

# *Britany Brotherhood 2005*



## *Brittany 2005*

This cruise took Dairne and Graham to La Rochelle in their Rustler 36 *Ariadne*. By keeping in touch with many friends using SMS messaging, we met many friends on the way, making it a kind of loose cruise in company, an arrangement we found ideal, combining the social gains of the cruise in company without any of the restrictions.

For Navigation we used

Imray C series charts

Various Admiralty charts

C-Map electronic charts\*\*

Cruising Association Handbook\*\*

Various pilot books, incl

North Biscay Pilot (Adlard Colles and RCC)

Inshore along the Dorset Coast (Peter Bruce)

French Pilot (Malcolm Robson)

For weather we relied mainly on internet cafes to provide

Raymarine 3-day forecasts

European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting (ECMWF) for days 3-7\*\*

[Those items marked \*\* were used as source data for the diagrams and charts in this Log]





## Overview

Our cruise in 2004 covered 1113 miles between June 27th and August 31st when we returned to the Solent. We had had no specific goals, except to find sunshine and seafood after our rather hectic cruise round Ireland in 2003. Once again, Dairne and I mainly sailed alone, except for a couple of day sails around La Rochelle when David Colquhoun joined us.

In the event, we cruised in company for short periods with many friends, including '*Santana*', '*Danae*', '*Siosarnoir*', '*Hobo*', '*Wild Swan*' and '*Rafiki*'. We also met many other new friends. Throughout, we kept in touch via SMS messages on mobile phones. It became a kind of Brittany Brotherhood.

We even kept in touch by SMS text with other club boats in Scotland and elsewhere in Brittany.

It was relaxing and sociable. But the trip out to Brittany, and the trip back were fierce. The 6 weeks in the middle, however, were wall to wall seafood, sunshine, and some good sailing.



Georgian House, Sark

The early part of our season had been unsettled by concerns over the health of our elderly parents, but we had managed some sailing, including a club 'dash' to Cherbourg and a brief visit to Alderney and Sark, where we linked up with other Marchwood boats. On the whole May was a pleasant, benign month.



Newtown - benign Spring



Santana leaving Havre Gosselin, Sark

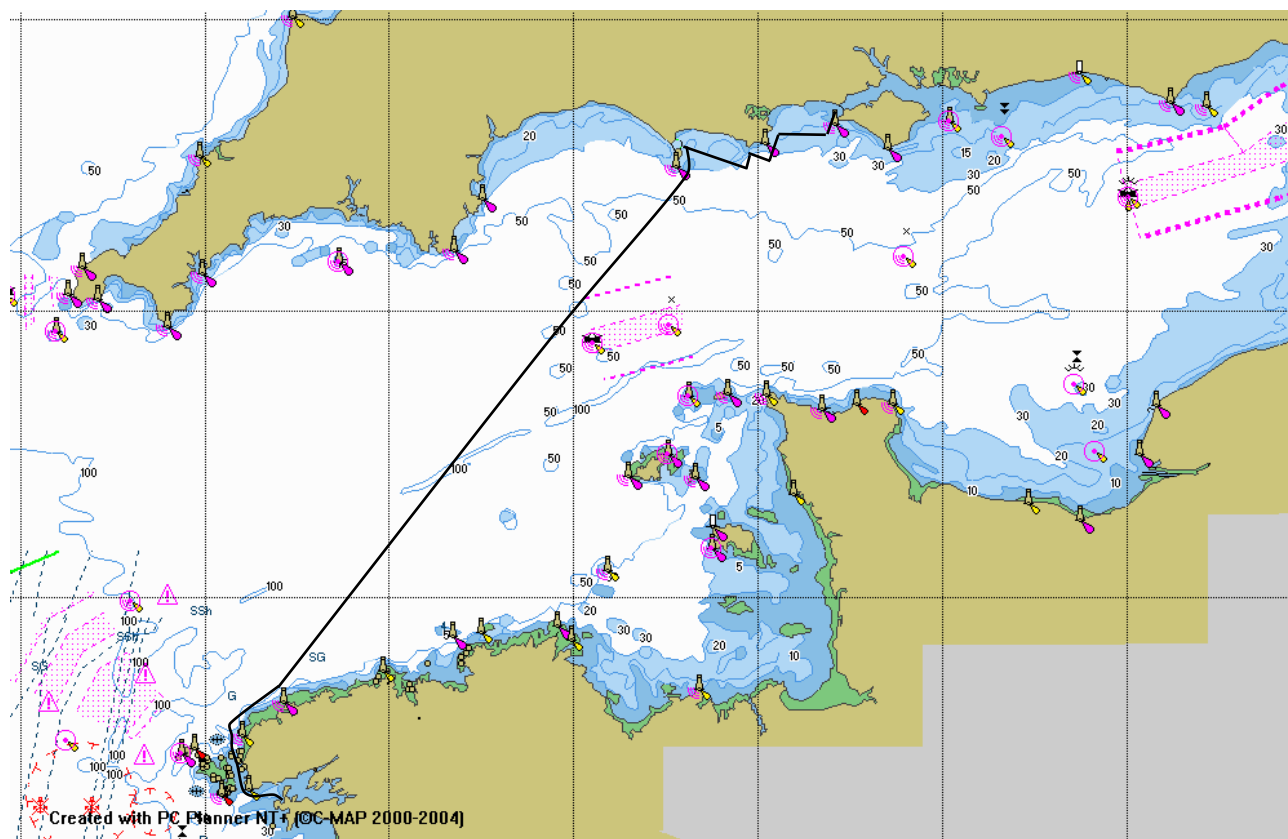


## Outward

Our plan had been to depart no later than mid-June, but the weather in June steadily deteriorated. We set a departure date of 21st June, then scrapped that in the face of an atrocious weather forecast. Eventually we managed to see a short window to get away on 27th June.

We got as far as Portland, where we were stuck for nearly a week while it blew hard from the West. Once that subsided, we could see a short window, so made a dash direct from Portland to L'Abervrach. This is a tricky route as the NW corner of the Channel TSS is almost on the track, and having passed that, you are crossing the main shipping lanes at a very shallow angle. The passage to L'Abervrach was  $28\frac{1}{2}$  hours.

Once through the Chenal du Four, we would feel we were in our cruising ground. We made it to Camaret, but were then stuck there during the next blow before we could move on!



The Outward passage - Needles to Camaret



### **Departure - 27th-28th June (13M)**

We had stayed at home for a week waiting for the weather to settle. It didn't. In the end we just decided to get going on Sunday 27th June. By late morning we had the boat alongside the Marchwood pontoon, stowing all the perishables on board. It was 1645 before we got away, reefed on a fast reach (exceeding 7kts at times) to Calshot, followed by a bumpy fetch to Cowes (gusting to 29kts apparent) where we had decided to spend the night before picking up fuel the next morning. We were glad of a short sail and a restful evening.

After fuelling the following morning, we set off on a reefed beat down the Solent. It was gusting to 27kts, so we decided to hide in Keyhaven, only just making it over the bar on a dropping tide. It certainly gave any barnacles on the keel a headache!



Keyhaven

It was bright, but very windy. After a good lunch, Dairne repaired some stitching on the StakWrap. Although we considered going on during the next tide, it would have been a late start into a F4/5 SW and grey skies. Not very inviting!

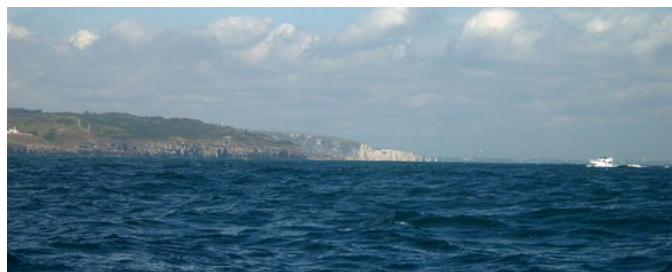
Instead we listened to Tim Henman winning a match at Wimbledon.





## Needles to Portland -29th June (44.5M)

We decided to press on, with Portland as a target, but planning our tacks so we could opt out for Studland or Poole if the going became unpleasant. At 0730 we were under way to catch the first of the west-going tide, motor-sailing under single reefed-main from Keyhaven down the Needles Channel till the Needles were abeam at 0820.



Durlstone Point

We stood out into the tide until we could lay the Old Harry rocks at Studland. It was a pleasant day, but the brisk wind led us to reef both main and genoa, after which (of course) the boat went faster!

I reckoned we would be well into Weymouth Bay before the tide went against us, so we decided to press on, beating out past Anvil Point, but tacking back onto St Albans to cut inside the race, which

was only slightly lumpy. One tack out for a couple of miles, and we came back onto port. The slightly backing wind helped and lifted us to the North entrance to Portland harbour.

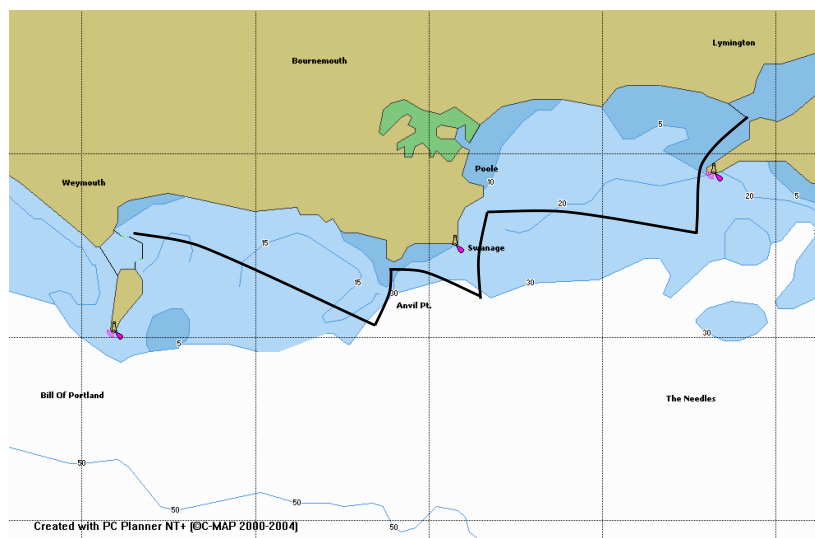
Just before we got there, a survey vessel called us on VHF and demanded that we keep at least 500 metres away from them. "Fine" I said "How far away does your radar show us". The reply was "500 metres", so I just said "That will do" and pressed on.

By 1520, we had picked up a buoy among the RNSA moorings off the new RYA centre, having logged 44.5 miles to windward. We were quite pleased with ourselves, and sheltered from the brisk SW wind.



Portland

Needles to  
Portland

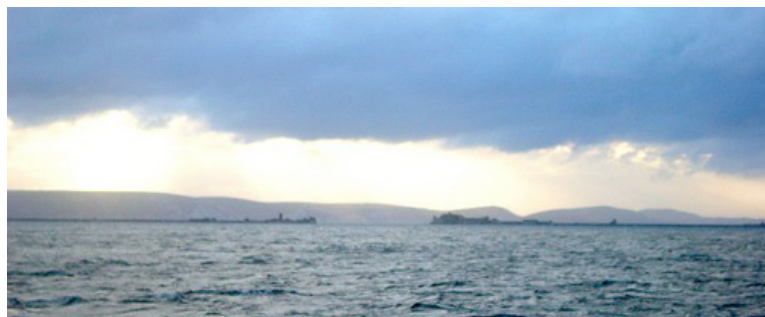




## ***Stuck in Portland: 30th June -3rd July***

With F5/6 blowing from the SW, we were stuck. But we had plenty of books, the radio to listen to, and our mooring was secure. So we just rested and sat it out during the 30th, occasionally texting our friends in France and elsewhere. We were glad of the rest.

The next day, we contacted the Port where the general manager, Steve Davies is an ex colleague. He came out for a short visit in one of his harbour ribs. Portland Port Company, who took over the Navy Base as a private company, had hoped to add the helicopter base as the only piece of flat land capable of being used to expand commercial port facilities. It is ironic that, not only did the Regional Development Association prevent the port from bidding for the site, but the new tenants, the Royal Yachting Association, have been instrumental in delaying the construction of a wind farm on the breakwater. As the breakwaters are listed buildings, the port could do with some revenue to assist with maintenance. It is no wonder that Portland Port has had some difficulty in coming to terms with the yachting community.



Portland in bad weather

Nevertheless, Portland is perhaps the one place in the South coast that has the potential to develop as a yachting centre. Steve and I had an interesting chat! It is clear that the Port company is already thinking in terms of yachting as a revenue stream. Indeed, the fact that I did not pay harbour dues was a concession to an old friend!

Later that morning we called the RYA centre to see whether we could go alongside their new pontoons. Sadly, they had not yet been handed over by the contractor, so we opted to go ashore by dinghy instead. It is an impressive facility, though not fully operational when we were there. The reasonably priced canteen offered a satisfactory alternative to a long trudge into Portland village.

During that night the wind, as forecast, backed into the Northwest, so we had much less protection and the boat was bucking about a bit. The deciding factor, however, was that my camera refused to talk to my laptop. If it could not be resolved, my camera would be useless once the chip was filled. So we decided to go into Weymouth. The only other option was to go back to Poole or the Solent, the weather being too vigorous to contemplate going further west.



Portland in a gale



Neither of us have happy memories of being rafted out against a rough wall in Weymouth. I called them on the VHF to see if they could get us close to the quay so that Dairne, who is not the most mobile person, would not have to clamber over other boats. As we arrived, there was someone from the harbour office to direct us to a berth they had cleared alongside the new pontoon outside the harbour office, with water and electricity nearby. The new showers were just at the top of the gangway. What a difference!

Having resolved the camera issue (at some cost), we had time to look around and do a little shopping. Also managed to find an Internet cafe and have a good look at the weather prospects. It looked like the strong westerlies would persist for a day or two, then go north westerly, and moderate. Clearly patience was the answer.

Not far from us we could see *Young Rustler* and spoke briefly to Norman Young the owner. His cruise to the West Country was, like ours, being badly affected by weather, and he was running out of time. We also exchanged visits with *Southern Cross*, another Rustler 36, on which Matt Vaughton and Sue Paice were returning from the Scillies, having given up an attempt on Southern Ireland due to persistent strong NW winds.



Rafted in Weymouth at night

We had just returned on board from *Southern Cross* when we saw Mia Yarrow, a member of Marchwood on the quay. She had come down by car to meet Jim and do a crew change on *Dreamer* who had just won the two-handed triangle race from Torquay to Kinsale, then Treguier and back. *Dreamer* arrived at 2130 having crossed Lyme Bay from Torquay in 6½ hrs. Remarkable! Jim was glad of the welcome, but turned in before leaving at first light to go back to the Solent.

Having seen Jim depart, I was surprised to find another boat manoeuvring alongside us less than an hour later. It was *Alison*. Apparently, the owner Arthur Godfrey, had left Brixham at about the same time as Jim, but had traveled slower, spending nearly all night punching against the Portland Race in incredibly rough wind over tide conditions. It must have been very alarming. *Alison* was on passage back to Yorkshire from Spain where he had kept the boat for some years. We helped them moor, and gave them hot tea. Later we got together and chatted, and he gave me a fascinating book he had written about paddle steamers on the Yorkshire coast.

The social round was completed by an invitation to visit *Salvation Jane*, a motor sailer we had met some weeks before in Yarmouth. There was a chance of a slight improvement in the weather the next day, so we restocked, and prepared to escape from Harbour Rot!





## Portland to L'AberVrach: 4th-5th July (158.4)

During the evening of the 3rd, the wind showed signs of moderating. Moreover, the weather pattern appeared to be relatively settled for the next few days, as indicated by the ECMWF forecasts. Time to go! But the tides won't let you, especially round Portland.



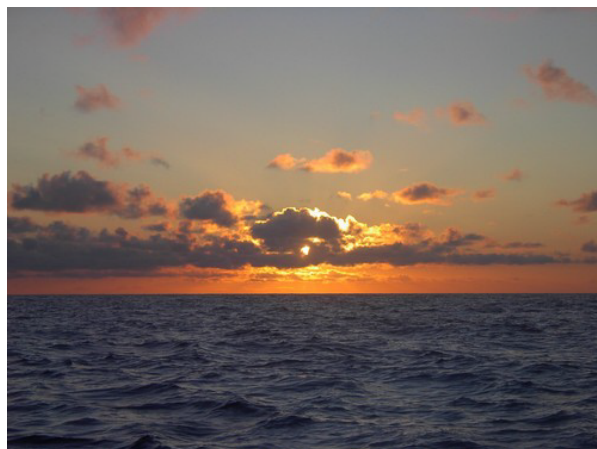
PortlandBill

It was 1045 on 4th July before we were under way, motorsailing the 10 miles along Portland before rounding the Bill. We tried sailing then, but the sloppy sea and fickle wind meant we could not lay close to our desired course,

As we were motoring, I asked Dairne to switch on the inverter to run a battery recharger. The autopilot and plotter tripped out. This was not serious and they were back on line in minutes, but strangely, our Western Channel cartridge was wiped clean. It had been fine when I set the route a few hours earlier. We still had waypoints, but could not zoom the chart, so we had inconvenience rather than a problem.

So we motored on through the to the late evening when the wind freshened a little to allow us to sail.

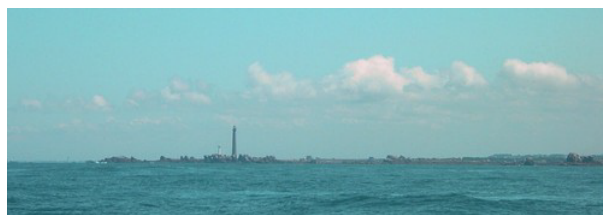
By 2100, we were laying our course but needed a reef. We continued to storm along through the night, Dairne taking the watch from 2000hrs to midnight, when I took over until dawn. These long watches are only possible because of the Monitor windvane steering. There is little to do except watchkeeping, and the occasional trimming of a sail or the Monitor. On this trip I tried an alarm set for 20 minutes so I could risk dozing. It worked well.



Channel Dawn

It was great sailing until toward dawn the wind started to moderate. The sunrise was outstanding, the sort of thing that makes night sailing worthwhile.

By 0800, the engine was on again, and we plugged on through the morning, eventually raising the Ile Vierge light, and reaching the Libenter waypoint by 1325.



Ile Vierge

We were well into the Channel, approaching Pot du Beurre tourelles before we picked up the leading marks, but there are sufficient buoys for it to be safe. We waved to *Segura 2*, another Rustler leaving L'Abervrach northbound.



We were lucky to find an empty buoy at 1430 - they were soon full of boats taking advantage of the more settled weather to get to or from Brittany.



We had covered 158 miles at an average of 5.5 kts. Satisfactory!



#### Leading Marks for L'Abervrach



Ariadne

This was when I discovered that I had left my paper chart for the Chenal du Four at home. The cartridge that had been 'wiped' was the one we needed. The workaround was to use a waypoint directory and manually put the waypoints onto the plotter over zoomed.

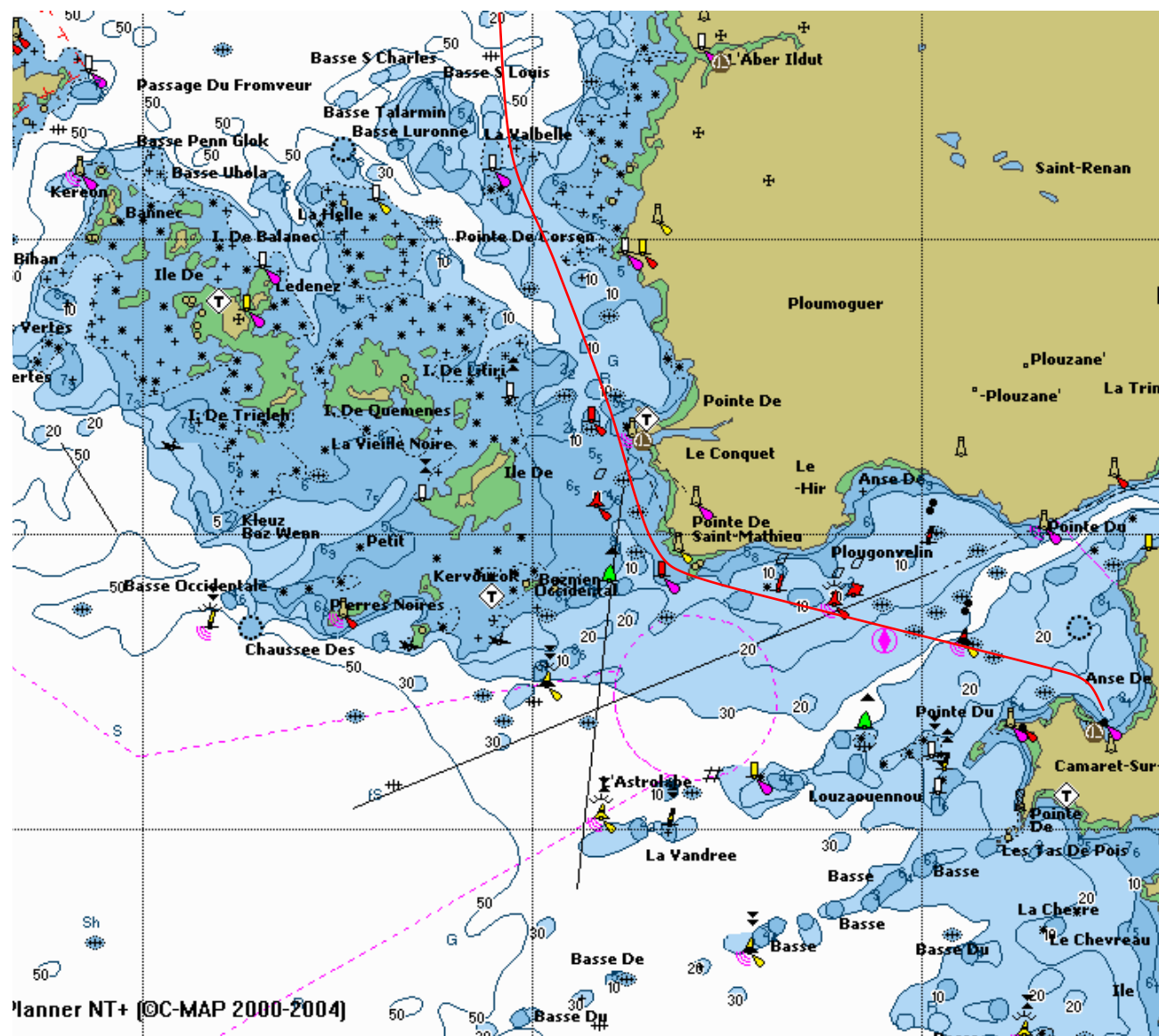
The rest of the afternoon was catching up on sleep!



Dawn at L'Abervrach



## ***Chenal du Four***







## Chenal du Four 6th July (34.9M)

Like the Needles Channel, the key is to carry the tide through the Chenal du Four. From L'Abervrach, the first few legs step from buoy to buoy passing a rock strewn coast (where the Amoco Cadiz was parked off Portsall causing a lot of pollution, of which there is now no sign).

The track then bends southwards past the Le Four light and into the broad channel where there are plenty of buoys to assist pilotage.

It was an early start to catch the tide in the Chenal. There was little wind, and we would be motoring all the way. The Chenal du Four is like the Needles Channel - easy when the weather is benign and potentially lethal when it is not. In the event our navigation worked well, coupled with ticking off the buoys lighthouses and tourelles as we passed them.

All went well until we were halfway down the Chenal du Four when a fog bank rolled in. We were glad of the plotter waypoints for a while, But the mist lifted as we passed Le Conquet and rounded Pte StMatthieu,



Le Four



Fog bank rolling in



Then we picked up a breeze almost to Camaret where we made fast 1400. We were now in our cruising ground, so could relax a bit

The weather was now forecast to deteriorate again



Pointe St Matthieu



## Camaret: 7th-9th July

We like Camaret, especially in the new marina close to the town - the walk along the mole is a bit much for Dairne. At last we could enjoy croissants, French bread, and patisseries such as Alsaciennes (my favourite).

Almost immediately we met friends from Marchwood YC. Liz and Julian were on their way back in *Rafiki*, after an extended cruise, during which they had concluded that they could cope with living aboard for long periods.

We had managed to secure a finger pier in the inner marina, but as the wind increased, it soon became apparent that the outer finger of the pontoon was breaking away. The marina staff spent a lot of time securing it with wires and tensioners, and it seemed to be OK. Bit worrying though!



The gale!

In Camaret, I was able to buy four beautiful SHOM charts to cover the gap left because I had left the relevant Imray chart at home; but I discovered that the Internet cafe had closed down. Although there was Internet access at very reasonable rates at the harbour office, they were so busy coping with the gale that was blowing that it was not available very often. This was frustrating because we were hearing through the forecasts that a very severe weather system was moving in. Also, I could not buy a French simcard for the mobile there. So, I contacted my sister (who is one of the weather girls for BBC Radio Solent) by SMS text, and she saved some images from their system for me.



Barometer kicked up a lot in 18 hours

We also knew, by SMS, that David Colqhoun in *Santana* had successfully crossed the Channel, and was stuck in L'Aberildut, halfway up the Chenal du Four

John Barker, whose father is Dairne's cousin, was crewing for David. He was working in the UK to broaden his experience before returning to his home in New Zealand. They had had to motor most of the way across the Channel, and being stuck in L'Aberildut was particularly frustrating. They were not able to make the 20 miles to reach us until the 9th.



John sailing Ariadne

Meanwhile, we met up with a family from the Czech Republic. They had dreamt of sailing away once their country became free. They had had an epic journey down the North Sea during which the skipper (and father of





the family) had been helicoptered ashore with a perforated ulcer. It had not stopped them, but they were grateful to have a view of the forward weather that I had managed to get from the Internet. It looked as though we would get a few days or reasonable weather once the depression moved away.

On the 9th, *Santana* arrived during the morning. John Barker and I did a quick bit of shopping before lunch. The last place we visited was the boulangerie where John fell in love with the girl that served us. He was silent for a long time! Perhaps it was his first close up experience of French chic?

Although we were looking forward to an improvement in the weather, we had at least one more day of strong winds. By now we were suffering from Harbour Rot, and we all felt John should have some sailing. So we opted to go into the Rade de Brest the next day. We knew the festival was on, but we were not prepared for the brilliant display of sail we would see.



Lunch in Camaret

The Rade de Brest is a huge inland sea, and an ideal place to play when the weather outside is suspect.



Rade de Brest





## Le Fret: 10th July (12.1M)

By 0940 we were on our way in a gentle breeze, but with low cloud and grey skies. The run through the Goulet de Brest was gentle - down-wind, down-tide.

Once inside, we could harden up and we went faster. The sight before us was magnificent. Many of the larger vessels at the Festival were out for a day of sailing in this huge pond. We just enjoyed sailing around them before making our way round the naval base to Le Fret in the SW corner of the Rade. It was very sheltered from the breeze which had now freshened to a F5-6, despite which we rafted up together for the night.



Santana running into the Goulet





### **Separate Ways: 11th July**

On the 10th, we had a lunch on *Ariadne* and our evening meal on *Santana*. It was a sort of farewell to John, who had to make his way back to the UK on the morning of the 11th. David would go to the Brest marina to wait a few days for his next crew. Alan, to arrive.

On the morning of the 11th, we took John into the main harbour at Brest. There was an impressive fleet of square riggers on display, a real bonus for John, but we managed to find a slipway where we could drop him off. Later, we heard that there was a subsidised bus to Roscoff (about £1.50, I think), and there were many people going back from the Festival, so he had many like minded people for company. The new ferry on the Roscoff service sounded more like a cruise liner.

We saw David cruising gently up the harbour as we headed back toward the Goulet to begin our Southbound leg on the Brittany coast.

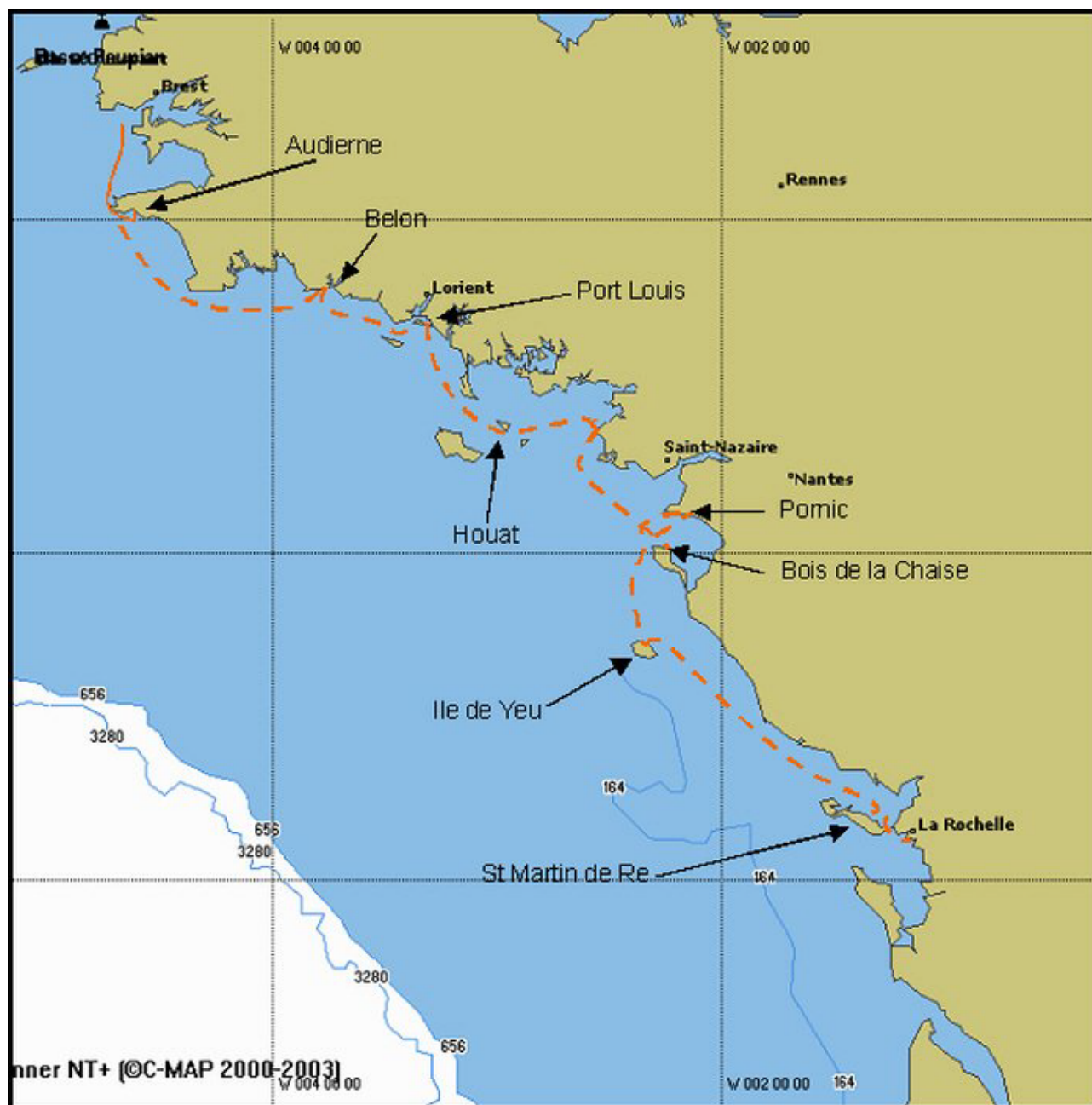


Ariadne in the Rade de Brest - photo John Barker



## Southbound

From Brest we made our way to the SE by a series of coastal hops. Until we reached Lorient (Port Louis), the weather remained grey. Even after that we had some grey, thundery days until we reached Ile de Yeu. Thereafter, we were destined to have several weeks of wall to wall sunshine.

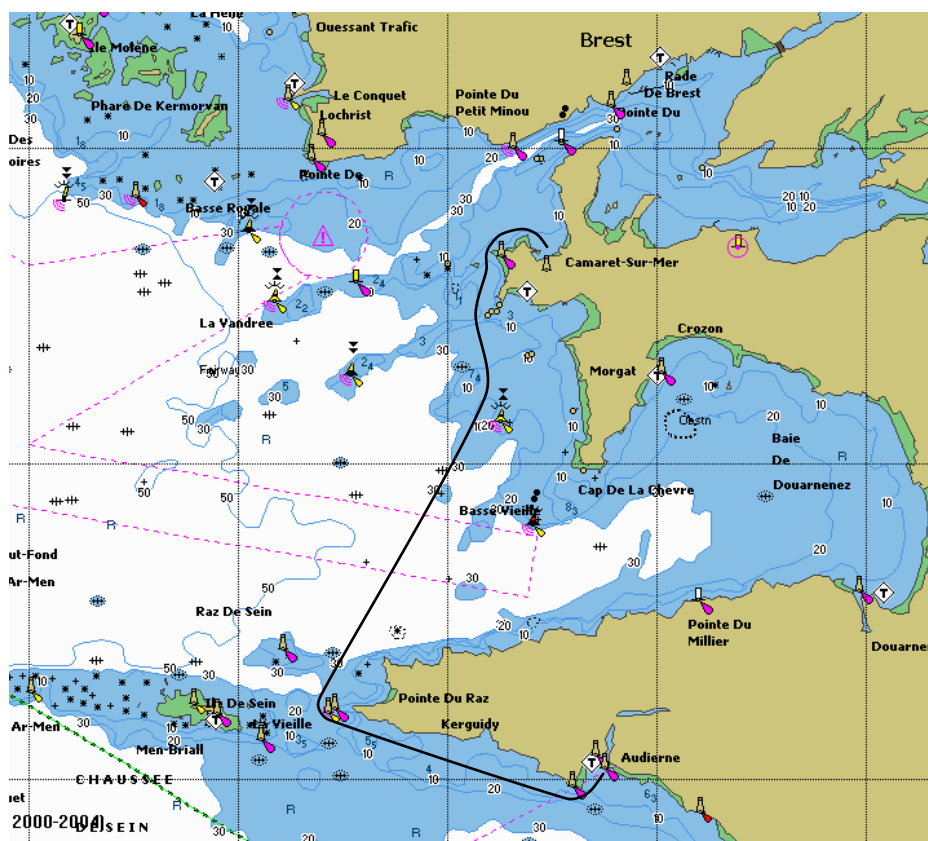






## Le Fret to Audierne: 11th July (40.1M)

Having dropped John at Brest, and waved goodbye to David, we motorsailed out through the Rade de Brest under single reefed main. Once clear we were able to bear away a little and unroll the jib, just laying the Pte de Toulinguet. It was a grey, cold day, not at all what we had hoped for.



Camaret to Audierne

The reach along the coast through the Toulinguet channel and past the Tas des Pois was not very pleasant. We held a course just west of south until we were clear of the offshore rock patches before bearing away toward the Raz de Sein.



Toulinguet Rocks



Tas des Pois

Bearing away after passing the Raz, the jib was poled out for a quiet run to Audierne, which we regarded as a simple passage stop. Having picked up a buoy, we did not try to got ashore.

By 1215, we were at the Raz. This was 30 minutes early for the, tide according to the pilot books, but the current was already with us. David had told us that this was to be expected, a fact that had been researched when he had cruised this area with Adlard Coles many years ago.



Raz de Sein



## Audierne to Belon: 12th July (44.4M)

Our guess was that the only way to find good weather would be to press on south as quickly as possible. So, by 0630 the next morning, we left under sail with a foreguy rigged to stop the boom slogging around. The wind was barely F3, North by West.

By 0830, we surrendered to the engine in order to maintain speed to catch the tide. As we approached the Pointe de Penmarch, the wind settled in again, so that by 0940 the engine was silenced once more.



Audierne to Belon

By 1100, we were passing the Spinec buoy.



Rounding Pen March

Progress was good, so we decided to press on to Belon rather than divert into the Baie de Benodet. Passing just north of the Isles de Glenans, we headed up toward Belon, crossing the bar with 1m under the keel, and moored to fore and aft visitors buoys.



Belon estuary





Ariadne in Belon

Our plan had been to have the (very expensive) seafood platter at the restaurant, but, being a Monday, the restaurant was closed. So instead we visited the creperie on the opposite bank where we enjoyed a magnificent platter of crevettes and a bottle of Muscadet.



Crevettes and Muscadet  
Nothing Like it!

### ***Belon to Lorient: 13th July (20.7M)***

Although it was tempting to carry on southward, I wanted to make arrangements to replace the Channel cartridge that had gone wrong earlier, and Lorient seemed to be the best place to set this up. We could not conveniently leave before 1030 when we motored over the bar, and set sail with the wind WSW F2. We tried the cursing chute for a while (after disentangling the control lines).

Less than an hour later, we gave up and motored the rest of the way to Lorient town marina. It had been one of those frustrating days when there is wind on the water all round you, but 400m away! We were motoring in a glassy calm.



Leaving Belon

Having arrived at 1500hrs, after a boring passage on a grey day, I was able to get ashore and do a bit of shopping as well as getting some emails away to set up the delivery of the cartridge to the port office at Lorient, where they were most helpful.



I had managed to find some exquisite pizza for lunch (yes. There is such a thing as 'exquisite pizza'!) This was lucky because there were very few shops open so close to Bastille day.

That evening, Dairne watched a magnificent firework display from the bridge at the top of the marina (maybe 100m from our berth). I am afraid I slept through it!

### **Port Louis: 14th/15th July**

Having found a supermarket open, a bit more shopping to replenish stores was undertaken before motoring down the harbour at 1100, making fast at Port Louis 45 minutes later. This is a quiet, but developing, yacht harbour next to a pleasant village. We knew David and his new crew Alan were on their way, so we were content to have a lay day to visit the museums in the grand Fort Louis.

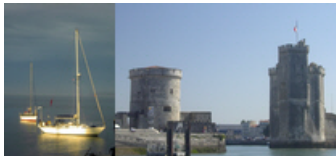
There are three museums, one related to the history of the French East India Company (hence L'Orient), another fascinating museum of marine archaeology and biology of the east Indies areas once controlled by France. The third military museum was less interesting. One small fee gives access to all three museums and the opportunity to stroll round the castle, from which there are good views of the approach channels, Isle de Groix, and (looking back into the harbour) the WWII submarine pens.



Port Louis







*Santana* arrived on the afternoon of the 15th and we arranged a communal supper aboard *Ariadne*.



Alan and David arrived on *Santana*. Dairne and Alan set about producing a Feast







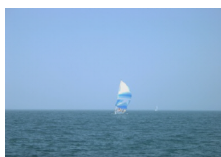
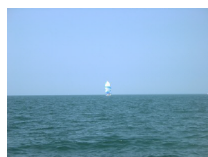
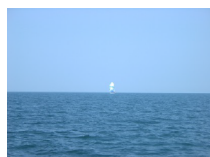
## Port Louis to Houat: 16th July (25.8M)

With fairly settled weather, we opted to sail in company with *Santana* to Houat on the outer edge of the Baie de Quiberon. All the island anchorages in this area can suffer from the 'Vent Solaire', a night land breeze that can easily reach N or NE force 6 at about midnight following a hot sunny day - much stronger than the sea breeze that preceded it. We made the judgement that there was too much stratus cloud for the risk of a vent solaire to be great.

We left at 0915, expecting *Santana* to follow shortly afterwards, but we were several miles south of the harbour when she appeared, with spinnaker set. Apparently Alan had walked miles out of the village to try and find some strawberries for David - he has a passion for them!

Until then we had trickled along with the main poled out in a light F2 wind. Once we could see he was closing with us, we set the cursing chute, but *Santana* is always faster than *Ariadne* in light breezes, and her spinnaker was far larger. Gradually she overhauled us

Before *Santana* caught us, we saw a pod of dolphins, but at a range that was difficult to photograph.





It took *Santana* till 1400 to overtake us, and we proceeded, more or less in company until 1530 when we decided it was wise to motor to be sure of having plenty of options for anchoring. The wind had gone into the West, so we decided to go into the big sandy bay on the east coast of Houat. This is a real 'vent solaire' trap, so we crossed our fingers and hoped that our assessment that the risk was low was correct. It was.

By 1645 we were safely anchored. We had carried the cursing chute for over 4 hours.

We then adjourned to *Santana* to sample some of Alan's culinary skills.

Later that evening, the cloud lowered and visibility dropped.



Approaching Houat

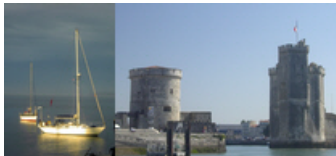


Houat Anchorage

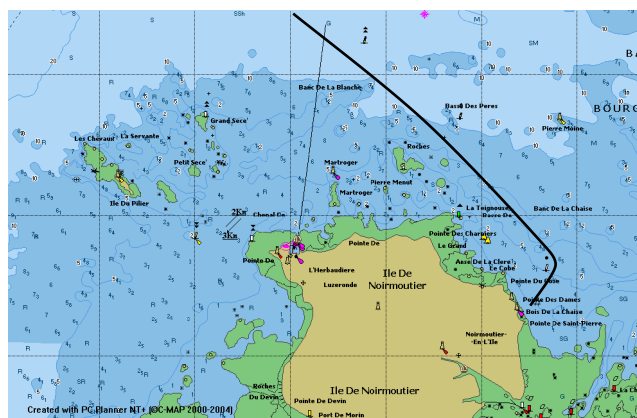
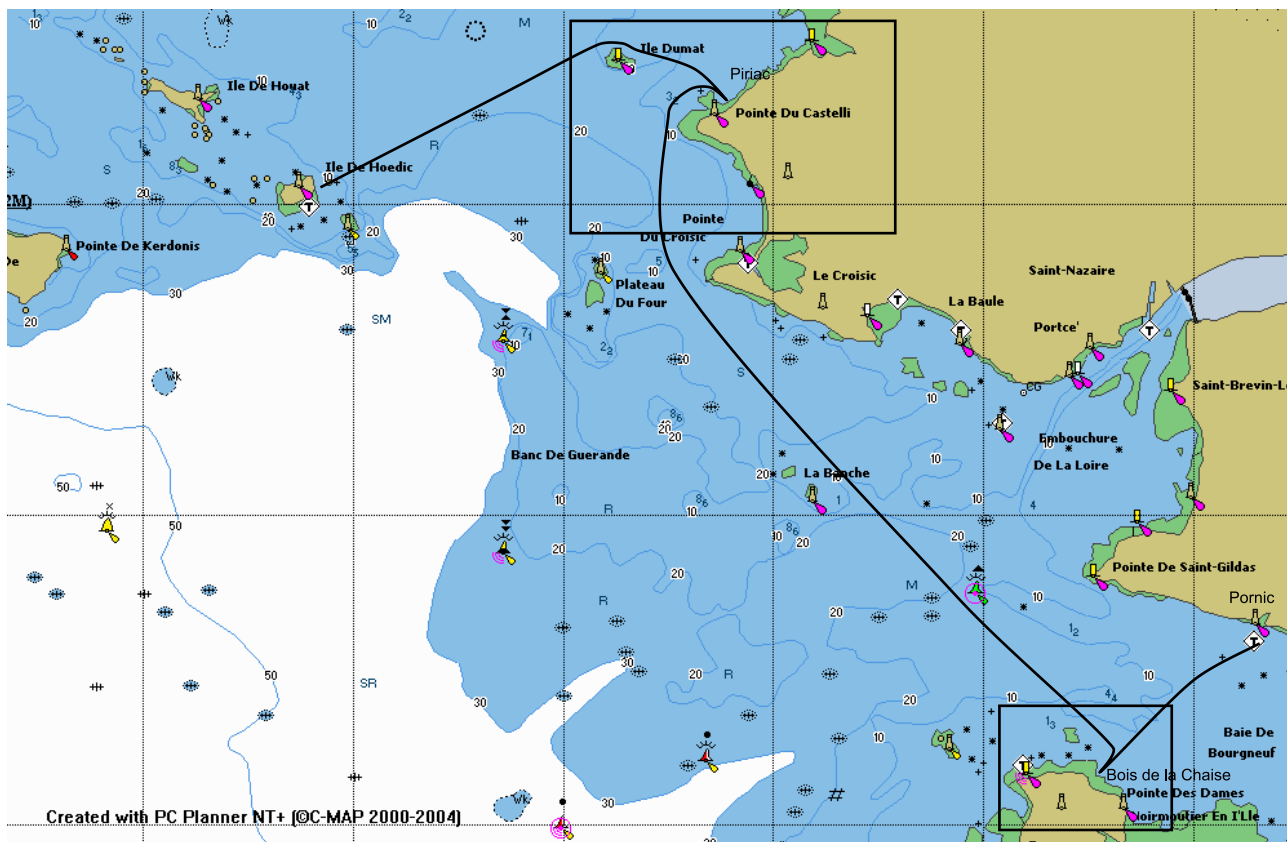
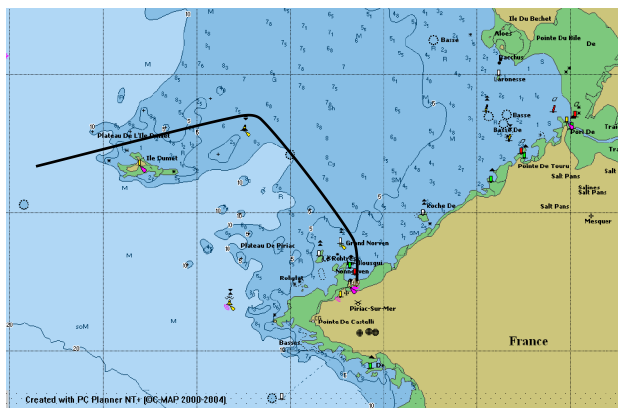


Santana Feast!





# Passage Chart Houat- Piriac - Bois de la Chaise - Pornic







## Houat to Piriac: 17th July (18M)



La Ville, Houat



La Ville, Houat



Houat Anchorage

We gybed at 1345, and found the buoys that lead into Piriac, a small harbour behind a tidal gate. It had only just been expanded. Even so, there was little room when we made fast at 1500. There we watched an incredible French mooring pantomime when someone who had just bought a 40ft Jeanneau tried to get off a difficult berth with mooring lines locked on cleats, crossed lines, and a general tangle.

Our friends in *Danae* arrived and were placed on one of the new pontoons. When we asked to join them, it was pointed out that there was no shore power there. That was not a problem for us, so we joined them there for the evening.

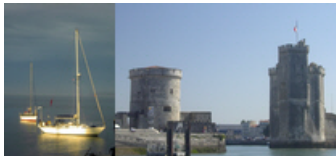
David wanted to get well south before Alan had to take a week at home (in France), so *Santana* left early. We had been in touch with another Rustler and agreed to meet them that day at Piriac, only a few miles away. This gave us time for a trip ashore. Houat is an attractive island with a quaint village that depends on tourism (especially camping) for its livelihood.

By 1200 we were clear of the island on a poled out dead run. The quartering sea built up quite a bit, but the Monitor handled it without much difficulty. The wind was W 4/5.



Monitor working hard on a run





## Piriac: 18th/19th July

Terry and Ruby in *Danae* had been away for nearly 6 weeks longer than us, and were in fact pottering northwards again.

Once the morning departures had left, the marina staff helped us to move to berths with shore power so we could keep our fridges running properly. It was now starting to get quite warm, though there was still a fresh breeze.

It is always good to meet up with Terry and Ruby - their experience in Brittany is always interesting and useful. They had just come from the Vilaine, where they had met up with another couple of Rustlers for Bastille day. It was here that Terry told me about the weather reports in the France Ouest newspaper - which I bought fairly often from then onwards. It helped my French as well as



making visits to Piriac Internet cafes less important.



Piriac

Piriac is a gem. It teemed with flowers everywhere, and we stayed there for market day. After a fascinating morning pottering through the town, we all met up on *Ariadne* for a long lunch with plenty of wine and local produce. We stayed an extra day, and were entertained on *Danae*.



It had been a pleasant break with long standing friends.



## ***Piriac to Bois de la Chaise: 20th July (29.7M)***

The paper bought that morning confirmed that the weather was set fair for a while, but with a growing risk of thunder.

At 0700, we followed *Danae* out of the Marina and along the approach channel, where they headed to the NW while we turned westwards, then southwards. The wind was fickle, with engine going on and off several times as we worked our way out to the headland, but by 0930 we were running poled out. For the first time on this cruise, we started to catch mackerel, stopping after we had six. We were entering the Loire estuary, inshore of the Plateau du Four with its magnificent striped lighthouse.

We were now approaching the height of the season, and our previous experience of L'Herbaudiere had not been the best, so we opted to motor round behind Isle de Noirmoitier to the Bois de la Chaise anchorage, where we found a visitors buoy for the night.



Plat du Four

We were content to sit on the boat and watch the activity all around - swimming, sailing, waterskiing, windsurfing, and hordes of people just enjoying the beach. It is a lovely spot in the right wind directions. The weather was beginning to get heavy with a threat of fog, or even thunder.



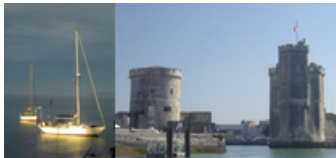
Bois de la Chaise

We knew that very good Rustler friends lived in Pornic, less than 7 miles away. But there was no answer when we rang them.

This was a place where we could sit in the cockpit and enjoy an evening drink, followed by a light supper. Then we had a phone call from our Rustler friend, Rod Kennedy. He and Claudine were driving back from Germany where they had been seeing friends. We arranged to meet in Pornic, the next day.







## Pornic: 21st July

It was simply a matter of dropping the buoy and motoring in poor visibility over to Pornic over an oily calm. We were there after 1hr 40m, having left at 0900hrs.

Rod and Claudine arrived by car and hosted us to lunch in a local restaurant, where they were well known. It helps! After lunch, Rod took us to the supermarket, and I was glad that we didn't have to walk. Pornic is a place where some form of transport is desirable to get from the marina to the town. One can go up the river on the top of the tide, but we did not attempt this.



Oily calm on the way to Pornic



Rod & Claudine's home

That evening, we were royally entertained by Rod and Claudine at their bungalow, accompanied by one of Claudine's nephews and his girlfriend. Rod is a wonderful host, and it was wonderful to see him rebuilding his life after the loss of his first wife to cancer. Claudine had also lost a husband to cancer. They understood each other, though at times the two Celtic cultures tend to clash!

We were back on board by midnight.

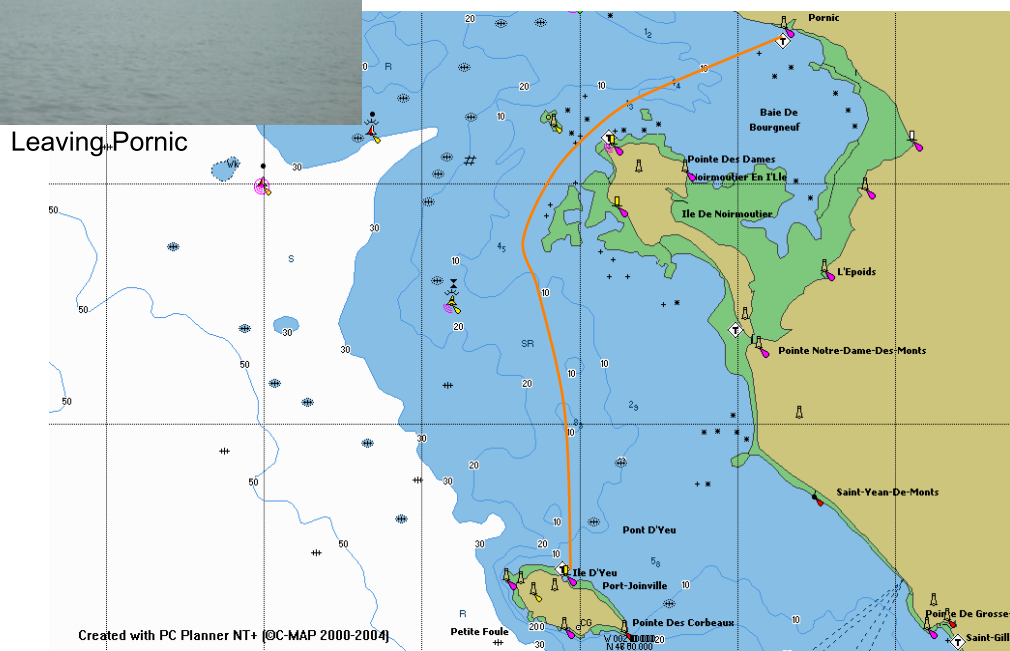




## Pornic to Ile de Yeu: 22nd July (28.4M)



The grey weather persisted and we were determined to try and get south of it. By 0735 we were away from Pornic marina, and motored through the channel between Noirmoutier and the Ile de Pilier. It is fairly shallow, but well marked. There are rocks lying well off the coast as you emerge from the channel, and it is important to find all the buoys before altering to SSW for Ile de Yeu.



Pornic to Ile de Yeu

There were thunderstorms around, which rumbled away, but we managed to keep clear of most of them. Occasionally we would go through a patch of really heavy rain.

By 1300 we were alongside in Port Joinville on Ile de Yeu to find another Rustler a few boats away. *Siosarnoir* was completed from a bare hull by Roddie and Dorrie Wade-Thomas. Their usual cruising ground is NW Spain, but the weather this year had led them to Brittany by way of a change. Recently retired, they were enjoying the prospect of more leisurely cruising. We certainly enjoyed being entertained on their boat. We exchanged SMS mobile phone numbers, and agreed to keep in touch. As they had already had a day or two on Ile de Yeu, they were due to move on the next day. We wanted to stay and explore the island a little.



Thunder and Rain





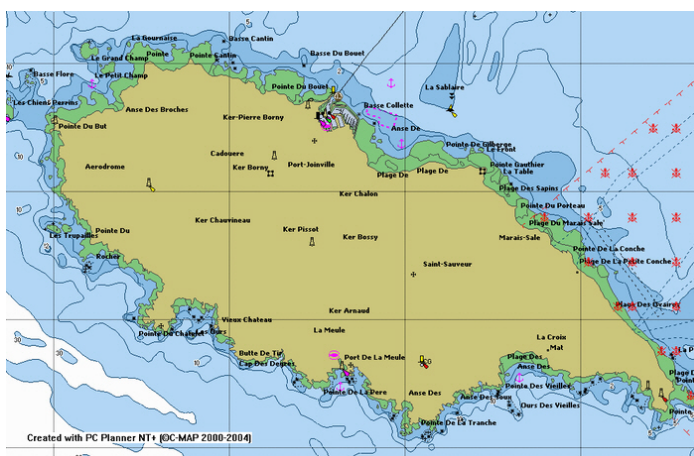
I managed to find a bus tour that left from near the marina at a civilised hour the next day. I also discovered an excellent Internet cafe and useful shops such as an excellent poissonnerie and a boulangerie. This is the most important thing to do on arrival in any French port.



Roddie & Dorrie Wade Thomas

### *Tour round Ile de Yeu*

Bicycles are not an option for us, so we have had to rely on public transport. In many ways it adds to the interest, though following the commentary of the driver can stretch our French beyond breaking point. What was interesting on this trip was to see the anchorages on the SW face of Ile de Yeu. If there is any 'houle' (swell) running they must be untenable, but on the day we were there, several boats had grasped the opportunity to day trip to these bays. Perhaps we may do the same on another visit.



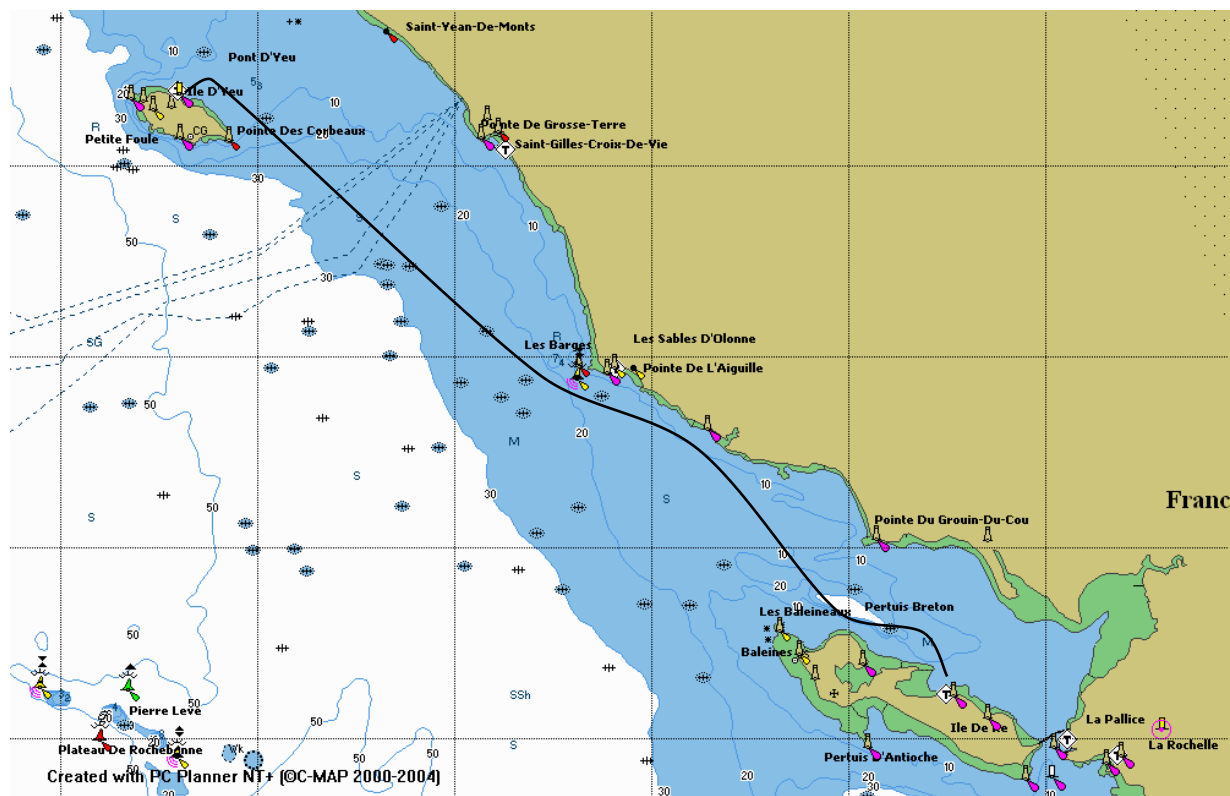
The tour stopped at several points allowing us to study the views and take photographs.







## Joinville to St Martin de Re:24th - 27th July (53.3M)

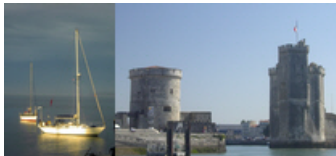


At 0615 when we motored clear of the harbour, there was a brisk F4 NE wind blowing straight into the entrance, kicking up a nasty short chop. Once clear, we turned southward under reefed main, and full genoa - it was a beam reach. In the first hour we covered 7 nautical miles, and the speed dropped little over the next two hours. At 0910, the reef was shaken out in a moderating wind. The sun really began to shine. Steadily the wind faded until just after 1000hrs the engine had to go on. Our course was shaped towards Bourgenay as an alternate destination if the sea breeze failed to materialise.



Dairne & Monkey sunbathing en route

By 1135, a SW seabreeze started to develop, slowly at first. It was not till 1210hrs that we were sufficiently confident to put up the cursing chute, and the course was reshaped to go for St Martin de Re. We were now bettering 3kts on a pleasant day. Dairne, who had slept for the first couple of hours, emerged to soak up the warmth. Even Monkey considered the conditions sufficiently benign to appear on deck.



To keep the chute full, we closed the coast of Ile de Re a little north of the harbour, the bonus being that we discovered that the current had turned south on the island shore 30-60 mins earlier than the tidal atlas indicated (at Brest +6).

By 1640, we were on a waiting buoy outside St Martin. As the sea breeze started to veer, an uncomfortable chop developed, not the first time we had experienced this off St Martin.



Entrance St Martin de Re



St Martin de Re

Eventually the gates were opened. Being the height of the season, the harbour was packed, and we were directed to a large raft with only a couple of boats inside us, and eventually there were 4 French charter boats outside, resulting in the usual French mooring pantomime. As the boat inside us later said, we had Napoleons army tramping over the deck until the early hours.

Despite the problems, we love this harbour, and went ashore for a real taste of cafe life, involving dry white wine and a seafood platter.



At last! Sunshine, seafood and the quayside cafe life





At last we had broken through into the good weather.



The market in St Martin de Re

The next morning we had to unmoor to let the inside boats out. This is a normal routine in this harbour, but I was able to secure a finger pier for us to move to - although the first one offered was far too short, and the gap an inch too narrow. The period when the gates are open is general mayhem. There is precious little room, and those people who have bought boats bigger than they can control are cruelly exposed.



Aboard Talisker



Hollyhocks grow everywhere

This place really is a gem. Everything is concentrated round the harbour, so Dairne did not need to walk too far. We both enjoy the market, which has plentiful supplies of seafood as well as really high quality vegetables and meat.

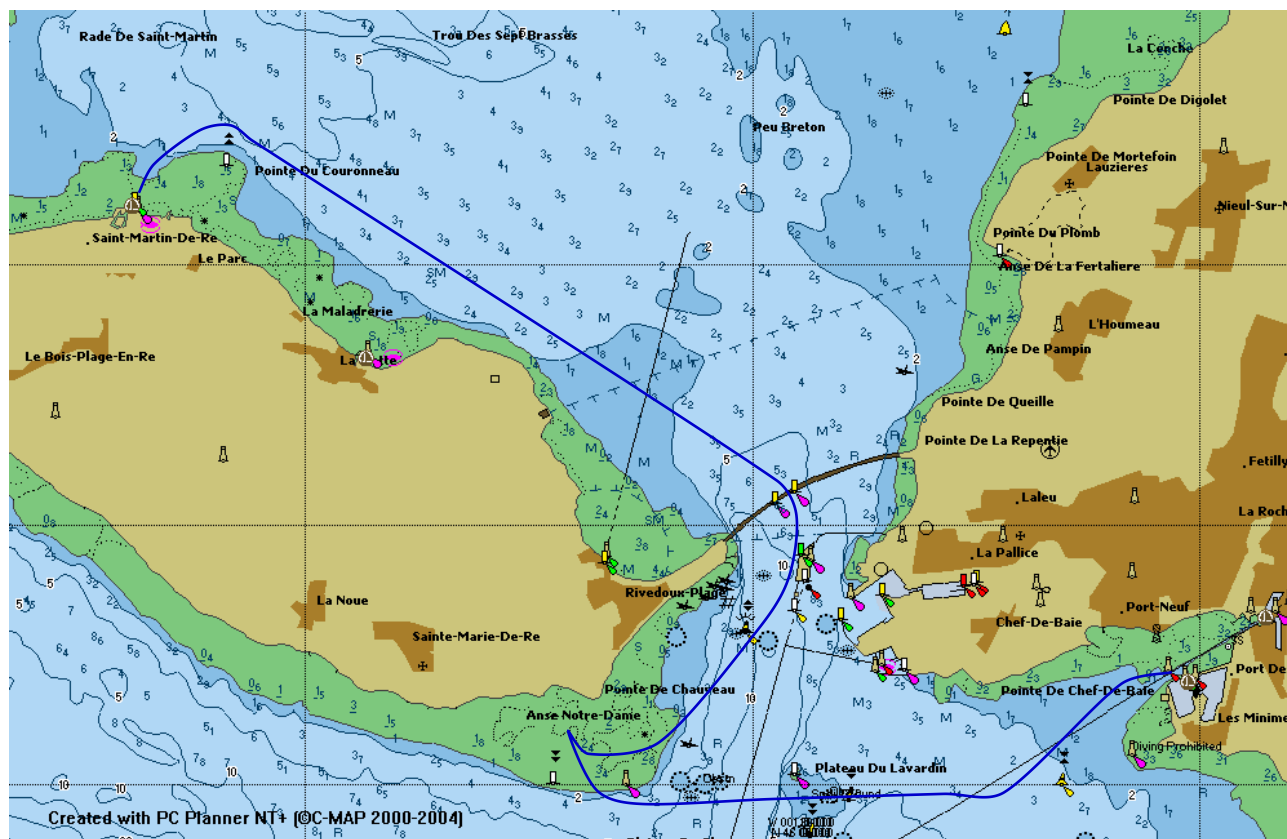
On our previous visit we had admired a beautiful varnished sloop called 'Talisker'. We got chatting to Anne and Nick, and ended up exchanging visits. They are a pleasant couple, but seem to have encountered some painful costs to maintain their boat, and are thinking of migrating to a boat with easier maintenance as they move into retirement. I know that feeling!

We enjoyed ourselves so much that we stayed a total of 3 nights in this lovely little town.





## St Martin de Re to Les Minimes (La Rochelle)(12.2M): 27th-28th July



Astonishing crevettes

We knew by SMS that *Santana* was already at Les Minimes, so that was our destination. But the gate opening times at St Martin de Re have to be rigidly controlled, so we had time for a shower and a last minute visit to the market before we got away at 1025.

It was complete mayhem, and we stayed in our berth while one boat that was virtually out of control went up and down the harbour while trying to get turned round. In the end, he went onto an empty berth and we slipped past.

Outside there was a light northerly, with insufficient force to sail easily, so we motored through the bridge and anchored north of Chaveux off the south end of the island, where we had lunch.

After lunch, we made sail and took two gentle broad reaches toward La Rochelle, making fast alongside *Santana* in Les Minimes at 1515.



Dairne had bought two giant crevettes in St Martin, which with Salad and wine made an evening meal with David - Alan having already left to go home for a few days.

On our previous visit, we had gone into the old town marina, and had only come into Les Minimes to join *Santana*. However, we were to learn that it has several advantages, including better power and water supplies, adjacent shops and restaurants, chandlery and repair facilities, and so on. There is also a regular and cheap river bus up to the town, an interesting trip in itself. La Rochelle is a quaint, but vibrant tourist town. We took the river bus mid-morning and had a stroll around. David had expressed disappointment in the pilot book he had bought, so I was delighted to be able to find for him a copy of the French pilot/almanac, which has all the essentials in English as well. Next time I come to France, I will get one for myself.

La Rochelle remains lively all day, with excellent street musicians. We had a first class 11 euro lunch in a quayside restaurant before returning to the marina. Resources were pooled for supper once more.

By now the weather was hot, and settled. We resorted to all kinds of sunshade, and even built windscoops to try and keep cool.



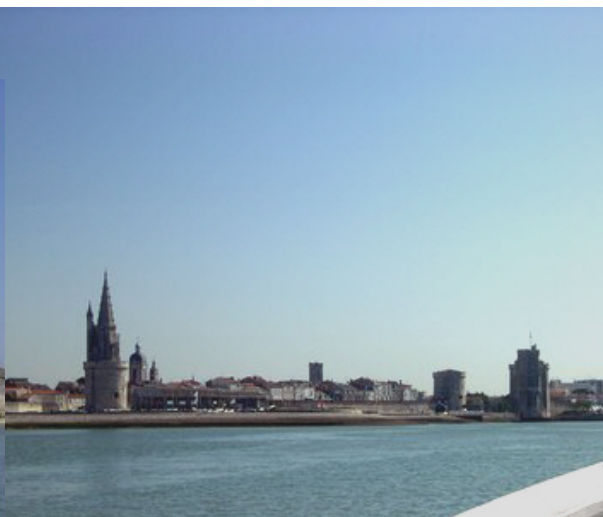
David helped us devour the crevettes



River Bus



Entrance to the old port, La Rochelle

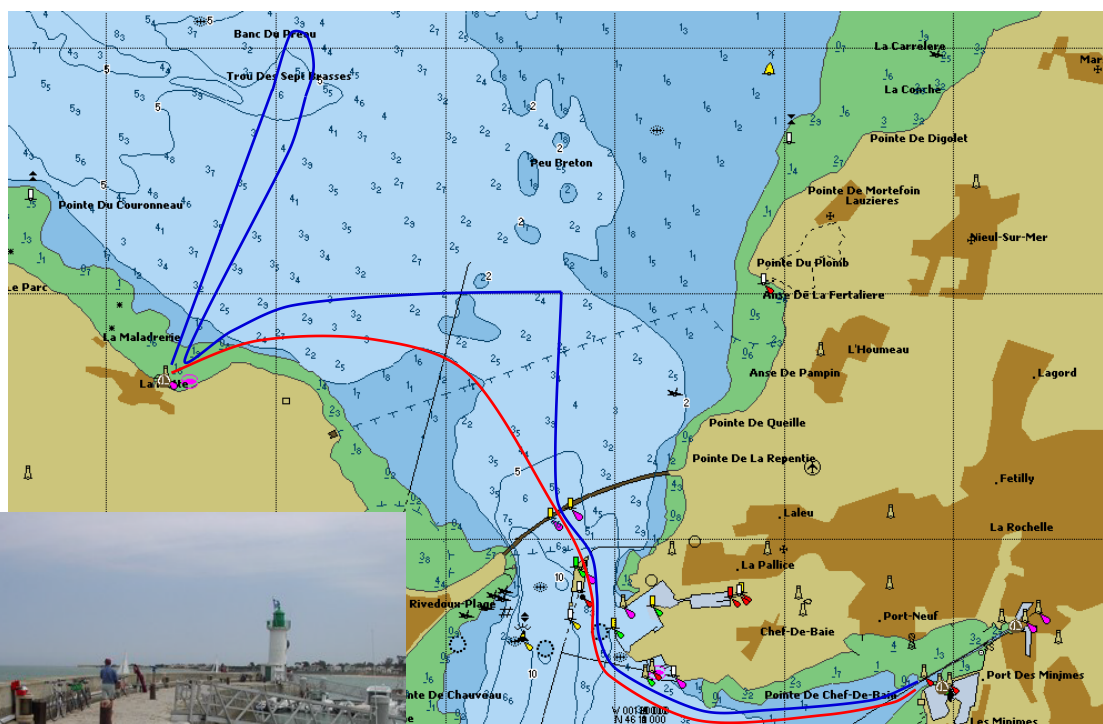


La Rochelle Shoreline





## Les Minimes to La Flotte: 29th July (25.4M)



It was now unbearably hot in the middle of the day. *Santana* was still waiting for Alan to return, so we invited David to join us for a day sail. He suggested that the tides were suitable to visit La Flotte, a drying harbour on Ile de Re, just through the bridge. It seemed a good idea.

We left a little early, and as we reached down the channel in a light northerly, the depth went down to 0.2m under the keel. It was a beat through the bridge. Once through the wind freshened to the point we needed reefs in main and genoa. We were off La Flotte by 1100hrs, but there was insufficient water so we reached across towards the mainland before having another go.

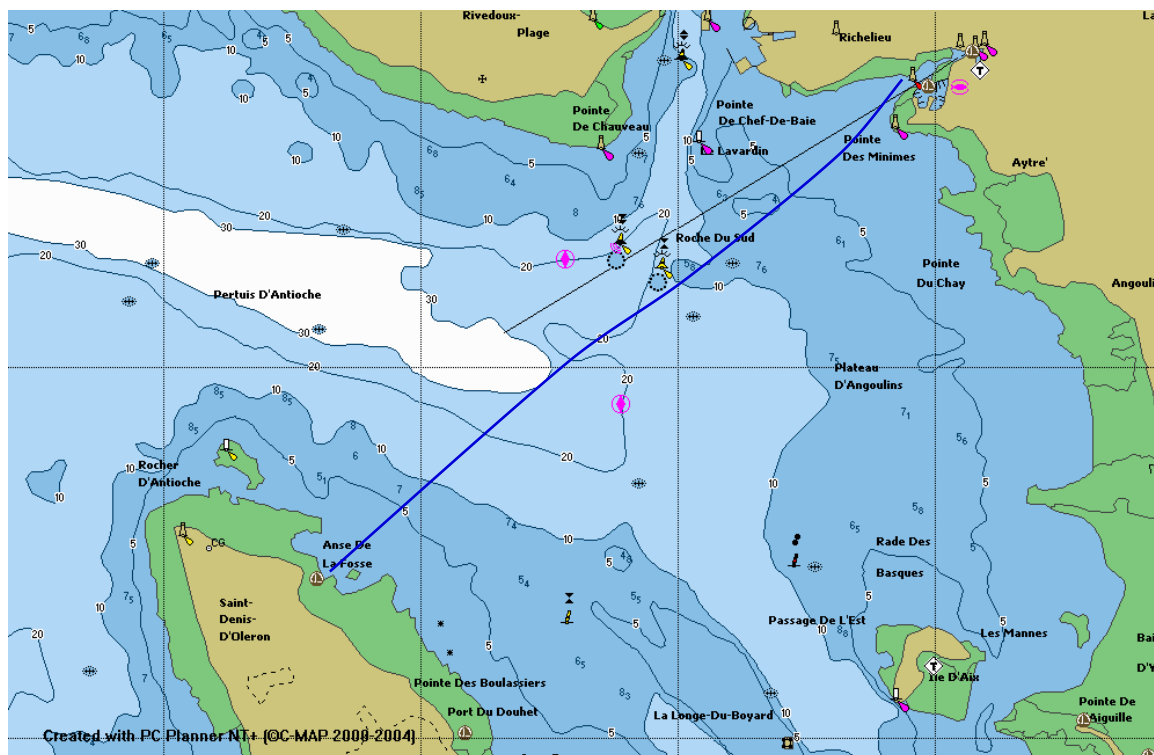
Very gingerly we crept in, and made fast rafted outside a motor cruiser inside the mole.

It is an interesting little harbour, where we had lunch in the cockpit, the mole giving us shelter from the brisk wind. At 1330hrs, we left, and ran back through the bridge to Les Minimes where we were alongside *Santana* by 1525hrs.





## Le Minimes to St Denis d'Oleron: 30th/31st July (23.4M)



David had already been to St Denis d'Oleron, and agreed to pilot us there. It is a severely drying harbour with a sill to keep boats afloat in the inner harbour.



I walked up to the village early next morning to find croissants and discovered the market was setting up. So we agreed to walk up to the village. It was superb market, with excellent seafood, cheeses. We sat at a cafe and watched the world go by for while before walking back to the harbour.

It is less than 12 miles, so we left after lunch to get there at the right time. Dairne helmed a delightful close fetch in west by south wind of F4. We were in fairly early and secured a good berth adjacent to the pontoon.





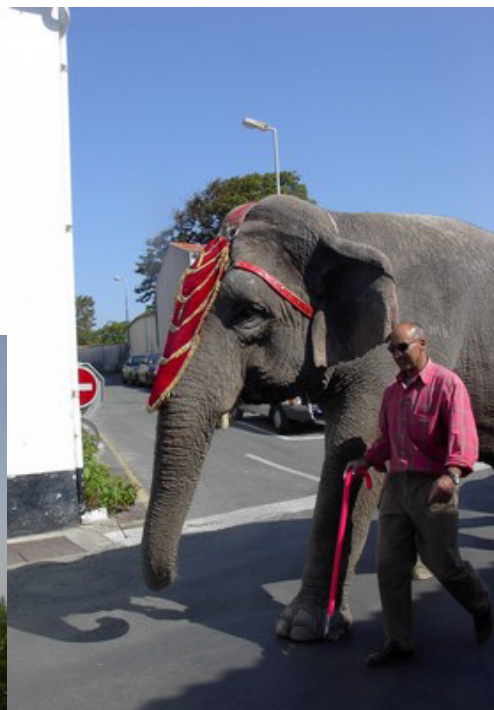


On the way, we were surprised to see a group of elephants walking up the road to advertise the circus. We had visions of them trampling through the market stalls, but it was too hot to follow them back to the town square to see what happened.

When we got back it was low tide, so we could see the channel quite clearly.



St Denis approach channel at low tide

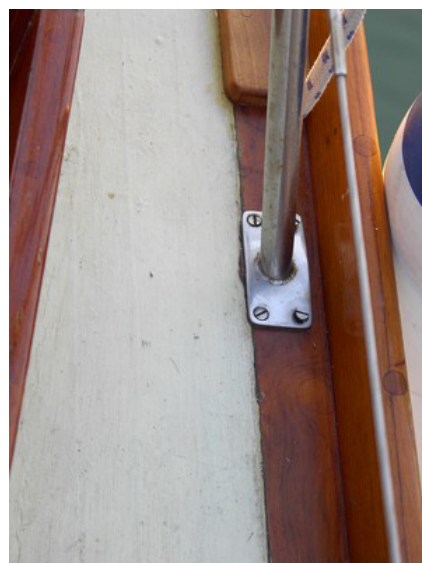


The next morning it was so hot, we motored out as soon as there was water, and gently motored back in a calm to Les Minimes, arriving back there at 1715. Our arrival was eventful, as I hit a boat manoeuvring in the marina where we had been directed to a different berth. Luckily

there was no damage. David was not so lucky. He had just got back to Santana when a charter boat charged into the quarter of Santana bending the pushpit, It took a lot of negotiation to sort it out as the charterer did not consider the damage serious.



David took us out for supper that evening, which was very good, if a little subdued.





## Northbound



The weather remained good, so we could afford to potter gently northward visiting some new places on the way. We were also able to re-visit some favourite spots such as the Golfe du Morbihan.

David left La Rochelle a couple of days later, and overtook us when we were in Ile de Sein. Although we didn't sail together, we were keeping in close touch with him through SMS text message.

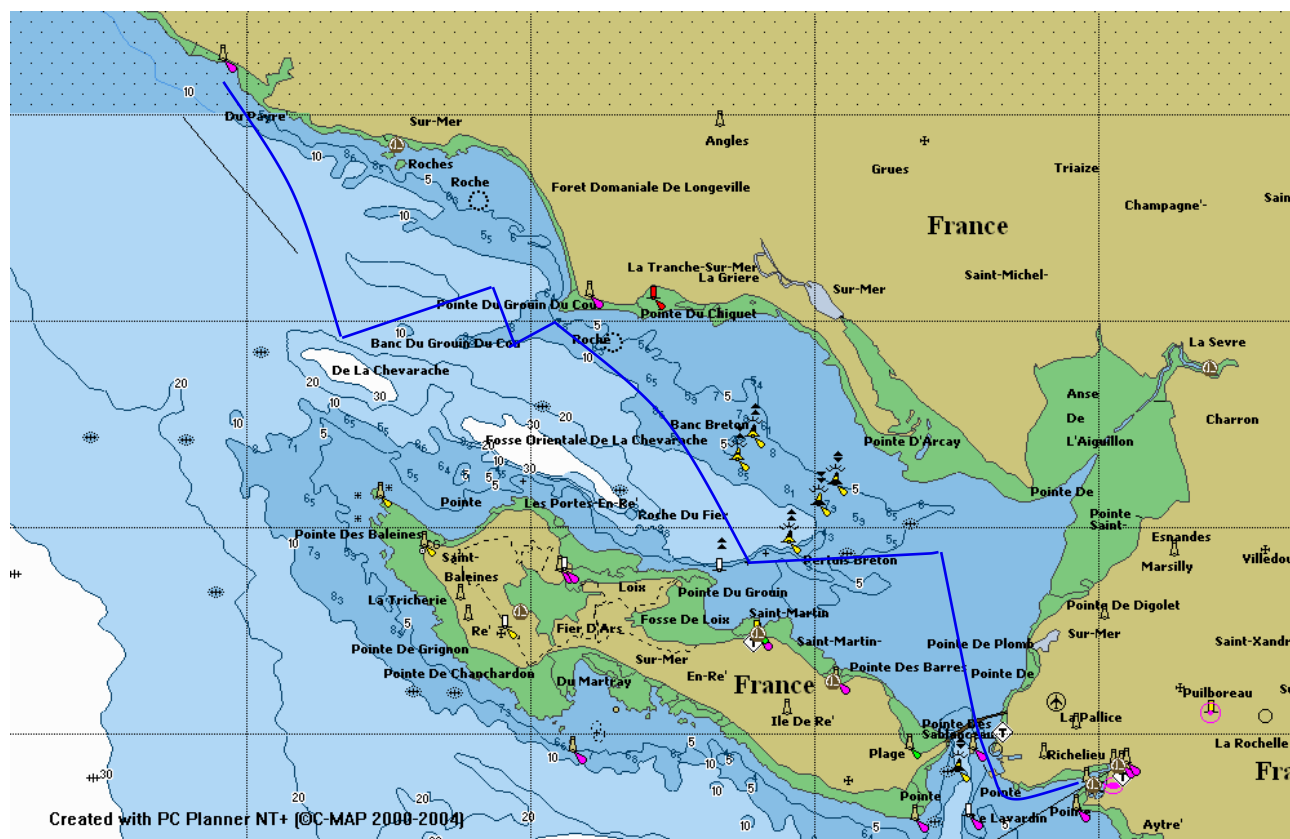
We had also met *Siosarnoir* again in Les Minimes. They had had a major failure of their bow thruster, and were waiting for an engineer to fix it. Eventually we were to meet up again in Lorient, where we also met Tim Slessor, a local resident and Rustler owner. Rod Kennedy and Claudine came by ferry from Port Louis- it was an impromptu rally!

Apart from a wonderful first day beating to Bourgenay, this segment of the trip was characterised by light winds and a lot of motoring.





## Les Minimes to Bourgenay: 3rd August (32.3M)



We had heard conflicting views regarding Bourgenay. It is clearly an artificial holiday complex with harbour and marina, and sounded a bit like Butlins. But with light adverse winds in prospect, we could possibly sail that far, but would have to motor if we were to try and reach Les Sables d'Olonne, We had visited the latter on an earlier visit, and not been too impressed with it - I had described it as Benidorm with boats.

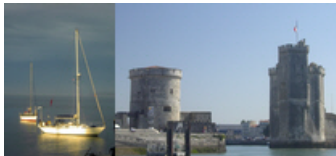
We said farewell to David at 0730, and motored until we were well through the Ile de Re bridge. At 0930 the suggestion of a breeze, WNW F2 led us to start sailing. There followed a gentle beat between Ile de Re and the mainland, then hugging the mainland coast till we reached Bourgenay.

There were many French yachts about, those going south sporting some of the most colourful spinnakers.

Halfway there we crossed tacks with a light-weight French boat being crewed by a group of youngsters. They got ahead of us, and were clearly pleased at doing so. We switched to



Colourful spinnakers



Just astern...

hand steering and started to try! I banked on better tide offshore and tacked out. An hour later we crossed ahead of them. There was much waving and taking of photographs. Later they peeled off inshore, but we later saw the boat in Bourgenay, but the crew were clearly ashore.

Bourgenay is a pleasant, but rather cramped marina with excellent facilities. Yes. It does have a slight air of the holiday camp, but it is a very useful passage stop with helpful staff.



...just ahead...

The two lower pictures were taken by the French boat.

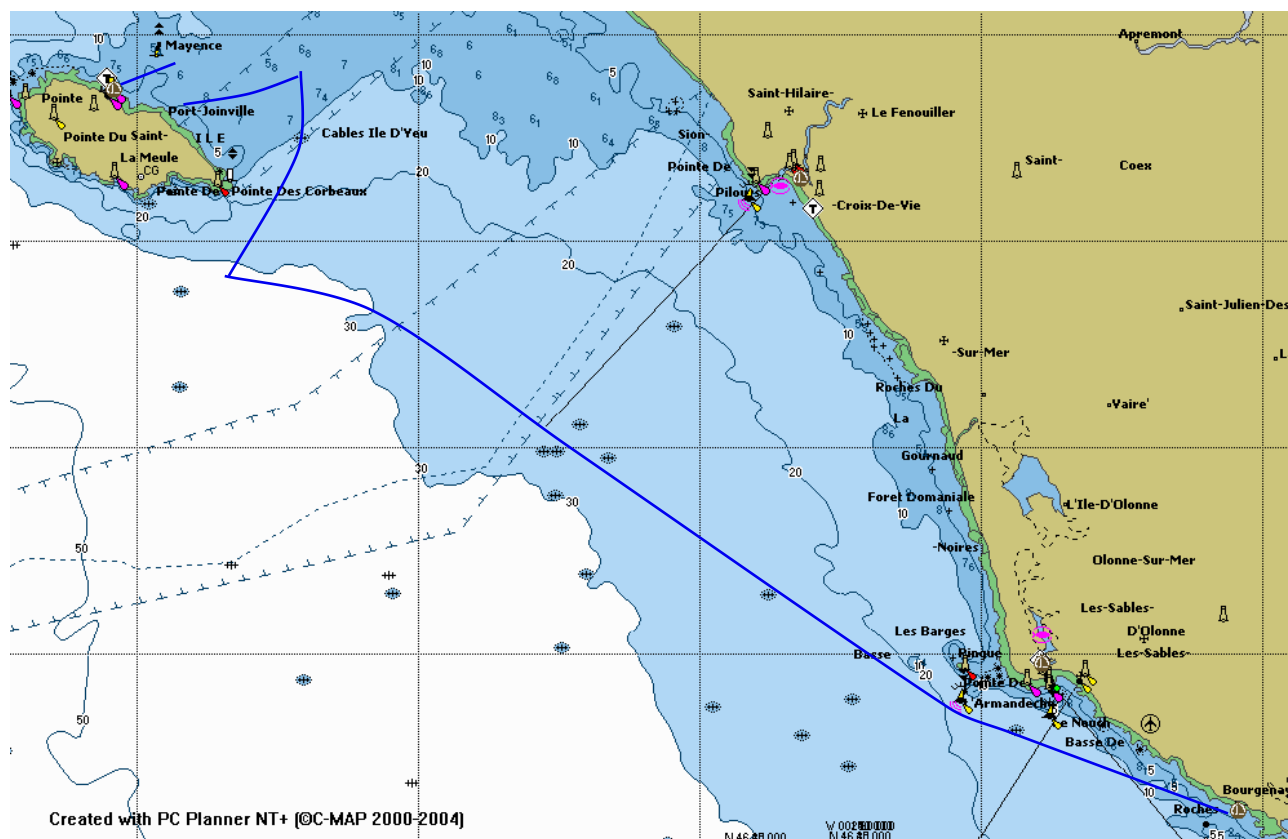


... But we got a lee bow





## Bourgenay to Ile de Yeu (Port Joinville) (37M): 4th Aug



It was still hot, so it was good to get back out to sea at 0750. We motored past Les Sables d'Olonne, passing the Pte Barges buoy at about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  cables. At 1130, the engine went off as a slight sea breeze started to build. Initially we were almost able to lay Ile de Yeu, and it was delightful sailing.



Wet dock, Ile de Yeu

At 1230 we experienced the first of several major windshifts. The wind was now mainly NW. Later I concluded that eddies were swirling down each side of Ile de Yeu which was aligned almost exactly with the wind. As each eddy passed us, the wind would shift.

In a freshening breeze we held the port tack toward the mainland, and eventually broke free of this turbulent air. We started to relax, and very nearly hit a buoy at speed. It had not shown on the plotter on the layer I was using. And we were not keeping an adequate watch while the windvane was steering. A serious lesson was learned. The buoy *was* there, but only on a lower layer. Inadequate passage planning. Failed again!



With the tide beginning to turn against us, we closed the coast of Ile de Yeu. As we were on one side of the island, the eddying was no longer a problem. A series of short tacks brought us into Joinville at 1700hrs.

However, the marina was full, so we rafted up in the main port until the tide had risen sufficiently for the wet dock gate to open, and we joined about 50 boats in this overspill marina, rafted three out, but with a constant water level.



Almost alongside us was the French yacht we had raced the day before. We invited them on board for a glass of wine. They were students from Paris holidaying on the yacht belonging to the father of one of them. Their English was far better than our poor French, and we enjoyed a happy hour together, and were able to exchange digital pictures via the USB drive I had bought in Weymouth.

The crew of the French boat we had raced against the previous day

I went ashore to find the Poissonerie was still open, and stocked up with crevettes and some fish for supper.

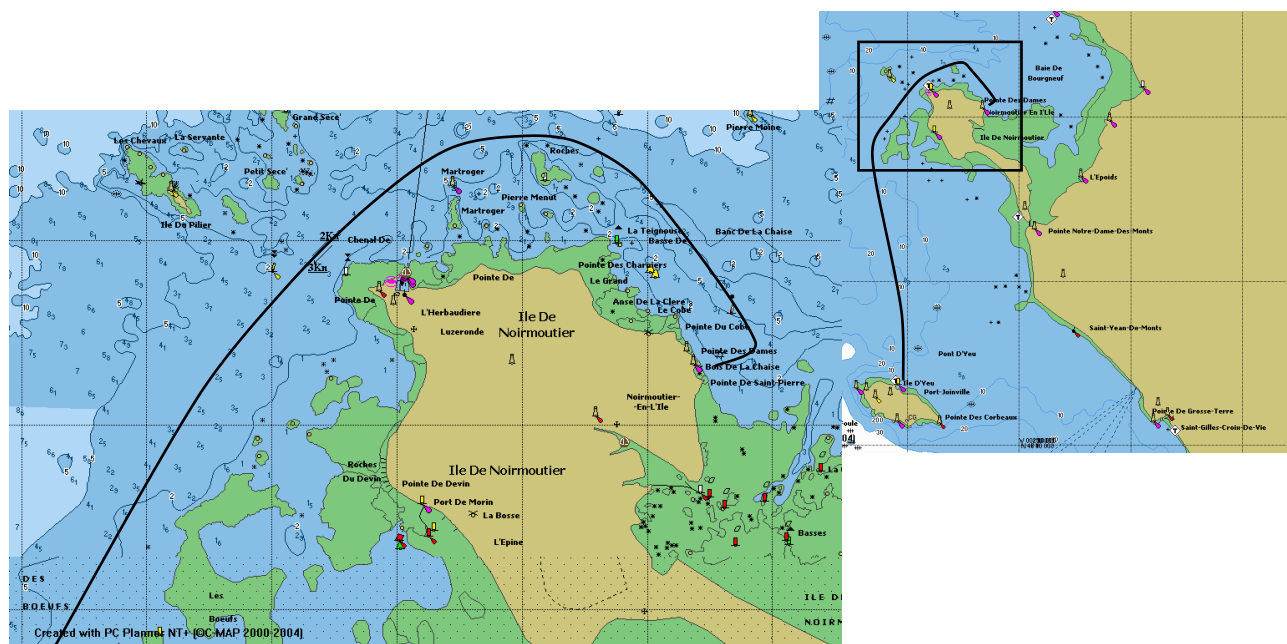


Excellent poissonerie on Ile de Yeu





## Joinville to Bois de la Chaise: 5th August (26.9M)



We wanted to go to La Turballe, but the day was almost windless, so we planned to go back to Bois de la Chaise as a stopover. Our departure time of 0800 was dictated by the opening time of the wet dock gate. Having cast off, we motored round inside the harbour while stowing warps and fenders before proceeding to sea as part of quite an armada. Most just motored away, but a few of us tried to sail in the Westerly F2 wind which gave us an easy close-hauled course to clear the off-lying rocks before turning into the channel past L'Herbaudiere.

By 0950, we gave up, and were motoring the rest of the way in a flat sea, lots of haze, and plenty of other boats paralleling our course.

Some boats were going the other way, and we passed close to what we think is the original Pen Duick, Eric Tabarley's first boat.

As we approached the channel, a trimaran overtook us under power, but suddenly we started to catch up with him. We altered to pass close by, and it was plain they had engine problems. They were grateful to accept a tow, and were happy to go to Bois de la Chaise, even though we offered to divert into L'Herbaudiere.



Pen Duick



Sarava under tow



Bois de la Chaise

There was one more surprise to the day. While we were enjoying our afternoon G&T in the cockpit, watching the activity near the beach, we saw what was obviously club racing (below). It is the only time I have seen this anywhere in France







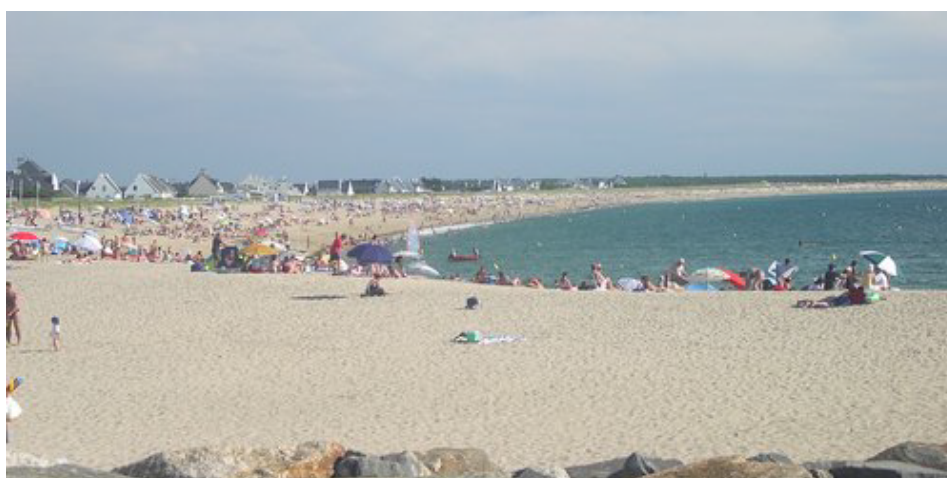
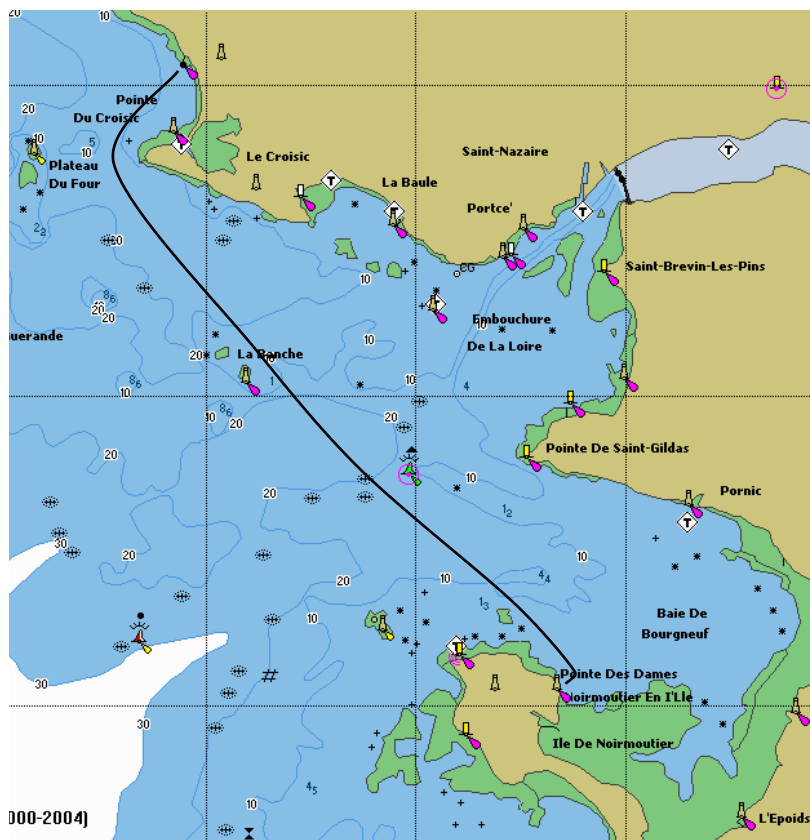
## Bois de la Chaise to La Turballe: 6th Aug (22.9M)

Another flat calm at first. It is an interesting bit of pilotage, passing rock shoals, first on one side, then on the other, with the main Loire shipping channel passing between them. We did not have far to go, and wanted some tide on arrival, so our departure was delayed till 0945.

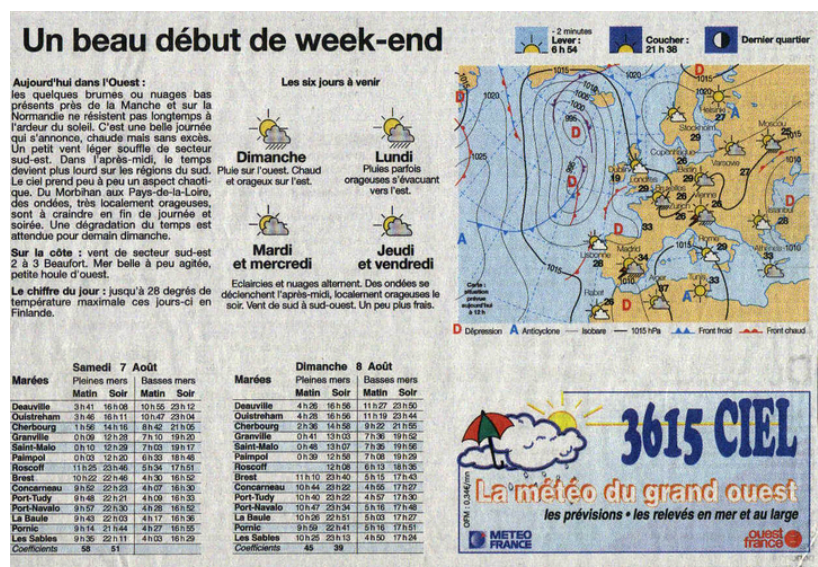
At 1145hrs, a light breeze filled in, and it turned into a delightful sail, a reach to Bse Castouillet where we bore off onto a run into La Turballe, arriving at 1530.

La Turballe is a working fishing port, and the yachts are in a congested corner where it is clear the marina has been developed piecemeal. The town is pleasant, with very good supplies, and we managed to have a meal ashore.

When we got back two more boats were rafted outside us. It was clearly going to take some sorting out in the morning.



La Turballe



47





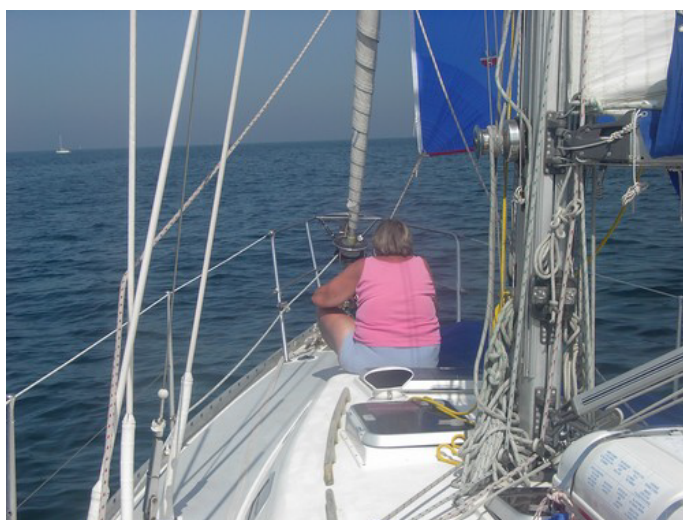
## La Turballe to Morbihan: 7th August (19M)



We only had 20 miles to go, which was just as well because it promised to be another hot day with little wind.

Departing 0830 - not without difficulty due to the congestion -we motored clear and hoisted the main. By 0900 there was a SE F2 wind, so the engine went off. At 1030, the breeze was sufficiently constant to allow us to set the cursing chute.

The autopilot was steering, and we were finding shaded places on deck. It was idyllically peaceful.



Ghosting under Cursing Chute

At about 1230, the breeze became fickle as the first signs of a sea breeze appeared. The cursing chute was handed, and thereafter we sailed a bit, motored a bit along the coast of Morbihan., finally slow steaming toward the entrance to the Golfe du Morbihan while waiting for the tide in the entrance to turn.

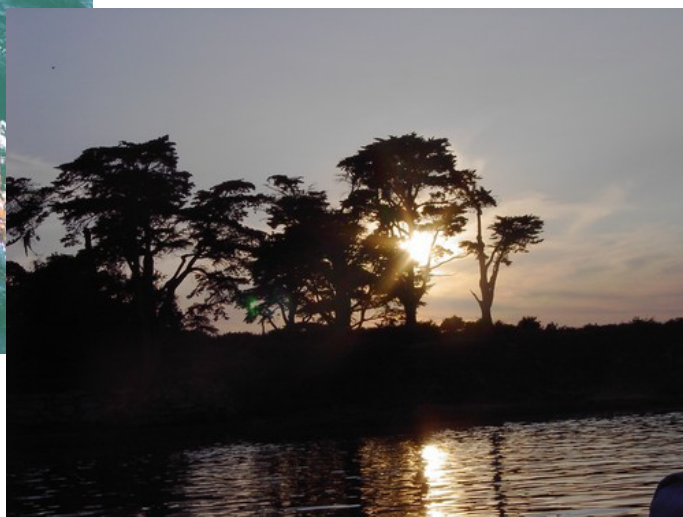


We crept through and found the anchorage behind Grand Vezid that we had shared with *Santana* 2 years earlier. To cool off we swam round the boat.

This was probably the last really good forecast we saw in France Ouest, so an extract is included.



Entering Morbihan



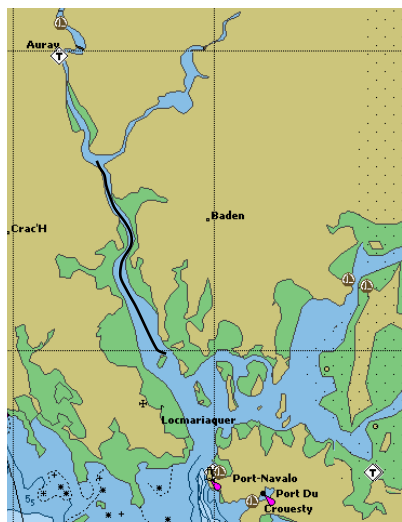
### **Grande Vezid to Le Bono, Morbihan: 8th August**

Being my birthday, I chose a leisurely trip up the river to Le Bono under power, where we arrived at 1155. After lunch we took the dinghy on the flooding tide up river to Auray - the air draught of the bridge is too little for *Ariadne*. It is a pleasant town, clearly designed as a tourist trap.



Port Auray

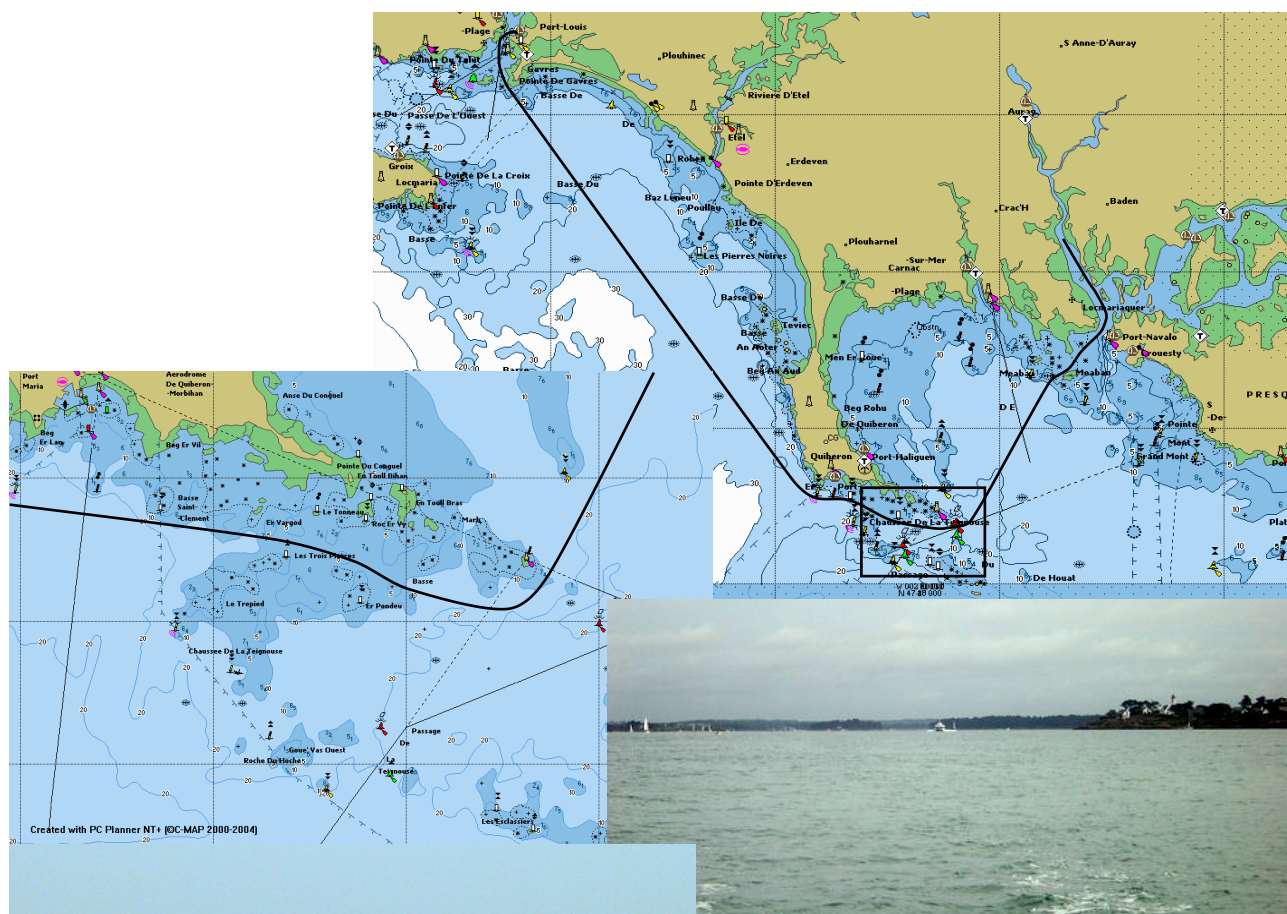
For the first time in weeks, the weather started to intrude on our plans. It rained, and there were clear signs in the forecasts that it was about to deteriorate. We had hoped for a few more days in Morbihan, but decided to get back round Quiberon before the weather broke. To make the best of the tides requires a bit of careful passage planning, and this occupied some of the evening.







## Morbihan to Port Louis: 9th August (32.3M)



Leaving Morbihan

By 0900, we were under way motoring down the river toward the Morbihan entrance, which we reached at just after 1000hrs, with the current just going favourable. There was virtually no wind, so we kept motoring across the Anse de Quiberon toward the main channel past the

Teigneuse passage

Teigneuse light, after which we took one of the side channels to save a few miles - still motoring.

The 'houle' (swell) was back at 1.5-2m, indicating some vigorous weather to the west.

It was just a long plug all the way, and uncomfortable in the long swell. By 1545hrs it was a relief to turn the engine off alongside the pontoon in Port Louis.



Port Louis

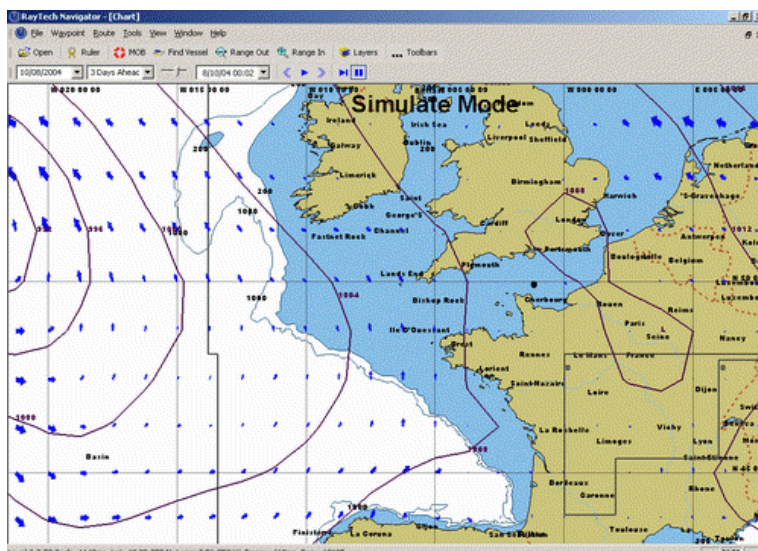


## Lorient: 10th/13th August

A visit to the Internet cafe confirmed that we were in for a few days bad weather, so we moved up to Lorient town marina. We had contacted Tim Slessor, our local Rustler owner, who had arranged to meet us that afternoon.

Meanwhile, I found that my replacement C-Map cartridge had in fact arrived. That was followed by a round of shopping and general re-stocking.

That evening we closed the boat up while Tim took us to his cottage, about 40 minutes away by car. On our previous visit 2 years earlier, his wife Janet had still been alive. Now Tim spends several months a year here, and has developed the adjoining cottage as well to accommodate his children and their families when they can visit. Janet would have loved it.



Raymarine weather map



Tim's cottage

We also learned about the amendment to his book, previously called 'Ministries of Deception', to which he had added a chapter on the Hutton inquiry. The book has been republished in paperback under the name 'Lying in State'. Compulsive reading like 'Yes Minister' without the jokes.

While we were relaxing in the bath, Tim was contacting the other Rustlers in the area. It turned out that *Siosarnoir* was also in Lorient at the Kernevel Marina. He also contacted Rod Kennedy and Claudine. We arranged to meet at the marina in Lorient for lunch.





Composite of the Rustler rally aboard Ariadne

Tim drove us round the area next morning on a rather grey wet and windy day, and we ended up at the marina for lunch. It was an impromptu Rustler rally. *Wild Swan*, *Siosarnoir*, *Hobo* and *Ariadne* were all represented. Great fun! We retired on board *Ariadne* for after lunch conversation and drinks, sheltering from the weather,



qui a dévasté le terrain de camping et tué Olivier Busnel, un campeur rennais de 29 ans.

Tornado at Houat

The France Ouest newspaper contained reports of a tornado striking Houat, right through the area where we had been anchored a few weeks earlier. It seemed several boats had been driven ashore or dismantled, and some 250 tents flattened. One person was killed. It was only 30 miles away.

After the mob had left, we invited the owners of *Jouster*, a Contest 36, with which we had sailed in company by

accident a few times to come aboard for a bit of chat and bottle of wine. It is a chunkier boat with more accommodation than the Rustler. We agreed that the weather would remain too bad to proceed to the west the next day, so we agreed to go together to see the Lorient submarine pens.

It was quite a long bus trip to the submarine pens, which have not been open to the public for long, and facilities are poor - it was impossible to find a proper cafe. Nevertheless it was a fascinating visit, and well worth the effort, including grand views of Port Louis from the roof. We just managed to get off the roof



Submarine pens at Lorient



before a monumental downpour. It would be an exposed walk back to the bus stop, so our guide helpfully called a taxi from the office so we managed to get straight back to the boat without getting soaked. We adjourned onto *Jouster*.

The next day we motored over to Port Louis and moored alongside *Wild Swan*. We had filled four days of unpleasant weather with a very pleasant social round. Unfortunately, the weather was too unpleasant for Roddie and Dorrie to take the ferry across the river to join us, but we agreed we would both depart the following morning. I was particularly struck by Rod's Celtic flourish using the saltire on a red ensign - which he claims is fully legal.



Ariadne and Wild Swan at Port Louis

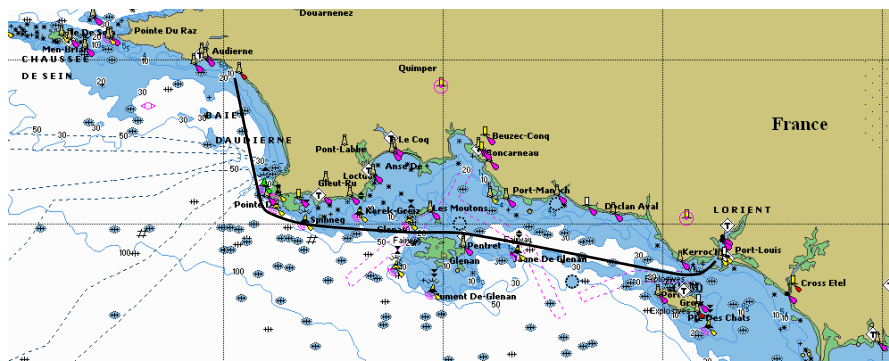


Wild Swan's saltire ensign





## Port Louis to Audierne: 14th Aug (55.7)



Rod & Claudine were up early to see us off at 0625. Motoring out, we saw *Siosarnoir* emerging from Kernevel. We were to motor in company all day, occasionally comparing notes on the radio. *Siosarnoir* with her Brunton propeller was able to maintain our cruising speed of 5kts at just over 2000 rpm, whereas we needed 2900 rpm. I had only put one coat of antifouling on this year, and we were undoubtedly a little bit fouled, but the difference is significant.



Iles de Glenans

The day dragged on in poor visibility, but little rain. There was a slight llop on the sea, but little swell.

My original plan had been to go into Loctudy, but conditions remained benign and we carried the tide. So after passing just to the north of Glenans, we carried on round Penmarch to Audierne, arriving there at 1645. It had been a tedious slog, but we had got well to the west with the threat of deteriorating weather.



In company with Siosarnoir

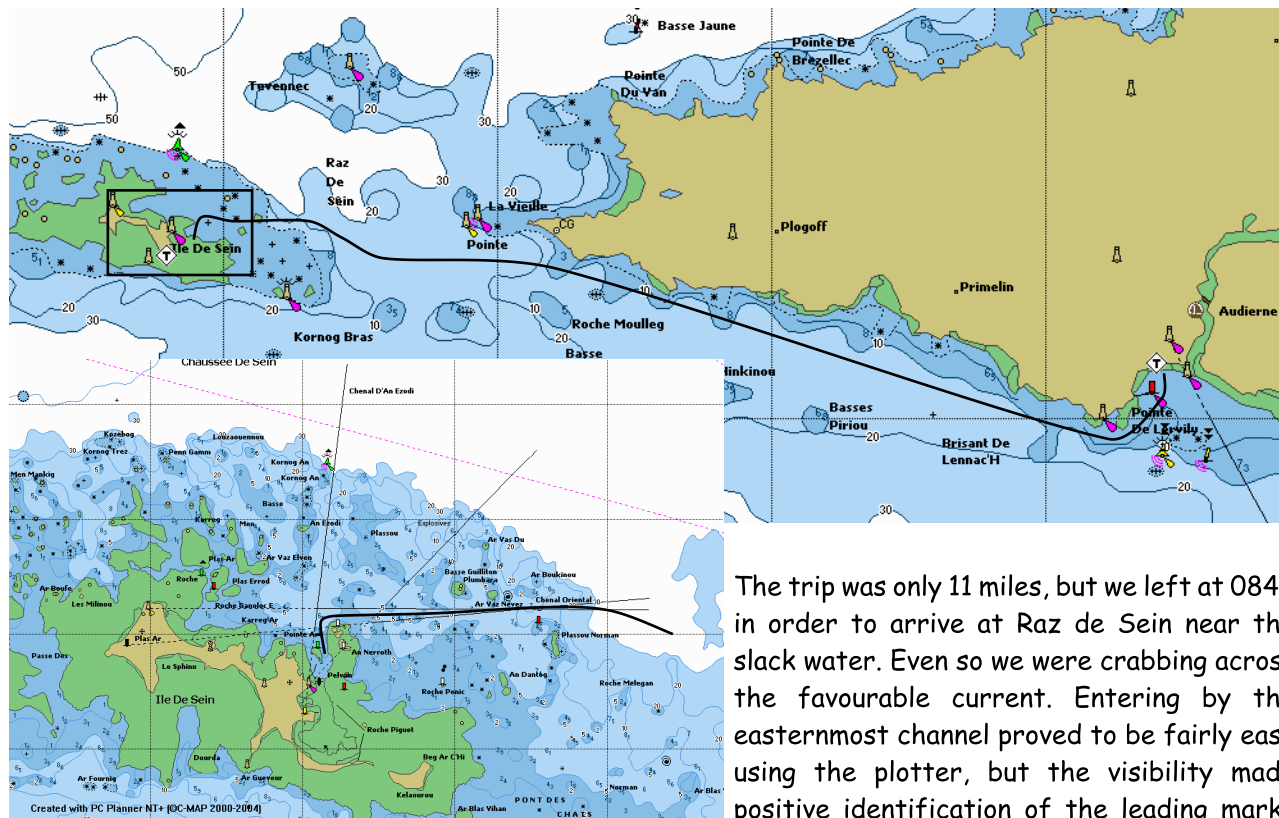
Roddie and Dorrie in *Siosarnoir* had decided to press on back to Plymouth before the weather deteriorated. We hoped to take longer getting home and still harboured hopes of pottering along the north Brittany coast, perhaps catching up with *Danae* again. The following day promised light south westerlies, and the tides were moderate. In fact conditions were ideal to make our first visit to Ile de Sein.



Dairne



## Audierne to Ile de Sein: 15th Aug (11.1M)



The trip was only 11 miles, but we left at 0840 in order to arrive at Raz de Sein near the slack water. Even so we were crabbing across the favourable current. Entering by the easternmost channel proved to be fairly easy using the plotter, but the visibility made positive identification of the leading marks tricky.



Approaching Ile de Sein

Turning into the harbour, we found it fairly congested. Not for the first time, I cursed leaving the legs at home as the best anchorage was near the top of the little harbour where we would have dried half a metre.

We anchored, but a large vedette came in, dropped its passengers, and picked up a buoy that was clearly too close to use. There is space outside the harbour, but we wanted to go ashore, so preferred to be inside. Eventually we found a spot with almost enough swinging room, but it would clearly need watching.

Turning into the harbour, we found it fairly congested. Not for the first time, I cursed leaving the legs at home as the best anchorage was near the top of the little harbour where we would have dried half a metre.

We were just settled when *Santana* came up on the vhf. David and Alan were just going through the Raz, having motored hard to get there. They were going on to Camaret.





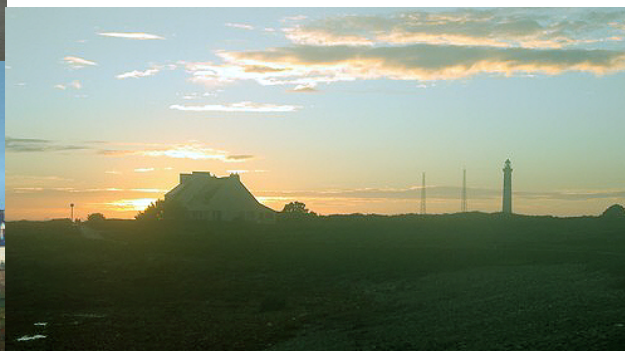
On shore we could see a church parade, followed by a football match on the beach, and lots of people about. It was a fascinating place to be.

The approach channels had been wider and deeper than expected, and well marked. Provided one keeps an eye on cross currents, the approach is straightforward. Given the right wind direction and not too much swell, this is a passage stop I shall use again.

By the end of the day, Ariadne had logged 23053 miles since build.



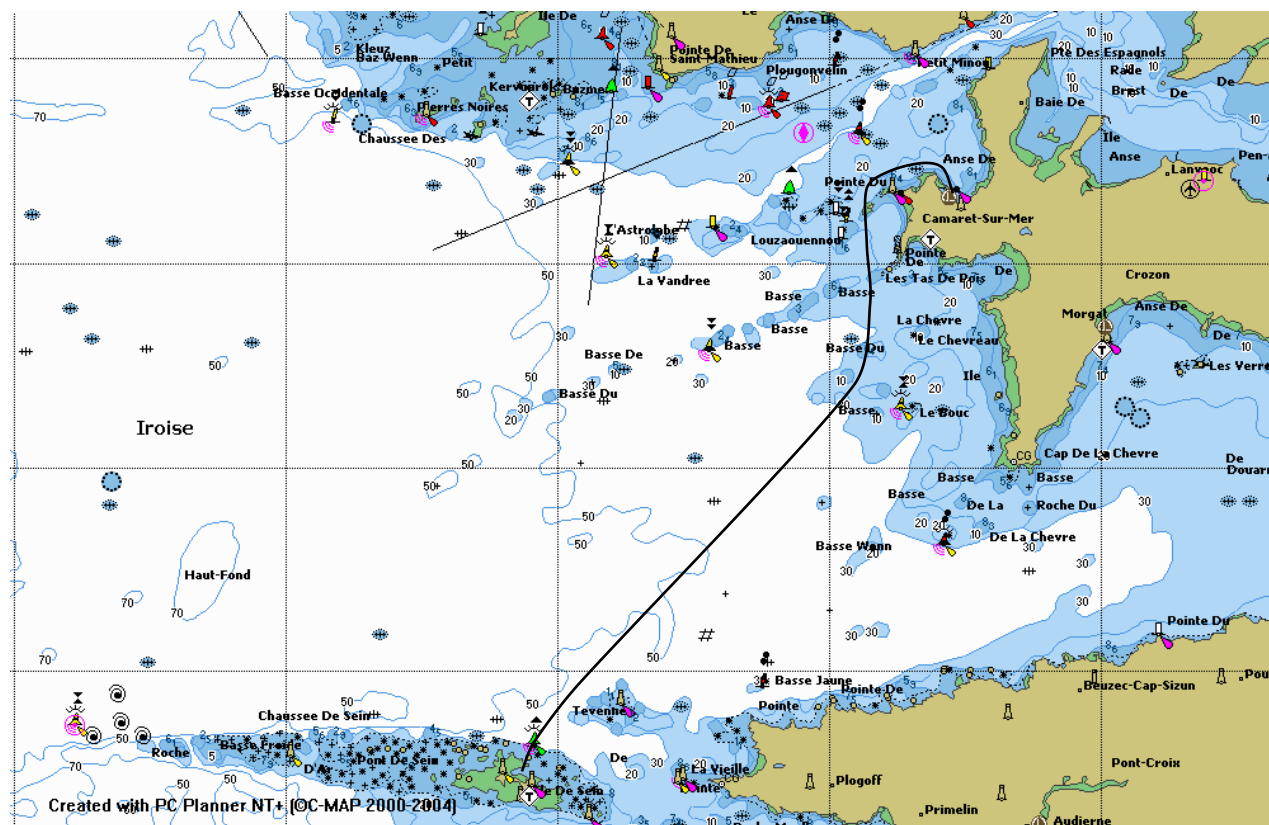
As it was our 40th wedding anniversary, we decided to eat ashore at one of the restaurants. By the time we had launched the dinghy, it was sheeting down with rain ("apd rain" according to a Kiwi guide we had had on South Island of NZ). We toggged up in heavy weather gear and rowed ashore. All the restaurants were closed, except a pizza bar. A decidedly average meal (they even got our order wrong) was relieved by humorous exchanges with the staff and some of the customers.



After our meal, the rain eased, so we decided to walk a little before going on board. The main island is tiny and we were able to walk through the village and look out along the chain of rocks stretching to the west. The cloud broke a little, and with the watery horizontal light spreading from the western horizon, I was just able to get some unusual photographs. The island is so small that nowhere are you more than a couple of hundred metres from the sea. This must be a bleak and isolated place in a winter storm.



## Ile de Sein to Camaret: 16th Aug (19.3M) (and 17th/20th Aug)



We had hoped to spend at least 2 nights at Ile de Sein, but the forecast had hardened with the prospect of a real blow within 48 hours. We decided to move on to Camaret to sit out the bad weather there, which meant leaving fairly early to ride the tide northward.

At 0810, the anchor was stowed and we were running along the transit for the northernmost channel, broad reaching in S4 wind.



Toulinguet rocks



Looking back to Tas des Pois

Once clear, course was set to leave the shoals round Tevennec to starboard. There were some huge rain clouds about, and shortly after 0900hrs, one caught us in a downpour. The wind gusted, the bow went down, and the boat leapt forward, the Monitor windvane managing to keep control. Visibility crashed to a few hundred metres, and it became quite dangerous to be hurtling along so fast. The radar was turned on.





The next rain cloud produced even fiercer gusts, topping 30kts. This was getting out of hand, so the boat was gently rounded toward the wind and the mainsail was scrambled down, requiring me to go on deck to haul it down the track. Thunder and lightning added to the drama.

I had assumed that no one would be trying to head south into wind and tide, so was surprised to pass a yacht motorsailing to the



Toulinguet Point

south. Just as well we had not encountered him during the first two gusts.

We broad reached under genoa, occasionally taking in rolls during the fiercer gusts. It was not the fastest progress, speed dropping below 5kts on occasion, but it was safer and more comfortable.

Eventually the storm passed, and the engine was turned on as we passed through the Toulinguet channel. By now I was cold and quite wet.

We made fast to a finger pier in the inner marina at Camaret (Port du Styvel) at 1320. We were obviously in for a blow.



*Santana* had already left, presumably taking the Chenal du Four to L'Abervrach or beyond.

We were to be stuck in Camaret for another 4 days while it blew and rained. On the 19th, I got a weather map that showed the possibility of a gap between two depressions. Fendering became a tricky issue and warps had to be watched for chafe as there was quite a bit of movement. I managed to get Internet weather from the harbour office. Otherwise it was a matter of eating and sleeping and, well, waiting for the improvement.

Walking along the quay one morning, I saw several yachts caught by a severe squall having difficulty in getting to the harbour. Even a large supply vessel had difficulty in getting an anchor to bite and hold.







It was a pretty major blow, as the article from Frace Ouest shows.

Ouest-France  
Vendredi 20 août 2004

Campeurs évacués, plaisanciers hélictreuillés, coupures de courant...

## Une forte tempête a balayé l'Ouest

**Des vents de 88 km/h à 126 km/h et des intempéries : la nuit de mercredi à jeudi a été plutôt agitée dans l'Ouest. Et il ne faisait pas bon dormir sous la tente...**

Dans le Finistère, 200 campeurs ont dû être évacués dans les secteurs de Pont-l'Abbé, Bénodet et Trégunc. Même scénario dans le Morbihan (à Erdeven, Étrel et Quiberon), dans les Côtes-d'Armor (Pleumeur-Bodou, Plouha) et dans la Manche (Blainville-sur-Mer). Certains ont été relogés dans des salles municipales ou dans des mobile homes. Les moins chanceux trouvant refuge dans leur voiture.

Les autochtones aussi ont eu le sommeil agité. Outre le sifflement du vent, il a fallu compter avec de nombreuses coupures de courant. Rien de bien grave, puisque l'électricité a été rétablie dans la plupart des foyers touchés en Bretagne ou dans la Manche.

A Concarneau, une centaine de plaisanciers ont dû quitter leur navire entre 23 h et 1 h. 70 touristes se sont trouvés coincés à Belle-Ile-en-Mer, sans navette. Certains ont passé la nuit dans une salle municipale, avec des campeurs pour compagnons d'infortune. D'autres ont préféré, bon gré mal gré, s'offrir une nuit d'hôtel.

Au large de Vile, la situation s'est un peu compliquée. Un homme de 45 ans et sa fille de 25 ans ont dû être hélitreuillés de leur voilier. En état d'hypothermie, ils ont été hospitalisés à Brest.

126 km/h à la Pointe du Raz



**Sud Finistère :**  
130 interventions des pompiers.

**80 campeurs relogés** au Guilvinec, 40 à Bénodet, 35 familles et 40 adolescents à Trégunc.

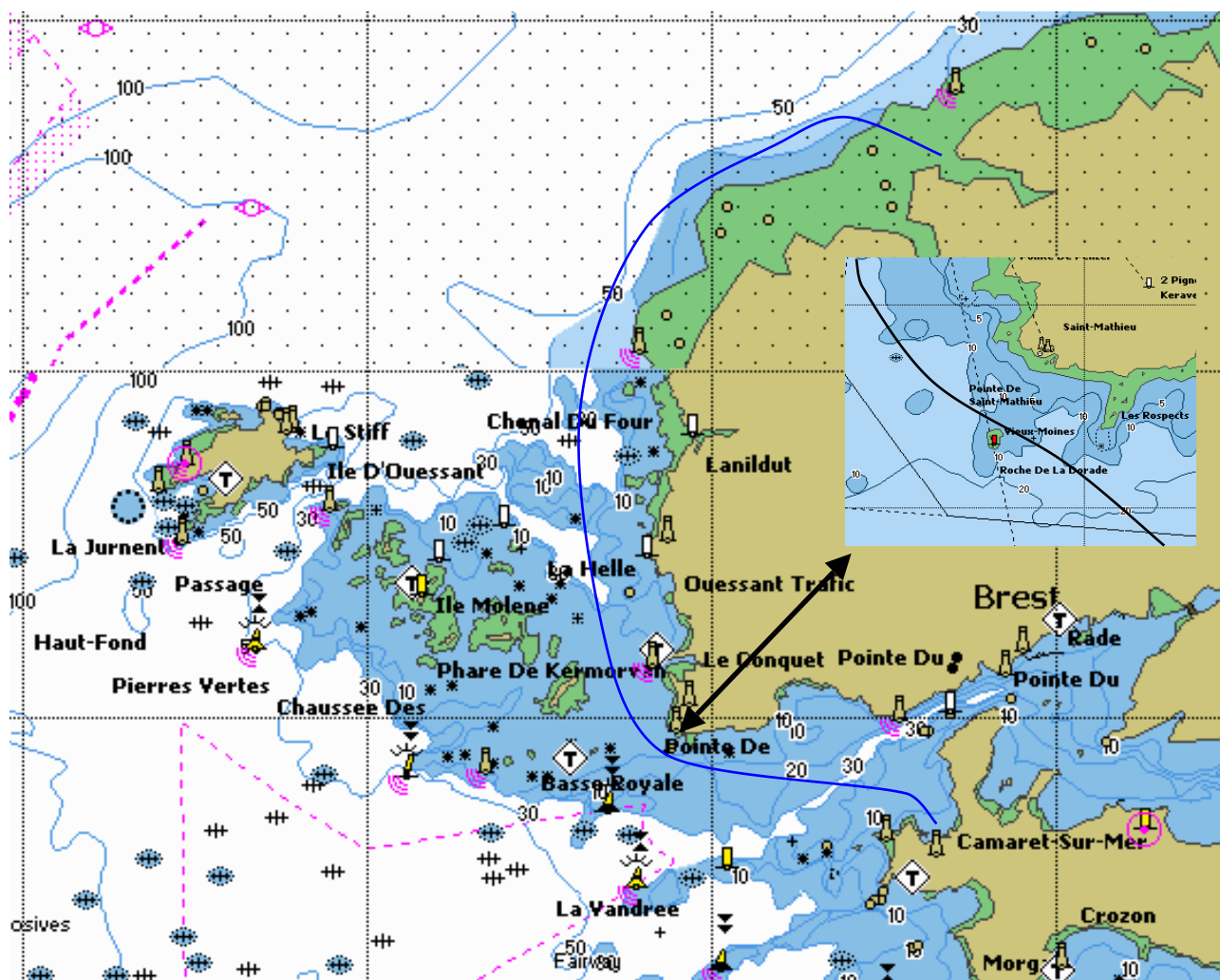
**Concarneau :**  
des pontons cèdent, 100 plaisanciers évacuent leurs voiliers.

**Sud Cornouaille :**  
42 000 foyers privés d'électricité.



Pascal Thomas - Soifce - Média France





### **Camaret to L'Abervrach : 21st Aug (31.6M) (and 22nd to 24th)**

At last there was a weather window. After fuelling, we were away by 1045, heading toward Chenal du Four under power, in a WNW3 breeze. We cut inside the rocks off Pts St Matthieu thereby avoiding the foul tide in the main channel, and gaining at least 30 minutes on boats that went by the more usual route.

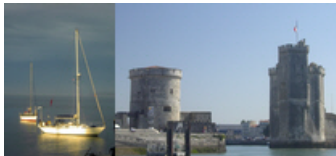


Pte St Matthieu



Rocks off Pte St Matthieu

Attempts to sail were not successful, so we ended up motoring all the way to L'Abervrach, encountering a long 2m swell once clear of the north end of Chenal du Four.



Approaching the Le Four light

The weather deteriorated again, and we were to spend 3 more days waiting for a weather window. During this period, we got to know a family on a Bavaria called Pretender.

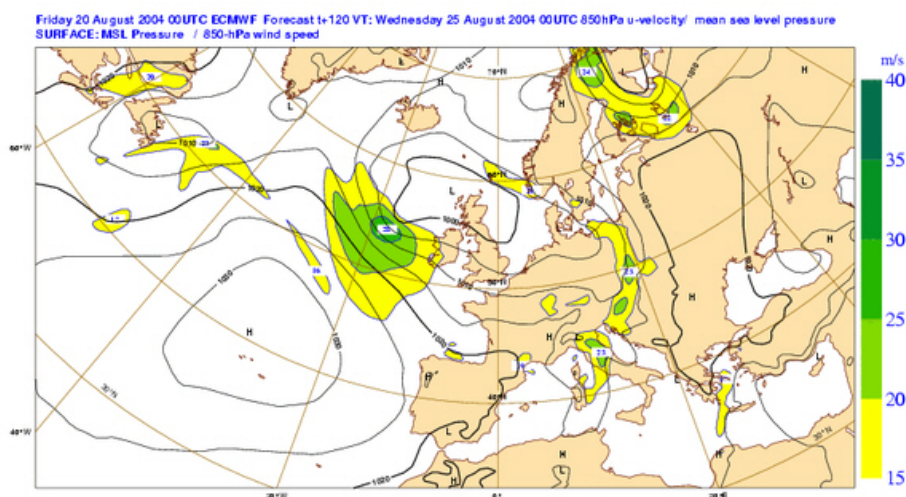
There was little to do but wait. Trips to the village for bread, and to the Internet cafe to update the weather helped.

We also had a meal ashore.



L'Aberwrach

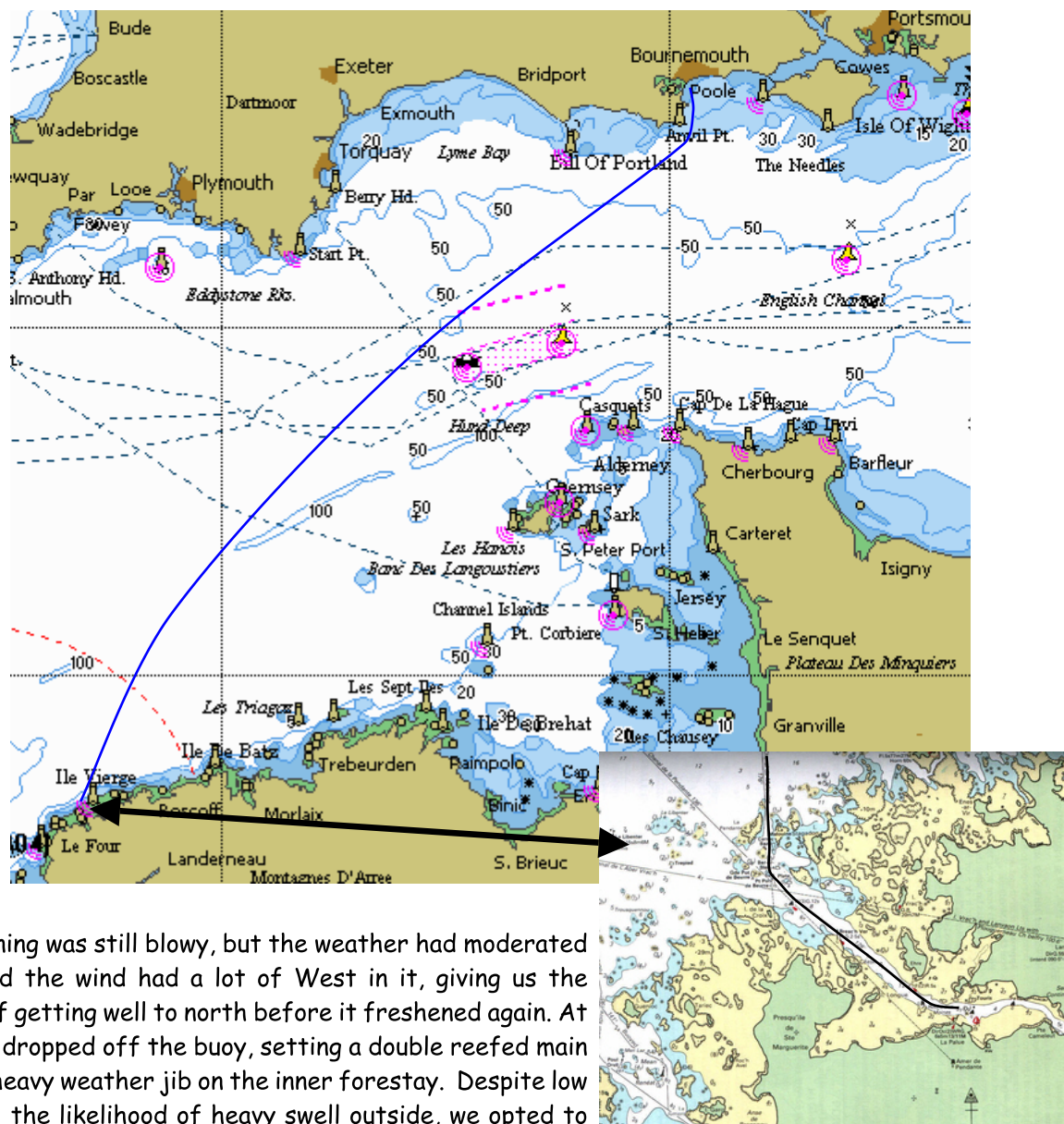
The weather looked like persistent N-NW strong to gale winds, but we began to look at a window on 25th August where we could get across the Channel and under the lee of the English coast before it blew again, as shown in the chart below:-







## L'Abervrach to Poole: 25th/26th August (165M)



The morning was still blowy, but the weather had moderated a bit, and the wind had a lot of West in it, giving us the chance of getting well to north before it freshened again. At 0850 we dropped off the buoy, setting a double reefed main and the heavy weather jib on the inner forestay. Despite low tide and the likelihood of heavy swell outside, we opted to exit via the Chenal de la Malouine.



This route avoided a long plug against wind and waves out to the Libenter buoy, and would probably save us more than an hour. In the event it was quite tricky. Dairne had some difficulty in steering and watching the stern transit in the lumpy water. An incoming lifeboat was not encouraging either! However, we got out eventually to find



quite a large swell, and a stiff beam breeze that allowed us to shake a reef out at 0940.

By 1300, the wind had moderated a little, so a little genoa was shown, but an hour later, it freshened again to W5, and even in the big waves, the small staysail and single reefed main were giving sufficient drive. These conditions persisted through the afternoon, but by mid evening the wind had freshened to W6, so the 2nd reef was taken in. It was a spectacular sunset. The swell at 2m enabled one to produce photographs that actually show the swell!!



2 metre swell at sunset

Overnight, the wind moderated, and we were able to go to full genoa by 0300. By 0400 we were clearing the north corner of the TSS, with just 45 miles to go to Anvil Point, and a reef was shaken out of the main.

At 0700 the sunrise looked angry, but the weather moderated so we went to full main, and the staysail was stowed as no longer required - we could use the genoa.

By 0800 we were 12 miles south of Portland. It was a fast sail toward St Albans, with the wind freshening again. A reef was taken down at 1220, and we stormed past Studland and into South Deep in Poole where we anchored at 1445.

It had been a wild and furious ride. Over a 24hr period we had covered 133 miles.

The weather deteriorated rapidly again, and we just snuggled down to sit it out for a full day before we were able to proceed to the Solent and home.



St Albans beyond Anvil Point





### **South Deep to Keyhaven: 26th Aug, 29th Aug (15.6M)**

We were anchored close to a smart Contest 44 (*Fearless of Lymington*), which I eventually realised belonged to Chris Cohen with whom I had sailed a GP when at school. Chatting over the gap, we learned he had been weather bound for a week waiting to go South on his way to Brazil and beyond. On the morning of 26th, I woke to find that he had dragged across the channel into the shallows. I was collecting warps, and beginning to get the dinghy ready when he realised, dragged the anchor home, and used his 100hp to blast back into deep water.



Chris Cohen's Fearless of Lymington aground in S Deep

We both sat out a miserable day. He was away early the following morning, and we followed.

At 1400, we weighed anchor, a slow process because of a lot of fine weed. The tide was still ebbing hard out of the harbour. The chain ferry was stopped in the middle with a yacht trapped alongside, lots of launches with flashing lights, and precious little constructive effort to free her. We managed to creep round the end and away through the Loo Channel, poling out the jib for a fast run toward North Channel.

At 1730, we crept into Keyhaven with very little water under the keel. We were not surprised to see *Santana* already there. David had got back a few days earlier and was taking the weekend for a quiet stay in Keyhaven with Roy Gannaway. We rafted alongside, relying on the French anchor David had bought in France. He had a 10kg Bruce off the stern to stop the swing. It was starting to blow again.

It was almost first light when we realised we had dragged perilously close to the spit. The stern anchor was slackened off, and I was able to swing us round head to wind. Roy managed to recover the Bruce which just pulled clean away with a mass of shell and mud in the claw of the Bruce. We re-anchored on my CQR while David changed back to his CQR, which we then set as a second bow anchor, hoping we would not twist them together.



We spent the next day chatting and comparing notes. David said he would think about another game for the following night. Well, at midnight, it was blowing very hard and David thought we would be better on a buoy that had become vacant. This was going to be difficult. We started both boats' engines, David controlling *Santana* while I steered *Ariadne*. We edged up to the anchors, which Roy recovered, and we carefully motored over to the buoy, still lashed together. David went forward to help Roy get the buoy on board, while Dairne shouted instructions back to me so I could keep the bow over the buoy. Eventually we were safely fast and retired to bed again.

### ***Keyhaven to Hamble: 30th Aug***

We crept out at 0830hrs, and had a fast reach up the Solent in a brisk, but gusty, NW wind, anchoring off Lepe for lunch - we just didn't want to go home. We saw *Santana* going past on her way back to Marchwood.

After lunch we weighed, unrolled the genoa and trickled into Hamble visitor's pontoon. Between Castle Point and Hamble we knew we were home. Powerboats and RedJets were charging about cutting up the water in their inimitable, thoughtless style. We knew why we had gone away!

My sister, Penny, and her husband Greg joined us for supper. Good to see them again

### ***Hamble to Marchwood: 31st Aug***

The next morning we beat gently up Southampton Water then gave up and motored home, 1113.4 logged miles since leaving Marchwood YC.

The boat had behaved impeccably, with no gear failures, except that in the last few days, the Multi instrument seemed to be misreading the Log data. The Log instrument itself was fine.

### ***Footnote***

A few weeks later, we tried a booze cruise to Cherbourg in company with *Santana*, but turned back as the seas were rough and the wind had more South in it than forecast. So its back to Sainsbury and Tesco for our winter stocks.



## Southbound

Keyhaven  
 Portland  
 L'Abervrach  
 Camaret  
 Belon  
 Port Louis  
 Lorient  
 Houat  
 Piriac  
 Bois de la Chaise  
 Pornic  
 Joinville  
 St Martin de Re  
 La Rochelle  
 La Flotte  
 St Denis d'Oleron



## Northbound

Bourgenay  
 Joinville  
 Bois de la Chaise  
 La Turballe  
 Golf du Morbihan  
 Port Louis  
 Lorient  
 Audierne  
 Ile de Sein  
 Camaret  
 L'Abervrach  
 Poole

