

SUMMER CRUISE 2007

French Coast – 9th June to 15th July

I've been nominated to write this report! I have endeavoured to leave out the effings and blindings (*Good! Ed*). I hope you find this a good read, not a lot of technical stuff, just a brief look at some of the good times had by us all.

- Lorraine

Who went:

Oyster – Brian and Lorraine
Misty – Ed and Barb
Blue Mullion – Chris and Mary
Pepperbox – Jim
Koorinal – John and Reg
Saxon – Rod and Martin

Ports of call:

Ramsgate, Boulogne, St. Valery-sur-Somme, Dieppe, Fecamp, Honfleur, Deauville, Le Havre, Fecamp, St. Valery-en-Caux, Le Treport, Boulogne, Ramsgate.

It was Barb's maiden voyage across the Channel, and the boat was only three weeks old. Barb, relatively new to sailing, did really well as she spent 3-4 weeks as no.1 crew – hats off to Barb!

Rod had a new shipmate on *Saxon*, Martin from *Kittiwake*. They made a nice couple, no romance though (so they say...) and only four tinned pies in four weeks.

To say that the weather was inclement is an understatement – we had it all, force 8, torrential rain, brilliant sunshine, and that was all in one day. All the passages were easy legs, with good sailing had by most of us – even John got his sails up and the engine off and still kept up his speed.

The first port of call (Boulogne) was where one-upmanship starts. Boats got smaller, nobody boasted of a big one. Mistakes were only noted if in our favour. There were a few smug faces, one in particular who, after a good result, kept singing "I'm so happy....".

Only one drama at sea, when *Blue Mullion's* engine started to mess about, and Jim the Good Fairy took them in tow. They were then taken alongside *Pepperbox* into the lock at Le Treport, and John spent the next day with his head down in the engine. He said "it makes a change from the loo" as the day before he had a blockage – Brian offered to test it but was told to (word deleted) off. *Blue Mullion* was duly fixed – nice to have a mechanic for a Dad! Apart from the ports that we visited, there were also some 'Chapman Tours'. A bus from Deauville to Caen, then on to the Pegasus Bridge and the museum, which is well worth the visit, then the tea rooms (the Café Gondrée). The train *Thomas* from St. Valery-sur-Somme to le Cretoy. The train from Rouen to St. Valery-en-Caux to see the handless clock and the churches. All trips came with good lunches, perfect scenery and a dash of culture. A few highlights, many too good to mention....

- to start the party scene on my birthday, early morning coffee freshly brewed by John on *Blue Mullion*, lots of cards and presents. Pimms at 6pm on *Oyster*.
- Brian's birthday 'Big One', back to *Blue Mullion* for champagne and cake, then at 6pm cocktails and tapas on *Oyster*. Singing and loud music followed.....
- More cocktails on Koorungal, this time made by Jim – 'In the Blue Bucket', the deadliest yet.
- A few rough nights in St. Valery-en-Caux. High tides and the wind behind them, water gushing in the gateway had all the ropes and fenders snatching badly.

Pool tables were found in Le Havre and other ports. Matches were set up and played – even the locals joined in. Knockout commenced, lots of good-humoured banter exchanged, some strutting by the more experienced players. This soon became serious – like 'friendly' racing, there is no such thing. Reg English became the European Champ much to others' disgust. He was then challenged the next day, no names mentioned, but Reg told him it was an annual competition and that he'd have to come up through the ranks next year.

The reading of menus was source of good humour, you never knew what you were going to get – well, I didn't anyway. Paying the bill was even more of a challenge, as nobody could count, or divide by nine.

One of Brian's many *faux pas* – all were sitting down to lunch, a very nice restaurant, and a tight fit. Two blue-rinse ladies were facing Brian, nodding and smiling at him; he raised his glass and said "Bon Jovi". We all laughed but the old girls thought he was wonderful.

Entering the lock at Honfleur, Martin decided to step onto the floating plank along the wall – it promptly sank, and so did he, up to his knees. Then in Ramsgate he nearly went swimming as the boat left the pontoon and he didn't, the gap widened and he was pulled horizontally. Godd job Jim was at hand or he would have gone swimming. He definitely has an affinity with water, and women apparently - in a bar chatting up the lovely barmaid, he asks if she is married. Her English seemed not too good as she replied "I will 'ave to ask my 'usband".

The highlight of the trip for me was in Boulogne – it was the Sea Festival, and along the quay there were three Tall Ships, lots of stalls, all kinds of music and dancing. On the Saturday it was also Bastille Day. From the beach looking up to the top of the cliff they set off the most beautiful firework display I have ever seen, and all set to classical music – the atmosphere was out of this world.

And that was it, back in Ramsgate – a takeaway on *Oyster*, a French wine, and a toast to the 'Ollowshore Oliday'.