

Midwinter Scotch Run 2021

Last time I raced virtually up the Irish Sea – from Galway to Dublin, I was fortunate enough to win, and in my exuberance I provided some background notes to the places we SOled by, which were also the places where I sailed and mostly raced in my younger years.

As we approached Dublin, there was a request in the Chat for more, and as I had not covered the coast from The Pale (that was the bit the King of England had under control during the Middle Ages centred on Dublin City, although being the King of Ireland also) northward.

My exuberance was only slightly less, as I was just slightly behind our eventual winner, Mirek who didn't put a foot (or gybe) wrong all race, whereas I early doors had kept bonk on just slightly too hot an angle aiming more for Dungarvan than Dunmore East as we had come away from Lands End.

And that was pretty much that; so, without further ado, here are my assorted notes about the coast from Dublin northwards.

11/11 18:34:16

If you zoom in on Dublin Bay, the peninsula jutting out from the northern shore is the Head of Howth. Howth Yacht Club is on its northern shore.

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Inside Dublin Bay on the isthmus joining Howth to the mainland you find Sutton and Sutton Dinghy Club.

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Sutton Dinghy Club is where the first Fireball dinghies in Ireland hit the water back in 1961.

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The little island north of Howth is Ireland's Eye; the bigger one further up is Lambay.

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The creek opposite Lambay is Malahide, home of many airline pilots who very often used to be avid sailors in their ample spare time. A dam a foot or so below HWL across the mouth of the creek makes it non-tidal and hence an exceptional, slightly cramped dinghy racing venue.

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2nm further north again is Skerries, home of another well-established sailing club. After that there isn't anywhere of note until we come to the wholly-open Border to 'Norn Iron'.

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Directly due west of us now is Carlingford Lough. The north shore is the North (obviously); the south shore is in the Republic where there is a nice sailing club.

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On the northern shore there is a 'wee' marina at Rostrevor as well. Strong tidal flows in and out of the lough make racing often a bit of a drag race to be first in or out of the tide.

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to the north east of Islay straight ahead of us lies Jura. The strait between the two isles is very navigable. I was hurtling down said strait in a chartered Westerly 32 from Alba Yachting in Dunstaffnage;

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Twice early May, maybe 2002, and the wind was building. Out of the strait we came and it was now 30kn, so we sought shelter, hugged the Jura shore and motored up narrow Loch Tarbert slightly further north. We anchored in the pool at top and threw out anchor, then a second. Wind gusted 60kn at 3 a.m. and she was tacking wildly on bare poles.

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Other yacht arrived and anchored too close and also started tacking on bare poles. My most worrisome night ever, which I 'enjoyed' with the woman who was to become my second wife.

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We are now of course in the domains of the Dal Riada, Celtic tribes who settled on the north east coast of Ireland in maybe the 7th C and then drifted across to the Isles, to go on in the 8th C, as Celts, or Gaels as they're known over there, to conquer Scotland, and..

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to build a watery windswept kingdom. This is the origin of Scotland's Gaelic heritage, which mingled with the Picts to the east and the Bretons (displaced by the Saxons) to the south in The Borders.

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But then in the 16th C they catch the new religion and in the 17th hordes of them are sent back to Ireland by their Norman overlords now in charge of all the British Isles and given the land of their distant old religion kin.

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A wry tale...

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worthy of an episode in Game of Thrones, whose Iron Isles of course are in fact the northern coast of Ireland - an inhospitable place for the yachtsman.

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Dunluce Castle at 55.21806, -6.56148 is the IRL place that postured as Lord Greyjoy's home in the series. Read all about it here: <https://www.silverscreen.tours/location/dunluce-castle-house-greyjoy/>

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Also of interest to Led Zeppelin fans.

06:35:18

Looking back along the eastern coast of Norn Iron you see Larne harbour at 54.82604, -5.78677, Belfast Lough at 54.66461, -5.85670, and Strangford Lough at 54.54087, -5.64691

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Not much yachting out of Larne but the ferry to Scotland's Cairnryan at 54.99246, -5.02295 departs from here. Great route for Covid protocol evasion and smuggling goods from the EU into the UK since...

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as said The Border to the Republic is more drive-through than a McDonalds.

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Belfast is home to the Royal North of Ireland in leafy, pleasant Protestant Hollywood on the south shore of the lough. Up until the mid or late 70s, RNIYC was a men-only club.

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Across the lough from Hollywood is Carrickfergus, where stands another mighty castle, once the base of Chichester, who ran The North (nominally on behalf of Elizabeth I) back in the 17th C...

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inter alia managing the plantation process and accumulating a personal fortune in the process. Union Jacks still flutter on the castle's ramparts to this day.

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Finally down to Strangford Lough - a yachting paradise. Up top of the lough you have White Rock; at the entrance Killyleagh. Have raced dinghies and small keelboats often here.

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And then in the middle of The North, aka Ulster, there is Lough Neagh at 54.60616, -6.42002. Legend says that Finn McCool, I think, or a.n.other cool dude, picked whatever was there and threw into the Irish Sea to land at 54.22191, -4.53581 to form the Isle of Man

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Sailing centres on Lough Neagh are inter alia on the southern shore outside Lurgan, and on the northern shore outside Antrim. Have raced championships out of both places.

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Lough Neagh is full of eels, the fishing rights of which were granted to Chichester in 1661 and are owned by his successors to this day.

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Enough. Over and out.

bonknhoot/November 2021