

## TAM O'SHANTER'S 2017 CRUISE – TRAVEMÜNDE TO GALICIA

### Anne Kenny and Neil Hegarty

*(Anne and Neil need little introduction, having featured in the pages of Flying Fish 2016/1 and 2017/2 – but on both occasions sailing Neil's Dufour 34, Shelduck.)*

*Tam O'Shanter is a Chance 37 which has been in Anne's family since 1987. She was built by Henri Wauquiez in France in 1972, to the design of Britton Chance, and was a member of the 1973 Irish Admiral's Cup team as well as competing in the notorious 1979 Fastnet Race. She was re-rigged as a cutter in 2010, and laid up at Vilanova last autumn in order to be well placed to depart for this year's Azores Pursuit Rally.)*

We were sorry to be taking *Tam O'Shanter* out of the Baltic and away from Scandinavia. We sailed her from Kerry to Norway in 2010, and since then had very much enjoyed our summers, cruising to St Petersburg and back to Travemünde while exploring ten countries. After last year's excitement bringing *Shelduck* back from America, however, Neil and I wanted this year to be a little quieter so we arranged to have *Tam O'Shanter* professionally delivered from Travemünde to Cherbourg. This would also make it easier to put aboard Atlantic cruising gear for the coming years. Together with our friends

Peter Cassidy and Peter Clarke and some family, we intended to join her for day-sailing the French and Spanish coasts, arriving at Portosín for the start of the Irish Cruising Club's Rías Baixas Rally. A good plan, we thought. The two Peters were to come with us on the Irish Ferries Rosslare to Cherbourg sailing at 1530 on Monday 29 May. None of this came to pass.

On Friday 26 May Neil received an email from the delivery company saying that *Tam O'Shanter* was returning to Travemünde – the crew had only sailed 38 miles before turning back.

*Tam O'Shanter  
being lifted ashore  
in Travemünde*



They had managed to break the gooseneck and vang, and had also put the boat aground, thankfully, as it turned out, only doing cosmetic damage to the keel. So on Wednesday 31 May Neil and I boarded the 1400 bus from Cork to Dublin airport. Arriving at 1700, we were immediately able to check in our bags for the flight to Hamburg the following morning, a great relief. We had three 20kg bags of gear.

Our insurance company, Pantaenius, arranged for a surveyor to inspect the keel and *Tam O'Shanter* was lifted at 1000, before we had arrived. The surveyor phoned Neil later that day to say that the damage to the keel was such that if we wanted to we could sail immediately, and that repairs could be done at the end of the season. However, as we had to wait for new parts for the boom and vang to arrive we decided to do all the repairs at Bobs Werft Boatyard in Travemünde, where *Tam O'Shanter* had been stored over the previous two winters.

Neil ordered the damaged boom and vang parts from Ireland and started to deal with the boatyard and insurance company. Anne was shattered by events, but tried to keep our spirits up by arranging car and train trips to the surrounding area of Germany which we would not normally have had the opportunity to visit. Monday 5 June was a holiday in Germany so the boatyard was closed. Anne drove us the 45 km to Wismar, a UNESCO world heritage site and part of the German Democratic Republic from 1949 to 1990. The centre of the old town is a huge market place surrounded by elegant buildings in styles ranging from 14th century North German Gothic, to 19th century Romanesque revival, to Art Nouveau. On Wednesday we went to nearby Lübeck to have a SIM card installed in the iPad, returned the hired car, and then went back to Travemünde by train.

Neil started searching for crew, locally, to help us on what could be a difficult 1500 miles to Galicia – across the North Sea, down the English Channel and then across the Bay of Biscay to the Rías Baixas. He visited a local sail loft who immediately sent out a notice to nearby sailing clubs, and also asked his daughter, Patricia, who lives in Paris, to check for crew in Holland as a central location between Travemünde and Cherbourg.

On Friday 9 June *Tam O'Shanter* was lifted out and the keel repaired – as the surveyor had already confirmed, there was no structural damage to the boat. On the same day Patricia called to say that an experienced sailor from Holland, André Smith, would sail with us from Travemünde to Cherbourg where she was to join us.

During that weekend we did some sightseeing by train. On Saturday we went to Hamburg and enjoyed lunch on the waterfront and also visited the new Elbphilharmonie concert hall. On Sunday we went to Lüneburg. The River Elbe flows through the town and it is part of the Hamburg Metropolitan Region. Since the early 1970s the town has been systematically restored, so that today it is a tourist attraction and important sectors of the town's economy depend on tourism. We were shown around by a very patient taxi driver from Romania, from the station and back to it. We were interested in visiting because we had sailed into Lunenburg, Nova Scotia on *Shelduck* – a town named in honour of the King of Great Britain and Ireland, George August of Hanover, who was also Duke of Brunswick-Lüneburg. We hopped back on the train, this time to Schwerin, a town surrounded by lakes which lay behind the Iron Curtain after World War Two. We got off the train one stop too early, so took a trolley bus ride which we really enjoyed. On arrival at the main station we decided to repeat the Lüneburg

experience and took a taxi tour, which was excellent. The landmark of the city is the Schwerin Palace, located on an island in the lake of the same name.

On our return to the boat that evening Neil received a text from a 24 year old German boy called Moritz, who had just completed his final accountancy exams and was offering to sail with us to Spain. On Tuesday he visited *Tam O'Shanter*, and on Wednesday confirmed that he would join us. We had been watching the weather forecasts daily and decided that the following Saturday, 17 June, would be the best day to set off for Galicia. André arrived on Thursday evening and we did the shopping on Friday. Moritz's father also came to meet us, and later he brought his own yacht – which is similar in size to *Tam O'Shanter* – alongside so that the family could wish Moritz a *bon voyage*.



*Anne on a tram in Schwerin*



On Saturday we were out of our bunks at 0430 and left at 0500, arriving at the east end of the Kiel Canal at 1800 after a passage in a fresh northwesterly. We were quickly into the lock and motored on to the marina at Rendsburg, which we reached at 2105. It was a long day of sailing and motoring, 91.9 miles at an average speed of 5.74 knots. The following morning we took on fuel, just to check consumption, showered, breakfasted and left the marina at 1100. We were never bored in the Canal, with the amount of shipping going each way keeping us alert. At the locks in Brunsbüttel we were instructed to go into

*A busy Kiel Canal*



*André, Anne,  
Moritz and Neil  
in Cherbourg*

the smaller lock – we were the only boat in it so we exited easily at 1800. We then motored against a very strong tide on to Cuxhaven, arriving there at 2100 and immediately taking on fuel for our planned 300 mile passage to Dunkirk.



Happily the wind was forecast to be a moderate northeasterly.

Next morning we departed the marina at 0900 to catch the tide down the Elbe. With a northeasterly it was a very pleasant passage past Holland, and we had little excitement until at 1630 on Tuesday we passed the Europort at Rotterdam, where navigation became tricky as there were so many ships coming and going in differently angled traffic separation zones. *Tam O'Shanter* arrived at Dunkirk at 0750 on Wednesday 21st, a passage of 329 miles and 536 miles from Travemünde. We felt lucky to get so far so quickly.

We took on fuel and water, showered, breakfasted and left for Cherbourg at 1000. The crew thought Neil was pushing on a little too quickly, but knew he was worried about westerly gales in the Channel – which thankfully did not materialise. The wind was still from the east and north. We reached Cherbourg at 1330 on 22nd and were joined by Patricia, who had travelled by train from Paris to be with us for three weeks. André left after dinner to spend the night ashore, before returning to Holland the following day to celebrate his 59th birthday with his family. He had been a great help to us and a support for Neil in what, in more normal strong westerly conditions, might have been a very difficult passage indeed.

Our next short passage was to St Helier, Jersey where Anne's son Ian and his family had lived for many years. Anne had been to Jersey before with *Tam O'Shanter* and was surprised at the navigation as our route took us closer to the shore than she was used to. We spent two days on Jersey, taking the opportunity to catch up with family and some of Ian's friends and also indulged in Jersey's home produce.

We departed St Helier on Monday 26th as soon as the marina gates were opened at 0600. *Tam O'Shanter* motor-sailed in a light northerly along the French north coast to the Chenal du Four, which we exited at 0200 on a windless night. In complicated areas our system is for Neil to watch AIS on the screen below, while Anne is stationed in the cockpit watching for small boats and buoys – on this occasion she found the many flashing lights surrounding *Tam O'Shanter* very confusing in the black of night. We don't have a chart plotter in the cockpit, but Neil uses an iPad and phones there during the day.

We motored on to the Raz de Sein, where *Tam O'Shanter* was tossed around by a very strong foul tide. Anne was glad she had fitted a Flexofold propeller in Finland, to go with the Yanmar 39hp engine fitted in Norway, for conditions like these. *Tam O'Shanter* reached Concarneau marina at midday on 27th June, ahead of a storm which was approaching across the Atlantic. At this stage we really could relax as we had broken the back of our passage to Galicia. Next day was Neil's 79<sup>th</sup> birthday. It has been our tradition to eat lobster on this day every year, wherever we are in the world, and Anne treated the crew to a memorable dinner – possibly the best we have had over the years of eating lobster.



#### *Celebrating Neil's birthday in Concarneau*

Very strong winds continued to blow on Thursday and Friday, with heavy rain, an Atlantic storm which brought all the Glénan boats in from their island. But even if not weather bound, as we were, Concarneau is a beautiful town to visit. The walled old town is splendid, and there's a typical French covered market open every day, as well as good supermarkets. Neil particularly enjoyed discovering some great 1970s architecture in the centre of the town, including the local church which replaced the original church which was blown down in a storm.

We left at 1500 on Saturday 1 July, having been watching forecasts of an easterly gale developing on the north coast of Spain on Tuesday, but we expected to be able to sail the 350 mile passage to Sada ahead of it. Neil and Anne continued to take one watch and



Patricia and Moritz the other – they liked to carry more sail than we did. As we sailed out of Concarneau Neil saw a familiar yacht, *An Gobadán*, built many years ago by Dermot Kennedy of the Baltimore Sailing School. Aboard was his son Irial and friend Ciara Whooley who were early into an Atlantic circuit via the Cape Verde islands and the Caribbean. (Having crossed the Atlantic, Irial and Ciara recently joined the OCC as full members).

The sea was very lumpy until we cleared the land. Moritz was particularly pleased to be carrying full sail in a northwesterly force 4, but we had to take in two reefs during the

night. During Patricia and Moritz's first afternoon watch a bird hit the mainsail and landed on the starboard lifeline. It was so tired that it came down onto the deck and finally into the cockpit – a homing pigeon a little off course. Patricia provided this beautifully-kept bird with food and a bird bath, and he stayed with us through that night and into the following day until he saw the Spanish coast. We all enjoyed our new pet, whom we named 'Percy', except maybe for Neil who wasn't too keen on the mess he made on the cockpit floor.

The wind lightened during Sunday so we motor-sailed for the day. It continued to lighten to nothing, and then started to come up from the east – a day earlier than we had expected from the forecast in Concarneau. The wind continued to strengthen on Monday until it was blowing gale force from the port quarter, and Neil decided to carry on with little sail. We were making good, safe speed in the breaking waves. As we approached the *Islas Gabeiras Tam O'Shanter* and her crew began to feel more comfortable in the shelter, and reached the marina in Sada, east of La Coruña, at 1500. The seventeen day cruise from Travemünde had been much easier than expected. We were so lucky with the weather and wind direction.





*Percy the  
(passenger)  
pigeon*



The main reason we had chosen Sada as our Spanish landfall was to meet Anton Pellejero, the ICC Port Officer there and OCC Port Officer Representative for La Coruña and the surrounding area, who had been who was recommended by Peter Hayden, OCC. There was a problem with the outlet from the hand washing basin and Anton immediately visited the boat and arranged to have it attended to the following day by the boatyard/chandlery Cadenote. We received great service from both parties. In Sada the heat hit us, so our first purchase was a fan to try to push the air around inside the cabin and cool it all down a little.

*Cutter rigged in Biscay*

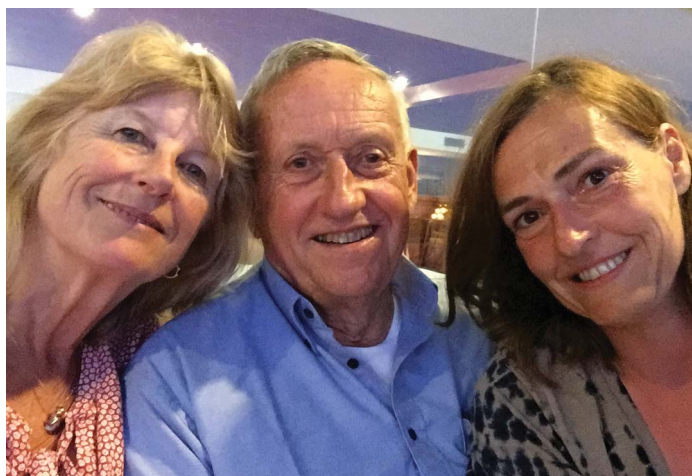


*Neil and Cormac  
toast the new  
fender step  
aboard  
Island  
Life*

Of great help to all was that the ICC had set up a Rías Baixas WhatsApp group so rally members could exchange information. Cormac McHenry, OCC, had his fender step burst in Portosín, and he had bought the previous one at Cadenote in Sada. We think he must have seen on the Rías Baixas WhatsApp that we were in Sada, as he emailed Neil who was happy to purchase a new one for him and deliver it to his berth in Portosín. Moritz left by bus for Porto at 0800, and we left the marina at the same time for Camariñas, where we enjoyed pre-dinner drinks aboard John Daly's *Wave Dancer*. This was another great port, where the marina manager even helps with your laundry as well as with fuelling. We lost a few socks in the laundry, however, and this had Patricia meeting many other sailors on the marina while tracking them down. Our neighbour on the starboard side was preparing for a passage to the Azores, and on Monday 10th we both left port amongst the fishing boats for our last passage before the Rally start.

We arrived in Portosín marina to a wonderful welcome and were presented with our battle flag, which was raised to port with the Kerry flag below. Bikes were put on the pontoon and we were ready to begin the festivities. Having arrived early we had the opportunity to get to know the town, stock up and check the local restaurants. Neil gave Anne a fright

*Goodbye to Patricia*





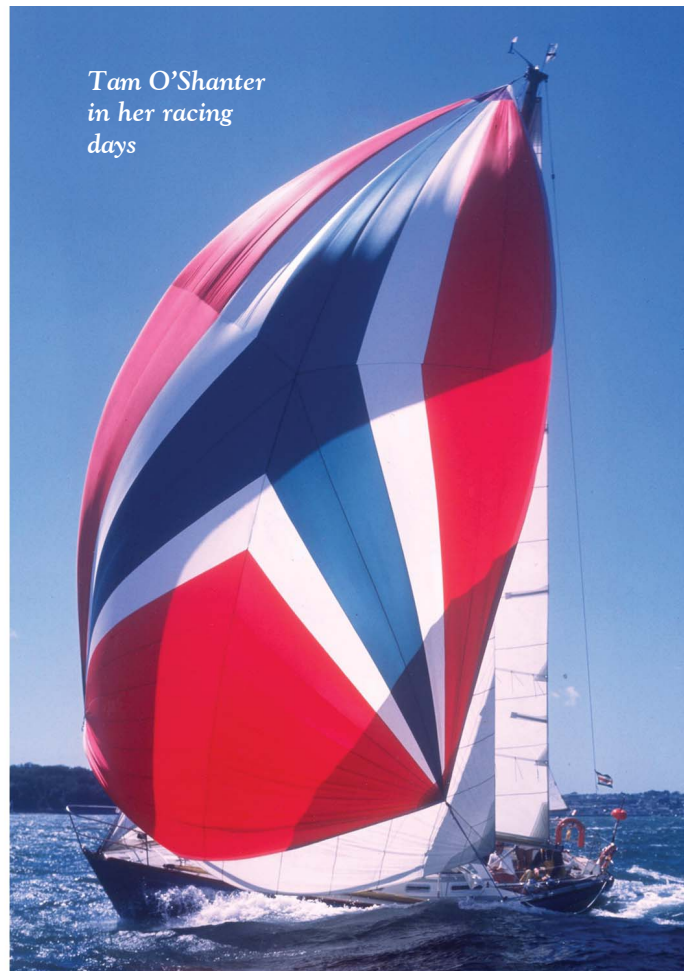


*Spanish,  
Battle  
and  
Kerry  
flags*

one evening after dark, when he fell off his bike on the pontoon and went for a little swim. He was fished out by club workers, and will not be doing that again. Apart from a few scratches and a modicum of embarrassment, plus removing Anne's heart from her mouth, he was okay. On Wednesday 12th the three of us dined in the Real Club Náutico Portosín, and next day Patricia flew home to Paris from Santiago de Compostela. On Sunday Neil's only brother Frank and his wife Ann joined us for the Rally. They had last been with us in St Petersburg, and as usual we enjoyed their company.

There were many highlights during the Rally but for us three stood out. First was Peter Hayden's faultless organisation. Second was the beauty of the Canal de Sagres and the Paso de Carreiro as Neil took *Tam O'Shanter* through with the assistance of the chart plotter and the pilotage notes compiled by Norman Kean and Geraldine Hennigan. Third

*Ready to be  
lifted out at Vilanova*



*Tam O'Shanter  
in her racing  
days*

were our pre-dinner drinks aboard in Combarro, where we entertained *Tam O'Shanter's* former owners Mungo Park and Jimmy Butler and some of her former crew, including John Bourke, OCC, who had sailed with Mungo when *Tam O'Shanter* was a member of the 1973 Irish Admiral's Cup team. Also aboard were former Jimmy Butler crew Dan and Jill Cross, Colin Hayes, Pauline McKechnie and Nick Musgrave, who was part of the crew during the 1979 Fastnet.

On her cruise from Travemünde to Galicia, *Tam O'Shanter* logged 1504 miles.

