



**BALLAD NEWSLETTER 2021**

## **From the Chairman**

Dear Ballad owner and all Ballad enthusiasts,

Well, we are coming to the end of another sailing season (apart from those hardy members who may compete in autumn and winter series or may cruise) and it's been yet another fairly strange one due to Covid-19. However, we have been lucky to have some lovely sailing weather during the spring and summer and, I know that many of you have been out there on the water whether sailing single handed, with family or actually with a crew. I hope you have all enjoyed whatever experience you have had and I look forward to a more usual season in 2022.

Despite the ongoing situation, the Ballad Association went ahead with the championship for 2021, having made the decision to cancel 2020's and also to move this year's to a later date. You will find an article about the championship, which was held in Dartmouth, and the results later in the newsletter but, at this point, I would like to thank Janie, our secretary, along with RDYC and DYC officers, their staff and Ian Morton (race officer) for their support in organising the event. I understand why the number of competitors was lower than normal, but I have to say that those of us who attended thoroughly enjoyed ourselves both on the water and ashore. It was just so lovely to be racing in the company of other Ballads in a beautiful location and then to be able to enjoy amiable company in the evenings. Both clubs were dealing with shortages of staff but were able to make us very welcome and to look after us very well.

Looking forward, we have a very exciting year coming up. 2022 marks the 50th anniversary of the first Ballads being launched and I know that several of you owners have Ballads dating back to 1972. That year, the Ballad was hailed as the 1/2tonne offshore racer and, looking at how our yachts continue to perform, we can easily appreciate that recognition. This 50th anniversary is an occasion that should be recognised and to this end the UK National Ballad Association are planning a celebratory weekend encompassing the Ballad Nationals.

All current Ballad owners and crew members along with previous Ballad owners and crew members are invited to attend this event which is being held in Fowey where the first one design open meeting took place. It will be hosted by the Royal Fowey Yacht Club with the support of Gallants Sailing Club, both of which supported the first event which led to the forming of the SW Ballad Association and then the UK National Ballad Association.

The dates for this prestigious event are 10th - 13th June when racing, cruising and social events for all being planned. A further update will be sent out later but initially please book out 9th- 14th June to allow time to "cruise" to Fowey (or longer if you are coming further!). Ensure all your crew are informed along with any other current or previous Ballad owners (whatever their current boat may be) - let's make this an occasion to remember whilst celebrating the success of a yacht that is still being raced and cruised the world over!

I hope you find the articles in the newsletter interesting. However, if you have had any adventures during the last 2 seasons, or even prior to that, or have undertaken work to your boat etc and feel it might be helpful to share it, then please do send an article in for future newsletters.

In signing off, I wish you all a healthy winter and a joyous Christmas and, as we go into 2022, a great sailing season encompassing our 50th anniversary celebrations.

See you in Fowey!

Best wishes,

Catherine

### **Editor's Musings**

I am a very bad Ballad owner! Not because I do not look after Vivacious, but because I very rarely make the Ballad championships. There have, of course been many very good reasons for that, and mostly because I was still at work, and spending Monday to Friday in London. That all changed last March, just as the first lockdown started. I retired from paid employment! It was rather surreal, however, because most people were working from home, and I was the only one in the office as I cleared my desk and completed my handover notes for my successor. Having done all that, I switched the lights off and left – no parties, no celebratory lunches, I just went home to Devon!

So, there I was, retired, lots of opportunities to sail Vivacious, but no, repeated lockdowns and Covid restrictions put paid to that, and all I managed was a number of day sails in the latter part of 2020. Then I became Commodore of the RNVR Yacht Club, and since then my life has not been my own! That is not to say that I have not enjoyed the experience, but it has been all consuming. So, I did not make it to Dartmouth and once again I have only managed a few day sails in Vivacious. Next year I will try to do better, but I can't promise anything until 2023!

With all good wishes

Tim

### **Ballad Class Championship Dartmouth 11-12 September 2021**

#### **Results**

The 2021 Championship was run by the UK Albin Ballad Association under the auspices of the Royal Dart Yacht Club, and supported by the hospitality of the Dartmouth Yacht Club

Racing took place in Start Bay using the RDYC inshore buoys under the direction of the race officer Ian Norton and his assistant.

Friday the 10<sup>th</sup> September saw the skippers and crews of the competitors assemble at the Dartmouth Yacht Club for a briefing given by Catherine Noakes. This was followed by an excellent supper and a chance for the crews to get together for the first time.

Saturday 11<sup>th</sup> September saw the 4 competitors, Blavinge, Duchess, Shara of York and Shebeen assemble in Start Bay off the Homestone buoy 'H' for a prompt 11:00 start to the series. The weather was fine with a stiff south westerly breeze.

Race 1 The course set was:- start H, RDYC 1, 2, 4, line, 1, 4, H finish.

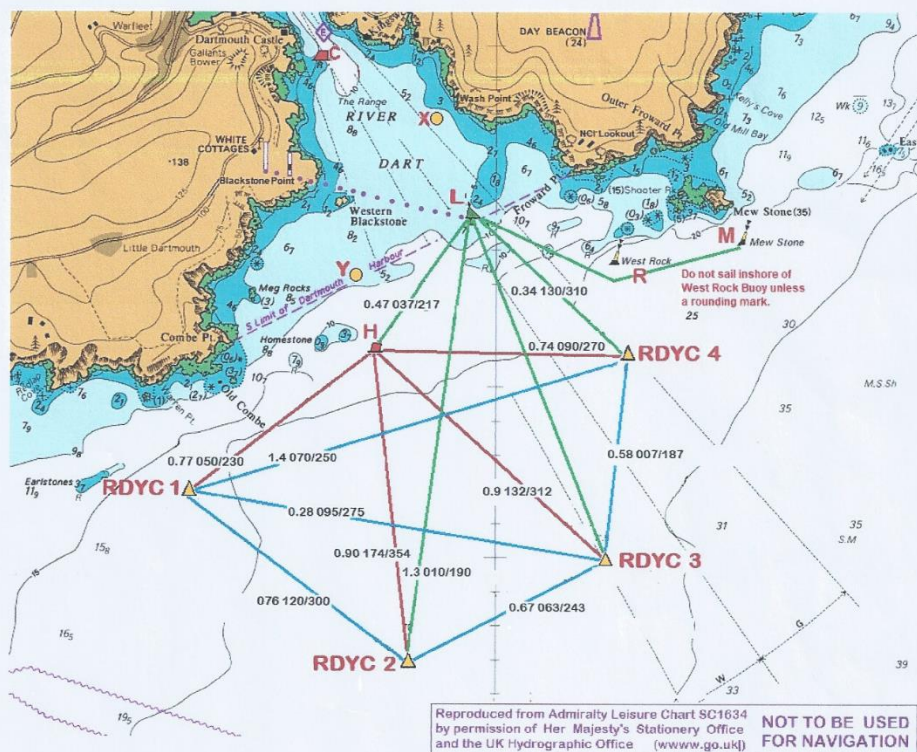
All four yachts made a clean start, Shara of York starting at the committee boat end of the line headed inshore, followed by Duchess, Blavinge and Shebeen. Shara of York pulled out a comfortable lead to the windward mark followed by Duchess, Blavinge and Shebeen.

Shara of York, with a clean spinnaker hoist was roaring off to the second mark RDYC 2, giving the fleet a Master Class in Ballad racing. After rounding the windward mark, Shebeen suffered some spinnaker problems which slowed her on the downwind leg, eventually she recovered the situation and with all sails working well she caught Blavinge before the RDYC 4 buoy, and the 2 boats continued a close fought race until the Finish. The final order was Shara of York, Duchess, Blavinge, Shebeen.





## COURSE MAP (Inshore Buoys)



### Marks and approximate positions (WGS84).

<b>H</b>	Homestone, red can buoy,	50d 19.61°N, 3d 33.55°W
<b>M</b>	Mewstone Buoy, south cardinal buoy	50d 19.92°N, 3d 31.89°W
<b>R</b>	West Rock Buoy, south cardinal buoy	50d 19.86°N, 3d 32.47°W
<b>(an obstruction which must always be passed to seaward)</b>		
<b>ODM</b>	Nearest mark to the CB (which may be H, L, C, T, Y, Z, 1, 2, 3, 4)	
<b>L</b>	Castle Ledge Buoy, green conical buoy	50d 19.99°N, 3d 33.11°W
<b>C</b>	Checkstone, red can buoy	50d 20.45°N, 3d 33.81°W
<b>X</b>	Yellow 6 knot buoy (Wash Point, N of Newf'nd Cove)	50d 20.30°N, 3d 33.33°W
<b>Y</b>	Yellow 6 knot buoy (due N Homestone)	50d 19.85°N, 3d 33.60°W
<b>1</b>	RDYC 1, yellow conical buoy with number	50d 19.11°N 3d 34.49°W
<b>2</b>	RDYC 2, yellow conical buoy with number	50d 18.7°N 3d 33.4°W
<b>3</b>	RDYC 3, yellow conical buoy with number	50d 19.0°N 3d 32.5°W
<b>4</b>	RDYC 4, yellow conical buoy with number	50d 19.6°N 3d 32.4°W

Race 2 The course set was a repeat of Race 1

A close start at H saw 2 boats, Duchess and Shebeen, over the line. Shara of York took the lead and sailed another faultless race from start to finish. During the downwind 'sausage' leg from RDYC 1 to RDYC 4 Shebeen was overtaking Duchess to leeward when there was a touching of spinnakers. Duchess took the penalty turns before the leeward mark almost allowing Blavinge to overtake her.

The race finished with Shara of York first across the line, followed by Shebeen, Duchess and Blavinge.

The race officer was concerned about the lack of wind forecast for Sunday and decided to run a 3<sup>rd</sup> race after lunch.



Race 3 The course set was shorter than the morning races but still following the 'triangle sausage' format:- start H, RDYC 1, RDYC 2, H, RDYC 1, H, RDYC 1, Finish H.

At the start Blavinge and Duchess were judged to be over the line, Shara of York started at the pin end of the line and took off inshore on a port tack, using the tidal advantage to set up another immaculate race to the windward mark and gradually pulled out a significant lead on the following pack. Shebeen sailed a good clean race behind Shara with Duchess close behind leaving Blavinge to bring up the rear.

Race 4 The race officer delayed the start as close to the 15:00 deadline as possible to allow the breeze to build, eventually setting a short course:- start H, RDYC 4, RDYC 3, finish H.

With little wind circa 6 kt from the East and a moderate tide running, this proved to be a highly tactical race. From the start Shara of York and Blavinge headed out to sea to work the best of the breeze and tide, Duchess and Shebeen opted for an inshore course to RDYC 4.

Shara of York led the fleet, rounding RDYC 3 and ghosting down to the finish at H to complete the four races in style with four wins. Blavinge followed and even flew a spinnaker on the final leg, completing the race within the time limit allowed. Duchess and Shebeen struggled to round RDYC buoys 3 & 4 and were eventually timed out.

Despite the small number of boats competing, the competitive spirit was there in abundance, everyone enjoying the atmosphere and the course on which we were racing in Start Bay.

Sunday evening we were treated to a bounteous prize giving at the Royal Dart Yacht Club followed by a delicious supper and a chance to exchange yarns with fellow competitors which made for a perfect end to a great weekend.

Yacht	Race 1	Race 2	Race 3	Race 4	Total
Blavinge	3	(4)	4	2	9
Shebeen	4	2	2	(DNF)	8
Duchess	2	3	3	(DNF)	8
Shara of York	(1)	1	1	1	3

Overall Results	Yacht	Score	Cup
1	Shara of York	3	Jean Ellis Memorial Trophy
2	Shebeen	8	Upper Deck Trophy
3	Duchess	8	Toms Trophy
4	Blavinge	9	Rocky's Spoon

Blavinge also won the Noakes & Habermehl Voyager Cup

## Around Ireland in Sixpence 2019

After the Jester Challenge in 2018 you would have thought the 2018/2019 winter and spring would have been fairly quiet maintenance-wise ie most jobs done. But no, we embarked on some ambitious repairs to replace the steel transverse plate linking the main bulkhead, and took out and refurbished the windows and a number of other things, so that we were in a bit of disarray by our planned departure date of mid April. We did get going on the 17<sup>th</sup> and headed for St Mawes in a very pleasant Easterly, and as always enjoyed the lovely, well-heelled surroundings of the harbour. Then on to Newlyn to meet up with my sister Sue and her family staying at Mowzle, and for the jumping off point to round Lands' End. This

was probably some of the finest weather we had all summer, and we enjoyed some splendid walks along the Postman's Trail that heads West and South along the coast. On the 22<sup>nd</sup> we set off for Padstow at 0830, again in sunny weather and a gentle Southeasterly. Our passage plan took us





close inshore inside

Sevenstones, between Armed Knight and Kettles Bottom, to make the best of the stream. By Cape Cornwall the breeze had piped up to 25 knots and veered a bit to the South, so we made good time to Padstow, coming alongside at 1900, with a great welcome from the HM. Then fish and chips of course, courtesy of RS!

On the 24<sup>th</sup> we headed out over the harbour cill at 0740 and North for Milford Haven (about 75 miles). I should explain that a. we were keen only to do day passages and b. we had planned a detour to take us up the Bristol Channel. Not fancying the lack of shelter on the North Devon and Somerset shores, we decided we would track East along the South Wales coast from Milford Haven to get as far as Portishead – as it turned out, it was to get a lift from Bristol to a funeral in Dorset. Milford Haven is a place of great contrasts, with its refineries and tanker jetties, and Pembroke Dock further up. But also, a great cruising ground and the beautiful Cleddau river is navigable for more than 10 miles inland. We arrived just before a very unseasonal storm hit with 80 knot winds recorded at St David's Head, so were glad to be tucked up in Milford Marina for a few days.

On the 29<sup>th</sup> we set out from Dale Bay, at the western end of the Haven, in a moderate ESE passing Tenby bay, heading for the Gower peninsula and its fine beaches. We rounded the Mumbles at 1700 and calling up Tawe lock at 1800 with just sufficient tide to lock in. Swansea Marina occupies the old Victorian docks and is a very pleasant place to stop for a few nights, with a most welcoming team at the marina and lock gates. One person you can't get away from in Swansea is Dylan Thomas!

2

Next stop Barry – Cumberlidge is not overly



enthusiastic about Barry, but it proved a useful passage stop, and an opportunity to meet one of Sixpence's original owners. Colin, now well into his eighties and still sailing, rowed out to greet us - he was thrown out a bit by the change of colour! Oh, and of course we got to wander Barry Island and tread in the steps of Gavin and Stacey, Nessa, Uncle Bryn, Gwen, Dave 'Coaches



Dave', and Doris "wish they'd cut the bugger off!" et al. Portishead on the flood, accompanied by a small but noisy fleet of retired lifeboats. After two nights we turned around and made our way back to Milford via Swansea and Tenby - a really lovely Georgian town. We spent a few days in Milford Haven waiting for favourable conditions to cross to Ireland and spent a day sailing in



the Cleddau before returning to Dale Bay where Ballad *Imagine* is moored.

Making an early start from Dale in very light winds, we had a long motor across to Kilmore Quay, County Wexford, on the SE corner of Ireland. Nicky Murphy the AHM directed us to our berth.

Kilmore Quay is a busy fishing port, as well as having a marina. Nicky, it turned out, was both an HM and crab fisherman. So, Katie asked him if she could buy some crab from him. He gave an emphatic "No....but if you get a saucepan...!" and then looking at the size of the saucepan "...you'll need another one..!". And so began a pattern of extraordinary welcome, kindness and generosity, met everywhere around Ireland.

Passage making on the East coast of Ireland is dictated by the tide streams and you can cover a lot of distance on a single tide. So it was that we went from Kilmore Quay to Arklow (54 miles) and then to Howth (41 miles) on single tides. Arklow is a small coastal town and once important port, and the home of the Arklow Shipping company with its fleet of ships in distinctive green livery. And on the site of an old munitions factories, it boasts an enormous and quite incongruous shopping mall. Oh, and for navigational nerds, Arklow is an amphidromic point with a tidal range less than 1m. Then, on to Howth or "Hoat' rhymes with boat" as I was told quite robustly by one of the marina staff after my inept call-up on the VHF. Howth (Hoath) is a pleasant and quite well-to-do town with fine walks around the Ben of Howth and views across to the 'Eye of Ireland' from the marina.

Next stop Poolbeg marina in Dublin Port; entry to the Port is tightly controlled and pleasure craft need to follow precise instructions from Dublin Harbour Radio, though as always, they were delivered with great politeness and welcome. Dublin hardly needs an introduction as a cultural and tourist destination, and we

had a fine time, joined by our sons Martin and Arthur, for my birthday. Our berth was right



on the turning circle for the cruise ships that constantly come and go, and at times seemed right on top of us. It's a busy old place Dublin.

We continued North, stopping the night at the private island of Lambay ("NO LANDING") but a very pleasant stop nonetheless, in beautiful surroundings with some fine Lutyen buildings. A short hop to Skerries, which was sheltered when we arrived, but we then had to clear out at 4am as the wind backed NE, so we beat up to Carlingford Lough across Dundalk bay. Streams run so hard in and out of the Lough that the channel markers are boat shaped.



With a bit of ferry gliding we swung into Greencastle on the Northern Ireland side of the Lough and spent a day exploring the coastline, the local castle (with many more to come), and made a note to come back and explore the beautiful Mourne Mountains that overlook the Lough from the North. Our next stop was Ardglass, with its small comfortable marina, and venerable manager Fred. The countryside is quite flat here, though we had

several very pleasant walks along the coast, with a close encounter with two peregrine falcons. Walking in Ireland is a different experience to England, they just don't have footpaths, and so many named walks actually turn out to be along the road. We were now on a schedule to get to Belfast to collect a campervan for a week touring and...well more of that in a moment. By now the weather was a good deal less clement and we approached Victoria channel in squally weather. Belfast is a busy

port too, but directions for coming into port were a little more relaxed than Dublin. Whilst it looks quite a detour, and there are more convenient marinas if you are on passage North or South, the Abercorn Basin is not to be missed. Sitting in the centre of Belfast you are right next to the Titanic exhibition, and only 10 minutes from the city centre with its fine civic buildings. The Troubles tour we did was marvellous, both entertaining and sobering, but uplifting to see a city that had come so far in such a short time from those dark decades of the seventies and eighties.

Abandoning Sixpence, we set off to Ballyshannon to spend 3 days at a tribute festival. And as the festival organisers were in no doubt.....when Rolling Stone magazine asked Jimi Hendrix what it felt like to be the greatest guitarist in the world, he said "I dunno, go ask Rory Gallagher".



Yes, this sleepy, rather run down town in Donegal, is His birthplace, complete with bronze statue in the square of the great man in full flight firing bluesy riffs from his battered Stratocaster. And each year, for a few days, the blues and Rory covers, blast out from every bar and tiny square. The weather was crap but we had a great time, before heading down to the Mourne Mountains for some walking (and more rain). Returning to Belfast on the 6<sup>th</sup> of June we then back tracked southwards to Strangford Lough - essentially an inland sea with a narrow channel at its entrance. One or two sailors we met were full of trepidation at the thought of the narrows, and yes 8 knots of tide under the boat feels a bit hairy,



particularly when having to dodge the ferry that shuttles back and forth between Portaferry and

Strangford village. But we loved Strangford Lough, with its hundreds of little islets, and nooks and crannies. First stop was the Quoile Yacht club in the SW corner of the Lough, where we met Isobel and her beautiful 120 year old yacht Glance. Then, onto Down Cruising Club better known as “The Lightship” – which is their fine clubhouse with visitors’ pontoon.



We spotted several Ballads on the way there and then ‘Tiger Rag’ when we arrived, looking spotless and very Sixpence-like in colour. Oh, and let’s not mention ignoring the excellent ICC Sailing Directions and running aground (twice) on our way in. On the 14<sup>th</sup> we were heading North again with an overnight (and expensive) stop at Bangor Marina, and then North again to Lough Larne (why would you want to go there someone asked?!). Well, get past the RoRo terminal at its head, and the Lough opens up, and though very shallow, you find there are several quiet and pleasant anchorages. The one we headed for was down an old, dredged channel towards a jetty for a now deserted cement factory, with large quarry behind at Magheramorne. Slightly behind the factory buildings was an enormous scaffolding and hoarding, which we assumed shielded a building that was being taken down. But no, we found out a day later that it was one of the *Game of Thrones* green screens (something to do with VR apparently), and in NI you just cannot get away from *GOT*. It really does drive their tourist industry. Then Glenarm and Billy the lobster whisperer! Billy ran the marina but had been a fisherman for many years. Our neighbour on the opposite pontoon had put out a creel - yes in the marina - and caught a lobster. And then Billy turned up just as we were admiring it in the creel and did his trick with the creature, putting it into a sleep-like trance, before we released him back to the sea. Only in Ireland we were tempted to say....! Rathlin Island next, and the Rathlin Sound with its 6 knot tides and boat-eating Slough-na-more whirlpool. Our timing was good and our arrival in the harbour uneventful. We loved the island, which was well set up for walking, and with marvellous wildlife including breeding puffins, and the famous but elusive golden hare – which we saw.

With a wedding to return to, we left Sixpence in Ballycastle for a week, and then continued along the North coast to Portrush, where huge preparations were underway for the Golf Open. Someone had mentioned that the train journey along Lough Foyle was well worth taking, starting from Portrush through Coleraine to Derry/Londonderry (this compromise label for the city seemed to trip off people’s tongues in NI). And it was a beautiful journey,



and our day in D/LD was both a revelation – its wonderful walled city, but also a stark reminder as you looked down at the Bogside, of the Troubles and troubled history, stretching back to the Siege of Derry in 1689, the role of the apprentice boys and the cries of “No surrender” that echo of course to this day. We lost our big balloon fender on Rathlin, and could only source one at Greencastle at the mouth of Lough Foyle. Although not a very promising place for a berth we managed to tie alongside a fishing boat in the inner harbour and were very snug. An Ovni - Lady Belle (Clare and Donal) crept alongside too, and we were joined, to our great surprise, by friends we had made in the Azores last summer; Jenny and Simon on Fenicia. Greencastle was our last stop on the North Coast before heading around Malin Head (the Northernmost point on our journey) into Lough Swilly.



Malin Head has a justifiably fearsome reputation, where strong tides and Atlantic swell can create very ugly conditions. There is an inshore passage that jinks through the Garvan Islands, which we decided to take following the ICC SDs very closely, but at one time thinking we could only see breakers! But a passage through appeared and Malin Head itself was quite benign in the light North-westerly. Lough Swilly is another deep lough, taking you well inland with several stunning anchorages and beautiful sandy beaches – a defining feature of the North West coast of Ireland. At Rathmullan we made several new friends who overwhelmed us with their kindness and helpfulness, not least in acquiring diesel. Everywhere we went with Sixpence, she got compliments or smiles of recognition from those who had sailed on Ballads.

Our next destination had really piqued our interest: Mulroy Bay leading into Broadwater takes you through a succession of narrows into what feels like an inland lake – this is Broadwater. The ICC SDs



tell you to keep your wits about you and at times the echosounder zeroed out, but it was well worth a few nail-biting moments to arrive where very few people go. We had Broadwater to ourselves (apart from the ubiquitous fish farms and mussel rafts) and found a delightful anchorage tucked behind an island in Cool Bay. Leaving Mulroy Bay we sailed around to Sheephaven and Downing Bay. The Downies is a very popular holiday destination, which is no surprise as the

surroundings are stunning and the beaches magnificent. We briefly crossed tracks with Coire Uisce owned by Norman Kean and his wife Geraldine. Norman is something of a legend on the Irish sailing scene, and editor of the excellent ICC SDs, which he seems to keep updated almost constantly. Tory Island next. We had had mixed reports about Tory Island and a lack of welcome from other harbour users. But we loved Tory Island, and the few folk we met in the harbour were very friendly and accommodating. Traditionally, the King of Tory, aka Patsy Dan Rogers, greets visitors to the



Island, but sadly he

died quite recently, though we did meet his widow in the An Club, a very convivial bar & eatery & social club. I'm chatting to an islander at the bar who didn't learn English until he was at secondary school on the mainland - we're several Jameson's in... By contrast the chef and manager had previously run a bar in Manhattan! Our next passage took us around the fearsome sounding Bloody Foreland down through the Rosses to Burtonport, via Gola Island for lunch and a lovely walk, with an overnight stop in the splendid Cruit (Critch) Bay. On the following day we headed up the tricky channel (not helped by a house built recently between two leading lights!) to the fishing harbour of Burtonport, to have our lines taken by Jimmy Jonny, who owned O Donnell's - "ah, so you must



be Jimmy Jonny" I said. He was only mildly surprised that I knew his name (local knowledge you see..!). The berthing fee was 6 euros, but "you get the second night free" Patrick the HM reassured us! We found some very pleasant walks along an old rail track in a bouldery, boggy landscape and then enjoyed a great meal in a bar that had a ridiculous mansized lobster fixed to the outside of it - sorry but no photos of the ludicrous beast. We set off the following day in wet and breezy



conditions, and sailed hard on the wind to round Malin Beg Head and set a course eastwards to Teelin Harbour, passing the spectacular Slieve League cliffs on the way. Arriving in Teelin Hbr, we again found we had the place to ourselves and it was a truly lovely and well sheltered spot with a good pint of G to be had at the Rusty Mackerel. Next to Sligo, stopping at Inish Murray with its wonderful and almost wholly intact 5<sup>th</sup> century monastery. In the UK this would have English Heritage all over it and be overrun with visitors. We were the only people there. (We did nearly lose the anchor though in the rocky seabed). With the anchor freed and a bit bent, we carried on then to Sligo, with its swift tidal approaches, and a most curious navigational aid - the metal man (a



Napoleonic era midshipman) who points up channel towards Sligo. There is a small marina at the heart of the city, and we were welcomed by John Carton the HM. Sligo is a lively and attractive place, and we spent four days there exploring the surroundings, including the extraordinary buried Neolithic field systems called Ceide, visited WB Yeats' grave and more sadly the harbour at Mullagmore where Lord Mountbatten was blown up by the IRA. John Carton remembered him with great fondness. Heading West out of Donegal Bay we were hard on the wind for 50 miles to Broadhaven just East of



Erris Head. A beautiful spot to explore, but we had lost a bit of time and continued on around to

Blacksod Bay passing inshore of the InishKea islands and finding an anchorage in Ellys Bay. For those not familiar with the North West Coast, you would be surprised how many sea miles can be covered in relative shelter from the Atlantic swell. The following day we went back to InishKea South, finding an anchorage in the most beautiful and remote surroundings, with a small harbour and a scattering of deserted dwellings\*, several of which had been recently renovated. Our lobster creel yielded one small brown crab and a very angry conger eel. \*The islands were abandoned in the early 1930s when a number of men out fishing in their curragh's were taken by a violent storm. Similar stories surround other formerly inhabited islands on this coast.

Next stop Toramore on Clare Island and the



birthplace and home of Grainne Uiale (or Grace O'Malley) the 16<sup>th</sup> century chieftainess and pirate. Clare Island is a popular tourist destination with its spectacular peaks, and excellent walks. Like so many harbours along this coast, the council lays moorings for visitors but makes no charge for them. We were on our own and it's late July. Achill Sound runs between Achill Island, which has the highest cliffs in the British Isles, and mainland Ireland. In theory you can pass through the sound but the ICC SDs say the lifting bridge installed in the 1980s has never worked properly. So, we decided to put our nose into the South Sound and spent a night overlooked by another of Grainne's castles, before heading into Clew Bay the following day.



Much of Ireland's landscape is greatly influenced by recent ice ages, none more so than Clew Bay, with its hundred or so grassy islets (drumlins) formed by the moving ice sheets. Much of the bay is very shallow, but it is possible (and we did) to go up to Westport about 5 miles inland. After a pleasant night in Colanmore Harbour we motored to Inishturk Island for a lunch stop and with a rising breeze beat the remaining 10 miles to Inishbofin island, a very popular and convenient passage stop on the West coast, but clearly for more local sailors too. Shelter is excellent in the



harbour, but the holding less good, and we were skating around with a lot of scope out. Our neighbour was on a mooring and clearly a local, and I asked if any of the spare moorings were for visitors. "No" he said, then shouted down below: "Pat! Do you still have a mooring here?" "Yes" came the reply. "The one forward of you - help yourself!"

The harbour is overlooked by Cromwell's Barracks, where he locked up priests before sending them off to the West Indies and almost certain death. He is Ireland's least popular historical figure! It's now the 6<sup>th</sup> of August and we are heading into Galway Bay around Slyne Head. I say around, but there is an inner passage called Joyce's pass – fortunately the swell was too high to contemplate it. But it looked the equivalent of threading your boat through the eye of a needle. We bowled down the Connemara coast to Roundstone, accompanied by a large boisterous pod of bottlenose dolphins.

This Connemara coastline offers some wonderful and scenic cruising and in another year we will return for sure. More bad weather was due and we decided to head to Rossaveal, a busy ferry port for the Aran Islands but with a brand-new marina. A French couple, Sylvie and Marc, were next to us in a rather fine Nigel Irens' designed motor yacht, and we spent some very pleasant times with them, before they headed South and we headed to Galway via Kinvarra Bay, to leave Sixpence for a trip home again. But about Kinvarra. I'd like to say that Sixpence met up with a bunch of hookers....! Well she did. Kinvarra was hosting a fleet of Galway Hookers - magnificent bluff bowed working boats who raced very competitively and with great skill in the shallow waters of the bay, and up the creek to Kinvarra, where we anchored and watched the sport at close quarters. Our marina manager at Rossaveal, Pdraig, took several trophies and was delighted to find us in the pub at Kinvarra, and we made more friends that night. (Somehow, the fact that we and Sixpence made the effort to get to places off the beaten track seemed to endear us to our Irish hosts – and we were truly endeared with them).

In Galway marina Sixpence met Hiawatha, a Norwegian flagged Ballad owned by a Belgian skipper, Caroline, who was sailing single handed for Portugal. We bumped into Caroline several times along the way south and finally in Kinsale, before we went east to complete our circuit and she headed south for the Isles of Scilly.

Anyway, returning from the UK to Galway, we headed first out to the Aran Islands and Kilronan Harbour, where we hired cycles and visited some of the spectacular fortifications which are a

major tourist draw in the islands. The following day was to be a long 67mile leg to Smerwick Harbour, on the Dingle Peninsula (running out of superlatives but will plump for spectacular surroundings including the Three Sisters – take note Three Sisters if you



should read this). For much of the way we were followed by our friends Donal and Clare in their Ovni Lady Belle, though they continued onwards to Valentia.

The next morning, motoring out of Smerwick harbour with the main up, we had that disconcerting



loss of power associated

with rope fouling the prop. But we also had that – “well she’s a Ballad so we can just sail out of this problem” type of feeling. And tacking back into the harbour we pulled in neatly alongside a fisherman’s punt, and managed to dislodge a big lump of rope and get going again. Taking the inner passage through the Blasket Sound and the Blasket Islands offshore, we headed for Dingle Harbour. Arriving at the entrance, we found it crowded with tripper boats, but we were focussed on making our entry, so only briefly caught sight of Fungi, the bottlenose dolphin, loping past us just a few feet away. Dingle has built an entire industry around this famous creature, but we’re not sure what happens when he pops his fins. He’s been a fixture for more than 30 years now.

Dingle Bay is large and deep, but with very little decent shelter, so we sailed across to Valentia Island and the harbour and village of Knightstown, built by the Knights of Kerry – the Fitzgeralds.



We had

no idea (thought it was Porth Kurnow), that this is where the first transatlantic cable was successfully laid across to Hearts Content on Newfoundland’s East coast. More gales and a bouncy time in the harbour, but we enjoyed the walking and visiting the tiny museum in Knightstown and the old lighthouse on Cromwell point. It’s now 31 August and we set off from Knightstown in a 25 knot

North-westerly to sail round Valentia into Kenmare



River (a bay really) passing between Valentia and the Skellig Islands. Luke Skywalker spent sometime on Skellig Michael, as *Star Wars* fans will know. We ran on into the bay, to one of our favourite harbours – Sneem, with its stunning wooded surroundings and colony of seals.

After two nights there, we

sailed further on up the Kenmare to Darrynane, and about as far as you can go before running out of depth. The downside was that we had then committed ourselves to a long beat – and it was a stonking beat – 20 miles back out to get round into Bantry Bay, taking the shortcut through Dursey Sound under the cable car.

Castletownbere is a large and very busy fishing port, and you drop your hook in a small triangle of mud away from the fish quays – so not much concession for yachties, but welcome shelter nonetheless. The town is pleasant and busy, and we had a lovely afternoon in McCarthy's bar listening to music. Just off Castletownbere is Bere Island, a large inhabited island with a welcoming



marina at

Lawrence Cove. Strategically important to the Brits to protect their fleet, it has a number of Martello towers and post Napoleonic fortifications, and these enhance what is a popular walking destination and justifiably so. Moving on and around Mizen Head, we headed to another old favourite, which is Crookhaven on the West side of Long Island Bay. From there we sailed East along the bay, with the Fastnet Rock offshore, to another favourite haunt in Roaring Waters Bay, anchored in splendid solitude close to Kilcoe Castle, owned by Jeremy Irons and Sinead Cusack.

We know the West Cork coastline very well. And as much as we would love to have stayed, we pressed onto Kinsale, with the coastline changing rapidly from mountains and rugged uplands, to cliffs and more groomed farmland. The next morning we set off on a windless, sunny day and headed into Cobh Harbour and up river into the heart of Cork City to the City marina - a single pontoon but with plenty of space.



Here we were able to wander the

city centre, go to the lively English Market, visit the butter museum (should be called the Kerrygold museum), and of course stop in Rory Gallagher place. He lived and is buried in Cork.... "yes, we knew that" you say. On our final day we had a lovely evening and delicious 'salmon en croustade' with Kate/Catherine who welcomed us to her home city. Back downriver, we stayed a night in Crosshaven in the Royal Cork Yacht Club marina. Mentally you raise a quizzical eyebrow at a Royal yacht club in the Republic, but it's a fine and very welcoming club, with no airs and graces (but then this is Ireland), and is the oldest yacht club in the world. Ah, but we pressed on, with another long leg to Dunmore East at the entrance to Waterford River, where we tied up on the pontoon behind the pilot as instructed by the HM – Deirdre Lane (first female HM we met). We spent long enough in Dunmore East to have a long chat with Elaine who ran the fish shack and had trained with RS in Padstow. The Irish are fond of the Fword and she delivered a volley on the subject of Brexit! Others we spoke to on Brexit were more modulated, but all saw it as nothing less than a tragedy and potentially a catastrophe for Ireland. Oh, and by now the obligatory Ballad photo



– this time at Dunmore East Sailing Club.

We then motored the 10 miles or so up the River Suir to Waterford. And the following morning did the Waterford crystal tour just before the cruise ship passengers flooded in, and it was fascinating to watch each individual stage of glass making and to chat with the highly skilled and

enthusiastic craftsmen. When they say handmade – it absolutely is. There is another river, the Barrow, which branches northwards to New Ross, another 10 miles inland. You pass through wonderful countryside, and make an entertaining entrance to the river, where they open the rail bridge to let you in (and out). Half way up, we suddenly went "What the hell's that? That ain't on the chart!". They were nearing completion of a magnificent road bridge over the Barrow (EU money we said!). New Ross likes to make it clear that the Kennedys came from here, and that JFK visited in 1963. And so, naming the New Ross by-pass bridge the "Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Bridge"





seems a bit of a shoo-in.

Early the next morning, just before dawn, we awoke to thick fog and the knowledge that we needed to get going, as we had fixed a time for the rail bridge opening. Eyeball navigation was challenging to say the least, and we played dot to dot with the channel markers and were thankful for the chart plotter and the echosounder, and Katie's sharp eyes.

But we made it without incident and carried on down river and out to sea, to round our last headland in Ireland – Hook Head - sailing the final 12 miles to cross our track at the entrance to Kilmore Quay. Nicky gave us a great welcome, and when we came to pay the berth fee for Kilmore Quay and I said we owed a night for New Ross, he said “\*\*\*\* New Ross!!” and charged us only for one night.

Oh, and I had a long chat with Jacky who was in a wheelchair on the pontoon.....extolling the virtues of his old Ballad.

And so we will too.....

Mike-Bravo-Golf-Alpha-2 Out.

### **Final Adventure with Sixpence to A Coruna July 2020**

In March 2020, we completed the purchase of our Moody 425 Seize the Day, who at the time of writing is lying at berth 7E, pontoon L, Rubicon Marina, Lanzarote. Anticipating that we would be the owners of two boats, we had spent the latter part of the winter and early spring preparing Sixpence for sale, and this continued into June as lockdown restrictions eased.

We placed an advert on the Apollo Duck website, with the intention of selling her privately without an agent. I had also placed a notice on the Jester Challenge website signposting the ad for possible challengers. Quite quickly she attracted attention including a skipper of one of the recently returned Clipper Race yachts, who knew that Sixpence absolutely met his needs for single handed ocean sailing. He had hoped to take part in the 2020 Jester Challenge to the Azores, but of course that plan was scuppered. Several others contacted me, but were understandably reluctant to travel.

Then on the 21<sup>st</sup> of June I had an email from Ricardo, in Galicia, Spain - A Coruna in fact. He was keen to come and see Sixpence, but at the time we didn't know when travel restrictions would start to ease. A flurry of emails and phone calls followed. The latter conducted through his English-speaking son, also Ricardo. On the 30<sup>th</sup> he mailed saying “The train arrives at the Lostwithel (sic) station at 10

July 06.30. I only have a one-way ticket !!!". Right.....well we can't launch Sixpence until 18<sup>th</sup> at the earliest because you can only get downriver from St Winnow in the 3 or 4 days before springs. And you say you have a one-way ticket? Then.. "I've changed my flight see you at Lostwithiel on the 17<sup>th</sup> at 1045."

Well, through the various phone calls and emails, we established that Ricardo was a sailor, but almost exclusively in dinghies, and so he asked: could I help him sail Sixpence to A Coruna? Yes of course I could. He also mentioned that he had been a signals officer in the merchant navy, and in response to my question directed at his son "does Ricardo get seasick?". No, he was an officer in the merchant navy etc.... Clearly I am leading up to something here – more of that later.

He arrived, and we both knew instantly we were going to get along, despite his broken English and my nil Spanish. And his first sight of Sixpence clearly cemented his feeling that she was the right boat for him.



On Saturday we launched and pottered down to a pontoon in Fowey, stopping to chat to fellow Jester Challenger Tom on Spooky, on a visitors' buoy in Wiseman's. Ricardo then spent his first night on board, and the following day we headed to Force 4 in Plymouth to get lifejackets and other safety gear – "The Spanish don't wear life-jackets". No they don't we can confirm!

On Monday I joined Sixpence and we carried out a rig check and tension (using the folding rule method). There were several other boats on the pontoon, Liberty Jane we knew from Newlyn, and Maja owned by Richard and Sue. Ricardo remarked on how friendly the English are, and our banter included repeatedly saying "'morning, 'morning, 'morning!". Shortly before we were due to cast off and start our shakedown to Helford and Falmouth, Richard sidled around with a box and offered it to Ricardo say "I can't use this with my rig, you have it." – it was a Loos rig tensioning gauge.

We set off at 1400 in bright sunshine and a NNE'ly F4 to 5. Perfect! Ricardo settled into the helming straightaway, and I crewed. Our plan was to have three days pottering around the Falmouth area, setting off on the Thursday for A Coruna. I had planned that each day we would try something different in terms of boat handling, but also leave time to explore on land (Ricardo is a keen hiker), and for me to fix stuff that got shaken down. So at Helford Ricardo took the helm to steer through the many boats in the river and to find and pick up a mooring buoy. No problems, and efficiently executed. In the morning, first thing, we did the circular walk from the village out to Frenchman's creek and back round. At midday, in a light southerly, we headed out hoisting sails as we cleared the moorings, and practised putting a reef in. Once clear of the entrance to the river, and heading towards Pendennis, we hoisted the cruising chute.

I planned to go up river past Old Harry ferry and practice some coming alongside manoeuvres on the long pontoon by Ruan Creek. So there we practiced for about an hour, using the spring lines to spring off or hold alongside under engine. All went well, and better still there were no onlookers or other yachties eager to take our lines. Then back down to St Mawes where we set the anchor and had a very comfortable stay overnight and did the stunning walk to St Just around to Percuil and back. Before setting off for the short crossing to the Yachthaven, we made some adjustments to the self steering gear which hadn't been working properly on Monday when I tried it, and tested it out under sail, and once satisfied we left St Mawes. Arriving at the Yachthaven, I called them up on Ch12 to let them know where we were berthing on the East end of the North pontoon. A few minutes later a 33 footer arrived to trying to find space – there was a 45 Jeanneau in front of us and I thought we could swop positions and make some space for us two smaller boats behind (no rafting of course). So I called the hut again and they concurred. A bit of shuffling later and we were all alongside, and moments later the grateful owner of the 33 footer handed Ricardo a bottle of red wine in thanks. He's definitely returning to Cornwall!!

As we were due to leave for A Coruna the following morning I thought I'd better check the bilge pump...lots of air and no water. Fortunately I had spares, and actually, after the usual contortions in the starboard cockpit locker, found 3 bolts missing which I replaced and all was well. Thursday arrives dull and drizzly, and I decide we will need the running lights, but first the port and then the starboard light were flickering in and out. "Sorry Ricardo, we're going to have fix this." I couldn't trace the fault and managed to find Kevin Green – Marine Electrical Services, who was able to get to the boat later in the day. It was a faulty switch on the panel, so an hour and £50 later we had

running lights. I was feeling a bit frazzled and decided a good night's rest would be good and so we set off at 0620 the following morning in a light southwesterly.

At around 1245, we were both in the cockpit and Ricardo said he would prepare us some lunch. We are now about 3 miles South of the Lizard, and feeling a bit of swell. Bending down to get some bread out of a drawer, I saw Ricardo hesitate and moments later rush for the heads. And then a few minutes later, not making it to the cockpit, he lay in his bunk and there, poor chap he stayed. I think at that point I did propose turning back as we had 3 or 4 days of southwesterlies before the wind veered North. But he was determined we carry on. And so I settled into a familiar Jester routine of beating out of the Western Approaches in a fresh southwesterly, setting a waypoint to pass outside of the Ushant TSS.

During the remaining day and through the night the wind picked up and the seas with it. I decided to extend a southerly tack to pass to the east of the TSS and work up inside it, giving the option to head inshore to Camaret. Ricardo remained very poorly and was struggling to take on any fluids or nutrition and seasick tablets came straight up again. At 1400, with only an hour's favourable stream left and Camaret about 25 miles distant, I altered course. Ricardo felt we should carry on as he thought we were well outside the TSS, but I explained that I had changed our route during the night in case his condition worsened and we needed to make land.

So Camaret it was. The wet and breezy weather passed through and we had a very pleasant sail picking up a visitors mooring to the south of Port Vauban at 2030. Well fed and well rested we set off the following morning at 0835 in a light southerly and sunshine heading for the Raz de Sein. I had not done the usual calculations about timing to pass the Raz around slack water, and if necessary we could have passed outside the Ile de Sein, but we had a south-going stream and the Raz was very benign. An altogether happier Ricardo with La Vielle and La Plate in the background, and heading towards Biscay and.....Well, I did say 4 days of southwesterlies.



And yes, this window of fine weather was short-lived as another warm front passed through and by 0100 the following morning, the wind was SSW and F5 to 6. I wasn't going to try out the quip that this was 'Ballad weather'! Ricardo gamely took the watches he could but was feeling very poorly again, and I urged him to stay in his berth and keep warm, and drink when he could. We were on a southeasterly course tracking along the edge of the continental shelf; not where I wished to be but for the time-being I wanted the option to head to the French coast. I was also confident that the wind would eventually veer northerly and we would be able to set a course direct to A Coruna. Sure enough, at 1600 on the 27<sup>th</sup> I recorded "skies clearing, wind veering, dolphins". We passed ahead of two long-liners heading out into the deep ocean.

From time to time Katie and I would exchange texts using our trusty Yellow Brick, and Ricardo's children and siblings could also track our position. We were on AIS and Ricardo was tracking the odd freighter and fishing vessels working along the edge of the deep water on his tablet. Quite often it would dip out though, and we eventually tracked that down to running two plotters at the same time. As it veered the wind eased and I hoisted the cruising chute.



It's the 28<sup>th</sup> and I calculated our ETA as 1330 local time (1230 UT). Our course was now a steady 223T and our next waypoint at Cabo Prior was bearing 223T. We were making good progress with about 120miles to go. In the evening as the wind picked up again and veered NE, I dropped the cruising chute and poled out the genoa. Ricardo took the evening watch and I went below to get some rest. Coming on watch I found the wind had veered further and took the pole down and brought the genoa across. In the early hours the wind piped up to a F6 and I put 2 reefs in the main and took

some rolls in on the genoa. We had reached the acceleration zone that sits to the NE of A Coruna on the NW corner of the Iberian Peninsula. Lights from Pta de la Estaca de Bares and Cabo Prior were visible and the land took shape in the morning under the overcast skies.

But by 1100 the sun was out and we could make out the breakwater and very prominent Port Control building, and the Torre de Hercules – the world's oldest working lighthouse apparently. Ricardo took the helm for the final run in to the Marina with his family there on the quay to welcome him home.



With Sixpence safely secured we went to his apartment, showered and headed for a pulperia and delicious polpo, and a beer or two. The following day I was booked on a Ryanair flight back to Stansted....and 14 days quarantine (thanks Boris for sneaking that one in while we were half way across Biscay!) But we had time for Ricardo to show me his city and a fine place it is too with a spectacular sea frontage. So finally.....

Goodbye *Sixpence*, see you again or should I say *Adios Sixpence hasta pronto*! Because I'm sure we will, though, we may know you as *Marisol*.

Chris

November 2020



## **UK Ballad Association 2020/21 Subscription request**

The rates (agreed at the AGM) are £6 per boat. There is also a category for past owners of Ballads who wish to remain in touch with the group, at £5.

Please can you actively respond to give me permission to hold details of your names, email addresses, postal addresses and telephone numbers, in addition to details of your boat. These will only be used for distributing newsletters, meeting information and notes, Championship information and Ballad product and clothing information.

I agree to my personal details being used by the Ballad Association Secretary, as described above: Name:

Boat name:

If you have the details of the new owners of your Ballad, it would be appreciated if these could be made known.

Please make cheques out to the UK Ballad Association and send (with this form) to Janie Smallridge at the address below:

The Willows

Ludwell Lane

Exeter

Devon

EX2 5AQ

Name.....

Address.....

.....

.....

Tel. No.....

E mail.....

Ballad Name.....

Ballad No.....

Sail No.....

Home Port.....

Please note the following change in my Ballad ownership details.....

.....



**Items for Sale**

Hank-on No 1 and No 2 Genoas:

Made by Sanders with original sail bags, the No 1 is virtually unused, and the No 2 has had significant, but light usage. Reasonable offers invited.

Contact Tim Clark on 07534 680305