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The Pilotage Foundation is grateful to John Lawson who was the author of all our Passage Planning routes flowing out from the South Coast of England to Iceland, The Baltic, the Atlantic Islands and the Mediterranean.

Updated in 2008 by John Marchment

Route 1

English Channel to FAEROE via IRISH SEA, CLYDE, SEA OF HEBRIDES, ORKNEY and SHETLAND

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General

It is 940 miles from the Solent to Torshavn in Faeroe via the Irish Sea and the Minches, rather further to Lerwick in Shetland. Diversion via Lerwick to Faeroe will add 280 miles. The longest unsupported leg is from Stornoway to Torshavn of 230 miles.

See Route 2 for the passage to the W of Ireland and the Hebrides which, surprisingly is about the same distance. The longest unsupported leg here is 520 miles from Eagle Island off NW Ireland to Torshavn, excluding St.Kilda and the W coasts of the Hebrides.

Weather and sea states

The weather along the whole route is dominated by the passage of Atlantic lows giving predominately westerly winds. Sometimes these are held up by high pressure extending N from the Continent which may persist for several days or even weeks with light or easterly winds. Occasionally from July to September, hurricanes from the US coasts will regenerate and sweep across the area as storms but more than two days of gale force winds per month in the summer are not usual. In general rainfall increases with northing.

Swell from the W or SW is a minor feature of St George's Channel, non existent in the Irish Sea but always present once clear of the Minches.

Sea temperature varies over the summer in the S from 11° - 16C ° to 8° - 12°C in Faeroe.

Fog may occur up to 2 days a month, is more prevalent to the E and can occur with little warning up to 6 or 7 days a month in Faeroe.

Currents

The effect of the flow of the remnants of the Gulf Stream are of no significance until N of the Hebrides when up to ½ knot easterly should be allowed for.

Tidal stream and tides

The timing of tidal streams off the major headlands in the English Channel, particularly up the Irish Sea and the North Channel and to a lesser extent further north, plays an important part in planning this passage especially at Springs. See Routeing Recommendations below.

The main flood stream flows NE into St George's Channel and the S Irish Sea, N in the S Irish Sea up to the latitude of the Isle of Man, S through the N Channel, E along the N Irish coast turning NE and then N through the Minches. Tidal streams are strong around Faeroe and fierce in the fiords.

Tide ranges vary from 4.7m at Plymouth, to 3.4m at Dublin, to 4.1 at Stornoway and less than 1m at Thorshavn.

Formalities

There is no need to clear in or out of Ireland unless it is a non-EU vessel or there are non-EU nationals on board. In these cases the Q flag should be flown and the Garda telephoned on first arrival or the Police in Northern Ireland. The Customs should be contacted on arrival in Faeroe and passports presented. A courtesy flag should be flown in the Republic and the Faeroese flag in Faeroe (not the Danish).

The import of alcohol is controlled in Faeroe and must not be brought ashore. It is generally available in the State outlets (*rusdrekkasolan*) but at a price. There are a few pubs and bars where you can get a drink now in Torshavn and bigger places.

Search and rescue

The route lies in the British, Irish and Faeroese Search and Rescue Regions (SRRs). It is covered by the VHF DSC network except for a 200 mile gap between the N end of the North Minch and the S end of Faeroe which is covered by the MF DSC.

Faeroe has 4 coastal radio stations keeping watch on VHF and MF bands.

There is helicopter coverage for most of the route.

Navtex and weather forecasts

The route is covered by Navtex stations at Niton (E and K), Valentia (W), Portpatrick (O), Malin Head (Q) and Rogaland (Norway) (L).

Details of the many other sources of weather forecasts may be found in Admiralty Maritime Communications (UK and the Baltic NP 291) and in RYA Weather forecasts G5/04

Fuel and domestic gas

Diesel tends to get cheaper the further north although marina outlets remain expensive. In the Republic and Northern Ireland, and Scotland always buy red diesel from fishing sources especially if a reasonable amount can be taken. Calor Gas (Butane) is available in Scotland and Northern Ireland and Camping Gas generally. It is worth taking enough Calor Gas to Faeroe to last the trip; Propane is used in Faeroe and Iceland and cylinders and adaptors are obtainable there if necessary. Kosangas (Propane) can be bought in Eire.

Timing of passage

The summer months are obviously likely to produce more settled and equable weather than the spring or autumn. It is a good rule to be S of Cape Wrath by the end of August. It is light for 24 hours in Faeroe around midsummer when the sun only just dips below the horizon.

Routeing recommendations

Going North

While the planned route is straight forward to the North Channel, with usually a nice long lee from Ireland up the Irish Sea, catching the various tidal gates en route is of importance especially in low powered craft. An adverse stream at Portland can be dodged inshore or well out and the aim should then be to reach the Lizard at HW Dover -0200 when it turns to the SW inshore; with a speed of about 5 knots, this will carry a fair stream for 8 hours round Lands End and well N across the Bristol Channel. A similar speed should carry over the period of foul stream to pass through the Tuskar/Skerries gap on the N-going stream.

A stop at Arklow or Howth might then facilitate using the 8 hour period of slack water between Howth and Carlingford before picking up the first of the N-going flood through the North Channel at HW Dover.

From here northwards the timing of the tidal gates become too complex for advanced planning but are still of day to day importance.

Going South

The reverse of going north; timing should be adjusted to catch the first of the S-going stream at the North Channel and, if possible round Lands End and the Lizard

Ports on the route

Port names in capital letters indicate a port with major marina facilities including slipping and all kinds of repair, electricity and water on the pontoons with the resources of a town or city nearby. Other ports will have many of these facilities but with any omissions noted. There are few marinas N of Craobh but all the ports mentioned cater for yachts.

Port categories

Ports are categorised for their accessibility in all weathers and the security of shelter.

- A Port of refuge in storms; complete shelter.
- A* Qualified storm port of refuge and haven.
- B Port accessible in gales with good shelter.
- B* Qualified gale port of refuge and haven.
- C Entry subject to wind, tide and swell conditions with some shelter inside.

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Distance Table

	SOLENT	PLYMOUTH	Dunmore East	HOWTH	Ardglass	TROON	RHU(Gareloch)	Craobh	Tobermory	Castlebay, Barra	Portree	Stornoway	Stromness	Lerwick	Tvøroyri	Torshavn
SOLENT	***	125	345	451	505	593	623	630	660	685	655	707	817	1029	917	947
PLYMOUTH	125	***	210	326	380	468	498	505	535	560	530	582	692	904	792	822
Dunmore East	345	210	***	116	150	238	268	295	325	350	320	372	482	694	582	612
HOWTH	451	326	116	***	34	122	152	179	209	234	204	256	366	578	466	496
Ardglass	505	380	150	34	***	88	118	145	175	200	170	222	332	544	432	462
TROON	593	468	238	122	88	***	30	60	90	130	135	187	297	399	397	427
RHU(Gareloch)	623	498	268	152	118	30	***	58	88	156	148	200	310	412	410	440
Craobh	630	505	295	179	145	60	58	***	30	85	60	130	240	452	345	375
Tobermory	660	535	325	209	175	90	88	30	***	56	30	100	210	422	310	340
Castlebay, Barra	685	560	350	234	200	130	156	85	560	***	***	85	195	407	295	325
Portree	655	530	320	204	170	135	148	60	30	***	***	48	145	370	258	288
Stornoway	707	582	372	256	222	187	200	130	100	85	48	***	110	220	210	240
Stromness	817	692	482	366	332	194	310	240	210	195	145	110	***	110	190	220
Lerwick	1029	904	694	578	544	399	412	452	422	407	370	220	110	***	210	220
Tvøroyri	917	792	582	466	432	397	410	345	310	295	258	210	190	210	***	30
Torshavn	947	822	612	496	462	427	440	375	340	325	288	240	220	220	30	***

The distances are direct between any two ports in different columns. Distances given between two ports in the same column will not necessarily be correct. Distances NW from Rhu are via the Crinan Canal.

PLYMOUTH A

A large naval and commercial complex with three major marinas and every possible facility and service; fuel from three outlets but only during working hours; water on all pontoons; easy provisioning from Sutton Harbour but not the other two marinas; regional hospital; good road and rail connections; airport with internal flights and to Channel Islands.

Falmouth 35M further W has similar facilities but both ports are some 12M off the direct track west.

Dunmore East B*

Open to the NE and SE; a fishing port with yacht moorings and alongside berths available; 2 – 3.4m alongside quay, 3m at moorings; fuel and water on quay; easy provisioning; ferries to England from Rosslare 40 minutes by road. Dunmore East is 30M off the direct track N but preferable to Rosslare harbour which has minimal facilities except shelter from the SW.

An good alternative stop after crossing the Bristol Channel is **Milford Haven** where shelter may be found in Dale Roads just inside the entrance; the locked port and marina at Milford Haven 5M further up-river is accessible HW-2 to HW with the usual facilities including fuel; Neyland marina is 8M from the entrance and accessible at all times.

HOWTH A

A modern marina in a fishing harbour conveniently placed along the Irish Sea for fuelling and refreshment for transients; marina is run by a well known yacht club and is secure in all weathers; 2.4m in approach channel; berths may be limited in high season for visitors and anything over about 20m length may have difficulty; fuel and water on pontoon; easy provisioning; travel lift, divers and all services; a good place to leave a boat but booking needed; frequent and fast rail service to Dublin; Dublin airport 20 mins by road.

Ardglass B

A small marina and fishing port but well sheltered and catering for visitors; 3.3m in approaches, 3.2m to 1.2m in marina; water on pontoons, fuel by cans (provided) in marina or from fishing berth; some support services and convenient provisioning.

The marina at **Portaferry** is 5M inside Strangford Loch with 2.5m at berths and similar facilities, is an alternative to Ardglass but the times of the fierce flood and ebb streams in the Strangford entrance often do not suit the need to carry them on passage outside.

25M further N with a 5M diversion into Belfast Lough is the large marina at **Bangor** with all the usual facilities and where there is an agency for Icelandic Hydrographic Service charts.

TROON A

Only for use if bound for the Clyde as it is well off the track through the North Channel. A small marina with 2.6m at the entrance, 1.4m – 2m inside; fuel, water and somewhat limited facilities; serious provisioning would require a taxi; good road and rail connections; Prestwick international airport 4M.

There are further big marinas at **Largs** and **Kip** further in to the Clyde.

RHU A

A marina at the entrance to the Gareloch close to Helensburgh with all the facilities, excellent road and rail connections with Glasgow and the Highlands, 30 minutes from Glasgow airport. .

The limitations on the **Crinan Canal** are 26m length, 6.1m beam, 2.8m draught (but may be less in summer) and 28.9m mast height; open 7 days a week in high season, ex-weekends outside it, daylight only; access at all states of tide; transit time about 6 hours; saves the best part of 100M from Rhu to rounding the Mull of Kintyre.

Craobh A

A small modern marina 12M S of Oban with good access, and most facilities including a slipway hoist to 15 tons; minimum depth 3.5m in entrance, more inside; good chandlery and engineering services; sailmaker available; small shop, pub and restaurant; serious provisioning from Oban by taxi or car hire; a good place to leave a boat; rail service from Oban southwards, ferries northwards and to the Hebrides; nearest airport Glasgow 2 hours.

An alternative might be **Ardfern** Yacht Centre 5M to the S but it is more off track.

Oban is less off the track than Craobh or Ardferrn, is a good shopping and communication centre with some visitors moorings near the town centre and a marina at Kerrera 15 minutes boat trip away.

Tobermory B

A deep, sheltered anchorage now mostly occupied with many yacht moorings; fuel and water available from fishing quay and easy shopping generally by dinghy; services slanted to fishing boats but yachts catered for and some chandlery; ferries to Oban and northwards.

Castlebay, Barra B

A reasonably sheltered anchorage accessible in all weathers with patchy holding but a number of yacht moorings; fuel and water by cans; more than adequate provisions; some engineering services; ferries to Oban and the north.

Portree B

A reasonably sheltered anchorage off a fishing port accessible in all weathers with a number of yacht moorings; cheap piped fuel alongside quay, and water; good provisioning usually by dinghy; limited services; ferries to the S and N, road connections via the Skye Bridge.

Stornoway A

A well-sheltered port with access in all conditions; pontoon berths for yachts up to 15m in complete shelter in depths of 2m close to town; piped fuel from North Beach Quay and water on pontoons; easy provisioning; fishing boat slip and facilities mainly fishing orientated; cranes to 25 tons; ferries to the Ullapool and Uig(Skye); airport close by with flights to Glasgow.

40M E of Stornoway on the mainland is **Lochinver** with easy access and good shelter with pontoon berths up to 12m.

Stromness, Orkney A*

A well-sheltered port on the W side of Orkney with access in the worst conditions except on the ebb in strong westerlies; at least 4m in anchorage where there are some moorings; there is a sheltered pontoon for yachts up to 15m and berths for longer on the quays; fuel and water at quays; easy provisioning close by; airport on island plus ferries both with mainland connections.

Lerwick, Shetland A

A busy fishing and oil rig support port which makes a considerable effort to welcome visiting yachtsmen; 6.8m in entrance with 1.5m to 6m alongside a pontoon in yacht harbour which is in centre of town; yachts of almost any size can be accommodated somewhere; water and electricity on the pontoons and piped fuel nearby, large quantities by road tanker; craneage up to 140 tons; ferry and air connections to the mainland; summer ferries to Norway, Denmark, Faeroe and Iceland.

Scalloway on the W side of the island is a good alternative and may be preferable if proceeding from or to the W or NW.

Tvøroyri A

A small port with a clear approach in all weathers and reasonable shelter inside on the E side of the most southerly island Suduroy; although not the first port coming from the S it has fuel, water and provisions available, also Customs to clear in.

Torshavn A

A deep-water well-sheltered harbour on the main island of Streymoy and the capital of Faeroe. Negligible tidal range, yachts lie alongside the quay close to the Boat Club in depths of 1.5m plus; water, washing machine, showers; fuel and water at or near the quay in main port; good repair facilities and heavy craneage; supermarket, hotels and restaurants close by; hospital; daily flights to Scandinavia as well as to Iceland, Aberdeen and London; a car ferry plies between Iceland, Faeroe, Norway, Denmark and Shetland. July 29th is St Olav's Day and all shops are shut.

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Route 1

Waypoint Table

THESE WAYPOINTS SHOULD BE USED FOR PLANNING ONLY AND NEVER FOR NAVIGATION

Waypoints are given to the nearest minute of latitude and longitude and are positioned in clear water clear of the ports and headlands.

Turning Points (TP) to avoid land or navigational hazards are also noted in the table.

The symbol * between two points denotes that the direct route between them passes over or close to land or other navigational dangers.

PORT OR POINT	LAT	LONG
SOLENT (Cowes)	50° 46N	01° 18W
*		*
PLYMOUTH	50 19	04 10
TP Lizard	49 56	05 12
Longships	50 03	05 48
Dunmore East	52 09	06 57
*		*
TP Tuskar	52 12	06 08
*		*
HOWTH	53 23	06 03
*		*
Ardglass	54 15	05 36
*		*
TROON	55 32	04 42
TP Little Cumbrae	55 42	04 58
*		*
RHU	56 00	04 45
Route between Rhu and Craobh either via Crinan or Kintyre		
Craobh	56 15	05 30
There are no direct routes between Craobh and Stornoway		
Tobermory	56 40	06 04
*		*
Castlebay, Barra	56 56	07 28
*		*
Portree	57 25	06 09
*		*
Stornoway	58 12	06 20
*		*
TP Cape Wrath	58 40	05 06
Stromness	58 56	03 18
*		*
Lerwick	60 08	01 10
*		*
Tvøroyri	61 32	06 42
*		*
Torshavn	62 00 N	06 44W

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