

Part 1

Five men and a gal set out to rediscover the ‘Golden Age’ of sailing aboard the good ship *Sanjula*.

1st July 2026 - Dùn Laoghaire, Ire.

Departure from Gosport was set for 0815, slightly delayed as the crew took a last opportunity to use the marina facilities; we headed out at 0820 (eventually!). The plan was to leave at half flood to take advantage of the early turn of the tide on the island side of the Solent in a determined effort to get around Portland Bill before the tidal stream turned against us.



*David & Catrina capturing the last of England's heatwave on the eve of our voyage -
Photo: Tony Malkin*

Off the Mary Rose buoy, we surprised a seal. We know they are expanding their empire, but this is the nearest to colonising Portsmouth we have seen. The skipper was alarmed. Seals are a meal for orcas, and after the attack on our good yacht *Sanjula* three years ago by killer whales off Cape Finisterre, which damaged the steering after continuously ramming the rudder, he regretted not bringing armed defensive precautions.

Just as well perhaps, because the second priority for our patriotic skipper was to “Keep a lookout for Russian frigates” – not, we believe, to avoid them, but to supplement any shortcomings our own Royal Navy might have these days in telling these barbarian Ruskies just what they can do with their pea shooter when confronting unarmed cruising yachts. We did just that.

Late Sunday afternoon, while our skipper was taking a nap, having spent much of the day knee-deep in the bilge dealing with a bolshy main engine, a grey silhouette emerged

from behind dark clouds, aiming straight for us. Was this the aggressive *Admiral Grigorovich* seeking to protect Putin's ghost oil tankers that had fired a warning shot over a yacht cruising in the English Channel the week before?

A binocular scan suggested it was, and with the strong views of our patriotic skipper still ringing in our ears, we instinctively went into action, giving the Russians what is now termed a 2-degree cruising salute. The vessel didn't dare to respond; instead, altering course to pass passively astern and head into Plymouth Sound.

We can't wait to see Sir Robin's face when the congratulatory telegram arrives from Sir Kier – one of his last acts in office – addressed to our 'True Blue' skipper!

The oily issue in the bilge led us to divert to Falmouth at one point. The engine kept cutting out – seemingly a fuel issue. But *Sanjula's* tanks were full, and the red diesel poured readily through the main filters. One crewman had the temerity to ask when it was last serviced, only to receive a steely stare in response.



*RK-J down in the bilge with Andrew providing tacit support to kick the engine back to life.
Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford*

Three smelly filters were stripped and cleaned in turn; the third was the culprit. A strip-search of the boat located a spare, and just as we approached Saint Andrew's Point on the St Mawe's side of the entrance Channel, when we could smell creamed Moules Mariniere cooking on the stove at the infamous Chain Locker watering hole in Falmouth, the order came to turn round and continue on to Dublin!

Our two heroes had emerged from the bilge triumphant, rightly awarding themselves OBEs for 'Order of the Bolshy Engine'. We sent a message of thanks to *Sanjula's* stalwart shore manager in Falmouth, George Fairhurst, for lining up an engineer to visit the boat first thing on Monday morning.

We soon forgot the Moules. Laurel's home-prepared meatball pasta bake proved a much better culinary delight, washed down with a celebratory glass or two of Pinot Grigio!

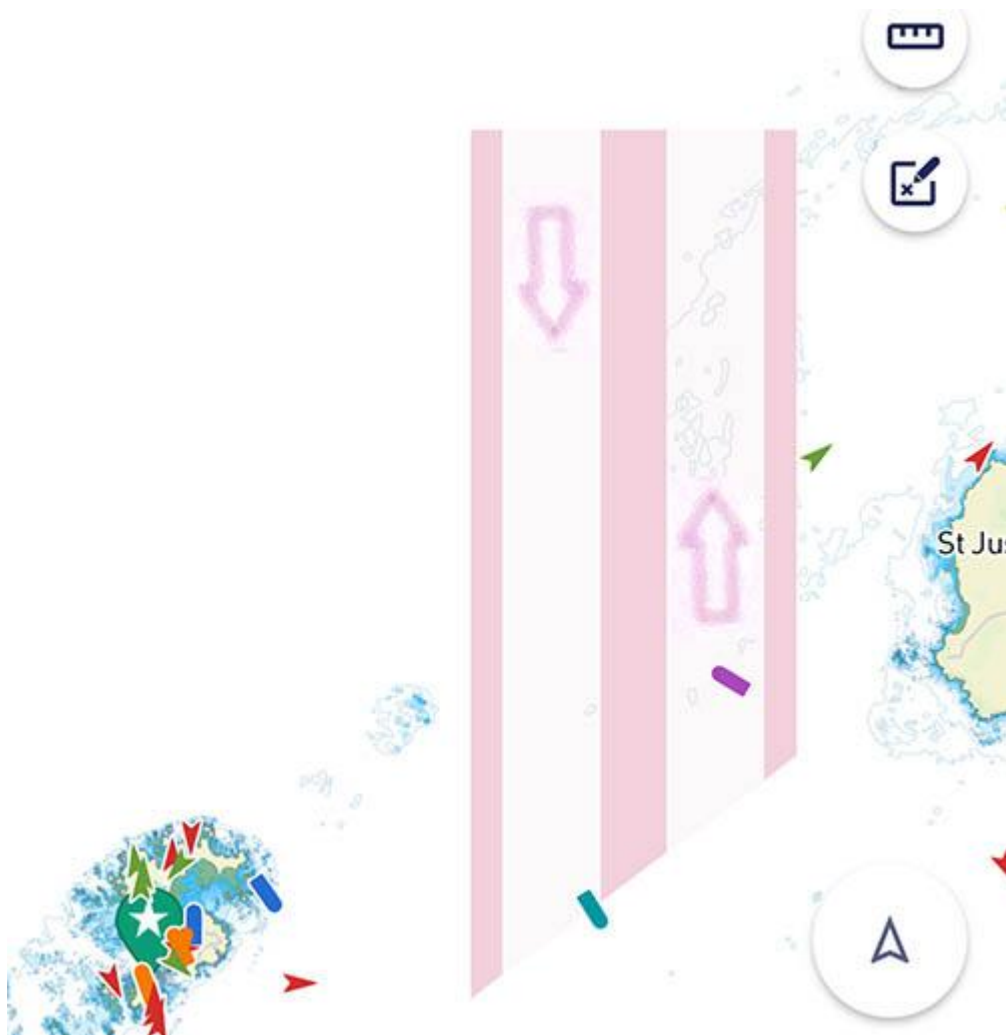
Guinea Pigs 'R -Us: during afternoons, tea is served with delicious cakes, test-baked by our gal using a series of Mary Berry and Delia Smith's historic recipes. Certainly, our Mothers knew a thing or two about cakes long before Mr Kipling!

On this first part of the voyage to join friend Enda O'Coneen's night of celebration at the National Yacht Club in Dùn Laoghaire, Dublin, on 2nd July, when Sir Robin is due to speak in support of the Atlantic Youth Trust, one of the delights has been the wildlife. In particular, the four pods of dolphins (or porpoises – we are not sure which) that have danced around *Sanjula's* bow wave between Christchurch Bay and Land's End. The presence of these inquisitive, playful mammals is confirmation that the English Channel, at least, is clean enough to support a proliferation of sea life.



Dolphin or Porpoise? Sanjula bow wave attracted 4 pods between Christchurch Bay and Lands End. Photo: Tony Malkin

As we rounded Lands End a surprise greeting came over the VHF from one of the Clipper Venture yachts CV9. She was 8 miles astern, her crew seemingly itching for a race, but then inexplicably turned round – perhaps with a deadline back in Gosport to train another group of budding circumnavigators preparing for the next Clipper round-the-world adventure in 2027.



Traffic Separation Zone between Lands End and the Scilly Isles. Photo: Savvy Navvy

The Skipper instructed us to stay close to the east side of the Traffic Separation Zones as we headed north. The zones are like side-by-side bowling alleys in opposite directions to each other, requiring a ship to stay on a straight line. *The Bunds Voyager* entered the north-going channel behind us at 16 knots. Our AIS showed the ship veering right then left, bouncing off the imaginary walls of the zone, like a drunkard on his way home. On clearing the traffic lane just behind us, *the Bunds* turned sharply to starboard, aiming at us before passing our stern by a half mile. Which looked like a lot less in the darkness of the night as she headed up the Bristol Channel. After that encounter, it was a relief to pass into the darkness with no more vessels to track on the AIS



How many men does it take to change a lightbulb? RK-J, Tony, David, Andrew & Barry -

Sanjula safely in Dùn Laoghaire undergoing repairs. Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford

Best wishes from the good ship Sanjula

Sir Robin Knox-Johnston

David Alan-Williams

Andrew Raby

Tony Malkin

Catrina Capon-Telford

Barry Pickthall

Part 2

4th July 2026 - Dùn Laoghaire, Ire.

Dùn Laoghaire, pronounced Dunleery, is a large man-made harbour on the south side of Dublin Bay. It is no longer used commercially and has been taken over by three yacht clubs, the Royal Irish, the Royal St George and the National, where we have been berthed for four days. It is school holidays and the harbour is full of dinghies manned by enthusiastic youngsters. Where are the adult supervisors? There are none. The youngsters run everything, from teenage instructors and supervisors to drivers of RIBs and safety boats. If anyone is wondering how to bring young people into our sport. The example is here.



A fleet of Toppers heads out for a day of youth race training to join other groups of Fireflies, Fevas, Lasers and J80s. Photo: Barry Pickthall

We stopped here while en route to Oban to celebrate another youth initiative: The Atlantic Youth Trust, headed by that ever-enthusiastic Irish adventurer Enda O'Coineen. Last year, he organised the purchase of one of Sir Robin K-J's fleet of 70ft Clipper yachts. Now, after a major refit supported by a plethora of Irish-based sponsors, her young crew, led by Bob Beggs, finished 3rd overall in last week's Round Ireland Race. They received their first silverware at a BBQ hosted by The National Yacht Club to promote its busy programme.



Bob Beggs, Naomh McEihatton and Enda O'Coineen who lead The Atlantic Youth Trust, with RK-J. Photo: Barry Pickthall

Top of the list is a trip this Autumn down to Antarctica, taking a group of youngsters down to Cape Horn, across Drake's Passage and back. What an adventure!



Sir Robin with Enda O'Coineen sharing anecdotes about their Round Ireland record trip aboard the 60ft catamaran British Airways back in 1984. Photo: Barry Pickthall

Their inspiration is Sir Ernest Shackleton, born not far from here at Athy, whose name and portrait are emblazoned along the sides of the yacht. We had the pleasure of visiting the newly opened Shackleton Museum in Athy and learning a little more about this Anglo-Irish polar explorer. Most remarkable was the 175-mile open-water voyage

from Elephant Island to South Georgia he made in their tiny sailing boat , *James Caird*, to organise a rescue for his crew after their ship, *Endurance*, was crushed in the Ice cap. More remarkable still is the fact that after spending several months sheltering under two upturned lifeboats on the windswept ice cap, the remaining crew all survived



Barry, David, Andrew and Tony in stoic pose alongside the statue of Sir Ernest Shackleton outside the museum in Athy.

Is it coincidental that this apparent lothario (in the centre) should have such a mural guarding his back?

Back on *Sanjula*, RK-J was working to get the tender to fire up for the first time in two years. The outboard had failed to spark throughout the voyage to Greenland and back last year. Returning in the afternoon, we explorers were greeted by white smoke and a manic cry of delight as the engine burst into life. The RIB took off on a parade around the harbour, and as it returned, the photographer was called to capture our skipper's beaming face as he produced a final twirl of wake. We got the picture... but then another.moments later, when the engine expired just out of range of a throwing rope.



RK-J returning in triumph at the wheel of Sanjula's RIB ...

We are told it was a momentary lapse caused by a dislodged fuel line and the RIB restarted before being hauled back up into the davits! We will know more about its long-term future once we reach Oban!



...Only for it to conk out moments later - That scowl says it all! Photo: Barry Pickthall

Our skipper, clearly worried about early signs of curry deficiency among the crew, then disappeared into the galley to produce a Murghi (Chicken) curry, accompanied by songs of Indian encouragement.

The crew made a hasty departure for Dublin Central in search of some culture and the statue of Molly Malone



So much for culture...Molly Malone appears 'brassed off' by the unwanted attention given to her assets. Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford



Our four heroes do their best to shield the lady's dignity. Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford

Last night's curry was an unqualified success, and now, fired up by a following wind, we set sail today for Oban, Scotland, in time to welcome the Clipper Round the World Race crews as they complete their penultimate transatlantic leg from Washington, USA. The first arrivals are due to finish on 6-7th July. For latest information, visit:

[Clipper Round The World Race](#)



CHEERS from all aboard the good ship *Sanjula*

Part 3

Five men and a gal set out to rediscover the 'Golden Age' of sailing aboard the good ship *Sanjula*.

Sanjula Blog 3– 06.07.26

Oban – Scotland

The passage couldn't have been easier – a simple 200-mile fetch/reach from Dublin northwards to Oban, all on one tack. The weather, however, has been less hospitable. It began well enough at 09:40 on Saturday with bright sprays of light filtering across Dublin Bay, reflecting the heatwave advancing along the UK south coast, but by the time we had Strangford Lough abeam, the clouds were 50 shades of grey.



50 shades of grey. No, not Tony, still wearing his sunglasses - but the gathering clouds behind. Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford

Forward planning had *Sanjula* catch every tidal gate, and with assistance at times from the iron topsail, she averaged 7 knots to our pit stop in Craighouse Bay on the east side of the Isle of Jura, and arrival in Oban 14 hours ahead of schedule.



Sanjay's route from Dublin to Oban - all on one tack: Photo Garmin

Helped no doubt by a few drams of Lamaby Isle Whiskey presented to our Skipper by Dublin's National Yacht Club shortly before departure, we six have been reflecting on the royal Irish welcome and hospitality we received during our 4-day stay on the Emerald Isle.

If anyone is wondering how to run a yacht club, come here. On weekdays, Ireland's youth and their coaches are in ascendancy, with groups scattered across the harbour either learning to sail, perfecting their racing prowess, or simply performing playful jumps from the quay.

At lunchtimes, the bar and terrace are bustling, Guinness is on tap, and the locals treat visiting yachties like lifelong friends....Same in the evenings, when the BBQ is inevitably lit to feed well-attended talks, and the harbour hosts sunset racing for one class or another. On Friday, after the offshore fleet had set off on the Kingstown to Queenstown race (Dùn Laoghaire to Cork in modern language), the Club hosted three events: A wedding, a wake and a formal dinner!

This is a club bubbling with enthusiasm - and Irish hospitality.



Sanjula moored up at the very hospitable National Sailing Club in Dún Laoghaire Photo: Barry Pickthall

Oysters R'US

During our stay, we were introduced to a promising experiment being conducted by volunteers from The Green Ocean Foundation and Dublin University to use oysters to clean the waters within Dún Laoghaire harbour. The programme began 2 years ago with the introduction of 200 spat being groomed for stardom in cages on the end of pontoons in Dún Laoghaire marina. Now they have 18,000 of these local crustaceans breeding happily in a half-mile long line of plastic cases, not to be eaten, but to filter unsocial elements from the waters.

“Are you worried about stealing?”

“No” replied Rear Commodore Andrew Colins, wearing a wicked grin. “We would soon have the culprit – They would be in hospital having their stomach pumped!”

These first 18,000, are capable of cleaning 1.25 billion litres of water a year... And with an equal number planned to be placed in Graystone and Malahide next year, the project expects to record a measurable improvement in water quality very soon.



Volunteers from the Green Ocean Foundation turning the oyster cages over to clean off weed, and to monitor the water quality. Photo: Barry Pickthall

“A female oyster can spawn up to 1.5 million tiny larvae each year and the team is collecting as many as possible” Colins explained, adding: “The hope is to develop a safe, secure and healthy environment in which the spats have a better chance of surviving to maturity. We are giving nature the opportunity to clean the waters leading to better light penetration to enable the regrowth of sea grasses and regenerate the oyster population to a level not seen in Dublin for the past 200 years

Back at sea

After rounding the Mull of Kintyre, we reached Craighouses in poor visibility and slanting rain around midday on Sunday to anchor in the Loch Na Mile Bay to the North.



*No-go areas! Loch Na Mile Bay and Lowlandsman Bay - poor ground to anchor in.
Photo: Navvy Savvy.*

The wind was gusting 29 knots, the bottom was unreceptive to the grasp of the anchor and we slowly dragged across the bay. The previous year the same had happened in Lowlandsman Bay, the smaller Bay to the north. This almost ended in a grounding as there was a critical steering failure as the boat dragged towards the beach. These two lochs are mud and kelp bottom, and anchor bearings have to be watched or avoid these two seemingly secure anchorages. None of us were happy, so we decided to leave and

head directly to Oban. The wind , a prime cause for Sanjula's dragging, died of course as soon as we were back in the Sound of Jura ,though not for long. Approaching the infamous Corryvreckan with its swirling waters and rocky outcrops invisible in the mist, the wind rose to Force 7 driving us in to the "interesting" Sound of Luing at 11.2 knots over the ground , indicating the strength of the tidal stream under our keel.



The swirling waters in the Sound of Luing. Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford

David was on watch happily enjoying the speed until the wind dropped suddenly once the Corryvreckan was behind us. It came back to punch Sanjula again as we worked our way through the rocks surrounding the Sound of Luing, blessing the Raymarine plotter which kept us safe in the misty conditions. How did we ever navigate before the arrival of satellites. Our Skipper muttered something about Sextants, but even in his capable hands, he had difficulty explaining how he would have used one when visibility is close to zero!



Our reliable Raymarine plotter, Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford

We exited the Sound and set course for Oban, a day early to moor up in the Town Marina with the assistance from the Sea Cadet training vessel John Jerwood, for which we thank her crew.



Sanjula safely in Oban Town marina. Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford

How many men does it take to change a compass lightbulb?

That was the question posed last week when the compass light seemingly blinked for the last time. Five of us put our heads together and finally solved the problem. Rich Du

Moulin gets the prize for the first correct answer...One man to hold the bulb while the other four turn the boat round!



Photo: Catrina Capon-Telford

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