

St Aubin boat - "Gypsy Queen" – August

"Gypsy Queen" is the drop keel version of the Gib'Sea 282. Just under 28 feet overall she is ideally suited to anyone wishing to explore small bays or drying harbours. She is owned by Alan & Elaine Le Rossignol who bought her new in 1991. Alan & Elaine made the decision to purchase "Gypsy Queen" at the Southampton Boat Show in September 1990. The bright lights and sales patter did not influence their decision to buy as they knew what they were looking for: "A shallow draft cruising vessel, which would be comfortable to live aboard for several weeks at a time and suitable for a young family." Alan and Elaine were both teachers in 1991 and several weeks could alternatively be interpreted as "School Holidays". Having now owned the boat for 23 years, and with no intention of selling her in the near future, it is apparent that it was love at first sight. A good seaman's first love is for a boat that will go to the places they like to visit and take them there and back safely. The match was perfect!

Pottering across St Aubin's bay under sail is a pleasure that many sailors have forgotten in recent years. Forty footers with large sails and deep draughts are not practical for a quick evening sail to wind down after a day at school or the office. Alan and Elaine know such pleasures and this has kept their feet firmly on the deck as they have resisted the lure of a larger, impractical, boat for simple but very enjoyable boating.

Alan would be the first to admit that messing about in small boats is a mixture of emotions. He recalled to me that while on a trot mooring in the Sound of Chausey, having enjoyed a lovely day ashore, a thunderstorm developed with such ferocity that "Gypsy Queen" was bombarded by torrential rain and gale force winds. "The nose was frightening and "Gypsy Queen" lay over in the gusts while being tossed and lifted as the seas pushed into the shallow channel. The thing that calmed us down the most was Andre, our son, rocking to the motion of the boat while playing his guitar over the sound of the roaring wind."

Experience is also a great teacher and one lesson that Alan and Elaine learnt through experience was not to trust the boat builder to know the correct size of anchor for tidal waters such as those around our islands and nearby coasts. Alan recalled that "We were anchored in St Briac, near St Malo, when our anchor dragged at 3 a.m. Disorientated by the abrupt awakening and noise of the wind, I quickly found myself on deck, wearing very little clothing, fending off boats as we

traveled past them, trying to retrieve a useless anchor. Not long after that experience the anchor was upgraded to something more substantial.” Alan added, “We have never dragged since.”

Over the years, this small little mass-produced vessel, has held up well to the toils of family use and being kept afloat for virtually the whole time. The 20 hp Yanmar engine is still running smoothly and has not required any major maintenance other than regular oil changes, new filters and impeller replacements, which have all been undertaken by Alan himself. When the 20-year compulsory insurance survey checked her over in 2011 the surveyor recommended that the standing rigging should be replaced. His advice was welcomed and the standing rigging was subsequently renewed. The only other major work that has been required was a cutlass bearing replacement and a precautionary epoxy coating, applied to the hull below the water line, to ensure the vessel will remain a sound and solid seagoing yacht for another 23 years!

