

# **HOLLAND 2009 – Jeanneau Prestige 34**



## **2.1 Volkeraksluizen**

**Robert Stevenson**



## HOLLAND IN ELISHA 2009

An account of our journey in 2009 up to and through Holland in ELISHA, our Jeanneau Prestige 34.

We left the club pontoon in Lymington at 12:10 on Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> late June 2009 and ran up to Eastbourne. It was warm with a perfectly flat sea. Essentially going East along the south coast is uninteresting and makes you realise how lucky you are to live on the Solent. Beachy Head is a break in the monotony and striking. The lighthouse, soon to be decommissioned, stands at the bottom of the cliffs and we floated off drinking champagne donated by Anne-Marie (our daughter) and took pictures. Nobody jumped over the most celebrated suicide spot in UK.

The entrance to Eastbourne was through a lock and we wouldn't choose to go back. A huge modern development some way from the elegant old, town inhabited by tattooed Londoners in sleeveless vests drinking fizzy beer. No real ale in sight! I had thought of going on to Dover as it was such a lovely day but why hurry? Later I wished we had pushed on.

On Monday 29<sup>th</sup> June took the bus up to Beachy Head and walked back down into Eastbourne Town Centre. Nothing to stay there for so back to Marina and left at 2:30. We ran happily towards Dover, though a F3/4 headwind developed, and just off Folkestone we hit a dense bank of fog. Now I hate fog almost as much as Elisha does, but what can you do?



BEACHY HEAD





We were not in shipping lanes so carried on with radar, creeping along at six knots and arrived only yards from the west pier head. It just emerged out of the fog about 12 feet away directly ahead. We crept up the channel into the inner harbour in very poor visibility and passed the lifeboat rushing out. The fog just faded away as we neared the marina. We followed a sail boat for a bit not sure which way to go, but it turned out he was lost. I saw him going up what I thought was the wrong channel so I altered course. He promptly stopped and followed us! I'm always convinced that other skippers actually know better than I what they are doing, but it is not always true.

We entered Dover marina in sunshine and moored up. We looked back and still dense fog blanketed the harbour entrance.

We spent a couple of nights in Dover while I tried fix a rev counter problem, and waited for the fog banks in the channel to clear.

We revisited Walmer Castle where Wellington spent his later years, and he died there. Very evocative. The old man had gone back to his folding army camp bed, still there, rather than any luxury. It is said he would walk on the battlements anxiously looking across to France. The French were building the gigantic harbour at Cherbourg and hugely expanding their fleet. They were being very belligerent – again!

Thursday 1<sup>st</sup> July we walked the Western Heights. Fort Redoubt is huge, hidden, and forgotten. We walked in the massive ditches, with walls which were quite unscalable.



*Fort Redoubt*

Deciding the rev counter problem  
(it would not display engine hours)

was incurable we relaxed and waited for a good visibility forecast to cross the Dover Straits. A little doubtfully we went at 1700 in spite of warnings there were still fog patches in the Channel. It was OK up to the point where you turn to cross the shipping lanes at right angles and across to the waypoint off Calais. There was much less shipping than we expected. Turning north for Dunquerque though it was not so nice with head winds and choppy seas, and failing visibility.

The Radar suddenly stopped working. Elisha got the Fog Horn out and it was generally unpleasant. Long shallow banks run parallel to a very dull flat featureless coast with either heavy industry or endless blocks of flats. These banks are a real hazard if you get the tide wrong or the wind is in the wrong direction. We were very relieved to get into Dunquerque and moor up in the Yacht Club at 2100.

We went ashore for a hot meal at the marina club and things looked a lot better. Not much of a place. Lacks character and 'zing'. But the Yacht Club supplies nice moorings and is friendly with a good bar and restaurant.

We found the Dunkirk WW11 Museum in an old fort, shoddy and easily missed, not mentioned or shown on town maps. Only the British want to remember as the visitors book shows. Apart from some old bits and pieces of guns it is mostly photos and models. Very good old film in different languages. Elisha was fascinated and kept trying to recognise Dad in the photos. He told me he had used the little 0.25 Browning automatic pistol, that was at Camusglashlan when I was a boy, to threaten troops lining up on the beaches who were showing signs of panic.

The Brits left 10,000 dead as a result of the attempt to help the French, who having in some cases run away, accused the British of deserting them. Weird to walk these same beaches with endless cafes and stalls. Crammed with swimmers and children. No signs except for the line of east

and west cardinal buys marking the sunken ship (seven destroyers were lost in one day to German bombers), some with the gentle swell still breaking over the wreck at low tide.

Awfully difficult to imagine the scenes in the photos with pillars of black smoke. Elisha was a little cast down when she saw the beach which in the photos is covered with bodies. Even the French commentary agreed the French soldiers who had been hiding in cellars to avoid fighting were a menace. Out of control and prepared to fight to get to the head of the queues waiting for ships. The old fort was sad. The Germans shot a number of civilians in the yard and few people go there now.



Above is a painting in the War Museum in London of the Dunkirk beaches in 1940.



Dunkirk Beaches Today



The Dunquerque Beach where the BEF was taken off, with Dad, in 1940 is now just an endless sandy beach full of sunbathers and cafes. Dad was actually taken off further north up the beach at Braye. At first sight no trace of 1940. Drank champagne to Dad back on the boat - and those who never made it back. Took lots of photos for future references.

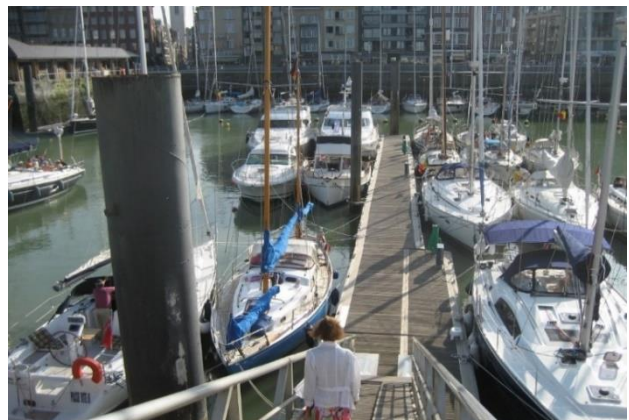
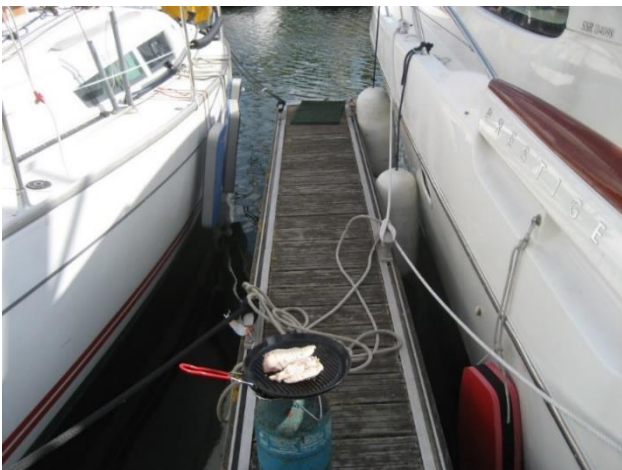
We left Dunkirk about 11:00 for Oostende (Ostend to Brits), a pleasant and uneventful run and into the RNSYC (Royal North Sea Yacht Club) to moor up. I never heard of a King of the North Sea, Belgium is a republic, so no idea where the Royal bit came from. We were met by Robere, the Harbourmaster. A local 'character'. He is famous on the coast, racing bout at 25 knots in his RIB. We rafted alongside a Dutch boat and sat sipping a beer watching in amazement as yacht after yacht came in until not a boat could enter, nor leave. A great deal of excited shouting, but in the end it all worked out.



*I lift a glass in memory of my father's rescue  
and to those who did not make it*



*Bruge Canal*



*Oostend Marina*

Robere scornfully dismissed our request to give us the required entry permit for Schengen entry stamps on our papers. He got no extra payment for the paperwork, so he would not do it. His opinion of Brussels was low!

Robere goes home at 16:00 but returns to work next day at 05:00. He lies in wait on the jetty in his RIB. He has noted any boats which have squeezed in after he left and not paid. He knows some skippers will try leaving early without paying, thinking they have had a free night. They are allowed to reach the outer harbour entrance before he streaks out to intercept them. They have to pay their mooring fee plus a €5 fine. He had got two yachts that morning and considered it a good start to the day.

We took the train to Bruges, which is just beautiful. Gill recommended it and so do I. We took a boat trip around the canals. How has this medieval city survived? Modern architects despair. Tried an internet café. Most frustrating. Different keyboards and couldn't connect to home.

Left Oostende 6<sup>th</sup> July with north going tide in gusty SW following Wind, F4/5 gusting to F8 according to forecast. As soon as out of channel a black cloud dumped torrential rain on us. In seconds we were soaked. The roof was roped back for security and by the time I got the rope off and the roof shut we were in rivers of water running off the deck. A

mile outside the entrance the rain stopped abruptly and we set course for Zeebrugge and the Westerschelde making 24 knots with a big following sea throwing up huge sheets of spray. The sun came out and all was well, roof opened and secured. Then the radar stopped working again signalling 'no scanner'. Not to worry. We entered the Westerschelde on the south side clear of the shipping lane and found our waypoint to allow us to turn across the shipping lane to the Vlissingen (Flushing) entrance. I cut the engines while we put up the Dutch courtesy flag and got ready, it was rough and we rolled a lot. We let a big ship on its way up to Antwerp pass our bow and started to move on when there was a crash of thunder, a streak of lightning, visibly dropped to about 200 metres and the rain came down again. No radar, glasses soaked so couldn't see instruments. Elisha was desperately ferreting about trying to get the fog horn, a large aerosol type pressurised can, out of the safety locker, not easy as we rolled. When she got it she excitedly leapt up and blew it in my ear so my hearing is even worse. I had not seen any close shipping before the storm came so we grimly made about 15 knots and crossed our fingers. All well, the Vlissingen harbour entrance appeared, visibility improved and we got in. Then we wandered around waiting for one of the many locks to open and followed a yacht in. Big lock but only about 2 foot rise and out into the canal.



*Bruges Square*



What a climate. In no time sun came out, we were sheltered from the wind and followed a convoy of boats up the canal through the lifting bridges. Motoring along at 4 knots in bright sun we sipped cold beer and pondered the astonishing rapidity of weather change.

We moored up in beautiful Middleburg on 6<sup>th</sup> July in a basin with all mod cons for €16.50 a night and were pleased to be, for the meantime, in peaceful sheltered big canals. Lovely town. We shopped and re-fueled.

Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> July we moved on to Veere, only an hour up the broad canal. I luckily got a place in the little village being a small boat, the main marina being full. Veere was just as charming as Middleburg. We now know that all the small Dutch places have church bells (often 20 or more in a single ornate church) which they not only use to chime the half hours but play tunes on for fun, all night. Elisha is not impressed.

It's a hard life drifting along the canals sipping wine and beer. The Dutch are so very friendly and pleasant. As in Belgium they scorn European officialdom. I am still worried as we were supposed to register as we entered the Schengen countries and I have the forms all ready. But all the harbourmasters do not want to know. They say it is European nonsense and they want nothing to do with it. Nobody has even asked for a passport.

The downside of this Dutch desire to keep their culture, of which they are very proud, is that though even in the countryside most (not all) people speak English, they do not write it. A document, menu, leaflet or navigation instruction in English is very rare and my Dutch not too good. Outside the very big cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam) use of credit cards is practically unknown. Restaurants, diesel pumps, marinas, supermarkets don't take them. The local banks are all Dutch and won't issue Euros to credit or debit cards through their cashpoints. Only to the Dutch 'picnik' cards. Fortunately we brought a lot of Euros or we would have been in deep trouble.



*Middleburg*



*Veere*



Anyway we moved on from Veere to explore the islands with their free moorings in Veerse Meer. Sadly it was raining with a strong wind so after a tour we left Veerse Meer through the lock and entered the Westerschelde. I had been very lazy about navigation and totally failed to grasp the fact that, although apparently sealed off from the sea, it is tidal and can get very rough. We found ourselves punching into a strong tide with wind against tide taking water all over with the hatch shut and things flying about the cabin as I had assumed a calm placid lake and not really prepared for sea. No Speed Limit in channels, but we couldn't have gone faster anyway, so it took a long time to circle a large shallow patch and turn north. We eventually entered the Grevelingenmeer through a lock at Brunisse and moored up in a marina. They had FREE WiFi and I established with Ann-Marie that I could not access my home pc. Ruined all my plans.

Grevelingenmeer is another dammed off inlet with islands and moorings scattered about. Not free but for 12 Euros you can get a permit allowing mooring anywhere you like for a week. The Grevelingenmeer, since it was dammed off, has been turned into a semi saline, very clean, lake. They have developed mussel farming, lobster farming. Also diving for pleasure and boating.

There are thousands of boats in marinas on the lake! The many islands have little bays and jetties to moor to. They are deserted and wooded and lovely to walk. Some islands have ponies a bit like the New Forest.

We wandered into Brunisse. The Mussel capital of Holland with a huge plastic mussel in the centre, to get our permit, another quiet little Dutch village, hardly any cars but of course lots of bicycles.

The first night, moored on an island pontoon, taught me a lot. We barbecued dinner, drank a bottle of wine and went to bed in a flat calm secure and happy. In the middle of the night I was woken by violent motion and cracks of thunder and staggered out on deck. It was blowing us violently on the jetty which had wooden posts, set back, with metal bands round the top. The waves were lifting the boat right up and grinding it against the metal tops of the posts. Great



*Herkingen Marine at Brunisse*



2.1 Volkeraksluizen

streaks of lightning rent the sky. Soaking wet I put out more fenders and ropes. What did I learn? That these sudden violent thunder squalls are a feature of Holland in Summer. That they invariably come from SW or W so you pick the E or NE side of any islands. It was subsequently explained to me that in the Grevelingenmeer the squalls came roaring off the North Sea, they would hit the sea dam and be abruptly forced upwards, then drop down the other side causing eddies which then all hit the numerous islands and formed vicious localised storms and were effectively cyclones. Grevelingenmeer, my informant said, said is good for sailing beginners (they always have experienced instructors with them) or experienced sailors, but most dangerous for those in between.

After some happy days in Grevelingenmeer we set off up the Krammer Volkerak through the giant Volkeraksluizen locks where we first met serious commercial traffic. Out through lock into Hollands Diep and along until we turned north into the Dordtse Kil canal. Huge powerful barges, often towing multiple dumb barges, churned along to Elisha's alarm. But she got used to them and gained confidence that they were not out to run us down. We arrived after quite a long day at Dordrecht. Amazing place at the junction of three major commercial canals. Again I had not done my homework and had long since forgotten my CEVNI signs (CEVNI qualification is compulsory for European waterways, and with good reason!) We tried to find a place we could just drift while I frantically consulted the CEVNI booklet.

The huge multi-arched bridge had red lights on some arches, a yellow triangle on another and two yellow triangles on another. Gigantic barges seemed to be coming from all sides. Unable to find the information I observed a launch going under the arch with a single yellow sign and, crossing my fingers, followed him. Once through it was mad. A barge was right across the river. Two seemed to side by side, another was going the other way and mixed in with no apparent pattern were various 'sport' (The Dutch term for leisure boats) boats. We peered hard trying to identify the entrance to the Yacht Club Marina but saw only narrow channels that seemed to go nowhere. We carried on upriver until I found a place just off the river by a lifting bridge to tie up for a moment. I sat down with the chart plotter at 1/2 mile scale and searched for the entrance. We had passed it and couldn't believe it was there. I marked it as a waypoint and we cautiously retraced our route. The waypoint put us at the mouth of a narrow dead end channel previously concealed by barges. We entered and within yards the channel went hard to port revealing a lifting bridge and a waiting pontoon. We waited for 20 minutes till the bridge lifted and entered. The Harbour Master



*Yacht Club at Dordrecht*



(Havenkantoor) stood on a pontoon and called out a berth number and, through another lifting bridge, we finally moored up in this hidden haven.



Dordrecht is an old city, older than Amsterdam we were proudly told. On a number of occasions I got quite a lecture on the history of places we called. I discovered that the Dutch believe the English think history is important and are proud of their old cities. Consequently they are keen to point out how old their cities are.

Merchants houses overhung the huge river outside and one could see this had been a very prosperous city for a long time. We liked Dordrecht but the rain returned so we took a fast ferry to Rotterdam the next day, where we just got very wet. Back in Dordrecht they were making a big thing about the American music festival which Elisha was really looking forward to. When it started the noise was awful. I could discern no merit in the tune bellowing out but put it down to being out of date. However Elisha was of the same opinion and bitterly disappointed. As she said you can't listen to it, you can't sing to it and you can't dance to it, so what good is it?

We watched a barge come in alongside a deserted quay on the river, wondering why. It came alongside but didn't moor. With engines keeping it in place it lowered a medium sized car on a crane (see picture). The wife came ashore and undid the slings, the barge moved off and she drove away. I learned this is usual. She will go shopping, get her hair done etc, and meet up 30 miles on at a pre-arranged place, the car is lifted aboard and on they go.

Many of the barges now carry two cars. Their wheelhouses are on extending pillars so when the decks are piled high with containers they raise the entire wheelhouse to get a good view over the top – extraordinary to see.

We left Dordrecht with regret up the Noord Canal to link up with the River Lek. After a good run up the Lek, sections of which you can plane on, we turned up into the Rijnkanal, sharing the lock with a huge barge, and aimed for Utrecht. We left the Rijnkanal for a smaller waterway heading for Utrecht centre. It got smaller and shallower and the bridges got lower and lower

culminating in a fixed bridge with 3.04 metres clearance. Our air draught is 3.0 metres, 4 cm clearance. We turned sharp left up an ever shallowing dead end and moored up relieved not to have touched ground. Instantly a youth sprang out of the bushes to demand €8. Elisha was convinced it was a con but he was official – I think.



Next morning I seriously reviewed the through the centre of Utrecht route. Bridge clearance they now said 2.95 metres so minus 5 cm! Decided it was some kind of a Dutch joke the guy at Brunisse who'd said we would get through was playing, and we would go back. But seemed a shame to give in. It is a sunken canal, the old city of Utrecht being built beside it but due to flooding problems the city had been progressively raised so you look down on the canal. There are cafes in some places beside the canal.



*Safely out of the first bridge in Utrecht*

Examined the possibility of removing the Radar dome. Not really on. Took the masthead light cover off and bulb out. Saved 6 cm. I guessed, I hoped, that the quoted height was worst case. Decided to give it a try. An examination of the bridge the previous evening had showed that it was of curved arch design and so the height quoted was only if you stayed in the middle. ELISHA does not steer well at low speeds. Some bridges were quite long and one had a curve in it.

We lined up nervously to enter the first bridge and then there was a blast of a horn and a low pleasure boat crammed with people came rushing out. We paused, hooted ourselves and entered the first bridge keeping strictly to the centre. Elisha stood in the stern checking our centralisation and I did my best. We had some 3 cm clearance and came through OK. After that the other 15 bridges just followed the pattern. Some were longer, one had a curve in it but we were OK. People on the bridges crowded to the edge as they saw us coming and cheered the red ensign and called out ELISHA. then they rushed to the other side to peer over to see if we actually came out and cheered again. It all became quite festive. At one canal side restaurant they offered us food as we waited at the edge for another cruise boat to come by.

We emerged triumphant and elated. now we were truly in the old River Vecht. It is a beautiful river. The new gigantic Amsterdam Canal has replaced it commercially so it is peaceful with many lifting bridges. For the first time we were charged for bridge transit in the traditional way. A sign warns you of the toll and the bridge keeper has a wooden clog on a fishing rod which he swings out for you to put the toll in as you pass through.

We moored free at beautiful spots on the banks and generally enjoyed ourselves. We stopped in a haven at Weesp and were rafted beside a Dutch steel cruiser with two Americans who had had the boat in Holland for 15 years. They came over for a drink and we had a nice evening. He said we should try to get to the Flower auctions at Aalsmeer and I made mental note.



*Cleared the last bridge in Utrecht!*





She had been on Obama's campaign team and full of chat. We stayed two nights and I examined some forts as it became clear we were entering some kind of fortified belt.

Weesp was nice but epitomised some of the Dutch downsides. Shore Power – yes, but 4 amps maximum or you trip the switches and you have to put in 50 cents for an unclear amount of power. 4 Amps won't run anything. Not a kettle, certainly not hot water. Doesn't worry us. It is enough to charge the batteries, we turn to Camping Gaz for the kettle and boil it for tea or hot water. Even without charge the batteries will, remarkably, run both fridges for 2 days or one for 3 days.

The shower is 50 cents with no control over the temperature or idea how long the water will come for – easy to get stuck in there covered in soap when it runs out. Water is 50 cents for a 100 litres but the only water point was blocked off by rafted boats. Why? are they trying to be green? Are they just penny pinching? I can't believe they get back the cost of installing all the metering kit.

We left Weesp with heavy rain clouds threatening – we should have stayed! Our old friends the violent thunderstorms were back. We clawed into the bank and moored up and sat with the roof shut and the electronics off and drank cold beer while the thunder rolled and the lightning flashed and the rain poured. now we know why all Dutch cyclists (the Dutch are all cyclists) carry plastic hooded rain coats at all times.

We exited the Vecht via Muiden into the Markemeer, followed the channel out and turned west for Amsterdam. We could plane for a bit but soon slowed down for the run up the channel. It was a Saturday so commercial traffic light.

Entering Amsterdam locks by the river our old friend the torrential rain and wind struck. We chose not to go into Sixhaven, the usual halt reputed to be very crowded and went instead to WSV Aeolus, a narrow entrance into an old dock with a strong cross wind and, after a bit of excitement, reversed ELISHA into a berth. Like most big cities Amsterdam has a problem and this is the 'wrong' side of the river with



*Toll Payment on the Vecht*



*Public Pee*



many immigrants in social housing. We saw no problems but were warned not to come back in the dark. A free ferry runs across the river to Amsterdam Central Station. We got an all day ticket the second day and explored. Amsterdam is a series of concentric canals, the innermost being the oldest and the other built as the city expanded. Links between the canals make a maze of connections. Elisha visited the famous store and we went on to the flower market where she bought bulbs – and a flower in a pot for the boat. A gardenia. Would it survive? But she missed flowers so we got it and it has done well going down below in bad weather.

I took a picture of their very sociable pissoirs. A triangular arrangement erected in the open in public places where a man can have a pee and not, in theory, be immodest. See picture. There appear to be no female equivalents.



*Flowers from Amsterdam*



After Amsterdam we reversed course back out into the Markermeer and set off for Naarden to the East. The marina at Naarden is about a mile from the town, an easy walk along the cycle path. Increasingly popular is the arrival pontoon with an intercom you call up on and are given a berth to go to. Expensive marina but all mod cons.

Walked up to Naarden. It is the most perfectly preserved fortress town in Holland, and there are many of them. Two concentric moat systems with bastions, island redoubts etc. It apparently sat astride a sandy ridge, one of the few approaches to Amsterdam and was an important town. But like so many preserved old Dutch towns the progressive reclamation of land and damming of the sea access placed it in an area of new land and easily by-passed, and it is just untouched. There are hardly any shops. We got there on the Sunday and only a few bars were open.

The boat tours of the moat were not in business and the Fortress museum was closed. Elisha, bored with the moat, saw a bus at the town edge and impulsively jumped onto it, grabbing a few Euros saying she'd see me back at the boat. I worried about her as I was not sure where the bus was going, or if she had enough money, or if she knew the name of the marina. Of course I need not have. She was relaxing in the boat when I got back, the bus driver had varied his route to drop her off at the entrance and been, as always, most helpful.



*Naarden Fortress*

Monday we caught the bus back but, contrary to the Rough Guide, it was closed,



as was everything else. Where the newspapers get the idea the continentals work harder than us beats me. Holland is closed not just on Sundays but on Mondays too!

Tuesday morning I made a last attempt to see the museum at Naarden, catching the bus on my own. Triumph, I got in. Disappointing. Best things were some video, available in English, of the Dutch defence plans over the centuries putting the whole thing in context. Like most museums these days it is set up as an 'experience' for school children. Model soldiers bending over cannon etc. No information about the two sieges. The French took it in one of them, I'd have loved to know how, or indeed why. It seemed impregnable to me.

Back to the boat and left after an early lunch for Spakenburg, reputed to be very traditional but crowded. It was. We squeezed in on a corner of the old quay having come down the narrow entrance canal which was solid with boats on both sides. The Harbour Master turned up and took a fee but told us we'd have to be away by 10:00 next day as passenger boats would be coming in. We could, he said, raft up across the creek. We walked up town finding the upper ends of the harbour are totally reserved for 'traditional' boats. They even have a shipyard making and repairing them.

Holland has mostly steel canal cruisers, some yachts and a huge number of traditional leeboard craft which they love dearly.

In Spakenburg there are still women who habitually wear old Dutch costume. Until the building of the great dams it was a fishing village and they are proud of this. Next day we moved the boat and walked up as it was market day. Crammed with people, music and stalls. We are beginning to move into the holiday season and it shows.

Back to the boat and turned west heading back to the Markermeer. Stopped at an island off the entrance to Naarden and moored for the night. It was hot and I swam though Elisha disapproved because there were ducks about. Lots of kids were swimming though. A peaceful night being very sheltered from the SW wind that was moderate in the morning. I wondered what it would be like in the Markermeer, and with good reason. It was very rough. These meers are shallow and can whip up a very nasty short sea in no time. Under sail you have to be very careful of a lee shore because out of the channels you can find yourself aground with the wind and sea pushing you on very easily. For an hour we pushed into the sea at 6 knots with the roof shut and lots of water coming over.

Once I was clear of the worst shallows and close to the Markermeer west shore I was able to turn NNE and get the sea behind me, which the Jeanneau is very good at, and up on the plane and 20 knots up to the dam before Enkhuizen which lets you into the IJsselmeer.

We went into a marina and moored up, a bit of a walk to town. Elisha went up to town while I sorted a few things out and I went up to meet her. Striding briskly along in my shorts, thinking of goodness knows what, I walked straight into a concrete bollard and fell over the top of it in spectacular manner cutting my leg and knee and hand. Furious with myself, and in considerable pain, I was regrettably short with a Dutchman and his wife who rushed to try and help me up. I got



*The Sea Behind us in Markemeer*

to my feet declining assistance and walked on. It hurt, so I didn't look to see the damage though I knew I was bleeding. Then I realised people were looking at me and realised I must look awful so I turned back to the boat to put some long trousers on and set out again to meet Elisha. We had a beer and went back to the boat. At this stage I felt the symptoms of one of my awful sinus infection based colds coming on. It just wasn't my day. Once this starts there is no stopping the process so we booked for another night. It takes a week to regain proper thinking power and a full month to really recover. Elisha was convinced it was brought on by swimming with the ducks, and she could be right. She moved into the spare cabin and we spent two days with me mostly in bed in a darkened cabin.

When we moved on two days later we headed for Loretsluizen Locks at the east end of the great Afsluitdijk Dam and out into the Waddensee or Friesen Sea, then east along the coast to Harlingen where I found an obscure Yacht Club through a lock and we moored up in a gloomy creek with lots of rain overhung by trees, and I retreated to my bunk for another couple of days while Elisha explored and returned occasionally with food.

Eventually I emerged and went into Harlingen feeling a touch better. Next day we emerged from the creek and set off for Vlieland, one of the Friesan islands. The Waddensee (Riddle of the Sands stuff) is very shallow and largely dries out at low tide creating enormous areas of sand with only some channels still navigable. Although the rise and fall of tide is not particularly high this leads to very strong currents as the rising and falling tides are funnelled into the few channels. The islands and the coast are very low so there are few landmarks. The channels are well buoyed but confusing as many minor channels lead off. We found Vlieland but, as warned in the Pilot Book, it being August, the harbour was closed, full. There is no other harbour and the anchorage marked on the chart I realised, dries out. We anchored in deeper water and watched in alarm as sand emerged all around us and large ships took the bottom. Their crews would put ladders over the side and take to the sand for barbecues etc. Efforts to land from the dinghy were frustrated by thick deep mud all around and the sandy beaches were a long way from where we were allowed to anchor. So we never got ashore.

Frustrated we decided to return to Harlingen as I wasn't feeling too good. When we started up the GPS, which had been giving more and more trouble dropping out on us, it refused to work. There was a flat afternoon sun glaring on the sand and location was difficult. The channel marking buoys were difficult to see and shape and colour were not obvious when you did. I had the chart but once away from Vlieland I could find no landmarks to take bearings of. After a bit I realised we were going up a wrong channel as the heading had become east. But which channel was it? We crept out getting shallower until I was just about to anchor and wait for the tide when I saw a major marker and the depth started to creep up.



*Harlingen*

Back into Harlingen, the town centre mooring, through a lock and bridge and desperately crowded. Slept soundly.

Next day we left and went back into the IJisselmere through the locks, anchored for lunch and on to Staveren on the east coast. Staveren is a huge modern marina and resort in Friesland. I was at the stage of my sinus cold that I was drained of energy and talked only reluctantly with coughing and nose blowing. I'm afraid the Dutch I met at that time must have thought me one unfriendly



taciturn Brit. Wandered around and filled up with diesel. Now full holiday season and the place crammed. Friesland is inhabited by very blond people to the extent it was notable to see someone with dark hair, let alone dark skin. They have caught this 'cultural' thing and are busy changing all the names and road signs to what they have decided is the 'old' Friesland spelling, not the nasty Dutch names that have been used for 100s of years. Friesland language words are being resurrected. The EU seems to encourage countries to break up – or am I just being negative. We saw no other Brit boats in Friesland and indeed have only seen three since we entered Holland and two of them were kept in Holland but British flagged.

Leaving Staveren we entered the canals again going up the Frisocanal through the Fluessen meer. Friesland is covered in meers, some large some small but all very shallow out of the, often narrow, channel. We stopped for the night at an island near the end of the meer. Surrounded by rented boats of all shapes and sizes. A fleet of five moored up next to us. They produced tents and barbecues and talked and sang all night. I heard nothing but Elisha couldn't sleep. We moved to Tjeukemeer where we got in the wrong channel and extracted ourselves with difficulty from very shallow water. In the channel fleets of sailing boat tacked and crossed our bows. When we stopped for lunch we were of one mind – enough. We had intended to spend more time in Friesland but the combination of shallow water, narrow channels which split off and lacking detailed charts with no GPS were difficult to identify. It was nerve wracking, endlessly trying to avoid highly manoeuvrable fast sailing boats which cheerfully sailed right at you, from different directions, on the basis it was up to you to get out of the way. Of course we might have seen it differently had I been well and it not been the peak summer holiday period. Elisha also pronounced herself bored with the endless 6 knots max and wanted to 'get somewhere'.

So we agreed to quit Friesland and head back to the open waters of the Ijsselmeer as best we could. So we left the Tjeukemeer and headed for Lemmer on the coast. We got there at about six in the evening and moored up to the bank a fair walk from the centre. Just as we were setting off a woman appeared demanding €6 which seemed steep for zero facilities. We walked down into town which was indeed crammed in the recommended mooring area. We ate dinner beside the water and very pleasant it was. I was fascinated, I took a picture, to see a sign showing a person holding hands with a child with a red line through. Was this ever madder political correctness? You mustn't hold a child's hand? I was baffled. Later I saw the same sign without the red line. Still don't understand. Perhaps there are areas in which you are allowed to hold a child's hand.

Next day we went through the three bridges (€5 collected in a clog), through the centre and the lock and out into the Ijesslmeer. Slowly down the channel passing amazing fleet of traditional large Dutch yachts racing. Got up onto the plane in choppy water with light rain headed for the Enkhuizen locks to get into the Markermeer. We had had a lovely time and loved Holland but now were headed home.



*Elisha with Hand Operated Chain Ferry*

We went into Monickerdam to a pleasant, if expensive marina, and Elisha went downtown to explore. I met up with her later. Like so many old and quaint Dutch towns it was deserted. No cars, no people and this the holiday season. Took a take away back to the boat. Next day set out to try and get past Amsterdam. We wanted a different route home and it is not that easy. The canal route through Amsterdam has 16 bridges, two of which being main line electrified railway bridges open only at midnight. For yachts with masts this is the only way and a night convoy is mustered. However we could easily get under the railway bridges. So we left Monickerdam and ran down south to Amsterdam turning west along the river past the station and found the canal entrance in an old basin. We paid our fee and started off on the long and tedious journey. It was extraordinary going through Amsterdam but with long delays at the bridges drifting about waiting for action. At one bridge Elisha had just asked why we were so close to an iron pillar, I thought it a good place to be near the bridge but to one side. An anonymous broadcast voice told us something in Dutch, I knew it was us because I made out 'Snell Boot'. He was it turned out warning us. A barge inches narrower than the bridge opening came powering through at speed. This pushed a plug of water ahead of it which rushed back in a wave, picking us up and slamming us against the iron pillar with a horrible crunch.

By the time we got through I was very tired and fed up. We found ourselves with nowhere obvious to stop in a crowded meer, so carried on down a canal. More bridges, until we reached Aalsmeer. There we spotted a boatyard which said passerels welcome so we tied up, cooked some food and went to sleep. Next morning a woman who had surely observed us appeared and wanted €12.



With no GPS, working out how to get to the mooring recommended was very difficult in a maze of canals, meers and shallow water. This cannot be appreciated without seeing the map!

It was a very nice friendly yacht club at Aarlsmeer flying the Red Ensign. The Harbour master said an Brit yacht had left that morning and they saw few Brit boats so liked to fly the flag to encourage others and he would leave it up while we were there. The club was cut off from Aarlsmeer by a hand operated chain ferry which you had to work yourself and gave Elisha some amusement. Aarlsmeer was pleasant if uninspiring but we wanted to visit the Flower Market we'd heard about. Be there by eight am we were told. By nine it is mostly over, by ten finished. Foolishly we set out to walk. It was miles on busy roads often with no pavements. The Dutch cycle so of course there were cycle paths but you are not supposed to walk on cycle paths.

We got there, having set out at seven, about 8.15 somewhat fed up. However we were welcomed kindly and paid our €5 each to do the, unaccompanied, tour. It was all worth while.

The market is a growers co-operative through which virtually all the cut flowers grown in Holland are sold. Members pay a small commission on flowers sold, non members pay a higher commission. Now many of the flowers come in from Africa and other countries to take advantage of the unparalleled distribution network. On arrival all flowers are inspected and inspectors notes attached. The flowers on unmanned trolleys are then pulled through the auction areas electrically where men, I reckoned about 60 in each area. (I saw 2 women out of several hundred men and was told women didn't like the pressure of 2 hours of mad bidding with lightning decisions and severe criticism if you pay too much) on computers see each batch of flowers on huge screens, two per auction area, bid in a Dutch Auction. Samples of the lot are held up briefly. Millions of flowers, priced per stem, pass through every day. amazing organisation and technology. The bids, made on the computers, appear on the screen so it is all silent. As a visitor you walk around a huge walkway which allows you to look down on the floor and see through glass into the auction rooms.



Elisha was far more interested in the flowers themselves. You look down on millions of beautiful flowers of every possible type. Tulips, orchids, roses (which have an individual auction room) are all there. The floor is a mass of colour with thousands of unmanned self driving, electric trucks moving with hardly any noise. Into the auction rooms, then out to the assembly area where they get together each purchaser's lots which set off to the truck bays for delivery. A few floor workers move about checking tags but mostly automated. A high proportion are delivered that day all over Europe and UK. British supermarkets use the system a lot as they know they will get fresh flowers delivered within 24 hours. Order up till midnight, flowers are bought fresh early following morning are sent off to you within an hour of being bought.

The floor area is enormous. The scale of the operation a tribute to Dutch organisation.

Took bus back and got lost but after 3 busses and a tour of the area got back to the boat, Thanked the Harbour Master and set off down Westender Plassen, another meer. Along a stretch of canal to Kager Plassen where got lost amongst little islands. Moored for lunch and worked out direction. A problem with navigation these days is you tend not to both buy the GPS chart chip and detailed charts. So when the GPS fails, as it did, you are in a position where you really miss the detailed charts.

Peter Upcher at the Lymington club had been to Holland and bought several hundred pounds worth of charts which he kindly lent to me. Without them I would have been in real trouble. Out of Kager Plassen and approached Leiden which sounded really nice.

A university town with moorings in the centre. But when we got there the bridge had two red lights – closed! August weekend. A really nice Dutch lady on a steel cruiser with her husband called out to us the town was full and they had closed access. It was a bit wet and miserable so we tried to tie up to decide where to go but a bridge keeper called out to us it was 'verboden'. TIP: Don't remark to the Dutch how similar their language is to German!

We wandered along half a mile trying to work out what to do when the nice lady and her husband



emerged in their boat from a creek and hailed us. It was a private mooring up there but they had talked to the Haven Kantoor and he had agreed they could stay for a night. They had very kindly said could he get another boat in as there was this British couple in a little boat who need somewhere to stay and he had agreed. They had then come out to find us. Lovely people the Dutch.

Next morning we took the dinghy in to Leiden but it was not a great success. It was raining gently, it was Monday morning and the Dutch don't really do Mondays. The shops that do open never do it before eleven. There was no sign of the lively student town with its floating cafes. So back to the boat.

So we set off for Rotterdam. These were non commercial canals, long since eclipsed by the huge big modern canals, small by commercial standards with lots of lifting bridges. I won't bore with all the names of canals and rivers because in Holland the same river or canal seems to have as many as five different names according to the section you are in.

We stopped for a free night moored to the bank after the lock and bridge at a little nothing place called Sytwenderbrug. We wandered up and Elisha got some chicken bits of some kind from an Asian take away but I could not face anything on offer. Back at the boat I had a tin of pea soup and poor Elisha found her so called chicken to be a revolting and uneatable minced processed chicken.

During our travels I had been attempting to fix the GPS. Although I could certainly have made it home without it, I preferred to fix it if I could. As the manual said the first thing to check was the wiring I had progressively re-connected with new connectors all the joins. The Raymarine C80 Multi Function screen is not itself the GPS but relies on inputs from GPS, Radar, Auto Pilot etc. All these inputs come together in the cabling so the connections are initially bewildering. I had not quite realised this. The diagnostics showed no satellite signals received but this was not true as my handheld backup worked fine.

Out of ideas I rang Raymarine in UK. I explained what I had done but they immediately said it wasn't the wiring but a fault in the GPS unit itself which was mounted on the Radar arch. I had thought the little dome was just an aerial but it was in the fact the GPS and just sent the information to the C80. He assured me the 125 model would fit the same holes and just replace the old 120. He lied.

He explained the 120 model had been replaced by newer 125 model with an LED on it and self diagnostics. He gave me the names of Dutch Raymarine dealers, who of course, thankfully, spoke good English. The only one who had a unit in stock was in Rotterdam.

So we moved on from Sytwenderbrug, starting early so as to make Rotterdam in good time. A day of frustrations. The first bridge kept us waiting an hour before a bridge keeper cycled up and apologised saying he didn't know we were there and we should have called him on VHF. A Dutch passer by had called him to say a British boat was waiting. The next bridge we waited an hour and a half and it turned out there was an electrical fault so we just chatted with other (Dutch) boats.

A slow journey with many bridges. We thought of stopping at Delft, once famous for china, but found a busy town with only mooring by a dual carriageway and that full of boats and so passed on.

Finally, quite suddenly, we were in Rotterdam. Through a lock and out into the Maas River. Enormously wide and full of barges. We crossed over and turned east heading up for the mooring in the Binnenhaven, under the huge Erasmusbrug Bridge and through another lifting bridge. Similar to Amsterdam in another old dock lock since disused with a few old cranes left there for decoration. Not nice but facilities very good. The nicest, cleanest, most spacious showers and toilet yet in Holland and that is saying something. Lovely washing machines and dryers for which we got free tokens plus unlimited water and electricity (13 amp!). A very friendly young



*Rotterdam*

Dutchman in charge. He printed me out (he had been in IT he was keen to explain) from the web a route to Raymarine and supplied all the other local information I needed. I rang the Raymarine dealer to make sure the GPS would be waiting for me and the next morning, having dissuaded Elisha from coming with me and set off at eight o'clock. What a journey!

It took forever. Long walk to underground. Rotterdam, like Amsterdam, has a very limited underground and I don't know why they bother. You cannot buy a ticket. A woman eventually emerged from the office and I explained I had no change for the ticket machine. They couldn't supply change. The machine took credit cards but we established it didn't like any of mine, although they worked OK everywhere else. Eventually, bless her, she came back with a free pass ticket to Central Station. Two stops on I emerged and walked a few hundred metres to Central Station. There was a ticket office but long queues and surly staff. In common with most international cities the staff were not Dutch, who are unfailingly courteous. Got ticket. One stop. Discovered 40 minutes wait so bought English paper. Rackety dirty old train arrives. One stop and in some industrial suburb. Find road. Obviously wrong place as only run down housing. Call



company. Actually on right road which becomes businesses if you just cross the dual carriageway as road continues on other side.

Get GPS and just hope it is right, but made in UK and instructions in English! Complicated procedure paying my €299. They tell me it is well known the unit fails in 4 to 5 years! On return home to Sway to find our neighbour, Gerald, had same problem but was in UK and got a replacement with 50% off as known problem. Thank god it at least failed when I was in an English speaking country.

Found a bus back, anything to avoid train. Bus driver apparently unfriendly but refused to take any money. I don't know why. Back at Central Station. Now got change for tube. As all instructions in Dutch (They speak English, don't write it so well) I could not get a ticket till security guy came up and showed me how to do it. Back to boat for 12:00. Elisha sensibly gone. I was so glad she had not come to be dragged around the tedious trip I'd had.

Opened the box and read the installation manual with care. Realise on reading manual I needed a Raymarine conversion cable to get 125 to work with 120 wiring. Had tantrum.

I tried to pull through the connection cable as new cable with unit. No chance. Bundled together and securely fastened with many other wires in multiple places – a major job.

I studied the wire diagrams and did some drawings noting the crossovers needed to get 125 working with 120 wiring. I set the 125 up on the roof mounted on a toilet roll and connected directly through the cabin door just to check it would work. It worked! It took time to find itself as it had to do a start up, re-initialisation and location scan - but it worked.

Having decided I had to use existing cabling I cut off the 120 at the radar arch and tried to fit the 125. They lied to me. They said it just fitted. Securing bolts in a different position and due to different cable connection needed  $\frac{3}{4}$  inch hole for cable, not in middle either. I carry a small drill in tool kit but it took me 1½ hours of scraping and chipping to get that hole. I mounted the RS 125 and connected it as per my drawing. Doesn't work. Have another tantrum. Glad Elisha not around as she won't have bad language and signs of hysteria. Got cold beer and sat down to think. Elisha arrives back from exploring Rotterdam. 'I thought you'd have it working by now'. She says. Bite tongue and drink the cold beer. I don't speak. Elisha looks at opened Radar arch with wire trailing out and cabin with electrical panels removed and wires trailing out all over the cabin. 'You'll have to make it work' she says. 'You can't leave it like this'.

Say nothing but have another beer. I decide on a different approach. Wire cable from RS125 through block wire to wire to old cable. Sit in cabin and try to do all the crossovers and wire isolations there, though I can't see the difference. Try again. It works!! Have a little whoop and dance. Tidy everything up and replace panels. Clear up fibreglass dust and cross fingers. Elisha unimpressed. 'I knew you could do it' she said.

Go and have Pizza at very odd place at side of dock. Feeling a little like a celebration I ask for the wine list. Cheapest bottle is €39.50. Sense of humour fails. Ask the waitress if she is serious.

It is the wine list and those are the prices. Remark the "Dutch must be very rich", and order two beers. Having pondered wine menu and seen someone else with a glass of wine at end of meal I ask if they don't serve wine by the glass. She says yes – I didn't ask. I leave no tip. Elisha says she (the waitress) doesn't like my head. (Trinidad speak).

Set off at dawn down the Nieuwe Maas in the direction of Europort. This is the gigantic new canal the Rotterdammers built when the Oude Maas began to silt up and on which their present prosperity is built. I had carefully checked and there is no speed limit. Observe water taxis dashing about in all directions at 30 knots making massive wake so obviously OK. Get ELISHA onto plane and cruise at 25 knots. Apart from water taxis there are no fast boats. A few yachts making their way down. A Dutchman in a canal cruiser some way off shouts something and waves his arms about. Alarmed that I might be speeding I slow down and double check my data. No problem I'm definitely OK. So wait till he well behind and carry on.

We turn south down the Oude Maas and plane happily along under big bridges till reach the Spui and turn west. The Spui also has no speed limit but is narrower and has a lot of leisure use from holiday camps with people in little inflatables and canoes so have to take care and slow down

a lot to avoid wash problems. About midday, having made fantastic progress we come out into Haringvliet, another vast Lake created by a dam. It is full of yachts, crammed with them. We head south east until we go under a huge motorway bridge and enter Hollands Diep and we are back at the Volkeraksluizen locks and so have completed our circle. We will now be retracing our steps. It is around six and we are tired. Before the locks there is an anchorage so we move in there and drop the anchor sheltered from west and south west in about 3 metres on mud. We eat on board and are very happy watching the world go by and sleep soundly.

We enter the lock (it runs 24 hours) early but it is packed and for the first time we meet a lot of Belgium boats. They are immediately, obviously, less competent than the Dutch and the bumping and excitement is much more French.

Out into the Volkerak. Another big freshwater lake but a speed limit so a slow run down to the Krammersluizen exit locks. Then out into the Keeten Mastgat, an arm of the Oosterschelde.

Having discovered there is no speed limit *in* the channels we make good progress to the Zandkrieksluis locks which give us entry back into Veersemeer. Crammed with boats and more Belgians. While waiting for the lock to empty so we could enter there was a delay and it was evident boats had bumped each other and were tangled up. Dutch lockkeepers don't shout. They stand and watch and try to give advice. Eventually a British yacht, about 45 foot emerged giving every indication of distress and headed immediately to waiting moorings and tied up. The anxious crew emerged and started trying to assess the damage. I think it was Belgium boats that they were tangled with. Nobody goes through the many Dutch Locks without a few bumps.

We entered thinking the lock was now full, but two barges, a large and a small one, came in too and leisure boats were shuffled and packed in. This being mostly a leisure, or 'sport' route they didn't have the giants separate locks for barges.

Out into Veersemeer with loads of boats and I feared everything would be horribly crowded. But we easily found an island mooring half way down and it was of all the nice places we stayed, the very nicest. Peaceful, sheltered and a beautiful evening. We walked round the island then barbecued chicken and had a bottle of cold wine. The GPS hadn't blinked for two days and my confidence was growing we had solved the problem. Elisha was in her element. A sort of Camusglashlan with calm waters and a fridge full of cold wine at hand.



*Cooking in the wind in Veerse Meer*

We debated another day in Veersemeer but sadly moved on and entered the Walcheren Canal at Veere. Through the lock and on to Middleburg where we got some diesel and bought some things for lunch. I got an English paper, the Times, and we went back for lunch on the boat. Then we set off on the canal, which becomes the Kanaal Door, the short distance of a couple of miles to Vlissingen (Flushing). We waited for a convoy to gather at the first lifting bridge and went through expecting, as on the way up, the other bridges to lift in sequence as we went down.



However it seems they were only synchronised with a convoys coming up the canal and we waited ages at each bridge. Thoughts of exiting at Vlissingen and possibly carrying on to Oostende faded. We finally exited the sea lock and found the Westerschelde waiting for us with a nasty choppy steep sea, a strong westerly wind and a grey sky spitting rain. We had got used to leaving fenders, out on both sides or out on deck but now had to get them all inboard.

I turned east up the Westerschelde towards Antwerp to minimise motion while Elisha clung on and got the fenders in. Eight fenders took some time and the tide was sweeping us up with the wind in the wrong direction. We were on the edge of the shipping lane so big ships kept looming up. Finally Elisha got everything in and the bow ropes stored. We turned south west for Breskens having abandoned all ideas of Oostende. We couldn't stay on the plane so slopped across to Breskens at six knots lots of spray. Beskens is sheltered by sand banks and once we cleared the western ends and turned east inside them the sea moderated and we turned into the harbour entrance with relief. I don't think the Westerschelde likes us crossing it.

Breskens is a fishing port in the strange little southern outpost of Holland to the south of the Westerschelde. We squeezed into a berth, our wide beam being a problem again, and went to check in. Immediately it didn't feel quite like the Holland we had got used to. Some nice restaurants and lots of fresh fish but not very interesting.

Next day the wind had dropped right off though still from the west. The sun was out and it all looked quite different. We ran out of the Westerschelde comfortably with just a little sea knowing that as we followed the coast we would come round to south west and feel what wind there was less. We ran about 25 miles to Oostende and were going so well we decided to carry on another 25 miles to Dunkirk. I was a little sorry to miss that chaotic Oostende Yacht Club harbour, the beer on the bar with a superb view and Robere the Harbour Master. However I had feared we might have to slog our way back into the sea down this coast so we took the weather when it was good.

It just got better and was really calm by the time we got to Dunkirk and we went slowly close inshore. Our experience on the way up had taught me a lot about the parallel coastal sand banks and I had the confidence to come down inside some shallower ones close inshore. This was both quicker and calmer. Back to the Dunkirk Yacht club. Instant book in as already on their computer. I started the big job of cleaning the boat (far from done even now). Grime was evident which is really hard to remove. Dunkirk is not exciting and I had no wish to go into town but Elisha was now keen to get a hairdo so that she arrived home looking smart and wanted to arrange something. Her hair was bleached with the sun and I had to agree with her - she looked wild.

We ate in the club, not very good sadly, but she only had managed a vague appointment at one o'clock the next day. She found it disconcerting that, after the superb English spoken in Holland, in Dunkirk nobody spoke a word of it! Next day I carried on fiddling with the boat and off she went early to see if she couldn't find an earlier slot. At midday I went to see the Harbour Master and explained it could be three o'clock before we left. He puffed his cheeks and said were we spending



*Veersemeer Relaxing*



*Island in Veersemeer*

another night. We could do but I didn't want to commit us. I explained that my wife had gone to get her hair done and I could not be sure when she would get back. Problem solved. He sympathised. He understood, I could not tell when I could leave. It was no longer a problem. What can any man do with a woman?

Elisha arrived back before one o'clock triumphant. She had got it done early and her hair looked really nice. They had done it very dark cut a bit shorter and sort of straight down at the sides, I thought it looked French and really nice. I much regret I took no picture as, later in Dover it went.

We left immediately for Dover as the weather was holding. We had about half tanks of diesel and I wanted to avoid unnecessary fuelling since it would be cheaper in Dover.

However I was having trouble with the starboard tank fuel gauge so was uneasy. A long run down past Calais and the boring flat industrial coast. Got to the waypoint and turned across the shipping lanes at right angles. More traffic than coming up but not a problem and visibility good.

You have to call Dover Port Control for clearance to enter the harbour. I called them on my ATIS VHF handset which I was told would not work in UK and it worked fine. No problem, no comments. So that saves £25 in having it modified back.

The showers in Dover are in PortaCabins. Elisha went for a showers and was unable to control the temperature. She arrived dejectedly back at the boat with the styling all steamed out by the overhot shower. It was a real shame.

We filled up with diesel at the fuel pontoon and it cost £295 which brought tears to my eyes. Dover is not an interesting place and the town centre very poor. We were right to take advantage of the good weather because the wind got up and we spent three nights in Dover watching big white capped seas outside the harbour. We took the bus to Walmer Castle with a Picnic and were most disappointed at the dumping down of the whole thing with plastic swords and no books of any interest. All based on giving people/school kids 'an experience'. When I queried the lack of anything except 'comic books' they said they were no longer allowed by English Heritage Retail to stock anything not approved centrally and nothing specific to the site apart from their own 'Hello' type booklet full of pretty pictures.



*A calm sea for crossing The Straits of Dover*





While I got on the internet and sorted some things out Elisha went up and spent a day in Dover Castle which she greatly enjoyed.

On the third day the weather looked OK and we set off. It was a little bumpy but not bad and we ran over 90 nm to Chichester Harbour where we anchored for the night. I was aware we were into Autumn Spring Tides with a maximum rise and fall and chose our position with care. I only just got it right. We were awfully close to mud banks but floated happily in a gully while all around yachts lay on their sides with distressed crews clinging on.

Next day up to Lyminster. Elisha got a little sad and asked if we couldn't just go on to the Channel Islands as she had no great desire to go home yet. We unloaded at the club pontoon in the Lyminster River. Anne-Marie, who was in Spain, had kindly left our car for us in the car park, so we loaded up the huge amount of stuff we seemed to have with us and took the boat round to its river mooring.



*Goodbye to Holland and Dover – not far to home now*

## A BOAT IN HOLLAND

### Locks

Major locks on the commercial rivers and canals are huge with several parallel lock chambers. They have a set of locks for commercial vessels, usually two, and a set of, usually two locks for 'sport'. An enormous scrum often develops in the big locks Nothing remotely like British canal locks. The Belgians are very bad and indifferent to protest. Dutch are pretty good. Have fendering out high and low. Occasional locks have very low floating defences which will score you just above the waterline if not prepared.

Brits are popular and welcome. British yachties, conscious of gleaming white hulls, get notably upset in locks. We saw a couple coming out of locks in a rush of boats, heading immediately for a waiting pontoon, and examining their scratched sides. It's a waste of time complaining to the lock keeper. Remember most Dutch boats are steel!

English is widely spoken, but not written. Water is charged for. Electricity seldom is better than 3 amps.

Do read up your CEVNI regulations and signs. Trying to find out what a bunch of signs mean at a busy canal junction is very stressful.

The Schengen area is a joke. It is the duty of the Harbour Master to check you in. Lots of paperwork is required. Penalties are fierce. But no harbour master will check you in. It's just EU bureaucracy, though it worried me.



## Route

|                   |                     |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| Eastbourne        | Enkhuisen           |
| Dover             | Ijsselmeer          |
| Dunkerque         | Lorertsluizen Locks |
| Oostende          | Harlingen           |
| Westerschelde     | Vlieland            |
| Vlissingen        | Harlingen           |
| Middleburg        | Staveren            |
| Veere             | Heegermeer          |
| Veerse Meer       | Frisocanal          |
| Oosterschelde     | Fluessen meer       |
| Grevelingenmeer   | Tjeukemeer          |
| Brunisse          | Lemmer              |
| Herkingen         | Ijsselmeer          |
| Krammersluizen    | Monickerdam         |
| Krammer Volkerak  | Krabbergatsluizen   |
| Volkeraksluizen   | Amsterdam           |
| Hollands Diep     | Aarlsmeer           |
| Willemstad        | Kager Plassen       |
| Dordtse Kil       | Leiden              |
| Dordrecht         | Sytwenderbrug       |
| Noord             | Rotterdam           |
| Lek               | Krammersluizen      |
| Amsterdam Kanal   | Krammer Volkerak    |
| Utrecht           | Volkeraksluizen     |
| River Vecht       | Oosterschelde       |
| Weesp             | Veerse Meer         |
| Muiden            | Middleburg          |
| Amsterdam         | Vlissingen          |
| Naarden           | Breskens            |
| Spakenburg        | Dunkirk             |
| Markemeer         | Dover               |
| Krabbergatsluizen | Chichester Harbour  |
| Waddensee         |                     |

