

# Sea Change

Stuart Carnegie

In 2015 we decided to leave the West Coast of Scotland and sail *Jesta of Lisia* back to Medemblik in North Holland where she was built, with a view to possibly selling her. We had a small cruise round the Inner Hebrides to say farewell and then transited the Caledonian Canal to the East Coast of Scotland. We made our way slowly south to Lowestoft, calling in at some interesting little places along the way, before crossing the North Sea to Holland. Invariably there were early morning starts to catch a tide or clear a bar and anchoring to wait for a rise in tide to get into some haven. On our way south we realised that we are not as young as we once were. Having cruised the Mediterranean for six years, the Baltic and Norway for four years and the west coast of Scotland for four years, we felt it time to see a bit of inland Europe and escape the need to be controlled by weather forecasts, tides and open seas. We opted for a 'Sea Change' and made for inland waters, rivers and canals.

By the spring of 2016 Contest Brokerage had found a buyer for *Jesta of Lisia*, the only snag being the purchaser had to sell his motor boat first. However, the brokers knew that we were looking for a little used Dutch steel motor boat between 40 and 45 feet primarily for inland waters, but capable of making coastal passages. The purchaser had just the one, so a swap with a cash adjustment clinched the deal at the end of June. We became the proud owners of a



*Jesta VI*

Steeler NG43, which we named *Jesta VI*. We could only manage a couple of weeks getting to know her in late September. We quickly discovered that everything on inland waterways is done in kilometres and kph rather

## Stuart Carnegie

than nautical miles and knots - a real change after 60 plus years dealing with the latter.

Having wintered the boat in a heated shed in Medemblik, we set off on 25 May 2017 in glorious sunshine for our planned cruise around Friesland. Our first port of call was Schardam, a tiny estuary, just south of



Hoorn, where an old school friend of Susie's, Sally, and her husband, Bill, have a summerhouse. The bow and stern thrusters came into their own as we shoehorned ourselves alongside a pontoon. The following day we went north to Hoorn, where Tim, our younger son, was joining us for a few days, as he was intrigued that we had swapped sail for motor. We moored in the old harbour astern of *Constance* (RCC). Tom and Rosie Cunliffe were on their way to Norway.

With Tim aboard we crossed the IJsselmeer to Urk, a former island and fishing harbour in the Zuider Zee before the dyke was built, after which it was then connected to the mainland. On arrival we discovered it was Urk's biennial fete, with every inch of the harbour taken over by boats which had come for their magnificent, half-hour firework display. Our next port of call was the delightful town of Kampen, the most northerly former Hanseatic port on the River IJssel. From there we wove our way through the canal system to Blokzijl, a charming, quaint, old village, and the following day we went to Meppel, so Tim could catch a train to Schiphol and fly back to London. Tim said he could understand why we changed to power: better weather inland, one can stop when one likes and it's easy to get to restaurants.

Susie and I continued north to Steenwijk, where we had a conducted tour of the Steeler yard, which was most interesting and convinced us that *Festa VI* was designed and built with great care and integrity. We then

slowly made our way into Friesland, stopping for the night alongside the canal bank in the quiet countryside just outside Ossenzijl. We then motored to Joure, the home of Douwe Egberts Coffee, and moored alongside the canal for a couple of days rather than going into the marina. Another school friend of Susie's, Paula, and her husband, Hayo, joined us for dinner aboard as they live in Sneek. I said that we thought Joure was a charming town, but was promptly corrected and told it was a village as there are only 11 towns in Friesland and no cities, so the rest are 'villages', even though their populations are larger than some of the 'towns'.

This got me thinking that we should try and visit all 11 towns during our cruise in Friesland. We eventually went to 10 of them, the only one we missed was Sloten, which will have to wait until another time. We continued on to our first town,



Waterpoort Gate at Sneek

Sneek, having crossed the Sneekmeer and found a suitable mooring close to the centre where we spent three days. The town is known as the boating capital of Friesland and is famous for its Waterpoort Gate which was the main defence of the town in days past. We then went to the pretty village of Teherne for a couple of nights. On 10 June, our 45th Wedding Anniversary, we were picked up by Paula and Hayo, who were taking us to a mystery place for a celebratory lunch. We drove to Harlingen, where we met Sally and Bill, and then we all had lunch in a private room at the 't Havenmantsje, overlooking the entrance to the harbour – a memorable occasion. In the following days we explored the waters around Akkrum, Grou and Jirnsum, where we left *Jesta VI*, for 10 days to return to England for a family wedding.

On our return to Jirnsum we went up the Prinses Margrietkanaal, the main thoroughfare in Friesland, to Grou where we squeezed into the old harbour near the centre of this picturesque village. We then went across the Pikmeer, Peanster and into the Kromme, where we moored for the night in the middle of the countryside, our only neighbours being wildlife. Alde Feanen is a large national park where we moored to one of the islands for lunch. We proceeded to Earnewald, the heavens opened and visibility went right down, so we moored outside the Princehof Hotel where we had an enjoyable dinner. The following day we had to return to Sneek to pick

## Stuart Carnegie

up our elder son, Joe, who was joining us for a couple of weeks. He was also keen to know whether we had made the right decision to discard sails.

Once Joe was aboard we went to Teherne for the night before continuing on to the town of Leeuwarden, the capital of Friesland, where we spent two days moored in the park next to the centre of this interesting town, which had an excellent ceramic museum. It was then onwards to Friesland's most northerly town, Dokkum, a charming place built on one of the few hills in Holland. We moored beneath an iconic windmill. We passed through small villages on the way to the Lauwersmeer, a large inland sea contained by a dyke, which was built in 1969. It is now a national park. We spent the night moored



Local in Alde Feanen

in solitude amongst the reeds. The following morning the boat was dressed overall to celebrate a significant birthday of mine. The three of us had planned to eat out at ZK86 in the evening so we motored to a small marina on the outskirts Zoutkamp for lunch aboard prior to going ashore.

Whilst washing up I noticed someone walking down the pontoon who looked like Tim, but I thought it was just another tall Dutchman. Then to my amazement when he got closer I realised it was Tim. He had flown



*Jesta VI* in Lauwersmeer - dressed overall for a significant occasion

in from London and hired a car and driven to Zoutkamp, having located us by our mobile phone signals! It was a wonderful surprise and to cap it all Tim and Joe presented me with an envelope containing a photograph

of a model of *Festa of Lisia* that they had commissioned for me. The model was too big to bring out. We all had a lovely afternoon and dinner together. Sadly Tim had to leave early the next morning to drive to Schiphol and back to work in London.

We departed for the city of Groningen, which is not in Friesland, where we moored in the Oosterhaven. We were met by Irena, Paula and Hayo's daughter, and her husband, Art, who took us to the Princenhof, a former monastery and palace, for dinner. We spent the next day exploring the vibrant city. We left Groningen on Sunday morning and had planned to go down the Prinses Margrietkanaal, but when in the lock we were informed the canal was closed for the day as work was being done on one of the bridges. Having looked up possible alternative routes we discovered the only way back was to retrace our steps, which was disappointing, however, one does see things from the opposite direction. We cracked on to Zoutkamp, into the Lauwersmeer and moored for the night in the countryside just to the east of Dokkum. Back at Alde Feanen National Park, via Leeuwarden, we moored for the night alongside a pontoon on one of the islands. We decided to do just a small hop to Warten, a little village, just off the Prinses Margrietkanaal, where we had lunch in a restaurant overlooking the canal. The national park provided another remote mooring for the night. The following day was grim, wet and windy, so we stayed put and had the surreal experience of watching Wimbledon in the middle of nowhere. At Grou we pumped out the black water tank, and carried on through the Pikmeer to the De Gref canal which goes around Akkrum and finally moored up in the canal on the outside of Tusken de Marren Marina. There we sadly had to say goodbye to Joe as he had to return home to Edinburgh. Joe enjoyed the experience of a motorboat and agreed that the change to power would give us the chance to explore inland Europe and be a new chapter in our lives.



*Festa VI* moored in Dokkum

The next day, Saturday 15 July, Hugh and Belinda Read (RCC) joined us to continue our exploration of Friesland. We set off the following morning through a small canal that eventually took us to the Alde Feanen where we found a remote, very quiet anchorage – just up Hugh's street! We then continued on our mission to get to the other eight 'towns', so our next stop





was the delightful Franeker where the world's oldest working planetarium is to be found. It was designed and built by Eise Eisinga between 1774 and 1781 in his small town house, which is now a museum and well worth a detour to visit.

Our next town was Harlingen, which meant exiting the canal system

through the sea lock into the Waddenzee, as the Noorderhaven in the centre of the town is tidal, though it can be shut off by gates in bad weather. We spent a couple of days exploring the town, which contains some of the finest old buildings in Holland. We then went back into the IJsselmeer via the sealock at Kornwerderzand at the north end of the Afsluitdijk and onto the town of Makkum, famous for its earthenware and tiles. From here we headed inland on the canals to the towns of Bolsward and Workum, where we moored for the night. Bolsward was a former Hanseatic town and has some spectacular architecture, the town hall in particular. Workum is dominated by its great church and tower that were

to be joined together, but this was abandoned in 1615. The Jopie Huisman Museum, which we visited, is dedicated to the scrap merchant who became a self-taught artist whose pictures depict the daily life of ordinary people. He died in 2000. From Workum we headed east to Sneek via the Heegermeer and the town of Ijlst, but we could not find a suitable mooring space in Sneek as it was a weekend and the beginning of the school holidays, when everyone takes to the water. We retraced our steps back to the town of Ijlst, which is one of the oldest and smallest of the eleven Friesian towns and was famous for its shipbuilding past. The canal through the town passes some delightful houses and gardens which go down to the water.



Waiting for the bridge at Burdaard

Time was now running out, so we had to abandon the idea of going to the smallest Friesian town of Sloten, a fortified town on a miniature scale.

Instead we headed down through the Heegermeer and into the Johan Frisokanaal and onto Stavoren, where we refuelled with diesel, filled with water and emptied the holding tanks. Stavoren, a former Hanseatic town that traded with England and the Baltic until its harbour silted up in the 14th century, is the oldest Friesian town. The old harbour is overlooked by the statue of the Lady of Stavoren. She is rumoured to be responsible for the silting of the harbour, as she instructed the captain of one of her ships to tip the cargo of wheat into the harbour when she was disappointed he didn't bring back precious jewels. Today the town is the gateway to



Hindeloopen

the Friesian lakes from the Ijsselmeer and has a thriving boat business.

On Monday 24 July we left the canal system through the lock at Stavoren that took us back into the Ijsselmeer and made the short passage to Hindeloopen, mooring in the

*Hylperhaven* (old harbour). Hindeloopen is another Hanseatic town and the tenth of the Friesian towns we visited. The very picturesque small harbour and town was renowned for its hand-painted furniture, which it still trades to this day. After a relaxing lunch overlooking the harbour, we departed for Medemblik the other side of the Ijsselmeer where we left *Jesta VI*.

Our two-month cruise around Friesland and north Holland was a great success - apart from missing out on one of the eleven Friesian towns - and vindicated our change from sail to power. We had no early starts and didn't have to worry about tides, weather or wind direction. We could stop when we wanted and stay in one place as long as we wanted. We covered 822 kilometres (444nm), passed under 119 bridges (our air draught is 3m with the radar and satellite dome lowered), negotiated 17 locks and only stayed in 4 marinas, to use their services.