

PRIME TIME BLOG 2016



Chapter 1

Monday 8 May 2016 - Weymouth

This year's cruise intends to take in the West Country and the Channel Islands, beginning today and ending at the end of July or early August. Over the winter Prime Time has had an internal makeover with window blinds instead of curtains, LED pelmet lighting in the saloon and reupholstery and new canopies in the cockpit as shown.



We set off with the west going tide departing Lymington Yacht Haven at 1220hrs setting our course via the Needles Fairway buoy, taking the offshore route, well to the south of Anvil point to avoid the overfalls and directly then in to Weymouth harbour. Conditions were sunny with wind gusting mid 20 mph but easterly, so we had wind and tide in our favour. We expected a smooth sea, but there were some white tops, so a bit lumpy, but nothing to cause a slam at 22kts and no white water



over the top. Prime Time was however tending to mildly zigzag her course with sharp turns to port and starboard. The autopilot was over reacting and oversteering first left then right to keep us on course. For the final few miles, we steered manually. Once tied up on the holding pontoon, just before the road bridge in to the marina, out came the manual. For some reason, the autopilot setting had defaulted to its most sensitive, fine for yachts at 5kts, but not

appropriate for a motor cruiser at 22kts, causing it to swerve from side to side. We reset it and look forward to seeing how it goes on our next crossing.

Other than that, the trip went according to plan, taking 2hrs 15m to cover 40nm, taking in to account the slow running in and out of the harbours at each end. We were allocated berth C51 in Weymouth Marina and settled in comfortably.

Today we reconnoitered for venues for the Royal Lymington YC cruise here in September. The Royal Dorset YC, now down to 43 full members we hear, has let its restaurant and bar to what looks like a downmarket restaurant and is clearly not an option. Bob Woolley recommended the Weymouth Sailing Club and upon visiting Penny there today, it looks just the job for us. Our friends Andrew and Linda of Weymouth also recommended the Gurka restaurant which too is ideal. Both are within walking distance along the harbour wall, so we plan to use both. Job done, thank you both.



We will remain here for a few days, before setting off to Torquay towards the end of the week. Tonight we celebrate with Andrew and Linda, their purchase today of their Nordhavn. We look forward to them joining us on our cruise in a couple of weeks time. Watch this space.

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Chapter 2



Wednesday 11 May 2016

Weymouth marina berthing costs this year were £38 per night for a 12 mtr boat, up from £30 per night last August. The weather was pretty wet during our 3 day stay. The weather today was forecast dry, wind gusting 6mph, but some mist. At 1600hrs, the bridge to/from Weymouth marina opened and we set off with the tide for Torquay, 55nm if going east of the Shambles and 6nm south of Portland Bill. However, the sea conditions, in such little wind, were akin to a mill pond, so we dared to go west of the Shambles and only 2nm south of Portland Bill, risking the overfalls and cutting across the notorious Lyme Bay closer in than we would in more normal wind conditions.

The autopilot behaved impeccably and the crossing was ideal for a motor cruiser. Cutting the corner and being rewarded with 4kts of west going tide as we rounded Portland Bill, cut 30 minutes off our 3hr crossing, with Prime Time achieving 25kts at times. The crew spotted a pair of Porpoise just outside Torquay, which delighted her. We encountered some mist requiring the radar, but pulled in to Torquay marina at 1830hrs and being allocated berth C52. We will remain here for about one week, before moving on to Dartmouth. Watch this space.



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Chapter 3

Thursday 19 May 2016

After 8 nights in Torquay, it was time to move on. The berthing costs were £41.50 per night, but as members of the MDL cruising club, we were due a discount of two nights, which brought the average down to £32 per night.

Whilst in Torquay, we met up with David and Carole Hayles from the Royal Lymington Yacht Club, at Dittisham for lunch.

As our next but one port of call is Guernsey, we needed a top up of fuel. The fuel berth in Torquay is not operated by MDL, but by the harbour master and we discovered his pump

was awaiting a part. Brixham, another MDL marina, was on our way to our next port of call, Dartmouth, so we decided to put in there. MDL have a reputation to keep up, say they have their diesel independently checked for quality frequently, so it should be as good a bet as any.

We departed Torquay at 1030hrs, to reach Dartmouth at slack water 1122hrs, as the tide runs fast through the Dart marina, where we intended to stay. We picked up 300 litres at Brixham, enough to get us to Dartmouth and Guernsey, with about 400 litres in reserve. The cost was 65p per litre, similar to Lymington; in Guernsey it is around 35p, so no need to take on more than necessary.



Prime Time in Dart marina



A view up the river Dart - note the mist



Dart marina - Prime Time distantly right of centre

The weather conditions were clear, cloudy, wind gusting 15kts SW. The tide was slack. The crossings to Brixham and then Dartmouth went to plan and we pulled in to Dart marina at noon, a little later than expected, because it took a long time for Brixham to get a man round to the fuel berth.

Last year, Dart marina had no free berths for visitors. Whilst we did stay there, we had to 'hot berth' by moving almost daily, occupying residents berths whilst they were away. This season, they have two free berths, so we are OK until the end of the month, when we plan to move on. Watch this space.



Dart hotel, which owns the marina



We used to own this boat in Majorca and have many happy memories of her, cruising around Majorca and Menorca. We found it berthed in Dartmouth and in excellent condition

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Sent today by a friend with a long lens!

Chapter 4

Monday 30 May 2016

After 11 days in Dart marina, Dartmouth it was time to move on, but where? We want to port and river hop down to Falmouth and visit the Channel Islands all by early August, but we also need to go home for almost two weeks around 22 June. Should we go to the Channel Islands now and leave Prime Time say in Jersey, or continue down the west country and leave her in Plymouth? We can leave the boat in Plymouth free of charge because we are berth holders in a sister 'Yacht Havens Group' marina in Lymington. By comparison, in Jersey, it may cost around £500 at £40 per night. Plymouth won. But hold on. Could we go to the Channel Islands now and return to Plymouth before 22nd June? Too risky with the Channel Island fog and cross channel weather, so continuing down the west country seemed the safer bet.



Our marina bill at Dart marina came to £49.50 per night. Only a little more expensive than similar marinas, but they have the best facilities we've ever seen (even a full size bath), a great hotel on site and is the only marina in Dartmouth. Yes, there is the Darthaven marina across the river in Kingswear, but we nearly always find its visitor pontoon full with rallies. There is also the even less convenient Noss marina upstream of Kingswear, which has no finger berths, rafting out and is in an industrial setting. Fortunately, Premier Marinas bought it out of Administration last month and have plans for a new marina, water taxi service and 80 ton travel lift, so relief is on the way.

Whilst in Dartmouth, we met up with Peter Lowe and Sharon from The Royal Lymington Yacht Club and some of our family members.

Today we set off for the river Yealm, just east of Plymouth. Conditions were wind northerly force 3, sunny, clear. The distance was 30nm taking 1 3/4hrs. We caught the last of the west going tide, aiming to arrive at the mouth of the river at noon, departing 1015hrs. High water Plymouth was 1247hrs, so depths would not be a problem passing the sand bar going in.

The crossing around the point at Salcombe was a bit lumpy, but not enough to slow us down and once heading west, instead of south out of Dartmouth, the sea was as flat as a pancake. Once again the autopilot played up with Prime Time swerving from port to starboard, so, for most of the way, the skipper steered. Upon later investigation, the autopilot calibration setting for rudder response had defaulted again to a sailboat setting. We reset it, but have discovered that whenever the electricity supply is turned off when we are in port, the system defaults to sailboat setting again. I shall have to reset it each time we go out until I have the courage to tamper with the 'dealer settings' which seems the only way to make a permanent change. However, the handbook warnings of entering 'Dealer Settings' are almost as dire as Cameron would have us believe leaving the EU would be.



The entrance to the river Yealm went according to plan and we were able to tie up to the first and preferred mid river visitor pontoon on the starboard hand. It was empty at midday, filled up by this evening, but no rafting out as yet. The harbour master visited us and we are £38 lighter for a two night stay.



The dingy was deployed for a trip up river to the Yealm Yacht Club to book a table for their bank holiday BBQ. On our return to the dinghy (it was 2hrs before low water) it was high and dry. The crew and skipper had to carry the tender to the water through ankle deep mud, but apart from a messy tender afterwards, all was well. Later we returned by dinghy, but this time, mooring up at the harbour master's pontoon at Newton Ferrers, which doesn't dry out and walking 15 minutes to the yacht club. An outstanding BBQ menu from their 12 years service chef, but only three tables taken; a familiar story. We sat outside in the evening sun overlooking this beautiful river as can be seen from the photograph opposite (see the crew in pink!).

We have no mobile phone signal, no internet access and to top it all, our two year old TV set has packed up. Typical when we are in the middle of nowhere. It has been binned and a new one awaits our arrival in Plymouth later this week. Watch this space.



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Superyacht refit at Pendennis yard next to marina

Chapter 5

Thursday 2 June

After 3 nights on the idyllic river Yealm, on the banks of Newton Ferrers and Noss Mayo, it was time to move on to regain telephone and internet connection once again. A bus trip to Plymouth had sourced a new TV, so at least that kept us in touch. We set off at 1040hrs deciding to go to Falmouth, a 40nm crossing taking approximately 2 hrs. We thought we would explore that area of Cornwall once again, before another few nights moored mid river in Fowey relying on our water supplies and generating our own electricity. That would also be on our way back to Plymouth where we plan to leave the boat for about 10 days.

The weather forecast today was NE force 3, clear. We would catch the last of the ebb tide going west, but that would coincide with low water neaps on the river Yealm. The charts and Reeds Almanac informed us there should be a minimum depth of 2.2m MLWN, so as we draw 1.1m, we should be OK getting out back to sea, provided we stay in the middle of the river channel and follow the meander out. We departed satisfactorily and set our course having adjusted the auto pilot sensitivity first. Two things happened.

The first was that we were conscious of a slight vibration. This usually emanates from the propellers having either hit something and buckled, or, more likely picked up a rope. It was not enough to stop an engine or slow us down from our usual 20kts cruising speed, but, nevertheless, we were aware of it. As we neared the end of our crossing the vibration seemed to clear.

The second was that this d...d autopilot instead of swerving from port to starboard along our course, was now cruising more serenely, but nevertheless deviating about 20 metres one way and then the other resulting in constant 'S' shaped movements to follow a straight line. Once again, the skipper had to resort to steering manually for most of the crossing.

(An attempt at a panorama of Port Pendennis marina, Falmouth, below)



The crossing

was on a flat sea under a cloudy sky, but lovely. On arrival at Falmouth around 1300hrs, Port Pendennis Marina, the first on the port hand on entry to the river Fal and closest to town, found us a vacant berth on pontoon B 22 for two nights. If we want to stay longer, we will have to move, hopefully to another berth vacated by its leaseholder. This marina no longer has visitors berths, an increasingly familiar story as the leisure boating industry has recovered strongly since the downturn.

The marina office kindly arranged for a diver from the nearby diving school to take a look at our undergear this afternoon. All was clear, with all the undergear reportedly in excellent condition and no damage to the propellers etc. There was evidence of something possibly having been picked up however, but our rope cutters had done their job.

The marina office have also arranged for the local Raymarine electronics engineer to pay us a visit on Monday. He will come out on Prime Time for an hour to 'dealer reconfigure' the autopilot from scratch for us. I'm wondering if, when we changed all the ship's batteries in the winter, this caused the autopilot to default to its factory settings? All will be revealed. Watch this space.

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Chapter 6

Friday 10 June – Fowey

We've been robbed! Turned over!
Mugged! Shanghied! Duped! Thieved!

Whilst in Port Pendennis Marina, Falmouth, I asked our neighbour with a lovely Princess 42, if the diesel price at the Falmouth Yacht Haven visitor's marina was about the same as anywhere else and he shrugged and said he thought so. So, we went to fill up. Fill up mind you. Not just a 5 litre can here. When the bill came the price was not the 52p per litre (non-propulsion) price in Lymington, or the 58p per litre in Brixham, but, wait for it. Are you sitting down? 85p per litre. Yes, 63% more expensive than other marinas! Of course, I queried it with his boss, but, "you see Sir, it's a local authority run marina". Ah yes, the public sector. I blame the EU. There should be a warning in all the pilot books and Reeds Almanac about these damned robbers. Be warned! My own fault, I suppose I should have asked first.

The Raymarine guy, Billy came out with us the day before and recalibrated the autopilot, which now runs fine. He advises to have the compass recalibrated every year, or at least when electrical work is done, which, of course, we have.

Anyway, after a sleepless night about the diesel, it was Friday and time to think about Fowey, our next port of call. The weather after Saturday doesn't look too clever, so if we don't move now or



The crew found a better offer

tomorrow, we'll be in Falmouth until the middle of next week and as much as we like it and its surrounds, 8 days or so, is fine. We paid our bill which was £42 per night.

The forecast was F2 and because it was so light, it had little constant direction. The wave heights around Plymouth were around 0.9m. Visibility, good and no rain. So, catching the east going tide, we set off from Falmouth at 1030hrs for a 1hr 20nm crossing to the river Fowey.

Well, no sooner had we emerged from Falmouth bay, we were in to 2m plus waves and rollers. We slowed down from 20kts to 12kts. The automatic trim tabs had our bow nicely dug in to the oncoming sea and we ploughed through it with plenty of spray over the top of us. After about 30 minutes, it worsened so we headed further out to sea in case it was overfalls and eventually, after about 1hr and 30m into our 1hr crossing, it was still rough, but we were able to head for Fowey at our normal cruising speed. We arrived at 1230hrs. After we moored up on the mid river pontoon opposite the lifeboat in Fowey, we looked back out to sea and it was like a mill pond. Where had all that come from? Perhaps it was Falmouth local council? Despite the forecasts, you just never know what the reality is going to be like. I blame the EU.

We celebrated our safe delivery with a delicious evening meal at the Royal Fowey Yacht Club, which, incidentally has an extensive table d'hote and an equally extensive specials board of sea food. The skipper had ribs, however, and (see photograph), that is how to serve ribs! The crew had chilli crab cakes, also delicious.

Today we awoke to find Jim Sey of the Lymington Town Sailing Club in 'Second Rebellion' behind us and it was good to catch up with him and his crew. They were leaving for Falmouth, but we hope to meet up next week in Plymouth. Watch this space.



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Chapter 7

Friday 18 June – Plymouth

After 8 nights on a mid-river pontoon in Fowey we were truly sorry to move away from such a delightfully pretty town and harbour. We were delighted that our domestic water had lasted so long (although we could have refilled from a harbour master's walk ashore pontoon) even with daily showers etc. The inside of our mooring pontoon opposite the lifeboat station, bow facing the sea, is very peaceful. On the outside of the pontoon facing upstream, there is much water slapping and wash noise on the hull during the night, which does not make for good sleeping. The cost here was £23 per night with the seventh night free. Helpfully, there are RNLI sponsored lockers in which to leave lifejackets after dinghying ashore, so we didn't have to carry them around with us all day.

At 1030hrs today, we set off for Plymouth. The forecast was wind force 3 NW, wave height 0.9m, dry, but cloudy with good visibility. The crossing was 20nm, taking about 1.5hrs, allowing for moving at around 6kts out of Fowey and also around the inner



reaches of Plymouth sound as we approached the marina areas.

The conditions out at sea were perfect for a motorboat, very little surface activity, so we were able to keep up our cruising speed of 20kts, with the tide adding another knot in our favour. Once again, the autopilot performed as it should, since it's recalibration.



Plymouth Yacht Haven have allocated us berth N14 for as long as we want it, as we are returning home on Monday until 4th July. As mentioned earlier, this is free, as we are annual berth holders at Lymington Yacht Haven. We saw David and Carole Hayles Nimbus "Dsea" all safely berthed whilst they too are back in Lymington.

It is difficult to photograph Plymouth because it is so large, so please see the naval chart; Plymouth Yacht Haven is bottom right. I also enclose a photograph of Polperro where we saw some filming for "Poldark". I also show a photograph of the amount of c***p the skipper had to lift out of a berth we were allocated at Falmouth, before moving in to it. To do otherwise, might have blocked up the sea water filters. This was Port Pendennis marina, where, you might have thought, they'd keep it clean themselves.

Our next port is St. Peter Port, Guernsey, when we return. Watch this space.

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Chapter 8

Thursday 7 July – St Peter Port, Guernsey

We returned to Plymouth on Tuesday, to find Prime Time at Plymouth Yacht Haven as we left her. The berth had been free, as we were able to do a berth swap with our home port of Lymington Yacht Haven, in the same ownership. The travel to/from Lymington is worth a mention. The train would have cost £225. A one way hire car £70 each way. Enterprise picked us up from the marina and dropped us back off there on the return - all part of the service. Apparently they collect you from 'home' when you hire from them. Both compact cars had satnavs and auto air conditioning. They had convenient branches near both locations.

The weather forecast yesterday was Plymouth wind SW 10 mph, wave height 0.7m, sunny and clear. Guernsey, wind NW 6 mph, wave height 0.9m, sunny and clear. The mid-channel buoy wind NNW 9 mph and wave height 0.7m. The tide was in our favour from 1615hrs for a 90nm 4.5hr crossing at 20kts arriving 2045hrs. That gave us the morning free for a walk east over the cliff top towards the Wembury area. All very lovely, but alas the crew had a fall, hurting one of her assets, badly bruising a rib, cutting a knee, grazing a hand and smashing her



sunglasses. Shaken, she carried on back to the boat. Out came the first aid kit and in to the washing machine went her clothes. We wondered if she was up to crewing on our long passage in the afternoon, but heroically she insisted she was.

Our crossing to St. Peter Port went well, with smooth to slight seas all the way. We encountered some traffic, but nothing required a change of course. The crew was much excited by the sight of a pod of either dolphins or porpoise around us and diving under the boat. Andrew and Linda in their Nordhavn were setting off at 0800hrs from Yarmouth for St. Peter Port for a 13hr crossing arriving 2100hrs. As we approached the north of the island, Andrew called us up on channel 16, switching to 72 and we got sight of each other.

It was high water springs in the marina, with the boats level with the cars in the surrounding car park. It was pretty full and we were allocated to raft up against another Broom boat. 'Zephyros', Andrew and Linda's boat, was also rafted up against another similarly large trawler vessel, obviously French because it was filthy dirty. We dined until midnight onboard Prime Time exchanging stories about our crossings, which had gone extremely well.

This morning we moved 'Prime Time' at 0830hrs to allow the Broom we were rafted to exit the marina and 'Zephyros' also moved to a spot in the marina, where it is unlikely it will be rafted. Both couples met up at Air-Tell in the town later to purchase 20 Gig 4G data sim cards for our wifi units, costing a reasonable £20, which will give us plenty of wifi access in both Guernsey and Jersey for all our devices. The marina wifi in both locations is pretty poor and in Guernsey today, out of service altogether.

Later, the crew bought a sports bra to secure her 'assets' more comfortably. She is now not aching quite so much, the cut knee is healing, but she is sporting an eye watering cleavage.

Meanwhile the skipper washed the boat down with 'A Glaze' shampoo which is notably frothy. Whenever the French are around, this washing gathers a Gallic crowd of onlookers.

Frenchmen: Why iz you vashing your boat?

Skipper: To get the salt off which is sticky and attracts dirt.

Frenchmen: Laughter and mutterings of "mad Englishman" as one gesticulates with his finger by his brain and the other's fag ash drops down the front of his Bretton T-shirt.

Frenchmen: Vot is making zee bubbles?

Skipper: Soap.

Frenchmen: Vot is zis zoap?

Skipper: Knowing that is something you cannot buy in France, said "You find a tablet of it in a wrapper in an English hotel bathroom".

Frenchmen: "Ah yes, I tried it once, but didn't like the taste"

Watch this space.

PRIME TIME BLOG 2016

Chapter 9

**Monday 18 July – St Helier,
Jersey**

The weather forecast today was wind force 1 NE, wave height 0.5m, sunny and clear, so a good day for the 29nm crossing to Jersey, taking approximately 1.5hrs at 20kts. The St. Helier marina sill opened at 1530hrs, so we decided to depart St. Peter Port, Guernsey at 1430hrs, arriving approximately 1600hrs, to avoid any vessel congestion waiting to cross the sill. This timing would also enable us to catch a favourable tide giving us 10% more speed and fuel economy.

‘Zephyros’ had departed for St.Helier yesterday and had advised us the weekend crush had gone and the marina was now relatively quiet, with plenty of spaces available.

First however, we needed to obtain fuel at St. Sampsons harbour a few minutes up the coast from St. Peter Port. The cost there was 40p per litre, instead of 51p in St. Peter Port and we needed 635 litres. Obtaining a slot for the tanker there wasn’t easy, it being fully booked, but we eventually got one at 0750hrs.



St. Helier



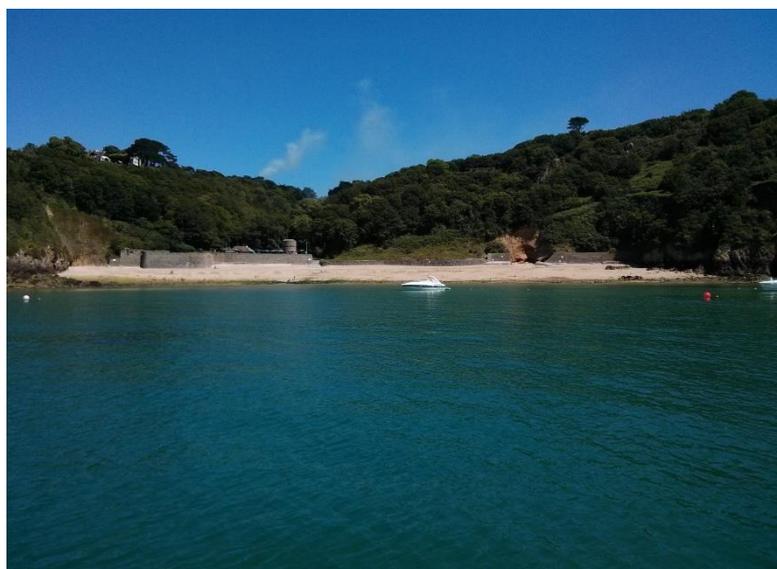
St. Helier

Rising at 0600hrs, we had to ask the two motor boats rafted to us, the night before, to also get up early to allow us to move and so at 0720hrs, we slipped our lines and headed out of St. Peter Port. Mooring up at St. Sampsons is a routine pontoon, but the skipper has to climb a vertical ladder about 20ft, to speak to the tanker driver and pay the bill. Manhandling the hefty commercial fuel pipe and fuel gun over Prime Time is a two man business, which the crew managed brilliantly, but it sadly set her injury back. Next time, I must find a way of doing this single handed.



Fermain bay

We departed St. Sampsons at 08.20hrs and returned to the outer harbour at St. Peter Port, whilst the crew went shopping. We then either had to hang around until the tide at 1430hrs or go somewhere in the meantime. Being such a lovely summer's day, we decided to anchor at Fermain bay just down the coast and have lunch there. The crew was in raptures watching a huge pod of dolphins pass by, to say nothing of the physique of a tall blond male paddle boarder with a washboard for a chest. Things took a bit of a dive for her later however, when another man swam past with nothing on but his underpants around his thighs exposing his hairy bottom.



Fermain bay

At 1430hrs we lifted anchor and headed for St. Helier on a perfectly flat sea in hot sunshine. On entry to the marina, which is usually a free for all to get a berth, we were met by a berthing master in a Dory. The crew declined to follow him and requested a finger berth we had had before, but this new berthing master was having none of it. We were too big and that was that. We had to go alongside. The crew graciously let him off lightly. Later, tea was welcome aboard 'Zephyros'.

We will reside in St. Helier until the end of the month or so and then return to Lymington, so this is the last blog for 2016. Thank you for your comments which are most welcome and we look forward to seeing you again, when we return to dry land.