

# TRILBY'S DUTCH TREAT



## Charles Marchant's 1976 Marcon Trophy winning log

The original plan had been for my friend, Denis, my 20-year-old son and myself to leave Walton on Naze on 26 July 1976 for Holland, hopefully to reach Amsterdam, and return via Ostend to reach our base by 6 August. Unfortunately on the 22 July business considerations forced Denis to forgo his cruise; Francis and I had resigned



ourselves to the prospect of a fairly sleepless North Sea crossing when we were pleasantly surprised to secure a last-minute recruit in the shape of PL, a friend of Francis and well-qualified for the cruise by virtue of his having volunteered to apply our spring coat of anti-fouling paint. Indeed, as later became apparent, his enthusiasm for boats is such as to eradicate all memory of tiresome land-based commitments.

Three seems to be the ideal number for a Trident on this type of voyage. It is enough to prevent watch-keeping becoming arduous but you are not too overcrowded on reaching harbour when four adults make for distinctly crowded forward accommodation.

Trilby, our centre plate Trident, lies on a half-tide mooring in Foundry creek so our time of departure at noon was determined by the time of flood tide. The morning wait

was filled by such chores as transferring to the forecabin as much weight as possible including our vast stock of tinned food. I noted that the victualling, which had been entrusted to my son, tended to reflect his tastes: indeed we decided that we could reasonably lay claim to having broken the record for the largest number of baked beans conveyed by a Trident at any one time.

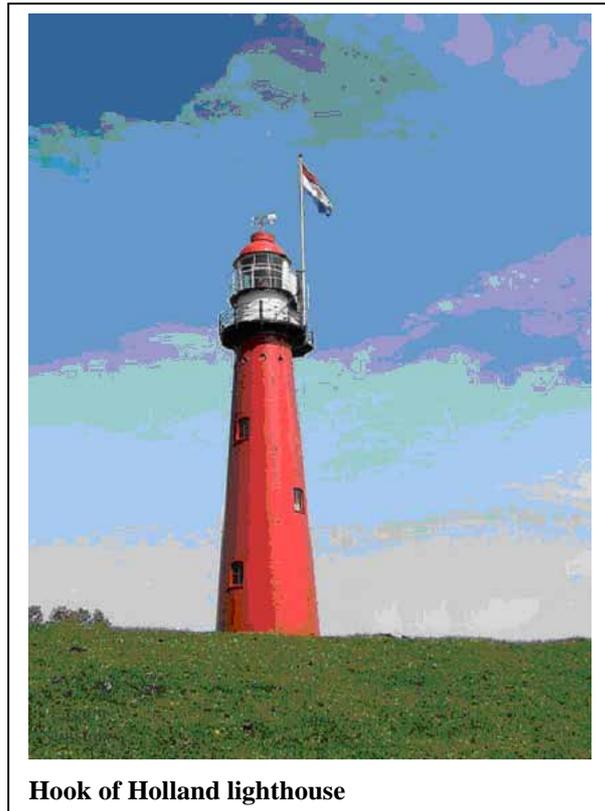
The day was sunny with a force 4 from a north-easterly direction. We hoisted sail off the Pye End buoy and immediately it was obvious that with the Genoa we would be too hard-pressed. We settled for number 1 jib with two rolls in the main and this combination served us well until nightfall when out of caution we shortened sail with two more rolls.

The intention was to make for Berghaven just inside the Hook of Holland and after a rest there to make up the coast to IJmuiden and thence via the North Sea Canal to Amsterdam. We could not quite point up to the ideal course but decided to stay on port tack for the time being on a heading of 120 degrees Magnetic. This kept us going well and took us safely past the sand banks.

Luck was with us, for later the wind backed and we were able to lay a course so that whilst still on the same port tack we arrived, half a mile up-tide of the Hook of Holland at 1300 next day. The sea was sufficiently agitated to cause P.L. and me to return our supper to its bosom and later our discomfort was not allayed by the sight of the voracious Francis wolfing a whole tin of sardines during one of his spells at the helm.

On making landfall we noticed that the Cruising Association Handbook was out of date in some respects. The outstanding landmarks were two power station chimneys to the south, of the Hook entrance which is further identified by a Gp.Fl(5) 20 sec. light (28miles) which is easily visible in daylight. We remarked perhaps a little slanderously that the smell of the Nieuwe Maas which now reached our nostrils was reminiscent of the , to us, familiar stench of the Mersey. This was the point at which to downsail and motor upwind and then into the river to reach the small harbour of Berghaven on the north bank. We had been encouraged in this plan by Delmar Morgan's *North Sea Harbours and Pilotage* which devotes three pages to Berghaven although admittedly he points out that it is a commercial harbour and his concluding sentence is "After a few hours rest or when there is daylight and as soon as ,is convenient it is recommended that this sanctuary be left in favour of a harbour which is more suitable for yachts."

In our case as soon as we moored at the jetty suggested by Delmar Morgan we were told to clear off. Possibly, if we had appeared to have suffered an arduous passage our



**Hook of Holland lighthouse**

reception would have been more hospitable. However the consequence was that we sought a yacht harbour up river and this led us much further inland than originally intended. A yacht-harbour mentioned in The Cruising Association Handbook at Vlaardingen appeared to have disappeared but 2 miles on to port we found the narrow entrance to the Schiedam yacht-harbour. Here we had a very friendly reception and the shelter and quiet provided by a tree-crowned high bank were in welcome contrast to the bustle of heavy traffic on the near-by river.

A good meal and drink served to raise any flagging spirits and also stirred some dormant fraternal instinct in PL who said he had a vague idea that a sister was to be married next Saturday and if so he should be present! A phone call to his home confirmed his theory and it was agreed that we would contrive to be in a position for him to catch the boat train on Friday morning, two days hence.

Armed with Waterkaarts (purchased in Rotterdam from the ANWB Tourist Office) and advice from the manager of the yacht haven we decided to journey to Amsterdam via the river and canal system. The route



**Bridge on the Hollandse Ijssel**

would give PL the opportunity to catch the boat train either at Leiden or Amsterdam depending on how we progressed. In making this decision we failed to take account of the delays caused by railway bridges which open only occasionally for the passage of boats.

We caught the tide upstream on Wednesday afternoon. Sailing is not permitted in this area and our faithful Vire saw us through various hazards in the form of tugs with long barge tows suddenly emerging from starboard hand waterways. If I had been able to anticipate the later temperamental behaviour of that same engine my tranquillity of spirit whilst going through Rotterdam would have been much disturbed.

After leaving Rotterdam we turned to port up the Hollandse Ijssel until our way was blocked by a schutluis ( a lock associated with and adjustable flood barrier) at Krimpen. We waited with a small queue of boats for about an hour before the gates opened. A confident jab on our start button brought no response and I had to perform the complete ritual of examining plug, filters and float chamber (everything apparently OK) before the Vire would agree to start: by which time the lock gates had closed once more. A friendly local reminded us that the lock-keeper would not feel it incumbent on him to open up until we had sounded 5 signal blasts so this we did and eventually passed through and found a berth for the night at the Middelwatering yacht harbour.

The next day at Gouda we passed from tidal water into the River Gouwe via the Julianasluis where a toll had to be paid at the lock-keeper's office. The journey through the rest of that day took us through innumerable opening road bridges to the Oude Rijn and thence to Leiden and beyond to Kage Plassen, a stretch of water rather like a king-sized Norfolk Broad where we enjoyed a delightful evening sail and practised man-overboard rescues for real (PL being a willing volunteer though for some obscure reason he declined assistance from our proffered boat hook when re-boarding, preferring to climb aboard using the rudder for a foothold). At Leiden we had shopped by a yacht-harbour for provisions. Whilst the crew were away on this mission my ego received a welcome lift from an elderly Dutchman who was busy touching up the varnish on his yacht in the next berth. Catching sight of our red ensign he called out that "we must welcome our liberators," then, pausing to regard my 55 year old bald pate, "ah, but you are too young to have been in the war!" Upon which he dived below to emerge carrying a sherry decanter and glasses and offered his services as local information bureau.

A vital document which we lacked was the time-table for the opening of Dutch railway bridges. Whereas the road bridges and locks open more or less on demand during all normal hours, the railway, bridges open infrequently and for short intervals at pre-determined times; it is essential to be ready and waiting for these rare occasions. My new friend pointed out that the way to



Amsterdam was blocked by a railway bridge which opened once per day in the early hours of the morning. Upon this information we based our decision that PL should take the boat train from Leiden and that our schedule was a little too tight to continue the journey to Amsterdam. Our adviser also suggested that when possible it was a good idea to use the hospitality of yacht clubs (marked "Societeit" on the charts) rather than the commercial yacht harbours. Facilities would often be better and cheaper, less crowded and with generally a more hospitable atmosphere. This advice proved to be correct both at Leiden and later in the Veerse Meer.

After PL's departure we retraced our journey as far as the Nieuwe Maas and turning up river soon reached the Noord and so (passing through a thunderstorm on the way) we came to Dordrecht. The storm was noteworthy as it was the only occasion when we got really wet during the whole holiday.

At Dordrecht we had planned to use a yacht harbour just beyond a swing bridge which now failed to respond to our signal blasts. Although scheduled to be manned we had to conclude that the bridge operator had deserted his post for that night and we decided to accept an invitation to moor alongside a tug-boat which was lying hard by the bridge. In carrying out this manoeuvre I was painfully conscious that the tidal current sweeping towards the bridge would rapidly carry us on to it in the event of

engine failure. However, luck held, we moored up without problems, the closed bridge made for more peace than might otherwise have been the case and our kind neighbour roused us next morning with welcome cups of tea.

The next day we sailed via the Oude Maas, Dordste Kiel and Hollands Diep to Willemstad. A sunny day with westerly Force 3 made for an enjoyable reach followed by a deal of close-hauled work. The excitement came at the start where an opening railway bridge at Dordrecht is quickly followed by a fixed arched road bridge with a minimum clearance of 10.6 metres according to the chart. As the rail bridge cannot bear to be open for an instant longer than necessary one could well imagine the possibility of a yacht boxed in by a rail bridge which had closed behind her and a road



bridge which proved to be a little too low. Viewed from below our 10 metre high mast head looked quite incapable of clearing the arch as we motored gingerly towards it watched by the crew of another English yacht who obviously regarded *Trilby*

as a suitable guinea-pig for the experiment in hand. Fortunately the experiment proved the reliability of the chart as well as the remarkable pessimism of the optical illusion.

Willemstad was a small tidal harbour on my previous visit in 1964. Alas the Delta scheme has rendered it virtually tideless and encouraged the growth of a large marina. The town remains picturesque but very overcrowded. The next day we passed through the new jumbo size lock system back to more tidal waters in the Heelegat. Leaving the lock we passed through a section of turbulent water which we were told was made by a screen of air bubbles injected to discourage the passage of salt water from the Heelegat through the lock to the Hollands Diep. The theory sounds a little strange but we felt much to diffident to challenge a Dutchman on hydrodynamical matters.

We spent some hours beating into a F4 westerly which raised quite a sea though a dam now shelters this water from the North Sea. In the evening we reached the Ooster Schelde and passed via the Zandkreek lock into the Veerse Meer. In the lock we had a long wait, presumably because the lock keeper was reluctant to perform his operations for the benefit only of *Trilby* and one other sailing boat and hoped at least one barge would turn up to make it worthwhile. This leisurely method of proceeding blunted our concentration which turned to the thought of tea so we were guilty of neglecting our warps when the water began to fall. *Trilby* started to be suspended from her king post! The tension in the rope and direction of pull jammed the rope and after a futile attempt to pass a stopper we had to resort to the knife. *Trilby's* bow dropped about a

foot and we found we had lost about three feet of rope as well as our dignity. We motored a further 4 kilometres to spend the night at the hospitable Wolphaartsdijk Club where we found good food, bar and immaculate showers.

The next day was dull with little wind and we motored all the way to Middelburg. The journey took longer than anticipated owing to erratic behaviour of the Vire. We eventually decided that one of the causes of our problems was the relative looseness of the jet adjusting



**Middelburg**

screw in our solex carburettor which sometimes moved of its own accord under the effect of vibration. We intended on leaving Middelburg to carry straight on through Flushing and on to Ostend so this was the last opportunity for shopping in Holland. Therefore we carried out our commission for purchase of delft-ware and disposed of our small Dutch change in the sweet shop.

The next day (4 August) we left Flushing lock at 1000 into an unusually calm Schelde and had the best sail of our holiday in a N.W. Force 3 to 4 and a warm sun. We reached a mooring in the Ostend North Sea Yacht Club harbour at 1530. Conditions were very crowded with many boats to cross before reaching the shore and a perpetual jabber from a van on the jetty equipped with a powerful public address loudspeaker the purpose of which remained a mystery to us. Comparing notes later with other mariners we decided that the new Mercator yacht harbour (reached via a lock from the fishing boat harbour) would make for a more satisfactory berth at Ostend in future.

The 3 August proved to be a gorgeous sunny day but with wind from the north-west. Having taken on board our "duty-frees", we left Ostend at 10.50 and set course for Ramsgate. We decided that to gain the required distance westwards in the

time available we would have to use the engine. Later in the day the wind backed and finally dropped to zero. The engine served us faithfully for the whole day and we reached Ramsgate at 2230. A course of 280 Magnetic took us over the top of the offshore banks (safe in the flat sea) and we held this until we had to turn north to round the Goodwins. The tide was adverse for this last stretch and we had the harbour leading lights in sight for 90 minutes before we reached them (taking care to watch out for the unlit Quern buoy (if the means could be found to fit cats-eyes reflectors to such hazards it would ease the task of a boat when trying to locate them on a dark night)).

Inside Ramsgate harbour having throttled back to listen to shouted instructions from the harbour master's department, the engine promptly stalled and refused to start. However our way and a gentle swell brought us within warp throwing distance of the quarantine floating jetty with which Ramsgate is now equipped. We were soon



efficiently processed by immigration and customs and retired with the thought that the next day's tides called for a start by 0730.

The floating petrol supply at Ramsgate opened at 0715 so we replenished our fuel tank and set off for Walton. The additional fuel proved to be essential because for the whole of the day the wind was zero at sea although we were later told that there had been a sea breeze at Walton.

We reached Kentish Knock Light at 1130, set course for the Sunk light vessel and thence to Pye End buoy reaching the Twizzle at 1730

Thus we completed an uneventful voyage which some might have considered boring but for the element of uncertainty contributed by our Vire. In fact of course, this is never so because each day in a boat inevitably throws up some fresh detail or seemingly familiar situation is revealed in a fresh light.

On reaching home we were pleased to find that PL had reached the wedding in time despite some delaying tactics by British Rail. Sometimes it can be almost as quick by Trident and so much more fun!

**Charles Marchant 1976**