



Cruising

www.theca.org.uk

- Across the Atlantic
- 10 years of Channel rallies
- Autumn talks programme





A typical scene during the Baltimore Fiddle Fair



Catching the sun

CA President **Robin Baron** enjoyed an excellent boating summer. Back in harness, he and Council aim to strengthen the CA's advocacy work and are preparing for the AGM

By the time you read this, summer will be all but over. Unlike 2024 it has been a good sailing season with warm weather and, in general, moderate winds.

In May, June and July I cruised *Misha* to southwest Ireland, sailing between Cork Harbour and Dingle and returning via Scilly. This is a beautiful cruising ground with stunning scenery, great wildlife, a very warm welcome wherever you go ashore and good food and drink. The downside is the exposure to the Atlantic weather, with no Hebrides to afford protection.

We made landfall in Baltimore, County Cork, and went ashore to find the village jumping. It was as though we had landed on a film set depicting rural Ireland. It turned out that it was the last day of

the Baltimore Fiddle Fair, an annual May event.

The added bonus to cruising in Ireland is that you are in the Common Travel Area, not in the Schengen area and so not subject to the 90/180 days' restrictions. Upon arrival we asked the Baltimore harbourmaster if we needed to check in with Irish customs to be told that, in 2024, he'd dutifully called the Revenue with details of each arriving foreign yacht. After a while, they said "Will you please stop calling us?". So the regulatory burden of cruising in Ireland is thin to non-existent.

Speaking of regulatory matters, representing the interests of cruising sailors has been part of the CA's culture since its establishment in 1908. Recent

examples of this include our work on poorly marked fishing gear, VAT post Brexit, the Schengen 90/180 day rules, orca and the tax treatment of HVO fuel.

As part of our advocacy work, the CA is looking to strengthen its ability to speak out for, and influence others on behalf of, the boating community. To that end, we need to further develop our lobbying capacity. We therefore need to find more volunteers with appropriate knowledge and skills to influence public bodies. If you think you can help, please get in touch with me, via office@theca.org.uk.

Remember, we'll be electing Council members at **the CA's 2025 AGM**. This takes place at **6.30pm on Wednesday 12 November** at CA House and by Zoom. Put it in your diary now. 

CREW: "My sailing experience started aged 10 in a Mirror dinghy and has included many offshore races and passages. I have lived in Australia, the US and the UK; my sailing qualifications include the ASA 108 Offshore Passagemaking in 2019 and RYA Yachtmaster in 2024. Looking for a "qualifying" passage for my RYA Yachtmaster Ocean Certificate, i.e. a non stop distance of over 600nm, 96+ hours at sea and more than 50nm from a charted object/land."

Join the Crewing Service ... and sail the Pacific?

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, starting with the **first in-person meeting on 2 October**. You can also find crew or a skipper by posting your details on our listings (the quotes here give a taste of what's on offer), or on the Crewing Service Forum. Find out more at www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome or contact Malcolm Davidson at crewing@theca.org.uk



SKIPPER: "@ 23 Nov. Join in Fiji at Vuda Marina (Fly to Nadi). @ 25 Nov (weather dependent). Sail for New Zealand, 7-8 day passage all being well. @ 3rd December. Arrive Opua, Bay of Islands, New Zealand. Dec 2025 - Feb 2026, Cruise the Bay of Islands & other destinations. I hope to sail with 6 people for the longer passages... and am happy to take mixed abilities from beginners to master mariners. I will share catering and other incidental costs equally between participants."

NEWS FROM RATS



Kingfisher Bulletin: Interactive map for offshore hazards

The Kingfisher Bulletin provides the fishing and marine industries with alerts of offshore hazards, activity notices and news, on activities in sea areas around the UK and Northern Europe. Its interactive map covers wind farm and other offshore construction activity, including cable laying. The Kingfisher Bulletin app is available to download for iOS and Android allowing updates directly to a phone or tablet. It allows personalised alerts to be set up so that hazard and notice information can be saved for offline use. View the map at kingfisherbulletin.org/notice-map. It's not a new service but it has not been well publicised for recreational boating. Thank you to CA member Ian Robson for telling RATS about this service.

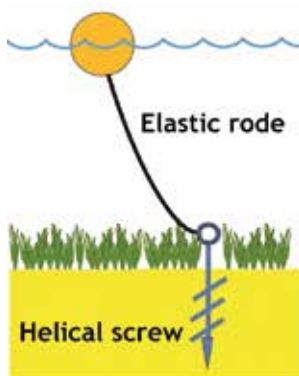
Studland eco-mooring issue

One of the new eco-moorings placed in the Marine Conservation Zone in Studland Bay, Dorset, is reported to have failed earlier this summer. The moorings are designed to help protect seagrass on the seabed, which is the habitat of a wide variety of sealife species and acts as a sink for atmospheric carbon.

The site project officer has told RATS that the failure of the mooring was due to damage to the buoyant elastic rode. The affected mooring was being tested during the summer and the cause of damage was not clear, but the moorings managers are aware that some moored boats exceed the displacement weight clearly marked on the buoys. The 87 eco-moorings laid in Studland Bay undergo regular and detailed inspections.

RATS will follow up on this and report more fully as soon as information is available.

■ Meanwhile *The Guardian* has reported that volunteer divers surveying seahorses in Studland Bay are seeing a considerable increase in numbers of seahorses – up to 33 on one dive, when seeing one or two used to be the norm.



Planning your energy use

RATS has developed a spreadsheet model to calculate energy used by on-board electrical systems when not connected to shore power. Its objective is to help you manage consumption within the limits of your vessel's battery capacity or to work out what battery capacity you need. You can add or remove solar panels, wind generators and hydrogenerators to find out their impact.

The spreadsheet includes detailed instructions on how to use it. On the CA website go to **Reg & Tech > Battery Energy Consumption**

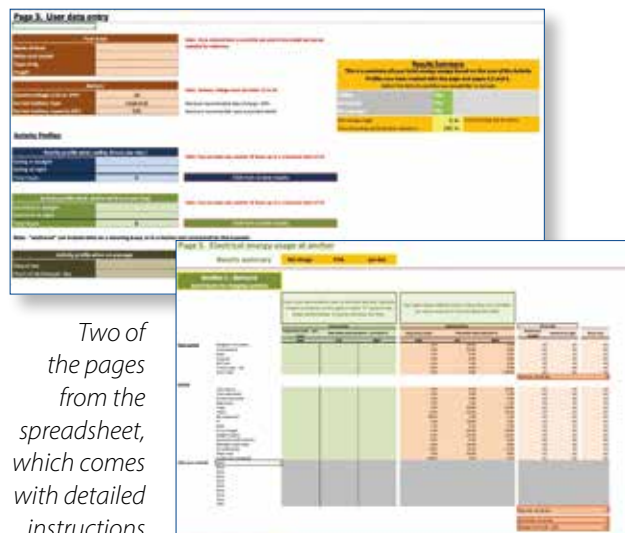
RATS welcomes comment and constructive criticism, so to comment, ask for help or report an error please email RATS at RATS@theCA.org.uk.

RATS (the Regulatory & Technical Services group) represents the CA in understanding and explaining how regulatory and technical issues affect cruising sailors. We represent their interests in dealings with government departments, offshore developers, statutory authorities and the marine industry. We also produce policy papers and technical questionnaires, write articles for *Cruising* and develop material for the CA website. RATS responds in detail to members' queries where it can. To contact RATS, email rats@theca.org.uk



Call for evidence: Decarbonising smaller vessels

Earlier this year the UK's Department for Transport launched a call for evidence to understand the challenges of decarbonising smaller vessels by 2050. The CA has been working with other organisations to co-ordinate responses, while still addressing the needs of their individual members. The final submissions date was extended until September and we will report on the CA's view in the December edition of *Cruising*.



Two of the pages from the spreadsheet, which comes with detailed instructions

View from the Rock down into Gibraltar and its bay. The border is just off the right-hand side of this photo by Nick Ellis

Gibraltar agreement: what we know so far

Gibraltar is a British Overseas Territory, bordered by Spain to the north and sitting at the entrance to the Mediterranean. Its location and status has made it a popular destination for cruising sailors in the past, both to reset the EU Temporary Admission VAT clock and to pause the Schengen 90/180 days clock. It has also offered fuel and stores duty-free.

In June, the UK, EU, Spain and Gibraltar agreed the core aspects of a future formal treaty between the EU and the UK in respect of Gibraltar, although as *Cruising* went to press, many details were not yet clear.

Land border checks will be removed but replaced by Schengen checks at the Gibraltar sea and air borders. The UK's Foreign Secretary has confirmed that time by UK nationals who are not residents of Gibraltar will be counted as

part of their 90-day limit, unless they are Gibraltar residents. Furthermore, if non-EU nationals wish to extend their stay beyond 90 days in Gibraltar it is likely that they will be subject to the Spanish visa regime, which does not include national D visas for the purposes of tourism, but requires a commitment to taking up residency.

Gibraltar will also introduce an EU-style VAT system ("Transaction Tax"), and probably a temporary admission system for visiting yachts, but will continue to be outside the EU VAT territory. It is not clear whether the current tax-free provisioning of fuel, stores and spares will remain available to pleasure craft.

Read more on the CA website at www.theca.org.uk/news/rats/gibraltar-agreement



Photo: Machiel Lambooi

Foreign vessels over 15m LOA in Norway

From the beginning of 2025, all foreign-flagged craft (or Norwegian-flagged craft with a foreign skipper) over 15m LOA or 50GT (gross tonnage) entering Norwegian territorial waters from anywhere have been subject to new regulations under national security rules. These include submitting a sailing plan to the Coastal Surveillance Centre 24 hours before entering Norwegian waters; obtaining permission before anchoring/berthing, before leaving anchorages/berths and before launching tenders; and regular position reporting.

A Norwegian Point of Contact is

mandatory. This can be a ship's agent or other organisation, who will charge a fee.

There are no exceptions, and the rules are already being rigorously enforced, with penalties in place. However, they do not apply to vessels under the 15m or 50GT limit.

All vessels arriving from outside the Schengen area are required to report to police and customs. For more detail on requirements for vessels both over and under 15m LOA and 50GT please see the link on *How to report correctly* on the Norway page at www.theca.org.uk/cruising_info/baltic/norway

Changes to regulations

Greek transit log

The Greek customs office has told the CA that application for a Transit Log must be made online **after** arrival in Greece. A copy of the stamped crew list obtained from the Port Police after arrival must be scanned to PDF and included, in addition to other documents. The crew list is being used to stamp crew in and out of ports, so check it carefully.

The CA's Greek Regulations page at www.theca.org.uk/cruising_info/med/greece/regs has been amended to reflect this, with an essential step-by-step guide to completing the online application form.

UK rules on Temporary Admission

HMRC has announced that from this summer a non-UK VAT-paid vessel owned by non-UK residents can remain in the UK without incurring VAT ('temporary admission' or TA) for up to two years (previously 18 months). The change does not affect UK-owned vessels. Read more at www.theca.org.uk/news/rats/france-visa-applications

Timing of visa applications for France

The timing of the process to apply for a French visitor visa, the VLS-T, has changed for UK nationals applying from the UK, and a six-month gap is not required. The submission window is also extended. RATS guidance on how to apply, at www.theca.org.uk/news/rats/france-visa-applications has been updated.

To the Caribbean

In November 2024 *Arkyla* joined the fleet of vessels on the ARC+, heading for Cabo Verde and Grenada. **James Kenning's** log for the year, complete with striking photos, won the Hanson Cup. This extract focuses on the ocean passages

Arkyla, a 2008 Regina 43 Deck Saloon, under way at night. Inset, farewell to Las Palmas

ARC+ Leg 1 Las Palmas to Mindelo 10-16 November 2024

10 November... the day has finally commeth! Whatever is still outstanding must remain outstanding as this is the day the lines are finally slipped from European soil and *Arkyla* is to head south to the tropics. We join the queue to motor out past the well-wishers waving enthusiastically from the breakwater to rousing tunes from a local brass band. We get our first taste of the competence of some of the rally skippers; with a long line of vessels heading to the marina exit, the large catamaran ahead (that shall remain anonymous), oblivious to the impending pile-up behind, decides to stop mid channel (taking all the channel) to savour the moment!

At 1300 the gun sounds, the signal flag drops, and the fleet sets off south... or at least attempts to as, almost as soon as the leg is started, the wind shifts and those boats that choose to sail rather than motor head east toward Africa! After two hours of sailing not very fast, and in the wrong direction, *Arkyla* joins the rest of the fleet in turning on the iron mainsail to make some progress toward our Cabo Verde goal. By 1730, with 30 minutes of daylight left, there is a whisper

of breeze, so we cut the engine and hoist the Parasailor... we are sailing at a respectable lick of 5 knots! We sail south into the darkness under clear skies and a mild swell.

Day 2 Dawn arrives with a fresher breeze, larger seas, and a more confused swell; gusts are blowing to 23 knots but we feel confident in still flying the Parasailor. *Arkyla* is flying along and our first recorded 24-hour run is 152NM – not bad considering the painfully slow start! The first rally position report has us at 24th in the fleet, impressive given our handicap rating as the 12th slowest boat of 94.

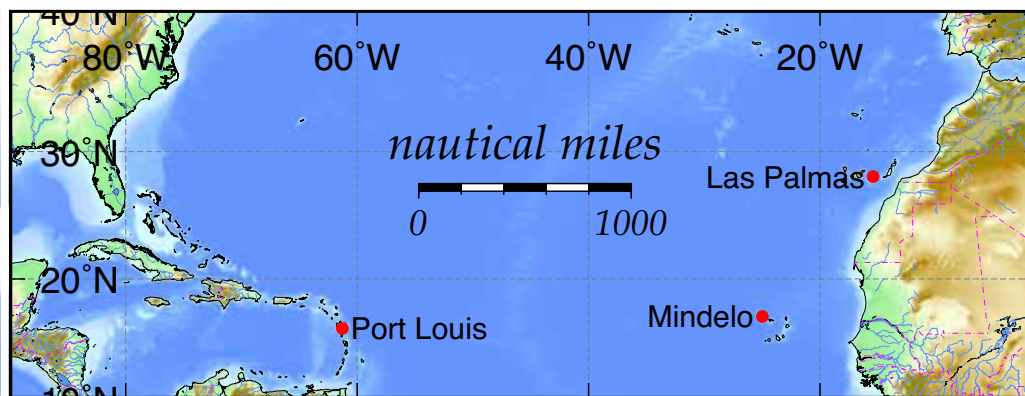
During the day we encounter our first technical difficulty – the hydrogenerator is giving no charge! Emails to Remoran in Finland determine that we have a unit from a known bad batch, susceptible to corrosion, so there is no fix – we must adapt to our new reality of reduced renewable energy; we hand helm more and must top up batteries by running the engine – exactly what I do not want to do. At least the freshening breeze is powering the wind generator. As night approaches we consider the stronger wind and debate if we should douse the spinnaker; the forecast is for steady winds so we decide to keep it flying.

The forecast was wrong! The wind is now



blowing a steady F7, and the Parasailor is at its limits. Despite us now being in darkness, I decide to douse the kite. Disaster strikes! At the mast, somehow the Parasailor halyard frees itself from the jaws of the winch; the sail drops instantly to the ocean as the halyard shoots up the mast – I only just get my hand out of the way, though three fingers are badly swollen. There are tears; not from the pain in my hand, but the sight of the stricken sail. We are left wallowing for two hours as we try to recover the sail back onboard; in that time we drift 4NM. The sail is unceremoniously shoved into the forward hatch, displacing the crew from their quarters. Exhausted, we set full main and the jib to make 7kt – we have some catching up to do.

Day 3 With the new morning we reassess our situation; beam reaching is not going to win us any prizes, so we set the pole and pull out the twin headsail rig... we are back on track and powering back up through the boats that had



Left, under way with the Parasailor before disaster struck. Below, Arkyla is joined by dolphins as she cracks along under twin headsails

overtaken us during our misfortune. Despite the disaster, our 24-hour run is another respectable 157NM. We settle into a rhythm and make steady progress south – life is back on the up.

Days 4-5 The wind stays steady and we crack along... 164NM is our new 24-hour run record. Several times we are joined by dolphins to lift the spirits and speed us on our way. We still need to run the engine daily to top up the batteries, and we have sadly had to sacrifice the freezer and its pre-cooked contents; the compressor was continuously running even on low power. Dried ship's biscuits and weevils it must be.

Days 6-7 Our march back up through the fleet has been steady, but by the early hours of Friday the wind becomes light and flukey; an annoying quarter swell also keeps knocking the wind out of the now slapping headsails. If ever

we needed a (working) Parasailor, this is the time. In these ight airs, *Arkyla* won't even entertain the notion of a broad reach, so we must continue toward Mindelo under the collapsing twins. All morning, afternoon, and into the next night progress is painfully slow. Our one highlight is catching the leading edge of a squall and, for 30 minutes, riding along at 8.5 knots. We see the sun rise one more time and, at 0841, we cross the finish line, furl our sails and motor into Mindelo marina – leg 1 complete, albeit with a few casualties!

Lesson learned:

- *If in doubt, douse the spinnaker before dark*

Cabo Verde R&R Mindelo, São Vicente 16-22 November

Safely tied to the dock, we prioritise activities: breakfast, a beer, organise repairs! The most important task is to haul the still soaking Parasailor from its resting place in the forepeak. Only now can we glimpse the extent of the damage caused by an ocean plunge while travelling at 8+ kt – it's not good. As well as the few small tears in the nylon fabric I was already aware of, it now becomes clear that there is a large and significant tear below the wing section of the sail, and this is too big and complex a job for the basic sail services in Cabo Verde.

I turn my attention instead to other needed repairs before we can depart again within the week. Most important

is to fix the pulpit stanchion post which hosts several low friction rings; the base bolt, which also feeds the nav light wiring into the hull, was sheared in the Parasailor drop. BoatCV is the resident repair and chandlery outfit within the marina; its motto is "if it's man made, we can fix it"... this is true! The pulpit is removed from the boat, sent away for welding, and within a day replaced and rewired. The price for this work... €59! Not only do these guys work miracles, they charge at a saintly rate too.

There is no time for trips around São Vicente and the neighbouring island of Santo Antão but I had seen these during my stopover on ARC+ '22. There is time however to enjoy the welcome and prize-giving parties, and to have a wander around the town. Security has become a bit of an issue since my last visit and a number of ARC participants were subject to crime, including attempted pickpocketing by the cashpoint machine and, more worryingly, an attack with a knife during a phone robbery. The local police were proactive to these incidents, but staying street-aware is currently a necessity here.

Mindelo remains a fascinating place to visit and soak up the African feel. The vegetable and street markets are full of interesting items and local characters in equal measure.

Lessons learned:

- *Security is an issue in Mindelo*
- *BoatCV can manage most repairs but delays are possible*
- *Beware the grogue – it's lethal!*

ARC+ Leg 2 Cabo Verde to Grenada 22 November-7 December

Day 1 It's all fun and games for the start out of Mindelo; not only does the entire fleet of 94 start on the same gun, but the line is peppered with anchored yachts and cargo vessels. Despite this, there ➤



The ARC+ fleet in Mindelo



is a clean start and all boats reach out into the channel. Clear of the headland, *Arkyla's* bow is turned to port and twin headsails set – we chuckle at the majority of the fleet heading straight for the Santo Antão wind shadow. As dusk falls, we are no longer laughing, because the wind has deserted us too. We have a frustrating night, and watch on AIS as our once commanding position sinks to the very back of the fleet. By morning not only are we languishing behind the pack, but we notice chafe on the starboard genoa UV strip – not a great omen. By 1300 our 24-hour run is recorded at a disappointing 133NM.

Day 2 The frustration continues; *Arkyla* does not like light airs, and the wind is more elusive than the Scarlet Pimpernel at a hide & seek tournament. We consolidate our position at the back of the fleet and record only 117NM – this could be a long crossing.

Day 3 A bit of wind, but progress is still fairly slow. We now have a new menace: sargassum weed! The weed constantly clogs the hydrogenerator and, even clearing the blade every 30 minutes, we make very little electricity, so the engine must be run to charge batteries. We stop the boat to lift the generator from the stern and clear its prop; we put the gearbox in reverse, and to our amazement the lost hanging gardens of Babylon emerge from behind the keel and rudder. Sails are set again and we zoom away a good knot and a half faster! Our 24-hour run is a respectable 152NM.

Day 4 For a while we are teased with a F6 north-easterly, but the wind remains fickle. We make only 143NM and maintain our fleet position in the high 80s. Boat time is set back one hour, more to create added confusion than to adjust to our westward progress

Day 5 The wind deserts us again. To prevent the headsails flogging themselves (and the radar) to death we put in a couple of rolls on the furler to tighten things up a little – this helps calm the slapping and even gives us a little increase in speed. Daily run drops again to just 125 NM... will we even make it to the Caribbean for Christmas?

Days 6-7 We plod along in our new norm of mediocrity. The wind is mostly F4 with spells of F5 to lift our spirits. We make runs of 141 and 145NM respectively. At least the weed seems to be thinning out a little.



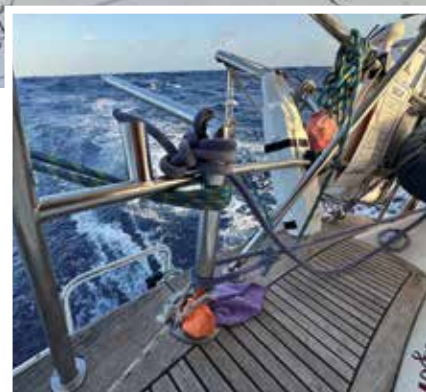
Day 8 It's "half-way day"! Truth be told, it has come a little later than hoped for. Still, we knock back a tot of rum each and offer one to Neptune in the hope he may look more favourably on us...

Day 9 Things are looking up; we make 160NM – perhaps our rum offering to Neptune was well received?

Day 10 Finally we are starting to cook on gas! We hit a daily run of 165 NM despite the bigger, shorter, and more confused seas that come at us from both the NE and SE. A surprise is in store for us, however; retiring to the aft cabin at midnight I encounter a sailor's worst fear... a new and unfamiliar noise. I peer into the transom void and am horrified to see the top of the rudder post unsupported and doing its own version of the funky gibbon. Water is also seeping from the packing gland. As a precaution we break out the emergency bilge pump, don lifejackets, make a call to rally control and set about brain-storming how to stabilise the situation. We shorten sail to slow the boat, but this actually gives us more speed! We come within visual range of *Aria Legra* and talk on the radio; they have their own lost power issues! As Pink Floyd might lyricise, *We are two lost souls in a fish bowl*... currently we don't really wish we were here! The last few days we had been making real progress through the fleet but we now temper our expectations of a heroic finish. We jury-rig the rudder, using the emergency tiller, some lashings and the two secondary winches. Despite all this we are flying – 24-hour run 179NM.



Left, Arkyla under twin headsails. Above, halfway! Right, the jury-rigged rudder. It turned out that the problem was caused by whale damage and the skeg had to be rebuilt. Below right, on the superyacht dock in Port Louis, Grenada



Day 11 Clearly we should have broken the rudder earlier... we are going like a rocket! Today's 24-hour run was 180NM... a record for *Arkyla*! We have sunrises, sunsets, speed and dolphins – Atlantic sailing at its best.

Day 12 175 NM... we continue to sail fast and work our position up through the fleet. We have gone from 89th to 42nd and are lying third in our division.

As we close the Caribbean our new adversary becomes the squall. The radar is now set for weather rather than collision avoidance. We ride our first squall in daylight, reefing the headsails just before the mass of grey beneath the anvil clouds consumes us. We make 9kt riding the surf but then, once the squall passes, the wind dies and veers – we are now headed toward Miami somewhat slowly. We keep the headsails rigged and go where the wind takes us with blind faith that the forecast will come good and take us back on course.

Days 13-14 We feel our hard-won gains being stolen from us. The wind becomes lighter and more fluke; our last two runs are 165 and 162NM. Our hopes of a Friday finish are dashed when the wind again backs and our course under headsails is almost north! Grenada is tantalisingly in sight, but we reluctantly take down the pole and try various sail configurations to drive us the last 30 miles to Port Louis. We are left wallowing in a sloppy swell so, for an hour, we hoist the iron mainsail. I feel deflated; we have managed 2200NM under wind power alone, yet succumb to

using the engine within spitting distance of our goal. But as we close the coast, the wind fills again and we unfurl main and jib to take us the last few miles to the finish line. In darkness we navigate the shoals and motor into Port Louis marina, on the superyacht dock for the night. We are greeted by an ARC Yellowshirt bearing the gifts of a warm welcome and industrial-strength rum punch. *Arkyla's* Atlantic crossing is at an end.

Lessons learned:

- **Radar is your best friend for detecting tropical squalls**
- **Have a plan (and a sail plan) for all potential emergencies**
- **Carry tools – and lots of them**

Postscript

I started the ARC+ rally knowing that *Arkyla*, a sturdy bluewater boat, was not going to win any prizes for speed. As it turned out however, she did! We had a podium finish of third in division, and we crossed the line mid-fleet at 42nd place.

James Kenning is a retired RAF officer and has sailed since childhood, first racing the OK class dinghy on Oxfordshire gravel pits. An RYA Yachtmaster, he has crossed Biscay, made two transatlantics, and cruised in the UK, Mediterranean, Caribbean, and Australia. *Arkyla*, a 2008 Regina 43 deck saloon, is currently sitting out hurricane season on the hard in Grenada; the probable plan is to splash in December to cruise the Windward and Leeward islands before crossing back to the UK or Europe in 2026. *Arkyla's* adventures can be followed on Instagram @sailingarkyla or through the website www.sailingarkyla.com.



Ten years of cross-Channel rallies



Channel Secretaries **Bob and Sue Garrett** look back on a decade of organising cross-Channel rallies, and share some of their favourite anecdotes and incidents*



We took on the roles of Channel Secretaries at the start of 2016 and were keen to run a Channel Section rally, because we had enjoyed and seen the value of such rallies in our local yacht club, as well as a CA Baltic Rally and an Ocean Cruising Club rally to Russia. Our objectives then, and right through the last ten years, have been both to support members who are keen to extend their cruising horizons, and to provide a platform for members to enjoy cruising together.

Our first Channel Section rally, held in 2016, had a limited scope as we were starting it rather late. It was just five days in length and visited only two French ports. It did not even start in the UK because another commitment meant we were already in France; it simply tried to bring together CA members to visit a couple of ports together. Some seven boats signed up but boat technical problems meant that only four boats actually got to the first rally port. The major win for us though was that we met Paul and Liz Harewood on their yacht *Minalto*, who are now not just great friends but also went on to support us in many ways in the CA Channel Section, and in particular to lead the West Country flotilla of future Channel Rallies.

*with names omitted to spare blushes

Over subsequent years the Channel Rally gradually grew in the number of boats, the number of ports visited, the distances sailed and the range of “diversions” in the programme to entertain the crews. Most significant was the addition of two starting points – a Solent flotilla and a West Country flotilla – with all meeting at some point to rally onwards together.

A couple asked for advice and added ‘Last year we sailed around Britain!.. but people have different concerns

We soon found that the maximum number of boats we, and more importantly marinas and restaurants, could easily cope with was 20, and our ambition to introduce members not just to crossing the Channel, but also heading further, led to one rally visiting Paimpol and Tréguier on the North Brittany coast. Over the years more than 90 different boats have taken part. Most participants are in sailing yachts, but we have had motorboats as part of the rally too. The sizes of boats also varies with the smallest 8m length (still bigger than the yacht I first crossed the Channel in) and the largest nearly 16m. Over the years the average boat size has steadily grown, and

this is starting to affect the numbers (or sizes) we might be able to take, as visitor pontoon space can be limited.

Each year has been a mixture of repeat and new attendees and included a few who have not crossed the Channel before. This highlights the wide range of types of participants. Some are experienced sailors who have sailed round the world, while others may have only bought their boat in the previous year – though they have usually crewed before. For those new to crossing the Channel we always offer an individual chat and also suggest they chat to others to gain their input too.

On one occasion a couple asked for some additional advice and my first question was “what sort of sailing have you done so far?”. To which the reply was “well, last year we sailed round Britain!” So, no advice really needed there? Well actually there was, because as we have found over the years different people have different concerns about crossing the Channel: it might be collision avoidance or being out of sight of land but can also be the process for getting a berth in a French marina, how to check in, how to pay, or a myriad of other questions.

Over the years we have been extremely lucky with the weather. We never had to delay a passage, though we



Top left, a rally dinner at Guernsey Yacht Club. Left, sailing over the green bits – the sill at Carteret. Above, the 2025 rally route with Solent and West Country starts.

tried to make the programme flexible enough for this eventuality. Nevertheless we came close on one occasion. This was crossing the Channel and some forecasts suggested gusts of F6. One lady said she would prefer to take the ferry so her husband agreed to do it single-handed. Unfortunately part way across he had to turn back, as he got a phone call to say she had arrived at the ferry port with his passport and he had her passport!

Some French ports are very different from those on the English Channel coast. The French make great use of tides to create marinas behind gates and sills, often with completely drying approaches. On one rally, one crew said "We never thought we would sail over the green bits of a chart," a typical concern of many who have not entered such ports before. We still remember, many years ago, being in a yacht club rally to Deauville where, having sailed between the channel marks to enter the port in the morning, we played rounders in the afternoon with the channel marks as bases.

Both yacht clubs and marinas have been extremely helpful in supporting our rallies, though we have chosen each carefully so we can be sure of that flexibility. The CA's HLR in Cherbourg has been invaluable in aiding our bookings and keeping us together, and Carteret marina and the Barneville Carteret Yacht Club is always a high point for the rally. The yacht club has barbecues we can use and is always welcoming. On one visit

I received a message from the marina staff that the Harbour Master wished to see me. This was the harbour master for the whole port so not just covering the marina but also the fishing port and ferry port. What had our rally done to cause his interest? So, with some trepidation, I went to meet him only to be cordially received and offered a reception for all the rally participants in the Yacht Club the next day for a free drink!

The crew commented 'We never thought we would sail over the green bits of the chart'

A few years later, while there on a rally, I had an email from the Yacht Club to say the President would be coming from Paris that evening to welcome us all. The President? Did they mean Macron? Well, as we found out that evening, it was the Yacht Club President, but again very courteous and welcoming. The event included quick speeches and exchange of flags, and then another free drink. You can tell why we return frequently!

Given the mix of past and new participants on a rally we have always seen it as important to bring everyone together as a little community. Initial pontoon drinks where everyone wears a name badge starts this off but dinners, games, barbecues, boules competitions, a safari supper and trips all further that

"bonding". In all these we have tried to balance achieving the objective of the event with having fun. An example being for a wine tasting competition, where the first rule was "No one falls off the pontoon".

Organising dinners for 40 or more where each person may have their own menu choices can be fun but fraught, especially when no-one remembers what they ordered. The various venues we have used have always been well organised and understanding. One restaurant stands out, though. In 2019 we extended our rally to reach North Brittany. We were not sure all the participants would get that far, with some needing to get back for other commitments and the additional risk of poor weather with more longer passages. However, we all arrived, still together, in Tréguier where the rally was to end. Because we were not sure of numbers we had not booked a venue for an end-of-rally dinner. So Sue and I walked up to a small restaurant we had eaten in before, went in and asked whether we could book a table for 30 for the following night. To our surprise they said yes, so we discussed menu options and then rushed round getting each persons' choices. When we arrived that evening we found the whole restaurant was ours, except one table – but that one table had some sailing friends of ours – the reach of the CA is huge!

Non-sailing friends may think cruising is an isolating hobby because you



Among the many organised activities are cycle rides and coach trips

are “lonely on your boat”, but we have always thought it very friendly, as you take strangers’ lines in ports and start to chat. Cruising is very much a community, the CA even more of one, and a rally gets about as sociable and cooperative as it is possible to be. Rally participants rapidly start assisting each other, not just in the routine but also when there are problems. We have had issues like ropes around props and faulty VHF aerials, all fixed by fellow ralliers; we even got a sail repaired overnight in the small port of Di  lette. This year one crew was unable to participate due to a boat fault, but another boat took them on. In 2022, Sue and I were in a similar position of having an unsailable boat about 10 days before the rally started. An email to those booked on the rally produced a list of offers for us to crew within just a couple of hours. And in the last two years Bob has crewed with Steve and Wendy Leyland on their yacht while Sue did logistics from home.

That mutual support has also extended to checking and sharing passage plans – “what time do you think we can get over that sill?”. While Sue and I have tried to provide an overall guide, we value others, often with as much or more experience than us, sharing their views too. Usually this goes well, but one year it did not! We were in Di  lette, and because of the timing of arrival the Solent flotilla was in

the outer marina while the West Country flotilla were in the inner marina, behind the sill. On the day of our departure, one of the Solent group decided on a gentle sail to our destination, Carteret. Because of the very light wind they left very early. Soon a few others decided that was a good plan. This caused some panic for those behind the sill. They saw them leaving and saw, on AIS, how slowly they were going. A rumour started that the tide was too strong, and by the time the West Country group could get over the sill, there would be insufficient time to get to Carteret before the channel in was too shallow again. I had to go round and explain why some boats left early, and go through the calculation to show that with a little use of engines we would quickly catch up the early leavers and arrive around high water.

The Alderney supply ship could not be unloaded because the new harbour crane had failed

Covid played its part in our rallies. The 2020 rally was planned and fully booked with visits to ports we had not taken the rally to before: Saint-Cast and Saint-Malo. However, lockdown meant the whole rally was cancelled. For 2021, we were unsure what might be achievable so initially planned a rally simply to bring the two flotillas together in Portland. We hoped that if conditions eased we might then be able to rally onwards to France. That was not to be, but while in Portland we heard Alderney had just opened up for visitors. We had a meeting on the pontoon and four boats decided to head there the next day.

We arrived in Braye and were put on particular swinging moorings for “Covid testing”. Next morning we were taken ashore and met by staff in full PPE where we had to prove our vaccination status and be checked for Covid. We were then

free to explore the island, where a strange story gradually emerged. Our first “port of call” was a coffee bar where I ordered the coffees and received an apology for the poor range of pastries “because of the crane”. I thought I had misheard, but asked for no further explanation. A bit later we visited a pub for lunch, where the bar staff apologised for the poor range of sandwiches “due to the crane”!

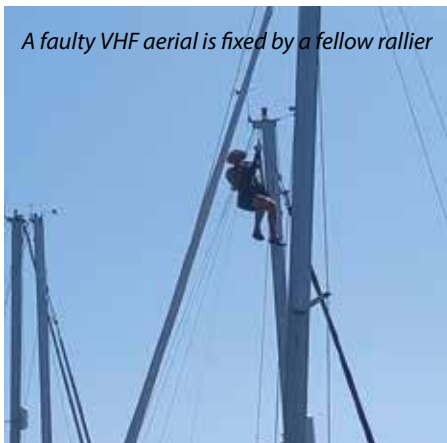
It transpired that the ship which brings supplies for Alderney from Poole could not be unloaded because the new harbour crane had failed. Over the next couple of days they brought in the old crane which also failed, and ultimately, we understand, a crane was brought from Guernsey to solve the problem.

The islanders were very resourceful in coping – and joking about it; the hotel where we went for another lunch even had a special menu of what was available with a picture of a crane at the top! Having checked into Alderney we were then allowed to sail on to Guernsey where the “sub-rally” ended.

Sue and I are pleased that the CA Channel Rally has given so many the experience and confidence to go further. Of course the CA has members sailing huge distances and in far-flung places, but they all started somehow. Our most extreme example is a couple who were experienced dinghy sailors and had just purchased their first yacht (LOA 10.6m). In 2018 they joined the rally, and we assumed they enjoyed it as they then booked for 2019. But when they arrived on the rally their boat now had an Aries self-steering mechanism, and we learnt there were other upgrades too. We asked what their plans were, to be told they would sail south to Gibraltar and then decide whether to go into the Mediterranean or across the Atlantic. They eventually headed out on a tour of the Atlantic islands – perhaps the rally boosted their confidence!



A faulty VHF aerial is fixed by a fellow rallier



CA London lectures autumn 2025

From the East India Company to electric engines, and from Britain in the rain to Greece, Albania and the Caribbean in sunshine, there's plenty of variation in this year's lecture season. Put the dates in your diary now

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 1 October

Slightly pear-shaped, part 2, Jeremy Batch

That the Earth is round had been known for centuries; that it might also be (very) slightly oval was long-suspected, although we disagreed with the French as to which way the oval went.

In this sequel to Jeremy's March talk, we look in more detail at the early British and French-led projects to create accurate maps and charts. In Britain, William Roy's 1747 Survey of the Scottish Highlands would lead to the commencement, in 1791, of our nationwide Ordnance Survey.

Meanwhile, the French had been busy with an even more ambitious project (begun in 1683) to measure their own prime meridian, not just through Paris and across France but around a quarter of the globe. The unit they redefined in the process (originally the length of a seconds pendulum, but now intended to be one ten-millionth of the length they were measuring) is now – for better or worse – used across most of the globe.

The Greenwich and Paris meridians were linked across the Channel in 1787 using rival surveying instruments, both accurate to one arc-second (one sixtieth of one sixtieth of a degree). Each side swore their design was better (you can still see one of ours, made by Jesse Ramsden, in the Science Museum) but both gave

positioning errors of only 7 inches (oh, all right, 18 centimetres). Plus: why NATO compasses are divided into 6,400 degrees and why, if you capture a Russian field gun, you really need to watch which way you point it.



Wednesday 8 October

First Voyages of the East India Company, Rob Smith

The East India Company became the most powerful multinational the world has ever known. However, its first voyages were somewhat haphazard. This talk by London tour guide Rob Smith looks at the attempts by British sailors to set up trading missions in India, China, Japan and what is now Indonesia. The difficulties faced included getting shipwrecked on an island full of penguins, accidentally firing the ship's cannons at their ship's boat, clashes with the Dutch East India company, and mutinous crews, not to mention the ever-present problem of diseases like scurvy and dysentery. Nevertheless, these challenges were overcome and the trading posts which made the East India Company fabulously profitable were finally established.



Wednesday 15 October

Round Britain in a Cornish Crabber, Roger and Chris Hardman

Despite never having owned a yacht before, Chris and Roger bought one and set off to sail her round Britain with long time CA members Rachel Edwards and Alan Bennett as crew. Storms, dolphins, breakdowns, a Coastguard commendation and becoming lead feature on the Home Page of the Berwick-upon-Tweed Lifeboat website followed. This is their story.



Wednesday 22 October

Not Sailing in Western Greece, Nigel Cuthbert

Greece has many hidden treasures in addition to the well-known tourist sites, some of which can be reached



easily from ports where your boat can be left safely for a day or more.

When you are planning a cruise, it is worth making time to explore the hinterland of the ports you visit, to enjoy the rich experiences Greece has to offer. Equally, if the weather is less than perfect for sailing, become a land explorer until the storms pass through!

In this talk you will see a selection of some of the wonderful places Nigel and Maureen visited and find details of where you can leave the boat and how to get to them. We hope this talk will inspire you to explore inland and enjoy fascinating history and stunning scenery.

Wednesday 29 October **Electric engines, Algie Bennett**

Advancements in battery technology and an ever-evolving range of motors mean that it's increasingly feasible for many of us to swap out not just the petrol outboard on our tenders but also the diesel inboard engine on full-sized sailing yachts for cleaner electric propulsion.

There are, of course, a lot of things to consider before making the switch, such as where you sail and dock or anchor up; how you use your engine; and how you could charge an electric alternative. And if you're (like most of us) not an electric motor aficionado, where to start can be the biggest challenge.

Fortunately, Algie Bennett, founder of Electric Outboard, is a passionate advocate of electric motors and with him on the night will be David Ellis from Temo electric outboards to show you one popular choice on the market. In this talk, Algie will take you through the basics, offer impartial advice

and answer your questions about what can and, equally important, what can't be achieved by switching to electric propulsion – well at least for now!



Wednesday 5 November **From the Med to the Caribbean, James Kenning**

In 2024 James delivered his Regina 43 *Arkyla* from its winter base of Valencia in the Med to the Caribbean. In this talk, based on his Hanson Cup winning log, he will touch on exiting the Med and negotiating Orca Alley, but will concentrate discussion on the Atlantic phase of the journey. This will include blue-water fit-out, crew choices (and issues), the pros and cons of joining the ARC+ rally, and the transatlantic passage itself from the Canaries to Grenada via Cape Verde. The central theme will be preparation and how this helped to overcome mid-ocean problems including shredding the Parasailor spinnaker and structural damage to rudder and skeg following a whale strike 1000 nm from land. *Read more of James's adventures on page 29 of this issue of Cruising.*

Wednesday 12 November **Cruising Association AGM**

Wednesday 19 November **Our Albanian adventure, Cath Bruzzone**

Sitting between the very popular Greek and Croatian cruising areas and the rising star of Montenegro, Albania has a way to go before it can offer the delights of typical Mediterranean cruising. But it is still a fascinating country to visit. Its

history includes nearly 50 years of brutal communist dictatorship which only fell in 1992. This inevitably informs the experience of the visitor, though the country is developing fast, maybe too fast? Cath will describe the experience of arriving in Albania from Corfu, spending several weeks there in *Minx*, their X-Yacht 40, leaving her in the country's only marina for six months over the winter of 2024, then sailing from south to north in May 2025, before checking out to Montenegro.

Wednesday 26 November **Stars to Steer By, Julia Jones**

Julia's latest book tells the stories of more than 100 women sailors from the 1870s to the present day. Its focus, however, is on the 20th century: trying to get some sense of how the social history of the time and the gradual steps towards equality, are reflected in the lives – and sometimes the struggles – of independent women who longed to go to sea. Sailing can so often seem to be a male-dominated activity, but women have been on board all along, often almost invisibly. Focusing on the 'stars' – people like Ann Davison, Clare Francis, Naomi James, Tracy Edwards and Ellen MacArthur – is thrilling and inspiring. Yet realising how women can be found on board clipper ships, in naval uniform, in boatyards, tending navigation marks, as well as racing or cruising should be encouraging even for the least adventurous. And let's never forget that the most popular all-time guide to celestial navigation was written by a woman – Mary Blewitt, whose story is in this book.

Wednesday 3 December

Our annual joint event with the Royal Institute of Navigation. Speaker to be announced.

Wednesday 10 December **CA carol service and supper**

Traditional carol service at St Anne's Limehouse, followed by an informal Christmas supper at CA House. Details and times will be published later along with a booking link.



Bookings

Events start promptly at 7pm unless otherwise stated. To book to attend any lecture at CA House, and to indicate whether you'll be ordering food, go to **News & Events > Events > BOOK VENUE** on the CA website. Please pay in advance on the website, or by contactless on the door. Individual lecture tickets Members £4, Non-Members £7.

Webinar links will be published before each event. 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.

Attitude leaves the Caledonian Canal at Corpach. Cathy wears a lifejacket for mooring, but what would happen if she went overboard in open water?

(Wo)man overboard!

Motorboats generally feel more stable than sailing yachts, but their crews can still fall in.

Cathy Brown considers when to wear a lifejacket, and the challenge of getting back on to any vessel, motor or sail

There is an interesting thread on the motorboats section forum on the CA website, about MOB equipment and procedures for motorboats. Madeleine Foreman, like many motorboat section members a convert from sailing yachts, points out that her boat has no halyards or winches, or anywhere to attach a handy billy, which rules out most of the techniques relied on by yacht sailors.

As always with CA forums, useful input has come from fellow members. Robert Beckett said the block and tackle he uses to raise and lower his dinghy “doubles up in an MOB situation.” The dinghy would be dropped in the water to aid retrieval of the casualty, and he recommends partial deflation of the outer tube, to make pulling the person on board easier – a good tip whether under power or sail.

Remko Sinck, a member of the motorboats section team, suggests that most of the promoted MOB tools seem unlikely to be effective in real life situations – such as a demanding sea state. I wholeheartedly agree: especially if you are short-handed, slings and so on seem impractical, with mast or without.

Remko suggests utilising the Petzl JAG system (*pictured left*), designed for mountain climbers. It has a four to one lifting ratio, a system brake which prevents fall-back, and a sock around the ropes which stops everything getting tangled. It looks a promising solution for both sail and power – provided a

secure attachment point is available for a vertical lift. It is available in one, two and five metre formats, to suit a wide range of boat sizes. Prices start from about £200, not cheap, but priceless if a life can be saved.

He adds that how to attach the rope to the MOB is another question – as indeed it is for most recovery systems. Realistically, they rely on the casualty being conscious and able to attach the rescue line to the safety line point on the lifejacket – and that presupposes that a lifejacket is worn.

It's potentially dangerous to wear self-inflating lifejackets inside a cabin: in a sinking, they might prevent escape

Because motorboats are in general more stable than sailing yachts, and crew are less likely to be involved in adventurous on-deck activities, lifejackets are perhaps less generally worn on motorboats. It is in any case potentially dangerous to wear self-inflating types “indoors”, because in the event of sinking they might prevent escape.

The best advice has always been not to risk going overboard in the first place, and I believe that our boat's deep cockpit and solid guard railings (so much more reassuring than the wire equivalent on a yacht) will keep me safe in most circumstances.

We do keep our lifejackets instantly available, stowed under the driver's seat.

But none of us knows when disaster might strike, and because of this we should probably take more notice of the RNLI's “useless unless worn” campaign.

Many motorboats have davits and boarding platforms, which could be extremely helpful for MOB recovery in a flat sea with a stationary boat, but would be extremely dangerous if propellers were turning – as they might have to be to recover a casualty.

In sailing yachts and motorboats alike, the biggest risk of falling in the water comes when mooring. Madeleine confesses to having fallen off a boat “four times, mostly in the marina.” I have fallen into the marina once, and come perilously close to it on other occasions.

Now I am older, and less strong and agile, I put on my lifejacket when mooring. But if the worst happens in a marina, there should be help and rescue equipment close to hand. It's what might happen in open water that needs more serious consideration.

Thank you, Madeleine, for prompting us all to give attention to this vital subject.

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.





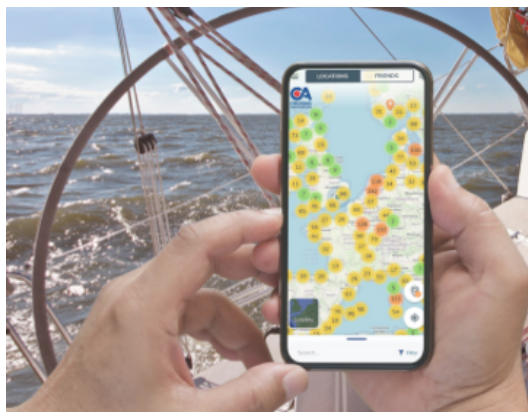
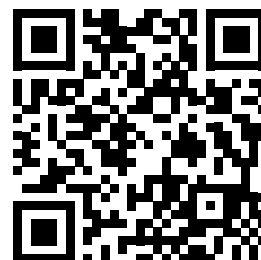
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