Seaward Squadron

Scottish Rally Report

20-22nd June 2025: Tobermory

Our Scottish Regional Secretary, Derek Wilson had chosen a spectacular venue for the second annual Scottish Seaward Squadron rally, at Tobermory. With its brightly painted buildings along the waterfront and the high woodland-fringed hills surrounding the bay, this made a perfect setting for Seaward owners to meet up, recount their adventures over the past year and enjoy time together. The town sits near the NW entrance to the Sound of Mull, with views out to the Ardnamurchan peninsula. For the cruising sailor, it offers the gateway to the Isle of Skye and Outer Hebrides.

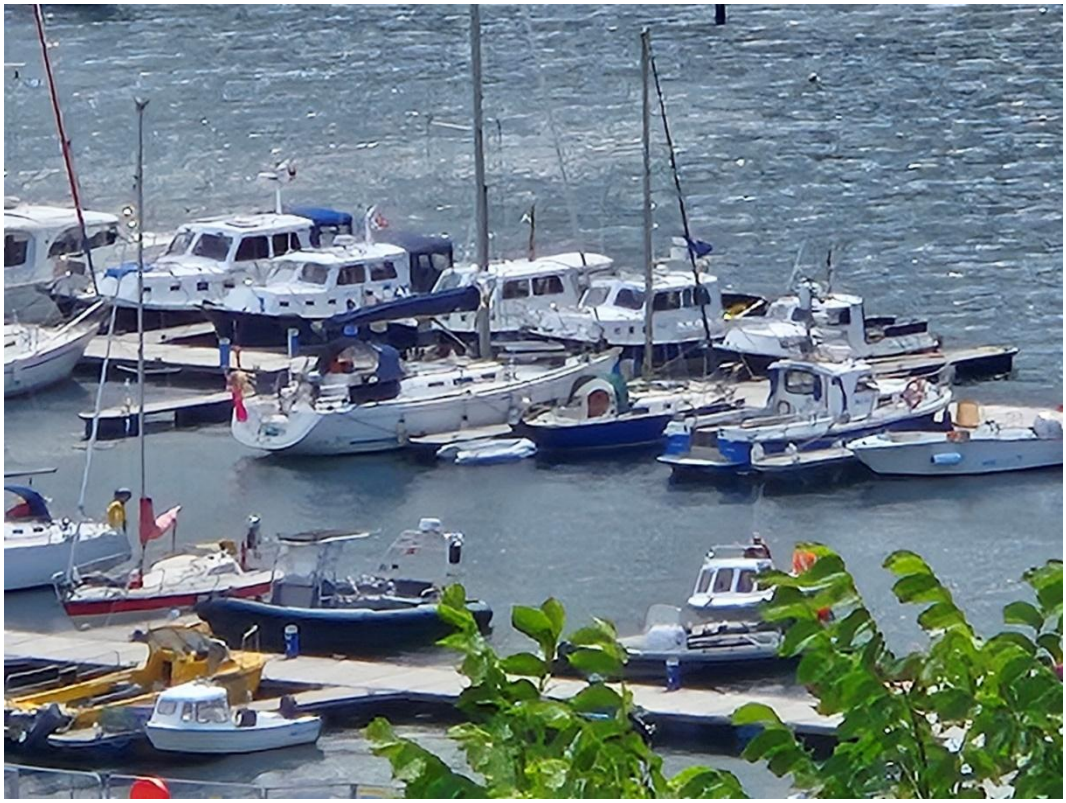
View from Tobermory to the hills of the Ardnamurchan peninsula

On the evening before the rally, three Seawards were moored in Loch Aline, on the Morvern side of the Sound of Mull. They were Derek's 29 "Savannah", my new (to me) 29 "Indigo" and Tim and Karen Gabriel's 39 "Lazy Tiger 2". We all had a very enjoyable get-together over drinks on Lazy Tiger 2, on the kind invitation of Tim and Karen, to whom I introduced Derek and my crew Peter Trowill. Derek had left his crew of 2 springer spaniels (Neve and Medlar) on Savanah.

The next day the three boats sailed 10 miles to Tobermory, where two other rally attendees were awaiting our arrival: Paul and Janet Caldwell plus Scout the dog on 35 "Gulfoss" and Pete and Heather Judd on 29 "Louise B". As always, the Seawards looked stunning, lined up along the finger pontoons in the morning sunshine. There were greetings with hugs and kisses and lots of catch-up chat before lunch.

In the afternoon, people did their own thing, investigating the numerous specialist shops along the harbour front (particularly the ice-cream booth and the whiskey festival advertised to take place next day), exercising the dogs or just walking along the local paths for pleasure. On Indigo, we considered various modifications to the boat, such as a more accessible stowage for the life-ring, which was previously stowed out of reach on the pilot house roof!

Shortly before the appointed time for the pontoon party, we welcomed the arrival of recent member of the Seaward Squadron “Bunchy” Johnston and his partner Rona, on their Seaward 25 “Bluebell”. They had sailed that day all the way from Tiree, which was quite a trip.



Five of the six Seaward boats at the Tobermory rally: Gullfoss left, Bluebell right, three 29s centre

So now the full complement of boats was present, the rally could begin in earnest.

Boat name	**Size**	**Skipper**	**Crew**
Lazy Tiger 2	39	Tim Gabriel	Karen Gabriel
Gullfoss	35	Paul Caldwell	Janet Caldwell
Indigo	29	Steph Merry	Peter Trowill
Savanah	29	Derek Wilson	Neve & Medlar
Louise B	29	Pete Judd	Heather Judd
Bluebell	25	Bunchy Johnson	Rona

The pontoon party was held at 6 pm on the finger pontoon between Gulfoss and Louise B, which made it a rather wobbly affair! The side deck of Louise B was used to display an assortment of “nibbles”: Peter’s smoked mackerel pate canapes and Karen’s warm sausages cooked in honey proved particularly popular. Drinks were flowing, and so it was a perfect ice-breaker for getting to know new friends.

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A wobbly pontoon party!

All too soon it was 7.30 on a Friday evening, time of course to go to the pub! A table had been reserved for us at MacGochans, next to the marina, where everyone was able to choose their own meal from a wide-ranging menu featuring lots of seafood. We were so busy enjoying ourselves that no photos were taken. As the evening came to a close, it was a tired but contented group that retired to their boats at the end of a perfect evening.

Nibbles on the side deck of Louise B

Saturday 21st June – the Sumer Solstice – and it was another bright and sunny day. To put that in context, I spent a fortnight in Scotland during June, and there were only 2 days when it did not rain, and those days were the Friday and Saturday of the Seaward rally. How lucky was that?

The day was spent by some exploring or enjoying the sights and sounds of Tobermory. Jan and Paul Caldwell walked with Scout up the hill to the famous cheese shop. Bunchy had recently acquired Bluebell and was seen avidly reading the user manual for the electric system on his boat, which, along with some other teething problems, he said wasn't working. Derek provided Bunchy with a kettle of boiling water, so at least he and Rona could have a cup of tea.

Bums up on Bluebell!

We discovered that the Western Isles Hotel had booked us for dinner at 18.30, which seemed a bad idea, since that was the time of our Saturday pontoon party. Derek was able to persuade the hotel to postpone dinner for an hour and our pre-prandial drinks went ahead.

Saturday pontoon party, all dressed up for the Gala Dinner

Paul and Jan generously shared some of their morning purchases from the cheese shop, balanced on crackers, while Peter produced canapes, this time with French pâté de Campagne.

Finishing our drinks, we all walked to the Western Isles Hotel, set on a rocky outcrop overlooking Tobermory Bay. From the marina, it was half a mile walk round the harbour, followed by 102 steps up the hill according to Peter. He counted them on the way up – not bad for a 90-year-old!

Wonderful view from the Western Isles Hotel restaurant for our gala dinner

People ordered their dinner from the restaurant while admiring the outstanding view across the bay and the food was delivered very promptly. Scallops were a popular starter, local trout a popular main course. When the plates had been cleared, I called for silence and proposed a vote of thanks to Derek for arranging the logistics of the rally, particularly in finding such a stunning location for the dinner.

Then I described the provenance of the Kimber Cup, which was inaugurated by Chris Clayton in 2023 in memory of the late Barry Kimber, founder of Seaward Boats. Having explained the judging criteria for the award and briefly summarised the entries in 2024, I was delighted to present the trophy to the worthy winner, Pete Judd

Having lingered over deserts and digestifs, a few people went to explore the hotel's "Banjo room", designed by Banjo Beale for the BBC TV programme "Designing the Hebrides". Then some folk chose to go back to their boat via the steps, while others took the longer but gentler downhill route along the road. As we passed MacGochans, Derek was spotted on the terrace, supping his "medicine", surrounded by four young women who were petting the dogs. Now we know why Derek takes Neve and Medlar everywhere with him!

Pete Judd receives the Kimber Cup

There was further merriment on board Louise B, where Pete had invited everyone for a “wee dram” to celebrate his award, after which everyone retired to their beds.

Next morning I was awoken at 7am by the familiar rumble of powerful Yanmar engines, as Bluebell set off back to Tiree. Bunchy was hoping to avoid the worst of the forecast strong winds, but a yacht which came into his berth a bit later reported 30 knots at the north end of the Sound of Mull. We hope that he arrived home safely, despite these poor conditions. I then went back to sleep for a couple of hours.

By 11.30, it was pouring with rain again and farewells were said as the fleet departed for their separate destinations. Lazy Tiger 2 was heading for Mallaig, Louise B to their home port of Craobh Haven and later Gulfoss left for Skye. You can read about Paul and Jan’s adventures in Paul’s cruise report on the Squadron website.

Derek and I were left to contemplate the success of the second Scottish Seaward Squadron rally, held on a rare sunny weekend. We are all looking forward to next year’s event and a venue will be announced soon.

Savannah and Indigo left on Sunday in Tobermory

The Seaward Squadron fleet on Saturday