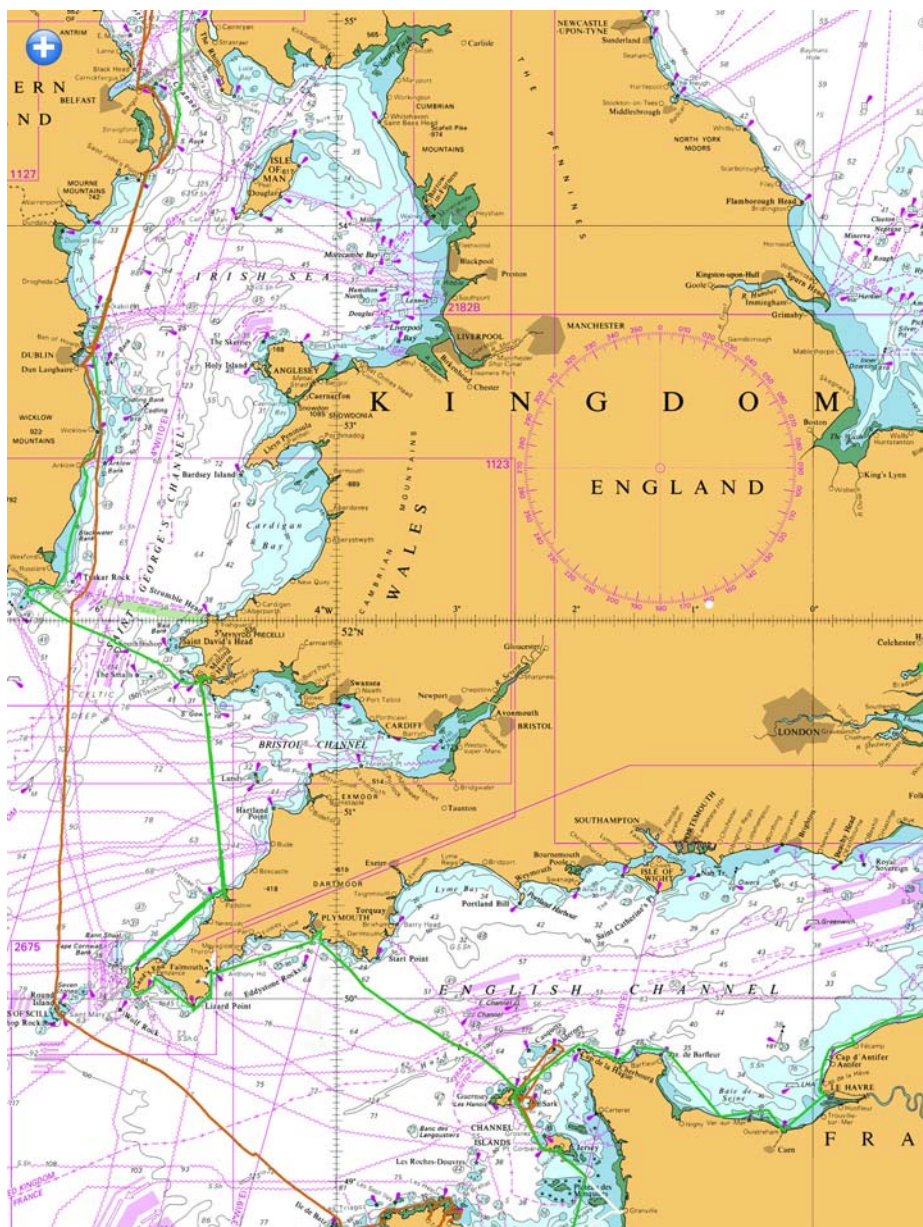




Carraig Log Book Voyage 1

Cnoc na Carraig
55° 52' N
5° 14' W



Carraig's 2015 track in green

Carraig's Log

Voyage 1 Year 2015

Carraig is your standard Moody 33, bought from Fred Ellis as Eric the Scop and stored at Suffolk Yacht Harbour on the River Orwell during winter 2014/15. In good "nick", this winter we installed a calorifier for hot water, but essentially she is sailed as rigged when Fred had her.

The question is where to?

There wasn't a pressing need to bring Carraig North this year, excepting that English Marina fees can be eye wateringly high and both marinas and moorings around the Orwell are oversubscribed. Then there's your actual sailing - with our Kames deep water mooring and 24 hour access to the Clyde and the West Coast of Scotland on the doorstep, this decision then is perhaps a "no brainer".

So, which way North?

Clockwise or Anticlockwise, to me the East Coast is a 'tad dull, with its post-industrial, bleak 24 hour ports or open roadstead and short-stay harbours, but would give us the lea in any thing from south through to north west. However, we have sailed the stretch between Blyth and the Forth in Lassiette - and knew that it would either be a lift out at Leith and transport overland to the Clyde or a long haul offshore up to Inverness and through the Caledonian Canal. Whereas, the English Channel and round Lands End were frankly much more of an exciting challenge. Then economics stepped in: researching the route, shewed just how expensive (and busy) the Southern English marinas and harbours are in comparison to that of the French ones and the Shell English Channel Pilot book makes it appear quite manageable, and suddenly, the crew were in favour, and

the die is cast. Quite how we planned-up to go as far south as St. Malo is lost in the mist of time, but I guess it was because it's that close and we may never return.

Navigating the Thames Estuary

The complexity of navigating the Thames Estuary has many issues: tides, sandbanks, channels, shipping, windfarms, unmarked hazards. The direction of tide is influenced by the sandbanks and can change dramatically between high and low water. At high water the tide passes over the banks, but when the water level falls, the tidal streams follow the channel more. There can be crosscurrents in the channels - eyeballing pilotage is important and "ticking off" passed buoys and spotting the next ones against a horizon of light pollution is very important.



Carraig at Suffolk Yacht Haven



Carraig launched



Carraig departing the Orwell



Bradwell Creek

Whatever we do next, by heading down to the Blackwater River, make it certain that Carraig has to cross the Wallet Spitway, and the difficult and perhaps dangerous Long and Sunk Sands. The Sunk being by far the more difficult, as it's devoid of marks to help in the crossing. Out of necessity we have onboard "the bible" - Roger Gasper's Crossing the Thames Estuary.

Suffolk Yacht Haven

Thursday 28 May 2015 - Much excitement in the Beaton household. We arrive at Suffolk Yacht Haven to launch Carraig. 0924 hrs. In the water and we motor round to our temporary berth and wash off the fine dust from the deck.

Friday 29 May saw us weather-bound with force 8 W-SW winds. Pamela and Alasdair took the opportunity to do some last minute shopping in Ipswich, then Alasdair cooked dinner aboard after which everyone turned in early.

Suffolk Yacht Haven to Bradwell

Saturday 30 May 0800 hrs. Pamela has left Carraig to visit Drew and Sandra and will rejoin, accompanied by Amy, later tonight. Alasdair and I let go and motor out from the Haven into the river Orwell. Wind W'ly 5-6 to decrease 3-4. 0900 hrs. Shotley Point abeam. We have followed the recommended inshore small vessel route clear of the main channel. To port is Felixstowe Container Berth, already being deepened to take even bigger ships, nevertheless, Carraig is smaller than their ship's lifeboats.

0945 hrs. Cork Sands Yacht Bkn. abeam. We're not "cutting the corner", being unsure of the varying depths and shallows in the Medusa Channel, and instead elect to cross Cork Hole towards NE Gunfleet East Cardinal Buoy and then inwards West past the Gunfleet Sands by way of the Goldmer Gat, avoiding the Medusa Channel. There is considerable wind against tide at Goldmer Gat, with a short sea on the flood.

1400 hrs. Wallet N°2 port hand buoy abeam and we are in the buoyed channel, ahead fine to port is the Gunfleet Sands Wind Farm. We are being overtaken by a tug and its tow (a barge), which veers off to rendezvous with another barge anchored out of the main channel. There's a continuous line of breakers to port marking the edge of the Sands. 1430 hrs. Enter the Knoll Channel at the entrance to the River Blackwater, with the controversial Bradwell nuclear power station dwarfing the sailors landmark of St. Peter's on the Wall Chapel. One of the oldest intact churches dating from 660-662, built on and incorporating brick and stone from the Roman fort of Othona, there to control the river estuaries and surrounds of the Blackwater and Colne, leading to the

important city of Colchester. The river's busy now, there's a big fleet of racing yachts from Maldon making good use of the top of the flood tide. We loiter, to pick our moment to dodge through the tight formation and aim to leave Bradwell Creek's tide pole to starboard.

1600 hrs. we enter Bradwell Creek and are all fast port side to in the small marina. During entry and manoeuvring it becomes very clear that Carraig doesn't go well astern and needs quite a distance to gain controllable sternway.

Pamela and Amy join Carraig. A very quick recce of the dreadful Marina bar indicates a walk to Bradwell's Green Man pub for a good meal is a better proposition.

Bradwell Marina to Tolesbury

1000 hrs. Sunday 31 May, We cast off to the sound of the local church bells.

Immediately, sternway presents a problem - Carraig will just not "sit" or answer quickly to her helm - this calls for much fending off as she swings beam to and straddles the pontoons. She appears to have extreme prop walk which claws her stern to port and we are left battling our way out of the Marina in a cross wind.

1100 hrs. Clear of Bradwell Creek and Pewet Island and out into the Blackwell. With the wind SW 5-6 and increasing 7, we are keen to make Tolesbury quickly on the rising tide. The chart shows channels threading through many shallows. 1112 hrs. We do an 180 degree turn at the Nass East Cardinal mark and enter the buoyed Mersea Quarters channel. 1134 hrs. Tolesbury Fleet leading to Woodroffe Channel - previously I checked the pilotage towards Tolesbury, walking the area and talking to the Marina Manager, who pointed out the best approaches. For a deep-sea seaman, "sniffing the ground" is not something to be done without good reason. And, this entrance is a spectacular example of a shallow man-made East of England marina where the tide goes out to expose miles of soft deep mud and a myriad of creeks. 1200 hrs. Bang on highwater, we cross the rubble cill with 7.5 ft. on the marker board and are safe alongside.

See here <https://vimeo.com/114273837>

We had booked the Marina Restaurant for a family lunch and it's lovely to have Margie and Roy, Drew and Sandra and later Charlene, Kelvin, Finley and Gracie visit Carraig. That evening Alasdair and Amy set off back to Harpenden for work on Monday and Pamela and I tidy Carraig, ready to return home on Monday too.

Tolesbury to Ramsgate

Friday 5 June. Alasdair and I have travelled down to Tolesbury by train to be met by Drew and driven the last few miles from Essex's Witham Station in glorious early summer sunshine. We find Carraig

sitting upright on the muddy bottom, with quite a bit of boot topping showing. We had intended to shift her to a better departure pontoon, the better to conquer the prop walk and ready her for an early exit, but that's not possible now.

Crossing the Thames Estuary

We had chosen Tollesbury Marina for it's convenience, being close to Drew and Sandra and their kind offers of assistance. However, this presents a challenge having foregone the opportunity of a clear run down from the Orwell through the Sunk Channels to Ramsgate, now we're to weave our way across the Thames Estuary and its myriad channels of Deeps and Gats.

Saturday 6 June 0300 hrs. Hw. Tollesbury at 0327 hrs. Off berth, it's not light 'til 0440 hrs. with Alasdhair spotting the small channel buoys, we slowly feel our way out. 0448 hrs. Knoll West Cardinal buoy the Main's up and we're motorsailing with the ebb- wind W-SW 4-5 with occasional showers. 0505 hrs. the Wallet Spitway is crossed with the falling tide and 4m under the keel. We set an Easterly course to avoid the East Barrow and pick out the Barrow Deep entrance buoys and turn south, against the ebb, and are quickly overhauled by a small container vessel. 0630 hrs. N° 6 Barrow port buoy abeam, alter to the East. Ahead, there are defined ripples at the edge of the bank, here, the north going ebb is well underway and the Sounder goes smartly from 21m to 3m, by simply crossing the Sunk Sands, we pick up the south going ebb. It only takes 4 minutes to cross into the Black Deep, but nevertheless it's all exciting stuff as we clear the last of the tide gates. At N° 7 stbd. buoy we wait to let a product tanker turn into Fisherman's Gat and follow her through. 0720 hrs. the water's deep enough and we're now "cocky" enough to cut the corner and head SE towards the Elbow buoy off North Foreland and Carraig is out of the Thames Estuary and into the Lower North Sea.

This route has only been passable using Roger Gaspar's Crossing the Thames Estuary, and has saved us hours of steaming. Thames Sands and Banks range from compacted sand and gravel through to shingle and natural cement boulders (Pudding Pan). Such is the constant movement of material that long established channels, like the South Edinburgh Channel, have had buoyage removed and are now silted and abandoned. A grounded fin keeled yacht is generally regarded as an inevitable Lifeboat call-out.

0828 hrs. East Margate Port buoy abeam, there is quite a concentration of shipping waiting in the Margate Roads and further out to port there's the huge windmilling Thanet Wind Farm and beyond the South Falls and the grey outline of dense

southbound Channel traffic. 0925 hrs. Well past Eagle North Cardinal Buoy and abeam of Broadstairs Knoll with the Goodwin Sands ahead. The East Brake Port hand buoy has been sighted and we turn into the maintained Ramsgate entrance channel. 0937 hrs. Call Ramsgate Harbour for entry instructions and told all clear to proceed to our marina berth (a really redundant procedure since Ramsgate lost all it's Channel ferries, but right of entry is still rigorously enforced). 1024 hrs. alongside and all fast. 1500 hrs. There quite a bit of send at high water and the pontoons are "seesawing", so we move further into the marina and make fast. Alasdhair has been before with Amy and spots a well known establishment - The Belgium Bar, very good all the same. 44 mls in 0724 hrs. at 5.95 knots.

Ramsgate

Despite the massive out of town centre, Ramsgate holds onto its small specialist shops and its a real pleasure to browse. It's the closest port to Amy's Mum and Dad (Tracy and Paul), and we're all joined by Jack, Amy's brother for lunch. This is Northrop country as Simon, Amy's cousin, is the local Sailmaker. This is Amy's first real yachting adventure, and we're all pleased that her Mum and Dad appear ever so relaxed about it all. Friends of the family, Frank and Doreen Farmery make it up for the day from Folkstone and we have a delightful time, including a visit to Trinity Yacht Club. Trinity is very "pucka" and has much memorabilia and silverware. Sad that it gives scant recognition to Prime Minister Ted Heath, born in a terraced house in Broadstairs, a longish stone's throw away, a Club Member, winner of many trophies including leading the victorious Royal Ocean Racing Club (RORC) Admiral Cup team in 1971. During that year, I had a sabbatical, (curtesy of a certain Dr. Beeching) being based at the RORC St. James Place Headquarters and onboard at Cowes/Hamble as Boatman for their yacht Griffin III. At times I was seconded to Donald Parr's boat Quailo III. Donald had a peculiar thing about the colour green, in that much of everything he owned or wore was British racing green - yet the name Quailo is Chinese for "white man" - Donald was delightful and in top form, winning the RORC Morgan Cup outright (no doubt due to some brilliant foredeck work), yet we were pipped for Admiral Cup selection by Cervantes IV (Quailo remained the reserve boat). I was partly funded by the RORC but sadly running out of cash, I returned to deep-seas duties. Ted, by contrast, was very much an acquired taste and could be deeply unpleasant at times.

Ramsgate to Boulogne-Sur-Mer

Tuesday 16 June Carraig's moved to the fuel berth prior to departing at 1024 hrs. - it's shaping up to be a glorious day - wind NE 3-4 becoming variable 2-3. 1140 hrs. Gull Stream PB abeam and we alter to the SW to clear the Goodwin Sands and its extensive shallows. Carraig coasts down the Gull Stream channel, past Sandwich and Deal. 1350 hrs. SW Goodwin South Cardinal buoy abeam and we head down past South Foreland towards Dover. The plan is to head south in the Inshore Traffic Zone to clear all ferry traffic before altering to 126°T to cross at right angles to the main traffic. 1511 hrs. Varne Buoy abeam to starboard by 3.5 mls, we've hit a purple patch, in that the Channel traffic is extremely light, whilst we are very vigilant, there's little traffic to cause any concern. 1615 hrs. to 1640 hrs. Cap Gris-Nez 6 points to starboard and we stop Carraig's engine with a high temperature alarm - right in the middle of the north going traffic lane. The winds light and Carraig's carried down through pot buoys on a 3 knot Southerly tide, before the blocked seawater filter is cleared and the engine's cooled and restarted. 1730 hrs. Abbeville West Cardinal Buoy (WCB) abeam and Carraig's in the French Coast Inshore Zone and alters coarse to the south towards the Cap Gris-Nez waypoint, which is abeam at 1830 hrs. 1920 hrs. At Boulogne approaches, hand sails and prepare for harbour. 2020 hrs. In true French style, and unbeknown to us, the Fishermen have spent all day blockading the Port and have just given up for the day, as we steam in at the head of a sizeable fleet, many are volubly unimpressed with the Fishermen's antics. Day's run 41 mls.

Pamela's first day at sea writes: "Eventful crossing to France!! Beautiful weather - *perhaps too little wind!* Saw some dolphins just before reaching Dover port. All a little sun kissed".

Boulogne

Wednesday 17 June Pamela, Alasdhair and Amy ashore for sightseeing and lunch at a small boulangerie. Needless to say an essential City Carrefour visit is made for wine and other goodies, and of course Phillippe Oliver's world famous cheese emporium's a magnet too. Carraig is in the small marina at Quai Chanzy at the Port a Maree. High water is at 1230 hrs. with a rise of some 8.6 m. The river La Laine feeds into the dock through a complicated sluicing system which sets up lively currents across the berth and Carraig lines are adjusted. In addition Carraig's anchor chain is out of the locker, measured and re-stowed and the anchor "hung off" over the bow and secured.



Tollesbury mud berths - Bradwell in distance



Tollesbury Marina



Ramsgate harbour entrance



Ramsgate's Smack Boys Hostel



Ramsgate and already broke

Boulogne to Dieppe

0710 hrs. Thursday 18 June. The weather forecast's for Westerly's 4-5 backing SW with poor visibility and rain. Off berth and roundup in the Outer Harbour - it's a bit miserable - to crown it - the main halyard has got itself through the upper shrouds and looped over the radar reflector.

Alasdhair works hard to fix it; and despite all his best efforts it's not for freeing and at 0740 hrs. we depart the outer harbour under engine and foresail. 1000 hrs.

Abeam of Le Touquet, the tide's set Northerly for the next few hours, with slack water about 1400 hrs. - this is causing a short "bumpy" sea with a cross swell and is a bit uncomfortable. 1400 hrs. St. Valery Sur Somme - the sun's out and the wind's come round to the South and the tide now with us - it's turning out to be more than a pleasant sail than was forecast.

For much of the days run, the beach has been backed by low lying dunes and any town or village is set way back inland. Indeed, some of the ports, like Valery Sur Somme and Touquet are affronted by miles of drying sand and need to be approached on a rising tide. The history of the Somme is too well known to mentioned here.

However, in Valery Sur Somme in 1066 a certain Duke William embarked to "put t' breeze up the Saxons". The locals, with a keen sense of their own place in history and to entertain Les Brits, gamely put on an EU funded annual festival in praise of this said Will. Although these harbours are perhaps the nicest on the coast - they are exceptionally challenging (i.e. miss any of the small marker buoys, that apparently are moved weekly, and you're stumped!) and it's Springs and our tide is not set fair.

1600 hrs. Daffodils WC buoy abeam and we shape a course towards Dieppe's leading lights and call Dieppe Port Control for entry (which is a requirement and not an option) and by 1720 hrs. we're all fast portside to in the Marina. Day's run 52 mls.

Dieppe

Over the centuries Les English have maintained considerable interest in Dieppe. Flattening it first in the 12th century and returning again and again until in 1694 they did it in style. The Locals retaliated by rebuilding, using the Architect Vatabren, with his typical French classical style to create a gem of a sea port. Thomas Cooke [inflicted] tested the market with an all in package tour too. Aubrey, Beardsley and Oscar Wilde also came here to write or die. Many others, equally important but less famous, ended their days here during the Second World War. It is the first French, German fortified harbour we have encountered. The Dieppe Raid saw the 2nd Canadian Infantry Division obliterated to test German resolve - no major objective on the ground was

achieved that day. Dieppe in New Brunswick, Canada honours their memory, the majority of inhabitants being of French Colonial descent.

With fine analytical skills, a deft touch or simple magic - Amy and Alasdhair free up the main halyard and we are in business again. The celebrations began with a stupendous "Fruits de Mer" in a harbourside restaurant.

Dieppe to Fecamp

Friday 19 June. 1030 hrs. off the berth and within the hour Carraig's going well in NW 4-5. The coast here is fronted by 50m cliffs, but where a river runs to the sea, a sand fronted village hug the slopes. 1554 hrs. Paluel NC buoy abeam. We pass the enormous Centrale Electrique nuclear generating plant, with four massive halls and domes cut into the chalk cliff and protected by an artificial breakwater. The chart is clear - there is no entry under any circumstances. 1613 hrs. Pan Pan - it's all in French, but quite clear so must be close so we keep a good watch. It's been a great day's sail, although there's been some fierce gust from shoreside. 1645 hrs. St. Pierre-en-Port abeam 7 mls to Fecamp. 1730 hrs. Call Fecamp for berthing instructions, sails handed and all ready for docking. 1800 hrs. Alongside and secure - days run 31 mls.

Fecamp

In 1410 Les English took to flattening Fecamp too. Nevertheless, it's delightful, whilst still being a major fishing port and home to Benedictine liqueur, first produced by the Order in the 14 Century. Saturday the weather's a bit dodgy with rain and fog patches further west. Decision made we're to have an extra day and enjoy Fecamp, for what it is - a fabulous coastal resort. Alasdhair and Amy wander off to explore and return with fresh seafood, whilst Pamela and Hamish take a promenade by the beach. Later, Alasdhair, Amy and Pamela tour the Distillery and discover it's all a bit of a con - much of exhibits are historical guesswork. As to the Benedictine, all declared it to have a not unpleasant taste when taken with water, but nothing to rave about. Amy and Alasdhair created a fabulous dinner onboard that evening.

Fecamp to Le Harve

Sunday 21 June. 0815 hrs. Slipped berth, weather W or NW 4-5 with rain showers. It's a bit of a header and as we are finding out Carraig doesn't do headers very well. Despite her big engine, her small 4 bladed feathering propeller's pitch has been adjusted to very fine. The result is that in good weather she goes very well, but the propeller fails to give much drive when punching into a sea. Hopefully, this can be fixed at the end of the season, but for now we will just have to work with it.

1045 hrs. Cross Le Harve-Antifer oil port channel - a completely separate tanker port. The wind and tide are now W'ly 5-6 with a low but steep quarterly swell and we're butting our way on. 1234 hrs. Le Harve Channel LH10 port hand buoy abeam - it's look both ways before crossing the approach channel - it's very busy as its highwater at 1250 hrs. - all pleasure craft are prohibited from the main Channel and must follow the right track towards the harbour entrance. We join a gaggle of French yachts and are marshalled by the Port traffic launch at the Avant-Port breakwater almost clear of the main channel. Two container ships thunder by in quick secession, simply awesome, they're both going very quickly out through the heads and down the channel. In fact, I've never been as close, as each ship winds up to full speed, and yet Carraig's by far the least closest yacht, the closest one is less than a couple of boat lengths from these huge steel walls. Then like a manned crossing the traffic launch is in mid-channel and we're good to go. 1330 hrs. All secured to our berth starboard side to. Days run 28 mls.

Le Harve

There's not much left of old Le Harve, the Allies were quite thorough. However, it's now an exceptional post-war example of urban planning and architecture, by Auguste Perret, and a UNESCO World Heritage Centre. To say that the City Cathedral is exceptional is an understatement, it took our collective breath away. The huge yet slender tall concrete tower represents a lighthouse, and is lit through a myriad of stained glass panes (art-deco style) which flood the whole freestanding interior structure in coloured light. A plain -rather windswept ugly exterior - hides this true gem. Alasdhair and Amy, by now had taken to scouting ahead for restaurants and reported back their find of a music festival and a rather good Italian restaurant.

Le Harve to Ouistreham

Monday 22 June 1040 hrs. Motored to Breakwater and mainsail up - there are many yachts departing at the same time. 1112 hrs. LH12 starboard channel buoy (SCB) abeam we cross over Le Harve main channel towards the Rade De La Crosse which marks the buoyed River Seine channel. There's not much water and not much headway with the foul tide. Les Girls are fully occupied practising their knots with the sheet ends and ignore the need to tack out of the shallows. Eventually, we tack, with less water under the keel than is prudent. The air is thick with misunderstandings and hurt feelings, and it takes Alasdhair's authoritative, calm and rational explanations of "it's getting shallow", "ready about", "lee ho" and the urgency of: "Carraig's going to ground, f***** tacking now" to defuse the mutiny.

1400 hrs. Trouville SW cardinal buoy abeam. We are being continually set into the shallows of the Seine Basin. Closing the coast with Carraig going nowhere fast the Engine's started and course set for Ouistreham fairway buoy. 1500 hrs. The extensive 5 -7 metres coastal fringe creates short steep seas, we're making heavy weather of all this, the tides against us and the current's running just under 2 knots. This was always to be the slowest leg of the cruise, but boy, never this slow with the wind set W'ly gusting 7s and with a hint of sleet it will prove to be the most miserable day's run of the whole voyage. 1627 hrs. Well clear of Ouisterham fairway buoy and approaching N°2 channel buoy, it's clear that the ferry outline on the horizon is getting bigger by the minute and hasn't deviated from the harbour channel's leading lights. 1715 hrs. N°5 SHB - loitered to let the ferry Normandie passed. Just as well we're in 5 metres, it's impressive how her "squat" is pulling water from the surrounding shallows into the main channel and Carraig drops 2 meters, before Normandie finally eases up to take on her Pilot and we gracefully round up and follow the Pilot boat into the main harbour. The main lock is impressive, prior to the ferry port here at Ouistreham shipping proceeded up the canal to Cæn. Our timing is spot on and we make fast to vertical wires, rise 2 metres and are through into the canalside marina at 1800 hrs. To crown it all the sun's now out and we're opposite a quaint open air, provincial quayside bar.

Ouistreham

Pamela and I have been here before with Sue and Graham, enroute to Sue's parents delightful southern French home. We've to scout-out Ouistreham's ferry terminal for a crew change and therefore we'd eat ashore at La Rascasse. It's excellent, Alasdhair and Pamela push the boat out with Marmite Royale - a lobster, fish and shellfish feast in a mild curry sauce; a couple steaks and wine round the bill up to 207€ - the most expensive meal so far.

Tuesday 23 June 0700 hrs. As crew changes go this is easy - Alasdhair and Amy walk the 15 minutes to the Portsmouth ferry. Arriving in Portsmouth, they have just time to wave to Sue Farmery and have a quick chat before she boards the return ferry, due to dock here at 2130 hrs. Meanwhile there's Carraig's laundry and a few jobs to be done and its a lovely Marina and a hot sunny day.

It was here on Tuesday 6 June 1944 that N°4 Commando landed and fought their way to Pegasus Bridge over the Canal. Ouistreham's Grand Bunker, which managed the coastal distance ranging and gun fire control, offered a pocket of German resistance and after sporadic shooting, the Commando left and it was only on Friday 9 June that 22 year old

Lieutenant Bob Orrell (eventually a Major) with three men investigated and liberated the last fortification held by the Germans at the beachhead. They also liberated the Bunker's piano, which accompanied them across Europe 'til the war's end, eventually finishing up, in tune, in the Royal Engineers Officers Mess. It took them two attempts and some six hours to blow the armoured outer doors with High Explosives followed by a couple of hand grenade chucked inside for good measure; thereupon, they were surprised to hear a voice say in perfect English "come upstairs Jonny, it's alright". Bob declined. Actually he said: "Bugger that. You come down". Concussed, the garrison of two officers and fifty men promptly surrendered.

Wednesday 24 June 0945 hrs. Left the Marina to take on 100 litres of fuel. We steamed up the Cæn Canal a little way to play with the steering and engine controls. Pamela has had a great time and latterly was able to turn Carraig "short round". Given enough time, distance and gentle teasing Carraig will go purposefully astern.

1145 hrs. All fast again in the Marina. We were to swop berthing with Wave Functions III another Moody. The time agreed for the move was at odds - They apparently always keep U.K. time no matter where and disdain to inform others and here's us on the recognised official French State summer time and repeated with unerring accuracy from the bell tower and church clock across the canal - all a tad idiosyncratic, as we prepare to move on time, they look astonished.

The N°61 bus wends its way through several small villages to Cæn allowing for a gentle day ashore. Lunch, French Italian was taken in a delightful cafe in a shaded square out of the heat of the day. There's not much in Cæn that hasn't been knocked about; the Vikings and Normans got in early, then the English, then the Germans, and the Allies, they had a go too and finally the French rebuilt the centre just so, but the outskirts are a 60s concrete pour. Nevertheless, it's an attractive town with its magnificent castle and the Abbaye des Dames, Queen Matilda's fine church and grave site. The singular important purchase of the day is a corkscrew - le tire-bouchon - at one-time there were three onboard - now all gone. 1810 hrs. we returned to Ouistreham on the Express bus alongside tired office workers.

Ouistreham to Port en Bessin

Thursday 25 June. The weather's to be fair variable 4. It's an absolutely beautiful morning, the Canal's surface reflects like glass. 0740 hrs. Off the berth. 0832 hrs. Out of the lock and underway down past the ferry berth 0927 hrs. Luc east Cardinal buoy abeam to port, we're following the 10 metre line as we proceed past first Juno then Gold Beaches. 1200 hrs. The remains



Crewed for the Channel crossing



South Foreland - Dover Patrol Memorial - Dover Straits



Boulogne-Sur-Mer



Port En Bassen

of the Mulberry Harbours at Arromanches have been renamed Port Winston, there's a buoyed channel in, but our charts are not detailed enough and the area is littered with wrecks and wreckage. The winds gone too light and variable to sail and the suncream is out. 1500 hrs. Inside the jetees in Port en Bessin's Avant-port, which dries in places, but today, with little wind the approach is straight forward. The first lock in is when Port en Bessin's harbour bridge opens at 1540 hrs., to the second the bridge opens and we follow a fishing boat in. The lock gates are both open until 1940 hrs. but it's a surprisingly tight fit and there's a

scrum of tourists on the quay cameras ready for mishaps. The visitor's pontoon is tucked tightly inside the lock's "knuckle" and for first time Carraig pirouettes like a dancer and simply nestles down in her allotted space. Crew look to the Navigator with incredulity and he has the good grace to look abashed. 2000 hrs. We've done some shuffling about on the pontoon, there's just enough space for 6 yachts, but that means we're free to go in the morning. However, now both lock gates are closed and we're in for the night. Today's run down past the D-Day beaches has been fabulous and the weather has taken a turn for the better too.

Port en Bessen

This pretty Normandy fishing village was taken on D-Day+1 by 47 Royal Marine Commando and 4 Special Service Brigade. They had been given the near impossible task of capturing this heavily-fortified, strategically-vital port from the same crack German unit -352 Infantry Division - that would wreck havoc with the American landing on nearby Omaha Beach. Instead of a suicidal frontal attack they landed at Gold Beach and skirting the coast came to it overland, which led to some of the bitterest engagements and fights of the landing. Indeed the entire episode [in Port en Bessen] has been recognised as one of the most successful in British military history - Hitler's instructions were that captured Commandoes were to be murdered. It was eventually the temporary reception end of the Pipeline Under The Ocean (PLUTO). Today it's hard to convey that so tranquil a resort with its fish restaurants and cobbled streets by the delightful and pretty inner harbour could have seen such bitter and murderous fighting.

Port en Bessin to Cherbourg

Friday 26 June 0700 hrs. The bridge and gates are open and we have the Harbour Master's permission to leave. As soon as we clear the breakwaters we set a course of 324°T. It's slack water - the early start means a cooked full English breakfast eaten underway. 1201 hrs. Pointe de Barfleur Lt. Ho. South by 4 mls. Tides in the eastern part of the Channel are strong, but it's only approaching Barfleur that the full force makes themselves felt and rates regularly exceed 4 knots. The Pointe can throw up a very nasty race and it's dangerous in a Westerly. The recommended distance off is at least 2.5 miles, preferably 4 miles. The forecast is for SE 2-3 veering SW 4 or 5. We motorsail in light airs - even this far out the water's bubbling up as the 3.8 knot current pushes us onward. 1252 hrs. Basse du Renier NCB abeam and we sight the next mark, La Pierre Noire WCB, having coasted round the Pointe in 30 metres clear of the extensive inshore shoals and reefs. 1350 hrs. At La Pierre Noire buoy we stop engines and sail, everyone takes a turn at the helm, the tide's due to flood and strengthen eventually to 4 knots against us, and for the next few hours we tack up wind, making a little headway, but it's a simple pleasure just to stop engines and have the foresail out and feel the rig take the strain. 1624 hrs. Entering Cherbourg outer breakwater 1700 hrs. Alongside and all fast.

Cherbourg

Cherbourg is the most important port on this stretch of coast. In many respects it mirrors the strategic requirements of that of Plymouth, it's magnificent safe outer harbour guarding the Western Approaches to the English Channel - the French La Manche. It was also to become the last place that many European Emigrants saw, major British shipping lines clubbed together to build the Hotel Atlanique, an emigrant reception centre for use prior to embarkation - how different a reception to that of today's migrants in Calais.

From early times the Port has either been squabbled over or bartered by both French and English Barons and Kings. The locals skate quickly over the German Reception - Generalmajor Erwin Rommel simply marched in with bands playing - the City Fathers declaring the "city open" to avoid it's destruction - the French navy, without a shot fired, "retreated" south to Oran in Algeria. The Americans found it less than welcoming with furious street fighting and bitter resistance. There are few wall plaques to French resistance in this town. De Gaulle, as rewards, gave it the Croix de Guerre and promptly built several nuclear generating plants and France's controversial plutonium reprocessing plant on it's doorstep.

Napoleon sits comfortably on his charger overlooking the second largest artificial harbour in the world. The huge marina, (1556 berths) in the heart of the town records some 19,000 yearly overnight stays and has every facility. The bistro does decent enough meals and an excellent G&Ts.

Saturday saw us up town for a "late-ish" lunch in glorious sunshine. French eateries have strict times, so it's not unusual on a cafe's terrace to see customers sitting drinking but eating food from other shops whilst the cafe's waiter is still serving dessert and cafe to his other patrons. But we're on time and our waiter does the impressive mental trick of remembering and delivering all orders without commitment to paper. Perhaps Sue's perfect French has a bearing on our Garçon's attitude, because, close by a tourist in khaki shirt, beige shorts, brown ankle socks and sandals is not making much headway at all.

Cherbourg and points west

From Cherbourg I've plotted two routes: One immediately North across the Channel (and possibly a low loader home) or the other down to the Channel Islands and back to Blighty vis some jumping off point as yet to be decided upon, for I have several permutations. We have come a long way, but the mere mention of Cap de la Hague and Aldernay Race are the cause and effect of yachting articles, many with some hair raising tag lines. The Shell Pilot goes: "This part of the Channel is where the tide really begins to rumble. Foreign visitors from outside Channel waters are often 'psyched out' by the tides of Southern England, but it is the streams and heights of Northern France that should make any prudent navigator take heed. To the foolish they deliver a preview of Armageddon. To the wise, under power or sail, they are a thrilling glimpse of the strength of nature, offering ridiculous progress at no extra charge. Working the tides is everything here, and a copy of the latest Admiralty Tidal Stream Atlas is a modest investment that will not be regretted". Just to make sure it adds: "Cap de la Hague is possibly the most stream-lashed headland in the world".

So back in January 2015, I had taken time to read as much as I could from on-line sources and my two pilot books. The good news, is that by and large there's a wide consensus as to routes to be taken. Carraig has proven that she's solid and sound and everything works, despite her current inability to butt through some head seas, but that's fixable. Her Navigator is beginning to ease up and is mellowing (slightly) and the crew, whilst threatening to mutiny, have not yet quite packed their bags, are discussing the delights of the Channel Islands and are genuinely game to go on. Oh, and we're to take a short break and have already booked our St. Malo flights home.

The Plan is from Cherbourg to Cap de la Hague to coast inshore on a counter current, arriving at the Aldernay Race bang on the start of the South going stream and ride the current to Guernsey's St. Peter's Port. And, to do a bit of the passage at night.

Cherbourg to St. Peter's Port

Saturday 27 June 1655 hrs. Let go and proceed from the marina to the main harbour. 1725 hrs. Through the Breakwater Heads - The harbour has been busy with ship and boat movement. 1830 hrs. Forecast for Westerly backing South West 4-5, mainly fair and we hoist sails and move closer inshore to catch the west going counter current. 1925 hrs. Basse Breford NCB abeam and we're sheltered from the high ground. Plonked right on the highest ridge is the huge nuclear power station and reprocessing plant with capacity for reprocessing half the world's spent fuel capacity, a major polluter at 90,000 Becquerel per cubic meter into the atmosphere and pumping one million litres of liquid radioactive waste per day into the Channel. It's unmissably lit like a big forest of Xmas trees - on Google Maps it's "mega" huge and can be sighted almost as far as the Channel Islands yet on my French charting software it has been blanked out. 2015 hrs. Cap de la Hague Lt Ho abeam and we alter course to enter the Aldernay Race, it's not dark until 2215 hrs. There's a cold breeze, but the wind is dying although at present it's giving us sufficient lift so we continue sailing. There's a couple of other yachts out and about, with at least another shaping up for the Race. 2130 hrs. Alderney Lt. Ho. abeam and the current is now picking up quickly from 2-8 knots, we hand sails and are "skooshing" through at 13+ knots at this rate we will be into St. Peter's Port about 0130 hrs. - local time.

2242 hrs. The VHF alarm goes off and I scramble to kill it. Pan Pan Pan a fishing boat with engine problems drifting bearing from Platte Fougere 045°T x 4 miles. The crew pass light hearted comments about its predicament whilst I quietly plot our relative positions.

There's now a deafening silence onboard as I work Guernsey Radio VHF 16 and 20 with our position course and speed, and we are told to continue on our present course towards the Little Russel channel and Platte Fougere and stand by on VHF 20. The wind gone just about westerly 2-3, and Guernsey is starting to give us a lee too, but occasionally we dip our bow into a long lazy Atlantic swell. I can stand-by, but to tow in these conditions, with an underpowered windmilling propeller would need something like 30 meters of cable laid hawser to ensure our tow and Carraig would both be in the troughs together and allow for snatching (the last thing I need is the tow surfing down into us). Then there's her weight, at present I

just don't know. Now the reality check, how good are we going to be in the dark, with a 5 knot tide in the Russel, if it's not alright on the night, we may well be swept past close to the reefs and shallows as we adjust our position relative to the casualty - I certainly don't want to come alongside it. Guernsey Radio call Carraig on VHF 20 and on cue ask if we can tow the casualty - I answer in the negative, but Carraig's still asked to proceed and stand-by. Good news, Guernsey Radio are now working the RLBI Guernsey Lifeboat "Spirit of Guernsey" and we can see her speeding blue flashing light, whilst Fougere Lt. Ho. is getting closer, soon we will be abeam. 2300 hrs. It's clear from the Lifeboat's searchlight that they are now at the casualty. 2316 hrs. Work Guernsey Radio on VHF 16 and 20 and are told the Lifeboat has the casualty under tow and Carraig is released and we are thanked for our services. The noise level on Carraig explodes with pent-up tension and cups of tea are called for. We are committed to the Little Russel channel and the 5+ knot current is sweeping Carraig down the line of leading lights towards St. Peter's Port and it's now abundantly clear how tricky a tow would have been and the daunting challenge of clearing SW Platte, the Roustel and Brehon rocks in the dark in this tideway.

Sunday 28 June 0052 hrs. It taken some time to dock, the fixed and flashing lights are not helping locate the unlit boat passage, amongst the clutter of moorings, but at last the Harbour Master's dory comes to view and we're led into our temporary berth. We're checked out for livestock, no dogs allowed ashore, to comply with the Island's strict landing codes and are handed our Immigration and Customs form to complete. Sandwiches, beer and wine are the early morning refreshments then it's off to our bunks.

Guernsey - St. Peters Port

Remember 70s Sundays, with no shops open and little to do? Well welcome to Sunday in St. Peter's Port, where St. Barnabas and St. Peters churches' bell ringers compete to out toll each other and the tourists mooch about down by the harbour, with nothing to spend their sterling on - at least it's a warm sunny day. We find a bar open and have a late breakfast or very early lunch - Mojitos at 1130 hrs. taste really good. It's not been a great morning - twice at 0115 hrs. and at 0615 hrs. Harbour Control have knocked on the hull wanting to know if we're for Victoria Marina. 1220 hrs. return to Carraig to find the Harbour Control team readying to move Carraig from the waiting pontoon to a permanent berth (we did say we'd return and be away by Noon). There's no Harbour charges if we go quickly - and it's all agreed, Sundays here have little to offer our secular crew.



St Peters Port Victoria Marina cill and outer harbour



Jersey's Noirmont Point



St Helier's inner marina and depth over cill



Saint-Servans-Sur-Mer - Sablons Marina

St. Peter's Port towards Sark

Sunday 28 June 1320 hrs. We return looking for a rogue fender, lost sometime during our stay. Possibly punishment from above, it's gone walkabout, the church bells continue to toll in mockery. 1350 hrs. Out of the Harbour enroute to Herm's Shell Beach via Alligande Passage, it's coming to slack water as we head back out and up towards Brehon Tower. In daylight it's very apparent just how narrow the Little Russel is as we swing NE onto our track through the Passage - over a dozen passages cut through Herm's extensive drying reef, with a profusion of marks and at close range, pilotage here becomes a precise art calling for a degree of concentration. To help identify marks they are all surmounted by alphabetic letters and it's abundantly clear that this is going to be a sound navigational test today as we swing past Godfrey Reef (it's marker "GB" ticked off) in 3 meters of water. 1420 hrs. The channels come at us very fast Percee Pass, Fourquiets with its North CB, Les Bouillons - Grands et Petits avoided, before shaping a course NNW towards Shell Bay to anchor in 5 m on a rising tide in the beautiful Shell Bay.

Herm

It's 3 miles from St. Peter Port to Herm. The Island is leased from Guernsey State to the Wood family, who's vision and efforts have resulted in its tasteful restoration. Shell beach has sands made of myriads of rare and exotic shells. There's a huddle of boats from gin palaces to small craft and Herm's stunning beach soaks up the trippers. Sue swims, the Navigator toys with his crab pot and Pamela soaks up the ambiance and sun, and it's in all respects an idyllic afternoon.

The anchor and cable require serious attention. It's attached with a large "D" shackle to 10 metres of chain spliced to 30 meters of multi-platt laid cable. Weighing anchor presents a challenge - the cable continually grips and jams in the windlass gypsy and to crown it all; the chain links ride out too. Clearly either the gypsy's miss-sized or the cable and chain arrangement's unsuitable for this boat. In addition, on closer inspection of the whole fo'c's'le, well-deck, windlass, spurling pipe and chain locker below, the whole arrangement's a lashup [confirmed later by inspecting one of Fred's laminated card's that we're missing his August 2011 purchase of 50mx10mm calibrated chain and associated $\frac{3}{8}$ gypsy. Talk about buyer beware]. This puts the dampeners on anchoring, it will let go alright, but weighing it will "knacker" a crew in anything other than light airs and little tide.

At last, anchor aweigh and we set off to motor against a 3 knot tide towards Sark. It's only 3 miles to the Barclay Brother's castle on the island of Brecquhou on Sark's

west coast, yet it takes over an hour. More a folly than a castle, the Brothers argue from it's battlements with Sark's Legislature that it should be possible for residents to leave property inheritance to all of their children - which is not allowed in feudal Sark - causing the partial dismantlement of its 443 year old feudal system of government and much bitterness towards Brecquhou's direction.

Sark

The visitor's buoys, are tucked in and a mere boat's length from the jetty, but the bay, Harve Gossenlin, is untenable due to the swell, and we reverse our course to the Couliot Passage and deeper water and across Banquette Bay to Sark's northern tip - Bec du Nez - now with the current, we whistle North onto the clearing line of Nore Pierre and Grande Moie and head back SE on the eastern side of the islands and into La Greve de la Ville to the visitor's moorings close to Point Robert Lighthouse. The visibility had been hazy all day, but now appears to be closing in. 2345 hrs. The Lighthouse fog signal begins to operate 2 moans every 30 seconds and as the tide turns we swing and lie athwartships to the swell and begin to roll uncomfortably for most of the night. Unsurprisingly, in the early morning, the crew are for shore leave and a walk to the shops for breakfast. Sue steps out onto the steeply shelving beach and takes a ducking, soaked by a wave to her waist. Notwithstanding Sue's early cold bath and a stiff 75 metre cliff path climb, once on the island's plateau, we are immediately drawn to the stillness, it's vedant beauty, flitting butterflies, chirping crickets and tame nature. Without cars or street lights and a low density population, Sark has some of the clearest of night skies, where an evening stroll on the grassy paths necessitate a flashlight or torch. Without doubt, it's one of Pamela's and my favourite islands for which we have fond and lasting memories and it's a real pleasure to be back. The full English breakfast is good too at Le Petit Poule, The local shop does a line in tired looking avocados priced at £2.75 each - perhaps priced too steeply for a sale.

Sark to St Helier

Monday 29 June 1210 hrs. Let go La Greve de la Ville buoy and head out to round Noire Pierre and associated rocks with the tide and current setting SW at $\frac{1}{2}$ knot. We set course to the SExS to avoid the extensive overfalls due to the irregular bottom. 1240 hrs. Blanchard ECB abeam and set course 172°T - the forecast is variable 3-4, occasionally 5 with fog patches. 1400 hrs. We have watched a bank of mist and fog roll in from the SW, the visibility's up and down at present. 1436 hrs. Desormes WCB abeam and visibility is about 1 mile. 1600 hrs. Point Corbiere Lt Ho to the North and we alter to enter the

Western Passage with the tide. 1634 hrs. Noirmont Point abeam to port and we hand sails and prepare for the harbour. 1700 hrs. Call St Helier VTS and given entrance clearance. 1730 hrs. We have entered the harbour, crossed the marina cill and are now moored alongside. It has been an uneventful motor in light winds and poor visibility, with a significant Atlantic beam swell.

St Helier

The first job is to drop the headsail and have a look at the leach line. We unpick the headboard end, rethread the line and sew it back more securely - all's well. We're moored right up at "G" pontoon just clear of the dock wall. It's strange to have business types in full office uniform, walking past with laptop bags and mobiles. Monday and restaurants are closed by 2100 hrs. - hunger drives us back from the business district to dinner aboard in the cockpit. It's now becoming abundantly clear that we've arriving too late in the day and with tight scheduling, not enough time's being given over to sight seeing.

St Helier to St Malo, Port des Sablons

Tuesday 30 June 0730 hrs. Let go, manoeuvre out of the tight marina berths and pontoon, Carraig is well behaved and responds well to rudder and engine controls and we're soon at the fuel berth. We bunker to take advantage of Jersey's duty free fuel - but as there no pressure at the berth we take our time to stow thing well, including the dingy, which is lashed to the foredeck. 0832 hrs. Hinguette PHB abeam in the South Passage (clear of the harbour) and we've got the tide against us for a while, but as it turns it brings with it a perfectly hot sunny day. The wind falls light to a steady Easterly 3 and we all have a trick at the wheel. 1412 hrs. NE Minqueiers ECB abeam to starboard and we alter to SxW to enter French territorial waters again and hoist the French curtesy flag.

The Minquiers, the "Minkies" are a group of Islands and rocks 9.5 miles south of Jersey. At low tide the area is larger than Jersey itself. A squad of German's were amongst the last to surrender in WWII. A fully armed soldier approached a French fishing skipper - Lucian Marie - and asked for help: "We've been forgotten by the British, perhaps no one in Jersey told them we were here, I want you to take us over to England, we want to surrender" This was on 23 May 1945, three weeks after the war in Europe had ended. In 1953 Jersey was given full administration rights. The main island has the most southerly working toilet in Britain - I'm told, there's no power or running water, but good mobile phone reception and fabulous sea views.

1809 hrs. La Saint-Servantine stbd hand buoy abeam (SHB). The Easterly shore wind becomes very warm from the foehn wind (like a hair drier) and picks up to a fresh 5 - Carraig picks up speed too and now we're whistling down the channel ticking off the rocks and way markers. 1834 hrs. Roches aux Anglais SHB abeam, my goodness it's busy, and there's some big stuff mucking about, we've to keep our wits about us, luckily we can ease off and lee bow the tide - we're got an east going 2.5 knot current to contend with. The charted depth is 1 metre, but its high water so the actual depth below the keel is over 12 metres. 1840 hrs. Rade De Saint-Malo round up, hand sails and prepare to dock. 1900 hrs. St Servian marina is big, but the visitors berths are at the entrance and we have no problems docking Carraig. Full moon, warm breeze and nibbles in the cockpit - perfect.

Sablons Marina - St Malo

Wednesday 1 July. We're to the Captainarere to make arrangements to leave Carraig. This is not possible they declare, because they don't have enough people to keep watch on her, but it's normally possible at St Malo's Vauban Marina, which will be better suited to our needs. The shore staff make all the arrangements and it's all settled Vauban will have us. It's a fine day again, the Crew sort the laundry facilities. Breakfast goodies were bought and lunch was onboard. 1730 hrs. Let go from the pontoon in St Sevan and motor round to wait on the Ecluse du Naye (lock) for Vauban dock marina. 1808 hrs. Lock gates open, and we're assisted and made fast by a couple of shore hands. It's a relaxed and leisurely locking procedure, where the shore crew go fishing whilst the lock fills. 1900 hrs. Alongside starboard side, right outside the Marina office. It's all fixed we have 2 week berthing rates - have a G&T at the local bar, before putting on our "glad rags" and heading off for dinner at La Chateaubriand - good food, so-so service.

St Malo

It's been very wet overnight and still raining at 0815 hrs. Sue goes shopping for breakfast in her wellies. Pamela and Sue make raids on Carrefour for lunch and Dinner and then again for more wine. There are walks round the ramparts and Sue swims too - soon its 1800 hrs. and we put Carraig into warm layup and we're ashore to the local bar awaiting the taxi to Dinard airport and home to Leeds.

Friday 17 July. Returning from Leeds to St Malo, we find Carraig just as we left her. We take time to flush, clean and refill the fresh water tank. It's a lazy morning, the sun's shining and the few chores are not onerous. Then it's a gentle walk and a late lunch. We do some supermarket shopping and buy two Carrefour wheelie shopping bags to save our arms when we lug the

booze back. We're using Carraig as hotel on water and Vauban Marina is well appointed.

Saturday 18 July. Slow start to the day again, this is becoming the norm. 1200 hrs. We jump on a water taxi to Dinard, with its reputation for laid back sophistication. However, we start by walking away from to town centre, but enjoy the more casual shopping experience of buying sandwiches in the boulangerie to eat in the local bar, at the suggestion of the Bar's Patron, Didier Meril.

Sunday 19 July. It's been a wet morning with heavy rain. Pamela's still filling up the home wine bin. There has been a list of odd jobs to be done, including the resetting of the Lowrance plotter in the cockpit which has been losing position, as I navigate with Ipad software, this is not of immediate concern other than the DCS VHF has no positioning information. [The unit later proved to internally corroded and was replaced].

St. Malo to Port de Lyvet

Monday 20 July. 0800 hrs. Delay leaving berth as the yacht Nightfall blocks our exit and is slow to move. 0840 hrs. All fast in the Lock - Nightfall has developed engine problems and can only go astern and rafts beside us. 0905 hrs. Nightfall does a tricky manoeuvre and leaves the Lock and harbour stern first, hoists sails, gathers forward momentum and is on her way to Guernsey for repairs. Carraig is in the Rade de Dinard on route to La Rance lock. 1010 hrs. We wait 40 minutes to lock into the Barrage lock. The Barrage took three years to complete and 20 years to pay for itself. It has an inevitable environmental impact with the progressive silting of the Rance ecosystem. Sand-eels and plaice have gone to be replaced by sea bass and cuttlefish. The operator, EDF, endeavours to maintain a tidal flow and adjusts the level to minimise biological impact. By taking the first Lock out of Vauban St. Malo we aim to carry the tide right the way to Port de Lyvet's Ecluse du Chatelier (lock), failing that we will make for Plouer Marina. 1106 Hrs. Port St. Hubert, we go under the two bridges and the Electrical cables. The last bridge is an arch with 20 metre central clearance. Carraig air draft is 14 metres, I double check as being off centre to the central span gives the illusion of zero clearance, but we go under it all the same. The Ipad's, MaxSea French Software has an "old" chart for the La Rance, which shows extensive drying heights, but the Barrage now stops the area drying at all so the chart is a guide, and we follow the well marked channel south. 1140 hrs. Pt. des Landelles viaduct air draft 20 metres, the channel is now very torturous and we're glad to be following a "local" who is giving us handsignalled directions as they too come right into the banking to keep in deep water. From now until the last lock



The daily shop at the Market



Weekend squeeze - La Rance Barrier lock



Eating ashore - always a pleasure



Traditional - Cups of cider

the river will dry at "half tide" and I'm quite sure that Carraig has found the muddy bottom on a couple of occasions. All the same it's very pretty and we pass some quaint fishing huts built out into the river. 1155 hrs. Lock through Ecluse du Chatelier, and proceed to a berth at Port de Lyvet's marina. The lock-keeper and his wife are very helpful, again, the locks are set up with vertical ropes and one simply loops, the mooring rope to it and makes fast onboard, while the lock empties or fills at a sedate pace. The Lock Keepers do their bit and then settled down to a light lunch and a small carafe of wine, now how civilised is that? This is as far as Carraig can go as the Chatelier Barrage keeps the river Rance at a depth of 1.6 metres and it's just too shallow to go to Dinan. This far inland, has killed the wind and the French countryside is very hot in the afternoon.

Port de Lyvet and Dinan

After the hassal and bussle of St. Malo's docks, Lyvet is all tranquilly, and friendly ducks. The Marina's a bit of a dumping ground, with boats that have seen better days to those that are only afloat because they're sitting on the bottom. Still, it's amazing, how many are derelict today, power washed and in use with the whole family loaded and off picnicking tomorrow. Indeed, we've notice, on the river and canal, how evolution has caused yachts to adapt and shed their masts and spars. The local bar L'Effet Mer has a terrace to watch the world go by on their bicycles and the occasional car or tractor, we book an evening table and will return in the cool of the day for dinner. The Marina's facilities are Ok-ish, with it's own pissoir, but no phone signal or wifi - Oh what a relief.

Tuesday 21 July. It's been very wet overnight again, we have a small leak in the aft cabin's starboard quarter, enough to make a nappy damp. 1100 hrs. There's no buses to Dinan, but it's about an hour and bit walk along the canal's tow path, it will be good to stretch our legs. We're by Dinan's outskirts and passing a Papermill, they're loading baskets into an Irish lorry for delivery to Maldon's oyster shack - an Essex favourite of ours. Dinan has been worth the walk it's a fine town built with commanding views above the river. We eat lunch of some savoury gallettes down by the river and then walk them off with a stiff climb to the town's historic medieval centre. The City Hall's statuary commemorates the slaying of England's Henry II Champion by the French King's Champion - honour is served and the town is saved from certain rape and pillage. The air's still and humid, a Taxi back to Carraig is not too difficult a decision to make in the slightest.

Port du Lyvet to Port de Plouer - sur - Rance

Wednesday 22 July. There's a pattern to the weather, with rain in the morning quickly drying to a warm and humid afternoon. 1245 hrs. Single up and let go, with Pamela at the helm. We've discussed the locking through with the Lock-keeper, and we're good to go, although an hour ago the canal entrance was all deep mud. We take our time 1320 hrs. Port St. Hubers bridges are reached and the wind shifts under the bridges and dies between the river valley cliffs and we call it a day for sailing as the tide carries Carraig on - so engine started and we backtrack towards Plouer. 1400 hrs. Madam Lilian is at hand to take our lines as Pamela brings Carraig to the pontoon, - Lillian offers information and take orders for the morning bread. It's a pleasant stroll into Plouer but it's putting the shutters up at 1700 hrs., the butcher opens long enough to sell steak for tea. The riverside bar down the road is busy as it fronts a play area and small riverside swimming pool, then it's back onboard for tea. The Navigator's exhausted and retires at 2100 hrs. the sound of the solitary sentry "the goose", honks its whereabouts and all is well.

Port de Plouer - sur - Rance

The river's full of eels and the cormorants are sleek and fed. We watch one catch and juggle a large eel 'til it was head down and just right, where upon the seagulls came to mob and pester it, forcing the cormorant to the shore where the eel gives a good account of itself, but to no avail - the outcome had been slated from the start.

Thursday 23 July The weather pattern repeats, with showers 'til lunch time. The dingy's inflated and we set off towards Morreuc on the SE river bank. The village's not big, just a few houses and a couple of converted farmsteads. France is still not yet on their holidays and we have the cafe La Cale de Mordreuc pretty much to ourselves and are dished up an excellent lunch. The locals stopped bringing us the "English" menu some time ago, now that we've mastered the specials board, indeed, as much as we Brits disdain to talk another's language, the French take quite the same attitude with English - only in the popular coastal towns does the lingua franca of cash support the multi paged mangled multi language set menus. Besides, a visit to a supermarket confirms how few food miles French produce travel, (we have suspected for some time that the French keep the best stuff for themselves - it's certainly true with their wine, Carrefour has exceptionally good cheap stuff) the specialised village butcher and baker are still there, perhaps, just hanging on, but in ruddier health than their British cousins. Pamela's in charge of the dingy on the return passage and we do little minuets and waltz back across the river.

Friday 24 July. We had planned to set off North down La Rance and back to St. Malo, but the weather forecast has been shouting at us about a deep low to cross increasing to 5-7, indeed no sooner had the cill gates opened than the heavens opened and the wind strengthened putting any move on hold. The Navigator got down to cleaning the bilges and Pamela reads, using the cockpit's cover as a windbreak. We were invited onto Inversander a bigish three bilge keeled steel boat for nibbles, where we spend a couple of delightful hours.

Plouer to St. Malo's St. Servin

Saturday 25 July. It's a beautiful morning, the weather's not quite gone through, but the forecast's bucking up. 1330 hrs. Singled up and ready to leave, timing will be tight for the locks and the waters flooding over the marina cill. 1400 hrs. 2.25 meters on the cill and we let go and are away. 1530 hrs. arrive at La Rance Barrage lock, we can see the signals are agin us and the locks just starting to close - that close, how infuriating, now we have to pick up a waiting buoy. 1545 hrs. Ha-ha the lock signals change and we're off as the lock opens to show that the previously locked in yachts are still there. The Barrage lock is crossed by a road bridge that doesn't open if there's an ambulance or police on the way or when the rush hour traffic is backed up too much. This still lets substantial motor boats through but stops us at 14 meters air draft, so we raft up with the others. 1630 hrs. Missed Vauban's Ecluse du Naye as it's shutting, not much luck today. Rather than hang about as it's quite a windy westerly 5-6, we turn short round in the harbour and go round the RoRo berth to Sablons Marina, and are all fast in a visitor berth.

Port de Sablons

Sunday 26 July. The weather's torrential rain this morning, but we swap cabins to give Angus and Beth the after one. Visit the Chandlers to spend some Euros on lifejackets and a boathook. A late-ish lunch and then Angus and Beth are with us at 1545 hrs. Later, all up the town for dinner.

St. Servans to Port de Plouer

Monday 27 July 1220 hrs. Better timing today as we leave the berth for the Barrage lock. 1300 hrs. short wait and we're in, all goes smoothly and we proceed South up river under jib. Headed at times due to the wind being funnelled by the high banks. At port St. Hubert bridge we hand the jib and motorsail, the rest of the way to Plouer.

Plouer

Angus, Beth and Pamela wander up to the nearest bar for drinks, whilst the Navigator rests. The crew return, Pamela russles up a superb risotto and a chilled Moët is produced. Everyone's in bed early and the Goose guards the Marina.

Tuesday 28 July. The weather's to turn wet today, so after breakfast, Angus and Beth go ashore for a wander, whilst Carraig is spruced up and the cockpit washed down. The weather turns in the afternoon and the crew settled down to cards and books.

Plouer to Port Lyvet

Wednesday 29 July 0900 hrs. Off the berth just at the end of the rising tide. It takes 40 minutes to motor up river to Ecluse du Chatelier, and into the lock, with the tide visibly on the turn. 1000 hrs. We're out of the locks and readying to make fast in the Marina.

Port Lyvet and Dinan

1145 hrs. It's too shallow to take Carraig any further. We could have used the tender, but needing to stretch our legs we set off at a brisk pace for Dinan. It's hot and sunny with cooling breezes from time to time. Lunch at a busy riverside bar. The city is busier than last week, the main square has a fair number of coaches, but its delightful all the same. The Navigator buys a fabulous "Celtic" flag. Then it's a taxi back down the riverside to Carraig. Dinner was at the St. Patrick's bar - an oddity with its red GPO telephone booth and Australian waitress - but a good meal, with fresh local produce, including local escargot.

Port Lyvet to St. Malo

Thursday 30 July 0715 hrs. Angus and I inspect the river level and discuss the merits of going with the lock-keeper - who's accent is almost impenetrably thick, but who speaks very slowly to us. The tide table is produced, and with a flourish it is agreed that we can go when we are ready. 0740 hrs. Off the berth and into the lock. The Keeper opens the lock but holds us until 0812 hrs. when he assures us that there will be sufficient water 'til the Barrage. We're happy at this, one of the navigator's concerns is the banks of covering rocks close to the lock - the marker poles sit some way off channel. Luckily, when we came up on Monday 20 July we followed a local boat in, but the rocks' jagged edges would certainly have gouged Carraig's hull on contact - we follow the plotter's reciprocal course very carefully.

0940 hrs. The Barrage gates are open and we steam straight in - 12 boats in the Lock, rafted from wall to wall. 1010 hrs. Out of the Lock into the Rade de Dinard, in what can only be described as a stampede, as everyone, tries to make the best of the last hour of the ebb. Off St. Malo's North Mole we hoist sails and tack down the Rade de St. Malo as far as the Lighthouse on the Le Grand Jardin. At 2 knots, there's a fair tide running and a hint of overfalls. The fast ferry Condor Rapide enters the Chenal De La Petite Porte at some lick. Originally built in 1997 for the Royal Australian Navy as HMAS Jervis Bay she was the largest

catamaran in military service. With 4 x 20 cylinder Rustons (medium sized stuff), powering 4 lips waterjets she is capable of doing 48 knots (55 mph), - She's had a chequered history, having spent more time in cold lay-up than in service - indeed, she's not mucking about as we bring Carraig to clear the Channel's Les Perres Garnier port hand buoy. 1250 hrs. There's not much point now in fighting the incoming tide, so we tack back up towards St. Malo, and make fast to a buoy to await Vauban Locks.

1655 hrs. Having let go from the buoy we proceed directly to Ecluse du Naye and by 1725 hrs. we're through and all fast at the visitors berths. 1850 hrs. Angus and Beth leave for Dinard Airport and the Leeds plane.

St. Malo Vauban Marina

Friday 31 July to Sunday 2 August There's quite a bit of tidying and laundry to do, besides it's hot and sunny and we are moored immediately outside one of the most fabulous of towns. We do a bit of sightseeing by bus, with a day trip to Cancale to sample the oysters. Dinner was some fresh giant prawns cooked and eaten aboard Carraig. The weather is certainly warming up and the evenings are balmy. There's much comings and goings, with a real mix of Nationalities.

St. Malo Port des Sablons

Monday 3 August 0930 hrs. We single up and loiter in the Basin - we are to share the lock with Trans Sea, a 4,000 tonne chemical tanker registered in Malta. 1010 hrs. We lock-in immediately astern, she looks to have a variable pitch propeller as she creates a bit of wash whilst alongside. The shore gang take our ropes - it's good to see them "dip them through" Trans Sea's (proper navy style) there's to be no busted lines when she leaves then. 1022 hrs. We follow Trans Sea at a respectful distance - her Pilot has a peek at us from her bridge before he orders half ahead. 1106 hrs. Alongside in Sablons Marina.

Sablons Marina

We give the deck a quick wash-down before heading to the chandlers, to replace another missing fender. In addition, I'm to change our reefing line so that they can be handled from the cockpit. Carraig is set up for this with the right fairleads and lever clutches. Fred, has had a propensity to cut his lines just a bit too short for my liking, and so it proves, but never the less it all appears seaman-like.

1900 hrs. We're delighted, Alasdair and Amy rejoin having flown out from London. We take them to the good restaurant that we visited with Angus and Beth. Heavy rain while dining and we moved inside. It's Spring tide and the Marina bridges are absolutely flat for a change. All in bed by midnight.



Poor weather on the Normandy coast



Caen canal - trialing going astern



Mojitos at 1130 hrs.



Port Lyvet lock

St. Malo to St. Helier

Tuesday 4 August 0800 hrs. Awaiting sufficient water to clear the cill and for the adjacent ferry to reverse into her RoRo berth. 0906 hrs. We have crossed the main channel and head NE passed St. Malo's Le Petit Be fort in 6 metres on a rising tide - HW at 1040 hrs. La Saint Servantine SHB abeam - It's SW - W 4-5 gusting 6 at times, we are going well with full sail. 1145 hrs. SE Minquiers ECB abeam, we are now getting the benefit of the Plateau Des Minquiers reef which has flattened the swell, we've just got the last of the east going tide, where upon it will become west going until 1630 hrs. when it will turn southerly again. 1145 hrs. NE Minquiers ECB abeam very close to starboard - we're close to the Basse NE des Caux bank but with some 5 metres we'll clear it with plenty to spare if we drift off course. 1319 hrs. Hinguette PHB abeam, we've made good time and are now entering St. Helier's South Passage. 1328 hrs. East Rock SHB abeam hand sails to enter the Harbour Road, we're pushing it and put engines to full ahead. 1400 hrs. In Harbour, alongside and all fast- excellent timing, by 1430 hrs. the depth over the cill is zero, so we're in on the last gasp.

St. Helier

Pushed up, we take the bus round to the drying harbour of Saint Aubin for an excellent dinner at The Boathouse Restaurant, for chateaubriand steak. Then a bus back to Carraig and everyone turned into their bunks.

St. Helier to St. Peter Port

Wednesday 5 August 0856 hrs. Pamela's at the helm and takes Carraig out of the Marina. 0924 hrs. Diamond Rock PHB abeam round up and raise the mainsail - wind Westerly 5, with occasional rain - bit of a header to start. 1112 hrs. La Corbiere Lt. Ho. abeam set course 327°T for Guernsey, the wind is looking to back Southerly and we pole out the jib to goose wing and make good speed - the Current is to become increasingly more favourable. 1345 hrs. St. Martin's Point abeam to Port, this has been a great day's sail, we have broad reached tacking downwind to shape up to the coast. Now the SW swell is switching off and it looks that the wind will go light too. 1436 hrs. All fast alongside the pontoon in the Pool.

St. Peter Port

There's no power on the Pool pontoons, but we were able to top up our water tanks. Ashore, for a drink and top-up mobile phones - the heavens decide to open up and we have heavy rain squalls and spectacular lightning all evening - thank goodness we're not the tallest mast. Dinner is to be Alasdhair and Amy's superb risotto.

Thursday 6 August We're boxed in and some of the boats plan to be here over the weekend. We negotiate our way out of the "pen" and by 0945 hrs. have moored at the exit of the next pen, portside to ready for going tomorrow. With an early start the crew are able to go shopping in the morning. When the light drizzle stopped we made for the Herm ferry and then lunch at the White House Hotel Bistro. Returned to Carraig late afternoon - freshened up and up the road to the Hook Restaurant for dinner and more steaks. Pamela and Amy back on board to pack for tomorrow's flight home.

St Peter's Port to Plymouth

Friday 7 August The forecast for the Channel is for Variable 3 or 4 becoming East or South East 4 or 5 with rain later. 0925 hrs. Off the berth with Alasdhair and I on board and alongside the fuel berth and bunker 65 litres of fuel. The plan is to go North about and take Doyle's Passage to the West. This will give us a lift with slack water and shelter. 1000 hrs. Brehon Tower abeam to Starboard (stbd) - we're making good time heading north up the Little Russel. 1015 hrs. Roustel tower abeam to stbd. 1029 hrs. Plate Fougere Lt. Ho. abeam to stbd turn into Doyle's Passage, we now have 1 knot of tide against us, before leaving the Passage we hoist our main sail in light airs. 1100 hrs. set course 307°T - this course allows for 12 hours of tide, we will allow Carraig to sail both east and west of the course line, and make little effort to adjust the course, unless she fall off too much.

1200 hrs. - 2200 hrs. have maintained a steady course of 307°T, traffic has been light, although there was one west bound ship which was on a steady bearing and we altered course to give her more sea room. The wind has been NE 3-4 becoming variable with stratus clouds clearing. 2230 hrs. Great Mew Stone abeam - about 1 mile off the course line. Alter course to bring E Tinker ECB ahead. 2345 hrs. Queen Anne's Battery marina for our booked berth - to find that this Marina is full. Plymouth Yacht Haven shares the same VHF frequency and calls to say they have berths.

Saturday 8 August 0000 hrs. replot a course to take us to Plymouth Yacht Haven. Their duty officer has us on radar and talks us in to the berth. 0030 hrs. Alongside and all secure - 88 mls and the Channel's crossed.

Plymouth

Quite simply, Plymouth offers everything for any vessel, from the smallest yachts to fully armed men-of-war. Alasdhair and I take a water-taxi to Sutton harbour (Channel Island coins gone) and wander round the Inner Harbour. It's a curious mix of genteel English looking through antique shops and Naval squaddies out on the

randan, as they do. Evening meal at the Glassblower restaurant - it's just a name - no blowers employed hereabouts - the meal is formulaic but well done, and on a Saturday evening full marks for fitting us in.

Sunday 9 August - Laundry done and ashore for lunch. Alasdair catches the 1400 hrs. train for London. The main halyard is brought aft to the cockpit for single handed sailing and the dingy is taken onboard and lashed down - not needed on voyage.

Plymouth to Falmouth

Monday 10 August 0710 hrs. Off berth, weather immediately closes in - SW 4 or 5 veering NW 3 or 4 - fog patches then thundery rain, to be fair later. 0820 hrs. E Tinker ECB abeam - have chose simply to retrace my incoming route before setting course 251°T, with a double reef. Carraig's not carrying the jib so it's a motor sail. 0900 hrs. The winds gusting 6s although the heavy rain kills it at times. The Lowrance plotter has gone off line but finally comes back on, I've had a look at the wiring in the deckhead - there's miles of the stuff, it's wet and all looks a bit suspect - I dry it out and the set comes back to life. 1200 hrs. Dodman point 4 points to stbd, Wind SW 5 with a confused Westerly swell, its been raining heavily on and off - more on - since I cleared Plymouth Harbour, but the sky is clearing and there's cumulous now coming through so the weather should improve. 1330 hrs. St. Anthony's head abeam - have made good time into Falmouth Bay and round up into the Carrick Road and the river Fal. 1400 hrs. St. Mawes SCB abeam - take my time to prepare for berthing, now that the rain's gone there's quite a bit of activity on the water. 1445 hrs. There are leading marks to enter Falmouth Haven Marina, there's not a lot of water at low water and the berths are dredged to keep them usable.

Falmouth

Falmouth is one of finest all-weather harbours in the British Isles. I've never been to "Falmouth for Orders" but it's a common event on tramp ships coming to the Channel. They still have sailing oyster dredgers and it's a delight to pick them out doing their business in the bay. Ashore it's delightful, a mixture of Cornish hippy to city folk in their exquisitely pressed new casual gear. I have a shore side shower and spruce up a bit. The next berth is a GP14 with mum, dad and two lads of 9 and 10 onboard, The lads sleep forward on the bottom boards and mum and dad are on the benches aft under a canvas cover-cooking is on the Marina walkway. We share a cold beer before I do my pasta. It's festival week and the town's rammed and far too busy for a wander, but I make a mental note to come back.

Falmouth to Newlyn

Tuesday 11 August. 0730 hrs. Off the berth the weather is for NE 4-5 with occasional showers. 0842 hrs. Manacles ECB abeam, with the North Easterly, its an easy reach with little swell and Carraig's going well. 1000 hrs. Lizard point abeam, we have half a knot of tide, Carraig's 2 miles off to avoid any overfalls, now that we're rounding the point we're meeting a low WNW swell which looks to be building, but will disappear once we're round into Mounts Bay. 1200 hrs. The swell and wind have switched off to cats paws. Its clear enough to see Goonhilly Downs dishes on the hill and St. Michael's Mount up towards Penzance. 1230 hrs. Note that there are lots of black pot buoys around as I drop the mainsail and prepare to enter Newlyn Harbour. 1300 hrs. Alongside and all fast port side to. The Harbour Office is clear that I could only come in if I had no dogs onboard as they are prohibited on the pontoons or in the harbour environs.

Newlyn

The Harbour is full of fishing boats and is a bit of a s*** hole, with it's constantly working fish market and noisy trawlers reflecting its "fish" heritage. The town has a reputation for hard-case fishing families running the show to their own unwritten laws. However, Newlyn is approachable at all states of the tide, day or night and is the last 24 hour port before rounding Lands End and the long haul to Padstow.

Newlyn to Padstow

Wednesday 12 August 0400 hrs. After a fitful night's sleep, singled up and let go at least an hour before sunrise at 0503 hrs. Weather for Lundy and Plymouth to be Variable becoming NE 3-4. Meantime with an hours early start, there's no pressure to make tide gates. 0530 hrs. Runnel Stones SCB abeam and the tides with us. 0630 hrs. Lands End abeam and alter course to the North, with Longships abeam to the west, the bottoms quite rough here and the currents welling up and we're just catching a bit of the east going stream, where it divides around the peninsular. It's a bit grey and desolate - not at all what I expected - but not disappointing. We weave past the Kettle's Bottom and Sharks fin reefs, but then, Carraig's arrived after a couple of days of North Easterlies and there's not much wind and little swell.

This coast can be so different in a westerly gale, where the 61 metre cliffs are devoid of vegetation some ways back inland - the heath and soil blasted off down to naked rock by wind driven salt spray. The power of a Hurricane or cyclonic wind driven salt spray is unbelievable - I have seen it strip layered paint right off and polish underlying steel and this exposed jagged rocky coast regularly takes the full brunt of the Atlantic weather and seas. 0705 hrs. Cape Cornwall abeam - and we're clear of the Brisons reefs and the tides fair til 0800

hrs. set course 048°T. To Starboard are the chimneys and buildings of the redundant tin mines, perched precariously at the very edge of the cliffs.

1200 hrs. It's a bit uncomfortable, the currents south going, the winds NxNE gusting 5 with a steep sea and a Westerly swell, when they combine we're being caught as Carraig rides the crests. There's nothing for it but to motorsail and selectively reef down to 2 reefs to avoid the sails slatting in the troughs and over powering on the crests. 1421 hrs. Trevoise head abeam and the tides been with us for an hour. I'm going inside the Quies and between that and the Bull rock and can see that the tides picking up round the Point and already we're up to 8 knots. I spot a submerging pot buoy ahead and note that there's many more - at least their lines are with the tide, but the buoys are being towed under. 1500 hrs. Stepper Point abeam and the river Camel's ahead and now clear of pot buoys. There's a lot of dinghies about as I rig for harbour. Padstow Harbour launch has come out and I follow it, while it handily cuts a swath through the dinghies. 1530 hrs. inside the Harbour, rafted up and all fast - HW at 1600 hrs. so the gates will close around 1800 hrs. and we're in for the night.

Padstow

1830 hrs. The inside boat want to move first thing in the morning disturbing the three outside. This is grossly annoying as they watching me, a single hander, and proffer nowt - no fend off or pass a line for that matter. We do a three boat shuffle and yet the sods still not happy till it's all to his satisfaction. Again it's the French, in the yacht Saidak, who scramble across to help take my lines and make fast. Maryvonne and Bruno produce oven fresh bread and dips and I go "vola" and offer a superb chilled white, olives and nibbles in the sun drenched cockpit. A votre sante - ah that's better.

Thursday 13 August 0700 hrs. Jinks, our whirligig boat's still here. It's raining hard, I put up the cockpit tent - I've been living in the for'd end and haven't used the after cabin, but this rain's getting worse so it's imperative that the tent's up. In the morning I wander up to the nearest cafe for breakfast - the harbour's empty today no kids with crab buckets, or smell of fish and chips for that matter, for the rain is bouncing (stotting) - it will be a day for make and mend. The forecast's not too promising either - a ridge is to establish over the UK - strong winds on Friday to moderate Saturday morning. The inner harbour used to dry, but is part of the flood defences to stop the river Camel swamping the town.

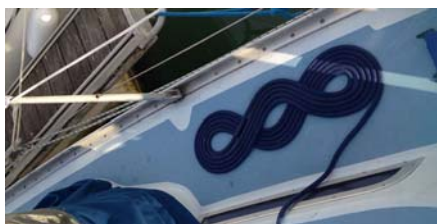
Friday 14 August. Laundry day - I'm at it all day, everyone's doing their stuff and the single drier is not keeping up with the



La Rance river dries



Dinard is stylish



Carraig style



The diving board covers at high water

demand. It dries up in the afternoon, and I'm able to go for a walk. The National Lobster Farm is really interesting, where they hand rear them and release. And, of course there's Rick Stein's empire: hotel, restaurant, fish and chips, icecream, cookery school. Is there no end to this bloke's talent? He has 100m of building on the old fish quay and there's always a queue, but he's flogging off stuff and I think I get a bargain. We do another shuffle - the new inside guys going to Bristol at 0545 hrs. and doesn't want to disturb us. I need fuel before I go so it will be an early start for us all.

Padstow to Milford Haven

Saturday 15 August 0530 hrs. Off the berth and head with Saidak to the fuel berth, which is in the drying outer harbour. Fuel up and say goodbye to Maryvonne and Bruno who are heading to Brittany via the Scillies. HW is at 0835 hrs. or so but we'll get the tide with us for a couple of hours, then it will be a Westerly stream from the Bristol Channel for 6 hours. The winds NW at present due to back SW 4-5 which will be good. Out of the river and at 0746 hrs. round Pentire Point and into the NW wind with a medium Westerly swell - set course 354°T - the good news is I put the main up in the river, but the jib's too full cut do much good on a close tack. I've adjusted the cars on the jib sheet track, but it's a huge sail, I really need to set another on the inner forestay to get her to go into the wind more. 1200 hrs. There's some alto stratus and cumulus coming through and the winds been trying to back for a while, but it's certainly gone more Westerly and I take out the main reefs, pull the jib out to the spreader, engines off and we're sailing. 1320 hrs. Lundy Island abeam some 12 miles to stbd. 1540 hrs. Pembroke sighted, with just a hint of the refinery stacks, the weather's hinting at something the sky's 8 octas but the barometer's steady, if anything the winds dying. 1630 hrs. Furl the jib and put the engine on the wind's gone NWxW 2-3, although the beam swell is still low and low. It's been surprising how few dolphins and porpoises I've seen. 1736 hrs. St Gowan WCB abeam. Carraig's a good bit off the course line, I had freed her off to the East to get her sailing and now am bringing her more to the West. 1840 hrs. Entering Milford Haven buoyed channel - It will be high water in a couple of hours, and still light to 2143 hrs. and I'm debating whether to lock in to the Marina or do it tomorrow - honestly I'm knackered and a bit bored, it's been a long day, with not much to see or do - so I've elected to head for Dale.

I've have AIS on my phone this trip and had a couple of calls from Dad asking if I'm OK - bless his cotton socks - but I've switched AIS off, from now on I'll bleep it when I'm leaving and again when I arrive - there's no point of worrying everyone,

besides, I've long realised that we've been going far faster than my ETA speed of 4.5 knots.

2010 hrs. Into Dale bay and alongside the mid bay pontoon, provided by the local sailing club. Again, what is it with people who hang around, but don't offer assistance. I've been doing this sailing and mooring lark for donkey's years, but it's always great when shoreside at least offers to help. Nevertheless I sit on the side deck, have a beer, converse and chill. I skip my evening meal and am asleep by 2100 hrs. - zonked.

Dale to Milford Dock

Sunday 16 August 0900 hrs. Ravenous - I have the full caboodle in the frying pan - will suffer later, but sod it. 0930 hrs. Call Milford Lock for entry times - whoops - got to get my skates on. 1000 hrs. Off the pontoon and full ahead, there's that whiff of burning rubber again, still I'm pressed for time. 1138 hrs. As I moor up to the pontoon in the locks they're closing the gates - this is a snazzy setup, the pontoons are fixed to vertical rails and just float up and down in the lock, and, they have inner and outer gates, so they can vary the lock's capacity. 1212 hrs. Out and round up onto the pontoon.

Milford Dock

I've booked Carraig in here for a week. So now it's a tidy up and stowing things from prying eyes. An "Ahha" moment - the exhaust manifold's leaking - the rubber hose has vulcanised in the heat. Anyway clean up, cut off the end of the rubber pipe, end for end it, refit and run up - it's all OK for now, but it will need attention at the end of the season. [with the benefit of hindsight, I should have cleaned out the exhaust gas mixer tail too - this situation was to reappear in year 2 too]

Monday 17 August

I leave Carraig in warm layup and walk to the nearby station for the 1000 hrs. train from Milford Haven to Leeds. Yesterday, I booked my ticket on line to be picked up at the station. It's a single line tracks - literally the end of the line, but in pulls the intercity for Manchester, boarded and we're off - slowly - it's to be a long day. There's so much to see of wet Wales and it passes the window at a snails pace, only when clear of Swansea does the train get upto speed. 1900 hrs. I'm in the door and home in Leeds.

Milford Haven to Kilmore Quay

Saturday 22 August. Angus and I have left Leeds and driven down in a hired car. The car is left with the Enterprise depot in Milford. 1245 hrs. Off berth, locked in and now out into the Haven's buoyed channel. The weather's to be light cyclonic, with poor visibility and prolonged heavy rain. 1345 hrs. St Anne's head cleared with it's fog horn sounding in the poor visibility.

1500 hrs. Grassholm Island abeam set course for Ireland 296°T and it's raining heavily and heavier still as the night wore on. 1900 hrs. clear of the Smalls separation zone 2200 Hrs. Tuscar Lt. sighted.

2300 hrs. The Bore rocks ECB seen dead ahead and the rain is now monsooning. The visibility closes right down, but we're to go through the Saltee Sound, using GPS charting and the echo sounder. I take Carraig in on the charted depth of 11 metres till Goose Rock is 4 points to starboard then swing her onto a NW'ly course to leave Jackeen Rock to port and back off the shelf at 10 metres - run North for 8 cables and then east to St. Patrick's Bridge Isolating Buoy which marks the start of the Kilmore Quay fairway. We pick up it's Isolating white light bang on the bow at less than three cables distance and slow Carraig down to feel our way in - I'm considering heading back out where we've just been and anchoring, when the visibility clears some what and we sight the leading lights. Concentrating on keeping her to the leading line I almost con Carraig up the beach, Angus shouts and points to the harbour entrance, now abeam, I turn Carraig short round and we're in and heading for a pontoon.

Sunday 23 August 0100 hrs. The visibility closes down again and we simply raft up for the night. Cockpit cover on and we divest ourselves of our sodden gear, all of which has leaks and we strip off and put on dry gear. A quick sandwich and a beer and it's off to our bunks.

Kilmore Quay to Arklow

Sunday 23 August 0800 hrs. Inside boats wants to move - which begs the question, do we go too or go to the fuel berth? The fuel berth's got fishing boats waiting on passengers to the Saltee Sound - decision made, we'll not get fuel now and the Harbour master's slow on accommodating our needs, but not charged us for our 7 hours alongside. We want to catch the tide North at Carnsore Point. 0915 hrs. Off berth and by 0925 hrs. cross St. Patrick's bridge - a natural break in a pebble ridge immediately to the east of the port. 1113 hrs. Carnsore Point to port and Fundale Rk PHB rounded, to leave the Splaugh PHB to port and heading out past Lucifer ECB. We're to leave Lucifer and Blackwater Banks to starboard and enter the Rusk Channel. The weather's better than last night, where it didn't take time to come down. Carraig's heading North with wind off the land to the West 4-5, which provides shelter so there's little waves or swell. We've chosen to go outside Glassgorman Bank, perhaps we're being too cautious, but with the tide with us it's only adding minutes to the trip. 1700 hrs. Glassgorman No2 PHB abeam and we alter towards Arklow's breakwater. 1730 hrs. Arklow South Pier rounded and into the Avoca River and motor up towards Arklow Marina and the river bank pontoon. 1800 hrs. all fast on the pontoon starboard side to. Distance made 50.2 mls at average of 5.77 knots.

Arklow to Howth

Monday 24 August 1100 hrs. Slow start to the day, turn short round in the river and proceed down river. The wind's light southerly veering westerly - there's no swell to talk of and we motor up the coast between the coast and Arklow Bank towards Mizen Head. 1240 hrs. Wicklow Head Lt. Ho. abeam A/C 358°T

1620 hrs. South Burford SCB abeam enter the Burford Bank "gyratory". Linger by North Burford NCB to await Stena Lines - Stena Adveturer to cross on it's way to Dublin. 1706 hrs. Nose of Howth Point abeam alter to the west towards Howth Harbour and Marina. Enter marked channel and go to fuel berth to take on 100 litres. 1800 hrs. At berth and all secured distance made 39.6 mls at average 6.02 kts.

Howth to Ardglass

Tuesday 25 August 1100 hrs. off berth and head out to Howth Sound and to the NE of Ireland's Eye. 1214 hrs. Shenick's point abeam on the mainland. Set course 357°T - wind E - SE 4-5 gusting 6, reef in but Carraig going well. It's a straight run out into the Irish Sea, some 14 miles off the coast at Dundalk Bay and the Mourne Mountains - With a SE wind gusting 6 at times there's a moderate following quarterly sea - Carraig is joined by a major pod of dolphins which enjoy diving and surfing around us, just when you think they're gone they surf in and "chuff" alongside. 1900 hrs. Phennick Point ahead as we turn into Ardglass Harbour - we take our time as the easterly swell is rolling into the outer basin, but the Marina is tucked well into the cove. 1930 hrs. All fast alongside - 54.1 mls av speed 6.52 kts.

Ardglass

Wednesday 26 August The weather is to close in S veering SW 5-7, perhaps gale 8. We've made quite a distance since leaving Milford Haven, and this is as good a Marina to do laundry and clean down. Ashore, we have what can only be described as a "gut buster" of a breakfast - the full Ulster. The port's compact with a working fishing fleet of large herring boats discharging via chutes to converted milk tankers. The herring's are going mainly for fish meal, yet again evidence of our inability to manage prime fish sources. The fishermen's Mission is busy - the loop-hole is that the UK allows the Merchant Navy and fishing community to employ crew as long as they are "deep sea" and are not intending to base themselves here - the Crew, some of them from India and Bangladesh, play a "game" of constantly signing off and on in Irish Ports to frustrate the Authorities. Very few crews are UK or Irish, whilst the Europeans are working legally most others aren't. The law spares the "Owners" of any fiduciary duty, so it's very much a merry-go-round, eventually the Border Force get active and clears the illegals out, but it's now so rife, the pipeline of crew is immense, that it's virtually unstoppable with the resources available.

Ardglass to Kames Kyles of Bute

Thursday 27 August The weather's improving and the afternoon's to be SW 5-6, seas slight to moderate in the North Channel, to moderate later. 1500 hrs. slipped from the Marina - there's a bit of swell at the Harbour Entrance and we rip a jack rope off the main's cover. 1600 hrs. we're well off Strangford Loch's entrance but there's still a steepish race at the fairway buoy, but it's going with us. 1700 hrs. South Rock PHB abeam, clear of the reef by 1.5 miles. With the wind as it is, we choose to broadreach out towards the North Channel. The intention had been to run up to Campbeltown, but with the wind set as it is we could make a good broad reach to the Kyles of Bute.

Friday 28 August 0000 hrs. Corsewall Point light raised 2 points to Starboard - we're mid Channel (it's 15 miles wide), both the Irish and Scottish coastal and town lights are bright. We have been sailing to Carraig's best point and take a gybe to take her way from the coast and more of an offing. 0320 hrs. Ailsa Craig abeam, we're now too far to the West of Arran and gybe again, this time the Main Sheet Track Stopper pin "pings" off - clearly a bit of metal fatigue as it hasn't been under too much pressure - we've been on manual steering for some time - the auto pilot has not been able to stop her from rounding up or broaching in what is quite a steep following sea - Carraig's has her full length in the troughs and skids down the wave faces, needing all the helmsman's attention. 0616 hrs. Pladda Lt. at Arran abeam, we alter course to clear and round Arran's South East Corner and Holy Island. The swell and sea's are switching off, but there's quite strong catabatic gusts from the land. 0657 hrs. Pillar Rock Point Lt on Holy Island abeam, were close in and will now follow Arran's East coast up to Bute Sound and into Inchmarnock Sound. 1135 hrs. The winds not quite "boxing the compass", but we're having to play the sails, although there is wind about. 1135 hrs. At the North end of Inchmarnock and we alter course to enter the Kyles of Bute. 1300 hrs. we motor the last bit, as we've got Carraig ready to go to her mooring - now all fast and gear ashore. - 102 mls average 5.12 kts and a maximum of 8.34 kts. We head for the Kames Hotel with my Mum and Dad and Beth (Angus's wife).

The Clyde

Saturday 29 August until Monday 5 October. Carraig's spent some time on the mooring at Kames or simply day tripping around the Kyles. The engine exhaust hose was replace at Inverkip on Wednesday 2 September - then Carraig left Kip to go to James Watt Dock (JWD). Friday 4 September, saw Carraig leave JWD and return to Kames, for the Kyles 10 miles weekend. Sunday 6 September saw Pamela, James, Greg, Sherry and Brian take a trip round the Narrows and Caladh. Monday 5 October saw Carraig to JWD for layup.



St Malo



La Rance



Cancale oyster beds



Beth and Angus chill at Plouer



Pamela at Dinard waterfront



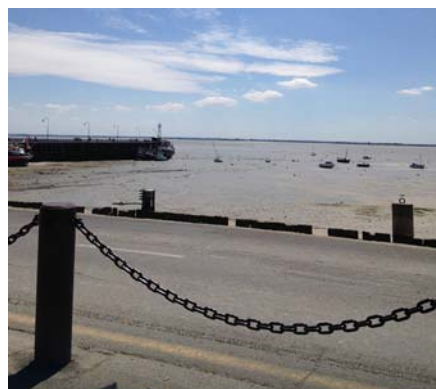
La Rance - chenal balise - fishing platforms



Boulogne breakwater mole



Dinan quayside and La Rance bridge



Cancale - Baie du Mont St Michel



The St. Malo to Dinard ferry



Angus sets the tone for the day 8-)



St Peter Port - Guernsey



Shorts and T shirt at Dinan harbour

