



Biscay Cruise June 17th – July 19th 2006

We left Slowcoach behind this year and sailed aboard Riviera Magic with John and Kath Cook. At Salcombe we met up with Kalulu and Magic Bean, Seabird of Bute having gone on ahead, would wait for us all at Camaret. The channel crossing was in a S.W. 4/5 occ 6. The sea became rough and very lumpy and the other two boats decided to turn back. After a long hard 24 hr. passage we approached L'Aberwrach through the Malouine Chenel and tied up safely on a buoy at Le Palue, having wondered at times whether we would in fact only be able to make Roscoff. The sea state did improve 35 mls. off the French coast. At 1400hrs the next day we motored along the coast towards Le Four light and down the Chenel du Four to the Pte de Saint Mathieu where we were able to sail right across the bay with a S.W. 4/5 to Camaret. We were met by Dermot Nolan on Seabird. The next leg took us on through the Tas du Poids rocks to arrive at the Pte du Raz 1hr before H.W. Brest. It was flat calm, the sky becoming bluer all the time. Here we spotted two sunfish enjoying a leisurely swim. We stopped overnight at St. Evette outside Audierne. Our holiday was now really beginning. It was hot and sunny and unbeknown to us then, it was set to last for a whole month. During our 20 yrs of sailing these waters, this year has been one of the best, with constant deep blue skies, blue seas, an occasional cloud, vibrant colours and heat. Oh my word ! was it hot at times, climbing to the mid 90's and so humid at night. But these conditions also had their drawbacks- very little wind!! From Audierne we island hopped to Ile de Groix, Belle Ile and finally Ile de Noirmoutier where we decided to head up to the river Villaine, through the Arzal dam to spend a couple of days at La Roche Bernard where we were plagued by mosquitoes. Here we parted company with Seabird for a week and travelled on alone back to Belle Ile via an anchor break at Ile Houat for lunch. Back across to the mainland we had an overnight stop at Lorient before going to my favourite port, up the river Aven, with the depth gauge going crazy, to Pont Aven, the most picturesque town favoured by local artists all having their own little galleries in the town. The river runs right through the centre with waterwheels, waterfalls over rocks and loads of cafes with

scrumptious ice cream, crepes and gallettes, not to forget the most picturesque loo in Europe. However we had to move on and our next stop was Concarneau, a complete contrast with its walled inner city. It was Sunday and everywhere was pretty dead, until you went into the walled town which heaved with tourists, trinket, clothes and china shops and food stalls. All rather fun. The World Cup was on and we managed to watch a few matches in local bars and grieved with France as they lost to Italy. Next stop Benodet, where we met up with Seabird once again. Leaving Benodet we had a long hard slog to get around the Pte de Penmarch and up to Audierne, but the next day we had a fabulous sail with N.W.3/4 to Le Raz and on to Camaret arriving as the winds went N.E. and strengthened. We picked up a buoy as the marina was full. It was firework night. The forecast was now bad for the next few days. N.E. 6/7 – no hope of getting up the Chenel du Four. We were held up for two days. It was very hot, not a cloud in the sky and blowing a hooley. Having seen a favourable weather report we left on the Sunday after spending the morning strolling among the market stalls. The horrendous conditions in the Chenel had calmed and we had an easy passage. Looking towards the west, a low mauve coloured mist along the horizon was creating strange optical illusions – rocks inverted on rocks and islands inverted on islands. Back once again into L' Aberwrach – what to do next? Straight across to Salcombe or go on a bit further. We decided to do the latter extending our holiday by three days and headed along the coast towards Roscoff taking the narrow channel between the mainland and Ile de Batz, finally ending up in Trebeurden, which made a super place to end our trip. We just made it, with inches to spare, into the marina over the sill. It is a very attractive place and we found the biggest open air market the next day. Pity we didn't have time to spend longer, the beaches and sea looked so inviting. The end now in sight, we had an easy crossing motor sailing most of the way but we did manage to sail for six of the 24hr passage back to Torquay. After approx. 750 miles Riviera Magic was safely back home. It took us about 3hrs to get all the gear off and loaded into the cars before we could finally go home, with a last farewell and thanks for a most enjoyable holiday.

Jenny Sampson