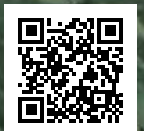




Cruising

www.theca.org.uk

- Orca reports: update
- Sardinia to Sicily
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2022 in review

The CA's President, **Derek Lumb**, looks back on his first full year as President. The CA's many recent achievements may be dwarfed by what is in store for the UK and other economies in 2023



For most of us the 2022 sailing season is over, and so now is a time for reflection on the past year. The pestilence of Covid diminished significantly, allowing many UK members to head for Europe in their boats for the first time since 2019, and so the inconvenience of Brexit was felt for the first time.

We took our boat to Brittany and my impression was that, compared with our last visit in 2016, there were a lot fewer boats flying the red or blue ensign. When we did meet some CA members there was much praise for the CA's very practical advice on entry and exit procedures. This was echoed by members I met on the CA's Southampton Boat Show stand.

The reduced number of UK cruisers crossing the Channel and the reported expansion in boat sales during Covid might explain the very busy season in the Solent mentioned by several members at the New Members' Day in October. Perhaps that will encourage people to venture back to France or head for the west coast of Britain in 2023.

Given the difficult conditions of the last three years, membership has stood up very well. We hit our highest ever membership in October 2019, saw a modest 5% fall during the worst of Covid but I am delighted to say that it has now recovered to surpass the previous highest level.

Impact of the economy

This is of course excellent news, but the external economic environment looks anything but benign. The UK is starting to feel like Rome in AD 69, the year of the four Emperors, although for us it is four Chancellors and three Prime Ministers – assuming that by the time you read this the tally has not risen! Inflation hit 9.7% in October and is set to rise further. This

will inevitably impact on the CA's cost base but, more importantly, will squeeze the disposable income of existing and prospective members.

I believe that the CA has come through the last three years and emerged stronger.

Recent CA achievements

We released a full re-write of CAptain's Mate in time for this season and it has been well received. Indeed, the app was nominated for one of *Sailing Today with Yachts & Yachting's* British Yachting Awards. This year 583 new locations were created, 2276 Cruising Reports were submitted and 3958 photos were added, which is great! Keep it up in 2023.


CA London and some Sections now "broadcast" many of their meetings on Zoom, making them available to the whole membership, irrespective of geographic location.

RATS continue to provide a superb service answering members' questions.

They have engaged with:

- the Home Office on entry and exit procedures;
- the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy on the means of complying with the Recreational Craft Directive when the UKCA (UK Construction Assessment) replaces the EU's CE marking as the means of demonstrating compliance; and
- HMRC regarding VAT on boats purchased in the EU before the end of the transition period but which have never been in the UK. In the case of the latter, we almost got to a decision early in the summer but the start of the revolving door in Downing Street put everything onto the back burner.

RATS have worked with the CA sections to collate information on individual country visitors' visa offerings which allow more than 90 day visits.

For those cruising on the Atlantic coast between Gibraltar and Scilly, the 



Just some of the many topics addressed by RATS in recent months



Speaking at the AGM, from left, Chair of Council Bob Garrett, President Derek Lumb and Hon Treasurer Richard Sherwood. Members were able to attend by Zoom and ask questions by email; it is hoped by next year they will also be able to vote online

reports of orca attacks have caused understandable consternation. RATS have formed a collaborative relationship with the Atlantic Orca Working Group (GTOA) resulting in the CA establishing an Orca Interaction reporting scheme on

the CA website. This has now become the principal place to submit interaction reports and is now starting to point towards practical measures to minimise damage. .

Independently of RATS, Chris Robb has

continued his single-handed battle with the Greek authorities who continue to insist that UK-owned EU-VAT-paid yachts lose their status if they leave EU waters and (incorrectly) do not regain it when they return under Returned Goods Relief. The Greeks then require these vessels to get and maintain a Transit Log which involves checking in and out with the Port Police in every port they visit and sometimes limits their time in EU Greek waters to 18 months. This is a huge imposition and Chris has submitted a formal complaint to the EU commission about this. 



New look & feel for The Galley at CA House

If you're visiting CA House you will notice new furnishings for The Galley and Assembly Room. "We wanted to give it a more modern and welcoming feel," said General Manager Lucy Hyslop. The room has had a complete redecoration including softer chairs in The Galley, new curtains, plants and lighting, new sound system and more outdoor furniture for summer use.



THE
BRITISH
YACHTING
AWARDS 2022
WINNER

STOP PRESS:

As *Cruising* went to press we heard that **Captain's Mate** had won the **Equipment Innovation class in the British Yachting Awards**. The official announcement was made on 28 November and there's more information in December's Newsletter.

All change for Crewing Service



Malcolm Davidson has taken over running the Crewing Service after former organiser Caroline Milmo moved to become Chair of the HLRs group. Malcolm said: "I am delighted to be taking over as chair of the Crewing Service from Caroline Milmo. Caroline has done an exceptional job over the last seven years, for which she deserves all our thanks. I've sailed with the Crewing Service on a number of occasions and look forward to working with skippers and crew to ensure it has a bright future."

Caroline added: "Having been involved with running the Crewing Service for the last seven years I'm stepping down. I have so enjoyed meeting members, hearing their sailing adventures and especially seeing those relatively new to sailing getting out on the water and building up their knowledge. I will still be using the service myself. It has been great getting to know other members, sailing different boats and discovering new destinations."

"I couldn't have achieved what I wanted to, taking the CS forward, without the support of the CA staff and other members, including Colin Penn and Jon Boon welcoming members at the winter meetings and Steve Greenham, Michael Barnett and Malcolm Davidson setting up the Zoom meetings."

"I'm really looking forward to getting involved with the HLR section. It will be very different. I know I shall enjoy meeting yet more volunteers and members over the coming years."

The Crewing Service kicked off its winter programme on October 13 with a full house and the mouth-watering

prospect of a three-year circumnavigation from one of the skippers, and Malcolm reported: "It was great to see so many crew and skippers when many people are only just beginning to think about their plans for 2023. It was Caroline Milmo's last evening as chair of the Crewing Service and she was given a rousing send-off for her fabulous work as she handed over the chair. Caroline is determined to continue sailing with the Crewing Service."

The CA's Crewing Service puts skippers in touch with crew and crew in touch with skippers. If you're planning for next season, why not contact potential crew members now? We are holding crewing meetings at CA House this winter on the first Thursday of each month and also via Zoom, dates to be confirmed. Find out more at www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome and if you have any queries please contact Malcolm Davidson at crewing@theca.org.uk



Malcolm Davidson, above, has taken over at the Crewing Service from Caroline Milmo, below



Planning to cross the Channel? Catch up with the webinar

If you missed the CA webinar on *Channel Crossing Paperwork Procedures*, you can now watch the recorded version by going to the News section of the CA website or searching for "Paperwork procedures".

Hosted by Bob Garrett, joint Channel Section Secretary for the CA, the webinar was a follow-up to the presentation made during the 2022 Southampton International Boat Show. It addressed the changes to paperwork and processes for arriving in and departing from France since the UK left the EU, shared practical experiences reported by members and varying implementation of the rules, highlighted protocol reviews and changes to date, presented an overview of new regulations for 2023 and discussed questions from webinar participants.

Over 150 members and non-members from France, Greece, Jersey, Norway, Turkey, UK and the USA tuned in to the live webinar.

Bob said, "After receiving a positive response to the presentation at the Boat Show, where the audience feedback was excellent, we decided it should be shared with the broader cruising community."

With the introduction of the new European EES (Entry/Exit System for non-EU citizens) in May next year, and ETIAS (European Travel Information and Authorisation System – visa waiver scheme for eligible third country nationals) in November 2023, the CA will continue to provide updates to members





Orca watch update

John Burbeck describes how intelligent orcas have been changing their habits and disrupting attempts to monitor them

Orcas are extremely intelligent, learn from each other, work together well in groups, and judging by their behaviour this year may be able to read the minds of the CA and GTOA Orca Project Team members. We had planned to get detailed reports of interactions with orcas off the Iberian coasts and then compare them with the same details from experiences of crews that travelled through the worst affected areas without suffering an interaction (“uneventful passages”).

Using data from 2020 and 2021 we identified the areas where we expected the highest concentrations of interactions to be for each month of the sailing season, and asked for reports from those areas, starting off with the area east of Cadiz then moving west and north to end the season off Finisterre in October. However our carefully prepared survey required attention when the orcas conspired to ruin our plans!

In July 2021, 35 interactions were recorded east of Cadiz and only five others, four being off Galicia and one in the Bay of Biscay. In July 2022 we requested uneventful passage reports in this area; however, only one interaction was recorded east of Cadiz and 15 were recorded between the west coast of Portugal and into the Bay of Biscay. The tuna fishermen in the Cadiz area reported plentiful tuna and yet a very unusual lack of orca sightings. The unusual location pattern of interactions continued throughout the season. In one interaction during August, a Norwegian yacht suffered serious damage only 90 miles southwest of the Scilly Islands. So we had to **change the uneventful passage survey area** from time to time as the orcas moved in this new pattern.

Even though they caught us out, we were able to publicise the changes to the survey effectively, predominantly using the Facebook groups that have been formed to track and discuss orca interactions. The “Orca Attack Reporting” group has increased from around 4,000 members to over 20,000 during the summer, showing the level of concern about this problem.

Working with the marine biologists at GTOA we have gathered plenty of useful information about orca behaviour. We have detailed reports of nearly 90 incidents and 220 voyages that were incident-free. The CA orca project quickly became the principal place to submit reports. The platform allows anyone to view every individual anonymised report, which includes all the skippers’ comments. You can also see the comparative data which sets interaction and uneventful passage data side by side (see www.theca.org.uk/orcas/reports).

What are the key points? Two yachts sunk, many seriously damaged, several of which were taking on water, but also several yachts had inquisitive visits from the orca, but no physical contact.

A body of evidence showed that **reversing the boat** worked either to reduce the duration of orca interactions and/or to reduce the damage. This is thought to be because they are only interested in the response that bumping rudders creates, and they cannot swim backwards. They occasionally hit the bows of reversing boats, presumably either out of frustration or searching for a rudder.

With our encouragement, our collaboration partners at GTOA lobbied both Spanish and Portuguese authorities

Reports of interactions up to October 2022 include one only 90 miles from the Scilly Isles



to advise them that orcas would not be harmed by slow and steady reversing and as a result of this and subsequent discussions with Associação Naval de Lisboa, the Portuguese authorities approved reversing as a tactic and it is now included in the Safety Protocol.

Together with the GTOA we are lobbying the Spanish authorities to get it approved for Spanish waters as well. At present their advice is still that all motoring in reverse in the immediate presence of orca is illegal because of the risk of injuring them as a protected species.

A small number of comments within interaction reports have testified that **sudden loud noises** have sometimes frightened the orcas away. Popular opinion had suggested that the **noise of an autopilot** in operation might attract orcas from distance, but a pattern in the comparative data is emerging to show that an interaction may be *less* likely when the autopilot is operating. So does the noise of the autopilot sometimes deter rather than attract an interaction? With the numbers to date we cannot say this with confidence, but turning the autopilot off does not appear to reduce the chance of an interaction.

The benefits of **pingers** have not been proven. At the beginning





Two recent reports on the CA website



Government did not put any navigation restrictions on yachts in their waters.

of the season there was a lot of debate about their use and although it was suggested in social media that they are harmless, it remains illegal to use them without license (at least in Spanish waters). Several yachts carried them on board, but no one has reported using them on an uneventful passage. However, there *is* a report of a yacht using a pinger being attacked and damaged. Because orca use their sensitive hearing to identify activities from many miles away, the use of a pinger may make them more aware of a yacht's presence. So the jury is out on whether they are effective.

Scientists believe that pingers can affect the hunting behaviour of orcas, preventing them from diving as deep or for as long in search of prey. Temporary or permanent hearing damage is also possible. One manufacturer has produced a **pinger specifically for orca interactions**, operating at a different frequency range and a lower energy level (volume) from the one most commonly used. It may still require licensing before being deemed legal to use.

Early comparisons between uneventful and interaction reports reinforce the view that this is largely a problem for **sailing yachts** (98%) rather than leisure

motorboats (1%) and fishing boats (1%), although small fishing boats have suffered and may have less awareness of the reporting project. Keeping very close to the shore and in **shallow water** seems to work: 13% of interactions in water up to 40m deep as opposed to 49% of reported uneventful passages occurring mainly within this depth. Only one interaction was recorded in a depth below 20m. Avoiding **black antifouling** and using Coppercoat appears statistically safer.

At this stage there is no clear evidence whether sea state, wind strength or depth sounder use have any effect.

Through this work we can also show that some actions are *not* attracting the orca to interact with yachts. Earlier this season there was a suggestion that towing a fishing line (trolling) might encourage an interaction. After contacting all the skippers who reported having an interaction we were able to find no evidence to support this idea. But we still do not know what is prompting the orca to interact with yachts as they do.

The good news is that unlike in the last two years, this year the Spanish

There is evidence from the many positive and grateful comments from yacht skippers in reports, emails and on social media that they appreciate the work the Cruising Association and GTOA are doing to try to help crews avoid interactions, and reduce the damage caused if they occur.

As this is written the season is coming to a close and there are likely to be only a few more interactions. We will spend the winter analysing the data and comments that we have collected from yacht crews travelling through the affected areas to see if there is any other advice we can provide.

We will also strive to build even stronger relationships with the authorities in Spain and Portugal, to better understand the work they are doing. We have heard about plans to tag a few orca to track their movements and also possibly some research into the effectiveness of Oikomi Pipes which are used for keeping orca away from oil spills.

Finally, we will have a publicity plan in place before the beginning of the season, as we are still hearing of crews that are not fully aware of the risk from the orca in these waters.



Dealing with dead seabirds

In some parts of the UK a large number of dead seabirds were reported during summer, and once again domestic poultry are being enclosed because of the risks of bird flu. Defra (the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs) has issued the following advice on reporting dead wild birds:

Do not touch or pick up any dead or visibly sick birds that you find.

Call the Defra helpline (03459 33 55 77) if you find:

- One or more dead birds of prey or owls
- Three or more dead gulls or wild waterfowl (swans, geese and ducks)
- Five or more dead birds of any species

Defra then collects some of these bird carcasses and tests them to help understand how the disease is distributed



Photo: Peter van der Sluijs/Wikimedia

geographically and in different types of bird.

Calls to the DEFRA helpline about dead wild birds are triaged and not all birds will be collected. The criteria for which birds are collected are adjusted to increase or decrease the sensitivity of surveillance.

Wild birds are susceptible to a range of diseases and injuries and not all dead birds have been infected with avian influenza. To find out more, read the advice on Defra website at www.gov.uk/guidance/avian-influenza-bird-flu#wildbirds



Tripping around Sicily



Richard Crooks & Alix Titley won the Lacey Trophy for their blog detailing the voyage of their brand new Oceanis 40.1 *Missy Bear* from southern France to Preveza. In these extracts they head from Sardinia to Sicily

Darkness and Light

7 October, 2021 – Richard

It's much more comfortable to have a strong wind on a flat sea, than the alternative. But we were beggars, with little choice if we wanted to leave Arbatax in Sardinia. The forecast was for a depression to pass through within 48 hours and that would blow all the way past Sicily and beyond for two or three days. There was an open window, and we needed to climb through it.

Elena had agreed to get the yard to put *Missy Bear* back in the water on Monday at 1000. We waited that morning at the hotel and received a text at 0945 from her that the antifouling had not been done!

"Why not?"

"Because I forgot to put it on the work list, but no problem, we can do it tomorrow."

"But we need to sail at 0600 tomorrow, to get to Sicily before the bad weather!"

<Pause>

"OK, we can do it today."

"Great, but when will she be in the water?"

"1430. And we'll do it for free!"

"OK, deal. Thank you!"

So, 1430 came and went, and there was no sign of the travel hoist appearing.

Then at about 3pm, I could see the top of a mast moving behind the trees off in the distance close to the yard. A yacht was on land and on the move. It had to be *Missy Bear*, surely? Half an hour later she was ready to be lowered into the water.

Ricciardo came on board and we had a look at the repairs. Very tidy job. And we already knew that the surveyors had been and checked the works for their report to the insurance company. So, we felt comfortable that all would be well on our next sail: a 175 NM voyage to the south-east. We presented Ricciardo with a toy for baby Alberto.

Missy Bear was due to be launched at 10am. At 0945 we received a text to say the antifouling had not been done

Then it was "All hands on deck!" to prepare her for the trip. And to victual her; nothing fancy, just tea, coffee, cereal, milk, water, sandwiches and chocolate biscuits. Off we go, leaving Sardinia behind.

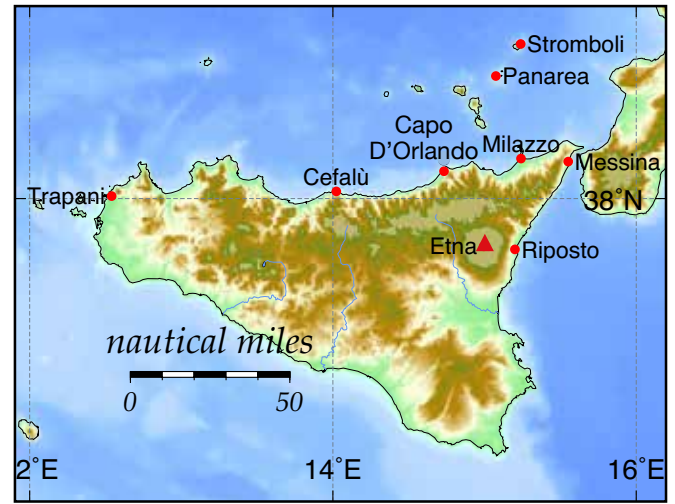
Before the light fell, Alix suggested we put in a reef. It was only a Force 4, but it's better to have a safety margin

when night-sailing. The swell was still a remnant from the previous days' stronger, persistent southerlies and so we had a decent sized sea on the starboard quarter. Alix called me a little later to put in reef number 2, as the wind gusted to 21 knots (F5). She is a good, cautious sailor and we make a good team.

By about 0030 on Wednesday, there was no moon and the sky was a pitch-black shroud punctured by tiny pricks of light of varying lustre. Occasionally, a glow would appear on the horizon. Was it a lighthouse, or town? No, we were 80 miles from the nearest land. Was it the moon about to rise? No, wrong time and wrong quarter. A quick look at AIS provided the answer; a distant cruise ship (*Bonaria*) lit up like a Christmas tree. It would disappear over the horizon in half an hour, as it sped its sleeping passengers at over 20 knots to their next morning port, and the darkness would return.

The only other relief from the black was the dull whiteness of the white horses approaching from the right before slopping against the hull, occasionally showering the helm in a spatter of salty droplets. And the white, frothy, dishwasher melee astern from the wake of the twin rudders.

But then a flash in my peripheral vision...



Capo Milazzo on Panarea where 22 stone round houses have been excavated. Lipari (right) and Vulcano (left) are in the distance. Right, San Pietro, Panarea

and another flash flickered momentarily. A huge cauliflower-floret of a towering cumulonimbus was at one moment invisible and black. And a second later it was lit up briefly from inside like an enormous, organically-shaped light bulb. And then blackness again, as the light switch was flicked off. I watched and waited. This time inside the bubble-wrap cloud was the shape of a man's upper body (head, shoulders, handless arms and torso) in a neon flicker. It was a sign that the weather forecast had been accurate: we were expecting electrical storms way off to the north-east towards mainland Italy, and also far ahead in Sicily.

After 11 hours of darkness on the open sea, it is always lovely and comforting to see the light of a new day gradually blossom. Soon that golden ball of fire would appear, only to be hidden by some low cumulus. Its rays still fanned out from behind them, in a spiked halo. I felt sorry for Alix, as she was off watch and missed it. But it was better for her to sleep after a couple of difficult watches.

We called the port authority to say we were entering the harbour, and by 1230 we were safely parked up in the little family-run Marina Artura Stabile in Trapani. We were both tired and could have done with a long nap, but the weather was great and there was much sightseeing to be done: I had been looking forward to travelling to the ancient settlement of Erice for months.

The world's first lighthouse 21 October, 2021 – Richard

I was sitting in the cockpit typing this yesterday while anchored just off St Pietro village (on Isola di Panarea) and looking north-eastwards at the oldest lighthouse in the world, sitting about 10 miles away.

It is the shape of a child's version of a volcano and there is a wisp of dark smoke emanating from the top, which is being carried by the gentle breeze in a thin grey band to the south-east. The lighthouse is of course, Stromboli.

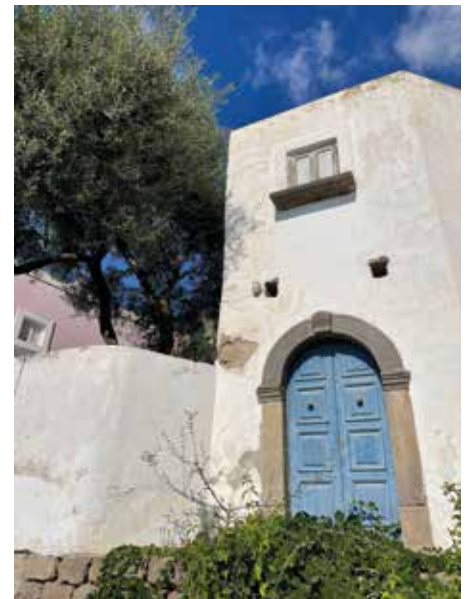
This flaming beacon guided ancient mariners who were sailing south searching for the northern entrance to the Strait of Messina. Heikell's *Italian Waters Pilot* informs me that the volcano's night light guided Odysseus towards the twin perils of Scylla and Charybdis guarding the strait.

Gran Cratere was puffing out white smoke as if a new Pope had been elected

Today, tourists sail at night around to the north-west of the cone to get the best view of the fireworks, but we decided to give that a miss; we will make do with the odd puff of grey smoke from here. And it pretty much puffs away continuously, which is why it doesn't erupt violently from time to time, like Etna.

The Isole Eolie (Aeolian Islands) lie just off the north-east corner of Sicily and comprise seven volcanic islands. They include two active volcanoes, the other one being the Gran Cratere on Vulcano island.

We had motored out of Capo D'Orlando on Tuesday, as there was no wind and the sea was glassy. And we passed to starboard the caldera of Gran Cratere which was puffing out white smoke as if a new Pope had been elected. We headed for Panarea, which mostly screened Stromboli from view.



The steep slopes of the islands are intertwining ridges and valleys where the lava has oozed down like a melting ice cream cornet and then frozen in place. Some slopes look ribbed, perhaps where the rainwaters have washed away rivers of pumice. The brown or grey rock is painted green by the low, shrubby vegetation that clings onto it for dear life. Some of the lower slopes have been terraced for cultivation.

We clambered into *Ursa Minor* [the dinghy] yesterday (Wednesday) and tied her up to the village jetty. If I showed you a picture of San Pietro and asked you where in the world you were, you might possibly say Greece. The houses are rendered and painted white, all the doors seem to be painted blue, the streets are random, winding and narrow. Only tuk-tuks, electric golf-buggies and mopeds impede your progress on foot. There are neither street sign nor signposts; very often your zig-zag way leads to a dead end, and you have to retrace your steps as in some Cretan labyrinth. Bougainvillea, jasmine, olive and citrus trees spill over the walls, with

Some of the rocks which have wrecked ships over thousands of years



the occasional bakery or simple church.

It is kept very tidy; there is no litter (unlike the rest of Sicily!). And there is a reason. This is the secret island getaway for the super-rich. We did actually walk past a private helipad. There are innumerable lovely, chic but discreet villas, with dry lava-stone walls and immaculately tended gardens. All behind gates with signs saying 'private property'.

Anyway, my mission yesterday was to drag Alix southwards along a coastal footpath to Capo Milazzo. On top of this small yet dramatic headland, connected by a narrow isthmus, is a Bronze Age village dating from the 15th to 13th century BC. Our walk there was lovely. It was a warm, sunny October day. We passed ancient, walled terraces that the locals would have cultivated. We dropped down to a sandy beach and I took off my shoes to paddle along the shoreline. And then we climbed – me barefoot - up the other side of the bay to look down upon our objective. The sea below was a shimmering turquoise and gin-clear.

These people originated from Sicily near Syracuse, and built a village of 22 circular stone huts. One is rectangular and may have been a public building. The archaeological finds include a lot of Mycenaean pottery, which enabled archaeologists to date the site.

The artefacts are kept in the museum on the neighbouring island of Lipari, so today we set off early and motored across to Lipari to search for the pots. Lipari is the most populated of the islands and has a holiday feel. The bay is dominated by a high citadel with defensive walls and the Cathedral of St Bartholomew atop. We parked *Missy Bear* in a marina at the north end of the crescent-shaped bay, and walked around to the town, which occupies the bay's central point. We climbed the winding streets up to the citadel, and reaching the top near the cathedral, came across an expansive archaeological site showing similar circular stone houses that we had seen on Panarea. I found the ticket office for the museum and paid €20 for two. What great value that turned out to be!

We went into the first museum building and were immediately immersed in a world of ancient container shipping, much of which passed the Aeolian islands en route from mainland Italy and Sicily to the Aegean and Africa. Maybe they used the light of Stromboli to guide them, but not always successfully. Most ships simply intended to pass the islands; many ended up stopping there for good, after meeting an outlying rock.

The ships carried hundreds of amphorae, and archaeologists can tell the date and location they were made by the shape and material of these containers. Many held wines and oils, but amphorae of porous clays would carry dry goods. They were stacked side by side in rows, up to five tiers high, pushed into sand in the bilges to keep them stable. Gaps were filled with straw and twigs to cushion the amphorae against the boats' motion.

In the museum we were immersed in a world of ancient container shipping

But we still hadn't found the pots. Finally we were directed to the Minor Islands Prehistory building. Of course! Soon we were gazing upon our prize: a cup on a high stem from which food would be served for communal eating. Some of the stems could be a metre tall.

We were amazed at how good and extensive the museum is. There is even another building dedicated to the history or the study of vulcanology. But we were "cultured-out" at this point. Everywhere you look in the islands, you are reminded that you are on a volcano that started being active about 260,000 years ago.

The Dire Strait of Messina **30 October, 2021 – Alix**

This part of the trip has given us a few navigation challenges: crossing over from Sardinia; the yet-to-come crossing of the Ionian Sea to Preveza (a good mate is coming out to help Richard do this); and also getting through the Strait of Messina,

the narrow waterway that separates the north-east of Sicily from the Italian mainland. When we were little, there was a popular rhyme:

*Long-legged Italy
Kicked poor Sicily
Right into the middle
Of the Mediterranean Sea*

Italy couldn't have been very good at football in those days because it didn't kick Sicily very far. The Strait starts off very narrow at the northern end (barely one and a half miles across), bends westward and opens out to over seven miles wide at the southern end.

The reason that it strikes terror into the hearts of so many sailors is that there are strong tidal streams in both directions, caused by different times of high and low water between the Tyrrhenian Sea to the north, and the Ionian Sea to the south, which can run at up to four knots at springs. A strong wind running with the tidal stream can increase its speed, whereas one running against it can create choppy, uncomfortable conditions. Added to this are sections where you can get whirlpools or eddies, plus it's a major shipping channel up and down with fishing boats and ferries going across, and you can see why it's a section of water to be respected. Odysseus sailed between the whirlpool Charybdis, and the sea monster Scylla. It is generally agreed that it was set in the Strait of Messina.

Richard, of course, has been though the Straits before, and pointed out that the Solent has equally strong currents, strong weather, and busier shipping lanes. In addition, *Missy Bear* is a decent-size boat with a good engine.

Nevertheless we spent quite a lot of time looking up tide timetables and tracking weather patterns. The southerly tidal stream (the *scandente*) starts 4½ hours after HW Gibraltar; we wanted to arrive at the Straits at slack water just before it turned, and preferably in daylight.

Milazzo is a town about three hours' sail from the start of the Strait, so we booked in there for Friday and Saturday, with the intention of heading off early



Left, Left, neolithic houses excavated in Lipari. Right, a fishy tasting platter from Erice



Sunday morning. We spent the afternoon looking around the Castello on the hill overlooking the town, and got back to the marina late afternoon to find a boat flying the British Red Ensign moored up next to us, with a very British-looking chap on the deck. Of course, we got talking. I think Richard half-wished we hadn't: the couple had set off to get through the Strait, and go on to south Sicily. As they turned to go down into the Straits they met increasing wind and sea swell, and waves breaking over the yacht. Once it reached F7, they decided to return to the marina in Milazzo. Hmm.

We had another look at the weather forecast. Saturday (the next day) was now looking better than Sunday. We decided we would head out, take a look and if we didn't fancy it, also come back. We rang the marina in Messina and booked the Saturday night, and then went out to enjoy a quick drink with our new friends.

Alarm at 0600 Saturday morning. First thing was to check the weather. Windy, our preferred weather app, was showing the wind in the Strait coming from the north-west (which is what we wanted) although other apps showed southerlies – not so good, but such low wind gusts that it wouldn't matter. But you can never really tell, as there are very local conditions there. We got everything ready and were away from our berth just before 0700. As we worked our way along the final stretch of north Sicily, the wind picked up, and by the time we reached the spit at the north, we had a F5 and were creaming along at 9 knots while double-reefed. Unfortunately, it was a southerly, so would be on the nose as we went down the Strait and would make for a choppy passage. Oh well, the narrow bit is only for two hours. We decided to turn into the channel and see what it was like.

Engine on, most of the sails furled, we turned into the Strait – and the F5 southerly dropped to a F4. Good start. And we still had a knot of current against us, so we had a smooth sea. Even better. We knew the points at which the whirlpools were most dangerous, and Richard pointed out patches of water where he said there would be eddies. But you know what – the sun was shining, the wind was very manageable and we passed pretty houses and scenery.

We were careful to stay out of the ship channel, keeping to the passage for yachts. You can incur a hefty fine if you get in the way of a large vessel as they cannot manoeuvre quickly. There are channels for boats going south, and for boats going north. You can only cross from one side to another in one place, and even then, you must radio the coastguard to alert them. A few ferries glided across our path now and then, and a couple of catamarans sailed back and forth, but otherwise all was well. In fact, we reached our planned marina slightly ahead of schedule.

As it was still early, and conditions were still good, we wondered if we should push on to our next port of call - Riposto, from where Richard and Tony will take the boat across to Preveza. We have some parcels to collect from the marina in Messina, but we could hire a car and drive back up. We checked the forecast and rang Riposto – yes, they had room, and therefore we pushed on.

As we made our way down the east coast of Sicily, we noticed that we were accumulating swathes of black dust on the boat. Suffice to say there had been a hefty outburst from Mount Etna that morning.

It was a long day but we were safely tied

up soon after our arrival at 1815. A storm came and went on Sunday and we had winds gusting gale F8 forecast through until at least midnight. But at least we were in the marina, not on the sea. I was going to say that the dire Strait of Messina wasn't actually so dire for us after all. But with the wind, and the way all the boats were bouncing around, it seemed the Sultans of Swing had caught up with us.

Missy Bear continued her adventure in 2022 and is now in Gocek, Turkey. You can read the blog at rcrooks5.wixsite.com/missybear (2021) and rcrooks5.wixsite.com/missybearseason2 (2022).



Alix and Richard came to sailing late, but have made up for lost time by chartering in the UK, Greece, Turkey, Australia and Canada and working on flotillas. Alix, an RYA Day Skipper, is known as Passepartout, as she sorted out the post-Brexit and Covid logistics, and has been promoted to Rear Admiral. Richard is a (lapsed) RYA Yachtmaster Instructor, and authored the *Skipper's Practical Handbook* (Fernhurst, 2007). Now they are retired, they finally have enough time to enjoy *Missy Bear*, their first boat.



It's a family affair



Nicky Barker first heard about the CA through her parents, who joined in the 1990s. She and Reg have sailed their Rustler 42, *Blue Velvet of Sark*, more than 54,000 miles with the support of the CA

Reg and I have sailed since we were children. Reg, inspired by *Swallows and Amazons*, badgered his father into buying a beaten up Enterprise and sailed it on a lake on the outskirts of Manchester in the summer and worked on her over the winter. I raced dinghies at the Guernsey Yacht Club and instructed with the Guernsey Sailing Trust, while my parents, having started with dinghy and day-keelboat racing in the Solent, cruised yachts eventually graduating to a Victoria 38, *Nomad*.

After joining the RAF I gradually moved into cruising yachts, thanks primarily to the excellent training offered by the Joint Services Adventurous Sail Training Centre (JSASTC). Reg's enthusiasm for sailing was re-ignited after we met and he too started taking RYA qualifications through JSASTC.

My parents loaned us *Nomad* for our honeymoon and we had a wonderful time, though the tides on the north Brittany coast over those three weeks meant that we made an awful lot of very early starts! We bought our first yacht, a Starlight 35, *Indaba*, the following year (2002) and enjoyed cruising her in the Solent at weekends and further afield when we had longer away from work.

My parents had joined the CA in 1994,

and found access to the charts, pilot books and other members' logs in the club's library invaluable for planning long sailing trips in Scotland, Ireland and the Baltic. They took part in the CA's Millennium Rally through the Baltic to St Petersburg before continuing, along with four other boats, through Russia's inland waterways to Murmansk and the White Sea. From here they entered Norwegian waters, rounded the North Cape and returned to the Baltic via the Lofoten Islands and Bergen.

Partly inspired by their long-distance sailing exploits and partly by an RAF Sailing Association expedition from Plymouth to the Canaries (the boat continued to the Caribbean and I felt quite torn not to be continuing too), Reg and I began planning our own long-distance cruising. We bought our Rustler 42, *Blue Velvet of Sark*, and continued weekendng as well as taking three-week summer holidays to allow us, once a year, the chance to get away to new cruising grounds.

My parents had often praised the CA facilities and we saw a couple of events advertised that gave us the opportunity to visit the CA ourselves. The Blue Water seminar and the Biscay day were both hugely helpful in providing advice and



Top, *Blue Velvet* revelling in the Caribbean trade winds (as were her crew!). Above, Nicky and Reg, and below a page from the Millennium Rally log of Alan & Brenda Donaldson, Nicky's parents. It won the Lacey Trophy in 2000





Left, down the East River, past Manhattan and out into the Hudson past the Liberty Statue. Right, cruising is just maintaining or mending the boat in beautiful locations but CA discounts help reduce the pain. Below, two of the events which make the CA so much fun



opportunities to speak to people who had "been there and done that". In particular we felt that the talks by doctors on what to carry in case of medical emergency were invaluable. We attended both these briefing days as non-members but joined shortly afterwards, partly because we found the club's ethos of information sharing with members and non-members alike so welcoming.

We set off long-term cruising in 2013, sailing across Biscay and down into the Med, where we remained for four years. While we were there we found CAptain's Mate a really valuable tool and tried to add to the database of reports wherever we went. The network of HLRs too proved its worth, especially after an engine failure which we could not resolve. The local HLR arranged for a mechanic to meet us. Adonnis spoke little English but, despite this, while fixing the problem showed us what to do if it happened again. The HLR's recommendation and Adonnis' work meant that our forthcoming fortnight's cruising with Reg's daughter could take place as planned, rather than our being stuck in an anchorage awaiting repairs.

While in the Med we met a number of other CA members, some via a daily HF radio net and some by dint of "flying the flag". David and Juliet Fosh (*Reflections of Hayling*) were in this latter group and, enjoying a chat over sundowners with them, we discovered that they too had been on that CA Millennium Rally with my parents – what a small world! Subsequently they had sailed across oceans and then returned to Europe; we picked their brains furiously both about the Aegean and places further afield.

We first encountered Australians Bob and Eileen Philips (*Songster*) via the HF radio net but met them in person a few months later on the CA's Lycian Cruise organised by Suzie and Robin Roots. Like

all CA activities, this was another major information-sharing event, with people discussing everything from Turkish history (the main focus of the cruise) to sail set-up and trim, ocean cruising and affordable overwintering marinas, and everything in between. We later bought Caribbean and Pacific charts from Robin and Suzie and bumped into Bob and Eileen, again via an HF net, in the west Atlantic.

Captain's Mate is hugely valuable, partly because reports are not anonymous and you can contact the authors

Each year we more than recoup the cost of CA membership in discounts alone. As we have put around 54,000 miles on *Blue Velvet*, most of our discounts have been for equipment, from sails and rope to tiny parts. But we were delighted to discover this summer that the favourite restaurant of our Dartmouth-based friends offers 10% discount to CA members!

We crossed the Atlantic in 2017 and thought the trials and tribulations of red diesel, VAT and stays in the Schengen area would be a distant memory for us... right up until Covid hit and, like so many cruisers, we sailed home. Before that we

had sailed up and down the western North Atlantic, from Grenada to Nova Scotia and west to the Honduran Bay Islands. We continued to use CAptain's Mate, much less well populated with data at that time than the Med and eastern Atlantic Islands, but we added reports and saw that many others were and are too. It remains a hugely valuable tool, not least because the reports are not anonymous and, if you wish, you can get in touch with the authors.

Before our return to Guernsey, our home base, we searched the CA forums, and others, for information on Covid rules, and after that we needed to understand UK VAT, red diesel, time in the Schengen area for UK passport holders... the list goes on. The work of RATS alongside the RYA has eased many of the difficulties and for that we are very grateful.

So the CA means an awful lot to us and membership has been worthwhile in numerous ways. As in any organisation, the most important thing is the people, and it is from them, and others who work tirelessly behind the scenes, that we have benefited so much. We fly our CA burgee with pride and look forward to meeting other members of our club to talk boating and exchange ideas, preferably over a glass of something nice in a beautiful anchorage.



CA London lectures, spring 2023

From electronics to Ukraine and from orcas to *Overlord* – just some of this season's topics



Wednesday 1 February Sailing into the Electronic Age, Jeremy Batch

"We have no use for these inventions" was the rebuff given to Christian Hülsmeyer by Telefunken in 1905 when he offered them his early versions of radar and the chart plotter. Decca would make the same mistake with the Beatles.

In this sequel to *Sailing into the Electrical Age* (2017), we'll follow the adventures and misadventures of the inventors, scientists and engineers who brought us not only radio and radar but all the other gadgets we never knew we wanted on our vessels and in our homes.

We'll start with a long-delayed visit to Cragside, William Armstrong's home in Northumberland, to admire his (British!) light bulbs from Joseph Swan, powered hydroelectrically in 1881 from a convenient lake via a generator from Werner Siemens. We'll look at the radio valve, the cathode ray tube (once in your TV and radar) and the cavity magnetron (still in your microwave and probably your radar) and move on down to the transistor, the integrated circuit, the microprocessor and the memory chip,



Cragside, Northumberland.

Photo Derek Voller/geograph.org.uk

now allowing you to drop the entire Admiralty chart collection into your plotter or into the bilges — provided you can still get the chips.

Also: a return visit to London's Lea Valley where the British electronics industry was nurtured; a wartime miniature radar device whose level of secrecy approached that surrounding the Flag Officers' Lunch; and "the machines that made nothing" but made everything possible.



Swallow's Nest castle in Crimea

Wednesday 8 February Sailing in Ukraine, Christopher Smith

After decades of sailing around Greek waters, Christopher's retirement dream was to sail through the Bosphorus and round the Black Sea to Georgia. Planning quickly showed Russian and Russian-occupied Georgian waters were no-go zones but at that time, 2012, the Ukraine and especially the Crimea proved to be excellent sailing. The Black Sea is notorious for storms, but these are reasonably predictable and thus avoidable (though during the long sail from Yalta to N Turkey he endured 85 knots of wind, thankfully only for 10 minutes). Setbacks included laborious times with officials, boardings by the Coastguard, jellyfish and outdated

electronic charts. Highlights were mooring at the bottom of the Potemkin steps in beautiful Odesa, sleepy towns on the Crimea coast, the splendour of the then co-Russian naval estuary of Sevastopol, an abandoned base for nuclear submarines in Balaclava estuary, palaces and downbeat hotels in Yalta - and dolphins. Let's hope we can get there again.

Wednesday 15 February Smuggling on the east coast, Andy Beharrell

Over several centuries a surprising diversity of goods was traded between East Anglia, northern France and the Low Countries. Good quality English wool was exported, woven in Flanders and SW Netherlands, and some cloth smuggled back, all duty free. In the golden age of import smuggling the most important commodity was over-proof gin called strong *Jenever*, or brandy; other items smuggled were most of the heavily-taxed products including wine, tobacco, spices, silks and tea. Andy describes the trade and how the pattern of landing and distribution changed with the evolving policies for prevention.



Moorings at Brandy Hole on the Crouch: was the creek named for smuggled *genever*? Pic courtesy of John Negus.

Main photo, left, Missy Bear anchored east of the fort on Methoni. Below, Julian Cable on Robinetta; Windfall Yacht Overlord under way (photo, Tom Cunliffe) and right, Admiral Lord Nelson on his column in Trafalgar Square (photo, Beata May/Wikimedia)



Wednesday 22 February Round Cape Wrath: Southwold to the Clyde in Robinetta, Julian Cable

Robinetta is a gaff cutter designed by Denys Rayner and launched in 1937. Last year, she made it from Tollesbury to Southwold on a shake-down cruise where rather more shook down than was ideal. Julian rebuilt the gaff and repaired the boom fixings by the spring and continued north towards their new home in Scotland. Leaving the Humber proved challenging. Getting around Spurn Head at dusk with wind over tide is not an experience boat or crew would choose to repeat, but once in Scotland, things got easier. A delightful weekend at the festival in Portsoy was followed by an uneventful passage to Loch Eribol via Scapa Flow and Stromness. From there to Cape Wrath was a thrilling ride. Now on the west coast, the delivery trip turned into pure holiday, exploring remote anchorages far up sea lochs and making new friends in tiny harbours. On her first attempt to round the Mull of Kintyre she was beaten back to Gigha. Undaunted, she tried again and made it into the Clyde.



Wednesday 1 March The Windfall Yachts, Charles Chambers

During the 1930s the Germans built up a large fleet of cruiser racer yachts to sail under the German Square Metre Rule. They were principally used for nautical training of German armed forces officers. At the end of World War II a large number of these German Government-owned yachts were allocated to the victors with many finding their way into various, mainly British services, yacht clubs. They

became known as the 'Windfalls' or 'Booty Boats'. Charles is one of a handful of skippers qualified to sail *Overlord* on behalf of the Offshore Cruising Club. He will talk about the history of the boats and how the OCC boats are used.



Wednesday 8 March Orcas, Windfarms and Taxes - an evening with RATS

RATS, the Regulations and Technical Services Group, represents the CA in understanding and explaining how regulatory and technical issues affect cruising sailors, and in dealings with government and other authorities, offshore developers and the marine industry. In this session they will cover some of the hot topics in their current workload.

Wednesday 15 March John Dillon-Leetch, Port Hydrographer, Port of London Authority. Details to be confirmed.

Wednesday 22 March The adventures of Missy Bear, Richard Crooks and Alix Titley

This talk describes the adventures of *Missy Bear*, a new Oceanis 40.1, as she sails from Canet-en-Rousillon in France to Preveza in Greece. *Missy Bear* remains steadfast as her crew deal with route planning, weather, laundry and an uncharted rock. Did they also mention Brexit rules and Covid regulations? Richard and Alix won the Lacey Trophy for their delightful blog of this trip.



Wednesday 29 March Hanson lecture: The influence of leadership and healthcare upon Britain's maritime dominance, Lionel Jarvis

It is too often assumed that British naval victories during the French Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars resulted from impressive strategic insight and imaginative tactical excellence. However, a very substantial contribution to these successes can be attributed to compassionate leadership, and an astute understanding of the needs of sailors and their health. It has been said that victory at Trafalgar owed as much to the citrus fruits as to Nelson's strategic brilliance. Far ahead of his time, we continue to learn today from Horatio Nelson's approach to leadership.

Surgeon Rear Admiral Lionel Jarvis is a consultant radiologist. He has previously served as Surgeon General of the Royal Navy, Assistant Chief of the Defence Staff for Health and as the Royal Navy's Chief Medical Officer.

Log competition prizes will be awarded on the night. Tickets at **£19 include supper** and must be ordered and paid for in advance.

Bookings

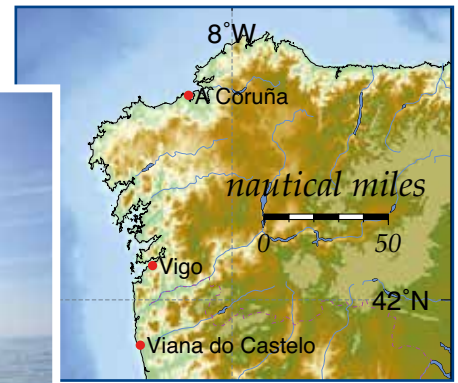
Events start promptly at 7pm. To book any lecture, please go to **News & Events > Events** on the CA website. To attend at CA House, click on **BOOK VENUE**. Please pay in advance on the website, or by contactless on the door; the cost is £4 for members unless otherwise stated. To watch online, please click on "Register by Zoom".

A reminder email with both links will be sent to CA London members each week. Any problems with the booking system, call or email Jeremy on 0207 537 2828 / reception@theca.org.uk.

Viana do Castelo



Camilla Herrmann explains why she loves not just Viana, but the whole of Portugal



Misty view of Viana from the top of Santa Luzia. Inset: welcome to Portugal. As Ben raises the flag, the first lobster pot is just visible ahead of the boat

In 2006 we sailed our Westerly Storm, *Kalessin of Orwell*, south from her home in Suffolk. With our sons Guy, then 16, and Ben, aged 13 and taking a few months out of school, we meandered gently down the coasts of Normandy and Brittany. Guy headed home from Lorient, and we bravely faced the terrors of a Biscay crossing, arriving in Gijón in northern Spain in early August.

Many people had assured us how much we would love Spain. Well, we do love it now, but arriving on the north coast, where most people only speak Spanish, was a bit of a culture shock after dear, familiar France, even though we were very embarrassed to be discombobulated by one of the world's most-spoken languages. Northern Spain was also cooler, very windy on the top left-hand corner, and foggy in the Rias Bajas.

We rapidly learned a few Spanish words, but there was still a lot of translation, very slowly, using a dictionary. (This was long before Google Translate). We went out for tapas one night in Gijón and they proudly produced an English menu.

Fantastic! We'll have a number 32, a 44 and a 47 please. Unfortunately they had obviously changed the numbering since the English menu was produced, and we ended up with two squid dishes and one of octopus. It was just as well that we already knew how to say *patatas bravas*.

After four wonderful weeks in the rias we needed to head south for the winter. We had been beset by fog, so from Baiona we took a short hop to Viana do Castelo, only about 20km south of the border. As we crossed the border Ben changed the courtesy flags, and while we watched him we nearly hit the first of a squillion lobster pots in Portuguese waters – another reason for a shorter passage.

We hadn't originally planned to go to Viana and didn't know much about it. As we arrived in the marina, very little space was visible, but a marina worker (later described by a fellow cruiser as a "gnarly old man") greeted us and squeezed us into a small space on the first pontoon. He invited Sam to accompany him to the office and as they strolled down the quay together he said, in English, "Arsenal

played well last night, didn't they sir?" Welcome to Portugal. It was wonderful.

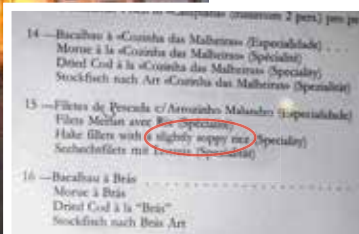
Viana is a charming, authentic Portuguese town topped with a basilica with fabulous views, and with a bridge designed by Gustave Eiffel (yes, the one who designed the tower). We'd had a brief Algarve holiday some years earlier but this was our introduction to proper Portugal: the architecture of the Minho with the Manueline details, the use of *azulejos* (tiles) for external decoration, the Pingo Doce supermarket where the checkout girl also spoke excellent English, and the general feeling that Portugal and England are similar seafaring nations separated only by 600 miles of sea. We went out for an excellent meal where we got exactly what we ordered, even down to the slightly soppy rice.

From Viana we headed south to Porto, Lisbon and the Algarve, deciding to overwinter in Lagos because it was so welcoming. Sadly we have never been back to Viana, but we have visited Portugal a number of times since, and it's always a pleasure.

Recent updates on CAptain's Mate indicate that the marina hasn't changed much in the past 16 years, although high-season prices have soared and welcoming marina workers may be thinner on the ground. Members who manage to squeeze in and pick up the lazy-lines, however, report that the centre of Viana is as lovely as ever.



Downtown Viana is full of little restaurants where they almost speak English



Camilla is editor of *Cruising*. 

Do you have a favourite harbour, anywhere in the world? If you can write 500-1500 words about it and have some photos, please contact editor@theca.org.uk