

The 26th Wayfarer International Rally – Pointe D'Arradon, Gulf of Morbihan, Brittany.



The twice postponed (2020 and 2021) 26th Wayfarer International Rally finally happened in early September in the Gulf of Morbihan in Brittany. Two boats from Chew and six sailors and camp followers took part – Phil Pemberton's Wayfarer World 'May' and Mike Higgin's Hartley Mark IV 'Ringle' were the boats, and the sailors were Phil and Simon Conway sailing 'May' and Mike sailing 'Ringle' with Kate O'Brien and John Kelly. Rae Kelly was shore boss.

The Gulf of Morbihan is a natural harbour, a bit like Poole, but about three times the size and with about 40 islands. 'Mor Bihan' in Breton means inland sea. Like Poole there is a narrow entrance so tides are fierce with up to nine knots at springs

Administration for the boats was quite involved – this being the first time Chew Wayfarers had ventured beyond the UK since Brexit and with the French being – well French! There was much discussion as to whether an SSR (Small Ship Registration) was required. We reckoned it was and was duly applied for. Proof of VAT status (ie was it paid on purchase) was required as was a Certificate of Registration? The UKWA (UK Wayfarer Association) supplied this. Cars and trailers required inter alia 'UK' stickers, the GB stickers of yesteryear being no longer valid. It was good to be prepared but in the event we were not troubled by officialdom once.

It was with some relief however that on 31 August we set off to catch the Brittany Ferries 2000 hours sailing from Portsmouth to St Malo. In the queue for loading we could easily identify fellow rally participants and joined them for a chat. The journey was as always a pleasant experience – watching the ferry expertly squeezing past sundry warships, indulging in a nice meal, topping up with a few more drinks, watching the clever onboard entertainment and sleeping well in a comfortable cabin. The ship remains on UK time until docking which was at 0800 Central European Time (7am 'real' time) so an early breakfast was the order of the day. Cars with trailers tended to be loaded on the lower decks so were pretty much first away and through the perfunctory passport and customs checks quickly

before driving the 200 or so kilometres to Arradon in the Gulf of Morbihan stopping for lunch



en route.

On arrival at the marina at Pointe D'Arradon we were met by the organisers Gilles Bruneau, English wife Jill and Thierry Grenier. We rigged, launched and tied up and took the trailers and trollies to our accommodation on a campsite which was about two kilometres away. We had booked chalets but some were camping and others staying in their motor homes. Incidentally we were gratified to find out that the French for motor home is 'motor home'.

Gilles & Co had arranged a get together on the site on the evening. This was very informal, the only rule being that you had to bring your own plate and glass! Served was the French equivalent of the Spanish tapas – 'la tapas', Breton cider, and French (naturellement) wines some of which came from Gilles' own vineyard. This was a good opportunity to make new Wayfarer friends as well as catching up with those from previous rallies. These included Nigel and Jay Pye from the Medway with whom Mike and John had roomed with in the Norfolk Broads and had converted to Famous Grouse. Bill Harkins and Margie McKelvey, who were tremendous hosts from the 2017 rally on Lake Ontario in the United States. Patty Kuntz, organiser of the 2022 Wayfarer World Championships on Lake Eustis in Florida, also crossed the Atlantic for the event. She had crewed on Ringle a number of times. Multiple Irish Wayfarer champions and serial rally attendees, Monica Schaefer and Miriam McCarthy were also there as was Wayfarer legend Ralph Roberts. Ralph was also on a mission – he had restored (magnificently!) a woodie for a Spanish customer who was collecting from Arradon at the end of the rally. Merrin Frogett, editor of the excellent Wayfarer News class magazine was also there and 'encouraged' a 'volunteer' to write up each day of the rally.

In all there were just over 40 attendees with just over half from the UK, five from Ireland, three from the United States and the rest from France, the Netherlands and Belgium. Of the 14 boats, six were Mark IVs, although three were adapted racers, a few Wayfarer Worlds, including Phil's 10128, one Mark 1 and the rest Mark IIs. The oldest boat was the Mark 1 woodie 447 (1961), while the youngest was Monica's 11299 (2020). While Mark IV cruisers do look uncluttered (fewer adjustable controls), they do lack what some consider to be essentials. Many had Highfield levers for rig tension as opposed to a cascade system and a few lacked ratchet blocks for the jibsheets. John Miller's 'Wayfair Lady' from Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland had an interesting Celtic Nations courtesy flag showing the flags of Brittan, Cornwall, Ireland, Isle of Man, Scotland and Wales. The Mark IV cruiser 'Turid' sported an electric outboard.



A bright and shiny Friday morning dawned and after a quick briefing from Gilles we set sail to one of the smaller islands in the Gulf – Ile Ilur, some using outboards to clear the marina and some accepting a tow for the same reason. (Roger Barnes, top honcho of the Dinghy Cruising Association and confirmed Francophile, has a 15 foot cruising dinghy of the Ilur class, based on a Breton fishing boat). For easy navigation, Gilles with his distinctive red genoa was usually lead boat and he called for volunteers each day to be tail boat. The wind filled in to a very pleasant Force 3 and we all, complete with picnics, arrived on the beach on Ilur island pretty much together. Techniques for landing differed. Dinghy cruising experts rolled away the genoa, rounded up to windward at the same time dropping the mainsail and dropping the anchor and then drifted or paddled onto the shore before setting up a stern line. The rest of us sailed into thigh deep water rounded up and one crew member jumped out and held the boat head to wind while the sails were rolled or dropped. The anchor was then thrown directly into the wind (or the boat paddled out to do so) and the stern line attached and taken ashore. A single Wayfarer had the anchor on the foredeck complete with tripping line, pushed the boat out and pulled on the tripping line to drop the anchor. A bit cumbersome but it does make it easier to recover the anchor and boat! Another used fenders to roll the boat up the beach but only a little way as the tide was going out. Us Brits

learned here that lunch in France is two hours! After our leisurely lunch we had an equally leisurely sail back to the marina.

On Day 2, another nice day, our destination was Ile D'Arz landing on a beach on the eastern side of the island. This island is permanently inhabited by about 200 people all the year round and has a regular ferry to Vannes. Population swells tenfold in the summer months. Again we anchored off the beach and had plenty of time to picnic, to explore and to use the (proper) toilets at the nearby Glenans Sailing School. Mike had brought the wherewithal – camping stove, kettle etc – to brew fresh tea and Monica shared a bottle of Black Bush whisky apologising for it being 'from the North'. On the sail back those who had spinnakers used them and a bit of a race developed with the participants pretending not to be racing!

On the Saturday evening Gilles had arranged to take over an oyster farm/restaurant for our group. This was only 500 metres from the campsite so getting back was easy! As well as oysters of three different sizes, prawns, clams, winkles and tuna mousse was available as was charcuterie for non-seafood fanciers. For vegetarians there was red, rosy and white wine, Breton cider and bread! The tables were all outside, the wind was increasing and the sun going down so most repaired to their chalets early to the whisky and to entertain neighbours.

Day 3 while fine was a bit on the windy side – steady Force 4 and forecast to increase - so Gilles had decided on Vannes as our destination. We would be unable to land but instead would tie up at waiting pontoon on the sea side of a road bridge. One or two reefs were the order of the day and this proved to be a challenging sail. We sailed past Maison Rose, a pink house near the entrance. This features heavily in the tourist brochures about the Gulf of Morbihan. The waiting pontoon was less than two metres wide so landing was tricky particularly for the first boat, although subsequent arrivees had the benefit of catchers. As the forecast had predicted the wind increased in the afternoon so the return sail was brisk but in all it was a rewarding day.

The Ile D'Arz but this time a beach on the west side was the order of the day for the Monday. During a pause in the briefing John Miller did a pitch for the 2023 rally which is to be held on Strangford Lough in Northern Ireland. He did warn that the temperature would be a few degrees cooler than the Morbihan! The (unusual) insistent rain in the morning soon cleared and this was a great sail round several small islands to a fantastic beach and loads to explore inland. Simon arranged a group photoshoot at lunchtime even collaring an unsuspecting tourist to snap so we were all in the shot.

The norm for official Wayfarer events is that if there is a (Force) 6 anywhere in the forecast, the event is postponed/cancelled. The forecast (and the actuality) for Day 5, the Tuesday, was Force 6 potentially gusting 7 so this was designated a lay day for sailors to do their own thing. This was no real hardship as the area is so pretty. Some explored locally, while others visited Vannes with its historic city walls, more than a few cathedrals, an interesting marina and numerous restaurants. Aramis, one of Alexander Dumas's Three Musketeers was onetime Bishop of Vannes. Vannes also had cashpoints – becoming necessary at this stage of the trip! Some visited Auray which has an almost perfectly preserved 600 year old harbour. Quiberon (you can catch the ferry to Belle Ile from here) and Carnac (almost every dinghy class has held its European Championships here) were also destinations as was La Trinite sur Mer, home of many ocean racing trimarans.

Wednesday was not an official sailing day but an intrepid few decided to circumnavigate the largest island, Ile aux Moines (Isle of the Monks). Navigation wise this was interesting as it was nearly low tide but was an enjoyable exercise.

The last night was a get together at the Creperie Keroyal just outside the village of Plougoumelin, about a 15 minute drive from the campsite. Of course crepes are the national dish of Brittany and the main course came with local scallops. A few of us were familiar with Kir but the aperitif had a local spin to it – Kir Breton – Crème de Cassis with Breton cider. The pudding was – yes you guessed correctly – crepes, this time with caramel and ice cream. A vote of thanks and presentations to the organisers then back to the campsite courtesy of the SatNav lady.

Most of us packed up on the Thursday and the Chewfarers headed for the Roscoff ferry. Phil and Simon by dint of some demon driving were first in the queue. It was while on the ferry that we were told of the passing of Queen Elizabeth. Patty Kuntz, returning to the United States had heard the news between flights and had thoughtfully put it on the event WhatsApp. The ferry arrived in Plymouth on time and Phil and Simon took advantage of their pole position to be able to drop 'May' off at the club by 11pm.

Yet another great Wayfarer International Rally. Looking forward to 2023 and grateful that franglais will not be required.