

CRUISING NOTES

NYDA'S FRENCH TRIP

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NEED TO GO SAILING

PLANNING A TRIP

As a few of you know I have not had many opportunities to take *Nyda* (my Ovni385) out for a decent cruise this year, having spent more time in Southampton, crossing the Solent on a RedJet rather than a sailing boat. In recent years Graham, Mikey and I make up a regular crew "3 men in a boat" with the intention of undertaking a 2-3 week excursion, however with Graham grabbing some late summer sun in Turkey, Mikey kindly offered to take a few days out of his busy schedule and take *Nyda* to France with me.

With a further hospital visit to Southampton planned for Monday morning we aimed to leave Cowes on the ebb tide in the afternoon after taking on victuals and checking we had adequate supplies of Grog on board. The weather forecast looked favourable for the whole week, winds from the west and mostly fine, I decided that going to the West Country would be too arduous for gentlemen cruisers so we planned a crossing to Cherbourg. Something of a milk run for many Solent sailors but still expected to take at least 12 hours at our usual speed. The tides were springs and expected to take us a considerable distance from our Rhumb line (crosstrack error) but with working GPS and chart plotters navigation is less of a mystery than when we relied upon DR and EPs. *Nyda* still carries paper charts, Walker log and sextant but they are not often called upon.

NOTES FROM THE LOG

DAY 1 MONDAY SEPTEMBER 2ND

Departed Cowes Yacht Haven at 2pm on the ebbing spring tide with the wind WSW F5-6. Wishing to minimize effort I opted to motor to Yarmouth where we picked up a visitors buoy for the night, for which we handed over £22 plus £10 for the water taxi. With the choice of a frozen curry or a meal ashore the skipper opted for the latter expecting seafood in either Salty's or the Blue Crab both closed unfortunately. So, a meal in the King's Head, seafood of course, followed by an early night: 9pm.

DAY 2 TUESDAY SEPTEMBER 3RD

Forecast; wind W F4-5 occasionally 6, fair, good visibility. Early start: alarms set for 5am. We dropped the mooring at 6am to catch the last of the ebb to the Needles. With a smooth sea forecast we set a full main and the furling jib after passing Bridge buoy. A pleasing 7 knots was achieved most of the time but with the engine allowed if a sustained boat speed fell below 5 knots.

Very little commercial traffic was seen mid-channel either visually or on the AIS, only 5 ships of interest and 1 yacht. With the sun shining and the boat going well it was a fast and enjoyable crossing.



1 Sailing well on our way to Cherbourg

Once within cellular phone range the phones were out, I checked ERNIE online and received a very pleasant surprise, enough to treat Mikey to dinner.



2 Race to get 4G signal

We arrived in Cherbourg at 5pm (BST) 6pm (CET) followed by the other UK registered yacht which seemed to have the same plans as ourselves.

Dinner: In the Cherbourg YC situated above the Capitainerie; an aperitif of Pommeau followed by Oysters, Crevettes and Turbot washed down with a bottle of Chablis.



3 Six No.3 Oysters

DAY 3 WEDNESDAY SEPTEMBER 4TH

Strong wind warning WNW F5-6, light rain until 10am (CET). Departed Cherbourg marina 11am (CET), wind F6 in the outer harbour mainsail hoisted with 1st reef. Set a pilotage course for Barfleur light following the cardinal buoys. With the sun shining we had a lively sail, reaching with the flood tide and wind making for a moderately rough confused sea. *Nyda* was making a SOG of 8-9kts reaching Barfleur in around 2 hours, once clear of underwater obstructions we put in a gybe to continue on a broad reach to St Vaast. Once past Barfleur we encountered a south to north tidal stream against *Nyda* dropping the speed to 4-5kts. Once inside the harbour we found plenty of space for visitors on C pontoon.



4 St Vaast marina

Planning to eat on board we made the compulsory visit to Monsieur Gosselin's emporium and wine cellar, where Mikey found a 2015 bottle of St Julienne – highly recommended.

DAY 4 THURSDAY SEPTEMBER 5TH

A day in port relaxing after assessing the weather forecasts for the next 72hrs. We had hoped to return on Saturday however it appeared that the wind would be from the north – not an attractive prospect so we revised our plans to leave St Vaast early on Friday with a forecast of W or SW F5-6/F7 later veering to NW.

The harbour office publishes a schedule of lock opening times, on this day they were due to close at 18:05, but this was delayed to 18:25 without any staff present. We discussed the lock times and mechanism by which they operate throughout the 24hours to service the marina and busy fishing fleet. With opening and closures during the night we concluded that their operation must be governed by the height of water rather than the staff getting up at 1:30am. The residents end of the marina was being dredged whilst we were there, the almanac states a depth of 2.3m on the visitor pontoons.



5 Lock gates closing St Vaast

Before we left St Vaast more seafood for lunch and dinner in the Fuchsias, a treat I had promised Mikey. Excellent service but we were disappointed by the main course, I have been watching too many Masterchef TV programmes!



6 The Fuchsias Restaurant and Hotel



7 A La Carte or Menu?

DAY 5 FRIDAY SEPTEMBER 6TH

Another strong wind warning F5-6 gusting 7, sea state moderately rough.

Left the mooring at 6am (CET) with a favourable tidal stream and smooth sea to Barfleur. The wind steadily increased from F3 to F6 in the channel as the sea state became rough in the wind over tide conditions, with a beam sea which was inclined to invade the cockpit and soak the helm. The 1st reef was kept in the main but we should have pulled the 2nd reef down for comfort, however we were making excellent speed.

MAYDAY, MAYDAY, MAYDAY heard mid-morning from *Halcyon of Hebe* a 44ft yacht, this was answered by Jobourg but control soon transferred to Solent CG. It appeared they were taking on water rapidly with two persons on board, I noted their position but calculated that they were at least 17 miles west (upwind) of our position so unable to offer any assistance. However another yacht and the RFA *Argos* were nearby which offered help including a fast rescue boat with engineer and tools. The CG Helicopter was soon tasked whilst the *Argos* helicopter was also readied and the Swanage lifeboat dispatched to the scene. During the distress we lost radio contact with *Halycon* but were pleased to hear that they had stopped the ingress of water and able to start their engine and continue on towards the Hamble.

Barfleur light to Bembridge ledge buoy is a distance of 60 nautical mile which we covered in 9hrs, we think this is a record passage for *Nyda* We arrived back in Cowes Yacht Haven at 6pm (BST) having logged a total 190 miles and only relying on the engine for the leg to Yarmouth and from Ryde to back to Cowes.

LESSONS LEARNT

- 1 Do you know the colour of your liferaft, this was a question asked by Solent CG.
- 2 We lost 2 fenders on passage; make sure they are secured correctly, a crew confessional. The skipper also confesses to a fender incident during a clumsy docking, fortunately this one was quickly recovered.
- 3 Sailing downwind in strong winds F6-7 we should have sailed under jib alone, safer and easier to gybe with minimal loss of speed.
- 4 Weather forecasting is readily available but we had winds greater than when I planned the trip. 24-48hrs good but less accurate 5-7days ahead. Expect the unexpected.
- 5 The pound is weak; France is no longer a cheap place to eat.
- 6 7 year old house batteries were not enough to run the auto-pilot and all the other electronics. When tested they had less than 40Ah usable capacity in a 420Ah bank.
- 7 Mikey has done over a hundred channel crossings but often feels queasy and less than enjoyable. With the symptoms starting on our way to Yarmouth a therapeutic +++ dose of Stugeron was called for prior to leaving the Solent. He was then able to go below and prepare lunch. However the doctor recommends following the instructions on the packet.
- 8 French marina finger pontoons are like Olympic spring boards and less than the length of my boat.