

# TINKER LIZ GOES DUTCH

David Nisbet's Marcon Trophy-winning log  
from 1969, the first year the trophy was awarded



Marcon Trophy

## TINKER LIZ VISITS HOLLAND

HAVING spent our last three summer cruises in British waters we felt it was time that *Tinker Liz* went foreign. We had been in Holland in 1963 with our previous boat *Afton Maid* and since then had a yen to return there and see more of the attractive harbour towns which surround the Zuiderzee that was. We had only two weeks available but we considered that by exploiting once again the flexibility of our boat-on-wheels and with a little luck from the weather we could in that time sail right round the old Zuiderzee and round off with a day or so in Amsterdam at the end. The potentially most difficult part, namely getting to Amsterdam and back was, in fact, the easiest. Through Tor Yacht Agency of Grimsby we booked a return passage for *Tinker Liz*, my wife Betty and I, and two friends, Douglas and Elsie Taylor. All we then had to do, apart from paying, was to turn up at Immingham with the boat on its trailer by 18.30 on Friday, 13 June (we are not superstitious).



*Tinker Liz* on her home-built trailer

Tor Line transported us to Amsterdam, craned *Tinker Liz* into the Coenhaven and by 1400 the following day we were motoring through Amsterdam harbour en route for the Oranjesluis and Volendam. Notice I said motoring, for Amsterdam harbour is like Piccadilly Circus on water, and it would take a braver man than I am to attempt to sail a course through that congested water-way.

On clearing the Oranjesluis we had hoped to sail first to Volendam, but once out in the IJsselmeer found the wind dead ahead; a necessary beat to windward on this first leg of our cruise received little support so the *Vire* was kept running until we had Marken light abeam when the wind did free and we happily stopped the engine and peacefully completed the journey under sail.

Being Saturday evening, the harbour at Volendam was a busy place with yachts of various shapes and sizes out for the weekend; these and the local fishing boats provided an interesting scene and this was further enhanced by the comings and going of the local people, the older ones in their traditional costume; it was noticeable, however, that the younger generation of females had almost exclusively rejected the traditional wear for the mini-skirt - no less attractive in its own particular fashion.

Next day was oppressively hot and perhaps because of the heat a veritable plague of small flies swarmed everywhere; yachts coming in from the IJsselmeer were almost black with the creatures. The only escape was either to get into the water or away from it; we did both and following the latter course caused us to explore the lesser known parts of the town which we found more congenial and natural than the area around the harbour which is mainly a tourist trap.

There had been a flat calm all day on the Sunday but on the Monday morning there was a light breeze fair for Hoorn so after replenishing some of our stocks we set off. We thought the flies had been dispersed by the breeze but once out into the IJsselmeer we were engulfed by them once again, so much so, that we had to drape towels over our heads leaving only a peep-hole to see where we were going. This was not easy either for visibility was so poor that we had to steer a compass course for Hoorn.

Fortunately, the wind freshened slightly after a time and as if by magic the flies departed. After this experience we considered that the only way



'Hoorn is our favourite town in Holland'

to feel clean again was to have a good wash so we dropped the anchor (in eight feet of water !) and went over the side with a bar of soap. Clean and refreshed (the IJsselmeer is fresh water incidentally) we completed our journey to Hoorn and tied up, not in either of the two yacht harbours there, but in the Oude Doelenkade alongside the park; this is one of the most attractive moorings I know in Holland.

We had a picnic lunch on the grass before doing a round of the town, Hoorn is our favourite town in Holland. It is a lovely old place much of which savours more of the past than the present. Here, as in many other Dutch towns, new building development has been made to match its surroundings so that one does not find modern concrete monstrosities elbowing out the mellowed brick and tile of the past. Also, where old buildings have been converted for a more profitable use this too has been tastefully done. A good example of this can be seen in the old keep at the harbour entrance which has been turned into an excellent bar cum restaurant with a nautical decor which fits the atmosphere of the old building admirably.

During the summer Hoorn has an "old Holland Market". On market days in addition to the usual market stalls there are others at which many of the old crafts can be seen being performed; these include clogmaking, net-making, woodcarving, basket-making, etc.. Also, many of the stallholders dress up in medieval costume. To add to the fun there are sideshows and other activities, like pole-climbing, for which small prizes are given. All in all this is an interesting and colourful occasion.

There was a good fresh wind blowing next morning as we left Hoorn and headed for our next port, Eikhuisen. As the wind was free for the whole of the trip, we made a fast time. A new marina has been built just North of the town and we went there first intending to moor up for the night but the whole atmosphere of the place was somewhat clinical and isolated and so we made our way back to the Buitenhaven and tied up alongside where there was much more going on to take up our attention. When lying in the Buitenhaven one has to be rather careful about fending off as the quay wall is built of rough stone and slopes outwards. Also, lines should be protected against chafe; we carry some pieces of PVC tubing which slide over our warps.

Eikhuisen has not the character which Hoorn has but it boasts one feature which offsets that deficiency; this is the Zuiderzee Museum. It is housed appropriately enough in the Peperhuis, an old warehouse of the original Dutch East India Company, and here one can trace in model and pictorial form the history of the Zuiderzee from centuries back when merchantmen

sailed from there to all parts of the globe, until today when it is fast passing from an inland sea to a jig-saw of polder land. The strong tradition of a sea-going people is manifested in the collection of old ships now located in a vast and elegant annexe specially built for the purpose. The names of the type of craft alone are sufficient to excite one's interest, name like Schokker, Blazer, Hooghaars, Aak, Boeier, Tjotter, which, to the uninitiated disguise their past function and those more obvious ones like Ijsflet, and iceboat, or the Potschip which used to travel along the waterways selling pots and pans. There are many more things of interest both old and new in the museum which makes a visit there a must for all who pass that way.

According to the brochures, one of Eikhuisen's attractions is its new swimming pool. It being a warm day we set off there for a swim, the males and the females making their separate ways. After walking miles Douglas and I gave up the search and hot and exhausted returned to *Tinker Liz*; soon afterwards the girls too came back also having failed to find the place. Afterwards we did find out where the pool was but by then it was too late, for it was whilst we were on our way to Medemblik that afternoon.

Again the wind was kind, it was a pleasant force two southerly, so as soon as we cleared the entrance restrictions at Eikhuisen up went the spinnaker which we carried almost to Medemblik; the wind freshened and veered and we had to change down to the working jib.

Medemblik has a large harbour but mooring of yachts is restricted to the north side of the Middenhaven and at the marina through the lifting bridge in the Westerhaven. There seemed no room for us in the Middenhaven and we had blown for the bridge to open when we were hailed by a local yachtsman who directed us to his private mooring; he was just going off for his annual cruise to the Frisian Islands. We inspected the marina later in the evening and it gave the impression of being extremely well organised with excellent facilities.



**Traditional dress in Hoorn market**

Although a pleasant little town, Medemblik is not the most exciting of places so the evening was spent showing our friends some of the more interesting spots we had discovered on our previous visit; places like the old moated castle, Kasteel Radboud or Murray House where lived Lord George Murray who took a leading part in the '45 Jacobite rising and who died in exile here in 1760 and is buried in the local churchyard. During our wanderings we heard strains of music from a church and on investigating found a rehearsal of Schubert's Mass in progress; this was being given the following evening. This seemed too good to miss so we quietly seated ourselves and heard it out to the end, which made a most pleasurable end to our day.

It was at Medemblik that the high cost of food was brought home to us. Until now we had been living mainly off perishables brought with us. For supper we decided to have some palate frites and "something"; the patate frites were easily recognisable as chips, the "something" was more mysterious but proved to be rissole made with meat and rice - mostly rice. This cost the equivalent of one pound sterling ! Further, in the morning we bought a kilo of potatoes and a half-kilo of beans from a travelling shop which cost ten shillings. I believe in the latter case we were taken in but from then onwards we were considerably more cost conscious when shopping. Appropos shopping, supermarkets are a blessing, for there one can go and browse around and have plenty of time to do the mental gymnastics associated with currency conversion so that the best value for money seems to be being obtained. It is a fact, however, that food in Holland, especially bought out meals, is considerably more expensive now-a-days than in Britain so this should be borne in mind when budgeting or stocking up for a cruise in these waters.

In the morning, Scheveningen Radio forecast a westerly wind force 4/6, so when we set out it was under working rig, but once clear we considered we could safely carry the genoa so up it went. It was a glorious sailing day, blue skies dappled with occasional puffs of cumulus, a firm breeze of wind which, nicely on our beam, sped us on our way to Den Oever. We had planned to arrive there around noon so that we could



**The North Sea Dyke**

pause for lunch then carry on to Makkum in the afternoon but it was just after 11.00 when we tied up in the very work-a-day harbour which marks the western end of the North Sea Dyke. The township is a little away from where we were moored, too far to get in a quick visit, so while Douglas and I took a good look around one small section of this civil engineering miracle the girls prepared a snack lunch.

Inside an hour we were on our way again, still with genoa set and now with a steady force 5 on our port quarter, scudding along the inside of the North Sea Dyke to Makkum. It was still only mid-afternoon when we locked out of the Ijsselmeer and hoisted our Friesland courtesy flag to

acknowledge our arrival in that pleasant pastoral state where nature still appears to rule the people; where endless herds of multi-patterned cows munch unceasingly on stretches of lush green pasture; where the horse can yet be seen plodding his working way over the fields, and where, as one sails along the many deserted waterways, the only sound is the chuckle of the bow-wave, the singing of the reeds in the wind, and the varied calls of the many birds which still find peace to live here.

It will be gathered that we like Friesland, and we were secretly pleased when, supporting the evidence of the mares tails forming in the sky, we were promised strong winds next day; further, our projected course to Stavoren would be along a lee shore. Now, no lee shore in strong winds is a good place to be sailing but on the Ijsselmeer it should be avoided at all costs, so that we had the option of staying put in Makkum until the weather was suitable or moving on through the inland waters of Friesland; we needed no prompting to decide on the latter. The only problem we had was that we had brought no charts of the inland waterways of that particular area so a frantic search was commenced to try to obtain some in Makkum. It is often said that

everyone in Holland speaks English. Don't believe it! By dint of signs and scribbles we managed to convey our needs to the lock-keeper who directed us to one shop; after a similar performance we were directed to another shop; but it was only after the third attempt that we managed to obtain a road cum canal map which seemed adequate for our purpose.

We decided to move on to Bolsward for the night and chose a route there although we had some qualms about it, for one of the bridges was not marked as an opening type. Optimistically, we assumed this was a typographical omission and off we went. We had still a free wind so we re-set the genoa until we found ourselves in the wrong canal; we had to start the engine to extricate ourselves and having done so decided to motor on. Our assumption about the bridge was correct but we were taken aback when we arrived at the outskirts of Bolsward to find the bridge over the main road there closed to water traffic. We could see there was an extensive civil engineering project going on but never-the-less off I went to find out the position. To any eavesdropper the next half hour must have been like an act at the London Palladium; there was myself with a dozen words of Dutch and the old bridge-watcher with half-a-dozen words of English trying to communicate our respective stories. The long and short of it was that we could go no further because of the road-bridge work at Bolsward and railway-bridge work further on. This meant re-tracing our steps and choosing another route but we were comfortably placed for staying the night and there we remained.

We were just nicely moored up when a German yacht appeared on the scene also intent on reaching Bolsward so he too had to be content to stay outside for the night. He was headed for Makkum and was using the same chart as we were and had noticed the allegedly non-opening bridge, too. He had planned to by-pass it by going through Bolsward and was most relieved when we told him of the error. The moral of this is to ensure that only official charts are carried and that these cover not only the planned cruising area but also adjoining areas if there is any possibility of being diverted there by force of circumstances - and this is always possible when sailing.

Bolsward is another of our favourite places. It has many fine examples of traditional Dutch architecture all very well preserved. Bolsward is particularly proud of its old town hall which, it would seem, was built almost as a communal exercise; the names of all who took part have been recorded for posterity in an ancient document. We were fortunate in that when we called there was an exhibition of the town's silver and other relics in the town hall and we were able to visit this and see the more interesting parts of the old building.

The wind next morning was as forecast, strong and gusting, but it was sunny and warm with it, so as we chugged our way along the canals we did some sunbathing. Our route took us near to Workum and as it was nearing lunchtime by then we turned in there. I had it in mind to take the girls along to the old weigh-house and have them weighed, for tradition has it that this was one method of discovering whether or not suspects were witches; witches, it was said, have no weight. At one time this particular weigh-house used to issue an "official" document to visitors certifying that the person had been weighed and declaring he or she not to be a witch. Unfortunately when we got there the place was locked up and showed no sign of its original purpose so Douglas and I are still in a state of uncertainty about our spouses.

We were able to motorsail most of the way from Workum to Woudsend. On the way we passed through the Heegermeer where there is only about six feet of water. The strong wind had made the water pile up in short steep waves and we had to quickly don our oilies to prevent us getting a soaking. After a short break at Woudsend to brew up and have a leg stretch we made our way to Lemmer passing on the way the attractive little town



**Bolsward Town Hall**

of Sloten where they are busy excavating to extend the yacht-harbour there. We moored in the new marina at Lemmer; this is a vast place which in addition to catering for local needs also serves yachtsmen from Northern Germany who motor up to Lemmer each weekend for their sailing.

Although there are some large craft moored here there is not a great depth of water so that deep-keel yachts should check where to go before entering. It was late by the time we took our customary walk around the town which is about twenty minutes walk from the yacht harbour and we were most surprised to find that practically all the shops were still open. However, currency restrictions being as they were, we confined our spending to coffee in one of the waterside cafes and, having had a fairly long day, turned in at a reasonable hour.

The wind had blown itself out by morning and so we were able to resume our original plan and we locked out into the IJsselmeer once again, headed for Urk. After a week of fair winds we had, for a change, a beat. This was no hardship for the wind was a gentle force 2 and the sun was shining. It was well after lunch-time when the girls announced that as the morrow was Sunday we should have to get to Urk before the shops closed so somewhat reluctantly we started the Vire to help us up to windward.

Entering Urk was a revelation. We had expected a quiet fishing port and were not prepared for the scene that greeted us, a veritable forest of masts which, as we entered the harbour, became the largest collection of fishing vessels I have ever seen in one place. The harbour was so full up that it was only with some difficulty we squeezed ourselves into an oily, smelly comer for the night. However, whatever Urk lacked in amenity it made up for in interest, for we spent a fascinating evening exploring this comparatively remote town.

Urk was at one time an island in the Zuiderzee and when the Northeast Polder was reclaimed Urk was incorporated into it. That it was an isolated community is still apparent in the way of life there and this is best exemplified in the dress habit. For here, too, traditional dress is worn but the style differs considerably from that worn in other areas.

Urk's history of the sea and fishing is vividly demonstrated by small paved area overlooking the IJsselmeer in the middle of which stands a bold sculptured figure of a woman. The figure has an expression which could be either expectation or apprehension and if apprehension, one need not seek far to discover the cause. Enclosing the sea-ward side of the area is a long wall on which is a series of plaques, one for each year since 1820, and on which are engraved the names of all those who have lost their lives at sea. Ages as well as names are recorded and one finds five or six of one family amongst the victims, some as young as eleven years. Altogether this is a most salutary reminder of the power and savageness of the sea.



**Urk's harbour reflects its island history**

This fear and respect for the sea can be further seen in one of the local hotels where a series of murals depicts (1) the fisherman saying farewell to his family, (2) the fishing fleet going to sea, (3) a storm at sea and (4) the fisherman's grave - not very good art, but the message here, too, is vivid.

A small gale blew up during the night and we resigned ourselves to another day in Urk, but by the time breakfast was over the wind had eased and since it was fair for Kampen we decided that should be our next port of call. As we prepared to leave the church bells started to ring and it seemed as if the -whole population of Urk began to make their way to their respective places of worship; remembering the fishermen's memorial, one could understand why.

Our journey to Kampen was uneventful but full of interest for it being Sunday many interesting craft were seen en-route. As the day went on the wind became lighter and it was only our determination to sail every inch of the way to Kampen that prevented us starting the engine when our progress against the current of the River IJssel became doubtful at times.

There is a yacht harbour at Kampen (a long way from the town) and we looked in there to try to find a berth for the night but it looked already overcrowded so we made our way towards the town itself, hoping to lie alongside some of the barges we could see tied up there. However, on the way we spotted an opening leading into a small harbour and went in and found a very comfortable and convenient mooring.

We were a little disappointed in Kampen, why it is difficult to say, but probably one of the reasons was, it being Sunday afternoon and very warm, there were few people about the streets. Also, Kampen has an industrial air about it which contrasted badly with picturesque Urk which we had just left. One thing we did enjoy in Kampen was a lovely fruity-flavoured ice-cream; Dutch ice-cream concoctions are something not to be missed, but they are not for the waist-watchers.

As we turned in that evening the wind was still westerly so as our course next day was generally easterly and that in the restricted waterway between the East Flevoland Polder and the mainland we resigned ourselves to a noisy day of motoring. You can imagine our surprise and pleasure when we looked out next morning and found the wind had gone round to the east and blowing force four. By 09.00 we were running down the River IJssel and headed for Harderwijk. As we left the IJssel and made our way behind the polder we had to turn westwards again and since the channel is very narrow at this point we started the engine and motored until the wind became free once more when we re-hoisted the sails.

There was no falling off in speed and soon we were locking through the Roggebotsluis, here we were interested to see two swallows nests complete with families tucked in behind two of the recessed bollards in the lock. As the sky was becoming overcast we had lunch under weigh to save time but it was only when we were just approaching Harderwijk that the rain caught up with us, the first time we had been rained on. We tried to find a place to moor in the main harbour area but due to the commercial activity there, decided that it might be rather uncomfortable so we tied up in what transpired to be a privately run yacht-harbour cum caravan site. There is a cafe-restaurant associated with the place but as far as we could see no other facilities. Adjacent to this area is a large recreational park for children including a "Dolphinarium". This area was very noisy and trippy and we expected little peace that evening, but to our surprise and relief the whole place closed down around 18.00, in fact when we went for a walk later in the evening it appeared as if the whole town had closed down, so deserted were the streets.

As the next leg of our cruise, Harderwijk to Muiden, was a long one we were up and away by 08.00. A depression was passing over Holland so we had overcast skies and a rather fitful wind. We did manage to sail a good part of the way before we ran out of wind altogether and reverted to power. After an hour on the engine the wind re-appeared in our favour and we were able to sail the rest of the way to Muiden. The only flutter of excitement we had was when passing under a new bridge connecting the polder to the mainland; the height is given as 13 metres and as we measure 11.5 metres we watched with bated breath as we approached and sighed with relief when we passed under safely - 1.5 metres is a good clearance at ground level but at the top of a mast looks awfully little !

We had not been to Muiden before but knowing of the Royal Netherlands Yacht Club by reputation we went in there and were directed to a mooring alongside a typical Dutch sloop. It was fascinating to see the variety of the craft lying here including the Royal Yacht "Piet Hein". By now the skies had cleared and I spent a long time photographing the yacht harbour and individual yachts from different angles. My favourite was undoubtedly Green Dragon which is a superb example of the traditional Dutch yacht and is immaculate in its appearance; the piece de resistance is a wonderful carving of a dragon on the rudder head. I must say we felt rather insignificant and tatty in such company. However, our ego was restored later when we discovered that the Union flag had been hoisted to mark our presence.

Naturally there are all facilities here including a dining room where an evening meal can be had; for us, however, after nearly two weeks without a real bath, the hot showers were the most acceptable feature. A charge is now made for mooring in the yacht-harbour but as far as we were concerned it was well worth the six guilders for the experience and convenience. Further, the cost was a lot less than in some home harbours where literally nothing is provided.

Overlooking the yacht harbour is the old castle. This is still furnished as it was when occupied and is



**Muiderslot Castle, Muiden**

open to the public. We spent an interesting hour looking around before setting off for Amsterdam. There was a flat calm, so we motored out of Muideren but once clear of all obstructions including a series of odd-looking erections presumably engaged on polder-work, we hoisted the sails (really so that I could say we had sailed part of every leg). After drifting for a quarter of an hour the hoped-for breeze arrived and we were able to sail a good way towards Amsterdam.

At the approaches to Amsterdam is a large lifting road bridge which opens only every hour on the hour. As we were anxious not to miss the next opening we started the engine but on reaching the bridge found it was closed for repairs that day. This meant we had to lower our mast to pass through, however, this was no disadvantage for we had intended to lower the mast later in any case so that we could proceed into the Amstel which is both a more convenient and more comfortable mooring than any of the yacht harbours in the main harbour area.

By the time we reached the Oranjesluis there was a queue of barges and other craft waiting to lock through and it was an hour later when we picked our way through the inevitable jumble of activity in Amsterdam harbour towards the quiet waters of the Amstel. We found a convenient mooring place and swept down our "landing-stage" to prevent us carrying the usual city grit on board.

As we settled ourselves down for a couple of days of city life (we were moored only a hundred yards or so from the Rembrandt Plein) we had the feeling of satisfaction of an objective achieved, so much so that we decided to celebrate by having a slap-up meal at a favourite restaurant of mine. It was a well-fed party that turned in late that night and not even the trams which ran past our cabin door could disturb us.

The next two days were spent sight-seeing and shopping in Amsterdam, the latter being of particular interest to the girls, but because of currency restrictions and cost it was mainly window-shopping. One place worth visiting is the cafe-bar on top of the harbour-authority building; here one can sit and watch all goings-on in the harbour area below; It is particularly fascinating during dusk to watch the lighting come on over the city and the harbour.

Saturday afternoon saw us back in the Coenhaven with mast stowed for transit and ready for lifting out on to the trailer again. This was done prior to the arrival of the Tor Anglia and at midnight we were all safely aboard and on our way back to the Humber. By 15.00 on Sunday we were home again in Scunthorpe, scarcely believing where we had been, it had all been so simple and straightforward,

For the statistically minded on our travels we covered 208.5 sea miles. We were under weigh for 47 hrs. 45 mins. of which we sailed 27 hrs. 50 mins; motored 13 hrs. 40 mins, and motor-sailed 6 hrs. 15 mins. Our average speed was 4.4 knots, which for a 19 feet L.W.L. boat we considered fairly satisfactory.

## **David Nisbet**

*2010 Editor's note: David Nisbet's horror at the price of a plate of chips and rissoles costing a whole pound sterling is more understandable when it is put in context. The purchasing power of £1 in 1969 was the equivalent of over £10 in 2010 and when viewed as the percentage of earned income £1 then would have been the equivalent today of around £18. See <http://www.measuringworth.com/ukcompare/>*