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COMMODORES' CUP POSTER



IRISH
MARINE
PRESS

56



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Cover – Dave and Roger Hudson collected the overall Boat of the Week trophy for their win in the 40-strong Laser SB3 event at Cork Week. Six weeks later, the SB3 class is preparing to host its first-ever World Championships with 150 boats bound for Dublin Bay. Photo: Bob Bateman

SEPTEMBER// OCTOBER 2008

02 EDITORIAL

03 NEWS

Lifeboat rescue, Cobh sailor goes solo, 30,000 bottles of wine, eco news, local boat designers, maritime music, UK IRC Championships, and lots more

16 SEASCAPES

Well done Schull, but what about the weather?

18 CLUB FEATURE

Lough Ree approaches its 250th anniversary with Club of the Year award

20 SPORTS MAD

Tony Castro – the godfather of the Laser SB3 – casts his eye over Ireland's fastest-growing fleet

24 GREEN AND MEAN

The Dragon, that is, not designers Reichel Pugh

30 UP TO SPEED

Dag Pike on his experience of the Round Britain Powerboat Race

36 RAISING THE CURTAIN

Southampton's doing it for the 40th time: have a look at what's in store

48 CORK WEEK REPORT

The numbers game for Ireland's premier regatta

60 OLYMPIC GAMES 2008

The slow boat from China

66 QUIET WATERS

Brian Goggin is surprised at traffic levels on inland waters

70 BACK TO SCHOOL

The ISA has just the training course for you

76 BOAT REPORT

Redbay 650 Rib – a classy performer with heart

80 BOAT REPORT

Elan 340 – bluster and more bluster didn't phase the newest Elan on the block

83 MARINE MARKETPLACE

Dubarry Crossword, and Hardys Wine Quiz

96 SOUNDINGS

Beautiful and sublime – WM Nixon gushes about this past summer

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ENTER THE DRAGON

Now is a tough time for Olympians. These are the days of anti-climax, a time where some will rest and gather themselves before another four-year cycle, while others hang up their dinghy boots and return to normal life.

After four years of building to a single ten-race regatta, suddenly it's all over and the clouds of autumn are darkening. Days are shorter and darker.

Critics are wheeling, vulture-like, overhead. Olympians and their administrators are easy pickings at this time of year, unless they have returned to the ISA offices with a medal dangling from their neck to guarantee immunity (see page 60).

After Qingdao, Ireland's goals remain unfulfilled. A top eight finish from one boat was the official target, but the best we could muster was twelfth, despite registering two fantastic race wins in the 470.

Post-mortems are cruel, but necessary. We try, we do our best, and we learn from our failings. We look back at what might have been done differently, before turning our gaze forward in optimism.

And looking ahead, there is something on the horizon. It's the sight of a crew that went forward from Dun Laoghaire late in August, bound for Alicante.

The Green Dragon, Ireland's first Volvo 70, cast off its lines to head to Spain and the start line of the Volvo Ocean Race, a major milestone in our sailing history (see page 24).

Although it has been a long time coming, our first round-the-world entry in 20 years has learnt a lot in the interim. Two NCB Ireland veterans are part of the organising team – boatbuilder Johnny Smullen and entrepreneur Enda O'Coineen.

Both will have been fully aware of the failings in that campaign, and similarly will have carried the positive lessons with them.

Afloat spoke to another NCB graduate, Gordon Maguire, back in December when the nascent Green Dragon campaign was little more than a rumour. He reckoned their media silence at that stage, and the fact that they hadn't gone on a nationalistic flag-waving recruitment drive, was proof that this campaign was a more mature, professional affair. How right he was.

The boat was designed in California, built in China and when it eventually arrived in Ireland, fully crewed, it was a complete ocean-racing package. It wasn't grown in the back garden, per se, but who cares? It oozes professionalism. This boat isn't built to merely finish. It's in to win.

WE SPEND OUR LIVES TALKING UP IRELAND'S POTENTIAL – BUT COULD THESE GUYS ACTUALLY GO OUT AND WIN SOMETHING FOR US?

We could bicker and moan over the fact that the skipper is a British medallist, but we have none of our own. We can take solace instead in the fact that the men he counts on to get him where he wants to go are Irish and are the best in the business.

We spend our lives talking up Ireland's potential – but could these guys actually go out and win something for us? Their bosses have already won us a stopover, how about a few podiums?

And sure, it's frustrating that the flag hasn't been waved more vigorously on the boat's behalf, that sponsorship wranglings have

meant that promotion of the boat as a project for Ireland has been close to nil.

When NCB Ireland left Dun Laoghaire in 1989, it was a nationally-celebrated festival, with the president and a 21-gun salute from the East Pier. When Green Dragon slunk out of Dun Laoghaire in the August drizzle, there was a festival of world cultures going on, but the boat and its international crew took no part in it. The public was none the wiser – the Green Dragon had hidden out behind 'members only' railings for two days, running corporate excursions on the bay.

So it represents the best and worst things about Irish sailing. It represents the massive potential this island nation has, and the ability to rank as world-beaters when we source external expertise to compliment our own ability.

But it also represents our tendency to keep sailing for those who already sail.

It's time for some joined-up thinking in the yacht and boat clubs around the country. We have 1,500 kilometres of coastline, and it's time we encouraged everyone to see it from a new point of view, looking in at the island from a boat, rather than standing on the shore, squinting at the sailors in the distance, wondering what's going on.

NEWS IN BRIEF

KING ONE IS ALL WIGHT

Dave Cullen's King One returned victorious having taken part in Skandia Cowes Week. Sailing as Sail4Cancer, they finished third in Class 6 which attracted 43 entrants, a highly commendable result given the tough competition. The winner of the class, Dean & Dyball, finished as top boat overall in the Isle of Wight's Cowes Week, illustrating the level of opposition. As the only Irish boat in the class, King One were proud ambassadors of Howth Yacht Club.

FAMOUS WRECK TURNS 90

October 10, 2008 will be the 90th anniversary of the sinking of the Dun Laoghaire to Holyhead mail boat RMS Leinster, torpedoed by the German submarine UB-123 shortly after leaving Dun Laoghaire. The sinking resulted in the loss of over 500 lives (the exact number will probably never be known). At noon on October 10, an inter-church service will be held in St Michael's (RC) Church, Marine Road, Dun Laoghaire to remember all those who were lost on the Leinster.

Background information on the sinking can be found on the website - www.rmsleinster.com

FREE RIB COURSE AT CREGGAN

An innovative community facility in Creggan, Derry is offering professional training free of charge for people in the Foyle catchment who are interested in a career in marine tourism. The 'Sea Cadet Camp' will be held at Creggan Country Park from 1st October 2008 and will train participants in RYA Level 2 Powerboating.

Gerry Quinn, Manager at Creggan Country Park, said: "The Sea Cadet Camp allows for sustainable growth and development of the marine tourism sector by providing employment, training and recreational opportunities to those living or working in the Foyle catchment." The Park provides activities including kayaking, pedal boating, fishing, sailing and windsurfing to groups, families and individuals. Advance booking is essential. To take part call +44 28 71 363 133, email info@creggancountrypark.com or visit www.creggancountrypark.com

Anchors aweigh - worth its weight in gold



DUN LAOGHAIRE MARINA WINS FIVE GOLD ANCHORS

Dun Laoghaire Marina is the first of the republic's 23 coastal marinas to receive the top award from the Yacht Harbour Association (YHA), an international body that promotes boating facilities.

The Five Gold Anchors award for high standards of operation was made following the first ever YHA site inspection at Dun Laoghaire earlier this summer.

The British based YHA awards range from one to five Gold Anchors (five being the highest award).

Dun Laoghaire is just one of 50 marinas world-wide to be listed by the YHA as a holder of the top award. Others on

the Irish Sea include both Carrickfergus and Bangor marinas on Belfast Lough and Conwy Quays marina in North Wales.

Dun Laoghaire's marina was established eight years ago and provides 820 berths, 30 of which are permanently reserved for visitors. It is the largest marina on the island of Ireland and is operating near capacity. It provides most of the berths for the staging of the biennial Volvo Dun Laoghaire regatta, the largest yachting regatta in Ireland attracts 500 boats, about 200 of these being visitors.

The YHA report accompanying the award highlighted the high standard of service on

offer, especially the marina's water taxi service and wireless internet for berth holders. The report also noted the excellent access to the sailing waters of Dublin bay. Lack of onshore space for car parking and boat storage facilities was seen as a drawback.

The Dun Laoghaire facility is privately owned by Marina Marketing and Management Ltd on a long lease from Dun Laoghaire Harbour company.

Marina Marketing and Management Ltd is currently investigating plans to expand the marina up to its potential of 1,150 berths, but this will only progress as demand dictates.

NEWS IN BRIEF

UK NATS SOURCE FOR OPTIMISM

Four Irish boats finished in the top 15 of the 162-strong U12 section of the Optimist UK Nationals. Seafra Guilfoyle, Patrick Crosbie and Peter McCann, all from Royal Cork, finished 8th, 14th and 15th overall, with Ruairi Finnegan of WHSC in 11th. In the senior fleet, 147 boats from eight nations sailed off, with Alex Rumball the best-placed Irish boat in 13th, ahead of Colm O'Regan in 15th.

BRITS BLAZE FIREBALL NATS

UK helms dominated the 29-boat Irish Fireball National Championships at Mayo Sailing Club, Rosmoney at the end of July. Tom Gillard, crewed by Frances Rowan showed impressive form by winning the final three races and the event in taxing conditions, with a six-point lead over Andy Pearse and Hugh Butler. The three-day event was dogged by light and sometimes absent winds, with only three races sailed from a schedule of nine. The fight for first Irish boat, and Irish National title, was won on equal points between Noel Butler/Seamus Moore in 4th place; and Michael Murphy/Alex Vove in 5th, with Butler winning the tie break on countback.

WIN A RIB WORTH €22,500

One club or recognized teaching establishment (RTE) will walk away with a Rib package worth €22,500 this month. The first ever ISA Yachtsman Euromarine Rib Championship will pit teams of RIB drivers against each other in tests of skill, speed and safety, two on the land and two on the water. The winners will win a 5-metre Rib for their club. The time trial aspect of the competition is a race against the clock through a slalom course, around a reverse gate, and featuring a man overboard. Entrants must be over 16 and should email denis.dillon@sailing.ie for details.

IRELAND IS FRANCE'S HONOURED GUEST

Ireland is the 'Guest of Honour Country' at La Rochelle's annual boat show, the Grand Pavois, starting September 10. Representatives of Ireland's southern harbour communities, hoteliers and reps from Failte Ireland will be at La Rochelle to sell Ireland as a cruising venue to the boat owners of La Rochelle, an area that claims to have more yachts and boats than all of Ireland combined. An Irish pub and restaurant will be a 9,500 square foot 'Irish pavilion', with Cork the best represented area. More on www.grandpavois.com

SECOND RESCUE FLIGHT FOR INJURED SAILOR

A sailor on board a chartered yacht off the Clare coast was finally airlifted to hospital by helicopter, after initially turning the rescuers away.

The incident, in mid-August, began with an alert when the Shannon-based Irish Coast Guard helicopter was sent to airlift the injured sailor from the yacht, the 35-foot French registered Cigogné, moored in the west of the county. It had been reported that the man had sustained a head injury after being struck by a sail boom.

On arrival, the injured man's companions advised the helicopter crew that he was refusing to be airlifted from the yacht and soon afterwards the helicopter returned to its base at Shannon.

Valentia Coast Guard then requested the Kilrush RNLI lifeboat to go to the scene and assess the situation.

"We got the call from the Coast Guard at around 5.45am after the casualty had apparently declined to be airlifted from the yacht earlier," said Kilrush RNLI lifeboat operations manager John Lambe. "We sent the lifeboat to the scene, where our crew discovered that the man's condition had deteriorated and that he was vomiting and bleeding from the nose. It was then decided that it would be better to call the chopper back in and the other crew members agreed."

The rescue helicopter arrived at about 6.30am. The sailor, who was by now unconscious, was airlifted to University Hospital in Galway, where his condition was said to be "critical".

Despite refusing to accept the help of the rescue helicopter when it was first sent to the scene, the Coast Guard has confirmed it will not be pursuing anyone for costs following the rescue operation. A spokesman said: "The seaman was in a confused state."

SOLO SAILOR THRIVES IN 1,000 MILE TEST



Solo: Barry Hurley

Ireland's love affair with shorthanded sailing continues to grow, with Cobh native Barry Hurley finishing runner up in both classes of the bluQube solo 1000, single handed yacht race. The race qualifies Hurley for automatic entry into the OSTAR transatlantic in 2009. Hurley skippered 'Dinah' (a modified JOD35) was second over the line and second overall on IRC.

The bluQube Solo 1000 involved three legs: Falmouth to Kinsale (185 miles), Kinsale to Santander, Spain (525 miles), and Santander to Camaret, France (290 miles), covering a total of 1,000 miles.

Twenty boats competed in the race which set off from Falmouth on 29th June 2008.

Hurley said: "I am delighted with my performance in what is one of the most challenging races I have ever participated in. During the winter my friend Bob Hobby and I gave my boat Dinah a complete refit. Everything inside was rebuilt to make her lighter, stronger and faster."

"The preparation really paid off. During the race the storms were appalling, especially on the second leg. I had everything thrown at me

with winds blowing over 40 knots, but Dinah stood up incredibly well. Conditions were so bad in fact that more than half the entrants did not complete the course."

Lack of sleep is a major problem for competitors who often have to resort to power-napping for ten to 20 minutes at a time. Sleep deprivation can also lead to hallucinations, and Hurley admitted: "At one point, Yoda from Star Wars was sitting at the bow of the boat giving me directions!"

He continues, "During the trip I had many high and lows, the lowest point was when I had to drop all the sails during a massive storm in the Bay of Biscay and lost my autopilot remote control over the side of the boat. However, leading the fleet 24 hours into the last leg, ahead of much bigger and more powerful boats was exhilarating and more than made up for the earlier problems."

The 31-year-old, a former GP 14 sailor, has been sailing for over 20 years and spends every moment he can on the water, when not working for O2 Ireland.

He concludes, "Completing the bluQube 1000 Solo means that I have gained automatic entry into next year's OSTAR. At 3,000 miles, it is one of the most testing single handed Trans-Atlantic races. I am really looking forward to this new challenge."

NEWS IN BRIEF

RECALL FOR SEAGO LIFEJACKETS

Certain lifejackets made by British outfit Seago have been identified as potentially dangerous, with the ISA recommending that owners stop using them and remove the gas cylinder from the lifejacket. Lifejackets should be returned to Seago Yachting Ltd, Mullany Business Park, Golden Cross, Halisham, East Sussex, BN27 3RP. Jackets will be replaced. Inquiries to Seago on sales@seagoyachting.co.uk or +44 18225 873632.

PIRACY EMBRACED BY GLENANS

September 19 is International Talk Like a Pirate Day, and those buccaneering souls at Glenans are advertising for speakers of both English and Pirate-speak to join them for a weekend of plunderin', grog and huntin' for buried treasure (presumably pieces of eight will be accepted as legal tender, but bring your beer in packs of six). Enquiries to 01 6611 481.

DERG SEES ENGINE THEFT SPATE

Several boat owners in marinas in Lough Derg have been relieved of their outboards, as a spate of engine thefts has hit the lake. The village of Garrykennedy has been particularly badly hit, with a gang making off with seven outboards. Terryglass was also targeted, with two engines and a jetski going missing. Most of the engines were recovered in a house in Nenagh, but clubs are being warned that they are at risk of further thefts, with claims that the engines are being stolen to order for export to Eastern European countries.

TWO HOSPITALISED AFTER BOAT MISHAP

Two people were hospitalised on August 25th after a cruise boat ran aground near Coose Bay on Lough Derg in Co Clare. At around 11am a hired cruise boat with seven people on board ran on to rocks at Stick Rock in Coose Bay. One woman is understood to have sustained a broken nose, while an elderly man was also taken to hospital in Nenagh as a precaution. The Lough Derg RNLi lifeboat, based at Dromineer, Co Tipperary, went to the scene where they found the vessel stuck on a rock shelf.

WINE RUNS OUT OF WIND ON DUBLIN BAY



The Kathleen and May – absolute essentials under sail

Unpredictable days of sail were remembered on Dublin bay in July when a schooner with a cargo of French wine arrived into City Quay under engine.

The six-day voyage from Brest – seen as a means of cutting the carbon footprint by using only wind and tide – had fallen victim to the vagaries of the Irish Sea. It's a problem east coast sailors know well. But it was nevertheless a remarkable journey and the first instance of such a cargo being imported here under sail since the 1800s.

Destined for the Irish market, each bottle on

board was labelled "carried by sailing ship, a better deal for the planet" but it wasn't all sail during the journey. The 30,000 bottles of French wine from the Languedoc-Roussillon region were becalmed off Greystones, Co Wicklow at the end of their voyage. The prospect of an ebb tide and fog off the Kish lighthouse left the skipper of the 108-year-old 'Kathleen and May' with little option but to revert to the age of diesel.

Despite this set-back, the company claims it can compete with conventional power due to the rise in fuel prices and is planning other trade routes. Already 80 winegrowers from the Languedoc-Roussillon region have signed up to the project and their wines – all made in the 'most sustainable way' – will be on sale in Ireland costing €6–€20 a bottle. A second schooner carrying Languedoc and Bordeaux wine is scheduled to make its maiden week-long journey from Bordeaux to Bristol, with a third due to sail up the Thames to London.

Fair Wind Wine, the company behind the ground-breaking move back to sail, says each bottle will have saved 4.9oz of carbon emissions.

NINE YEARS, SEVEN SEAS



The Murphys arrive home to Howth. Photo: John Deane

before returning home. Nine years later, they finally returned to Howth, leading a parade of sail into the harbour.

The pair covered 39,000 miles during their circumnavigation, stopping in 38 countries. The journey started with the Atlantic Rally Cruise in 1999, after which the Murphys cut through the Panama Canal and across the Pacific.

After a year and a half touring New Zealand, they visited the Pacific Islands of Fiji, and Vanuatu, where Pat said they 'fell in love with the people'. So much so, that after holing up in Australia to avoid the cyclone season, the pair stripped down their boat, and loaded it up with books and clothes for distribution among the islanders on their return journey.

The altruistic delivery trip, and another cyclone season spent hiding in Australia, clearly racked up some good karma for the Howth couple.

Had they stuck to their original plan, they would have found themselves in a western Indonesia

When Pat and Olivia Murphy set off from Ireland in 1999, the plan was to spend four years touring the globe in their 41-footer Aldebaran

on December 26, 2004, when the devastating Pacific tsunami struck the island.

Despite negotiating notoriously pirate-ridden waters around Indonesia, the worst tragedy to befall the couple was a disappearing dinghy in Flores, Indonesia.

"One day I headed ashore and when I came back the dinghy and 4hp outboard were missing," Pat told Afloat.

"I had just handed the painter to a local boy who was minding the dinghies for the other boats there, and I guess he didn't tie it on properly and it drifted out to sea in the dark."

"Everybody got very upset about it, and when we got to Bali, the people there presented us with a brand new 6hp Suzuki outboard."

After crossing the Indian Ocean via Sri Lanka, the trip took them into pirate-infested waters once again. Setting sail from Oman through Somalian waters, Aldebaran joined a five-strong flotilla, which maintained visual contact and radio silence, using codewords to switch transmissions to a previously-agreed SSB radio frequency to avoid detection by pirates. The flotilla also maintained contact with US and coalition naval vessels in the area, and sailed without masthead lights at night.

The final year was spent making their way from the eastern Mediterranean to Ireland.



GREEN! FOR GO!

The Green Dragon team, surrounded by well wishers including Dun Laoghaire lifeboat, leaves Dublin bay on August 23rd bound for Alicante, Spain and the start of a 39,000 mile race around the world. They have given a nod to a place on the podium which is a big promise from a brand new boat and a brand new crew. There is a huge amount of work still to be done and as many before them will testify – including those who backed NCB Ireland – it is not the going out of port, but the coming in, that determines the success of this voyage. We wish them well (see page 24).



NEWS IN BRIEF

CLUBS GET €357K LOTTERY BOOST

The government has signed over more than €350,000 to 17 Irish sailing clubs as part of its sports capital programme, funded by takings from the National Lottery. The funding is generally used to improve or build on club assets, or buy equipment with a useful life of more than five years. The smallest amount went to Kiltaloe Sailing Club, receiving just €4,000, while the largest amount went to one of the richest clubs in the country, Dun Laoghaire's Royal Irish Yacht Club, which claimed €65,000 under the scheme. Glenans came in second at €50,000.

2008 CAPITAL GRANTS

Kiltaloe Sailing Club	€4,000
Royal Western Yacht Club of Ireland	€25,000
Baltimore Sailing Club	€30,000
Cove Sailing Club	€25,000
Glenans Irish Sailing Club	€50,000
Dun Laoghaire Motor Yacht Club	€10,000
Irish Sailing Association	€40,000
Royal Irish Yacht Club	€65,000
Sailing in Dublin Club	€6,500
Atlantic Sailing Club	€8,000
Mullaghmore Sailing Club	€12,000
Dungarvan Harbour Sailing Club	€12,000
Waterford Harbour Sail Club	€30,000
Lough Ree	
Yacht Club (1770)	€25,000
Mullingar Sailing Club	€8,000
Bray Sailing Club	€6,000
Greystones Sailing Club	€10,000

GET IN TUNE WITH THE OCEAN

What's this? An article about music in a watersports magazine? Yep, didn't you know? Music and the maritime go together like Pimms and cucumber. Just think of the amount of songs inspired by the sea: 'I am Sailing', 'Bride over Troubled Waters', and let's not forget the rhetorical question, 'What Will We Do With a Drunken Sailor'? Answer: entertain him. Cork Week seemed to realise that boats now have CD players for a reason, copping on to the fact that inviting big musical names to the tents was a good idea. www.coisfarrarige.com and www.seasessions.com

MORE THRILLS FOR MILLS



The Wicklow base of Mark Mills Design just keeps churning out the winners, and the latest to cover itself in glory is the IRC 68 from Mills' desk, Alegre.

Alegre missed out on the Round Ireland when the race was postponed, but made the most of Cowes week, winning the prestigious Britannia Cup.

Alegre sailed a strong race tactically to leverage her performance in the light airs of Wednesday, finishing half an hour ahead on the water and eight minutes ahead on corrected time.

The Britannia Cup was originally given to the RYA by King George VI to foster big boat competition, and it has remained the most desirable trophy of the event bringing out the largest Class Zero fleets each year.

Alegre has been worked up well since her launch at NEB by a strong crew led in Cowes by Adrian Stead, and has benefited from a North Sails program led by Kevin George. Her next stop is the Mediterranean for the Maxi Worlds and the Middle Sea Race.

Earlier in August, another Mills export claimed the overall victory in the Copa Del Rey (King's Cup) in Palma.

The Mills Design IRC 40 Ngoni, helmed by owner Tony Buckingham, swept to victory in the IRC 2 class of the Spanish glamour event held every year in Palma.

In ideal conditions Ngoni looked strong all week with five firsts and three seconds in the ten-race series, making the final outcome clear with a day to spare.

www.mills-design.com

SAILORS OF THE MONTH – THE STORY SO FAR...

Afloat's Sailor of the Month awards is already looking like a 'Who's Who' of Irish sailing for 2008. Now we're past the half-way mark, here's a recap on the recipients to date:

JANUARY
Michael Holland (Dun Laoghaire)
 Awarded Ireland's premier cruising trophy, the Faulkner Cup, for outstanding voyaging and exploration in the Arctic and Antarctic.

FEBRUARY
Damian Foxall (Kerry)
 Winner of Barcelona World Race.

MARCH
Norman Kean and Geraldine

Hennigan (Courtmacsherry)
 Produced complete update of cruising directions for east and north coasts of Ireland.

APRIL
Nicholas 'Nin' O'Leary (Cork)
 Skipped University College Cork team to inspirational victory in Irish Universities Championship.

MAY
Dave Dwyer (Cork)
 Success in Etchells 22 International campaign, and class winner in IRC Nationals.

JUNE
Aodhan Fitzgerald (Galway)
 Skipped Ireland West to overall victory in BMW Round Ireland Race 2008.

JULY
Anthony O'Leary (Cork)
 Winner of class in Commodore's Cup, and Chairman of Race Committee for ACCBank Cork Week

AUGUST
Gerald Owens and Philip Lawton
 Double Olympic race winner (see page 60)

Pat and Olivia Murphy
 Circumnavigators of the globe (see page 6)

IRISH DOMINATE UK IRC CHAMPS



Conor Phelan's Jump Juice – a winner at the UK IRC National Championships

Jump Juice emerged ahead of a strong Irish contingent at the UK IRC championships in June. With the Commodore's Cup on the near horizon, many nations were using the event as the final test of their team preparations, including France and the United Kingdom.

In light to moderate conditions, the Ker 37 – helmed by Mark Mansfield, with Maurice O'Connell, Conor Phelan and Mike Budd in the afterguard – only moved into the top position by securing second place in the final race. This left her tied with Eamonn Rohan's Mills

40 Blondie, but in contrast to the result in the Irish IRC championships two weeks earlier, where Jump Juice lost out on a tiebreak, the honours went to the Phelans' boat this time round. Other top Commodore's Cup boats in the class also featured well, with Aria from France in third and Roark from Holland in fourth.

Hours later, there were further celebrations when it was announced that Jump Juice had also taken the Overall Championship award.

With Jump Juice and Blondie first and second overall, it was a clean sweep for the Irish with Roy Dixon's Corby 36, Rosie, taking third overall.

Other notable results from the regatta were a class win for Rosie in the competitive IRC 2, where a number of Commodore's Cup boats – such as Voodoo Chile, No Naked Flames and Quokka – were competing. Quokka finished a close second in class, with Voodoo taking fourth and No Naked

Flames a further two places back.

In IRC 0, Anthony O'Leary's Ker 39, Antix Eile, fresh from a new keel addition, led until the last day when an OCS allowed John Shephard's Fair Do's in to take the title, with Antix Eile a close second. Tony Buckingham's Ngoni, the former Tiamat, finished 3rd, while Tim Costelloe's new Mills 43, Tiamat found the lighter going difficult and could only manage eighth in class.

In Class Super Zero, Colm Barrington's TP 52 Flash Glove took fourth overall, behind Niklas Zennstrom's TP 52 Ran. This class has become much more competitive in 2008 with a number of new Med Cup 52s competing in the UK with fully professional crews.

Overall it was an exceptional result for the Irish boats and all boded well for the up coming Commodore's Cup, particularly if the event was held in similar light to moderate conditions, with the Irish White team of Jump Juice, Antix Eile and Voodoo Chile coming out on top of all the teams that competed at the UK Nationals.

WORDSEARCH

L	R	S	B	F	L	O	R	E	S	S	E	A	V	Q
L	A	K	E	C	H	A	D	L	R	E	D	S	E	A
L	A	K	E	H	U	R	O	N	W	M	R	B	I	G
G	J	M	E	D	I	T	E	R	R	A	N	E	A	N
R	L	A	K	E	O	N	T	A	R	I	O	R	L	I
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JUNE//JULY SOLUTION

Alford magazine in association with Gill bring you a seasonal wordsearch. Complete the quiz, cut it out and send it to Gill/Alford quiz, 2 Lower Clonmagogue Road, Donaghadee, Co. Down. Entries to be received no later than Friday, October 31, 2008 and entries must be on official entry form labeled. 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.

SCHULL LOOKS TO THE SEA

I find the world of cities and big towns increasingly artificial. I prefer coastal towns and villages, where the sense of life and what is important is influenced by the sea which laps the shores. Coastal communities, generally, have a deep sense of self-support and dependence on their own resources. So I was impressed by the commitment of the people of Schull in setting-up their own lifeboat service.

Those who use the waters around Schull have the extra protection of an inshore rescue lifeboat for which €300,000 was raised in funding by local people. They bought the 21-foot boat and paid for the building of a boathouse and control room on land provided by the Office of Public Works at the rear of the Garda Station. The crew, including fishermen, also paid for their own training to Coast Guard standards. The service is recognised for emergency call-outs as part of the Coast Guard system, an impressive example of community commitment to the marine sphere.

Garda Sergeant Ger Prineville is Chairman of the Lifeboat Committee. He succeeded Tim O'Connor, Principal of Schull Community College, which has its own sailing school, training local pupils in watersports as part of the school curriculum. Tim is also one of the leading organisers of the annual Schull International Schools' Regatta.

I was on the water with the lifeboat crew on a training exercise. Stephen O'Keeffe of the committee told me that everything in Schull was "of and about the sea", so the service was a commitment to community welfare.

The boathouse and control room are impressive, a great example of regional, coastal people committed to the sea. The inshore rescue boat will augment the service from Baltimore RNLI Lifeboat Station a few miles away. Well done to the people of Schull.

Right: Community rescue - the Schull lifeboat on exercises

MET SHOULD 'BIG UP' SMALL CRAFT WARNINGS

As another sailing season moves to its conclusion with a generally poor summer where weather was concerned, one of the topics regularly debated has been the accuracy of weather forecasts. Neither Met Eireann nor any other forecasting service can be blamed for the weather. They are 'forecasting', in other words, predicting, from the best information available to them and based on their expertise as meteorologists. At times one could feel sympathy for the forecasters, with the most regular predictability this summer being rain.

But there is one aspect of Met Eireann forecasting about which I have a question. Why are 'Small Craft Warnings' issued during sea area forecasts on radio, not directed towards coastal areas in the same way as the rest of the forecast?

The sea area forecasts give headlands and locations where particular weather impacts can be expected. However, apart from one lady who regularly related the Small Craft Warning to a specific area, the forecasters made a general reference in their forecast introduction that a Small Craft Warning was in force.

But for which area of the coast, or is to be taken that the warning is for the entire coast, even when the rest of the forecast would not imply strong or difficult conditions in all areas?

I mentioned this issue on Seascapes in response to the opinions of listeners that the lack of a specific area reference did not make the Small Craft Warning particularly helpful. Subsequently I heard one male voice on Met Eireann state a specific area, but apart from this, the forecasters did not give an indication of where the warning was directed.

I first raised this issue during the controversy over last year's junior regatta in Dun Laoghaire and the conditions in which young sailors were on the water. I was discussing the context of the 'rescue' effort. It was debatable whether there ever was a 'major emergency' as described in the general media. It had been stated that a Small Craft Warning had been in existence. I described the warning as a bit of a 'catch all'. In other words Met Eireann had, in fairness, issued a warning, but it was not specific to any area. Met Eireann took issue with that description and I invited them to further discussion, but none followed.

I am appreciative, as a sailor, of Met Eireann's service and of the dedicated work of the forecasters, but why cannot Small Craft Warnings be made as specific as the rest of the forecast conditions for coastal areas? It would be more helpful to all leisure boat users and that would help safety.

While we have been having a pretty rotten summer here, there doesn't seem much hope that the Government could afford a Weather Modification Department such as they have in China, where the country's Academy of Meteorological Sciences employs 32,000 people, has a department in every one of the country's 30 provinces and a resource of 7,100 anti-aircraft guns; 4,991 special rocket launchers, with 30 aircraft and a budget of over €130 million. Their job is to change the weather, by firing rockets into the clouds. It is the largest artificial weather programme in the world. Despite international scepticism, the Chinese remain convinced of the merits of attempting to alter weather patterns and say that, since 1999, 250 billion tonnes of rain was artificially created, enough to fill the Yellow River several times over. A pity we can't export rain to them!

What's your view? Email us a comment@aflboat.ie



THE BIG 250 COUNT-DOWN

BY PAUL
O'DOHERTY

THE VIEW FROM THE MARINA – LOUGH REE YACHT CLUB

Lough Ree Yacht Club is now just over a decade away from the celebration of its 250th anniversary. Much has changed since it was established in 1770, including its name – it was originally called the Athlone Yacht Club – but its continuous existence for well over two centuries allows it to claim the title of the second oldest yacht club in the world.

The club moved to its current site, at Ballyglass, on the south end of Lough Ree, just north of Athlone town, in 1914. In 1947, it joined the Irish Yachting Association (now ISA) and in 1952 the famous yacht designer, Uffa Fox, responsible for many of the developments that contributed to popularity of dinghy sailing, was in attendance for Dinghy Week.

Membership is now around 300, of whom 150 to 200 are juniors. Not surprising for a family-oriented club, there are times when a number of generations from the same family have sailed in the same boat. The main sailing classes are Optimists, Picos, RS Fevas, Mirrors, Lasers, Shannon One-Designs and J24/Cruisers. Beginners progress from Optimists or Picos to RS Fevas or Mirrors and then to bigger/faster boats requiring more skill and experience.

Fees range from €405 for a family, €265 for a single and €130 for a junior. Boat parking fees are €20 to €35 per season in the boat park or €25 per week per berth. Swing moorings are €100 or €170 per season alongside.

The club's more famous members include the Castlemaine family, who have been involved from its earliest years. Significantly, in the year that's in it, the club has also had two Olympic sailors: Alf Delany (1948 and 1952) and his son, Owen Delany (1972).

The sailing season runs from Easter to October on alternative weekends. From March, junior spring training takes place at the club on Sunday mornings, while winter training starts in October and continues until January 1st each year. Some of the club's most popular events include the Athlone to Portumna long distance weekend race in June for Shannon One-Designs and the annual regatta over the first week in August where there is sailing for all classes coupled with a party-affair in the evening.

The club also runs a junior sailing scheme (ISA dinghy) over four weeks in July with adult sailing courses in the evenings during the same month. Periodically, it also runs courses on VHF, first aid, powerboat, safety boat and race management.

The club's bar/lounge, serving morning coffee, afternoon tea and post-sailing snacks, overlooks the lake and harbour area, offering stunning views of the setting sun. The clubhouse also has changing facilities (and clothes dryer) and showers, with individual and family units. A crew lift is available for mobility-impaired sailors and the club is easily accessible with entrance ramps. For those thinking of getting into sailing, Picos and RS Fevas are available for hire on a sessional (Picos only) or weekly basis, and the club owns a Drascombe Long Boat – available for family outings or use for mobility challenged members – and a number of rescue boats.

Looking to the future, the club has plans to develop the foreshore, rebuild the starter's hut and expand the jetty/berthing facility, much of which is in the early planning stage.



Decked out – A recent facelift has made the clubhouse much more inviting

**THE
COMMODORE'S
VIEW**

Like a lot of people who've reached the higher echelons of their sport, commodore Eileen Browne (pictured below at the wheel) has had a life-long involvement in sailing. "I've been involved since I was born," she says. "My parents couldn't find a babysitter so they took me sailing in a Moses basket. My family is originally from Athlone and we've always had a boat on the river and spent our holidays down there.

"I now have a small converted barge which I stay on - it's my floating cottage. The barge was once used on the River Barrow to transport paraffin oil to the towns on the river. It didn't have an engine at the time, but one of the Athlone people took it up and converted it into a houseboat, you could say. It's a shortened version of the barges you see on the canal in that it's 42-feet long as opposed to 60-foot, and was built around 1890.

"I go up to it most weekends. I keep it at Quigley's, a marina off the lake, and then bring it around to the club during the season. I also sail competitively, very competitively, in a Shannon One-Design with my brother - we're in the top ten. I also sail in cruisers in Dún Laoghaire.

"I've been commodore since last November and I've been very busy. I retired from my full-time job in May of last year in order to do this. I also have an elderly mother who I take care of. Being commodore means that there is always something to be done chugging away in the back of your mind. However, I thoroughly enjoy it. The best part about this job is that I get to get to know the members - I'm totally involved in all of the events and have a little bit of influence in it as well".

"What's the best thing about the club? It's a special haven, easily accessible from all parts of the country, near a major urban area (Athlone) but far enough away to provide a peaceful atmosphere where people can enjoy their water sports in a safe and natural environment. And the family/ community spirit at the club enhances the enjoyment for all and encourages the formation of lifelong friendships".

For more information on the Lough Ree Yacht Club, see www.lryc.ie

CLUB FOCUS

We select a club per issue. To request your club be featured, please contact us on clubs@aflrat.ie



Committee members celebrate winning the Mitsubishi Sailing Club of the Year 2008 won jointly with the Shannon One-Design Association



**WORDS FROM
THE MEMBERSHIP**

"Lough Ree Yacht Club has a real sense of local community and camaraderie amongst the children and adults and a genuine willingness to give a hand and look after each other". Pat Coffey

"Our daughter and younger son count LRYC as their second home. We as a family have all been involved in LRYC, and are happy to be so. It's a good place to be". Gill Walsh

"LRYC has a beautiful new clubhouse, low profile timber-clad building, which blends neatly into the landscape". Damien Delaney



CASTRO'S REVOLUTION



HE COMES FROM PORTUGAL. HIS SURNAME COMES FROM CUBA. HIS BOATS COME FROM ALL OVER. TONY CASTRO IS THE GODFATHER OF THE LASER SB3, AND HE SPOKE TO MARKHAM NOLAN ABOUT IRELAND'S FASTEST-GROWING FLEET

Tony Castro is one of those continental Europeans who was all but adopted by the Irish ten years ago. Back then, he was the man behind what could have been Ireland's international one-design export – the 1720. For five years, it was the fine young thing of one-design racing in Ireland and the UK, the five-man keelboat that ushered

us into the age of asymmetric sailing.

But the 1720, for all its endearing characteristics, was a little too saggy around the hips for the roughies. Among other things, five crew proved too hard to muster, and support for the class dissipated rapidly. From great heights of racing

outside, the 1720 has tumbled to the status of club racing toner and sailing-school workhorse.

Ireland then flirted with the Etchells, a stopgap measure that harked back to the classic lines of the Dragon or Soling, but it was a relationship that couldn't last. Marriage was never on the cards.



There's a boat in there somewhere: an SB3 in typical downhill pose. Photo: Bob Bateman

And then along came the SB3, all flash and young and Hollywood and steeped in dinghy roots. Jaws dropped and tongues rolled along the floor. This, said the frustrated club racer, could be what we were waiting for all along, and it has an international brand to back it up.

Again, Castro's name is stamped on the transom, and the global proliferation of the boat (300 of them have popped out of moulds since 2006 – a third of which are in Ireland) caught Castro, and even 'dinghy superpower' Laser, by surprise.

"We were hoping, but not expecting it," said Castro. "It's already making phenomenal inroads in other countries. There are 27 in Australia (since the launch in January), a similar number in the USA, 22 in Portugal, boats in Italy, France and Holland already. There are even 11 sailing in Dubai."

Ireland has bought into the SB3 in a big way. Forecourts are littered with them, with new sailors opening their hearts and wallets to the SB3's tight one-design racing, blistering downwind pace and a design that's more than familiar.

With its sitting-out format, stainless granny bars, open transom and masthead asymmetric, the SB3 is like slipping on a comfortable old shoe for Irish sailors. It's a baby 1720, for Pete's sake. Didn't they just stick the old design on a photocopier, and reduce to 60% of the original?

"Well, no," says Castro. "Scaling down doesn't work very well. You could say for sure that the success of the 1720 landed the part for the SB3. Laser watched the way the 1720 was managed. The 1720 was not very professional, it was more of a non-profit organisation, but they knew the future was one-design and the 1720 opened the door to this possibility for Laser. We had to rethink the design and how the boat behaves."

Laser wanted something that would have mass appeal, stand up to mass production, and that followed their formula of Spartan simplicity with performance as an extra bonus.

"It was not designed to be the fastest boat in the universe; it was designed to behave in a specific way," said Castro.

"We didn't want to make a boat that was over-athletic to sail. We wanted something where 50-year-olds and 17-year-olds could compete on equal footing. "You can make a 20-footer a great deal faster than the SB3 – look at the 49er. But when you or I go sailing, you want to have fun. And to have fun, your anxiety level has to be very low. We needed to design a boat so that the average sailor isn't afraid of it – it's docile, it doesn't bite back. You mustn't be afraid." Fear was not a factor, and sales are humming.

Shane Murphy of Sutton Marine, the Republic's Laser dealer, has brought about 60 new boats into the country so far.

"There has been a 10 per cent renewal in the fleet this year. There's certainly 80 to 90 boats in Ireland at the moment. The only thing that's stalling it is deck space, and the class has exploded worldwide so the delivery time's gone out."





**WORLD
LASER SB3
CHAMPIONSHIP 2008**



THE WORLDS AT A GLANCE

Putting 150 identical boats through the regatta mill is a big task, and the National Yacht Club has stepped up to the plate to score the first ever SB3 worlds. We spoke to NYC Sailing Secretary Con Murphy about plans for the year's biggest championship, and how it all came about.

SECURING THE EVENT

"Basically, the class came to us two years ago and said they were interested in having an event in Dublin Bay. At that stage, it was the Europeans. Then, when the class was designated an international class, one of the criteria was that they had to have a worlds within 12 months, so the event was redesignated a worlds. Since we've taken on the event, the class in Ireland has grown so much, it's up to 90 boats now."

ON THE WATER

The 150-boat fleet (141 confirmed as we went to press) will be split across two windward-leeward courses. Even with the fleet split in two, there will be up to 75 boats per start line. Course designation per day will be worked out from overall results overnight, with the first day's racing done on a perceived seeding system. After a practice race, there will be three days of qualifiers, followed by two days of gold/silver fleet finals. Jack Roy and Con Murphy will be calling the shots and manning the lines as PROs on the two courses.

ON THE DOCK

The NYC is trying to accommodate the majority of the fleet in front of the club, with floating

pontoons installed for the event. Others will be tied up alongside the Royal St George Yacht Club, under a reciprocal understanding with their neighbours for the nationals.

ON THE SHORE

After an opening ceremony with the Garda Síochána band and handshakes from politicians, the club will be the site for onshore craic. Sites have been made available for camper vans on the Carlisle pier, and on-site catering comes from the Butler's Pantry.

ON THE SCOREBOARD

What's tantalizing about this event is that it's so hard to predict who will win, or even feature at the top. The SB3 class is tight enough that any one of 25 boats could be in with a shot. Dave Cheyne from Royal North has featured on several podiums this year and could well do so again. South African entry City of Cape Town, helmed by Roger Hudson, is back having won best boat at Cork Week, and a host of sailors from around the country have all had a stab at the top five. Irish names to watch out for include Dave Barry, Tom Fitzpatrick, Aidan O'Connell and Gareth Flannigan, but really, trying to predict anything is mere crystal-ball gazing, and the international element means this championship is wide open.

ON THE WEB

Keep an eye on www.sb3worlds2008.com for info. During the event, www.afloat.ie will have daily pics and reports.



The SB3s will be in action on Dublin Bay in September. Photos: Bob Bateman

With the class explosion, competition has sharpened, and that meant Laser had to re-examine their build to deal with complaints from sailors that weight irregularities were affecting performance. "That's been corrected," said Castro. "Laser changed the rules so that the weights of all boats are corrected, and now all boats are identical. That's done and over with.

"The boat has been much more successful than was expected. When that happens, better sailors come in and standards get pushed up. Then the quality of the product comes under more scrutiny."

The big hurdle, as with so many classes that surge to popularity in Ireland, is the post-traumatic stress suffered after a major championship. Scoring the first ever worlds is a major coup for the National Yacht Club, and it will be the biggest one-design championship in the country this year.

With 150 boats on Dublin Bay, it will be a visual spectacle, a logistical nightmare, and a racer's dream (fingers crossed).

It will also test the mettle of the SB3 in the long term. Will the class hemorrhage owners post-worlds? Will it attract tens of new boats? The debate is ongoing.



RIDING THE



WORLD CLASS



LOUAY HABIB HITCHED A RIDE ON THE GREEN DRAGON, THE IRISH ENTRY FOR THE VOLVO OCEAN RACE AND ONE OF THE WORLD'S FASTEST MONOHULLS. HE EXPLAINS WHY THE ATLANTIC DRAGON-RIDE WAS A ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EXPERIENCE

Despite their long and distinguished history, Reichel Pugh had never designed a yacht for a round-the-world race – until the Green Dragon. The California-based designers count the Melges 24 and several mighty Maxis as offspring. They were canting keel pioneers, making yachts built purely for speed, like Morning Glory and Pyewacket.

First impressions of their Green Dragon is that she is capable of immense power; the huge rig supports a massive sail area, the size of three tennis courts. While the bow is designed to cut through waves, the yacht is extremely beamy aft of the spreaders, making it clear that, at the right speeds, this is a yacht designed to plane almost permanently.

The Green Dragon on offshore passage. Photo: Bob Bateman



QUALIFICATION OVER: READY TO RACE

SKIPPER IAN WALKER (ABOVE) REPORTS ON THE PROGRESS MADE ON THE GREEN DRAGON'S FIRST OCEAN PASSAGE

The Green Dragon Volvo Open 70 has completed its qualification passage for the Volvo Ocean Race 2008/09. Having decided to find the most testing weather for the trip, conditions onboard were extreme, as the crew rounded the famous Fastnet Rock and headed north-east straight into the North Atlantic. During the 2,000 mile qualifier, Green Dragon sailed to a waypoint 200 miles south of Iceland, the crew then set a northerly course to 59.32.2N 020.6W, approximately halfway between the Outer Hebrides and the Faroe Islands, before returning south to their training base in Cork.

Ian Walker, skipper of the Green Dragon Racing Team said after the qualifier: "It took us exactly five days to sail 2,050 miles in predominantly strong downwind conditions in the North Atlantic. The conditions turned out to be absolutely perfect, Ian Moore did a fantastic job to navigate us around a strong North Atlantic depression in an anti-clockwise (downwind) direction. I have never felt so much excitement from going sailing without racing in my life. These boats are outrageous and awesome in equal measures, from hustling along at 20-25 knots in the pitch black to repeatedly piling into the backs of waves that you couldn't see over 400 miles from the nearest land.

"Fortunately, the confidence of people like Neal McDonald is infectious and you could feel the crew's confidence and trust in the boat grow daily. The pace has been relentless; our best run came at the end of our trip, when we covered 524 miles in 24 hours, despite a few manoeuvres and a very dark and windy night. The experience of guys like Neal, Damian, Justin, Phil and Tom really shone through, but everyone onboard put in an enormous effort in testing conditions.

"It's a huge milestone for the team – and the boat – to have completed this test. One false move or any major structural damage could have jeopardised our whole program. Hats off to the team at Reichel Pugh yacht design, ASTA structural engineers, and to McConaghy's who built the boat – not forgetting Southern Spars New Zealand who built the rig. We now have a long list of small jobs for the shore team, the first of which is to give everything a thorough check through, and repair the broken too! For the guys on board it is time for a Guinness and some Irish stew, before finding something dry to wear! It is strange to feel so elated at having just completed a qualifying passage, but the stakes are high in these boats and time is short for the Green Dragon Team. We have to push hard to learn fast, and we continue to take positive steps forward to try and catch up with the big teams."

VITAL STATISTICS

WHEN WE LAST WENT TO PRESS, IT SEEMED LIKE IRELAND HAD TWO ENTRIES IN THE VOLVO OCEAN RACE. AFLOAT'S MARKHAM NOLAN WENT FOR A SAIL ON BOTH, PURELY IN THE INTEREST OF SCIENCE.

Nothing makes for excitement like the prospect of sailing a VOR 70 – the invite is like finding Willy Wonka's golden ticket. If you search for the Volvo Ocean Race on YouTube, you'll see footage of the carbon boats punching boat-shaped holes in the ocean, hitting waves with a speed that borders on disrespect.

They're capable of performances like that for sure, but the footage is heavily edited, and there's plenty of workaday sailing on VOR 70s. Apart from a brief spot of 20-knot night sailing, my journeys on board the Green Dragon and Ger O'Rourke's ill-fated McConnell's Chieftain (before the marina incident) were light air affairs. However, whether it's blowing 15 knots or 50, there's no denying it: these boats are impressive.

Let's start with the stats: When it comes to sails, loads, weights and speeds, the balance sheet of a Volvo 70's physics ledger is a book of big figures. During the race, the boat carries a wardrobe of 14 sails chosen from a maximum of 26 declared, including a one main, a storm jib and a storm trysail. The largest sail on board is the big asymmetric spinnaker, at 500 square metres double the area of the average tennis court. Add to that a mainsail and an inner staysail, and the Volvo 70 can carry around 800 square metres of cloth in optimal conditions, scooping every ounce of energy out of the atmosphere and transmitting it into forward motion.

It's light, too. Twenty years ago, NCB Ireland weighed more than 30 tonnes fully laden. The VOR 70, just ten feet shorter, weighs half that, and seven of those tonnes are in the keel, which gets canted 45° to windward, a giant lever that keeps the 100-foot carbon rig close to vertical at all times, like a heavy lead foot permanently on the accelerator. The canting motion is much faster and smoother on the new boat than on the old, but the impact is dramatic on both. At the touch of a button the boat immediately corrects posture and sits up straight. Two things follow from that: big loads and big speeds.

In landlubber terms, spot speeds of more than 75 kilometres are achieved by these boats, with loads on the rig equivalent to that generated by hanging a double-decker bus from a single rope through a block

in sailing/scientific terms, these boats streak across the sea doing in excess of 40 knots, while their rigs creak under loads of up to eight tonnes.

Motoring is less impressive. A Volvo 70 does six knots under its feeble and rarely-used engine, but for most of my Green Dragon excursion journey from Galway to Cork, we were either chugging along or making the most of just ten knots of air while Damian Foxall pointed out his favourite spots on the Kerry Coast, and Justin Slattery and Tom Braidwood exchanged war stories from ocean races past.

Under sail, testing was the order of the day for watch leader Foxall and Kiwi bowman Andrew 'Animal' McLean, an engineer, former sailmaker and man of few words. As we worked through sail changes, 'Animal' jotted down the results, speeds, and angles which were plugged into sail overtap charts – the cheat sheet for sailing VOR 70s. The charts tell the skipper what sail combination is a winner in any given conditions.

With the code zero, the giant masthead reaching headsail, the pressures on the rig are immense. This is the sail that snapped the Green Dragon's carbon-fibre bowsprit while sailing off Gosport before they made the move to Ireland. The prodder has since been beefed up considerably.

Running backstays (the square-top main precludes having a regular one) and tacklines are cranked up with one eye on a readout from a loadcell, which counts off as the tonnage builds. The asymmetric sails and several of the headsails are hauled on deck furled and folded into a bag. A swivel is attached to the head, a heavy furling unit to the tack at the bottom, and they are then hoisted up the rig (by us, on the coffee grinders), after which one of two tack lines is ground down until the loadcell figures match the instructions. Then it's sheer on; the sail unfurls and the speed becomes the clock to watch.

There are big numbers on the chart, too. Thirty-nine thousand miles of hostile water lie between the start and the finish. The longest leg accounts for almost a third of that, 12,300 miles from Qingdao to Rio, potentially six weeks at sea or more. It all adds up to some spectacular sailing.

Onboard photography: Hiang Jian



The construction and specification of the deck gear is robust. Short stopovers in between long legs mean that a major breakdown could not only jeopardise the end of one leg but also the start of the following one – in short, putting the team out of contention.

As we cruised out of Cork Harbour under engine, a large number of well-wishers buzzed the yacht, giving a taste of what the reception will be like when the race gets to Galway next summer, having covered well over 35,000 miles.

Even as we hoisted the main I

realised that this was going to be an adrenalin-pumping ride. Conditions were fairly calm in the harbour, but navigator Ian Moore predicted more wind offshore.

The wind inshore was barely over ten knots, but boatspeed was already approaching that under mainsail alone. Well-wishers started to drift away and were replaced by a pod of fully grown dolphins.

Readying the boat for sail testing meant stacking – shifting almost two tonnes of gear to the windward side of the boat.

Boyz in the hood – a VOR 70 can have 1.5 tonnes of water on deck after a bad wave, so it's hoods up and eyes down



PADDY IRISHMEN, PADDY ENGLISHMEN...

... and Paddy Chinaman – with Chinese backers underwriting a large portion of the exercise, a Chinese crewman is a must-have for the Green Dragon team, and with the lucky individual being the only Chinese national in the race, it will guarantee the Green Dragon a massive share of the global audience.

As the Green Dragon headed out on its 2,000-mile qualifier, it had three new crewmembers aboard, all vying to be the single Chinese representative on the Green Dragon. It wasn't plain sailing. The trial was a trial by fire, with winds in excess of 40 knots and speeds in the high twenties, as they took just five days to cover 2,020 miles. One of the three Chinamen to head out into the North Atlantic stepped off the boat of his own accord after the trial. A club sailor, unused to ocean conditions, severe sea-sickness meant he was happy to rite himself out, leaving it to the two remaining sailors to fight it out for the slot. However, Aloft understands the most likely candidate is Gue Chuan, a local boy in the stopover port of Qingdao, which makes him even more attractive from a marketing point of view.

There's no passengers on a VOR70, however. Language is something of a barrier, with Gue still learning the Volvo 70 vocab, but he is reportedly fitting in well with the team and putting his weight in training.

HERE WE GO AGAIN...

Ireland has had representatives in every edition of the race since 1977, and have won on several occasions, with Noel Drennan and Ian Moore (a Green Dragon team member) on board winning Illbruck entry in 2002, built by Corkman Killian Bushe. Bushe built the ABN Amro boats (ABN Amro 1 won last time), and is in charge of the builds for the Ericsson team this time round. Justin Stattery (also on Green Dragon) was also on board ABN AMRO 1, which won the 2005/06 race.

Angela Heath (nee Farrell) was Ireland's only lady on board Maiden, the first all-female entry in the race, in 1989, but the honour of first Irish lady to race around the world goes to Susan Kavanagh, who sailed the race in 1985/86.

The first Irish entry was MCB Ireland (1989-90) which came 12th out of 25. A lot has changed since then. The crew of MCB Ireland raced against 24 other boats, all different. By contrast, the seven Volvo Ocean Race boats are almost identical, all conforming to a single design rule.

Ireland's Green Dragon boat weighs 14 tonnes (half of that in the canting keel), is made almost entirely of lightweight carbon fibre and can fly around 800 sq m of sail.

MCB Ireland weighed 28 tonnes before gear. It was ten feet longer and had spinnakers a third smaller than the Green Dragon. It could fly 535 sq m of sail and had a heavy aluminium mast. The Green Dragon was designed in California, built in China, and launched in the UK.

MCB Ireland was designed in Cork, built in Ballyfermot, and launched in Dublin Port.

Several of the crew organise the stack on deck, piling them in order for ease of access later on. The sails are heavy, really heavy; it takes three strong, fit guys to slide some of them into place.

And this is while the boat is flat; heaven only knows what the job must be like in a big seaway. Once the stack is in place, metal posts are stabbed into holes in the deck to keep the sails from sliding to leeward, and the sails are strapped down.

Below deck, Damian Foxall is moving the gear to windward and is not doing it gently. Lines, repair kits, sail bags, basically anything moveable is hurled unceremoniously across the boat before being carefully stowed so it will stay to

windward despite the boat's bucking motion. It's an exercise Foxall will have completed hundreds of times, during hundreds of thousands of sailing miles and during his recent Barcelona World Race win.

Once clear of land, a small headsail is raised. This was no press junket – the Green Dragon crew were very much at work. On the wind, the beamy Volvo 70 is not really at home but portions of the race will require this point of sail. Cracked off just a few degrees, the boat really starts to shift, the apparent wind angle shoots forwards and the boat speed climbs dramatically.

With a bear away, up goes the masthead kite and a staysail.

By now we are fully pressed, sitting perched on top of the stack, above the height of the guard rail and a long way above the water line. The keel is fully visible, canted to the windward side of the boat and nearly breaking the surface of the water like an orange dolphin.

Over a metric ton of water is in the aft tank to keep the bow up, the carbon fibre flyer is fully heeled and we are reaching at speeds of about 20 knots. It only feels fast when you look at how fast the water is moving. It's almost bizarre, hurtling along in an eerie vacuum of silence. What's more, we maintain this alarming pace almost effortlessly.

The power is amazing; a normal cruising boat would be assuming a cork-screw motion in the Atlantic swell; rising to the top of a wave and then surfing down the back of it – but not a Volvo 70. These boats create so much apparent wind that they go faster than the waves, skipping from one wave to the next. The leaping motion is more like that of a speed boat. The instruments confirm this; we are sailing at a true wind angle of 120° but the apparent wind angle is only 50.

We are offshore for the whole day and the mood on board is a happy one, almost tipsy with the excitement. Each time we bear away to

test a new sail, Neal MacDonald, on the helm, exaggerates the speed slide shouting 'fishtail!' as the rudder creates a foaming wake. With the day's work nearly over, job lists created and data stored, MacDonald commented on what it's like to go around again – his sixth lap of the planet.

"I had been talking to Ian Walker for quite some time, just for friendly advice really and when the America's Cup was going off the rails, we started really talking about the idea of joining the team. The real appeal to me, this time, is that I am doing what I love; racing around the world but without the weight of making the right decisions resting on my shoulders. I am involved in the decisions, as is all of the team and it is a great bunch of guys with a hell of a lot of talent."

The Green Dragon may have been the last team to hit the water but my impression is that they are hitting it running and have a tremendously talented group of sailors with a great team ethos. Can the team win the Volvo Ocean Race 2008-09? Only time will tell but they have a great boat, a crew which is a great blend of raw talent and experience. As the last team on the water, they may be seen as underdogs, but that's a position that the Irish revel in.



Justin Slattery at the wheel of the Green Dragon

TEAM TRIVIA

As yet, there's no rule that stipulates on which side the fleet must pass New Zealand. So potentially, yachts could be separated by thousands of miles as they cross the Pacific before converging again at Cape Horn.

Green Dragon will have the only Chinese team member in the race, moaning the eyes of China and Asia will be firmly on the Irish boat.

The only cooking implements on board the Volvo 70 are two camping kettles and six plastic 'sporks'. Food is made in a large, insulated bucket, and tastes better than you'd think.

The tackline is lovingly known as the 'down**ker' by the crew. Dolphins are known as 'jumping sharks' and the grinders are the 'pumps'.

Watch leader Damian Foxall has clocked up 648,000 kilometres in offshore racing, about 90% of the distance it takes to travel to the moon and back.

Bowman Justin Slattery has helped set three world sailing speed records this year alone.

'Green Dragon' is the name of a consortium of Chinese building contractors who are sponsoring the project. Agreeing on a design for the Dragon was very difficult, as a tiny error could offend an entire nation of more than 1.4 billion people.

Helm Tom Braidwood is an avid single-handed sailor. He thinks singlehanders who sleep four hours in a row are crazy, and prefers to wake every 20 minutes during his sleeping watches.

HOWYA, CHIEF

Hold off on the death notices, because Ireland's second entry to the Volvo Ocean Race is, apparently, still on life-support.

Ger O'Rourke, who renamed his second-hand VOR70 'McConnetts Chieftain' for the Round Ireland, says he could still make the Alicante start line for October 4. O'Rourke told Afloat: "The Volvo guys want me to race" and in an email ten days before we went to press, said: "We still are okay to start and hope to formally announce a named sponsor within the next few days. Boat and crew ready."

Chieftain racing is still held off as a provisional entry on the race but we have yet to see anything from camp Chieftain.



AGED 75, DAG PIKE LED THE WAY IN THE RECENT ROUND BRITAIN POWERBOAT RACE

FULL SPEED AT

Half way round Britain in a very fast powerboat, I felt the need to stop and ask myself, "Why am I doing this?" I was still asking that same question when the event finished but at least I had the considerable satisfaction of winning the Round Britain Powerboat race at the ripe old age of 75.

We had won the race by covering the 1,400 statute mile course in 20 hours 37 minutes which gives an average speed of around 55 knots. To finish the race one-and-a-half hours ahead of our closest rival was some feat, and at my age, the satisfaction of winning becomes even more intense.



The winning entry
at full speed

As to why - well, I was in the winning boat in the last Round Britain powerboat race back in 1984 and even participated in the first Round Britain Race way back in 1969, one of only two people to do all three of these gruelling contests. Round Britain is hailed as the toughest powerboat race in the world and just finishing is a great result. To get placed is even better and, well, somebody has to win.

The chance to participate came late in the day with an entry from Greece. The boat was Blue FPT, named after the engine manufacturers Fiat Power Technologies, built by FB Design and at 55 feet, the biggest boat in the race. Size counts in this sort of event when you have to be prepared to race in winds up to force 6. However, while we may have been the largest, we were far from being the fastest, with some of the boats capable of 100mph or more.

Our top speed was a modest 70mph but what really counts in this sort of race is consistency. You have to finish every leg of the race within a set time limit so reliability is paramount. With three engines we had an advantage here because the boat could still do 55mph on only two engines. Those boats with only two engines probably couldn't plane on just one engine so if they had a problem they might not finish within the time limit and so would get time penalties. This race is won on elapsed time so position is not so important until the race is finished.

My role was as a navigator and I had no problems coping with this challenge on a mental level. I was much more worried about the physical challenge and hoped that my ageing body would stand up to the punishment. There was only one way to find out.

Some boats went out of the race even before the start at Portsmouth when they drifted over the submarine barrier close to the start line and damaged their rudders and propellers, demonstrating the need for concentration from navigation at all times. The early casualties included the hot favourite and our sister competitor, Red FPT.

I had to miss this first leg because of family commitments but the crew did well in the rough conditions to come in second overall, a good start to any long distance race. The south coast run to Plymouth was short but challenging in winds up to force 5 and the size of Blue FPT really told. One boat sank going across Lyme Bay in the difficult seas and several boats suffered engine problems so the going was not easy.

The next day it was wild storms with winds up to force 9 forecast. The leg was to have been over the open seas from Plymouth to Milford Haven and the organisers wisely cancelled it because of the forecast conditions. Most boats were put on trailers and travelled the long way to Milford by road. Some brave souls waited for the wind to ease and just made it to Milford by water in time for the start the next day.

For this long leg from Milford to Bangor in Northern Ireland there was a challenging swell remaining from the storm the day before which slowed the boats on the way out to the Smalls Lighthouse, a turning mark on the course. Once round this corner we could turn on the power and head north and were soon leading the pack.

Faced with the choice of heading for Rosstare and the shelter of the Irish coast as soon as possible, or continuing straight up the middle of the Irish Sea, we chose a middle route, heading for Wicklow Head and then hugging the coast in case the swell was more pronounced than expected.

Under the lee of the Irish coast the seas went down and it was a straightforward run up the coast at full speed. It was only in the calmer seas towards the finish that the faster boats caught us up and all we could do was watch them power past to the finish line. Still we came in fourth and

this was enough for us to lead the race, a good start but a long way to go.

While other boats were changing engines and fixing things, all we had to do was check the Fiat diesels and refuel to be ready for the next leg heading north again to Oban in Scotland. The wind was freshening from the southeast on this leg so we expected a difficult first 30 miles before we could tuck in under the shelter of the Mull of Kintyre. There was a strong tide race off the Mull but it suited us perfectly and we ran through it at full speed, just touching the top of each wave and once again we were leading the fleet.

Further north the navigation became challenging as we made our way through the narrowing channels and shooting the narrows at the Fladda Lighthouse at 60 knots was exciting. Once again in the calm waters towards the finish, the faster boats passed us – frustrating but nothing to be done, so we had to settle for sixth place on this leg.

The leading boat was Wetpunkt, a dedicated race boat. We had dropped to second place overall. However, we were leading our motor cruiser class so we were pretty happy with things.

There was relief all round at the two-day break for the boats to transit the Caledonian Canal across Scotland so that racing could resume, heading south from Inverness. While we had nothing to do apart from the constant checking, this was valuable time for the other competitors to bring their ailing boats back up to strength. Amazingly there were still over 40 of the original 47-boat fleet still running at the start from Inverness.

The pressure was now on for the long run around the coast to Edinburgh and the challenge on this leg was to keep as close inshore as possible to get the calmer water but to do this safely. With winds blowing up to 25 knots, sea conditions were difficult but they slowed the other boats more than us.



The fleet leaves Bangor in Northern Ireland



Dag nurses one of two chart plotters – they both did sterling duty in tough conditions

Rounding Kinairds Head we hit a patch of very difficult swells that slowed us considerably, but further south we wound up to full speed again even though the seas were building. On the final run in to the Firth of Forth where there was a difficult head sea, we overtook three boats to take second place behind Wetpunkt.

It was a tough hard leg but we maintained our second place overall, gaining a minute on the leaders, a big Norwegian Goldfish RIB that suffered an electrical fire, but there was still a long way to go.

There was relief that it was only a short leg to Newcastle the following day and with the fresh wind off the land, the obvious course was to hug the coast. This brings its own dangers in the form of lobster pot markers, which at high speed you only see when you are very close. We took the narrow inshore channel at the Farne Islands to save vital seconds and, when the Norwegian RIB Lionheart lost over an hour with a transmission problem, we moved back into first overall with a lead of just over an hour.

Now the pressure was really on. Could we keep our lead against a faster boat? Everything would depend on weather,

tactics and good navigation. The 200 miles to Lowestoft seemed to last forever in 15 knot winds and Lionheart took an inside but longer route to get calmer seas. We followed a rhumb line course because there would be less advantage for us to go inside but Lionheart picked up 25 minutes on our winning margin so we were only 45 minutes ahead going into the final leg.

It was nail-biting stuff and everything would depend on the sea conditions and getting the navigation right across the Thames Estuary and in the English Channel. The winds were not so strong, allowing us to run at full speed most of the way, but there were difficult tidal seas around the headlands. To avoid the south-westerly head seas in the Channel we went right inshore where conditions were better than through the narrow Looe Stream to head up to the finish. We had no idea how Lionheart was doing but prayed that they had not made up too much time.

Heading round the two right angle bends and up to the finish line we came, in second place on that day's leg, to be greeted by loud cheers. Lionheart had transmission problems once again so we finished one and a half hours in front overall. We had done it, we had won.

What a relief – and what an emotional experience coming into Portsmouth.

Surprisingly none of the dedicated race boats featured in the top six and it was mainly production boats that were up there in the prize list. It was good to see the younger guys in Blue FPT suffering as much as I was when the seas were rough and I was certainly a bit battered and bruised at the end of the race.

The boat was magnificent with not a single problem for the whole race, and the three Fiat Powertrain diesels did not miss a beat despite being under enormous pressure during the race.

Navigation was done through two chart plotters in the hope that one of them would keep working. They both did sterling duty in these tough conditions, but it was interesting to see the reduced levels of focus when you only have to put the required route into the plotter and let it do the work. One thing with racing is that the plotters will not accept alternative routes and once you are going along you can only change the scale of the presentation. It is just too difficult to try and press the buttons to get alternative presentations. The electronics made life easy but the paper charts were never far away just in case.

THERE'S NO BUSINESS LIKE SHOW BUSINESS



IRELAND'S SUMMER HAS BEEN A TAD CLOUDY, BUT SOUTHAMPTON'S ANNUAL ON-THE-WATER SPECTACLE IS LINED WITH SILVER. MARKHAM NOLAN EXPLAINS

Life begins at 40, so they say, and few look as spry at that age as the Southampton Boat Show, which blows out 40 candles this year. The nine-day party kicks off on September 12 and, while mid-life crises don't even get a mention, Southampton's middle-age spread means a bigger and better show than ever before.



GETTING THERE

Getting there's half the battle when it comes to the boat show, and it's really no battle at all.

Belfast, Cork, and Dublin are all served by direct flights into Southampton International Airport, with Flybe and Aer Arann. The Dublin-Southampton route has three flights most days, with flights starting at just €5.95 one way before taxes, with the Belfast route less frequent and considerably more expensive. Derry will also get a direct route to Southampton, but it kicks in this October, just a shade too late for the show.

Cork, meanwhile, is served by Aer Arann, which flies four times a week between the two cities, with fares starting around €50.

Once you're there, take a train from the airport station to Southampton central, and the show is a ten-minute walk, or take one of two bus services from the airport to Southampton City Centre, namely Unilink and First Bus.

Ryanair, in traditional style, don't fly directly to Southampton, but rather fly to nearby Bournemouth, where you can get a bus or taxi the rest of the 25-mile journey. There's also a train from central Bournemouth to Southampton Central station, a 25-minute journey which cuts through the picturesque New Forest on the way.

At the time we checked, it was possible to get Ryanair flights for absolutely nothing, excepting the taxes and charges, although this kind of thing never lasts long.

For more maps, etc., have a look at www.southamptonboatshow.com and click on the 'Plan your Visit' tab.

SHOW INFORMATION

The Show is open between 10am and 7pm every day except the final day when it closes at 6pm. It's located around Mayflower Park/Town Quay, Southampton.

TICKET PRICES (IN £ STERLING)

Public Days: 13th – 21st September

	In advance	At the gate
Adult	£12.50	£15
Combi Show Ticket	£20.00	£25
Seniors, Students, and Disabled visitors	N/A	£10
Child (under 15)	Free with paying adult	
Platinum/Ladies Day Ticket	£85.00	
Ladies Day – 18th September only	£85.00	
Groups 10+	£10.00	N/A
Groups 40+	£8.50	N/A

Preview Day – 12th September

	In advance	At the gate
Adult	£17.50	£20
Seniors, Students, and Disabled visitors	N/A	£15
Child (under 15 yrs)	Free with paying adult	
Platinum Ticket	N/A	£85

In our locale, on the western islands of Europe, Southampton on the water remains the boatshow benchmark by which all others are measured, and the one which they all try to emulate.

Across the ditch, even London's Boat Show has moved to mimic Southampton's inside-outside duality of purpose.

By moving from the Earl's Court showrooms to the Thames-side location it now regularly inhabits, London has dispensed with the need for giant indoor pools in which to float a few token yachts.

And here in Ireland, the on-the-water boat show at Malahide – only two shows old – has made a splash, allowing Ireland's big guns in boat sales to show off their wares in their natural environment – on the water.

Southampton remains the biggest and the best, with hundreds of berths, and hundreds of exhibitors, tempted to the Solent from all over Europe. Whether it's to walk the pontoons or hit the marquee showrooms, this is the big daddy of boat shows in Britain and Ireland, and the main port of call for anyone who's seriously thinking of investing in the next year.

But times are, allegedly, very glum. Our Celtic tiger can't manage more than a faint purr and we're supposedly wallowing in a permanent state of financial gloom and depression.

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FRENCH FLAIR AND FLY MOTORS

Jeanneau have four new models making their debuts this summer. Their cruising Sun Odyssey range gets two new versions, the 30i and the 44i, and the luxurious 50DS at the larger end of the spectrum.

The 30i is, as you'd expect from a boat of its size, offering decent space below for a 30-footer. However the 44i is a step beyond that. The forward cabin can be split sensibly with a removable bulkhead, and can even have bunks added for extra accommodation.

Despite being billed as a performance cruiser, its unworkable mainsheet traveller precludes any real raciness, as does a table in the cockpit, but the deck layout is well thought-out and, as is typical with the Jeanneau Sun Odyssey, is set up for cruising at speed rather than taking line honours. The 50DS makes no pretence as to its purpose – luxury cruising, and it does it exceedingly well.

On the motor side, Jeanneau are throwing their weight behind the Merry Fisher 815. The name sounds jolly but it means business. A mid-size motor cruiser, the Merry Fisher is trying to be all things to all men, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Some of its more practical features (an off-centre rather than corner transom door, and the bench helm seat) will help it please most people most of the time, and 200hp should be enough for most people.

The popular Prestige range also gets a new addition: the 1,150hp Prestige 50 Fly. Spacious in every area, the 50 Fly provides for expansive comfort. A fully-equipped galley and three cabins with a bathroom each make this a regular floating home away from home.

Martin Salmon, John O'Kane and Ross O'Leary from MGM Boats; and Hugh Mockler, Amy Mockler and Alan Barton from HM Yachts will be taking care of business on the Jeanneau stand at the show.





SPORTY NEW BAVARIA MAKES DEBUT

The name of Bavaria's new offering is a bit of a mouthful but the package that goes along with it is slightly easier to swallow, with options to beat the band. The Bavaria 37 Highline Avantgarde (got that?) will be officially unveiled at Southampton, sitting pretty on berth 192.

The 37 is the first in Bavaria's new Highline Avantgarde range, a product of a buyout of the boatbuilder and a strategic shakeup, that has resulted in a €10 million expansion of the Bavaria factory.

It is, more or less, an upgrade of the existing 37 Sport/HT, and comes with three engine options (one petrol, two diesel). The large cockpit area has a wet bar and fridge, the heads are roomy and have a separate shower compartment. As with all the Bavaria range, the 37 Hard Top comes with wide side decks, allowing easy access to the bow with complete 360° vision from the helm position.

The two double cabins are exceptionally large, with the forward cabin particularly roomy. There's an option to convert to a twin aft cabin.

The interior has been totally revamped to more luxurious standards, and customers will also have eight different choices of upholstery to choose from, and three different interior wood finishes. It's yours on the water for €250,000.

O'Sullivan's Marine will be manning the Bavaria stand, with Brian O'Sullivan on hand to answer questions.

Prices from:

'On the water' Classic 37 Sport = £184,822 including VAT

'On the water' Highline Avantgarde 37 Sport = £194,631 including VAT (and including choice of cockpit and interior upholstery and woods).





MGM SHOWCASE PRIME MERIDIAN

MGM Boats will be making their presence felt in Southampton, with agents on several stands. The Dun Laoghaire outfit will take their own stand at the show, proudly displaying their Meridian line, for which they have the agency in both Ireland and the UK. On the stand will be the Meridian 341, a 35-foot flybridge cruiser aimed at the mid-size motor cruiser market.

Gerry Salmon reckons that the Meridian is 'rightly priced to put a cat among the pigeons', and is expecting to attract a lot of interest.

The 341 comes with twin 6.2L MerCruiser petrol powertrain as standard, but has the option of twin 330hp Cummins diesels. Bow and stern thrusters – part of the 'Docking on Control' system – means mooring this mid-sizer is as easy as the early levels of Tetris, and the interior layout is well thought-out, spacious and elegant. We had a walk-through at the Malahide show and it was impressive. If you missed out, step aboard at Southampton and you'll be pleasantly surprised.



NEW FIRST COVERS ALL BASES

BJ Marine will be assisting Beneteau with their traditionally impressive presence at Southampton, with pride of place going to the new First 40.

'The new First 40 is a real machine,' said Bernard Gallagher. 'She will be very competitive, she's replacing the 40.7 which has been a racing stalwart for many years.'

The First 40 and 45 step in, upgrading the 40.7 and 44.7, both standard-bearers in Irish cruiser-racing. First's designs have never gone to extremes, combining the best of both the cruising and racing worlds. Designed again by Bruce Farr, the 40 comes in three specs, replacing more and more aluminium with carbon fibre as you progress upwards. The regatta pack has carbon boom and spinnaker pole, with the regatta carbon pack adding a carbon mast. Sail options are also covered, with the race pack offering a larger main, smaller genoa (106% rather than 135%) and a slightly larger spinnaker.

The new Oceanis 54 will also be on display, a beamy (almost 5 metres) twin-helm cruiser that compromises nothing for comfort. Layout options offer both twin forward cabins or a large owners suite, with two doubles aft of the companionway and a usable foc'sle cabin. Beautiful finish throughout is standard for the Oceanis range, some of the most cruisable production yachts around. At £250,000 ex VAT, the 54 seems to be a bargain.



The new First 40. Photo: Guillaume Plisson

Can that be true? Not according to Ireland's drove of happy chandlers and marine agents, who say that Southampton will be the end to a bumper season.

Bernard Gallagher of BJ Marine in Malahide has struggled to keep boats in the showroom, with four of Beneteau's 42-foot Swift trawlers motoring off his dock this year already – an indication that luxury marine craft are still in demand.

Hugh Mockler of HM Marine, a Jeanneau and Najad agent, reckons his growth and that of the marine industry in Cork is hampered only by a lack of marina space in Ireland.

So with marina waiting lists bulging with applicants, and heavy machinery sailing away under the pilotage of satisfied customers, it's clear that interest in boating is at an all-time high. And if you want in, or are thinking of upgrading, a trip to the Southampton boat show is a sensible investment.

As ever, attendance at the event is split between the serious purchasers and the serial tyre-kickers, and the trick for boat shows is providing enough to keep both happy.

For the committed buyer, Southampton is the businessplace where many boatbuilders and gear providers unveil their latest creations. Jeanneau, Hanse, Beneteau, Bavaria, X-Yachts and other big names will be rolling out new models in their global range, and using the Southampton docks to do it.

It's a chance to take a sneak peek at the latest models and engage in some heated horse-trading, with competition between vendors reaching a frenzy during showtime.

With the euro close to all-time highs against the pound, it also puts boats that were previously just out of reach back within grasp, opening up a whole new sector of craft to the Irish buyer.

FAIRWAYS TO HEAVEN

Bespoke cartographers Latitude of Kinsale will be tabling a new item from their range at Southampton – and this one knows its station.

The makers of contoured admiralty charts have put together a 3D chart table designed to be fitted in the cabin of your vessel. It's crafted from Cherry wood, has inbuilt surround lighting and contains all working navigational aids built in and flickering in real time.

Pick your home port, and have the details of it blink at you permanently from below a panel of glass, rather than inside a moulding plastic Ziploc chart bag.

Their Southampton stall will also include a selection of Black and White and Colour 3D charts and Light Charts of the Solent and the Isle of Wight.

This is sure to turn heads among the superyacht crowd, with Latitude happy to recreate 3D representations of any chart, anywhere in the world.

The Kinsale designers have already supplied prizes for the likes of the SuperYacht regatta in Porto Cervo, Key West and Cork Week.

With every piece made by hand, Christmas shoppers need to get in there early. Last year Latitude stopped taking orders in early November – so book yours at Southampton.

SOUTHAMPTON Stand A148 in the Solent tent near the entrance.



Way to go – Latitude offer 3D charts for your cabin

BLING BLING

Calling all buoy racers – this is the latest on-the-water equivalent of the hot hatch. ChrisCraft's Silver Bullet comes with a basic engine packages that boast five litres of 5.0L Gxi (270 PSHP) Volvo Penta, but can be beefed up to the 5.7 Gxi (320 PSHP) Volvo Penta. The latter engine will achieve speeds on excess of 68mph (claims Irish dealer, Dave Maguire), and she comes with an upgraded stereo (with sub-woofers) and a special teak package that covers the swim platform, centre foredeck and engine hatch. "This boat truly is the best handling boat I have ever driven," says Maguire. "It drives like a Porsche 911."



DUBARRY'D FROM TOE TO HEAD

Dubarry are quite possibly Ireland's most successful marine export of all time, unless you count friendly Christianity, but they're proselytising further and looking for converts in the American market. In short, they want your soles., and more besides.



As Dubarry prepare to go large in the US of A, they're expanding their clothing range to clothe the serious yachtsman from head to toe.

Their boots were cutting edge before any of the other companies had even figured out there was an edge, and they remain the best-loved offshore footwear for the serious sailor. Now they have the clothing to match.

Among the line-up is the Sierra Short, with reinforced cordura where it matters (the arse), lightweight quickdry material throughout, a splashproof thigh pocket and a multitool pouch for your Gerber/Leatherman/McGyver multitool. They're also SPF 40, so your bits don't get burnt.

There's also the Pro Racer Lightweight Aquasport shoe (pictured), a new featherlight on-deck trainer with the traditional non-slip, non-marking sole, but none of the bulk. Kiss goodbye to the Dubarry trademark boots 'n' shorts tan line that gives you a brown ring around your knees, and say hello to nimble feet. Don't worry, the good old Ultima (also pictured) is still the staple, but do keep an eye out for the hardcore Fastnet boot, with Lycra around the calf for easy entry and more grip.



Their new-look website, dubarry.com, is under construction, so make sure and keep an eye out for their gear on show at Southampton.




2008 GXL 205 BOWRIDER



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- Canvas soft top package
- Stern filler
- Swimplatform
- Mooring cover
- Upgrade package




2009 GT249 CRUISER



2008 Model Shown

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- Remote spotlight/compass
- Transom shower
- Windshield wiper
- XL package




Tel: +44 28 703 28886
Email: info@xtremeboats.co.uk



The Hanse 470

BROOM, BROOM

Making very positive noises ahead of the Southampton show were Broom Boats, builders of the new 395 model, targeted at inland waterways users in the Irish market and being launched officially on the docks at Southampton. The 395 is an interesting little package, not least for the range of engine options available. For pootling along the waterways, she can be fitted with a 115hp engine for maximum fuel economy at low cruising speeds, and

comes fitted with a substantial skeg to protect the propellor and rudder. However, if you're heading out to sea, you can opt for plenty of extra grunt, calling on twin 330hp engines to push through the waves.

Broom Boats will also have their 425, 450 and 50 on show at Southampton, with Billy Shaw from Portumna Marine, their Irish dealers, on hand to answer questions from Irish buyers.

ALL HANSE ON DECK - ALMOST

Hanse Yachts will have five boats on display at Southampton, the Hanse 320, 350, 370, 400, 430 and 470, if you care to investigate. That's almost the entire Hanse range on the Southampton pontoons.

The only two absentees are the 540 and the 630, which is a slight disappointment, as the 600 in particular has the lovely clean lines along the deck and solid, angular construction that you'd associate with a Wally yacht. Both are designed by Judel-Vrolijk, who have penned designs for umpteen cruisers, as well as a line of racers that include modern TP52s.

New interior layouts will be the order of the day for those present and correct, with the 320, 350 and 470 all undergoing a remodelling below decks, with some minor changes above decks also.

The award-winning 400 (European boat of the year in 2006) will have an all-new interior, deck and cockpit and feature the choice of either single or twin steering wheels.

Irish agents Philip Watson and Paul Kingston will be in attendance at the show.

TRAWLING FOR LUXURY-SEEKERS

Beneteau are also plugging their new Swift Trawler 52 at Southampton. The smaller, 42-foot version of this boat has sold well in Ireland already. Extravagantly finished, this ample motor cruiser has a fuel tank capacity of 4,000L, which practically allows you hedge your diesel buying for months ahead, and comes with a max of 1,150hp from twin screws, giving you a cruising speed of 18 knots.

The owners cabin stretches the entire 4.9 metre beam and has a writing desk, and a tender sits comfortably on the aft upper deck.

For sports cruisers, the new Antares II will be on display, as will the sporty Flyer 550 Cabriolet and the Monte Carlo 32 hard-top, which could be the perfect sports cruiser for Irish weather.



YAKKITY YAK – THE DRYSUIT’S BACK

It's not all about the big boats and the bling. If you spend your time a bit closer to the water, you're taken care of at Southampton too. Crewsaver have taken some concepts from those who sit below the waterline – kayakers – and applied it for the benefit of small boat sailors. Lessons learnt from their excellent YAK range of kayaking gear check out the buoyancy aids – we like them a lot! have been piled into the Vertex drysuit. It has a twin neck system for optimum warmth and dryness.

The inner seal is Latex which gives the best seal against a high impact swim (think 49er burying the nose). The outer is neoprene, adding warmth and durability to the neck system. With extra features, the fabric needs to be extra special, so a four layer laminate fabric provides the highest levels of breathability and durability. Adjustable cuff and ankle covers keep the suit as sleek as possible and protect from nicks and cuts, while the integral braces and excellent fit of the suits mean mobility is maximized. An extra sleeve pocket adds extra storage to the suit. RRP is €269.93 – pretty reasonable for a breathable drysuit. Both Viking Marine of Dun Laoghaire and CH Marine of Slandore are stockists.



AVERT YOUR EYES

Fancy some fancy shades, but don't want to fork out for the pricey prescription version? Gill have you covered.

Their new Shield sunglasses are, they say, the first floatable and polarized over-glasses for sailors who wear prescription glasses. Designed to be worn over prescription frames, Gill Shield sunglasses provide 100% protection against harmful UVA and UVB light. The lenses are scratch resistant, have an oleo-phobic surface (we looked it up – it means afraid of oils) to prevent fingerprints and smudges adhering to the lens.

The frames are made from lightweight Grilamid TR90 and include cushioned pads in areas where the glasses could come into contact with the spectacles. Additional buoyancy, inserted in the frame arms, allows the glasses to float should you drop them overboard. They can't guarantee that they'll save your own glasses, though. Common, they're sunglasses, not lifeguards. The RRP is around €45.



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PEARLY WHITES

It's all gleaming power on the Sonas stand, with the Pearl and ChrisCraft marques getting an outing on the pontoons.

Top of the line is the Pearl 60, a yacht that combines expansive living space with innovative features and luxurious finishes to rival any superyacht.

At a cruising speed of 28 knots, it has a range of 300 miles, thrust forward by twin 775hp Volvo engines – not bad for a 4-cabin 60ft motor yacht. Private viewings can be arranged.

If you're looking for something slightly more recession-friendly, ChrisCraft's Corsair 36 might be more your style – a beautifully appointed sports cruiser with timeless riverboat lines evocative of the Riva, and a build quality unmatched in this sector, says the bump. Surprisingly roomy, too, with 6'2" of headroom in the forward cabin, and another stateroom to the rear.

ChrisCraft will also have the utilitarian but sleek Catalina 29 and 26 on display. Sonas has David Maguire looking after Irish customers.

For the sightseer, Southampton puts on a show like no other. Big names of the yachting world will be there, including blue-water survivors Robin Knox-Johnston and Pete Goss.

The Jeannie Johnston



Ireland's famine ship, the Jeannie Johnston, is free to explore, and there are plenty of historic craft lining the docks, with air-sea rescue drills whirring overhead.

There's even a ladies' day, on the 18th, with a fashion show on the main stage, champagne in the bar, and chocolates in the lounge.

Direct flights mean that getting there is a cinch, and the beer is cheap, so there's really no excuse for a no-show.

THANK YOU FOR NOT SMOKING

A rising tide lifts all boats, but rising sea-levels help no-one. If you're in the market for a motorboat, it's incumbent upon you to at least try and be slightly green.

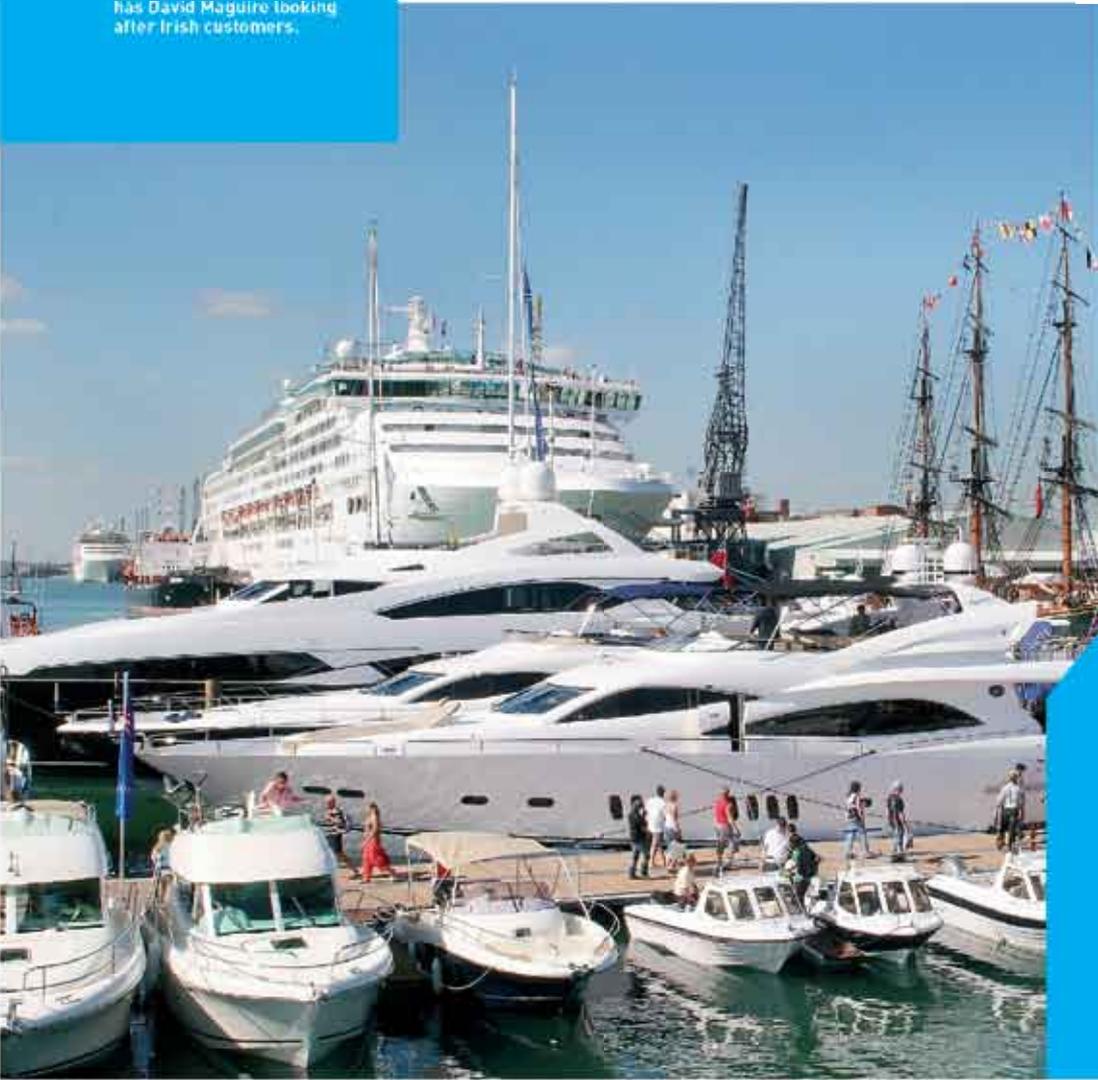
Why not ask about Volvo's new range of petrol engines, fitted with a catalytic converter for leisure boats. Volvo Penta is launching four catalyzed sterndrive models and one catalyzed Volvo Penta IPS gasoline model, all of which satisfy California CARB 4 star requirements, the toughest emission regulation standard in the world.

With some very technical controls on combustion, the reaction inside the catalytic converter sharply reduces emissions of hydrocarbons and carbon monoxide.

The fuel system also includes emission monitoring and diagnostics to alert the driver if the exhaust emission control is not functioning optimally. So you've been warned.

If you're committed to guzzling gas, don't worry, because these engines ain't powered on muesli, and there's certainly no lack of power. The range includes two small-block V8 engines developing 270hp and 300hp, respectively, and one 400hp big block V8 engine.

The Volvo Penta IPS 550G, a 400hp gasoline powered version fitted with a catalytic converter, is offered only in selected markets.



MEET UP WITH YOUR X?

X-Yachts have drawn lines in the sand, splitting their range into three distinct categories.

Conor Fanning and Debbie Weldon will be on hand at the X-Yachts stand to answer queries from Ireland, and the jewel in their crown this year is the Xc45, the latest in X's cruising range.

The Xc45 retains the stylish yet somehow practical lines that are associated with X-Yachts, which have always inhabited a reassuring Volvo-like space that suggests performance but sensibility at the same time, somehow with no compromise in either department. You could call it the X-factor, but that would be incredibly clichéd...

The Xc45 has plenty of headroom down below, with a slightly raised cabin roof above, but still looks fast and beautiful.

They'll also be showing the X34, X37, X40, and the elegant X50 from their performance range.



PLAYING THE NUMB3R5



BOTH ON AND OFF THE WATER, IT'S THE NUMBERS THAT MAKE CORK WEEK WHAT IT IS. LOUAY HABIB EXPLAINS THE MATH OF IRELAND'S PREMIER REGATTA, AND HOW SOME THINGS NO LONGER ADD UP



Dan Meyers' aptly-named 66ft IRC weapon, Numbers, did ACC Bank Cork Week in style. As one of the glamour yachts, Numbers enhanced her status by being tethered to a 170-foot mothership, the schooner Meteor, and renting the grand dwelling of Crosshaven House for a little bit of extra room for crew and guests. The name 'Numbers' might well have referred to the lengthy digits written in on the owner's cheque book.

The Numbers crew, like the rest of Cork Week's visitors, were blessed with excellent sailing weather – a variety of wind strengths over the week coming mainly from the south west.

CORK WEEK
REPORT 08

Although a huge wind shift on day one turned some races inside out, there were few complaints about the conditions.

What's more, the rain fell, for the most part, either side of the event rather than in the middle, giving a huge boost to the social side of the regatta which was extremely well run. The large number of bands and DJs in every tent were exceptional, catering for a wide variety of tastes.

I can safely say I have never been to a regatta with such professional and highly organised entertainment.

On the water, Cork displayed one of its true assets as a sailing location: the variety or number of courses that can be laid on.

Inside the harbour, tight courses around the cans test crew work and navigational skills to the maximum. Along the coastal route, tidal effects and wind effects from the land conspire to produce tactical courses along a magnificent backdrop.

And offshore, sea state comes into play with the Atlantic swell producing some dramatic surfing conditions.

However, it has to be said that race management was not on a par with the excellent administration in 2006. Some competitors found that their harbour race had become a seven-mile windward-leeward course outside the harbour and sometimes resetting of courses took far too long, much to the frustration of competitors.

This problem is not confined to ACCBank Cork Week, it must be said,



Aerial photograph of the Class Zero and IRC 45 fleets on Friday. Inset: Bernard Gouy of France in his Ker 39



David Dwyer's Marinerscore.ie, winner of IRC 1 by a 3.5 point margin



115
103

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One of the many cruise liners to visit Cobh berthed at the Deep Water Quay on Wednesday. The ship provided an interesting backdrop for the Class 2 boats in the harbour race



Many regattas rely on volunteers to carry out race management duties and, harsh as it may be to say, the standard is often simply not good enough, especially at the big boat level, where professional sailors deserve equally professional organisation.

Good volunteers are a precious commodity and deserve to be heaped with praise for their efforts, but at the top level sailors throughout the world are clamouring for a professional race management team to travel from regatta to regatta and provide top-quality racing.

Overall, the numbers were down at ACC Bank Cork Week, with about 380 yachts making it to the event, down from the heyday of more than 600 boats. When you consider that the final number includes 40 SB3s, a class that has sprung up from nothing since the last Cork Week in 2006, that is a significant drop in cruiser/racers. Difficult delivery conditions in the days preceding the event prevented a few yachts from competing, but that couldn't account for the falloff on its own.

Having said that, it's not too many years since Cork could expect 70 - 80 Sigma 33's and up to 40 Sigma 38's holding their nationals at the event. These classes have declined in numbers and this has had a knock-on effect here.

A common consensus from the competitors was that with a strong euro and a weak world economy, competitors from USA and Britain found Cork Week's entry fees and the cost of accommodation prohibitive.

PROFESSIONAL HIT

THE FOOL'S GOLD INCIDENT IN CORK SHOWS HOW USING ISAF RULES TO VET 'PROFESSIONALS' CAN RESULT IN BIZARRE OUTCOMES



left – Rob McConnell's A35 at Cork Week
Photo: Bob Bateman

would be category three."

"I was given the choice to protest it, which would mean a Rule 69 if I lost, or else retire gracefully and that's what I did."

For McConnell and crew, it meant that they would have to count their races to date as

RET, with McConnell forced off the boat for the last day's racing.

The Fool's Gold crew went out to compete for what could only amount to a pyrrhic victory, and took with them Tom Fitzpatrick as helm – the most bizarre twist of all. Fitzpatrick guided them to a final race win, which would have clinched the event for them had the previous races been counted.

"If you think about it, I've been racing against Tom all my life," said McConnell.

"Tom's been beating me all my life. Tom is an infinitely better sailor than I am – a different league.

"If Tom's not a category three, and he's not because he's not paid for it, then surely I'm not a category three. It's meaningless."

Fitzpatrick, a former Olympian, coach and multiple national title holder, admitted that the rule had not fulfilled its intention.

"I was able to sub in, being a former pro, so by removing a categorised pro and subbing me in maybe they made the boat go faster, so they didn't really achieve their objective.

"I play to the rules," said Fitzpatrick. "I'm not going to whinge if they put a rule in that they don't like, but his [McConnell's] work doesn't contribute to making a boat go faster."

McConnell said he contacted the race committee three days before the event to query his status but was told that he could remain as a Category 1 sailor without issue.

While hugely disappointed, not least for his crew who had put in such an effort, McConnell bore no malice to the organisers who gave him the flick.

"Anthony O'Leary had his arm around me going: 'Kid, you don't really have a choice here.

If you made a ten grand donation to the RNLI, I still couldn't do anything about it.' Cork Week themselves were very good about it."

The incident raises the question once again as to whether or not the ISAF classifications are the right way to vet amateurs and sieve out the professionals.

The Large Corinthian events will have to look at the Fool's Gold incident and ask themselves whether or not the hobbyist who works in the sailing industry deserves to be able to sail unfettered in the big events of the season, or be forced to keep a professional distance.

Cork Week's roots lie in the everyman, Corinthian principle that the event is for the amateur and the amateur alone.

The tokens of Class Super Zero, Class Zero and the one-design fleets are tossed to those who want to deal with the pros, but the lion's share of handicap racing is exclusively amateur, and professionals are banned.

One incident from this year's event shines a light on the grey area inhabited by the peripheral sailor, the quasi-professional who might not be there to sit at the back and whisper tactical sweet nothings, but nonetheless earns his living from sailing and sailboat racing.

Category 3 sailors are not permitted in the amateur classes at Cork Week. A Category 3 sailor is defined as someone who is paid to prepare either a boat or a team for an event, and then competes in that event, or with that team.

A Category 1 sailor, meanwhile, is someone who does not sail for money, and whose work "does not require knowledge or skill capable of contributing to the performance of a boat".

The area between the two would seem to catch a lot of people linked to the industry who derive their income from sailing and who, while not considered professional sailors, might be seen as sailing professionals. Chandlers, boat dealers, charter operators, sailing gear agents, and the like. Even yachting journalists, or your common-or-garden club instructor could, technically, be caught out by the letter of the law.

Waterford's Rob McConnell was the most high-profile victim caught out by the rule this year. A former Olympic 49er campaigner, McConnell entered Cork Week as a category one amateur, as skipper of his own Archambault 35, Fool's Gold.

McConnell is also the Irish dealer for Archambault, newly-anointed, and with his crew found himself in second position with one day to go, within shooting distance of the win and clear of the third place boat.

But McConnell was also within range of the protest committee, and found himself facing an ISAF official on the eve of the last day's racing due to a query over his status.

The protest, incidentally, came from a former employee of a Dublin-based boat dealer, who had sat out several Cork Weeks due to his category until he changed his employment status.

"I sat down with a guy in ISAF to decide what my category would be next year," said McConnell, "and he decided that it

Numbers, winner of Class Super-Zero and arguably one of the best sailed boats of the week, rounding one of the marks on the Slalom course. Brad Butterworth and many of the Alinghi crew members were on board as was Crosshaven's Joe English, valuable for his local knowledge

HOW OLD IS CORK WEEK?

Was this year the 30th anniversary of Cork Week, or will it come in 2016? To many of the competitors enjoying Crosshaven's sunshine this year, it might seem irrelevant when the event started. But for those close to the action, and the organisation, it certainly stirred up an interest.

After much discussion, it now appears that the leading Cork sailing authorities are in agreement. The first Cork Week was held in 1978 and attracted around 32 boats.

The event, which ran from July 18th to 21st, featured the presentation of the Carling Trophy. There had been some confusion over the event, which some commentators felt was in fact an

ISORA event. However, checks on The (then Cork) Examiner archives - by Afloat correspondent Claire Bateman - revealed that there was an ISORA event on July 4th that year in Holyhead, with a feeder race from Dun Laoghaire attracting 50 yachts.



Successful close to first Cork Race Week



Start of it all - Tom O'Sullivan's report from 'The Cork Examiner' in 1978

THE WORD ON THE WEEK

WE PUT OUR EAR TO THE GROUND - ONLINE, IN PRINT AND ELSEWHERE - TO HEAR WHAT THE HORDES HAD TO SAY ABOUT CORK WEEK...

Kawalski - Sailing Anarchy

If you don't want to spend your entire paycheck, it's a good idea to revisit your student days and stockpile drinks on your boat and make timely trips back and forth to the marina.

Anne Hogan - manlydaily.com.au

We are definitely coming back in two years. The quality of the racing, the variety of the courses and, of course, the partying is unparalleled.

Mayo Advertiser

The one constant was dry, warm weather; a true sailor's delight.

Jen

I didn't like '98/2000 so much because that was around the peak number of boats (The Bigger, Better, Faster, More period). Since then there have been fewer boats and hence fewer people, and it's been a lot more pleasant not having to fight your way through hordes of pissed sailors to get anywhere on the site.

Thiepval - Sailing Anarchy

After 2000, I vowed I'd never do another. It's just too big, too drink centered, too much of a scrum... the Scottish Series is much better fun... Even Cowes week is more fun than Cork now, as long as you do it in the right way.



Limerick's Ger O'Rourke in action in an SB3



J109s



Laser SB3s

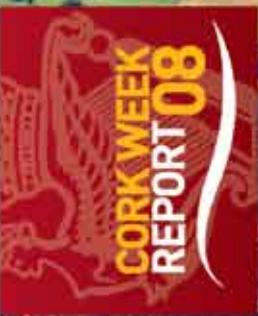
The hiking upwards of bar and food prices meant that living expenses were also very high for sailors visiting from afar.

In defence of the organisers, the entry fee was set before ACC Bank became the sponsors and it is understood that entry fees will be lower for the 2010 event. That will come as little consolation to this year's empty-walleted visitors, and takes no account of paying €6 for a plastic glass of beer in the on-site tents - more than was paid for a proper pint in a clinking glass in the local Crosshaven pubs.

When you add it all up, ACC Bank Cork Week is still a cracking event, and the friendly pseudonym it has earned in the UK - 'Craic Week' - belies the fiercely competitive spirit on display out on the water, where it's all about playing the numbers. But the price issue has to be addressed for the next event, if grumbings on the dock are anything to go by. Unless the numbers add up on shore for the average punter, it could all come to naught.



Roy and Vera Dickson's Corby 36 Rosie in Tuesday's racing. Skipped by David Nixon, Rosie was the overall winner of IRC Class 2



WRAPPING IT UP

CORK WEEK HAS COME AND GONE, BUT ALREADY THE SHAPE OF THE 2010 EVENT IS COMING TOGETHER. RCYC ADMIRAL MIKE MCCARTHY (LEFT) GIVES US HIS VIEW ON A FEW KEY POINTS

ON THE WEEK IN GENERAL

"It was a tremendous event from a competitor's point of view and a club point of view. We're absolutely delighted. On the last day we had a going away present for all the boats, maybe 250 of them, and I shook hands with everyone – and got positive feedback from every last one."

ON THE PRICING ISSUE

"It is an expensive event, but then we believe we give good value to the competitor at the end of the day. The quality of the racing is superb, and that costs a lot to run. And also the quality of the social activities on site are tremendous – unfortunately that costs a lot of money to set up."

"To be fair, one or two of them did comment on prices, but any holiday is expensive. They're here for a full seven days, there's no way that's going to be cheap. But positive reactions from everyone, we are delighted."

ON CORK WEEK 2010

"We're already planning the 2010 event. There were comments positive and negative and we have to try to constantly address all of those issues. The most important thing is to continue to make the event as professionally run as possible."

"We're considering tweaks to the race course, and trying to make life a bit more fun on

site during the week of the event itself.

"There are a number of things that we are considering and if price is one of those things, then so be it. The important thing is to make sure that it's fun on the site for the club sailor – that's the goal of the event."

ON THE 'PROFESSIONAL PROBLEM'

"There is no problem, to be honest with you. The rules are quite clear. The competitors do not want professionals in their club racing in Cork Week. What Cork Week did was create two classes, Super Zero and Zero, also a corporate class, and grade

two and grade three sailors can race in those fleets.

"The problem is that's not a Cork Week issue or a club issue, that's ISAF grading. Most competitors will have received an email by now asking them for their feedback on the 2008 event, and it is quite surprising the number who have come back saying 'Make sure you keep a 'grade one only' event, and that's what the competitors come back looking for."

"Nonetheless there is a demand for grade twos and that's why we've gone out of our way to create a corporate class."

HOT SITE IN HARBOUR

As the Cork Week fleet crossed tacks along the Cobh shoreline, passing the naval dockyard at Haulbowline, few would have realised they were cruising past one of Ireland's environmental hot potatoes.

Haulbowline island, at the time, was making headlines because of cancer-causing residue, left over from the Irish Steel plant that once occupied the land. It was recently confirmed that a cache of 500,000 tonnes of slag and toxic waste material were buried at the former steelworks.

The report, compiled in 2005 but, like the toxins, only seeping out later, shows high levels of several heavy metals at the plant, both in soil samples and water samples.

Chromium six, which causes cancer both by inhalation and by infecting groundwater, was revealed to be present in massive quantities at Haulbowline. The mineral is a highly toxic anti-corrosion agent used in the steel-making process, but which is gradually being phased out due to its toxicity.

The site is a blight on one of the finest natural harbours in the world, and home to one of the best regattas in the world. How can sailors make their views known on this subject? We'd like to hear your thoughts – comment@afloat.ie

The constant dumping of processed slag from the steel works at Haulbowline has increased the area of the island to over 80 acres and has left major contamination in its wake. Can sailors do anything to highlight this problem located in the middle of one of Ireland's biggest regattas?



CORK WEEK RESULTS 2008

Boat of the Week – Kinsale Kettle
City of Cape Town, David & Roger Hudson

Sisk Group Corinthian Cup
Playing FTSE, Jonathan Anderson

Prix d'Elegance
Fortis Excel, Agne Nilsson

TP52 Carrol Cup

Boat: Ran, Owner: Niklas Zennstrom

IRC Super 0	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Numbers	Dan Meyers	12	
2	Ran	Niklas Zennstrom	12	
3	Flash Glove	Colm Barrington	25	

TP52	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Ran	Niklas Zennstrom	9	
2	Flash Glove	Colm Barrington	18	
3	Rio	Charles Dunstone	21	

IRC 0	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Oystercatcher XXVI	Richard Matthews	9	
2	Tiamat	Tim Costello	19.5	
3	Inis Mar	Bernard Gouy	20	

IRC 45	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Werewolf	Jerry Otter	12	
2	Fortis Excel	Agne Nilsson	17.7	
3	International Rescue	Led Tracy	27.5	

IRC 1	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Mariners Cove, Le	David Dwyer	14	
2	Apollo	Nigel Passmore	18.5	
3	Jammy Dodger	Neil Martin	20	

IRC 1 ACC	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Trilogy II	Jean B Samzun	9	
2	Freya	Conor Doyle	11	
3	Pi Squared	Fin McCurran	26	

IRC 2	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Rosie	Roy & Vera Dickson	16	
2	Mustang Sally	Andrew Creighton	29	
3	Barafundle of Mumble	Neil White	30	

IRC 2 ACC	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Barafundle of Mumble	Neil White	7	
2	Duckwell, Pooley	Kevin Aitken	17	
3	Genie	Andrew Jackson	23	

X35	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Nexus	Mike Budd	14	
2	Kiss	David Pinner	15	
3	Vortex	Tim Harrington	20	

IRC 3	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Bengal Magic	John Moorehead	21	
2	Ex Pat	Herve Dhanis	26	
3	Sir Duckton	Roy Morgan	33	

IRC 3 ACC	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	EOS	David Scott	13	
2	Musk-Ox	Neville Devonport	18	
3	VSDP	Tom McCarthy	19	

IRC 4	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Dick Dastardly	Stuart Kinnear	18	
2	Fixation	Nick Fullagar	26	
3	Heghziyah of Lymington	David Lees	28	

IRC 4 ACC	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Dick Dastardly	Stuart Kinnear	18	
2	Heghziyah of Lymington	David Lees	28	
3	Harmony	Jarone McCarthy	21	

IRC 5	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Kinetic	Richard Colwell	15	
2	Obsession VI	Barry Rose	16	
3	Chia Chia	Phil Egleton	17	

IRC 5 ACC	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Chia Chia	Phil Egleton	10	
2	Catch 22	David Rider	17	
3	Flash II	Adam Kyffin and Jon Oliver	19	

IRC 6	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Bahdit	Ian Travers	9	
2	Shillelagh	John Twomey	17	
3	Peanut	Ron Campion	23	

IRC 6 ACC	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Bahdit	Ian Travers	9	
2	Peanut	Ron Campion	17	
3	Impactidius	Edward Rice	25	

1720	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Wat n Ready	Nicholas O'Leary	10	
2	Aoidh	Robert O'Leary	23	
3	20 Pact 5	English & Grotty	27	

J109	Place	Boat	Points
1	J Dream	18	
2	Tigh Solais II	22	
3	Juke Box	32	

SB3	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	City of Cape Town	David/Roger Hudson	39	
2	Redman Fisher			
3	Ridgefence	Dave Cheyne	45	
	Sailing Westie			
	Sharkbait	Ben Duncan	69	

Sigma 38	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Ernstmann	Patrick Kirwan	30	
2	Enigma	Howard Morrison	21	
3	Red Macaw	John Edwards	24	

Corporate Class	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Anticipation	Peter Newlands	8	
2	Puma Logic	Sailing Logic Ltd	21	
3	Jedi Knight	Stan Fenton	27	

Gentlebens Class 1	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Orna	Philip Dilworth	15.5	
2	Neddie	Stephen McCarthy	20	
3	Persistence	Charles Broadhead	24	

Gentlebens Class 2	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Minx III	Tom McNeice	15	
2	Cavatina	Ian Hickey	23.5	
3	Expression	Billy Duane	31.5	

X332	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	X Rated	John & Gair Gordon	11	
2	Roxanne	Robin Smith	13	
3	Brightwork	Bob and Jon Baker	19	

Beneteau 31.7	Place	Boat	Owner	Points
1	Alpaca	Pau/Deirdre Tingle	13	
2	Tigger	Cassidy/Mulhall	17	
3	Eauvotion	Jason/Debbie Corlett	24	

FLAME BURNED BRIGHTLY

THERE WERE PLENTY OF SAILING FIRSTS AT THE 29TH GAMES



The highlight of Ireland's sailing Olympics was two wins in the 470 dinghy class. Here Phil Lawton concentrates on trimming the kite to establish a lead over the Brazilians. Photo: Ingrid Abery

Qingdao, China: On 24 August, the Olympic flame was extinguished simultaneously at the National Stadium in Beijing and the Qingdao Olympic Sailing Center, officially ending the Games of the XXIX Olympiad and bringing to a conclusion a remarkable journey for the sport of sailing.

The 2008 Beijing Olympic Games Sailing Competition brought together 400 of the world's finest sailors racing in 272 boats representing 62 nations. They demonstrated their talent to the world over the course of 117 races during 13 days of competition in 11 sailing events. After years of dedication and training, competition for the ultimate prize in sport came down to 11 Medal Races, where the winners of the 33 sailing medals of the Beijing Games were decided.

In many ways this was a landmark Games for sailing. It was the first time

the Medal Race format, featuring the top ten competitors competing in a final double-points race, was used at the Olympic Games. China won its first ever gold medal in sailing, whilst Alessandra Sensi of Italy became the first female sailor to win four Olympic medals.

British sailor Ben Ainslie won his third consecutive Olympic gold medal, a feat International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Jacques Rogge called "equally fantastic" to the recording-breaking performances of American swimmer Michael Phelps and Jamaican sprinter Usain Bolt.

In total 18 nations won medals, including the first ever sailing medal for Lithuania. With four gold, one silver and one bronze medal, Great Britain topped the sailing Medal tally for the third consecutive Games. Other gold medals went to Australia (two), Spain, the USA, China, Denmark and New Zealand.

CHINESE WHISPERS

AS IRELAND'S OLYMPIC FLEET WAS PACKED BACK INTO CONTAINERS TO TAKE THE SLOW BOAT FROM CHINA, JAMES O'CALLAGHAN, THE ISA'S MAN ON THE GROUND IN QINGDAO, SPOKE TO MARKHAM NOLAN ABOUT THE WEEK THAT WAS



JAMES, WHAT ARE THE FEELINGS IN THE IRISH CAMP AFTER THE GAMES?

"There are mixed feelings, to be honest. We had a couple of objectives in this cycle. We had a target of one top eight boat, and missed that. We also had a target of blooding a younger team for 2012.

There's no guarantee that it will be the same team in Weymouth, but the knowledge from this team will be passed on. There are some positives, in that the 470 guys had their race wins. The mood in the camp was pretty positive."

YOU WANTED A TOP EIGHT FINISH – WHAT WENT WRONG?

"It's a bit too early to pick out one thing to point and say – 'that's what we did wrong'. We set the bar pretty high, and we were right to set it that high. We wanted three boats capable of a top eight finish. We had maybe one and a half. Ger and Phil were the only one consistently in the top ten, the Star had made top ten finishes but we didn't really know if they could do it consistently. Now we have to wait four years to have another stab at it."

TALK TO US ABOUT THE INDIVIDUAL CAMPAIGNS

"Ger and Phil were disappointed. The 470s would have been our banker. Their last day they had a three-race day and a realistic chance of getting into the medal race. Ger has been quite philosophical about it – he said he really enjoyed the campaign and felt that his boat was immaculate, and he was in good shape, good form. He'll need some time to look back and think 'what could I have done that would have made a difference?' Maybe nothing.

The Star guys, they were 13th. They definitely weren't high-risk enough downwind – too conservative, and that's a big learning point.

They don't have a boatspeed issue and they certainly weren't overwhelmed by the event. On the last day, Freddie Loof (who took bronze) came over to Peter and put his arm around him and said: 'Don't worry – I was 13th at my first Olympics.'

Ciara had a top eight in 2006 but hadn't repeated that in the two years since. She's been very positive about the whole experience, and may go again, but you have to be realistic. She's also waiting to hear what happens with the women's keelboat. She's very open-minded about a campaign in another class."

SAILING MADE NATIONAL HEADLINES FOR ONCE – WAS THE PUBLIC SUPPORT EVIDENT?

"We were very aware of the support from the public because of the [ISA] website. It became part of the daily routine to go down to the container and check the messages that had come in. It would be great if we could capitalize on that momentum as we begin the cycle for 2012, and get support for the OS6 funding effort now, when the guys really need it. That's the challenge. Corporate Ireland isn't really ready to get behind it until we have that medal, it's got to come from the Irish sailing community.

EARLY SHINE

STAR – PETER O'LEARY/STEPHEN MILNE

By the time these guys got to the start line, there was already a lot going on in their wake. Putting aside the fact that the rest of the Irish squad were almost packing their things to leave, O'Leary and Milne had surfed a wave of controversy into Qingdao.

Whereas the nominees in other classes were clear-cut choices, the Star nomination was made subjectively and, some would say, against the run of play, with the Star pairing of Max Treacy and Anthony Shanks appealing it until the 11th hour.

However, it looked like O'Leary/Milne, a Cork/Ballyholme combination, had jettisoned that baggage without too much trouble.

A sixth in race one showed early confidence, battling eventual silver medallist Iain Percy into submission and keeping former gold medallist Robert Scheidt at bay too.

A twelfth in race two seemed like a hiccup after another single-digit finish in the third, when the pair finished seventh ahead of another wad of big names.

But in the middle of the event, the rest of the fleet started to flex its muscles.

The Star is where the 'grown-ups' congregate at the Olympics, most are graduates from other classes and many could sail with at least one previous medal tucked under their wetsuit if they so chose.

In medium conditions, where gear changes became critical, the Irish pair found themselves repeatedly shut out of the top ten in the small 16-boat fleet.

They turned that around in race eight, finishing eighth, but that was to be their last dalliance with the medal race spots. They finished in thirteenth overall.

TWO BULLETS, NO BULLSEYE

470 – GER OWENS/PHIL LAWTON

This pairing had to bear the pressures of expectation on their shoulders to some extent, with ISA Olympic manager James O'Callaghan nominating them as the best chance of a top eight finish. They looked to have the gcods to back it up early on.

Their preparation was sacrificial. Lawton shed 15 kilos (two stone) in anticipation of the light airs they would face at Qingdao, living mostly off Ryvita and hummus and running tens of kilometers most days to whittle his frame down. The boat was prepared meticulously, with a super-light main reducing weight aloft, pared down weight at the extremities to bring the centre of gravity closer to the mast step, and master boatbuilder Edwin Brennan on site to sort any issues and make sure everything was tickety-boo.

Race one was among the windiest they would face all week – a whopping 10 knots, and it was a hiccup for the pair, who found themselves in 25th at the top mark, then 27th one after the reach, followed by a valiant fight back to finish 22nd.

Race two was a different story. Reaching the top mark in second, they lay just behind the leading Argentinian pair. Storming past them across the reach, Owens/Lawton built a comfortable cushion to win the race by a 47-second margin – Ireland's first race win, and all of a sudden sailing was making front page news back home, with the pair in ninth overall and inside the cut for the medal race.

Races three and four, both on day two, were mediocre affairs. A 15th and 17th saw them slip two places overall, and put the pressure back on to reach the top ten.

Race five, and bang, they were back. An early dash right from the line paid off, and Owens/Lawton led the race from the word go, with first the Brazilians and then the Italians ripping at their heels. It was a nail-biter as the Italians closed in, and only six seconds separated them at the line. Ireland lay in ninth, with two Olympic wins in their back pockets. The overall winners, Australia, didn't manage a single bullet.

Race six became their discard. Trailing in last, the pair only managed to reel in one boat, the home team, to finish 25th. Three boats were OCS, but it was scant consolation, and after a brief stay in the top ten, they were back in 11th.

Four races remained, but there was little joy for the Irish pairing as a 21st in race seven meant they counted two races in the twenties. The medal race began to slip out of reach and a finishing 15, 13, 24 scoreline did little to improve matters.

For Owens, he equalled his Athens achievement, in 16th overall. But for both, the lasting memory will be two wins at the Olympic games.



Peter O'Leary and Steven Milne were the Star keelboat class reps. Photo: Richard Langdon

SLOW START FOR FLAG CARRIER

LASER RADIAL – CIARA PEELO

For the Malahide sailor, the Beijing Olympics started with an ear-to-ear grin. She strode into the Bird's Nest stadium, proudly carrying the Irish tricolor, having left a mass of newspaper profile pieces floating in her wake.

Peelo had also been anointed as a great hope with a seventh in the Qingdao pre-Olympics to her credit. She was also said to revel in the light conditions, and was one of the few looking forward to what the Qingdao site would throw up at her.

Race One was hardly a flag-bearing affair, with Peelo posting a 23rd in the 28-boat fleet, having slid south from a more respectable 17th at the windward mark. It would prove uncharacteristic, however, and her form would slowly build.

A hard-fought 17th

in race two led to a 15th in the five-knot race three on the Wednesday, and then, after a rest day, Peelo went out on the racecourse late on Friday into 12 knots of breeze, rounding the first mark in fifth before slipping to seventh overall.

If she could maintain this momentum, things were looking up. A 13th on Saturday, having spent most of the race inside the top ten, put her in 15th overall, within sniping distance of the medal race.

However, Sunday brought more bad luck. Despite a fresher 16-knot maximum, Peelo put in a 24th, and then a 25th on Tuesday.

With two races to go, Peelo was slipping down the rankings, and after race eight lay in 23rd overall. A 10th place finish in the last race was enough to raise that to 20th position.



Tim Goodbody in the mix in the Finn class. Photo: Ingrid Abery

SIGHTS SET ON 2012

FINN – TIM GOODBODY

This was the first Olympic venture for Goodbody, a long-time Laser sailor who has had the Finn place in his sights for some years now. Bulking up rapidly a few years ago, Goodbody quickly outpaced journeyman campaigner Aaron O'Grady, who then teamed up with Goodbody as his coach for Qingdao.

Goodbody joined several Laser alums in the fleet, with a host of names familiar from the top of international Laser fleets for many years.

The ISA made no bones about the fact that Goodbody is marked on their cards for 2012, and despite proving he could maintain consistency in a fleet marked by its quality, Goodbody was unable to impact on the top ten in any marked way.

A jittery start on day one with a 22nd was quickly put behind him to be discarded later on, and Tim set about racking up a brace of finishes in the mid-teens.

Most of Goodbody's races were notable for the fightback involved, picking off places until the end where they were available, rather than sliding back through the fleet.

In the end, his overall result did not reflect the individual scores. Despite having just two finishes in the twenties (22nd and 21st) he had to settle for 21st place overall, but will take plenty of solace in that he has four years to improve before Weymouth.

Ciara Peelo made her debut in the Laser Radial dinghy. Photo: Ingrid Abery



IRISH SAILING NEEDS TO GO BACK TO SCHOOL



NO SURPRISES WHO RULED THE WAVES IN QINGDAO, AND WE'LL BE HEARING ABOUT IT FOR SOME TIME TO COME. BUT AS TEAM GB'S FINAL MEDAL TALLY ROSE TO FOUR GOLD, A SILVER AND A BRONZE, IRELAND - WITHOUT ANY RESULTS IN THE TOP HALF OF ANY FLEET - IS LOOKING FOR ANSWERS. COPYING THE BRITS MIGHT BE THE BEST TACTIC

Fushan Bay lived up to its reputation as a poor venue with unpredictable winds but regardless of conditions the top teams still came out on top. What happened in China matters hugely because it sets the foundations for the next quadrennial. In fact, the emphasis among the 400-boat fleet has already moved from the Yellow Sea and to Weymouth, the venue for 2012.

The arguable highlight of the 60-nation event was Ben Ainslie's master class in the Finn dinghy. It taught the world another lesson about his supremacy and how serious Britain takes sailing - they spent £22 million to win six medals.

Many lessons have been learned in China, but perhaps the most important one for Ireland is what our nearest neighbour is planning over the next four years, both as Olympic host and the world's strongest sailing nation.

Quite apart from the six medals, it is amazing to think that British sailors reached the top ten for the medal race in every one of the 11 events.

Ireland's Olympic regatta goal was a top eight finish for at least one of the four competing boats. Deliberately, unlike the run-up to Sydney and Athens, there was no talk of medals. This was a rookie squad and results were up and down.

The fact that no Irish crew finished in the top half in any of the four fleets meant it was down to Athens veteran Ger Owens for the Irish highlight - two race wins for himself and Phil Lawton in the 470 class. Unfortunately, that was not enough to lift them above 16th overall, the same as had been posted in Athens. Tim Goodbody finished 21st in the Finn. Ciara Peelo in the Laser Radial was 20th and Peter O'Leary and Steven Milne, after a campaign

of four months, 13th in the Star. But the results themselves belie an important fact that needs highlighting, especially in an Irish sporting context. Unlike track and field events where heats lead to a final sailing differs because by making it to Qingdao Irish crews had qualified for sailing's Olympic final.

No Irish sailor has finished in the top eight at an Olympic regatta since 1980 so it's unclear how three Qingdao greenhorns might possibly have been expected to achieve it. This and many other questions face a management debrief that now needs to revise targets to gain new momentum. The immediate target is Weymouth and it will need to rely on its youth programme and existing Olympic panel for that but what it lacks for the future is a sufficient number of participants. It will involve some long term initiatives to broaden interest in the sport for 2016 and beyond.

When Ainslie picked up his third gold medal, he also earned himself a place in British Olympic history as the most decorated of all British Olympic sailors. It's an outstanding achievement for the product of a Royal Yachting Association (RYA) campaign that identified talented British youngsters in the eighties and nineties. It's a model that is there to be replicated.

The success of the RYA campaign - one that focussed on broadening the sport across the UK population - is well documented, as is RYA Team GBR which has positioned Britain as the most successful sailing nation in Olympic history and sailing as Britain's current top-performing Olympic sport.

The RYA has a pool of talent so deep that an elite band of youth sailors waits for its chance to follow in the wake of the current squad. This talent has been nurtured from regional squads over two decades.



What's daunting about Ainslie is that, with four medals under his belt, he is also currently at the peak of his career. Aged just 31, he has many more regattas to go and has indicated every intention of being at Weymouth in four years.

Ainslie reminds us what sailing as a sport can do, the very reason why we want our children out on the water. He's a role model for all school kids, not just those in Britain. If targeting school kids for yachting medals might sound far fetched, it needs to be taken in the context that we have been nearly 30 years without success. Ireland won silver in 1980 but that was when 62 nations boycotted the regatta.

The introspective world of Irish Olympic sailing needs to think outside traditional circles of yacht club grass roots that have so far failed to deliver.

When the then Minister for Education Mary Hanafin spoke about putting sailing on the school curriculum at the National Yacht Club a year ago, she spoke with

some conviction. It wasn't a gimmick because the general election was over.

She was launching the Laser 2007 4.7 European championships, just one of three major sailing events for her Dun Laoghaire constituency, an affluent Dublin suburb with four waterfront yacht clubs, a magnificent man-made harbour and an 800-berth state-of-the-art marina.

But the minister had to refer to Schull Community School in West Cork to give an example of a school that goes sailing as most other schools are content with PE.

In spite of many individual attempts to promote school sailing, it has never taken off. What is required now is a new initiative to get children afloat across the country - perhaps in Dun Laoghaire, where four waterfront clubs have the ideal infrastructure to promote the sport. By investing in schools, clubs are investing in the future.

Results on the Yellow Sea may not show it but a lot has been achieved by James O'Callaghan's young team. There is a core already set on London including a gutsy young Star pairing of O'Leary and Milne. Already they will be challenged by Max Treacy and Anthony Shanks who will declare next week.

And there is an existing structure for youth sailing that has borne fruit in this month alone when 14 Laser Radial sailors from the Irish Sailing Association youth academy made the trip to Douarnenez, France for this year's youth Europeans, with the event producing Ireland's second top five at a worlds or Europeans this year.

These are achievements that need to be built on and the best way to do that is to add more numbers. Sitting in a classroom perhaps in Schull or maybe in Dun Laoghaire there may well be a youngster with the same superpowers as Ainslie. The challenge is to identify him or her and give them access to the water.



International lineup: Tim Goodbody to weather of the triple Olympic Gold medallist Ben Ainslie of Great Britain. Photo: Ingrid Abery

IS WEATHER TO BLAME?

BRIAN J GOGGIN SPENT TWO WEEKS POTTERING ON LOUGH DERG AND DIDN'T FIND THE WEATHER CATASTROPHIC



Lough Derg: the peaceful Rossmore Quay

I'm just back from a fortnight pottering around Lough Derg and, if our experience is anything to go by, the Celtic Water-Tiger is dead. Traffic (both private and hired) seemed to be way down on normal levels, although that comment is based on anecdotal evidence: I haven't seen the Waterways Ireland traffic figures yet.

Except for one night in Dromineer, we spent our other nights at quieter harbours without pubs (Kilgarvan, Dromaán, Rossmore) and maybe things were more crowded elsewhere, but I was surprised to find that, on one night in Dromaán, ours was the only occupied boat in the harbour. Even Dromineer was quiet on a Friday night; perhaps the closure of the hotel is making a difference.

Some people blamed the weather, but we didn't think it was too bad. We had some heavy rain, but for some reason none while we were navigating: I didn't have to don my serious waterproofs once. There was even some sunshine from time to time, which is always a bonus, and the only strong winds seemed to be at night.

We had a visit in Portumna from the Waterways Ireland warden, who was checking up on things and ensuring that best use was made of the space available. This sort of presence, whether by land or by water, is a very good thing, using low-key persuasiveness to make improvements. Mind you, I suspect that WI will have to use the heavy hand sometime soon: I have the impression that there has been an increase in harbour-hogging by owners who won't pay for moorings and who prefer to privatise sections of public harbours (at taxpayers' expense).

Our fortnight spanned the August Bank Holiday weekend, which we spent in Portumna Castle Harbour, and admittedly that was crowded. There were boats moored on the approach walls every night and at one stage eight boats were rafted inside the harbour. And that's not to speak of the herd of camper vans...



Portumna Castle Harbour was very busy over the August bank holiday weekend



Lots of camper vans at Portumna Castle Harbour, parked by the 'No camping' sign



Boats were moored to the entrance walls at Portumna every night

THE BOYNE

The Industrial Heritage Association of Ireland (<http://www.steam-museum.com/ihai/>) organised a tour of sites in Monaghan recently, and I went with some friends. The tour included mills, the startling remains of Great Northern Railway viaducts and several sites on the Ulster Canal: the summit feeder, a bridge and milestone, Templetate Lock (in the middle of a field) and Ireland's only canal tunnel.

On the way home, we called in at Oldbridge to see how IWAI Boyne Navigation Branch's restoration project (<http://boyne.iwai.ie/>) was getting on. Tommy McLoughlin, the Project Manager, had kindly agreed to stay behind after a hard day's work on the sea lock to show us around. I must admit I was very impressed: this is a very professional operation on a lovely navigation.



An old boathouse on the Boyne Navigation

THE NAVIGATION ITSELF IS EXTREMELY ATTRACTIVE AND SOME SECTIONS OF TOWPATH ARE WELL USED BY WALKERS AND ANGLERS; A DAY-BOAT SERVICE MIGHT COMPLEMENT THOSE ACTIVITIES

Like the Barrow, the Boyne is a river navigation with several long cuts — which are not all on the same side of the river. The sea lock, providing entry to the lowest cut, is at Oldbridge Lower, very close to the Battle of the Boyne site, and there is a second lock (Oldbridge Upper) on the same cut. This second lock is a rare turf-sided lock with sloping sides; a horse-bridge crosses the upper end.

Restoring navigation on that stretch means replacing gates and removing dams (and no doubt some dredging); success would open the navigation from Drogheda almost as far as the Brú na Bóinne Visitor Centre, with only one other lock in the way. And that means that it would be possible to offer a water-bus service from Drogheda to the two visitor attractions, the Battle of the Boyne site and Brú na Bóinne.

So this is a restoration project with some point to it. A restored Boyne Navigation, cut off from the connected inland waterways system, may never attract large numbers of cruisers, but it could justify itself in other ways. A water-bus service would be an attraction in itself; it would also relieve the traffic congestion on the area's minor roads — and perhaps make the other attractions easier to find. Furthermore, the navigation itself is extremely attractive and some sections of towpath are well used by walkers and anglers; a day-boat service might complement those activities.

Unfortunately the Boyne Navigation Branch's trailer was stolen since our visit. It is a twin-axle 8' x 4' steel galvanised trailer with a mesh tail ramp. It is unusual in that it has high sides, of which the top 15" drop down to form a shelf hanging on chains. It has lights and black plastic mudguards. This trailer was custom built by T.R. Trailers and is used to transport equipment on to the site on workdays. If you see it, contact Tommy McLoughlin at 087 277 1591.



The Boyne: looking downstream from the sea lock at Oldbridge to the M1 bridge



The Boyne towpath, well used by walkers and anglers



The turf-lock on the Boyne above Oldbridge



The horse-bridge at the turf lock on the Boyne



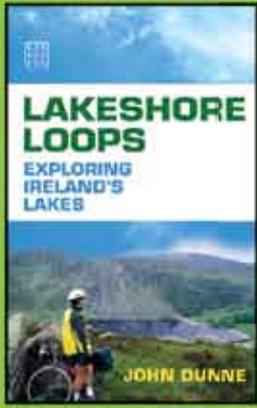
New gates for the Boyne sea lock await the insertion of leather between the steel and the wood



Tommy McLoughlin at the helm of the Boyne workboat



The Boyne sea-lock commemorates the engineers of 1778



LAKESHORE LOOPS

John Dunne's book *Towpath Tours* described cycling (and walking) routes along Irish river and canal navigations. He has now brought out *Lakeshore Loops: Exploring Ireland's Lakes*, which does the same for lakes large and small (www.libertiespress.com). His chosen routes around the lakes stick as close to the water as possible, so they're not always suitable for cars (or for the more delicate bicycles), but they do mean you see a lot of lake. There are lots of practical details about where to park and so on, and he describes nature, history and legends. An excellent handbook for explorations outside the boating season.



The River Bride is a navigable tributary of the Munster Blackwater. This cot was at Camphire Bridge, near the confluence.

THE MUNSTER BLACKWATER

The Munster Blackwater (and its tributary, the Bride) are always included in lists of Irish inland waterways, but I had never seen them. They are not connected to the main system, so getting there requires a car journey, and I had never got around to it until a few months ago, when we drove over the Vee to Cappoquin and on to Youghal.

Nineteenth century travellers described the Blackwater as the Irish Rhine, which is a bit of an exaggeration, but it is certainly very scenic and full of historic interest. There are several 'big houses' along the route; people associated with the area include the Knights Templar, Walter Raleigh, the Duke of Devonshire, the von Thyssen family, Katharine Countess of Desmond (said to have died at the age of 140 after falling from a cherry tree), Claud Cockburn, Molly Keane and Richard Boyle (1st Earl of Cork and father of the man who gave us Boyle's Law).

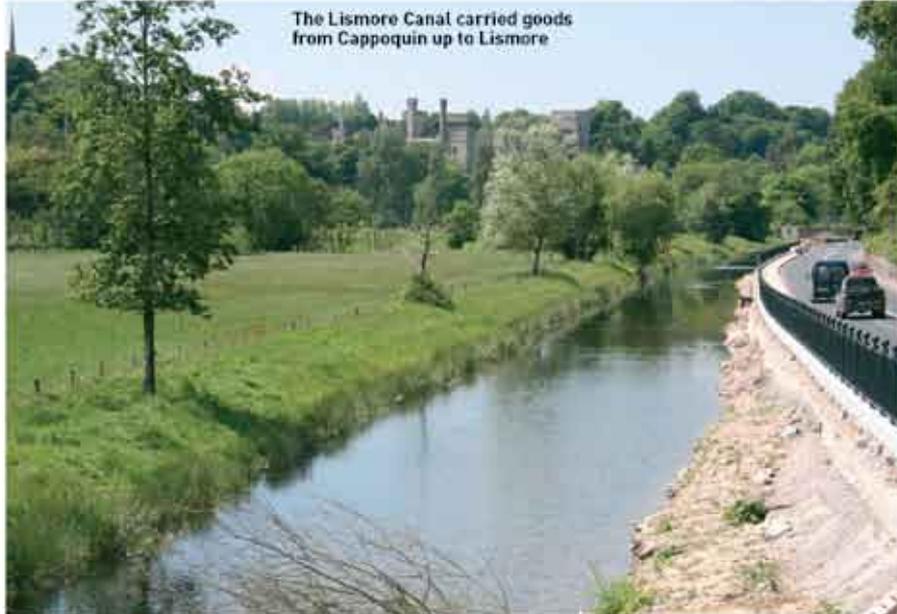
The Munster Blackwater: the magnificent Ballynatray House



The tree-lined banks of the Munster Blackwater



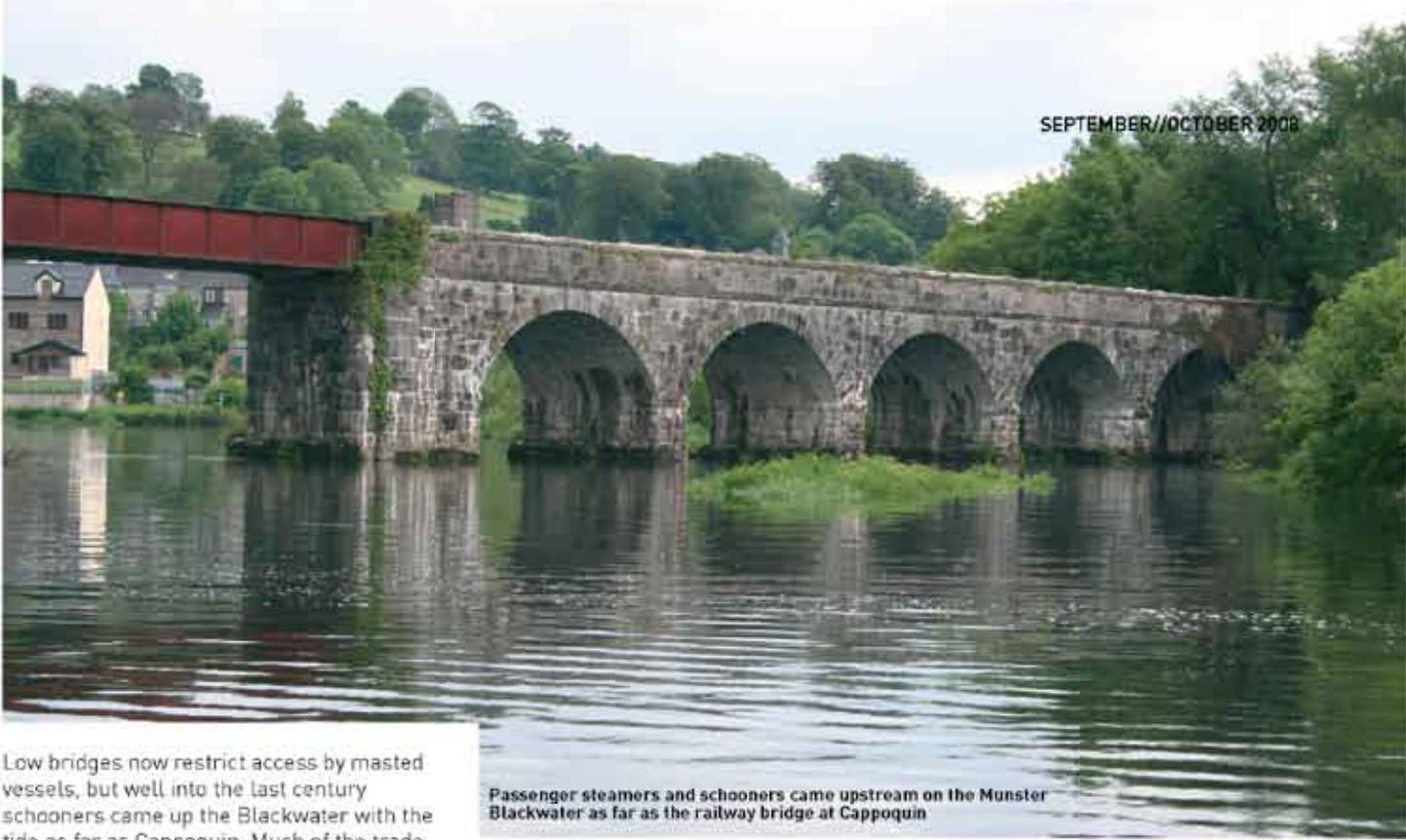
The Lismore Canal carried goods from Cappoquin up to Lismore



Dromana House looms above the Munster Blackwater



On the east bank of the Munster Blackwater, one of the old quays



Low bridges now restrict access by masted vessels, but well into the last century schooners came up the Blackwater with the tide as far as Cappoquin. Much of the trade was with Wales, carrying coal in and timber (for pit props) out. There are several quays along the river; schooners would discharge part of their cargoes in the lower reaches, reducing their draught for the upriver section. They could discharge the rest in Cappoquin and take on part of a load, completing it further downriver. The Bride, a tributary, was also navigable and schooners went up there too, and a short canal carried goods to Lismore, where the Dukes of Devonshire own the castle. Furthermore, steamers went as far as Cappoquin and excursions were popular.

Passenger steamers and schooners came upstream on the Munster Blackwater as far as the railway bridge at Cappoquin

Amongst the schooners that used the Blackwater were the De Wadden, a steel three-masted schooner built in 1917 and now in Merseyside Maritime Museum, the recently-restored wooden three-masted schooner Kathleen & May and the ketch-rigged flush-decked trow Jonadab, whose remains are in the Purton boat graveyard near Sharpness.

There are some boats on the river, but traffic was very light when we were there: a few fishing boats, a small sailing-boat going downriver with its mast lowered, the occasional jetski and power-boat, but not much else. Some of the old quays are used for swimming, but on the whole the river seemed to be under-used.

We went with the tide all the way from Youghal to the Kitchenhole just above Cappoquin, and also did some exploration of the Bride and the Lismore Canal by road. Tony Gallagher runs a trip-boat, the half-decker MV Maeve, from Youghal, although his scheduled trips don't go as far as Cappoquin. Tony (087 988 9076) is a mine of information about this wonderful river and he brings old photos and documents to show to his passengers: highly recommended.

For a photo tour of the Blackwater, see <http://www.pbase.com/bjg/blackwater>

a sense of...

relaxation

have you found yours...

www.waterwaysireland.org



CRUISE WITH CONFIDENCE

PUSH THE BOAT OUT THIS YEAR WITH A TRAINING COURSE UNDER THE ISA'S CRUISING SCHEME

Have you found that your cruising restricted by your lack of knowledge and confidence?

Would you like to go a longer cruise next year or to feel more confident and relaxed when you're on holidays?

Are you tired of just crewing, and want to skipper the boat, but never get a look-in because the skipper always does the navigation?

Would you like to charter a boat in Ireland, or somewhere in the sun, but don't have any of the certificates that charter companies demand?

Have you always wanted to go sailing on a yacht and didn't know how to get involved?

If you answer yes to any of these questions, you should consider brushing up your skills with one of the ISA's training courses aimed at cruising sailors.

The ISA's National Cruising Scheme has been developed over many years to assist sailors in learning how to sail,

and developing existing skills; catering for every level from absolute beginner to required certification for skippering a yacht on ocean passages. The courses are offered in either sailing or motor yachts according to preference, and are run right around the country all year round.

This article aims to identify the courses and certificates that are available and to help you choose a course that will make your cruising more fun and enjoyable, wherever you are and whatever way you are doing it. Courses are run on sailing and motor yachts.

SEA-BASED TRAINING

There are a number of 'sea-based' training courses in the scheme. These are all run at sea, aboard cruising yachts. On the lower level course such as Competent Crew, you will learn how to sail or handle the boat under sail and engine as well as simply getting to grips with living aboard a cruising yacht. On the more advanced courses, you will act as skipper and navigator for the boat while on passage and when entering and leaving harbours, marinas and anchorages. Of course, all this is done under the watchful eye and guidance of your instructor. You will be amazed at how fast you pick up the skills and find out how easy all those daunting passage plans and calculations really are.

SHORE-BASED TRAINING

The shore-based training courses in the Cruising Scheme compliment the sea-based training by allowing participants to learn and develop skills in the relative comfort of a classroom and by allowing time to absorb and practice the course material away from a boat and all its distractions. On the three shorebased courses, sailors will learn how to plan and implement passages, working up from short coastal hops on the Yachtmaster Coastal Course to extended ocean passages on the Yachtmaster Ocean Course. It covers course plotting, tide calculation, developing passage plans and identifying where you are, as well as the principles of safety. Many of these courses are run over the winter months, often as an evening class.



CERTIFICATES OF COMPETENCY

Those successfully completing the Competent Crew, Helmsman Certificate and Day Skipper Courses all receive their certificate of competency at the end of the course. If you want one of the ISA's Yachtmaster Coastal, Offshore or Ocean certificates, you need to apply to the ISA to be assessed by one of the ISA's Yachtmaster Examiners. The Coastal and Offshore assessments can usually be arranged on your own boat, if you have one, otherwise the ISA will slot you in on an assessment with a boat owner. The assessments vary in duration according to the level and number of candidates on board and are an opportunity for you to demonstrate to the examiner that you can manoeuvre, pilot and take charge of a yacht at the level required. The examiners have all been trained by the ISA and, as sailors themselves, know that you go boating for fun so while being professional and thorough, your examiner will do his or her best to ensure that you enjoy the assessment. The ISA's Yachtmaster certificates are recognised and approved by the Department of Transport.



WHAT TO EXPECT...

COMPETENT CREW

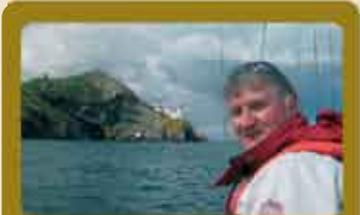
The ISA Competent Crew course provides the beginner with an introduction to the world of sail cruising. As well as learning to sail your boat, you will get to grips with living aboard a cruising boat and by the end of the course you will be able to take your place as a competent, safe member of crew aboard a sailing yacht. No previous experience or knowledge of sailing is required for this five-day training course, which may be run together or split up over weekends.



When I received an ISA Yachtmaster navigation course as a Christmas present from my wife, I was a little apprehensive to say the least. After all, it was ten years since we sold our yacht which we sailed extensively in the Clyde and around the Scottish Islands. I always wanted to study the rudiments of navigation but got by mostly keeping land in sight except for a few occasions in fog when I had wished I knew more to ensure the safety of my crew. As the course material began to arrive in my inbox, I began to think that I had taken on more than I had bargained for. I was signed up to the very intensive course (one day a week over eight weeks), with material which is normally set out over a more relaxed 22 week period at 2.5 hours per night.

The first day at the Royal Irish Yacht Club in Dun Laoghaire, 15 enthusiastic 'would-be navigators' introduced themselves to the tutor, John Leahy. He said he would explain the reasoning but it was down to us to take it in and do the homework. The feeling of being in the trenches created an 'esprit de corps' and ensured they were no laggards over the eight weeks. John was good to arrange additional classes to ensure we all got across the line. We enjoyed a well-deserved celebratory dinner in the club with our partners and spouses to commemorate our achievement. I'm glad I did it!

Damien O'Sullivan
Damien completed a Yachtmaster Offshore Shorebased training course with Oceanmaster Sail Training



I found the course intensely ideal for keeping up the momentum of interest in learning which was greatly enhanced by the teaching style of John Leahy. John's approach suited the various levels of experience in the class and by arranging the students in small groups to work together and assist each-other with the course work exercises.

The students were not only varied in experience but also in age and gender and the competition and friendly banter made the course that much more enjoyable. Overall, a great learning experience.

John Davies
John completed a Yachtmaster Offshore Shorebased training Course with Oceanmaster Sail Training



Jane and I completed the ISA Competent Crew course with Richard and Eady McGovern at Malahide Sail Training on their Hallberg-Rassy 34. The course ran over two weekends earlier this July. We attended the Lombard On the Water Boat Show in Malahide in April, where Malahide Sail Training had a stand.

Having booked the dates, the only variable that was a cause of concern was the easterly winds that were forecast on the first weekend of the course. Both weekends turned out well with 15-20 knot wind and only a little rain.

While we covered the various competencies over the two weekends, it never felt like work. We learned a lot of sailing theory and how to begin to put it into practice. We enjoyed several days of good sailing, a particular highlight was sailing across Dublin Bay to Dalkey on a beam reach with 15 knots breeze, both of us taking turns on the tiller. We are already planning to do our Day Skipper certificate with Richard and Eady when we have gained more experience crewing.

David and Jane Browne.

David and Jane completed an ISA Competent Crew course with Malahide Sail Training



After recovering from a serious operation on his back, which almost left him paralyzed, my dad Tony said he wanted to take up an active sport, something he had never tried before. So for his 60th birthday in 2007 I decided to buy him some sailing lessons. I logged onto www.sailing.ie and found details for South East Cruising School run by Charlie Kavanagh.

We boarded the 'Saltee Dog' in Wicklow town for six days (three weekends) sailing up and down the east coast of Ireland. Our main aim was to get an introduction to sailing but it soon became much more than that. In our first few hours at sea we were tacking our way up the east coast, past Bray, Killiney and Dalkey, across Dublin Bay and on our way to Howth Marina. My dad finished the course with a Competent Crew Cert while I went on to receive the ICC certification. Completing this course with Charlie gave us the passion and confidence to take new-found love of the sport to the next level. In August last year, we made the decision to purchase our own boat 'Shamrogue'.

We are now full members of the Arklow Sailing Club and just this summer we competed in the Kilmichael Challenge and won our first race on board 'Shamrogue'. This should prove to everyone that, even at 60 years of age, it's never too late to take up sailing. Just book yourself on a course and get out there!

Ken and Tony O'Toole

Ken and Tony completed an ISA Competent Crew Course with South East Cruising School



HELMSMAN'S CERTIFICATE

The ISA Helmsman's provides the basic boat handling and seamanship skills necessary to safely and effectively handle and manoeuvre your motor yacht both at sea and within harbours and marinas. No previous experience or knowledge of boating is required for this course which may be completed in as little as two days.

DAY SKIPPER

The ISA Day Skipper course is a sea-based training course, and provides participants with the basic skills and knowledge necessary to skipper a sailing yacht by day in waters with which they are familiar or, in other words, local day trips from your home harbour or moorings. It's a five-day course which may be broken up over weekends. Participants should have some boating experience, equivalent to the skills and knowledge covered in the Competent Crew course if you are sailing and Helmsman's Certificate if you are using a motor yacht. During the course you will be developing your boat handling skills as well as starting to get to grips with basic weather, navigation and pilotage.

ISA YACHTMASTER COASTAL

Holders of the ISA Yachtmaster Coastal certificate have proven their ability to skipper a sailing or motor yacht on coastal passages during daylight and at night. In order to do so, you will be comfortably devising passage plans, calculating tides for primary ports, plotting a course to steer and estimated positions as well as filling the role of skipper and crew when taking your boat into (and out of) a wide range of conditions and situations. There are three elements to the certificate: the shore-based training course (45 hours); the sea-based training course (five days); and the assessment. You may complete any one of these on their own.

ISA YACHTMASTER OFFSHORE

Holders of the ISA Yachtmaster Offshore certificate have shown that they can skipper a sailing or motor yacht on coastal and offshore passages and crossings by day and night. In doing so, you will need to complete tidal calculations for secondary ports, offshore passage planning and boat stability. There are two elements to the certificate: the shore-based training course (45 hours); and the assessment. You may complete any one of these on their own.

ISA YACHTMASTER OCEAN SHORE-BASED COURSE

The ISA Yachtmaster Ocean Certificates shows that a sailor can skipper a sail or motor yacht on ocean passages without the use of electronic aids, where they are out of sight of land for extended periods. This will include the use of a sextant for position fixing, offshore communications, world weather and great circle routes. Again, there are two elements to the certificate: the shore-based training course (45 hours); and assessment. You may complete any one of these on their own.



WHAT DOES IT ALL COST?

A five-day sea-based training course will cost between €650 and €840. This will include your accommodation (on-board) and food. Extras usually only include meals and drinks consumed ashore. Shore-based training courses cost between €400 and €600. This includes all of your course materials.

A Yachtmaster assessment with the ISA will cost between €155 and €310, depending on whether it is for coastal, offshore or ocean and whether you are willing to be assessed alongside other candidates.

WHERE TO GET MORE INFORMATION

More details on the National Cruising scheme are available on the ISA's website, www.sailing.ie including a full list of all the courses being run around the country with dates and venues. Your local cruising school will be able to help with any technical enquires; their contact details are included here and on the website. Of course, all this information is also available from the ISA Office who may be contacted on 01 2800 239 or info@sailing.ie

LIST OF CRUISING SCHOOLS		COUNTY	REGION	SAIL	MOTOR	SHOREBASED
BRAY SAILING CLUB	01 2860272 commodore@braysailingclub.ie www.braysailingclub.ie	Wicklow	E			✓
CARLINGFORD SAIL TRAINING CENTRE	0868558253 info@carlingfordsailtrainingcentre.com www.carlingfordsailtrainingcentre.com	Louth	E			✓
CARLINGFORD YACHT CHARTER & SEA SCHOOL	043 9373879 michaelcaine@beaforthouse.net www.beaforthouse.net	Louth	E	✓		✓
CELTIC VENTURES	0402 39418 celticventures@eircom.net www.celticventures.com	Wicklow	E	✓	✓	✓
CLONTARF YACHT & BOAT CLUB	01 8322691 info@cybc.ie www.cybc.ie	Dublin	E			✓
DUN LAOGHAIRE SAIL TRAINING LTD.	01 2895167 jimgorman1@eircom.net	Dublin	E	✓		✓
FRANK JACKSON SEA SCHOOL	040467626 frjackson@eircom.net	Wicklow	E			✓
GLENANS IRISH SAILING CLUB (DUBLIN)	01661 1481 info@glenans-ireland.com www.glenans-ireland.com	Dublin	E	✓		✓
HARKANGELS	01 8392192 harkangels@eircom.net	Dublin	E			✓
HIBERNIAN CRUISING SCHOOL	041 6852971 hibernian@eircom.net	Louth	E	✓		✓
MALAHIDE SAIL TRAINING	01 4409583 info@sailtraining.ie www.sailtraining.ie	Dublin	E	✓		✓
NAOMH EANNA OCEANMASTER SAIL TRAINING	087 2649726 01 2894292 john.leahy@gmail.com www.oceanmaster.ie	Meath Dublin	E E			✓
RINGSEND TECHNICAL INSTITUTE	01 6684498 info@ringtec.cdvec.ie www.ringtec.ie	Dublin	E			✓
SAILING WEST	08706 12522 paul@sailingwest.ie www.sailingwest.ie	Dublin	E	✓		✓
SCOUTING IRELAND SEA TRAINING DUN LAOGHAIRE	087 2344691 eflavell@eircom.net	Dublin	E	✓		✓
SEA CRAFT	01 2863362 www.seacraft.ie	Wicklow	E	✓	✓	✓
SHACKLETON D.E.C.	01 8481400 www.coliste@dunlaigh.ie	Dublin	E			✓
SOUTH EAST CRUISING SCHOOL	0404 69970 sailsoutheast@eircom.net www.sailsoutheast.com	Wicklow	E	✓		✓
UNIVERSITY OF LIMERICK A.C.	061 076622 mike@ulac.ie www.ulac.ie	Clare	Mid			✓
B.I.M. NATIONAL FISHERIES COLLEGE	074 9381068 hegarty@blm.ie	Donegal	N			✓
DIVEOLOGY LTD.	074 9128001 www.diveology.ie	Donegal	N			✓
NORTH WEST REGIONAL COLLEGE	marion.johnson@nwrc.ac.uk	Derry	N			✓
KELTIC WAVE	021 4359843 claire@kelticwave.com www.kelticwave.com	Cork	S	✓		✓
NATIONAL MARITIME COLLEGE OF IRELAND	021 4326273 admissions@nmci.ie www.cit.ie	Cork	S			✓
NAVAL SAILING SCHOOL SAIL CORK	Courses run for Naval Personnel only 021 4811237 info@sailcork.com www.sailcork.com	Cork	S	✓		✓
SOVEREIGN SAILING	021 4771445 james@sovereignsailing.com www.sovereignsailing.com	Cork	S			✓
BANTRY SCHOOL OF YACHTING & SEAMANSHIP	027 51753	Cork	SW	✓		✓
BANTRY YOUTHREACH	027 52648	Cork	SW			✓
GLENANS IRISH SAILING CLUB (BALTIMORE)	01 6611481 info@glenans-ireland.com www.glenans-ireland.com	Cork	SW	✓		✓

WEST CORK SAILING & POWERBOATING CENTRE	027 60132 info@westcorksailing.com www.westcorksailing.com	Cork	SW	✓	✓
WEXFORD HARBOUR BOAT AND TENNIS CLUB	053 9147504 info@whbtc.ie www.whbtc.com	Wexford	SW		✓
BOW WAVES	091 560560 info@bowwaves.com www.bowwaves.com	Galway	W	✓	✓
SEATEC MARITIME TRAINING	098 27772 info@seatec.ie www.seatec.ie Mayo	Mayo	W		✓
SHANNON YACHTMASTER	065 6842409	Clare	W		✓
WEST COAST CRUISING SCHOOL	087 2351976 bptravers@eircom.net				✓
WEST GALWAY SCHOOL OF NAVIGATION	095 23569 john@serioussailing.com www.serioussailing.com	Galway	W	✓	✓

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REDBAY RIDES HIGH

REDBAY 650 BOAT TEST



THE NEW 650 RIB FROM ANTRIM IS A CLASSY PERFORMER, WRITES DAVID O'BRIEN

What is below the waterline is often overlooked, but the big plus about buying this boat is her tried and tested hull shape

Redbay Boats have been operating from Cushendall, Co Antrim for over 30 years. Owned and managed by Tom McLaughlin, Redbay produces craft built and designed to withstand the often extreme sea conditions found off the North coast. In fact, Tom puts every boat through a series of sea trials personally – as cox of the local lifeboat, he’s well able to put a boat through its paces.

Originally, Redbay specialised in the all-fibreglass Fastliner fishing boat range, but in recent years the factory has seen a dramatic shift to its RIB range. These run from 11 metres right down to 6.5 metres and the boat tested here is the new version of the 6.5m, now called the 650. The older 6.5m model shares many of the hull characteristics, but has a much higher bow and a simpler interior. This would have been aimed more at the commercial sector.

TOM'S AIM IN DEVELOPING THE 650 WAS TO PRODUCE A CLASSY, EXTREMELY WELL-FINISHED PLEASURE RIB



Four saddle seats are the standard configuration with comfortable seating and storage underneath

Tom's aim in developing the 650 was to produce a classy, extremely well-finished pleasure Rib that would retain the exceptional handling characteristics of the 6.5. This involved a new bow profile which, though lower, still has a pronounced rise in the bow sections. This allows easy visibility at low speeds and ease of exiting at the bow at beaches, piers, etc. The deep-V bow section is very similar to that found on its near sister, the 6.5, and so it shares the class-leading handling characteristics, especially in large and difficult seas.

The interior of the boat is where the main differences can be found compared to the

6.5. The monocoque (one-piece) interior mouldings are of the highest quality and the finish is top class. A raised bow anchor locker is built into the moulding, and it can also be used for storage.

If plentiful storage is your thing, then you won't be disappointed with the very large consul storage area which will eat whatever bags are offered through its substantial front facing door. The consul itself is a good size and offers protection for both the passenger and co pilot seats. Perhaps it might have been worth allowing a couple of more inches of space on one side to allow easy movement to the bow.

A substantial windscreen finished what is a very smart and good looking cockpit console



There's plenty of space on the top of the well-designed console for all the navigation and additional instruments that an owner would want in a RIB of this quality. In the test boat, a large-screen Standard Horizon Chartplotter was accompanied by a DSC VHF and a Fishfinder sounder. The test boat also included a nice music system built into the waterproof rear glove pocket.

This glove locker also has a 12v socket for charging mobile phones, torches, etc. It also allows for iPods and the like to be connected up to the waterproof speakers in the cockpit. Our test boat had a good-sized wheel and an easy-to-use hydraulic steering system. A substantial windscreen finished what is a very smart and good-looking cockpit console.

Four saddle seats are the standard configuration with comfortable seating and storage underneath. To the rear is a nice moulded well where an electric bilge pump is fitted.

This test boat had a very smart teak deck, which though it looked like wood, was actually an easy-maintenance synthetic material. It certainly set off the boat and the overall look of the interior with this fitted was that this indeed was a premium offering in RIB terms.

The 650 tested was fitted with a four-stroke Suzuki 150hp engine and a 50-gallon underfloor fuel tank, complete with filters. A substantial and strong A-frame to the rear houses the various navigation lights and antennas and also provides a point where ski ropes can be attached.

SPECIFICATIONS

Length Overall	6.50 metres
Beam Overall	2.70 metres
Internal Length	5.46 metres
Internal Beam	1.60 metres
Max Recommended Load	1,000 kg
Max Recommended Persons	Ten
Hull Weight	710 kg (excluding engines, etc.)
Max Recommended Engine Power	168 kW / 225 hp
Tube Diameter	460 / 560 mm
Tube Material	Hypalon
Design Category	B

TO BUY FOR

Call us old fashioned but a teak deck always looks great except when it gets dirty, so this one's even better, it's not teak at all, it's wipe down plastic! One of the nice surprises on this boat was its Suzuki power source; the idea of having an engine idle so silently that you think it's cut out is a joy.

TO CRY FOR

Maybe we're just clumsy but the bilge pump located in a small well next to the transom is prone to being stepped on.

HOW MUCH

The boat pictured here is £35,000 including VAT @ 21%

GO FOR MORE

Glen men are renowned hard workers and Antrim's biggest boat building firm have been busy working out how to get more and more on to these pleasure Ribs. For example, an iPod adaptor in the glove box, a music system and waterproof speakers are well worth considering, especially as the engine is so quiet!

AFLOAT VERDICT

What is below the waterline is so often overlooked but the big plus about buying this boat is its tried and tested hull shape. The first time you are caught out in a blow is when you will really appreciate the extra dosh you spent.

Red Bay Boats Ltd, Coast Road, Cushendall, Co. Antrim, N. Ireland BT44 0TE
 Tel: +44 (0) 28 217 71331
 Email: info@redbayboats.com

All very well – the boat looks extremely smart, but how does it go? On the test day in question, winds were force 4 and there was a decent swell. We were able to test it in both flat water conditions inside Cork Harbour and also in the more exposed and wavy outside harbour conditions.

When initially fired up, the engine could hardly be heard and was silky smooth even at low revs. It steered easily and without much effort and the throttle was easy to engage. When out of the harbour, a slight touch of throttle brought the boat onto the plane – an unusual feature for a boat that weighs over 1,000 kgs all up.

Increasing the throttle brought the boat in flat water to a top speed of 44 knots at 5,800 revs. A nice cruising speed of 30 knots was available at about 4,000 revs which would likely be the level that most boaters would be happy with, bearing in mind fuel usage.

But it was out in the open water that Redbay's 650 came into its own, handling the heavy wave conditions with absolute ease. There was no

tendency for the bow to rise in waves and depending how much engine trim was used, it was easy to get a comfortable 30-knot ride that felt similar to what many other boats would experience at 20 knots. With a following sea, fast cruising speeds could be easily achieved.

Fuel usage at 4,000 revs is around 4.5 gallons an hour, again showing how economical these Suzuki four-stroke engines have become.

Overall, Redbay seem to have a winner with this 650 – its classy good looks allied to a tried and tested hull shape make for a very good package and, in these days of weak sterling, it's very competitively priced too. Perhaps this is why it has made such a big impact on the Irish RIB market already. Mark Mansfield, the former Olympic yachtsman, leads a group of new owners of the 650s into the Cork area. There are half a dozen 650s from Cork harbour to Crookhaven principally used for pleasure purposes from island hopping to waterskiing. The Star keelboat sailor says the 650's useful size means it easily trails behind a standard family saloon, but it's also big enough to face the roughest conditions afloat.



REDBAY BOATS LTD.

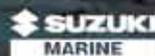
Announcing Red Bay's new 650 RIB

The Stormforce 650 is one of the most innovative RIBs produced by Redbay so far. The design came from a need for a standardised RIB of around 6.5 metres that could be built quicker, lighter and to a superior and consistent finish.

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CUTTING A DASH WITH ELAN



The 340 revelled in the heavy conditions

THE ELAN 340 IS PUT THROUGH ITS PACES BY AFLOAT'S GRAHAM SMITH ON A BLUSTERY STRANGFORD LOUGH

When I was much younger, the Lotus Elan was a sports coupe that was as classy as you could get at the time and rather unusually had a fibreglass body. The name was derived from the French word 'elancer', meaning 'to dart' while the English definition is 'dash' and 'spirited self-assurance'. Such descriptions were apt then for the Lotus

and are certainly relevant now for the elegant range of Elan cruiser racers that are becoming an increasingly familiar sight on Irish waters.

With a French name, a British design and a Slovenian construction, it is international in every respect and in Ireland, the Elan flag is flying high at local agents

Whiterock Yachts of Sketrick Island on Strangford Lough and Carrickfergus Marina on Belfast Lough. David McKnight and his team have enjoyed considerable success, with some 60 sales in five years of various boats under the Elan banner, which is some achievement.

The 340 was launched as the

successor to the 333, with designer Rob Humphreys handed the task of taking the best elements of his earlier design without losing the spirit of the original concept. Creating a faster boat to satisfy the competitive instincts of racing skippers as well as a comfortable cruising boat were also among the criteria handed to Humphreys.

FIRST IMPRESSIONS:

Being already acquainted with Elans of various sizes, either sailing or racing in the Dublin area, I knew that the elegant lines drawn by Humphreys on the others would be replicated with the 340 and I wasn't disappointed.

It's another very attractive boat for sure, with leaner lines forward to give a finer entry and less resistance through the waves. A slightly fuller after-body was given to increase stability and enhance downwind speed.

From the dockside, the large wheel and open cockpit sent out all the right signals: that this boat was intended to be raced as well as cruised, and the stylish large window on each side of the coachroof adds to the racing feel.

IT'S ANOTHER
VERY
ATTRACTIVE
BOAT FOR SURE,
WITH LEANER
LINES FORWARD
TO GIVE A FINER
ENTRY AND LESS
RESISTANCE
THROUGH THE
WAVES

The Elan was particularly pacy on downwind legs



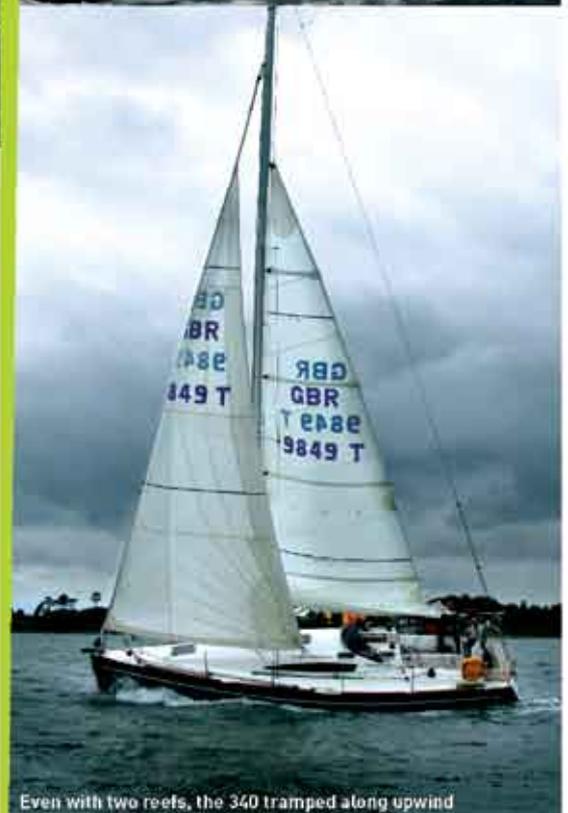
ON TOP

The on-deck layout is a curious mixture of racing and cruising styles. On one hand, the side and foredeck is uncluttered like a good cruiser should be, such as the jib sheets being led along the side of the coachroof rather than along the deck itself, so less things to trip over.

On the other hand, where a cruising boat would have a mainsheet system on a track mounted across the coachroof and led back to the front edge of the cockpit, the Elan uses the racing system of a track just in front of wheel at the aft end of the cockpit. For the racer looking for cruising and racing, it offers the best of both worlds!

The aforementioned large wheel is placed well aft and set into a well, so creating a spacious feel to the shallow, racing-style cockpit while all the other sail controls are led back to the cockpit, making it ideal for family or short-handed sailing.

Above the deck, it sports a fractional rig, with two interchangeable options – an overlapping headsail rig for the lighter airs and a non-overlapping 110% headsail rig – and a masthead spinnaker, if required.



Even with two reefs, the 340 tramped along upwind

DOWN BELOW

Below decks, Humphreys was asked to increase and better optimise the internal volume of the old 333 with the new 340. Based on his own experiences as a 333 owner for several years and with feedback from other owners, he has managed to juggle a successful formula and create additional space in every area, which is some achievement for a boat under ten metres in length.

It's a conventional layout, with an L-shaped galley to port opposite a reasonably sized chart table/nav station. The folding table wrapped around the keel-stepped mast in the centre of the saloon can accommodate up to four people seated comfortably on both sides.

Seven hatches or windows stream light into the saloon and the use of light-coloured wood and downlighters adds to the feeling of space below.

The layout offers two double-berth cabins with more than enough space to satisfy above-average sized adults, and you can opt for an extra berth in the saloon. The head compartment is just behind the nav station and the saloon and cabins offer loads of storage space, drawers and cubby-holes.

UNDER SAIL

Whatever of the features below or above deck, the Elan 340 comes into its own when under sail. It looks like a racing boat that you can cruise and it certainly lives up Elan's description of it as a 'performance cruiser'.

Our test conditions were far from ideal. Strong, westerly winds gusting over 20 knots was not what was ordered – and in Strangford Lough the gusts can be serious – but once we got the sail combination right (down to two reefs and slightly furled headsail), she really tramped along effortlessly.

The big wheel is a real joy and it's attached to a big, powerful rudder below which aids control. The helmsman is nicely self-contained behind the mainsheet track away from the crew, with comfortable seating or standing positions, yet within easy reach of the mainsheet if sailing short-handed. The only negative was the central backstay on the test boat (had to lean forward to avoid it across the shoulders) although a split system to both sides of the transom is available.

The 340 was designed, we were told, to be responsive and fast in light airs but it can handle the heavier stuff, as we discovered. A long waterline length, an optimised lead keel and tall rig are real boosts to performance while the fuller after-body certainly added to the impressive downwind speed.



The large wheel makes steering the Elan a real joy

UNDER POWER

Elan has opted for Volvo Penta diesel engines as standard and the 340 is fitted with a 29hp unit that is highly efficient and more than adequate to power this size of boat along. Attention has been given to sound insulation to reduce noise and the engine compartment is readily accessible under the companionway steps. On deck, the engine controls are next to the helm's right leg and accessible enough to allow easy manoeuvring when picking up a mooring or entering/leaving a marina berth.



TO BUY FOR

Looks and performance... and that big wheel! Easy and fun to helm, this was one of the best sailing boats we have tested in years in terms of handling, acceleration and general get-up-and-go. It will satisfy cruising enthusiasts, especially if they like to get from A to B with some performance, and the racers should also get a sufficient buzz at club level.

TO CRY FOR

Personal opinion, naturally, but I found the backstay arrangement annoying, as it constantly rubbed across my shoulders and the back of my head while helming in the central position and when moving from side to side during a tack. You probably get used to it but anyone over 6ft tall may find it a distraction. Go for the split system instead.

HOW MUCH?

As with all their boats, Whiterock Yachts offers the Elan 340 for a price that includes VAT at 21%, delivery, antifouling, warps, fenders and commissioning in Carrickfergus, with the basic boat fetching €134,903.

Sail costs depend on owner's choice, of course, while Racing Packs and Cruising Packs are each in the €5,500 region.

GO FOR MORE

The basic package is impressive but go for the racing pack if that's your thing or the cruiser pack if you like the extra comforts.

AFLOAT VERDICT

Another success for Mr. Humphreys and the Elan brand. A neat mixture of cruising needs and racing demands, with style and performance the outstanding features. It was European Boat of the Year in 2007 and we can see why.

Elan yachts are distributed in Ireland by Whiterock Yachts in Strangford Lough, tel: 0044 28 97 542 910) and Carrickfergus, tel: 0044 28 93 351 141 www.whiterockyachts.co.uk

and

Sovereign Yacht Sales
Kinsale, Co. Cork
tel: 00353 (0) 21 477 4145
www.yachtsales.ie

ELAN 340 TECHNICAL SPECIFICATIONS

LOA	9.99m
Beam	3.48m
Displacement	5,000kg
Sail Area	71m ²
Fuel Tank	95 litres
Engine	Volvo 29hp

SOUNDINGS
WITH WM NIXON



RAYS OF SUNSHINE IN IRISH SUMMER

Total beauty is as rare in boats as anything else. And so too, in 2008, were classic summer evenings. Yet this past season, Soundings managed the combination of beautiful boats with sublime summer evenings on two memorable occasions, and the recollections will colour the year's memories long after the rains are over and gone.

It was back in June that the Club of the Year 2008 award was presented jointly to Lough Ree YC and the Shannon One Design Association at the former's clubhouse at Ballyglass, north of Athlone. The day had been cold and wet. But slowly the sky cleared, there were glimpses of sunshine, the sailing area in front of the club came to life with kids out in Oppies, and within the superb yet friendly clubhouse, the place buzzed with banter.

Harmon Murtagh – who is himself a national treasure – gave a brilliant outline of Lough Ree's sailing history. The club can trace its roots back to 1770. As for the Shannon One Designs, they have evolved from sailing versions of the classic Irish lake boat – a masterpiece in its own right – with the class beginning with a meeting of folk from all the lakes in Athlone in 1922.

There happened to be a Civil War going on in Ireland at the time, and the SODs race with

such vigour that you could be forgiven for thinking this is the continuation of civil war by other means. Yet their competitiveness creates superb boats to this 18ft clinker-built design which is ever-young – their current Chairman, Stephen O'Driscoll, is but a slip of a lad. And the latest elegant creation from master craftsman Jimmy Furey from Leecarrow in Roscommon was in pride of place in front of the club, gorgeous in her varnishwork, glowing in the evening sun.

The occasion was perfectly concluded with Eileen Browne, Commodore of LRYC, who spoke from the heart (see page 18) about the meaning of clubs and voluntary effort. The need for a sense of community may be central to civilized life. But you don't aspire to a sense of community. Rather, it is a by-product of shared enthusiasm and group and individual efforts to get things done.

That evening on Lough Ree was enough to be going on with, but a few weeks later we found ourselves on Dublin Bay for more perfection. Again it had rained and blown stink in the morning, but somehow it was all bundled away. A warm breeze settled in from the sou west, the air was crystal-clear, and Hallowe'en stepped gracefully across the blue water.

This 70ft Fife masterpiece of 1926 established a Fastnet course record which was only beaten by two much larger boats before Ted Turner finally toppled it in 1971 with the 12-metre American Eagle. But her great history aside, Hallowe'en is such a beauty that no matter which way you look at her, she looks lovely, and her Dublin Bay syndicate were bringing her south after she'd started at the Fife 150th Regatta in the Clyde.

However, it was the portoon at the Royal Irish YC in Dun Laoghaire which provided the perfect showcase for this work of art, as did Dublin Bay on that unexpected evening of summer sweetness. So although the weather statistics may indeed demonstrate that 2008 has been a poor summer, Soundings found a classic summer on Lough Ree in June, and aboard Hallowe'en out on the Bay in July. And when the rain returned, we were glad to see it, for our bit of land was parched.

Hallowe'en rounds the Fastnet Rock, retracing her record breaking route set over 80 years ago
Photo: Bob Bateman

