

RETURN TRIP LYMINGTON TO PORT HALIGUEN



LOG SUBMITTED BY ANDREW SUTHERLAND

DATES: 27 JUNE-7 AUGUST 2017

DISTANCE: 858 miles

BOAT: MARTLET OF ARUN

TYPE: JEANNEAU SUNLIGHT 30'

SKIPPER: SUE SUTHERLAND

**CREW: ANDREW SUTHERLAND, ALASTAIR GRANT, ROBERT NIGHTINGALL,
ANNIE LUNDBERG, STEVE LAW**

INTRODUCTION

Two years ago we sailed to Lorient and we decided this year that we would like to go further and sail to La Rochelle. In a spirit of optimism I therefore purchased the necessary charts which I felt would act as an incentive to get that far south.

Tuesday 27 June - Lymington to Cherbourg 77 miles

Having met our crew, Robert and Annie, for the first leg of the journey at Lymington Station on Monday evening we spent Monday night on the boat ready for an early start to Cherbourg. At 5.00 we left to catch the Hurst tide and set course for Cherbourg at 6.00 after passing the Needles. Unfortunately it was not the best of passages. We had heavy rain most of the way with little wind which meant we motored for eight hours out of a twelve and a half hour journey. Worse still I was seasick and out of action for two hours. Fortunately Annie and Robert are very experienced and stepped into the breach. Two hours out of Cherbourg we saw a fast rib approaching us which turned out to be French Customs. Dressed all in black they reminded us of the Milk Tray man. They asked us where we were from and where we were going after which they kept station with us for half an hour radioing information back to their mother ship. They did not allow any photographs but Sue had managed to take one just before they arrived.



Men in Black



Channel in Rain

Wednesday 28 June - Cherbourg to St Peter Port 47 miles

St Peter Port being only 47 miles from Cherbourg we were able to set out at the civilised hour of 1230 and arrived in Guernsey at 2000. An hour out of port heavy rain started with little wind so we had more motoring than we would have liked. At the top of the Alderney race the weather deteriorated further. More wind, first 20 knots then increasing to 25 and gusting 27 for the next four and a half hours. Skipper not happy, irritated that the weather forecast had been so wrong. Bad weather meant that we had to spend the next three days in St Peter Port. Having been drenched two days running I treated myself to a new jacket. A fouled lazy jack rope meant Annie had to go up in a bosun's chair to sort it out. Fortunately the sun came out 1 July and we were able to hire bikes to go round the island. Despite having been to St Peter Port many times we all found plenty to do in the town. We were very pleased to meet up with Bill and Alison Parsons for a drink who with their son were on their way back to Lyminster.



Annie and Robert in Guernsey

Sunday 2 July - St Peter Port to Treguier - 56 miles

Wonderful sail with sunny clear skies at last taking 9 hours. Food, which is always important to retain a happy crew, is well planned by Sue. (Today there were toasted cheese and onion sandwiches cooked in dry frying pan, one of my favourites.)

Arrived at 1930 and moored on the end of a finger mooring. We had been warned of the very strong tides that run in the river, but our arrival time had been perfect. Splendid old town with cathedral with amazing lattice work spire. After the bad weather we had experienced so far we felt as though our summer cruise was really starting. We decided to spend the next day in Treguier and cycled to a local village for some exercise. Having two folding bikes on the boat is definitely a good idea.



Sue and Annie in Treguier

Tuesday 4 July-Treguier to Roscoff – 42 miles

Another early start at 0700 to catch a tide. For the first time this trip we were able to follow the coast and saw some spectacular lighthouses. Lunch, always important at sea, consisted of some delicious cheesecakes that Sue had bought in Treguier. Lack of wind meant that we had to motor for seven hours but at 1300 we were joined by about ten dolphins and we turned the engine off in the hope that they would stay with us longer. Besides being a handy marina for going south Roscoff is also a good place for crew changes with its ferry to Plymouth. The town is ten minutes away from the marina and is full of character so we had no hesitation in staying another day. It was market day and there was a lot to see. We especially liked the pink caravan which turned out to be a mobile barbers. I also decided that it was time to buy a bosun's chair of our own.



Mobile Barber Shop in Roscoff



Onion Johny House in Roscoff

Thursday 6 July – Roscoff to L’Aber-Wrach - 37 miles

The first thing one has to decide on leaving Roscoff is whether to go inside or outside the Ile de Batz. We decided to go outside which did not seem to make much difference to the time it took us to go inside when we last came back to Roscoff. L’Aber-Wrach is hard to miss in any weather because of its closeness to the massive Ile Vierge lighthouse which we sighted at 1100. The lighthouse at 77 metres is one of the tallest in Europe. Once we had passed the strange lattice shaped Libenter buoy at 1400 we had a very easy passage into the harbour. Again there was very little wind but it was such a hot day that swimming was the order of the day as soon as we arrived in a delightful bay next to the marina. There was the added bonus of a wonderful sunset to end the day.

Friday 7 July – L’Aber-Wrach to Brest – 41 miles

A 0600 start to catch the tide through Chenal du Four but with clear skies and calm seas. This is when the real adventure starts, “rounding the corner” towards Biscay. Very little wind and engine on for most of the passage, but as we turned south towards the Chenal de Four the skies cleared. Landmarks, buoys and lighthouses were one by one noted and passed with a good southerly tide under us- Le Four, Point de Kermorvan off Le Conquet and finally Vieux-Moines at Pointe St Mathieu (looking like Whitby, with a ruined church). By 1230 we were off the Pointe do Minou lighthouse which provided another photo opportunity. Approaching the marina in Brest we saw the submarine pens still used by the French navy and the remarkable white spy ship. Quite why it is white when it is meant to be a spy ship eluded us all.



The imposing Citadelle of Brest

Saturday 8 July – Brest to Camaret - 9 miles

Annie and Robert left us on Saturday morning and I went round the Chateau which has a naval museum well worth visiting. We intended to refuel in the marina but the pump was not working and had to go to Le Moulin Blanc marina about an hour away to refuel. On our return the pump was working. There is some law about that!

A short hop in the afternoon took us to Camaret where because it was so hot we had a much needed swim after stocking up on provisions. The town is memorable for the awful showers in an underground bunker beside the Vauban Fort!

Never having been to Morgat we cycled there on Sunday and ended the day with our first “Moules and Frites” of the holiday at Chez Phillippe.



The Vauban Fort at Camaret

Monday 10 July – Camaret to St Marine - 58 miles

The wind looked promising as we left and we had a full main up but still had to motor sail most of the way fortunately on a very calm sea. Spotted more dolphins at Pemmarche. We have always preferred St Marine to Benodet on the other side of the river Odet. Although smaller it has more character with a good beach and adequate supermarket together with an old Breton Lavoir where the ladies of the town did their washing. There is a very interesting Seamen's Mission, now a museum, one of many in Brittany, which were set up to support fishermen and their families. It also has many restaurants and a few art galleries.

Tuesday morning was gloomy and it poured with rain in the afternoon. Fortunately we had a good supply of books to occupy us. There was a minor panic when we could not get the engine key out of the lock but WD40 came to the rescue.

A visit to the launderette is always essential and fortunately St Marine had a good one even if it was an open air lean to. Still Wednesday was market day and we potted around the market while we waited. A good bike ride in afternoon to Ile Tudy opposite Loch Tudy along a good track behind the sand dunes was followed by a great meal in the Hotel du Bac.



The Lavoir at St Marine

Thursday 13 July - San Marine to Port Louis – 40 miles

Once again we had a flat sea with no wind but optimistically had a full sail up. With such calm weather the autopilot came into its own giving us a very easy passage. As there are no refuelling facilities in Port Louis we refuelled at Kerneval across the river.

Port Louis is at the mouth of the river leading to Lorient. It was capital of the French East India Company and they built the huge citadel in the 16th century for their stores. In fact the whole town is fortified with tall ramparts around it. There is a fascinating museum and a poignant memorial to the 66 resistance fighters who were shot there in the last war.



Dromedary in French East India Company Museum

Friday 14 July- Port Louis to Port Haliguen - 28 miles

Bastille Day was spent motoring to Port Haliguen on the Quiberon Peninsula with winds no more than 6 knots except at the very end when we had gusts of 22 knots.

There is not much to see at Port Haliguen so we walked to Loch Maria directly opposite which is a very lively resort with good beaches and interesting shops.

On Saturday we cycled around the peninsula, a good ride of 15 kilometres and enjoyed a splendid meal in the Creperie du Vieux Port. Sunday's weather was not good and we went for a further bike ride.



Vieux Creperie Restaurant at Port Haliguen

Monday 17 July – Port Haliguen to Port Tudy - 26 miles

A leisurely start at 1200 took us to this beautiful little harbour on the Ile de Groix which reminded us of Yarmouth. By the time we arrived the temperature was 36 degrees and as soon as the capitainerie had been sorted we rushed to a local beach for a much needed swim. On the way we passed a Parisian banker with a penchant for bagpipes who played us O Flower of Scotland.

Next day brought thunderstorms and high winds but in the afternoon the skies cleared and we were able to cycle to the wide beach of Les Grands Sables past a roundabout with very happy children. With no improvement in the weather on Wednesday we cycled to a huge Vauban fort at Bourg which the Germans renamed Berlin in the last war. We ended the day with a very pleasant meal in Port Tudy.



The Parisian bagpiper



The Roundabout at Port Tudy

Thursday 20 July –Port Tudy to Port Louis -18 miles

The plan was to sail to Concarneau but after motoring head in to wind of 20 knots with 3 reefs in we decided Port Louis would be a safer option. Knowing that heavy rain was coming we erected the cover over our cockpit which gave us an extra space to dry our wet oilies.

With poor weather on Friday we took the ferry to Lorient which was virtually wiped out in WW2. Sadly the rebuilding was in a very modern concrete style but we were able to see the old headquarters of the French East India Company which were not destroyed. That evening we were visited by a local French teacher who asked if we would mind answering questions in English from his pupils in a local café next morning. Intrigued we could only agree.

Next morning I met Arthur, a very confident 12 year old boy, and Sue talked with a local artist. Arthur was particularly interested to know if I enjoyed “strolling” along Lymington High Street which I assured him I did. The only question which made me hesitate was, what was our national motto? Not wishing to let him think we did not have one I came up with “Honi soit qui mal y pense” which because it is Old French I had to translate for him. With more heavy rain we decided to eat out and then had a very pleasant night in the Citadelle Hotel.

Yet more heavy rain and strong winds on Sunday and Monday so we decided to stay in Port Louis and I revisited the French East India Company museum in the Citadelle. Well worth a second visit.



The Rhinoceros outside the French East India Company

Tuesday 25 July – Port Louis to Concarneau – 32 miles

For a welcome change Tuesday was a sunny day with a westerly of 20 knots. The marina in Concarneau was very welcoming and greeted us with a bag of Brittany biscuits which were a Brittany version of a lardy cake but made with butter and caramel-delicious. We had to find their source in the old walled town and despite the crowds we enjoyed walking around the battlements.

With heavy rain and 5-6 winds we decided to stay in port and took a bus to the nearby town of Pont Aven. Definitely a must see with a good museum that is an outreach of the Louvre. Very popular with painters like Gauguin it had some delightful walks in woods and along the river. Very good lunch in Les Anges D'Or which acted as a good distraction from the rain.



The old public loo at Pont Aven

Thursday 27 July – Concarneau to Audierne – 40 miles

We looked forward to going to Audierne as we had been on a “bucket and spade” holiday with our sons twenty four years ago. There were heavy seas and winds of up to 18 knots but we had a good sail. Audierne can only be accessed HW plus or minus 3 hours so we decided to wait in the shelter of St Evette until there was enough water. The harbour is a challenge but we entered on a rising tide and thankfully there was room on the visitors’ pontoon.

With the wind worsening we decided to cycle inland to Pont Croix, a wonderful ride on the flat along the river in the morning where there was a market. The town is built on terraces which slope picturesquely down to the river. In the afternoon we cycled to St Evette but there was little to see.

By Saturday the wind was 5-7 and we decided to treat ourselves to a night in a hotel on both Saturday and Sunday. It is frustrating to be cooped up on the boat in bad weather but another cycle ride to Pont Croix and two nights in a hotel restored our flagging spirits.



Grand Cher Road in Pont Croix

Sunday 31 July – Audierne to Brest -37 miles

A lovely sunny day but in contrast to the last few days no wind and so we had to motor all the way. At 1015 we had transitted the two great lighthouses of La Vielle and La Platte. Sue very pleased as she had got the tide exactly right. The approach to Brest is very interesting and we spent our time trying to identify all the wartime installations. We arrived back in the Marina du Chateau just as the wind got up. That law again!

Tuesday 1 August - Brest to L'Aber-Wrach - 40 miles

Our original plan had been to meet our new crew, Steve and Alastair, in Roscoff but our delay with the weather meant that they had to come by train to Brest. Leaving at 1345 we passed Le Four and saw Libenter at 2100 and arrived to a very busy port at 2130.

With a force 5-7 in L'Aber-Wrach and gusts of 38 knots forecast we had to remain in port next day but were had a delicious fish meal with Alastair and Steve in L'Ecailler des Abers.

There being no improvement in the wind on Thursday we cycled to Plage Ste Marguerite where the weather conditions were perfect for about fifty kite surfers. Steve and Alastair had a good long walk that afternoon.



Les Vieux Moines en route to L'Aber-Wrach

Friday 4 August – L’Aber-Wrach to Roscoff - 34 miles

Very light winds so had to motor most of way. We decided to cut between Ile de Batz and Roscoff for the challenge. The town was very busy but we had a very good meal of fish and lobster in Les Arcades.



The crew in Roscoff

Saturday 5 August - Roscoff to St Peter Port – 76 miles

With a force 4-5 westerly wind we had a wonderful sail all day. By our standards this was a long sail and we were very glad to have our very competent crew. Guernsey was sighted at 1550 but we did not arrive in harbour till 1930. Enjoyed a good meal that evening in Dix Neuf restaurant.

Sunday 6 August – St Peter Port to Weymouth – 76 miles

Perfect sailing conditions with a south-westerly 3-4. Our passage coincided with the beginning of the Fastnet race and we had a good view as they sailed round Portland. We managed to sail for most of the day which was an improvement on recent weeks. Fortunately we arrived just in time for the bridge to open as we decided that we needed the luxury of a proper marina.

Monday 7 August – Weymouth to Lymington – 44 miles

At long last a day with no rain but not enough wind to make progress. We needed the engine on for seven out of the ten hours as we were against the tide most of the way to ensure we passed Hurst with the tide. We measured our progress against the measured mile pylons and it took us 19 minutes, an average speed for the passage of three knots an hour. Very glad to be home at last at 1915.

Summary

A very satisfying cruise in our trusty 30' boat, undertaking only day sails, as planned and giving ourselves lots of time to explore the ports we visited.

We were disappointed not to have been able to sail further but this was impossible as we had crew changes to consider and the weather was not at all obliging. To enable us to explore further south in Brittany we are thinking of leaving the boat in Brittany next year for some sunnier sails.



Back in Blighty