

SAILING IN THE NETHERLANDS

By Richard Sampson

(with amendments for 2004 by Ted & Diana Evans)

DISTANCES

Deben to Den Helder	135 NM
Deben to Ilmuiden	122 NM
Deben to Ramsgate	48 NM
Ramsgate to Ostend	60 NM
Ramsgate to Dunquerque	38 NM
Ramsgate to Zeebrugge	65 NM
Ramsgate to Breskens	73 NM
Ramsgate to Flushing	77 NM
Deben to Roompot	85 NM
Deben to Stellendam	95 NM

Breskens to Flushing	2NM
Flushing to Middelburg	4 NM
Middelburg to Veere	4 NM
Veere to Zandkreek	13 NM

Zandkreek to Goes Lock	3 NM
Goes Lock to Wemeldinge	3 NM
Wemeldinge to Tholen	10 NM
Zandkree to Zierikzee	9 NM
Zeeland Bridge to Willemstadt	15 NM

Willemstadt to Haringvliet	8 NM
Willemstadt to Bruggehoff	7 NM
Brugehoff to Dordrecht	6 NM
s. Dordrecht to Rhoon	8 NM
Dordrecht to Alblasadam	2 NM
Alblasadam to Rotterdam	8 NM
Alblasadam to Gouda	7 NM

Gouda to Alphen	5 NM
Alphen to Kaage Plassen	5 NM
Haarlem to Amsterdam	12NM

INTRODUCTION

This is compiled from logs, notes and experience of sailing from the Harwich area to and in Holland over the period 1979 to 2003, the earlier voyages being in Norina, a 23 ft Seamaster Sailer with only a 7 HP engine, and in and after 1986 in Bellatrix, a Westerly Konsort Duo, a motor sailer which initially had a Volvo 28HP engine, and later a Nannie 29HP one. Norina could never be persuaded to do much more than 4 knots, whereas Bellatrix will do over 7, if persuaded properly.

In view of the age of part of the information this should not be regarded as adequate information for navigation, for which the proper charts and other up-to-date information should be obtained, but as a

useful guide as to where to spend your time, and a rough idea of distances to be covered. Without knowing readers' tastes it is difficult to recommend what to see. If yours lie in the direction of bingo and night clubs, this is not for you.

CHARTS AND OTHER INFORMATION

For the North Sea crossing there is nothing like the appropriate Admiralty charts, but for the approach to the Dutch coast the Dutch chart 1801 is recommended as this is more up-to-date as it is republished every spring (and some of the inshore sandbanks do move). This is one of many charts in large book form which cover all the Dutch waters readily accessible from the sea. For the more inland canals there is another series folded like maps which give a lot of useful land based information as well. They are all readily (and more cheaply) available in Holland. All show the depths in canals and clearances of bridges, but note that on the inland charts these are in decimetres.

It is a legal requirement to have on board the part 1 of the Dutch Almanac which gives all the regulations for the inland waters, though it is only available in Dutch, and is not much use to many of us. Part 2 of the Almanac which is published annually is much more useful as it gives great detail about canals, bridges and locks, including the vital information of their opening times and dimensions. Although only available in Dutch, it is not too difficult to decipher. It does not include opening times for railway bridges, which is published separately and may be obtained from major stations and tourist bureaux - free! However, it is rather difficult to get early in the season, as the Dutch railway timetables change in May, and publication sometimes seems to be delayed.

GETTING THERE

This decision really depends on how much time you have, and how much of Holland you wish to see. The longest routes, but the quickest if you wish to get to North Holland, the Waddenzee and the IJsselmeer are direct to Den Helder or IJmuiden. The former is about 135 nautical miles from the Deben and the latter 122. If you have plenty of time and wish an easier trip you can go via Ramsgate 41NM, Ostend 60NM from Ramsgate, or any other of the Belgian ports and up the coast to Breskens or Flushing. There are other points of entry a little further north, into the Oosterschelde through the lock at Roompot or into the Haringvliet through Stellendam.

BRIDGES AND LOCKS

These abound in Holland, so information about them is vital. All now have VHF whose channels are shown in the Almanac, and many of the operatives speak some English, enough to understand that you wish to get through, though whether you will understand their reply is another matter. Most are very helpful. Fixed bridges have their heights (Above NAP, Normal Amsterdamsche Piel, which is the standard level at Amsterdam, and varies very little) in the Almanac

and on the charts. Bridges can be divided into three categories; small ones on minor roads and in villages, which will open on demand during their opening periods (Almanac again), those on motorways and major roads, which only open at fixed times, usually early morning, lunchtime and early evening, and railway bridges, whose opening times must be obtained as shown above, so it pays to plan your route timing to avoid unnecessary delays. The most painful railway bridge is that into Amsterdam from the south, which carries all the lines into Amsterdam and opens once per day, and that at about 0300hrs. There are mooring facilities of varying standards near bridges and locks.

All the places, canals and rivers mentioned here are accessible with your mast up. There are many more canals in Holland accessible only to motor vessels; you can even travel as far as the Black Sea. Most of the places mentioned here are on or near the "mast up" route from the Westerschelde to the Waddenzee.

MOORINGS

In most towns there are marinas, which, compared with the UK are modestly priced, except where recorded. Besides these there are many lakes or meers where you can drop your anchor, as long as you do it sensibly, and not in buoyed channels. Along canals there are also many places where you can moor out of the way, but you will find a few prohibition signs such as "Anlegen verboden". Some waterside houses have what are obviously private moorings, as do catering establishments, which provide them for customers.

ZEELAND

On entering the Westerschelde, which is a river very busy with commercial traffic, there are three possible resting places. On the west bank just inside is Breskens. The marina is the second entrance on the right. You will be most unpopular in the first, which is the ferry terminal. There is a very frequent ferry service to Flushing, and the ferries go both ways, like a tram, but do change their navigation lights round at night. The marina is very good, though somewhat expensive by Dutch standards, but the town of Breskens has little of interest. Crossing over to the north side there is a marina in the harbour used by tugs and pilot boats. This is expensive and good, but the catering arrangements are not so. It is close to the town (Flushing). The next entrance on your left up the River W Schelde is used by the local ferries as well as the North Sea ferries and leads to the Walcheren canal to Middelburg. There is ample room inside to wait around for the big lock, which leads into the shipbuilding area, and thence into the Walcheren canal. Just as you turn right into this there is a small marina with minimal facilities, but which is very useful when going seaward if you need a night's rest before crossing the North Sea. It is a long walk into town.

There are two or three bridges across this canal (Almanac again) before reaching a short side canal on your port side which goes into

Middelburg, which is a town well worth visiting. The yacht berths are in former dry docks where wooden ships were built. Just before a lovely little cast iron bridge there is a jetty outside the office of the harbourmaster, who will direct you to a mooring. These are both outside and inside the bridge. The latter are only accessible when he opens the bridge at half past every hour, except at lunchtime. If you want to get away at a time of your choice, ask to go outside. Everything you need can be obtained here, and there is a floating chandlery, which you passed on the way in. The club is near the little lifting bridge and provides good food in the evening. There are many features of interest in the town, and a modest walk away is a model of a town in Holland complete with canals and little boats sailing on them. Just right for the children.

On continuing up the Walcheren canal you will reach the locks at Veere. This canal is the oldest in Holland, and one lock appears to be of the same vintage and has one sloping side, which makes life awkward, so go into the more modern lock (starboard one) if possible. On leaving the lock you soon reach the Veersemeer. This was once a large estuary, with fortified fishing villages on its shores, but is now cut off from the sea (as far as navigation is concerned) by a large dam. Just to your west is the town of Veere. If you just want a few hours there to visit moor up on the pontoon on the Veersemeer, but if you wish to spend the night there, go inside the little harbour, but you will find it very congested, especially at holiday times. There is a small club there, with some food available.

There are several islands on the Veersemeer. Landing is prohibited on one as it is a nature reserve, but on the others there are jetties for a few boats, and one can wander over the islands on which are facilities for a barbeque and a sentry box loo, as well as rubbish collection points, all of which are serviced by a boat. The channel through the meer is well buoyed, and very occasionally used by barges. Towards the east end there is a marina on each shore and another part way along in a side creek. The small town of Woolpharsdijk is not of great interest. The whole area seems to be devoted to quiet holiday making, with campsites and lots of facilities for dinghies ashore. At the end of the meer is Zandkreek lock.

On leaving the lock be careful to observe the buoys, as there are many shallows. You may go up or down the Ooster Schelde. Going up, (E) on the south bank is a side canal roughly two miles long leading to Goes (pronounced Hoos!). Through the lock and two bridges you will find on your port side the entrance to the most charming marina in Holland. Trees and grass abound, and you will be surprised if you open the door into the little lighthouse. The clubroom (for that is all it can be called) contains a sink, lots of glasses and a sign, which invites you to lift the hatch in the floor and help yourself to beer, and put your money in the box. Naturally this marina is very popular, and if it is impossible to squeeze in, continue a short distance up the canal into the town harbour where there is plenty of

room.

On returning to the Oosterschelde and turning right you will come to Wemeldinge where there is a marina in two basins which were once the entrance to locks into the South Beveland canal coming from the Westerschelde, but this has now been diverted. Moorings here are good, the water supply awful and the "facilities" great, though access is impossible without a swipe card from the harbourmaster, whose working hours are not extensive. There seems to be nothing of interest around the marina.

Further east along the main river you will meet another large canal (which has low bridges) and a side canal on the left up to Tholen. From personal experience I advise you to follow the buoyed channel. The mooring facilities there are good, and there is a club where WCC was once entertained, but it is closed for much of the time.

Returning west along the Oosterschelde, where you will need your chart as there are lots of shallows and many devious channels, you will see an enormous bridge, the Zeelandbrug, over two miles long. All the arches (except those near the shores) are the same height (about 12.3m) and have a clearance gauge, so if you know the exact height of your mast you may get through. If not, there is an opening section at the north end. A short distance west of the bridge, and on the north side there is a canal up to Zierikzee, a town well worth a visit. There are many moorings alongside the canal. Whilst here it is worth taking a short bus ride down to the dam where there is the Delta Expo. You can visit part of the dam, (and see why navigation there is undesirable) together with a model of Holland showing what could happen if the tide rises - and other interesting exhibits.

Further west along the Oosterschelde there are other towns on the south bank, Colijnsplaat and Sophiahaven, both with marinas.

Returning to the east side of the Zeelandbrugge there is a channel going NE, Keteen, which later develops other names such as Maastgat, just to confuse us. Just beyond a ferry there is an entrance on your left into the small fishing harbour of Bruinisse, part of which dries, for this water is slightly tidal.

Through the lock you will enter the Grevelingemeer, which is an enclosed estuary like Veersemeer, though bigger. Just inside the lock is a large marina. On the south side of the meer is Brouershaven, up a side canal, and in the meer many islands which can be visited, one of which has a number of wild horses. Recently a scheme for collecting a small charge for mooring in the islands was instituted. If you wish to visit the enormous dam at the north end you will find some moorings there, but it is a waste of time as a motorway across it prevents you even seeing the sea. In good weather it is possible to spend several days on the Grevelingemeer and around its islands.

Returning to the main channel via the lock, on the opposite side there is Krabenkreek, which leads up to another small village with a marina. There is not a lot to recommend it. Continuing roughly northwards you will find a lot of commercial traffic entering from your right, and then reach a large set of locks, Krammer Sluizen. The lock to be used by small craft (except in winter) is to the left of the big locks, and at least half a mile further on. This is a modern lock where they prevent sea water reaching fresh water by flushing the salt water out with fresh at every filling, so it is rather a slow process. Small craft locks are signed "SPORT".

The next feature of importance is the set of locks near Willemstadt, the Volerak Sluizen. When through this you will have to cross the nearly continuous flow of large vessels coming out of the big locks. Once across this you will see the narrow entrance to Willemstadt on your right. The windmill is a good mark. Inside you may continue straight ahead into the old town harbour, or turn left into the marina berths. Both are usually very full. It is worth spending a couple of hours walking round the town, preferably early or late when the trippers are not there. If Willemstadt is not to your liking, or there is no room, sail due north across the Haringvliet to the other side where you will find a small marina up a side canal at Numensdorp. Visitors are usually berthed alongside the little canal.

You may go downstream here, through the bridge to visit Haringvliet, and on to the dam, where you could have entered from the sea if you liked a somewhat longer crossing from home. Continuing eastwards from Willemstadt (using your chart as there are shallows), you will see a bridge through which you cannot go. Shortly before this there is a marina at Strijensas, then there is the entrance to the Dordse Kil, a man-made canal, and just beyond this is another marina at Bruggehoff. The Dordse Kil is a magnificent canal with a few gentle bends, and each length has a pair of brilliant leading lights. There are no places of interest along this, and at the north end you will meet a large junction, with SIGNPOSTS! Continue northish to Dordrecht where there are two bridges, one a railway bridge. A VHF call will tell you the next time of opening, but if you have long to wait do not moor at the jetty near the bridge, as the wash from passing large vessels will probably cause you damage. Go back a little way to an old side dock where a sign says "Sport" , and tie up in there. If you have a low mast you might get under the fixed part of the bridge where there is a clearance gauge, but beware. Allow a good clearance for my VHF aerial told me once that it was not accurate. Dordrecht is worth a visit, and if you bear right at the next T junction you will find the entrance to some moorings, but through another bridge. No facilities, but good moorings, and close to the town.

From the junction south of Dordrecht there is a canal to the west which will take you either back to the Haringvliet, or to Rhoon, where there is a large marina with long woodland walks nearby. There is also a good restaurant and a swimming pool. If you wish to visit

Rotterdam without sailing there, Rhoon is convenient, as there is a nearby station on the "underground". The canal past Rhoon continues until it joins the North Sea canal below Rotterdam, near Europort.

Turn west at the aforesaid T junction north of Dordrecht and continue towards Alblasadam, where you will find another bridge. Near the bridge on the north side there is the entrance to some more moorings (through another bridge!), but they are hardly to be recommended. The only facility was one water tap. The sight of an enormous bridge will warn you that you are approaching Rotterdam. To visit here, or to find your way out to the North Sea past Hook of Holland sail under this bridge, but when you see the low railway bridge take the channel to the left of the island, where there are two bridges that lift. Beyond the island you will see Rotterdam on the opposite bank, and the marina near the Eurotower. If you continue down to the Hook, observe the port and starboard markers and keep in the channel, for these markers are on the ends of groynes which dry out. As the entrance to Europort is so busy I get the impression that yachtsmen are not very welcome, though they cannot keep us out. There are no facilities for yachts at the Hook, though in emergency the fishing harbour could be used. Europort is forbidden to yachts, though a tripper boat visits on Sundays.

SOUTH HOLLAND

To continue north turn about 160deg to starboard before you reach the large bridge above Rotterdam. There is a set of moorings on your left at Capelle an den IJssel, but these are only fit for emergency use, or by very tired yachtsmen. You will shortly reach the Flood Barrage, and unlike the Thames one, you cannot sail through it as it lifts instead of sinking. There is a lifting bridge at the left hand end. At low water, be careful as there is not much water in this tidal river. You will reach a junction where you keep left, and enter a lock. This is one of the few waterways in Holland where you have to pay so moor up on your port side, as that is where the office is. You are now approaching the town of Gouda (G = H) which can be reached down a small side canal. Just inside here on the right is a marina, with little to recommend it, but you can continue to the town via a lock with only a few inches change in height. There are no organised moorings in the town, but the bridge on your left will be opened and you can moor alongside in pleasant surroundings, although the road can be noisy. Before leaving, check on the opening time of the railway bridge close to the junction as it is better to wait at your mooring rather than at the bridge.

Continuing north through the tulip country and villages of Waddinxveen and Boskoop each with their bridge, you will pass under railway bridge (a heft brugge) just after which you must turn left at the cross roads. The canal through Alphen an den Rijn is narrow between houses and factories, and is inevitably where you meet the large barges. Near here is a wonderful museum displaying times from geological through Roman times to the present, so do try and find

somewhere to moor up and visit it. At the next "cross roads" you have a choice:-

Via Kager Plassen

Continue straight on from Alphen until you reach a junction. Turn right. On the left is a side canal with moorings a short way along from which you can visit Leiden. The Hague, which cannot be visited with your mast up, is not far away. Continue north under the next bridge, and you will soon reach open lakes around which are many possibilities for mooring and anchoring. The village of Warmond is tucked away to the west. At the north end of the lakes you will meet the next route (qv).

Via Woubrugge

Turn right through the bridge at Alphen cross roads and in about 1NM, you will enter the town of Woubrugge. WCC has made several exchanges with the locals, who are extremely hospitable. Just before the bridge is a small marina, and beyond it there are more moorings on the left. Mooring alongside the canal is only permissible for limited periods. Continue into the Brassemeer and follow the buoyed channel across it to the north. Through the village of Oude Wetering you will meet a T junction. If you turn left you will meet the previous route.

Just north of the junction of the two routes at Kaag is an awkward bridge, opening only seven times a day. Having got through this, continue through Lissebroek, Hillegom and Zwanshoek and through the bridge at Cruquius. Here you must stop to see the museum where there is an enormous beam engine with six beams and a vast central steam cylinder. Surprisingly this was built in Cornwall for the Dutch drainage system. The canal you are on is the Ringvaart, enclosing and draining a large area south of Amsterdam. Take the canal nearly opposite the museum into Haarlem. Just before the next bridge are some moorings on your left, but these are a rather long walk from town. In Haarlem there are many bridges, usually operated by one man on a bicycle. It is possible to find one or two quiet mooring spots in Haarlem as there is no commercial traffic. After the railway bridge you will be expected to call at the harbour office and pay a small fee. After office hours the bridge keeper dangles a clog on a fishing rod to collect it.

After Haarlem there is a lock at Spaarndam shortly after which there is a marina on your left, then a bridge under a busy road. Then comes another bridge just before you enter the Noordzee canal about 5 NM from the large sea locks at IJmuiden. In this canal you are permitted to sail, but not to tack. About 8NM up the canal to the east you will arrive in Amsterdam. There are three possible berths in Amsterdam, a municipal one at the back of the central station on the south bank, where one is advised not to leave boats unattended, as the station is the druggies' centre of Europe. The second, also not highly recommended is about a mile further on on the left, opposite port hand buoy 14 and up a side canal. This is really a boatyard, and quite

a long way from the city centre. The recommended marina is Sixhaven which is on the north bank right opposite the station. Although on the other side of the river from the city there is a 24 hour free ferry service only about three minutes walk from the marina. The visitors information centre can be reached by walking under the station and crossing the road, where the canal boat trips leave.

Brassememeer to Amsterdam via Aalsmeer

This is a shorter route than any of the above, but less convenient. At the T junction at Oude Wetering turn east. When you reach Westender Plas keep to your port hand bank because there is a maze of channels elsewhere. There is soon a bridge which only opens infrequently and at the end of next meer you bear right into a lock (where a fee is collected). This canal leads to the large bridge near Amsterdam station which only opens in the early hours, so yachts collect into a fleet and travel down this canal together, through many bridges, usually after dark, to await in a dock near the station. Once under this horror you are in the North Sea canal not far from Sixhaven marina.

NORTH HOLLAND, THE IJSELMEER AND FRIESLAND

About two miles further to the east you will find the Orangesluis lock and bridge. Continuing along the buoyed channel, passing the small marina of Durgerdam on your left (which is not worth entering: it is just as comfortable to anchor outside) you will enter the IJselmeer. This former estuary, now a freshwater lake is about 42 miles long and 20 wide at its broadest. You could happily spend your whole holiday visiting the small towns and villages around it. The north end is separated from the sea by the Aftsluitdijk which is 15 miles long, and to prevent surges causing flooding there is a similar Houtribdijk across the middle. Both have locks at each end, but the one at the west end of Aftsluitdijk at Den Oever does not work on Sundays.

Weather on the IJselmeer is usually benign, but you should be lashed down as for the sea as there are occasional nasty blows. All the towns and villages can be visited by yacht and many have marinas, otherwise one can always moor in what was the former fishing harbour. It is impossible to describe them all here, but these few are worth mentioning:- Monnickendam and Volendam are nice little towns. and if you go there, do visit Marken on the adjacent "island". It seems to have resisted change over the years and some of the inhabitants still wear traditional Dutch garb. Enkhuizen at the west end of the central dam is a must, not for the town but for the museum. You have to go there by special ferry, and there are many old buildings moved from parts of the IJselmeer which have been flooded. There is a building containing all the different traditional Dutch boats.

On the other side Muiden should be visited if only to see the castle. This is where the Queen keeps her Dutch barge, and sails it herself.

Naarden is a town fortified by star-shaped walls, but can only be visited afloat if your mast will go under the 12.9 metre bridge, or you can sail many miles around through the Randermeer. Lelystad, named after the engineer responsible for the creation of the IJsselmeer is a modern town at the east end of the Houtribdijk. Urk was once an island and the home of a fishing fleet. It is very disturbing to visit the memorial ground just outside the village which records the names of hundreds of local fishermen lost at sea. Frequently all the men and boys in one family were lost. Lemmer, Workum and Stavoren are routes into the canals of Friesland. Lemmer has both canalside moorings and a marina.

Stavoren has the town harbour near the little railway station and a marina just off the canal. Hindeelopen has no access to the Friesland lakes, but is a charming village with both a small town harbour and a marina. It is so rural that a shepherd was seen driving his flock down the main street past the bank. Heegemeer and the adjacent lake have buoyed channels across them, and you can anchor anywhere where there is enough water. There are several marinas in the little town of Heeg, and mooring is possible in the delightful ports of Sloten, and in Woudsend near the windmill that powers a sawmill. You can proceed up the John Friso canal into the Princes Margriet canal (which comes up from Lemmer) into the Sneekemeer. If town life grabs you Sneek (pronounced Snake) is not far off to the west. The P.M. canal continues past the town of Grouw (remember G=H) and off to the east is a wonderful tangle of very rural waterways called Princen Hof where all is quiet and peaceful.

The P.M. and other canals continue to the Ems and Germany, but to get to the Wadenzee you must go west through Leeuwarden where there is an adequate marina to the east of the town, though it is worth making the effort to pass through several lift bridges to take advantage of the riverside moorings in the parkland in the west of the centre of town. The Harinxma continues westward to Franeker, a charming village off the main canal, with the oldest working Planetarium in the world and many lovely buildings, and then on to Harlingen, which is the port on the Wadenzee. The Marina on the port-hand just before the Hiddessluizen Lock into the main harbour is much cheaper and quieter than rafting up in the Noorderhaven in the centre of Harlingen. When leaving the harbour pay attention to leading marks behind you, and keep well left of the marks to your starboard which keep you clear of the Pollendam, as these appear to be inside the hazards.

It is essential to have an up-to-date chart of the Waddenzee as the banks there are constantly on the move, the buoys likewise. About the only fixture there seems to be a gas rig. The Friesian islands are well worth visiting. Texel is the largest and has a good harbour at Oudeschild. Ameland has a small harbour, The harbour at West Terschelling is good, and it is very pleasant to cycle around the island as there are hardly any cars. It is possible to return home through any of the Zeegats, if you do not mind a long sea trip, or back into the

Ijselmeer through the locks at either end of the Aftsluitdijk.

There are many areas accessible with your mast up which are not mentioned here, as experience is limited. Try going from Amsterdam through North Holland to Den Helder, or the eastern part of Friesland.

Happy sailing!



