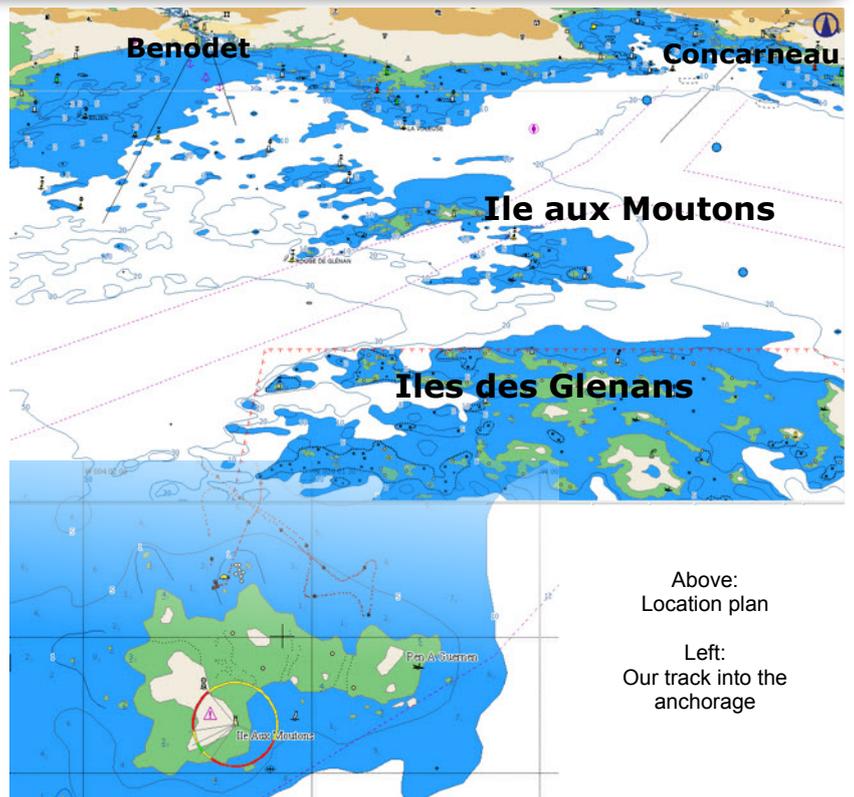


Short Visit to Ile aux Moutons

Some years ago, we were on passage from Loctudy to Belon, passing just to the north of Ile aux Moutons, which lies NW of the Ile de Glenan. We had considered it as a passage stop for lunch, but it does not rate even a mention in the N Biscay Pilot, and even Malcolm Robson only shows a diagram of the lighthouse, with no supporting pilotage notes. So we were surprised to see that quite a substantial fleet was sheltering in the lee of the island. I noted on the chart 'local anchorage', and resolved to explore it another year.

The only English Language pilot I could find that referred to the island is 'Sailing Tours Part III - Falmouth to the Loire' first published in 1894. William Cowper's pilotage instructions can be a little bit quaint, but his descriptions of



Above:
Location plan

Left:
Our track into the anchorage



the locations he visited are memorable. Of Ile aux Moutons, he writes...

"It is a curious little settlement this. With no post, no railway, no steam boat, hardly any regular communication with the rest of the world; but yet a more jovial, jolly old fellow than the guardian of the lighthouse I never saw. The whole domain may be about an acre and a half of grass, yet on this, a cow is kept. How the poor beast lives, I do not know, for the grass, having hardly any soil was all withered and burnt up." "Imagine my astonishment when first I set foot on this dot of a rock to see a noticeboard put up 'It is forbidden to walk on the grass!' I could scarcely believe my eyes!" "No, it was no illusion. Then I boldly invaded

the grass; the innate courage of the Briton asserted itself. Spirit of my ancestors! Would I be restrained by a board? No, not if it were the whole Board of Trade! The cow stares aghast, even the countenance of the jovial guardian blanched, but I strode on - it was not grass it was hay.

"It appears the fishermen who come here for shelter have a way of bringing their nets ashore and drying them on the grass. As this is all the cow has to live on, and since the keeper has to light his fire with the assistance of the cow, and unless the keeper as a fire he cannot cook his dinner, and unless he cooks his dinner he would find it hard to live, and as the lighthouse cannot be kept lighted without the guardian, and as many ships would be wrecked unless the lighthouse is lighted, whereby a good many lives would be lost, a great deal depends on this grass"

And it goes on in like vein (including pointing out that there are no sheep on the island).





This year, the chance to visit Ile aux Moutons arrived. We were in Concarneau, and decided that the prospect of a deterioration in the weather made our plan to visit the Iles de Glenans unattractive, so we resolved to hide up the Odet at Anse de Combrit instead.

However, that was only a short passage, and with flat water and a F2 breeze we saw the opportunity for a lunch stop on the way at Ile aux Moutons. With the wind slightly south of west, the bay on the north side ought to be protected. But as we approached we could not see any boats there, and wondered whether we had imagined the earlier observations. Then we saw one yacht, then another, and a couple of small motor boats all tucked in among the rocks, so we tacked up to the bay, dropped sail and motored in to anchor in 3m over sand and some weed. This was close to the buoy shown on the C-Map chart (though it is white, not yellow, and is clearly there for service craft to moor).



It is a delightful spot, well protected from the swell (although that was negligible when we were there). We had arrived at about 1245, and over the next hour about 20 dayboats, ribs and motorboats arrived, mainly from the direction of Benodet, so it is obviously a popular spot. We had a relaxing lunch there and just enjoyed the scenery. Quite a lot of people had gone ashore, but we did not do so.



After lunch, we motored round to the next bay where a couple of small yachts were anchored, but the bottom there is rock and probably not good holding. There was one yacht in the bay to the SE of the island, but we did not go round there, and instead set sail on a gentle reach to the Odet.

Researching later that day, I found that Alain Rondeau in *Pilote Cotier*, the excellent French pilot book sponsored by Beneteau does give a description of both the northern and SE anchorage. His excellent photo shows the anchorage we used well occupied. The SE anchorage is also referred to in Peter Cumberland's "Secret anchorages of Brittany",



It is a pity that these delightful anchorages are not better known to British yachtsmen. Approaching the northern anchorage from due north gives a clear run to the northern anchorage. And I would guess Cumberland's advice to approach the SE anchorage from "close N of Les Porceaux N cardinal buoy" is sound and sensible

