



After a wonderful Shrimper Week in Zeeland, we set off south in company with Carlos and Diana Gomes (*Crevette* - 730) for the first half of our journey to North Brittany. We drove all day, on the way having to replace a punctured tyre on the trailer. We arrived at Plouer sur Rance in the pouring rain and parked in the boatyard for the night.

Sunday 19th June: We woke to a calm, blue-sky morning! We rigged and launched down the gentle slipway and, after making contact with the Harbour Mistress, set sail down the Rance. It is a beautiful river and reminded us of the River Deben back home - both rivers dry out to acres of mud. There was enough wind to sail, but it was quite cold and the blue sky disappeared. We reached the lock at the barrage by lunchtime and were dropped down 25 feet (about the range of the tides around there). It was quite a short distance to St Malo, and we motored into the marina mid-afternoon, just as it began to rain. We had arrived during a festival of music, and when the rain eased we wandered round the various damp little groups of singers and musicians and treated ourselves to our first crepes and cider of Brittany! The rain deterred us from further exploration and we returned to the boat for an early night after a game of Black Jack.



Bumbling in Brittany 2011

Monday, 20th June: We left St Malo harbour at 9 am in a slight drizzle. There seemed to be a maze of buoys, rocks, and more rocks, but with the aid of the charts we managed to get out safely.

Our plan was to get to St Quay-Portrieux, about 35 miles from St Malo, the longest planned leg of the trip. The wind was westerly with a touch of south, where it remained the whole week, so we had to tack and ended up doing 50 miles even with the help of the current! Light to start with, the wind increased during the day, with stronger gusts causing us to put in a reef. We took one long tack out to a lighthouse, Grand Léjon, and then worked our way in amongst the islands and rocks. On the last few miles a fierce squall came through, and we needed two reefs and the jib reduced. It was quite difficult to see the buoys and cardinals marking the channel through the rocks in the driving rain. We arrived at St Quay-Portrieux, a pleasant sheltered marina, at 7.30 pm after 10½ hours sailing. For me the day had seemed interminable. We were extremely wet and very relieved to be able to moor up and relax. We settled in with a stiff drink, supper, Black Jack and an early night.

Tuesday, 21st June: The original plan was to get to Tréguier, but Rob agreed to reduce this and at midday we set sail for Lézardrieux. We headed north, hugging the coast on a reach under full sail, and even saw some blue sky and sun. It was pleasant to be able to enjoy the views of the cliffs and small sandy coves and scattered villages. After 11 miles we turned west, passing inside the Ile de Bréhat with its very different extraordinarily shaped piles of rocks. It was near low water and jagged rocks seemed to be all round us until we reached the entrance to the River Trieux. We passed through some lovely scenery, first with expanses of water and rocks and lighthouses and then, as the river narrowed, a rocky shore with wooded hills above. We continued on up the river past Lézardrieux to inspect an interesting and quite old cable-stayed bridge just beyond the marina. The countryside on the far side changed dramatically, from rocks and wooded slopes to rolling fields and animals grazing. At about 4.30pm we arrived at the marina, where Bumble Chugger became the centre of much interest. We took a stroll up the steep winding road into the main square, which was surrounded by pleasant houses and masses of colourful flowers.





We settled outside a cafe for a quick glass of fine Breton cider and suddenly found musicians gathering around us to practice for a concert that evening. We ordered more cider and sat listening to some amazing impromptu entertainment, first Scott Joplin on the keyboard, followed by a duet with a banjo and then some bagpipes! Later that evening the sound of the concert wafted down to the boat.

Wednesday, 22nd June: A lovely calm morning, but by 9 o'clock the wind was up. The forecast expected a Force 5 with gusts of Force 7 during the morning. We decided to visit Ile de Bréhat in the morning and then set off for the journey to Tréguier in the afternoon, when the wind should have dropped.

It was quite a fast rolling run back down the River Trieux, with the wind rising. It was nice to turn off the main channel at Ile de Bréhat and into the quieter water of Port de Corderie, though nowhere seemed to be sheltered from the increasing wind. We had time for a quick walk and the sun came out and shone on us as we wandered along the narrow winding roads, some bordered by high stone walls. It was very reminiscent of the Isles of Scilly, with flowers everywhere and cosy stone houses basking in the sun. It was a tough row back to the boat against the wind, then lunch aboard before it was time to leave, with the water dropping fast and the sun disappearing behind cloud.



Once clear of the island, the sea became quite rough and the wind was increasing, contrary to the forecast. With the rough weather, we decided it would be advisable to go out to sea rather than taking the planned route through a narrow short cut through the rocks. This added over twelve miles to the journey, and as we sailed out to sea the waves became huge, with breakers giving us a continuous drenching. The view from the wave-tops was just solid white, and the wind howled - it was up to a Force 7 now and gusting 8, definitely the worst conditions

we had ever sailed in. The revised route needed two new waypoints to be entered into the GPS map and Rob instructed me how to do this while he concentrated on keeping the boat upright. It was difficult to do with all the noise, buffeting and constant dowsing but at last I succeeded. For four hours we made slow progress with the main double-reefed and the jib three-quarters furled: it felt at times as if we were lost in endless mountains of water with the wind whistling like a banshee. The motor packed up quite early on - not surprising with the amount of water that poured over it. Slowly the first of the new marks came into sight, to our great relief. The GPS map is certainly an incredibly clever machine - I don't know how we would have got into the Tréguier River and avoided all the rocks without it. The marks for the main channel into the river appeared and we could head towards the shore, with the waves becoming less daunting.

It was more sheltered in the river, but we were still hit by fierce gusts. Rob was still unable to start the engine, so we made slow progress tacking up the river. We passed a large cruiser marked 'Douane Français', and soon after a rib with six red-suited individuals aboard roared up behind us. Two of them boarded us, asked us a lot of questions and wanted to see our papers. Everything in the cabin had been thrown around by the seas and was now jumbled up in an untidy heap! Luckily they didn't want to look in it but insisted on seeing our SSR (Small Ships Register) certificate, which fortunately Rob had in his document bag. They were finally satisfied and roared off back to their ship. We heard later that they'd spent several hours searching one of the boats in the marina. All very exciting!

Rob finally got the engine started and we headed up the lovely wooded Tréguier River with the spire of Tréguier Cathedral appearing above the trees, and into the marina. We were both soaked through in spite of our expensive wet gear, so drying off and getting into dry clothes was our first priority, then a strong whisky to revive us! It had been a very shattering, stressful day through the worst conditions that either of us had ever been in.



Thursday, 23rd June: Trebeurden was our next destination. I had time before our midday start for a quick explore of the picturesque old town and to stock up on food. It was a much gentler morning, but by the time we got out to sea it seemed more than the Force 5 forecast. By mid-afternoon, the wind was down a

bit but it was a wet and uncomfortable sail, with the waves quite big and very confused. It seemed a long trip, and it was great to find ourselves at last creeping in amongst the rocks with the marina masts showing in the distance. We moored up to the visitors' pontoon at about 8pm, and soon we were visited by Brian Lea, a great friend of Trevor Heritage, whose wife was the cousin of Roger Dongray. Their daughter had helped build a wooden Shrimper, *May* (9).

The last couple of days had been rather taxing, and with more westerly winds forecast Rob suggested a plan B. We would get the boat out here, where there was a slip, trail to the south coast and spend more time sailing there. This plan definitely got my support!

Friday, 24th June: This became a land travelling day: a series of taxis, buses and trains got us back to Plouer sur Rance and by late afternoon we had returned to Trebeurden with the car and trailer. The marina was a hive of activity with the yachts having arrived from their race from the Yealm, drying clothes and celebrating their success or otherwise.

Saturday, 25th June: By lunchtime we had manoeuvred the rather tricky slip, de-rigged and were on our way south, arriving at Loctudy soon after 3. An hour later we'd launched down an excellent slip. The sky was pure blue and it was hot - wonderful!

The next week was all about what Shrimper sailing should be! Short trips along the coast to Bénodet, Quimper, Concarneau, Port la Forêt, out to the Iles de Glénans; pottering up rivers, swimming, sketching, walking and picnicking. It was all perfect! By the time we got the boat out of the water ten days later for our trip home, the storm on the north coast just felt like a bad dream!

Gille & Robin Whittle – *Bumble Chugger* (124)

