

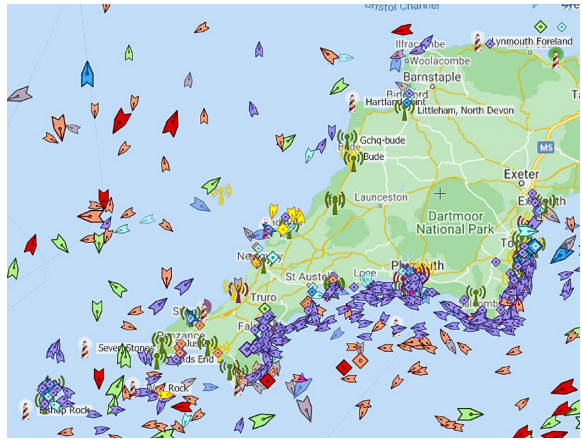
## A micro cruise in our home waters

The north coast of Cornwall and Devon

John and Carol Armstrong

The AIS screen shot of the West Country showed that the north coast was considerably less crowded than the south, so that became our area of interest.

A good forecast for mid-July with building high pressure seemed perfect to explore the coastlines of north Cornwall and Devon. The opportunity of taking time to investigate an area less known to us was not to be missed.



The Helford River provided a quiet overnight stop after leaving Mylor on 14 July before we set off in ideal summer weather to round the Lizard. Conditions deteriorated quickly as we approached the headland and a rogue wave soaked the helm (me) before suitable clothes were donned. The partially secured anchor gave the bow a mighty clonk but there was nothing we could do in those conditions except plough on and question why we had been caught out yet again. Crossing Mount's Bay in much calmer conditions we were accompanied by many

## John and Carol Armstrong



John's birthday in Padstow

dolphins, including youngsters frolicking around *Cinquante* for nearly an hour. However, the wind picked up again and the prospect of rounding Land's End in a building NW5 seemed distinctly unappealing, wind against tide, to be followed by a roly night at St Ives. It was an easy decision to change course and head for Newlyn instead.

*Cinquante* spent the night snugly anchored under the lee of the harbour wall as we watched the fog roll over from the north coast in thick grey strands as the wind whistled above us.

The following morning was a very different day and we motor sailed in a NW2 as far as St Agnes, before a good sail in a NW4 for the last four hours of the eleven and half hour 64nm passage. Padstow was welcoming and very busy. All the restaurants were fully booked; the fish and chip shops and takeaways involved long queues each evening. John's birthday brought friends on board to help us celebrate along with the children and grandchildren, a very jolly time was had by all.

With a sigh of relief at escaping the hot windless harbour, after three days we set off northwards at midmorning on 17 July, stopping at Port Isaac for fresh crab.

It was tempting to go right inside the harbour by fully lifting our swing keel to draw less than a metre, but the tide was ebbing and we later learnt the fishermen might not have been very welcoming.

Half an hour after leaving Doc Martin's village the iconic new bridge at Tintagel came into view. It is a spectacular example

Tintagel Haven and the new bridge



## A micro cruise in our home waters

of modern engineering and well worth a visit. We passed the island and threaded our way through the lobster pots dropping the anchor in 13.6m to eat the fresh crab for lunch in Tintagel Haven. Having visited Tintagel Castle in the past and looked down at the rocky inlet, we had never ever imagined anchoring in this tiny cove. Shards of Venetian pottery have been discovered on the beach and this anchorage has been used as a harbour for thousands of years by sailors coming from as far as the eastern Mediterranean. Those trips were a feat of seamanship indeed.

After lunch we potted up the coast and John took *Cinquante* into the Boscastle entrance which is very difficult to distinguish from afar. With the falling tide and wading swimmers making it very clear just how shallow it was, we turned and beat a retreat.

Hartland Point in the NNE4 was comfortable to pass by in the virtually flat seas and, once anchored off Clovelly, we enjoyed a stunning sunset with Lundy Island a smudge in the distance. The following morning was hot and windless again so we motored along hugging the coast, drifting over the flat calm Bideford Bar and up the river to drop friends off just below Bideford Bridge. We turned downstream to anchor off Appledore. An off duty lifeboat volunteer helpfully suggested that we would be more comfortable on Instow Beach on the opposite side. We crossed the estuary until we took the ground and raised three balls. The same local friends we had dropped off earlier returned and walked across the beach to *Cinquante* (by then high and dry), bringing supper, which we ate watching another amazing sunset in balmy conditions. 'Covid Freedom Day', 19 July dawned and all Covid 19 restrictions were lifted in England, but there were mixed messages from the government: how glad we were to be afloat for this short escape! Another very hot and sunny morning as we waited for the tide to lift us off the beach before we could slip through the sparkling blue sea over the Bideford Bar to continue exploring up the coast. We passed the *Grand Designs* folly on the cliff top, noting the large crane and numerous white vans - still not finished! We anchored in the charming Lee Bay for lunch. There were a few outlying rocks, but the water was thankfully very clear.



Taking the ground at Instow

## John and Carol Armstrong

We entered Ilfracombe harbour with the larger than expected Damian Hurst statue of Pregnant Verity guarding the entrance. The Lundy passenger ferry, the *Oldenburg*, moored alongside gave the feeling of arriving, but we didn't go ashore. Never have we seen so many fenders on boats that were moored in the inner harbour. The swell must be humungous in a north easterly. On to Watermeet Cove which was full of moorings and very tucked away; a passing boater told about the big concert due that night because people were allowed to mix again.

There was zero wind and we motored past Coombe Martin to anchor off Wild Pear Cove a mile beyond, in really hot conditions. A trip ashore and a swim seemed a good idea; fortunately we realised before setting off in the dinghy that this remote and stony beach was colonised by nudists. We stayed on board (with our clothes on). At dusk the lights of Wales, just 24 miles away, twinkled in the darkness.

The following morning we moved to anchor off Coombe Martin and went ashore for stores, passing numerous paddle boarders, canoeists and swimmers – what a popular place. The museum was fascinating. We learnt there had been silver mines here for a thousand years; the village is in the Guinness Book of Records for



hosting the longest street party for the Queen's Jubilee, and the local strawberries, renowned for flavour and quality, are sent to Wimbledon each year.

Lundy was the next destination and we passed the charted Stanley Bank overfalls, named on the chart as the White Horses, but nothing equine to be seen today on the flat oily water. Stunning cliffs on the island's west side glowed yellow in the late afternoon sunshine and it was gloriously hot again. Jenny's Cove was the plan for the night and we anchored in 14.5m feeling delightfully remote and away from everything and everyone.

Jenny's Cove, Lundy

## A micro cruise in our home waters



Landing Bay, Lundy

We hoped to see puffins, and we weren't disappointed; dozens of pufflings plopping on and off rocks with the more adventurous ones flying circuits around the cove. All the while we were being watched by feral goats high on the cliffs above us. Yet another beautiful sunset and not a soul to be seen or heard, such a contrast to the crowds on the south coasts of Cornwall and Devon. This was magical.

The following morning we motored around to Lundy's Landing Bay on the south east side, for a walk ashore and a drink in the pub. The island store was well stocked with wines, Lundy gin and good provisions for the various holiday cottages. The church hosted an exhibition of island history, flora and fauna, but John sadly couldn't access the turret clock; one of his hobbies is the restoration of these large time pieces.

With an easterly wind forecast we returned to the total seclusion and shelter of Jenny's Cove, leaving the ten or so yachts to roll around overnight in the more popular anchorage. At dusk we noticed the Lundy ponies grazing on the high cliffs above us, and it could not have been a more perfect sight as we sipped chilled wine watching another spectacular sunset.

Carol Armstrong



## John and Carol Armstrong

The shipping forecast offered 'An area of low pressure over France and Biscay will bring strong winds, gales and thundery showers to southern areas'. The convenience of Padstow Harbour beckoned and we had a good passage with a combination of sailing in the E and SE3 to 4 and motor sailing when it dropped. Tintagel Haven again proved to be a convenient lunch stop and we anchored in 11m; the anchorage felt more protected than Jenny's Cove and there were fewer lobster pots to avoid on our return.

We spent three nights in Padstow, which had many more visiting yachts and motor boats. Anchored in the bay outside the entrance to River Camel was *Triple Seven* with Tom Cruise aboard; this caused quite a stir with the locals. On 25 July in a light NNW2 we left Padstow at 0520 and headed for Land's End having calculated the tides carefully. However, at Cape Cornwall we endured 1.5kt of foul tide, quite contrary to what was expected.

We dropped anchor off Polgwiddden Cove in the Helford River at 1820, having come 70nm in 11 hours. Friends invited us on board their boat for supper: a lovely end to a most enjoyable exploration of our home waters. On the 26 July we returned to Mylor having completed a micro cruise of 345 miles.