

National Shrimper Week 2002– Zeeland, Holland

Once again Claud Lanyon, Scalawag (598) acted as my travel agent for our trip to Holland. This year a third boat from St Mawes, Vintage Port (834) Croyden & Miriam Whittaker were to join us. Tony Coups (676) research suggested the slow Caravan Special from Harwich to Hook of Holland was the cheapest and most convenient way to travel. Wanting to arrive early we duly booked a crossing for Thursday 20th June.

After consultation we decided to leave St Mawes at 06.30hrs on the Wednesday. Our first stop was Taunton followed by Reading for lunch. After 400 largely uneventful miles, except for Croydens security strap coming undone, we arrived at Harwich without mishap, having travelled round the M25 before the rush hour started. The Whittakers over-nighted at a Little Chef and Claud, Sheila and I at the Ferry terminal. We retired to bed early and in the morning discovered we had been joined by several other Shrimpers namely Tony & Rosemary Coups (676), Karen Weston (407), Avis Niven (434) Richard and Anne Pottinger (434), Ian Fisher (435) and Trevor Thomas (649), David and Jean Cornhill who all had arrived at different times during the night.

On boarding the ferry and passing through various controls, I saw several owners having to unlock their boats cabin for some sort of check. It's a good job I am deaf and answered 'NO' to all questions, as I later discovered that others had had their 'Flares' seized for the journey. I had spared myself a lot of work climbing on board and my flares remained on my boat undetected. Our arrival on board the ferry caused quite a lot of interest and one deckhand asked us if we would like to go on the Bridge during the crossing. We were duly invited onto the Bridge where the Captain explained all the instruments etc. I never realised the sea was so shallow miles out. Seven hours later we were in Holland, well fed with two free meals during the crossing.

It was only whilst on the ferry that I had looked at the map to see where we were going, ZEELAND and made a note of our suggested route. I was the last boat off the ferry and at the back of a convoy of four boats being led by Karen (ladies first, all gentlemen let ladies go first but could they map read –No). Soon we were heading north on the M5, when we should have been going south. I realised immediately the point they had gone wrong but opted to follow rather than go alone. 10 miles later the convoy turned off the motorway to turn round. 50 miles later we arrived at WOLPHAARTSDIJK, on the VEERSE MEER a damed, slightly salt water lake. The fishing nets were hanging up to dry. That evening I prepared the boat for launching in the morning and was joined by Tony and Rosemary for supper in the camper.

FRIDAY morning was spent booking in with the harbour master and launching. Trevor kindly offered to help me launch only to fall off the tow-bar into the water. I felt really guilty as Trevor usually launches single handed without even getting his feet wet. We were issued a berth number, our first of many occasions reversing in between two posts, putting lines on each before reversing again to moor stern against the pontoon. It was fun

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and games single-handed but I was going to get better. Worse was to come, all the locks single-handed!! The weather was fine and sunny and I went for a shake down sail up the lake. I soon realised it was important to check the chart and follow the well marked bouys. Miss one and you soon went aground. There was plenty of wind and I had a great sail. I couldn't wait for the morning and Shrimper Week to officially start. More and more boats were arriving. That evening I ate in the camper and then went for a cycle ride up the side of the lake.

Saturday 22nd June Shrimper Week 2002 got underway and the sun was shining. Robin Whittle(124) had agreed to start with me. It was going to be a beat all the way to VEERE. We crossed backwards and forwards across the lake. After a while I had a lucky tack and overtook Robin, but it soon became apparent that a reef was required as the wind had increased. Whilst getting my reef in Robin and Gillie overtook. They were taking it a bit seriously, both sat up leaning out all the time. I was never to catch them again but it was a great sail and took us 2 ½ hours to reach VEERE, a 13th century port. Whilst walking round the town we witnessed a wedding, where the bride and groom left the church in a Fire-engine with the siren going. On getting back to the boats about four Shrimpers were rafted outside us. Just as the owners were about to leave to visit the town, a space became available in front of us and we were able to split the raft into two enabling Robin and I to get out. We then sailed up to the dam before turning round for a long run home. It was quite windy 5/6 and I was glad to have my reef still in. I didn't lose much ground as we were travelling at near maximum boat speed. If all the sailing was to be as good as this we were in for a cracking week. A great days sailing. That evening we had our first official dinner and all received plaques. A good way of introducing everyone.

Sunday 23rd June. (Planned trip to YERSEKE)

Acting on advice from a local owner, Claud and I agreed to start early. Today was to see us negotiating our first locks. I had prepared three bow lines, two light weight ones, returning each side to the cockpit and two stern lines always ready for any eventuality. On entering the first lock I looked at the weed to guess if we were going to go up or down. I opted for UP and reached 6ft up for two hooks. Eventually we didn't seem to move far. Leaving the lock we sailed out into the OOSTERSCHELDE which is tidal. We turned to starboard and ran with the wind and tide towards YERSEKE, On and on we went. As time went by I thought to myself, this is going to be a long beat back. The tide was not due to change until about 15.30hrs and as oysters and mussels don't agree with my stomach I suggested to Claud and Sheila that we anchor for lunch. During lunch we watched the Shrimper fleet pass on their way to YERSEKE. After lunch we started back against the tide. A sail across the channel and back proved that progress under sail was going to be slow unless we kept out of the tide. Claud finally gave up the unequal struggle and motor sailed, overtaking me. I managed to sail all the way entering a lock into the canal to GOES just as the gate closed. Our motor up the canal was beautiful, in lovely sunshine. As we reached the bridges they were just opening. Our timing was perfect and as it turned out we

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were very lucky to be one of the dozen or so Shrimpers able to moor right in the centre of the town. It was a perfect setting. That night I dined on board.

Monday 24th June started with a visit to GOES town hall for a reception with the Mayor. We received a very warm welcome and were very fortunate to be allowed up to the clock tower overlooking the town.



At 11 o'clock we left Goes, on mass, providing excellent photo opportunities to the local press and us alike. We locked out into the OOSTERSCHELDE again. Our next port of call was ZIERIKZEE which meant sailing north under the Zeeland bridge a three mile long bridge built in 1961 and still gleaming white. It was worth waiting for the tide and we sailed east and rafted up for lunch in a small channel. There was much dragging of anchors myself included as two other boats rafted up on one side of my anchor, Ian's engine would only go in reverse which proved interesting!! After lunch some of us set off for ZIERIKZEE a beat still against the tide. It was a great sail and it was advantageous to keep

to shallow water, so shallow that you could have got out and walked for an hour or more. ZIERIKZEE was a lovely town and thirty Shrimpers rafted up together near the bridge provided a great picture.



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Tuesday 25th June; a lazy day an opportunity to remain on land for a cycle ride or visit local gardens. I opted for the gardens. Three of them and splendid they were, once we had found them!! When will lady drivers learn to map read. We only did about 10 'U' turns in our attempt to find the first garden. But it was well worth it, with an excellent lunch in the second garden. That night we had our second official dinner.

Wednesday 26th June, We sail to BROUWERSHAVEN. This was going to be our longest sail, 20 + miles. I prepared my lunch in advance. At first the wind was light for our reach under the bridge again then a run to GREVELINGENSLUIS (Lock). The tide was with us all the way and Boyers Shrimper was slowly overtaking one boat after another. We had a short wait at the lock so I had my lunch. On entering GREVELINGENSLUIS (a salt water lake, saltier than the sea for some reason) I was the last to get my sails up. It was going to be a beat all the way to BROUWERSHAVEN and what a splendid sail it proved to be with the wind increasing all the time. It was very important to keep an eye on the chart and count the bouys as there were several shallows. Boyers Shrimper again picked up places and went from last to second. The last few miles were really quite competitive as the first few boats were obviously racing each other by that stage. A shame I went aground again near the end. Good fun. Again our mooring pontoons were awaiting us.

Thursday 27th June – Race Day. A down wind course only – a passage race. It really was quite a wind 5/6 ie maximum speeds. Unfortunately on our gybe I lost my whisker pole and had to return to pick it up. The other problem was they wanted us to record our time at each turning mark which proved almost impossible single handed. It was all hands to the deck. I then lost the piece of paper I had recorded my finishing time on. Freddie had suggested lunching at BATTENOORD but only four boats arrived which was just as well as it was very congested and had no or very little depth of water. It was however sheltered! After lunch we locked out back into the MASTGAT. On leaving the lock I looked back and saw Karen on the last Shrimper standing on deck waving, apparently in some trouble. I turned and on arrival found she had got something round her prop. It was ideal sailing so we sailed together to SINT-ANNALAND where I towed her into the marina. There, we were met by a most helpful harbour master, who, with help from other owners soon had the netting sack removed from Karen's prop. Panic over.

Friday 28th June – Return to VEERSE MEER and WOLPHAARTSDIJK our starting point. The forecast was not good wind 6/7 and rain and we got both. It was a beat back most of the way. It was rough and wet. I had set off nearly last, a mistake for safety reasons as it turned out. I saw that several boats had taken down their sails and were motoring. They appeared to be getting very wet, as the wind and the waves increased. I finally had to roll in some of my jib. This was the first time I have ever done this and in rough conditions going about proved difficult. I decided to put the engine on for safety and started to motor sail. Navigation caught me out once and I went aground in big way (on a falling tide) but was fortunately able to sail off. You had to keep an eye on the chart the whole time as there were no landmarks visible to head for. Anyway I survived and looking back on it, at no point was I frightened which is reassuring for future trips. That evening

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we had our final dinner at HET SAS a short drive away. I overnighted in the camper in a field behind the restaurant. It was a lovely meal and Freddy and Ronald were warmly thanked for an excellently organised week.

Second Week

Having said our good byes last night to those returning home, we woke up on Saturday morning to sunshine and much lighter winds of 2/3. At 11.45am we (that is Claud, Sheila and myself) set off to retrace our first steps by beating up to the ZEELANDBRUG (bridge) at the north end of the OOSTERSCHELDE then turning east along the KEETER MARTGAT ZILPE. There we locked into the VOLHERAK before turning north up a canal to overnight in OULDE TONGE. We arrived at about 18.00 hrs having made good progress at speeds of up to 7 knots, in a strengthening NW 4/5 wind. OULDE TONGE was a small quiet harbour and we received a warm welcome with much interest in our Shrimpers. The others had set off for ZEEBUGER but the forecast was poor and the open sea was not for us.

Sunday forecast 4/5 possibly 6 W/SW. After a hot chocolate in the square at 11am we set off for BENEDAN SAS our intended next stop. A planned easy day. It was blowing hard and on went our waterproofs. Jib only seemed the easy option and we were soon passing through BENEDAN SAS. It seemed very small with little to offer, yet the canal apparently continued with two further harbours more inland. The canal passed through a nature reserve and the wild life was spectacular. We continued sailing on jib alone until we reached DE HEEN for a late lunch stop. Having explored the village we decided to continue sailing along the canal although we had no idea where we were going as we were well off the chart by now. At 16.00hrs we arrived at STEENBURGER a quaint but large town. The harbour master gave us a local map. If wanted to continue further, it would be masts down for two 3 m bridges then several bridges 7 meters high. Our masts are 7.25 m, or are they. We stayed the night.

We woke on Monday morning to very strong winds and heavy rain. The rain stopped by 11 o'clock, so we planned an early lunch then get our masts down. During lunch we heard the forecast F 7/8 ship warning. What's more the rain started again. Plans were put on hold and we decided to remain put until morning. At 15.00hrs we were roused from our after lunch siesta by the sound of Shrimper engines!! Barry and Freddie had arrived. We all met for tea in a local café. On returning to my boat, disaster, I noticed that my jib was torn in two places. Although Freddie was going to a sail-makers for repairs to his jib, I made the decision that my sailing holiday was over and Boyers Shrimper would turn into a motor boat for the rest of the trip.

The weather forecast remained very poor, Tuesday morning forecast 5/6 westerly with showers. Claud and I got our masts down. I used a pair of oars with flip flops on the bottom to act as crutch and Claud used my boarding ladder. Freddie had never seen Shrimpers used as canal boats and I think he was much impressed taking photo's of us leaving. Our final destination was uncertain but we had a very enjoyable trip up the VLIET Canal, turning left into the MARK -VIELT Canal and right into MARK Canal.

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However it was cold with frequent heavy showers. At LEEMAN at the entrance of the short canal to OUDENBOSCH we saw a crane and decided to stop and make enquiry's. The time was about 14.30hrs. There we met Yan and his wife and were immediately offered coffee. We explained our intentions and Yan's wife offered to take us to the railway station at ROOSENDAAL. We were on an inter city train by 15.45 on our way to GOES, a 30 minute journey, 7 Euro's. We got a taxi the short distance to WOLPHAARTSDIJK. We arrived at 16.59 just as the harbour master was locking up. He allowed Claud to get his car out but we would have to wait until morning to get our trailers. No problems, I slept in the camper. Wednesday was a terrible day, heavy rain all day. We drove back to the boats in the morning and got them out by crane after lunch. It was too wet to pack up so we went to WILLEMSTAD by car for tea, it was pretty but seemed very cold, only 14 degrees. Thursday was fine but with a few showers and we were able to pack up the boats.

I parted company with Claud and Sheila who were going off sightseeing and visiting relatives and I returned to WOLPHAARTSDIJK. That afternoon was sunny and I went for a cycle ride from WEMELDINGE to YERSEKE then south to the MIDDLEGAT coast before returning along the KAN DOOR ZUID- BEVELAND canal. I stopped for supper overlooking OOSTERSCHELDE before returning to WOLPHAARTSDIJK to overnight in the camper, using the marina showers.

Friday I cycled along the north side of the VEERSE MEER to the VEERSE-GATDAM and Saturday along the southern side of the OOSTERSCHELDE and over the OOSTERSCHELDEKERING road bridge/dam gates for lunch near WESTENSCHOUWEN. Both days I cycled 40 miles with ease. cycling in Holland is bliss!!

On Sunday I parked at ORANJE PLAAT and cycled to MIDDELBURG via VEERE, I then continued to VLISSINGEN on the HONTE coastline and then on to ARNEMUIDEN and back to the camper. MIDDELBURG was a splendid town with a complex inner harbour.

Monday the 8th July was time to return home, a short drive to the Hook of Holland for the return ferry crossing. We got off the boat at 8pm and I drove to Reading and overnighted at a motorway service. Claud and Sheila went to relatives near Ascot. I got up early the next morning and was back in St Mawes by 11am.

A great holiday. Kindly edited and printed by John Lock (325), my secretary!!