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## A PIONEERING SAILING TOUR...

SIX LINNSEN YACHTS WERE MOORED IN ROOMPOT MARINA, READY TO GO. IT WAS FRIDAY 12 JULY AND A STIFF WIND HAD BEEN BLOWING ALL WEEK. WE STOOD ON THE JETTY, RATHER WORRIED, WONDERING WHETHER THE CROSSING TO LOWESTOFT THE NEXT DAY WOULD BE GOING AHEAD AFTER ALL. HOWEVER, ONE OF THE MEMBERS OF OUR GROUP – AN EXPERIENCED SAILOR – WAS POSITIVE ABOUT THE WEATHER AND WHEN TOUR LEADER ALEXANDER JONKERS ARRIVED A LITTLE LATER, WE COULD ALREADY SEE IT IN HIS FACE... THE TOUR TO THE SOUTH-EAST COAST OF ENGLAND WAS GOING AHEAD!

### THE GROUP MEMBERS AND THEIR EXPERIENCE AT SEA

Our group consisted of 14 people, including our tour guide. Two of the skippers had a navy background and two had experience of sailing on the sea. For one couple, it would be their first time and we had some experience of the Wadden Sea, the Baltic and the German Bight. The skippers formed themselves into a weather team and a navigation team. Every day, we held a pow-wow on one of the boats, which – as well as being informative and in-

structive – was very pleasant. We kept in touch by VHF when we were crossing shipping lanes and when porpoises and seals were spotted. Alexander checked by VHF every two hours during the crossing to see how things were going with the crews and their boats.

### THE NORTH SEA

The North Sea is, on average, 94 metres deep but south of the Dogger Bank it is usually less than 50 metres in

depth. The North Sea is the link connecting Europe to other world markets. An increasing number of pleasure craft visit the North Sea. Together with the neighbouring English Channel, it is the busiest shipping area in the world.

**DAY 1-2 - LOWESTOFT**

The crossing to Lowestoft took 14 hours (95.6 nautical miles). We departed with the tide at 6.30 am, heading for the Roompotsluis lock, and a little later we were sailing on the North Sea. Once past the wind turbines, drilling platform and shipping lanes, we found ourselves – just six yachts – in an enormous expanse of water. The sun coloured the water blue and the wind was force 3-4. Just off Lowestoft, we encountered a fog bank. The weather team had already prepared us for this and we sailed in straight-line formation, as agreed. As we were sailing close together, big ships would be better able to spot us on their radar. All of us were also using radar, which was a very instructive experience. Fifteen minutes later, just before we reached Lowestoft, the fog lifted and we had a fantastic experience, arriving in England on our

**SAILING ON TIDAL RIVERS ON THE SOUTH-EAST COAST**

*The south-east coast of England is a fantastic cruising area with fascinating and often protected natural features, home to water birds, seals, porpoises and dolphins, authentic English towns and fishing villages and an exciting way of sailing in a tidal area. The rivers are fed by rainwater and dredged to keep them accessible to shipping. The river estuaries are subject to the action of the tide. Thresholds of sand and gravel are formed in river estuaries by waves, currents and storms. The thresholds are moved by wave action. The river estuaries are signposted by buoys and it is advisable to follow the buoyage closely.*

**MARINAS**

*In the rivers you will find harbours with moorings where you can anchor as well as inland harbours. To prevent beaching at low tide, there are thresholds in front of the harbour entrance. In other cases, the harbour will have a pontoon jetty in the deepest part of the river. Water taxis are available to take you ashore. If your trip depends on the tide, you wait until high tide before crossing the threshold into the harbour. You sail out when the tide is lower but you still have the current with you. An advantage of this is that you are not held up by locks and bridges. Ipswich is the only place that has a lock.*

own boat! We sailed into the port of Lowestoft. We moored in Lowestoft Marina, where we were the guests of the Norfolk and Suffolk Yacht Club. We used our well earned day of rest to look around Lowestoft. This port city is situated on the most easterly point of the United Kingdom, 110 miles north-east of London. Lowestoft has a long history in the fishing and energy industries and is a traditional seaside resort.

**DAY 3 – RIVER ORE**

We set off for the river Ore. At high tide, we crossed the gravel threshold and sailed into the river estuary. This is Orford Ness, a long, wide, vegetation-covered gravel spit on the Suffolk coast. During the Cold War, it was the site of a secret radar station used as part of the country's defence against low-flying aircraft. It is now a magnificent nature reserve, protected by the National Trust. The reserve is 2,230 hectares in area and consists of flint gravel, tidal rivers, mudflats, sandbars, salt marsh, reed beds and tidal marshes, which makes it an ideal habitat for many

The crossing to Lowestoft



Lowestoft Marina





*Tide Mill Woodbridge*



*Pin Mill- The Butt & Oyster pub*

species of birds, Chinese water deer and hares. The size of this reserve fluctuates as gravel is washed ashore and washed away by waves. The nearby town of Orford probably used to have a sea view. We dropped anchor in these magnificent surroundings! We jumped into our dinghies and visited Orford.

#### **DAY 4 – RIVER DEBEN – WOODBRIDGE**

The Tide Mill in Woodbridge is a rare example of a tide mill in which the wheel still turns. It is a reflection of the early Industrial Revolution. The reservoir next to the mill is now a yacht harbour. We spent the night there after first dining in a nearby restaurant, The Table.

#### **DAY 5-6 – IPSWICH**

It was early in the morning when we crossed the threshold of Tide Mill Yacht Harbour and headed for Ipswich. There are a number of yacht clubs along the river Deben and we passed through a row of boats at anchor which was several kilometres long. It looked like a guard of honour for our “Linssen fleet”.

We passed the Felixstowe Ferry and the Harwich – Hook of Holland shipping lane without a problem. Halfway up the river Orwell, we moored at Woolverstone Haven

*Brightlingsea harbour*



for a wonderful walk to Pin Mill, a hamlet and sheltered anchorage for barges. Pin Mill has many small industries (sailmaking, malting and brickmaking) but is now best known for The Butt & Oyster pub and yacht and dinghy sailing. We enjoyed a delicious lunch at this beautiful spot.

It was then time to return to the boats. We sailed under the Orwell Bridge (the first and only bridge of this trip). It took a further half hour to reach the lock at Ipswich, the capital of the county of Suffolk. Ipswich is one of the oldest towns in England (7th - 8th century) and is important for the North Sea trade. Present-day Ipswich still has a working port handling several million tonnes of freight per year. Recently, the city has had an extensive makeover, especially along the waterfront, and is now a residential and commercial centre. It also has two marinas, Ipswich Dock and Neptune Marina. Neptune Marine gave us a really warm welcome! Each boat had a place reserved for it by name in the marina.

The Linssen fleet had already received a lot of attention during the trip. But in Ipswich we often had to provide information on the quality and price of the yachts. English photograph albums will probably be packed with pictures of the Linssen yachts this year.



**DAY 7 – WALTON BLACKWATERS – TITCHMARSH MARINA**

After a day of rest in Ipswich, we passed the river Orwell and crossed the shipping lane to Walton Blackwaters. Walton Blackwaters is a paradise for animals and has really beautiful scenery. It is a world governed by the tides, half swamp and half sky, with almost nothing to indicate where the horizon is. It is home to two species of seal, the common seal and the Atlantic seal. Here, the common seals are a reddish colour because of the iron oxide in the mud.

Titchmarsh marina is on the Walton Channel, a channel with strong currents. It appeared that the majority of (English) boats in Titchmarsh Marina seldom ventured beyond the Walton Channel. It was therefore essential to take a careful look at the depth and tide there. The buoyage, which was almost square on, indicated the route and despite the fact that we followed it closely we ran aground on the gravel when sailing out the next day. A propeller was damaged but fortunately we were able to continue on our way.

**DAY 8 – RIVER COLNE – BRIGHTLINGSEA**

The small but fascinating river that we sailed on this day was the river Colne. Our destination was Brightlingsea, a coastal resort on a spit of land in the river estuary. The river estuary is mostly tidal and, at low tide, there is a one metre high threshold in front of the harbour. A specially assigned harbourmaster in a rubber dinghy piloted us through the fairway and led us boat by boat to one of the

two pontoon jetties in Brightlingsea harbour. We went ashore by water taxi to explore the town. The traditional industry in Brightlingsea used to consist of shipbuilding and oyster fishing. Industry has declined so that it is now mainly a dormitory town for Colchester. On the quay was the only remaining fisherman, who was selling fresh fish and shellfish.

At the entrance to Brightlingsea Creek is Westmarsh Point. There we saw Bateman's Tower, built in 1883 by John Bateman as a recuperation area for his daughter. The tower is regarded as a folly and is currently managed by Colne Yacht Club. The tower is accessible to the public during yacht races. There is a campsite, a (dated) open air swimming pool and a long line of colourful beach huts on the point.

**DAY 9 – RIVER CROUCH – BURNHAM**

The River Crouch is a river that flows through the entire county of Essex. Burnham-on-Crouch is on its northern bank. The town used to be a very important place, as a ferry port and fishing port with its famous oyster beds. The arrival of the railway in 1887 boosted commercial and agricultural activities and a foundry was built. This benefited boatyards and local traders. The River Crouch became an ideal venue for the growing boating hobby, which it still is, even today. We moored in Burnham Yacht Harbour, situated in the unspoiled Dengie marshes, in the late afternoon. There is a scenic walk/cycle path to

*Ramsgate*



the town centre from which you can enjoy a wonderful view of the beached boats and the sea as you pass along.

#### DAY 10 – RAMSGATE

It would be a fantastic trip across the wide Thames estuary and the North Sea. The wind was force 3 – 4 and there was little shipping around. We crossed the two sandbars at high tide. It was a great experience sailing past the cliffs to the Royal Harbour in Ramsgate.

The old town towered over the harbour and, at low tide, we sailed into the narrow fairway towards the long jetty where all the boats moored. All around us was sand and gravel and a fantastic view of Ramsgate. About an hour later we climbed the steps to the Royal Temple Yacht Club and held our last pow-wow there. We wrote in the visitors' book that we were there with six Linszen yachts. We had our last meal in England in an Italian restaurant. Ramsgate is described as a blend of maritime heritage

and architectural finery. Most of us would willingly have spent another day there but we had to leave early in the next day for Blankenberge.

#### DAY 11 – NORTH SEA – BLANKENBERGE (BELGIUM)

We left Ramsgate at 8 am. It was special seeing the sunrise at sea from there! It was 10 hours sailing, a force 3 wind and there was hardly any shipping traffic to be seen. Far behind us, lightning flashed now and again and we were instructed to go inside if it came close. However, we stayed ahead of the thunder and lightning and it became a wonderful trip again. The familiar Belgian coast came into view and we attracted a lot of interest as we sailed into the Royal Scarphout Yacht Club in Blankenberge at 5:30 pm.

It was the end of a wonderful journey...



*Looking back on a fantastic trip, I think how suitable the title “pioneering sailing tour” is in many respects. When Jan told me last year that he would like to go on this tour, I thought, “Okay, but without me”. I expected to be seasick and suffer a lot as a result of sailing at sea. Because Jan wanted so much I eventually agreed but my share in the preparations was mainly, “How do I survive a 14-hour sea crossing?” How different it all turned out and how happy I am that I went along!*

*Alexander reassured me, “A good skipper will never say that the weather at sea was against him but that he depart-*

*ed in good weather and stayed in port in bad weather”. Alexander sailed on all the boats, gave advice where necessary, carried out minor repairs and if necessary simply switched boats on the open sea. We were greatly affected by the weather. We had glorious weather from start to finish. The wind was up to force 4 during the crossing and between 3 and 6 during the entire trip, peaking at force 8. This meant that we were able to travel without hold-ups and according to plan. We discovered that sailing at sea and in tidal rivers was a very beautiful and exciting experience. You learn what navigation is really about and you feel at one with the elements.*

*When undertaking a trip like this for the first time, it is pleasurable and safe to travel with a group. We learned a lot from the experienced skippers and skippers' wives, some of whom had made the crossing many times before.*

*Trudie Rutten*



TIPS-TIPS-TIPS

**SEASICKNESS**

*For me, this was the reason that I had doubts about going to sea and as far as I know this is the same for many people. Seasickness is caused by the body's sense of balance being disturbed by the rocking of the boat. Sensitivity to seasickness differs from person to person.*

**TIPS FOR PREVENTING SEASICKNESS**

- adjustment – the body must be given time to adjust to the rocking motions (yawing). It is therefore not advisable to go to sea direct from home.
- avoid coffee, carbonated drinks, heavy meals and acidic fruit; eat easily digestible meals and keep to normal mealtimes
- avoid stress
- avoid chills
- stay interested in what is going on around you, keep busy, take charge of the steering
- stay in the fresh air and keep your eyes fixed on the horizon.

**MEDICATION TO PREVENT SEASICKNESS/TRAVEL SICKNESS**

*Different medications are available but read the pack insert first because some medications can have unpleasant side effects.*

- I myself have had good experience with Bach flower remedies, a natural remedy without side-effects. The Bach flower “Scleranthus” has a positive effect on the sense of balance and “Bach Rescue Remedy” has a calming and soothing effect.
- Acupuncture wristbands (SeaBand) can relieve symptoms of seasickness.

**THE SAILING ROUTE**

- Roompot Marina
- Lowestoft- Norfolk and Suffolk Yachtclub
- River Ore – Orford
- River Deben –Woodbridge
- River Orwell – Woolverstone – Ipswich Marina
- Walton Blackwaters – Titchmarsh Marina
- River Colne – Brightlingsea Marina
- River Crouch – Burnham on Crouch
- River Chrouch - Ramsgate – Royal Harbour
- Blankenberge (België) - RSYB

**DURATION OF THE TOUR**

11 days including 2 rest days – total distance: 320 nautical miles.

**PREPARATIONS**

Tour guide and Linszen yachts dealer Alexander Yonkers provided us with a folder containing information on the tour, a list of essential books and maps and points to note for the preparations for the sailing tour at sea.

**BOOKS AND MAPS**

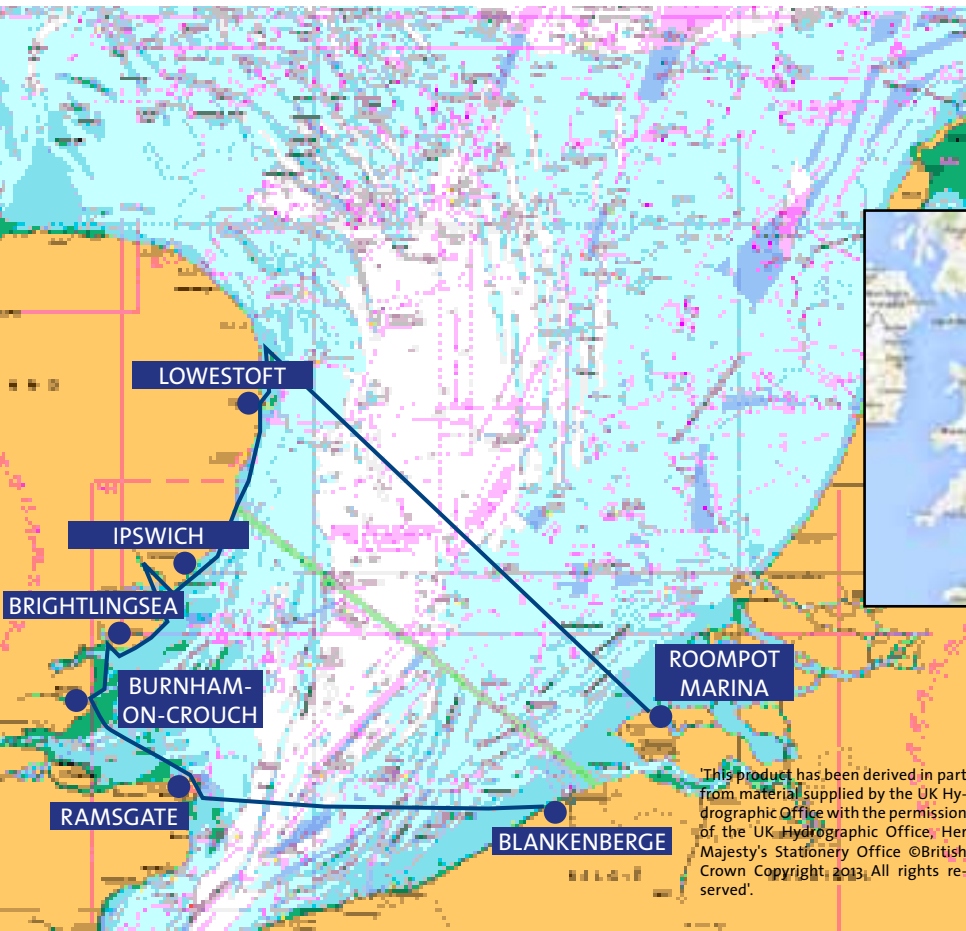
The correct, up-to-date maps (electronic and paper). The current ANWB Wateralmanak, parts 1 & 2 and Reeds Nautical Almanac (mandatory). Aids: extra hand-held compass, compass, calipers, ruler and pencil. Recommended reading: Vaarwijzer De Engelse Oostkust (author A. Valk, ISBN 9789064104312, Gottmer Uitgevers groep bv)

**SAFETY**

Lif jackets, liferaft, flares, lifelines on deck, additional anchor and line, seasickness medication, meals that are easy to prepare and sufficient drinking water.

**THE YACHTS**

Of the six yachts that took part, four were equipped with stabilisers and a second engine. Stabilisers reduce the yawing of the boat by as much as 90%, which makes sailing at sea much more comfortable. However, the fact that having stabilisers is not a precondition for sailing at sea was borne out by the two remaining boats that made the crossing to England (several times) with no complaints.



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