

North Wales Circular

Ian Atkinson's second Marcon Trophy winning Log

ONE OF THE GREAT pleasures of cruising with a Trident is the shallow draft, giving the ability to enter (and leave!) sometimes very shallow estuaries, and stay in often unknown or sketchy drying anchorages.

Having visited North Wales several times the prospect of yet another 12 hour plod across Liverpool bay, pounding into the prevailing wind sent me to the charts to seek out alternatives.

Instead of the usual SW course from Glasson, I decided to follow a coast-hugging southerly route, taking better advantage of the prevailing wind, and at the same time exploring the mouth of the River Dee with a possible overnight anchorage at Hilbre Island.

Hilbre Island is an informal nature reserve, with a few scattered holiday homes and an abandoned lifeboat station/lookout. Its sisters, Little Eye and Middle Eye are accessible on foot at low water from West Kirby on the Wirral.

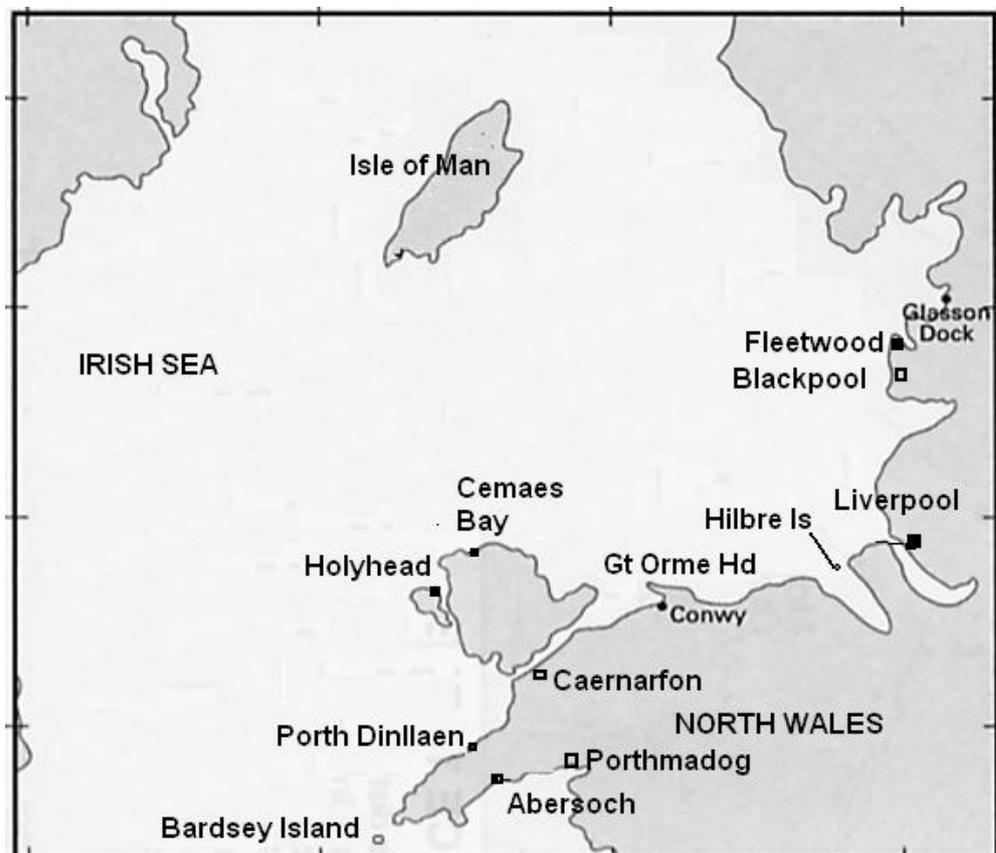
A soft sand anchorage appeared to be possible on the sheltered East side (The exposed west side being rocky). A quick look on Google Earth confirmed what I had read – no previous club members having visited.

And so the trip began. I had coerced a fellow club member to accompany me as far Cemaes Bay Anglesey, where, having arranged to meet up with a fellow member *en route* he would 'jump ship' for the return trip to Glasson. I would then continue on single-handed around the top of Anglesey to Holyhead, and then continue south, hugging

the coast to Porth Dinallaen (Morfa Nefyn) on the Llyn Peninsular with the intention of reaching Portmadog.

The timing of the tides dictated that we overnight at the nearby port of Fleetwood allowing a low water start in daylight. This low water start revealed the previously hidden and imposing Shell Flat Shoal. Hugging the Lancashire coast was quite novel as several features previously hidden over the horizon where revealed, including the extensive Ainsdale Dunes, the Liverpool skyline and a huge wind farm to the South of the Queen's Channel, Liverpool.

The Northern approach to Hilbre involved some careful navigation, following the numerous 'swatches' or channels through the sand marked occasionally by large commercial buoys, this being an alternative approach to Mostyn Dock. Soon the Island hauled into view but typically the wind strength began to rise just when we needed to anchor! For a moment it looked like it



would be too rough.

However by moving closer in to the lee of the low lying island, we found much calmer water, and allowed the anchor to be set. The tides here run quite fierce East-West so no sooner had the tide turned than our stern began turning into the wind, threatening to turn the saloon into a wind tunnel. Heaving the trusty Fisherman's over the lee pushpit kept us nicely on station, bow towards shore while we awaited low water and a chance to explore the Island.

The swell continued as the tide dropped, and then the most alarming graunching and scraping began. Obviously the bottom was coarse but as I kept trying to remind myself 'if you cant do anything about it don't worry.' Just put faith in that ponderous keel and Orla's 'sacrificial shoes' - thankfully renewed!

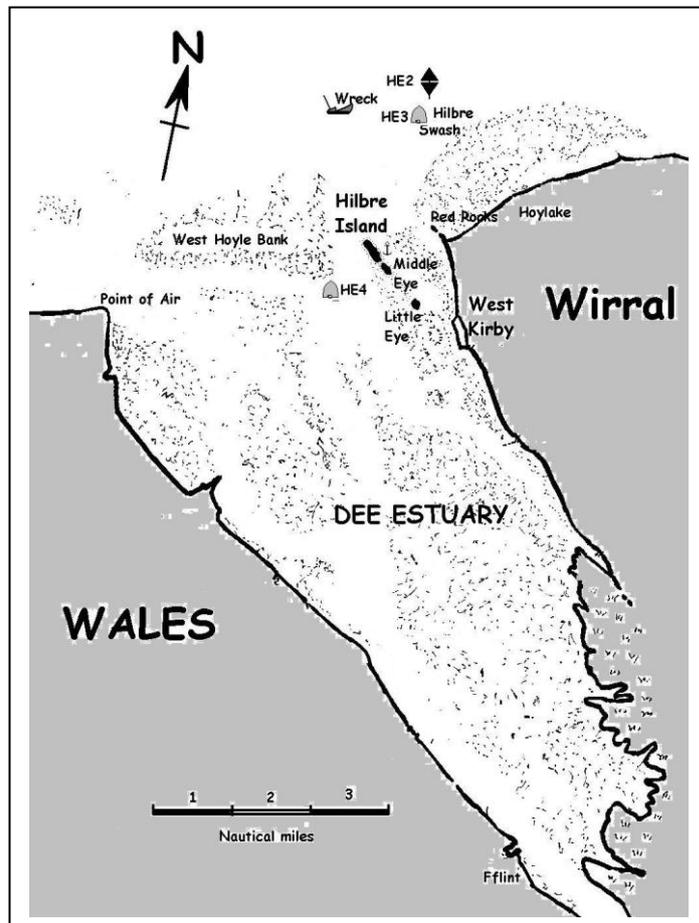
After a hair-raising age, we settled, thankfully upright, and ventured ashore. A more charming and atmospheric island could scarcely be imagined. The underlying soft red Cheshire stone had been weathered and sculpted by the sea. A lonely one time Pilot house remains together with some attractive, charming shacks and the unbelievably battered remains of the former Lifeboat station, its slipway of one ton blocks now flung far and wide as a testimony to the power of the sea.

Fortunately we had not closed *too* far in with the island, staying to seaward of a line of black buoys, as under our keel was a level bed of what appeared to be hard red coral. But it became alarmingly 'boulder like' further in. However behind us to the East, as far as the eye could see, stretched firm flat sand.

A very, very, early start saw us retracing our course then Westward, hugging the N Wales coast, past Point of Aire, Rhyl, Llandudno, then across to Puffin Isle where we rendez-voused with our club mate and a sudden 2 reef squall. We proceeded North, entering Red Wharfe Bay on the top of the Tide.

Unbelievably, within two hours we had passed from freezing squally rain, to really hot and very humid sunshine! A dip over the side beckoned, and after an invigorating swim a joint meal commenced.

The next morning required another early start to get to Cemaes Bay, an exceptionally attractive and (unless a NE wind) safe anchorage. Should the wind shift to this quarter shelter can be found



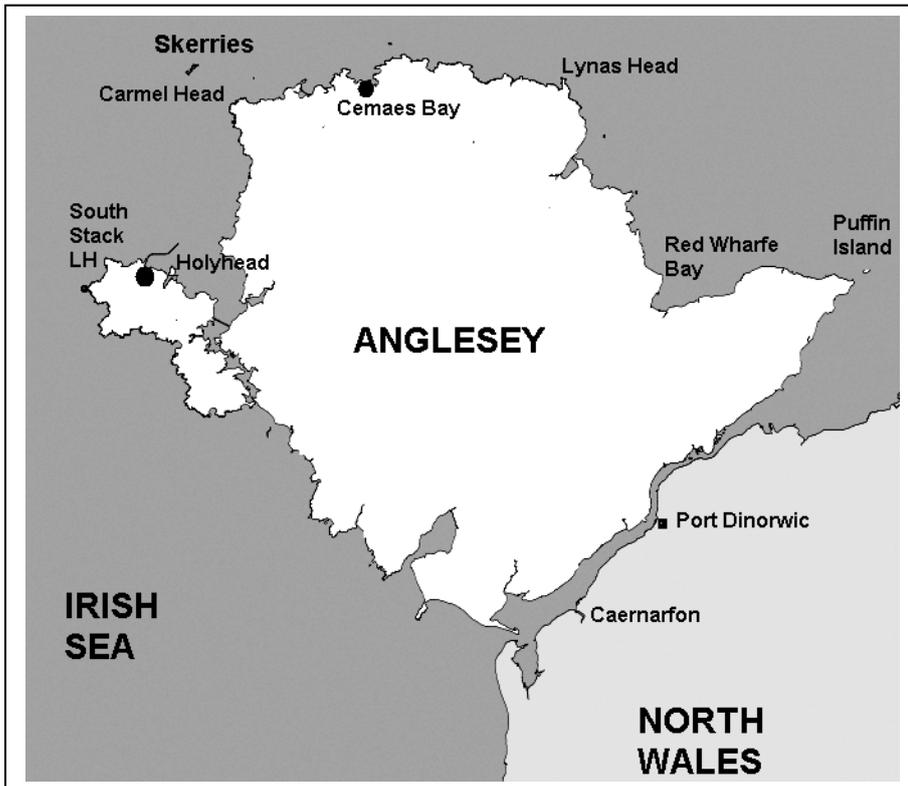
by tucking behind the westerly headland, by the old lifeboat station.

The day turned out to be one of those exceptional sailing days, bright sun, and a steady offshore wind F3-4 occ 5, giving the opportunity for some excellent sailing, just far enough off shore, yet close enough in to enjoy the coastal scenery.

Having turned the corner at Lynas head, it was wind on the nose and beating into the wind, but just as it looked like we could cut inside of Little Mouse and enter the bay, the dinghy, which until this time had traveled happily with its bow tied to the pushpit rail, went solo cruising.

The strong wind soon had it away, but fortunately we managed to recapture it just under the cliffs. An examination of the painter revealed that the original floating poly-prop line had degraded with UV, lost its strength and had simply broken.

Back underway we now had to take the long way round the outside of Middle Mouse to enter Cemaes Bay, picking up a vacant buoy opposite the old jetty. After a trip ashore entrusting the dinghy to my crewmate I answered a routine VHF call to be informed that the dinghy once more making a bid for freedom! Dumping the



Fortunately this was my second trip through so all the waypoints and timing was logged. All I had to do was to drop the mooring in the gloom, and worry about getting entangled with a crab pot, many of which were dotted around the anchorage. Soon with the open sea and a rapidly lightening sky beckoning, it was time to press on, close hauled, under engine and with a strict timetable to keep.

The swell of the previous day had not moderated, and as *Orla* closed with Carmel Head the oncoming waves being funnelled between the offshore rocks and the headland made for an uncomfortable and at times violent fore and aft motion.

mooring and getting rapidly under engine we closed with the dinghy just before the surf line. An 'enquiry' revealed that the use of an inappropriate clove hitch was this time to blame. An uncomfortable fetch had by now developed and was rolling into the bay, so we moved over into the calm of a millpond, by the old lifeboat station, tucked behind the shelter of the western headland.

Anglesey has a delightful circular walk all the way round its coastline, and once again ashore we used this to return to the village for our 'end of cruise' meal. My crewmate now having jumped ship returned to Glasson, while for me another early start beckoned for the next leg around to Holyhead.

A study of the chart and the pilot book of this part of Anglesey is guaranteed to have the familiar 'icy hand' clutching at one's vitals. Savage rocks abound with all too familiar names like the Skerries, and the Archdeacon, fierce tides, overfalls, and enough black ink to almost blot out the blue, however its all a matter of scale and timing (I tried to remind myself !)

Once the chart plotter is homed in to a more practical scale a clear 'inner passage' is revealed, the exception being Passage rock on which many a transiting vessel had doubtless come to grief, fortunately there is a narrow inner-inner channel to the south of it, approx 400 yards wide and bounded by Carmel Head.

Drawing parallel to Passage rock I could see the water boiling violently over it, the tide being low water slack, across on the other side waves were sweeping up the face of Carmel Head. It would have made a good picture if I could have held a camera steady!

Soon we were round Carmel Head and a course for Holyhead, but strung out ahead were yet more rocks to navigate before the pleasure of the open unobstructed sea. The wind now on the beam gave a welcome break from the engine, and a brisk sail soon brought us into the impressive Holyhead harbour, with reputedly the countries longest breakwater.

Here a warm welcome awaits for visiting Yachties courtesy of Holyhead Yacht club, who maintain a number of visitors moorings and a water Taxi service. The weather now deteriorating heralded a change: the coastal forecast being for F7-8. Holyhead is a good place to be weather bound within the safe shelter of the harbour. There is an interesting maritime museum, and a very welcoming yacht club with all the facilities.

Two days later the forecast improved and it was on to Port Dinllaen. This involved yet more navigation of the plentiful black ink on the chart, and a south west coast hugging route under the very cliffs of North and South Stack lighthouses (the alternative being to go several miles out to avoid even worse rocks and tidal races).



Orla passing South Stack lighthouse

Once beyond the shelter of the breakwater the familiar long deep swell began, fortunately the wind was just enough on the bow for the main to draw, and add some much needed stability. The swell though heavy was at least regular and we made fair progress until one rogue wave, rising typically as they do from nowhere ran along the beam rising as it went before dumping in the cockpit and spinning her around. As we closed with North Stack the sea became ever more confused as the energy within rebounded off the steep cliffs.

One Stack down, it was now time for South Stack. The waters here were much calmer in comparison and the camera even came out as the autopilot could now manage the course. Little chance here for a shipwrecked mariner though, as the cliffs hereabouts rise almost vertically. Continuing on SW until a direct course could be set for Port Dinllaen we rose and fell through the swell. On

past the aptly named Fangs, fortunately Port Dinllaen being more of a sheltered cove can be entered at any state of the tide allowing for a relaxing unhurried day's sail.

One of the things I find when solo cruising, possibly because of the intensity of the mental concentration and nervous energy expended, is that once arrival and everything else is sorted the most delicious tiredness overwhelms you! And so it was, after a hearty nights sleep, rocked like a babe in the gentle swell I awoke to glorious sunshine reflected, spangling and dancing on the headlining.

...a rogue wave ran along the side before dumping in the cockpit and spinning her round...

This is a glorious spot to visit with a beachside pub, gently

shelving sandy beach and a 'warm' clean sea. Not surprisingly this is a Mecca for sea bathers. A little later after a quick trip ashore and a quick dip, it suddenly dawned that the calm conditions were ideal for visiting Bardsey Island. This

remote offshore island south west of the Lleyn peninsular has for centuries been a place of pilgrimage, with an ancient abbey and reputedly the remains of 2000 saints buried there.

Current info was that it was home to a colony of monks, who while not forbidding landing discouraged visitors. A quick study of the tides confirmed that it was just possible to negotiate the infamous Bardsey Sound before the north-flooding tide made the strait impossible, so without further delay it was anchors aweigh and off!

A bright sunny sail made the day, but as the wind died the engine took over. The detail on the plotter proving invaluable, as the approach demands caution, the anchorage being guarded by several awash rocks.

The Trident is ideal for this type of exploration, with its shoal draft, iron keel, and ability to take the ground one can relax a little more and gain access to places larger deep draught vessels wouldn't dare. I eventually came to anchor in the central spot I felt happiest in, but as the pilot warned the bottom was kelp, and holding unreliable.

I therefore dug out the fisherman's anchor, and using the dinghy deployed it as far as possible in the opposite direction. I have developed great faith in this pattern of anchor and always find it far more difficult to break out than either the



Port Dinllaen: 'a glorious spot to visit'

plough or Danforth which is *Orla's* primary anchor.

Returning to *Orla* I was startled by a huge seal surfacing just under the oar, evidently put out by my presence, and intent on shooing me off. As it was mid afternoon I decided on a trip ashore.

I rowed towards the simple jetty, followed by strange swirls and aquatic disturbances shadowing my progress. As I reached the shore a figure detached itself from a group and walked towards me. Expecting trouble, I was pleasantly surprised to be welcomed ashore by the sole resident farmer, and offered any assistance should I need it! Relating my expectations of hostile monks he replied that the last holy person (a hermit Nun) had left several years before and now the island was carefully managed using redundant accommodation for self-catering holidays, with an extensive footpath network.

Gleaning directions to the ancient abbey I followed a medieval earth track rising from the beach and soon spied the distinctive outline. The ancient Abbey while little more than a ruin, still contained the old altar together with a Celtic cross, and at that very time the setting sun was shining through it! The rough humpy ground surrounding the Abbey bore testament to the many ancient burials of long ago. This place being the most favored place for ancients to be buried, surrounded by the Saints.

As I explored around the old Abbey I couldn't help keeping an eye on *Orla* riding like a small sea bird in the tiny anchorage. I needn't have



'...a seal surfaced just under my oar'

worried, despite the strengthening W wind the swell was minimal, and she remained where I had left her.

Returning to the dinghy and pushing through the kelp beds that line the shore, the seals once more made their appearance, and once more aboard kept bobbing up alongside, seemingly curious as to what I was doing. The farmer had mentioned that “the seals may keep you awake” (no chance!) but as dusk came on a haunting chorus of wailing and crying began with no let up in the breaching and splashing.

The weather forecast that evening wasn't good, strengthening westerly winds to reach F7-8 by the next evening. I would have preferred to stay longer but holding on kelp beds didn't seem wise, despite the reasonable shelter, so I resolved to make for Porthmadog next day.

I had to await the last of the North going flood before leaving and heading East, meaning a leisurly 10 am start. All being well I should still have enough daylight to begin the approach to Port Maddoc, albeit at the earliest time for entry.

A brisk sail making maximum use of the strengthening wind now coming over the port beam/quarter (Which I find is her fastest point of sail) soon saw us flying by the aptly named Hell's Mouth, a SW facing bay, which in the days of pure sail became a fly trap to square rigged vessels, being unable to tack out of it. On past the sailing Mecca of Abersoch, our speed over the ground now nudging 5 kts while the log hovered at 4-5kts before both settling 5-5, a personal record!

I chose to anchor up at Llanbedrog a quiet attractive bay lined with multicoloured beach huts where anchoring close to a surprisingly high headland provides some useful shelter. Add the gentlest of shelving sandy beaches, an attractive beach bar, pub, public loo, bins and a supermart makes it a really good place to visit, the water here is also gin clear.

Lunch stop over it was back to business and a telephone call to the Porthmadog harbourmaster revealed that the Fairway buoy position was now some quarter of a mile from the position on my plotter. Once more underway a reef was called



Orla ‘riding like a tiny seabird’ amid the kelp in the Bardsey Island anchorage

for as the wind gusts became stronger still. Possibly the most exhilarating sail I have ever experienced developed as by carefully easing the mainsheet, resisting the urge to use the tiller to resist her rounding up, taking in as the gust passed kept her bounding on, and pushed to speed up to an incredible 6kts confirmed by both the log and gps.6-6.This was with one reef almost full Genoa and a dinghy lifted on the aft rail.

It was not to last, as the increasingly strong gusts proved too much and she violently rounded up several times. It was high time to reef, and a jolly time too it was balancing on the coach roof in the heavy swell. As we where going to arrive too early it was time to moderate her speed, reaching the Fairway buoy just within the earliest limit of approach.

Now apparent was the bar, marked by a line of breaking waves extending south beyond the position of the original Fairway buoy. The channel then turns North, following a line inside of the thundering bar, and rather too close for comfort, but with good depth. A most appealing vista now developed as we made our way up the attractive estuary in the low sunshine, and once having reached the end of the regimented lanes of moored vessels, made fast alongside the Harbourmaster's office in the last of the evening twilight.

Feeling the need for like minded company I sought out the yacht club, finding it further along the quay disguised as a Thai restaurant that now shares its extensive building. I was immediately made very welcome, and pressed to re moor alongside the club jetty but I had had quite enough for one day. The forecast for the next few days was awful, and as forecast. Glad to be within the relative shelter of the harbour I took time out to become a tourist. Lots to do here particularly for a family cruise with several narrow gauge railways climbing into the nearby breathtaking mountains. Three days later and a suitable early tide saw us re tracing our route. Making maximum use of the long days I worked out that I could reach Porth

Dinllaen in one 12 hour sail, pausing at Abadaron, until the fluky contrary coast-hugging current began. This current I had been advised allows you to transit most of the North going leg of the Bardsey channel some 2 hours before the main flood starts saving heaps of time, however where the two currents meet 'confused' water would be encountered.

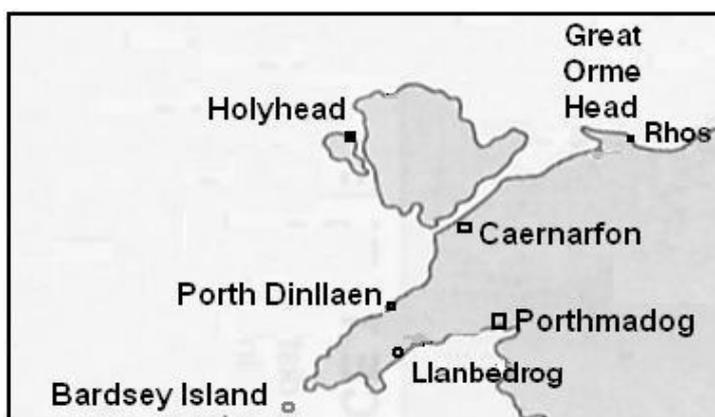
The sail progressed without incident, mostly on engine to maintain speed against the ebbing tide, the wind being just off the bow. By late afternoon we where anchored off Abadaron, with just enough time for a brew and to pack enough food down to see the impending late sail through.

As promised *Orla* swung her stern to the north and it was time to go. Hugging the coast one has to pass inside of Carreg Ddu rock avoiding the lurking crab pots like so many sea mines. Also as promised, the 'confused water' lived up to its name, but not enough to worry a Trident! Beyond here one encounters the last of the ebbing tide so progress is slow until the North-going flood gives a welcome lift. At the stroke of 2200 we rounded the headland in the dark,

thankful for the chart plotters crumb trail, that led us faithfully in to our previous anchorage. Up spirits over, the familiar tiredness put paid to plans for food, and with the lee cloths drawn up around me countering the heavy swell, I

dropped off into sweet oblivion.

Next morning with no rest for the wicked or obligatory dips, the tidal gates called the shots, so anchors aweigh it was off again to get over Caernarfon bar. An excellent sail under a sombre overcast took us across the bay to the cardinal mark close by Pilot Island. But just as I was reducing sail a terrific series of following swells threw *Orla* around for fun, forcing me to drop onto the coach roof and straddle the mast to avoid being flung off. Reefs completed, we followed the channel but spotting the buoys in that beam-on swell was a nightmare. Abeam of



Fort Belan the swell reduced and the familiar features of the Menai strait beckoned.

Port Dinorwic was to be the day's destination, also conveniently the practical limit of progress against the flooding tide. After picking up a vacant buoy I readied the dinghy for a trip ashore. However later in the day the forecast deteriorated rapidly, and I was to be storm bound yet again.

Bank holiday Monday dawned bright and sunny, and with a midday deadline to begin the transit of the straits, made for a leisurely start.

As I awaited cast-off time, several large yachts with probably powerful engines were already beginning to transit the strait, well in advance of slack. Fighting the urge to rush off I awaited my departure 'slot' bringing up the rear of a gaggle of yachts. As we entered the narrows all manner of powerboats, jetskis and every idiot in creation shouting Yahoo! swept past, taking great delight in passing as close as possible, and throwing us around in their wake. Oh for a handy bucket of slops!

Once under the familiar bridges the straits opened up and taking the Dutchman's Swatch, I set course for Great Orme Head. I had planned to anchor off Rhos on sea, partly as a fact finding exercise, should I ever need a refuge on this coast. So hugging the coast yet again passed Gt Orme, and Colwyn Bay, coming to anchor off Rhos pier in about 2 metres, approx 200 yds off the end off the long low wooden pier. Several stone breakwaters have been constructed here to create small attractive inner harbours, from the previously exposed coastline.

As dusk fell the lights ashore lured me like a moth, and a short row and wade through the shallows, was soon enjoying the pleasant surroundings of a miniature Southport. It's a sort of genteel arcade lined place.

Back aboard another very early start awaited for the return to Glasson. So a little before dawn we weighed anchor, and headed North, through a forest of wind farms and into a glorious sunny day. An uneventful sail past ever increasing installations and the familiar beckoning Blackpool Tower soon saw *Orla* swinging happily, back on her river Lune mooring. Altogether a thoroughly enjoyable and varied cruise with lots of pleasant memories to dwell upon.

Ian Atkinson

As you were...

By the time you finish reading this, you will probably feel you can no longer rely on a word you read in *Trident News* (if you ever did). I have two embarrassing confessions to make.

1. Back in November I boasted about the four (two extra) anodes on *Lottie's* bilge plates last year. When she was hauled out for the winter it became apparent that the result of all that extra zinc was that much of the paint on her steelwork had bubbled off – both the antifouling and the five coats of Primocon metal primer. In addition I had the worst plague of barnacles ever in 30 odd years on a Dell Quay mooring.

To add insult to injury, I then came across an article I'd written in 1982 for *Practical Boat Owner* where I had noted exactly the same thing had happened with my earlier Trident, *Eleanor* when I fitted zinc anodes. I had completely forgotten about this. (You can read that *PBO* article in the 'Tridentology' section of the online Manual – details on page 3).

I e-mailed MG Duff, the cathodic protection specialists and their very helpful technical manager, Rick Simpson, replied that 'over-protection' (too many anodes) could cause paint to bubble. "The hydrogen formed from the reactions causes bubbling which can lift the paint coating. During these reactions, you get alkalinity forming at the cathode area of the affected steel, and alkalinity is the worst enemy of paint. It breaks down the paint's resin and you lose all adhesion with the metal." As I suspect Primocon also contains Zinc (and have now replaced the five coats that bubbled off) this year I'm trying no anodes at all, except on the prop shaft.

2. My second bloomer in that same article was to imply you don't need to worry too much about protecting your P-bracket. Then, while updating the Owners Manual, I discovered at least four Tridents had suffered broken P-brackets. Worse still, one of them was my own boat *Lottie* under her previous owner! And galvanic corrosion certainly played a part in most of these.

Lottie's bracket was replaced with a stainless steel fabrication. But I'd certainly be keeping an eye out for any signs of discolouration, weakness or corrosion on a bronze one. A shaft anode provides no protection: the rubber cutless bearing insulates the bracket from the protection of the shaft zinc.

Yours cringingly,

Bob Doe