



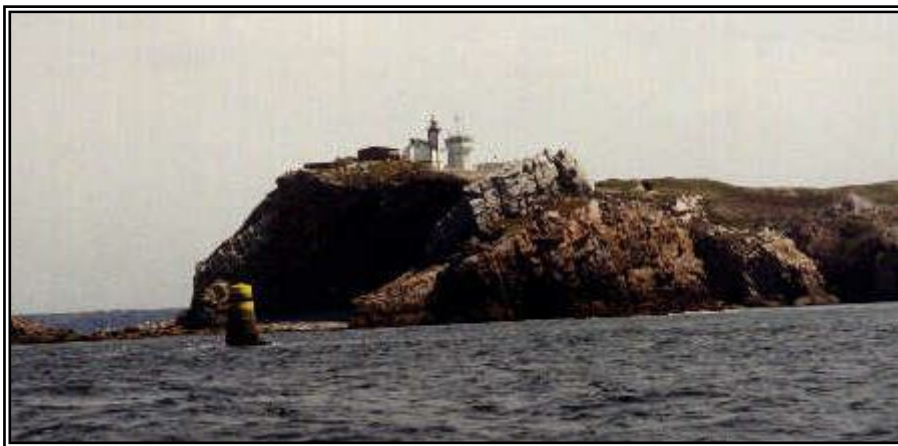
*Bon Mer à Tous
Brittany 1999*

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Brittany 1999

Ariadne

Graham & Dairne Rabbitts

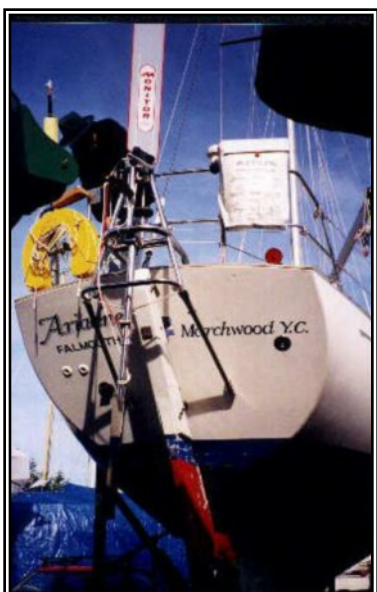


Pilotage diagrams from Malcolm Robson's French Pilot
Sketches from Peter Cumberlidge's "North Brittany and Channel island Cruising"
Chart Details from Imray C series charts
Our own photographs (except the Jument in a storm!)

Ariadne, 1999

At the end of the Irish cruise, we agreed we had had two big problems, battery management and the lack of wind vane steering. During the winter, we had put both right.

The batteries were replaced and Adverc battery management fitted to replace the original regulator. We discovered later that Orion Marine (the builder of the Rustler) had also switched to Adverc as standard. On this cruise, at no time did we ever have battery problems, and were able to keep the fridge on all the time, the Supercool system having an economy setting which limits the current drawn to 1 amp unless the engine is running.



¹And we fitted a Monitor windvane. Although easy in principle, the feet had to be bolted to the deck over the tiller trunk and through the transom. Clare and Iain helped, with Clare's five feet height and size two shoes enabling her to climb² completely into the space between the foot of the quarter berth and the transom! I can only just get my shoulders through the gap with some difficulty. Even so she needed to use a socket set with an extension handle³taped on and the nut and washer held in place with blue tack. Still, it worked.



Our electric⁴ autopilot had always been 'George'. His new companion was christened 'Fanny'. The only other mod was to fit a masthead crane so we could fly the burgee at the masthead. This was done one weekend in



¹ The Monitor windvane being installed

² Iain inspecting the windvane alignment

³ Iain at the masthead fitting the burgee crane

⁴ Ariadne going well at Hurst

Newtown. Iain went up the mast early in morning in a flat calm. But by the time we had finished, the wind was blowing 20kts, and the bucket we were using to pass tools up and down was swaying in the wind. Eventually we worked out the answer - shackle the bucket to the topping lift!

We then had a marvellous sail down to Poole in company with John and Mary. Iain and Clare went with them, took my camera, shot a reel of film and got two pictures Beken would have been pleased about!

Preparation

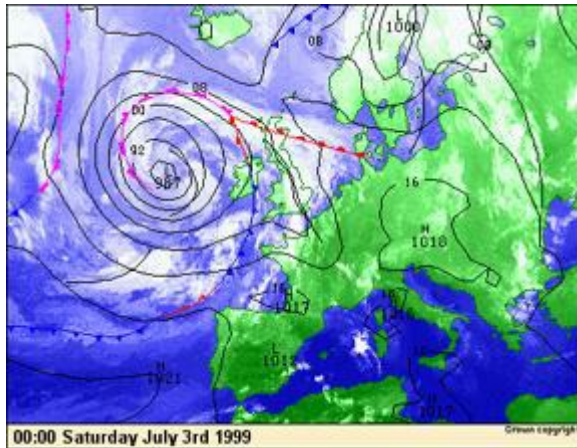
For weeks the weekend stores had included a few extra bottles of tonic, a half dozen tins of stewing steak, or an extra packet of loo rolls. So when we came to depart for the cruise, the storing mainly consisted of adding the fresh food and the extra clothes. It was relatively painless.

Our goal was to visit the islands off Brest, and if possible go to Ushant, and if time permitted to call in at the Iles de Chausey on the way back. An ambitious programme in three weeks, but feasible if the weather served. In fact, our plans had changed at least twice. After epic trips to South Brittany (twice), the Scillies (in a gale.... again) and Ireland, our original battle plan was to potter round the Bay of St Malo. This changed when Iain's tour in Kuwait was curtailed, and he seemed to have shedloads



of leave. We thought we could try for Spain, and planning commenced. But he was made redundant and took the cash, and eventually accepted a job in New Zealand - bang goes the passage skipper! Dairne seemed keen to go back to the Ushant area. We had tried two years previously, but bad weather, and my father's ill health in Spain had combined to curtail that cruise. So the overall plan was agreed. Ushant, and then back along the Brittany coast. We have decided that we prefer to cruise Brittany west to east because you arrive at the destination with the flood. Also, there can be a big swell on the Brittany coast, and this is easier to handle downwind, which generally blows from a westerly quadrant in late July.

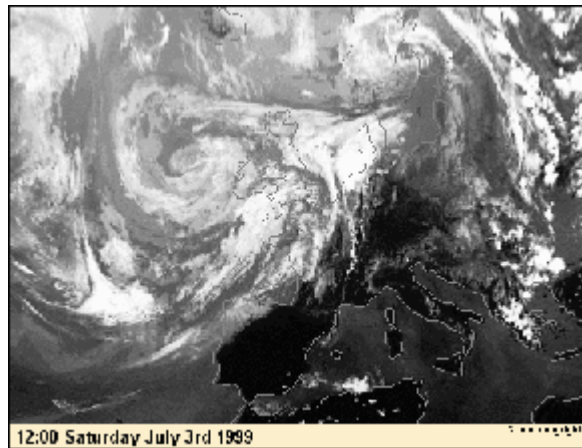
Sat July 3rd - MYC to Yarmouth



Iain and Clare had been staying with us, so Iain and Graham brought *Ariadne* alongside while the girls arrived later with the last of the stores. These were ferried on board before last farewells were made. Iain was due to leave to take up the new job in New Zealand a few days later, so this was a major farewell. Graham's parting words as Iain drove off were "Much better than a tearful farewell at the airport, eh?". "Couldn't agree more" said he, as he potted off in father's

car with a full tank full of petrol. "Come and visit us any time, provided you bring the boat".

Clare remained in our house, busy finishing off orders for wedding dresses before joining Iain in the middle of September. She saved the weather and satellite maps every day which, as will be seen, add so much to this log.

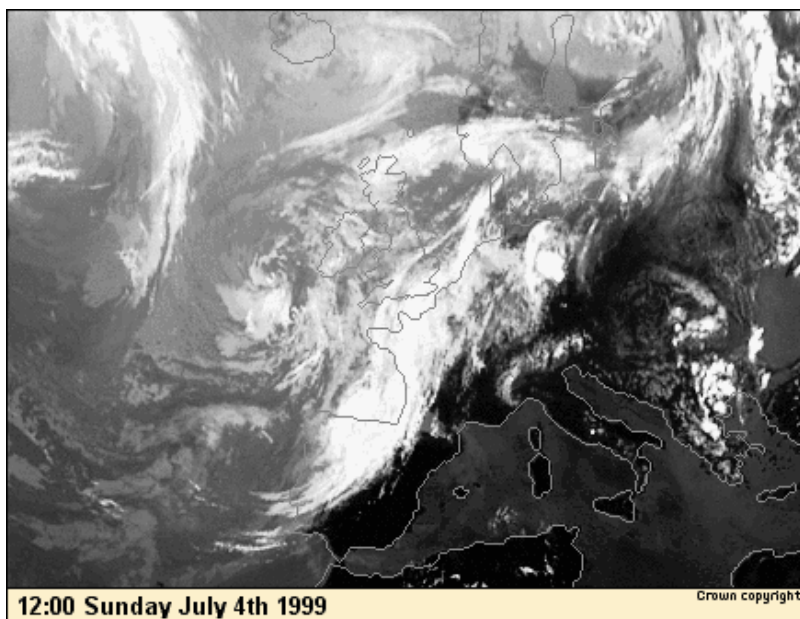


Under genoa in gusts up to 24kts, we reached down Southampton Water before pulling in to Ower Lake to have lunch and regroup. At 1440 we left, with 2 reefs tucked in the main for a brisk beat down the Solent to Yarmouth. Here we met "*Another Bold Venture*", owned by Peter and Maureen Shaw, a Rustler in which they are gradually making preparations for a round the world cruise. We joined them for a pub dinner at Freshwater. Their crew of Bright Young Things had found the conditions too onerous, and one of them returned to the mainland by ferry the next day. Peter was *not* amused!

The forecast was for lightish NW winds the following day, so we decided we would try to head as far west as possible the next day.

Sunday July 4th: Yarmouth to Weymouth

One of the best forecasts available is the 0530 on a Sunday morning. In addition to a full forecast and coastal waters forecast, there is a yachtsman's week ahead prediction. This was taped on using the radio with a built in timer, and was subsequently proved to be right. It indicated moderate NW winds earlier in the week, with the possibility of them backing and freshening later. This underlined the need to get as far west as possible in the early part of the week.

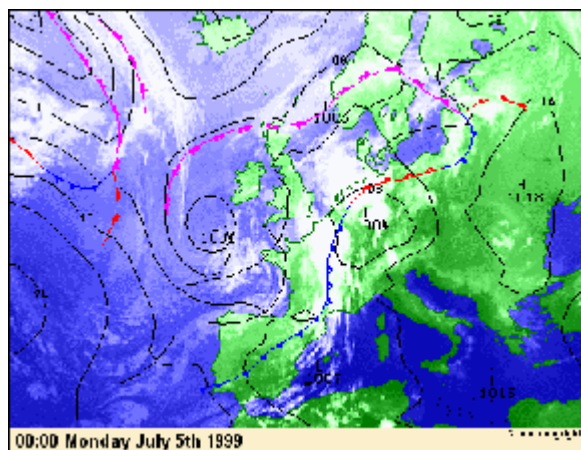


As can be seen from the satellite picture, there were no vicious systems around, and the depression to SW of Ireland was a weak feature. Clearly it was going to take some time before the NW wind developed - but we were not to know that.

It was 1000 before the tide was going to be helpful at Hurst, so we left then. It was motorsailing against a slackening tide to Hurst, when rain killed the wind leaving only a S F1, but by 1145 the SW Shingles buoy was 1 cable away, and the engine could be turned off to use a Southerly F2 wind. This served until Anvil point, but the slop on the water there was too much and by St Albans the engine was on again. The water was distinctly bumpy, with no discernible inside passage on the race, but it was never vicious. Motoring gently across Weymouth Bay we realised that we were unlikely to make the tide at Portland, so diverted to anchor outside Weymouth at 1900 to wait for the tide, and get a little sleep.



Monday 5th July 1999: Weymouth to Salcombe



By 2315 on the 4th, we were under way again - under engine - gently trolling out to the end of Portland Bill, slowing down a little to make sure of not getting there too soon. The Bill was rounded at 0130, and despite a couple of attempts to sail, we plugged gently across Lyme Bay under power, 'George', the autohelm driving all the way. Graham did the first watch, and went to sleep just when it started to rain, leaving Dairne sheltering under the hood.

With the dawn came a little better weather, and eventually sunshine, although the coast remained in the murk until by midday, the coastline of Devon was fully visible. In these conditions, entering Salcombe was straight forward, and a buoy was picked up at 1315, in warm sunshine.



In the early part of the season, many of the boats at MYC had discoloured, including *Ariadne*. A gentle afternoon gave the chance to go round in the dinghy and give the hull a wipe with oxalic acid, which immediately made her a lot smarter.

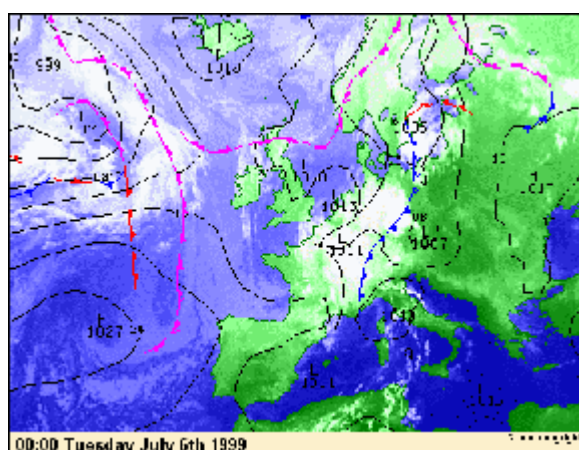
While doing this, Graham noticed that on the next buoy was a boat with a rather frayed ex-commodore's MYC burgee. Investigation revealed John Fennell who was assisting a club member from Christchurch to move his Centaur back from the west

country to the Solent area. They were planning to leave later that evening, but a pleasant hour was had on their boat chatting about nothing very important.

Ashore for an excellent meal in the Victoria Arms, right next to the dinghy pontoon. Unfortunately whi was the second time we had been in Salcombe on a Monday when the Foot in the Plate which we had enjoyed some years previously is closed.

Tuesday 6th July: Salcombe to L'Abervrach

Compared to Cowes, topping up with diesel at 35p/litre seemed daylight robbery. But that is what we did at 0930, before moving to an empty buoy for the rest of the lovely morning. While there we saw and hailed *Velado*, a Rustler 32 from MYC which was in the middle of a 6wk cruise and leaving for the Yealm.



The forecast was WNW with seabreezes. A high off W Finisterre seemed to be developing, while a low way north was slowly filling. The sea area forecast was W2 becoming 3 or 4, fair with fog patches. Worth a go!

After dropping the buoy at 1335 we set 1 reef and full jib in a sunny W4 wing and headed South. Now 'Fanny', the Monitor windvane steering, came into her own, helming nearly all the way.

On these longer passages, we have some 'house rules'. Harnesses are *always* worn at night by anybody on watch *and hooked on to the D-rings in the cockpit*. We also assume that all our wonderful electronic gear will go bang in the next 5 minutes. The

Voyage from <u>Salcombe</u> to <u></u>		Date <u>6 July 1999</u>			
		LOG	COG	SOG	WPT
0930	Water & fuel (35p/litre!) and to buoy.	10657.0			205 111
1035	Dropped off buoy - seaward out				
1100	Passed off buoy - seaward out	10659.6	14.4	5.3	205 111
1200	50°02.03'N 03°04.10'W	10664.5	138	5.6	206 102
1300	50°01.81'N 03°05.06'W	10670.0	205	5.1	206 102
1400	49°57.17'N 03°06.32'W 12-21kts breeze sunline	10675.2	213	6.0	205 24.1
1500	49°52.52'N 04°02.16'W Wind FS WNW Breeze	10680.7	224	7.2	204 82.3
1600	49°48.30'N 04°06.97'W FS WNW Sunny	10686.1	212	6.8	203 82.4
1700	Rogue wave down hatch 49°40.61'N 04°12.75'W	10692.8	221	6.5	202 74.9
1800	49°34.91'N 04°17.05'W 2nd reef in for night Wind 17-21kts	10697.7	215	5.4	202 68.6
1900	49°31.02'N 04°21.06'W	10703.4	227	5.3	201 44.1
2000	49°26.55'N 04°26.91'W	10709.3	180	3.8	200 59.9
2100	49°22.60'N 04°27.54'W Daria off watch	10713.7	208	4.3	199 52.8
2200	49°17.49'N 04°29.54'W Wind veering 19-18kts	10719.2	181	5.2	199 49.4
2300	49°12.49'N 04°32.91'W	10726.1	206	6.2	199 42.3
0000	Full jib (Wind 11-15kts) 49°05.93'N 04°33.73'W	10730.2	198	6.5	200 37.7
0100	Wind 8-11kts full sail				
0200	49°00.70'N 04°35.94'W	10734.7	198	5.7	200 32.3

answer is simple. We keep our log up to date every hour, recording log, COG, SOG, distance to waypoint, and bearing to waypoint. With this data we can always revert to DR not more than 1 hour old.

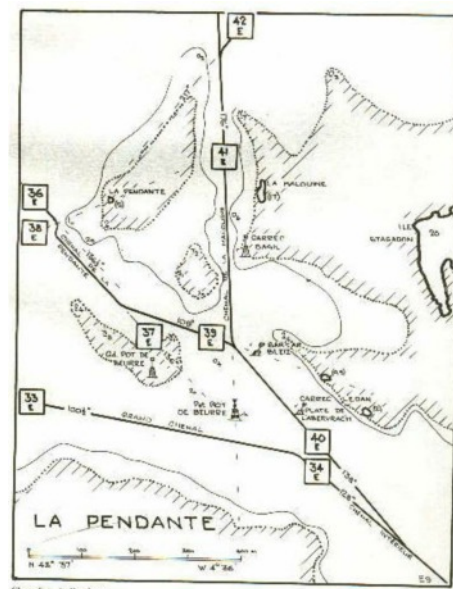
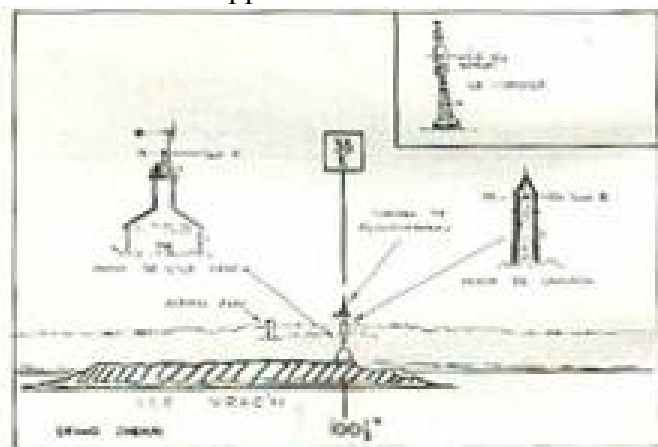
At about 1700, there was some excitement as we had heard on the VHF that there was a submarine exercising in the area. We saw the Nimrod aircraft leave the area, but there was another anti-sub aircraft patrolling, so the Nimrod was called up to make sure we were not likely to get a periscope up through the cabin sole!

By 1810, 4 rolls were taken in the jib as the wind was gusting to 25kts. The sea was gradually building and the SOG was 6.8-7.2kts.

At 2000 a rogue wave jumped down the hatch soaking the chart table but otherwise doing no harm, but the wind was still increasing, reaching gusts of 27kts by 2100. Visibility, however, remained good, with the Lizard, Ile Vierge and Le Stiff lights all visible (as looms) at 2340. At midnight, Dairne came off watch.



By 0300 the full jib was set, and at 0345 the main was unreefed to give full sail. The wind had faded to 8-11kts. At 0500 Dairne took over the watch again until 0715, when after consulting Graham, the decision was taken to turn on the donkey and head for L'Aberwrach, finding the Libenter buoy to start the approach. A buoy was picked up at 0945. We used the Grand Chenal, which we had done before. The Robson⁵ marks were there on deck, but Cumberlandidge's directions were sufficient reminder for this generous approach.



⁵ We carry all four volumes of Robson's guide to France, plus the Channel Islands volume. They are wonderful provided you can see the marks! The trick is to have a general pilotage guide and then use Robson if his marks are visible. They are incredibly precise.

Even so, Robsons sketches of the long transit into the estuary made them easier to find.

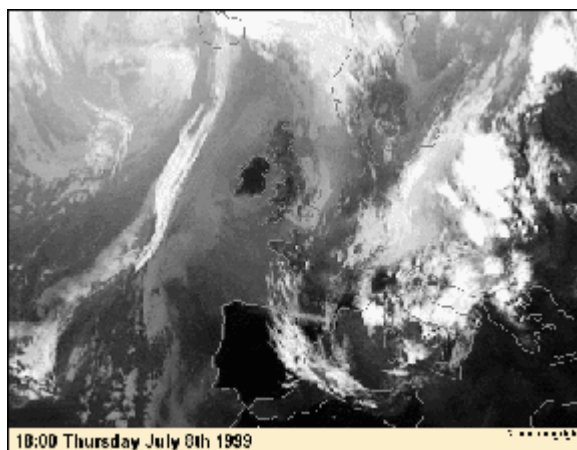
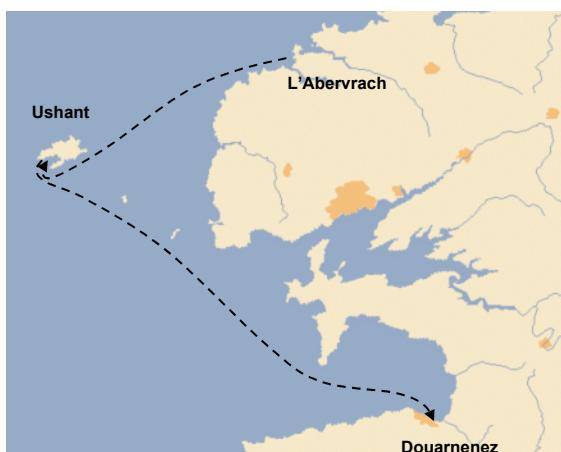
We were now back again in the land of the tourelles, those wonderful navigational marks which make the rugged coast of France one of the easiest to navigate. It was the British blockade which had forced the French to navigate inside some of the most impressive rock areas and build these magnificent structures.

The place was surprisingly empty, although there were a number of very impressive Dutch yachts there.

We had covered 101.6 logged miles in just over 20 hours. We were tired, so stayed on board for a pleasant supper on a warm evening.



Wednesday 8th July: L'Abervrach to Lampaul

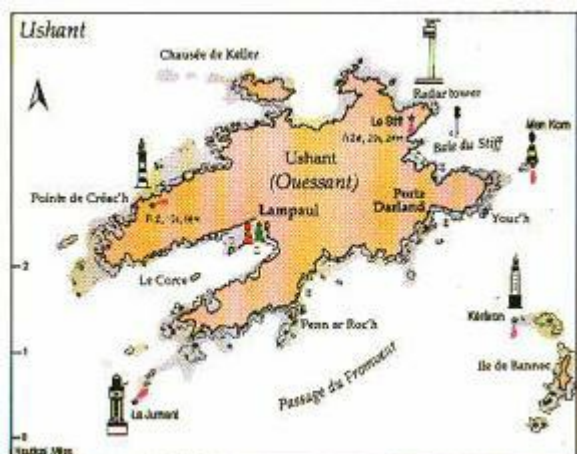


The forecast was for NW winds, with little prospect of any south in the wind direction. We started listening to the French forecasts. Phrases we liked were

"Avis de tempête neant" [No gales forecast]

"Petit houle" [small swell]

We were particularly taken by the way Crosse Corsen signed off - **"Bon Mer a Tous"**, literally "Good sea to all" seemed a gentle and friendly theme for our cruise.



It looked settled with the worst that could happen would be a NW wind not exceeding F5. So we decided to go for Lampaul on Ushant [Ile de Ouessant]. Our route would takes us along the South side of Ushant through the Chenal de Fromveur, a passage with a fearsome reputation for strong tides and rough water at Springs, especially with wind against tide. We were lucky, however.

Tides were on neaps, and there would be moderate wind and little swell swell.

By 1025 we had dropped the buoy and motored through an incredible sailing school of windsurfers, Hobie cats and other boats - the French really do this kind of thing well!



We were sailing happily along on a sunny morning - Dairne had even put her shorts on when Graham said " I don't want to worry you, but in the next five minutes we will be in fog". A bank was rolling in and another yacht 200 metres away quickly disappeared. OK Choice Time!. If we had been in *Fay-A* we would undoubtedly have turned back. Instead we chose to rely on the GPS

plotter and the radar - though we agreed that we would have been happier with an independent backup such as a battery powered hand held GPS.

We sailed on through the fog, with the main worry being other yachts which we felt confident we could see on radar. We were heading towards the Men Korn beacon on the NE corner of Ushant, though we never sighted it. By 1430, we had a school of dolphins in company for about half an hour. It is amazing how much they lift the spirits!



By 15400 we were at the waypoint off Menkorn, the NE marker of Ushant with nothing visible and the SOG rising to almost 6 kts. But then the rocks appeared out of the mist, and with a combination of plotter and visual sightings as the visibility steadily improved, the southern coastline of Ushant was negotiated . As we swept down the coast, the SOG peaked at 10.1 kts, but the current was surprisingly local. It was, however, enough to give us sobering thoughts about the Chenal de Fromveur in a stiff breeze with a spring tide. We chickened out, rounding the Jument lighthouse under power and declining the Robson short cut. It



was lazy but comfortable. The picture on the left shows La Jument as we saw it. Other pictures of it are more famous!



As we rounded La Jument, the NW wind freshened to F5 giving a stiff beat up the Bay to reach Lampaul at the top. We bottled out, using the iron topsail to work round the island of La Corce. There were about 15 yachts anchored there, including a British Ketch, but most were French. All were on large buoys put there to attract visitors. No one ever asked for any

money for mooring to them.

At 1645 we picked up a buoy at Lampaul. It had been a wonderful exposition of the combination of radar and plotter. If either failed, the other was a fallback. We always knew where we were (plotter) and who else was around (radar). Sailing here one must expect mist and fog rolling in, but the kit makes it safer. In spite of this, as we approached Lampaul and rounded the Jument, the visibility was always suspect, so the Robson marks for the short cut could not be trusted.

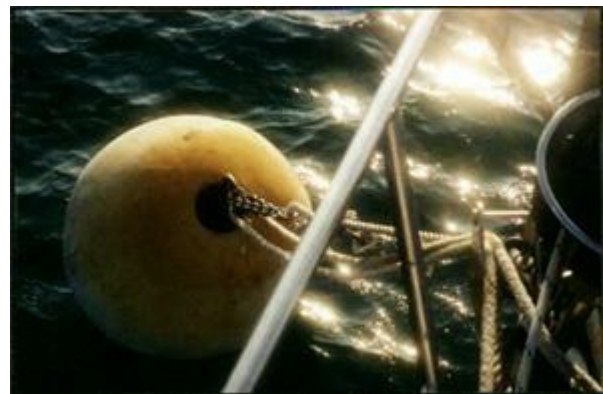


We went ashore for dinner, and found a local hotel serving excellent seafood

After supper, we sat in the cockpit. There was quite a lot of haze about, so the stars came out one at a time. Exquisite!

Thursday 9th July: Lampaul

Graham was ashore early to find a boulangerie and returned with croissants. It was a lovely morning, with a stiff NBE breeze which persisted all day, making Lampaul an unusually (we think) comfortable anchorage. They were wonderful buoys, but no one came near us for a fee. They seemed to be glad to have visitors! As elsewhere, we used our short warps with a chain link through the buoy (with an anchorplait backup). This gives a lot of peace of mind when chafe can attack any mooring rope.



An expedition in the morning revealed a beautiful, rather quaint village, with lovely gifte shops, not over priced, and access to postcard, post office and all





essentials. T-shirts were found for Kendra and Christopher and the all important postcards!

We sat outside the Hotel De Fromveur supping beer or Ricard, and booked a table for the evening. It was worth it. A wonderful meal (including superb seafood) ashore returning to the dusk on board.

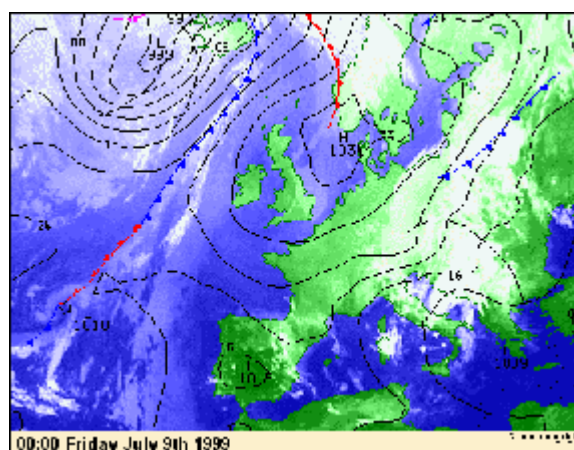
This was a lazy lay day in wonderful, special island surroundings. The wind stayed firmly in the NE protecting the anchorage with no swell working in. We were lucky.

Friday 10th July: Ushant (Lampaul) to Douarnenez

It was a brisk morning, so at 0830 we ran out of Lampaul under the small jib and main. The wind was NE5. But despite the sunny start, there was fog around and it duly clamped on us by 1000. It was easier



this time, however, as the sea to the south was clear.. By 1100 the fog had started to clear and a bit of genoa was added to make a quasi cutter rig giving 5.6 kts over the ground.



By 1200 we had full main and genoa, rounding the Basse du Lis at 1325. We rolled the genoa to have a peaceful lunch, adding 1 kt to the speed (abt 5.5 kts). By 1420 we were turning into the Baie du Douarnenez, so lowered the staysail. It is a spectacular approach with Ile Tristan guarding the approach to the old harbour.



By 1645 we were alongside the new visitors pontoon at Douarnenez on the Téboul side of the river.



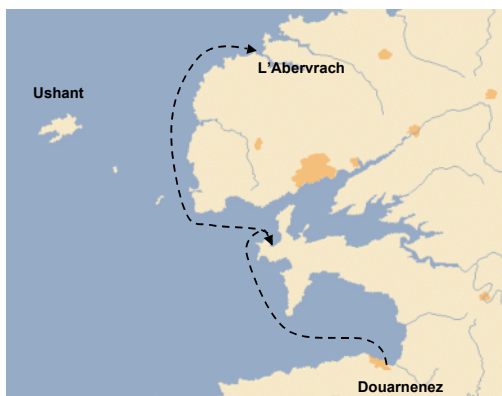
It had been a sparkling 42 mile reach to a new destination. After supper on board, we walked along the quay to sit in an open café and sup a brandy (or two) and a beer.

On the opposite bank, we could see the old town of Douarnenez, while just opposite, on Ile Tristan itself was a magnificent old, but derelict, mansion. It looked as if it could have many tales to tell about a chequered past. Who built it? What was it used for between 1939 and 1945?



Unfortunately, the wind was straight into the entrance and there was considerable movement, but this died away as the wind stabilised for the evening. There were also signs that the weather was beginning to go into a brisk westerly phase, so we decided not to explore Dournanez, but to press on back to Camaret the next day. We shall go back there though.

Saturday 11th Jul: Douarnenez to Camaret



Another boulangerie visit for the most magnificent croissants and some alsaciennes. We left at 0900 with a gentle reach down the Baie du Douarnenez with the wind N2. It freshened as we rounded Cap de la Chevre,

passing the offlying rocky ridge at a respectful distance to give NE 4 as we beat towards the magnificent Tas des Pois rocks, and 2 reefs and 4 rolls were tucked in.



As had happened two years previously on the passage from Morgat to Camaret, we were tempted to go in behind the Tas des Pois where there is a sheltered anchorage. It would have been a magnificent lunchtime stop. Unfortunately, we would then have face a beat through the Toulinguet passage against the tide. Once again we decided to press on. This is a fabulous area, and it was a pity not to

have the time to potter.



Nevertheless, passing the Tas des Pois is always impressive. It is impossible to cruise this area, with its shoals and isolated rocks without remembering that most of the survey work was done by the Royal Navy during the Napoleonic blockade of Brest. It is an interesting and exciting area with a manoeuvrable modern yacht fitted with good instrumentation (and radar to assist in poor visibility). It must have

been a different matter altogether to sail this area in unwieldy square rigged ships with no auxiliary power (except a cutter manned by pressed men) and no navigational aids. Just imagine being becalmed off the Vendree???? Buoy in gathering fog!

We had to beat through the Toulinguet passage before squaring away for a reach into Camaret which was reached by 1330 at the new marina close to the town.



Even at this stage (before the French holidays really got started), we were lucky to find a berth outside another Brit yacht, a Moody 36 called *Devoran* belonging to a member of the RYA cruising committee, out for a trip with his family and friends.

Another meal ashore!. Good moules and seafood in one of the many excellent waterside cafes/restaurants.



Sunday 12th July: Camaret to L'Abervrach

The BBC week ahead forecast at 0530 confirmed that we were in for a few unsettled days (with westerly winds) followed by a return to settled weather by the end of the week - which threatened the return of northerly, or even easterly, winds. We decided we would use the westerlies to shift cruising ground to the Bay of St Malo.

The 1000 start illustrates the value of arriving in the Ushant area at neaps with a view to cruising eastwards. How civilised! Our initial intention was to go to l'Aberildut.



Initially we had 1 reef and six rolls in the jib, but the wind rapidly moderated so we were under full sail reaching toward Pte de St Matthieu. The reefs and rolls were taken in again as we

prepared for the beat down the Chenal du Four. It is always exciting, especially in sunshine, but the wind over tide kicked up a wicked short chop. But who cares when the tide is doing the work?!

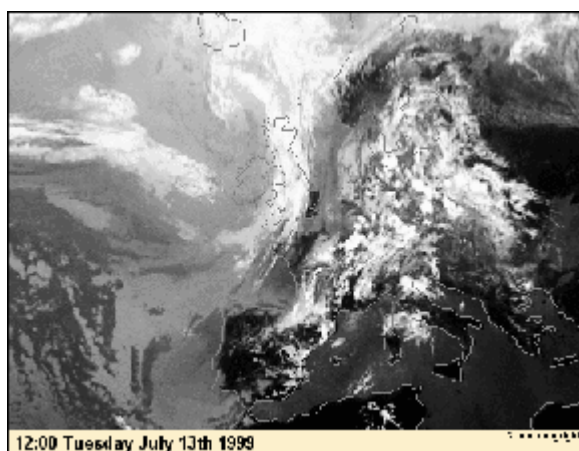
It was going so well we decided to press on to l'Abervrach, passing the Four lighthouse at about 1400. We tacked round the Basse Paupian buoy and could just lay the Libenter buoy, the entrance to the L'Abervrach channel. We found a buoy in L'Abervrach sat 1650. It had been beautiful sailing all day.



The log showed 32.8 miles, but we had covered 55 miles with help from the tide, with tack angles into the southern end of the Chenal du Four of about 70°. The day ended with a quiet supper on board, with the

sun playing on the bulkhead in the cabin, and Dairne dozing - again!

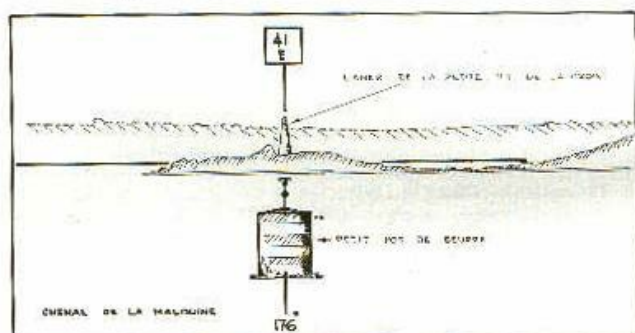
Monday at 13th July



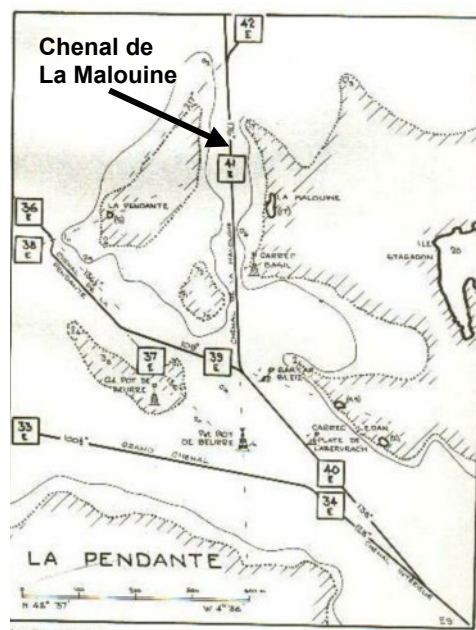
The forecast for the week which we had heard was still looking accurate. Indeed looking at the satellite picture, it looks as though we had the best weather around, from a cloud point of view!



We left the buoy at 1010 with a brisk north-west a force for and motored down the channel and eventually through the Chenal de la Malouine. this is a very narrow channel with a long leading marks but the diagrams in the Robson book are quite clear. It looks quite easy on the Robson sketch....



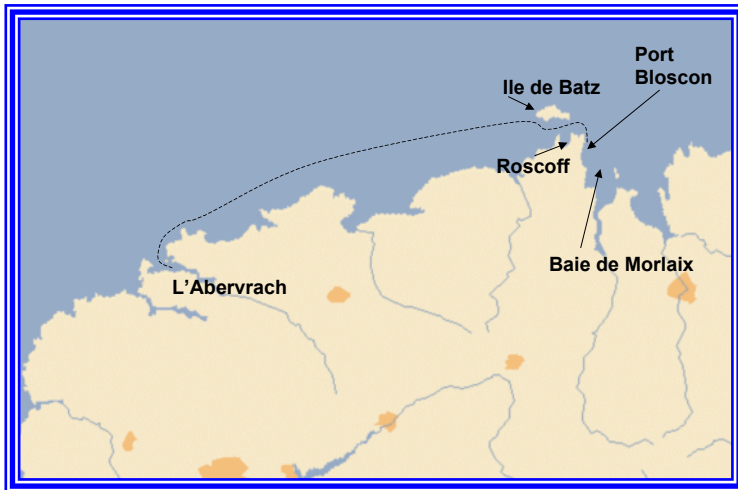
But it never seems quite so clear in reality - even though we had excellent visibility and flat water. Stern marks are always more difficult too.



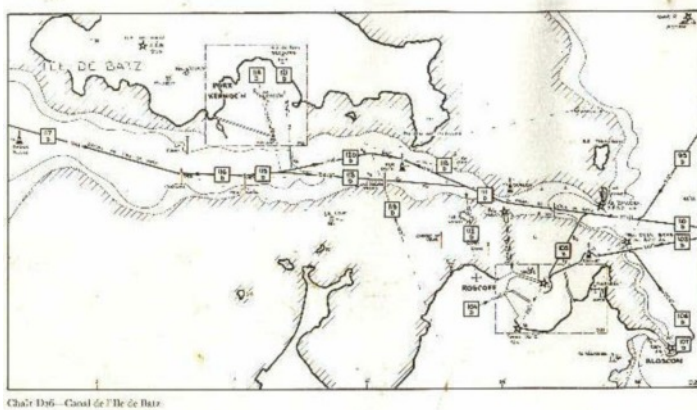
By 1100 the we were under full sail headed towards the Lizen van Ouest buoy.

There is a somewhat eerie feeling skirting around the edge of the rocks which mark the boundaries around the huge Ile Vierge lighthouse.





Gradually the wind faded until by 1230 we abandoned the use of the windvane and resorted to the electric autopilot on a near dead run with the jib goosewinged. this gave us the advantage that we could enjoy our lunch without too much rolling and by 1300 we were to cables south of the Pen ar Ross buoy.



From time to time during the afternoon we tried to sail, but in the end it was motor sailing all away until we reached the channel behind Ile de Batz. Our original intention had been to anchor near Porz Kernoch in the Ile de Batz channel, but there was some swell and we decided to go on.

The options appeared to be to go on to Tebeurden (too far), to go up the Penze river (we were unprepared with our pilotage) or to anchor off Port Bloscon which was our choice. In the event it turned out well because of there was an empty buoy available, and it was beautifully sheltered from the North West and the South. Our trip through the water had been 23 miles, although we had made 56 miles over the ground, just showing how strong the Brittany tides can be.

Dairne managed to put together some very special crepes for supper. As dusk descended we had a magnificent firework display over the town of Roscoff and from all the towns around the Baie de Morlaix celebrating French independence day.

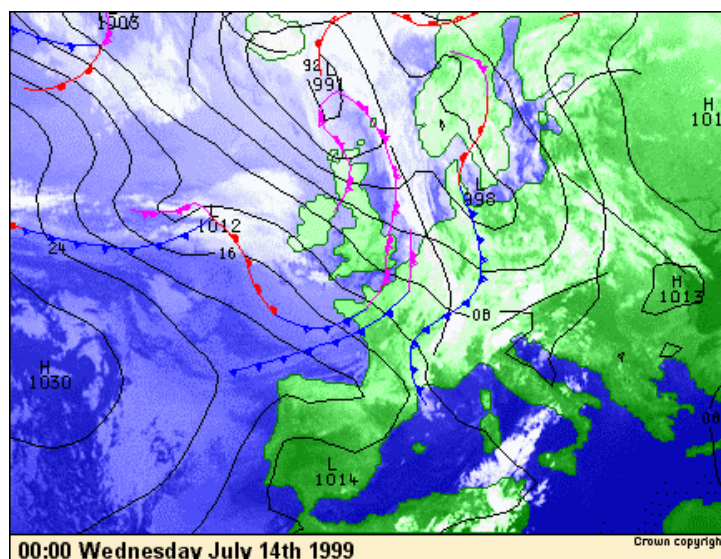
At 2330, the "Quiberon", the Brittany Ferries ship, sailed for Plymouth, a magnificent sight.

Tuesday 14th July

True to forecast, there was a brisk WSW wind of force 4 to 5 when we dropped the buoy at 1030 under main alone. The weather was set to worsen the following day, so we were bidding to get to Treguier, where we could hide up a river.

Rounding Le Menk a stern transit was picked up comprising Duslen and Menguen.

This took us out into deep



water where we jibed and set the jib for a broader reach which took us north of the La Meloine. We were of rolling like a pig with the windvane just about coping, so we put up one reef in the main. Gradually we eased seawards to the north of the La Meloine rocks.

We should have used the twin headsail rig with which we had previously experimented, but we needed to push hard over the foul tide, and the heavy weather jib was probably too small for the job. This meant that, without the pole in (and I was too lazy at that time of the morning!) we had to sail off the dead-downwind course which would have taken us toward Sept Iles. The fast way would have been to gybe, and go inside La Meloine, along the shore towards the Lannion and take the first of

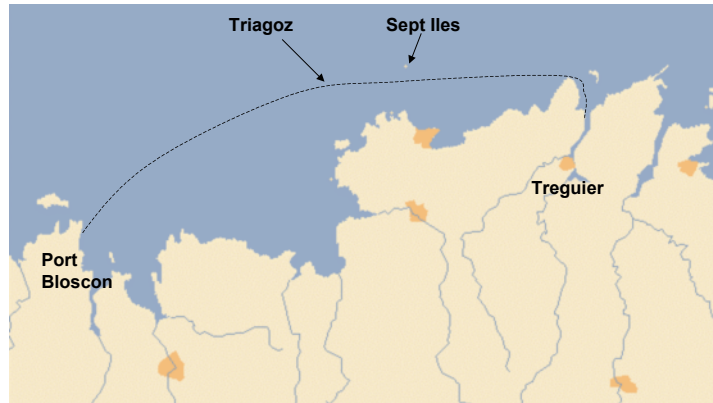


the flood tide past Treberuden. But I was quite keen to have a close look at Triagoz, which we had only seen before in the far distance. So the very broad reach course, which gave a ground track of 030° was just about acceptable. By mid morning, with La Meloine safely to the South of our position, I succumbed and set the pole with 2 stops of the telescopic extension as I wanted a few rolls in the jib. The photograph, taken earlier in the year near Poole shows why! Also, in the picture, Dairne is helming, but near Triagoz Fanny was in control.



By 1300 we were nearly out to Triagoz and were nearly on a dead run with a large quartering and somewhat confused sea. The boat was a running at nearly full speed and despite the difficult conditions Fanny, the windvane, was coping well. It was wind against tide, so progress was slow.

A jibe was called for near Triagoz. As always, we rolled the Genoa up before the jibe, bring the boom across, reset the pole with its topping left and then unroll the Genoa. It may take a little longer, but it is certainly safe.

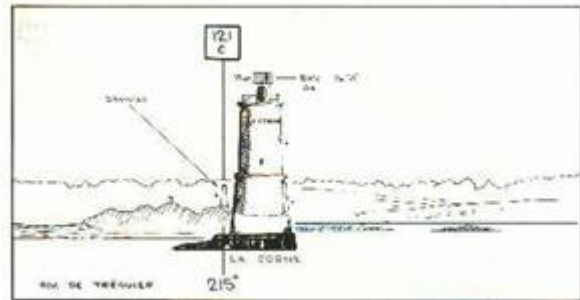


Heading in towards the gap between Sept Iles and Ploumanach, the tide turned and we started to fly, eventually reaching more than 7.5 knots over the ground. Another jibe enable us to set up a comfortable course to the Basse Crublent buoy. It had been a wonderful wild sail all the way, slow in the first half speeding up to a sleigh ride as the tide turned in our favour. At one time we were going at 9.5 knots over the ground. We reached the Basse Crublent at 1700.



The directions in the Cumberland book are easy for the first phase of the entrance, but the drawings in Robson's book are wonderful as one makes the

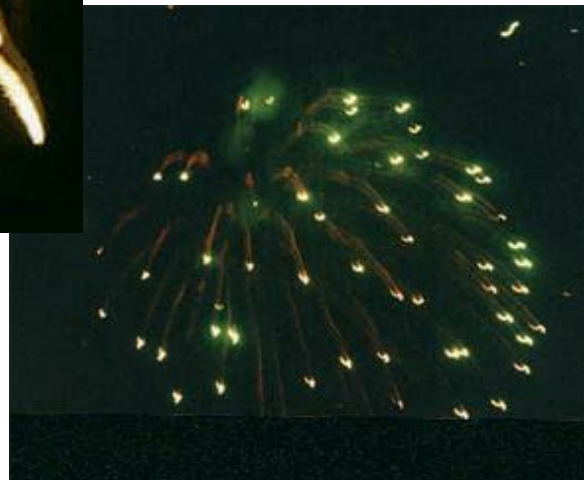
turn into the river, with various options for short cuts.



We went in the standard way, finally picking up the La Corne transit before seeing the first of the fairway buoys which lead all the way up this beautiful river until Treguier is sighted. It was motor sailing all the way up the river to Treguier where we made fast at 1830, fortunately at slack water - although that lulled us into a false sense of security!



Unfortunately, we had chosen a very short pontoon and although all looked well, when the tide started to ebb "Ariadne" was pulled almost diagonally across the berth and we were lucky to avoid damage.



The weather was grey and threatening to be less than pleasant. Treguier is a comfortable place to be and we had already decided on layday here to let the bad weather go through. It is a really delightful town, with a wonderful

cathedral which has spire which looks as though it has been made of concrete lace. We were next to a wonderful gaffer from Plymouth being used as a kind of sail training vessel.

As the tide dropped... and dropped.... And dropped, the river began to show all the banks and channels. We could see the path we had taken by the buoys and how close one had to go to some of the obstructions. Although it was windy, the sun shone, and it was a lovely



evening, at first, though it did rain later.

We enjoyed an early meal, and waited until about 2300 when there was a magnificent firework display on the bridge just above the marina. We had a grandstand view! There was a disco on the river bank, and plenty of revelry and noise, but we just kept to the boat and watched from a discreet distance! Independence Day was well and truly celebrated!

15th July, Layday in Treguier

The marina manager, who was clearly used to "stupeed English" strongly suggested that we moved berth to a longer finger pontoon. This time we were next to a Westerly with a retired English couple on board. Very friendly. When asked where he was off to next, he said that he had arranged to meet someone at Brehat at the end of the month. Two weeks to travel less than one day's sail! That's the life.

It is just a lovely town. Dairne found the steep hills a bit of a drag, but we did some essential shopping and sat in the square supping a beer in the sunshine, admiring the spire.. The power sockets in the Marina wee the old French style, and after hunting around, it was discovered the marina shop sold the right plug, so we had shore power and a chance to give the battery a good charge - although we had had no real problems at any time, despite keeping the fridge running continuously (mainly on the economy setting which limits the current drain to 1 amp unless the engine is running).

Treguier itself is built round a large square, and the cathedral dominates many views of the town, even some of the quaint side streets and squares.

As we strolled back to the boat in the late afternoon, we stopped to look at an ancient rustbucket, about 4000dwt. It was one of the Baltiski class Russian (or ex-Russian ships. At high tide it had a 20° list, but at low tide it sat upright. It must have been interesting getting it up the river. Why was it there? Would it ever go to sea again? We never did



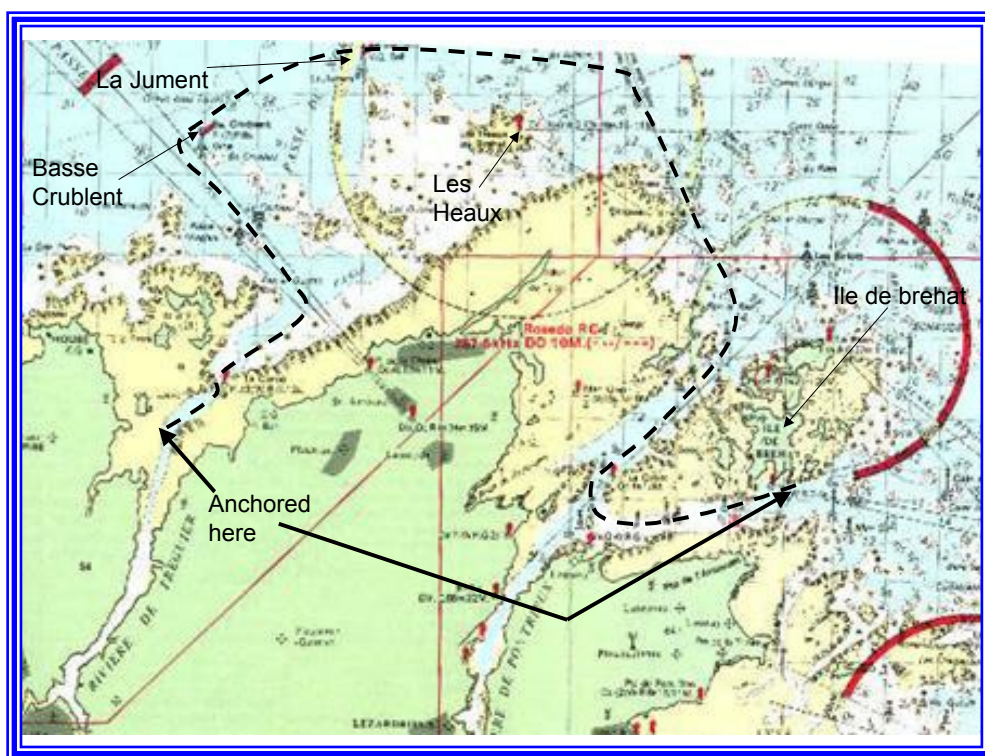
find out!

By evening, we couldn't face the hill again, so opted for the barbecue restaurant close to the Marina. It was a serendipitous choice. The meal was magnificent, Dairne starting with a dozen oysters, followed by moules, and a meat course and sweet. Including a bottle of Muscadet, the lot came to less than £12 each. Superb cooking, good service, pleasant surroundings. Without doubt voted the best meal of the holiday!

It was just a short stroll back to the boat, having had a restful day, with good food and wine. Not a bad way of life!

We were about to round the corner into the Baie de St Malo to begin the second main phase of our cruise. From the French weather forecasts, we heard that the *houle* (swell) was becoming significant in the western end of Brittany, and we felt quite pleased that we had judged it right so far and would be protected from it. The next day would provide some of the most interesting pilotage of the whole cruise, with a run from Treguier to Ile de Brehat.

16th July the Treguier to Brehat



With the high water 0920 the flood tide required to take us around the corner to the Brehat and would not be until the afternoon. Theoretically we could have driven against the ebb through the *Passe de la Gaine* close to the shore, but against a dropping tide in a very narrow channel did not appeal! We decided however that the advantage of leaving Treguier was so great that we would go down towards the mouth of the river and wait at anchor till the tide was favourable. The run down the river was in gentle conditions under power. Eventually we anchored in 11.1 metres

off Pte Tourot. It was a peaceful morning and Graham spent the time polishing the monitor and the pushpit while watching the rocks pop out of the water as the tide fell.



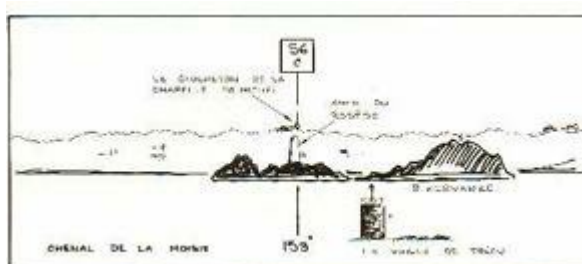
On a previous visit in Fay-A we had used the narrow Passe de la Gaine, which is direct and inshore route. However, we would have had to wait until the tide was at least half up before tackling it, so we opted to go outside Les Heaux and try the Moisie passage.

At 1505 we weighed and proceeded under full main and engine down the main fairway, past La Corne tourelle, and turning to port at the Pen ar Guizec buoy - no short cuts! It is straight run then until the Basse Crublent buoy was reached. Almost be drifting on the tide, course was set for the Jument, although it was necessary to steer off by quite a large amount to allow



for the set of the tide which was already beginning to run strongly to the East. Quite soon the engine had to be started again. At the Jument, the heading was changed to due East to skirt the rocks which surround the impressive Les Heaux lighthouse.

Using the excellent drawings in Malcolm Robson's books, we were able to easily see the transit so for the Channel passing the Moisie beacon. Even so, with the tide running hard it was a fairly nerve-racking passage as we reckoned there was only just



enough water in the channel and at that time it can be very narrow at half tide. What makes it all more difficult is that the rocks are only visible on one side, while on the other side and all around the boat there is just swirling water. However the wind was very light and there was a very little swell, so motor sailing under mainsail only made it relatively easy to see the transits, although the long transit through to the Church on Brehat was



quite difficult to see at first, despite the good visibility. This is not a channel that I would wish to attempt in poor visibility or with any sea running.



By 1745, we were safely through the Moisie channel and into Grand Chenal, rounding the Vielle de Treou Tourelle. We were now back in more familiar territory, motoring up the wide Grand Chenal.



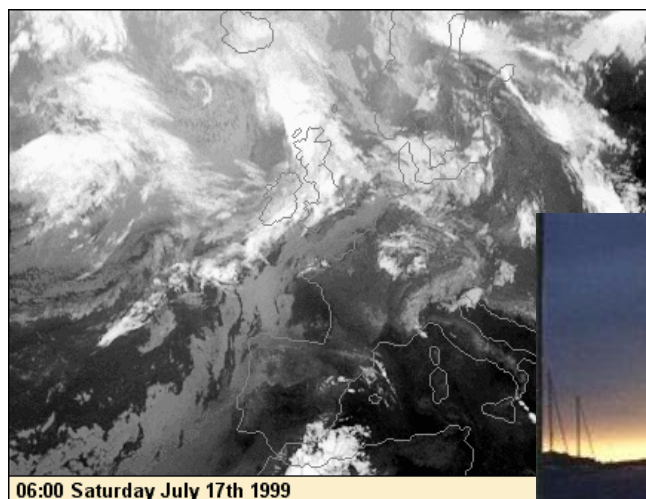
This took us past the La Croix beacon, then taking Robson's short cut round the corner we passed the Rompa tourelle, and eventually round of the south side of Ile de Brehat until we eventually anchored in deep water off Port Clos. It was a warm still evening, and being a Friday, said there were a large number of boats anchored for the weekend. We managed to find a suitable space to anchor. Last time we had used this anchorage, they had been visitors buoys but no more!



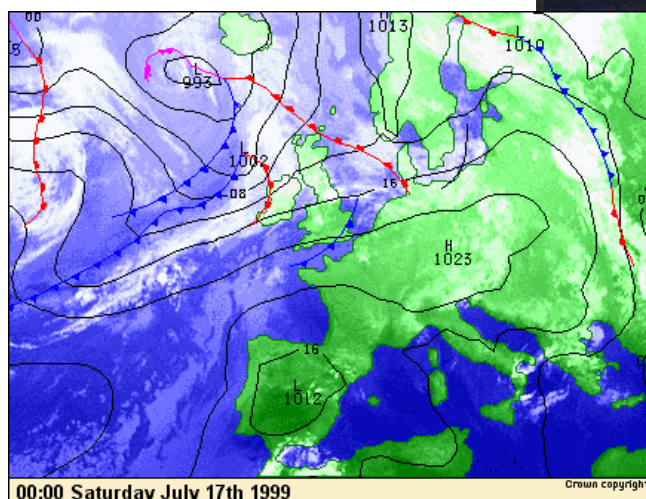
The total passage had been less than 14 miles from the anchorage in the Trieux estuary, but it had been solid pilotage all the way requiring continuous concentration. Good fun, but always a relief to have completed the trip safely.

There was not sufficient time to go ashore, but it is a beautiful and wild place, so we were content to have a gin and tonic in the cockpit an early supper and just watch the sunset.

17th July, Brehat to St Quay Portrieux



We woke to a spectacular dawn. The forecast was for improving weather, and the cloud sheet allowed the sun to shine in underneath from the North east.



The weather map shows a strong ridge up the channel. Our stay in Treguier had allowed the bad weather to go through, and we were set for several days of gentle weather, with too little wind for good sailing, but plenty of opportunities to visit new places in the Baie de St Malo which we were now entering.

With strong spring tides running, the track facility on the autopilot was invaluable as it enabled us to travel straight lines between the various waypoints without risk of deviation into the many rocky shoals. There are many outliers, all marked by IALA spar buoys as one passes the Anse de Paimpol, then past an attractive cliff-lined coast with many attractive little bays. We were beginning to run out of time, but it is clearly an area well worth more detailed exploration, with many bays sheltered from westerly winds and half-tide harbours every few miles.



The final approach to St Quay Portrieux is quite spectacular, with a series of rocky outcrops. Among these were dozens of boats out fishing, mainly leisure day boats. As the marina photograph shows the small Benetau power boat is immensely popular in this area. One slight snag on the approach is that the new harbour wall has obscured one of Robsons transit for the approach, but it was not a serious problem, and the book has been annotated with an alternative transit.



The new marina is dauntingly large, and our hearts sank to see such a boat carpark. We found a berth not far from an obviously neglected Rustler called "Agitator", but we were asked to move to another pier reserved for visitors. As we were there by 1100, we had the afternoon to explore.



It was a long walk along the new mole, round the old drying harbour. There is a long sweeping road round the old harbour, and tucked in the corner is a quaint area of narrow streets, shops and restaurants. I went into the old village, and found a promising restaurant to which we returned that evening. A happy choice, with excellent food and wine.



Sunday 18th July St Quay to St Malo

I had remembered to set my alarm clock tape recorder to pick up the 0535 radio 4 shipping forecast, because on a Sunday it includes a week ahead forecast for yachties. This one gave quite a lot of pause for thought, because it suggested a couple of light days, with strengthening winds by Wednesday and a blow on Thursday. Previous forecasts had been spot on accurate, so we had to work out the schedule for the week. What a pity this immensely useful forecast is not at a more sensible hour!



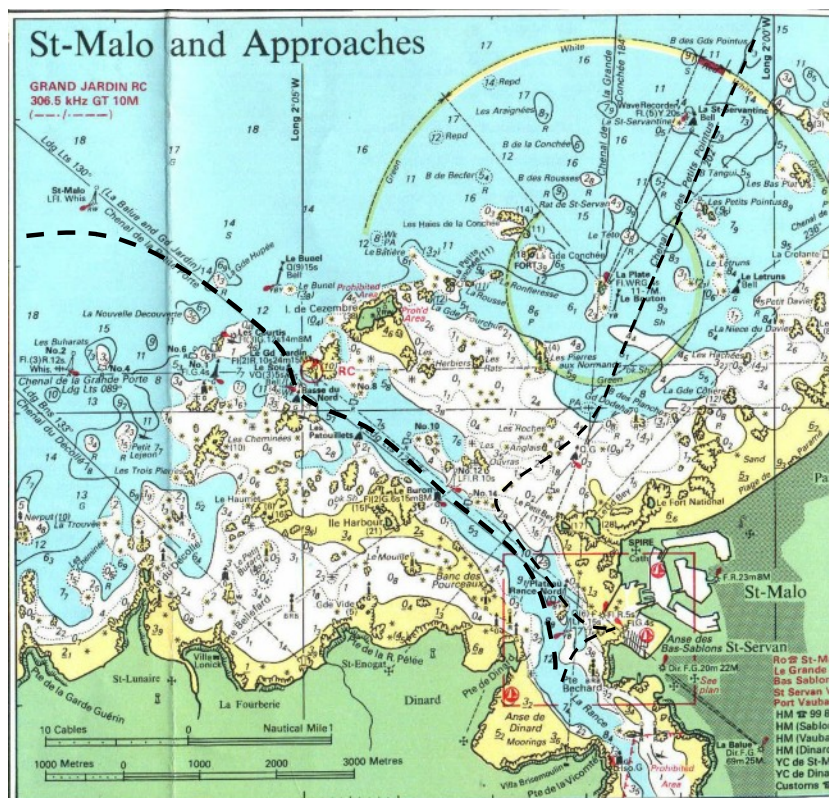
Today we could go to St Malo, a long trip but not impossible. Then could we get round the corner to Cancale? I particularly wanted to go there because of the seafood - quite apart from the interesting pilotage involved. But whichever way I worked it out, it didn't work. We had to go north on Monday, possibly via a lunchtime stop at Iles de Chausey to get to Jersey. Tuesday would take us to Guernsey, with Wednesday possibly taking across the Channel before the weather broke and went strong NW. So Cancale was abandoned, but it remains there to be discovered in a future year. The plan was set. If the forecast was right, we would get to Chausey for a brief visit, leaving only Ile de Sein as a Brittany island we had not visited. A target for next year? We shall see!

By 0720 we were on our way, passing to the North of the rocks passing the Madeaux buoy so we could quickly move towards favourable streams. By 0900 the Petit Lejohn was 1.75M at 108°M, and by 1100, Cap Frehel was 2.72M @ 133°M. It had been motoring all the way. At long last, at 1110, we chanced turning the engine off, and at 1145 sighted a Rustler 36 called "AKKA" going in the opposite direction.





Slowly we sailed across the bay, in a gradually making seabreeze falling on to the Brittany Coast, roughly NNW force 2. south of the Vieux Bancs to pick up the leading marks into St Malo. Rounding the Les Cortis tourelle, we ran slowly in, goosewinged, passing Le Grand Jardin lighthouse, eventually running out of wind close in and motoring to the anchorage off Dinard - there being insufficient tide for either of the St Malo marinas.



The Baie de St Malo really is marinaland! There are now very few harbours without one, but the snag is that the rise and fall of tide is so great that they are really only accessible above half tide. We sat in the river watching all the weekend yachts go home, looking across the river at the magnificent walled old town of St Malo. At 1900 we weighed and went in to the St Servan marina.





As we were to discover, the visitors berths are near the entrance, and susceptible to swell, especially in a northerly wind. Fortunately it was light, so it was not too onerous. However, a mental note has been made not to be there in bad weather if there is any north in the wind.



We had decided to get a taxi to the Vieille Port of St Malo for the evening, but there were none to be had. A little questioning led to the offer of a lift to place where taxis could be found. Our kind driver took us right to the main gate to the Vieille Port, which was generous, and most friendly.

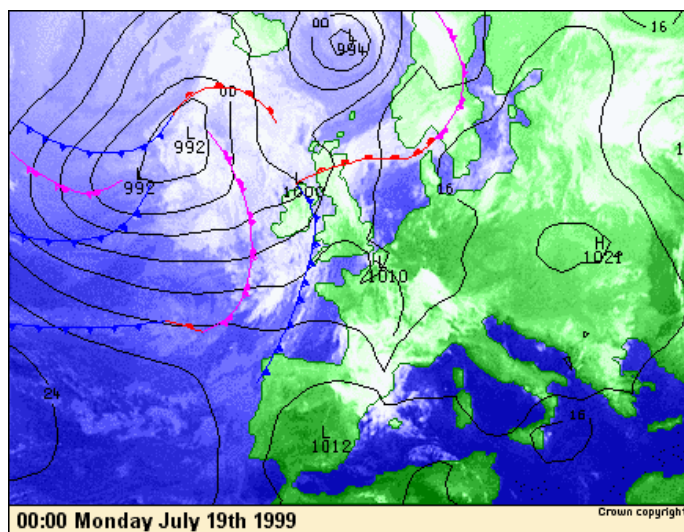


The old town was heaving, even at eight o'clock on a Sunday evening. We walked the perimeter walls, ending up at a bistreau in one of the squares, watching the world go by over a cool beer. Then we strolled back to the main gate. No taxis appeared at the taxi rank. After consulting a local policeman, I managed to call a taxi driver at home, explain where we were, and where we wanted to go. It stretched my French to the limit!



It had been a long evening, and we knew we had an early start, so a quick Scotch preceded a fairly early night.

19th July St Malo to Iles de Chausey and St Helier



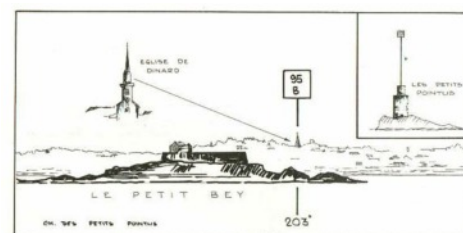
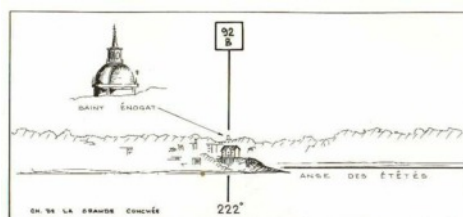
We would have liked to have stayed longer in St Malo. It is a most attractive town and the old part is delightful. Next time, we will go in to the marina via the lock. However, and the weather was set to deteriorate. The morning dawned with little wind and relatively poor visibility. The forecast did indicate that the wind it would increase to West or west north-west F5 by the afternoon. Cancale was clearly out of the question.

The issue was whether or we could take the risk of a visiting Chausey.

Going there had been a long-standing ambition, and we decided that it would be safe to make a lunchtime visit and then proceed on to St Helier.



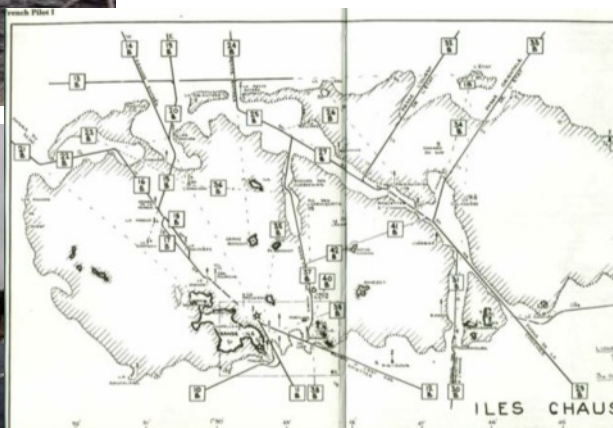
At 0740, we proceeded out of the marina under power and lined up for the Chenal Des Petits Pointus. The Robson marks were very clear. There was a slight amount of swell and it was more comfortable to have the main up. This we did as we cleared the Servantine buoy once past the rocks surrounding St Malo. And with the tide beginning to run quite strongly, a it was necessary to allow for a cross set of nearly 20°. The islands were sighted at about four miles and the entrance was made by the southern route which is easy and clear of all obstructions.



There are plenty of visitors buoys close to the island, but there were a lot of visitors!



We motored gently past the village. It was an intriguing and attractive place, and we couldn't wait to explore. Eventually we found an empty buoy and by 1045 hrs we were moored safely fore and aft in quite a strong stream.



The dinghy was inflated and we went ashore. It was a fascinating little island, with an attractive landing place.

We ambled slowly up the hill to the church, from which we could see across vast areas of rocks totally surrounding the anchorage. Vedettes were coming and going.

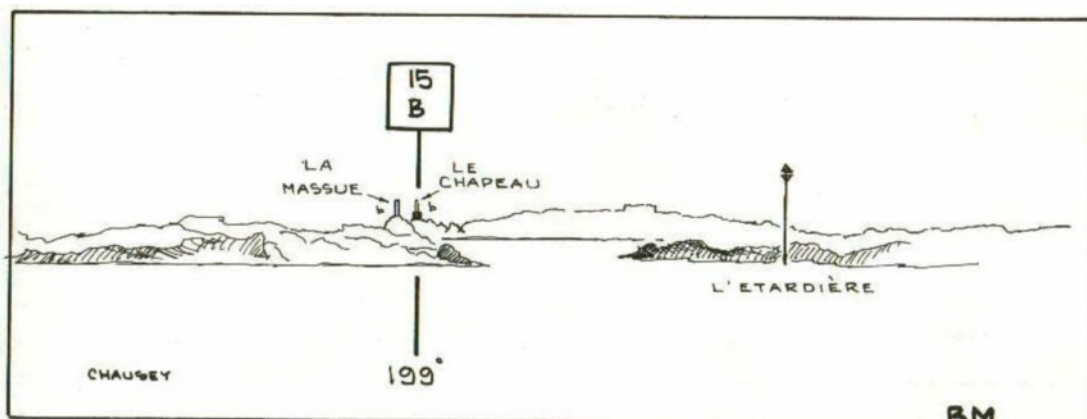


As Robson says, the residents face the dilemma of wanting to live on a lonely island, and being dependent on grockles (tourists) to be able to do so! We strolled across to the area where there is a post office, a hotel (with restaurant) and a café/ shop. We had hoped to have lunch on the island, but the café did not appeal and the only restaurant was closed. So we bought a baguette plus a few bits and returned to the boat where we had an excellent lunch with a bottle of Muscadet. It was excellent!

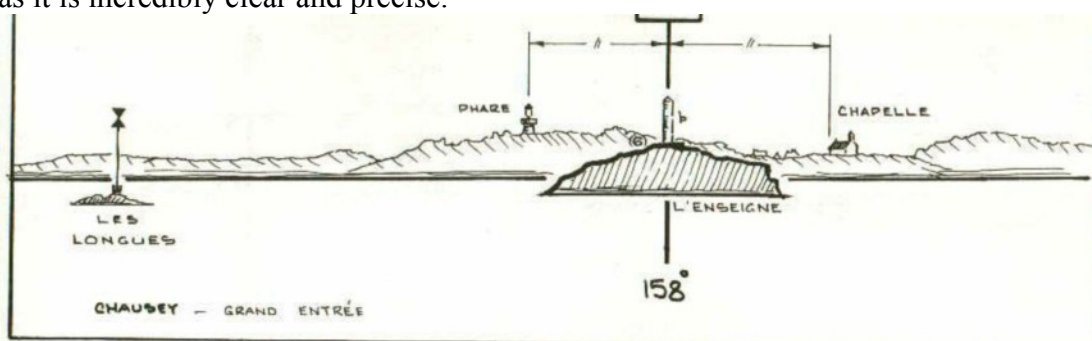


The next part of the passage was another challenging piece of pilotage as we intended to leave the islands throughout the rocks to the north. High water had been at 1130, roughly, but we needed to wait until the tide would be strongly favourable in the direction of the Minquiers. I calculated we could leave safely until 1430, but to give a bit of safety we left at 1400.

Our route out to the north would use the Grand Entrée, which was safely negotiated with a comfortable 1.6 metres under the keel. It is a fascinating channel with a dogleg. The first leg lines up the balise shown in the photo above with the church tower, and one then proceeds until two beacons set among the rocks are in line.



One never knows whether they will be as clear as Robson's sketches, but in this case, they were. This takes you on the crossleg. Then finally the white L'Enseigne beacon in line with the lighthouse leads away to the north. Indeed, it is claimed that this transit almost takes you to the East Minquiers buoy in good visibility. I can believe it as it is incredibly clear and precise.



Not all the obstructions are visible, but the beacons and tourelles, plus the highly visible church on Chausey itself give excellent transits.

It was motor sailing again! We had left the islands at 1400 and by 1545 were 2

cables from the North East Minquiers buoy. The forecast wind had not materialised, which was disappointing, with of the result that we had to motor all the way.

Once such Jersey was in full sight, we called our friends Fay and George Le Couture on the mobile phone. They had been our next door neighbours when we had lived on the island some 17 years before. It was typical that their reaction to our unexpected call was to invite us for supper that evening. We were to call on our arrival at the marina and they would collect us. An easy evening was in prospect.



As we motored pas the Demi de Pas tourelle, it was a strange feeling. We had lived in jersey for 3 years, but that was 18 years previously. We had had no desire to return, but we were at least visiting friends. It is a lovely island, but no place for an ordinary family to live!

By 1805 we were made fast in the tidal La Collette marina, but it was fairly full, so we had to drop into a cross berth which was a bit tricky, and would present problems leaving! Soon we were on our way to our friend's house in St Clements.

On our return to the marina we ended up chatting to Stewart and Christine who owned a Tradewind 35 called Pleiades which was moored nearby. They ended up on board chatting, as one does, about boats. They kept their boat at Birdham near Chichester. It was their first season, and they had already attempted some interesting passages. It is one of the serendipitous aspects of cruising that we shall probably bump into them again in some outlandish spot, maybe a few years from now. Lets hope so!

20th July St Helier To St Peter Port

It had rained hard during the night, and was blowing hard in the morning, pinning us on to the berth. The tides dictated that we waited until 1100 before leaving. With a spring to prevent the stern (and Fanny) bumping the pontoon astern, another from the stern to prevent us going into the boat ahead, yet a third to stop the stern swinging in when we swung away, a line was run from the bow, over a speedboat on the pontoon running across our stern. The electric capstan was ready, but was not needed. Dairne hauled the bow clear till we were head to wind, while I dropped the spring and stern

warps. Stewart - our friend from Pleiades - helped by dropping the bow line and we were away. Main up, and a long motorsail plug against the tide across St Aubins bay past the Noirmont tower to Corbiere in rain and a lumpy sea with the wind dead ahead - the only conditions when one could wish for more than our 27 hp Yanmar, which nevertheless performed splendidly.



Then, gradually we were able to take a large handrail round the Corbiere lighthouse at about 1230 until we could make sail. The tide was setting strongly to the east, so with the wing about WSW, we were able to just crack the sheets and make the track towards Guernsey.



The wind freshened to F5 WSW, and there was a large, lumpy sea. At 1255 we put a reef in the main and unrolled the jib with 6 rolls. The issue was whether we could make up enough against the tide to weather the Lower heads buoy to the South of Herm. The tide turned just in time to help us, so we did, but not with a lot to spare. It was interesting comparing our performance with a French boat which was definitely faster through the water, but was carrying so much sail that it was excessively heeled and making leeway. We did better.



As we cleared Lower heads, we were able to crack the sheets a little, and we were coming into the flatter water in the protection of Guernsey. The last hour was a glorious, fast reach in with bright, but patchy sunshine which dappled Herm, Jethou and Sark. Glorious!



By 1600 we were alongside the waiting pontoon outside St Peter Port, the only problem being an officious idiot who made us re-moor to no useful purpose. The tide was, but now, only just starting to rise, so it was going to be late before we could get into the marine. We took the water taxi ashore, and found an Italian restaurant. It was good, but we had Dover Sole and Sea Bass "as available" and they charged the earth! By contrast with the excellent value we had experienced in France, we came out having had a good meal, but feeling cheated and robbed. Typical Channel Islands!

At 2145 we motored in to the marina for the night.

21st July, Guernsey to Studland

The tides were now dictating departure at civilised times. A slow start, followed by a little shopping for cheap booze still allowed time to visit another Rustler 36 we had seen in the marina. Called Border Reiver, we knew the name, but eventually realised it was the same as another entirely different boat belonging to a Tynemouth SC friend on which Sue (Sleepy Sue from the Irish cruise, if you read last year's offering) had sailed.

It turned out that this Border Reiver was on its way back from 2 years in the Med. The boat was newer than Ariadne, and the owner, a consulting engineer knew what he was about. He had many similar extras to us, but had a much better arrangement for keeping weather out of the cockpit lockers, a mod which will be fitted to Ariadne this winter. He had not enjoyed the Med. Like so many others we have spoken to he found it too hot, no wind or a gale, and expensive. He supported our plan to cruise NW Europe when we retire.



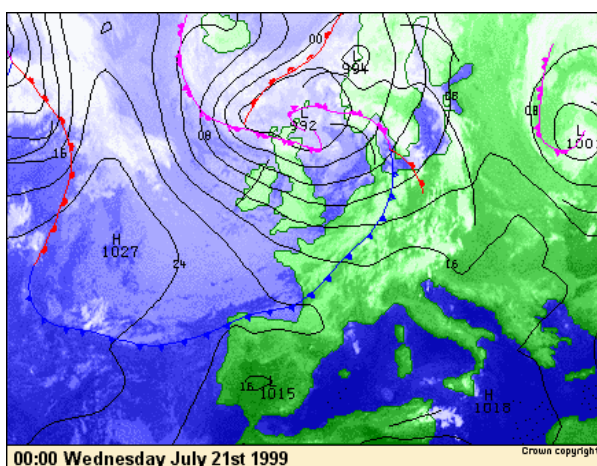


There was the usual mayhem with too many boats wanting to leave all at once to make the most of the tide, but we were eventually safely away, heading up the Little Russel towards Alderney. The wind was forecast WSW 5/6, and so it proved. We started with the small staysail set on the inner forestay, but had to point up too high to compensate for the tide, and eventually rolled out some genoa. As we approached Alderney, the staysail was lowered, and was to take no further part in the proceedings. With winds of 18-23kts, its benefit was marginal.

The problem was that the tide started setting strongly to the NE, with SOG exceeding 7kts much of the time. This meant we were in danger of being set over the Pierre au Vrac, and although there would be plenty of water over it, it could be throwing up a nasty sea. By overcompensating, this meant that when we turned into the Swinge, we were on a dead run heading just inside Burhou. The slant of the tide took us dangerously near



the ledges between Ortac and Burhou, and we were forced to wear round (because it was so bumpy) and broad reach across the Swinge towards Alderney. Wearing round again, the strong stream took us rapidly through the Swinge, past Braye harbour, and deposited us into the rough water where the stream from the Swinge crashes into the tide running up the Channel. Lumpy.



Through the whole passage of the Swinge, the seas were so confused, that it was hand steering until we were well north of Alderney. Then we

settled into a fast reach.

The forecast was peculiar, suggesting the wind might veer through N perhaps to NE by morning. We decided to go for speed to the NNE so that if the forecast materialised we could tack and lay into Studland or the Solent, depending on what had happened. With a SOG of nearly 8 kts we crashed on throughout the afternoon, but the wind did not veer. So as the tide turned to the west, we found ourselves making back towards the rhumb line from Alderney to Studland. This looked promising.



It was tremendous sailing, with 1 or 2 reefs, several rolls in the genoa, 2m high rollers burnished with sunlight like handworked copper.



The passage was not uneventful. Three times we had to alter course to avoid commercial shipping. More interestingly, as we sighted the English coast and dusk came down we saw a boat beating hard down channel to the west. Then another, the two more, the a whole fleet. It was the Admiral's Cup fleet on their race to the Wolf Rock. While we sat sheltered in our cockpit, with Fanny doing the

work, they were draped over the windward gunwhale going hell for leather into what promised to be a very dirty night, with St Albans and Portland still to come. They were welcome to it. What was tricky was that their nav lights were low down on the pulpit to save weight and windage, and were only visible when we were both on a wave. We passed a couple of boats at closer quarters than I would have liked!

Our SOG never dropped below 5.4 kts all the way to Studland where we anchored at 0015 hrs after a fast passage. The big quartering sea had presented Fanny with no problems all the way, massively reducing the crew stress.

At last! We were clear of marinas!

22nd July, Studland to Newtown



Now the tides were even later, so we could have a lazy morning after our exciting passage from Guernsey. There is something restful and welcoming about Studland. It ought to be a wild, open, exposed place, but usually it is just, well, peaceful.

We tried to call Clare on the mobile, but it did not want to work at Studland. I am sure Vodafone works better off the coast. Instead, we called

Niton, only to get the engaged signal. After checking with Coastguard, they found out that Niton was off the air "till further notice", but was due to close down shortly anyway. Amazing the Coastguard did not know, but had to find out!

The wind had moderated overnight, and in a gentle NW force 3, we weighed and set full sail. There was a gentle slop on the water left over from the previous day, so the boom preventer was rigged. This is an arrangement I had on Fay-A and it is extremely safe. A line with eye splices at each end is permanently kept secured at its midpoint at the outer end of the boom. The



gooseneck ends (where the eye splices are) are secured in camcleats on the boom and double held when not in use with light shock cord. This means that, using a snatch block at the bow, a line can be led from the cockpit to the bow, and connected to one of the lazy ends without needing

to reach the boom end, which can be dangerous in a seaway. All the work is done near the mast where there is plenty to hang on to. Recovering it is just as easy as the lazy end can always be reached. Simply undo the snaphook from the eye and secure back into the camcleat. Very safe, even if the wind



has increased while the guy is set.

So it was going to be a gentle end to the cruise after all. But we had been right to get back as the winds were going to have a northerly slant for some days.



Even so the sheer strength of the tide provoked a reef off Fort Albert as we approached Hurst, but it was shaken out by Yarmouth and we enjoyed a fast reach to Newtown where we picked up a buoy at 1730.

We were close to an attractive wooded sloop called Rebelle. Peggy and Colin Pase came aboard for a very pleasant evening of yarning about boats. I had commented on the quality of his varnish work which he claimed he had not touched for 5 years. The secret apparently was a German concoction called Coelan which has 300% extensibility and is hard wearing - but at £35 per 750ml tin it needs to be used sparingly!

23rd July Newtown to MYC



Even though it was only Friday, we had to get back to MYC as the team from Alice Springs YC were due to arrive next day - but that is another story!



Another lazy morning. A Dutch Bowman 40 came alongside and took over our buoy and we went alongside Rebelle for lunch, which included home made elderflower and apple wines (hic!).



At 1530, we motored clear set full sail with the pole in for a run to Calshot and a glorious sunny reach to MYC. It was a delightful and relaxing end to a successful cruise. Dairne kept up the holiday spirit right to the end!



The end, however, was bizarre!



As we approached dock head, there was a large black liner which had just come off the QE2 berth and which went up to the upper swinging ground to turn - in itself unusual. It was surrounded by small craft as we passed it at Royal Pier. The secret was revealed when it sounded its horn - which played "When you wish upon a star"! I later learned it had been doing this every few minute during its promotional stay in the port. Radio Solent and the staff at

ABP were being driven mad by it. It was, of course, the Disney cruise ship. An ugly monster if ever there was one!

We had logged 645 miles in three weeks, added two new Brittany Islands to our collection, and had excellent weather throughout. The sailing had, on the whole been good, although we had to motor lot in the Baie de St Malo.

But Fanny was the real star!



