

JOKE AND JOS KEMPERS ENJOY THEIR LINSSEN GRAND STURDY 500

Text: Gabi de Graaf; Photos: Jos Kempers



EXCITING CROSSING IN THICK MIST

IT'S CURIOUS HOW MANY EXPERIENCED SAILORS CHOOSE A LINSSEN YACHT. "THAT'S NOT SO ODD," SAYS JOS KEMPERS. "IT'S BECAUSE THEY'RE STURDY, WELL-BUILT BOATS. YOU CAN RELY ON A LINSSEN." JOKE AND JOS KEMPERS HAVE BEEN ENJOYING THEIR LINSSEN GRAND STURDY 500, THE "AMPHITRITE", FOR THREE YEARS NOW. THEY HAD A WONDERFUL TIME ON A RECENT TRIP ALONG THE SOUTHERN ENGLISH, NORTHERN FRENCH AND BELGIAN COASTS.

The Kempers began their trip in their home port, a marina in Leimuiden run by their son Bart, from where they set out for Zeeland. They travelled via Alphen aan den Rijn, Gouda and Dordrecht, arriving in Willemstad the next day. "It's a town that merits repeated visits," says Joke. The next day, the weather was perfect and the couple dropped anchor on Lake Veere. "Still, we didn't sleep as well as we would have liked, because we had the journey to England ahead of us and were a bit nervous," Joke relates. Travelling via the Zuid-Beveland Canal and passing through numerous locks and under countless bridges, Joke and Jos finally arrived in Flushing, where their friends Arend and Sonja Bon greeted them. The Bons would be accompanying them on their own yacht. It was sunny when the boats left for Blankenberge, Belgium, the next day. That evening they discussed where and when they would cross over to England. They ulti-

mately chose to depart from Dunkirk in France, a busy ferry terminal. Joke and Jos were not really charmed by Dunkirk, and they decide to stay there only one night.

BUSY FERRY TRAFFIC

The following morning, however, there was a very thick mist and they were less than keen to grapple with the busy ferry traffic before making the crossing to Eastbourne. So they decided to travel down the French coast to Boulogne-sur-Mer instead. After a while, however, the mist cleared and they set out across the English Channel after all. "We had to keep an eye out for ferries, but there was little trouble otherwise," says Joke now. After about ten hours, however, the mist closed in again and threw a spanner into the works. Fortunately, their friends Arend and Sonja had equipped their boat with an Automatic Identification System (AIS), allowing them to identify the course, direction and speed of all of the boats they en-



countered. “It’s a fantastic system for navigating safely at sea. Arend warned us whenever large ships were in the area, and at long last we entered the port in Eastbourne safely,” Joke relates. The port has a narrow access channel and many shallow areas, but once inside the two couples enjoyed the view of the large, splendid harbour – not to mention the many restaurants and pubs along the quay. It was time to relax, in other words. Eastbourne is an elegant Victorian seaside resort with a Mediterranean climate. The English call it the “Suntrap of the South”. That says enough. The seven-kilometre-long beach promenade is lined with Victorian buildings and palm trees. The two couples spent three days there. “We cycled a lot along the coast and through the hillside towns. We visited the old church of Our Lady of Ransom, a very special place. We also enjoyed the old facades, so reminiscent of Dickens.” The couple’s folding bicycles, which they always take with them on their travels, were objects of curiosity for the English. But they could not allow themselves to be distracted. “We really had to pay attention – we were cycling on the ‘wrong’ side of the road and had to be conscious of which way to look when crossing a junction,” adds Joke.

IMPRESSIVE COASTLINE

Finally, they left for Brighton, one of Britain’s most renowned seaside resorts. On the way, they enjoyed views of the impressive coastline, with its steep chalk cliffs rising up from the sea. “Awe-inspiring! Especially when the sun shone on the chalk cliffs. We also came across numerous little fishing boats and lots of small, round buoys.” The old seaside resort of Brighton is famous for its splen-

did pier and Victorian architecture. It’s an ideal town for strolling about. The town centre consists of snug, narrow streets and charming squares with pleasant cafes, shops, and points of historical interest. “The well laid-out cycling paths along the coast make for very pleasant cycling.” There is also a very good train link between Brighton and London, which Joke and Jos used to visit their daughter in the capital.

After three days, the two couples left Brighton and headed for Chichester. They cruised along the large, lovely bays of England’s southern coast. A stiff side wind and high temperatures made for a long and tiring day, and they were very happy at the end of it to reach Chichester. The town lies on Chichester Harbour, a bay and popular area for both boating enthusiasts and water sports suppliers. “Almost the entire harbour was shallow, so we finally dropped anchor and took our rubber dinghy to a yacht club. It was a very stylish place – a very traditional club where we were received as guests. First, however, they asked us whether we were members of a yacht club,” says Jos. “If we hadn’t been, we wouldn’t have been admitted.” The two couples enjoyed the splendid sailing races organised here. They were entirely English in character: traditional sailboats with crews dressed in blazers and shorts. “Everyone there is very keen on boating, both young and old. It’s quite a sight to see the groups of small boats manned by fanatical competition sailors.”

THE CROSSING TO FRANCE

The journey continued. The couples crossed The Solent, the stretch of sea between the Isle of Wight and the southern coast of England, and entered the Hamble,



The steep chalk cliffs of Brighton

a small tidal river. There are numerous marinas full of splendid sailboats along the river. They moored in Port Solent, a new marina in Portsmouth Harbour. The following day, Joke and Jos's daughter and her family came to stay for the weekend. "We all crossed over to the Isle of Wight. We had a headwind of force 6 or 7. It was fantastic. The children were delighted." Set in the Atlantic, the Isle of Wight is renowned for its splendid natural scenery and unspoilt villages and towns. The group spent the night in Cowes, an important port town.

The time had come to start the crossing to France. After an overnight stay in Lymington, the two couples started their crossing at 6 a.m. It was a bit misty when they crossed The Solent, but by the time they passed the Isle of Wight, the sun had risen and the weather was splendid. It was a quiet trip, with only a single ferry passing them. "A wonderful journey, except for one area polluted with rubbish, oil and wood," says Joke. By the time they reached the French coast, the mist had returned. The couples decided not to travel to the large port of Cherbourg-

Octeville, but instead headed for Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue, a noted fishing port and marina. It is also a well-known oyster farming centre, and the mild climate has made it a popular seaside resort. "Boats can only enter the harbour of Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue if the tide is favourable, so we were uncertain how things would go." The two couples reached the harbour at around 8 p.m. – absolutely perfect timing. They were assigned a splendid berth with a view of the boats entering and leaving the harbour. Like many seaports, Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue is sealed off by a large watertight lock at low tide, so that enough water remains in the harbour. "It's almost unbelievable when you later realise that the sea has actually receded several kilometres," says Jos. "And it's wonderful to moor there and watch the incoming and outgoing tide and all the hustle and bustle of fishing vessels unloading their catch on the dock."

Saint-Vaast-la-Hougue was so pleasant that the two couples ultimately spent a week there. "We met some very nice people and ate very well in the harbour restaurant. We also visited Cherbourg-Octeville, and decided that we really had made the right choice."

They also visited Sainte-Mère-Église on the coast of Normandy. It made a deep impression on them. "Very sobering, what happened here during the Second World War. Those enormous cemeteries with the graves of young men who died at age eighteen, nineteen or twenty. It brought a lump to my throat, and gave me the chills at the same time," Jos recalls. "And then we saw the steep, rocky cliffs that those young soldiers had to climb. Unbelievable."

After a week spent seeing the sights, the two couples moved on. They decided to let the wind and waves determine their next destination. Although the waves lashed the boats and the sea was very unsettled, they navigated to Deauville. Fortunately, they once again managed



to enter the harbour just in time. "Once we were safely moored, we were surprised to see that the entire navigable channel lay dry once the tide ebbed. It was quite an interesting experience." Deauville is a lovely town with beautiful homes, an elegant boulevard and inviting outdoor cafes. "Purely by chance, the town was hosting a gigantic antique and classic car rally that Saturday. It was great to see all the old vehicles."

The trip continued to Honfleur, renowned for its picturesque old harbour. "A charming town, but very touristy," says Joke. The next stop was Le Havre, and then the distinctive old harbour of Fécamp. "Le Palais Bénédictine is especially lovely. Truly the lap of luxury," says Jos. The famous Bénédictine liqueur is made in this neo-Gothic/neo-Renaissance palace. "The distillery was fascinating and we were very tempted to purchase a bottle of the delicious liqueur. And we didn't resist that temptation!" adds Joke.

The next trip took them from Fécamp to Dieppe, where the river Arques empties into the English Channel. It was a long distance to travel, but the trip went smoothly. "I last visited Dieppe about fifty years ago, and my romantic memories of the place no longer matched the reality. We went cycling here as well. The port is part of a large industrial site, but the harbour itself and the dockside cafes are still inviting," says Joke.

The couples continued to Boulogne-sur-Mer. They had trouble finding berths at first, but finally succeeded. "We cycled into the centre and it was quite a challenge, because the town is spread across hills and valleys. We were certainly ready for a drink once we arrived," Joke relates. The two couples stayed in Boulogne-sur-Mer for two nights, and then travelled on to Nieuwpoort in Belgium, which has what may be the largest marina in northern Europe. "It was a very different sort of harbour from the ones we'd visited until then. It had a truly gigantic number of yachts," says Joke.

The two couples spent a day in Dunkirk and then began their journey home. "It was wonderful to be back in the Netherlands again" says Jos. "We spent a couple of relaxing days in Zeeland. We dropped anchor for a few nights and even went swimming, which we hadn't done while we were at sea."

Back home, the Kempers cherish their memories of a wonderful trip. "We got to appreciate our Linssen Grand Sturdy 500 even more. It's a pleasant and comfortable boat and handles especially well in rough swell."



"A SUPER BOAT," IS WHAT JOS KEMPERS CALLS HIS LINSSSEN GRAND STURDY 500.

"I've never had a moment's regret. It's like taking my house along with me." Jos and his wife Joke should know – they are experienced sailors and have navigated many different boats. Jos's father ran an inland boatyard, and Jos and his brothers took over the business when they got older. Later, Jos purchased two marinas of his own, in Aalsmeer and Leimuiden. He offers the entire range of boating services, from repairs and sail-making to a shop.

He awakened Joke's love of boating during their engagement. She did not need much encouragement, however; she was already a fervent canoer and had always really loved the water. Aquatic sports are important to the whole Kempers family. The couple's two sons now run the two marinas, and their daughter and her three children also spend as much time on the water as they can. Joke and Jos Kempers have been enjoying their Linssen Grand Sturdy 500 for three years now. They used to spend all their time on a sailboat. "I didn't really like ocean sailing," says Joke. "But I'm a convert now, purely because I really trust this boat." Navigation is only part of the enjoyment of boating, Joke and Jos Kempers believe. "The social side of things, checking out the harbours, visiting fun places," are what make boating truly appealing for them.