

# S/V AT FIRST SIGHT

## We Were On the Move - Kinsale to Howth

April 2023



### Kinsale and Passage to Howth

We left off our last post in the lovely seaport town of Kinsale, County Cork, ~25km from the city of Cork, which is Ireland's so-called second city. I'm kind of surprised we hadn't visited Kinsale earlier during our longer-than-intended stay in Ireland, because it really seems to have something for everyone. (We passed through Cork twice, and we've also flown into and out of its international airport, but we had not been to Kinsale.)

First of all, Kinsale is somewhat of a small town with a big town feel and amenities. (Or is it a big town with small town charm?) As a harbour (aka harbor), it has a robust mix of working vessels and pleasure craft, with a boatyard, several marinas and moorings, a yacht club, a sailing school, and more. It has plenty of culture, too, in the way of artisan shops, nice restaurants (including Michelin Star rated Bastion Restaurant), and a weekly farmers's market.

Unfortunately, we couldn't stay long enough to explore as much as we would have liked because of our immigration status. And so, we were underway for the vicinity of Dublin (~200nm / 35 hours by sea) with the first weather window. But rather than enter the busy industrial Port of Dublin, we set sail for Howth a picturesque harbor town on the northern outskirts of Dublin, recommended by delivery captain Charlie Murphy. What a great recommendation this turned out to be.



*Scenes from around beautiful Kinsale Harbour*





We were joined on this overnight passage by Andrew Miles, a British cruising sailor we met in a boatyard in Cartagena back in 2021, and whose path we later crossed several times (both intentionally and by happenstance) around the Balearic Islands. We also rendezvoused with Andrew and his wife, Ali, in Florida when they vacationed there last spring. He was desperate to get out on the water on his yacht, Miles Away III, which he lay berthed in Italy at the end of last season. However, he was intending to sail to the Greek Isles this season, but to do that for any length of time he needed a visa. So, while he waited for the visa application process to play out, he would have to get his sailing fix crewing aboard AFS. Unfortunately for Andrew (and for us), winds were light and variable for most of the 190nm passage from Kinsale to Howth, which led us to motor the entire way. Not only did we not sail even a mile, with the exception of the first 2-3 hours, which we described in the ship's log as a "glorious morning," we experienced drizzle or rain for much of the passage, and it was downright cold during our night watches.



Other than notes in the ship's log about the unpleasant weather, the majority of the transit was rather uninteresting, except for comments about the great food Vicki served up at every meal. That is until we made our final approach into Howth Harbour, where we very nearly ran aground.



Our ship's log had this description of the near grounding. "1130. Motored northbound all morning into freshening winds and building seas with occasional rain showers. However, arrived Howth Yacht Club Marina under mostly sunny skies and a gentle breeze. The approach into the marina is well marked, but Andrew and I found it confusing nevertheless, and we very nearly veered left into an inviting basin that has only a meter or less of water at low tide. Vicki was on the bow, however, and she alertly called our attention to the very large sign on the breakwater seawall with a large arrow pointing to the right saying, "MARINA".





## Howth to Belfast

Once safely docked, we all explored the lovely town of Howth, and found it quite to our liking. Much like Kinsale, Howth has a wonderful mix of big town amenities and culture and small-town charm. For example, we had a scrumptious seafood and fish dinner that night at Octopussy's Seafood Tapas Restaurant. And the marine store and hardware store was well-equipped with everything we needed/wanted. We bid Andrew a fond farewell the following morning, and then Vicki and I began preparing for our overnight passage to Belfast, Northern Ireland.

There is no comparison between the passage from Kinsale to Howth and the subsequent one, Howth to Belfast. Our logbook says it all: "Best day on the water thus far in 2023. Sun is shining. Calm sea. Light but steady breeze off the starboard quarter, which is keeping our new asymmetric spinnaker full, and in turn, it is pulling us along at 6.5-7kts. To top things off, Vicki fixed a terrific lunch - avocado and cucumber salad. "



But all good things must come to an end, and by nightfall at 21:00, the wind had shifted to forward of the beam prompting us to douse the spinnaker and unfurl the genoa in order to keep sailing. Overnight was chilly, but otherwise idyllic with good boat speed and a smooth ride. We rounded Copeland Island to enter Belfast Lough at daybreak, and then the wind totally collapsed, which forced us to motor the remaining 10 miles up the Lough to Belfast Harbour Marina.

Once there, Berthing Master Joe and his Assistant Berthing Master Kayleigh made us immediately feel welcome and at home. And what a nice place to call home, too.

This little marina is located in the historic Titanic Quarter, just 100m or so from the Harland & Wolff shipyard where the RMS Titanic was built between 1909-1912, before her ill-fated maiden voyage from Southampton, England to New York City, and only a 10-minute walk from the Belfast city center - a city that has undergone a remarkable revival since the depressing days of The Troubles of the 1960s-1990s.

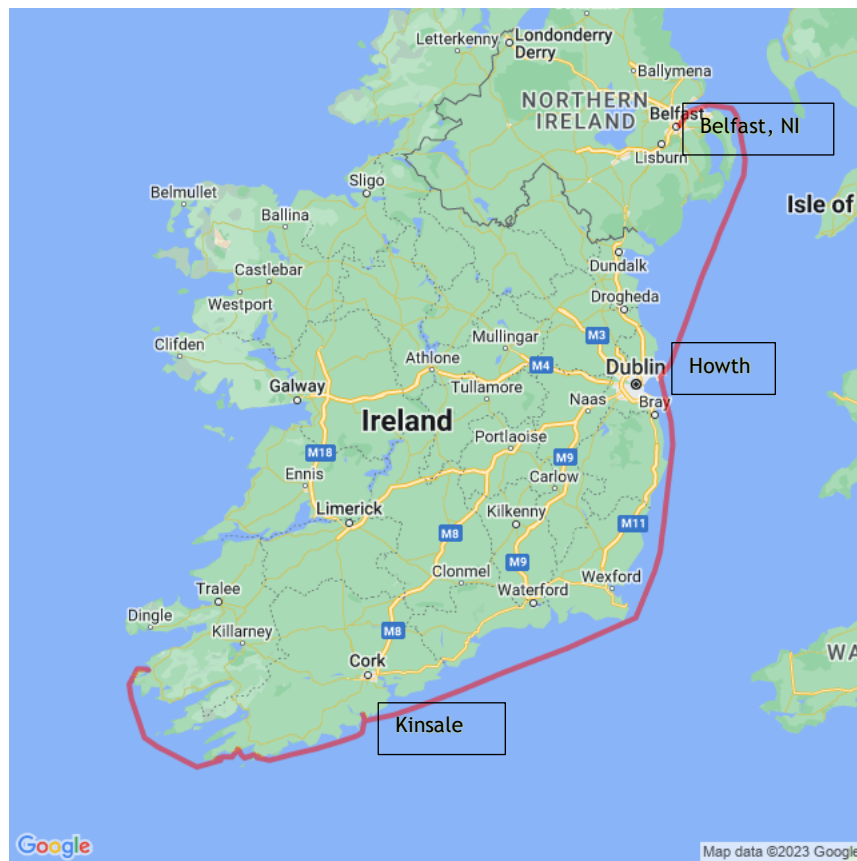
But the vibrant vibes of Belfast today belie the undercurrent of conflict and tension that still exists in some Catholic/Separatist and Protestant/Unionist neighborhoods, where wrought iron gates are still closed at sundown every night to limit unrestricted passage between neighborhoods! We highly recommend that anyone visiting Ireland also visit Belfast, Northern Ireland, and take both the guided walking tour and the Black Taxi tour to get a deeper appreciation of how The Troubles of the past still affect this great city and region to this day.



All that being said, our main reason for stopping in Belfast this time was to find a good dog sitter for Saylor so that we could return to the States for ~2 weeks in order to attend Charlie's graduation from Emory University School of Medicine, and to also take care of some routine medical care needs in the Atlanta area. The end result was a month's berthing for AFS at Belfast Harbour Marina, before pressing on to Scotland, which will be the topic of our next post.



*S/V AT FIRST SIGHT docked at Belfast Harbour Marina*



*Our track from Kinsale to Howth (22-23 April), and Howth to Belfast (26-27 April).*