

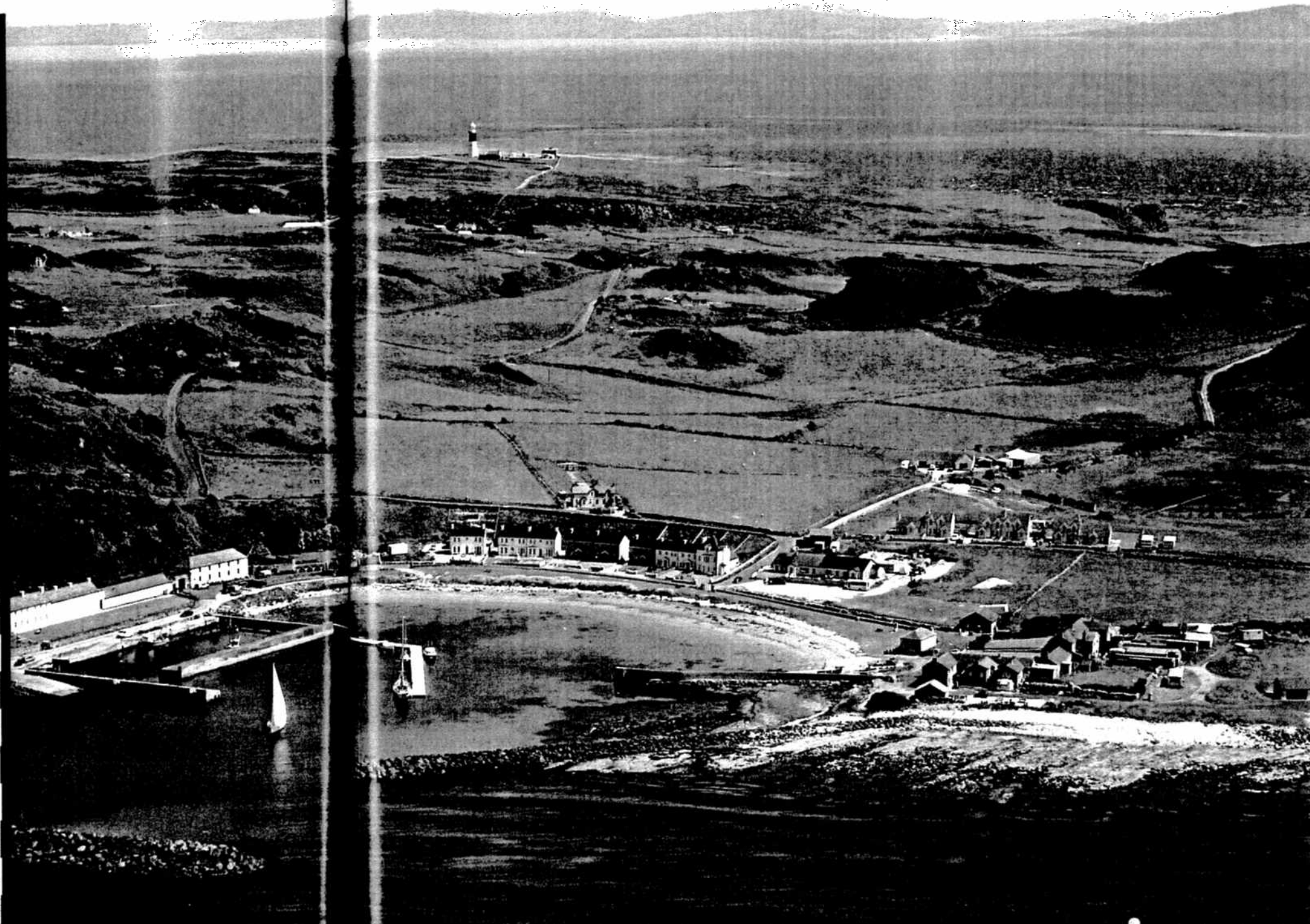
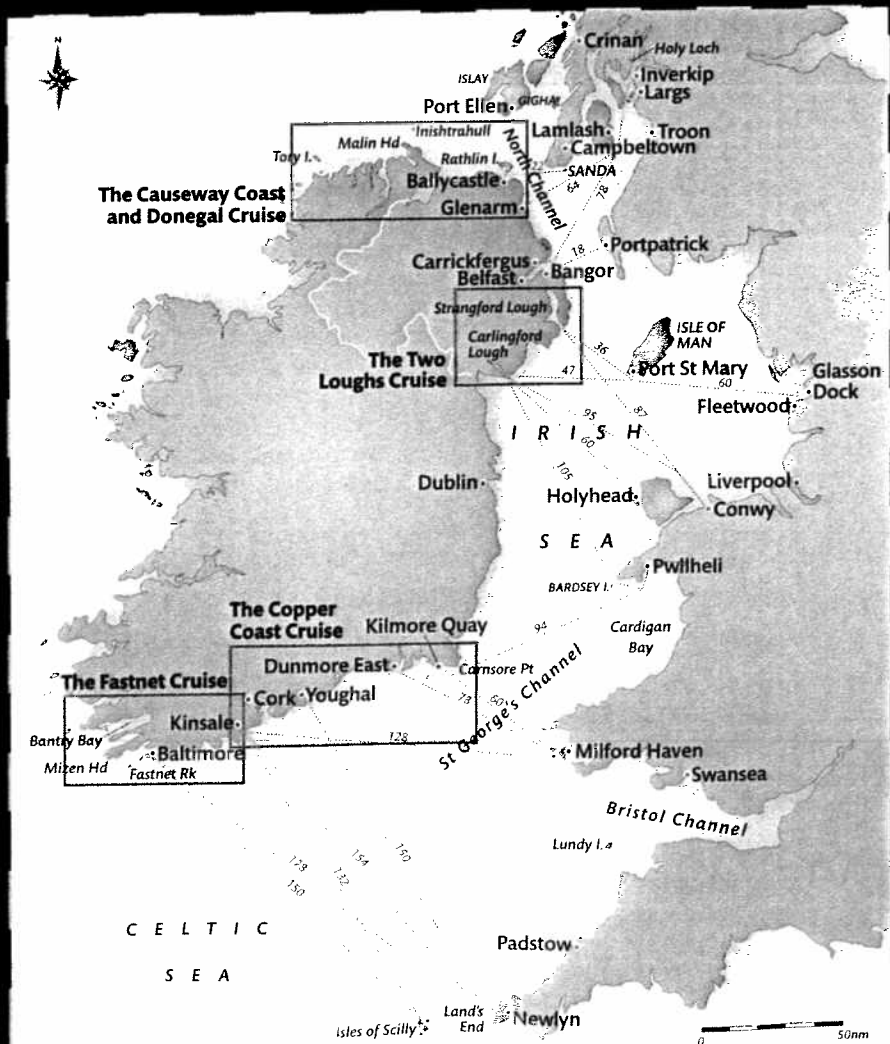
Norman Kean cruises and researches the entire coast of Ireland in his role as editor of the Irish Cruising Club's acclaimed pilot books. Here, he presents four cruising plans to help YM readers embark on a magical voyage of discovery in Irish waters

Ireland is only a short voyage from Cornwall, Wales and, especially, Scotland. The last time *Yachting Monthly* pointed her bows at the Emerald Isle (*Fifty Good Reasons to cruise Ireland*, July 2007), we gave some compelling answers to the question 'why cruise in Ireland?'

Is the crossing straightforward, or are there hidden hazards? Where are the best jumping-off points? What are the harbours and anchorages like? Are the famous headlands, Malin and Mizen, tigers or pussycats? Where are the best places to visit, the best sights to see, the best pubs and restaurants? We'll tell you where to get things fixed when they break, the best places for crew changes, and where to leave the boat if you have to. Here are four recommended itineraries, any of which will fit comfortably into ten days on the Irish coast.



MAIN PHOTO: Rathlin Island  
ABOVE: Beautiful beaches are often deserted  
LEFT: Live pub music sessions are part of Ireland's appeal



# 4 ways to cruise Ireland

**SAIL FROM CORNWALL**

# The Fastnet Cruise



**M**ost yachts crossing from Cornwall make their landfall at Crosshaven or Kinsale. There is a certain logic in aiming further west, since if you start at Baltimore you can shape a cruise almost regardless of wind direction. But we will start at Kinsale. It is accessible in all weathers and tides and by day or night – the lighthouse on the Old Head can be seen 20 miles out to sea. The shortest crossing is 132 miles from Scilly, but if coming from the south coast of England, the best departure point is Newlyn.

If the weather pushes you east or west on passage, there are plenty of good alternative landfalls on the Irish coast. Tides are a minor consideration on the Celtic Sea, although it is useful to catch the north-going stream at Land's End.

**COURTMACSHERRY AND GLANDORE**  
After a relaxing lunch in Kinsale on Day One, shape a course out for the Old Head.

**WEATHER FORECASTS**

The standard UK Shipping Forecast for sea areas Malin, Irish Sea, Lundy and Fastnet has it covered. Belfast Coastguard broadcasts the Inshore Waters forecast for Lough Foyle to Carlingford Lough. The sea area forecast from Met Eireann, covering the whole of Ireland, is usually more detailed and specific than the UK Shipping Forecast, but its format may catch the visitor unawares. There are no standard sea areas – the coast is divided up on an *ad hoc* basis. If you don't know where Rossan Point, Howth Head and Valentia are (for instance), you won't make much sense of it. The Irish Coastguard broadcasts the Met Eireann forecast, and both Irish and British forecasts go out on Navtex.

If the weather is very settled, and the tide is well up, you may be lucky enough to be able to take your dinghy and explore the caves that penetrate right through the headland. Steer west for Courtmacsherry, a delightful unspoiled village at the head of the bay to the west. An alongside berth is usually available, and there are good pubs and a fine restaurant at the hotel, but pay close attention to the sailing directions, for the channel is narrow!

The following day, press on for Glandore and Union Hall, on a beautiful wooded inlet

## 'Why not make your way up to Glengarriff, probably the prettiest anchorage in Ireland'

20 miles to the west. Glandore is a village of upmarket second homes, almost unbearably picturesque, but Union Hall is a much more down-to-earth fishing port that has a wonderful fish shop with very reasonable prices. The extraordinary Drombeg stone circle, dating from 100BC, is a mile or two from Glandore, and the eccentric Ceim Hill museum is just outside Union Hall. You may be tempted to linger in Glandore Harbour, but the alternative is Castle Haven, a few miles west. The village of Castletownshend, on a single street sloping steeply up from the harbour, was the home of Somerville and Ross, the authors of the 'Irish RM' stories, which became a Channel 4 TV series in the 1980s. Mary Ann's, halfway up the hill, is an

Approaching North Harbour on Cape Clear Island

outstanding pub and restaurant.

The coastwise tides here are noticeable but not particularly strong; a knot or a knot and a half at the most. Not so much as to upset your plans.

**BALTIMORE BECKONS**

The next overnight stop is Baltimore, West Cork's busiest sailing centre, but drop the hook for lunch in Barloge inlet, and if tide permits take the dinghy up to Lough Hyne, an extraordinary half-tide lake with a unique ecosystem. Baltimore is a very cosmopolitan place – the Glenans sailing school has its Irish

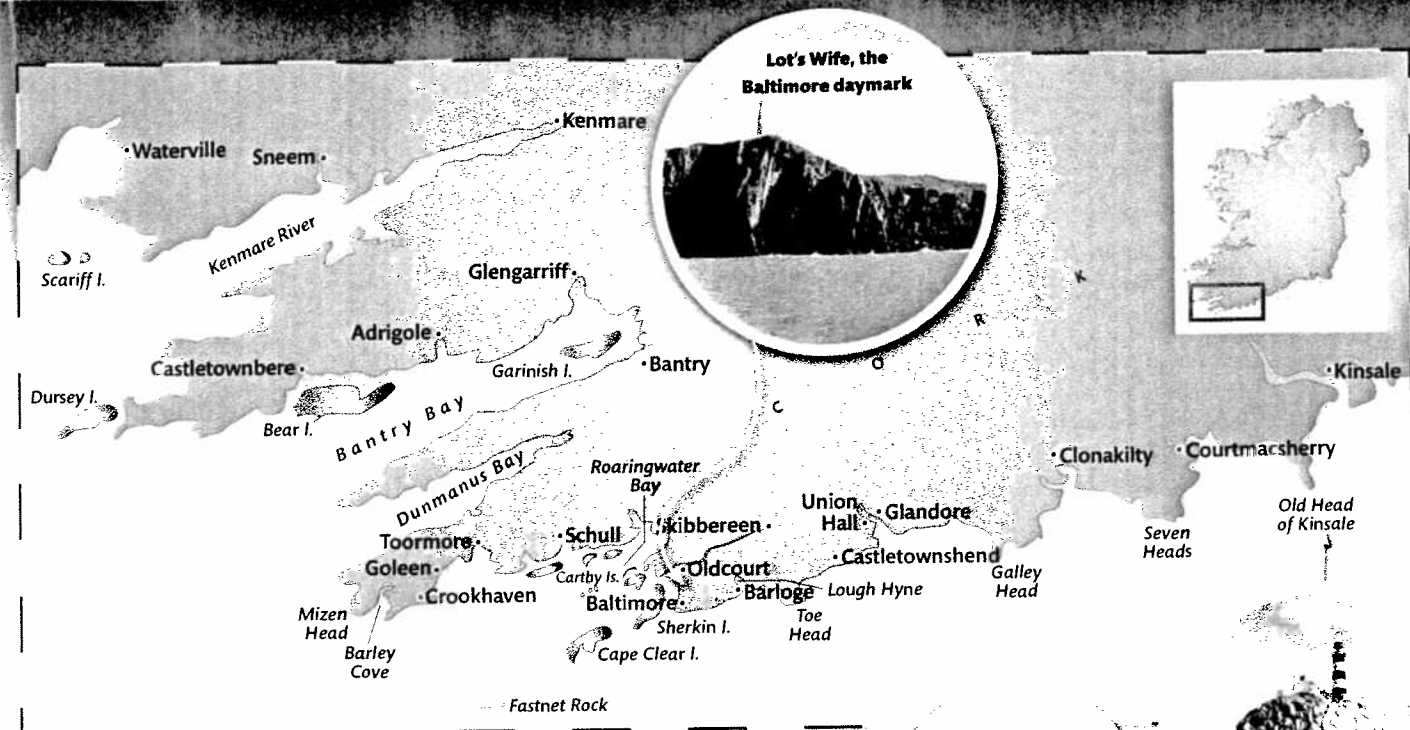
base here, and Chez Youen is an excellent restaurant. But for local flavour don't miss the smoked mackerel sandwiches in Bushe's pub. Just across from Baltimore is Sherkin Island, where Matt and Eileen Murphy founded a remarkable marine biology centre in 1975 (see [www.sherkinmarine.ie](http://www.sherkinmarine.ie)).

**DOZENS OF ISLANDS**

The north passage out of Baltimore runs into the Ilen River, a gorgeous and peaceful stretch of water with two excellent boatyards four miles upriver (O'Donovan's has the largest travelhoist in Ireland). Heading seaward leads to Roaringwater Bay, with its dozens of islands – take the chart and make up your own plans.

**TIDES**

The tides may be a key factor in planning your crossing. The Irish Sea fills simultaneously through the North Channel and St George's Channel, and when it's High Water (more or less at the same time) in Belfast, Dublin and Liverpool, it's Low Water at Malin Head and in Cork. So the tides run fairly fast in the North Channel and St George's Channel, especially around the headlands (and also in and out of Liverpool Bay), and you'll have to play the tides in making your way round some of the coast of Ireland. However, the rise and fall on the Irish coast is only 3 or 4m (as opposed to the 6-7m range on the English and Welsh coasts) and very few Irish harbours have any tidal restrictions at all.



Cape Clear comes highly recommended, with its laid-back style and its remarkable community of Gaelic scholars, fishermen, writers, artists and birdwatchers. This is the best place in Ireland to observe seabirds, especially shearwaters. The Carthy Islands are beautiful and peaceful. Schull offers good shops, pubs and restaurants, a modest chandlery, a sailmaker and the country's only planetarium. Crookhaven, out towards Mizen Head, has a decent if occasionally windswept harbour with visitors' moorings. It was the scene of some of Marconi's early achievements with long-range radio, and it once had ambitions to rival Cobh and even Southampton as a transatlantic passenger port. The pub food in O'Sullivan's bar is excellent and the nearby Barley Cove is West Cork's finest beach. The lighthouse buildings at Mizen Head are home to a fascinating museum.

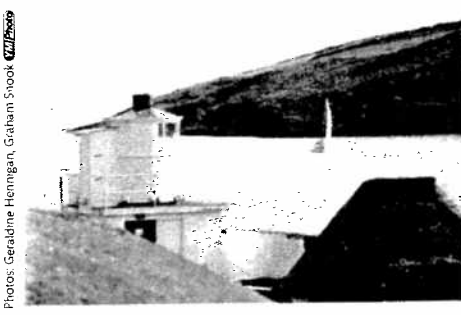
**THE ORIGINAL MACCARTHY'S BAR**

If you fancy really quiet spots, take a turn up Dunmanus Bay, or else head over to Castletownbere, where there's the best and handiest supermarket on the south-west coast and you can enjoy a pint in the original MacCarthy's Bar, recently eulogised by Pete McCarthy in his eponymous book. Enjoy the peace of Bear Island, with its little marina at Lawrence Cove, or the mountain scenery around Adrigole, and make your way up to Glengarriff, probably the prettiest anchorage in Ireland. The remarkable gardens on Garinish Island are well worth a visit. Bantry House, south of Whiddy Island, is a notable concert venue.

Before you leave, be sure to take a turn out round the Fastnet Rock, probably the most famous racing mark in the world.



ABOVE: The Old Head of Kinsale  
BELOW: The genuine and original MacCarthy's Bar, Castletownbere



ABOVE: Charles Fort lighthouse, Kinsale  
BELOW: Drombeg Stone Circle, near Glandore

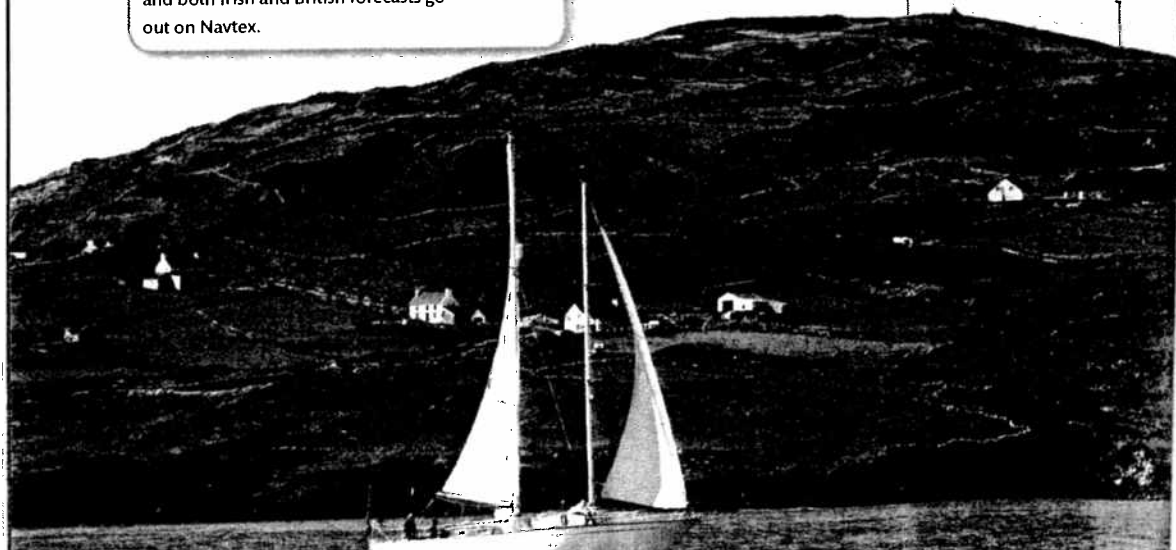


Photo: Geraldine Hennigan

Photo: Geraldine Hennigan, Graham Snook

Photo courtesy of MARINA SPORT

**SAIL FROM SOUTH WALES**

# The Copper Coast Cruise

**T**he sailing centres of South Wales are ideally situated as jumping-off points for a cruise along the south coast of Ireland. Kilmore Quay is 60 miles from Milford Haven, and the passage is across the tide, so what you lose on the roundabouts you gain on the swings, so to speak. But it is useful to plan to arrive off the Irish coast on the west-going tide, and in daylight, since although the coast is well supplied with lighted navais, the pilotage can be tricky, and it is easier and more interesting by day. In bad conditions, Dunmore East, in Waterford Harbour, is a safer landfall, but Kilmore Quay has a good harbour with a small marina, a chandlery, boatyards, and good pubs and restaurants. The harbour office is exceptionally helpful.

**SALTEE AND WATERFORD**

The Saltee Islands, south of Kilmore Quay, are home to over 300 species of birds, and provide a fascinating area to potter around in settled weather.

Dunmore East has a busy fishing harbour and a pretty anchorage. A couple of days

could be spent exploring the tidal rivers Suir and Barrow. Historic Waterford city and the town of New Ross both have useful marinas. New Ross, incidentally, is where the ancestors of the American president John F Kennedy came from.

**COPPER CLIFFS**

Head west on Day Three, along the cliffbound Copper Coast, so-called for its mineral-bearing sandstones, stretching for 20 miles to Dungarvan. Have a careful exploratory peek into the bay at Boatstrand Harbour, halfway along the coast and in the lee of Dunabrattin Head. It's not marked on the chart and – so far – it isn't mentioned in the pilot book.

Dungarvan lies at the head of a shallow and winding but very well-marked channel, and has a mostly drying harbour, excellent shops, pubs and restaurants and an energetic and welcoming sailing club. It is a favourite haven for many regular visitors from Wales. Helvick, facing Dungarvan across the bay, is handier if you're in a hurry, with visitors' moorings in deep water (but little else). You



The Copper Coast stretches west of Hook Head

don't have to worry too much about the tidal streams on this coast.

Next port of call is Youghal, 15 miles to the west. It was here that Sir Walter Raleigh planted the first potatoes in Ireland, when he was mayor of the town in 1588. The name of Youghal's Moby Dick pub commemorates the fact that the 1956 film, starring Gregory Peck and Orson Welles, was shot here.

**CORK AND KINSALE**

On your way west from Youghal, pick up a mooring at Ballycotton and have lunch afloat or ashore, then head for Cork Harbour. There are three marinas at Crosshaven,



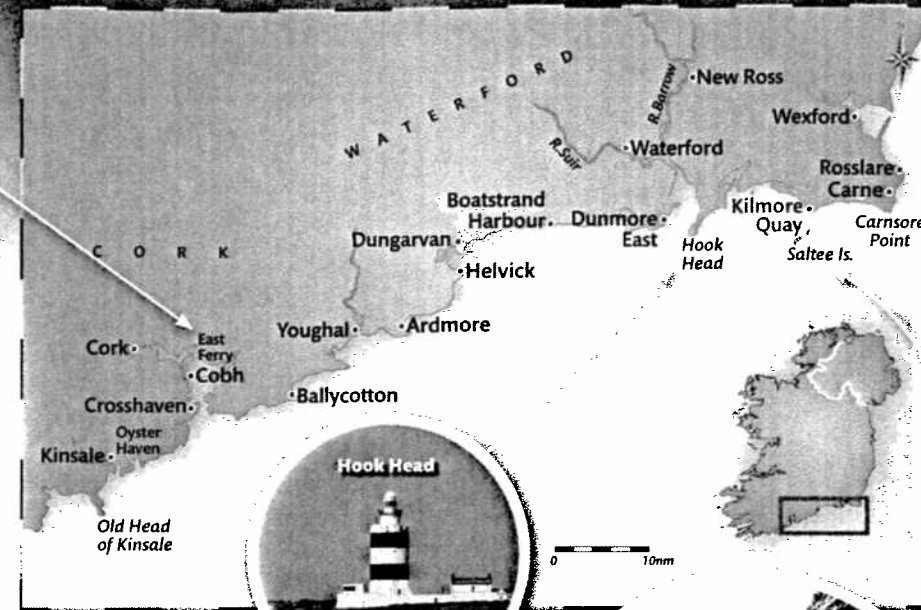
East Ferry marina

**LEAVING YOUR BOAT**

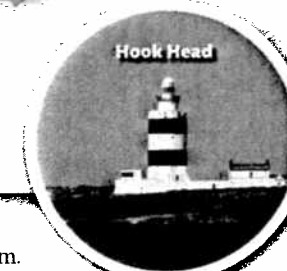
Any of the marinas will be happy to look after your boat for a while, and the pontoon in Derry also has good security. Moorings are often available, but their quality and condition are sometimes a matter of guesswork. Talk to the owners or a local expert and satisfy yourself before trusting your pride and joy to a stranger's mooring. In the south-west, where marinas are few, boatyards and local businesses are very helpful. Details are in the *Sailing Directions*.

including that of the Royal Cork, the world's oldest yacht club, which welcomes visitors. Crosshaven also has capable boatyards, riggers and sailmakers. The marina at East Ferry offers a quieter alternative in lovely wooded surroundings.

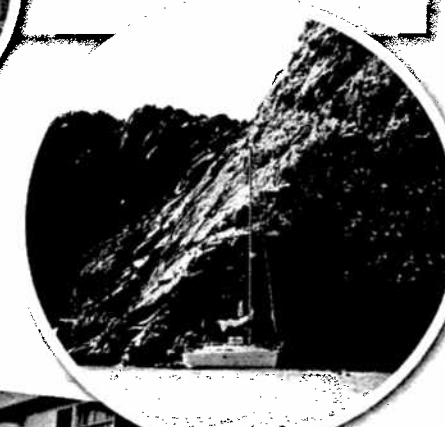
The picture-postcard town of Kinsale, on its beautiful natural harbour, is your next objective, but pause before you get there to explore Oyster Haven, behind the Sovereigns rocks to the east. Oyster Haven has nothing to do with shellfish – the name comes from the Norse *Ostrham* (eastern harbour). Presumably, *Westham* was Kinsale. Of the major sailing centres of Ireland, Kinsale is the most picturesque and historic. It was the Battle of Kinsale in 1601 that ended the Anglo-Irish wars of Tudor times, and underpinned English supremacy in Ireland for the next 300 years. You will sail in under the guns of Charles Fort, a magnificent fortress dating from the 1670s and now



KILMORE QUAY TO KINSALE



Hook Head



an interesting museum. Kinsale has three marinas and receives thousands of visiting yachts each year. It is renowned as the gourmet capital of Ireland and the restaurants in its narrow winding streets are world-class. For an excellent seafood meal at reasonable prices, go to Jim Edwards or Fishy-Fishy, and be sure to call in at the oldest and best pub in town, the Greyhound. Facilities include a decent boatyard and O'Mahony Sailmakers, a husband-and-wife team who make their own sails on the premises. Cork International Airport is only a few miles up the road.



ABOVE: The Saltee Islands are a paradise for birdwatchers  
LEFT: For excellent seafood in Kinsale, go to Jim Edwards  
BELOW: Crosshaven marinas

**CHARTS**

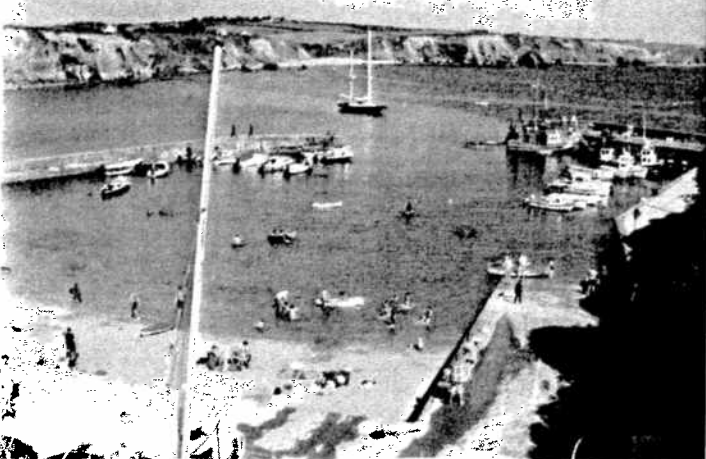
The Small Craft Folio SC5623 (Bantry Bay to Kinsale) covers the Fastnet cruise, and SC5623 and 5622 (Waterford to Kinsale) describe the Copper Coast, with just a little extra needed for Kilmore Quay from SC5621 (Waterford to Carlingford Lough) or chart 2740.

For the Two Loughs, SC5621 and 5612 (Carlingford Lough to Lough Foyle) have it covered, but as an alternative charts 44, 2800 and 2156 are the only essential ones, with 633 and 2159 optional.

There is no chart of the Newry River at the present time but it is described with a sketch plan in the latest edition of the *ICC Sailing Directions*. For the Causeway Coast and Donegal, SC5612 extends as far west as Lough Foyle, and charts 2811, 2697, 2699 and 2752 cover the north coast of Donegal.

The *ICC Sailing Directions* will add to your safety and enjoyment, and it's also worth investing in an up-to-date tourist guidebook.

The secret Boatstrand Harbour isn't marked on the chart



Summer Cove, Kinsale, and the hospitable Bulman pub

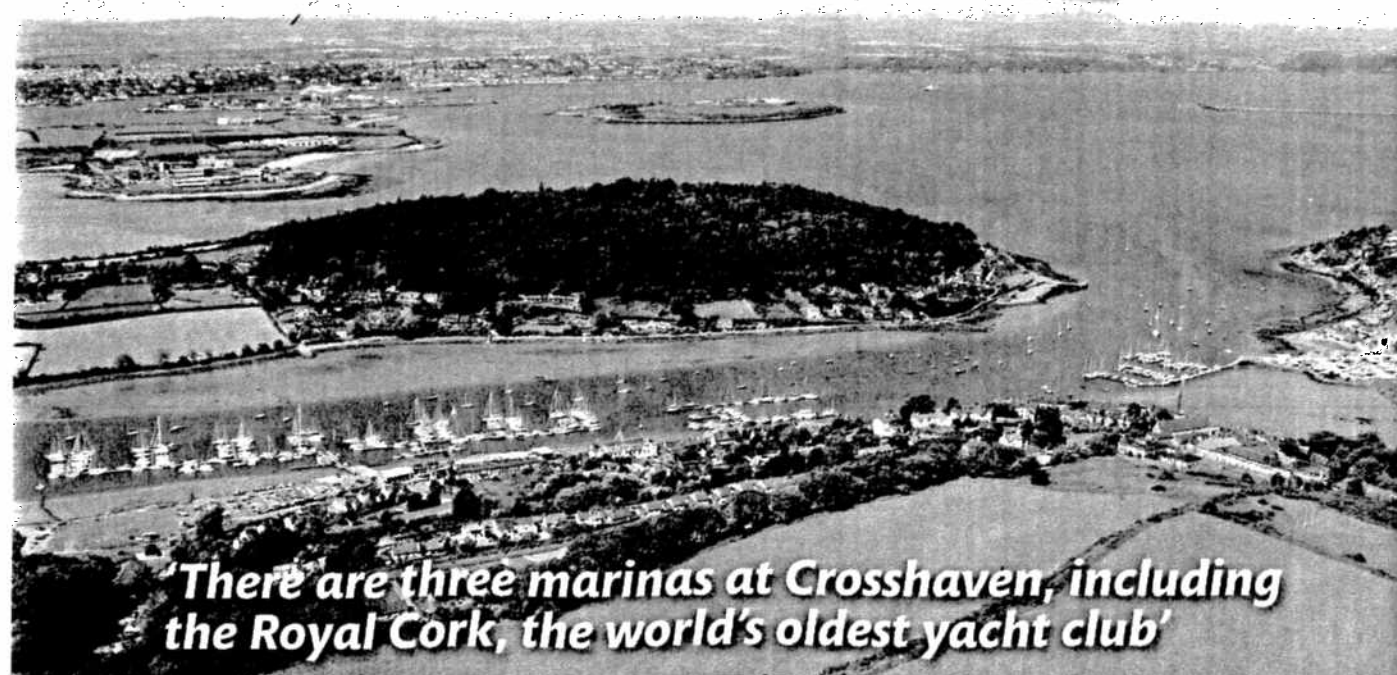


**BIG SHIPS**

You'll need to keep a sharp lookout for commercial traffic, but Irish waters are not as busy as the English Channel. There are several high-speed ferries. Carry copies of the Stena, P&O, Irish Ferries and Brittany Ferries timetables (they're all on the internet) and you'll have an idea where and when to expect them.

**OFFICIALDOM**

There are no passport, immigration or customs formalities between the UK and Ireland, so for the great majority of yachts, the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic is invisible. The money and the road signs look different, but the welcome doesn't change.



There are three marinas at Crosshaven, including the Royal Cork, the world's oldest yacht club