



Picture at right is an adaptation of a painting by Roy Glanville commissioned by OCC founder Humphrey Barton. Depicted is his 25 foot yacht *Vertue XXXV* sailing trans-Atlantic in 1950.

Ocean Cruising Club

Meet Our Members

MEET OUR MEMBERS

Welcome to the fourth in a series of biographies featuring fellow OCC members. Some you may know or have heard of, while others will be newly introduced to you through this series. Whatever the level of familiarity, the cruisers you'll be reading about come from all over the world and exemplify the unique blend of personal accomplishment, welcoming friendship, and an openness and willingness to assist others in realizing their cruising dreams. These characteristics are what make the OCC an exceptional collection of ordinary people. These stories remind us what our Club stands for and why, when you see a flying fish burgee in a harbor or on the open water, you know you belong to a club that not only encourages long-distance cruising, but also celebrates the people who enjoy this rewarding lifestyle.

Featured Member – Jarlath Cunnane

Home Port: Westport, Ireland

Boat: *Northabout*

Jarlath's Philosophy

"It is better to wear out than rust out"

Jarlath Cunnane, is a retired construction manager, boat builder, certified surveyor, adventurer and author from Castlebar, County Mayo, Ireland. Jarlath is a gentle soul within a polar bear frame. He treasures silence, but can tell a story with the best of them. Better yet, he creates his own stories in whatever he does. And he shares his adventures with many who are fortunate enough to be asked to sail with him. Married to "ever-tolerant" Madeleine, they have two children.

With a lifetime's sailing experience off the West Coast of Ireland, Jarlath has sailed extensively throughout the North Atlantic and Mediterranean Sea. Among the many boats in his life, he built and sailed *Tom Crean*, the replica of Shackleton's James Caird lifeboat used in the South Aris expedition. Despite a very busy career managing civil engineering projects around Ireland, Jarlath also managed to build the aluminium 15meter (49 feet) expedition vessel, *Northabout*, which made an historic voyage between 2001 and 2005.

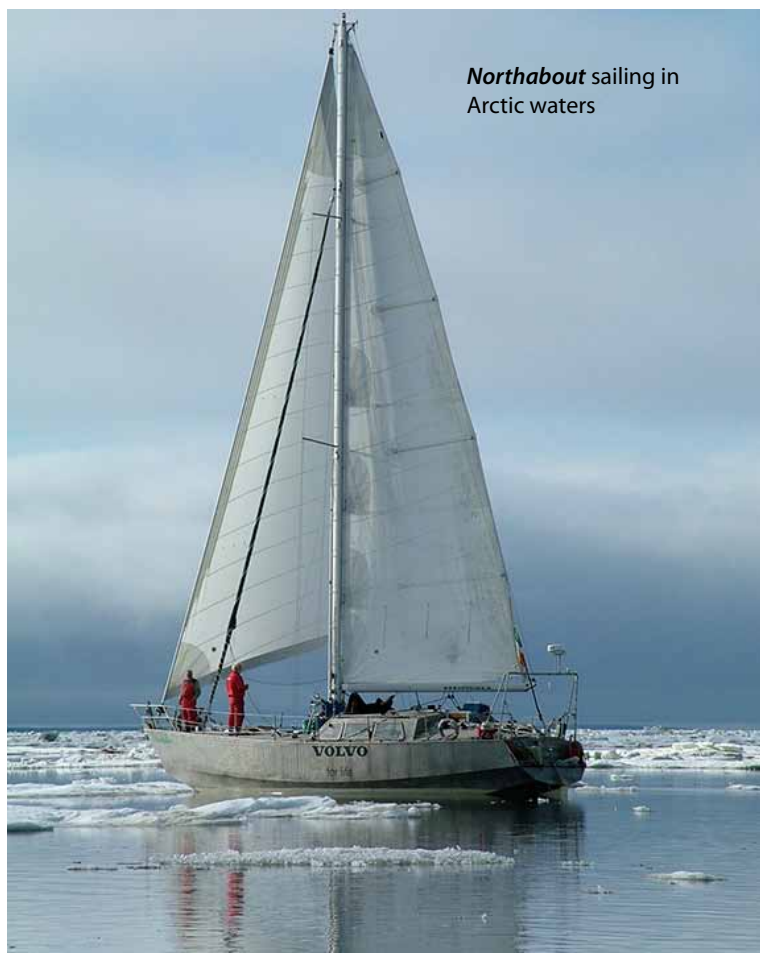
Jarlath was awarded THE BARTON CUP by the Ocean Cruising Club in 2001 for the most meritorious voyage made together with OCC member Paddy Barry and crew from Ireland. The voyage consisted of a successful transit of the Northwest Passage in *Northabout*, departing from Westport, Ireland on 23 June 2001 and arriving in Nome, Alaska on 2 September.

The 7,800 mile voyage took in Greenland, the Davis Strait, Baffin Bay, Lancaster Sound, the Canadian and Alaskan Arctic coast and islands, the Beaufort and Chuckchi Seas and the Bering Strait. Paddy Barry's record of the voyage in *Flying Fish* is punctuated with accounts of Irish music and singing with the local Inuit peoples in the Far North! Anyone who has the good fortune to know Jarlath and his crew would recognize the great Irish spirit that he shares wherever he goes.

Current Boat

Northabout, a Nadja 15 design by Gilbert Caroff, who has considerable experience in design for polar expeditions. Features include:

- Shallow draft with centreplate raised and a protected rudder
- Accommodation for eight crew plus their stores for an extended voyage
- Cutter rigged with roller furling on both headsails; an easily handled sailplan
- Fuel storage of 2000 litres to give a range of 2500 miles under power
- Large wheelhouse accommodates helmsman, navigation, galley and dining area
- Specifically designed and strengthened for encounters with ice



Northabout sailing in Arctic waters

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Quick Facts

Boatbuilder, adventurer, author who circumnavigated the Polar icecap

Best Known For

- First successful east to west circumnavigation of the polar icecap
- Author of his book, "Northabout" and numerous articles
- Has built more than 70 boats, his first a 14-foot dinghy when he was a teenager
- OCC member since 1998
- Always searching for new adventures
- Fun loving, friendly, highly competent and trustworthy – the man they all love to sail with and sing with.

Years Cruising

Since growing up in the environs of Clew Bay, and on *Northabout* since 2001

Geography Covered

The Northwest Passage and the Northeast Passage, seven Atlantic crossings, numerous boat deliveries, trips to the Eastern Mediterranean, and a visit to St. Petersburg

Website

<http://www.northabout.com>

Links to Other Bios

LINKS NOT YET ACTIVATED



Jarlath at the helm

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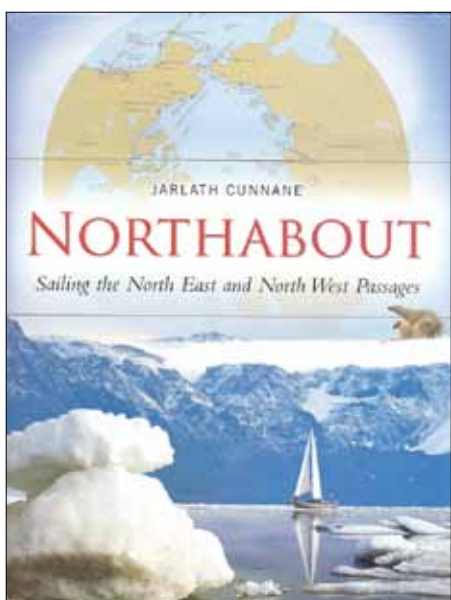
Featured Member – Jarlath Cunnane



Northabout motoring in Clew Bay, Ireland, with a few friends

The Book

Jarlath subsequently published a beautiful hardcover book aptly titled “*Northabout, Sailing the Northwest and Northeast Passages*” which was favourably reviewed in *Flying Fish*. The photography and storytelling are first-rate and inspire new generations to set out in search of adventure far and wide. Now out of print, the author has some copies available.



Why the OCC?

“It was there, like climbing Mount Everest. I joined because it was there.

Also I like the magazine *Flying Fish* very much. It gives me ideas about places to cruise.”

Jarlath's Polar Voyage

The voyage which started in June 2001 took *Northabout* to Alaska and Western Canada where Jarlath and his crew spent the next two years cruising. Next, they decided to return to Ireland via the Northeast Passage. In 2004 they sailed to Russia, wintering the vessel in Siberia when stopped by the ice. In 2005 they completed the voyage returning to Ireland via the Norwegian coast and the Caledonian Canal. The Cruising Club of America awarded the Blue Water Medal to Cunnane in October 2005, as builder and skipper of *Northabout*, after completion of this, the first east to west polar circumnavigation by a sailing vessel.

A Grand Adventure

So, in the grand style of legendary predecessors, Jarlath built a sturdy vessel with his own hands, with a crew of great mates skippered it through the frozen waters, and returned home to receive a hero's welcome from the world. Jarlath is building a new more easily handled small schooner to replace *Northabout* in his workshop in the west of Ireland. In 2012 he took leave from the project to sail to St. Petersburg via North Cape, Archangelsk and the White Sea Canal. Well done Jarlath! Thanks for reminding us that grand adventure is still possible in this age.

What led you to become an ocean sailor?

“I was introduced by friends and had a dream of sailing over the horizon even though I'd been raised inland.”

What have you gotten out of the experience?

“A touch of frostbite and meeting like-minded people.”



Details of *Northabout's* Voyages

2000 – The Build

Construction of the 49-foot aluminium cutter began in Jarlath's workshop in April, 2000. By February, 2001 the hull was finished and on June 1st *Northabout* was launched and taken to the quay at Westport, Ireland for rigging, final fitting out and loading of stores.

2001 – Through the Fabled Northwest Passage

On 23 June, 2001 with a crew of six aboard, some final details still to be done and sea trials not yet started, *Northabout* departed for Canada via Greenland. By August, they had entered the Northwest Passage. They successfully navigated the shallow, rock-strewn, difficult portion of the passage with only brief stops at two small settlements. Weather forecasts warned that they could expect colder than normal conditions. With Point Barrow, the most northern point in Alaska still 500 miles ahead, the lead between the shore and the offshore pack ice began to close up and new ice began to form behind them. It became a race against time as they rounded Point Barrow the most northerly tip of Alaska, passed through the Bering Strait and entered Nome, Alaska on September 2, 2002. With the Northwest Passage successfully behind them, *Northabout* was hauled ashore for the winter.

2002-2003 – Pacific Northwest

Northabout spent the next two seasons cruising the Gulf of Alaska and the Inside Passage, a coastal route along a network of fjords which weave through the islands on the Pacific coast of North America. The route extends from southeastern Alaska, in the United States, through western British Columbia, in Canada.



Northabout being lifted ashore for the winter in Nome, Alaska

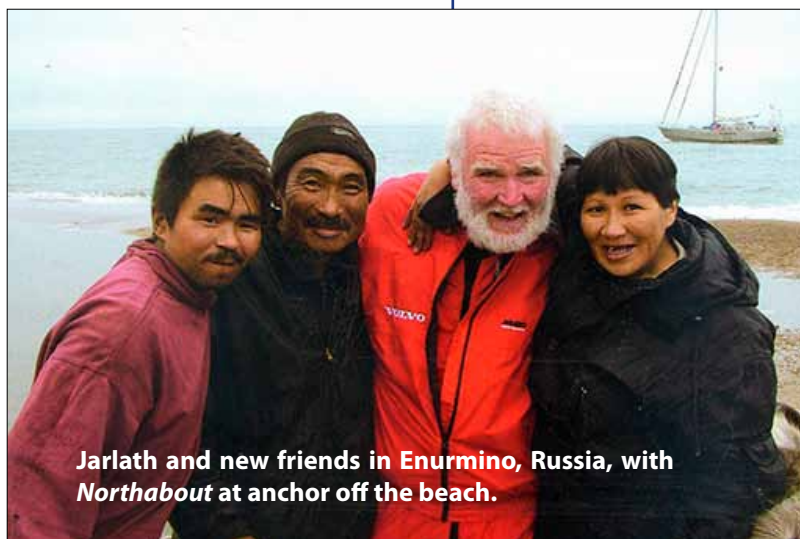
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2004 – The Northeast Passage – Year 1

In the summer of 2004 *Northabout* set out from Prince Rupert,



Jarlath and new friends in Enurmino, Russia, with *Northabout* at anchor off the beach.

BC for the Northeast Passage over the top of Russia. They were delayed first by the Russian permit process and next by stopping to rescue a solo-sailed Dutch vessel named *Campina*, which had been disabled in the ice, and needed a tow to reach a rescue vessel. In 2004, winter arrived with a vengeance in early September – with new ice forming and the navigation season now over, they retreated up the Khatanga River to isolated town of Khatanga (northern Siberia) where the boat was lifted aboard a large steel barge and secured for the winter.

2005 – The Northeast Passage – Year 2

Having overwintered in Khatanga, Siberia, *Northabout* departed 21 August in the company of nuclear ice breakers and succeeded in rounding cape Chelyuskin in heavy ice. As they passed the forbidden island of Novaya Zemlya, they pressed hard to cross the Barents Sea and reach Murmansk ahead of an approaching storm, where they once again encountered “the paper curtain.” Finally, *Northabout* rounded Norway’s North Cape and sailed down the Norwegian coast and across the North Sea to Scotland’s Caledonian Canal reaching home port on 12 October 2005. On this voyage, *Northabout* became the first sailing vessel to circumnavigate the northern polar icecap in a westerly direction, a voyage that was recognized with the awards from the Ocean Cruising Club, Cruising Club of America, Irish Cruising Club, and Royal Cruising Club.



Northabout crewmember, Paddy Barry, trying out traditional fur clothing during stopover in Gjoa Haven. This storied community is located on the southeast coast of King William Island at the heart of the Northwest Passage.

2007- 2008 – Ireland to the Caribbean via the Canaries and back via Azores

In search of warm weather for a change, Jarlath and crew decided to test warmer waters and *Northabout* crossed the Atlantic to the Caribbean. On this crossing they rescued a French couple from their sinking yacht, in mid Atlantic, arriving in Grenada with two extra crew members on board! Two seasons were enjoyed exploring the islands, before returning home the next year.

2010 – Ireland to Nova Scotia & Newfoundland.

With a group of traditional musicians, *Northabout* entertained the inhabitants of coastal communities in Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland, and in turn they were treated to great musical events ashore. Having circumnavigated Newfoundland, they returned to Ireland via the Azores.

2012 – Ireland to St. Petersburg, Russia

Northabout departed Westport on 22 June and reached St. Petersburg in July having stopped to cruise Norway en route. This circumnavigation of Scandinavia took them over North Cape to Archangelsk, through the Belamorsk Canal to St. Petersburg, Estonia and Stockholm, and through the Gota and Trollhatten Canals across Sweden, to Denmark, across the North Sea, and home in September via the Caledonian Canal.

In Conclusion

We hope you enjoy these biographies as much as we enjoy bringing them to you. We will continue to share tales of other members whose adventures and contributions personify the spirit of the OCC. If you have any suggestions for members we should feature in the coming months, please contact Doug Bruce (dougdaleb@gmail.com) Lynnne Bruce (juanona40@hotmail.com) or Peter Whately (peterwhatley@live.co.uk). We welcome any and all thoughts.