

ROUSTEL TOWER

... there you are !!

Brittany, Brittany, Brittany. Well it took three years in the planning. Planning, that's a laugh.

What really happened was in the first year the boat was broken, in the second I was broken and in the third we made it – that's me and Jenaka II a Frances 26 bermudan cutter.



Thursday 26 May 2016. Forecast SE 2/3, not ideal for crossing the Western Channel to Alderney, my first stop.

23.45, strops dropped off mooring EM6 and took my cheek in hand and slipped out through the East Ships Channel, Portland Harbour at midnight – confident that no one would have seen me do that naughty exit.

Light rain, main up, really only for someone to see us in the dark, motor sailing out to the East Shambles cardinal buoy, always used as my start line to Cherbourg, The Channel Islands and hopefully for the first time, Brittany.



02.00 Half moon breaks through clearing cloud, stars appearing and a moonlit path to the east.

03.45 'First Light', although this time of the year 'first light' never really leaves you as you can track it from west to north and then pops up as a real 'first light' in the east.

A little while later, and still relatively dark, nav lights two miles off to starboard beam, and then both red and green visible, she was heading our way, and clearly one of those unpredictable fishing boats.

Red Flares ?! Really, coming off the fishing boat ?

Out with the binoculars.

No need for Coastguard contact, no need for lifeboats, the red flares were the wings of gorging seagulls being painted by the fishing boat's port light.

South easterly picking up, but still a light wind.

Trawler passes starboard quarter.

05.15 Sun low on port side.

Simrad tillerpilot helping far more accurately than me, especially when concocting an early breakfast.



To the nav table and starting to smarten up navigation as the entry to the west going Casquets TSS draws nearer.

My Yeoman Navigator plotting system has never let me down and provides a neanderthal approach to the full acceptance of electronic plotting.

The use of paper charts alongside technology is a happy combination for me.

07.00 Entering the west going Casquets TSS – a super yacht and bulk carrier pass way ahead of our bow.

08.00 Now the east going TSS exit. Well not quite, surely to our starboard is the start of the marine equivalent of the ‘Le Mans 24 Hours’ .

Out off my starboard beam a phalanx of 6 large ships charging out of the TSS lane.

I wonder if the Channel VTS authorities keep them ‘off’ until light is really established?

Manoeuvred with ease around them, except for one where at one stage her bow was heading straight for us, increased engine revs and eventually her starboard sides started to reveal.

Now the steep west side of Alderney clearly ahead.

11.00 Secured on mooring 20, Braye Harbour.

Water taxi ashore into The Divers for lunch.

Later popped in to see the Harbour Master for advice on transiting The Swinge channel next day.

Sunday 29 May

15.30 Left Alderney.

Swung hard left once training wall to Braye cleared and started heading down The Swinge.

There’s a treat at the SW end of Alderney if you go down the Swinge side of the island.

Rising up like something from Rio de Janeiro, a couple of massive rocks resembling the tops of Sugarloaf Mountain is the main Western Channel gannetry.

You’re not allowed to pass freely, as has normally happened on previous passages a ‘guard’ flight of three gannets close from my port side and ‘buzz’ the forestay.



You must have to rise early to get eye make-up that perfect?

Now I am not really on my own, Peter Cumberlidge and his 'Cruising Companion to N. Brittany and the CIs' has come along.

His guidance is excellent and delivers pragmatic gems just when you need them.

One of these is not to be fooled as you line up for the Little Russel approach to Guernsey to be fooled by the high land at the far SE end of Guernsey as that is the first thing you discern and liable to convince you to move off your bearing and drift out to the east, leaving way over to starboard the low lying NE end of Guernsey, which is really where you should be.

17.25 Herm off the port bow

19.30 Entered St Peter Port and secured on waiting pontoon raft with lines being taken by our temporary neighbour, an Etap 27 from Leigh on Solent.

22.30 Moved into St Peter Port's Victoria Marina.



Over only a couple of visits to St Peter Port I vowed that one day I would depart the harbour and rather than turn to port and home, I would find out what's down there should I turn to starboard and head for Brittany.

I had originally intended to head for Lezardreux on the Trieux River.

But what state would I be in after 10 hours heading for an unfamiliar coast.

Entry to the Trieux is the quintessential Bretagne arrival – rocks beside you and transits a must.

The unhip pilot touched on such set of circumstances by quoting the mantra, 'If in doubt of your position, turn around and go elsewhere or heave to'.

Well go elsewhere? Closer examination of the pilot described the wide welcoming arms of St. Quay Portrieux.

So discretion being the better part of.....

2 June 2016

05.00 Left St Peter Port and at last turned to starboard at the harbour entrance.

Unfurled genoa and for two hours ran with a following quarter sea south.

As the tiller pilot was unable to cope with the corkscrewing run, I was at the tiller for two hours and unable to make a dash for breakfast.

Even just after those two hours, tiredness was signalling and I needed food and a catnap.

Genoa down and engine on – tiller pilot now coping to enable me to gain sustenance and some catnaps – a clockwork egg timer essential for this repose.

10.30 Half way to Cote d'Armor, 25 miles to go. Wind NNE 12 knots. Shame I was wasting it, but I needed freedom to feast and rest.

14.15 Tricolour hoisted.

I still think its magic when closing an unfamiliar haven that what you have prepared on your pilot plan and the chart gradually comes to life as the three dimensional picture unfolds, and as we closed St Quay Portrieux, so it was.

15.30 Secured alongside visitor's pontoon, Marina d'Armor, Portrieux, Brittany.

A Cornishman arrives in Brittany – The Celtic Fringe !



A very pleasant three days spent at Portrieux and effectively established my future base for cruising North Brittany coast, including Lezardreux !

the

5 June 2016

05.15 Slipped lines from Marina d'Armor.

Hoisted main outside of harbour.

05.45 Dolphin on bow.

11.30 Guernsey coming out of the mist on port bow.

15.15 SE of St Martin's Point and 10 metres to port is a swimming bird with a bright colourful beak – the first time I have ever seen a puffin.

16.30 Secured alongside Victoria Marina, St Peter Port.

7 June 2016

11.00 Left Victoria Marina for fuelling pontoon and then moved to harbour pontoon with fog enveloping the whole of the harbour.

Two Alderney residents who 3 years ago had forsaken their Piper Cub aircraft for a 10m motor cruiser returned to the pontoon saying they didn't think they had the experience yet to attempt the Little Russell in the prevailing conditions i.e. visibility close to nil.

13.00 An RNSA crewed 27' Cruiser left for Hornet.



The fog had lifted to a certain extent and judging that it was island coastal fog we moved out into the Little Russell with Fort Brehon clearly

visible.

Hoisted main, ostensibly to be seen.

Got across to Fort Brehon when forecast channel 'fog patches' clamps down.

Heading north up the Little Russell against a spring ebb.

After half an hour motor sailing, the fog clears slightly and on our starboard quarter appears Fort Brehon – we had been going backwards (I can't even justify the term 'astern') !

Recovering from this perplexing scenario when the fog once again goes to 'dense'.

Whilst deploying tiller pilot so that I could free myself to start doing some pretty focused navigating, I looked around from my 'astern stance' to find much to my alarm the not so tall Roustel Tower looking down on our bow – yes we were that close.



Engine slammed astern and picked our way out – phew !

Lesson was not to have used the 'pointer screen' on my little cockpit plotter, but 'maps'.

Clawed our way out of the pinch point between Roustel Tower and Fourgere Point and escaped the worst of the ebb.

Fog persisted and plotter came into its own in getting us out of the Little Russell.

The plan was to do what I had done before and head straight home.

However getting out of the Little Russell had clearly taken a toll on my energy levels and therefore decided not to turn to port and commence crossing the end of the Casquets TSS, but turned to starboard and headed for Alderney.

20.45 With the fog, despite it being June, darkness fell early and with the next question being, would Alderney have its own island coastal fog on top of that occupying the channel.

Plotter doing a fine job, until right there in front of us was Chateau a Lebec Point, on the east end of the approach to Braye Harbour.

A quick 180 degree turn and re-crossed the entrance and there wonderfully were two rectangular blocks of white light inviting me into Alderney.

22.00 Secured onto mooring in Braye Harbour.

8 June 2016

Took the water taxi into Alderney and listened very quietly to another skipper telling the taxi driver how they nearly came to grief yesterday on Chateau a Lebec Point !

Victualled and intended to stay and rest at least another day.

However,

17.00 No sign of fog, although patches were forecast.

18.45 Slipped mooring visibility clear as gin.

Midnight entered the ends of the TSS with much reduced visibility, but new iCom AIS clearly showing shipping traffic east going.

9 June 2016

00.45 Able to clearly see vessel passing across my bow left to right.

01.00 New moon set off to port, sea now so still stars are reflected off the surface – we were in a magical place.

01.15 Jury rigged stern light as masthead ceased working – steaming lights on.

Continued due north anticipating channel tide to turn us west.

01.40 Poole Harbour entrance 15nm due north
Cassiopeia on starboard, Plough on port bow.

02.45 Hints of first light.

DAYLIGHT – St Aldhelms Head clear on starboard bow.

05.30 Stowed cockpit plotter as vis now clear.

05.45 F4 East comes out of nowhere.

06.00 Re-deployed cockpit plotter as vis reduced to 50 ms – dense fog.

Plotter needed to find North Ships Channel

Plotter needed to find NSA Visitors pontoon.

07.30 Secured alongside.

Distance covered: 300 sea miles.

Fog – Hey Ho !

Doug Odgers
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