as the steering bar was on the inside and the tractor was trying to turn it from the fixed axle end.

Saturday 27th July 2009

Breakfast at 7.30 and on the first ferry at 8.30 to Ballycastle to meet Elaine, Paul, Tiggy and Nathan. To my surprise the folk boat was moored in the harbour when I left!



We had a lovely day driving on the north Irish coast before we went to the Giant's Causeway. They say you shouldn't go back; well when Jo was at Colrairie University (1987) Elaine, Mags and I visited the Giant's Causeway with Jo and all we did was to drive up to the cliff top and walk down to the Causeway with hardly a

sole about. Not now; huge car park, £6.00 to park, tourist centre, large 'eatery' and extra if you wanted the bus down the 500 yard cliff road to the Causeway – and they were queuing for the bus both ways!! Being so commercialised was disappointing for, although the rocks hadn't changed, they were covered with people.

You have to have a licence to take your car to Rathlin and you have to be staying for at least a week to get one, so we parked and carried bags and bedding on to the 1800 ferry back to ET III where the children had an exciting night sleeping on Poppa's boat. We

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had Tiggy, Nathan and Poppa sleeping in the saloon and Mummy and Daddy in the Admiral's quarters and a good night was had by all – I think?

Sunday 28th June 2009

We had another lovely day wandering about Rathlin in fine weather and being tourists. When we set off in the morning we noticed the tractor was back parked on the harbour wall above the folk boat and the mast was lying nearby. After a picnic lunch and ice creams I sadly waved goodbye as they sailed away on the 17.30 ferry back to Ballycastle.

After dinner I went to see what had happened to the folk boat and found a group of youngsters trying to sort out rigging. It wasn't long before I got involved and realised they were short of a jamming block. I found one in ET's stock and gave it to them and as soon as the mast was made secure and they were motoring happily around the harbour. Later there was a knock on my hatch and there was the young owner of the boat offering me a bottle Famous Grouse, except it wasn't Famous Grouse, it looked clear like water. "Be careful with it" he said with a knowing look and obviously thought he was giving me a quality item. I tried it with some apple juice Elaine had left behind and it was very smooth and enjoyable.

Monday 29th June 2009

I left Rathlin Island at 08.45 on a lovely sunny morning and motored out to South Lighthouse where I had seen the sea running like a river from the cliffs on Saturday. I was early and the tide was still against me for an hour or two so I made slow progress towards Ireland's north eastern point. It was a beat of course; the wind was coming out of the south east, force 4 and I was flying my No. 3 jib and one reef. Unfortunately it did not last and soon after midday the wind had gone all together and I had to motor the rest of the way to Carrickfurgus. There was one lively ten minutes on the way when I was passing Larne and my AIS warned me of a dangerous target approaching at 30kts. It was the ferry and the vector showed it on a direct collision course. I could not see it in the warm weather haze so I put the engine flat out to give me maximum speed and manoeuvrability for when he came into view. He cleared me safely but I am not sure whether he altered course to avoid me or not.



I arrived at Carrickfurgus Marina at 17.48 and they kindly allowed me to moor on the hammer head when I asked them for an easy berth as I was single handed. Carrickfurgus Marina is situated on an attractive water front and facilities are very good and well protected. The whole place is very securely fenced and access could only be gained by

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buzzing the intercom to talk to Marina HQ when you had to give your boat details. You have to do this to enter the marina, the showers; in fact you have to go through two control gates to get in the showers, and the refuse area. I couldn't help noticing there were a lot of high fences in Northern Ireland.

Tuesday 30th June 2009

I spent a very enjoyable sunny day in Carrick Furguss being a tourist and spent a good part of the afternoon in the castle where I had to organise the guard. The Castle has a long history starting in 1180 and was the centre of many power struggles. William of Orange landed here in 1690 and went on to succeed at the Battle of the Boyne.



Wednesday 1st July 2009

I needed fuel which was only available in the harbour next door to the marina and only manned from 9.00 to 5.00. I wanted to get away as soon as possible to get the south going stream but it was low water and not much depth in the harbour. Local advice was providing I stay strictly in the channel I'd be OK and the harbour team would be on station 9.00 Irish Time (i.e. about twenty past nine). I left it till 9.15; the harbour launch was in the fuel berth there was little water so I struggled to hold ET III along side the launch and make her fast. The harbour team, fresh faced young men shortly out of school, arrived apologetically and quite un skilfully got the launch out of the way (the engine refused to start) and me on to the fuel berth. They were all very friendly and, fuelled up; I eventually got away at 10.30 Irish Time!

Crossing Belfast Loch I had another brush with a ferry coming in at 35 knots. The AIS showed it would pass close ahead so when she came into view I turn 90 degrees to port to pass under her stern. The ferry alarmingly altered course directly towards me, we were now head on, so I threw the helm hard to starboard and went at full throttle and it passed clear astern. Looking at the chart afterwards the ferry had altered course to enter the deep channel which I had just crossed but it was a bit hairy at the time.

The morning had started warm and misty with the threat of rain and no wind. By 11.00 a cold south easterly set in blowing force 2/3 so it was a beat, of course, but quite pleasant nonetheless; She does sail well to windward. The temperature had dropped and I went from shorts and shirt to fleece and water proofs very quickly. It eventually died and I put the engine on at 15.00hours but it wasn't all bad,



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as the wind went the sun came out. Back to shorts and shirt!

It was at this time I got the first signs of trouble with my tiller pilot drifting off course to port having been working fine for the previous hour. Resetting the course did not cure it so I turned it off and on again and it worked OK the rest of the way to Ardglass. I arrived at Ardglass at 19.20 after a very pleasant trip. Ardglass was fairly straight forward entry providing you watched the buoys as it seemed smaller than it appeared on the chart and the turns in the channel came up rather quicker than expected, again it was much easier going out once you knew it.

Thursday 2nd July 2009



I decided to leave Ardglass when the tide turned against me as the tidal streams are weaker on the Irish side and particularly north of Dublin Bay planning to be near the Isle of Man when the strong streams turned in my favour. This meant leaving about 15.00 and I cast off at 15.08. I motored out to sea into mist and light rain which came and went until the following morning with no wind. Though the weather was quiet it was still an eventful trip.

Firstly the tiller pilot started to wander to port again and it was quite a while before I found it would hold a course to a way point. So I put a way point at Bardsey and we motored along the course line. Secondly there were the large ships which my AIS

warned of there impending arrival at my position. In the pictures you can see the ship that would have run me down if I had not altered course. The picture



A BEAT ROUND IRELAND 2009

PWLLHELI TO PWLLHELI

of the chart plotter shows the situation. The dark line from the top shows my track and the manoeuvre I made to duck under his stern, the triangle is the AIS image of the ship and the red circle is a half mile safety circle around my position, any ship likely to entering this circle is considered a dangerous target.

By 22.00 a south easterly had set in and I beat against it for a couple of hours before I had to put the motor on again. I went through Bardsey Sound at 10.19 hours 3rd July 2009 and arrived in Pwllheli at 14.03 having motored the rest of the way except for a couple of hours sailing between Bardsey and St Tudwals.

Conclusions

1. It was a great trip and, even though it was a beat nearly all the way round, the weather was mainly kind.
2. One month is nowhere near long enough to do justice to such a trip.
3. Navigation up the west coast (particularly the North West) is such that I felt I needed more than one pair of eyes to visit some of the places single handed.
4. The chart plotter must always be returned to a zoom level that shows the navigation details even when you think you are well offshore.
5. AIS is a very good safety addition to your equipment.
6. Offshore up the west coast I saw no commercial or fishing vessels until I got to Broad Haven so short sleeps are low risk.
7. I did 821 miles over the ground and 934 miles through the water comparing my plotter with my log.