

A Trip to the Kentish Stour – June & Des

Wednesday 17th Aug 2011: We left Walton Backwaters at 04.00 heading for the Medusa then Sunk Head Towers, Black Deep, and past London Array wind farm. Wind was NW3 and we were motor-sailing.



We skirted the Fisherman's Gat and East Margate then reached the North Foreland, looking dramatic in the morning light. We circled inside Broadstairs harbour and then went past Ramsgate into Pegwell Bay, at 12.00. We sailed over everything into the entrance of the Stour, which is by a big old power station. There were lots of seals on bank just inside.

We continued past Richborough Port, which was used to send troops to France in the first World War, and anchored above Stonar Gap for lunch. We then managed to sail all the way to Sandwich, which was a good four miles up the beautiful wide and meandering river. It was high slack water by the time we arrived and sailed alongside a pristine Dutch yacht.



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We had a walk round the lovely historic town, which had been an important port in medieval times and a Cinque Port. Hard to believe it now that the entrance has silted up. There were plenty of pubs to choose from for our drinks and meal. The day had been well above our expectations and Des kept saying “I never thought it would be like this!”

Thursday 18th Aug

The town was full of ancient Tudor buildings and we explored it properly, visiting the ancient law court and church, then bought provisions from the market. We left at 13.00 as soon as tide flowed up (we had already lowered the mast). The countryside was beautiful and the weather still sunny, although very windy. There were lots of big boats moored right up in this part of the river but none was moving!

The river doubles back to pass the power station again, but from the other side. Pluck's Gutter, where we had planned to get to, was not much of a place so we continued upstream. We went past Grove Ferry, and then the river opened out suddenly into some big wide broads just like Norfolk.



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We thought we would see how far we could get and continued past a weed catcher, but we soon found our prop was completely fouled with very tough weed, which we could not get off easily. We had to row the boat backwards (the best way it would go) to the weed catcher, where I lay down with the bread knife (my arms are longer) to cut all the weed off, which took ages! We had actually got within about three miles of Canterbury. We got back to Grove ferry at 18.00 and tied up right outside the pub, where we had a well-earned drink and meal.



Friday 19th Aug

We left at 07.30 to take the flood back to Sandwich, which was strong by the time we got there so we went under the the bridge backwards and back alongside the *Edam*, which was still there. We repaired the running lights then took the stream down at 10.30 and had enough water even at low tide to get all the way down to the entrance, although the flood was against us by this time. The last part of the river goes through an absolutely vast drug factory complex!



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We anchored by the seals and they entertained us for ages as the light faded. In the night they were swimming all round us and splashing about!



Our plan had been to go to France and the forecast had looked good, but when we woke up at 04.00 it had all changed. The wind was now fair to go home so we thought we better take the chance before we got stuck, but the trip was well worth while in its own right!

