

Quantum **Network**–Newsletter Summer 2010

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

- **Sailing adventure – Putting the theory into practice.** After a winter studying ashore, Paul recounts the experience of doing it for real on a Mileage Builder trip.
- **Featured location – Saint Malo.** Once it made its wealth from capturing foreign ships, now a must visit location for yachts touring Brittany.
- **Focus on sailing** – Have flares had their day?
- **Dates for the diary** – Mileage Builder to France and the Channel Islands (27th August – 3rd September)

Sailing Adventures – Putting the theory into practice.

Like many would-be sailors I spent the dark winter evenings pouring over charts and tables, studying for my RYA Yachtmaster theory certificate. Keen to test the theory, I booked, with my classroom partner Dave, on a seven day trip to France and the Channel Islands.

We slipped our berth at 06:00 on Monday morning - now we were doing it for real! The wind was favourable for catching the tide though the Alderney Races to reach St. Peterport on Guernsey. Here was our first dose of reality. Plotting and re-planning courses on the compact chart table, as we heeled over, was a far cry from the spacious dining room table where all that theory was worked out. We opted for the shortest route down the Little Russell channel, this was not going to be for the fainthearted.



As we approached the channel, night was falling and the lights started to appear and take meaning. I was confronted with what looked like a night approach to Heathrow. Dave seemingly had the binoculars glued to his face, trying to make sense of what was ahead and match the lights to the chart. Meanwhile our skipper Glenn, reassuringly at ease with the situation, kept a calm eye on everything as if he was driving down his own street. Suddenly Dave announced he'd spotted the transit lights that would guide us safely into St Peterport.

It was approaching 1am as we rafted up on the visitors pontoon. Day one of our mileage builder had really tested us and we reflected back on a long but very satisfying passage.

After some R&R enjoying the atmosphere in St Peterport, we moved onto to Jersey, passing over the sill at St Helier with less than 1/2 meter under the keel, the digital display confirming our tidal height calculations and proving that those graphs from the theory course really do work!

I had the challenge of planning the leg to Alderney. Timing was going to be critical, as the tides there are not to be messed with. It was good to see the Little Russell channel in daylight. The impact of wind against tide was something that we'd discussed on the theory course, however I never imagined it could be so dramatic. The lumpy sea that greeted us, as we passed the mid channel Roustel rock, seemed to come out of nowhere.

We left the channel with the wind on our bow. We were going to have to tack to make any progress but we could not afford to arrive late. I kept one eye on the chart and one eye on my watch. This was going to be close.

As we approached the south side of the island the tide was pulling us in the wrong direction. Glenn suggested staying on the starboard tack would give us tidal help for longer, which turned out to be sound advice. Tidal diamonds are all well and good for theory planning, as they allow you to arrive at a nice precise number, but in practice they don't always reflect the situation just a short distance away.



We rounded the north of the island and quickly focused on finding the transit into Braye Harbour. The photograph of the transit marks in the pilot book proved an accurate guide as we lined up the church spire and white cone - don't you just love it when a plan comes together?

After a short sail to Cherbourg, with a favourable tide, touching 11 knots over the ground at times, the final leg back to Gosport was going to include an overnight channel crossing. It proved to be a busy night. As darkness fell, a seemingly endless procession of lights appeared on the horizon. This was a good opportunity to practice taking bearings and using the radar, with as many as 10 vessels at a time travelling along the eastbound lane. I was focused on one in particular, it's bearing not changing, confirming we were on a collision course. I knew that we had right of way but I had also heard stories that the big ones don't always give way.

Another check on her bearing – still the same then a significant change, as she altered course to pass half a mile off our stern. All went exactly as it should, the theory and the reality finally came together. It had been a very satisfying crossing.

I have added another 250 miles in my log book but I have taken so much more from the experience than I can write in the log book, more than can be learnt in any classroom. Knowing the theory is good, experiencing the reality is great. Thanks to Glenn, this was less a Mileage Builder, more a Character Builder. - **Paul , Abingdon**

(download the full account from our web site – www.quantumsailing.co.uk/feedback/mileagebuilder.pdf)

Featured Location - Saint Malo – The city of granite

At first glance, the approaches to Saint Malo can appear daunting. Given careful planning however it will be seen that there are wide and well-marked fairways leading to a secure port close to the heart of the city. With a choice of marinas, if you opt for the secure Bassin Vauban, you will tie up just outside the main gate to the walled city.



A fortified island at the mouth of the Rance River, with a city built of the same grey granite stone as Mont St-Michel, Saint Malo was originally named after a Welsh monk Mac Low around the 6th century. It became notorious, in the Middle Ages as the home of the Corsairs (French privateers and sometimes pirates), offering asylum to all manner of thieves and rogues.

By the 13th century the local inhabitants, known as "Malouins" were already quite successful at capturing enemy ships, when they swore allegiance to Charles VI, king of France. In order to keep the inhabitants under control, the Duchy of Brittany had the main castle built, which the Malouins then took over in 1590.



The city, clustered around the cathedral, was burnt down for the first time in 1661. In the following years, architects Vauban and Garangeau re-constructed and extended it.

Thanks to its seafarers and merchant ships owners, who commissioned vessels to the Eastern Indies, China, Africa and the Americas, the city enjoyed prodigious prosperity in the 17th and 18th centuries.

The 1944 liberation battles devastated the city and destroyed 80% of it, although the walls and castle were spared in the destruction. It is from the preserved and restored ruins that St-Malo rose again. Thanks to a careful and heritage-conscious reconstruction design, the city of granite was rebuilt with its original style and skyline.

What remains now is a town of great character, pleasant cafés and good restaurants. Saint-Malo has one of the highest concentrations of seafood restaurants in Europe and is famous for its local oysters from Cancale. It is always worth planning a visit there on any trip across the channel. For more info, see www.saint-malo-tourisme.com/

Focus on sailing – Flares, has their time past?

The discussion continues to rumble on about whether flares are redundant now that the electronic age offers other alternatives such as EPIRBs (Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacon) and PLBs (Personal Locator Beacons). Last year, the RYA has clearly started to point towards the end of flares as carried today and their web site includes articles on this. See:

<http://www.rya.org.uk/newsevents/enewsletters/Cruising-news/may2009/Pages/areflaresredundant.aspx>

The site also contains comments from readers, both for and against, although it must be said that the majority appear to be in favour of change. See also the editorial on the 'sailers' web site featured in the last edition:

<http://www.sailers.co.uk/index.php/editorial/367-rya-flare-advice-is-sensible-and-timely>

The discussion will continue to run for a while yet, and whilst many sailors will agree with the need for change, the regulations, requiring all coded boats to carry expensive and time-limited pyrotechnics, will delay the change. Maybe it is time for the MCA to make a change to the coding regulations!

Dates for the diary

Mileage builder Cruise – 27th August to 3rd September –

If the feature on St Malo or Paul's description of a Mileage Builder have wetted your appetite, why not consider our seven day cruise to France and the Channel Islands? Individual places can be booked and all standards are welcome - you don't need to have spent the winter studying theory! Contact us for details – glenn@quantumsailing.co.uk.