

## Largs SC Cruising Group – use of AIS (Automatic Identification System)

At Sunday's Cruising Group meeting, Dino Zavaroni of local firm DDZ gave a demonstration of modern electronic aids to navigation and safety. This led to an interesting discussion on the advantages of having AIS (Automatic Identification System) linked to your chart plotter.

For those not familiar with AIS, all commercial vessels carry an AIS transponder, which regularly transmits the ship's position, course and speed, together with its name, MMSI number, and some other information.

You can see this on the internet – this link will take you to the AIS information for the Firth of Clyde south of Largs / Rothesay, down to south of Arran:

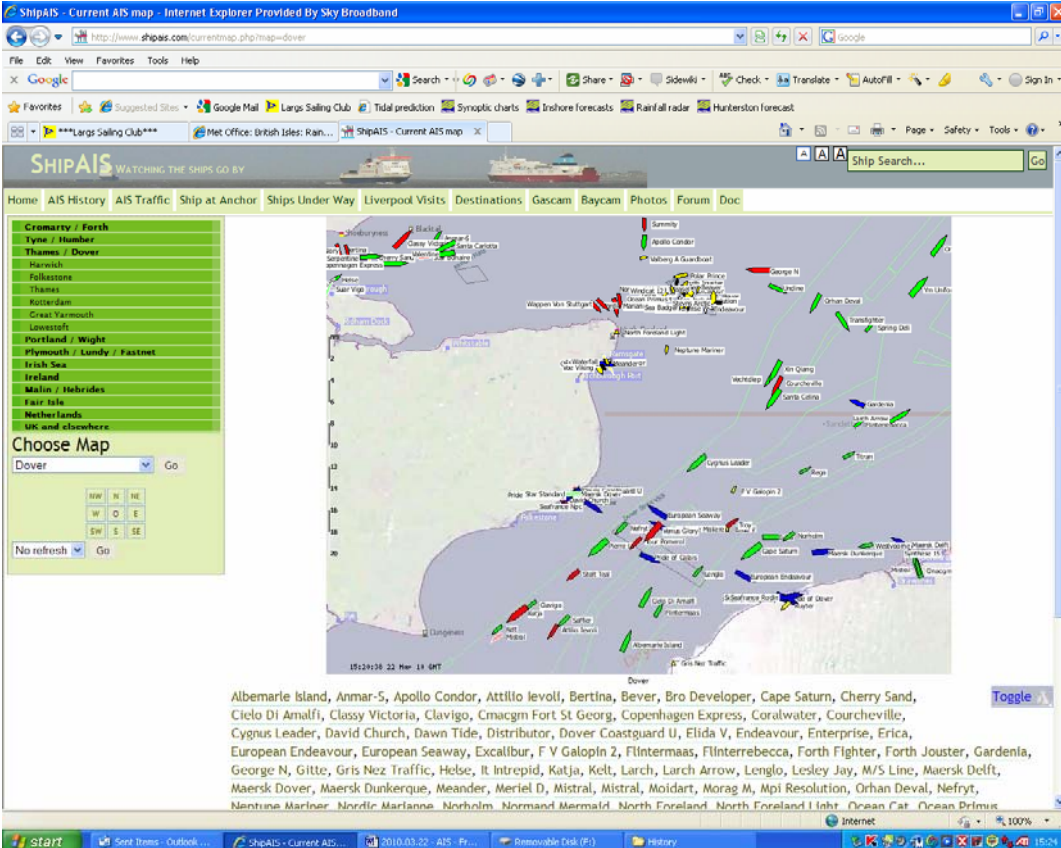
<http://www.shipais.com/currentmap.php?map=IsleofArran>

You can then use the toolbars to the left to select other areas (coverage extends all round the UK) and there are even links to webcams on the River Mersey, for example.

Also, you can search for ship specific information – this will take you to the Caledonian Isles, the Ardrossan to Brodick ferry:

<http://www.shipais.com/showship.php?map=ClydeApproach&mmsi=232001580>

If you want to convince yourself never to cross the Dover Straits at night, see the screen capture below from the Dover AIS display!! Note all the ships listed at the bottom of the screen – click on each one for more information.



The screenshot shows the SHIPAIS website interface. The main map displays the Dover Straits area with numerous ships plotted, each with a name and MMSI number. The ships are represented by small icons with colored arrows indicating their direction and speed. The map is overlaid on a satellite-style background. On the left side, there is a navigation menu with various regions and a 'Choose Map' dropdown set to 'Dover'. Below the map, a list of ship names is displayed, including: Albemarle Island, Anmar-5, Apollo Condor, Attilio Ievoli, Bertina, Bever, Bro Developer, Cape Saturn, Cherry Sand, Cielo Di Amalfi, Classy Victoria, Clavigo, Cmaacm Fort St Georg, Copenhagen Express, Coralwater, Courcheville, Cygnus Leader, David Church, Dawn Tide, Distributor, Dover Coastguard U, Elida V, Endeavour, Enterprise, Erica, European Endeavour, European Seaway, Excalibur, F V Galopin 2, Flintermaas, Flinterrebecca, Forth Fighter, Forth Joustier, Gardenia, George N, Gittle, Gris Nez Traffic, Helse, It Intrepid, Katja, Kelt, Larch, Larch Arrow, Lenglo, Lesley Jay, M/S Line, Maersk Delft, Maersk Dover, Maersk Dunkerque, Meander, Meriel D, Mistral, Mistral, Moidart, Morag M, Mpi Resolution, Orhan Deval, Nefryt, Nantuna Mariner, Nordic Marianne, Norholm, Normand Mermaid, North Foreland, North Foreland Light, Ocean Cat, Ocean Driftus.

With a suitable receiver linked to a modern chart plotter, we can receive this information on our boats, and it can be an invaluable tool in collision avoidance,

particularly important as there are now fast ferries around doing 40 knots, and we all know the allegations about commercial vessels perhaps keeping a less sharp lookout for our wee boats than they should! Also, because you can receive the vessel's MMSI number, if you have a doubt about the vessel's intentions, you can make a DSC call directly to it, and make them aware of your presence.

This is not a plug for AIS over radar, but AIS is much cheaper (£ a few hundreds) against radar at perhaps 3-4 times the price, and a higher power consumption. However, radar has advantages in navigation as well as collision avoidance.

The photographs below have been provided by Freddie and Hilary Moran, who cruise extensively on their Malo 40 Arctic Tern e.g. see their log of their circumnavigation of Ireland in 2009 on the Malo web site <http://www.maloyachts.se/Default.aspx?tabid=251>. After 2 years of experience with AIS, they are firmly of the opinion that they wouldn't be without it!

Gordon Cochrane  
Largs SC Cruising Group

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On the way to the Scilly Isles from Lands End



North Channel with 4 ships about