



St Peter Port, Guernsey



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

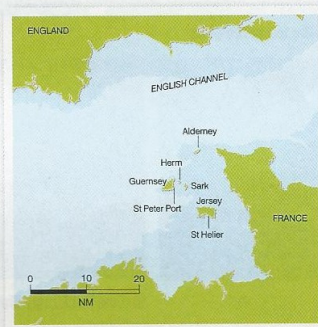
■ Roger Oliver is best known to PBO readers for his 'grown-up gap year' cruise around Britain in *Jalina*, his Sadler 25. He holds a commercial RYA Yachtmaster certificate and is a 'C' rated Royal Artillery Yacht Club skipper.

Guernsey to Jersey

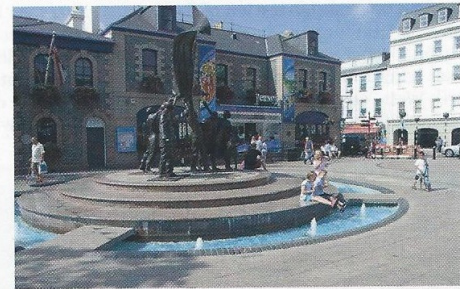
Sailing from St Peter Port to St Helier and back, Roger Oliver makes the best use of tides and eddies to speed him on his way

St Peter Port on Guernsey is the perfect base for day trips to the Channel Islands of Herm, Sark and Jersey. In the last two issues of PBO I showed how to plan day trips to Herm and Sark, so now I am off to Jersey.

For some weeks before the time of my visit the winds had been very light, which would have made it difficult to reach tidal gates in time without the assistance of the engine, but as luck would have it good winds were forecast for the next few days.



The marina at Saint Helier, the largest town in Jersey



St Helier's Liberation Square commemorates Jersey's liberation from German occupation by the British forces on 9 March 1945



La Frigate Café and restaurant close by the marina

St Peter Port to St Helier

DISTANCE: 28NM • PASSAGE TIME: 5 HOURS

Passage plan

A westerly wind (Force 4 by dawn and increasing to Force 4-5 in the afternoon, veering north-west later with isolated showers) would give me a reach from St Peter Port to Point Corbière, then if the wind did veer to north-west Force 5, *Jalina* would be on a weather shore and sheltered for the remainder of the leg through the North West Passage all the way to St Helier.

After a detailed study of the Admiralty chart there were a number of dangers to consider, which I ringed on the chart in pencil. First, with the wind likely to be westerly, I would need to keep clear of the Lower Heads south cardinal buoy, south of Musé Passage. Also, I would stay at least three miles off Grosnez Point on Jersey, to keep clear of Rigdon Bank. This would give me good sea room as we closed the lee shore, and I also needed to clear the rocks off Point Corbière. Here I planned an offing of at least a mile from the lighthouse, and the locals told me a good guide would be to keep the lighthouse's lantern level with the highest point of the land behind it.

To keep clear of Les Kaines rocks, off Pt La Moye, I just needed a back sight to the Corbière lighthouse, keeping it open and to the left of the white mark on Jument Rock.

My final concern was the rocks and shoals lying at the eastern end of the North West Passage, south of Noirmont Pt. So to identify Les Fours north cardinal, I prepared clearing

bearings, which I wrote onto my plastic washboard for quick reference in the cockpit.

I added three new GPS waypoints off Jersey which would help if it became foggy. I find that putting in new waypoints each time, instead of keeping a waypoint library, makes me look closely at the chart, and I always double-check them with ranges and bearings. I marked up tidal atlas pages for each hour and put them into individual waterproof plastic holders which enables me to use a chinagraph pencil for notes. Then all I needed was an early night, ready for a 0500 start.

Timings and tides

The morning was still, with very little cloud and a light breeze, and the air was damp, giving a feeling of early autumn. This was to be a short passage, so I had breakfast and prepared a flask of tea and a goody box of cake and a lump of cheese (a northern habit) for later. I'd prepared the sails the night before – the mainsail with one reef and my orange working jib.

At 0550 (HW Dover +30 minutes) I slipped my lines, cleared the pontoon as quietly as possible and called harbour control on Ch12 for clearance. A bright orange sun was just rising over Herm and Jethou. We were soon clear of the entrance, ropes were coiled, fenders stowed and I shook out the reef as I hoisted the main – the orange jib looked even brighter with the rising sun against it!

CHARTS AND PILOTS

Admiralty Charts:
BA 3655 1137 808
2669

Admiralty Tidal Atlas NP257
Pilots: *Royal Cruising Club Pilotage Foundation – The Channel Islands*, by Nick Heath, Imray, £19.95

Reeds Nautical Almanac 2007, Adlard Coles Nautical, £34.99
Reeds PBO Small Craft Almanac 2007, £15.99

For charts and pilots visit the PBO website, www.pbo.co.uk, and click on 'Books & charts' or tel: 02380 333051

I felt a damp chill through my waterproofs – I must have been getting soft after all the hot sunny days of the summer. We were two days towards neap tides, so the tide had been setting south through the Little Russel for approximately two hours. It would set south-west until 0630 and then south until 0730, and finally south-east, taking me down to my intended rhumb line off of Point Corbière.

A simple tidal vector

The tidal vector worked as I expected, with the first of the tide pushing *Jalina* off and eventually back to her intended rhumb line.

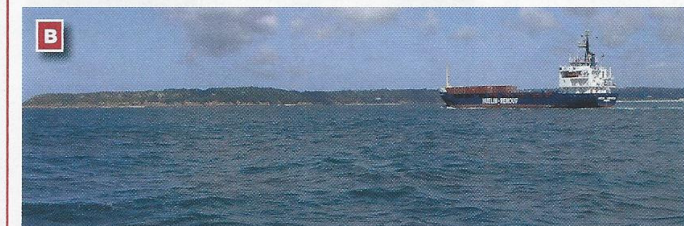
After a while the Corbière lighthouse stood out prominently off Point Corbière. As we approached, the tide was setting us in towards the point, so I checked my GPS track for WPT CORB and made sure I kept the lantern in line with the highest point of the clifftop behind.

As I cleared the point I maintained my track south-south-east and got a GPS bearing on WPT NOR, off Noirmont Pt. I spotted the German Tower on Noirmont Pt and checked it with the hand bearing compass, comparing it against the GPS bearing.

The wind had been a very light westerly Force 2, but we were in good time. It was 0930 as I changed course for WPT NOR on a bearing of 098°T. We were running before the wind with just over one knot of tide under us. No vessels were in sight and we had plenty of sea room, so I made a plot (the last one) to check our track



▲ Clearing Corbière Point and keeping the lighthouse's lantern in line with the top of the cliffs



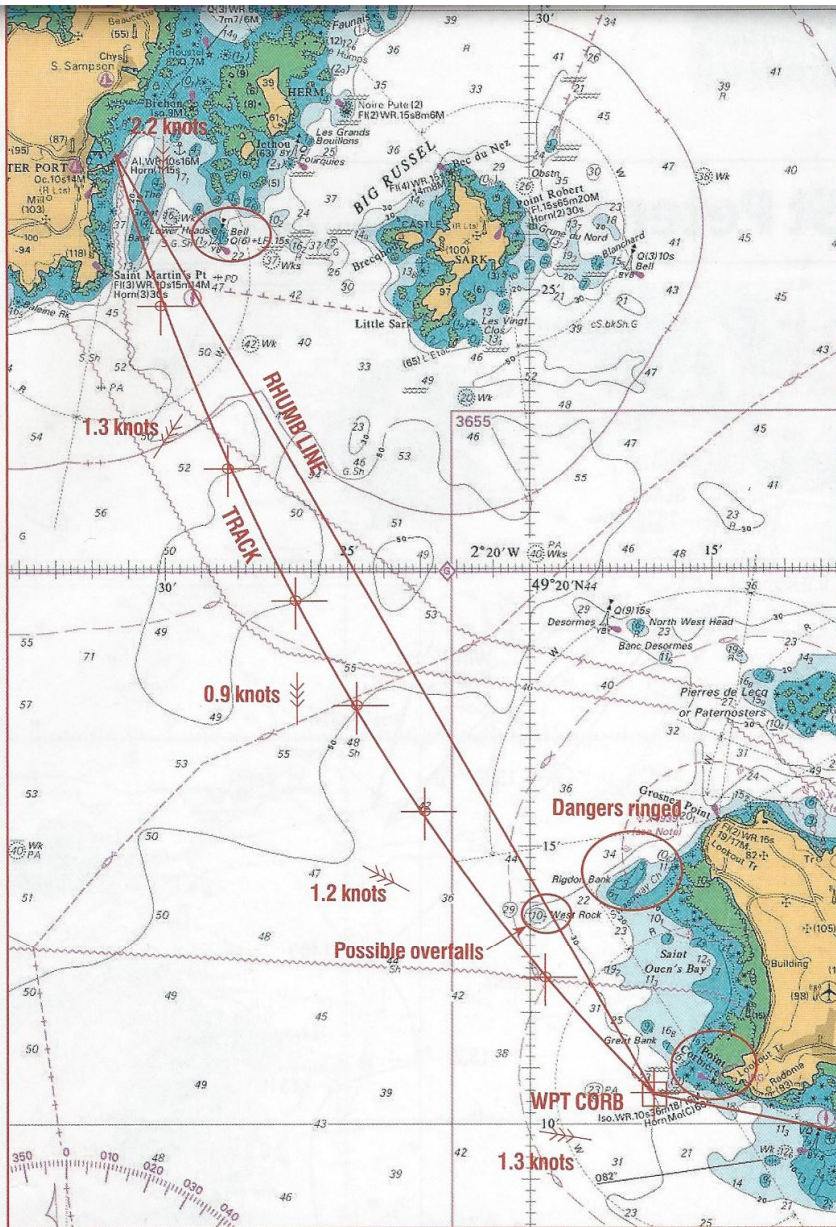
▲ Shipping passing through the North West Passage



▲ East Rock buoy/Dog's Nest Bn/Grève D'Azette can be aligned in transit

GUERNSEY TO JERSEY

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for passing through the North West Passage – the remainder of the passage into Jersey would be mainly visual pilotage.

To avoid getting too close to Pt La Moye and Les Kaines, I kept checking astern to make sure that the Corbière lighthouse and the Jument Rock white patch were a little open, until I was due south of Pt La Moye Radome.

Shipping

As *Jalina* approached Noirmont Pt, several small ships were also approaching so I monitored them on Port Control Ch14 as a precaution.

All the navigation marks are quite clear in good visibility and the Tower on Noirmont Pt is rather distinct. Once I had arrived at WPT NOR, I set my final WPT SAINT to pick out East Rock buoy, Dog's Nest Bn and Grève D'Azette in transit. Using my hand bearing compass and binoculars I first picked out Ruaudière Rock green can, then to its left I spotted the East Rock green can buoy. As you clear Noirmont Pt, make sure you have identified Pignonet south cardinal, and its rocks, just to the south.

As I closed WPT Saint the East Rock buoy was a cable off my starboard bow. I then picked out the red post transit bearing (023°T) off the inner harbour wall, to guide me in.

Into harbour

With plenty of sea room I handed *Jalina's* sails, getting the fenders and lines ready before calling St Helier harbour control on Ch14 for clearance to enter – they were very helpful in giving me directions. This is very much a commercial port, so care is needed on the final approach. Don't stray out of the channel, there are underlying rocks. It was 1030 (HW St Helier 1200) and even with 6.5m of tide above CD there are rocks with a drying height of over 6m just off the channel!

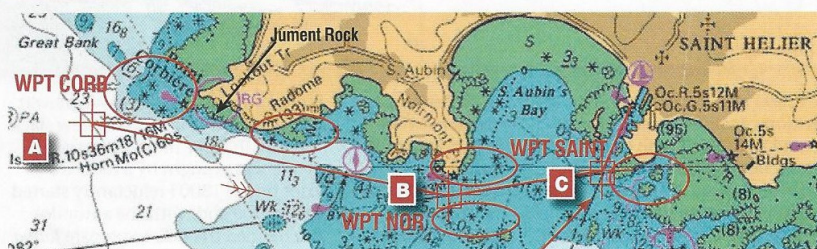
The marina has a tidal sill but there was 4.5m over the sill showing on the illuminated digital depth gauge, and there was still another metre rise to high water at 1200.

If you have to wait for enough water to get over the sill, there is a waiting pontoon to port and fuelling facilities to starboard.

By 1100 *Jalina* was tucked up in the marina. It was the end of a very pleasant trip, and as I had a leisurely lunch in the cockpit, the wind started to pick up and changed to the NW – the forecasters were spot on!

I decided to spend two days here and then head back to St Peter Port when it would be neap tides.

St Helier Marina has all the usual facilities for the yachtsman, with the town only a short walk away. ▶



Red transit posts can be seen astern of yacht departing

St Helier to St Peter Port

DISTANCE: 29NM • PASSAGE TIME: 6 HOURS 40 MINS

Passage plan

My return passage was basically the outward one in reverse: I'd use the same waypoints and many of the same bearings, but there are several navigation points and use of tides worth mentioning, as we were then on neap tides.

The weather forecast was north-west Force 5-6 decreasing Force 4-5 later, fair with showers, visibility good, sea state rough to moderate.

The wind direction and strength were not too good, as it would be on the nose and I would have to rely on lee-bowing the tide to push me northwards a little. It was a pity it was not Springs because the stronger tide would then knock at least an hour off the passage.

I needed to be off St Peter Port no later than 1730 (slack water), after which the tide turns south in the Little Russel with 0.7 knots at 1800 and then nearly 2 knots at 1900.

Preparing to sail

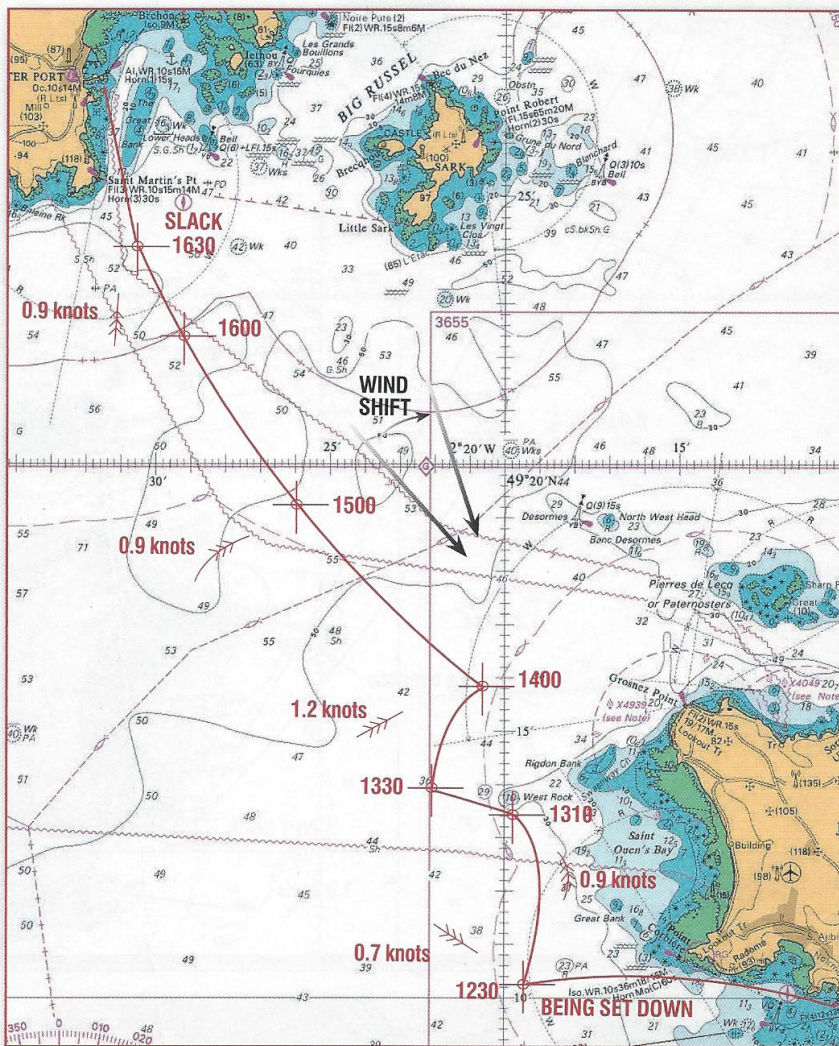
I woke to a north-west Force 3 wind, so it would be a case of fetching up to Corbière lighthouse through the North West Passage, then a beat to St Peter Port. I spent a little time studying the tides off the west coast and noticed an eddy sweeps north at 1235 (Dover HW +6hr), which would give me a lift.

With the possibility of stronger winds I decided to put a reef in the main: this would give me a flatter sail, meaning I'd be able to point higher. It would also ease any weather helm, reducing the drag on the rudder and reducing the battery drain on the autopilot.

I slipped *Jalina's* lines and departed St Helier Marina at 1050 to clear the sill. If I'd needed to depart earlier I would have left the day before and tied up onto the waiting pontoon in the main harbour.

Using the tides to increase my speed

I called harbour control on Ch14 and cleared the harbour just ahead of a fast cat, which caused a huge swell for boats close to its path. Point Corbière was cleared by 1230 but I was being set down by the tide, so I tacked inshore to take advantage of the eddy sweeping and bending along the west coast. This took me half a mile to the south of West Rock, west of Rigdon Bank, where I tacked onto starboard, sailing due west to keep clear of it – I was now lee-bowing the tide.



At 1330 I tacked onto port with the intention of sailing north towards Sark and then putting in a tack using the later north-going tide. But the wind veered to north-west, so I delayed tacking to see if the shift was only temporary. It was not, so at 1400 I tacked onto starboard. I was now getting the best part of a knot lift from the tide and a little extra to boot, which cancelled leeway. The lift was quite noticeable and I couldn't believe my luck! *Jalina* was pointing well, she felt nicely balanced with very little weather helm and the slot between the sails was just right, with just a little lift on the luff of the main.

As we closed on Guernsey the wind strength started to vary and by 1630

▲ The wind was on the nose and then shifted, but the tide gave me such a good lift that I could easily stay on starboard and close Guernsey by 1630

it died away to a flat calm – I knew it was too good to last! It was now slack water with three miles still to go. To avoid being caught by a foul two-knot tide at 1800 I reluctantly started the engine and, with the autopilot on, handed the sails to prepare *Jalina* for harbour. I shed my waterproofs and put the kettle on – it was the end of a very pleasant day's sailing. **PBO**

NEXT MONTH: GUERNSEY TO ALDERNEY

■ Follow Roger's day trips from St Peter Port to Herm (PBO 485) and Sark (PBO 486) or read his previous article on crossing from Cherbourg to Alderney and Guernsey negotiating the tricky Alderney Race (PBO 476). Call the Copy Service on tel: 01202 440832, email: copyreport@ipmedia.com or download a PDF from our website: www.pbo.co.uk by clicking on 'Find PBO articles'

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