DASH THROUGH THE CRINAN **Date: 1/08/16**

Boat Name ANNIE C
Crew Laurence Mc Veigh
Annie Mc Veigh (author)
Conor Mc Veigh
John Coyle

We had a week to cruise from Ballycastle to Ghiga to the Crinan and through the canal for Campbeltown and home. But our journey starts in Ardglass were our boat "Annie C" is moored, Dad (Larry) and John Coyle (Family friend) set of to Glenarm on Saturday and then on up to Ballycastle on the Sunday to give us a head start.

Monday…

Conor and I joined the trip on the Monday morning, the weather was fair with a nice even breeze but little sunshine. We set our course for Ghiga, on the west coast of Scotland.
We past Rathlin and then set on a beam reach, which stayed with us until it backed more and lightened a fair bit, eventually leaving us on a flat sea with gorgeous sunshine. On our way we saw at least 6 pods of dolphin and to our surprise a whopping 20ft basking shark which was the first shark I've ever seen. We motored into Ardminish Bay which we picked up a visitors mooring boy. Me and Conor pumped up the dingy and headed for land which we found 1 shop 2 houses and a restaurant with we bought coke, vimto and 2 bottles of beer. We were told to go quiet and slow on the dinghy but who ever actually does that.

Tuesday…
We woke to sunshine and a gentle breeze and after breakfast we headed for the island, all of us, me dad and Conor headed for a walk around the tropical gardens while john hired a bike to cycle around the island. We met up an hour or so later and had treats and coke, and coffee for

Dad at the boat house café before heading back out to the boat.
We cast of from the mooring in late morning and set out to find our way to Crinan.
The weather had change a bit, we still had the good breeze which was coming from behind us, but we had lost the sunshine.
We again were lucky and seen dolphins a couple of times, and even though there looked like there was rain all around us we seemed to avoid it, but it meant that we didn't get a good luck at the coast as we sailed past.
We arrived up to the lock at the Crinan basin to discover that we had just made the last opening this evening, something Dad and John hadn't really thought of, but at least we got in.

It was very busy in the little basin as a lot of people had got in before us and also a lot of boats had come the other way and were waiting till morning to go out.
We got tying up against another yacht, but didn't get to plug into electric, which left me worried about my phone.
Up to the hotel for our food and Dad and John had a couple of beer. When Dad asked about the journey through the canal we started to get worried as people seemed to think it would take longer than a day to get through it.

Wednesday…

The morning was wet, with the promise of wet all day, Dad went to chat to the girl at the lock gate and we were allowed to jump the que a bit as he said we were in a rush.
We had never done this before so we were very excited to see what all happens, we watched the first 3 boats head into the lock and then out after the water flood in, and then it was our turn.
Because of the heavy rain we were on our own for the first few gates, this left us with all the winching. But Conor and I managed after we were shown what to do, john would driver the boat, Dad would catch the lines and tie up, ad we would do the winding, then Dad helped us push the big gates across.
Still everybody said we wouldn't get through in a day, but Dad and John thought we could because not many people were doing the trio because the rain was so heavy.
For lunch we had soups and sandwiches, we ate them while we motored up the canal, not stopping until we got to the next gates.
About halfway through we teamed up with a boat that also wanted to get out through today, so we all worked together and got to the last lock 15 minutes before they closed for the day.

Once they let us out we followed the other boat to Tarbet, they knew the way and Dad was happy just to motor behind them in the rain to get there.
And as is normal as soon as we tied up in the marina, the rain stopped.
We kept our wet sailing gear on and went up to the nearest hotel and ordered our dinner, we put our wet clothes on their radiators and got them sort of dried.

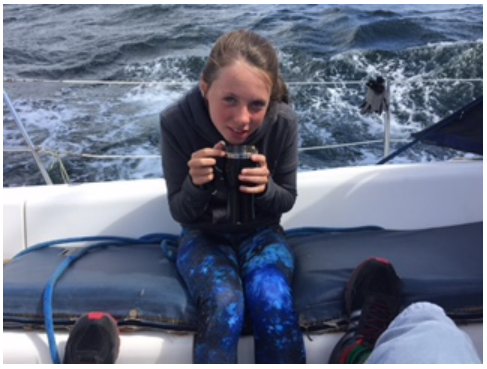
Afterwards Dad and I went to the shop and bought ice cream and treats and brought it back to the boat for supper
Dad and John were happy because if we hadn't tried to get through the canal we would have just sat about all day and watched the rain.

Thursday…

Next morning Dad took Conor and me up and bought some cheap waterproof trousers for us as ours were just too small, we went to the shops and bought some pressies for Granda And Eabha, and got back to the boat to see what we were doing next.
Dad and John listened to the weather and said that there was bad weather coming on Sunday and that we should get closer to home so we could see what to do.

So we decided to go to Campbeltown.
The sun was shining and it was nice and breezy, we got all the sail out and flew along for the best days sailing yet. The wind was blowing between 22 and 28 kts all day but it was coming from behind and we were on a broad reach all day. And the sun didn't stop shining all day either.
Only when we had to turn to starboard to get up the last bit to Campbeltown did the wind feel really strong because we were beating into it.

When we got to the marina it was very busy, Dad tried a couple of times to go into spots but they were reserved but then the manager came down and sorted us out.
We got to use the best showers ever and we went upto the big hotel and had Fish and chips for diner.



Dad and John talked to all the boat people and they were all getting ready to go back to Ireland as the bad weather was coming for a few days.

Friday…

Dad and John got up early and left the marina while Conor and I stayed in our bunk. It was decided the night before if the weather held up we would head straight to Ardglass, but if it didn't look that good we would just aim to get the boat back to the Irish coast, that way we could get it home easier when the weather was better.
When we got up we were away still had Scotland behind us but now we could see land ahead also. Instead of the wind this morning, we had very calm weather, with just small waves from the sea. But this didn't last, as it started to build up the further we got across, but the wind and the sea, it was the first time that we all didn't feel great the whole trip.
By the time we got close to Belfast lough, it was blowing really hard and then the engine started to make funny noises and then stopped. After a while Dad and john decided to sail into Belfast lough and Bangor marina to get diesel. As soon as we decided to sail into this lough the wind completely died, it then took us 3 hours to get in, we sailed right upto the diesel berth, we all got to go up and walk about for a little while, then we talked about what to do next.

The weather wasn't too bad now, so we decided to go on ahead to Ardglass, and at least the boat would be home. Once we got out of Belfast lough the sun came out and the wind was perfect for a beam reach, we flew down the coast for a couple of hours. But this didn't last, the sunshine stayed right up to 10pm, but the wind died before we got as far as Strangford, so the last 10 miles or so we had to motor. Nobody really minded, we had supper, noodles in a cuppa soup, then treats, we also seen dolphins outside Strangford lough,(I think we seen them every day except the day we went through the canal).
When we got to Ardglass it was dark, but we didn't mind because we were home and didn't have to think about the bad weather that was gonna come tomorrow.

Saturday…

We got up and had breakfast in the café beside the marina, we sat and talked abouyt the good trip we had, and then we started to plan next years trip.
Conor and I would like to go to france or spain on the boat, but I think Dad is sticking with Scotland for next year.

We went back and tidied the boat, met up with Granda, talked, went crab fishing, ate treats and had a good day about the marina.

(Think John has had enough of us !!!)