

THE ITALIAN JOB

Glenans Irish Sailing Club this year linked up with the Annje Bonnje yacht club on Lake Como in northern Italy to provide instructor training to a group of its top sailors. Four members of the Italian club took part in the GISC keelboat instructor course at Easter in Baltimore.

The group had earlier completed a pre-entry course on Lake Como given by Glenans Development Manager, Ruth Ennis. Discussions are at an early stage in relation to further cooperation, with the possibility of the Annje Bonnje club running its own Irish Sailing Association approved instructor courses supported by GISC.

It all began four years ago when one of the Italians, Alessandro Orlandi, joined a Glenans cruise from Dublin to Baltimore. The west Cork coast worked its magic on Alessandro. So when he and his fellow sailors went in search of instructor training Baltimore was high on the list.

"There isn't a standard way to teach sailing in Italy", says Ruth Ennis. "They don't have a system like we have here." As Alessandro Orlandi puts it, "we like very much the Glenans method and the Blue Book (the Glenans Instructor's Manual)."

The Italian sailors spent the winter preparing for the course. They met once a week to study English language sailing terms. "It was quite funny," recalls Alessandro, "six Italians talking English and eating pasta." Ruth Ennis received a regular flow of emails checking nautical terms and references. She also sent them a series of exercises with charts, calculating tidal information and introducing them to reference ports. "We came to Baltimore for the navigation" says Alessandro who points out that the opportunity to do an instructor course in tidal waters was one of the main attractions of Glenans.

"They were intrigued by the weather" says Ruth, who explained to them how low pressure systems dominate our weather and how those systems behave. They had some difficulty calculating magnetic variation, coming from east of Greenwich, but soon mastered that as well.

On the water their skills quickly became evident. "They sail were differently to us" says Ruth. "They go through the detail, the theory behind it...They are very good sailors." For Alessandro the instructors course was not so much about learning "new concepts but refining what we knew already." The instruction by Joe Carolan and Joe Rooney was, he says, "wonderful".

Alessandro says the group "really appreciated" the atmosphere in Baltimore and had "a lot of fun" during their ten days in Ireland. They could have undertaken a similar course closer to home. But Ruth Ennis says a number of factors made them opt for Ireland and GISC. "We were able to adapt the course for them" she points out. But even more important, she says "Italians understand the Irish psyche and we understand them."

Given the success of the course, the Annje Bonnje club is looking at ways of developing its relationship with Glenans. There could be a further group of trainee instructors heading for Baltimore. And the Italian club is also keen to work with GISC to promote a standardized instructor training scheme for the Lake Como region, perhaps approved by the Irish Sailing Association.

Like his fellow instructors, Alessandro Orlandi will be busy on the water this summer. He will be teaching in two lakeside clubs during weekends in June, July and August. Adults "from 18 to 60" will be discovering a passion for sailing and developing their skills on the water, instructed by four Italians the Glenans way.

Visit the Annje Bonnje website at www.annjebonnje.it