

Cruising from Poole to Western Scotland with a Sealine SC35

I retired and bought our first boat a Sealine SC29, a trip to Dartmouth and a week sleeping in the rear cabin or post box as we called it told us if we were going to keep this up a larger boat would be required.

So back to the Sealine Dealer and a trade in for a new SC35 was negotiated, at first it seemed huge especially when approaching marinas. With this new boat I hoped we had the potential to go further than the normal cruising grounds from Poole but initially we enjoyed trips to the West Country and Channel Islands as we built up our experience and gained confidence in the boat.

So the idea of heading up to the West Coast of Scotland grew and after further encouragements



from the staff on the “Visit Scotland” stand at the Southampton boat show it moved towards a reality. The challenge could be the weather especially as we planned to set off in early May, we had lived in Scotland for many a year so did know this could backfire badly and Sheila my wife was most concerned on this one.

So how did we start to plan, well first of all we put together a high level route which we would like to achieve all things going well. From this we started to build up information which would help us. The Clyde Cruising Club Guides for the different areas of Scotland were excellent and although being aimed at sailors helped us greatly at the planning stage and for the duration of the trip. Visit Scotland produced some excellent material especially covering the Caledonian and Crinan Canals areas which were in our high level plan. Also I went back through my boating magazines and cut out all those articles which could be relevant to our trip and this provided another excellent source of information. You do have to be careful with all this information that it does not become too daunting when presented all at once whereas on a day to day basis it is all very manageable.

Preparing the boat was of course the other important task but really the boat is more than capable of the task planned as long as the maintenance is up to date and you keep up with all those little tasks which build up. One area which did require attention however was storage, although there were only going to be two of us on the boat for such a trip you can never have enough storage space. Extra lockers were manufactured and dropped into void spaces and wire drawer units were installed in the second cabin. This work really paid off as now we stood a chance of finding our many possessions and especially as we had to take clothing to cover all seasons.

The other important area was communication and like most people now we wanted to be able to access the internet during our trip without the bother of searching for free Wi Fi which often has its limitations. In particular I wanted to be able to access current weather forecasts as so often with a motorboat you can take advantage of short weather windows to make progress. The solution was a mobile Wi Fi device and this really surprised us as it never let us down, even moored up in the middle of nowhere in the Crinan canal we had a good signal. It was just so good to know you could reliably get online, keep in touch and even pay a few bills which never stop coming in even when you are away from home.

I had agreed with Sheila that after about 30 days she should take a trip home and have a some days off and catch up on a few things. So on our arrival at Largs flights were booked at a very reasonable cost with Flybe to Southampton and Sheila headed off. Sheila got this right as in her absence we had the worst 3 days of weather of the complete trip it rained and rained and Largs was getting less attractive by the hour. Still it was a good move and Sheila came back rested and ready for the next leg up the West coast of Scotland.

We did not book any marinas in advance but would often ring the night before to check availability but there was never a problem, again there was an excellent free Marina guide called "Welcome Anchorages" available with all the information you required which is published annually and available on line.

Anyway back to the great day of departure and we headed off west to make it around Lands End so we could head north where Scotland did seem a long way off at this stage. The preparation and



talking about the trip had been going on a while so it was great to be on our way. I will not try and cover the complete trip as this has been done many times in the magazines but just mention a few of the memorable moments. Transiting the Caledonian and Crinan Canals and the numerous locks was a great experience helped by the friendly and helpful lock keepers. However on the Caledonian Canal beware of the many charter boats, when you see a 30 foot charter boat heading

your way flying the skull and crossbones with the crew of lads all holding a beer in their hand it really is time to take precautions, this turned out ok but we were struck by a charter boat where the lady advised me we should have "parked" somewhere else, I will not repeat the rest of the conversation.

Tobermory was a delight and helped by the sunshine on the coloured quayside houses closely followed by our stays off Islay and Jura and the mandatory distillery tours and subsequent sampling. We really were so fortunate with our weather and rounded the Mull of Kintyre with a flock of Gannets swooping under our bow with glassy seas.



The trip up the coast to Scotland was also an experience as we took in Wales, Isle of Man and Northern Ireland. Our visit to Douglas IOM had an exciting start as harbour control requested we wait for a bridge to be lifted as they were busy with the inbound mainland ferry. We watched it come in and I was admiring the skill of the professionals as she spun round and went astern in her berth, regrettably this was followed by much noise and steel dropping into the water as she demolished the fender structure to guide her. This reminded me of one of my early attempts at berthing in Cobbs Quay. Next day it was all the news on the Island but it was time to get the bike out and cycle around the TT circuit, I learnt from this it is a lot easier on a motor bike climbing out of Ramsey than on a push bike.

We had decided we would not retrace our steps home but have Hector shipped back by truck to Poole from Largs. We had quotes before we left from companies in the South but on the outward call at Largs we saw an advertisement in the marina magazine by a boat shipping company so thought it worthwhile to give them a call, a good move as they offered a very competitive quote based on securing a return load. When we were near the end of the trip we contacted them and all it all worked out well, proved a significant saving and they provided excellent service.

When the adventure was over and Hector was loaded onto the truck in Largs Marina and we waved goodbye it was hard to imagine the next day it would be arriving back in Cobbs Quay where at 10:00 hrs on schedule it came in through the gates, a little grubby from the trip but all was well.

So in conclusion we both really enjoyed the 8 week trip, we were fortunate with the weather and emerged relatively unscathed. Perhaps to Sheila's despair this got me thinking of perhaps a trip to the Baltic in a year or so. I am just finishing off this article en route to the Baltic, we are presently just about to leave the Netherlands and head along the German coast in the direction of the Kiel Canal but this will be another story and if it takes me as long to write this one as for the Scottish trip it will be a while.

The Route to Scotland from Poole

Poole, Fowey, Falmouth, Padstow, Milford Haven, Pwllheli, Holyhead, Douglas IOM,

Bangor NI, Ballycastle NI, Largs



Cruise Route for the West Coast of Scotland and Lochs

Largs, Tarbert, Dunardy, Oban, Ballachulish, Gairloch, Fort Augustus, Inverness, Invergarry, Corpach, Loch Aline, Tobermory, Mallaig, Kyle of Lochalsh, Salen, Craobh, Craighouse, Port Ellen, Lamlash, Portavadie, Port Bannatyne, Largs.



Article by Roger Wilson.