

The Royal Lymington Yacht Club

Caledonian Canal Cruise (Isle of Skye)

19 to 28 September 2016

Personal Log written by Anna and Derek Barnard



Facts about our 34 foot cruiser chartered from www.caleycruisers.com

Distance travelled 120 miles

Fuel used 110 litres of diesel

Max speed 8 knots

7 nights on board




16 locks negotiated


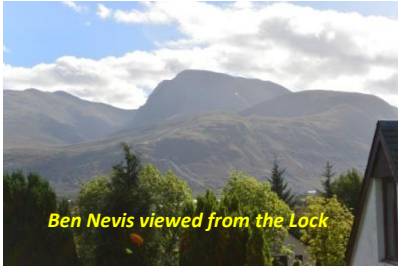

8 Swing Bridges

Commenced from Inverness to Banavie (Fort William) and return

Crewed by 2 (boat is designed for 4)

| Timeline | What we did |
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| Day 0 18 September | We journeyed to Inverness, some 600 plus miles from Lymington over several days, staying with family and friends, to arrive at Inverness on the Sunday afternoon and booked into a B&B. We were asked to be at the Caley Cruisers Boat Yard by 11.30 am on Monday morning. |
| Day 1 19 September | Arrived at the boat yard around 1030 am and checked in. A security deposit of £500 is required from your Credit Card, (not actually debited but details held in abeyance pending your return). The task of transferring food, alcohol, clothes, bikes and other paraphernalia starts. Fortunately, you can back your car up to the stern of your charter. Our group (comprising 16 members and friends chartering 5 boats) are ushered into a Training room and given a 30 minute film covering all aspects of our charter, including man overboard drill. 11.30 We are introduced to our Instructor, who shows us Isle of Skye, a 34 foot motor cruiser. This comprehensive handover is useful as we discover additional storage! We are asked to check engine oil daily and told that the capacity of the holding tank is sufficient for 2 people, (obviously he had not met Derek before!) 14.15 The engine is turned on and we motor off the quay to perform some basic manoeuvres on the canal, including reversing back into the mooring, Mayhem rules as 7 cruisers are attempting to do the same procedure on a narrow canal with adjacent Marina berths. 15.00 We set off, as a convoy, passing through Tomnahurich Swing bridge and our |

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| 16.45 | <p>first lock (Dochgarroch). Here, any instructor (placed earlier on the larger boats) alight and we are on our own, motoring down the canal, through Loch Dochfour, for a further 10 minutes and entering the northern end of Loch Ness. Arrived at a tranquil spot next to the A82 and the village of Drumnadrochit, having transited the upper reaches of Loch Ness and Urquhart Bay. All five R.Lym boats arrive and moor up for the evening at £10 per boat and £4 for electricity. Four boats dined at the Loch Ness Inn, (good menu but seemingly expensive) and the fifth boat went to the Clansman Hotel, (they also reported a good menu). Free transport is advertised from the quay to these establishments. The weather was sunny, light winds from the SW and warm, (although it cooled during the evening and night). Midge free and no rain!</p> |  <p><i>Drumnadrochit moorings</i></p> |
| <p>Day 2 20 September</p> | <p>Several boats headed off early to St Augustus while the Isle of Skye and Eriskay III crew got their bikes out and cycled uphill to Urquhart Castle. This is worth a visit. The Castle is well organised, its history is covered by a short film at its Visitor Centre. The ruins are a result of the castle being partially blown up by its last occupants in 1692 – then left to decline. The return bike journey was less taxing with mainly downhill runs that passed through the village of Drumnadrochit where forgotten items can be bought. After a quick lunch we left for St Augustus, passing the base of Urquhart Castle in all its splendour. We met the other R.Lym boats at the foot of the Fort Augustus Locks waiting to enter the first Lock. We were instructed, by the Lockkeeper, to jump the queue and squeeze in behind a smelly survey ship called 'Chartwell'. We were also required to pull our cruisers manually through all 5 locks. Alas, we were accompanied by diesel fumes of 'Chartwell' and the grass cuttings that blew towards us in the SW wind. The moorings at the top of the lock were full but a Lock keeper helped us to move boats around so that we could moor up and 'plug in' to the shore power at £3 per night. Eriskay III (Ian and Norma Hunter) and Isle of Skye (the Barnard's) slept well that evening!</p> |  <p><i>Urquhart Castle overlooking Loch Ness</i></p> |
| <p>Day 3 21 September 09.30 10.50 11.10 11.50</p> | <p>We left Fort Augustus and motored gently to Kytra Lock where we had to wait for a craft coming the other way. We squeezed into the Lock behind Eriskay III and opposite was Taransay (the 'Christopher's and Hammett's) and Highland Monarch (the 'Houstons and Pantlings'). It was here that DB had problems throwing a rope, despite all his experience, and on the third go hit Linda, the Lockkeeper, in the face. We were all awarded GOLD Stars, except Ian Hunter, as we had our lifejackets on. Exited Kytra and motored onto Cullochry Lock. The Aberchalder Swing bridge quickly followed and we entered the very pretty Loch Oich. At its southern end you approach the Laggan Swing Bridge where we were summoned by the Swing Bridge Operator to pass under it with only inches to spare! After the bridge we cruised into Laggan Avenue, a spectacular tree lined canal, and 20 minutes later arrived at Laggan Lock. Here, we were prevented from continuing due to high winds on Loch Lochy, so moored for the evening with Eriskay III, (electricity £3). The strong wind conditions prevailed but eased at 15.00 when Balmoral and Highland Monarch decided to go through the Lock, towards Banavie, for the evening. The Eagle Barge Pub at the Laggan Lock serves excellent ales but were unfortunately fully booked for dinner, so we dined</p> |  |

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| | with Eriskay III and played cards whilst it poured with rain outside. |
| Day 4 22 September 08.30 |  <p><i>Laggan Locks</i></p> |
| 10.10 | <p>A much better day with less wind but misty with rain. Entered Laggan Lock at 08.30, exiting at 08.50 to Loch Lochy. Shortly after, the rain stops and the sun breaks through the mist and onto the surrounding mountains – spectacular scenery unveils. Loch Lochy is deceptively long and we enter Gairloch Lock at 10.10 with a visiting Netherlands Yacht. Exiting 10.45, we motor through the manually operated Moy Bridge, (sometimes, we are told by the Lockkeeper, you have to wait for the owner, the farmer, to open it!). We overtake the yacht and meet 9 canoes paddling out from Banavie. A couple of miles further on and Banavie (Fort William is nearby) and Neptunes Lock appear.</p> |
| 12.10 | <p>Ben Nevis is on our port side and we moor with Eriskay III for lunch. A debate ensues as the weather forecast for the next 2 days is SW F5 gusting F8/9. Boat Taransay, (the Christophers and Hammetts) appear and they join the discussion. Our current plan of dining and staying overnight is abandoned. So, we commence our return journey at 13.05 after taking several photos of Ben Nevis and Neptune's Staircase locks in beautiful sunny weather, but the wind is building.</p> |
| 13.05 |  <p><i>Ben Nevis viewed from the Lock</i></p> |
| 14.00 | <p>At 13.45 we pass Moy Bridge and arrive 13.50 at Gairloch Lock, exiting at 14.20. (We are slightly delayed as the lock keeper dropped his radio into the Lock and had to 'fish' it out with a bucket and string, and the radio still worked!)</p> |
| 16.00 | <p>We transit Loch Lochy and Laggan Locks, to arrive at Laggan Avenue around 16.00 hours in a gusty SW F5. The weather forecast pushes us on to Loch Oich and to Invergarry where we find boat 'Highland Monarch', (the Houstons and Pantlings), moored to the Glen Garry Hotel pontoon. A quick phone call and we book ourselves into the Invergarry Hotel for dinner as the Glen Garry was full. At 19.00 we trek through the Glen Garry Hotel grounds with the crew of Highland Monarch and Eriskay III, along a swift flowing stream, under a bridge and 20 minutes later pop up at the Invergarry Hotel for a scrumptious, reasonably priced dinner, (recommended). Had to get a taxi for the return journey as the liquid sunshine was chucking it down and its was blowing a hooley!</p> |
| 19.00 | |
| Day 5 23 September 09.00 | <p>Isle of Skye and Eriskay III departed before Highland Monarch from Invergarry and passed the Aberchalder Swing Bridge at 09.10. (It opened this time due to higher water levels.) Motored to Cullochey Lock where the lockkeeper Derek, is a friendly character, shortly to retire after 19 years and also worked for the Forestry Commission. He reckons he knew every tree. We exit the Lock at 09.30 and arrive at Kytra Lock 30 minutes later. Kim, the Lockkeeper, told us that Balmoral, (the Sutherlands and Appleyards), had moored there overnight. She also told us that last year 25,000 boat movements were recorded in her patch from Fort Augustus to Laggan Locks. We slowly proceeded to Fort Augustus, arriving at the top of the locks at 10.45 and met up with Highland Monarch, Balmoral and (later) Taransay. The moorings were full so rafted against Eriskay III and spent the rest of the day visiting Fort Augustus.</p> |
| 09.30 |  <p><i>Cullochy Loch</i></p> |
| 10.45 | |

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| <p>Day 6 24 September 11.00</p> <p>12.50</p> | <p>'Showers with rain in between' is what Lockkeeper Derek told us and so it proved. Some of our boats went down through the 5 basins on the 08.30 lock but Eriskay III and ourselves waited for the 11.30 lock, (every 3 hours you can start to transit the Locks). The 11.30 Lock turned out to be early and rather full, however, we were invited into the lock with Eriskay III and IV, as the lead boats, and in front of 2 larger LeBoat cruisers, plus a private yacht on her way from Oban and another cruiser. One of the LeBoat cruisers decided to 'crab' into the Lock and the third cruiser seemed not to understand how the mooring ropes should be managed as water empties from the Lock! This provided much amusement for the many spectators around the locks. All boats are manually</p>   <p>hauled through the 5 basins, (which seemed easier this time, probably due to it being downhill!). Anna starts to learn Scottish from the Hunters. We exit at 12.50 and moor for the night on the Visitors moorings at the bottom of the Lock staircase. Spent the day 'mooching' around the village of Fort Augustus and finding out where the Lovat Hotel was for our evening meal. This later proved to be an excellent choice as we had an excellent meal and fine wines. (The Hotel has a Michelin star restaurant at £50 a head, which we avoided, but still managed to spend that amount in its Brasserie!). The Scottish language course continues!</p> <p><i>Some pictures of our gathering at the Lovat Hotel, Fort Augustus. Pic 1 – the Brian Appleyard, Sarah Houston, Andrew Sutherland and Alyson Pantling; Pic2 – Stuart and Kathy Hammett, and Ian Hunter.</i></p> |
| <p>Day 7 25 September 09.30</p> <p>12.35</p> <p>13.50</p> <p>15.00 15.30</p> | <p>A wet blustery day for crossing Loch Ness, so phoned in to Caley's to check on the weather. The fleet were given the OK and we set off from Fort Augustus at 09.35. Due to the windy conditions (SW F5/6 with gusts) the boat veered regularly as it surfed down the swell of Loch Ness - concentration was required! Arrived 12.35 at the lighthouse at the northern end of Loch Ness and entered Loch Dochfour. Here a little care is needed as there is a weir that monitors the water level of Loch Ness and is effectively the start of the Ness River, flowing through Inverness to the sea.</p> <p>We tie up at Dochgarroch Lock and have to wait as the Lockkeeper is at lunch until 13.45. We enter at 13.50 with a private yacht, Eriskay III and 'IV', (a German/Swiss couple), and Balmoral. Taransay is left behind as there was no room for her in the basin. Cruiser traffic was building, as its changeover day tomorrow, so the Tomnahurich Swing bridge opens promptly. Eriskay III takes the lead back to the Caley Boat yard, arriving just after 15.00 hours. All R.Lym craft are moored by 15.30 hours and the task of packing up and stuffing bags into the car begins. We eat on board whilst others seek out nearby restaurants.</p> |
| <p>Day 8 26 September 07.00 08.30</p> | <p>You are required to vacate the boat by 08.30, so much activity ensues. Caley's take control of Isle of Skye and move her to their shed where holding tanks are discharged and fuel tanks topped up. The boat is checked, cleaned and restocked with fresh bedding and linen for the next charter who are due at 11.30. It seems Isle of Skye used 110 litres of fuel, sailed approximately 120 miles and didn't fill her holding tanks! An excellent cruise with good food and company. We leave the boat yard around 10.30 and follow the canal to see where it</p> |

10.30

empties into the Beaully Firth. Our cruise is over but not the memories – an excellent adventure and worth considering doing it again!



Anna and Derek
Barnard
October 2016