

Log for the Trip to Southern Brittany

May 2017

by Colin Le Conte

This blog covers the trip of two boats “Whatever!” and “Echo Beach” to Southern Brittany in May 2017.



Photo 1 Echo Beach and Whatever! in Concarneau

This was a lifelong ambition based on the inspiration and knowledge of Edward Fattorini who had done the trip 3 times.

The purpose of the trip were

- Improve navigation and equipment usage skills
- Improve boat handling
- Travel through the Chenal de Four and Raz de Sein to Southern Brittany
- A holiday

Thursday May 25th 2017

Guernsey to L'Aber Wrac'h – 103nm

The forecast was Force 4 from the East with one metre waves and after much deliberation we decided to proceed with a journey with possible alternative marinas of Treguier and Roscoff if the sea conditions were worse than expected.

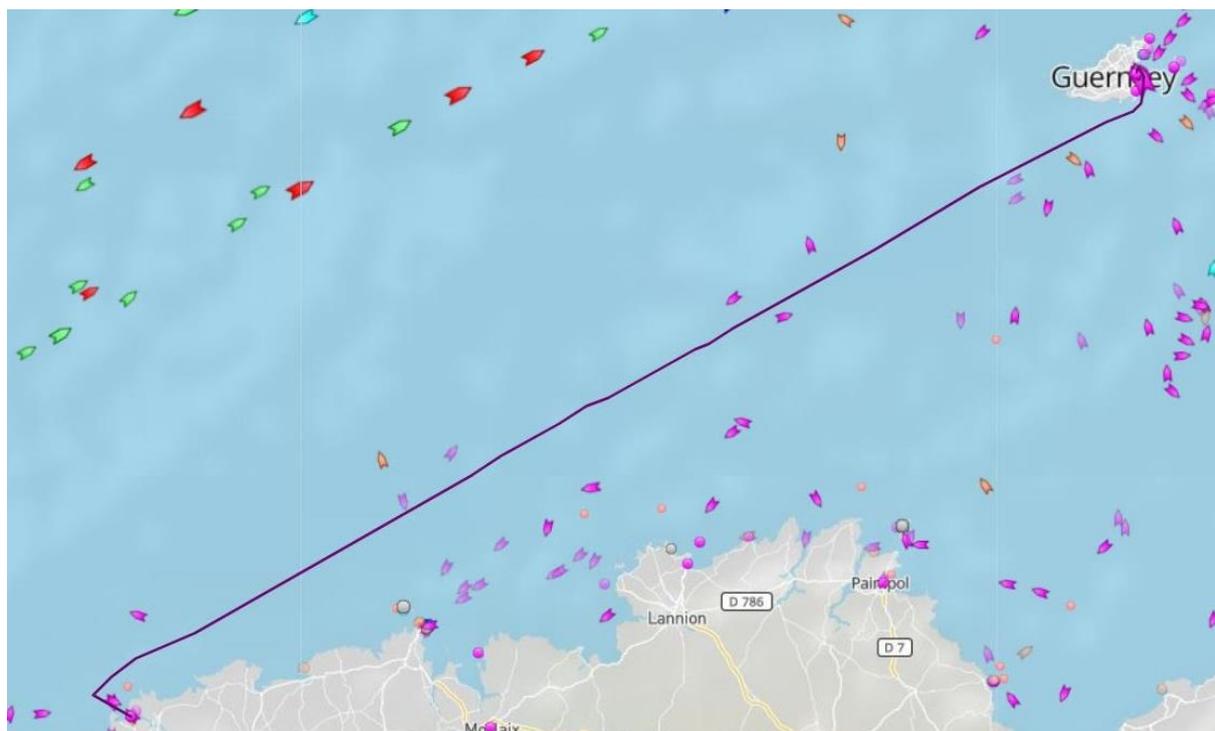
Pros

- East wind with smaller reach and smaller waves
- East tide to speed up our journey
- Wind with tide
- The previous couple of days had been calm
- Sunshine!

Cons

- Big spring tide (107 coefficient)
- 1m waves predicted

We departed from the harbour early in the morning so the tide was from the East to ensure we had wind with tide with us throughout the journey. As it happens the journey with good and fairly calm. We were able to maintain an average speed of 28 knots to L'Aber Wrac'h.



We headed direct for L'Aber Wrac'h from Guernsey with over 87nm from St Martins point to the next waypoint. On approach we decided on the slightly longer route of the Grand Chenal which approaches from the North West via the Libenter west cardinal. This is a wider and easier channel to navigate for a first time visit and we were pleased we chose it as turning into the wind, we appreciated the full Force 4 gusting Force 5 and saw the waves breaking over the rocks either side of the other two passages.



We called up this fairly new marina on VHF Channel 9 which is used by almost all the French ports, were met by a Rib and moored on the inner side of the Breakwater which was a bit tricky due to the strong breeze blowing us away from the pontoon. This was a good position to moor and we enjoyed great views with amazing views and sunsets.





There is a lot of activity in the river with many Oyster boats and recreational windsurfing and fishing.



The marina has quite good facilities although it is a bit of a walk to the Marina Office and there is a lack of security for the visitor's pontoons.

It is a small village very close to the marina and has a good atmosphere and sufficient restaurants to ensure a good meal. Most people just pass through L'Aber Wrac'h and the facilities are now ideal for this. Being only 15nm from Le Four lighthouse, it is much closer to the passage than Roscoff.

The facilities are behind the marina office and were adequate.

There were a few good restaurants nearby and we were able to have a fine meal in good French style with a pizza the evening!



Friday 26th May 2017

L'Aber Wrac'h to Douarnenez – 49nm

The next morning the forecast had improved and so we decided to go around the west end of Brittany and so we topped up with around 300 litres of fuel at €1.404 per litre for the next part of our journey.



We did a lot of research into the best time to go through the Chenal du Four and studied the tidal atlases. There is very little information on the web and the details provided in the Featherstone book relates more to yachts to ensure they have a beneficial tide throughout the route. All we were keen on was making sure it was slack water.

The trip through the Chenal du Four was calm and timed it perfectly with the tides.





Using the new NV Chart booklet (which proved to be very good), a Raymarine Chat plotter using Navionics charts and good visibility, we had no navigation problems. We already knew that the Cameret and Morgat marinas were busy with a regatta during that week so we headed for Douarnenez which is famous for its old gaffers and boat museum. This was slightly out of our route and probably added an extra 17 nautical miles to a journey however, it is well worth a visit.

As we went further into the bay, the sea turned into a millpond. Flat calm.



Despite having contacted the Port office in advance, we were only informed of the outer visitor's pontoon in Port Treboul which happened to be quite exposed to the elements despite being between the mainland and an island. We therefore suffered quite a bumpy night.



There is in fact a more sheltered visitor's pontoon in the Port Rhu marina which is where the old museum is located and will be advisable if people want to stay for more than one night.

To access it you call them on VHF9 and they will open the pedestrian bridge on demand.



There was a market on the following morning in a nearby car park at the end of the Port Treboul marina.

Saturday 27th May 2017

Douarnenez to Loctudy – 57nm

We left in the morning to catch the slack tide to head through the Raz de Sein to Loctudy. Leaving Douarnenez the “mill pond” had become a challenge with a large Atlantic swell and so we spent 17 miles punching our way through 1.5 metre waves at a speed of 18 knots. Despite this, we arrived at the Raz de Sein exactly at the predicted time for slack water. There was still quite a swell running through the passage however it only lasted for about half mile although some smaller boats seem to be struggling a little.



Once we turned more South East, we were travelling with the swell and it also decreased as we entered deeper water. It was good to see some dolphins jumping on route, especially a much larger Risso dolphin.

We navigated carefully through the various cardinal marks around the south end of Brittany and made our way up the coast to Loctudy past the famous chequered lighthouse.

The helpful marina attendant was able to give us two good fingers as the marina was not too busy. There are also some visitor mooring available on the breakwater for large boats.

A ferry goes across to Ile Tudy every 30 mins except for Sundays and so we caught the boat and



spend a very pleasant evening on what used to be a separate Island. We could have used the dinghy but there is quite a current that goes up and down the channel and this should only be considered at slack tide. The cost was Euro 3 return.



Loctudy is a little separate from the town but the marina kindly provide bicycles free of charge for up to an hour so you can get your groceries and go to the boulangerie first thing in the morning. There's a pleasant walk which takes about 20 minutes to get to the town and the number of good restaurants and cafes are available. The walk takes you past the fishing fleet (mostly sardines historically) which can be very interesting, especially when they offload their catch.



Sunday 28th May

Loctudy

The Sunday saw thunderstorms pass through on their way to Guernsey! Heavy rain and lightning although the area to the East of us around Concarneau seemed to catch the worst. The BBC reported over 120,000 flashes of lightning were recorded over Brittany and the UK.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-28367425/lightning-drama-filmed-as-storms-hit-the-uk>



During a break in the weather we walked through the fishing docks as far as the Town and up the main street. There is a pleasant walk back to the marina via a road that passes the Town Hall and an interesting old church – Eglise St Tudy which was built in the 11th century.



Monday 29th May

Loctudy to Sainte Marine – 4nm

We left Loctudy immediately after breakfast to head across the Bay of Benodet to Sainte Marine. We chose Sainte Marine as we had heard good reports about it and also the marina office at Sainte Marine had been very helpful when preparing for the trip whereas the Benodet failed to respond to any e-mails or answer the phone when we called.



As it turned out, this was a very good choice with Sainte Marine being a lot more sheltered from the tide and has some great restaurants within a few minutes' walk.

Benodet marina is larger and more commercial but there is more to see with a good market on the day of our arrival. There is also a large supermarket within 1/2km of the marina accessed by a scenic path.



A ferry goes across the river every 30mins and leaves Sainte Marine on the quarter to and quarter past the hour and charges Euro 2 each way. It takes less than 5 mins to get across.



Tuesday 30th May

Visit to Ile de Glenans – 25nm return

We took Echo Beach to the Ile de Glenans at 9:30am in order to arrive with the tide above half tide. This meant we arrived before the ferries which left at 10:00 from Benodet and were able to drop some of our team off at the pier.



We then tied up to one of the many white bobbers and rowed ashore.

The sand between the 2 islands soon dried out and created a very nice view.



The island is a mixture between Herm and Sark. It has a number of buildings but is low lying and sandy (like Herm). A pleasant walk around the Island with some great views and many lizards sunbathing in the morning sun.

The island was fairly quiet although I am sure it can be busy in the summer. Following some drinks at the Café, we returned to the boat for a fresh bread sandwich lunch.



We left the islands before low water and returned to the Odet River. Having made good progress, we decided to refuel at Benodet (there is no fuelling at Sainte Marine). The machine would only take Euro 70 at a time and so the marina attendant kindly overrode the system so we could just pay at the end. Good job as the pump has to be one of the slowest in the World and it took well over half an hour to load 500 litres.

We then went up the Odet River which has special cruises advertised, but we were disappointed. The Trieux river leading up to Pontrieux, the Rade de Morlaix leading to Morlaix and the Rance are all much nicer. There were thousands of trees but little else to see. You can get fairly close to the old town of Quimper but not close enough to visit.



Wednesday 31st May

Sainte Marine to Concarneau – 11nm

The next day, we refuelled Whatever! while the ladies went to the Sainte Marine market which was a bit of a half-hearted affair.

We called the marine office to ask them to override the Euro 70 limit and started the long process of filling her with Gasoil (diesel). The marina attendant this time pointed out there was a black button on the side of the pump with the symbol of a lorry. Press that and the fuel comes out twice as fast. So instead of being incredibly slow, it is just slow!

We left for Concarneau, the furthest point of our journey. We knew the marina is full in July and August but hoped they would have room at the end of May. There were a lot of training / fleet yachts, but we found a good place on the South side of D pontoon. The South side of D is preferable as there is more room in the fairway than the north side.



Concarneau was delightful. The old walled Town had high quality shops, restaurants and a boat museum.



Outside of the walled Town, there is a good pedestrian area and the old Halles market.



The only downside was the facilities. For such a nice marina, it was surprising that the facilities could only be accessed through the marina office which was open from 9:00hrs to 12:00hrs and 14:00hrs to 18:00hrs. So apart from a single public toilet and a single shower which we could access with a code, there was nothing.



Thursday 1st June

Concarneau to Roscoff – 114nm

The weather forecast was F1 to F2 and slack water was due at the Raz de Sein at 15:30, so we departed soon after 13:30 and ran across the Anse of Benodet, the South West Baie D’Audierne and had a flat crossing of the Raz, running at 28 knots.



A beautiful sunny day until we reached the Chenal du Four which then exposed its other notorious threat – fog. The currents meet and there was fog with a visibility of just over 100m. We slowed down considerably and used radar, chart plotter and every other means to go from cardinal to cardinal, checking our position and watching out for other boats. Strangely it was still sunny as the sea fog was only a few metres high, but thick enough to gain our respect.

We had noticed on the way down there were no crab pot buoys in the Chenal but still kept a good watch.

We found all the marks which were accurately positioned and carefully observed passing boats, or boats that we passed. The largest of which was a galleon, emerging out of the mist as if in a film. It even had an AIS transmitter. How privateering has reached the modern era.



The fog cleared just before L'Aber Wrac'h and we had a good run around the north side of Ile de Batz. Being near low water, we thought it was wisest not to attempt the inside passage, especially with the threat of further fog.

On arrival at Roscoff, we moored up on the fuelling pontoon as instructed and spent a peaceful night.



Friday 2nd June

Roscoff to Guernsey – 74nm

We spent a very pleasant morning in the old town of Roscoff and visited the church where Mary Queen of Scots used to visit when she was sent to Roscoff at the age of 6 for a number of years.



We also went to the end of the long walkway towards Ile de Batz which is used by ferries at low tide and also gives a good view of the inner passage.



Echo Beach added 150 litres of fuel to ensure it had ample.

The forecast was F2 from the West but with 2.2m waves at 14 seconds. This means a long swell and so it proved, both boats disappearing as they were in different troughs on the way to Guernsey.

Passing inside the Sept Iles rocks it was great to see the Gannets nesting.



We made good passage to Guernsey.

This was an amazing trip. Great weather, great boats and amazing scenery.

Boats

Echo Beach



A Princess V39 with Volvo Penta D6-330hp engines.

Colin's Princess was built in Plymouth in 2016 – see <http://www.princess.co.uk/boat/princess-v39/>

Whatever!



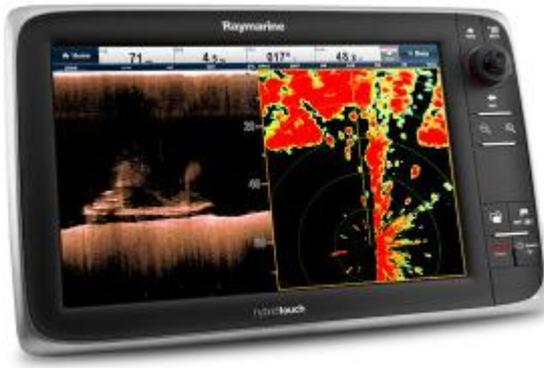
A Princess V42 mk2 with Volvo Penta D6-370hp engines.

David's Princess was built in 2008 – see <http://www.princess.co.uk/>

Equipment used

In addition to the charts, compass, flares, liferaft, EPIRB, DSC radio, radar reflector, backup GPS and backup radio we are using the following technologies.

Colin is using the latest Raymarine v17 Lighthouse II software on the Raymarine E125 Chart plotter. It has an external and internal GPS antenna, EV1 heading sensor, autopilot and i70 screens.



The courses have been plotted using the Navigation Planner software v7.10 which uses the Navionics charts which is an excellent program.



The Navionics charts are the latest Navionics+ and cover the vast area from the Netherlands to Morocco and goes as far as Italy and Corsica. The chart is called 46XG Central and West Europe.

- Raymarine E125 Charplotter using Navionics charts with May updates
- AIS transponder and receiver
- Raymarine digital HD radar
- Raymarine DSC VHF radio
- Navigation Planner PC software with Navionics Charts
- Navionics App for android
- NV Chart Books numbers 4 and 5
- Various Charts covering the whole area
- WiFi repeater with "Three" SIM card
- TripAdvisor
- Vodaphone SIM which works in 40 countries
- Windguru pro
- Featherstone West France book

Distances and fuel

Name	Distance	Time	Echo Beach Fuel estimate (litres)	Whatever! Fuel estimate (litres)
Guernsey to L'Aber Wrac'h	103nm	3:40	323	316
L'Aber Wrac'h to Douarnenez	49nm	1:45	156	153
Douarnenez to Loctudy	57nm	2:15	182	177
Loctudy to Sainte Marine	4nm	0:11	14	12
Sainte Marine to Ile de Glenan and Odet river to Sainte Marine	25nm + 6nm		85 + 23	0
Sainte Marine to Concarneau	11nm	0:24	40	34
Concarneau to Roscoff	114nm	4:30	375	360
Roscoff to Guernsey	74nm	3:00	245	237
Total	443nm		1,444 litres	1,289 litres

Refuelling

Name	Echo Beach	Whatever!
L'Aber Wrac'h	284.9 litres	316
Benodet	464.0 litres	342
Roscoff	150.0 litres	
Boatworks+	552.4 litres	631
Total	1,451.3 litres	1,289 litres

What we learnt

In Southern Brittany, it is almost all yachts and small motor boats. There are very few 10m+ motor boats. The price of fuel is very expensive and may partly explain this.

The tides are much smaller than Guernsey. The range is up to 5m maximum on a big spring.

None of the marinas were restricted by the tide and none had gates or lock gates.

The tide times are all very similar to Brest. Once you know the Brest times, most of the Southern Brittany times are similar. For example Benodet was 8mins before Brest and Port du Crouesty was 4mins after Brest.

The marinas in the rivers can have quite a strong tidal flow and the tide is based on whether the river is filling up or emptying and not related to the normal tidal direction out to sea.

The yachts tend to leave early in the morning and arrive late afternoon / early evening. So faster boats have the advantage of arriving when there may be more space in the marina.

12m appears to be about the maximum length for finger moorings although all marinas seem to have an outer wall which you can raft up on.