

## ISW 2018: Lough Erne, Northern Ireland – Ruth Tayler

A select contingent travelled to N. Ireland for ISW (15<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> June), the majority of boats heading from the East Coast and Southern England and joined by a local boat from Sligo in Southern Ireland. The intrepid travellers came by various routes, some choosing to drive more in the UK to the ferry and then a short ferry hop, and others a longer ferry trip but shorter drive. A Met Office yellow storm warning fortunately didn't batter the Irish Sea as they predicted so the ferry wasn't too rough. Andy Mullins had arrived early and had already explored the local area.

The boats were scheduled to be lifted in on Friday morning, and a very efficient one man band with small crane soon had everyone launched; some then chose to go for a sail while others explored the local town of Enniskillen.



We were invited to spend Saturday racing with Lough Erne Yacht Club as part of their regatta to celebrate the Club's 200<sup>th</sup> birthday; this was won by Kevin, Heather and Fergus Collins in *Purple Haze* (369) in some pretty blustery conditions. Later we joined members in the clubhouse for a celebratory meal and our welcome dinner. Robin presented Tom Bailey (the member who had worked very hard to welcome us and make the week so successful) with a picture of the Shrimper fleet in St Malo at ISW 2014. We were also introduced to the Club Admiral - more about him later.

The next day we set off for the more open and exposed part of Lower Lough

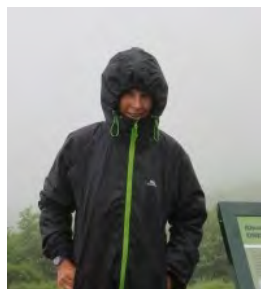


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Erne, which is 10 miles across and deeper than the Channel so can get quite lumpy; together with catabolic winds off the Cliffs of Magho, this made for interesting sailing. Navigation marks are posts with red and white top marks, pass on the white side, and were also numbered to correspond to grid references, so it was quite difficult to get lost.

All very reassuring once you got used to it. Lunch was at Magho, our first acquaintance with the jetties that Waterways Ireland has provided throughout the Navigation. All are excellently maintained and nearly always empty. The walk up the cliffs had to be done as they were there, but by the time we got to the top the soft had come in and the view was impressively white.

Soaking wet, we sailed across to the intriguingly named Lusty beg (beg means small), a small island with a self operating chain ferry to the mainland and a very welcome pub.



The following day the plan was to end up at the yacht club for the night. Two boats visited the village of Kesh a mile up a river, the spring has been busy and they did a little pruning with their mast on the way but no lasting damage, another couple of boats visited White Island to see the ruined church with a reconstructed Romanesque doorway and eight carvings in the wall.

The town of Enniskillen at the bottom of the Lower Lough was our next port of call with an invite for lunch and a talk at the Inland Waterways headquarters; we set off and congregated at Marina Round O to discuss how far the masts would need to be lowered to get under the two bridges. As in all good stories, we decided to watch our leader Robin go first to establish the correct height and then duly followed.

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We were treated to a welcome sandwich lunch and a very interesting talk on the waterways and how they are trying to attract walkers, bikers, canoeists, sailors and boaters. We were all very pleased to be presented with a large waterways umbrella as a memento, particularly as it was pouring!

Onward in the pouring rain we dutifully raised our masts and headed off down the river to Carrybridge (more shenanigans with the masts) arriving at about 6, fortunately the pontoons were adjacent to a pub where we were able to take some food and beverage and even have a shower.



Weather improving, our next engagement was with Lord Erne at Crom Castle, where we had been invited on a tour of the castle by his lordship and afternoon tea. The visitor's centre, ruined castle and public jetty are owned by the National Trust but the castle is still Lord Erne's private home so we felt very privileged; it was enlightening to hear about the difficulties of funding and running a very large house. The house itself had been used as a sailing lodge for many years until his father moved there in 1958, and there was a grand collection of half hulls on the wall.



After tea we headed back up the river to Carrybridge where those not sleeping on their boats had left their cars. We arrived about 8pm and were made very welcome in the bar.

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Next day we set sail for Enniskillen and more mast dropping before entering the Lower Lough. Like the previous day we had the pleasure of Simon Wilton's company on board. He had certainly travelled the furthest as he keeps his Shrimper in the Falklands. He had been to visit a classic boat, the *A.K. Ilen*, which used to trade in the Falklands and is now being restored in Cork. So he had missed the Waterways visit but was very taken with the umbrellas so we went back and managed to blag him one. Having three on board does make shooting the bridges easier.

Passing back through Enniskillen we visited Devenish Island, a monastic island with a round tower from the twelfth century and the remains of a small church and other artefacts including graves and a large cross.

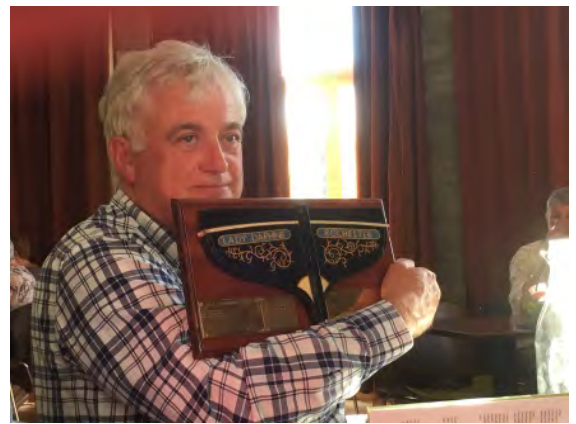


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The weather was now smiling on us all and we headed back to the yacht club and a BBQ. Tom opened the bar and later in the evening a talk was given by the Admiral, a local historian, on the history of the club and information about World War II and the flying boats that had been stationed on the Lough.

Friday marked lift out day for most. Robin of course got his boat out on to the trailer on Saturday, so most opted for a gentle sail around the islands in the morning learning lots about wind shadows. We opted to go further up the Lough so we could walk to the final meal as we were lucky enough to have another week.

The final dinner was extremely well received and Robin presented the prizes. The Collins had already received the Shrimper Regatta Cup at the club prize giving. Peter Blyth of *Peewit* received the Lady Daphne Seamanship trophy for rescuing a GP14 that had capsized in the lough, and John and Deryk in *Skylark* were awarded the Plymouth Plate.



Ruth had arranged a jigsaw of a photo of all the Shrimper bows in Holland as a thank-you for Robin and Gilly. It looked very difficult and we hope they will have time in the winter to do it.

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Sadly for the others who had to leave, the weather then changed and the place really showed itself as a wonderful cruising ground. We sailed from one end of the Lough, to Belleek for a pottery tour, to the other taking in several castles on the way - some ruined, some neo-classical stately homes. BBQs in the evening by the jetties and coffee by campfires. Hot and sunny and 360degree blue skies and the umbrellas found another use.



Well done Robin and Gilly for finding this place and all the hard work organising it, especially the interesting talks. Thanks must also go to Tom and Loch Erne Yacht Club for their help and for making us so welcome.

We are looking forward to seeing as many of you as possible in Plymouth next year, with every expectation that it will be as fantastic a week as we had in Northern Ireland.

**Tim and Ruth Tayler** – *Sapphire* (17) Shrimper 21

