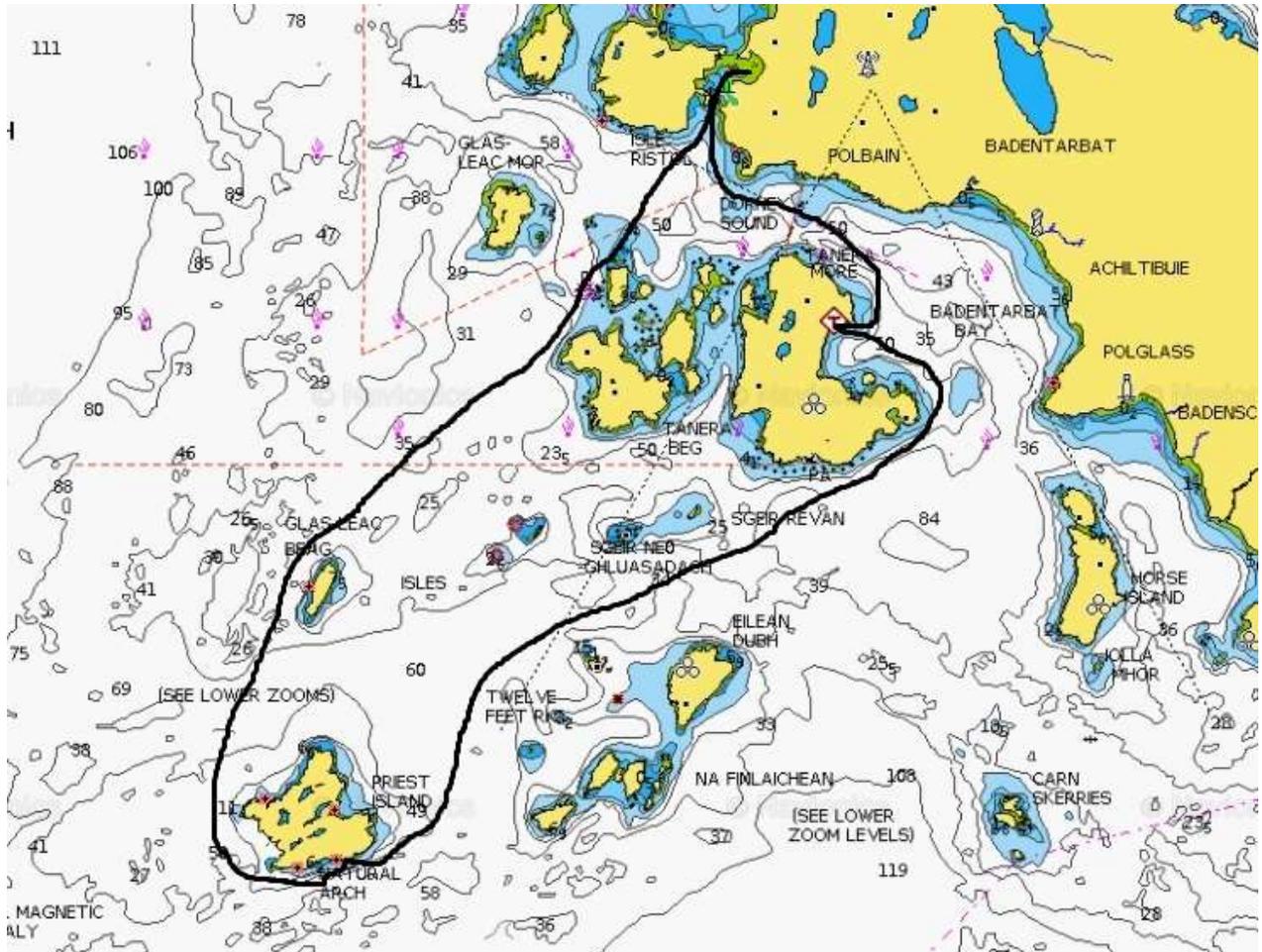


Summer Isles Dinghy Cruising Trip 30th May to 2nd June



(Route of trip Day1)

Originally the trip was planned for three boats, way back in the dark days of February. Now, in May, we were all packed, with the boats on their trailers, and ready to go!! John and Janis Keast set off early, with their trailer sailer, and travelled all the way to Achiltibuie. Unfortunately, it was at this point that John was struck down with a tummy bug and had to return home, quite disappointed.

The two remaining boats were:

A Wayfarer, named Blue Yonder. Helm: Calum Pearson, crew: Ken Tease.

A GP14 named BooFoo. Helm: Ian Cameron, crew: Helen Rowson.

Day 1

Thursday 30th May was spent travelling, from Inverness. The weather was dry and we set off for Port a Bhaig campsite, near Achiltibuie, north of Ullapool, on the West coast of Scotland. At the campsite, we set up our tents, and camp. We then trailed the boats along to Old Dornie Harbour where we got the boats rigged. This would be our base for the boats. The harbour itself has a long slipway and stony beach which was accessible for our dinghies at all states of the tide.

So, on a rainy Friday the 31st of May we left Old Dornie Harbour, a little later than planned, at 11:00 am with low water at 12:10. Calum had prepared a form with all our details, and so we contacted Stornoway coastguard to give them our details and our proposed destination, of Priest Island, before setting off. We each carried a radio on channel 70. Calum had an i-pad with navigational software.



Visibility was poor, with constant rain, and at the point of leaving Old Dornie neither primary objective was in sight. Wind was around force 3.

We set off on a course of about 240 degrees to the rocky wee island of Glas-Leac Beag. There was a fair bit of Atlantic swell. Blue Yonder at one moment would appear above us, then vanish below us. Only the tip of her mast showing, until raised up again on the next wave. Although I have sailed BooFoo for years and been out in all sorts of conditions, this was the first time I had been out in such a large swell in such a small boat. A bit scary, at first and does make you realise just how small you are!

We continued, turning south on a bearing of 210 degrees, to round Priest Island. We were making good time in the light wind, with Priest Island eventually materialising on the horizon.

Now, on the south side of Priest Island we met very light winds. In fact, no wind at all!! This of course was the furthest point in our outbound journey. We, in BooFoo, used our oars to make our way around the end of Priest Island with some help from Blue Yonder's small outboard. Blue Yonder then managed to land at a small bay, with a steep beach of football sized pebbles, which was challenging underfoot.

The island itself is uninhabited, although no doubt was lived on in the past. Frank Fraser Darling, a fairly famous ecologist, ornithologist and conservationist apparently lived on the island for a while. It was also the hideaway of two conmen, Jim Miller and John Bellord, on the run from the law, who lived there for almost a year, in 1976!



We skirted the coast of Priest Island then headed on a run at 33 degrees towards the islands of Tanera Beg and Tanera Mor passing the rocky cave on the side of the island. Fortunately the wind had come back. Continuing onwards we passed between two rocky skerries, then headed due east to round Tanera Mor meaning to land in the large bay on the east side. The beach seemed to have disappeared, having been replaced with a pile of large boulders. There was lots of construction going on all over. It turns out that the Island was getting a serious make over by the new owner. The project managers invited us in to what was the old Post Office for coffee and biscuits and a heat at their stove! We were all pretty wet and cold, from the constant drizzling rain. Unfortunately, with all the upheaval, it wasn't possible to get one of the islands stamps which it has produced since the 1970's



Refreshed and heated from the roaring stove and warm welcome, we set off again. We rounded the North side of Tanera Mor and had a north westerly reach across Dornie Sound back to Old Dornie harbour again. Blue Yonder made the mistake of landing at the wrong but very similar looking pier. Well, it was a 17.5NM long day! We all landed at the correct pier at 17:30 after 6.5 hours of constant sailing. The boats were hauled out on to the beach, in the pouring rain, and made secure. Off we headed to the campsite for food and a shower. The rain lasted all night, so as it was wet outside a bottle of red wine was opened, and we became wet inside too. Day 1 complete. Time for bed. zzzzzzzzzzzzz

Day 2

On Friday the 1st June it was quite windy. Around F4/ F5 and gusty. Mainsails reefed, we left Old Dornie harbour at just after 10:00 am but retreated from our first venture back into Dornie Sound, judging it a bit too windy to be safe. We sailed about the bay and fortunately the wind dropped a bit, so we tried again. This time we skirted the coast a bit more, getting some shelter from Tanera Mor. We then crossed over to the north side of Tanera Mor with the intention of passing through the channel between Tanera Mor and Eilean Fada Mor to get to an anchorage NW of Tanera Beg. However the wind was being funnelled through this gap and was very strong, easily F5/F6 with a lot of white horses and we had to spill wind even with a deep reef in. Just about this point, in BooFoo, we had a problem with our furling Genoa. The foil for rolling the sail around had decided to jump ship. I could see it slowly sliding out of the luff. Helen was on the helm and I managed to get the foil inboard. This meant we did not have the means to reef the foresail. So we decided, as it would be a run home, to drop the mainsail and head back towards Old Dornie under genoa alone. Blue Yonder, meanwhile, had continued to try and reach the proposed destination. Having put in a number of tacks, one of which almost had them capsized due to the mainsheet snagging, they eventually admitted defeat. We both sailed back to the harbour, and although a bit disappointed, decided it was better to play safe in these conditions and call it a day.

Back at Old Dornie, we discussed having a last sail on the next day, before heading home. However as the weather had been so wet we decided against this, so we derigged the boats and returned them to camp. We then got showered and headed to the An Fuaran Bar which is just above camping area. In the restaurant area it was warm and cosy. We had an excellent meal and a few drinks, reliving the day and its highlights. Guess what? The rain went off. (for a wee while). The next day we struck camp and drove the boats back to Chanonry Sailing club at Fortrose. There was still unfinished business. We will be back!!

