



Sunrise over St Michael's Mount

Church. Hook is on the east side of the river and Crook on the other side of the river, with it's very small church. The second story is of the locals using a crook to hook wood over the wall from the king's land for their own use.

We saw our first wind farm at Tuskar Rock, which is the most easterly point of Ireland. The first gas rigs we saw were before Peterhead, lit up at night, enormous and quite close in-shore. We also saw quite a few when crossing the Wash – they appeared out of nowhere, large and ghostly like giant crane flies.

Other landmarks were: Rattray Head, sticking out of sand dunes and in such shallow water. Flamborough Head then Cromer and the narrow channel through



Gas Rig North Sea

the wind farm, off Great Yarmouth with its helter-skelter and fun fair. North and South Foreland – how white are the cliffs – especially after the sand of the Wash and the limestone/sandstone of Yorkshire. Dungeness, Beachy Head, Selsey Bill, Portland Bill, Dartmouth Day Beacon – a familiar sight which really signified that we were nearly home.

The dolphins were special whenever we saw them. The pod between Eigg and Skye were smaller than those in the North Sea and more acrobatic, doing somersaults and leaping out of the water. They stayed for 20-30 minutes. The ones in the Moray Firth were larger and more sedate and stayed with us for three hours or more.

When we left, I had four aims, which some may say were a bit random but feature aspects near to my heart. The order is irrelevant because each had its own significance: to sail around Ardnamurchan Point, to meet up with my youngest son on the east coast and eldest son on the south coast and to return home safely. The release of adrenaline for achieving each was considerable. My middle son, living in Australia, was in on the frequent reports.



Dolphins between Skye and Eigg

People ask whether we had any dramas. Inevitably so. Here is the log entry for probably the worst one:

At Conningbeg Lighthouse 0930 broad reach genoa 7 rolls, force 5 big seas. Dolphins, JB goes below for camera and found cabin awash above floor boards, which looked worse because we were heeling so the leeward bunk was covered. Galley tap found knocked open in rough sea by a water bottle sitting in sink and the electric pump had been left on. It was warm fresh water so panic over, 'only' the total contents of 120 litre water tank transferred. . . .! What a mess, tin and bottle labels, tissue for cushioning wine bottles, glass from broken Guinness and wine bottles, melted butter, kiwis, onions etc etc. (Pot-luck tinned meals would follow). JB bucket and sponge for 2 hrs, greasy brown water. But we were so thankful it was fresh water. The elation of seeing dolphins turned to despair at our water problem. We continue reaching in a big sea to Tuskar rock 20 mls from Conningbeg.

Another instance was on Loch Ness – 38 knots of wind from the NW became light and variable over a period of two hours. We were half way along the Loch (11mils) opposite Uruquart Castle, relaxing with full sail and sarnies in hot sun. Lifejackets were on the coach roof when suddenly there was a whoosh and the wind blew at 38 knots from the SW (astern). The boat heeled as the sails filled, Jim's cap flew overboard and chaos reigned until we hurriedly donned lifejackets, reefed and furled the genoa to 7 rolls. Then we proceeded for the last 11 miles on an exhilarating run. It was as though the Loch Ness monster had decided to disturb our calm and make his presence felt.

Nasty moments included touching as we came out of Eyemouth – the depth was less than the stated 3m. We were 1½ hrs before low water and dragging through the mud at 1.1m. JB stood on the starboard side with the life raft, dinghy and anything else moveable. My heart was in my mouth as it is rocky a bit further out. Another heart stopping moment was on the opening of the sea lock gates at Clachnaharry (the Inverness end of Caledonian Canal) and seeing waves, the height of the lock gates, rolling into the lock and knowing we had to make way against it with a 13.5hp engine!

We met so many fantastic people, all doing their own thing but so interesting and interested. One of the most enjoyable ports was the Royal Norfolk and Suffolk YC at Lowestoft, who were hosting a compulsory stop over for the two handed Round Britain and Ireland Race. It was good to be included – we partied hard there.



Heather on bow as we approach The Meusestone and home