

FAREHAM - VANNES TWINNING CRUISE 2015

By George Pickburn - The 'Vannes Driver'

The Twinning between Fareham and Vannes in France has again been celebrated by the cruise of Fareham boats to Vannes. Departing as singletons from around early June, 18 boats and 47 people from Fareham MBSC, Hillhead SC, Portchester SC, and Warsash SC eventually reached Vannes on 1st July. The outbound weather was accommodating: plenty of sun and, bar an early 'blow', not too much wind. One boat took 4 days, some 4 weeks to make the passage, enjoying the charms of the Brittany coast en route.

We gathered at Croesty Marina, just outside the Golfe de Morbihan, where we dressed ships overall, and were received by our French hosts, led by Georges and Mariannick Legris, at a *pôt d'accueil* in the Croesty Yacht Club.



The next day, we were addressed in the morning by a rigging expert who offered a critique of our boats, and in the afternoon,

led by French boats, we processed through the Golfe to Vannes itself.

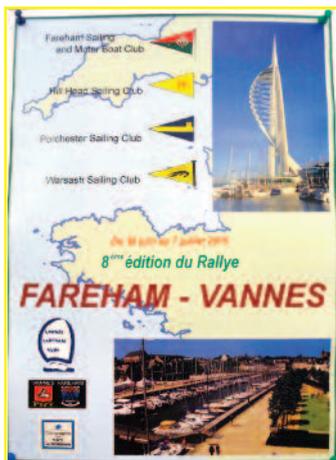


Our joyous arrival in Vannes, dressed overall, was a spectacle to behold.

We were greeted by a Breton pipe band, and waved at by many Vannois on the shore.

Several of our hosts were on hand to take lines and greet us with their customary warmth.

There followed a marvellous week of interest, fun and feasting which the Fareham visitors will long remember.



We were received in the Mairie by the Maire-Adjoint pour Tourisme Nadine Ducloux and Marcel Boché who is the Vannes Twinning Chair (this made the local press,



with photograph); serenaded by the "Copains du Sinagot" whilst we played petanque and other games on the quayside; visited a bird reserve, the Vannes Museums,



and the market; ran sculling races in the harbour; were visited by the French 'RNLI' and experienced life-rafts and



flares (!) on a Safety Day; and visited Muliplast to view the manufacture of high-tech carbon boats. On five evenings we enjoyed Breton and French cuisine

and wine of the highest order in local restaurants, concluding with sea songs performed by soloists from each nation and by scratch choirs. Each visiting crew was also royally hosted by the French families for afternoon diversions and to dine chez eux. We were the guests of the Association des Plaisanciers de Port de Vannes (APPV) for a lunch in the cloister of the Vannes Music Conservatoire.



The visit to Vannes ended formally on 7th July, though some boats chose to tarry in Vannes or other Breton

harbours. For Jill and I in Stormbird, the passage home included some of the ports we had reluctantly sailed past on the way out. As I write, some boats are still sheltering in Guernsey or Cherbourg as the Channel weather has temporarily lost its summery feel.

I offer my thanks for the support of the four Club representatives who form the Organising Committee of the sailing twinning, and to Jon Spencer for acting as its treasurer.

During the final dinner, gifts marking the visit were exchanged and we were entertained by Ian Buchanan on sax. At the dinner's conclusion, I invited our French friends to sail to Fareham in 2017; we now begin planning and fund raising for their visit.

If you would like to be involved, perhaps as a host to a French crew - even though you might not yet have made passage to Vannes - please do contact me on 01489 574178.

