

# Log of La Mouette's Summer Cruise 2009



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**Crew: Robin Wearn and Peter May**

Tuesday 9th June: Lymington ~ Alderney.

Woken up by the mobile phone saying "Wake up it's twelve thirty". The Shipping Forecast at 0048 was encouraging, with northerly winds, maximum force 5, decreasing later and moderate visibility.

Let go from sailing club pontoon at 0110 and set off down the Lymington River under an overcast sky, with a full moon giving enough light to see the outlines of boats we passed. Sail was soon hoisted and we had an excellent run down through Hurst Narrows which we passed at 8 knots over the ground. Just off the Needles we hit a rough patch but soon settled down to good sailing on a broad reach towards Alderney and it started raining.

During the night the wind freshened, we took in one reef and still managed to surf down the steep following sea at up to 7 knots. These conditions were excellent for a quick passage but rather demanding on stomachs which had been fortified with wild boar sausage and sticky jaw pudding at the Fisherman's Rest before leaving. By lunch time, with the shipping lanes behind us, the wind eased and the rain stopped so we shook out the reef and adjusted course for Braye Harbour. The fishing line went out on the last leg down the north side of the Island and we caught three mackerel before drifting into the lee of the breakwater, where we were finally becalmed, and motoring in to pick up a mooring buoy.

(68 miles, 15½ hours, 4.4 knots)

Wednesday and Thursday 10th – 11th June: at Alderney.



La Mouette and others at Alderney

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### Friday 12th June: Alderney ~ Guernsey.

Left Braye in bright sunshine with light breeze and, with a favourable tide, were soon making good progress through the Swinge. However, once clear, the breeze fell away and we needed the motor to get to the Little Russell before the tide turned against us. There were several other boats about, either drifting or motoring, and we all arrived at St Peters Port at the same time to wait for the tide to rise enough to get over the sill at Victoria Marina. We were first in and soon moored in a snug corner near the town.

(23 miles, 5 hours, 4,6 knots)



Victoria Marina, Guernsey

### Saturday 13th June: Guernsey ~ Tréguier

For the next leg of our journey to we needed to leave St Peters Port on a south going tide and arrive off Tréguier on a rising tide so, although the distance was only about 40 miles, we decided to make a slow overnight crossing.

There was absolutely no wind when we left at 1400. We motored until we could see the Roches Douvres lighthouse then switched off the engine and drifted until a fitful breeze sprang up. The lighthouse remained in sight for the next six hours and eventually we started the engine again to avoid be carried the wrong side of it.

### Sunday 14th June: Guernsey ~ Tréguier

With the Roches safely behind us we stopped the motor again and sailed gently along on a clear night with the lights of France ahead and stars above. Quite suddenly they all disappeared and we were enveloped in thick fog just before dawn. As it became lighter we could see our little world which extended as far as the first swell crest and hear the sound of boat engines. The GPS took us to Basse Crublent buoy off Tréguier which, when it emerged from the fog, looked very big indeed. As we sailed on, visibility improved and what had only been sounds before turned out to be intrepid French anglers in a mixed fleet of outboard driven craft, some going very briskly!

I visited Tréguier last in 1968 (No GPS then!) and we anchored in the river off the town with the tide swirling past. Now a marina has been built from which one can walk ashore on the level at high tide or up the 45 degree gangway at low time. We tied up here at 1000 and spent the rest of the day sleeping and shopping and eating in a pleasant little family run restaurant by the quay.

(52 miles, 21½ hours, 2.4 knots)



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### Monday 15th June: Tréguier ~ Pontrieux

After a leisurely breakfast of fresh croissants we left the marina at high water and took the tide down the river. There was a light breeze, rather fluky in the river but with the tide's help we were able to sail and, in the sunshine, see more of the river than had been possible on the way in. At La Corne lighthouse we parted from our inbound track and took the short cut Passe de la Gaîne, the route is well marked and with the added reassurance of the GPS, it was a delightful sail among the rocks. As we rounded up to approach Lézardrieux we were close hauled and somewhat over canvased for the gusty conditions but were soon getting shelter from the land and were glad of full sail as we tacked up the river in a constantly changing wind. We continued like this, helped by the tide, under the bridge at Lézardrieux until we were defeated by a dieing head wind in the narrowing river. So we motored the last three miles in absolute stillness through steep wooded banks, past an imposing chataux, until at 2140 we reached the black gates of the Pontrieux lock. VHF and phone calls to the lock were unanswered so gallant Pete scaled the vertical ladder to the lock and went in search of the lock keeper. Having woken him up Pete explained that, although out of sight, there was a little boat below waiting to come through the lock. He returned down the iron ladder with the promise that the lock would be opened in 15 minutes and sure enough the keeper soon appeared at the lock edge waving us in.

It was getting dark as we motored out of the lock but it was light enough to see a splash on the left bank and a dark form at the head of a "V" of ripples as an otter swam across the river ahead of us.

The pilot book recommended going as far up the river as possible so we went on until the keel touched and then circled round and found a gap at the end of the quay where we made fast and prepared to turn in.

(30 miles, 8½ hours, 3.5knots)



Pontrieux

### Tuesday 16th June: at Pontrieux

Spent the afternoon on a walk along part of the GR341 through a wooded river valley to the south of Pontrieux. The tourist office map was not very precise and a slight navigational error resulted in wet feet whilst taking a short cut to get back on track. We stopped at a bridge to wring out our socks and met a man with his toes under the hand rail doing sit ups. After exchanging "bonjours" we set off up a steep hill. Near the top we were overtaken by our friend running, carrying his mountain bike on his shoulder!

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### Wednesday 17 June: Pontrieux ~ Ile de Bréhat

Another croissant breakfast and lazy morning waiting for the lock to open at high water. We left at 1400 and drifted down the canal under jib only. As we rounded the last corner the lock gates were closing so we had to hang on to the bank and wait for two boats coming up. Once clear of the lock we set sail again and in a very fluky wind managed to sail all the way, past Lézardrieux, to Ile de Bréhat.



The bridge at Lézardrieux



La Chambre, Ile de Bréhat

By the time we reached the open water there was a fresh westerly breeze as we looked for a sheltered spot to anchor. The main harbour, Port Clos, although sheltered didn't look too good as it dries out, but just round the corner we found La Chambre, a sheltered all tide anchorage. It says 'anchorage' in the book but actually it was full of moorings. We found a vacant one well inside and picked it up at 1900.

(10 miles. 5 hours, 2 knots)

### Thursday 18th June: Ile de Bréhat ~ Paimpol

Blew up the dinghy after breakfast and rowed ashore to explore the islands. This is another place where cars are not allowed but we did meet a lot of tractors and trailers. Some in the harbour, where supplies from the mainland are brought in by flat bottomed boat and unloaded on to the trailers while the tide is out.

The weather was lovely and the island charming with pretty cottages and flower filled gardens but, at the exposed northern end, it was easy to imagine a very different picture during winter gales.

Back from our walk at midday we took in one reef and set off for Paimpol. It was a lovely sail and ended with a stiff beat into the harbour entrance. The lock gates were both open so we went straight in and were soon berthed in the marina.

(7 miles, 1¼ hours, 3.9 knots)

Paimpol



Cattle trough - Ile de Bréhat



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### Friday 19th June: Paimpol ~ St Brieuc

Woke up at for 0518 shipping forecast and realised that it was 0618 local time and we had 12 minutes to get the last lock out on this tide. We were underway and calling the lock in 5 minutes flat and then had to wait for a boat coming in so had time to change out of pyjamas into oilskins.

There was less wind that yesterday but we were soon bowling along and looked like getting to St Brieuc two hours before the lock started working so we decide to call in to St Quay. St Quay is a man-made harbour accessible at all tides with a modern marina: just the place for a quick wash and brush up and lunch.

At St Bieuc we waited for about 15 minutes with the centre board in the mud for the lock gates to open and allow us through. A friendly harbour master gave us the combination for the loos and said there would be no charge for just one night. What he omitted to tell us that there was an all night party on the next boat which involved singing and shouting and rides up and down the quay on a moped.



Le Légué (St Brieuc)

(26 miles, 6¾ hours, 3.9 knots)

### Saturday 20th June: St Brieuc ~ St Cast

It was quite a relief to get up at six to catch the lock and, had the revellers next door not still been up themselves, we would probably have taken the opportunity to throw the moped into the canal.

Resisting the temptation we got underway and motored down to the lock which we shared with two other boats. By the time we got through the tide was well down and the larger of the other boat had the misfortune to touch the mud at the channel edge. Despite lots of running about, heeling over and bursts of power it looked pretty hopeless to us as we sailed on with one hand on the centre plate rope.



Low water

It turned out to be another good days sailing with a following wind and a smattering of rock dodging near Cap d'Erquy to keep us on our toes.

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St Cast Marina



The way ashore

The harbour of St Cast is not marked on the chart or mentioned in the “Channel Pilot”. However, we had a brochure, picked up at Tréguier, which contained a “Plan du port - Accès 24/24, 780 places sur pontoons” which sounded pretty good to us. We arrived at low water and as we rounded the huge breakwater of piled up rocks were greeted by the noise of dredgers and dumper trucks at work. Beyond them were rows of empty pontoons and beyond that a pontoon occupied by fishing boats so we tied up there while Pete went ashore to investigate. He returned with muddy shoes saying he had found a Maître du Port office and some unlocked loo's but no Maître du Port so we decided to find a quiet corner of the yacht section and settle ourselves in.

This was easy as we were spoiled for choice but getting ashore was more challenging: the decking on the brand new pontoons had not all been laid then there was the padlocked chain at the top of the gangway, the mud left by the loaded dumper trucks and the steel fence before we were in semi civilisation. Fortunately as the tide rose dredging work stopped and we were left in peace which lasted the whole weekend.

(27 miles, 7 hours, 3.8 knots)

### Sunday 21 June: at St Cast

In perfect walking weather we set off to follow GR 34 coastal path with wonderful views of blue sea, yellow sand in the bays and craggy cliffs between. Where our map ended, or as it turned out, a little beyond, we turned inland along a lovely path through the woods beside little river. Our packed lunch was eaten and a siesta taken at a ruined mill before we walked and eventually came out on a road. No matter which way we turned the map it didn't make sense so, deciding we were in terra incognita, set course by the sun and headed back to the boat. Less than a mile on we came to a little town with a sign post saying “St Cast” and a bar selling cold beer. From there a disused railway line took us back to the riviera part of St Cast where we finished the last of our iron rations overlooking the beach and blue sea.



Mussel farm seen from GR34

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## Monday 22 June: St Cast ~ Jersey

Set off at 0700 in a flat calm and motored the fifteen miles to SW Minquiers buoy in three hours. The next five miles to the NW Minquiers buoy took another three hours under sail but, by then, there was a light NW'ly breeze which allowed us to set course for St Helier. As the east going tide strengthened it became clear we would not make St Helier without the engine so we decided on Gorey at the eastern end of the Island instead. Tide and freshening breeze helped us through the Violet Channel and into Gorey Bay.



SW Minquiers buoy



Legs at Gorey

The harbour at Gorey dries out at low water and is very crowded so we thought we would try out our legs on the beach just beyond the harbour. At about 1900 we dropped anchor and waited till an hour after high water before running La Mouette up the beach and deploying the “legs” (which also serve as spare oars and bunk lee boards). With a little adjustment we soon had her sitting absolutely upright and at low tide ran the anchor out astern to pull off with in the morning. After a stroll ashore, followed by dinner of freshly caught mackerel, we turned in with the alarm set for the 0518 weather forecast.

(48 miles, 13 hours, 3.7 knots)

## Tuesday 23rd June: Gorey (Jersey) ~ Di lette

Woke with the sun rising behind Gorey Castle, a light on shore breeze and the tide coming in fast. By 0630 we had pulled the boat off the beach and at 0700 weighed anchor and set off across tide towards France. Just managed to clear Les Ecrehou before the wind dropped and left us drifting north at four knots in complete calm. We were still becalmed when the tide turned and resorted to the engine to get us nearer the French coast and out of the tide. Off Carterer the breeze came back and we were soon sailing again and benefiting from a counter current running along the coast towards Cap de Flamanville. At Flamanville we thought we were running into a rough patch as we could see white water ahead so we donned oilskins and checked safety lines. As we got closer it turned out to be froth from the underwater discharge of the nuclear power station. We wondered if it glows at night! It was a struggle here against the tide and wind, particularly as we dutifully kept outside the prohibited area which enclosed the discharges, many fishing



Flamanville Nuclear Power Station



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floats and a rib full of anglers secured to one of the marker buoys. The trusty outboard chugged on and at 1700 (French time) we were secured to the pontoon at Diélette waiting for the tide to cover the inner harbour sill.

### Wednesday 24th June: at Diélette

You've guessed it. We went for another walk. This one had beautiful coastal views with the added challenge of circumnavigating the civil engineering work associated with phase 3 of the power station. It led us eventually to the village of Flamanville where we bought extra provisions to take back to Alderney.



Diélette Harbour

### Thursday 25th June: Diélette ~ Alderney



Following wind

Having made careful tidal calculations we set off for Alderney at 0730 in a moderate NE'ly wind heading for Logis Bay on the south side of the Island. After a couple of hours of good progress along our track the wind freshened and we decided to take in a reef. During the five minutes it took to reef we drifted half a mile north of track and the wind suddenly died. So we shook out the reef and started the engine but were still being pushed north. Then, back came the wind and away we went, engine off, surfing down the waves at seven knots and beginning to claw back our lost ground. But it wasn't to be and as usual, Alderney Race won. We crabbed

past Pete's house by Houmet Herbe Fort and into the slack water off Quénard Point where we lowered the main and sailed down to Braye under jib with mackerel line trailing as if that had been the plan all along. Fishless we arrived at 1225 and secured to Buoy 10 from which we had left two weeks earlier.

Although disappointed at the lack of fresh fish the shore party was delighted with the French fruit, cheese and wine.

(18 miles, 5 hours, 3.7 knots)

### Friday 26th and Saturday 27th June: at Alderney

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### Sunday 28th June: Alderney ~ Lymington

Yesterday was very foggy but today the forecast is for E/NE wind, force 3/4 and no mention of fog.

At 1130 we set off in the midst of a fleet of ribs and jet skis which were returning to England after a night in Alderney. They soon disappeared in a cloud of spray and petrol fumes leaving us very pleased with our slow but comfortable progress. The wind was a bit fickle and it became obvious that without the engine we wouldn't make the Hurst tidal gate by 0330 tomorrow so, under threat of mutiny if we started it, we sailed gently on.



Leaving Alderney



We crossed the shipping lanes without having to alter course and in mid channel met the Lord Nelson coming the other way going as slowly as us.

t.s. Lord Nelson

### Monday 29th June: Alderney ~ Lymington

During the night we watched the lights of Portland and Swanage slowly draw astern and had a brief glimpse of the International Space Station as it passed overhead. The tide helped us into Christchurch Bay then turned and left us creeping up the coast and along Hurst Spit to the Narrows. Luckily the crew was asleep when we reached this point and with a quick burst of 5HP, we were through and sailing on towards Lymington where we secured to the club pontoon at 0945.



Unloading at Lymington

(80 miles, 22 hours, 3.7 knots)