

The Final Voyages of SHADOWMERE, A 1979 Hallberg Rassy 41 Ketch



The Log of 2022

Ian and Shirley McCrum

Shadowmere's Final Journey(s)

Well, the best laid plans... Shirley and I had wanted to cruise the Azores in 2020 but Covid scuppered that idea. Poor old Shadowmere was grounded - ashore for 3 years after crossing the Atlantic in May 2019. She stayed ashore until May the 4th, 2022 when I returned with Nick Butler and John Henshaw to bring her home.

I had managed to visit her each year to check everything was ok, no cockroaches or mould! but the sprayhood shredded due to thread weakened by UV, the domestic batteries died of old age and I ended up needing new injectors in the engine. Other minor problems abounded of course but that is part of yachting!

I had to give an anticipated launch date each year despite covid and I had always given the date as May the fourth, this is easily remembered (by me) as it is Starwars Day. If you don't see why, ask a Starwars fan. I like memory aids and always book dentist appointments for 14:30 hours. (Tooth Hurty in the afternoon...) Age does diminish memory, now, what was I saying...

Shadowmere was booked to launch at the beginning of May and we planned around that date. I flew out on April 24th, Nick flew out on the 2nd May and John came out on May 6th.

The first three days of my visit had really bad weather, which was a surprise, but 2022 ended up with bad weather most of the month - the Azores high might have been over Iceland and the Icelandic lows came down to be over the Azores. This is actually close to the truth as there was a North Atlantic Oscillation happening as a weather event.

I got most things checked out though, I had meant to service the winches, I had written this down on one of my many "Things to do" lists. I lost the list though but was happy I could spin them around by hand. This proved to be a mistake as once under load they misbehaved, I belatedly recalled one winch gave trouble on my earlier voyage and it turned out that it had a damaged pawl. The other winches had the usual hardened grease laced with black volcanic dust.

The days before launch were enjoyable, at least when the weather was benign, most days after the first three were ok and Nick and I even managed a couple of swims in the bay. We walked up to the supermarkets each day, had a cheap coffee and Pastel da Nata and bought the heavier items to lug back to the boat. This invariably involved cases of beer or six packs of UHT milk. The beer and the milk lasted well, I was still using them a week after landing in Ireland. We also found a rather nice Portuguese red wine at 2.29 Euros a bottle. We ended up with 13 or 14 bottles on board and as I normally only allow one drink a day I thought these should last. As captain, I did relent and allow double rations so lunch underway involved a sandwich, beer and crisps and a choice of beer or wine with the evening meal. No drunks were harmed in the making of this voyage.

On dry land, I had tried to start the engine with the inlet water cooling pipe pushed into a barrel of fresh water and noticed the cooling water started flowing and then abruptly stopped. I phoned Adriano, the (very good) diesel mechanic who had fitted new injectors and ran the engine last. He came and fitted my spare impeller, he used gasket cement

and we were unable to run things after fitting as it needed to harden. The old impeller had some tears in its fins but no missing rubber, it had been poorly fitted when the engine was built and had been rubbing on the cover plate.

Two days later we launched and the engine had the same problem, Adriano came back and sucked and puffed through various pipes, I did ask him if my exhaust elbow was ok (they can soot up) and was the heat exchanger blocked/gummed up. "No" he said " very clean exhaust and very forceful flow from the heat exchanger" he made vague reference to "airlock" but I am not sure what he did to clear the problem. A week later when the fault recurred I was most puzzled but did get to the bottom of it.

Anyway, we launched and got ourselves to the marina pontoon and set about bending on sails and filling water tanks, checking gas and generally getting ready for sea. John arrived on a Friday along with more foul weather but we had a rather nice meal in a nearby restaurant called "Pescador" - recommended by Nick's taxi driver. Of course there is no guarantee that the restaurant owner is not the taxi driver's brother, or cousin but I can personally recommend it. The three of us had good fish stews - the house special and an Azorean speciality. The next day we played the tourist and got buses to circumnavigate the island with stops in Biscoitos and Angra.

On Sunday, we properly finished provisioning the boat with food (apart from the previously loaded beer, wine and milk) and finished getting ready for sea. I had been buying various tins of meat and these, along with the staple carbs of potatoes, rice, couscous, noodles and pasta in various guises would form the backbone of our diet, some fresh meat was also bought and some tinned vegetables as well as the sailors favourite of cabbages and onions - the only fresh produce that will last (more than a month). Azorean cheeses were available in rather large rounds and these lasted over the entire voyage (and then some) so all was good. I would have liked to have spam and corned beef on board but we could not find any.

On Monday we had an appointment with immigration (emigration?) at 10:30 and I also had to check out of the Marina. I completed paperwork with Paulo, the Marina Captiniere and then handed him a gift of the RCC Pilot book on the Atlantic Islands, he is featured on page 132 and described as being very helpful, which he is. A most kind man. He was tickled. Getting our passports stamped took all of 5 minutes and then we were free to leave. At 12:30 we departed under (working) engine and motored North for the next 20 hours.

I had downloaded 15 days of gibs at 3 hourly intervals - the weather is shown as a grid of wind arrows. These are accurate for 3 or 4 days and then indicative but I also had a good, if old, weatherfax machine on board that printed onto thermal paper and I could buy 50p weather forecasts for a single location using the satellite Garmin Inreach that Alan Doyle has lent me. The weatherfax proved invaluable.

The gibs; I showed these to John and Nick and outlined the strategy; go North for a day to get some wind, head East for 2 or 3 days before turning North to North-East. This avoided a string of depressions that were heading up the middle of the Atlantic and passing 3 or 4 hundred miles West of Ireland. By sailing East we could get into a more moderate wind stream to carry us up to the isles of Scilly. This proved a most prescient strategy as one of the lows deepened a few days later and became a rather severe

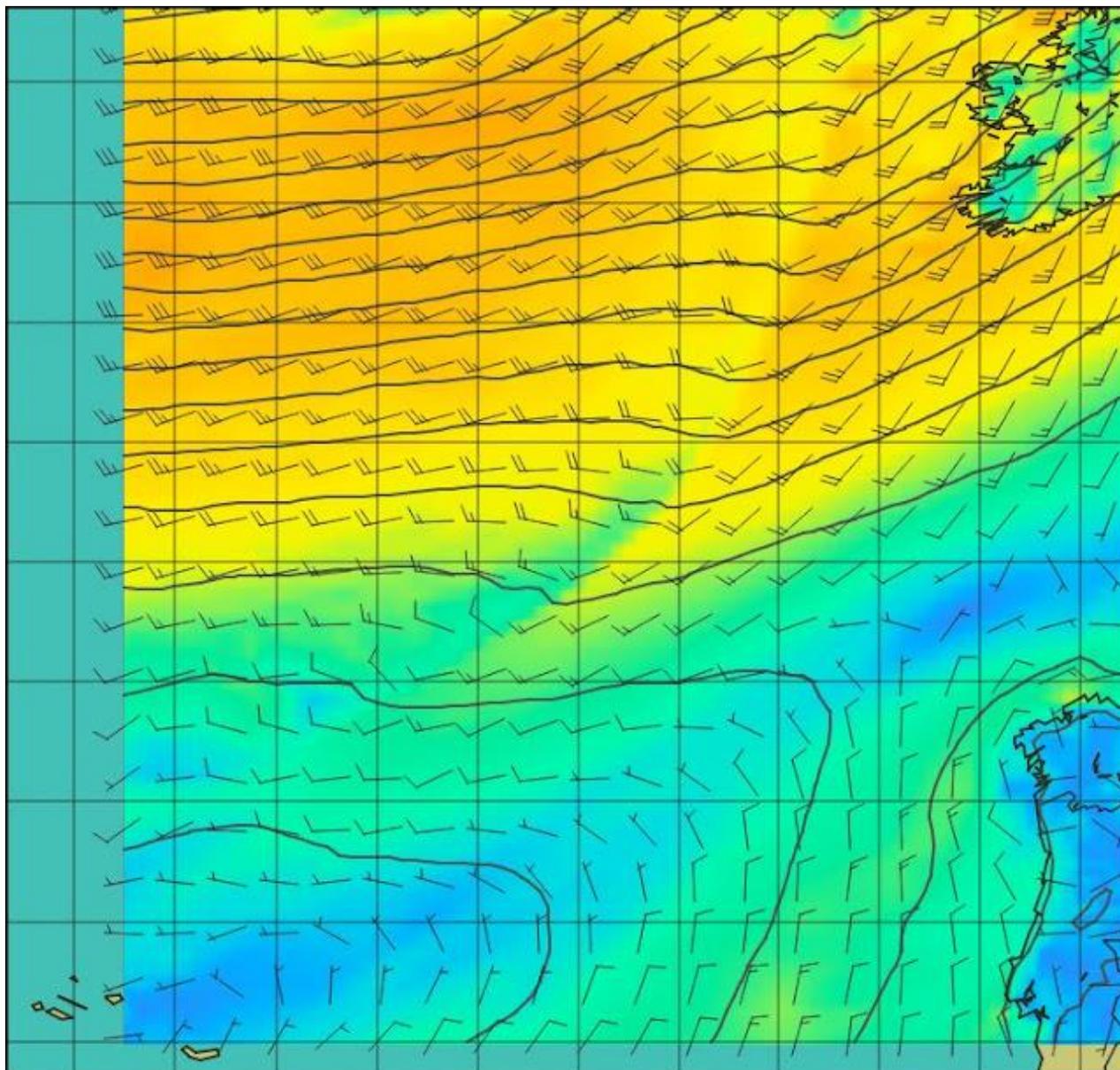
storm, by then I was watching it carefully as it had winds near its centre in excess of force 12 (one forecast said 66 knots+). The weathercharts showed it deepening and becoming rather large so three days in to the voyage it was clear we could not totally avoid the depression, I was into damage limitation mode.

Below is our actual route, as mapped out by the updates I uploaded to the web using the satellite Garmin Inreach gadget that Alan Doyle had lent me. A most useful gadget, never buy an epirb, buy one of these instead. I also downloaded weather forecasts from it, and



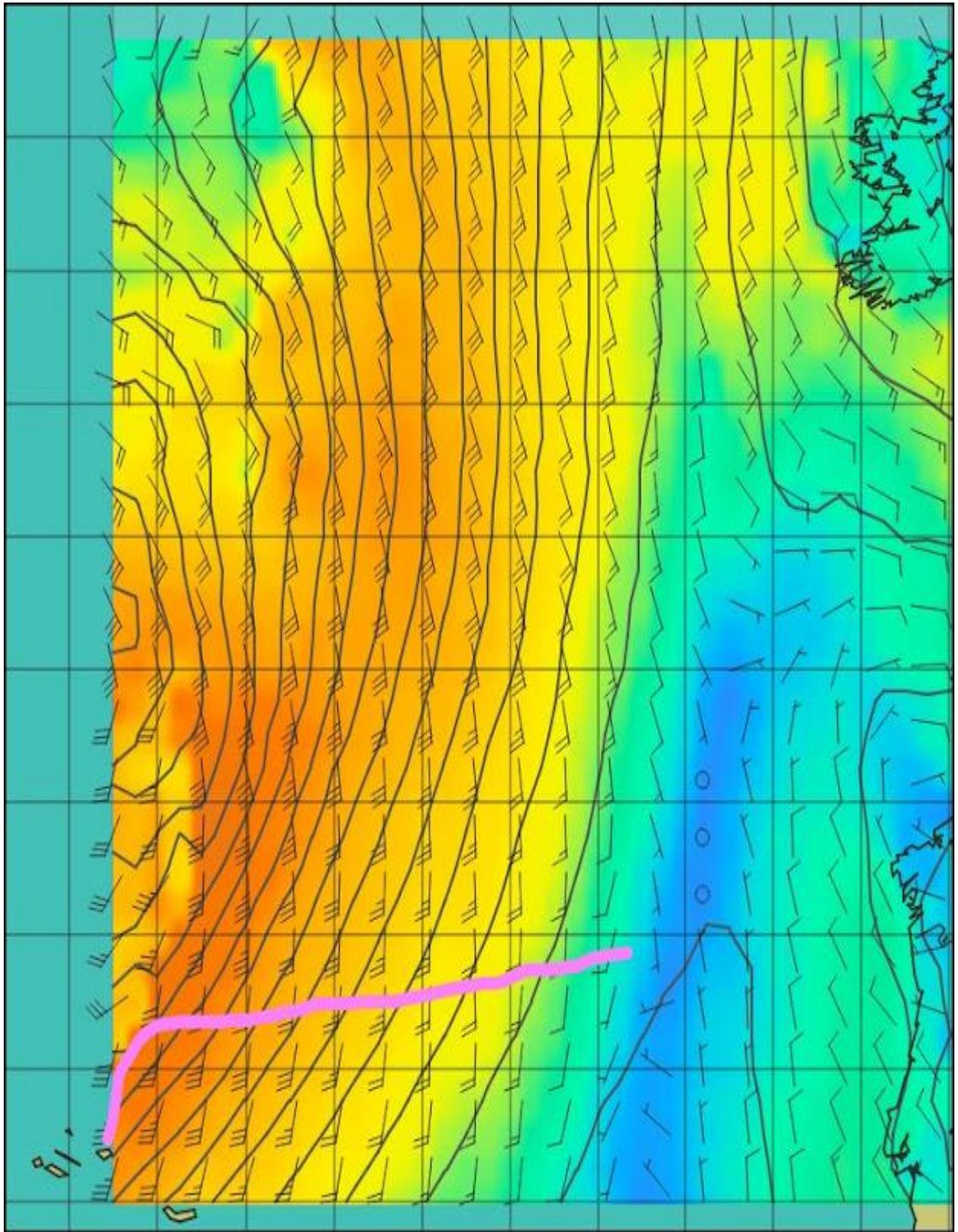
had a SMS dialogue with Alan for technical advice on the engine, thanks Alan.

Here are the sequence of Grib I downloaded before leaving. Followed by a weather chart showing how the grib put the centre of the big low further North than more up to date weatherfaxes. I downloaded faxes three times to see how real life was varying from predictions. Quite a bit, and the grib was wrong but it is a lot to expect them to

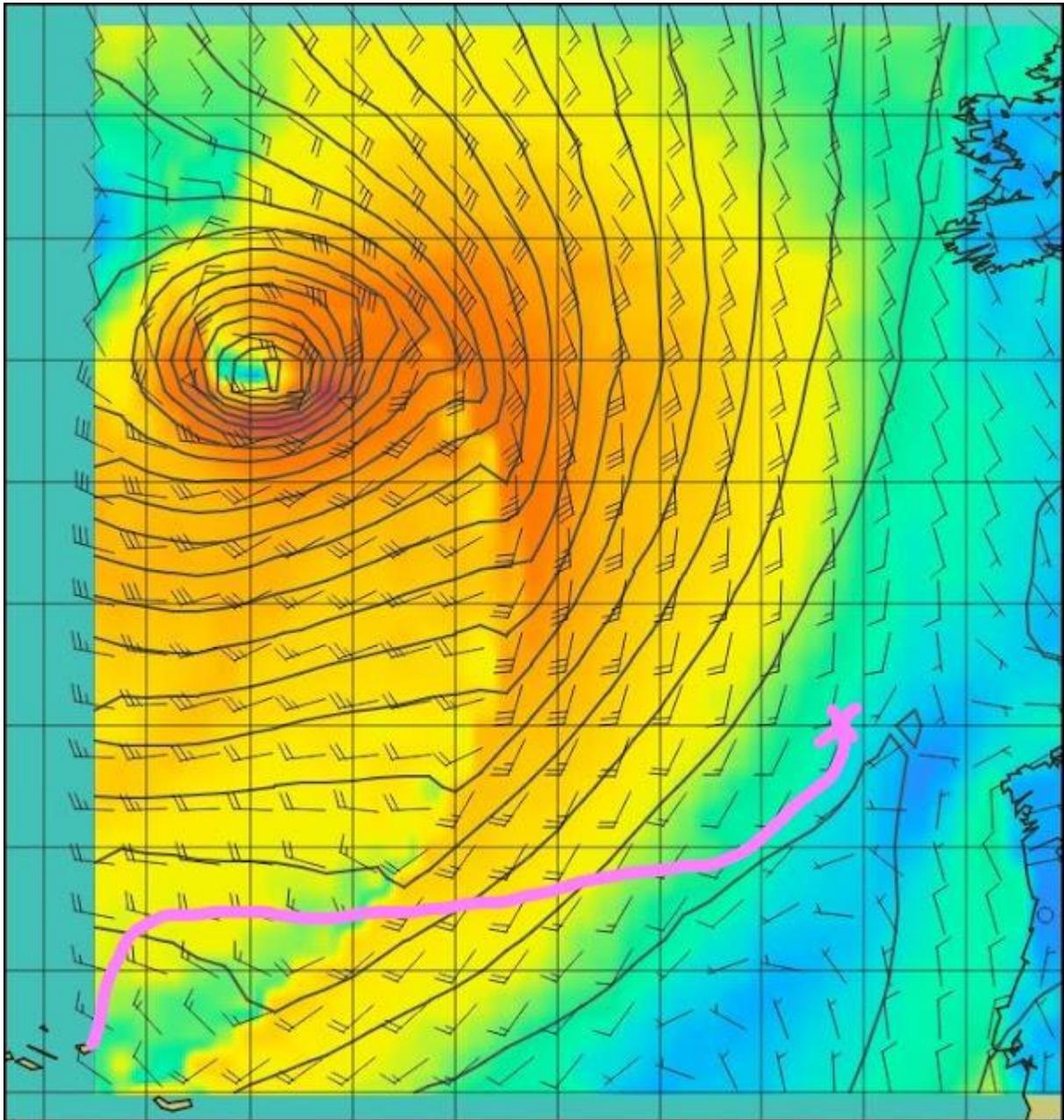


look a full week (or fortnight) ahead. Faxes only look 5 days ahead.

The Grib above is for the day we left, the one below for 5 or 6 days later, I planned to travel East along the purple line and that would keep us in the lighter winds, or heading for them anyway. At least that was the plan.

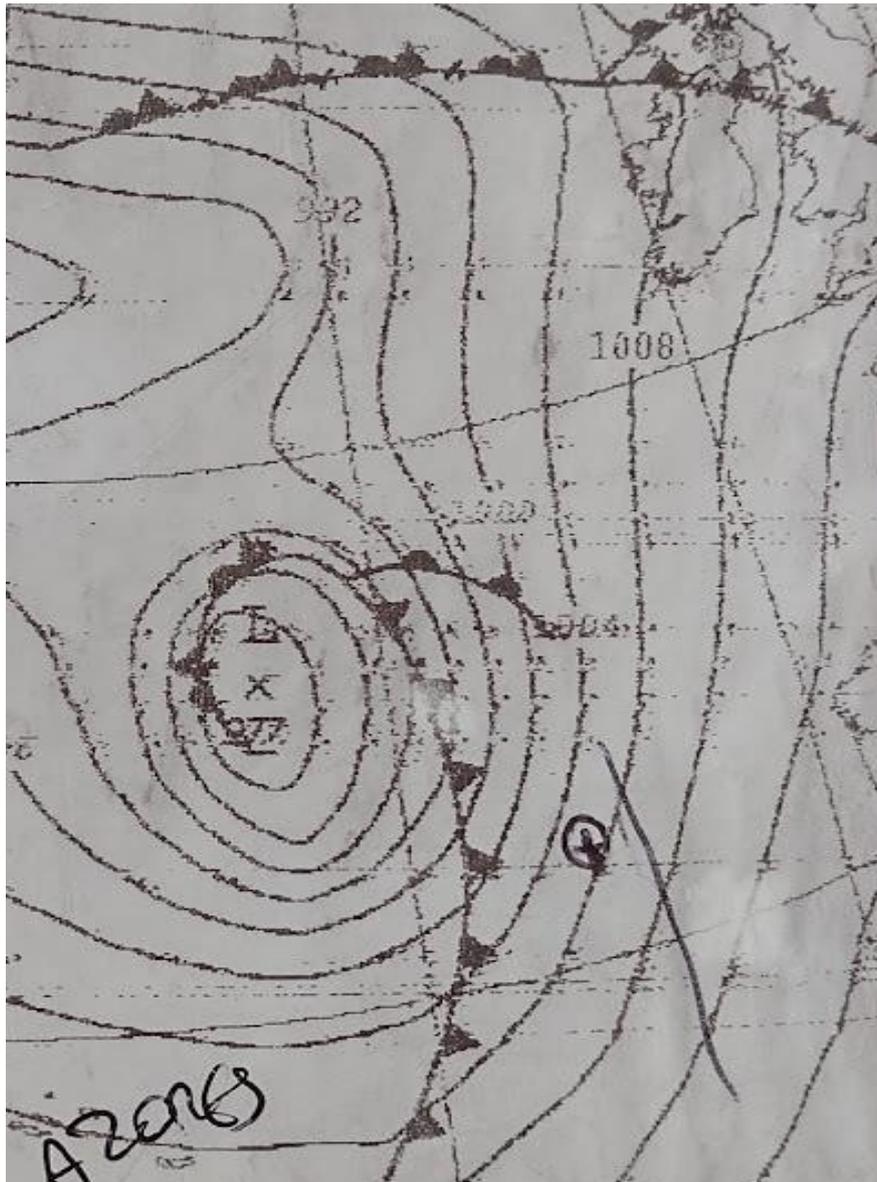


But we knew strong winds were coming. Note the gibs show the eye as just South and a long way West of Ireland. This was what the gibs were saying for Day 8 after our departure.

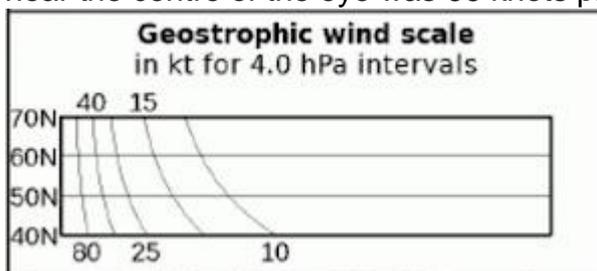


Had the centre of the low and its associated F11 (on this forecast) been as far North as the gibs predicted we would have had pleasant sailing...

The weatherfax below shows a 72 hour forecast and it shows the low West of Spain and 200 to 300 miles from the boats position and way south of where earlier forecasts placed it. By using a Geostrophic Scale you can crudely estimate wind strengths,



You measure the distance between isobars where you are and then place your dividers on the left hand axis of the chart below at the correct latitude. The geostrophic wind is at 500m and surface winds will be 70% of this figure but will gust up to the geostrophic value. Not very easy to read but clearly 40 to 50 knots. (by now, the actual forecast for near the centre of the eye was 66 knots plus.



I had hoped to be a 100 miles more to the South but the winds made it easier to sail where we did.

Our final route had a couple of days of bad weather, we had a trough pass over us in a couple of hours one morning with force 8 for a while, we saw the seas build but it wasn't too bad. The next day the lower part of the depression passed over us.

We got solid force 9 gusting 10 with seas of 20 to 30 feet. Had we been further South as I had planned I think it would have been F8 gusting 9. The windy bit lasted a few hours and it was all over in 12, although we had winds of force 6 for a few days. I think the wind anemometer peaked at 49 knots but I suspect it stops at 50. Also it does under-read when winds are from the aft starboard quarter (green 150 to 180) since I fitted the LED combined Tricolour and Anchor light - it is a rather tall unit and shades the anemometer.

Storms do not last forever, after storm clouds come blue skies...

When the wind was at its worst it was nice and sunny which always helps. Nick was on watch when it hit and he loved surfing down the waves, in fact he requested an extra hour on the wheel he was having so much fun. I normally try to be rigorous about watch times as rested crew are vital but I relented. I wish I had photographed him but my phone was buried in a waterproof box in the emergency grab bag along with our passports, my credit cards and the satellite communicator.

We had about 4 feet of foot showing in the number 2 genny as a storm jib and the boat travelled at a sedate 6 knots unless you went looking for surf. Going downhill Nick managed 11.3 knots and I was delighted that Shadowmere just went in a straight line, easy to control with no worrying gripes. A magnificent lady. A Hallberg Rassy 41 and she showed her pedigree. Later cross seas did cause lurches and rolls but this was only a problem down below, steering stayed straight and easy. The cockpit stayed dry.

Down below, moving about meant continually tensing muscles and using a lot of physical strength to hang on to the numerous and well placed handholds in the cabin. We did manage to read, cook, eat, pee, poo and sleep).

It is strange how leaving a boat alone for three years makes things break. I have mentioned the winches which I should have serviced. A catspaw of lines allowed winching and tying off the sheets in an effective way.

One of the pipes under the aft cabin sink leaked and made the water pump come on and dump the entire contents of the water tank into the bilges before we noticed. I had stored reserve water on board in 6L plastic bottles so with rationing we survived. No washing and dishes got polished with sea water and kitchen roll, we had a lot of toilet paper and kitchen roll on board.

One of the large tupperware boxes holding first aid had slid around on the cupboard shelf below the sink in the aft heads and this is what had dislodged a water pipe. Hidden consequences of storms!

The next casualty was the gas stove. It had a flame that was sometimes high, sometimes low and I thought if this stops working I would regret not having spam and corned beef on board as our diet might become tins of cold meat and water, bread and cheese. The next day the cooker stopped working. I had to go up to the bow and hang into the anchor

locker to swap the gas regulator. Luckily I had a spare, I recall thinking I should keep a camping stove on board as an alternative way of cooking.

I have used and loved Triangia meths (spirit alcohol) cookers for camping. I bought my first one when I was 18 and my second twenty years later so our kids could cook on one each on hiking expeditions. They take up little space. Mine was taking up little space in my garage back home. Note: always have two of everything. Two is one and one is none should be the mantra when ocean cruising.

I had issues with both foresails, the reefing line on the drum of the first leading sail (the number 1) was too short and I had to crawl up to the bow one windy day and wind more line around the drum. This is tedious work that is exhausting. Well, the hanging on is exhausting and wetting. The number two had jammed when I first hoisted it and I had gone up the mast in the marina to unwrap the halyard that had rolled onto the forestay, 3 or 4 turns. This happens if the angle between the halyard and the forestay is not in the recommended 15 to 20 degrees. I wondered if we had not tightened the halyard enough. The next time it jammed was as a storm was approaching but we wound in it enough to act as a storm jib. A few days later, rather than go up the mast, we ended up winding the sail around and around the foil by hand and got it furled. We then used the number 1 for the rest of the voyage. I can improve the angle by lifting the clew up six inches with a small strop but the problem needs further examination.

A major potential problem was the engine not starting when we were 48 hours away from the Azores. I contemplated returning, I also contemplated heading for mainland Portugal or NW Spain a few times over the next few days. I was worried about charging batteries until I discovered that the new replacement solar panels were producing lots of charge, we did not need to run the engine over the next two weeks for charging, although we did not run the chartplotter.

In fact the GPS feeding the chartplotter was not working, I fixed this a few weeks later by ordering a new cable junction strip - the NMEA 2000 system uses fancy cables, terminators and special junctions "T" pieces. I recognised it as an RS422 communications system used in some CAN systems in cars and could have jury-rigged something up as I had been an RS422 "expert" in my professional career but that would have been a bit nerdy and wasn't needed. The VHF radio has its own GPS and we could read our latitude and longitude from it and use paper charts for our navigation. The chart plotter still showed AIS targets and actual charts, we could move the cursor to where the radio GPS said we were and get some tactical use out of it.

It is handy having a second GPS - two is one and one is none, always have two of everything. In fact the AIS has its own GPS too, and of course the three mobile phones and the satellite communicator all have their own GPSs. I also had a GPS puck that could plug into my laptop. So we had eight GPSs on board! I also have two sextants as well. Always good to have spares

Back to the engine. After the weather settled I crawled into the engine room and methodically went through the system. Water comes in from the hull fitting, through a seacock, up to a water strainer which has a transparent (sealed) lid. From there it goes to the impeller and from there across to the heat exchanger. The output pipe from the heat exchanger goes up to just under the deck where there is a wee grey plastic thing, I think

it is an anti-syphon valve but it might have a different purpose in this installation. There is a spring loaded valve in it that allows air in if there is a vacuum or very low pressure in the pipes. At least I think that is what it does. The downward pipe from here goes to a T junction near the engine exhaust, one pipe of which has a half open valve; to adjust the percentage of water in each downstream pipe. Water goes into the exhaust and cools it, and the other pipe goes direct to the back of the boat, as does the cooled exhaust - there are two exits out the hull at the stern.

Water was not flowing. I removed a pipe from the outlet of the heat exchanger and briefly started the engine. Voluminous flow! this was a good thing... The next candidate for inspection was the wee grey plastic thing. I removed it, John the technician stripped and washed it and we found a tiny black spec of dirt (volcanic cinder?) that sometimes kept the valve partially open. Why this stopped the flow without flooding the engine compartment none of us knew. Perhaps water impellers can't pump uphill 4 feet unless some type of syphon assists the flow. (this is not an explanation anyone I have talked to actually believes so it is a bit of a mystery).

After a good clean and connecting it up the engine started perfectly with good water flow and has never faltered since. Note to self, clean it every year!

So there it is, a boat sitting doing nothing for three years has things go wrong. Carry spares, tools and miscellaneous bits of junk, duct tape and aralidite to allow jury rigging, and have a good Heath Robinson attitude. (The American version of Heath Robinson is called Rube Goldberg)

As to the journey, after the storm, the force sixes, the things breaking and getting fixed, the rest was uneventful. Storms never last and blue skies will return. We enjoyed many days of the 13 day passage it eventually took to get to Kinsale. It was a shock to the system to have to do coastal navigation when we finally arrived in Ireland. After nearly missing the entrance to Kinsale I downloaded charts and a Navionics app to my phone and resolved to repair the chartplotter.

Kinsale was a welcoming place, it, and like the rest of SW Ireland, has changed a lot in the last 40 years. Lovely wee cobbled streets, gift shops, cafes, restaurants and places serving Guinness, what's not to like.

Nick took his leave from John and I here, a bus to Cork airport linked into the airport to airport coaches and from Dublin airport to Belfast was straightforward. Public transport in Ireland works very well. All free for 65 year-olds too!

After a couple of days awaiting weather John and I headed East, we were boarded a few hours later by customs who inspected our passports, we had flown the Q-flag when entering Kinsale and reported our arrival to the harbourmaster and asked him to let customs know, he later said they were aware of our arrival and might or might not visit us. The customs guy was a very pleasant retired garda officer and I showed him the white powder I had sprinkled throughout the food lockers. It's Boric Acid to kill cockroaches I told him, best to be upfront about these things. He did not taste it or sniff it up his nose to check.

Our next stop was Dunmore East where we waited another couple of days before heading around the corner to Wicklow, Howth and Ardglass where I considered the voyage complete. It was good that John had started the voyage and ended the voyage, even if the gap in the middle was 5 years. We had left Ardglass marina in June 2017 and here we were back in June 2022. I had mixed feelings of course,

Looking back over the final journey it occurred to me that after leaving the Azores and getting good strong winds, Shadowmere wanted to come home.

She had picked up her skirts and ran and ran.

Having said that, there was one more journey to take; After getting her ready for sale, we move her to Belfast Marina and then she is sold, I get one more adventure – I help the new owner sale her to Saint Malo in September, 2022, we are blessed with good sailing winds;

Once safe in Ardglass, we empty her of all our personal debris and memories. This was a horrendous physical effort, never mind the emotional effect. I come across things I had forgotten were on board, old friends, my angle grinder, jigsaw, a couple of electric drills, a hot airgun, several soldering irons, spanners, spare spanners, mole wrenches (vice grips in American-speak - The Mole company in Birmingham (uk - not the American one) patented "Mole grips" in 1950) a cubic foot of stainless screws, bolts, nuts & washers, widgets and threaded rods, a small chain winch (a hand operated crane that can lift a ton). Crowbars and a sledgehammer. wow.

Of course there were rocks and shells taken from beaches (oops) as well as hats and t-shirts, woolly gloves, scarfs and balaclavas. My Tropical trousers and shirts (God bless Rohan and Craghoppers), I used to hand wash these and watch them dry in two hours under a tropical sun. Two years of my life were in the boat, and a dozen years before that. Every item has a history, a long history in fact.

The memories are not just mine of course. The years in the Baltic with Shirley, the family holidays, and the other crews who had been on board all carry many memories, happy, serene as well as exciting in both good and bad ways but memorable nonetheless. Shadowmere had touched over twenty people in a significant way over her time with us.

It took a week to empty her, the boat rose in the water when she became an empty shell. We did leave essential gear on board but managed to empty nearly all of her lockers, some of which I had not been in for years. There are a lot of lockers, and often the floor of a locker would lift up revealing more storage space. I just did a mental count and came up with 48 storage spaces.

The boat was in the small marina at Ardglass, a mere 6 miles from the house and my increasingly crowded garage - as I piled up bags and boxes on its floor and then piled up bags and boxes on top of those bags and boxes.

I would pack things up on the boat and Shirley would bring the car and trailer to the marina at the end of the day, invariably the tide was out and I had to push overladen wheelbarrows up the rather steep ramp, time and time again. Shirley cleaned and cleaned, scrubbed and polished every cupboard and surface until the 45 year boat could

have passed for a much newer boat. She did look well (both Shirley and Shadowmere). Shirley also gave her a lick of varnish.

We had a number of visitors to the boat, some had the dream but maybe were not quite ready for a world going cruiser, some just wanted a look, to kick the tires and admire the old lady. Each boat visit and tour was stressful for us; you show off your best and wonder what others think.

I had a visit from a Belgian family, one guy had sent his mother, father and wife as he was stuck in work. A serious enquiry, an HR41 was exactly what he wanted, he knew there were only 105 in the world ever built - we were hull number 85. I think he was most keen to buy her but it is always hard to judge the state of the teak decks from afar. The VAT rules after Brexit also caused some concern.

The VAT situation was particularly unusual because the issue was not just Britain versus Europe. The UK is comprised of GB and Northern Ireland. GB being England, Scotland and Wales. But Northern Ireland was sort of halfway between GB and Europe. It was in the customs union but not (fully) in the EU. I had taken advice from the legal experts consulting for the Cruising Association. In some ways the position was easier for an EU citizen to purchase the boat. There are two relevant points.

The boat was in the EU (the Azores - Portuguese) on December 30th, 2021, the date Brexit "happened" and hence it was "deemed to be EU VAT Paid".

The boat was in the UK prior to leaving the UK (weird English but that is what you get) and when it returned it was eligible for returned goods relief (RGR) provided it was still owned by the original owner and was the same boat! (i.e had had no substantive works carried out when abroad). It was then "deemed to be UK VAT paid".

All this was despite my having the 1979 VAT invoice which proves VAT was paid when the boat was bought. And in any case UK VAT officials didn't used to worry about boats older than 1992.

The Northern Ireland situation did muddy the waters a bit as regards RGR so originally I had thought I would have to call into Falmouth (i.e GB) on the way home and claim RGR but regulations changed and RGR was implied if you could prove the boats whereabouts at the key dates. I had also talked to a couple of long term UK yachties living in the Azores and they had written to HMRC and got letters saying they were all right, I had the name and address of the poor soul in HMRC and an example letter she had written so selling to a UK, or maybe a GB? person would be ok. In the end I did not call into GB and went straight from the Azores to Ireland.

I know of two friends who had come a cropper with Brexit and boats, they both bought boats in Sweden. One before Brexit and one after. Neither could bring their boat home into the UK without incurring a VAT penalty of 20% of the perceived value of the boat. They are doomed to wander the oceans of the world, never sailing home...Or register the boat as European and owned by a company - there are always loopholes, ask the rich people...

So the boat was snug in Ardglass and we lived nearby, what could go wrong? Well it turns out Ardglass marina are happy to have big boats visit but not stay. I had enquired if I could stay a month as I expected to sell the boat and they had been most helpful, but after 6 weeks they were keen for me to move on. A nuisance.



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Above is Ardglass Marina, below is Belfast (the marina is bottom left)



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Every month you keep a boat, it costs money and the less money the better. The big marinas in Belfast Lough are fairly expensive but the tiny marina right in Belfast's city centre was cheaper. Shadowmere had spent all of 2016 and half of 2017 there before departing for the North Atlantic adventure, we had left in May 2017 and got lifted out for a month in Carrickfergus before final departure. So in many ways the journey was complete by returning there.

So we sailed from Ardglass to Belfast, we stopped overnight in Donaghadee for old times sake and I had a pint in Pier 36 with Ken Walsh, an old crewmember, I had also telephoned Nick but he had hurt his back gardening and was heading for the bath and bed, dangerous things gardens, I'd rather be away from land in a boat.

The next day we had a delightful family day anchored in the Copeland islands, paddle-boarding and playing, eating and watching the myriad of seals and birds that lived nearby. We had spent many days there when we lived in Donaghadee for 25 years. Ironic that moving from Donaghadee 15 years ago had allowed us to buy the big boat that made comfortable ocean sailing possible. We were now back on what we thought would be Shadowmere's last (to us) voyage.

And then to Belfast, Shadowmere's home. Joe and Sasha, the marina staff made us feel most welcome and there were several liveaboards for company, Hilary and her Dutch barge was a friend of Shirleys and Alan and his ketch were kindred spirits - he had also travelled the North Atlantic to Nova Scotia, a lot singlehanded too. He was planning to head for the frozen North next.

Selling Shadowmere took twists and turns, an early contender was referred to us by the broker, a Frenchman - we thought - turns out he was Belgian, had lived in Italy for 9 years and was now working in Paris. He is a European then, I suppose, just like we used to be before the English Brexit. At least we have Irish (and UK) passports...

He came to view the boat and my son Matt and I took him for a trial sail "out the Lough", a one hour motor and a one hour sail and then a one hour motor back. He was interested but said he was also going to visit a HR41 in Greece in August first. At least he had seen the boat, the teaks decks keep getting described as being in "poor condition" just as they had been described in 2006 when we bought the boat. You had to see them to realise they were perfectly serviceable and in 5 years time you will still be running up and down the decks in bare feet in the tropics without worry. You could lift the teak, make good the underlying fibreglass and apply non-slip paint, but personally I would rather keep the old teak.

Anyway, whilst he was away I got another couple of phone calls, one through the broker and one through a facebook/website viewing. I took a phone call from a guy who worked on oil rigs for 12 weeks at a time and then stayed "home" for a few weeks. He said his divorce had just come through and he was completing the sale of his house next Monday and could put the money for Shadowmere in my bank account on Tuesday.

"Wow", I said, "congratulations on the divorce, did he want to see the boat or arrange a survey"

"no, no, I trust your description of things, I just want the boat".

"Great", I said, "call the broker and make the arrangements"

I was somewhat mystified by all this, but, perhaps, what is meant to be, is meant to be. I was a little sceptical and awaited confirmation from the broker. Finally on the Tuesday night I texted the client back and got a brief reply "I am not going ahead with the sale" and thought that was that. But talking to the broker the next day he said that the client still wanted the boat but had been unable to get a residential mooring in Falmouth. He had even talked to both Belfast marina and the nearby Bangor (NI) marina to get prices and availability of residential marinas, I suppose if you spend your working life on oil rigs you can live anywhere. The broker also said there is another guy trying to sell his flat in exactly the same position, if he sold the flat he would buy the boat. Wow, again I thought.

In the meantime the original Belgian (the one who had sent his family instead of himself to view the boat) emailed me to say he had bought the HR41 in Greece and was sorry, if I ever visited Belgium I should contact him and he would take me sailing.

And then the Frenchman came back (the second Belgian) with a firm offer which I accepted. Shadowmere was sold.

Well, technically, sold subject to survey. He and I moved the boat to Carrickfergus to get lifted out for survey. I was liable to fix any defects that affected sea-worthiness and operational integrity (whatever that is), or at least defects that were unknown or not listed in the inventory.

Carrickfergus boat yard is to the right of the marina below, to the left of the harbour mouth.



Microsoft product screen shot(s) reprinted with permission from Microsoft Corporation.

I waited with bated breath whilst the surveyor poked and prodded Shadowmere. I showed him the boat and then got offside, I paced up and down like an expectant father

for most of the day. He was most thorough, hitting every square foot of the hull with his hammer, he scraped paint off every seacock and hit the seacocks and judged whether it rang like a bell or sounded like a dull thud. Ding or Dong

He gave a verbal report at the end of the day and we drew up a snaglist of what needed fixed, I had to fix some navigation lights and replace a shackle on the second anchor along with a few minor things. The boat needed re-rigging, which we knew, so the client looked after that.

The seacocks were an issue. I had them checked in the Azores and the company there had replaced three, that left eleven others which I had replaced in 2006. The correct seacocks had been fitted then, de-zincification resistant (DZR) brass as per the standard at that time. The EU has decided since then to amend the regulations to say that from now on, only phosphor bronze seacocks should be used and the surveyor said, that whilst the sound emanating from them was a nice ding and they were ok, they should be replaced to meet the new standard.

Who should pay for this was probably a moot point, but in the interests of a quick sale I agreed I should drop the price by half the estimated cost of replacing the seacocks. The deal was done.

I agreed to work my way down the snaglist the following Monday/Tuesday and then the broker could arrange bills of sale and other paperwork. I had also agreed to help sail the boat to her new destination in France but I was only available from the 10th September as Shirley and I with 6 others were heading to Alicante and Valencia for Eileen and Reg's 40th Wedding anniversary celebration.

And so it was we set off at 5am on Saturday 10th September to motor South, little wind, and of course what wind there was came from the wrong direction. We arrived in Howth at low water and checking the up to date charts on my phone - using a Navionics app and chart that had cost me £49, I discovered the water was very thin at low tide and we could not get in to fuel up (and wait for tide heading south - my usual ploy). We blattered on into a foul tide at 4 knots and headed towards Dunleary (Dún Laoghaire). By the time we got there the fuel dock was shut and, again, we headed on, speed dropped to 3.6 knots in Dalkey Sound but we arrived in Wicklow harbour at midnight. The next day was a rest day, in rain and driving South winds, but we got a good pint of Guinness in Wicklow sailing club.

A mid morning departure had us flying down the coast with the tide and arriving at the corner of Ireland, Carnsore point an hour after slack, the tide was then against us heading the 9 miles to Kilmore quay. The last mile is through a red and green buoy on St Patrick's land bridge which is shallow (15 feet deep) and hence rough, before turning sharp right at a safe-water buoy and following two transit lights to get up the narrow channel to the harbour, we arrived after midnight, again.

It had been a long time since I had been here and the harbour had had some work done. The pontoons seemed full and were narrow to get into so a hammer head was sensible. there were two boats already rafted up there (and a lifeboat on the other hammer head). We came alongside the two and a very friendly guy called Dougie helped us tie up, when the owners of the inner boat popped up.

and said "no, no, we are all tied up to just two cleats, it won't do"

Frankly, with no gales forecast it would have been fine,

"we are leaving at 7am for Madeira" they said,

"so will we", we said, (leave at 7, not head to Madeira)

"but but two cleats are not enough" they said again.

Dougie then quietly remarked, "you can go on the fuel pontoon, I will walk around and take your warps."

This we did, an easy berth, big rubber fenders along the berth.

We offered Dougie a beer but he said he was getting up at 6 the next morning to head North.

"make sure you rev your engine well before leaving", I suggested, and we laughed

There are two types of yachties, you can describe them with various adjectives, helpful and not helpful, perhaps? My overwhelming wish is to think about the kindness of strangers, an (almost) universal truth. Thank you Dougie.

I lied about leaving at 7, it was best to leave later in the day and avoid the last of the strong winds. This we did after a rather good fish and chips, served with mushy peas. The Frenchman asked what mushy peas were and I said like petit pois, only different. They were delicious, adulterated with garlic I think, the frenchman enjoyed them.

The sail south was a delight, beam, broad or fine reach in a good sailing wind we managed 7 knots plus for most of it. As there were only two of us, we used two hours on and two hours off for the next 50 hours. Originally I thought we might visit the Isles of Scilly, one of my favourite places but we decided to avoid them as inspection by HMRC might prove problematical, we had bills of sale but no (new) ownership registration papers.



The French coast appeared as we could see lots of racing boats, at one stage 4 came up on the AIS as about to collide with me, they were going up wind at 9 or 10 knots and hence restricted a bit in their manoeuvrability I was doing 4 knots against tide and I turned ninety degrees and wondered if I was fast enough to miss the oncoming traffic. I was, by about 50 yards. The next excitement was about 10 miles from St Malo we discovered a massive windfarm under construction, we got radioed and told to head East for a couple of miles to avoid them. It was going to be another night time entrance. We headed East and then South to approach the 30 or 40 navigation marks that show the way in to the harbour. Tricky.

I navigated and found a more isolated mark to head for, easier to identify and once there we could buoy hop. We didn't identify the mark until we nearly hit it but from there I found another buoy to head for, after that we picked up lit transits and passed the next set of buoys easily enough, it always looks worse than it is. The

chartplotter allowed me to work out compass courses between buoys and I double checked using the Navionics App with it's more up to date charts in case buoys had been moved. The third part of the navigation was to look up and use our eyes!

Onto a buoy in the harbour to await a lock gate and bridge opening in the morning, we were to go into the inner harbour where there was a berth waiting. My journeying in Shadowmere was approaching its end.



A nice walk up the old town, treated to coffee, lunch and an evening meal, (gallettes and risotto) finished the day and had me on a ferry home, via Portsmouth and a day spent with friends before flying to Belfast. Ferries, trains, cars, planes and more cars. I was home, Shadowmere wasn't



She is to be renamed Colibri - the French name for a hummingbird. A year in St Malo, then taken to Greece for a year before going around the world for 5 or 6 years. Deus Volente. (D.V.)