



Kite in Ireland

Colin Henwood reflects on what makes a superlative trailer-sailer – and a great holiday on Lough Derg

Sharing a boat is a great idea. I share *Kite*, a 21' (6.4m) gaff-rigged sloop – see W84 – with Andrew Wolstenholme who designed her. The advantages of sharing a boat are numerous, not just halving the costs but all the fettling and faffing around is easily shared between us. She is always ready to go, so we can get on and sail her. All boats benefit from regular use. Unless you are sailing around the world, it is rarely wear and tear which causes a boat to deteriorate. It's neglect on the mooring, a damp cabin with poor ventilation, corroded engine parts and other things going un-noticed from lack of use which contribute to the premature aging of a perfectly good boat.

Andrew and I do not live next door to each other. The Wolstenholmes live in Norfolk; if *Kite* has a home port it's Wroxham in the heart of the Broads. The Henwoods live in the Thames valley where if we want good sailing we have to travel. It's the scope and flexibility that a good trailer-sailer offers which is our little boat's great attraction.

Over the last two years, we have participated in two English Raids; cruises-in-company of the sort of small, interesting and adventurous boats often featured in this magazine. *Kite* has toured the Broads, made a guest appearance at the Beale Park Boat Show and visited the Emerald Isle – of which more later. This is her third season and we plan to take part in the

third English Raid based at Shotley on the East coast, explore Poole Harbour and the Purbeck coast and maybe the Fal and Helford rivers in Cornwall. We have many future plans for trailer sailing with *Kite*: the waterways and inland seas of the Netherlands; Milford Haven; the Gulf of Morbihan; and the Venetian lagoon are all within range. It makes you wonder why anyone would own a deep keeled yacht and pay for a marina berth on the South Coast!

The right trailer-sailer...

Kite's gestation has been a long one. The idea began at the second Portsmouth Festival of the Sea in 2001 when Andrew and I talked about a simple boat we could enjoy with our families. The idea to share the boat did not emerge until a few years later when the build project had stalled and I agreed to complete the job. With the distractions of running a busy boatyard, finishing her took another 6 years and she was finally launched on Wroxham Broad in 2010.

This boat is more cockpit than cabin, so a family can be comfortably accommodated for day's sailing, with the cabin providing space for all the "stuff" that accompanies a day out on the water. The cabin is also somewhere to make a cup of tea and we can even sleep overnight in comfort.

Trailer-sailers have to be simple to launch and recover on a



Facing page: Colin Henwood helms *Kite* in the 2011 English Raid. Photograph: Andrew Wolstenholme

Above: The hard chine hull with its modest deadrise sits low on the trailer for easier launching. Photograph: Andrew Wolstenholme

Right: Colin, Andrew and Andrew's daughter Joanna sail *Kite* in the 2010 English Raid. Photograph: Kathy Mansfield



slipway, quick to rig and de-rig, easy to tow on the road, and sail well. These essential requirements have to be included in the design and construction of the hull, the rig and the trailer; all are interlinked.

Kite has a simple single chine hull made of epoxy bonded marine plywood, with a ballasted centreboard plus some internal ballast and there's a well for a small outboard. This shallow deadrise hull shape is very easy to load on to a trailer and its light weight – all-up 1653lbs (750kg) – means you don't have to be a gorilla to winch her on. Light weight also means an average sized car can tow her easily: the boat plus trailer plus gear weighs around 1984lbs (900kg), so a Ford Mondeo 1.8 with a towing capacity of over 3000lbs (1450kg) is suitable. The spars are hollow carbon fibre and feather light; the mast, which sits in a tabernacle, can easily be raised and lowered by one person without any risk of concussion. It takes about 30 minutes for two people to rig and launch *Kite* and the same time to recover her and ready her for the road.

The road trailer is a braked single axle chassis, with a 2200lbs (1000kg) capacity. A single axle makes manhandling far easier than a twin axle and dramatically reduces the overall towing weight. The chassis design has been kept very low to reduce the depth needed when wading on a slipway; so far we have launched and recovered many times without having

to submerge the wheel bearings. Other trailer designs with a hinged or break-back chassis or a 'piggy back' launching trolley all add weight – and cost – and were not necessary for the light weight, chine hull.

Kite is held down on the trailer with two heavy-duty ratchet straps, one through the stem U-bolt and the other through two U-bolts up inside the outboard well. This arrangement is very secure and better than long straps over the boat which always rub away on varnished edges. The tailboard assembly fits with a long steel pin to the rudder fittings on the transom which mitigates the usual lash-up that unravels somewhere on the motorway scattering bits of plastic in your wake.

Making the whole arrangement as simple and straightforward as possible usually means you will get to use your boat more often. Slipways can be a nightmare with an impractical rig, a heavy boat and a vehicle that cannot manage the job. *Kite* does not require an expensive, gas guzzling 4x4. She can be handled off and on to the trailer by two people and one pair of waders without stress or damaging the boat.

The last item on my list of trailer-sailer essentials is: Must sail well. This might be asked of every boat but what is the point of driving all the way to your new and exciting cruising area if the boat will not go to windward or is so slow you just don't get anywhere against a tide.



The lovely Lough Derg. **Above:** Shannon One-Designs and Waterwags at Dromineer. **Below:** "All you do is turn up, launch your boat and go sailing". **Facing:** Inishcealtra, Holy Island, in Scarriff Bay on the west of Lough Derg. Photographs courtesy: Shannon Development



Kite in action, in Ireland

Last summer's trip to Ireland put *Kite* to the test. Our destination was Lough Derg on the River Shannon. This Irish river has a great history as an important navigation into the heart of the country. As the commercial waterway has been given over to pleasure boating, the Irish Waterways authorities have taken over the harbours and wharves and provided moorings, slipways and the other facilities you need for cruising the lake. Unlike many of the English cruising grounds, the slipways and moorings on the Shannon are free; you do

not need to buy a licence, so all you do is turn up, launch your boat and go sailing – bliss!

The Shannon is a fantastic mix of river and loughs – lochs – along its 224 miles (360km) from its source in County Cavan down to Limerick. The navigation starts in Lough Allen in north west Ireland and the river sections link many loughs and tributaries which form the river basin. The section from Lough Erne down to Killaloe at the south end of Lough Derg is an ideal course for the first Irish raid in September – see *Calendar*. Waterways Ireland publishes clear charts in a neat



the villages on the Lough have little harbours with marina style jetties and facilities. Some of these harbours seemed quite remote and secluded, in particular Dromann opposite Dromineer on the west shore, where the entrance is well marked as you follow a narrow channel into a "secret" harbour surrounded by woods and countryside.

The Irish weather has a well earned reputation for a good deal of rain and for our stay it was probably fairly typical, best described as 'sunshine and showers' with some of the showers on the heavy side. Each day we chose our route depending on the wind strength and direction. The rain, if it came, never lasted long and was usually accompanied by a freshening breeze. *Kite* is very easy to reef and

plastic envelope; they are laminated with a thin coating which just survived 8 days of average Irish summer weather.

We aimed for Dromineer on the east side of the Lough Derg. This lough is the largest expanse of open water on the river at about 20 miles (33km) long by about 9 miles (15km) at the widest point. The shore line is indented with many bays and there are numerous islands; a great cruising ground for a boat like *Kite*.

At Dromineer harbour, we rigged in the open car park and launched down an easy slipway. The Harbourmaster offered us a cup of tea, guided us into the small marina and showed us where to park the trailer while we nipped out for an evening sail after our drive across southern Ireland from the Rosslare ferry. This was August, the middle of school holidays and the height of the season – we had the lake to ourselves and the sense of discovery, real and imagined, was with us everywhere we went.

Navigation was straight forward; all the channels and hazards are well marked and the shallow bays are detailed on the chart by an odd but clear grid pattern. These shallows in the bays and around islands are certainly not soft mud; there are plenty of rocks to be aware of and a careful slow approach to any secluded anchorage is important. We clonked the centreboard on something hard on at least two occasions as we sneaked in looking for a quiet spot for a cup of tea and a spot of fishing.

Dromineer is roughly halfway up the lough on the eastern shore which gave us plenty of scope to explore the area. All

un-reef and we became used to watching out for the little squalls approaching across the surrounding hills, so we could tie in a reef and put a jacket on ready for them.

The islands of Lough Derg are really beautiful, especially Inishcealtra – Holy Island – in Scarriff Bay on the west side. You can land at a little jetty and explore the early monastery established in the 6th century by St Colum. We approached around the southern tip of the island as the northern end looked very shallow. The nearby harbour of Mountshannon has a great tea shop and that alone makes a visit worthwhile. The entrance to Scarriff Bay is guarded by the Middle Ground Rocks and the Lushing Rocks to the south; the hazard is well buoyed but you need to keep a careful look out.

As a destination for a trailer-sailer, Lough Derg is ideal. We had 8 days sailing and could easily have had another 8 days and still there would be more to explore. The facilities for anyone bringing a boat to the Lough are first class and free. The countryside is beautiful, the pubs are great – I recommend Larkins Pub in Garrykennedy – and the people are the most kindly and welcoming you could wish to meet.

Further Information

Lough Derg has two tourism organisations: Shannon Development covering Clare, Limerick, North Tipperary and West Offaly – www.shannonregiontourism.ie tel: +353 (0)61 361 555 – and Failte Ireland West Tourism for County Galway – www.irelandwest.ie tel: +353 (0)91 537 900 See also: www.discoverireland.ie/lakelands