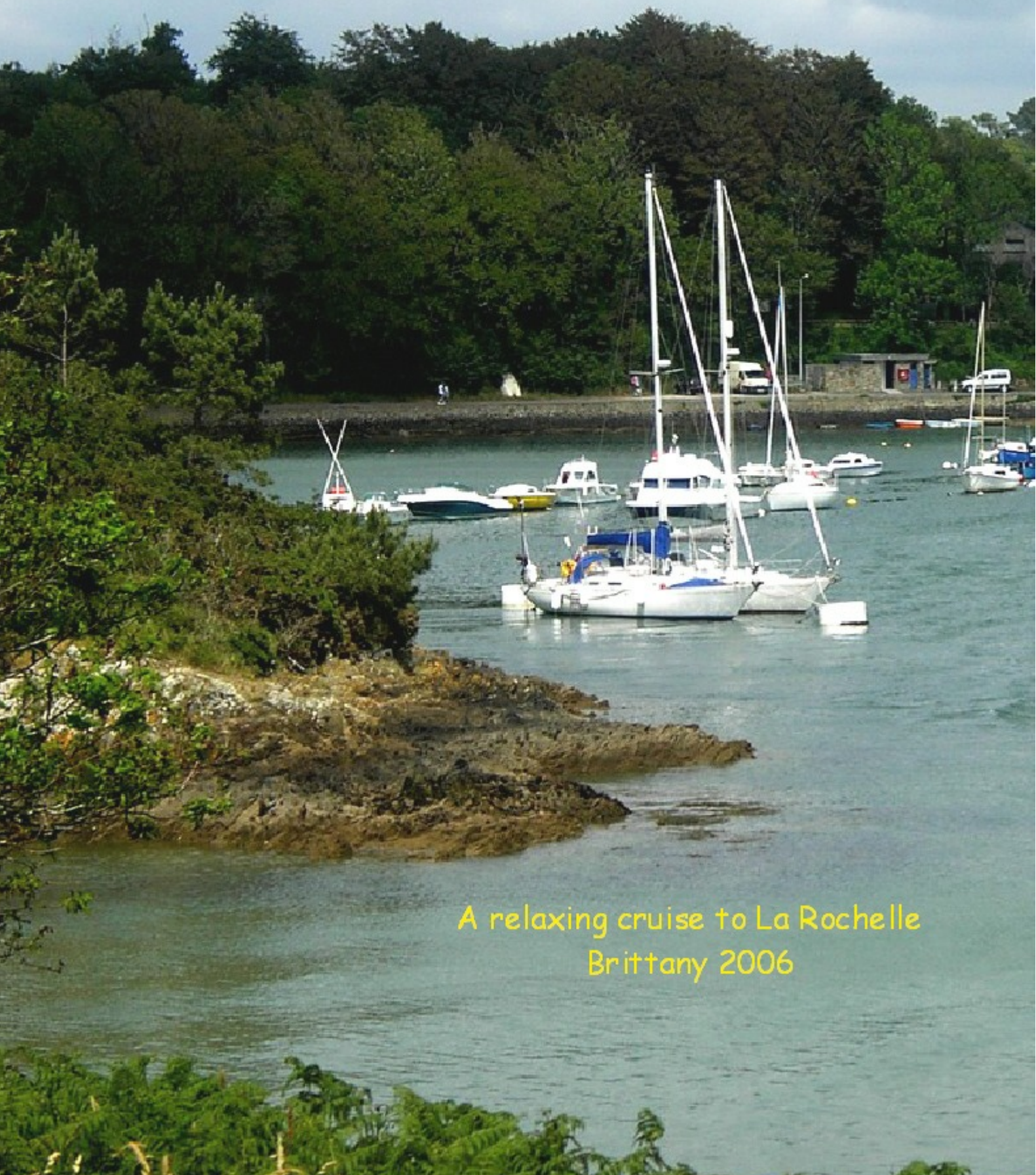


Phare & Wide



A relaxing cruise to La Rochelle
Brittany 2006

Phare & Wide

*A relaxing cruise to La Rochelle
Brittany 2006*



Santana passing Swanage



Santana

Spring Cruise

Early in the season we attempted a short spring cruise in company with *Santana*.



We waited overnight at the new RYA facility in Portland before setting off to Cherbourg.

We retreated back into Portland after encountering poor visibility and a worsening forecast. This was going to persist, so we gingerly made our way into Weymouth in thick fog - using the radar to find the Portland entrances!



Another Marchwood boat, *Dreamer*, arrived as well. We were clearly going to



Skua

be stuck for a few days, and I applied my rule of thumb that in such circumstances the best thing to do is to get in touch with the Dutch boats in harbour. They are always fun! There were two.

Skua was a Tradewinds 39 design stretched to about 42 ft. Arthur and Geke were headed towards Ireland or Scotland.



Dreamer



Kind of Magic



Dave Quantrell
 top right: Graham
 Henk & joke
 David Colquhoun and Dairne
 Geke and Arthur
 Mia and Jim

Kind of Magic was a 42 ft composite boat that Henk had completed over a period of 18 months, a magnificent achievement! Henk and Joke were off to Spain, and would later spend some time sailing company with *Dreamer*.

Altogether we were in Weymouth for five days and as there were five boats that meant five parties.



Chesil Bank



Jurassic Coast near Bridport



Portland



Our days were spent hiding from the weather. Or going out to look at it. On one day we decided to get into training for France by cooking moulles.

Sadly, on one day we had to attend the funeral of a good friend, so we hired a car. Because it crossed a weekend, we effectively got a free day. We took advantage of that to go out to Portland, and to visit Bridport, with some wonderful views of Chesil and the Jurassic coast on the way.

The weather was quite wild out at Portland, but we did not arrive at the right time to see the Race at its most violent. The 200m gap inside the race was quite apparent though.



Eventually we watched *Dreamer* and a *Kind of Magic* head off towards Spain and at about same time *Skua* headed west as well.



Santana and ourselves waited till the following morning and then had a wild sail inside the St Albans race. We chose to use the North Channel in to the Solent



About a week after we all got back in September, Henk appeared sailing single-handed. Joke had already gone back to Holland. He was a welcome visitor to Marchwood Yacht Club and was entertained during his stay by Jim and Mia. A couple of weeks later we had a phone call from Arthur. *Skua* had got as far as Dingle where Arthur had found his accordion in great demand in the folk pubs.

A Family Day Out [MYC-Newtown-MYC: 31st May: 35M]

Apart from a few weekends, the only other notable sailing was a day out we had with the Nottingham Rabbits. It was a grey and windy period, so our original plan for a 2 day cruise was abandoned. We sailed as far as Calshot, and ran to Newtown for lunch. For the beat back to Calshot we needed 2 reefs in the main and several rolls in the jib. It was nearly 2100 by the time Neil and I put the boat in the mooring.



Ariadne



Neil



Tamsin



Christopher and Kendra



MYC to Studland [11th-12th June:27 M]

This year the cruise did not start until mid-June for a whole host of domestic reasons. Inevitably the previous six weeks had delivered moderate easterly winds for those that had been able to get away. Eventually after a couple of days of monumental effort by Dairne to stow all the stores we slipped down Southampton Water to Cowes where we refuelled then went back to Marchwood for the night.

12th June was hot and sunny with a south-easterly force three wind. So by 8 o'clock we were motoring down Southampton Water, where we turned down the West Solent at Calshot. The wind faded for a while and we had to motor past Hurst until Alum Bay. There followed a gentle reach down the Needles Channel and across the bay to Studland where we anchored at 1700 hours.



It is always a peaceful anchorage, until the wind goes easterly. After all the bustle of getting away, we were happy to just enjoy the place and relax.

The forecast for the next day was for the wind to veer into the north-west. Our plan was to depart mid-morning, and motor against the tide round Anvil Point and St Albans to be well positioned to take the tide at Portland.



Studland to L'Abervrach [13-15th June: 167M]



It was shortly after 1030 when we set off motoring in calm conditions past Old Harry and Peveril ledge. Shortly after rounding Anvil Point, we could see past St Albans to Portland where there was a really black cloud. As a precaution I called Portland Coastguard on the VHF. They advised that the weather conditions at Portland were westerly force six. At the time we were experiencing only force 2. We decided to turn back to Studland and within minutes we were running under double reefed mainsail only with 30 knots of apparent wind.



Anvil Point



The blow only lasted for about an hour and then quickly moderated. But we had missed our tide and had to delay our departure until the evening. It was 2130 when we finally got under

way with a north-west force 2 wind. We motored as far as Anvil Point and then sailed gently, barely stemming the tide but easing away from the coast.

It was 0400 by the time Portland Bill was 11 miles to the north of us, and a bit later we had to start the engine because the wind had failed altogether. I took the watch from midnight until about 0500 when Dairne took over again.

The only problem with this passage from Studland to L' Abervrach is that one is crossing all the main shipping lanes at a shallow angle. During the late morning four ships went by but at a safe distance, although we think that at least one of them made a significant course alteration for our benefit.



Ile Viee light seen from Grand Chenal

We were still motoring, but with sails up, although in the early afternoon we had to roll the Genoa because we were on a dead run. Later the wind filled in and we were able to sail for a while putting in a short engine run at 1930 to charge the batteries as we settled down for our second night at sea. As usual Dairne took the late-evening watch and enjoyed some pleasant sailing, but when I took over again at midnight the engine had to go on as the wind had died.

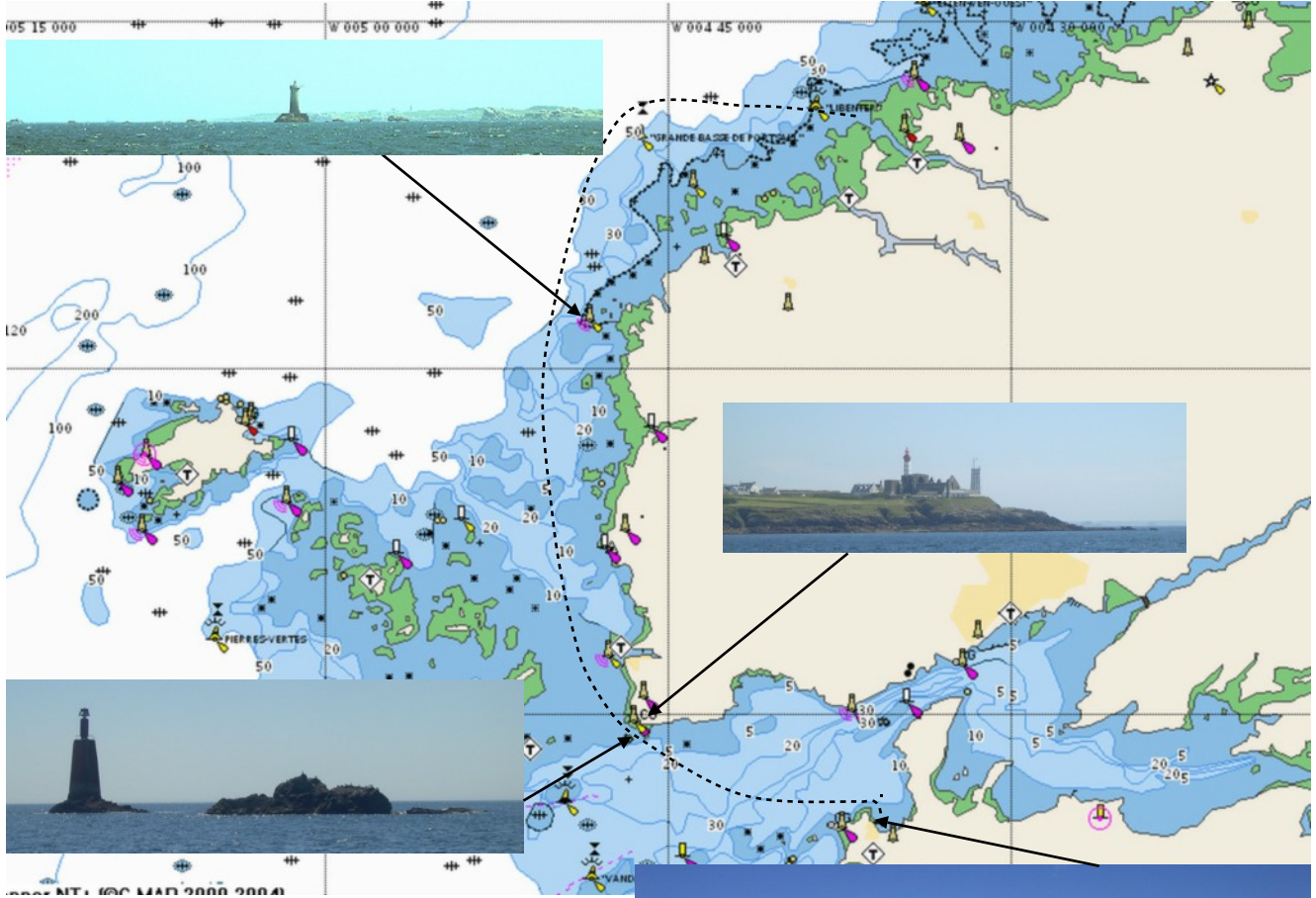


Approach to L'Abervrach through Grand Chenal

By 0100 we could see the light on the Ile de Batz, and by 0230 the light on Ile Viee was dipping. At 0545 the wind had veered and started to fill in and the engine could be turned off. It quickly increased in strength and we were on a dead run against the strong Brittany tides making for the Libenter buoy off L' Abervrach. This was a wind over tide situation with a vengeance, and eventually the steering became so wild that we rounded up and dropped the mainsail altogether and proceeded under reefed Genoa only, reaching the Libenter buoy at 0640. An hour later we were secured to a buoy in L' Abervrach after a trip of 167 miles.

L'Abervrach to Camaret [16th June: 32 M]

We had a leisurely day catching up on sleep. I did walk up to the a village so that we could get our first croissants and French bread. We also went over in the dinghy to visit a another Rustler called *Heart of Gold* that was on its return from a Brittany cruise.



The next morning dawned bright. The wind was fairly brisk being between north and north-east force 4. By 1015 we were away from the buoy (after unblocking the sink!). We were able to reach along the coast to the Basse Paupian, where we gybed. It was almost a dead run past the Four lighthouse and then a broad reach down the Chenal du Four. Ile de Molene and the island of Ouessant were visible to the West.



Tas des Pois

As we approached the southern end of the Chenal, the wind headed but we were able to go between Pointe St Matthieu and the off-lying Roche de la Dorade. Before us lay the panorama of the Goulet de Brest to the east, and the magnificent Tas des Pois rocks to the south. We had reached our cruising ground!

At first it looked as though it was going to be a beat to Camaret. But slowly the wind backed and we were able to lay it in one tack with a huge curving track. It was beautiful sailing in flat water. By 1615 we were alongside the pontoon in Camaret At last we could do some serious shopping to build up our stocks of French food and wine.



We like Camaret. It has all the essentials, such as supermarkets, chandlers, and above all a good boulangerie for croissants and French bread. There are three marinas in the harbour, of which we usually use the one nearest the town which minimises the amount of walking that Dairne has to do.

Most of the town activity is concentrated on the waterfront, but it is worth meandering through the backstreets to find attractive squares and quaint housing.



Camaret to Loctudy [18th June: 52 M]

After a layday in Camaret, we set off on the misty morning of the 18th at 0830. The force 2 wind was from the north-west so we motored through the Toulinguet passage and passed the Tas des Pois rocks. There was a risk that the wind would freshen from the north-west so we decided that it would be unwise to make a stop at the Ile de Sein.



Above: Toulinguet Right: Tas des Pois
Below: Tevennec

We left Tevennec, a rocky island, to starboard as we headed into the Raz de Sein.



Right: Raz de Sein
Below: Pointe de Penmarch



Catching the tide just right, we were making more than 11 knots over the ground as we went through the Raz de Sein and shortly afterwards were able to turn the engine off for two hours as the wind had freshened slightly to WNW 3.

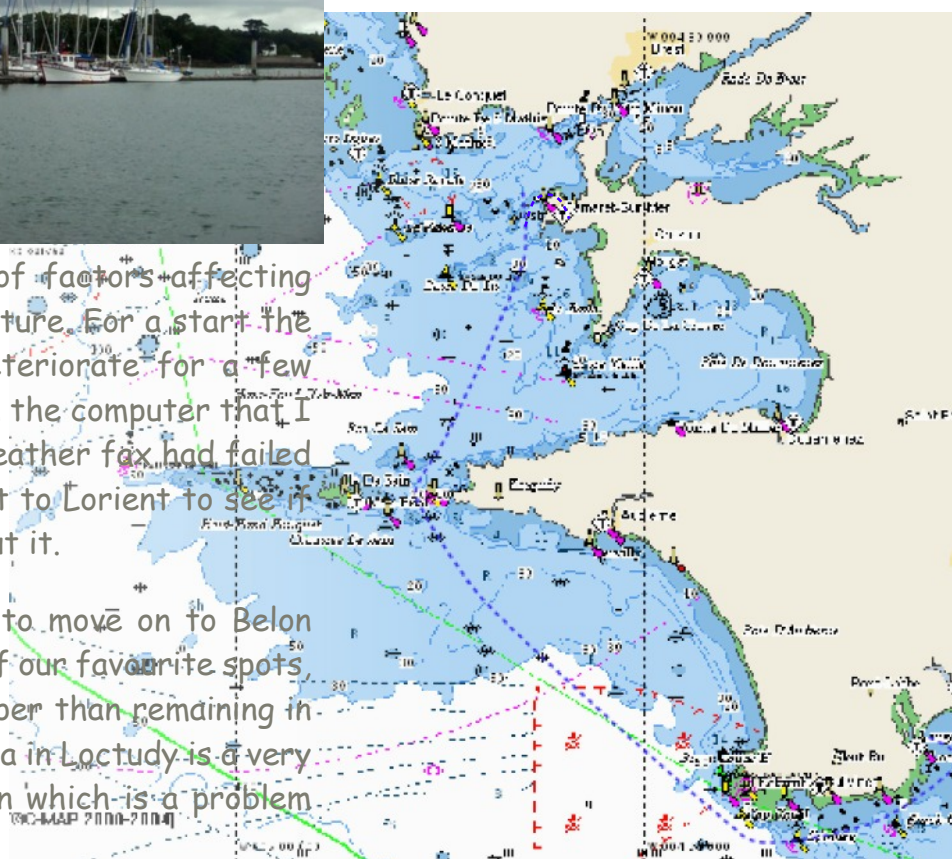
The towers at Penmarch were in line at 1520 when the engine went back on so that we could make the critical tide to round Penmarch but an hour later we were able to sail again for a while.



It was 1720 when we passed the Karek Greis buoy and 1830 by the time we were alongside in Loctudy, where we were met by David and Val from *Mojito* (another Rustler 36) and by Ken and Liz Sizer from Marchwood Yacht Club. They all joined us for drinks on board at about 2100



Left: Loctudy entrance
Right:
Karek Greis buoy
Below right:
Loctudy shoreline
Below left:
Loctudy Marina



There were a number of factors affecting our decisions for the future. For a start the weather was set to deteriorate for a few days. Also the screen on the computer that I had set-up to receive weather fax had failed and I was anxious to get to Lorient to see if I could do anything about it.

We therefore decided to move on to Belon the next day. It is one of our favourite spots, and would be a lot cheaper than remaining in Loctudy. Also, the marina in Loctudy is a very long walk from the town which is a problem for Dairne.

Loctudy to Belon [19th June: 21 M]



It is only a short run to Belon, and we needed a certain amount of rise of tide by the time we reached there. Accordingly we delayed our departure until 1445 and then set off on a dead run with the wind only force 2 from the west north-west with the full main and the jib poled out. We ran across the bay past Benodet and Concarneau to port and the Glenans islands to starboard.

By 1830 we were entering Belon with just 0.4 metres under the keel, guided by some helpful fishermen who showed us where the deep water was! By 1900 hours we were secured on the buoy. Two hours later *Mojito* arrived and rafted up alongside

Altogether we spent three nights in Belon, enjoying a good seafood lunch at the creperie, and some lovely walks along the banks of the river from which we got some most interesting and delightful views.



Dave, Val & Dairne



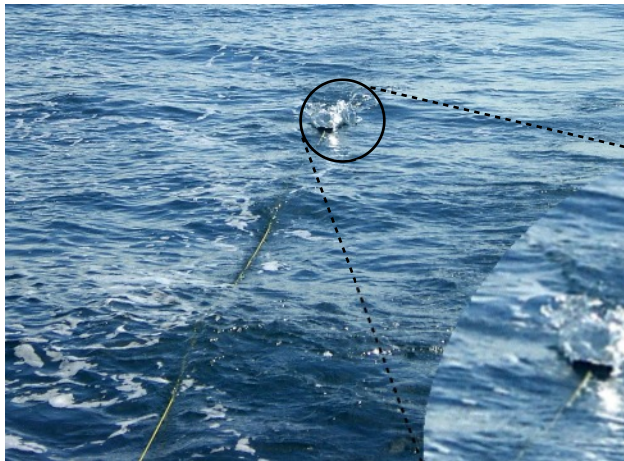
Mojito & Ariadne



Biscay Mackerel

There were fewer mackerel about than when we were here two years earlier. But the Biscay mackerel were still far larger than those that we could catch in the Channel.

We were using a simple spinner trailed below a home made paravane that had



been given to us by David Colquhoun. It is a simple piece of ply with a pointed 'bow' at one end.

It mainly holds the hook a metre or two below the surface, but once a fish has taken the hook, the paravane surfaces as shown in the picture above.

Later in the cruise, when we linked up with Terry Eagle, he was quite miffed that his expensive professional paravane was not producing results, whereas our tatty bit of ply was regularly dishing up a couple of fish.

As he would say "Couldn't happen to a nicer person!"

Belon to Lorient [22nd June: 20 M]



Mojito leaving Belon

Then we gybed and headed gently up into the harbour area, passing the fort at Port Louis to starboard, and the massive submarine pens to port.

Below: Lorient submarine pens



It blew quite hard while we were in Belon but after three nights we were ready to move on. It is not a long passage to Lorient and the winds were light so we just drifted past the coast in company with *Mojito* which was headed for Ile de Groix.



Lorient approaches

We went up into the town marina because I was keen to see if I could find a solution to the computer problem with the machine that received weather fax.

In the event it turned out to be not possible, but I did manage to find the shop that sold the most magnificent pizza you have ever had in your life. I also managed to acquire a simcard for Dairne's mobile-phone so that we would



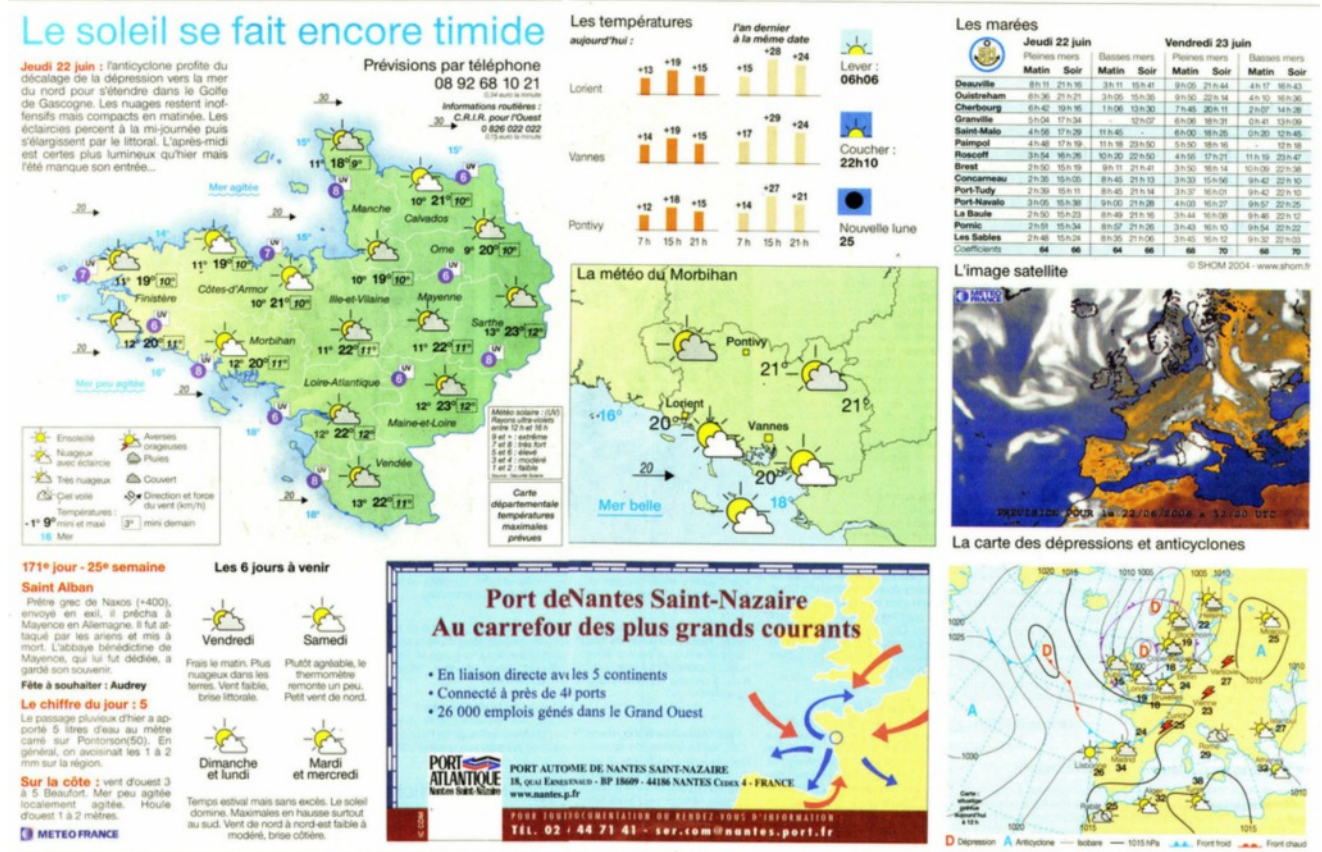
Above: Ariadne entering Lorient
Left: Fort Louis

Below: Lorient shoreline

no longer have to make international calls involving roaming charges. Moreover, we could talk to other friends in France who had also got a French simcard at very little cost.



Looking across the harbour to Port Louis



High quality weather information in Ouest France newspaper

We chatted with the owners of boat called *Odysseus* who knew our friends Roddy and Claudine, and who subsequently applied for membership of Marchwood Yacht Club

Although I had failed to solve the weather fax problem I was not too concerned. Not only are the French coastguard forecasts superior to those in the UK and even in Ireland, but there is a newspaper called Ouest France that publishes each day a half page of weather information that is completely adequate, giving weather charts, satellite pictures, regional forecasts, shipping forecasts, and even an indication of the UV level likely to be encountered. As a last-resort I could always go onto the Internet using GPRS and get weather maps from the UK Met Office via the BBC, or more importantly the long-range forecasts from ECM WF.

Lorient to Sauzon, Belle Isle [23rd June: 24 M]

Although the weather had got warmer once we came round to South Brittany, it was not yet hot.

There was still a tendency for disturbed weather in the English Channel only 50 miles to the north and it was clear that it was a lot warmer further south.

Moreover we did not know how long the current pattern of north-westerly winds would continue. We therefore decided to push on even though there was little wind and it meant motoring all the way to Sauzon in Belle Isle, passing the Birvideaux lighthouse that stands isolated in the middle of the sea.

Unfortunately the tide times were not really suitable for going up the harbour and drying out on legs, so we secured fore and aft to the buoys near the harbour entrance. At last we seemed to have found the heat, and we spent a lazy evening just watching the harbour activity.

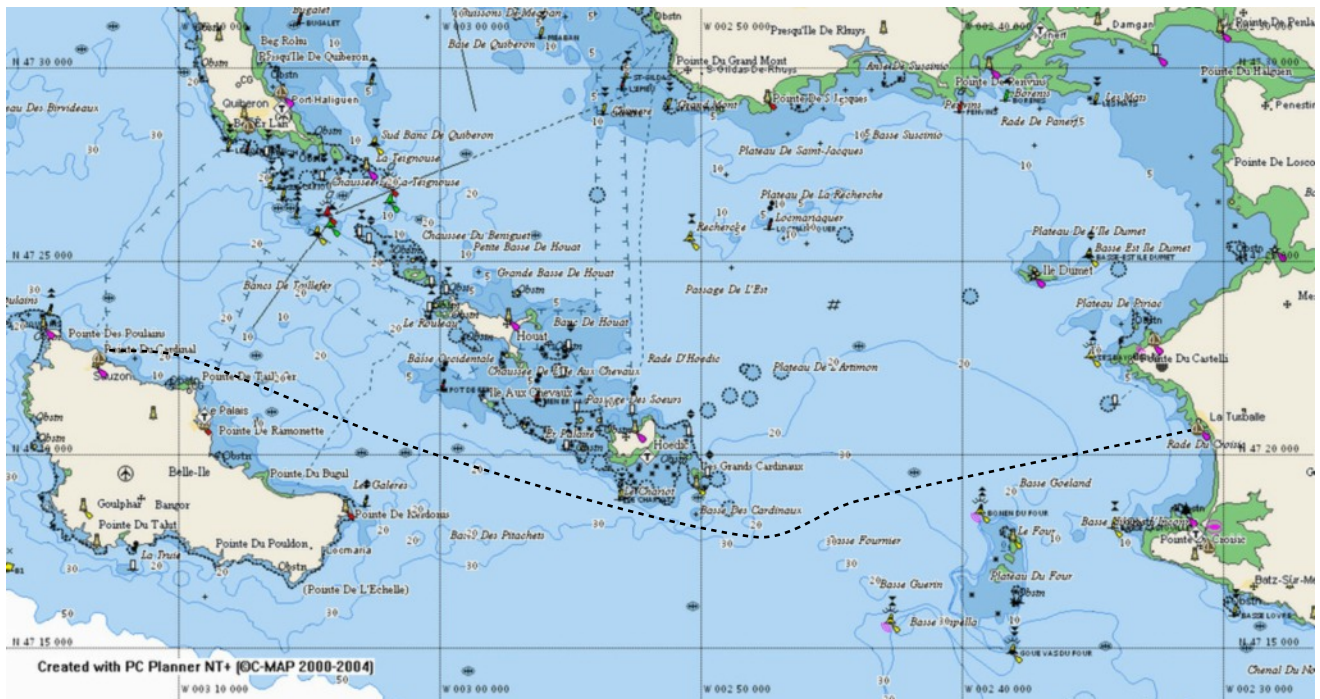


Sauzon, Belle Ile

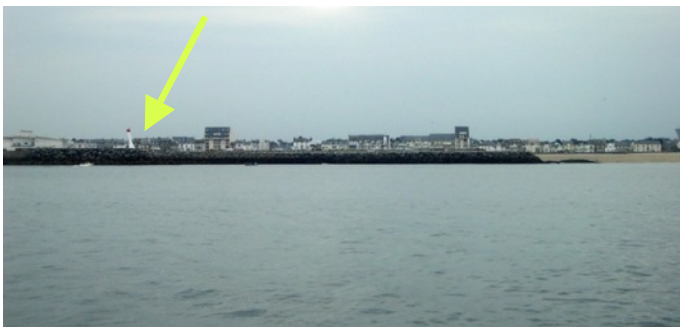


That night there was a mild vent solaire, the reverse of the sea breeze that strikes at about midnight and goes on almost until dawn, sometimes reaching force 6. The boat was moving quite a lot, but Dairne managed to sleep through it all.

Sauzon to La Turballe [24th June: 31 M]



It was now very hot in Sauzon. It also looked as though it was beginning to get crowded and there would be a further risk of a vent solaire the following night, so even Le Palais would not be an alternative. Also, we had a commitment to link-up with Claudine, who was part-owner of a Rustler and who lives in Pornic. We decided to try and reach La Baule, even though this would require quite a bit of motoring unless the afternoon sea breeze filled in.



La Turballe

It was nearly 10 o'clock by the time we set off, motoring to the south of Houat and Hoedic. The sea breeze did not arrive, so rather than motor all the way to La Baule, we diverted to La Turballe. We had managed to sail for short periods, but the wind was not reliable. By the time we reached La Turballe at 1710, we had covered 30 miles.

The photograph above shows how difficult it can be to spot the harbour entrance when it is a dogleg through an artificial wall, which is why there has to be a beacon - see arrow.

The picture on the right was taken in Scotland, but it conveys the atmosphere of this day quite well - though Brittany was a lot hotter!

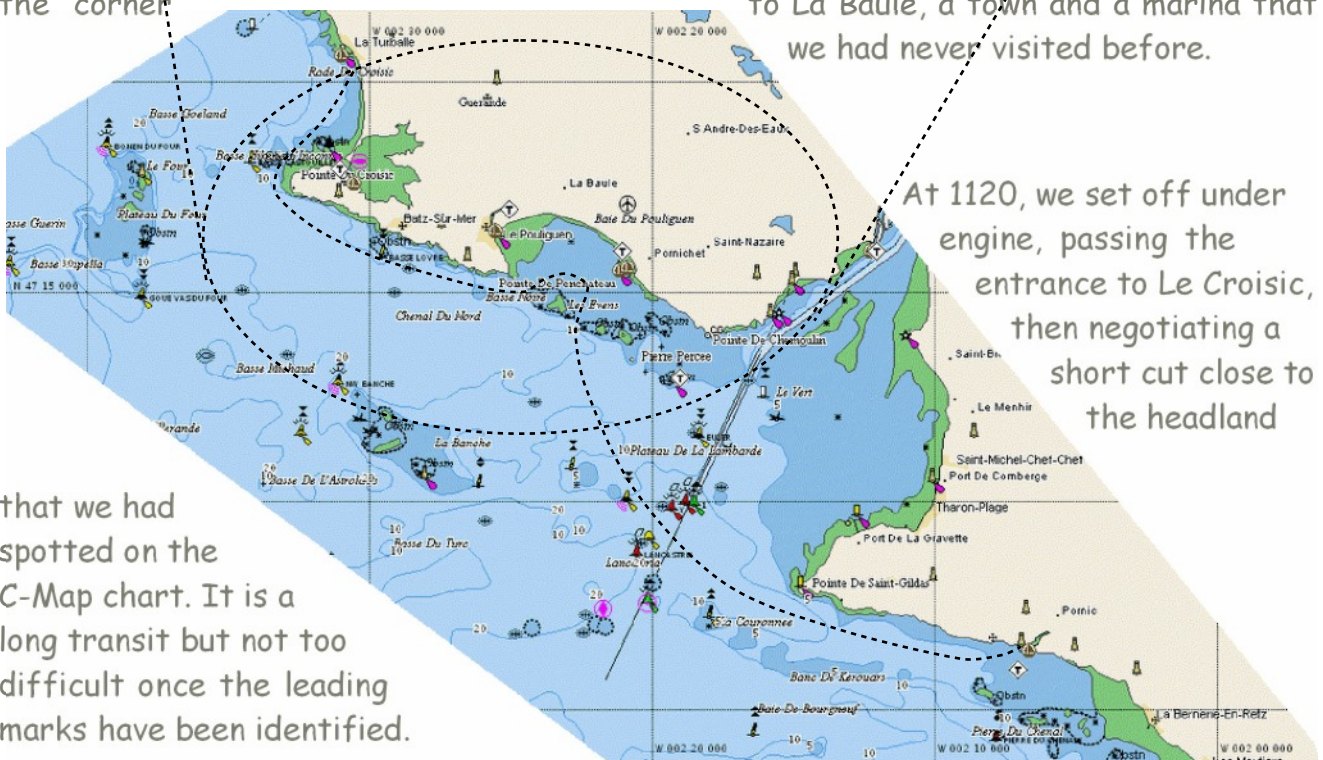
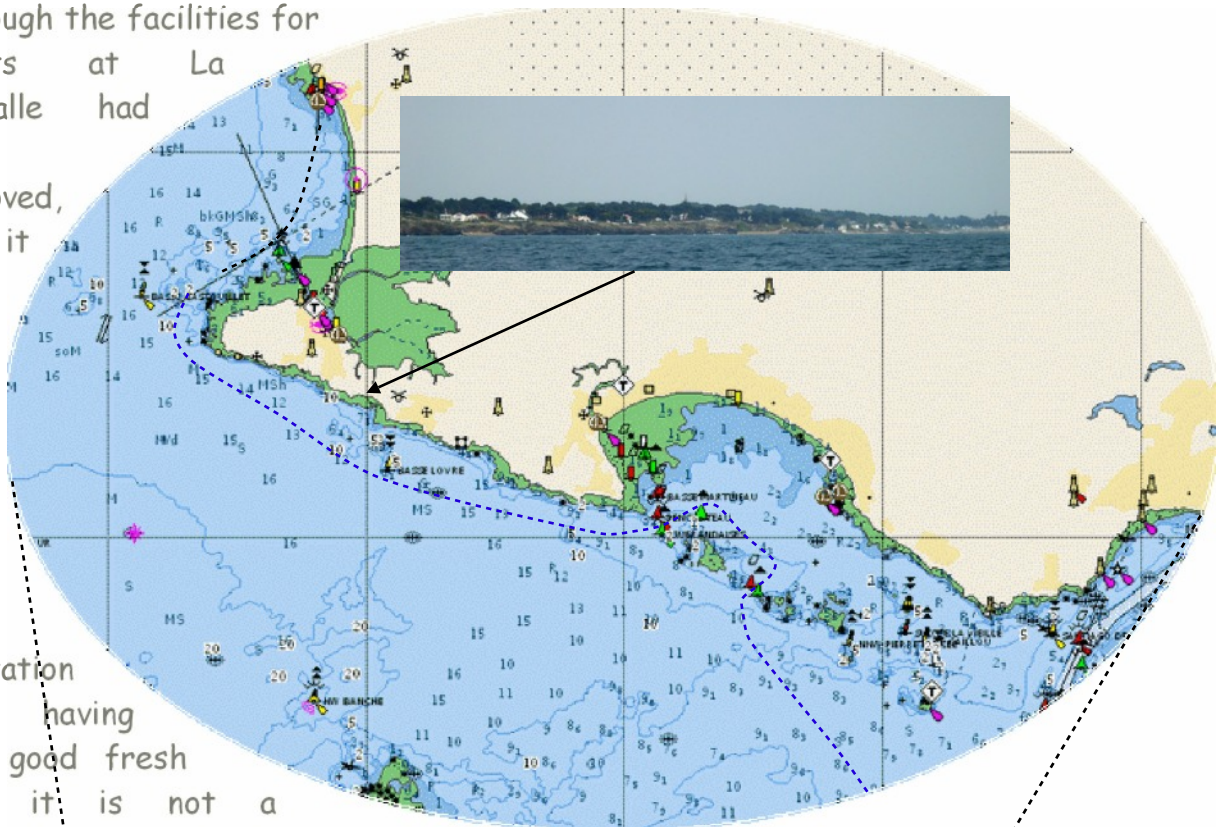


La Turballe to Pornic [25th June: 25 M]

Although the facilities for yachts at La Turballe had been improved, and it has a

reputation for having very good fresh fish, it is not a particularly attractive place to be in hot weather which we were now experiencing. But by the next morning there was still very little sign of any wind. Accordingly we decided that we would just motor round the corner to La Baule, a town and a marina that we had never visited before.

that we had spotted on the C-Map chart. It is a long transit but not too difficult once the leading marks have been identified.



At 1120, we set off under engine, passing the entrance to Le Croisic, then negotiating a short cut close to the headland

We were able to sail along the coast before working our way behind the rocks that protect the bay off La Baule. To our surprise a brisk sea breeze then filled in and we realised that we still had enough run of tide to be able to get all the way to Pornic. By then we could also see that La Baule looked like a concrete jungle on the beach, not unlike Benidorm.

We quickly bore away and raced through the central passage into the bay, then charged across the Loire estuary before making our way along the coast then turning into the marina at Pornic and making fast to the visitors pontoon. What had threatened to be another day of heat and no wind had produced some sparkling sailing.



The picture on the left was taken by John Barker in the Rade de Brest some 2 years earlier. It is one of the best pictures ever taken of *Ariadne*. It conveys the sparkling sailing we had on the way to Pornic.

Parked at Bois de la Chaise [27-29th June: 18M round trip]



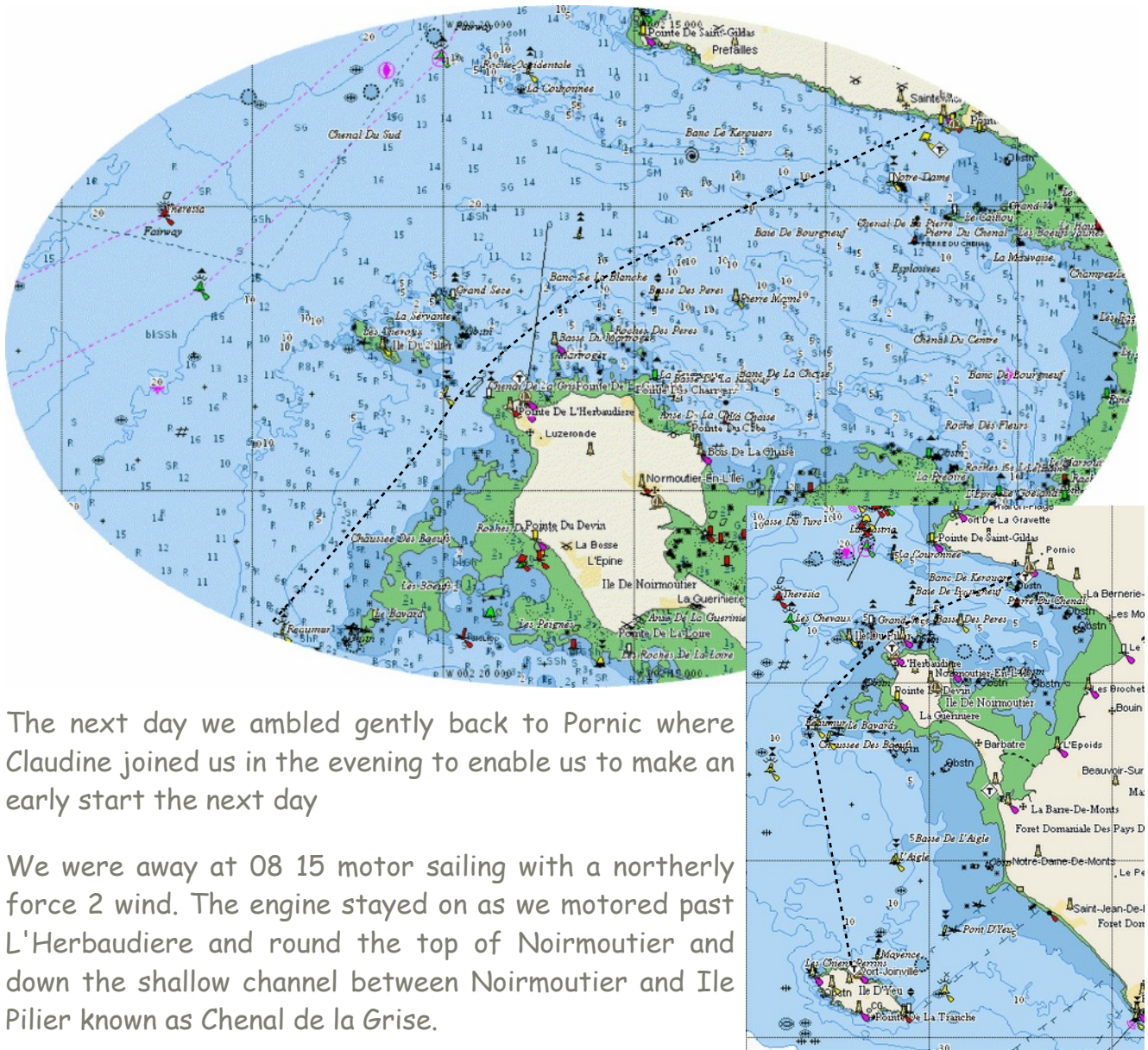
Claudine needed a couple of days to clear up a few things before she was able to join us, so we had a lazy day (which turned out to be rather windy). Claudine ran us up to the supermarket and then entertained us to a splendid supper at home. The next day was much more settled, so rather than wait in the marina we drifted across to one of our favourite anchorages at Bois de la Chaise off the island of Noirmoutier

It was the beginning of the heatwave that was to last a full month. . Heatwaves have the rather strange French name of "le canicule", a word that completely floored us the first time we saw it in a newspaper headline and which led to much hunting in the dictionary . The cockpit table was set up and we enjoyed a lunch of crevettes and Muscadet and whiled the way the time as it got hotter and hotter. This led to the decision that at the earliest opportunity we would purchase a fan.



Our supernumerary crew, comprising Monkey and Puffin absolutely insisted on enjoying the sunshine with us.

Pornic to Joinville, Ile d'Yeu [29th June: 25 M]



The next day we ambled gently back to Pornic where Claudine joined us in the evening to enable us to make an early start the next day

We were away at 08 15 motor sailing with a northerly force 2 wind. The engine stayed on as we motored past L'Herbaudiere and round the top of Noirmoutier and down the shallow channel between Noirmoutier and Ile Pilier known as Chenal de la Grise.

At noon we were able to deploy a the cruising chute which we carried all away to Ile d'Yeu, and by 3 o'clock we were alongside in port Joinville.



Dairne and Claudine

The next day started gently enough with visits to the boulangerie and the poissonnerie, followed by a leisurely lunch ashore. We were all feeling rather lazy so we opted for a gentle trip on the public



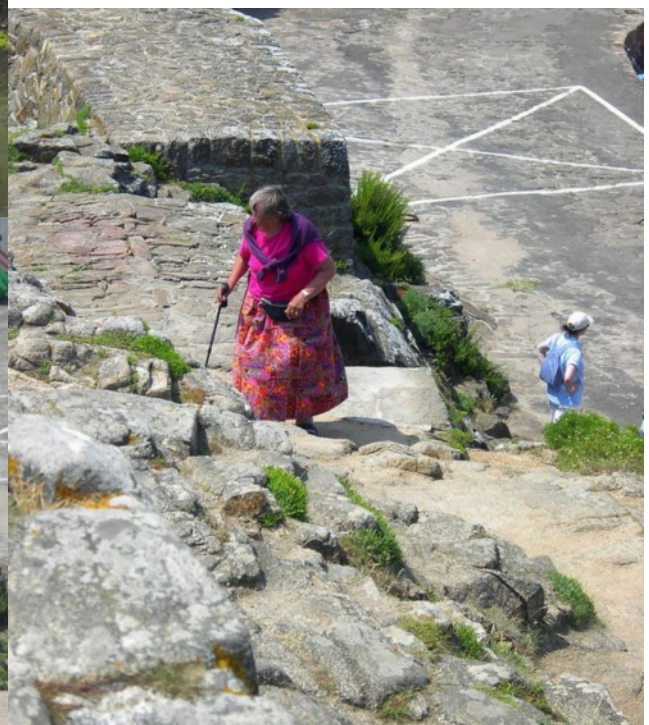
bus across the island to La Meule, a tiny little harbour on the Atlantic coast.

By this stage in the proceedings, Dairne had started to learn some of the secrets of French cuisine from Claudine, lessons

that were to stand us in good stead for the rest of the cruise.



Dairne and Claudine at La Meule,
Ile d'Yeu



Joinville to St Giles Croix de Vie [1st July: 20 M]

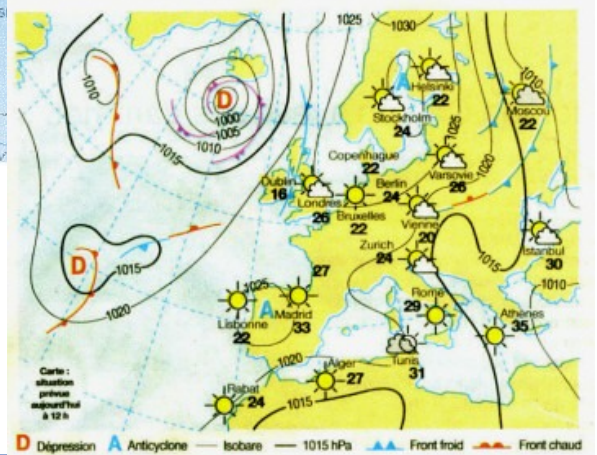
The Ouest France forecast would remain substantially unchanged for many weeks. It must have become tedious being a forecaster. High-pressure over Biscay with very few

isobars in the area led to cloudless skies and a very light winds with some days producing a sea breeze in the afternoons. The vhf

forecast used phrases like "Vent de nord ouest, 2 a 3 Beaufort. Mer belle à peu agitée". It was now July

and all French marina prices double. The day dawned hot and sunny, so we motored gently down the coast, with Claudine carrying out a Pilotage exercise which I think helped boost her confidence. We anchored in La Vieille for lunch.

La carte des dépressions et anticyclones



Claudine wanted to do some more Pilotage, so we left at 1300 with the plotter switched off heading for St Giles Croix de Vie, which was not visible in the heat haze even though it was only 10 miles away. Once clear of the island we were able to turn off the engine and

we sailed gently along. By 1430 the cursing chute was deployed for a couple of hours.





Left: Leading marks at St Giles Croix de Vie

Below Left: Our new fan

Below: Sunset at the marina



We arrived at St Giles at low tide, and the Channel was shallower than predicted so there were a few anxious moments as we motored in. By 1700 we were alongside in the marina.

After Claudine had been picked up by one of her neighbours to return home, Dairne and I had a very pleasant seafood meal in the local bistro.

The following morning I was able to purchase a fan at the local chandlery, and it was a great relief in the cabin to get it mounted and working. Already daytime temperatures were about 35 centigrade, and at night it was really going below 29 centigrade

Since leaving the Raz de Sein we had hardly had to consider effect of tides, but in the Pertuis Breton behind the Ile de Ré tides become important again. We wanted to avoid a stop in Sables D'Olonne, but could not quite reach St Martin, so we opted for a short sail down the coast to the artificial a marina and resort of Bourgenay.

St Giles to Bourgenay [2nd July: 26 M]



Leaving St Giles Croix de Vie

For once there was a gentle breeze, in which we beat along the coast and we had an interesting day trying to work out where the next shift would come from. On the whole we were fairly successful in guessing when the sea breeze would arrive, and we were well placed to seaward to take advantage of the major shift that ensued.

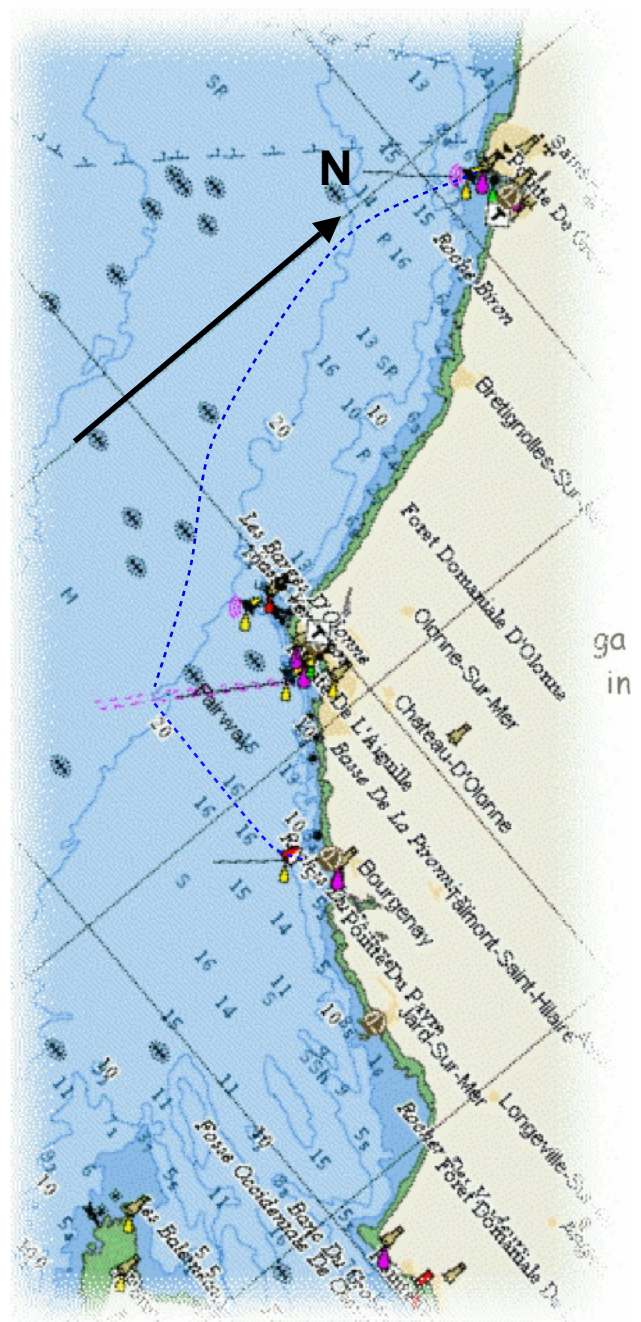


The most amazing incident however was when we were some four miles off the coast and found a small plastic dinghy that cannot have been more than 8 ft long in which there were four fishermen. There was certainly no spare engine and no evidence of life jackets either. The French must have charmed lives!

It was mid-afternoon when we crept into Bourgenay near the bottom of the tide and found a berth. We were soon visited by Jeff Owen of *Arian* who was on a cruise with his family. As usual we were entertained by his acerbic wit.



Bourgenay



Bourgenay to La Rochelle [3rd July: 29 M]

We waited till mid-morning to let the thunderstorms clear before we set off. At first the wind was westerly force five and very gusty, but it was still sunny. It turned out to be a fast sail all way to the Re bridge. We had been in touch with Terry and Ruby on *Danae* by text. They were in the Minimes marina at La Rochelle which they informed us was a very full. They advised us to motor as hard as we could while they tried to reserve a berth, and ignore the usual reception arrangements. This we did with great success.

Motoring up to the marina we could see the twin towers of the old harbour, an image that had inspired my cruising ambition from the days of my youth.

Our southbound journey was now complete and we could settle into a few days' rest and some gentle sailing in company with *Danae*. Briefly *Mojito* was also in the area as well.



Left: *Ariadne* approaching Re Bridge
Below: Entrance to La Rochelle old port



La Rochelle - Charente Maritime

From L'Abervrach to La Turballe, we had been in Brittany; then for a few days calling at Pornic, Yeu , St Giles and Bourgenay, we were in the Vendée; and now we were in Charente Maritime

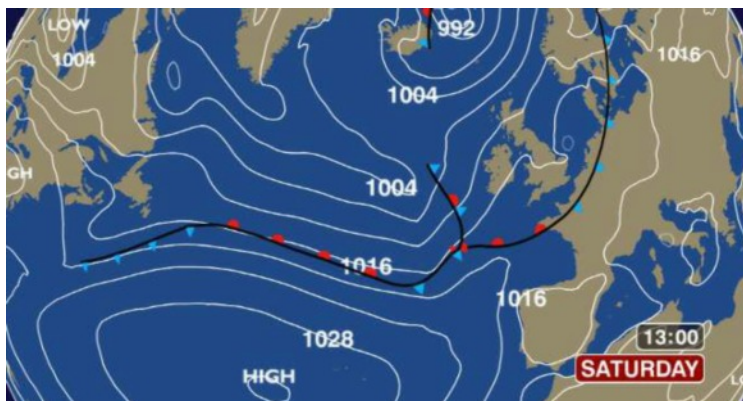
We were to spend some time pottering about the area. First we rested in La Rochelle at the Les Minimes marina, occasionally going into the town on the ferry where on one day we had lunch with Val and David from *Mojito* (they returned the visit later). Les Minimes had most essentials, such as boulangerie, basic alimentation (grocer,fruiterer and off licence), restaurants, the occasional market for shellfish, and a launderette.

We could also connect to the Internet very cheaply using a WIFI service that covered the marina, subsidised by the local authority.

Later we would potter across to St Denis d'Oleron; up the Charente River to Rochefort, passing south of Ile d'Aix on the way; then returning back under the bridge, to St Martin de Ré.



In the UK, the heatwave had not yet started. Indeed, the weather map for 8th July shows fairly tight isobars over Scotland, indicating strong winds there - which we knew through occasional text messages from our friends Mike and Rosemary. To the south, the winds were also fairly strong round Cape Finsterre on the NW corner of Spain, where *Dreamer* was cruising. In the middle, Charente Maritime enjoyed its own microclimate. It was hot, very hot. What wind occurred was primarily driven by sea breeze thermals.



BBC weather map for 8th July published on 5th July

Occasionally we would have a day or two when the winds blew stronger, but right through July the weather was basically benign. The only problem was that this was due to high pressure in mid Atlantic, which would mean headwinds once we started our return. For the time being, however, we just enjoyed the settled weather.



Les Minimes marina at La Rochelle

We stayed in the marina at Les Minimes for four days. The scarcity of berths was such that it was not possible to think about popping out for an afternoon's sail and coming back. We had pushed fairly hard to get here while Terry and Ruby were still in the area in *Danae* and we were glad of the break.



The Yngling fleet

Immediately opposite our pontoon was the Yngling fleet. There were about 60 of them involved in their World Championships. It was fascinating to watch this fleet prepare each morning and return in late afternoon. We thought that there would be a new verb "I Yngle, you Yngle, we yngle" etc.

Mojito was in the old town marina. We had been there on previous visits, and it is great fun but a little noisy. As there is a regular river bus from Les Minimes to the town, it is in many ways a preferable arrangement to be in Les Minimes.



River bus

Even so, it was fun to go up to the town again and stroll round the market and other parts of the town. On one day we had lunch at a restaurant with David and Val from *Mojito*. Dairne's starter was almost the size of a seafood platter.



La Rochelle Skyline



Dairne at Les Minimes with stepstool for getting on

Although the marina seemed completely incapable of managing the berthing arrangements, it was otherwise an excellent facility. One great improvement was the introduction of a wifi service at a cost of €6 for a week. This was truly excellent value and allowed me to update all security files on the computer, and get recent and up-to-date weather maps.

Each evening we would get together on either *Ariadne* or *Danae*, with Dairne and Ruby alternating the cooking. Terry and I concentrated on helping the French to reduce the size of their wine lake!



Ruby & Terry

La Rochelle to St Denis d'Oleron [7th July: 12 M]

After four days, we were more than ready to move on if only to get some cooler air out to sea. Although they had already been there, Terry and Ruby suggested that we all go over to St Denis d'Oleron. Although it was only a 15 mile passage Terry was keen that I get some photographs of his genniker on the way, and he would take a few photographs of *Ariadne*. *Mojito* did not join us and went exploring elsewhere.

Terry had arranged the genniker so that it could be permanently carried on a stumpy bow sprit, with a roller drum that enabled the sail to be set and furled from the cockpit. On the whole it worked fairly well, although there were occasional difficulties in getting the shoulders at the top of the sail to roll in properly.



Danae with Ile de Ré bridge in background



Danae under genniker



Danae's stub bowsprit for the genniker

St Denis has a small harbour with a natural sill so that one always stays afloat. On a previous visit during spring tides, the water outside the harbour



St Denis d'Oleron

had almost disappeared, but we remained properly afloat. On this occasion, the tides were neap and the range was very small.

We quickly set up the beach umbrella that Terry had loaned to us to keep the withering sun off the cockpit table which we loaded with a bottle Muscadet and a couple of bowls of crevettes.

The next morning we strolled gently up to the town and wandered round the market, with its wonderful displays of all manner of fish, meat, fruit and vegetables as well as clothes jewellery and all the other paraphernalia associated with a French market.



Altogether we spent three nights in St Denis. The heat was wilting, but it is a pleasant place to be. Indeed unless there is a strong reason for going to La Rochelle, St Denis has a much more pleasant atmosphere than the marina at Les Minimes. We were picking up tips from Terry and Ruby on preparing oysters.... "What you need is an oyster knife with a sharp point, but without sharp blades, and a roll of Elastoplast"....Terry did not like the oyster knife that I had bought



in the market because one side of the blade was sharpened and he reckoned that I was asking for trouble. We also learned a few tricks from him and Ruby about preparing moules. Terry also joined hordes of Frenchmen, scraping the beach near low water for palourdes, a small shellfish that lives very close to the low water mark in the sand. Like oysters these are broken open and eaten live.

We had managed to get the boats into adjacent berths, so the stay at St Denis was very sociable. But we still had our privacy and independence.



The capitainerie at St Denis d'Oleron

St Denis had made us welcome. The facilities are adequate, and clean. Even the capitainerie was decorated with hanging baskets. Internet access was freely available there too. The area around the harbour is gradually being developed to attract tourists, but the development is on the whole quite tasteful and spacious.

We had enjoyed our stay but the time had come to move on. Terry and Ruby had left the Solent a month before us, and now wanted to start a leisurely journey northwards. We on the other hand still wanted to visit Rochefort and St Martin De Re.

These are two delightful portraits of *Ariadne* that Terry took on the trip over to St Denis d'Oleron.



St Denis to Rochefort [10th July: 21 M]

We were short of wind, and temperatures continued high. Our fan was working overtime, and the fridge had to be set higher to make sure we had ice for the sundowner gin & tonic - but it kept on working.

As we would have to motor for 15 miles up the Charente River in any case, the lack of wind did not matter much, but we knew it would be extremely hot inland in Rochefort. Nevertheless we decided to press on and visit what we had been told was a fascinating town.

So far, we had been visiting relatively easy harbours, and although I had occasionally checked Malcolm Robson's books for confirming transits, it had only been an extra check (although they had proved useful when going into St Giles when the water depths proved to be less than expected). Now, however, we would need to maintain a long transit to enter the Charente River, and the remaining transits, though only of importance to larger commercial ships, were usefully explained in his book, though many had been changed in detail.

Just after lunch we made our farewells with Terry and Ruby and set off across the Baie D'Oleron. It was another hot and windless day as we motored past Fort Boyard. Then rounding to the south of Ile D'Aix we headed towards Fouras.



Above: Fort Boyard
Right: Typical vedette



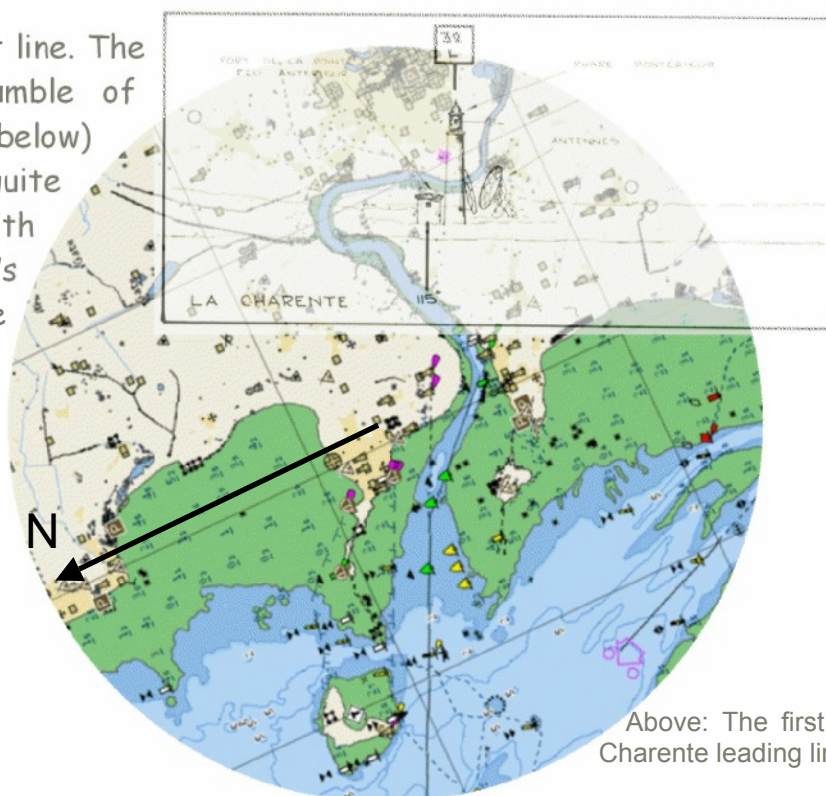
Above and Below: The shoreline at Fouras



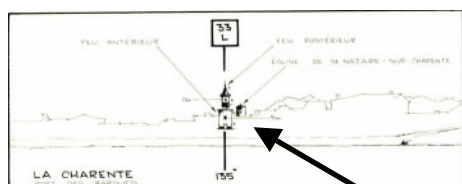
We were looking for the first long-range leading marks into the Charente estuary.

The first transit was so far inland that at first I could only find it in the compass binoculars - it was certainly impossible to photograph it. Once located, however, it made steering in the strong cross currents very easy.

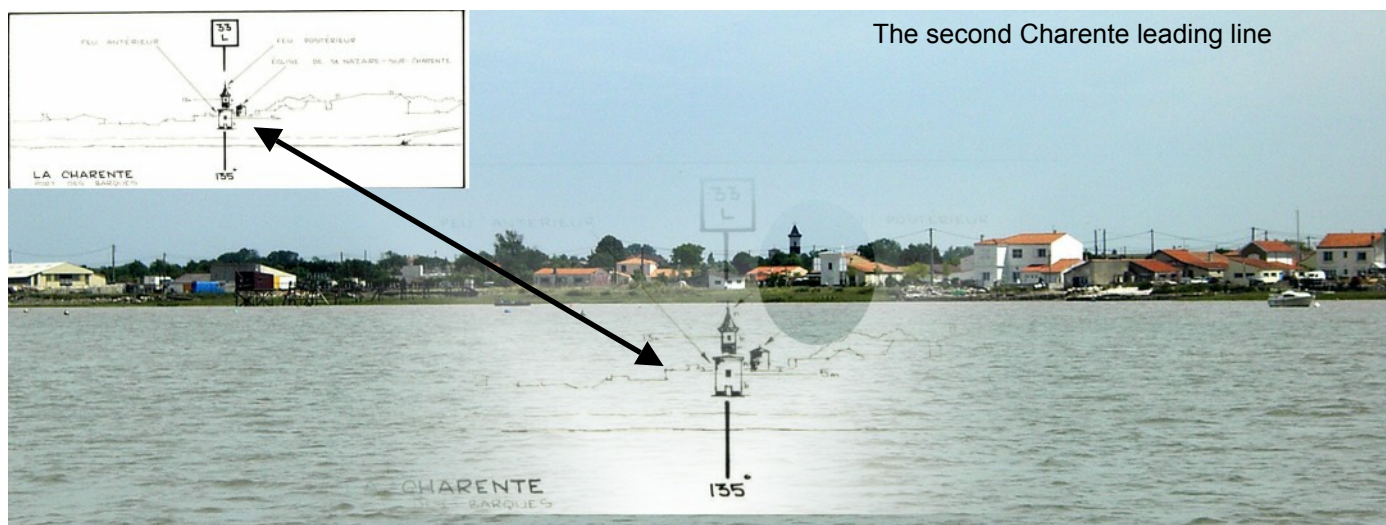
Then we turned onto the next line. The leading marks are in a jumble of buildings. The photograph(below) was taken when we were quite close in, but at first, even with the binoculars, Robson's drawings helped to identify the shapes of the leading marks better than any photograph.



Above: The first Charente leading line



The second Charente leading line



After that we were then in a river where it was possible, in a boat of our size, to ignore the leading marks and keep somewhere near the middle. The tide began to sweep us up the river very quickly and we became optimistic that we would make it all the way to Rochefort on this tide.





Fishing lodges in the Charente

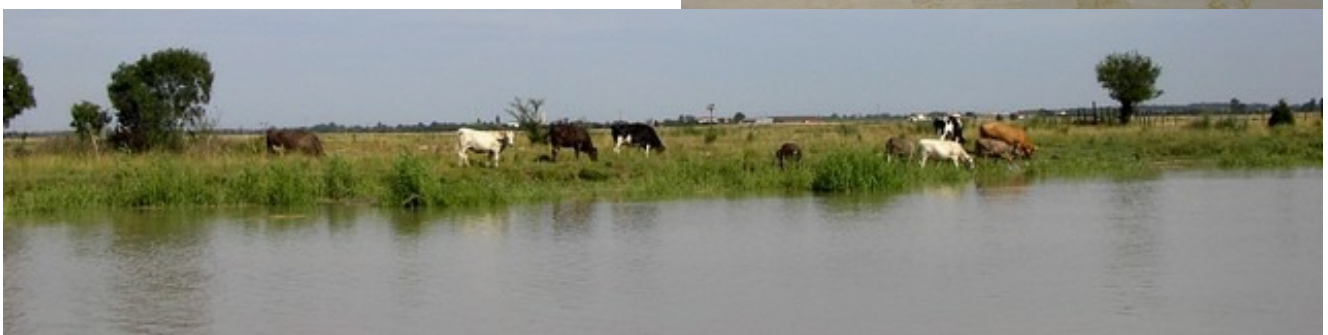
This is a river that makes its way inland in long graceful sweeping curves. In places there were buildings of obvious historic interest by the waterside. Also numerous fascinating fishing lodges from which the locals obviously collect large numbers of crevettes and, no doubt, other seafood.



Eventually we came to the bridges. Fortunately the Swing Bridge referred to in Malcolm Robson's books (which only opened twice a day in the early morning and late evening) has been replaced by an

elegant high-level fixed bridge. The old transporter bridge is still there and is still operated at weekends as a museum-piece.

Above and right: The Charente bridges
Below: A rural scene opposite Rochefort



We reached the entrance to Rochefort at the correct time and had to motor about in the river waiting for the boats to leave, and dodging the occasional commercial ship. Anywhere else such ships would appear to be the small coasters that they actually were. Here they filled the river.



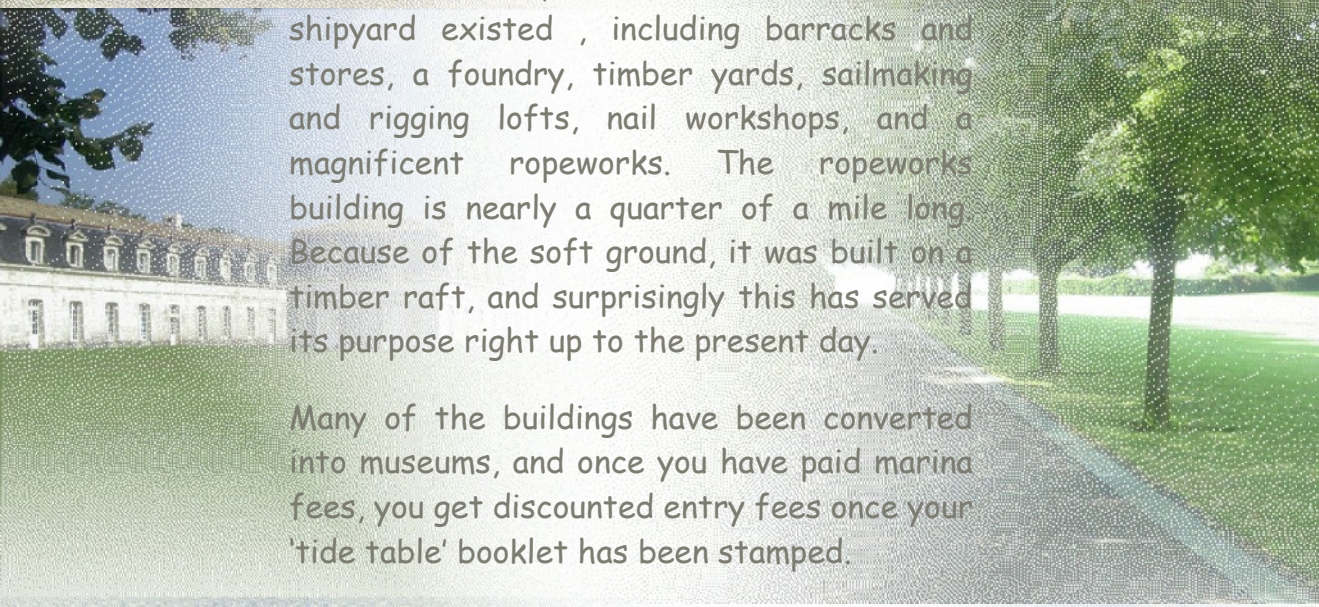
Eventually eventually we were able to go through the gates into the old Port of Rochefort. We were allocated a berth in the far basin, and made ourselves as comfortable as we could in the heat. Already it looked quite a fascinating spot.






Hermione

In the morning, we set off along the river bank seeking the drydock in which *Hermione*, the full size reconstruction of an 18th century French frigate, is being undertaken.



Rochefort was built specifically as an armoury, a long way up a river so that it would be safe from British attack - although there was one major raid mounted in longboats and launches. Within the town, all the main services for a shipyard existed, including barracks and stores, a foundry, timber yards, sailmaking and rigging lofts, nail workshops, and a magnificent ropeworks. The ropeworks building is nearly a quarter of a mile long. Because of the soft ground, it was built on a timber raft, and surprisingly this has served its purpose right up to the present day.

Many of the buildings have been converted into museums, and once you have paid marina fees, you get discounted entry fees once your 'tide table' booklet has been stamped.



Hermione sits in a drydock, itself an interesting piece of history, that was almost rediscovered by accident. Started some years ago, she is being built in oak, (and in the interests of sustainability the trees are being replanted!).



The old drydock, discovered by accident

Traditional methods are being used throughout, including full sized lofting of the frames and bulkheads (as was the case when I started shipbuilding in the 1960's).



The timetable has slipped, but the project is designed to provide tourist interest, so the slippage is not particularly important. The current expectation of float out and commencement of rigging is 2010.



After a long look at the hull, it is fascinating to go through the other workshops where they are building associated structures, such as fighting tops and longboats, and even the ships wheel.



There is also an extensive forge making belaying pins, forged bolts and any other required metalwork,

There are some finished boats on show, as well as some wonderful models.



We thought we had earned lunch at a street restaurant.

Dairne had walked about a mile, which was no mean achievement. Fortunately, we managed to find a bus that dropped us off near the marina.



Down the Charente [11th July: 6 M]

Originally, we had planned to stay overnight and leave on the morning lockout. But it was so hot among the enclosed buildings that we opted to leave straight away on the evening tide. This meant we would not get the opportunity to look closely at the ropeworks, but that can wait for another year.



Departing Rochefort



Motoring past the rope works

The trip down the river was uneventful, apart from encountering two coasters passing just below the bridges.



Above and left
Passing ships leave little room for yachts!



We picked up a mooring off the Club Nautique, about halfway to the estuary. It was a lot cooler there than in the town.



An unusual piece of high bank on the Charente

Charente to St Martin de Ré [12th July: 26M]

This year Bastille Day, 15th July, fell on a weekend. It was now 12th July and we decided that we would get to St Martin de Re as quickly as possible to try and get a berth. It would undoubtedly be a scrum, but we were ready to have a few days of harbour rot and there is no better place than St Martin.



Top: Ile d'Aix
Middle: Ile d'Aix
Bottom: Fort d'Enet

We were also aware that another Marchwood boat, *Passager* was in the area and we thought that they might be anchored off the south end of the Ile de Re.



There was quite a brisk breeze that morning. With the high pressure still sitting out in the Atlantic it was from the north which would give us a beat towards the Re Bridge. To make the best of the tide, we left quite early under engine until we were well clear of the estuary and standing out towards Ile d'Aix. To starboard, we could see the rather forbidding Fort d'Enet, obviously built to protect Fouras and the Charente.



South end of Ile de Re

It was indeed a very pleasant beat up towards the South end of Ile de Re which we reached by late morning. *Passager* was there and we anchored near by.

Mike and Janet came over by dinghy and we had a pleasant lunch together sheltering as best we could from the sun. It was interesting comparing notes with them. They had left the Solent long before us, but had become involved in a folk festival at Benodet where they had had the most interesting and enjoyable time.





Passager with Re bridge in background

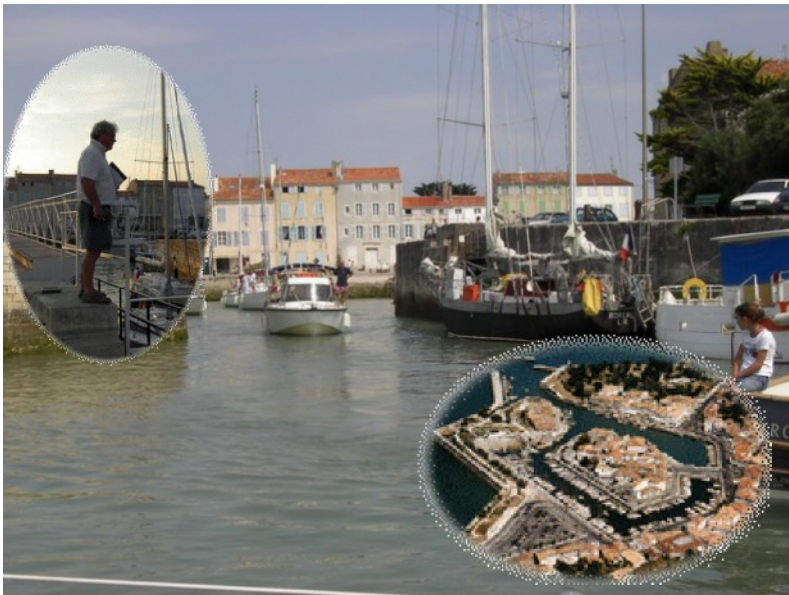
Eventually we slotted into the queue and were directed by Monsieur Garnier, the harbour master, to berth on one of the visitors' berths four out. Monsieur Garnier is quite a character and always stands on the lock wall directing the incoming yachts like an orchestral

They had already been in St Martin, so we left them at anchor shortly after lunch and joined the fleet waiting for the gates of St Martin to open. As had happened to us before, the wind off St Martin de Re was quite brisk during the afternoon and those boats that anchored looked quite uncomfortable. We managed to jill gently backwards and forwards under mainsail only and this was rather more satisfactory



Approaching St Martin de Re

conductor. With his shock of grey hair he looks not unlike Simon Rattle, although I have never seen the latter conducting an orchestra wearing shorts.



This is a fascinating little harbour, with an island in the middle. One side of the island dries, but the other side is gated to form a wet harbour. In the picture below, one scans through the entrance channel, and the lock into the main pool, which can get very crowded in summer. (The pictures opposite provide more detail)





St Martins harbour views

With all boats being tucked together one quickly makes friends with the adjacent boats (unless the boat outside happens to be a large French charter boat, in which case one has to suffer Napoleon's army advancing to the shore and retreating back to the boat late at night).



Cosy mooring arrangements in St martin de Re



Pavement cafe life!

Although the mooring arrangements are totally chaotic, we like St Martin de Re and Dairne was even prepared to cope with clambering over four boats to get to

the pontoon. There are numerous pavement cafes, and above all a wonderful market with the best selection of bread, fish, meat, and vegetables that you could wish for. It is open every day, including Sunday.



Dairne, Janet and Mike

We were not that surprised to find that *Passager* came into the harbour the next morning having had a rather uncomfortable night in a fresh breeze in the rather exposed anchorage at the south of the Ile de Re.

On Bastille Day itself, Mike and Janet from *Passager* joined us for an evening meal which stretched until the light faded and we sat in the cockpit and watched the fireworks which, as usual, were an impressive display.



St Martin de Re at night



St Martin de Re just after Bastille Day

The harbour was absolutely packed over the weekend, and this panorama photograph which I took was after three boats had already left the harbour. It seemed almost impossible to get another boat in.

When the boats depart, there has to be an incredible unpacking process if boats on the inside wish to leave. Somehow it all seems to happen with a degree of goodwill, and occasional humour. Now and again one encounters the idiot who is unable to control his boat properly and as a result tends to go banging about inside the harbour bumping into other vessels. Fortunately with the very docile weather that tends to occur at this time of the year, conditions are usually such that manoeuvring is possible, even in a long keel boat like a Rustler.

On the day after Bastille Day, Mike and Janet set off again and it was quite interesting helping to get them out of a very deep trot with their long keel and bow sprit. We also had to shuffle a little, after which we were only the second boat out from a pontoon. While this meant we were able to go ashore more easily, it meant we would have a more difficult problem when we left. But so be it!

On the following day we had quite a lot of excitement. Dairne and I were about to go ashore, when Monsieur Garnier and the assistant harbour master came rushing around. They had closed the gate an hour earlier and it had only just become apparent that there must be something jammed in the seal. It seemed the water was pouring out of the harbour, and the harbour master was worried that all boats would ground. We were all asked to set



Above: The fleet aground in St Martin de Re with lines from masthead to quay

Below: The dock gate leaked for the whole tide cycle





lines from the masthead to the quay in an attempt to hold boats upright if the water dropped too far. In the event we did dry, but by less than a foot. One or two boats in the harbour were at rather crazy angles, but the masthead lines had been sufficient to save the day. When the tide returned and the gates could be opened divers discovered that a small rock had got into the sill. It had probably been blown there by the propellers of a Sunseeker that had come in the day before.

On the whole I had the impression that the French had managed to learn something about mooring in the two years since we were last here. Even so, there was one yacht that arrived single-handed into this congested mayhem without any warps or fenders at the ready. Of course, being French, he got away with it because the boat he was required to go alongside already had fenders and the people on board were able to get hold of him and hold his boat steady on a windless day until he was able to find the necessary warps and fenders.



On the opposite side of the lock, there was a studio which was operated under a franchise from the photographer who takes all those wonderful pictures of lighthouses in France. We found in there than most wonderful book in English that covers all light houses between Shetland and Gibraltar along the Atlantic coastal rim.

Having had several days of rest, and soaked up the atmosphere of this wonderful marine village, we were ready to commence our northward journey by 17th July. We had thoroughly enjoyed exploring Charente Maritime. Our cruise was far from over and there would be many interesting encounters with Rustlers and other yachts on the way home. Our broad plan was to be past Ouessant by the end of the third week in August, that is before the unsettled September weather set in.



The pictures on this page are a few images of the village of St Martin de Re



St Martin de Ré to Les Sables d'Olonne [17th July: 23 M]

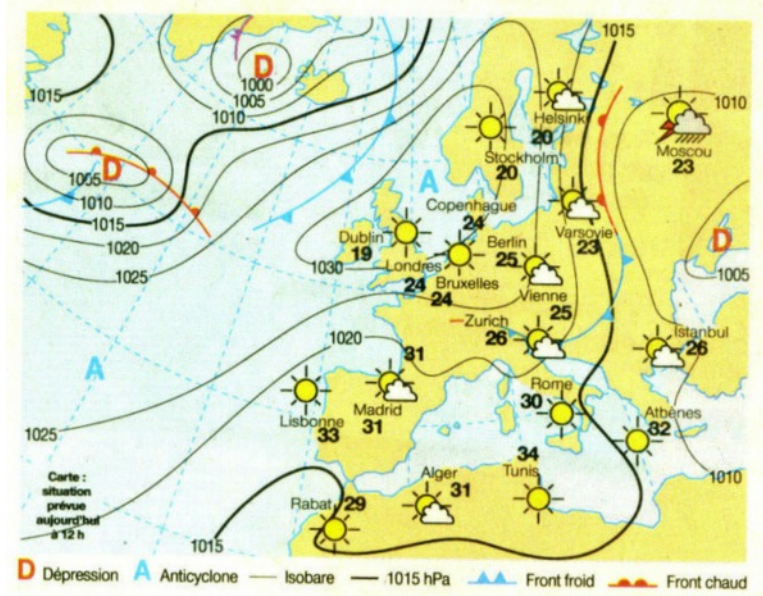


The heat re-established itself after a brief breezy period during the Bastille weekend. The only change in the overall weather pattern, as shown in the satellite picture, is that the heatwave had managed to get across into southern England. We had been enjoying le canicule for a month already. High pressure in the Atlantic continued to

L'image satellite



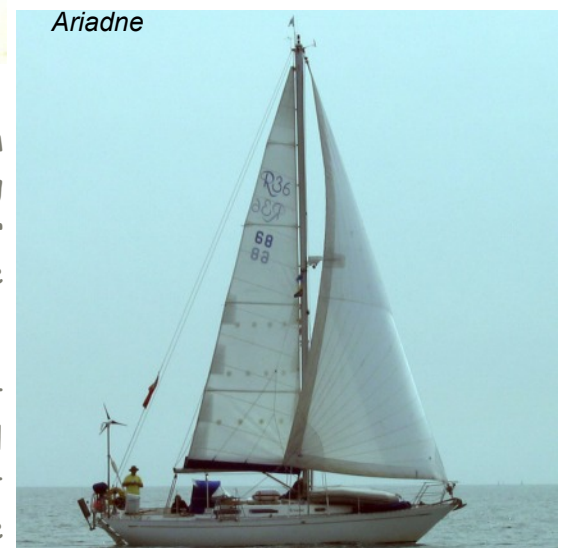
La carte des dépressions et anticyclones



dominate the weather.. For as far ahead as we could see, any gradient wind would continue to come from the north-west. The only possibility for favourable winds would be sea breezes.

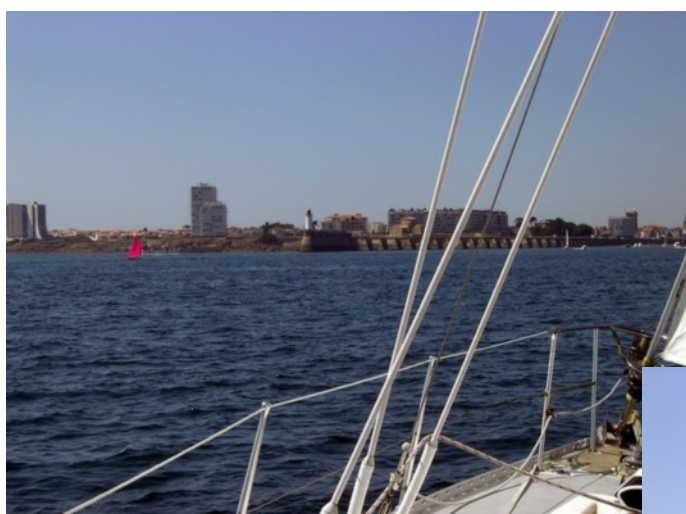
We were now ready to move northwards from Saint-Martin de Re. In some ways we were hoping that by going further north we would find cooler weather, but at the same time we wanted the summer to continue for another month.

Once the gate was open, we set out on to a flat rather grey sea, motoring with no wind. The coastal scenery in the Vendée area is rather dull, the coast being mainly flat. The most significant features are



the water towers which are quite useful for locating position, providing you can decide which is which.

When we set out we were not quite sure where we were going to end up, but after only 15 minutes the phone rang. It was Terry from *Danae* in a supermarket in Les Sables D'Olonne. He was purchasing a replacement electric hotplate, and wanted to know if we wanted one. We did, so our destination was settled. We would go to Les Sables D'Olonne to collect it. We were following *Danae's* example. One spends so much time in marinas in France where one has already paid for the electricity that using an electric kettle and a hot plate significantly reduces gas consumption. This represents a major convenience as well as a significant cost saving.



Above: Approaching Les Sables d'Olonne
Right: Well named service ship!
Below: Fort at entrance to Les Sables d'Olonne



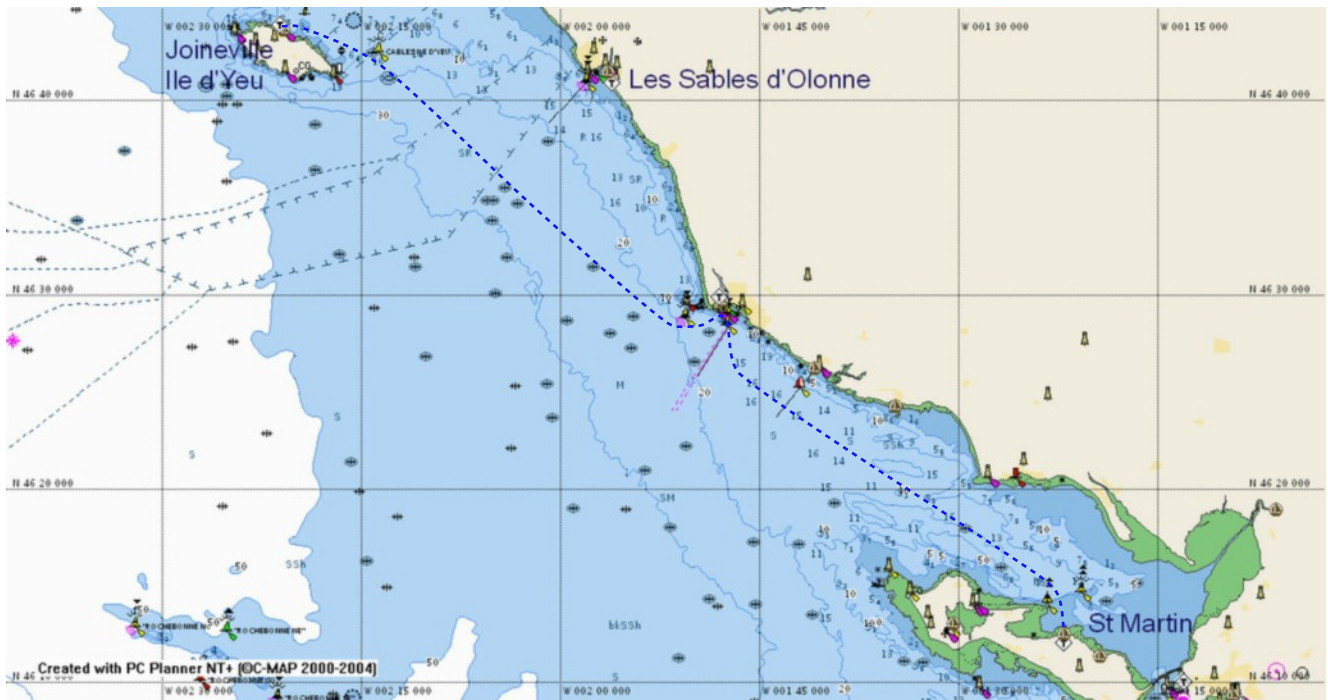
As we emerged from the Pertuis Breton, a light north-westerly breeze filled in and we enjoyed a really pleasant beat to Les Sables D'Olonne. On the way we passed a small jack up rig, which was not in itself significant, but we were overtaken by its service vessel which had emblazoned on the side and magnificent name "Ruby"!



As we were motoring into the harbour, we were overtaken by another Solent yachtsmen, Derek Ide who was single-handed in his westerly Fulmar. Once we were alongside in the marina, Derek, Ruby and Terry joined us for a bottle of wine and to exchange news. It had been

pleasantly cool at sea, but it was stiflingly hot in the marina, which is well inland at Les Sables D'Olonne.

The next morning, I was able to purchase cables and plugs to connect our shiny new hotplate to the mains socket. It is certainly true that all possible services are available in Les Sables D'Olonne. After all it is the home of Beneteau, Jeanneau, and Feeling yachts.



Passage from St Martin de Re to Ile d'Yeu, via Les Sables d'Olonne

Round Yeu to St Giles Croix de Vie [20th & 21st July: 27 M]

Derek Ide in *Fearless* was still southbound, so we left him at Sables D'Olonne while *Danae* and ourselves headed for Ile d'Yeu. It was yet another grey windless day and we had to motor the full 20 miles.

Ruby and Terry wanted a lay day at Ile d'Yeu, but it was so oppressive that we opted to attempt a circumnavigation of the island perhaps including an overnight stay in one of the anchorages. This was all more important as our cabin fan had failed after only three weeks.

One of the things we had
cruise was recording



been doing throughout the
actual tracks for C-Map.



This is an example
of one of the
more interesting
ones. Perhaps I
will use this

technique more extensively in future logs.

After visiting a number of the interesting bays, we concluded that the slight Atlantic swell that was beginning to develop would make an overnight stop uncomfortable. Instead we opted to go back to St Giles where we had bought the cabin fan to see if we could obtain a replacement.



The overlay is Malcolm Robson's sketch - you know what to expect before you get there!

We managed to sail some of the way on a dead run, with the *Genoa* poled out, but still arrived at St Giles near low water and once again had to make use of Malcolm Robson's transits to check that we were in the deepest part of the Channel.

Once comfortably secured in the marina, we made a return visit to the marina restaurant where once again we enjoyed moules farci.



St Giles Croix de Vie

The next morning I was able to replace the defective fan, and I also bought another as spare.



Every few days the weather gave slight signs of breaking down, sometimes as thunderstorms, or as on this day the wind increased to blow at about force 6 from the north-west. As a result we stayed put and had a chance to explore St Giles properly for the first time. It is an attractive town with all essential facilities although one does have to walk a little distance to find everything.

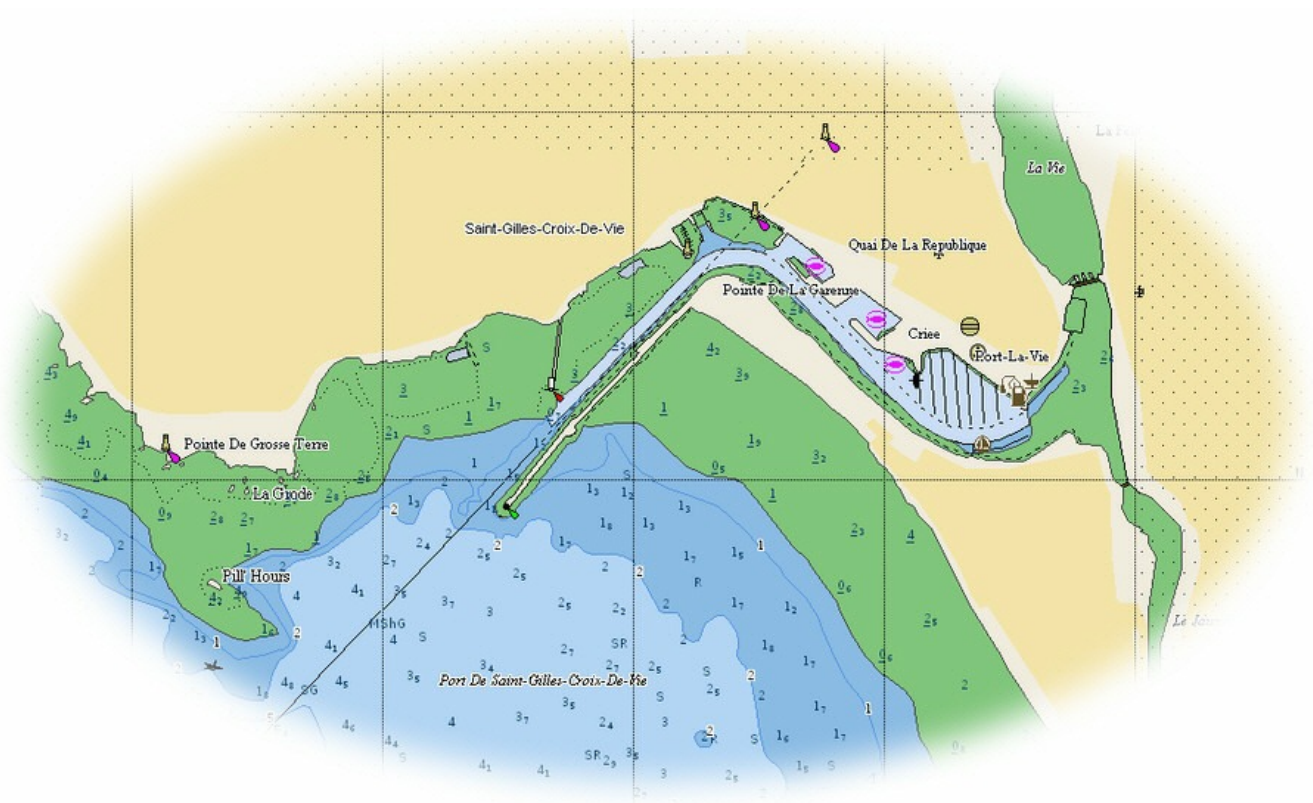


Loire Wine Festival

What we did find however was a wine festival right next to the marina. We were able to tour the stalls and try several red and white wines from the Loire. We found we particularly liked the Touraine white, and their medium red wine which was called Gamay. We bought several cases of the White, a box of the Red, and also two

cases of Pouilly Fumee.

I returned to the boat for our useful collapsible baggage trolley to collect the wine. We were now well-stocked.



St Giles Croix de Vie

St Giles Croix de Vie to L'Herbaudiere [22nd July: 37 M]



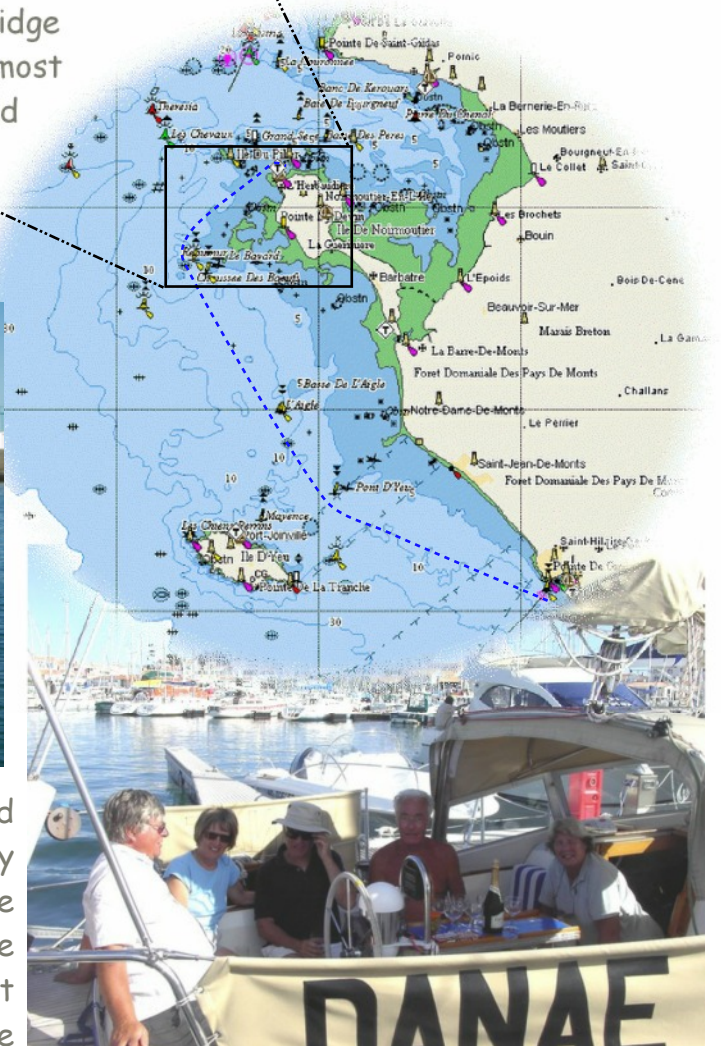
The weather was not much better the following day, but we had received a text message from *Danae* that another Rustler, *Seol Mara*, was due to arrive at L'Herbaudiere. If we could make it then we would have the requisite three boats to constitute a rally! It was an unpleasant trip with the wind right on the nose with a very lumpy sea until we passed the Pont de Yeu buoy, after which we were able to sail a little. This buoy marks the end of a

ridge

that extends from the mainland almost halfway to Ile d'Yeu. But once we could bear away into the Channel between the Ile Pilier and Noirmoutier it was a most enjoyable tail to the trip.



Alastair and Carol in *Seol Mara* arrived the next morning and we had a really enjoyable day in their company. Even if we had wanted to do so, we would not have been permitted to remain at L'Herbaudiere as they were expecting the arrival of a large rally fleet. *Danae* and ourselves decided that we would make our way across the Loire estuary to Piriac, but Alastair and Carol had to start their return passage as they were on only three weeks' holiday. As Alastair retires at Christmas they will be able to start serious sailing next year, although their plans include relocating to Scotland. We shall miss them, and it will certainly be an incentive to go back to Scotland to see them again.



L'Herbaudiere to Piriac [24th July:24 M]

Carol and Alastair left early to take advantage of a land breeze coming from the North East down the Loire valley. We were not far behind because the breeze was unlikely to last.

It was a fast reach across the Loire estuary, passing one of the large pilot vessels waiting at anchor for trade.

As we approached le Croisic, the wind died, as expected, and we had to motor in still conditions past La Turballe.

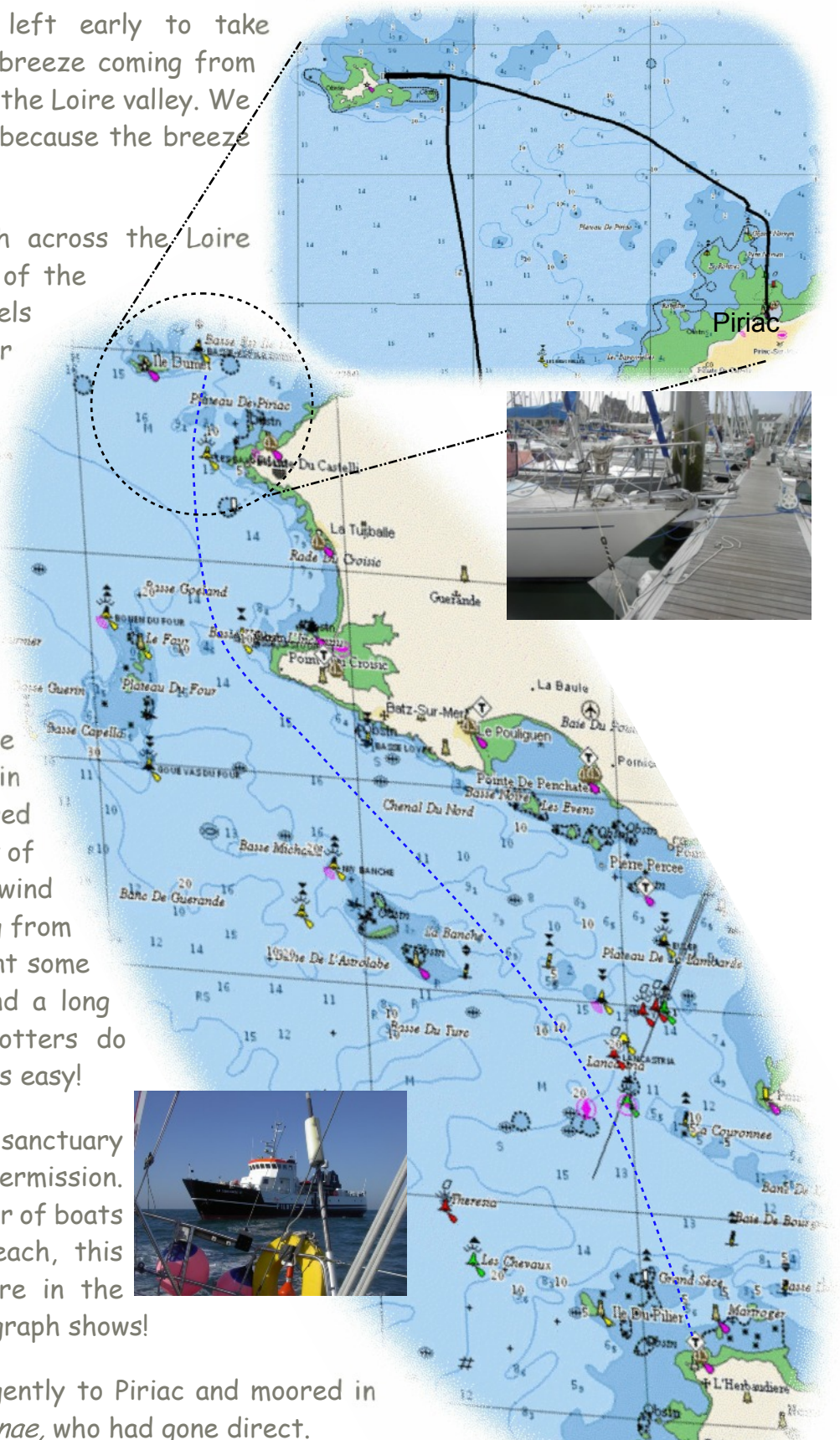
We were early on the tide, so we motored in to the sheltered anchorage to the east of Ile Dumet (what wind there was now coming from the West). This meant some careful pilotage round a long submerged ledge. Plotters do make such manoeuvres easy!

Ile Dumet is a bird sanctuary and landing requires permission. Judging by the number of boats dried out on the beach, this rule is observed more in the breach, as the photograph shows!

After lunch we ran gently to Piriac and moored in the next berth to *Danae*, who had gone direct.



Anchorage at Ile Dumet





Piriac is a town of flowers

Piriac [24th-26th July]

Piriac is a delight. The village is decorated throughout with flowers. We had stayed there with Terry and Ruby two years previously and thoroughly enjoyed our visit. This time we planned to stay for four nights.



It is fun just to walk around the town even the market is full of colour and action. The fish stalls located just



behind the

church are always worth a visit.

You find new routes from the market back to the boat just for the pleasure of finding little alley ways that are ingeniously decorated.



Needless to say we took advantage of all the fresh food and especially the seafood.



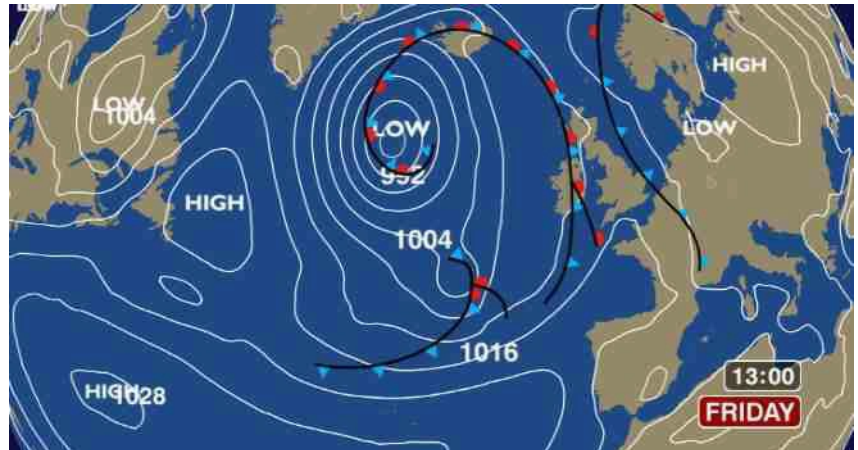
There was almost a competition to see who could create the most interesting meal. We were surprised to learn that Terry and Ruby had not come across savoury crepes, so Dairne produced

some as a snack. A meal on board *Danae* is always a feast and an experience not to be missed if you ever get the chance. Look at this seafood pie, for instance!



Piriac to the Morbihan [38th July:30 M]

The weather in the Atlantic was now becoming decidedly more vigorous and its effects were getting closer to the English Channel. Terry therefore decided to press on towards Lorient. We took a slightly different view and decided to go up into Morbihan for a couple of days.



It was now 28th July so we had about four weeks to get past Ouessant. This was plenty of time provided the weather didn't break down completely. On the other hand if we continued under the influence of the high pressure area, then the dominant gradient wind would be north-westerly giving us a beat.



We were now heading into one of the great French yachting play areas - the huge protected area of water with the long peninsula of Presqu'île de Quiberon to the west like a giant breakwater and the islands of Belle Isle, Houat and Hoedic to the south. Very little of the Atlantic swell can penetrate this area.

To the north of the area is the great inland sea of Morbihan. That is where we intended to go.



Glorious sailing approaching Morbihan

It was quite a fresh beat but we were able to carry full sail so it was one of those wonderful days of sunshine flat water and a brisk breeze. Our progress was so good that we arrived at the entrance to Morbihan much too early. We rolled the jib and sailed gently along at about two knots until the tide had turned.

Entering Morbihan we shaped to go up the Auray river and turned sharply round the head of the Grand Vezid island to an anchorage that we had used a few times



Morbihan entrance

before. By now the wind was a brisk force five and we were glad to find that as expected the anchoring area was well sheltered.



Distinctive abandoned house on Grand Vezid

The tide had only just turned in our favour but we were still swept into Morbihan at a great rate, passing Port Navarro and a series of tourelles that form essential leading marks..

Then we swept past the southern tip of Grand Vezid island, along its length, and then sharply round the northern tip to an area where there is virtually no tidal stream. We anchored with only a couple of metres under the keel.



Sheltered anchorage with little tidal stream

A little while later a Dutch Contest 42 anchored near by. On board were a family of four who joined us for a sundowner. They had been doing some quite adventurous sailing and obviously found the Contest a highly suitable boat.

The day ended with a rather wild-looking sky that correctly suggested a deterioration in the weather for the following day. Despite that the Dutch boat set off, but we opted to let the rain come down and have a quiet and relaxing day.



Beertje 2

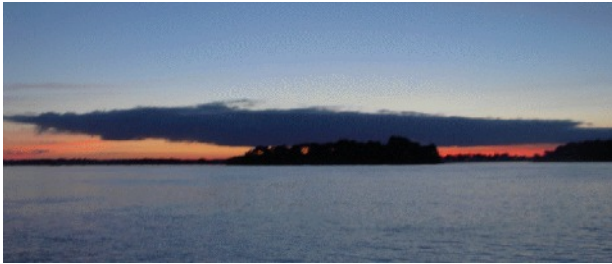
It appeared there would be a two day window in the weather that would allow us to get round the Quiberon Peninsula, with a brief stop at Port Haliguen.



Views from the Grand Vezid anchorage



Morbihan to Lorient, via Port Haliguen [30th -31st July: 36 M]



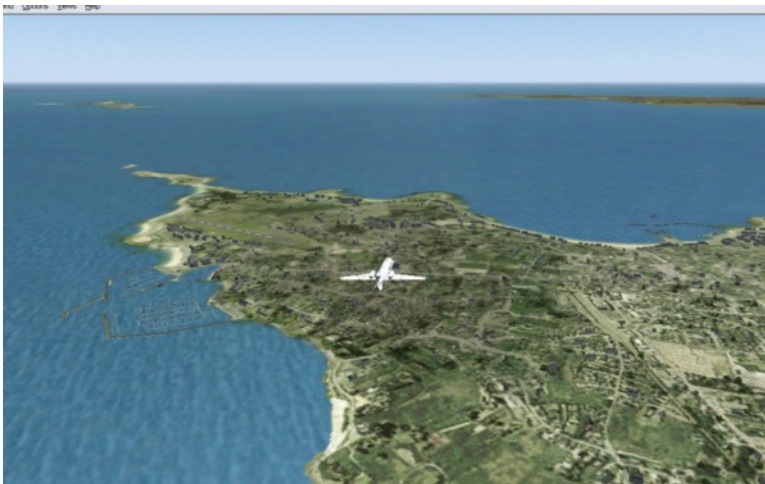
Morbihan 'Red sky in the morning'

We let the first of the ebb tide sweep us out of Morbihan, then had a gentle sail towards the southern tip of the Quiberon Peninsular.



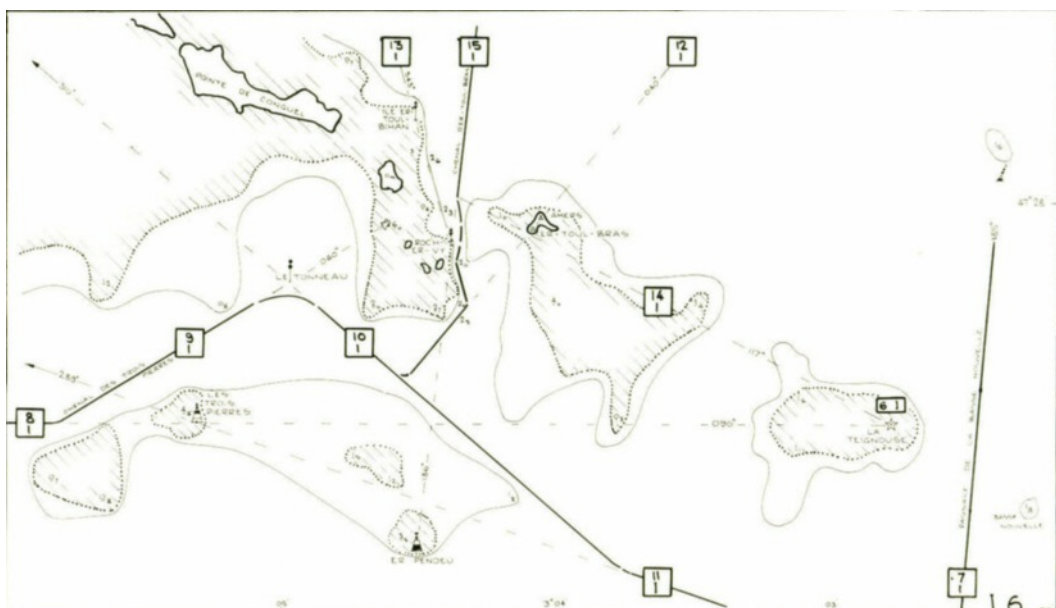
Departing Morbihan

Port Haliguen is a bit of a concrete jungle, but it is extremely well located as a starting point for the passage around the tip of the peninsula. So it is worth a quick overnight stop if tide times so dictate.



MS Flight simulator view of Port Haliguen

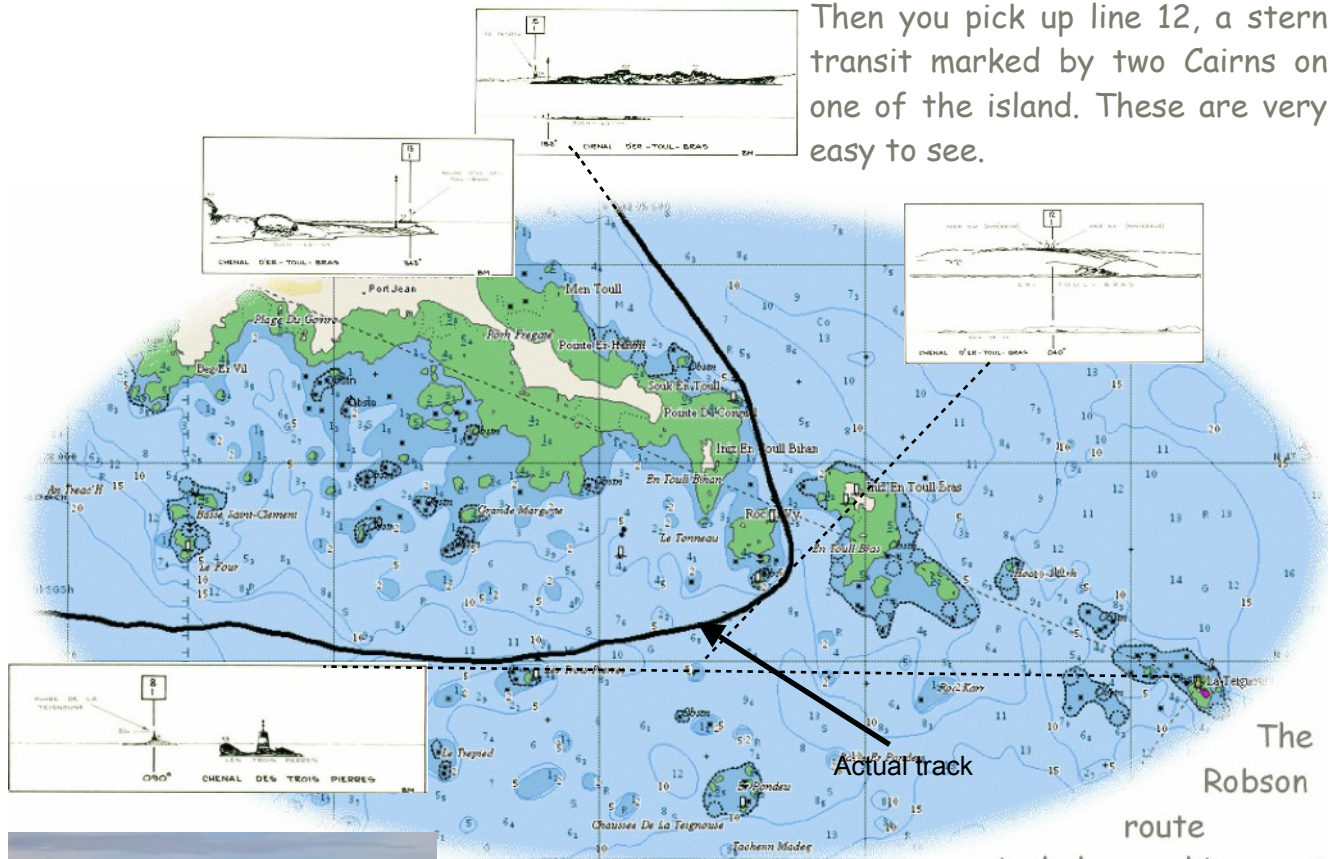
The next morning we set off. The usual route is the wide Teigneuse passage, but there is a much shorter route through the rocks right at the tip of the peninsula. This is well documented in the *Pilote Cotier*, a French pilot book which we found generally very useful and which is liberally stocked with good photographs. However it was the Malcolm Robson Books that contained drawings of all the transits.



Malcolm Robsons transit lines round the tip of Quiberon

First you pick up the transit (Line 15) that leads you into the wide passage at the very tip of the peninsula, with a secondary transit (Line 13) that shows the safe clearance from the rocks on the starboard side. Note that Robson describes this channel travelling in the opposite direction. This is one of the slight complications of using his books.

Then you pick up line 12, a stern transit marked by two Cairns on one of the island. These are very easy to see.



Confusingly, the tourelle in the photo is the Trois Pierres in the approach to Lorient!

But by judicious use of the plotter, we were able to head out leaving the Trois Pierres tourelle safely to port, then picking up the final stern transit of the same tourelle in line with the Teignuese lighthouse (line 8).

We were now in the open sea and could bear away towards Lorient. Now we could feel the Atlantic swell, the dreaded

houle. It was about one-and-a-half metres high, but there was sufficient breeze to drive us over it with sheets just slightly eased.

By 1255 we were alongside the pontoon in Port Louis.



Port Louis

The Port Louis Rallies [31st July-3rd August]

We like Port Louis. It is not a large town and some of the facilities are limited. But it is unpretentious and a place where you can catch your breath. I went up into the town to get one or two essentials, and as I got back to the marina a rather attractive looking boat was berthing on the other side. I soon realised it was a Rustler 42 called *Jubilare*.



Dairne, Bill, Ruby, Terry, Julia

Once again we had the requisite three boats for a rally! So Bill and Julia Bickerdike joined us for the evening on board *Ariadne*. What an interesting time they have had. Almost on completion the boat set off on the Arc rally in which they did incredibly well. The boat

was almost fault free at the end of the Atlantic crossing.

They were now on a Brittany cruise with the intention of leaving the boat for the winter at Rochefort. We were able to give them a little bit of advice on places to visit and I loaned Bill my chart of the Morbihan. It later arrived at home by post with a note that he was concerned that he would not be allowed to bring it in his hand baggage when he returned to the UK by air.



Jubilare leaving Port Louis



It was a wet day, which was quite a novelty for us. Terry and Ruby were waiting for their daughter and family to arrive from the UK. We had contacted Tim Slessor, who was due

to come over to Port Louis at in his Rustler *Hobo* later that day. Despite the rain we wandered round the town which Dairne had not seen for some time, meeting Terry and Ruby protecting their newly purchased bread from the rain.



Hobo arriving at Port Louis

Eventually Tim arrived and squeezed *Hobo* in between *Ariadne* and *Danae* with about two inches to spare on either side. He spent the evening with us. It was good to catch up on his news and the work that he had been doing to the cottage that he owns not far from Lorient.

As he had not been able to do much sailing during the year, we joined him on *Hobo* for a day trip to the Ile de Groix. We got the impression that *Hobo* was a very fast boat, probably because she was running a ton lighter than *Ariadne* having much less cruising gear on board.



Port Tudy, Ile de Groix



Tim - expunding or explaining?

Port Tudy was quite full, but the harbour master managed to find us a berth where we could walk ashore. Tim bought some fishing tackle, then we managed a leisurely lunch at a cafe by the harbour. The sail back was lively and we were a little early so we went up the Blavet river as far as

the tide would allow before returning to the marina.

Terry and Ruby were able to join us for a while, so once again this constituted a Rustler rally! In the course of reminiscing we remembered that Tim had, out of curiosity, visited the Alice Springs Yacht Club in middle of Australia. Oh yes it does exist! He had then arranged for us to



Hobo alongside in Port Tudy



Cosy berth for three Rustlers

Yacht Club. As Tim and I happened to have our ASYC burgees on board, we dedicated the rally in Port Louis to the Alice Springs Yacht Club as the picture shows.

We had had a highly sociable stop in Port Louis, but we were keeping one eye on the weather to spot a suitable day to move on.

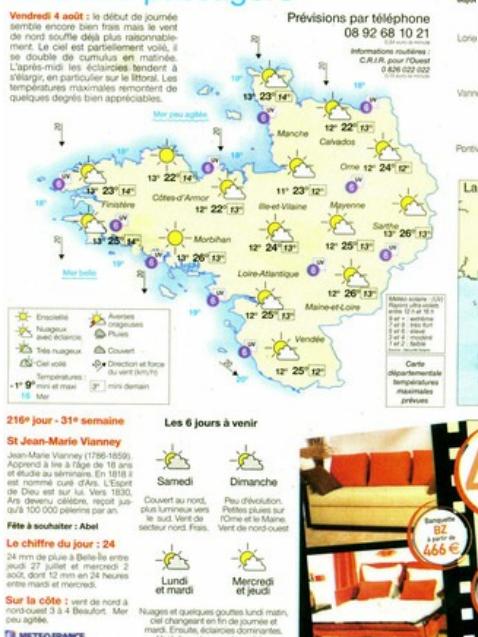
The French word for a ridge of high pressure is 'dorsal' which is much more expressive. The dorsal had re-established itself and was protecting us from the North Atlantic weather. It had however that we were facing grey skies and light headwinds for some time to come.

assist their team when they came to the UK to participate in the Fastnet race. Dairne and I had done most of that because we were conveniently located and at the time I had a useful connection with Red funnel. As a result of this exercise the Rustler Association had been made honorary members of the Alice Springs

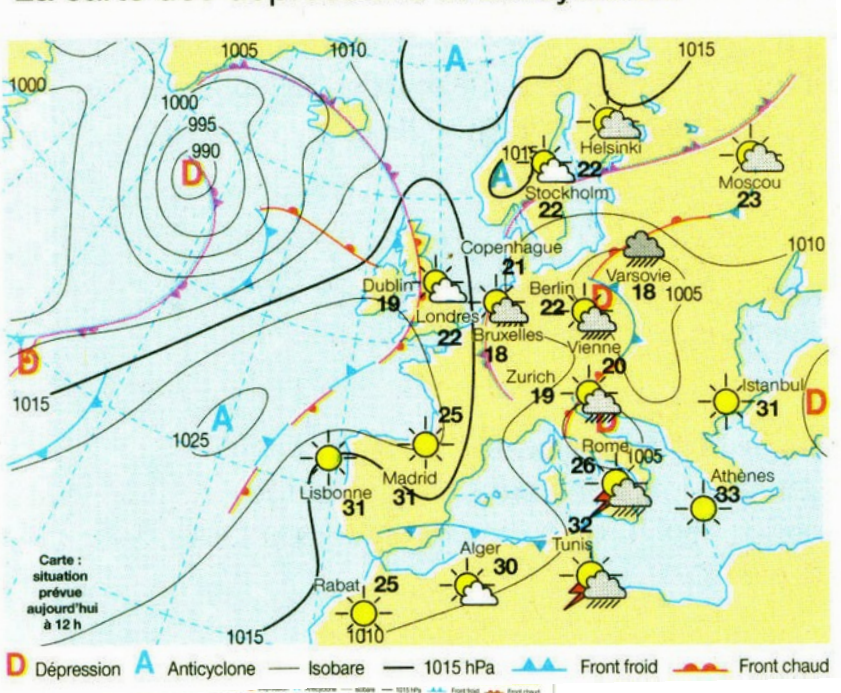


Alice Springs YC Rally?

Embellie passagère



La carte des dépressions et anticyclones



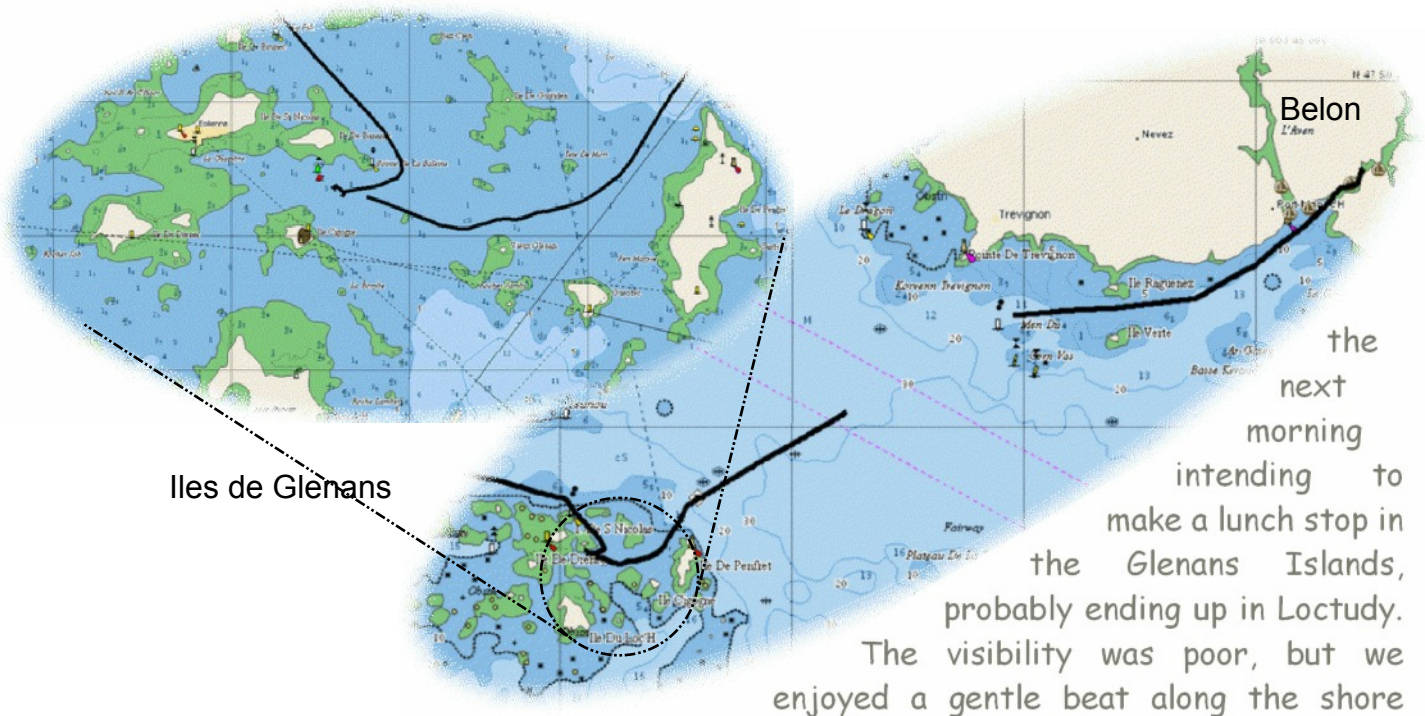
Port Louis to Belon and Iles de Glenan [4th August: 24 M + 12 M]

We decided to press on, leaving Ruby and Terry at Port Louis for an extra day. If conditions were favourable we would try to get towards La Foret, but if not we would divert into Belon. The chart shows the actual track of our passage. Our second tack out towards Ile de Groix was a bad one, but after that we managed to judge the shifts correctly, and even overtook the Contest 40 owned by the Dutch family that we had met when in Morbihan.



But although it was pleasant sailing, it would take rather too long to reach La Foret, so Belon it was.

As we had stayed at Belon on our trip, south-ward, we did not even go ashore and set off



the next morning intending to make a lunch stop in the Glenans Islands, probably ending up in Loctudy. The visibility was poor, but we enjoyed a gentle beat along the shore



before heading out towards the Glenan Islands. Approaching from the north-east we used Malcolm Robson's transits and the chart plotter to reach the main anchorage where there were an enormous number of boats, possibly as many as 200.

We had not been there long when Dairne commented on the number of British boats arriving. We realised that two of them were from Marchwood Yacht Club. We hailed them, and both *Dreamer* and *Superted* anchored nearby. We were invited over to *Superted* for lunch. They were just at the start of their short cruise to South Brittany, and *Dreamer* was returning from a much longer expedition to the rias of Spain. This time it was a Marchwood Yacht Club rally!

So often, particularly when there is a significant Atlantic swell, the Glenan anchorage is uncomfortable, but on this occasion it was so peaceful that we all decided to stay the

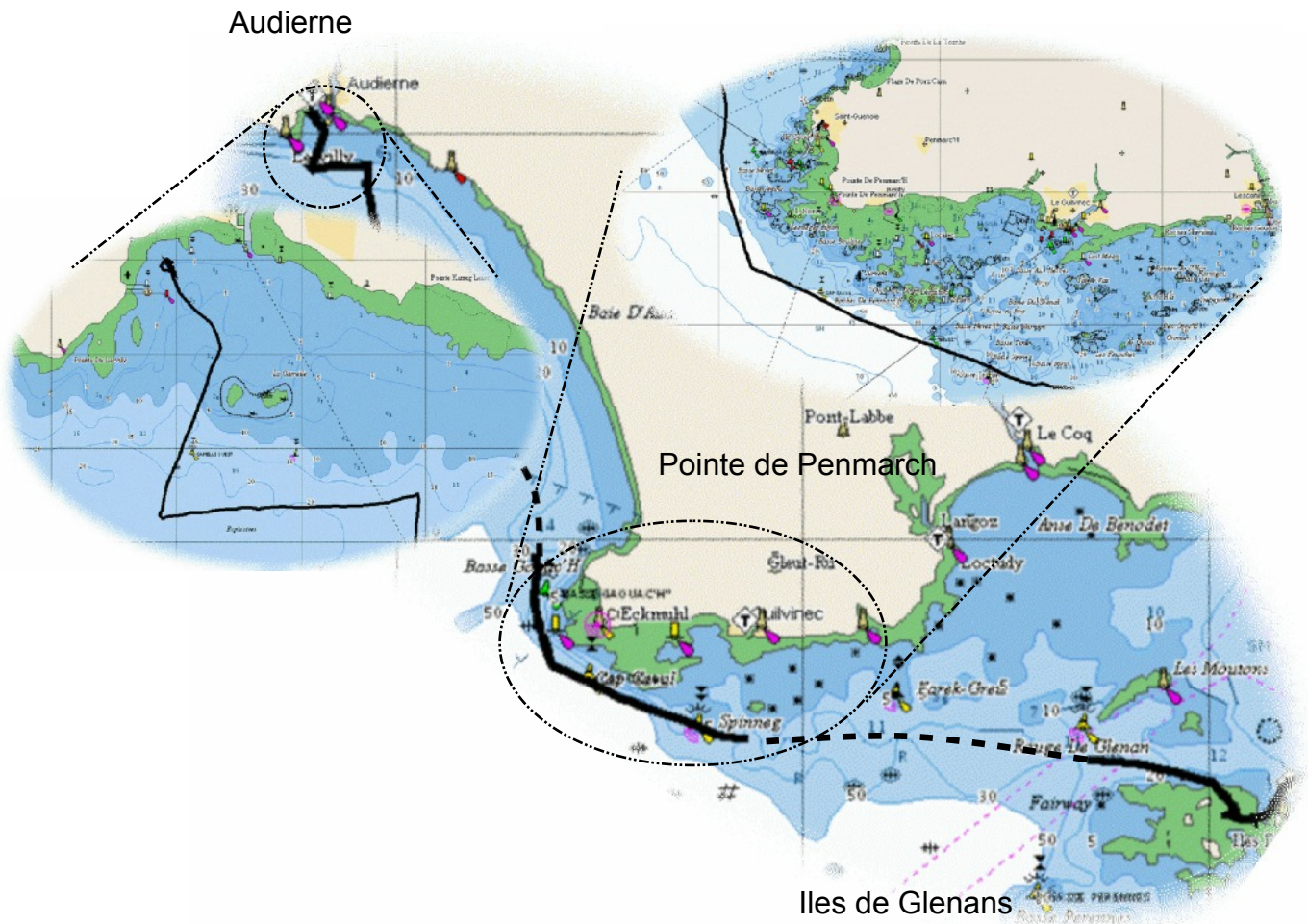


night. After lunch Jean and Matt from *Superted* led a piece of collective madness by going swimming. Jim and Mia from *Dreamer* followed suit, but we abstained and took the photographs.



In the evening we gathered on *Ariadne* for a few drinks and snacks.

Ariadne at Iles de Glenan



Iles de Glenans to Audierne [6th August: 39 M]

The next morning we made our way out of the anchorage to the north, the Channel out to the east having insufficient water. It was a grey, nondescript day with no wind, very little visibility, and not even much swell. So we motored.



By 1100 we were $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles SSW of the Karek Greis buoy, We got occasional glimpses of the inshore rocks and beacons, but as usual when rounding a long headland like this, they seemed to 'walk along the coast'. An hour later we were $1\frac{3}{4}$ M NNW of Spinneg, with the mist beginning to clear. By 1235 a gentle breeze had started from WNW, and when we were $\frac{3}{4}$ M south of Menhir tourelle we could sail.

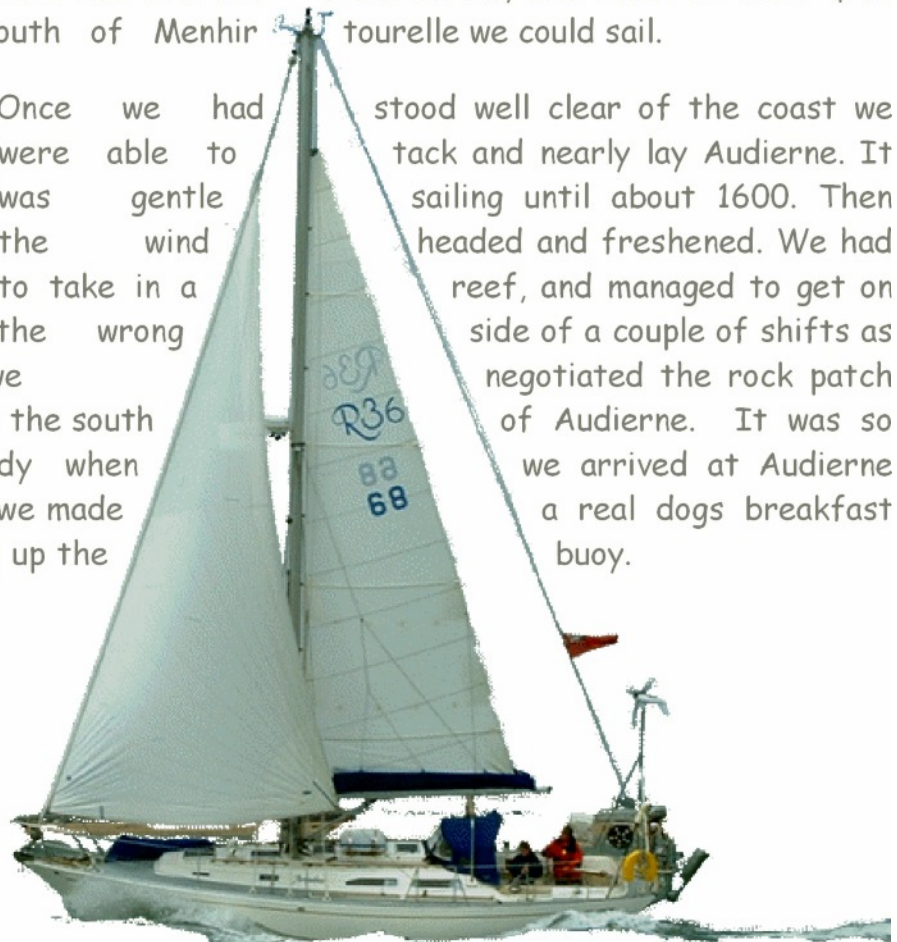
Spinneg



Once we had
were able to
was gentle
the wind
to take in a
the wrong
we
to the south
windy when
that we made
of picking up the

stood well clear of the coast we
tack and nearly lay Audierne. It
sailing until about 1600. Then
headed and freshened. We had
reef, and managed to get on
side of a couple of shifts as
negotiated the rock patch
of Audierne. It was so
we arrived at Audierne
a real dogs breakfast
buoy.

Once reefed, *Ariadne* is very
stiff, beautifully balanced and
goes like a train



Audierne to Camaret [7th August: 25M]



There were long-range indications that weather would be breaking down shortly. Not only did this lead us to abandon our original plan to visit the Ile de Sein, but it also spurred us to proceed direct to Camaret as quickly as possible. We were away shortly after 8 o'clock under engine motoring on a flat sea towards the Raz.

There was low mist hanging around the cliffs at the Raz and the visibility was generally poor in all directions. As we passed close to the yellow and black La

Plate beacon, we could see the strong wake generated by the tide. It is just about visible in the bottom picture below.



Raz de Sein

Our hopes that we might be able sail after passing through the Raz were quickly dashed.

The cloud base came down and it began to rain as we approached the Tas des Pois. In fact we could not remember the last time that we had had to motor all day from A to B without any respite from the engine noise.

The headline in the France Ouest newspaper got it dead right: "the Sun has lost its exclusivity". Yet amazingly the sun came out as we turned



Tas des Pois

Toulinguet rocks



the corner and ran into the inner marina at Cameret.

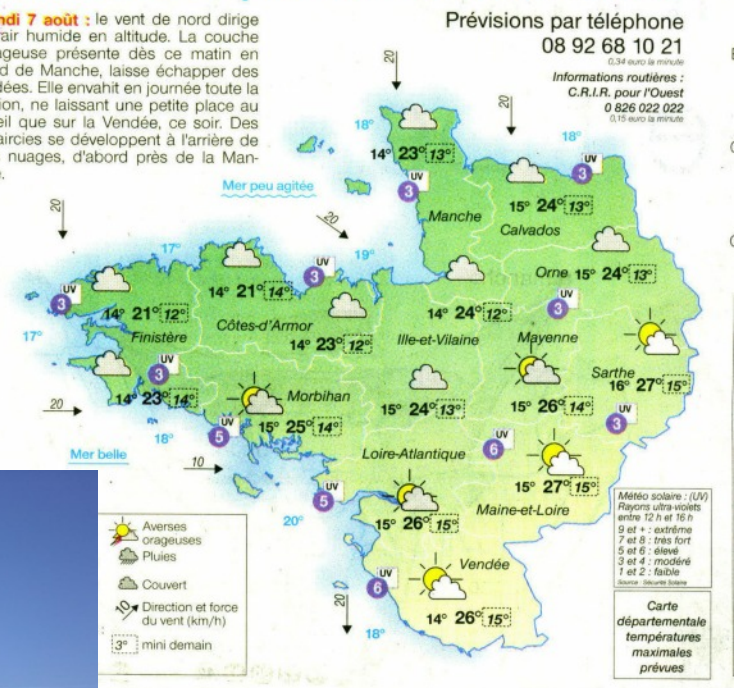
We had completed this stage of the cruise with a day to spare. Reaching Cameret by my birthday on the 8th had been a useful benchmark. It had put us in a strong position to get safely through the Raz de Sein and into the Channel, ahead of the probable deterioration of the weather

by September. On the two previous occasions we had attempted to cruise the North Brittany coast on our way home, we had been forced to take weather windows and dive across the Channel earlier than we otherwise would have wished.

On the following two days there were brisk winds varying between north and north-east, precisely the wrong direction for going through

Le soleil a perdu l'exclusivité

Lundi 7 août : le vent de nord dirige un air humide en altitude. La couche nuageuse présente dès ce matin en bord de Manche, laisse échapper des ondées. Elle envahit en journée toute la région, ne laissant une petite place au soleil que sur la Vendée, ce soir. Des éclaircies se développent à l'arrière de ces nuages, d'abord près de la Manche.

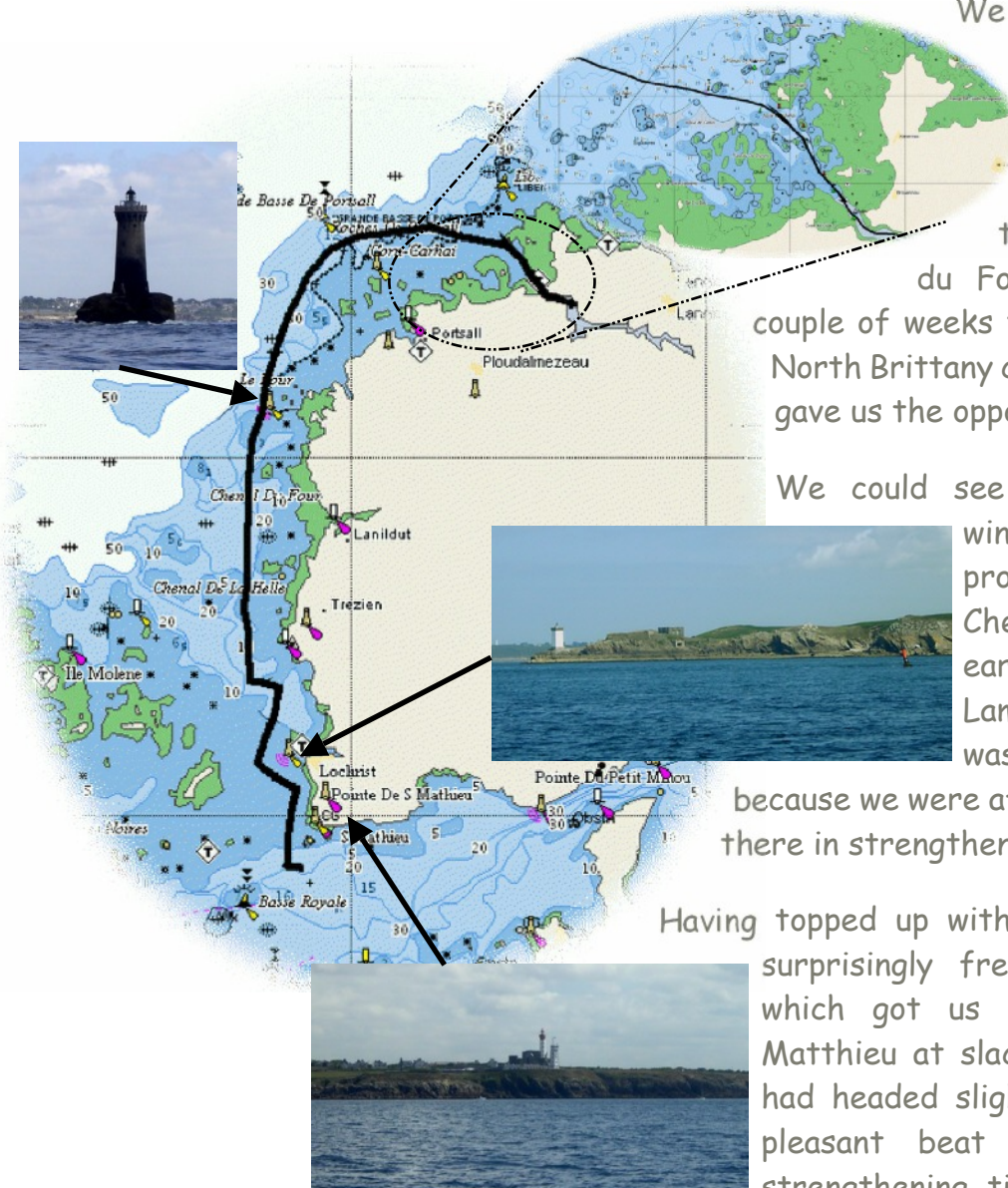
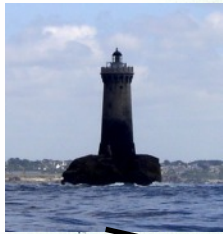


Left & below: Views of Camaret

the Chenal du Four. So we stayed put and it was not until 10th August that we embarked upon the final segment of a cruise along the north Brittany coast. On this occasion we would be able to feel our way along the coast as far as Paimpol before cutting up through the Channel Islands on our way home.



Camaret to L'Aberbenoit [10th August: 28 M]



We were now beginning to think about getting home to the Solent. But we had first to transit the Chenal du Four and we had a couple of weeks to potter along the North Brittany coast if the weather gave us the opportunity to do so.

We could see a short weather window so decided to proceed through the Chenal du Four. An earlier plan to visit Lampaul on Ouessant was abandoned because we were afraid of being stuck there in strengthening winds.

Having topped up with fuel we left in a surprisingly fresh northerly wind which got us to the Pointe St Matthieu at slack water. The wind had headed slightly, but we had a pleasant beat with a gradually strengthening tide, the first tack

taking us towards Le Conquet.

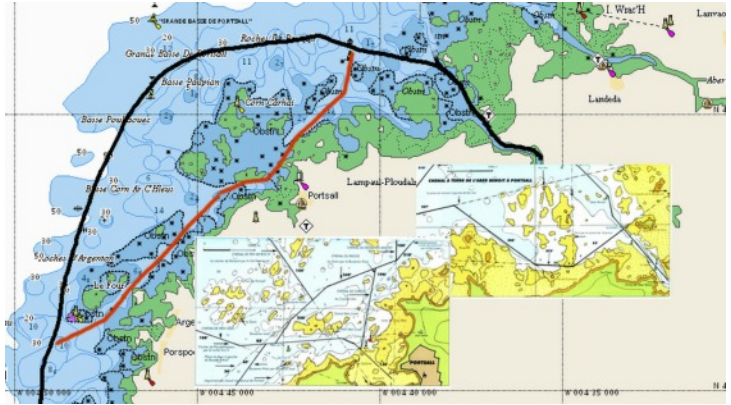
As we approached the Valbelle buoy the wind faded and the engine had to go on. We were now beginning to feel the swell coming in from the north-west, and as we emerged from the Chenal du Four, a short northerly chop was imposed diagonally across the swell.

Getting to the basse Paupian buoy, the sea became so confused that hand steering became essential and despite quite a useful breeze the wind was so badly shaken out of the mainsail that the engine had to stay on all time and it was impossible to deploy the Genoa.



Confused water at Basse Paupian buoy

I made a mental note that the next time we transitted this part of the coast I would make an effort to use the much more sheltered inshore passage behind the rocks. It is well described in both the Robson books and the Pilote Cotier. the passage runs from from the Le Four lighthouse past Portsall to L'Aberbenoit.



As we were likely to be held up by weather for a few days, we opted to go into L'Aberbenoit rather than L'Abervrach. Although the facilities are not so good it is a gentler and more relaxing place to be.

Black line shows actual track: Red line shows approx route inside the rocks where *Amoco Cadiz* was wrecked



Entering L'Aberbenoit

Still under power, we recognised the first of the buoys that marked the channels through the rocks into L'Aberbenoit. That wonderful feeling of relaxation gradually spread through us as the swell disappeared and we were able to concentrate on missing the yachts as we motored up the river to find a buoy about a mile from the entrance.



Left: Entering L'Aberbenoit

Below: Sheltered moorings up the river



L'Aberbenoit [11th-13th August]



Panoramic view of the moorings at l'Aberbenoit

The next morning was bright and breezy. At low water on the very low spring tides we noticed that there were dozens of French men women and children scouring the shores for seafood. But of particular interest was a group that had landed on a sandbank that clearly only broke surface on the bigger tides. They were busily



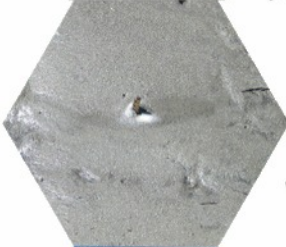
Shellfish gathering

digging up something
and we were

determined to find out what it was so we got into the dinghy and landed on the bank ourselves. I went over to the couple who were busily digging and the sequence goes a bit like this



You find a small hole in the sand and scatter salt round it



The little beast lurking underneath senses the salt and thinks the water has come back so he sticks his head up



You grab hold of him and pull him out



What you have got is a razor fish which the French eat raw flavoured with garlic oil and herbs. Amazing isn't it



The wind continued to blow so we spent two more pleasant relaxing days in L'Aberbenoit, visiting the oyster farm for a seafood lunch on one day, and going down the river in the dinghy on the second day, partly to find the shops, and partly just to look at the view.

This is the kind of place Richard Feynman must have been contemplating when he introduced his lectures on nuclear physics with the words *"If we stand on the shore and look at the sea we see the water, the waves breaking, the foam, the sloshing motion of the water, the sound, the air, the winds, and the clouds, the sun and the blue sky, and light; there is sand and there are rocks of various hardness and permanence, colour and texture. There are animals and seaweed, hunger and disease, and the observer on the beach. There may even be happiness and thought"*



Ariadne at L'Aberbenoit

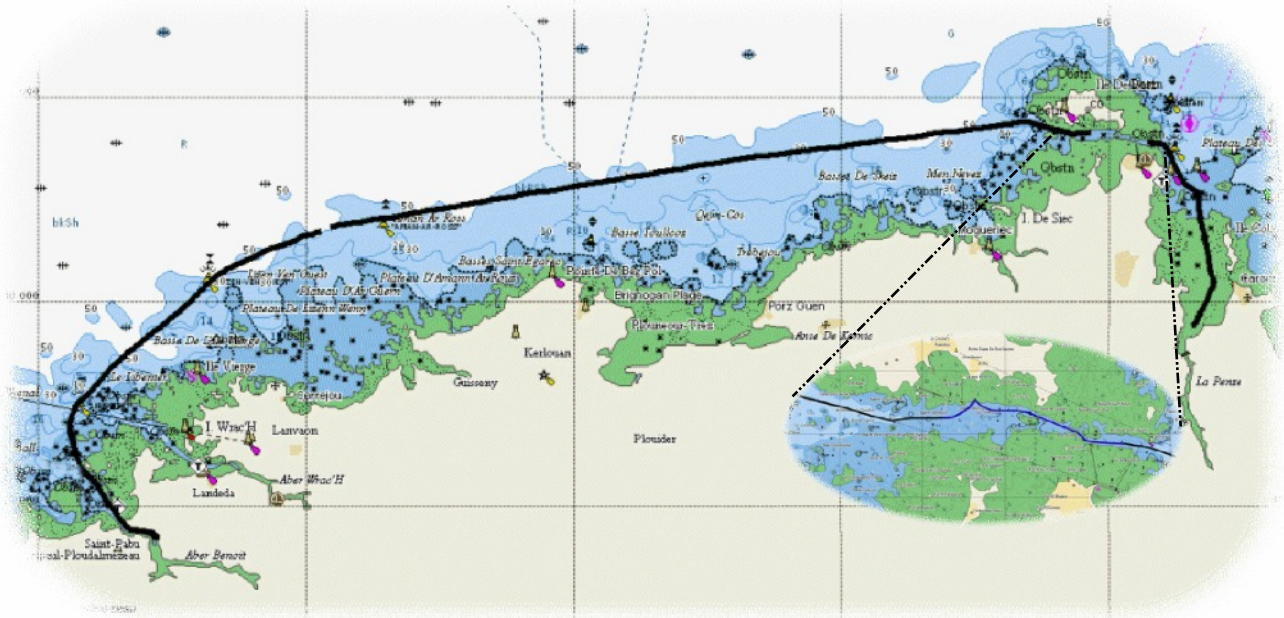




L'Aberbenoit

L'Aberbenoit to Penzé River [14th August:30 M]

On the morning of 14th the forecast suggested winds between north-west and north force 4-5 but moderating with a moderate sea, a swell of one metre and the possibility of fog. Even so, this represented a weather window so we decided to set off, leaving at 06 30 in order to get best benefit from the tide.



Ile Vierge Light, the tallest in France

By 08 10 we were at the Lizen Van Oeust buoy and being swept along by the strong tide that is such a feature of this part of the Brittany coast. The sea was not nearly so rough as it had been near the Libenter buoy, but was still lumpy enough to require a foreguy.



Lizen Van Oeust buoy

As we approached the Ile de Batz, we were joined by a pod of dolphins. They were all small and we wondered if this was a creche. It was the first sign of dolphins that we had seen throughout the trip.



The transits into the Canal du Batz are very difficult to see,



but the channel is fairly wide on the West, side and with a little bit of help from the plotter we eased our way into the anchorage off Porz Kernoch, the village on the Ile de Batz.



Porz Kernoch, Ile de Batz.

The lighthouse in the background is a good friend to sailors on Channel night crossings

Even setting aside the disturbance from the vedettes, there was some movement working in from the sea outside, and with the wind due to back round further into the West, this did not seem to be a particularly comfortable anchorage for the night.



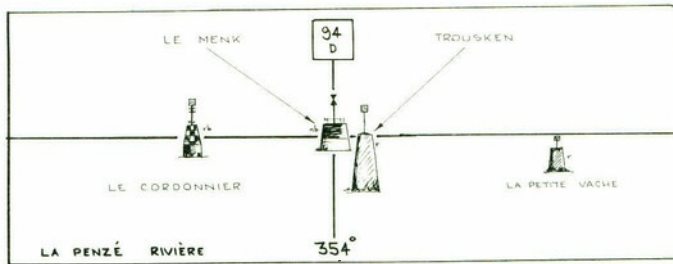
Batz Channel near low water

We opted to go up the Penze River which we had not visited before, but which seemed to offer a quiet and rather remote anchorage.



We left the anchorage perilously close to low water in order to be sure of getting well into the Penze River at a civilised

hour. At times, motoring very slowly through the Canal du Batz, we had a only 0.5 metres under the keel, and at one time held up a vedette because the channel was so narrow.



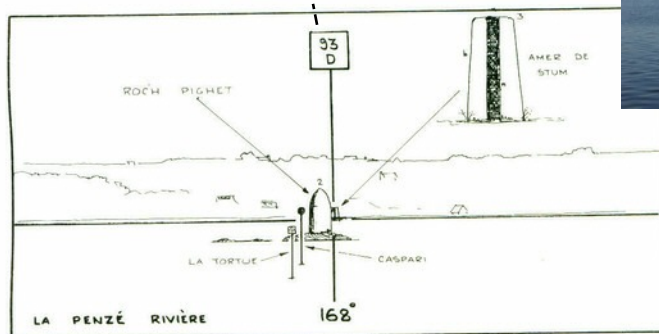
Once round the corner past the ferry terminal, we were able to make good use of Malcolm Robson's wonderful transits. First there was a stern transit that took us into the river.

Then we looked ahead and there was a line of balises and tourelles that led us right into the river itself, although there were a few handrails to be made around some of the balises.



The anchorage could not have been better. There were a few buoys empty and we opted to pick up one of these. What had been a very grey day turned into a beautifully sunny evening.

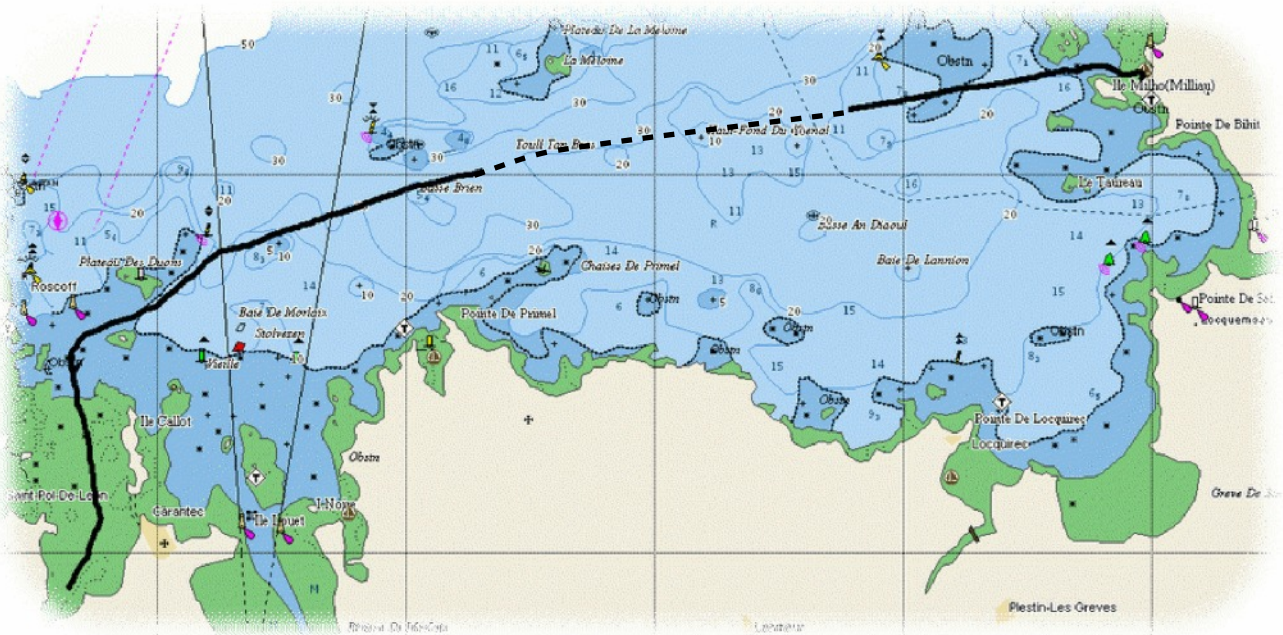
It was a relaxing place to be.



Penze River



Penzé River to Trebeurden stopover [15th , 16th August: 14 M]



Perhaps it should be explained that the green parts of C-Map charts are covered with water at high tide, but dry on (at least) the lowest tides. However, the rise of tide in north Brittany is such that for much of the tidal cycle there is enough water to sail. Up rivers like the Penze river there are also pools that are sufficiently deep for a yacht to anchor over the low water period. So, for the trip to Trebeurden, we had to wait until there sufficient water in



Above: Distinctive hill marks Trebeurden approach



Left: A ring of islands provides shelter

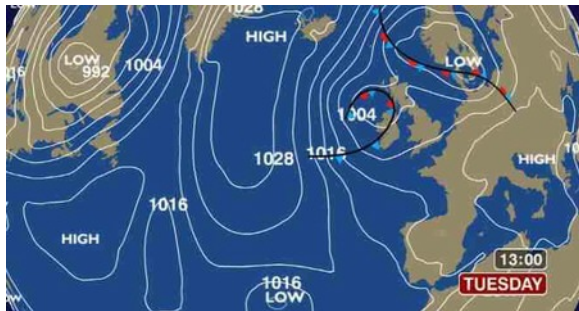
Below: Trebeurden marina has a half tide gate



the Penze river channel to get out safely; while about 3 hours later, we had to be sure there would be enough water for us to cross the sill to get into the marina at Trebeurden. That is what passage planning is all about.

At 0640 we were away, edging down the channel through the bricks, using the same transits as before until we could cut away to the east. By 0735 we were sufficiently into clear water to sail, so the engine went off, and we drifted across the Bay of Morlaix, passing south of Basse Brien. We were south of Le Melouine, a distinct, visible rock patch when we decided that it would be wiser to motor to be sure of approaching Trebeurden near the top of the tide,

By 1110 we were alongside the pontoon in Trebeurden.



The weather forecasts were oozing pessimism for several days ahead, so we got the maps from the Internet. The blue pictures are from the BBC, and go 5 days ahead. These offered little cause for optimism, but when we looked at ECMWF, (below) which looks a full 7 days ahead, things looked more hopeful.

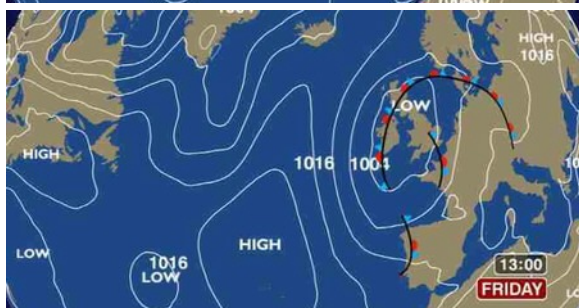


It is a long walk up a steep hill to the boulangerie, and even further to the Supermarket. However, the marina cooperate with the Supermarket to provide a car. We took advantage of this service, and it worked well.

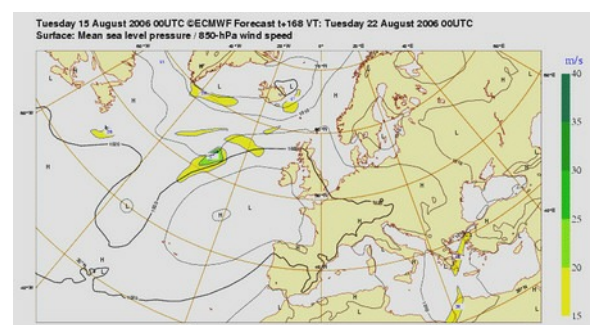


On our first evening there we visited the marina restaurant and had an excellent meal to celebrate our wedding anniversary - "42, the answer to life the universe and everything.....?"

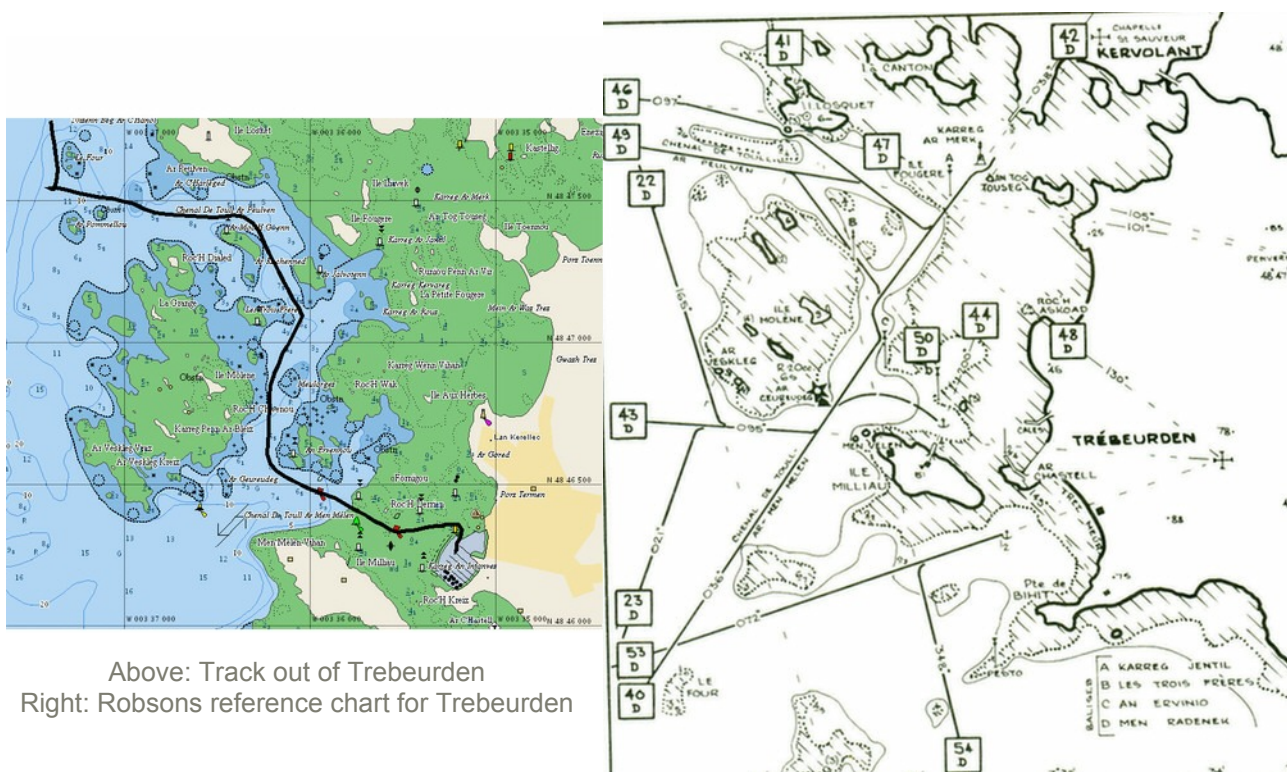
The next day we sat out rain and wind, visiting *Mojito* that had arrived with 2 guests accompanying Val and David.



Trebeurden is expensive, so we decided to take advantage of a slight break in the weather the next day to slip round the corner to Ploumanach, a place we had not visited for several years.



Trebeurden to Ploumanach and stopover [15th-18th August: 9 M]



A pattern was establishing itself: a short weather window followed by a few days of wind, rain or adverse wind and sea conditions. The chart above left shows our actual track through the rocky Trebeurden passages, using the lines described by Malcolm Robson (the views of the transits are NOT shown). Dairne steered very carefully.



The wind had a surprising amount of east in it, so we



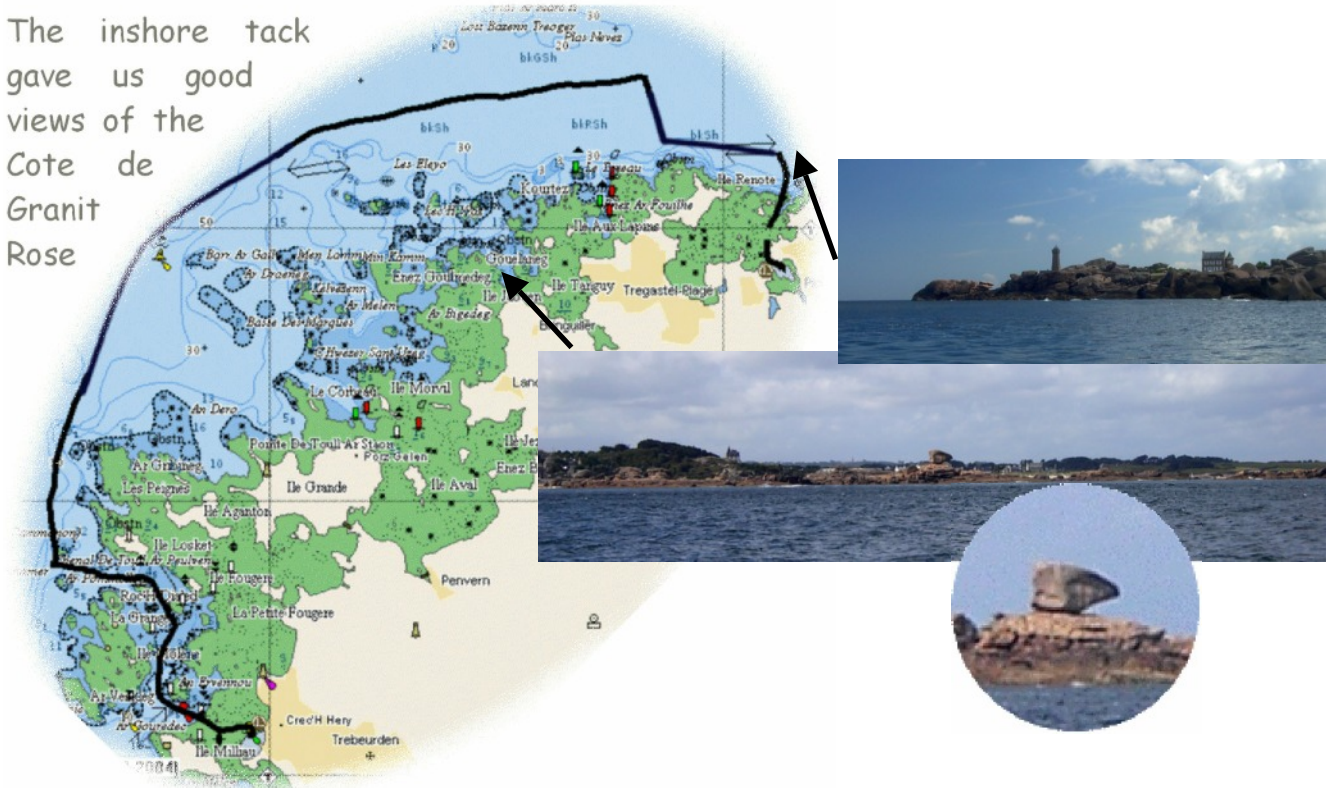
were able to hoist sail in flat water and reach northward, heading away from the rock

ledges near the shore before hardening onto a beat in the channel between the mainland and Les Sept Iles. The distinctive golfball dome on the shore was visible, and to seaward, we could just see the menacing Triagoz ledge and lighthouse.



The wind had now shifted to slightly south of east, so it was a sunny beat in flat water. The wind freshened to such an extent that we required 1 reef and 3 rolls in the genoa. But it was comfortable.

The inshore tack gave us good views of the Cote de Granit Rose



We approached the Mean Ruz light, and turned into the narrow, rocky, but well marked channel. Once over the half-tide sill, we were directed to a dumb-bell mooring by the harbourmaster's assistant in a plastic dinghy. He assisted us in making fast.





We had seen the best of the day. There were heavy, thundery showers throughout the afternoon. We just hid below.



Ploumanach is an interesting harbour like no other we know. It is well sheltered, and in an attractive location. Because there are no walk-ashore facilities it is rarely crowded.

Because of the weather, we stayed here 3 days, rediscovering the location of the shops for bread and other supplies. At times it was sunny and windy, so we could cruise round the sheltered rocky waterways in the dinghy, and go ashore at

one of the beaches for a drink ashore.



Ploumanach to Treguier and stopover[19th , 20th August: 17 M]

Altogether we were three days in Ploumanach waiting for the weather to clear. Eventually we got away at 1130 when there was only 1.86 metres over the sill (Ploumanach is a half tide harbour with a fixed sill). We felt our way down the channel among an attractive local fleet.

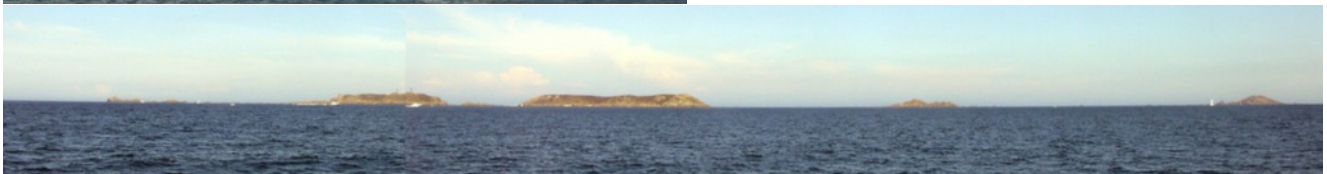


Feeling our way down the Ploumanach channel

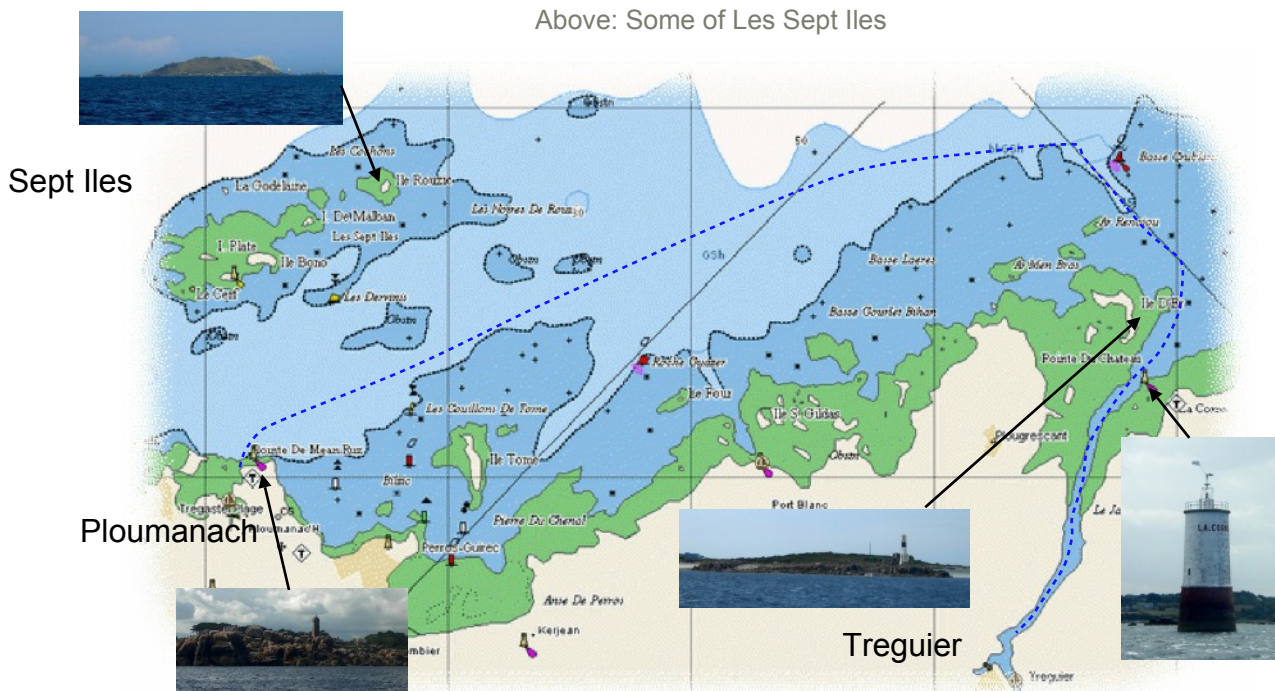
Once outside we turned away to the east and it was a gentle run inside Les Sept Iles.



We poled out the genoa and ran straight for the Basse Crublent buoy that marks the entrance to Treguier.



Above: Some of Les Sept Iles



We had hoped to go into Perros Guirec, which we have never visited, but the tide coefficient was so low (i.e. very neap tides) that the gate would not be opening for several days - we would be neaped, even if we could get in!

Approaching the Basse Crublent buoy, we recognized *Mojito* tacking downwind. The wind freshened as we gybed and headed in to the river towards Treguier. The wind direction was such that we were able to sail most of the way up the river.



We tried to go straight on to the marina pontoon but a rather silly French marina attendant could not understand that the most important thing I needed was a spring to stop the boat going forward. As a result we did some slight damage to the bow.

As can be seen from the diagram, the marina pontoons almost cross the river. The fingers do at least put the boats roughly in line with the stream, but there always seems to be a slight angle, especially on the ebb. This can cause all kinds of problems

The next morning *Mojito* arrived with their guests and we arranged to all go to the barbecue restaurant on the waterfront together that evening. We had been there before and found it excellent value for seafood. It was still excellent, and reasonably priced too.

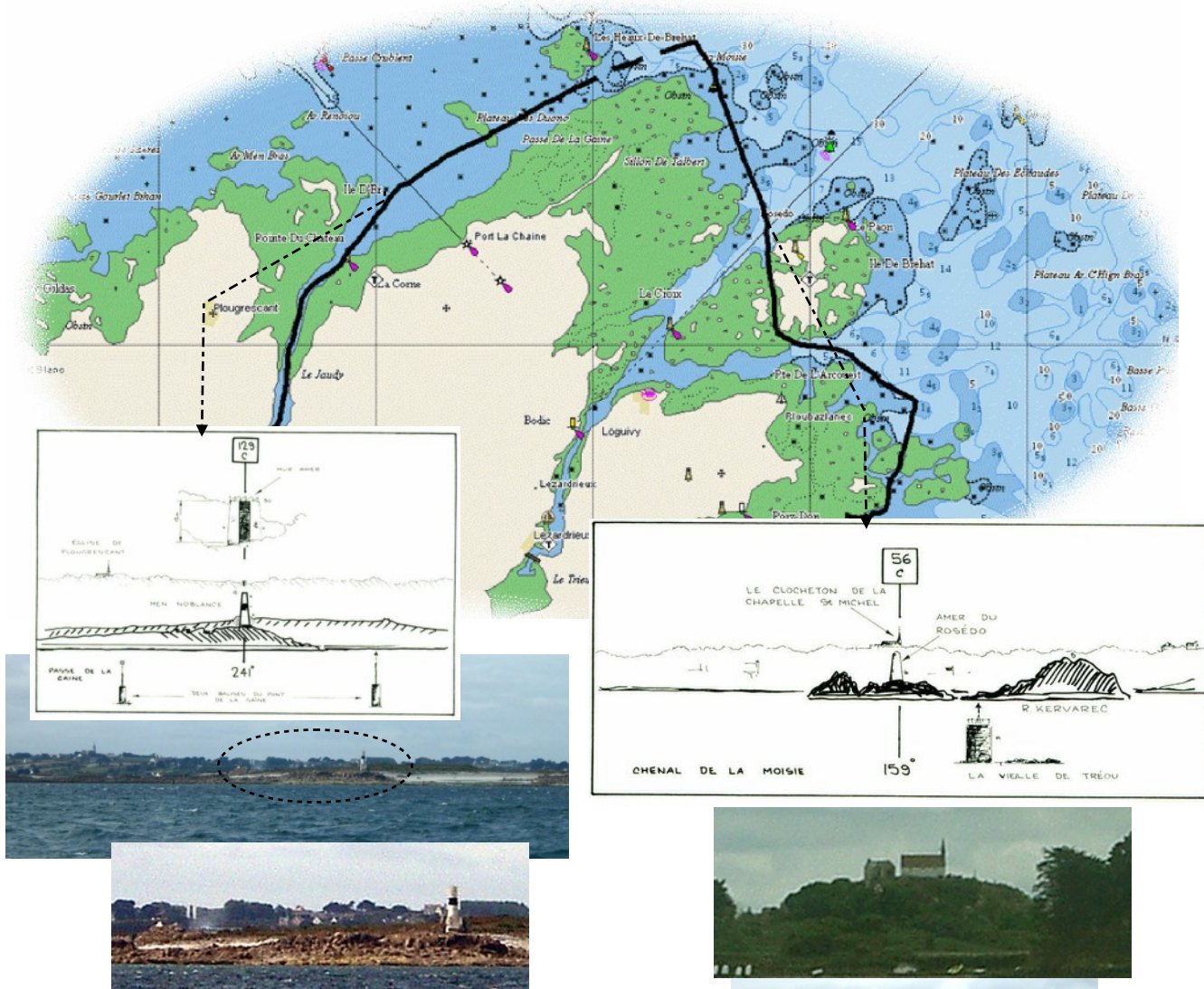


It blew fairly hard the next day so we sat tight, making preparations for what turned out to be most interesting passage the day after.



For some reason, I took no pictures in Treguier, so these images are taken from the Internet!

Treguier to Paimpol [21st August: 18 M]



It was still blowing fairly hard when we set off down the river under engine, unfurling the genoa as we got to the estuary. We were able to make five knots with just the headsail.

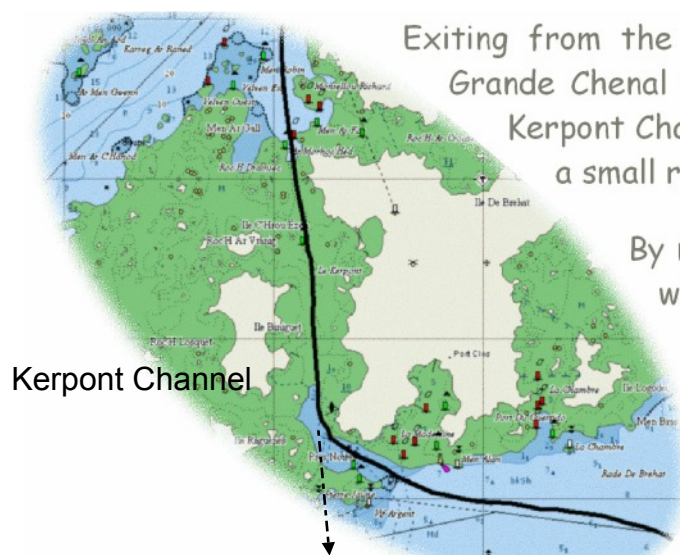
We eased across until we had picked up the transit for the Passe de la Gaine, which we were to hold for more than half-an-hour. It is a long passage which in one place gets quite shallow.



This passage goes inshore of the les Heaux de Brehat, before turning on to the Moisie Channel.

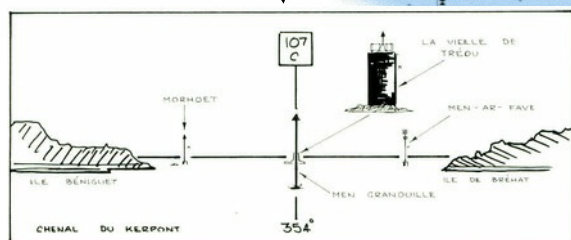
This is another very long transit and without the help of Robson's drawing

it would have been impossible to find the distant church like transit which only just showed over the trees when viewed from afar and which could only be found with good binoculars. The transit here is important because the cross tide is trying hard to sweep you into a shallow area where the only visible sign is the vicious swirl on water.



Exiting from the Moisie channel, you just cut across the Grande Chenal into Lezardrieux before cutting down the Kerpont Channel which goes between Ile de Brehat and a small rocky island to the west of it.

By now the tide was running very hard and the wind must have been about force 6, so we furled all sail and started the engine with the intention of easing gently down this Channel. We had arrived earlier than anticipated because of the speed with which we had transited the first two channels. But I calculated that there should be four metres of water in the Kerpont Channel.



Robson sketch
looking S:
Photo looking
N



At first all went well, but the depth under the keel started to reduce rapidly and we were going far too fast, with wind tide and engine or acting together. I needed to do something rapidly and as I know that *Ariadne* turns better to port I made the serious error of trying to spin around in

that direction, which was away from the marked Channel. We had in fact drifted slightly to port of a line marked by the balise anyway.

We were halfway through the turn, and beam on to wind and tide when the keel struck the rocks quite hard. We bumped and banged for about 10 seconds (it seemed a lot longer, but the plotter which was recording a point every 30 sec failed to detect it at all). At times being heeled over to about 10 or 15 degrees until we broke clear into deep water again.

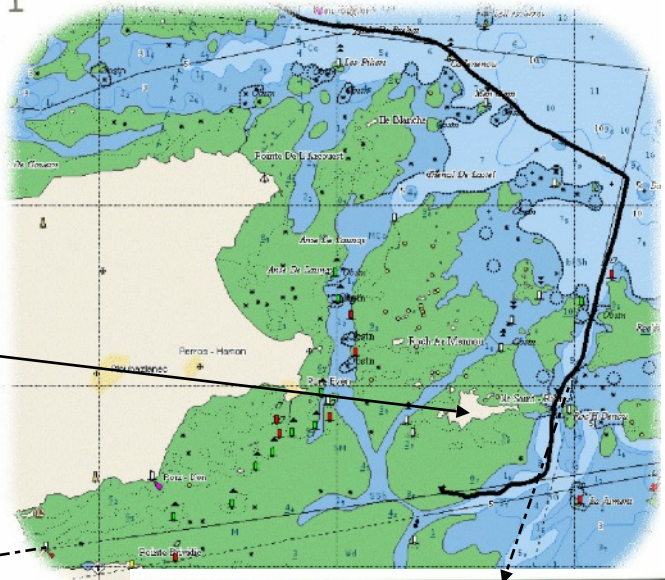
Ile de Brehat

I had made a serious error, and just about got away with it. When the boat was hauled out in the winter we found that a fist-sized chunk had been

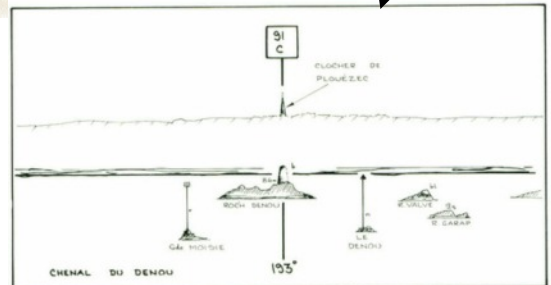
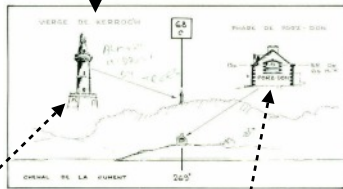


knocked out of the shoe that fortunately I had had added to the keel when the boat was built. No structural damage was done.

There was no really comfortable anchorage available at which we could



regain our composure, so we carried on making our way down the Chenal de Ferlas and the Chenal du Denou before entering the Baie de Paimpol.



We were now motoring up wind but under the lee of the land, and we were eventually able to anchor in about two metres of water to wait for the tide to allow us into Paimpol.

There is one final Robson transit into Paimpol, but the backmark is now almost lost in the trees and it is dismissed by Pilote Cotier as useless. We found it, and it does help, though the channel is now quite well buoyed.



It was quite a relief to get alongside that evening, and a real delight to walk round the quaint town of Paimpol.

We were only to spend one night there but it is

marked on the list as a place to be revisited.



Paimpol to Jersey [21st August: 43 M]



The clouds scudding over in the dawn sunshine were a remnant of the strong winds of the day before. But we could see the gradual breakdown in the weather beginning to happen and we needed at least 4 sailing days to get back to the Solent if we were going to make call at Jersey to see some old friends.

At sea level there was very little wind and we had to motor so all way to St Helier. We had not lived in Jersey for 20 years, but the sight of Corbiere and the Channel marks along the south coast of the island seemed quite familiar.



Distinctive tower SE of Paimpol



Dawn leaving Paimpol



Corbiere, the SW corner of Jersey



Approaching St Helier

We had to wait for there to be enough water to get into the marina, but then made ourselves comfortable and contacted our friends George and Fay who are true Jersey people. They immediately collected us from the boat and we had a most enjoyable evening at their house in St Clement.

During the course of the next day, I contacted Julian Rogers who had helped me so much 25 years earlier when I was precipitated into the aviation business in Jersey. He had lived and worked in the island throughout, and is still doing a bit of consulting work. He is now the h l r for the Cruising Association in Jersey. Julian came on board, and seemed to

like *Ariadne*. He then took us along to the Royal Channel Islands Yacht Club, and treated us to a lobster supper, our only lobster of the cruise!

We had noticed another Rustler in a marina. It was Ron and Tina Baker in *Orion's Girl*. Among the bigger boats we also saw *Captains Lady*, with Brian Alexander and his wife on board. Both boats were heading south, . We visited both boats and arranged to meet in the St Helier Yacht Club on the edge of the marina. The meal there was excellent value, and this constituted yet another Rustler rally!



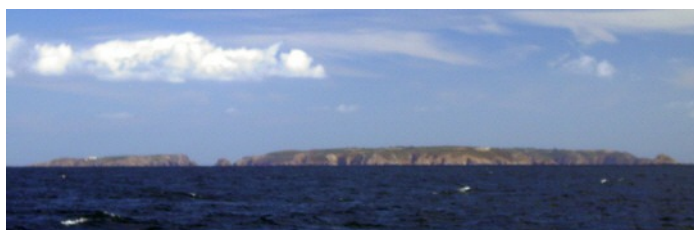
Orion's Girl on near pontoon, *Ariadne* on next spur



Left: Note the name on the odd piece of sculpture just outside the marina
Right: St Helier bustle

Jersey to Guernsey [25th August: 12 M]

It blew for a couple of days, but we had made good use of our time in Jersey. The time had come to move on and there is little to say about the trip across to Guernsey which was again motor sailing in moderate conditions. We left at 0740 to catch the tide, and we were alongside the waiting



In lined with the gap between Sark and Brecqhou

pontoon in Guernsey by noon, but had to wait until 1900 before we could get over the sill into the marina.

I had hoped to visit Sark, but deteriorating weather, and the threat of a major wind shift mitigated against an overnight stop. I had hoped to go there to see Joe Birch, the daughter of Malcolm Robson with whom I had been in correspondence.

She had been most encouraging and helpful and I was very disappointed not to be able to go and see her.

It had been a very short weather window and we had to spend two nights in Guernsey before being able to move on to Cherbourg. While we were there, we made a brief visit to Denbigh Gabbittas and his wife on *Black Sugar*, yet another Rustler 36. We invited them for a return match in the evening, and ended up with a party of seven on board,. It was great fun!



Fast cats kick up a big wash



Approaching St Peter Port

Dairne had visited Guernsey with her mother for a Spring Gourmet Break, but we had not visited in *Ariadne* for some years. Wandering round the steep streets of the old town, Dairne came across a shop selling material off the reel and haberdashery of a kind that has long since disappeared from England (except in a few remote villages). She could not resist purchasing some material and lining for a skirt.

The enormous piles on the pontoons inside the marina only need to accommodate half the tide range as they are inside the sill. In the Channel Islands, tides can reach 13m (approx 40ft), although they are a bit less in Guernsey than in Jersey.



Guernsey marina



Guernsey to Cherbourg [27th August: 33 M thro' water, 44 M over ground]

The forecast for the trip to Cherbourg was not particularly promising, but in the event it turned out to be a very pleasant brisk a broad reach with the wind at about force five. I thought that I had stayed far enough off Cap de la Hague. However I wanted to avoid being thrown right out into the Channel by the Alderney race then finding it difficult to work my way back to Cherbourg.



Where the north going water from the Alderney race met the east going Channel tide, the seas were chaotic and hand steering was essential for

Watery sun reflecting off confused water N of Cap de la Hague

an hour. But after rounding Cap de la Hague we encountered the reverse eddy in the tide and for a while progress was slow. The boats that had gone up the Alderney side of the race and gone at least two miles further out into the Channel got to Cherbourg about an hour before us. We had all left Guernsey at the same time.



Cherbourg breakwater

Danae was already in Cherbourg, and we had a pleasant reunion while stocking up on wine, and entertaining each other. On this occasion Dairne's

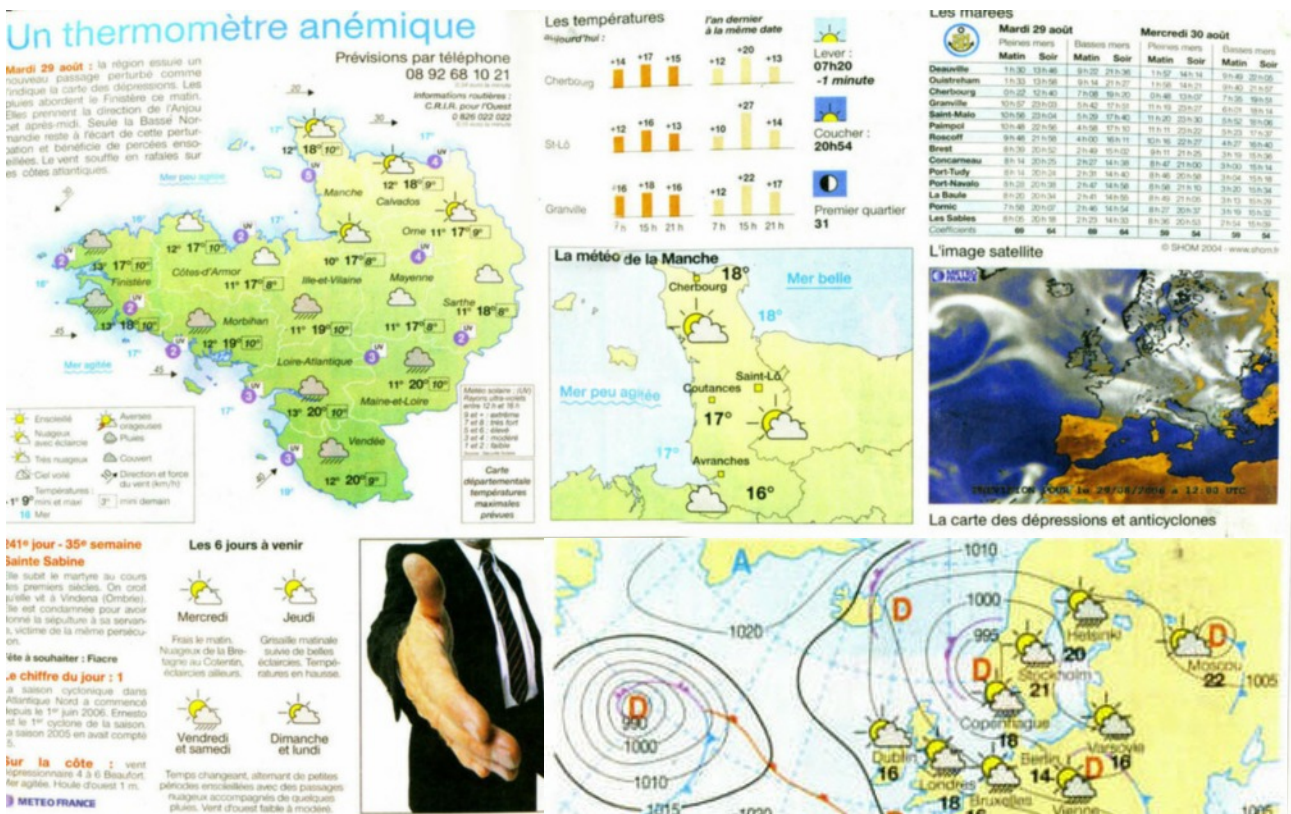
Dairne, Terry and Kiwi Chicken



Cherbourg marina

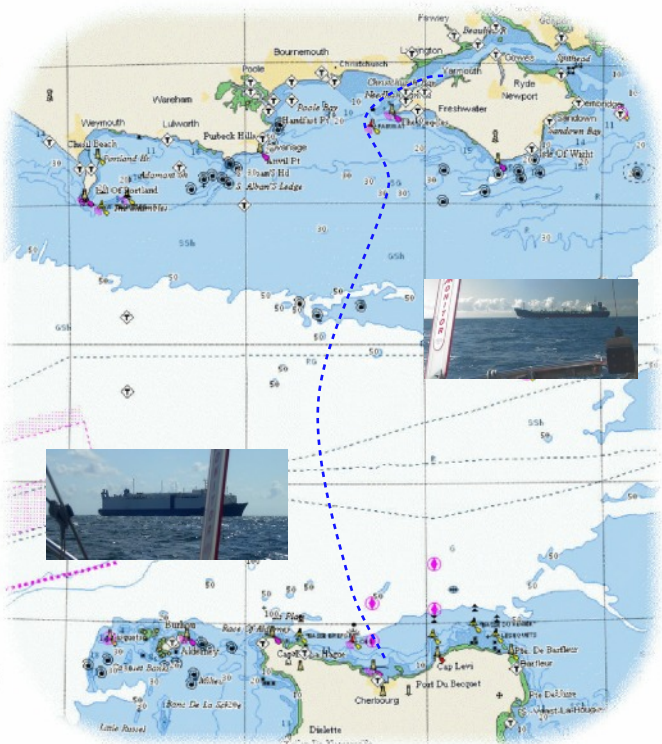
contribution was what we call kiwi chicken because we learnt the recipe from Peter and Maureen Shaw who had picked it up in New Zealand on their circumnavigation in their Rustler 36.

Cherbourg to Newtown [30th August: 75 M]



The weather was now going seriously downhill, and we were anxiously looking for a window to get across the Channel. The Ouest France newspaper was speaking of an anaemic thermometer, and indeed it was noticeably colder. The best we could manage was west north-west force 4-6 with the sea becoming rough and an underlying one metre swell. This was tough stuff, but if we didn't take that chance then we were likely to be stuck for several days by strengthening winds with a lot of north in them.

We tried to leave at first light, and Terry got away successfully but we found we had flat batteries. Our charger had obviously packed up without us realising it. I eventually managed to get an engine start from the emergency battery (I suspect it had dirty terminals).



We were about an hour behind Ruby and Terry. We were both trying to get to the West Solent, but it was only just off close hauled. The wind freshened throughout the morning and just before midday we put one reef in the main.



The Needles and Alum Bay

As we approached the south side of the Isle of Wight, Terry called on the VHF to say that he was bearing away round the east side of the island to go direct to Portsmouth. We pressed on, although the tide was beginning to turn against us as we reached past the

landfall buoy.

To avoid the worst of the tide we opted to go up the North Channel, and blasted our way through the tide at Hurst. We had reached the Fairway buoy by 4 o'clock, but with a very slow dead run up the Solent Against the tide it was 1915 before we anchored get Newtown.



Sneaking round the corner in a reverse eddy



Fierce tidal swirls at Hurst



Dairne helmed through Hurst

Newtown to MYC [31st August: 12 M]



Newtown

Our cruise was over, and it only remained to run back up to Marchwood under genoa only the next day and to pat ourselves on back that we had taken the weather window across the Channel. Other friends were stuck on French side of the Channel for nearly a week before another possible opportunity arose.

At just under 1200 miles, this had not been a long cruise. But it had been relaxing - well, most of the time!.



Ariadne

(Ré bridge behind)

