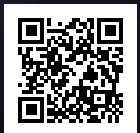
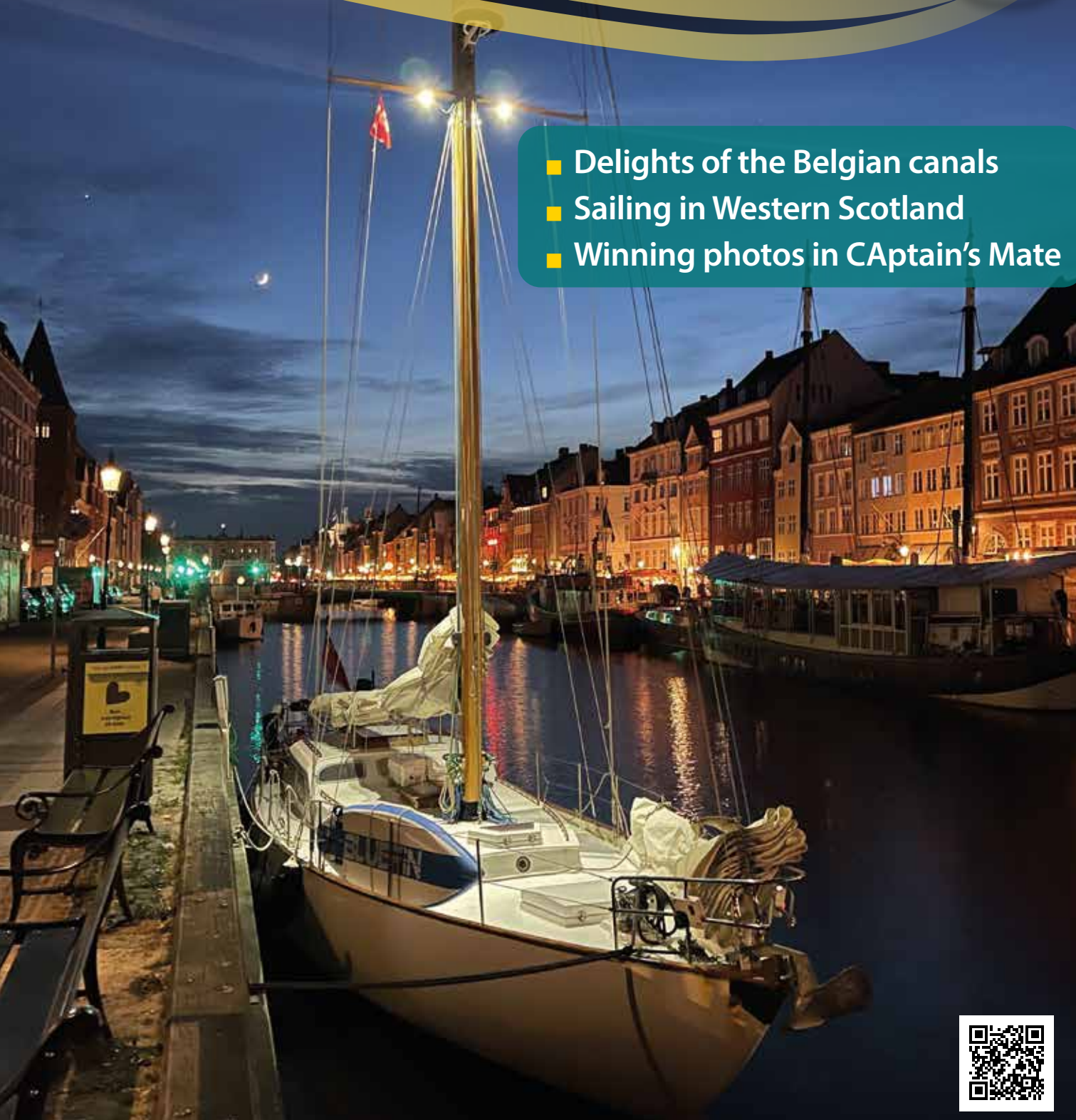




# Cruising

[www.theca.org.uk](http://www.theca.org.uk)

- Delights of the Belgian canals
- Sailing in Western Scotland
- Winning photos in CAptain's Mate



# Springing into action

The CA's President, **Derek Lumb**, looks back at a successful winter season, and forward to some changes that could help us all

I am writing this sitting in my boat in Penzance harbour. External factors directed an early start to the season but I have to say that it has not been the mild, balmy April we have had in some recent years. Nevertheless we have had some decent sailing since we left the Deben on 12 April and so far motored less than 40% of the way, which is pretty good for us. So, if we are sailing, then the CA winter season is over and we are swinging into summer sailing mode.

The winter season has, I think, been very successful thanks to a lot of work by volunteer organisers and speakers for which I thank them all. Events have been well attended and well received. At the same time a number of Sections have run Zoom talks giving all CA members a chance to see some fascinating speakers. That said, much of the value of our physical talks is in the chat around the event – questions to the speaker and follow ups in the bar – and so, if you can, I urge you to try and attend in person, you will get more out of it that way.

On a related topic, the CA makes much of its online offering but, in my experience, perhaps more important is the community, the members of the CA. Over the years my cruises have been enriched by meeting fellow CA members which has been both convivial and enlightening. I well remember meeting Roger King and Kristin Saunders, joint authors of the 100-page *CA Guide to Southern Sweden*, in the Vasserhamn marina in Stockholm. Over a beer or glass

of wine or two they gave us a host of really useful tips on where to visit out of the hundreds of possible locations in the Stockholm archipelago, greatly enriching our cruise. The lesson is: fly your CA burgee, and talk to others who you see doing the same.

## *I urge you to think about accessibility when submitting reports to Captain's Mate*

Last June, Camilla wrote a superb article in *Cruising* entitled *Not so accessible*. This set out starkly some of the severe challenges faced by sailors who are not as fortunate as us when trying to use harbours, marinas etc. Things which most of us fail to notice or even think about – until we too need them. CIDG has taken this on board and is including fields for accessibility information in the next major release of *CA Captain's Mate*, but it takes time to get this right, and we are unlikely to see this until late in the year, which means that we will have lost a sailing season in which to garner information. *CM* works by members submitting cruising reports, from which the editors pick out information about facilities for inclusion in the items in the "Info" tab. Can I urge you to think about accessibility when submitting cruising reports and to include any information that you think would be useful if someone with limited mobility was



looking at places to visit.

Finally, we have seen a number of changes at CA House. After last year's problems with the cabins, they are all available again and we now have an online booking system for them, accessed via the website. You have all been sent an email with details of this but if you have lost it, or not kept your email address up to date in Your Account information, accessing the online booking is easy. Simply log in to your account and go to the Accommodation page at [www.theca.org.uk/services/accommodation](http://www.theca.org.uk/services/accommodation), where you will see a new **BOOK ONLINE NOW** button. Our cabins offer comfortable accommodation, just a short distance from central London. All cabins are either double or twin, ensuite with a shower. Amenities include in-room tea/coffee making facilities, a hairdryer and Wi-Fi. Priced at £60 for single occupancy and £70 for two with free onsite parking, our cabins offer excellent value.

We have seen a number of staff changes this winter. I mentioned in a previous report that Jeremy has now retired but in the last quarter Jennifer Mitchell, our Membership Secretary, has retired after nearly 30 years working for the CA. Tony Palmer, our accountant/book keeper has also left and we thank them for all that they have done for the CA and wish all of them a long and happy retirement.

Those of you who have attended any event this winter will have met Mandie Hart, the new events administrator, who has made a fantastic start in proving support to the many volunteers who organise events at CA House – welcome to her. Also joining us is Sam Barham who, among her other duties, is taking on the role of Membership Secretary and again is a very welcome addition to the team.

On that note, I wish you fair winds and smooth seas – enjoy your sailing!



*The fixed-angle ramp at Brighton Marina – always slightly too steep for a wheelchair*



*This photo and right, Colin Wright*

Around 11% of CA members, including former presidents and former editors of this magazine, now own motorboats. It's a growing trend. Two members, **Gilbert Park** and **Dennis Knight** ask:

## Why not have a motorboat section in the CA?

**Q** You've both been members of the CA for quite a few years. What made you come up with this idea?

**Gilbert:** It's important to note that we are not in competition with sailing boaters, but in co-operation. After all, we all share the same water be it inland, coastal, offshore or ocean. And the CA's services and member benefits such as CAptain's Mate, RATS, discounts and so on are relevant to us all.

Even so, there is a perception that the CA is mostly targeted to owners of sailing vessels and this could well deter people from joining the Association. That would be a pity as here in the UK there is a lack of clubs for motorboaters other than the owners' associations for particular makes of vessel. Some sailing clubs do have motorboat sections, such as Chichester Yacht Club, and that is the sort of model the CA could follow.

While we have more in common with sailing cruisers than we have differences, we do have some issues and needs that are different. Dennis and I think it's time to recognise that more could be done to meet those different needs. And we believe having a motorboat section might also make the CA an even stronger organisation and voice in the UK.

**Q** What would a motorboat section offer?

**Dennis:** Firstly, we envisage a dedicated forum for answering queries and sharing information.

Learning would be an important part with talks, or possibly a seminar, covering items of specific interest to motorboaters such as engine maintenance, oil analysis, antifouling, safety, dealing with asymmetric decks etc. These could be held in CA House, but also broadcast on Zoom.

We would also hope to have a cruising programme in due course. Gilbert and I sail on the UK south coast and would be happy to organise cruises in company in our area, particularly for beginners looking to build confidence. Many new to motorboating are nervous about, for example, crossing the Channel the first time or venturing out of their familiar local coastal area. In time we would hope motorboaters in other areas would develop their own events in conjunction with their Sections.

**Q** Next steps?

To begin with, we would just like to hear from any members interested in joining or helping develop this initiative. The address is [motorboats@theCA.org.uk](mailto:motorboats@theCA.org.uk)

### Dennis Knight

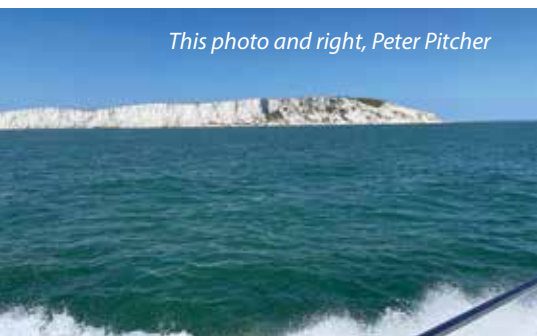
started his sailing career dinghy racing in National 12s, International 14s and Flying Fifteens. In 1999 he and his wife joined the ARC Atlantic crossing in their Oyster 435 and spent some years cruising the coastal waters of the USA, Alaska and Canada. In 2008 they crossed the Pacific from Mexico to French Polynesia, New Zealand, Australia, Indonesia and Mediterranean, returning to UK waters in 2016 some 56,000 miles later

He now cruises UK coastal and European waters in his Nimbus 365 *Shilling*.



### Gilbert Park

learnt to sail 50 years ago in a Mirror dinghy in the West Country and since then has sailed mostly in that region. With advancing age, he decided to switch to motorboats, first exploring the same area then going on to the Western Mediterranean. Following Covid and Brexit, he is back in the UK.

*This photo and right, Peter Pitcher*



## National Coastwatch is CA chosen charity

Council has decided that the National Coastwatch Institution (NCI) should become the new chosen charity for the Cruising Association, following the sad demise of the Jubilee Sailing Trust last year.

We support our chosen charity by encouraging member donations and support at the Southampton Boat Show. You'll find more info about NCI in the advert in each edition of *Cruising*, or go to [www.nci.org.uk](http://www.nci.org.uk).

The NCI is a voluntary organisation keeping a visual watch along UK shores. Currently almost 60 National Coastwatch stations are operational and manned by over 2600 volunteer watchkeepers around the British Isles. National Coastwatch watchkeepers provide the eyes and ears along the coast, monitoring radio channels and providing a listening watch in poor visibility. They are trained to high standards to deal with emergencies, offering a variety of skills and experience.



### A picture is worth 1,000 words

The 2023 CAptain's Mate Photo Competition, across the categories of Pilotage, Essence of place and Useful info, resulted in three winners and 12 runners-up photographs.

One of the best was this shot (*above*) by Nicholas Boxall. Over the winter of 2022-23, Hurst Spit at the western entrance to the Solent extended to provide a hazard for boats. Nicholas added a new entry to CM to upload his photo, which he captioned "Taken from my drone circa 300ft looking south west, February 2023."

But we still need more images! **Why not upload your photos, to be in with a chance of winning the 2024 contest?**

This lovely image (*right*) of Nyhavn in Copenhagen, Denmark, won the "essence of place" category. The photo was taken by **Andrew Bristow**. Unfortunately, due to a technical issue, we credited the image incorrectly in the Newsletter – our apologies.



**CREW:** "My experience so far has been coastal which is very enjoyable, I would also like to experience offshore and night sailing; sailing in warmer climates is also very appealing. I am a fast learner, adaptable and sociable and would welcome short and longer sails - UK and further afield. My day job is as a Yoga teacher and I am happy to share practice if this appeals. I am also a clinical hypnotherapist along with other holistic therapies."

## Crewing Service: still time to find crew

The CA's Crewing Service puts skippers in touch with crew and crew in touch with skippers. Now that the season is under way the regular crew meetings have come to an end, but you can still find crew or a skipper by posting your details on our crew and skipper listings; the quotes here give a taste of what's on offer. For an urgent requirement, it's also worth posting on the Crewing Service Forum.

Find out more at [www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome](http://www.theca.org.uk/crewing/welcome) and if you have any queries please contact Malcolm Davidson at [crewing@theca.org.uk](mailto:crewing@theca.org.uk)



**SKIPPER:** "We will be starting a 'trade winds' circumnavigation in November 2025 and are looking for like-minded couples to join us for one, or more, of the various passages of the trip. Crew will be us and one couple for each passage of one to four weeks duration. Starting with the ARC+ (Las Palmas to Grenada via Cape Verdes) in November 2025, and working our way westwards thereafter. We'd like omnivores (without dietary needs please) with sailing experience, who will be confident with night watches. Ocean experience is not necessary."



# NEWS FROM RATS

*The sMRT ALERT is a new MOB device from Wescom which complies with the new regulations, transmitting on VHF DSC as well as AIS. Its GPS receiver uses both GPS and Galileo*

## New regulations for personal MOB devices

Do you have an MOB device that transmits a position over AIS? Under new regulations, already in force in some parts of Europe and coming soon to the UK, it must also transmit via VHF DSC. If it doesn't, you must stop using it.

Over the past few years there has been a significant increase in the variety of PLB (Personal Locator Beacons) and MOB (Man Overboard Beacons) available on the market. These devices are typically attached to one's lifejacket and are activated, either manually or automatically, when the lifejacket inflates. They then transmit position information to aid in the rescue of an overboard sailor.

These devices fall into two primary categories:

- 1. PLBs** that are effectively personal EPIRBs and transmit the location of the overboard sailor to **overhead satellites**, which then relay the position to the global network of marine search and rescue services. These devices are typically used by single-handed sailors who cannot rely on a nearby boat to locate them.
- 2. MOBs** that transmit the location of the overboard sailor via AIS (Automatic Identification System) and so notify nearby vessels of the position using the **AIS VHF** channels. These devices are typically used by sailors who are on a boat with other crew members who can use the AIS system to locate the overboard sailor.

In 2019, the World Radiocommunication Conference revised the regulations for Autonomous Marine Radio Devices (AMRD) to reduce the amount of AIS data that could clutter a navigation display and hence improve safety of navigation. This means that MOBs (AIS devices) will have to transmit notifications using **VHF DSC as well as using AIS**. Under the new regulations, only these devices may use the VHF channels assigned for AIS:

- AIS Man Overboard devices using VHF DSC (Class M devices)

- Mobile Aids to Navigation (e.g. mobile ocean data acquisition systems or temporary marking of wreckage or underwater operations)

Other AMRD, such as fishing buoy markers or diver-locating markers, are not allowed to use the standard AIS channels and have been assigned a new, lower-power AIS channel.

The new regulations are **not yet in force in the UK**. Ofcom has informed RATS that it will be looking at how to implement the new regulations in 2024. But in other European countries, in particular **Belgium, Denmark, Italy and Germany**, the new regulations are already in force and devices that don't meet the new regulations are illegal in these countries. The regulations will come into force in the **Netherlands** at the beginning of 2025.

RATS recommends to CA members that, if you own a MOB device, or are planning to purchase one, make sure it is capable of sending a VHF DSC message in addition to using AIS. Most of the devices now on the market already meet this specification and those that don't have been discontinued by manufacturers. However, RATS has found some online chandleries still offering non-DSC-capable MOB devices for sale, so CA members should avoid buying these.

Note that some PLB devices on the market, such as the Ocean Signal PLB3, communicate position via the search and rescue satellites *and* via AIS. These devices are not currently covered by the new regulations even though they don't transmit a VHF DSC message. However, as one manufacturer has told RATS, "this is a fudge" and the regulations committee is still reviewing these devices.

Robert Sansom



### Rocket launches in the North Sea

Do you plan to cross the North Sea this June to the north of the Dogger Bank? As mentioned in March's *Cruising*, the German Offshore Space Alliance plans a series of rocket launches from 18 to 29 June, with the launch platform at 55° 46.0' N 003° 22.7' E. The latest info is on the [North Sea Net forum](#) on the CA website.

### An Evening with RATS 2024 proves a success

The 2024 Evening with RATS proved a success, with a good audience at CA House and many more members and non-members watching online. The webinar attracted attendees from Australia, Denmark, Faroe Islands, France, Guernsey, Ireland, Isle of Man, Italy, Jersey, New Zealand, Spain, Turkey, UK and the USA.

Topics covered were:

- Recreational Craft Directive/CE marking
- Orca update
- Extending Schengen stays
- Sustainable Hydrotreated Vegetable Oil (HVO) and diesel

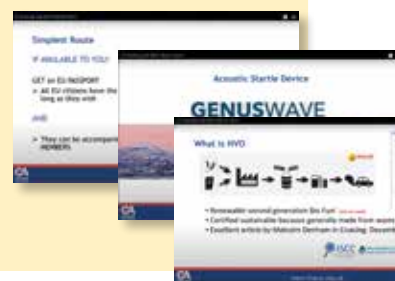
...plus a summary of technical projects. After the presentations on the specific topics the team responded to a selection of questions from the audience.

#### Did you miss the event on 21 March?

It's now available on the CA website under

**Member Services >**

**Videos**, or via a link from the CA homepage. *Note that the video does not include the Q&A session.*



## All crew IDs must now be reported via SPCR before entering UK

In April, the UK Home Office changed the process for the submission of Pleasure Craft report (SPCR), with "permission to travel" checks by the skipper now required for all crew. The changes applied **from 18 April 2024**.

The skipper of a pleasure craft arriving in the UK from outside territorial waters is responsible for examining the passport or other identity document of all members of crew and passengers on their vessel before departure from a port outside UK waters. They must then certify (as part of the SPCR) that these documents are those of the relevant person on the vessel (by photo match) and that they are valid (in date etc) and meet the UK entry requirements.

All British and Irish passport holders are automatically acceptable, as are all those having right of entry as granted by a visa to visit and stay in the country.



To use the SPCR system the skipper needs to create an account with Border Force and for each voyage must submit electronically a description of that trip with details of crew,, using the online system at [www.spcr.homeoffice.gov.uk](http://www.spcr.homeoffice.gov.uk) (see QR

code, left). This will be acknowledged with a unique voyage ID and will give the Universal Permission to Travel (UPT) if all on board are acceptable to enter the UK. If for whatever reason, one or more aboard are **not** permitted to enter the UK, the skipper will be asked to complete additional checks, or may need to call Border Force or Customs (HMRC).

There are no other changes mentioned to the regulations as set out in [www.gov.uk/guidance/sailing-a-pleasure-craft-that-is-arriving-in-the-uk](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/sailing-a-pleasure-craft-that-is-arriving-in-the-uk). Boats must still fly the Q flag from the limit of territorial waters (12 miles offshore). This can be lowered when reporting formalities are completed, which we understand to mean on receipt of the UPT.

Later on this year, additional changes to the system will be introduced, including an Electronic Travel Authorisation (ETA).

Mike Eastman



## RATS advice: Avoid carrying diesel in cans to EU

Over the last few months RATS has been reviewing the advice we have given regarding the carrying of spare diesel in cans when entering the EU and we have concluded that **this should be avoided if at all possible**.

The Istanbul convention allows temporary importation of fuel held in a vessel's main tanks between different customs jurisdictions without any customs liability. This is not an EU rule, and applies to all of the signatories to the convention which includes UK and EU. However, while the convention does mention lubrication oil for normal servicing, it does *not* mention spare fuel in cans. It can be argued that these are outside the protection of the Istanbul convention and potentially liable to import duty and/or customs action for evasion of duty.

We previously understood that the SOLAS V safety requirements allowed a skipper to carry spare fuel if needed for the safety of their vessel, and that this would override customs issues. However, on careful review we have concluded that the SOLAS V requirements may not give

shelter from possible customs actions.

Our advice is now that it is best to **avoid carrying spare diesel in cans** when entering the EU or NI from GB. Any fuel subsequently put into cans for onward passage after entering the EU **must be white**, and receipts should be kept to show that full duty was properly paid.

Under the SOLAS V safety requirements, a skipper must ensure the safety of their vessel, and specifically must ensure it has sufficient fuel for a voyage. This may mean carrying spare fuel. The skipper must therefore recognise that any fuel held in cans on arrival may create a liability if the vessel is inspected by customs officials. The skipper can help to justify their actions by having a **prepared written passage plan, and receipts** to show that full VAT and duty were paid on the diesel in the cans.

As an added complication, some EU customs officials may regard the use of dyed/red diesel purchased in GB and held in cans as an attempt to avoid paying duty on fuel used by pleasure craft. (GB is the only place where dyed/red diesel is available tax-paid). Therefore, it is better

if any **spare fuel in cans is undyed/white**, again with detailed receipts. This will also avoid any residual red dye in cans if they are subsequently refilled with legal white diesel once in the EU.



In summary, although we are not aware of any recent cases of action by EU customs officials over dyed/red diesel in main tanks, there *are* compliance risks if they find dyed/red diesel in spare cans. There are also potential environmental risks from carrying and transferring diesel in cans, so we would suggest that this should be avoided if at all possible.

You can read more in the **Use of Marine Diesel** pages in the **Reg & Tech** section of the CA website.

Trevor Page





Moorings in Brugge

## Completing the circle

Vanessa and **Julian Dusek** had taken *Pluto*, their Southerly 115, from Calais to Westhoek in Belgium. In summer 2023 they travelled back to Calais, and this log of their adventure won the Love Cup

Fate has a funny way of playing jokes on you; this time she saved it until the last 200 metres of our trip, which had otherwise had the usual challenges and delights of inland waterway cruising.

### Westhoek

Earlier in the year we had brought *Pluto*, our Southerly 115, from Calais to the marina at Westhoek, which is on the Plassendale canal just inland from Nieuwpoort, an excellent marina which is also the base of Le Boat charters. Although *Pluto* is a yacht she has a lifting keel and only draws 0.8m with it up, though even that is insufficient to stop us occasionally running aground. An interior steering position as well as the one in the cockpit makes her the ideal compromise for inland waterway cruising. We usually only use it when it is pouring with rain. "*Il pleut comme la vache qui pisse*" as they say in France. And it often did.

Going north from Westhoek there are a

lot of bridges and in summer, because of the hire fleets, they only open two-hourly, so you go through in a mini-convoy. It's all monitored by cameras and works smoothly. You leave the little Plassendale canal and join the large commercial Canal Oostende to Gent. Approaching Brugge, one bridge lifts a complete road sideways on rockers and then entering the suburbs of Brugge is an awful lock. At this point all boats are under central VHF control.... or not in control as you will read.

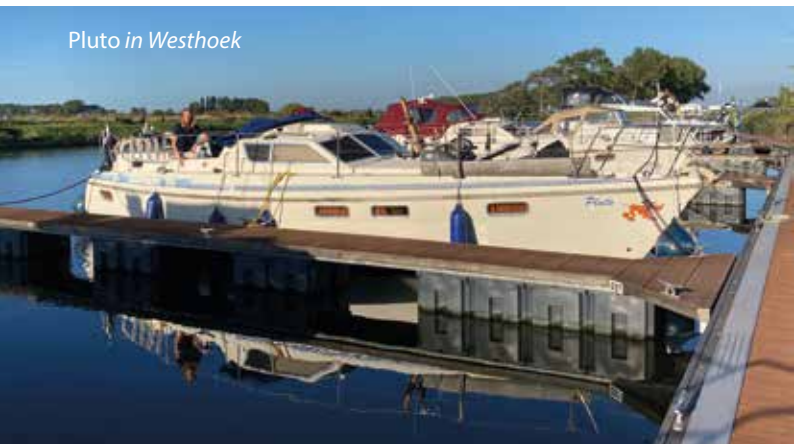
The awful lock. That Dampoort lock. With over a thousand locks under our belt we have met many awful locks but this is one of the worst. It is D shaped and big; very big barges moor alongside the straight part, in which case smaller craft like ours go to the curved part where there is nothing but three ladders and hanging wires to hang onto. Bollards are situated ashore for barges, a long way apart, and inaccessible from below. A motorboat

came in ahead of us and took up three-quarters of that side behind another one, leaving us moored by a single bow rope to a hook. Motoring gently ahead against it as a "running moor" held us in place, but we rose as the lock filled and the water swirled forcibly. I watched as the pulpit ground into the concrete and the bow navigation light crunched and was destroyed. Then the motorboat insisted, with a lot of shouting, on reversing, forcing us against stone pillars. Thence the short journey to the Coupure marina was uneventful, except for watching the bow thrusterless boat performing incomprehensible manoeuvres at the entrance.

### Brugge

The harbourmaster has to lift a footbridge to let you in, and as we entered he instructed us to moor facing out and then took our mooring lines welcoming us warmly. This is a lovely marina, only

*Pluto* in Westhoek



Brugge's amazing road bridge rises on concrete rockers





Gent moorings and right, the historic waterfront



ten minutes walk from the centre of this beautiful city. Unbelievably we were only charged €13 a night. Brugge needs little description, being a very popular tourist destination, but it was surprising to find that after leaving the crowded streets, the museums and cathedral were almost empty. We ate at the nearest good restaurant and returned to the boat that night in a torrential thunderstorm, soaked but very happy.

The canal around Brugge carries some very heavy commercial traffic. The harbourmaster lets you out of the marina and informs traffic control, who will then guide you out through the bridges and locks. They manage barges going in opposite directions as well as the occasional pleasure boats, all on VHF channel 18. We travelled in a very slow barge convoy until at one lock we were waved through and released on to Gent.

## Gent

When we got to the outskirts of Gent we chose a narrow canal that took us 10km into the centre of Gent, where we met a concrete bridge with 2m clearance. We retraced our steps and it rained and rained and rained as we entered the ring canal, Ringvaart, that we should never have left. We were looking for the Lindenlei marina in the centre of Gent and only needed to find the entrance

to the river Leie. Thanks to the notes on CAPTAIN'S MATE we found it easily. Like Brugge, this marina is only ten minutes from the very centre of the city. The rain had ceased, and we were met by the harbourmaster who was expecting us and guided us into a box mooring where a very jolly man unexpectedly helped with the mooring and invited us for drinks on his boat; he was fellow CA member James Littlewood.

We prefer Gent to the very popular and touristy Brugge. Our berth was five minutes away from a bakery and ten minutes away from excellent shops, delicatessen, fishmonger and butcher. The "absolute must see" item is the 1432 Gent Altarpiece, the Adoration of the Mystic Lamb by Van Eyck, considered as a masterpiece of European art and one of the world's treasures.

The magnificent 12th century Gravenstein castle is impressive, and we enjoyed watching a colourful regatta as well as an excellent meal at a Michelin-recommended restaurant, the Lys d'Or, where the wine waitress, in her early 20s, impressed us with her knowledge and her saying she had already over 400 bottles in her cellar. We would happily have stayed on another week, again at €13 per night.

Now it was time to turn towards home,

Calais, and we set off up the river Leie, a very pretty river. In the environs of Gent there are some magnificent houses along the river bank at which we gawped, some very modern, nearly all 20th century.

## Deinze

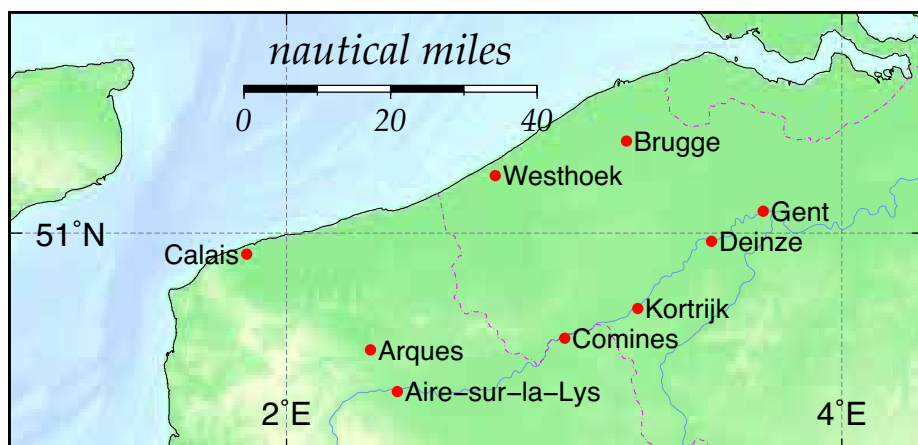
Marinas on the inland waterways are unlike those at sea, in that they may just be pontoons projecting out into a river or canal from the bank, as at Deinze. Our berth was typical: pontoons with space for two boats in between.

There was an empty space next to us and people on a very wide charter boat decided to fill it, which they did. With squashed and displaced fenders and much barging and pushing and revving they eventually got in, snapping the cord holding our guard wires on the way. It's funny how some nationalities are more pushy than others. There is a lovely beautifully maintained park at Deinze and it was a joy to walk around it.

## Kortrijk (Courtrai in French)

Kortrijk is quite a large town and was at the centre of the flax trade, the trade which made Flanders so rich. The main river runs through the middle of the town, but there is a parallel cut where one can moor. It is said to be crowded, but we were the only visiting boat there in September and the harbourmaster could not be raised. Fortunately there was still electricity unused on the pontoon and we had no need of any facilities other than a good restaurant. There was one with a Michelin star only ten minutes walk from the boat and they had a table. We had landed on our feet, not knowing we were going to one of the most precious restaurants we had visited.

The building was stark, modern; a Francis Bacon faced you as you went in, and there were only five tables, and white bare walls. A sole waiter greeted us, the menu was in Flemish (Dutch)





A couple of the impressive properties fronting the river Leie



with no option of another language or a choice. Not knowing the Flemish culinary terms, we did not know what we were getting. Translating *Gerookte biet, Munt en Umeboshi* into smoked beetroot, mint and umeboshi would not help much. The courses were small, the fish dish was one mussel with a spoonful of delicious sauce, a carrot split into two was another (*Wortel Tempura Basilicum*). There was no wine list; the waiter would choose wine by the glass for you.

The next day it really rained, *la vache* was fully exercised and water dripped into the cabin through hitherto unknown places. Eventually it stopped and we visited the Flax Museum which had favourable comments on *Captain's Mate*. It is an excellent museum, a model for others. Curators of some of our prestigious museums and galleries should go there to see how to display things. We came to understand why the Leie/Lys was known as the golden river.

Just before La Deûle, where the commercial traffic swings off to go through Lille, is the Comines Lock. Coming from the north you now enter Wallonia, and after we moored in the lock, the keeper requested that someone should visit him in his eyrie with the boat papers. Vanessa, who speaks fluent French, climbed up the lock ladder and then the stairs to the office where all the boat details were entered. From now on and for ever we can cruise Wallonia. On the other bank we had been in the Flemish part of Belgium, for which we had had to pay a fee, and as we were going into France we had to pay VNF another fee; three different departments in the space of two miles.

## The River Lys

Beyond the Deûle the Lys (Leie in Belgium, La Lys in France) becomes very rural, with branches overhanging the water. It also becomes shallower and weedier. At Merville a bridge by the lock was broken and would be until next

year. Only boats with a low air draft such as ours could get through. Beyond the lock the river bends to the left and there were some red buoys which, as we were going upstream, we left to port, and ran aground in 1.0m. The keel was already up as the depth finder was showing very shallow water. We extricated ourselves by reversing, with some difficulty, as we were fairly well stuck. Then we noticed there was a triangle of buoys with two green starboard ones to the left. We went between the green and the red in about 1.2m depth.

I decided to check our water intake filter. Rather than try and get to the bank where there was a lot of thick weed, I did a "Southerly anchor" and dropped the keel. With the keel down we draw over 2m, and we were in 1.5. *Pluto* stopped mid-river and I emptied the filter, which was almost completely clogged with mud. Then it was a simple journey to our destination, Aire-sur-la-Lys, to a very rickety pontoon in a side arm. A very smart new marina is due to open in 2024.

## Les Fontinettes

Thence we were on the home run, Fontinettes lock held less fear now that we have found the sliding bollards. It is a deep intimidating lock. Arques remains a charming little marina, and from there it is one day to Calais. Not long ago this was an extreme intelligence test. The locks at the Calais end of the canal only open an hour or two either side of high water. The Canal de Calais has five lifting bridges and a lock at the inland end. In 2015, four bridges were under one department's control, the lock and the other bridge another. There was a lunch break from 11.45 until 14.15. The canal is 30km long. When do you depart in order to arrive in time to catch the Calais sea lock? Also it was under-used with shallow patches; we have run aground there too.

It has changed now. Big barges use the canal and, acting as dredgers, keep the depth constant. All the bridges and lock

are under the control of one travelling VNF employee from Dunkerque. All communication is by mobile phone, but maintaining the mystique of the canal, the number varies frequently.

## Entering Calais

From Arques to Calais was uneventful, and with a great sense of satisfaction we picked up a buoy in the Calais Arrière-Port. Access to the marina is via a lifting road bridge, which opens on the hour two hours before and three hours after high water. We decided that rather than rushing for the last opening we would lie to a buoy overnight, enjoying the gentle rocking of the swell and observing the night life ashore. Well wine and dined, we slept well, and woke to get the penultimate bridge opening in the morning.

That was when fate played her hand. I looked out of the cabin window and saw nothing but thick fog. It was not even possible to see a boat moored next to us, let alone see where the entrance to the marina might be. Fog horns boomed mournfully out at sea as we waited for the last opening, resigned to another seven hours on the buoy, and we had run out of beer. Ten minutes before the appointed opening time we heard a fishing boat's engine start; the fog was lifting slightly and we could vaguely see him. We slipped our buoy, chased after him and as we neared the bridge Fate smiled, the fog miraculously lifted, sunshine shone through and in broad daylight we were able to slide on to a pontoon.

Julian and Vanessa Dussek sailed their Southerly 115 away from British waters in 2006 and cruised in the Mediterranean and then European inland waterways. Julian is a retired cardiothoracic surgeon and a past President of the CA.



## Looking for the King of Norway

Cruising from Sweden to the Western Isles of Scotland, **Bjørn Riis-Johannessen** came across a reference to the grave of the King of Norway. Finding it on Canna was just one highlight of the trip, and his log won the Hanson Cup



Loch Drumbuie.

Close relations between Norway and Scotland have existed for many centuries, through the last war and to the present day. It was with surprise we learned about the grave of the Norwegian King on one of the Small Isles.

We left Sweden late April for a three-month cruise to visit Shetland, Orkney, the Outer Hebrides and the west coast of Scotland. We wanted to experience this highly recommended cruising ground, for the first time for the skipper, and also hoped to catch up with a bit of Scottish/Norwegian history.

### Preparations

We sailed from Sweden to Lofoten and back last year and *Adélie*, our Aphrodite 37, was well tested and up for a bit of offshore cruising. Paper charts and Clyde Cruising Club Sailing Directions were all onboard and the Antares Charts loaded on the iPad. Jackie had handed in notice that her sailing days were over, so it was to be another cruise with many crews, from the CA Crewing Service and various crewing websites. Two- to four-week periods seem to work best, so with skipper and two crew, this meant I had to line up some 10 crew members for the trip. With four from Britain, one from Sweden, two from Spain, one from Switzerland and one from Latvia, a fair bit of time and travel planning was required, but it all worked out remarkably well.

### Sweden to Shetland

The plan was to sail across to and around

the southern part of Norway, continuing on to Bergen and from there cross over to Shetland, taking the shortest passage across. An uneventful passage across to Norway and a fresh SE got us to Kvitsøy near Stavanger in good time. After a rest day at Kvitsøy, the forecast predicted a steady SE, force 6-7, gusting 8 over the next 2-3 days, so there was a quick change of plan – drop Bergen and head straight off to Shetland from Kvitsøy.

It was a great crossing, not counting a crash jibe just after leaving Kvitsøy, the skipper's fault. It ripped the main sheet traveller off the rail, but fortunately there was no damage that couldn't be quickly repaired. This part of the North Sea seemed remarkably empty. Our only sighting over the 220-mile crossing was two oil platforms and a couple of support vessels.

We started off with two hours on/four hours off, on autopilot, but the wind soon picked up and we decided two of us should be in the cockpit, with two hours' hand steering as we judged the conditions too heavy for the autopilot, two hours' stand-by in the cockpit, food, drinks, etc and two hours asleep. For the last 12 hours or so we were pretty steady at 30-35 knots wind and with three reefs in the main and only half the genoa out, we were still logging 7-8 knots. *Adélie* is not a fast yacht and we were pleased to have logged an average of 6.3 knots by the time we reached Lerwick after a 35-hour crossing.

We were planning on three days at Lerwick and a visit to Scalloway museum was high on the list. Refurbished and reopened in 2012, it covers the history of the Shetland Islands and, of particular interest to us, the Shetland Bus operation during the Second World War. This started out with fishing vessels travelling back and forth between Shetland and Norway, supporting the resistance movement with people and arms and taking refugees back to Scotland. The fishing vessels were no match for the Germans when discovered and eventually they were replaced by three American submarine-chasers. The Shetland Bus carried out more than 200 missions and brought 400 tons of weaponry, explosives and other supplies over to Norway.

After a day with a bit of maintenance and some local sightseeing (read: pubs), we left Lerwick in the afternoon, to sail down to Grutness Voe anchorage by Sumburgh to shorten the passage to the Orkneys a bit. It was quite noisy, being right next to Sumburgh heliport with all the offshore traffic.

### Shetland to Ullapool

After an early morning departure from Grutness we arrived at Westray Harbour late afternoon. It was flat calm most of the way with a couple of hours under sail at the end. Pleasant fishing port with a couple of shops and a fishmonger. Westray proudly claims to have the worlds shortest commercial flight, out to Papa Westray. The scheduled flying





*Above, leaving Sweden, heading for Shetland*

time is 1 min 30 sec, record 53 seconds. It would be nice if all flights were that short!

It was a short hop down to Kirkwall. Now we were properly entering unknown waters for a Baltic sailor, with serious tides. The tidal streams around the Orkneys require careful planning and we came down the Eday Sound on the start of the southerly stream a **lot** faster than we had expected, drifting at about 9kt. Exciting stuff for a beginner.

We had a rest day at Kirkwall, full of Norse history with St Magnus Cathedral in particular, founded in 1137 by Earl Rögnvald, under the authority of the Archbishop of Nidaros (today's Trondheim). Here we found our first Norwegian King. King Haakon IV Haakonsson was buried here in 1263.

Kirkwall has a well-equipped marina and visitor pontoon with a fuel dock. The local CA HLR's details were posted and we took the opportunity to get advice for the next tidal gate, Eynhallow, which should not be attempted at anything other than close to slack tide, particularly if there was a bit of wind. We had no issues there, following the advice.

From Kirkwall, our plan was first to go to Loch Eriboll, east of Cape Wrath, but there was a bit of weather on the way and a local yachtsman warned us it could be difficult to get out of the loch in adverse weather, so we decided instead to get around Cape Wrath and on to the west coast directly. So, Kinlochbervie it was to be next. It was a good choice and we spent a couple of days there waiting out a blow.

A couple of more stops down the coast and we arrived at Ullapool, for our first crew change. Jonas from Sweden and Nina from England disembarked, with Darta from Latvia and Lorena from Spain arriving. There was a new marina under

construction, but while we were there, the harbour pontoon was only available for water and drop-off. For longer stays, it was buoy mooring and dinghy landings, and it gets pretty choppy there when the westerlies come down the loch.

## Ullapool to the Hebrides and Oban

We were not sure if we should head on south, east of Skye, or head out to the Hebrides, so we decided to stop at Isle Martin just outside Ullapool and see what the weather might be up to. This is a delightful place to visit. St. Martin is reputed to have established a monastery here around 400 AD. Modern-day activities include sheep farming and a flour mill. The island now belongs to The Isle Martin Trust. There are some lovely walks and a small, but pretty decent pontoon that takes some four boats. Anchoring, it's probably a good idea to use a tripping line.

The decision about where to head next was made for us. With a nice southerly, out to the Hebrides was the obvious choice and we headed for Loch Mariveg, just south of Stornoway. Loch Mariveg is a great anchorage. We found a good spot in the inner part of the loch and were treated to an osprey flying above us with the telltale fish catch carried longways, landing by the nearby nest.

Next afternoon we arrived in Stornoway and caught up with more Norse history. Norwegian Vikings arrived in the area around 750 AD and the islands were part of Norway until the mid-1200s. Various chieftains ruled and enjoyed their summers raiding the coast. It was not a particularly peaceful time. As Wikipedia says, Magnus Barefoot, one of the kings at the time, "ran, with varying success, an aggressive and expansive Norwegian foreign policy". A later king Magnus gave up on the Hebrides in 1266 and handed



them on to the Scottish king.

The weather had now properly settled on a high and for the next three or four weeks we had amazing weather. Not a lot of wind, but perfect for exploring the coast. From Stornoway, we sailed through the Shiant Islands, enjoying the amazing bird life, to Loch Claidh, rated as one of Scotland's 10 best anchorages. From there to Tarbert, Loch Maddy, Loch Skipport and Loch Boisdale. It is difficult to rank the various places we went to, but among the anchorages, it would take a lot to beat Loch Skipport.

In Tarbert, you find the Isle of Harris distillery right next to the pontoon. This is the first legal distillery on the Isle of Harris and they produce an excellent Isle of Harris Gin, infused with sugar kelp. They also produce whisky, the Hearach Single Malt, which unfortunately was not available until September. We could not wait four months to have a taste, so that would have to be for the next visit. Magnus Barefoot came to Tarbert and had his longship carried across the isthmus to the west side of the island to demonstrate his possession of the isles.

Another crew change was approaching, so it was time to head back towards the mainland with a stop at Canna, one of the Small Isles. Of all the places we visited over a six-week period, I would probably put Canna on top. A well-sheltered harbour with visitor buoys and anchorage. There are excellent hiking opportunities, bird life – lots of puffins – a great pub/restaurant serving local produce from sea and land and stunning nature. There is also a surprisingly well-stocked, self-service community shop.

Evidence of Canna's history goes back to neolithic times, with some small cellars dug into the ground. There is historical evidence from the Bronze Age

Adélie at anchor in Callas Mor, Loch Skipport



and during the Iron Age a hill fort was constructed on the western side of the island. Of particular interest to us was the period under Norse rule. Canna was part of the Kingdom of Isles, a Norwegian crown dependency. A pamphlet about the island points to *The Grave of the Norwegian King*. Slightly puzzled by the determinate form – the Norwegian King was alive and well when we left – we decided to check this out. There are several stone structures at Canna that might be old burial sites. We went to look for the grave and eventually found it, but not without some difficulty.

I have not been able to find any historical record of a Norwegian king buried at Canna, so it was more likely a local chieftain. But, whoever and whatever he was, they certainly found a spectacular spot for him, on a small peninsula with views over the sea towards Skye.

I was so taken with Canna that we came back twice more to enjoy this spectacular island. Sadly, there was a less idyllic side to Canna and some of the other islands: huge amounts of plastic rubbish, mostly related to the fishing industry. There were signs of efforts to clean this up, but a long way to go!

Time was starting to run out before our next crew change and we had to head on to Oban. We stopped at Tobermory for a much-needed laundry session. Tobermory is picturesque, but crowded and pretty busy, so our preference on several occasions was to stay at anchor in Loch Drumbuie an hour or so north-east of Tobermory. This is an excellent anchorage with many options for where to stay, depending on wind direction.

### Hebrides loop from Oban

Angela and William from Grimsby embarked and over the next few weeks, we continued to enjoy what I believe must be the best of what's on offer on the west coast of Scotland. Passing west of Rum, we were treated to a pod of some 50 dolphins following us and playing around the boat. Quite a sight!

The good weather stayed with us for a while, and we spent more time around the Small Isles and Skye, where we stayed at Loch na Cuilce in Loch Scavaig. We took due note of warnings of downdrafts even in settled weather, but couldn't have asked for better conditions, swimming in 19° water, kayaking and hiking the nearby hills.

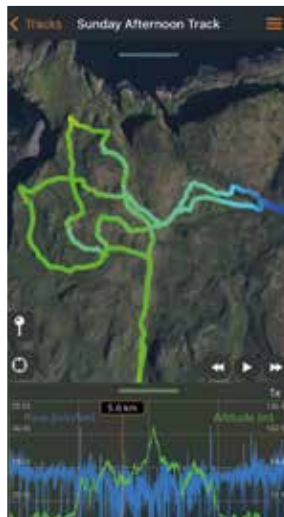
Another crew change was coming up and after a short stop in Oban, Kerrin from Switzerland and Paula from Chile joined. Paula is a frequent visitor on *Adélie* and was taking a break from her job as a chef at a fine dining establishment in Spain. She didn't waste much time in getting going on more seafood delights!

After several weeks of unbelievable weather, change was clearly in the air, as we found out heading back out to the Hebrides. We sat the wind out for a couple of days in East Loch Tarbert before we headed back east to find more sheltered water east of Skye, stopping in Rona and Loch Moidart before heading through the Caledonian Canal.

We spent a couple of days at Inverness and then set off on the final leg to Egersund, south Norway, about 350 nm. Very little wind from the start, on the nose, then a lot of wind. Appalling rain, which managed to get even worse, but we finally made it in a bit over 60 hours, all soaking wet. We spent the next couple of weeks cruising up the Norwegian south-east coast and down the Swedish west coast, finally reaching Gothenburg at the end of July with 2,320 nm distance logged in about three months.



Right, the grave of a Norwegian king on Canna, and right, our afternoon's search for him



Bjørn Riis-Johannessen lives in Geneva and keeps his boat, an *Aphrodite 37* acquired in 2018, on the Swedish west coast. He and his wife Jackie have sailed extensively in the Baltic region and on several sailing expeditions in the Antarctic where Bjørn has organised and led sailing/ski mountaineering adventures. In 2022 Bjørn took *Adélie* from Sweden to Lofoten and back and in 2023 to the northern isles, Hebrides and Scottish west coast.







## Golden memories

**Cathy Brown** is writing a history of her yacht club, 50 years old this year – and celebrating her golden wedding. The memories are great, but there's still plenty to look forward to

I have spent the spring compiling a history of our yacht club, 50 years old this year. Coincidentally Richard and I celebrated our golden wedding, too. Thoughts of the last half century have been inescapable.

The history project has been more work than I expected when I volunteered for it, but really enjoyable, as it has brought back so many memories. We weren't quite founder members, but we weren't far off. Haven Ports YC was born shortly after the opening of Suffolk Yacht Harbour on the River Orwell – one of the first of the new-fangled marinas springing up in response to the boom in yacht ownership sparked by post-war prosperity.

We are fortunate to be “boomers” – part of that “you've never had it so good” generation which enjoyed the dawn of the Welfare State and seemingly unlimited career opportunities. Yacht ownership, which before had been the privilege of the few, became open to the many – boosted by the runaway surge in house prices. Banks were keen to lend against all that unearned equity.

*Our Hustler 25.5 had very analogue instruments, no running water, no fridge and a gas hob but no oven*

So we bought a yacht. It seemed the last word in extravagance, but in fact was pretty basic: a Hustler 25.5 with a 6hp engine and a single battery, which powered the whirling depth sounder, Mini Seavoice VHF, and very analogue instruments. There was no running water, no fridge – not even a cool box. There was a gas hob, but no oven. But she was a great sailing boat and taught us to love life afloat.

It's hard to define the ridiculously addictive appeal of sailing to people who aren't affected by it. It's the combination of so many things – fresh air and exercise, contact with the great outdoors, wonderful scenery and wildlife, ever-changing weather and tide. And in those days, the fascinating challenge of navigation, without the reliable electronic position fixing we now take for granted.

I went to night school to learn how to do it and found the combination of art and science appealing. You can study as hard as you like, but you never quite get to the bottom of it. You can do all the sums, plot all the vectors, but there are still no guarantees. The tide may not match predictions, the weather may be nothing like the forecast, throwing out all those

*Hustler 25.5 Boxer of Burnham: a bit basic, but a brilliant sailing boat*



calculations. A strong element of educated guesswork still has to be applied.

First Decca and then GPS, with computerised, digital instruments, came along, and took away the uncertainty. You don't have to be able to navigate at all now. Just press “track” on the autopilot and the black box will work out set, drift, leeway and all the rest, and send the boat in an unerring line to the next waypoint.

The whole boat is likely to be rather more comfortable, too – with hot and cold running water, fridge, central heating, and a lavishly-equipped galley. In fact it is all a bit less adventurous these days, but what my musings over the last few weeks have led me to realise is that the appeal of being out on the water remains fundamentally the same.

We still enjoy the challenges of passage making, the delights of safe anchorages, watching seabirds and seals and stunning sunrises and sunsets. And, perhaps most of all, we hugely appreciate the fun and the friendships, not only within the yacht club which has been so central to our lives for half a century, but also of all the people in cruising grounds near and far who have taken our lines and shared useful advice – or a welcoming drink – not least under the burgee of the CA.

**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.**

