



Departure at Dawn!

Ariadne 2000

Scillies

In the millennium Year, *Ariadne* went to the Scillies

The crew were

Dairne & Graham Rabbitts

This log records the trip

Acknowledgement is gratefully given to the following sources

Websites:

UK Met Office: www.meto.gov.uk

Icelandic weather service : www.halo.is (Or weather.euroseek.com)

[Weather Maps were saved from the web in New Zealand by Iain and Claire Rabbitts]

Pilot Books

Isles of Scilly Pilot: Robin Brandon Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson

Yachtsmans Guide to the Scilles: Norm

Cruising Association Handbook

Macmillans

French Pilot : Malcom Robson Nautical

Charts & Maps

Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson

Microsoft

Admiralty Folio Series and others

Photographs

Myself

David Barker

Photo: Yachting Monthly





1: Preparation



Millennium in Newtown

We had seen in the millennium at Newtown on a still morning, then laid up for a couple of months. By now *Ariadne* had completed five seasons, so there were a number of routine jobs to be carried out, such as renewing the anode and replacing the gold tape sheerline. The temporary leads used for Fanny the Monitor windvane, needed to be made permanent, and new cleats were added to the cockpit coaming. A new Spinlock clutch was added to the roller reefing gear, a neat piece of kit, and numerous other small jobs were carried out.

For the previous year we had been pleased with our heavy weather jib, but it had never been expected to take the boat to windward because the sheeting angle was too wide. The sail had, however, been so successful that we decided to try a barber hauler strap arrangement at the mast and the necessary eyeplates and wire strops were made up. It later proved a great success.

Also, from Seateach, a second hand sail dealer, we acquired a No2 hanked-on

Elvstrom genoa to go on the inner

forestay which would act either as a backup in the event of failure of the genoa or the roller gear, and could potentially give us a twin headsail rig for running. During the Spring we had tried both of these arrangements, but during the cruise neither were to feature. It was nevertheless comforting to know they were there.

Another addition, installed when the engine was serviced in the Autumn, was an inverter. It is only 200watts, but is sufficient to charge the many rechargeable items - handheld VHF, power beam, cordless drill, a laptop and printer, and even an electric toothbrush! It will also run the portable radio, and even drive the Black and Decker Mouse polisher. It has proved very useful. The installation, done by the electrician who installed the Adverc the previous year was neat, and exactly what I asked for.



Testing the twin headsail rig - photo David Barker



Blasting along - heavy weather jib with strops

We also had a zip cover made to enable the heavy weather jib to remain on deck secured at the tack and ready to hank on. Apart from the extra safety of not having to drag the sailbag forward in a blow, the deck stowage released a lot of space in the quarter berth area. The new bag looks like a body bag, and has been christened "the Mother in Law".

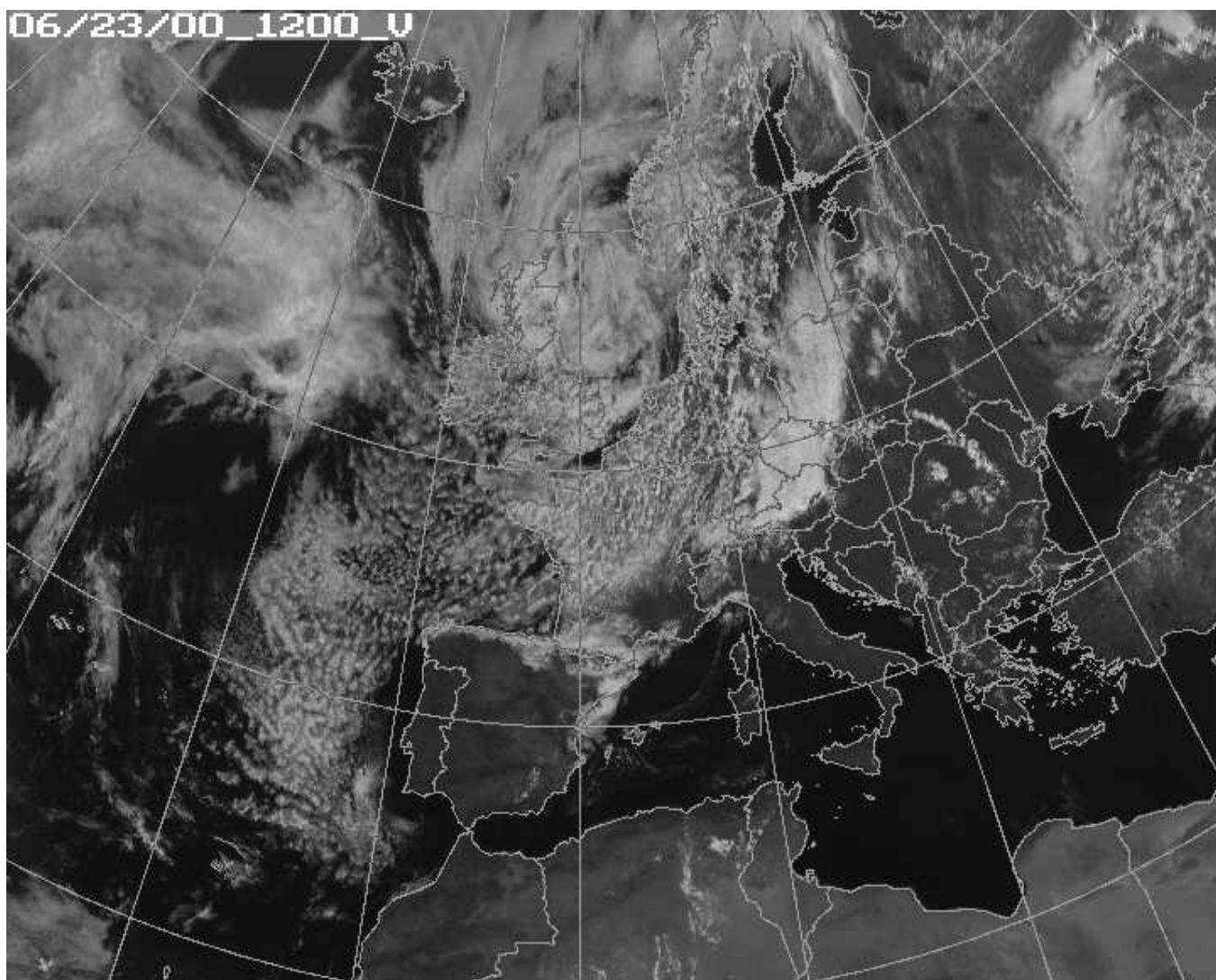
So no earth shattering changes ahead of the cruise, and an interesting, and relatively uneventful Spring around the Solent. The highlights were a weekend with Claire and her parents, after which Dennis wrote a delightful card; a Bank

Holiday with Roger and Maggie, where we tried to get to France or the Channel Islands, but bad weather kept us confined to the Solent, including a jammed roller gear (which sent Dairne up to the masthead three times), and a broken wire in the gas kicker; and a restful weekend during which David Barker took some fascinating pictures.

Dairne had gradually built up the stores on board, so our final departure, while not exactly leisurely, was relatively unstressful.

The broad plan for the cruise was to go the Scillies if we could see settled weather, visit our friends in Falmouth, and come home via the Brittany coast. The dates were chosen to give us neap tides during the third week to make the Brittany segment easier. No records were going to be broken this year, but it offered some opportunity for gentle cruising if the weather was kind.

As our departure weekend approached, the weather patterns indicated possible settled weather in the Scillies from about Tuesday, so our plan changed a little. We would go hard to the West as fast as possible, and visit Falmouth on our way back.





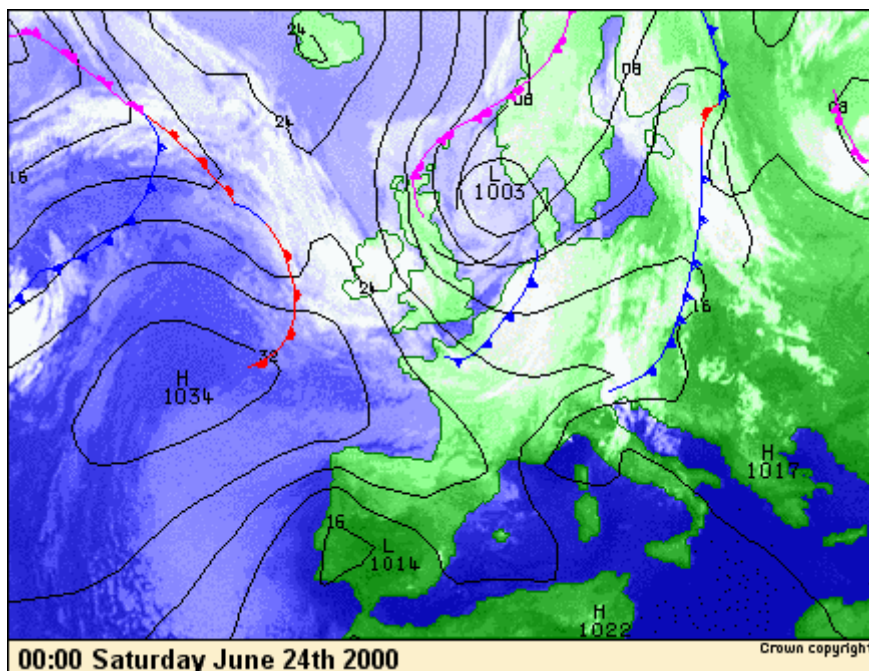
2: The Outward Leg

Saturday 24th June 2000 MYC to Studland



Both Dairne and I had had a busy period, so we were ready for a break. Fortunately, only perishables and last minute clothing had to be stowed, so we were away from the MYC pontoon at 1305, only a little later than planned. By then the tide was already starting to turn to the west at Cowes, so we motorsailed all the way to Calshot (it was a dead run), then unrolled the Genoa as we hardened up into the west Solent.

Quite soon, a reef was called for, then another off Yarmouth as the wind freshened under the influence of the tide. Three tacks saw us over the Bridge and heading west. Twice we got on the wrong side of shifts, so it was a little frustrating. With the prospect of a weather change overnight, *Ariadne* was guided to Studland.



The benefits of a good night's sleep outweighed the prospect of flogging a foul tide round St Albans. By 2000 we were settled, but it had been a vigorous start to our holiday, and we hoped for more settled conditions.

Sunday 25th June 2000: Studland to Salcombe



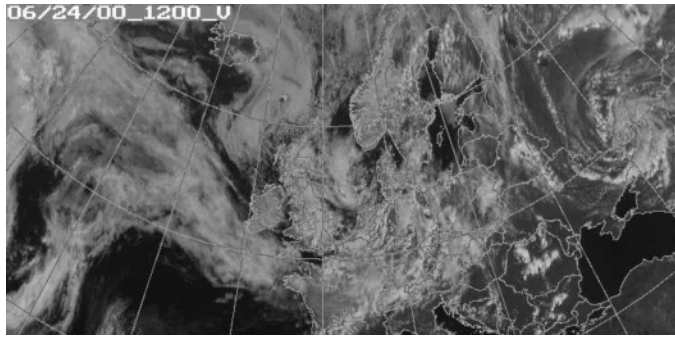
Anvil point at Dawn, looking NE

To make the tide at Portland, we needed an early start, so at 0430, with first light just beginning to show, we were away again, with a Northerly F3 to help us on our way. Once again we had a dead run from Old Harry to Durleston so motorsailed with only the main up. By 0515, we were round Anvil Point, with the engine, off, full jib, and bowling along making 7.5kts over the ground. The sun gradually showed itself over the hills.

Good sailing persisted until Portland was approached at about 0730. The lee from Grove Point killed the wind, so the engine went on to round Portland Bill on the inside passage at 0810.



Attempts to sail in the N F2 wind were soon abandoned and the rest of the day was basically motorsailing.



Portland

In mid afternoon, both sun and moon were clearly visible in positions to produce a cross bearing. So I had my first sextant practice of the year (for several years, for that matter!). These electronics are all very well, but the could go bang, and there is something satisfying about astral navigation. It is still amazing that one can locate the position with considerable accuracy using such a simple instrument. Thank goodness for Mary Blewitt! But being out of practice, it took several re-workings before I could be confident that I had got it right, and even then the fix was only just within 10 miles of the GPS position. More practice needed!



Good moon for a sight



Start Point

By 1615, a light seabreeze had filled in, but not enough to maintain speed. We could see settled weather in the forecast, and were determined to get west as fast as possible. Even so, we would run out of favourable tide just after Start Point, so opted to get some rest in Salcombe and make another early start the next day.

The approach to Salcombe is always dramatic. We intensely dislike Prawle Point which can on occasion be the scene of some nasty waves. On this occasion it was docile.



Prawle Point, with Bolt Head behind

By 1915, we were comfortably secured to a buoy, made supper and turned in.

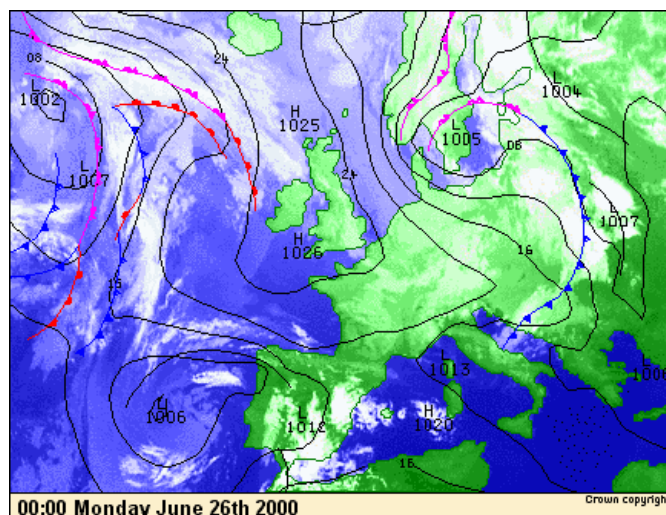


Monday 26th June 2000: Salcombe to Newlyn



Bolt Head at dawn

Out of Salcombe at 0430, with navigation lights needed until past Bolt head. Very little wind at all despite a f/c of NE3/4 going SE perhaps 5/6. Motor and autopilot doing the work with a heading to pass the Lizard by 3M. At 1020 the log records that "the anemometer has not turned for 3hrs!"



It was a long plug, with little relief except a request from Coastguard for reports of reception on channel 10. We duly obliged twice. It sounded like they were trying to adjust the coverage from their aerials. There were a few warships about, and at 1000hrs we found we were in a possible live firing exercise area, but with little we could do about it. In the event, the frigate and its accompanying spotter aircraft moved away to the south.

At 1620, due south of the Lizard, a breeze filled in from the NE. At first it was a bit fickle, and the engine was used to push us up into Mounts Bay, but from then onwards we had a smart breeze and an exhilarating sail to Newlyn.



Lizard, from the west

The first excitement was a racing pigeon who landed on the deck. We never feed them, but gave him some water. We must have been headed in the right direction because it stayed with us into Newlyn harbour and had to be



Stowaway at the Lizard!

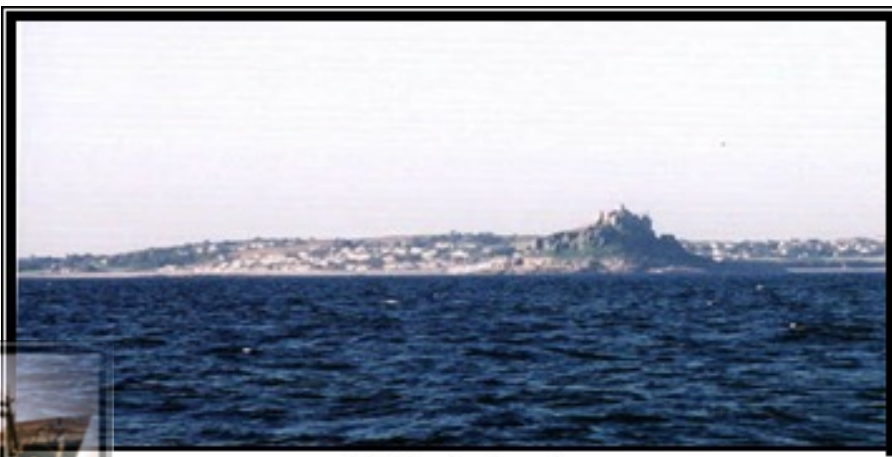
driven away when it started to settle down for the night. It had already made so much mess, that it was decided that enough was enough!

About half way across the 15 mile leg across Mounts Bay we heard a call to Coastguard. One fishing boat had boarded another smaller boat to find the single handed owner with his hand trapped in the winch, unable to raise the alarm. He had been like that since 1000hrs that morning, nearly 7 hours!. The lifeboat was despatched to pick him up and provide some extra help to recover the gear and bring the boat into Newlyn. They both arrived just ahead of us. Nasty accident.



By the time we arrived off Newlyn, the wind had shifted to about ESE 4/5 and a sea had started to build, but there was no problem in rounding up, dropping sail and motoring in.

Newlyn is always busy, but there



St Michaels Mount

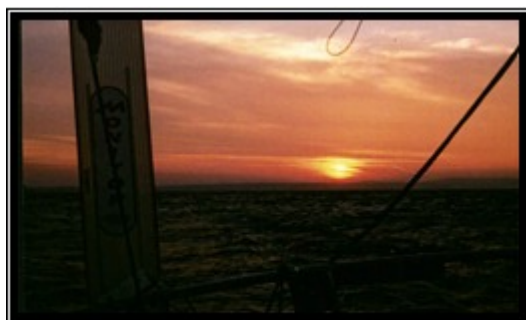
was one trot of yachts behind the central pier which we joined at 2000hrs. Getting ashore was tricky so once again we ate on board. A small 20ft motor launch moored outside us having just plodded over from Scillies.



Newlyn

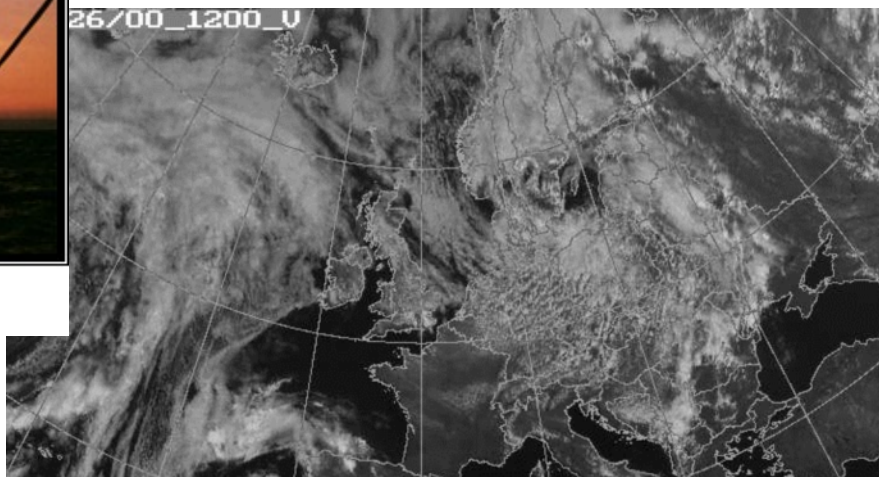
Tuesday 27th June:

Newlyn to St Agnes



Dawn departure from Newlyn

26/00_1200_U



Our third early start in a row at 0440, once the motor boat had dropped off to let us out, took us into a lumpy sea with the wind about E F4/5. One reef and six rolls in the jib gave us adequate speed as we reached to the South past Mousehole.

The weather was not as clear as the satellite picture suggests. Throughout the day, visibility was at best moderate.

Once at sea, we could just hold the jib at about 120° apparent wind





Wolf Rock

with a course that would pass south of Wolf Rock. There was still a big sea running, so thought of switching to the twin headsail rig was abandoned - I was too lazy! This meant that by mid morning, when the Scillies were vaguely visible through the mist, we had to gybe and head in towards St Mary's sound.

It was only the second occasion on which we had approach the Scillies from the SE, so a bit of care was taken to identify the clearance transits and we took a long route on the main transit before making a wide sweep to approach Porth Conger where we anchored between St Agnes and Gugh at 1145.



Fanny working hard!

Now we could slow down, and we did. We had thought of going into St Marys, but you immediately know when you have made the right choice. This was just perfect!

Ashore to the Turks Head for an evening meal, where Dairne had a very large sole, then back on board to enjoy the evening, a clear starlit night, free of mainland air pollution,. There was only one other French yacht in the anchorage. We could relax, with no need for a 0400 start the next morning, and forecasts still offering a settled period. Indeed, Dairne had to be woken at 0900 the next day, but the smell of a bacon sandwich provided enough - but only just enough - motivation!



St Agnes

3: The Scillies

Wednesday 28th June 2000: Around St Agnes

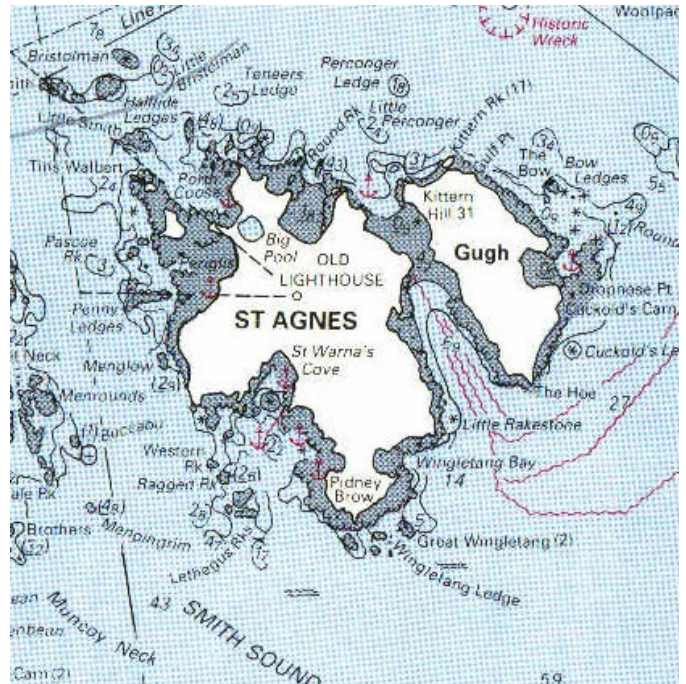
How we enjoyed a lie in after three 0430 starts in a row! We woke to a calm morning, with a light wind ruffling the water, and some sunshine. Three times we had visited the Scillies, always ending up in New Grimsby lashed to a buoy while it blew a gale. In the distance we had seen St Agnes, and now we had a chance to explore it.

The anchorage itself is unusual, formed by a natural isthmus between St Agnes and Gugh which covers at high tide. With mainly southerly winds in prospect we had anchored in the smaller Porth Conger harbour

to the north of the isthmus, right next to the pub. To the west, the protection is from St Agnes, while to the East, there is a

large rock just north of the smaller island of Gugh which offers protection. The tripper launches go through this narrow gap between St Agnes and Gugh to St Marys. There is probably room for six boats to anchor comfortably in generally good holding. The water is so clear that it is possible, even in 6m depth, to pick a sandy spot to place the anchor.

The island is dominated by a white lighthouse, now disused, but reputed to be one of the oldest lighthouses in the world, the original light being a coal brazier. Now it is privately owned, and the lantern room is a greenhouse. The Admiralty paint it every few years as it makes a very good daymark.



One wild flower among many!



The wide sweep of Periglis Bay, Annet beyond



St Agnes Light



It is not a big island, and a pleasant morning stroll was all that was needed to see the best views, and get the flavour of this amazing place. Hedgerow and sea birds sing squawk and chirrup while you walk by - or even through - carpets of wildflowers. Yet the shorelines are those of a remote, weather-beaten island, with rocks sculptured by rain and waves.

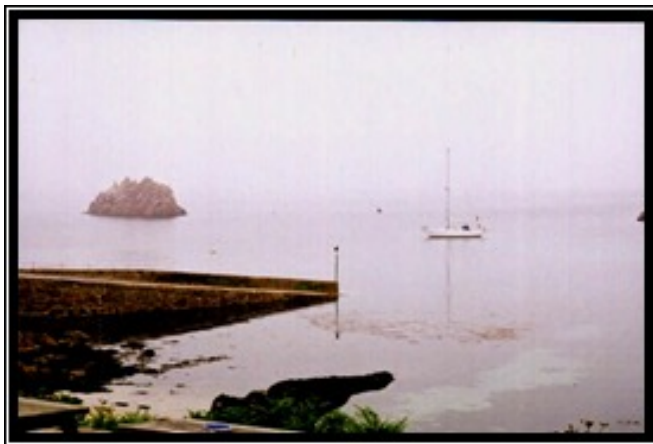


The rock formations on the south-western corner were amazing! Exposed to the prevailing winds and winter gales, the rocks were sculpted into fantastic shapes. Tucked in corners, some in apparently exposed places were brightly coloured wild flowers. We heard a cuckoo, and there were song thrushes and all kinds of finches and sparrows.

Back diagonally across the island, we came across tethered cows who seemed resigned to being a visitor attraction, and small fields protected by high hedges, fallow at this time of year, but clearly used for producing Easter daffodils and other spring flowers. Then into the "village", and a new set of images.



There are only 60 residents on the island, mainly leaseholders. The residency requirements are even stricter than on Jersey. Sadly, the owner of the post office and shop had decided to retire, but was unable to maintain residency having been an important part of the island community for many years. They would



Still, misty evening . St Agnes

have to return to the mainland. We bought our first crop of postcards here.

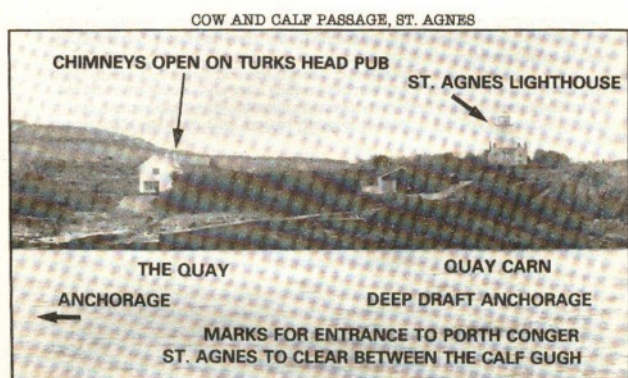
Water is not a major issue, but everyone has tanks to collect rainwater from the roof for non-sanitary uses. There was one café open where we had a light lunch in the garden with sparrows and thrushes hopping around the table foraging for crumbs.

By mid afternoon we were back on board. The genoa needed attention, so it was dropped to the deck and fed through the forehatch where Dairne, sitting on a bunk, restitched a patch on the leech. Meanwhile I plotted a tour round Annet and down to the Bishop for the following day. But, as the photograph shows, the visibility was reducing. The forecast was "Winds light to variable mainly E with moderate to good visibility".



Thursday 29th June 2000, Fog!

At 0830, visibility was under 1.5M, not enough for using some of the long transits needed for safe pilotage around the western islands. There was every prospect that the visibility would improve, but it was not a risk I was prepared to take. We decided to go to St Mary's for the day, using the launch route out between Gugh and the rock to the North. There are in fact two rocks, known as Cow and Calf. The Calf is between the large Cow rock and Gugh and covers just after low water. The transit needs to be good to find the gap which is only 20m wide.



This set of transits is found, not in the Imray pilot book, but in a little local pilot book by Norm, humorously written, rather patchy in its coverage, but full of local wisdom. I like transits such as pub chimneys. They seem homely.

By 0900 the visibility had dropped to 300m, then the pub disappeared. This was serious! The engine was run for 30 minutes to lift the batteries while we waited for the fog to lift. By 1200 we had 3-500m visibility and it looked to be clearing. Off we set, passing between Gugh and the Cow without even stroking the Calf. Half way to St Mary's the fog clamped again, and it was a tense radar approach at low speed until we saw the outlying rocks close to St Mary's harbour and found our way in. On the way, the track function on the autopilot had let us down, but I think I had managed to confuse the microchip at one point, so I forgave it, and it performed faultlessly throughout the rest of the cruise. The whole trip only lasted 45 minutes. It seemed a lot longer.

While preparing the pilotage for the now abandoned trip around Annet, I had read in the Imray Pilot about the western rocks that *"These rocks are the graveyard of many ships. A tour of the area in a local launch is advised. The skipper will usually point out dangers if requested"*. With little prospect of wind, and suspect visibility this seemed excellent advice, so we identified a trip advertised for the following day.

In the late afternoon we went ashore to buy more cards and gifts for grandchildren, and booked a table at the Captain's Gig, recommended by Norm. An excellent recommendation!

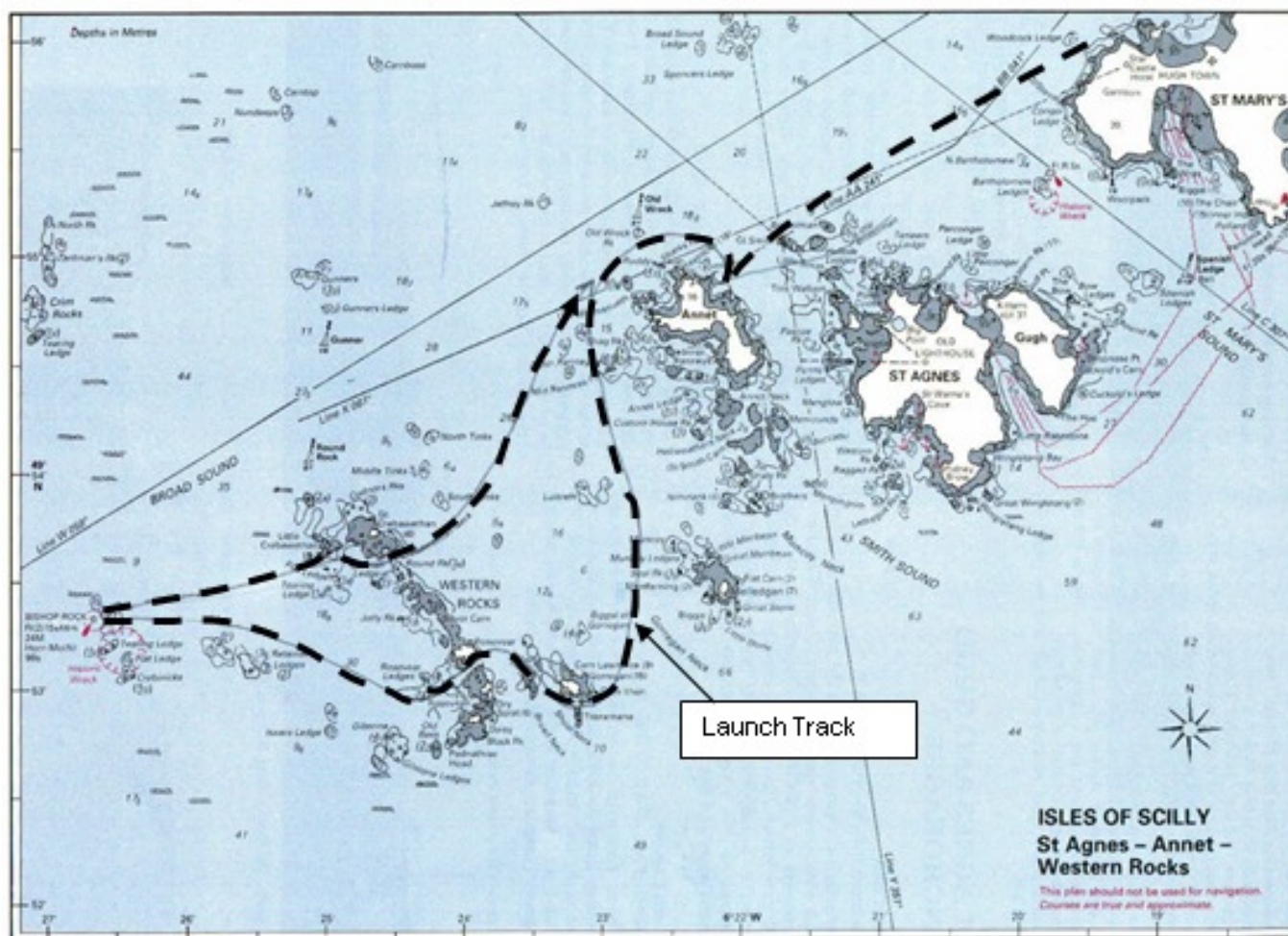
Dairne had goujons of three types of fish followed by lobster thermidor, while I had a crab cocktail followed by hake stuffed with prawns topped off with cheese and herbs. Washed down with Muscadet, the effect was exquisite! Not bad value either.

Friday 30th June, 2000 Tripper Boat

Alongside for water at 0900. While we were there a French boat came outside us for diesel. We passed the hose across. He managed to spill a few cupfuls of diesel in the water and the harbourmaster went ape. He wanted detergent sprayed on it NOW! The Frenchman did not understand, and just shrugged. By now the harbourmaster was going purple, so I loaned the French boat our Fairy liquid and peace was restored. I had scored lots of brownie points, not diminished when I told the harbourmaster what my job was!

We returned to the mooring. Locked up and rowed ashore to join the 1000 departure to the Bishop along with about 50 other trippers. It turned out to be a fabulous trip.

It was nearly flat calm and little swell. The route is shown on the chart above. We were passing within less than 10 yards of the rocks at times. There is no way that anyone without a lot of local knowledge would have attempted it.



It was a tremendous experience lasting two and a half hours. It was fascinating to see these wonderfully named rocks and try to work out the track. I marked it on the chart after our return, and I think it is right. Annet is now a bird sanctuary; Rosevear is where the builders of the Bishop Rock lived in wooden huts, even holding a summer ball on the island; and every island and rock has its wreck stories. The launch skipper knew them all, and milked his audience for all the pathos he could muster! In the course of the trip, apart from numerous seals guillemots, razorbills and shags, we saw a sailfish and a basking shark. The puffins were scarce, but a few were in evidence.

A trip to be recommended on a good day.

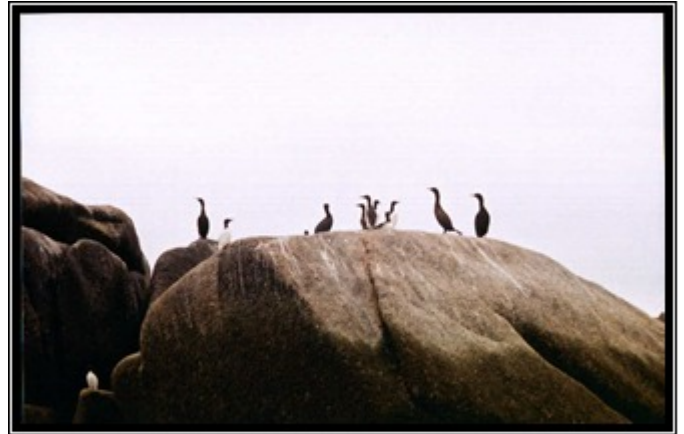


Scillies shags are sociable!



Guillemot gathering, Smith Sound, Annet behind

There were no puffins visible off Annet on the outward trip



Supercilious looks



"Not more tourists!"



"Got any fish?"



"Here's lookin' at you"



"Look!" said Dairne, "A Turtle". Amazingly, no one



First glimpse of the Bishop



A door is visible about 30 feet above the base. Last winter, this was smashed by the sea and the whole base of the lighthouse was flooded.

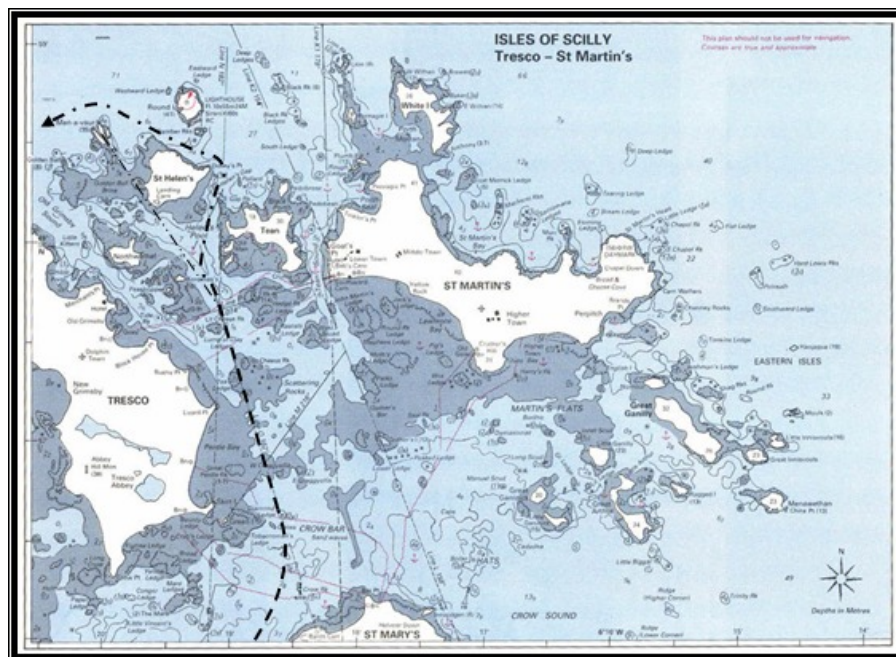


On the return trip, we went back close to Annet, and one or two puffins obligingly put in an appearance. They really are silly little birds. One was chased by terns determined to steal his beakful of sandeels, but the puffin was sufficiently wily and determined to hang on to his food. At this time of the year, they are busy feeding their young in burrows all over Annet. Landing is prohibited on the island which is a seabird reserve.



After two and a half hours of sheer delight, we returned to St Marys and back to Ariadne at her mooring. St Marys is busy at this time of year, with few vacant moorings. It is a bit of a tripper haunt. We wanted to get back to the remoter parts.

Some years previously we had met a rather taciturn couple who, each year during the school holidays, sailed their 26ft Harrison Butler called *Tradewinds* from Essex to the Scillies. They had told us of spending a force 10 at anchor in the "hurricane hole" where they were completely safe, even though it appeared to be exposed to the west. Only yards away, waves had been tumbling, but they were in relatively flat water. We



had eventually worked out that this was St Helens Pool. That became our target for the afternoon.

Under power, we headed North out of the St Marys anchorage until the clearing transit of the St Martins Daymark on the north peak of Creeb, a rock on the norther corner of St Marys. This clears any obstructions, and it was then safe to turn towards Crow Beacon. Curving to the north of the beacon and bringing it into line with the TV mast set up a long stern transit all the way across the flats between St Martins and Tresco.



Even though Crow beacon is lost against the land,



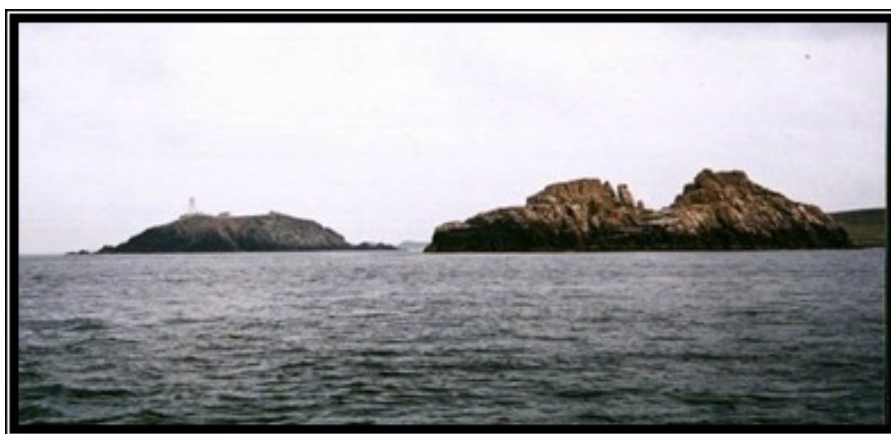
Men au Vaur in transit with N cairn on St Helens, from St Helens Pool



Was the TV mast built in that spot in order to create the transit? It is a tight transit with not too much tolerance in places.

Although the pilot book showed this transit to be safe all the way in to St Helens Pool, I preferred the greater margin by switching to the transit of Men au Vaur on the the north carn of St Helens after passing Hedge Rocks. It looks perilous on the chart, but on a still day near high water, it was quite easy.

St Helens is a truly breathtaking anchorage, apparently exposed to the NW, the NE and the SE. Apparently, the rocks in all these gaps are sufficient to break the force of the seas in even the strongest winds. It is reckoned by the locals to be the safest anchorage in the islands. We were tempted to stay, but lacked the confidence to do so in the face of a slightly worsening forecast. Instead we eased out through the narrow Gap Rocks to the NE. Although only 100m wide, this gap was the entrance used by trading vessels seeking shelter in St Helens Pool in years gone by.



The gap between Round Island and St Helens, from the west

Curving round though the deep gap between St Helens and Round Island, past Men au Vaur our route led over Kettle Bottom to the entrance to New Grimsby Sound, with which we were very familiar. Past Cromwell's Castle and Hangman's Rock to a buoy off the village ended a truly fascinating day by 1730.



Concentrating on important things!

In the event, our decision was probably the right one, as swell can work in to St Helens from the SE. At 0430 I went on deck to lower the burgee which was frapping a shroud. The sky was low and grey, with a drizzly F4-5 SE wind. In New Grimsby, the boat was pinned beam on to the tide. Later we were to learn that the streams in St Helens are far weaker than in New Grimsby (or Tean Sound).

The barometer had fallen over four days from 1028 at Newlyn, to 1025 when we were at St Agnes, to 1018. Nothing apparently to worry about.

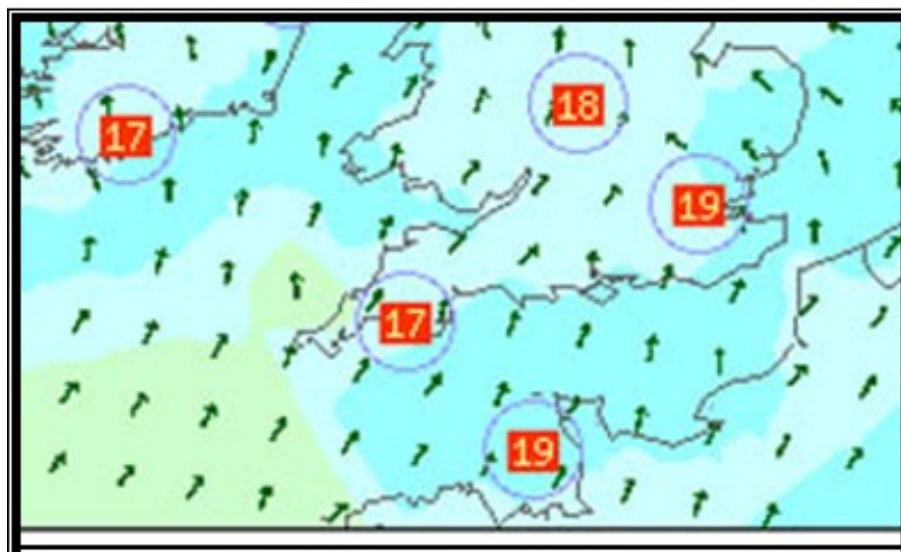
The forecast of wet weather overnight appeared to be little more than a passing trough.



New Grimsby, looking North. Hangman's Rock left, Cromwell's Castle Right, Shipman Head centre



Saturday 1st July 2000. Back to St Helens Pool



Extract from the Halo weathermap for 1st July

One of ways of gaining local knowledge is to listen in to the fishermen on the VHF. This morning we heard an intriguing conversation. One of them said he had never seen such a large flock of shearwaters going towards the Spanish Ledges. What had disturbed them? His view was that they only flocked like that when bad weather was on the way. Well, there were signs that the weather was starting to break, but nothing serious yet. The weather map shows a moderate SW wind, so at 1000hrs, we set off under single reef main and full genoa, retracing our steps, except that we went outside Round Island.



Gap Rocks passage, looking North North east



Ariadne in St Helens Pool



Safely in through the Gap Rocks, we could not find our way over the bar into St Helens Pool, as it was dead low water. We anchored to wait for the tide. At 1310, we found we were dragging quite badly, and motored into the deep part of the pool, where we anchored in about 4m. Anchor transits and bearings were taken. And logged.



Landing beach on St Helens, Tresco behind

there were good views of Men au Vaur and Round Island, with carpets of wildflowers everywhere.

By a circuitous route, I eventually reached the top.

Meanwhile, Dairne had found a more direct, if steeper route, and had struggled up to meet me there.

We stood there for a long time identifying the islands, and just enjoying the peace. It had been well worth the climb.

Then we worked our way down, back out to the boat and decided to

After lunch, the dinghy took us ashore for a walk on St Helens itself. The peak is the second highest point in the islands, from which panoramic views are available. It was not easy walking, and I was glad I had brought my walking boots.

Dairne waited in a dell while I walked round the west side of the island to try to find a pathway.

At one point, I cut across a corner and was mobbed by black backed gulls who did not appreciate the intrusion.



Men au Vaur from St Helens

Across the island



Round Island from St Helens



last few yards to the top



The beach at St Helens: tide now in

spend the night in St Helens Pool. It turned out to be a peaceful night, although I found it odd that the tidal streams through the pool appeared to be much less than in either New Grimsby or Tean sounds.



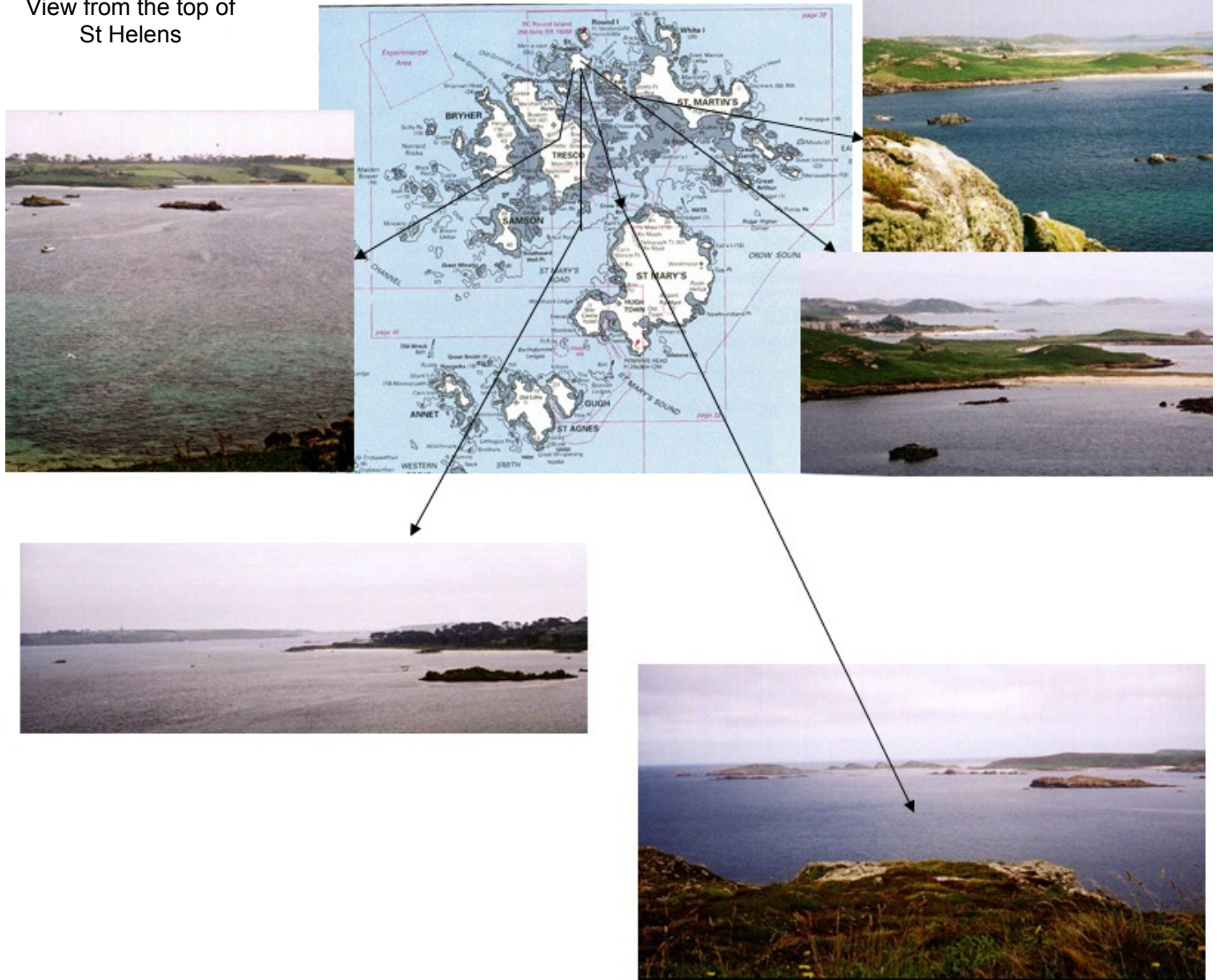


That night I was working on the pilotage for the next day, and enjoying this wild , but peaceful, anchorage, when a few thoughts struck me:-

It is almost mystical that rocks like Men au Vaur, Castle Bryher, and Great Smith are located to produce perfect transits. These are the distinctive, different rocks that are easy to pick out. These islands didn't just happen, they were designed!

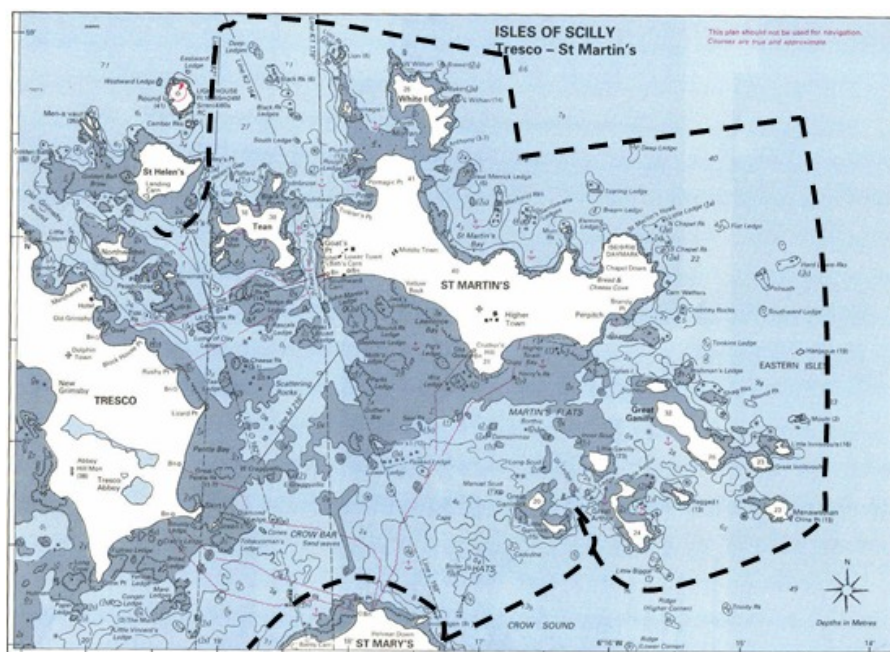
As the light goes, the wind drops to a gentle breeze. The birds still call to each other. We are now in a closed rock pool, now the tide has dropped. Safe. A magical place. One wonders how the anchor chain curves across the bottom as we have been moved first this way, then that way. It will be lying in gentle sweeping curves.

View from the top of
St Helens



Sunday 2nd^t July 2000: St Helens to St Agnes and St Marys

If pilotage within the Scillies is interesting, the passage close in round the Eastern Rocks requires a precision of navigation in open water which is unusual, and is certainly quite tricky. The weather was still set fair through till the end of Monday, but Tuesday was forecast to be fresh, according to the very useful week ahead forecast broadcast at an unearthly hour on each Sunday morning. Even now, with a Fresh SW forecast for the Tuesday, we could see a pattern developing which would take us back to the UK mainland on the Tuesday.



Motoring clear of St Helens pool, via the Gap Rocks at 0800 was easy, full sail was made and we stood on a northerly course, keeping the Star Castle Hotel on the E Gap rock, until the southern edge of Men au Vaur was clear of Round Island, thus clearing the Deep Ledges.



North of White Island, looking West, past Lion Rock to Round island

With the wind SE F2, we could then head more or less due east. This was held until well clear of White Island, when an inshore tack was made so we could view the N coast of St Martins. Once the gap between Round island and St Helens was visible South of White island, we tacked again standing just north of east until we had Menawathen on Hanjague to clear the lethal Lewis Rocks, which even in these calm conditions looked most unwelcoming with a cap of breakers showing.



Great Arthur, viewed from Watermill Cove



We were soon able to crack the sheets for a fetch outside the eastern rocks, round Biggal to turn into the anchorage on the western side of Great Arthur. Some swell was rolling in, so we moved across under power to an anchorage off Watermill Cove on St Marys for lunch. We knew where the anchorage was because there was a motorboat there. At first we thought it was a fishing boat, but it turned out to be an extraordinary craft from Chichester called *Ned Kelly*. As the photo shows, she carried two derrick booms, from which, it seems, plates were suspended to damp the roll. She really looked odd. Later she went out, supposedly to go to the north side of St Martins, but motored back in 30 minutes later, presumably because the slight swell was causing her to roll unmercifully. How ever did she get to the Scillies?!



Ned Kelly

We rolled a bit, but not so much that the glasses slid off the table while we had lunch. Then at 1450, we weighed and made sail. The course was to the Hats buoy until we had the Crow Beacon on the S edge of Samson, a handrail, then head south until the key transit of the St Martins daymark on Creeb took us right across to the approach to St Agnes where we anchored at 1550.



Isthmus between St Agnes and Gugh covers at high springs

With the wind basically in the SE we thought this would be a good anchorage, but it was not. The only explanation I have for a swell working in from the north was that the spring tide flow running down the

Irish Sea was hitting the Scillies and the energy was being converted into a swell. It is a phenomenon I have never seen before - tide induced swell.

So with engine and jib, we returned to St Marys for the night where we picked up a buoy. Much better.

It had been a grey day, but full of interesting pilotage. It was the first time we had been through Crow Sound, and the first time we had had a good look at the Eastern Rocks. In different weather they would be an interesting place to explore. All day we had been on solid transits, showing yet again that these islands were really designed for small boats, despite their apparent treachery.



Tuesday 5th July; Portscatho and Helford.



Hilda's Flowers

Whenever we visit Falmouth, it is always a pleasure to see our family friend Hilda, who lives at Portscatho. A quick trip ashore to buy some flowers, and we were away on the 1000hrs ferry to St Mawes. Hilda had just had a cataract operation, but that did not stop her driving down to pick us up from the ferry. Back to her house, and the a pub lunch. Only to realise that the flowers were left behind on the boat! We told Hilda she would have to make do with a photograph!

The flowers were to accompany us across the Channel both ways, and lasted almost till we were back in the Solent. I was furious at my absent mindedness!

After lunch, we returned to the boat, and motored to Helford - the weather still being sultry and not at all inviting.

By 1820, we were on the mooring and had a light supper. We watched the gaffers racing in the river - they are

always elegant.

Next to us was an interesting cutter called *Chesapeake*. The owner was testing his lights, and we did the same. It was easier for each to see the others lights. One thing led to another, and the discussion went on till 0130, and serious damage to a bottle of Scotch! Adam had worked for many years with IMO on chart work, and on the new conventions for electronic charting. It was fascinating hearing at first hand how the international politics wend their tortuous way. Slowly, slowly, he reckons, we are getting there and a genuine ECDIS will emerge.



Keen evening racing in the Helford

Wednesday 6th July; Helford to Yealm

The day started with a visit to *Chesapeake*. She was large, much more roomy than outside appearances suggested, and had clearly been nurtured with a lot of affection. By 0855, we were on our way, motoring out of the Helford with a NE F2 breeze which did not last. So it was motoring until we were 4.5M south of Dodman at 1110,. Progress was slow, so Dairne tried her hand at fishing with her new boat rod - without success. We kept drifting along through a lazy lunch until 1325 when the engine went back on. 30 minutes later, the first suggestion of a seabreeze appeared which gradually built up to F3 by 1530. We were just about able to lay the course, and had some pleasant sailing until 1630 when the wind died again. Motor on again!. The wind came and went, but it never amounted to much. The depth calculations for crossing the bar into the Yealm were a bit neat, but we made it first time making fast to a buoy at 1835.





It rained all evening, but we didn't care. Steak and mushrooms, with onions, mash and a bottle of light South African red wine meant the fact that there was over 2 inches of rain in Wiltshire did not disturb our feeling of having cheated the weather. We were dry and warm, so what else mattered?

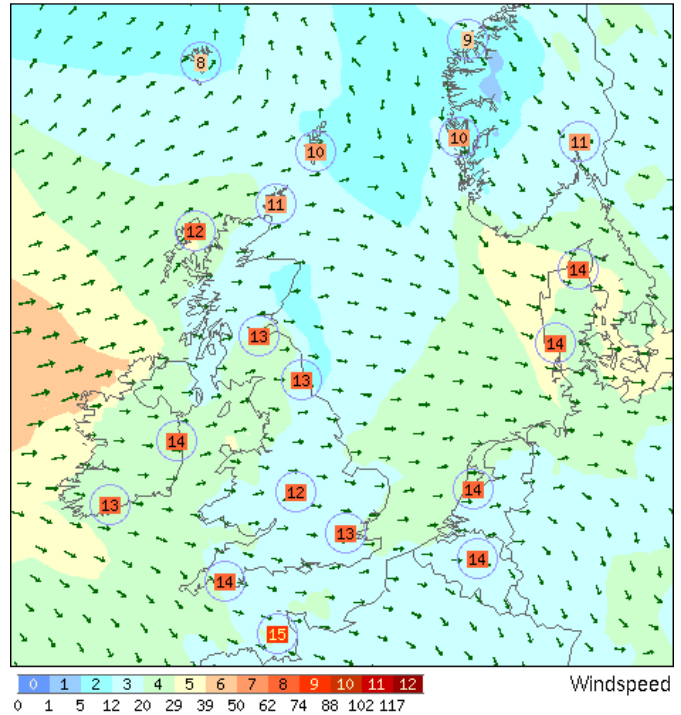
Friday 7th July; Yealm to Treguier

Although the weather to the North of Britain was looking a bit more vigorous, we were promised gentle and favourable breezes for the crossing to France, although N-NE F4, or even 5 was mentioned..

A mid morning start was agreed. The theory was that we would have full daylight as we approached the French coast the next morning, with Treguier as the goal.

While waiting to depart at 1100, Spirit of Daedalus, an MYC boat, left the harbour heading west.

Saturday July 8, 2000 08:00 GMT



Dairne setting out from the Yealm

The only problem with this beautiful river is that it is quite impossible to tell what conditions will be like outside. In the end, we motored clear, and set the main with 1 reef, just in case! It was a kind of grey, uncertain day with a little bit of a lop on the sea, but we were able to sail at first.

The entrance is steep, spectacular, and immediately after passing through the gap on the way out, one has to dogleg sharp to port round a natural sandbar before getting into the middle of the bay.



Entrance to Newton Ferrers, the Yealm



Sailing Barge Victor

At 1145, we passed the sailing Barge Victor under full sail. She was a grand sight, so we took a few pictures, and got an address from them over the vhf to send them some prints.

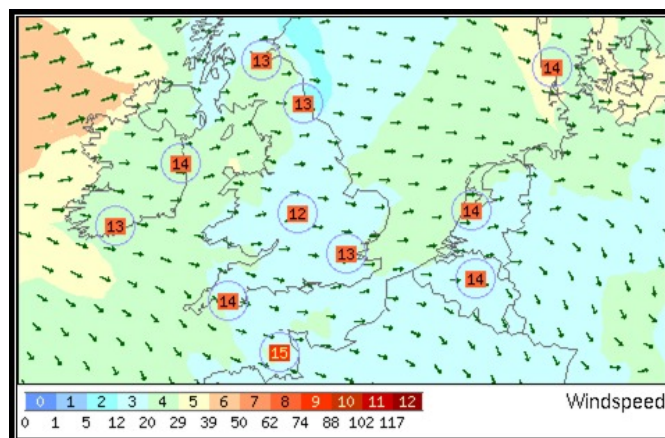


By midday, we were sure that the expected strong breeze would not materialise, so we went to full main, but shortly after 1230 the wind faded, so the engine went on again. Throughout the afternoon, the wind, which was almost astern never exceeded F3, but now and again we sailed for an hour or so. Sometimes we just drifted at a knot or two. Our waypoint was set to the Bse Crublent buoy at the entrance to the Riviere du Treguier as our progress was so uncertain that it was not possible to calculate the E-W tidal drift. This is where the plotter really scores as one can see the plot unfold as wind and tide interact. As dusk came, we stated to come across quite a bit of shipping.



The Channel seems to get busier every year!

During the night, the wind was more NW than the Halo weather map shows. By midnight, it was a brilliantly clear starlit night, with phosphorescence in the bow wave and a brilliant tube of light from the propeller. The breeze had, however, filled in, and a single reef was put in the main. To keep the genoa full without a pole, we were heading slightly to the west of the preferred course. But the 0100 f/c gave NW4/5 becoming SW 6, so I didn't mind being set to the west



Halo weather map for 0800, 8th July 2000



Spectacular Channel dawn

a bit. Moreover, the tide was due to turn to the east as we approached the coast, and that would give us a good push back to Bse Creublent.



By 0330, Sept Iles light was sighted, and by 0430, Roches Douvres light was seen dipping and Les Heaux light was also visible.

Shortly after an electric dawn, the stars gradually disappeared, leaving two clear planets, Saturn and Jupiter. The boat was rolling quite badly, and the horizon was not too clear, but I took my first planetary sight on Jupiter, giving a position error v gps of about 10 miles. Must try harder!

As the full daylight arrived, the wind freshened to a full F5, gusting 6. A gybe was called for as the tide turned, and we raced over the

ground for 5 miles to Bse Crublent, lowered the main, ran in under genoa only against a strong ebb. It was slow work, with a lot of rolling, but we felt under control.



Passing La Corne

After 22kt gusts in the approach, the shelter of the river gave us a peaceful reach up the river, the engine only being started 1 mile from Treguier itself.



First sight of Treguier

By 0845, we were on a pontoon in Treguier. We had covered 102 miles at an average speed of 4.5 kts, which was quite fast considering the amount of time spent virtually drifting the previous afternoon. Our total logged distance in Ariadne had also passed 13,000 miles.

Immediately we had made fast, the cloud started scudding over and the wind increased. We were content to be snugged down. As the tide was starting to ebb strongly, I was concerned about the tendency for the boat to be pinned on the finger pontoon. The rudder was lashed over to lessen the effect of the tide, and I decided to lift the monitor paddle. Mistake. Inevitably, a boat tried to leave while the ebb was running, lost it, wrapped himself round the stern of Ariadne and bent one of the Monitor tubes. Fortunately, it was the 'sacrificial' tube which is designed to be a bit weaker than the rest, and is easy to replace. The owner had the good grace to circle round once he was clear and give me his phone number.

We were to be stuck in Treguier for 3 nights by bad weather, but we didn't mind.

After some sleep, we tried to get into our favourite restaurant but it was fully booked. We walked up the hill into the town, and found a fascinating old place where the food was excellent, with a pleasant atmosphere.



Sunday 9th July 2000: Layday in Treguier



All the same mast height!

This was a wet and windy day. The barometer fell at 1mb per hour all day. We were moored near a group of Westerlies, two of which, Phantom and Tiramisu were sailing in company. Lunchtime drinks aboard Ariadne filled in the time until we went aboard Tiramisu for a return match! The Westerly Oceanlords at 38feet are very roomy. It was interesting that all the boats, including the Rustler 36 had the same mast height, showing the power of the Rustler hull to carry sail.

We were interrupted by a big cat that wanted to repeat the lets-wrap-ourselves-on-Graham's-Monitor game, but was eventually persuaded to wait till the tide slackened. However, in trying to help him, I took a 200' warp to the upstream pontoon and floated a line across. After the attempt had been abandoned, I was returning with this large coil of rope over my shoulder. The linkspan to the pontoon, which must be 60feet long was at a steep angle as it was nearly low tide. As I came down it, my feet went from beneath me. To save myself from sliding the whole length on the bridge, I braced my feet out sideways, and just managed to stop. This is probably when I got a double hernia!

Steve and Nicky on Phantom were putting the boat together for an 18 month sabbatical. It was interesting to see his mobile phone and laptop fit giving internet connection. He had had trouble getting 2-way email in France, and the internet was both patchy and expensive. This has persuaded me that Navtex is worth having after all. He also had a very compact HP340 printer and was using the Leisure 300 tariff on Vodaphone. Worth exploring further!

We were joined by the crew from Celtic Spirit, a Warrior 40 on another pontoon. All these boats, based at Haslar were members of Dolphin Cruising Club.



Boats sheering about in Treguier anchorage

Several boats were sheltering from the weather at the anchorage, including a three masted lugger (presumably on her way to the Brest Festival). We had last seen her in 1992 under full sail hammering through the Ile de Batz channel near Roscoff. A handsome ship!



Monday 10th July 2000: Another Treguier layday!

The f/c was for northwesterlies force 5 or 6 occasionally 7. Not a difficult decision to stay put!

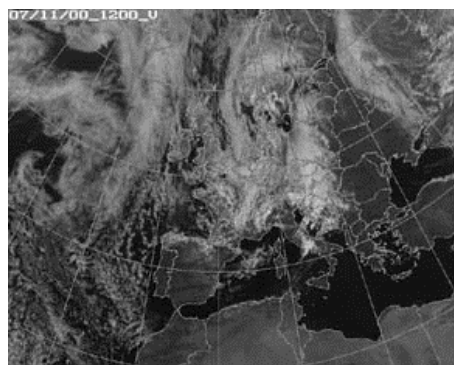


Our favourite restaurant

An early stroll to the boulangerie for croissants, showers at the marine, and booked in to the restaurant St Bernard for the evening. It did not let us down!

The barometer had remained steady all day. The forecast for Tuesday was not so good, with N-NW fresh winds, but f/c for the Wednesday was W 3-5. Promising! It looked like another lazy day ahead.

Tuesday 11th July 2000, Yet Another Treguier day!



The barometer crept up 4mb overnight, but the wind was still brisk from the N. The 'stayput decision' still looked good. The forecast was for the wind to go westerly and drop the next day, with the seas calming as well.

By 1400, we were still getting gusts of 28kts. So we went shopping - mainly for Armagnac and Bordeaux. Dairne prepared the most magnificent Galottes in the evening. We sat around chatting. For the first time she picked up a sextant and looked through it. Sun sights next! By late evening, the barometer was up to 1019.

Wednesday 12th July 2000: Treguier to Poole



Riviere du Treguier

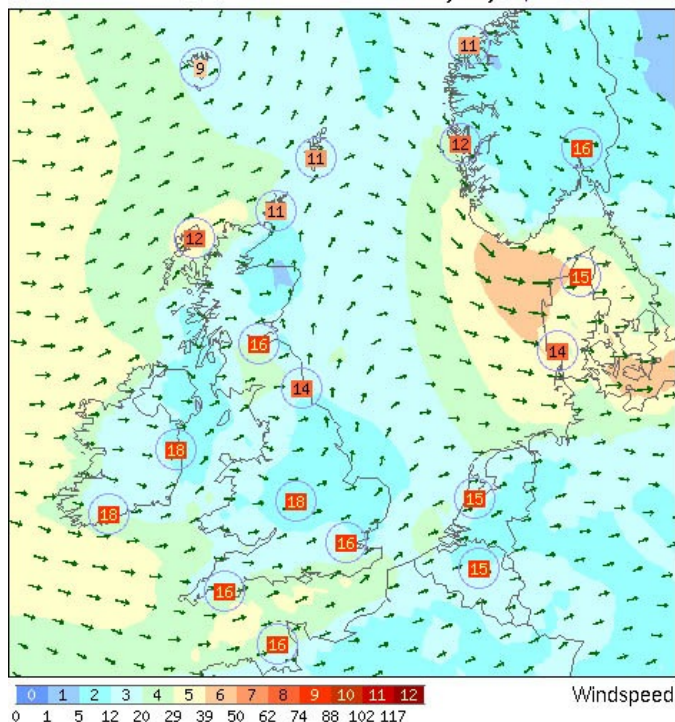
We were ready to go. Slack water would be at about 0945, and we were away at 0930, in company with the Westerly fleet. They were going to Guernsey, but I reckoned the weather was due to go Northerly again fairly soon, so we had opted for a dash to the English Coast.

The barometer was at 1014 and rising, with a forecast of W-SW 3/4, falling light. Not bad!



The Treguier Estuary has many isolated houses

Wednesday July 12, 2000 20:00 GMT



Phantom

We motored down the river in company with the Westerleys, hoisting the main, and motoring out to the Bse Crublent buoy. There we set a waypoint 10M west of Guernsey, set the windvane and settled into the passage, waving goodbye to our friends who headed off past Roches Douvres to Guernsey.

The early part of the trip was uneventful. Sheets slightly free, and the boat bashing along at better than 6 kts over the ground. By mid afternoon, we were well to the West of Guernsey, and could see a "ferry" taking an unusual route from S of Guernsey to the West. As the "ferry" got closer, it was obviously QE2 on a channel cruise. She passed about 3 miles ahead.



Queen Elizabeth II at speed in the Channel



Anticipation of departure

towards us. Dairne kept visual lookout in the cockpit, while I drove the radar plot. The bearing was constant. At 1.5M, Dairne got a visual, masts in line! This is the worst case. The ship was moving fast, probably more than 15kts. Do you stand on, or do a 180 degree turn? It was quite tense, but we both decided that the vessel would pass astern. As she came towards us, I called her on Ch16, and got an answer!. She was a German container ship, and as the officer said "I don't know what sort of radar reflector you have,

The picture shows that the visibility was becoming suspect, and about 10 minutes after it was taken, QEII disappeared into a fogbank. On went the radar, as we were now approaching the shipping lanes. There were several ships about, but one, in particular, showed up at about 3M as heading



but you were giving a very strong signal". Comforting. She passed about 200m astern, close enough to read her name as Ipex Empress..

A few minutes later we nearly ran down a basking shark - still doing better than 6kts.

Three hours later at 2100, the visibility had cleared, the wind had dropped off to not much at all, and we were very close the Channel Light Vessel. Yes, it does exist - this thing we hear of so often in the weather forecasts. It was quite interesting to see it. Unmanned, powered by solar panels, and just sitting in mid channel guiding us all.



Channel Light Vessel

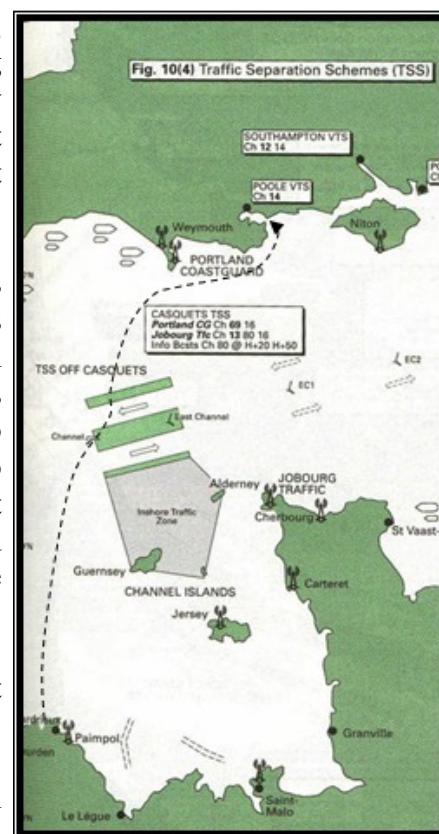
Now I made an error of judgement. We had kept to an almost northerly course so that we had a choice between going over to Dartmouth, or keeping on to Weymouth or even Poole. This gave plenty of contingencies if the weather worsened. But in the end it put us close to Channel Light vessel (which I wanted to see anyway, out of curiosity). However, the problem was that with the wind going westerly, I did not want to end up on a dead run to Portland, so my preference was to bear away early. This would put us on a track at about 60° to the westbound traffic lane, instead of the required 90°. And that is what we did.

Although there was shipping, it was easy to turn to starboard and pass astern of the oncoming ships. At about 2330, however, a ship was coming down the Channel and I judged that it would be better to turn onto a NE course to pass astern of her. But a small vessel turned towards us and whatever I did it still turned toward. So I altered to NNW to avoid. Although this put us onto the correct 90° track for the TSS, it also forced us to pass close ahead of the freighter. Eventually I realised that the small vessel was a pilot cutter chasing us out of the TSS! I tried calling them on Ch16 without result (I forgot that pilots believe the world should be at their beck and call on Ch9).

It was an unnerving experience, not to be recommended, and makes it doubly clear that one should stick to the TSS rules!

By 0245 we had Portland light dipping, with a closest point of approach at 7.8M at 0500, by which time the tide was again with us. We had managed to hold the port tack, but found eventually that it was taking us too close to St Albans Race, so a gybe away at 0550, followed by a gybe back at 0630, gave us a relatively comfortable if breezy sail past Anvil Point (which kept appearing and disappearing in the drizzle).

It was a damp, but easy sail on to Old Harry, where the engine was started to allow us to anchor in South Deep in Poole Harbour by 0930, having given the battery a good charge. We had covered 133 miles at an average speed of 5.5kts. Not bad!



Casquets TSS



Thursday 13th July 2000: South Deep, Poole

We slept till the afternoon, then just enjoyed the place - it is a very pleasant anchorage. It blew hard, with a lot of north in the direction, justifying our decision to come across in one hit. The forecast of W/NW 4/5 promised a fast but easy passage back into the Solent.



A good day to be tucked up in a safe anchorage!

Friday 14th July 2000: Poole to Yarmouth



Interesting morning sky in South deep

The morning sky was full of interest. There were layers of small cumulus clouds. Sunshine dappled on the water, making a kind of pewter effect. There were indications of a brisk NW wind to come.



A brisk reach back to Hurst

At 1310, we weighed, passing out through the Looe Channel to set full genoa and a single reefed main. With a WNW F4 wind, it was a brisk broad reach on flat water, all the way back to Hurst where we re-entered the "playpen" (the Solent!) at 1600, making fast in Yarmouth at 1645.

Just along the pontoon were David and Mary Bailey on Caramour, another Rustler. When we told them of our plans to go to Scotland next year, David was especially enthusiastic. They had managed to get to Fair Isle and back in 12 weeks, and on another cruise had visited St Kilda. Mary was not quite so sure about attempting Fair Isle!

We celebrated our safe return with a meal at Salty's restaurant. First class food, but double the price of France!

Saturday 15th July 2000; Yarmouth to Newtown

It is almost a tradition that we spend the last night of our cruise away in Newtown, so a gentle trickle up against the tide between 1130 and 1320, including sailing right into Newtown, led us to a quiet afternoon in Clamerkin Lake.

Sunday 16th July 2000; Newtown to MYC

At 0845, we motored out on a sunny morning with little wind and pottered up to Cowes where we spent a short interlude on board *Thoma* with John and Mary Miller (guzzling olives stuffed with Garlic) before setting off for home again at 1215. One long starboard tack, coupled with a strong tide carried us to Reach buoy, but there was insufficient wind to beat over the tide in Southampton water, so it was the iron topsail that took us home to make fast at MYC at 1545.

We had only covered 656 miles in three weeks, but felt we had achieved all our goals, especially a settled week in the Scillies.

Now to plan the Scottish trip.....



