



Weir Quay Sailing Club

AFFILIATED CLUB MEMBER OF THE ROYAL YACHTING ASSOCIATION

NEWSLETTER AUTUMN 2006

WITH CRUISING NARRATIVES

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COMMODORE'S NOTES

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I believe 2006 has been a successful sailing season for a lot of club members. That may be a recollection unduly tinted by our own experience of one of our best summer cruises yet in Southern Brittany. However, I see from the Cruising Narratives in this issue that other members have also had good cruising in waters as far apart as S Brittany, W Scotland and the Pacific Ocean. As the committee members' reports will testify, by and large it has been a good year for the club.

As ever, the club's prosperity is due entirely to the active participation of its members and as ever we have a debt of gratitude to the members who put their energy and their focus into contributing to the well being of the club. I hesitate to name names for fear of causing offence by omission but there are specific instances that deserve to be mentioned.

Joe Gilling stands down as Membership Services Officer this year – a post that he has held for four years. Joe took over from Ian Kilpatrick, who had already started the task of bringing some IT to bear on the task in creating a database to store membership details. Joe has continued that process and has rationalised and streamlined the main processes in his remit: mailshots, e-mail shots, subscription-gathering and communication with the membership and so on. He was also one of the architects of the new constitution and has been a great contributor at committee meetings, where his views and energy have always been valuable. Thank you Joe. Thank you also to Granville who agreed to ease Joe's workload by taking on the position of newsletter editor – a task that this edition testifies has been ably done. Thank you also to Robin Riddett for picking up the baton from Joe.

Richard Gould stood down as Dinghy Officer last year because of family commitments. Despite that he has continued to work hard to maintain the momentum of the Friday evening sailing with Cargreen and has made a successful joint bid with Cargreen to gain funding to buy three new Laser Visions. These will make exciting sailing for those who have progressed beyond the Picos. Thank you Richard.

Steve Kirby not only handles the treasury with skill and diligence but works constantly to encourage wider participation in club activities. He assisted Richard with his grant application. Thank you Steve.

Jim Barnes has put a great deal of time and effort into various works associated with the lease renewal and the potential re-location. Perhaps the most significant of these was the survey of local sailing clubs, the results of which support our view that the current rent is not the peppercorn rent the landlord believes it to be. Thank you Jim.

Behind the scenes it has been a very difficult year for the committee as our thoughts have been dominated by the imminence of the end of our current lease on the clubhouse and latterly the prospect of re-location. Frustration has caused the temperature to rise at several committee meetings and at the separate meetings we have held in order to progress the lease renewal. Some of this frustration has been directed at me because I have not done in a timely manner that which I have taken away as actions from previous meetings. I apologise for this and will only say in mitigation that this is not due of lack of time or commitment to the club, but that I am finding my role in the current circumstances to be a real test of my abilities.

I would like to thank each and every committee member for his or her outstanding support and contribution to the running of the club. I would also like to thank Pat Lean, Jocelyn McInnes, Adrian Mitchell and Ian Penrose for their expert assistance with matters regarding the lease and potential relocation.

It is to those subjects that I would now like to turn.

Weir Quay Sailing Club is the envy of every sailor who visits it. We have something special here. Something to do with the location, the members, the atmosphere, our outlook, both literally and metaphorically. We don't always quite know what it is that makes this club special but we know it is special – and we understand the envy with which others regard us.

The landlord does not believe that the presence of WQSC as a tenant does anything to enhance the value of the estate and is very keen to regain vacant possession of our clubhouse. A number of reasons have been cited but the fact of the matter is that the estate believes it can

increase the value of, and the revenue from, the estate if vacant possession is retrieved.

Our lease is as close to cast iron as it is possible to be in terms of provision of an automatic right of renewal but the fact of the matter is that a tenant's relationship with an unwilling landlord is likely to be uncomfortable and a hindrance to development.

All this means only one thing: the going is getting tough. And it's going to get a good deal tougher. As Carol so eloquently put it to our January committee meeting, we are going to need every ounce of resource from everyone who is prepared to help in order to secure the future of this club.

Robin

TREASURER

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The figures quoted below are provisional and are subject to ratification at the annual audit.

Over the Club's financial year that closed on September 30, the Club had a turnover of slightly over £19,708 and over the course of the year realised a surplus over income of £5,454. The surplus arises principally from donations (£514), interest from the funds held in a bank account (£1,180), social events (£513), subscriptions from new members (£1,510), mooring repairs (£536) and the subscription from the Gig Club. The forecast income from the subscriptions and dinghy charges covered the basic cost of running the club – i.e. rates, insurance, rent, administration and maintenance. With the increased size of membership, the recommendation to be made to the committee is that subscriptions for 2007 remain unchanged.

Fundus charges have been reviewed and mooring charges for next year will increase. The charges for subsequent years are subject to price increases in line with annual inflation.

Overall, the Club has a healthy financial position.

Steve

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

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First of all, my thanks to everyone who has attended, brought guests, and helped with the organisation of our social

events during the past year. A special mention to Julie Waters of Tamar and Tavy Gig Club without whom I would have been lost at the Barn Dance.

Our year began with the Annual Dinner, held at The Blacksmith's Arms in Lamerton on a very snowy, frosty evening – and not one guest failed to appear, which only goes to show what intrepid outdoor folks we all are. The venue proved to be excellent and the food was good. This year we are addressing the problem of getting hot food at the same time on each table by introducing a seating plan. Don't forget to book your places for 24th November this year – everyone should have received a menu in the AGM mail shot.

The New Year's Day celebration was well attended as usual.

Unfortunately our first winter speaker, Willie Ker had to cancel his talk on high latitude sailing at the last minute – we will endeavour to fix another date with him. Drummond Challis gave a fascinating talk on the making of the film "The Riddle of The Sands" and was bombarded with questions afterwards by those members who had done their homework. Pat and Dudley Lean shared their experiences of their return trip from the Mediterranean, which ended in disaster off the French coast. You can read later in this issue of the safe arrival of 'Eowyn too' in the Tamar and I wish them all the best in their new craft.

The Barn Dance was jointly attended by WQSC and TTGC members and was a delightful family occasion once more. Thanks to Liz Johnson for introducing "TED" who kept everyone busy dancing until we all dropped exhausted – and thirsty. The bar profits were excellent!

Our 40th Birthday celebrations took place on 11th June. Ian Kilpatrick contacted many of our founder- and past members and a goodly number of them were treated to a day sail in some of the cruising boats. They were later entertained at a party in The Clubhouse attended by many current members and friends of the club. Hugh Williams did the lion's share of the arrangements – thanks Ian and Hugh.

The Regatta this year was my exercise in delegation, and with sterling support from Steve Kirby, Debs and Adrian Helps, Trina and Ian Brooks and Dick Brown and many others, it worked. The weather was not as kind to us as it has been in recent years – I'm afraid I was hogging the good weather whilst cruising in Brittany and celebrating a BIG birthday.

I hear that, despite the weather, it was a good day.

One of the regular Friday dinghy sailing evenings with Cargreen culminated in a BBQ. It was a perfect sailing day and a good social evening. The Cargreen visitors took their dinghies back across the river in near darkness. It would be great to see this become an annual event.

Still to come, the AGM – early applications are recommended for the position of Social Functions Officer. The Incumbent will be very happy to hand over this highly sought-after post and offers training and support to the successful applicant.
Sue.

Membership Services

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Total membership for the year 2006 rose from 135 for the previous year to 148 members in all categories (individual, family, life) which included 23 new memberships. The net increase of 13 memberships implied a loss of 10 members who did not renew their subscriptions as occurred in 2005.

The table below shows the breakdown in all categories:

Item	2005	2006
Total members	135	148
Of which, New	21	23
Non-renewals	10	10
Family including Cadets (<18 yrs)	84	94
	53	57
Cruisers	64	68
Dinghy	42	41
Tenders & inflatables	36	38
Waiting List		
Dinghies		5
Moorings		14

While the number of moorings cannot be increased in the space available, a new toast rack for dinghies will be constructed on the foreshore to add 10 new slots before next season.

Clive Moody provided considerable and much appreciated support this year in sorting out the dinghy park assignments. John King also generously helped by making up stainless steel number plates for previously unmarked bays.

Granville Starkie is completely up to speed now as Newsletter Editor and looks forward to receiving your input especially for the Annual Cruising Edition. In addition to putting out two newsletters this year, the revised *Constitution* and newly prepared *Operational Policies and Responsibilities* were circulated with the spring newsletter.

Thanks are due as well to Ian Kilpatrick who continues to act as Webmaster on the WQSC website www.weirquaysailingclub.co.uk. It is gratifying to see that the number of hits is now over 10,000 but Royal Mail continues to be the best way of reliably reaching all the members.

Finally, many thanks to Robin Riddett for agreeing to take on the position of Membership Services Officer as I am stepping down at the end of the current season after serving for four years. Robin can be contacted at (01822) 840257 or via email at hb@riddett.fslife.co.uk

Joe

CRUISING NEWS

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I must admit, having only recently arrived home after buying an aluminium Ovni 36 replacement for Eowyn, a steel Bruce Roberts Offshore 44, I am spending most of my time catching up on what the Club has achieved in my absence during the summer. I also panic every time 'Eowyn too' turns before Phantom Star! We may have downsized but the fact that we now only draw 0.55m (21.6 inches) can create its own problems. Happily, I panic unnecessarily.

This does lead nicely into the increasing number of incidents of vessels touching or of having near misses when wind and tide contrive to upset the arrangements of us mere mortals.

The general trend amongst members is in fact to increase the size of their toys and assume all will be well. This is not so. I hope that David will come up with some fiendish scheme to get out of this situation when we start on the mooring maintenance programme next year. In the future however buying a larger vessel may mean you could forfeit your mooring until space becomes available. Please bear this in mind if you are thinking of upsizing and discuss with us before the event.

Another problem I encountered was storing the outboard - don't we have a lot?

It is another subject we will have to address this winter, so if you have not identified your motor with name and phone number, please do so. It would help those running the Club on your behalf immensely.

Those of you who missed the cruise to the Yealm really did miss out. Sun and a fair wind in both directions plus a wonderful selection of English real ale (something you don't come across in France very often) and good food to boot, made for a great weekend. If you are going to be meticulous, yes, it did rain as we returned to Weir Quay - I'm sure it was only local!

I understand that three members subjected their yachts to the RNLI Sea Check during the season. All three thought it was well worth while and very informative. For those who missed out I will be in touch to discuss when and where next time. For those who didn't even consider it and have changed their minds, call me.

I look forward to seeing you all at the AGM and then the Annual Dinner where we can exchange ideas.

Dudley

DINGHY NEWS

In the absence of a Dinghy Officer the following items have been kindly submitted by Richard Gould and John Tomlinson

Dinghy Sailing

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Cadets

What started a couple of years ago as a few of our cadets trying out the club Picos, and sailing down to Cargreen, has now become an established fixture in the diary. Friday Cadet's starts in April. Those brave enough to face the icy waters, wrap up and head out for those first bracing spring evenings (brrhh!). The sailing continues enthusiastically through the summer, often ending up with at least one, but usually all of the sailors trying out their capsizing skills. In the height of the summer we had as many as dozen Cadets turn up at different times to make use of the Picos and Skippers as well as Toppers, Mirrors, Fevas, Comets, Visions and Enterprises. On one evening, it was

so popular that we didn't have enough boats and had to resort to cadets waiting on the beach and taking turns for a sail. This year, we once again treated the Cargreenies to a barbecue with no less than 22 boats and many more hungry sailors turning up to try one of our Commodore's famous sausage and burger baps.

Keen cadets keep the sailing going through to the fading light of September. But, eventually, even with torchlight to guide us home, all good things have to come to an end.

As usual, parents are actively encouraged to help to ease the effort of the few regulars on the evening. Things like setting up the boats, pulling trailers up the slipway, driving the safety boat or putting the safety boat away, all need doing, and of course getting a BBQ going is a really nice way to end one of those warm sultry summer evenings. Thanks this year to all of you who have helped. Particular thanks, as always, to Alan Seward, who is always on the Safety Boat, come rain or shine. Obviously, if there are any of you out there who would like to help, please don't be shy in asking.

Active England Grant

One of the main "off the water" activities this year has been the application and successful award of a 50% grant to fund a brand new club training boat. This initiative kicked-off in March 2006 when WQSC and Cargreen were invited by the local Sport England representative to attend a meeting in Plymouth to discuss improved sailing opportunities for novice sailors in the area. In all, eight grants of £7000 were awarded to local dinghy clubs (or partnerships) to purchase new boats. In return, the clubs have agreed to find matched funds (50%) and commit to improve sailing opportunities. As a partnership, Cargreen and WQSC have received one of these grants which enables us to purchase 3 new club training boats (RS Visions). Cargreen will retain two of the boats, and WQSC will get one boat. The new boats will arrive in March 2007.

In order to satisfy the conditions of the grant WQSC have prepared a three year Dinghy Development Plan (see the website). The Development Plan identifies a number of key objectives such as, training, establishing a core of volunteers, establishing community links and of course, fund raising to raise the other 50% towards the new club boat. To make this

work we need volunteers – willing hands please contact either Carol Horner or myself.

Richard

Dinghy Racing

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The organised sailing events have enjoyed varying levels of support. One of the aims of the programme has been to ensure the safety boat is available should members choose to potter in their dinghies rather than participate in sailing races. I am pleased to report the notion of pottering about in dinghies, as an alternative to racing, has proved attractive to a number of members.

The participants have enjoyed the dinghy races, but numbers of dinghies have varied between two and a maximum of seven on the 17th June. We managed to sail three races in each of the Spring and Summer Series.

Four boats completed the Tamar Bridge race on the 6th August. A fresh East North East wind provided ideal conditions,

with the opportunity to set spinnakers, and the added excitement of bursts of planing which kept everybody on their toes. Unusually the race was completed without any capsizes! On the 16th July WQSC entered three boats, sailed by Robin Musgrove's son in law, Chris Miller and John Tomlinson, (crewed by Janneke Tomlinson) in the Cotehele to Cawsand race. It was a glorious day with light and variable winds. By pure chance we managed to sail around a large windless patch outside the breakwater resulting in a Weir Quay boat winning on handicap - an excellent day on the water!

If there has not been sufficient interest to run a dinghy race, we have usually had two or three boats on the water. Conditions for the first of the Autumn Series races were rather blustery causing this race to be cancelled. However boats which ventured out enjoyed excellent conditions for extended planing runs.

There are still three more races/sailing opportunities at Weir Quay before the end of 2006!

John

CRUISING NARRATIVES 2006

PASSAGE RACE TO FOWEY or ON TEST THIS MONTH – REEFING GEAR

Nigel Baxter

The WQSC cruising programme, in a flurry of indecision, promised a “late cruise” 23 to 24 September. I like Fowey; I like Fowey quite decisively. I liked Fowey even more when I jumped off Tamar Swallow at Town Quay popped into the harbourmaster’s office and received a warm welcome. A pontoon was booked to cater for the “late cruise” and for a Sabre Class Association Rally. The Godfather (Sabre district) thought it a good idea to combine the two events. So did I. The Eddystone Race having been cancelled (me again) I thought that a cruise – in the form of a passage race – would fit the bill, after all who does not want to overtake everybody else even when cruising? Whilst I set about dreaming up handicaps, I witnessed much rattling of Sabres over the e-mail as claims were made about maximum speeds attained, the Godfather keeping a wise but knowing silence. WQSC does not do cruiser racing does it – well this was getting serious, so serious I started investigating proper handicaps. There was the Barnes Wallace Grommit system based on animated races on German reservoirs or the Port of Plymouth Sailing Association system that goes back 500 years and rates the “Mayflower” a little faster than the “Golden Hind”, possibly due to the new zealot based antifouling.

Interest seemed good from members (bugger I thought!) and we had the prospect of a real variety of boats of different construction material – stuff used for building buildings, for making furniture, for wrapping roasts and that other funny reinforced window stuff. The weather was pretty interested in playing a part as well, forecasting easterly or south-easterly 5 to 6/7 in the west. We were to go west.

Unsurprisingly, therefore, the drop out rate was high come the day. On the windy slip Joe with Rockbird (is that a pop band’s groupie?) and the white Black Cygnet decided to test the water (cold and salty not surprisingly!) and motored off down river, which itself was a bit of a battle.

On the way down the confused Cygnet spotted Wacabone lurking on her mooring at the mouth of the Lynher. A quick attack ensued with a broadside effectively disabling Wacabone’s reefing gear so she sailed with two reefs in throughout the weekend.

In the Hamoaze Black Cygnet checked in with QHM who kindly advised that he had stationed a submarine as our outer distance mark – how thoughtful – although it was a pity that QHM had not advised the new skipper to leave his shiny buttons alone and not to repeatedly dive & re-surface. Nimrod had checked in with race control, which was also the white Black Cygnet and added to her confusion. Nimrod reported to be at the start line in 20 + knots of wind, whilst the rest of us were still in transit and frankly still unsure whether to race. Nimrod set off - she is a big, mighty vessel. It seemed only a few minutes later that Nimrod returned, somewhat enigmatically, to transmit mood and reported being well into Whitsand Bay and sent a weather report. The wind down to 18 knots, sun shining and having a great sail. I am sure I heard the click of ice in glasses in the background. I checked Nimrod’s handicap and adjusted it for carrying a weather forecaster and transmitting studio.

Suitably encouraged, Rockbird, Wacabone and a Cygnet of some colour or another decided to go for it, noting their own start time and submarine avoidance course. Next mark – Punch Cross Rock, Fowey harbour entrance.

Race Control was dutifully last to clear the start line, thanked QHM for his sporadic outer distance mark and hoped he had a nice day tucked up in his tower. Soon Nimrod’s handicap was being adjusted again for having a rubbish forecaster as Cygnet searched in vain for a wind drop to 18 knots. Cygnet (colour optional) was chasing Wacabone, until the draughty weather called for a second reef, wound in for the first time out of necessity. Who was that weather forecaster?

With a goodly swell under keel, the ride was a roller coaster, but Cygnet, cosy under two reefs and yankee, long keel, heavy-ish displacement, high freeboard and original Baby Blake, was behaving. She even broke her speed record, although I shall keep that secret until the Sabres will wave on e-mail again!

In port after, I must confess, a good sail although perhaps not as good as great, Cygnet became the 4th boat on the WQSC & Sabre Association reserved pontoon (although Nimrod should count as at least 2). Not a Sabre in sight, in fact we were joined by no other boats, which made us seem proud to have made Fowey. Nimrod had broken her record for the passage. Attempts were made to work out results over a fine dinner ashore, although the maths was probably a bit dodgy. Joining up with others who ate at Royal Fowey, the provisional results were announced, during which Nimrod announced that her new sails had performed well, a factor not initially declared to the handicapper. The results calculator promptly developed a nasty twitch before exploding and causing severe splinter injuries to the bar staff. The results are now due in February.

In the morning we spotted a Sabre, yes a Sabre, sneaking away from the other pontoon. Her name was noted (more of a name of a horse than a yacht). The Godfather knows!

Nimrod was the first away in the morning, funny sounds coming from her bow as she turned off the pontoon as if articulated. We watched her go, grateful that we would therefore be spared the ignominy of her charging past us on the way home as if we were standing still. Curiously the remaining 3 yachts started in a fashion closer to a race start than achieved for the race itself. It was a bit helter-skelter off Fowey, good job I raised sail and put in my contacts in the harbour! Wacabone set off in a south-easterly tack, serenely upright thanks to her concrete and 2 reefs. Rockbird (damn & blast them) managed to point better than old Wackers and Cygers and even brandished a photographer to record Cygers

headbutting the waves. The others were slowly overhauling Wacabone before Rockbird tacked to head inshore. Joe will advise on the success or otherwise of this strange tactic! Wackers & Cygers kept close-ish company until a rakish angle persuaded the white Black Cygnet to luff up and pull in a second reef. A long day of tacking followed, Cygnet proving a pretty dry boat – the biggest lump of seawater actually cleared the heads of skipper and crew. Rame Head as ever, never seemed to get closer and I watched Wacabone seemingly tack in and out of Whitsand Bay whilst making little seaway. My crew and I had raced dinghies together some years ago so we applied dinghy tactics and hiked out. The port cockpit coaming moved! Some tweaking got the old girl pointing better and we squeezed, at a just respectable distance away, past Rame, fenders out. We watched behind as Wacabone, who had put in a long seaward leg in a desperate attempt not to have to tack out again, came roaring in sailing a little broader. Cygnet held her off as finally we could sail at more favourable angles (upright as well as to the wind) after Penlee. Then the bloody wind fell sharply off.

Nonetheless being purist and slightly stupid, thoughts of engines never actually got uttered until 2000hrs off the Naval Base. By this hour I expect Nimrod had been fed, watered and stabled whilst her crew bathed, fed and snoozed in front of the TV.

Same again next year????

With thanks and apologies for poor use of artistic licence to:

Nimrod skipper Ian Penrose & crew
Rockbird skipper Joe Gilling & crew
Wacabone skipper Steve Kirby & crew
Black Cygnet crew Matthew Newton
Fowey Harbourmaster and QHM
The Godfather

From Atlantic to Pacific

Joe Gilling

This summer gave me the wonderful opportunity to sail both in Atlantic and Pacific waters. I joined friends Peter and Sue Stevens and Tim Bolton for two weeks in Scotland for a cruise in the Hebrides and then in early September joined friend John Kuiper in British Columbia to sail in the Gulf Islands off southern Vancouver Island. Both trips were firsts as I had never visited Scotland let alone sail there and, although I had visited Vancouver several times for skiing I had not sailed there.

In Atlantic Waters

I joined *Grebe*, Peter's Hallberg Rassy 31 and Tim, in Oban on Monday 19 June. While waiting for the ferry to go out to Oban Yachts on the island of Kerera, Tim and I made good use of the time to visit the Oban Distillery for supplies. We stocked up with a number of different single malt whiskeys in 20cl taster bottles. Despite best efforts though, we found that three tots were about the most we could manage in an evening before our taste buds numbed.

My hopes for an early start the next day were literally dampened as rain and gales set in for the next three days and we had to stay in port. The bad weather also frustrated several long distance sailors who needed to press on including a Danish crew that was just completing a trans-Atlantic voyage. The skipper needed to get to work in Copenhagen on Monday but it was clear that we would be storm bound until Friday.

The weather on Friday was a bit sullen but a fleet of boats set out up the Sound of Mull mostly heading for Tobermory. After 4½ hours of sailing we picked up a mooring in the very picturesque harbour of Tobermory. We were able to take on more supplies at the Tobermory Distillery. The Fish Café ashore provided a real treat of squat lobsters (squat because it has no tail, but very succulent long arms, hence lobster) which none of us had seen before. Delicious.

Saturday saw us heading for Isleornsay in the Sound of Sleat as we headed north towards Skye. The weather was still gloomy and threatening.

The lighthouse on Ardnamurchan Point looked quite formidable while off in the distance we could see the small islands of Rum, Eigg and Muck. The Cuillin Hills on Skye were outlined in misty clouds. The wind, which had started at NW 3-4, was slowly dying so by 14:00 hrs we started motoring to finish our 40 mile run for the day. The anchorage at Isleornsay was very peaceful with (despite?) a small fleet of RNSA boats in for the night.

Sunday actually lived up to its name as the sun shone and the temperature rose enough for shorts and T-shirts. Not much wind however as we set off on a short hop across to Sandaig and the bay where the naturalist Gavin Maxwell lived and wrote *Ring of Bright Water* in 1960 about an otter that he had brought back from the marsh area of Iraq. We toured around his homestead site but the house itself had burned down in 1966. Around the cairn and plaque were many piles of small stones left as personal memorials by his many fans.

The rest of the day was magic as we ghosted along under sail up Loch Hourn with no more than 10kts (usually less) of wind. Just as well there was little wind as we were completely distracted by a flock of herons nesting in the trees on a small island and failed to notice a submerged rock. Clang! No damage was done when we hit but the damning evidence of faulty navigation was recorded on the chart plotter/GPS that showed our recorded track taking us right onto the rock. Our night was spent in the tranquillity of an anchorage shared only with one seal at the top of the loch.

Sue joined us in Mallaig on Monday. The facilities for yachts at Mallaig are sparse. The Harbour Master suggested we use the RNLI casualty mooring and get showers at the Seamen's Mission - good advice. It was very different being in a fishing port with the weather-beaten trawlers compared with Salcombe or the Solent with their fine yachts.

The next few days provided magnificent summer sailing but with quite variable winds from 3 to 36 kts. By Thursday (noted in the log by the Captain as being St. Peter's Day) we had made our way through strong tides under the Skye Bridge and around to Plockton.

Plockton had particular memories for Tim. He had served as a submariner with the Royal Navy and was involved in testing torpedoes in the waters around Skye. His father had also served in the RN during WW II as a surgeon stationed at Duncraig Castle opposite the village.

Plockton was so congenial we stayed two days and managed to hear some local music at the pub. Lots of jigs and reels on fiddle and accordion. We had long since decided that this would be a proper cruise and not a mad rush of passage making and deadlines. Amazing how fair weather, good food and fine whiskey can make a person relax.

Plockton was the far point of the trip, as then we had to turn and make our way back to Oban. We more or less retraced our route stopping in Isleornsay and Mallaig before heading past Ardnamurchan for Tobermory.

The forecast on leaving Mallaig was for initial calm rising to Force 7 later in the day. We motored for 2 hours but then the wind began to build until it peaked at gusts of 38kts off Ardnamurchan Point. We were towing the inflatable dinghy, which became somewhat flighty in the gusts and flipped over several times. The problem was solved, however, by tying the bow of the dinghy to the push-pit and dragging the stern in the water.

The last three hours of the trip were much calmer as we rounded Ardmore point and headed for Tobermory. Once more we enjoyed a fine dinner in our favourite restaurant and managed to miss the heavy showers as the weather changed again.

Our departure from Tobermory was accompanied by a pod of five dolphins that wheeled and jumped and put on a show for all the boats in the harbour. Dolphins seem particularly taken by the sound of engines and prop wash as they would race over to accompany each boat as it left its mooring.

The final night of the cruise was spent in another magical spot Pouilladobhrain (pool of the otter) close to Oban. Nearby is the Tigh an Truish Inn, a pub (The House of Trousers) so called because after the Jacobite Risings when kilts were banned, the islanders were reputed to change out of their kilts and into trews here, when going to the mainland.

Back in Oban we spent a busy time clearing the boat in readiness for the delivery crew that would take the boat back to Plymouth. For them it was a slow trip home mostly on the engine because of

a lack of wind while the rest of us sped back by car and plane.

In Pacific Waters

I would not normally plan on two cruises in distant waters in one summer preferring instead to enjoy more time in each location. Our son Christopher's enrolment at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver did, however, provide an obvious opportunity to take a sailing charter. Fortunately John Kuiper a brave friend now living in Vancouver and who previously featured in the story *Voyage of the Rockbird* (WQSC Cruising Annual 2002) was still game to team up for a charter in the Gulf Islands for ten days September 5-15. My wife Melody was planning to sail with us for part of the trip but jumped ship even before we started having received a better offer to go with friends on their luxurious 50 ft motor yacht. To her the choice was obvious – sleep with a sweaty crew on a sailboat or have a cabin to herself on the motor yacht. Chris was fully occupied immersing himself in Canadian culture at UBC so John and I were on our own.

The weather on the West Coast had been hot and dry for almost the entire summer and so it continued. Blue skies all the way but unfortunately not much wind. We had chartered a 34ft boat from Nanaimo but because of engine problems were upgraded to a 38 footer at no extra charge. We felt like kings lounging in the cockpit eating the Dungeness crabs we caught at several anchorages along the way.

The Gulf Islands are similar to Scotland in some ways with lots of rock and rugged forested shorelines. Some places are rather confined for sailing, though there is no lack of water as the charts often show over 200m very close to shore. A major difference between BC and Scotland is the greater number of very expensive yachts and second homes on the Gulf Islands compared with the almost emptiness in Scotland. British Columbia, and Vancouver in particular, is booming while the proximity to Seattle and the North Western United States (Microsoft, Boeing, etc.) has led to an invasion of wealth. Fortunately we were sailing in the off-season or it would have been rather crowded.

Throughout the trip I was reading *Passage to Juneau* by the Englishman Jonathan Raban. He set out from Seattle in 1998 to sail his 35ft boat single-handed up to Juneau, Alaska. He recounted a vast

history of Captain George Vancouver's explorations in 1792 as well as the Indian lore, natural history, and present-day activities in the area. As we sailed I was particularly impressed by the strong tides and the over-falls that occurred where tidal streams meet. I could well imagine what it would have been like for the Indians in canoes without engines or tide tables to help navigate.

Like the Indians, in a very modest way, we were able to live off the sea and land. We stopped in James Bay at a National Marine Park where we anchored to do a bit of crabbing and explore the island. Having set the crab pot we rowed ashore and found that the apple and plum trees that had been planted by homesteaders in the 1920s bore an enormous amount of ripe fruit. The harvest was bountiful and left us a lot of fruit to take back home to the city of Vancouver.

We walked on the beach made of oyster shells that had accumulated over the years of Indian habitation and raked up from the bottom of the bay a dozen giant oysters to add to the feast. Further crabbing with a chicken leg on a fishing line added to the catch of Dungeness crabs we hauled up in the crab pot. Quite fittingly we enjoyed this fine meal while at anchor in Poets' Cove later in the evening.

The ten days of sailing in the Gulf Islands are hopefully just the beginning of more voyages in British Columbia. It's ironic to think that as a joint British/Canadian family that if we hadn't moved to Bere Ferrers we would have moved to Vancouver. But then we wouldn't have the opportunity to sail to France and Ireland and Scotland and well, who knows where?

Editor's note: Joe enjoyed the Scottish malt – in Scotland – but you will note he spells *whiskey* like the Irish (and Americans) do. In deference to Joe's transatlantic origin I have resisted the temptation to change it to the Scottish *whisky*.

AN UNPLANNED EVENING IN CAMARET *Carol & Bruce Horner*

The weather forecast was for light to moderate winds, south to southwest with mist early but clearing. It was already clear as we left Audierne early that morning, so it seemed an ideal day for our trip through the Raz du Seine and the Chenal du Four to L'Aber Wrac'h.

We reached the Raz just as the tide was turning in our favour to allow as much time as possible to cross the Iroise and up to the Chenal du Four on one tide. There was good visibility and we could see intrepid French sailors beating down close inshore against the wind and tide to round the point inside the lighthouse. Annis is a heavy boat though and the wind was light so we resorted to motor sailing. With the tide under us we were making good progress north when we heard another English boat on the VHF asking if there were any ships in the vicinity of the Four light who could advise about visibility. Eventually a boat just north of le Conquet, in the south part of the Four channel, answered, and reported that they could only see 100 metres. When another yacht replied that he could only see 50 metres we decided that an evening in Camaret would be very attractive.

We altered course for the Pointe de Toulanguet, turned off the engine and enjoyed the cliff scenery as we drifted along aiming to be in Camaret for a late lunch. More VHF traffic though had us worried about whether we would be able to get a berth. Ushant Traffic Control announced to all shipping in the area of the Four channel to be alert to thirty one racing yachts travelling south to Camaret. They were sailing against both wind and tide in the fog! Even the French can't cover 10 miles in those conditions faster than Annis can sail 5 miles downwind, so we reached Camaret first.

There was no need to worry about berths as the inner pontoons were reserved for the racing boats leaving the marina free for visitors. What a race though, this was the Tour de France la Voile with 31 participants, both amateurs and professional crews of 6 in identical 30 footers. To us they looked like dinghies with a small low cabin, just enough to keep the sandwiches dry. The race left Dieppe at the beginning of July, and would finish in Toulon in early August after being trailed across the south-west corner of France from Royan to the Mediterranean

coast and completing several more sections to Menton and back. Each leg of the race was between 80 and 160 miles, and we had met up with the race from St Quay Portrieux to Camaret.

The yachts had left at 1800 the previous day and sailed overnight along the north Brittany coast. The first one finished in Camaret just after 1500, and then boats started arriving every few minutes, as the visibility closed in. By early evening the inner marina was full of yachts and sightseers, with exhausted young crewmen catching up on their sleep lying on the pontoons before they headed off to the parties in town. The whole harbourside was filled with sponsors' stands, including Tupperware who had

provided the boxes for lunch, supper and breakfast. A huge screen was showing video clips of the racing and race positions for all the yachts.

The next day they were up early ready for match racing around the buoys in the bay before returning ashore for prize giving and a quick lunch before leaving for the next leg at 1800. We watched from our anchorage in Anse de Bertheaume as the fleet sailed gently south gradually becoming a thin line of white dots on the horizon in perfect visibility on their way to Bourgenay near Les Sables d'Olonne.

We prepared to head for home the next day.

WHITE BARON 2006

John Hoyle

2006 has been a quiet year for White Baron. The skipper has purchased an estate on a hillside and unfortunately the previous owners had not ensured that the water reservoir was sufficiently large to accommodate the requirements of the new owners. This lack of water and also the problem in adapting a wooden building to his requirements meant he had other things on his mind.

At the end of June we left for a cruise and leaving Plymouth turned towards Dartmouth. The sea was flat and there was a light easterly and we decided that the next leg would be to Weymouth. After studying the tide tables we collected a mooring off Dittisham and paid for the privilege.

Lyme Bay was again calm but the light easterly was cold and by the time we reached Portland Bill it really had penetrated. We took the inside passage round the Bill and rafted up at Weymouth to be told by the inside boat that they had been in warm sunshine all day. After two nights in Weymouth we left for Poole. It was a good day and we made good time to Worbarrow Bay for lunch. Poole was only a little way off and we were in good time so lunch was a protracted affair and after taking five minutes rest departed to Poole. After a time we realised that the coastline was moving slower than it ought and decided we ought to see just what the tide was doing. It is fair to say we had left

on a favourable tide but due to the protracted lunch this had turned and we had not looked at the rates. Off Plymouth the tide is not too significant but off St Albans Head and Anvil Point you really need to ensure that you are not fighting the worst of it. We were fortunate we were on neaps and not springs.

We did manage to reach Poole and spent three nights in the bay enjoying the meat bought in Weymouth cooked on the barbecue and enduring the high temperatures. As you can imagine there was much study of tide tables for our return trip and we decided on an early start.

The easterly had now changed to a very light, warm westerly and we had a fry up off Portland Bill eating with plates on our laps. The conditions were benign and Lyme Bay was again flat calm. We eventually made Salcombe, anchoring above the Salt Stone for another barbecue. During the trip across Lyme Bay many moths rested on the sails and deck. These were Silver Y's that are immigrants from the continent.

The first rain of the trip ensured we left Salcombe after filling with water and a quick stop to reach the Yealm just in time for the clouds to clear and the sun to return. After two nights in the Yealm we had our first real sail into the Tamar. It had been an enjoyable trip but we used far too much diesel.

NEVER HEARD OF OVNI?

Pat Lean

After the sad demise of EOWYN, the long search was on for the replacement, 'Eowyn too'. It had to be another metal boat, [although we had dallied with the idea of a solid GRP like the Southerly], fully flexible with a lifting keel. It also had to have 2 good bedrooms and a well-fitted kitchen. Considering the number of boats out there, you would think this was not a difficult spec. Give this spec to any broker, and he will shake his head and chuckle, lift his head to the heavens and look at you as if you were asking for a trip to the moon for under £50. A few couldn't be bothered to get up from their desks and walk over to meet us, or even ask us to sit down. With quite a few quid in our hot sticky hands, wouldn't you think they would try to sell us something else? Life among the Beneteau and Swan set must be easy money.

We trawled through Holland with their canals and delicious steel boat industry, and found not a sausage, unless you would be interested in an aluminium smelly hole with rotting food and socks melded together under the kitchen table. We hung around agencies in Essex, land of drying creeks and mud berths – zero, except for the attitude problems. Finally, during a holiday last Christmas on the Costa Brava, a German agency actually still open at the time, trawled the internet for us, in German, and came up with Symphonie, lovely looking aluminium lifting keel, deckhouse saloon, one of a small series built in Wilhelmshaven, N Germany. We made contact with the agent and drove over. She was gorgeous (the boat!), kept in a shed for most of her life, and we were smitten. However, there was a strange tale behind her. The owner was the builder, who had hoped to run a small production line, but it seems he had been the agent for Ovni and had copied the design, with modifications. The deck saloon was a very desirable feature and the fit-out very good, but it seemed too clean, in fact, had it ever been launched? And the price? The owner could not provide all documentation, all VAT receipts etc. We concluded it had been the prototype because of various modifications and filled holes, reinforcements and such like. However, we decided we would be interested if we could get it for a good

enough price and pay the VAT on return. In the event he could not provide proof of ownership and right of sale, or that the design was up to Category A standard. He was not prepared to negotiate. So we had to step away - even the agent had been deceived by the past history.

But it did lead us on to look more closely at the Ovni, a production boat for the last 15 years, and highly prized by the French, built near Les Sables d'Olonne and with full technical backup. We found not many for sale. In the meantime we found a Van de Stadt, Dutch design for amateur build, back in Wilhelmshaven - aluminum, lifting keel with a 2 ton bulb on the bottom, which meant she didn't sit well when drying out, but was a very stable boat with good proven sailing ability. Over we went again, a long and boring drive, and the owner, very honest and earnest, was a much more credible vendor than our previous experience. He had commissioned Van de Stadt to take the standard deckhouse saloon design with a fixed keel and modify it for the lifting keel. The layout was exceptional. Whilst the hull was professionally built, and fair to boot, the owner, a marine engineer, had fitted it out himself, and the heavy mahogany and amateur woodwork ruined a very fine boat. With a high price it was not for us, but a useful comparison for the next step, down to the south of France and the Ovnis.

We saw 4, starting with an ex charter from Kiriakoulis, Nice, who despite our appointment to view, didn't know we were coming, and had already sold it. Tatty and not well maintained, it was a decent price, but built for the charter market, not our choice of spec. On along the coast, the next agent in Marseilles didn't turn up for the viewing, the yard didn't know who owned the boat as they filed the boats under the owner's names only, and it was well over-priced. Port Napoleon, and the only French agent we have crossed to be worthy of the name – as he worked for Ancasta, he had a professional format to follow. The boat, 5 years old and owned from new by a Swiss, was immaculate, except for the appalling modifications he had specified and also installed, using what looked like hacked up shelving to create a workshop. Even the agent shook

his head at the work and the price. Next stop, Port Camargue, where we had found an agent with three. One was already sold and the second was in Sicily so he could only show us the third. However, he didn't have a key and the owner was at the airport and wouldn't be back for a few days. It is a wonder we actually bought a boat at all.



Our new boat - found at last

Dudley did in fact gain access, with the keys found in the usual place of the cockpit cave locker, and we gave it the fine-toothed comb treatment. The agent had never seen inside it and couldn't explain much of the equipment. Neither could the owner, who turned up a couple of days later. He had never had the floor up, did not know the function of several of the instruments, couldn't understand the electrical system and so on! He had provided it with covers to the settees, 3 layers on the table, dodgers, Caribbean bimini, Med bimini, winch covers and all the tarty bits you could dream up.

However, in touching up the paintwork he had managed to splash paint on every piece of deck equipment and drip it on every portion of the deck. He was truly amazed at the depth of investigation and survey we carried out.

Desperation had struck, however, and with some hard negotiating we struck the deal, subject to a later inspection of her bottom on the hard. In fact, for 10 years old, she looked almost new below, and certainly very lightly used. She'd had two owners, one who sailed her around the Morbihan and the other who brought her down to the Med, and used her for day trips around the bay.

We flew back for a second visit not knowing what was to be left on the boat, saw her out of the water, phoned instructions to the bank and took possession. I say that we paid the money expecting to take over, but the owner rather thought he would take off with his mates for the weekend – in our boat! What if he had sunk it? Rammed it? Lost even so much as a fender?

The French shrug is well utilised.

EOWYN TOO BACK HOME

Pat Lean

We took possession of our new boat, an Ovni 365 – actually longer than that, but as it is stencilled on the side, we get an advantageous deal in marinas – in June this year, probably the hottest weeks in the Med but with force 8 gales all around. We had a berth in a small sailing school club on an Etang (small lake) leading straight onto the Canal du Midi, and from there we could almost see home. It took 3 weeks to get the boat ready for us and ready for the canal. She has the requisite lifting keel, min. draught 550mm,

but with a gallows at the back needing very careful measurement as the Midi has low arched bridges which would only give us about an inch clearance at the edges. We looked forward to a month of sheltered waters, no worry about anchoring, weather or winds - a holiday at last! With the mast out (a bit of an unnerving experience as there were 6 Frenchmen all trying to help and take charge) we spent our first night anchored in all of 1m of water and found that the electric windlass worked like a dream



On the Canal du Midi

We then committed to a month of very, very hot motoring.

The canal is a UNESCO world heritage site – just like the Bere Peninsula – and a major engineering feat with wonderful locks and lock systems. Unfortunately, we met one of these very quickly.

The round lock at Agde has 3 entrances and is built to allow a 70ft barge to turn left within. It is not at all suited to a 36ft sailing boat with the mast sticking out front and back. However, our luck was in and we were able to tag onto a British/Dutch barge that could bridge from one side to the other and our entry into the system became easy. The first part of the canal from Sete to Toulouse was the first built and planted some 200 years ago with Plane trees both sides giving wonderful shelter for the horses and of course, us. The first major lock at Beziers was frightful to say the least. I checked it out the night before - a series of double locks in a 12-lock staircase, each oval in shape with 2.5m lifts. Gallons of water cascade out looking to swamp the leading boat, surging and swilling the 5 boats around in a porridge of foam and heaving water. I felt like turning back. But we were professionals at this, having tackled the Caledonian Canal in winter and the Rhone in full spate. This was the summer, hot with lots of people watching. And in fact, it did turn out to be less daunting, once in and with lines ashore, under control.



Lock Staircase at Beziers

What a dream and delight the journey became, first drifting through days of vineyards, and just as they became tedious, we went onto sunflowers, a couple of weeks of those, then after Toulouse the maize. Shade and the availability of good tree roots to tie to dictated the lunchtime and nightly stops. The towns were charming. However, we had far worse problems with shopping than we had on the Rhone/Saone. French villages also suffer from loss of local shops, the growth of out of town shopping, remote supermarches and closure of open markets.



Sunflowers

So the tip is, stock up well before leaving. When we flew out to take over the boat, we had 10 boxes of goodies trucked out – and they arrived mostly intact, on the prescribed date at the right destination. A

lot of thought obviously had to go into what to take, not just the summer clothes and basic boat gear, but extra pulleys, bits of wire, tools, kitchen equipment, bedding, duvets even, and heaps of winter clothing. Why did I bring all this? was a constant carp, but we found out later why. It seemed crazy taking sieves, plates etc. but it costs a lot of money to equip completely, even for 2 people for a few months. Having all this gear stacked in boxes in the house, offloaded from EOWYN a year before in Cherbourg, I certainly didn't want yet another set.

We couldn't get a list of what was to be included in the sale and, in the event, we were left the furniture polish and dregs of gin, but the vendor almost maliciously took the second gas bottle and the BBQ. Considering the pile of Euros we paid over, that was excessively mean.

The journey took us through Carcasson, Toulouse, and out onto the Gironde to Bordeaux. We had the mast put back up, were given a good bottle of wine included in the price, and we set off to Biscay against a fearsome floodtide.

As soon as we neared Biscay, we thanked our foresight in stuffing the boxes with jumpers and wet weather gear. The temperature plummeted, and welcomed us back to the World of Winds and Weather. We were in new territory and found wonderful havens from the northerlies up the R. Charente at Rochefort, a gorgeous fortified town, with a good enough marina and a Lidl' on the doorstep. The trip upriver was a delight, gliding through the mudbanks with the flood and ferry gliding against it to try to catch onto the waiting pontoon outside the lock.

It was now getting into the July/August mass breakout, and the sea was swamped with the holiday French, who all dashed into the marinas at night. It has to be said, the anchorages around the islands are rarely calm and peaceful and the inevitable swell always arrives at 3 in the morning, so we swiftly headed up to the River Vilaine, east of Morbihan and such a well-kept secret. Although the tidal part of the river is tricky and shallow, a lock now keeps most of the river as a secure and sheltered haven. You can spend 2 weeks and more tied to the banks, alongside free pontoons, sailing up to Redon, visiting villages - some dead, others touristy - on the way.

There are thousands of boats stacked up here and, even in August there were

not many cruising up and down. Most seem to marina hop, not venturing further than La Roche Bernard leaving most of the river quiet and underused.

It is a short day's hop to the Morbihan, and up the river to Auray. The Gulf of Morbihan itself seemed much more restricted with oyster beds this year than on our previous visit 10 years ago, and in fact our first night there involved missing a 'frame' with our anchor, but draping the chain over the spikes. As the anchor dried out at low water - with 2ft draught we had anchored on the beach - we were able to walk over and disentangle it, carrying the anchor back to the boat before it drifted off.

There was a vast increase in static boats and moorings, so not such a quiet and sheltered stopover, but the R Auray up to Bono is still the better anchorage.

We next aimed for the River Blavet up past Lorient and an even greater surprise. We were the only visitors upstream, on our own for 3 days, skimming under 2 bridges up to Hellebont. We passed the remains of the fleet of sailing tuna boats abandoned in the 50's, and now an array of rusting and rotting hulks, masts only showing at high water and an eerie sight at low. We met up with the Abeille Languedoc, the tug, normally based in the Channel who we last saw in Cherbourg after she had attended our calamity and towed EOWYN back to France. She is now being replaced with a bigger and better equipped boat so is down there for refitting. A sad reunion.



Tuna Boat Graveyard, R Blavet

We were heading quickly home as it was certainly getting colder, but had to stop at the River Odet and take the trip up to Quimper - what a joy having such a draught and going where very few can go. Again, we had anchorages to ourselves and it was only just out of the August

period. Unfortunately the weather was also very wet, misty and at times cold enough for full English winter gear. We set off in mist that turned quickly to dense fog en route for Audierne.

Equipped with radar, we were slightly less nervous than usual but none the less acutely aware that there were many small fishing boats not on the lookout still dashing about in the fog, as indeed we did come across quite a few obviously not very worried about being hit.

Dud had entered the flight plan into the GPS and we motored from waypoint to waypoint, my eyes glued to the set, which I must admit was a fair exchange for the TV that had also disappeared from the inventory. We did catch a few lowing sounds of fog horns, but it was the shouts of the fishermen on the end of Audierne pierhead and the smell of their cigarettes that told us we were spot on, although the wrong side of the light. Even negotiating the harbour needed waypoints and a good lookout. The port had been fogbound for 3 days, so we were lucky to arrive at all.

We left Audierne 2 days later, skirting the 60 ft English classic ketch that had inadvertently run aground on a falling tide halfway to the harbour mouth and was beginning to lean across the channel. The fog very quickly smothered everything again and we passed through the Raz in dense fog, arriving off the N coast and into the Aber Benoit just as it lifted.

Back to the 7+m tidal ranges, with most of the anchorages taken up with oyster beds – unmarked – and moorings taking up the rest of the river. Lovely river as it is, it is not welcoming to have such a

difficulty in finding anywhere to drop the hook.

Despite having gale warnings almost weekly from the time we left the Med, through the Midi and up to the top of Brittany, we spent more time motoring up Biscay than sailing. But, we did have a good forecast to get back home, albeit a bit of a beat. 'Eowyn too' has a flat bottom and is only 8 tons: at half the weight of EOWYN she is stopped by the waves much more, and slams instead of slicing through. But the speed makes up for it, meaning that we are more uncomfortable for a shorter period. The ease of steering with fingertip control and handling lighter sails is a dream and a doddle. Except for the reefing still being at the mast, which is something we can tackle this winter, I don't have to move out of the cockpit. Seats are very comfortable, and she can be balanced to hold her track. Add to this all the bits and bobs to fiddle with, keel and rudder up and down or in-between, more bits of rope to tweak and jammers to play with, plus the radar and Dudley is in Disneyland. But the speed makes up for it, meaning that we are more uncomfortable for a shorter period. The ease of steering with fingertip control and handling lighter sails is a dream and a doddle. Except for the reefing still being at the mast, which is something we can tackle this winter, I don't have to move out of the cockpit. Seats are very comfortable, and she can be balanced to hold her track. Add to this all the bits and bobs to fiddle with, keel and rudder up and down or in-between, more bits of rope to tweak and jammers to play with, plus the radar and Dudley is in Disneyland.

The Big Day ***Robin Venables***

This year in the last week of June, The Second Sea Lord had one of those birthdays that ends in a zero. And she was determined that it should be celebrated afloat. The instructions were quite specific.

"I want to swim in the sea. I want sunshine. I want to sail. I want dolphins. And I want a seafood dinner in a French restaurant."

Sue booked three weeks of holiday spanning the big day and no amount of protestation from me that it was a bit early in the year to be assured of good weather and the sea would be cold had any effect whatsoever.

So I booked my holiday accordingly.

As ever, despite our best intentions, the first time that Nutcracker

ventured south of the breakwater this year was as we set off for Brittany in a lively westerly, four days before The Big Day. Yours truly did what he always does when he hasn't had chance to gain his sea legs yet. Suffice it to say that Sue did the lion's share of the work getting us to L'Aber Wrac'h. The next day we got down the Chenal du Four and anchored for the night in Anse de Bertheaume. There we made contact with Bruce and Carol on Annis, who had got away ahead of us and were in St Yvette, just outside Audierne. We agreed to meet in Îles de Glenan the next day so by next evening – the eve of The Big Day – we were anchored off Penfret and the weather was turning rapidly from pretty good to spot on.

The anchor was still snuggling into the sand when a sploosh from the stern announced that wish one had been granted.

Over supper on Annis, we agreed that the appointed restaurant should be on Ile de Groix.

The Big Day dawned bright and clear with a light westerly wind. After a very leisurely start during which a delightful watercolour of Nutcracker by way of a birthday card was delivered by personal courier from Annis, we set sail for Ile de Groix. Some hours later, we were having a cracking sail in bright sunshine (wishes two and three fulfilled) when as Sue went below to make coffee, she asked, "where are the dolphins?"

"Don't worry," I said, "they are on order".

Not two minutes later I saw suspiciously cetaceous-looking fins in the water nearby. "Dolphins!" I announced.

For the next fifteen minutes or so we were treated to a magnificent display of aquabatics by the largest school of dolphins I have ever seen; there may have been as many as sixty of them. Family groups of mothers and calves synchronised under and alongside Nutcracker while others leapt and played with the bow wave. There were fins and splashes everywhere. The ear-to-ear smile on Sue's face said it all - wish number four met in spades.

The wind was increasing westerly, so our plan to anchor in a little harbour called Loc Maria on the west coast of Ile de Groix was abandoned, so it was with some trepidation that we motored into that infamous yacht-scrum Port Tudy. Well, it wasn't a scrum at all; it was less than half-full and parking was completely stress free – an advantage I guess of cruising early in the season.

The day ended with coffee and a digestif to complete a delightfully French three-course fish-fest in one of the little restaurants overlooking the harbour and mainland France beyond in the evening light. The wish list had been met in full.

Thanks be to Serendipity and Good Fortune for a wonderful day.

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