

LATE AGAIN JULY 2016

**North Brittany and the Channel Isles**

# Late Again's Cruise North Brittany 2016

St Hellier to Roscoff and Return to Lymington

6-21 July 2016

Approx 378 NM, 14 sailing days, averaging 27 NM per sailing day (compares to 315 NM, 12 days, daily average 24 NM on our cruise Lymington/ Scilly Isles/back to Penzance in 2014). Just under half of our passage hours under sail alone - 37 sail, to 42 motor or motor-sail. Coincidentally the sailing hours in our 2014 cruise were also 37, but the motor/motor-sail were less than half at 31

In Outline:

Our partners in the boat, Pete & Ruth Wagstaffe, had cruised the boat from Lymington to Cherbourg, Guernsey, Treguier, Portrieux and Jersey, in the miserable weather of the second half of June. We hoped for better luck, to explore the reefs and plateaus S of Jersey, then cruising out and back along the 'Cote de Granit Rose' including a crew-change at Roscoff.

# SAILING SOUTH & WEST

Day 1, Weds 6 July: A lunch-stop in the Plateau des Minquiers (Minkies), and overnight in the Iles Chausey. Crew: G&JT, Lynn and Steve Poulter.

The idea of this day's sail was to learn more about some of the low-lying plateaus which lie east and south of Jersey. Time wouldn't allow overnighing in both, but the Minkies are known as a lunch-stop for people traveling further, and as access to the Sound at Chausey is possible from the south at all states of the tide, we figured we could pass through the Minkies on our way south, take in some of the atmosphere there, and reach Chausey some time after low tide at around 16.00 (BST +1).

We left Jersey Marina at 10.40 BST, an hour before the falling tide closed the cill to us: implication for a 20-odd mile sail to Chausey was that we could dawdle over the day's passage since we didn't want to arrive before LW. Winds were light NW, but too little even for dawdlers - so mostly motor for the morning. All the sun we required.

It didn't seem unreasonable to pay a call on the Minkies on the way: with the proviso that we were at full springs, with an 11-metre tidal range, and that the passage through past Maitresse Ile might prove difficult if we were much below half-tide. However, the latest RCC Pilot for the area talks of a growing sandbank (2006) off the Grune Tar beacon (N of Maitresse Ile): and so it proved. We came up 100m short of an impressive bank which blocked

## Day 1 Contd

our way entirely, even with an expected 4m depth at the time of approach. But we anchored of the Jetee des Fontaines de Bas (one of the marks of the passage), brought out the lunch, and gave the Minkies full marks for remoteness, sunlit charm, and unquestioned control of its borders. You can just see the cluster of houses on the island on the left, and the beginnings of the sandbar on the right.



So we continued on our way after a couple of hours by going back the way we had come, and taking the conventional route to Chausey round the N and NE Minkies buoys. Now the breeze was better, still NW, and we coasted along under spinnaker with the tide under us until Chausey was abeam, at 18.00 (FST), and we motored the last miles round the headlands into the sound.

We found most of the hoped-for mooring buoys occupied. Negotiations with other skippers suggested two possibilities: **either** there was no hope of avoiding grounding on the available moorings at the next LW - there was 8m to fall, and around 8m on the sounder; **or**, if we took the advice of the friendliest skipper, and tucked in behind him, there was assuredly a trench under him, and he hadn't touched last night with a draught of 1.6m. We followed the second course:

we were well sheltered, no swell, clean sand beneath, and a touch would probably be no more than a little lean. So we dinghied to shore, dined with pleasure, went to bed at midnight and - plonk - woke at 04.00 to the sound of tumbling books from the chart table, and the boat at a 25 degree heel. The tide dropped for another 30 minutes, the boat reached 30 degrees, and then recovered as we dozed, until we floated upright by about 06.30. Low Water Springs does make Chausey an uncomfortable place for a deep-keeler: next time we went the coefficient was 60%, rather than 96% on the first occasion - and it worked better!

(Bowling down to Chausey, in light airs, the islands to the left).

(7 hours at sea, of which 2 anchored: about three under motor)





High Tide and the setting sun on Chausey, and a tippy night....



Day 2, Thursday 7 July – a walk around the Chausey landmass, and an afternoon sail to St Malo to coincide with the first locking into the Bassin Vauban, which we thought would be 19.00. (Below is the lugger Cancalaise, which takes trippers from Chausey daily. She is leaving Port Marie, which provides a neap-tide anchorage just west of Chausey Sound.)



We slipped the mooring at 14.20, and were soon bowling down towards St Malo under poled-out jib and main. Over three hours under sail in a 10kt northerly meant we arrived at good speed off the handsome Grand Jardin lighthouse at 1815, and finally dropped sail just short of the lock gate, to be told the first locking was an hour away. So we cruised around a little and inspected Dinard Harbour, and were finally tied up under the walls of the old Citadel by 20.30. (Six hour motoring since Jersey (including locks) and about the same under sail.)

It was the night France dreamed of winning the Euro 2016 football, and the town was alive with fans of all ages, and glistening with with outdoor TV screens as they put Italy away decisively in the semis. Portugal would be easy after that? We slept well once the tooting car horns faded away in the small hours.



3 hours out of Chausey, the Brittany coast approaches, Steve is fishing and helming is fun. As usual, we're too fast for the fish. Below, St Malo from the sea.





Day 3, Friday 8 July: St Malo to Paimpol (or Lezardrieux?)

There was talk overnight of taking a lay day in St Malo on Friday, since there was in principle so much to explore. But another view was that, with five sailing days available before the crew had to be in Roscoff for their ferry home, nearly 100 miles of coastal sailing ahead, and the prospect of stronger winds from W and NW on Monday and Tuesday, it would be better to cover a large-ish slice of the distance now in fine weather, and have shorter daily runs later in the trip when the going would be tougher. The skipper took quiet satisfaction from the crew's willingness to suppress the lay day!

So Late Again slipped through the lock again at 11.00 near HW, hoping for 6 hours of W-going tide, and headed past the Grand Jardin light-tower towards Cap Frehel and the Baie de Paimpol 30 miles away. Winds were light NW, nearly on the nose, and our desire for distance required the motor to do most of the work, along with the autopilot.

At 15.00, after four hours and average speeds, tide-assisted, near 7 knots, we were covering the ground fine: too fine, in fact. The constraints of the tidal entrance at Paimpol, closed till around 20.00, meant that, with an arrival in the Anse de Paimpol near 17.00, we would have three hours to kill before we docked. We could have found a quiet anchorage and swum for our tea, but at that point the weather changed, the wind went up to 20 knots, still NW, the sky went dark grey as we passed the Grand Lejon light, and we were reefed and beating grimly into a lumpy grey sea. Swimming lost its appeal.

As the skipper was checking his locking times over the chart a bright voice from on deck said: 'Why hang around for Paimpol, when Lezardrieux is open all tides, and only 10 miles more?'. Julia, of course, and right again! So we eased sheets and headed north in a stiff breeze which promptly dropped to very little. Back to motor, and a careful search for the leading mark to take us in (Cain Ar Monse , N Cardinal in our case). We reached it at 18.00, and were

tucked into Lezardrieux Marina by 19.30.  $8\frac{1}{2}$  hours at sea, engine hours 8, sailing insignificant this day, progress excellent, a good supper ashore in the Yacht Club bar.

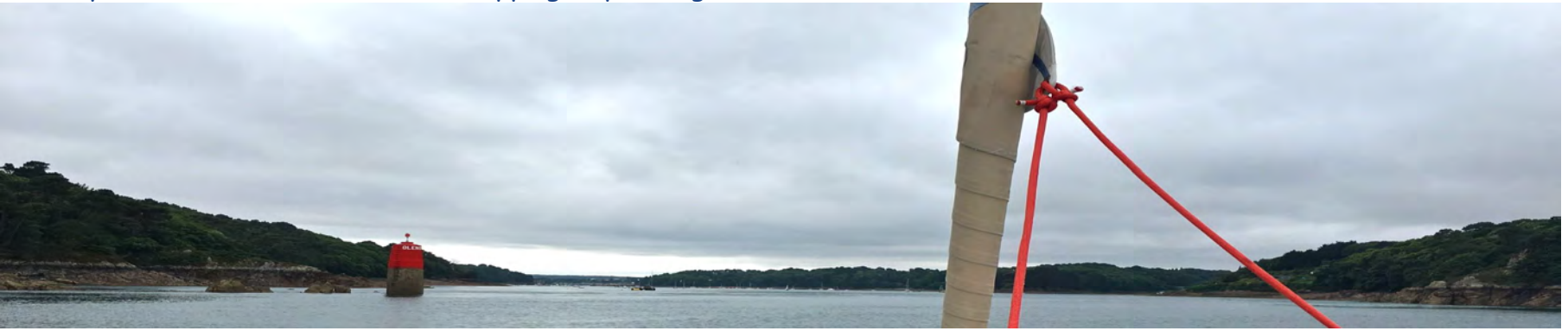


Rounding Cap Frehel under power - a headland we see more of later in the cruise.



Leaving Les Piliers to port (hopefully) as we pass south of Brehat on the way into Lezardrieux. The tide is unexpectedly flowing hard against us in the Rade de Brehat, while it will help us in the Trieux River.

# Entry to the Trieux River, and a shopping trip amongst the old-world charms of Lezardrieux



Day 4, Sat 9 July Lezardrieux to Treguier

This was a simple afternoon trip, around 15 miles, timed for a 1500 departure to catch the west-going tide, in light airs and strongish streams. We explored the route to Treguier, E of the E-interest marks (La Vieille de Treou, La Moisie), and finally west-going S of Les Heaux's handsome light, and through the little passage at Pont de la Gaine (looks like the eye of the needle on the chart, but is over 100m wide on the water: see extract from our Navionics plot for the afternoon, left below) and on to Treguier town, where we tied up in the marina after a fascinating three-hour passage, entirely under motor. Second chartlet shows a quick reaction from Steve on the helm as we came past the La Corne light and tried to pass over the banc du Taureau - no contact!





Day 5, Sunday 10 July: Treguier and Points West

A leisurely morning visiting Treguier, including the grand residence of the philosopher Ernest Renan, anti-clerical and secular, late c19th.

We planned to leave earlier than the day before, because of the distance to the planned stop at Trebeurden.

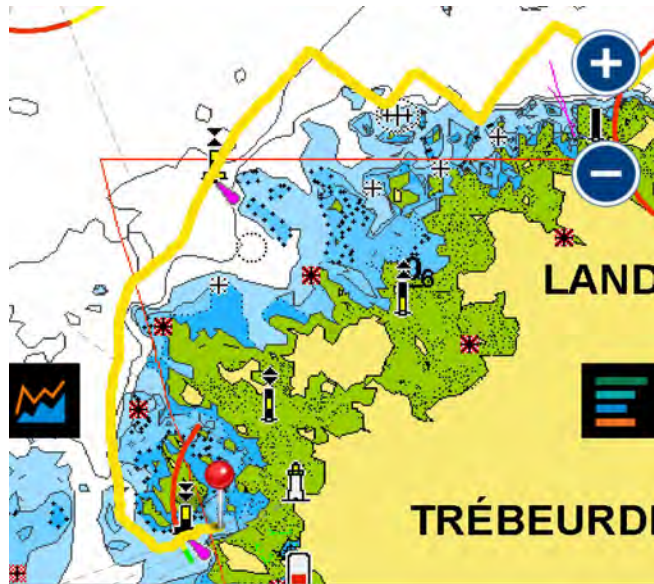
But before we could leave the Marina we had to extricate ourselves from an embarrassing mistake: tide was ebbing down-river at 2-3 kts, the boat pointing down-river too, but constrained by its down-tide pontoon, and needing to reverse into the current and gain steerage-way to manoeuvre out of the berth. Skipper gunned the motor in reverse as the lines came off, but instead of gaining steerage, the boat flipped quickly across the stream and across the sterns of the two-three boats to stbd. Lots of shouting, a few helpful comments from observers, and we left the berths sideways scraping our stbd topside against the stern-gear of the moored boats - in particular one stern ladder which left a long scratch in our gel-coat. We exchanged insurance and contact details with the HM, paid EUR 10 (Steve did) to the owner of a small cruiser driven by a large outboard, to help him re-paint a scratch on the motor, and were finally on our way - crestfallen and thoughtful, at 13.45.

(A two-bladed folding prop in a weedy marina probably needs special attention before it picks up enough drive to stem a strong tide in reverse gear. )

## Day 5 Contd

The change to the weather which we had anticipated was now in place - overcast skies, stronger winds (15-20 kts) but still from the NW.

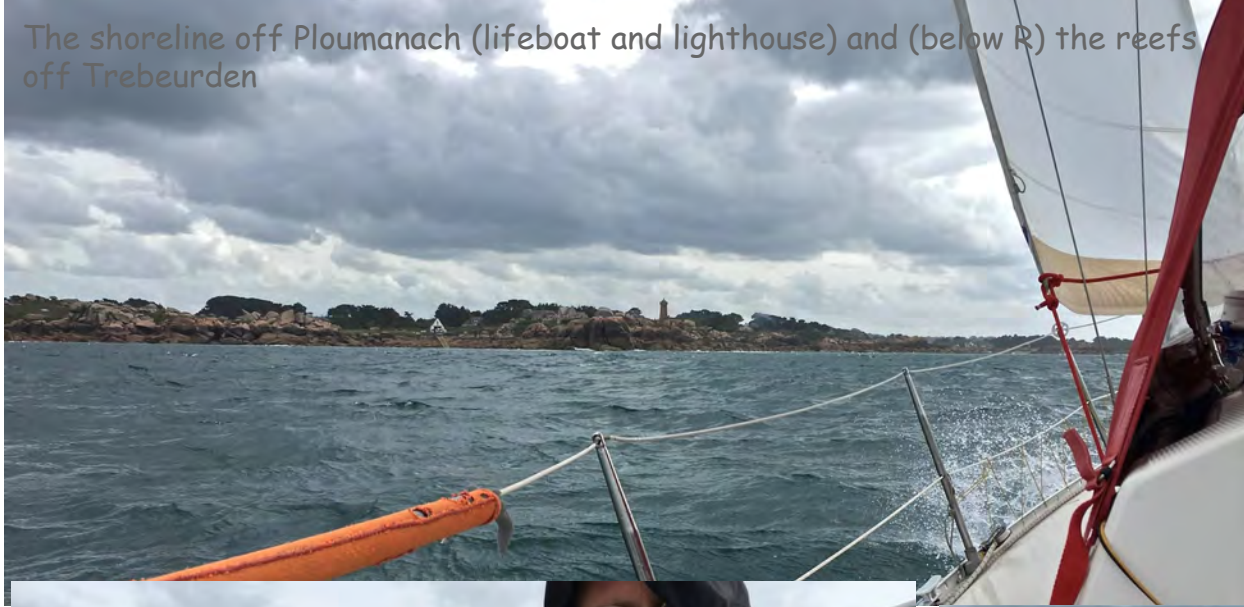
With reefed main and jib, we beat westward along the N Brittany shoreline, inside the Sept Iles, accompanied by a small number of boats with similar determination who we guessed were lured on by the Festival of the Sea at Brest. The last one disappeared into the rocks around Ploumanach, and we were left to beat on alone past the reefs which lurked inside the Barr ar Gall buoy in mounting seas: at the tops we could see only white water for an hour or so, and we feared the turn of the tide would soon delay us.



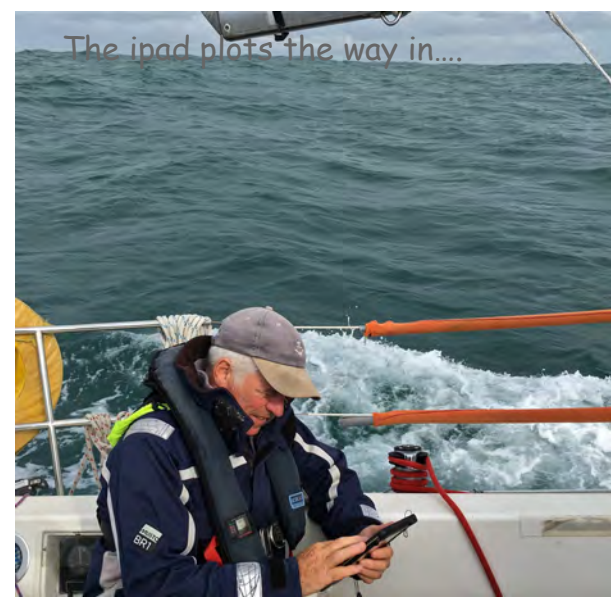
But the corner was for turning, shelter was half an hour away, and we celebrated the rounding by turning on the motor and picking our way south outside the Crapaud rocks and inside the Ile Milliau to Trébeurden itself: a handsome resort town which has burnished its jewel by adding a new marina with space for passing yachts. Since it was after 17.00 we got no help from any Harbour Master, but did our own maths and crossed the cill at 20.00, as the first of the waiting boats to take the plunge: nearly 1 metre to spare under the keel!

A 6 hour passage, 35 miles, 5 under sail and 1 power.

The shoreline off Ploumanach (lifeboat and lighthouse) and (below R) the reefs off Trebeurden



The ipad plots the way in....



Lynn and Steve keep the course





Day 6, Monday 11 July: The Last Leg of Part 1 of the Cruise, to Roscoff

Trebeurden has a good marina with good shore facilities - and good walks across to the Ile Milliau when the spring tides are running: but the neaps were with us, so no footway would appear to the Island for the next few days. We walked the nearby shoreline with its tumbly pink rock formations, and prepared to catch the ebb to Roscoff 15 miles to the west at 14.00- by taking the big furling genoa off the forestay, and replacing it with the High Aspect no.3 jib which came with the old suit of sails bought with the boat in 2012. 20 knot Westerly forecast, which with W-going tide and our own headway could easily lead to 30kts over the deck, and we wanted to put less stress on the reefed No 1, as the sailmaker had asked.

The passage went well, taking 3 ½ hours into the teeth of the wind, and the same steep seas as the day before. The trial for the no.3 jib went well too, with a good clean luff for the breeze to work on. Our track across the bay bore no relation to our previously waymarked route, as the head wind and the topography dictated most of the tacking decisions: so we tacked Sof the Meloine rocks instead of N as planned, and nearly into the mouth of the Morlaix river too; and S of the Duons, instead of N. At a mile off we spotted the new marina walls, furled sails and motored in, pleased with 14 nm hard sailing out of 15.

The new Roscoff Marina is a fine facility for sailors complementing a beautiful old town, best known for its shipping and ferry links to the UK down the ages - including the 6-year old Mary Stuart bound for Paris from Scotland to become the Queen of France in 1548, and onions, spuds and caulies in more recent times.

Tuesday was a lay day for exploring the town. Lynn and Steve left us on the Plymouth Ferry at 08.30, and Carolyn and Gerry McCafferty joined us on the returning boat on the same evening. We took the ferry to the Ile de Batz during the day (pronounced Bah!) and enjoyed another island environment in fair weather.





This and previous page: Paths above Trebeurden, the no.3 jib at work against a dark sky, and the skies clearing for our arrival in Roscoff

Roscoff's handsome church, a Gaullist memorial on the Ile de Batz to 11 Frenchmen who had crossed to England in June 1940 in answer to De Gaulle's appeal from London in the same month: and the graves of two Canadian sailors who died with over 120 of their shipmates when their Destroyer HMCS Athabaskan was sunk just before D-Day in April 1944



HMCS Athabaskan (Lt.Cdr. John Hamilton Stubbs, DSO, DSC, RCN) was sunk in the English Channel north-east of Ouessant by two torpedoes from the German torpedo boats **T-24** and **T-27**. The magazine and a boiler blew up in an explosion that was seen 20 miles away. 129 of the crew went down with the ship. 83 men were picked up from the water by the torpedo boats and taken prisoner. Another 44 of the crew were picked up by HMCS Haida. The wreck lies in position 48°42.940N, 004°31.485W.



Day 7, Le Quatorze Juillet 2016: Roscoff to Ploumanach.

The time had come to fill in some of the gaps in our knowledge of the N. Brittany coast as we turned eastward. First was Ploumanach where we had observed companion vessels seemingly disappear into the rocks on our way to Trebeurden on day 5. How was it done?

Weather was fair, NW3, the boat fully fuelled. We slipped at 1230 to allow our new crew to explore in a few hours the pleasures of Roscoff that we had enjoyed over two days, and set out to the NE on a beam reach with full sail, past the Barr ar Gall buoy, which had been such a landmark on day 5, and started closing the coast near the granite lighthouse we had seen on that occasion.

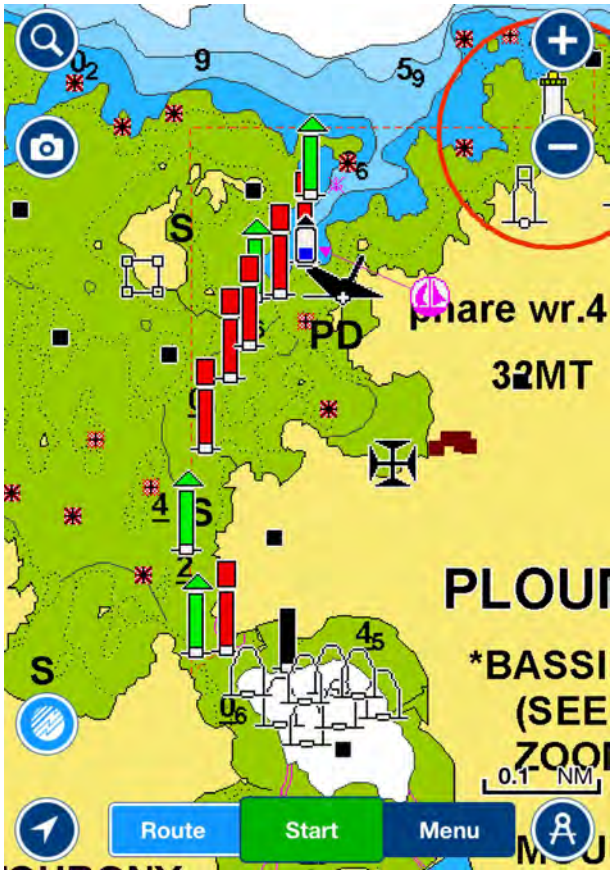


Ah! There's the lighthouse. Maybe the yacht will show us the way?



Is that a green post to the right of the pink rocks? Indeed it is!





The Navionics chart on the left gives some idea of the strangeness of Ploumanach as a port, but the aerial photo says much more. Once you have threaded the rocky entrance there is a perfectly sheltered fishing port now making sailors welcome, and with 1.8m behind the cill. The other side of the town is St Guirec, with a great beach and shops (top right of the photo). We loved it! Stay longer next time.



Ploumanach  
from the land:  
the entrance  
marks near  
the chateau.  
Below is a  
panorama  
from the quay  
in the  
morning:  
Carolyn and  
Gerry on the  
right





Day 8, 15 July: Ploumanach to Paimpol

Another lazy morning, breakfasting ashore (all) shopping (Carolyn) waiting for the rising tide to lift us over the cill: winds NW 2-3 as the day before, strong sun amongst broken cloud. 12.15 was the moment to slip, and once outside the rocky entrance we set course downwind, inside Les Heaux again (see day 4), past the the entrance to the Treguier river, and south alongside the Ile de Brehat. The tide allowed a splendid short-cut through the Kerpont Passage, which dries 4m at LW, but above half-tide feeds directly into the Anse de Paimpol through a series of narrow, but reasonably well-marked passages. We carried sail for all but the last few miles, where the typical anxiety of making 5-6 hour passages between one half-tide cill on the rise (Ploumanach) and another on the fall (Paimpol) meant we hurried the last bit under motor and made our date at 1730.



The Kerpont Passage, N/S over the sands drying 4.1m, then across the W/E Rade de Brehat, and on southward along the shallow channels into the Anse de Paimpol: a fun passage!



Julia helping us eastward on the inshore route to Brehat



Catching the breeze down the Kerpont, Paimpol next stop

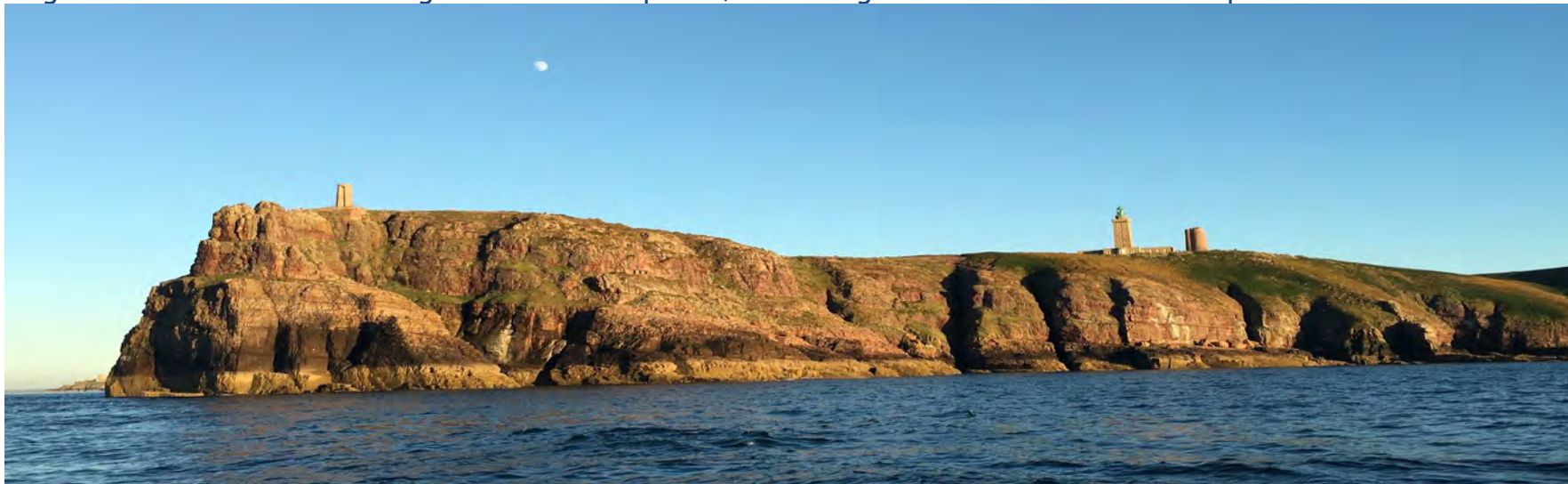


Paimpol is a handsome town with a long history, most recently fishing the Grand Banks under sail: good seafood and a very muddy entrance at low tide!

Day 9: Saturday 16 July

The objective today is St Cast: an old resort town 15 nm W of St Malo, with a new marina which we have heard well of. We are confident we can continue with shortish legs each day (32 NM today), the forecast remains fair, even if the wind has shifted to NE. We are focusing on a channel crossing next Thursday 21 July.

The sail starts at teatime (16.00) to allow the locks to open: we have two hours gentle sailing close-hauled, but the wind falls light and the motor goes on, then off, then on again for a dramatic close rounding of Cap Frehel, which shelters St Cast from W: this is 21.30, and we are keen to arrive! We tie into the all-tide marina an hour later, after a good deal of effort stemming the tide under power, as once again our tidal window has expired.



The Cape at Frehel is studded with old lighthouses. The active one is the nearest on the right.



The sun sets  
behind us as we  
motor down to  
St Cast after  
rounding  
Frehel



St Cast: beautiful sands, an elegant resort, a Gaullist monument: and a well-integrated marina, no cill and a lovely prom into town



Day 10: Sunday 17 July

Our exertions in rounding Frehel late last night allowed another lazy start (15.15 hrs), with 10 miles to go to St Malo and a lock into the Vieux Port which wouldn't open until after 18.00. Weather warm, winds NE f1-2, which mean close on the port bow if we were to sail at all. The log recalls a cheerful late lunch at sea, followed by a more determined effort to pick the right channel into St Malo: in this case the Chenal du Decolle, a mile or so S of the main channel past le Grand Jardin. We picked our way under motor past the local marks (favourite is Le Petit Buzard!) and arrived in time for the first locking, only to find a large Russian tanker taking priority over the small fry. After we have received five sharp toots for trying to get in first, all is forgiven and we are locked in together with the monster.







Elegant villas along the Dinard shoreline, outside St Malo. We found a creperie in the old town.



Day 11: Monday 18 July

Pressure from the lock-keepers was now impacting at the other end of the day: the last chance to leave the basin was 08.45, so we were amongst the early risers, keen to catch the E-going tide towards Chausey, 15-odd miles to the NE. Our liking for the shallow reefs of the area wasn't exhausted, and with a new crew and a smaller tidal range we felt we could make a better job of our second visit.

This time we took one of the easterly exits from St Malo, the Chanel des Petits Pointus, which set us nicely on our route, and magically a Northerly wind sprung up, sufficiently broad to give us a gentle sail direct to the Sound at Chausey on port tack. Dolphins attended us on the last stage of the journey.



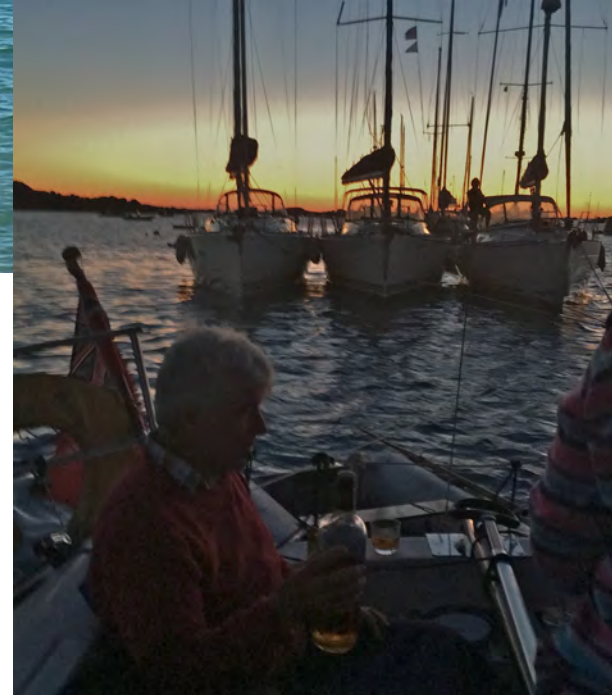
By early afternoon we were tied up in the N end of the Sound again, with a promise of 3m of depth at LW.

A pleasant evening walk around the island, and supper back on board.



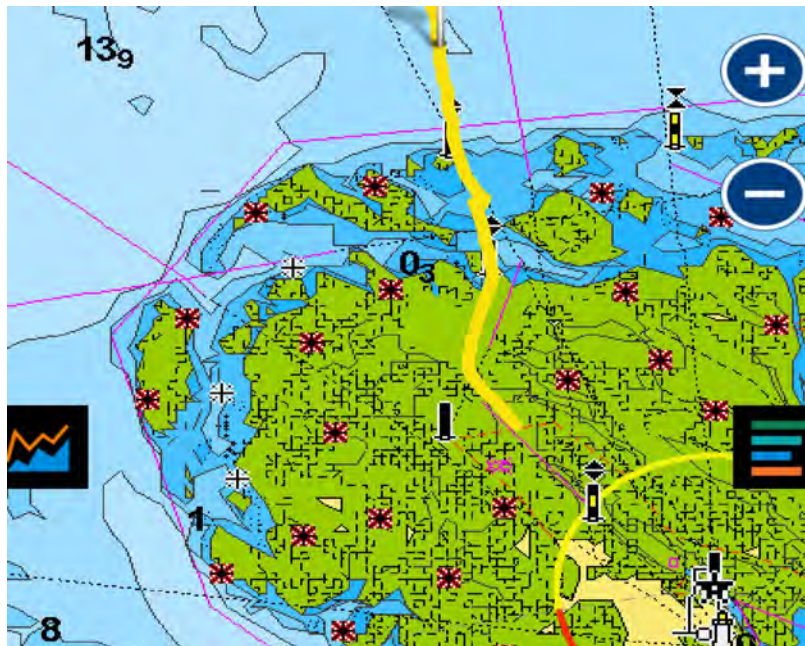
Mooring in Chausey Sound takes a lot of string, but the views from ashore are delightful...

...and the swimming was good, the small boats well catered for, and the evening libation congenial.

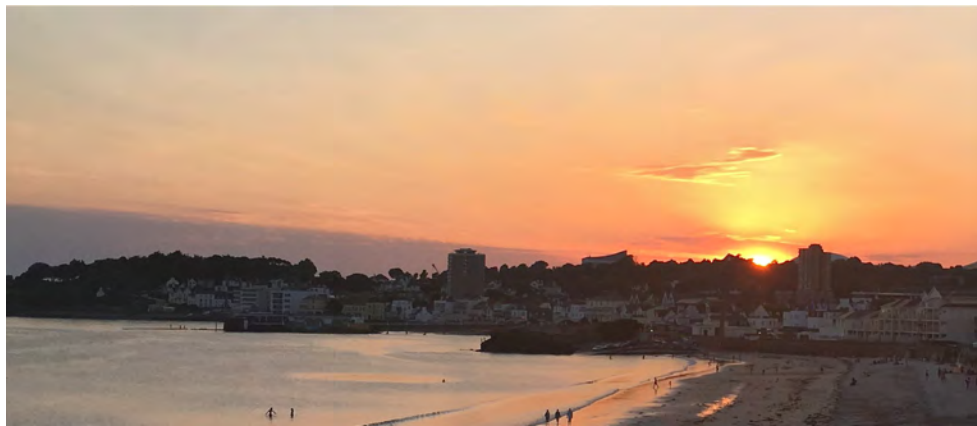


Day 12: Tuesday 19 July

We had avoided approaching Chausey by la Grande Entree (sic) on our earlier visit since we were on a falling tide, but by 08.00 on Tuesday we were at virtually full tide, with around 8m over datum, and only a short distance to run before we were through the passage, so we gave it a go at 08.15. It was clearly marked with a couple of turns, and in 40 minutes we were through, and hoisting sail in 15 kts of SE breeze, for St Helier, where we arrived at 12.45, locking into the inner harbour when it opened mid-afternoon.



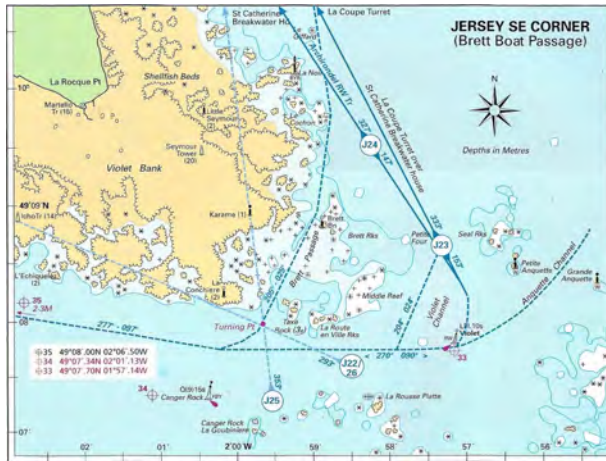
McCaffertys explored St Helier in the afternoon, while the Trevs linked up to relatives and dined at the water's edge in St Clements Bay on Thai cuisine!



## Day 13, Weds 20 July: Jersey to Alderney

The wind agreed to collaborate on this last day before we set off across the Channel to home: 20kts W at 06.30 as we left harbour on the rising tide.

A good reaching breeze, but dissuasive for going west-about on leaving St Helier. Local advice was: 'of course, go east-about'. This presented a wealth of choices, but the inshore route was bound to be favourite in terms of distance run, so we chose the Brett Passage, went round Conchiere to port and N to the Cochon buoy (red can), leaving Bretts beacon to stbd. Like other narrow passages, it looks much wider on the water than on the chart, and we had a few meters over datum. We glimpsed Mont Orgueil Castle to port, and another sunken landscape as we went N through the Ecrehou plateau at the top of Jersey, and then romped NNW towards Alderney, with two reefs in main and jib for comfort.



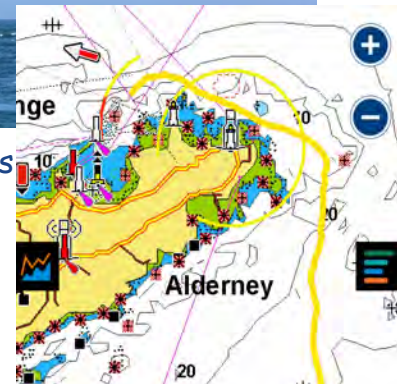
Brett Passage  
Chart from RCC  
Channel Islands,  
Peter Carnegie



When didn't this happen on this cruise? We have started mighty early to catch the N-bound stream, but our 35-mile passage from the Brett Beacon, has by noon exceeded the life of the stream, and we are now at the top end of the Alderney Race - where we have seen boats sucked southward as the stream builds to over six knots. But it is early in the change of tide, and we put the motor on as we slow. It is nonetheless quite a struggle to round Quenard Point at the NE tip of the island: the log reads; 'a great sail with 2 hrs of white-knuckle motoring at the end': moored in Braye Hbr 1315 BST, 6  $\frac{3}{4}$  hrs after leaving Jersey. We concluded, by the way, that GPS doesn't help much in telling you if you are rounding a tide-girt headland: good old transits work better.



(Wind over tide off Quenard Point at 1215 BST) **Footnote:** Our track around the headland shows us passing inside the Sauquet rock, which is awash at LW. We were at HW but it wasn't intentional, and the water was very disturbed.





A quick passage meant an afternoon for exploring, a delicious supper at the Braye Beach Hotel ('Alderney's Boutique Hotel on the Beach'), and an early bed.



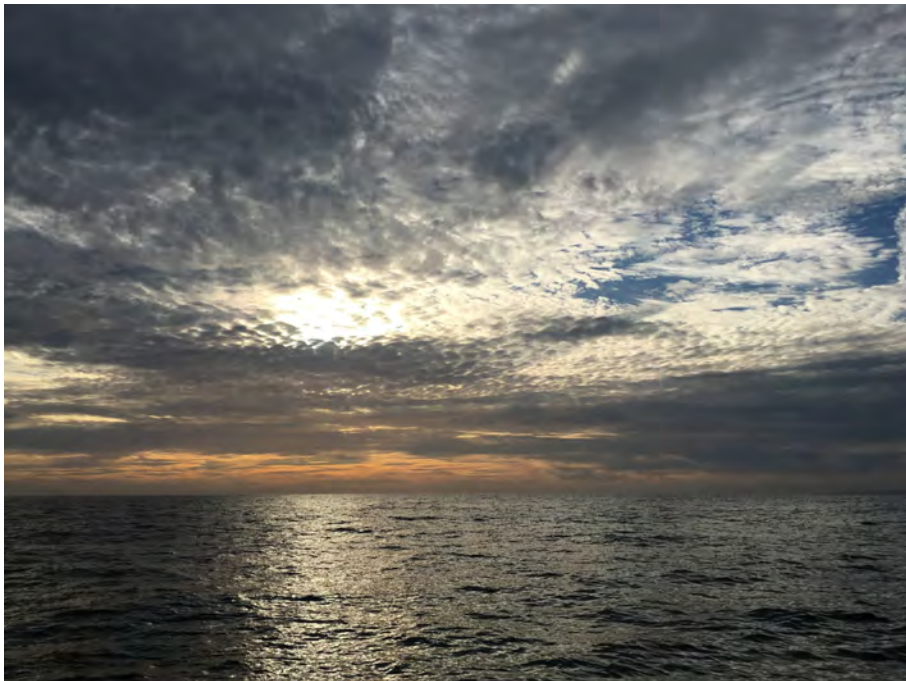


Day 14, Thursday 21 July

Lighter airs were forecast for this last day of the cruise. We made a cautious assumption of an average 5 knots for the 60-mile passage ahead, and we set our alarms for a twelve-hour journey starting around 06.00, to catch the first of the flood at Hurst. The actual start was 06.20, mainsail and motor in a light NW breeze, but it filled in steadily through the first part of the morning, till by 09.15 we were under full sail making 6-7kts, and remained that way until we arrived off the Bridge three hours early for the tide at 15.30. This time we needed 90 minutes of motor to bring us over the Bridge and through Hurst narrows against the ebb. Speed over ground never fell below 4 kts, so we had reason to thank the trusty motor once again. We could have aimed for an arrival at half-flood, say 21.00, had more time in bed, and saved on fuel with an actual arrival of 18.00. Will we ever learn? Journey over with arrival on the RLym pontoon at 17.00.



**Footnote:** The helmsman's instruments, photographed at 14.15, tell a tale: Bridge Buoy 8 NM distant, course to steer 323 deg, COG 332. Speed over Ground 6.25 kts. But the course we have steered most of the journey has been 020 deg, on the 5 kt assumption, and we have enjoyed 6 hours of E-going tide, and only two of W-going. So we must steer W or end up in Brighton! The nav-package advises a course correction of 40 deg - and in the nature of things the helmsman is correcting by 50. So now we risk ending up to the W of our objective, if we don't watch out!



The sky as we leave Alderney at 06.30, and the sea as we cross the Bridge at 15.30.

