

Raptor in Search of Sunny Spain

The Cruise of the Raptor

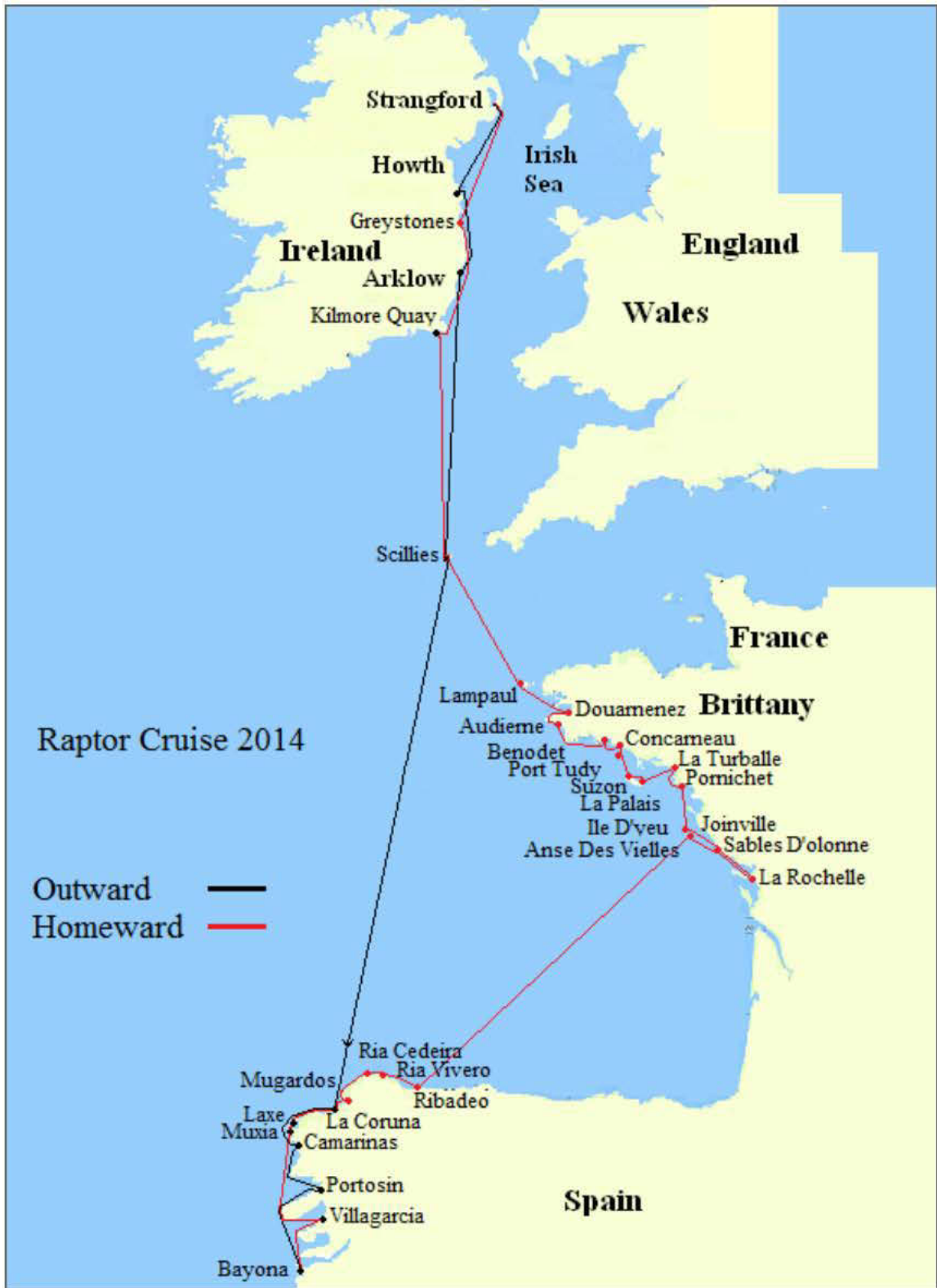
Frances McArthur

and

Ian Stevenson



3rd May to 26th June 2014



Map of Raptor 2014 Cruise

Raptor in Search of Sunny Spain

Outward Bound - Strangford to La Coruna

Raptor cast off from Strangford pontoon at 06.00 on Saturday 3rd May bound for the Scillies. Ian Stevenson, Frances McArthur, David (Davie) Wylde and David (Dave) Anderson were on board, all experienced sailors. With the sails up things look good, doing 6 knots, St John's Point well behind and only



A bit the worse for wear - people are trying to explain to Dave how to duck

48 hours to go to the Scillies. By 09.45 the failing wind was all over the place, sails were down and the engine on. Dave got hit on the bridge of the nose by the boom. Much blood but a plaster 'fixed it'. You might think a big tall fellow would have learned to duck by now. He retired to his berth feeling a wee bit sick. Ian had caught a 'bug' and spent the morning hanging overboard so at 11.20 with 2 crew down, Davie and Frances altered course for Howth. With only the Genoa out, it was much more comfortable. Arrived in Howth at 17.30, had a pint in the yacht club. No dinner for Ian yet!

After a lovely fry cooked by Dave we departed Howth at 13.00. Wind was 12 knots southerly again with lumpy sea and many lobster pots to avoid. Arrived in Arklow at 19.00. Dined on board. Ian and Frances retired while the two

David's went to the pub. Ian recovering slowly although he tried sitting under a tree, it didn't work. Awoke to more than 30 knots of wind howling from the south and white water on the river! Two Davids cooked breakfast. Went ashore for coffee and arranged to meet the boys in the first pub over the bridge which had great Wi-Fi to update forecasts. Looking favourable for 02.30 tomorrow.

Up at 02.15 and away by 02.30 in calm conditions. Headed south towards the Tusker Rock under engine. Out of the Irish Sea the waves got bigger and wind stronger so we got sails up, heading for the Scillies. Wind increased to a steady 25 to 30 knots, south to southwest. Big confused sea all day and into Wednesday. Too rough to cook spaghetti and made do with bolognaise sauce with focetta bread. Picked up a mooring at 07.15 on a bright sunny morning, having come through 29 hours of fog, wind and rain. With oillies hung up it was Laphroigs all round followed by sausage baps and sleep. Ashore for provisions and dinner in the Atlantic Hotel with beautiful views of the bay. All shattered and in bed by 22.00.



A recovered Dave enjoying a brisk sail in the Bay of Biscay

During our passage to the Scillies, the autopilot had become confused by the big seas; the seat on the aft heads had broken; the forward head seat had become loose; the galley drawer and the bin door catches had



Davie entertains on the fiddle most days

broken. Dave ingeniously engineered bungee cord fixings for the catches which held for the rest of the season. Ian also decided to fit a 3rd reefing line 'just in case' but we don't want to be at sea on the day it is needed. While on the fuelling berth Frances boiled potatoes, made up 10 rolls and wedged everything into the fridge and was beginning to wonder why she hadn't flown to La Coruna. Repairs and refuelling completed, we left at 11.15 on 8th May for the 3.5 days to windward across the Bay of Biscay. The wind averaged 25 knots, gusting 30 knots and mostly south westerly. Sailed for 24 hours then motor sailed off and on.

Arrived La Coruna on Saturday at 23.00 in the pitch black and were met near the marina entrance by a vessel shining searchlights on us for about 5 minutes. Night vision wrecked! Customs, pilot or police? We never did find out. Put clocks forward. A drink, snack and went to bed. Dave however was suffering from lack of land and

not being able to work out that you had to 'push' the marina gate to open it, climbed the fence and ended up in a Spanish birthday party in the marina restaurant! On returning, he had a problem finding his cabin and slept in the saloon!

Late start. Toilet seat needed to be repaired again after the rough seas!. Stud bar, nuts, washers and screws did the trick this time. After lunch the 3 boys went into town for a beer while Frances stayed on board and washed the cockpit and cleaned below. Tokens can be bought for the only washing machine but the tumble dryer is free! Beware of the queue to dry clothes!

Housework completed we all wandered up the narrow streets for fish platters and wine.

Further South - Coruna to Bayona

Davie is an accomplished fiddle player and brought pleasure to every marina as he sat in the sunshine playing away. After this morning's session the two Davids went for provisions, while we topped up the water, then refuelled and set sail in glorious weather heading along the coast doing 8 knots on a broad reach arriving at Camarinas at 19.45. For the neat least the next week the weather is to be 'escorchio'!



Spinnaker set fair for The sunney South.

Ashore for coffee and ready to leave for Portosin. Very windy north easterly force 5 to 6 occasionally 7. Great sail! Frances surfed into a berth going full astern! It was hard to find a restaurant but we ate at Bodegon, a basic Spanish restaurant full of local people. Great value with 4 calamari, steaks, 8 beers, and 3 bottles of wine for 20 euro a head!

Slow starts are becoming the norm. Planned to leave at 12 noon but not ready until 14.00. Then discovered Ian's phone, wallet and jacket were not on board. Having phoned the mobile and getting a Spanish gentleman, Portosin marina were extremely helpful in booking a return taxi to Camarinas for 100 euro.

Nice country drive to be met with hostile reception at Camarinas marina. Accused of not paying our marina fees (for which we had a stamped receipt) and not returning 4 keys for the showers (we only had 1 key which was posted through their letterbox)! Nobody spoke English so Frances communicated in German! Staff insisted we wait to speak to some chap who took 20 minutes to arrive to continue the discussion in German! Having bought our nice taxi driver coffee we eventually left with plenty of ill feeling. It would appear that if Marios says you haven't paid, a stamped receipt is no proof. We certainly will not be hurrying back.

On our return we met Mike and Sue from *Secret Breeze* having coffee in the lovely lounge and restaurant at the Portosin Marina. They were heading for Gibraltar but had been delayed with a leak at the propeller shaft and they had also found the marina staff very helpful.

While Frances and Ian were running about in a taxi, Dave and Davie had spent a more interesting afternoon brushing up their Spanish with the barmaid from the previous night. Dave is now competent in Spanish, confidently telling people 'my hovercraft is full of eels'. They also had a short trip to the beach but hardly noticed the topless scenery.

We went back to the same restaurant that night. The TV had football on at maximum volume with cheering Spanish supporters, so after dinner Frances and Ian returned to *Raptor* for peace and quiet but the boys stayed late to work on their Spanish.

Planned to call into Ria de Arosa, but having had an extra day ashore in Portosin, we decided to go straight to Bayona. We left Portosin at 12.00 and sailed for 2 hours with the kite up, then 2 hours with the genoa, and finished



Surfing dead down wind and touching 14 knots - Ian looks a bit anxious

by motor sailing. Interesting coastline of cliffs at Finistère with *Raptor* surfing at up to 14 knots. Arrived Bayona at 21.00. Dave parked the boat and we went into town for beers wine and tapas.

The next day Davie and Frances went into town to check out the bus stop for their departure in the morning, while Dave went in search of a gift for his daughter. Back to the boat for an afternoon of relaxation in the scorching sunshine. After showers and a few beers we ate outside in the pedestrian area in a fabulous restaurant called Pategonia. Back to the boat for the boys last night and too many farewell drinks.



Band wending its way through narrow streets

Dave and Davie left early for the bus to Vigo, then change for Santiago de Compostello to get the airport bus. Dave's hand luggage was overweight necessitating him to repack in the middle of the airport floor! The boys continued to Dublin by air and then by bus to Belfast.

Frances and Ian went to replenish stocks only to find that it was Galicia Day and Bayona was shut! We stopped for a beer in the pedestrian area when a band in traditional costume passed by. Barricades were being put up along the main street for a cycle race, the Giro d'Italia of Bayona! This was the start of the day's



Casual dancing in the streets all day



More formal presentations on the stage



The beautiful and friendly Bayona Yacht Club

celebrations, with folk dancing in the streets. In the evening an open air concert took place in the square outside the marina. Each folk group had their own traditional costumes with singers, dancers and pipe bands. It was all very atmospheric. We walked along the coastal path with the castle towering above us and spectacular views to sea.

In the evening we dined on the veranda of the Bayona Yacht Club. A truly beautiful setting with the castle behind it and the bay in front. Linen tableware, gin and tonic served 'cowboy style' in huge goblets filled with ice and lemon peel to decorate, outstanding octopus followed by grilled turbot, extremely polite and helpful staff who all spoke good English. It was an evening to be remembered!

Just two to go north

We were sorry to leave Bayona at 11.15, 18th May, to head for Ria de Arosa. No wind and scorching hot. Arosa has beautiful scenery and is the biggest of the Rias being 14 miles long and 6 miles wide. We berthed at Villagarcia which had lovely old buildings in the centre of the town, but everything was very run down with lots of graffiti and groups of teenagers hanging around aimlessly. The marina restaurant was

built on stilts and looked good for dinner. We stopped there for an evening beer intending to return for dinner after a late siesta but didn't wake until 07.00 the next morning! No fiddler to wake us up?

Jackie Mayne visited. She and Paul, are RUYC members who have wintered their boat abroad for the last ten years and have only just got this far but are still heading south! As they were returning home for two weeks they wanted to donate their perishable provisions. They informed us that there really is a new marina at Muxia despite it not being listed in this year's Almanac. She told us that the chap running the marina was called Jesus and had lent them bikes! We set off at 12.15 after Ian checked the engine. No wind, flat calm and motoring into short bursts of torrential rain showers. Much cooler at 12C. Passed Isla de Bua then between Illote el Toran and Illa do Mallador. Rocks look extremely close. Hoped the chart and GPS were accurate. Sun came out for the rest of the journey. Managed to get jib out at 18.30. Big swell at Finisterre.



Ian checks the engine oil and water

A Customs cutter came to within 20 feet of us to have a look, leaving a massive swell from its wake! Arrived at Muxia 21.15 with big Atlantic swell. We just got tied up on the hammerhead when the heavy rain came on. Berths are extremely small and parts of the marina are very shallow. Electricity requires a 30 Amp power socket or adaptor neither of which we had.



Customs cutter has a close look

Woke up to more torrential rain showers and much more wind than forecast. Went ashore at midday but didn't have the courage to ask the marina guy if he was 'Jesus'. Muxia is a very active fishing town which reminded us of Tobermory with all the brightly painted houses on the seafront. It has the Spanish equivalent of the Fisherman's Co-op. We walked out to the point and sat and watched the massive swell crash onto the rocks. Later toured the quaint back streets and had a fabulous lunch of octopus, sea bream stew and monkfish in O'Capelo Restaurant, definitely recommended. This area is part of the Pilgrims Way and we met many hikers on their journey. Left Muxia for Laxe at 15.45 for

the short 2 hour trip as it's to pour tomorrow. Arrived at Laxe and anchored in the small bay with a young German couple circling *Raptor* in their dinghy, telling us that they had 85 metres of chain out (in 8 metres depth) and that we couldn't anchor near them as it was due to blow! Frances didn't realise she was going to need so much German language on this trip! Hatch board in and central heating on!

Woke up on Wednesday 21st to 15 knots, gusting 24 knots from south southwest. Frances wanted ashore, so the dinghy was blown up. She decided Laxe wasn't very interesting as it consisted of one deserted street and she wouldn't hurry back. Meanwhile Ian stayed on board on anchor watch. Our next crew members David (referred to as DT) and Elaine Taylor had arrived in Santiago de Compostello yesterday to do a bit of sightseeing for 2 days and join us on Friday in La Coruna. However we got a phone call to say they had seen Santiago in 20 minutes last night before going to the pub and were now on the train to La Coruna! We left Laxe at 14.00 for La Coruna. Somehow Frances had calculated the passage as being 13 miles instead of 31 miles so it took a bit longer than predicted! This gave Elaine time to go to the hairdressers in La Coruna! With the Genoa out we did 8.5 knots, dodging through between Islas



Ian Stevenson Frances McArthur Elaine Taylor and David Taylor

Sisargas and the shore which was quite shallow and rocky. As we passed Malpica we were sorry we had no time to stop there. It has a massive sea wall sheltering a small, hilly town. Approaching La Coruna at 17.15, the rain was bouncing off the sea. This was the first time that we had worn oillies since our arrival from Biscay 10 days before. We had another police vessel come to examine us. We must look suspicious?

Four tugs were manoeuvring a huge ship out into the channel and after circling several times we finally got berthed. DT and Elaine, who had just got drinks at the marina bar, left abruptly shouting, 'Amigos, Amigos'. So no time for showers! Back at the bar we retrieved their drinks and caught up on the trip so far, then dropped their bags off at the boat and went up into the town for excellent tapas at Alma Negra.

New Crew for a new direction

Chill out day for laundry followed by a dander into town for tapas lunch at Havana which was fabulous. Dinner on board. Torrential rain overnight.

We awoke to more Germans complaining that our laundry had been drying overnight and they had taken it out (no folding)! However the sun came out as we filled the water tanks and after returning to Havana for internet and more tapas we left on Friday 23rd May at 16.00 for the fuelling berth where we managed to drop the cap overboard! Oh golly, gosh, drat, etc! Plugged filler hole and left for Ria Ferrol.



Local sea-going skiff near Ferrol

Interesting fort on the way up the Ria Ferrol. No berths or moorings in small marina at La Grana so we went on to Mugardos and tied onto fishing boat at 18.45. Pontoons all too small for yachts. Elaine cooked wonderful prawns bought from a 'live' fish counter in La Coruna.

Grey skies with some sunshine, but cold! Left some beers on the fishing boat as a 'thank you' and departed at 11.30 spotting a rowing boat with a tree growing out of it! Frances navigating and underway asked, 'where are we actually going?' After retracing our way down Ria Ferrol and into Ria Cedeira, we anchored and went ashore and found a nice pedestrian square for a cool beer. Very noisy children playing on bikes and skateboards so returned to eat aboard.

Cloudy on shore but lovely out at sea. No wind so we motored along a coast of spectacular rocks and cliffs. DT nervous of being too close to Rocks! Elaine navigated first part using the tourist map of Cedeira, skilfully picking out lighthouses and churches. Arrived at 17.00 in lovely little marina in Vivero town centre. DT explored the town to find a restaurant and met two Frenchmen, Didier and Christian on their way to Brest in a Jeanneau Sunrise and invited them for drinks at 12.00 the next day.



Weird place to plant a tree

Got up at the crack of 11.00. Quick breakfast before Didier and Christian arrived sharp at 12.00. Pernod and wines, then off to see their boat *Simba*. More wine and Rum Blanc with orange juice. Finally came back to *Raptor* and went for a walk through the narrow streets and lovely old buildings to tapas restaurant that was bustling. Excellent Gadis supermarket where we bought chiprones (baby squid) which Elaine cooked with salad for dinner. Early to bed!

Left at 12.20, 27th May, having waved goodbye to the gents on *Simba*. It was lovely and warm until the wind got up and suddenly it was fleece weather again. With wind on the nose we motored for Ria Ribadeo, about 34 miles.

Arrived 18.00. Had a drink at a Taperig, but not friendly so ate at a small hotel opposite. A disastrous tapas meal of 2 whitebait and 1 chorizo that looked like someone had eaten it once already and they kept offering us noodle soup! Perhaps we've had enough tapas with very mixed weather doing the Rias!

Is it sunny in La Rochelle?

The forecast is still wet and cold in Spain but warm and sunny in France! Easy decision to cut the Rias short and head for La Rochelle. Got provisions and left for fuel berth at 13.15, 28th May. Parking in a very narrow travel hoist area we refuelled and were away by 13.35 heading for La Rochelle, a passage of 278 miles. We motored the first hour then sailed until 20.45 and motored sailed until 22.00 with seas very slight. Boys to bed and Elaine and Frances did the first watch. Frances had dolphins swim with the boat for over 45 minutes. They were feeding on shoals of fish using the phosphorescent light of *Raptor*. Elaine got photos of the sunrise. More dolphins accompanied us at 10.30 and again in the afternoon. DT managed to video them. With much improved weather it was sun tops and shorts, with Elaine even putting on a swimsuit.

At 19.30 we decided to alter course to Ile d'Yeu with only 77 miles to go, ETA was 12 hours 12 minutes and 28 seconds by the chart plotter! We arrived 08.45 on Friday 30th May 32minutes and 32 seconds late. Intended to go to bed after breakfast but were given a berth alongside the committee boat for a weekend sailing event. They were in Caribbean costumes in party mode, drinking champagne at 09.00 and letting off hooters. All good fun made more enjoyable in the sun!

There was more entertainment as a local yacht tried to reverse downwind into the empty double space on the other side of our pontoon. As he slowed, the wind on the bow spun him around sideways into the berth. Much help and shouting was required to sort it out!

We went ashore to Brassiere Du Port for crepes and moules, a nice change from tapas. A black horse sauntered past us, head nearly on the ground, looking fed up at having to pull eight large tourists in its carriage. We felt as tired as the horse looked and turned in early.

Ian and Frances went to purchase a diesel cap so Elaine and DT toured the pretty back streets, market and shops in Joinville. We departed at 14.15 via fuel berth then went round North of island to bay on south east coast called Anse Des Vieilles where we anchored and BBQ'd in the sunshine.

Breakfasted below as the wind was cold although warm in the sunshine and left the bay at 13.15 Sunday 1st June. Spinnaker up at 13.30 doing 9.3 knots. Spinnaker down at 14.15 as wind was up to 20 knots. Lunched on leftover BBQ'd steak in baguettes. Into Les Sables d'Olonne at 17.30. Small marina in Almanac is now much extended. On the mainland it's rugby jumper and fleece weather again. Loads of restaurants beside the marina, so ashore for muscles and back to boat. Spotted yacht belonging to the Seatons (BYC, CCC). Their son Ryan, is campaigning with Matt McGovern in the 49ers and they have now qualified Ireland for Rio in 2016.



What is real and what's not in Port Olonne?

Sharon Seaton came to say goodbye the next day. They had wintered their boat in La Roche Bernard and were leaving to take a train back there to get their car. We got the water taxi (1 euro) to La Chaume and went a walk round the narrow streets and looked at Port Olonne where the Vendee Globe starts from, returning to Sables d'Olonne for more exploring before leaving at 14.30. Gennaker up and doing 6 to 7 knots to arrive at La Rochelle at 20.00. 4,500 boats in the marina! We met Bill and Alexandra Rainey who had brought *War'n*

Peace over from Ile de Rea to start their berthing contract. Our berth was 18 minutes away from the Capitainerie and restaurants and it took 8 minutes to walk to the nearest loos!



Children's percussion band used plastic containers

Stephen arrived and the panniers seemed to explode when he opened them to present us with the gift of a square frying pan!

Stephen went off early next day to find secure parking for his bike. DT finally got a hot shower, 1 euro for 7 minutes. This was in addition to the 44 euro berthing fee! DT and Elaine then packed and made baguettes for the airport. Having said our 'goodbyes' Ian and Frances got the 11.30 water taxi to La Rochelle and bumped into to Stephen on a street corner. Behind the tourist area are many little streets with interesting architecture. After a crepe for lunch we boarded the water taxi when Frances' mobile rang. Fiona and Barney Isherwood had spotted us and were on the gangway to say 'Hello'. Due to lack of sunshine, and celebrating their 20th wedding anniversary, they had come from Ile de Re into La Rochelle for lunch. On returning to *Raptor* we were greeted with a nice note from DT and Elaine to thank us for a great fortnight.

Departed 10.30, 5th June, with little wind and motored to Les Sables d'Olonne. Videoed going under the bridge, leading to Ile de Re! Up until the last minute, the mast looks certain to hit the bridge although there is lots of clearance. Sun shining and very hot. Bread and cheese lunch. Arrived 16.00. (Reflected on co-incidence of meeting Roy and Sharon Seaton on Sunday in Les Sables d'Olonne, Bill and Alexandra Rainey on Monday in La Rochelle marina and Barney and Fiona on Wednesday in La Rochelle.

Departed 10.30, 6th June for Ile d'Yeu with wind 15 knots from the south. Main up doing 8 knots. Tried to teach Stephen how to tie knots with mixed results but many new



Knot looking good?

DT went his 8 minute hike to the shower block. No hot water and smelly, so not impressed. We moved *Raptor* to a visitors berth closer to restaurants ashore and took the water taxi to La Rochelle with a family ticket for 8 euro, otherwise 3 euro per head, Four adults constitutes a family! We came across a great kids concert in a square with homemade drums from buckets and empty gallon water containers. Back at the marina we waited for Stephen McCready to arrive by motorcycle. His wife Katrina was supposed to come too but had to stay home to look after their sick dog. The birds at the local restaurants were very tame and happy to sit on the chairs beside us waiting for any titbits.



Stephen's bike seemed to explode when he released the catches on the panniers



Elaine and Frances have their YMCA a bit out of sync at their last night party

and unusual knots were produced. His original 'time knot' kept us entertained. Arrived 17.00 and went into town and walked up the back streets to find a good Casino supermarket for provisions. Back to boat for tagliatelle vongle followed by sausage hot dogs! Stephen returned the knot tying lesson with a card playing lesson, against the noise of thunder and lightning. Another boat arrived sideways in the berth beside us needing our assistance to straighten it out.

Heading to Pornichet probably, with Stephen practicing his knot tying again but not looking promising. Our game of 'eye spy' got a bit confused as Stephen thought our Dan Buoy was a Ben Buoy so it took a while to work out,

'beginning with a B'. We decided to miss out La Herbaudiere because Stephen's train departs at 14.00 tomorrow from Pornichet. Arrived 18.00 and went straight ashore for a walk to find the station in this very spread out town. Back to marina to a restaurant called La Touline for steaks and chips. Toilets horrendous with no doors so males using urinals with girls passing! Fantastic mural on the wall of the Capitainerie. Stephen's last night so back to boat for more card playing.

Homeward on our own - Sunday 8th June

Very hot and sunny. Got up to have breakfast ashore with Stephen. All the restaurants at the marina are good and very friendly, but the town is not very interesting. Quite a long walk over the causeway to nearest Spar. Said 'goodbyes' as Stephen left for his train to St Nazaire, then on to La Rochelle for overnight stay in a hotel. Thence to collect his bike for the journey back to Ireland, rather him than me.

Fought with the credit card system for fuel and left Pornichet at 13.15, 6th June with no real plan. Motored across La Baule Bay in zero wind, so to Le Pouligen where buildings were very touristy. Round Point de Penchateau where houses changed to old turret style and in the end decided to head for La Turballe. Lots of boats racing in the bay. Nautical festival with Tall Ship crossing the bay. Arrived at 15.30. Only 16.40 euro for a berth but no laundry facilities at the marina. Port office closed until 16.30 on Sundays. Went a walk along the front where the town had a nice feel and the only sign of tourism was a children's roundabout. Ian ready to chill out and in no hurry to move on!

On way back to the boat we met Declan and Maureen Kane from Clondarriff on their Westerly, *Fougere*. They had met David and Maureen Greenhalgh on *Big Boots* (RUYC, ICC) in Concarneau in 2004 in the storm that collapsed the pontoons access gangway. Small world. Stephen text to say his five star hotel was lovely. Hope he has a five star seat on his BMW motorcycle!

Rain during the night, Frances woke up with wet legs from open hatch! Went ashore to adequate Carrefour City Supermarket, but it had no fresh counter. However there was a good butcher and fishmonger opposite. Beautiful tubs of flowers around the lovely square. Lots of bikers arrived in the square for lunch. Looked like local chapter of Hell's Chartered Accountants?

Stephen text to say he had reached Nantes on the bike. Siesta in the afternoon, followed by boat tidying and cleaning! Dinner on board with a nice bottle of Faustino Rioja, a welcome change from boxes of wine over the last 3 weeks. Decided not to move on yet! La Paseralle had internet, so far the only bar we have found here that did. Great Patisserie, so bought strawberry tarts for afternoon tea. Bill and Alexandra Rainey arrived from La Herbaudiere where they had had a disturbed night with fishing boats going in and out. Good call not to stop there. Went to walk along the 2 mile beach but it was too sore on the feet as the beach consisted of broken shells. Had a glass of wine with Bill and Alexandra on board *War 'n Peace* on the way back to *Raptor*. Met a couple from *Annah of Gigha*. They used to sail out of Anglesey but wintered their boat in the Vilaine River. At 80 years he was lying on the dock trying to unhook weed from the prop. They had a beautiful black Labrador with a sore paw. Gave them Aloe Vera ointment, but he later was wearing a bandage after having been to the vets.

La Turballe has a lovely wee chapel. with an illuminated ship for a light. Went into Patisserie for mini quiches, strawberry tarts and apple tarts. Went to laundrette. Great industrial driers and washing machine only took 33 minutes no matter what programme you used! Met Alexandra and Bill in Cap 270 while waiting on laundry.



Girls using a two handed scull with great skill

Got internet from La Paseralle, only 2 doors along, and got news that Frances' daughter Kirsty, along with her husband Russell McGovern and 10 month old Rory, had reached Tarbert having been storm bound in Campbelltown on their Scottish cruising holiday. Frances went all maternal over new photographs of grandson Rory.

Sorry to leave La Turballe, a real town with lovely shops, great chandlers, pretty flower tubs and sunshine. Said 'goodbyes' to the Rainey's and departed at 11.00, 11th June, for Le Palais. Sails up in north west 10 knots gave a SOG of 7 knots. Untied mysterious knot at the top of the snuffer bell which tied itself last time we flew the gennaker with DT and Elaine. Put gennaker up but wind died to a flat calm, I should know by now that is

what gennaker do. Past Hoedic Island with lovely sandy beaches. Making slow progress by 14.00, so took down main and motored. Arrived in la Palais and were put on first mooring in from the entrance with continuous ferry horns and wash from fishing boats. Excellent meal of lamb shank and frites in Le Poison Rouge.

After a bad night with constant noise and an early morning crane loading fishing boats, we went ashore for coffee and photos of the town. There is a road sign to Bangor here! Got prawns at the local market and left at 13.30 for Sauzon, only four miles away. Lunch on arrival of pate, salmon and salad. Oiled the teak seats, grating and bathing platform which dried in 5 minutes in the heat. Dangled feet in water and considered a swim but water was very cold and good sense prevailed.

Lent the dinghy pump to the two Jaques in a wee motor boat. Ashore to Hotel du Port on the pier for cold beers. About to depart when we met the two Jaques again who insisted on buying us beer. Good looking Jaques skied and dived, hired Harleys and used to own a bike. Sports in common. Evening moon was lovely reflecting on the sea

Sauzon is a lovely tranquil place so we were sad to leave at 10.30, 13th June for Ile de Groix. Bill Rainey had told us that Port Tudy was closed for dredging but we arrived at 12.30 and got a berth on a hammer head in the marina away from ferry wash and air hammer ashore. Put up boom tent as sun shade as it was sweltering hot.

Two French couples on a tiny yacht next to us never stopped talking loudly. They ate a 2 hour lunch, then started singing French songs. Necessary trip ashore for peace and quiet in Les Gracon du Port, a lovely shaded bar overlooking the marina. Wind forecast to be from the north for the next week. Not much in Ile de Groix, but pretty. Supermarket is a long walk uphill. Not a place to go if you need to stock up on provisions.

Back at the marina, four girls entertained us by skilfully using a single large double handled oar to scull a large traditional sailing boat about the harbour.

In the evening a blue Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 39 called *Indemnity* arrived from Lorient and rafted on to us. Crew of 4 doctors and a dentist, all brothers-in-law to the owner, who spoke very good English and were great fun. They brought us a special wine from a friend's vineyard and after dinner on deck, we supplied them with whisky. They were proud to produce a bottle of single malt Tobermory whisky! *Raptor* supplied music by Queen through the deck speakers and a good party was had by all. They were going to the boulangerie in the morning so Frances was quick to ask if they could bring us croissants. No point walking up the hill if you don't need to!



Awoke to *Indemnity* leaving for Sauzon and our bakery order sitting on the cockpit table! Port Tudy was now like Piccadilly circus with boats arriving from the direction

Indemnity leaving for Sauzon



Douglas, Gordon and the new traditional Fiffer

Lorient for the weekend. Left at 10.30 for Concarneau. Eventually got sails up for 13.00. Arrived 14.30. Big cumulus clouds over the land, but clear sky out to sea! Roasting hot! Ashore to the Inter-Marche supermarket as they allow trolleys to be taken to the marina. They do a roaring trade with sailing school crews stocking up for next week's trips! Internet from the marina is for 24 hours only and is strictly adhered to.

Went to the boulangerie for bread and strawberry/raspberry tarts and walked through the Walled City. Ian got The Sunday Times and was happy on board. Left at 14.00, 15th June for Benodet. Genoa out doing 6 knots for an uneventful trip.

Went to the harbour to get the water taxi to Sainte Martin but the service had been suspended for a week. Settled for brunch at a creperie, followed by

a beer in Les Bluniers beside the Capitainerie. Heard Scottish accents behind us. It was Douglas Crocket, Frances' cousin from Glasgow and his friend Gordon Turner from Perth.

Gordon owns a traditional Fiffer, called *Oblio*, that was built in Benodet for him last year and is truly a masterpiece of woodworkers skill. They had brought *Oblio* down from Scotland by Range Rover and trailer to take part in a traditional yacht regatta in two weeks time. The Fiffer had been launched earlier that morning and they were taking a break from rigging her.

We met up again at 19.45 and watched a sunk Beneteau motor boat being salvaged. Had a fabulous meal of **goat's cheese crepe, scallop and bacon kebab followed by ice-cream. Gordon had to deliver *Oblio* two weeks early as he was going to Ian Graham's daughter's wedding in Gairloch, Wester Ross. By co-incidence Frances had holidayed in Badechro with the Grahams when she was 8 years old. A truly small world.**



Blue salvage vessel towed recovered boat to the pier



As the tide goes out the true mess is revealed

Bumped into to Dougie again in the chandlers. Said our 'goodbyes' quickly as they must be on the 18.00 ferry from St Malo to Portsmouth, then heading up to Glasgow. A long run. If we had got the water taxi to Sainte Martin for lunch, we would never have met Dougie or Gordon!

We left at 11.15 17th June for Audierne. The fenders were flattened hard against the pontoon with the tide of the river flowing out and had to spring off using full power. Arrived at St Evette 16.00. Picked up a mooring narrowly missing coils of semi-submerged rope. Bed at 22.30 for 07.00 start in the morning.

Left at 07.15 to get the tide at the Raz de Sein. Motored half an hour then sailed at SOG 8 knots.. Sailed through the Raz de Sein and beat up the coast to Douarnenez. in 10 to 15 knots of wind. Arrived at 13.30 on



Saving on the cost of a dinghy?

visitors pontoon, and berthed as far in as possible, which proved to be a good idea as there was a swell later. Sunbathed and watched the local sailing school of Treboul go out. Went ashore and walked through wooded path to La Passerelle to cross to Douarnenez. Saw a lad wading out into the river with his mast and sails over his shoulders to his boat. Keen or what? Nice views of Le Treboul from the bridge. Looked at old light ship and boats in gated lock. Decided to head for Lampaul, Ile d'Ouessant in the morning. Light northeast wind due to high off Ireland. Last moules in La Pointe restaurant with local wine recommended by the waitress

Got enough food for today at the local boulangerie. Departed fuelling berth at 10.15. Motored in flat calm in very hot breathless conditions. Having brought wool and needles, Frances decided to start knitting for grandson Rory!

Arrived Lampaul which is a lovely wee place with narrow streets and sturdy houses with shutters. Plenty of bars and cafes with the odd tourist shop and a cathedral. Great Spar supermarket for provisions. Went to the Roc'h Ar Mor hotel and sat on the terrace overlooking the bay until the sun went down.

Farewell France

Alarm went off at 04.00. Still dark so struggled to get up! Left mooring at 05.15, 20th June to motor out of Baie de Laupaul. Stunning rock formations with sunrise in the background. Big lumpy sea. Motored across separation zone doing 7.3 knots. Put sails up for small gain to 8 knots. Very few ships about, even in the separation lanes. Some fog in shipping channels but cleared into bright sunshine once we crossed from French into UK waters at 13.10. AIS is very reassuring in these conditions.

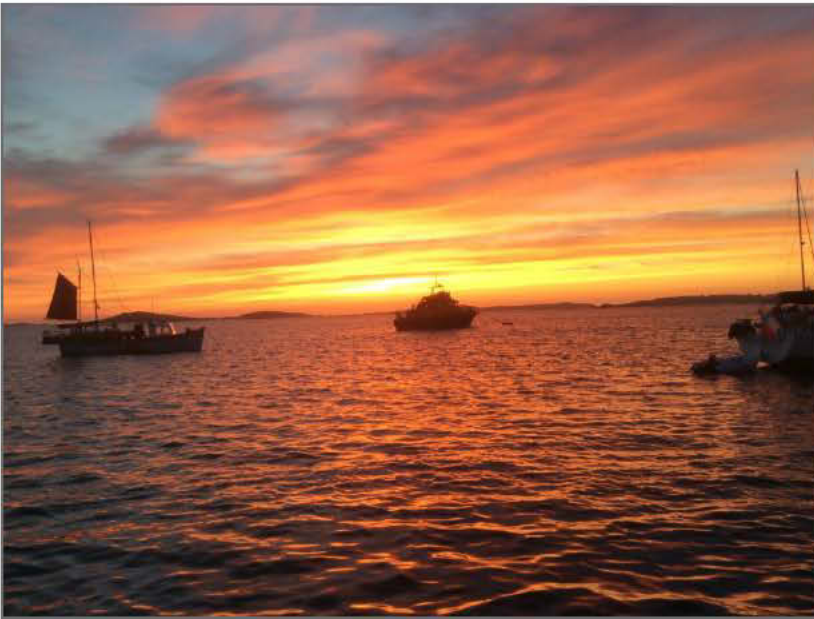
Sitting knitting at 17.00 when Frances looked up to see a pigeon was sitting on the main sheet track. Tried to shoo it away with a pillow! Obviously very used to humans and stayed with us for an hour-and-a-half. When it flew away it seemed disorientated for it flew in circles before disappearing. Arrived in Hugh Town to a busy bay with every mooring taken! Very grateful to a French boat that let us raft onto them. Went to the Atlantic Hotel for excellent pub grub.

Got up to cast off the French boat leaving for Tresco. Busy harbour wall with smaller RIBs doing visitor tours. Went ashore for a pasty which we ate on the wall overlooking Porth Cressa which now has moorings but no jetty for dinghies. Pints and internet at the Atlantic Hotel.

Back to *Raptor* to tidy up and put provisions away. Invited an Irish Cork Yacht Club yacht to raft on to us. Turned out to be Kevin Lane. His kids came up through Optimist dinghies with Frances' children and he knew BYC and SSC very well. His son Richard also went into Lasers and he knew Matt and Russell McGovern. Booked a table for 14.00 for the Atlantic.

Woke up to find *Tanit* (Clyde Cruising Club) one mooring away with what turned out to be a delivery crew taking her from Southampton to Dun Laoghaire for the Round Ireland Race, which they later won. Went ashore for supplies then back on board for pasties for lunch.

Departed 15.00, 22nd June and motored into northeast to north northeast wind. Frances went to bed from 03.30 with only 11 hours to go to Arklow. Got up at 07.00 with still 11 hours to go to Arklow!



Sunset in the Scillies

Discussed alternative plan and decided to try Milford Haven. Sails up and as it turned out not to be a fetch, we tacked for Tramore with the idea tacking along the coast (which should be sheltered) to Kilmore Quay. *Raptor* had done enough slamming for one night! In any case the tide at Tusker would no longer be favourable.

night and no fishing boats. The wind veered and lifted us up nicely to Kilmore at 18.00. Glad we didn't choose Milford Haven.

At 08.15 a whale came alongside, blew from its spout, did two more appearances and disappeared. At 09.00 *Raptor* doing steady 7.8 knots for Youghal! At least the sun is shining. Only saw two cargo vessels during the

Frances' eyes started to give her trouble after we left Hugh Town with black bars developing across her field of vision. This condition had deteriorated all day and on arrival at Kilmore the Harbour Master had a taxi waiting on the quayside to take us to Wexford Hospital as we were worried about a possible detached retina. With no diagnosis and the doctor admitting he knew nothing about eyes we were offered an appointment the next day at Waterford Hospital with an option of going by bus to Dublin if the retina was detached! The patient is not supposed to move if a detached retina is suspected! This was not an acceptable option! On return to *Raptor* we met the Cudmores (ICC), who asked how Frances' eye was? News travels fast in marinas.

Lee Stevenson came to the rescue and drove down from Bangor to collect us. Leaving at 02.00 from Kilmore Quay, we dropped Lee in Bangor and were in the Royal Victoria Hospital emergency eye department by 07.50. First in the queue for it opening at 08.30. A thorough examination showed that the jelly of the eye had become detached from the retina causing fluid in the vision. Apparently this is very common in people over 40, although we had never heard of anyone having this complaint. OK to sail **Raptor** on home? Yes! Received a telephone call from the Kilmore Harbour Master to see how we had got on at the Royal. Very caring! Leaving tomorrow for Kilmore Quay.

Final Leg

Graeme McArthur, Frances' son volunteered to come back with us to Kilmore Quay to bring the car back which avoided Ian having to return by public transport to pick the car up. Paid the Harbour Master and thanked the very helpful marina staff for their assistance. Left at 14.15 with genoa up doing 8 knots SOG with the tide. With Tusker on our starboard side, we met **Tanit** again. Decided to keep going to Arklow to be home by Thursday night, hopefully. Doing 9.2 knots with the tide. Decided to head for Dun Laoghaire and see how far we would get against the tide. As we were tired from the events of the previous 2 days we ended up in Greystones at 23.30 instead. Some 60 footers were assembling for Round Ireland Race. We had just got settled, when at midnight we had to move to accommodate an incoming 60 footer due at 03.00. The office didn't open until 09.00 and as we had to leave at 08.00, we were told the berthing would be free.

Left at 08.00. Grey skies, wet cockpit because it had been raining, we were not used to this! Arrived in Howth at 10.15 to refuel and were away again by 11.15. Sea and wind had got up during the last hour. Put sails up and sailed from Howth to the Strangford Narrows. Received a phone call from Brian Black (ICC) enquiring of our whereabouts. He came to catch our ropes at the Strangford pontoon and came aboard for drinks at 20.00.

It was great to be welcomed home by a near neighbour and good friend after 2124 miles.

Distance Table

Departure from	Depart	Destination	Arrive	
Strangford	3rd May	Howth	3rd May	65
Howth	4th May	Arklow	4th May	38
Arklow	6th May	Scillies	7th May	177
Scillies	8th May	La Coruna	11th May	405
La Coruna	12th May	Camarinas	12th May	47
Camarinas	13th May	Portosin	13th May	39
Portosin	15th May	Bayona	15th May	44
Bayona	18th May	Villagarcia	18th May	35
Villagarcia	19th May	Muxia	19th May	62
Muxia	20th May	Laxe	20th May	17
Laxe	21st May	La Coruna	21st May	31
La Coruna	23rd May	Mugardos - Ria Ferrol	23rd May	15
Mugardos - Ria Ferrol	24th May	Ria Cedeira	24th May	27
Ria Cedeira	25th May	Ria Vivero	25th May	32
Vivero	27th May	Ribadeo	27th May	34
Ribadeo	28th May	Joinville - Ile D'yeu	30st May	278
Joinville - Ile D'yeu	31st May	Anse Des Vieilles	31st May	9
Anse Des Vieilles	1st June	Sables D'olonne	1st June	31
Sables D'olonne	2nd June	La Rochelle	2nd June	36
La Rochelle	5th June	Sables D'olonne	5th June	36
Sables d'olonne	6th June	Joinville - Ile D'yeu	6th June	33
Joinville - Ile D'yeu	7th June	Pornichet	7th June	31
Pornichet	8th June	La Turballe	8th June	14
La Turballe	11th June	La Palais	11th June	26
La Palais	12th June	Sauzon	12th June	4
Sauzon	13th June	Ile de Groix Port Tudy	13th June	19
Ile de Groix Port Tudy	14th June	Concarneau	14th June	26
Concarneau	15th June	Benodet	15th June	12
Benodet	17th June	Audierne - St Evette	17th June	33
Audierne - St Evette	18th June	Douarnenez	18th June	30
Douarnenez	19th June	Lampaul Ile D'Ouessant	19th June	42
Lampaul Ile D'Ouessant	20th June	Scillies	20th June	104
Scillies	22nd June	Kilmore Quay	23nd June	139
Kilmore Quay	25th June	Greystones	25th June	72
Greystones	26th June	Strangford	26th June	78
			Total	2124

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