

*I read with some envy Ted's report about the Shrimpers' exploits in Brittany this year. It would seem that there was the usual wide spectrum of weather prompting the odd unfortunate incident that I am pleased to see did not mar the overall enjoyment of the Brest 2000 Festival.*

*I note with considerable interest that some of the ill wind that blew resulted in a more powerful, quiet and heat giving iron topsail for "Albert". I am sure when coupled with the "grand foc" it must now be the most formidable and luxurious Shrimper in the fleet or is it "Clementine 2"?*

*Northern Ireland was not represented at Brest largely due to the fact that the sole member had seen and done it twice before. "Blue Chip" however opted for a less frenetic outing to Scotland; sailing single-handed anti-clockwise around the Isle of Mull with that flying Yorkshire man Roger Tushingham in "Misty Morn".*

*In May this year the two Shrimpers were towed to Oban where we launched at the excellent facilities of Dunstaffnage Yacht Club. The following morning under inclement weather and threatening winds we sailed due north to Tobermory on the Isle of Mull using the strong tide flowing in the sound. The forecast for the next few days was not unexpected; blowing NW.6 which necessitated a detour into Loch Sunart (due East). The loch provided us with some wonderful sheltered sailing downwind with Blue Chip's cruising chute matching the new and attractive cutter rig of Misty Morn.*

*That evening the two boats mooring half way up the loch at Salen where we were each "had" for a £5 mooring fee and a further £5 for a shower! As one local fisherman put it, we were "vulturised". The next morning as the wind continued to blow, we set off to the head of Loch Sunart, where the mooring ground proved extremely uncertain with anchors dragging in a strong overnight wind. Thankfully the wind and rain abated the next morning which allowed the two Shrimpers to motor sail back down the Loch enjoying the impressive mountain scenery, dappled in pulses of sun and shade. While we waited for tidal support for the main leg of the passage that day, we had time to make a detailed exploration of Loch Teacuis which is renowned for its wildlife as recorded on the BBC nature programmes.*

*So far our boats performed extremely well but as Blue Chip approached the Loch's exit it was unable to take in cooling water due to the extreme sailing angle of the boat on the rough seas. (The problem stemmed from advice given to me by a Yanmar agent, that in order to reduce the furring up of the cylinder block over a period of time, the intake pipe should be lengthened so as to loop above the engine head thus trapping any cooling water when the boat is lifted to the trailer. Salt deposits tend to accumulate when the engine cools - the theory is good but not in heavy seas).*

## **An alternative to Shrimper Week by Leslie Hughes, Blue Chip**

*Having put into Tobermory to rectify the problem we set out on what seemed a marathon sail of some six hours to the remote and somewhat lonely island of Coll in the Inner Hebrides (yes, the island which ran out of fresh water this year). Communications with the Coastguard were proving increasingly more difficult and as weather forecasts were now an important factor in our passage planning, we were a little concerned, as we had reached the furthest point in the circumnavigation of the Isle of Mull. It was therefore disappointing to find that the calm moonlight night turned to a southerly 3 to 4 the morning we were to leave Coll and sail due south. Our passage was therefore unavoidably foreshortened to a very tranquil and isolated mooring on the island of Gometra. Here we took stock of our progress over a welcome walk across yet more mountain terrain.*

*Staffa Island (Fingles Cave) was our objective next day and as we had made good time on this comparatively short leg we were tempted to land but prudence prevailed and after taking the mandatory photographs moved swiftly on to Iona through the ever present Atlantic swell. Staffa looked well in the bright sunshine with the breakers crashing at its solid columnar base almost ringing out the Mendelssohn overture to the Hebrides- a truly inspiring sight indeed.*



*The well known bull hole on Mull provided a secure base for our visit to Iona, the monastic home of St. Columba. As always Roger was keen to climb the nearest hill - this time it was the granite stone quarry from which the stone was extracted and ferried to Iona to build the Cathedral.*

*The final day was to be the most exhilarating and enjoyable of the trip. Fortified the previous evening at the Red Bay restaurant with an enormous fry-up and washed down with a bottle of rose, (John and Eleanor Wagstaff had opened the restaurant especially for us since we had arrived out of season), we set sail early next morning for Oban some 45 miles due East. Our GPS co-ordinates saw us initially through the notorious Torran rocks immediately south of Iona. With the sun on our transoms and the Atlantic swell behind us we made excellent progress on a kindly sea along the magnificent rugged south coast offering little respite until we reached the Firth of Lorn and then on to Oban, completing the passage in some 10 hours.*

*Overall the passage around Mull of some 140 miles over 7 days was an aspiration we both wanted to realise. Job satisfaction was extremely high, perhaps prompting further adventures - crew permitting!*

*Would we do it again? Most certainly as long as the nuts on the helms are as reliable as the Shrimper.*