



Cruising

www.theca.org.uk

The new Captain's Mate
An accidental cruise in France
Autumn lecture season



The end of term

In his last message as the CA's President, **Julian Dussek** looks back over three extraordinary and challenging years



I am writing this, my last President's report, from my boat. The wind is howling, the boat is rocking (slightly) and I am in Calais Port de Plaisance. There is a near gale blowing. Last night our neighbours, fellow CA members, were boarded in the night by migrants trying to steal their dinghy. They had sailed round the world and this was the first time such a thing had happened to them.

I wrote my report for the July edition at the end of April and referred to the way traffic lights could change as you approached them. When it was published in June it looked rather flippant. I never dreamt how true it was to be. Countries changed colour at short notice and the government even invented (and then abandoned) a new traffic light colour, "amber plus" which explains why I was not able to present the CA Club Cruiser class trophy at Cowes. This is a new initiative, as we had never sponsored anything in Cowes week and we are keen to support and encourage cruising everywhere.



Captain's Mate

Elsewhere in *Cruising* you can read about the new version of CAPTAIN'S MATE (CM) due to be premiered at the Southampton Boat Show and released to members near the end of the year. The current version is still unique in presenting cruising information and was always hailed as the jewel in the CA crown. The new version is light years ahead. The concept, design and implementation is due to the phenomenal input by Ivan Andrews and Sam Steele, assisted by a large team of volunteers as well as of course Adrian Lester, our chief technology officer. I have been fortunate to sit on the Cruising Information

Development Group (CIDG) and have seen the effort put into its development. All this selfless work is free of charge from members; we could never have afforded it otherwise. Ivan and Ian Wilson, chair of CIDG, have steered the way in which this new version has developed. Sam has managed the monumental task of transferring 19,000 reports on over 6,000 locations from the old CM to this new version. This involved recruiting and training 44 volunteer editors who have freely given their time. The Covid pandemic has paradoxically been a major benefit in that those involved have been confined to home during a complete sailing season enabling unexpected progress.

Looking back over three years

The three years of my Presidency have been amazing, extremely rewarding and very challenging. In the first honeymoon year we were visited by HRH Princess Anne and celebrated the 50th anniversary of Sir Robin Knox-Johnston's solo circumnavigation, plus his 80th birthday. We knew that we were leaving the European Union but had little or no idea of the details. It came as a shock when we learnt that while EU citizens were to be allowed to visit the UK for six months, the UK government had no intention of arranging a reciprocal agreement with the EU, so UK citizens are limited to the Schengen 90 in 180 day allowance. Why?

The VAT demands on returning boats came as a bolt out of the blue almost at the end of the transitional year. Why? We have now established good relationships with HMRC and the Treasury and are building on this, but through no fault of our own are late joining the table. We are dealing at the highest level: I received a letter starting "Dear Julian" signed "Jesse" (Jesse Norman, secretary to the Treasury). I wish we had been involved from the start.

Members have been wonderful in contacting their MPs and letting me

know about their experiences. It has given me insight into the spectrum of behaviour by MPs ranging from the dismissive, even dishonest through to extremely helpful. I also realise that if the government wishes to be obstructive it can be, with no explanation.

Even if we had some idea of what leaving the European Union might involve, no-one envisaged a pandemic which has had an even greater impact. Think back three years, could life as we live now have been envisaged? Look at the screenshot taken from CM's Find my Friend. When Derek Lumb sailed round Britain he complained that there were no boats showing in Scotland, now there are plenty of flags and for every flag there are many times more boats. The striking feature is the black hole which is mainland Europe. Belgium and the Netherlands at the time of writing remain closed to UK citizens.

Our staff have coped magnificently with the impositions, the changing



President's report, continued

rules, the major alterations to working practice. CA House thrived despite the pandemic. Volunteers have worked tirelessly, committees meet far more often using Zoom. The last meeting of CIDG was chaired from Elba by Ian Wilson and a member of the RATS/VAT group joined from his boat in Malta as he tries to return to the UK. The only major change is that Peta Stuart-Hunt, our publicity officer, is retiring later this year but we already have someone stepping into her shoes, Luissa Smith, whom I am sure you will come to know well soon. Peta has raised the public profile of the CA enormously. I have been very impressed by her response to breaking news items and the ability to get press releases out, even before other major organisations and especially over weekends.

The AGM is on November 10, www.theaca.org.uk

theaca.org.uk/events/ca-agm-101121

after which we will have a new President and Chair of Council. Alison Hadley's term as Chair and as a member of Council ends after a very successful period of office. It might surprise members to learn that the President does not chair Council. That is a separate and extremely responsible and onerous position that does not enjoy the limelight. Council has functioned harmoniously and has met more frequently than usual partly because of the easy use of Zoom. Alison has also put on an excellent series of live lectures using Zoom and will continue to run a full winter series. She remains as the London section secretary. We are still working out the best format for events.

Council needs new members. Please give serious thought to becoming a member and if you are interested you can ring me or Alison to discuss what is involved.

One member who has no official title within the CA is Chris Robb who has

taken on the Herculean task of getting the Greeks to conform to EU law and VAT imposition on UK boats. This is an epic saga of true Greek proportions. Members can follow it on the Med Section forum but it involved Chris, on behalf of the CA, making an official complaint to the EU Commission which was upheld and eventually the Greek AADE, the equivalent of our HMRC had to back down. Inside knowledge of Greek governance, and assistance by fellow member Themis Vokos has been invaluable. All UK sailors in Greek waters should be very grateful for Chris's tireless activity.

It has been a great privilege to represent the CA and I am indebted to all the staff and volunteers who have contributed so much over those years. I have also enjoyed the friendship and support of our patron, Sir Robin Knox-Johnston who has a special affection for the CA. Whoever succeeds me is a very fortunate person.



CA trophy for winner of Club Cruiser class at Cowes Week

The CA was proud to be in the mix at Cowes Week 2021 as the presenting sponsor of the all new Club Cruiser Class. From July 31 to August 6, 21 club cruiser teams tussled it out on the challenging Solent race track in a mix of conditions, with too little wind

on Wednesday and too much wind on Friday compressing the series from seven races to five.

Proving their talent whatever the weather were Louis Kenna and his team on *Chameleon of Cowes*, a Morris 36,

who took victory with their impressive 1,2,1,1,2 score line. Second went to *Panda of Hamble*, a Westerly Fulmar 32, with *Aqua*, an Optima 101, in third. The team on *Chameleon of Cowes* was awarded the specially commissioned CA Club Cruiser Trophy, and the podium top three each received CA goodie bags.

Presenting the trophy, Alison Hadley, Chair of CA Council, commented, "We know that many of our members enjoy the thrill of competition as well as more leisurely time afloat. And the skills needed for winning races can only make you a more efficient cruiser. So there is no great divide and we hope to sponsor the Club Cruiser racers again next year."

The Cruising Association's motivation to become presenting sponsor of the Club Cruiser Class Trophy is to encourage and celebrate the many sailors who enjoy competitive racing, alongside exploring new cruising waters and returning to old favourites. Find out more at: www.cowesweek.co.uk



Photo: Paul Wyeth

A better way to view cruising information

A new version of CAPtain's Mate is due to launch in the next few months. Here's why you should be getting excited about it already

If you visit the CA stand at the Southampton Boat Show you'll find us demonstrating a new version of our app, CAPtain's Mate. Later this year the new version will be available for CA members to download and use.

If you already use and contribute to CAPtain's Mate you may be wondering why a new version is causing so much excitement. After all, the core of the app – the reports from members on marine locations that they have visited – is still the same as it was when the app was first launched in 2012. .

The new app is part of a much bigger development, known within the CA as **Project 1**. Completion of the project will see all cruising reports, whether on the CA website or on CAPtain's Mate, presented in the same consistent and, we hope, useful way. The project also makes it much easier for the CA's hardworking content editors to view, edit and consolidate the 19,000 current reports on marine locations, plus future reports.

What's new

New design

The app has been completely re-written, with a new modern design, to make it easier to use. However, existing users will find many familiar elements. We have used new topography for the maps, and as before you can switch to a satellite view.

Finding things more easily

The **map** and **list** pages have been combined and work together. The home screen is now a map, but the list can be viewed by dragging it onto the screen or tapping the search bar. Both the list and the map can be filtered to show just one type of location (marina, anchorage etc) or those with only the desired facilities (travel-lift, diesel, laundrette, etc).

Opening page for each location

When you open a main location in the new version of the app or online, you will see information divided into three categories: **Overview, Info and Reports**. You can switch between the pages by tapping on the title, or simply swiping left or right.

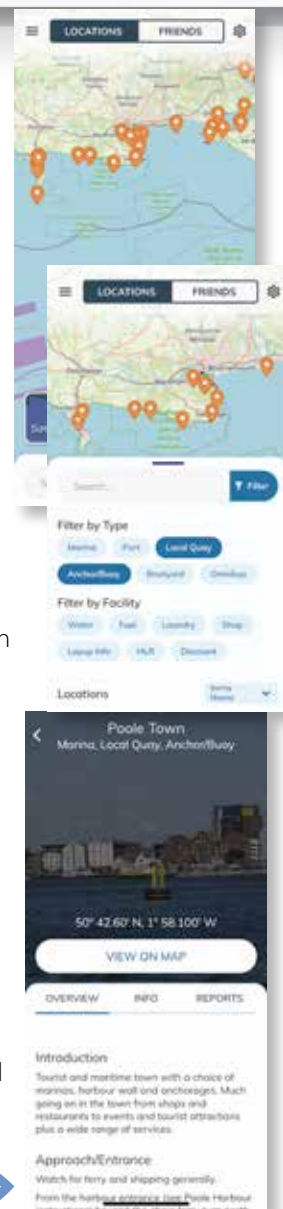
Overview page

In the **Overview page**, our editors have aimed to give a helpful and consistent summary of information about the location including the approach, shelter and berthing, all drawn from members' input or editors' own knowledge.

The same page also shows HLR or CA discount information if available, and links to online CA publications (eg cruising guides) for that area.

Omnibus locations

Some large cities or towns have a **number of berthing opportunities**. For these our editors have created an omnibus location to summarise the features of the town itself, and individual locations for each marina or quay. The overview page lists these together and allows you to quickly switch between them.





Reconnaissance

CHANNEL PHOTO COMPETITION

CA members uploaded recent photos of marine locations in the Channel to be used in the CM app. The winners were:

Reconnaissance: Hope Cove, near Salcombe, by David Fickling

Pilotage: Entrance to the lock at Le Tréport by Richard Kitson

Vibe: Polperro, by Ian Wilson.

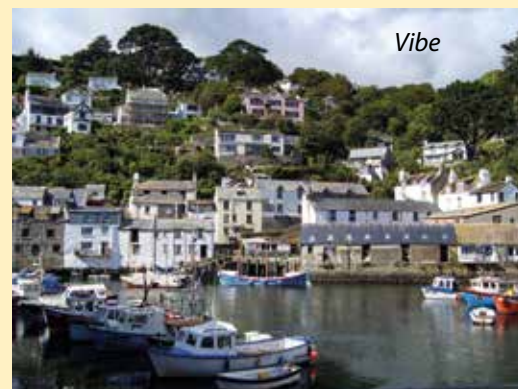
Guiding detail: Wootton Creek showing pontoons at low water, by John Clack



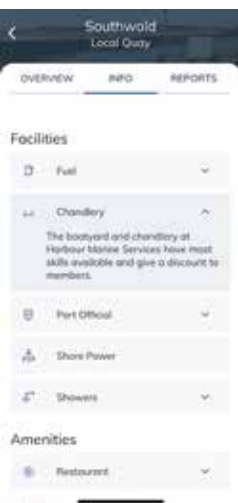
Pilotage



Guiding detail



Vibe



Structured info

The Info tab lists facilities, amenities and contact details. However, this material is still drawn from members' reports, so behind the icons there may be additional useful information that you won't find elsewhere.

Members' reports are user-friendly

The heart of our information is still **our member reports**. The Reports tab is similar to the existing CAptain's Mate but, as requested by many members, you can now choose whether to show the oldest or newest reports first. Whichever option you choose 'sticks' until you change it. You can view either a short summary ('collapsed') or the whole report ('expanded').

You will always be able to edit or delete your own reports. Our editors may move factual information from your report into the Overview or Info pages, so you will then have made an addition to the searchable data.

You can contribute

From the Overview screen or Reports tab, you can add further reports yourself. All information is useful. Our editors will review new reports and update the Overview and Info tabs as required.

New locations

As before, you can still create reports for locations that no one else has yet reported. We have made the process of entering the right GPS coordinates more intuitive, and you can now supply more information about the location than you did before.

Members' location photos

One big change, which you may already know about if you entered the Channel photo competition, is that the app will now provide a mechanism to upload and display location

photos contributed by members. Each location has a **photo gallery** for you to view pictures already uploaded, and the most appropriate photo will be selected by the editor to appear on the Overview page for that location. The system automatically attributes any photo to its author. Over time these will build to become an invaluable visual resource for many of the 6000 locations in the app. Please do upload your pictures too. We need not just pretty photos, but also images showing entrance markers or a well-hidden laundrette.

App accessibility

Rather than having its own controls to change elements such as text sizes, the app has been designed to be compatible with your device's own accessibility features.

Other features

Many of the features familiar to existing users are still present, for example **Friends** (now available from a tab on the Home screen), **draft reports** and your online **membership card**.

We have improved the data update mechanism, so that each update now takes only a few seconds. There are still controls for you to change how often the app tries to update, but we think the **auto setting** should now work for the majority.

The app will work offline just like the old one. It has much improved map caching, but the existing **map download** feature has been retained and available from the Settings screen.

New website

For non-smartphone users, the CA website's **Cruising Report** pages will be replaced with a new website that looks and works in a way that is identical to the app.



How much do you weigh?

In 2018 we arranged for our Linssen 35SE to be transported on the back of a lorry from Chichester Marina to Saint-Valery-sur-Somme in France, for the start of our European Inland Waterways adventure. We had confirmed lifting facilities were available, and we had arranged the delivery at a very reasonable price, some £1,000 less than most other quotes.

On arrival at 9am the *convoi exceptionnel* had to park across the track of the small tourist train which ran regularly between Saint-Valery and Crotoy around the Baie de Somme, as the lift was alongside. We had one hour before the first train was due to depart. The slings were fitted around the boat and we started to film the launch... the lift alarm went off... and we stopped! We were too heavy. We had naively calculated that our 7.5-tonne (Linssen brochure) weight plus our belongings on board would not exceed the 10-tonne lift limit. We were wrong. We had failed to take into account the full fuel tanks and vast amount of equipment on the boat, and in reality the boat weighed 12.5 tonnes. Oops!

We spent a nerve-racking day arranging for first one (slings too small) then another crane to come from elsewhere, whilst the boat on its low loader remained parked across the railway line and the driver had to drive the lorry around the block every time a train was due – no mean feat in the narrow streets of Saint-Valery! At 7 o'clock that night a 40-tonne lifter arrived and we were finally launched.

That little blunder cost us not only our pride ("*ah, les Anglais*" was the constant refrain from the many tourists viewing the spectacle) but also the £1,000 we had so smugly saved.

Judy Evans and Bob Barker, MV *Mon Amie*



'Well, it makes a change from leaves on the line...'

Tell us your blunders

Have you ever done something really dumb while sailing? We want you to tell us about the silliest mistake you have ever made on a boat... or maybe the silliest you're willing to admit to. The best will be published in each issue of *Cruising*, alongside a cartoon by wonderful marine illustrator Claudia Myatt. The original artwork will be the prize for the winner each quarter.

Send your entries to editor@theca.org.uk before November 1 for the December issue with the subject line "Boating blunders". They should be no more than 300 words.

Join the Crewing Service

The CA's Crewing Service puts skippers in touch with crew and crew in touch with skippers. Even if you can't go sailing at the moment, why not take time to contact potential crew members? There's just a taste of what's on offer in our crew and skipper listings in the quotes here. To read more, go to www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome – or check the Crewing Service forum. We hope to hold **crewing meetings at CA House on the first Thursday of each month from October to April**, plus Zoom meetings for those who can't get to London.



CREW: "I am new to sailing and looking to gain experience, hopefully to Yachtmaster level. I grew up on my grandfather's ferries off the coast of Norway, so I have deckhand experience. Easygoing, adventurous and generally fit. I am a PADI D1Vemaster. I speak Norwegian, English, Spanish and some German."

SKIPPER: "Short cruises on East Coast and continent, anywhere from Brest to Elbe, from one day to two weeks. Flexible on timing and routes. Plan to head off in the direction favoured by the wind. Excellent chance to experience catamaran sailing. Flexible on crew size."

Luissa is our new Press & PR Manager



The CA's Press & PR Manager, Peta Stuart-Hunt, retires from the CA at the end of October. Her replacement, **Luissa Smith**, has an extensive career in sailing and spent many years with World Sailing before establishing her consultancy business in 2009.

Joining the CA to start the handover in July, Luissa told us, "I have been involved in sailing from grass roots to elite all my life, and for more than 30 years sailing has been my career. With the current upsurge in boating activities it is an exciting time to be joining, and I am looking forward to building on the work already in place, promoting the CA's role and working with the team of staff and volunteers."

An unintentional cruise to the South



Misty Blue © Neil Gibbons



In August 2020 **Malcolm Denham** and Julie Fry took a gamble on lockdown rules and headed out to their Maxi 1100 *Misty Blue* on the Vilaine. The winds were northerlies... so they headed south. The resulting cruise was well worth the 14 days' quarantine on return to the UK, and the log won the CA's Love Cup for a cruise of less than 30 days

I am writing this during the third UK national lockdown and remembering our short 2020 season. Our world had shrunk and it took some time to expand our horizons but it all came back. We reflect with great joy on the time we were able to spend on *Misty Blue*, enjoying some fantastic cruising. We also feel some sadness, knowing that many of our friends were not able to sail at all this season.

In August, we could see the prospect of quarantine being imposed on travellers coming to the UK, and the FCO advice changing to "essential travel only". We booked our ferry for August 12.

Downing Street leaking like a colander can be useful: the advice changed three days later! To stay safe we decided to

avoid using shoreside facilities and to shower on board. We would only eat in restaurants if we could eat outside, with plenty of fresh air and only socialise on other boats in the cockpit.

Normal activities felt like stepping into the unknown. After boarding the ferry with all the new Covid-19 safety procedures, we went to the cabin and stayed there until called to disembark. On arrival, we were surprised and pleased to see Roscoff market open. It was very well controlled with designated entrances, hand sanitiser everywhere and everyone wearing masks, which gave us some confidence. We couldn't miss the opportunity to get some gorgeous Roscoff onions.

Our boat *Misty Blue*, a Maxi 1100, was

ashore and winterised in our home port of Arzal-Camoël on the Vilaine river in South Brittany. The "Spring fit out" job list had been attacked with a red pen. Do we need to anti-foul? We weren't going to be in the water long. No. With our lift-in booked for Friday, we had a day to take the covers off, find and refit everything then a cursory polish (the joys of a blue hull). We launched and put the sails on, but not without issue. The mousing line for the topping lift had chafed through after the unplanned nine months ashore, so I had a trip to the top of the mast to reeve a new one.

The forecast was for strong winds, we were rusty after 10 months and as chafed as the topping lift. We spent some pleasant days exploring the river, >

The old clock in Piriac – always at 4.07



anchoring, using our inflatable canoe, swimming and cycling. We had some time to socialise with friends, at a safe distance of course.

Our original plan for 2020 had been to cross Biscay and explore the Spanish rias. Now, getting through the Arzal lock and into seawater felt like the start of an Atlantic crossing. It is always nice to start the season well and we did, with a short sail of 15 miles in a light NW'ly to a favourite of ours, Piriac-sur-Mer.

How things change: it was August, but there were plenty of visitors' spaces. There was mandatory mask-wearing in the narrow streets, and more hand sanitiser than you can imagine, all very reassuring. We bumped into Mark and Judith Grimwade and enjoyed a dinner together, our first meal out with friends since before the first lockdown in the UK.

One thing that never changes in Piriac is the old clock in the Rue de Keroman, which is right four times a day: one side says 11.16, the other 4.07, a welcome touch of predictability.

Our revised 2020 plan was to go where the wind looked favourable. The forecast was for winds from NW to NE for the next few days, so South it was. The Loire marks the border to the "South" where the weather tends to be warmer, and the architecture changes to white-washed houses with red tiled roofs, giving a real Mediterranean feel. It was now September 1 and the weather was glorious, with temperatures out on the water in the high 20s. We planned a

passage across the Loire, either to Pornic or to L'Herbaudière on Île de Noirmoutier.

An 0800 start got us over the Piriac sill, so we could carry the tide south.

The previous season we had bought a furling cruising chute, which was flying beautifully on a beam reach crossing the Loire. Pornic would mean hardening up, furling the chute and probably a tack, the COG on the chart plotter was straight into the entrance of L'Herbaudière. It was warm, sunny, and we were sailing fast, the decision took about two seconds. Of course shortly afterwards the wind dropped. However, this was made up for with a visit from some dolphins.

There was mandatory mask-wearing in the narrow streets of Piriac, and more hand sanitiser than you can imagine

We were given a nice sheltered berth in L'Herbaudière, away from the swell through the entrance. Also, the near constant fishing boat traffic can make the visitor pontoons unpleasant. Mind you, tightrope walking skills were more appropriate, on a short pontoon 30cm wide with the buoyancy of a beach ball. An early afternoon arrival, with the temperature at 25°C, meant we had time to walk to the beach and swim. Île de Noirmoutier is flat with cycle tracks through salt marshes and forest. We cycled a favourite circuit of about 30km

which takes in the best parts of this attractive island. A stop for a swim and an ice cream on the way back and it felt as if normal service had been resumed.

Julie had a yearning to go to Île de Ré and while our confidence in the world around us had grown, we were still thinking maybe we might be forced to get back to base and home at short notice. Port Joinville on the beautiful Île d'Yeu felt very manageable as we have previously sailed back from there in a day. With a light SW'ly the first few miles through Chenal de Grise was head to wind. We motor sailed to clear Les Boeufs, then bore away for a close hauled sail to Port Joinville.

In most places we try to stay two or three nights to enjoy the destination. We had a few days of cycling and swimming and enjoying the holiday atmosphere. It was quieter than normal this year and disappointingly there was no live music. The islanders had got their priorities right. Any piece of hard ground near a restaurant was converted into a terrace with tables suitably spaced. It didn't matter if the tables were the other side of the road, waiters would weave in and out of the traffic to serve food. At 2000 the main road was closed and more tables and chairs were set.

After three nights on Île d'Yeu with wind from NNW we were set fair for a crossing eastwards to St Gilles-Croix-de-Vie. The entrance here is a little tricky with strong currents, so it is best to enter at slack water, which meant leaving Joinville



Left, Julie cycles on the unusually quiet roads of Noirmoutier. Above, market on Ré. Masks were worn consistently

about midday. We were making better progress than planned, meaning we would arrive well before high water and for some reason the boat wanted to head south, or was it the helmswoman?

By now all pretence of needing to get back home had gone. We reviewed the passage plan and found we could arrive in Les Sables d'Olonne early evening, with plenty of water in the entrance channel. Since we were that close, it would be a shame not to visit Île de Ré!

We had another good sail in a lively sea, the wind building to F5 and a final fast reach towards the beach in Les Sables, dropping the mainsail in the shelter of the breakwater. Having checked in to Port Alona, we were delighted to be allocated a berth on the Vendée Globe pontoon. It turned out to be not so good. They were building the Vendée Globe village and had closed the facilities. Footpath diversions meant a long walk to get anywhere. We only stayed one night so it wasn't a big deal and we did swim off the wonderful beach.

The passage to Île de Ré was one of the few we didn't change midway, well nearly. Our aim was to go into Ars-en-Ré, where there are wonderful salt marshes with fantastic bird life a short cycle from marina. The daily market is walking distance from the boat and Ars is generally more relaxed than St Martin. We also knew it was reasonably sheltered because we had sat out storm Miguel there the previous year.

The plan was to arrive at No 1 Bûcheron buoy one hour before HW. The drying channel is about another four miles, with a lock gate into the Bassin de la Criée. Departing Les Sables at 1330 we found the wind was stronger than forecast, we

had the cruising chute rigged but didn't use it, as we were already averaging 7kt. We reached the Bûcheron an hour early with the wind now 22kt, and we still had full sail. A quick turn to windward and a rapid dump of the mainsail and we were motoring into the channel.

This is not a place to try sailing in. The first part of the channel heads W with sand banks either side and one in the middle, it then turns SW and becomes narrow and dries.

Turning in a narrow channel into 22kt of wind and 2kt of tide was heart-stopping. The rudder just touched the soft mud

The first real sign of trouble was a fin keeler to the leeward side of the channel, on its side on the mud. We went slowly with little steerage, 2 to 3 knots of tide now pushing us, 20+kt of wind on the beam, with less than 1m under the keel. The next ominous sign was the motor boats and a catamaran stopped in front of us. We were about half a mile from the lock gate with 0.3m under the keel, time to abort. Turning in a very narrow channel into 22kt of wind and 2kt of tide was a heart-stopping moment. We succeeded, touching the rudder in the soft mud. Looking at the mud soup around us, from the high revs applied forward and reverse to make the turn within a boat length, we were very close to running aground. It felt cold, even at 23°C, motoring into the cross wind, both of us still in shorts and T-shirts. The good news was the fin keeler was now upright and his anchor appeared to be holding, but waves were breaking over the Bûcheron bank. With the wind on the port quarter and waves

beam on, it was an uncomfortable, rolly exit.

We had two options for shelter, St Martin de Ré four miles away, or the boat park of Port des Minimes in La Rochelle 17 miles away. The pilot book warned of dangerous swell in St Martin entrance in strong NW'lys. It was now 1830 and I was not minded to push on. The fetch wasn't too great, the wind hadn't been strong for too long and other boats were heading towards St Martin from the SE. We decided to stand off and watch their mast tops above the channel walls, in order to judge the swell in the channel.

It was time to take the plunge. Thanks to Vauban and his fantastic 17th century civil engineering, St Martin is very well protected, but unfortunately he didn't design the breakwater, which funnels swell from the NW. After just a very short spell with the swell rolling in, we turned to starboard and the water surface looked like upturned egg boxes with swell reflecting off every wall. A little tricky but by 1940 we were safely moored in the locked basin.

The strong winds blew for several days, so we enjoyed the shelter of St Martin. We tried to cycle to Ars-en-Ré but the headwind and closures of the cycle route meant we didn't make it. A stage of the Tour de France was finishing in St Martin that day, we thought it would be crowded so avoided it. We enjoyed cycle rides to La Flotte and Loix, at a rather more leisurely pace than the Tour.

It was now mid September and we rather reluctantly decided it was time to head back northwards. The wind gods were with us most of the way back and we aimed to take our time and visit different ports to those on the way down. ➤



Above, Julie enjoys a post-swim beer at the Bahia bar, Pornic.
Right, a fitting end to the cruise



Our passage to Bourgenay, just south of Les Sables d'Olonne, was 24 miles with two hours of motoring then two hours sailing in a sea breeze. Bourgenay is a modern, some say soulless, marina but the staff are very friendly and helpful. There are some essential shops about a kilometre up the hill and the wonderful Plage du Veillon is just over a kilometre along the coast path. The Vendée has some of the best marked and maintained cycle routes on the Atlantic coast, together with some fabulous beaches. As the days were getting shorter and the evenings cooler, our rule of only eating outdoors meant lunch out rather than dinner. This wasn't a hardship because daytime temperatures were still over 25°C.

We did make it into St Gilles-Croix-de-Vie, with another downwind sail from Bourgenay under cruising chute, but in some very confused sea. St Gilles-CdV is famous for its sardines and still has a large fishing fleet; you are given a tin of sardines when you check in at the marina office. It is a popular mainland holiday town, but now everything had the end of season feel, even the sardine shack with cable drums for tables was closed.

After two days we left St Gilles-CdV heading northwards, this was the first real upwind sail we had had so far. We felt once we got to the "corner" at Point d'Yeu halfway between the island and the mainland, we could sail north close-hauled. Unfortunately, with the wind dropping and the tide building, we were not getting very far, tacking through 105°. A night back in Port Joinville beckoned.

Back in Joinville it really felt like September now, whereas before everything felt like July and August with a time lag. The wind also realised it was

near the equinox and time to go back to normal patterns.

The next day we left early with one reef in before leaving the harbour, then 15 minutes later two reefs. With some Atlantic swell it was fast sailing in a lumpy sea. We sailed to the west of Île de Plier, towards the start of the Loire channel. With one tack we could lay a course for Pornic, north of Banc Kerouras. We tacked but after two miles, with the wind veering, we now had to tack again to weave through the banks. An ENE'ly, and being close inshore meant the gusts and wind shifts were big, fully powered up one minute crawling the next. We needed a few more tacks along the shore, to arrive safely in Pornic after an energetic an enjoyable sail.

Pornic became a popular resort in the 19th century when the railway arrived and it has a rather up market feel. Another favourite harbour, how many can you have? Julie loves it because the beach is about a 100m walk away so she can swim frequently, followed by a post swim beer in the Bahia beach bar.

The weather was changing with some storms forecast later in the week. It can be difficult to get out of that "corner", so we opted for a long motor in no wind, rather than a beat in strong winds a few days later. We set a course for Île d'Houat in the Bay of Quiberon, hugging the coast to Pointe de St Gildas, then across the Loire. We were rewarded with another warm sunny day and by a visit from shoal of porpoises before we reached the Loire. Later that day we saw a large shoal of dolphins feeding. Sadly they weren't interested in playing in the bow wave.

Another reminder of the changing times were the now redundant cruise ships

anchored off the Loire, where normally you only see tankers and container ships.

Crossing the Loire marked the end of our unintended cruise to the South. In 21 days we sailed 320 miles in passages of 25 to 40 miles visiting some of our favourite places, enjoying warm sunny weather and *La vie française*. Fourteen days of quarantine on our return was a small price to pay.



Malcolm is a chartered engineer who worked for a major oil company. When they retired in 2013, Malcolm and Julie sold their previous boat, a Rival 34, and in 2015 bought *Misty Blue*. After a season sailing Atlantic France they moved *Misty Blue* to Arzal in 2017 and are still enjoying this wonderful cruising area. They have cruised in Scotland, the Baltic, and Italy as well as the UK South coast and the Channel. They are not lifelong sailors, and met while windsurfing. Malcolm has been cruising since the early 1990s and is a Yachtmaster Offshore,

The Breton chateau of Suscinio in Morbihan, on the Atlantic coast of France

CA London lectures, autumn 2021

This season's talks range from Biscay to the Baltic, and from the 17th century to the future

At present we are trusting that we can run this year's autumn lectures at CA House. We will also broadcast them as webinars.

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 for CA House and online. If you are not on the section mailing list, please check the events listings on the CA website.

Wednesday October 6

Escaping the Ionian: The Gulf of Corinth, Mick de Pomerai

In 2020, Covid-19 meant a very short season for many. Lovely as the Ionian islands are, they get very crowded these days, with boats cluttering every harbour and anchorage. Mick's and Susan's intention had always been to head east into the Aegean, and the week spent sailing through the Gulf of Corinth was wonderful and not long enough. With the Corinth Canal now closed indefinitely, there is perhaps no better time to explore this much-neglected cruising ground, which will be the focus of the talk. This year,

Mick is exploring the western Aegean and will be happy to discuss the experiences of applying for a Transit Log, necessary if you want to hop over to Turkey or Albania, and also a Biometric Residence (180-day) permit (jury still out on that one!) after the main talk.

Wednesday October 13

The balmy, beautiful and beguiling Baltic, Andy Beharrell

The Baltic is a stunningly beautiful cruising ground. The Baltic countries offer variety, but one thing that many have in common is rocks – lots of them. In this talk Andy will look at



Charmary at Mariefred in Sweden

how to miss them, how to moor to them and what there is to see on them. He will take us on a Cook's tour round many of the Baltic countries to see what they have to offer gastronomically and culturally, and their different cruising opportunities. He will look at some of the major towns and cities, but also guide us around some of the destinations off the beaten track and describe some exciting future plans for Baltic section events.

Wednesday October 20

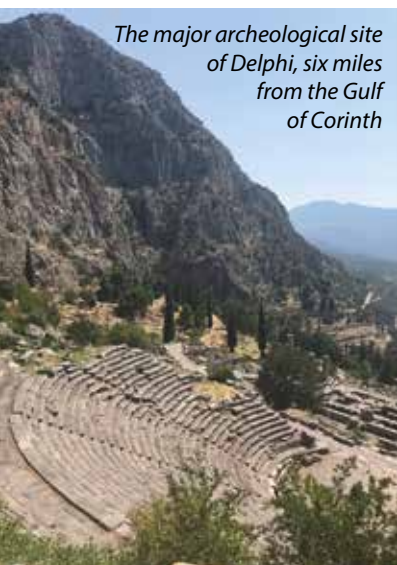
Cruising the Biscay Coast of France, Judith Grimwade

The Bay of Biscay has a reputation for storms and dangerous seas, so why do so many people choose to make the Atlantic coast of France their cruising ground? Mark and Judith Grimwade have spent nearly two decades exploring this area. What are the benefits and attractions that kept them there? Judith will answer these questions and share the knowledge acquired as editor of the Western France Chapter of the Cruising Almanac.

Wednesday October 27

Looking after your diesel engine, Nigel Bryan

Keeping your engine in good shape isn't just about the WOBLE. Those daily checks give you the confidence to make the next passage. Keeping the engine going for every season is about a good winterisation regime as well as regular servicing. ➤



The major archeological site of Delphi, six miles from the Gulf of Corinth

Nigel is an instructor teaching diesel maintenance for First Class Sailing. In this talk, he will cover all the angles of keeping the old donkey youthful at heart and raring to go next year. Topics covered will include keeping moisture out, nice clean oil in and nurturing your Amps.

Wednesday November 3 Samuel Pepys and the Navy of Charles II, David Davies

Samuel Pepys is best known as a somewhat roguish diarist and as perhaps the most important chronicler of such great events as the Plague of 1665 and the Great Fire of London of 1666. However, his "day job" was as a naval administrator. The navy that he served is much less well known than that of Drake or Nelson, but Pepys's era was a hugely important period in the development of the Royal Navy into a truly professional fighting force. This talk will focus on several aspects of Pepys's Navy, including the dramatic and vicious battles of the Anglo-Dutch wars.



Wednesday November 10 Annual General Meeting of the Cruising Association. Starts at 6.30pm.



Timothy Long, the youngest person to sail solo round Britain, arriving in Largs. Photo: Marc Turner/EMCT

Wednesday November 17 Round Britain, Timothy Long

In the summer of 2020, Timothy sailed around Britain, single-handed, at 15 years of age. This presentation covers his trip, which started on July 16, 2020 from Hamble Point Marina, following an anti-clockwise route around the country. Exactly 11 weeks later he arrived back in the Hamble after what he describes as "an incredible adventure!"

Bookings

Events start promptly at 7pm unless otherwise stated. To book any lecture at CA House, and to indicate whether you'll be ordering food, go to **News & Events > Events > BOOK EVENTS ONLINE**. Please pay in advance on the website, or by contactless on the door. Individual lecture tickets members £4, non-members £7. Season tickets available to members at £24.

Webinar links will be published a week in advance of each event. Any problems with the booking system, call Jeremy on 0207 537 2828 or email reception@theca.org.uk. There will be no charge for viewing online.



The future is electric, says Jimmy Cornell

Wednesday November 24 The Future is Electric, Jimmy Cornell

Jimmy will describe how, in late 2020, he completed a 4000-mile maiden voyage on his new *Aventura Zero*, a fully electric Outremer catamaran. The aim of the voyage was to test the sustainability of a sailing boat with electric propulsion on an offshore voyage, and whether the onboard consumption could be covered by the generation of electricity from renewable sources. This was achieved on the final nonstop 1500-mile leg from Tenerife to the south of France and, he says, shows that the future of cruising is definitely electric.



Wednesday December 1 Cruising through life from BC (before children) to the Hanson Cup, James Littlewood

James Littlewood won the prestigious Hanson Cup in the CA's log competition. In this talk he reflects on his sailing career from racing his Achilles 24 *Bluefinn* from Harwich to Ostend in July 1980, with just an outboard engine and no GPS, to his 2020 winning entry, which introduces us to Henry Montagu Doughty. In 1887, Doughty took his 53 ft Norfolk Wherry to the Netherlands and then on to Germany. He set standards that James expects all CA members to emulate. He had on board a full-size bath for his four daughters, and he took his butler from his home at Theberton Hall.

Wednesday December 8 Our annual joint event with the Royal Institute of Navigation

This is planned to be a webinar only as the speaker is expected to be overseas. It can be watched at CA House. There will be no charge. Details to be confirmed nearer the time.

Wednesday December 15 CA carol service and supper

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



Sue & David on Carolina in Birdham Pool, Chichester Harbour, and below right, Carolina in Birdham Pool and in Sharfleet Creek on the Medway

In sickness and in health

Sue & David Long are the CA's Kent section secretaries. Their love of sailing was hampered by David's seasickness, but with perseverance their HR26 *Carolina* has become part of the family



David has always had an interest in sailing and wanted his own boat. His uncle was a ship's doctor on the *Canberra* and owned a succession of boats.

When we first married we had to choose between a boat or a family... and we decided to have children. About 25 years ago David was invited by Chris Passmore to join the crew on board *Santy*, a Victoria 34 owned by his father, CA member Michael. The first weekend was delightful, in good company sailing from Warsash to Yarmouth and Lymington. Then it all went downhill on a lively passage from Portsmouth towards Dover when David suffered a serious episode of seasickness, which forced Chris to stop at Brighton.

For many years David, like Darwin and Nelson, was dogged by this debilitating condition, although his enthusiasm for sailing always won through. He has a comprehensive collection of remedies from brown paper through to an electric shock watch and novelty glasses, although he accepts that none of these actually work.

In order to maximise the use of *Santy*, David and a group of friends were encouraged to gain RYA qualifications

so that they could skipper the yacht for the family. David and Chris took their Yachtmaster assessments together and Sue was persuaded to get her Day Skipper. We would often join varying groups of friends on *Santy* and David would help the owners by moving the boat for the Passmore family to locations including Brixham, Guernsey and Roscoff for their holidays. David and friends took her to the Baltic in stages, with Sue joining for a holiday at Travemünde.

As our sailing abilities developed, we joined flotillas in the Ionian and later moved to bareboat charters in Greece and Turkey. More recently, we have joined former Kent secretary Clifford Mickleburgh on his boat *Dawn Owl* to explore the inland waterways of the Netherlands, the Moselle, the Friesian Islands and Helgoland. On these trips we acted as scouts to check out the local facilities so that Clifford could update the Captain's Mate entries.

We used to attend the Kent Section Winter Warmer talks as guests of the Passmores, and in 2010 they encouraged us to join the CA. When Ian Galletti resigned as Section Secretary, we were persuaded to assist Clifford Mickleburgh as treasurers, and have now taken over as Section Secretaries. We have particularly enjoyed the many varied talks both locally and at CA House and more recently on Zoom. It is very helpful to be able to talk over various problems and experiences with fellow sailors and is a great support mechanism. Prior to the Baltic passage the entire *Santy* crew attended a Baltic seminar at CA House, which was invaluable preparation. We have also enjoyed doing book reviews for the CA library as this has given us the opportunity to read books that we would otherwise have missed. We believe, like



Bob Garrett in the March 2021 edition of *Cruising*, that the more you put in the more you get out.

We had the opportunity to purchase our Hallberg-Rassy 26 *Carolina* in 2013 as retirement was looming; the timing couldn't have been better. Our son said, "Dad, you have now got your son and your boat". *Carolina* is much loved and we have had a lot of fun with her. Our regular sailing areas are the East Coast to Woodbridge and the South Coast to Yarmouth and Beaulieu, and we have taken her up the Thames to CA House to attend lectures. Our grandchildren are now enjoying sailing and *Carolina* is part of our wider family. With the advent of Covid our trips have been considerably shorter. We really love spending a peaceful night in Stangate or Sharfleet Creek in the Medway getting away from everything.

