

SAILING // MOTORBOATING // WATERSPORTS
NOVEMBER//DECEMBER 2008 €6.50/€5.45stg incl

IRELAND

AFLOAT

IRISH SAILING ANNUAL 2009

**SAILING
INTO 2009**

CHARTING THE SEASON AHEAD



**BOOM
OR BUST?**

VOLVO FLEET IN TROUBLED WATERS

**FREE INSIDE
2009 IRISH BOATING
WALL PLANNER**



HUNDREDS OF BOATS FOR SALE ● RACING RESULTS ● SOUNDINGS ● CROSSWORD ● WWW.AFLOAT.IE

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IRISH SAILING ANNUAL 2009 NOVEMBER//DECEMBER



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Cover Shot: Green Dragon at the start of the Volvo Ocean Race.
Photo: Rick Tomlinson/Volvo Ocean Race

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Great start: Mayor of Cape Town Helen Zille presents Green Dragon skipper Ian Walker with the Waterford Trophy for third place at the VOR leg one prize giving. Only days into leg two there was bad news for Walker's men when the boom broke. See page 24
Photo: Rick Tomlinson

MAKING OUR OWN LUCK

Painting a boat green is bad luck, apparently. Superstitious sailors don't allow the colour to be used on board anywhere, right down to the smallest detail.

Anyone studying news reports over the last few weeks might believe that there's something to the superstition. Within the space of a month, two famous Irish boats – both painted green – hit underwater objects, one with catastrophic consequences.

Asgard II is now the subject of salvage operation, as experts consider whether she can be raised from the sea bed in the Bay of Biscay. Thanks to the quick actions of her captain and crew, there was no loss of life when she began to take water in the middle of the night and subsequently sank. Thousands who had sailed on her mourned her loss.

The Green Dragon also hit an underwater object that brought her to a standstill during the first leg of the Volvo Ocean Race (VOR). Good fortune, the skill of her crew

and the quality of her build allowed her to complete her journey to Cape Town.

But worse was to follow, when a 50-knot squall broke the Dragon's boom just three days into the second leg to India, around 1,500 miles from Mauritius. As Afloat went to press, the crew was scrambling to use anything on board – including bunks – to splint the boom back together to make it to Cochin.

Whatever happens, Ireland has produced a boat that held its own against the best, in the toughest race on the planet. This country's ability to compete with the best on the world stage was again reflected in the stunning win by CIT sailor Nicholas O'Leary at the World University Championships in October.

It may be a cliché, but there's a very real sense in Irish sailing circles that you make your own luck. We are all aware that the country is facing challenging economic headwinds, and there is no shortage of commentators

who would talk down every sector of the economy. But it's an indication of the resilience of Irish boaters that the industry outlook for 2009 remains buoyant.

Afloat magazine is also thumbing its nose at the recession with this 120-page issue, packed with news of the major events around the coast next season.

All credit to event organisers that the various regattas and races around the coast have been coordinated next year to bring as many boats as possible to the west coast in May for the Volvo Race stopover in Galway.

The ICRA national championship heads to Fenit and, although there are those who will question the 100-boat target, the competitive boats will be there.

Dun Laoghaire is on a high after receiving so many international plaudits for the National YC's staging of the inaugural SB3 Worlds. And news that it will host the

ISAF Youth Worlds in 2012 is another shot in the arm for the port that hosts the 500-boat Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta (VDLR) next July. It is a worrying development, however, that no club is staging a World or European championship in Irish waters in 2009.

Before then, both the VOR and VDLR will also be centre stage at the first boating event of the season. The National Boat Show in February sees the Irish Marine Federation brave the economic chill with its 25th show at the RDS.

Minister of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs Eamon O'Cuiv was right when he said we undervalue the oceans around us. Now, with a packed season ahead, there's a unique opportunity for us to exploit the incredible resource that our coastline offers.

COMMENT?
LET US KNOW YOUR
VIEW ON AFLOAT.IE



Next stop Boston: The new harbour at InisMeain

BOOST FOR ARAN VISITORS

The completion of a new harbour on the Aran Islands will provide an important tourism link for the island. The new harbour, at Inis Meain, was built at a cost of €14m, will improve local transport access as well as promoting business and encouraging new visitors to the island. The cost for Cé an Chalaídh Mhóir included works such as dredging, the construction of a pier and breakwater and parking facilities.

The development was opened by the Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, Éamon Ó Cuív, and the Minister for Energy and Natural Resources, Éamon Ryan.

Construction firm SIAC completed the work under the direction of Galway County Council and RPS engineering consultants. "The construction of this new harbour will help strengthen economic opportunities for the island's community," said Mr Ó Cuív. "Given the remote location and high wave conditions, the project was logistically challenging."

HISTORY ARRIVES IN MALAHIDE

GRAHAM SMITH REPORTS ON A WW II VETERAN LAUNCH

A new attraction in Malahide Marina in recent weeks has been the HSL 102, a 64ft wooden-hulled high speed launch with a history that dates back over 72 years when she was the largest and fastest production powerboat of her time.

During the Second World War, the retrieval of pilots and aircrew shot down over the sea around the British Isles was the responsibility of the Royal Air Force Air Sea Rescue Service which operated launches and aircraft in co-operation with the Royal Navy.

The RAF commissioned the design of the HSL by Fred Cooper, who also designed Donald Campbell's water-speed record Bluebirds, and the British Powerboat Company built 22 Class 100 high speed launches in total. HSL 102, built in 1937, was one of those 22 which between them rescued some 11,000 aircrew.

HSL 102 was active during the Battle of Britain – picking up 38 aircrew in 1941 – and also participated in the Dunkirk evacuation. She went on to perform target towing

duties for the Navy in 1943 and three years later was decommissioned once the War had ended.

She is one of only 60 vessels included in Britain's 'core collection' of historic boats which are described as "of pre-eminent national importance, meriting a higher priority for long term preservation", but because she is privately owned, she doesn't qualify for any public funding.

Now the sole remaining example of her class, having been lovingly restored by her owner, Phil Clabburn, she has appeared in films, at festivals and boat shows. However, after some 30,000 man hours of restoration work, he can no longer afford the upkeep of such a remarkable craft and has put her up for sale, at an asking price of stg£385,000.

HSL 102, notable for the famous RAF 'roundel' on each bow, can accommodate up to eight people in considerable comfort below and her three 400HP Cummins diesel engines can produce a top speed of 38 knots. Phil Clabburn is available on 0044 7966 256392.

NEWS IN BRIEF

DERG CLASSICS GO LARGE

The third Waterways Ireland Classic Boat regatta attracted more than 100 boats to Lough Derg Yacht Club at Dromineer on September 13-14. For the first time ever, one of the Howth Seventeens was persuaded onto fresh water. Ian Malcolm and his family brought the 1898-vintage Aura to Dromineer, and promptly won the keelboat class. 17 Water Wags and more than 15 Shannon One-Designs took part (see Soundings, page 120).

SAFETY FIRST IN RCYC

A series of near collisions between yachts and shipping this summer in Cork Harbour led to a mandatory briefing for yachtsmen at the Royal Cork Yacht Club. All skippers competing in the club's annual October league were addressed by the Port of Cork at a pre-event briefing to stress the collision regulations. In one incident in the lower harbour area a dredger skipper had to go full astern to avoid two yachts competing in a club race.

McGROTTY WINS MUNSTERS

Simon McGrotty and Doire Shields won the 2008 Fireball Munsters over 20/21 September at Lough Derg Yacht Club. McGrotty counted 1, 2, 1 in his second championship win of the season in the 25-boat fleet. Second, on eight points, was Helmsman's nominee Noel Butler, crewed by Seamus Moore. Andrew Pierce and Hugh Butler finished third. Skerries boats won all races, including McGrotty's father – twice and reigning Mermaid National Champion Niall McGrotty, crewed by Robert Mahon.

IRISH FIRM TURNS TIDE

Irish renewable engineering firm OpenHydro has successfully installed its new 'open-centre' design tidal turbines on the sea-bed at the European Marine Energy Centre in Orkney, Scotland. The turbines, each six metres in diameter, have been specially designed with an open centre so as not to hurt any marine wildlife, and can power 150 homes. The six-metre turbines are mounted on a triangular steel structure on the sea-bed. Each turbine is mounted deep enough so as not to interfere with marine traffic, and can prevent the emission of 450 tonnes of CO2 each year.



Head turner: This classic is seriously for sale in Malahide

NEWS IN BRIEF

IRISHMAN DOES
VOR COMMS

The Volvo Ocean Race has announced the appointment of a new Communications Director, Dubliner Marcus Hutchinson. Hutchinson has a wealth of experience in the yacht racing event management business and in the media and communications sector. Events he's been involved in include the 1996 Atlanta Olympic Games, several single-handed transAtlantic races, the last four America's Cups and most recently the MadCup Circuit. See also page 14 and 15.

ISA SEEKS
OLYMPIC FUNDING

The Irish Sailing Association (ISA) is to embark on a fundraising campaign to train and support its Olympic hopefuls competing in the 2012 Olympics. The ISA estimates the annual cost to attain Olympic medal winning standard is €1.5 million per year. Ireland's budget was dwarfed on the International stage - Ireland spent €2.4 million in comparison to Team GB's €27.5 million - which excludes significant corporate sponsorship - an item of which included a Volvo car for each team member. Colm Barrington, Chair of the Olympic Steering Group (OSG), said: "Now is the time to increase investment," and added that some of the fundraising onus "will lie with the sailing community itself".

503 LIVES
SAVED BY RNLI

Volunteer lifeboat crews in Ireland rescued 503 people in the six months from January to June this year, according to half yearly statistics released by the RNLI. The figure represents an increase of 75 in the number of people rescued over the same period last year. The busiest stations in Ireland were Dun Laoghaire, (36 shouts) and (25 shouts) with 79 people rescued between them. Valentia lifeboat crew in Kerry was also busy, rescuing a total of 35 people in the first six months of 2008.

NOONANS
EXPAND PREMISES

Father and son team Tony and Graeme Noonan are expanding their premises at Newcastle, Co. Wicklow. The Noonan boatyard is undergoing an expansion of its covered area to just over three times its present size. This new premises will also incorporate a 'keel slot' in the floor, which facilitates the lowering of yachts to floor level. Noonans has been in full operation for the past 13 years carrying out repairs and maintenance of all types, and full osmosis treatments using the Hot Vac hull treatment system.

YOUTH WORLDS COMES
TO DUN LAOGHAIRE

Sailing's youth's Olympics will come to Dun Laoghaire in 2012 following a successful bid by the Royal St. George YC to win the prestigious event

In a major coup for youth sailing in Ireland and a boost for Dun Laoghaire as a sailing centre, the International Sailing Federation (ISAF) announced in November that the Youth World Championships will be held in the east coast port in 2012.

The Royal St George will run the event in association with the National Yacht Club and Dun Laoghaire Rathdown County Council, along with other yacht clubs and local bodies.

Organiser Brian Craig says one of their key objectives is to have a record number of nations competing. Being a strong supporter of the Youth Championships, Ireland has only missed one in the last 20 years, and until now has been the only participating country that hasn't hosted the event.

Dun Laoghaire's facilities are second to none: uniquely compact, the site offers easy circulation between accommodation, dinghy park and dining/social areas. Close to the actual sailing area, the capital city and therefore the airport, Dun Laoghaire is sure to prove popular with spectators and sailors alike, offering a great range of on-shore facilities for supporting families.

The Royal St George YC, founded in 1838, has a long history and tradition in Irish sailing and is regarded as one of Ireland's leading yacht clubs with almost 2,000 members. The

waterside location provides a magnificent setting for the members and visitors to enjoy such a luxurious club. The National YC is no slouch either, having been around since 1870 when it was known as the Kingstown Royal Harbour Club, and providing it's 1,300-plus members with a relaxed and friendly setting.

Both clubs will provide all the onshore needs of participants and officials, and will ensure ample boat parking and launching, provision of secure storage and repair facilities, and of course, a controlled 'field of play'.

Dun Laoghaire's large sailing community can also provide a pool of over 300 volunteers who are experienced in the area of international sailing championships, and is not just well serviced for leisure with the Hospital and RNLI Lifeboat Station beside the harbour.

Dublin Bay's horseshoe-shaped bay is excellent for sailing. Open to the east and approximately six miles across, the Bay allows for very fair racing, with a prevailing south westerly breeze giving a range of sailing conditions.

With all of this and experienced International race officials, qualified safety personnel, fast accurate results, and a superb social programme, the Youth Worlds at Dun Laoghaire is set to be a highlight for the sport here.

Over 250 of the world's best young sailors will line up for the opening races at the 2012 Volvo Youth Sailing ISAF World Championship in Dun Laoghaire, but will Ireland be in the hunt for medals? Our photo shows Laser sailor Ben Lynch on a blast reach during this year's event in Denmark. The Cartow sailor was Ireland's only top ten finisher. Photo: onEdition



YOUR NEWS? IF YOU HAVE AN ITEM YOU WOULD LIKE COVERED
PLEASE LET US KNOW AT COMMENT@AFLOAT.IE

NEWS IN BRIEF

DONEGAL TO RESTRICT BOATING

Donegal County Council is to use the Maritime Safety Act 2005 to create a bye law that could prohibit recreational craft and personal watercraft being used in certain waters around the Donegal coast. Wording in a public notice in the local press by law means that a law banning jet skis could now extend to a large number of boats. Donegal sailors also say traditional safe moorings could be scheduled as prohibited waters, including Downings Harbour and Marblehill in Sheephaven bay, and at Rathmullen on Lough Swilly, all traditional boating spots. "Both trailer sailors and visiting yachts need to be made aware of where they aren't welcome, the fines start at €1,000" said a local.

SQUIB SAILORS ROUND WORLD

On Sunday 2 November, Dun Laoghaire Squib sailor Simon Evans of the Royal St George YC and Fearghal O'Nuallain began Revolution Cycle – the first Irish circumnavigation of the globe by bicycle. Their unsupported expedition will cover over 30,000km, passing through 30 countries and some of the highest, lowest, driest, coldest, warmest and loneliest places on earth. Funds raised will go to depression charity, Aware. The pair can be followed on www.revolutioncycle.ie

GLOBAL SAILOR IN BOOK DEAL

Adrian Flanagan, who made history in May when he completed the first ever single-handed 'vertical' circumnavigation of the world, has released a book of the remarkable voyage. 'Over The Top' tells the story of his 30,285 mile journey, inspired by Francis Chichester's record-breaking circumnavigation in Gypsy Moth. Flanagan mortgaged his house for the trip, and was helped through Russian bureaucracy by billionaire Roman Abramovich. The book is available on Amazon.co.uk and all good booksellers.

LOCK CLOSED

Battlebridge lock will close for essential maintenance during the winter season from Thur 20 Nov until Sun 1 Mar 2009.

Tall ship ahoy – Lord Nelson arrives in Dublin in May
Photo: Gareth Craig



TALL SHIPS SEARCH FOR CREW

In the absence of the Asgard II, Irish tall ship lovers get the chance next summer to sail on either of the Jubilee Sailing Trust square-riggers. Lord Nelson will sail in to Dublin from Bristol in May and then does a Dublin-Dublin voyage before leaving for Scotland. Tenacious arrives into Waterford from Southampton for a week of sailing, before heading for Liverpool. She will also sail to Dublin in August to start a voyage to Oban. Anyone aged between 16 and 90+ can join the crew and no experience is required. More details from www.jstireland.ie or 01 285 7278.

CORK YACHTMASTER GEARS UP

Trainees on a Yachtmaster course based in West Cork boarded a Challenger 72-foot racing yacht in Cork City in November as part of their intensive training.

The course leads to an internationally-recognised, commercial Yachtmasters qualification, and has been running for three years, with a 100% pass rate.

Applications are being taken for next year's 22-week programme for complete beginner, priced at €16,095, which includes bed, board and all training courses. The course begins in September 2009, finishing at the end of March 2010. More information from www.westcorksailing.com

Top class – Yachtmaster trainees in Cork city. Photo: Billy MacGill



ASKMOBY TAKES SILVER

The Ennis-based weather forecasting business, Nowcasting International, has had a major win for its AskMoby.com initiative.

AskMoby.com has been awarded the 2008 Silver Award for the Most Innovative Business Model at the Mobile Search Awards in London. The service provides a quality and accurate hour-by-hour forecasting, free of charge, from www.AskMoby.com

"We were very pleased to beat big international companies from Europe and Silicon Valley; it's a very significant feather in our cap," said CEO Mark White.

AskMoby.com is sponsoring the Green Dragon in the Volvo Ocean Race and assisting the crew with specialist requirements for current forecasting on some of the legs.

SANTA FOR SAILORS

Ten gift ideas for the sailor in your life!



Find your way

Garmin is offering a new series of handheld GPS devices for marine, outdoor and fitness enthusiasts this Christmas. The Oregon features an intuitive touchscreen interface, rugged, resilient design and a variety of preloaded mapping options. Lightweight and with up to 18 hours of life from two AA batteries, prices start at €385.

In the bag

Gill's range of waterproof bags now includes 5, 10, 25 and 50-litre dry cylinder bags, useful in all boating environments, whether racing or cruising, sailing or motor boating. Made from durable waterproof fabric with roll-down closures, snap buckles and webbing reinforcement to create a simple watertight seal, each bag has a full-length translucent mesh reinforced panel so that you can easily see what's inside.



Have a Helly Christmas

Beat the cold weather and increase performance with the Frost Hoody from the Helly Hansen Warm collection. The Frost Hoody is a thermal base layer designed for comfort, warmth and dryness in cold conditions, while Helly Hansen beanies are the perfect stocking filler for those wanting to look cool whilst keeping warm.



Make a date

The 2009 Rick Tomlinson Calendars feature 12 great images from recent assignments around the world, including Key West, the Superyacht Cup, Cowes Week, the CommoJore's Cup, the Antigua Classic Regatta and stunning cruising images from Antarctica and Sweden. Order from www.rick-tomlinson.com



Whistle for fuel

For the environmentally conscious, the Fuel Whistle helps prevent accidental fuel spillage and wastage when re-fuelling boats by changing its standard 'whistle' to a 'warbling' sound when the tank is nearly full. From €15.50





Sounds right

Beef up your sound system on board with speakers from the JL Audio range, distributed by Marine AV. All JL Audio Marine's speakers are made using marine quality materials – stainless steel fasteners, powder-coated aluminium chassis in their amplifiers, solid-brass connectors, UV-resistant Centrex polymer speaker baskets and moisture-proof driver diaphragms.



Tune in for less

Broaden horizons for the sailor in your life this Christmas with one of the best selling hand-held VHF radios, the Standard Horizon HX270E, now available from just €88 inc VAT. It includes a large LCD screen with clear, legible digits and a backlit display and keypad, it comes pre-programmed with all UK and international channels, is fully waterproof and submersible, JIS 7 approved (1 metre for 30 minutes) and comes with a 3-year waterproof guarantee.



Wearing the pants

Hard wearing, waterproof and breathable, the new Gill Waterproof Waist-High Sailing Trousers offer a comfortable alternative to salopettes, providing protection from wind, rain and spray. Made from a lightweight PU coated waterproof polyester fabric, the trousers have fully taped seams and adjustable ankle closures to prevent the ingress of water. From €88 including VAT.



Pressing all the right buttons

Raymarine's new A Series range of chartplotter/ fishfinders features a strikingly clear high-resolution screen, embedded Navionics Silver-level cartography and brand new engine interface. The innovative quick-release swivel-mount bracket means that the unit can be quickly fitted and easily removed for security. Available in three screen sizes and a range comprising two chartplotters and three chartplotter/fishfinder combinations. The A Series is available through Raymarine's global network of dealers and distributors and the price for the A50 excluding cartography from €750 ex VAT and €887 ex VAT including the Navionics cartography.

Timed to perfection

Time and tide wait for no man, but this Christmas you could give the gift of the perfect start with a Gill sailing watch. The luxury SailMaster watch and the Regatta Master digital watch boast a whole host of features for those who relish life on the water and both are capable of a lot more than telling the time. The SailMaster features an invaluable Tactical Planner, and a start line indicator. The tactical planner will show the tacking, reaching and running angles. It also has optical and very audible acoustic signals, which means you will rarely have to look at the watch itself once the sequence has started. The lightweight Regatta Master Watch from Gill is not only an excellent sailing watch but perfect for everyday use, with a countdown feature for use prior to race starts, a timer, digital compass, calendar and alarm all built-in. For night-use there's a powerful electro luminescent backlight. The Gill SailMaster Watch available from €410 including VAT. The Gill Regatta Master Watch available from €82 including VAT.



NEWS IN BRIEF

DOWNTURN SWAMPS MARINE FIRMS

Three Irish marine firms have gone to the wall this year already as the credit crunch bites. Strangford yachtsman David McKnight was forced to liquidate his company, Whiterock Yachts, in October, after plummeting sales. A petition for the winding up of Premier Marine and Leisure Limited was presented to the High court by the Collector General on September 9th, prompted by tax liabilities. Both failures were preceded by the sale of the Sail Ireland Marine Ltd fleet by receivers in May. A dozen yachts and motor boats were offered for sale in Kinsale on May 9.

TITANIC BID FROM BELFAST

Belfast wants to mimic Galway, hosting a stopover for the next edition of the VOR. A Belfast Harbour Commissioners' delegation travelled to the race start in Alicante to discuss a bid to tie in with the 100th anniversary of the building of the Titanic in May 2012. The expected return to the local economy can be expected to be over €43 million. The Belfast city fathers are rejuvenating an area of the city known as the Titanic Quarter. It is a €6.5 billion development, and the VOR stop-over would be a centrepiece to celebrations in an Olympic year and, of course, a further boost to Irish sailing.

NEW CHAMP FOR J24S

Former All-Ireland Sailing Champion Stefan Hyde was deposed as J24 national champion in September, when the Carrickfergus crew of Taz took the J24 National Championship title on Carlingford Lough. Seven races were sailed over the two days of the event and the Carrick crew won the last two races impressively to beat former champion Mickey McAldin of Lough Erne YC in 'Murder Picture' by three points overall. Hyde was another three points behind in third. Competitors travelled from as far afield as Dun Laoghaire, Malahide, Lough Neagh and Lough Erne to race in the event.

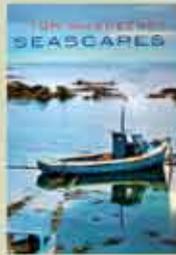
FLOATING TREE

A large Christmas tree floating on a pontoon will be anchored off Sarsfield Lock in Limerick City from mid-November 2008 until mid-January 2009.

SAILING BETWEEN THE COVERS

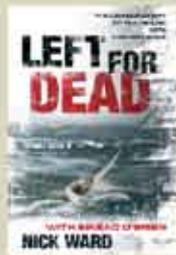
PAUL O'DOHERTY SCANS THE SHELVES FOR ENTERTAINING READING SUITABLE FOR PLACING UNDER THE TREE THIS CHRISTMAS

Despite the worst October in living memory for markets, budgets, weather and astrologers, the Christmas bookshelves are still groaning under the weight of endless choices for everyone. So for anyone unsure of what to buy their favourite captain or serious admiral, here are few tips from Afloat's list of 'must-reads' for the year ahead.



Seascapes by Tom MacSweeney (Hardback £24.99) Seascapes has been on RTÉ radio for over 30 years and in this book, Tom MacSweeney, the RTÉ marine correspondent and presenter of the programme, includes some of the most fascinating stories to

feature over those years. With stories including the landings of the Munster fusiliers at Gallipoli, the sad tale of the 400 who died to build Dun Laoghaire harbour, and the Barna bog boat, Seascapes offers a wonderful perspective of our maritime heritage. Featuring tales of tragedy and triumph alike – as diverse as the tale of commander Bill King, the only submarine commander to survive World War II from start to finish, to tales of whale watching and dolphin spotting off our coast – Tom reveals the lives and history of this 'Island Nation'.



Nick Ward and Sinéad O'Brien's **Left for Dead** – The Untold Story of the Tragical 1979 Fastnet Race (published by A. & C. Black, price £7.99), which, while first published in 2007, has now been reissued with what the publishers call a 'dramatic new chapter'. Telling the

story of the traumatic race nearly 30 years ago, when 15 sailors died and 24 crews were forced to abandon ship in unrelenting storms, Ward and O'Brien recall Ward's experience aboard the fateful Grimalkin when controversially he was left for dead with another crewmember Gerry Winks, who subsequently died, after a decision was made to take to the lifeboat. Harrowing, uncompromising and in your face, it leaves you asking for more, particularly the untold story that doesn't emerge conclusively in the final chapter.

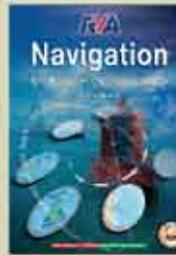


On a similar theme, if much less emotional, **Sea Survival Handbook** by Keith Colwell (Royal Yachting Association, £8.99), is as practical and calm an overview as you'll get for the price with headings that include heavy weather, liferafts, man-overboard prevention and situations, advice on when to abandon ship, survival in cold water and life-saving signals. Ultimately, a very good value survival guide that every sailor should take the time to read.



Arctic 2 Antarctic – A Celtic Spirit of Fastnet Voyage (includes a 60-minute DVD documentary) Michael Holland and Janet King

£29.95/£22.95. In 2005 an experienced amateur crew from eight different countries and both hemispheres sailed from Ireland to Iceland and back aboard an Irish sailing boat. Then, in 2006, after a major refit to prepare her for high-latitude sailing, Celtic Spirit of Fastnet and her crew sailed south to the Antarctic and across the Southern Ocean to South Georgia before returning to Argentina in 2007.



Navigation Exercises (Royal Yachting Association, £19.99) by Chris Slade is, initially, a straight-forward questionnaire that asks the reader such standards as 'list three items of equipment that should be carried onboard a tender' or 'when crossing a traffic separation scheme should

your heading or ground track be at right angles to the traffic flow?' What follows are definite answers that make this selection ideal for practising navigation and seamanship skills. It also comes with two detailed RYA training charts.

NEWS IN BRIEF

MARINE REP FOR CABINET

The Irish Marine Federation (IMF) has welcomed news that the Department of Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs is taking on the responsibility of developing the marine leisure sector, but a department spokesperson has maintained the decision to take on this role had not yet been confirmed. The marine leisure section of the Department of the Marine sank without trace six months ago when the Department of the Marine was split across five government departments. Six months later it has resurfaced (unofficially) in the bailiwick of Minister Eamon Ó Cuív, TD. A Federation spokesman said "the fact that marine leisure now has a voice at the cabinet table is a significant shot in the arm for a sector worth €700 million."

16 YEAR OLD SETS SAIL

Hundreds of well-wishers gathered at Gunwharf Quays, Portsmouth on Saturday 15th November to wave goodbye to 16 year old Michael Perham as he set off on his bid to become the youngest person ever to sail single-handed around the world.



FORECAST IS MADE TO MEASURE

Dear Sir,

Tom MacSweeney is held in very high regard by the marine community, and rightly so; nevertheless, I would welcome an opportunity to address his views on our Small Craft Warning service as expressed in his Seascapes column (Sept/Oct 2008).

Met Éireann is allocated broadcast times and durations to deliver Sea Area forecasts on RTÉ Radio. We do not include the full text of warnings in these broadcasts as they would eat into the allocated time, which on occasion has been prone to curtailment by RTÉ for a variety of reasons.

When warnings are in operation, we refer to them in a brief preamble to the Sea Area Forecast, and occasionally, forecasters may have time to amplify this but we don't have the airtime to include the full texts, particularly as both Small Craft and Gale Warnings could be in operation at the same time.

The relevant warning thresholds (Force 6 or 7 for Small Craft Warnings and Force 8 and higher for Gale Warnings) and the specific areas to which they refer are clearly identified within the Sea Area forecast itself.

The full warning text is available on the Irish Coast Guard's Marine VHF network, on our Weatherdial service and on our website met.ie, as has been the case since the service was launched in 2003.

The Small Craft Warning service has been exceptionally well received and welcomed by sailors, particularly by those involved in safety at sea. It has been so successful that we were asked by the Marine Safety Working Group to change it from its initial summer-months-only service to a year-round service and were delighted to have done so.

Yours, etc,

Aidan Kelly
General Forecasting Division, Met Éireann

WORDSEARCH

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There are 37 rivers hidden here – we've started you off with Yangtze. Find the other 24 in our Wordsearch and win a Gill Barrel Bag

Name: _____
 Address: _____

 Tel: _____



Almost in response to an association with Gill bring you a nautical wordsearch. Complete the quiz, cut it out and send it to Gill Marine quiz, 2 Lower, Clerkenwell Road, Dean Lane House, Co. Dublin. Entries to be received no later than Friday, January 16th, 2009 and entries must be on official entry form (below). The first correct entry out of the hat will receive a Gill bag. Employees, relatives and friends of Irish Marine Press and Gill/Dinghy Supplies are ineligible for this competition. Answers will be published in the next issue.

SEASCAPES
TOM MacSWEENEY



Seascapes is on a new mooring – we have moved to Mondays at 10.30pm on RTE Radio 1, and repeated at 5.02am on Friday mornings. Tom MacSweeney is Marine Correspondent for RTE.

IRELAND CAN LEAD THE WORLD

As the Volvo Ocean Race began, I found myself in Alicante – an interesting port beneath a magnificent hillside canopy with a sense of its historic past when sailing ships dominated the harbour.

As I stood on the quayside, high winds were sending squalls scudding across the harbour towards a black-painted sailing ship riding high out of the water, pulling and tugging at her mooring lines, rolling from side to side and occasionally plunging up and down. Narrow and long, with a high superstructure, she didn't look like the most comfortable vessel on which to sail around the world, but had done just that. She was attracting long lines of people, waiting patiently on the quayside in wind and rain for their turn to go aboard.

The ship was a replica of the Nao Victoria, the St. Victoria, in which Juan Sebastián Elcano completed the first-ever world circumnavigation in 1522. The Spanish are very proud they were the first nation to sail around the world.

Further down the quayside from the Nao Victoria, tugging at their mooring lines, were the modern and very different boats of the Volvo Ocean Yacht Race, ready for their opportunity to go where the Nao had gone before. On three of those boats, Irish sailors are putting their country on the world stage of sailing.

I felt pride in being Irish as I looked at the boats and met the sailors, but could not help another thought: the Spanish government had ordered the building of the Nao Victoria and then appointed the state company for international exhibitions to use the ship to represent Spain around the world.

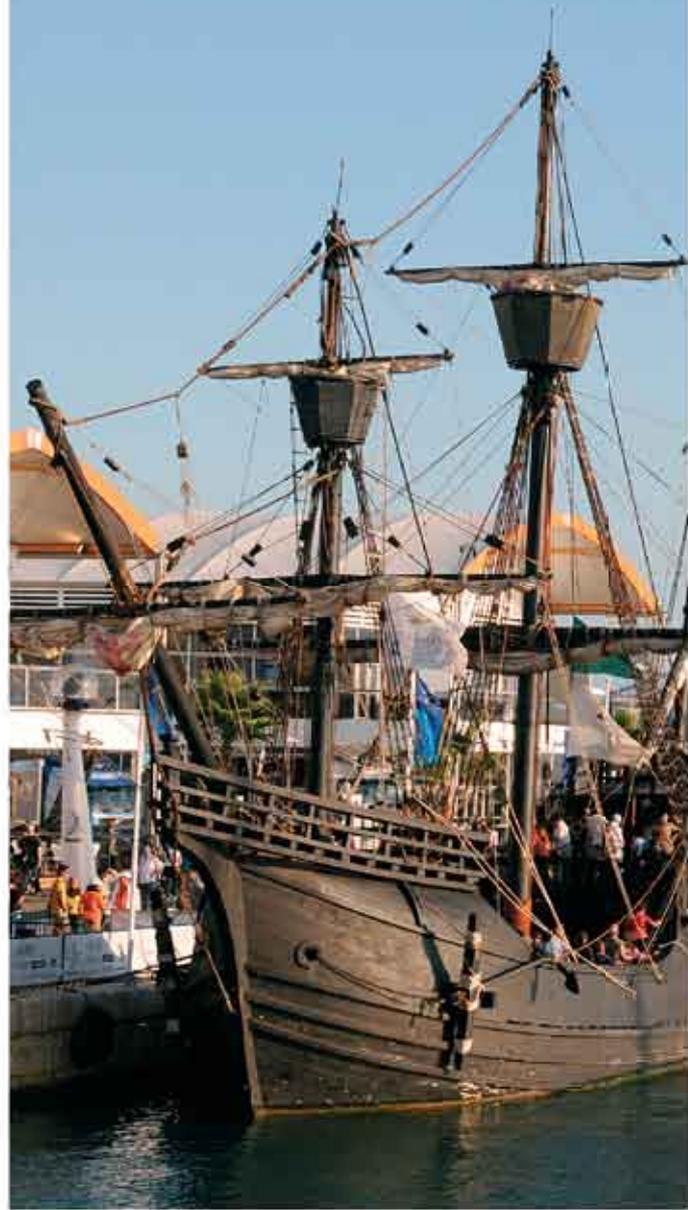
Why is there not similar pride in Ireland, this island nation whose sailors have carried its reputation around the world and created respect for Ireland?

I thought about Asgard II, our national sail training vessel which, at that time, was lying on the seabed in the Bay of Biscay, awaiting a decision about whether she should be lifted. By the time this column is published, a decision may have been made. I hope it is to lift her.

Regrettably, from the information I have been given, Asgard II was under-insured. I have been told the insurance held on her was only in the region of €3m, which experts in the realm of tall ships tell me means she was considerably under-insured. The cost of replacement would be many times more than that.

Whether one is dealing with one's boat or home, the importance of insurance is the replacement value. Asgard II is a national asset, so who in the Department of Defence which owns her, is responsible for the level of under-insurance on the vessel? Surely this represents a neglect of a valuable State asset? She has given service over a quarter of a century to people of all ages. Sail training is recognised as a benefit to personal and career enhancement.

In the Volvo Race there is the Green Dragon, which originated from Galway Bay Sailing Club and is now supported heavily by Chinese financial backing. Justin Slattery from Cork is bowman, the same position he held on the Dutch boat ABN Amro One, which won the last Volvo Race and the toughest position on a yacht.



THE VOLVO IRISH

With Justin is Damian Foxall from Derrynane in Kerry, who has a round-the-world victory under his belt, in the two-handed non-stop Barcelona Race. He would love to add the Volvo to that.

There is Ger O'Rourke from the Royal Western Yacht Club in Kilrush who bought ABN Amro One, had it refurbished and entered it himself. Now he has Dutch financial support, the Tommy Hilfiger Group is backing him and he has been given support by the Discovery TV Channel. He has done many of the biggest yacht races in the world, winning several - including the Sydney-to-Hobart - and his boat Chieftain was the first Irish yacht to win the Fastnet Race.

Team Russia is another boat which has Irish involvement, with 29-year-old Jeremy Elliott from Cork as sail trimmer. He also designed their sails. Jeremy began his sailing in Kinsale, has studied naval architecture, has been involved in the British

challenge in the Americas Cup and, working for North Sails, designed the sails for Team Russia. The Volvo Race was one he wanted to tackle.

"I haven't done it before, so I'm not sure what I'm in for, but I'm here anyway and ready to go. I'm looking forward to it," he told me.

It's not only on the boats that there is Irish presence. The Race Communications Director is Marcus Hutchinson from Howth and one of the Principal Race Directors is Bill O'Hara from the North of Ireland. Marcus has a classic boat in Kinsale, ashore at present because he doesn't have the time to sail it!

There is pride in being Irish. As our economy falters, it's time for our leaders to look outwards to the sea as a resource for this island nation. As that long-time campaigner for the marine, Matt Murphy, who runs Sherkin Island Marine Station in West Cork, once put on button badges he issued, let us work towards having 'More Jobs From the Sea.'

Old and new - the Nao Victoria, a replica of the Spanish vessel that circumnavigated the globe in the 16th century is moored alongside the VOR fleet prior to the October start. Photo: Dave Kneale



THE VOLVO IRISH FROM TOP:

Owner Eamonn Conneely

Damian Foxall, watch leader

Justin Slattery, bowman

Ian Moore, navigator

VOR Race Officer Bill O'Hara

Yacht builder supreme Killian Bushe

Delta Lloyd - owner and skipper Ger O'Rourke

Johnny Mordant - Green Dragon, Technical Director

Johnny Smullen

Marcus Hutchinson, VOR Director of Communications

Jeremy Elliott Team Russia

COMMENT?
LET US KNOW YOUR
VIEW ON AFLOAT.IE

Afloat's under water photo of Asgard II as she lies upright on the seabed. Photo: Courtesy Colste an Asgard and Remote Presence.

ASGARD II
DUBLIN

HEARTS SINK WITH ASGARD



Sailors around the country were left in shock when the 27-year-old brigantine went down in September, writes Markham Nolan

Sailors are known for developing unusually emotional bonds with their craft, and this autumn saw an unprecedented outpouring of grief across the country for the loss of an ocean-going vessel.

Grown men shed tears in September when early-morning news bulletins told of the sinking of the Asgard II, Ireland's famous sail-training vessel, which had disappeared beneath the waves off the coast of France.

"She was probably the only man-made object that I came across that had a personality, had a soul," said Capt Tom McCarthy, a former skipper of the Asgard II, echoing sentiments expressed around the country from former crew and trainees.

Bobby Molloy, the minister for defence who commissioned the build of the Asgard II, said: "It's a terrible tragedy. Ever since she went to sea, she has introduced thousands of young people to sailing. She was an informal maritime ambassador for Ireland. It is imperative in my view that every effort is made to refloat this national treasure.

"Sail training has many benefits: it's character building, and introduces [trainees] to a whole other aspect of life in this country." Since her launch in Arklow in 1981, more than 10,000 trainees have swabbed the decks of Ireland's only sail training brigantine, with many returning time and again for the unique experience of a tall ship.

Several graduates and former crew members attested to the importance and character of the Asgard, and her constant presence and performance in Tall Ships Races, giant tricolor flying from the stern, brought international exposure.

Margaret Stokes, a former watch leader whose father worked for Jack Tyrrell, the shipwright who built the Asgard, was on board for the initial sea trials, and admitted to weeping when she heard of the sinking.

"We witnessed the sea trials, when her mast bent so badly under sail that we thought it would break – it was like a banana. The crew, made up of the lads from Tyrrell's yard, kept urging Jack to shorten sail.

"His response was that he 'had to see what she would do'. The mast did not break but she was taken back to the yard and the additional backstays on the mainmast were fitted."

The Asgard, so, has been mourned like the passing of an old friend. The details of the sinking are well-known by now. At 2am on September 11, the Asgard sent out a Mayday call over the radio. She was off the coast of Brittany, with 80 metres of Biscay water underneath her, and taking water on board rapidly.

The boat was nearing the end of a ten-night voyage, bound for La Rochelle where it would represent Ireland at a marine trade show, but the 20 trainees and five crew aboard would not make it. They took to liferafts as the Asgard began to go under, and were picked up by the French

coastguard who transferred them to the nearby island of Belle Ile.

The immediate reaction was one of deserved commendation for skipper Colm Newport for his safe and swift handling of the situation, with no injuries or lives lost, but speculation quickly took over as to what caused the sinking.

AT 2AM ON SEPTEMBER 11, THE ASGARD SENT OUT A MAYDAY CALL OVER THE RADIO. SHE WAS OFF THE COAST OF BRITTANY, WITH 80 METRES OF BISCAY WATER UNDERNEATH HER, AND TAKING WATER ON BOARD RAPIDLY

The Asgard, built in Arklow 27 years ago, was known for its pace and seaworthiness among tall ships and had handled severe weather in the past, which made her sinking in relatively calm waters all the more of a mystery.

Investigations initially centred around seacock valves thought to have allowed the water ingress. An investigation by a remotely operated vehicle (ROV) late in September then showed damage to a plank, suggesting that the Asgard may have struck an underwater object which caused her to sink.

The Department of Defence said at the time: "it is not possible at this stage to determine whether this has resulted from impact with the seabed, or was the original cause of the sinking".



Asgard afloat in happier times – passing Blackrock Castle in Cork Photo: Bob Bateman



Asgard II appears to sink by the bow with life rafts visible around the stricken hull

The same investigation offered hope that the Asgard might indeed be salvageable, as she had settled in an upright position on the seabed, and was largely intact, making retrieval easier. With the status of the craft ascertained, it became time to decide what action could be taken.

On October 22, defence minister Willie O'Dea, chairman of Coiste an Asgard, told the Dail that after the underwater survey, the department was seeking tenders for the salvage of the Asgard, but had, as yet, made no decision on whether or not that would go ahead, and whether or not the boat would be restored if it could be salvaged.

Weather conditions on the Bay of Biscay mean it will not be possible to raise the Asgard until the spring of 2009 at the earliest. The Asgard was insured with Allianz for €3.8 million, a sum which, it is universally agreed, would not come close to covering a replacement, but may stretch to cover some of the cost for salvage and refurbishment.

The submission date for tenders to the salvage operation closed on October 31, and as Afloat went to press, it is understood that Allianz was locked in negotiation to see if the operation was viable. A defence spokeswoman estimated that the replacement of the Asgard, if necessary, would take eight years, and would be contingent on finding the right craftsmen for the job.

Although the State bought the Asgard II for €635,000 in 1981, the more recent build of the Jeanie Johnston was budgeted for €2.5 million but cost €14 million, so the cost of building a replica or similar craft to the Asgard could prove prohibitive. In the

current economic climate, with budgets being slashed and €180 million of defence money earmarked for three new patrol vessels, the Asgard is likely to rank lowly on the list of governmental priorities.

Apart from the insurance investigation, two other inquests into the sinking are ongoing, one by the Marine Casualty Investigation Board, the other by French coastguard authorities.

In light of what will definitely be a long delay before Ireland has a dedicated sail training vessel again, calls have come in for the Jeanie Johnston or the Dunbrody to fill the void temporarily. The Jeanie Johnston, which takes trainees on shorter voyages, is owned by the Dublin Docklands Development Authority and has been ruled out as a substitute, despite widespread calls from politicians and the marine community.

Others have called for her replacement with a craft that is more modern, more in keeping with the realities of sailing today. For the past 27 years, the Asgard II has been a familiar sight around Ireland's coast, and has been a strong link with Ireland's rich maritime history, bringing sailing's past to life for thousands. Her disappearance, and the fact that her future is now shrouded in so much uncertainty is a huge blow to the Irish marine community.

Irish sailors and coastal residents have been urged to make their feelings known on the matter, and prepare to assist in raising funds to restore the Asgard to her former glory if at all possible. An Afloat poll on whether Asgard should be raised or not brought in an overwhelming 84.6% (of 300 respondents) saying 'yes', while there was still time.

THANKS FOR THE MEMORIES

So many people were affected by the sinking of the Asgard it's easy to understand how so many feel much more than a vessel was lost. Following reader requests Afloat is compiling Asgard memories. Let us have your memory at comment@afloat.ie



ST. BRENDAN'S LOSS

PAUL O'DOHERTY DISCOVERS TRALEE BAY SAILING CLUB AND WONDERS WHY THE SAILING SAINT DECIDED TO LEAVE SUCH A BEAUTIFUL SPOT

With some of the most beautiful scenery anywhere in the country, anyone visiting Tralee Bay Sailing Club (TBSC) near Tralee must wonder why St Brendan, born locally, left here all those years ago in search of something better. In fact, the clubhouse, up the hill from the harbour in Fenit, is one of the best spots in the area to view what the venerable saint missed when he left behind the panoramic views of Tralee Bay from Blennerville Windmill to the Marahees and westward to Brandon Point – the Slieve Mish

mountains acting as scenery's onshore overlord – in search of what we now call America.

Then there is the sea, with Tralee Bay well sheltered and generally flat, with mostly westerly winds to take you the six to eight hours spin to Dingle and Cahirciveen or the four to six hours sail to Kilrush, the two closest marinas. Not surprisingly, it's the combination of scenery and protected inshore waters which provides a tremendous venue for competitive

sailing events such as national championships and West of Ireland Offshore Racing Association (WIORA).

Rather conveniently, the club is a ten-minute drive from Tralee and with viable connectivity, which includes a one-and-a-half hour drive from Cork and Limerick, accessible rail and bus alternatives, and Kerry Airport with its daily connections to Dublin, London, Manchester and Frankfurt, only a 20-minute drive from the clubhouse.



Club on the hill: Tralee Bay Sailing Club proudly overlooks Fenit Harbour. Photo: David O'Brien

The history of the club goes back to 1956 when a group of local enthusiasts decided Tralee Bay needed sailing, and it has grown ever since, now boasting a vibrant and expanding membership, clubhouse and sailing school. The sailing season is year-round and is currently involved in winter dinghy coaching for Optimists and Lasers.

FACILITIES

The clubhouse, adjacent to the 110-berth marina, has full changing facilities and a separate purpose-built sailing school that is disabled-accessible. It also has a bar, committee rooms, results office, protest/jury-room, function-room, kitchen, and a large dinghy secure park and slipway with electric winch and storage facilities.

Running a range of courses to suit all age groups, special needs and school groups, the club has three ribs and three rescue boats, while the school's fleet includes Topper, Pico, Laser 2, Fisher and Omega for courses and for hire, and 'sit in' Pyranha Master TG kayak for sea-kayaking courses.

MEMBERSHIP

There's a very strong voluntary commitment from the 600-strong membership (100 of whom are youth members) including all-hands-on-deck for the twice-annual general clean-up. Then, there's the rota for safety boat cover, officer of the day, results, launching and retrieval, and lunches. The committee runs the club, school and bar, although it does have at its disposal a part-time bar manager, sailing school manager and an enthusiastic group of sailing instructors. The trustees (previous commodores and some other long standing members) are involved in strategic planning and investments for the club.

THE HISTORY OF THE CLUB GOES BACK TO 1956 WHEN A GROUP OF LOCAL ENTHUSIASTS DECIDED TRALEE BAY NEEDED SAILING, AND IT HAS GROWN EVER SINCE

The main classes sailed are Optimist, Toppers, Lasers and Cruisers, and membership fees cater for a number of categories including single (€355), family (€545), cadet (€105), first year cruiser (€175), pavilion (€105) and senior €175, while there are no parking fees for boats. Famous sailors from the club include former Tánaiste Dick Spring; Damian Foxall, the first Irishman to win the Barcelona World Race; and Ireland's most famous sailor of all, St Brendan, who was born near Tralee.

EVENTS

For dinghies the spring regatta is usually in April with the autumn regatta at the end of August. There's also the Fenit-Dingle regatta in September. The club also hosts national and international events every year, this year bringing the Topper World Championships and Optimist National Championships to its shores. Weekly racing is every Wednesday and Saturday. Into the cruisers, the Fenit Cruiser Racing Regatta was held for the first time this summer. The cruisers race regularly every Tuesday and Thursday night from April to August and there's regular racing on Sunday in the summer and through to September and October. In addition, there are a number of offshore races including the Fenit-Dingle race, the OSM 100-mile race and the Fenit-Kilrush race.



In the summer the club runs a full complement of ISA-approved sailing courses and a variety of powerboat and sea kayaking courses. Courses for winter 2008/2009 include a number of ISA yacht-master, safety and engine maintenance courses.

THE FUTURE

On December 4th, the club will hear a talk from Bill Gladstone, author of 'Sail Trim and Rig Tuning: A Captain's Quick Guide' and co-author of 'The Instant Handbook of Boat Handling, Navigation, and Seamanship: A Quick-Reference Guide for Sail and Power'. All are welcome although you'll need to book in advance. Next June, the club hosts the Irish Cruiser Racing Association (ICRA) annual regatta in conjunction with the West of Ireland Offshore Racing Association (WIORA) annual regatta. The event, the biggest cruiser racer regatta ever on the west coast of Ireland, is expected to attract up to 100 cruiser racers. The club will also host regional dinghy events for Optimists and Lasers next year.

WHAT THE SAILORS SAY

"We have a friendly competitive sailing club with wonderful facilities including a secure dinghy park, a safe launching slip, a purpose-built sailing school, a beautifully situated club house and bar and a marina close by. The spectacular scenery and ideal sailing conditions in Tralee Bay must make it one of the best sailing clubs in Ireland". (David Buckley, commodore)

"The club's own dedicated sailing school, which runs a full programme throughout the year and puts large numbers of sailors through its courses, has become a catalyst for the club's development of sailing locally, regionally and nationally. The club sees the benefit as a means of inviting new participants into the sport and developing the club. The sailing school over the past number of years has developed sailors from beginners through intermediate and advanced ISA courses and on to the Pathway Programme. The school is now poised to develop advanced coaching skills and is working towards becoming a centre of excellence for coaching programmes." (Lorna Browne, junior organiser)

"I am delighted to be a member of a sailing club where you can compete against all the officers of the club while dinghy sailing at club racing on a Wednesday night". (Liam Lynch, vice-commodore)

**CLUB FEATURE
TRALEE BAY SC**

THE COMMODORE'S VIEW

According to commodore David Buckley (right) "the club is beautifully situated overlooking Tralee Bay with its flat seas, spectacular mountains and constant winds. I can safely say there is not other sailing club in Ireland with such a spectacular setting". Weather-wise, "no two days are the same in Tralee Bay" and Buckley acknowledges that what's best about the club is that it is "friendly, competitive and conveniently situated ten minutes drive from the centre of Tralee Town and from my home and office". Working and living so close to the club, and having been involved in sailing since he was eleven years old, and graduating from Mirrors and Fireballs, among others, into the cruisers, Buckley sails twice a week

So what's it like to be commodore? "I've been commodore since last December and thanks be to God my year ends this December. I know some clubs have two-year terms but in Tralee Sailing Club it's one year, and I'm very grateful for that because we've had a very eventful and successful year. It does take up a certain amount of your time although I have enjoyed it thoroughly, having achieved so much. It's what I particularly like about my year as commodore"

For more information on the Tralee Sailing Club see www.traleebaysailingclub.com or www.traleebaysailingschool.com



Commodore David Buckley

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**Fenit
Marina**

Looking west over Fenit Marina



Photograph by James McCarthy - Blinnon

Located in Tralee Bay, near the county capital town of Tralee, the 136 berth marina is one of the most strategically located marinas in Ireland. Adjacent to the regional airport, mainline bus and train terminus, the marina is most suitable for crew changes and prolonged stop-overs for cruising yachts.

With the Maharees to shelter the biggest of the Atlantic swells, sailing is always possible in the waters around Fenit.

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www.fenitharbour.com



30 KNOTS IN THE DARK



CONDITIONS ON THE FIRST LEG WERE NOT FOR THE FAINT-HEARTED, AS THE DRAGON'S FIRE WAS ALMOST EXTINGUISHED BY AN UNDERWATER OBJECT

Aren't technicalities a wonderful thing? When the Green Dragon, the Volvo Ocean Race entry shared by Ireland and China, sidled into Cape Town in fourth, they actually finished third, and could claim the third spot on the overall podium.

Ahead of them were Ken Read's Puma, sandwiched in between the two Ericsson boats in terms of on-the-water finishes. Ericsson 3, with its illegal keel, saw its third place revoked by the umpires until it can get the lead out and fit a new fin, and Ireland, with its first entry in 20 years, is among the leaders.

Enough of the rules, because, as the sponsors insist, the VOR is about life at the extreme, and the eight entries were treated to every extreme during the three-week leg – from vacuum-like doldrums conditions to full-on survival conditions. Leg One of the VOR reminded

us why this race is one of the greats. If you weren't glued to the scheds every three hours, you missed out on what has been the closest start to a round-the-world race in decades.

Question marks hung over Green Dragon and the rest of the fleet as the start date approached, with Ericsson and Telefonica the only teams to have raced one VO70 against another ahead of the gun. No-one had any indication of which design and crew would be quickest, although the smart money was on the Swedish-backed teams, whose exhaustive testing process would, it was thought, stand them in good stead.

Over the 6,500 nautical miles between Alicante and Cape Town, the eight-boat fleet duelled constantly, playing a high-speed leapfrog as they gybed and swapped places across the Atlantic.

Irish eyes were firmly fixed on our two – yes, two – entries, the Green Dragon skippered by Ian Walker, and the surprise entry of Ger O'Rourke, emblazoned with its last-minute sponsorship from Delta Lloyd.

As the fleet passed the Canaries, O'Rourke and crew put the cat among the pigeons, making some seemingly astute tactical decisions on the left side of the course as they hugged the African coast. They put on a show of pace to grab the lead for a while, the first time for a second-hand boat since the olden days of handicap racing, a remarkable feat considering their lack of preparation and funding.

Small boat, big sea. Ireland's Green Dragon is heading for India. Photo: Rick Tomlinson

But it was to be short-lived. Ericsson 4 (skipped by Torben Grael) and the American entry Puma consistently punched out at the front, crossing within metres of each others' bows all the way to the doldrums, match-racing across an ocean.

Green Dragon, meanwhile, apparently played its 'stealth' card to hide tactical errors through the Canaries, before taking a gamble and gybing out west as the fleet approached the doldrums. It would prove inspired.

When the wind filled in, Walker et al got their hands on it first and cut a dash for the far side of the Atlantic. A scoring gate off the coast of Brazil offered a valuable cache of points to the first boat around, and the race to Fernando de Noronha turned into an upwind drag, led by Ireland.

The Dragon got there first, jubilantly turning left for South Africa with maximum points from the gate safely stowed below decks. Close behind were Ericsson and Puma, and ahead loomed a deepening Southern Ocean depression, which amounted to a hurtling conveyor belt to the finish line.

Like slow traffic merging onto a motorway, the skippers eyed the weather charts cautiously. Any more than 25 knots in a VO70 is like putting nitro-glycerin in the petrol tank. The rig provides such an abundance of power that after 30 knots you are utterly maxed out and looking for the brakes. No-one was relishing the prospect of 40 knots plus.

On board Delta Lloyd, navigator Matt Gregory had devised his 'scale of Heaven and Hell' to describe the intensity. As the depression approached, Gregory explained: "Right now, we are in Zone 9 [Fear]. I need to make sure that I don't put the boat in a location that escalates us to Zone 10 [Sheer Terror and Survival]. These boats are so powerful

that they don't need a breath of wind over 25 knots to set the ocean on fire."

Delta Lloyd was suffering with a broken top spreader on its starboard side, praying for a port-gybe run home, and had to stow its masthead spinnakers until full repairs could be undertaken. Ahead, the leaders were already disappearing in a blitz of white, streaking foam. The on-the-water experience of Ericsson 4, down a man since having a team member medivaced earlier on, showed as they chewed up the miles in full control.

As they surged into the lead, no-one could touch them; and Grael's team racked up a 602-mile day to take the monohull 24-hour record by some margin, with seemingly limitless reserves of speed. Back on the Dragon, skipper Ian Walker was getting his first taste of proper Southern Ocean salt as they hooked into the heart of the depression. "This is insane," he wrote in a terse email, "35 knots of wind, pitch black, 1,500 miles from land."

As their speed topped out in excess of 30 knots, the Irish crew suffered some major damage, with nose-dives sending crew members flying. Then, the Dragon hit an underwater object. "There was a deafening crunch and the boat went from 25 knots to a virtual standstill," said Walker. "Neal [McDonald] who was helming smashed the wheel and everyone else fell over."

Whatever it was cleared itself and the residual damage stripped Dragon of ten per cent of its pace, allowing Ericsson 3 to slip past into third. Two shredded spinnakers didn't help, and sailmaker Phil Harmer was kept busy on the approaches to Cape Town, stitching the rags back together to create a workable masthead A-sail. Delta Lloyd would finish seventh, relegating the limping Telefonica Black team to last place, and sailing out of their skins to do so.





"The boom, it's in two pieces"

Only four days into leg two and there was disappointing news that Green Dragon had suffered a broken boom in 50-knot squalls some 1,500 miles from Mauritius. Skipper Ian Walker reported that no injuries had been suffered on board during the incident, but the decision on whether to continue on under jury rig to Cochin or to head for Mauritius for a replacement boom was still to be taken. The previous 24 hours had been the most testing in the race so far. The Dragon's latest misadventure came after they survived a spectacular Chinese gybe the previous day. Walker's men were not alone in sustaining damage as squalls hit 50 knots and seas rose to between 10 and 12 metres. A number of boats reported structural damage and shredded sails.



WALKER QUOTES

ON THE RACE

"This is insane – 35 knots of wind, pitch black, 1,500 miles from land and we are desperately trying to squeeze more speed from a boat that feels and sounds like it's going to self destruct any second. We have to push hard to stay ahead of the front."

ON THE BOAT

"We go well downwind and we go well in the light but obviously, in stronger winds, we struggle because our bulb keel is light. Bulb weight equals power so there will no doubt be times when we suffer from that."

"It is clear that the boats behind are a little quicker" (when loading at the leg one scoring gate)

"As soon as we get into stability sailing mode, such as upwind or reaching, then boats with maximum keel weights do grind away from us. We lose miles each three-hour schedule, so that is a bit depressing."

"Nobody knows what boat is going to win this race. It may yet be that some teams have cut it too fine. First and foremost we want to finish this race. We never wanted our boat to break in half. We made some conservative design decisions and we have a good strong boat to complete this course."

"We're still learning about when we're quick and when we're not. Ironically because of our breakaway from the other boats in the first leg we did not spend a lot of time with other boats in close quarters."

ON THE CREW

"We've only got a core crew. There are no substitutes. It's my intention to keep the same crew all the way through with the exception of planned changes at the end of leg two and four to give some people a leg or two off to recharge batteries."

"The three Irish crew have exceeded my expectations. They're on this boat not because they are Irish but because they're world class. I depend on them the whole time."

RUB OF THE GREEN

UPDATE
VOLVO
OCEAN
RACE

2008 - 2009



Boom and bust: Damien Foxall assesses the damage to the broken boom as the boat sails on under jury rig. Photo: Guo Chuan/Volvo Ocean Race

The Irish Chinese entry made it onto the podium in Cape Town, but needs to keep sailing hard to keep it competitive in the months to come.

On the podium in Cape Town, after two shredded spinnakers and a high speed collision, Ian Walker easily shrugged off the age-old superstition that painting a boat green brings bad luck.

There was worse to follow with a broken boom days into the second leg.

What's more, the British leader of Irish hopes in the Volvo Ocean Race (VOR) conceded after the first leg that although the Green Dragon is not as quick as other entries at times, there are still plenty of tactical opportunities for the Green Dragon to stay at the front of the fleet in this nine month race.

Fourth on the water but third highest points scorer in the opening leg, Walker has brought an immediate return to his Chinese and Irish backers, but the Green Dragon's result comes at a time when even the weak-kneed might be forgiven for taking maritime lore to heart.

In the space of little over a month, both Ireland's green painted boats have either been sunk or damaged after striking underwater objects: Asgard II remains the subject of a salvage operation to lift her from the sea bed off Brittany after the sail training brigantine sank in as yet unexplained circumstances there a month ago.

In the south Atlantic, a similar fate was avoided when the Green Dragon hit a still unidentified object at speed, damaging her keel and bringing her to a standstill.



If a broken boom, leaking daggerboard and ripped sails were not enough to contend with Green Dragon was also dealing with a bout of the flu, half of the crew got headaches and sore throats. Still it did not stop them getting to the scoring gate in third position. No mean feat without a boom! Photo: Rick Tomlinson

But Walker is not superstitious – just as well, given that the Green Dragon is now well into leg two. From Cape Town, the fleet crosses the Indian Ocean to Cochin, a distance of over 4,000 miles.

The colour of the hull won't bother the crew on board the Dragon, but boat speed will keep all of them awake at night, particularly as competitors came from behind in leg one and just sailed past them.

Instead of being able to outrun Puma or Ericsson in this leg, Walker may have to rely on a tactical move or another rub of the green. He's coming to terms with boat speed differences that other teams have eeked out over much longer campaigns. Ericsson 4, for example, is effectively a fourth generation boat. By comparison, the Dragon was on the drawing board a year ago. The fact that it made it onto the podium in Cape Town is just cause for celebration. Its speed will improve as the crew learns more about her, says Walker, but the problem is that the rest of the fleet will speed up too.

"We do see [boat speed] differences," he admits. "We're obviously light in the bulb [keel]. As soon as we get into stability sailing mode, such as upwind or reaching, then boats with maximum keel weights do grind away from us. We lose miles each schedule so that is a bit depressing."

It's an unhappy situation because more weight in the bulb equals more power. "In car terms, it's like racing against someone with bigger

horsepower", he says.

This is the first time that the race, first staged in 1973, has departed from its rampaging route through the Southern Ocean to take in three stops in Asia. Singapore and Qingdao, the Olympic sailing venue in China, follow Cochin.

The course takes the eight boats west under the island of Madagascar and up the Indian Ocean to Mauritius, partly to keep them well east of the area off Somalia, where piracy is so prevalent. It could also mean as much of a tactical battle as a speed test, with early stiff conditions followed by tricky light airs. Telefonica Blue's skipper Bouwe Bekking is confident his boat will be especially quick in the light airs.

But there are still many unknowns and more details will come out of this second leg. Green Dragon is a strong boat and a conservative build that may well fare better over the next ten marathon legs than others who may have cut things too fine. Damage sustained by both Telefonica boats and Puma is an example of this.

Now closing in on India, the fleet is heading for a part the world where the repair of high tech boats is not an exact science.

In all of this, the Dragon team has to put its broken boom behind it and look to the other legs. The Dragon will be competitive, Walker maintains, if they continue to sail like they did in leg one and – superstition aside – manage to avoid things that go bump in the night.

VOLVO
OCEAN
RACE

2008 - 2009



SPONSORSHIP
OPPORTUNITIES
AVAILABLE

It's a sign of the times that both Irish inspired teams have sponsorship and VIP opportunities still available. More details from:

Green Dragon's Commercial Director David Hassett
E: davidhassett@greendragonracing.com
or mobile: +353 87 7992812.

Ger O'Rourke's Delta Lloyd team can be contacted on: +353 87 253 4639

Photo: Rick Tomlinson



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TAKING ON WATER



IRISH PERFORMANCES AT THE OLYMPICS SUMMED UP THE SAILING YEAR – MORE LOWS THAN HIGHS. MARKHAM NOLAN LOOKS BACK AT THE YEAR'S PEAKS AND TROUGHS

THAT SINKING FEELING

EVENT: Sinking of Asgard II
LOCATION: Bay of Biscay
DATE: September 11
STATUS: Low

This was, without a doubt, among the lowest lows this year. It was an ominous date to begin with, and when news began to filter back on September 11 that Ireland's only sail training vessel had gone down in 80 metres of water off the French coast, many people felt like they had lost a long-standing friend. The Mayday call went out at 2.20am, and by 9am there was nothing to be seen of her familiar bottle green hull and brigantine rig above the waves. After 27 years of solid service, the Asgard's final journey appeared to be a vertical voyage to the bottom of the sea. Five crew and 20 trainees were safely evacuated and transferred to the nearby island of Belle Ile, while the entire maritime population of Ireland scratched their heads and wondered why she had gone down in the first place. There was no indication of an impact, winds and sea state were moderate at the time, and Asgard captain Colm Newport offered little by way of enlightenment as to what caused the sinking. Investigators have since focused on one of the boat's sea cocks, which may have allowed water into the hull, despite early suggestions that the boat sank too quickly for it to have been a mere valve issue. That no-one was injured was the one saving grace of the incident. It remains to be seen if she can be raised from the sea bed. (See also page 16).

Gone to bed: The Asgard II now lies on the sea floor in the Bay of Biscay. Photo: Bob Bateman



A TO Z

W M NIXON TAKES AN ALPHABETIC VOYAGE THROUGH 2008



A

AODHAN FITZGERALD
of Galway, whose overall win of the BMW Round Ireland Race with Ireland West was as neat as you please. His dedication to the race is in its best traditions – and yet again we see that the Farr-designed Beneteau First 40.7 is one of the all-time classics. They are present in significant numbers on America's Great Lakes, and have their own start in Cowes Week.

B

BEREAVED
That was the feeling of Ireland's maritime community when the news of Asgard II's sinking (left) came centre stage on September 11th. At first, there was relief that the evacuation of the crew had been executed in copy-book style. But then came the acute sense of loss. This much-loved ship carried thousands of devotees since she was commissioned in 1981. Captain Tom MacCarthy spoke for everyone when he talked of a ship with a soul.

C

COMMODORE'S CUP
Hey, we did all right in the Commodore's Cup. Getting Ireland's two teams second and third was quite an achievement, particularly as those astern included the French led by the very determined Gery Trantesaux. Especially let it be remembered that Anthony O'Leary powered through with Antix Eile to be overall winner of the big boat division.



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CHINA BLUE

EVENT: Olympic Games
VENUE: Qingdao, China
DATE: August 9-22
STATUS: High/Low

Ireland's Olympic team were sent to China with tempered, realistic goals this time around, we were told, by an ISA burned once too often by touting medal chances that never materialized.

Having then failed to jump a lowered bar, Ireland's Olympic ambitions could be said to have hit a great wall in Beijing. Before brandishing a critical knife, it's important to note that this event had plenty of things going for it. Access and coverage was second to none - RTÉ covered the sailing live online, which meant that you could skive off work and watch our sailors doing their thing from your desk - all in the name of patriotism. Sky had it covered too, and the wonders of modern technology meant that we were linked to our team like never before. Our sailors were in the headlines, largely thanks to Malahide's beaming Laser Radial sailor

Ciara Peelo, who carried the flag and led the entire squad into the stadium. But Qingdao had a lot of things going against it, too. For the most part, racing was light, fluky and uninspiring. A sea of weed was an evil omen, even if it was in our national colour. First to hit the water was Finn sailor Tim Goodbody, posting a 22nd for starters, then a 13th, results that would bookend his overall tally as his best and worst results for the week. Next up were the 470 duo, Ger Owens and Phil Lawton, who did their best to liven things up with a race win on their first day that had everyone hooting with delight. In just six knots of breeze they eked out an advantage to put sailing on everyone's lips nationwide. Then, after a mediocre day in between, the pair added another win two days later, leading the race from start to finish. Two wins in an Olympic event is a rarity in the 470, and so the pair deservedly became the

sailing story of our Olympics. However, Owens would later admit that having two race wins but still finishing in the same place as he had in Athens was a huge disappointment. Flag-bearer Ciara Peelo struggled in conditions we were led to believe suited her, scoring a seventh in race four, but no higher than 13th for the remainder of the event, finishing 20th. Last, but by no means least, controversial Star picks Peter O'Leary and Stephen Milne opened their account with a sixth in the 16-boat fleet. Early hopes were dashed by a string of bottom-half results, and like the rest of the squad, the Star sailors packed their boat up while the medal race was being sailed. Finishing 13th, they were closest to the ISA's stated realistic goal of one top eight finish, but not close enough. Tune in next time, when it's a mere skip across to Weymouth for the 2012 Olympics.

LEADING LIGHTS

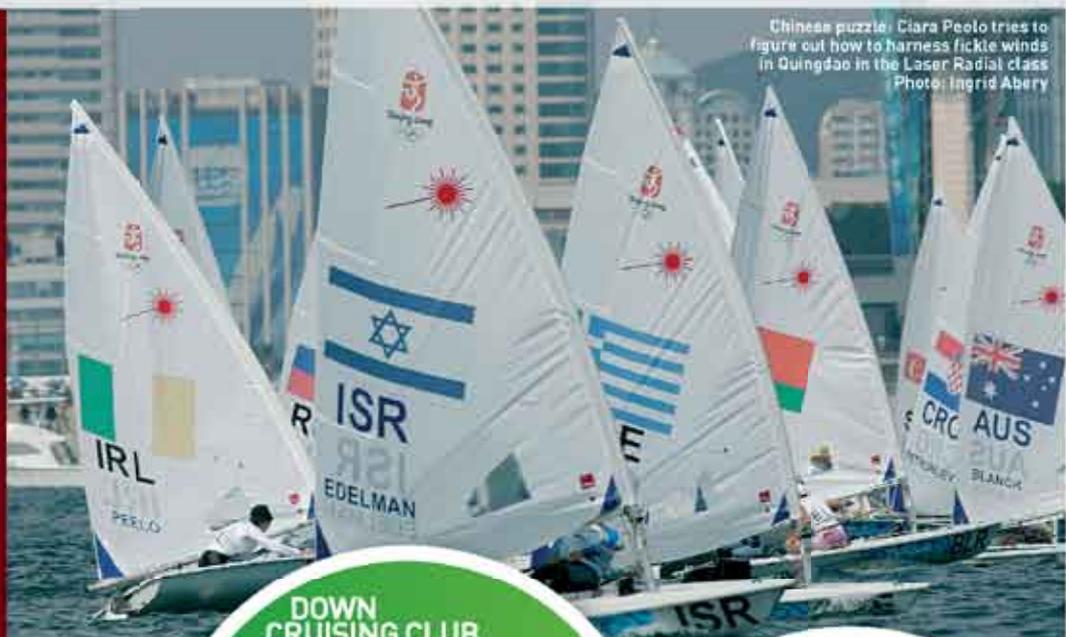
SAILING IS THE ULTIMATE COMBINATION OF INDIVIDUAL SKILL AND TEAM EFFORT. AFLOAT RECOGNISES THE MEN AND WOMEN WHOSE TALENT AND COMMITMENT HAVE LIFTED THEM TO THE TOP OF THE FLEET

SPIRIT OF ADVENTURE JANUARY 08



The first Afloat Sailor of the Month for 2008 was Michael Holland of Dun Laoghaire,

who voyaged successfully with his 72ft ketch, Celtic Spirit of Fastnet, between the Arctic and Antarctic. In essence, this superbly-planned cruise was a private expedition to some decidedly rugged places. Private it may have been, but it later went public, as Celtic Spirit's skipper and crew were awarded the Irish Cruising Club's supreme award, the Faulkner Cup. Dating back to 1931, the Faulkner Cup tells us everything about sailing development in Ireland. First time round, 77 years ago, it rewarded a very modest cruise to Scotland in a 26ft wooden gaff cutter. This year in the National Yacht Club, it celebrated global voyaging in a special high tech 72ft vessel which sailed where other ships have been sunk by ice. We have surely moved on - and then some. (See also page 10)



Chinese puzzle: Ciara Peelo tries to figure out how to harness fickle winds in Qingdao in the Laser Radial class
Photo: Ingrid Abery

DOWN CRUISING CLUB

at Ballydorn in the inner reaches of Strangford Lough were celebrating 40 years in their headquarters in a former Irish Lights lightship during 2008. We can remember being in Strangford Lough forty years ago when they brought their newly-acquired vessel home, and skillfully manoeuvred her into this snug and sheltered berth. Yet even after all that time, it is still something of a surprise and a special pleasure to come upon this haven of hospitality hidden among the green hills. Though Commodore Ronnie Stephenson and his members celebrated the day of days - 40 years to the minute - in a very wet easterly gale, the superb shelter of their location made it all possible.

ENEMIES

We'll, we would incline to use the word 'rival'. But your dyed-in-the-wool competitive sailor becomes ever more blunt as his sport becomes more local. One very distinguished extremely senior sailor of our acquaintance recently found that a change in rating bands had moved him into a new division of the White Sail Class. In some clubs, they call it the 'Gentleman's Class'. Scarcely the appropriate term in this case. Our friend has been winning for more than sixty years in all sorts of boats. And we'd heard he was still doing so in his latest venture. "Yes indeed", he replied, eyes gleaming, chortling with glee. "In 2008, we've made a whole new set of enemies out on the water. It keeps a man young..."

NOT WAVING, DROWNING

EVENT: Sinking Economy

DATE: Year-long

STATUS: Low

"May you live in interesting times" is a well-known Chinese curse, and there have been no more 'interesting' times, financially speaking, than the last year. Ask any marine broker, boat dealer, chandler or industry head how business is doing, and the response you'll get is likely to be muted at best. Like a butterfly beating its wings in China, the effect of dodgy American mortgages has rushed around the world to hit the Irish marine industry a dull thud. Afloat is aware of three marine companies that have already gone to the wall, with plenty of others quietly feeling the pinch. An increase in VAT in the October budget, albeit by just 0.5%, adds to the cost of buying a boat in Ireland, and the rising cost of oil (somewhat reduced as

we went to press, but still high) means that filling tanks with diesel is more expensive than ever. The budget also cut funds to the Irish Sports Council by nearly €5m, prompting fears that sailing will see some of that handed on. The ISA is funded to the tune of 40% by the Sports Council. Despite the shadowy prognosis for the economy, chinks of light shine through. New marinas are planned on the west coast, Noonan Boats in Wicklow is set to expand its property by 300%, and recession-proof foets (like the SB3) are booming. Still, until the Government finds a way to levy a fee on the wind and tide, purely being on the water remains a fiscal untouchable, even if the means to enjoy it become a little less manageable for most of us.



Atlantic depression: The US-inspired financial crisis has crossed the ocean to hit the marine industry here but the Beneteau trawler yacht still shone through in 2008
Photo: David O'Brien

THE BOY SHOWS PROMISE APRIL 08



Sailor of the Month for April was Nicholas O'Leary of Cork, captain

of the Cork Institute of Technology crew which convincingly won the Intervarsities title racing the Irish Sailing Association's SailFleet J/80s on Lough Derg early in April. Conditions were rough, but O'Leary showed true leadership in inspiring his crew to heroic efforts after a man overboard incident in the first race. The Corkmen battled their way back to second place in that opening joust, and then won each race thereafter. CIT thus qualified to represent Ireland at the Student Yachting Worlds in France in October, and in the meantime O'Leary kept in form by winning the Irish Match Racing title in Dun Laoghaire in September, and the Helmsman's Championship of Ireland in Howth at the beginning of October.



Peter Crowley (pictured above, right, with Tommy Dwyer) always raises the race management bar, but his new standard for committee boats puts the starter's hut to shame. ISA President and First Lady Marie took command of Beneteau Swift Trawler 42 Spare Time in April (left, main picture). They may not be t'rawling from her, but he hasn't ruled out using the rod'n'anger". They bought it for a number of reasons; "being able to represent the ISA by arriving by water was a small part of it. I'd much rather sit in a boat doing 20 knots than park on the M50! Time is not as free as it used to be."

As committee boat for October's ISAF Nations Cup event in Kinsale, she also featured at the Topper Worlds in Fenit and the Fastnet International Schools Regatta. "We can get down to the Scillies in eight hours. We fully intend taking it down to France and possibly Spain."

Her maiden voyage to Cardiff was to watch Munster destroy Toulouse in May. "The trip back from that was in a full Northerly gale, we were the only boat to cross the Irish Sea that day. It might not be cheaper than flying but it's certainly more fun!"

HARRY CUDMORE & GORDON MAGUIRE

Ireland has produced many talented sailors over the past thirty years or so, but it could be argued that the two who have that unmistakable star quality are Harry Cudmore and Gordon Maguire. However, as Maguire is based in Australia and Cudmore on the Solent, their paths rarely cross. But in 2008 Maguire was much in evidence in Europe as helm aboard Mike Slade's super-maxi Leopard. He was on the big beast when she established the new course record for the BMW Round Ireland race in June. And then just a week later he re-appeared on board for the annual Round the Island Race round the Isle of Wight, intent on helping Slade to another record. But on the starting line in decidedly brisk conditions, Leopard got hooked up with another boat where the man calling the shots was Harry Cudmore. They got themselves disentangled, and Leopard was able to go on about her business to such good effect that a new record was in the offing. But the startline collision could have invalidated it, if the inevitable protest meeting went the wrong way. Leopard's enormous crew adjourned for an early lunch, leaving Maguire to speak in the protest against Harry Cudmore, amidst zillions of jokes about silver-tongued Irishmen. Maguire was the brighter tongue, and he won the protest. The Leopard lunch went into overdrive.

JUMP SHIP

What with a halyard problem and a computer failure for the canting keel making it touch and go simply being in time for the start, Green Dragon made it even more memorable at Alicante by having a man jump ship as they settled into the race. But it was all planned. Tom Roche of Dublin, one of the subscribers to the Shamrock Challenge combine which came together to keep the Green Dragon show on the road, was game to have a go. He donned a drysuit, sailed in the crew through the first few miles, and then jumped over the stern to be safely picked up by shore manager Johnny Smullen in a RIB.

INCLEMENT WEATHER

One's heart went out to the city fathers of Alicante in the buildup to the start of the Volvo Ocean Race. Easterly gales and torrential rain were no-one's notion of the Mediterranean in early October. But a French journalist gave them a memorable phrase which made inclement weather almost poetic. "Here in Alicante" he filed, "the wind is blowing the dogs off their chains". It sounds even better in French.

CONQUERING ALL
MAY 08



Dave Dwyer of Cork became Sailor of the Month for May after a string of successes in both the top offshore

class, and the International Etchells 22. In mid-May, he was crowned Irish Champion in Class 0 in the Nationals at Howth. Then at the end of the month he battled French champion Gery Trentesaux in the Scottish Series. But although the French skipper's impressive new First 45 Lady Courier took the title, Dwyer's Mills 40, Mariners Cove, was recovering her early season form, and rounded out the Scottish expedition with two straight wins on the final day. The style of the Dwyer achievement is underlined by his parallel success in a very different kind of boat, the Etchells 22. He'd been right in the frame while racing in the early season in Florida, and then when he transferred to the European Etchells racing in the Solent, he scored a clear win. Then in July he returned to home waters to contest ACC Bank Cork Week in MarinersCove.ie with his club crew, and won overall in Class 1.

ON EDGE ROUND IRELAND

EVENT: Round Ireland

DATE: June 22 - 27

LOCATION: Irish waters

STATUS: High

The anticipation ahead of the Round Ireland was huge. The record-smashing maxi Leopard was due in to take a large chunk off Colm Barrington's existing monohull record, two Volvo 70s were expected (although they hadn't RSVP'd), and a handful of boats in the 50-70ft bracket were in the line-up. A committed gaggle of double-handers in the smaller boats kept things interesting for those who don't bother watching the boats over 50 feet long. After a short delay, wherein the maxis apparently used their clout to decide against a gale-force beat to Tuskar, racing got under way on June 22. However, it was without two of the most anticipated entrants. Alegre, a Mark Mills design to be helmed by Torben Grael, had to pull out as the delay meant its crew were out of time. And Ger O'Rourke, who had just taken delivery of what is now

the Delta Lloyd V070, punctured his hull getting off the marina. Even without them, the race unfolded into a nail-biter. Spectators tracked the action online minute-by-minute via Wicklow SC's new race tracker, and after dealing with 60 knots round the top, the fleet tacked its way down the Irish Sea, with Aodhan Fitzgerald's Ireland West taking the crown. It was the double-handers that caught many people's imagination, though, and the double-handed win went to Mumbo.ie. For Paddy Cronin and John Chambers, victory in their first double-handed offshore was a major bonus. Add to that the fact that it was Chambers' first offshore, and you can see why they were delighted to beat the likes of Slingshot (Michael Boyd and Niall Dowling), who had dominated RORC's double-handed division all year.



Ready for Ireland: Competitors line up on the quay ahead of the Round Ireland race. Photo: Bob Bateman

KNOCKNAGOW

The mighty Knocknagow, the Shannon-based barge which is so large she's more like a ship.

Owner-skipper is our own Brian J Goggin, and we first met him aboard her in Vicarstown on the Grand Canal in 2004, when he was bringing her through to the Shannon from the Barrow. In 2008 we glimpsed her heading across a silvery sea on a sunlit Lough Derg. With us was a senior sailor who can remember the Knocknagow when she plied her trade on the Suir between Waterford and Carrick-on-Suir. He remembers another kingsize vessel, the Rose McCrone, which traded along the Barrow between Waterford and New Ross. Does anyone know what happened to her?

LEAVE THE NAME ALONE

As in Helmsman's Championship of Ireland. Everybody knows what you mean when you talk about the Helmsman's Championship. It's time-hallowed, and then some, going back to 1964, with the historic silver salver an inscribed compact history of Irish sailing. While we can appreciate why the powers-that-be might want to re-name it the All-Ireland, we're sorry, but that is forever associated with Croke Park. That said, maybe we could Reed Croker and run the Helmsman's Championship as a stadium event. Either way, Nicholas 'Nin' O'Leary is the Helmsman's Champion 2008 and we all know what that means - it has the unique recognition factor that marketing men die for.

Lighting the bulb: Sophie added plenty to the Spice Race, but even she couldn't generate enough energy to get it started.

DAN MEYERS

The man who brought the all-conquering Numbers to Cork Week. This utterly gorgeous 66ft J/boat design had already swept all before her at Key West, and was rumoured to be a two-thirds version of the boat the Alinghi crew would like to see used in the America's Cup (you do remember the America's Cup?) Anyway, Brad Butterworth and several of the Alinghi crew were on board, and Numbers simply bowled everyone over. As for, taking after the crew, a round of beers for them after racing set the owner back formidable numbers, too.

NORTHSIDE DRAGON

Trendy restaurateur and TV business pundit Jay Bourke goes where no others would dare. After all, one of his newer ventures in Dublin has the unlikely name of Shebeen Chic. It's a resounding success, retro-celtic and just the job for recessionary times. And the name of his Etchells 22 also tells it like it is. The Etchells have been known as the Northside Dragons for some time now. But it takes Jay Bourke to use it.

OLIN STEPHENS

The life of a creative artist, and timed with style. The great yacht designer Olin Stephens died in September 2008, having celebrated his hundredth birthday to worldwide acclaim back in April. He was such a gentleman in every way, and his greatest designs all had that unmistakable elegant trademark style which identified his work. The best Stephens designs were absolute masterpieces. Elegant, seaworthy, very fast, and utterly American.

THE WEST'S AWAKE

JUNE 08



Aodhan Fitzgerald of Galway became June's Sailor of the Month with his stylish overall win in the 3MW Round Ireland Race, skipping the well-proven First 40.7 Ireland West. Fitzgerald is no stranger to round Ireland success on this boat, a Bruce Farr creation which is one of the all-time great designs for offshore racing – the Sydney-Hobart overall victory is another First 40.7 achievement. There are now hundreds of First 40.7s afloat and racing worldwide. Yet not all of them notch up classic event wins. But Ireland West certainly does the business. Back in 2004, Fitzgerald raced the same boat on the round Ireland in the two-handed division, and won. He sailed her fully-crewed as Ireland West in 2006, but that was one of the years when Eric Lisson's Cavatina took the title. However, for 2008, the Galway men were back for more. Larry Hynes put the Ireland West package together, and Fitzgerald assembled a crew of all the talents drawn almost entirely from the Atlantic seaboard, though they did include helming ace Neil Spain as the token Dub. Throughout a ferociously demanding marathon, Ireland West was always in the top ten. And they sailed a tactically perfect race over the last hundred miles, which saw everything click into place. It gave them a sweet overall win by a clear hour and fifteen minutes, a decisive victory when it's remembered the other top ten boats were generally placed within minutes of each other.

SPICING IT UP

EVENT: The Spice Race
DATE: November 2009
LOCATION: Solent UK to Granada
STATUS: Low

What do you do when you want to promote a yacht race? Take pictures of boats? Hand out flyers? Organisers of the Spice Race, a new ocean race from Cowes to Grenada in the West Indies, took it all to a new level when they opted for a 'spoof' glamour photo shoot in the Hamble Boat Services yard. Playboy model Sophie Reade arrived in the 'Spice Machine', an Audi R8 with 4321 blazing down the side; which just happens to be the number of miles from the Solent to Grenada. She was met by 'Concise' Skipper Ned, who opened the door. Everybody downed tools and out came the camera phones. The yard more or less came to a standstill as Sophie showed a real interest in the yacht's appendages.

Everything got a bit over heated in the midday sun so Ned decided to cool things down a bit with his hosepipe. Unfortunately for all involved, the Spice Race was postponed until November 2009, with organisers citing insufficient entries "to support the associated social, educational and charity programmes we had wanted" in the UK and Grenada. There are no shortage of entries for Dun Laoghaire regatta next July, if Sophie is interested...

ANTIX AND ORGANISATION

JULY 08



Anthony O'Leary of Cork was Sailor of the Month for July with a remarkable performance which included campaigning the top boat in class in the Commodore's Cup, and then returning home to Crosshaven to mastermind attractive innovations on the water in Cork Week in his voluntary role as Race Director. The Commodore's Cup achievement with the new Ker 39 Antix Eile was star stuff. The boat – new-built in Croatia and chartered from Colm Barrington – had some outstanding early season performances, but was off the pace at the Irish nationals in May. Modifications were made – one story talked of moving the keel all of eight inches. However, time was short for testing, and then the main event at the beginning of July served up some ferociously demanding racing conditions. But O'Leary was the man for the job, on top form. The tougher the going, the better they liked it, and on the final windy double-scoring day, they hauled the Ireland White team up nine points to second overall, and convincingly clinched the Class 1 individual win. Then came Cork Week. Some time last winter, the O'Leary Kitchen Committee in Crosshaven came up with the notion of an innovative new slalom course. For many boats, anything is more interesting than the windward-leeward format. But slalom also involves more work on the water for the mark-laying boats. The O'Leary family – including Olympic sailor Peter taking a break from China – did the business, and Cork Week had added flavour.

OLYMPIAN FEATS

AUGUST 08



Global circumnavigators Pat and Olivia Murphy were co-winners of the August Sailor of the Month award, sharing the prize in a busy four-week period with Olympic race winners Gerald Owens and Philip Lawton. Taking nine years to fulfil the dream of sailing your own boat around the world may seem as far as possible from the hotshot cut-and-thrust of victory in two races in the Olympic cauldron, but the achievement of the Murphy husband-and-wife team is in its way as outstanding as any Olympic success. The welcome home for Pat and Olivia's 41ft Aldebaran said it all. Even the weather smiled, and Howth YC Commodore Gerry O'Neill set the tone in hailing the achievement of the first Howth boat to sail round the world. Gerald Owens and Philip Lawton of Dun Laoghaire have made a huge commitment to the Olympic ideal, and their campaign in the 470 class was both long term and thorough. In the difficult sailing conditions at Qingdao – strong tides, poppy sea conditions, and flukey winds – they showed well, and Irish prospects were good when the Owens-Lawton crew recorded two race wins, one of them very clear cut. But in one of the biggest classes in the Olympics – 29 boats – the pace was ferocious, and the Dun Laoghaire crew slipped down the rankings. In the end, they fetched up 16th overall. But for now, we cherish the memory of those two beautiful wins. And the achievement of Pat and Olivia Murphy is for all time, and all sailors.

ANOTHER CORKER

EVENT: ACC Bank Cork Week

DATE: July 12-18

STATUS: High

Cork Week was one of two events that made hay while the sun shone, dodging clouds to leave unique memories of warm, enjoyable sailing in summer 2008. It was, to all intents and purposes, blissful stuff, and despite a downturn in entries, 'Craic Week' lived up to its name on and off the water. Newly introduced slalom courses, in which fleets gybed reach-to-reach downwind, proved popular and exciting, if tiring on the arms, and a new Corinthian trophy reaffirmed Cork Week's abhorrence of jockey-ridden professionalism, with a few notable exceptions. A flash of glamour was added by the appearance of Ireland's Green Dragon Volvo Ocean Race boat on the course. On site, Cork putted out all the stops for entertainment, and despite grumbings about entry fees and the price of a pint, things ran smoothly. Going into the final day it was all to play for in almost all classes on the water, keeping things interesting until the final gun. At the top end of the price list, six TP52s fleshed out a 15-boat Super Zero class, where the professionals were free to do battle, no matter what the cost to the skippers. It was the 86-footer Numbers that clinched the pot in the Super Zeros, but not the overall prize. Cork Week's overall winner was a South African Laser SB3 – one of 41 at the event – sailed by father-and-son team David and Roger Hudson. Hudson would go on to do battle at the top end of the SB3 Worlds fleet in Dun Laoghaire two months later.



PERFECTION

as in the ultimate classics. And we had visions of them during 2008, as the starry File designs headed north and south past Ireland, bound to and from the File 150th Regatta in the Clyde in June. Two of the most notable were the 70 footers Lady Anne and Hallowe'en – the former an inshore racing gaff-rigged 15 metre; the latter the Bermudan rigged sea-going 15 metre which set a long-standing Fastnet course record in 1926. Hallowe'en has the most beautiful sheer line imaginable, but purists would argue that her rig is not according to the File original, which had a shorter mast and a longer boom. However, Hallowe'en has had several rigs in her time, and dare we say it – she looked best at all under a Bermudan yawl rig fitted in America in 1954 by Rod Stephens, presumably with design input from his brother Olin, with whom he always worked closely.

QINGDAO

the Olympic sailing city. Anyone unaccustomed to the Chinese ability to get things done and create massive public works will have found Qingdao an eye-opener. Even the advent of smothering algae in the sailing area was dealt with, and the enthusiasm of the people was such they'd have eaten it if need be. But then when times were hard it was said that in China they'd cook and eat anything which flew except a jumbo jet, anything with four legs except a table, and anything which swam except a torpedo. After all, these are the people who built the Great Wall of China.

RECESSION

Signs of it in sailing include a greater cherishing of local classes which provide guaranteed sport in specific locations with manageable expense. In Dun Laoghaire to see Green Dragon before she headed for Alicante, we were particularly impressed by the loving care lavished on the Glen class which lie to their moorings off the Royal St George YC. Marmalade is also in good spirits, and the Howth Seventeens are seeing a new surge of life. Other signs generally are the revival of the traditional Guinness pint, poetry is making a comeback, donkey ownership is high fashion, and bicycle clips are de rigueur. On the downside, smoking is seen as slightly more excusable.

The bigger they come: George David's Relchet Pugh 90, Rambler, Edward Cobl during ACC Cork Week, but could only manage tenth in the Super Zero class. Photo: Bob Bateman

FAMILY VALUES
SEPTEMBER 08

The Dickson family of Lough Ree became September's Sailors of the Month after an outstanding season in which they made a significant input into the sport, both as volunteers and as enthusiastic participants. In 2007, David Dickson was a notably successful Commodore of the historic Lough Ree Yacht Club in Athlone (it dates back to 1770) and set it well on track to be the current 'Club of the Year'. During 2008 he returned to active racing in his classic Shannon One Design, and won overall at both Lough Ree and Lough Derg Weeks, making him the undisputed Shannon One Design champion. Come September, and the Ree boats raided south to Lough Derg once again for the Waterways Ireland Classic Boat Regatta, and the Dickson's 1961-vintage boat (built by Walter Levinge of Athlone) was overall winner, sailed this time by David's son Cillian, aged 15. Cillian is also an ace in the RS Feva class, so the Dickson family are multi-talented. They're inspiring administrators, classic boat specialists, racing aces, and high tech sailors too - very worthy Sailors of the Month for September.

IT'S A FAMILY AFFAIR

EVENT: Various
DATE: Various
STATUS: High

2008 was the year that family values were brought back to the centre of Irish sailing. Leading the way was one of Ireland's best-known sailing surnames: O'Leary. Unless you do your sailing under a large and heavy rock, it's been very hard to miss Anthony O'Leary & Sons, which sounds like a firm of solicitors but is a Crosshaven clan whose arrival on the racecourse often heralds a battle for second place. Anthony O'Leary is former admiral of the Royal Cork, and led Ireland White into Commodore's Cup battle on board Antix Eile. Back in their home waters, almost the whole clan was competing during Cork Week, with youngster Robert, a hitherto unknown and apparently reluctant force in sailing, taking the helm of a 1720

and immediately nipping at his older brothers' heels. Peter, the eldest of the three brothers, had been hitting headlines for months at this stage, his Olympic nomination in the Star class confirmed after a long and controversial nomination process. Nicholas, or 'Nin', collected a few customary gongs during the summer, among them the ISA match racing title. Things came to a head in Howth in September, when the O'Learys used the podium at the All-Ireland Championships as the venue for a family reunion. Nin took the senior title at his first attempt, followed by Anthony in second, with Robert crewing, pushing Olympian brother Peter into third overall for an O'Leary family one-two-three.

SLALOM COURSES
Failure is an orphan, but success has many fathers. The introduction of slalom courses at ACC Bank Cork Week was adjudged a success. It certainly sharpened up spinnaker work on some boats. But inevitably the curious wondered where the idea came from. Doesn't the word come from ski-ing, and isn't it used in kayak racing too? But the move to big boat racing was another step altogether. The idea was on the agenda in Crosshaven in February 2006, but the word is that a brainstorming session by Donal McClement and Dave Meagher in the Carrigaline Court Hotel bar in September 2007 saw the first airing, with Dave doodling his ideas on the back of a bar receipt.

THE 1720
They haven't gone away, you know. It was facile to write off this 1994 class, even as fashion swung in behind things like the 5B3. Perhaps the labour-intensive and relatively straightforward 1720 is just the boat for these recessionary times. Certainly in West Cork they have thriving fleets, with the Nationals at Baltimore a great event, and across in Holyhead they're all the rage. But the most interesting debut of 2008 was the cruiser-racer version of the 1720, created by the legendary Jo Richards of the Isle of Wight, who masterminded the 48-footer which became Irish Independent and was overall winner of the Fastnet Race back in 1987. He builds boats for Stephen Foin, all called Full Pelt, and the 2008 Full Pelt was a 1726 with an added cabin to Jo's design which qualified her to race IRC in Cowes Week. She placed third overall in class. And who knows, maybe in 30 years time someone will buy up this cruiserified 1720 and turn her back into a proper 1720, just like they do today with old 6 metres.



Shining through: Peter O'Leary and Stephen Milne got the nod in the class for China, but only after a long battle, on and off the water. Peter is pictured here sailing his Star in Cork harbour with brother Robert. Photo: Bob Saleman

Power generation: Anthony O'Leary (left) finished behind son Nicholas (right) at the All-Ireland championships but, with son Robert crewing, managed to come home ahead of Olympian son Peter. Photo: Bob Bateman



STARS LOSE THEIR SPARKLE

EVENT: Star Selection
DATE: Drawn out
LOCATION: Various
STATUS: Low

It could be said that Irish sailing dodged a bullet this year, in that the national media didn't pick up on the squabble over the Star class nomination for the Beijing Olympics. With sailing, rightly or wrongly, perceived as the wealthy spoiled brat of sports, watching two well-heeled yachties arguing over an Olympic nomination could have been easy pickings. Luckily, that never happened, but the torrid affair split loyalties in Ireland's close-knit sailing community. Dublin sailors Max Treacy and Anthony Shanks had, without question, qualified the country. They had done the donkey work, but the ISA wanted to send Peter O'Leary and Stephen Milne, whose star was in the ascendant. They had impressed at the Star Worlds in Miami and were being touted as wildcard medal hopes by many. The appeal went to an ISA tribunal, held behind closed doors, with the outcome that O'Leary and Milne got the nod. Their failure to deliver at the games could be chalked down to inexperience of the event, and O'Leary has since announced he will team up with good friend and Olympic Finn sailor Tim Goodbody for an assault on the next games in Weymouth. But is Treacy done yet? Only time will tell. Next time around, everyone's hoping it will be a nice, clear-cut decision with no room for appeals.

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PURE THRILLS
OCTOBER 08



John Kenny of Ringsend is Sailor of the Month for October, having set a new Irish speed record on a windsurfer in the big winds weekend of October 25th and 26th at Dungarvan in County Waterford. Kenny, a 35-year-old steelworker, happily describes himself as a speed freak. He has done his thing on motorbikes and mountainbikes, but his thrill in going fast now finds its purest expression on the water. He found ideal conditions when winds were so strong racing was cancelled at other venues. Last January, he achieved a personal best of more than 40 knots (that's 73 kph) on the British speed sailing site in Essex. But naturally his ambition is to push to the limits in Irish waters, and the smooth but breezy waters in Dungarvan Estuary have been doing the business. His new Irish record is 38.379 knots, but as the Essex speed showed, there's more to come. And the focus returned to Dungarvan at the end of November, with the World Production Windsurfer Record Championship is being staged there. The international entry list quickly topped the 50 mark, with numbers being capped at 80, and the word was that everybody who's anybody in windsurfer speed would be there.

ULTIMATE SAILING MACHINE?

When you think that, 70 years ago, people were saying that we'd never see the likes of the giant J Class boats again, and realise that nowadays there are many craft much larger, then clearly all things are possible. It's just a question of pushing the limits. Certainly the 90ft multihulls which are emerging for the preliminary sparring of the America's Cup represent an impressive nod of approval for something which would have been seen as the outer limits even a few years ago. But inevitably there'll be some awful bangs. For as the pioneers put it, if things don't break spectacularly new and again, then we're building them too heavy in the first place.

WESTERN MEN

There's something about Ireland's Atlantic seaboard which makes the men of the west a people apart. When you think of it, Green Dragon was in Galway during Race Week in July, and just around the corner, Ger O'Rourke's Volvo 70, still called Chieftain but game for anything, was in Limerick. And now they're both in the Volvo Race, 25% of the total fleet. Let's hear it for the West.

VICTORY

It was such a straightforward piece of history in the making. The first ever winner of the first ever Laser 500 World Championship. And it all happened in Dublin Bay in September, with a fleet of 136 boats. It's difficult to imagine Geoff Carveth as an Oldie, but no matter what happens from here on, he has this unique and unrepeatable claim to fame.

ON TOPPER THE WORLD

EVENT: Gul Topper Worlds
DATE: July 19 - 25
VENUE: Tralee Bay SC
STATUS: High

The picturesque setting of Fenit quietly tempted a horde of Toppers south this summer, with 181 helms arriving in Kerry for a week of high-intensity racing. Not traditionally a high-profile class in Ireland, the Topper has gained popularity of late, and although the results sheet was dominated by British visitors, Philip Doran of Courtown made a welcome incursion into the top five, finishing fourth overall. On the way, Doran won race six, and posted 11 top 10 results out of his 12 races. There was a healthy Irish contingent, many of whom stepped out of Laser 4.7s for the event. Ali Dix from Howth finished 38th, which saw her fifth female competitor overall, and Ireland's youngest competitor, Kinsale's Daire Courmane, earned a notable mention for keeping 60 boats behind him overall and placing fourth in the last race of the silver fleet. Coach Thomas Chaix reckons that based on the squad's performance at Fenit, it won't be long before IRL sail numbers populate the top of the fleet.



Britannia Rules: The visitors dominated at the Topper Worlds in Tralee Bay

XANADU

If you happen to be in the pleasant South Cork anchorage of Courtmacsherry, it's possible there'll be a strikingly handsome clipper-rigged ketch lying to her mooring. With raked white masts and dark blue hull, she is distinctive. As she should be, for this is Xanadu, the 48ft steel ketch which has become Ireland's Voluntary Survey Ship. She is sailed by Norman Kean and Geraldine Hennigan who do virtually all of the on-water survey work on Irish harbours and anchorages for the Irish Cruising Club sailing directions, while Kevin Dwyer organizes the aerial photography. Designed by German Freres Senn and built in Buenos Aires, Xanadu's history is complex, but her varied life seems to have been a preparation for her present generous function.

YELLOW PINE

When many of Ireland's oldest local classes were being built a long time ago, yellow pine was specified by the designers for the planking as being a durable long-grained timber which was widely available. In fact yellow pine was so popular that it became very difficult to obtain, and less desirable woods had to be used. But for anyone who wants to build – say – 100-year-old design to the original specification, we hear that yellow pine is available in 30ft planks in Austria. It seems that Austrian bees insist on living in hives made from yellow pine, so the Austrian bee-keepers association has sourced a supply. Quite why they have 30ft planks isn't clear, but it's good news – the boat-building ideal is to avoid butt joints if at all possible.

ZEPHYRA

The "missing" Dublin Bay 24. In the Afloat Annual a year ago, we published a photo of Zephyra in stately seclusion at her castle in Mayo, a long way indeed from the rest of this historic class which was being assembled for restoration in France.

The story of how Zephyra came to be in Connacht was simply too complicated to explain, and it seemed impossible to extract her from exile. Yet in July, all changed. She was spirited away, and for the first time in 31 years is with her sisters again. And the word is that, like some sacred relic, the last true piece of the eighth DB 24, the Vandra, is now on the way too, though as she will be a new-build a future Vandra is still unclear. But after a five year journey, all the Dublin Bay 24s will be together again for the first time ever, though the idea for the class initially emerged in 1934.

LASER BEAMS

EVENT: Rise of the SB3
VENUE: Everywhere
DATE: All summer long
STATUS: High

There are plenty of reasons not to get carried away with the rocket-like rise of the Laser SB3 fleet. The build quality, at the start, was a bit suspect, and anti-monopolists will wait that it strengthens the sailing monolith that is Laser inc (two boats in the Olympics and counting...) They'll be joined by the cynics who say it's just a fad. Give it five years and they'll be adorning roundabouts. For now, though, and for the foreseeable future, the rise of the SB3 is undoubtedly a good thing, (unless you're in one of the classes that it has eroded away to nothing). Its timing has been impeccable.

The ascent of the reasonably-priced three/four man boat coincides with an economy in freefall, and a vacuum in the small keelboat club-racer market. It can be trailed behind an average-sized saloon car – a boon in times of horrific petrol prices, and oh, did we mention the sailing? Fun, performance (if you haven't plained on an SB3 yet, you wouldn't understand) and trademark simplicity make it a joy to race. More than 500 believers crammed onto two courses on Dublin Bay this September for the first ever World Championships – inaugurated by a healthy fleet of 136 boats. For all intents and purposes, this was a flawless event, with tight racing from top to bottom, glorious weather and a worthy winner who fended off Olympians and local heroes to win in the last race. The event was backed up by a summer of regionals attended by 35 boats and more, and an 80-boat nationals. Enthusiasm stretches down to the grassroots, with club forecourts heaving under the weight of the boats. Like or loathe, they're here to stay. For a while, anyway.

THE NOVEMBER AND DECEMBER SAILORS OF THE MONTH WILL BE ANNOUNCED ON WWW.AFLOAT.IE

In 2008, for the first time in the 12 year history of the competition, Afloat magazine is asking the public who should be crowned Ireland's sailor of the year.

The overall national award will be presented to the person who, in the judge's opinion, achieved the most notable results in, or made the most significant contribution to, watersports during 2008.

Now you can log on to Afloat.ie and help select the shortlist from the last 12 months' top performers. The boating public gets to nominate their top three through the online poll, Afloat.ie gets a vote too and the Sailor of the Year judges decide the final winner.

Only one vote per registered Afloat.ie user. The poll opens at midnight, December 31st.

Cast your vote by midnight February 18, 2009. The award will be made online and over the national airwaves as part of a special RTE 1 Seascapes programme on Monday, February 19th at 10.30pm. The awards are administered and judged by Afloat magazine, the Irish Independent and the Irish Sailing Association. The judges decision is final and no correspondence will be entered into.



Winning number: The SB3 has dominated like no other this year, and attracted 136 boats to the first world championships, held on Dublin Bay. Photo: Richard Langdon

& PATAGONIA & CAPE HORN

SAILING WAY OFF THE BEATEN TRACK

DIGBY FOX TOOK TIME OUT FROM TV PRODUCING TO EXPLORE THE REMOTE, TOLKIENESQUE COASTLINE OF PATAGONIA, AND TO ACTUALLY LAND ON CAPE HORN. WELL, HE NEEDED TO GET AWAY FOR A BIT....

One of the reasons I had a go at sailing a single-handed beach cat around Ireland in 2002 is the stark beauty of the unspoilt coastline. The Irish coast is magnificent, as of course you know.

A memory I will always treasure from that trip is a chat with two fishermen in Kilbaha, the tiny hamlet tucked under the tip of County Clare. These hardened salts were ripping heads off monkfish and preparing pots on their battered boat, against the harbour wall, waiting for the tide.

They'd seen our flimsy looking Kevlar machines, discovered with horror that we were sailing off the coast on them, and invited us over for a cup of tea in the most stained, cracked, unwashed and decrepit mugs I'd ever seen. I think they just wanted to see what kind of freaks we were, all ponced up in Musto dry suits and the like.

"You'd never catch me in one of those," said one. "It's a wild place out here." True enough. But sometimes wild is what it takes. Sometimes life can grind you under its foot so hard that you can barely breathe. In 2002 I was mourning the loss of my son Harry, and bashing around Ireland's beautiful coastline reminded me what was sparking and wonderful in the world. Even that tea was a tonic.

Last year I had another reason to escape, a happier one though. I'd spent three years working on the America's Cup circuit. I'd had the magic job of sailing on all the AC boats during the Acts as one of two onboard cameramen, an awesome experience. These machines may not be the quickest or biggest, but they're loaded up like nuclear missiles. The crews are intense, and sailors like Brad Butterworth and Grant Dalton are impressive individuals.

For the Cup itself, which was an amazing clash between these characters, they had to replace me with radio controlled remote cameras (a dismal substitute, but that's another story). The TV execs made me a Live TV Gallery Producer, which is as much fun as you can have sailing without stepping on a boat – loads of knobs and buttons and TV screens and chattering headphones and being asked to move Larry Ellison's private cruise ship because it's blocking out the entire TV frequency, etc., etc...

After four months of the America's Cup circus, I looked for another escape. An offer came up which would take me to somewhere so far off the beaten track I had to look it up on a map – Patagonia.

This southern tip of South America has long been a getaway. Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid spent time on the run there and rumour has it that the Nazis snuck out submarines that way.

My escape started in Puerto Montt a market town on the Pacific side, about 1,000 miles north of Cape Horn. I was invited by one of the 2006 Clipper Round the World skippers, David Pryce, who I'd filmed across the Southern Ocean.

Dave, with his partner Hannah McKeand, had just polished up a 20m aluminium Radford designed schooner Blizzard, to take charters down to Antarctica. Dave was an outstanding skipper during the Clipper Race – relaxed, chatty, time for everyone, and winning by a country mile. The invite was a delightful excursion for me, and I could justify the trip to my dear wife Paula by filming some background material for a documentary on Hannah, the fastest solo skier to the South Pole, and aiming to become the first woman to ski solo to the North Pole.

Hannah will be making her second attempt in 2009 – all alone, with no support or resupplies. She may make it, but the odds are against her: -60° temperatures, tall ice ridges, open water that she has to swim across, plus polar bears. I apologise for using a TV technique, but we'll hear more about Hannah a little later!

Dave and Hannah are both adventurers, but this wasn't an extreme trip. The remaining guests, Tony Laurent and Jamie Weeden, were both Australians along for an enjoyable trip, and Blizzard was perfectly comfortable with a warm diesel heater making the saloon a cosy place to eat, relax and socialise.



Skipper Dave Pryce flicks through the Patagonia Guide, one of the best of its kind



The ice-breaking bow of the aluminium Blizzard, a 70ft Australian schooner with lifting keel designed for adventure

Coletta – Wow! The BBC recently filmed a part of their Serious Ocean series here, where youngsters explored ice caves and slept in snow holes





Nearly all anchorages here need two stern lines led ashore. Blizzard used two big drums for this

DELIGHTS OF CHILE

Puerto Montt would be the last mobile phone reception for ages, so I filled the answer machine at home, trying to persuade Paula that this really was to do with work and not an excuse to disappear off her radar for a month (she was not entirely convinced...)

But God it was good to set sail! The light was clear and bright, a snow capped volcano sparkled behind us, I had an adventure before me, and, another great reason to love sailing, some interesting people to get to know.

At nightfall, we anchored off Pumalin Park, an extraordinary project set up in 1991 by US millionaire Doug Tompkins, founder of the North Face clothing range, who bought huge tracts of virgin temperate rainforest 75 miles south of Puerto Montt.

Tompkins did this in secret to stop deforestation by loggers, and by 2001 he'd snapped up 320,000 hectares of land, making Parque Pumalin the world's largest privately owned conservation area, which he's given to the Chilean people.

As we chatted about this in the saloon over our first bottle of Chilean red, it was a chance to get to know each other a bit better and to talk about this extraordinary country. Chile is probably the most politically stable country

in South America, the least corrupt, comparatively well off and modernised, safe for tourists, with over 6,400 kilometres of coastline.

After Ferdinand Magellan discovered the southern passage, the Strait named after him, between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans in 1520, the Spanish started to obliterate the native Indians from the 1540s, founding the capital, Santiago, in 1541 and cultivating the valleys.

The rest, as they say, is in Wikipedia.

My favourite fact about Chile, though, is related to wine. Stay with me on this one! The Carménère grape variety is thought to be one of the original six noble grapes of Bordeaux, but it was wiped out in Europe by the Phylloxera plague in 1867, and never replanted. Fortunately, it was 'rediscovered' in Chile, unaffected by the disease, and they now produce Carménère single variety wine in Chile's Central Valley.

Perhaps you sophisticated Afloat readers know all about Carménère – likely your cellars are groaning with the stuff – but I'd never heard of it. Such a silky wine was a great discovery and if you're not acquainted, I advise you sample it at your earliest convenience. We did.

MOVING SOUTH

Our second night was spent in a stunning anchorage called Puerto Juan Yátes, named after a local pilot aboard the schooner Ancud sailing in 1843.

Turkey vultures cruised around the circle of islets, packed with evergreen beech trees, wild flowers and a few Magellanic penguins squawking away. Three dolphins, either Peale's or Chilean, completed the picture and after anchoring we explored the area.

Looking back, this was my favourite spot during the whole trip. In December, Spring is blooming in Patagonia, and the flowers and shrubs burst out of their winter hibernation.

This particular anchorage looked as if a Zen gardener had spent 1,000 years perfecting one thought: harmony.

Our guide book was full of these gems, and I could have spent a happy two weeks exploring the Chiloe province.



THE SENO GLACIER

The first hint that we were in glacier territory came about a week into the voyage, when the water changed from blue-grey to pale green, quite distinctly. We were making a 12 mile detour up one of the many fjords spiking off the north-south Messier Canal, and more dolphins joined us, dancing through our milky bow wave.

A few breaks in the rain let us look up the steep mountain sides at the waterfalls streaking downwards. Around here, they don't talk about centimetres of rainfall per year, but metres: 7.5 metres, actually.

To get a handle on that statistic, I've just checked with the Irish Meteorological Service, and Ireland has an annual rainfall of around 1m. A mild drizzle by comparison.

At the glacier, nothing could have prepared me for the wall of opal ice cascading down to the water's edge. Beneath the white surface, the blues sparkled a deep luminescent aquamarine, intensified under ancient pressure. When the sun popped out for a moment, the crystal wall lit up.

We were all dazzled, weaving our RIB through the floating ice. Tony was awestruck. So was I. I thought at the time that this one sight, a phenomenal natural wonder, was worth the price of admission alone.



In such a remote part of the world, the wildlife is untouched. The crew enjoyed sighting dolphins and albatross every day.



below: Women's work – Hannah McKeand, the polar trekker, repairs a problem with the prop shaft as the lads look on!



Hannah McKeand, left, with Jamie Weeden, centre, and Tony Laurent, right, who had incredible stories to tell about crossing the Atlantic in a Hobie and barely making it alive



ENGAGING COMPANY

We were beginning to settle into shipboard routine. Everyone helped out with sailing and cooking, enjoying the scenery and telling stories (another for the list). Tony, the grizzled Australian in his mid-50s, told us about one of his earlier sailing adventures which I found extraordinary. Forgive me for wandering off piste, but it's a good one.

In 1986, with Daniel Pradel, he was one of the first to sail across the Atlantic on an open-decked beach catamaran, a Hobie 18. I'd heard about this trip when I was a journalist for the UK magazine *Yachts & Yachting*, but it was scarcely covered by the English-speaking media.

I knew that these two had arrived in Guadeloupe practically dead, all their kit having washed overboard days earlier. Their legs were lacerated from being bashed off the trapeze. Pradel had to have plastic surgery on his legs and he suffered psychologically from the experience for some time afterwards.

But they'd made it. Senegal to Guadeloupe in 18 days. Tony

said of the trip: "By the end we'd run out of food and water, we'd lost everything, and slept no more than ten minutes at a time strapped to the mast. Daniel needed six months of skin grafts on his legs afterwards.

"We had three days without any sail up at all. The water was smoking. Toulouse meteorological college later told us the wind was off the chart, minimum 60 knots. We knew if we'd flipped the boat it was all over."

Tony admitted that he owed his survival to Daniel's strength of character, and that he later returned the favour by asking to him crew with quixotic Frenchman Olivier de Kersauson on their Jules Verne attempt in 1994, which was successful.

I asked Tony how he looked back on that Atlantic Hobie trip. "My lasting impression," he said, "is that we were privileged to have touched that place in our heads where the will to survive is so strong. I'll never forget it."



PUERTO EDEN AND THE PEEL INLET

Halfway down the 1,000 mile stretch, and after four days and nights of solid rain, we stopped off at the tiny hamlet of Puerto Eden.

Miguel Concha has set up a restaurant, which is basically a table in his tiny front room, a tight squeeze for five. What Miguel lacked in space he made up for in hospitality, and we enjoyed a great afternoon on land with amazing views over the harbour.

The huts are basically tin shacks with thin insulation, so how these hardy folk survive the winters, with one resupply ship passing each week, is beyond me.

Taking a diversion off our southerly route, we branched off to motor up the north-easterly Peel Inlet. This spectacular fjord spikes deep into the Patagonian icecap, almost to the border with Argentina, with over a dozen glaciers descending to water level.

We enjoyed a break in the rain to absorb this spectacular sight. A group of Dusky dolphins joined us for the afternoon, dodging icebergs like us, relishing the cold tranquillity of the place and obviously enjoying some company. You could probably count the number of yachts visiting here each year on one hand.

Although an inlet fed by the sea, so much fresh water pours into this fjord that it felt like a mountain lake – clear, clean and bright.

I mentioned earlier that I was filming some background material for a documentary on Hannah McKeand. With icebergs surrounding us and translucent light, a joy for a film maker, I interviewed Hannah on camera about her love of cold climates.

"Cold doesn't bother me," said Hannah. "Empty is what I like: deserts, Scottish hillsides, Polar regions... Places where I can see for miles. I spend my life feeling like a giant so I like places where I feel like a small person."

I don't think Hannah had the best time at school... she is a towering 1.83m (6ft 2in), and currently well over, ahem, 100kg, although she expects to lose 20kg during her 60 day slog to the North Pole from Canada, pulling a 150kg sled behind her. When she first skied to the South Pole in 2004, she found a natural ability in this harsh climate and her 2006 record astonished some of the military teams training down there.

Hannah reminds me very much of Ellen MacArthur when Ellen was 18 and unknown. I interviewed Ellen during her sail around Britain in a 21ft Corribee, and with the photographer Crystal, we were amazed at the passion with which Ellen talked about sailing, her boat and the environment she loves so much, the sea.

Hannah has that same enthusiasm – a passion that inspires – and a real belief that she can do something that to me would be impossible. Perhaps you'll see Hannah speak about her polar adventures on the Discovery Channel some day – I hope so!

Hannah said of polar trekking: "Extreme cold will kill you in hours if you do the wrong thing. If you put yourself in that situation it's incredibly revealing. You have to shape up in a big way. It's very, very hard, but not as hard as people think. It's basic. Your life slices down to core elements: temperature, fuel, hydration – eat, sleep and be warm."

Hannah echoed something Tony said earlier: "We're cossetted now, so I have some of my most enlightening moments in these environments, in touch with those base levels of survival."

I think we are drawn to these characters – people who set out to do incredibly difficult things in life. Their human spark seems to burn brightly, and most of us enjoy warming our hands by their fire, mainly from the comfort and safety of our more orderly lives.



Puerto Eden, in the middle of nowhere and supplied once a week by ship



A Chilean speciality, the Pisco Sour: Chilean grappa mixed with white sugar, egg white and ice. Apollo would have run quite comfortably on this

YC MICALVI

After the long haul south, our first real taste of 21st century civilisation was Puerto Williams. We're not talking metropolis here, just 2,300 souls, mostly Armada (navy) personnel.

The town, only demilitarised since 1986, has an internet café, a couple of restaurants, and a grocery store, but most sailors end up in the Micalvi, a 1925 German freighter beached here since the '70s.

The Micalvi is the southernmost yacht club in the world and proudly so. Club burgees from all corners decorate the saloon, which lists to port, a delightful quality for any drinking den.

The visitors book is a fascinating insight into the cruising history of this far flung spot, with names such as Isabelle Autissier and Sir Peter Blake standing out.

Pancho was the man behind the bar, occasionally stoking the wood stove and serving Pisco Sours to the motley clientele.

Polish songs, Piscos, two blokes who didn't like being asked questions, more Piscos, and this warm oasis for cruising sailors gently listened, listing, having heard it all before. I'm told it was 5am by the time we got out. You get the drift.

ROUND CAPE HORN

Finally, the big day. Cape Horn. Tony was awake at 4am hearing the wind pick up in our anchorage 12 miles from the Cape. Here we'd used three shore lines to avoid contact with Santa Maria, a pretty red steel sloop run by a German skipper, also preparing to go around the Horn.

The previous evening Dave, Hannah and I climbed to the top of Isla Hermite for great views of this clutch of barren islands, so close to what feels like the world's toe, imprudently dipping into the ferocious cyclones circling around the South Pole.

Conditions were not so great: 30 knots and rain. The sloppy sea rolled us around, and off the Horn itself, waves exploded as they crashed into the vicious looking reef. Tony recorded 42 knots on the anemometer. At least as we rounded, looking up to the lighthouse and the huge Chilean flag rippling in the wind, it felt suitably awe-inspiring.

Round the Horn we made a dash for the cove where steps lead up to the lighthouse, protected from the biting westerly wind. Timing the surges, Tony, Jamie and I jumped off the RIB, while Dave reversed to wait on Blizzard – a selfless call by Dave and Hannah.

The view from the lighthouse was breathtaking. This battered landmark, a turning point fixed in the minds of sailors struggling against some of the harshest elements anywhere on earth, looked the part. Bleak, ragged, isolated, wind blasted; black rock against white spray.

In 1992 the Chilean government erected a magnificent monument: "In memory of the seamen of all nations who lost their lives fighting against the elements in the southern sea." The multilayered steel relief of an albatross, designed by Jose Balcells, is perfectly fitting. These majestic birds, which we saw every day, are the undisputed royalty of this environment.

The lighthouse is manned by the Chilean Armada, and we were lucky to come across Second Lieutenant Carlos Roberto and his wife Veronica, who were three days into their one year stint here. Whether this was an honour or not, we weren't sure, but we appreciated the warmth of their welcome. Tony and Jamie kicked into tourist overdrive, having their passports stamped, banners displayed and pictures taken.

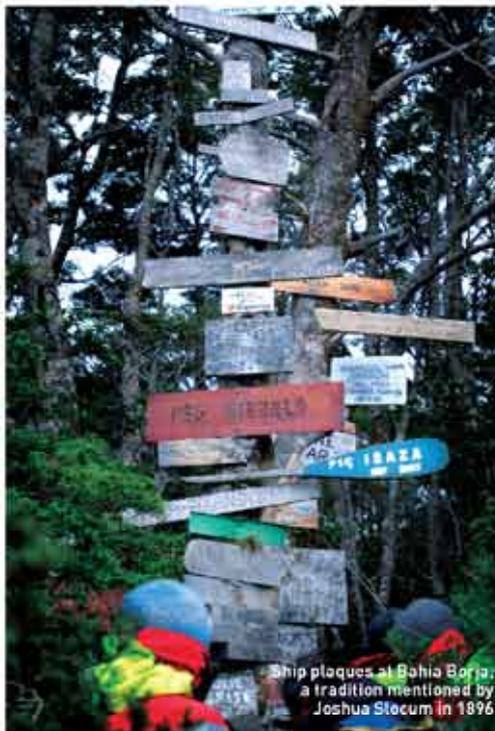
Overall, it was a moving experience, particularly for Tony, who'd promised himself 14 years ago when rounding Cape Horn that he'd come back one day: "It was such a profound moment the first time, I just wanted to reconfirm that feeling and get a bit closer to it. It's a holy shrine in some ways. A homage to the bones of sailors far more adventurous than us."

Personally, it was a privilege to stand there. It's an unusual place to sail around, let alone stand upon.

To me it was the finale of this expedition, sailing down Chile's incredible coastline, anchoring in Zen-like bays, enjoying excellent company over great dinners and glasses of Chilean red, sailing through ice, gasping at glaciers for the first time, washing in fresh waterfalls, snuggling in a warm bunk with rain and wind lashing and howling outside, not seeing any other people for weeks, and all surrounded by abundant wildlife – dolphins, sea lions, albatross, terns, penguins, and my favourite, the steamer duck, which instead of flying, tears across the water at the slightest danger with its flightless wings paddling like crazy. A natural Rubik's Cube of a puzzle for Darwin when he came through here.

This is a remote wilderness, harsh and beautiful, barely touched by humans. Voyaging on boats like Blizzard is the only way any traveller will get to see some of these archipelagos, teaming with natural and nautical history.

For me it was an escape that turned into a journey that turned into an insight into explorers – following in their wake and enjoying their company.



Ship plaques at Bahia Borja, a tradition mentioned by Joshua Slocum in 1896

A Southern sea lion with his group of females



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Digby Fox is a TV producer of international events, including the 2007 America's Cup, before which he was a full time sailing magazine writer and editor.

PRICE AND INFO

Expeditions range from two to four weeks, costing between 1,000 to 1,600 Euros per person per week, based on between five and nine guests, plus flights which involves a bit of internet hunting to get to Ushuaia via Buenos Aires, or to Puerto Montt via Santiago.

For more information, contact David Pryce through the expedition website: www.blizzardexpeditions.com

NAVIGATING

Two Italian sailors have made cruising in Patagonia easier and richer in detail. Mariolina Rolfo and Giorgio Ardrizzi have explored the area for 11 years in their 43ft ketch Saudade III, and in 2004 they published their Patagonia & Tierra del Fuego Nautical Guide, a wonderful collection of 400 anchorages, historical background, wildlife notes, sketches and so on. During our trip we praised this book every day. Quite simply, it's brilliant.

You can order copies (ISBN 88-85986-34-X) through www.capehorn-pilot.com

The charts with the most detail have been put together by the Chilean Navy, called the Armada. One tome, the Atlas Hidrográfico de Chile (publication No.3042) is the navy's entire coastal collection shrunk to 31 x 44cm size. You need a good magnifying glass to see the detail and read names. The Atlas is available for around US\$100 from chart specialists, but order ahead as the edition was last printed in 2002.

YOUR DAYS ARE NUMBERED



VERY FEW ARE LUCKY ENOUGH TO BE ABLE TO TAKE THE WHOLE YEAR OFF FOR SAILING, SO NOW'S THE TIME TO PRIORITISE THE KEY EVENTS, WRITES CONOR BYRNE



Big winds off Kinsale



Just a few words of warning before you throw your eye over the events designed to distract you in 2009. You may need to sit down with your employer before signing any entry forms, and consultations with spouses are at your own risk.

Volvo is making its mark on Irish sailing in 2009. Few people need reminding about the Galway stopover of the Ocean Race in May, and Volvo has retained its title sponsorship of the Dun Laoghaire Regatta (see page 62). Apart from these two mammoths, there are no international events taking place in Ireland, giving clubs and members a welcome break after many years of hosting, but the ISA see this as a problem. Ed Alcock explains that the ISA has received Sports Council funds for years for these events, and "not taking up an allocation of money can mean that we don't get it the following year."

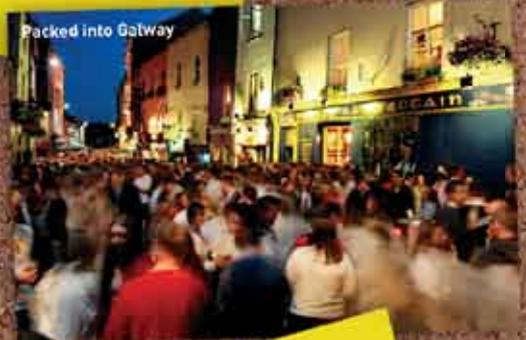
Our home and away competitors are getting ready early in the season. Five Irish Flying Fifteens are competing in the World Championships in Melbourne in January, and as they leave, three Irish teams land in Perth for February's Team Racing Worlds. Also heading Down Under are one, maybe two, Etchells keelboats for the Worlds in Sydney in March.

As frostbite races begin to thaw out around the country, the biennial IMF Allianz Dublin Boat Show is back to pique our interest in February. It would be foolhardy to expect a turnover compared to previous years in this interesting period. "It's not exactly the best time to be in the boat business," says Steve Conlon of the Irish Marine Federation. "There won't be as many big boats there as there has been in the past, simply because the industry cannot afford it. But there will still be a lot of boats" [see page 59]. Conlon is taking a tack away from the traditional boat show as we know it. "We're trying to persuade more people to get involved, more emphasis on extreme sports - kitesurfing, surfing itself - rather than just opening the doors, pushing big boats in and letting people view them. We are expecting a good show, a slightly different show, a lot of new people, and a whole new emphasis on getting people started in water sports."

Bound for Dingle



Packed into Galway



One of the bigger dinghy events on the calendar hits Galway this year and needs little introduction. The varsity team racing circus visits Oranmore in March for their Nationals. Hosted by NUI Galway and Galway Bay SC, 24 teams are expected, plus now regular visitors from Scotland.

Rather than put off what you cannot varnish tomorrow, skip the spring cleaning and take the once-in-a-long-time opportunity to see the 'Everest of Sailing' arrive in Galway from May 23 to June 6. Let's Do It Galway expects 140,000 visitors in the smallest stopover city of the race, and once the weather is kind, the city is a worthwhile trip for any person, hardened skipper or otherwise.

An adventurous season is ahead for cruiser racers. For their sixth season, ICRA are organising their national championships on the west coast, at Tralee Bay SC (June 10-14), and are expecting 80 to 120 boats at the event.

"On Saturday, June 6, we've three feeder races coming in from across the country," says Brian O'Sullivan of WIGRA. "One is the Dun Laoghaire to Dingle race (D2D), we've the OSM 100-mile race from Galway to bring the west coast boats down, and we've a SCORA race coming from Kinsale to Fenit."

The Galway Bay/NORA Regatta (June 3-5) takes place as part of the Onesails McWilliam West Coast Super League, along with the 100-mile race, some of the ICRA nationals, and three other regattas in Foynes, Cliften and Kilrush. The OSM 100 mile race is briefed in Galway as the Ocean Race boats head for Sweden; the €50 entry fee is donated to the RNLI.

Competitors at the Bell Lawrie Scottish Series (May 22-25) will miss some of the Galway celebrations, but no better place than the Clyde to sit out the chaos. Another event that has some of its limelight, and its sailors, taken away by the Volvo is the Rolex Fastnet Race starting on August 9.

Chair of the Dun Laoghaire to Dingle Race, Martin Crotty, is quick to point out that it's a race in its own right. "As it happens this year, it feeds into the ICRA nationals. It's part of a scheme of things that allows boats to position themselves down in Kerry to go either to the ICRA nationals or the Sovereign's Cup and still have time to get back to Dun Laoghaire week."

WIDRA organisers are arranging skippers and crew to deliver boats the 6-8 hour trip from Dingle to Fenit. "There's a great end of race atmosphere, boats tend to stay on a couple of days... there's a great buzz, a brilliant atmosphere, and loads of craic in Dingle," says Crotty.

Fintain Cairns of ICRA is confident of a good turnout at the 2009 nationals. "Fenit will be lively ashore, it's going to be fairly well self-contained, but the main thing from our point of view is the racing. From the original doubts about going there, people are looking forward to something different." Brian O'Sullivan is aware of the geographic problems posed by the event. "This is going to be the biggest cruiser event ever on the west coast of Ireland, by a long shot. Getting boats from Dublin will be the big issue." An ICRA Championship sponsor was to be announced as Afloat went to press.

There is enough of a break after Fenit to see if your loved ones still love you and to go to work (if there is any for you) before the south coast's more competitive regatta of the season, Kinsale's Sovereign's Cup (June 24-27).

When the bulk of keelboat racing is over, it's time for the dinghy sailors to perform abroad. The intrepid 505 class is hoping to get five boats, and maybe seven, to the European Championship in Kiel in June, and also that month, eight Optimist sailors travel to Lake Garda, Italy for the Europeans. Five helms will have already qualified for the World Championship in Turkey in July.

July and August are busy months for Irish representatives at the Topper Worlds in Austria, the Mirror Worlds in Wales, ISAF youth worlds in Brazil, Laser Radial Worlds in Japan, and the Standard rig worlds in Canada.

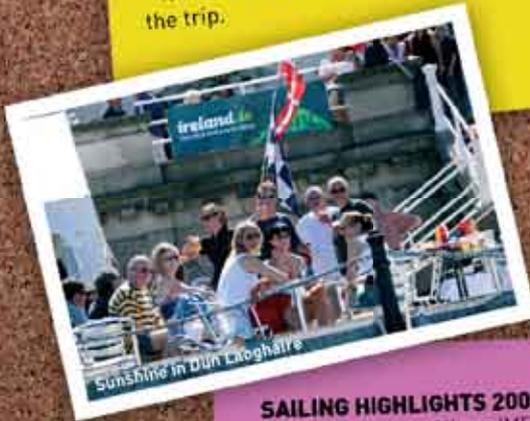


Ready for the off in Fenit

Love it or hate it, Dublin Bay will always try and lure you back, but event secretary Ciara Dowling will make sure you're there on July 9. The Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta organisers have been listening carefully and have proposed many bullet points of alterations, developments and improvements, the most notable being the inclusion of Howth as a venue in the four-day regatta. From getting discounts in hotels and on ferries, to encouraging early entries by dangling rewards on our computer screens, event organisers everywhere should take note of the effort going into the Dun Laoghaire Regatta (see page 62).

At the same time as Calves, the Shannon-One-Designs host one of their two-week regattas in Lough Ree, their national championships alternating this year as the week-long Lough Derg regatta. Sticking with clinker, the Mermaid class is returning to one of its favourite haunts this year – and back to a seven-day regatta in Sligo Yacht Club – and the 'Wag Worlds' props up the profile of Dun Laoghaire week.

Fireball sailors will finish out August on the west coast of France, at the European and World Championships in La Rochelle, where they expect a dozen boats to attend. Another class that visits an enviable venue is the SB3 fleet for its World Championships in Cascais, Portugal. Talk has been rife since the Dublin Worlds – it would be a surprise if many boats didn't make the trip.



If you have any money, holidays or crew left, and Skandia Cowes Week (August 1-8) isn't your thing, West Cork's Calves Week tempts from August 1-10. The party kicks off the day before with a race from Crosshaven to Schull, taking in the Fastnet. A novel way to see the best of one of the loveliest parts of Ireland, this sailing marathon will haul you over to Baltimore, out to Cape Clear Island, take in Crookhaven regatta and finally complete the Schull Regatta the next day. Organiser Jackie Kenefick coaxes us with "lots of sailing, lots of regattas, craic, anybody who has ever been to it always comes back. The fleet increases every year without fail."



After CIT's nail-biting finish in the Student Yachting Worlds in France, Ireland can send CIT plus another team to the event to defend in October. The qualifiers are to be held in keelboats over a weekend in April. One of the last regattas of the season is the Shannon One Design Wolf Regatta in Terryglass. We leave you with news from the 2008 Notice of Race, that "Racing will commence at 11am (ish) sharp". There is no expectation that this will change in 2009.

SAILING HIGHLIGHTS 2009

- | | |
|----------------|--|
| 18-22 February | Allianz IMF Dublin Boat Show |
| 6 June | Dun Laoghaire to Dingle Race (D2D) - National YC |
| 23 May-6 June | Volvo Galway Stop-over |
| 10-12 June | WORA - Tralee Bay SC Brian O'Sullivan |
| 12-14 June | ICRA National Championships |
| 24-27 June | Sovereigns Cup |
| 9-12 July | Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta. |

UK EVENTS OF IRISH INTEREST

- | | |
|-------------|---|
| 22-25 May | Bell Lawrie Scottish Series - Clyde Cruising Club |
| 1-8 August | Skandia Cowes Week - Cowes Combined Clubs |
| 9-14 August | Rolex Fastnet Race - Royal Ocean Racing Club |

THE SHOW GOES ON!

IT WAS ONLY TWO YEARS AGO THAT THE IRISH MARINE FEDERATION ROLLED OUT ITS BIGGEST EVER SHOW. HOW TIMES CHANGE

Demand for exhibitor space in 2007 was at an all-time high, even with an increase in space of over 20%. It was one of the largest consumer exhibitions in the country. On one level, the size of the show was an indication of the buoyancy of the economy in general and the marine leisure market in particular.

On another level, however, it was an example of what can be achieved when businesses – and, indeed, competitors – stick together to promote the industry as a whole. Now that times resemble 1988 more than the Celtic Tiger era, the marine industry faces its toughest ever struggle.



Against this background, the marine industry will stage its 25th boat show next February. And against the odds, it's looking very positive. Already half of the exhibition space has been allocated and the IMF's exhibition organisers expect the RDS show to sell out by Christmas.

The fact that the IMF is staging a show at all is a brave decision, but the take-up for it is an indication of marine industry resilience. Perhaps some can see brighter prospects on the horizon?

The show aims to reinforce the message that there is vibrant professional marine leisure industry in Ireland, and so there's no need to go overseas to buy a boat, chandlery or equipment. It also introduces new entrants to boating, with a new focus on surfing, kite-surfing and angling. The boat show team is working on a number of initiatives aimed at broadening the appeal of the event. These include:

- Live music and fashion shows together with the regular boat show talks
- A feature on the Volvo Race, including Green Dragon's live progress
- A heritage trail to promote the inland waterways, with questions left in a trail around the show. A holiday on the Shannon is up for grabs for the winner
- Demonstrations of traditional boat building skills and rope work, giving show visitors a chance to see first hand how a clinker is built
- Kidzone with Sea Life, which introduces children to the sea and promotes the purchase of their first dinghy
- An extreme sports demonstration area, featuring kite surfing
- Better use of the 1,000-member Boat Show Club to promote exhibitors and products



TO WATCH FOR...



O'SULLIVANS MOVES INTO RIB

Over 40 years since O'Sullivan's Marine began building fibreglass boats, the Tralee-based company has now diversified into the expanding RIB market with the launch of a 6.5m model, to be followed shortly with a 6.0m version. The boat is currently undergoing sea trials, and O'Sullivan's are seeking CE certification and approval from the Department for commercial use.

The hull is a deep Vee, particularly at the bow, giving a better ride even in very choppy waters. The bow itself is raised to throw off the waves but a lot of time and experimenting went into getting this angle absolutely right, so that visibility is not impaired. Fitted out with Henshaw hypalon tubes, which

come in a choice of colours, along with a selection of different consoles and seating arrangements, O'Sullivan's Marine can customise the layout of this RIB to suit an owner's needs.

Powered by twin or single engines, the O'Sullivan's RIB can cruise at 20 knots or scream along at over 40 knots, whatever the mood takes you. Handling is excellent, with reasonably light hydraulic steering, a great beam of 2.7m and a well proven hull that cuts, rather than pounds, the waves.

Ample storage is provided by way of a raised bow locker, large steering console, shelves for extra storage and a selection of different seating arrangements.

CAP THE LOT

Designed by the Garroni Designers and the Jeanneau design team, the Cap Camarat 555 is a 5.5-metre open model created to offer features normally found on larger models (6 to 6.5 metres). With a tapered V-shaped hull (16° / 36°) offering exceptional performance and handling, the 555 also features 700 mm of depth in the cockpit, long built-in stainless steel handrails, stainless-steel wraparound side rails, and a large anchor locker.



NAVIONICS TRACKS AWARD

Navionics Mobile has just been shortlisted for the DAME Award in the 'marine related software' category. The company expands navigation choices by bringing detailed marine charts on state-of-the-art personal navigation devices. Using the software, Navionics charts can be uploaded on smart phones, allowing the viewer to check a GPS position on the chart, pan and zoom, and view object descriptions, in both day and night modes. Navionics Mobile charts are easily downloaded to a phone from the internet, and are then stored, allowing the sailor to navigate without a mobile signal. Further information from www.navionics.com

ANTARES REVS UP

Appearing for the first time at the upcoming Paris, London and Dusseldorf Boat Shows, the new Antares 7.50 Outboard will broaden the scope of the Antares range (Antares 6.20 and 6.50 Outboards) and answers the growing demand for outboard motor models. In a 7.5-metre boat, Antares has included a saloon/double berth in the wheelhouse; a galley corner; separate heads, a double berth forward and a cockpit saloon/sunbathing platform. The Antares 7.50 is priced, without engine, from €22,290.



ON COURSE FOR THE RECORD...

THERE ARE OVER 200 DAYS TO GO UNTIL THE 2009 VOLVO DUN LAOGHAIRE REGATTA, WHICH IS ALREADY SHAPING UP TO BE THE COUNTRY'S BIGGEST EVER SAILING EVENT, WRITES DAVID O'BRIEN

It may be doom and gloom on the economic front but Dun Laoghaire is planning some excitement next season. The third staging of the Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta will provide racing for IRC rated boats, one design classes, white sail, corporate class and dinghies.

No surprises there for the biennial armada of Ireland's biggest fleet, but there is a newcomer to raise eyebrows – the first ever white sail Irish national championships to be staged as part of the week.

Tapping into a big demographic has been the regatta's winning formula. As soon as it opened its online entry system in November, there was a dozen entries from clubs as far afield as Whitby YC in Yorkshire and Cannes in the South of France. Those closer to Dun Laoghaire were also quick off the mark. Full credit to the first entry that was much closer to home – David Quinn in the SB3 investwise.ie from Howth. Also entered in the IRC 1 division is the Admiral of Royal Cork YC, Mike McCarthy in Checkmate.

Below: Sailors and friends gather in Dun Laoghaire for the 2007 prizegiving. Organisers expect about 3500 sailors on the water, making it one of the biggest participant sporting events after the marathons



WHITE SAILS GEAR UP

Although providing championship racing for the gentleman's class might sound like an oxymoron, the move is a response to demand from the sailors themselves. Dun Laoghaire has its finger on the pulse in gearing up to meet this demand that may top 100 boats. Organisers are pitching it as the first national white sail championship anywhere in the world. They expect national title honours in three divisions - super, one and two.

VALUE FOR MONEY

Mindful of the economic headwinds and the fact that other events have been criticised for charging at a fair rate of knots, the organisers have set about providing an all-in entry fee to include: racing, berthing, social (with the use of the four waterfront yacht clubs) and craning if applicable. They have also made arrangements with local ferry Stena to provide special rates for travellers.

RINGING THE CHANGES

Simplified course formats have been designed for 2009, giving organisers an increased number of participants and a greater flexibility for race officers.

Race officers will now be able to set navigational courses on the day. Outer courses have been moved back within bay - inside the tidal contour to avoid the Burford bank, an experiment that did not work well in 2007. A new inshore race area encompassing Howth for larger keelboats has been added.

There will also be a Howth Race Day for IRC classes. Starting north of the Liffey, it will finish in Howth, and a barbecue at the yacht club there will encourage non-sailors to DART it out to enjoy the fun. The final day of the event sees another innovation - the Sunday Feature Race, an inshore race using the island with a pier finish for keelboats.



Room with a view - special rates for competitors at the four star Royal Marine Hotel

DUBLIN KEEPS IT MODEST

Coming to race in Ireland next summer? If you're fed up being charged at a rate of knots when you come ashore, then read on. Dun Laoghaire is living up to its claim of having the best facilities at a fraction of the cost of other similar regattas in these islands. Dun Laoghaire organiser Phil Smith has responded to the charge that Ireland is an expensive place to sail by publishing entry fees eight months in advance. He makes the point that competing in the capital's waters is cheaper than Cowes or other international events of similar size hosted here. Between entry fees, berthing and accommodation costs, the cost of competing in an average 35-footer in Dun Laoghaire is almost half that of elsewhere. And it's not just the racing that's competitively priced. The organisers have a four star hotel chain as co-sponsors. The Royal Marine Hotel on the regatta site will have specially negotiated regatta rates (from €150 per person per room including breakfast). Now there's value for money!



Dublin bay served up strong winds in 2007

COURSE CHANGES

Feedback from Cruiser classes has been undertaken and there are many new courses for 2007. The key elements are as follows: Super 0 (TP 52s, etc.) will race on a separate course from IRC 0, 1 and J109. The Middle Course from the bay (used by Sigmas, 31.7s; IRC 2 in 2007) which used the fixed DBSC marks has been removed.

Two new course areas have been created in Sutton/Howth and Killiney Bay. The Outer Course has also been removed (Burford area) and brought in to the centre of the bay, inside the tidal contour between Howth and Dalkey. There will now be only two courses in the centre of the bay (north and south) – there were four on some days in 2007.

Removing the middle course not only frees up the bay and gets the outer fleet out of tide. It also frees up the DBSC racing marks so it's possible to set a fixed mark course (on the day over the radio) if there is too much or too little wind for windward/leeward courses.

The top cruiser group (IRC 0, IRC 1 and J109) will race in a different area and under a different race officer each day. Two days in the centre of the bay, one north and one south; one day in Sutton/Howth; and one day in Killiney.

The Sutton/Howth concept was used in 2007 for the Half Ton Cup. The idea is that you start (windward leg) north of the channel, race into Howth race area using the Howth marks and finish. The second race will start in Howth area and the finish will be back in the bay, north of the channel in the Rosbeg area.

IRC classes are among the biggest classes at the 500-boat regatta



2009
SEASON
PREVIEW

Classic sails; the regatta is open to all types of craft



The Squibs were one of 26 classes that turned out the 2007 event





ONLINE ENTRY

Entries opened in November. Avail of the early entry discount by entering online at www.dlregatta.org



THE FRENCH ARE COMING

A French armada may drop anchor off Dalkey island next July. The prospect of a full French attack at Volvo Dun Laoghaire week maybe just sabre rattling at this stage but organisers are taking no chances. It's all because 2006 Commodore's cup winning skipper Gery Trentesaux has signed up to compete and he is understood to be rounding up other French boats to come with him. The town of Dun Laoghaire is officially twinned with Brest in northwestern France and organisers have been making efforts to strengthen the ties between these maritime towns with the support of Dun Laoghaire's county councillors. A notice of Race in French has been produced and it has been marketed to several French clubs with Trentesaux's advice.

WHITE SAILS TO FILL THE BAY

As part of Ireland's biggest regatta in 2009, Volvo Dun Laoghaire week will host the first ever White Sail Cup and the race is on to assemble the world's biggest fleet. The east coast port is set to become the Cowes of the Irish Sea again in little over eight months time with racing for 26 classes from eight different countries expected. "We've seen massive interest in white sail racing over the last few seasons and now we're marking it with a new trophy that should appeal to boats from across Ireland and the UK," said regatta chairman Phil Smith. The trophy is being donated by ISORA commodore Peter Ryan, also commodore of the National YC, which has major historical significance in Dun Laoghaire and, is presented to the organisers to celebrate the growth in this new style of racing. The white sails fleet attracted the largest entry at last year's Volvo Regatta. Designed to get seldom used boats off marinas, the attraction of the concept is easy to see; a bunch of friends sailing together on an average cruiser can participate in simple racing after work or at weekends without any of the high-end hassle attached with spinnakers and large crew numbers. "We're expecting over 100 - white sail entries," says race director Brian Craig. The white sail fleet could swell numbers at the regatta to over 500.

SB3 BATTLES WITH FIREBALL

Over 26 classes will participate and with over 200 days still to go, there's plenty of news to come on what is Ireland's biggest ever sailing event. The organisers are guaranteed a big turnout because 60% of the expected fleet is from the bay area.

IRC divisions in particular are likely to attract a significant number of visiting entries. Following on from the success of the inaugural worlds, the Laser SB3 fleet is expected to be the largest in the regatta. The class is already targeting a large overseas entry, leading the organizers to place a cap of 80 on entries. The fleet will have its own race course area.

But other fleets will run the SB3 close in the competition for numbers. The Fireball class plans to run its 'Open Championship' and 'Celtic Trophy' at the event. As a result, entries from the UK and Scotland will swell numbers so Fireballs may end up as the biggest fleet in the regatta.

There are a number of new arrivals including the RS Elites, which will be making their first appearance at VD LR. A corporate fleet too is making its debut. To accommodate an increased UK entry, a feeder race is planned, in partnership with the Royal Dee and Liverpool YC.



SEASON
PREVIEW
2009

BRUNETTE LEADS IRISH IN MED



LEGALLY BRUNETTE WAS THE BEST PLACED OF THE THREE IRISH BOATS IN THE ROLEX MIDDLE SEA RACE IN OCTOBER, RECORDING 29TH OVERALL

Skipped by Cathal Drohan (RStGYC), and owned by Drohan and Paul Egan, she is one of the first of the new X-41 one-design racing yachts, and was delivered in spring 2007. Legally Brunette has had some success already, coming second in the 2007 Dún Laoghaire-Dingle Race and performing respectably in the 2007 Lee Overlay offshore series. In 2008 she was one of the dozen or so boats that had to retire from the Round Ireland.

Drohan set off from Dublin in mid-August with a Glenans training crew and brought the boat as far as Estepona in Spain. After a short break, he was joined by a series of regular crew members and friends, taking the boat to Alicante, Palma, Cagliari, Pantellaria and finally to Malta.

Probably the crew with the widest age span, from Eugene

Egan (aged 15) to John Hall (NYC, aged 70) with another ten fairly evenly spread between those two ages. Eleven of the 12 were regular crew, joined by Emmanwel Attard from Malta, a non-racer who normally cruises a 35' Jeanneau.

The race begins from Marsamxett Harbour in Valletta, with thousands of locals, supporters and tourists at various vantage points looking on. A total of 77 boats lined up for the start, with two other X-41s in the fleet.

Five days into the race, the fleet hit a sudden squall. The wind, which had been at about 20 kts suddenly jumped to 40, gusting to 50 plus. Lightning, thunder and hailstones added to the scene, which resulted in three fully or partial dismastings in the fleet. Happily, there were no serious injuries on any boat.

After six days at sea, Legally Brunette crossed the finish line at the Royal Malta Yacht Club to terrific cheers from other competitors and revellers on the shore. As the youngest racing sailor, Eugene took the Youth Cup award.

Ireland could do this. The Maltese are a nation of under 10% our size (under 5% our land area), but with marine infrastructure we can only dream of.

The Round Ireland stands shoulder to shoulder with the Middle Sea and the Fastnet as one of the leading European offshore races. The Middle Sea was able to attract 77 competitors in October from 20 different countries. The Round Ireland in midsummer has been attracting between 40 and 50 boats but could, with more infrastructure to receive visiting boats (principally, convenient marina spaces), double that number.

Ireland may not be able to match the sunny weather, but in midsummer, we have close to 20 hours of daylight. We also have more regular breeze. And although we haven't live volcanoes, we have topography and sea states as varied as those in the Mediterranean, if not more so. A Russian competitor in the Round Ireland this year put it this way: "the BMW Round Ireland is a better race than the Fastnet, it has more challenges, different weather systems, tidal gates, the Atlantic Ocean, everything". There you have it.

When the Middle Sea Race starts on October 17th 2009, our Ministers for Sport and Tourism should be there to see how State support and engagement backs up the endeavours of the organisers for the benefit of all involved in marine activities.



Sean Craig, the new class captain of the Dublin Bay SB3 fleet, is expecting 60 boats for July's Dun Laoghaire Regatta. Photo: Gareth Craig



DUBLIN
PORT CO

HIGH TIDE FOR BAY SAILING

"Anyone talking about the sort of weather we have been having during 2008," writes Dublin Bay Sailing Club Commodore Tim Costelloe in his annual report, "would be hard put to say anything positive. Yet DBSC's Thursday evening racing, which so much depends on favourable weather conditions, had less cancellations than other years and actually had more boats turning up and competing than in 2007."

The participation rate for keelboats on Thursdays registered an increase of 5% in

2008. That, and the fact that boat entries rose to just short of 400, and paid-up membership increased to over 1,700, would seem to show that Dublin Bay Sailing Club, in the stressful year of 2008, has continued to hold its own.

In another section of his report, Costelloe referred to the concern caused earlier in the summer when the Department of the Environment announced that it intended to extend an existing Special Protection in Dublin Bay into a part of the Bay

traditionally used by DBSC for its races.

While there were assurances by the Department that the purpose of the order was the protection of wildlife only and that it should not impinge on sailing activities, there was a fairly widespread belief among DBSC's members that well-meaning proposals such as these sometimes have a habit of turning into something totally unexpected in the hands of unsympathetic officials.

Rollercoaster, a J109 racing in Class one.
Photo: Gareth Craig



O'NEIL LEADS THE WAY

The DBSC register of boats competing in its racing covers a fairly wide spectrum – from the 32-strong new SB3 class to the traditional Mermaid and IDRA 14 boats which race on the Club's dinghy courses. The SB3, as might be expected, has attracted a younger, more venturesome sort of competitor into the DBSC ranks. Among the newer sort, Tim and Stephanie Bourke, in Mephisto, won the first Sunday series. But experience of the fickle wind systems of Dublin Bay is not to be gainsaid – nor, indeed, consistent, systematic racing. And so it was that a DBSC veteran, when it came down to winning the overall series, had it all very much his own way.

This was Barry O'Neil who at one time in Badger was one of the stalwarts of the Dublin Bay Ruffian class and featured regularly at the club prizegiving. In the SB3 class this season, Barry in Sin Bin, won the overall Thursday prize (the Goldsmith Cup), the overall Saturday prize (the Sunday SB3 Cup) as well as series prizes for Thursday Series 1 and Sunday Series 2. Also among the prize winners was Cathy McLeavey, nowadays devoting much of her considerable talents to organizing junior sailing, but who once graced the Irish Olympic team. Her boat, no 3033, won the Thursday Series 2 prize.

DBSC PREMIER AWARDS 2008

DUN LAOGHAIRE HARBOUR TROPHY

(For the most successful new yacht in DBSC fleet)

Jawesome II

Vivion Kennedy and Mervyn Dyke

THE GEORGE ARTHUR NEWSOM CUP

(For the most successful yacht in one-design classes)

Magic

Donal A. O'Sullivan and David Espy

THE WATERHOUSE SHIELD

(For the most successful yacht in handicapped classes)

Lively Lady

Derek Martin

DR. ALF DELANY MEMORIAL CUP

(For the most successful boat racing in dinghy classes)

Jill

Patrick Mangan and Paul Smith

THE BRENDAN EBRILL MEMORIAL CUP

Bendemeer (Gerald Kinsella)

THE VIKING AWARD

For a significant contribution to sailing

Richella Carroll

RESCUE CREW AWARDS

Declan and Daragh Traynor

HUT PERSONNEL AWARDS

Bert and Wendy Bass, Jacqueline McKenna, Anna O'Connor, Pauline Keogh, Carmel Winkelmann, Richella Carroll, Eileen Cooper, Patricia McGloughlin, Dick Strong, Joe and Sarah Fallon, Jeff Brownlee, Bairbre Cafferky, Lee Kidney, Ida Kiernan, Valeries Kinnear, Richard Lawton, Siobhan Leech, Dee Neeson, Gerry Pinkster, Rosemary Roy

The DBSC wrote to the Department suggesting a modification to the eastern section of the proposed protection area that would exclude the site of some DBSC marks.

The Department's reply was, in essence, that a boundary could only be changed on scientific grounds.

To DBSC this was singularly unpersuasive, given that the eastern boundary was a simple line of sight between the Poolbeg lighthouse and the lighthouse on the Dun Laoghaire East Pier. However, having reflected on it, the Committee decided to take the official assurance at its face value.

Somewhat more re-assuring was the establishment in July by the same Minister of a Dublin Bay Task Force charged with the development of a master plan for Dublin Bay. Its remit was clearly wider than the earlier proposal. In its submission to this body, the Club welcomed the intention to take wider considerations into account, and it pointed out that the Bay is a unique recreational resource in a European capital city.

ROLLERCOASTER RIDES HIGH

Among the cruiser classes – a growing component of DBSC racing – Cruisers 1 has been pre-eminent for the highly competitive spirit of its crews.

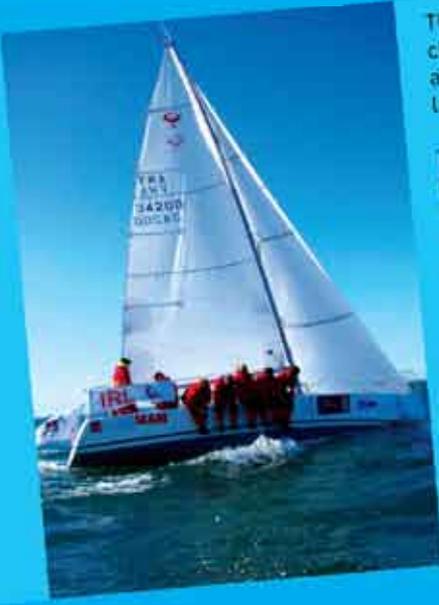
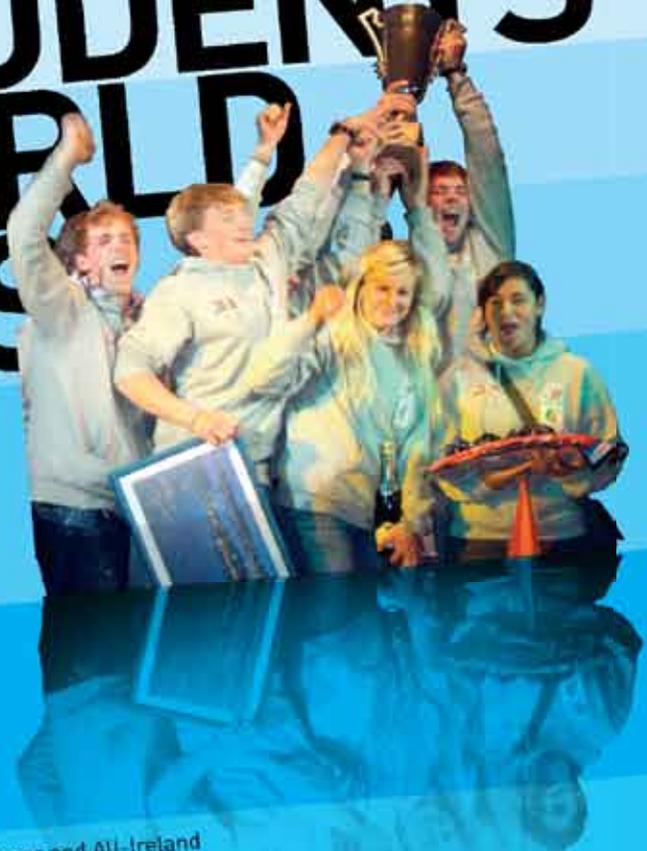
Earlier this year, some controversy erupted when the Committee, as it was entitled to do under the sailing instructions, allocated two Corby 33s, which were marginally outside the official breakpoints, to the Class. There were misgivings that the newcomers, who had already demonstrated a considerable turn of speed, would dominate local class racing. In the event, this didn't happen.

The winner of the overall Thursday IRC prize (the West Pier Offices Cup) as well as the Saturday IRC prize (the Weir Cup), not to mention the Tiamat Trophy (Thursday Echo overall) and a clutch of series prizes, was Rollercoaster, sailed by Chris and Patanne Power-Smith.

Rollercoaster, in fact, is a J109, one of a fleet of eight fast cruiser-racers currently occupying an important niche within Cruisers 1. Peter Reddens' Jetstream was the only other J109 among the prize winners. The other prizes went to Peter Beamish's A34, Aztec (Thursday Echo Series 2), and a Mills 30, Raptor, which was sailed by Denis Hewitt and friends (Saturday Echo Series 2). Donal Dempsey's Sunfast 37, Humdinger, won Saturday Echo Series 1 and Gringo, Tony Fox's A35 (MOD) won IRC Saturday IRC series 2.

CORK STUDENTS TAKE WORLD HONOURS

A NAIL-BITING WEEK OF CONTROVERSY AND EXCITEMENT AT LA TRINITE SUR MER IN NOVEMBER ENDED IN RELIEF FOR CORK INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY, WHO TOOK IRELAND'S SECOND STUDENT YACHTING WORLD CUP TITLE IN THREE YEARS



The crew, led by skipper and All-Ireland champion Nin O'Leary, showed skill both on and off the water to clinch victory in the very last race.

Thing started well, with the jitters of race one (8th place) shaken off by a win in race two. Race three saw a long lead sacrificed on the last leg of a coastal race when the Portugese slipped past for a win.

On day two, Ireland posted three finishes in the top four, but day three would bring some travails for the Cork squad.

Aiming for three results in the top three, the CIT team started well with a second, followed by a third. But with five boats deemed OCS at the start of the third race, the Irish saw their main rivals, the Italians, gifted a win.



THE CLIMAX OF THE EVENT CAME DOWN TO AN ALL-OR-NOTHING DOGFIGHT ON THE START LINE



A long night in the protest room ensued, when video evidence showed that the Irish could not have been over. A sheepish PRO admitted the error, and with redress and average points given, the Irish were in third overall. Another protest room venture, where the Irish came near to being disqualified for flying a spinnaker when instructed not to, was deemed a lucky escape.

A second in the night race, then, left CIT feeling like a win was a long shot going into the last race. "The bare minimum for us was that we had to win the race and the Italians had to be at least seventh," said team coach Adam McCarthy.

The climax of the event came down to an all-or-nothing dogfight on the start line. O'Leary went after the Italians aggressively, sailing them away from the fleet and the favoured end.

"It's funny because they didn't really seem to be expecting us to go after them," said McCarthy. "Maybe they thought we were going to sail on and hope for the best but either way they were crippled and left about 30 seconds late for the start."



"It was a basic match-race for the final and Italy weren't expecting that," said George Kenefick, mainsail trimmer. "The helmsman couldn't believe it and started shouting at his crew." Rattled, the Italians could do no better than seventh, while O'Leary sailed a masterful day, carving the fleet up to win the final race, and the event, against all the odds.

Crew: Nin O'Leary (driver), George Kenefick (main trim), Joe Bruen (trim), Silvia Phelan (trim), Aoife English (trim, pit), Grahame Durcan (mid bow, pit), Dave Barnett (mid bow, navigator) and Cian Twomey (bow).



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109 FITS THE BILL



The J109 has stretched its legs and taken off, writes Markham Nolan

Take a cross-section of the new classes with a foothold in the increasingly crowded boat market in recent years, and you'll notice a recurring trend. From small to big, and from high performance to those more suited to pootling about, there's a heavy leaning towards simplicity, performance, and adaptability.

Asymmetric spinnakers are a big feature too, and the obvious touchpoint for this is the Laser SB3 – swarming to a club near you soon. But for the big boat sailor looking to improve his ratio of hassle to enjoyment, absorbing all the benefits of the smaller craft, the J109 is becoming the big story. Taking cues from its

predecessors, the J35 and J105, the J109 has stretched its legs in all directions. In terms of performance, it's faster than its older sisters, with a large 1,183 sq.ft asymmetric flying from a retractable carbon bowsprit. The large, central wheel sits aft in the open cockpit, and the rig boasts a simple single backstay on a hydraulic ram.

The 109 has been performing well on IRC too, with wins in the Middle Sea Race in 2002 and, more recently, the Saab-sponsored ICRA Nationals this year, where Tino Hyland and crew scooped the overall prize in their new boat, Sail 4 Cancer. Twenty-six of them lined up at

Cork Week, one of the larger one-design fleets; 39 raced one-design at Cowes; and a healthy fleet is building up in Dublin Bay, where 10 J109s line out on a regular basis, hoping for a one-design start next season.

Back-up service also counts – when the fleet was at Cork, there was a full back-up service available ashore, provided by J UK/Key Yachting and Boyd Boats which ensured that any damage or service items were attended to immediately. The team had a full range of spares and parts to cover most eventualities.



Scottish entry Tigh Seluis II leads south of England entry Jaguar In to a mark at Cork Week. Photo: Bob Bateman

It's this kind of service that helps the brand loyalty that is displayed by J owners, many of whom are on their third, fourth or fifth J.

IRC stalwarts are flocking to the 109, with the likes of former Royal Irish Yacht Club commodore Peter Redden assembling crew that incorporates his long-standing IRC conspirators and a rotating panel of his son's friends and other family.

Hyland and his team proved that the 109 has speed straight out of the wrapper, as he explained just after the ICRA Nationals.

"After selling our Half Tonner, Harmony, we found ourselves at a loose end and decided to campaign something bigger. The boat was a stock J109 which we ordered from J Boats about a month ago and were lucky to get a cancelled order for immediate delivery.

"She was delivered directly to Dublin from France by road in order to save time and was sailed for the first time on May 14th, two days before the ICRA nationals. The crew set foot on her for the first time on Friday morning and only one had ever set foot on a J109 before." Hyland's performance earned them a bookie's nod for the Scottish series, and left him

singing the boat's praises as the perfect all-rounder.

"The philosophy behind the campaign is to have fun sailing with friends and family. "Nigel [Biggs] and I both have children who enjoy sailing and we hope to take them racing in the Cruisers 5 class in some of the regattas later in the season."

But it's racing where the J109 comes into its own. J boats have proven themselves well capable of creating fabulous one-design racers, with the J24 and the J80 the best examples of this. But it's the crossover potential of the 109 that sets it apart.



Aquellina, the successful Arklow-based J109. Photo: John Deane

J-BOATS ADDS TO PACKAGE



Becci Eplett of J Boats UK with Paddy Boyd – providing a back-up service at J events

There's still a unique family feel to the J-Boat brand. The J-Boat owner buys into a membership that includes not only other owners but also the dealers, service agents, manufacturers and the founding fathers – the Johnstone brothers and their family – four of whom are on the board of directors of J-Boats.

The family atmosphere is embraced by J-UK and Boyd Boats, the UK and Irish distributors for the J range, through attendance at regattas and boat shows as well as regular correspondence throughout the year. The team at J-UK and Ireland pride themselves on the knowledge they have of their customers and in the after-sales support and back-up.

For example, this year in Cork Week, J-Boats was on-site with a full spares and support service that provided an overnight repair service to cater for any incidents. The J-UK office maintains publishes the regatta programme, posts classified ads (for free) and most importantly, knows wherever and whenever a gathering of J-sailors is taking place, inevitably resulting in a party.

The support extends to each year's regatta schedule which provides a host of opportunities for top level racing and après-sailing for J sailors around the coasts of UK, Ireland and France. If you can't get your boat there, no bother; J-Boats will help you to charter a race-ready J delivered to your choice of regattas. These include racing in the various Solent spring series; National Championships; Bell Lawrie Scottish Series; IRC Nationals, both UK and Ireland; Deauville Week; the Fastnet; and the famous J-Cup where up to 100 Js of all sizes will race and party in Torbay in August.

A dedicated J-Team support resource will be in place for the Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta operating out of the Boyd Boats office on the Carlisle Pier.

J-DATES 2009

17-19 APRIL

Coaching Clinic
Dun Laoghaire

9th JULY

Irish Nationals
Dun Laoghaire



Photo: Bob Bateman

Like the Beneteau 31.7, which is raced in IRC and one-design, the 109s are all slightly different and rate differently on IRC, but are close enough to make little difference when they're on their own, which is what Hyland is advocating on Dublin Bay.

"The Irish boats can hardly be described as one design because of different sails, masts and the fact that some carry internal lead. But I feel that one design racing in the bay will be great for the class and the fact that J109s can race competitively under IRC will be a great help.

"I believe that the class association should apply the same rules at the UK class association for one design in order to encourage visits to the UK and visitors from the UK." All in all, says Hyland: "J109s are great boats with great potential for inshore and offshore racing".

Unlike the other J boats, the 109 doesn't scrim on comfort, meaning it's roomier below decks, better equipped, more thoughtfully laid-out and well capable of comfortable cruising. Six berths below provide ample accommodation, and above, deck controls are laid out sensibly to make double-handing it a cinch. The

mainsheet traveller sits just ahead of the large wheel, and all lines come back to the cockpit.

Offshore, she's no slouch either, with Arklow boat Aquelina showing good pace in the Round Ireland this year, finishing third in Class 2. RORC's Class 2 standings are also littered with J109s, with the top J109 finishing fourth in the overall offshore series. New boats are readily available, but the second-hand market is strong, with boats holding their value well.

JOIN THE FUN

J/109 Whether you want to win under IRC, be the first 35 footer to round the Fastnet Rock or race around-the-cans in a strict one-design fleet, the J/109 is the obvious choice for Ireland.

With fast approaching 400 J/109s sold worldwide, the Irish class is growing at a rapid pace supported by a strong class association and a competent and committed local dealer.

The 2009 J/109 Irish National Championship will be held as part of Volvo Dun Laoghaire Regatta and a fleet in excess of twenty boats is expected. The legendary J-Cup (the J/109 UK National Championship) takes place in August 2009 in Torbay, just a short hop along the coast after the finish of the Fastnet Race.

For close one-design racing, a bespoke regatta circuit and races on the IRC race-track in an exciting and genuinely dual-purpose performance cruiser-racer, the J/109 is the only 35 footer which will tick all of the boxes.

For more information on the J/109 or any of models in the J Boats range please contact Boyd Boats in Ireland or J-UK.

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Photo: Eddie Myers



NIN CONQUERS FAMILY TO TAKE CROWN

Nicholas D'Leary is the ISA All Ireland Sailing Champion after holding off a strong challenge in a unique battle with his father and brother, who finished second and third at the event in Howth in September. 'Nin' D'Leary kept both his father, Anthony, and brother, Peter, at bay, despite the latter's clearly sharpened skills in the wake of his return from action at the Olympics in Beijing.

Nin was also the recipient of the First Timer GP14 Award as this was his first time to compete in the senior event, although he had previously won the Junior title in 1999 when he was just 12 years old.

In the Junior and Girl's competition, four races were sailed to provide a clear winner in Philip

Doran from Courtown Sailing Club. Discarding a fifth place, he counted two race wins and a second place. "I feel brilliant," he admitted. "Before the weekend I didn't expect it. We had good sailing with a range of conditions and I got consistent results."

Tiffany Brien was second overall at the Howth Yacht Club event, taking the ISA All Ireland Girl Champion title. Competitors were drawn into three groups of eight and each sailed just three races in the opening series. Only the two highest placed sailors from each group automatically qualified for Sunday's final series of races. Two remaining places were

filled by the best performing third placed sailors from each group.

Using the SailFleet J80 keelboats, the playing field was extremely level and ensured exciting racing. Time and time again the boats crossed the finishing line within seconds of each other.

Before all the sailors went afloat they attended a detailed briefing where the dos and don'ts of using the SailFleet boats were outlined in detail. The briefing highlighted that these were part of the Sailing Instructions.

Dinghy sailors were reminded that no toe straps meant that hiking out was not an option, while for cruiser or keelboat sailors, no guardrails also had an impact and they were advised not to sit over the rails. Examples of what was permissible and what was not took some time to run through.

With on-the-water umpiring to monitor infringements, competitors were all keen to have a clear understanding in advance of all the options they could use to maximise the potential of these boats.

All competitors had to either rig or de-rig the boats over the weekend and with Patrick Blaney and his SailFleet team to hand, it was a painless process. As the competition drew to a close, most competitors and spectators gave the SailFleet a resounding thumbs up.



ALL IRELAND CHAMPIONSHIPS ALL IRELAND CHAMPIONSHIPS AL



NIN and his crew collect the trophy

ALL IRELAND MOVES WITH THE TIMES

The All Ireland sailing competition has evolved over time. There is no doubt it has struggled in the past to live up to its own billing as 'Ireland's premier event'. As much as the competition produces a champion of champions on water, it's value is also as a reflection of the state of the national sailing classes.

For example, when Tom Fitzpatrick lifted the trophy back in 1998, 16 invitations had been issued. It was staged in 1970s at Royal Cork. The fleet was drawn from 15 invited classes plus the defending champion.

Times have moved on and recent prosperity means the national authority no longer goes cap in hand to different fleets looking for individual owners to lend equipment.

The purchase of its own fleet of eight J80 keelboats in 2007 has allowed an extra eight invitations to be issued and the competition extended to three days.

It is an expansion, however, that still cannot accommodate all the country's one design classes. Cruiser racing, not represented at all in 1998, now has four berths. Olympic squad participants plus wildcards account for a further seven invitations.

There is obvious merit in such inclusion but not at the expense of classes previously represented.

The fact that one design representation is down from 94% in 1998 to 50% in 2008 in a fleet that has increased from 16 to 24 is a worrying contraction for one design sailors, but it is perhaps more representative of the entire sailing scene. Present ten years ago but absent now are Flying Fifteens, Squibs, J2As, 1720s, Mermaids, Enterprises, National 18s, IDRA 14s, Albacores and disabled sailing representation.

Clearly, the way people are going sailing is changing. Nothing stays the same, not least rules governing the event that now says if a class championship is not run by an ISA national race officer then there will be no invitation. Six classes fell foul of this rule this year. Some classes have died away, such as the Albacore, others disaffiliated and others have not bothered to nominate. And no-one needs a ruler to gauge the impact of the SB3 class, a phenomenon that has been a shot in the arm to the overall scene but damaging to some classes.

This year's event also featured a junior event, running in tandem, with 21 of the country's top juniors competing. The weekend therefore was an ideal forum for discussion on one design sailing, if only to decide the shape of the 'All-Ireland championship' in another ten years. Have you a comment about this story? www.alliat.ie/forum

FINAL RESULTS

- 1st N. O'Leary (Match Race), M. O'Leary and D. O'Connor
- 2nd A. O'Leary (Wild Card Nominee), R. McDonald and R. O'Leary
- 3rd P. O'Leary (Olympic), C. Peelo and J. Walsh
- 4th G. Flannigan (Laser SB5), J. Tomalin and D. Nelson
- 5th S. Hyde (2007 Defending Champion), D. O'Reilly and D. McManus
- 6th T. Goodbody (Olympic Nominee), M. O'Leary and R. O'Sullivan
- 7th S. Brien (RS Elite), S. Milne and B. Espey
- 8th N. Biggs (ICRA Class 1), G. Rile and T. Hyland

FIRST TIMER GP14 AWARD

Nicholas 'Nin' O'Leary

TOP THREE JUNIORS

- 1st Phillip Doran (Toppers) Courtown Sailing Club
- 2nd Tiffany Brien (Laser Radial) Royal North of Ireland YC/Ballyhome YC
- 3rd Chris Penny (2007 Champion) Carrickfergus & East Antrim Boat Club

TOP THREE GIRLS

- 1st Tiffany Brien (Laser Radial) Royal North of Ireland YC/Ballyhome YC
- 2nd Annalise Murphy (Laser Radial) National YC
- 3rd Isabella Morehead (RS Feva) Royal Cork Yacht Club

SAILORS

ISA All Ireland Sailing Championship 2008

Name	Surname	Representing	Crew 1	Crew 2
David	Ni	ICRA 0	Maurice O'Connell	Dave O'Reilly
Nigel	Biggs	ICRA 1	George Rile	Tino Hyland
Neil	Spain	ICRA 2	John Murphy	John Downey
Flor	O'Driscoll	ICRA 3	Marty Maloney	O. O'Farrell
Gareth	Flannigan	Laser SB3	Jeremy Tomlinson	David Nelson
Garrett	May	Pupeteer	Eamonn Byrne	Darragh Byrne
David	Dickson	Shannon OD	Anna Leach	Dara McCarthy
David	Burrows	Etchells	Richard Burrows	Raz Beshoff
Derek	Mitchell	Ruffian 23	Robert Mitchell	Shane Mitchell
Pat	O'Neill	E-Boat	John Banahan	ANO
Simon	Brien	RS Elite	Stephen Milne	ANO
Brian	Goggin	Irish 505	Nelson Moore	Matthius Hellstern
Stefan	Hyde	2008	Daire O'Reilly	Declan McManus
Timmy	Corcoran	GP14	Brian Reilly	Brendan Brogan
Noel	Butler	Fireball	Hugh Butler	Ismail Inan
James	Espey	Laser	John Driscoll	ANO
Adrian	Allen	Multihull	Michael Allen	Andrew Gallagher
Martin	Byrne	Dragon	Conor Byrne	Brian Matthews
Timothy	Goodbody	Olympic	Mossy O'Leary	Rory O'Sullivan
Peter	O'Leary	Olympic	Ciara Peelo	Joss Walsh
Nicholas	O'Leary	Match Race	Mark O'Leary	Dara O'Connor
Anthony	O'Leary	Wild Card	Ross McDonald	Robert O'Leary
Debbie	Hanna	Wild Card	Sue Monson	Gavin Dolg
Mary	O'Loughlin	Wild Card	Karena Knaggs	Katie Dwyer

Junior and Girls Competitors

Name	Surname	Class
Phillip	Doran	Topper
Rory	Lynch	Topper
Timothy	O'Loire	420
Cillian	Dickson	RS Feva
Adam	McCullough	Mirror
Ben	Lynch	Laser
Chris	Peeney	Laser Radial
Richard	Arthurs	Toppaz
Richard	Harrington	Optimist
Aidan	McLaverty	ISA Youth
Mark	Boylan	Wild Card
Michael	Molloy	Wild Card
Aoife	Hurney	Topper
Isabella	Morehead	RS Feva
Catherine	Vaughan	Mirror
Tiffany	Brien	Laser Radial
Katie	Malcolm	Laser 4.7
Danika	Sugrue	Toppaz
Diana	Kissane	Wild Card
Annalise	Murphy	2007 Winner



A Junior's start



FINAL VOYAGE

APPRECIATIONS

LOVE AFFAIR WITH DRAGON RACING

DAVID NOLAN

David Nolan, who died suddenly in February, was a keen sailor all his life.

His sailing career began with his mother Eithne in a Dublin Bay 12 footer – a single sail clinker-built dinghy – raced primarily within Dun Laoghaire Harbour. His early career in the telephone business brought him to Cork where he was introduced to Dragon sailing and there began a life-long love affair with Dragons – and Kinsale – which continued until his untimely death at the age of 54.



A caricature of Dave Nolan by his sister, Barbara

In David's early Dragon days there were no trailers, cranes or 4x4s, so racing was confined to Dublin Bay with the odd visit to Belfast or Kinsale to sail in borrowed boats. An early trip to Strangford Lough in 1977 (borrowed makeshift trailer and borrowed car) resulted in victory in the Irish Dragon Championships with John Kidney and Harry Boyd. Thus began a 30-year sailing relationship with John, Harry and Lee Kidney, which involved six Dragons and loads of success on the race course.

In recent years he became involved in race management and looked forward each year to participating in Alan Crosbie's race officer team in Cork Week.

He bought a new Dragon and towing vehicle only two months before he died, had organised a crew and had booked for

numerous 2008 championships across the continent. He was always well organised.

His wife, Mary, tragically predeceased him by four years, having developed a particularly aggressive form of MS. Mary was also deeply involved in sailing, running the race office and keeping up and the rest of the fleet in order.

David and Mary are survived by their two children – Markham, now living in Dun Laoghaire, and Claire, now living in Los Angeles.

Of course, there was David Nolan the family man and David Nolan the businessman and other aspects of his life – but that is for another forum. May they both rest in peace.

JK



BOATBUILDER AND MERMAID MAN

PETER DUNNE

The passing of Peter Dunne, boatbuilder and sailor, who died in May aged 73, was the end of an era for the sailing community, especially in north county Dublin.

Born in Rush in 1935, the eldest of seven children, Peter went to Rush National School after which he began his apprenticeship as a carpenter.

He had a varied working life, and his last job was at Jim Coleman's on the Channel Road. When Coleman's closed, Peter devoted the rest of his life boatbuilding and repairs – his first love.

He used his skill as a carpenter and his love of boats to build his first Mermaid, Deirdre, in the backyard of his family home in Eden Terrace, starting in February 1953. When the boat was completed, the only way to get it out was to take the roof off the shed and manhandle the vessel over an 8ft wall.

He was a founding member of Rush Sailing Club and was elected hon secretary at the inaugural meeting in 1954. He went on to become Commodore and continued his work and devotion to the club right up to his death.

During the early years of the club he used his boatbuilding skills to teach and helped the members to build Mermaids at the Mill and later GP14s at the clubhouse. He built and launched his first GP14 Phantom in 1966.

He married Nelly in 1959 and daughter Patricia came along a few years later. Patricia remembers sleeping on lifejackets as a child under the deck of a boat, always knowing no matter how high the waves or rough the sea, that she was safe with her dad on the helm.

Despite health worries since 1992, he continued to sail until recently. In 2003, he set sail to Skerries regatta in Deirdre, with

Nellie and grandson Rick as crew. Peter and Deirdre were escorted from Rush by a motor boat who advised they were now participating in the race – causing much delight to have Peter back in the racing fleet in Deirdre and also much consternation to the rescue crews.

The Deirdre took to racing again the next year at Rush regatta when Peter, Tony Bollard and Moss Weldon, with a combined age of 235, participated in the race. There was great camaraderie at the slipway as everyone helped to get the three into the boat.

There was more to him than boats, too: he was on the board of St Maur's Trust, set up to care for the former Chapel of St Maur, and was instrumental in helping to save the old chapel from demolition. In recent times it has been used as an arts centre and will soon be restored by Fingal County Council who are transforming it into a library.



GREGARIOUS SAILOR AND TEACHER MICK LOUGHNANE

News of the death of Mick Loughnane hit all of us like an icy blizzard. He was a gregarious man, immensely popular in many walks of life... in rugby, sailing and in business he left a mark, and we can truly say that we are all the better for having known him.

Mick became well known in the sixties and seventies for his entrepreneurial abilities as he opened two restaurants in the burgeoning Leeson Street. First came the Old Hob, a popular bistro which saw many a late night, and became a meeting place for many of the wide circle of friends and acquaintances of Mick and Susan. He then opened the premises next door, naming it after an eighteenth century dandy called Buck Whaley who had lived down the road

in St. Stephen's Green. That too became a great success with the yuppie population of the day, and in fact it was difficult to be accepted into that particular society if you had not been barred from at least one of Mick's premises!

A great deal of custom came to the two restaurants in Leeson Street from Old Belvedere Rugby Football Club of which Mick was a prominent member. He played with the first XV for several years.

Mick was introduced to sailing by Freddie Cooney, and saw the opportunity of using that interest to build up a business – thus Sail Ireland was born. The Sail Ireland pontoon outside the Trident Hotel in Kinsale became a must-stop-off point for

most visiting yachts, be it for diesel or a couple of beers with Mick. As a result, he was known and liked by yachtsmen from all over Ireland and the UK.

His latest venture was to set up DuYaSail.com, a sailing school in Puerto de la Duquesa on the Costa del Sol. The initiative was aimed at those who wanted to learn to sail in the sun, in the warm tidal waters of the Med. Before the dream was realised, Mick was taken from us, but the sailing school is up and running with one Dufour 40 and another on order.

In some ways, Mick is still at the helm.

JO'B and FC

KERRY SAILING MOURNS ITS KING JERRY O'SULLIVAN



Tralee businessman Jerry O'Sullivan – whose love of sailing and boating brought him to national prominence – passed away on February 3rd last.

Jerry's association with the business community in Tralee stretched back to the time when his father owned grocery and furniture shops in Rock Street, many decades ago. Jerry followed in his father's footsteps in the family business, which he expanded over the years into one of the biggest furniture shops in the country. Later, he diversified into the boat building industry as he had a strong love of the sea and a lifelong association with boating in Tralee Bay.

His love of sailing and boating, in general, stemmed from his childhood, when he sailed his first boat on the lakes near his home in West Kerry. This led him into boat building, a hobby which grew and developed over the years. The landing of renowned ocean sailor Bill Verity into the shores of Tralee Bay in the 1960s was the catalyst in getting Jerry interested in building fibreglass boats – probably the first in Ireland to do so. Bill brought his expertise from the States where fibreglass boatbuilding was in its infancy and between the two of them they developed their first mould as early as 1964. At the time, they were told that these fibreglass boats were only a notion and they couldn't last!!

In the late 50s he built and launched his first sailing yacht – the Geraldine, named after his only daughter – and this was the first serious step at creating a sailing centre at Fenit in Tralee Bay. Not long after, Jerry, along with a few like-minded individuals, put his hand in his own pocket to purchase the land on which the Tralee Bay Sailing Club now sits. In those days, club meetings were held in the family home, where Jerry as secretary cum treasurer kept account of the monies collected for the foundation stone of the clubhouse. This club has now grown to very impressive proportions and Jerry became the father figure for all the sailors who have gone down to the sea there over the past five decades.

Jerry was a very competent seaman and sailed around Ireland and further shores on many an occasion, with utmost confidence in his fearless but competent seamanship. Jerry had other interests – for example, motorbiking and flying – and supported the development of an airport in Farranfore – that which we know today as Kerry Airport. He obtained his own pilot's license in the early 1970s. As a member of Tralee and Fenit Harbour Board, he was a strong supporter of the RNLI in Fenit and was delighted at the reinstatement of a base there in the 1990s. He was also a strong supporter of the Irish Marine Federation and a member of the Irish Cruising Club.

Jerry's main hobby – boating – was to become a business. He employed a number of local men to build a fibreglass boats and O'Sullivan's Marine Ltd was born. Over time, the company grew and the final move was to purchase a large site and build a dedicated factory on the outskirts of Tralee in 1980/1. The company is still located on this site, where his son, Brian, now runs the business, which is well known throughout Ireland.

A man of high principles and values, Jerry was a republican at heart, who wanted only the best for his family, his town, county and country. Jerry's partner in life was his wife, Noreen. Having spent more than 50 years together, they saw all sides of life but always had a phenomenally positive attitude even in the most adverse of times. He was a shrewd businessman, who could drive a hard bargain, but at the same time, could be equally as generous.

Jerry packed a lot into his almost 86 years, is predeceased by his sons, Dermot and Pat, and is sadly missed by his wife, Noreen, children Michael, Brian, Geraldine and Declan, grandchildren Laura, Michelle, David, Kate and Cian, sister Peggy Kelliher, nephews, nieces, relatives and friends.

Suaimhneas siorrai da anam dilis.

BO'S



WINDS FRUSTRATE CORK LEAGUE



THE MATTHEWS AUTUMN LEAGUE AT THE ROYAL CORK YACHT CLUB FELL VICTIM TO THE WEATHER THIS YEAR. JUST THREE LIGHT WIND RACES WERE SAILED, INSTEAD OF THE FIVE WITH ONE DISCARD AS PLANNED, REPORTS CLAIRE BATEMAN

From Tralee in the south west to Dunmore East in the south east yachts came to participate in the Matthews Autumn League in Cork harbour

Photos: Bob Baleman



Matthews
Est. 1904

The event was fortunate to have Richard Leonard as Principal Race Officer who managed three days racing where many others might have failed.

Day one saw almost 90 boats on the start line on an outer harbour course. This was a short windward/leeward course for the six spinnaker fleets with the race officer sending the two well-supported white sail classes on a reaching course from Trabolgan to Ringabella. After two false starts,

the fleet got away on the third attempt and the wind held for all the other starts.

Day two saw a significant swell outside Roches Point and Richard Leonard sent all the fleets on courses that would take them inside the harbour with a finish at Cage Buoy just outside Crosshaven. The light north easterly wind proved unpredictable from the start with significant wind shifts and lots of holes with no wind at all.

OCTOBER LEAGUE

The ebbing tide made laying the windward mark awkward and its variability defied the efforts of many crews to set spinnakers on the reach over towards Ringabella and W2. Many boats sat motionless in the water or drifted backwards in the ebbing tide but for many the frustrating lack of wind proved too much. As the afternoon wore on, so did the number of retirals.

By 4pm there were boats lying all over the harbour with their drooping sails but as the tide turned so the cyclonic wind began to fill in from the south at about 5 kts. With a shortened course at No. 13, spinnakers flew up on every boat heading north.

On day three the morning was misty with drizzle and hardly a breath of wind in the harbour – hardly October league weather. The light and variable southerly wind which continued to build forced the Race Officer to re-set the starting line twice so it was 2pm before the first of the fleets were sent off on harbour courses. This proved to be a useful compromise as the wind stayed light and the spring tide gained strength. Tidal tactics proved crucial with boats clawing their way up both sides of the harbour.

On days four and five high winds and rain prevented racing and so overall results were based on the three races run.

Conor and Denise Phelan kindly gave the use of their First 35 Endeavour to the CIT Cork students team to facilitate their work-up during the Matthews Autumn League prior to their departure for the Student World Yachting Championship – and they won. See page 72 for our full report



Tom Roche's Meridian from Kinsale in the opening race



Andrew Creighton's Mustang Sally and Dave Dwyer's Mariners Cove approach the weather mark on opposite tacks in the opening race



RESULTS

IRC CLASS 1

Wavetrain – Simon Coveney
Checkmate – Mike McCarthy
Endeavour – Nicholas O'Leary

ECHO CLASS 1

Saxon – Senator Eric and Wan Waterman
Aisha – Kevin Lane
Tux – Mary O' Keefe

ECHO CLASS 2

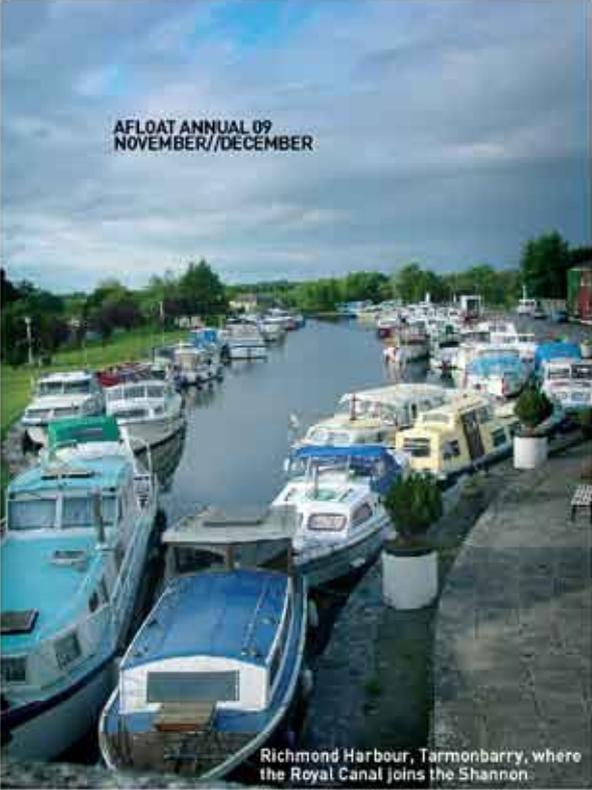
Harmony – Jerome McCarthy
Magic Formula – Max Philips
No Excuse – Ted Crosbie

ECHO CLASS 3

Chameleon – Padraig O'Donovan
Running Wild – Sullivan Brothers
Fast Buck – John and Fiona Murphy

IRC 2 WHITESAIL

Rapparee – Tom O'Mahony
Eilie – L. Donnelly and Mark Reardon
Aishling – Bryan Heffernan



Richmond Harbour, Tarmonbarry, where the Royal Canal joins the Shannon.



The navigation arches at Carrick-on-Shannon

FULL CIRCLE ON THE CANALS

Brian J Goggin looks forward to the reopening of the Royal

As I write, various IWAI branches are preparing for end-of-season cruises. Some intrepid inland boaters (equipped with wheelhouses and heaters) keep going all year round: one group of Heritage Boat Association enthusiasts holds an end-of-season rally on Lough Derg after Christmas, with a start-of-season rally the next day.

Warning on water

Maybe the weather will be better over Christmas than it has been so far this year. Wet weather doesn't just depress boaters' spirits: it also depresses boating activity, certainly for that year and perhaps in subsequent years, amongst both owners and hirers. The traffic figures for the Shannon and the Shannon-erne Waterway, kindly supplied by Waterways Ireland, do suggest that activity has been down this year.

Strong flows on the Shannon, as a result of the rainfall, were another problem. There were many reports of boats being pinned across bridges by the flow of the current. I do not know of any central source of information on the number and

severity of these incidents, but perhaps it's time there was one. I don't mean to suggest that we need a full investigation of every incident by the Marine Casualty Investigation Board, but it would be useful to be able to measure the extent of the problem — and perhaps even to do something about it.

One difficulty is that the Shannon is badly designed for its current uses and level of traffic: bridges (where current speeds up) close to locks (where boats must slow down), quays and pontoons close to bridges and locks so that there are always boat movements across the traffic streams, single navigation arches with restricted visibility, and pontoons above bridges forcing boats to make awkward approaches. If we are going to have strong flows every summer, some re-engineering may be required; Waterways Ireland's new booms at weirs and at Killaloe Bridge are welcome improvements, but we may need extra navigation arches and fewer pontoons close to bridges.

In the short term, though, perhaps more could be done to provide information

and warnings to boaters, and especially to hirers and others with relatively little experience. On the Thames, large yellow warning boards are shown at locks to warn boaters that the flow is increasing or to alert them when it is decreasing; unpowered boats are advised to moor and powered boats are advised to seek safe moorings. The next stage is large red boards saying 'Caution: Strong Stream', which means all boats are advised not to navigate. There is also a telephone floodline giving recorded information.

Waterways Ireland (WI) does issue warnings, but the question is whether the warnings are reaching (or getting through to) those who need them most. The Shannon has many fewer locks than the Thames, so there are fewer places where warnings could be placed; WI may need to think of new ways of getting the information out.

It would also be useful if they could provide more precise information: for example, it would be nice to know the speed of the current at places like Shannon Grove and under the navigation arches of bridges.

Reopening the Royal

For Waterways Ireland, the big event for 2009, all going well, will be the reopening of the Royal Canal. It runs from Spencer Dock through Maynooth, Kilcock, Enfield, Kinnegad, Mullingar, Ballynacargy and Abbeyshrule to join the Shannon at Richmond Harbour, near Tarmonbarry. Completed in 1817, it was not very successful commercially, and in 1845 it was bought by the Midland Great Western Railway which wanted the wayleaves for its track: the railway line follows the canal closely as far as Mullingar.

Although the MGWR did not particularly want the canal itself, it wasn't allowed to close it. But traffic gradually declined, except during the Emergency (World War 2), when turf was carried to Dublin to replace the coal that the UK refused to supply. When L.T.C. Rolt travelled on the canal just after WW2, there were only two traders left, and the last of them, James Leech of Killucan, stopped carrying in 1951. The canal was officially closed to navigation in 1961, and since then the Royal Canal Amenity Group has been fighting for its restoration.

The canal probably has more pubs along it than the Grand. It has fine stonework, an aqueduct 100 feet in the air, nice harbours and other attractions, including (now) an automatic lifting bridge at Begnagh, which scans the canal seeking boats and lifts when it sees one coming. The locks out of Dublin, up from Spencer Dock to Cabra, are hard work, but then there is the attractive stretch past Ashtown and Dunsink followed by the dramatic crossing of the M50 at Blanchardstown.

New sector gates are being installed at Spencer Dock to control access from the Liffey and to counter flooding. In Co Longford, where the local authority installed low culverted road-crossings in many places, the last of the culverts, at Lyneen, will be replaced by a fixed bridge. Richmond Harbour will be closed this winter for maintenance and some other minor works are underway; it is even possible that an improved water supply, from Lough Ennell, will be made available.

At first, WI will have to control traffic and monitor the banks closely to ensure that they are standing up to the traffic: most of the Royal boats, in the old days, were horse-drawn. But WI suggested, at a meeting in April 2008, that there will be a series of events next summer, from Dublin to the western end, after which traffic will once again be admitted from the Shannon. Unfortunately WI was unable to provide us with any details of decisions made since April, so we cannot say exactly what will be happening on what dates.

Offaly hits the right note

Fleadh Cheoil na hÉireann is a traditional music event organised by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, and for the past two years it has been held in Tullamore. The Offaly Branch of IWAI has taken advantage of this to encourage more boats to use the Grand Canal: it has organised Float to the Fleadh, a convoy from Shannon Harbour to Tullamore. This year, it even persuaded three of the Shannon cruiser hire firms, Silverline, Emerald Star and CarrickCraft, to allow Fleadh-goers to hire boats and take them along the canal to Tullamore.

The event was a magnificent success, with over 80 boats in Tullamore for the Fleadh. The very presence of the boats increased awareness of the canal, and Offaly Branch enhanced the effect by arranging events and ensuring media coverage.

If the Fleadh returns to Tullamore in 2009, another Float event will be arranged. But Offaly's initiative provides a guideline for other IWAI branches, showing the advantage of linking in with major non-waterway events. Thus next year, for example, IWAI's North Barrow Branch, based in Athy, may be able to link in with the National Ploughing Championships, which will be held on a site between the Athy/Stradbally road and the Barrow Line of the Grand Canal.

The trip to the Fleadh wasn't altogether uneventful, for many boats were travelling on the weekend before the Fleadh began, when we had one of the heaviest downpours on record. The 30km Long Level above Ballycommon (east of Tullamore) received very large amounts of water, only some of which could be released via the usual overflows. Accordingly, it had to be drained westward, down the canal, over 40km to the Shannon.

Waterways Ireland staff worked throughout the weekend, including both Saturday and Sunday nights, with four racks open on all gates from Ballycommon to the Shannon: an unprecedented operation that prevented flooding over large areas. The resulting flow on the canal was such that navigation had to be stopped; the boats heading for the Fleadh were directed to Pollagh, where they moored safely until the flow subsided.

Royal Canal crossing the M50

A strong stream at Killaloe bridge

Even wooden cruisers can cope with the Grand Canal

THE CANAL PROBABLY HAS MORE PUBS ALONG IT THAN THE GRAND. IT HAS FINE STONEMWORK, AN AQUEDUCT 100 FEET IN THE AIR, NICE HARBOURS AND OTHER ATTRACTIONS

The Canal Stores at Clonas awaiting the reopening of the Ulster Canal

Heading North on the Jamestown Canal



A Sand Barge at Rams Island



Farrs marina



Northern exposure for WI

The best way of getting information about what Waterways Ireland is doing is to look on the website of the Northern Ireland Assembly. Some information about WI's doings, north and south of the border, is available on the House of Lords website, generally as a result of a question from John Dunn Laird, Baron Laird of Artigarvan, but he has been rather quiet since April 2007. Waterways Ireland is occasionally mentioned in the Oireachtas, but its doings are largely ignored in the southern legislature.

In Northern Ireland, however, the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure holds regular hearings, received reports from the relevant minister and publishes full information on its website <http://www.niassembly.gov.uk>. In September, Gregory Campbell, the NI Minister of Culture, Arts and Leisure, reported to the Committee on July's meeting of the North/South Ministerial Council (Inland Waterways Sectoral Format). The NI representatives were the Minister for Regional Development, Conor Murphy, and Mr Campbell; Éamon Ó Cuív, Minister for Community, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs, represented the Irish government. The meeting received a report from WI's Chief Executive, John Martin.

The report said that, since October 2007, WI had installed 86m of moorings on the Royal Canal and on the Shannon, 283m on the Erne and 36m on the Lower Bann. WI's new HQ building, in Enniskillen, was on time and on budget. It intended to reopen the Royal in 2009, to improve other navigations and to complete "investigations and construction of extensions on the Shannon navigation". WI has been consulting landowners and other interests along the

line of the Ulster Canal from the River Finn (Lough Erne) to Clones; it has "commenced procedures to have the preliminary design undertaken and [proposes] to take forward the land acquisition in advance of letting the contract". It intends to register all its property, first assessing what the process might need, and it has carried out some marketing.

WI's strategy has "five marketing objectives, which are: awareness creation; development of a corporate identity; promoting greater use of the waterways; working in partnership with other bodies; and building a platform for sustained development".

The Committee discussed the report of the meeting, with questions to the Minister on the timescale for reopening the Ulster Canal, the slight under-representation of Protestants amongst the 76 permanent WI employees in Northern Ireland, potential for development of the Lower Bann and Lough Neagh, the effect of currency fluctuations and of the "pressures on public-expenditure budgets in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland".

In that context, it should be noted that Brian Lenihan's budget in October 2008 involved cuts in provision for pensioners, in certain education and health services and in the estimates for agriculture, transport and arts, sport and tourism. However, the estimate for Waterways Ireland's capital and current expenditure is the same as it was last year. According to WI's current Corporate Plan, operating revenue — which includes what boaters pay — will amount to €440,000 in each of the years 2008, 2009 and 2010; current expenditure in those years is expected to be €38,550,000, €39,550,000 and €41,330,000 respectively.

WI'S STRATEGY HAS "FIVE MARKETING OBJECTIVES, WHICH ARE: AWARENESS CREATION; DEVELOPMENT OF A CORPORATE IDENTITY; PROMOTING GREATER USE OF THE WATERWAYS; WORKING IN PARTNERSHIP WITH OTHER BODIES; AND BUILDING A PLATFORM FOR SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT"

Ireland's Commodore's Cup squads were admittedly homegrown in terms of design. In either Kers or Wicklow-designed Mills, the Green and White fleet didn't stray far from home to compete in the Solent.

Similarly, the French decided to keep things local, and turned heads with some of their chosen weapons. Four of the nine French boats came from a boatyard miles from the sea, not far from Poitiers, where John Archambault has been equipping sailors with racecraft since 1954.

**JOIN
THE**

A-TEAM

**AFLOAT TAKES A SPIN
IN THE ARCHAMBAULT
35, FRANCE'S LATEST
IRC OFFERING WITH
AN INCREASINGLY
IMPRESSIVE
PEDIGREE**



Now run by his sons, this family business has sold over 1,600 boats and employs 50 people. Small enough to manage yet big enough to compete against the likes of Beneteau, the company is growing by ten per cent per year.

"We feel that the boat does 'exactly what it says on the tin'," says designer Jon Archambault of the A35: "The design brief called for a good all-round sailing boat, not just in the obvious IRC rating areas, but also for a boat that was good for a family as well as race crew and that performed out on the water.

The A35 was a natural progression from the larger A40 design. This is a sleek looking yacht, but performance suffered under IRC handicap in the early years of the 2004 Commodores Cup. Since then, they have updated the design and three A40s raced in the 2008 Commodores Cup.

Also of interest is the smaller A31, which will be available shortly and looks like it could be a very strong competitor on the IRC scene. Bringing forward some lessons from the A40, designer Joubert Nivelt's objective was to create a production boat that targeted the crowded cruiser/racer mid-market, tackling the likes of the popular J109, Beneteau 34.7, X35 and Kerr 32 head-on.

A racing package can be added to the standard boat. The most successful upgrade so far has been Batistyl, which won Class 3 and robbed the Irish of the 2006 Commodores' Cup. Since then, the A35 has won its class at Spi Ouest, the Audi IRC Australian Championship and Volvo Dun Laoghaire Week, among others. It's making inroads here too, with five boats racing in Ireland and more on the way.



THE COCKPIT IS PURE RACE BRED WITH PLENTY OF SPACE TO MOVE ABOUT. THE DECK IS INTELLIGENTLY LAID OUT WITH FITTINGS FROM LEWMAR AND RONSTAN



You can notice an A35 from a distance by its signature teardrop windows and minimalist coach roof. It certainly stands out as a good looking boat in the marina. For its length, it's proportionately wider and lighter than the 34.7 and slightly heavier than the X35.

The cockpit is pure race bred with plenty of space to move about. The deck is intelligently laid out with fittings from Lewmar and Ronstan. The large mainsheet track, located behind the tiller, gives plenty of scope to trim accurately and manipulate the other sail controls without too much fuss. All the loads were manageable.

There's an optional carbon mast and boom for €25k extra, but this has not been so popular. Other than that, the race package includes a carbon spinnaker pole, all the necessary spinnaker control lines and the genoa inhaulers. Sails can be supplied by Archambault or bought from your own choice of sailmaker.

Below deck there is a separate head and shower room and large double aft cabin. The interior is well proportioned but fairly basic compared, for example, to a Beneteau. Its construction is finished to a very high standard.

Afloat enlisted former Olympian Tom Fitzpatrick, who has been sailing an A35 during the Howth Autumn League, to talk us through its handling: "The A35 is available with a tiller or wheel, but most owners choose a tiller," he explained. "The helm is responsive with enough feel in the rudder to tell you when something is not quite balanced in the rig. It's rewarding to hold the tiller when the boat is set up right and tracks straight and fast in the water.

"Upwind, the boat behaves well. As with most yachts, it's important to keep a balance between the power in your rig and your angle of heel. "On the A35, because it's wide at the stern, the leeward quarter lets you know exactly when you have heeled too far by the noise of churning water and the feeling that you are giving away precious metres on the race track.

"We found the A35 easy to set up and hit the polars in 12knts and again in 6-8knts during the second race in Howth.



Downwind

With a crew of nine, there's a choice of either the A-sail or a conventional symmetrical spinnaker. In around-the-cans racing, this can force some tactical decision making. "When we first launched the A-sail, it became clear that this boat had much more to offer. It accelerated up to top speed quickly and felt more like something under 30 feet than 35 feet. After you find the best downwind angle, the trick is to keep the speed up, while getting the best VMG you can.

"At top speed, the A35 allows the helm to weave downwind, going low down the waves and coming back up to catch the next one. In comparison, the 49er was pretty much like motorway driving in a straight line because you passed over the waves so quickly, there was no point in taking them low.

"The symmetrical spinnaker looks slightly smaller than it should be, although this is probably for rating reasons, but it would be nicer if this was bigger. When racing in under eight knots, it always felt like we needed more power.

"The flip side is that it was very easy to control and you don't get as much roll to windward compared to other designs. You may know that sickening feeling when the boat heels right over to windward and at any minute the rudder is going to stall out and a Chinese gybe is inevitable.

We were using McWilliam sails who have designed for nearly all the Irish boats. They use the latest in sail technology and I couldn't fault their design in any way. The boat is moulded with a bow pole aperture for the A-sail. Batistyl use the conventional pole without a sprit fitted, but this is relatively easy to retro fit.

The local Irish agent, Prolines, have an A35 available to test sail. Call Rob McConnell on 087 628 9219 to arrange a visit.

A35 SPECIFICATIONS

Design	Joubert Nivellet, 2005
LOA	10.59m
Beam	3.55m
Draught	2.1m
Displacement	4,450kg
Sail Area	100% 67.5sq m Main 38sq m Genoa (105%) 29.5sq m Symmetric 95sq m Asymmetric 109sq m
Rating	1.030
Contact	Rob McConnell Prolines Naval Architects, Waterford Business Park, Cork Road, Waterford Tel: 087 628 9219 www.prolines.ie

COMPARISONS

J/109

The J109 is undoubtedly popular in Ireland and a strong performer under IRC, with a good resale value. A good one-design choice.

LOA	10.75m
Beam	3.51m
Draught	2.1km
Displacement	4,944kg
Sail Area	Upwind 54.3sq m Asymmetric 95sq m

BENETEAU FIRST 34.7

Beneteau as always provide top quality products and the 34.7 is a great cruiser/racer option. Not the best performer on IRC but perfect for club racing.

LOA	10.3m
Beam	3.37m
Draught	2km
Displacement	4,400kg
Sail Area	Upwind 70.3sq m Asymmetric 91sq m



RACING FAVOURITE



The new Dehler 34RS is a racing boat that can be cruised, rather than the other way around, writes Graham Smith

After such a poor summer, the request from the Editor to test a boat in late October didn't sound too enticing. But as luck would have it, it was a glorious day, with the sun shining through, a pleasant moderate breeze and a flat sea on Dublin Bay – perfect conditions for trying out the new Dehler 34RS.

Dehler is one of the three big German boat brands and while some of its designs dating back to the 1960s might have looked a little staid, the development of the highly successful DB1 and 2 on the racing circuit in the 1980s really made sailing folk sit up and take notice. A Jude/Vrolik-designed range between 1998 and 2005 secured its position at the forefront of boat production and the new 34RS has certainly moved the bar up a few notches. On this occasion, Dehler went to Simonis Voogd Design BV to create the new era of its racing and cruising yachts, and the 34 is one of an exciting selection.



First impressions

We joined the 34RS in the middle of Dun Laoghaire Harbour and while a high freeboard is one of its design features, she didn't look ungainly on the water. Indeed, the freeboard wasn't that obvious until we were back on the pontoon in the marina.

A straight bow, a flat deck line, a coachroof sloping gently backwards with designer windows, a smoothly curving cockpit coaming and a tall fractional rig all combined to give an attractive look that was immediately appealing.



A long rudder and large wheel meant good control and the comforting absence of any broaching movement



Plenty of room for up to 8 diners around the fold-away saloon table wrapped around the keel-stepped mast



Mast blocks at deck level direct lines outboard and lead aft to the cockpit under protective panels



On top

Once on deck, it became clear that this is a racing boat that can be cruised, rather than the other way around. The helming position sits in front of an open transom and behind a large wheel housed aft of the mainsheet track across the full beam of a spacious cockpit. The cockpit seating is at the same height as the side deck (separated by the curved coaming), so there is no sudden change of levels when racing.

But there are plenty of innovations of interest to both racers and cruisers alike. At the stern, LED navigation lights mounted on the pushpit, a clever swimming ladder that retracts flush into the transom, and a patented hatch door design allowing the door to concertina down into itself and be closed from inside and outside at various heights, are among the standard features.

The cockpit floor houses an eight-man life-raft when sailing offshore (but it could be an ideal cold store for liquid refreshment while in port!), the starboard cockpit locker is so vast that you need the ladder provided to get to the bottom and the open stern has room for two large removable transom utility boxes (which can be left ashore during racing).

The side windows are an attractive shape, housed in contemporary metal frames while the two hatches, one either side of the mast, are flush fitting with gas struts. At the bow, the furling mechanism is housed below deck, leaving a neat, unobtrusive fitting under the pulpit.

As you might expect from anything constructed by the Germans, this boat is built with strength and rigidity as a matter of course. Aluminium profiles, for instances, are laminated into the hull where it joins the deck to support high-loaded deck equipment and that includes the stanchion posts.

Harken blocks, Nomen folding cleats (to avoid warps catching when you don't want them to), quick reefing systems and rod-rigging are all part of the racing package.

Using a slatted, fold-in seat arrangement, the saloon berth can be quickly stowed away to convert it into a bench seat around the saloon table



Sailing comfortably upwind towards the Poolbeg towers

Down below

Below deck is the usual compromise between cruising needs and racing demands. A teak-finished interior, with elements of brushed aluminium and light coloured ceiling liner, two large saloon windows on each side and two deck hatches to give plenty of natural light, help to give a feeling of space.

The blue upholstery on the test boat served to darken the interior; cream fabric would be a brighter option, if a little more difficult to keep clean in the long term.

A spacious aft cabin has as much cupboard and locker space for personal belongings as the large forward cabin, while the U-shaped sofa in the saloon transforms into another double berth by way of a clever slatted frame which slots under the seat.

The keel-stepped mast does impact on space below but then this is a racer first, so some leeway has to be given in this area. The saloon table folds down on both sides of the mast, giving adequate space for casual seating.

Electric-pressurised water supply, a two-burner stove and oven, two stainless steel sinks and a coolbox mean the L-shaped galley is a good working area while the navigator has plenty of space around a generous chart table. Behind the chart table is a separate head with pump toilet, wash basin and a deep wet locker for foul weather gear.

Contemporary design cabin windows are a feature of the 34RS's profile



Clever cleat – snaps shut when not in use, so nothing to snag when you least expect it.

The ample-sized head and shower compartment aft of the navigation station features a deep hanging locker behind the toilet.



Under sail

In keeping with modern global trends, the 34 has been optimised for better IRC performance, so the high freeboard, reasonable beam for space and stability and waterline length all help to give effective acceleration and speed.

"Thanks to the newly developed rudder.. the Dehler 34 offers excellent upwind sailing performance" boasts the glossy brochure and it certainly measures up to that claim. Due to a moderate 1.95 metre draft, the larger rudder has a better aspect ratio than the keel and its well-balanced shape and gearing to the large diameter wheel leaves the steering light and sensitive.

Admittedly we were sailing in flat water in 10–12 knots of wind, but this was being converted into over 7 knots upwind without any effort. With the balanced wheel, there was never a fear of broaching in the heavy gusts which is very comforting. Other 34 footers are less inclined to behave so well!

Whether standing or sitting on the cockpit coaming, the helming position is excellent, offering a good view of the forestay and bow. In addition, the wide side-decks mean crews' bodies and heads don't get in the way of that all-important view forward.

Boat speed through the tack was also impressive. From 7 knots beating, the 34 dropped less than 2 knots during the manoeuvre and that turning speed can obviously be improved with a racing crew. Equally impressive is the acceleration back to the original speed, supporting the builder's claims in the promotional material about performance.

The boat was easy to sail and, just as importantly, was enjoyable to sail as well.

Under power

Racing boats only need engines to get to and from a race course and to make their way around a mooring or marina, so in that respect, the 34RS is amply equipped. The Volvo Penta Compact 21hp diesel engine with folding prop and saildrive comes as standard – more than adequate for what's required.

As is the norm these days, attention has been paid to sound-proofing below deck and the engine is easily accessed from the main saloon and from either side, via the aft cabin and/or the head compartment. On deck, the engine controls are easily handled, to the helm's right hand.

TO BUY FOR

Powerful performance under sail is definitely a major plus and the range of innovative fittings and ideas is very impressive.

TO CRY FOR

I would opt for the lighter interior colours to give a sense of even more space below, while the grab handles on the coachroof look like they were an afterthought!

GO FOR MORE

The standard specification is very good but the RS package is even better and gives just that bit extra when you want to race. Teak side decks would add to the classy feel.

HOW MUCH?

The Dehler 34 comes in at €131,730 ex VAT, delivery and commissioning but including a set of cruising sails. The 34RS racing spec version has more to offer and that is reflected in a price of €134,700 but without sails (to give the owner the freedom to use their favoured sailmaker!), again ex VAT, delivery and commissioning.

AFLOAT VERDICT

The letters RS after 34 stands for Regatta Specification and for those who want a racing boat that they can cruise, then this is worthy of serious consideration.

Dehler boats are distributed in Britain and Ireland by GC Marine, with Alan Corr of International Marine Services, the newly-appointed Irish agent. Alan is contactable on 087 2533 431.

FAIR PLAY



FAIRLINE TOOK A RISK IN DESIGNING THE NEW SQUADRON 55 BUT IT HAS PAID OFF HANDSOMELY, WRITES DAG PIKE

Fairline took a big risk when it decided to introduce a new Squadron 55 to its range. The original 55, developed 10 years ago, was an iconic design that has proved to be its most successful model ever. It would not be an exaggeration to say that the original 55 marked the beginning of the modern day Fairline and hundreds have been sold. Could the new version live up to this reputation?

After a sea trial in challenging conditions, the answer is a resounding yes. With 35 boats ordered from the drawing board, it seems that I'm not the only one who has come to this conclusion.

What has changed over ten years? Well, the sure handling and comfortable living areas are still there but the big difference is in the sophistication. The interior of this new design is very sophisticated in a modern way but manages to combine this with feeling extremely comfortable so that you don't feel over-awed by the high style. Then there is the sophistication of the on-board systems. Computer control rules the roost here with even the steering using 'fly-by-wire' systems but there's enough manual input required to leave you feeling fully in control. It's a happy combination that makes you feel that this is a true leisure yacht that works with you all the time.

The 55 feels great in port and it doesn't disappoint at sea. The wind was blowing at 25 knots, the sort of conditions in which many builders wouldn't let you take a boat out for a sea trial. Fairline has no such reservations and positively encourages the use of full throttle in

four-foot waves with breaking crests. Sure, there was some slamming into the head seas at full speed but then you wouldn't normally use full throttle in these conditions. Ease back and the ride becomes smoother and well controlled.

You can use the quick acting flaps to keep the bow down in these conditions but in fact the ride was smoother with the flaps up. The boat was a joy to drive and at the 26-knot cruising speed you felt you could go on all day at this rate. Turn downwind in the rough conditions and the ride was a bit less frenetic and here the full bow shape came into its own, creating generous lift to smooth out the ride. Having just come back from the rough ride of winning the Round Britain Powerboat Race, it was sheer joy to experience the best of the sophisticated side of boating.

The hull that creates this good-natured performance appears fairly conventional with a moderate deadrise vee in the hull and a chine line that keeps low at the bow. Below the waterline, the entry is quite fine but the bow shape widens out quickly above the chine to create generous space for the accommodation.

Fairline's designers have tweaked the shape here and there based on experience and the propellers operate in shallow semi-tunnels. Rather than squeeze in the maximum number of cabins, Fairline has opted for a three-cabin layout below with the VIP cabin forward and the twin cabin sharing a bathroom. This means that all of the cabins enjoy plenty of space and this in turn leads to a relaxing feel.

The decor is subdued and features a combination of textured fabrics and highly polished American walnut wood with some black leather trim. Other lighter woods are available.

In the master cabin the bed is athwartships, facing the bathroom on the starboard side. There's a clear view through the large side window in the bathroom and a matching window on the other side above the head of the bed. You can't help feeling that the bed might have been better placed with the headboard against the aft bulkhead but here there is a large double closet, lockers and drawers all finished as mirrors that expand the apparent size of the cabin. This helps to compensate for the reduced headroom over part of the bed.

The twin cabin and the VIP cabin forward follow a conventional layout. The clever design of the escape hatch in the VIP cabin incorporates a forward-facing window, filling it with light. The shared bathroom is large and is ensuite with the VIP cabin and it also serves as the day head with a door at the foot of the access stairs. All of the

cabins are fitted with iPod decking stations and there is a fourth station in the deck saloon.

The saloon is divided by steps into the lounge and the galley/dining area – headroom over the lounge is only around 6' 6" which gives it something of a cramped feel. Nevertheless it feels comfortable once you are sitting down and there's a large flat screen TV opposite the settee for entertainment.

Although it looks wonderful, I'm not sure about the off-white carpet over the whole of the interior that could prove a nightmare to keep clean but there are options for alternative colours.

The open plan galley is brilliant, easy to use and accessible although serious cooks might prefer a proper oven rather than the microwave fitted. Opposite is a fold-out diagonal dining table that fits into the corner settee with two stools to make up the seating numbers. This is one of four possible dining areas on the 55 footer and with cooking facilities in the galley and on the flybridge barbecue bar, there's no shortage of eating options.



The seating at the helm comprises two excellent adjustable seats with a centre access so each can be reached without disturbing the other. Given the spirited performance of this boat, the occupants here are well secured but the rest of the guests are left to their own devices with just settee seats with no handholds. Each helm seat has its own navigation display but they are so far apart that it would be difficult to make comparisons between radar and chart in challenging navigation situations. There is provision for a paper chart on the top of the dash but the clear plastic cover on it is likely to cause serious reflections.

As on nearly every motor yacht, the windscreen pillars are thick and the side view from the helm is seriously obstructed. Similarly there is virtually no view astern except for that provided by the CCTV. On the flybridge the view is better and in order to keep the profile low, the helm is raised above its low level surroundings. The reverse angle windscreen offers no protection except to the occupants of the sunbed that surrounds the helm station. Further aft on the flybridge, the rails are very low on the port side just by the stairs and you feel very vulnerable passing this spot.

The power comes from twin Volvo Penta D-12 diesels, each producing 775 hp. These drive through a conventional propeller and shaft system to give a top speed in the low thirties. The engineering is excellent and the engine compartment looks immaculate and comes complete with a dedicated engine and gearbox oil change system. Aft of the engine compartment is a compact crew cabin and this can also be specified as a utility room.

The profile of the 55 looks well balanced but the lines of both hull and superstructure suggest that the accent has been put on generating maximum internal space and this comes at the expense of narrow side decks. On the foredeck there is another sunbed, this one fitted with a cooler box so drinks are ready at hand. The mast for the antenna is a two-pronged affair that flares out at the top to create a balancing termination to the sensuous flow of the flybridge.

For a first off prototype, this new 55 is brilliant. There are a few areas where the design needs tweaking, such as the visibility from the helm and various security matters, but I don't think that I have come across a boat that is so nearly right at the first attempt. Congratulations to the Fairline designers – they have set a standard that will be hard to follow.



FAIRLINE SQUADRON 55 SPECIFICATIONS

Length overall	55 ft 05 ins
Length waterline	46 ft 06 ins
Beam	15 ft 09 ins
Draft	4 ft 03 ins
Displacement	21.81 tons
Hull deadrise	18°
Fuel capacity	636 gals
Water capacity	301 gals
Engines	2 x 770 hp Volvo Penta D12 diesels
Propulsion	Shafts and propellers
Design	Bernard Olesinski and Fairline
Builder	Fairline Boats
Price	available from €1.215m inc VAT

STANDARD EQUIPMENT

- Electric capstan
- Bose Hi Fi and I Pod Docking system
- Bow thruster
- Full cutlery and crockery set
- Flybridge bar and barbecue with fridge
- LCD 32 inch TV
- Starboard side entrance door
- Teak decks in cockpit and flybridge
- Air conditioning
- Docks i.e TV, phone and water inlets
- Side boarding ladder
- Vaccuflush toilet system
- Glendinning Cable Master
- Onan 21 kva generator
- Fairline Boat Management System
- Raymarine combined chart plotter and radar
- Electric ceramic hob
- Microwave oven
- Fridge
- Twin sinks
- Safe
- 22" LCD TV in master
- Fast acting flaps

OPTIONAL EQUIPMENT

- Additional Raymarine navigation displays
- Aft crew cabin
- Audio upgrade pack
- AIS unit
- Upgrade to bang and Olefsen audio visual package
- Stern thruster
- Williams 325 Jet tender
- Control station in the cockpit
- Water maker
- Icemaker on the flybridge
- Mood lighting system
- Surveillance camera in the engine room
- Teak side decks
- Optional wood and fabric finishes

TO DIE FOR

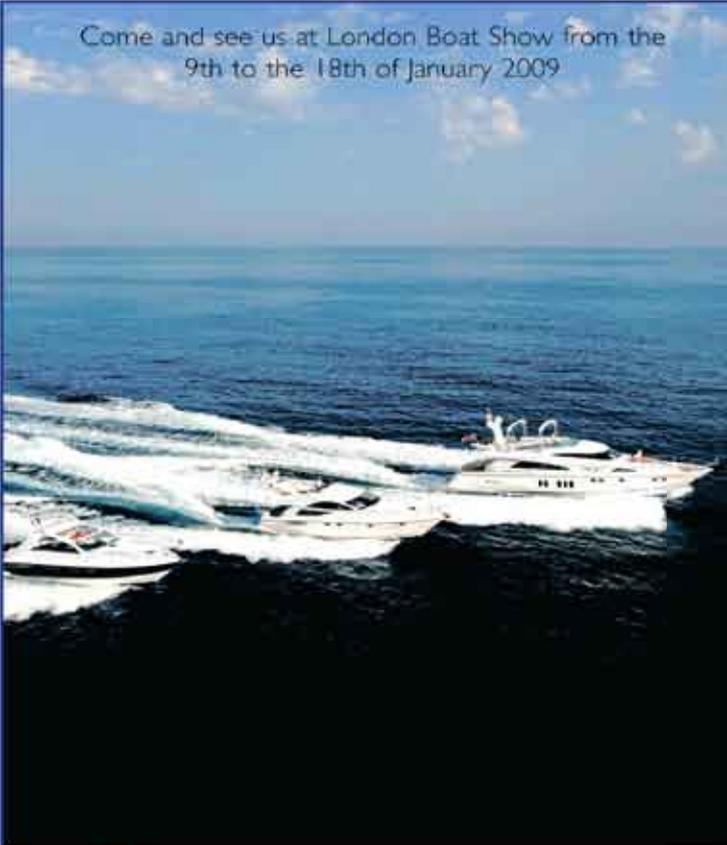
- Great handling
- Great style
- Good helm seating
- Good galley
- Forward window VIP cabin

TO CRY FOR

- Visibility from the lower helm
- Low rails on flybridge
- Only microwave oven in the galley
- Crew cabin designed for dwarves
- No secure guest seating

Fairline are distributed in Ireland by Fairline Ireland
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Fax +353 (0)21 4777309

Come and see us at London Boat Show from the
9th to the 18th of January 2009





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SCREAMING REELS LANDS TOP PRIZE



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ITS 23-YEAR HISTORY, AN IRISH BOAT HAS WON THE ROSSLARE SMALL BOATS FESTIVAL. IN AN EXTREMELY TIGHT ENCOUNTER, WRITES DEREK EVANS



Anglers fishing from Stella fishing during the competition

Screaming Reels from Rosie's Sea Angling Club in Cork took top honours in this prestigious event with 26 different species of fish.

The four-day festival – sponsored by Failte Ireland, Sea Angler Magazine, Navman Electronics and Daiwa Sports – attracted more than 100 anglers in 37 boats from Liverpool, Isle of Wight, Southport, Scotland, Wales and Ireland.

A window of good weather allowed anglers to launch from Kilmore Quay and explore new areas along the Wexford coastline, the Saltee Islands, Brandy Rocks and beyond. This rare opportunity had a positive effect on catches and resulted in a record total of 41 different species. Once recorded, all fish were released back to the water.

Some unusual species included sea scorpion, tadpole fish, pipefish, clingfish and sand goby. The heaviest round fish, a conger of 8.26kg, fell to Matt Lowery of Lauren 2, and the heaviest flat fish proved to be a tie with Sandpiper and Screaming Reels both catching plaice of 0.42kg. Isle of Wight angler Robert Turner landed a specimen ballan wrasse of 2.44kg (to be verified by the Irish Specimen Fish Committee). The appearance of black bream in good numbers was particularly pleasing to the organisers.

Following four days of spectacular angling, the Screaming Reels team of Martyn Rayner, Seirt Shults and Neville Murphy were declared winners

with 26 species for 23.87kg. In second place, and a mere 0.7kg behind, were Steve Mills, Mike Hennessy and Patrick Cunningham (Isle of Wight) aboard Sonic Blue. Lauren 2 from Southport with crew of Matt Lowery, Andrew Thomas and Gary Houlcroft managed 25 species to finish third.

At a banquet dinner in Crosbie's Cedar's Hotel in Rosslare, prizes were awarded in a variety of categories and presented by Pat Doherty, chief executive officer of Eastern Regional Fisheries Board (ERFB) and Orla Woods, angling product manager of Failte Ireland.

'This festival is very important not only to promote the great fishing we have on the east coast but also the investment it brings to the local economy each year', Doherty said.

Next year's event will take place from September 12 to 19. For information on east coast angling, visit josie.mahon@erfb.ie or www.fishingireland.net



Terry Hill on board Sea Mistress shows off his catch, a greater spotted dogfish (or bull hussel)

SOUNDINGS
WITH WM NIXON



AGE HAS NOT WITHERED THEM

IN THESE CRAZY TIMES, WE CLING TO WHAT WE CHERISH.
BUT ARE WE CLINGING TO THE WRECKAGE?

Is what we cherish seen as wreckage and rubbish by other folk? Whatever the answer, it's certainly the case that, from 2008, Soundings cherishes and is sustained by some very special memories, and more than a few of these seemed to be based around vintage boats. Boats so old, indeed, that the more cynical might dismiss them as wreckage.

Naturally one of the special memories is the Waterways Ireland Classic Boat Regatta at Dromineer on Lough Derg in the middle of September. The flavour of it had been sweetly set by a promotional photo taken at the Lough Derg Regatta Week in mid-August. By Gareth Craig, it's titled 'Coming in for tea'. Racing at Dromineer is very civilized and they take a tea break, but this photo from the LDYC balcony – mostly of Shannon One Designs – tells us so much more.

For it could equally be called 'Escorting the Champion'. Central to the fleet is SOD No. 73, owned by the Dickson family of Lough Ree. Skipped by David Dickson, the Walter Levinge-built 1961 boat had already won the class in Lough Ree week, and when this photo was taken – on the Thursday at Lough Derg – another win and the overall championship were heading Dickson's way.

But that's only a part of it. For the sun is shining – utterly remarkable for August 2008. Yet as the years go by, this luminous record of late afternoon sunshine at Dromineer is what we'll remember, rather than the almost continuous rain.

The Classic Boat regatta came up on the radar just a month later. As Jack Bayly, LDYC Commodore, has commented in the club's end-of-season newsletter, there's an almost incalculable amount of

voluntary work involved in successfully running the annual Regatta Week followed within a month by the Classic Boats at a club which is already busy throughout the season. Mentioning the weather, he rightly thanks the many members whose efforts succeeded in making a pig's ear into a silk purse. They tell it like it is down in Tipperary.

The rain was trying to get back into gear by September's event, but here again it relented. When all types are included, more than a hundred classics were involved, and the shared enthusiasm for tradition and the skill of craftsmen in boat-building was an inspiration. This time round, the mood was captured by photographer Gerardine Wisdom at the starting line. The Committee Boat is John Lefroy's Phoenix, 58ft of history – she was built by Malcolmson's of Waterford using Lowmoor iron in 1872. In the foreground, setting a proper jackyard tops'l – something which hadn't been seen on Lough Derg since the 1920s – is Ian Malcolm's Howth Seventeen Aura, built by Hilditch of Carrickfergus in 1898.

Thus the combined age of these two boats is 246 years, and that's without adding in the ages of the skippers. And if you include the ages of the Shannon One Designs and Water Wags and sundry others milling about the start line, we're very quickly into thousands of years of dedicated maintenance and enthusiasm encapsulated in one photo.

The prize list highlighted the best of them. Virtually all the Water Wags seemed to get a trophy, as did Aura with her tops'l, while the Shannons saw No 73 – helmed for this event by 15-year-old Cillian Dickson – taking the class and winning the overall trophy.



This meant that Lough Ree YC have been setting the pace, their raid southward being led by Commodore Eileen Browne with her attractive 34ft barge Rud Eile. Once upon a time, back in the 1890s, Rud Eile started life as a humble dumb barge, delivering paraffin to the little ports and towns along the Barrow Navigation. Now this sensibly-sized boat has been converted into an immaculate river cruiser. So stylish, in fact, that at Dromineer she was awarded the Display Prize. When a rejuvenated paraffin barge can very deservedly win the Concours d'Elegance, there's hope for us all yet.

Inset: Hail to the champion. Overall winner No 73 (the Dickson family) is escorted in for tea at Dromineer by fellow Shannon ODs and other boats. Photo: Gareth Craig

Main photo: 246 years, and counting... that's the combined age at the Waterways Ireland Classic Boat Regatta of John Lefroy's Committee Boat Phoenix (left) and Ian Malcolm's tops'l-setting Howth Seventeen Aura (foreground). Photo: Gerardine Wisdom

