

With the Castor Spica around England

Jan van der Pouw



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During the summer of 2022 Jan van der Pouw took his Trintella I, *Castor Spica* on a single-handed sailing journey: Around England in 80 days, counterclockwise



Part 1 – from Lowestoft on de English East coast to Eyemouth



The east coast of the United Kingdom should qualify as a hidden gem. From Lowestoft on you see very few yacht sailing northwards. Most of us are only familiar with Lowestoft, the least attractive harbor city of East Anglia barring Grimsby, or Ramsgate, because of the crossing. Ramsgate is at least a nice place compared to Lowestoft ad Grimsby. During my trip in 2022 Lowestoft was the first port of call after Ijmuiden. Despite the less attractive harbor, it is exceptionally hospitable thanks to the RN&SYC and quality of their 'cooked breakfast' – which makes for an excellent start of the day. Since Brexit you'll need a Q-flag to receive clearance, which is handled completely via email. I sailed from Lowestoft to Wells-next-the-Sea with an SSW wind 3-6. A trip of 62 miles.





Wells-next-the-Sea

Wells is a lovely little town, but you must time your arrival properly because the channel is partially drained during low water.

I arrived at the last possible moment, but the harbor master came over in his RIB to guide me through. An exceptionally nice and helpful fellow, and I have encountered many of them during my entire trip. An unparalleled description of Wells can be found in Imray's East Coast Pilot. When leaving Wells at 04:45 in the morning, I was so caught up in enjoying the sights and the sunrise that the tide knocked me straight into a red barrel. Talking about wake-up calls! Lesson learned. The damage wasn't too bad. The anchor's locking pin was a little bent – and later this turned out to be more serious than initially surveyed, since I couldn't unlock the pin anymore. When trying to find a new pin it turned out that there are hardly any chandlers on the UK's east coast, at least none that are not a few hours by car. I sawed off the pin so I could at least cast my anchor, and eventually managed to replace the pin at a chandler in Ardfern (West Scotland, after the Caledonian Canal).

I'd love to have sailed The Wash up to King's Lynn and Boston, but a SW-6 made that a little difficult. So, I set course for Grimsby, which was easily reached with said wind and a fair amount of sun. A trip of 58 miles. With waves on the quarter this daytrip was a good test of the new wooden mast I'd had put in just two weeks before departure. You can enter the Grimsby harbor through a 'free flow' lock of 2hrs +/- HW. If you're early, as I was, you can anchor behind the southern pier. The shipping on the Humber from and to Hull is something to keep in mind. The harbors are in an industrial port area, but the hospitality of the yacht club was typically British once again. It's 67 miles from Grimsby to Scarborough and the route goes past Flamborough Head. It's a

beautiful cape with a bird sanctuary. It is recommended to stay 2 miles away from shore because of the wind and tide.

The weather reports said that there would be rain and thunderstorms coming in from the southwest, with lots of wind. Thankfully, most of the rain passed by me, except the last storm. Of course, that happened exactly around Flamborough Head, while I was sailing fully rigged. The mainsail had to come down. I luffed and sailing on the genoa I managed to get the mainsail down. I tied it up later because the luffing led me to sail right towards the cape. Then suddenly 2 miles are next to nothing.

In Scarborough, the harbor master was another exceptionally helpful and kind chap. When calling in on the marine radio, they knew I was coming from Wells. Apparently, Rob (the Wells' harbor master) had let them know. It was very kind of them to come onto the docks to take my ropes. Scarborough is much nicer and prettier than I'd imagined. Of course, there were the typical tourist traps of the East Coast, but the town is well-worth a walk, thanks to its history and the Scarborough Fair, which unfortunately wasn't there when I was visiting. The Fair is famous because of the 200 year old ballad, also covered by Simon & Garfunkel.



Scarborough harbor

From Scarborough I travelled on to Whitby. It's a relatively short trip of 23 miles. Compared to 30 years ago, Whitby is much improved. The entire city has been renovated/restored with a clean yacht harbor behind the bridge. The arrival route takes you past the abbey on the southern shore. I was a little too late for the bridge opening and got an anchorage at a pontoon near the Fishers Quay, which was a little uncomfortable.



Whitby

From Whitby I sailed to Hartlepool, a 26-mile trip. The entrance to the Hartlepool harbor is a little tricky to find, but once you're past the lock you enter a large, well-organized marina. The Marine Museum with the Trincomalee frigate is worth a visit. When entering the lock on engine, my plotter and radio suddenly went 'dark'. Once in the harbor and plugged into shore power, I managed to get everything working again, but it left me a little worried. These batteries don't like running out completely. The cause turned out to be a nut that had come loose due to vibrations, and a battery switch that had trouble shifting to 'on' mode.

From Hartlepool to Blyth with the yacht harbor Royal Northumberland Yacht Club. The harbor isn't truly in the city center, but the club ship, the oldest still floating wooden lightvessel, is really lovely.



Blyth – club ship of RNYC

I had a truly excellent meal for a rather low price. Again, there were many welcoming members who loved to chat. I met a Roger who used to sail the Zeevalk and visited Muiden. The more you know.

The next destination was supposed to be Berwick-upon-Tweed, but the RNYC discourages this because of the bad anchorage location. Later I heard this information was outdated. So, I will

visit the next time I go to the UK. The trip went on – I sailed by the Farne Islands and Holy Island. I didn't stop this time, but I will next trip. I counted 5 castles (in ruins) during this trip alone, reminders of a time long past.

After Berwick, my next stop was the southernmost harbor city of the Scottish East Coast, Eyemouth. A 56-mile trip. The Scottish courtesy flag went up. The locals appreciated that very much. Arriving at Eyemouth is a bit nerve-wrecking because the channel passes through rocks. The place is very dear, clean and has several great pubs and restaurants.

Part 2 - Scottish east coast and Moray Firth and the Caledonian Canal to Banavie



Eyemouth

The Scottish East coast and Moray Firth

From Eyemouth I crossed the Firth of Forth (route to Edinburgh) to Arbroath – well-known for the 'smokies': smoked haddock. A 45-mile trip. When arriving at the harbor, the lobster traps found everywhere drove me crazy. The things show up everywhere at the UK coast, but this was the most I'd ever seen. During my trip I had heard of several boats who'd gotten a trap's line stuck in their propeller, so I hardly dared to sail on the engine at night. Anyway, Arbroath is well-worth a visit. I had the best fish & chips there of my entire journey, and there are great pubs. The Commercial Inn is an absolute recommendation if you want to meet

some locals. Arbroath Marina is behind a lock, which is only manned during office hours (every three hours +/- HW).

The next destination was Peterhead. A 75-mile trip. I left with a SW 6 but arrived with a N 7-8. Not my favorite for a 16-hour trip.

I left on the genoa and had planned to have the mainsail up with two reefs before Aberdeen. I thought it would be possible, sheltered by the coast from the wind. I was wrong. The wind changed to NW and up to a 6. With waves coming headfirst I didn't want to move to the mast. So, I went ahead with just the genoa. The wind shifted further north and on channel 16 I heard that Gale Force 8 was imminent. Well, it was there already. Though by then it was dark and uneasy, the Castor Spica held her own like a proper seagoing vessel. It was relatively quiet, and the new mast held its own with just the genoa despite all that nature threw at us. It was a relief when I managed to go tack before the harbor entrance and found myself in quieter waters.

Like Aberdeen, Peterhead is a harbor with many offshore boats. The Marina is in the SW corner and it's a short walk to the town and the closest supermarket. After checking the boat after this rough trip, I found that the bilge was full of water – almost to the cabin floor. (The bilge of a Trintella 1 is deep/big.) So, I spent a lot of time finding possible leaks. Though I found one contender, it didn't explain the massive amounts of water. Something to keep an eye on. At the recommendation of some friends from Eyemouth, I sailed from Peterhead to Whitehills.



Whitehills

A 38-mile trip. The town is located at the Moray Firth and has a nice, small harbor with the kindest harbor master in Scotland. A man named Bernie. You see, Bernie takes pictures of the boat when you are coming in, and you can download them from him. When paying in the harbor's office after docking, his first comment was: 'before you ask,

the answers are yes, and yes.' There's a pub and a supermarket.

When I wanted to make myself a cup of tea, I was surprised to find myself without water – though I had filled the tank at Arbroath. So, I filled it again. It was strange that it wouldn't fill entirely. When I opened the hatch, I saw that the water was all the way up to the cabin floor. A leak in the water tank! I opened the inspection hatch and saw the sensor of the water meter was broken, and that resulted in a hole in the tank. I created a makeshift solution and it's been fixed since. Whitehills to Lossiemouth was a 40-mile trip with Head wind.



Lossiemouth

So, we sailed against the wind. If you can sail the route in a straight line, it's only 25 miles. Lossiemouth is a delectable little harbor that comes with the recommendation to reach out to the harbor master (Amanda) ahead of time to discuss the ideal time of passage for your draught. The Castor Spica is 1.35 m but with the low tide she was in the mud and about 10/20 cm above the water. But that was on the visitor berth. There are several great pubs and restaurants near the harbor, and quite a few day tourists. I stayed here for a few days to meet my Scottish friends from Elgin. I also got the service battery replaced here. My next destination was Nairn, about 23 miles west of Lossiemouth. This is another small harbor that you cannot enter with a draught over 1.5 m. The channel is a challenge because it drains almost completely. The yacht harbor is mainly used by yachts of the local sailing club, and you'll stand out as a Dutch yacht. People are very hospitable but there's neither water nor shore power at the docks. You can shower in the clubhouse, and you'll receive a key from the harbor master to do so.

Though the trip to Inverness is only 16 miles, I was anxious to pass beneath the Kessock Bridge spanning the Beaully Firth on time. When the tide

is not in your favor with about 7 knots, I couldn't have done anything but anchor and wait for it to turn. But on the engine, I made it just in time.

Crossing the Caledonian Canal 'Single handed'

In Inverness we start our journey south, through the Caledonian Canal. I spend a day in the Inverness Marina to get the license and talk to the lock masters to agree on a time for locking. Then on 18 July I sailed to the Clachnaharry Sea Locks. I have quite some experiences in sailing solo through locks, but this one caught me off-guard with its high walls, but at least there was a friendly (assistant) harbor master. I had my long lines ready and while I'd have preferred to be docked bow first, the man above me wanted to have my stern line first. The result was exactly what I'd feared. My ship decided to drift away from the wall and though I got my bow line on the shore, the dear fellow lost his grip and before I knew what had happened, I was drifting backwards in the lock. 'Quite embarrassing'. And this was just the beginning.

The four Muirtown Flight locks went smoothly, and then I heard on the radio that the Tomnahurich Swing Bridge half a mile down couldn't run because of the heat (23°C). The price to pay for the fair weather: a two-mile distance! I heard that there were also a staff shortage limiting the number of lockings a day. Before the lock I met a lovely couple from Hastings, with whom I sailed until Fort Augustus.

The next day I left during the first shift at 08:15 for Loch Ness, with a short stop after the lock of Dochgarroch.



Gairloch Locks - Caledonian Canal

Truly beautiful scenery, and in a tearoom, I treated myself to a great cup of coffee and something sweet. I had planned to go for a walk, but the temperature had gotten quite high at that point, so I decided to sail on. I sailed onto Loch Ness, which is rather interesting with all the

stories surrounding it. It was lovely weather: no wind and lots of sun. The beauty of the nature is overwhelming. I sailed right past Urquhart Castle.



Urquhart Castle

It was too busy for my taste to anchor there, so I sailed onward to Fort Augustus. I anchored at a pontoon and spent a minute exploring the town. It was clearly too touristy for me. Apparently, I had gotten used to quiet. Probably related to the 20-year anniversary of the Canal. I took a long walk the next day, exploring a large part of the Great Glen Way, enjoying beautiful nature and splendid sights.

After the five locks of Fort Augustus I sailed onto Loch Oich, the highest lake, to the Laggan Locks.



Laggan Locks

Docked for a lock for the night and visited the floating pub 'Eagle Barge' for a great meal and some drinks.

After locking the next morning, sailing the third and last lake, Loch Lochy, the weather turned Scottish: rain. But again, the nature was stunning. After some four hours I arrived at Banavie, over Neptune's Staircase.

I docked behind an Ovni from Nairn, whose dock I had used as a guest when I was there.

to drop past Easdale Island to sail the Cuan Sound. Because I have a strong aversion to lee shore, this was quite the issue. You sail towards a rocky coast with a lot of breakers and two large antennae masts to aim for since you must pass between them. Having a plotter does ease the mind. Once inside, the waves disappeared but the wind also subsided, as well as the leeway of South Cuan. Because I had been so quick, I was an hour early in going in – meaning there was a strong outward current to push us back towards the entrance. I called upon the engine to pass through the Sound and a lovely little sun came out to see me towards Craobh.



On the way to Craobh

The sights are truly marvelous. Craobh is a pretty, modern marine with exceptionally lovely staff. When contacting the neighbors, they invited me over for tea. At the port office you can purchase different nautical objects. I finally was able to buy the locking pin for my anchor. I highly recommend the nearby pub 'Lord of the Isles'. The village is truly small, with only a few houses.

At my neighbors' recommendation, I sailed from Craobh over Loch Graignish to Ardfern at the end of the Loch. Several sources name it Scotland's most beautiful Loch and I can only say that it was truly breathtaking. Beautiful mooring, the Ardfern port has all modern conveniences including a well-stocked shop of nautical objects, and modern sanitation. The village is only a little bigger than Craobh with a wonderful pub/restaurant, a tearoom with home-made goodies, and a delightful little grocery. There I made the long hike to Loch's mouth. On 28/7 at 04:00 I left towards Islay; unfortunately, the wind was missing once more, so I went forward again on engine. Sunrise when you sail such a Loch is spectacular. Though both sunrise and sunset at sea are always beautiful, they never cease to amaze me. On route to Islay, I had hoped to moor at Lagavullin Bay, but it only has two moorings,

and those were both taken. So, I sailed on to Port Ellen with a little harbor that had place for me. A 45-mile journey. I hired a bike and explored the island and distilleries. You can see that the island is well-off, everything is perfectly kept. Scotland has stolen my heart by now; such a beautiful (sailing) area, nice people, pretty ports, and moorings. I will return here with the Castor Spica; I might leave her there for a season. After two days it was time to leave Scotland and I crossed to Northern Ireland, in the direction of Ballycastle on the Rathlin Sound.

When crossing you might notice the Atlantic swells. Rathlin Sound is infamous for the tidal flows and whirlpool it causes. There are two whirlpools in Northern Ireland that are so intense that they have a name: Rathlin Sound and Strangford Lough. The harbour master of Ballycastle is another very kind man.



In Ballycastle

Next to me was moored a couple from Belfast, again very kind, who gave me several tips for the journey further down the east coast of Ireland. After having visited a pub with live music together with a French couple, I crossed to Rathlin Island. You must time this right because of the tides, otherwise you'll see all the corners of the Sound, as a Dutch couple later told me. Apparently, I did it the right way because I crossed in a straight line. On Rathlin there's a little port with a village store, which was, according to the harbour master, open whenever it felt like it – no logic to it whatsoever. Of course, I went, and it was open. Its small assortment was a delight compared to the abundance of choices in our Dutch supermarkets. Rathlin is Irish and has a bloody past with multiple mass murders by the English on the Scottish who fled here. It is said that Robert the Bruce sat in a cave here when he was inspired to start his final rebellion against the English. After a somewhat

rainy day on Rathlin, my next destination was Glenarm. Again, I calculated the tides right and sailed into the North Channel with lovely weather. In Glenarm I met the crew of the Babar again, they made a series of pictures of the entrance. Glenarm is a small town with a beautiful castle, which is still inhabited. You can visit it and hear all about the juicy details.



Castor Spica entering Glenarm

From Glenarm to Bangor. This time a hodgepodge of weather over those 24 miles: rain, drizzle, sun, little wind, lots of wind with 2-6 BFT gusts. When I sailed onto Belfast Lough wind was coming in 25 knots, which was a little too much sail for only 1 reef. Bangor Marina is a well-organized port with all facilities. Wednesday evening, I was a 'visiting yachtsman' at the Royal Ulster Yacht Club. Phil the treasurer was host and introduced me to fellow club members. Such hospitality and bonhomie in a wonderfully formidable club house. Great food and a stunning view over the Belfast Lough. After several recommendations for Strangford Lough, drinks and dinner, David also gave me a short tour through the club house. Their trophy cabinet is comparable to ours in Muiden. I also saw the Gloucester chamber and the Lipton Room. Yes, the tea and the four shamrocks of America's Cup. He had been refused as a trader for the Royal Yacht Squadron in Cowes and became challenger for the Cup from the RUYC. Never saw it, but there was a Queen's Loo. The toilets were designed by someone in the 19th century and are apparently so comfortable that you can fall asleep on them. Thursday, I took the train to Belfast for the Titanic Museum – very impressive and educational, but boy, what a mass of people despite the time slots. I also visited Nomadic, a tender for among others the Titanic. In the evening I visited Jenny's, Bangor's oldest pub. They had live music, and I had a deep philosophical conversation with William, a kind and interesting man, who used to be a police office, dive master and many other things. A true

jack of all trades. But man, is such an Irish pub a good time!



Entering Strangford Lough

On the morning of 5 August, I decided to leave for Strangford Lough because of the weather and wind forecast for the upcoming few days. It took some calculating because of the tides, since the tidal flows are strong on the Lough, and you cannot sail against them. Another challenge was how to moor at a pontoon singlehandedly with these flows. Thankfully everything went well. Initially I shot past the harbour with 8 knots and had to turn back with 2.5 knots and full power. I had dinner at the Cuan, which was delicious, and I took a bottle of red wine back to the boat – to be cracked open and enjoyed with some cheese, together with Peter, an 'old gaffer' who brought his own wine. Peter is moored behind me and invited me to join him on Saturday to cross to Portaferry with the ferry. There's an old gaffer's event, called Boats and Sounds, with music et cetera. I'd love to see what it's all about. Saturday morning Peter and I got ready to take the ferry to Portaferry, when Danny Breen, a berthing master, comes swaggering over to chat with us. A nice fellow, and when we finally went on our way, he called me back over to give me his Public Transport card. He said: 'thumbs up for the picture, and wave. No need to pay. Put it back on my boat when you return.' Isn't that just the nicest thing? It is that characteristic Celtic hospitality that I have been encountering my entire journey. The festival was a little disappointing, but the folk music was nice at the sailing club, and we had a few pints of Guinness outside as well as a baked salmon.

Ireland - Dun Laoghaire

I left Strangford with high tides, on the one hand to avoid the force of the tides and on the other hand to be on time. A long trip of exactly 70 (sea)miles in 13 hours and 45 minutes. I'd mostly have a west wind, with 3-4 BFT later on. It didn't

quite turn out that way. The first two hours I had a nice western, ship going smoothly, but it sank to SW 4, so I had to call on Nils. Beginning of the afternoon I still didn't have wind, but the weather was wonderful, nonetheless. Later, around 17:00, the wind came on a little, but all the way from the south. Disappointing. To be brief: Nils had a busy day. Around 20 miles before Dun Laoghaire the ebb tide came on, so I went the right way with about 5.5-7 knots. I finally moored at the Marina at 22:15. It was very busy with all the departing and incoming ferries and cargo vessels.



Sunset in Dun Laoghaire

A nice little fact is that the Irish Sea doesn't really have tidal flows. Flood comes from the north and south streaming in at about the same time to about midway, and the same goes for the low tides. Even more flows in the North Channel and the St. George Channel, however.

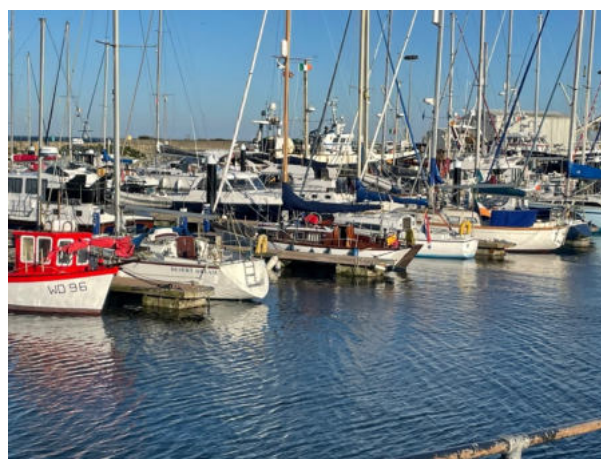
Part 4 – from Dun Laoghaire in Ireland to Muiden in the Netherlands



After a visit to Dublin, easily reachable by train from Dun Laoghaire, I sailed towards Arklow. A 36-mile journey almost entirely on the motor due to the lack of wind. I never expected to motor so

much. With beautiful weather, it was quite warm. I walked through the village where the main street is lined with numerous pubs. The harbor is not much to boast about. The next stop will be Kilmore Quai on the southeast side of Ireland.

This 54-mile stretch was mostly covered by motor. The Irish coast here isn't particularly appealing, but you pass by Tuskar Rock, which is quite beautiful to see, and just before Kilmore are the Saltee Islands. St. Patrick's Bridge lies between the islands and the mainland of Ireland. It's not a bridge but a shallow area where the tide can be quite strong, and it's essential to plan carefully. While I hadn't seen many yachts on my journey so far, the harbor of Kilmore was packed. I was supposed to dock next to a huge motor yacht, for which I'd have needed climbing gear to get ashore. Nevertheless, I called the harbor master to inquire if there was another option. After confirming my boat's length again, he exclaimed that I'd won the lottery.



Castor Spica in Kilmore Quai Ireland

I got a lovely berth with a finger pier, the last one available. From that moment, I was "The Lucky Dutchman." A charming little village with the best fish & chips in southeast Ireland. After two days, I set sail at 4 in the morning to catch the southeast wind to Milford Haven in Wales. The initial motor journey in the dark was thrilling, especially with the crab/lobster pots whose buoys weren't visible. A beautiful sunrise and it was fantastic to sail again until about 3 hours before the river's entrance, when the wind died down. You can spot quite a few dolphins here, sometimes very close to the boat. The 71-mile journey continued to Neyland past Milford. Anchorage and mooring spots were crowded, and I didn't want to be behind Milford's lock. In hindsight, not the wisest decision as it was a significant sail and partly an industrial area. Re-clearing turned out to be a needless hassle

Cornwall

On August 13th, I embarked on a long 82-mile journey towards Padstow in Cornwall.



Castor Spica on the Celtic Sea

It's one of the most delightful harbors I've visited on this trip, highly recommended. The day started with hope but eventually, there was no wind, just a glassy Celtic Sea, Bristol Channel. So, I resorted to the motor, thankfully with lots of dolphins displaying their acrobatics. I arrived in Padstow just 15 minutes late; the lock closed at 10 PM.



Castor Spica at the quay of Padstow

However, the harbor master allowed me to moor at the RLNI buoy for the night. Navigating the river (the Camel) was a challenge in the dark as I had no idea where the buoy was. I accidentally sailed past it after the last red light. It was quite a task to catch the pickup line in the strong river current. The next morning, the harbor master called me via the radio, allowing me to enter after 7:30 AM and moor at the quay using a ladder. Make sure to have long lines as there's a few meters of tide before the door closes again.

Padstow has a small harbor basin with various shops, eateries, and drink spots along the quay. It's cozy and bustling with day-trippers. After a few days enjoying the delights of Cornwall and

pondering why I'd motored so much, I decided I wanted to sail and so I did.

The next leg is around Land's End towards Newlyn. It was a journey I won't easily forget. A wind of 2-6 from the northeast, rain, a lot of rain, and no wind. Since I vowed not to motor, I drifted slowly toward Land's End but missed the tidal gate, which would have given me a favorable current until the entrance of the Channel. As a result, I had the tide against the wind at Land's End. That's not always comfortable, especially with a northeast wind of 5-6, causing very high waves. The boat went under with its boom half-submerged three times. Ultimately, I anchored at Gwavas Lake, the bay between Newlyn and Penzance, at 11:30 PM. I didn't feel like entering a full harbor with strong wind after a 71-mile journey. I had a lovely sleep despite the rain and wind and the next day, as the weather cleared up, I decided to stay a while longer, enjoying the view, including St Michael's Mount.

On the 18th, I set sail at 6:15 AM towards Falmouth with a northwest wind of 3-4. Sailing past the Lizard, I spotted four or five sailboats sailing close to the coast for the first time. However, I prefer staying about 2 to 3 miles from the shore. After 39 miles in drizzly rain, I entered Falmouth Haven. Fortunately, the weather cleared up, allowing me to explore the town with a rich maritime history. Excellent fish & chips and an amazing evening at the Chain Locker with good food, a lively crowd, and great live music. I had several interesting encounters in Falmouth. The most bizarre was on the morning of departure. I saw a Pogo, one of those small MiniTransat boats, anchored close to me, and it turned out to belong to a Dutchman. I spoke to him, and he told me he'd been towed in by the lifeboat that night. What an adventure, what had happened? I was stunned as he narrated his story. The autopilot had failed, and outside, he couldn't see the chart plotter!

I sailed directly towards Fowey, about 25 miles, sailing beautifully and arriving with the jib only. In the bay, you can moor at a buoy and take a water taxi to the very picturesque town. Highly recommended.



Fowey Gig regatta

From Fowey, I sailed to Salcombe with a forecast of a 3-5 south/southwest wind with showers, mist, and rain. I only encountered two of those showers with a fair amount of wind, but they passed in about five minutes. After 37 miles, I arrived in Salcombe with some sunshine. It's like Fowey but on a larger scale. You can tell Salcombe is a water sports paradise; you see everything from canoes to jet skis.

Now on my way to Teignmouth, a 35-mile journey that took about 9 hours. Navigating into Teignmouth is challenging due to the many buoys; the waterway is hard to discern. Eventually, I was allowed to moor my 1.3-meter draft boat inside a pontoon, which was comfortable, although there was no connection to the shore. I didn't feel like inflating the dinghy, so I observed everything from the cockpit.



Teignmouth

Departed at 5:15 AM towards Weymouth with a beautiful southwestern wind. This made the boat sail at 6-7 knots through the water. Sailing into Weymouth was a treat. Despite the motorboats and jet skis' busy activity at the entrance, I decided to anchor peacefully at Goathorn Point near Brownsea Island. Soothing.



Near Portland Bill

This proved to be true with about 6 knots against and a wind that almost died down. My strategy to sail well around it ended up in dead water; consequently, I didn't make any progress, and in fact, I was going backward. So, I had to rely on the faithful Sabb once again. Eventually, with a nice sunny weather, I could still sail into the harbor for the last miles. It's a nice, large place with two faces: the beach and everything associated with a certain English audience, and the harbor with boat people, along with their pubs and camaraderie. A day to make use of the excellent marina facilities and clean up the boat. Here, I encountered someone for the first time who related the name Castor Spica to astronavigation. Quite interesting.

At 8:00, I set off towards Poole Harbour, enjoying sailing against the tide at St Alban Head, but with no hurry. Due to the congestion of motorboats and jet skis at the entrance, I decided to turn portside at Brownsea Island and peacefully anchor at Goathorn Point. Refreshing.

The Solent

Anchored up at 7:15 AM to make it to the Solent on time. Everything was quiet, and I didn't see anyone heading out. I thought, did I calculate correctly? I chuckled when a yacht near Brownsea Island quickly set sail. Did they think the guy with the classic yacht would know better? I'm going too! But at the entrance, numerous yachts emerged from the marinas. Sailing wasn't very swift with the northeast wind of 1-2 Bft, so I had to resort to the motor just for about half an hour to pass through the North Channel, against a tide of about 2-3 knots. It was a bit of a traffic jam sailing into Yarmouth on Wight due to the Bank Holiday. Luckily, with my 8.7, I could navigate in. I had to dock alongside a boat from the harbor

master, as larger boats were double moored both in front and behind.



Castor Spica parked in Yarmouth

It was a tight space, but with the Sabb's clockwise propeller in forward and reverse, I managed to park well. It was nerve-wracking, but I received a round of applause from the crews of the other boats. I was and still am, very proud. Yarmouth is genuinely the most charming village in the Solent, small with lovely pubs and restaurants, and shops. A great marina. From Yarmouth, I sailed 4 miles an hour to Lymington. Moored at the Town Quay, close to the cobblestoned streets of the center, bustling with day-trippers during the day and quieter in the evening. If you ever sail there, visiting the Cellar, a tasting room, is highly recommended. Sailed from Lymington to Cowes on Wight with quite a strong northeast wind and choppy seas.



Weymouth

I secured everything on the river and prepared, not wanting to capsize overboard. Cowes genuinely exudes the sailing spirit but is quite expensive, like all harbors in the Solent. I also noticed that from Weymouth, the number of motorboats increases exponentially as you enter the Solent. Many of these boaters seem to have no knowledge of navigation rules or proper

conduct, very un-English. The wind remained in the northeast corner, not very pleasant. From Cowes towards Itchenor near Chichester. Sailing past forts named "No Man's Land Fort" or "Horse Sand Fort," I intended to anchor at the river's mouth. However, due to the expected strong northeast wind, I sailed further to a pontoon at Itchenor. A lovely little town with a friendly harbor master and a water taxi. I spent the day there as the strong wind kept me up at night. Had I overlooked something? I checked the almanac and indeed, in heavy wind of 4-5, it wasn't advisable to pass through the Looe near Selsey Point but to sail about 4 to 5 miles further off the coast. That would have cost me considerable time heading towards Brighton. So, after careful consideration, I decided to stay put. It turned out to be the right call because the next day was quite stormy.



Itchenor

Departed 1.5 hours before high tide from Chichester at 7:30 AM with very little wind. I could navigate through the Looe, but eventually, the wind completely died out, and the boat lost all speed. So, once again, the Sabb had to take over, and it had to do that all the way to Brighton. In Brighton, you find a professional marina with all the facilities. I visited an old friend there. Due to sometime pressure, I refueled and left at 9 AM for Dover. After 12.5 hours and 60 miles, I arrived.



Dover Castle

Thankfully, I had reserved my berth via phone as the new marina was still closed to visitors, and I was told I would be denied entry to the harbor otherwise. Entering a harbor in the dark is always a bit thrilling, at least for me. Interestingly, I could moor at the same jetty as 17 years ago when I first came here with my previous boat. Dover Port Control and the Marina were as clear, professional, and helpful in communication as often found in the UK. Dover remains a busy ferry port.

Belgium

After a day of walking, I hit the sack early as my planned departure time was 2:30 AM. Motor-sailing with an east wind of 4-5, I crossed the traffic separation scheme and initially sailed until about 8 AM when the wind weakened to a variable 1-2, and I had to resort to the motor. Instead of Oostende, I entered Nieuwpoort at RYCN. What was delightful was that Cedric, with his Jadyca, also a Trintella 1, sailed out to meet me and guided me through the harbor channel past the shallows.



Castor Spica and Jadyca in Blankenberge

He had arranged with the VNZ harbor master for the two Trintella's to moor side by side.

The Netherlands

After a pleasant afternoon catching up, I departed at 6:30 AM the next morning toward Scheveningen. It was a 59-mile journey, and I moored at 1:15 AM. What a disappointing journey. It started well with a south wind of 3-4 that eventually died down. Despite about 12 hours of sailing, it wasn't much fun with this wind and waves on a long keeler. Eventually, in the rain, I had to resort to the motor, crossed the Maasmond, and moored next to a 49-footer that had just entered. On September 8th, although the weather forecast indicated a south-southwest wind of 4/5 with showery rain and a chance of thunder, I left at 10 AM. It was a gift to sail towards IJmuiden. Beautiful sailing weather, sunshine, and the wind stayed strong. I wanted to continue all the way to Den Helder. The preventer was at work, and when inside, it felt like being in a washing machine in broad reaches. But I sailed the 24 miles in 6 hours, and the circle was complete. Turned out, it took me precisely 80 days. After dinner at the local Chinese, I had time for reflection. It was a beautiful challenge that I'd undertake again. I grew attached to my boat and gained rock-solid confidence in her. The wind forecasts weren't always accurate, leading to frustration, but that's part of the experience. I motored more than I expected and wanted. At moments when the wind dropped, it was in unfortunate spots, close to the TSS or inshore, and I was under pressure to return home. Otherwise, I would have anchored more frequently to wait for wind.

On the 9th, I sailed to Muiden in 5.5 hours, covering a total of 1,931 miles.