

Quantum **Network**–Newsletter Autumn 2011

Welcome to the autumn edition of the Quantum Newsletter. In this edition we have –

Sailing adventure: Thoughts from an anchorage –Stuart reflects on the experience of anchoring.

Featured location: St Vaast – An attractive Normandy fishing port on the east of the Cotentin Peninsula.

Dates for the diary – Late season Quantum Network weekend – 4th-6th November & looking ahead.

Sailing Adventures – Thoughts from an Anchorage

There are many great anchorages around our coast and in Northern France / Channel Islands, often missed by those that just sail marina to marina. Stuart sent us some reflections on anchoring from St Helier earlier this summer:

'The good ship *Slipstream* has a very fine anchor. For those with techy tendencies, it is a 35lb CQR, mounted on the bow roller for immediate deployment. CQR is, allegedly, a mis-translation of 'secure'.

Judi and I like to spend time at anchor. In France it doesn't cost anything. On the UK south coast, if someone can catch you, then you will be charged! A fiver for harbour dues, for parking in the river Dart opposite the town quay, we have no argument with but once it reaches double figures, it does seem a tad cheeky when you are using your own tackle (so to speak).

I reckon that we have become almost slick in using our anchor and throw it out at the slightest excuse ... stopping for lunch, during a race, when the wind has died and the tide turned we'll dredge rather than be carried backwards, dampening down a snubbing mooring line and handbrake turns in narrow rivers. We most frequently anchor for a 'quiet night away from the crowds'.



Harbours and marinas have their place but they are not always perfect. Being handily situated in the middle of town can mean that you are serenaded by the locals making their way home in the wee small hours and then woken up at some ridiculous time in the morning by the road cleaners clearing up after them. The coming and going of fishing boats is dictated by the tides and not by daylight hours; worse in France because it all happens an hour earlier.

Anchoring for us is an exercise in husband and wife communication. I drop, Judi drives. Having decided how much water I want to anchor in, Judi pootles forwards into shallow water until the said depth is found. We do the shaggy dog manoeuvre and describe a circle of radius about 25m to look for any surprises (like protruding rocks) and then return to the desired spot. Judi stops the boat, I drop the anchor until it hits the seabed and then Judi engages reverse as I pay out the chain. When most of the calculated length of chain is out, I cleat the chain and Judi gives the engine more revs and we dig the anchor in - we hope. It is pleasing when we get the whip-lash as all the slack chain is taken up and the anchor is not dragging. This can all be done under sail but then we reverse roles and I drive.



For a quiet night without any anxiety, we like to choose some fine sand or mud to drop the anchor into. Anchors are designed to bury/plough themselves into the seabed when pulled horizontally and a mixture of sand and mud is excellent, albeit smelly when pulled back onto the deck. Charts give you all this information and recommended anchorages are marked as such. The wind direction and any forecasted changes have to be allowed for. Ideally you hide behind land of some sort to reduce the size of the waves or swell.

Anchoring has many aspects to it. Let's take the mathematics for example. The accepted wisdom is that you should have 4 times the depth of chain out or 6 times the depth if you are using warp (rope). OK. So, you have to know whether the tide is coming up or going down, whether you will still be floating at low water and how much chain/warp you will need at high water. If you have the sort of personality that craves detail, this gets interesting. No, it really does. You refer to the almanac, you devise a tidal curve or even sort out secondary port tidal differences. Conventional wisdom has it that chain in the anchor locker is not doing you any good. If you find yourself in a strong wind or tide then the above advice is only for starters. Chuck all available chain out, first making sure that the boat end is well attached to the boat.

This year's problem has been either that there has been no wind and no point trying to sail anywhere or there has been too much and there has been no shelter available. The predominately northerly winds so far this summer have made the North Brittany coast a tad exposed. All our usual sheltered spots have not been sheltered. Arriving in the Anse de Brehec one afternoon we were wonderfully sheltered from the NW wind. We were so comfortable that we

decided to stay there all night. Sadly, about 0030hrs, the Atlantic swell came around three sides of a square with the tide to find us, together with the wind that had veered NE. Then there was serious slapping, rocking and rolling going on. What had been a sweet anchorage became a miserable spot.

Now having spent two nights off the Iles Chausey, it has been so peaceful that the ringing in the ears has kept us awake! Surviving by BBQing fish caught from the back of the boat, sadly, we are now forced to seek civilisation to replenish our fresh water. Still, after a night in St Helier we will be off for another a night at anchor '

Stuart, Leicestershire

If the techy aspects at anchor or any other point of sailing interest you, Stuart runs Swift Valley Sea School, delivering RYA shorebased courses. See www.swiftseaschool.co.uk

Featured Location – St Vaast la Hougue

Whilst Cherbourg with its all-weather, all-tide access is often the first stop in France, if you can time your arrival right, then St Vaast is just a few miles further from the Solent. Sheltered on the east side of the Cotentin Peninsula, also known as the Cherbourg Peninsula, it is a favourite destination on many of our cross channel cruises.

The small pretty town, is centred on the harbour, which is shared between the well sheltered marina and an active fishing fleet. As with many harbours in Normandy the tidal range restricts access, with the lock gates being opened 2¼ hours before local high water and closed 3½ after high water. If you arrived early, you can anchor in the bay outside the harbour wall, sheltered from most winds, other than strong blows from the easterly to southerly sector.



As you approach St Vaast, you will enter between the two Vauban forts, one on the mainland and one on the island of Tatihou. This island, guarding the entrance to St Vaast, has had a varied history. Nowadays, you can take tours on an amphibious vehicle or even walk out to it across the mussel and oyster beds. In years gone by it was used for isolating plague victims.

St Vaast has a significant military history. It was here that Edward III landed in 1346, with an army of some 16,000 knights, men-at-arms, archers and foot soldiers. From St Vaast the army marched to Caen to capture the capital of Normandy. This was the beginning of the Hundred Years War.

During his inspection of the coast in 1686, Vauban noted the strategic position of the Bay of La Hougue and the vulnerability of the shoreline making it conducive to invasion. The naval Battle of La Hougue took place off the town in 1692. On 3 June during a heated battle with the Anglo-Dutch fleet, twelve French ships were sunk in the vicinity of the Island of Tatihou. It was the decisive naval battle of the Nine Years' War, also known as the War of the English Succession

Following this battle Vauban decided to build the two towers observatories to protect the bay, making landing impossible through the crossfire from the two batteries. In June 1694 the work commenced and took 5 years to complete. The two distinctive towers are not only good landmarks when arriving by sea but are well worth closer inspection, if time in port permits.



These days, the British get a much warmer welcome here. With a variety of cafés and restaurants along the waterfront, and the availability of excellent seafood, St Vaast is well worth a visit if you get the chance. For more information see www.saint-vaast-reville.com.

Dates for the diary

We have had some great sailing weather so far in September and October. Hopefully November will be good too. By popular demand, we are again putting on a late season weekend specifically for Quantum Sailing network members. This weekend will include the opportunity to work on developing and practicing your sailing skills. It will run from 1700 on Friday 4th November to 1700 on Sunday 6th November and is being offered to Network Member at £165, inclusive of food onboard, moorings and fuel. If you are interested please contact Glenn on 07919 017835 or glenn@quantumsailing.co.uk

Sailing in November may not be to everyone's taste, so for many thoughts turn to sailing in 2012. The Quantum Sailing programme for Adventure Cruises will be published shortly but, as a Quantum Sailing Network member, you can help shape and influence those plans. If there are cruises that you would like to see on the programme or if you have any other suggestions for us, please let us know. Email info@quantumsailing.co.uk