

**N e w s   R e l e a s e**

**For immediate release**

**5 October 2023**

**British Sailor completes 9000-mile Harbour Master Sailing Challenge,  
raising £25,000 for The Seafarers' Charity**

Supported by Inland and Coastal Marina Systems (ICMS), British sailor Mark Ashley-Miller has completed his epic 9000-mile Harbour Master Sailing Challenge, raising over £25,000 for The Seafarers' Charity.

For the last five years, Mark has been sailing his 34ft Nauticat, *Good Dog*, around the UK and Ireland (including the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands) in a bid to meet every Harbour Master in England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland.

In the wake of Storm Agnes at the end of last month (28 September 2023), Mark sailed up the River Boyne into Drogheda, County Louth, on the east coast of Ireland where he was greeted by the port's Harbour Master, Captain Laurence Kirwan, concluding his extraordinary five-year challenge.

On his ambitious expedition around the UK and Ireland, a challenge which was conceived from a deep-seated passion for sailing and a desire to support the seafaring community, Mark has visited 310 harbours and met 256 Harbour Masters, receiving a phenomenal welcome by so many.

"The thing that will stay with me now I've fulfilled this personal challenge is just how incredibly welcoming and supportive of my mission the Harbour Masters I've met have been," says Mark. "In Newlyn, Capt. Rob Parsons texted me long before I arrived and told me I would be 'his guest', while in Ullapool, HM Kevin Peach, welcomed me with a bottle of malt whisky, and as a former marine scientist told me so many interesting facts about the reason behind changing fish stocks.

"In Aberdeen, not only did Capt. Alex McIntosh find a berth for *Good Dog* in the massive port, which is usually off-limits to normal yachts, she jumped aboard and gave us a guided tour of her

impressive port. And in the Port of Tyne, HM Steve Clapperton kindly filled up *Good Dog* with diesel as his ‘contribution to my charity challenge’. I’d like to say thank you to him and the countless other Harbour Masters for their incredible generosity.”

Challenge by name, and challenge by nature, Mark navigated dangerous entrances with shifting sandbars (The Wash), very remote harbours (St Kilda - 50 miles west of the Outer Hebrides) and commercial shipping traffic. He says: “Container ships and yachts do not mix, although in the Port of Larne in Northern Ireland, a friendly man in port control asked a P&O ferry to ‘hurry up’ with its loading as ‘the *Good Dog* was standing off, and the skipper has important business with the Harbour Master’. I found this very funny, the captain of the P&O ferry did not.”

Departing Dartmouth in 2019 and travelling around the coast season after season, Mark has gained valuable insights into the challenges Harbour Masters face on a day-to-day basis as they ensure the safety and prosperity of their individual ports.

“The shallow and potentially dangerous entrances of many harbours have to be clearly and correctly marked with buoys and lights, all of which is part of a Harbour Master’s duty,” continues Mark. “Maintaining dredged channels and managing the cost of moving thousands of tons of silt every year, while taking into account the environmental considerations, is another vital task.

“I’ve also seen first-hand just how important solid and stable pontoon berthing is. In river-based harbours such as Kirkcudbright and Arklow where, when the river is in spate, the water can flow out at several knots, unless the harbour has secure pontoons for yachts, commercial boats, and fishing boats to tie up against, they simply get washed away.

“Installing robust and well-designed pontoons makes the difference between a safe haven and a dangerous harbour. This is where ICMS plays its part. As I circumnavigated Ireland from Belfast anticlockwise to Dublin, I found an increasing number of harbours had ICMS pontoons. For a yachting, the difference in tying up to a rickety wooden pontoon with dodgy cleats and a strong well-built non-slip heavy duty pontoon is significant.

“Wherever I visited, from tiny Glenarm to Cork city centre, and I saw an ICMS pontoon, I relaxed as I knew I would be safe. I’d also like to take this opportunity to say a huge thank you

to Ollie, Jon and the team for their generous sponsorship and support of my challenge and the company's significant donation to The Seafarers' Charity."

Not alone on his mammoth journey, Mark travelled with between one and three crew members at any one time. "Over 90 different people have crewed for me over the five years. Many of them have even done it several times. As well as my wife Fiona, I have had many good friends crew including journalists, naval officers, round the world skippers, members of the Queen's Bodyguard, ornithologists, vicars, soldiers, barristers, estate agents, farmers and even a scientist from the Met Office who tested the accuracy of different forecasting models as we sailed!

"I'm very sad my journey has come to an end. It has given me an enormous purpose in life. Working alongside The Seafarers' Charity has been an enormous privilege, as has meeting some of the people whom the charity helps, be it fishing communities receiving mobile dentistry, or the staff of the various seafarers' missions who do so much behind the scenes. I now have a much better understanding of the near invisible life of international mariners, and I'm delighted to have been able raise money to support them."

Deborah Layde, Chief Executive of The Seafarers' Charity, comments: "Mark Ashley-Miller's completion of his five-year Harbour Master Challenge is a remarkable testament to his drive and commitment, the well-being of seafarers and his support of our charity. Mark had the privilege of meeting 256 Harbourmasters across the UK and Ireland over the past five years which not only raised vital funds for The Seafarers' Charity but also shone a light on the vital role seafarers play in all our lives. Mark's extraordinary journey also recognised how important harbour masters are to seafarers and safety around our coastline; many more harbour masters know of our 106-year-old charity now too I believe.

"Congratulations, Mark, on your extraordinary journey and achievement. Thank you so very much for choosing us as your Challenge Charity."

Mark will be documenting his adventures in a new book, coming out next year.

Donations to the Harbour Master Sailing Challenge can still be made via <https://donate.giveasyoulive.com/fundraising/harbour-master-sailing-challenge> or via <https://harbourmastersailingchallenge.co.uk>

To find out more about The Seafarers Charity visit <https://www.theseafarerscharity.org>

To find out more about Inland and Coastal's pontoon ranges and unique decking options visit <https://inlandandcoastal.com> or email [sales@inlandandcoastal.com](mailto:sales@inlandandcoastal.com)

## Ends

### Notes to editors:

High-res images are available online at <https://maa.agency/media-centre>

### About Inland and Coastal Marina Systems

- Inland and Coastal Marina Systems specialise in the design, manufacture and installation of marinas.
- Inland and Coastal Marina Systems is the official UK SeaBin supplier.
- Clients include local and regional Government, Port and Fishery Authorities, Marina Operators, Sports and Recreational Clubs, Development Consortiums, Consulting Engineers, Architects and Main Contractors.
- Inland and Coastal Marina Systems work internationally and have three offices; Banagher in Ireland, Lossiemouth in Scotland and Southampton, England.
- For more information on Inland and Coastal Marina Systems visit <http://www.inlandandcoastal.com>

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