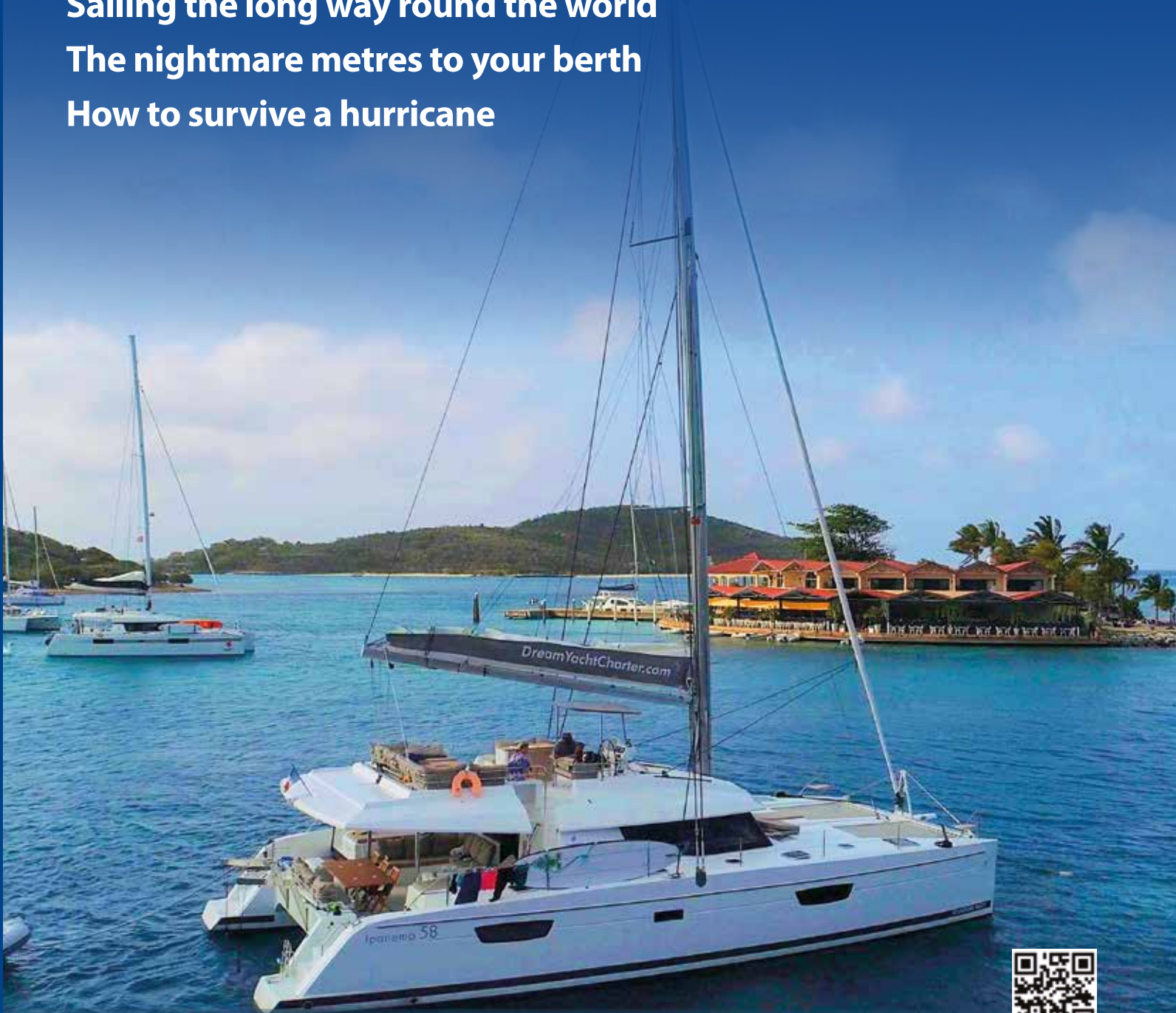




Cruising

www.theca.org.uk

Sailing the long way round the world
The nightmare metres to your berth
How to survive a hurricane



Reaching out to members

Judith Grimwade welcomes the season for socialising with other boaters, and new initiatives for sharing information with our members, whether by podcast, online video, or seminars outside London



Many of you will be reading this edition of *Cruising* in its electronic format and the cruising season will be well under way. Wherever you are, I hope that you are enjoying good cruising conditions and are perhaps on your way to one of the many rallies or meets that are such an important part of the life of the Cruising Association.

Meeting like-minded boaters is one of the pleasures of cruising and members of the CA belong to a great community of enthusiasts. One of the best parts of each summer is the opportunity to renew friendships and to make new friends. If we are lucky, the warmth of the occasion is matched by blue skies and sunshine. We are always looking for photographs of such occasions to share on our Website or to post on social media, so please forward them to office@theca.org.uk,

remembering to check that you have the permission of the participants to do so. Sometime during such an occasion, you can introduce a new member to the CA, earning yourself a reward to spend at the CA Shop and giving the code (which you can find on the CA website under **Member Services > Refer a friend**) for a reduction on the first year's subscription if made with a direct debit.

CA podcasts and videos

We are very fortunate in having talented and enthusiastic members within our Association. Trevor Taylor, our new South West Section Secretary, has produced the first podcast on Dartmouth and the River Dart, www.theca.org.uk/sections/southwest. Also, in response to requests from within the membership, our first videos with extracts from presentations have also been uploaded.

We would like to continue to add to this important information thread, so if you have taken videos of "interesting" entrances or perhaps even Mediterranean berthing or using box moorings, please contact office@theca.org.uk so that these may be added to our collection.

CA House...

Having a HQ that allows us to hold a comprehensive lecture programme during the non-cruising season and



where our Cruising Sections hold their seminars, at a location that can be accessed by public transport from the regions, is a great benefit to the membership generally. CA members are spread wide and far, and not just within the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland. Our situation at Limehouse is one of the easiest places in London to access by road and public transport. With our five cabins, members who live away from CA House and London, can find accommodation at reasonable rates. Being able to offer accommodation to those making presentations at these event is a great advantage.

CA House not only provides accommodation for our staff, our library and information centre but it also contributes an important income stream that enables the association to fund benefits such as Captain's Mate and our website. This is because we own the building, and the land on which it stands is on a 250-year lease at a peppercorn rate. We are able to share the building with other users, so CA House is an important source of income. It

Photo: Herbythyme/Wikipedia



The River Dart, pictured here at Kingswear, is the subject of the first CA podcast by South West section secretary Trevor Taylor


would be very difficult to administer our association without this facility.

...and beyond

Our regional sections organise events at various venues around the country which are greatly appreciated by those members who are able to attend them. We are aware that there are areas of the UK where we do not have sufficient members to make such events practicable, or where there are geographical constraints. It has long been an ambition to extend the reach of

CA activities beyond the regions where we have sections. There are plans for a day seminar to be held in the North West of England. We do not have a regional section in that area, and are looking at venues with good communications, so that there is easy and convenient access. We do have sufficient members in this area to arrange a successful event. At the time of writing, plans are not completely finalised, but the event will probably be in the early afternoon, with a buffet meal followed by a keynote presentation, finishing in time for people to make their way home at a sensible hour.

The cost of this event will be similar to attending a seminar at CA House. If this event is a success, then we hope to organise other events of a similar nature elsewhere. The event will be judged to be successful if we have a good attendance of members who found the day enjoyable and informative.

The CA will again be attending Kip Marina in Scotland for Scotland's Boat Show in October, and we look forward to meeting many members there. Following our successful seminars in 2017, we will be providing speakers in 2018. 

From the forums

Replacement Liferaft?

I am about to replace my 15-year-old EV offshore liferaft as I am told it can no longer be serviced. Having looked at reviews, the Viking seems to be a sensible balance between cost and quality. But then I saw the AWN, several hundred pounds cheaper using new construction technology that claims to offer an offshore quality liferaft for the cost of an inshore budget model. Anyone got one? Or anyone got knowledge or views?

Mike Walsh

Being in the States, this is probably at best only partially useful advice. First, I would not cheap out on the one thing that has to work if there is a really serious issue. Second, as an ex-pilot, I love Winslow Life Rafts. They were originally built for small aircraft. They come in a variety of packaging and are much lighter than the competition... I wanted a raft that was light enough that I could get out of the locker and throw over the life lines.

David Rome

You tend to get what you pay for, but you may want to check out servicing before you take the plunge, especially if you are not in the UK. The Viking rafts are excellent quality but need to be serviced by Viking I think (this is also true for Ocean

Safety) unless you want to cut corners. If you want a light manageable raft, then Waypoint (part made in E Europe?) look the best option. Most of the rest are made in China, though I don't know about the AWN. One option, much recommended by the service stations is to buy a cheap raft and throw it away after three years rather than service it.

Stephen Tedbury

We have an Ocean Safety which we chose on the basis of both specification and visual inspection at a boat show. It seems an excellent raft BUT when we needed a service when in Valencia we had to have it shipped to Barcelona which added considerably to the cost and time.

Tony Boas

We bought a Crewsaver Ocean but found drainage holes in the canister were wrongly positioned for being mounted vertically (ie in portrait orientation) on the pushpit... then we found out that Crewsaver rafts should not be mounted this way. None of the manufacturers advertise on orientation. Very unimpressively, after two or three emails trying to sell me their liferaft (but not answering the question) Viking stopped replying. Ocean Safety, on the other hand, were very helpful and confirmed that theirs could be mounted this way - as long as the painter exits at the top (it relates to the gas bottle position).

Paul Lingard

Join the debate at www.theca.org.uk/forum

REASONS TO BE A CA MEMBER

- Comprehensive, user-friendly website www.theca.org.uk with thousands of pages of information, advice and expertise, members' forums, boats and gear for sale and wanted, and much more
- World-class library of books, charts, pilots and logs in print and electronic form
- Discounts on key products and services
- Quarterly magazine
- Wide range of topical and authoritative publications
- RATS: the Regulations and Technical Services group fights to protect the interests of cruising sailors
- Convivial bar and excellent food at CA House
- Shared expertise: whatever your cruising plans, members will be able to help with experience and advice
- Area Sections covering key cruising grounds at home and abroad
- Honorary Local Representatives (HLRs) to help and advise visiting yachtsmen all over the world
- A crewing service matching skippers and crew
- Overnight accommodation available at very competitive rates at CA House only ten minutes from the City of London
- *The Cruising Almanac* published annually by Imray
- Winter season social, training and lecture programme

Yachts in Simi. Photo: Hilda J Luyt

Greek cruising tax info updated

The Greek regulations information on the CA website has been updated by Chris Robb to reflect recent changes on renewal of the cruising permit, and the new cruising tax. In summary:

- All recreational boats in Greece must carry a permit to cruise which can be obtained from the port police on arrival. EU flagged boats over 7m will be issued with a **"Private Pleasure Maritime Document", commonly known as a DEKPA**. To obtain this you need passports, yacht registration certificate, a certificate of boat insurance in Greek, your ICC or equivalent, and €50.
 - Your DEKPA needs stamping once a year *before* the annual date it was last stamped. Fines can be and have been levied for renewal even a few days late, notably at Kalamata. We would advise you therefore not to get your DEKPA re-stamped (validated) at Kalamata if you are out of date.
 - For renewal, if you cannot be certain of being on your boat at renewal time, we recommend that you get your DEKPA stamped once early in the year and again once late in the year – each and every year. Early stamping *is* allowed, though some Port Police appear not to know. Gently insist and explain that you won't be in Greece on the DEKPA expiry date.
 - For longer term absences, the law allows for a yacht to be Out of Use (ashore). Full details of how to register this, and maybe even to register your boat as Out of Use afloat, are on the CA website.
- In January 2018 a **cruising tax known as TE.P.A.H** was passed into law. The tax is payable by all vessels over 7m that cruise in Greek waters (of any flag). As *Cruising* went to press (May 2018) the TE.P.A.H. is not being collected anywhere in Greece and we have no information to suggest when (or even whether) it will be collected. We also don't have any information yet on how to pay the tax, the law says that it's supposed to be payable electronically.
 - The tax is only payable if the boat is in use. If the boat does not move (and in practice that will probably mean it's in a marina) then no tax is payable, as long as the port police are notified. Note that if you use the boat, even for a day, then a full month's tax is payable.



For full details, go to the Greek Regulations page on the CA website (www.theca.org.uk/cruising_info/med/greece/regs or **Cruising Info > Mediterranean > Greece > Greek Regulations**). Updates are also posted on Mednet, which you can read in the Forums or receive by email.

Confirmed: no Belgian penalties for British red diesel

Following the sustained effort by the CA including meeting the Ambassador and lobbying via HLRs and other contacts in Belgium, the Belgian Finance Office has confirmed to the CA that there will now be no fines or penalties for UK vessels visiting Belgium which have UK marine red diesel in their tanks.

The Finance Office notice says: "The policy of tolerance regarding red diesel in UK flagged yachts visiting Belgium will be maintained until further notice. Any change to this policy will be communicated in due time.

"This removes any remaining uncertainty for the members, and other yachtsmen and women, who wish to make the crossing from the east coast or channel ports to Belgium. This status quo to the agreement will not change, without warning, on behalf of the boating community in the UK."

However, 100% fuel duty must still be paid on all red diesel which is purchased before a trip to Belgium. The full advice details are contained in the note at www.theca.org.uk/rats/red_diesel_use_in_belgium on the CA website. The CA is grateful to the Belgian authorities for confirming the policy, and encourages members to visit Belgium this summer.

Colin Heywood



60 enjoy Ocean Safety day

More than 60 CA members and friends enjoyed a day-long safety seminar organised by Ocean Safety at its Southampton HQ in May. Topics included: man overboard, EPIRBs (different types of beacons), liferafts (types, contents, grab bag), lifejackets and flares. A discount of up to 30% on Ocean Safety products was available on the day.

Members described the event as "a really useful and informative day" and it may now be repeated in other locations.

Could your boat withstand a hurricane?



Left, Independent Boat Yard, Benner Bay, St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands, after Category 5 hurricanes Irma and then Maria hit in 2017. Damage here was less than in the BVIs. Photo: Evelyne Nye

2017's hurricanes devastated boats both in and out of the water. If your boat is in the Caribbean, Don Street advises on how you can keep it safe and continue to sail during the hurricane season

An area from west of St Barts to the east coast of Puerto Rico is often called Hurricane Alley, because the islands in the area have over the last 35 years frequently suffered either a direct hit or major damage by a hurricane that has passed close by.

With two exceptions, none of the yard managers have laid up boats during hurricane season in such a fashion that they would stand a very good chance of surviving a hurricane.

The yard attached to Marina Puerto Del Rey had 237 boats properly laid up: tied down, well supported by screw jacks, masts out, no total losses: just three per

cent suffered major damage during 2017.

In St Martin, Sir Bobby Velasco says: "I lay up my boats the way my daddy taught me: wooden cradles, everything tied together with cross spalls, well nailed together and masts out". Boats in Bobby's marina survived undamaged except for sand blast damage from hurricane-blown sand. Elsewhere in St Martin, where boats were hauled ashore there was massive destruction.

In marinas in hurricane alley in 2017, outcomes varied from massive destruction, to many boats sunk, to no sinking but major damage, except Marina Puerto Del Rey. Puerto del Rey with its



Don's experience

Donald M Street, who arrived in St Thomas in the US Virgin Islands in November 1956, is the compiler of the Imray lolaire charts which cover all of the eastern Caribbean east of Aruba, and is author of guides covering the same area. Over the past 70 years he has built up a tremendous knowledge of how hurricanes affect the yachting industry in the eastern Caribbean and the northeastern coast of the US.

In Manhasset Bay, Long Island, where Street learned to sail, the 1938 hurricane sank or put ashore 400 boats. In the New London Newport area it killed 486 people and caused the modern equivalent of \$1.4 billion of losses.

The 1944 Great Atlantic hurricane had hurricane force winds over a 600-mile circle. It sank a US Navy destroyer, a light ship and two USCG coast guard cutters.

On *lolaire* and other boats Don has survived seven hurricanes. In 1984 *lolaire* was caught on the north side of St Martin, by the late season (mid-November) hurricane Klaus. *lolaire* survived using six of her seven anchors. Subsequently he obtained the NOAA book *Tropical Cyclones of the North Atlantic Ocean* that records the track of hurricanes from 1851 onwards, and has studied and recorded many recent hurricanes.

After Hurricane Hugo in 1989 Don published detailed guidance in all four of his guides, *Caribbean Compass* and various yachting magazines. If his advice had been followed hundreds of boats would not have sunk, and hundreds of millions of dollars of insurance claims would not have been made.



How to lay up safely ashore in a hurricane zone:

1. Use a robust cradle.
2. Tie the boat down – to dead men or sand screws in the sand.
3. Dig a pit for a fin keel.
4. Take out the mast!

Photos taken at Catamaran Marina, Antigua



12ft-high 1,000ft-long breakwater was specifically built so that boats would survive a direct hurricane hit to the marina. The marina has a total capacity of 950 boats, of which 552 were in the water. Just 4% suffered major damage, 2% were total losses.

In the islands to the south of Hurricane Alley – Antigua, St Lucia and Grenada, where large numbers of boats lay up ashore for the hurricane season – the marina managers claim they have learned their lessons by observing the disasters: Antigua as a result of Hugo, Grenada as a result of Ivan in 2004. They lay up boats properly so that they will survive a hurricane.

Fin-keeled, deep-draft boats have their keels in a pit, boats are in specially built steel cradles or are very well chocked by numerous screw jacks, and boats are tied down with straps to either dead men buried in the sand or sand screws.

But the vast majority of the boats are stored with their masts in. Wind pressures go up with the square of the velocity. When the wind gusts to 180mph the wind pressure is astronomical: 83lb per sq ft. That means that on a 60ft mast with the wind gusting 180 mph, the load exerted 30ft above the deck is 5,450lb. When the wind is fore and aft, or near

to it, this load really does not matter. But with that load on the beam, will the boat stay in the cradle?

Every time a hurricane passes through hurricane alley, boats pour into supposed safe havens, such as Ensenada Honda on Culebra, Hurricane Hole St Johns, or inner Benner Bay on St Thomas. In every major hurricane they are disaster areas with a total of well over 100 boats sunk, and a similar number suffering major damage.

If a hurricane is forecast...

Hurricanes are tracked by satellite from their earliest stages by NOAA Hurricane center. They head west, never altering course more than 5 degrees in 24 hours. Any zig to the south never lasts more than 24 hours. If a hurricane springs up, each day plot a 10-degree cone from the position of the hurricane. The area of the cone gets smaller as the hurricane approaches.

If you are in the cone 48 hours before the hurricane is to hit your area, **pick up the anchor and head south on beam reach or close reach**. That will give you enough time to be well south of the hurricane. You will experience manageable winds and big seas. Once the hurricane passes, turn around, head back to your anchorage and examine the destruction you avoided by heading south.

From hurricane alley:

Just head south or southwest, **do not try to fight your way east to an island or harbour in the islands of the eastern Caribbean**.

From Antigua or islands to the south:

It is just a case of heading south. In years gone by you could head southwest to Venezuela, but with the present disastrous political situation this should be avoided.

The **anchorage in Grenada** will look attractive, but they will be so **overcrowded** there will be the danger of boats dragging and damaging others

Head south to Trinidad, but do not stop in Chaguaramas. The anchorage is overcrowded, the bottom is poor holding, and there is a strong reversing tide that makes anchoring difficult. Continue **south to Point-à-Pierre**. Anchor at 10°N well below any danger from a hurricane.

You can continue to sail safely during the hurricane season by following these guidelines. Read detailed advice in March 2018 *Caribbean Compass* at www.caribbeancompass.com/online/march18compass_online.pdf and in the August issue of *Cruising World*. This article is just a summary.



The last few metres

Noel Dilly considers the challenge of approaching – or leaving – a berth under the watchful eyes of your fellow sailors



The first twenty or so metres leaving or picking up the mooring are a source of considerable anxiety to some, and totally inhibit sailing in others. Competence can be judged by friend and foe alike, and reputations irretrievably lost in seconds. Doing something while everyone around is standing still will immediately attract attention. Observers will materialise as if by magic. Prime moorings near the clubhouse come at a premium. Movement on the pontoon is spotted from the bar. The moment one's intentions become known, conversation dies and members, pints in hand, leave the bar and gather in the picture windows. A sure sign that some daring soul is about to leave or enter a marina berth. The bar-bound experts with their self-proclaimed vast sailing expertise have their eyes riveted upon the impending action.

Once upon a time fellow sailors would have moved quietly into position to help. Now they move to vantage points with cameras to record the potential disaster. Like any good drama the outcome is unknown and the twist of events unpredictable but probably expensive. Your identity will be known and any damage that you might do will be reported far faster than you can confess.

Not for nothing do many of us fear these few metres far more than anything else we may encounter while sailing. It is not mooring lines but this challenge that keeps many yachts marina-bound.

Why? Because the first and last moves of a sail are not easy. The threat of embarrassment is a powerful inhibitor of action. The basic problem is that rudders don't work unless there is water flowing over them. The solution is either to move the boat quickly or find some other method of steering. Dispersing the audience with grape shot is probably against the small print of the marina Health and Safety regulations.

The amount of energy to be used up in a crash is easily calculated. It depends upon the mass of the boat and the velocity. The mass should be pretty constant except that the crew may be jumping overboard in fear. It is obvious that the slower you go the less the potential damage. However going too slowly invites disaster.

What the audience secretly wants is to watch the helm transfixed, staring into the jaws of disaster, vainly persisting ever more violently with a manoeuvre that is obviously not working. Standing white knuckled clutching the wheel like a talisman, and bellowing instructions, more

Left, a yacht approaches its berth in Suffolk Yacht Harbour, under the eyes of watchers in the clubhouse. Below, gongoozlers enjoy the chaos in the Vilaine lock in Brittany



like a latter-day American evangelist than a yacht skipper.

Resist the desire to get it over with instantaneously. Use the Mark 1 eyeball. Study the potential solutions before committing to the manoeuvre. Of course looking at a problem never solved anything, something has to be done. Brief any helpers before beginning the attempt.

The object of the exercise is to get the bow pointing in the desired direction. Cheat! think outside the boat. Rely upon the wisdom of ages, not the boat's infernal combustion engine for the solution. If the engine is really needed as a comfort blanket, keep it out of gear. This is prime rope around the prop time! The throttle lever is bound to get caught up a trouser leg, or leant upon at the most inconvenient time. In difficult situations the engine will probably not help anyway. Engage brain before engaging the gearbox, think what a sudden acceleration is likely to do. Use the wind: what it will do is known. The bow will almost certainly head off downwind whatever one would prefer, unless you do something about it. Try the rudder while still alongside. If there is any sort of water flow, its effects can be determined.

Whatever you do, it is unlikely that the laws of dynamics will change. Accept that there is no way of controlling the elements. This does not preclude doing things to exploit or counteract their effects. Leaving a berth does not have to be smooth and slick like driving a car out of a garage. Undertake



Above, ARC boats leave their berths at Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The perfect time to get it wrong, with thousands of knowledgeable onlookers ashore and on other boats. Right, 'You'll never get into that berth': crew assists with approach manoeuvres in Middelburg



the adventure in doable bits. It is what is doable, not what is desirable that should dominate the plan. Hoping for the best is the last thought before disaster.

It is sometimes useful to have crew members ashore helping to manipulate the boat. Especially those who are sure they know exactly how it should be undertaken, based upon zero experience.

If the cockpit is crowded with guests dressed up to the nines in safety gear, staggering around like youngsters on a Duke of Edinburgh hike bent double under the weight of unusual equipment, they will only get in the way. Get rid of the passengers, they will all stand up and look at the tricky bit and totally obstruct the view. Their combined weight moving around on the bow will upset the trim and ruin the steering. Left on board they may discover new aspects of vocabulary and the minuscule time it takes to shed a calm exterior.

Pick up guests somewhere more convenient, such as the fuelling pontoon. This pontoon always has easy access and a large turning area to encourage visits to purchase fuel. There are people there eager to take money and they might just take lines.

What about the adjacent boat? Its guardrails will make fine hand holds for pulling and pushing, and the rails get a free load test on an important item of safety gear.

Walking the boat out along the finger pontoon works well when leaving astern.

Indeed sometimes the bow can be encouraged to point in the desired direction by judicious use of an adjacent pulpit.

Warps, the time-honoured technique of the days of pure sail, remain a potent tool in solving most of these problems. There are usually enough cleats on adjacent yachts and pontoons to provide the desired strong points. The "kiss" advice in their use is important. The fewer lines the better.

When pushing and pulling out of arm's reach, use a boat hook that is a boat hook, not some flimsy device with a spike on the end designed to cause damage and left over from the Bengal Lancers.

Coming home

Returning to a berth is nearly always easier bow first. The boat can be warped around later when no one is watching. Getting the bow alongside an already moored boat and manhandling into position is often far neater than risking motoring straight in. It is likely also that the owner

and crew of the chosen boat will rush to help.

Don't be inhibited about using adjacent berths to sort out the next step, and perhaps rig the warps to help the move to the appointed slot.

Should the effort prove successful the onlookers retire muttering darkly about the luck of the devil, bow thrusters and other such trickery, convinced in any other set of circumstances their dire predictions would have been vindicated.

Once you are berthed and the glow of satisfaction is spreading warmly, just spare a thought for the skipper of the single-engined, massive-top-hamper catamaran. Sometimes, all one can do is give up, go shopping, or visit the in-laws.



Noel Dilly is a retired professor of anatomy and a contributor to *Heavy Weather Sailing*. He started sailing in 1944 and has cruised all over the world. He survived the 1979 Fastnet Race, weathered Hurricane Dean, and now he and Sandie sail a Rustler 36.



The long way home

Martin Bevan & his wife Elizabeth took their Amel 54 *Caduceus* across the Atlantic in 2010 and around the world from 2014 to 2017. Here he explains why they came home via Cape Town and the Azores



For anyone contemplating a circumnavigation, one of the biggest questions is how you get safely back to Europe. The growth of piracy in the last 20 years coupled with the eastern Mediterranean having all the appearance of a war zone has made the “easy option” of the Gulf of Aden, the Red Sea and the Suez Canal a less than favourable option for many of us.

This leaves the majority of sailors with two options: ship the boat back from the Far East, or head south for the Cape of Good Hope and the passage up the South Atlantic. Our planning, such as it was, before transiting the Panama Canal in January 2014, therefore concluded that at some time in the indeterminate future we would round the Cape of Good Hope before heading north.

In 2014 we crossed the Pacific visiting the Marquesas, Tahiti, Niue, Tonga, Fiji, Vanuatu and New Caledonia before heading south to spend the summer land touring the North and South islands of

New Zealand. Cyclone Pam hit Vanuatu in March 2015 while we were in the South Island. Having spent some time getting to know one of the more remote island groups of Vanuatu we decided to shelve the plan for sailing on to Australia, and instead head north, with the idea of providing what aid we could in the Maskelyne islands of South Malakula, some 100 miles north of the Vanuatuan capital, Port Vila.

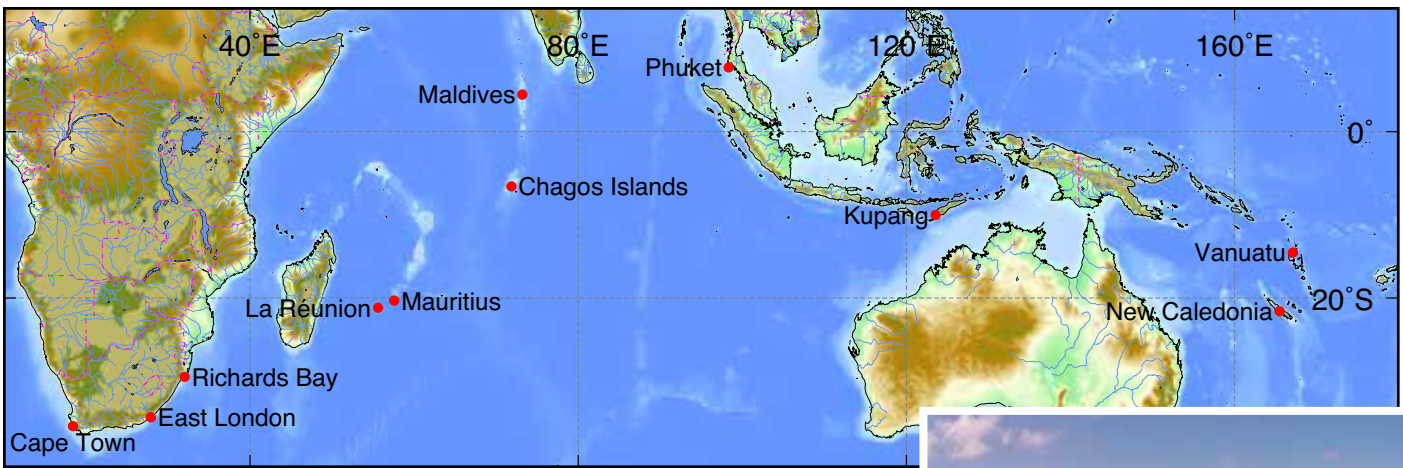
After an interesting bureaucratic struggle Elizabeth, a retired GP, had her UK medical qualification accepted by the Vanuatuan Ministry of Health. In May 2015 we arrived back in Vanuatu with the boat heavily laden with clothes, food and medical supplies that we had put together with the help of friends made in New Zealand, and purchased with donations from family, the World Cruising Club and Masonic charities. The story of the five months that we spent in Vanuatu can be found in our sailing blog ([blog. mailasail.com/caduceus](http://blog.mailasail.com/caduceus)). Suffice it to say it was one of life’s great experiences.

Leaving Vanuatu in September 2015 we sailed to New Caledonia for some necessary repairs to our water maker and genoa furler before making the 3000M non-stop passage through the Torres Straits to Kupang, Indonesia. We spent six weeks cruising through the Indonesian islands to Singapore and then north to Phuket in time to meet up with friends on a sister yacht for Christmas.

Early 2016 saw us sailing west from Thailand, via Langkawi to the northern end of the Maldives. Six weeks were spent sailing south through the Maldives. This was followed by what proved to be our favourite cruising destination, the British Indian Ocean Territories of Chagos, where we spent three idyllic weeks entirely on our own, other than for an early morning visit by two assault boats full of Royal Marines.

Crossing the Indian Ocean, and the equator, from the north-east to south-west requires a certain amount of planning as ideally you require to be out of the northern hemisphere before the cyclone season starts and not enter the southern hemisphere until its season has finished. Keeping a wary eye out for late-season southern hemisphere cyclones, and after a slow start crossing the equator, we had a very robust trip to the delightful outlying Mauritian island of Rodriguez before sailing on to Mauritius itself, where we laid the boat up ashore for the period June to mid-October.

November is a good time to make the final push from Mauritius to South Africa and the Cape, but the trip itself is full of challenges. The weather on the final approach to South Africa, in our case Richards Bay 60 miles north of Durban, and for the trip riding the inside of the Agulhas current south to Cape Town has the potential to be destructively interesting. We had three weeks to



consider the options while visiting La Réunion. La Réunion to Richards Bay is approximately 1400 miles; of these the final 200 are the most hazardous as you approach the Agulhas current and make a crossing. This crossing has to be carried out when the wind is not blowing out of the south-west. However, weather systems producing gale force south-westerly winds seem to occur at five- to seven-day intervals, and when those south-westerlies are blowing only the most foolhardy or unimaginative sailors would even attempt a crossing. Forecasting the weather window 1000 miles away is not easy.

Leaving La Réunion in the company of 14 boats from the world ARC Rally 2016, we had a very fast trip to the southern end of Madagascar before, literally, falling off the end of the wind at the end of day 4. With no usable wind there then ensued an undignified motor at best speed to make the closing weather window. Suffice it to say all 14 boats arrived safely at Richards Bay, with the last one getting in four hours before the weather deteriorated. A yacht that was travelling independently and insisting on being a purist and not using diesel got caught the wrong side of this blast, suffered considerable damage to the boat, a crew with a broken arm and had to wait four days for the sea conditions to improve before crossing the Agulhas current – shaken and stirred.

Having got inside the current, the options are much better because there are ports of refuge as you travel down the coast. These, however, are not without their difficulties: the ones that are easy to get into are commercial ports where you can be competing with oceangoing fishing boats, bulk carriers loading coal and other mucky minerals and in the case of East London, Mercedes-Benz motorcars. We managed to make the 350 miles from Richards Bay to East London in one hit, helped with a 50-mile boost from the

Left, the approach to Cape Town and inset, Caduceus. Right, Ile Bodam, Chagos. There is strict control over visiting but it was one of the most stunning locations Martin & Elizabeth visited and they had it to themselves for three weeks

Agulhas current. We then sat out 36 hours while the wind blew a hooley from the south-west before abruptly swinging round to the north-east allowing us to proceed. The next weather window provided a combination of wind and good motoring conditions to get us the final 550 miles to Cape Town in one hit, where we arrived on the most fabulous clear morning with whales, dolphins, seals and a single penguin to keep us company.

With no usable wind there was an undignified motor to Richards Bay at best speed to make the weather window

The boat spent the period of December and early January in the V&A Marina, Cape Town, while we took advantage of being able to get away to visit a game reserve in the North East of the country and relatives in Johannesburg. Christmas was spent at Knysna, on the Garden Route, and we had a wonderful new year party on the pontoons at the V&A.

There is a downside to being in Cape Town over Christmas and New Year: many of the engineers and technicians who would be useful to help with repairs to the boat go on holiday. David Barnes of Action Yachting, based at the Royal Cape Yacht Club, was able to organise most things but even he ran into a brick wall when we needed a repair to the high pressure pump on our water maker. Fortunately we were carrying the necessary seals and with some very good



support from Dessalator I reluctantly became an expert on stripping and reassembling the pump.

All of this meant that it was not until January 19, 2017 that we headed out from Cape Town, turned right and pointed ourselves at St Helena. Our proposed route was St Helena, Brazil, Eastern Caribbean and Bermuda before crossing the Gulf Stream to Norfolk Virginia, USA. Two days and nearly 500 miles later, downwind, down-current and most certainly with the sea behind us, changes in family circumstances made it a priority to return to European waters as soon as possible. A return to Cape Town was neither practical nor a useful solution, so it was definitely a case of "onwards and upwards".

At this stage we had an email exchange with sailing friends in whose company we had crossed the Atlantic in 2010/11 and sailed on via Bermuda to the United States. At first they were incredulous that we were intending to go to Norfolk, and it took a little while to realise that they thought we meant Norfolk, UK and not Norfolk, USA. On a more positive note, they suggested that we should consider heading for the MDL Marina at Sant Carles de la Ràpita near Barcelona, Spain.

By the time that we arrived in St Helena not only had we resolved the short-term difficulties in the family, all of which concerned the welfare of elderly relatives, but we had also secured a 12-month



Right, *St Helena on the port bow, shortly after dawn, January 29, 2017*



rental on a 20m berth in Catalonia. This left us with the interesting problem of how to get from where we were to where we wished to be.

In 1975 I crossed the Atlantic north to south as a member of the crew on the yacht *Great Britain II* [pictured], racing from London to Sydney non-stop in the *Financial Times* Clipper race. In 2010 Elizabeth and I did a double-handed crossing east to west. Now in 2017 we were going to do our next Atlantic crossing south to north, again double handed. The reaction from other cruisers in St Helena could easily have been regarded as not encouraging. Certainly, it was not going to be an easy passage and any thought of a direct route to the Canaries and Gibraltar was not going to be possible due to the predominantly north-east winds, north of the equator. An option was to get to the Cape Verde Islands from where it might just be possible to make the Canaries. This introduced two problems. Firstly to make that passage would put us far too close to the West African coast and in danger of piracy. Secondly, in order to make it to Gibraltar it was highly likely that we would still have to head for the Azores. We therefore decided that we would head for Ascension Island and from there go direct to the Azores and cut out the middleman. This decision was assisted by the fact that we were carrying a full tank of diesel and 200 litres on deck, we were very well provisioned and had a fully

functioning water maker.

The first leg was a mere 630 miles to Ascension Island, a fascinating place to visit and one of the more difficult places to get ashore.

Elizabeth prevailed upon the port captain to assist and he kindly provided a boat morning and evening to get ashore and back, after our first eventful trip by dinghy.

The second leg, from Ascension Island to Ponta Delgada in the Azores, was rather more involved. Ascension Island lies at approximately 8° South. Ponta Delgada lies at nearly 38° North. The original planning distance was 3666 miles and the first major obstacle was the equator and the ITCZ. I feel that the old term of "doldrums" was far more descriptive.

The sailing gods must have been smiling upon us for we had a relatively easy passage across the equator and were able to conserve our not inconsiderable diesel stocks, just in case. We were receiving excellent weather routing from Alex Frowein, a sailor that we had met in Malaysia and who was now back ashore in Switzerland. He helped us meander our way around various weather systems, generally heading in the correct direction. This did involve 18 days on the wind on a starboard tack, so perhaps the gods were getting their own back for are equator transit and all that delightful downwind sailing in the Pacific. The boat coped very well and with the autopilot set at 45° to the wind, pounded along in more or less the correct direction. The final tally was 3739 miles with the passage time of 25 minutes under four weeks. There is no denying that it gave us a great deal of satisfaction but it was nice when we stopped.

Seven days in Ponta Delgada allowed us time to recover, to properly celebrate the completion of our circumnavigation which had occurred at 16° North when we crossed our outgoing track from November 2010, and to do some sightseeing around this most beautiful island. All good things come to an end, however, and after a week we headed out towards Gibraltar, 1000 miles away,

and just in advance of a weather system coming in from the West. This weather system gave us 3 days of our fastest sailing ever as we hit 200 miles a day. All good things come to an end and we eventually fell off the end of the wind and motorsailed on towards Cape St Vincent aiming to cross the separation zone in daylight and travel down the landward side of the shipping. It was in the gap between the north and south going shipping lanes and in a flat calm that the engine decided to falter and die; definitely one of those "oh bother!" moments. After 30 minutes of rising panic trying to identify all sorts of highly technical reasons why our electronically controlled Volvo engine might have stopped, a pause for a deep breath and the application of common sense suggested that changing over the fuel filter might help. As we were about to pass close to Cape Trafalgar the term "voilà" seemed appropriate as normal engine functions returned.

If our theoretical circumnavigation was completed north-west of the Cape Verde Islands, our spiritual circumnavigation was completed as we passed through the Straits of Gibraltar with the Rock coming up with the dawn in almost identical conditions to those that we encountered in October 2010. The photographs are almost interchangeable.

Martin, a retired chartered accountant, and Elizabeth, a retired GP, bought their *Amel 54 Caduceus* in 2007. Three years later they crossed the Atlantic with the *ARC* and spent a couple of years exploring the east coast of the USA. Early in 2014 they transited the Panama Canal and they completed their world tour in April 2017.

