

Sail Training in Scouting

Coastal and offshore sailing is an excellent activity for senior Scouts and Venture Scouts, and even in the earliest days of Scouting some Sea Scout Troops had access to vessels capable of coastal and offshore sailing.

The international Sail Training movement, as we know it today gradually emerged in the early 1950s and one of the catalysts for its development was the foundation of the Tall Ships Races in 1956.

Sail Training started in Ireland when the historic yacht "Asgard", a gaff-rigged ketch, which had been used by Erskine Childers to smuggle rifles for the Irish Volunteers in 1914, became available as a national sail training vessel in 1968. Asgard was later replaced by "Creidne", and in 1981 a new, purpose-built sail training brigantine, "Asgard II", was designed and built in Arklow. Many Irish Scouts have sailed on her over the years.

A limited amount of coastal and offshore sailing has also been available within Sea Scouting for some years. There have been many coastal cruises around the Irish Coast, and across the Irish Sea in privately owned yachts.

"Asgard II" made a great reputation for herself in the Sail Training world, and many Irish Scouts enjoyed the "Asgard experience", especially since the Irish Association of Master Mariners instituted and sponsored the competition for the Desmond Fortune Trophy for Sea Scouts, or by taking advantage of the "Asgard Challenge", or indeed by direct application to Coiste an Asgard for a place.

LOSS OF STY ASGARD II

Unfortunately, Asgard sank early in September 2008, south of Brittany, on the way to La Rochelle for a routine maintenance session. Mercifully, all the crew and trainees were rescued without injury.

Two Sea Ventures from 5th Wicklow (Bray) Sea Scouts had sailed on "Asgard" from Den Helder to Lowestoft to Dieppe to Weymouth on the cruise before she sank. Two other Sea Scouts, from 9th Wicklow (Arklow) and 3rd Sligo (Rosses Point) unfortunately lost their chance – they were due to embark for a cruise at the beginning of October.

Asgard lies in quite deep water and the government has decided to abandon any attempt at raising the vessel, and has apparently taken the insurance money and put it into the general funds.

TALL SHIPS RACES first started in 1956, and have been held every year since then. The races take place in waters around Europe, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean. Time in each port is usually three or four days during which the focus is on activities

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for the young trainees, time for crew changes, and a festival atmosphere for the local community and thousands of visitors. Many Irish Scouts have taken part in these races over the years, on board "Asgard II", on British Scout training yachts or on chartered craft. Vessels fully crewed by Irish Scouts took part in the Tall Ships Races of 1998 (Vigo to Dublin), 1999 (St.Malo to Greenock) and 2005 (Waterford to Cherbourg) Races.

TALL SHIPS RACES VISITING IRELAND In 1991, the event came to Cork from Milford Haven, in 1998 to Dublin from Spain and in 2005 it started in Waterford. In 2011 the race will again start in Waterford, and the first leg will be clockwise around Ireland to Greenock, in the Clyde. The second leg will be from the Clyde to Shetland Islands, thence to Kristiansand in Norway, and the last leg to

"Sail Training International" organises and manages these races in European waters. The purpose of the events is to provide an opportunity for friendly competition among the sail training fleet and to develop international friendship and understanding among the young trainees and the communities visited during the races. The Tall Ships races typically attract a fleet of 70 -100 vessels from about 20 countries, and of every size from 30ft yachts to square rigged ships over 300 feet long. Most years some 3-4,000 young people (aged 16 -25) from close to 30 countries take part in the various legs. Details of the races for the next two years are given below. Applicants for Tall Ships Race must be over 16 yrs. The events usually consist of three segments - two races, with a "cruise in company" in between, thus visiting 4 ports. Individuals will usually "sign on" for one of these segments only.

SMALL SHIPS RACES started in 2002, organised by the Association of Sea Training Organisations (ASTO). The first Race was from Weymouth to St.Malo. Irish Sea Scouts entered a boat in this event. Later these races became single day events, held each Autumn in the Solent, and Irish Sea Scouts participated in two of these events in the Ocean Youth Trust Ireland vessel "Lord Rank", on one occasion crewing the yacht from Bangor to the Isle of Wight as well as participating in the race.

In 2006, ASTO organised a Small Ships Race from Glasgow to Belfast and 3 Irish yachts fully crewed by Sea Scouts took part. The same 3 yachts took part in 2009 in the Small Ships Race from Greenock to Belfast coinciding with the arrival in Belfast of the final leg of the trans-Atlantic "Tall Ships Challenge".

SEA SCOUT ARMADAS. In July 1995 a "Sea Scout Armada" sailed to the World Jamboree in Holland. Thirty nine Sea Scouts from Dundalk, Dublin, Waterford and Cork chartered 3 large sailing craft in Britain and sailed across the North Sea to the Netherlands, joining with twenty-two other vessels manned by Sea Scouts from

Amended Annually

Norway, Denmark, Finland, Poland, UK, Italy (brought by container), Netherlands, and Belgium, to form an impressive fleet to visit the World Jamboree.

In July 2007, to celebrate the Centenary Jamboree, another "Sea Scout Armada" of 27 boats, with crew total of 281 from Belgium, Norway, France, Spain, Portugal, Holland, Poland and Germany assembled at Ostend and sailed to Ramsgate in Kent, and then up the Thames to the West India Dock in London.

The boats spent 3 days in the dock, and the crews visited the Jamboree and London before embarking on the return journey home.

Tall Ships Races – 2011 and 2012

The Tall Ships will return to Ireland again in 2011 and 2012.

In 2011 the race series starts from Waterford on 3 July, and the course is clockwise around Ireland to the Clyde. The second race is to Shetland, then to Norway, finishing in Sweden.

In 2012 the race series starts in St Malo, then to Lisbon, Cadiz, La Coruna and finishing in Dublin.

Discovery Sailing Project is part of the London Docklands Scout Project of The Scout Association, and administratively is a Scout District in Greater London Northeast County. The Project has three training vessels, "Thermopylae Clipper", "Discovery" and "Bambi". During the sailing season the vessels are based on the South Coast of England, at Universal Marina in Southampton. For details of all vessels, see website www.dsp.uk.com

"Discovery" is a 13.5 metre Seastream cutter. There are mid-week and weekend cruises throughout the Summer, and autumn training cruises are run on the South Coast of England, cost about £35 Stg per day for 14-25 year olds, £40 for over 25s. The Small Ships Race and the Tall Ships Races and subsequent delivery cruises home occur during July and August. For Tall Ships Races, minimum age is 16 yrs.

"Thermopylae Clipper" is a 60 ft clipper racer, used, together with "Discovery", for training cruises during May/June and Sept/October on the South Coast, operating out of the Universal Marina in Southampton. She is also involved in offshore cruises, such as an Easter weekend to France, and takes part in the 2008 Tall Ships race

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Adventures Offshore is also part of the Scout Association and administratively is a Scout District within Essex County. Its function is coastal and offshore sail training.

"Ocean Scout" and "Offshore Scout" are 15 metre ketches. The age range for trainees is normally 14-25, but for Tall Ships Races it is 16-25 yrs.

Programme for 2010 During April, May, June, September and October the vessels are used for training cruises on the East and South Coasts of England (see website). In July they take part in the Tall Ships Races from Antwerp to Aalborg, to Kristiansand, to Hartlepool, returning to the East Coast to finish the season. For details, see Adventures Offshore website.

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