

*An Autumn Cruise
Sept/Oct 2011*

Alderney and back

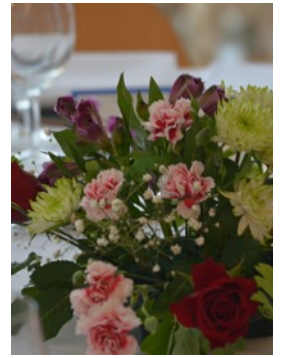


Autumn Cruise

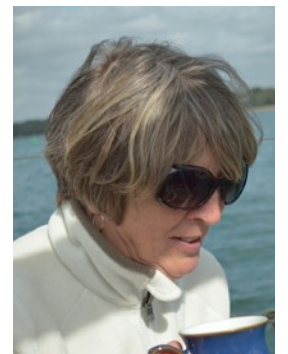
Our Autumn cruise started with the Rustler Owners Association annual dinner held for the first time at the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes.

Quite few people arrived by boat. There was space in the RYS marina, but as that can be a bit exposed, a number of boats (including *Ariadne*) went to Shepards Wharf marina; while others went up to the Folly Inn.

The setting was ideal; and the food excellent. The wines were sponsored by Penrose Sails, and were well chosen.

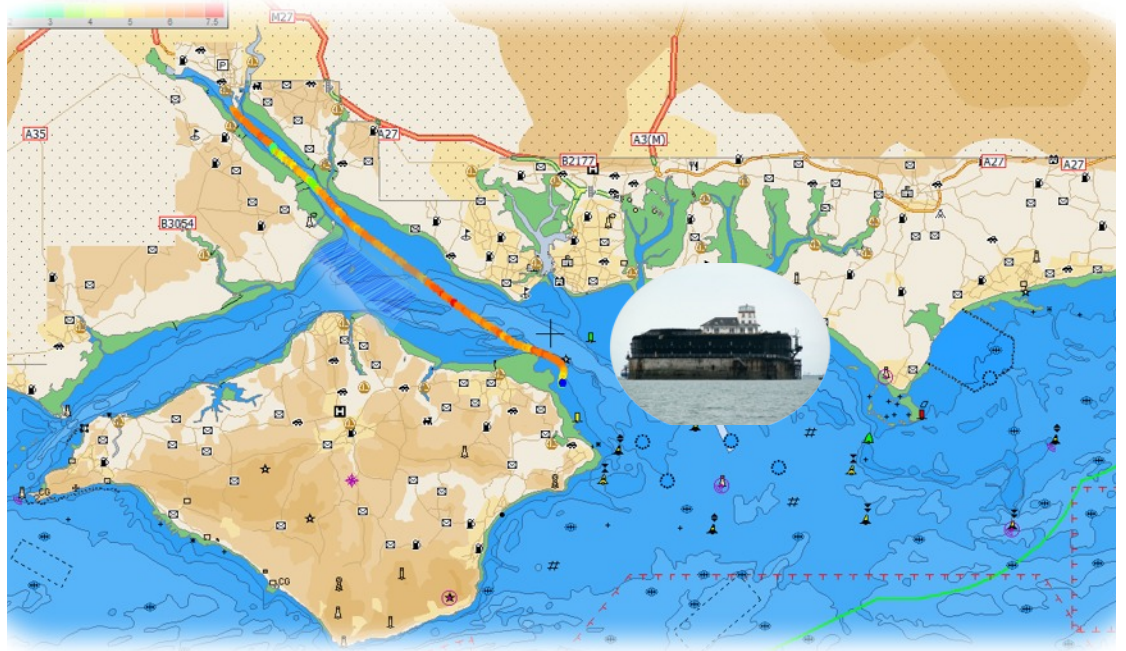


Our guests for the weekend were Alistair and Carol Bell (right), who had driven down from Scotland where they now live, especially for the dinner. Alistair sailed us over to Cowes in a brisk breeze. We should have reefed, bit was a very fast sail, so did not take long!



On Saturday, the day after the dinner, many of the Rustler 36 fleet gathered at the Folly Inn up the Medina for a rally. At one stage we had 18 people in the cockpit of *Mojjito*! On Sunday we returned to Marchwood so that our guests could get on their way north, and so we could restock.



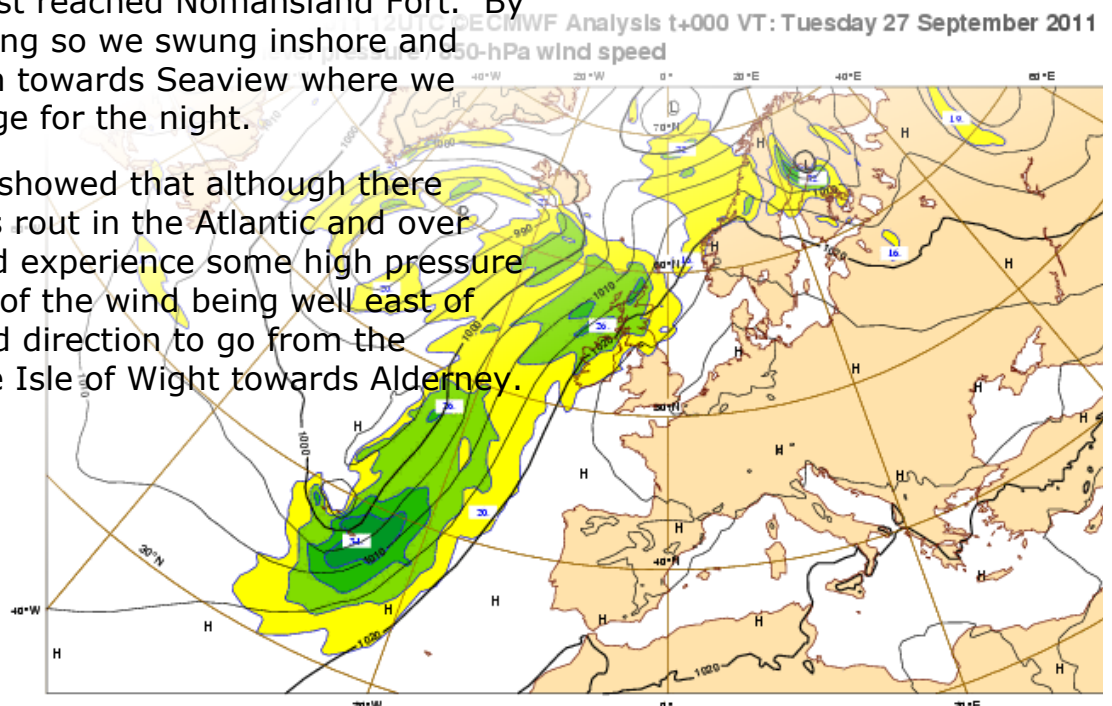


By mid afternoon, we were sailing on a broad reach which settled into a steady southwest breeze as we passed Calshot. We had had a hectic few days so it was pleasantly relaxing to just let the Monitor self steering gear sail the boat across the Solent towards Ryde.



Soon we were passing the East Bramble buoy and angling across towards the island shore. We worked our way round the edge of Ryde Sands until we had almost reached Nomansland Fort. By now light was fading so we swung inshore and worked our way in towards Seaview where we found an anchorage for the night.

The weather map showed that although there were strong winds rout in the Atlantic and over Scotland we would experience some high pressure with the prospect of the wind being well east of south, a very good direction to go from the eastern end of the Isle of Wight towards Alderney.





It was a peaceful night, and at first light we were up and motoring gently towards Bembridge Ledge past Saint Helens roads. On rounding Bembridge Ledge buoy the tide was still strongly against us, so we tucked as close into Sandown Bay as possible after passing Culver cliff. There was a useful eddy off Dunnose, but as we reached Ventnor we met the full force of the flood coming up the channel. It nearly brought us to a standstill and it was nearly an hour of hard motoring before we were sufficiently south of the island, and before a steady southeast breeze filled in enough for us to sail.



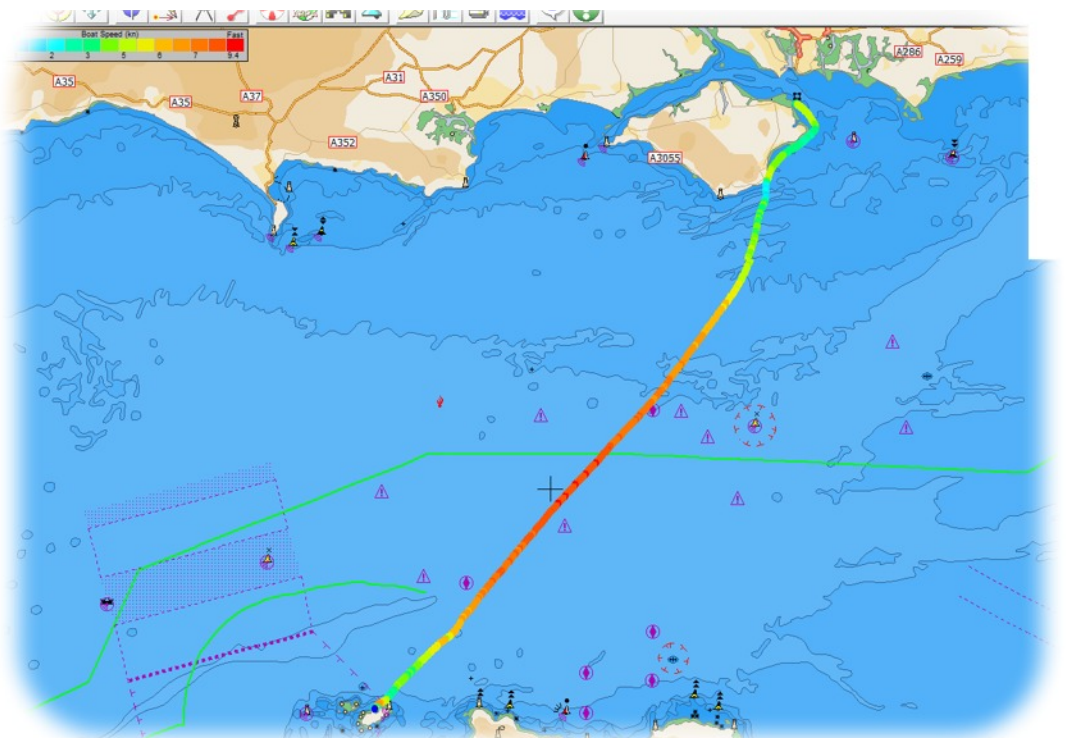
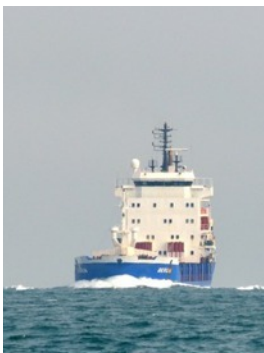
Although we were carrying full sail, daylight hours at this time of the year are in short supply so we had to keep the motor on until almost the middle of the day when there was sufficient breeze for us to maintain six knots through the water.

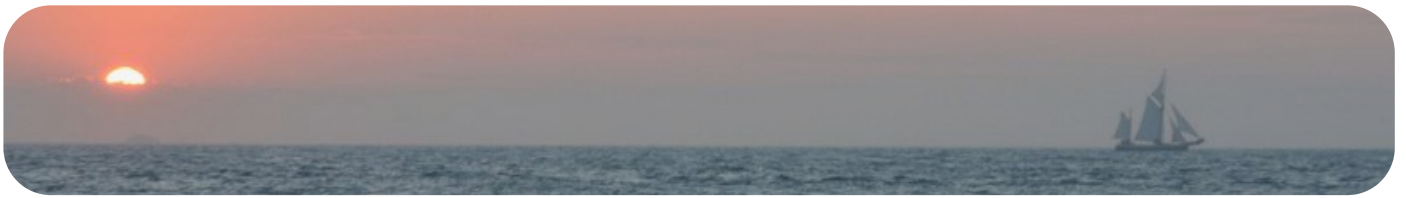
Visibility was very patchy. We had seen the south side of the isle of Wight, but it soon disappeared into fog with an visibility of about 1 mile. We were lucky to see the west going line of ships though the AIS gave us a precise indication of where they were.



Note that on the AIS plot we were heading due south but by now being swept ever faster to the west by the strengthening ebb tide. We never saw any of the westbound ships, though we could hear them through the fog, an eerie experience

It was almost dark by the time we picked up a buoy in Braye Harbour.

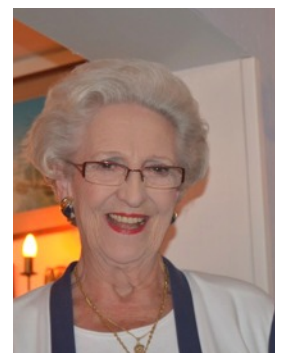


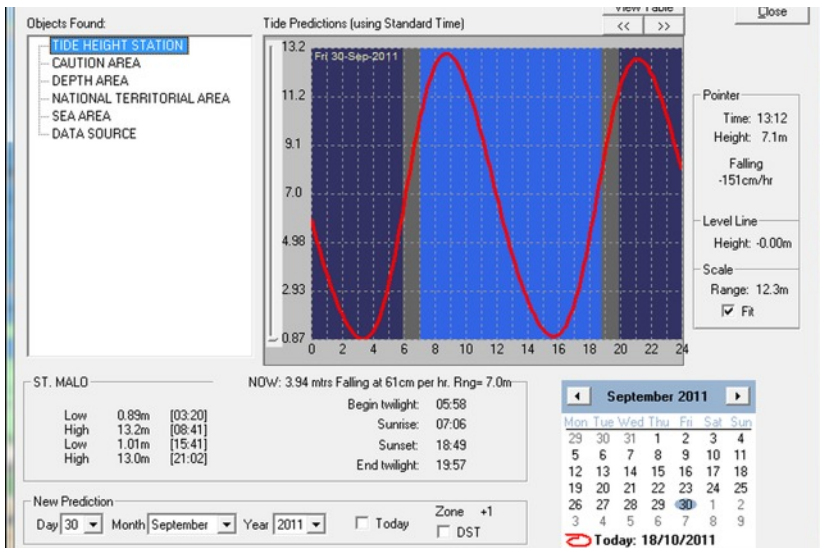
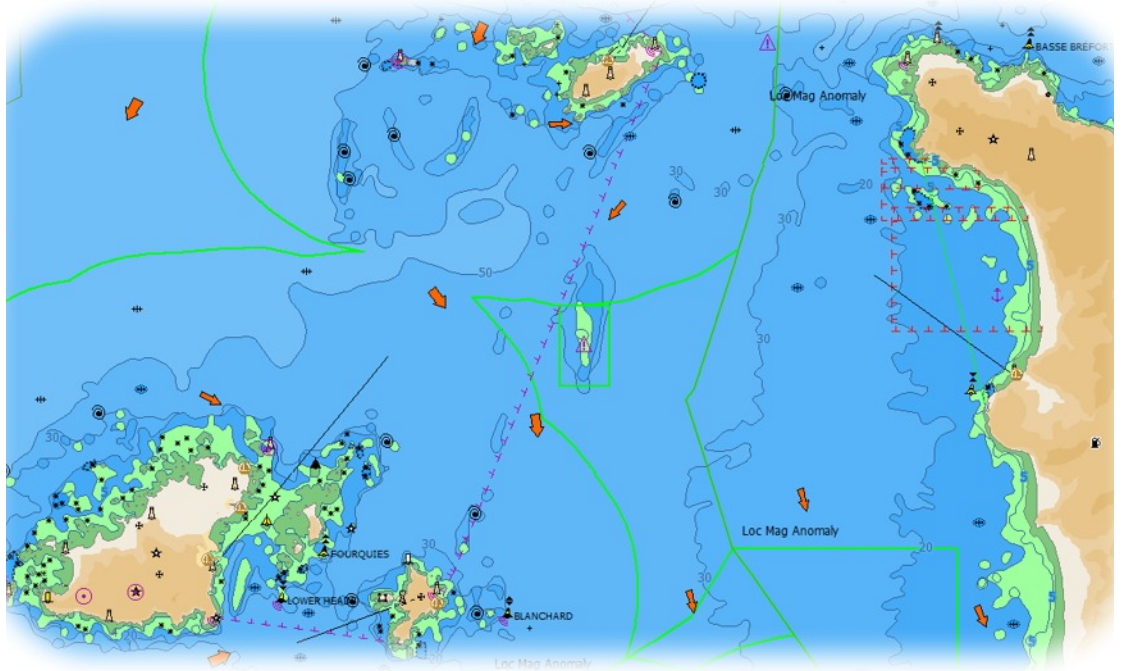


The next morning there was a gentle south easterly breeze and bright sunshine we went ashore for a pub lunch and a stroll round the Harbour. We also reserve the lobster at the First and Last for that evening. During the afternoon we watched one of the vessels that brings stores to the island manoeuvring in the confined space of a Harbour - quite a skilful ship handling operation.



That evening we took the taxi ashore and had a wonderful meal at the First and Last. A previous visit had been with the Rustler rally some years previously when everything had been organized by Roddy Innes. We learned from Rita (below right), the proprietor of the First and Last that during this year Roddy had had a party on the island to celebrate his 100th visit to the island - no mean achievement.

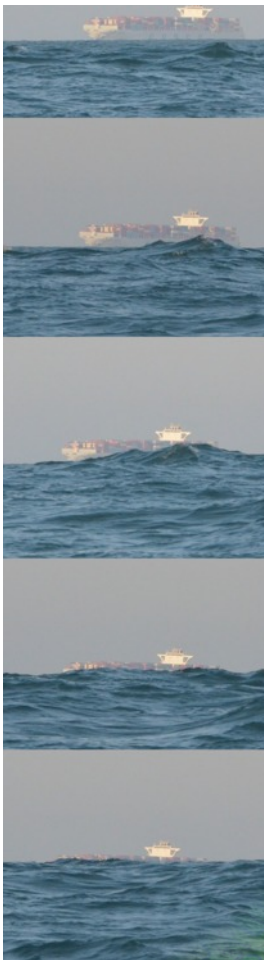
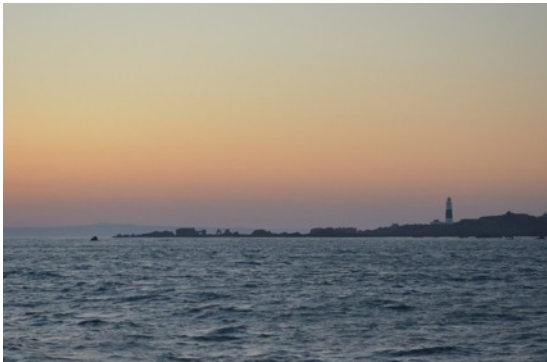




This was the period of some of the biggest tides of the year. Indeed the next day would be the very biggest, with saints Marlow on the nearby French Coast experiencing 12.5 metre range -almost 40 feet. This was a far from ideal time to be cruising in the channel islands, but the weather prospects had been completely seductive.

We had planned to go down to Sark in the morning, but the wind veered into the south and freshened to about 14 knots. With six knots of tide through the Alderney race, and four knots of boat speed this would have felt like a 20 mile beat in a force 5 to 6 wind over tide not a prospect that we relished. So instead we just sat out on the mooring and enjoyed the sunshine.

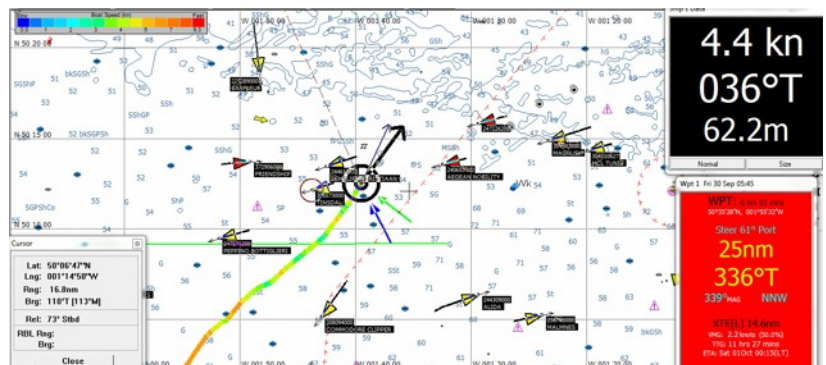




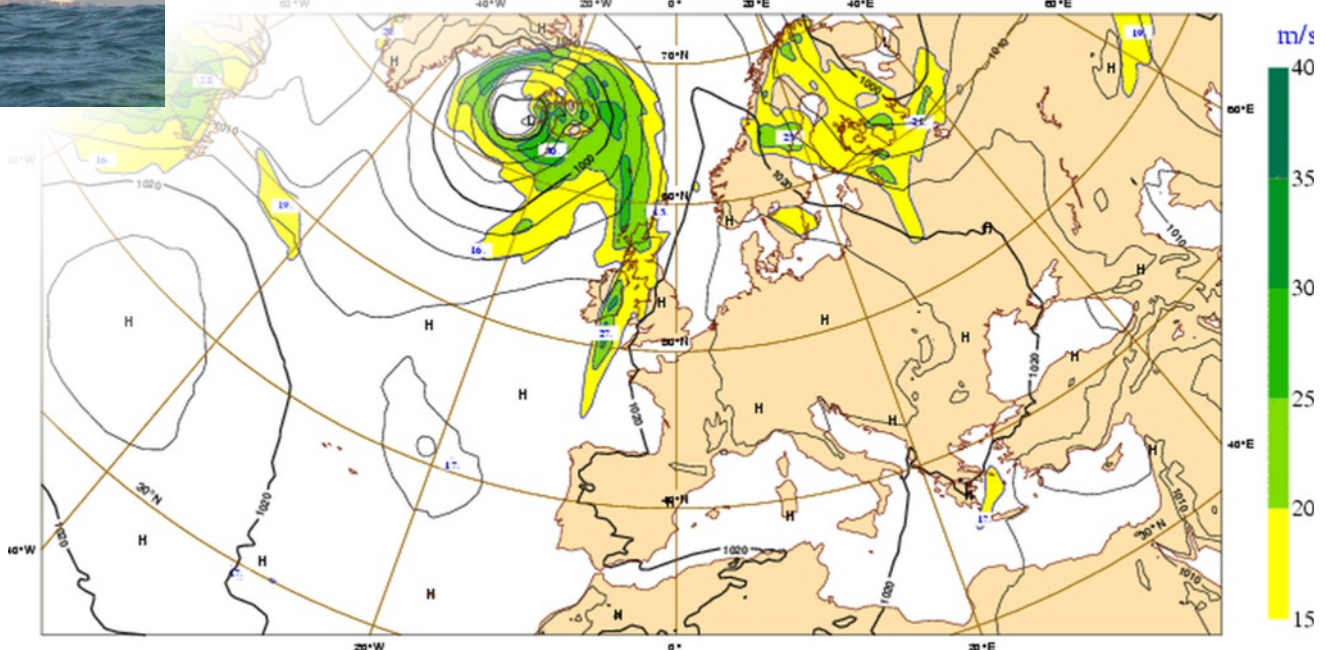
The next day conditions were ideal for a passage back to Studland so we set off at first light. After clearing Alderney we were able to watch the sun rise out of the water next to Cap de la Hague.

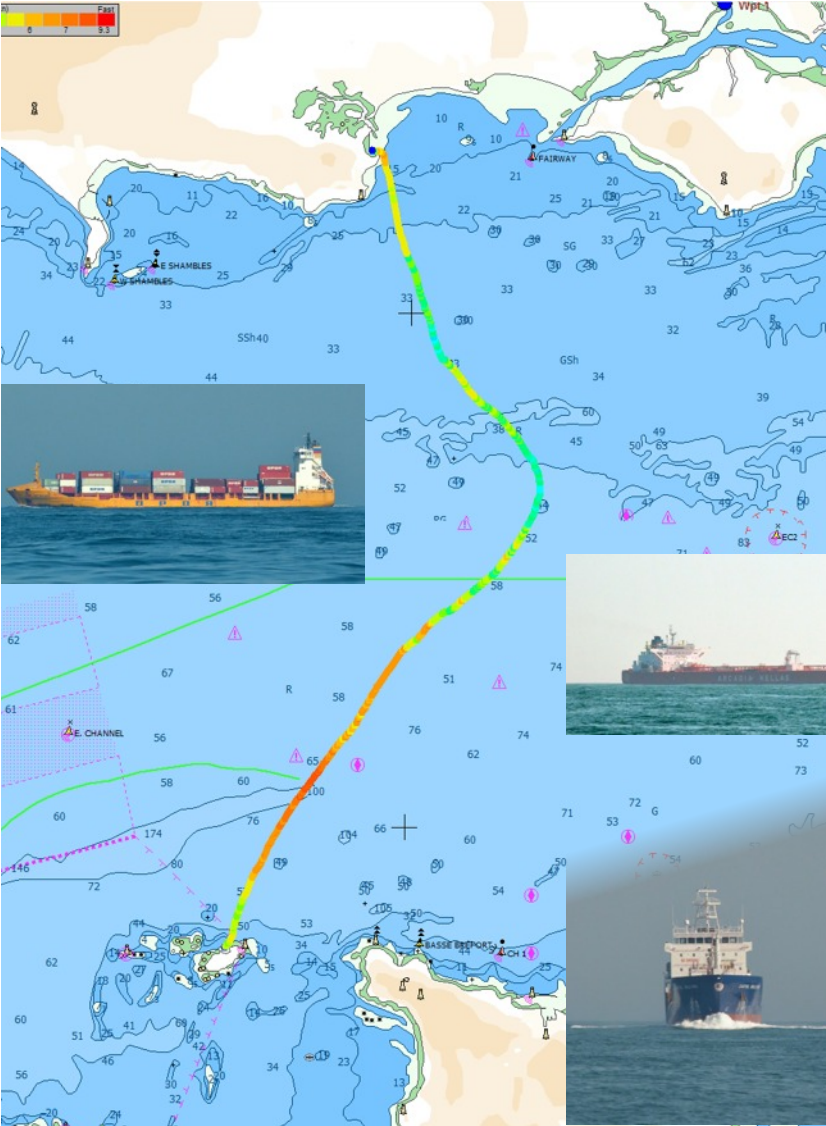
As we only had 57 miles to go compared with the 72 from Seaview to Alderney, we were able to sail nearly all the way. We saw a few gannets making their way back towards Ortac. They were a long way off but I did manage to get a few half reasonable photographs. There was quite a swell running as this sequence of a container ship heading towards Cherbourg shows.

The visibility was clear and we had no trouble crossing either of the shipping Lanes.



2011 12UTC ©ECMWF Analysis t+000 VT: Friday 30 September 2011 12UTC
Sea level pressure / 850-hPa wind speed

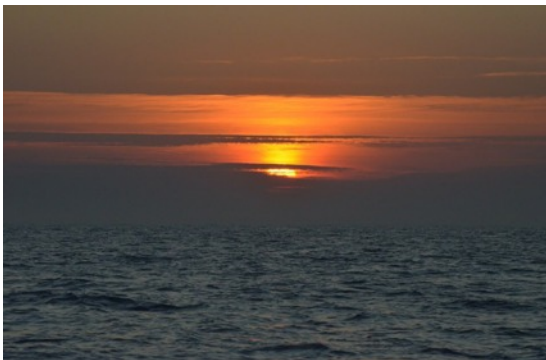


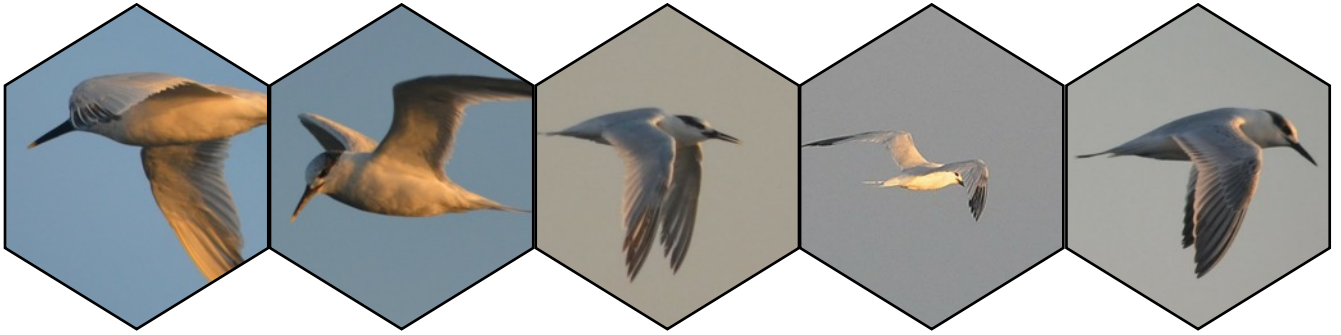


It was one of those rare days when it was possible to have good fast sailing across the channel but remain warm and dry

One coaster looked as though it would pass very close to us, but he altered course to pass well astern

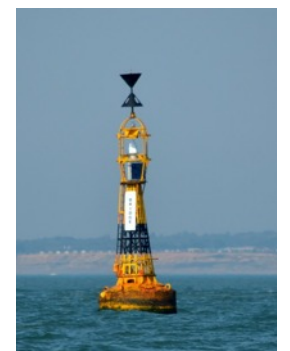
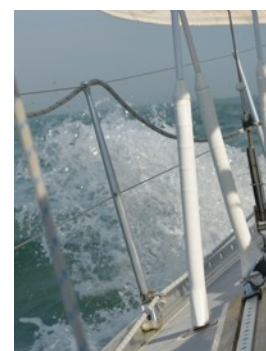
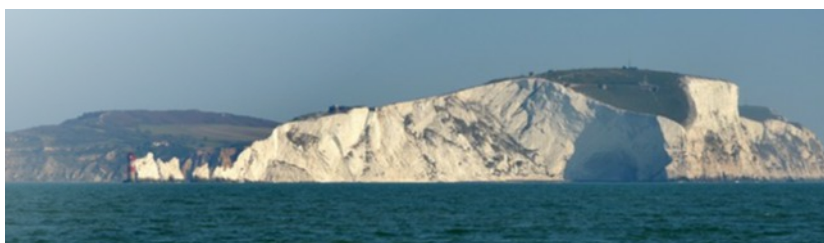
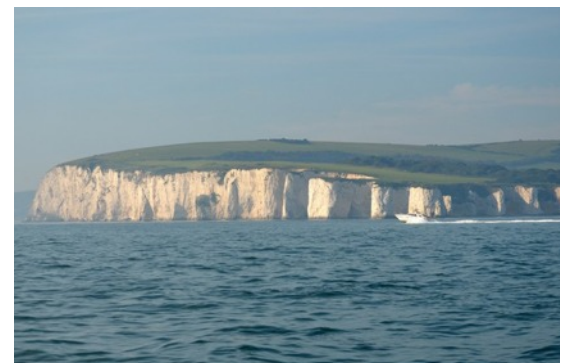
For a couple of hours in the middle of the day the wind dropped light, and for about 20 minutes we motored. The tide had turned and although we were still heading east of north we were being set to the west. The slow passage in the middle of the day meant that we ran out of daylight as we approached Anvil point. The result was that for the last hour we had to motor and it was fully dark by the time we re-anchored at Studland





Next morning Studland was peacefully quiet. The terns were fishing so once more I took up the challenge of trying to get good photographs of these agile birds.

After motoring clear of Studland we were able to sail close hauled into an easterly wind. Soon it veered a little and freshened so that we had a really sparkling sail all the way to the Needles. We took the last of the tidy up the Needles channel, but as we approached Hurst Castle, the wind died completely and the tide turned against us. The motor went on and we managed to reach Newtown before the spring ebb had reached its full strength. To our delight Derek Ide was already anchored close to a favourite spot, and he invited us to raft alongside. We had a pleasant afternoon and evening exchanging news.

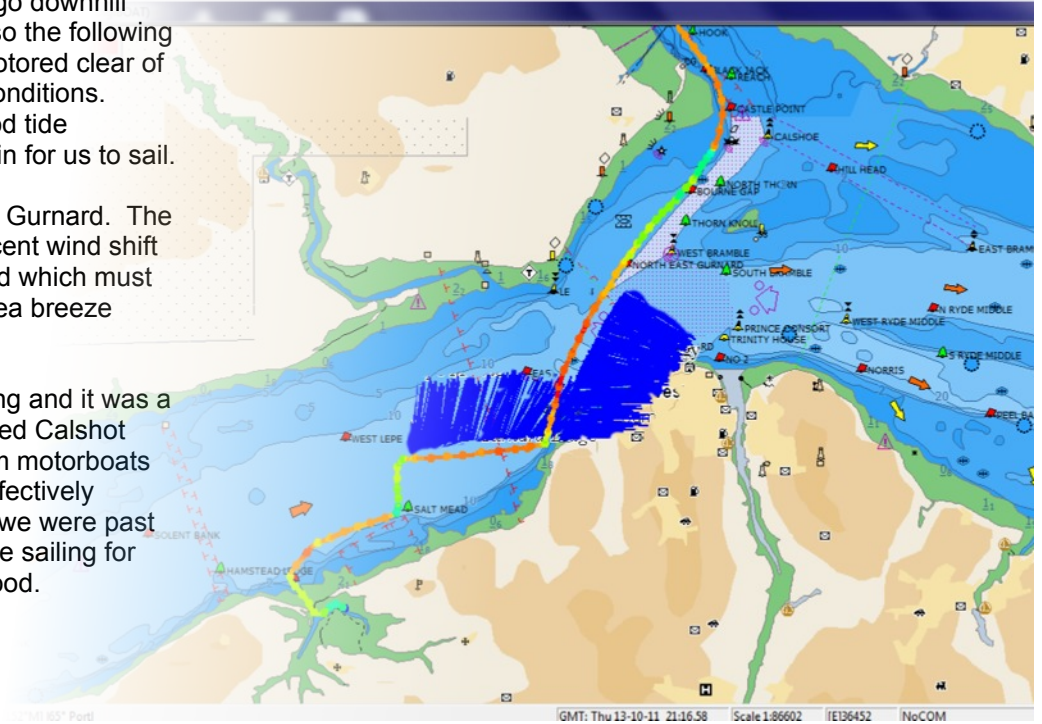




The weather was expected to go downhill over the next couple of days, so the following morning at about 10.00, we motored clear of Newtown in almost flat calm conditions. However the strong spring flood tide generated enough apparent win for us to sail.

A second tack took us towards Gurnard. The plot clearly shows the magnificent wind shift that we picked up as we tacked which must have been due to a vestigial sea breeze coming up through Spithead.

By now the wind was freshening and it was a glorious sail until we approached Calshot where, as usual, the wash from motorboats and the ferries made sailing effectively impossible. We motored until we were past Fawley where we could resume sailing for the rest of the way to Marchwood.



Although this had been a short cruise, we had certainly taken advantage of one of the few short periods of summer sailing weather during 2011.

It had been very relaxing.



