

A QUESTION OF SEAMANSHIP

Bill Anderson is YM's seamanship guru. He was RYA chief instructor from 1972 to 2000 and created the Yachtmaster scheme



A little pinch of spice

If you ignore the crowds and avoid overnight anchorages exposed to the nocturnal land breeze, which sets in strong from the NE at about midnight after sunny sea breeze days, the bay of Quiberon, Belle Île and the Morbihan must be one of the most idyllic areas within easy cruising range for south coast-based yachtsmen.

It offers short passages to several islands, small challenges

from the 8-knot plus tidal streams in the Morbihan, plenty of harbours and anchorages within easy one-tide distance, no need to sail at

night, no shortage of secure bolt holes in which to shelter from the odd bout of rough weather, and all within 300 miles of home.

Many owners with time to enjoy leisurely cruising base their boats on that part of the South Brittany coast. The passage time to and fro by train, plane or car and ferry is generally much shorter than it is by sailing boat but if you make your sailing too easy you miss out on that little pinch of spice which makes our sport special.

At the end of last summer's visit to the land of easy sailing we left ourselves just enough time to make the 250-odd miles from the Morbihan to the NW tip France in half a dozen day-sailing hops with a couple of days to spare. All was going well until we reached Les Îles de Glénan where the previously benign weather forecasts suddenly changed. A deepening low was moving in from the Atlantic towards

Scotland, bringing strong SW winds on its southern flank. In our area this meant that the next day would bring a calm morning

with the wind increasing from the SW during the afternoon and reaching Force 6-7 by evening. A clear and sunny morning would give way to rain and deteriorating visibility with fog patches later.

Our plan had been to make a longish day sail, setting off after breakfast to arrive at the Raz de Sein, a somewhat notorious tide-race, before the stream turned foul at about 1630. We would then have about 20 miles to go to reach Camaret, a very secure

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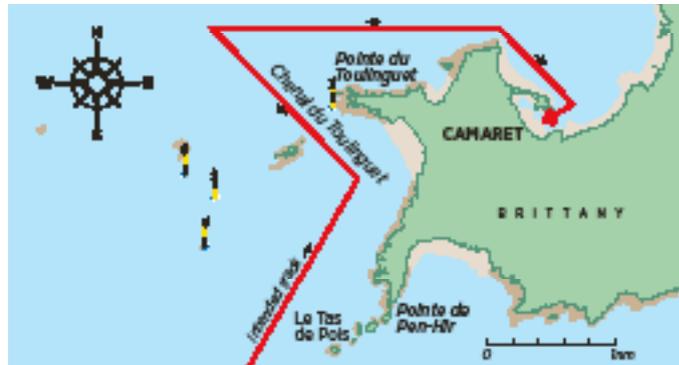


CHART: MAXINE HEATH

harbour just south of Brest.

We set out rather apprehensively the next day. We very much wanted to be North of the Raz de Sein and, if possible, in Camaret before the weather broke. But if we were much too early at the Raz, with 6 or 7 knots of north-going stream running through the narrow rocky channel and a rapidly freshening wind, we might have a seriously rough passage. We did, however, have a bolthole available in Audierne to which we could divert if the strong winds arrived earlier than expected.

As things turned out we had a lovely sail as far as the Raz and were through with the last of the favourable tide by 1600. Then the weather closed in. By 1630 it was raining, visibility was down to under a mile and it was blowing a gusty Force 5 from the SW. The Toulinguet Passage, a narrowing

funnel a quarter of a mile wide, with a dead downwind approach and rocks on either side, was 15 miles ahead. 15 minutes later the vis was slightly worse, the wind slightly stronger and we were running goosewinged at about 7 knots through a building sea. Thank goodness for chartplotters. If we held our nerve we should be in Camaret in less than two hours. Or we had the option of altering course 50 degrees to port to pass outside all the rocks to the west of Toulinguet. That would only add an hour to the passage and should easily avoid all navigational dangers. And if we pulled down a couple of reefs in the main and lowered the mizzen the steering would be easier and we wouldn't go all that much slower.

Decision time – over to you. ▲

For Bill's answer, see p32

SAILING LIBRARY Books reviewed by Colin Jarman

POLYNESIA – AN OCEAN REALM

By Pete Atkinson,

available from

bit.ly/2ch0YpY at

US\$9.99 (PDF format)

or in hardback at £57,

or as an ebook from iTunes at US\$9.99.

While costly, the hardback is best way to appreciate the beautiful underwater photography shot by the author during a 45,000-mile cruise around the South Pacific aboard an elderly 11m wooden cutter. He set out in 1982 with a plastic sextant and youthful dreams, at a time when there were far fewer restrictions than cruisers face today.

The narrative gives a taste of life in the islands at that time, but the extensive notes on underwater photography are of limited use as they refer only to film cameras.



CRUISING ANGLESEY & ADJOINING WATERS – 9TH EDITION

By Ralph Morris, published by Imray at £32

Morris' book is based on an earlier work by Henry Glazebrook, but it is Ralph's hard work updating and expanding this guide that has made it essential for any boat cruising in these exciting waters between Liverpool and Aberdovey.

This wire-bound book contains a huge amount of information, has clear, simple charts of approaches and harbours, plus photos and 'aerial' photos taken from Google Earth. A table of abbreviations and symbols was omitted but is available from the website cruisinganglesey.ralphmorris.com as a 'patch' to print and paste in.



THE SLOW TRACK TO EVERYWHERE

By Peggy Banfield,

available from

peggybanfield@yahoo.co.uk at £9.99

In late 2001 Peggy Banfield and her husband Mike decided to sell up, buy a Hallberg-Rassy 352 and go.

They spent the next seven years cruising *Forever* on a trade wind route around the world via the Red Sea and French canals. Peggy's account is easy to read, gives a clear description of their adventures and has plenty of colour photos, though many are too small to see clearly and overprinted with variously sized captions. Would-be world cruisers should enjoy it, but remember it's not a 'how to' liveaboard cruising guide.

