

So Phare, So Good!



Ariadne's 2010 cruise to the Gironde

FRONT COVER: Corduan

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I am grateful to Digiboat Int Ltd for their consent to use charts created using their Software On Board (SOB) PC based charting system.

This Log was produced using Serif software including PhotoPlus X4, PagePlus X5, AlbumPlus, PanoramaPlus. Frequent use was made of FastStone Image Viewer, and many images were stored and organised using Flickr.

Much of the text was based on bLogs written at the time on my website at <http://www.ariadnetrue.co.uk> (the blog is at <http://www.ariadnetrue.co.uk/ATBlog.html>)

The website and bLog were built using Serif WebPlus X4.

The views expressed are purely my own, based on observation at the time. While the passages undertaken may be of interest, no warranty is given for the pilotage information given, and any skipper attempting a similar passage must rely on his own judgement based on up to date official charts and his assessment of conditions at the time

Graham Rabbitts

Jan 2011

For reference map see back cover

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Ariadne's 2010 Cruise to the Corduan Lighthouse

Preface

This was probably our best Biscay cruise. We went further south than before, and achieved our goal of visiting the Corduan lighthouse at the mouth of the Gironde. This magnificent 18th century structure is open to the public, but it is quite an adventurous day out on the vedette from Port Medoc.

The trip to the Gironde proved to be quite challenging, partly because some ports were still closed after the winter storm 'Xynthia', and the Gironde itself is quite a challenging approach.

Not much was new on *Ariadne* this year. The biggest change was the transfer of navigation software to

[Software-On-Board \(SOB\) published by Digiboat Int Ltd \(website \[www.digiboat.com\]\(http://www.digiboat.com\)\)](#). SOB uses C-Map cartography, which we already had.



Netbook at chart table

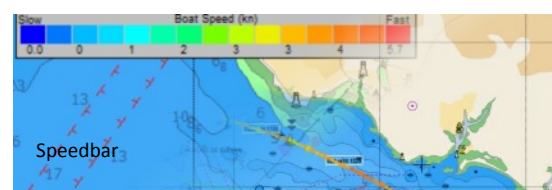
Previously, we had run our chart software on a large 17 inch Dell Laptop. A beautiful machine for processing data and images, but too power hungry to leave on all the time. So this year we decided to experiment with using SOB on a Samsung netbook. This proved to be so power efficient that we could leave it running all the time we were at sea. The result is that it behaves like a data logger, being connected to the ships instruments and the AIS.

We had also been wanting to have access to the chart plotter in the cockpit when navigating in confined waters. Putting an additional plotter there would have been expensive, and tricky to install as it would require a new 12v supply. Instead, when it was needed we simply disconnected the netbook from all the instruments, except the C-Map cartridge reader; added an independent usb GPS dongle to give position, COG and SOG; and placed the netbook on the main hatch. On the 2 or 3 occasions we wanted such a capability, it worked well.

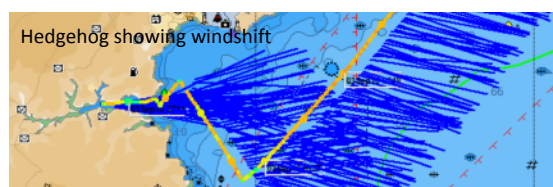


Netbook on hatch

The big bonus, however, emerged when I got round to writing up this Log. The actual track could be used directly on the charts. Moreover, the 'beads' that make up the track can be coloured in accordance with ship speed (SOG), red being the maximum speed, and blue the slowest speed. It is also possible to show wind direction in a 'hedgehog' picture. This shows wind direction, but not speed. Useful to illustrate a

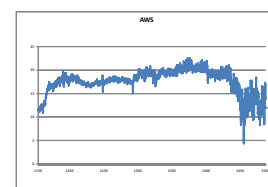


Speedbar



Hedgehog showing windshift

windshift. Other data can be analysed using Microsoft Excel, and in one case I did produce a graph of wind speed during the day.



Windspeed graph

Acknowledgements

Most of the photographs are my own, but Bob Comlay who joined me for the final leg from Falmouth to the Solent, took a number, and other contributions from my stock library of pictures of *Ariadne* came from Andrew Gardner, Roy Dowman and John Barker.

I relied heavily on the French Bloc Marine almanac, which has the main pilotage information in English as well as French, supplemented by a variety of pilot books (especially Malcolm Robson and Alain Rondeau) and charts, mainly the Imray C-series in France, and Admiralty folio charts for much of the English coast. For comms we used Skype via wifi at the marinas and occasionally gsm mobile using Vodafone Passport.



Heading West

7th - 9th May

It looked like we were in for a week of North-easterlies, a favourable wind direction for heading West, but cold. That is how it turned out. After an exhausting day doing the final loading and packing, we set off on Saturday, trickling down the west Solent under trysail and genoa, a gentle rig that keeps the genoa stable on a very broad reach to Keyhaven. We found a buoy, but swung so close to the bank that we moved to anchor in Colquhoun's cut.

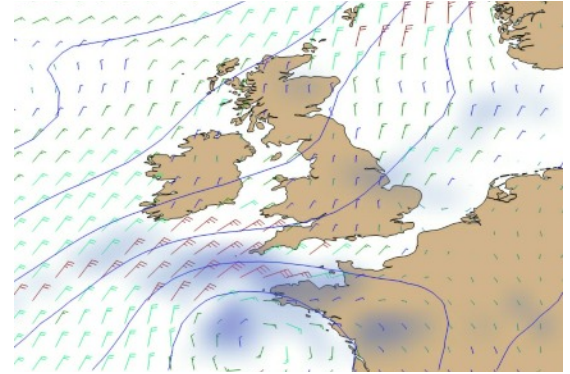


Left: Keyhaven

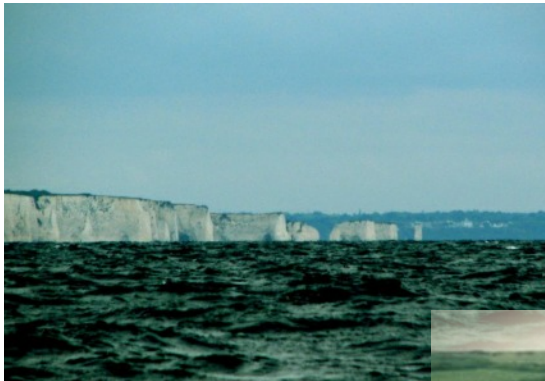
Below: Ugrib weather map for 10th May

Then, it was a cold passage to Weymouth. We set off at 0820.

This passage gave us the first real opportunity to use our Software on Board charting system. Although we had used it as a backup while we were testing the Nobeltec software for the previous two years, this was now to be our main navigation system. Also we had



installed it on our Netbook computer. This is so power efficient that we were able to leave it on all the time. This makes the generation of tracks for this Log and the video Log much easier.



Weymouth, like all the other ports we visited, was empty of visitors. The cold, and the price of diesel seemed to be the main factors.



Above: Purbeck Coast
Left: Weymouth lifeboat



Left: Anvil Point

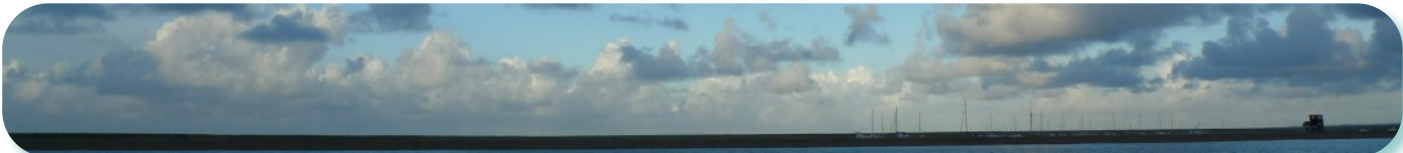
Below: Netbook computer linked to AIS and instruments

While we were there, we heard via VHF of a boat in trouble off St Albans, and wondered whether we needed to go back out to sea to escort her in,

but fortunately the Lifeboat was tasked for the job. Once in the harbour, they switched to an alongside tow and did a neat job of mooring the casualty just next to us on the long pontoon

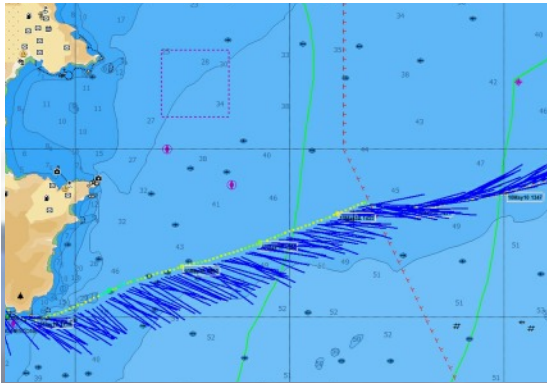


Weymouth

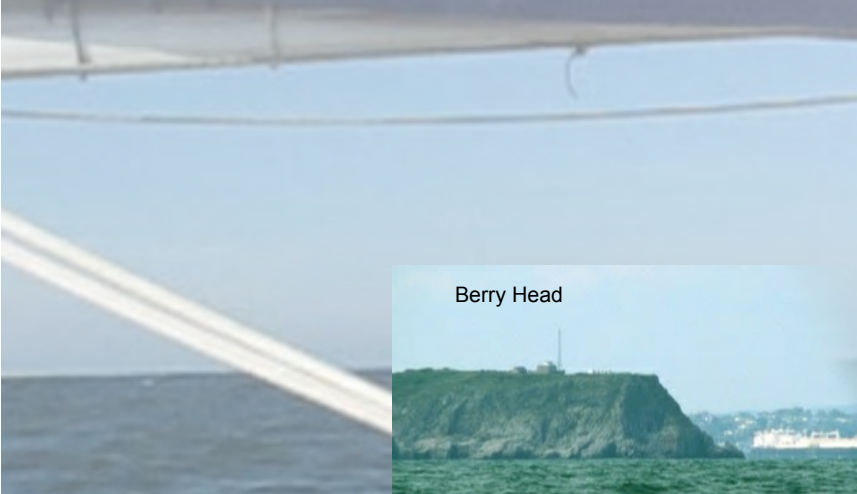


10th -11th May

Our next leg across Lyme Bay involved one of the calmest passages we have ever had round the inner passage at Portland, and the first two thirds of the crossing was fast under a blue sky, but the wind shifted so we gybed. But we ended up punching tide so we motored for the last hour into the D Dart, anchoring in the Pool at 1645.



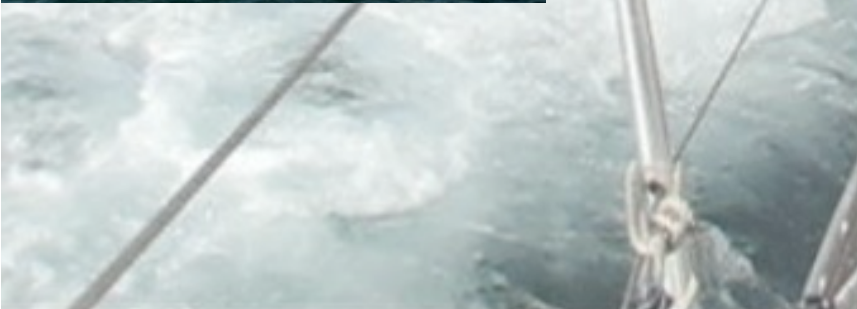
After contacting our friends Carol and Alistair in their Rustler 36 Seol Mara we opted to go up to Dittisham the next day and wait for them to catch up.



Berry Head



Approaching the Dart



Anchored at Dartmouth



Dittisham

To our surprise and delight we found other friends, *Middy Sun* (Anne and Marc) already there in their Tradewinds 35. We usually meet them in Falmouth, but they had started their passage to the east coast early. As they were to make a very early start the next day, they were not able to join us for the very pleasant evening with Carol and Alistair on *Ariadne*.



Middy Sun



Seol Mara

12th - 14th May

Two more days of fair winds took us via the Yealm to Fowey where we caught up on emails and blogs during a wet Friday. But it looked more promising for the weekend, though, and possibly warmer.

The display bottom right is a 'screen grab' taken just as we rounded Prawle Point. The full track to the Yealm is shown below. For some inexplicable reason, we did not record the track from the Yealm

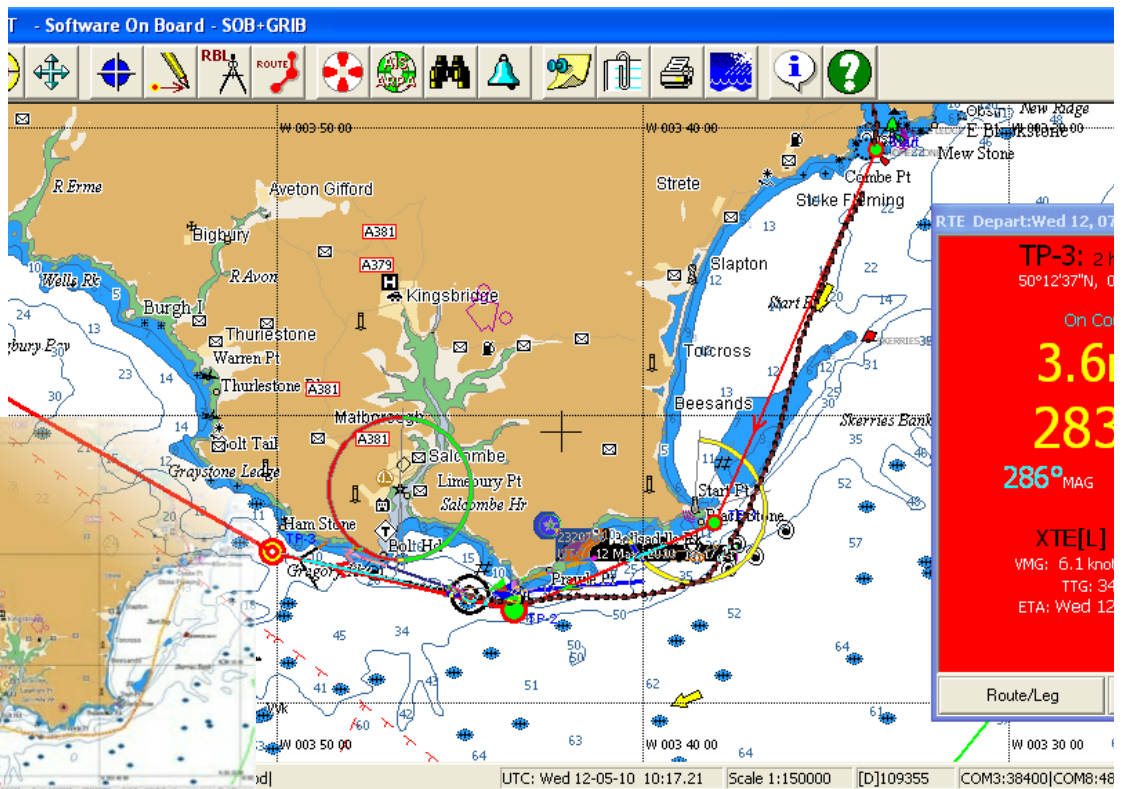
Below: Leaving the Dart



Great Mew Stone



River Yealm





HMS Echo and Rame Hd

The tide times were civilised, so we were able to leave the Yealm to be on the Church transit by 1000. But the f/c W/SW 3/4 never materialised, and we motorsailed most of the way, the breeze only building to sailing strength for the last couple of hours.



By 1500 we were on a buoy on the Polruan side of the river, having covered 20 miles from the Yealm



Church Idg mk



Fowey entrance

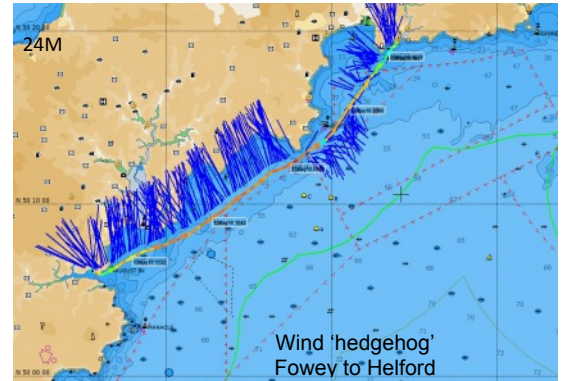


Fowey

Stripey Weather!

15th May

We have had alternating days of cold, grey and sometimes wet and windy weather followed by a day of blue skies, and a steady breeze, giving fast sailing in flat water, just like the day we sailed to Helford from Fowey (although, as the

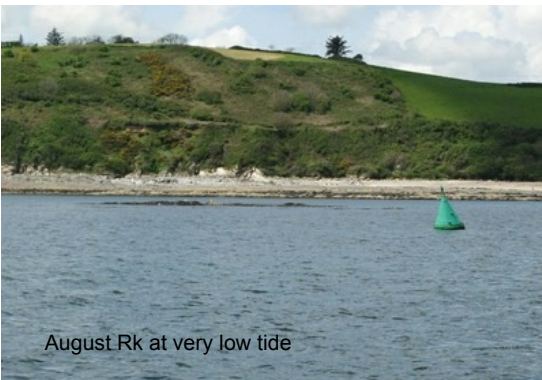


Wind 'hedgehog' Fowey to Helford



St Anthony's Hd

hedgehog plot shows the wind was fickle and shifty until we rounded the Dodman).



August Rk at very low tide

As we approached Helford, the tide was unusually low and we saw August Rock above the surface. That we had never seen before!



Gribbin Hd

At Helford we met our friend Jerry Eardley who was on single handed passage back



Passing Yacht



Helford

from the Scillies in his Folkboat called *Jasp*. He is so intrepid, and is also completing a new wooden gaff rigged yacht at his home in the North West. It was good to hear about progress, although that has been set back by external events interfering with his boatbuilding time. It is a massive project, not made easier by suppliers who do not quite deliver what he ordered. Is that just a UK characteristic?



Jerry Eardley's Jasp





16th May

Jerry set out for Fowey early next morning, on another cold grey day, hoping to beat the tide round Dodman. We drifted slowly to the Fal, bagged the Rustler Yachts mooring, and sat out the weather, anticipating the next day at Falmouth Marina for shopping, visiting Rustler Yachts, and catching up on emails. The good news is that the supermarket just outside Falmouth Marina is now a properly stocked Sainsbury store. Various predecessors were most unsatisfactory, and this new shop is a great improvement.



17th-21st May

We spent a few days pottering about the Fal-Helford area, partly because I needed to talk to Rustler Yachts about a few matters relating to the Owners Association. We were also waiting for weather.



Left:
Lunch at the
Falmouth Marina in
Penryn

Below:
Smugglers Cottage
(up the Fal)



Ships laid up in Fal
(Many fewer than last year)



Falmouth



Alastair and Carol came up to the Ruan Pontoon to hide from weather. Eventually we left in company. They went direct to Penzance, but we ducked into the Helford (below)



Seol Mara



Below:
Dairne relaxing
&
The electric hotplate is
a big gas saver when in
a marina



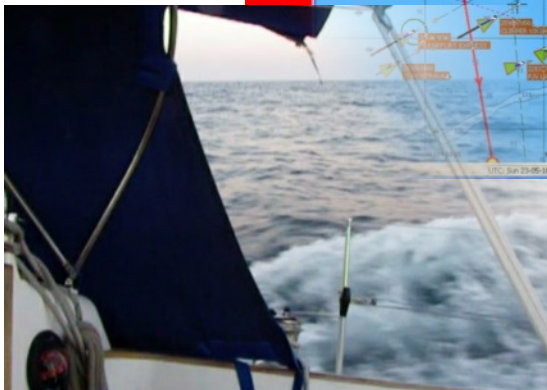


Crossing the Channel

22nd-23rd May

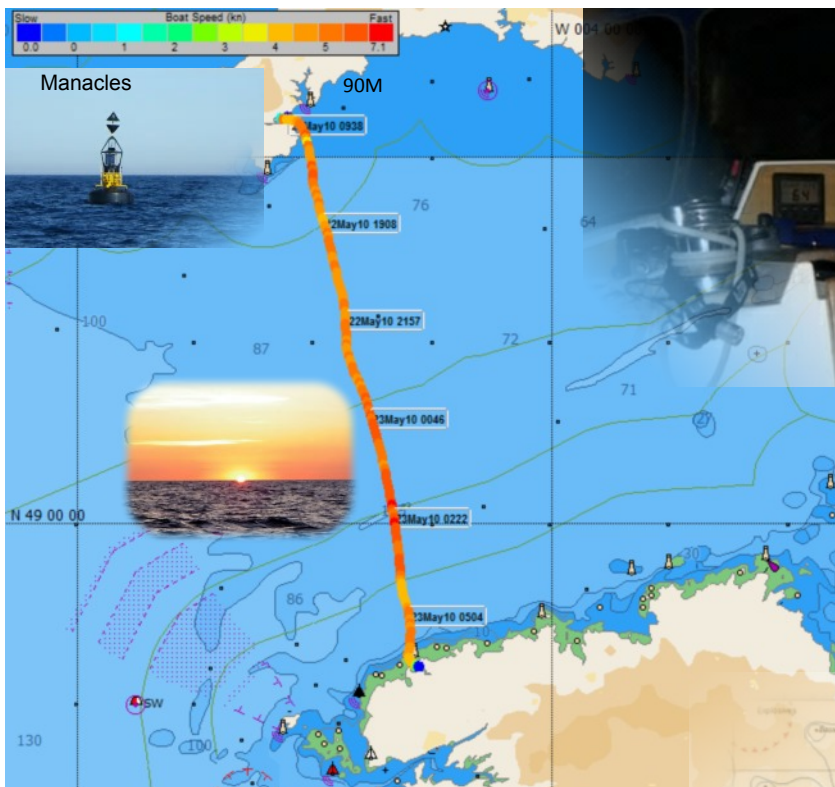
What a crossing! After motor sailing out to the Manacles at 1700 hrs we set off on a beam reach, nearly 90 miles to L'Aberwrac'h in Brittany. The wind was steady between 14 and 18 kts all the way, except for a lighter patch around dawn.

The Channel was very busy, as the screen grabs from our AIS shows. We really like this display of AIS data on our little netbook using SOB software.



Above:
AIS plots

Below:
Malouine Channel



Over 6 kts through the night



Approaching L'Aberwrac'h at 0745, conditions were suitable to sail up the Malouine Channel rather than go along to the Libenter buoy. We were alongside by 0910 on the outside of the Marina



L'Aberwrach



Malouine Channel



L'Aberwrach and further south

24th May

The marina is now so full they are putting short term visitors on the fishing boat pontoon on the outside of the marina.

The good news is that the wifi service at L'Aberwrach works well and is still free. The little poissonerie behind the sailing school still operates from a window at the end of the restaurant pictured here (behind the white van, left)



The bad news is that the price of the navette (shuttle bus) to Landeda, which was 1€ aller/retour when it was introduced 3 years ago is now 2€/ head each way! France has become expensive!



Landeda



Despite that we enjoyed our first French meal ashore.

In the afternoon, a large Jeannau moored just astern of us. We got talking, and ended up having a glass of wine on board their boat which was called *Resting Goose*. David and Annie were good company. Our paths were to cross again later in the cruise.

25th -27th May

It would be an afternoon tide to go down the Chenal du Four, so we invited David and Annie to an early lunch. Annie, who is Danish, produced some very tasty pickled herring. After lunch we motored down to L'Aberildut (trying to sail in the fickle breeze between Basse Paupian and the Le Four light).



Le Four



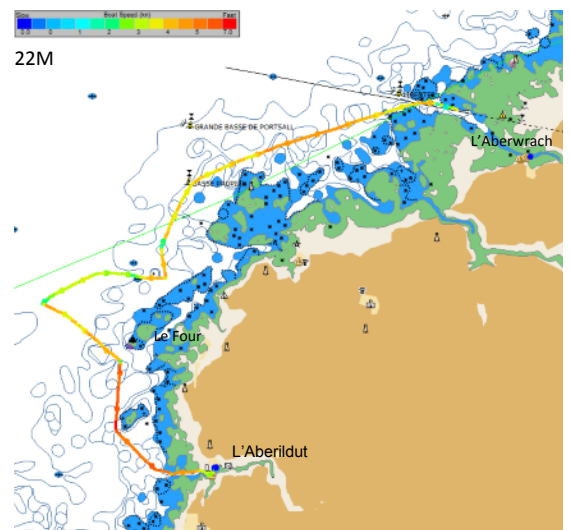
L'Aberildut



L'Aberildut



L'Aberildut at low tide



Resting Goose wanted to push on so she kept motoring and quickly disappeared.

By 1930, we were on the rather strange dumbbell buoys in L'Aberildut.



L'Aberildut

The weather was due to be dirty the next day, and it is a quiet place to stay. We just sat out the weather for a day. But worse was in store, so we were determined to get further south. So with a first light start on the 27th May we sailed and motored down the Chenal du Four, passing Le Conquet and just seeing Pte de St Mathieu in the misty distance.



Le Conquet



Pte St Mathieu



Grand Vinotiere



La Fourmi

At the southern end of the Chenal du Four the water pouring out of Brest crashes into the stream from the Chenal du Four producing very rough water off the La Fourmi Buoy.

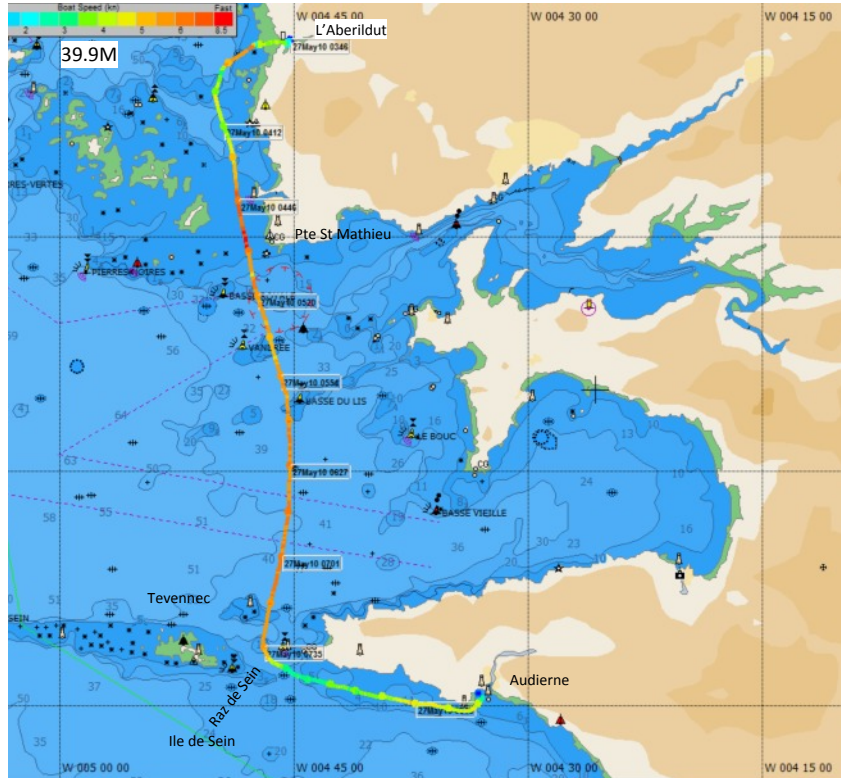


Tevennec



Raz de Sein

In poor visibility we motored to the Raz de Sein, passing just within visible range of the isolated island of Tevennec. We then had a splendid reach to Audierne as the visibility improved.



Enez Sun

We then had a splendid reach to Audierne as the visibility improved.



Audierne



We had the swell behind us, but the ferry from Audierne to Ile de Sein (*Enez Sun*) had to punch through the seas. When we arrived at Audierne, the buoys were fairly empty. As we had been motoring, we had plenty of hot water, enjoyed a refreshing shower. Dairne set about preparing potato wedges to go with our evening meal.

Far Right:
Enez Sun, the tough vedette operating between Audierne and Ile de Sein
Right
Ariadne at Audierne





28th -29th May

The next day (28th May) we had a drift and a motor in bright sunlight to the little village of Lesconil, one of the fishing ports on Penmarc'h. We had always wanted to visit these ports, but had been warned they were dedicated to commercial fishing.



Le Menhir

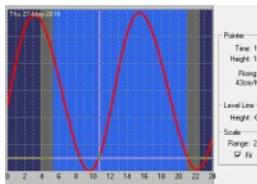


Eckmuhl at Pte de Penmarc'H



Reissant tourelle

Right: The tide curve for Loctudy showed we had 1.75m over LAT, just enough to creep over the bar into Lesconil



But in Bloc Marine (the excellent French Almanac) it said "Lesconil harbour becomes a marina for recreational boating. Entrance difficult in strong S/SE/SW winds". By contrast the note for Guilvenic says "Forbidden calls till further notice because of important works" Mysterious! So Lesconil it was!....



Cap Caval



Basse Nevez



Lesconil

For the first time in several years we were south of the Raz. We were in a village we had never visited before, and which was not heavily developed. So we enjoyed a couple of days stay there

Lesconil

We think this is a bit of a discovery. It is a traditional Breton fishing port that has opened its harbour to yachts. Moreover, unlike Loctudy (just round the corner) the village is right on the harbourside, so there is no long walk. There is a good choice of restaurants and essential shops right by the quay.



OK, the reported depths are a bit optimistic (though we did not go aground), and the 'marina' is clogged with local fishing boats. There is an unloading pontoon, and the harbourmaster may invite you to stay on it overnight. Otherwise, the only mooring option is between two buoys in mid harbour. That is what we did.

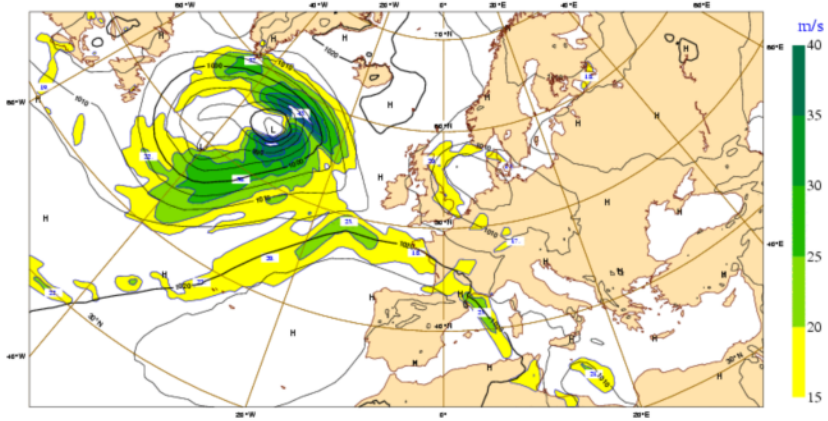


The village is a delight, not unlike the village on Houat. The harbour is dour in some ways, and reminiscent of the fishing harbours on the E coast of Scotland like St Monance.





Sunday 30 May 2010 12UTC ©ECMWF Analysis t+000 VT: Sunday 30 May 2010 12UTC
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed



We stayed in Lesconil for two nights (only 20€ altogether) during a SW F7 that veered to NE. No scend worked in at all. A full-on southerly gale might be a different matter....



Probably the Rustler 36 is about the biggest boat that could comfortably use this harbour, although on the top of the tide it could make a good lunchtime stop for bigger boats on passage round Penmarc'h.

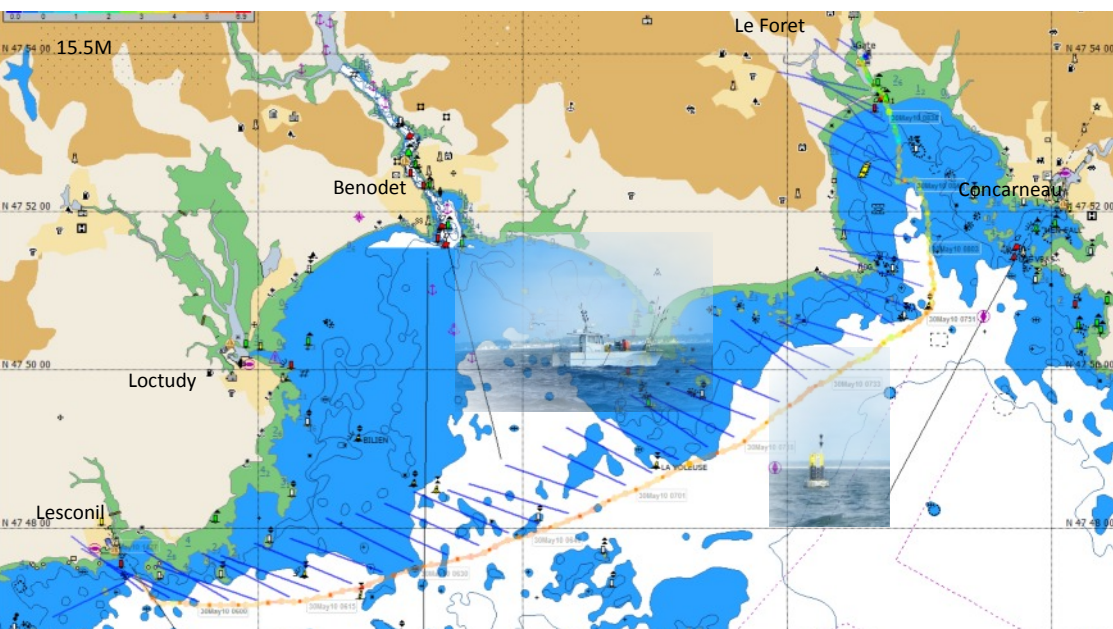
The vigorous weather was pushing further south than had been forecast earlier. In mid Atlantic, ugly depressions were threatening Ireland and Scotland, a pattern that would persist most of the summer. The sooner we could get south, the better.

Already we were beginning to re-familiarise ourselves with the French VHF forecasts. Words like 'rafales' (gusts), 'agitee' (rough), and 'houle, (swell) appeared in nearly every forecast, but words like 'averses' (showers) and other weather terms needed to be looked up. It soon became routine. We were to find that the wind was mainly between West and Northwest most of the cruise, giving us a fairly easy trip southwards. One plus was that the swell rarely exceeded 1.5 metres all season.

Port de la Foret

30th May -1st June

After sitting out a wet and windy day in Lesconil, we had a fast reach in fairly flat water across the Anse de Benodet to Port de la Foret. The wind tails show that we had a steady NW wind that gave a fast reach till we turned into Baie de la



Foret, where we had a 1 reef beat for an hour. We had never been there before so opted to spend 3 nights there, the final day again being to sit out a grey, wet day.

But as can be seen on the next page, the weather as we approached was very pleasant.



There are quite a few Brits in Le Foret, many boats being kept, or over-wintered here. We met up with the crew of a smart cutter called *Yell Sound*. The owners invited us for dinner, and we reciprocated the following night. They used to run the marina at Dunstaffnage in Scotland and we found that we shared many experiences of Scotland, and had come across quite a few of the same people. Small world!



This is a pleasant marina, although it is a long walk to the town, and an even longer walk round the bay to an excellent poissonerie. We were also able to try our new Remoska cooker for the first time. It is a very useful piece of kit, even though it can only be used in marinas with shore power. The saving in gas is significant. Indeed during our whole cruise from mid May to September we only used 3 dumpy cylinders of Calor, and did not need to buy any in France at all.



Quite a few of the Vendee Globe sailors base themselves in Le Foret, and while we were there we saw Sam Davies' boat being launched.



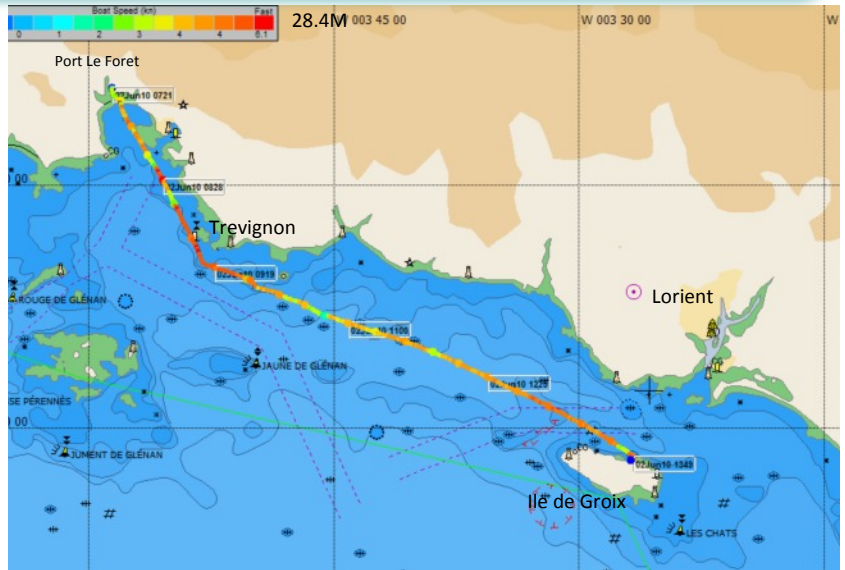
Sun and seafood

2nd - 5th June

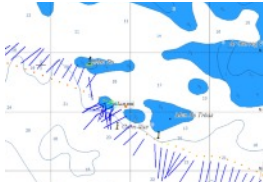
Well it IS what we came for.



It was mid morning when we left Le Foret and sailed gently past Concarneau in a light NE breeze. (Note the times shown on the chart are UTC. Local time was UTC+2)



By 1130 Local, the wind had died, so we took the opportunity to reswing the compass.



Then the wind became very fickle as we drifted close to a couple of rocky ledges. Fortunately there was enough water to just pass over the top. The sea breeze filled in quite suddenly, and we were on our way.



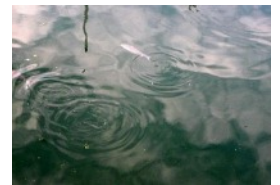
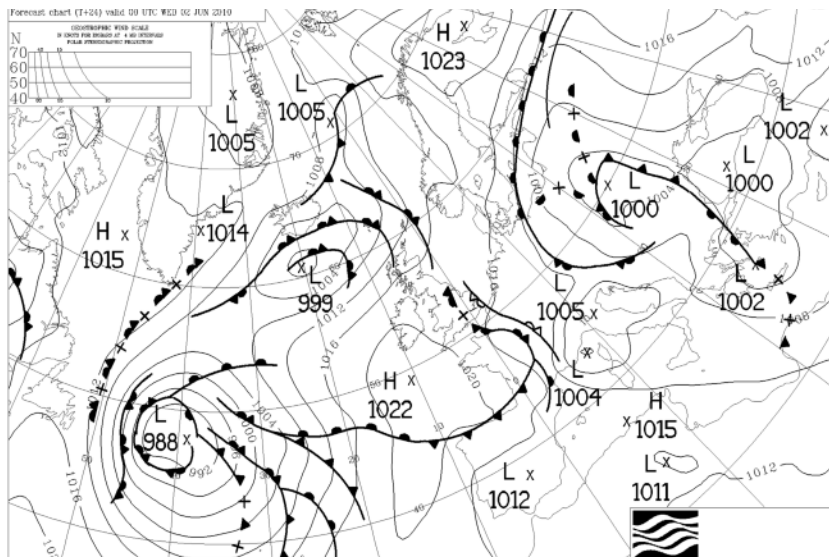
It was a delightful broad reach under cursing chute to Ile de Groix, where we managed to find a berth round the back of a pontoon in the inner harbour. Very cosy!



We strolled around the harbour area and managed to get a bottle of locally produced wine. It was not bad! In the morning, I meandered up through the village to the Supermarket, about 1 ½ kilometres away. We had not spent time exploring Ile de Groix, and it is still something we must do.



The weather map indicated the possibility of light NE winds for the next day or two, perfect conditions for a visit to Ster Vraz on Belle Isle. We resolved to go there the next day.



(These weather maps are downloaded from Mailasail. Com in incredibly compressed form - approx 150kb)

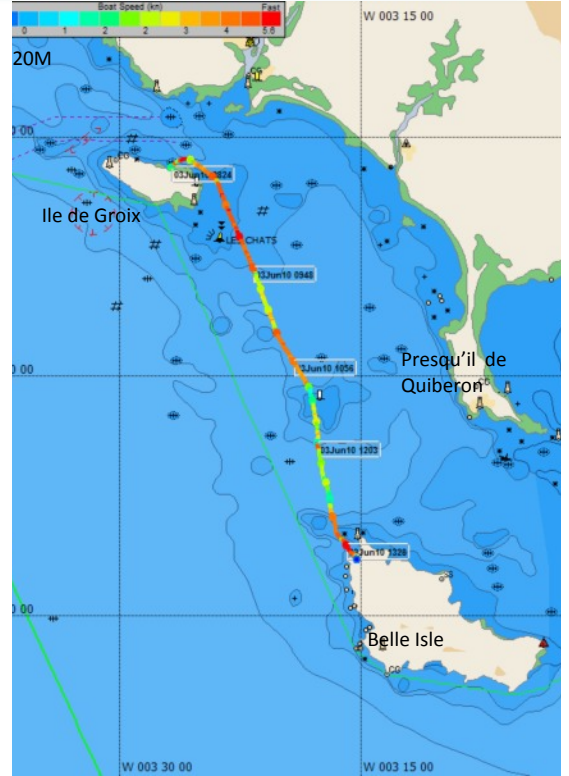




3rd June SterVraz, Belle Isle

It was mid morning before we got away, with some compact manouevring required in the congested harbour- always a difficult feat in a long-keeled yacht.

Out to the Basse Melite buoy where we tried to sail in a gentle E breeze, but there was sufficient slop on the water to make it necessary to keep the engine on. The breeze was fitful, and by turns we motored and sailed until we were 2M E of the Birivideaux tourelle. The wind died altogether and we motored gently towards Belle Isle, gradually finding our way into Ster Vraz, a tiny, high sided inlet on the western face of Belle Isle. There were two other boats there. We dropped anchor well clear of them, then got the dinghy over the side so that a stern line could be taken to a ring on the rock - there certainly is not enough room to swing.





Once the lines were secure, the cockpit table was rigged, and in brilliant sunshine, we enjoyed a G&T. This is an amazing peaceful place in the conditions we experienced. It is incredibly sheltered, which means no phone signal at all! So you need to be confident about the weather. A sudden windshift to West could be very dangerous.

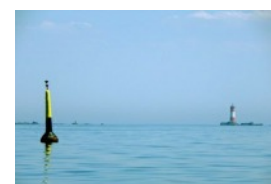
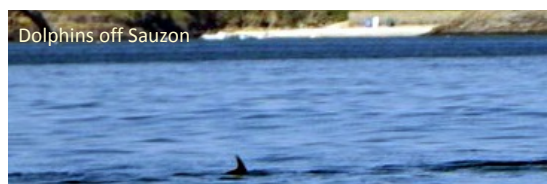
It could also be quite entertaining to be here on a busy weekend when boats are all rafted together.

Not for the first time, we heard a cuckoo calling.

La Turballe 4th - 5th June



Breakfast in the cockpit, followed by motoring (most of the time) in a calm to La Turballe. It was so hot that we got out the shorts. We switched the engine off and drifted past Le Chariot, Groguegez Light and the rocks off Hoedic while we had lunch



After lunch we motored for a couple of hours, until a gentle sea breeze developed, so we ghosted on a dead run towards La Turballe just over 6 miles away. In the mist we could see the light on Banc du Four with its spectacular spiral paintwork.



It was very hot inside the harbour, which had had new potoons since our last visit.



In Turballe there is a magnificent market where we managed to get moules crevettes and filet de Julienne. After visiting the market we were able to enjoy lunch at a pavement restaurant that included more oysters, langoustines crevettes, and a fichtet of Muscadet.



We stayed 2 nights here, and thoroughly enjoyed the atmosphere.

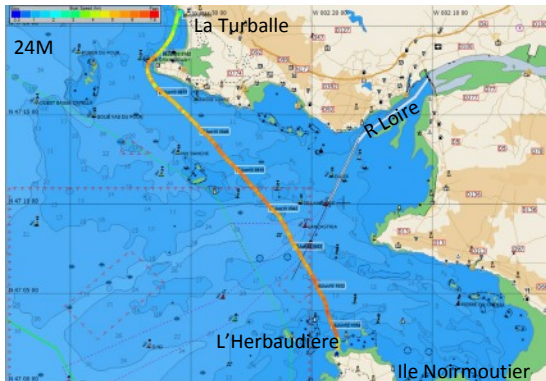
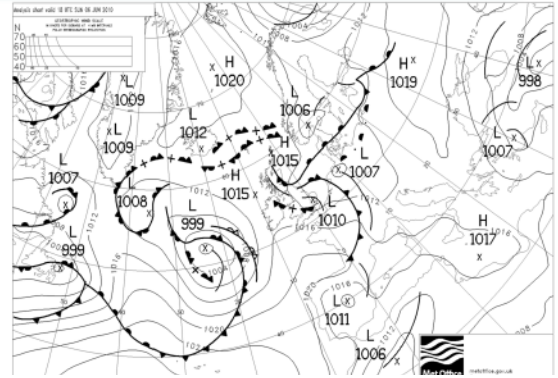




Storm Damage!

6th - 7th June

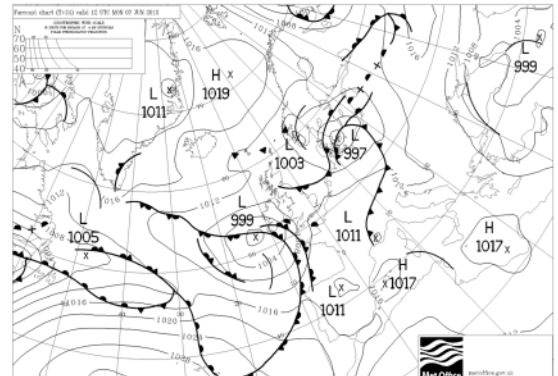
Croissants for breakfast before leaving at 1000 in a gentle NW wind. Under full sail we reached through the inside channel at Pte de Croisic, then bore away onto a dead run. The wind freshened to F5 as we passed north of La Banche and headed across the shipping channel into the Loire towards Ile Pilier (above) and L'Herbaudiere. Sparkling sailing!



Anchored dredger



'Moniflor'



The Bracknell weather maps obtained from Mailasail on the Internet showed that this favourable breeze would turn into a nasty depression crossing the area in the next day or so, so we were glad to make progress.

After a blistering dead run to L'Herbaudiere, we met up with *Resting Goose*, the big Jeanneau that we had last seen in L'Aberwrach.



The main topic of conversation was the state of the ports south of Noirmoutier - and an adverse forecast of strong southerlies. In the event, both boats took advantage of a brief delay in the onset of adverse weather to motor in a near calm the 22 miles to Ile de Yeu.

But what now? La Rochelle, and Les Sables d'Olonne were closed as a result of the severe storms the previous winter. Rochefort was full, and not accepting visitors, and St Giles Croix de Vie was said to be closed until the following week for the Vendee St Petersburg race event. We were seriously considering abandoning our attempt to get to the Gironde to see Corduan. Although St Martin de Re and St Denis d'Oleron were open their capacity to handle boats displaced from the other ports had to be questionable. *Resting Goose* wanted to leave the boat in this area and had to accept a berth in Royan.

No doubt going further south would be possible. But was it worth it? The next year the ports would all be open again, with new rebuilt facilities, we hoped. In the meantime, we would enjoy a few days on Yeu while making our mind up. Already I had visited the wonderful poissonerie, and no doubt will do so again!

The latest news was that Bourgenay had just re-opened. We had a few days while the weather settled down before we needed to finally decide what to do.



French wifi

Nearly every French port we had visited has had high quality wifi available, either free or very cheaply. This compares favourably with the high costs in UK ports (up to £8 per day!).

A definite bonus of cruising in France has been the plentiful availability of good quality wifi hotspots in virtually every marina. Many are free, but in Vendee they charge 1€ per day (which compares very favourably with the usurious rates in the UK). In Camaret they have unsubsidised Netabord, which looks expensive at 14€ for 24 hours. But as that is usage time, not elapsed time, it lasts for several days - even if you are using it for listening to radio 4!. The list below shows ports known to have good wifi (free unless there is a daily rate in brackets).

However, wifi is becoming much more generally used because of things like BBC I-player. While the wifi connections are, on the whole, high quality, there is often insufficient bandwidth available to support total demand for data. The result can be irritating dropouts. But radio via the Internet is the only practical alternative to Radio 4 and Radio 5 Live which, much of the time, both carry interminable cricket. Moreover, the transmitter power of Long Wave has been reduced, so broadband options are becoming ever more important.

Meanwhile, we had discovered that the little Samsung Netbook that we had been using for navigation had many advantages. Unlike my big Dell, its power usage was so little that we could leave it on all the time at sea, which I why this

Log is decorated with coloured tracks, and (where appropriate) wind tails.

In effect, it is a data logger.



The clarity of the AIS display, driven by the Comar engine is more than adequate.

Also, when we are navigating in narrow channels, it can be placed on the hatch with its own gps dongle. With up to 6

hr battery life, it was not necessary to arrange an additional power supply.

Rustler Fleet survey of good wifi hotspots in France. (Free unless stated otherwise)

- Trebeurden
- L'Aberwrach
- Brest
- Camaret (14€/ 24hrs usage)
- Lesconil
- Loctudy
- Port de la Foret
- Concarneau
- Port Tudy
- Port Louis
- Le Palais
- Vannes
- La Turballe
- L'Herbaudiere (1€)
- St Gilles Croix de Vie (1€)
- Joinville (1€)
- Bourgenay (1€)
- St Denis (approx 10€ per day, but offset by low marina prices)
- Rochefort (10€/ day; good wifi but poor I'net bandwidth)
- Port Medoc (5€/ day)

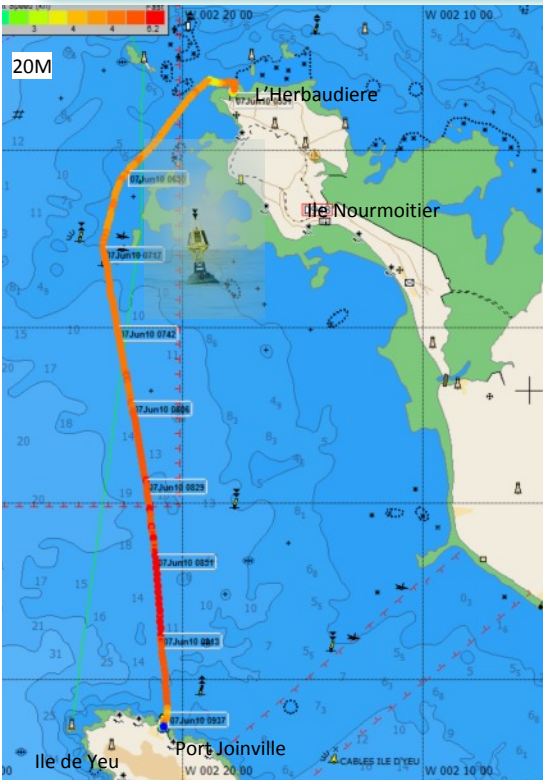


L'Herbaudiere to Ile d'Yeu

7th June

L'Herbaudiere was in the process of being reconstructed. The result was that the space for visitors had been reduced. Moreover, with the strong winds blowing into the harbour, manoeuvring into the available space was tricky. Somehow we managed, initially rafting on a French boat, then moving to a position alongside. Although *Resting Goose* was only 10 yds away, it was a days march around the marina to get to them, so we launched the dinghy to get across.

In addition to chatting about the state of the harbours further south, we were keeping an eye on the weather. We got



Joinville harbour entrance and leading marks

a forecast for the 7th that read "W3/ 4 becoming S 5/ 6 later then veering SW. Rain later". We decided that, even if we had to motor, the best strategy would be to get clear of a very crowded L'Herbaudiere and move on to Ile d'Yeu.

By 0830, we were on our way, with *Resting Goose* leaving very shortly after. She quickly overtook and disappeared into the distance. There was an oily calm on the water as we passed down the channel inside Ile Pilier, then headed south towards Yeu.

It was still calm when we got into Joinville, where we made fast at 1230. *Resting Goose* was not far away on the opposite pontoon. David produced another bottle (or two?) of the excellent *Resting Goose* white wine that had been made in a vineyard in East Anglia. Typical of David to have spotted a good deal and to have the courage to make the investment. 250 bottles at less than 3 pounds a bottle! Not bad!

We were still uncertain about whether to proceed further south, so we decided to sit out the next day, which proved to be windy. On the 9th, *Resting Goose* had a very fast sail down to St Martin de Re. They texted us to say there was space, so we decided to curtail our stay on Yeu and push on on Thursday 10th, with Bourgenay as a diversion option.



Resting Goose



Ariadne



Joinville street

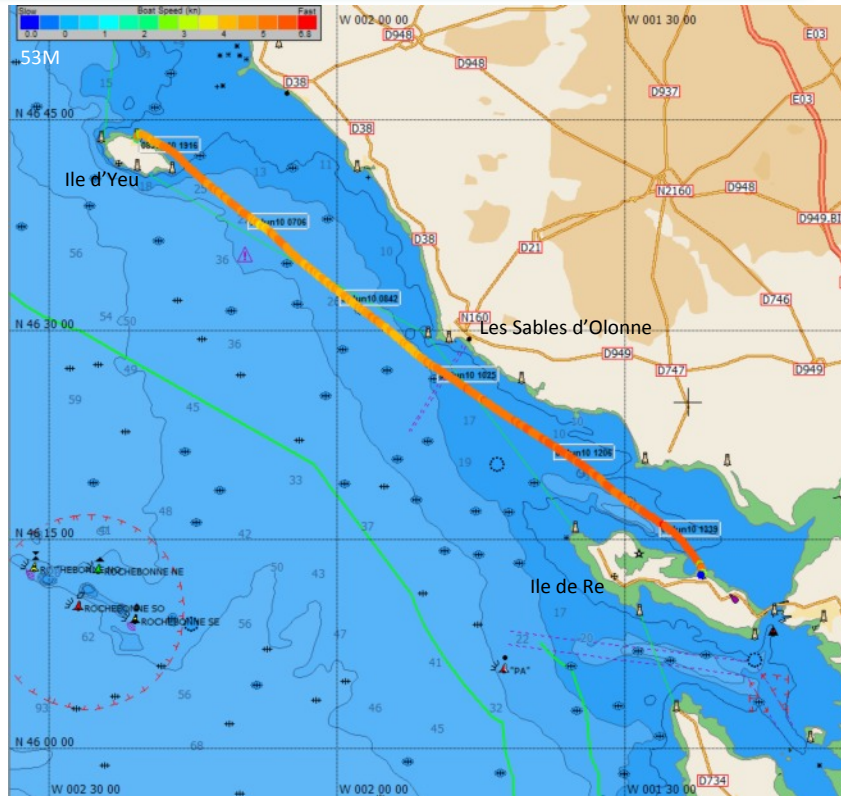


Charentes Maritime

10th-12th June

The forecast was for the wind to go into the south for a few days while a complex depression sat over us. Ugrib indicated that we could expect light SE winds early in the day, freshening to a F5 southerly by early evening. Thereafter the weather was set to go downhill for the coming weekend. So we had to get on with it, even if it meant

Grande Barge, off Les Sables d'Olonne



motoring.

At 0630, with rain and poor visibility, we set off. The wind, not as forecast was force 3 SSW, but it was fitful, so attempts to sail were abandoned. By late morning we were close to Les Sables d'Olonne. The weather had improved, and there was weak sunshine.



As with many of our passages, we had the fishing line over, but making any catch was rare. Today was no exception. Altogether it was a tedious trip. We passed a few fishing boats. What on earth were they catching?



Les Islattes

By 1400 we were abeam of the Les Balineaux light off the north end of Ile de Re, an hour later we passed Les Islattes tourelle, and by 1545 we were rafted 5 out inside the harbour. It was very congested!



Ariadne entering St Martin de Re

St Martin de Re, marks the start of the Charentes Maritimes area of France. Once in St Martin de Re we almost stopped caring about the weather it is such a wonderful little place, despite the mayhem of the mooring arrangements. As expected we were moored 'a couple' (rafted out five deep) almost closing the harbour.



Right: Ariadne rafted out in St Martin de Re



Aboard Resting Goose

We had several exchange visits with David and Annie from *Resting Goose*. They are on their way to the Caribbean slowly, and keeping away from big fleets like the ARC. They were great fun to get to know, and warmly welcomed us despite the fact that *Resting Goose* is big, luxurious Jeanneau compared to our relatively little *Rustler*. Gradually we found the stakes rising in the food competition, but we could not compete with their home grown 'Resting Goose' dry white wine. They seemed to have endless stocks!

Through the midweek, the harbour slowly emptied, but at the weekend it was chockablock with boats from La Rochelle and elsewhere. During this period, our Monitor self steering was clobbered by a French boat – so hard that the bevel gears disengaged. I managed to get it back together, although the main frame was slightly distorted (but it continued to work well through the rest of the trip).



Ariadne alongside Resting Goose



Monitor self steering gear on Ariadne

Studying the weather patterns, David and Annie decided to move on to Royan on Sunday. They had to get the boat settled in time for a short return to the UK.



Ariadne alongside Resting Goose



Moreover, they did not need to come back! It was tempting to go with them, but the N-NW winds were setting in again, and I did not want to go to the Gironde until I could see a weather opportunity for the return leg. So we decided that we would leave with them, and go to St Denis d'Oleron to wait for suitable weather. Apart from which St Denis is a pleasant place to be.

St Martin de Re to St Denis d'Oleron

13th June

On the Sunday morning, we were pleasantly surprised to find that the French boats that had completely blocked the harbour entrance had, as they promised, left as the gate opened at 0600. We followed immediately with *Resting Goose* close behind.

We had a brisk sail through the Re bridge, and anchored just beyond to await the tide into St Denis d'Oleron.

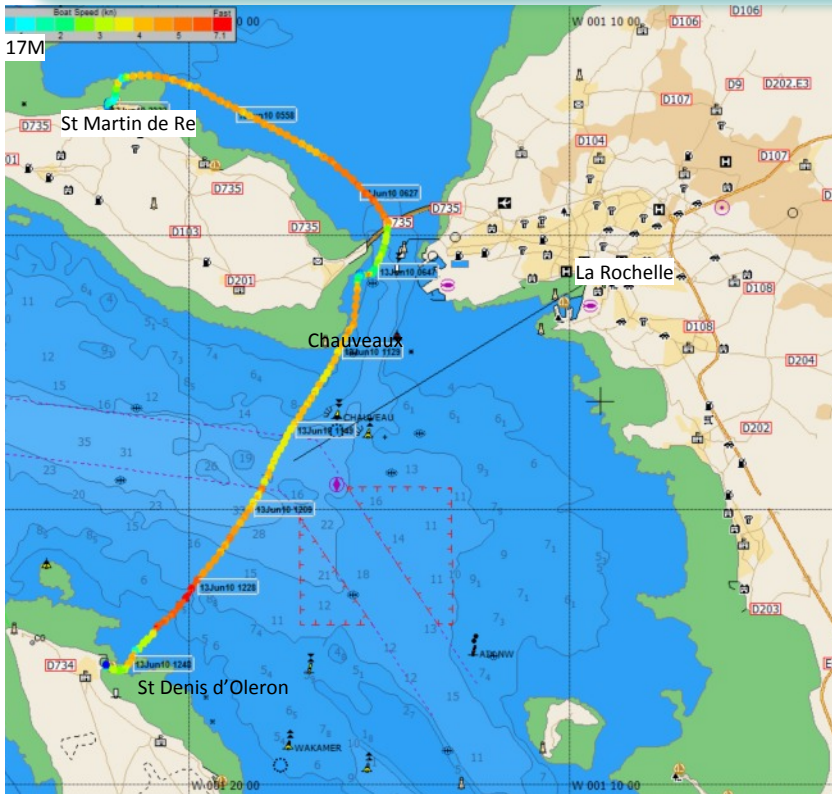
Resting Goose stormed off into the distance, and we later had a text to say they had safely reached Royan.



Resting Goose



Resting Goose



Ile de Re Bridge



Lunchtime anchorage off Ile de Re



Chauveaux

Off and on we had been in company with *Resting Goose* for a couple of weeks. It was, for us, a highlight, and we wish them well on their cruise. That afternoon we had a fast fetch over to St Denis. We like it there, so the fact that the weather looked like being bad for a few days was no hardship!

St Denis d'Oleron

We would be several days waiting for weather. It was cold, there was some rain. The winds were very fresh, with a strong northerly component in the direction. There was a big swell outside the harbour.



Ariadne in St Denis.



Harbour office

The harbour itself is snug, with a natural sill to keep the swell out. We visited the village and the excellent market, a few times, and consumed our final bottle of *Resting Goose* wine.

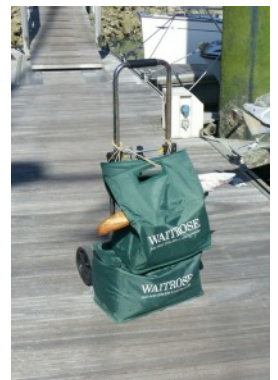


St Denis entrance at low tide.



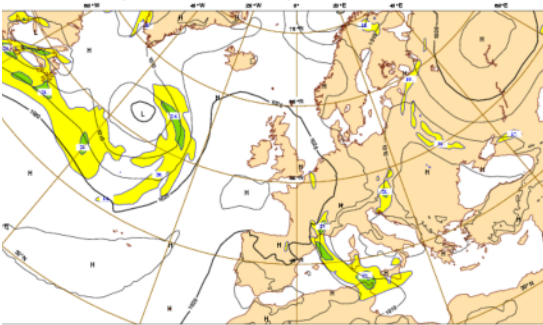


St Denis is a clever marina. Someone spotted a natural bar, and by incorporating this into the entrance, it created a natural sill. The heart of the village is a kilometre from the marina (off the bottom left hand corner of the picture above). That means it is long way to carry the shopping. For that reason we carry a collapsible barrow in the cockpit locker. This coupled with the excellent rectangular Waitrose bags make is ideal for a visit to the market and the boulangerie. Most mornings, an early trip to the boulangerie was made to get fresh croissants and a baguette. The latter would usually be consumed at lunchtime with crevettes or other seafood from the market. Not a bad life!



The wifi charges in St Denis were the highest we encountered in France, but the marina charges are so much lower than elsewhere that the overall cost was similar to other marinas. This meant that I could monitor the weather patterns daily. The overall patterns tended to indicate brisk winds with a north to northwest component would persist for several days. Initially the winds were strong, but there were signs of the winds easing as we approached the weekend. The problem was that high pressure had been sitting in the Atlantic for weeks, resulting in fresh or strong NE-N winds. We could get to the Gironde, but could we get back? We were on the point of giving up - or at least deferring our attempt till our friend Sue arrived - when a brief weather pattern appeared. There could be a light northerly breeze on the Friday (after a couple of days of F6 winds), with the promise of light easterlies on the Monday or Tuesday to ease the path back. The Monday weather map (left) does not show wind direction too well over Charente Maritime, but examining the Ugrib forecasts for the same period did indicate that E-NE winds would be likely on the Monday. We decided to give it a try, even though the tide times were not the best. Indeed we would have to push into the Gironde against the tide. That turned out to be tougher than we expected.

Monday 17 June 2010 00UTC ©ECMWF Forecast t+096 VT: Monday 21 June 2010 00UTC
ce: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed





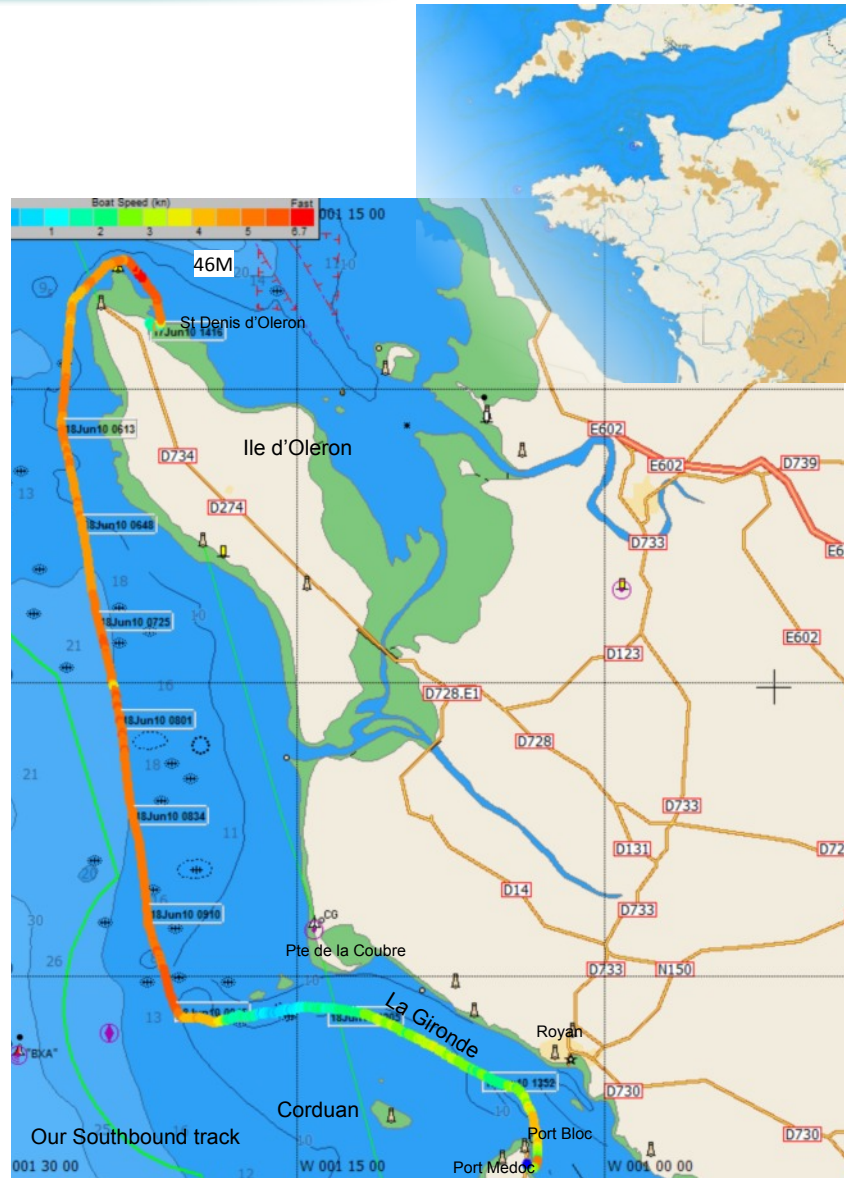
Expedition to Corduan

Voyage South

There is a theoretical option to go to the Gironde inside Ile d'Oleron and Malcolm Robson has done it. But as he says in his French Pilot "Here is a good place to warn you off using the Pertuis de Masmusson. I have been through once in total ignorance, near high water, and thought nothing of it; but every time I relate this, I listen to tales of strandings, drowning, buoys out of position, etc. If you think your nerves are up to scratch, just stand on the Pointe d'Avert when the ebb is running against a force 2 zephyr. The sight, if you are still set on going south should dispel the boredom of the long haul round the north end of Ile d'Oleron"



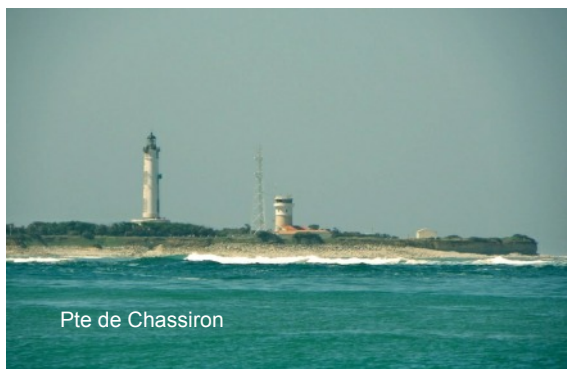
The dangerous Pertuis de Masmusson at south end of Ile d'Oleron, showing the almost continuous breakers



The French vhf f/c gave W/NW 3/ 4 'peut agitee' with a swell of 0.8-1m; overnight W/NW 4 occasionally 5 becoming 'agitee' with a swell of 1m, and during the following day we could expect the wind to increase to N5/ 6



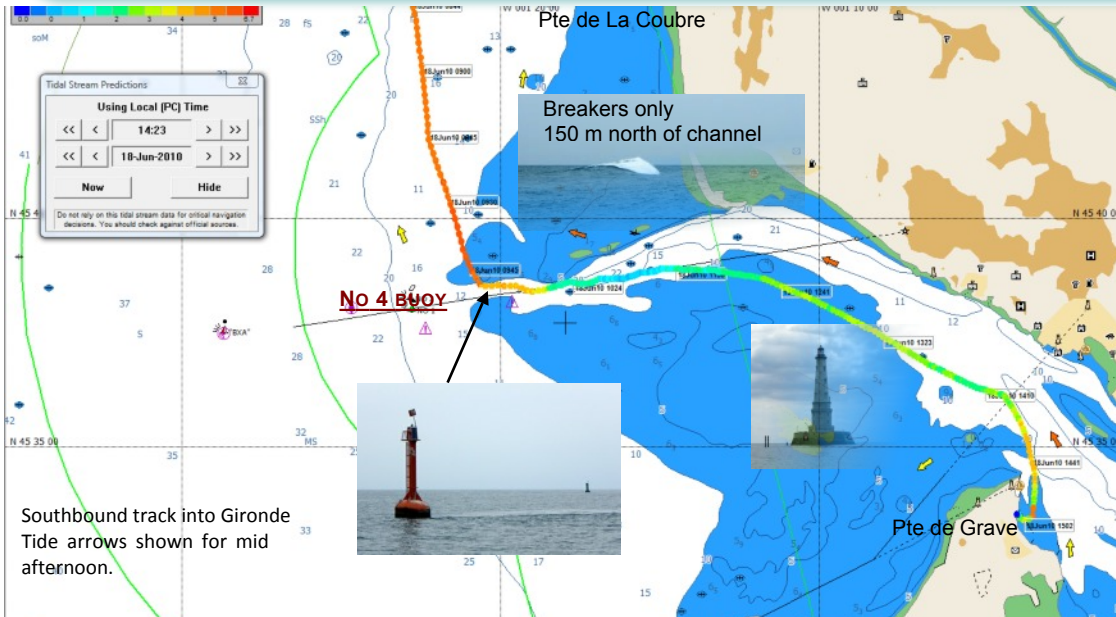
The Antioche tourelle with wreck clearly visible



Pte de Chassiron

We left St Denis as soon as the tide allowed at 0720. The sky was grey, the visibility less than 5M and there was very light northerly wind. As we motored round Pte de Chassiron and the Antioche tourelle that is surrounded by wrecks, we met the swell which persisted all day at less than a metre. Then there

was long 25 mile plug to the entrance channel into the Gironde.



Entering the Gironde, it is necessary to go outside the No 4 buoy because there is a long ridge that extends seaward from Pte de la Coubre for nearly 4 miles. By the time we got there, the tide was about to turn foul. The tidal data indicated that on neaps we could expect adverse tides

of up to 2 kts on the ebb. In the event, we had 3kts nearly all the way up the estuary occasionally touching 4kts. To compensate, the bonus was that the wind had filled in and rounding the No 4 buoy we had a fast reach in towards Pte de la Coubre, then a long trip up the estuary on a dead run. We kept as far outside the main channel as we could to avoid the adverse tide. But the interesting thing was the sand waves. The echo sounder would show 10m under the keel, then a few minutes later, only 6m; then back to 10m and so on. Clearly the whole estuary is on the move the whole time. Indeed the breaking waves had shown us that the spit that runs out from Pte de la Coubre was much closer to the main channel than the chart would have led us to believe.

First tantalising glimpse of Corduan through the mist



We could see Corduan in the mist, but our course never got closer to it than a mile and a half. It seemed to take forever, but at least we were not wasting diesel pushing water up hill. By 1815 we were safely alongside the incredibly short fingers of the Accueil (arrival) pontoon in the modern marina at Port Medoc just inside the South arm of the estuary behind Pointe de Grave.

Around the marina. Plenty of restaurants, a chandlery, lots of brokers - but no boulangerie. So early the next morning I set off to Port Bloc, a quarter of a mile away. I guessed that as a ferry port it might have a boulangerie. I was out of luck, but did pick up a leaflet for the vedette out to Corduan. It seemed booking was essential. So when I got back to the boat, we rang them. The Saturday trip was already full, but we got a couple of places on the Sunday trip departing at 1500hrs.



Port Medoc



It was a fair hike for Dairne to walk along to Port Bloc, but we were there in good time. The first surprise, on boarding the vedette was to see a flat top pontoon with two large outboards strapped alongside. So this was how they were going to land us! And this explained why they warned in the brochure that we would have to wade ashore!



The pontoon being towed by the vedette



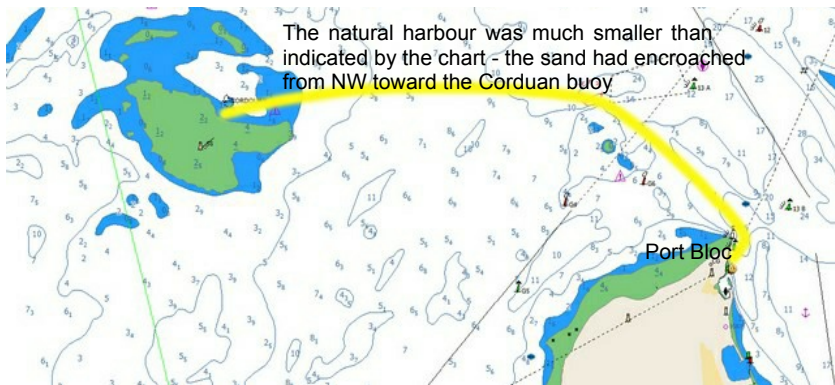
Corduau buoy

The vedette was nearly full when we left. The pontoon was dropped astern as we cleared the harbour, and the vedette got up to speed, probably about 15 kts, with the pontoon planing astern! After about 20 minutes, the pace slowed as we swung in behind a sandbank that was beginning to emerge. Clearly the trips are timed to arrive at half tide down when the sandbanks start to form a natural harbour. There is one buoy on the way in to give a useful position fix.

After anchoring, the pontoon was drawn alongside and half the



Corduau



passengers, about 40, stepped on board and remained standing. There are handrails - even so it is hard to believe that the UK's MCA would approve such a passenger



The entry port

operation! It took about 10 minutes to drive the pontoon through the shallow water, grounding occasionally, so that the outboards had to be half lifted. On the inward trip, however, they were able to get to the causeway that extends some 100m from the lighthouse, so we were able to step ashore relatively dry shod.



Napoleonic furniture

There were a couple of school parties so we had to wait a little before entering the lighthouse through the single entry port. The bottom open gallery of the lighthouse

contains the keepers quarters, and there is an exhibition room furnished with Napoleonic fittings. The outside of the



Pontoon discharging passengers at the causeway





For that is one of Corduan’s original purposes, being built for Louis XIV and Marie Therese. Their initials are carved in many places throughout the lower levels.

At a much later date the new high tower was added above the chapel. The architecture is much more modern, with some very clever stonework as the staircase merges with each floor above to produce a heart shape in the roof. Interestingly the sense of the spiral was reversed at this point. Originally, there were only three levels below the original light, an entrance room and store, the Royal apartment, and the chapel, which remains magnificent.

The original lighthouse



Royal apartment



Augustin Fresnel

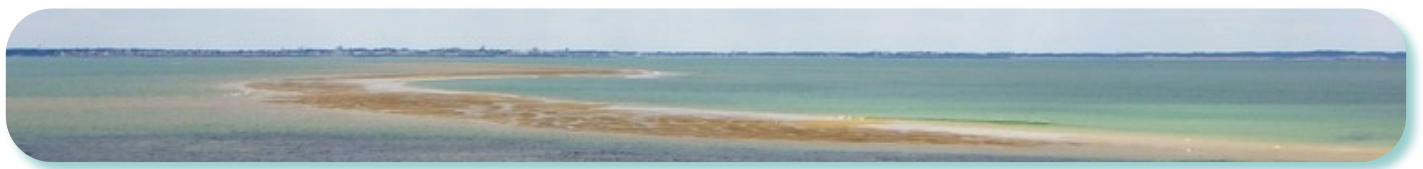


Initials 'MLT' = Louis - Marie Therese



In the lowest room, there is a bust of Fresnel, on which a note claims that Corduan was the first light to be fitted with a Fresnel lens.

There is also a commemorative plaque to the Cockleshell Heroes raid during WWII (opposite). Having sailed the estuary, one really appreciates the scale of their achievement.



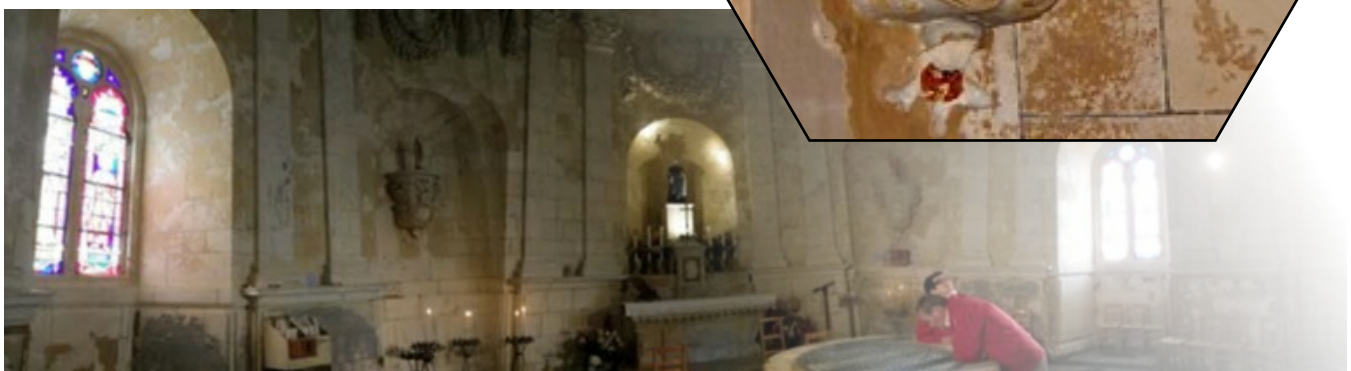
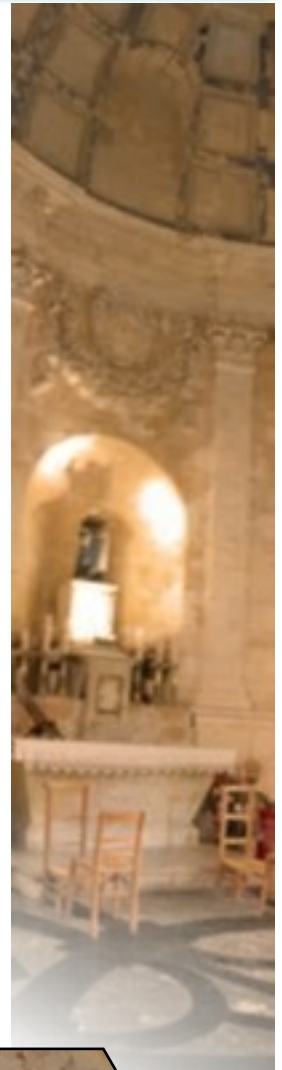
Text on a plaque commemorating the Cockleshell Heroes raid:

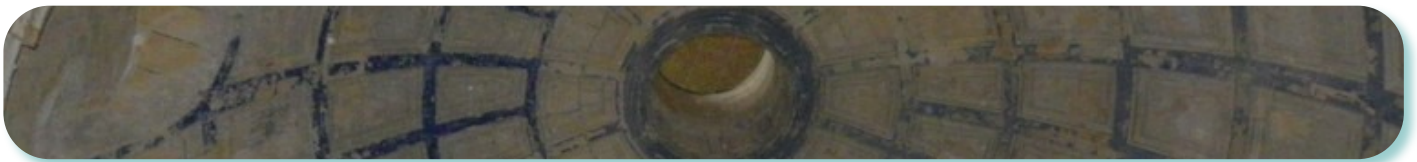
At dawn on 6th December 1942, having sailed from Greenoch (Scotland) on 30th November, the submarine HMS TUNA commanded by 28 year old Lieutenant Commander Dick Raikes DSO RN, was slowly following the Landes coast northwards from Bayonne in shallow water. On board were some unusual passengers; a group of twelve Royal Marines from the 1st section of the RMBPD (Royal Marine Boom Patrol detachment). The Royal Marines, commanded by Major H.G. "Blondie" Haslar, OBE RM, their six two-man Cockle MkII assault canoes and their equipment were stowed in the forward compartment of the submarine.

Their mission was to paddle up the Gironde, then the Garonne by night to attach Limpet mines below the waterline of armed German merchant ships alongside the quays at Bordeaux and Bassens. The "blockade runners" were supplying the wartime industry of the third Reich with vital raw materials from the Far East. The absence of landmarks along the flat coast of the Landes made navigation very difficult. Shallow water, moored mines laid by the enemy parallel to the coast, magnetic mines laid offshore by the RAF, the radar at Soulac, German coastal artillery and continuous maritime and aerial patrols all made HMS TUNA very vulnerable. It was only at 1345 on 7th December that the navigation officer Lieutenant Rowe, RN, was able to identify the Phare de Corduan and thus obtain an accurate position of the submarine. HMS TUNA then proceeded at periscope depth, fixing her position every 30 minutes which enabled Lt Cdr Raikes to disembark the Royal Marines at 1935 in the exact position requested by Major Haslar. Of the six embarked canoes, one was damaged during launch and returned to the UK with its crew; two capsized; one sank after striking a submerged obstacle and two reached their objective. They succeeded in seriously damaging four blockade runners and setting ablaze a small tanker. Of the ten Royal Marines, only Major Haslar and Marine Sparks returned to England via Spain after a journey through occupied France. Sergeant Wallace RM and Marine Ewart were shot at Blanquefort on 11th December 1942. Lieutenant Mackinnon RM, Marine Conway, Corporal Lover RM and Marine Mills were captured and later shot in Paris on 23rd March 1943 after lengthy interrogation. Corporal Sheard RM was drowned and never seen again and the body of Marine Moffatt was washed up on the beach at Bois en Re on 17th December 1942.



The chapel, above the Royal apartment, is probably the most magnificent of all the rooms in the lighthouse





Spiral staircase

lighthouse is ornately carved, as would be appropriate for a royal residence and refuge.



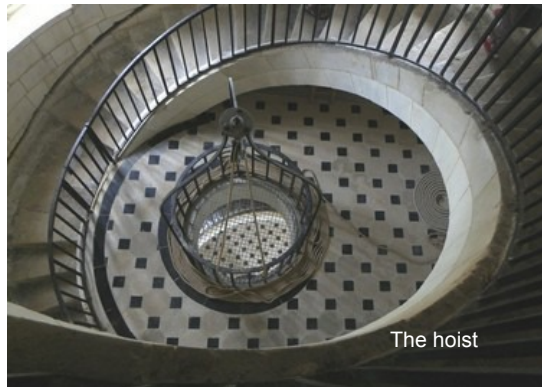
Dairne



Heart shape as staircase blends into floor above

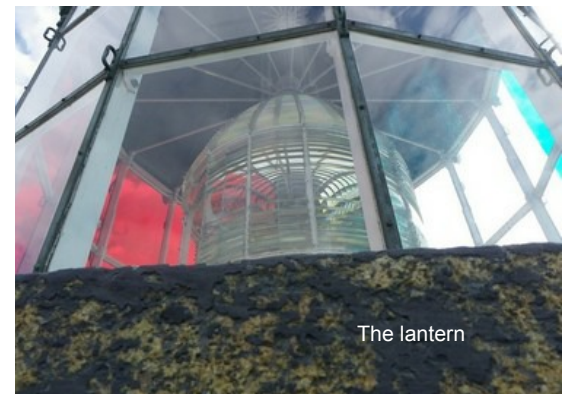
Just below the highest level is a gantry frame that allowed stores - such as wood

or coal for the lantern - to be hoisted up the central shaft.



The hoist

Unfortunately we could not get close to the lantern and its beautiful Fresnel lens (claimed to be the first lighthouse to have such a device), but by reaching up, I managed to get a photograph of it - well sort of.



The lantern



Looking down into the chapel

On the way down we got glimpses through the 'well' shaft, such as the one on the left of the chapel



From the gallery round the lantern at the top we could see for miles, and we could also see the layout of the natural harbour - though by now the whole causeway was exposed, and it was clear that we would have to wade across the sandbanks to a point where the pontoon could pick us up.



Vedettes anchored in the natural harbour



The causeway exposed as the tide drops



All the way down again - then the long walk along the causeway, and across the sands to a point where we could board the pontoon to return to the vedette.

The low tide, however, gave some completely different perspectives of the lighthouse



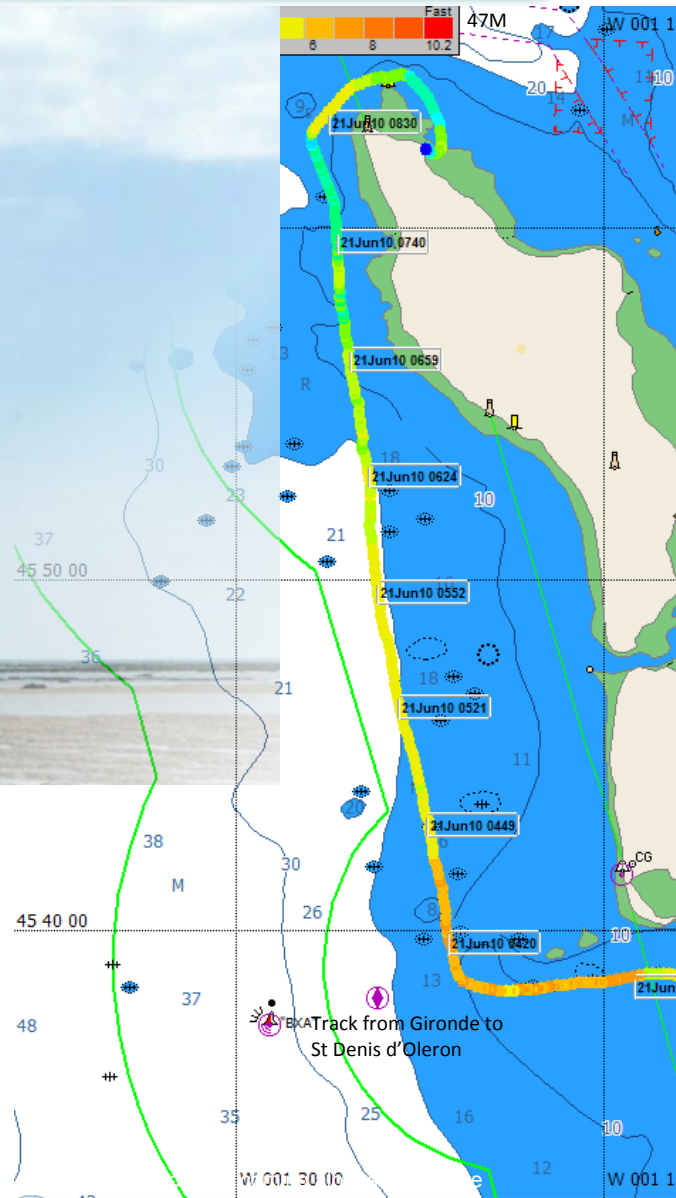
Dairne wading out to the pontoon



The lantern



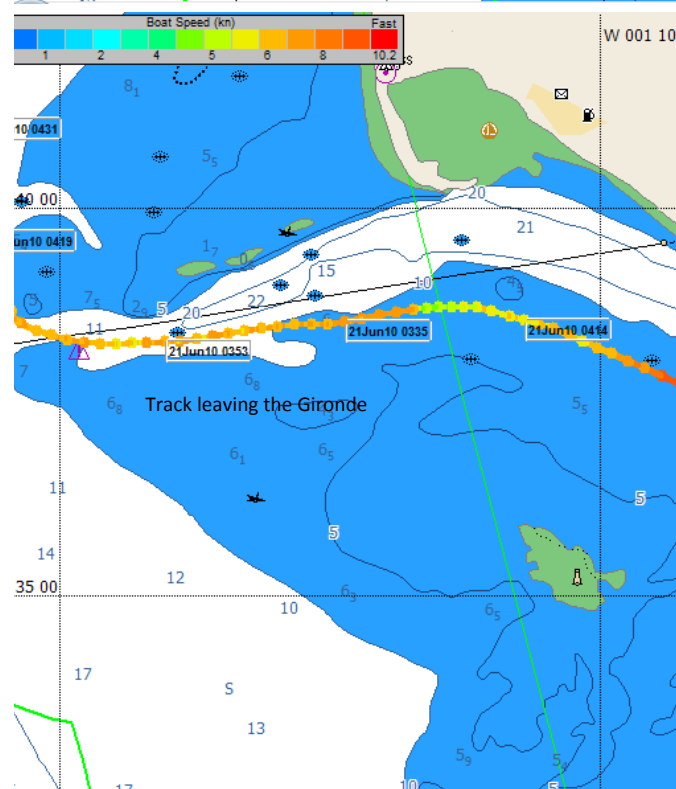
Pontoon with a full load



Once both loads of passengers were on the vedette, the return passage lasting about 40 minutes gave us time to reflect on a fascinating day out

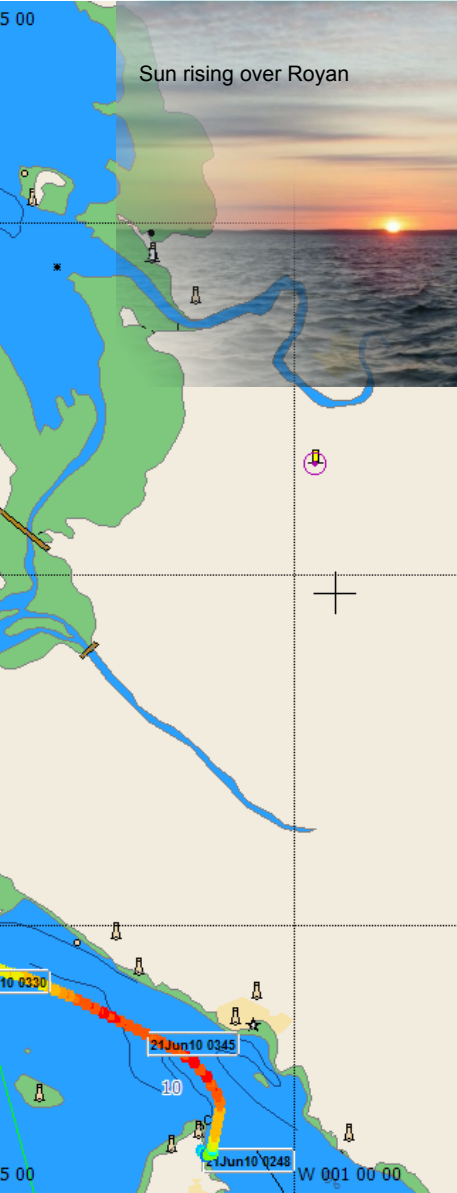


Pontoon under tow



Track leaving the Gironde





Sun rising over Royan

The long range forecast held. We were able to leave at first light, just before sun up, on the next morning. Immediately we nosed out of the marina, the bow was grabbed by the tide, and we were whisked away down river. Under full sail we were reaching at about 5-6kts through the water as we passed Royan, but at times the tide assistance gave us speeds of 10 kts over the ground, with the tower of Corduan visible out to sea. However, as we turned to the east to follow the main channel past Pointe de la Coubre the rush of tide met the slight Atlantic swell and a fierce chop

developed bringing boat speed down to almost nothing, and shaking all wind from the sails. So for the next four miles the engine had to go on as we bashed through heavy seas. Goodness knows what it is like in SW wind of any weight! Must be impressive - if not alarming. This is certainly a river to respect!

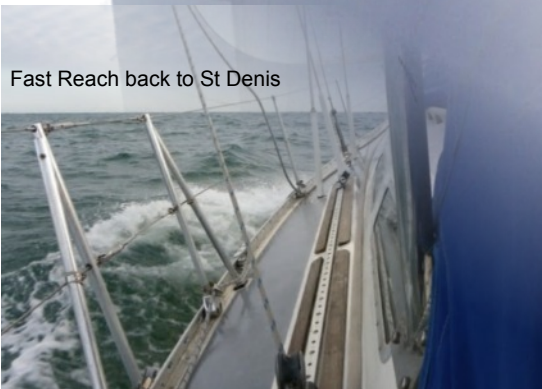
But after rounding the no 4 channel buoy and heading north we were almost immediately able to sail and had a pleasant 20 mile reach back to Pte de Chassiron, during which we caught a magnificent Bonito (coastal tuna). Once again we gave Pte de Chassiron a wide berth before entering St Denis d' Oleron. We



No 7 buoy and Pte de la Coubre



Bashing into the head sea



Fast Reach back to St Denis

had covered 45 miles at an average speed of over 6 kts.

The Bonito was a very tasty bonus to our thoughts about a successful expedition. We had judged the weather correctly, and completed a potentially tricky passage uneventfully. It was while approaching Pte du Chassiron on the way back the title for this year's Log occurred to me -

"So Phare So Good".



Ariadne, our yacht [photo John Barker]



St Denis d'Oleron

22nd-23rd June

We were expecting friend Sue to arrive in La Rochelle on 24th, so we settled down for a lazy couple of days in St Denis d'Oleron. It was hot, so we managed to buy a new parasol to provide some shade for the cockpit table. We also had time for a good wander round the market. And of course we had seafood for lunch virtually every day.



Mojito and Ariadne



St Denis Market

Each morning, before the heat of the day got going, I would walk up to the village for croissants and the paper. This far south we could not get France Ouest, our paper of preference. But the SudOuest newspaper showed clearly that we were looking at temperatures of about 25°C

It looked as though we were in a for quite a spell of hot weather.

On the 23rd, Mojito arrived. She is another Rustler 36, with whom we had kept in touch by text message and the occasional Skype call. Luckily, they managed to get a berth close by.

So we had a couple of days of socialising.

It looked as though Sue had brought us a spell of really good weather.



boulangerie

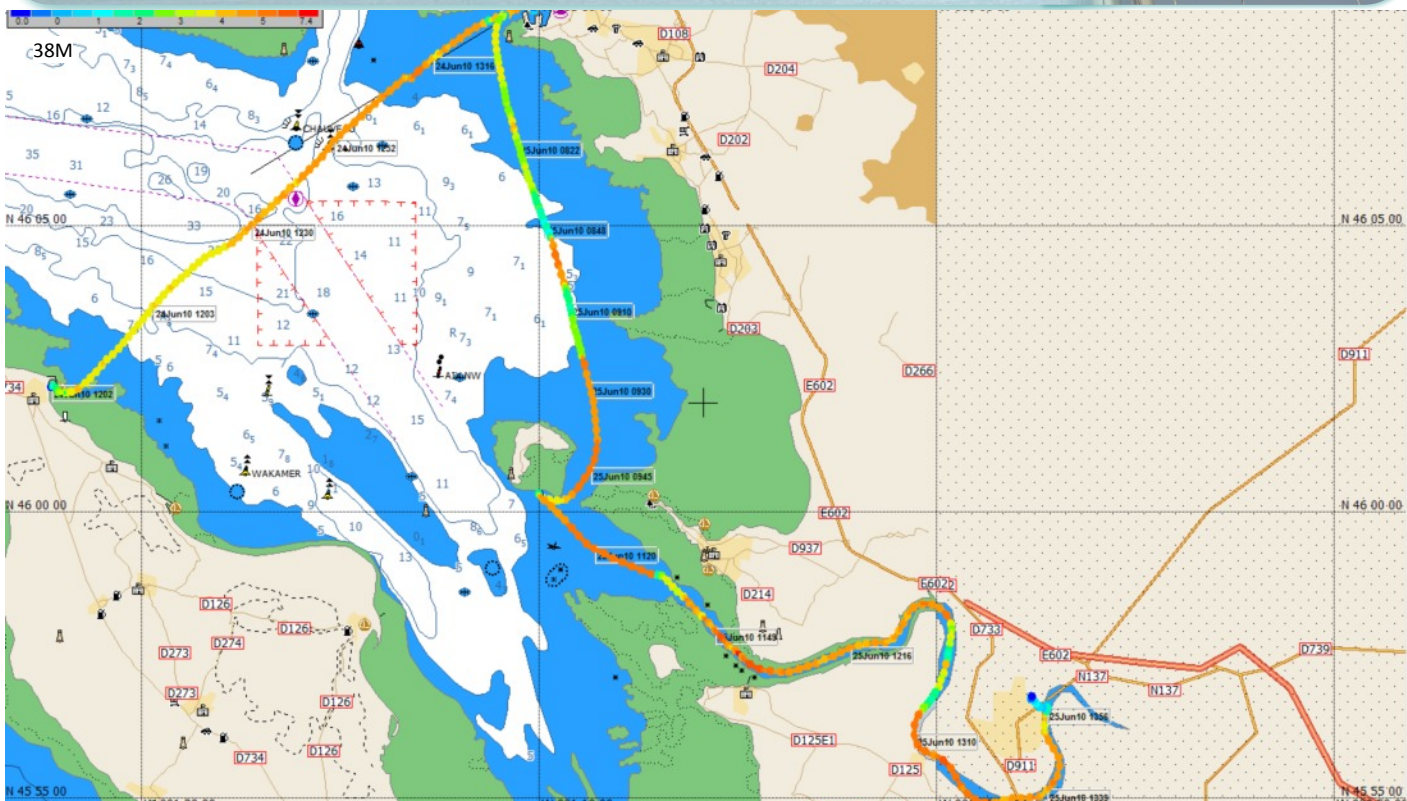


Mojito arriving



Charcuterie in St Denis Market





La Rochelle

24th June

Sue was due to arrive on a mid afternoon flight to La Rochelle, so after an early lunch we potted across to Les Minimes marina. It was very hot, and there was virtually no wind. On arrival at Les Minimes, there were no visitors berths except on the hammerhead of the central pontoon. We rafted out.



It was a long walk to the marina office, and I went right round the marina to find the boulangerie, and the papershop. There was a small market set up in car park with a very impressive seafood stall. When the girls saw me taking photos, they posed!



In the car parks there was pontoon debris lying around everywhere, and in the office, the photos taken immediately after the winter storm Xynthia had struck were truly horrifying. The surge had been so big that the pontoons floated off the top of the piles and drifted away with boats still moored to them! Every pontoon in this marina, where there are more than 3000 berths had needed replacing. Somehow they had restored some kind of order, and were gradually renewing row by row. All the boats on a pontoon were being moved up to Vieux Port in the town centre, the pontoons renewed, and the boats brought back. Quite an operation. And it has recently been announced that a further 1350 berth are to be added!



Sue eventually arrived on the solar powered vedette which silently slipped past *Ariadne* on its way from the town to the marina berth. We were able to stay put for the one night and chose to eat on board. We had not met for some time, so there was plenty to talk about.





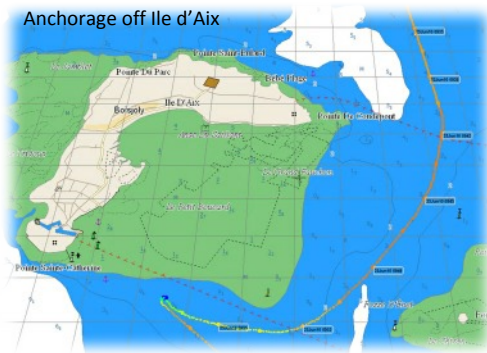
Up the Charente to Rochefort

25th June

Not a good sailing day. It was windless and hot, reaching well over 30 °C by mid morning. We needed to get some air moving over the deck, so we left at 0930. There was only just enough water in the channel as we left Les Minimes.

We meandered gently south, mainly motoring. There are some enormous mussel farms in this area, and the boats that work the farms tend to be long, low, and fast. In their way, they are quite elegant.

The channel round the east side of Ile d'Aix is very shallow, but well marked, so we crept past fort D'Enet, and anchored south of Ile d'Aix to wait for the tide up the Charente. Dairne and Sue tried swimming, but the current was already so strong that they could not let go of the safety ropes. Still it cooled them down before a seafood lunch the shady cabin.



Mussel farm



Sue



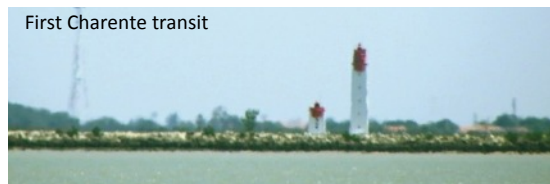
Fort d'Enet



Fouras-Aix ferry



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First Charente transit



Fouras

Once there was enough rise of tide, the anchor was weighed, and we headed towards the first leading marks heading past the town of Fouras. This is a very long transit, and requires good visibility. Compass binoculars are a great help in finding it. There we turned onto the second leading marks. These are difficult to distinguish, but Malcom Robson's sketches are extremely helpful. Once found, it is a long but easy transit, and very helpful in the strong current.

Thereafter we were carried up by the strong flood. The river winds back and forth, so sometimes the breeze was dead ahead, and at others dead astern. We arrived off Rochefort just before the lock opened, and we were moored at the top of the harbour by 1930. It was very, very hot.



2nd Charente transit



Fort Lupin



Charente Fishing Lodge



Road and transporter bridges



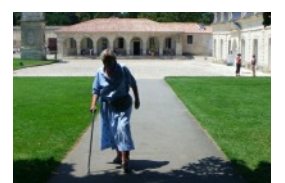
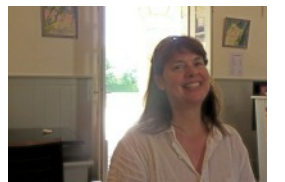
Rochefort

25th June

It was every bit as hot as during our previous visit. The harbour is a heat trap, and it reached 35°C. The cabin fan was essential. We just flaked out for the evening. As usual, Sue fell asleep!

Next morning, before it got too hot, we wanted to see how much progress they had made in building the French Frigate *Hermione* since our previous visit. She was started in 1997 and is now expected to float out in early 2011. But the deadlines have been missed before - the building is too much of a tourist attraction! It did not look like progress had been great since we were last here, but there is now a lot more detailing and equipment to see.

Unfortunately we had not realised that to view the interior you MUST book in advance through www.hermione.com. Nevertheless it was good to see her, as well as visiting the Corderie (ropeworks) museum that we missed last time.





Back to Ile d'Aix and St Denis

26th June

For Dairne and I, a lazy day was called for so we just rested aboard. Sue went off on her own to explore the town. I tried to get more weather information, but although the wifi gave a strong signal, there was a clear lack of bandwidth. My guess is that too many people were listening to World Cup on the Internet! The result was that the wifi was almost unusable.

It was so hot that we decided to leave on that evening's lock at 1745, go down the river for an hour and use one of the yacht club moorings overnight. The cooling breeze as we motored down the river was very welcome. The vedette returning to Rochefort from Ile d'Aix create a huge amount of wash. Apart from that there was little traffic. As expected, we found an empty buoy for the night.



Ariadne with sunshade



vedette



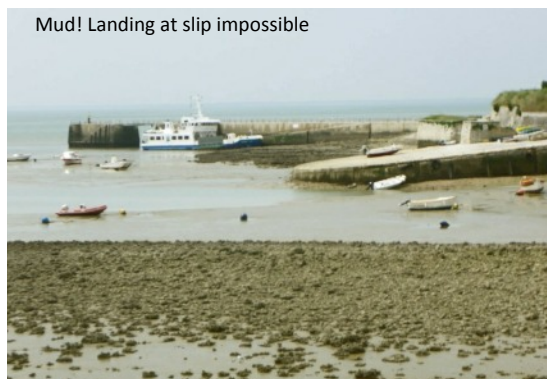
Oyster skiff



27th June

At 0745, I set off motoring down river with the ebb stream, leaving the girls asleep. On the way we saw one of the oyster skiffs that are quite common in these parts. Flat, bottomed, aluminium and with a big outboard, they zoom out to the oyster beds at great speed. But one must wonder about the fuel efficiency!

By 0920, we were on a buoy off the south end of Ile d'Aix. It is an island we had



Mud! Landing at slip impossible

passed but never visited. This was an ideal opportunity because we had to wait for water into St Denis d'Oleron. There was a freshening NW breeze forecast, so we were well sheltered. The dinghy was inflated and we went ashore. It turned out to be difficult to land because the tide was very low; the end of the slipway was high and dry across soft mud, so we had to go round behind the vedette pier where we found a steep shingle beach. We were able to pass this information on to *Mojito*, who had arrived and picked up the buoy next to ours.



Ariadne anchored off Ile d'Aix

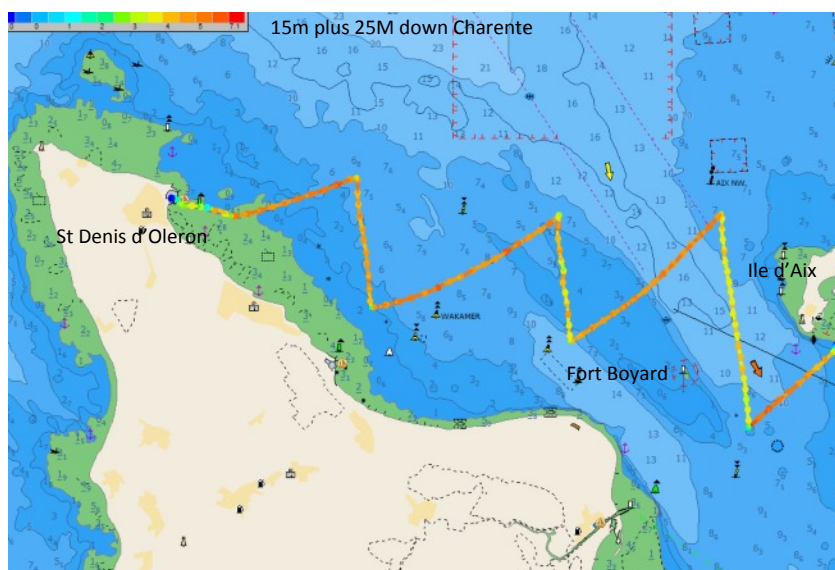
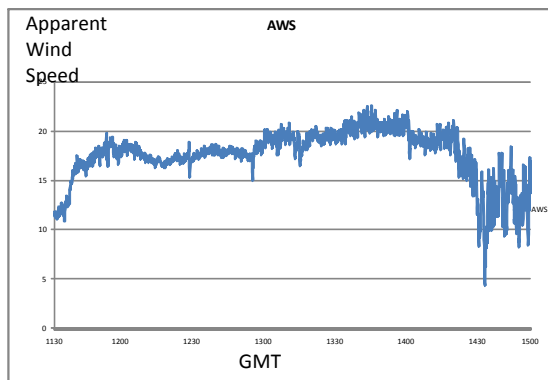


This fascinating island reeks history the moment you step ashore. Napoleon visited in 1808 and ordered new fortifications to be built. Many were designed by Vauban. The strategic importance is that the island guards the entrance to the Charente, the gateway to Rochefort which was the marine arsenal of revolutionary France. Coupled with Fort d'Enz and Fort Boyard, the whole width of the bay was within cannon shot. In 1809, Captain Thomas Cochrane led a British fireship attack against a powerful squadron of French ships anchored in the Basque Roads. In the attack all but two of the French ships were driven ashore. The subsequent engagement lasted three days but failed to destroy the French fleet.



After Waterloo, Napoleon came to the island before surrendering to HMS Belleophon.

We absorbed the atmosphere sitting in the sun. There is a lot more of the



island we did not see. Another visit would be worthwhile. Then in the brisk breeze, we had a beat against the tide. The sailing was brisk, but in flat water so it was most enjoyable. We were in St Denis by 1740.



St Denis to St Martin

29th -30th June

In the morning we all spent an hour at the market before getting back on board for lunch. We had wanted Sue to see Rochefort, St Denis and St Martin, and her week with us was going all too quickly. So at 1710, we left St Denis and had a sparkling reach as far as the Re bridge where the wind veered as it



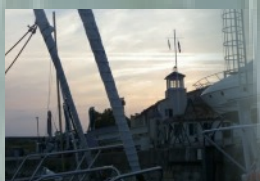
funnelled down the Pertuis Breton, and it was a fairly rugged beat - but the wind was so warm it was still pleasant.

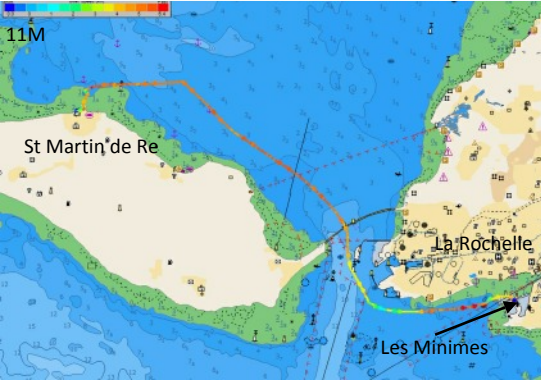
St Martin de Re was its usual chaotic self.

During the morning we had to move 3 times to shuffle into the right place. The harbour only works if everybody does exactly what M Garnier, the harbour master demands. He looks a bit like Simon Rattle, and he waves his arms as if he was conducting an orchestra. Watching the evolutions is part of the entertainment.



We had most of the 30th there, and Sue bought herself a very chic French dress with a low décolletage! After a slow quayside cafe lunch we left at 1710 for La Rochelle.





La Rochelle

30th June -1st July

Sue had seemed to attract good sailing winds. Twice we had had to beat, but in warm winds with flat water. Now we had a 1 reef run, gybing once clear of Ile de Re, to the Re Bridge, followed by a straightforward reach to Les Minimes where we made fast on the Accueil berth, though not without difficulty. The wind was blowing hard beam on to the berth through the marina entrance. I got the approach wrong and it took a lot of effort to get to a comfortable position

with adequate fendering.

Sue and I walked the length of the pontoon to the capitainerie to pay for the night. She was amazed at the evidence of damage still visible 6 months after "La tempete Xynthia" had struck. The display panel on the right gives only a slight impression of what that night must have been like.

Earl next morning we took the electric vedette to the Vieux Port at La Rochelle.



There we meandered through the old town, pausing in the shade of a pavement cafe, looking at a few of the shops, and ending up at the bus station so Sue could go for her flight just after midday.



This was the only opportunity we had had to visit the town which has always had its own fascination. It was difficult to imagine



the lower part of the town seriously flooded but it had been. The recovery was remarkable.

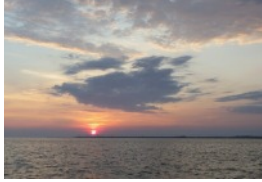
Dairne and I made our way gently back to *Ariadne* to a makeshift lunch. With a gentle NW wind, we were tempted to leave the heat of the marina. So at 1530, we dropped down the channel and had a short but gentle beat in a west by north F2

breeze and flat water, to anchor south of the Ile de Re for the night. The main channel leading marks (right) are hardly visible, although the bright lights can often be seen, even in broad daylight on a grey day.

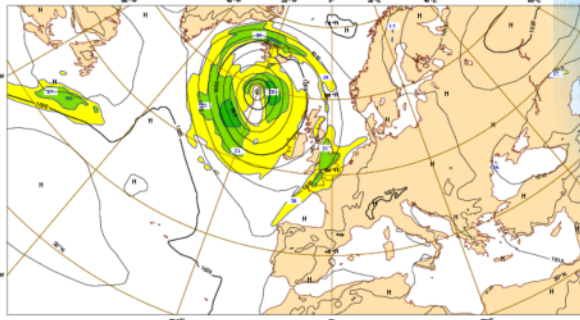


Even at anchor it was still crushingly hot, so we just lazed around, mainly in the shade of the cabin.





Friday 2 July 2010 00UTC ©ECMWF Analysis 1+000 VT: Friday 2 July 2010 00UTC
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed



Bourgenay **2nd-4th July**

Even at 0600 the temperature was 23°C, so we got under way under oily calm conditions. It was a tedious plug under engine through the bridge and running the length of the Ile de Re, passing St Martin de Re illuminated by the morning sun. We were using our electric autopilot on the Monitor self steering. We then angled slightly toward the mainland coast. By 0830 we had the Les Balineaux light off the northern end of Ile de Re abeam, and by 1100, we were alongside the visitors pontoon in Bourgenay. We later learned that all the pontoons had been replaced, and I did find some pontoon debris abandoned in car park.



Scottish storm

Compared to last year when we had had excellent weather in June, the West coast of Ireland and Scotland have already had a tough year. Now, we were anxiously texting our friends Mike and Rosemary who were hunkering down to face a F10 forecast, with a major windshift, for the area north of Ardnamurchan. We later learned that they were anchored in Arisaig, unable to move for more than 5 days.

La Course Croisiere des Ports Vendee

So we had arrived at Bourgenay and rafted up on the outside of the visitors pontoon - until the harbourmaster arranged for us to move into a finger berth. It seemed that a major event was happening at Bourgenay. Eventually some 60+ boats flying flags and wearing decals arrived. The highest number I saw was 85, but I suspect not all the fleet joined at Bourgenay.

It was a classic example of French mooring machismo. The rules seem to be

- 1: When you enter a harbour you must not display weakness by getting fenders or warps out of the locker
- 2: Under NO circumstances should you use springs (gardes) or quay lines.

Believe it or not, the boats in the banner picture at the top of the page are supposed to be moored parallel to the long pontoon behind them. Boats were rafted 7 out in great banana shaped rafts with the outer boats being at 60 degrees to the pontoon, This actually made leaving difficult, and the departure of the fleet between 0830 and 0900 on the 3rd morning was quite





exciting to watch! Why is it that, with all the wonderful sail training that the French organise so well, they are absolutely incapable of mooring boats properly?!

The fleet left to go to Les Sables d'Olonne. On Saturday they were to go to St Giles Croix de Vie: then on to Ile d'Yeu for a couple of days. All places to stay away from!

Mojito

Shortly after the fleet departed, David and Val arrive in Mojito, the Rustler 36 we had last met in St Denis. They had missed the mayhem, and now had the entire visitors' pontoon to themselves!

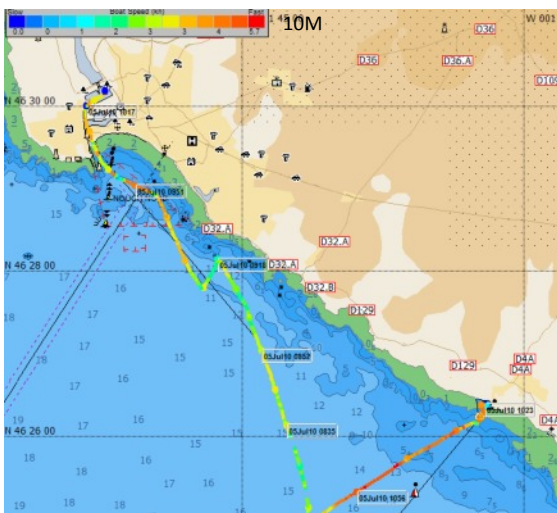
We were enjoying a few quiet days having been on the move virtually every since we had left St Martin de Re in company with *Resting Goose*.

We had briefly crossed paths with *Mojito* in St Denis, then gone our separate ways for a while. This is the kind of cruising in company we like. By keeping in touch via SMS or occasionally Skype, we can see where a slight adjustment to plans makes a meet possible. On this occasion we had an excellent lunch ashore. I had had the advantage of a couple of mornings scouting around, and had found a good boulangerie, several good restaurants, and -well out of town - the supermarket. In the course of this exploration, my opinion of Bourgenay had gone up. Our short previous visit had suggested that it was nothing more than a holiday camp. But, dig a bit deeper, and there is some quality there too.



Bourgenay to Les Sables d'Olonne

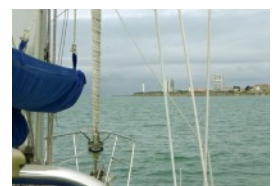
5th July - Brise Cotiere



A pattern is developing in this warm weather. Very early in the morning, there is a breeze off the land as the air cools. Then there is a calm period as the gradient wind takes over, typically from the North West as it finds its way round the huge area of high pressure in the Atlantic. Then, just before midday, the sun heats the land sufficiently to reinforce the gradient wind with a sea breeze. By 1700 hrs this is blowing at a brisk F5 from N or NW.

All jolly nice, but that wind direction is bang on the nose of where we want to go!. So we have a choice of sailing in the mornings with very little wind against the tide; or bashing to windward in the afternoons.

For that reason we crept only 6 miles along the coast to Les Sables d'Olonnes, in order to reduce the length of the passage the next day to St Giles Croix de Vie to about 15 miles. By leaving early we could get to our destination before the wind is too brisk. Well, that was the theory.



There is still evidence of damage here from the winter storm Xynthia. But the port admin has clearly decided it will do all it can to accept visitors. After all this is an iconic sailing port for France. Nevertheless, it must have been heartbreaking to see the damage. It must have required heroic efforts to get it back together again.





On to St Gilles Croix de Vie

6th July



Pointe de Grosse Terre, St Gilles Croix de Vie

Once again we left early to avoid the strong adverse sea breeze we expected in the afternoon. After motoring out to the Petite Barge buoy, with the distinctive Grand Barge tower close by, we tried to sail, but the F1/2 wind was insufficient to drive us through the slop left over from the previous day's sea breeze.

9 miles from St Gilles, the first of the seabreeze began to appear. Almost drifting, we took a short tack out to sea then straight to St Gilles, using Malcolm Robsons safe clearing transit (as well as the plotter) to make sure we kept clear of a the foul patch south of the harbour.

The Naiad in the photo seemed to cope with the lop on the water better than we did, and this reinforced my feeling that maybe we need some new sails.



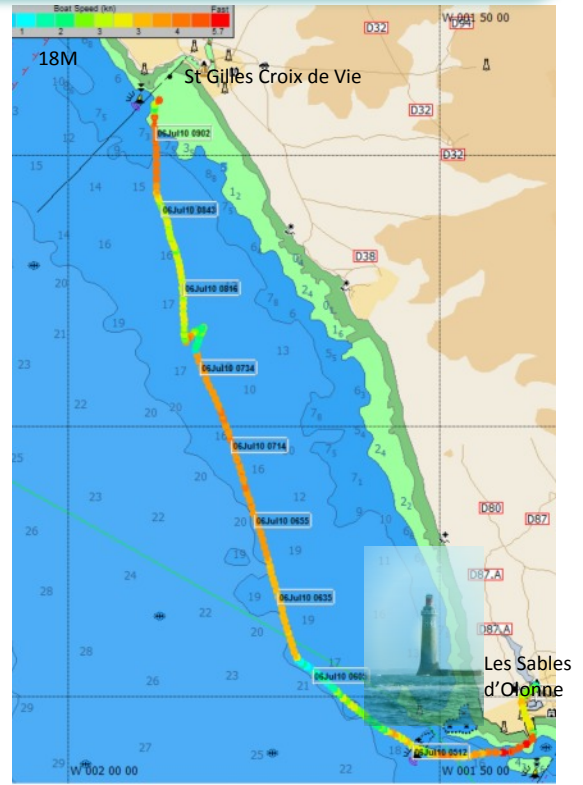
La Chaume, Les Sables d'olonne



Pte de l'Aiguille



St Gilles harbour transit



Port La Vie

St Gilles has the clearest harbour transit I have ever seen.

We were lucky, and got a berth in the Port La Vie marina. When *Mojito* arrived they had to go onto the river berth where the tidal streams can be fierce.

There is a very large market not far from the marina, and it was an excellent place to restock the boat.



In a hurry!

David and Val joined us for lunch at the marina restaurant where, as during our last visit, we enjoyed some very tasty palourdes farcies, absolutely reeking with garlic butter.



Back to Yeu

8th -9th July

We hoped that by leaving early, at 0700, the last of the overnight land breeze would help us on our way. In the event, there was insufficient wind to sail until 0930 when we were sufficiently clear of the coast.

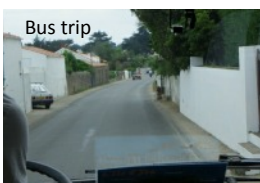
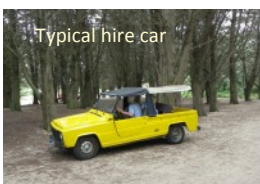
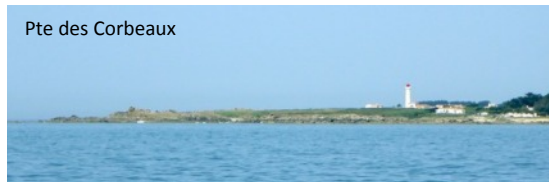
Mojito left about half an hour after us and we saw her motoring northward, straight into the breeze. They had decided to start their trip home and were making for L'Herbaudiere. We were going back to Ile d'Yeu, hoping to be better positioned for a passage across the mouth of the Loire.

The feeble breeze died altogether until the first of the new sea breeze appeared from the north at 1015. We were able to carry that breeze until we were under the lee of Ile d'Yeu, after which we motored to Baie de la Vieille where we anchored. Unfortunately, there was a slight swell working into the bay, so it was not sufficiently comfortable to stay overnight, which is what we had hoped. We wanted to avoid what promised to be a stuffy night in harbour.

This was one of those rare days when we had caught a mackerel, but only the one. It was supplemented by a tin of sardines for lunch!

After lunch, the sea breeze was more established, so we had a pleasant beat up to Joinville, where we were met by Brian Alexander, whose R42, *Captains Lady* was pausing on passage south. We had a pleasant evening on board with Brian and Dawn. The weather was close, with thunder heard in the distance. During the following day, we took a bus tour of the island, a trip we had done before, but it is an interesting place to explore.

Joinville probably has the best poissonerie on this coast. It was visited regularly!





Across the Loire

10th July

Just for one day, the wind was forecast to go into the West. This would be ideal for a reach across the Loire estuary. There would then be one more day of fairly settled weather to enable us to get round the corner to Piriac before a marked deterioration was expected. So it was disappointing to find a light north westerly that would give us a beat when we left Joinville in company with a number of other boats, mainly motoring towards Nourmoitier.

After sailing in the short lop of the sea for an hour, we gave up and motorsailed to windward, taking a long leg to the west once we were well north of Yeu. We were hoping that the wind would back into the West later.



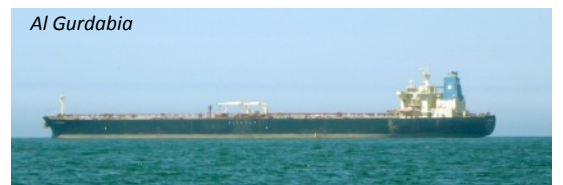
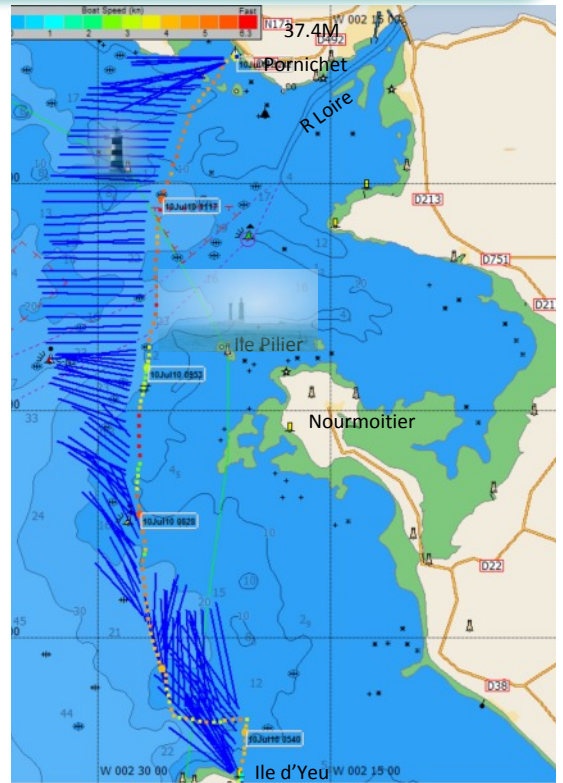
By 1100 we were motorsailing to the north, with Ile Pilier in sight through the mist. Progress was disappointingly slow. But the wind was slowly starting to back. By 1230, the sea breeze was beginning to fill in from the west, the wind probably funnelling up the Loire. This was more like it!

Gradually the sheets were freed, and the speed picked up as the wind freshened. By 1315 we were at the Les Chevaux buoy, and less than an hour later, we were across the main fairway into the Loire and passing the La Branche tourelle at about 3 miles.

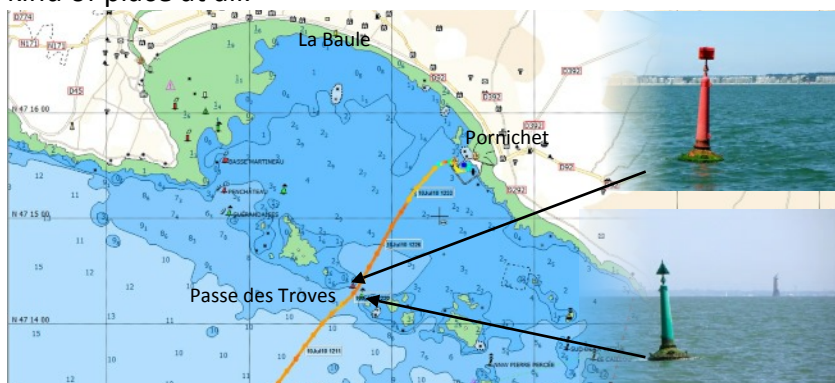
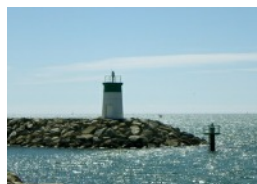
There was very little shipping about, except for the moored tanker *Al Gurdabia*, and a few fishing vessels.

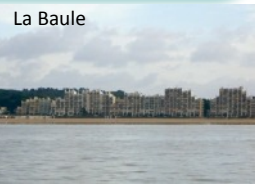
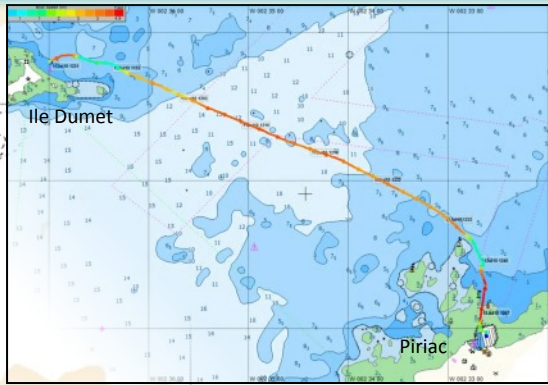
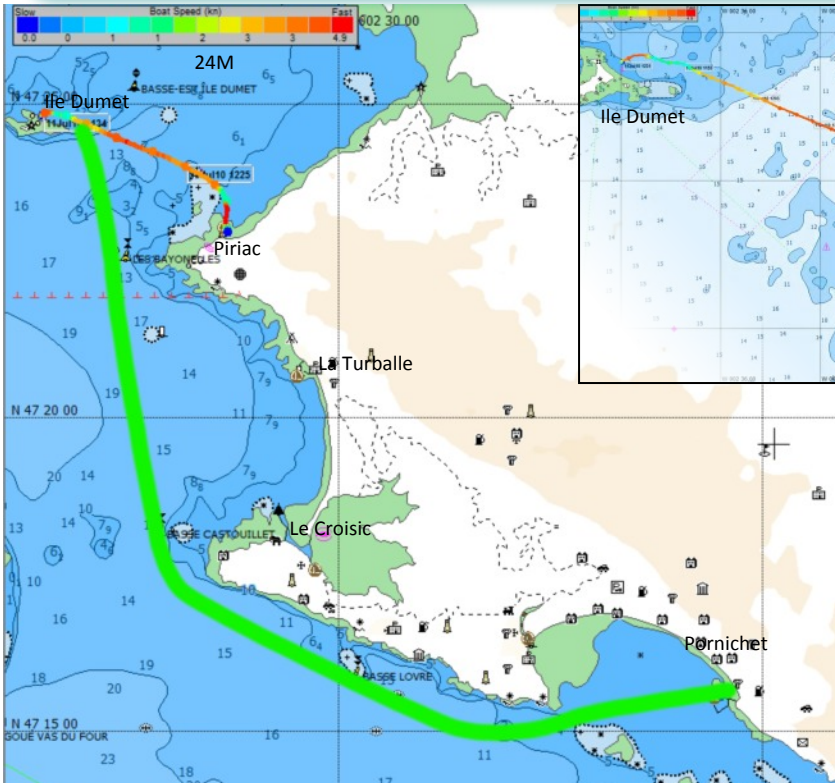
We found our way through the line of rocks that shelters La Baule and Pornichet via the Passes des Troves. By 1545 we were alongside in Pornichet.

It is a huge marina, a long walk to the capitainerie, and at least another mile to the town. More than Dairne wanted to tackle, so we stayed on board, dug out the Remoska and had a good meal. In any case Pornichet, seen in the banner at the top, is a huge concrete jungle, rather like Benidorm with boats. Not our kind of place at all.



Pornichet seen behind its protective fringe of rock, viewed approaching Passe des Troves





On to Piriac

Sunday 11th July

This was the day when I forgot to turn on the track recorder - hence the thick green line.

A civilised 9 am start in the hope of some breeze was not rewarded. We had to motor past La Baule, but managed to drift slowly along the shore past the Le Croisic

shore until the tide started to go foul. 30 minutes motoring got us round Pte de Croisic when we could again drift slowly past La Turballe goosewinged.

There would be insufficient water to get into Piriac, so we opted for a lunch stop at Ile Dumet which we reached at 1320.

As it was a weekend, and with the wind in WSW, the bay was

Plateau du Four was visible to SW off pte du Croisic

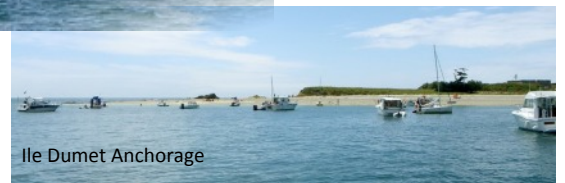


sheltered and there were numerous French boats there.



Approaching Ile Dumet

There was still very little wind, so we weighed at 1445 and trickled on a gentle breeze the 3½ miles to Piriac. Out of interest, we were able to identify Robson's leading marks, though the channel is sufficiently well marked with balises.



Ile Dumet Anchorage

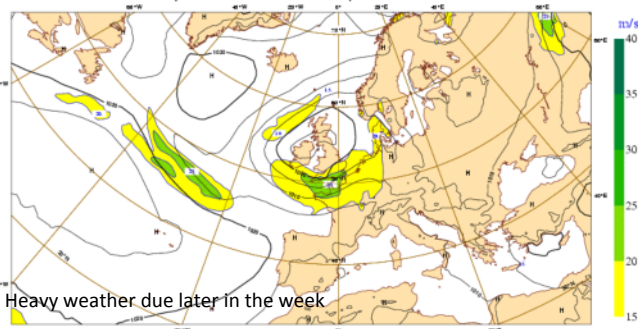
Piriac has a half tide sill that is lowered as soon as it is covered, giving a wide entry window across the top of the tide.

The weather was set to go downhill later in the week (right), so we were pleased to be in one of our favourite ports.

Robsons leading marks for Piriac



Friday 9 July 2010 00UTC ©ECMWF Forecast t+144 VT: Thursday 15 July 2010 00UTC
Surface: Mean sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed



Heavy weather due later in the week



Piriac

12th-16th July

Having got to Piriac, that wonderful town of flowers, we enjoyed a few days rest while the weather went badly downhill. The night we arrived, we expected a 'grand frais' (i.e. force 7), with some rain too. Bastille day fireworks in Piriac were postponed till Sunday because of the forecast.

However, we had been getting along quite well so far so a few days rest was welcome.



Piriac market is one of the best, though it seems that even the French are having to come into line with EU standards. Open fish stalls in the street are giving way to large market halls where fresh water and good hygiene can be easily maintained. The first one we had seen was at La Turballe, and the one at Piriac can be seen in the collage above.



It is a gentle lifestyle, with a good boulangerie and tabac (for the newspaper Ouest France) both close to the marina. A gentle stroll through the village to the market for Moules, Crab, Crevettes, beautiful white fish, fresh vegetables, and the occasional 'naughty but nice' patisserie. Now and again, we would stop at a pavement cafe and watch the world go by.

Over the next couple of days we could watch the grey sea outside the harbour. Very few boats went out. It was rough, but it must have been wild to the west. The whole gulf of Quiberon is just a gigantic playpen for yachts, with Presqu'il de Quiberon acting as a breakwater against the Atlantic swell



On the 15th the forecast for Yeu and Rochebonne was " W/SW 5/6 (7 at first) → S/SW 5/7 (occasionally 8) in NW. Severe gusts. V rough at times, sea high in W with cross sea . Rain → showers → Thundery"



On the VHF we heard Cross Corsen attending to a number of yachts in distress, including one that stranded in the entrance to the Morbihan. Later we learned that this was our friend Roy Dowman and his boat *Aswas*. Fortunately, no one was hurt and the damage to the boat was superficial. But *Aswas*, which is a Westerly Fulmar, was hauled out at Port Navalo for a good check over. Derek Ide, single handed in his Fulmar, *Fearless* met up with Roy and gave him much needed encouragement. As I

pointed out to Roy, I have clobbered Brehat and called out RNLI twice, so the score is still 3-1 to me! He indicated that he intended to keep it that way! Roy ran out of time, and set off back towards Lorient the day before we headed over to Morbihan, where we eventually linked up with Derek.

Meanwhile we heard from David and Val (*Mojito*) that they had met *Jessamy* and *Wild Swan*, both also R36 yachts with good friends on board. *Jessamy* would also have headed west before we got into Morbihan, and *Wild Swan* was due to return to her mooring in Vannes, which *Mojito* was also due to visit. Had it not been for the extreme weather we could have had quite a combined rally!

The weather started to moderate a little by the 16th, which was sunny, but still blowing fairly hard from the wrong direction for us. On one day the tides were huge, reaching to only $\frac{3}{4}$ metre below the quay level - the passarelle was horizontal

We had been in Piriac for almost a week, and thoroughly enjoyed our stay.



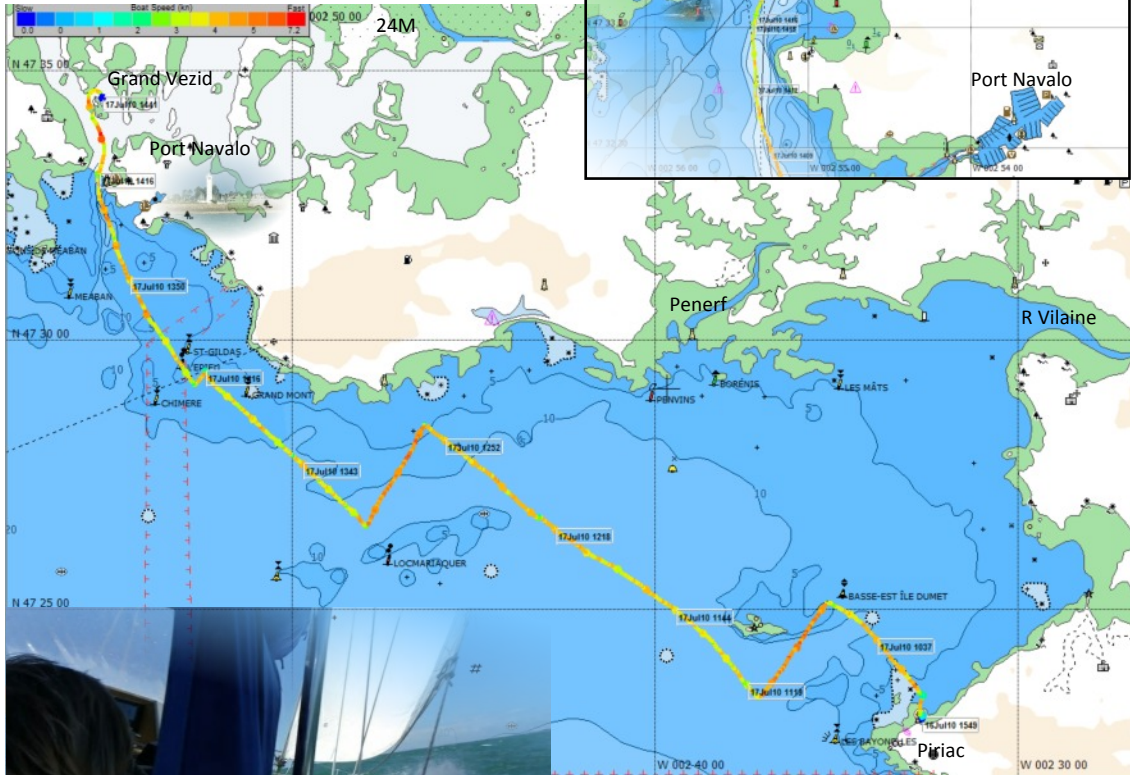
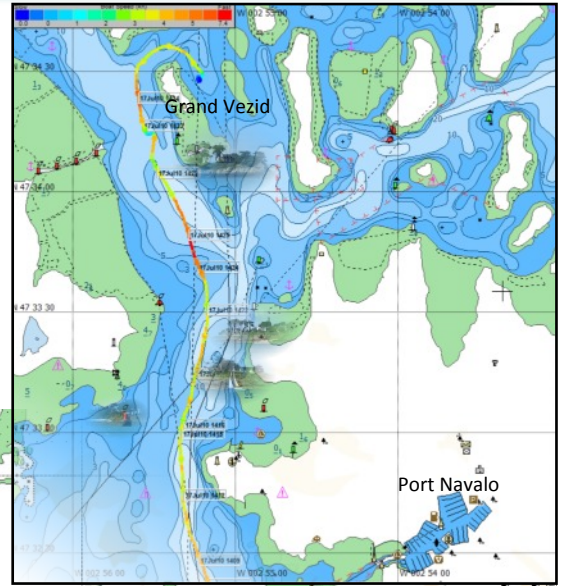


Into Morbihan

17th July to Grand Veziid

After nearly a week in Piriac, mainly due to adverse weather, we were suffering from harbour rot. But, it was a gloriously sunny day; and the Quiberon peninsular isolated us from the Atlantic swell. So a beat of 20 miles did not seem too daunting. It was a sparkling afternoon sail. It is pleasant to be warm when beating!

In preparation for navigating within Morbihan, we were also



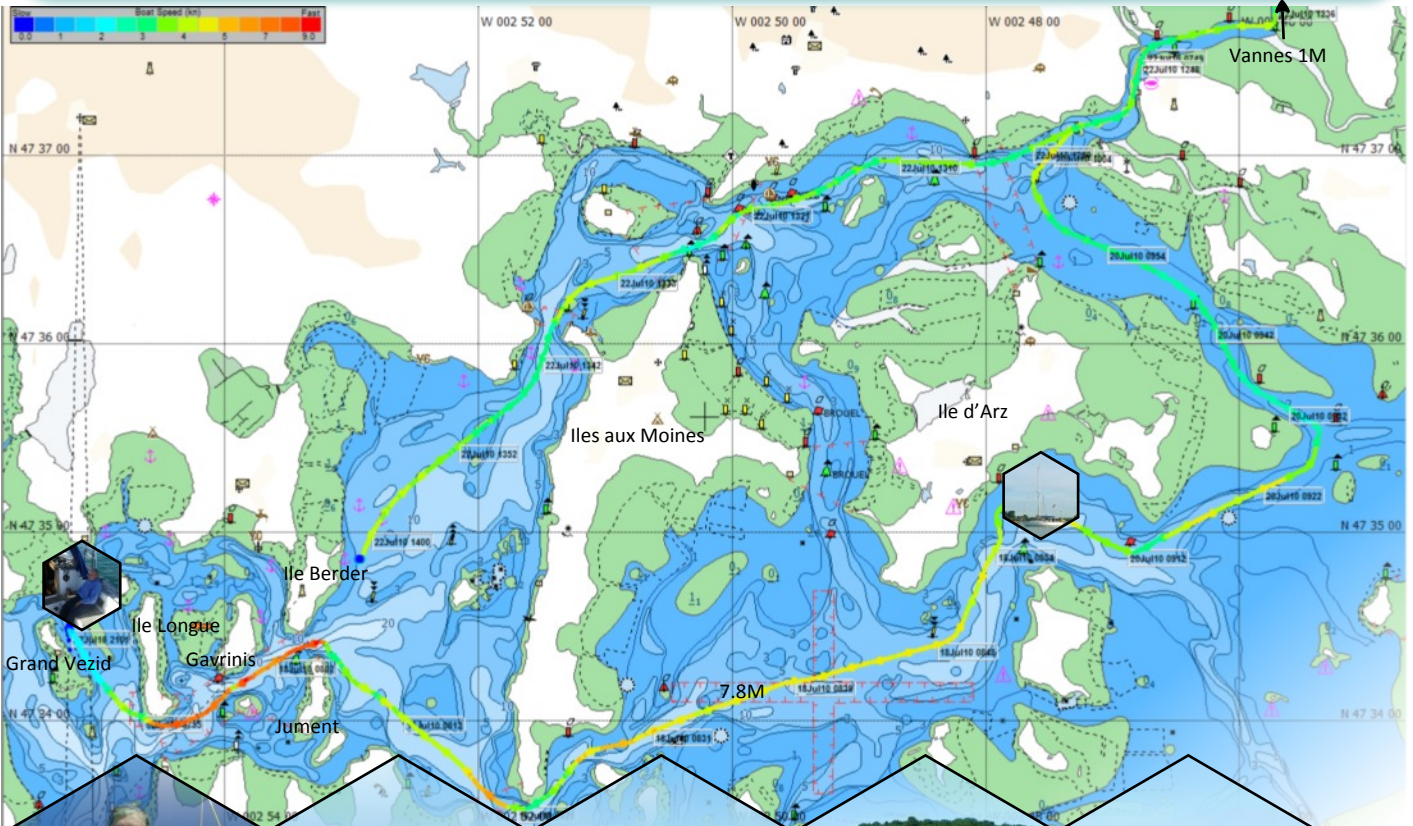
experimenting with using the Netbook as a cockpit plotter. Our little Samsung had such good battery life that we did not need to arrange a power supply; and by using a usb 'dongle' to



provide GPS input, and our chart cartridges, the only thing we were missing was AIS data, which for such close in pilotage is unimportant.

After passing south of Ile Dumet to avoid a buoyed restricted area, we reefed as the breeze freshened, and in two tacks had almost laid into Morbihan, except for a final short hitch to clear the reef between L'Epieu and St Gildas buoys. Thereafter we could free the sheets and get the boat going fast. This was just as well as we were a bit early and still had 2 kts against us in the entrance. We were creaming along at 6½ kts through the water, so all was well.

The tides are fierce in many places in the Morbihan, but we had been shown a peaceful anchorage just inside the entrance behind Grand Veziid island, where there is shelter from the wind; just sufficient water with good holding; and very benign tidal streams. We regard this almost as our private anchorage, and there were only 2 boats there when we arrived. And they both left before dusk (although a couple more arrived for the night). Very peaceful.



18th July

It was the first time that we had departed from 'our' anchorage behind Grand Vezid to the south. Once the bow pushed south of Ile Longue, the flooding tide grabbed us and we were soon doing 9kts SOG. There were great swirls on the water near Jument as we headed towards the Southern tip of Ile aux Moines. A sharp turn to port and then we headed across the shallows till we



were past the l'Ouef shoal (see banner at top of page). By midday we were anchored south east of Ile d'Arz, where we had arranged to meet *Mojito*, who had been up to Vannes. For us this was a new anchorage.



Mojito arrived and anchored nearby. David and Val had used this anchorage before and gave us useful tips on where to land, and where the shops were.



Ile d'Arz

19th July

I went ashore to explore the village, and find the boulangerie. Following David's guidance, I wandered through the trees near the beach, past the village pump, and then past the church to the centre of the village. But this is a remote, sleepy island, and not a lot was open at first. So I went for a stroll to find out the lay of the land.



Ile d'Arz is narrow, so it is quite easy to walk across and get good views across to the mainland.



There are some fascinating archaeological sites on the island, but they involved a lot of walking. So when Dairne came ashore with me later in the morning, we concentrated on getting to the village and seeing the key things. We had a good lunch ashore in a garden restaurant before going back on board to relax for the rest of the day.



Mojito had left once the tide was away to start their trip west towards Ushant.



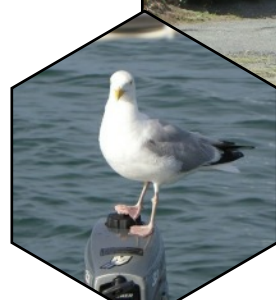
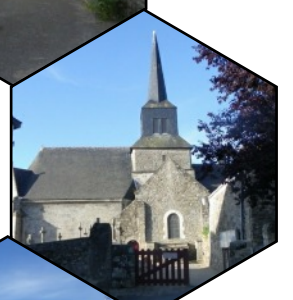
We had had very poor wifi at Piriac (our sole criticism of the port), but needed good quality signal to sort out a major restructuring of the Rustler website that I had set up on the Ning platform. It was for that reason that I was keen to go up to Vannes, where I was sure there would be good Internet access by one means or another.



Ile d'Arz is slightly off the 'main road' through Morbihan to Vannes. Its sleepiness is one of its main attractions. It certainly seemed to us to be a delightful place. 'Gentle' might be the word to describe it best.



However, one does have to be careful because the whole eastern part of Morbihan is quite shallow, so some time was spent plotting the track to be used the following day as we went round the north of the island to work our way up to Vannes.





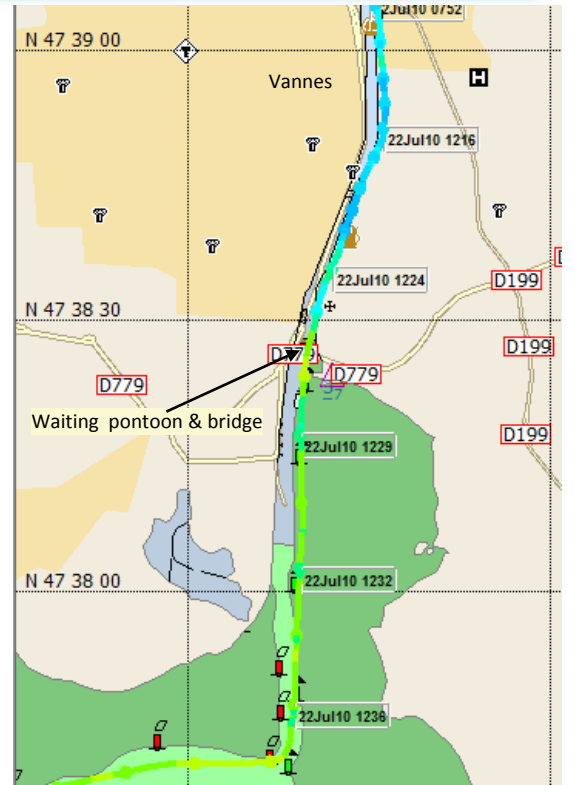
Vannes

20th - 21st July

It was late morning when there was sufficient water to make our way over the shallows to the north of Ile d'Arz (see chart for 18th July) and then swing round into the narrow channel up to Vannes. We were there early so had to join other yachts on the waiting pontoon. Eventually, the bridge opened and we proceeded to our allocated berth, only to find another boat had taken it. After a while we were re-allocated a berth much nearer the town which saved Dairne a lot of walking.

During that day I managed to fix the problems with the Rustler website

We had hoped we would meet up with Roddy and Claudine, also Rustler owners. So we were delighted when they came on board and then invited us to lunch the next day at their flat right next to the marina.



'Lunch' started in a bar with a 'pression' at 1130, and then proceeded at their flat with an hors d'oeuvres of prawns, followed by a huge platter of langoustines, and a couple of spider crabs.

Then came Lieu Jaune, followed by cheese, then strawberries dowsed in cream. Claudine is an excellent cook, and she had carefully chosen wines to suit each course. We got back aboard at 1930

It was quite an experience!





Vannes Canal



Vannes Canal

Ile Berder

22nd July

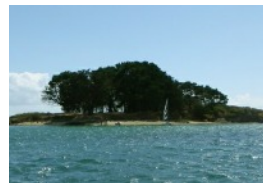
By text we had arranged to link up with Derek Ide, who was cruising single handed in his Fulmar called *Fearless*. Following his recommendation we dropped down the canal from Vannes and passed north of Ile aux Moines to an anchorage of Ile Berder. There was a strong wind, but the falling tide assisted.

Once again we had the PC chart plotter on the hatch which made pilotage straightforward.

There are so many islands that it would be easy to get lost!



The roadbridge



Iles Logoden



Fearless



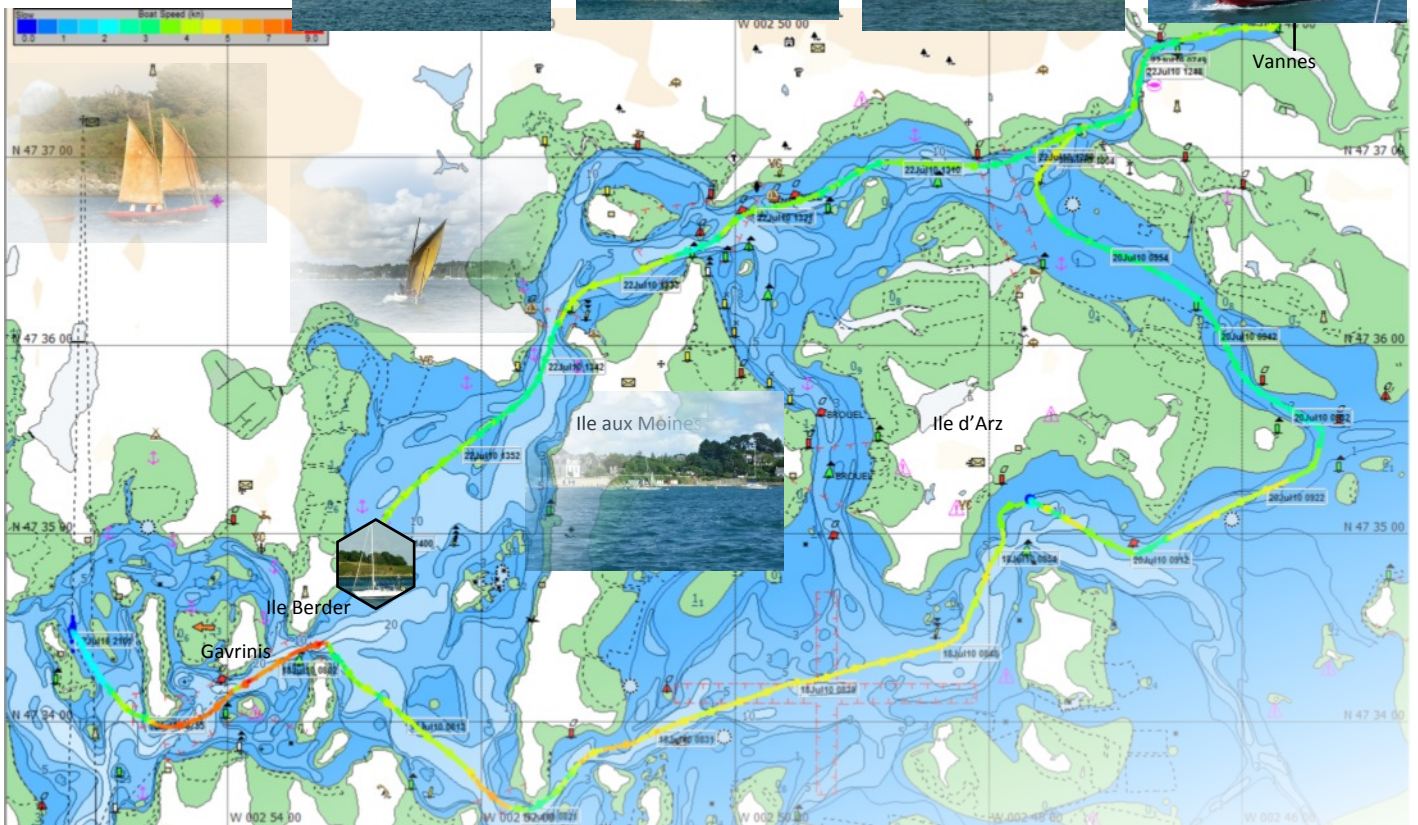
Ariadne



Truie d'Arradon



Locmiquel





The anchorage was close to the point in Morbihan with the strongest currents, but seemed to be slightly to one side of the stream. Already at the anchorage was *Festina Lente*, a Sigma 38 that had just completed an Atlantic Triangle, with Philip and Lynda Meakins on board. Derek had met them before. So it was quite a jolly party in *Ariadne's* saloon.

Derek, Phillip and I decided to go for a walk round the island. Ile Berder is privately owned, but the public are invited to land. To the south, the views are of narrow channels with fast flowing currents, while to the north there is a low tide causeway to the nearby village of Lamor Baden. It is pleasant walking through pinewoods. There is even a chapel on the island.



Festina Lente



Lynda had some kind of infection, so she and Philip retreated to their boat, while Derek joined us for supper on board *Ariadne*. This was another part of Morbihan that we had not seen before, and another excellent anchorage.



To Penerf

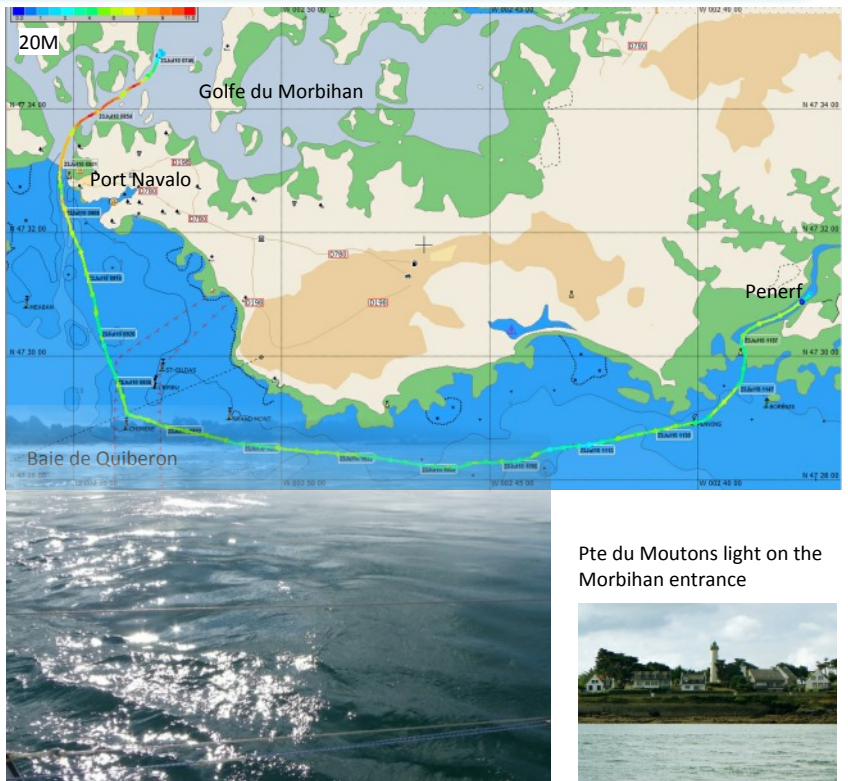
23 July

Fearless was still headed south, and I had never visited Penerf, so we agreed to sail there in company.

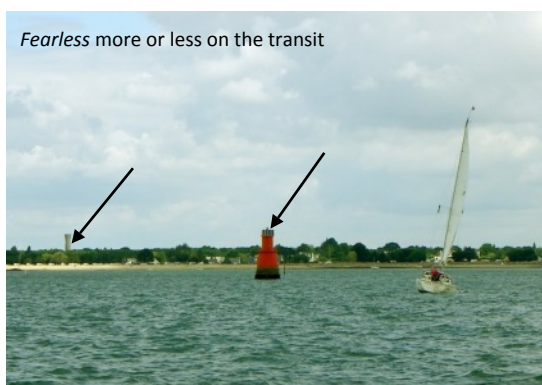
There was a mass of weed on the first 10 metres of the anchor chain when we weighed mid morning. By then the tide was well away and as we nosed into the stream we were almost flung out of the Morbihan with SOG exceeding 10kts for a short while.



Once outside, we found a NE 3/4 breeze that gave a broad reach to clear the Morbihan, then a gybe onto port tack as we followed the coast along towards Penerf. With the coast blocking the breeze both boats motorsailed for a while, but as we hardened up toward Penerf we were able to sail again until we identified the oddly named Tour Anglais. Then, rolling headsails, we followed *Fearless* along the tricky transit.



Pte du Moutons light on the Morbihan entrance



It is a long channel up to the town. Only one mooring was free, which we picked up, and *Fearless* came alongside (a couple). But after lunch, the tide turned, and the wind against the strong outgoing stream made rafting the boats unsafe. So Derek dropped away and found another empty buoy a quarter of a mile up river.

The whole area is low lying, with little shelter from the breeze that had now freshened considerably. We opted to wait till the next day to explore the village





Penerf

24th July

There is not a lot of Penerf, but we all went ashore for a stroll round. We found a poissonerie where we bought some mussels and Derek selected the oysters.

Then we strolled round the village. It really is a very sleepy place, and this side of the Morbihan, known as Presqu'il de Rhuys, is very much out of the way. Fishing and holiday homes seem to be its future.

A lazy coffee at the bistreau (where one could also buy some bread and the paper) before we looked in at the church, then went back aboard *Ariadne*.

It was moules for lunch and oysters for supper, followed by a spag bog. In addition to the oysters, Derek provided some bubbly . A jolly evening!

Derek had moved again to an empty buoy just ahead of *Ariadne*, so it was not too far to row.

We had enjoyed a few days in company. Derek wanted to go on to Piriac, the next day, whereas we had decided to attempt a trip to Houat.



Left: Fearless ahead of *Ariadne*



Below: Derek played taxi



Left: Poissonerie



Above and Right: Tiny church



Around the village





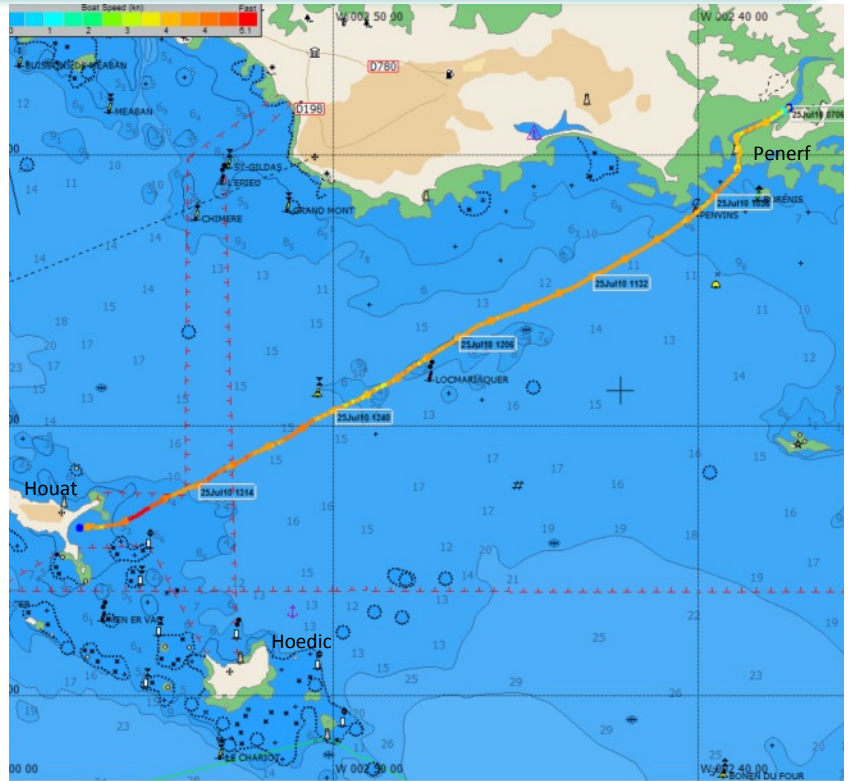
More exploring

25th -26th July

After a couple of nights in Pnerf , Derek went on to Piriac in *Fearless*, while we set out for Houat, one of the islands that form the southern barrier of the great natural playpen that is the Baie de Quiberon. The forecast was NW 3/ 4 occasionally 5. Sadly, the wind was not quite as forecast, never veering past westerly and the tide was slightly adverse. It would have been a long hard beat in the prevailing chop, even though it was sunny, so we motor sailed for 3 hours. A pity, because it was a sparkling sailing day, but the motion would have been a bit harsh on Dairne's back as the wind freshened to nearly F5.

We were not surprised to hear that *Fearless* had had a storming reach to Piriac.

We like Houat. So do the French. There were over 100 boats anchored in the bay at the eastern end of the island.





Ariadne at Houat



With the wind firmly in the west, and little chance of a vent solaire (the local land breeze that blows hard NE in the small hours) the water was flat, and it seemed as secure and anchorage as one would wish.

We spent the next morning ashore pottering about the village. It is always such a clean and fresh looking place, obviously totally dependant on holiday traffic.



Atlantis



Graham, Angela, Graham, Dairne on Ariadne

On the way back we invited Graham and Angela from a British Beneteau called *Atlantis* to join us for a happy hour in the late afternoon.



We were resting after lunch when we realised that a French

single hander that had anchored just ahead of *Atlantis* had dragged and the boats were grinding against each other. I rowed over to assist, but was not able to contribute much. Then the wretched Frenchman moved and anchored dead ahead of us. Clearly he was not using enough scope for the stiff breeze. After a lot of hand waving and shouting, he moved elsewhere.

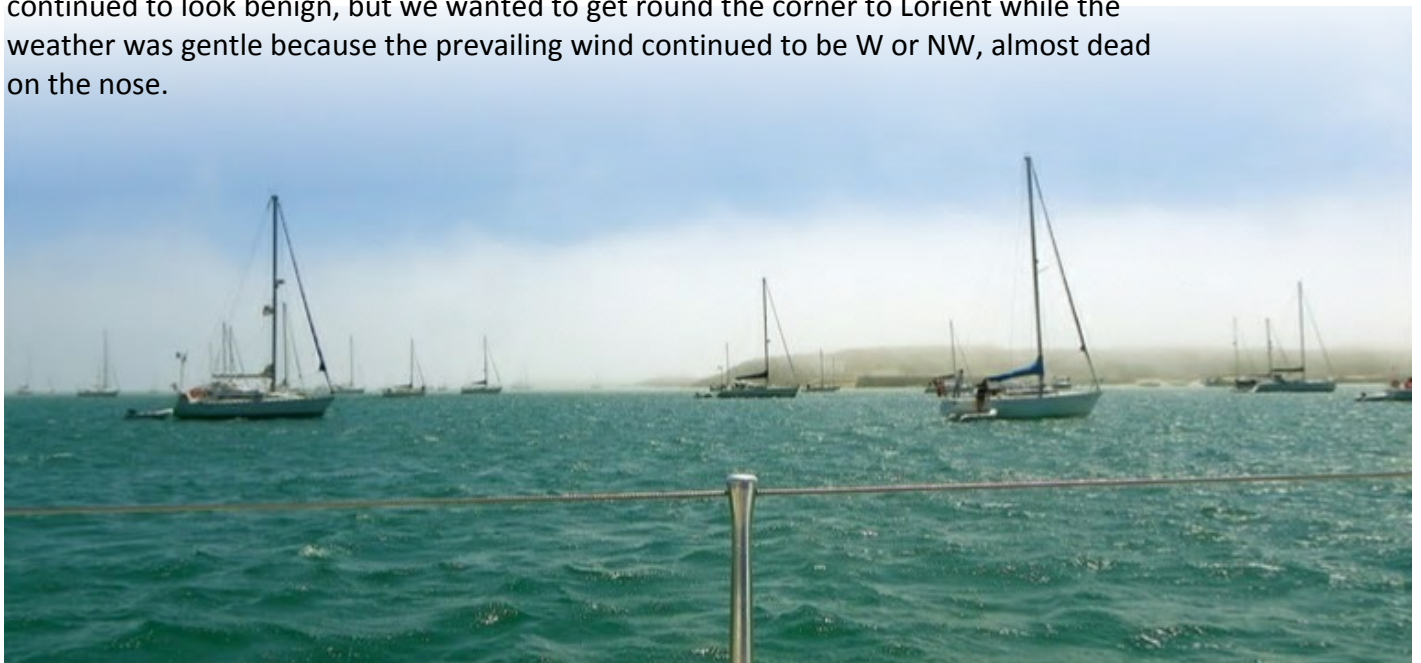


It turned out that Graham and Angela were from Sarisbury Green, not far from where we live. Graham wrote in our visitors book "Thankyou for a lovely happy hour! A most welcome drink after our 'adventure' on Houat!"



Towards the evening we could see low cloud blowing over the south end of the island.

During the night the wind moderated, and it was peace once more. The weather maps continued to look benign, but we wanted to get round the corner to Lorient while the weather was gentle because the prevailing wind continued to be W or NW, almost dead on the nose.





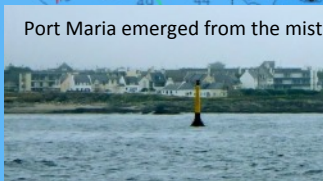
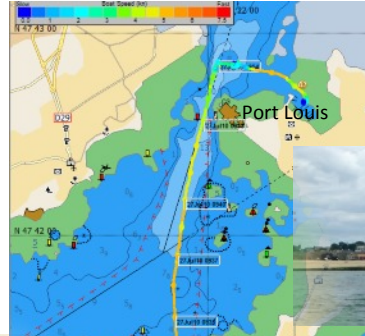
Houat to Port Louis

27th July

As we left the Houat anchorage to the north, what had started out as a pleasant morning disappeared into a bank of fog. This would be a day of navigating by electronic chart plotter, backed up by radar and, for almost the only time south of the Raz, the AIS (which kept track of the high speed vedettes charging around).



Using the Beniguet passage would have involved a big diversion, but by



keeping north of the reefs we could join the Teigneuse passage near the Basse du Millieu buoy.

After Port Maria the vis improved but there was little breeze except for the last 5 miles of the trip.

As we entered Lorient, we saw Tim Slessor sailing *Hobo*, and arranged to meet him a couple of days later



The new marina berths at Port Louis are a major improvement; the wifi, at 3€ per day is of high quality (so we can avoid the bloody cricket on radio 4 LW!). We found a cave there that was offering a very good deal on Bordeaux and Entre Deux Mers, so a dozen of each was shipped!



Tim's Place

28th-29th July

There is nothing special about Port Louis. And therein, lies its attraction. It is a low key, genuine little town. We were able to stroll around, replenish stores, and visit the boulangerie and charcuterie that we had used in previous years. It was like slipping on a favourite sweater.

Across the estuary, we could see the submarine pens that remind one of some of the history of this place, though the museum in Fort Louis is probably more important as it reflects French influence throughout the Far East. We also saw Taberly's *Pen Duick* making sail.

Tim Slessor collected us, and took us to his cottage. Quite apart from practical details like a soak in a bath, it is a beautiful, relaxing environment.

Above all, it reminds us of Janet, Tim's wife, who died of skin cancer that was not diagnosed until far too late. We cannot visit this place without feeling her presence, and we think that, in some way, the whole project has become a shrine to Janet. Even if that it is so, it is far from morbid; it remains a vibrant, and exciting place to be, which is what she would have wanted.

It is always exciting to listen to Tim's latest project. A new book, a new adventure.

The next day, Tim brought us back via Locmiquelic where we helped a friend of his change the furling headsail on his boat.

It had, once again, been a delightful interlude of intellectual stimulation, and good food; just as Janet would have wished.





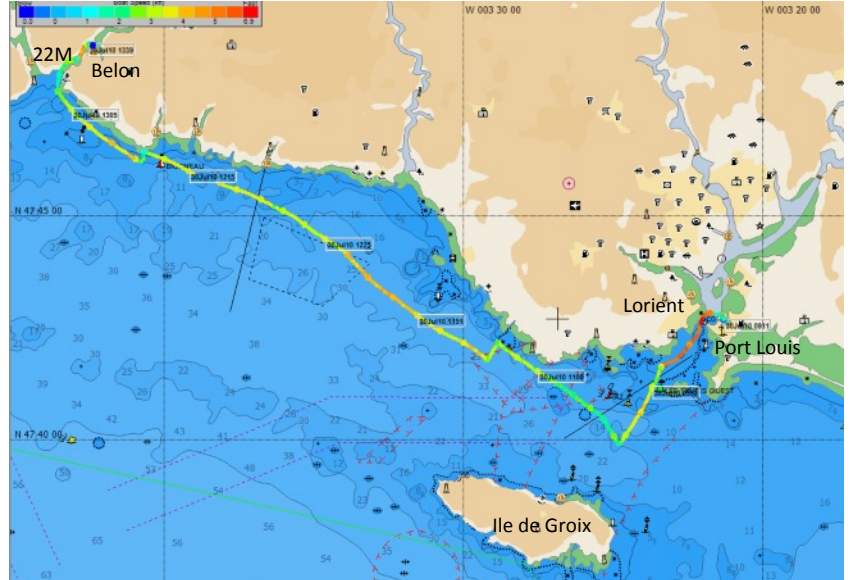
Lorient (Port Louis) to Belon

30th-31st July

Late morning was the time to leave to work the tidal stream. After motoring clear of Lorient, it was a gentle beat in flat water under grey skies.

At first the peace was disturbed by the ferries charging between Lorient and Port Tudy on Ile de Groix. Thereafter there were only a few yachts and the occasional fishing boat.

Of greater interest was 'Bases de Vitesse' that Malcom



Robson identifies in Vol 3 of his French Pilot. If you have ever wondered why those huge tourelles were built in the Iles de Glenans, or what was the purpose of the various amers (little tourelles) scattered along the coast, Robson explains.....

"The mystery of all those amers and balises we have been meeting since Iles de Glenan - obviously of no navigational use - can now be explained. They are marks for measured distances, chart H27. The nearby naval base at Lorient must have had a field day during the last century, setting up the marks, though why they didn't make it easier for calculation - whole numbers of nautical miles - we shall never know. Tidal currents here are never more than a knot and run 280°/100° fortunately. The marks are still painted regularly so you can settle that argument about your vessel's speed."



Ariadne at Belon

We were able to identify many of the marks, and photograph a few.

We passed inshore of Les Verres, a



Entrance to Belon



Packed in tight



Les Verres

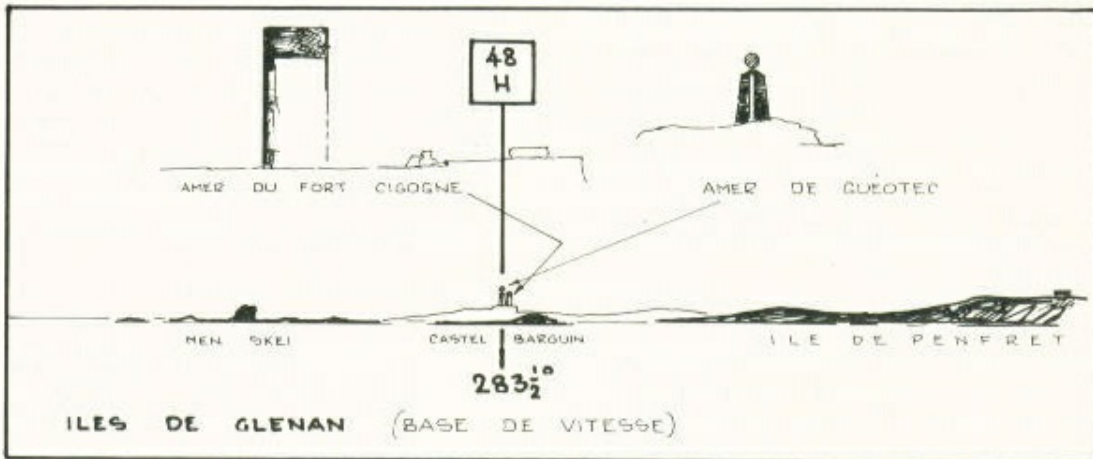
tourelle marking a reef, then worked our way into the Riviere du Belon.

By 1700 we were moored fore and aft off the village. The buoy spacing is tight for a 36 ft boat, but we managed.





Bases de Vitesse

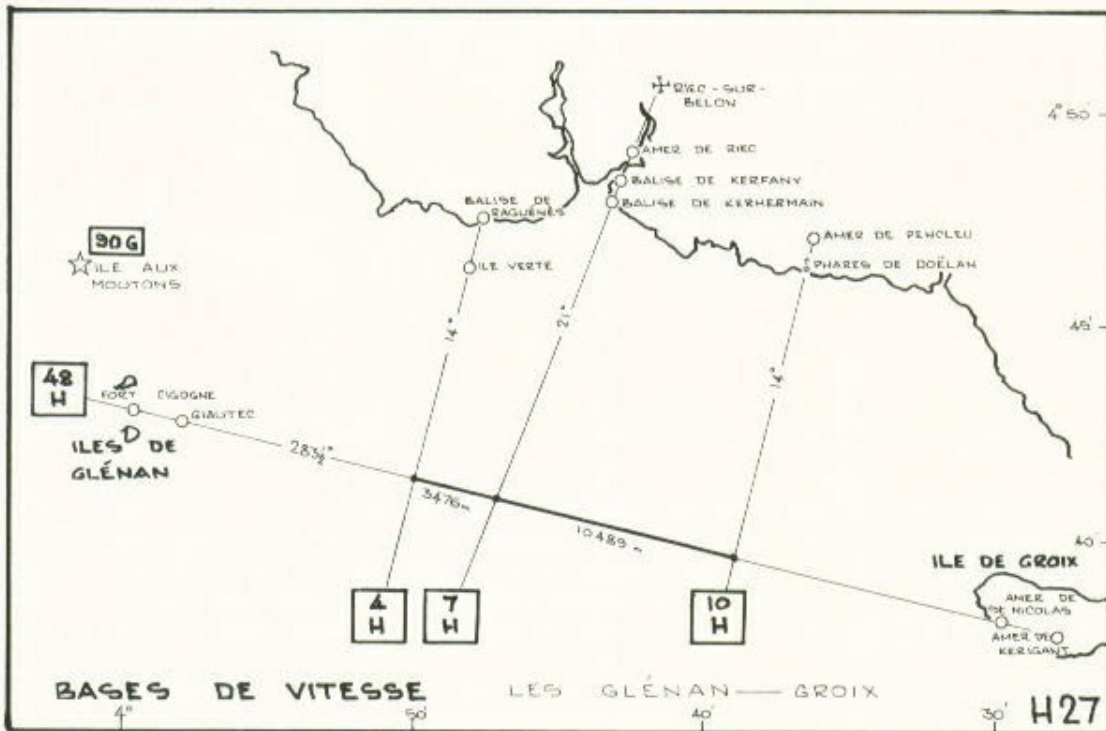


48H the *amer* of Fort Cigogne × Guéotec *amer*. Both these are in Iles de Glénan and are shown on chart G26 (p.71). Breast marks are

4H (p.83) the *balise* of Raguénès × the *amer* on Ile Verte,

7H (p.88) Riec church, *amer* of Riec, *amer* of Kerfany and *amer* of Kerhermain all in line, and

10H (p.91) *Amer* of Penclou × the two lighthouses of Doëlan.



We had a lay day in Belon . The weather was not conducive to pushing on, so we just rested.

On the day after our arrival we went ashore for a seafood lunch at the bistreau (No! Not THE very expensive fish restaurant on the other side of the river!)





Concarneau

1st -2nd August

After 2 relaxing nights in Belon, conditions were docile, so we decided to make for the Baie de la Foret. We had always used Belon as a stopover rather than Port Manech or the Aven river. The moorings at Port Manech looked interesting, so we motored over to have a look. Might be an interesting option if the tides into Belon are inconvenient.

Having made sail, we had a gentle beat along the coast, passing Pte de Raguenes and inside Ile Verte where we could see two more of the Bases du Vitesse amers identified by Robson.

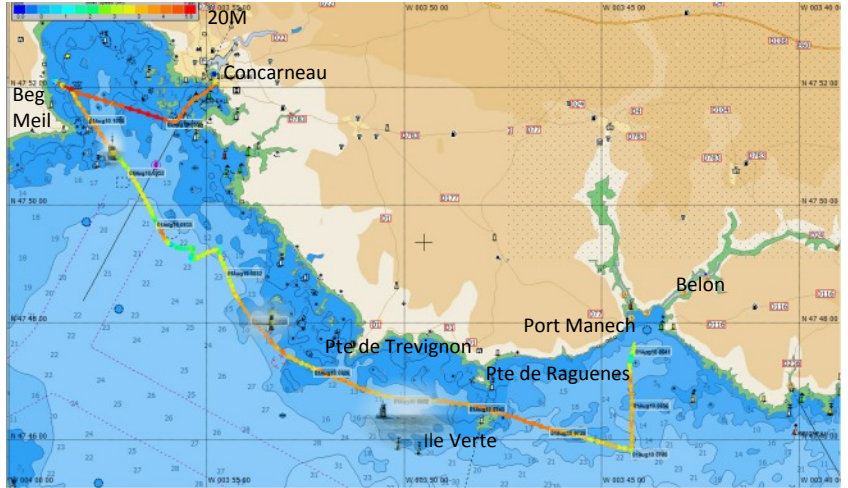
After rounding the Pte du Trevignon, the wind headed from SSW to WNW and just after the Kerreg Tangi tourelle became very shifty. We were not in a hurry, so we tacked on the shifts, until the new wind filled in from WSW giving us a fast reaching passage into Baie de la Foret.

Port Manech



Ile Verte amer

Pte de Raguenes amer



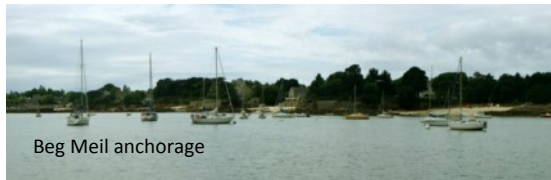
Beg Meil semaphore



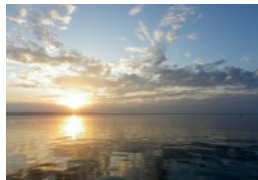
Pte du Trevignon



Pte du Trevignon



Beg Meil anchorage



It was Sunday, so nothing would be open in Concarneau, so we decided to anchor off Beg Meil for the night. It was quiet once the breeze died in the evening.

Right: strange lighthouse leading mark

Below: Main harbour transit.



Next morning, we motored across to Concarneau picking out Robson's transits, though they are hardly needed in daylight.

We were moored on the inside of the breakwater pontoon, so it was quite a walk to the market and the old walled town.

Concarneau was its usual touristy self, but we managed to restock, visit the market and the old town (where Dairne found some more Christmas presents). Now we were anticipating a bit of a downturn in the weather, so progress would be flexible for a while. But we were stocked to be away from marinas for several days if necessary.



La Medee

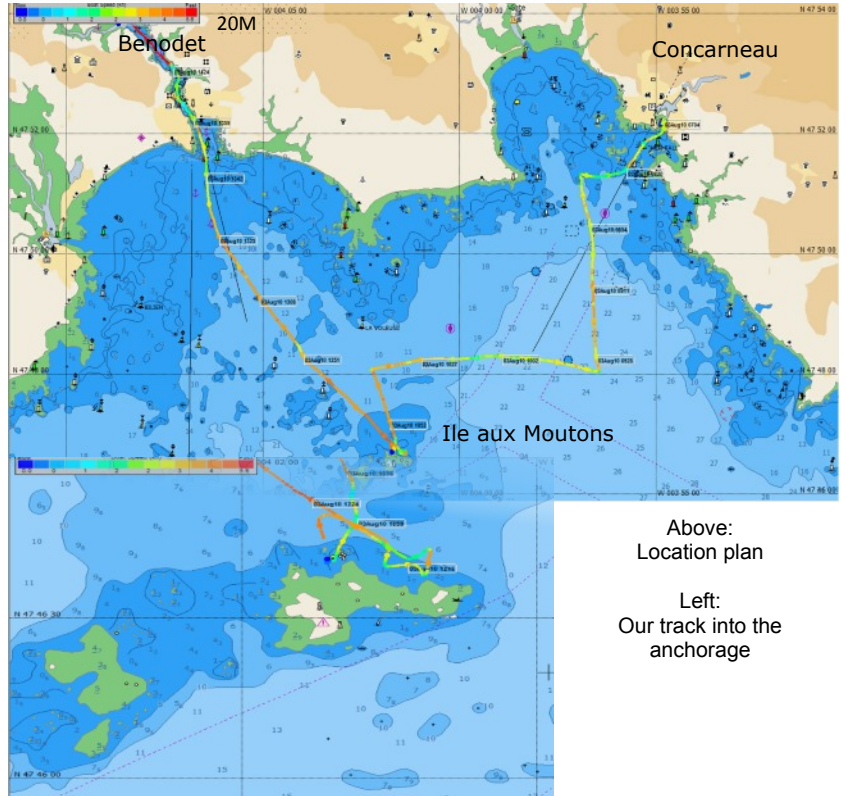


Ariadne is in the group of boats on the right

Short Visit to Ile aux Moutons

3rd August

Some years ago, we were on passage from Loctudy to Belon, passing just to the north of Ile aux Moutons, which lies NW of the Ile de Glenan. We had considered it as a passage stop for lunch, but it does not rate even a mention in the N Biscay Pilot, and even Malcolm Robson only shows a diagram of the lighthouse, with no supporting pilotage notes. So we were surprised to see that quite a substantial fleet was sheltering in the lee of the island. I noted on the chart 'local anchorage', and resolved to explore it another year. The only English Language pilot I could find that referred to the island is 'Sailing Tours Part III - Falmouth to the Loire' first published in 1894. William Cowper's



pilotage instructions can be a little bit quaint, but his descriptions of the locations he visited are memorable. Of Ile aux Moutons, he writes...

"It is a curious little settlement this. With no post, no railway, no steam boat, hardly any regular communication with the rest of the world; but yet a more jovial, jolly old fellow than the guardian of the lighthouse I never saw. The whole domain may be about an acre and a half of grass, yet on this, a cow is kept. How the poor beast lives, I do not know, for the grass, having hardly any soil was all withered and burnt up." "Imagine my astonishment when first I set foot on this dot of a rock to see a noticeboard put up 'It is forbidden to walk on the grass!' I could scarcely believe my eyes!".... "No, it was no illusion. Then I boldly invaded the grass; the innate courage of the

Briton asserted itself. Spirit of my ancestors! Would I be restrained by a board? No, not if it were the whole Board of Trade! The cow stares aghast, even the countenance of the jovial guardian blanched, but I strode on - it was not grass it was hay.

"It appears the fishermen who come here for shelter have a way of bringing their nets ashore and drying them on the grass. As this is all the cow has to live on, and since the keeper has to light his fire with the assistance of the cow, and unless the keeper has a fire he cannot cook his dinner, and unless he cooks his dinner he would find it hard to live, and as the lighthouse cannot be kept lighted without the guardian, and as many ships would be wrecked unless the lighthouse is lighted, whereby a good many lives would be lost, a great deal depends on this grass"

And it goes on in like vein (including pointing out that there are no sheep on the island).





This year, the chance to visit Ile aux Moutons arrived. We were in Concarneau, and decided that the prospect of a deterioration in the weather made our plan to visit the Iles de Glenans unattractive, so we resolved to hide up the Odet at Anse de Combrit instead. However, that was only a short passage, and with flat water and a F2 breeze we saw the opportunity for a lunch stop on the way at Ile aux Moutons.



With the wind slightly south of west, the bay on the north side ought to be protected. But as we approached we could not see any boats there, and wondered whether we had imagined the earlier observations. Then we saw one yacht, then another, and a couple of small motor boats all tucked in among the rocks, so we tacked up to the bay, dropped sail and motored in to anchor in 3m over sand and some weed.



This was close to the buoy shown on the C-Map chart (though it is white, not yellow, and is clearly there for service craft to moor). It is a delightful spot, well protected from the swell (although that was negligible when we were there). We had arrived at about 1245, and over the next hour about 20 dayboats, ribs and motorboats arrived, mainly from the direction of Benodet, so it is obviously a popular spot.



We had a relaxing lunch there and just enjoyed the scenery. Quite a lot of people had gone ashore, but we did not do so.

After lunch, we motored round to the next bay where a couple of small yachts were anchored, but the bottom there is rock and probably not good holding. There was one yacht in the bay to the SE of the island, but we did not go round there, and instead set sail on a gentle reach to the Odet.



Researching later that day, I found that Alain Rondeau in *Pilote Cotier*, the excellent French pilot book sponsored by Beneteau does give a description of both the northern and SE anchorage. His excellent photo shows the anchorage we used well occupied. The SE anchorage is also referred to in Peter Cumberland's "Secret anchorages of Brittany", it is a pity that these delightful anchorages are not better known to British yachtsmen. Approaching the northern anchorage from due north gives a clear run to the northern anchorage. And I would guess Cumberland's advice to approach the SE anchorage from "close N of Les Porceaux N cardinal buoy" is sound and sensible





Hiding in the Odet

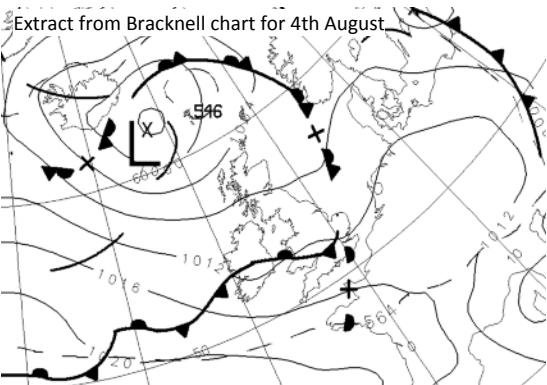
3rd-5th August

After leaving Iles aux Moutons, a gentle reach brought us into Benodet where we could pick out the numerous lighthouses and leading marks.

Once in the river, it was a matter of following the moorings until we could turn into the Anse de Combrit and anchor.

The weather map for the 4th showed that we would be under the end of an occlusion. And so it turned out, with low cloud and rain. We just sat it out.

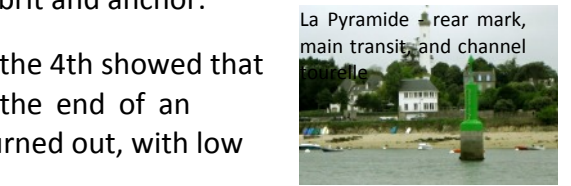
On the 5th the weather did not encourage a long passage, so we cruised up the Odet till we could see Quimper; retraced our steps, and had a gentle sail to Loctudy, where we would be well placed to go round Penmarc'h the next day.



Pte de Combrit



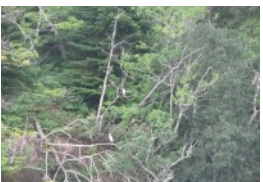
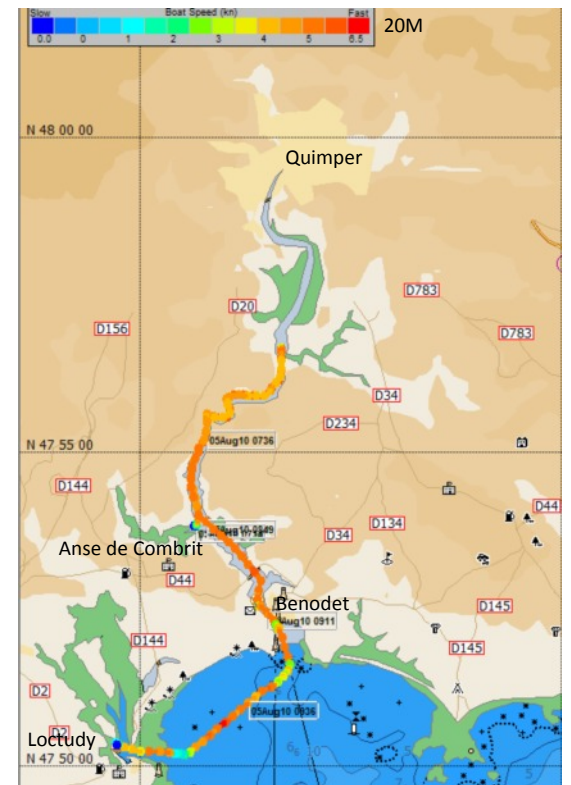
Le coq- front mark of main transit



La Pyramide rear mark, main transit, and channel



Narrow entrance to Odet marked by 2 tourelles



Perdrix, Loctudy



Loctudy



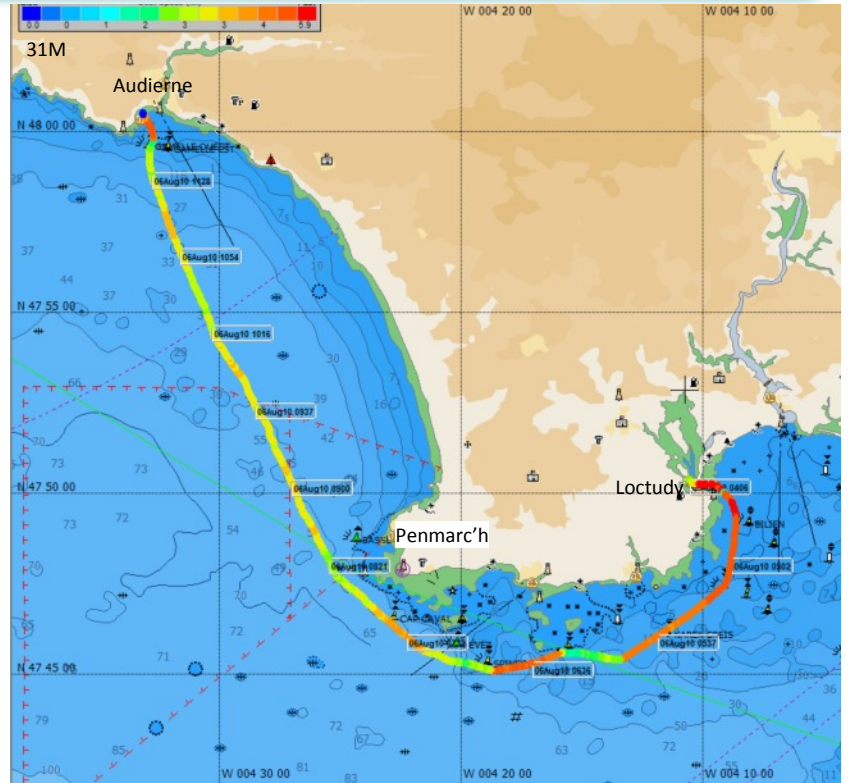
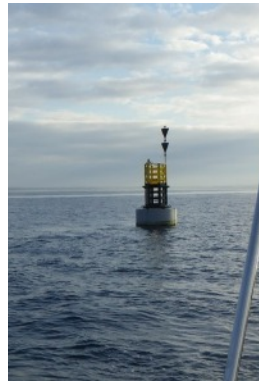
Loctudy to Audierne

6th August

It was grey, sill morning when we motored out of Loctudy at 0720.

As so often in the past, it was a long plug round Penmarc'h ticking off the buoys - Bilien, Kareg Greis, Ar Guisty, Spineg and Cap Caval.

The lighthouses of Penmarc'h seemed to walk along the coast keeping pace with us.

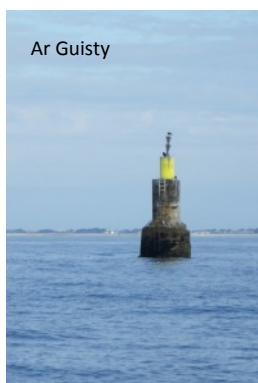
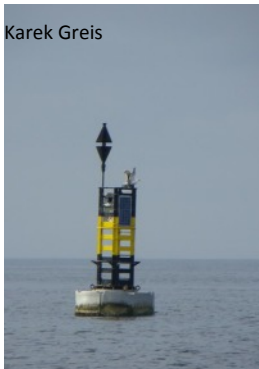


By midday we were past Cap Caval and could shut down the engine while squaring away onto a broad reach.

It was a long, slow flop across the bay .

By 1500 we were on a buoy in Audierne.

For some reason, we have never been ashore at Audierne, and this was no exception. We treat it as a passage stop. That is probably unfair on the town.





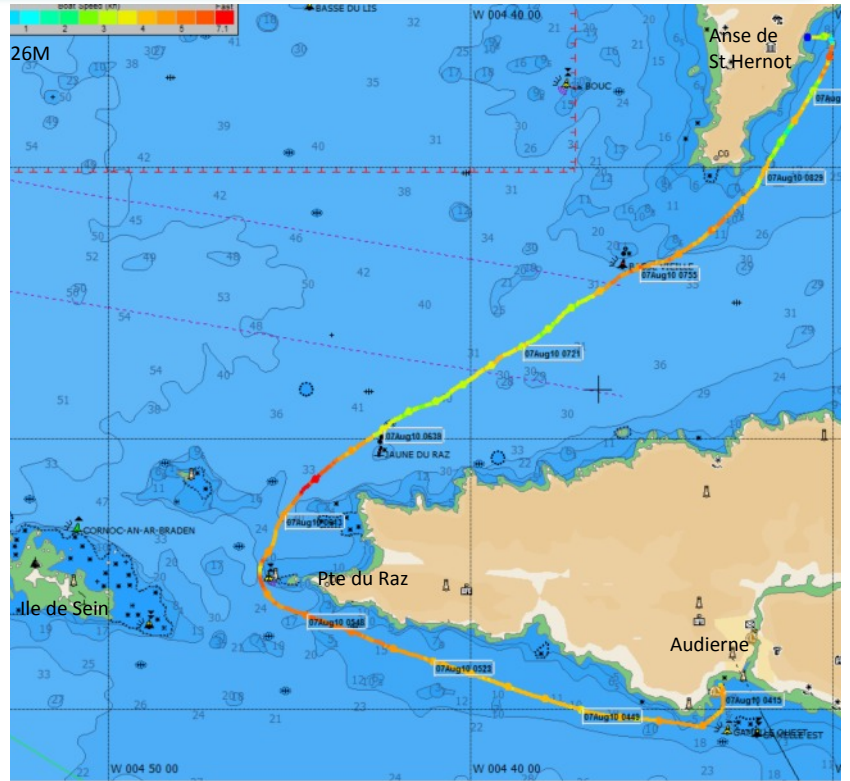
Through the Raz

7th August

I could not remember when I stopped wearing shorts – it must have been about the time we were in Port Louis. By Belon, I was wearing socks again,



Audierne lighthouse

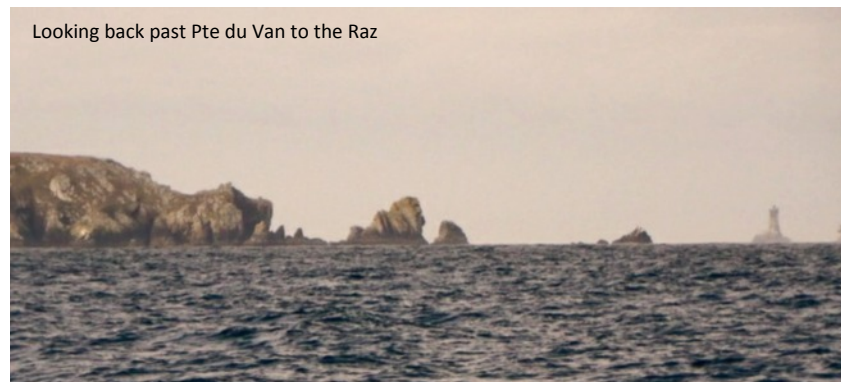


La Plate tourelle, La Vieille lighthouse, Raz de Sein

and as we approached Audierne, the fleece came out. During our cruise up the Odet, Dairne commented that the bracken was beginning to show the golden colours of Autumn.

On the way from Audierne, under engine, through the Raz de Sein, the forecast was for 'crachin' – drizzle - so waterproof trousers and boots were de rigueur. And we were not even in the Channel !

The reach from the Raz to one of our favourite anchorages in Anse de St Hernot, near Morgat, was enjoyable, with the swell disappearing as soon as we were behind Cap de la Chevre. It begins to look as if the weather is breaking down for a while, so we will probably move round to Camaret to sit it out. Hope of visiting Ile de Sein seemed to be fading.



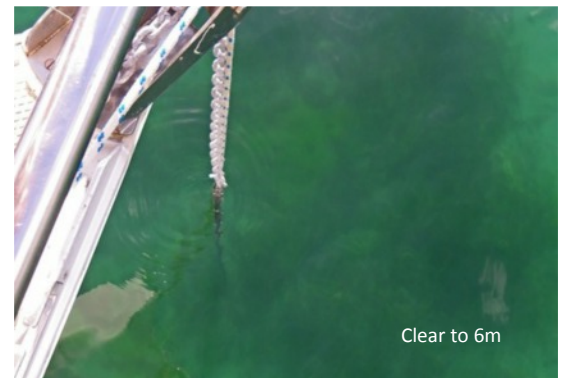
Looking back past Pte du Van to the Raz



Anse de St Hernot



Anse de St herot



Clear to 6m



Morgat

8th August

It is the hook of rock at the south end of the Anse de St Hernot, clearly visible in the Google aerial photo, that makes it such a good anchorage when winds are in the west or further north.

It is just a wee daunder along the coast to Morgat. The only interesting pilotage being to identify the rather attractive lighthouse on the cliff top.

In Morgat, we found lovely new marina pontoons. It was not the first time we had been here for my birthday, so we knew exactly which restaurant we wanted.

We started with a lovely dish of palourdes farcies, absolutely swimming in garlic



butter, followed by steak which we cooked ourselves at the table on a hot stone.

Morgat is a lovely holiday destination tucked away from the mainstream.



Not for the first time, we enjoyed our brief stay there.



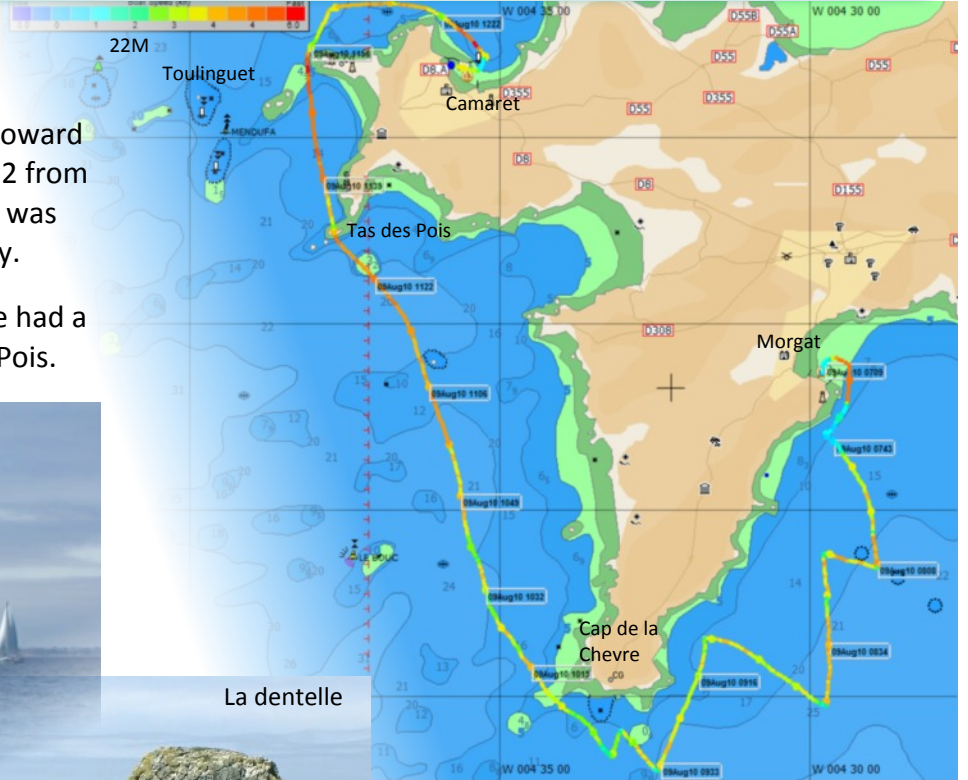


Through Tas des Pois

9th August

A gentle beat in the late morning toward Cap de la Chevre, the wind being F2 from the south. Rounding the headland was tricky because of a fierce tidal eddy.

The reward was that, thereafter we had a gentle reach toward the Tas des Pois.



Toulinguet rocks



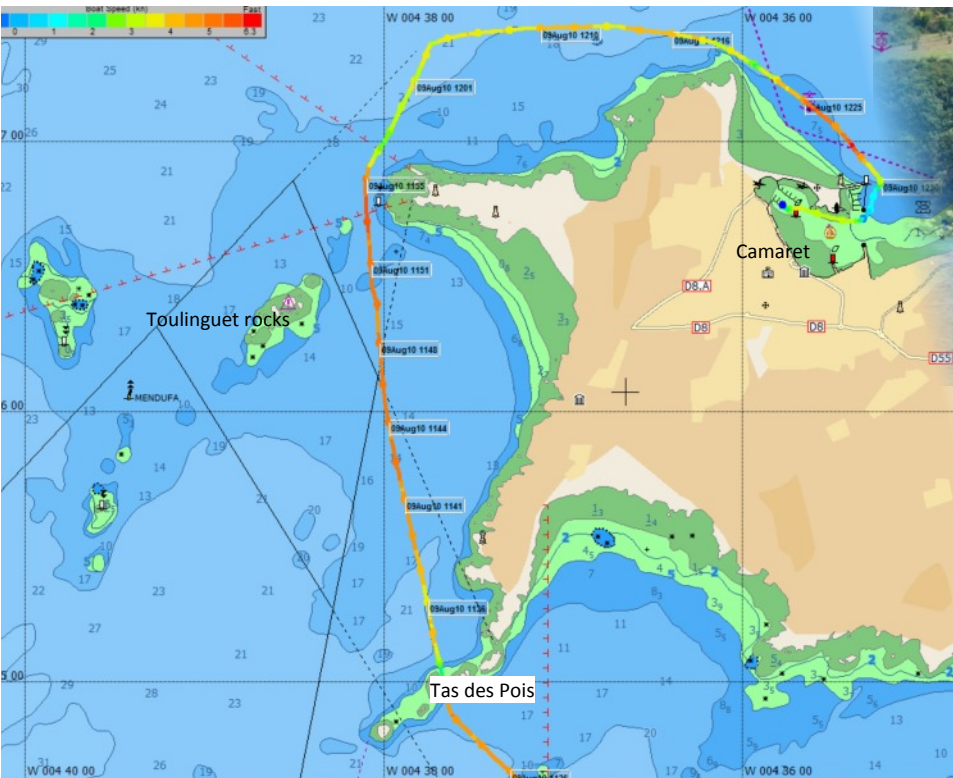
La dentelle



Pte de Toulinguet

It was convenient to go between the rocks, so we did.

Then gently along the coast passing inside the Toulinguet rocks, before turning the corner and almost drifting into Camaret.



Camaret

As we made fast it clouded over. We didn't mind. We had had a good day's sailing.



Camaret

10th August

We were happy to spend a day or two in Camaret to restock, visit the poissonnerie, and see what the weather would do. Our next next move would be up the Chenal du Four, and with winds firmly in the northern quadrant, that could be uncomfortable.

The tidal coefficient, which the French use to relate tidal range against a standard 100 at Brest, was due to be 108 - a very big spring tide. Most impressive were the low tides.



While returning from the boulangerie one morning, I noticed a Westerly called *Rafiki* that had once belonged to a member of Marchwood YC. Chatting to Christine, who was cruising Brittany with daughter Elizabeth and son Jerome, I learned that they had a problem with rot in the tiller.

As luck would have it, we knew that Derek Ide, an expert woodworker, was due to arrive in *Fearless*. Within the hour, there he was, and a couple of hours later, a near perfect tiller was installed on *Rafiki*.

It turned into quite a social occasion, winding up on board *Fearless* at the end of the afternoon.

The weather showed no sign of improving, so we planned to go over to the new marina in Brest so that we could explore the maritime museums that Macolm Robson had praised in his pilot books.

The new marina is very close to the chateau, so it is now accessible to us, especially to Dairne.

The weather showed no sign of improving, so we planned to go over to the new marina in Brest so that we could explore the maritime museums that Macolm Robson had praised in his pilot books.

Above and Right:

Extremely low tide at Camaret



Right:

Camaret street market



Left

Camaret back streets



Météo

Vers l'amélioration



Jeudi
 matin : Grisaille le matin suivie d'un ciel variable. Petit risque d'averses.
 après-midi : Belles éclaircies après la grisaille matinale. Ondées vers fest.
Samedi
 Dimanche : Les températures du jour et l'an dernier

Chateau du Brest

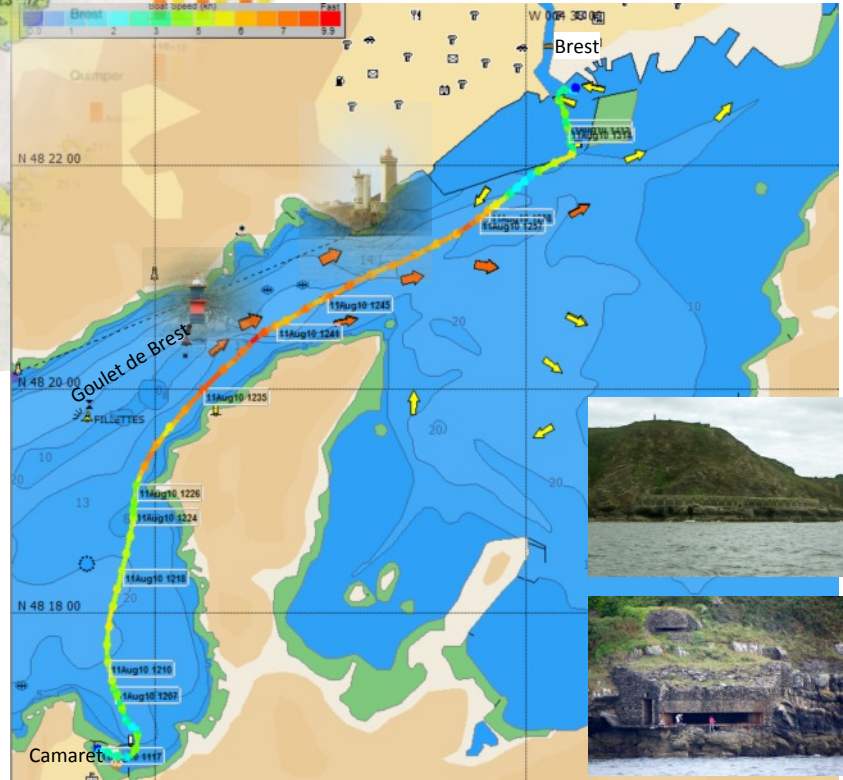
11th -12th August

After a couple of relaxing days in Camaret, with plenty of excellent seafood, we needed to decide where to go next. With a few days of brisk north to north westerlies in prospect, it seemed like a good opportunity to try out the new Marina du Chateau in Brest.



Pte de Petit Minou

Prévisions marines : vent de nord-ouest 3 à 4 Beaufort, fraîchissant temporairement 4 à 5 B par effets de brise l'après-midi sur les côtes sud Bretonne. Houle d'ouest 1 m.
Prévisions agricoles : 1 à 5 mm sur fest de la région.



Fetching in through the Goulet de Brest, the sense of history is almost oppressive, Everywhere you look there are defensive structures, some placed there by Vauban, and some



built for Hitler. Interestingly, most were built to keep the British out. SOG reached 10kts at times.

So it was inevitable that we climbed up the steps to the Musée du Marin at the Chateau just above the marina. It is the French equivalent of Greenwich, and the building itself has a fascinating history dating back to Roman times.

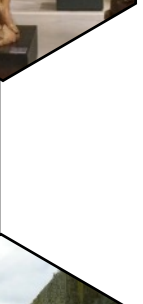
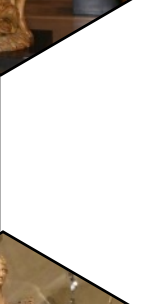




The Chateau building was fascinating, and some of the displays were intriguing, but we both rank the museum at Port Louis which deals with French development of the Orient as being better.

Never mind! It was a great experience, but a bit of an ordeal for Dairne. We stopped at a small port restaurant on the way back, and ate too much! The restaurant specialised in rich meat dishes. Ours was a lamb hock, very fatty and full of flavour with vegetables, gravy and great chunks of bread.

Dairne slept all afternoon and evening to recover.





Tour Tanguy

13th August

I was gradually learning my way around the bit of Brest close to the new marina. The day before we had struggled up to the Chateau museum, which was fascinating. But it left Dairne exhausted, so I was on my own when I visited the other nearby museum, the Tour Tanguy, a small 14th century tower that houses the municipal account of the town history. Interesting, but not very extensive.

It is quite a good walk after climbing back up to the level of the Chateau. The route takes you over the lifting bridge. This bridge is a replacement for one that had been built in post Napoleonic times, and which had served the city well for over a century. However, failed Allied attempts to destroy the submarine pens resulted in the city, and the bridge, being destroyed. The replacement bridge and the concrete buildings thrown up to replace the town centre make Brest a functional, but not very beautiful city. But the site has been fought over since Roman times and its history is fascinating.

On the way back, I discovered that heading from the marina towards the commercial port leads to several restaurants, a good boulangerie and an excellent poissonerie - as well as the open air stage that pounds out music till the late evening.

Back to Camaret

14th August

The weather was still unsettled, but we decided to return to Camaret and rejoin *Rafiki* and *Fearless*. It was a straightforward reach in a stiff breeze. It gave us a chance to look more carefully at the submarine pens (see top banner) and the rather strange white ship in the harbour. I later posted a picture of her on Flickr asking if anyone knew about the ship, to which I got the following reply

Quote: "This vessel is the BEM MONGE, a Measure and Test Ship of the French Navy. The ship is equipped with extensive tracking technologies as well as trajectory processing and radio-electrical analysis, and specializes in taking measurements, processing data, and conducting naval and air surveillance. In addition to its military functions, the BEM MONGE participates in civilian missions for surveillance, space observation, and trajectography. The French space agency CNES has also used the BEM MONGE to gather and process the launching parameters for the Ariane 5 space rocket."Unquote

Leaving the Goulet, one rounds a small island linked to the shore by a bridge. Clearly it had been reinforced as an advance lookout post in years gone by (see pictures to right)

Coming alongside the marina berth in Camaret in the feesh breeze was tricky, and Derek's assistance was greatly appreciated.



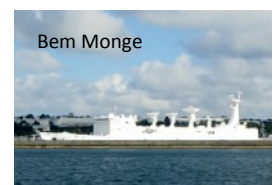
Bridge over River Penfeld



Tour Tanguy



Portzic Light



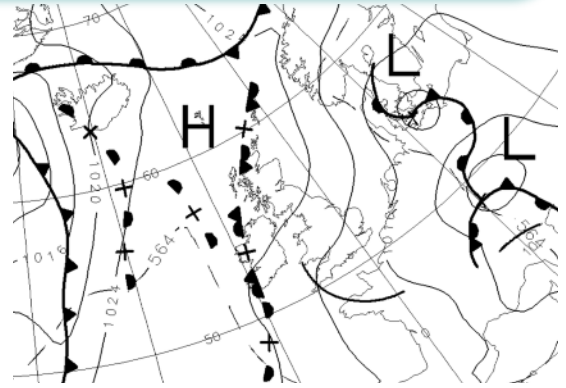
Bem Monge





15th-16th August

Fearless and *Rafiki* had been socialising, Elizabeth and Jerome being rather impressed with Derek's sailing experience. So we joined in. Derek made a magnificent fish stew for everyone later.



The weather remained persistently from a northerly quadrant, so there was no enthusiasm for going on through the Chenal du Four. I thought there would be a slot around the 17th, but the other boats



Camaret

were suffering from Harbour Rot. So we all cruised round the corner to duck the unsettled weather, and anchored in Le



Elizabeth



Rafiki



Fret in the vast Rade de Brest, a huge inland sea. For that passage, Dairne went with Chris in *Rafiki*, while Chris' daughter, Elizabeth, sailed *Ariadne* with me.

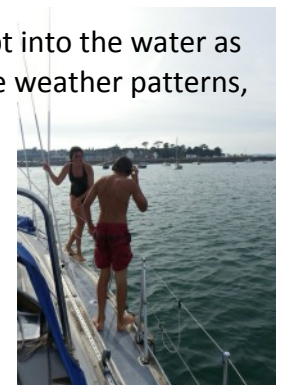
Elizabeth was delighted to sail a *Rustler*, and managed it very well. It was almost a drift with the tide through the Goulet de Brest, but became a fast reach once we were able to gybe and head past the French nuclear submarine base at Ile Longue, where marines in black wetsuits observe you from a distance in high speed ribs. Eventually we rounded up, well sheltered in Le Fret, an anchorage that had first been recommended to me by David Colquhoun when we were cruising in company with *Santana*



Jerome, Elizabeth and Christine



Amazingly Elizabeth and Jerome (her younger brother) both leapt into the water as soon as we were anchored! But studying the weather patterns,



we saw that there would be a brief period of settled weather on the Wednesday, followed by an extended period of unsettled weather. So we decided to move on the next morning to L'Aberildut, and cross the Channel to Falmouth from there the next day.

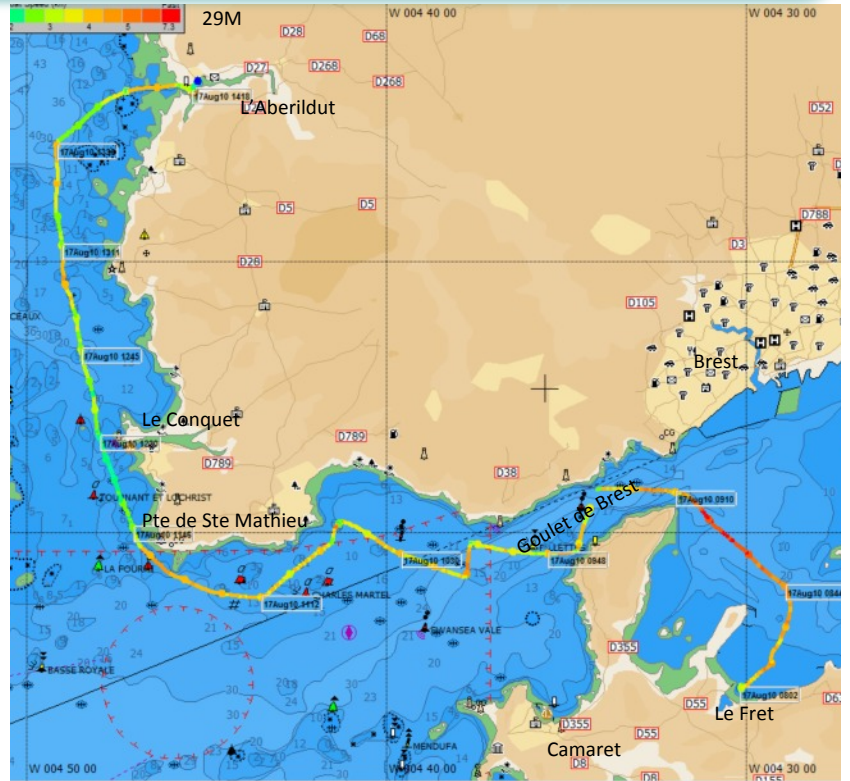




Back across the Channel

17th August

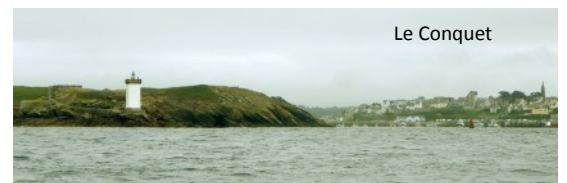
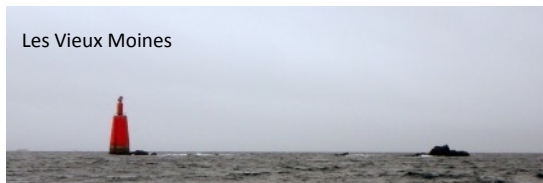
We said farewell to *Rafiki* and *Fearless* who decided to wait for a better opportunity to move north. The visibility was very bad, and we needed AIS to keep clear of a number of patrol boats, one of which we later realised was carrying out a minesweeping exercise.



It was a lumpy beat in poor visibility through the Goulet de Brest, with wind against tide kicking up a sea. After motoring for a while round Pointe St Mathieu, passing inside Les Vieux Moines reef, the visibility lifted and we had a gentle reach up the Chenal du Four. The tide was against us, but very neap, so apart from the short stretch off Le Conquet where we had to motor, the tidal effect was not significant.

By 1730, we were moored in L'Aberildut.

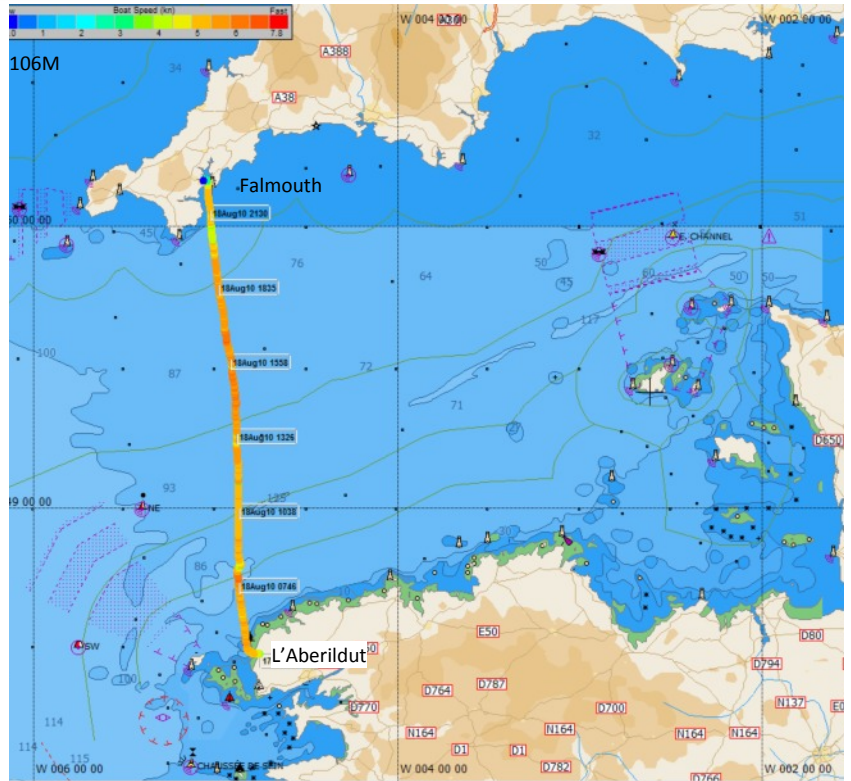
Our friend Di phoned to say that Dairne's mother was very unwell. At 91, the signs were not good. We could return to Brest; go on to L'Aberwerac'h; or go across the Channel to Falmouth. The weather window we had spotted earlier made the last of these choices the quickest way to get Dairne home, so planned an early start for the next morning.



18th August

On the Wednesday morning, at first light, we were away motoring in a very light SW wind.

To the east we could see Le Four silhouetted against the rising sun.



To the West we could just make out Le Stiff on the Ile d'Ouessant.

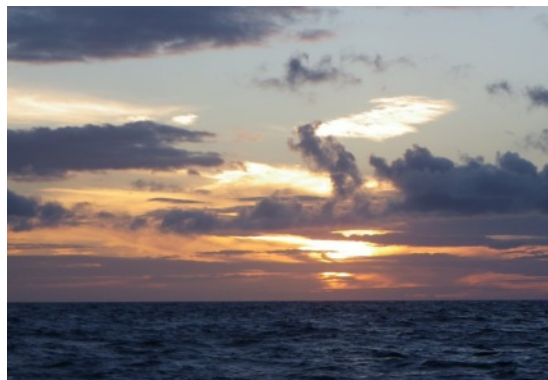


After 5 hours we encountered a line squall, after which the wind shifted and settled into the west, slowly freshening through the day to reach about F5. We were making good speed under full sail, the true wind being just south of West.

At 1100, still well south of the TSS, we encountered *Pride of Bilbao* hammering southwestward, obviously cutting the corner on her way to Santander. We were surprised that she was not obliged to use the TSS.

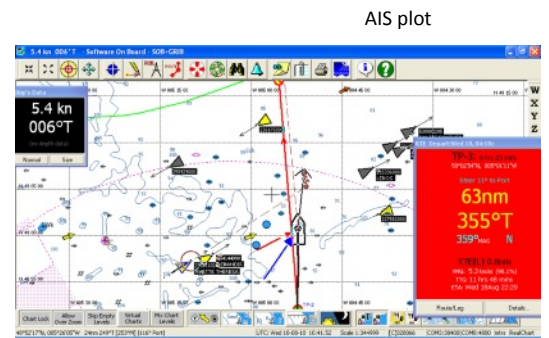
We encountered the TSS at about midday. There was quite a lot of activity and the AIS was invaluable in making sure there would be no close encounters.

For several hours we were in company with *Rockbottom* who came up astern motorsailing, then sailed for a while. The



picture shows that the conditions were fresh, with a lumpy sea. We spoke on vhf. They had come from Brest and were trying to make Fowey, so in the late afternoon they retarted their engine and gradually pulled away again.

As the sun started to go down the wind freshened to F6. We had had 11 hours of fast reaching which took us almost to the Manacles buoy after which we motored on a flat sea, anchoring in Falmouth at about midnight.





Falmouth

19th-23rd August

We motored up to the Falmouth Marina at Penryn the next morning. The hire car company made a special effort to make a one-way car available for Dairne. She set off to Southampton late morning.

The plan was that I should deal with a few accumulated faults, go up to the Ruan pontoon and await developments. The preferred option was that Dairne would make the necessary arrangements in Southampton, then return so we could get *Ariadne* back to the Solent via a Rustler rally at Fowey on 4th September.

There was a fairlead that had come apart, that proved straightforward to repair; a light over the chart table that needed adjusting to make it work again; and there was some shopping to do, including getting some more gas (we had not needed to buy any gas in France). But the biggest job was the alternator. Even before we left, there had been a faint glow in the indicator light, which had got steadily worse during the trip. We had been told that the glow was not unusual, but John Skewes at Cellar Marine reckoned it indicated that some of the diodes were gone. In the end I went for the expensive option. John sent an engineer over the next day. He fitted the new alternator, and took the old one away for repair. That would give me a spare. Unfortunately, Cellar Marine had not appreciated that I had fitted Adverc. This meant that there should be an extra wire to the alternator. The engineer was reluctant to do this until he had checked the old alternator and established that it was definitely the problem. In the meantime, the new alternator worked, seriously dragging down the engine revs, indicating that it was working a lot harder than the old one.

That afternoon, I took *Ariadne* up to the Ruan pontoon, where (as expected) I met Marc and Anne in *Midday Sun*. I stayed there for a couple of days. Sadly the mobile phone signal there is poor and it is often necessary to stand on the coachroof at high tide to have a conversation.

The news from Southampton was not good. It was plain that Betty was gradually slipping away and Dairne was struggling with making all the arrangements. So it was clear I would have to leave *Ariadne* and go to Southampton to help. Marc and Anne promptly offered to look after *Ariadne* for a week or so. I made the necessary arrangements with the Truro harbourmasters office. Marc took me up to Malpas where I caught the bus into Truro, and then made my way by train to Southampton.



Ariadne at Ruan Pontoon: Photo Bob Comlay



Heading Home

1st-3rd September

It was clear that Betty, Dairne's mother, was slipping away quite quickly, but she was hanging on with a toughness that we had come to know and admire. Meanwhile, the weather had become much more unsettled, and there was no prospect of improvement. I decided that the best course of action was to get *Ariadne* back to the Solent as quickly as possible and laid up before getting involved in all the final arrangements that were inevitably in prospect. Dairne agreed, but we decided that I would get a couple of friends to assist me in getting the boat back.

Luckily, both Roy Dowman and Bob Comlay were available, so on 1st September we headed back to Truro by hire car. Marc met us at Malpas and ferried us back to the Ruan Pontoon. He had had to run the engine a couple of times to keep the batteries up (I had left the fridge on), but the Air Breeze wind generator had done most of the work, even in that relatively sheltered spot. It is wonderful to have friends like these. There when you need them!

I was delighted with this groups of guests. Anne and Marc, as liveaboards, are always interesting company, and Dairne and I like Anne's paintings, two of which are on the saloon bulkhead in *Ariadne*. Roy I have known since school, and for the last two seasons we have been close to each other on our cruises, but circumstances have combined to prevent our meeting up. Bob I met via Flickr. He is a great photographer, and sailed two voyages with Tilman. He had crewed *Ariadne* on our shakedown cruise and I knew he is great company, a competent sailor, and a good cook. What more could one ask? As Roy Dowman said later "Every boat should have one"

The next morning we dropped down to Falmouth Marina where I had arranged to meet the engineer from Cellar Marine so he could return the spare alternator and add the extra wire to the new one. It turned out he was very late, so we arranged to visit Rustler Yachts that neither Bob nor Roy had seen before.

Eventually we were able to get away at 1730, leaving just enough time to get down to the Helford where we picked up a mooring for the night.



Above: Bob, Macr and Roy



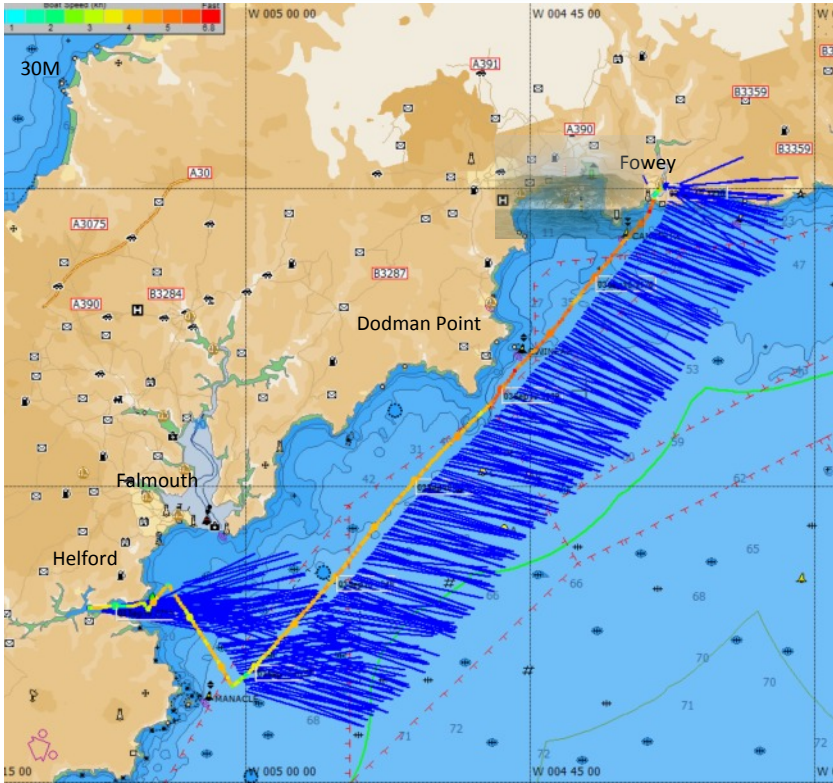
Left: Anne and Graham

Below: Marc, Roy Anne Graham (photo Bob Comlay)



Left: Plug for Rustler 33





Helford to Fowey

3rd September

When *Ariadne* left the Helford just after 0800, the wind was fickle. Anticipating a windshift, we took a port tack down towards the Manacles. The good news was that we got the shift right, as the plot clearly shows. The bad news was that the boat was sluggish. I became increasingly convinced that the absence of a mid season scrub, and 10 days stationary on the brackish waters of the Fal had taken their toll. We would struggle to get the boat driving all the way home. (When she was hauled out it was confirmed that the weed growth was worse than usual).

Nevertheless it was a good beat with a single reef in the main. Bob and Roy were impressed with the performance of the Monitor windvane.

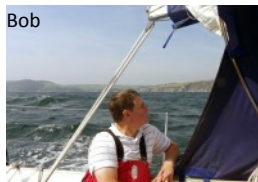
By 1430 we were alongside the pontoon that had been reserved for the Rustler Rally.



Nav station on *Ariadne*
(Photo Bob Comlay)



Roy



Bob



Fowey (photo Bob Comlay)



Ariadne in Fowey



Rustler Rally

4th September

We were there a day early, so on the morning of the 4th, we went motoring up the river to see if there were any other Rustlers hiding further up the river, especially Rodney Wade Thomas who was organising the event. It is an interesting river.

We had managed to contact Jerry Eardley whose folkboat is kept in Fowey. He invited us all to his father's house for lunch, and joined the Rally as our guest later.



Bob was fascinated by Jerry's boatbuilding project. He is building a new 30 ft wooden gaffer. They promised to keep in touch.



By the time we got back to the pontoon, the other boats had arrived.

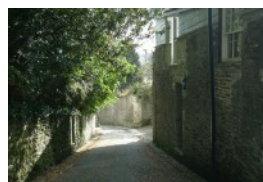


The rally itself only had 4 boats - two 36s and two 42s. At least one boat had abandoned because of the threat of easterly winds making the return to Plymouth difficult after the rally.

After drinks on Rod and Dorrie's *Siosanoir*, we all went over to the Royal Fowey YC for an excellent dinner.



For a variety of reasons, all three of us needed to get back to the Solent, so we were unable to stay for the second day, planning to leave early to try and make the tide at Portland. But things never work out exactly as planned.

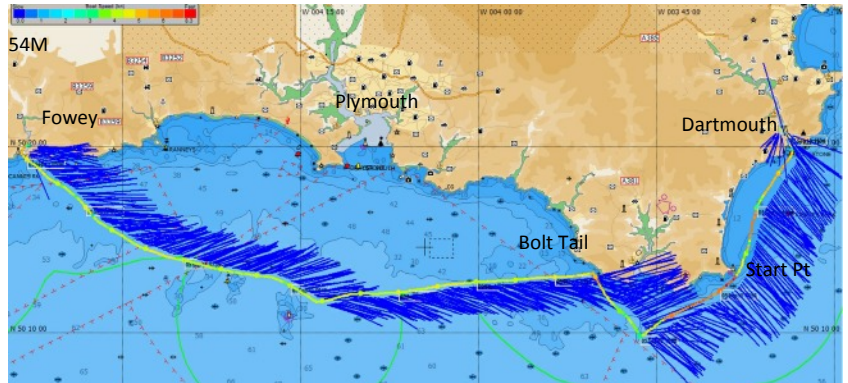




Bashing along the South Coast

5th September

This was a most frustrating day. The wind direction, the sea, and the foul hull made it necessary to motorsail nearly all the way to Start Point, though we did try sailing after passing Bolt Tail.



The midday f/c was not encouraging:-

“Wight, Portland E/SE 4/ 5 →5/6 Sh Mod/G: Plymouth S/SE→SW later 4/5 (occasionally 6) Rain /Showers”

We kept plugging on, passing inshore of the Eddystone. Roy and Bob seemed to prefer being on deck. I was happy to leave them to it, and spent most of the time below, including preparing coffee and lunch as required.



(Photo Bob Comlay)

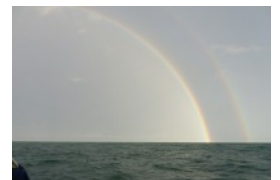
It looked as though the wind would not veer until we were well across Lyme Bay, making it difficult for us to catch the tide at Portland. In the circumstances we opted to go instead into the Dart for the night. An added attraction was that our long time friend Chris Cohen and wife Angie were there in their Contest 44 *Fearless*. Roy was due to help them take the boat down the Portuguese coast later in the year.



(Photo Bob Comlay)



Eddystone



Crossing Start Bay, I tried to set the cursing chute, but it was just too shy, so we abandoned the attempt.

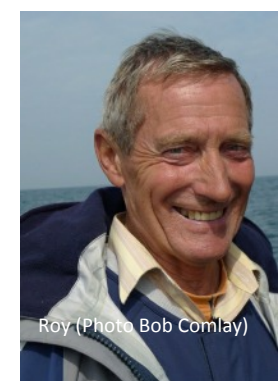
By 1800 we were rafted on *Fearless* in the Kingswear marina. It was the start of an enjoyable evening on board with Chris and Angie.



Galley Slave! (Photo Bob Comlay)



Cursing Chute (Photo Bob Comlay)

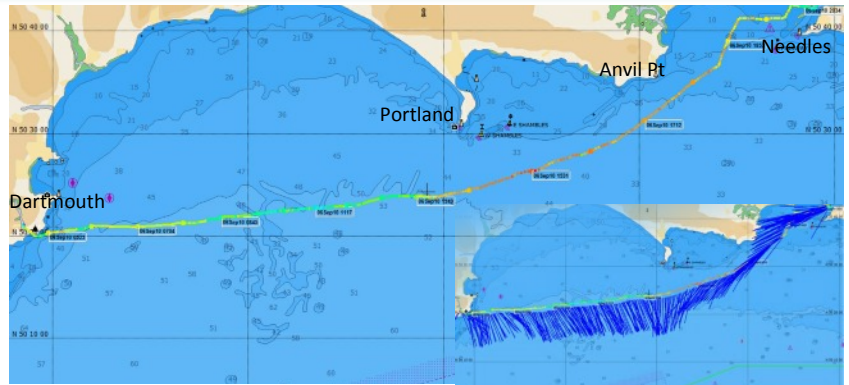


Roy (Photo Bob Comlay)

Into the Solent

6th Sept

Before 0700 we quietly crept away from *Fearless*, and headed across Lyme Bay. There was a lumpy sea, and it was difficult to sail. By 1100 the wind was dropping and heading, so we started motor sailing. The strategy was to go well south of the Portland Race, then direct to the Solent.



Roy (Photo Bob Comlay)



Roy and Graham (Photo Bob Comlay)



Reaching to St Albans (Photo Bob Comlay)

The tide was now foul, with SOG dropping to 3kts. By 1330 the seas were frequently stopping the boat. We were still motor sailing.

It was cold, raining, and uncomfortable. Roy was feeling the motion and preferred to stay on deck. Bob was with him most of the time.



Monitor sailing the boat (Photo Bob Comlay)

It was not until 1420 that we finally shut down the engine, and got sailing. Shortly after 1500 we were 10 miles SW of Portland Bill, and the tide was about to go our way.

By 1600 we reefed the main in the freshening breeze, and took a couple of rolls in the genoa. Our speed over the ground (SOG) had increased to 6.4 kts. By 1635 we were due south of the Bill.

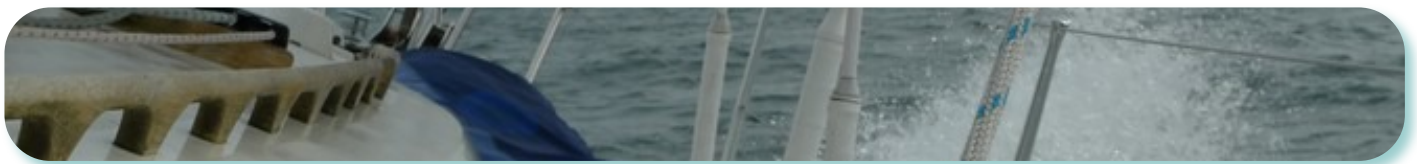
Now, irritatingly, the wind veered, so that as we bore away towards the Solent, we found ourselves close to a dead run. At 1850 we goosewinged. Both Bob and Roy were surprised at how well the Monitor coped in the big seas on a near dead run.

Eventually as it got dark, Bob, who had had an hour below to warm up took over the helm and hand steered because the wind started to get shifty. (See the wind tails on the chart inset). It was tricky stuff going up behind the Shingles bank in the dark (which is why there are no pictures of Bob helming), and we gybed twice (deliberately, I hasten to add!).



The front that caused the windshift as we passed Anvil Point.

By the time we got to Hurst, the tide had turned against us, so we just crashed through, and turned behind the spit where we anchored on the plotter for the night.



1500+ Miles

7th September

Conditions were gentle for our run up the Solent the next morning to Marchwood. We were on the pontoon by 1115

With the help of Bob and Roy, we had got *Ariadne* back home to Marchwood after one of the most uncomfortable, wet trips across Lyme Bay that any of us can remember. On the way we called in to the Rustler Rally at Fowey, and met up briefly with friends in the Dart. A great crew! Thanks to both.

From leaving Marchwood *Ariadne* had logged 1536 miles for the whole cruise.

I was back in time to see Betty, though she died fairly peacefully a few days later on September 15th. In the meantime, I had managed to get *Ariadne* ashore onto her trailer, all the weed pressure washed off, and I could concentrate on dealing with the domestic issues.





Solent

Portland

Dartmouth

Falmouth

Cherbourg

L'Abwenwrach

Cherbourg-en-Fouir

Brest

Morgat

Raz de Sein

Benodet

Pte de Penmarc'h

Lorient

Morbihan

Belle Isle

Piriac

Ile d'Yeu

Les Sables d'Olonne

Ile de Re

La Rochelle

Ile d'Oleron

Rochefort

Corduan

La Gironde