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Circuits and bumps in Brittany

Duncan Wells continues the saga of the delivery of his Hallberg Rassy 352 from Brittany. Last month we left them in Audierne. This month they negotiate the Raz de Sein and make an overnight stop in Camaret.

After a fabulous meal at the Hotel Goyen in Audierne we were ready to take on the Raz de Sein and pass the mighty La Vieille Lighthouse and La Plate West Cardinal, as we headed up to Camaret and savoury pancakes.

Audierne to Camaret is only 28 miles but timing is important. The NE flood begins at HW Brest +0550 so we needed to leave Audierne at 1000. We exited without mishap and motored SSW past West Gamelle which kept us away from the rocks then headed due West until we'd rounded Pointe De Lervily just over a mile off. Then it was onto 290º for La Vieille some 7 miles up the road.

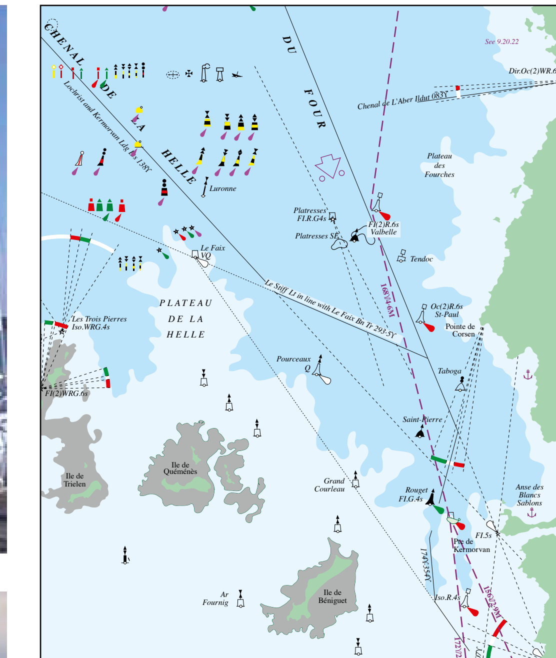
Fortunately it was conveniently calm and Nick wondered how far it was to the horizon? "About 1.15 times the square root of the height of eye in feet," I told him. I'm 6 feet tall so when standing in the cockpit my eyes are about 9 feet from the water, then the horizon for me will be 3 x 1.15 miles, about 3.5 nautical miles away. "If you want to go all foreign and metric," I said, "the distance to the horizon will be 2.08 x the square root of the height of eye."

PHOTO RCC PILOTAGE FOUNDATION

BEAU TEMP

Abreast of La Plate we turned due North to head up past Tevennec about a mile to the West of us. There are rocks around it which extend to about 5 cables. The weather was perfect. Indeed 'Beau Temp' Michel had written in the log, I see. It was such Beau Temp that although there was a swell there was no wind and no chop and we must have passed through the Raz in the calmest of conditions. Half the crew were lying on deck topping up their tan!

With Tevennec on our port beam we turned on to 025º and made for Les Tas de Pois and the inside passage, the Chenal de Toulinguet with the unlit Louve WC to starboard - shown vertically on the chart to indicate that it's attached to a rock. When I say 'we turned on to 020º' you have to understand that this trip was governed by getting there rather than by having an enjoyable sail. So if we turned on to a particular course and this did not suit the point of sail, the sails would be handed and we would proceed under engine. There would be plenty of opportunity for sailing over the four day trip we reasoned and so it transpired.



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You find the visitors' berths at Camaret on the landward side of the North mole just by Port Vauban and the very long pontoon was practically empty when we arrived. It's quite a hike to the town and it might be tempting to head on into Port du Notic which is much closer but the visitors berths here are only for smaller boats. We'd arrived at 4.00pm and since there was no mad dash for any restaurant, we decided to take a leisurely walk round to the town. Settled in a hostelry we sampled the savoury pancakes. A first for me, certainly. Pancake, ham and a fried egg, delicious. With local dry cider, even delicious-er.

LITTLE DOT

In the morning we had time to inflate the dinghy – *Little Dot*, as she became known – and to try the outboard. We'd bench tested the outboard in a barrel at Michel's house but I'd never seen the dinghy. It was made by Bombard and just as small as Michel had said it would be. Nick and I took it for our maiden voyage across the harbour to the town. The breeze was up that morning and we got a wetting but dinghy and outboard did the job and better still the outboard started first time.

Previous experience of outboards had led me to believe that this was a fabulous bonus. I once had a 30 hp Yamaha that was a nightmare. A local garage had extracted huge amounts of cash from me only to produce an engine that started infrequently and then either ran slow or cut out thereafter. So it was a joy now to be owning old 'one pull'. You're supposed to run them through a bucket of fresh water after use but despite never doing this it's continued to live up to its name.

Of course it's only a 2hp and couldn't pull the skin off a rice pudding but it starts first time every time and I can lift it one handed. You can't do that with a 30 horse outboard.

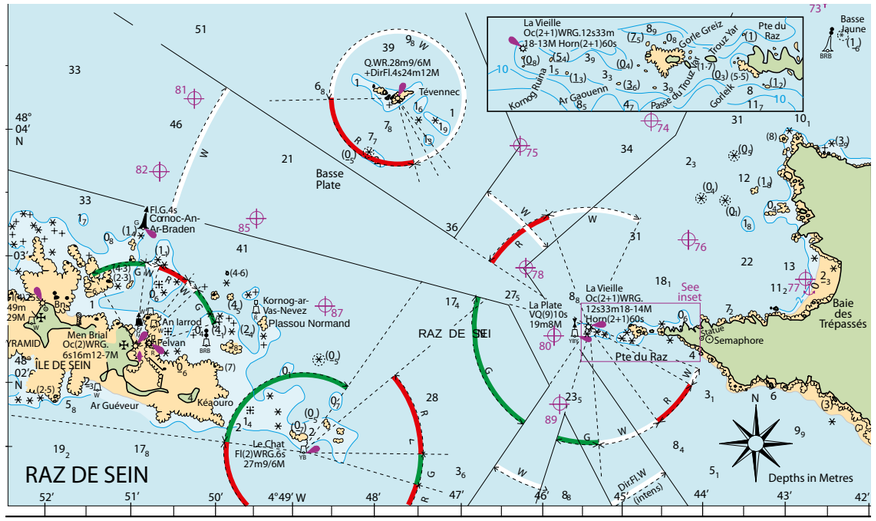
Timing for the Chenal du Four as with the Raz is important. The North going stream starts at HW Brest -0545. We would need to be at Vieux Moine PHM by 1400 to ride the tide. »

DISTANCE TO THE HORIZON?

Sq Rt Height of Eye in feet x 1.2 = Distance in M
Sq Rt of 9' = 3' x 1.2 = 3.6 miles
Sq Rt Height of Eye in metres x 2.08 = Distance in Km
Sq Rt of 2.77 x 2.08 = 5.76 Km

SPEED BY CORK?

Length of your boat overall x 3
Divided by the time it takes a cork to travel from the bow to the stern x 5
= approx speed through the water in



LA LUNE

It was very handy having Michel on board, not just because we were sailing in his backyard but also because he was able to show me round the systems and foibles of the boat. And he had some wonderful sayings. I paticularly liked his expression ‘intelligent pile’ for when you flake the rope and put down first what you require last to avoid it snagging. And of course there was ‘The Lune’. One cloudless evening Michel had said to Nick, “See the Lune, is it growing or lessing?”,

“Waxing or Waning,” I translated.

“I don’t know,” replied Nick.

“Well, Nick, I’ll tell you. The Lune, La Lune, she is a woman and she lie. So when you see a ‘D’ for declination, she increase!” Never to be forgotten. Coupled with the fact that HW Springs at your home port will always be within a two hour span, it means we can look out of the window and the state of the moon will tell us approximately the time of HW at our home port. Berthing at Swanwick where HW Springs for Portsmouth is roughly 1200 means that a day trip springs with a full or new moon is to Yarmouth, Lymmington and the West and a day trip neaps is to Portsmouth, Chichester and the East. Of course we’ll check all this in the Almanac before we set off. And we’ll make sure we have the latest forecast. But you can get a pretty good idea about what’s happening just by looking at the clouds – cirrus indicates a low is on the way, clear skies suggest high pressure and of course you can always apply the Crosswinds Rule.

With your back to the lower winds if the upper winds are coming from the left, the weather will most likely deteriorate.

THE LUNE – LA LUNE
(She is a woman and she lie)
When you see a ‘D’ for
Declination ... she increase!
The moon is waxing.

LES GENDARMES

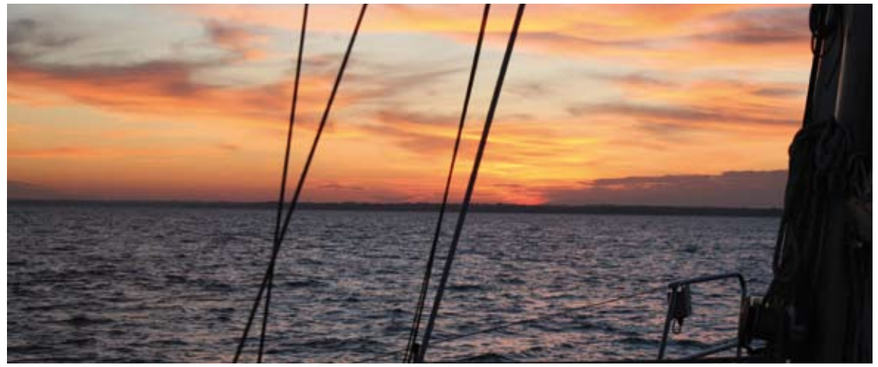
Leaving Camaret was hardly as graceful as it might have been. A grey gunboat complete with machine gun and the word *Gendarmerie* down the side had parked itself on our pontoon in the corner by the shore, some 50 metres ahead of us. The wind was blowing us on to the pontoon and the tide working in unison was pushing us on. It was a classic occasion when springing off was the answer. Instead Michel had some idea that *Dorothy Lee* would have enough power and momentum to drive off, as long as big Nick gave the bow ‘the big shove’ to windward and into the tide. It was his boat, so he should know what she would do. Actually it wasn’t his boat, it was my boat. Still I deferred to his experience.

He confused things a bit by suggesting that we might go out backwards and that Martin might have to give ‘the big shove’ on the stern. So Martin held onto his stern rope in readiness and Nick held the bow line. Of course holding onto the lines was pointless as being pinned onto the dock by wind and tide, the boat wasn’t going anywhere.

On the command, Nick was expecting to release the line and shove the bow. And that’s what I was expecting too. And I think that’s what Michel had intended. Quite what was going through his mind though at the critical moment I do not know because he called out “Martin, give the Big Shove!” So Martin on the stern let go and went to give the Big Shove while Nick held onto the bow. Michel then surprised everyone by gunning the engine ahead which tugged the line out of Nick’s hand and seeing the boat speed off both crew jumped on board. *Dorothy Lee* rocketed forwards along the pontoon giving her fenders a really good work out and as she gathered way so she gained some steerage but the wind and the tide were still exerting a considerable force on her and the Gendarmerie boat was getting closer. Eventually the bow turned to weather and *Dorothy Lee* came round, but not before we’d banged into and locked with the anchor on the Gendarmerie boat. It broke our guardrail and twisted our pushpit. Of course as is always the case our antics had attracted quite a crowd, alerted probably by the scream of the over revving engine. We freed ourselves from the Gendarmerie boat – thank goodness there were no Gendarmes onboard – and being now head to the elements were ready to gather our skirts and make a more dignified exit from the harbour. We then saw a crowd of Frenchmen running down the pontoon and carrying a large fender. “We’ve left a fender behind,” said Nick. Michel turned *Dorothy Lee* towards the pontoon and the Frenchmen threw the fender on board as we passed. “Merci, Merci” we cried in our dreadful French accents. And we proceeded out of the harbour. After a moment Michel said, “I don’t think the fender she belong to *Dorothy Lee*”.

“My God, we’ve taken one of the Gendarmerie’s!”

“Let’s get out of here”.



IMPERFECT DEPARTURE

As I say, what we should have done, with the wind and tide pinning us on to the dock, was to spring off. We should have attached a mooring line to the stern cleat on our starboard side by its looped end, the standing end – the looped end of anything should be kept on board when leaving the dock because loops have a habit of re-attaching themselves to cleats. We could have run the line down to the dock, around a cleat roughly amidships brought the running end back up to the stern cleat on the boat, taken it round once, crossed over and round once more, ‘OXO’ fashion so that it couldn’t slip but so it could be removed quickly from the cleat. Or we could get a member of crew to hold the line and lock it off by running it under one wing of the cleat then up, over and under the other wing for purchase. Then with the transom and quarter well fendered we could have put the engine astern. It might have needed a few revs to get the bow out but eventually she should have headed into the tide and the wind. We would then need to remove the spring. You take the running end off the cleat and then holding the standing end of the line, that which is attached to the cleat on board, we could have pulled the other end of the line clear from around the cleat on the dock. It’s a mistake to try and flick it off because that never works; worse still flicking can result in a coil of rope catching on the wing of a cleat which will stop you going anywhere. How long you have to get the spring line clear of the cleat on the dock will depend on how strong the wind and tide are and how easily the bow of your boat gets blown off.

Of course it’s not always the case that the wind and tide are pinning you on at 90 deg. And if the angle is less than that you’ll want to spring out whichever end of the boat makes the smallest angle with the wind. Bear in mind that generally the tide will have a greater effect on the boat than the wind. So the departure wasn’t perfect. And now we’d broken the guardrail. Mind you, Martin soon had it fixed up with a lashing. The pushpit itself had to be levered out when we got back to England.

More next month!

CHARTS AND PILOTS

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Both £17 each.

The Pilot Book is Imray’s *North Biscay, Ouessant to the Gironde Estuary – 7th Edition* by the RCC Pilotage Foundation with revisions by Mike and Gill Barron – £35

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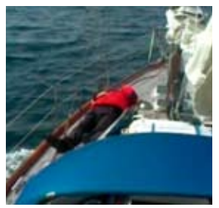
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