

Yacht *Flamingo*

Cruise Log
Summer 2004

Scotland

Author: Emma Hurley

Dedication

The Author wishes to dedicate this log to Roger Greene, a great skipper and teacher.

Roger, thank-you for all your help, patience, kindness and friendship over the last five years. Here's to many more!



The Author at Work

Crew

Malahide to Bangor

*Roger Greene
Sidney McInerney
Joe Dalton
Emma Hurley*

Bangor to Largs

*Roger Greene
Sidney McInerney
Joe Dalton
Emma Hurley
Mary Jo O'Sullivan*

Largs to Malahide

*Roger Greene
Sidney McInerney
Joe Dalton
Emma Hurley*

Day 1: Thursday 24th June

Malahide to Ardglass

A couple of weeks prior to departure, there was some doubt as to whether we would be heading for Scotland at all – Roger (*Flamingo's* owner) had decided to sell at the end of the season, but already had an interested party who wanted to buy immediately. Roger was reluctant to sell so early in the season, but if the price was right? There were a couple of tense weeks when we wondered if there would be a boat on which to holiday. Much our relief, the potential buyers did not purchase our soon-to-be holiday home and the trip went ahead after all.

As if that wasn't enough uncertainty, the weather then took a hand in disrupting our itinerary! Gale force Northerlies and high seas scuppered any chance of setting forth on Wednesday 23rd June, our original departure date. Arriving to the boat in Malahide Marina at 0900 on Thursday 24th, we were grimly determined to get under way rather than postponing again. 'We' (besides myself) consisted of Roger Greene (Skipper), Sidney McInerney and Joe Dalton. Mary Jo O'Sullivan was to join us in Bangor.

Everything was stowed by 1000 and the shore parties having left, we cast off. Once in the channel, we hoisted the mainsail with two reefs. The lazyjacks got stuck during this process and Sidney had to break the rope, or the whole bag system for the sail would have been damaged by the strong winds, which were still from the North and gusting up to 30 knots, but forecast to subside later.

A short time afterwards, the wind vane came loose from its housing on the base of the old aerial (which I had replaced last year in Wales) and started waving around in a precarious manner. There was nothing we could do except anxiously watch as it flapped back and forth, at times almost hitting the new aerial – that was all we needed, a broken aerial before we'd got past Skerries! Thankfully, the runaway wind vane never actually did any damage.



Braving the Wind

Day 1: Thursday 24th June (continued)

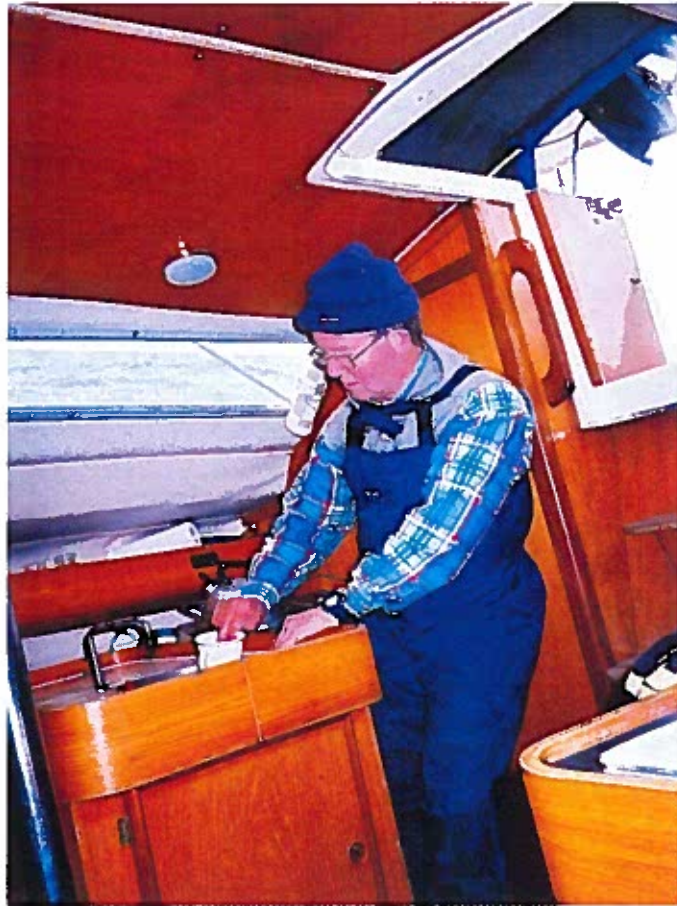
Malahide to Ardglass

The wind still showed no sign of abating by the time we were off Skerries. We had a long discussion about whether to go on or turn back. It was hard work on the tiller. None of us relished the thought of pounding through the waves against the wind for the 50-mile trip to Ardglass. But the weather had already postponed our trip once and we were reluctant to let it beat us again. Turning around would not have been pleasant, with a following sea. Safety was always our first priority and there was a consensus that we should push on. If the wind had not slackened by the time we were approaching Drogheda, we would seriously reconsider our options.

The weather must have taken some pity on us, for the wind lessened to a more manageable force 4, still gusting higher at times, but comfortable enough for us to continue on our journey. I say 'some' pity, because we were hit with a few nasty squalls. Even later when the wind had quietened further we encountered some torrential showers that reduced visibility considerably. In between, there were some lovely bright sunny spells, but the temperature, which had been mild in the morning, got progressively colder as the day wore on.

Lunch was hampered in both the preparation and the cleaning-up by the considerable heel on the boat, but enjoyed none-the-less. Reluctantly, not having seen any of the coast above Skerries before, I gave in to sleep for a couple of hours, and felt much the better for it (apart from the continually decreasing atmospheric temperature). A British Army ship passed us north of Kilkeel, but very little else of note until we arrived in Ardglass at 1950. We had made it! After splicing the mainbrace, we enjoyed a lovely fish lasagne specially prepared for us by Geraldine (Joe's wife), washed down with a bottle of wine. Then it was off to the 'Old Commercial' pub for a nightcap.

<i>Distance covered this day</i>	<i>53 miles</i>	<i>Miles covered to date</i>	<i>53</i>
<i>Distance under power/motor sailing</i>	<i>4.1hrs (22.29miles)</i>	<i>Miles under power to date</i>	<i>4.1hrs (22.29miles)</i>



Sidney Prepares Lunch in Difficult Conditions

Flamingo in Ardglass Marina



Day 2: *Friday 25th June*

Ardglass to Bangor

Sidney and Roger were up and about early to prepare for departure before 0700. I had every intention of joining them, but, like Joe, could not raise my head off the pillow until we were well under way, at about 0830. I have no idea why – we only had one drink last night! Of course, I got slagged about staying in bed while others were working, all in good spirit.

Once the 'second watch' was up and about and fed, the 'first watch' went below for breakfast. In contrast to the day before, the sea was like glass and it was very pleasant sitting on deck in glorious sunshine, with a beautiful view of the Northern East coast of Ireland on one side and Stranraer on the other. I didn't even put on my sailing trousers or jacket – just ordinary clothes under my lifejacket. It was so mild.

We had a very pleasant voyage to Bangor, arriving shortly after 1400. We even managed to put up sail for a short while when the wind filled in. Once at our destination, there were plenty of jobs to be done. I had to go up the mast and check the wind vane – which seemed perfectly ok. There was no way to secure it further without limiting its mobility so I left well enough alone, on the basis that we were very unlikely to meet those wild conditions again. On the way down, I re-threaded the lazyjacks, Roger and Sidney having first selected suitable rope and all of us having worked out where to thread it correctly.

Back on deck, we noticed that the pulleys were at awkward angles and consequently chafing the ropes. It was probably what had caused the original to break. So back up I went with an assortment of shackles, screws and rings. After a few attempts, the right combination was found and I could descend once again. All that remained was to decide on the correct length of rope to secure the lazyjacks as before. Again, it took more than one attempt, but eventually we were all satisfied with the results of our work.

Next, Sidney and Roger had to shackle together two pieces of anchor chain, as all of our future stops would more than likely not have marinas. While all this was happening, Joe was busy preparing tea for us all – very welcome after our busy afternoon!

With gales forecast and Mary Jo due to join us the next day, we were staying put for the time being. There was a Traditional Boats Festival on for the weekend, and we spent Friday night in the marquee specially erected for the event, listening to a very good Trad Band – made up of skippers of some of the trad boats in for the Festival. We were late retiring.

<i>Distance covered this day</i>	<i>34 miles</i>	<i>Miles covered to date</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Distance under power/motor sailing</i>	<i>7hrs (30 miles)</i>	<i>Miles under power to date</i>	<i>11.1hrs (52.29 miles)</i>

Day 3: Saturday 26th June

Bangor

The storm wasn't too bad during the night, but picked up early in the morning. As I lay in my berth reading (while the others were still sleeping), I could hear the wind howling through the rigging and the rain pelting on the forehatch. I was very glad we had turned the boat to face the wind as Sidney had suggested. There would be no chance of the Traditional Boat Race today.

People eventually stirred and breakfast was a leisurely affair. After a bit of pottering, we all headed for the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum – just a short train ride away in Cultra. We spent well over two hours there – in the transport section alone – but could easily have remained another two and not seen everything properly. To round off the visit, I had a go on a miniature train – reliving my childhood!

Mary Jo arrived at the marina in the late evening and we all headed out for dinner on the town (in a local hotel). We didn't stay up too late though, as we planned an early start.



The Author Relives her Childhood!

<i>Distance covered this day</i>	<i>0 miles</i>	<i>Miles covered to date</i>	<i>87</i>
<i>Distance under power/motor sailing</i>	<i>0 hrs (0 miles)</i>	<i>Miles under power to date</i>	<i>11.1hrs (52.29 miles)</i>

Day 4: *Sunday 27th June*

Bangor to Glenarm

At 0810 we departed for Glenarm, where we had learned there was a marina. We had planned to stop somewhere around there anyway, but the presence of a marina made up our minds. The weather was pleasant for the morning, with good wind for carrying full sail almost the whole journey. We arrived at 1225, ahead of the rain and were greeted by a friendly harbourmaster who told us we could eat in the hotel in Carnlough (3 miles away) and that there were taxis available.

We decided to stock up on provisions, as this might be our last port in 'civilisation'. This we did in the local Mace and Spar. Rather than trek to Carnlough and back, we elected to dine on board. I cooked curried noodles and it seemed to be enjoyed by all. We accompanied the food with 2 bottles of wine. At Joe's insistence, to round off the night, we headed for the local hostelry where he had a very interesting political conversation with a local!

<i>Distance covered this day</i>	<i>25 miles</i>	<i>Miles covered to date</i>	<i>112</i>
<i>Distance under power/ motor sailing</i>	<i>0.15hrs (0.8 miles)</i>	<i>Miles under power to date</i>	<i>11.25hrs (53.09 miles)</i>

Day 5: Monday 28th June

Glenarm to Ballycastle

The night was colder than previous ones and I was glad of my mummy-style sleeping bag. Lower temperature, however meant less condensation in the morning. The forecast was reasonable (West 4-5, backing South 4-5, later veering South-West 5-6 gusting 7). Maybe the worst of the weather was behind us.

We set off for Rathlin Island at 1015, having first stocked up with provisions for a few days. There was very little wind to begin with, so we motored all the way. With the tide under us, the 20-odd mile journey took us just 3 hours and we nudged into Rathlin harbour at 1315. There was very little room inside the harbour and the anchorages between the quay and the breakwater didn't look very hospitable. Within 15 minutes we had decided to head for Ballycastle Marina.



A Brief Encounter with Rathlin

Shortly after turning towards the mainland, a heavy squall hit us. Lumpy, confused seas made the 5 mile journey difficult - for Roger and Mary-Jo, who had elected to stay on deck and for the rest of us sheltered below, who huddled near the companionway to get plenty of air and held on tight to avoid being thrown across the cabin. The tide was with us, thankfully - I don't think we would have made it otherwise. We completed the 5-mile journey in 1 hour 25 minutes.

Once in port, we all dozed for a while, exhausted from the passage from Rathlin. Later, Sidney mended a gas leak in the cooker hose, while Roger and I worked out ideal departure times for Gigha. With the prospect of moorings or anchorages for a few nights ahead, the crew opted to dine ashore. We ate a hearty meal in the Marine hotel, accompanied by the obligatory wine.

Day 5: Monday 28th June (continued)

Glenarm to Ballycastle

We heard on the late news that *Team Spirit*, the Howth boat in the Round Ireland Race, was to cross the North coast tonight. We'd been keeping track of race progress especially as Roger's son, David, was crewing on *White Rooster* from Malahide. Maybe we would see them the next day?

As night approached, the weather was remarkably calm. Roger left the radio on to catch the 0530 forecast just in case there was a last minute change.



Fair Head with Rathlin in the Distance

Distance covered this day	29.3 miles	Miles covered to date	141.3
Distance under power/motor sailing	4.75 hrs (29.3 miles)	Miles under power to date	16 hrs (82.39 miles)

Day 6: *Tuesday 29th June*

Ballycastle

There was no change in the forecast so we stayed in port. Everyone did their own thing, exploring Ballycastle and its environs in various directions. A few big boats were visible off the coast – no doubt 'Round Ireland' competitors. We had heard that *White Rooster* was heading up the West coast, so we would probably not see them before we left.

We all got our washing up to date and availed of the showers as we did not anticipate facilities again for a couple of days.

Back on board in the evening, we planned our next-day departure over a lovely dinner cooked for us by Mary Jo, accompanied as always by some wine (chosen by Joe). The rain pelted down. Luckily we had reversed into the berth and were sheltered from the worst of it. We retired early, as we were to depart for Gigha at 0900.

<i>Distance covered this day</i>	<i>0 miles</i>	<i>Miles covered to date</i>	<i>141.3</i>
<i>Distance under power/motor sailing</i>	<i>0 hrs (0 miles)</i>	<i>Miles under power to date</i>	<i>16 hrs (82.39 miles)</i>

Day 7: *Wednesday 30th June*

Ballycastle to Gigha

Departed 0900 as planned, having purchased a few last minute items. Sea was rough and visibility poor. We sighted a few 'Round Ireland' boats, but not *White Rooster*. Roger tried hailing them on the radio, but, not surprisingly, got no response. They were anticipated to pass Rathlin around lunchtime, according to the updates we'd received from Claire, Roger's wife.

By lunchtime, the weather had improved greatly and we could see Scotland clearly. However Ireland had disappeared in the mist. The skies continued to clear and we had a great view of the Kintyre Peninsula and the islands of Jura, Islay and Gigha in the distance ahead.

Following some tricky navigation, we arrived in Ardminish Bay, Gigha around 1500. As soon as we had picked up a mooring, Sidney and I immediately started pumping the rubber duck and all crew headed ashore (in two trips across the 200 yards or so) to explore the island.



Ardminish Bay

There were some beautiful gardens, to which Sidney, Joe, Mary Jo and I made a short visit. Meanwhile Roger explored a nearby old church. After a drink in the hotel, we had a gorgeous meal in the converted boathouse on the water's edge (and availed of their electricity to charge our mobile phones). To round off, we order Irish Coffees and watched in amusement and irritation as the proprietor made a 'pig's ear' of them! Mary Jo could not contain her patience and got up to show him how it was done! Luckily he took it in good spirit, we weren't sentenced to washing up duty.

Distance covered this day	34.5 miles	Miles covered to date	175.8
Distance under power/motor sailing	6.4 hrs (33.5 miles)	Miles under power to date	22.4 hrs (115.89 miles)



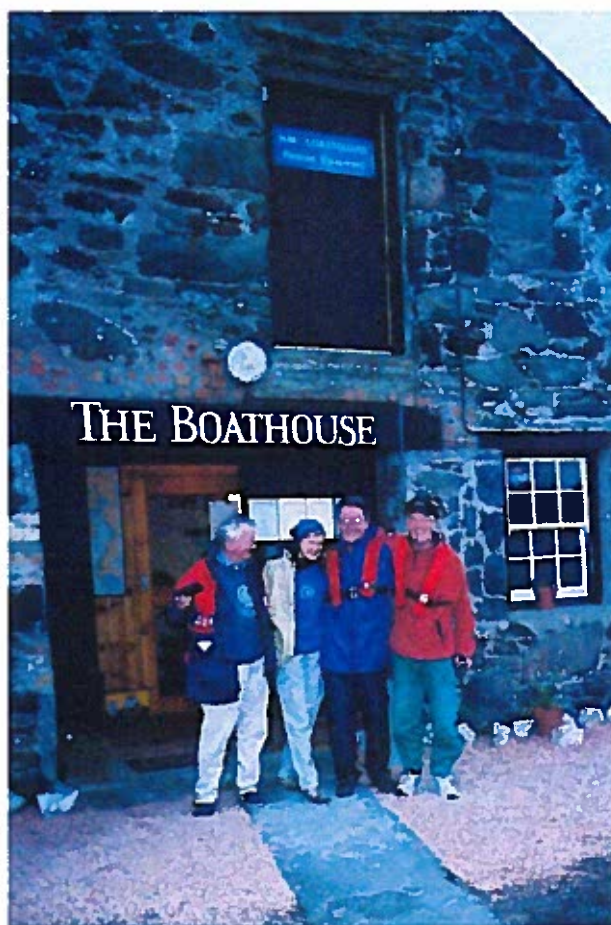
Flamingo (centre picture) Moored off Ardminish Pier

Rowing Home





The Boathouse – Inside and Out



Day 8: Thursday 1st July

Gigha to Dunardry

Departed shortly after 0900. More tricky navigation up to the top of the island, then slightly lumpy seas all the way to Crinan. The Paps of Jura faded in and out of the mist and we had some hazy showers. Wind was variable and gusty, so we motor-sailed with the jib poled out.



The 'Paps' of Jura

As we reached Crinan sea-lock, the lock keeper waved us in immediately. Once inside, Roger paid the fee for passage (we would settle up later) and we continued through to tie up just short of the canal entrance.

There was a very quaint coffee shop by the Crinan Basin (also very expensive). We had to count our pennies as the shop did not take credit cards and there was no ATM – in fact there would be none until Ardrishaig at the other end of the canal (two days away)! Luckily, we calculated our combined resources would see us through the canal. And we had enough diesel until we could get more (also at Ardrishaig).

After a potter (collective), some post-card writing (me) and a walk to the chandler's (Sidney and Joe), we set off along the canal. Much to the skipper's relief, there was no mobile phone coverage – he could get a break from his crew's constant texting!



Sea View from the Crinan Canal

Crinan Bridge



Day 8: Thursday 1st July (continued)

Gigha to Dunardry

The scenery was beautiful and the atmosphere very tranquil. We saw ducks and ducklings along the way and some very quaint dwellings along the towpath (including an intricately decorated traditional gypsy caravan).

There are 15 locks in total (including the sea-locks) and 7 bridges. Having already negotiated the automatic lock 14, we were waved through Crinan Bridge. At Bellanoch Bridge, the sweeper (a floating lock-cum-bridge-keeper) asked us to wait in lock 13 for another boat coming through behind us, and to continue together – to save us time, and save water. We happily agreed, looking forward to the company of another boat, if only for a short period. We waited in the lock while the sweeper drove off to open a bridge further along for some other travellers. Once the other boat arrived, a lock operating party was formed (Sidney, Mary-Jo and myself from *Flamingo*; and two men from the other boat). The remaining crew stayed aboard to manoeuvre the boats through the locks.

The bespectacled man from the other boat informed us he had been through 3 times before and advised that we split into two teams – one to go ahead and prepare the next lock, while the others were filling and then closing the previous one. We readily agreed – it made sense, especially as we were all trying to reach the pub in Cairnbaan by 1900 before the locks closed (it was now after 1800).

We left them to close the lock once it had filled while we headed for the next one. We opened lock 12. Time passed. The gates of lock 13 finally opened and *Flamingo* arrived in our lock. More time passed. Eventually, the other boat moved slowly into out of lock 13 and into lock 12 and we could close the gates and start filling.

The not-so-young female skipper of our neighbours barked orders at everyone around her (not just her own crew) when trying to tie up. Mary Jo and I were on the bank to take ropes from her deck crew – but neither the young bowman, nor the middle-aged woman on the stern could throw a rope properly! After 3 attempts, the rope came close enough for me to catch it (just). I secured it loosely around the cleat and tried to explain to the bowman that he needed to pull in the slack. He was more interested in the shenanigans at the stern.

Mary-Jo had been unable to catch the rope (it had not been thrown near enough to her). Then the woman on the other end of it fell backwards quite hard. No sympathy from her skipper though, just yells of ‘get that b***** rope tied up’, or words to that effect. By the time the boats were secured and the gates closed, we were exhausted! And we still had one more lock in this set, then a small distance on, a further set of three and a bridge!

Since we had started opening the locks, as the evening drew on and a few very heavy (but brief) showers fell, we were all attacked by swarms of midges. It was impossible to keep them at bay and they got everywhere! Roger hid under a towel, to no avail. I rubbed my hand over my face and it came away covered in the tiny black creatures – and I could still feel more biting me. After a few minutes of swatting and swiping, we gave up and resigned ourselves to our fate. Later, when they had abated after dark, I counted over 50 bites, mostly on my face and legs – though how they got through the sailing trousers I don’t know!



Flamingo (and our neighbours) in the Lock,

Day 8: Thursday 1st July (continued)

Gigha to Dunardry



Lock 11 Bridge

Lock 11 had a bridge also and therefore was operated by a keeper. Our passage through was slow. Having observed the pace of our fellow travellers, the lock/bridge keeper informed us we would not get through to Cairnbaan before closedown. At lock 10, the sweeper arrived back to us. She told us one boat could tie-up after lock 9 and the other must continue on a short distance and stop before lock 8. This was due to the width of the canal. She too was astounded at the slowness of the other boat. We thanked her as she bade us farewell and safe journey.

With lock 9 prepared, we waited for lock 10 to open. And we waited. And waited. One gate opened. We waited some more. We saw Roger disembark to help the land crew push, but the gate did not move. Frustrated, I returned to investigate – and discovered the crew had not opened the sluice, making the gate opening almost impossible. I uttered a few expletives under my breath as I snatched the handle and did the job myself.

While the boats were still rising, our 'friendly' neighbouring skipper tried to persuade Roger to continue on to lock 8. Roger explained that as he had not been through before, he was not committing to anything until he had seen outside the lock! She wasn't impressed. Once outside, we observed the landing jetty and made a quick decision to stay. We were very glad to see the stern of our neighbours and vowed not to rise too early in the hope that they would have gone further ahead.

Distance covered this day	33.3 miles (30.5 + 2.8 canal)	Miles covered to date	209.1
Distance under power/motor sailing	4.6 hrs + 2.7 hrs canal (33.3 miles)	Miles under power to date	29.7 hrs (149.19 miles)



Flamingo above Lock 9

Day 9: Friday 2nd July

Dunardry to East Loch Tarbert



Canal Traffic

Cast off at 1000, having availed of the well-equipped facilities at lock 11 (only a 10 minute walk away). As we slowly putted along, I was reminded of the Patrick Kavanagh line about canal water being 'so stilly greeny at the heart of summer'.

A large lunch (that turned into dinner) was eaten in the Cairnbaan Hotel, beside lock 5. Our progress through locks 8 to 6 was tiring – with no accompanying boat we had to do it all ourselves. Still we were glad to move at a reasonable pace! Lock 5 was also a bridge and after our brief respite from gate pushing, we felt like a rest. So coffee turned into a long (very nice) lunch.

Fed and watered, we continued on. There was about a mile stretch to Oakfield Bridge. Next came lock 4, which also had a bridge. While we waited for a boat to come through in the opposite direction, Sidney had a long chat with the bridge operator, in the course of which he mentioned our adventure of the previous day. The bridge operator had a story for us about our 'friends'. When they had come through earlier, he had tried to instruct them to move to one side and make room for the other boats in the lock. They failed to comply so he made it clearer, and then as they still did not react, he shouted as the need became more urgent. The end result was that the bowman pulled too hard as his fellow crewman on the bank held tight to the other end of the rope and was pulled into the lock! Despite the potential danger, the lock keeper couldn't help laughing and nor could we when we heard the story. No one was hurt – just very wet and not very happy!



Lock-keeping (Emma and Mary Jo above; Sidney below)



Day 9: Friday 2nd July (continued)

Dunardry to East Loch Tarbert

Our progress through locks 3 and 2 was very good, having met a couple of boats travelling in the opposite direction and co-ordinated leaving gates open for each other, thereby also saving water. At the final sea-lock, the keeper asked us how we had enjoyed our trip. We replied that it was very enjoyable and eventful, and Sidney proceeded to tell an abridged story of our 'friends' - both our experience of them and their antics that morning. Even though we had never got the name of their boat (we were too busy!), the keeper knew immediately who we meant. And she added a final chapter. They had arrived at the sea-lock earlier and she asked them how they enjoyed their journey. The skipper replied that they had had a 'dreadful experience' and when offered a discount for the return journey, said there was 'no way' she would be through again. When asked the nature of her dissatisfaction, the reply came: 'My crew can't throw ropes and are totally incompetent!'



Ardrishaig Basin

Day 9: *Friday 2nd July (continued)*

Dunardry to East Loch Tarbert

Once out of the canal, we motored all the way down through Loch Fyne to East Loch Tarbert. Wind on the nose all the way, but only cold on final approach to the inlet. Rafted-up alongside a boat from Donaghadee. Dinner in the Victoria Hotel, followed by a search for a pub with some 'craic'. Despite a seafood festival and traditional boats festival, most places were quiet, but we found a lively place to have a nightcap.



East Loch Tarbert

Distance covered this day	16.7 miles (7 canal)	Miles covered to date	225.8
Distance under power/motor sailing	5.6hrs (16.7 miles)	Miles under power to date	35.3 hrs (165.89 miles)

Day 10: Saturday 3rd July

East Loch Tarbert to Largs

All were late rising so despite having good intentions of an early departure, it was 1000 before we left for Largs. Weather was beautiful – best day so far. No rain and lots of sunshine. And very nice wind. After sailing down Lower Loch Fyne, we turned into the Kyles of Bute. We all took turns on the helm, but Mary Jo spent the longest time, as this was her last day with us.



Kyles of Bute - West Kyle above, East Kyle below



Day 10: Saturday 3rd July (continued)

East Loch Tarbert to Largs

The scenery was unimaginably picturesque – heather covered mountains and lush greenery everywhere. We were too late for the rhododendrons blooming on the mountainside, which are said to be incomparable in beauty. It was all so peaceful.

Once we changed direction to head out through the East Kyle, we had to motor sail as the wind was against us. We took the narrower, more interesting looking, of the two channels. Once outside the Kyles, we had more sea room and turned off the engine. Peace and quiet again.



HMS Waverley

Just after passing Rothesay, we saw the *Waverley* heading towards us. It's the last ocean-going paddle steamer. It was quite a sight. Crossing the Firth of Clyde, we kept a close eye out for shipping, but encountered none.

Day 10: Saturday 3rd July (continued)

East Loch Tarbert to Largs

Arrived in Largs 1630 to find a Topper Regatta in full swing – which meant full catering in the club that evening – and visitors were welcome. We chose from a marvellous selection at a very reasonable price (and some nice wine too).

Earlier, we had all explored the large area surrounding the marina. It was rich with restaurants, coffee shops (with lovely ice cream) and a well-stocked marine supplies store. Mary Jo and I spent quite a bit of time in the store, perusing various items. We bought some souvenirs and presents and a very special 'thank-you' present for our skipper – Port and Starboard socks (to teach crew who can't tell the difference). He was most appreciative and swore he would treasure them!



Splicing the Mainbrace (with Port and Starboard socks)

Distance covered this day	30.5 miles	Miles covered to date	256.3
Distance under power/ motor sailing	2 hrs (8.7 miles)	Miles under power to date	37.3 hrs (174.59 miles)

Day 11: Sunday 4th July

Largs to Troon

We said goodbye to Mary Jo at 0930 as she headed off in a taxi for Prestwick. We pottered about for a while and discussed whether we would depart this day or just rest. Finally, we opted for a very pleasant reach to Troon, departing Largs at 1130.

Saw a flock of Gannets diving off our port beam, shortly after we passed Hunterton Power Station. There were obviously plenty of fish around. It was a very restful and relaxing voyage. At 1255, just off Ardrossan, the wind started to drop. We were in no hurry and as we were still moving, we held off putting on the engine. I changed into my half-mast trousers and short sleeves. Eventually, our speed dropped to almost nothing and we had to give in and put on the engine - only for the last 30 minutes of our journey.

Arrived in Troon 1530. Had a good (if distant) view of the golf course as we approached. Sidney, Joe and I went in search of some shops - which we found in the form of a Safeway about 10 minutes walk away near the edge of the town. There we stocked up on all necessary provisions. By the time we returned the wind had picked up again, but colder now. We were glad to get back. Dinner was very tasty in the newly opened marina restaurant. The bitter was nice too! We retired early.

<i>Distance covered this day</i>	<i>18.1 miles</i>	<i>Miles covered to date</i>	<i>274.4</i>
<i>Distance under power/motor sailing</i>	<i>0.5 hrs (2.25 miles)</i>	<i>Miles under power to date</i>	<i>37.8 hrs (176.84 miles)</i>

Day 12: Monday 5th July

Troon to Campbeltown

Departed early (0845) for Campbeltown. The wind was on the nose and rather than going for the open straight route, we decided to look into Lamlash, possibly with a view to staying, depending on conditions.

As we read the sailing directions for the area, it became apparent that sudden violent squalls were to be expected from the mountains of Arran in Westerlies. We contented ourselves with a nose into Lamlash bay – at least we could say we'd seen Arran close-up. As we were leaving, we felt the force of one of the aforementioned squalls – we almost broached and were very glad we had decided not to stay there.



Lamlash Bay, Isle of Arran

We managed to motor sail for a short while, but most of the time the wind was directly on the nose so the sail was useless and we took it down. It was hard going. At least it was dry, but not very warm. We were glad to arrive in Campbeltown at 1815. After dinner on board we adjourned to 'The Feathers Inn' for our customary nightcap. Before retiring, we made a decision to stay put the next day and rest after our long, hard voyage.

Distance covered this day	41.7 miles	Miles covered to date	316.1
Distance under power/motor sailing	9.1hrs (41.7 miles)	Miles under power to date	46.9 hrs (218.54 miles)

Day 13/14: Tuesday 6th/Wednesday 7th July

Campbeltown to Bangor (nightsail)



Campbeltown 'Marina'

As planned, we stayed in Campbeltown all day. There are no facilities around the 'marina' (a single, long pontoon along which boats raft 2- and 3-abreast). All the local hotels offer showers to visiting sailors at a nominal rate, so I availed of one - very pleasant, a towel, shower gel and shampoo were supplied, not to mention endless hot water.

We visited Springbank distillery (and got a sample of Campbeltown Loch Whisky) and pottered around the few shops (including a lifeboat shop). I saw a sign outside the library for the 'Linda McCartney Garden' and went inside to investigate. It's a small garden with lots of plants and sun and a couple of benches to sit on. There's a plaque in the corner explaining that this was a tribute to her by the people of Campbeltown, which had been her home for many years before her death. It was very tranquil. I sat on the seat for a while and soaked up the sun.

Later, I returned to the library for a forecast (I had booked internet access) and met Roger there about to do the same thing. The forecast was not good - the wind was due to pick up considerably in the North Channel the next day - up to gale force 9. Back at the boat, there was a crew meeting. The forecast for the night was quiet - ideal for motoring across to Ireland. A snap decision was made - we were going for a nightsail.

Day 13/14: Tuesday 6th/Wednesday 7th July (continued)

Campbeltown to Bangor (nightsail)

After a quick dinner in a local hotel, we departed at 1800 (having made our decision barely an hour earlier). As we prepared to leave, I heard some chatter on the radio about the *Royalist*. I wondered if it was the same boat that Ellen Mac Arthur had sailed on – the Royal Navy sail-training vessel. It sounded from the conversation that the *Royalist* was in or near Campbeltown. Sure enough, as we left the marina, there was the *Royalist* berthed beside the cargo vessels, where there was deep draught. We passed close-to and the cadets cheered as we waved back.



HMS Royalist, Campbeltown

We were off Sanda Island by 1945. Ailsa Craig (faint in the distance), Arran and Kintyre all looked very picturesque in the setting sun. We could see Fair Head very far away ahead of us. Wind was slack as predicted and Brendan (the autohelm) was steering.

Sidney and I took first watch from 2100 to 2300. We saw the sunset and all was quiet, except for a large ferry that headed our way. We were prepared to alter course if necessary but we were well lit and he saw us and changed course. Roger and Joe took over at 2300, with Sidney and I to resume at 0100.

Day 13/14: Tuesday 6th/Wednesday 7th July (continued)

Campbeltown to Bangor (nightsail)



Sunset in the North Channel

At 0130, I awoke with a start. I had slept right through my alarm! Quickly I got up and found that I wasn't the only one to have missed my watch - Sidney was still sound asleep. I immediately offered to wake him so that we could take over, but Roger replied that we were almost at our destination and it wasn't worth them going to bed before getting into port. In an attempt to redeem myself, I offered nourishment, which Joe accepted in the form of soup. Roger wasn't hungry. I got into my 'oilies' and grabbed a bit of chocolate before joining the deck crew.

It was a flurry of activity, taking down the mainsail, getting lines and fenders ready. Sidney awoke as we were getting into port (I got a metaphorical wrap on the wrist for not waking him). We could not raise the marina office on the radio, but luckily knew where the visitor berths were, so just made our way to them. I was cold by the time I got back into bed and was glad once again of my mummy-style sleeping bag.

Distance covered this day	50.1 miles	Miles covered to date	366.2
Distance under power/ motor sailing	8.5hrs (50.1 miles)	Miles under power to date	55.4 hrs (268.64 miles)

Day 14: Wednesday 7th July

Bangor to Ardglass

We made a quick departure at 1020, just taking on fuel (and paying our dues of course). The weather was pleasant and I sat on the upturned dinghy on the foredeck for some time, writing my log. I had to move to the mast once we got to Donaghadee Sound as the sea got a bit sloppy and splashes from the waves were a little to high for comfort. Once through the sound, I returned to my position on the dinghy.

It was an easy voyage to Ardglass, motor-sailing most of the way. We managed to cut the engine for about an hour when the wind picked up for a while. Arrived at 1545 and pottered about and enjoyed the sun. For our final night (as we thought), we decided to dine on board. Sidney made lovely Spanish Omelettes, which we followed with peaches and cream for dessert.

I insisted that we had to play at least one game of 'shut-the-box' before the voyage ended. It's been a tradition on *Flamingo* holidays and I wasn't going to let this be an exception. We played a few rounds and despite an initial lack of enthusiasm, everyone got into the spirit of it. Joe won – and he had been the least inclined to play! It was a nice way to spend our last night on board.



Ardglass Marina – A Bird's Eye View

Distance covered this day	35.4 miles	Miles covered to date	401.6
Distance under power/motor sailing	4.3hrs (20.5 miles)	Miles under power to date	59.7 hrs (289.14 miles)

Day 15: Thursday 8th July

Ardglass

Woke up to a bad forecast – gale warning on the Irish Sea, so we stayed put. Sidney, Joe and I walked the 6-mile round trip to Killough, past Coney Island. Looking out to sea, we saw a yacht heading south on what looked like a very pleasant tight reach or one-sided beat. So much for the gale warning!

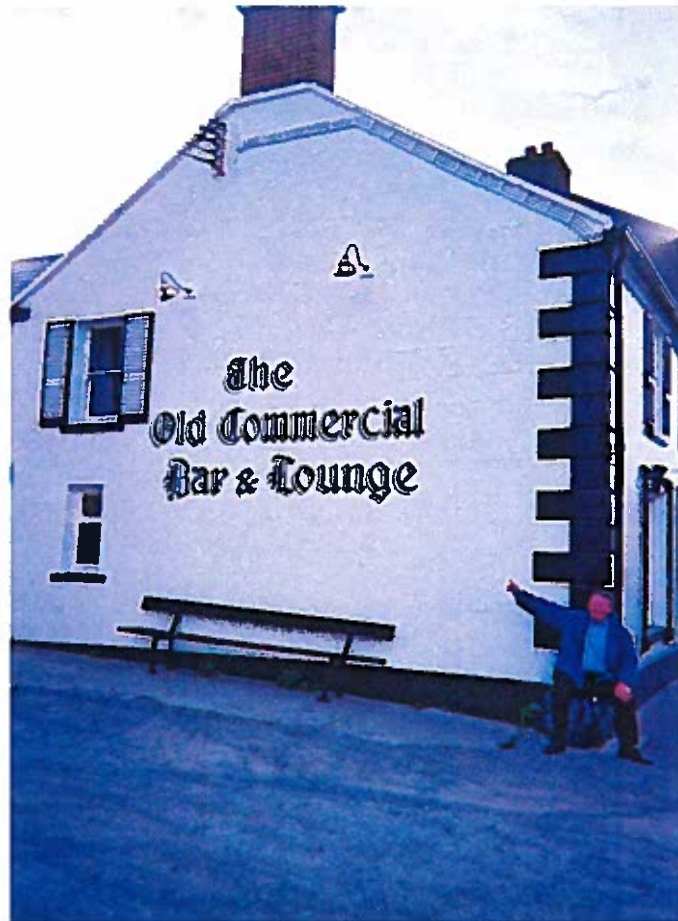
On returning from our walk we had coffee and cakes in a very nice coffee shop beside the harbour. Back at the marina, rejoined by Roger, the four of us sat on a bench soaking up the sun and viewing the boats. The rest of the afternoon was spent in a very relaxing manner - either reading on board, or wandering about the town.

We decided as this really was our last night aboard (we hoped) that we would go out for dinner. Joe checked out the potential eateries and the Golf Club was favoured. The food was tasty, the helpings generous and the atmosphere very pleasant. Afterwards (having first perused the other hostelrys) we revisited The Old Commercial – where we had been on our first night in Ardglass, two weeks previously (to the day). With our early start and long sail home ahead of us, we just had the one and retired early.



The Last Supper: Dinner in Ardglass Golf Club

Distance covered this day	0 miles	Miles covered to date	401.6
Distance under power/motor sailing	0 hrs (0 miles)	Miles under power to date	59.7 hrs (289.14 miles)



Last of the Summer Wine?



Day 16: Friday 9th June

Ardglass to Malahide

Set sail at 0910. Very pleasant reach past Killough – even set the spinnaker for a time (with the engine running, unfortunately). Saw a few other yachts heading south, but quite far away (both ahead and astern). Sun was quite strong initially, but clouded over later, followed by a rain shower (which I missed as I was packing)!

Passing Dundalk appeared to take a long time – but the GPS told us we were moving at 4 knots over the ground and the bearings taken at regular interval backed up its analysis.



The Condemned Men Ate a Hearty Meal: Last Lunch of the Voyage

After lunch (prepared by Sidney with the last of our provisions – salmon salad with bread and butter, followed by cakes and tea/coffee), the wind came around to the South – dead on the nose – and we had to take down sail. Visibility was excellent – we could see Rockabill, Lambay and the Sugarloaf clearly and the rain held off in the afternoon (at least the showers missed us).

Joe and I were keeping watch (Brendan, the autohelm, was steering), when we saw a school of porpoises to starboard, heading north. Very little else of note – still the few distant yachts heading in the same direction, wind still on the nose. North of Rockabill we encountered a few overfills. There were some people – probably bird conservationists – landing as we passed inside (I never knew there were two islands – Rock and Bill).

Day 16: Friday 9th June (continued)

Ardglass to Malahide



Rockabill

Just North of Lambay, I saw a sailing jacket floating in the water and felt a shiver down my spine. Roger altered course to get a closer look. We all stared hard as we passed, then came around for another look. Much to our relief, there was no one inside the jacket, but it was a sobering moment – a sharp reminder that the sea must be respected at all times.

We continued into Malahide without further incident and the shore parties welcomed us home. It had been a very enjoyable and pleasant trip, despite the less than favourable weather. I felt a little wrench as I left *Flamingo*. Although I would continue to sail on her for the remainder of the racing season, this was my last voyage on the boat where I had learned to sail. The end of a chapter, but a new beginning. God Bless *Flamingo* and all who sail in her!

Distance covered this day	54.8 miles	Miles covered to date	456.4
Distance under power/ motor sailing	11.33 hrs (54.8 miles)	Miles under power to date	71.03 hrs (343.94 miles)



Home, Sweet Home!