

Captain's Rally to St. Malo – 27th August 1st to September 2009

The Captain's Rally to St. Malo was the third event in the South West Branch 2009 calendar. St. Malo was chosen because it has excellent facilities, there is much to do in the area and St. Malo has an atmosphere that is unique. The idea was for boats to berth in the Vauban Basin, which required locking in, so that they would be co-located and close to the Intra Muros. Five boats had made arrangements to attend the Rally, with one from another branch proposing to extend its stay to meet up with the SW branch members. Other members had said that would like to have attended but the sailing programme was issued too late to include it in their season's plan. This will be fixed for 2010 by issuing the draft programme at the Branch AGM in January..



Prior to sailing from the UK the weather forecast was not good, with fairly high winds forecast for the Channel and Bay of St. Malo. There are a vast number of weather forecasting sites available, but when it comes to long range forecasts they frequently contradict each



other. One could be optimistic and select the best, in which case we would have been looking at F1-3, with gusts up to F5.

However, the BBC, UGRIB and some other sites forecast winds and sea states that were higher than this and proved to be much more accurate with typically F4-6, gusting F7, for the first few days and increasing to up to F8 gusting 10 later in the week. This weather, naturally, deterred some but as the host boat *Eleanora* (Moody 31) set off from

Weymouth on Monday 24th with the aim of arriving in St. Malo late afternoon of the 25th.

For route planning we normally uses a speed of 5 knots, so the planned arrival time was 1930 local time. However, immediately prior to sailing a new three bladed Bruntons Autoprop had been fitted to *Eleanora* which gave us at least an extra knot over the old fixed two bladed prop so we arrived before there was sufficient water to get into the marina. This was a great sail, with winds initially touching the upper parts of 5, a rapid transit of the Alderney Race and a calm sea and run into St. Malo. Berthing in Vauban Yacht Basin with a F5 on the stern was interesting.



Due to the weather forecast, the boat that had planned to stay for the first part of the Rally left early. However, on Friday the next boat, Keith and Celia Bater, arrived after a passage via the Channel Islands. For those who are unfamiliar with the Vauban Basin in

St. Malo the locks open between two and a half hours either side of high tide and there are



waiting buoys at the entrance of the basin for those arriving early. Uncertain how many would make it no booking had been made for a social evening, but there was an open ship policy and the weather was ideal for the après sail and other social activities. During the day members independently visited Erquy, Dinon and Dinard and an evening social was held at a small fish restaurant within the walled city. This gave the term “catching crabs” a different slant! From St. Malo a trip up the Rance is a nice day out, but unfortunately the lock times did not allow for this.

By the end of “lé weekend” the weather forecast was not good so boats began to leave. *Eleanora* had to wait until Tuesday as we had to drop Brenda and Ann at Rennes airport, by which time the weather had deteriorated and the forecast meant that we stayed in St. Malo and extra day. By Wednesday we saw a 10 to 12 hour window that should get us to

Guernsey, so we left early. We made St. Peter Port with three reefs in the main, and for the last hour or so a F8, wind against tide and in a downpour; but it was exhilarating and very safe as the Moody 31 handled it with confidence. We believe that other boats that had left early and made Carteret and St, Helier also experienced delays. Not relishing F10 gusts in the Channel, the next window was on Saturday, so we left St. Peter Port at 0530 on Saturday morning and arrived in Weymouth in time for the 1600 bridge. This was great sail with winds typically 4-6 on the beam, again catching the Alderney race spot on and arriving in a high 5 to 6.



For those who were able to make it, the Rally was most enjoyable and we plan to do something similar for 2010. If a circle is drawn from Plymouth, an optimum destination would be the North Coast of Brittany, such as Tréguier or other ports along the North Brittany Coast.

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