

Retirement Cruising - *Serenata to Stornoway*



David Young's 1974 Marcon Trophy winning log

I hoped to get at least to Cape Wrath in 1974 so sailed from Knott End, Fleetwood, early in the season. 2145 on Wednesday, 15 May, saw *Serenata*, bilge keeler, sail No 38 scrape into Ramsey, Isle of Man well after half tide. The 16 hour passage had been uneventful, with winds between S & E but generally too light, until the last mad rush past Maughold Head and into harbour under jib and engine.

Within minutes of stepping ashore I met fellow TOA member Ken Randall on the quay. Next day I visited and admired his *Trident of Man*, sail No.227, then almost complete.

Friday saw me beginning to crack that tough nut the North Channel, leaving harbour at 07.00 in a bleak S5. The ebb carried me past Ayre Point but the wind fell off and I faced the strong inshore flood stream before reaching Portpatrick. So I slipped into my old favourite drying harbour. Port Logan, anchoring in the Bay and moving into full shelter after half tide.



Next morning I had to pluck up courage to brave a big swell and run through continuous rain before a force 6 S with the main rolled past the batten and storm jib. The swell was breaking along that ironbound coast as I raced with the wind and 4 kn. ebb past Portpatrick and Black Head.

Last year I made the 40 mile crossing to Campbeltown. This time my objective was Girvan. When I got there I found the mainsail slides were jammed solid. Laying her alongside a tall fishing vessel, I soon found stalwart local yachtsmen to 'careen' her and free the offending slides. These were newly fitted and ran up and down a track, having a narrower 'neck' than the originals. Unfortunately, they also have a narrower 'shoulder', which allows them to tilt and half fall into the track. Much of the time in

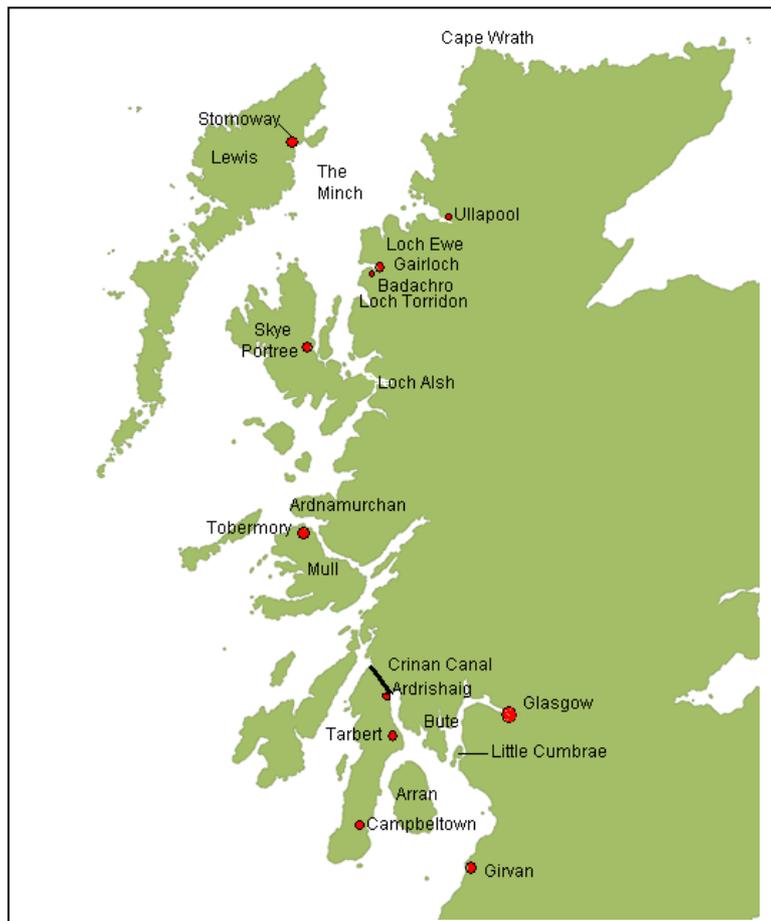
Girvan was spent in replacing the old slides. How much better not to be able to reef off the wind than to be unable to reef or lower at all.



West Kyle of Bute looking South with the mountains of the Isle of Arran in the distance

My son, Colin, joined me at Girvan. We sailed for Lamlash, Arran, at 0740 Wednesday, 22nd May, wind W4 gusting 5. After beating through the great naval anchorage behind Holy Island in heavy Arran squalls, we let go near Lamlash pier at 1240.

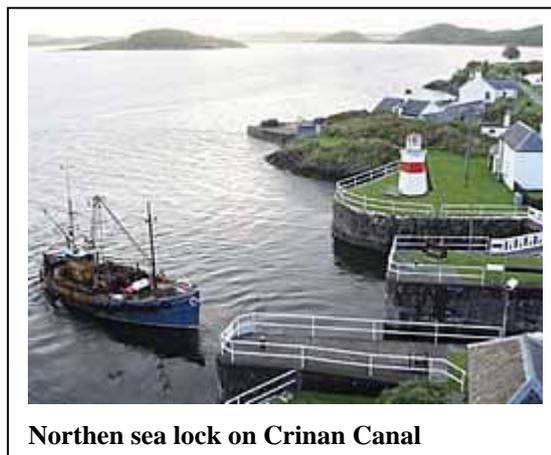
Next day saw a long haul past Little Cumbræ, through Largs Channel and into the famed Kyles of Bute, with mixed weather and winds. The most striking and memorable sight was a big, sunlit tanker at anchor off Wemyss Bay, framed in a brilliant evening rainbow against a black sky to the N.E. The heavy hailstorm which followed as we reached past Loward Point was memorable but not pleasant. The Vire had to be used for the last half hour in the East Kyle and through the Narrows against the young flood to the delectable Glen Caladh.



Sheltered as that beautiful haven is, the N.E. gusts whisking through it next morning deceived us into sailing with 7 rolls and storm jib at 0740. In the Kerry Kyle of Tignabruaich the following

wind was lighter and steady. We caught the tide at Ardlamont Point and were in the perfect landlocked harbour of Tarbert in L. Fyne at 1230. As I write this up more than three months later, the surrounding hills, and Little Cock Island itself, are purple with heather in the August rain. I cannot describe the intervening voyaging even in the scanty detail I have given to the first ten days. I must try to keep to the high spots from now on.

David, my son-in-law, joined at Ardrishaig on 25th May He and Colin did the donkeywork with gates and warps in the "do it yourself" (but never on Sunday;) Crinan Canal. Colin left the following windy morning, Tuesday 28 May. David and I



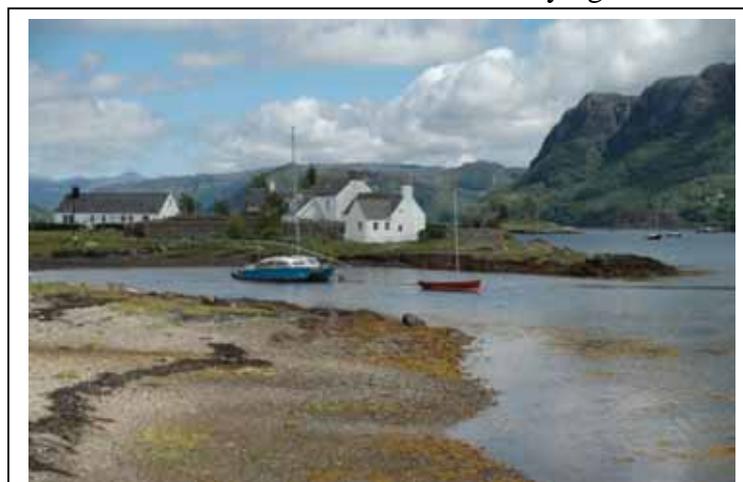
Northern sea lock on Crinan Canal

completed the transit to Crinan Basin the same afternoon and left the canal sea lock in a NNW 3 on Wednesday. Wind freshened in the famous or notorious Dorus Mor ('Great Door') and after a summery interlude in Lochs Shuna and Melfort we thrashed into Balricar Bay under full sail against violent squalls.

Next day, beginning 09.05, was marked by the passage of three sounds, Cuan, Easdale and Kerrera. Pasing up the Lynn of Lome we had a quick look in L.Creran, then back to Dunstaffnage motoring the last hour from L. Nell with mainsail pinched on port tack. Next day we had a following SE for a fast passage to Lismore Light and through the Sound of Mull to Tobermory. David left next morning, Saturday and on Monday, 3rd June, my solo cruise to the far N.W. began in earnest.

Ardnamurchan, westernmost part of the British mainland, is a point to be respected. I had to beat round it but afterwards the wind was free. It was too strong at times off Eigg but quietened down and carried *Serenata* up the Sound of Sleat in clear weather to Isle Ormsay by 2130. This was our farthest north last year. Next day I was early on the tide for Kyle Rhea, where there is never a true slack. The last of the ebb was only just stemmed with a leading wind, entailing stepping carefully but slowly between the ebb overfall and the rocks.

My first taste of many Scottish squalls was in Loch Alsh. Later that day I shortened sail in outer Loch Carron and after identifying the confusion of outlying islands, rocks



Plocton: 'Mecca of Northern yachtsmen'

and shoals, beat into Plocton anchorage, that Mecca of northern yachtsmen; WSW 5 gusting 6. Inside Yellow Cliff Island there was no option but to bring up all standing, not even ranging the cable or dropping the jib for fear of being swept down to leeward. Luckily no spectators, except possibly ashore.

A day in port, then next morning a perfect whole sail NW wind falling light until, bang! between Pabay and the Crowlin Islands, heavy squalls struck again. And towing the 'Nautosport dinghy in these 'sheltered waters' too: Poll Dorn is perhaps the most impressive anchorage of the cruise, well-sheltered, remote, though I was not the only "solo". The postman who gave me a lift from (not alas, to) the telephone box, proved to be the brother to a kind lady who had given us hospitality at Applecross several years ago.

Next day, 8 June, on northwards through the Inner Sound towards S. Rona, whose light had seemed romantic from the night's lonely anchorage. The wind, heading and failing, frustrated thoughts of L. Torridon or even Gairloch. I passed NW through Caol Rona in sunny calm, under power. Wham: NNW backing WNW, reefed and turned SW towards

Portree. What magnificent sights the Storr and Old Sram made from Ramsey Sound, and what squalls came off the sheer, high cliffs of Skye, unavoidable if the harbour of the Capital is to be entered. Caught aback, with or without way, beam ends and all, so down with the jib, and engine on, for the final two miles to



Portree, Isle of Skye

anchor off the pier. The next two days, stormbound, proved that holding is not too good here, and that a nasty loup comes in from the SW.

Acarseith Mor, S. Rona, the perfect landlocked anchorage, is a little difficult to locate and enter. A beautiful blue yacht came in to share it, late in the evening. A summer's day's sail took me to Gairloch next day. Anyone who knows Badachro needs no recommendation or description, words are inadequate for others.

Shieldaig and Flowerdale Bay have their own attractions, as I saw next day on my way out to Rubh Re. A calm day, but a popple off that notorious promontory, and glorious views of Skye and the Outer Hebrides, and to the NE the distant Point of Stoer, looking like an island and beckoning me on to Eddrachillts Bay. But I was bound just for the Summer Isles, slowly across the wide mouth of Loch Ewe with light following wind, past Greenstone Point. Then a decision to make for Isle Martin, right under towering Ben More Coigach where it drops steeply to the sea. A sudden breeze from N, force 3, but it only lasted an hour. So at 2100 the engine for the first time that long day, to a peaceful sheltered anchorage in a purple sunset in Loch Kanaird.

Next morning it was a drift up to Ullapool for telephone and provisions. Indifferent holding and an open feeling there, so up through the Narrows and a calm night in my namesake. Port Young. This bay was to serve my brother and me well as shelter from very hard W winds later in the season. Meanwhile the summer weather continued for a Sabbath drift to the Summer Isles. A cuckoo sang from the slopes of Ben More all that quiet afternoon and a large school of porpoises made white waves, seaward. The wind was 0/1 but the engine had a full day's rest and I anchored under sail in "The Cabbage Garden", the island of Tanera Mor in Loch Broom, at 2025, Sunday, 16 June.

What kind people there: Ralf and Mary, Theo and the rest. They looked after *Serenata* when I left her there a month later to travel South for Colin's wedding. But many memorable passages and anchorages were to come before then.



Tanera Mor

Having cut down and still only covered the first month, the rest must seem even more like a catalogue. Ru Coigach, Lochinver, Point of Stoer: all calm weather, and too much motoring, but only 6 gallons so far, and 10 more at the time of writing on 25 August.

Loch Drumbeg is out of this world - perhaps the sunset and solitude made it. An evening call in L.Nedd and later that evening to L.Ardvar and the generous hospitality of a wealthy man and the fresh trout sent aboard for my breakfast - delicious: Badcall Bay saw a rare temporary anchorage at midday, then on past Scourie Bay and



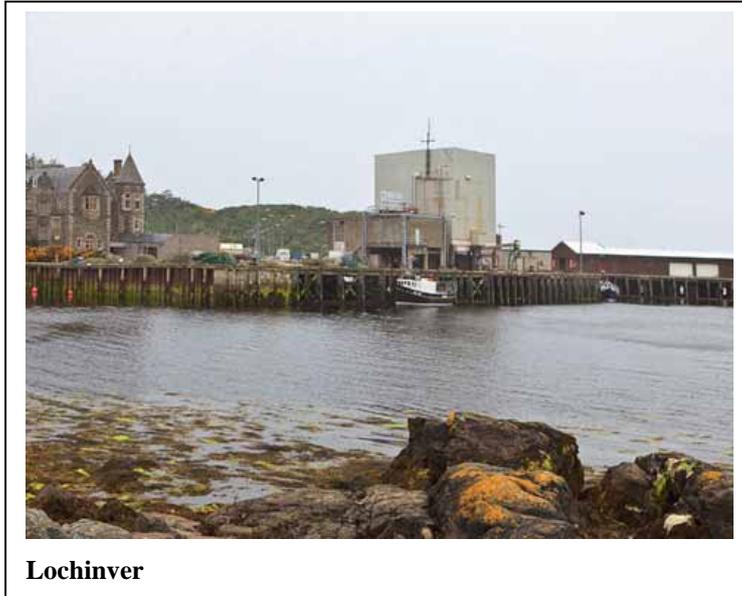
Loch Drumbeg: 'out of this World'

the stupendous cliffs of Handa Island. So into L. Laxford at evening and to a quiet anchorage in Fanagmore Bay. Fancy a telephone box in such a remote spot, and actually visible from the loch: Who could resist looking at Capt. John Ridgeway's famous base behind Ardmore Point: A quick afternoon visit, though I did not enjoy the squalls in his loch, then round in the evening to L. Inchard,

flat calm and motoring again.

I anchor in Carnus Blair. What is that loud noise of seagulls? It is 0400 and they are on the beach. The tide has ebbed but the wind has come E and I have dragged. I am in 1.5 fathoms and holding now. A hair raising beat to L. Bervie, just across the main loch, in heavy E squalls at 0900 and so through the narrow entrance into a sheltered anchorage - my farthest North. Met a crew who had come from Scrabster in fresh E yesterday, in a Westerly 22.

“Easy to get from Scrabster to Wick through the Pentland Firth in a tide”, these locals said. Could I do it? No: The NE winds were blowing and next day I scooted back past Handa Island and Pt. of Stoer - big seas this time - to Lochinver again. There was the Dutchman and his wife in their big, steel ketch *Lucipapa*, on their way from Holland to St.Kilda. Cruised the Baltic, Norway, Brittany, and five times to the 'West Coast' which he thinks the best. And (nearby) on my doorstep: next day, round Ru Coigach again - plenty of sea but wind free - and into Dornie Bay (Isle Ristol). I seem to be heading South but the Outer Hebrides call and it is Midsummer's Day.



0900, Tuesday, 25 June, on course for Stornoway, wind N by E, 4/5, 3 rolls and working jib. 1140 sighted Eye Peninsula. 1545 anchored opposite the town. Stornoway evening weather reports force 5, and again Wednesday. Thursday morning, NW2/3, anchored Tob Cromore, L. Erisort. Water from the well (better than the stuff they now get through a pipe). The whole family, three generations, took me to their hearts. Evening visits, tea, scones, presents of milk, butter and cheese from their one cow, and there was a salmon in the net that day: two huge steaks waiting in a plastic bag, especially for me (and my pressure cooker).

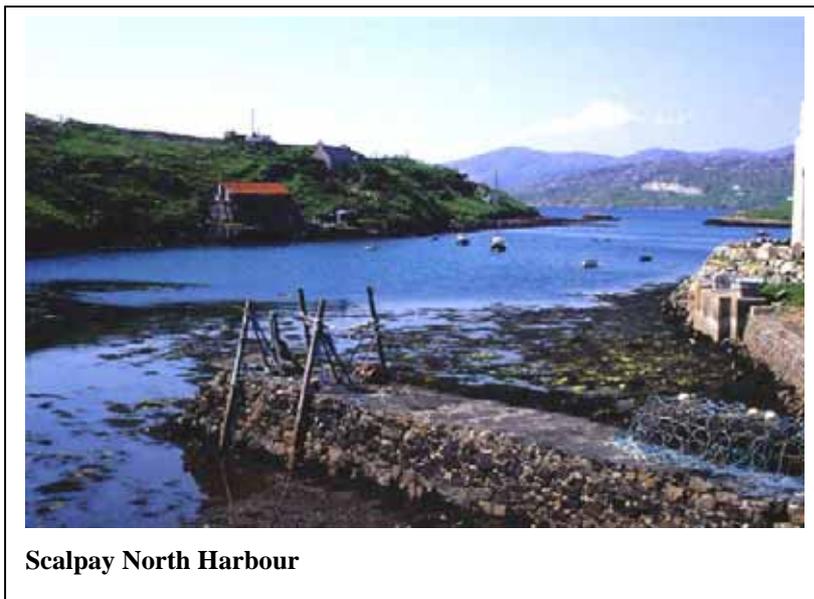
I could hardly tear myself away, but had to see more of the Long Island. So to Gravir in L. Outrn (open to E but the swell never comes so far up:) and a mile walk through Sunday's rain to use the telephone. Next to Tob Limervay in Little L. Shell, then through Shiant Sound and past famous L. Seaforth and its majestic mountains, on a bright, clear morning and on through Caolas Scalpay, finishing with a hard beat into Tarbert, Harris.

A visit to Scalpay North Harbour was irresistible, then next day out through the South Entrance and across the Little Minch. The ebb set my little ship away from that long and dangerous chain of rocks and islets which stretches from the Shiant's across to Skye and separates the Minches. Duntulm Bay, Skye - what an awe-inspiring anchorage is Port Erisco behind Hulm Island, with a swell setting in and a feeling of insecurity as one looks across to Harris and Lewis in the open N. Round Ru Hunish

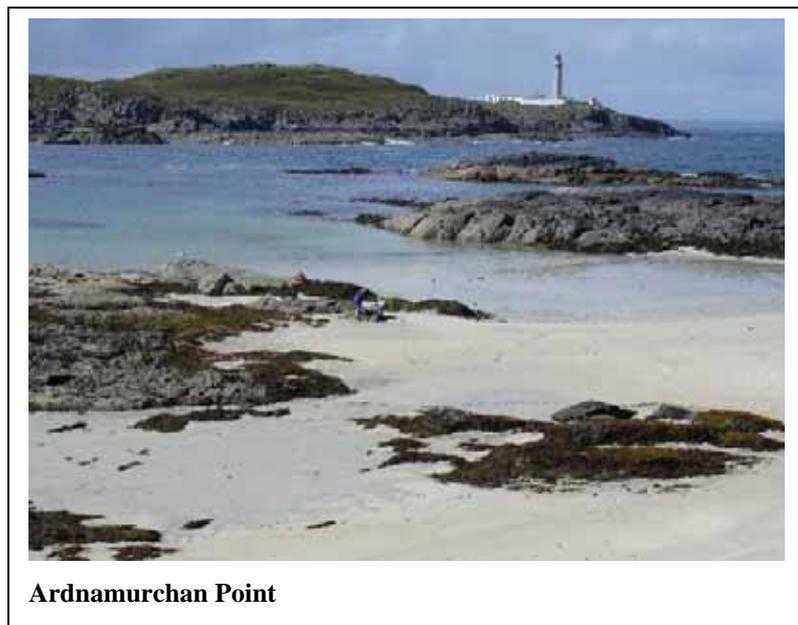
on the swift flood early next morning, with glorious views of the Ouiraing, the Hebrides and the Torridon Mountains, and so to anchor in Badachro for the second time, on July 6.

The rest would be repetition, though in different conditions and a few new anchorages -

Aultbea, L.Ewe, Kyleakin, Mallaig, Puilladobhain, Lochranza, Carradale, Portpatrick. The different overnight harbours and anchorages total 45. The hook has also been down temporarily in Badcall Bay, L.Nedd, Ullapool and Little Horseshoe Bay (Kerrera).



Scalpay North Harbour



Ardnamurchan Point

Serenata is a wonderful sea boat but, of course, does not like going to windward against much sea or tide. The *Vire* has its idiosyncrasies and is used sparingly, but it has made the occasional windward passage possible with sheets tight in, as round Rubh Re, through the Inner Sound of Ramsey, and southwards from Muck to weather

Ardnamurchen Pt. Steering is demanding, singlehanded, but she does heave-to well, even in a big sea, if I am prepared to sacrifice progress, or the considerable fore-reaching happens to be in the right direction.

Serenata reached her home moorings Friday, August 30, having spent her one night at sea on 28th/29 August. The wind headed me on passage from Ramsey and I missed the 2100 tide into Morecambe Bay. Perhaps I could have made it with the *Vire* but the forward drive packed up leaving the Crinan Canal. Another job for the winter.

David Young

Editors note 2011: this brief account covers just one of David Young's many remarkable single-handed cruises in the Irish Sea and around the West Coast of

Scotland. Between 1973 and 1977 alone, he logged over 5,000 miles: not bad for a man who had retired – and who had sold his previous boat in 1939.

From his home port of Knott End-on-Sea in Morecambe Bay, he sailed the bilge-keeler Serenata to Wales, the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland and 17 different anchorages in Southern Ireland, often living afloat for three months or more.

His main cruising ground lay to the North however. No fewer than 130 of the 166 different anchorages he visited in these five years were in Scotland. He calculated in 1978 that he had visited 27 different Scottish islands on 58 occasions. He explored 29 different lochs, anchoring 48 times. He passed through the Crinan Canal four times in this period and reached as far north as the Isle of Lewis and Talmine and the Kyle of Tongue east of Cape Wrath on the northernmost coast of Scotland.

Yet more was to come. In later years he sailed right round the top of Scotland to the Moray Firth and Inverness, returning to Morecambe Bay through the Great Glen, Loch Ness and the Caledonian Canal.

Sadly, it was all to end in 1980. After “eight glorious years of retirement sailing and cruising” he wrote in Trident News, and with more than 10,000 miles under his keel, he had been forced to sell Serenata due to poor health. Severe angina did not prevent him taking commercial cruises to Norway and St Kilda. And he went on the National Trust for Scotland ‘Adventure Cruise’ to Fair Isle aboard the SS Uganda; a ship soon to be heading off for a different kind of adventure in the South Atlantic where it acted as a hospital ship during the Falklands War. And even as he was convalescing from a prostrate cancer operation he had revisited his old Scottish haunts by car with Betty his wife.

After David Young died in 1995, his 1978 entry for the Marcon Log competition was reprinted in Trident News. TOA Vice President Tom Dixon, who had known him well since he joined the TOA in 1973, recalled: “His cruising exploits were held in high regard by the then members of the Association. Following a cruise from Knott End-on-Sea up the West Coast of Scotland, rounding Cape Wrath in gale force winds and returning through the Caledonian Canal, a Special Award was made to him in recognition of this and other cruises.”

In 2007 there were reports that Serenata had been driven ashore in Morecambe Bay and written off. There were also rumours that she had been undergoing restoration in the Fleetwood area but, despite various enquiries, no confirmation of this has been found. The TOA would be glad to hear of any news on the fate of Serenata.