

Tasman's Blog

Cowes to La Rochelle, July/August 2017

Crew: Paul & Debbie Kelsey and Angus Belcher



La Rochelle

26th July 2017 - Cowes to St Peter Port:

Tasman slipped her mooring at East Cowes Marina on a dull and rainy Wednesday morning with the wind set to build to approx 28 knots with a moderate sea state.

At 0900 the sea state was beginning to get 'lumpy' and whilst Tasman was happily motoring along with green water washing over her topsides and straight over the windscreen and overhead. Paul and Angus had a brief discussion (deciding that whilst Tasman more than capable, Debbie not quite so relaxed about it!) so changed course for Cherbourg and the crossing became much more settled on the new course.

At 12:10, another chat saw Tasman change course once more and head for Guernsey, whilst the Alderney Race was a little bumpy, it was the Little Russell that produced the most wave action with Tasman riding across 3 waves and dipping her bow on every 4th one. With the wind picking up again we entered a crowded Pool at St Peter Port for a refuel and brief overnight stop. It seemed that everyone else had decided to sit that day out!

27th July 2017 – St Peter Port to Roscoff:

09:45 Tasman headed out of St Peter Port for Roscoff. Whilst it was initially bumpy, the sea state soon settled as we headed straight for Roscoff maintaining speed of around 18 knots. We first called Port Roscoff on VHF channel 09 to request clearance to enter the port (as Brittany Ferries and Irish Ferries frequently manoeuvre in the area just inside harbour entrance). We entered Port de Plaisance de Roscoff (Port Bloscon) and moored up by 1400.

The Port Bloscon staff are very helpful, speaking very good English and manning the marina until 8pm during July & August (you can even order your croissants and baguettes in the marina office and pick them up early the next morning).

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The Port Bloscon RIB greet incoming vessels at the marina entrance, escorting you to your berth and even helping you with your lines if you ask them. There are strong eddys in the marina as it is an open ended marina, so a little care is needed to gauge speed manoeuvring into the finger berths – as with most French marinas, the finger berths/catways are shorter than those in the UK and most have a hoop or bar on the end to which you secure your stern line by looping it through the hoop and passing it back up to the boat. There are however plenty of cleats to lasso and electric/water points.

The shoreside showers and toilets are well maintained and very clean and there is a good laundrette facility just behind the marina bar/restaurants.

Its an easy 20 minute walk into town where there is a good selection of restaurants to try (our favourites included: Brasserie le Surcouf and La Moule au Pot. For a lunchtime crepe, Creperie Tal an Iliz and Creperie de la Poste offer a superb selection of homemade crepes!)

The weather picked up again enough to keep us in Roscoff for another day, waiting for the next weather window.

Saturday 29th July – Roscoff to Camaret:

Angus and Paul discussed best time to depart Roscoff to ensure entry into Chanel du Four at slack tide so it was a 07:00 departure from Roscoff on a wet and foggy Saturday morning, this is when Tasman's newly fitted Raymarine radar and chart plotter systems came into their own!



[Stone Sculptures at Camaret](#)

Whilst there was a 2 metre swell following the strong winds that caused us to spend an extra night at Roscoff, Tasman motored through these with ease. At 11:40 we moored up on the outside edge of the breakwater at Port Vauban, Camaret (the

cleats on this concrete breakwater are the large old fashion iron cleats and easily lassoed). Angus's knowledge of the marina

layout and best place to come alongside is immensely helpful for our first visit in thick fog!

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Having decided to opt for lunch and supper on board as thick fog and drizzle outside, we were boarded by 5 French Customs Police! Thankfully they seemed more curious about Tasman and although thorough on reviewing paperwork, their search wasn't too intrusive and they were friendly and polite.



A reminder of the old fishing days at Camaret

NOTE: The power on the pontoon trips out every 12 hours so you have to press the green button next to your socket on the power post to reset it. There are limited shower facilities here but they are clean.

Sunday 30th July 2017 – Camaret Sur Mer to L'Orient:

Again, Paul and Angus discussed best time to depart Camaret in order to arrive at Raz du Seine in slack tide.

At 09:10, we slipped our lines and made for L'Orient, entering the Raz at approx 10:15 with the 'Le Chat' cardinal visible to s'board and the weather brightening.



The Raz

13:50 travelling at around 16 knots, we are an hour away from Port Kernevel, L'Orient (there is a choice of marinas at L'Orient and we opted for Port Kernevel as it's close to the river entrance so an easy overnight stop). The Blue Water Tower is clearly visible about 8 cables from the entrance to Port Kernevel, you access the marina from the

far end of the breakwater (the near end of the breakwater as you enter the river is where the fuel berth is situated). 15:00 we are tied alongside a very short finger berth which was a bit of a squeeze to get into (Paul having noted a sign stating 'max. 12 meters' at the head of the pontoon!). We decide that we will request a mooring along the long breakwater on the return run!



Rainbow over L'Orient

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Monday 31st July 2017 – Port Kernevel, L'Orient to Port Olona at Les Sables D'Onnes:

We decide to stop at Les Sables D'Onnes and then take a leisurely short hop to La Rochelle on Tuesday. Angus suggests Port Olona might be the best bet so Debbie calls up the marina enroute and tries out her French on the Capitaniere! We are assured they have room for us and having taken a note of our length, boat name and expected arrival time, we are asked to radio them when we are near to the Port.

So it's a leisurely departure from L'Orient at 0915. The sea is a calm Atlantic swell, bright sunshine and dry – hurray!

11:55 we spot a large pod of dolphins breaking the waves on our bow and starboard side, smiles all round.

At 13:30 we spot quite a few lobster pots dotted around nearby, they have different coloured flags above the buoys so helps to make them a bit easier to spot than just the buoys which can sometimes disappear in the swell.

15:30 we approach the marina entrance, as instructed we temporarily tie up alongside the long waiting pontoon / fuel berth on the left which is directly below Port Olona's Marina Office and head up to the office to get our berthing instructions.

Amazingly we find ourselves in a finger berth directly alongside another Talisman 49! This is an older boat than Tasman with the logo "Talisman Short Sea Explorer" on her topside which has a slight greenish hue to it. The owners are Dutch and kindly come to help with our lines. It seems we are both heading for La Rochelle the next morning. Angus puts in a brief call to Mike Burnham to tell him what are the chances of finding 2 Talisman 49 motorboats moored up together and Mike seems to remember her from his Halmatic days and he says they had to add the green pigment to the topside moulds.

Les Sables d'Onnes seems to be more fun than we had expected with a couple of small electric passenger ferry boats regularly running across the river which we decide to go on for the princely sum of One Euro! It is worth the trip as the far shore has a wealth of restaurants, bars and stalls set up alongside the quay.

Tuesday 1st August 2017 – Les Sables D'Onnes to Bassin de Chalutiers, La Rochelle:

Debbie had already been exchanging emails (stalking) with the Capitaniere (Christian Lemoine, Maitre de Port) at La Rochelle 6 weeks before our departure from the UK because we knew that our arrival time was during peak season and the French 'super holiday' period so we wanted to make sure that we had a berth! We decided to request a place in the old port rather than the Port de Minimes because the old port is right in the middle of the town so easy access to bars, restaurants and it's superb twice weekly market.

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Debbie had emailed Christian the previous day to give him our expected ETA as we understood that one of the port staff would need to book in for the bridge over the entrance to Bassin de Chalutiers to be raised for our arrival.

08:20 we slipped our lines at Port Olona to make for La Rochelle (we noticed that the Talisman 49 alongside us had already departed, perhaps they hadn't pre-booked their berth or were worried that Port La Rochelle wouldn't be expecting 2 Talisman 49 motor boats to be arriving the same day!).

It was a beautiful sunny morning, the best weather we'd experienced since leaving the UK!

We travelled at a steady 16 knots and at 11:50 we passed under the bridge between the French mainland and Ile de Ra.



At 1220 we arrived outside the entrance to Bassin de Chalutiers and having called Port La Rochelle to announce our arrival, we needed to hover around for 10 minutes as we found out that when they say that they will raise the bridge for you at 12:30 that's the exact time it happens! The bridge opens on request at the half hour from the gate/lock opening times.

We are greeted by the Port RIB and are directed to Pontoon 1 where he kindly assists in taking our lines and explaining that the power trips out every 12 hours on the posts so he shows us the button to press near the socket point to reset the power (we decide to press this "reset" button just before heading to bed and again in the morning before we head off to explore).

This is a university town and they operate a "Yellow Velo" bike rental system which is very much like the "Boris Bikes" in London. There is a huge array of restaurants and bars but this is a tourist destination so there are more average restaurants than memorable ones.



La Rochelle entrance

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Our favourite within walking distance of the marina was Andre's, 5 Rue St Jean du Perot (served the most fantastic homemade soupe de poisson).

La Rochelle has a daily indoor market about a 20 minute walk from the marina and well worth the visit, as well as a bigger market that spreads out into neighbouring streets twice a week. There is a good laundrette 5 minutes walk from the marina and a bar/café just around the corner from it (so you can have a drink whilst you wait for your washing to finish!).



Tasman in Bassin Chalutiers- La Rochelle

Shirley flew into La Rochelle and joined us for a few days, we took the passenger ferry to Ile de Ra and hired bicycles for the day. The Aquarium at La Rochelle is just opposite Bassin de Chalutiers and also a good excursion.

After a few days Angus left us, flew back to Southampton and we continued with the rest of our journey.

Friday 11th August 2017 – La Rochelle to Port Joinville, Ile d'Yeu:

07:20 we left La Rochelle (the day before we arranged with the Captanerie a time for the bridge to lift) and headed for Ile d'Yeu (we had called the Port Joinville, Ile d'Yeu marina a couple of days earlier and they said they'd find room for us). A white tower marks the approach to Port Joinville, as do a lot of fishing boats!

We were directed to the visitors pontoons, by a French lass in a RIB, which are close to the entrance (they also have the awful closed cleats that you can't lasso so had to break out the 'Easy Moor' and temporary bow line!). She first said port side too, but Ah!, when we got to the pontoon, that'll be starboard then. A quick shuffle of lines and a move of a classic sailing boat aft (the space was slightly too small for Tasman, we squeezed in and relaxed.



A busy Port Joinville

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This island is very, very busy in high season and a regular stop over for many yachts/motor boats so expect to be rafted 3 deep! However, the marina staff are very friendly and helpful (moving us to a hammerhead rafting on the day before we depart, otherwise we might be trapped inside several other boats). Not many great restaurants, good creperies and the best fish mongers I've seen!

Monday 14th August 2017 – Port Joinville, Ile d'Yeu to L'Orient:

09:30 departed Ile d'Yeu on a beautiful calm sunny day and weaved through the many lobster pots around the harbour entrance (although marked with small flags attached to the float so helps to see them). We passed a pod of dolphins that were clearly rounding up a shoal of fish and feeding.



L'Orient

14:40 arrived Port Kernevel, L'Orient and this time requested an alongside berth inside the wave break, they only had one space available for us for anything more than an overnight stop and we noticed that the dedicated visitors pontoons seemed to be mostly occupied by local French boats. So definitely worth calling ahead for a berth.

The weather was unsettled for a few days so we stayed in L'Orient longer than intended.

Saturday 19th August 2017 – L'Orient to Camaret:

Paul timed our departure to arrive at the Raz de Seine at slack tide and the 'La Chat' and 'La Plate' cardinals appeared on the horizon on schedule! After a perfectly pleasant motor through the Raz, we moored up at Camaret at 16:30 (the marina much less busy than on our outward voyage) and moored ahead of a beautiful Moody yacht called 'Senior Moments' and caught up with Ian and Nora whom we'd last met at Ile d'Yeu.

Similar to L'AberWach, most visitors seem to be just for overnight, in transit to the north or a landing point when heading south. For the reason that most people don't stop, we decided to take the bikes and have a look around.

An easy 20 minute walk brings you into Camaret Sur Mer and we enjoyed a super meal on the terrace of the hotel La Thalassa.

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Monday 21st August 2017 – Camaret to L'AberWrach:

Thick fog first thing in the morning so sat tight until it had lifted to a light fog and departed Camaret at 13:30 (Tasman's new chart plotter and radar display proving to be a fantastic addition!).

15:25 approach the Libenter cardinal, which marks the entrance channel to L'AberWrach. We had noted from the pilot books that there are shallow rocks marked by port 'perches' in the entrance to the marina but this was our first visit so we were surprised that the yellow buoys and port perches sit directly inside the entrance of the marina which means you have to navigate right side of these to reach the visitors pontoons (don't be tempted to go directly left as it's still very shallow here).



Perch marks at L'AberWrach

Again, most people just overnight at this location, on route south or north, but we decided to stay a few days and explore the area on bikes – we were glad we did. We cycled to the market town to restock the fridge, and enjoyed a ride along the coast watching the oyster fisherman at work.

There are a couple of good restaurants close to the marina and Auberge du Pont (fantastic!) is only a 10 minute taxi ride away and well worth the trip!

Market day in the village is on Tuesdays for fresh produce and there is a clothes/goods market at the port on Saturdays.

Thursday 24th August 2017 – L'AberWrach to Roscoff:

Only a short 2.5 hour run to return to Roscoff which has, in our opinion, some of the best pain au chocolat!

Friday 1st September 2017 – Roscoff to St Peter Port:

Departing Roscoff marked the end of our French holiday but passing 3 separate pods of dolphins helped! The weather was closing in again, so on Saturday, after refuelling, we made a dash for Cowes to take advantage of a 24 hour weather window.

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Debbie collecting provisions in L'AberWrach