



BOB GARRETT

The CA's Blue Water Section encompasses the Caribbean. This is Anguilla.

A Crucial Support Network for Long-Distance Cruisers

by Peta Stuart-Hunt

The Cruising Association provides its more than 6,300 members — cruising sailors and motorboat owners — with an unrivalled support network and information hub wherever they are in the world. Here is an overview of this global resource that represents members in 43 countries, highlighting what it can offer Caribbean-based sailors.

The Cruising Association (CA) is a not-for-profit association dedicated to those who cruise on yachts, both sail and power. Its extraordinary mass of first-hand information, collected and shared by its members, is of unequalled quality, quantity, breadth and relevance. Its members are encouraged to share their experiences and knowledge — pros and cons — as well as recommending the fun stuff, to get the most out of your cruising, wherever you may be.

The organisation also provides members with an array of benefits and discounts, services, information, help and advice. Founded in 1908, it has become a favourite resource for many of the best-known names in sailing. Sir Robin Knox-Johnston says, "Whether you want to circle the globe or just enjoy the satisfaction of navigating yourself, friends and family safely and enjoyably from one place to another, I commend the Cruising Association to you."

The Blue Water Section is your hub

The CA's Cruising Sections cover the Mediterranean, Baltic, Biscay, Celtic, Channel, European Inland Waterways, North Sea, and Blue Water areas; the latter encompasses the Caribbean.

The Blue Water (BW) Section came into existence in 2010 after six CA members met on a beach in Barbados after an Atlantic crossing and decided that a worldwide section would be a useful adjunct for CA members who had set their horizons farther afield than Europe and the Mediterranean, where various other sections already existed. It is now run by Sandy Duker, assisted by Mike and Anne Hartshorn.

BW members are encouraged to keep in touch with each other as they sail away from home waters. Separate e-mail groups are set up, allowing those cruising in the same areas to exchange information and share experiences, help each other if needed, and meet up in port to have a drink and swap stories.

It's also possible to use the CA's Section Forum to ask questions which can be answered by BW members who have already "been there, done that." All this is also backed up by the CA's proprietary app, Captain's Mate, containing all the cruising reports posted by members about harbours and anchorages around the world, as well as the Find a Friend and discount information which are more recent enhancements to this clever piece of technology.

Run annually, the Atlantic Crossing (East-West) Group is the largest group in the



BERYL CHAMBERS

The Captain's Mate App lets you automatically download and store thousands of cruising reports.

BW Section, with 32 CA member yachts having crossed between November 2019 and March 2020. Some were on rallies and others were sailing independently. Updated information lists are regularly sent out to this e-mail group along with advice regarding paperwork needed, long distance provisioning, shopping ideas and recipes, lists for first-aid kits and much more.

BW members mainly sail from the Caribbean to the United States to cruise the East Coast during the Caribbean hurricane season. Others pass through the Panama Canal to sail the Pacific, Australasia, Asia, eventually returning to the UK or the Med to complete a circumnavigation in anything from two to ten, or even 20 years.

Honorary Local Representatives

CA members have access to a worldwide network of Honorary Local Representatives (HLRs). They help with practicalities such as sourcing emergency repairs, finding moorings, securing visas, translations, explaining local customs and bureaucracy, and providing advice on provisioning, land transport and excursions. If they can't help you themselves, they'll know someone who can.

HLRs in the Caribbean region include Christopher Lloyd in Tortola, BVI, Commodore Eschrich in Havana, Cuba, and Debbie Armstrong in Varadero, Cuba. Anita Sutton is our HLR in Grenada, Richard Bayle is in Guadeloupe, Jose Mendez is in Puerto Rico, and Jesse James is our go-to guru in Trinidad & Tobago (Jesse's advice and regular updates have been much appreciated in keeping CA members advised throughout Covid lockdown). Additionally, Marina Resort Waterland in Para, Suriname, offers a CA discount and has been helpful to members who couldn't get into Trinidad during lockdown.

CA members Richard and Brigitte Hunter, who usually keep their Moody 46 in Grenada, returned to the UK in late May after three months in lockdown in Guadeloupe. They too have nothing but praise for the local HLR, as well as the islanders. As Richard reported to the Moody Association, "After some initial quite stressful times sorting out the boat, insurance, accommodation and getting our daughter and her family, including their 18-month-old baby, home, we loved it. This was really due to the amazing hospitality, helpfulness and friendliness received from many people but not least from the CA HLR in Guadeloupe, Richard Bayle. Not only did he show me how to prepare the boat for a hurricane, but he also gave me six old T-shirts to wrap round old car tyres, rescued from the dump, to protect the boat; definitely above and beyond the call of duty of an HLR!"

The sharing of information is the lifeblood of the Association and is encouraged at all times. Cruising enthusiasts join the CA for many reasons, but all in all, the CA is worth adding to your list of go-to organisations if you're planning to cruise any distance in the short or longer term.

Visit www.theca.org.uk for more information.

Reasons to Join the CA

- The exclusive Captain's Mate app lets you automatically download and store thousands of cruising reports, find a nearby member or one of our Honorary Local Representatives, and access hundreds of discounts. You can download reports when you're online for offline use when sailing.

- You have access to online and offline information and advice about cruising in small boats.

- 16,000 member-only pages on the CA website encompass just about everything you ever need to know, and Forums cover every topic you can think of.

- You can access a network of Honorary Local Representatives.

- You can enjoy an extensive lecture and social activity calendar (Covid permitting).

- CA House, ten minutes from the City of London in Limehouse Basin, offers you overnight accommodation at competitive rates in its riverside cabins.

- A Crewing Service matches skippers to crew and vice versa.

- You have the opportunity to fly the CA's blue ensign.



Members Richard and Brigitte Hunter praised the CA's Honorary Local Representative in Guadeloupe.



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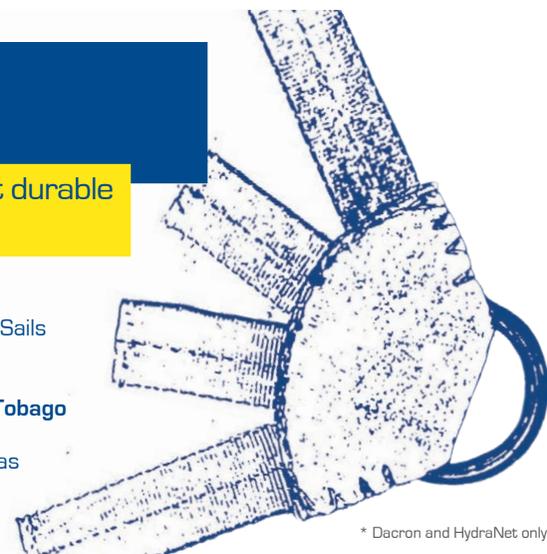
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