

**Review of Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation publication  
Atlantic France from Ouessant to the Spanish border. Third Edition.**

**Author: Nick Chavasse MBE**

The 400 nautical mile Atlantic coast of France is one of the most popular areas for offshore cruising yachts. It has islands, sandy beaches, lovely rivers, an inland sea and delightful ports. This excellent pilot has evolved from seven additions of a North Biscay Pilot and two editions of the Atlantic France Pilot. The third edition is a revision of the Author's previous 2018 pilot. He has explored all the islands and rivers personally as well as the 106 ports covered. During the summer of 2021 he sailed from L'Aber Wrac'h to Rochefort and back to Foleux in order to ensure that the extensive information included is bang up to date. He even sailed over the Gois Causeway, which sits on eight square miles of drying mud on the east side of Île de Noirmoutier, with just 0.9m to spare, and under the Pont de L'Île d'Oléron, bending his VHF antenna horizontal, so that nothing would be missed.

An almanac will give details of principal ports but this pilot provides an abundance of explanation about channels, anchorages, tidal streams, as well as the multitude of possible calling places along this beautiful coast. The numerous photographs are first class. The aerial shots were taken by Patrick Roach but most of the others are by the author. Many of these are taken from his yacht Wild Bird thereby giving the reader a view seen from the cockpit as an approach is made. The book has been written with the whole crew in mind, so each section has a layman's description of what is to be found ashore, such as the wild flowers; roses in May, carnations in June, yellow immortelles in July and sand lilies in August on the island of Houat. To encourage yachts to visit ports and harbours some personal stories are in side panels, which vary from navigational to geographical and historical interest. Mention of and a photograph of the Cockleshell Heroes memorial, on the beach near Royan at the entrance to La Gironde, is particularly poignant.

Even if one has spent many summers exploring this coast, there always seems to be a something new to enjoy. Gliding up the Belon River to sample oysters

at Chez Jacky, the thrill of entering Etel guided by the semaphore station, the curious Ster-Wenn anchorage on Belle-Île and going under La Charante transporter bridge on the way up to Rochefort, are examples so well described in this pilot. Understandably, the author covered the rather featureless coastline south of the Port Medoc by car. A minor disappointment is the absence of distance tables for each section although the inclusion of post-BREXIT entry procedures and ports of entry is most welcome.

In the current days of navigational technology, the Third Edition of the Atlantic France Pilot is an extremely useful complement to a chart-plotter, electronic charts and an almanac. It brings to life the area to be cruised. It should be kept on the chart table open at the relevant page for all the crew to consult. Its value can be gauged by the number of Scandinavian, Dutch, German and other international yachts which carry one on board, as well as most British.

The author has done a first rate job and is to be congratulated.

David Southwood