

## SHRIMPERS TO ST MALO & QUIBERON BAY

*Text by Barry Mellor (Clementine – 49)*

It all started when Pierre Deleage (Hon Sec of the French Shrimper & Crabber Association) asked me if I thought there would be interest in an international Shrimper rally on the Rance, to coincide with the departure of the Tall Ships from St Malo. A quick straw poll soon assured me that there would be good support (including for some a second week in Southern Brittany). Indeed, a fleet of ten British (one from N Ireland), one Belgian and one Dutch Shrimpers came together in France on Sunday 18 July – arriving by ferry and overland, with boats on road trailers. We were met on Sunday morning in St Malo by Pierre and his team – and very friendly and helpful they all were. The bulk of the fleet launched off the slip at Port St Jean, near the St Hubert Bridge on the Rance, while a few preferred to use the mobile crane on the quay at the little port of St Hubert (FFr 300). This was the scene of the inauguration of the St Malo Anglo-French Swimming Club, when Sir Clifford Champion (*Saucy Ann*) took to the water (involuntarily), by falling off the side the quay from which we were being craned in! Fortunately, this event was recorded for posterity, both on film and in the Times newspaper, which produced the following headline: “*Champion forced to remove his swimsuit*”.

We were soon all afloat and sailing, in a stiff breeze on our way up the Rance to Lyvet, a small marina upstream of the Le Chatelier lock and therefore in non-tidal water. That evening we all joined together for dinner at the restaurant “*Ty-Corentin*”, giving us an opportunity to chat to our French hosts, and review the plans for the forthcoming week.

On Monday, we sailed from Lyvet up to Dinan, and rafted up alongside the quay in this lovely old historic town. Thereafter, it was shopping for victuals for the week, though some older crewmen were seen loitering outside a shop displaying a sign: “*INDERDIT AUX MINEURS*”. Closer inspection revealed the following items for sale (all of them indispensable on a Shrimper): *aphrodisiaques, contacts, boites aux lettres, projections, gadgets, lingerie, cuir & SM*. The rest of us did some more serious sightseeing (including climbing the belfry), and enjoyed an excellent dinner at a charming riverside restaurant - delicious *Moules Marinieres!*

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the next day (Tuesday) we passed through the Le Chatelier lock and sailed down the Rance to Cancaval, where we a wonderful Breton evening had been arranged for us by the local community of Pleurtuit. This started with a guided tour of the local Chateau gardens, followed a drinks reception in the chateau grounds and then a delicious dinner on the banks of the Rance, listening to a most professional shanty choir. A magical evening, thanks to Pierre's friendship with the Pleurtuit authorities.

The following morning (Wednesday), we found that the local newspaper had produced a sympathetic article about the Shrimper headed *Des Cornish dans les embruns des geants*.

That morning, we passed through the Rance tidal barrage, the lock opening on the hour every hour (you have to be ready to enter the lock around 20 minutes before). We then rafted up off Dinard for a picnic lunch, where our French friends passed round glasses of *Kir* (served from an inflatable). In the afternoon, we enjoyed an excellent sail in the Rance estuary, before mooring up together on the drying beach at Solidor - where special moorings had been laid down for us by our efficient French hosts.

On Thursday morning, we were free to walk into St Malo proper, and see the magnificent sight of the Tall Ships moored up in the inner basins – the highlights were the three giants from Russia (*Mir, Sedov and Kruzhenshtern*), and we were able to go on board the *Kruzhenshtern*, a memorable experience. Other tall ships which dwarfed *Clementine* included three from Norway (*Christian Radich, Sorlandet and Statsraad Lehmkuhl*) and the *Khersones* from the Ukraine. *Clementine* felt more comfortable with the *Jean de la Lune*, described in the programme as “small but enthusiastic”.

We then enjoyed a magnificent sail along to coast passed the Pointe de la Varde, and then back to Solidor in time for a drinks reception, hosted

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by the local historical society. This was followed by dinner at a charming restaurant - oysters and other items of *fruits de mer*, a variety of creepy-crawlies fished up from the deep. By the way, do try the *Soupe d'Etrille*, translated into English as "Home Produce Velvet Swimming Crab Soup" or the *Damier de Poissons*, translated as "Draughtboard of fish"!

On Friday morning, we sailed out into the open sea to have a picnic afloat and watch the tall ships leave St Malo. *Clementine* sailed alongside *Blue Chip* for a while, we flying our newly acquired geniker from Rockall (or is it a cruising chute?) while *Blue Chip* flew her cruising chute from Gale Heard (or was it a genniker?). Our new genniker is a spectacular affair in yellow and black, which some members of the fleet thought looked very similar to the signal flag: "I am manoeuvring with difficulty – keep clear", while Ian Fisher (*Black Sheep*) thought it conveyed the message: "I am slowing down", which is more like the truth!

Some of us then landed on the Island of Cezembre (for drinks and swimming), prior to meeting up for our farewell dinner and speeches at Dinard Yacht Club. The lot had fallen to Ted Palmer (*Kittiwake*) to speak on behalf of the British, and he made what had to be the most politically incorrect speech of the millennium – and which I had to translate into French. Regrettably, dear reader, it was far too near-the-bone for me to reproduce it here! I only wonder that the French did not immediately break off diplomatic relations!

On Saturday and Sunday, some boats and crews had to return to home ports, but a group of six of us (*Clementine*, *Black Sheep*, *Blue Chip*, *Scallawag*, *Jean and Moby Dick*) hauled out (at Port St Jean or at Lyvet), prior to trailing down to Port de Crouesty, near the entrance to the Morbihan in Southern Brittany. This is a modern marina development, with good facilities, including shops, restaurants and hotels, and an excellent wide slip, where we all launched.

On Monday morning, we set out for the old and attractive port of

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Le Palais, the principal port of Belle Isle. With wind in the NorthEast and wall-to-wall blue skies, it was a gentle run, with good visibility and no obvious dangers. However, the Shrimper is a small boat to venture out into the Atlantic, and we took the precaution of sailing in company, and making radio contact on the hour (Channel 72), to ensure all was well. Le Palais offers secure moorings in the inner harbour (you have to lock in at half tide) and deep-water moorings in the outer harbour, which gets a little choppy if the wind is in the North.

On the Tuesday, we were able to enjoy some sightseeing and sailing along the coast, including visiting the famous Ster Wenn fjord and the wonderful beach at Ster Vraz (with a portable BBQ and some freshly caught sea bass). Overnight, some of the boats tucked in to Sauzon, a charming and friendly village, where one dries out completely (it is best to have legs). I have heard of at least one Shrimper with legs – maybe this is an idea, which could catch on?

Wednesday – the next destination was the island of Houat, where we anchored (for picnicking and swimming) off some of the most attractive and unspoilt beaches you will ever see in Europe. The Shrimper has the great advantage that it can be anchored in very shallow water and/or beached (preferably on a rising tide!), for swimming and going ashore. Four of the boats spent the night off Houat, while two went off to the large but friendly and efficient marina at Port Haliguen on the Quiberon peninsular - the choice for those who prefer hot showers, an up-to-date MetFax and some Breton *galettes*.

On Thursday, we entered the Morbihan for a picnic, swimming and exploring on shore. The Morbihan is famous for its rip-roaring tides, so we were most cautious, entering at dead low water, and leaving at dead high water. With a small outboard, Clementine would never have coped with those tides and neither I guess would the inboards.

On Friday, it was time to haul out and make the journey back to the channel ports and our ferry crossing home.