

John and Sheila / Yacht Wild Again.

Log For 2005

Cruise to the Morbhan

We left Clontarf on Sunday 29thMay at 15.00hrs, for Howth Marina. The plan was to clear customs on Monday, load all the heavy gear and take on as much diesel as we could? (Diesel costs almost double in France.)

Our journey would cover 1216nm and visit 31 ports, starting in Ireland and going via Cornwall, the Scillys, northern France and then down into Biscay. We would visit some of the outer islands just outside the Gulf of Morbhan and then pass through the Gulf of Morbhan and on into the Bay of Quiberon.

We would meet up with Ron and Yvonne in Vannes and then visit the islands inside the Morbhan before heading back to Brest, where Ron and Yvonne would disembark for home.

From Brest Sheila and I would visit the E;Lorn river, then head back to Camaret and then on out to Ouessant, before making our way back to the Scillys and then back to Clontarf.

We departed Howth at 06.00hrs Tuesday 31stMay, on a course for the Isles of Scillys and our boltholes were either Kilmore Quay or Padstow. By 22.00hrs we were outside Rosslare and the forecast was perfect, so we continued on our passage to the Scilly's.

At 0200hrs a gale warning was broadcast and we realised that the only place to run was to Milford Haven, this was not in the plan!

We arrived onto a visitors mooring at 08.00hrs having had to make our way through blinding rain, high seas and fog and were almost clipped by a huge tanker. We tried to depart the next day but had to turn back due to another strong wind warning!

We became weather-bound on that mooring until Sunday the 5thJune during that time we met up with Kevin Rogers who is the local coastguard. Kevin kept us up to date with the forecasts and rightly predicted that we would not be able to leave till Sunday.

We left at 09.30hrs and set a course for the Scillies, the seas were still lumpy and blowing from the Southwest, but at least we were under way again?? We were not going to be that lucky.

Just after dawn we were almost at the north entrance of New Grimbsy sound when we were enclosed in fog, we were now committed to enter but we could not see anything, we could hear the water breaking on the rocks but nothing else.

Thank god for radar! We crept in slowly past shapes and shadows until we found a spare mooring, the time was 0700hrs, Monday 6thJune We were tired but very happy. At about 09.00hrs the fog lifted and our presence created quite a stir, we were in the middle of the moorings surrounded by boats who wondered where we came from and was it safe to go out! As they were all trying to make passage.

We moved on into the main harbour and lay to the wall and then crawled into our sleeping bags for a few hours.

Our normal 36hr journey lasted eight days! We stayed there from Monday until Wednesday evening the 8th and started out on a night passage to Camaret, Brittany. The seas were again very lumpy, a sharp eye is needed for shipping in this area because you cross two sets of shipping lanes as you approach Ushant and the channel Du four, these lanes are five miles wide with a space of five miles between each.

The channel Du Four must be approached with a south going tide, as it can be very dangerous as it exits into the bay that encloses Brest and Camaret. We arrived in Camaret at 14.hrs on Thursday 9thJune and departed for the Raz De Sein the following day. It is very important to arrive at the Raz at slack water! Be it high or low. Anyone that does not do so, may live to regret their lack of home work!

We continued through the Raz and followed the coastline down to Audierne, travelling on our ear at seven knots, under jib only! We arrived at 21.00hrs on Friday evening and spent the night on a visitors mooring. We departed Audierne at 09.00hrs on a course past Penmarch and around to Benodet. This area can be very tricky and anyone on their passage would be well advised investing in a good chart plotter. We arrived in Benodet at 15.00hrs on Saturday 11th the weather had slowly improved since we arrived in France and so like all good Christians we had a day of rest on Sunday.

Benedot has the most beautiful walks and the scenery is superb, but one thing it lacks is a place to buy food! The lockers were bare and we were really hungry, this meant that we must move on. Monday saw us on a passage to Ile De Groix having departed at 08.25hrs and we arrived in Ile De Groix at 14.15hrs, the marina was packed, the tar was melting on the roads and the pubs were closed, we then discovered that the supermarket was uphill (1in4) twenty minutes away? The things we do for food! I have to say that we would have liked to stay a little longer as the island is beautiful, but we had arranged to meet Ron and Yvonne in Vannes on Saturday the 18th June and this meant that we must keep on the move. We were the inside boat with five outside us, you can guess who were not happy campers at 08.00hrs on Tuesday.

The weather was superb, at sea the temperature was 28C, we had a free wind and the Gulf of Quiberon beckoned. The Gulf is a big inland sea, quite shallow and has three major marinas on it. The Gulf in turn leads in to the Morbihan and that's where the fun begins. We settled for Crouesty marina and we were amazed at what we found. They dug a huge hole and built a marina that could take two thousand yachts and had a dedicated section for visiting boats. We arrived on the marina just as the weather changed, we had had an increase in wind, it got very cold and then came the fog but we were snug and were very happy campers.

Crouesty is a small town and very attractive and the area around the marina is laid out beautifully, full of shops and restaurants though it was also the most expensive. We departed Crouesty at 09.00hrs and entered the Morbihan. The tides run at about 10 knots and there is no room for error, you must turn instantly you are parallel with the starboard hand mark, having first found your transit with your leading mark and a church spire that is seven miles inland, not a bad trick at 10 knots, the pilot book says that you get sucked in and spat out of the Morbihan and that's just what happens. It also recommends that you list the islands on paper and number them because, you will not have time to consult your chart on your way in. (we bought an aerial postcard to navigate by.)

We shot through the narrows at Ile Aux Moines and discovered a waiting pontoon on the island and they also provided a free water taxi, at this point it is only 10.30hrs, so you have some idea of the tides here. At this point we are now 17 days out and have 117 hrs run time on the engine, our ships log shows 724 nautical miles run, and the Gps log shows 552 nautical miles, this just shows the strength of the tides off the coast of France.

This was our first opportunity to take a break, as Vannes was only a few miles away, so Sheila and I went ashore for the day.

Moines is quite small and self contained, complete with shops and restaurants, the island is served by flat bottomed ferries which cross between the islands and the mainland and its frightening to see the ferries being spun around by the tides as they cross the narrows, as you can see entering or leaving can only happen if you use the tides, and so our journey continued (with the tide) the next day towards Vannes, Just outside Vannes there is awaiting pontoon and because we draw only a metre we arrived with the flood and had to wait for the bridge lift before continuing on to Vannes.

Its very hard to find your way up to Vannes, because you meander past islands and into creeks and you try to see around bends and stay off the mud banks and watch the echo sounder and watch for ferries etc,. But once we saw the famous red chateau and passed with 4 knots of tide under us we knew we were on the right track.

We waited for 1.5hrs for the bridge lift and as we passed under the bridge the operator informed us of our allocated berth, we kept going and going looking for the berth and to our surprise we located it right in the central area of the town, it was great to be surrounded by pubs and shops, now all we had to do was wait for Ron and Yvonne the date was the 17th June and they were due the next day! It had been a hard push and a tight schedule but Vannes is well worth seeing, I would like to spend a week there in the future. We missed out on a medieval festival with real live jousting and mock battles, but we were unable to stay another two weeks as we intended to sail and explore the Morbhan with Ron and Yvonne, by now the temperature was 38C and the sunshine was fabulous, that is, as long as you stayed close to the boat! Ron and Yvonne arrived from the Paris train at 15.15hrs, just as the day got cooler. But there were hotter days on the way and we would be grateful for the cooler waters of the Morbhan. We left Vannes on Monday afternoon the 20th on the short journey to Ile D, Arz where we lay at anchor for the night, had a few beers etc and hit the bunk.

We visited the island the next day and explored all the nooks and crannies, the people that live on these islands live in paradise and we visit like ships in the night. Later that day we headed for Ile Aux Moines where we again set out exploring, the days were now getting hotter and little or no wind and it was difficult to stay cool, so swimming became the order of the day.

The following morning we left on the last of the tide and headed for Navalo and picked up a visitors mooring, where we waited out the last of the tide and picked up the next flood and went on a little cruise up the Auray river, at this point the temperatures were climbing into the high thirties.

We finally stopped at around 14.30hrs just below the town of Auray at the little town of Bono, where we were able to pick up visitors moorings for the night. It's almost impossible to describe how beautiful these places are and we could spend weeks in this region without getting bored.

From Bono we went back to Crouesty and because the tides were so strong we covered 18nm in just two hours, we stayed overnight in Crouesty and sailed back out into the Atlantic to the Island of Houat, once again we were able to get a visitors mooring and set out to explore the island before moving on to Belle Ile and the harbour of Sauzon, arriving at 18.00hrs on Friday the 24th June. At this point we are now moving back north and on our way home.

We spent Saturday on the local transport exploring the island before returning to Sauzon for our final night this far south!

At 09.00hrs we set out north for Concarneau, the weather was super and we had a great sail all the way up and arrived in our favourite marina and town at 16.00hrs. We stayed in Concarneau for three days before moving on to the Odet river, the glass was dropping and a real change was on the way, we stayed on the marina till Friday morning and decided to risk a short passage to Loctudy even though we had fog, rain, big seas and shallows, all around us!

We arrived in the early afternoon and were very glad to have arrived safely, having made our way through all the reefs and shallows in almost zero visibility in blinding rain and fog! O! The joys of sailing.

Loctudy is very safe once you are in, you are not allowed to enter the very narrow fairways between 17.00 and 19.00hrs as this area is a fishing port first and for yachts second. Loctudy is quite a small town but it has a good supermarket and is used as a jumping off point for crossing Biscay. We left the next morning at 06.30hrs, it was the 2nd of July, and our intention was to head around Penmarch point and attempt to arrive in the Raz just as the tides were turning south, then clear the Raz and head in against the tide to Morgat. Everything went well and we arrived safely onto one of the nicest marinas in that region.

We stayed in Mograt for three days and would have stayed longer, but time was running out for Ron and Yvonne, work beckoned so we set out for Camaret on the 5th July, we had a great sail all the way and loads of sunshine. From Camaret we set out for Brest, it's quite a short trip, but you must use the tides, or else it can get nasty!

Brest is a great crew changeover point; it comes complete with an airport and train network and has a great bus system and the costs are not bad. Ron and Yvonne left for Paris on the 8th and we headed into the city on the local bus and really enjoyed the experience.

We decided we would explore the upper reaches of the Lelorn and set out at noon Saturday and gently cruised along on the tide, anchored for the night and headed back to Camaret the next day, where we enjoyed a couple of days break before we set out for Ouessant.

We had concerns about Ouessant, as the pilot books do not speak kindly about the place and we had heard bad stories about the place, nonetheless we set out on the 12th July at 12.00 and arrived at 18.00hrs travelling along in a force 3 which slowly rose to force 6 as we arrived in Lampaul. We had great difficulty with anchoring in a very confined area and after three attempts and having trapped our retrieving line around the rudder we rafted off an Irish yacht called the Mornington and stayed on the mooring until Thursday morning, before heading for the Scillies.

As we neared Lampaul we were travelling along on 8 knots of tide and met lots of overfalls on the way into the mooring area, this place should be only visited in very settled weather?

We went ashore for a visit and were dodging bicycles all the time? As only the locals are allowed cars and the Ferries drop off loads of visitors for the day. We headed for the famous Craic, h lighthouse, it was all uphill for nearly an hour but was worth the visit, it's a magnificent sight and the area around it was like a lunar landscape, nothing grows here!

We set out on Thursday 14thJuly, the seas were flat, it was calm day and all we could hear on the radio was mer belle (smooth seas), for the whole passage, it was great as it's so rare that it happens. We arrived in St Mary's at 05.30hrs and got a berth alongside the harbour wall, in our usual spot!

There are some marvellous walks around the Scillys and one would need a week just to get the feel for the place, the islands are a crossroad for boats travelling to and from Ireland and it was not very long before we had an Irish boat alongside us, she was from Dungarvan and had a crew of retired teachers and were heading for 3 weeks in Spain, they were great company, but like all ships in the night they were soon gone!

While we were there, we found that Jerry was at anchor over in Bryar, in Green Bay and so we set out there and anchored for the night. The following morning we set out for Padstow, the seas were quite rough off Lands End and we thought we heard Declan contacting Falmouth, so we sent Declan a Dsc call, no response?.

Arrived in Padstow at 17.30hrs on Thursday the 21stJuly having left the Scillys at 05.00hrs, it had been along day, Jerry arrived about an hour later and we got a great berth together, alongside the centre of the town. We were right about Declan! He arrived the next day.

Padstow harbour can only be entered 2hrs either side of high water and before that, you must cross Doom Bar, so it's very important to do your homework! Other than that, all you have to do is enjoy Padstow, we stayed for 3 days and it was great.

Weather dictates all! It was time to make a dash for home, so we left Padstow at 21.40hrs on the 25th July to do a night passage to Kilmore Quay. We had a full moon with us for the whole night and had a beautiful crossing to Kilmore, arriving in the afternoon at 14.40hrs, but we had to stay ahead of the bad weather and left Kilmore Quay at 08.30hrs the next morning, taking the last of the flood to Carnsore Point and the full flood north to Arklow. We arrived in Arklow at 15.30hrs having completed the passage in just 7 hours in very lumpy seas. We were now weather bound in Arklow, it blew a force 9 for the next 3 days and the berth was very uncomfortable, so much so that we had to leave the boat for several hours each day for Guinness therapy. We stayed in Arklow until Saturday the 30th July and left at 12.00hrs with flat to calm conditions and arrived back on the moorings at 18.00hrs, after a passage of 66 days, to the Morbhian and back.

WILD AGAIN 2005