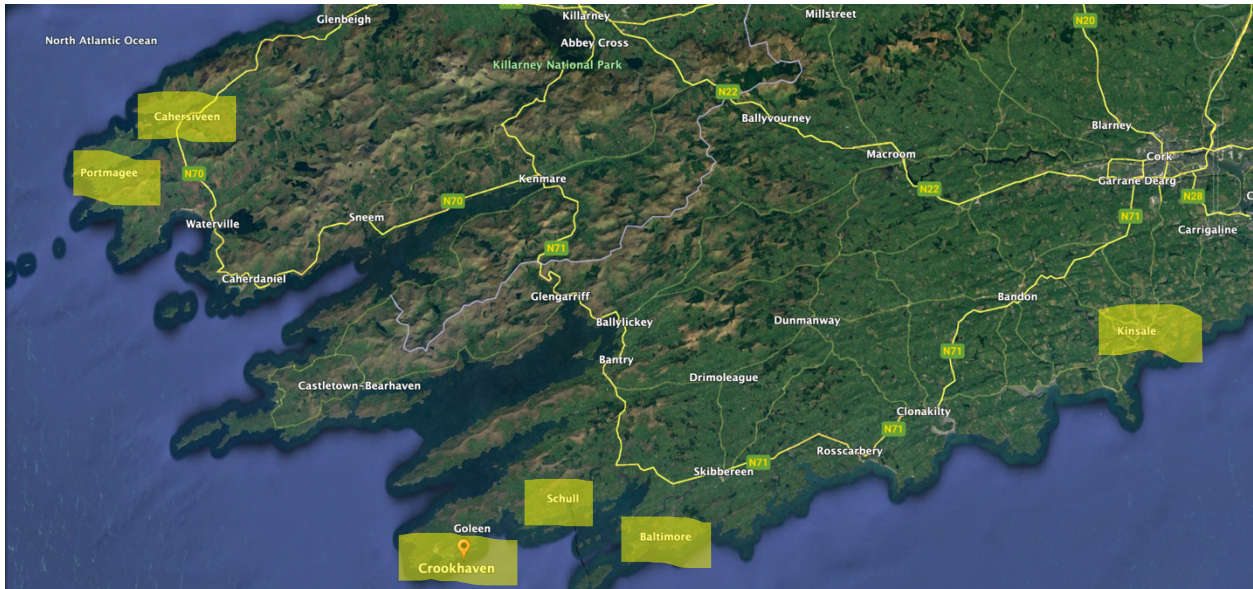


SV AT FIRST SIGHT

Wintering Over in County Kerry, Ireland



We wintered aboard AFS in Cahersiveen, County Kerry. When springtime came, we brought the boat around the south of Ireland to Kinsale via Crookhaven, Schull, and Baltimore, all of which are in County Cork.

In our last post we discussed the courtesy tow we received from the RNI because our Perkins diesel wouldn't crank due to hydrolock. We have to admit that that incident shook our confidence a bit for offshore passage making. Although we got the saltwater out and our Perkins was purring like new again, we still weren't certain why the hydrolock had happened – and more importantly, when and if it might happen again. Fionan Murphy, who builds 60ft fishing boats at his Valentia Island boatyard recommended fabricating an “up and over” swan neck mixing elbow on the back end of the engine that would, in all but the rarest of circumstances, prevent the retrograde flow of seawater.



A crude example of a swan neck mixing elbow from an online Perkins forum.

We liked the idea, and we searched high and low around County Kerry for a fabricator to make one for us, but we could not find one with experience designing such an adaptation for a sailing yacht. We also looked into installing a one-way check valve near the exhaust overboard discharge. Surprisingly, we couldn't find a diesel mechanic anywhere who thought the latter were worth their high cost, not to mention the time and effort to install them. So, at the end of the day, our exhaust system was just as it was when the hydrolock occurred at sea.

This, coupled with the fact that David needed two surgeries to fix his hand injuries, followed by months of occupational/hand therapy to regain useful function, made the decision easy to winter over in Ireland rather than pressing on to Scotland last autumn. The only other option,

really, was to fly back to the U.S., but we quickly ruled that out. No one would be aboard *AFS* during the winter to prep her for the next season; and importantly, we wouldn't leave Saylor in a kennel for months on end, and at nearly 11 years old we didn't think she'd do very well in the cargo hold of a long international flight.

Once we had decided to stay in Ireland the next decision was where to lay up for the winter. As charming as it is, Portmagee is a tiny village that pretty much shuts down during the winter. And Portmagee has no marine services. We next looked at the port of Dingle, our original destination ~10 miles across Dingle Bay, but it seemed logistically isolated from Tralee and Killarney, where David needed to go for his follow-up. Cork and Crosshaven on Ireland's east coast have a plethora of marine and yachting services, but getting there meant an overnight transit around the rugged and, at times, stormy south, which includes the Fastnet Rock of yacht racing fame. With an abundance of caution, we were leery about making an ocean passage until we could get the Perkins properly checked out by an experienced marine diesel mechanic.



The nightly view (in September) from our cockpit on the floating seawall dock at Marina Cahersiveen.

We eventually settled on wintering over Cahersiveen, a small town with a small marina ~15km from Portmagee. We couldn't have made a better choice. Located on the Skellig Ring, a subset



Cahersiveen is an idyllic small town in County Kerry. It has a bustling main street offering *almost* every kind of goods and services we needed. And it has a strong sense of its Irish heritage, as shown in the center photo with the street dance festival.

of the better-known Ring of Kerry, the town has almost everything we needed – several grocery stores, a fantastic hardware store, a variety of restaurants, coffee shops and bakeries, a primary care doctor, two ATMs, and two pharmacies. Plus, it is reasonably well served by bus lines to

County Kerry's bigger cities, including Tralee and Killarney where David had his medical appointments. And the best part of all, we've never met a friendlier or more welcoming group of townsfolk anywhere we've traveled.

The only thing missing in Cahersiveen from our perspective, really, was/is a cadre of marine tradesmen and craftsmen. That said, we eventually arranged for two diesel mechanics from County Cork to crawl around our engine room looking for clues about why we had experienced hydrolock enroute to Ireland. They both concluded it must've been a one-off, fluke event, and that we're extremely unlikely to have it happen again. Besides, they added, if we remained worried about it, we could always run the Perkins when we get into the kind of sea state we were in before, e.g., sporty conditions with wind and swell abaft the beam. (In other words, ~50% of the conditions we have during our offshore passages!)

Another downside to Cahersiveen, in retrospect, was the weather. Although not particularly



cold (only twice did the nighttime temperature dip below freezing), it was seemingly pelted day in and day out with 20-30kt winds, and it rained hard in waves off and on most days almost



Fall and winter in Cahersiveen had a different look than late summer. Storms off the Atlantic Ocean were a near constant occurrence with driving rain and wind often exceeding 40kts. But there was an occasional rainbow, too.

the entire winter. It sure made us appreciate the mid-winter sunshine, when it appeared.

But we didn't just hang out in Cahersiveen for six months. We rented a car for a 10-day road trip around the Republic of Ireland and to Belfast, Northern Ireland. And we took a weeklong

trip by car ferry to Wales and back. In addition, Vicki flew to Durban, South Africa, to spend three weeks with Shelby’s family for some quality time with grandkids Maebel and Evan. Meanwhile, David went on assignment at USAID headquarters in DC for three months, contributing to the U.S. Government’s humanitarian assistance program in Ukraine. And while working in DC, David also flew to Florida for a special Christmas Eve Dinner with his siblings and their spouses, and he later flew to Seattle to spend a week with Ben. Unfortunately, he tested (+) for COVID on arrival, which meant he spent most of the visit isolating in Ben’s apartment.



We made a road trip in October 2022, from Cahersiveen to Belfast. Along the way, we visited the Cliffs of Moher (l) and Llscannor (r) in County Clare. We stayed in the Titanic Quarter in Belfast, and attended an Ocean Cruising Club dinner.

In late November 2022, we took a car ferry from Rosslare, Ireland, to Pembroke, Wales. We thoroughly enjoyed both trips, even though neither helped extend our visa-free stay in the Republic of Ireland.

In addition to our trips away from Cahersiveen, we had a few visitors come there, including good friends Karen Parko and her husband Andrew Lowry – both of whom have sailed with us in the Caribbean, and who we were intending to rendezvous with in Scotland last fall, had we made it beyond Ireland. We also unexpectedly connected with former Walter Reed – Bethesda colleague and friend, Catherine Kimball-Eayrs, and her husband, Bradley, who were on an anniversary trip to Ireland, and happened to be passing through Cahersiveen on the Ring of Kerry.



We were fortunate to spend time in Ireland with friends who were visiting there, too. We’re seen at left with David’s med school classmate, Karen Parko, and her husband, Andrew Lowry. At right is Catherine Kimball-Eayrs from Walter Reed-Bethesda, and her husband, Bradley.



But the most special time was had when Grandchildren Maebel and Evan dragged their parents to Ireland from State Department R&R in England. We showed them around Cahersiveen and Portmagee, and Mae and Evan had a sleepover aboard *AFS*. And they helped us transit from Marina Cahersiveen to Murphy’s Boatyard on Valentia Island for final spring preps before continuing on to Scotland.



We had hoped our trips to Northern Ireland, Wales, Durban, and DC would have reset our clocks for an extended visa-free stay. However, as Vicki learned upon her reentry to Ireland through Cork Airport, the extension is totally at the discretion of the immigration officer on duty when you arrive. And for a brief period that seemed like an eternity to Vicki, she was not immediately granted reentry when she returned from visiting the Tucker Family in South Africa. After conferring with his chain of command, the Immigration Officers eventually granted her reentry, but only on the condition that she would depart Ireland aboard *AFS* by 22 April. Unfortunately, Cahersiveen continued to be pounded by stormy weather systems coming off the North Atlantic until the end of March / early April, when we had made arrangements to haul out at Murphy's Boatyard for pre-season maintenance and hull inspection.

This was also when Travis, Shelby, Maebel and Evan were visiting us. So, we did what any grandparents would do under similar circumstances, and we pressed them into service to help us with the 2-hour transit from the marina to Murphy's on Valentia Island.



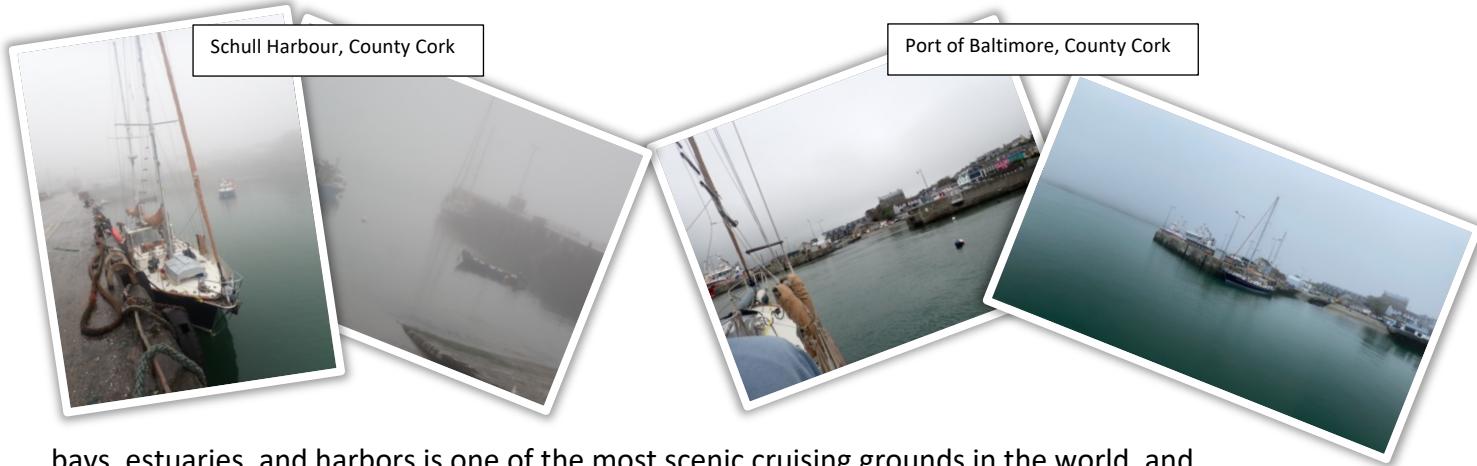
We said our tearful goodbyes to Shelby, Travis and the grandkiddos the next day, and then rolled up our sleeves for a busy week in the boatyard.

We were in and out of the boatyard in a week and finally ready to continue our journey to Scotland – 8 months later. The only fly in the ointment was that Vicki had committed months earlier (and was very much looking forward to) spending 10 days in April, the 11th – 21st, with six of her closest female friends from our tour of duty in Rota, Spain, 2000-2003. The League of Extraordinary Women – LEWs, as they call themselves – get together every few years for some girl time, and this year

they all agreed to rendezvous in Ireland. And they had already locked in airline reservations from the U.S. and from Spain, and deposits had been put down on accommodations across Ireland and Northern Ireland for their 10-day road trip.

Thus, while Vicki and LEWs did their circuitous driving tour around the Emerald Isle, David, wonder dog Saylor, and Charlie Murphy (a professional delivery captain, and no relation to Fionan) sailed *AFS* from Valentia Island around southern Ireland and Fastnet Rock to the harbor town of Kinsale in County Cork on the southeast coast, with stops in the fishing villages of Crookhaven, Schull, and Baltimore. While we could have made the 150nm trip in one overnight passage, this part of Ireland, with its numerous rivers,





bays, estuaries, and harbors is one of the most scenic cruising grounds in the world, and shouldn't be missed.

By the time David, Saylor, Charlie, and *AFS* were safely docked in Kinsale, Vicki was wrapping up her excursion with the LEWs in Dublin. And although she was technically already at the end of her visa-free stay in Ireland, she trained from Dublin to Kinsale and climbed back aboard *AFS* for the upcoming sails that would eventually take us away from the Emerald Isle.



At First Sight docked and awaiting Vicki's arrival from Dublin at Trident Marina, Kinsale, County Cork.