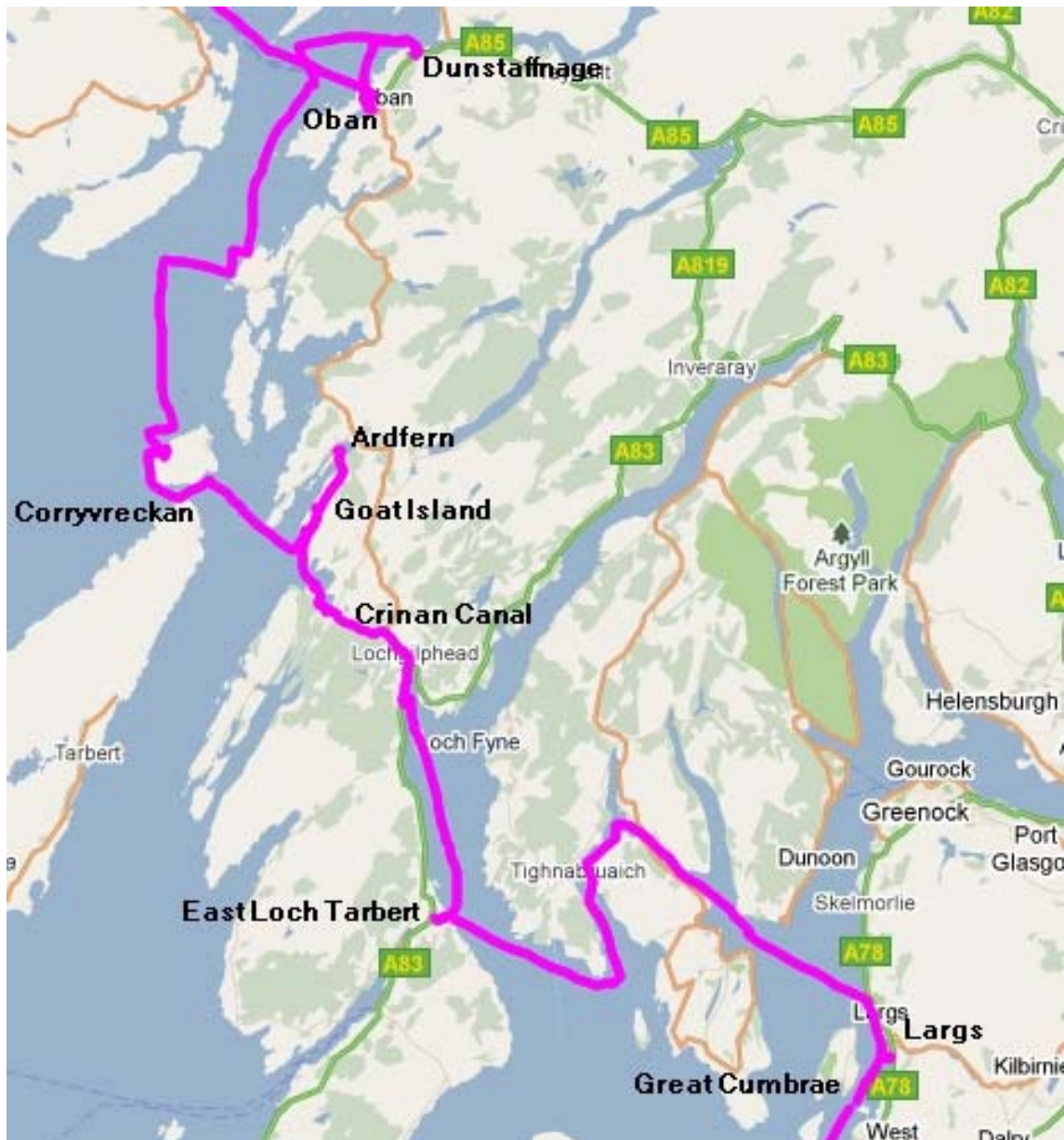


**3rd Report: Oban 56°25'.1N 5°29'.7W to  
Largs 55°46'.4N 4°51'6W  
25 June to 10 July 2010**

**Route Overview**



## Reports Silmaril 2010

**On Friday, 25 June** we were back in Oban. We returned via Edinburgh, where we visited Adrian, a former graduate student of Alex's. His wife Evelyne was not there. She was in Egypt for a few months to study Arabic. So, the three of us had a good dinner and went to a pub for an after-meal whiskey. Next day we took the train to Glasgow, where our friend Ben from Hamburg joined us and we continued to Oban together. Ben will stay with us for two weeks.



*Silmaril* was fine, but there was no water at the pontoon and for the washing machines. Kerrera Island had not water for a very long time. So, water was in short supply and we had to fetch it by the bucket from a tap on the pier.

**Saturday, 26 June.** We went shopping and attended to some chores on board.

**Sunday, 27 June.** The weather was not great. In a drizzle we sailed a short distance north to Dunstaffnage, where *Silmaril* would come on land for maintenance jobs. We moored at a pontoon and cleared ship that *Silmaril* would be ready to reach the shallow slip at high tide. In the afternoon, Alex and I hiked to the ruins of the castle . . .



## Reports Silmaril 2010

. . . and took a nap on the pebbly beach. Ben rested on the boat.



**Monday, 28 June.** This time a totally different kind of crane took *Silmaril* out of the water. She hung close to the ground like in a cradle. They put her on a stand and we could still live on her. Ben got ready for his post (of observer). There were only rails available to sit down on, therefore, extra padding was called



for.

## Reports Silmaril 2010

We worked hard all day, filling, painting, scrubbing, greasing, and gluing. Alex made a thorough job of the inspection, since we would not see below the water line for a good while.

**Tuesday, 29 June.** And back into the water *Silmaril* went, crane and all. I was a bit nervous, since the tide had already begun to change.



But we found enough water to turn and head back to the place at the pontoon to fill the water tank and to get ready to leave.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

The weather got worse and we sailed through the Firth of Lorn under dark low clouds.



About two hours later it was still cold, but the sky was almost clear and we marveled at the unusual rock formations on the isle of Scarba.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

Alex had calculated the best time for the passage through the Strait of Corryvreckan between Scarba and the isle of Jura for a little later. So, we anchored in a bay at the southern end of Scarba and fished, unfortunately without success, ate and studied the books to find suitable anchorage for the night until it was time to go.



With light wind from aft we sailed, Ben at the helm, through the slightly choppy waters of the strait under a UFO cloud. The current was so small that there were almost no waves. Only a few eddies or rising bubbles demonstrated how these waters would look in strong winds and currents.

## Reports Silmaril 2010

We headed toward the entrance to Loch Craignish and encountered much wilder turbulence at Dorus Mor than in Corrivreckan.



The place is also described in the book as often more difficult to pass than Corrivreckan itself. But in present conditions we had no problems at all.

## Reports Silmaril 2010

We turned into Loch Craignish and chose the inner waterway. After a failed anchoring maneuver in a first bay we continued north and finally anchored in the vicinity of Goat Island, where a motor boat already lay at anchor.



**Wednesday, 30 June.** Our next destination was the Crinan Canal. But the anchor would not come up. Tidal streams and wind had made Silmaril dance back and forth and had obviously caught the chain on some very sturdy obstacle. Neither our own efforts nor the pulling and dragging by two helpers with a powerful boat from a nearby marina got the chain free.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

We had to leave the entire chain fixed on to a fender and sail to the marina. We made fast, but changed to a more sheltered berth, since bad weather had been announced. And it blew indeed during the night. But we lay in a good place.

A diver, Tony Bennet, was supposed to come to our aid. He came aboard to discuss the procedure. He is a professional but only dives in his spare time. And today he had to wait for some Russians and Israelis who chartered a boat from him. We were mighty glad to get his help. He is competent and moreover very nice. If the weather would not worsen, he would dive for us tomorrow.

So, we sat there, were rocked and rained on and took care of minor chores.

**Thursday, 1 July.** The weather was too nasty for Tony to dive. We waited.

**Friday, 2 July.** Yes, Tony arrived and brought his equipment on board. We motored back to the bay near Goat Island. The dark blue fender was not visible for a long time in the choppy water, but there it was, what a relief!



Tony explained what he was going to do and what we were responsible for. He then struggled into the wet suite, strapped the lead belt on, fastened the flippers and scrambled onto the small platform at the stern. Alex helped with the tubes and the valves, before he slipped into the water.



He would swim to the fender and follow the chain down to where it was caught. The dinghy had to be in the water for Tony to be able to come a board again.

## Reports Silmaril 2010



All clear, Tony was in the water and the dinghy made fast.

He soon reached the fender and with it the end of the chain and disappeared.

We waited, all three of us a bit tense. And it took a while for him to emerge again. He had to come on board again to change the gas bottle. In the depth of about 7m he had to wrestle his way through a jungle of head-high sea weed to reach the obstacle. The chain was looped around a



mushroom-shaped rock resulting from *Silmaril's* movements with wind and currents during the night and about 10m from the anchor it was tightly wedged between the stem and the cap of the mushroom rock. Tony could not free the chain. But he knew now how to lay it out in order for us to pull in a certain direction at full throttle. His hands were badly scratched but he was not discouraged, again back in and down he went. Meanwhile we almost had a mishap with the dinghy. I suddenly saw it floating along the boat's side, thought it was no longer fast and vaulted over the railing. I never knew how I landed in the dinghy. And it was still tied, thank goodness, you see, I had no oars!!

## Reports Silmaril 2010

Tony came up the second time and had positioned the chain for a hopefully successful try with *Silmaril* later on. We returned to the Marina of Ardfern and discussed for a long time how we would go about the maneuver. As a precaution, Alex reserved 10m of chain and a new anchor at the chandler's. We could retrieve the free 40m of the chain by sawing it off. Toward noon the wind picked up considerably, but we were too impatient to wait any longer. We returned to the dark blue fender, fixed a long line to the end of the chain and pulled at full throttle in the direction Tony had given us. Nothing happened. Alex had already gotten the saw and was retrieving the line and the chain until we were close to the place where the mushroom rock held the chain. I tried a gain, once, twice, three times. And suddenly there was a crunching noise, a wrench and we drifted off dragging the free anchor in the strong wind. It was such a relief to see the anchor appear loaded with heaps of leathery kelp as Alex took in the remaining length of the chain. Maybe the waves and the 25 knot wind and the short chain had helped to free the caught part from the rock. The locals never knew of this particular rock, although the bay is often used as anchorage. We celebrated our deliverance with a sip of whiskey and did not forget to sacrifice some to Neptune!

Alex called the chandler in high spirits and cancelled the reservation of chain and anchor. And we headed for the entrance to the Crinan Canal.

Many boats were waiting in front of the lock. Four Norwegians slowly went round and round close to the lock. All of them had hoisted the ARC flag. They were on their way to the Canary Islands where the rally would begin at the end of November.

Finally it was our turn and we entered the first lock, continued to the second and were on our way to Bellanoch Marina.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

The narrow canal is an enchanted place. We tugged along through wild stretches, only bushes, trees, and some flowers, . . .



. . . we passed a number of very special abodes . . .



. . . and reached Bellanoch Marina where Tony had generously offered us a berth. There is no visitor berthing officially. But he has his charter boats there and gave us permission to stay over night. He was there himself, showed us to a free berth and handed us the key for the toilet.

## Reports Silmaril 2010

On the same evening we met Sheina, Andrea and their son Lorenzo who live in the beautiful gothic house in Bellanoch Bay, where they used to have a B&B for years. Now they are very busy supporting and accompanying Lorenzo in his sailing. He is the youngest of the Scottish National Team, trains excessively and travels to many competitions. They would all three be at the World Championship of the Laser Radial class in Largs in a few days. We would probably see them there again.

**Saturday, 3 July.** Alex and I took a short walk along the small bay and to the little Chapel up the hill behind the bay. Ben waited for us on *Silmaril*. He has a problem with his leg and cannot walk very well.

Toward noon we got ready to leave. Sheina, Andrea and Lorenzo came to give us a short tour of their own boat and to say good bye.



Sheina is Scottish and Andrea is Italian. On this picture he looks a little like my father when he was Andrea's age.



**Reports Silmaril 2010**

We left Bellanoch Bay and headed toward the remaining nine locks that are all hand-operated by the crew.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

The locks are narrow and short and pretty exhausting to operate. The atmosphere became a little tense in front of each lock. That's why there are only a few pictures. Ben took them. And this was the procedure. One had to go ashore before entering the lock. To find a suitable place close and deep enough to get out proved to be challenging at times. Then the one on shore had to go and get ready to take the lines when *Silmaril* was in the lock and tie her up. First Ben took the job, then Alex took over, since scrambling up the lock entrance and hurrying to catch the line and opening the gates is quite strenuous.



Once the boat is tied up, the back gates have to be closed. The black poles with the white ends are the levers that must be moved to close each door separately. They are secured with a stick in the ground and Alex forgot once or twice to lift it up and braced himself in vain with the bulk of his considerable weight against the immovable beam.

Once both gates are closed, the sluices at the other gates can be cranked open. The water shoots in with great momentum and the rocky walls of the lock are dangerously close to the hull!



Alex got ready with his legs to prevent *Silmaril* from getting scratched and himself from polishing again!

## Reports Silmaril 2010

The weather forecast announced strong winds for the night, so, we decided that we would stay in the canal over night and made fast at the pontoon after the ninth lock of the day and enjoyed a good dinner in the restaurant across the water.



**Sunday, 4 July.** Bad weather had been announced for the entire day and it was raining and blowing indeed when we got up. So, we took the bus to Ardrishaig to go shopping with a break for coffee and cake. On and off it kept pouring, but a family of five had great fun in a small playground across the street from our shelter. The Scotts are obviously waterproof.

## Reports Silmaril 2010

**Monday and Tuesday, 5 and 6 July.** Today there are four more locks. Between the last two we had to wait in a small enclosed basin before we could enter the last lock, pay and leave the canal into Loch Gilp and more open waters. We tried to catch a buoy right outside the last lock to eat lunch in peace, but the thick cable just would not come up. Even the aluminum boat hook could not cope, it came apart and we had to move after it floating in the stiff breeze. So, we drifted, ate our lunch and watched the gannets circle high up, fold their wings and plummet into the water for fish. Then we set sails and raced down Loch Fyne to East Loch Tarbert.



We stayed for two nights, . . .

. . . strolled along the harbor, read about the old Loch Fyne Skiffs, Wee Dooker (the local name for the common guillemot and nickname for the Tarbert fishermen) and Iolair (the eagle). . .



## Reports Silmaril 2010

. . . climbed the hill with its castle ruin and the archeological excavations . .



. . . and in the evening we walked to the old Dutch coal ship and had a drink. The owners sailed it from Holland and transformed it into a pub.

We liked the town very much. It still has a small fishing fleet in operation and there are many small shops and advertisements for all kinds of activities: sailing, crafts, music, church, exhibitions, reading groups, hiking and many more.

## Reports Silmaril 2010

**Wednesday, 7 July.** We left the marina in pretty good weather and a stiff breeze. We enjoyed an exceptionally varied day under sail.



We headed southeast toward the long Island of Bute and continued through the Kyles of Bute, the two sounds that hug the northern part of the isle on its West and East side. The wind had subsided and we tacked leisurely toward the northern tip of the island.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

This is where the two sounds meet and where a very narrow passage had to be managed in changing winds.



The maneuver was successful despite little wind from all directions and we left the four huge buoys under sail behind us.



The continuation south proved a little tricky. The wind increased, surprised us with violent gusts on the nose, forced us to keep tack and prevented us from making good headway.

## Reports *Silmaril* 2010

At the end of East Kyle we met with even more wind, short steep waves and a murky sky.



We fought our way across the Firth of Clyde and along the coast toward Largs, but could not stay away from the lee shore far enough to our taste and were forced to tack time and again. Nevertheless we wanted to reach Largs, even if we did not cherish the thought of arriving in a strange and according to our book, narrow marina with this kind of wind.

But we managed. From far away we saw virtually hundreds of lasers flicking back and forth in front of the entrance to the marina worming up for a training run of the World Championship of the laser radials. We had enough time to call the port authorities and ask where to moor *Silmaril*. To our great relief two helpers stood at the pontoon ready to catch our lines and pilot the boat safely into the berth despite the 17 knots even here among so many boats.

Towards the evening the wind died down, only the rain clouds remained and bestowed on us a breath-taking view.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

Sheina, Andrea Lorenzo and Oscar, the dog, were all here already and we celebrated our meeting.

The Marina and its vicinity were full with the boats and equipment of over five hundred competitors from fifty-eight nations.

**Thursday, 8 July.** The day was full of special happenings, Ben said goodbye after two weeks as our guest and it was my birthday. We had a good lunch on board with a bottle of champagne from my niece Sofia. Ben made me a very thoughtful present of a holder for a can of beer or a bottle of coke to fix anywhere on the railing. We then accompanied him to the railway station. We spent two eventful weeks with many animated discussions. We will think of the time often and of the many topics we treated with fervor!

In the afternoon we joined Sheina and Andrea to give support to Lorenzo before his first training run. Last preparations, Sheina is ready with the ultimate serving of pasta in the Tupperware! But Lorenzo was too nervous to eat.



## Reports Silmaril 2010

Lorenzo gave me a last smile for the picture and off he went.



The boat is pushed down the slipway into the water, the trailer handed over to an supervisor and go!



Jump on, insert the center board and trim the sail immediately. It takes a well-conditioned equilibrium to sail these boats.

In the evening we walked to Largs, where the opening ceremony for the World Championship was held. The event was hilarious.



Quirkiest patriotism and wit were both there . . .

**Reports Silmaril 2010**

. . . and the time-honored bagpipes, of course . . .



. . . a group of ladies with all kinds of percussion instruments, wildly drumming away . . .



## Reports Silmaril 2010

. . . and the whole crowd of participants carrying their national flags, their supporters and many onlookers marched through the streets to the sea front..



In the evening we went for dinner at the Nardini to celebrate my birthday. For years the restaurant has been operated by the family and Italian personnel. They serve excellent food.

**Friday, 9 July.** A rainy day. We visited Lorenzo again and watched the hectic activities of the competitors for a while. It was very windy all day.

### **Saturday, 10 July.**

It was still raining and very windy his morning. But we got our bikes out and took the ferry to the neighboring island of Great Cumbrae. We headed south on our way to drive round the island. We passed many wonderful rocks . . .



## Reports Silmaril 2010

. . . and reached the wide bay of Millport.



In the pretty town we ate a light lunch in the pub, visited an old convent with its ancient graveyard, . . .



## Reports Silmaril 2010

. . . laughed a lot about the conference bicycle



. . . and about the mushroom rock that reminded us of our anchor chain adventure.



Unfortunately we had to complete our tour around the island in rather more than less rain. Our last day in Largs was coming to and end, we were going to leave tomorrow. More about that in the 4<sup>th</sup> report.