

Irish Cruise Week 2002 – Barry Mellor (*Clementine* - 849)

Thanks to the initiative of Roy Harper (*Lady Eleanor* – 93), a Welsh/Irish flotilla of four Shrimpers was able to get together and enjoy some of the beautiful coast in Southwest Ireland. Roy had received strong support from Martyn & Jane Todd (*Betsy* - 459) and from old campaigners Leslie & Jessie Hughes (*Blue Chip* – 351). A fourth boat (*Parvati* - 824), based locally and owned by Frank & Jane Hancock, joined us when we were in Castletownshend.

The Shrimpers launched over the weekend 10/11 August in Union Hall, a fishing village just across the bay from the pretty village of Glandore. When Roy enquired of the harbour master the dues for launching and recovery of the Shrimper, including the parking of car and trailer, he replied, "Oh! we can't be making a charge for a pretty little boat like that!". The landlord of the Glandore Inn (Kieran O'Donahue) is a keen sailor, so there was a special welcome, a few pints and delicious fish & chips on Saturday night.



The Shrimpers were soon exploring the attractive Glandore Harbour, and checking out the position of some of its hazards, including the literally named 'Inner, Middle and Outer Dangers' (three prominent rocks) and the famous 'Adam's Island' and 'Eve Island'. Such are the rocks between Sheela Point and Adam's Island (and indeed elsewhere!), that the locals advise "avoid Adam and hug Eve".

On the Monday, the Shrimpers enjoyed a pleasant sail round to Castle Haven (Castletownshend). Passage making in these parts is a constant delight, with much to see and identify along the beautiful coastline. There is wildlife in profusion, with a variety of seabirds wheeling around the boats: gannets, fulmars, storm petrels, razorbills, guillemots, terns etc. A large black fin seen in the water turned out to be a sunfish, a rare sighting. The major features along the coastline have colourful names - Rabbit Island, The Stack of Beans, Belly Rock, Seal Rocks, Horse Island, Black Rock and The Stags.

The Shrimpers were joined on Monday in Castletownshend by John Clogg (*Albert* - 488) and Carol & Barry Mellor (*Clementine* - 849), who had flown over from Stansted to Cork. That evening, we were all then invited by Jane & Frank for Pimms and some tasty morsels. With everyone together, the team posed for photographs on the terrace of their house overlooking the harbour.



Drinks with Jane & Frank were followed by a very enjoyable dinner at the well-known local pub Mary Anne's (landlord Fergus O'Mahony). The weather the next morning (Tuesday) brought rain and wind from the SW i.e. weather reverting to normal. But the real problem was the thick fog – so no passage making that day. The crews occupied themselves usefully by helping to re-rig the Hancocks' boat, followed by some creek crawling up the inner sound of the harbour.

Roy then took John and Barry out to Black Rock for some gentle fishing. A number of pollock and mackerel were duly caught, and 'Lady Eleanor' resembled a fish processing factory ship by the end of the day:

*'Lady Eleanor' sailed out to sea
To take part in an angling spree.
With his hooks and his lance
The fish haven't a chance
And we all had mackerel for tea.*



On Wednesday, there was little let up in the weather, so a shore day was arranged. The team drove off to Bantry House, a 'stately home' delightfully situated at the head of Bantry Bay and the scene of an ill-fated attempt (in 1796) by the French fleet to land an invasion force of French troops. We learned that, had a landing been made, both the local Irish and the Catholic Church would have been more hostile to the 'revolutionary' French than they were to the English!

That evening, we went down to the village of Baltimore, to visit the famous Bushe's Bar (prop. Tom Bushe – no relation!) and a sampling of Guinness and Murphy's. Both were judged to be in fine condition, and more was ordered.



Thursday dawned clear and bright with a SW 3-4. Off we went on a magnificent passage from Castle Haven to Baltimore Harbour, passing wonderfully spiky rocks 'The Stags' and 'The Kedges'. The coastline here is spectacular, and the landfall between the mainland and Sherkin Island is as good as it gets. The well known beacon (Lot's wife) can just be seen in the photograph. An anchorage was found off Sherkin Island and we decide to cook on board that evening – a kind of Irish Cassoulet, with rice, potatoes and fresh salad.

Friday was another good day for sailing. More provisions, fresh bread, pork ribs and peppers (appropriately orange and green), arrived from the shore and Roy had caught more mackerel, so a BBQ was ordered.

We sailed into Roaringwater Bay, which has to be the best cruising grounds for a Shrimper anywhere in the British Isles, and soon found a deserted island with a sheltered beach and the remains of an ancient settlement, perhaps monastic. We soon had a fire going and cooked what was nothing less than a banquet.

Regrettably this was to be our last day, and we sailed back into Baltimore to haul out on a curiously shaped slip. It had a good incline, but was on a curve, rather like a hockey stick. This made for an interesting challenge, but the skippers and crews were up to it.



Soon the Shrimpers were on the trailers and all the crews back in Bushe's Bar, enjoying a liquid supper set up by the ladies.

What a week! Lets hope we have an opportunity to repeat it one day. Very many thanks to all, especially to Roy for the inspiration, Jane & Martyn for their local knowledge, and to Jessie and Leslie for all their skills and experience.