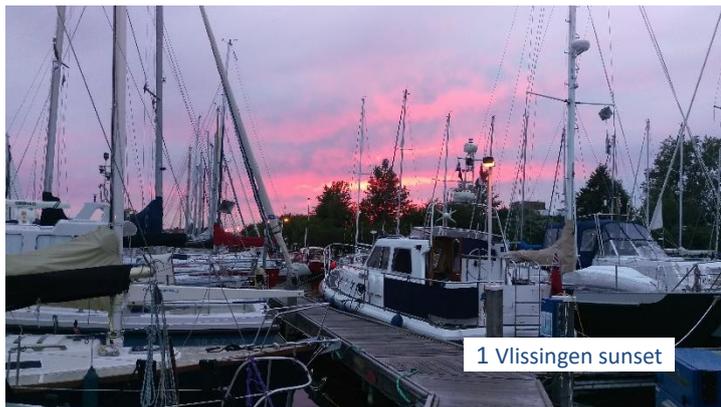


## Tipanie in The Netherlands: July 18th to August 1st 2015

### Ramsgate to Vlissingen and through the rivers/canals to Harlingen

#### Day 1: 149 km (93 miles) Ramsgate to Vlissingen

Having arrived in Ramsgate by hire car on Friday evening, it was a last minute decision to set off on Saturday, as the forecast suddenly appeared much better than for Sunday, our proposed day of departure. It was all a bit of a rush but we were on our way by 10.30. The crossing was calm and uneventful. It took us 5 hours to the Vlissingen lock entrance and, for once, our timing was perfect as we went straight into the lock. We opted to go into the VW Schelde marina just through the lock. The harbour master swiftly directed us to a box mooring and we were tied up and sorted by 4pm. It was a 20 minute walk into Vlissingen, where the fair was on. After a walk around we returned to the marina and ate in the small restaurant on site. The mosselen (mussels) and frites were great.



#### Day 2: 6 Vlissingen to Middleburg

We woke up to pouring rain - full oilies needed just for a trip to the facilities. We realised that we needed to stock up on the ANWB charts and the water almanac (mandatory) before heading much further. We decided we could safely make it the 6 km to Middleburg by joining one of the regular convoys up the river. We filled up with fuel at VW Schelde and joined the 12.25pm convoy of yachts up the river passing through 5 bridges on the way. The bridges opened on schedule for us all and an hour later we arrived in the historic centre of Middleburg. By the time we arrived the sun was out. A final wait for the bridge into the Binnerhaven and we were alongside the pontoon by 2pm. The harbour master met us and directed us to a berth from the bridge as we went in.

Middleburg is a beautiful old town. After some lunch on board, we had a walk around the town. As it



2 Moored in the Binnerhaven at Middelburg

was Sunday and the shops were closed, we found out where the big chandlers was so we could get our charts first thing in the morning. We ended up at the restaurant next to the yacht club overlooking the harbour for supper. Another very good meal and mosselen again.

### Day 3: 45km

#### Middleburg to Sint Annaland

We were at the chandlers at 9 am and a very helpful lady selected all the charts we would need for our proposed route to Harlingen. We also got charts for the Stand mast route in case we ended up going that way. A couple of hundred euros poorer and we were back at the boat and on our way in time for the 10.15 bridge opening. The short journey down the canal to Veere was done in the company of a whole fleet of boats. We waited a while for the lock at the end of the canal but eventually made it through and out into the Veerse Meer by 11.20. Whilst in the lock we got chatting to the chaps on the boat alongside us, who advised against going to Brunisse because of the long wait at the lock. They suggested Sint Annaland as a good alternative so we changed our plans.

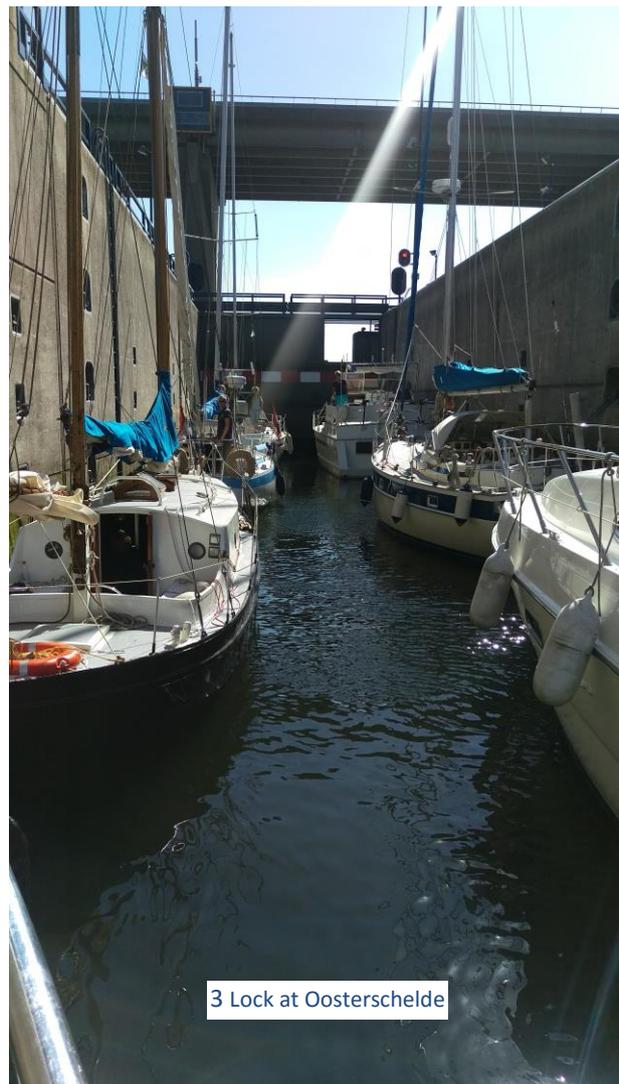
Firstly we had to get through the Zandkreek lock at the end of the Veerse Meer. There was a long wait but eventually we all made our way into the enormous lock. This time we had learnt our lesson and opted to tie up to another boat rather than the lock wall. We exited the lock at 1pm into the Oosterschelde - 23km covered and a further 22km to go.

The weather had by this stage deteriorated and we were now in rain and mist. We arrived at Sint Annaland at about 4.30pm - here there was a waiting pontoon where visitors could call the harbour master and arrange a berth. As we tied up the sun came out and it was a beautiful evening. We ate in the restaurant at the marina, which has superb views. Food was very good but pricey.

### Day 4: 32km

#### Sint Annaland to Willemstad

A sunny day and very hot. We left at 9.30. We had 2 locks to go through, the first being the Krammersluis - this provides entry to the Volerak. The lock was much smaller than those the previous day and entry was made all the more exciting for everyone by both tide and wind pushing us in. One yacht ended up broadside across the lock; then the final boat to come in, a 65 footer, got us all worried as it towered over us. Finally all secured, we had a longish wait in the lock whilst the water is cycled to avoid salt water getting into the freshwater Volerak.





4 Willemstad JK Batterij marina

We headed towards the Volkeraksluis a further 16km along the beautiful Voleak. Again we were lucky and arrived just as the lock was emptying and went straight in. This was a bigger lock and altogether easier. We soon covered the short distance along the Hollands Diep to Willemstad and got a berth in the JK Batterij marina. A box mooring, which was challenging but we were moored by 1pm.

The sun was beating down and it was very hot. We had a walk around Willemstad, a very pretty and historic place. It was a trading town for many centuries and, like many in this area, has a star shape fortification around it, the bastilles being in each point of the star. The harbour was hosting an historic ship rally and was jammed with magnificent old vessels.

We had supper at the restaurant in the corner overlooking the harbour. Plaice for me and cod with smoked salmon for Chris - all very good.



5 Historic Boats in Willemstad Harbour

Lots of mossies around so a few bites collected!

### Day 5: 58km Willemstad to Schoonhoven

We had now left the Zeeland area and were on the Hollands Diep. This is a motorway for shipping! Great care must be taken when crossing from one side to the other. Smaller boats have their own channels to follow outside the main channel. We found it fascinating - a whole range of barges - one was stacked with white vans, probably at least a 100 of them.

After 8 km we made a turn into the Dordtse Kil to head north towards Dordrecht. At the end of this section we joined the Oude Maas and passed through Dordrecht - the waterfront area looked lovely although we had no time to stop this time. With 28 km travelled we reached our turn into the Noord, which would take us up to the Lek, the river we would follow to take us east.

At the Lek we hoped that it would finally be less busy. We reached the junction with the Lek at 12.30 and



6 Barge near Dordrecht

decided we would aim to go another 20km to Schoonhoven. Once on the Lek it was quieter with the main obstructions being the frequent cross channel chain ferries - they expect you to stop.

Schoonhoven marina was a little disappointing - the facilities were basic although the pontoons were new and well serviced. However the cost was only €16 for the night. Schoonhoven was a very pretty little place, about 10 minutes' walk from the marina. Supper on the boat.

### **Day 6: 38km Schoonhoven to Wijk Bij Duurstede**

We continued east along the Lek. As we pulled out from the marina in the morning we did so into a long line of barges. It was a slow journey with little chance for overtaking. The speed limit is 20kmh, but the barges, many of which are very long, only manage about 12kmh and boats are not expected to create a lot of wash. We patiently chugged along. After 16km we reached the junction with the Lekkanal which many of the barges headed up on their way to Amsterdam.

A further 5km and we were at the first of 2 locks on this stretch of the Lek, sluis Hagestein. We were the first boat to arrive and moored up on the waiting pontoon. Barges then started to appear - 6 in total and they have priority. We doubted whether we would fit and whether we wanted to! Amazingly the enormous lock swallowed all 6 barges with room for us and 4



7 Moored to barge in sluis Hagestein

other leisure boats that had by now arrived. We tied up to one of the barges and the bargemaster couldn't have been more helpful. 90 minutes after arriving at the lock we were out - 20km covered from Schoonhoven in 3 hours. We decided we would stop before the 2nd lock at Wijk Bij Duurstede, a further 18km down the river at the JH Rijn en Lek marina.

As instructed in our guide book we moored at the waiting pontoon. The harbour master soon arrived and was very helpful. He walked us to the berth so we could look at it and then waited whilst we brought the boat around and took our lines. The facilities were immaculate, there was an onsite bar/café and it cost €15 for the night!

We had a walk around Wijk Bij Duurstede - another lovely Old Dutch town then supper on the boat.



8 Wijk Bij Duurstede

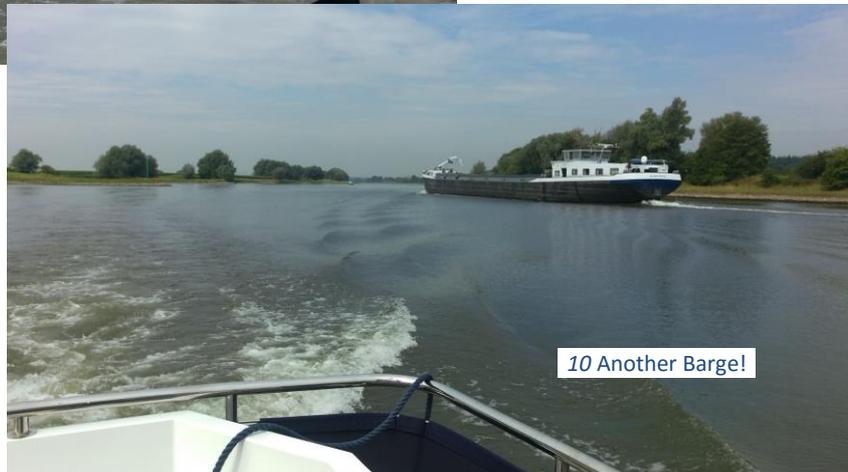
**Day 7: 124 km**  
**Wijk Bij Duurstede to Deventer**

We set off with the intention of going to either Doesburg or Zutphen, but the forecast for the next day was looking very bad so we decided we would get as far as we could before stopping. We left early at 8am and our first stop after 3km was the Amerongen sluis. After yesterday's experience we were prepared for a long wait, but we only waited about 15 minutes. No barges this time, just a few other leisure boats. We were on our way along the Lek by 9.15am. A further 30km and we came to our last lock on



9 Bridge at Zutphen

the Lek, Sluis Driel. For once the gods were with us - we spotted the green lights and increased our speed to make it into lock. The gate closed behind us - they don't wait for you to tie up! We were out within 10 minutes.



10 Another Barge!

The next stretch was through Arnhem and we went under the John Frost Bridge, of 'A Bridge Too Far' fame. It was along this stretch that we reckon the skipper made his one waterways infringement, when he overtook a slow moving barge in what we later reckoned was a no overtaking zone. Fortunately there were no river police nearby (there are lots of them around).

Just outside Arnhem we reached the junction of the Lek and the Geldere Ijssel. We turned onto the Geldere Ijssel and started our journey north - this river would take us all the way to the Ijsselmeer, over 100km away. The Geldere Ijssel was very different and took a bit of getting used to. It is narrower, with more bends, has a 2/3 knot current carrying you north and still has plenty of barges and chain ferries to negotiate. The barges take up a lot of room on the bends and will sometimes display a blue board on their starboard side indicating that they want you to pass starboard to starboard. The binoculars came out so that we could spot as early as possible the barges' intentions. We only had one worrying moment when a bend in the river, a very large barge and a chain ferry coincided - the skipper was glad when he had made it safely through. The scenery along this river is beautiful. We continued up river past Doesburg and Zutphen to stop at Deventer in the JH Deventer marina. The marina is about 2 km north of Deventer. This is where the skipper made his second minor misjudgement of the day, being caught in a back eddy in the entrance and running aground. Full astern and we were soon off! We were met by the harbour master and guided to a berth and again we received help with our lines. It started to pour with rain just after we arrived and didn't stop all night.

The marina had immaculate facilities and an onsite restaurant. It cost €38 for 2 nights. We ate in the restaurant that night and met a lovely Dutch couple, Olaf and Gerda. Our evening with them did wonders for our pronunciation of Dutch place names as they looked inquisitively at us as we tried to explain the places we had visited.

The forecast for the next day is very bad so we decided that night to stay put.

### **Day 8: 0 km Deventer**

As forecast it dawned a very windy and wet day. Whilst Chris was in the showers, Tipanie received 2 hefty knocks from a boat trying to leave that was blown straight down onto the line of moored boats. We were moored stern to, so no damage but a lot of red paint on our anchor!

We braved a lull in the rain to walk down into Deventer. It was a charming place and, as it was a Saturday, there was a market. I really enjoyed having a look around and stocked up on some Dutch delicacies for the boat and to take home. As it started to rain, we took shelter in a cafe for lunch. It was very windy with horizontal driving rain and as it showed no signs of easing, we made a dash for the station and got a taxi back to the marina.

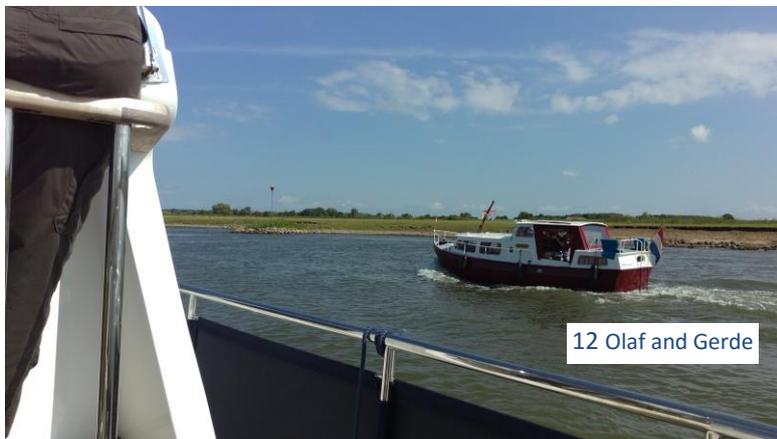


11 Market in Deventer

We heard later that the storm that day was the worst summer storm in The Netherlands for over 100 years. In the IJsselmeer it gusted to force 11. In Urk harbour, our next point of call, the water levels rose so high there was a danger of the pontoons floating free. We were safe and sound in the marina and invited Olaf and Gerda on board for a pleasant evening.

### **Day 9: 74 km Deventer to Urk**

We left at about 9.30am and continued our journey north up the Geldere IJssel. It was a lovely day



12 Olaf and Gerde

and the scenery was beautiful. As it was Sunday there were no barges to worry about. After about an hour we caught up and overtook Olaf and Gerda. They were heading to the Ketelmeer whereas we were heading to the IJsselmeer to Urk.

We passed through Veesen and then Zwolle, passing easily under both the road and rail bridges. So far we had been fine with our mast up - our air draught is 5.3m.

We knew that the next bridge at Kampen was going to be tight. All the bridges have a tide gauge,

showing the water level below the bridge, around 1km before you get to them. The Stadbrug gauge showed 5m air draught. So it was out with the spanner and the two nuts were quickly removed enabling us to drop the mast for the trip under the bridge. It was soon back in place and we headed out of Kampen towards Ketelmeer.



14 Lifting bridge into the IJsselmeer

later realised that the free boxes had small green signs on them and the non-free ones small red signs. We were soon safely moored up, once again with help from a friendly bystander.



13 Kampen - note height gauge on right

The weather for both Monday and Tuesday was not looking good with another storm forecast so we anticipated spending 2 nights in Urk and duly paid the harbour master €33 for the 2 nights when he came round the next morning. This price included electricity and Wi-Fi!

### Days 10, 11, 12, 13: Storm bound in Urk

The predicted storm was true to its word, with the wind gusting to F9 and accompanied by frequent squalls. Extra ropes were deployed and everyone battened down the hatches. Those boats that came in struggled to moor in the gusting strong wind.

Finally on Thursday, Day 13 of our holiday, the wind started to ease and the sun came out. We realised we didn't have a chart for the final stage of our journey to Harlingen. Urk, we discovered, has 2 excellent chandlers with everything the yachtsman or fisherman might need. It also has a whole range of wonderful restaurants and the local specialities are the fish. We ate at the terrace restaurant overlooking the harbour, at De Boet in an old warehouse on the harbour front and in the local fish shop on the corner opposite the supermarket. All were excellent; De Boet especially with its outstanding service and extensive wine list. We also visited the museum and found out that Urk used to be an island 15km from the mainline in the Zuiderzee until the 1930s when the northern polder was reclaimed to join it to the mainland.



16 Fishermen's Memorial



15 Old fishing vessels Urk Harbour

One of the highlights of Urk is the very moving monument to all the fishermen who have been lost. It is a statue of a fisherman's wife looking out to sea for the return of her loved ones. On the walls surrounding the statue are plaques containing the names of all the fishermen who have perished since the 1800s. The youngest was age 11. The other was the range of old fishing vessels on display in the harbour.

We resolved to make a move the next day and head up to Harlingen, 65km away, our finishing point for this holiday.

#### Day 14: 68km Urk to Harlingen

We set off at 10am as we wanted to reach the Northline yard in Harlingen before 4.30, when they close. The wind and waves had died down and we had a pleasant journey up past Stavoran, Hindloopen and Makkum. We reached the lock at Kornwerderzand at 12.30 and rafted up at the back of a large queue of yachts. There were also numerous large leisure barges arriving. Also we found out that one lock was broken!

Three locking's later we were in - just. It was a real scrum although the discipline was outstanding and any boat that tried to jump the queue was promptly hooted and shouted at. They wisely did a locking just for the barges although it meant we had to wait longer. It



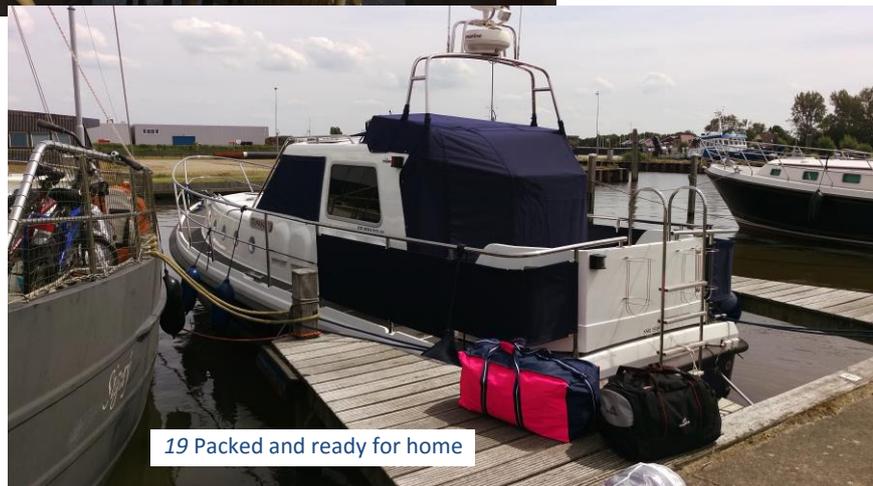
17 The Scrum for the Lock!

was 15.50 when we exited the sluis - 3 hours 20 minutes! Immediately after the lock was a bridge which looked low. It would be opening for the yachts but not until after the next locking. So, we decided not to risk it and lowered the mast. We now had it off pat and it was a 5 minute job and we were on our way.

We arrived in Harlingen harbour at 4.30 and waited another 30 minutes for the lock into the canal. The Northline Yard is 2km upstream from here and by 5.30 we were safely moored up in our allocated box mooring. We were welcomed by Anne (pronounced Ohner) who had patiently waited past their 4.30 closing time.

We were leaving Tipanie at Northline for the rest of the summer and for the winter she is going into their heated shed.

Clanger of the day (and of the holiday): trying to leave the berth on Urk with one of the stern lines still secured to the quay! Again swift action from the crew meant no harm done, except to the skipper's pride!



**Vital statistics:**

Ramsgate to Vlissingen: 149km  
Vlissingen to Harlingen: 445km  
Total Mileage: 594km

Total fuel used: 1160 litres  
Ramsgate to Vlissingen: 490 litres (speed 20 knots average)  
Vlissingen to Harlingen: 670 litres (speed 6 - 8 knots average)