

## **Cruising Logs Reviews 2026**

**Adjudicator: Fiona Hicks**

Three logs were submitted:

Ed Wheeler – comprising a goodbye to Witchcraft of Howth and hello to Compass Rose

Max Boyd – Evenstar from Strangford Lough to West Highland Week and Back

Rory Flannigan and Lewis Steven – Sophia to Belfast and Back

One Memories: Introduction to Cruising on Blazer – Anne Hicks

When I said to Gill that I would judge the log competition this year I was in my mind getting the opportunity to read some tales of distant voyages to places I fondly remember around Ireland and Scotland's west coast. As the days went by there were desperate calls in TellTales and the Cruising WhatsApp group from Gill for logs to be submitted. By that psychic link that exists, usually between twins, but in this case sisters, my sister Annie sent in a submission of memories, entitled My Introduction to Cruising, she was clearly saddened by the lack of other logs. Some of the memories may differ, as they say, but her recalling how I tried to plot our position using a sextant as we ploughed up the Irish Sea after leaving Strangford Lough was true. When my dad asked where we were, roughly, I asked did he have any charts of the North Sea as we appeared to be somewhere off Edinburgh. I never did master the art even after completing the Yachtmaster Ocean Theory course.

However, in due course we ended up with three very different logs. Not the traditional type most of us were used to compiling, when we sat our Yachtmaster exams, as Gill reminded me with all the electronic gadgetry these days, detailed logs are no longer 'a thing'. I can only hope that people do put a fix on a paper chart or note it down from time to time – how embarrassing it would be to get in difficulties and the last position you remember being the Oban Inn the night before!

### **Witchcraft and Compass Rose – a Tale of Two Boats and Two Cruises**

The first log and the one most akin to the traditional was submitted by Ed Wheeler. It starts on the sad notes about the damage to his Contessa 35, Witchcraft of Howth, caused when she fell over during a storm on the hard at Copelands Marina and then suffered the fate of having another boat fall on her during a second storm. Owned jointly with Winkie Nixon and Harry Whelehan originally, Ed had owned her outright since 2006 so when she was sold Ed admits to being quite emotional. The cure was happily not too far off, and Ed was off in search of a replacement: "she must have good sailing qualities

and not be ugly". Ed talked his nephew Keith into going joint ownership and they bought a Sadler 25, suitable Ed reckons for "gunkholing in drying harbours and creeks" rather than long distance cruises of which we know Ed has done several.

Ed and Keith picked Compass Rose up in Poole on 25th April and after provisioning set off and arrived at Lulworth Cove, a lovely spot, for the first night. Their voyage then took them round Portland Bill, in close to avoid the race. However, the first snag appeared shortly thereafter when Ed ended up wearing breakfast due to the cooker gimbals jamming. There were a few more hiccups but with a good breeze they made it round Start Point and into Salcombe. The delivery trip continues via Plymouth where minor problems were sorted, Keith jumped ship and was replaced by Ed's son James.

A good forecast persuaded Ed to head straight for Ireland instead of a longer cruise and they headed for Arklow. Fresh winds gave them a bit of hassle with the furling genoa, soon sorted, and with mostly fair tide they arrived into a busy Arklow marina.

The northerly winds delayed the next leg of the delivery and after a week Robin McKelvey joined Ed in Arklow. They headed off and overnighted in Howth and then with "an entirely uneventful but almost windless passage" they arrived in Compass Rose's new home in Ballydorn at 21:00 Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> May.

The second half of the log recounts Ed's single-handed trip on Compass Rose from Strangford up to Rathlin, taking in overnights in Ballyholme Bay and Glenarm. Ed was joined in Rathlin by Robin again. Bad weather arrived so instead of heading round to Donegal, Plan A, they headed up to Islay, Plan B. The following days they visited Port Ellen, Ardmore Island and Craighouse where refreshment was enjoyed in the Hotel. A gentle start, "ghosting up inside the Small isles" turned into a boisterous sail to Craignish and then a berth in Ardfern. The weather did not play ball, and the decision was made to take the Crinan Canal. Next stop was Loughgilphead. More adverse forecast and so on Ed's birthday 1<sup>st</sup> July they exited the Canal and took a night passage down Kilbrannan Sound and by 08:00 were anchored in Knockinelder Bay waiting for the tide to turn in the narrows. Safely back in the Dorns, Compass Rose had racked up 725 miles for delivery and cruising trips. A lot more compact than Witchcraft, Compass Rose appears to perform well so long as there is not too much windward work.

### **Evenstar - Elan 40 – Max Boyd and family - a bit of racing and a bit of cruising**

This grabbed my attention straight away as it starts with lively RS Elite racing at Killyleagh Regatta. Back at the Quoile after the regatta, the Boyd family's Elan 40 Evenstar was loaded up for the trip up to West Highland Week. At this stage I have to say that Max's English teacher must be very happy with him as the descriptive narrative is so alive. He describes leaving the Quoile at 6:00 and the Lough "was glassy and still, the kind of dawn that feels like a secret". Evenstar motored most of the way to Glenarm but picked up a

breeze and were able to sail a “perfect passage, balanced, steady, effortless”. Who doesn’t want one of those every cruise? Next day dolphins escorted Evenstar up to Gigha where Max had a swim. Another outstanding sail took them up the Sound of Jura to Ardfern with speeds logged at over 9 knots. Ardfern was wet so the boom tent was employed. Evenstar met up with friends in Ardfern and they travelled in convoy to Craobh Haven for the start of West Highland Week.

West Highland Week was well enjoyed apparently, they “fully embraced the madness”. I can equate to that! There was a passage race to Oban, in the rain, and they finished up at Kerrera Marina. There followed what appears to have been a standard WHW party, singing dancing and being carried around in a life raft – probably best not to ask. More racing and arrival at Tobermory after a successful day on the water – a 2<sup>nd</sup> place. A great time was had by all in Tobermory until the curse of Scottish cruising kicked in. As soon as Evenstar left the harbour for the start of the trip home, the rain settled in as Max puts it – “not dramatically stormy, just relentlessly wet.”

Then the wind turned into the south. Max reckons it was Tobermory punishing them for leaving. It was bad enough that his Dad decided to stop off in Oban. Next port of call was Puilladobhain as the weather cleared for a lunch stop then to Carsaig Bay on a beautiful still evening. The next leg south was to Gigha, another damp passage, a picnic stop off the north end and then overnight in Ardmish on the basis that the welcome was so warm on the way north it would be a pity not to revisit.

The home stretch was punctuated with a stopover in Chapel Bay, Copelands giving good timing for the tide into Strangford and the spinnaker was actually deployed on this leg towards home. Back at Evenstar’s home mooring at the Quoile the Boyd family of 5 had cruised and raced around 500 miles. This log was bringing back many memories to me, both of WHW and West Coast of Scotland weather. Thank you, Max.

### **Sophia – Sonata Rory Flannigan and Lewis Steven**

As my introduction to cruising was a Nicholson 43, I’m not sure I can imagine what cruising in a Sonata is like. Rory makes it sound slightly grimmer by starting his log with “Sophia was stripped out by her previous owners” . “He never meant to go to sea”, to misquote Arthur Ransom, it was never Rory’s intention to go cruising, however, his partner Lewis was so keen to give cruising a go that they started off on a one-night cruise to Belfast Harbour. Rory being Rory couldn’t resist the temptation for once to witness his friends instead of himself, working at mark laying at a dinghy event at Ballyholme. After spectating a bit Rory and Lewis set sail under main with the outboard lifted up and headed towards Grey Point. After giving Lewis a few steering tips, Rory left him at the helm and prepared their picnic lunch. It was a warm day with a breeze in the northeast.

They sailed on up the Lough, taking a close line past Royal North and impressing their friends on shore with a text book gybe.

Lewis is obviously a natural, he was able to hold the boat steady while Rory lowered the main and got the engine into position for the motor up the channel. After getting clearance from Belfast Harbour VTS they motored up to the marina. A new experience to both so lines and fenders were readied in good time only to be rapidly rearranged when the expected berth was unavailable – Plan B. All sorted they were soon relaxing with a chilled beer next to Ken and Debbie Hunter’s Juniper.

The next day the reality of cruising adverse weather – choppy seas and the easterly wind up to 16 kts funnelling up the channel was a challenge for Sophia’s 3.3HP outboard. Once out of the channel the waves were less bothersome, but the wind was still firmly in the east and Lewis was back on the helm for the trek back to Bangor. By Grey Point the sea flattened and a look in at Brompton was possible. A short turn round the corner and Sohia was back in her Bangor Marina Berth.

Rory recommends Belfast Harbour Marina and both he and Lewis enjoyed their maiden cruise in Sophia. Well done, Rory and Lewis and good luck with your next adventures.

Thank you to all three of you for submitting your work and cruising tales.