



Cruising

www.theca.org.uk

- 12 reasons to join the CA
- Comparing almanacs
- Three ways to enter France
- In praise of the Midi
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Cruise, explore & connect

In this issue we look at examples of the benefits of CA membership: some you might expect and others that may be a surprise. Why not put the week of **23-28 March** in your diary – we are running a cruising skills week open to non-members

Our cruising skills week will include a series of online talks on the weekday evenings, followed by an all-day, in-person and online hybrid event on Affordable Sailing on the Saturday. Talk topics will include (subject to confirmation):

- **The boat buyer's survival guide** Find and buy the perfect boat for you
- **Cruising for beginners** Get started, with confidence. Plan a route and decide how to navigate it, with advice from experienced cruisers
- **Flushed with success** You and your sea toilet ☺
- **Emergency procedures & MOB drills** When things go

wrong at sea, preparation makes all the difference.

- **RNLI rescues** Real-life rescue stories and the key lessons we can learn
- **Planning and preparation** Insights from a harbourmaster who's seen it all
- Plus a whole day on **Affordable sailing**. There are many innovative ways of reducing the cost of getting afloat... while exploring less visited places at home or further afield.

Keep an eye on the CA website for more details, which will be coming in the New Year. We'll also be offering a digital goodie bag and a chance to join the CA at a discount.

12 benefits to be aware of

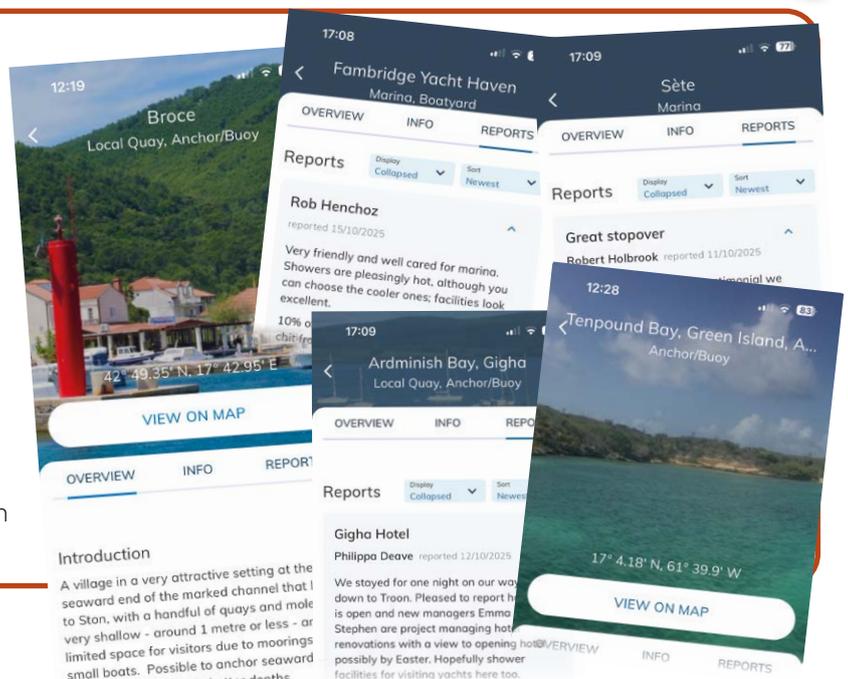
1. **Social** Meet like-minded souls via the CA's sections, at rallies and meets throughout the year.
2. **Cruising info and Captain's Mate** At the heart of the CA: see below.
3. **Honorary Local Representatives** In many sailing destinations, the CA has locally-based HLRs to help you in your travels. Read more on page 13.
4. **RATS** The CA is good at technical and regulatory stuff. Our RATS team publishes regularly in *Cruising* and can answer *your* questions on topics from VAT to orca attacks, and many others – see page 6 to find out more.
5. **Find answers online** The CA's website includes forums where experienced CA cruisers offer well-informed advice, often answering questions within hours.
6. **Crewing Service** If you need crew, or want to find a yacht to crew on, contact the Crewing Service – read more about how it works on page 14.
7. **CA House** Our base in Limehouse Basin, London, has a restaurant, bar and cabins where members can stay for prices starting at £65 a night: see www.theca.org.uk/ca_house.
8. **The CA library** within CA House has a huge selection of books, charts and more to help you with planning.
9. **Lectures & seminars** See next page, and pages 15 & 16
10. **Cruising & Newsletter** Yes, this very magazine, plus our monthly email newsletter.
11. A **blue ensign** with CA insignia is available to members.
12. **Discounts** See next page.



Cruising information

Sharing information is at the heart of what we do in the CA. Our CAPtain's Mate app and website offer overviews of thousands of marine locations, together with structured info, recent reports from members, and photos of harbours, moorings and much more. You can also find details of local discounts for CA members and Honorary Local Representatives within the app.

But CAPtain's Mate isn't the only place we share cruising knowledge. Our annual **Cruising Almanac** summarises a truly vast amount of information on locations between Shetland and Gibraltar. Read more about the Almanac and how it compares with its main rival on page 4.



The intrepid crew of *Indian Runner*, a 26ft Cornish Crabber which sailed around the UK. They presented to the London section in person at CA House and via Zoom



Lectures and seminars

Between September and April many of the Sections of the CA offer talks, lectures and seminars on topics which we really hope will interest our members. It's your choice: you can go along to the talks in person, enjoy a social evening and meet some like-minded cruising boaters; or in many cases you can stay on your own sofa with a nice glass of your favourite tippie and watch via Zoom. Where copyright restrictions allow, we also upload videos of the talks so that you can watch later.

Here are just a few of the items to look forward to:

- **London lecture series:** The best of the best, on Wednesday evenings from 4 February to the Hanson lecture on 29 March. At CA House in Limehouse or free for members to watch via Zoom. Full details on page 15.
- **Local section talks:** go along to seasons of regular talks in **Kent** (Dog & Bear Hotel, Lenham), **Suffolk** (Royal Harwich Yacht Club, Woolverstone), **Thames Valley** (Colston Hall, Gerrards Cross) and **Wessex** (Lilliput Sailing Club, Poole). Generally you can enjoy a meal and a drink before or after the talk. And keep a look out for winter events in Essex, Solent, and South West too.
- **Seminars from our cruising sections:** these usually focus on one or multiple topics in a specific cruising area. **Baltic, Biscay, Blue Water, Celtic** and **European Inland Waterways** all have all-day seminars planned between January and March. **Channel** has a one day seminar plus another day on *Your First Channel Crossing* and **Mediterranean** runs a two-day event. You may be able to attend part or all of the days online, but for maximum benefit go along to CA House, where you can learn even more from chatting informally to speakers and other participants.
- **Online talks from our cruising sections:** **Celtic, Mediterranean** and **Motorboat** are among those who run events, usually via Zoom only, during the winter. Recent topics have included *Chat & Share* for Celtic waters; *Avoiding the crowds around the eastern Mediterranean*, with Med gurus Rod and Lu Heikell, and *Motorcruising the Dutch Frisian Islands*, with Machiel Lambooj and Remko Sinck.

Discounts: save the cost of your subscription

The CA has negotiated hundreds of discounts for its members, with marine suppliers of every kind in locations around the world. Before spending money on *anything* to do with boats, members should check the list – we publish the current list of suppliers in every full issue of *Cruising*, but the most up-to-date list and access to the discount code is on the discount pages on the CA website.

Our website now has a discount search, so members can find options by category, by country/region or by text search.

Across Europe, many **marinas** offer discounts on short-term or long-term stays, or visits with groups of boats. With a long stay or a winter berth you can easily save hundreds of pounds (or euros). If you're buying **clothes** check out deals from **Musto** which offers a 25% discount to members on a huge range of items. **Imray** and **Adlard Coles** offer generous deals on travel and pilot books. If you're looking to upgrade your prop try **Darglow** and **Bruntons**. And if you need to get your boat moved from one sailing region to another try one of the editor's favourite options, **Halcyon Yachts**, or move it by land with **Boat-Shift Marine Transport**. These are just a tiny fraction of the options on offer.



Watch out for our new CA video

We're putting together a reel highlighting some of the benefits of belonging to the CA. It stars Tom Cunliffe and it's coming soon to a video platform near you. If you're not sure if joining the CA is worthwhile, or if you want to convince a friend to join, keep a look-out for the big reveal – Tom is very persuasive!



RATS Q&A:

What you want to know

Tania Nieveen analyses questions to RATS, with a couple of recent examples

- Are you puzzling over the impact of new legislation on your next cruising adventure?
- Do you want to check out which rules apply to your situation?
- Have you a problem raised by insurers or regulatory officials?
- Do you have a technical problem on your boat?
- Are you unsure about electrical or technical installations?

As a CA member you have **free access to our team of regulatory and technical experts**, who use their knowledge and expertise to help you navigate to a solution.

Our team consists of approximately 10-12 volunteers, many of whom have a technical, regulatory or legal background, who give their time and expertise free of charge and aim to provide an answer, in most cases, within 14 days. Some questions are urgent and where possible an answer is expedited to help you. Others require in-depth searches or even contact with authorities, which can take much longer than 14 days.

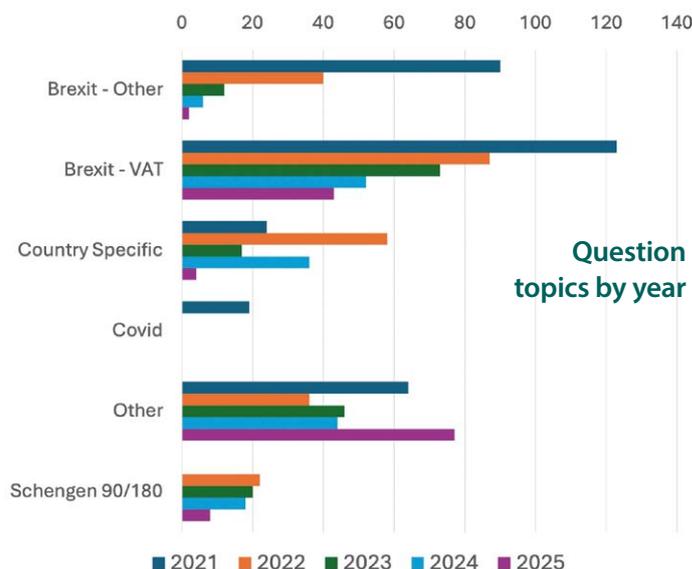
Numbers and topics

Since 2021 RATS have answered 1,043 questions (as of October 2025) and have been tracking the number and type of queries. We are proud to say we have provided a response to every question posed to us to date.

The number of questions has decreased over the years with the peak being in 2021, largely due to questions about Brexit. VAT questions alone account for the majority of questions sent to RATS. It is not surprising, as this has become a complex area since Brexit and one with potentially large financial implications. Members are rightly asking for help with their particular situations, ensuring they understand any implications of their proposed actions to avoid unnecessary and costly surprises. Other Brexit topics including Schengen, visas, pets and food also yield a significant number of questions each year.

Travelling between the UK and the EU has become more restricted, both for people and boats, since Brexit, and the regulations on entry and exit are still changing to accommodate the new digital entry/exit system (EES). In addition, some countries are granting long-stay visas to individuals who wish to extend their travels beyond the Schengen 90 in 180 days. The CA has been following this closely and are one of the most informed sources on the intricacies and processes involved.

Covid was a big concern to everyone, including cruisers, and accounted for nearly 20 questions in 2021, but none since then as thankfully Covid has become less of an issue. Other topics are diverse and



include questions on visas, Orca interactions, fishing gear and insurance.

Country questions are often about a specific location, for example the MCZ at Studland Bay or Temporary Admission rules in Greece. Often the best source for answers to some of these types of questions are the CA sections and/or HLR who cover that area of interest.

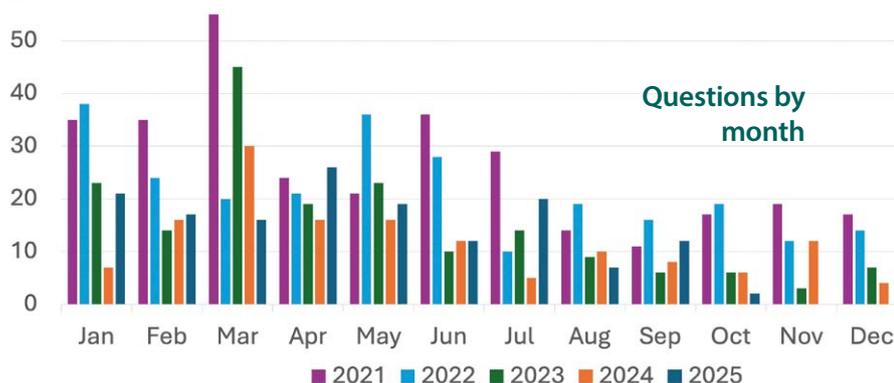
While RATS have a number of very knowledgeable technical experts who can provide answers to a wide range of questions some of these topics are best discussed in detail on the CA forums, providing and sharing a wealth of information to and between members.

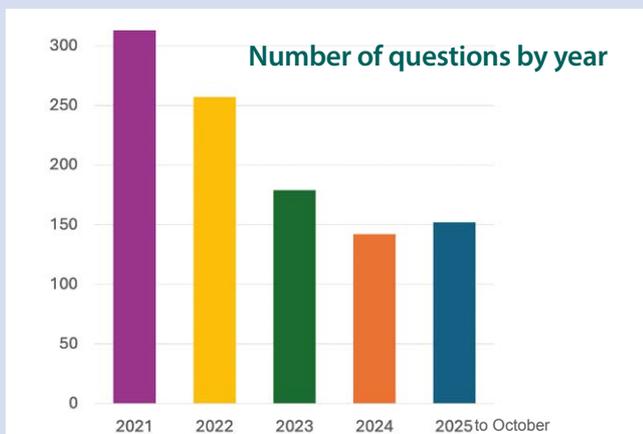
We can also see (*questions by month, below*) that the number of questions varies at different times of the year, with the first three months of the year particularly busy, maybe as members prepare for the coming cruising season. There are fewer questions over the summer months when RATS themselves enjoy some cruising!

Research your query first

Members' questions often raise points of interest, for example, insurance and fishing tackle, that subsequently become projects for investigation in more depth by RATS. These may be published both by the CA and other marine publications or even become a topic for which RATS and or the CA lobbies authorities and regulators. However, RATS do expect members to have researched their question prior to sending it, to see if there is already sufficient information on our website. If the answer already exists, you may just be sent the link to the page(s) in response to your question.

There is a process for submitting questions with guidance





How to submit a question to RATS

CA members can put questions to RATS by emailing rats@theca.org.uk. Before doing so, do remember to check the CA RATS advice pages as well as members' forum topics (using the menu and search functions) in case your query has already been covered, particularly for country-specific questions.

Often the local Cruising Section has the most up-to-date knowledge on local rules and practices, and you may get a quicker response by posting to the section forum or contacting the relevant HLR.

If you still cannot find the information you are looking for, email RATS providing as much detail as possible. Please note

that members of RATS are all unpaid, part-time volunteers who contribute to RATS according to their time available. Some RATS have specialised areas of expertise, but all are enthusiastic amateurs, not professionals. RATS responses are peer reviewed within the RATS team.

Please note the following:

1. This service is only available to current CA members;
2. RATS does not deal with questions of a commercial nature
3. RATS aims to provide a response within 14 days, but responses can take longer where the issues are complex. In the summer sailing months, the availability of RATS is limited and the response time to questions may also take longer
4. RATS provides guidance to CA members not legal advice
5. On legal issues, RATS guidance is limited to issues relating to UK and general EU law
6. If members want to share RATS responses more widely, please contact the RATS Chair (RatsChair@theca.org.uk) beforehand so that we can work out the best way to avoid any misinterpretation
7. RATS reserves the right to publish anonymised Q&As in CA publications to benefit other members
8. RATS aims to help but reserves the right, at our discretion, to decline to answer any question
9. **Any response given is subject to the disclaimer on page 23.**

on what RATS cover and how to send questions, which we do ask all our members to follow (see above).

We believe that the time, effort, and expertise spent by members and RATS should be shared with the wider community of CA members. The updated CA website is live and you will increasingly find that anonymised members questions can be found in links to related pages and in Frequently Asked Questions pages or incorporated into new pages. You will also begin to see anonymised questions of interest published in our newsletters and in *Cruising* magazine.

Example questions

To give you a taste of what you may expect to see here are a couple of our recent questions of interest.

A CA member recently asked what qualifications he would need, in addition to his ICC, to take his 11m yacht through the French canal system. He was particularly concerned to ensure that he was covered for power over 10m, despite the endorsement limitation on his current ICC.

RATS confirmed in their response that in order to travel through the French inland waterways, he would need to complete a CEVNI course and get his ICC upgraded to indicate that he is now covered for Inland Waterways as well as Coastal. There are several CEVNI courses available online, which once completed provide the certificate to submit to the RYA together with your ICC, to get the necessary endorsement added.

RATS also clarified as follows: "The ICC endorsement for 'Sail (including auxiliary engine)' allows you to motor in your yacht under engine. There is no stated length restriction. We do not believe that the temporary removal of the mast for traversing the canals has any bearing on this endorsement. The Power

endorsement, and its restriction to 10m in your case, is specifically to facilitate the holder of an ICC for Sail to drive a tender with an outboard engine, and is not in any way related to the yacht and its length." The RYA also confirmed this position.

Another member wrote that his boat was VAT-paid in Italy before he brought it to the UK and registered it in the UK in 2011. In 2015, he took his boat from the UK to the EU, where it has resided since. He now wishes to bring it back from Italy. Will he have to pay VAT on it, even though it was VAT paid prior to Brexit?

The answer was the good news, that he should be able to bring his boat back into the UK without having to pay any VAT to HMRC on the entry of the yacht into the UK. Goods (including yachts and their equipment) can be re-imported into the UK without payment of VAT in certain circumstances under Returned Goods Relief (RGR). For RGR to be available:

- a. the vessel must not have had more than "running repairs" during its period of export, that do not increase its value
- b. in general, the goods must be returned to the UK within three years, but HMRC has made clear that on a return to the UK, the normal three-year time limit will be waived by HMRC for personal effects (including yachts) as long as the yacht is returned to the UK for the personal (non-commercial) use of a UK resident person;
- c. the person importing the goods is the person who originally exported them.

It seemed that the member would satisfy these conditions.

RGR on an entry to the UK can be claimed as part of the normal *Sailing a pleasure craft to and from the UK* (sPCR) process.

Three ways to enter France

Since the UK left the European Union, travelling from England to France has become more complicated. **Peter Lyle** reflects on three recent experiences

We love France and have enjoyed voyages to her northern waters over the last 20 years. Brexit brought complexity, and the entry regulations may still be deterring British yachts from visiting. There seem to be far fewer British ensigns flying in French marinas than ten years ago. In *Albatross*, our Jeanneau SO 36i, my wife Jean and I have sailed across the Channel (and back) three times in the last two seasons. Our experiences highlight not only the absurdities and pointlessness of the present arrangements but also, how benign they are.

Trip 1. May 2024: The Dart to the Channel Islands, St Malo, then home again via Guernsey

As far as I could see at the time, the first leg to Alderney required no new bureaucracy. We sailed to Braye, dinghied ashore, completed the usual yellow form, stuck it in the slightly rusty box at the top of the steps in the harbour, and there I suspect, it probably still sits with hundreds of others. Perhaps someone processes them somewhere, but if so, I wonder why? I saw no yellow courtesy flags, and kept ours dry.

Having safely entered the Bailiwick (of Guernsey, via Alderney) we sailed on to Jersey, without further ado.

Next St Malo. This is a Port of Entry. Schengen here we come! Having checked the CA's invaluable information on the matter, we asked at the

Capitainerie how we might get our passports stamped.

The nice man at the marina office was not impressed. "*C'est pas normal*," he shrugged.

It was Friday afternoon, the passport office might be shut. Tomorrow (Saturday, surprisingly), it might not be open. Sunday, *alors*, was Sunday. "What about Monday?" "Monday is the flower show."

We left on the Tuesday, our passports unblemished.

Heading back home via Guernsey, we anchored in Havelet Bay. As we hadn't checked out of the Bailiwick after visiting a few days previously, there seemed no point in checking in. We had a lovely sail back to the Dart.

Trip 2. May 2025 Dart to the Channel Islands, St Malo, along the North Brittany coast, home from Lézardrieux

Simple. We had discovered (thank you CA), that we should access the Border Force sPCR (submit a Pleasure Craft Report) and tell them about our trip.

The form is easy. Simply load it with details of the first leg of the voyage in the 24 hours before you leave the UK, list the names and passport details of the crew, wait briefly for Border Force to check and approve your crew list, make some inspired guesses about the timing of your voyage and away you go. It's a pity that some of the coding on the app doesn't recognise some British ports and

that "UK" defaults (as a country of origin) to "Ukraine".

The form advises you to update any changes online en route or to phone. Mobile telephony and internet access isn't great mid-Channel, but anyway, as we approached the Casquets Traffic Separation Scheme we had other things to worry about. I found Border Force's instructions on the wearing of our yellow flag on *leaving* UK territorial waters incomprehensible. Anyway, it was, I believe, only the beta version of the form.

Our arrival in Braye was, as ever, a breeze. We completed another yellow form and stuffed this into the rusty yellow box at the top of the harbour steps. *Plus ça change!*

One week later we were again in St Malo. This time however, we had an additional crew member on board; William, a lawyer, with slightly more French vocabulary than Jean and I (together). But not a lot.

Anyway, possibly as a result of his training and his experiences travelling in Africa, William is much bolder than us when dealing with French customs officers and border officials. This time we had come prepared. Not only had I emailed, in advance, the correctly completed Customs PAF form to an assortment of official addresses in St Malo (thanks CA), complete with a rather cleverly idiomatic covering letter in French (thanks Google) but also we had an assortment of maps as well as reports from CA members

How to find information

If you are planning a trip to Channel France, the CA has invaluable sources of information on entry procedures. However, with the introduction of the EES in October 2025, procedures will continue to change, so check web pages and apps again before you go.

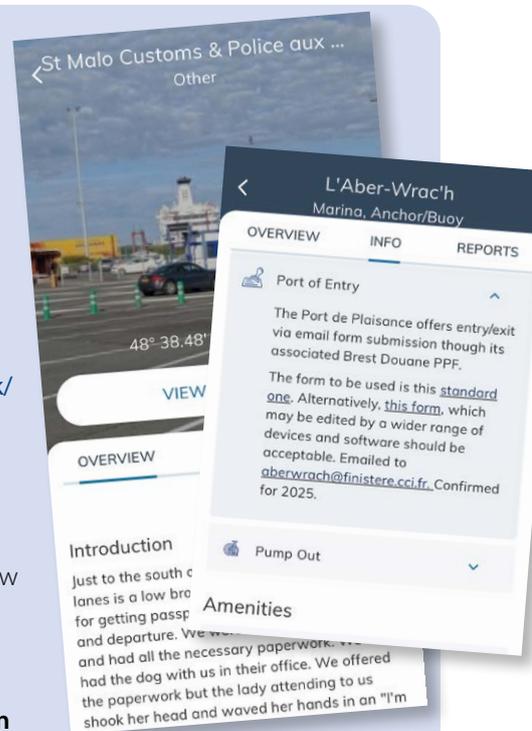
Entry procedures and ports of entry Go to www.theca.org.uk/france-channel-ports-of-entry for the latest information on EU and non-EU citizens, EES and ETIAS, official Ports of Entry and other ports in Channel France, and important additional considerations. For an update on EES so far, see page 26.

Captain's Mate Use the CA's app (or the same information online at www.theca.org.uk/ciapp) for detailed information on where to find the offices of the Police aux Frontières and how to get there.

The **Cruising Almanac** lists Ports of Entry in all the countries that it covers.

sPCR the skipper must notify HMRC and Border Force by completing the form at www.spcr.homeoffice.gov.uk. Note that even if you have completed the form before, you now need to **create a gov.uk One login**, so do this in plenty of time. If this uses the same email address that you have previously used for the sPCR your information should be retained.

Both EU and non-EU citizens are **legally required to check in and out of Schengen on every trip**, although French officials may appear relaxed about EU passports.



(thanks Captain's Mate). So this time we would find the Customs Office whatever.

After less than two hours wandering around the St Malo ferry terminal, we came upon a car park with a queue of cars crawling their way to the ferry. Unfortunately, the car park was on the other side of a nasty looking security fence. Fortunately, just on the other side of the fence, and presumably supervising the security of the loading operation was a tall well-built man, dressed in black and with a truncheon as well as a gun; "DOUANE" on his back.

William summoned him and explained fluently in English that we needed to get our passports stamped.

"Attendez ici, I will be back". He took our passports and disappeared. When he returned our passports had been thoroughly stamped. He disappeared again. Jean checked the passports. We'd all been stamped into and OUT OF France.

We had a pleasant voyage in northern Brittany, and having already been checked out of Schengen didn't feel that we needed to do so again when we set off from Lézardrieux the following week.

William however, had to get home earlier than us and took the ferry from Roscoff. His passport proudly showed that he'd entered Schengen once and left it twice.

Jean and I, returning to Dartmouth by boat, dutifully entered our voyage details on the sPCR. The regulations advised that

we should not lower our yellow flag until instructed by BF to do so, but as we had approached Dartmouth in darkness and tired after 16 hours at sea, I think I may have failed to observe some of the finer technicalities of, what appeared to me to be, an entirely pointless gesture. We are yet to hear from BF.

Trip 3. June 2025 Dartmouth to L'Aberwrac'h, Southern Brittany and back

I completed the sPCR. Jean ironed our yellow flag. I emailed the Capitainerie at L'Aberwrac'h marina with a photograph of the duly completed Secondary Port Entry form and a covering note in even better French than before. We sailed overnight.

Under the current rules, L'Aberwrac'h is a Secondary Port of Entry. If you go in by a Secondary Port, you should also leave by one. At the Capitainerie I was greeted in English by a nice lady who explained that she had already emailed me back the officially stamped PAF form. However, as I thought it might be good to have a paper copy, she kindly printed this for me as well. Hurrah!

I examined this form, which I had printed at home, completed, photographed, emailed and which she had then sent to the local Douane, who had printed it and stamped it and emailed a copy back to L'Aberwrac'h, where it was printed again... I was now the proud owner of a virtually black coloured photocopy with a faint

official stamp at the bottom.

There were just three British boats in L'Aberwrac'h when we were there. The skipper of one of these (a 57-footer), having tied his boat up, approached me slightly anxiously, asking how to get a PAF form. I reassured him that in L'Aberwrac'h at least, this was not a problem.

We had a lovely time re-exploring Southern Brittany and checked out of L'Aberwrac'h some four weeks later. Once again, I simply emailed the PAF form to the Capitainerie who had it copied and stamped and emailed back to me the following day.

To get legitimately back into Dartmouth involved using the sPCR form again. Such a pity that even though the form can remember the crews' details it can't remember those of the skipper, even though the skipper is also listed as crew. Once again we were warned not to lower our yellow flag until so advised and once again no such instruction was forthcoming.

My message: Enjoy beautiful France, and don't let the customs and border regulations spoil your pleasure; these are really not a problem.

Peter and his wife Jean spend most summers sailing around the British Isles and northern France in their Jeanneau 36i Albatross.



In praise of the south of France

Looking down on the entrance to Port Miou

Barry and Linda Edmonds sailed away from the Med... and six years later went back again. This time they were so entranced by the south of France that they never went any further

The dream of many leisure sailors is to *sail south till the butter melts*, turn to port and go through the Mediterranean until they reach Greece. This was our dream also, and in 2008 we left the UK in our Westerly Corsair and spent five months sailing the west coast of France. In October 2008, having spent many weeks weather bound, often shivering through the summer, we decided to head straight for the Med, via the canals. In April 2009 we had our mast shipped to Grau d'Agde in southern France and transited the Garonne and Midi canals, exiting a month later to have our mast raised, sails on and into the Med. Bliss.

We were on our way to Greece, and arrived in Corfu in July 2009 via Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily and the foot of Italy. We spent a very pleasant three years sailing the Ionian and surrounding areas before sailing back to the south of France, and returning to the UK (via the Rhône, Saône, canals and Seine) in 2012 for family reasons.

Back to the Med

In the late autumn of 2018 we sailed to Le Havre, up the Seine to Rouen, had our mast shipped to Navy Service at the

mouth of the Rhone and reversed our 2012 trip. Our plan was to spend a few years exploring other parts of the Med, but we became entranced by the beauty of the south of France (and its close neighbours) and spent the next six years enjoying a part of the sailing world that most (including us the first time) bypass on their way further east.

This is our story of the why we want to praise the south of France, its anchorages, islands, ports, people and places.

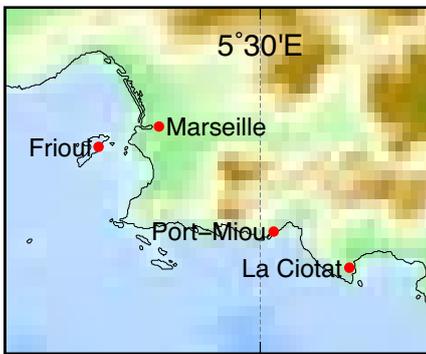
We used **Port Navy Service** as our base as we prefer *Sovereign Flame* to be out of the water for a few months each year, it gives 10% discount to CA members, it's secure and every possible support service is on site. The downside is the Mistral (mainly NW) wind that blows through the Rhône valley, so planning and caution is necessary particularly early in the season but very doable with forethought. This area around the Camargue is (deservedly) infamous for its mosquito population and a visit to the Pharmacy du Port for appropriate spray is vital before working on the boat.

Our routine was to spend a few days antifouling, re-rigging etc before

launching and motoring the short distance to the marina in the town of **Port-Saint-Louis du Rhône**, where we would ensure all systems in good order, restock with food, refuel and then head east towards **Marseille**.

Marseille has a reputation for unsavouriness that we found to be entirely unjustified. It is a vibrant (not necessarily lovely) city, with a fascinating past, as it was the main port of entry for North African trading ships in the past, which has contributed to its ethnic diversity today. The cathedral of Notre Dame en Garde towers over the city, is visible for many miles from sea and is definitely worth a visit (take one of the many buses). The leisure (old) port is in the heart of the city and has a number of different "owners". We usually moored in the (second to starboard on entry) CNTL marina. Rates are very reasonable (around €36 a night). There is much to fascinate you, for a week or more.

A short distance offshore is the **Frioul archipelago**, with the famous Chateau d'If immortalised as the prison of the Count of Monte Cristo. The main two islands are connected by a French Navy-made causeway creating a huge port



and marina. It was used as a place of quarantine for trader arrivals. On top of the cliff is a chapel with all open walls to allow winds from any direction to blow through and disperse "evil humours". No one could call it beautiful, it is a very stark and rocky place, but the walking, bird life and swimming (often very cold) in the small *calanques* are joyous, and peaceful after the energy of Marseille.

From here it is a short sail to the port of La Ciotat and its magnificent towering sandstone cliffs, passing many small islands, *calanques* and anchorages, often busy with weekend sailors and tripper boats out of Marseille. Before getting there we pick up a buoy and stop in the *calanque* of Port Miou to enjoy the experience of being in an inlet surrounded by steep cliffs watching (mainly) young men leaping off the top into the very deep, clear and cold water, and then strolling over the cliffs to the swish and uber-chic port of **Cassis**. Enjoy an aperitif at a portside bar and if you are feeling particularly relaxed and wealthy, a meal. We stayed in the marina once... and were taken aback at the cost, so we didn't stay more than one night. At the stern of our allotted mooring was a floating golf green hole, and we spent the evening watching (floating) golf balls being chipped from the roof of the clubhouse, often missing us by a few feet. Not terribly relaxing.

Sail across the bay of Cassis, between the Isle Verte and the mainland, and enter the old town of **La Ciotat**, a place with a great history of shipbuilding, now reinventing itself as the place to refurbish your superyacht, but losing none of its attraction. Moor stern-to (as usual) on the stone quay, tie your stern lines on first, then pick up the lazy line and secure your bow. This is a very sheltered port. It is where the Lumière brothers invented and showed the very first moving picture of a train entering the railway station, so realistic the terrified audience fled before it could run them down. The original Eden theatre is preserved and shows films to this day. The markets

The isles Frioul off Marseille and below, the original Eden theatre in La Ciotat



are excellent, around the quayside and further into the town, and there are regular buses to the huge Carrefour a few miles away. Walk over the sandstone cliffs and watch climbers ascending and see their reflections in the crystal waters, enjoy the municipal gardens and relax on the beach of Muguel with a coffee before the stroll back to the port, and don't forget to visit the quayside museum of the town's maritime history. We stayed often for around €30 a night.

Heading east the next port of delight, and our overall favourite is **Bandol**. It's only six miles, but please stop and drop and anchor in any of the small coves on the way.

Bandol has been described as a location of fading glory, but for us it never faded, with its outstanding beaches, walks and convenient train station. The island of Bendor is owned by the Ricard family, a yellow submarine takes you out for underwater viewing, and the visitors' pontoon never fails to introduce you to new friends. We were never tired of it. The tourist information office here is probably the most helpful we have ever encountered, it's on the quayside and is a must visit (especially as there is a second set of marina facilities next door).

One headland, and a few miles, further east is **Sanary-sur-Mer**, a proper seaside holiday place but worth a visit. We walked there, spent half a day and caught the bus back. The marina looks very well refurbished after a visit some years earlier had left us reluctant to stay again.

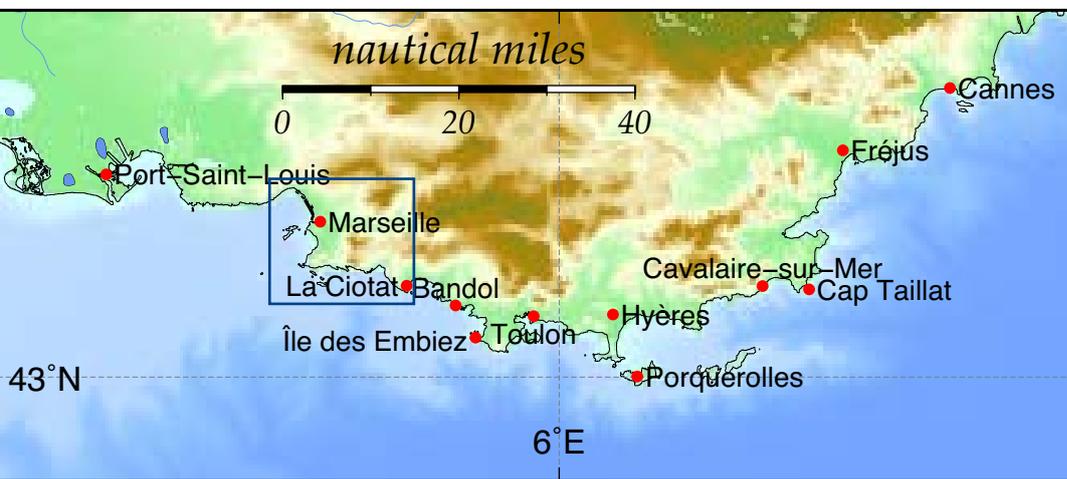
Next stop, the **Isles Embiez**, perhaps three miles south of Bandol. Again, mainly owned by the Ricard family, and with holiday apartments, hotels and a vibrant tourism and local music scene, there is lot to do and see. Enjoy the road train circling the island with its interesting history and flora, and understand the important research and environmental work that is done here, all funded by the

Ricard family. The anchorages are safe and uncrowded or there is a convenient marina.

Now sail to **Toulon**, a massive natural (and man-protected) harbour and the home of the French Navy. Try not to get a mooring near to the Corsica-bound ferries, as they run their engines all night! If you are there during midsummer the (free) entertainment will stay with you forever. On every square and street corner there are musical performers of every genre, with food and drink offerings that keep you dancing way beyond your usual bedtime. Again, this is a port of significant ethnic diversity and the markets and restaurants reflect that. We never felt threatened or unsafe but it is the only place where we were robbed of a rucksack, when we had cycled to a local beach.

The **Hyères** peninsula and its wonderful islands are a three-hour sail to the east. Your first stop has to be **Porquerolles** island. Calm and protected anchorages abound, from the very NE tip to the west of the main harbour which has many visitors' buoys and a full-service marina. There are walking trails across the island often leading to secluded beaches. Bicycle hire is available and is definitely the best way of seeing the whole island. This is an immensely popular place served by frequent ferries from the mainland which is only a short distance to the north. It is one of the islands that





Useful info

- Each year pick up a free copy of the *Plans Pratiques des Ports* in most marinas and chandlers. It gives the phone numbers and email addresses of all ports to enable advance booking. CAptain's Mate has details of most of these ports and anchorages.
- For advance booking on the Riviera use www.rivieraports.com.

are now being subject to restricted number of visitors. For an interesting day out catch one of the ferries which connect with a bus service, taking you to the centre of Hyères town where you can explore the history of the castle overlooking the town.

There are other islands that are either available to visit, or are protected places which either allow no visitors or only those with permits, but usually from Porquerolles we will either sail to Corsica, approximately 22 hours, or to **Cavaire-sur-Mer** (Port Heraclea) which is only four to five hours away and is a true French holiday (bucket and spade) location. We love it for the (almost) professional games of *petanque* played on the front, surrounded by bars and restaurants, and the fantastic free concerts and shows that are regular features of the summer season.

A short sail east and south brings you to **Cap Taillat**, an excellent anchorage that is really well protected from winds with east or west in them. If the winds shifts, just up anchor and round to the other side.

Saint-Raphaël is only five miles distant. Head for the Vieux port, make sure you call in advance in high season as it's very busy, and it's also where you first begin to encounter the superyachts of the Riviera, who think it's obligatory to pass

as close as possible to sailing boats. Next to Saint-Raphaël is the massive resort of **Fréjus** with its plethora of caravan sites and huge beaches offering every kind of seaside diversion, worth a cycle ride as you head out to see the old Roman amphitheatre. Saint-Raphaël itself can be described as genteel, a favourite of the British in earlier years and the road train will take you for a ride through the history of the place. There are excellent gardens next to the marina, a tourist information office, a small beach and the obligatory big wheel.

Sailing further east and less than 15 miles away you reach Cannes and its off-lying islands, the **Lérins**. Drop anchor in around 5m of sand in between the islands (Honorat and Marguerite), keep out of the well marked channel (the French coastguard are frequent visitors) and avoid the sea grass areas as there are now hefty fines for offenders. Inflate the dinghy and go ashore to explore. On Honorat there is a monastery selling its own wine, an interesting tour, and striking displays of agapanthus; further round, or through the middle, visit the ancient watchtower on the south coast.

Also go across to Marguerite island with the castle prison of the Man in the Iron Mask, an unidentified prisoner of state held for 34 years in the 17th century. To this day there is no confirmation as to his

real identity, although the local tourist board make a lot of the film starring Leonardo DiCaprio!

It's only about a mile to **Cannes**. You have sent the old port an email requesting a berth, in you go and carefully go astern into your allocated place. Go to the office and present your documents, pay (for us around €36 a night), get your pass and the whole place is yours to explore. It offers outstanding secure facilities with the choice of still or sparkling water on tap, right in the heart of the city. Great beaches, exhibitions, a sublime (steep) walk to the castle and cathedral, with permanent (and expensive) markets close by. Reaching Cannes means you are properly in the French Riviera and there is so much more to see, do and explore. Our praise of and for this part of the Mediterranean will continue.

Barry & Linda bought their *Corsair Sovereign Flame 25* years ago and in 2008 set off to Greece via the Canal du Midi. They spent three years in Greece, returning to the UK in 2012, and in 2018 made their way back to the Mediterranean via the Seine and canals. In 2025 they brought her back to the UK and plan on new horizons in the future.



The sandstone cliffs of La Ciotat



Anchorage on the east side of Cap Taillat



Above, Stig, and below, his 1975 Hallberg-Rassy on one of the SXX blue buoys. Bottom left, many entries for the area on CAPtain's Mate.



Orust to the Norwegian border

Stig Eriksson is the CA's Honorary Local Representative on the Swedish west coast – or best coast, as locals call it

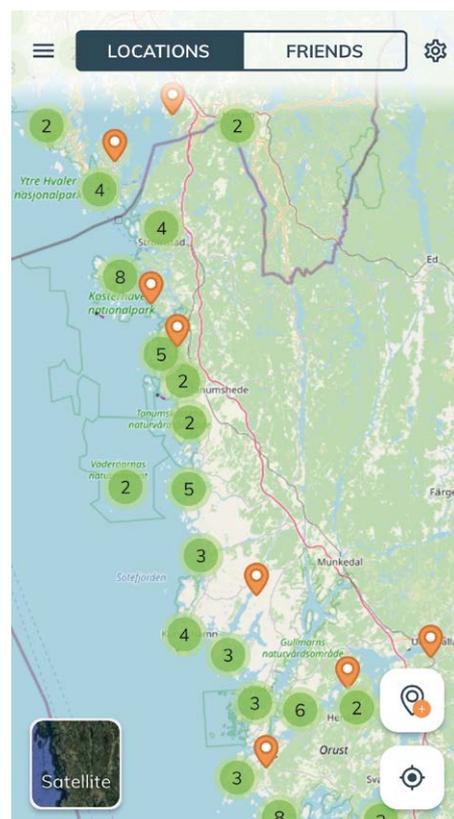
Hi, I'm Stig Eriksson, HLR from Orust in the south to the Norwegian border. I live on the island of Orust in a small village called Henån. In winter approximately 15,000 people live on Orust, but in the summer it's around 45,000!

Orust has been famous for boat production for hundreds of years. Many modern Swedish yachts, including Vindö, Hallberg-Rassy, Najad, Malö, Sweden Yacht and Regina, are produced on this small island.

I've sailed since 1970 when I bought my first wooden boat. I bought my existing

boat in 1984. It is a Hallberg-Rassy Monsun 31, build number 186, from 1975. I sail a lot from April until end of October/middle of November, normally in the archipelago but also on longer trips to Scotland or Norway. In 2023 I sailed to Shetland, the Faroe islands and Iceland. But I still love sailing in Bohuslän and the west coast of Sweden... we call it "The Best Coast" of Sweden.

Bohuslän is a small archipelago but there are many places to moor alongside the cliffs. The Swedish Cruising Association (SXX) has around 6000 iron mooring



Right, typical island moorings and below, the guest harbour guides are available in English



spikes along the archipelago, all of which are free to use. There are also some 100 blue mooring buoys, but you either have to be a SXX member to use them, or apply to the Baltic Section Secretaries (baltic@theca.org.uk) for one of the small number of permits allocated to the CA each year.

There are no tides to be concerned about: the range at neaps is around 0.2m and at springs 0.4m. The pilotage is simple because the fairways are well marked. The SXX has also surveyed many natural harbours and it is possible to buy harbour books in SXX office in Gothenburg, or view the Gästhamnsguiden online at www.gasthamnsguiden.se.

You can also find small villages along the coast with nice restaurants. But I love to stay out among the skerries.



Sailing in Sweden

Entry/exit requirements Details are in the document **Cruising Information – Formalities** which is on the website at www.theca.org.uk/cruising_info/baltic/general_info. If you are coming from another Schengen country, no formalities are required (but any boat can be approached by the coastguard at any time and asked questions). If you arrive by boat direct into Sweden from UK refer to the Formalities document.

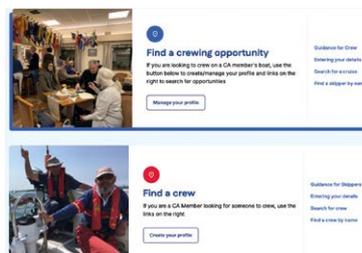
SXX blue buoys SXX and the CA are affiliated organisations and SXX grants the CA a small number of buoy permits each year. Members whose boats are under the 8-tonne limit for using the buoys can apply to the Baltic Section Secretaries (baltic@theca.org.uk) and may be lucky enough to receive a permit.

There is a great deal more information about Sweden on the Sweden page on the CA website, including for example guidelines for obtaining a Swedish Visitors' Residence Permit, also a warning about boats without EU VAT-paid status overwintering – and much more.

CREW: "For the last 20 years I've sailed mainly on the East Coast, with trips to Holland and up to the Baltic; cruised west coast of Scotland and Ireland; Greece; Adriatic; Mallorca; last year crewed on Atlantic crossing. I recently moved to Dorset to be nearer grandchildren. Fairly recently retired, am looking for cruising opportunities in UK, Europe and further afield as opportunities arise."

Join the Crewing Service to find crew... or find cruises

The CA's Crewing Service puts skippers in touch with crew and crew in touch with skippers, with regular crew meetings at CA House and online over winter, with the **next in-person meetings on 4 December and 8 January**. Members can also find crew or a skipper by posting details on our listings (the quotes here give a taste of what's on offer), or post on the Crewing Service Forum. Find out more on the **updated Crewing Service page** at www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome (see screenshot, right) or contact Malcolm Davidson at crewing@theca.org.uk



SKIPPER: "I have recently brought my boat to the River Hamble from Suffolk. Consequently I have lost some of the crew who sailed with me. I would like to be able to go for midweek/weekend sails. I'm also planning to sail to La Rochelle on the French Atlantic coast next summer, likely leaving in May."



A beach in Tobago, the Caribbean starting point for Going South with Sandy Duker

CA London lectures spring 2026

Travel the world in our season of lectures. Explore the entire UK coastline, plus the London docks, the West Country and the East Coast, or voyage to France, Spain and south to Uruguay with our speakers

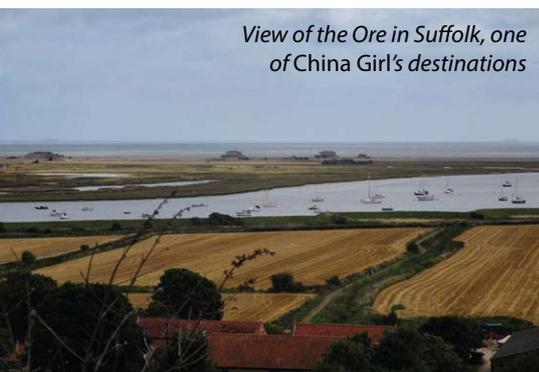
All events are open to any member, subject only to restrictions on numbers. Members of CA London section will receive weekly reminders, as usual, with the booking links. If you are not on the section mailing list, please check the events listings on the CA website.

Wednesday 4 February The Story of London's Docks, Jeremy Batch

London's Locks, Docks and Marinas – the story of the Port of London from Roman times to the present day was Jeremy's first lecture, given to the CA in February 2007. It tells the story of all of London's docks (West India, East India, London & St Katharine, Surreys, Royals) and also covers some of the other history of "London River": Alfred and the Danes, the first locks, the Jamestown expedition, the canals, the Blitz, etc.

This year the talk will be updated for the big screen (ours was narrower 19 years ago). We'll go further west to London Bridge – which couldn't originally be included because it wasn't in the *Eastenders* aerial photo! – and east to cover Tilbury and the "new" London Gateway, which opened in 2013.

The bath was filled, and the First Sea Lord climbed onto the toilet seat. His aides stood ready with a back-brush and a tray of paper



View of the Ore in Suffolk, one of China Girl's destinations

boats. Also present were Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten, Winston Churchill and one Mae West. Where were they, what were they up to, and what was the connection with London's docks? Come and find out!

Wednesday 11 February Highlights of a Seven Year Circumnavigation of Britain and Ireland, Ann and Steve Crome

Ann and Steve left Ipswich in April 2019 with a four-year plan to circumnavigate the UK and Ireland on *China Girl* (Jeanneau Sun Odyssey 41DS), visiting every harbour deep enough to take the boat. Seven summers later they returned to the River Orwell. They will share the highlights, discoveries, challenges and their sense of achievement.

Wednesday 18 February Yachts, Rocks and Tapas: Discovering the Hidden Coast of Mediterranean Spain, Sean Glynn

Join Sean, author of the newly revised RCCPF/Imray pilot book *Mediterranean Spain*, for an engaging exploration of one of Europe's most overlooked cruising grounds.

In this talk Sean and Sarah share insights gathered while researching the pilot, a journey that "forced" them into harbours and anchorages they might otherwise have sailed past. The result was a deeper appreciation of Spain's rich coastline — its excellent cruising infrastructure, easy access from the UK, and the surprising variety found once you get beyond the budget holiday scene. From the rugged beauty of the Costa Brava to the historic harbours of Andalusia, this presentation offers a sailor's perspective on the practicalities, the pleasures, and the hidden gems of cruising mainland Spain.

As the number of yachts cruising the Mediterranean continues to grow and



Hidden anchorage in Spain

space in popular areas becomes harder to find, the mainland coast of Spain — often overlooked — is well worth revisiting as a rewarding and practical cruising destination.

Wednesday 25 February Going South – Grenada to Uruguay, Sandy Duker

Brian and Sandy sailed thousands of miles together, starting in 1979 on the muddy east coast of the UK in a 29-footer. The boats gradually got bigger until their final boat, *Moonshadow Star 2*, was a Farr 56 built in 2002, which crossed the Atlantic a few times.

On their second visit to the Caribbean Brian and Sandy agreed it was time to sail further and broaden their horizons. Unusually, they decided against going through the Panama Canal and the inevitable 'Pacific Milk Run' and instead turned south to Uruguay. This is the story of their trip.



Jacare, Brazil: a saxophonist plays Bolero every evening at sunset



Kay Wilson on Moorglade by St Michael's Mount



A calanque (cove) east of Marseille

Wednesday 4 March

Cruising the West Country, Ted Wilson

From Portland Bill to Lands End the West Country covers 150nm of superb cruising opportunities.

It has a lot to offer from wide shallow rivers like the Exe to the deep gorges of the Dart and Fal; from rocky headlands to sandy beaches; from lavish marinas to swinging moorings in working harbours; from secluded anchorages in sandy bays to sheltered island pontoons up winding rivers. Ted and Kay have had their mooring at Starcross on the Exe since 1993, though it has not usually been the focus of their cruising. However, when they return from more distant places, they realise that the home turf is world class. By heading west along the coast picking out the less obvious moorings including his own favourites, Ted hopes to demonstrate that exploring the West Country is well worth the trip.

Bookings

Events start promptly at 7pm unless otherwise stated. To book on the new website for any **CA London lecture**, and to indicate whether you'll be ordering food, find the lecture under **News & Events > View upcoming events**, filter by CA London (not CA on its own) to find the event, and click to take you to the registration page. Then choose **Book Venue** or **Register via Zoom**. Please pay in advance on the website, or by contactless on the door. Individual lecture tickets members £4, non-members £7. Any problems with the booking system, call or email Darren on 020 7537 2828/events@theca.org.uk. There is no charge for viewing online.

Wednesday 11 March

In praise of the south of France, Barry and Linda Edmonds

Most cruising sailors see the south of France as a stopping-off location on the way to more exotic destinations in the Mediterranean, but with so many renowned locations to visit nearby this area is worth exploring in much greater depth. It has outstanding marinas, reasonable pricing, stunning scenery, beautiful islands and anchorages and terrific transport infrastructure. Corsica, Elba and the west coast of Italy are close and add additional zest to exploring this whole region. Having spent seven years doing so, Barry and Linda would like others to share their affection. *Read more about their adventures on page 42.*

Wednesday 18 March

An evening with RATS

We hand over to our Regulatory & Technical Services team to update us on their current projects.



Wednesday 25 March

Hanson Lecture Confessions of a Cruising Correspondent, Dick Durham

Dick Durham started sailing aged 12 and served as mate in the last cargo sailing ship in the UK, the Thames barge *Cambria*. He has cruised from Norway to Gibraltar; been at the end of a lifeboat towrope in the Bay of Biscay when a Storm 10 disabled the 55ft brigantine, *Black Pearl*; raced in the America's Cup Jubilee aboard the 12-metre *Victory*; and aboard *Warpeth*, a 41ft Bashford Howison during the 2001 Fastnet Race. He acted as watch leader aboard *Gipsy Moth IV* on two legs of her second circumnavigation; crewed for Sir Robin Knox-Johnston aboard *Suhaili*. He has written six sailing books including the biographies of the last sailing captain, Bob Roberts; yacht designer Maurice Griffiths; and yachting cartoonist Mike Peyton. A *Yachting Monthly* columnist, wherever Dick sails he always returns to his beloved Thames Estuary which he currently explores in his 25ft gaff cutter, *Betty II*, and which forms the background to his talk.

The talk will be followed by the award of the CA's log competition prizes. **Tickets at £20 include supper and must be paid in advance.**

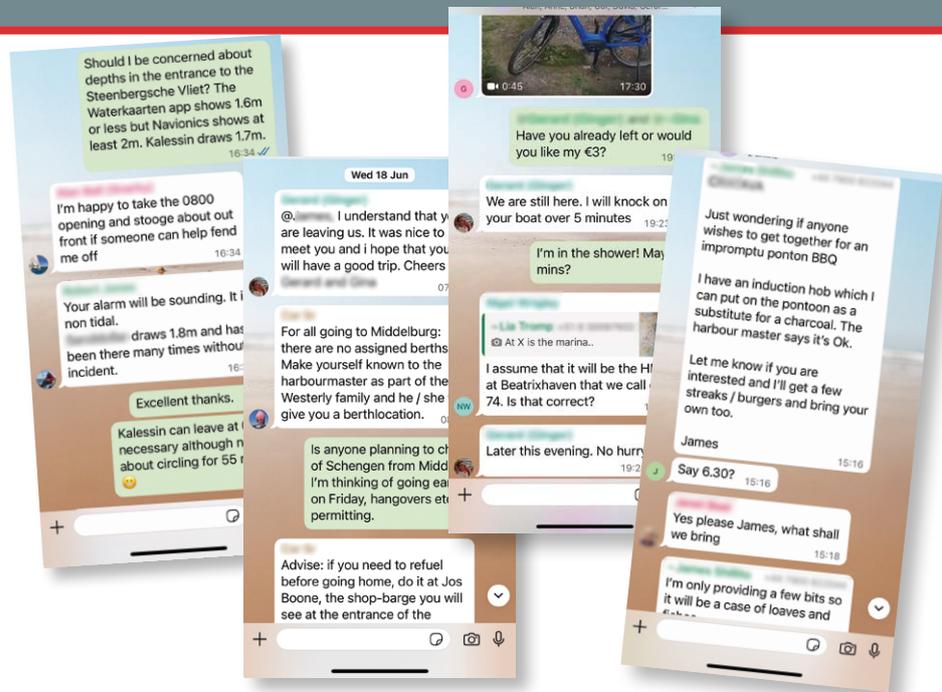


Dick Durham's yacht Betty II

A selection of WhatsApp messages from a sailing rally this summer

What about WhatsApp?

Many sailors are not early adopters of new technology, whether it's a Portland plotter or GPS and electronic charts. **Cathy Brown** welcomes the use of instant messaging tools... in the right place and at the right time



Looking back on half a century afloat, I am struck by how many dramatic technological developments there have been – and how reluctant the yachting world often appeared to be to embrace them at the time.

I was taught navigation by a retired naval officer who believed that the parallel rule was the only proper tool for chart work, and saw using the “new-fangled” Portland plotter as somehow cheating. He had obviously never tried stepping a parallel rule across the lurching chart table of a 25-foot yacht in a lively sea. It inevitably slipped just before reaching the target. The Portland plotter made chart work actually achievable.

Yacht Decca, when it arrived, was also widely regarded as cheating. It was some time before the RYA syllabus was adapted to recognise the enormous benefits of electronic navigation. Now, with GPS chart plotters at the wheel and on the phone, many yachtsmen do little if any traditional chartwork. So much so that paper charts have threatened to disappear altogether. I for one am grateful that does not now look like happening, in the foreseeable future at least.

Not so long ago the Shipping Forecast – on long wave – was the key source of weather information. Now there are so many weather apps it is hard to know where to start, and long wave is disappearing.

Before the internet, the Almanac was the sole source of harbour plans, tidal data, customs regulations, and so much else. Now all that – and much more besides – is available online from any number of sources.

One major factor in the success of the CA has been its wholehearted embrace of information technology. The organisation's *raison d'être* is sharing information, so that all members' can benefit from fellow cruisers' experience and discoveries.

The latest redevelopments of both the website and the CAptain's Mate app underline that the quest to remain ahead of the game continues as enthusiastically – and effectively – as ever.

My navigation teacher believed in the parallel rule, and saw the 'new-fangled' Portland plotter as somehow cheating

Undoubtedly there were members, back in the day, who questioned whether electronic media could ever take the place of print: the Almanac and indeed *Cruising* magazine. Experience has shown that there is room for both, just as there is room for both the members' online forums and CAptain's Mate, complementary sources of invaluable up-to-the-minute guidance.

Currently there appears to be some disagreement (on a forum) over whether spontaneously forming WhatsApp groups are another useful add-on – or whether they too are somehow “cheating.”

WhatsApp exists outside the CA umbrella, unregulated and difficult to control. Some members fear that its use risks bypassing the forums and CAptain's Mate, denying valuable information to

those outside groups to which they have no access, and which in any case are unsearchable.

But a dedicated WhatsApp group can be invaluable for participants in, for example, a section rally. The fact that information is instantly notified – where a forum email may not be discovered for some hours – is potentially an important safety feature.

The medium is also handy for purposes inappropriate to forums – from notifying last minute changes of plan to arranging a pontoon party, for example.

WhatsApp groups can be incredibly useful. But just like the website, the forums and CAptain's Mate, they are only as useful as the content generated by members. All rely on us sharing our experiences.

And if a post on a WhatsApp group has relevance beyond that limited circle, no doubt a conscientious member will re-post it on CAptain's Mate or the appropriate forum – just as they already so kindly do. We are all enduringly grateful for that generous effort. And taking note of all that vital information is not in any sense cheating!

Cathy, a former editor of *Cruising*, is enjoying cruising with her husband Richard on their motor boat, *Attitude*. In her four sailing predecessors they raced and cruised from Spain to Sweden and sailed around the UK and Ireland.





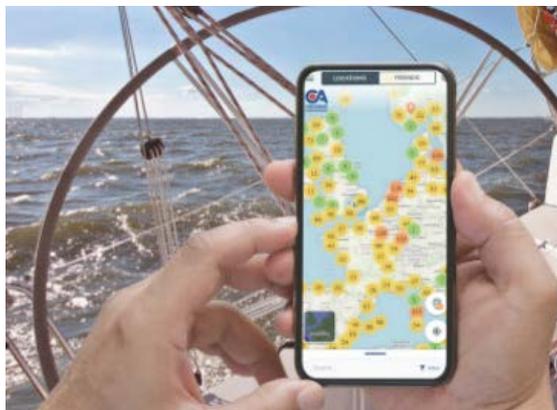
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