

Too Short Trips

What we learned on our 'olidays

Jonno Barrett



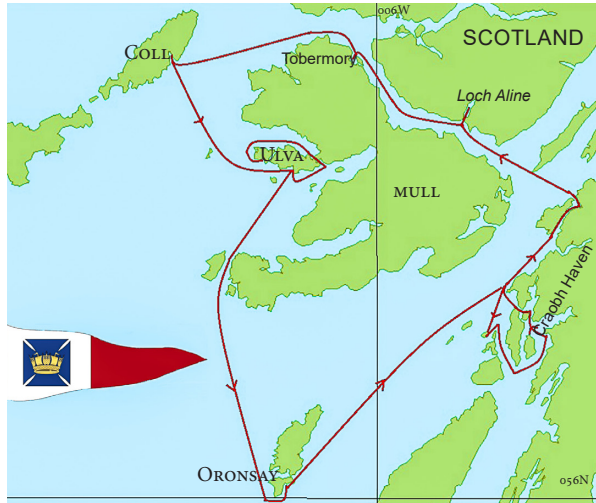
Jonno Barrett



Rosie Barrett

Even two rather short cruises are better than lockdown, as all the RCC knows. While my literary skills can't express the sheer joy of being back afloat, we can try to share a bit of what we learned.

When, what with this and that, it didn't look as if we'd get to *Whirlaway* in Helsinki we belatedly chartered *Lotus*, an Ovni 43 from the very helpful David Lyle of Scottish Yacht Charters at Craobh Haven. She is the same length as *Whirlaway* and, with an aluminium hull and centreboard, we looked forward to the change with interest. With three cabins and two heads we



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anticipated Cunardian luxury and we properly appreciated even the compromised Cunard standard aboard. For a week of our 10 days, Rosie and I were joined by new sailing friends, Paul and Wissit Furlong.

Setting off north from Devon, I felt that childish excitement: 'We're going sailing – can you see the sea yet?' Well yes since we live beside it, but you get the idea.

Even short cruises offer the potential for learning and personal development and here I offer some of the more profound insights.

Respect the weather

Great plans (and complicated crew changes) evaporated as a wind-free forecast dashed thoughts of the Small Isles and Barra, suggesting instead a drifts circumnavigation of Mull with minimal engine. Keeping it simple proved a good decision. We claim a new record of six and a half hours for the 12 odd miles from Tobermory to Loch Aline; we enjoyed every bit of it, particularly the slightly smug feeling as others motored in

Check the inventory

Wissit enjoyed a lovely start at the wheel through Cuan Sound on the way to Puilladobhain (so much for spell checkers), but may have regretted being the lightest as we hoisted her up to reeve the halyard for the RCC flag kindly loaned by Lorne Byatt (RCC). While we managed to find a line for the halyard, we lacked a coffee pot. After a cracking reach to Oronsay we were joined by Henry and Louise Clay (RCC) for dinner on the basis that they supplied the pot - they even loaned their spare. It was a lovely evening and we were impressed by the full inventory of spares available on a yacht as well found as *Flycatcher*.

Cherish local knowledge

Actually, local advice may not help. Reaching rather too rapidly towards the Sound of Iona, I scrambled for the charts, as David Wilkie (RCC) radioed reassuringly 'There's plenty of water if you go the right way.' We joined them at Ulva for drinks, so he must have something ...

A centreboard beats a lead line.

Next day, David's insight was justified as we found in the Sound of Ulva, when we didn't quite 'go the right way'. A falling tide isn't a disaster if you have a centreboard. With one bound, multiple bumps actually, we were free and on our way.

Are you fully qualified?

We were, as it turned out. While surely not the first to anchor off Staffa and row into Fingal's Cave, we question which other crews have sported a crew member



Wissit bravely ascending the mast

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Ben Mor from Ulva Sound

whose GCSE music included the Hebridean Overture? Who else has bellowed not merely Mendelssohn's opening 'De dum de da dum dum' (repeated) but carried lustily on to the end (or at least until the reverberation drove us into the open air)? Wissit again. An RCC first, I wonder?

Don't Walk Behind Puffins

Puffins might appear charming and tame and those on Tresnish mostly seemed all of that, apparently untroubled by the hoards that were visiting them. Tame, but not reliably charming as they were impressively projectile from astern. Just saying.

It's still Scotland

Lotus anchored off Fingals Cave

Days of warm sun and zephyrs had us wondering if we had been teleported to some Mediterranean island. This lasted until a pub visit on Coll with Mike and Pam Jaques (RCC) ended with us all driven back to the boat by midges making up for time lost during Covid.

Keep in touch

As a rule I hate mobile phones aboard, this year I mellowed. With what felt like half the RCC on the West Coast (the half not in Scilly) the phone and Whats App greatly enhanced our social



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Tired shoppers

life. Drifting along the north west coast of Mull towards Loch Drambuie (resisting the siren call of the Small Isles and a day donking), Rosie worked away with Voicemail, Twitter and eventually Facebook. It paid off and we rerouted to Tobermory, a lovely run down the coast leading to a brain expanding feast at Café

Before the rain a quiet evening at Eilean Dubh

Fish. We did wonder how you can run a restaurant whilst being so totally under the radar. Next morning the crew were grateful to collapse on the RCC donated bench by the pontoons after a hard morning's shopping.

That evening a call with Bob Bradfield (RCC) encouraged him to divert for an evening dram or two in Loch Aline. Here he assured me that his Antares Chart of the Sound of Ulva is faultless. I had to agree; it was his dram.

Gilded Memories

Our memories are of constant warm sun and the odd force three sail but a look at the log reveals a very rainy



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night at Eilean Dubh off Lunga and a soggy damp morning back to Craobh.

The lesson learnt as the nights draw in and thoughts turn to next year? Ignore the log; cherish the gilded memory, always!

A little coda

Home again, we found that the Finns had opened the border – off to Helsinki before they had a chance to change

their minds. *Whirlaway* was afloat alongside the Fleck's yacht *Malouine* (RCC), at Suomenlinna. Following two cold winters she was in need of a bit of love. We got

Janetta, Milne design built in 1939



Whirlaway and Malouine at Suomenlinna

down to work, looking forward to the reward of a few days in the Finnish Islands. The steering was a bit stiff when we went to get the mast in, but we lubricated it all carefully and did a whole mile (or so) to the Nyländska Jaktklubben (NJK) Yacht Club base at Blekholmen, a favourite place and a chance to catch up, over dinner with Jan and Anna Horhammer (RCC) at the clubhouse pavilion.

Lonely Islands aren't everything

After two isolated years, maybe untouched islands far from humanity weren't what was needed?

A Displacement of 12 Metres gathered on our NJK pontoon as

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Thea, Anker design built in 1918

we rigged *Whirlaway*. We felt a bit upstaged as the eight strong Baltic 12m fleet gathered for their slightly Covid restrained World Championship. Hustle followed bustle as excited and even scenic race crews energised the very air - the perfect lockdown antidote.

This proved a very good thing. When we set off the steering did some very discouraging soft, crunchy, jamming stuff and the planned few days island hopping turned into a five mile circuit and back to NJK. It's interesting being passed by a very high value fleet of heavy boats when your steering is jamming intermittently, but we made it claim free and photo heavy.

I suppose *Whirlaway's* 60 years means arthritis can hit her as much as the rest of us and, with HMRC mandating a prompt start for home next spring, we were wary of making things worse. We resigned ourselves to watching the nice young men and women (and their boats) of the 12 metre fleet.

Thus our short Scottish cruise was followed by an even shorter Baltic day sail. Four weeks afloat, about 200 miles covered and every one a winner.

The final lesson?

As the highly bejewelled ladies on the bus from Ryde to Parkhurst prison know so well; even a short visit is worth a long journey when it's true love.