

LOG OF THE STAR SHIP MOODY MADAM ON ITS ENDLESS QUEST TO EXPLORE THE FURTHERMOST OUTPOSTS OF THE GALAXY - 2012.

Is this summer ... yes Jim, but not as we know it

CAPTAINS LOG ENTRY No 1

Monday June 18

After constant bad weather and gales, seems to be chance of some respite for few days. Decided to try our luck and head off to foreign parts. Cast off berth in Gillingham Marina, locked out into last of flood tide coming into Medway. Two hours later saw us heading for the Spile buoy on route Ramsgate, and picking up ebb tide down Kent Coast, motoring as not enough wind to sail but quite pleasant. SMS message, it's Nigel and Gill in their new boat Miranda out for the first time, also heading for Ramsgate. Agreed to meet. Forecast SW so expected to get usual lumpy seas and wind on the nose off Longnose but surprisingly flat. Lots of coming and going at Ramsgate with wind farm traffic but Port Control allows us to go straight in, moored next to Miranda invited on for G and T's to toast their new acquisition, a fine Westerly Tempest, which we were happy to do. Joined by more friends Bryan and Brigitte so more G and T's then repaired to the Royal Temple Yacht Club for more drinkies before heading to Pizza Express for dinner and more wine. None of this is good preparation for a long Channel crossing with an early start the next day.

Tuesday June 19

Morning dawned bright and clear, forecast good, so at the appointed hour 07.00 (5 hours before HW Dover), cast off our lines, got clearance from Port Control and headed out into the arms of the North Sea. For one hour we head due East, motoring with light tailwind, slightly headed by the tide to fetch the Goodwin Knoll buoy on the port beam - thus avoiding the clutches of the dreaded Goodwin Sands, then we alter course to make 120 on the GPS on route Dunkirk now 30 miles away. Some tide now in our favour so can make 5.5 knots over the ground, motor sailing at 5 knots. Our course takes us via the South Falls, then across the shipping lanes to the Ruytingen NW, had to dodge a couple of tankers by slight course alteration to pass astern (never good idea to try and pass in front!) but not too much commercial traffic today. Our course takes us south of the rhumbline but we will make this up when the tide turns (slack water HW Dover - 1 hour). By 12.00 making good time, tide now in our favour and decided to try and make it further along the coast as can see forecast for Wednesday not looking so good. By 15.00 now picking up some help from the wind which has swung round to NE force 3 to 4 and making 7 knots over the ground. Decided to press on to Ostend. By 17.45 passing Nieuwpoort and the conspicuous tall hotel at Ostend comes into view. Two hours later made it to Ostend harbour just as tide starts to slacken, got permission to enter from Port Control but turned red lights on as we were half way down entrance channel and then got told off for impeding an incoming ferry, oops. We like the Royal Ostend Yacht Club at the bottom of the harbour and were soon moored safely on one of their pontoons. Repaired to Clubhouse for our first taste of foreign beer. Long crossing (logged 65 miles) but pleased that we had made such good progress. Feasted on Sally's sausage casserole and turned in as both exhausted.

Wednesday June 29

Forecast worrying, NE 4 becoming 5 later. That will be right on the nose and promises a rough passage, just about on the limit of what we will put up with. However decided to give it a go as more gales forecast for the weekend and don't want to get stuck in Ostend. Need to make sure we get full benefit of E-going tide so cast off at 10.00 bst,,a couple of hours before tide due to change. Get permission to leave harbour and check twice, no incoming ferries! Sure enough its a bit lumpy and we can't quite sail the course, but its reasonably bright. As expected slow going and it takes us 3 hours to make it up to Zeebrugge. The harbour here sticks out for over a mile and it always takes ages to get past, We put in a long tack out to sea

to make sure we can clear the entrance, then tack onto our new course, amazingly we can now sail this, so even with two reefs in and a scrap of headsail we can make 6 knots and its not too rough. With the help of the tide now favourable we make the giddy speed of 9 knots over the ground as we speed toward the Westerscheld estuary. We can see Vlissingen but have to avoid the busy shipping lanes so can't sail straight across the estuary and we fire up the trusty iron horse to speed us between two coasters. There is a small harbour as we pass Vlisingen but we sail past and turn into the entrance, which leads to the locks. What a relief to find shelter and calm waters. Very shortly we lock through into the canal which leads to our destination, Middelburg. Call up bridge control and think I get an answer but its in Dutch so we stooze around waiting for the first bridge to open. After 30 mins I say to Sally shall we moor to some posts to wait, no sooner were the words out of my mouth than we get the red and green lights, first indication that the road bridge is going to be raised, followed shortly by the bells as the road barriers come down. The bridge goes up, we get the green light and hurry through. There are four more bridges to negotiate, we are the only yacht going upstream, the hurly burly of Vlissingen rush hour comes to a halt just for us. It takes us about an hour to do the 5 miles or so to reach the Stationbrug at Middelburg, This finally swings for us and we turn into the cutting, which leads to the marina. We are about to moor outside the Harbourmasters Office when the Harbour mistress who is about to go home appears and says she will open the little bridge for us so we can moor in the marina basin. We duly pass through and make our way to pick up a 'box' mooring- bows too with a line to two posts astern, she kindly even takes our lines as we make fast. By 19.30 we are all secure = WE HAVE ARRIVED IN HOLLAND

ENGINEERS REPORT TO BRIDGE

What's up Scotty?

REPORT No 1

Captain, regret to report catastrophic failure of on-board laptop computer. While attempting to connect to ships warp drive batteries using crap Maplin voltage adaptor managed to fuse input circuitry on laptop as evidenced by strong burning smell followed by smoke emanating from socket and blank screen. This means we will not be able to use the personal transporter or communicate with home planet earth via e-mail for the time being.

Scotty

Captain: Do your best to fix it Scotty

REPORT No 2

While passing planet Goes managed to talk to friendly Klingon computer expert. He advised repair unlikely and in any case would cost more than laptop. Only solution is to get new laptop
Scotty

Captain: No can do Scotty till we return to planet Earth and who knows when that will be.
Can't you fix it?

REPORT No3

With nothing to lose attempted to investigate damage myself. Removed all the screws I could find on back of laptop but still could not get back off, however managed to find panel on front which could be removed to reveal burned out component. Prodded this with trusty small electrical screwdriver (Christmas present, 2007) and it promptly disintegrated. Prised internal connections apart on premise that they were causing short circuit. Tried normal charger. Somewhat to surprise of all on board (ie Sally and me) was able to report laptop started charging again and shortly thereafter screen came to life, if a bit flickery. Programs appear to be functioning normally.

Captain: Well done Scotty, does this mean we can now use transporter and send e-mails.

Scotty ; Regret not Captain as we have used up all out T-Mobile credit for dongle and can't transmit until we find friendly planet with T-mobile shop or find free wifi hot spot. Will advise as soon as communications restored.

REPORT No 4

Scotty: managed contact passing mobile shop Frau W who kindly loaded credit onto dongle. Thus can report communications restored, also transponder as managed to beam up slice of Dutch appeltart mit sahn. Felt obliged to eat it myself to confirm authenticity and can confirm it was delicious.

CAPTAINS LOG - ENTRY No 2

21st June to 24th June

Spent 4 nice days in Middelburg while depressions rolled up the Channel. Thursday was market day and the market square was busy with stalls selling everything, the cheese man had an especially impressive display of his wares with enormous cheeses on show. Had usual cappachino and appeltart sitting in the sun. Middelburg thrived during Holland's Golden age when warehouses of the Dutch East India Company lined the canals, now converted to chic apartments and office buildings having largely escaped damage during the war, unlike the impressive 15th century town hall which dominates the market square which was almost totally destroyed following a retaliatory bombing raid in 1940. Over all, the tall spire of the 'Lange Jan' with 207 steps to the top of the tower. Tim Hopper and I had a race to the top once, he beat me.

Saturday we visited the excellent Albert Heinz supermarket to replenish ships stores and later treated ourselves at the El Senso Italian restaurant. Sunday was a thoroughly wet and miserable day, we hardly emerged from the boat until the evening.

Monday 25th June

There is a very good forecast in English issued by the Netherlands Coastguard at 08.05. It's a slightly automated report by a Dutchman we have come to know as 'Willi'. Often starts: warnings... there are no warnings.. (this is generally good news). Anyway today Willi say ; W 4-5 decreasing variable 1-3, risk shower, so we decide to move on. The Dutch generally all get going at 10 o'clock, we join the exodus from the marina but need to stop at Jos Boon Ships Chandlery shop to take on diesel. (44 litres, €59; the cost of us getting here). Then up the canal and lock out into the Veerse Mere. This is a beautiful tree lined tideless salt water lake with several islands where you can moor to staging or 'steigers'. We put the jib up and are wafted along at 4 knots, the sun has come out and it's beautiful, our spirits soar. With the forecast looking good we head for one of our favourite spots - the Omloop. Its just an inlet surrounded by trees, but very peaceful with nothing there but nature. By lunchtime we are moored on the island side, the sun's out and we settle down to a lazy afternoon and a quiet night.

Tuesday 26th June

Wake to perfectly still sunny morning, could easily stay another day but have heard from friends and agree meet Goes (pronounced hoose). Breakfast and head out into Veerse Mere, takes 1 1/2 hours to reach lock at end of the Meer, you can sometimes wait for over an hour if you just miss a lock, but on this occasion we can see the boats coming out and hurry to see the lights go green so we can go straight in. When it's busy have seen 30 or more boats crammed into this lock but today only 6 of us. The level rises, the gates open, the lights go green and we emerge into the Oosterschelde. We head for the red and green buoys marking the entry to the Goessche Sas channel, again with amazing luck we can go straight into the lock; this gives access to the harbour canal which winds 5km through the countryside to bring us to the town. Again the Harbourmaster has raised the road bridge to let some yachts out and he holds it for us to pass. We moor just outside to main basin as it quieter. There is free

water and electricity on the pontoon. The friendly Harbourmaster came by and greeted us in perfect English. Its Market day and we wander into the Market Square for lunch outside one of the many cafes with tables and chairs outside so can enjoy people watching. They are setting up for a concert tonight. Soon our friends from Conyer, Derek and Sharon and their friend John turn up in their boat Shade, a Southely 115 . We have drinkies on Moody Madam and join Derek and Sharon who have cooked a whole chicken for dinner. Later we head into the Square to listen to the concert but its very noisy and not our scene. Bed.

CAPTAINS LOG ENTRY No 3

Wednesday 27th June

Said goodbye to our friends on Shade. Got bikes out for ride but out of practice so didn't go far. Eat Java Palace Restaurant, buffet as much as you can eat for 15 euros. Bad indigestion all night.

Thursday 28th June

10.00 Cast off Goes, through bridge (10.00 opening) down canal and locked out into the Oosterscheld again. Spent a bit of time tacking up the Keeten Gat but soon got fed up and put the engine on. We are heading for one of our favourite spots, Oude Tonge. First discovered by an expeditionary force from Conyer in 1999 when Imagine, Foxtrot 5, Gemini, and Banagher first visited these uncharted waters. It was a real adventure to venture up the narrow and shallow cut not knowing what we would find. The natives were amazed to see white men for the first time and came to stare in their strange wooden footwear (well the old Harbourmaster anyway). Now it's in all the guide books and has been spoilt by development - blocks of flats gradually spreading up the canal. However there is a new Clubhouse and much-improved showers. Also new Alber Heinj in village. We lock through into the Volkerak and pick up the buoyed channel, which appears to lead nowhere until you see the gap of the sluice gate in the sea wall. We head in and pick up a mooring box marked with a green disc to show its free (many places have boxes where you have to go in between posts, trying to put a line over as you go past and moor bows to a pontoon) we are all secure by 15.30 and repair to the small square at the end of the harbour where the Lely Hotel has some tables outside. Enjoy well-earned cold beer/diet coke sitting in sunshine.

Friday 29th June

Feeling energetic go for long cycle ride, bit breezy going but behind us coming back. Have to move to next berth, try to do this without taking cockpit tent and washing down, big mistake as cant see properly past Sally's knickers and hit mooring post sending nav lights into the murk, oops. Managed to get emergency replacement from chandlery but cost €16. Harbourmaster took pity on Sally who was upset and waived mooring fee, we were quite touched. Stocked up with supplies but decided to patronise the Lely again for dinner. Delicious steak cooked just right. Meal for 2 with bottle wine €65.

Saturday 30th June

Just opposite Oude Tonge off the Volkerak is a delightful river leading to Steenbergen. We head over mid morning. There are several posts in the river you can moor to for free. Have pleasant few hours but Willi threatens SW 5-6 so think we should retreat to Steenbergen where there is more shelter. On arrival are greeted by the delectable Lorraine standing on the bow of Oyster - exchange greetings like Livingstone and Stanley meeting in the jungle after months of isolation. Later Brian and Lorrain join us to swap yarns and for Pims. Guy Gibson of Dambuster fame is buried here as he and his co-pilot were shot down in their Mosquito shortly before the end of the war. There is a memorial in the town and we have visited the grave, two simple war commission headstones in the local graveyard.,

Sunday 1st July

Windy, stay Steenburgen, grateful for our cockpit tent.

Monday 2nd July

Wind's calmed down, sun's come out, cast off and return to river where we pick up a vacant steiger. Its perfectly isolated surrounded only by the reeds lining the river with the odd boat coming or going to Steenberg. Sunny afternoon for change, can sunbath in cockpit. Sally does some work on the stern with feet in water. We have swum here but today the water looks like brown soup, not very inviting. Later get our little gas bbq out to have bbq in cockpit. Strange sausages, which turn out to be curried, but steak is nice washed down with glass of cab-sauvignon. Get charts out to decide where to go next.

ENGINEERS REPORT TO BRIDGE

Captain,

You may know that on this day 200 years ago, Scientists at the CERN Collider Laboratories in Switzerland, presented the first evidence for the existence of the Higgs Boson

This of course provides the basis for our transporter system. By neutralising the Higgs Boson field we can create matter without mass. This can then be converted to radio frequency and transmitted by a conventional laser beam to the selected location. Of course you need a T-Mobile dongle with plenty of credit to achieve this.

Scotty

Scotty,

Thanks, we are now entering an unexplored region of the Galaxy and will need to conserve power. No more beaming up Dutch Apple tart for the time being.

Jim

CAPTAINS LOG ENTRY No 4

Tuesday 3rd July

Today we head over to the remotest outpost of civilisation as we know it - Ooltgensplaat. We first discovered this after being stuck in a lock for 4 hours and needing a refuge for the night. Its up a very narrow and shallow tree lined cut but eventually opens out to reveal some decent moorings and clubhouse. There is nothing in the village except a supermarket and Chinese take away. Nearby is the strange outpost of Prinz Fredrick's Fort. It's a Napoleonic fort which has been transformed into a 'holiday village' by the accretion of a collection of sheds. We stumbled upon good blues band practicing here once but today the place is looking rather run down and the restaurant is closed. We return to the boat to do some jobs. The heads have been backing-up and the seals need replacing. I have a set on board as have been putting job off for weeks. It's a sod to do and is usually accompanied by much swearing. I usually hurt myself but only manage to stab myself once with a screwdriver this time; Sally manages to stop the flow of blood with a tourniquet and I complete the task with more swearing; surprisingly no leaks. Eat on board, salad followed by Dutch desert delicacy, Greeseemeel pudding, to which I have become addicted.

Wednesday 4th July

9.30 - Early start cast off and make way into big lock leading into the Hollandsch Diep. Emerge at 10.45 and have 15 mins to do the 1 mile to make it to the Haringvliet Brug for the 11.00 opening. Just make it, bridge goes up as we arrive and we hurry through hardly missing a beat. There is a light E breeze but not enough to make sailing worth while so we motor, suns come out, its hotting up and we peel off oilies and layers of jumpers. We are heading for Middelharnis, a small town off the Haringvliet. We moor alongside on the quay, its not very busy. We get the bikes out and cycle back down the canal to the entrance where they have made a little sandy beach. Its packed with kids splashing about, girls in bikinis disporting themselves and pretending to ignore the boys, mums with babies and grandparents with toddlers. There is a beach hut selling ice creams and snacks, Mum orders frikandel and chips, I have hamburger, delicious with usual dollop of mayonnaise on the chips. Later we sunbathe on the beach for an hour or so, reflecting that we are certainly the only English and probably the oldest!

Thursday 5th July

Usually my job to put kettle on for tea and get 8.05 forecast from Willi, today's my birthday so get tea in bed as special treat. Have nice day pottering around Middelharnis; buy new shorts and later visit the Italian restaurant for nice meal,

Friday 6th July

Very showery with thundery atmospheric disturbances. Another English boat arrives, only the second we have seen since arriving in Holland. We help them to moor, Tony and Marian in Wild Geese from Woodbridge. They join us later for G and Ts and we swap info about places to go.

Saturday 7th July

Even wetter, get stuck into new birthday book, coffee on Wild Geese a Sadler 29. agree eat together and visit El Pinochio again for pizza.

Sunday 8th July

Wake to thoroughly wet and windy morning. Had resolved to move on and nearly chickened out, but by lunchtime it had brightened up a bit and we decided to head over to Hellevoetsluis. some 6 miles away the other side of the Herringvliet. Windy, put jib up and get blown along at 5 knots. Just as we are entering the canal entrance to Hellevoetsluis there is a thunderstorm and we get drenched while mooring up. Walk through to marina to see Havenmaster to get berth assigned. He speaks excellent English and is very helpful. Bridge opens at 3.00 and we motor through to pick up berth, the Harbourmaster is on the pontoon to help us moor. Tie up, put kettle on, sun comes out and we gradually dry out.

CAPTAINS LOG ENTRY No 5

9th- 10th July

Hellevoetsluis is one of Netherlands fortified towns and was the home port of the Dutch navy in the 16th century. Where we are moored was the former dockyard and at the E end is a historic dry dock constructed by Jan Blanken in 1825 with a spectacular steam driven pumping mechanism smuggled from England. Several famous Dutch explorers we had never heard of set off from here apparently. The pumping station is no more but the dry dock has been restored and is still in operation today.

There is a small historic area around the dock but it's mainly modern housing with a covered shopping arcade to rival Bluewater. Weather has deteriorated and we spend a couple of days dodging the showers and sheltering from the fresh SW wind. Patronise the Greek restaurant on the quay. Excellent new shower facilities, mooring costs us €16.50 per day.

11th July

After extensive study of the Stroomatlas and HW tables for Hoek of Holland, Navigator advises that N-going tidal flow in the river Spui will start at 14.00. It can run at 2 knots so it's a good idea to go with the flow.

Morning arrives with heavy rain and strong winds but by lunchtime sun has come out and wind moderated a bit. We cast off and await the 13.00 bridge opening. Out into the Herringvliet with some trepidation but the wind is behind us so put up most of genoa and speed along at 5 knots. After 1 hour enter Spui and find tide is indeed in our favour (well done Mr Sulu). This is a delightful river meandering between meadows for 7 or 8 miles. We do it all sailing under jib, one of the nicest days we have had for a while. This brings us to the small town of Oud Beerland. where we head into the tiny harbour, the Harbourmaster directs us to a rather short pontoon but we moor up safely and wander into town for a beer and diet coke for you know who. Eat on board - ships stores and turn in. Heavy rain all night.

12th July

Again on Navigators instructions, depart at 10.00 to take the tide up the Oude Maas to Dordrecht a distance of some 12 miles. It's cool and cloudy but stays dry. There is indeed a strong current so make good time. Have to keep sharp lookout as there are many barges coming and going and need to keep well to starboard side of channel to keep out of their way. With 5 knots of boat speed do 7 knots over the ground. Suddenly the huge road/ railway

bridge at Dordrecht comes into view. We cut across the river to find the waiting pontoon as bridge only opens every 2 hours and we have an hour to wait. It's still windy with the wind blowing us off the pontoon which makes mooring tricky, but fortunately a Dutch couple take our lines to help come alongside. Several more yachts join us. Shortly before 13.05 we cast off and at 13.16 as if by magic first the road and then the railway track rise majestically into the air. We only have 4 minutes so hurry through. Shortly after the bridge in the shadow of the Cathedral is the entrance to the Nieuwe Haven marina. Four of us head in and after some persuasion the Harbourmaster who is waiting on the visitor's pontoon assigns us a box. Some confusion as find it is already occupied but moor next one which turns out to be OK for the 4 days we intend to stay.

CAPTAINS LOG ENTRY No 6

Sulu - we are entering a particularly wet area due to galactic jet stream, shall I put force field on to avoid hull damage.

Captain: No need, Scotty will activate cloaking apparatus (cockpit tent) and Bones will issue oilies and personal wetness deflecting device (umbrellas) to all crew.

DORDRECHT - is a lovely city, one of our favourite destinations. In the middle ages Dordrecht grew to be the most powerful mercantile city in Holland taking advantage of its location at an intersection of trade routes which were mainly over water. Trade took off when in 1299 city was granted rights to store and trade all goods transported by river. Warehouses and houses were built and the havens created, now filled with leisure craft. Fine houses line the Wijnstraat and Groenmart, reminders of their former occupants, wine sellers, timber merchants and owners of breweries and sugar refineries. It's particularly pleasant to sit outside one of the waterfront cafes drinking a glass of wine and watching the barges taking their cargos all over Europe; but not today. What we have come for is the Big Rivers Jazz and Blues Festival!

Some 12 different stages are created through the city and over 80 bands will play in a variety of styles, and it's completely free!

Friday 13th July - we do some chores then cycle into the Market place where a band called Inner Simplicity is playing some nice blues music. We then wander to the Grote Kerstuin where a band is supposed to be playing Beatles numbers but it's too loud. The Ashtray Nuts are more interesting playing modern jazz. Another group seem intent on playing as many notes as possible as loudly as possible in no particular order, I think its funk , the Dutch love it but its not our style. We find another good blues band with a girl singer with a great voice. Incidentally everyone is singing in English.

Saturday 14th July what a shame, it rains nearly all day. We manage to take shelter under an umbrella outside the Grand Cafe to listen to Jay Jays Border Jazzmen and Dixi Express which is more our style. We take in another couple of venues and enjoy some good music but are getting wet and cold. Return to the Grand Cafe, which turns out to be a bit like the Tardis, enormous inside and packed out. Waiter manages to find us a table we have excellent meal (€45).

Sunday 15th - bit brighter today Nice swing band Bruut but the Memphis Maniacs are a bit wild. Lovely girl country and western singer called Suzy Dexter, bit like Dolly Parton but sweeter voice and not so much in front. Amazing band called the Dudettes, billed as sex tits and rock and roll, powerful girl singer bit like Tina Turner but more in front. Finale is Queen tribute band from Italy; lead singer could be reincarnation of Freddy Mercury. Huge crowd but manage to creep in near front so Mum can see. Crowd goes wild with classics like Bohemian Rhapsody and final song ...We are the champions of the world... is very emotional. We look at each other and say 'the aged parents' at a rock concert... the kids will be proud of us!

All very good humoured, no roudiness, no missiles on roofs, handbag searches, crowd barriers or G4 staff in evidence, excellent weekend (and no mud)

Monday 16th July - all good things must come to an end and it is time to turn south and make our way homewards. Request opening of Iron Bridge from Harbourmaster at 8.55, Engelenburger Bridge from Dordrecht Central Control at 9.00 (channel 83), and emerge into Oude Maas. Wait 10 minutes for Dordrecht road/rail bridge to lift and head south down the Dordtsche Kil. The tide is against us so its slow going. Omens are not good; Willi predicts SW winds f5-6 and rain. By time we get to Hollandsch Diep its starting to drizzle and there is a stiff breeze on the nose. We press on and lock through into the Volkerak. Here the wind has really got up and we record 30 knots (f 7). Even slower going but we continue on to reach Oude Tonge by 16.30. Its pretty full but find space on canal side. Moored with some difficulty in pouring rain. and retreat to shelter of cabin for warmth and sustenance

CAPTAINS LOG ENTRY No 7

Tuesday 17th July - Bright start but its windy (SW 5-6). Cast off and motor short distance to Krammer Sluice. Lock through. Put sails up with 2 reefs in and 3 rolls in genoa and manage to sail close hauled into the stiff breeze down the Keeten but its hard going as need to tack and dodge barges. Moody Madam is not particularly close winded being bilge keeled and well loaded with cruising gear and we are overtaken by several yachts making much better progress to windward which depresses us. However persevere and eventually make it to lock into Verse Mere. Soon thereafter arrive at Delta Marina. This is a big modern marina but has the advantage that we get 50% discount as moored in Gillingham, which is member of Trans Europe Group. See Harbourmaster in office and are assigned nice berth. Eat in their nice restaurant but are feeling knackered so early night.

Wednesday 18th July - thoroughly nasty day, wet and windy (f 6-7); decided not to go anywhere today. Manage to get little bike ride into village and to investigate big holiday camp on shores of Verse Mere. Would be lovely if weather was better. Retire to boat get books and crocheting out.

Thursday 19th July - still windy but need to move on as can see fine weather window developing for the weekend and need to be nearer coast. Willi says wind will go down but this doesn't happen until the evening. Cast off at 12.00, blast of wind hits us in face as we emerge from the shelter of the marina but make reasonable speed as it's not rough. Brief lull enables us to lock through at Vere without hitting anything in the lock and we proceed down canal to Middelburg where we are greeted by Brian's friendly face soon after we moor (pity he didn't arrive a bit sooner, he could have taken our lines). Anyway see Harbour Mistress and are assigned berth in the basin at the back of the harbour which is very peaceful.

CAPTAINS LOG ENTRY No 8 – HOMEWARD BOUND

Set course for home Mr Sulu

Friday 20th July 2012

Last shopping expedition to replenish supplies, then at 13.15 through bridge, stopped at Jos Boon Floating Chandlery shop to take on (white) diesel (57 litres; €79 - not bad for 5 weeks motoring) and headed back down the canal to Vlissingen. Through the big sea lock and finally emerged into the open sea at 16.00. Always get sense of freedom. We were heading over to Breskens to be poised for early start the next day. Took best part of an hour crabbing across the tide to enter marina at Breskens. Harbourmaster is on end of reception pontoon and directs us to berth. This is a big marina with a nice Clubhouse restaurant, but decided to eat on board. Then joined by our friends from Wild Goose for drinkies and agreed strategy for next day.

Saturday 21st July

Set off at first light, 05,30 to take first of ebb out of Westerscheldt. Beautiful bright morning. By 7.00 a fresh northwesterly set in and we put sails up to enjoy fast sail down as far as

Zeebrugge. As usual it seemed to take ages to get past the huge harbour. Once past we altered course to head down Belgian Coast. This brought the wind on our stern and in order to keep speed up started engine, we wanted to make it to Dunkerque if possible for crossing next day when the winds were forecast to fall light. We carried on down the coast, bit rolly-polly with the wind behind us but made good progress and reached Dunkerque just as tide turned. Headed in and tied up on the visitor pontoon at the Port Grand Large marina. Arrived at 14.15, the trip had taken 9 hours to do 50 miles. After we had rested a bit, got bikes out and cycled into the seaside resort of St-Malo-les-Bains. Holidaymakers were out in force on the promenade as it was fine evening. We eat in one of our favourite restaurants, 'Bistro de la Plage' which was one of the few buildings left still standing after the war. Excellent meal to mark our last day in foreign parts.

Sunday 22nd July

9.00 (back on BST) said goodbye to our friends on Wild Goose, cast off our lines and headed for England. Hot, sunny and as predicted not much wind. Just the sort of conditions I like! Rather uneventful trip, dodged a couple of tankers but white cliffs of Dover eventually came into sight and then Thanet loomed on the horizon. Our old friends the Richborough cooling towers (conspic) which used to be a good landmark are of course now demolished. Eventually fetched the Goodwin Knoll and headed into Ramsgate arriving at 17.15, it had taken us 8 hours to do the 40 miles logged but please to be back in home waters.

Monday 23rd July

Cast off Ramsgate and headed north. Suddenly alarm went off - panic - this has never happened before in all our years of boating. Stopped engine, cleaned, engine water intake filter, bit gungy but not blocked. Restarted engine and checked that hot water was coming out of exhaust, seemed OK so carried on. Off Viking Bay got text from Daughter who had just arrived on coach outing with our two Granddaughters. We could see them running down the beach and faintly small voices carried across the water shouting 'Grandad...' They were very excited and could boast to all the other kids about it. Pressed on to Longnose the headed down Kent coast. Wind was a SW 4-5. Moody Madam was romping along at 7 knots with the favourable tide. Safely through the new buoage at Cooperas and cracked on sailing all the way into the Medway and down as far as Stangate where we planned to anchor for the night - the best sail we had all holiday. Dropped sails and started engine - panic as alarms gone off again. Limped over to find spot to anchor and dropped anchor. Celebrated our return to home waters with stiff G and T Had another look at engine and discovered that one of the arms had broken off impellor. Fortunately had spare for just such an eventuality. Fitted spare, fired up engine, checked exhaust, all well! Shortly joined by Swiss Miss who had got wind of our homecoming, for a convivial evening at anchor enjoying the peculiar charms of Stangate creek.

Tuesday 24th July

Cast off from Swiss Miss after lunch and made way up Medway under jib, by 16.30 we were safely moored on our berth in Gillingham Marina.

The end of an excellent holiday

CAPTAINS REPORT TO STARFLEET COMMAND

Gentlemen, I am able to report mission accomplished and safe return to base. Have discovered a highly advanced civilisation who live in a strange watery world, much of which lies below sea level. There is a sophisticated system of interconnected waterways plied by a variety of waterborne craft. On land the natives have become adept at using strange mechanical devices which require them to balance on two wheels and propel themselves forward with their feet. Able to advise that the people who inhabit this land are friendly, communication is surprisingly easy and the food is good (particularly a substance referred to as Dutch Appletart which has been extensively studied). Recommend further visit.