

The last two years cruising has for us not been hampered by the weather more by family matters. This year we have done the usual I.O.W., Poole and crossed the ditch three times but have needed to stay closer to Home in the UK.

Our favourite cruising area is The Cote du Granite Rose and the Channel Islands, our last good season was 2008, the weather set the pattern for the season with strong winds that seemed, unlike previous years, to last for weeks at a time rather than two or three days. During the sailing season we were fortunate to have had several good sails and met up with other members and also made several new friends while cruising the Channel Islands and the beautiful Cote de Granite Rose of Brittany. This is a fantastic sailing area. The tides are high and the currents caused by them run fast, this can help to enable you to average 7 to 8 knots while sailing without much wind in good sea conditions. The area which is rock strewn needs to be treated with respect as the currents can all too easily carry you into danger and any wind over tide conditions will cause the sea and waves to pick up and be at best uncomfortable.

The start of our season was nearly delayed when Sue cracked one of her rear teeth just before we left UK necessitating a quick trip to the dentist for treatment before we set off to France and our summer cruise.

Our Summer cruise began with our first trip Cherbourg to Port Bail 49 NM saw us motored into a f3 westerly for 18 miles to Cap de la Hague with just enough wind to cause breaking seas over the deck and occasionally over the dog house at Cap de la Hague, once past the Cap, we headed south into smooth seas, hoisted the sails and shut the engines off and blissfully sailed with the tide the next 30 miles all the way to our next destination. Two other boats that left Cherbourg the same time continued on past the Cap into the wind, either to Alderney or Guernsey but our first port of call would be Port Bail, 5 miles south of Carteret, where we intended to dry-out on the sand and scrub the bottom.

After a leisurely scrub we antifowled and waited for another cat Rumpeltea from Christchurch to join us, they however telephoned to say that they would be delayed for a further week.

Although once inside Port Bail it is perfect for safe anchoring, the 5 day forecast courtesy of our nasa weatherman, predicted strong winds from the West, this means we would be on a lee shore should we wish to leave Port Bail and be forced to stay until the sea and wind eased. Later that evening the forecast from Jersey Coastguard for the following morning sounded reasonable so when we had enough height of tide to float we headed for St Aubins on Jersey. Distance 33 miles this is one trip where one has to push the tide 50% of the time or head for the much closer St Catherines or Gorey.

St Aubins is a small drying harbour with fore and aft moorings for local boats. The wall to the right is for refueling and visitors where, subject to room, one can tie on the wall. The wall is for visitors, however as is often the case, some local boats feel that it is their right to ignore the rules and leave their boat on the wall. Should the wall be full however all is not lost as there is plenty of room just outside the inner harbour behind the fort.

We arrived at St Aubins with just enough water to allow us to enter, the first space was occupied by an Athena 38, that just left us enough room to pass it and the other boats on their fore and aft moorings, and we found space on the wall behind another Catalac an 8M "Gail O". which is a local boat that has been owned by the present owner since new.



Once in and tied up at St Aubins all is peaceful in all but strong S.E. winds.

The Royal Jersey Sailing Club at St Aubins has excellent showers, views over the bay and all visiting yachtsmen are welcome. There is no berthing fee at St Aubins, good toilets are within 100yds. As is the local supermarket and also the local garage will supply fuel and sell you a card should you require electricity. St Helier is 5miles along the bay and should you have bikes the Jersey cycle routes are excellent. They tend to keep you off the normal roads or on green roads with a max speed limit of 15mph. We cycled to St. Brelades bay approx. 5miles. This bay is another good anchorage with golden sandy beaches on either side of a rocky central divide visible at all states of the tide. Care must be taken on approach as one or two rocks break the surface at half tide. These rocks are just left of centre of the bay but easily avoided by using a large scale chart or a decent plotter zoomed in. If you have neither the water is crystal clear and a slow approach with a member of the crew keeping a sharp eye forward is all that is required.

Most visiting yachts sail past St Brelades from the westerly Channel Islands of Guernsey or Sark passing the well-known lighthouse on Jersey's SW point La Corbiere.



Our friends being further delayed in Christchurch by more strong winds. With the forecast for several days of rough seas and strong winds, we decided to leave the safety of St Aubins and head south to St Malo and then up the Rance to the medieval town of Dinan. With any luck we could get a berth and enjoy its many delights before others heard the bad weather forecast.

The strong currents run predominantly clockwise in the area. St Brelades is ideally situated for a night stopover before heading south to St Malo or Ile de Brehat as from this point you are just clear of large crops of rocks on the southern side of Jersey called the Minquiers.

Our trip with a F4 south westerly took us through the eastern side of the Minquiers to le Coq cardinal buoy before altering course due south to keep the rocky islands of Iles Chausey on the port beam as we now head for St Malo to enter the Rance. Distance 43miles. The weather allowed us to sail about 50% of the trip with the wind now heading us, slowing progress. The tide just turned as we approached over the shallows 2 miles off St Malo causing a bumpy confused sea.

We headed for the lock into the Rance. The lock is situated next to the hydro barrage and the current when released rushes through the barrage and can cause boats entering or leaving the lock to veer one way or the other, the other thing to be aware of as you enter the lock is the wind, as it usually turns and tries to push the boat sideways. This happened to me the first time I used the lock but I am not alone, as I know of several other boat owners who have also ended up sideways. This lock can lift you up to 10M and is capable of holding 20 or more boats, it gets very busy on holiday weekends and as such is not for the faint hearted. A lock, like a marina or slip, is the ideal place for onlookers to view and enjoy the antics of the many boaters getting it wrong. It being midweek and quiet (not many onlookers) we joined only two other boats and a vadette in the lock.

The lock has ropes that are fixed at intervals to the top and the bottom of the lock wall for you to tie onto. These ropes are always filthy and covered in seaweed. If you, like us, have odd bits of rope sitting in a locker, now is the time to use them on all front and rear cleats. The reason you put them on both sides is that despite your intention to berth on the port side, the lock keeper is in charge and far more knowledgeable than you and may instruct you, through a loud hailer, to berth on the starboard side.

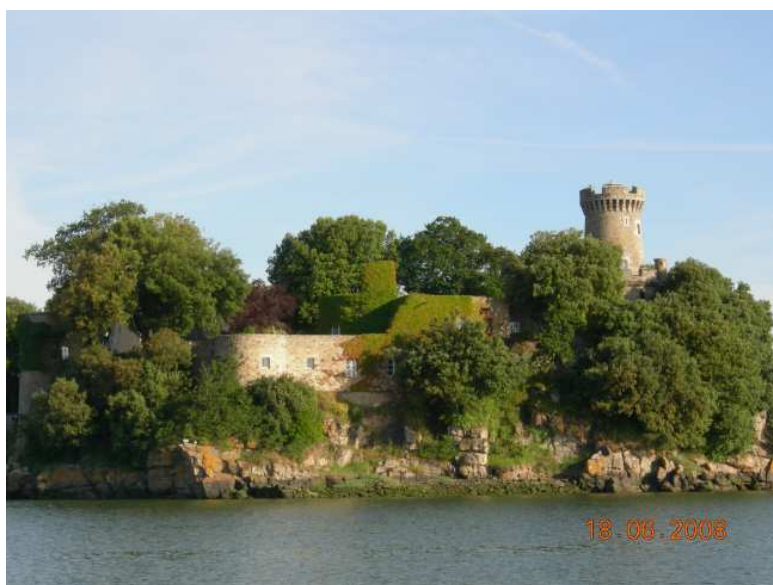
Many boat owners sail with our partners and apart from strong winds and rough seas having instructions shouted at them, for all in earshot to hear, by the helmsman from the cockpit while they are on the foredeck, will at best cause a little tension between crew.

Sue and I use two-way headphones when mooring or entering a lock. The advantage of this is that our hands are free and we do not have to push a button before we speak. We can relay instructions and receive answers in a quiet civilized manner heard only by one another.

The technique we use at locks, for us seems to work well. Sue stands on the foredeck and as we go in we then decide which side we intend to tie-up. Then we aim as far inside the lock as possible, keeping approx 1meter from the side as you move forward. The reason for this is twofold, one as you move forward, the boat will be sucked, as if by magic, into the wall and, two the other problem with this large lock is that while you are looking forward it is not unusual to be rocked by a wash caused by being overtaken by a speed boat, gin palace, or vaddette who wish to either berth on the other side or get through the lock before you.

The headphones allow us to talk normally as to which rope I want Sue to catch and how much slack to give to allow me to move and catch another rope at the stern. This time we had just tied up when a motor cruiser bearing a Jersey ensign entered to tie up on the other side. The lady on the foredeck caught a mooring rope and secured all ok, the helmsman hooked his boat hook onto a ladder up the wall of the lock only to find that the wind blowing into the lock blew the stern of his boat away from the wall. The boat hook, being of the extending type, extended, parted in the middle, leaving the hook on the ladder and the helmsman holding the handle. We fended the stern of his boat off our boat among cheers from the overhead onlookers. With many expletives being shouted by the helmsman in Jersey French back and forth to the onlookers, we later learned that while leaning over the wall of the lock, one of the onlooker's spectacles had fallen into the cockpit of the cruiser. These were recovered only after a bucket was lowered by rope from the top of the lock and an exchange of glasses and half of boat hook restored Anglo-French relations.

The lock gates opened and we exited quickly before the cruiser. With the current and wind astern we were able to goose-wing up the beautiful Rance. We had intended to stop for the night at a jetty provided by a restaurant once owned by Lilly Langtree, but the jetty was full and as we were enjoying our sail we continued on past Le Minihic and St Suliac on the opposite bank, as far as the tide would allow, to Mordreuc 16 miles up the Rance, where we picked up a buoy at 6pm. for the night with the view on one bank shown below and the village on the other. We were also greeted by a rather nosy local resident whom can be seen most days sunning himself on the beach and keeping a watchful eye on the young children as they swim and frolic in the waters of the Rance.



Pied a terre on the Rance opposite Mordreuc



Nosy resident just resting

Mordreuc is accessible at all states of tide. To travel further up to Lyvet requires a rising tide and the following day we intended to continue through the Chatelier lock into the canal proper and proceed up to the most amazing medieval town of Dinan.

After a peaceful night we awoke to brilliant sunshine and no sign of the forecast bad weather. We ate breakfast at our leisure, untied from the freebie buoy and motored

gently up the river. The tide was rising and the banks on either side were busy with herons, and all manner of wading birds enjoying a fish feast.

One could be forgiven for thinking you were not in France but in the far-east as on the banks of the river there are many small huts mounted on stilts with fishing nets hanging out to dry in the early morning sun. The river is quite wide here but as you continue towards the Chatelier lock it becomes much narrower.



The Rance is wide in places



Fishing huts with nets on the bank

The lock and swing bridge open between 0800 to 2000 local time provided there is at least 8.5m rise of tide.

HW Chatelier is 2-3 hours after St Malo depending on the barrage.

This lock is much smaller than the previous lock at the barrage by St Malo. We are first to arrive and find the lock gates closed barring us from entering. There is a current caused by the overflow from Lyvet this current coming down and the tide rising causes just enough swirl to make it difficult to just stop and hold the boat on station before the lock. There is a wall to the left of the lock with enough room for one boat to tie up to wait for the lock gates to open.

We grab it.

Although we don't have long to wait other boats are now also waiting, one an English boat is trying to hold station without much success, he keeps running aground as he tries to turn, two other French boats, more used to dealing with this lock when the tide is low. One hands us a line that we fasten to our rear cleat and he then drifts back with the current, another line from his rear cleat is handed to the next boat who secures it to his bow. No sooner have we done this and the lock gates open and we are then allowed to enter. It is safer and easier for us to let the two French boats go in first as the wall we are tied to has an overhang that would foul our mast should we continue forward.

The French boats enter and tie up and we back off and follow them, the other English boat is still stuck in the mud bank as the lock gates close.

Once through the 3M to Dinan in the canal proper, is now unobstructed overhead and has a minimum depth of 1.8m. and as we leave the lock, immediately on the port side is the marina and pretty village of Lyvet, on the starboard side are several moorings and the local yacht club.

Food for thought - one years berth in the marina at Lyvet would cost approx £600.00 for a Catalac up to 9m. - one tenth of what it would cost to be in a marina in Poole, Dorset.



The marina at Lyvet showing just the last two of the pontoons

The next place of interest is a mile further and on the starboard side is a wall 300yds long with a picnic area, fresh water and respectable toilets, this is another free stopover and well worth a night or two.

A small road leads from here to the village of Taden approx  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile. The village has a pub that stocks fresh baguettes, milk and a few necessities. It also hosts a market on Friday evening, the stalls selling local produce, cider, wine, cooked meats etc. It was here on one stall we met an Australian lady who has built up a thriving business locally. She produces her own cheeses, apart from the normal Brie, Camembert she produces Cheddar and Stilton. The locals seek her cheeses and needless to say so do the many English who live in the area. Should you wish to explore the area just past Taden there is a large camp site with a launderette with several washing machines, swimming pool, several shops and enough activities to keep children amused all day.

Our next port of call the most amazing medieval town of Dinan. It is now several years since we first visited Dinan, at that time we were under the impression that we would only be able to do so with our mast stepped as the Macmillan Reeds Nautical Almanac used to clearly point out that prior to entering Dinan and the port there is a power cable that crosses the canal with a height below that of our masts. We were fortunate during that time to follow a large yacht whose mast being much taller than ours, motored straight into the port with us close astern. No sign of the power cable!

Dinan is on the starboard side of the Rance and there is a long pontoon before the port proper, although this is reserved for canal hire boats we have usually found it almost

empty during the week, only becoming busy during high season and at weekends when holidaymakers return, or collect their hire boats. Just past this pontoon are finger pontoons, with many local boats and few spaces. The vedettes moor past these finger pontoons. If you have ventured this far, your only option is to turn round and either moor by the wall on the port side, this is free and allowed but it is also the area where both yachts and vedettes turn.

The cost of a berth in Dinan for a week's berth won't break the bank, in high season for an eight meter boat it is approx £60.00. Port of Dinan water jousting centre of picture



The town is up the steep hill to the right.

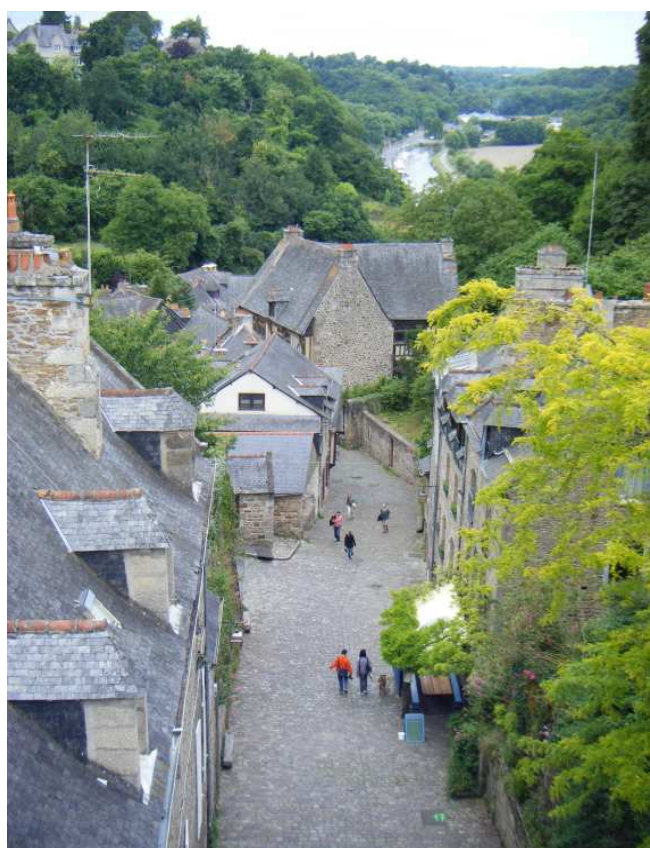
One of the jousting teams

The town is lined with cobbled streets and as you climb up towards its centre, you see the small medieval houses with windows and doors that are anything but square, no pvc double glazing here, it is still unchanged and has to-date not been spoilt. Many other medieval towns I have visited, the first thing you see are the ramparts adorned with satellite dishes or mobile phone masts.



Port office at Dinan

Right: view from top of the arch half way up the hill, Rance visible top right of picture.



Dinan and the area of the Rance in general gains much of its income from tourists and so far has resisted the temptation to open arcades with slot machines etc. that the modern youths of today seem to enjoy.

We continue climbing up the cobbles through an arch in the ramparts and eventually we reach our goal, for in the square is the largest and best French market we have found to date in France.

A word of warning the loo's in the market are, alas, also of the medieval kind and not recommended for those suffering from overindulgence in the grape, the previous night. Our fresh food shopping done we meander back down the cobbled streets towards the port, stopping only for madam to study the menu's displayed at the many eating holes we pass on the way. We visited Dinan four years ago on our way back to Cherbourg after three months sailing, I mention this because during that time I had not visited a barber to have my hair and beard trimmed. There are many unisex barbers in France and having a trim can be quite costly. It was here with temperatures in the 30c bracket that I saw a one man barber shop, the patron, a portly gentleman spoke very little English but understood my need. He proceeded to open a cutthroat razor and after sharpening it he cut both my hair and beard with it. He did not use scissors at all. He did a really good job and looking at me, he even had the cheek to say to Sue that she now had a new man. We learnt that he was a Breton man with a large Breton belly. Generally the men of the area have the Breton belly the women the Breton b-m.

On arriving back on our boat we noticed that many more boats had decided to visit the port. One boat was having difficulties so we helped them tie up only to find out that they were the people from the Channel Islands we had helped in the barrage when their boat hook parted company. It transpired that they had always sailed a deep keel yacht in the past and recently purchased their present cruiser. They admitted they were struggling with the effect of wind-age on the tall topsides and noticed that we did not seem to have the same problem. We were invited on board to sample the local grape, enjoyed a pleasant chat. The lady of the boat commented to Sue how cool she appeared entering the lock even listening to her Walkman while she tied the warp to the lock wall. We explained that the Walkman was in fact a two-channel radio, which we demonstrated. They decided it was a must have bit of kit to add to their boat. They are not the usual walkie talkies they use two separate channels, the advantage being that both users can talk at the same time to each other and you have both hands free, as you do not have to press a talk button or say over before speaking.

I purchased the (Cyber Talk) 2-channel headsets from Argos, they were listed in the children's toys audio section "pre-school", ("pre-school" which fairly accurately describes us sometimes!) The cost under is £15.00. I have checked in the latest Argos catalogue and find that they no longer stock them. I understand they can be bought from Hamleys London

While in the area it is well worth taking a stroll or dinghy further on past Dinan down the canal to the next village of Lehon, about 2miles. This has a monastery and even in the



height of the season is un- crowded except for a few local residents making use of the large outdoor swimming pool. I can recommend the restaurant shown over the bridge.



Lehon monastery view from towpath



Bridge over the canal to the cobbled Lehon.

Having arrived in Dinan in the morning and completed our shopping, we stayed the one night and left the following afternoon to head back down the canal to Taden. No sooner had we moored when we received news from our friends in Christchurch that they intended to cross to Cherbourg the next day, we agreed to meet them, in two days in the Channel Islands.

The next day with a steady westerly breeze we sailed down the canal for 6 miles and picked up a freebie buoy on the westerly shore of Minihic. On the opposite bank is the popular St. Suliac but with the westerly wind blowing in that direction, Minihic is the comfortable option and to continue out past the barrage with the present wind would mean us having to pay for a night in St. Malo.

**A word of warning** to all who intend to enter the Rance with petrol engines, fuel is not easily obtained unless you have either a bicycle or are prepared to carry cans for over a mile, and even then, some supermarkets are forbidden to allow you more than 5 liters. I understand this is to prevent terrorists from buying flammable materials. France is not alone with this ruling. I encountered this rule, and was refused petrol, when trying to fill a 25 litre tank while at Newport on the IOW.

The place to get petrol before entering or after leaving the Rance is opposite St. Malo at Dinard. Even when the tide is out there is a dredged channel on the starboard side that is used by vedettes etc. Fresh water is also available but beware the water hose has an automatic cut off and both Sue and I have been soaked when using it.

The following morning with little wind we half sailed and half motored the 42 miles back to St. Aubin and again tied in the small inner harbour. Our Friends had crossed to Cherbourg the previous day, but unfortunately they had experienced confused seas and fresh winds, at one time they were both sea sick and were now in no mood to continue until they both fully recovered. They were unused to sailing in this area and not wishing to sail straight to

Jersey, we waited for a weather window and then agreed to meet them outside the entrance of Port Bail.

While in Jersey we take the opportunity to fill the fuel tanks to the brim, petrol being far cheaper here than in the UK or France.

The trip to Port Bail from St. Aubins is not easy for a sailing boat, because one is limited by the tide ie. You need HW + or - 1 ½ hours to enter Port Bail in safety, you also need HW - 2 hours before you are afloat to leave St. Aubins. Distance 33miles this is one trip where one has to push the tide 50% of the time or head for the much closer St Catherine's bay just 17 miles along the rock strewn south coast of the island by way of the Violet passage.

Later that evening the forecast from Jersey Coastguard for the following morning sounded reasonable so when we had enough height of tide to float we headed for St Catherine's just past Gorey. The wind was light but sufficient to enable us to sail all the way and we anchored behind the breakwater in smooth calm water. There are plenty of local mooring buoys in the area but no visitor's buoys. The water is clear and the holding in sand good. The only danger when entering St Catherine's in fog is from the Plateau rocks in the centre of the bay. We have used this anchorage several times in the past and provided the wind is from East to South have not experienced any swell. A pleasant evening was spent watching the members of the local sailing school in wayfarers, and optimists perform.

The following morning the weather again clear and with little wind we headed for Port Bail the wind being light we actually hoisted the spinnaker as we passed the rocks and sandy beaches of Les Ecrehou on our port beam. I have not been to Les Ecrehou and today had we not been constricted by time and commitment of meeting friends it would have been the ideal weather to explore. Our friends arrived outside Port Bail before us and were gently sailing along the coast fishing. They followed us in and edged into the far right hand side of the harbour away from the moorings and town, anchoring by the sandy dunes that only boats of shallow draft are capable of. Later that evening we enjoyed a bar-b-que on the sandy shore with the fruits of their fishing.

John wished me to winch him up the mast to untangle a halyard that had broken free during their rough trip across the channel. I agree to do on condition that he winched me up my mast to enable me to replace my VHF aerial that was suspect. On inspection I discovered the aerial was fine but the inner cable was corroding. The effect of this was that I could receive ok but my transmission was poor.

Yet again the strong westerly winds returned with vengeance for the next few days and we were eager to get on our way. Our intended cruise to the festival of the sea at Brest still our goal.

The Jersey coastguard weather forecast improved with the sea state easing from rough to rather rough and for the following day it was described as moderate with swell. The outlook later in the week - stronger winds. We agreed to head for St. Malo then continue west along the French coast as the winds were forecast SSW. We would be able to get

some shelter, protected by the coast of Northern Brittany. We stayed one more day to allow the sea swell to drop further and left the shelter of Port Bail heading south with a SSW F3 just too close meaning we had to motorsail into it.

After an hour we noticed our friends were dropping back and discovered that their 20 HP engine was cavitating with the waves. They wished to continue, and this we did but another hour later, they were now only travelling at 3knts. At this rate they would be in trouble when the tide turned. I knew that we would not be able to get back to Port Bail, as by now the tide would be out. The sensible option, turn west and sail to Jersey. This we did and had an excellent sail. We were joined on passage by a pod of dolphins the highlight of the day. Needless to say we arrived with not enough height of tide to enter St. Aubins and our friends elected to go into the marina at St Hellier. We anchored outside and waited for the tide. We were fortunate to find room on the wall at St. Aubins our third visit this season. The Athena 38 was still moored on the wall; a friendly wave from the owner who's face seemed familiar but I couldn't place him. To my surprise he was a Jersey man whom we had met the previous year at Taden on the Rance. We had failed to recognise him as he had recently upgraded from his previous boat a Twins to the larger Athena 38.

The weather worsened again and we found ourselves trapped for the next three days, at least we were safe apart from a small fishing boat that appeared to be abandoned on the wall between the Athena and us. We were informed that it was owned and used by an unpopular Jersey man who was in employment on shift work and only used it occasionally. The boat stank of rotting fish and appeared to be in poor condition but was equipped with an alarm that beeped whenever an inquisitive seagull ventured on or near the deck. It should not be in the harbour as he had a mooring outside. The harbour master informed us that the owner had been instructed to move it to it's mooring and that the owner would be along to move it later that day. Needless to say the tide came in and went out but the beeping smelly fishing boat remained unmoved.

To put the wind in perspective it was blowing from the south straight into the bay of St. Aubins and during the second night it breached the wall further along the bay, causing flooding on the road to St. Hellier. We were safe and spent this night while afloat fending off the fishing boat from our stern and the front of the Athena. Tired both the owner of the Athena and I waited till his boat touched bottom then he went home. I retired to bed when we touched bottom at 3.30 AM.

I awoke the next morning to find much commotion and was surprised to see the fishing boat that was still floating when I went to bed was broadside against the hulls of the Athena. Its rear cleat had been ripped out of the transom. Fortunately, there was no damage to the Athena. A small crowd gathered to watch as the harbour master (immaculately dressed in his uniform) arrived to remove the fishing boat. This one would think would be a simple job but as he stepped from the bow of the Athena onto the fishing boat the reason for the smell became obvious the decks were covered in fish oil and he slipped and slithered all over the place. To his credit he remained composed and upright despite the oil, loud beep from the alarm and mirth of all onlookers. The fishing boat disappeared with a roar of approval as the onlookers wandered away.

The wind eased a little during the morning and despite being tired after two nights with little sleep we decided to cycle to St Helier. Our friend's wife needed to obtain some medication in tablet form, her tablets having been misplaced. We waited until the boats grounded and then cycled to the main town of Jersey, St Helier, five miles along the coast. We made good progress aided by the westerly wind passing several places where the sea had breached the wall. Once in St Helier we made their way to a chemist but without a prescription the chemist insisted that she see a local doctor. The chemist was very helpful and made her an appointment to attend a nearby surgery in 1 hour's time.

Local residents of the Channel Islands have to pay to attend a surgery and see a doctor, our friends were fortunate because they did not have to pay to visit the doctor or for their prescription, all charges being covered by our National Health Service.

### **WARNING**

**from April 2009 any UK resident will now have to pay for all medical treatment in the Channel Islands.**

Another boating colleague found to his cost that despite having Medical insurance that in many cases your insurance does not cover dentistry. Even when it is included it will cover extractions but should you lose a filling and get an ulcer caused by the loss of the filling, neither, ulcer or the replacement filling is covered. Be careful, read the policy thoroughly and make sure when obtaining your policy it specifies Channel Islands.

The Channel Islands is still independent and not part of Europe so a European only policy will not cover you.

Sue and I headed further into the centre of the town to one of the large indoor markets. With the wind easing we may be able to head further south to Brittany tomorrow and while here the opportunity to restock with fresh vegetables and meat is too good to miss. The prices at the market for fresh produce are fairly reasonable with the many stalls being manned by the local farmers. The Channel Islands is unlike the UK where you have Tesco, Asda, Sainsbury's and many other supermarkets. Here there is very little competition for the main supermarket group, Chequers, who seem to have a monopoly and this is reflected in the prices of many items. Until last year the Channel Islands were duty free with no VAT on goods purchased. These days they add a sales tax of 2%. This should still give local traders over 15% price advantage over the UK. Strangely, the prices of goods in most cases are similar or even higher than those in the UK. The argument given by the local traders for this, in many cases much higher than mainland prices, is because of the extra cost incurred shipping the goods in.

Someone is doing quite nicely thank you, sadly it is not you the customer.

We cycled back to the boat and filled the water and fuel tanks to the brim. Petrol & diesel, this is the one thing that is well worth buying being some 30+ p per litre cheaper.

The boat and stores fully replenished all we now required was a favourable weather report and a good night's sleep to recharge our batteries. The weather report for the night SW 5-6 gusting 7. The wind dropping to a F4 and the sea state easing from rough to moderate the following morning. With the wind already rattling some halyards further away in the harbour we decided to see what it was like in the morning and retired to bed by 9.00 pm feeling relieved that the stinking fishing boat is no longer a problem.

My good nights sleep was interrupted some two hours later by Sue saying someone is walking over the foredeck. True enough on looking through the port window all I could see was the hull of a large yacht. Further inspection revealed a French registered Westerly Fulmar 32 rafted along side us. My first impressions to tell them where to go faded when I saw onboard an elderly couple. They had just sailed from Lezardrieux and needless to say, were very pleased to find shelter from the now strong winds. I helped him attached shore lines and because his draught was almost two foot more than ours, we loosened our breast lines so our little cat could sit on the mud when the tide went out.

Despite doing this to sleep is impossible until the boat grounds.

The following morning with the wind eased we decided to leave as soon as we floated. While still aground we removed our shore lines, secure in the fact that the deeper keeled Westerly would hold us in position until he floated.

The owner of the Westerly was an experienced sailor with a wealth of knowledge they had sailed round Great Britain and Ireland plus the usual Mediterranean. He was grateful for the assistance we had given him the previous night and went on to explain that he owned a house overlooking the River Treiux from where he could see his boat on it's river mooring, he also had another mooring at Ile de Brehat. Both of these moorings he went on to explain were in little use during the summer months and we were welcome to use them if we were in the area. We thanked him for the offer but now floating, we said our Bon Voyage's and moved out of the harbour into the bay. Our friends headed for Lezardrieux but we didn't want to motor into the wind so headed back to St. Malo and the Rance. We managed to sail well past the Minquiers until we turned into the wind and motored the rest of the way up the Rance to Minihic where we were well sheltered and I had my first good night's sleep for four days.

After one rest day and with the weather improving we said goodbye to the Rance and took one of the many inshore passages west past Dinard. Just 5 miles further on is a small island.



Dinard from the inshore passage.

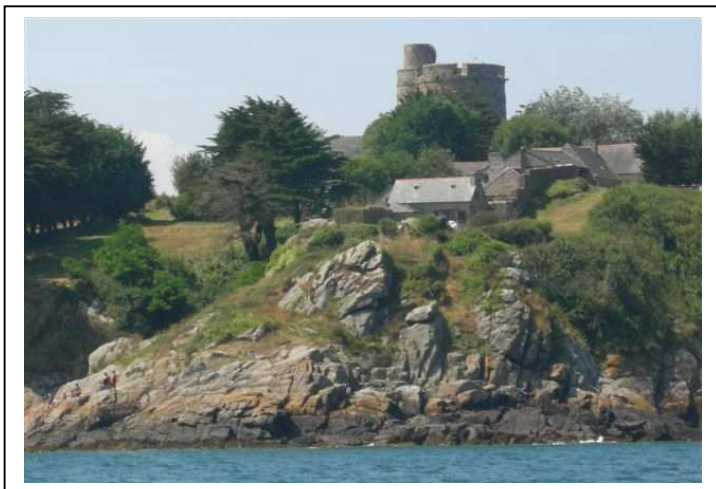


Ile Ebihens with boats at anchor in the bay at near high springs.

By just visiting marina to marina on the typically Brittany sailing holiday, 90% of UK boat owners who sail in the area see very little.

This island is tidal and when the tide is out access to the small town of St. Jacut is about a mile and a half away where one can buy all the usual bits and pieces that are needed. They

also have a very good street market once a week. The Island is called Ile Hebiens and is best approached from the east and as you sail by you will think, it is all rock with the odd house dotted about by the cliffs. Then just past a small building sat on a small peninsular this sandy bay opens up with excellent protection from all winds except southerly. We have enjoyed the delights of this Island for many years. The anchorage is safe, the swimming and fishing excellent.



*Ile Ebihens approaching along the Eastern side of the island.*

*Safety is easily forgotten, when the sun is shining.*

We stayed for almost two weeks before we headed west. This for us is not normal but while there, we made new friends, an English family from Weymouth on a Moody 42 and a French family on an Omini who had just sailed back from New York, they had many interesting tales to tell. While there, we were, joined by 12m Dragon Slayer and the Athena from St. Aubins. 8m Chateau Cat from Falmouth was sailing in the Channel Islands but sadly we did not meet up.

Dragon Slayer was going to head for the Channel Islands then cross back to their home berth at Poole. We agreed to head back to the Channel Islands with them, our boat having been beached except for high tide for two weeks we needed to refill our tanks with fresh water and the only other advantage being, our intended destination to the west, that with the predominantly westerly winds, we should be able to sail to Jersey or Guernsey, meet up with Chateau Cat then sail further west towards the bay de Morlaiox.

The best laid plans for us were altered after receiving a phone call from my son in England, with the excellent news that his wife had just given berth to their first child a baby boy. Delighted, we rushed off in the dinghy to St Jacut to buy a present and card, agreeing to follow Dragon Slayer to Jersey the following day.

The day's weather was glorious, with a light westerly wind, so we spent the afternoon sailing and fishing for mackerel on the other side of the island. We explored the marina at St Cast and other available anchorages towards Cape Frehel. Cape Frehel, with the famous fort on top, is an ideal photo opportunity if you are close in. It looks harmless enough but when approaching from either side beware as at certain times of the tide the sea from being flat calm can, within five minutes, develop into large over falls that you can't escape from. I have been caught in these and recommend that 400yds. berth be allowed. The anchorages were good but would be more open to swell. Had we stayed there, it would have saved 5 miles on our trip to Jersey the following day, but we felt the saving

not sufficient with the added risk of an uncomfortable night. We sailed back to anchor in deep water 200yds off the beach that we had earlier left. Sadly the fish for us were not biting that day.

Tide half out at springs with the mainland of St Jacut in the background.



After a peaceful night we woke early with no wind to speak of and a sea mist. Our intention, to head west round the minquiers aided by the ebbing tide to arrive off the west minquie cardinal buoy as the tide turned to then carry us eastwards to Jersey. We caught the west going tide and made good progress using one engine with little wind behind us, not enough to fill the genoa.

We altered course just past the west cardinal just as the tide turned right on schedule, the early morning mist now cleared, another beautiful day. The first weather forecast of the morning from Jersey Coastguard arrived over the VHF a few minutes later with a gale warning for Jersey and north of the area. The gale would arrive later that evening accompanied by a complex low. There had been no mention the evening before during their 2day forecast of either gale or her friend complex low. Do we really want to get stuck in Jersey for a few days; we have been there three times already this year. We do an about turn and motor into the tide with both engines and head south towards Lezardrieux. The main channel into the river passes Ile de Brehat on the port side. To the north of Brehat there is a rocky outcrop that one can, with local knowledge in smooth conditions and no swell, sail over. The sea depth for many miles just outside this stretch of water changes from 50 m to 20 m and it is not unusual to see breaking waves all along the 20 m contour line. Coming from the south or east we tend to avoid the rocky outcrop by sailing more south until just past Brehat where we turn west passing between mainland France and the Ile to join the main channel further up river. The current is less fierce and the views are better. Once past Brehat the channel is quite large with doglegs to pass the rocky dangers. We continue up the river Trieux to Lezardrieux, where there are three options for those wishing berth on a pontoon. The first to the right is accessible at all states of the tide and consists of several pontoons for both local boats and visitors; we note that along the outer edge visitor's boats are rafted two deep. The current runs strong here at certain times of the tide and being rafted puts you more in the main current. Just past these pontoons is another marina, where a sill restricts entrance, depending on the height of tide. We opt to ignore these first two options and turn towards the centre of the river and tie on a long pontoon. This pontoon has no electric or water and access to the shore from here is limited to using the dinghy, or calling the marina office who will send a launch to collect you. This service is included in the berthing charge but not generally known by visiting yachts. We prefer to have the freedom of being independent and because of the currents put the outboard on the dinghy making it ready for use. Later that evening we were just about to lower the dinghy to go ashore when two boats that had been rafted

together on the far shore decided to leave with the tide. The opportunity, too good to miss, we slipped our berth to grab their spot, as it would allow us to both fill our water tanks and walk off into the town. As we tied up a berthing master appeared in a dory and informed us that this space was reserved for a large vessel that was due later that evening. He directed us to another finger berth where small boats were moored and after some difficulty we managed to tie up. The fingers were only 4 meters long and the stern of our boat stuck out by 4 meters plus the useful stern fender consisting of Zodiac and motor that hung on its davits.



The main street of Lezardrieux

We move down the tree-lined river and picked up a buoy under a stone building that looks a bit like a French folly. With only a door and one window overlooking the river, the views are a definite plus but later that evening when the sun goes down the window in the little folly flashes green. This folly is a pretty starboard navigation light.

The following morning bright and early with the wind in the river light and from the south, we left with the tide and sailed with several other boats down river.

Our intended destination Ile Callot situated in the bay de Morlaix near Roscoff, 54 miles west. There were probably 30 other yachts all heading out either from Lezardrieux, Ile Brehat or the River Treguier.

Once we cleared the river and rocky outcrop we headed west with the wind on the beam. We made good progress passing several yachts. The wind F4 gradually increasing and veering more westerly, the wind direction indicating 35 to 40 degrees off the bow. After 24 miles we near the September Isles. The current is with us and runs faster outside the Isles but we aim to sail inside, it being in calmer water. The other advantage to us being that the further out from the mainland the further we will have to tack back or motor straight into the wind later on, should the wind continue to increase. It does increase just as we are abeam of the second Isle. The wind indicator is now constantly reading 25 mph with gusts of 30 over the deck, and heading us more. The sea condition protected from the mainland is still good, we decide to tack and head for the near by Ploumanac'h rather

After a peaceful night we spent the morning shopping and after filling our tanks, paid our dues in the harbour office. The cost of £18.00 for one night we felt excessive as we were charged extra for being a catamaran.





than continue for another 25 miles. We have had a good sail so far and by stopping now we may be able to explore for the afternoon before travelling on the next day.

Ploumanac'h is well documented in all pilotage books of the area and well worth a visit even if it is just to say you have been there or take a photo of the Chateau Costaeres with you or your boat in the foreground. Ploumanac'h is not accessible at all states of the tide and if you wish to stay afloat you can pass over the inner sill and tie on dumb bells in a minimum depth of 1.2m. There are no anchorages in the area but we have explored in the past and marked with the aid of a handheld GPS several areas where there are no rocks and the sand is flat. These anchorages we prefer to the other dumb bells option because it is easy to go ashore either in the dinghy or when the tide is out on foot. When on the dumb bells and the tide drops, you return from being ashore and will have to scramble down slippery muddy rocks to get in your dinghy.

A quick check of the tidal heights and we realize there is not enough water to allow us to enter between the outer rocks. Our nearest option 1 mile west of Ploumanac'h and available at all states of the tide is nearer, Tr'egastel. We down the sails and motor the last half mile finding the entrance between friendly rounded rocks rather than the jagged ones we passed earlier.



View of the entrance from inside

we are sheltered from the wind in calm water.



After an early start a light lunch and a glass of the local grape, feeling tired, we both retire for an afternoon nap. We are woken with the sound of excited young children voices as they sail back and forth. The wind has dropped and turned back to southerly. Other boats have also sailed into Tregastal while we napped and the one in front of us has its port of registry as Christchurch. The owners seeing that we were on a Catalac rowed over in their dinghy for a chat and ask if we are staying the night and where are we heading.

We inform them our intended stop was to be the Bay of Morlaix and looking at the time realise that we must leave now, to be able to get to one of our favourite anchorages at Ile Callot off Carantec. This we do, and arrive with the tide falling fast. To reach our anchorage we must cross a causeway that connects the

island to the mainland at Carantec. It is already drying leaving us just enough depth at its deepest point to pass over it. Once over, we head for the beach and anchor with only minutes to spare to the left of the causeway.



We anchor in the yellow face, causeway to the right and powercables to the left both visible in the photo.

Rocks surround the island and the beaches, on close inspection, are white shell. The anchorage is protected from any fetch by the mainland from the south. As the tide falls by anchoring to the left of the causeway the oblong island on the left dries protecting you from the west and the causeway on your right protects you from the east. Whatever the wind direction, the sea remains flat and you will never feel the boat touch the sand as you start to dry. To the west of the island is the river Penze and to the right the Rivier de Morlaix. We spent three days on the beach, the wind at best was F5. On one day we regularly saw gusts over 40 mph. We are safe but the constant wind is tiring and Sue's split tooth that required treatment before we left on our summer cruise was now playing up again. We need a dentist. Roscoff is only 5miles west of us but there are no marinas. The nearest marina with a large town is Morlaix. On receiving the latest forecast for even more gale force winds we lift the anchor and motor up the river to Morlaix. The river is crowded with many other boats also heading in the same direction. We are the last boat in the lock and before we leave the berthing master asks if we had booked a berth. We had not but explain about the tooth and that we don't require electric and are prepared to tie against a wall. We are told to wait while he checks if he can find room for us. After half an hour he returns and beckons us to follow him. As we move through the lock into the basin we can see it chocker block with boats packed like sardines in a can. We follow and eventually raft third boat out from a wall. The reason for all

yachts in the marina is not because it is the height of the holiday season or the gale warnings. There is a Finisterre race due to start in two days time and the boats start from the bay de Morlaix. The marina is a hive of activity with riggers and sail makers, crews and support teams all busy preparing the boats.

The following day being Saturday we need to find a dentist, the marina office is very helpful with details of several local dentists.

The first two are away on holiday, but third time lucky, the receptionist explains that he is very busy and already has four emergencies. He agrees to see Sue if she is prepared to wait. We join the other suffering patients in the waiting room.

The dentist appears, he is a dapper little man who could easily be mistaken by his appearance and movements for Agatha Christie's, Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot.

He inspects Sue's tooth, X-rays it and photographs it, repeatedly saying it is incredible, he goes on to say that She will not lose the tooth, pointing to the x-ray he explains that the pain is being caused by a large infection in the gum under the split tooth. He writes her a prescription for antibiotics to be given to the pharmacy, giving full instructions as to the dose. All this takes at least half an hour of his time and expertise, but to our surprise he refuses to charge for his services saying he has not done anything. Pleased with his services we thank him and return back to the marina.

To explore Morlaix from the marina one simply continues to walk towards the viaduct 400yds. further up the river to reach the centre ville. It is situated at the bottom of a deep valley. While we were there apart from the Finisterre race, there was a folk music festival with many different artists performing every night for ten days. Music is a universal language enjoyed or disliked by all nationalities. To our surprise as well as local Breton bands, many other artists came from Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Holland, giving the whole affair a real European flavour. The backdrop for the stages set up in the square, being the tall medieval buildings lit up by floodlights and to add to the scene old black and white films were projected onto the white walled buildings. The pavement bars and restaurants in the square did a roaring trade as did the many stalls selling crepes, hotdogs, baguettes and they even had an open fire with ducks and chickens being spit roasted. The smell of the food makes my mouth water now, yes, it all added atmosphere.

Hundreds of people of all ages and nationalities enjoyed the festivities as they mingled and danced as one. We saw no drunkenness or any other trouble. The security was limited to two Gendarmes who were enjoying the festival as much as the visitors and could even be seen dancing the odd jig.

The marina seemed almost deserted after the race started, no more rafting. We moved onto a finger pontoon with a view from the cockpit astern of a floating restaurant. Having just tied up a face familiar then appeared to greet us. It was Clive Smith the marine surveyor who had surveyed our boat five years ago. He used to keep his 30's Scottish fishing boat in the Solent, but now prefers to berth it here in Morlaix. The boat and its wood are beautifully kept, the pride and joy of Clive and Jennie. In the main saloon it boasts a full size upright piano.

Happily, over the next couple of days Sue's tooth was improving, unlike the weather that showed no sign of improvement.

Being marina bound gave us plenty of time to explore the surrounding area. We took the bikes out of the locker and secured them on the pontoon. During the week that followed, we cycled along each side of the river and generally relaxed chattering to other boat owners.

The marina was filling again as the wind worsened to gale 8. Among the many seeking shelter, two yachts 'Chablis' and 'Tideline' from Christchurch. The owners had been cruising for six weeks exploring the coast in much the same way as us. The Moody that we had seen at Ile Hebriens had been sheltering in the river Penze within a mile of us at Ile Callot.

More boats arrive the following day. One had sailed from Salcombe with a crew of six. During the crossing his foresail had blown out and his rigging damaged.

To be fair both he and the crew looked more blown out than his boat. What one wonders possessed him to sail into a well-forecast South Westerly gale 8. I think he was lucky neither he nor his crew were lost or injured.

He and his boat were still there when we left. On further inspection; during the crossing one of his spreaders had damaged the wall of his mast.

We stayed for a total of two weeks, during that time the many boats that sheltered here related all sorts of horror stories. The one thing all agreed on, 2008 had been the windiest summer they could remember with the gales lasting more for weeks rather than days.

The marina charges we paid at Morlaix were very reasonable. For two nights rafted and twelve nights with electric on a good finger pontoon, we paid just under £140.00 for the two weeks. This was to be the last time we paid for a berth or harbour dues that year.

Our total spends during our three-month cruise with that regard £168.00.

Two weeks marina bound is not our idea as to what a sailing holiday is about. We enjoyed our stay, made new friends but are now itching to be on our way.

The plan, move into the Bay this evening, anchor for the night in another delightful spot we discovered last week while exploring on our bikes. Then, weather permitting, sail back east to Port Blanc a place we have never visited but highly recommended by 'Chablis' and 'Tideline'.

We took the second lock, the first being full and motored down the river with the Moody following. The sky looked threatening but with the forecast for the following morning of light SW winds, we are hopeful of a pleasant passage. After anchoring we enjoyed a peaceful evening meal on board, no road noise here unlike the marina.

The Moody could be seen anchored in the distance.

The following morning we caught the ebbing tide to carry us out the bay then headed east in light southerly winds. An hour later as the tide turned to help our steady progress, 'Tideline' & 'Chablis' could be heard talking over the VHF.

They had anchored in the next bay and were just heading out. They intended to anchor later that evening for the night near Perros-Guirec, a very popular seaside town in the area, being close to Ploumanac'h and the bird sanctuary situated on the September Isles. Perros-Guirec has an expensive marina where one can get neaped for several days, it is popular with charter boats on the St Malo-Morlaix run.

Now just in range of Jersey coastguard the latest forecast for the next two days is unbelievable. Yet again, more storm and gale force winds.

The wind, for us meantime gusting 8knts, dropped further and we motored the last 20 miles to Port Blanc.

The dangers outside the entrance are well marked and once inside to the right are 30 (V) buoys many with local boats on them, these do not dry. We ignore them and turn left towards the many small islands that are enclosed within the harbour. The depth falls away gradually and we anchor in the area described to us by 'Tideline' but after careful calculation with the aid of the plotter, move into deeper water for the night. Having just done this we look up to see 'Tideline' & 'Chablis' entering the port and they anchor where we had been. They had decided to continue from Perros to Port Blanc on hearing the Jersey forecast. I did suggest that they might touch the bottom but they had been here at springs before and felt they had sufficient depth. The wind did pick up that night and both Sue and I were woken by the sound of both 'Tideline' & 'Chablis' masts and rigging shaking as their boats thumped the bottom.

The following morning as tide once again disappeared with the ebb, to be replaced by hundreds of families, often 4 generations, who brandishing buckets forks rakes and large plastic bags, scratched about in the sand for anything that moved all no doubt to be transformed in to a delicious sea food meal or bouillabaisse. I could now see the ground in the area it is 70% sand 30% rock. Time to explore on foot. Some of the islands are private, we explore further using the hand held GPS, to mark suitable drying anchorages for future use thereby giving us protection from winds in any direction. The area is a fascinating place. One 3-400yd. section is protected from the sea by a bank of round pebbles like Chessel Beach in Dorset or the stretch from Hurst Castle that protects Keyhaven in Hampshire. In another area, built between the rocks, are houses that appear to be attached or semi-detached from the rock itself.

We had several more days of storm force winds and are extremely thankful we had explored for other drying anchorages. Many of the waves were breaking over the rocks protecting the visitor's buoys and the pebble beach, as they did so spray was thrown high into the air totally obscuring the September Isles from our view. To see this spectacle first hand was an experience that will always be remembered by us, though one we would rather not repeat.

Our Nasa weatherman was giving us a five-day forecast. The next two days looked promising with winds no more than F5 but with more storm and strong winds coming for the following three days, it was probably a good time to move. Jersey coastguard also gave a half reasonable forecast for the next 2 days with the sea state dropping from rough to rather rough.

Our hopes of sailing to Poole for our August Bank holiday meet & eat at the RNLI were falling fast, we like all the others who attended that year did so by car.

After some discussion, we left the safety of Port Blanc. The wind from the south was robbing our genoa, we poled it out and goose winged all the way to Havelet Bay, Guernsey 55 miles.

The sea was rough and the currents by the Roches Douvres (often called Russian duvets by local fishermen) slowed us to half a knot for over an hour. The following morning with very little wind and a now friendly sea, we motored the 46 miles to our homeport of Cherbourg.

Peter & Sue, Cl.8.220 ME-AND-ER.