

Friesland Revisited – John Montgomery and Peter Trowill

Earlier this year Peter Trowill and Fran Davies (*Sequel* – 1, Cornish Crabber's first Shrimper 21) canvassed the idea of a return to Holland based at the area of the highly successful 2016 International Week organised by Harry Breuking and his team. They were quickly joined by John Montgomery and Maggi Lamont in their new 21 (*Blue Moon* - 65), who had had to pull out of the 2016 Week at the last minute. Ian and Angela Roberts (*Emma J* - 39) and Steve and Jenny Hendon (*Miss Molly II* - 15) also signed up.

Thursday 17th May: From Bosham *Sequel* and *Blue Moon* took the scenic route through the South Downs, on around the M25 and Dartford tunnel en route to Harwich. Stopping at Colchester services, they met up with Ian and Angela before journeying on to the Cross Inn for supper. Although three Shrimper 21s almost filled the pub's car park to capacity, it is a good place to stop for a bite on the way to Harwich as it is right on the A120. Arriving at Harwich, we met up with Steve and Jenny (who had been cruising the East Coast) in time to catch the overnight ferry to Hook of Holland.

Friday 18th: After a somewhat early but leisurely breakfast on board the *Stena Hollandica* ('the world's largest superferry'), we were off the ship by 8.30 and on our way, navigating around Amsterdam and via the Afsluitdijk across the IJsselmeer to arrive at Marina Stavoren in time for lunch. Peter had pre-booked, so masts up and craning only took a short time thanks to the friendly and efficient marina staff. From the launch area we motored round to pile berths stern-on to a pontoon - an interesting exercise with a cross wind. Having settled in and following champagne on *Blue Moon*, we drove to town for dinner at Schots, a Dutch take on a Scottish restaurant with an amazing array of whiskies. There we were joined by Stephan, a Shrimper 19 owner who had driven over 250 km from Germany to meet us for the evening! Stephan, a VW engineer and an expert on diesels, had strong views on European governments' negative attitudes to diesel engines and their environmental concerns.

Saturday 19th: We awoke to a sunny morning with light westerly



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winds – ideal for the first leg of our cruise. After provisioning up at the Co-op (Ian pointed out that we should have motored the boats around and moored outside the store's front entrance), we departed Stavoren for a gentle run down the Johan Friso Kanaal (D20) navigating our first bridge and crossing our first aqueduct to stop for a picnic lunch in a tranquil lagoon on Nike Kruzpole Island. As the skies started to darken it was decided to press on, motoring through grey mist/light rain to Heeg's Passantenhaven marina and arriving at 17.15, by which time it had dried up. G&T's on *Emma J* followed by a walk into town for a meal.



Sunday 20th: A sunny and pleasantly warm day provided the opportunity to explore the pretty village (something that didn't take too long as, being a Bank Holiday Sunday, most things were closed) and for Fran, our artist in residence, to do some sketching. We left the marina at midday to anchor and watch the Dutch barges racing in light winds on the Heegermeer. Interestingly, Dutch Barge racing rules allow for the use of punts.

Early afternoon and time to press on to our next destination – the town of Sneek; with very little wind and narrow canals, we motored via Ijlst, crossing our second aqueduct. With a very crowded canal trip through the centre of Sneek (particularly interesting waiting for the town's main bridge to open), we arrived at Sneekjacht Marina at 16.30. Sneekjacht is not so much a marina as a garage block for people who want to moor their boats undercover. We moored stern-to again on piles, with everyone getting more adept at lassoing the piles with bow lines as we reversed in. Peter, however managed to bag a berth alongside. Once again a really lovely overnight stop in a quiet backwater but with only a short walk into the historic town centre.

Tonight's drinks on *Sequel* were followed by supper on the grassy banks of our marina



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berth before a walk into the town ending with a nightcap in a local bar. A local sport seems to be fishing bicycles out of the canal.

Monday 21st: Another sunny day but windy, with a north easterly 3/4 gusting 5. After a visit to Aldi for provisions, we motored out of the marina for a sail around Sneekemeer under reefed mains. After a lively beat across the lake followed by a run down the lake, we found a more sheltered spot to anchor for lunch just off Goinggarijp and for Maggi and Steve to have a swim.



We decided on another sail in the afternoon, but it was too gusty to be pleasant and really needed two reefs, although Ian had changed down to his small (non-standard) jib which sets much better than a part-furled standard headsail. Prudence and comfort dictated that we turn back to head for Joure, arriving at the marina at 16.15 having passed some spectacular traditional and contemporary

canal-side houses. Again, we all moored stern-to, this time on finger pontoons. Drinks on *Miss Molly II*, followed by a walk through the local woodland park into town for another great supper at Bistro Fred.

Tuesday 22nd: Yet another warm sunny day. Shopped in town after breakfast, with the usual problem that many shops and restaurants won't accept English credit or debit cards – could it be something to do with Brexit?



Today's cruise was to Sloten. We motored out at 11.45 to motor-sail to Tsjukemeer via D15 and D19, having caused a traffic jam when the bridge on the A7 opened for us.

We enjoyed a good sail on the lake, passing Marchjepolle Island with its sandy beach and lagoon which, for future reference, looks like a good overnight stop.

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The final leg to Sloten involved crossing the busy Princess Margaret canal, which fortunately wasn't too crowded. On arrival at Sloten, Peter found a really picturesque inlet - Havengeld Pleziervaart (used during the 2016 week and featured on the front cover of the Autumn 2016 edition of the Shrimper magazine) to moor in a line under the town's windmill.



There we met two Dutch Crabber 24 owners who edit the Dutch Crabber magazine and who were invited on board *Blue Moon* for Pimms with the gang, followed by a BBQ on the edge of the marina. All back on board just before we had a brief shower of rain.

Wednesday 23rd: Sloten is the smallest walled city in Friesland and a historic settlement with interesting buildings along a central canal with a windmill dating from 1755. A number of traditional Dutch working barges were moored on the canal bank just north of the town, and we were invited aboard one of them for a look around.

We departed Sloten at lunchtime, having passed under the town's main bridge, paying two euros collected in a wooden clog lowered down to the boats as we passed. Ideal sailing around the Slotermeer Mar in a gusty north-easterly, with the fleet opting for a mix of one reef plus part-furled jib, two reefs, or jibs only. Arrived at Woudsend on the other side of the lake, another picturesque old town with narrow alleyways, to raft up alongside the town quay. Aperitifs and nibbles aboard *Sequel* before dinner at the Café Restaurant de Watersport on the canal banks.

Thursday 24th: Left Woudsend in the sunshine at 11.30 via the D17 back to the Hagemer Mar. Broad reach with reefed mains under clear blue skies in a brisk east-north-easterly force 4 to 5 to Langehoekspoll island for lunch. On the way Ian had a luffing match with the barge owner we had met in Sloten. As we settled down, a dredger turned up to dredge the narrow basin - somewhat to the consternation of at least one motor boat moored next to it. As the skies started to

turn grey we decided to press on, with *Blue Moon* and *Miss Molly II* under reefed mains and partially rolled jibs for a fast broad reach down the De Fluezen, with *Miss Molly* clocking up 6.7 knots. *Sequel* and *Emma J* took the comfortable route under jib only. Arriving at Galamadammen hotel/marina at 17.00, we were unfortunately unable to all moor up together and indeed Ian had to shift off his berth as the owner came back unexpectedly. Early evening drinks on the bank hosted by *Miss Molly II* followed by a tasty dinner in the hotel.

Friday 25th: After overnight rain things fortunately dried up and, following a good breakfast in the hotel, we left under full sail for a pleasant run down to Stavoren, arriving late morning and lunch time. Being their last day, *Blue Moon* and *Miss Molly II* were lifted out and packed away. After fond farewells, they departed at 16.00 inadvertently taking the scenic route along the side of the Ijsselmeer, arriving back to the Hook of Holland to catch the overnight ferry to Harwich. Before boarding they found a really good restaurant, Jutter, on the promenade only five minutes from the ferry port, for a final supper before sailing at 21.00.

Saturday 26th: Meanwhile, back at Stavoren, Ian and Peter (who had been joined by his daughter and her German partner) decided to sail to Workum, another interesting town that had, like Stavoren, once been a North Sea port before the formation of the Ijsselmeer. They berthed in a small marina in the town, with an excellent chandlery. *Sequel's* camper van accommodated her additional crew.

Sunday 27th: Time to return to Stavoren. They decided to sail via Heeg, lunching this time alongside the old quay in the centre of town. This was followed by a very pleasant sail back down the Heegermeer and Der Fluessen.

Monday 28th: *Sequel* and *Emma J* were craned out in the morning and returned home by different routes. However, both hit the same roadworks shortly after departure and had to reverse, with some difficulty, into the same farmyard!

This part of Holland is particularly scenic, with interesting sailing on a mix of canals and lakes. All the towns and villages we visited or passed on our journey were really pretty, neat and tidy (with no litter anywhere!) and all of our restaurant meals were splendid. We all enjoyed good company and great sailing with brisk winds on smooth waters. A marvellous time was had by all.

John Montgomery – *Blue Moon* (65) and **Peter Trowill** – *Sequel* (1)