

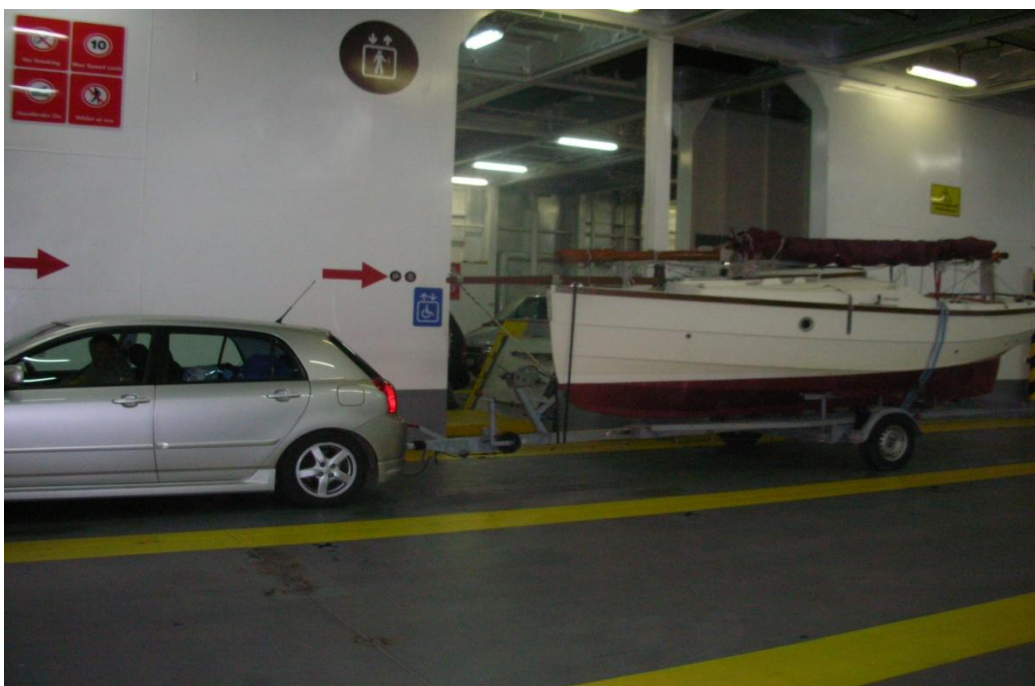
Shrimper Week 2011

SHY TALK goes to Zeeland.

Text by Tony Coles. Photos by Cathy Gardner.

Our adventure began at 10 pm on Thursday 9th June when Cathy and I left home to make the 30 mile journey to Dover to catch the midnight ferry to Dunkirk.

Very little traffic and 45 minutes later we were pulling up at the DFDS checkin booth in Dover Docks. The bleary eyed girl at the window had already fed our number plate details into the computer and we were greeted by a cheery “hello Mr Coles” and our tickets and travel documents were handed over. Just as we were pulling away she shouted at us to stop, and apologetically said she had not seen that thing we were towing behind us. Yes the boat had been following us closely since Whitstable, and trailer and shrimper were booked on the ferry. No problem! New paperwork and we just had to go in the caravan lane to wait for the ferry.



At 1140 pm we boarded, not a hint of security checks or hunting for flares or fuel tanks. Although we were amongst the last on we seemed to go to the front of the deck.

This proved the case as we were amongst the first off the boat in Dunkirk and soon on our way to Belgium. No formalities or any sight of officialdom anywhere. But there again it was 2 am our time or rather 3 am continental time.

About half an hour later the 3 ‘boy racers’ we had seen in the queue at Dover revving their engines, finally hurtled past us breaking not only the speed limit but probably the sound barrier as well. However about 15 minutes later we passed one of the stopped on the hard shoulder with hazards flashing and smoke pouring from under the car’s bonnet. ‘One should’nt mock’.

By 0630 we were through Belgium, into Holland having gone through the magnificent Westerscheldt tunnel (Eur 7.30 toll), over the Slandersluice, and arrived at our destination of Kortgene. We found the Delta Marina car park with a section taped off. Notices in Dutch mentioned the 'Shrimpers' so we undid a section, drove through, parked up, and crawled into the boat for a few hours kip.

By mid morning we awoke to find other Shrimpers had arrived and we were soon greeted by Adri de Muynck, our intrepid organiser who told us where to launch, or be craned in.

We found the slipway and were second or third boat to use it. It looked perfect, but by not being tidal a layer of slime had formed below the water level. The end story is that the boat would not move off the trailer, so I waded in in bare feet to give it an almighty shove. It didn't move, I did and went flat out in 2 feet of water. Temper and help from others soon had it afloat and we parked the car and trailer, and then motored the boat to our berth in the marina, followed by a warm shower and dry clothes.

We decided not to sail that day and instead met old and new Shrimper friends and ended up eating at the excellent Sports Bar in the Marina. By then the rain had started!

It was still raining on Saturday morning and although the wind was SE 2-3 we decided to have a look at the town instead of sailing. More Shrimpers arrived and we caught up with gossip and then all adjourned to the restaurant attached to the marina for the welcoming dinner. An excellent meal was followed by speeches and the gift of a welcome pack containing a towel, Zeeland courtesy flag, and brochures covering the local area.



0900 Sunday we departed for Veere quite a few miles to the west near the North Sea. In fact on the way we heard on the vhf some friends who had sailed over in their 'big boats' (30-50 footers) arranging to meet at the Veeresdam which is as far west as you can go. We decided to join them and rafted up against them at the small wharf for a quick beer. We didn't stay long as the weather was deteriorating, so we bade our farewells and motored against the wind to the lock at Veere, and into the canal to Middleberg. We did intend to check out the jazz festival in the town, but only got as far as the Yacht Club on the quay, where we decided to

eat and spent the evening in the company of a happy band of Shrimper sailors. On leaving the club about 11pm we bumped into yet more friends from our own Hollowshore Cruising Club in Kent whose Moody was in the next dock. A nightcap should never be refused and it also guaranteed a good nights sleep.

Next morning, Monday, we motored down the canal, through 2 lifting bridges to Arnemuiden where a preserved historic shipyard is situated. Apparently the yard had been run by the same family for several centuries, but the last owner refused to accept that fishing boats could be built in anything other than wood and hated engines of any kind. When the yard closed in the 1960's it was locked up as it was with all the tools and equipment inside. Over the last couple of decades it has been renovated and now repairs old wooden fishing boats and is open to the public as a working museum. The old man must be turning in his grave at the sight of 40 odd fibreglass, and oh, sorry one wooden Shrimper tied up at his quay all with engines.

We then motored back to the lock at Veere and were surprised to see that swallows had built their nests in the lock walls in the top level of bollard holes. We somehow missed them on the way up, probable due to the rain. The parent birds flying through Shrimper rigging to feed their ever hungry young.

We spent the afternoon sailing down the Veerse meer to the lock at Zandkreekdam with rain and a 3-4 SW. Through the lock and onto the tidal Oosterschelde. One Shrimper (you know who you are) decided to jump the red lights. Ok the lock was open, but the bridge carrying the dual carriageway had not risen, but thanks to a crescendo of warning yells from other boats reverse was engaged before any damage was done to the mast.

Next obstacle on our way to Colijnsplaat was the spectacular Zeeland Bridge. By some miscarriage of justice we found ourselves to be the first boat to go under. The chart indicates min 16m at HWS, and it was only half tide. But the nagging doubts from sea level? Six kilometres long and 47 arches, which one to choose? Straight through number 3, looking back at least 20 plus feet to spare for all the other boats.



On arrival at Colijnsplaat we are spread around the marina instead of being all together. No matter, we met up in the Yacht Club and had a good if expensive meal.

Next morning, Tuesday 14th June, the sun shone, a NW 2 and we were on our way to Yerseke. Under that bridge again, beginning to really like it! Crossed a busy commercial shipping lane for the inland waterway system and arrived at Yerseke at 1500 hrs. Nice place with cash machines (we needed one) and supermarkets, bakers etc.



That evening we had a wonderful bbq on the sea wall and watched the tide disappear to the horizon.

Wednesday 15th June. Wind and rain back again, on the nose and against the tide to motored NW to Zeriksee. Meant going under THE bridge again, this time at the northern end next to the lifting span whilst the big yachts had to wait.

Ours friends from home who we had seen at Veersedam were waiting for us and had moored next to the place reserved for Shrimpers. We spent the evening with them, eating in the town square. They were very impressed with the Shrimper and the social side of the SOA. However the space and comfort of a Bavaria 32, to them, outweighs the versatility of our wonderful little boats.

Thursday, 16th June. A change of plan, it was intended to spend two nights in Zeriksee, but because a gale was forecast it was decided to get the fleet back to Kortgene to ensure we were all there for the last night and not weatherbound on the Oosterscheldt. The day started off sunny and we had a good sail back to the Zandkreeksluis. But coming out of the lock it was back to wet and windy and on the nose, so there was a quick motor to the Delta Marina.

The customary Shrimper Week race was held at the same time and about half the fleet took part. It was won by 'One man and his dog'. We gather it was more due to navigational expertise than the crewing ability of the poodle. But all said and done congratulations to Michael Radecki for a fine effort.

Diary entry says 'Blew old boots in the night with squally showers'.

Friday 17th June, last official day! Still blowing, decided to take the car to the Delta Museum at Burghuis. Together with the crew of 'Jolly Janet' we decided that Eur 21.50 each to get in was a bit steep, so we went for a picnic on the dunes overlooking the mussel beds.

That evening we had a brilliant buffet dinner at De Korenbeurs restaurant in Kortgene with end of week speeches and presentations. The wine was 'on tap', good job because that night the wind howled as the full force of the gale blew through.

We had booked to stay on a couple of extra days to explore the Veerse meer by ourselves. But the weather made this impossible. So it was into the car again to look at Goos, which I found too crowded and busy, and back to Zeriksee which was still great. And back over the now infamous Zeeland Bridge by car

On Sunday we slipped out without mishap, de-rigged, and left after lunch for Dunkirk. Originally we had booked on the midnight ferry to Dover, but DFDS had cancelled this and offered a place on the 2200, which actually suited us better. We arrived at Dunkirk at 1645 and enquired if we could catch an earlier ferry. We were offered the 1800 but at an additional cost of £100 (The return trip car, 2 passengers, boat and trailer had only cost £103). We declined but asked about the 2000 sailing. "No problem, you can use your existing ticket on that with no extra cost". We did of course, and had a last night celebration dinner in the Bistro restaurant onboard. Very good food and quite reasonable. Dover 9pm uk time, home 10pm. That was Sunday, the following Thursday we towed down to Chichester ready for Solent Cruise week starting the following Sunday. But as they say that is another story.

Finally a big word of thanks to Adri and her team for organising such a wonderful week, and to Trevor Thomas for doing his Hon Sec stuff! And well done to Robin Wearn for sailing from the Solent to Holland and back to attend.

Tony Coles/Cathy Gardner
SHY TALK (930)