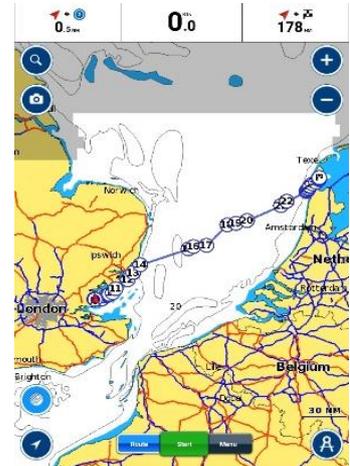


# THE NORTH SEA/HOLLAND ADVENTURES OF TRINCO

## CONTESSA 26 – CO1272

### PETER & CAROLINE HOOPER

When Dutch Rob Kolster invited us to join his proposed Contessa 26 North Sea Rally from Texel, the largest of the Frisian Islands in North Holland, I accepted the invitation immediately, when first announced in early February 2017. This was to follow the success of the Contessa 26 50<sup>th</sup> Rally from Lymington last year, where 45 boats attended. I had always wanted to sail up to the northern waters of Holland. Caroline was not quite so enthusiastic, reminding me that the dates, being the last weekend July/August, were the same period as our two last holidays on the boat, Southern Holland 2016 and the Rally at Lymington last year. We had endured strong headwinds, waves and rain on both holidays. This year, I assured her, it would be different. So confident that all would be pleasant, I purchased a new cruising-shute to complement our large spinnaker, in anticipation of the prevalent south-westerly warm summer breeze for a gentle downwind cruise across the North Sea up to Texel.



Tuesday 25 July 2017, we moved Trinco out from Burnham Yacht Harbour and picked up a mooring off Rice & Coles for the night. Taking advantage of first light and strong ebb tide we slipped the mooring at 04:30 am Wednesday and with engine on, headed off on our trip. Flat water, red morning sky and straight into an easterly headwind breeze. Something not quite right here.



Out of the River Crouch, through the Swin Spitway and into the Wallet. The wind slowly swung south, but not until we were off Harwich did it turn into the south-west and increased to 15 kts apparent. Cruising-shute I suggested. Not likely says Caroline. 11:00 am we rounded the N Shipwash Cardinal buoy, about 6nm east of Orford, and headed on our north-easterly course to Texel, deviating only to cross the Traffic Separation Scheme (TSS) routes and pick our way through the wind farms. Early afternoon about 13:30 we reduced to 2 slab reefs in the main and half a rolled up genoa. 15:30 visibility reduced by intermittent drizzle. Seas building as we were heading out in the North Sea proper. By 16:30 we had a steady 22/3 kts behind us and on a real sleigh ride, slip-sliding down the waves as only a Contessa 26 can do, with the auto-helm fighting to hold the course. But hey-ho, we were on holiday, enjoying ourselves.

Although shipping was relatively light, compared with the southern North Sea we were used to, the Icon AIS was nothing less than brilliant, spotting the ships and giving us the reassuring accuracy of their course, speed and any possible collision information, allowing us plenty of time to make any necessary course avoidance adjustments. Also, good to know their identity and destination. We were also heartened by the fact that we were transmitting as well, so they could see us.

23:00 pm and we were still on the sleigh ride. Relentless, no let up under an overcast sky and heading into the black night and naturally



we were tired. Still surfing at 8.0 to 9.5 kts, it was decision time. To stay on course we need to sail almost dead downwind, but with the auto-helm swinging through 60 degs on the waves, the risk of involuntary gybe at night was not worth thinking about. We rounded up into the wind the dropped the main. With our old through the mast roller system it was very quickly rolled safely away, all neat and tidy. With the engine now back on and half a genoa, we were still averaging 8 kts but under control. A happy auto-helm again.

Through the dawn light crossing the Texel TSS, shipping traffic increased and brought interesting moments trying to identify the strange lights and shapes of other traffic and obstructions, including the gas platforms and their pipe head structures and their associated high speed work boats.



The relief as always to pick up land, sighting the estuary into Den Helder and then into the Schulpengat Channel, picking our way between the islands and mainland, arriving at Oudeschild and entering into the very welcoming Wadden Haven Texel Marina at 10:35 am. 190 km on the log. Crossing time 30 hours. Average speed 6.3 kts. Not bad for the two of us on a little Contessa, given the foul tide sets we also endured.



Rob arrived with his daughter on their 26 Kleine Kohanna that afternoon having sailed from Medemblik, joined later by his wife and their dog, having driven over from the mainland. Later in the evening, the yellow hulled Constanza with Victor Recasens and his Father arrived from Ijmuiden, having also had a very bumpy trip. Belgium Kurt Brewee on Bijou sailed singlehanded from Ijmuiden and joined us one day later. The North Sea Rally boats had arrived, all 4 of us. Trinco being the only UK entry that managed to get there. The wind was still showing a steady SW Force 6/7 shown on the illuminated board on the Marina wall.



Friday we had a day off the boat and went sightseeing in Texel, a very friendly Island, with good shops and restaurants and a pre-book hopper bus service. Saturday morning we left Oudeschild in convoy, cruised across the Waddensee, still blowing 30 kts, into the main lock at Kornwerd and through into the Ijsselmeer, which was not the calm protected inland water I was anticipating. After a quick thrash we arrived in Hineloopen where the Harbour Master had reserved space for us to moor together and another jolly and social meal in an excellent restaurant. Distance 28 nm.



Sunday morning and it was still blowing hard, but the race still on, with a course set by Rob to head south down to Enkhuizen and possibly Hoorn. We set off 10:00 am and had a very wet and windy, gusting 33 kts, sail and as we were racing, pushing as hard as we could and tacking into the headwind. There was no chance of making Horne, so the race was cut short and it was late afternoon that we made it into the very picturesque town and the marina of Buitenhaven in the centre of Enkhuizen. Distance 34 m. Last night dinner all together along with our 26 Class Secretary, Mike Harrison, who had travelled from Cowes to greet us.



After saying our goodbyes to our new friends, with the Rally over and the fleet sailing in different directions, we set off on Trinco at 11:00 am, through the lock into the Markermeer, heading SW into the breeze to cross over to enter the canals at Durgerdam and up into Amsterdam's Sixhaven marina, right in the heart of the City Centre. Distance travelled 36 nm.

Tuesday, after a morning sightseeing, including boarding a City tour boat, we motored Trinco out from Sixhaven and up into the canal from Houthaven, mooring alongside a wall, just before Amsterdam's main city railway bridge, less than a mile from the Station, our intention was to join the night convoy south through the centre of Amsterdam. At 02:00 am, the railway bridge signals sounded and then it lifts open and the convoy, now over 30 boats of all types and sizes, starts the night journey south. After clearing the first seven road bridges at about 03:30 am my concentration dropped for a moment and we wandered too close to the bank edge. The next we heard, very loudly, was hitting a tree, a very large overhanging branch which held us, then slowly bent free with a loud cracking noise covering the boat in large leaves and left the other boats staring at us. All very embarrassing but we were so lucky we did not rip off the top mast instruments or worse still lose the entire rig.



After clearing another 24 bridges and locks, having gained a little sleep every now and then, whilst when waiting for their opening, we passed down through Rotterdam and outskirts of Gouda. At 20:00 pm and now raining again, we eventually arrived at Dordrecht, only to find the main

marinas were full and eventually found space in Wijnhaven, the old town centre marina and enjoyed a very welcome meal in the nearest restaurant. My



Navionics route plan from Enkhuizen to Dordrecht was 75 nm, but it all seemed a lot further. We would certainly recommend the Night Convoy route, with the night lights and shadows through the different areas of Amsterdam and the fascinating and beautiful scenery on canals and open water areas, winding through towns and the differing countryside and passed so many windmills. Distance 58 nm.

To be back in Burnham on Saturday, we needed a good weather window to cross the north Sea again. Our plan then was to head south and try to exit Holland out through the Roompotsluis, after a night in Zierikzee. Thursday 3 August, we left the beautiful old town Dordrecht, without any sightseeing at 10:10 am and headed out, turned the corner south and straight into 20 kts on the nose and more rain. The journey south was slow and rough, motor sailing into 20-30 knts with a nasty chop that sent the spray flying. Hard work looking forward over the sprayhood.



We past close to the beautiful old town of Willemstat and then through the huge Volkerak lock under the motorway, at about 13.30 pm, straight out into 30+ kts into the Hellegatand, down through the Grevelingenmeer and then to pass through the lock at Krammer under another motorway at about 17:00 pm, to enter the tidal salt water of the Oosterschelde. By then enough was enough and we decided to call it a day and bore away to port, at high speed down the narrow channel at low water to arrive in the safe harbour of Sint-Annaland and then an excellent

dinner in their Yacht Club. Distance 39 nm.

Almost in exactly the same sea area as 2 years ago, with the water crashing over Trinco's deck, we lost our boathook and purchased a new one from the same Chandlery in Sint-Annaland as we did before. Something about our summer holidays. Two trips to the local garage which was about a mile walk away, to fill our diesel tank and extra cans, and then at 12:00 noon, we were off again. Soon we were back with 29 kts on the nose and some huge seas. This is an inland waterway, but we had waves were bigger the Thames Estuary in a gale. But then the Oosterschelde is over 30m deep, more than most of the North Sea.



Like all good plans, they are there to be changed. At about 16:00 pm we decided that a North Sea crossing out through the Roompotsluis was not a good idea, even with less wind forecast for Saturday, the seas off those sandbanks are not nice at the best of times, as we experienced 2 years ago. We changed course and ran off down towards the lock into the Veerse mere, passing Veer and then turning into the quiet canal leading into Middleburg arriving at 19:40 pm, and then into one of our favourite Yacht Clubs for a very friendly and welcome supper. Distance 33 nm.

With a favourable looking weather forecast, we left Middleburg



at 08:00 am and headed south down the Kanaal Door Walcheren, through the numerous bridges and locks and finally out through the Vlissingen lock. Whilst we had travelled less than 5 nm, it still took us over 2 hours since leaving Middleburg.

We cleared the harbour entrance and now we were heading out again back into the North Sea.



The wind having been a constant South-westerly all week, which would have given us a lovely beam reach home, decided, as our luck would have it, to swing to the west-north-west and yet again on the nose. Then the rain started and visibility was severely reduced, just as we were heading out through the main shipping channel of the Westerschelde Estuary, then a short



squall back up to 29 kts. But that cleared, the wind abated and sun shone as we motored-sailed out across the Hinder bank, around the wind farms and off across the north and south TSS shipping lanes. At 19:00 pm another rain squall hit us and the wind picked up quickly to 30 kts. But luckily it passed as quickly as it had come and we settled down to an very pleasant clear and starry night sky. Heading just south of the Galloper and across to the Long Sand Head and then we back in the familiar territory of the Thames Estuary. At 06:50 am we passed the Whitaker Buoy, with the

tide having just turned in our favour to speed us home up the River Crouch. Feeling happy to be back in the home River, we packed our bags and tidied up, putting on the sail cover for an anticipated quick departure, when just off Holliwel Point, putt, putt, putt, the engine then stopped and we drifted in silence. No more diesel, which was not surprising since we had motored some 30 hours in all, pushing hard and still averaging some 1.5 litres per hour, since refuelling in St Annaland.



So, cover off and sails set and we tacked our way up the last 3 nm to Rice & Coles pontoon, where a can of diesel awaited us and after a quick bleed adjustment the engine was back in life to take us the final mile into the Yacht Harbour berth by 10:30 am on Sunday morning. We were home, some 24 hours after leaving Vlissingen, distance across logged at 144 nm. We never did set the new cruising-chute

12 nights sleeping on our little Trinco, who looked after us as a Contessa 26 does, keeping us safe and down below we still stayed warm, dry and cosy, over a total trip logged at 533 nm.