

A cruise to smaller ports in Brittany Spring 2017

Very often the weather early the year is much better than later and also places are less crowded but still hold the same appeal. There were lots of ports that I wished to revisit but was not particularly keen to go great distances, wanting once again to be "in" Brittany.

The weather was mainly good with fair winds. As there were so many places visited, I'm not intending to give a complete travel log, except where specific things happened, or were worthwhile to record. Hopefully reading this will stimulate others to get out their charts or look on Google Earth to venture into places usually zoomed past. A list with lat and long is at the end of the piece. I am aware that OPUS is able to dry out, but there are plenty of walls and jetties to dry out alongside. Ports and French places are in italics, with a few general charts showing their position.

Sailing from Dartmouth, it was an easy reach across to Guernsey where I re-fuelled but did not go into the marina, as I was leaving very early the next morning. Ben however wanted to visit land, so we stopped on the way South, to the anchorage off *Roche Douvres*, where, in the 50s and 60s we had often stopped to relieve the monotony of the lighthouse keepers by bringing papers and fresh vegetables [now automated]. I didn't want to launch the dinghy so Ben swam ashore and did what he needed to do, before swimming back to the boat.



Roche Douvres



La Corderie

I then moved on to *Brehat* where we took shelter in the enclosed anchorage of *la Corderie*. The island did not have many visitors so early in the season, and so after a quiet night and a wander around, we moved on up the *Pontrieux* river, past the suspension bridge and anchored off *Roche Jagu*, going ashore to visit their superb gardens before enjoying an excellent vegetarian lunch at the chateau. Unfortunately the safe anchorage proved to be shallower than I thought. - I then had to wait for the rising tide to get back to the boat.



Roche Jagu



Ooops

The town of *Pontrieux* is normally also visited, but this year I moved on back down river and along the coast to *Port Blanc*, briefly entered, and then on to *Tregastel*. Here the granite rose coast produces weird and wonderful rock formations and a good mooring but at this time of year the normally thriving town was quiet; I

did manage to have a wonderful brunch at the hotel Beau Sejour, famous for its' petit dejeuner, and worth coming for that alone.



Tregastel

There was no need to visit the marina at *Trebeurden* and so we moved on once again, looking into *Port Melin* and then on across the *Baie de Morlaix* to look at the new marina at *Roscoff* and fuel up. The tide moves swiftly through the marina and berthing on the outer finger births must be difficult. I exited through the southern end and, by keeping right, up the river, passed *Carentec* and then had to wait for sufficient drop in the tide, for the classic RYA problem of getting under the *Corde* bridge [11m] with sufficient water to float. I managed to just touch the tip of VHF aerial with 0.3m under my keels. *Penze* is as it was when I first visited back in the 60s and – if it had a horse would still be a one horse town. The lower reaches of the river however, are a quiet nature reserve and the task of getting under the bridge is well worthwhile, so long as you can dry out at the head of the river.

The next day I retraced my steps and entered old *Roscoff* harbour, rediscovering both water and electricity being freely available alongside the old wall. I used the opportunity to restock with bread but the next day moved on across the to *Ile de Batz* to go alongside the cale at the northernmost part of *Porz Kernoc'h*, having discovered much growth below the water line in *Roscoff*. I needed to use my pressure washer but the distance from the water tap at the head of the jetty was too far for my hose, but I managed to fill the dinghy halfway down with water and then use it as a reservoir to clean the bottom.



Roscoff old hbr



Dinghy reservoir

As usual, when leaving on the West going tide through the canal, the sea was lumpy despite a following wind. The next bit of coast is rarely visited although there are a number of smaller ports that are worth seeing so I looked in at *Brignogan*, where one of the leading marks that used to be a diving platform and ladder has been replaced by a mundane, starboard hand pole. In keeping with my philosophy avoiding marinas, I passed *L'Abervrach* and *l'Aberbenoit* [the normal stopping off places] but almost came to grief as I took the inside, sheltered, swell free passage of the *Porsal* channel, as, at the critical moment, visibility dropped to 20 m and my chart plotter gave insufficient information, necessitating a drastic slowdown before one of the local boats collecting Vrack appeared,

and I was clear. I escaped Northwards to go round *le Four*. Luckily the visibility increased and I could head East into *Argenton*. This little port is rarely visited but rewards the effort but by being utterly charming and there are visitors boys where one can more afloat even at low springs. It also has the most interesting leading lines that I've come across as well as many beautiful architecturally interesting houses.



Argenton



Leading Marks

There are a number of other smaller ports on the way down the *Chanel le Four* and I was surprised to see the new development in *L'Aber-ildut* which now has a marina and of course went into *le Conquet* which has always been a favourite of mine. Why rush on past?

We were then in the 50 square miles of the nautical playground of *Rade de Brest* and South Brittany, very much in an area that had been frequented by an old friend, Doug Arnold who had kindly left me his charts and tidal information when he sold his boat some years ago. These charts have been much used despite being at 1987 vintage and showed many of his cruises with Vera. I was very sad did you hear of his demise, on my return to UK.

The wind was still in the East so I avoided *Camerat* and anchored off the beach inside *les Tas de Pois* for lunch before moving around to *Morgat* but was unable to use their marina, as not one, but three regattas were taking place, so I had to anchor to the North. This proved valuable, as after the dinghy launch for a run for Ben, we also entered the deep sea caves there.

An easy passage followed to *Dournenez* and after a brief period alongside at *Treboul* to top up batteries and provision I moved across to the old port of *Rosmeur* which is more interesting with bistros and the older properties developed when canning fish was developed in the C19th. A quaint restaurant called the "amorous whelk" kindly produced excellent food at short notice near the end of service with a fine view over the Anchorage.

The wind had come round to the south-west, so the beat West enabled me to visit the interesting small bays/ports where there are a number of small landing *Lanvers, Loedoc* and *Brezellec* all showed steep climbs to get to any civilisation, but some moorings.

Approaching *point du Raz*, I fell in with Pen Duick 3 and 6, who passed through the *Raz de Sein* going South with full crews, but I continued West across to *Ile de Sein* and it's romantic quiet Town though much visited by many tourists during the day. One dries out in the inner harbour, snug, safe and secure. The navigation and pilotage is a little challenging but interesting and once there, the facilities are only a small shop but a few bars. Sunsets against the dramatic outer rocks are worth the anxiety of getting there.

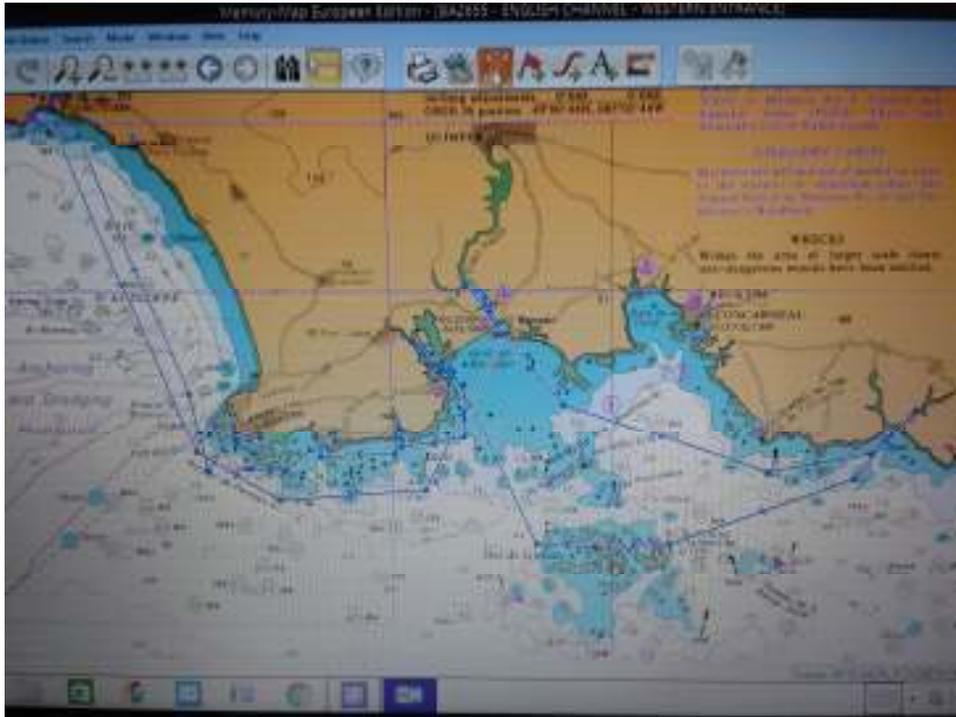


Ile de Sein

Motoring was needed the next day going South, and we entered *Audierne* which had a full time dredger going, to keep the channel open and it was important to keep to the leading lines. Surprisingly the marina

berths were all full, mostly with manned boats, so we took a berth alongside the quay. I was pleasantly surprised not to touch at low water.

It was a long slog down past *Penmarc'h* the next day, into a light Sw'ly before easing sheets to go into *Benodet*. We were joined by Carolyn and her dog, by car there and so ventured upriver to *Anse de Combrit* to allow long walks in the woods for the dogs. The French seem to use and maintain the forests so much better than we do. We later stocked up at the convenient supermarket at the head of the *Anse de Penfoul*, having used the marina electricity mainly for hair drying, and then departed South East, across to the Belon River in order to eat at *Chez Jacky*; a true experience of seafood gastronomy and the oysters truly taste so much sweeter. Wallet lighter, it was time to head for the anchorage to the East of *Ile de Penfret*. Many other boats were there, shepherding a weekend regatta of youngsters who overnighted there. Unfortunately the dogs collected many ticks amongst the bracken, despite swimming back to the boat.



A pleasant sail the next day took us through the *Glenans* islands, and on to *Loch Tudy*, not initially to the marina but upriver to where Doug and Vera had noted that good blackberries were to be found by the long jetty. Not yet available in the Spring however! Back down to the marina, the next day we sat out 24hrs of strong winds with other boats all heading South, borrowed the free bikes, and buying a fresh turbot which was filleted for us, from the fish market. Replete and refreshed it was time once again to visit small ports, initially along the South facing coast. *Lesconil* and *Le Guilvinec* both have excellent well marked entrances, which account for their use mainly by fishing boats, although there is still room for the occasional yacht. *Kerity* and *St Pierre* [under the Ekmuhl light] are smaller and dry early but also have very interesting pilotage, - so reward the adventurous.



St Pierre and Eckmuhl light

The dogs liked both, but Carolyn said enough was enough so we avoided *St Guenole* which is full of Ocean going fishing boats, and headed back North, to *Ste Evette*, picking up a mooring. The dogs' legs were crossed for the night so we went alongside the jetty next morning and waited whilst the Ile de Sein ferry loaded with a full complement of passengers. They had an easier but less exiting trip out, to my earlier one there.

With plenty of time for slack water, it was possible to sneak into small harbours to the South of the Raz; *Porz Tarz* and *Le Loch* were average but we found *Porz Loubous* delightful and *Port Bestrees* more sheltered, but full of moorings.

I have taken the *Chenal de Trouziard* [Course 000/180 at 4° 44.65 West] often, and it always impresses crew, both novice and the experienced for, although narrow [93m wide and 3.5m deep] it has less tidal flow than the main channel but has an "interesting" sea state, once through. You just don't go against the tide or when the wind is force 4+. The pilot adds "strong movements of the wheel must be made with caution."

Needless really, as the helmsman will probably be paralysed anyway!

Normal breathing resumed, we enjoyed a SWly 4 up and round to *Camarat* before spending over a week in the *Rade de Brest* proper. It is a quiet and lovely area with much to recommend it, rather than rushing on through North or Southwards.



Iles de Morts looked nice as did *le Fret'* which has a regular ferry service to Brest. There is not much to *Moulin Mer* except the tidal mill itself but *le Faou* has abandoned drying quays that served a beautiful country town with most facilities. A little touristy but we are also tourists.

Once back out in the main estuary and rounding *Lanvennac* and the monastery, we had just 2.5 hrs to get up the river *L'Aulne* to the lock at *Guily Glas* before it shut; On the way we passed rusting Naval ships in reserve, under the *Terenez* bridge [27m headroom] and the sheltered wooded banks. Once into the canal, civilisation returns with free mooring at *Launay* [but results in slightly gypsyish boats dominating] and an excellent bakery. It is worth persevering up and into *Chateaulin* itself. There is an old pontoon on the left bank with water but no electricity. Best of all is the short trolley push to and fro to a supermarket which also has a "container laundrette" - so 'wash whilst you shop'. A vet sorted C's dog for its' passport requirements and a day later we emerged into the river once more to sunshine, before sailing down and across to *Tiffduff*, for lunch and the inevitable Moules and cheese. The animals finished off 2 baguettes and the anchor then raised for a gentle sail on past *Brest* and picked up a buoy off *le passage*, the old ferry port before the bridge was built. Shops and water are available.

We had planned for C to do a bus shuttle down to *Benodet* for her car from *Landeneau*, and the passage upriver was straightforward but on arrival at the road bridge for the canalised part for the town found it shut and the telephone failed to get through to anyone who would open it for us. We anchored a little downriver and then dinghied up the next morning. I then motored back down to the newer Chateau Marina in Brest, Carolyn arriving back later that evening. It is very smart and surrounded by restaurants but the facilities for yachts are upriver at the old Moulin Blanc Marina.

The next day the sun shone on the original crew as we used the ebb to head West, anchoring in *Anse de Bertheame* for lunch, before rounding Point St Matthieu.



Pointe St Matthieu

Although eager to get back, I couldn't resist the chance to visit *Ile de Molene*, again with interesting pilotage and more developed than *Ile de Sein*. Using GPS certainly makes for less stress! The clear visibility also enabled entry into *Porsal* via the inner passage where I called a halt. No dinghy was needed as once again we dried out.

We rounded *Ile Verge* Light the next day and looked in on *Correjou*, before pressing on to *Roscoff* old town once again. I was eager to get homeward, and stopped overnight at *Port Blanc*. Then on back to Jethou, St Peter Port [for duty free fuel and back across to Dartmouth, all easy, well used passages, cleaning the boat as we went to be ready for running racing for J24 Regatta at Dartmouth the following weekend.

Richard Stevens.

Malcolm Robson's Pilots are well thumbed and annotated and Doug's Charts were used South of Chanel de Four. All are available for borrowing, if you would follow.

So take your time to explore, 57 ports visited in four and half weeks ----- phew.

Richard Stevens, 31st October 2017



The anchor above, is from the Amoco Cadiz and is now shown on the quai of L'Aber-ildut.

Note its condition [bent and broken flukes] and remember the damage that the ship with its cargo made. A warning to all not to underestimate this coast!

Where are they?

Place	Latitude N	Longitude W
Roche Douvres	49° 06'	2° 48'
Brehat	48° 51'	3° 00'
Roche Jagu	48° 44'	3° 08'
Portz Melin	48° 48'	3° 34'
Roscoff	48° 44'	3° 59'
Penze	48° 38'	3° 57'
Portz Kernoc'h	48° 45'	4° 01'
Brignogan	48° 40'	4° 19'
Porsal	48° 33'	4° 42'
Argenton	48° 31'	4° 46'
L'Aber-ildut	48° 28'	4° 45'
Le Conquet	48° 22'	4° 46'
La Louve Anchoage	48° 17'	4° 38'
Camarat	48° 17'	4° 36'
Morgat	48° 14'	4° 30'
Douarnenez	48° 06'	4° 20'
Lanvers	48° 05'	4° 30'
Loedoc	48° 04'	4° 37'
Brezellec	48° 04'	4° 40'
Ile de Sein	48° 02'	4° 51'
Audierne	48° 01'	4° 32'
Benodet	47° 52'	4° 07'
Belon	47° 49'	3° 42'
Penfret	47° 43'	3° 57'
Loc Tudy	47° 50'	4° 10'
Lesconil	47° 48'	4° 13'
Le Guilvinic	47° 47'	4° 17'
Kerity	47° 48'	4° 21'
St Pierre	47° 48'	4° 22'
St Evette	48° 01'	4° 33'
Porz Tarz	48° 01'	4° 37'
Le Loch	48° 02'	4° 38'
Porz Loubous	48° 02'	4° 40'
Port Bestrees	48° 02'	4° 43'
Ile de Morts	48° 18'	4° 32'
Le Fret	48° 17'	4° 30'
Moulin Mer	48° 19'	4° 17'
Le Faou	48° 18'	4° 11'
Chateaulin	48° 12'	4° 05'
Tinduff	48° 20'	4° 22'
Le passage	48° 24'	4° 23'
Landeneau	48° 26'	4° 15'
Anse de Bertheame	48° 21'	4° 42'
Ile de Molene	48° 24'	4° 57'
Correjou	48° 38'	4° 30'