

Log of Trip to the North Norfolk Coast

6th August 2012

Des and I had been waiting for an opportunity to go to the north Norfolk coast and it was in August that our opportunity came. We brought Gwendoline up to Snape from the mooring at Aldeburgh to load up, ready for the trip.

7th August 2012

We left Snape when we came afloat at 06.00 and were at the Alde entrance 08.45 (a distance of 16M). We had a depth of 7' over the bar at low water springs which was a 2' improvement on last year, and the old entrance has now nearly closed up. It is strange how the shingle shifts so much. The wind was light SW but we soon managed to switch the engine off and were at Orford Ness at 09.45. At Thorpness we saw a black cloud and put reef in. The tide was gaining strength against us so we motor sailed to Southwold. We were in the Blyth at 14.00 (20M from Orford Haven) and given private jetty by the harbour master, who asked how much rubbish we would make and what we would put in the river!



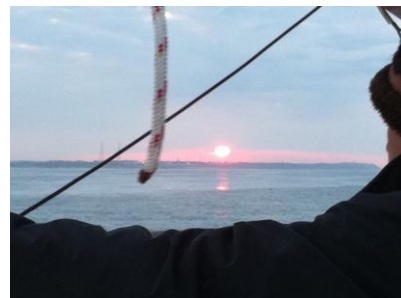
8.8.12

We may have picked a weather window but the tides could have been better timed. Oh well you can't have everything! So we had a walk to Walberswick while we waited for the flood to be well under way so we could take advantage of the whole of the favourable ebb stream running north,



which would start at 16.00. We left the jetty at Southwold at 13.45 in a light easterly F3. We went close in past Easton and Covehithe to cheat the tide and noticed the dead tree which stands in the surf there has gone! We went over Newcome Sand shoal at HW and registered 9'. We were sailing well and when the tide came fair we picked up speed to 7.5kn and once 8.3 but then the wind died in the

evening and we passed the "Cockle" E cardinal at 18.50. We saw The Scroby Sands looking very high! Sunset was 20.30 and we were at the water tower after the Bacton masts having gone 43M.



Now the tide was slack. As you travel north the tides get earlier so you never get the full 6 hours! Here we were clear of gas pipeline and underwater cables, so we anchored off the beach in 16'. I have to say I was a little apprehensive anchoring in the sea, but it was preferable to stemming the tide all night. It is a thing Des does all the time in Cygnet (a Thames barge) but a Shrimper is not quite the same! Luckily it was calm with just a little swell so all was well, although I did not sleep very well!

9th August 2012

We left at 04.20 while it was still dark using the last of the ebb but then having to punch the flood as we approached Blakeney as you need at least 4 hours of flood in order to enter the harbour. We spent lots of time on this trip working out the tidal flow and heights in order to arrive at our destination at the correct time. The most important fact was to enter the harbours as soon as it was safe and have enough flood left to take you right in before the ebb set in, if that happened we could be dried out in a very inconvenient place! The wind was E3 and there was a lovely sunrise near Cromer in fact it was a lovely morning, luckily without the mist that had been forecast. Even luckier we were sailing, as so often one ends up motor sailing on a long trip because of having to enter a harbour at a particular time. I took us all the way to Blakeney Spit. We had done so well were early at Blakeney Fairway buoy at 07.45 a distance of 18M. (LW Blakeney Bar was 05.45.) We looked in but anchored till 09.00 as the breakers looked scary! There is a wreck at the entrance to the channel on the port side which is marked by a post and as we entered we could see by the breakers that the channel



turned to starboard although there was no green buoy! We got in ok and then saw hundreds of seals on both banks, and in amongst them a green buoy, it had been washed up and not replaced, explaining the entrance problem! The channel was very difficult to follow in the Pit but we got to Morston just to have a look but wanted to make Blakeney on that tide which we did at 11.15. The town was very busy due to the

lovely hot day. We found an old boat to tie up to and take the ground.



Morston Quay

Blakeney Town



10.8.12.

We had a good sleep after our adventures and evening out in Blakeney, and were keen to press on, but although HW was supposed to be at 13.15 at the Quay, we only managed to float and get away at 12.05 and bumped over ridges in the channel and were aground several times. The dinghies were going out with rudders and centreboards raised. We motored to have a close look at the seals which were lazing on the sand on both sides. We got very close, and they swam all round the boat.

But we learnt that you need 2 days to leave the harbour, as by now the tide was falling and we did not want to enter the next harbour on a falling tide, and anyway we



could have only made Wells, 5M away. 14.00 we sailed back beyond mussel beds in the outer harbour and picked up mooring. I swam and it was VERY warm!! (And about 3' deep.) We ate on board and did not touch the bottom in the night.

11th August 2012



In the morning while we were waiting for the tide, we blew up the dinghy and went for a walk on Blakeney Spit. It was a fabulous morning and I walked over to the sea to find the lovely and totally deserted beach, which reminded me of Camber Sands! The sea looked calmer than when we arrived. Des inspected a mock barge called Juno. We left at 09.50 and were at

Blakeney bar at 10.30. Wind was East 3 and HW 13.30. We had to go against the flood tide as we would need to have plenty of height in the tide in order to enter Brancaster. There are so many things to consider when visiting these harbours! Luckily the wind increased to compensate and we were sailing well on a run under just the main. However it seemed a long way round and you have to enter from due north, past the wreck, in order to enter the channel but we were there at 13.10 a distance of 11M. The Almanac says "Dangerous to enter except by day in settled weather."

The wind was now East 5 and there were seemingly hundreds of sailing dinghies racing at sea adding to the confusion, and difficulty in finding the channel. We surfed down a wave over the bar but then found it difficult to find channel into Brancaster Staithe. We kept touching the bottom but were relieved to be in before HW and anchored to the side of the moorings in a good position for getting ashore to find water and may be fuel, as well as a pub! We were in 5' feet of water and about to take the ground when a man calling himself the harbour master told us to move even though we demolished all his reasons, ending up saying it was because he said so! He made us go "miles" away and found we dried on an island even though he had said we would still be able to walk ashore! So we had to use the dinghy as well as walk so could not get the water we needed. Luckily we had nice meal in pub, and forgot about him!



12th August 2012

Des walked miles using dingy to cross small rivers in the sand banks and crossed mud and stones to get water, cursing the harbourmaster every step of the way! There was no diesel. I went for a walk and now could see the sweeping curve of the channel and the line buoys we had somehow missed with the myriad of dinghies yesterday. I walked over to Scott Head and another wonderful beach.



We decided to go to Wells despite the weather which was blustery SE force 4. We came afloat at 12.30 and followed windey channel. The red spherical buoys

were easy to see now we had seen the channel at low tide! It seemed much easier getting out! We got to the wreck before 13.00 and then it was 2hrs to Wells fairway buoy. We motor sailed long and short tacks. Wells is quite different from the other harbours with wind farm boats rushing in and out. The channel is well buoyed and goes close by the beach which has beach huts, swimmers, dunes and pine trees. We berthed on a pontoon in the town and saw the nice harbour master. It was £16 and had showers etc. He told us that the "harbour master" at Brancaster had no authority and in fact worked for the National Trust! We dried out alongside but had 7' HW. We walked round town and saw rows of people eating fish and chips at 4pm. There were local shellfish stalls on they quay, and a street with many tourist shops cafes. I found a lovely Georgian square with a green and 2 pubs, where we went in the evening and saw the Olympic closing ceremony on TV.



13.08.2012

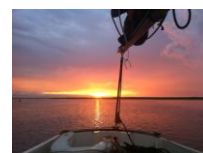


We woke up late and had a walk to the beach. There was a little train which only went as far as the caravan park.



We decided to go to Blakeney to shorten the return trip so did shopping and left at 14.45.

SE3 motor sailed west to Blakeney entrance. The green buoy was still missing, so we followed our GPS track and anchored as before. Planning to leave 02.30. Cooked our tin of Greek meatballs!

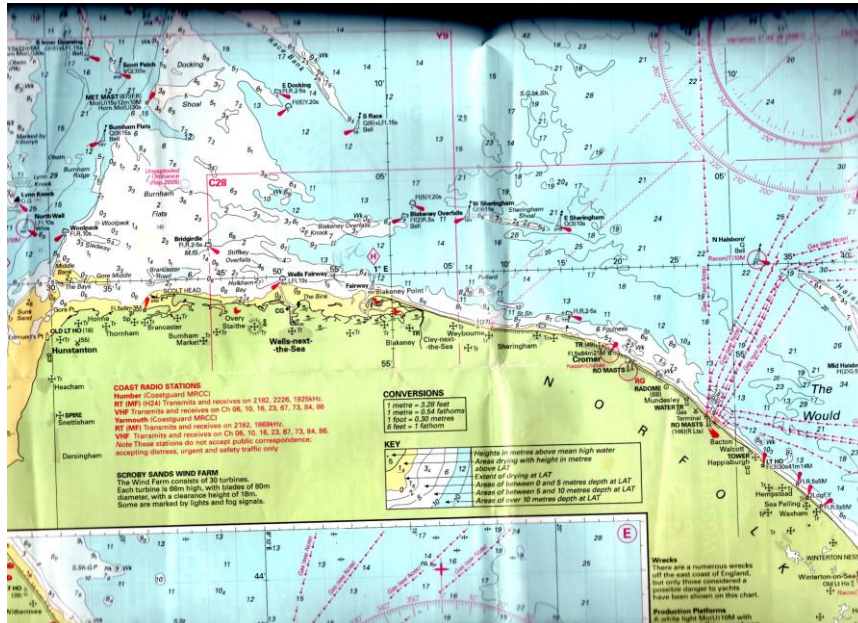


14th August 2012

We got up at 02.10, and followed our GPS track out of the harbour, luckily it was calm S2 but in any case it would have been impossible in the dark without the track. By 03.20 we were in the sea motor sailing and would have the whole duration of the flood to sweep us along, even though the wind was not going to do much! Des did that night watch, steering for Cromer lighthouse and getting light from Sherringham, which helped him manage to avoid all the "Cromer Crab" pots which were visible in the now dawn light and just a narrow crescent moon. 05.45 my watch took us from Cromer to just before the "Cockle". 08.15 Des's watch, and by 9.30 we were inside the shoals before Great Yarmouth. We had not quite managed to clear Great Yarmouth before the tide turned against us which was unfortunate as it is at its strongest there as it sweeps round the most easterly bulge in England. 10.45 was my watch and all I could do was tuck in as much as possible to try and keep out of it. We managed 3.5kn until off the mouth of the harbour when our speed dropped to 2.5kn, but then we tucked in again and it improved once round the corner. 12.15 Des's watch



took us to just before Lowestoft, but now the sea was choppy as S3 dead ahead, it was quite tedious but the forecast was not looking good for the next few days so we really wanted to get back if we could. 15.45 my watch. Wind increased S4



and the chop was stopping the boat making it most frustrating. At 16.15 the forecast was for F5 later with worse to come. We had to decide whether to go into Southwold, as

some other boats were, and be stuck there for several days or press on, there were no more harbours and 20 miles to go. We voted to carry on and prepared for worse conditions when the tide would turn in our favour meaning it would be wind against tide. Quite strangely the sea strangely flattened before the wind eased, which it had done every late afternoon during our trip. 18.15 Des took over, the wind was falling light and we were in the Alde anchored in Abraham's Bosom at 20.30. Just time to have a drink and fall sleep quite exhausted, having sailed 82M from Blakeney.



15th August 2012

Up 07.30. The wind was howling, a stiff easterly had set in, but we were ok now. Regatta boats were laying racing buoys for the start of Aldeburgh week. We had to motor sail to Aldeburgh but managed to sail the rest to Snape arriving 11.00.