

## Pelagia Cruise 2018 Part 4

After Beverley and Ann left us at Crosshaven, Pat and I spent a day catching up with boat chores and cleaning up after a crew change. The weather predictions were for a severe storm on Wednesday and Thursday, so in order to make progress we thought we should do a long sail to Dunmore East on Monday then motor up the river to Waterford city on Tuesday, where we could sit out the storm and do city visits. We therefore left Crosshaven at 0700 hours to make the 58 mile trip to Dunmore East. Initially the tide would be against us but not strong and we would then benefit later from the strong tide with us before we arrived. It was a grey overcast but dry morning as we left Crosshaven and we were somewhat sad to be leaving this beautiful spot. We motored out of the estuary past the place where the Titanic anchored to take on the final passengers and mail from Cork before beginning its fatal voyage in 1912. A light breeze from the land gradually increased and we eventually set mainsail and Genoa as we travelled along the picturesque south coast, known as the copper coast because of the copper mines in this area two centuries ago. The wind faded and rose again as the day wore on but we made good speed especially when the stronger tides at the east end of the island started to help us. The sun eventually broke out to cheer us onward. We saw little of other craft all day and it was quiet as we turned into Dunmore East at 1600 hours having logged 55 miles. There is a visitors pontoon on the east side just inside the harbour entrance which turned out to be full with two yachts, the pilot boat and the lifeboat. We managed to tie alongside another yacht whose skipper, Robert was very happy to let us lie there. I recognised his boat immediately as a Biscay 36 called Ayesha which used to belong to Libby Purvis and her husband Paul Heiney. Robert confirmed that it was indeed, although he had bought it from an owner after Libby. He was sailing back to Milford Haven the next day, Initially he said at 0400 but later he relented and said 0700 would be fine so we did not have to move off so early.

The next morning dawned bright when we moved to let Robert out and we moored up again as we did not need to leave until 1200 to catch the flood tide up to Waterford. A quiet walk around Dunmore East revealed a charming little town not at all like we first imagined. There were many thatched cottages, nice large houses and hotels all overlooking a very scenic bay and estuary.



The channel up river to Waterford is about 15 miles and has fierce tides so we had to set off at low water and take the flood stream up. From Dunmore East we set a course north east to the first set of buoys in the Channel arriving there just as the tide started to run. Initially it was slow but by half way we were being whisked along by a tide of about four knots. The main river was the Suir, but there were two other rivers that joined it and at the confluence of these there were whirlpools forming. The buoyage was confusing and half way we had to turn around briefly to give us thinking time before we were set upon some shallows. The scenery on route was magnificent with wooded hillsides and pretty cottages. The city marina is a set of long pontoons and by calling them by mobile phone we were told which pontoon to go on. I had to turn around and moor up into the tide which was no mean feat at the middle of a raging spring tide. The marina man arrived true to form just after we had moored up! This marina is all mechanised which means you can exit the gangway gate to the town by push button but to return you have to call a number on your mobile phone and the gate opens!



Although the town is historic, and one of the oldest towns in Ireland founded by the Vikings in the eighth century, it is in poor condition. The marina facilities were probably the worst we have ever come across, a dribble of a shower with luke warm water. The weather, true to form, turned very bad as storm Hector battered Ireland. The wind and rain combined with the tide running made for a very noisy night on the berth. I was glad that I had doubled up all my mooring lines before going to bed as I would have been seriously worried about the strain on the lines from the gushing tide. We planned to visit Waterford crystal factory on the Wednesday as an indoor visit but our early start was thwarted when we found the flood gates closed and locked at the top of the gangway. The marina man could not help as he said the council locked them when very high tides were forecast and he had no keys. Eventually we found an old pallet on the pontoon which assisted us to get enough height to scale the gate and escape. The whole system seems very Irish and unsafe for people on the pontoon if you cannot get off in the event of a problem. Anyway, after the wet of the night the day brightened up and we had a lovely visit to Waterford glass factory followed by lunch in their cafe. Waterford glass has been made here since the 11th century but really only in its present form since the 19th century. In the afternoon we had a virtual reality experience at the Viking museum re-enacting the early years of the Viking history in this town up to the time of Reginald the Viking King who, from here, attacked and established a Viking town in York.



It was a wonderful and well put together experience which the Yorvik museum in York needs to take note of. We followed this visit with trips to the heritage museum and the Bishops palace the next day, both very good and worthwhile tours.

With a better forecast of weather we left Waterford on the Saturday morning at the turn of the tide and motored back to Dunmore East. It was at a full spring tide so we flew back on a fast current arriving in Dunmore at lunch time. We had intended to wait there until 4.0 p.m. when the tide would be right for going north to Kilmore Quay, but as it turned out the wind was force six and the swell huge at the entrance to the

estuary so we stayed in Dunmore again and ended up there until the Tuesday sitting in drizzle and fog with strong westerly winds. Whilst there we had to visit the local pub to get WiFi to get the weather, which was a good excuse for a pint of Guinness! Tuesday forecast was not ideal but tides dictated that if we could make Kilmore on that day the next would be good for going on around the corner and up to Arklow. We duly left Dunmore at 05.30 hours on a grey morning with slight drizzle. With light winds the swell was not too bad but the drizzle closed in until we could see no further than a quarter of a mile. The harbour at Kilmore has a very narrow and shallow approach channel marked at its outer end by a buoy. The tides run fiercely past here and if you miss the buoy you are on the rocks. Relying on the plotter once again we found the buoy and steered for the harbour which we could not see until half way between the buoy and the entrance but we got in safely. The wind rose to force six again and the drizzle and fog did not clear until late that afternoon. Several yachts were in there bemoaning the conditions and waiting to escape to various destinations, all praying the Wednesday would turn out as predicted to be better. We walked around Kilmore admiring the thatched cottages which were enchanting, but in close proximity to some very plain and ugly new houses which rather detracted from their charm.



Wednesday dawned bright with a southwesterly wind and the tide set in our favour at 9.0 a.m. so we set out along the narrow route to the outer buoy. It was interesting to see the Saltee islands just off the entrance which had been totally obscured the day before. After reaching the buoy we turned east through a narrow gap marked by two buoys called St Patrick's bridge, which guided you over a shallow gap in the rocks only 2 metres deep. It was a great relief to pass over these and into deeper water as we set our Genoa sail and sailed downwind in the force five breeze.



The sky remained dark and brooding with heavy shower clouds around us but we made tremendous speed as the fierce tide whisked us east towards Carnsore point, the south east corner of Ireland. The point was

insignificant in appearance, just a sandy spit with fourteen wind generators on it. We hoped we could complete the 49 mile passage before the tide turned against us because if so it would shorten our journey time. The tide got stronger as we approached the point and it drove us fast round the corner and up towards Rosslare. The wind was forecast to get light and variable as we set north up the Irish Sea but as we approached Rosslare it veered north west, almost on the nose and strengthened to force six. With a full Genoa sail we were hard pressed and I had to run off east but this was taking us towards the Tuscar rock lighthouse very fast and we had to reduce sail quickly to get her back on course. Black skies and strong winds remained with us for a long while and the strong tide running north against the wind set up a steep short sea so we had a very bouncy wet ride as we navigated our way through the offshore sand banks of this coast. At times the tide was three knots so with our boat speed we were reaching 8 knots over the ground. The day gradually improved and the wind moderated to force four although still west northwest in direction. We reached the Arklow entrance at exactly five p.m. just as the tide turned and we had logged only 36.6 miles for a 49 mile journey. Thank god the tide had carried us the 12 miles extra! It would not have been good going against it.

We moored on a pontoon in the river run by the marina as the small marina itself was very tight to get in and fairly crowded. The pontoon had water and electricity and walking round to the showers we found they were quite good as well. However, at low tide we observed a large outlet pipe near us that was spewing out sewage obviously coming from the blocks of new apartments called marina village. When I raised this with the marina attendant he confirmed that this was correct and there had been an argument about this for ten years, but at last a new sewage facility was in build and would be complete in three years! I could not believe that in this day and age new buildings would be allowed before the sewage was treated properly and that against EU regulations it was pouring into a river. We would have to make sure we washed our lines and fenders if they had touched the water. Arklow town was not attractive as you walked across the 18th century 19 arch bridge but we did find a pleasant walk up the river where it was wooded and peaceful.



The weather was also on the up with high pressure building from the west promising to give us some settled weather. There is still a legacy here of old dead industry, chemical and explosive works from the early 1900's which are gradually being demolished and new shopping precincts being built. There was even a new Aldi store which we found useful, but interesting to see that most of the fresh produce was all Irish! Britain should take note of this and do the same for our produce in the UK.

Leaving Arklow at midday as the tide turned north again the weather was sunny and warm as we set course for Greystones, a harbour north of Wicklow head and about 25 miles distant. The countryside on route was very attractive with a backdrop of hills and fields and very little housing. The tide soon started to push us north but the wind remained too light to sail and on the bow again. We therefore motorsailed all the way. At times we did 8.5 knots over the ground with the fast tide and these were neap tides! We arrived at the very nice harbour in about two and a half hours for the 25 mile trip having logged only 18 because of the tide. The sky remained blue and sunny all the way which was a pleasant change for us. Greystones proved to be a splendid harbour and an attractive coastal resort with nice houses. The backdrop of hills and countryside was the unique setting. Another sunny and warm day with light winds saw us set off on the short leg across Dublin bay to Howth only 15 miles away. We started motoring but a force four wind came up from astern of us and we sailed beautifully most of the way. Our only problem was avoiding the ferries entering the traffic

separation scheme on the way in Dun Laoghaire harbour. Arriving at Howth on a sunny busy Saturday afternoon was manic but we got a berth in a very tight corner and we await here the arrival of Corine on Monday to continue our trip to Troon.

Now we have the saga of the toilet!! Bear with me on this horrible subject for a while. We had noticed a smell developing in the heads since we were in Waterford and each day it got worse. I had tried cleaning all the pump and the seals. We had flushed with toilet cleaner and washing up liquid but still it got worse. Pat described it as something dead! We emptied the lockers and cleaned them all out in case of a dead rat but nothing was found. The disgusting smell got worse! It seemed worse when you flushed the toilet as if the smell was coming in with the fresh water. We had been in some messy harbours so hoped that clean Greystones would solve the problem, but no. On close examination of the holes around the rim of the toilet bowl, where the flush came in, a small piece of something grey was hanging out of one hole. When pulled and stretched the thin and much deteriorated body of a sand eel gradually emerged with the associated disgusting smell. It took some time to remove it all and the problem is solved. Poor thing must have been sheltering in the inlet pipe when it got sucked in, passed through the pump and stuck where it could go no further in the bowl rim.

Howth is a very attractive tourist town and when we arrived on the Saturday there was an Irish pipe band competition on the green in front of the marina. There were hundreds of onlookers watching the many bands playing all dressed in their traditional kilt costumes which made quite a spectacle.



Corine arrived on Monday at midday and we were able to spend the beautiful afternoon walking around the cliff path of the rugged headland with fantastic views over the sea and towards Dublin. The next day we caught the train to Dublin City to explore the Capital. There were some good sights such as the Trinity college and its famous library with the book of Kells. The other historic library in the city, the Marsh library was closed that day. We all felt that it was not that nice a city to spend time in and were quite glad to return to Howth for a splendid evening meal in a fish restaurant on the quayside. Our next sailing leg was a long one to Carlingford loch 40 miles north and we had to get there at the turn of the tide to carry the flood stream in. We left Howth mid morning and with little wind we motored until a breeze enabled us to sail for four hours. We entered the loch channel at the correct time and carried the tide into the marina five miles up the loch at 19.30 hours. The scenery was magnificent around the loch with hills on all sides but the marina was rather poor with broken down harbour walls and we just went aground inside the marina as we negotiated a visitors berth. The tide was rising so we soon got her into the berth. Carlingford town turned out to be a pretty historic town with medieval streets and buildings winding around the remains of the old town walls.



Luckily we had a morning to explore there before the tide was right to leave for our next leg to Ardglass.

Ardglass was only 25 miles north and on a dripping hot day with little wind we motored all the way. The entry to the harbour was very tight at low water but we headed for a berth straight ahead as we got in and found the facilities good. Seals were watching us from just outside the harbour as they fished for their supper in the channel. This town was also quaint with many old towers and ruined castles one of which was now a nursing home with fabulous views.



Once again we did not leave the next day until late morning because of the tidal stream and sailed the long leg to Bangor in the Belfast loch. We set sails several times but each time the wind died again and we motored on another hot day. The measured distance of 36 miles was helped by the strong tide and we only logged 28 upon our arrival in Bangor. A very large marina with good facilities was in the centre of the town bay so we had access to shops and the train which we took the next day to visit the Titanic exhibition in Belfast docks. This exhibition which only opened a few years ago was wonderfully done, telling the story of Belfast in the 1900's and the creation of the dream ship in Harland and Wolf's yard. This was followed by stories of the sinking and the survivors in harrowing detail. An excellent day out on another sunny day in Ireland!

On 1st July we left Bangor and Ireland to sail the 22 miles across to Portpatrick in Scotland. It was hot, sunny but with a force four wind. Our easterly tack was pointing us in the right direction but the tide was running us somewhat south. We thought we might have to tack north at some point but the combination of a gradual wind shift and the tide turning north as we approached Portpatrick enabled us to complete the sail on one tack and exactly on target to enter the leading line for the tight channel in. We were met by a very friendly harbour master who helped us to tie up to the harbour wall with our long lines to allow for the tide rise and fall. This is something we have not done for many years having sailed in non tidal waters and it was

quite nostalgic to return to this. Corine was a little perplexed at having to climb the high vertical harbour ladder but soon got used to it.



We walked the coastal path to Killingtringan lighthouse the next day in beautiful weather with fantastic views and solitude.

Corine had another week with us so in the glorious weather we decided to explore some of the anchorages around Arran and the Clyde estuary before ending up at Troon. Our next trip was therefore to Campbeltown on the inside of the Mull of Kintyre. We could not leave Portpatrick until midday to catch the tide north and there was no wind. We motored north along the scenic Galloway coast then as the tide started to race us north away from the peninsular we began to see the Mull in front of us. The island of Alisa Craig stood out clearly against the blue sky and calm sea and porpoise frequently appeared around us. At 1900 we closed the coast and motored into Campbeltown at the same time as several other yachts were entering having covered the 38 miles in seven hours. The very small marina was crowded but the harbour master found us a space alongside another vessel and we were able to use the good shower facilities newly installed. The town was poor and run down but the surrounding countryside was pleasant and after a little shopping we set sail for Loch Ranza on Arran. A force four wind was blowing into the loch and the harbour and with no room to turn, we had to reverse all the way out of the narrow entrance until there was enough sea room to turn around. We set the sails in the loch and were tacking out expecting a good sail but once outside the loch the wind died and back to motoring. Arran island looked fantastic in the clear air and we enjoyed the views on route to the north end of the island.



With only about 10 miles left to go the wind did come up from behind us and we sailed the remaining half of the trip until it again died just off the bay. We found a visitors mooring buoy free and tied up there in Loch Ranza with wonderful views of the surrounding high mountains.

The afternoon was spent walking around Loch Ranza and the old castle on the shore and then enjoying our meal in the cockpit as the sun set outside the bay. The night was disturbed by a wind from the

north causing a lumpy sea in the early hours and having had a noisy end to the night we were all glad to leave sharply in the morning for a short sail to Millport on the island of Cumbrae. This town was said in the brochure to be the sailing jewel in the Clyde estuary so after a very gentle sail in a force three wind we expected to find a wonderful bay. The bay was sheltered and a seal colony inhabited one rocky islet but the town was poor and drab when seen from the bay. Having taken up another visitors buoy we went ashore and discovered that it was packed with holiday makers from Glasgow who seemed to like the rough and trashy aspects of the area rather than the more genteel of Scotland. It all left us with a dismal feeling about this place. The next morning our sail was to be back onto Arran at the bay of Lamlash and a gentle breeze got us almost all the way on our 15 mile sail. We again found a visitors buoy but this time the town and surroundings were stunning in the sunny clear weather looking out onto Holy Island in the bay.



Holy Island is occupied by 31 Buddhist monks who live there and try and promote World peace and indeed they have idyllic surroundings for it. We enjoyed a walk around Lamlash with some lovely houses flanking the waterfront.

Our final day was to be a leisurely sail 15 miles to Troon which is to be our base for a year. We put up all the flags of the countries we had visited on route out of the Mediterranean and had the champagne on ice to celebrate our arrival. A light wind wafted us out and away from Arran and we sailed ever slower as it decreased in the sunny morning. I finally decided that we should turn on the engine and motor the remaining eight miles to Troon to get in at a reasonable time. The electrics were dead and the motor would not start so whilst Corine and Pat tried to keep her sailing towards Troon I took to the engine room to ascertain the problem. Changing the starter battery over to the service batteries did no good so there was clearly a bad connection or a short circuit somewhere, but where! I tried all the power supplies to the switch panel and inside the cockpit control panel without success, it could have been anywhere in the multitude of cables. After an hour and a half I thought I should inform the coastguard of our situation which I did with a routine call on channel 16 saying we were drifting without engine, trying to sail in the nearly non-existent wind towards Troon. They decided that the best option was to send the lifeboat to tow us which sadly was not the way we wanted to enter Troon on this final leg. I continued to try and resolve the problem and a small yacht appeared alongside to help but thought we were too heavy for them to tow and left. I eventually got the starter motor to turn by jumping cables across the battery terminals and the engine burst into life. I informed the coast guard and they said the lifeboat would still escort us in case of further failure on route. The lifeboat arrived and took station behind us as we motored for the next hour. We made harbour at about 1700 hours and went straight to our allotted berth where the coast guard team met us to take down some details of what happened. They were all wonderfully helpful if not a little embarrassingly so! The three of us still celebrated in style with the champagne and a fabulous meal in the Troon restaurant. The failure bugged me a bit that night and one clue to the problem was that the alternator was showing no charge when the engine did run. First thing in the morning I was under the engine and found a cable snapped off from the earth post on the alternator. A new connector was soon fitted and all was resolved!



It was a sweet moment entering Troon harbour after a long, challenging, exciting and enjoyable voyage. The trip from Lagos had taken two months and we had sailed 1487 miles. Sailing away from Lagos we had many thoughts in our heads on that grey drizzly morning. As Pelagia once again pushed her bows out into the Atlantic, in some ways it was sad as it was the end of an era, but we were now homeward bound. Watching our wake spinning behind us made us contemplate all those many happy memories of our Mediterranean experiences flowing astern. However, we were both ready for a new final adventure to come home safely to the UK waters. We also knew we were going to dig deep beating up the Portuguese and Spanish coasts against the north east trade winds with big seas, and finally the notorious Biscay crossing. However, it all worked out well with its assortment of highs and great lows; that's sailing! We are both delighted to have arrived in beautiful Ireland and experienced sailing up its east coast and finally to Scotland. Here a variety of land and seascapes made for truly unforgettable sailing. There are stunningly exquisite landscapes to explore with ancient castles and a wonderful history. Most of all, it's a wildlife lovers paradise absolutely teeming with life, such a delight after the dead Mediterranean. Watching gannets, dolphins, seals and whales in their natural habitat is amazingly breathtaking. Scotland has its natural larder too, which we have already tried and tested, especially the fresh seafood and don't forget the malt whisky from World class distilleries. We so look forward to exploring our new cruising ground with all its new adventures. Pelagia will now get some love and attention that she needs after all her travels and she will be based here for the next 12 months whilst we take some rest at home after we have cleaned and tidied her up in the next week.

Chris