

Cove Sailing Club Newsletter – May 2023

Commodore's Address

Dear members,

Finally, after a winter that did not know when to start and when to end, it's great seeing the club back to full strength and all elements afloat and having fun.

The club is growing quickly, and our challenge is ensuring all members stay engaged and enthusiastic. The committee has worked extremely hard to ensure all members are getting communications. Each club element has a dedicated WhatsApp group, and we will endeavour to publish a weekly quick club update. Please check your junk and spam emails to ensure you are getting them. The club is highly active on social media, which can also be a good source of news and upcoming events.

The marina is starting to fill up, and I would like to express the club's heartfelt thanks and acknowledgement to the dedicated group of members who look after it so diligently, all voluntarily.

We are incredibly proud of our marina, which has undoubtedly been the catalyst for the club's growth. Marinas, by nature, are both labour and financially challenging. Our goal is to extend the marina further to provide more club members berths and visiting berths, but our ultimate short to medium-term goal is to provide further protection.

I would encourage all members who have any ideas or skill sets that could help us achieve our goals to reach out; no idea is too small. Any future lottery winner will be guaranteed complete confidentiality 😊

Our dinghy sailing is thriving, and a tremendously good headache for the club is how we accommodate the new influx of boats; to date, members have stepped up and are finding great solutions for storage. The club embarked on a boat ownership model some years ago, and it's great to see the fruits of this showing so strongly.

We still have several club boats for members' use, and I would like to thank the parents and juniors for keeping them ship shape.

Please do feel free to come down on Wednesday nights and watch the sailing and meet up with members. The marina will be open, which is a great way to get fresh air and socialise.

Our sailing club has significantly benefitted from our new members, and I would encourage every member to get involved as much as possible, identify a club project and go for it; A nice project would be to enhance our clubhouse and outside decking area further to have a warm welcoming space for all to enjoy. (over to you)

As a club we would like to encourage members to try and facilitate new sailors on boats during the summer. Friday nights are an excellent way to do this. We will shortly set up a crew available list.

Financially the club is continuing to meet all its obligations, but significant capital outlays are still some time away; we will apply for all grants possible, But now we must challenge members to be creative.

We have a jam-packed summer ahead between training, racing, cruising, and Club events ashore and afloat, and it is hoped to arrange some pop-up club trips around the harbour when we get a settled patch of weather.

Huge thank you as always to Cathy for giving the club this fantastic outlet to share our experiences.

I am always available to chat, so please reach out, and have a fantastic summer.

***Dominic Losty
Commodore***

Mixed Dinghy Sailing Report

By Joe Keenan

The mixed dinghy sailing took to the water in April with many of the sailors returning from the group of last year. The fleet has expanded with the addition of privately owned lasers in addition to the regular club boats of four Picos and a Feva.



The club was also endowed with a generous gift of the Hennessy wooden boat. This has launched under the stewardship of an experienced group of skippers and has been extremely useful in taking out our less experienced sailors and parents who wish to have a taste of sailing.



We are also in the process of getting the Omega "Donkey" ready for the water and this will be a great boat for our teenagers to enjoy and stretch their sailing abilities. Our sessions begin with a team briefing for the sailors and safety boat crew and we are then ready to launch.



We have met with a variety of conditions this year including being becalmed on a spring tide, and being enveloped by sudden fog when we were joined by the Pont Aven coming in from Roscoff (here I come blowing one!) and our sailors and safety boat crew rose courageously and safely to the challenge.



Our more experienced sailors have joined the Wednesday evening racing with a firm commitment to present a formidable challenge to the Rankins.



We are hopeful that our less experienced sailors will gain sufficient confidence to join the second league in July and August.



All sailors are preparing for their ISA Basic Skills level and we include some coaching for this in the weekly briefing.



This briefing however takes on a much wider spectrum as we discuss elements of seamanship and the local effects of the tides and harbour activities.



The group acts as a fulcrum within the club, ready to take on new members or those progressing from the optimist group,

helping sailors with an interest to gain more experience in the safety boats, and providing with the Hennessy boat an opportunity for families to consider whether they might wish to join the growing fleet of Rankin ownership.



Our concept has always been fun, safety, and learning but one of the aspects that became apparent at the end of last year's sailing was the comradeship that grew among the sailors which we hope will be repeated again this year.



On a personal note, I cannot thank enough all the parents, shore crew, safety boat drivers, boat menders and skippers, the club, and all that help in many innumerable roles for their continued support. We can only continue to get better as a team.

Optimist Class Report and Plan for 2023 Sailing Season

***By Carl Jackson,
Class Captain***

The Optimist group started our 2023 sailing season early, with a plan made at the members forum in January, to host a boat rigging session in March with a goal to have our first sail before the start of April.

We had several new members taking ownership of their first Optimist and even for the experienced sailors it takes quite a while to tie on their sails for the first time during the season.

Sailing has to be unique as a sport in that the beginner Optimist sailboat is probably one of the most complicated boats the child will ever rig.

It has stumped more than a few experienced sailors when they first went at it in anger before their child went out for their first sail.



First time Optimist sailor, Conal Kirwin in full flight.

Holding true to our plan we had our first Sunday Optimist sail on the 26th of March under absolutely gorgeous sunny skies. Near ideal conditions for a first sail and we were incredibly excited to have our Performance Coach, Ethel Bateman, back with us for a second year of coaching. Ethel

is no nonsense, and no boat enters the water without all the rigging first being inspected and the sailor (and their parents) shown how to correct any rigging issues like how many twists to put in the Bling Line to hold the boom in the right shape for the prevailing wind conditions. She is very good.

Our group hosted several sails in April to give our sailors a chance to get their sailing form back. Our tried and tested format is that our Senior sailors will head off with Ethel and the appropriate safety boats for Paddy's Point or around Haulbowline to get the best wind conditions and the beginner sailors stay close to shore at Whitepoint. This provides the ability to focus our Performance coach on improving our older sailors skills while giving our beginners a chance to learn to sail under relatively sheltered conditions.



Optimist League racing off Whitepoint.

Our big event of the sailing season is always the IODAI Munster Championships. This year, "The Munsters" are held on the first of July. The challenge for our group was to host a sailing camp before The Munsters but primary schools don't finish till the end of June and our Performance Coach requested time off to study for her Junior Cert.

The solution was to host our camp during the May Bank holiday weekend. We had 12 sailors participate, great parent/guardian/grandparent support (a well-oiled machine after 4 camps in the last year and a half) and Harry was with us to keep the safety boats in operation for all of the sessions. The kids had about 5 hours a

day on the water, eating lunch while drifting around Cork harbour on their boats or stopping off at Spike Island. We opened up camp this year to MBSC and were pleased that three of their sailors joined us for the weekend. We finished off the camp with a very light wind race from Spike to CSC Marina and used the event to kick off our summer league racing for the year. So despite being the youngest, the Optimist group had the first CSC sanctioned league race of the season.



Great group of kids out on the water having fun.

Going forward for the rest of the season our group will continue to host a sailing session each week and keep our league racing going at the end of each training session. We have a core group of Senior sailors now who are very competitive and it's anyone's guess who gets their name on the trophy at the end of the year. Watch this space!



A great group of kids, coaching staff and parents make the CSC Optimist group possible.

Dinghy Park and Boat Storage



Dinghy Park boat storage fees are now due and can be paid to Joe Kennan directly.

Please ensure that you put your sticker on the transom of your boat.

Unfortunately, boats that are not paid by June 1st will be removed from the park.

All money collected from the storage fees will be spent directly on the dinghy park and junior sailing.

Dinghy €80.00

More than two Dinghies €60.00 each

Optimist €50.00

More than one Optimist €40.00 each

First Cruise of the Season! By Cruiser Class Captain Vince Donnelly

Oyster haven bound, Isandra iii slipped her lines in the city marina at 11:30. We had planned to depart the night before and take up our mooring in Lower Aghada but laziness set in and we decided to fight against the tide downriver the next day instead. It was a beautiful sunny morning which gave us very light winds from the SW. Not enough to sail unfortunately against the tide nonetheless we made our way under diesel wind.



Being the first sail since September last, there's always something unnerving. Low and behold, weaving through the moorings at Passage my steering completely jammed. With mooring balls dead ahead, I quickly put the engine into idle and that too decided to give up. Shouting at Danny to ready the anchor, while I tried to restart the engine and figure out what was happening with the steering. With that said the anchor was down and holding well. Somehow the steering fixed itself, and I'm not sure if I had caught something below water or what. After some quick checks to the engine, she seemed to run fine again but not perfect but alas we made it to the harbour entrance where we intercepted Eureka (Moody 36) coming out from East Ferry. She followed behind us under motor until we passed Roches Point at which point she opened her

sails up and took more of a southerly heading bearing off the wind, out towards the oil rigs. (Or what used to be)

After passing Myrteville I decided to open sails having picked up to about 8kts from the SSW and we had a nice abate, slow reach down to the Sovereigns making about 3-4kts.



We dropped anchor in 3m of water on the western shores of Oysterhaven. About an hour later Pat arrived on Eureka.

Shortly after that Midnight Trapper arrived, a trapper 28 with her motley crew, Cathal, Gareth & Glen. It would be their first sail of the season also, dusting off the cobwebs in preparation for our June trip planned for the Isles of Scilly.

The motley crew joined us on Isandra iii for a pre-BBQ aperitif. With that it was time to get ready and head ashore and start the BBQ. SY Martina arrived about that time, having saw the nice weather and not being able to deny the joys of the evening afloat. Midnight Trapper, was due to intercept with us and sail in company beneath Fort Camden but owing to some small delays they left about 40min behind Eureka and Isandra iii. None the less, they made excellent time, and they sailed all the way under broad reach from Camden beyond half way where they then lost the wind and turned on the motor, since it was an evening BBQ we were hosting and not breakfast the next day, this seemed wise!

All ashore, we had 3 BBQs burning, with an 80s play list filling in the background.

We cooked salmon, fresh monkfish from the English Market, burgers and sausages to name but just a few. Since it was the first outing of its kind, Isandra iii and crew (including our sausage dog) (and not the bbq kind) treated everyone to a magnum

Montsant, to wash down the food while Midnight Trapper shared some bubbles.



Of course, the conversation between all was very nautical to say the least, we did venture further from comfort and discuss all kinds of things eventually. And for one, was the upcoming trip to the Isles of Scilly in June, as well as proper flag etiquette. I think the conversation was born having spotted a white sail flag on the backstay of one of our four boats. No names mentioned of course! It was now getting dark so we lit a bonfire to keep us warm and provide us with some light. We were blessed by the lovely night, which was not cold whatsoever, but the ambiance of a fire made it very Scout like, and a somewhat glassy waters where our boats lay on anchor peacefully nestled the whole setting nicely.

After a bit of a singsong and a few jokes, it was time to head back and get some shuteye. A fabulous evening was had by all. Morning came and so did the typical Irish weather. Overcast and raining with quiet strong winds from the north. All forecast however, so everyone seemed prepared. SY Martina departed back for Cobh at 10am along with the tides and SY Eureka weighed anchor at 11:00

While the crew of Isandra iii served up a full Irish breakfast. Midnight Trapper left at 13:30hrs and Isandra iii followed shortly after at 14:00hrs.

A full main was hoisted by Isandra iii. That would later be realised as a mistake. Ploughing along with full main and 1 reef in the headsail, a steady 22kt northerly

drove us homeward bound over a flat sea. A strong gust at one point took us right over on our side and rounded me up. That was one way to shake out the winter cobwebs. Since the boat has only been used for accommodation in the previous 6 months while awaiting a new gearbox, all the little things I couldn't find all winter suddenly appeared below deck! Including some broken table wear. I wonder if I could turn my house upside down would I find all those little bits I so desperately lost over the years! Danny and the dog (Mr Coco, daschound) were not so impressed to say the least!

So, I decided another reef was needed and went about my duties. With 20-25kts blowing constant out of the north and a flat calm sea we barrelled back towards home at 6-7kts sometimes more. It seemed the foul tide made no impact with these conditions. "At least Yet"

Shortly later we passed Midnight Trapper to her port and she was flying a full headsail and eating up the water so we took the opportunity to snap a few pics.



We were hard on the wind entering the harbour and as we approached Myrteville, we dropped the headsail and engaged the assistance of the motor. It was a very slow passage from here all the way to the city but we made it in 4hrs in all despite pointing into a very foul tide. We tied up in the city about 18:00 and somewhere around 19:30 had a bite of dinner, it all seemed to end and suddenly it was Monday morning.

Thanks to all those who joined. Until next time!

Fifteen months in the sun!

***Mediterranean trip by the
O' Driscoll family on their yacht
Régál, July 2021 – Oct 2022***

PART ONE

- 1. The dream & plan**
- 2. Preparing for departure**
- 3. Cork to the Med in 3 months**
- 4. Winter home in Cartagena Oct 21 to April 22**
 - a. Trip weary and glad to be pausing
 - b. Home schooling in an historic town
 - c. Trips inland – skiing in Granada, Barcelona, Madrid

PART TWO

- 5. 6 months sailing in the Med – April '22 to Oct '22**
- 6. Finish in the South of France and sell the boat**

The dream & plan

You could say this all started back in 2006, when we got married and sailed out of East Ferry with my father Donal on his boat Ré Shuanta. We were leaving on our honeymoon, a one-year circuit of the North Atlantic. From Cork to the Canaries and westward with the ARC to the Caribbean for several months, and then home the following year via Bermuda and the Azores.

That great trip sparked the dream to one day make another trip of similar duration, hopefully with our own family.

In 2007 we bought our first boat, a Seal 22 'Sandpiper' from John Doyle. We had good fun around Cork Harbour on her, and then along came our crew.

So in 2013 we traded up to another local boat, a Scanmar 35 known as 'Abacist' which we renamed Rénuá. She was a far larger boat with a fore and aft cabin and we started to prepare her with an eye on our trip.

The years moved on and the children kept growing. It became obvious that space would be tight for a trip of any serious duration.

We're going to need a bigger boat!

So, we bought another Cobh boat in Oct 2019, a Beneteau Cyclades 43 called 'Hidden Ajenda' from Kevin O' Rourke. With 3 cabins, a large cockpit and a lot more space she was the ideal boat for the trip. We renamed her Régál and looked forward to leaving the following spring.

Preparing for departure...or so we thought

We replaced the rigging and the bow thruster, upgraded the ground tackle, new electrics AIS & VHF and much more.

Spring '21 and we were 6 weeks away from departure, arrangements made with schools and workplaces, all set to go. Or so we thought.

We all know what happened then, as Covid hit and the world locked down. Like many other people, our hopes and dreams went into cold storage for a year. While it was very disappointing at the time, on reflection we got to know the boat better and also fixed items like faulty windlasses which would have caused us greater problems abroad.



Cork to Cartagena in 3 months

In Spring '21 vaccines were being rolled out across Europe and we were itching to go. With Ruby aged 12 and Colm 10 it felt like now or never.

On the 12th July we left Cork Harbour, bound for Camerac-sur-Mer in Brittany, a voyage of 48 hours or so.

Our first evening at sea

We have lovely sunshine and are motor sailing. Several pods of common dolphins come bow-riding and bidding us farewell as we watched Ireland fade to our stern in a beautiful sunset. When the night finally comes the sky is full of stars.

Day Two

Today is a very different day to yesterday. It is overcast and there is no wind. From the early morning the sea swell has been gradually increasing and the conditions are rolly. This is a day that just has to be endured. Ruby and Colm feel seasick. Ronan and I are tired after several shifts of night watch. The rolling prevents anyone from getting proper sleep and never allows the children to forget their queasy tummies for too long. We get some distraction from 'eye spy' which is made very challenging when the item spied must be outside the boat. We are in a great big fishbowl with only sea and sky and yet there was plenty of spying to be done. Colm does some great helming before dinner.

We go through two traffic separation schemes around the Scillies during day light without much to report. The larger Ushant Traffic Separation Zone is much busier and we are crossing it diagonally at night time. The north going lane is full of ships with one following quickly behind another so it is hard to find a gap long enough to cross. Ronan and I go on watch together and pick the best spot to cross at, which meant travelling down through the separation zone for a few miles. The AIS is incredibly useful as it gives all the details of each ship including the speed they are travelling at and how soon and how close you will come to it. We were going to come very close to one ship Torpo. Ronan made contact and Torpo agreed that we would pass in front of him. It is an exciting and nerve-wracking experience and when we are safely out of the TSS Ronan is delighted to turn in after nearly 6 hours on watch.

We are so happy to arrive in France this morning. We have our first family sea passage done. We tie up at the marina in Camerat Sur Mer and have champagne and eggs to celebrate. We are so proud of Ruby and Colm. The lack of movement on the boat and the feeling of



stillness is a sensation we all really appreciate.

Sunshine – heading south through the Raz de Sein

After passing through the Raz de Sein we continue our passage from Camaret to the îles de Glenan. We pass Phare D'Eckmuhl, the lighthouse at Penmarch - 'gateway to the sun'. We share our anchorage in the Glenans with about 70 other boats. We can see the other Glenan islands from here and there are boats everywhere. There are so many masts of yachts at anchor, we can't count them. There are day trippers on sail and motor boats. And finally there is the Glenan sailing school with dingy's, catamarans and windsurfers out on the water and on the beaches on almost every island. The other big population in the Glenans, aside from sailors, is seagulls. The weather is hot, the islands are low lying and full of white sandy beaches. The water is clear and shallow. This is what we have been looking forward to for so long. Nous sommes arrivé.

Brittany to Galicia

We have decided we will make our passage to Spain on Monday as there is a weather window. We would love to have more time in France but if we are to get into the Mediterranean before winter we have to push on and get further south. This is a jam-packed weekend with passage-planning, dingy-repairing, provisioning, refuelling, 5 loads of Laundry, car rental, stocking up in decathlon and two trips to take in the sights of the old town of Concarneau.

Another 52 hours, some rough and bouncing

We say goodbye to the lovely Port la Forêt, turn on our engine and put up the sails. We have more than 50 hours of passage to make across the Bay of Biscay. Donal O Driscoll has given us many wise words over the years and they frequently come to mind and guide us. His advice on passage making is make it as fast as is comfortable. Weather and conditions can change on passage and in the Bay of Biscay there is nowhere to go but through it. Based on this we leave the engine on, while we sail and make 7 knots rather than slowing back to 5 knots without it. This passage, like our last, is rolly. The kids are dosed up with seasick medication and yet still feel a bit queasy and sleepy. They are troupers and always perk up with any bit of distraction. They can't read or write because of the motion but they have podcasts downloaded and it's lovely to see

them laugh away to themselves when they are wearing their headphones.

When the first night is turning into the second day on passage, the wind comes up and there are squalls and dark clouds about. We put two reefs in and the boat settles back down and is comfortable on her course again. Colm is up with me when I see the blows from a Whale in front of us. I think she is sleeping because the 4 blows come from the same spot. I bear away to Port and as we come closer her huge back and fin come up and before she dives down. I hold my breath until I am sure we and she are out of harms way. I let out a 'holy

We continue on our journey through the vast infinity pool, which is how Ruby describes where we are. Hour after hour all we see is sea and a 360-degree horizon. The swell is dropping by the hour, and we all welcome the reduction in roll and the improvement in sleep. At 8am on day three, Colm declares 'Land ahoy' - He is the first to spot the Spanish Coast, dead ahead. As we get closer the heat comes up and we have a sun -filled 7 hours before we drop our anchor in Cedeira.

The four of us jump off the boat for a swim- it feels amazing to have arrived in Spain.

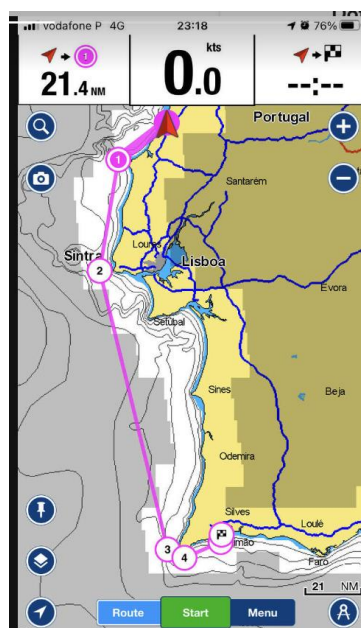
It is so lovely to wake up at anchor and smell the eucalyptus. We are surrounded by hills that are covered in forests of eucalyptus and pine. At the foot of these hills are long sandy beaches and pretty towns.

We spend the next several weeks enjoying the Rias of Galicia and eventually making an 11 hour passage from Baiona to Porto. From there we are making hops south along the Portuguese coast, from Figuera de Foz to Nazare and around Cape St. Vincent to the Algarve

We motorsail south from Figueira da Foz and have a geography lesson as Regal is coming into Nazare. We examine the charts of the area and know that we will sail right over the underwater canyon that creates the perfect big wave that surfers from all over the world come here for. We are within a mile of the coast and our depth reader jumps for 20 meters depth to 60 meters to 95 to 150 meters to no reading as it is too deep. Within a few minutes it starts come back to normal depths again. There are no big waves today thankfully but it is amazing to see the cliffs and the lighthouse

that feature in so many of the surfing videos and photos we have seen over the years. It is hard to imagine such huge waves being within sight of the town and marina. The big waves travel north and the canyon protects the town and marina to the south - this is a geography lesson for the kids at its best.

South to the Algarve



The Portuguese coast is littered with danbouys. These fishing markers are made from tall, thin sticks on a float with a tiny flag on top and ropes below the surface. Should we go over one, it could foul the propeller and disable the boat so that we would need to be towed into port for repairs.

In order to avoid this happening we have to avoid the danbouy and they are very hard to spot. Often it is easier for whoever is on watch to stand up at the bow on look out. On seeing a danbouy, they call back to the cockpit for the helmsman to alter course to port or starboard. Ruby and Colm are getting very good at this. We do some calculations and find that Nazare is the perfect place from which to start a 30-hour trip to Lagos. The weather is settled and there is practically no swell - you can't get better conditions than this if your priority is making Lego on passage. We round Cape St Vincent and the bottom of Portugal and travel the beautiful Algarve coastline from Sagres. We anchor off the big beach in Lagos, jump in for a swim and then have french toast to celebrate our safe arrival.



On Danbouy watch in fog and pyjamas



Orcas on my mind

The entrance into Lagos is memorable because the footbridge between the town and the Marina has to be opened to allow the boat through. Ronan and I came under this bridge once before when we arrived in 14 years ago with Donal, Fergal, Neasa and Kevin O' Connor from the Azores on Re Shuanta on the return Atlantic Rally. We are brimming with memories again and the kids indulge our reminiscing. There are ARC boats here now preparing to sail to the Canaries before they cross the Atlantic. We see the lovely camaraderie between these boats and their shared excitement of fulfilling the dream. Lagos is lovely and there are a number of factors that lead us to decide to stay here until Donal and Margaret (a.k.a Nana and Grandad) fly out to visit in a week's time. The most unusual factor being the presence of Orcas in the bay. There is a small group of Orcas who in the last year or so have got a taste for ramming sailboats. It just so happens that they are in this area now. Two Yachts are towed into the boatyard after being attacked. They target sailboats rudders with the apparent

intention of disabling the boat. It seems to be a game they play with yachts under 15m in length and so they would like the look of us. I have watched videos on YouTube of these encounters and it looks like a very unpleasant and frightening experience. The fright I got when I saw the Risso Dolphin's off Figueira da Foz gave me a tiny insight into what crew must feel like when the Orcas come. There have been reports of an attack lasting two hours and one I read about where the Orcas appeared to try and push two yachts together. This does not make for good bedtime reading when you are sailing in these parts. After a lovely few days in Lagos, all 6 of us sail along the coast to Ilha Culatra, not far from the border with Spain.

We are on our way to Ilha da Culatra in the Ria Formosa Lagoon which protects Faro from the open sea. It is a place we have often heard about since Margaret and Donal spoke so highly of it when they were sailing in this area a few years ago. It is a sand island with a few fishing villages with shops and restaurants but no cars - only tractors and quad bikes to get through the sand roads.

The entrance to Ria Formosa is boiling with tide, I take a video of it to try and capture the experience which feels a little like white water rafting. Once we are inside the breakwater things are calm and we take in our first views of the Island. The sky is so big here, the buildings are low and the landscape looks barren- it reminds me of an old western.

Back to Spain

We move to an anchorage near the entrance of the lagoon. We have a long trip ahead of us to arrive to Rota before dark. We leave lovely Culatra at dawn and with a swirl of tide we are spat out of the Lagoon at 9.5 knots. We have wind and with two reefs in the main we turn off the engine and have a glorious but unfortunately short-lived sail. The engine is turned back on as the wind moves around to our bow. When we are an hour away from Rota the clouds change and the wind strengthens to 25 knots- It's the Levant wind blowing up from Gibraltar. We spend several days in Rota, making day-trips to Cadiz and get to grips with the new reality of home schooling. We would all much prefer to be at the beach. We get there in the afternoons and have great fun watching helicopters go back and forth from the nearby

Spanish and American Naval bases.

The straits

We leave Rota at 8am in tandem with Yacht Allegrini heading for the Straits of Gibraltar. The weather suits to go through the Straits as the wind is slack and westerly. There is Easterly wind due in a few days' time and that can make the passage through the straits difficult. We are leaving Rota a little sooner than we might have liked but we prefer easy passage making - especially when we are passing Tarifa - the windiest place in Europe and on going on through the strait. It is lovely to have Yacht Allegrini for company and Helen and Steve stay in touch on VHF radio and phone during the day. They are ahead of us paving the way and alert us to any hazards- like the angling competition we have to dodge around. It is very exciting to see the first glimpse of another continent. Africa reveals herself much earlier in our journey than we were expecting. She appears just like any other headland we have seen on the horizon, in the haze of distance. As we move closer she becomes larger and more defined and we are certain it is herself and not just another bit of Spain. I don't know how many times I say 'That's Africa' over the hours that we have her in our sights -

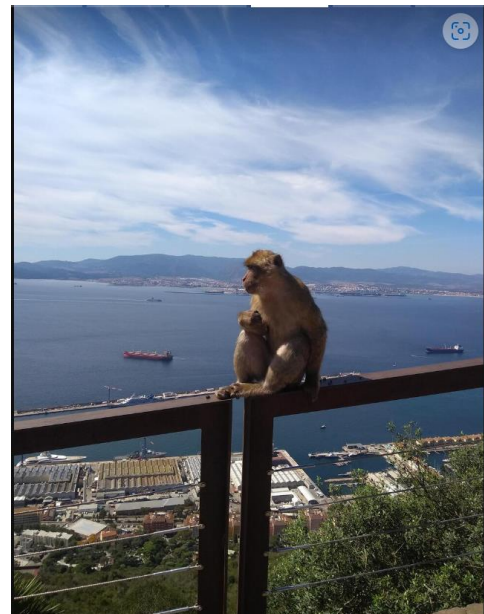
We have the sails up and are motoring, the increase in wind we are expecting never comes so the engine has to stay on. It helps having the Allegrini crew to share in this disappointment. The kite-surfers of Tarifa are having a rare day off as we motor past.

I continue to say 'that's Africa' as we round the corner and enter the straits proper- it is hard not to, as the Mountains of Morocco are unbelievably close. There are lots of ships in the straits but we are unruffled as they move in a predictable straight line in the traffic separation system. We stay outside of that and hug the Spanish coast, grateful we don't have to cross these shipping lanes. There are several 'Pan Pan' calls over the VHF radio during this passage and we see a few high speed rescue vessels, we assume these are for emigrants attempting the crossing. The advice given to sailing yachts should they come across a vessel in distress is to make a 'Pan pan' call but not approach under any circumstances. This makes for a sobering reflection and as we eat dinner in the sunshine.

We see Yacht Allegrini ahead of us turning to port - they are entering the bay inside the rock of Gibraltar, excitement is building as we will be there soon. It is a dramatic entrance; with the British rock looming to starboard, Africa astern of us and the Spanish bay is buzzing with shipping.

The sun has nearly set by the time we are at the Spanish Marina, La Linea, just over the border from Gibraltar. Steve and Helen are there to take our lines when we come into the pontoon. We are grateful to have connected with such lovely people and to have shared the experience of sailing through the straits of Gibraltar for the first time.

The Rock of Gibraltar



When we open the hatch and look outside this morning the rock of Gibraltar is there looking right back at us. It looks just like it does in all the pictures it is surreal to have it as the backdrop to our breakfast in the cockpit. We only have one day to see Gibraltar as we are leaving tomorrow morning. There is Easterly wind due to blow from Tuesday onwards so we want to get around the rock and further east before that kicks in. We are still in Spain so we put our walking shoes on and head for Britain. We skip past a tailback of cars waiting to cross the border and quickly realise this border is no joke and we have to go through two passport controls and pass by customs with our backpack full of water and sun cream. The road into Gibraltar passes through the airport and over the runway. When

a plane is due barriers close the road to cars and pedestrians just as like a railway level crossing. So we walk across the runway to get into the city. Gibraltar reminds Ronan of Australian cities - there is very much a British feel in the architecture of the old town but also the influence of the sun in the overall design. We spend an enjoyable and busy day seeing all the sights of Gibraltar, getting a taxi tour to all the hotspots like the viewing platforms and siege tunnels.

On the way down the hill we visit the World War 2 tunnels, the Moorish castle and a few more bits - we are bleary-eyed from sight-seeing. We hail a taxi but of course he can only drop us to the border so we walk the rest of the way home. When we look up at the rock now we see it differently - we can now see all the holes in it.

Into the Med



We leave the marina in La Linea just as the sun is beginning to rise over Gibraltar and the views are stunning. As we travel east around the rock the Spanish, British and African coasts are simmering in the sun and the sea is busy with shipping and wildlife - there is so much to look at. As we motor out of the bay we see a seagull narrowly escaping death as a big splash comes up from underneath him; a fish making a grab. We think it might have been a tuna as there is a lot of tuna fishing and tunny nets in this area. As we pass by several ships at anchor, a pod of bottle nose dolphins come over for a quick hello at our bow. They are so much bigger than the common dolphins we normally see. Common dolphins are around too and we see them several times - living up to the name they have been given. We see some flying fish zooming by and a tuna repeatedly jumping out of the

water. A 6ft blue shark sidles up to our bow and then shoots off as if he had got a terrible fright. Our most unusual sighting of the day is what look like giant translucent sea cucumbers who are drifting below the surface as we sail past. We pass more than a hundred of them; some are as small as your hand and others are like curled up snakes and over 10 feet long. We look them up on the google and find out they are Pyrozomes - These are not individual animals as they appear to be but each one is a colony of zooids who work in unison to propel the colony through the water. During our research we also learn that a Portuguese Man - o- war is similar - it's colony of zooids and not a jelly fish at all! What a great and unexpected biology lesson we all get. At mid-day a fog starts to come in and our circle of vision reduces gradually until we can hardly see 10 meters beyond our bow. We have our electronic charts and AIS on our phones so we know where we were going and what traffic is about- this reduces the fear factor that is normally associated with sea fog but the eeriness of it remains. We are in the thick of it for an hour before it slowly begins to dissipate and our field of vision expands until finally the coastline emerges blurry at first and then it sharpens in the sunshine. We arrive in Fuengirola marina and have our first experience of Mediterranean mooring. There are no finger pontoons so boats sit side by side in a row, their sterns tied off at a long pontoon and their bows attached to mooring lines which are out from the pontoon. Ronan reverses the boat back to the pontoon and the Marinero hands me the start of the mooring line. I walk with the line up along the boat, dropping muck everywhere as the ropes are filthy from lying in the marina water. I tie off the rope on the cleat at the bow. Job done, I turn around to see a big kerfuffle at the back of the boat. The Marinero and 4 other men on the pontoon are pushing our boat off and Ruby and Colm rushing for fenders while Ronan is on the helm and trying to throw and retrieve ropes. I had unwittingly tightened the wrong end of mooring rope and Regal's stern was pinned to the pontoon. No amount of men pushing her stern is going to fix this so we have to drop all the ropes and leave the berth to come in again. We have a large audience for our second attempt - there is nothing Boaties like more than to watch others make a mess of things. Some wonderfully disapproving looks come our way from people sipping wine in their cockpit.

The second attempt is better. We are securely tied up but all hot and bothered so we escape to the beach- A swim cools us down, erasing any bad feelings and we have a great evening in cafe Bing. We spend several days here and enjoy Rubys 13th birthday with a spot of parasailing.

Costa del Sol to the Costa Blanca



We journey eastward passing Benalmadena, Torremolinos and Malaga. These names are so familiar to me, yet their geographical location is only dawning on me as we sail along the Costa del Sol. We stop in at a little port we have never heard of called Puerto Caleta de Vélez as we hope to meet up with a friend from home. Unfortunately our little rendez-vous doesn't work out and we go for a meal and a walk around. The consensus is that our evening here is quite unremarkable. We leave the marina in the early morning to go east and then north to the Costa Blanca. As we sail out into the rising sun I wonder if we have been unfair in our judgement of this place. Our lack of enthusiasm might have very little to do with the town - whose name we have already forgotten. It might instead be a symptom of travel weariness. Our next port of call is Cartagena which is where will be spending the winter. We are looking forward to seeing it as we have heard nothing but good things about the city and it's marina. 30 hours at sea should get us there. We are in touch with the crew of Yacht Allegrini who are also in transit to Cartagena and it's no coincidence. The wind is forecast to pick up later today which should make for good sailing. Tomorrow evening when both Regal and Allegrini should be safely tied up at Yacht Port Cartagena, a strong northerly wind is due to blow.

Steve and Helen started this journey from a marina further east so they have a 40 mile head

start. For the moment neither boat has any wind as we motor along on a flat sea. Ahead of us we see some fins very close to each other moving in circles - we think it might be two blue sharks so we motor closer to get a better look. It is a big sunfish over a meter in diameter. He is swimming in circles lying on his side - That is why we could see several fins. I hope he is just having a good time in the sunshine, Colm and Ruby, who listen to every word their Auntie Clare, the vet says, determine that the unusual circling behaviour is due to an inner ear infection. We see some flying fish skimming the water and as the day goes on it becomes very hot in this October sunshine. We use the shower at the back of Regal to cool down.

A WhatsApp message from Steve says their wind has filled in and shortly we feel it and roll out the headsail. It doesn't last long and soon we roll it in again as the sail is only flapping about. We roll it in and out several times during the day, the wind that is forecast seems to be delayed or maybe it won't show up at all. We see several ships to our starboard as we motor between the coast and the traffic separation zone at Cabo de Gata. When day turns to night we are a lot closer to land than we are used to. It is disconcerting as there are so many lights visible on the coast to our port and there are lights from shipping to our starboard. There are red, green, white and yellow dots shining or flashing in the darkness. It is hard to figure out what everything is and when you are heading towards these lights it is important to know what they are. The AIS and chart-plotter are a great help but there are some unidentified dots. We have a Father Ted moment when we can't tell if a white flashing light is small or just far away. We alter course to avoid it and now think it might have been a small light on a big tuna net. There is also light from phosphorescence. The normal water disturbance from the propeller turns into something magical as great big green bubbles belch out from our stern. Dolphins come and as they shot past towards the bow they have ribbons of green phosphorescence trailing behind them. The wind comes with the sunrise and we motor sail for the morning. The swell is increasing as well as the wind and we are impressed to meet Lasers as we approach the bay of Cartagena. When we arrive at our berth in Yacht Port, Helen and Steve are there with the Marinero to take our lines. The wind

continues to increase and when halyards are whopping around marina it is a comforting sound. We are glad to be tied up safely with friends close by in this lovely place.

A week later and we are delighted with our new digs at Yacht Port Cartagena. There is a nice atmosphere around the marina. The staff who drive about on their golf carts are helpful and friendly.

The facilities here are great. We actually oohed and aahed when we went into the shower block. Ronan and I because it was all so new, clean and shiny. Colm and Ruby because of large open area with a big couch and very big Television. Colm was so excited about this new extension to our living space that he spent a whole afternoon there sorting all the books on the book swap shelf. He did a great job - he shelved the books according to Language to make it easier for everyone. This marina caters mainly for foreign boats as the locals use the neighbouring, more established yacht club. Many of the boats will stay for the winter. There is even a Cartagena liveaboard facebook group which we have joined.

The marina is in a gorgeous setting on the city's wide and beautifully maintained promenade complete with cream paving and palm trees. Just outside the marina along the promenade is the sub-aqua museum and El Batel Auditorium, both stunning modern buildings. Further along the promenade is the sailing school, diving centre and the cruise ship dock. A cruise ship arrives early every morning and leaves in the evening. Sometimes two come in, the second one docks directly behind Regal. It is like having a massive apartment block installed next to us overnight. We look up at the guests, high up on their balconies who are looking at us looking at them.

Beyond the cruise ship area of the promenade is the fisherman's pier and the naval museum. There is so much to see and wander around before even crossing the road to the city. When we do cross over we are in the pretty old quarter which is packed full of history that we are only beginning to explore. Ronan and I decide it is time to have a summit meeting about our travel plans. Up for discussion is the possibility of travelling on to see a few more places for another month before returning here to spend

the winter. We go to the cafe holding our cards very close to our chest only to find on turning them over that we have the same hand. We both want to stay here and not travel further until the spring time. There is the possibility that come January or February we will regret not having stayed out sailing for longer. We decide to risk the regret and go with how we feel now. Ruby and Colm are happy too. They have made a few friends and are enjoying the new routine here of school work in the morning and hanging out with their new pals in the afternoons.

Daily Life in Cartagena



It's beginning to feel like home here at the marina in Cartagena, The time is flying by as we settle into a daily routine of exercise in the morning followed by school until about one or two with varying degrees of interest, enthusiasm and frustration from all four of us. We have a tourist ticket for these two weeks that we sometimes use in the afternoons to visit some of Cartagena. When we aren't doing the tourist thing, Ruby and Colm spend the afternoons on their scooters zooming around the Sub Aqua Museum building with their pals. There is a bit of a turn over with friends as many boats are still on the move. Several of the boat kids we meet are destined for the Caribbean. The British live-a-boards we meet who are staying in the Mediterranean also can't hang around for too long. As a consequence of Brexit they cannot stay in Europe for more than 90 days out of every 180. Some we meet, who have followed the dream of selling up and sailing now have to fly back to Britain and rent an apartment for 90 days. We are sorry when the crew of Alchemy leave as James's was a good pal of Colm and Ruby's and we had several lovely evenings with his parents Alex and Tom. There is a nice sociability on the marina and

people often stop by the boat and chat and there are invitations to coffee or drinks or dinner. It's so interesting meeting people from every corner and hearing how they have come to be here. We are all excited when we see a Japanese flag flying on yacht on the marina- we don't get to meet them but I do get a smile and a bow as they walk past. Evening time on board Régál is just like home - Dinner and wash up followed by negotiations about screen time and bed time.

To be continued. Part 2 in next edition of this newsletter.