



Cruising

www.theca.org.uk

- CA autumn lecture season
- Orcas: gathering information
- Through the Caledonian Canal
- My favourite harbour: Lakka, Paxos



Seeing a man about a dog

The CA's President, **Derek Lumb**, took his Border Collie pup to Europe for the first time and was delighted to benefit from the guidance of the CA



By the time you read this the 2022 sailing season will be winding down. Jean and I have sailed in UK waters since 2018, but an unexpected offer of a mooring contract in France led to a late change of plan. Faced with the 90 in 180-day limit we decided that, for this year, we could do four or five weeks outside the EU in the UK and Channel Islands before entering France and so get more than four months of sailing.

With this as a plan we had to get up to speed on the formalities that we would need to comply with, further complicated by the fact that we sail with Becky, our Border Collie pup. We had taken our previous dog to the EU but this was to be our first experience since the UK left the EU. We flirted with arrival at Cherbourg or Saint-Malo from Guernsey and I sent emails to customs at both places to ask about the arrival procedure with the dog. To my delight both replied promptly and helpfully and so, with RATS advice from the website, we knew **what** we had to do but not necessarily **how** we needed to go about it.

This was when the CA really came into its

own. Bob and Sue Garrett, the Channel Section Secretaries, have put together a guide for all the Ports of Entry on the French Channel coast. Drawing on information from our HLRs and from early visitors, these give practical instructions for each place with directions to offices, office hours and tips on what to expect.

Quite a few yachts were flying CA burgees; their universal view was how useful and reassuring the CA's advice had been

With this under our belt we submitted our e-C1331 and left Dartmouth at 0300 on 21 May bound for Beaucette Marina in Guernsey. We had a great time in Beaucette, met and enjoyed the company of fellow CA members Caroline and Adrian and their dog Tom.

We obtained our Animal Health Certificate for Becky from a local vet and, following advice from French customs,

we sent scanned copies of the dog's documents, together with our *Préavis DOUANE* (Customs notice) the day before our planned departure. We left Guernsey around midnight and arrived in Roscoff around 1130 the next day. Overnight we received an email giving us an appointment with Customs at 1430.

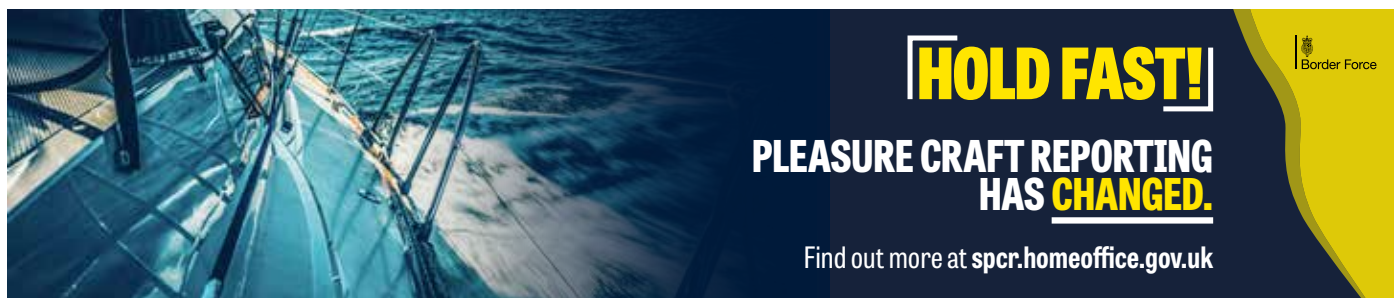
We followed the instructions from the CA website and arrived (with Becky on a lead) in the appropriate place at just before 1430. We were asked our boat name and for our passports which were stamped and returned. "What about the dog?" we asked. "Don't you want to check her Animal Health Certificate etc?." The officer looked bit puzzled, but replied "You have emailed us copies, haven't you?" "Yes," I replied. "Then it's OK". That was it – formalities over.

I was pleased to see quite a few yachts flying CA burgees on our way south and tried to have a chat with all of them, and the universal view was how useful and reassuring the CA's advice had been. I have found one of the great joys of CA membership is chatting to fellow members about their experiences. After 14 years of membership, I have come to realise just what a huge resource of experience our members are. The CA has a long history in facilitating the sharing of experience of members which exemplifies itself in cruising reports but goes so much further. The forums are full of people requesting information, advice or help and receiving it, promptly and courteously. So, my message to all of you is keep on doing it – the strength of the CA is its membership and working with a wide range of members, as I do, has only served to strengthen that view. We are extremely fortunate to have so many highly qualified and experienced members in almost all professional fields willing and able to contribute to the activity of yacht cruising and long may it continue.



Derek aims to chat to any boat flying a CA burgee. These are in the Channel Rally in Cherbourg





Reporting UK arrival & departure online

It is now possible to report arrival in or departure from the UK in a pleasure craft through a new digital reporting service at www.socr.homeoffice.gov.uk single Pleasure Craft Reporting (sPCR), developed by UK Border Force for the UK Government.

The requirement to notify UK Customs of your voyage plan to destinations outside the UK and arrivals into the UK, has included travel to/from the EU since the UK left the EU in 2020. From 1 January 2022, this requirement has been actively enforced using the Pleasure Craft Report Template e-C1331 email form and C1331 postal form.

The new online service, currently in “beta” mode, will eventually replace the forms. For the time being the UK Border Force will accept reporting of a voyage plan via www.socr.homeoffice.gov.uk:

- online (preferred)
- by emailing form e-C1331 (now renamed Pleasure craft on non-UK voyages: leaving or arriving in the UK (pleasure craft report (sPCR) fallback template) or
- by postal submission of printed form C1331

“The CA has been liaising with UK Border Force for a number of years on this project with a view to ensuring that the new system fits the needs of the cruising community,” commented Derek Lumb, CA President. “Together with the RYA, British Marine and other marine organisations, CA representatives have influenced a positive outcome for cruisers.

“The change to a new online service delivers a far more accessible and user-friendly experience, making it easy to log new and alter existing passages.”

UK Border Force has stressed that this is not the final online version, and some changes are likely to be made in the light of experience.

New users of the online service will first be required to complete a “once only” account registration, before being required to “add a pleasure craft”

- Boat registration number
- MMSI and callsign
- AIS – (a transponder, not just a receiver) – if the form asks for your AIS number, this is the same as your MMSI number
- Skipper’s details, and those of regular crew

and then proceeding to submit voyage plan data including:

- Full names, date and place of birth, passport or travel document details for all people on board
- Goods documentation
- Date and estimated departure and arrival locations and
- times for your voyage plan



The voyage data must be submitted at least two hours but not more than 24 hours before departure.

Currently the form only allows a two-hour arrival or departure range. The CA has discussed with UK Border Force that this may be difficult; its advice is to give your best estimate and then update your report if you believe that either your arrival place will change, or the time will be outside the range you gave. Data can be updated online or skippers can telephone the appropriate UK Border Force Operational centre for the area of your arrival as soon as practicable.

Pleasure craft arriving in the UK from outside the UK (including the Channel Islands) must fly the Q flag as soon as they enter UK waters (the 12 mile limit). Unless you are told otherwise by Border Force, call National Yachtline on 0800 123 2012 on arrival; they may give you clearance to leave, tell you to wait for a Border Force Officer or to contact one of the regional numbers below. The Q flag must remain flying and all crew must stay on board until you have received clearance from a Border Force officer.

- Read more information, and access the online reporting service or forms, at www.socr.homeoffice.gov.uk
- Read a detailed explanation of how to use the sPCR, for CA members only, at www.theca.org.uk/sPCR-explanatory-document

Contacts for Border Force operational areas

North +44 (0)300 106 5725

Central +44 (0)300 072 4322

South +44 (0)1293 501266

South East +44 (0)130 329 915



Avoiding orcas in Iberian seas

The CA and GTOA have set up online reporting forms to gather information about incidents where yachts encounter orcas, and also safe passages where no orcas are seen. **John Burbeck & Paul Lingard** report on the work so far

“ There were three interactions in the space of two hours. The first was at 0600 and lasted ten minutes, the second at 0630 and the third at 0800. The latter was the most intense and lasted approximately half an hour.

When the interaction began we started the engine, but as the first rudder (Hydrovane) had been damaged we began to go around in circles. Five minutes later we stopped the engine. We tried to notify Salvamento Marítimo by radio, but received no response. We gave a general warning on the radio and another sailboat approached to help, at that moment the orcas finished the first interaction going in the direction of the second sailboat. After a while the orcas returned and began to damage our second rudder (the normal one of the sailboat) until they lost interest and we think they went for a third boat, in this case a catamaran whose name we do not know. In the last interaction, apart from damaging the rudder, they also hit the hull hard, to the point that we gathered all documents in case we had to leave the boat at some point.

We had serious damage to the Hydrovane-type rudder. The normal rudder is also damaged, but we don't know to what extent because the steering works partially. ”

“ I only saw two adult females and two juveniles. My crew mate saw six in total. The pod mirrored my course and speed about 200m off port side. This lasted maybe a minute before they started moving towards our boat. We then dropped the sails and turned off the engine. Only the juveniles came to the boat so close I could have touched them. I didn't and they also did not touch the boat at all. The adults then swam across the bow and waited for the juveniles to join them 200m from starboard side. They then departed the area.

Very placid and almost lethargic. I've never seen one before so not sure how they behave. ”



The skippers' comments in two of the early reports to the CA website this season show the great variation in the behaviour of orcas as they interact with yachts. But both are very scary. It is worth remembering that no one has been killed by orcas in the wild. But certainly scary.

Most people who cruise the Spanish and Portuguese coasts will now be aware of this surprising behaviour of a population of orcas in these waters. Indeed, there was a very informative article on the topic in December 2021's *Cruising* by Jette Knudsen and John Ferslev. RATS were keen to help find ways to assist crews with this problem so they supported a proposal from CA member Paul Lingard, that we work with the Spanish and Portuguese marine biologists who have been monitoring these orcas for about 30 years. Paul had a personal interest as he was planning a cruise through the affected waters and had been unable to find any evidence-led advice on what to do. Grupo Trabajo Orca Atlantica (GTOA) are the organisation who represent the marine biologists and RATS has established a very good working relationship with them.

The first few collisions were reported in 2020, but last year this had increased to over 180, and many of the boats were so severely damaged they had to be towed into port. The orcas are members of a population of about 50 known as the Strait of Gibraltar population, and they feed on the tuna that leave the Mediterranean Sea after spawning. Initially three juvenile orcas were involved; this number has steadily increased and now 14 adults and juveniles out of a population of about 50 have been identified as perpetrators. These orcas have been nicknamed GLADIS; details are on the GTOA website, www.orcaiberica.org.

The information that had been collected by the marine biologists gave details of where and when the incidents occurred, but was mainly focused on the behaviour of the orcas as they were trying to understand what was motivating them. ➤

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



The CA and the GTOA have developed a reporting system to collect much more detail not only of incidents where the orcas interacted with yachts, but also what mitigating action was taken and whether it worked. This evidence not only helps them to understand better why incidents arise, but also, as importantly, to be able to give good advice to boat crews. They have also collected reports of incident-free voyages through the worst affected areas to try to identify what might be helping prevent interactions by the orcas – see www.theca.org.uk/orcas.

These reports can be submitted in any of four languages, English, French, Spanish or Portuguese, and have been made publicly available for all boat crews, whether CA members or not, so they can use the contents to plan their routes. The interaction reports are linked to a pin on a chart. In order to receive as many reports as possible, the project has been widely publicised in the marine press, the marine industry, all the marinas around the Iberian coast, and in many sailing clubs.

As the knowledge grows, the CA and the GTOA publish advice and guidance. On its website www.orcaiberica.org, GTOA highlights the risky sea areas with a traffic light system which changes as the tuna and orca migrate (*see right*).

Avoiding damage

Why are the orcas deliberately colliding with small boats, particularly yachts under 15 metres long, and what can be done to avoid it happening and to stop them if they start? At the time of writing this article we still aren't certain, but some factors are becoming clearer.

We have not seen a reported interaction to date that has taken place in water less than 20 metres deep, and have seen several uneventful passage reports where skippers chose shallow water routes. However, this is where most of the fishing pots are to be found. So, what a choice, fishing pots or orca!

If the orcas attack, the GTOA advise stopping the boat, taking the sails down, switching off the autopilot, leaving the wheel

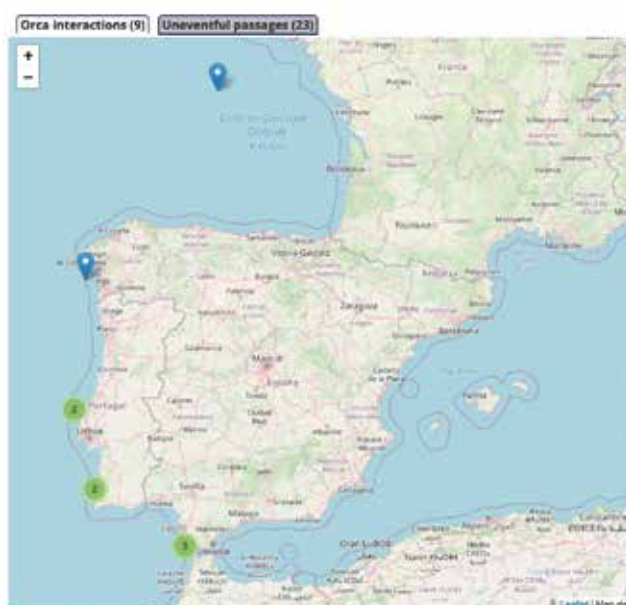
free to run and staying clear of it. They ask that crews do not interact with the orcas, and if possible, they should take photos of the fins to aid identification.

If conditions allow it, reversing safely seems to shorten the duration of the attacks on yachts' rudders as the orcas cannot swim backwards, and after bumping the bow they seem to lose interest in the interaction. It is illegal to aim at the orcas.

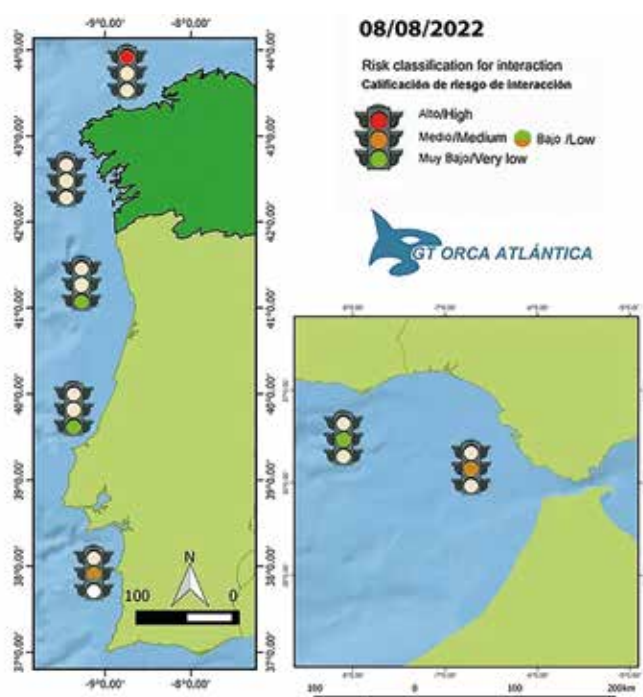
In their article in December Jette and John suggested some solutions, and here are some recent thoughts on those:

1. *Fit a steel rudder.* There are no further developments on this suggestion although it is worth remembering that some metal rudder stocks have been badly bent.
2. *Use an anti-depredation pinger. The use of pingers to scare off orca is now actively discouraged.* They may be illegal, and are certainly very harmful to the orcas because of the frequencies and volume of their transmissions which can travel large distances through the sea. Orcas are a protected species and have very sensitive hearing which can easily be damaged; the noise can also affect their eating patterns.
3. *Sail in company.* Unfortunately this may not work. In June this year a yacht that went to help a yacht that was being attacked was in turn attacked itself.
4. *Oikomi pipes.* Currently they are approved to keep orcas away from oil spills. We are still awaiting further information on the effectiveness of this method which appears to have some potential to help.

In the previous two seasons, the attacks and damage were so serious the Spanish Government banned yachts under 15 metres long from passing through specific areas. In 2020 it was an area off Finisterre and in 2021 an area off Cadiz. We are hoping that the awareness of the risks and the advice, albeit very limited at this stage, will help to reduce the scale of the problem so there will not be a need for another ban this season.



Above, the CA's orca interactions map as at mid-July 2022 and right, the GTOA warnings





'How was I to know I was asking for 200 litres of laxative...?'

Oil for the best

Back in the '50s I had been lent the Bristol Channel pilot cutter *Hirta* for several years and on one trip across to Ostend we needed TVO (Tractor Vaporising Oil – which is a form of paraffin and was used in those days in modified petrol engines) to get home.

We lashed jerry cans to oars and “The *Hirta* Crocodile” proceeded into town not knowing the right word in French – or Flemish. I tried “*Tay Vay Ohhh*” and “*Parafeen*”, neither of which worked at several petrol stations. A helpful Belgian suggested we try a different word (I forget it now) at a small shop up a side street.

The crocodile proceeded to the address given and I asked for 200 litres of “the word”. The shopkeeper came outside, surveyed the crew standing on the pavement all bearing jerry cans tied to oars and said. “*Mon Dieu* – you are ALL constipated?”

Mark Grimwade



A busy autumn with the CA

This year for the first time since 2019 many sections hope to run full winter lecture programmes and/or cruising seminars. Many more events can be viewed online. Log on to the CA website to book via **News & Events > Events > BOOK VENUE**

16-25 September Meet us at the **Southampton International Boat Show**.

Wednesday 5 October, Single-handed in the North Atlantic. First of the London lectures, at CA House and via webinar. See the full programme of talks on **page 7**.

Saturday 15 October, 12:30 Historical meal at CA House Former CA President Julian Dussek is organising another meal with dishes ranging from the Roman period to the 16th century. £22.50 a head, spaces are limited..

Saturday 29 October, Biscay Section seminar. Provisionally booked at CA House.

Wednesday, 9 November, 18:30, Cruising Association AGM 2022. At CA House and online.

Saturday 19 November Denmark Information Day, Baltic Section. At CA House.

Saturday 28 January, 2023 Channel Section seminar. At CA House.

Saturday 4 February Celtic Section seminar. At CA House.

Saturday 18 February Baltic Section seminar. At CA House.

Saturday, 11 March Pip Hare at the Royal Hospital School with Cruising Seminars, Suffolk. Afternoon & evening.

25-26 March Mediterranean seminar weekend. At CA House.

Thank you to the Crewing Service

CREW: “I’ve sailed extensively in UK and Mediterranean waters. Happy to take on any crewing responsibilities on a boat and can act as watch leader... I’m a competent sea chef and can rustle up a warming meal in a bit of a blow as well as some decent food when calm. Happy to do the victualling too.”

Member Ron Houston contacted us to say: “Just want to feed back how useful I found the crewing service. Back in March I attended a crewing service meeting at CA House for my intended trip Lagos-Madeira-Azores-NW Spain. I needed crew for the final leg. Two signed up and both very competent and nice guys. Although we had a routing forecast, conditions on that leg were testing: close-hauled for 36 hours in F6/7. The boat handled it no problem (Hallberg-Rassy 37) and the crew were good too. So, thank you CA Crewing Service for helping me complete the 1700-mile circuit.”

Find out more at www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome and if you have any queries please contact Caroline Milmo at crewing@theca.org.uk



SKIPPER: “My time is not limited plans are fluid, and my intention is to get to the Mediterranean but not stopping in every lovely port on the way. Longer passages a must. There is a dog on board which has its issues but he is part of the team. *Katrilli* is a 40+ year old S&S and quirky but sound.”

CA London lectures, autumn 2022

This season's talks cover oceans, islands, climate, ships, icebergs, electronics and tides



We are once again planning to run this year's autumn lectures at CA House as well as broadcasting on Zoom. All events are open to any member. 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 5 October **Single handed in the North Atlantic,** **Kass Schmitt**

Kass Schmitt is a solo sailor whose dream is to be the first American woman to complete the OSTAR, the original single-handed trans-Atlantic race which, back in the 1960s, began the solo racing scene we know today.

Kass will talk about her motivation and preparations and recount her experiences of taking part in this famous event in 2017 as well as her plans to compete again in 2024.

Wednesday 12 October **South Pacific, Graham and Kate Walker**

In late 2019 Graham and Kate Walker set sail from the Caribbean to cross the Pacific on their Ovi 395 *Barracuda of Islay*. In the Galapagos, Covid struck, and all their plans changed. The trip was now dominated by the difficulty of "where



next" decision-making as most Pacific countries closed their maritime borders or introduced tight controls; this was additionally complicated by the timing of the south Pacific cyclone season. Despite the challenges of the pandemic they were able to cruise through a relatively empty Pacific visiting Panama, the Galapagos, French Polynesia and Fiji before finally reaching New Zealand in October 2021.

Wednesday 19 October **The effects of climate change on** **voyage planning, Jimmy Cornell**

In recent years, the global weather conditions have seen major changes especially in the location, frequency, strength and extra-seasonal occurrence of tropical cyclones. Sailors planning to go on a long voyage are now rightly concerned about how these changes will affect their plans. Jimmy has been

monitoring global weather conditions since the 1980s, both for his own interest and to update his various books.

The first part of the talk is based on the findings of a survey he concluded among 65 long-distance sailors, more than half of them circumnavigators, backed by comments from forecasters, marine insurers and boat builders. The second part will describe how to plan a future voyage by taking into account all those factors and bring the ship and its crew safely home.



Image: The wub/Wikimedia

Wednesday 26 October **Famous Ships of London, Rob Smith**

London may not spring to mind when you think of shipbuilding, but seagoing vessels were constructed

Photos, clockwise from top left: Tobermory on Mull, one of the islands visited by Ann & Steve Crome; Pacific view; Greenwich weather vane modelled on the 16th century ship Henry Grace à Dieu; Novara in the ice; the Boas's Malo lone in the Western Med; tides in the English Channel

here for hundreds of years. The pride of Henry VIII's fleet, *Henry Grace à Dieu*, was built in Woolwich, as was HMS *Beagle* which carried Charles Darwin. The Blackwall Yard built well-armed cargo ships for the East India Company. In 1577 the *Revenge*, the ship used by Francis Drake to raid Cadiz, was launched from Deptford. Isambard Kingdom Brunel's mighty *Great Eastern* was built at Millwall while HMS *Warrior*, the first iron-skinned warship, was completed by the Thames Ironworks.

In this talk, Rob will tell the stories of some of the most famous ships built in London. He will also talk about where you can see the remains of London's shipyards and talk about the people who worked in them.

Wednesday 2 November Round the Islands, Ann and Steve Crome

While sailing round the UK, Ann and Steve have been circumnavigating some of the larger islands round our coast, all of them for the first and probably only time. They plan to talk to you about their adventures going around Lundy, Anglesey, Isle of Man, Ailsa Craig, Arran, Bute, Mull and Skye, including the navigational challenges of a first time visit and a few things to see onshore.

Wednesday 9 November Annual General Meeting of the Cruising Association Starts at 6.30pm



Wednesday 16 November In the Wake of Giants: Sailing the Wildest Seas on Earth, Bjørn Riis-Johannessen

The *Novara*, Steve Brown's 60ft aerorigged schooner, completed a 33,000nm circumnavigation of the American continents, passing through the North

West Passage and visiting South Georgia and the Antarctic in the wake of many famous polar explorers. Bjørn Riis-Johannessen took part in the southern leg of *Novara's* travels and in his talk he will cover sailing and on-shore adventures in the Antarctic regions, with an introduction recounting some of the historical highlights of polar exploration.

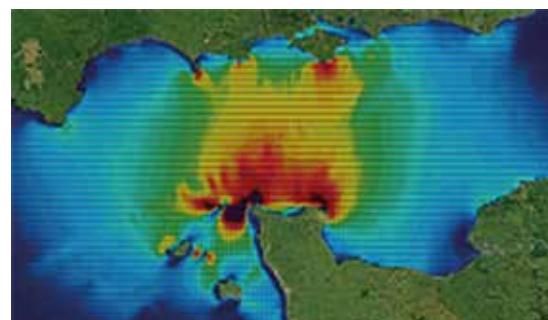


Wednesday 23 November West is Best in the Med, Tony Boas

While many CA members reaching the Mediterranean head straight for Greece and Turkey, Tony and Sarah Boas have spent the past decade sailing around the western Mediterranean, particularly the Balearics, Corsica and Sardinia. Tony will outline their cruising and discuss suitable equipment for the area. He will also talk about formalities since the UK has left the EU, pilot guides and passages. He will attempt to tempt you to visit the region with photographs of some of their favourite anchorages and harbours.

Wednesday 30 November Essential Boat Electrics, Oliver Ballam

Oliver, who runs Seapower Marine Electronics in Suffolk, is the co-author of *Essential Boat Electrics*, described by its CA reviewer as 'easy to read and an excellent little book'. He will talk about the themes covered and about common problems he is called upon to fix.



Wednesday 7 December Tides part 2, Penny Haire

This is our annual joint event with the Royal Institute of Navigation. Penny returns to give the second part of her talk which is to focus on modern tidal prediction and models. There have been many recent developments in this space; for example, we can now measure tidal height from space, and this technique in combination with computer modelling is about to supersede traditional methods of tidal prediction. If you missed Penny's excellent talk last year, you can catch it on the CA website under **General Info > Videos & podcasts..**

Wednesday 14 December CA carol service and supper

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

Bookings

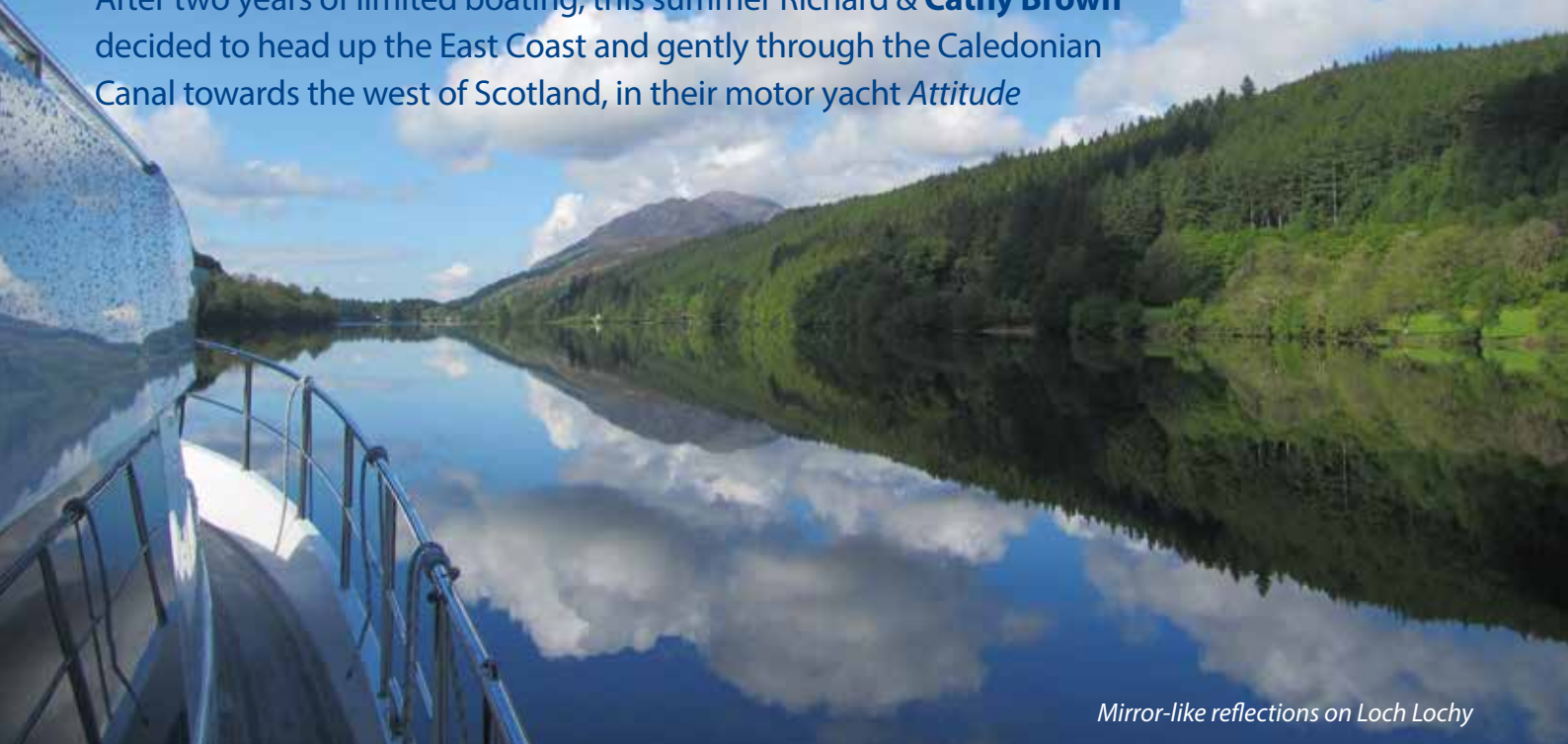
Events start promptly at 7pm unless otherwise stated. To book to attend any lecture at CA House, and to indicate whether you'll be ordering food, go to **News & Events > Events > BOOK VENUE** on the CA website. Please pay in advance on the website, or by contactless on the door. Individual lecture tickets Members £4, Non-Members £7. Season tickets available to Members at £32.

If we are unable to hold any event at CA House it will still be broadcast on webinar and prepaid tickets refunded.

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

Through the Caledonian Canal

After two years of limited boating, this summer Richard & **Cathy Brown** decided to head up the East Coast and gently through the Caledonian Canal towards the west of Scotland, in their motor yacht *Attitude*



Mirror-like reflections on Loch Lochy

It is some years since we sailed round the British Isles - the long way, via Orkney and the west coast of Ireland. We always intended to go again, through the Caledonian Canal and down the Irish Sea, to fill in the bits we missed.

That was originally our plan for this summer's "staycation" cruise in our motor yacht *Attitude*. But then we decided not to make another circumnavigation. "Going round" inevitably creates pressure to make progress, and in 2009 we felt we had rushed through the Western Isles far too quickly.

We also wanted to avoid the South Coast this year - we've "done" it many times, and with the upsurge in staycation cruising, it was going to be crowded. So we planned to head up the East Coast from our home port on the River Orwell, transit the Caledonian Canal from Inverness to Fort William, and then spend as much time as we could exploring the Western Isles before returning through the canal, and back down the East Coast, hopefully stopping at different ports each way.

A two-way transit of the Caledonian Canal is not cheap. For our 13 metres LOA the fee was £517, but this includes mooring at any of the numerous transit pontoons, mostly served with water and electricity, and one night in a marina, along the way, with seven nights allowed in either direction. Take into account the scale of the infrastructure, and the endless help given by the small army of lock-keepers and bridge-swingers, and it does not seem an unreasonable bargain.

Apparently, it is possible to negotiate the entire 60-mile (50 nautical miles) canal in two and a half days, but "why rush?" asks the extremely helpful Skipper's Guide - supplied in printed form in the sea lock as you arrive, and also available for download from www.scottishcanals.co.uk for study in advance - urging everyone to "enjoy the delights" of the waterway. It was advice we happily followed.

Our passage began mid-afternoon, when our friend Claire arrived to join us (a very welcome extra pair of hands for all those locks). The entrance to the Clachnaharry sea lock was probably the worst moment of the entire experience - with strong cross wind and cross tide. But everything calmed down as soon as we were in the lock chamber, ropes caught by the friendly and extremely helpful lock-keeper.

We had booked our passage online that morning, so the formalities were minimal: he gave us the licence to display in the window, and the essential key to the shore-side facilities along the route, and advised us that after the first two locks we should stop for the night in the Seaport marina and wait for the first swing bridge of the morning to begin the climb of the Muirtown flight of four locks.

That first day we made just two miles (and two locks). The two Inverness marinas, one open to the sea, one tucked inside the canal, are very different in character, but we were delighted to see otters playing in both of them.

We set off the next morning in company with just two sailing yachts, so we had plenty of space to perfect our



Irresistible overnight mooring at Laggan Locks



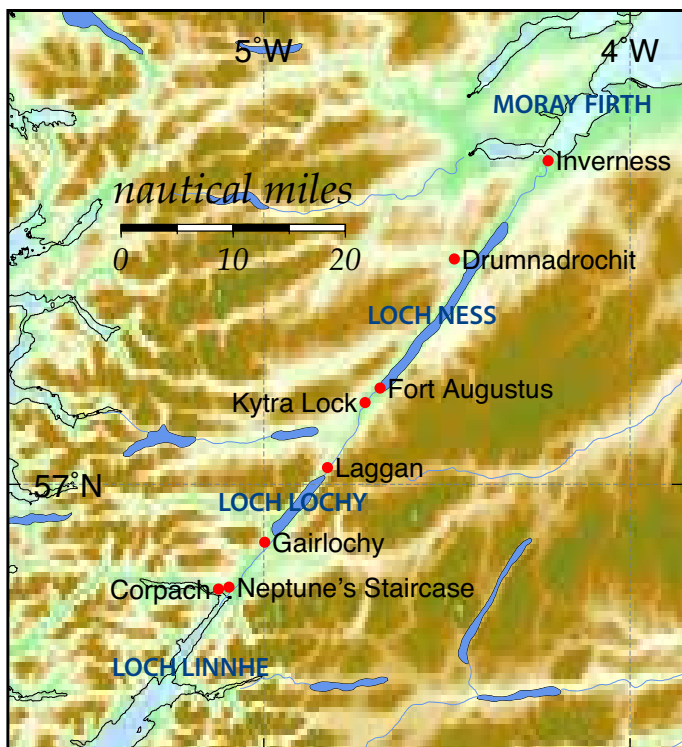


Photo © Peter Sandground/Scottish Canals

Above, boats descending the flight into Loch Ness.

locking technique in the Muirtown Flight. Once the first chamber had filled, Claire and I were directed to step ashore, and walk our warps up to the next. The Skipper's Guide states that "on lock flights crew from small vessels should manage ropes on shore" but we had not expected this to apply to *Attitude* - clearly too heavy to be pulled along from the bank.

Fortunately, one of the other yachts was a "local" well used to the routine, and he explained that it was a big time-saver, freeing the lock-keepers from the need to catch ropes every few minutes. So we walked up the lock sides, just taking up the slack while the skipper motored from chamber to chamber, and then holding the boat in place with ropes looped round the very user-friendly hooks on the quayside, rather than taken back aboard.

This season we acquired walkie-talkie sets, and they really came into their own on the canal

This season we acquired walkie-talkie sets so Richard and I can communicate more easily during berthing, anchoring and other manoeuvres when one of us is on deck and the other inside at the controls - and they really came into their own on the canal. We wish we had invested in them sooner. Our other useful investment was in two giant ball fenders to protect our flared bow from the lock-sides - probably the best £100 we have ever spent. Richard had also made fender boards (two halves of a scaffold plank, appropriately adapted) which also thoroughly earned their place.

At the final lock of the flight, once the boat had risen, we stepped back on board, and carried on into the canal, passing Caley Marina, the home of many of the hire boats which are said to be the main hazard to navigation, and quickly found ourselves in open countryside.

The first section of the canal runs picturesquely parallel to the River Ness, with weirs between the two to regulate water level and supply, but when we passed, the river was significantly below canal level, so the notices warning to keep clear of

the weirs were redundant. Then there was just the solitary Dochgarrock Lock to negotiate before we reached the point where canal and river merge, in tiny Loch Dochfour, leading into mighty Loch Ness.

All the locks and bridges along the canal work on VHF Channel 74, but there was very rarely a need to call ahead, as the lock-keepers keep their neighbouring colleagues informed of everyone's progress and plans, and bridges would swing like magic as you approached, the next lock standing ready. It's all incredibly efficient.

That night we stopped at Drumnadrochit, halfway down Loch Ness. The day's passage was 11 miles. Drumnadrochit Harbour is not covered by the licence fee, but we were happy to pay the additional £10 (plus £4 for electricity, which was also charged at all the "free" moorings) for such a charming situation, right by the Loch Ness Lifeboat station.

Claire and I walked the mile or so into town, and when we asked for directions to the supermarket, a very kind man insisted not only on giving us a lift to the shop, but then another back to the boat with our supplies. This was our first taste of the friendly and helpful welcome we were to receive wherever we went.

The next day there were no locks on the way to Fort Augustus, the tourist honeypot of the canal, where we naturally elected to stop for a spot of sightseeing, after a passage of 13 miles. Loch Ness had sadly been something of a disappointment, as the weather was what the locals call "dreich" and the spectacular scenery was hidden behind curtains of rain. Fortunately, the rain stopped in the evening, and we were able to go exploring (and dining) ashore and recce the spectacular five-lock flight we would be negotiating in the morning.

The weather changed overnight, and we were able to take photos looking back up Loch Ness, transformed by early morning sunshine, before setting off up those locks. It would be interesting to know just how many photos and videos were taken of us, providing the cabaret for hundreds of tourists of all nationalities.

The most remarkable thing about Fort Augustus is that after the crowds and cameras of the lock flight, the canal turns a corner - straight into deserted countryside. The way the scenery changes, almost moment by moment, all along the length of the canal, was one of the big surprises of the trip.

There were sections where distant mountains suddenly appeared round the corner - and others where trees crowded the banks restricting the view ahead to a matter





Left, waterborne traffic of all shapes and sizes at Kytra Lock.
Below, snow on the mountain tops in early June



of metres. There were grand houses and impressive bankside gardens to marvel at - as well as the occasional historic castle. And there were great expanses of deserted mountainside.

The isolated Kytra lock, barely two miles from bustling Fort Augustus, could not have been more different from the tourist town. Here we were instructed to tie up to the waiting pontoon, to await two big barges. We decided we liked the scenic location so much we ought to stay for the night, a day's passage of six locks, but again just two miles. Who cared? We had a most enjoyable woodland walk, even though it was raining, and we failed to spot the otters the lock-keeper told us about. (We did see a mink, though).

And there was endless interest in the other people passing through this magical spot. There were walkers, cyclists and horse-riders sharing the canal-side path, and canoeists and stand-up paddle-boarders, as well as sailing and motor craft of all kinds on the water. Come the evening, tents were pitched among the canal-side trees, too. It was lovely to see so many people sharing the peace and quiet, without interfering with each other's enjoyment.

The next day's passage was six miles including just one lock, at Culloch, the final step upwards. We had reached 32.3 metres above sea level (106 feet). This was the most scenic section of all. And, at last, the sun was out. We needed fresh water and stopped at the pontoons before the Laggan locks (the start of the descent), meaning just to fill the tanks and carry on, but again it was such an idyllic situation that we decided to stay for the night, and enjoyed another delightful walk, and more wonderful bird (and people) watching.

The next day was the best of the lot, although it was all so good it seems invidious to pick a favourite. It was a sparkling day with sunshine and zero wind, so once we had negotiated the Laggan locks - two chambers, but one was on free-flow - we were enjoying mirror-like reflections on jaw-droppingly beautiful Loch Lochy. Ben Nevis came into view, still with patches of snow near the summit. And there were rhododendrons in profusion turning the hillsides above the water purple. They may be an alien, invasive species much frowned upon by nature conservationists, but they were nice to look at!

The Gairloch locks were soon negotiated and all too soon we were at Banavie, at the top of Neptune's Staircase, and only a couple of miles from the Corpach sea lock, feeling rather sad that the canal adventure was nearing its end. The day's passage was 13 miles. We still had a day of our licence left, and it was a day before Claire needed to leave, so we awarded ourselves a "tourist day," staying on the pontoons at Banavie for two nights, and fitting in a trip up the Glen Nevis ski bubble to enjoy the magnificent mountain scenery from a different perspective.

The final day could hardly have been more different from the first. It was blisteringly hot. By now we were in shorts, T-shirts and sun hats rather than fleeces and waterproofs, as we walked the boat down through the eight-lock flight, the famed Neptune's Staircase, again surrounded by interested bystanders with cameras, although nothing like as many as at Fort Augustus.

It took a little more than an hour and a half to negotiate the staircase, and the two swing bridges below it, and the final surprise was that the remaining mile and a half of the canal (four more locks) was just as pretty and scenic as the rest. Even the Corpach sea lock is picturesque.

There was no sense of anti-climax, as we pulled in the warps for the final time and headed out through the piers into the open waters of Loch Linnhe. All in all, the Caledonian Canal is an incredible experience.

Cathy, a former editor of *Cruising*, is exploring new options with her husband Richard on their motor boat, *Attitude*. In their Arcona 410 *Brave* and her sailing predecessors they raced and cruised from Spain to Sweden and sailed around the UK and Ireland.



Photo of Neptune's staircase © John G Moore/Scottish Canals

The CA was with us all the way

After many years of cruising adventures in the Caribbean, Baltic and Med, **Sarah Stevens** and her partner Dave have recently sold their beloved Hallberg-Rassy... and Sarah has taken on the role of Mediterranean section secretary

My cruising life started in the late 70s, after a mad last-minute dash to the Med to join a flotilla sailing cruise and a fortnight away from cold, damp and dreary Manchester. I loved it all, and shortly afterwards one of the guys on another flotilla boat asked me if I'd like to help him crew his new boat in the UK, a 19-footer that sailed like a dinghy! Serendipity!! That guy was Dave Beane and we are still together 40 years later.

After a couple of years of coastal cruising and "exciting" trips across the Channel, we bought a proper cruising boat, *Rodnigon*, a 27 foot Varne, and sailed every weekend and holiday. Based on the River Blackwater in Essex we sailed to the Netherlands, Belgium and the Normandy and Brittany coasts of France. In 1994 we bought *Morning Flight*, an S&S 34, just like the one Edward Heath used to race, and sailed across the Atlantic in the ARC Rally. It is a credit to the boat's qualities rather



Above, Dave and Sarah. Below, *Rozinante* racing on the CA Greek cruise in 2010.

Photo: Dave Kitson



than our abilities that we came second in our class. We cruised the Caribbean for a few months, then I returned to work and Dave carried on to the East Coast USA.

I joined Dave whenever I could, but though *Morning Flight* sailed like a dream she was not a comfortable cruising boat, so we sailed her back to the UK and sold her. We started looking for a more "sea kindly" long distance cruising boat and eventually found an S&S-designed 40-foot ketch in Baltimore, USA, sturdy and safe but in need of a lot of TLC. Dave spent a year refitting her, I left work, and we spent the next three years exploring from Nova Scotia and Maine in the summers, down the East Coast and in the winters to Florida, the Bahamas, Cuba, Mexico and Honduras. Perhaps not surprisingly after that we felt we needed a break from sailing so sold her and returned home.

We fell in love with Turkey... then Greece, Albania, Montenegro, Croatia, Sicily & Sardinia. We had become Mediterranean sailors

One year later we bought another Varne 27 and decided to explore the Baltic. We knew nothing much about the Baltic, someone told us about the CA, and they certainly did and do, so we joined up. And that was probably the best sailing decision we ever made. We scoured the CA House library for charts and information, read all the Baltic newsletters and joined their talks and parties. We spent a long summer in the Baltic exploring Sweden, Finland and returning via Estonia and Germany.

We planned a more extensive cruise the following year... and then went to the "Not the Boat Show" party in January 2008. Loudly bemoaning the fact that the boat we really wanted, but couldn't afford, was a Hallberg-Rassy, I got a tap on the shoulder, a quiet word in my ear, and contact information for a Hallberg 352 currently in Turkey and for sale at



a reasonable price. Another piece of serendipity: she had been commissioned and owned until then by other long-standing CA members, Philippa and Stephen Southall.

Our plan was to sail *Rozinante* across the Mediterranean that summer, the Atlantic that winter, pick up our Caribbean sailing and maybe sail right round the world. But we fell in love with Turkey so delayed the plan for a year. Then we sailed to Greece, explored the Aegean and the Ionian, sailed on up to Corfu, Albania and Montenegro. Explored Croatia over two seasons, returned to the Aegean, and then cruised Sicily and Sardinia. We had become Mediterranean sailors.

The CA was with us all the way. Making ourselves known to any boat flying the CA burgee, taking part in two of Suzie Root's Med rallies, attending numerous informal meet-ups and rallies and making numerous friends. And all the time supported by the huge store of information on the CA website and *CA Captain's Mate*, in the library, on the Mednet Forum, and among all the people we met.

In 2021 we made the sad decision to sell *Rozinante* and hang up our sailing gear for good. Time waits for no man! So we started to tell friends we were leaving the CA... no boat... no point.

Then out of the blue I was asked if I'd like to become a section secretary for the Med Section. This is a great way for us to stay in contact with the sailing world, and also to give back to the CA which has given us so many interesting and enjoyable years.



Lakka



In the fifth part of our series in which CA members write about their favourite port or harbour, **Keith Pettican** visits Lakka on the Greek island of Paxos

Paxos is just 7nm south of the southern tip of Corfu, a six- to seven-hour passage from Gouvia, which is the largest marina on Corfu. The passage can be broken, with options to stop on Corfu itself or hop across to the mainland en route.

The island is just seven miles long and three miles across at its widest point. The resident population of Paxos is only 2,300 but it welcomes more than 200,000 visitors each year. Despite this, it never feels crowded. The number of visitors is restricted because the island has no airport and unlikely to ever have one due to its topography, so the only way to reach Paxos is by the limited ferry service from Corfu. Similarly, cruise liners are unable to visit the island.

My very first experience of Lakka was in 1996 when I helped a friend get his boat down to Greece and our first Greek landfall was Lakka, and “wow!!” I continued to visit most years on friends’ boats till 2010, when I took my own boat *Broke Aweigh* there for the first time,

and the thrill of entering the bay on my very own boat was no less than 14 years previously. I have continued to visit regularly, most recently in September of 2021, and nothing has changed much during that period apart from a handful of discreet villas having been built into the hillside.

There will often be several CA members in the harbour, so a perfect place to meet up

Why is it my favourite harbour? The beautiful crystal-clear water, the well-sheltered circular bay, the picturesque waterfront and a great selection of tavernas. More often than not I arrive there with the intention of staying a couple of nights and am still there a week later, such is its pull.

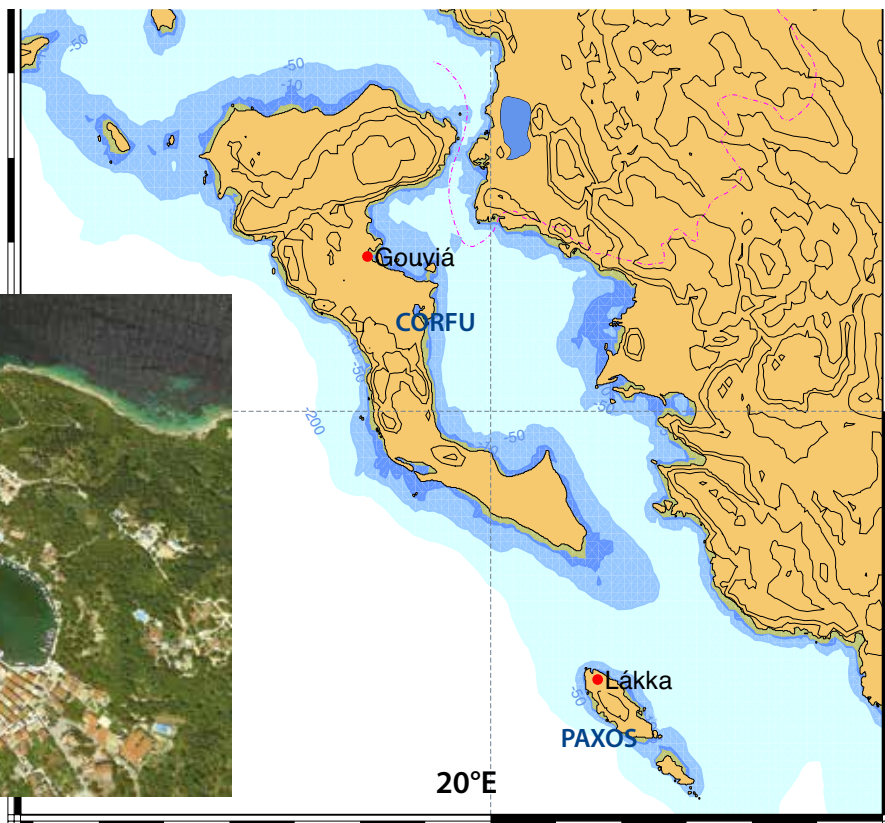
A couple of years ago I had my family, including two teenagers, on board with

the intention of a week’s cruise around the northern Ionian. Having arrived in Lakka on Day Two, they asked “why can’t we stay here?” They could swim off the boat or one of the three swimming beaches, paddleboard or take the inflatable and improve their rowing or driving skills.

As you enter the bay, the depth reduces rapidly from over 50 metres to four or five metres over no more than 100 metres distance. The water colour changes from dark blue to turquoise and every stone on the sandy bed can be seen. Once in the bay you have the option of the town quay or simply dropping your anchor.

The narrow-ish entrance to the bay provides shelter from all but the north-east, so is perfectly safe the majority of the time. In high season more than 100 boats of various shapes and sizes can be at anchor, and is generally not a problem unless an unexpected breeze picks up – not all are as vigilant with their anchoring as they could be. ➤

Do you have a favourite harbour, anywhere in the world? If you'd be willing to write between 500 and 1500 words about it and have some photos, please contact editor@theca.org.uk



The town quay can accommodate up to about 15 boats depending on size, and has access to water and electricity. More often than not there will be several CA members either at anchor or on the town quay, so it is a perfect place to meet up with other members.

The quay can become a little stressful mid morning when up to three or four largish tripper boats arrive, and up to 1,000 visitors descend on the village for a couple of hours. Come the afternoon, and siesta time, the village returns to its tranquil state until the evening when visitors from the villas around the bay and skippers and crews arrive for their evening meal and inflatables crowd the quay.

Back to why it is my favourite harbour. The town has a selection of mini-markets, butcher and other shops including a wonderful hardware store where I am sure they have all that you would ever need if you could find it among the stock, some of which must go back years, if not decades, not helped by the fact that the owner is probably as old as some of the stock and doesn't speak a word of English.

The town is compact around the harbour, with alleyways linking the two village squares and very limited access for vehicles. In the evening, traffic is banned completely.

Over the years I have got to know

some of the taverna owners and always receive a warm welcome on my return. Despite its size Lákka has a great range of tavernas offering everything from simple Greek snacks to the closest Greece comes to fine dining, all at a very reasonable cost. One of my favourite tavernas maintains the Greek tradition of inviting guests into the kitchen, where the owner makes great theatre of describing all the freshly cooked and cooking dishes he has available. It's always a difficult decision as to where to eat.

It is very difficult to recreate the attractiveness and the draw of such a lovely harbour and bay in writing but hopefully the photos will do justice to my choice!



Keith Pettican supports the running of the CA's Med section. Until recently he sailed extensively in Greece & Turkey in his Bavaria 33 *Broke Aweigh*.

