

# Around Scotland in 12 days on “Solveig”

*By Rory Carter, age 8 ½ (with a bit of help from Dad, Mum & Findlay)*



The story so far –

Dad and his crew (George, John and Alastair) were looking at the choppy seas and windy weather all day but decided to leave the harbour at Limekilns on a cold Thursday night and set sail for Inverness.



I was wondering how they were getting on as we hadn't heard from them. Next thing we know, they've gone into Peterhead for the night and only completed half the voyage! They had a very bumpy ride from Limekilns and motor sailed all the way. The crew's reward for reaching Peterhead was Mum's chilli con carne!

After a good night's sleep they headed off for the Moray Firth and had dolphins join them on the way to Burghead harbour where they spent the night. Next morning they reached Inverness and entered the sea lock for the canal. Solveig was all ready for the start of our holiday in two weeks' time.

## Passage: Seaport Marina to Dochgarroch

Date: Saturday 30 June  
Position: 57°29'.04N 04°15'05W  
Barometer: 988

Time: 1530  
Weather: warm & sunny

It is early Saturday morning when we get on the train at Inverkeithing to Inverness. The train was very busy and it felt good to be travelling backwards as I haven't really been on a long journey on a train before.

The first job at Seaport Marina is for Findlay to go with Dad to see if they could find a large plank of wood to use as a fender board and for me to go with Mum to the supermarket for supplies. I got the best job as it turned out that Findlay had to walk miles with Dad looking for B&Q and they ended up 'finding' a piece of wood which they then had to carry miles home! I'm glad the Police didn't see them.



The pressure was on... we had to get through the Muirtown Swing Bridge before rush hour and we thought we were all ready when Dad realised the gear lever was stuck and there was a lot of hammering and groaning to get it working... just in time and in a bit of a rush we headed towards our first set of locks.

The lock keepers decided to give my Mum a crash course in rope handling and lock keeping which she seemed a bit nervous about but we're all going to get plenty of practice on this holiday. As we enter the lock and the water floods in it looks like a sea serpent is coming to eat the boat.

Another swing bridge at Tomnahurich (there are lots of long names in this story!) and then we stopped at Dochgarroch loch and went for great dinner at 'Oakwood restaurant'. They didn't do a children's menu so I ordered scallops and bacon. The waiter said it was good to see a young boy trying new food and he was going to ask me for my review afterwards. That's when I found out that scallops are a bit chewy and squidgy at first but I do like them (sort of). That was a busy day so off we went back to the boat for our first night sleeping on the boat on this holiday.



### Passage: Dochgarroch to Fort Augustus

|           |                                     |            |      |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|------------|------|
| Date:     | Sunday 1st July                     | Time:      | 1745 |
| Position: | 57°08'.07N 04°40'.07W               | Barometer: | 990  |
| Weather:  | Warm, overcast & some light drizzle |            |      |

It was a bit rainy when we woke up and I decided that the quarter berth is not my favourite as it wasn't very cosy so I agreed to swap with Findlay for the rest of the journey and have the main cabin all to myself.



Into Loch Ness we go and everyone is talking about the Loch Ness Monster. I don't think it's real because I don't believe in sea monsters but I keep an eye out anyway especially when we moored at Drumnadrochit for lunch and walk into village where my Mum was saying there was a big statue of the monster. It was a bit of long walk from the boat even though I had my scooter with me so we ended up getting a taxi back to the boat in the rain.

When we set off down Loch Ness it was very misty and spooky and we sailed past Urquhart Castle. I left my Mum and Dad to crew the boat while I went down below to watch a nice video and eat sweets in the warm!

We arrive in Fort Augustus for tea time and moored at the foot of the locks

where there are lots of other boats. The fish & chips at "Canalside Chip Shop" had been recommended and I can tell you that they were very good.

I became a bit of a card expert on this holiday playing Uno and pontoon and rummy and scabbie queen and donkey. You would start the game with a pile of 'Nessie poos' which were little chocolate drops and first one win a game would get some more to keep in their pile. At the end of the evening the Nessie poos would magically disappear!



## Passage: Fort Augustus to Loch Oich

Date: Monday 2nd July                      Time: 1900  
Position: 57°02'07N 04°48'.02W              Barometer: 996  
Weather: warm & sunny

At Fort Augustus we have a lot of lock gates to go up and we decided to have a lie in to get our strength back and we missed the first lock-in at 9am ...we are on holiday after all. The next lock in is at 1.30pm so we go exploring and find a little play park through a hedge for a quick play.



Now we are ready for the lock-in so we go through the swing bridge and we're squashed into the lock with lots of other boats. It's a bit bouncy and soon a crowd of people are watching us which makes me feel like a seriously important person... there is even a bagpipe player!

Mum & Findlay took the bow & stern lines for first few locks and then me and Mum for the rest. When you were walking the ropes up you had to make sure not to fall down the hole after the lock gate but we managed. One of the motorised gates was broken so it was taking a really long time.

The sun was shining as motored through Kytra lock and on to Cullochy where the lock keeper lady gave us all a gold star for wearing our life jackets. We started wildlife spotting and saw deer and a water vole!

On Loch Oich there was a wee chance for some fishing but we didn't catch anything which was a bit sad but I was glad when we moored for night at Laggan swing bridge and I went for a row in the inflatable as I'm pretty good at rowing.

We had a wander to the park and the pub and Findlay was in the biggest huff ever but decided to join in when he could see that there was coca cola and pool.



## Passage: Loch Oich to Banavie (top of Neptune's Staircase)

Date: Tuesday 3rd July                      Time: 1615  
Position: 56°50'.09N 05°05'.04W              Barometer: 997  
Weather: warm, sunny & occasional shower

When you are motoring to Laggan locks it looks like you are sailing through a forest.



We motored half way down Loch Lochy and sailed the rest in a force 4. Suddenly there was a very loud noise from what looked like huge plane (something like a Wellington bomber) flying above us and an hour later followed by a single Tornado then two Tornados side by side. Later that day we found out those two Tornados had crashed over the Moray Firth which was very sad.

There was a long stretch from Gairloch to Banavie with lots of kayakers and Wayfarers. Thanks to Dad no kayaks were sunk as we passed. Banavie is at the top of Neptune's staircase and it has great views of Ben Nevis and the mountains. Mum decided we would walk into Fort William for a meal and said it wasn't that far away. Over three miles later we arrived tired, and I had a very sore foot and I was really hungry. We had to climb over a barrier to get into the town and Dad had to help Mum over which was really funny. Guess what the restaurant was called...The GROG AND GRUEL! We had a wee starter while we waited for our main course and we chose nachos (Dads favourite). After threatening to mutiny we found a taxi to take us back to the boat!

## Passage: Banavie to Linnhe Marine (next to Shuna Island)

Date: Wednesday 4th July                      Time: 2200  
Position: 56°35'.10N 05°22'.90W              Barometer: 996  
Weather: warm, sunny....torrential rain & force 5....warm & sunny

It's always easier going down locks than going up so we were looking forward to going down Neptune's staircase. We had entered the first lock along with a few other boats when the emergency happened. A Danish boat in front of us had her bow line caught on her cleats and as the water fell she was left dangling and the lock keeper didn't seem to notice. The skipper ran forward and cut the line with a knife and the boat landed in the lock with a splash and swung out but no one was hurt and disaster was avoided.



At Corpach divers were repairing the sea lock but after a wee while we were out into Loch Linnhe to find a lot of rain and fog and strong winds from the direction we were heading....

Soon the bad weather had passed and sun & blue skies came out just in time for our next big challenge...the Corran Narrows.

We only arrived half an hour too early at the Narrows but had lots of current against us so we ended up going to a pier near Ardgour for tea. Forgot to mention...Mum made an amazing leap from the boat to a ladder on the pier with both bow and stern lines. We were all very impressed as she had been standing waiting for Dad to do it 😊



Later on we picked up a mooring at Linnhe Marine to stay the night. While Mum enjoyed a Pimms and Dad had his first G&T of the holiday, Findlay & I had a fish before bedtime and a terrific rain storm.

## Passage: Linnhe Marine to Oban Marina

|                                                                                   |                        |            |      |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|------------|------|
| Date:                                                                             | Thursday 5th July      | Time:      | 1530 |
| Position:                                                                         | 56°20'.67N 005°35'.48W | Barometer: | 1002 |
| Weather: very warm, sunny....thunder & lightning, torrential rain....warm & sunny |                        |            |      |

We woke up to a lovely sunny day with no wind so we were ready for more motoring. Before we left for Oban I had a fish and caught my first fish of the holiday...a mackerel. Shortly afterwards we headed off round Shuna Island and past a very old looking castle - Castle Stalker.

Oban Marina isn't at Oban but a place called Kerrera - an island opposite Oban where you get a little ferry to the town. The town was crowded and I really wanted to spend my holiday money so we went into a book shop and we bought some Michael Morpurgo books (my favourite author). We walked to the fishing shop but it was closed so I couldn't buy a new fishing rod - YET! Back to the boat to keep away from the thunder and lightning!



## Passage: Oban Marina to Crinan

Date: Friday 6th July Time: 1630  
 Position: 56°05'.45N 05°33'.40W Barometer: 1005  
 Weather: warm, sunny & occasionally overcast

Leaving Kerrera Dad said we would be going down the Sound of Luing as there was wind to sail and with the tide helping us we managed 9.5 knots. We had to watch out for whirlpools at the bottom of the Sound of Luing, but it was my usual time for watching a film instead and I missed some really big whirlpools that sounded exciting but I was too busy watching Treasure Island which is a good story.



Soon we were going through another sea lock which was really bouncy into Crinan. It turned out Dad found the chandlery and was in heaven at Crinan boatyard. We were lucky to go to the Crinan Hotel for tea and Findlay and I had fish & chips while Mum enjoyed a plateful of scallops. But that's not the best bit! Afterwards Dad took us down to the jetty and we began fishing. I managed to catch a Pollack and wee other fish and was pretty pleased with myself.

While we were fishing, an old fishing boat pulled up and Dad was chatting to one of the divers called Dougie. Dougie gave Dad a bag of scallops so Dad gave him some beers which was a good swap (Dad did start drinking some of the beers though). Dougie asked if Findlay and I wanted to catch more fish....and we did! So Dad, Findlay & I went with Dougie in his RIB even though it was getting late. We set off very fast and headed right out into the Sound of Jura. Dougie switched on his fish finder and it showed cartoons of fish and a chubby fish was a big fish! All we had to do was drop our lines over the side and soon we began pulling in 3-4 mackerel at time! You should have seen my face because it was amazing. It was after 10.00pm by now and the sun was setting so we set off back to Crinan and Findlay & I took turns to helm....it was really fast.



## Passage: Crinan to Ardrishaig

Date: Saturday 7th July Time: 1730  
Position: 55°56'.23N 05°23'.75W Barometer: 998  
Weather: Overcast with rain...all day

We set off from Crinan basin and it was raining a bit and we made our way through a narrow section in the canal. A sign said you should sound a warning....to warn others we were approaching, so Dad gave me a fog horn trumpet to blow. I thought it sounded a bit like a duck and it was quite hard to blow.



I think Mum and Dad were glad to have the help of the lock keepers as there were a lot of locks that day especially in the rain. I became a bit of an expert on locks and helped the lock keeper a lot but I think we were ready for hot drinks and buns at the hotel in Cairnbaan when we got there.



It was a long, wet and tiring day and we all agreed to stop at Ardrishaig. Dad prepared the scallops given to us by Dougie, and Mum cooked them ...they were really nice!

## Passage: Ardrishaig to Tarbert

Date: Sunday 8th July Time: 1400  
Position: 55°52'.00N 05°24'.60W Barometer: 1001  
Weather: Rain at first, then warm & sunny

No wind again but the sun came out and waterproofs came off at last. Mum spotted three porpoises and I was so excited I cried out "Killer Whales"! But it was only porpoises.



We were impressed with Tarbert as there were lots of boats on pontoons and lots to see and do. We had arrived at the end of the annual seafood festival and there were bands like Lady Gaga and Katy Perry lookalikes. There was also a fair but nothing else really to do with seafood so when it was tea time I had mussels for tea at the Anchor Hotel to add to my taste for different types of food. After tea we were treated to ice creams and climbed the hill up to Tarbert castle where someone had painted old tyres to look like the Olympic rings and to look down on our boat.

## Passage: Tarbert to Rothesay

Date: Monday 9th July Time: 1730  
Position: 55°50'.28N 05°03'.20W Barometer: 1002  
Weather: Light rain to start, sun then overcast

The good thing about Tarbert is that they have a little area that has exercise machines to play on but I needed a long lie in as my legs were worn out already from too much playing. We haven't mentioned washing very much so far but we did decide to have a shower in Tarbert and that is when Dad left his glasses behind!

Dad was on the scrounge for more wood for when the mast gets put down and he found some without having to walk too far. We left Tarbert after lunch and motored until we reached Tighnabruaich and there was wind so we could sail through the rest of the Kyles of Bute with a bit of fishing thrown in.

Dad phoned Bowling to see if the Jackdaws were still nesting on the crane that we needed to lower our mast but lucky for us they had gone.

We had to wait a wee while to get into Rothesay as the traffic lights were showing us that the ferry was about to leave but we soon got in and found two more Westerlys in the harbour and one was a Konsort! It looked very similar to ours.

Mum went in search of food and came back with an Indian take away...fantastic. After tea, Findlay & I went for a scooter along the sea front.



## Passage: Rothesay to Bowling

Date: Tuesday 10th July Time: 1645  
Position: 55°55'.78N 04°28'.90W Barometer: 1002  
Weather: Light rain, overcast

I was still trying to decide what to spend my holiday money on. I was thinking of a horse riding lesson but we didn't see many horses so in the end I chose a new fishing rod and there was a fishing shop right beside the harbour at Rothesay. The shop owner was very friendly and I had a nice surprise after discovering that I could not only afford a new rod but a better reel than I had before....RAIDER was the name!

At the harbour a sailor on a bigger Westerly boat than ours asked Dad for a tow out of the harbour as his engine had broken. We took the boat's tow rope but the boat was too heavy to tow around the pontoons and out of the harbour. We had a lot of helpers and people watching us but in the end we left the boat to be repaired in Rothesay. We were a bit late now in leaving and we had to get all the way to Bowling by 4pm to get into the Forth & Clyde canal and get the mast put down.



After passing Greenock I came on deck and helped Dad take the sails down as Mum helmed the boat. We now had to carefully follow the channel buoys as the chart said we would run aground if you didn't. Just as we were getting close to the entrance to the sea lock at Bowling, a large container ship with two tugs raced up behind us and we had to leave the main channel. It became very shallow very quickly and I could tell Mum was worried.

It was wet and slippery as Dad set to work taking the mast down and I helped Mum make tea....meatballs and spaghetti – my favourite! I'm also becoming really good at playing cards and winning.

## Passage: Bowling to The Stables

|           |                                        |            |      |
|-----------|----------------------------------------|------------|------|
| Date:     | Wednesday 11th July                    | Time:      | 1815 |
| Position: | 'The Stables' nr. Kirkintilloch        | Barometer: | 1004 |
| Weather:  | Light rain, overcast with sunny spells |            |      |

It was an early start for us to meet the Scottish Canals helpers at 8am further along the canal. Not a lot of time for breakfast!

We had a whole load of helpers – 6 men and two vans just for us but we were glad to get help as there are a lot of locks and swing bridges on the Forth & Clyde canal. They were all very friendly and they would take us past Maryhill locks. Solveig's speed was a bit slow because there was long weed and it seemed to be wrapping itself around the propeller. Dad had to keep stopping and putting the boat in reverse to remove the weed.

It was exciting to go in a lock that dropped down under a road! At Clydebank Shopping Centre everyone was watching us as we held up crowds on each side of the canal as the bridge was put up to let us past. We didn't bother about the time when we stopped behind the floating fish n chip shop for an early lunch and a wee shelter from the rain.



Findlay and I had started a new 'eye-spy' game for spotting certain types of rubbish in the canal. Most things were footballs, bikes and shopping trolleys....but we also spotted quite a few Heron very close to the boat or flying ahead.

The weather was better so Findlay & I joined the lock keepers at Maryhill locks to help them open the sluices and push open the lock gates. We really enjoyed this and we now had an extra team of helpers with another van. They were laughing at Mum trying to unloop the rope around the lock cleats and helped her by putting the rope at the edge – not really the point!

We had a long section of playing eye spy and motoring through fields and trees and stopped at The Stables right beside the restaurant....how cool is that.

## Passage: The Stables to Limekilns

Date: Thursday 12th July      Time: 2230  
Position: Capernaum pier, Limekilns      Barometer: 1006  
Weather: Dry, warm & sunny

It was sunny when we woke up! But it was another early 8am start and Mum was finding it hard to get out of bed but we had to meet our next team of helpers. I didn't think the scenery on the Forth Clyde canal would be as good as the other canals, but it was and we had great views as the canal was often above the fields so you were looking down on the view. We passed canoes, fishermen, runners and rowers and swans fighting!

We soon had an extra team of helpers to make sure bridges were opened before we arrived and locks were opened & closed without us having to do very much. It was a bit of a race and we were going down locks again which is always much faster.

This is when I had my big disappointment... no time to stop at the Falkirk Wheel because we had to go down the locks at Falkirk with another boat...but Mum promises to take me for a whole day another time. We did see a kingfisher along the banks of the canal and that is something no-one in our family has seen before.



At the Falkirk flight of locks, Findlay and I jumped off and ran along the canal side to help the canal helpers. It took a long time and there was no time for breaks so Mum gave us a packet of jelly beans each to keep us going. After what seemed like a very long time we made it to the sea lock at Grangemouth and we thought it was going to be too late to make it into the river Forth that night so we had our tea. I thought this would be a very noisy place to spend the night right beside a motorway, but Dad sorted it so that we were able to get down into the River Carron and out into the Forth later that evening...and we did. We had to follow very small sticks of willow stuck in the mud and they were hard to see and there wasn't very much water in the river!

Soon we were back in the Forth we motored down to Limekilns into a choppy sea – we were home and it was 10pm at night.... But we had made it right round from Inverness to Limekilns in 12 days.

