



# Cruising

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- Channel rally report



# Cruising from outside the EU

In his last message as CA President, **Derek Lumb** realises how much has changed in the past three years for cruising sailors travelling to and from the UK

The first week in June was National Volunteer week and I was pleased to record a message of thanks to all the CA volunteers who keep everything going and I think greatly enrich the cruising experience for all of us. I would like to take this opportunity to say thank you again to everyone who gives their time, knowledge and experience to the CA, whether it is in a formal role, undertaking a specific project or responding to a forum thread, submitting information to CAptain's Mate or writing an article for *Cruising*.

Given that so much is done by volunteers who are keen sailors it is perhaps not surprising that much new work slows down during the summer, as most of us go sailing.

## Help us to improve the website

That said, improving our website is a top priority. A lot of preparatory work is currently under way. A significant number of you responded to the web survey in the autumn of last year which helped identify what we need to improve, but as we move forward we need to understand how we can improve it and to do this it would be enormously helpful to know **what you use the CA site for**. Why did you log on to the site? Did you find what you were looking for? Was it easy to find or tortuous? Did you discover things that you were unaware of? How did you go about looking for the information you were seeking? Did you use the menus, go straight to the search facility, or did you do one and then try the other? We would be delighted to hear from any of you about your experience of using the site so please drop an email to me ([president@theca.org.uk](mailto:president@theca.org.uk)) with your experience.

## UK leaving the EU

This is my last report as President of the CA, and looking back the landscape for cruising sailors has changed considerably over the last three years. When I took over in November 2021, the impact of the UK's departure from the EU had largely been delayed by Covid, and we were having

fortnightly meetings (at 0830) to lobby for changes in the post-Brexit rules.

We pursued three topics:

- to secure an extension to the deadline for UK residents to return their boats to the UK without paying tax
- to include within this boats which had been bought in the EU during the UK's membership of the EU but which had never been to the UK
- to prod HM Government into seeking to negotiate an extension of the 90 days we are allowed in Schengen, compared with the 180 days allowed for EU citizens visiting the UK.

Our efforts were made more difficult by the revolving door of ministers under the Johnson and Truss administrations, but we were successful on the first (in conjunction with the RYA); we failed on the second, which I think was unconscionable given that most people caught by this had acted on advice from HMRC, later rescinded; and on the third it was eventually made clear that they had not the slightest intention of raising the issue with Schengen, and they told us this in a tone which suggested that it was unpatriotic to want to stay in the EU for more than 90 days!

At the time, the CA moved on to unpicking the practicalities of getting extended visitor visas in those countries which allow them. In this, the Sections took the lead, I think providing excellent information. I must single out the Channel Section, the Baltic Section, and Judy Evans (who holds no formal position in the CA) whose forum posts on securing a French Visitors' Visa have been invaluable. With a new government this may be a topic worth returning to.

Under the withdrawal agreement, yachts owned by UK-resident owners which were present in EU waters on the

date of Britain's withdrawal, retained the right of free circulation. In Greece, however, the interpretation by the Greek authorities was that, if such yachts were removed from the EU for even a day, this right was lost, and they were then required to sign in and out with the police at every port visited – a huge inconvenience! Chris Robb and later Nigel Cuthbert again held no formal position, but took the lead for the CA on lobbying the Greek authorities to get the law changed to stop this unreasonable (and unlawful under EU law) practice. In the last few weeks we have learned that they have been successful and the law has now been changed.

I cannot end without a mention of RATS who have stepped up in these turbulent times. Among a wide range of activities, they have answered literally hundreds of member questions, mostly about the implications of Brexit. They have also provided high quality articles for *Cruising*, responded to many consultations regarding changes in UK waters, represented the CA in liaison with Border Force as well as introducing the Orca information service at a critical time

Finally I would like to end by thanking everyone who has supported me and the CA in the last three years and to give my very best wishes to my successor. It has been an honour to be your President.



Over Derek's three years as president, the UK's departure from the EU has been a recurring theme



## Cruising to and from France: the story so far

For those sailing to and from the EU, the UK's departure from the bloc brought about many changes. **Bob Garrett**, Joint Channel Secretary, looks at how the French authorities have tried to ease the pain for us all

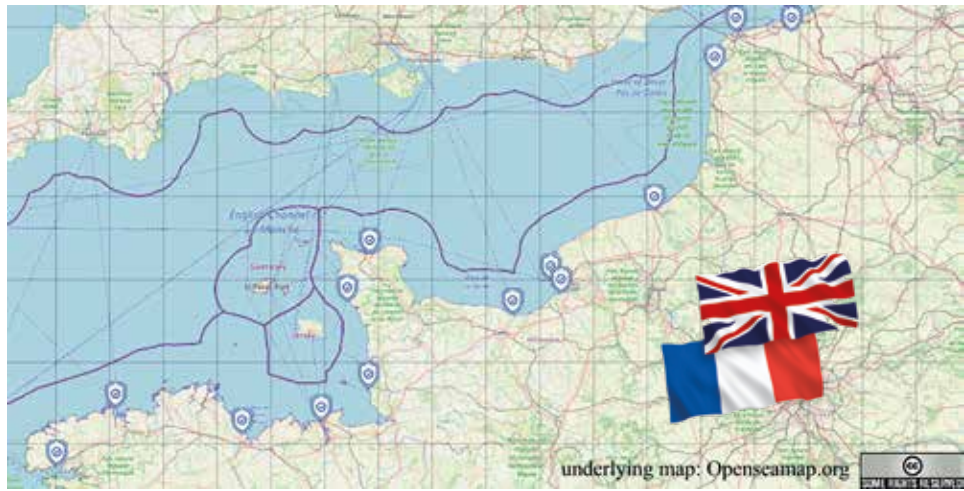
Even before Britain left the EU, any boats arriving in the Schengen area from the UK (and other places, including the Channel Islands) were supposed to check in by submitting a "Schengen form". However, French officials never enforced this for boats from the UK (presumably because we were in the EU) nor the Channel Islands (although they were never in the EU). On only one occasion was I asked to do this, and subsequently another local official responded that the first officer was new and had "*not yet understood the difference between what was necessary, and what was required*"!

When the UK finally left the EU, we knew that boats travelling between the UK/Channel Islands and the EU would need to check in and out formally, which meant more than a simple Schengen form. It meant personal checks (particularly on length of stay) as well as passport checking and stamping. All this could only be done by the immigration officials at Ports of Entry (PPF). On the French Channel coast, with its proximity to the UK and Channel Islands, and with well over 50 ports or harbours but only 13 ports of entry, this was going to be a problem not just for visitors but also for local officials, marinas and businesses.

In 2021 much work was going on to identify a way around the PPF "bottleneck", thanks to pressure from marinas and businesses as well as local officials. At first it was hoped that a general programme could be put in place to permit entry and exit processes using an online or emailed form. Unfortunately this was not deemed acceptable for general use. Covid resulted in little progress being needed that year, so not much happened until 2022, when two ports on the Brittany coast did get agreement from their local immigration officials and approval from above at regional and national level. Meanwhile the same form template was put in place to speed the process up at PPFs, and a few ports established other local agreements by which officials would visit the port to check in/out visitors who had submitted forms by email.

In 2023 the system used by the two Brittany ports was extended to five ports on that coast under the same local immigration office; and there was pressure from other ports wanting the same. In 2024 this system finally received approval from the French government for a more national roll-out. A list of ports was published under a new "protocol" which permitted these ports to apply for agreement from their local immigration officials to handle entry and exit via these emailed forms.

This process, which has been in place since 2022 for



Map showing ports of entry (Points de Passage Frontalier or PPF)

an increasing number of ports, has not been without complications: entering a PPF and departing from a "protocol" port (and vice versa) was generally not acceptable, crew changes when a protocol port was used could be difficult, and travelling onwards to other countries was uncertain.

This increased flexibility, its implementation, variations and subsequent clarifications could be seen as a source of uncertainty and doubt. However, I believe the overall effect has been very positive for those of us cruising the Channel. Without them we would have been limited to entry and exit only at PPFs. This would have been extremely restrictive, so we should be grateful to the French authorities for interpreting the EU Regulations in this way. We should also be grateful to the HLRs, marina management personnel and others who have pushed for this, communicated it and now have the extra work it entails.

The big question now facing us – and the French authorities and ports – is what happens after the EU Entry Exit System (EES) and the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) go live. These were both approved by the EU when the UK was a member. Their implementations have been much delayed; EES is imminent and ETIAS expected before summer 2025. Will it be possible to find an acceptable process to avoid again now being limited to PPFs? A fingerprint scanner is promised in every harbour and various options have been floated, but we don't know what will happen in practice.

### Timeline

**31 January 2020** The UK leaves the EU. Entry to France is only possible through ports of entry (PPFs), where passports must be stamped in and out

**March 2020 to early 2022** Covid restrictions severely reduce foreign travel for cruising vessels

**2022** Two Brittany ports introduce an email form for entry; the same form is used in some PPFs. In some locations officials start to visit marinas

**2023** The Brittany system is extended to five ports

**1 June 2024** French government introduces new "protocol" for listed ports where the form can be used. There is still complexity around port or crew changes

**10 November 2024** Planned date for introduction of EU Entry Exit System (EES) with fingerprint scanners

**Spring 2025** Expected date for the European Travel Information and Authorisation System (ETIAS) to go live



Left, an active enhancer and above, a good passive reflector. Images: Echomax. Right, an AIS aerial. Image: Digital Yacht

# The best way to be seen

## Do you really need an active radar reflector?

Recently, a member asked RATS which radar reflector he should fit to his boat. This topic is probably third in the list of contentious boating topics (after “Flag Etiquette” and “Which anchor is best”) but with this subject at least we benefit from some empirical, laboratory-based testing that is hard to refute.

### Regulations

The publication of the Maritime and Coastguard Agency’s Marine Guidance Note (MGN) 349 in September 2007, as amended on 4 October 2022, repeated the recommendation that all UK-registered boats should carry a radar reflector, saying:

- All small craft should correctly and permanently install a radar reflector, either passive or active (powered), that meets British Standard BS EN ISO 8729:1998 (ISO standard 8729:1997); and.
- Owners of vessels under 15m overall length should, where practicable, fit the most effective and appropriate reflector for their circumstances.

This guidance repeats the requirement laid out in SOLAS Chapter V Regulation 19.2.1.7 for all ships of less than 150 gross tonnage to, if practicable, “have a radar reflector to enable detection by ships navigating by radar at both 9 and 3 GHz”. This applies to all boats whatever their country of registration.

The guidance note was issued after the 25ft sailing yacht *Ouzo* was run down by a P&O ferry off the Isle of Wight in 2006, resulting in the loss of all three of her crew. Search for **MGN349** to read the note, and **MAIB report 7/2007** to read the report.

Note the words used:

- **permanently** – not just carried in a locker and hoisted when conditions dictate (so might be forgotten).
- **practicable** – in the event of an incident, the owner without a reflector might be called upon to justify why it was not practicable to install a reflector.

Studies were carried out at the time of the *Ouzo* investigation,

the most comprehensive being one carried out by the defence contractor QinetiQ. RATS has not itself carried out a technical evaluation, so our guidance relies on the QinetiQ report, which is now 17 years old. However, there seems little progress or advance since then, so we consider that it is still relevant.

### Radar frequencies

Two bands of radio frequencies are used for radar: S-band and X-band. All ships of 300 gross tonnes and passenger ships of any size are required to fit X-band radar. Ships over 3,000 gross tonnes must fit radar sets for both bands. X-band (9 GHz) is used for collision avoidance and S-band (3 GHz) for deep sea ocean use to penetrate fog, snow, rain etc at distances over five miles. Leisure vessels use X-band.

### Radar reflectors

There are two types of reflectors: active and passive.

#### Active

These are known as Radar Target Enhancers (RTE) or radar transponders. They are normally mounted at the top of the mast and are powered. When “painted” by a ship’s radar they transmit a more powerful response (hence ‘transponder’) on the same frequency which the ship’s equipment will detect. Echomax appears to be the only company producing these devices making two variants, a single band, X. and dual band, SX. These sets do not draw a huge amount of power (23mA when listening, less than 200mA when transmitting). They have the benefit of an audible alarm (which can be switched off) that sounds when a radar signal is detected; useful when in remote areas, almost pointless when there are lots of ships around.

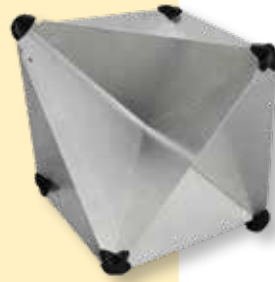
For inshore use, leisure boats can fit the single, X-band transponder, but ocean-going boats, and any boat which traverses waters used by vessels over 300 gross tonnes (cross-Channel, North Sea or Biscay, for example), should use the dual band version covering X- and S-bands.

Disclaimer: products & services are not endorsed by the CA nor, unless stated otherwise, have they been tested by the CA

**Prices** (approximate, as at July 2024):

<b>Echomax EM230</b>	<b>£145</b> – see <a href="http://www.echomax.co.uk">www.echomax.co.uk</a>
<b>3Lenzz*</b>	<b>£330</b> – see <a href="http://3lenzz.com/en">3lenzz.com/en</a>
<b>Octahedral reflectors</b>	<b>£15 - £30</b>
<b>Tube-type reflectors</b>	<b>£20 - £30</b>
<b>Echomax Active-X RTE</b>	<b>£525</b>
<b>Echomax Active XS RTE</b>	<b>£775</b>
<b>Class B AIS Transceivers</b>	<b>£260 - £1000</b>

\*This product only appears to be on sale in the Netherlands and Germany.



Left, a tube-type reflector, not recommended on any boat, and above left, an octahedral reflector. Images: Lalizas. Above right, a 3Lenzz passive reflector, claimed to work better on a heeling vessel. Photo: 3Lenzz

Echomax acknowledges that the RTEs are not triggered by the lower-powered “broadband” radar sets fitted to smaller vessels until quite close (1.5 to 3.5nm). One of the earliest sets of this type will not trigger a response until less than 200m away.

**Passive**

These are many and varied. They are complex-shaped metal constructions with orthogonal corners which are designed to catch and reflect the incoming radar signal. This can be encased in a plastic surround. The larger the effective radar cross-section (RCS) area the better, though the shape is important. Their weakness tends to be that performance drops off when the vessel heels and must be installed correctly.

The Qinetiq report studied several, at various angles of heel, of which the Echomax EM230 and the Tri-Lens came out well (although the latter does not now appear to be on the market). The Firdell Blipper 210-7 came next with reasonable performance, but this company ceased trading in 2021

At the other end, the tube-type radar reflectors behaved really badly. As an example, even 1° heel angle was enough to reduce the strength of the return (already between 1/3 and 1/4 of the Echomax) by a further factor of about 4 (yet one frequently sees them taped to backstays, far from vertical, where they do absolutely nothing).

The QinetiQ report concluded that *Ouzo* would have been detectable if its reflector had an RCS of 10m<sup>2</sup> in X-band and 1m<sup>2</sup> in S-band. This size of reflector may have been impracticable given the size of the yacht, but skippers should fit the largest reflector that their yacht can sensibly accommodate.

**Radar bands: ranges and wavelengths**

**X-band radar** operates in the frequency range of 9.2-9.5 GHz with a wavelength of 3 centimetres. It is effective for detecting small objects at shorter ranges, such as buoys and small vessels.

**S-band radar** operates in the frequency range of 2.9-3.1 GHz with a wavelength of 10 centimetres. It is used for early detection of targets as it operates at ranges in excess of 20 miles.

**AIS**

It could be argued that having an AIS (Automatic Identification System) transceiver (a set that transmits the vessel location and details and receives AIS broadcasts from other vessels) is sufficient for collision avoidance and makes you more visible to ships. There are anecdotal reports that when crossing busy shipping lanes, ships seem to avoid sailing yachts more readily.

**Conclusion**

The “money’s no object” solution is to fit a dual-band active RTE, and a good quality passive reflector (for those times when, for whatever reason, your RTE is not powered (thereby satisfying the ‘permanently’ requirement) and an AIS transceiver. This gives you the maximum chance of being seen by another vessel electronically.

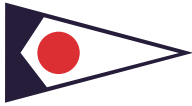
Fitting an AIS transceiver, without *any* radar reflector, would not absolve the boat owner from the legal requirement to permanently fit a radar reflector where practicable. It would be difficult to make the case that an owner was unable to fit a reflector on any sailing or motor yacht used for cruising.

If your budget does not stretch to all three systems, then to comply with SOLAS **you must fit a passive reflector** – and the best you can afford. Only a passive reflector continues to protect you on that dark night or unexpected thick fog in mid-channel when you’ve suddenly lost all your electrical power. An AIS transceiver is not an alternative. The QinetiQ report makes clear that tube-type reflectors have a very poor performance, so RATS would not recommend these on any member’s vessel.

As the MCA note recommends, your reflector should be:

- installed and orientated in accordance with its manufacturer’s recommendations – for example, in the “catch rain” position to increase its performance; and
- fitted as high as possible, ideally at least 4m above the water.

And finally, skippers should be aware that even with a radar reflector their boat may still not be readily visible on ships’ radars – and therefore fitting a reflector does not absolve skippers from the obligation to navigate with caution and maintain a proper lookout at all times.



## MOTORBOAT

The CA's new Motorboat Section aims to bring together motorboaters wherever they are and whatever type of motorboating they enjoy. We mainly aim to provide a platform to share information and updates.

The Motorboat Section is due to officially be launched at the Southampton International Boat Show on Monday 16 September 2024. All of the information and forums on the CA website and CAPTAIN'S MATE will be available to Motorboat Section members.

### Meet the team

The initial Section team are **Gilbert Park** and **Dennis Knight** from the UK, and **Machiel Lambooj** and **Remko Sinck** from the Netherlands. If any other CA members want to volunteer in developing the Section, please email [motorboats@theca.org.uk](mailto:motorboats@theca.org.uk).

### Cruising in Company

Cruising in Company gives boat owners the experience of a long passage (such as crossing the Channel or going to the Netherlands while enjoying the security and safety of completing the passage with experienced skippers. On arrival, you can also meet other motorboat owners and learn from them.

We will organise boats based on cruising speed, ensuring a comfortable experience for all. Boats with a cruising



Three Stars at sea by Stuart Bradley

speed of less than 19kt will be in one group and faster boats in another. Organisers will handle berthing and provide entry requirements advice, making the process stress free.

### Zoom talks

Some of the planned monthly talks are:

- **Stabilisers** Many motorboats would benefit from some form of stabiliser. Golden Arrow look at what is available.
- **Breakdowns** Sea Start (South Coast breakdown service) explains what commonly goes wrong, how to prevent it from happening and what you can do about it.
- **Still boating – never mind your age** Gilbert Park's top tips to keep

motorboating comfortable and safe as we get older.

- **Frisian Islands by motorboat** Machiel Lambooj and Remko Sinck present this scenic adventure.
- **Heavy weather for motorboats** An RNLI coxswain, an expert in going out in relatively small boats to help others, explains how to avoid trouble in heavy weather.
- **The Change** A series of 10-minute talks from those who have changed from sail to motor.

We are thrilled to launch the CA Motorboat Section and look forward to your participation and contributions!

**Motorboat Section Team**  
[motorboats@theca.org.uk](mailto:motorboats@theca.org.uk)

**CREW:** "I own my own boat and have many boating and teaching qualifications. I am looking for opportunities to meet new people and enjoy all kinds of sailing, and power-boating... though sailing is my fave :) I am particularly looking for trips during the UK winter months, and to do more significant ocean crossings. My last was from NE Brazil to Ushuaia on an Arctic exploration yacht. Most of my experience is coastal cruising and Europe."

## Crewing Service: start planning ahead

The CA's Crewing Service puts skippers in touch with crew and crew in touch with skippers. There will be regular crew meetings at CA House on the first Thursday of each month from October to April, starting on **3 October**, plus one Sunday meeting, and Zoom meetings. You can also find crew or a skipper by posting your details on our listings; the quotes here give a taste of what's on offer, or post 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 are looking to sail our Grand Soleil 46 back across the Atlantic to the UK from St Vincent in May/June 2025 (yes next year). All dates TBC and include prep time and fun on arrival.

- St Martin to Bermuda 845 NM. Two weeks, 6-20 May
- Bermuda to Azores 1800 NM. Three weeks, 22 May-11 June
- Azores to Plymouth 1200 NM. Two-three weeks 13 June-early July

We will sail with a crew of 4 or 5 - people can join for the whole trip or individual legs."

## From New Zealand to Fiji

**Stephanie Jones and her partner Clive Carrington-Wood sailed north from the Bay of Islands on their Ocean 60 schooner – and found that South Pacific sailing can turn your ideas upside down**

Our ten-day passage north in the Pacific Ocean (from 35°S to 17°S) was full of surprises! It was all new for us, and could be for many of CA members too. Among the many things we discovered were:

- Differences in seamanship practices
- It can pay to ignore the advice of “experts”, and weather forecasts
- Anchoring without any dry land in sight can be a great idea
- Opinions about sailing destinations vary according to who is giving them, and why
- Islands can appear one day and be gone tomorrow
- Something can be said for autocratic leadership, at least on remote islands
- There are still places in the world where you can sail for well over a week without another yacht in sight
- There are places more strict about imported food than New Zealand
- Tourist guide books are not necessarily for sailors
- Marina welcomes can be like your own private party entertainment, and...
- There is an alternative to being stuck up on pit-props if you want to go up on the hard.

In New Zealand hardly anyone flies an anchor ball when they drop the pick, and the motorsailing day shape (black cone, apex downwards) is so rarely used that they don't even sell one in Auckland. The charming and good-looking official from

the New Zealand Customs (an ex-naval officer) who checked us out on the start of our voyage in Opuia in the Bay of Islands had seen us cruising, and praised us for our attention to seamanlike detail!

Everyone we spoke with in New Zealand when we were about to set off was sucking their teeth and pulling on their beards when we announced we were sailing north to the islands in March. *It's far too early, you'll hit a cyclone, it's too dangerous – you must wait till late April or May.* But we enjoyed great sailing weather and did 183 nautical miles in our fastest 24 hours, without any scary wind conditions, on a long passage of 1,150 miles over ten days at sea. On our fastest days we flew our brightly-coloured downwind sails, a gennaker, and a gollywobbler – a quadratic sail flown courtesy of our schooner rig. The only drawback was that there were no other boats around to admire us!

The weather forecast said there would be no wind and we'd be motoring most of the time. How wrong could it be? We consulted several different weather prediction sources, including a malfunctioning and hugely expensive piece of onboard software. The sources of weather information also disagreed among themselves over wind direction and wind speed. The weather was never what we expected, but we averaged nearly seven knots and a maximum of 12.9, with motoring on only a few half days. Under engine, we use 3.5 litres of fuel an hour, so we hardly made a dent

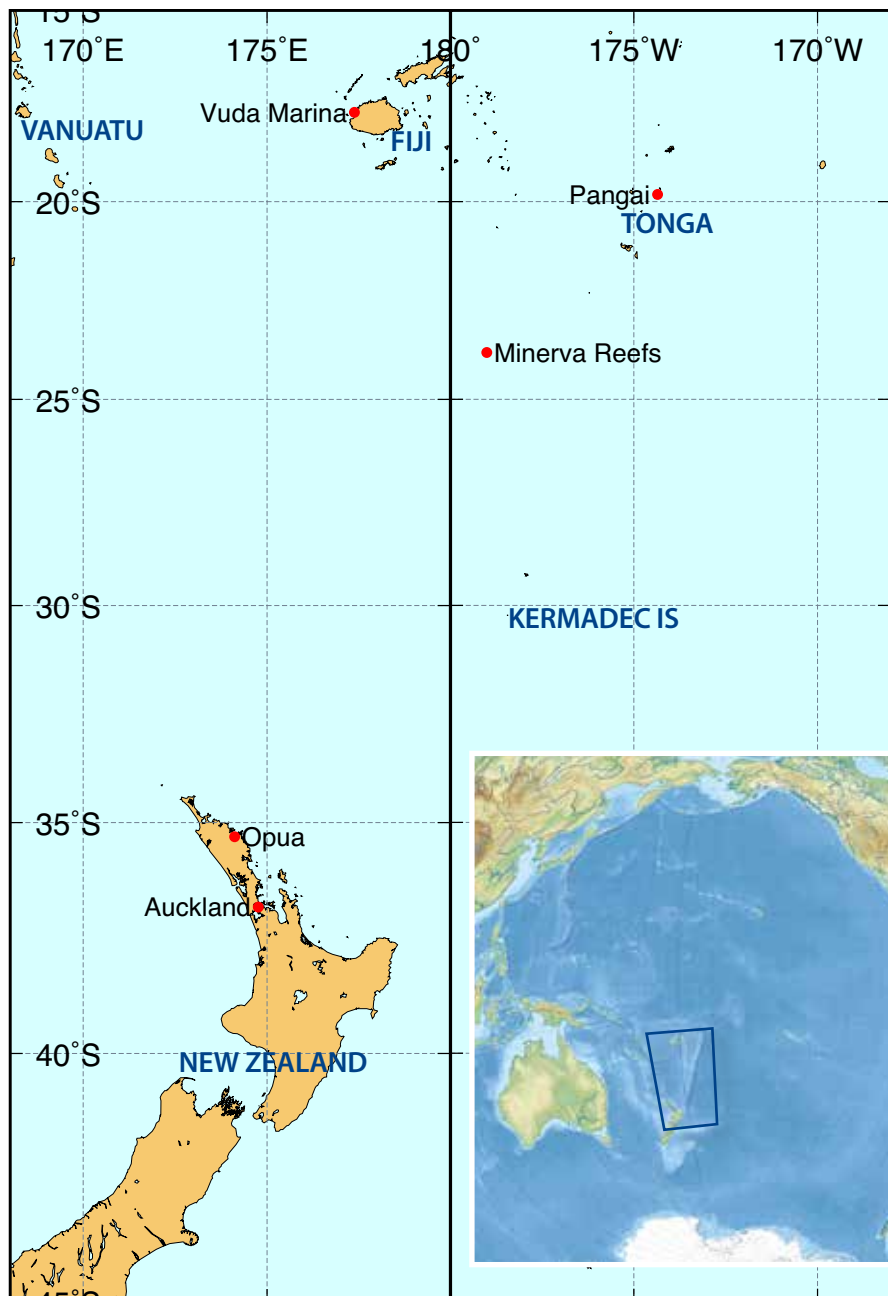
in the 1600 litres we carry on board. It proved a much cheaper option than flying, especially if you don't include all our boat costs.

Why did we stop on the way during our passage? Minerva Reef is a fairly obscure underwater extinct volcano caldera between New Zealand and Tonga. We were told initially *It just slows you down and there's nothing to see!* But other friends said it was amazing, and it was also praised by Jeanne Socrates, which must be a good recommendation. Indeed it was. Just a small strip of rock covered in fresh coral emerged at low water springs, and it seemed a shame to walk on it. The marine life underwater was like a tropical fish tank, clear and sparkling and seething with fish and coral of all descriptions. After six days at sea and 771 miles from Opuia, it was blissful to anchor overnight.

We heard varying opinions about our destinations. *Tonga is nicer than Fiji – or the other way around?!* One of our New Zealand friends who has visited Tonga 13 times (having sailed 35,000 miles in the process) loves it and has never sailed beyond it. He said it was easier – you can spot the reefs plainly, and it's therefore safer, even sailing at night, and single-handed. British passport holders can stay for six months. And in our experience, the Tongan officials weren't fussy about all our provisions on board. The nice customs officials became friends and helped us with shopping locally – although the fruits and vegetables



Happy Spirit II with her gollywobbler and gennaker, and below, the driest land in the Minerva Reefs



Pacific map: Uwe Dederig/Wikimedia

they kindly brought for us to try were rather mysterious, except the delicious mangoes.

They also provided water – needed after a crew of six had spent six days at sea, even though we carry 2,500 litres. In a large wooden hut near the dock we found 1,000-litre tanks belonging to the Tongan Navy, one of which had a tap. It was much too far away for our hose to reach, so we laboriously carried 5-, 10- and 20-litre containers back and forth depending on our individual strength. A rustic bar beckoned – the Tiger Inn – but they had no beer! This could be bought at one of several local Chinese emporiums, and they stowed our beers in their fridge for us, and gave us glasses.

How can islands suddenly sink and others appear almost overnight? We heard about a volcano which erupted in one of Tonga's Ha'apai group of 57 islands,

during the Covid shutdown. So charts were already out of date, and the only cruising guide we found was dated 1992.

We soon realised why our friend liked Tonga so much. He's a bit of a loner and likes to live cheaply and clearly enjoyed deserted beaches with few other yachts about – although there would be more in the cruising season. Plus the fact that the customs officials let you keep all your provisions – unlike in Fiji (see below). Certainly the snorkelling was amazing, although disappointing after Minerva Reef – arguably anywhere would be.

*Why would you want to go to a place which is a Kingdom?* Some of our New Zealand friends complained that Tonga still has a king – it's so tribal! The King of Tonga, a benevolent autocrat, regularly consults tribal leaders, and provides all Tongans with land to build a home and to grow crops and keep pigs and chickens. They

mostly seem happy and content – but many Tongans have migrated and left for pastures new, so subsistence living may have its limitations. We met a striking-looking Tongan on the dock who spoke perfect English and turned out to be a rugby player, currently studying for a PhD in Theology at Cambridge.

*Did we see any other ships or boats on the way?* The Pacific Ocean is big, but you would expect to see at least a few vessels on a 10-day passage. Nope! But on approaching Fiji we did see HMS *Tamar* of the Royal Navy. We called them on the radio, and they were impressed at our blue ensign (our skipper and part-owner being a former RN officer) and called us "an elegant yacht". They wouldn't tell us what they were up to, but they said we would be welcome on board for G&Ts if we called in at Suva, Fiji's capital. We also saw one large merchant





Left, exotic fish on Tonga. Above, yoga on the beach with Fijian teacher.

ship, a 200m cargo vessel which crossed our bows a long way off. Looking at our inflatable globe on board, we were reminded that the Pacific covers almost half the planet.

*Is anywhere more fussy than NZ about the food you bring in?* We were used to going through bio-security at Auckland airport where we had declared several large jars of Marmite (the local equivalent not being quite to our taste) which were allowed in! Many large signs in Chinese and other languages threaten huge fines for bringing almost any food item, or even having muddy shoes. But when we arrived in Fiji, we were subjected to a very thorough search, even using a sniffer dog, and local bio-security officials took away half a dozen black plastic sacks of all our beloved New Zealand *kumara* (sweet potatoes) and other goodies recently bought in Tonga, because they might carry fruit fly. Luckily they left our tinned food. They were especially concerned about our medicine cupboard, taking photos of packets of paracetamol and

ibuprofen. Apparently many Pacific Islands have a drugs problem.

However, we had a fantastic experience when we first tied up at the quarantine dock with our yellow Q flag flying (we do try to do everything in a shipshape way). Several marina staff serenaded us with guitar and song while we listened entranced. We had experienced something similar at Fiji Airport in transit to New Zealand the previous year, but didn't expect our own individual welcome for *Happy Spirit II* and her crew. We weren't allowed ashore until we had cleared customs, but we had already got over our missing *kumara* by then.

After a delay of several days to get a cruising permit, we set off to discover something of the Fijian Islands before our crew departed and we settled down to stay over in Fiji for the UK summer. Already in early April the Fiji yachting season was picking up. We were only the second yacht that year to check in when we arrived, but then they were arriving thick and fast. *How can a cruising season be totally different after a passage of six days or even less?* In New Zealand yachts were starting to be laid up for winter on the hard and in marinas. In Fiji the season was just beginning. It was blisteringly hot when we arrived, but then cooled down to perfect temperatures between 24° and 28°. No wonder so many yachts go north for winter. Everything is upside down compared with UK and Europe, which takes a bit of getting used to.


According to Lonely Planet, the best locations are the Mamanuca and Yasawa groups of islands. We set off excitedly for a much-recommended spot with great snorkelling and palm-fringed beaches, and a mooring we had booked for a cheaper long-stay option. It was indeed stunning, but there was no great welcome, nor a long-stay yachting community, just increasing numbers

of tourists. I had decided to stay over the six months with our yacht in Fiji (partly an insurance requirement) but the mooring we had booked, at Musket Cove on Malolo Lailai Island, proved to be relatively far from the shore, with an expensive long ferry journey to the mainland for shops and the international airport. The local shop didn't even sell wine or beer. So we dropped the rather tatty mooring line after a day and did some more exploring.

Although more expensive than being on a mooring, we decided to stay at our friendly and convenient marina (with a shop with grog, at least) for the duration. And then we heard about and saw the cyclone pits. What is a cyclone pit? It sounds like the pits but it can be a great option. It's a big dug-out on the hard with a deep area for your keel and rudder in which your yacht sits, held up with old car and tractor tyres. The marina office were willing to accommodate us, and we arranged the haul-out. In the end we only moved a few yards but we were inland, out of the water, and snug in our pit, with a nearby shower block and shore-side heads. And when we hauled out we were nice and clean and didn't need a water-blast. The long passage and coppercoat re-applied in New Zealand helped. Writing this article from our pit, we are as cosy as you like, with many yachting neighbours – although most of them are preparing for sea rather than sitting it out like us. Meanwhile, Fiji is fascinating, hugely friendly and cheap and as I write, I'm sure I'll be very happy here for six months.

## Pacific surprises

- We suddenly went from longitude 174° east to west! We crossed the international date line and we hardly noticed.
- Less pleasant surprises included losing our fresh food on arrival in Fiji.
- Our boat insurance premium suffered a hike of 300%, which we are still negotiating.
- Thanks to a heavy downpour as we left NZ, our clothes were wet from the start.
- And when you are cleaning your boat underwater before a passage, remember to turn the toilet valve to holding tank!

Stephanie Jones is a retired university professor and author of dozens of academic books and articles – but is now writing about sailing. When she met her partner Clive Carrington-Wood, in Malta, her *Granada 37.5* was a party boat and hardly ever left the marina, while ex-Navy and schoolboy sailor Clive had traversed the globe by sea. Ten years ago in New Zealand they bought *Happy Spirit II*, an Ocean 60 schooner built in Poole in 1984, and have finally dragged themselves away from the gorgeous sailing in NZ. 

Indian Runner under way and right, hosting a Safari Supper starter



## Cornish Crabber cruises to Carteret

Roger and Christine Hardman aboard *Indian Runner* joined the Channel Rally for their first-ever cross-Channel passage

We shall not cease from exploration, and the end of all our exploring will be to arrive where we started and know the place for first time.

**T S Eliot** (*Little Gidding*)

My first disastrous encounter with a sailing boat was in 1968 on a second date with Roger. Roger and his family had always been sailing enthusiasts and had a Firefly dinghy on a small reservoir. Out in this dinghy in quite a stiff breeze, I had no idea what was happening. Lean out, said Roger. I did, but decided I didn't like doing that, so without warning, sat in again. Has anybody else capsized falling into the sail? It's remarkable our fledgling relationship survived, but even more remarkable is that all these years later, I have discovered a love for sailing, albeit in a boat a bit larger than that dinghy.

Two years ago, at a relatively late stage in our lives, we bought *Indian Runner*, a gaff-rigged Cornish Crabber 26. Two friends who are very experienced sailors introduced us to the Cruising Association and we have discovered what a superb organisation it is. The advice, expertise and experience on offer is astonishing.

Earlier this year we signed up for the one-day Channel Seminar. It was excellent. We learned a lot and were determined to take part in the Cross Channel Rally if we could. It was a case of watching for the email inviting entries – the Rally filled up in the first 24 hours. We were delighted – we were in!

There were two fleets to begin with - the West Country Fleet, gathering at Brixham and making their way to Cherbourg via

Alderney, and the Solent Fleet meeting at Yarmouth. We berth at Port Hamble so the sail to Yarmouth was a gentle introduction to the trip. We didn't know anyone else on the Rally so the first get together on the pontoon for drinks felt a little like the first day at school. The socialising continued at the Yarmouth Sailing Club who made us very welcome. One of the lovely things about the rally was how from that first meeting as strangers, friendships developed which will, I am sure, be sustained.

*It was tremendous to be able to talk to Bob as he guided us in, and there were willing hands on the pontoon*

The next day brought our crossing to Cherbourg. We found it very helpful to hear the experiences of others who had done it before and the advice of our Rally Organiser, Bob Garrett, was invaluable. In the end, of course, each skipper has to make their own decision, taking into account the capability of the boat and the crew. We were aware that our boat was an outlier, the only gaff-rigged craft and many feet smaller than the other boats in the fleet. We envisaged getting to Cherbourg when everyone else was fast asleep, but in the event *Indian Runner* surprised us and although we arrived last, it wasn't by much. It was tremendous to be able to talk to Bob on the radio and phone as he guided us in and there were willing hands to help us raft up on the pontoon. This was to be the pattern of

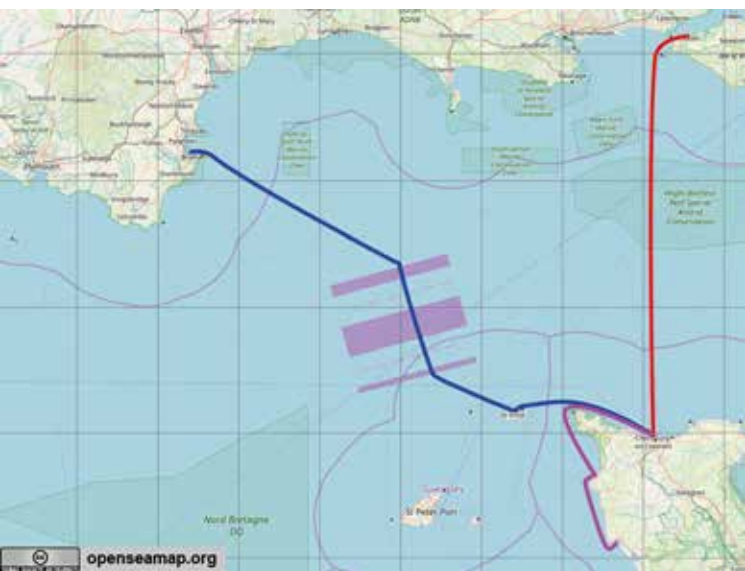
the whole rally. There was so much help and mutual support.

The intricacies of sailing, weather, tides and currents are sadly not the only challenge to be faced crossing the Channel. We now have to handle all the entry requirements for entering the EU from a non-Schengen country. Here again Bob's advice was invaluable, as are the relevant pages on the CA website. We had an easy introduction to the process at Cherbourg, where the police visited the marina to collect the entry form and stamp passports.

The pattern of this Rally and Cruise in Company was just right for us. A day's sailing followed by a couple of days to explore the area. It was our first time in Cherbourg, which has much to offer – not least the submarine museum for Roger and *Le Parapluie de Cherbourg* museum for me. In the Thursday market we enjoyed shopping for our course in the Safari Supper which would be happening in our next port, Diélette.



Bob umpires the boules



The flotilla heads west from Yarmouth



Cyclists head back to Diélette



Confidential envelopes had been handed out by Bob in the passport queue detailing the course and the number of people to expect. We were lucky – we had a starter course, which, given our small galley, was appreciated.

### *The jib sheet somehow wrapped around the prop. Rather than derision for our carelessness, we were offered help*

Our next two ports, Diélette and Carteret were a real contrast to the busy-ness of Cherbourg. And both had very interesting and challenging approaches in terms of getting the tide time right. As a “newby” to the sailing world, I am fascinated by how different the challenges are in each port and how much there is to learn.

The sail to Diélette involves rounding the Cap de La Hague. I’m learning that rounding a headland usually has its challenges but we made this one more challenging by our own stupidity. The jib sheet somehow got loose and wrapped itself round the propeller. It came free with a very frayed end, which we suspected meant that some of it was still wrapped round the prop. It was typical of the spirit of this lovely group of

people, that rather than our carelessness being greeted with the derision we felt it deserved, we were offered help instead. One of the boats had a waterproof GoPro camera on an extension rod and yes, the offending rope could be seen wrapped round the propeller shaft. Our skipper took a swim and emerged triumphant, rope in hand!

The programme of the Rally was very well planned. There were lots of opportunities for fun and socialising. There were several memorable meals in great restaurants, beautiful walks, a very competitive game of *boules*, a blind wine tasting on the pontoon (no-one fell in), a welcome at the Barneville/Carteret Yacht Club and the use of their barbecue and a highlight for me, the Safari Supper. This was a wonderful way of meeting quite a number of other people and deepening friendships.

The rally came to an end in Carteret, leaving us all free to make our plans for onward journeys. At the briefing meeting the night before we listened with some envy to those planning extended cruising further west along the French coast or the Channel Islands. We were getting ready for a sailing trip to the Netherlands in a few weeks’ time so had to return home. We decided to return to Cherbourg as our port of exit, and sailed directly there from Carteret.

We were rewarded with a speed of 13 knots around the Cap de La Hague - this time without the drama of the rope. We sailed back to Hamble from Cherbourg rounding the Isle of Wight to the east as the tide times weren’t right for the Needles. It was a very long day but we arrived back in our home berth very happy and with a sense of achievement.

We are already hoping to get a place on the Rally next year and will keep diaries free for a longer cruise in France next time. Our huge thanks to Steve and Wendy Leyland (Solent) and Paul and Liz Harewood (West Country) and of course Bob (and Sue whose organisation from afar was appreciated). And above all to our fellow rallyists, whose kindness and friendship were special.



Siouville beach



## CA London lectures Autumn 2024

**From below the chilly North Sea to sunny Atlantic islands, glorious Baltic and rainy Scotland, plus tips on better sailing as we get older....and more. Put the dates in your diary now**

*All events are open to any member, subject only to restrictions on numbers for those attending at CA House. Please note: lectures can be watched live online but we do not generally make recordings available after the event, for a number of reasons relating to time and copyright issues. Members of CA London section will receive weekly reminders, with the booking links. If you are not on the section mailing list, please check the events listings on the CA website.*



*Crew in the Holtenau lock*

*seem to have lived not one life but snatches from a dozen different lives. (Arthur Ransome's Autobiography)*

Generations of readers are familiar with one of Arthur Ransome's 'lives', that of author of his 12 **Swallows and Amazons** books, but he was also a young Bohemian, writer of folktales, journalist, war reporter, fisherman, secret agent... and a member of the Cruising Association. His books encouraged Dame Ellen MacArthur to sail and Dr David Bellamy to champion conservation.

Arthur Ransome's literary executor, Paul Flint, will navigate through Ransome's life, using his many boats as waypoints, and explore some of the places that inspired his books from the Lakes in the North to Pin Mill and the Walton Backwaters and, for good measure, some Dutch courage.



*At that moment the boat lurched sideways as the water came over the gunwhale... Shipwreck, from Swallowdale*

cruising and for his first year he had chosen the western Baltic Sea. Then the world had a pandemic and retirement was put on hold, as was the cruise. As restrictions started to be eased in 2021 David stayed in home waters for a five-month circumnavigation of Great Britain, but in May 2023 he finally set forth on his journey to Germany, Denmark and Sweden via the Netherlands and the Kiel canal. In this talk, he will discuss the planning and preparation for the trip including the post-Brexit border formalities and the sometimes difficult conditions encountered both sailing to and returning from the Baltic. Once there he discovered a paradise for sailors and will tell of the magical harbours and anchorages, the lovely scenery and the pleasant and welcoming people he encountered, as well as the ease of changing the eight different crew members who joined him along the way! The talk will be illustrated with charts and photographs taken during the trip.

**Wednesday 23 October  
Better Drowned than Duffers: the Life of Arthur Ransome, Paul Flint**

*It seems to me that I have been like a shuttlecock bandied to and fro by lunatics. I*

*Grace Darling and her father  
row out to rescue the Forfarshire*



**Wednesday 9 October  
East Coast Shipwrecks, Robert Smith**

Author, college lecturer and London walks guide, Rob returns to CA House to tell the stories of some dozen wrecks of the last six centuries lying beneath the North Sea, such as the SS *Forfarshire*, whose disaster on the Farne Islands brought Grace Darling to national celebrity status for the rest of her short life, and the sad fate of HMS *Beagle* in the mud near Paglesham.

**Wednesday 16 October  
The Baltic and back in 90 days, David Woolgar**

Retirement in April 2020 would finally allow David to spend the summers



## Wednesday 30 October Reflections of a female Transatlantic sailing co-skipper, Julia Tybura

Julia, an executive coach, non-executive director and former CA Council member, has recently completed her first transatlantic sail on a 42-foot sailing boat with her husband, Rupert Wainwright, as co-skipper and their friend, Lawrence, as crew. She will share the story of her journey from novice sailor to the 'big trip' and reflect on the challenges faced in that journey and the transatlantic trip focusing on co-skippering, team work, problem solving, decision making and division of labour in the face of adversity – as well as navigating big waves!



## Wednesday 6 November Carry on Cruising, Gilbert Park

Like taxes, growing old is inevitable! For some it may mean giving up sailing while others, like Gilbert, find a way of dealing with the changes associated with ageing so they can continue to enjoy a life with

boats. Gilbert has been sailing for nearly 50 years and the first adaptation he made was moving from sail to power. No more aching hands from cold, wet ropes. Once this jump was made he found ways to make time on the water even more safe and enjoyable. Gilbert says he likes to think he is a practical innovator and there will be little theory in this talk, but a lot of tips as to how to cope with age-related physical and mental difficulties. Many of these tips can be useful to those who don't think we're old yet!

## Wednesday 13 November Cruising Association AGM CA House

## Wednesday 20 November Sailing around Britain in memory of Sam, Camilla Herrmann

*Cruising* editor Camilla Herrmann and her husband Sam Brown always wanted to sail around Britain in their Westerly Storm *Kalessin of Orwell*, but after Sam suffered a stroke in 2012 which left him seriously disabled and with limited speech, it really wasn't a practicable option. They continued to sail gently, with crew, in the waters of the East Coast, the Netherlands and France. In 2023 Sam died, and Camilla decided to devote the summer of 2024 to sailing anti-clockwise around (most of) Britain in his memory. She describes finding and sailing with crew; the challenges of dealing with bumpy

waters, unknown harbours, anchoring and reefing, after years of undemanding marina-hopping; encountering Scotland's worst summer in many years... and returning home (by train) to edit this issue of *Cruising*. Once it had gone to press, Camilla set off through the Irish Sea towards the English Channel, and she completed the 1600-mile voyage successfully in late September.

## Wednesday 27 November The Voyage of the *Cilicia*, James Parnell

In a field in land-locked Armenia, there lies a full-scale replica of a 13th century merchant ship. She was modelled from a time when the Armenian Kingdom of Cilicia had a coastline and a mercantile fleet. Amazingly, the project was conceived when Armenia was part of the Soviet Union and built in a time of turmoil and war. When Armenia found itself a free country, the ship was transported to the Black Sea and launched. In 2002-06 the crew sailed her all through the Mediterranean, on out into the Atlantic and on to northern Europe, even as far as Tower Bridge, returning to Armenia via the rivers of Russia. The *Cilicia* covered more than 15,000 nautical miles and visited 65 ports in 25 countries. The lecture will re-tell this remarkable odyssey with the aid of material from Armenian Ayas Nautical research club.

## Wednesday 4 December Our annual joint event with the Royal Institute of Navigation. Speaker to be announced

## Wednesday 11 December CA carol service and supper

Traditional carol service at St Anne's Limehouse, followed 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.

Webinar links will be published before each event. Any problems with the booking system, call or email Samantha on 020 7537 2828 / [office@theca.org.uk](mailto:office@theca.org.uk). There is no charge for viewing online.



Left, Southwold has a vision – but why wait 10 years to implement it? In Texel excellent facilities, including five different recycling bins, are on offer right now

## Don't save your vision for the future

A lively, prosperous harbour brings far more to a seaside resort than just a few yachts. **Cathy Brown** wonders why so many UK authorities struggle with offering decent facilities to boaters

On our way to Ijmuiden on our summer holiday cruise to the Frisian Islands we stopped in Southwold, which has been a favourite since we visited in our first yacht back in the 1980s. It has to be said that it is a favourite in spite of, rather than because of, its characteristics.

The port has oodles of historic charm. You moor among the fishermen's boats and huts. There are all kinds of historic craft, some undergoing inspiring restoration, others quietly rotting away. There is a lifeboat station, fresh seafood stalls, a great fish and chip shop, a historic pub – and trendy watering holes of Southwold and Walberswick within walking distance. What's not to like?

The downside is a woeful lack of basic amenities. It is true a few of the moorings are better than they were back then, with floating pontoons to cater for the vicious tidal stream, but the main visitor staging, conveniently placed right outside the Harbour Inn, still demands fender boards to protect the boat from the unforgiving pilings, and long shorelines to cope with the rise and fall.

Furthermore, there are no loos or showers. Well, there are – in the campsite a good half mile walk away. Nobody can be expected to go that far in the middle of the night, so presumably the harbour authority (East Suffolk Council) turns a blind eye to the black water going into the river.

The council charges top dollar for the moorings, plus an extra £6 for electricity, but offers almost nothing in return. There are no recycling facilities – just

mixed refuse skips for everything. There is supposedly wifi, but it does not work. "The wire is broken," we were told, unapologetically.

On the Continent, many marinas are owned and run by local councils. They take a pride in the facilities they offer. They understand that a yacht harbour is an asset to the community. It not only generates mooring fees but also has huge spin-off benefits for local businesses.

### *British local authorities don't want to be suspected of subsidising an elite pastime*

Visiting yachtsmen spend money in restaurants, supermarkets and on all sorts of other goods and services, marine-related and otherwise. Britain's local authorities have been slow to understand this. They are reluctant to be suspected of subsidising what might look like an elitist pastime.

Of course it is no such thing. True, some boat owners are wealthy, but far more are "ordinary" people who give up everything else to run their boats. For many the annual cost is probably less than the price of a Premiership season ticket, and no council would suggest football is elitist.

So imagine our surprise when we came across an East Suffolk Council leaflet entitled *The Harbour Southwold, Vision 2035*, which recognises "the potential

fiscal powerhouse" of the location. The leaflet is packed with that kind of meaningless councilese: "facility enhancement", "economic revitalisation", "sustainability and compliance." All very well, we thought, but why wait until 2035 to put it all right?

The harbour needs loos and showers adjacent to the moorings, recycling facilities (there is not even a bottle bank) and working wifi now, if "sustainability and compliance" mean anything at all.

It is a shaming contrast to arrive in the Netherlands where every marina has palatial cloakrooms and laundry facilities, black water pump-out, a full range of recycling bins, and everything that is required to make yachtsmen as welcome as possible, as well as making their stays more "sustainable." It all encourages us to stay longer and spend more in the neighbourhood shops and restaurants.

Britain's planning authorities should have recognised this back in the 1980s – not be putting it off now for another ten years, by when it will be half a century late.

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