At the end of May HOEOCA set sail again for France. Honfleur had been selected because of its reputation as an attractive northern French port. There had been debate about passage plans within the time frame of our rallies but the challenge was set. Four charter boats and 6 owner boats made for France in something of a swell. The conditions meant one of our crews was forced to turn back as a precaution. Passage plans proved quite varied, so between the fleet we visited Le Havre, Ouistreham St Vaast-la-Hougue and Fecamp before tackling the locks guarding the old port of Honfleur. For some, time pressures meant the engine predominated over the sails, but larger boats used their speed and expert seamanship to allow the wind to blow them across.

The rendez-vous in the medieval port of Honfleur was worth the trip. The famous port was now in the hands of vessels flying the pennants and flags from maritime Balsall Common. The reception put on for us by the port dignitaries was both delightful and hospitable. Another historic speech from our Commadore in french was eagerly awaited. Our hosts were impressed that we were ahead of the political curve brandishing a female leader. The historic 'captainiere' kindly served drinks on the house. The rally dinner followed nearby, in the heart of Honfleur and provided an excellent highlight with the customary 'debrief' from our newly installed Commadore (Judy Lambourne) detailing events overcome during the outward passage.

Our return to home port provided more challenges to our crews. Fog in the channel, particularly the shipping lanes, was not scripted but had to be expected in May. Foghorns were deployed and fortunately trouble was avoided. The'shipfinder' app using AIS proved useful when mobile signal could be obtained. The crew of Laita learnt the value of 'Sea Start' whose colours looked remarkably like the AA. It turned out the engine had contracted the disabling 'diesel bug'. Cure, using a pump to unblock the fuel line, was effected and progress home was possible.

The rally winds were generally light meaning that 7 days or a larger vessel were needed to sail the course. Honfleur, however, was an excellent and hospitable destination. Thanks were appropriately given to Rear Commodore Cruising Graham Clark for his superb organisation. This was his swansong and I know all in the club have been appreciative of his contribution to cruising (never mind 'Supplies' and club tie sales) over the past few years.