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# WHAT LILY DID NEXT

Alison Alderton & Roger Harrington

After leaving Ireland, our barge *Lily* returned to the United Kingdom where she overwintered on the River Trent in the Midlands. During this time Roger and I moved to Denmark and began settling into a new life and for Roger, a new job. At Easter we returned to the UK to be reunited with *Lily*, have her lifted out, jet washed, the hull repainted, new anodes fitted and put on a lorry for onward despatch.

Our original plan was to transport *Lily* to the Hook of Holland. We would then travel northwards through the waterways of the Netherlands before crossing into Germany, which would be an ideal base, being the closest country to Denmark with a good network of inland waterways. Unfortunately over the winter our dog, Buster developed a nasty immune system related disease causing severe lameness and ligament damage. This called for a change of plan and we decided to have *Lily* transported directly to Northern Friesland cutting a huge chunk off the planned trip. Although still some distance from our Danish home, this would enable Buster to continue receiving the specialist care he needed. However, it was all going to be a bit of a gamble as neither of us had ever visited this part of Europe before; we were heading for a country we knew little about with a sick dog and a twenty ton barge in tow, some people would consider us a little mad!

With a location in mind we searched for a suitable company to off-load *Lily* and eventually found SRF in Harlingen, recommended by The Barge Association (DBA). Several phone calls later and all was arranged, the company would lift *Lily* off the lorry, place her in water and supply a temporary berth. They could also arrange transport but we opted to use Hutchinson's, our usual haulage company. On this occasion they used a secondary company from Scotland who were able to take *Lily* to Harlingen and return with a cargo thus keeping costs down for us. The whole procedure was carried out by a logistics overseer who had helped load and off-load our barge previously so knew exactly what was required. *Lily* is not your usual flat-bottomed barge she has a V hull with a skeg running from bow to stern so needs to be well blocked and secured for transit, it is a time consuming procedure. Finally with *Lily* safely on the lorry we parted company. She travelled from the port of Hull to the Netherlands by overnight ferry whilst we headed south to take the channel tunnel. If all went to plan we would meet up with *Lily* at the SRF boatyard twenty-four hours later.

As *Lily* was not sailed into the Netherlands there was no need to register with local authorities and being less than fifteen metres



The yacht harbour Harlingen.

in length no need for a licence. However, a record of how she arrived in the country by way of receipts from the haulage company must be kept in case we are ever boarded by officials. Whether you can read Dutch or not, it is also a legal requirement for all vessels to carry Book 1 of the Dutch Almanac. For those sailing a craft into the Netherlands the rules differ and it is necessary to report to customs and fill in a Schengen form on arrival. If like us you have a dog even with a pet passport they cannot enter another European country in a private vessel, they must come via an official designated route.

It was a grey wet morning when we finally met up again with *Lily*. She certainly looked like a small fish compared to other vessels in the boatyard and seemed rather lost in the boat lift which is used to dealing with much larger and heavier craft. No matter how many times you transport your own boat there is always a sense of overwhelming relief once it is safely back in the water and this occasion was no different. In a fine drizzle we quickly reassembled the wheelhouse and motored into our temporary berth which would allow us time to look around the area and find a suitable new home for *Lily*.

Harlingen is an important port with a large fishing fleet. In the summer months it is busy with ferries trundling back and forth to the Frisian Islands and the narrow cobbled streets overflow with clientele relaxing in the pavement cafés. Preferring peace and quiet this was not the ideal location and as we needed to shorten our journey to and from Denmark decided to look for a base in the east of the province. So with a map and list of marinas to hand we set off exploring by car. Quite by chance we stumbled across a small marina situated on the outskirts of a village. Surrounded by lush green meadows where Texel sheep and Frisian cattle graze and standing on a waterways crossroads, this seemed ideal. Roger and I don't speak a word of Dutch but after much gesticulating we seemed to make ourselves understood and somehow managed to book a box mooring for the coming twelve months. All that was left to do was move *Lily*.

Our first trip on the waterways of Friesland was filled with anxious anticipation. We left

early in the morning heading eastwards into the hinterland along the massive Van Harinxmakanaal. This is a busy commercial



Commercial barge Prinses Margrietkanaal

waterway linking the coast with the capital of Leeuwarden and the Prinses Margrietkanaal, the main route for freight travelling across Northern Europe. Although we have encountered commercial vessels before it is always a surprise to see gigantic vessels inland and you cannot help but marvel at them. Part of this route also forms the so-called mast up route allowing sailing vessels or those with high air draft to access the Baltic Sea ports without having to make a coastal trip so large yachts, beautiful Dutch Tjalks and Schuitjes are common place. At



Dutch sailing barge

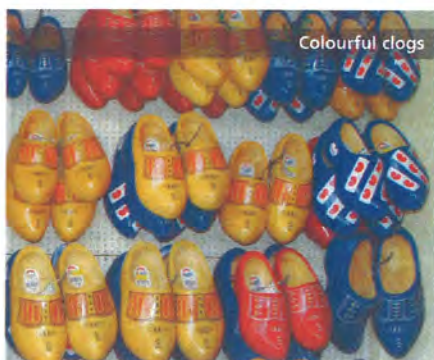


Lily and crew at Dokkum

Burgumer Mar, our first lake we left the commercial waterway to head northwards on a quieter more relaxing route leading to our chosen marina. The whole journey went without incident and the sun shone down on us making our first voyage a great success.

We soon settled *Lily* into her new home which is close to Dokkum. This is the most northern town in Friesland and was once the headquarters of the Admiralty but is more widely known for the murder of St. Boniface by Pagan Frisians in AD 754. The main visitor moorings are located beneath the town's former ramparts on which stand two impressive windmills, De Hoop and Zeldenrust. One is open to the public containing a small museum whilst the other houses a pet shop; it's not just old Amsterdam that has mice in windmills! Dokkum has a good selection of shops including a wonderful cheese store and a colourful weekly market. There is no doubt that this picturesque town has cast its spell over us and we are more than happy to while away the hours here.

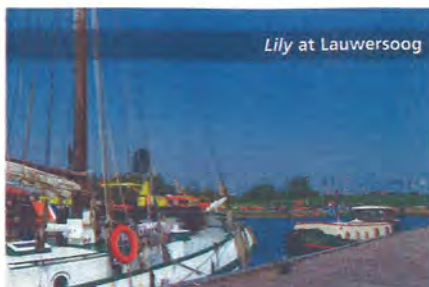
Boating in Friesland is a real pleasure; the country is geared up to dealing with boats of all shapes, sizes and nationalities. Locks are few and far between whilst bridges open and close without problems, even main-line railway and motorway bridges! Many are operated by bridge keepers whilst others are self-operated by pushing a button on a keypad situated close to the bridge. It all works amazingly well however, a VHF channel is displayed at each bridge should problems occur. Some bridges, mostly in town centres are chargeable and the bridge keeper will lower a wooden clog on a fishing rod to collect the dues as you pass through. It's a little unnerving at first but it doesn't take long to get the hang of it!



Colourful clogs

One of the places we have enjoyed exploring is the Lauwersmeer. Once an estuary, this was closed to the Waddenzee by construction of a dam and sluice as part of a flood defence programme in the 1960's. The whole area is now a nature reserve known for its flocks of Spoonbills and herds of Konik ponies. There are several small islands with free moorings where in the springtime we watched flocks of Egyptian geese with their young and deer coming down to the

water's edge to drink in the setting sun. Crossing the Lauwersmeer takes us about an hour at a gentle pace; to cross Lough Ree would be nearer four so that gives you a good idea of the size difference. At the sea lock a small community has built up around the harbour of Lauwersoog which is one of the best places to enjoy the fresh fish or shrimp dishes of the area.



Lily at Lauwersoog

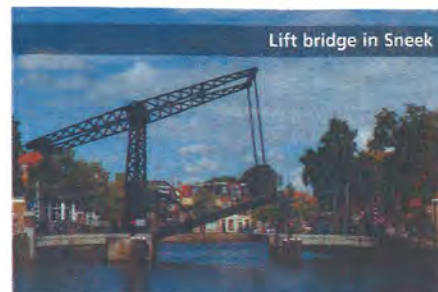
Later in the summer we enjoyed longer onboard heading southwards on the Lits-Lauwersmeer Route cruising through Drachten and the Âde Feanen National Park to Sneek, the boating capital of Friesland situated in the heart of the Frisian Lake District. By this time we were sporting our new Athlone burgee which flew proudly from the mast and looked fantastic. *Lily* attracted much attention but not in the usual manner, we are used to people coming to look at her in the UK where she is considered a large craft but in Holland people see her as 'small and quaint' often mistakenly thinking she is a traditional narrowboat! Reaching Sneek was a milestone for us and somewhere we never thought we would visit in our own boat. The visitor moorings are chargeable and costly especially in the Kolk where the historical Waterpoort Gate is situated but believing this a once in a lifetime opportunity, we paid up and proudly enjoyed the view! A short walk away we discovered a welcoming Irish pub, an ideal place to relax after a spell of retail therapy in the bustling city centre.



Proudly flying the flag in Sneek

From Sneek our travels led to the village of IJst where we had a guided tour of De Rat one of only seventeen wind-powered saw mills still in use. With most of Friesland being flat open fenland, wind power is a great resource and used for a variety of purposes from land drainage to milling grain.

Continuing on we enjoyed stops at Bolsward and Makkum where we popped onto the



Lift bridge in Sneek

Ijsselmeer but unfortunately bad weather prevented further exploration of this vast expanse of water. Formerly known as the Zuiderzee, it was landlocked by the building of a sixteen mile dam in 1932, severing it from the North Sea.

Friesland is known for its cold icy winters so everything shuts up, water supplies are turned off and most boats are lifted as waterways are often transformed into skating circuits. But never ones to be easily put off we spent Christmas and New Year onboard and were rewarded with mild weather and deserted waterways. We are now busy planning our next trip to the Turf Route, a series of small waterways dug to assist with the peat extraction from the south eastern area of Friesland. Perhaps this trip will reveal some similarities to Ireland?



Wind powered sawmill De Rat

Our first season in Friesland has been very rewarding, getting used to how things work has taken a little time and effort but I am sure we will spend many more happy hours cruising here. Throughout the past year Buster has made a good recovery. He still has bad days but on the whole is fit and well enough to enjoy life back onboard taking up his usual position on the chart table and role as Admiral of our ship. Whilst we are happy exploring these new waters Ireland is never far from our thoughts and we are still actively involved as IWAI members and in promoting the country's waterways! As for our future plans to move *Lily* into Germany, well I think with the new found delights of Friesland tugging at our heartstrings we will be staying put for quite some time and can highly recommend this area to those looking for somewhere different to boat!