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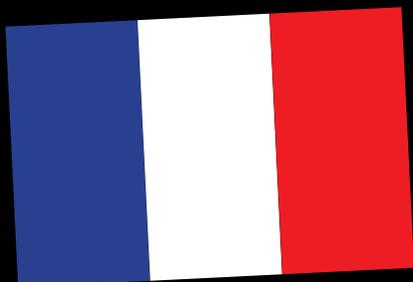
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BOAT & ENGINE TESTS · REVIEWS · BREAKING NEWS · ELECTRONICS · PROFILES



BALLISTIC FALMOUTH TO PARIS

An athletic RIB International team enter the Paris Marathon. Toby Budd provides a diary of Ballistic One's passage from Falmouth to Paris as the three man team bear down on the capital to compete with RIB in tow...

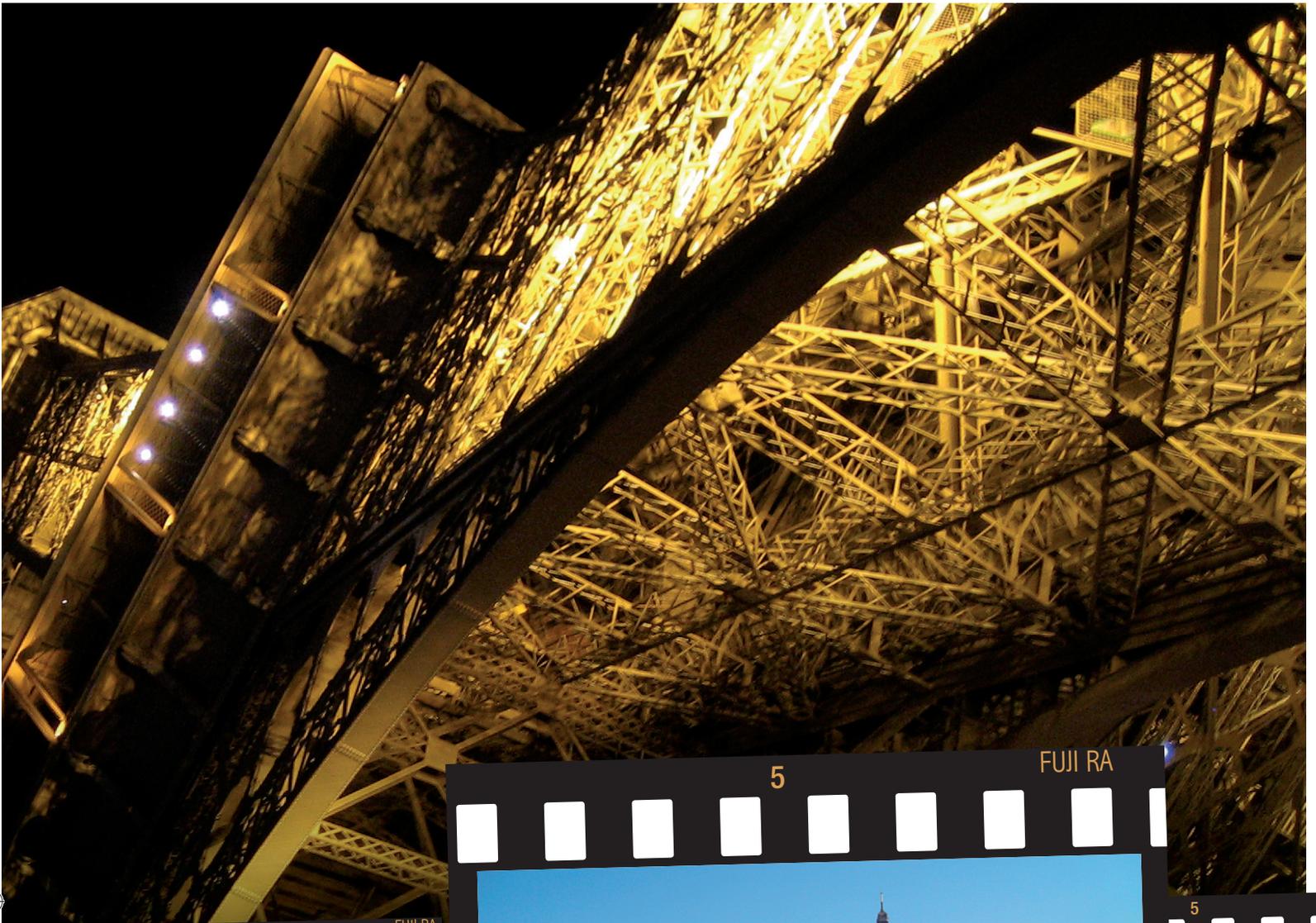


As a thin layer of early morning frost capped the light grey tubes and glittered in the early morning sun, we set off from Falmouth on the crispest of spring mornings bound for Paris. Overhead a flawless cold blue sky curved down over a wide arc to meet a razor sharp ocean horizon some 20 miles to the east. As we rounded St. Anthony Lighthouse and set our course east, the sun rose gracefully ahead, laying before us a magnificent shimmering highway that stretched out ahead towards Salcombe. I find that it's in the dark depths of winter, in that relentless time after Christmas as the weather stands guard outside your home,

that a man comes to day dream the most. Day dreaming is surely a wonderful thing and as the winter surrounds us, I find myself dreaming the most, dreaming of epic times ahead, of adventures and expeditions framed in summer's glory.

It was on one of those long cold evenings, as the wind and rain thundered in across 2,000 miles of angry ocean to lash against our weathered Cornish window that I sat with friends in front of a crackling log fire to discuss the forthcoming trip to Paris and the Scilly Isles. My girlfriend Rose and business partner Matt were competing in the Paris marathon on April 9th and plans for travel and

accommodation were slowly coming together. The idea to go by RIB from Falmouth across to Le Havre and up the Seine to Paris, was at this point just that, an idea. We had also been training hard all winter for the 'World Pilot Gig Championships' in the Isles of Scilly, and again a plan soon fell into place to RIB out to the islands for the championships. And so it was, on the 3rd of April, that we departed from Falmouth on the first part of a 1,200 mile journey that would take us across the channel and into the heart of France. After returning from Paris, we would have a few days to take stock before donning our oilskins again and heading out to the golden Isles of Scilly.



All we needed now was a boat and after several phone calls and a dozen emails we got in contact with Jason from JBT Marine who sounded keen on the idea. He suggested we used the RIB International demo boat 'Ballistic One' and after Hugo confirmed he was happy we were on.

APRIL 3RD 2006

The lead up to departure had been manic. The long list of 'Things to Do' was slowly being ticked off as we prepared the boat, 'Ballistic One' for departure. With Matt's van full of gear, we drove down through a mist filled valley to Mylor Yacht Harbour on a bitterly cold spring

morning. It took a good half hour to stow the gear and lash it down, I had fuelled up the night before and so after tucking up inside our stiff oilskins, we let go and set off for Paris.

After clearing the moorings, I slowly bought the boat up onto the plane, the 250hp Yamaha effortlessly brought the boat up to a comfortable 27 knots at 3,800 rpm. After rounding the lighthouse, we picked up the southwesterly swell and thundered off east towards Salcombe. As we flew across a shimmering ocean, we grinned in satisfaction,

at that moment we were contented men, free and happy with an unquenchable spirit for adventure, the world was our's for the taking.

As with all moments of contentment, it didn't last long. The bitter east wind soon cut through us and as teeth started to chatter our focus moved to Salcombe, to a hot café, big breakfast and fresh hot coffee. We made the fifty-mile passage in just over two hours and made fast to the fuel barge in Salcombe at 0830. After realising it was £1.30 a litre we soon stopped filling the tank and decided



Ballistic: Falmouth to Paris



Planning the route on GPS to Paris.

to wait until Cherbourg where we knew the fuel was cheaper. After moving to the visitor's pontoon we went ashore. The warmth of the quayside café was well received as we peeled off our layers and sat down for breakfast.

After breakfast I went to get some cash and whilst in the queue I recognised Mark Featherstone from RB4, I quickly explained what I was doing and arranged to meet him on the pontoon so he could see the boat. He arrived as we were preparing to leave and started to chat about the ensuing trip and some of the logistics involved. We soon got talking about paperwork and I explained what we had onboard. It turned out that the photocopies we had of certain documents could be a problem so we decided to call by JBT on the way to pick up the originals.

JBT are based in Emsworth so we decided to head for Southampton where we could spend the night. Leaving Salcombe, we again turned east, the sun had now started to warm the day and made the passage to Southampton much more enjoyable than the morning's bitter run. We rounded Portland Bill at 1806 and set a course for the Needles and it was at this point that fuel started to become a concern.

Before I go any further I should explain how we made our fuel calculations. The Ballistic RIB we had been lent was one of four identical boats used to test four 250hp outboards back to back. The fuel consumption figures had been published in a previous issue of the magazine and we had used these as a guide for estimating our fuel consumption. The article had given litres used per hour at various rpm, until we got the boat we did not

know how these rpm readings related to speed but were delighted to find that the Ballistic would do almost 30 knots at 4,000 rpm with two crew and a full tank of fuel.

The fuel consumption figure at 4,000 rpm was given at 21 litres an hour; this gives a fuel consumption of 0.75 litres per mile at 28 knots. In rough water we knew this would increase and had estimated around 0.87 litres a mile assuming we could make 24 knots at the same rpm. We decided to work on a litre a mile for estimated fuel consumption and allowed a 33% contingent. The boat had a 250 litre tank so we were confident when leaving Salcombe

Harbour. We made fast and took on 173 litres of petrol, although we still had 70 odd litres in the tank this meant our fuel calculations were significantly out. Including the 30 litres we took on in Salcombe, we had used 200 litres to cover 150 miles, giving a fuel consumption of 1.3 litres a mile in relatively calm seas. This was by no means a huge problem but it had increased our estimated fuel costs for the trip by £350, not the end of the world but it did manage to dampen spirits as we crossed a grey Solent towards Southampton.

By the time we'd squared away the boat, we were both ready for a hot shower and some



Leaving Falmouth

that we had more than enough fuel to get Southampton. (150 miles = 150 litre + 33% = 200 litres).

As we rounded Portland Bill we were down to the last light on the fuel tank, and as we closed on the Needles it started to flash. We were both concerned but assured ourselves that the fuel read-out had not been calibrated properly, and we were fine. As we came in past steep breaking overfalls we both looked nervously at the blinking light, this really was the last place we wanted to run out of fuel. We sheepishly cleared the lighthouse and came to a rest in the welcome calm of Yarmouth

grub. After a quick stop at the marina facilities, followed by a crisp pint of Guinness, we went to meet some friends in town for dinner at a local Thai restaurant. Fed and watered, we returned to find the RIB covered in a thin layer of ice as the temperature had fallen well below freezing. It was to be our first night on the RIB, the plan was to erect the full-length cover and sleep on the sun deck at the front of the boat. It seemed a good idea at the time but as we stood there in the freezing cold, other options were hastily discussed. A plan was soon formulated and a quick visit to the kebab shop saw Matt return with a large portion of doner meat



Ballistic: Falmouth to Paris

and chips. We had befriended the security guard when we arrived and as we hoped, the hot food on that bitter cold night was just enough for him to let us stay on the floor of the cloakroom provided we were gone by the time his boss arrived the following day at 0700. Not a problem, we were delighted and relieved, glad we were not going to have to spend a cold night aboard the RIB.

APRIL 4TH 2006

We woke early and thanked the kind security guard for his hospitality. After showering I decided to give the boat a wash down; it was now 0830, but by the time I had moved through the boat with a brush and hose the water had already frozen on the bow behind me. This was the spring! We both hoped the temperature would rise soon, otherwise it was going to be a cold passage to France.

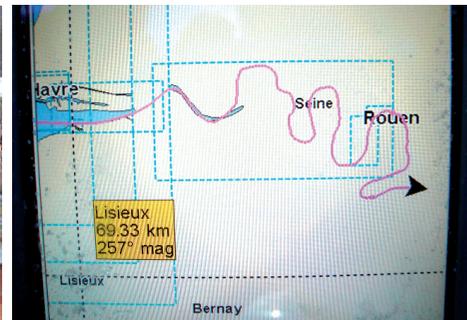
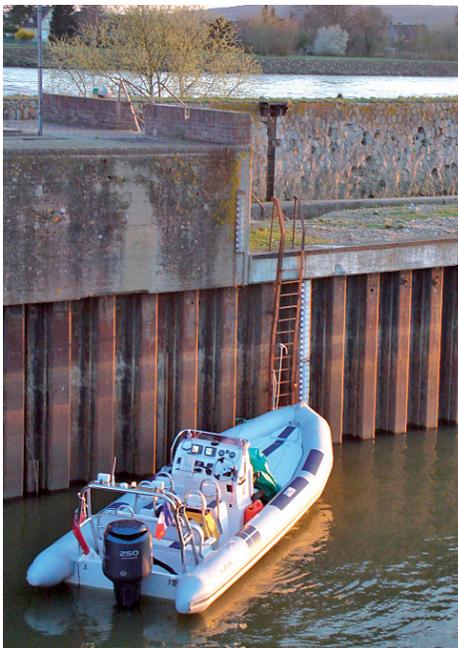
We left Southampton at 0900 and made our way down Southampton Water, past Portsmouth and up the river to Thorham Marina. It was bitterly cold, we had thermals and warm clothes, but with a wind chill well below freezing we were both finding it hard to stay warm. After tying up, I shot off to find

LEAVING THE ESTUARY MOUTH, WE POWERED UP AND POINTED THE BOAT TOWARDS FRANCE.

the Ballistic office and found Jason tucked in behind his desk in a heated room with a steaming cup of coffee. After a chat about the boat and the engine, I collected the necessary paperwork and headed back to the boat.

A quick stop to top up the tanks at the marina and we were away, leaving the estuary mouth, we powered up and pointed the boat towards France. It was just over 100 miles to Le Havre and we hoped to make the short hop across the Channel in under four hours. Leaving a grey and cold South Coast behind us, we were grateful the weather was still holding, the cold east wind managed to hold itself down to a bearable 10-15mph as we crossed the shipping lanes, however as we crossed our halfway point it began to increase. The Ballistic's powerful chines would throw the spray well clear of the boat but anything above 20 knots and this water is soon thrown back aboard as we travelled along with the wind on our beam. By the time we closed on Le Havre the wind was up to a solid force six and building, we were both soaked through and ready to arrive.

We came off the plane at 1748, peeled back our waterproof hoods, wiped clean our salt encrusted eyes and entered the calm waters inside the Le Havre breakwater. It's a wonderful feeling to arrive in port, we had only been at sea a few hours but arriving in Le Havre I enjoyed that familiar feeling sailors and boaters the world over feel as they enter harbour. We had arrived and as the smell of



Arriving at our first lock on route to Paris. Our journey along Le Seine, Past Rouen to the first lock.

French pastries wafted across the harbour our attention focused on a hot shower, some dry clothes, a cold beer, a hot meal and if we could pull it off, the fresh crisp sheets of a soft hotel bed.

We tied up at the visitor's pontoon, squared away the boat, put the cover on and set the alarm. The Ballistic has a very impressive alarm system that's triggered when you either move the boat or one of the lockers are opened, to add to this the boat will text you and let you know where it is and should you wish, text it back and turn it off.

Tired and wet, we shuffled off with our damp gear, towards the town to find a hotel, emerging out of the marina and onto the street. We were stopped by an elderly Frenchman who had seen us arrive. It took some time to explain what we were doing but after some time we got the message across. It turned out he was an ex-pilot from the harbour and offered to take us to a hotel. We piled our gear into the back of his Volvo

estate and made our way into town, after some limited conversation in our best French we pulled up at the hotel and hopped out. The kind French gentleman pulled away and we climbed the marble steps to the reception. "Une chambre pour deux person" "Non, nous sommes completes" A word that we would come very familiar over that evening "Full".

After eight hotels we gave up and made for the marina, a hot shower lifted spirits and we made for the town. Our first French meal went down extremely well, goats cheese on toast, steak, dessert and coffee were all that was needed to set us back in the mood for adventure. We returned to the boat to find a fresh layer of ice on the cover, with a certain amount of trepidation we clambered in and rolled out our sleeping bags. This was to be our first night on the boat and as my feet slid down my sleeping bag into the soaking mush at the bottom I looked forward to a long night of broken sleep and cold.



OUR FIRST LEG SAW US TRAVEL 110 KM FROM LE HAVRE UP TO ROUEN, IT TOOK JUST OVER FOUR HOURS AND WE ARRIVED IN ROUEN IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON.



APRIL 5TH 2006

It's amazing what two large French coffees and a croissant can do to a man in the morning. I had barely slept, but the breakfast enjoyed at a roadside café soon motivated me into action. Before we set off we had to fuel up, get some lunch and buy a guide book for the canal ahead. Unfortunately, the water-side fuel pump only took the local french Credit Card so it was back to the 'Jerry Can'. Six runs and 120 litres later and we were ready.

Leaving the harbour we headed back to sea before turning and entering the well buoyed channel that took us up the estuary and into the entrance of the river. The east wind was still as bitter as when we had arrived and any thoughts we had of calm sun-kissed canals were slowly evaporating away. After passing under Tancarville Bridge, the short wind against tide chop began to ease and we set our speed to 28 kmph, the speed limit on the tidal section of the river. As the sea turned to a river the trip suddenly seemed to enter a new chapter, we were now heading into the heart of France and the whole trip suddenly became an exciting reality.

Our first leg saw us travel 110 km from Le Havre up to Rouen, it took just over four hours and we arrived in Rouen in the early afternoon. We still had to get our pass for the

canal - the certificate that would allow us to pass through the numerous locks ahead on the remaining 241 km to Paris. We had also lost our camera due to an unfortunate incident involving Matt and a toilet, so a call to the local electrical store was also called for. I had brought my bike on the boat and unwrapped it on the pontoon so I could cycle into town. After an hour riding round the bustling streets I returned to the boat to find Matt busy cleaning and repacking all the gear. Next was a visit to the 'VNF' waterways office and after producing a long list of documentation including insurance, SSR, passport and an inland waterways ICC, we were granted our 'Peage Plaisance', it was valid for a week and cost 35 Euros.

We were keen to press on and so departed into a hazy afternoon sun in order to make the first lock before 2000. We arrived as the setting sun descended behind a long row of swaying beech trees to the west. The lock was now closed, but we were happy to be back

on schedule. There was no pontoon so we set out long lines fore and aft and made the RIB secure alongside the wall outside the lock. We climbed the rusty ladder and explored the three enormous locks that separate the sea from the river Seine and the canal. We managed to find a security guard and again, in our broken and rather pathetic french, found out the locks opened at seven, we were okay

where we were for the night and that there was a café a 20 minute walk down the road. After covering the boat, we set off for the local village, hungry and tired, both ready for a cold beer and some hot food. We rounded the corner of the village church to find a sad sight indeed, the café was closed, lights off, doorway barred and windows boarded over. A ten minute recce of the small village confirmed it was the only one in town and there was nowhere else open. Resigned to the fact that

dinner was now a half-eaten French sausage and a Mars bar, we set off back to the boat.

Passing a large Victorian house, I heard





Ballistic: Falmouth to Paris



a door open and tentatively poked my head through the large cast iron gates. Approaching me, in slippers and dressing gown, was a middle age French woman with a broad and welcoming smile. As best I could, I tried to find out where the nearest restaurant was and after some exaggerated hand signals managed to find out it was in the village we had passed a good ten kilometres down the road. When the lady offered to run us down there we couldn't believe our luck and gladly accepted, on the short ten minute journey we tried our best to make conversation but with our limited vocabulary it ended with us randomly listing a hotch poch of French nouns and verbs together, which the lady seemed completely confused by. We spent the rest of the journey in awkward silence.

We arrived at the small bar and thanked the lady, after ordering two beers we asked if food was possible, the bar man looked delighted and showed us to a back room filled with a group of ten or so laughing Frenchmen. We sat at our table and were handed the menu along with a litre of house red, after staring

burst out in laughter, we had no idea. After a quick circuit of the town trying to explain we had a boat at the lock we passed a bus stop, a bus stop with a map on, I climbed out and pointed at the lock. In an understanding yelp our driver's face relaxed, I climbed back on board and we were off.

APRIL 6TH 2006

The following morning our alarm went of at 0650 and we climbed reluctantly from our sleeping bags. After packing down the cover we let go and motored around to the open lock gates, the lights showed green and so we

LEAVING THE ESTUARY MOUTH, WE POWERED UP AND POINTED THE BOAT TOWARDS FRANCE.



blankly at the menu for a couple of minutes we managed to work out one of the dishes had bone in, we thought. On the waitress's return we tried to find out what was available but soon gave up, shrugged our shoulders, looked pleadingly at the waitress and said "Mange chaud, s'il vous plait". It seemed to do the trick and she trotted of to the kitchen to prepare our meal.

An hour and a litre of red wine later, we stumbled back to the bar for a coffee. They were closing up and we made attempts to get a taxi ordered. After they worked out what we wanted the bar man insisted he would run us back himself - excellent! We climbed in the back of the Citroen and pulled out of the parking lot. Our driver turned to us and asked which way to go. I looked at Matt and we both

entered. It was a still cold morning and a heavy freezing fog hung heavily over the water and filled the lock with a weary and intimidating atmosphere. We had bought fenders so the Balistic's grey tubes would not have to sit on the lock walls; we lowered them and came alongside to sit on the slimy black wall. To save a lot of hassle we didn't bother putting out lines but sat on a bow spring with the engine hard over in tick over. The large steel gates closed behind us and we began to rise, after a couple of minutes the gates ahead opened ahead and we cautiously motored forward, waving to the lock keeper in his cosy office as we went.

The visibility was down to forty or so metres, but by the time we had covered the first two kilometres at a snail's pace it began to close in further. We were forced to the side

of the canal, keeping well clear of the main channel, the barges are fitted with radar and are happy to steam at full speed in almost zero visibility. After two hours we were frozen to the bone, but more concerning was the fuel situation, or rather the lack of it. We were forced to pull over some twenty kilometres from the lock under a road bridge. As Matt got the stove going to make a coffee I set off, Jerry Can in hand, to find fuel. After crossing the bridge both ways I realised that our guide book was wrong and that there was no fuel station in the vicinity. In desperation I stuck my head in a local café which was getting ready to open and asked where I could get fuel. Standing before the bartender stood a bearded Englishman, dressed in full oilskin with a fuel can in his hand saying "petrol" and "for boat"

repeatedly. He soon took stock of the situation and as I left in disappointment was bundled into the back of a Peugeot 306 and run a good 20 kilometres to the local town where I filled up with fuel. An hour later I returned to the RIB, thanked the bartender and climbed aboard. The fuel situation was still dire but the 20 litres would at least get us another 20 kilometres further on and we could worry about it again then. We set off with our coffee into the fog once more, an hour later and the fog started to burn off and a clear blue sky and heart warming sun appeared above.

The rest of the day was spent making good progress through the numerous locks and where possible running ashore to find fuel. It was a glorious day and in the flat calm we would take turns to lie on the sundeck at the front and bask in the powerful sun. Sunset found us ahead of schedule at our final lock before Paris. Although it was now closed, we were within striking distance and happy that we could crack off the remaining fifty kilometres in time for lunch with the girls in Paris. We tied up to a small quay and I set off to find dinner, returning with pizza and two bottles of Merlot. An hour later we tucked up under the cover and settled down for a cracking dinner.

APRIL 7TH 2006

The now tedious task of fetching fuel on the bike was finished by ten, and we set off on our final leg. Paris here we come! We locked straight in and were underway on the other



After the breaking fog we arrive at Le Barrage numero trois

side of the lock by 1030. The next few hours were amazing, with so much to look at we sat in silence waving at the hundreds of people living out their lives on the shores of the Seine. Things were going well until we heard the wail of sirens behind us; we turned and saw a police boat steaming towards us, dropping the throttles back the fast launch came alongside. We were surprised we had not been pulled over until now, since Le Havre we had seen no other leisure boats on the canal, only commercial traffic, and knew that we had been sticking out like a sore thumb. I climbed aboard the police boat and handed over our papers. Thankfully they were in order and after explaining what we were doing and showing them around the RIB we were on our way again.

Words fail me when I try and describe the final five kilometres to the marina. Navigating the RIB through the fast flowing river was challenge enough, hundreds of tripping boats and barges are concentrated into this small stretch and adhering to the necessary rights of way in the current gave you a real adrenalin rush. All this happening as we passed some of Europe's most famous landmarks with thousands of people looking on as our little boat fought up stream in the surging current. Finally we arrived at the marina and locked in. The hectic river outside seemed a million miles away as we made fast to our pontoon. In our



WE PASSED SOME OF EUROPE'S MOST FAMOUS LANDMARKS WITH THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE LOOKING ON AS OUR LITTLE BOAT FOUGHT UP STREAM IN THE SURGING CURRENT.

shorts, we washed down the boat and packed it away. Rose, Amy and the others arrived as we put on the cover and we set off to have lunch in Paris.

Paris is a great city - vibrant, beautiful and most importantly, every other building is a creperie, cafe, brasserie or some other establishment that sells food... and you can't say fairer than that of pal.

Find out how the marathon went, what happened on our return journey, and how we got on when we ventured out to the Scillies, as well as fuel consumption figures and a low down on how the boat and engine performed, in the next issue.

Toby Budd
www.crossshore.co.uk



Police Patrol - Checking papers are all correct.



Waiting to enter the first lock of the day



Finally arriving in Paris.