

# PRIME TIME BLOG 2017

**Tuesday 2 May**

We had intended to set off on this year's adventure yesterday, but the wind was in the force 6-7 region and the sea state 1-2m wave height. Today it was around force 2-3 easterly and the sea state 0.6m wave height. With the wind and tide together, the wave height should be even lower and giving us a comfortable ride. Our intended destination from our home port of Lymington was Dartmouth. The trip would be around 84nm and take about 4hrs 15m at 20kts. We would be crossing Lyme Bay, 6nm south of Portland Bill, to avoid the overfalls.

We departed Lymington, after refueling, at 1550hrs to catch the outgoing tide and made around 22kts all the way on a very flat and calm sea in glorious sunshine. We



Prime Time

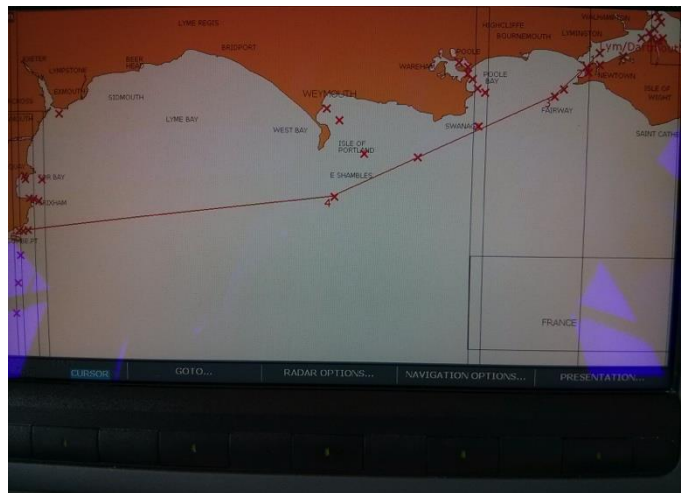


Dartmouth Royal Navy College



Zephyros - Nordhavn 43

pulled in to Dartmouth at 2000hrs to see the splendor of Dartmouth Naval College facing us as we made up the river to Dart marina. We had telephoned ahead to make sure we had a berth, not wishing to arrive after a longish trip, when



Route to Dartmouth

the light was going down, with no fixed abode. All was well and we docked comfortably on the I-J hammerhead, as directed earlier.

Our friends, Andrew and Linda in their Nordhavn 43 had set off earlier and were berthed already on a mid river pontoon and we hailed each other as we passed to our marina. After we had washed down Prime Time and got changed, we made for the 'Floating Bridge' pub, to meet up at 2100hrs to enjoy a welcome and hearty meal and exchange stories of our crossings.

We intend to stay here for about 10 days to take in a visit to the college and the Dartmouth Music Festival, before moving on to Salcombe. Watch this space.

### **Thursday 18 May**

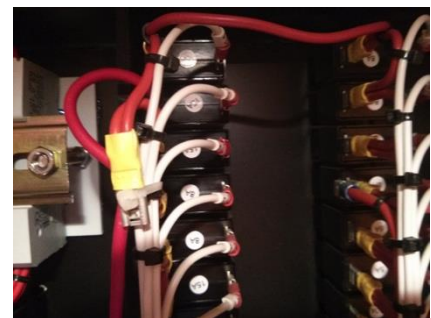
Sixteen days weatherbound in Dartmouth, the longest we have been weatherbound anywhere before. We were, however, in Dart Marina, undoubtedly the best place to be moored up in the town and Dartmouth has plenty to do....and plenty happened as well.

First the tourist bit. We visited Totnes, Dartington, Exeter, Dittisham, Paignton, Brixham, Berry Head, Kingsbridge, the Royal Naval College and Torquay; anything to fill the time. Mind you we had to invest in two new pairs of waterproof walking shoes and a new umbrella, which speaks volumes for the weather.

The crew has a supplementary job as 'Chief Executive Tourism' on 'Prime Time' and did a fantastic job finding new places to go every day, rain or shine, armed with all the bus, train and ferry timetables.

Second the other 'events'. The forward heads, newly converted to electric flush from manual during the winter, failed, which displeased the crew no end as it had adopted private ablution. To the ignorant, like the skipper, it seemed as if there was no power going to it and after checking a few obvious things like the fuse and connections, I had to find a professional. Fortunately, after some phone calls, a boatyard at Noss marina further up river were very helpful and said if we bring the boat now, they would take a look, even though they were busy. Dave, the electrician, took an hour, including being on the phone to Andy in Lymington who wired it up, but found the fault. There was no power going to the fuse. He swapped a couple of wires over and after checking everything else was still working on board, we were back in action. They only charged £53 including VAT, which I thought well worthwhile.

Then the outboard motor for the tender failed when above 75% throttle, unless I had the choke partially out. We could have managed, but it's always better to have everything working as it should. I discussed it with Andrew and he very kindly suggested I take the outboard on to his aft deck, where there is more space and together (mainly Andrew!) we stripped down the carburetor, but



Behind the fuse box on Prime Time



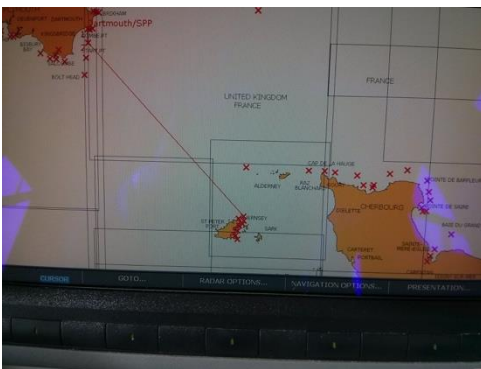
Skipper with faulty carburetor

found no blockages. The jets are however of less diameter than a pin. After a couple of attempts at stripping it down and trying it, although it improved, it wasn't happy, so a replacement carburetor was needed. Fortunately a Honda 'dealer reconditioned' exchange carburetor was found on ebay for £48, so I ordered it, it came the next day and, once fitted, it worked perfectly. Upon leaving Andrew and Linda's 'Zephyros' after dinner one night around 10pm, the skipper and crew boarded the dinghy with said outboard and in pitch dark, sped back across the river to 'Prime Time', with the crew armed with a torch facing forward...SBS eat your heart out. The crew was so excited, she thought she was in a 'Famous Five' adventure.

Dartmouth had some interesting ships pass us by on the river, including a small cruise ship carrying about 100 people and some photographs show some of the activity.



Yesterday, our friends Richard and June on 'Rockland' arrived from Guernsey and moored up late last night on Dart Marina, so we were able to say "Hello". We would have liked to stay with them, but after so long in Dartmouth, the skipper was stir crazy to get somewhere else and today, there is a weather window. We had intended to go to the river Yealm next, but the weather forecast is poor again next week and we would be locked in there on a midriver pontoon for up to a week; there is also not a lot to do after a couple of days. We therefore needed a marina to hole up for another week or so. We didn't want to go to Plymouth for that long and it is too soon to go to Falmouth and miss out the Yealm and Fowey, so we decided on the spur of the moment to head off for Guernsey.



At 1000hrs, we took on 200 litres as a safety margin for this 70nm trip, which would consume around 350 litres, from the fuel barge moored in the middle of the river Dart.

At 1040hrs we set off



Route to St Peter Port

for St Peter Port. The forecast

Route to St Peter Port entrance from West

was for wind NW gusting 14mph, bright and clear. The wind being behind us would help to keep the wave height down, forecast at 1.1m. Infact the surface of the water was just a ripple, but the swell was 2-3 feet, not bad at all. We had a good crossing in 3hrs 15mins.

The approach to St Peter Port is quite rocky as can be seen. We will reside here for a week or so. We have to fly home for a week at the end of the month, so here is very convenient for that purpose. After that, we may head for Jersey. Watch this space.

## Tuesday 13 June

After a month in St Peter Port, Guernsey, during which we flew home for 10 days of commitments, it was back to Prime Time. She had come to no harm whilst we were away, moored safely in Victoria marina. It is notable that St. Peter Port's mooring charges are lower if the boat is unattended and the cost here was £13 per night including electricity, compared to £30 per night attended. During our time in St. Peter Port, a rally of 200 French yachts crammed in to the marina, see photograph; I have never seen it so packed. Amazingly they behaved themselves and the



Prime Time in St Peter Port



Herm



St Peter Port visitors marina very busy

marina staff were very helpful laying on extra staff at the facilities explaining to them what a lavatory seat was. We note President Macron has pledged to try and make them compulsory in all French WC's, bringing France into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, but the unions are likely to resist.

We visited the beautiful island of Herm whilst we were in Guernsey; we could have been anywhere in the world, see photograph.

The weather today was very light winds of no discernable direction, clear, sunny and a flat sea; ideal for moving on. Andrew and Linda had departed back to Weymouth the day we flew home, to attend to the new arrival of their grandson, so we are now solo.



Nordhavn 68 in St Peter Port

We decided to set off for St Helier, Jersey, as we are only 30nm away; it would be a shame to miss it. We needed 600 ltrs of fuel to top up, so we booked the bowser at St. Sampson's harbour just up the coast from St. Peter Port. We were in competition with a Nordhavn 68

wanting 8,000 ltrs, putting our puny order into perspective. This however also paled in to insignificance against the superyacht shown, which also required filling up with 200,000 ltrs. Kevin at St. Sampson's fitted us in however at 0930hrs this morning and charged us 45.9p per ltr.

At 1000hrs, we set off for St. Helier passing the Nordhavn 68 on her way too. The trip was uneventful, but most enjoyable, sitting there watching the world go by as Prime Time did the rest. We pulled in to St. Helier at 1130hrs, found it quiet and a convenient finger berth. See if you can spot her (centre right foreground) in the photograph of the marina. After washing down and lunch, the crew wanted to walk 3m to St. Aubin and back, which is a pretty harbour, see photograph. I also took a photograph of a sculpture there carrying the inscription "Ships are the nearest things to dreams that hands have ever made".

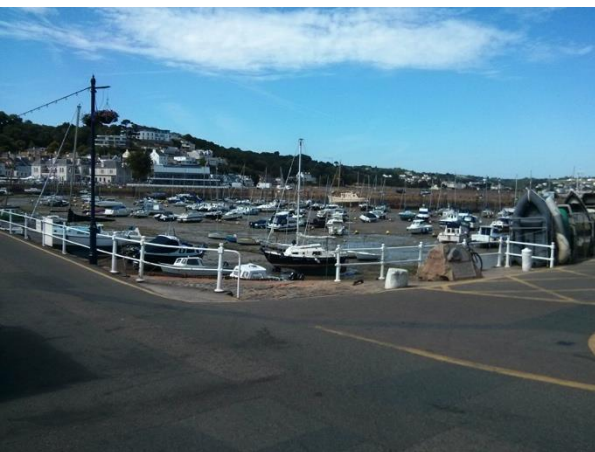
We plan to stay in St. Helier for one week, then north to Plymouth. We have some commitments again in England, for a week or so, then we will be off to the West Country. Watch this space.



St. Helier marina



Superyacht



St. A

Carving of hand pulling rope



## Monday 19 June

During our week in Jersey, we were fortunate to meet up with our good friends Paul and Micheline Vasselin who on Wednesday, took us to a beautiful sunset evening at St. Brelade's

Bay. On Friday, they took us to a celebration of the Queen's official birthday in the grounds of Government House. We felt very privileged to be there with the Governor and Officials of Jersey, together with many local people. The evening revolved around a garden party, military bands, a 21 gun salute and a speech



by the new Governor announcing those of the island, whom HRH Queen Elizabeth II had honoured in this year's birthday honours list. As you will see, the crew and skipper had to scrub up a bit for this one, but it was an evening we shall never forget.



Paul and Micheline have a Nimbus and, being in Jersey, have to protect themselves from the French trying to moor up, more often than we do. Readers of past blogs will remember some of the exploits we have witnessed.

**Skipper and crew scrubbed up**

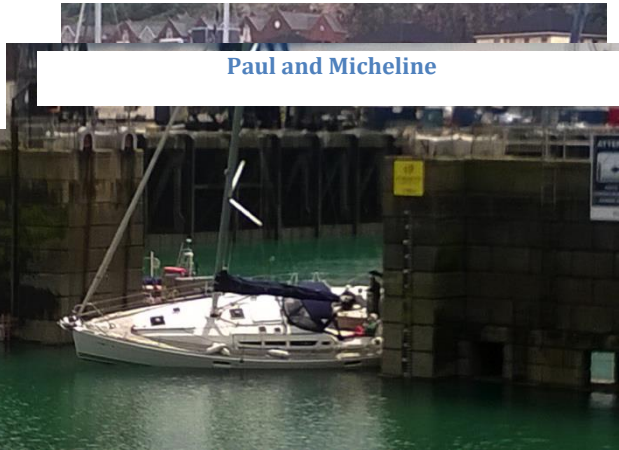
For example, 'Hogwarts', which is waving sticks around upon entering a marina, hoping a magic spell



**Guards Band parading at Government House**

would moor them up, instead of using warps and fenders. Another example is not understanding what a sill is in the marina and having to wait until there is sufficient water for your boat to get over it. Paul and Micheline were able to share a

**Paul and Micheline**



**From another angle**



**Frenchman mooring up successfully**

couple of photographs of one of these occasions they have witnessed of an unfortunate French sailor not understanding this principle.

Today, we prepared to cross from Jersey to Plymouth, 110nm, which would take 5½ hrs at 20 kts departing at 1430hrs and arriving around 2000hrs. First, we topped up with 150 ltrs of diesel at 56.9p per ltr to give us our capacity of 900 ltrs, in the knowledge we would burn 550 ltrs of it. The weather forecast was 28c, sunny with wind easterly at mid teens mph. Swell height around 2 ft every 8 seconds. Good conditions for a crossing of this length.



Plymouth Yacht Haven, slightly more industrial than Lymington Yacht Haven

We left our berth at St. Helier marina at high water, to catch the outgoing tide running our way and then from the fuel berth at 1425hrs. The crossing from Jersey to the SW tip of Guernsey was choppy and we took some spray, but once past Guernsey the channel was pretty flat, becoming more so as we got closer to the mainland. The crew took this photograph of the evening sun on the flat sea as we approached Plymouth, finally docking at Plymouth Yacht Haven at 1930hrs. We had gained 30 minutes by having 2 kts of tide with us all the way.



Prime Time is behind the yacht on the right!

We are residing here until Friday, whilst we attend a commitment in Coventry and then hope to spend the weekend at anchor in the River Yealm. We will return on Monday to Plymouth, when our son arrives to stay with us on board, before we all return home to Lymington the following Thursday to Monday. We should be back on board Prime Time by 4 July, when we will probably depart for Fowey, but, as ever, watch this space.

#### 4 July 2017 – Fowey

During our fortnight in Plymouth Yacht Haven free thanks to being a berth holder in sister marina, Lymington Yacht Haven, we have attended to commitments in the Cotswolds, Coventry, Lymington and had our son David on board for a few days, which was lovely.

Fowey

Transport to these locations was facilitated by Enterprise car hire, cheaper than trains and they pick you up and drop you off, which is a great help. Their service was excellent and to be recommended.

Whilst at Plymouth, we also were able to meet up with former Royal Lymington Yacht Club members, Iain and Di Oag and see their lovely house in Staddiscombe, plus fellow members Tony and Margaret Adams, who were visiting Iain and Di on their way by car to the west country. We spent a lovely day with them all.

Yesterday, we drove back from Lymington to Plymouth and today set off for Fowey, a 19nm trip west. First, we took on some fuel at Plymouth Yacht Haven to replace the 550 litres we used between Jersey and Plymouth and slipped our lines at 1050hrs. The voyage was set to take one hour at 20kts, with the tide going with us. Weather conditions were virtually no wind, sun and a flat sea. All went well as we pulled in to Fowey at around 1230hrs. The additional time had been consumed getting out to sea from the Yacht Haven as Plymouth, of course, is a large harbour.

Fowey accommodates 1,500 yachts on buoys and mid river pontoons. There is no marina, but there is water available on the harbour master's pontoon, shoreside facilities and wifi. The harbour is also blessed with a good supply of marine engineers, electronics and chandleries. We moored up on our usual mid river pontoon opposite the RNLI station; from there it is a 5 minute hop on our dinghy to the landing stage. The RNLI have installed lockers to encourage dinghy users to use their life jackets, which is very helpful. Unfortunately they only take the old £ coins at present.



Fowey



Fowey



A Lymington yacht, 'Trilogy' is here and we hope to meet up with her and her crew this evening at the Royal Fowey Yacht Club. We will report on this and what we do here in our next blog, but we have paid for 6 nights, the 7<sup>th</sup> is free, at a cost of £20 per night, which is very good. Watch this space.

## Sunday 9 July - Falmouth

We had six glorious days in Fowey on a mid river pontoon without electricity or water. To our delight, we used less than half of our 500 ltr tank, so we could theoretically survive for a fortnight, provided of course, we had enough clothes! Electricity was provided by our generator, but the battery bank and inverter coped with all the necessities, lights, TV, internet, charging mobile phones and tablets etc. We only required the generator a couple of hours in the evening to give us a tank of hot water for the showers in the morning. Cooking was by gas, or microwave using the generator.



Prime Time far left background

Today it was time to move on to Falmouth.

Weather conditions were negligible wind, sun/cloud, good visibility for our 20nm, one hour crossing south west. We caught the outgoing tide west, departing at 1000hrs, arriving in the Fal estuary at 1100hrs. A good and uneventful crossing. Our usual marina, Pendennis could only offer us rafting up outside the marina, which would have left us too exposed for comfort.

We tried Falmouth Visitors Marina, but they too were full, offering us a buoy instead. So we tried Falmouth Marina, run by Premier Marinas up the Penryn river. They had a berth available in shallow water, so we made for that. Upon our approach, a staff member met us in a Dory to escort us to our berth, which was very kind as it was quite difficult to find. Now berthed up however, it is very protected, peaceful and quiet – ideal, except that it is a 20 minute walk in to town.



Falmouth Marina



**Prime Time in Falmouth**



**Cruise ship moored off Falmouth**



**Falmouth Marina restaurant**

No sooner had the skipper plugged in the shore power, the crew had the washing machine and tumble dryer going for a week's washing to catch up on. Meanwhile, the skipper gave 'Prime Time' a good shampooing. We're guilty of taking water and electricity for granted; it did us no harm having to think economically about both for a week.

Falmouth Marina has a lot of services available as you can see, including an attractive restaurant.

There is a 294 ft cruise ship, moored just outside Falmouth, called 'Mein Schiff 4', probably German, which an app tells us is doing a tour of the UK and Ireland. This is something the French are unlikely to do; good job as they'd sink a few locals trying to moor it up! There is also a 47m superyacht called 'White Star' undergoing sea trials moored off St. Mawes.



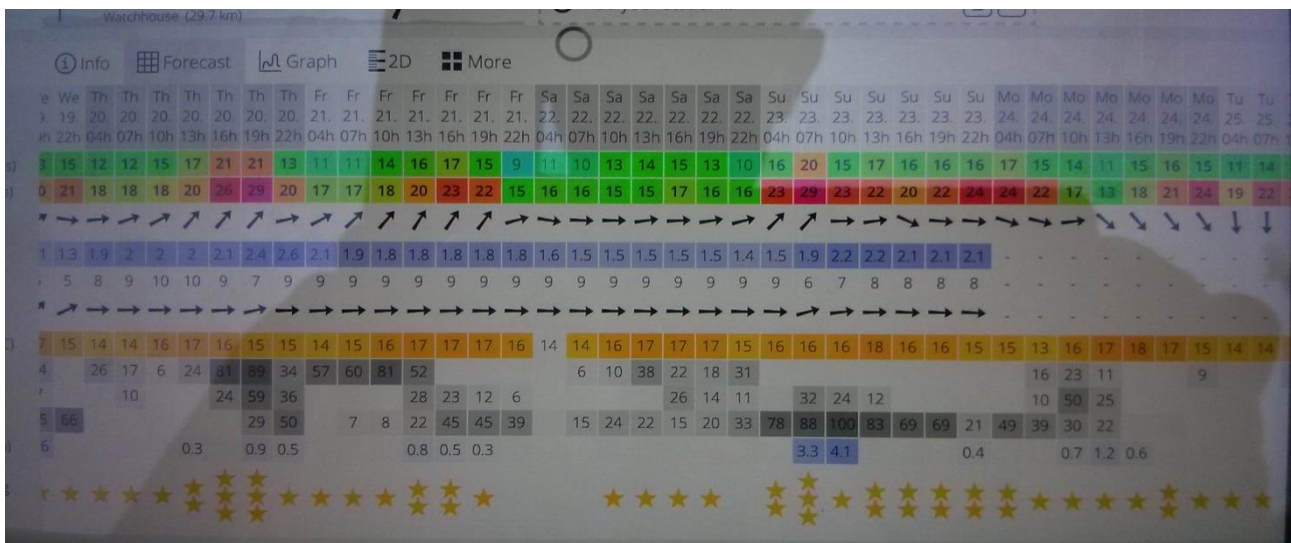
**Facilities available at Falmouth Marina**

With the washing on and the boat cleaned up and lunch had, the crew whipped the skipper into town to stock up on provisions and then had him yomping home with a backpack full of essentials, gin, tonic, chocolate, nuts and raisins etc. She is now a happy girl.

We will reside here in the hope we get a weather window to go to the Isles of Scilly, but if not, we will begin our journey east, probably to the river Yealm. Watch this space.

### Monday 17 July 2017 – Torquay

Well, there's a surprise. No Scillies and no river Yealm. After 8 days in Falmouth, a very reasonable £33 per night, the weather forecast for the next 10 days made moving anywhere difficult. The BBC may be telling us there's a heatwave this week, but that is accompanied by high winds as the snapshot below will testify:



The coloured numbers are the wind speed and gust strengths; the blue are the wave heights. We like to see the wave heights around 1.0 mtrs or less, so you can see our problem.

As clearly, there isn't going to be a settled period of sea below 1m in the next 10 days and we intend to be home around the end of the month, the Scillies was out. As we have decided also to join up with the Broom Owners Club rally at Island Harbour on the river Medina north of Cowes on the Isle of Wight on 28<sup>th</sup> July, with few windows available to go east, we decided we had better move today, at least to Torquay, which ruled out the river Yealm. There is the possibility of another window on Wednesday this week, in which case, we can either move on further east to Weymouth or Portland, or, if necessary, go the whole way to the Isle of Wight. It's a case of watching the weather. We'd like to be in Island Harbour by tomorrow week.

We set off at 0955hrs for this 75nm trip east, which would take us around 4hrs. The forecast was for wind speeds in the mid teens and wave height below 1m, wind with tide, so hopefully a good crossing. Indeed the sea was flatish until we started approaching Bigbury Bay. Enroute, we passed the Eddystone lighthouse. As we got to Bigbury Bay the sea turned so lumpy we had to reduce our speed to 10 kts while we ploughed through the waves. This persisted for about half an hour, until we turned in to Torbay. The crew passed this period of time quite happily, rocking to "The Hollies" on her ipod.



Eddystone Lighthouse

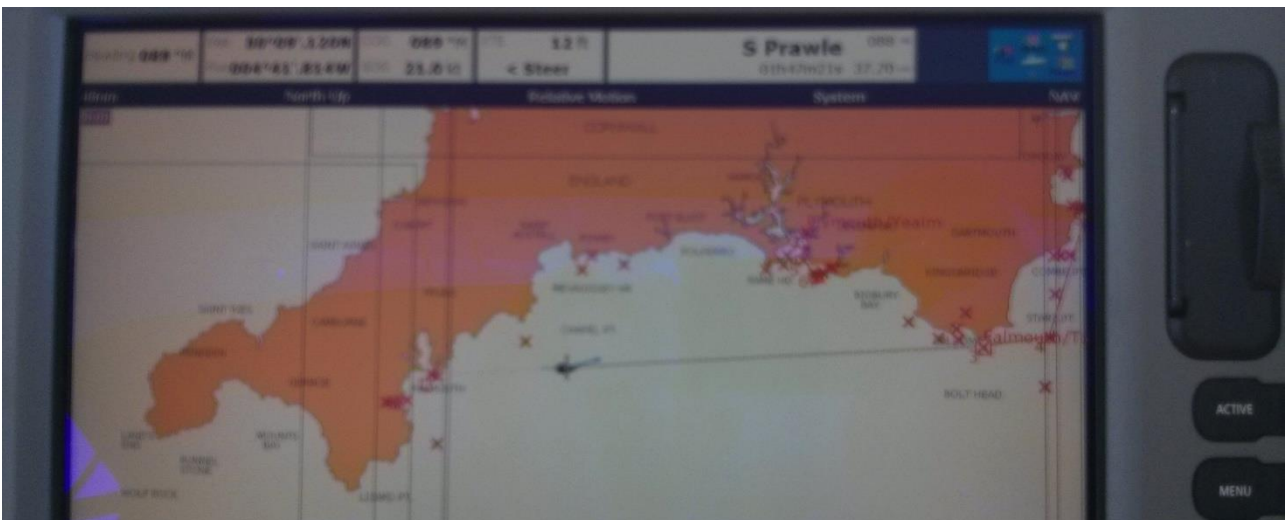
The hazy photograph of the chart plotter, shows our course today and Prime Time's position at the time.

We eventually arrived in Torquay after 4 ½ hrs, at 1430hrs and, fortunately, they were able to accommodate us, otherwise we might have had to backtrack to Brixham or Dartmouth. Prime Time was thoroughly covered in salt, the helm seat was squeaking and needed to be re secured on it's mount and the windscreen washers had failed during our trip. So after lunch on board, the crew departed to the shops in the hunt for dinner whilst the skipper shampooed the boat and did the maintenance. The washer jets had become a little blocked with salt and one of the pipes had split, which we replaced.



Torquay

We will reside here watching the weather for our next move east. Watch this space.



Route to Falmouth

**Tuesday 25 July – Brixham and Island Harbour, Cowes, Isle of Wight**

The weather last week in Torquay was mixed, from sunshine to gales and lashing rain – no day was good enough to go to sea. We made good use of our time, visiting Babbacombe, Cockington, Brixham, Teinmouth, Paignton, Dawlish, plus a visit to Torquay theatre to see a Bill Kenwright musical 'Dreamboats and Petticoats' and the cinema to see the new film 'Dunkirk'.

The first really good day was today, with little wind, sunshine and a wave height of around 0.5m.

We calculated our crossing to Cowes, would be 100nm, taking 5hrs consuming 450 litres. If we were to arrive when the lock at Island Harbour marina, Cowes, was on 'freeflow' (ie., both gates open), we would need to depart at 0800hrs. Fortunately, this coincided with the tide turning east to be with us all the way.

First we needed fuel, but discovered Torquay has a local authority harbour concession operator who was very expensive. The only competitive alternative anywhere in Torbay, or the Dartmouth/Salcombe peninsula, was the MDL marina at Brixham.

The fuel pontoon at Brixham didn't open until 0900hrs, so our best option was to cross from Torquay to Brixham yesterday so we could fill up and leave when we were ready today.

We settled our marina bill in Torquay, which was a reasonable £38 per night and crossed slowly at displacement speed to Brixham, to take in the view of the beautiful bay from the sea. After half an hour at 7kts, we pulled in to Brixham's fuel pontoon. Ricky, the attendant was most helpful and talkative (spent 2 years in the army, but was medically discharged, wants to be a fisherman, is studying his skipper courses, but is working at MDL in the summer, because it is better money – as he sets up house with his partner – just thought you'd like to know).

The fuel here was 20p per litre more expensive than Lymington, which we put down to the lack of competition. The berthing fee for one night was also an expensive £44 (curious when both Torquay and Brixham are MDL



The crew at Cockington



Island Harbour



Prime Time on berth at Island Harbour

marinas). So, with a somewhat lighter wallet, we berthed up for the night, but took in some beautiful Brixham fish at a local hotel in the evening.

Today, at 0800hrs, we departed Brixham for this somewhat long crossing to Island Harbour. Weather conditions were perfect. We eased 'Prime Time' out of Brixham and in to Lyme Bay. Half an hour later, we were delighted to see our first pod of dolphins this year, leaping out of the water and frolicking about the boat. Wonderful.

An hour later, just as we were 20nm south of Lyme Regis and halfway across Lyme Bay, our ship's radio crackled "Securite, Securite, Securite, attention all shipping on the South Coast. This is warship 'Sutherland' warship 'Sutherland', live missile firing, go to Channel 10. Out".

We looked around and couldn't see warship 'Sutherland' and being 20nm south of Lyme Regis and heading 6nm south of Portland Bill, as far as we knew, outside the Royal Navy practice firing area, reasoned that they wouldn't like to be in the papers for sinking a British pleasure cruiser and carried on. Anyway, we've lived to tell the tale.

Approaching Portland Bill, the tide with us of 2kts increased to 7kts at times and thereafter remained at around 4-6kts until we reached the Solent, when it reduced back to 2kts.

Entry to the Solent was a different world, with shipping everywhere, land on both sides and the inevitable Solent chop. Nothing to slow us down however from our 20kts. We weaved through the shipping along the Solent and turned in to the Medina river at Cowes at noon. The tide had saved us up to an hour of our journey time and we made the 'freeflow' lock in very good time.

We are now berthed up here for a week, whilst we attend the Broom Owners Club rally organized by Peter Upcher, whose boat 'Sheringham Lady' is featured here.

Our next port will be our home port of Lymington, not seen since 1<sup>st</sup> May and as such this is our final blog for 2017. The crew's log calculates we have walked 350 miles during this period which has mitigated the impact of the Pasties and Danish pastries – we hope. The crew and I send you our best wishes for the remainder of the summer and beyond, hope you have found our blogs of passing interest and look forward to entertaining you again next year.



[Sheringham Lady](#)



[Island Harbour restaurant](#)