

Chichester to Crosshaven

Saturday 11th Sept to Wednesday 15, 1999

A report of voyage of the Yacht "OASIS" on passage to her new home port

The Crew

Eoghan Allen	Skipper (Minder)
Harry Field	First Mate (Insomniac)
Victor Shine	Chief Engineer
Dermot O'Mahony	Catering Manager (Galley Slave)
Richard Laws	Purser - For a Touch of Class
Bob Thompson	The Old Man and the Sea

The Support Team

Pat Fleming	Assistant First Driver
Triona Ceile	First Driver

On Friday the 10th of September this Gallant Corps was organised at the Douglas Garda Station to conduct a lightning sortie to the Port of Chichester in the Solent to collect "OASIS" the new 40ft Sunfizz acquired by the Cork Garda Sailing Club. With the minimum of protest everybody took their allocated seats, fastened their seat belts (some protest) and agreed not to disturb the sleep of the drivers. Quite literally, before we knew where we were we had crossed from Rosslare to Fishguard and driven to Chichester, arriving two minutes ahead of our 0700 Saturday morning agreed rendezvous. We will allow the brave drivers fill in the gaps.

On boarding OASIS, we found her clean, tidy and almost ready for sea with a few quick jobs to be done by us. Triona and Pat went shopping for the essentials of food, wine and just a little beer. Triona then produced an excellent bottle of bubbly and a fantastic home baked chocolate cake. With those two we set about having a little party to inaugurate the take over of OASIS.



The Pre Departure Party with Triona's Cake. Richard returns from recovering the Champagne Cork

At 1200 we slipped and refuelled at the fuel berth, and then being in all respects ready for sea, we departed Chichester. We slipped out through a lock into the Chichester River and into the equivalent of Piccadilly Circus. Boats everywhere, under sail, motoring, at anchor, and drifting, - literally hundreds of them, all flying their Club Burgees and Ensigns. Not to be outdone, we immediately hoisted the Tricolour and boy did we get looks. Richard demanded that in deference to his heritage that we should also fly a small Union Jack, beneath the Tricolour. The responses varied from the un-printable to "it's on a roll on the back of the heads door".

In hazy conditions and light winds and into the last of the flood we crossed the Chichester Bar to the Solent. Then under sail we started off on the Journey home, which we hoped to make in two legs, Solent to Scilly and Scilly to Crosshaven. The Solent is always a busy place with yachts, Container Ships and Ferries, not to mention the odd hovercraft. We established that while we might have the right of way in certain situations that we would keep out of everybody's way. The two massive concrete structures at the entrance to Portsmouth - fortresses defending the RN HQ - looked quite spectacular as they peered out of the mist at the Irish Yacht infiltrating the defences. We cleared the Solent at 1800, getting a good view of the Needles as we slipped out into a SW force 3.



The Needles

At long last the Culinary Maestro could be persuaded to go below and feed the troops and Dermot in quick time put and excellent spread on the table which was enjoyed by all. It is suspected and an investigation has been initiated to establish which mutinous members of the crew washed it down with a glass of red, dry ship how are you. Straight after that wonderful repast some of the bodies went horizontal and the ship settled into a 3-hour watch pattern.

Southerly winds gave us a good reach in the early part off the evening but that was not to last long as it moved through South-Southwest to SW. We gradually hardened up until close hauled in force 3 to 4. OASIS sailed on, if a little uncomfortably, for the sleeping babes below. Shipping in the area was generally light as we sailed towards Anvil Point and Portland Bill. However, we did see 40-knot, container and passenger vessels. They came out of nowhere and disappeared just as fast. A sharp lookout was essential. We passed Portland Bill at dawn on Sunday Morning.

OASIS powered on for Start Point close hauled, continuing on for the Lizard. Being Sunday, the Skipper read from the Bible for the Crew on the Poop Deck. It was a sad and lonely affair, followed by a few #####s from below as the boat heeled to Starboard, the wind had freshened and the cook's wonderful Spaghetti Bolognaise came crashing out of the oven and was spread in a thin layer all over the deck in the galley. However, let it now be known that Dermot is made of sterner stuff and after his initial un-controlled outburst, he approached the crisis most professionally. A new meal was on the table 30 minutes later and with the exception of a slight taste of varnish, it was the best meal of the trip. By 1700hrs the wind had freshened slightly and we eased helm on to a close reach, just to give her head for a while. All racers need a gallop now and again. The consequence of this, however, was that we ended up inside the Lizard, close to the Manacles and not a million miles from Falmouth. We were not to be diverted any further and with the bit between our teeth we crossed the traffic lanes. I was reminded as I stood in the cockpit in the dark, of the words of that song about the Charge of the Light Brigade, slightly adjusted to suit the situation. "Ships to the right of us, ships to the left of us, ships above us and ships below us, into the valley of death sailed the 6 of us. I would prefer my next visit there to be in daylight.

In the freshening wind which had now gone Westerly we picked a long Atlantic swell, so we woke up the engineer who seemed to be delighted to be gainfully employed for almost the first time since leaving

Chichester. Uneventfully we steamed on, arriving at anchor in St Mary's, Isles of Scilly at 1200hrs Monday, and exactly 48 hours after leaving our berth at Chichester.

We had very precise plans for our time in the Scillies, mostly planning to live like the sailors of old. Debauchery, pillage and plunder were high on the list. Some got the heads down for a few hours after the long journey, while the less experienced went ashore to get in some elbow exercises. That evening we met for a few pints in the Mermaid and dined in that excellent restaurant upstairs. We were back aboard for 0030. Again experience showed itself here. The long in the tooth hit the sack, while the inexperienced and myself sampled that wonderful bottle of amber liquid that Martin had most generously placed at our disposal. This sampling was conducted in different parts of the bottle to ensure consistency. Bless you Martin.

We planned to spend two and a half days in the Scillies, so we all got up early next morning to be off enjoying ourselves. We had worked to get here and now we had earned our break. The skipper went ashore first and got the latest weather details from the Harbour Master. The Skipper, who is somewhat of a sadist, the #####, returned with a smile "Sorry lads, there's a bit of a blow coming in and it will last for a while, we have got a gap for maybe 20 hours, so let's get our ass out of here." A couple of hours later we were on our way in beautiful light conditions, so light in fact that the only way to move the boat was with the engine. The sadist had done us in again. We were clear of the Scillies at 1700hrs on Tuesday. Sailing conditions improved as the evening went on, until at about 2200, in fresh wind, we took in 2 reefs in the main. We were beginning to see the beginning of the weather change. OASIS sailed well and was now in her element with a fresher wind on the beam than we had experienced so far, we cantered along keeping up a good speed. By 0500 we had the Genoa furled and having made up our course to the West we put our stern to the seas and ran for Roches Point. At this stage Cork Radio in poor reception conditions was heard warning of imminent gales in the area Roches Point to Valentia. Our first trace of Home was the Kinsale Head Gas Rigs. We passed about a mile to the West of the Rigs and could only barely make them out in the poor visibility conditions. Now quite a strong sea was running and the following seas were breaking all round. Everybody felt safe and secure with the boat, Harry slept below, the Skipper hit the bunk, and the engineer slept in the cockpit, while Richard was getting ready for the homecoming by trying in vain to tidy up the galley. Bob was overheard saying to Dermot who was on the wheel; for God's sake don't look behind you!



Cox'n Dermot O'Mahony & Victor

I felt Richard shaking me out of my sleep, " Skipper", Richard was always so correct, I guess it's the breeding that they get on the other side, " The coxn's compliments sir, we are 2 miles South of Roches Point". Be right up says I, -----the dream was over; we were at the journey's end. A short hurried journey but a wonderful experience with a mighty crew. New friendships had been established, let us not let it fall away from here. Now is the time to do some real team building, there has to be a strong case for a reunion next summer.

Distance Covered 422 Nautical Miles

Eoghan Allen

