

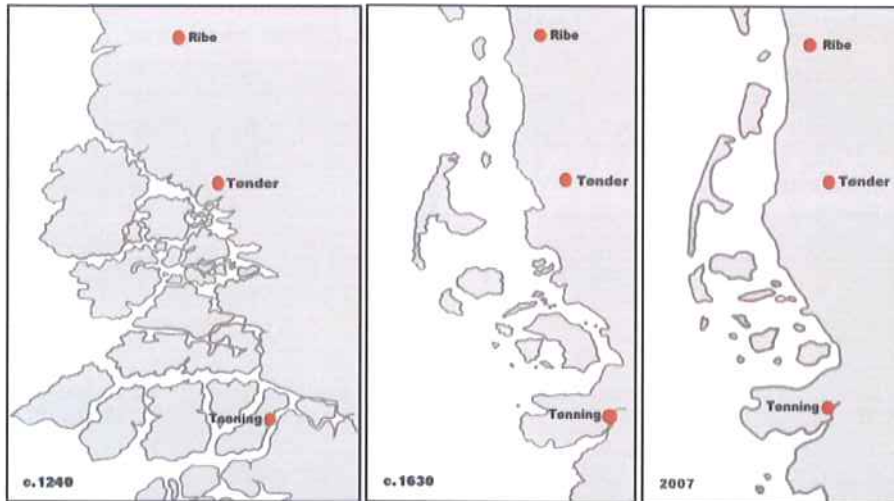
A Different Cruising Ground



island, however, is also a well-located stepping stone to one of the lesser known tidal cruising grounds: North Frisia between the River Eider and the Danish border, known as the *Sea of Halligen*. This is a much less frequented cruising ground than the better known tidal areas of Holland and East Frisia. This was the goal of *Troland's* 2007 summer cruise (S110 #42).

The Frisian island Heligoland (Helgoland) is known to most North Sea cruising enthusiasts. It is interesting because of its history, as it belonged to Denmark until 1807, was British until 1890 and since then has been German. It is also a tax free area and conveniently located as a gateway to the River Elbe estuary, Kiel Canal and the Baltic area. The

The Sea of Halligen has developed as a result of two dramatic natural disasters. They were storm surges which today would have called for the biggest of newspaper headlines and have released huge aid programmes. In medieval times the area consisted of large low lying areas, which were regularly flooded. A protective layer of peat



Historical maps of the area between the River Eider and the Danish border. From the River Eider to the island of Sylt the distance is about 50 nm

covered the area but as it was used for production of salt, it was gradually removed and the land became exposed to erosion. When a storm surge in 1362 flooded the area, it literally ripped it apart. It is said that more than 10,000 people drowned, and a whole town (Rungholt) disappeared overnight. During the next centuries the area was exposed to the forces of nature which were completely in control. In 1632 another great storm surge hit the area and further took its toll, but since then coastal protection and salting more or less have kept pace with nature.

Today the area is characterised by a large number of islands, protected to the west by huge sands and separated by deep tidal channels and vast shallows that dry out at low tide. The bigger islands of Sylt, Amrum, Föhr and Pellworm are all protected by huge dikes that will give shelter even against the biggest of floods. However, as a result of the above mentioned two storm surges, 10 smaller islands have survived: the Halligen. Halligen are islands that are only protected by summer

dikes and they are regularly flooded during autumn and winter. For the duration of the flood, man and beast has to take refuge at Warften (in Dutch I believe they are called Terpen). That is small, artificial, 3 to 4 meter high mounds, created by humans in order to secure a dry shelter during floods. Three of the Halligen have no permanent population but all



others are populated. Hallig Hooge is the largest and has about 100 inhabitants whereas only one family lives at Hallig Südfall.

The whole area is of course completely dominated by the tide and its changes every 6 hours. At low tide almost 80% of the area lies dry. A multitude of birds invade the muddy expanse and seals enjoy



The white dunes at Amrum



S110 *Fushan* at Amrum



the sun while resting at the sands. As the tidal range is between 3 and 3½ meters everything is covered with water at high tide. As far as the eye can reach the sea is only interrupted by small lumps of land, where the Halligen settlements are situated on waften rising above the horizon. You are completely alone, except for the odd seal curiously watching the intruder.

Even if the area is exposed directly to the North Sea, the large areas of shallow water and the protecting sands to the east ensure a relative calm sea, and the perfect adventure awaits you when you enter the area.

North Frisia is also very interesting from a cultural point of view. Medieval immigration from the Low Countries combined with the fact that the area is a part of Schleswig (thus having belonged to Denmark until 1864), explains the fact that as many as four different languages are spoken by different groups of the population. Of course everybody speaks German. But everyday language may be Low German which is widespread on the Halligen and in the coastal areas. North Frisian is still spoken on the bigger islands of Sylt, Föhr and Amrum as well as on

Heligoland, and finally there is a small Danish minority which have their own schools, for instance at Föhr.

Because of its remoteness and the challenges of sea and tide, the area is only visited by very few yachts apart from the local ones. Sailing a Southerly though, does make thing so easy that it is almost like cheating. You may find complete solitude and dry out at the smaller Halligen, for instance Langeness or Oland. Alternatively you can visit the small picturesque, drying harbour at Hallig Hooge, more touristy (but mostly day travellers) and with several restaurants. Or you may call in at the marina at Amrum. The island is a popular holiday resort with white sandy beaches, several hotels and holiday apartments and every opportunity for shopping.



Practical information

Approximate distances to Heligoland: From Copenhagen: 250nm, from Den Helder in The Netherlands: 150nm, from Lowestoft: 250nm and from Dover: 330nm. I'm not aware of any English language pilot books and the area is not covered by Reeds-MacMillan. However, Jan Verner: Die Nordseeküste. Helgoland bis Sylt. Delius Klaasig Verlag. in



German language is very useful even if you don't speak the language. Harbour plans are self evident and much the same applies to tables giving hourly tidal height referring to relevant watersheds and harbours. *Gezeitenkalender 2007* published by the German *Bundesamt für Seeschifffahrt und Hydrographie*, comprises German tidal tables with high and low water measured for Husum, Helgoland, Büsum, Brunsbüttel, Glückstadt, Hamburg, Cuxhaven, Bremerhaven, Bremen, Wilhelmshaven, Emden, Nordeney and Borkum in German Bight.

More pictures and satellite imagery at www.troland.dk/en

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