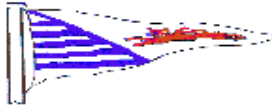


President: BOB FREEMAN  
71 Longleaze, Wootton Bassett  
Wiltshire, SN4 8AS  
e-mail: BOBatLongleaze@aol.com

# Bobcat & Catalac

Founder: MARY LACK



# Cruising Association



Treasurer: RICK HARVEY  
44 Southway Carshalton Beeches.  
Surrey. SM5 4HW.  
e-mail: june.rick@btopenworld.com

196 Harewood Avenue,  
Queens Park, Bournemouth,  
Dorset. BH7 7BQ  
e-mail: P.Gimson@Bmthonline.net

Secretary  
PETER GIMSON  
Tel: 01202 773749



AUGUST 2002

*Bonjour*

*Fellow Bobcat and Catalac Friends every where,*

As our voyage continues we have had a pleasant couple of days in Arques, had a lovely meal ashore and also met up with Tony & Esther on there 8m "Duet of Arne" who were returning to Calais on there way home. We now have to go through one of the largest locks at Fontinettes, with a rise of about 13.3m and uses 25000m<sup>3</sup> of water every operation. A lot when it has to operate just to allow a small yacht to pass through. We are going down the Canal Grand Gabarit to get to the St Quentin Canal, there are all sorts of lovely places to stop the canal banks etc are fairly well maintained and the French love there floral displays a lot of the locks are extremely picturesque.

We have usually found somewhere to stop and get a fresh bagette for lunch, ( lovely )

There are still not many other boats about and we go days some times with only seeing the odd Peniche (Barge), we have found the locals very friendly even the fisherman say hello or ( Bonjour ).

We have got two tunnels to venture through as we get to our highest level, the first one being the Grand Souterrain ( Riqueval Tunnel ) that we get towed through for about 6km, the next is the Le Tronquoy ( Lesdins Tunnel ) of only 1km that we go through under our own steam !

The weather has been improving, I even managed a swim when the temperature shot up over 90 degree's F. We are intending to do a circular route and get into the Canal de la Somme and then come out of the Canals at St Valery sur Somme but we have heard rumours that some of the locks are closed and that we cant get through, in that case we will probably have to return to Calais, we will let you know next month.

Best wishes and good sailing to you all

*Bob & Ann " Think Again " St Quentin Canal France.*

## **Hola**

By Judy & Paul Thompson (SQUIB CL 9.200)

### **Summer 2001**

The mysteries and myths of the Balearics are slowly being uncovered as we weave our way round the ports and calas of these sun-kissed, idyllic islands. We've now reached Menorca, the most eastern island, on our adventures with the next stop Sardinia.

Our winter in Aguadulce was incredibly busy and varied. United with many live-aboards like us of all nationalities, the last thing it was, was boring! There was of course the organisers as there are in any group of people and they soon got to work arranging quiz nights, boules and tapas nights, paella nights, music nights, fancy dress nights, BBQ's, the list went on and we joined in everything. The days didn't escape either and there was the 'Aguadulce Ramblers Society' (ARS) for short, line dancing classes (not for the faint hearted) and the marina gym/health club which included an aerobics class. ARS was good fun and gave us an insight into the life and back-streets of the town: the line dancing we both decided to give a miss and Paul wasn't too keen on the idea of gym or aerobics. So I decided to join the health club with Caroline, a lady who we first met in Tarragona on our travels last summer who was also spending the winter in Aguadulce along with her husband Peter.

We tolerated the repetitiveness of the gym telling ourselves it hurts so it must be good for us. The aerobics however was much more fun, mainly because it could be more accurately defined as dancing. It soon became apparent that the Spanish have more rhythm in their big toes than we have in our whole bodies! The weekly Spanish conversation lessons held on someone's boat helped little as the tirade of instructions came at us like a machine gun and arms and legs flayed everywhere! Caroline and I and a Dutch girl we had befriended gave up trying to compete with the naturally gyrating hips around us and did our own thing. As a result we, surprisingly, started to lose a few pounds, our agility improved (necessary in nautical life), and it also provided excellent entertainment. They also had better showers than the marina had too!

Towards the end of January a boat jumble was organised providing a good opportunity to clear *Squib*'s bilges of some of the junk accumulated along the way. We set up 2 tables, 1 for the junk and 1 for some of Paul's paintings, the latter I had to run as he wanted nothing to do with it (didn't think they were good enough). The event was also patronised by a neighbouring marina and the turnout good, which is hardly surprising as most yachties are bargain hunters and scavengers. Our junk sold reasonably well, but the star turn was definitely the paintings, with lots sold and several orders for more taken. We eventually swapped tables when the captain of the marina commissioned Paul to paint a picture of the marina. See I told you so!

We managed to find a small 240V washing machine for 4000 pesetas (about £16) and a 240V sewing machine for 6000 pesetas (approx. £24). The washine machine washes and rinses (luxury!) so the 2 Sainsbury buckets (ie.the twin-tub) were relegated to a locker for use during the summer in anchorages where no shore power is available; the sewing machine was however very heavy, so would be sold on before we left after fulfilling its purpose.

At the beginning of March we both got a bit restless, so we decided to hire a car and go inland and head west to a town called Cordoba and then onto Seville near the Portuguese border. Ironically it seemed as though we were going on holiday!

The 5 hour drive to Cordoba took us to the most charming and fascinating town steeped in history and quite obviously influenced by different religions and eras. On arrival we headed for the Jewish quarter as our guide book had advised this was where we would find most of the tourist attractions like the famous Mesquita, which was top of our list for tomorrow and more importantly, the reasonably priced hotels.

The Mesquita has been a place of worship for many centuries. Originally built as a mosque in the 8th century, it eventually became the largest mosque in the Islamic world. In the 13th century it was converted into a church

and curiously in 16th century a cathedral was built within the centre, creating an intriguing and diverse building which we thoroughly enjoyed exploring. Around the Mesquita we discovered narrow streets and alley ways with tiny, white well preserved houses bedecked with flowers. Further on we found wider streets lined with orange trees.

On a notice board we read about a Macedonian group called 'Gypsies' who would be performing in the main theatre that evening and duly booked 2 seats. Later we sat in the cabaret style surroundings watching and listening in awe to an enormous woman with equally enormous bosoms accompanied by an accordian, clarinet, trumpet, keyboard and bongo player belting out the most mind blowing songs to a heartily involved audience. It was the kind of evening which reached your inner soul.

With our ears still ringing we ate breakfast the following morning and made plans to drive later to Seville. We put our bags in the boot of the hire car and noticed broken glass inside, someone had broken in overnight. Fortunately nothing missing as we had taken everything with us to the hotel. It took us the rest of the morning reporting it first to the hire car company, then to the police, where we had to complete a double-sided A4 form in Spanish and then finally getting the glass replaced. Nobody spoke English so my newly learnt few words of Spanish were stretched to the limit, which made it even more interesting. All part of the adventure!

Onto Seville where the heavens opened and Paul realised there was something in the car after all -his coat! Too late now we had told the police (we think) that nothing was stolen.

Seville is similar to Cordoba in many ways, but much, much bigger and we wasted no time at all in getting hopelessly lost. The suburbs consist of busy dual carriageways and roads with an assortment of the usual housing developments and industrial areas, whilst the inner city is a maze of tiny, very narrow streets most of which are one-way and sometimes only just a car width. Again this was the most interesting area, so we concentrated on finding somewhere to stay. After driving around for at least 2 hours we decided it might be easier on foot. We walked a good few miles before we found a suitable hotel and after making the reservation used our best Spanish to ask for directions back to the car. We had fortunately made a note of the street name where the car was parked after a similar experience in Cordoba where we hadn't done so and literally couldn't find it anywhere! This time however we had a different problem, we found the car with no trouble at all, but spent an hour and a half weaving our way back around the one-way streets searching for the hotel which was in fact only a half a mile away! It's much easier by sea! Still we got to know Seville very well in the process, which made our sight-seeing expedition over the following few days much easier. That evening we found a gorgeous restaurant which more than made up for the days' antics.

Seville is the capital of the region of Andalucia and is not short of monuments and attractions. We soon realised we would need more than 2 or 3 days to see all and concentrated on some of the more interesting. We headed first for the cathedral which, along with St Paul's and St Peter's, is the largest in the world and seeing is believing. It is believed that the remains of Christopher Columbus are housed in a tomb here, although some think they were mislaid at sea. Constructed on the border of the Jewish quarter in the Santa Cruz area, this immense structure is primarily Gothic, although the internal decor is mostly in later styles. The site originally housed the main mosque and remnants can be seen in the grounds like the majestic Giralda tower.

Climbing up the tower via a long winding ramp, after 33 flights we needed oxygen: only 1 more flight which was stairs and Vfe were at the top. The ramp was designed apparently for horses and not for the disabled as we first thought, although it could double up, but then we thought it would be a bit sadistic to take a wheelchair almost to the top and find the last flight was stairs! Finally reaching the bell tower we were rewarded with the most spectacular all round view of Seville, which also gave us an excellent prospective of the city.

The Rio Guadalquivir flows from the Atlantic and through the city and on the banks we found much to explore. The marina was the first stop. Security was much in evidence and the only way we could visit was by a guided tour from the security guards, after which we concluded it would make a good place to winter and stored this knowledge perhaps for future reference. The nearby maritime museum housed in the Torre de Oro (the Golden Tower) kept us occupied and fascinated for the next couple of hours. During the next 2 days we found more museums -archeological and art; the moorish fortress Alcazar, a residence for Muslim and Christian royalty; the Palacio de Don Pedro, with its exquisite decor and immaculate gardens and a huge park with a mini 'Trafalgar

Square' complete with hundreds of beautiful white doves and a tabby cat curled up peacefully on a chair in their midst!

Andalucia is home to flamenco dancing and no self respecting sightseer could leave without seeing a performance. In Seville we found many commercialised, tourist orientated shows, but we were told the best are the spontaneous seen in cafes and bars. We were not lucky enough to find the latter, but did find a small, intimate venue of only 30 in the audience and 3 performers-a female dancer, and a male guitar player and another male singer. Lasting for 2 hours, they sang, played and danced with such intense passion some members of the audience actually cried. Suitably refreshed we journied back home to '*Squib*' and life in Aguadulce and got stuck in to the winter jobs which we had complacently thought we had plenty of time to do. The newly acquired sewing machine was deployed making a new sun awning to replace the bimini made last winter. Made of strong canvas as opposed to an old sail, this task proved tougher than first thought mainly due to the sheer weight of the material and the inability of the machine. So after many days and lots of expletives, it was half made and then the machine decided to pack up, which was not only frustrating because the awning was half finished, but annoying because we had a buyer for the machine when we'd finished! After much deliberation we decided to buy another and found a very lightweight (it looked like a toy one to me) basic machine which, to our surprise, stoically sewed through several layers of canvas and also fits snugly into a locker.

Towards the end of March, Sam managed to take a much needed break after a gruelling stint during the foot and mouth outbreak and came to visit us along with Graeme, a family friend. They both had a good week with plenty of sunshine and checked out the local sights, hostelryes and beaches. Graeme is an excellent musician and kept us entertained by playing Paul's guitar, with us doing our impression of a cat's chorus. We gave '*Squib*' an airing one day and went for a sail around Almeria bay anchoring on the way back to go for a swim, although judging by their faces and the short time in the water, it was not quite warm enough yet .

We said our farewells at the end of the week and returned to our jobs and to prepare to be lifted out of the water the following week. This was when the real fun began. We were in the yard for 1 week during which we worked solidly scrubbing, scraping and anti-fouling '*Squib*'s' bottom and cleaning and polishing the remainder of the hulls, checking sea-cocks, replacing anodes, servicing the engines and re-packing stern glands. The week culminated with a birthday BBQ for Paul, organised by our friends who all rallied round. Brian, a chef by profession, made a delicious strawberry and cream birthday cake complete with candles. With plenty of drinks, yarns and songs, the merriment went on well into the night.

Back into the water and things felt more natural and got back to normal. We were now into Semana Santa (Holy Week) an important festival in the Spanish calendar, where processions through the streets are held twice daily around the streets. We went along one evening to witness a huge effigy of the Virgin Mary flanked by flowers and lights, being carried through the streets with many followers.

Easter came and went and mid-April was approaching, we checked our job list and it seemed to be growing longer not shorter! We wished we had started them earlier. Over the next few days we stepped up the pace and got the important ones done and with a spell of settled weather we said 'au revoir' to our many friends in Aguadulce, and set sail east bound for San Jose rounding the difficult Cabo de Gata, which fortunately caused us no problem that day. It was good to be 'on the road' again and we gloried in the travelling for next few days stopping at San Jose and Garrucha where we amazed and delighted to find not only showers, but a bath ( a luxury for us yachties!) -the bad news there was not a plug in sight, cruel or what!

We were now heading up the east coast and the next stop was the large port of Aguiias, where we found the marina full, but room on the empty commercial quay. Later when all the trawlers arrived back after their days work, we were politely asked to move 3 metres or so to make room, no problem happy to oblige, except I forgot in all the excitement that I had put some potatoes on to boil for dinner. When an awful burning smell permeated the cockpit and the quay, the skipper from the neighbouring trawler produced a bag full of gambas (prawns) and small fish. We're still not sure whether it was a 'thanks' for moving or a 'sorry' for the burnt spuds! In any case they tasted delicious.

It was proving difficult to get a reliable weather forecast from our VHF radio or Navtex, but a neighbouring German couple managed to get one on their SSB (single side band) radio. The German reports are renowned for being one of the most reliable. With a forecast of a beneficial south westerly F4/5 tailwind we set sail the following day towards the naval port Cartagena. After 2 hours in F2/3 north easterly headwind, it got stronger and stayed on the nose. The sea got rougher as the wind increased and remained dead on the nose until we found ourselves unwittingly in a very, very uncomfortable F7 making only 2 knots! Not recommended. We made an unsuccessful attempt to duck into the next port of Mazorron, but decided with direction of the wind and waves it would be safer to plod on for the next

15 miles to Cartagena. We arrived late afternoon and once again thanked our guardian angel. So much for the weather forecast! All part of the adventure!

A 2 day rest and wait for the weather to calm down and we were on our way again heading north for the inland sea, Mar Menor where we would meet up with our friends from Aigues Mortes, Len and Gill on *Lady Bear*. A few miles off the entrance, a customs boat came alongside and instructed us to hold our course and speed. 2 men boarded: 1 to search, as this coastline is notorious for vessels carrying illegal Moroccan immigrants and the other checked our ship's papers. When all was found in order and no strange stowaways, they went on their way to another Dutch boat who had been travelling with us called Waccabuc - perhaps this time looking for drugs?!

Mar Menor is entered via a swing bridge opening every 2 hours and with an hour to wait we anchored near the entrance and put the kettle on. Unfortunately we didn't realise until later that whilst drinking our coffee we had managed to collect a stray fishing net around the port propeller. This was to cause us an intermittent problem for the next couple of months.

Once through the bridge we headed for the smaller of the two islands, Isla Perdiguera, towards the southern end of this 12 miles by 6 miles lake. The larger island is privately owned and out of bounds. After making radio contact with Gill and Len we met up with them on a rickety pontoon and caught up with all the goss. Next day we went exploring which didn't take long as the island is tiny. 3 bar/restaurants were the only buildings, but the island is home to thousands of seagulls and rabbits. We found large cavernous underground tunnels which folk say have been used by smugglers. We were captivated as a group of school children on a day trip went into fantasy mode as they played at sailors and pirates on this 'treasure' island. Later that day we sailed to the nearby marina at Los Nietos where Gill and Len had wintered and were invited to join them and their friends for a BBQ that evening eating, dancing and drinking into the small hours. Los Nietos we: found the following day was a small sleepy untouristy village with not a shred of English to be found. This gave me a chance to practise my Spanish particularly at the butchers which officially only opened on Sunday, but during the week you could visit his house next door and have a chat and buy meat from the comfort of an armchair in his front room, with not a pre-packed pork chop in sight!

Back into this century and we arranged via the marina staff to hire a car to collect Sam and her boyfriend Richard from Alicante airport the next day as public transport was complicated. It was lovely to see them both and as we passed through the Santa Pola salt marshes, home to the wild flamingoes on the way back, we began to catch up with all the news. They were intrigued by our story of the little island and wanted to investigate the following day.

However we found a much busier 'desert' island than we had left a couple of days before - it was Sunday, leisure time for the Spanish. Sam and Richard found plenty to do swimming and exploring and we met up with our friends Caroline and Peter on *Masquerade*. Gill and Len had also travelled to the island and later the 8 of us had a very enjoyable get together on *'Squib'*.

Adjacent to the swing bridge at the entrance to Mar Menor is Tomas Maestre marina where we spent the following 2 days waiting for the high winds to subside before making our way to Torre Vieja, 15 miles north.

Birthdays have a habit of cropping up once a year and mine is no exception. After the present and card opening session, made all the more exciting because Sam and Richard were with us (and had brought lots of cards and presents with them and had also bought me a much needed table for our cockpit!) we hired a car and headed for the mountains. We spent an enjoyable day ending with a delicious evening meal back in a Torre Vieja restaurant compliments of Sam and Richard - I felt well and truly spoiled.

We said our farewells at the airport after a wonderful week and prepared for Zoe's arrival in a couple of days. The weather and sea conditions had improved slightly after a very unsettled period and we set sail for Alicante 30 miles north.

A very excited Zoe arrived and we wasted no time at all catching up with news. Her idea of a holiday was just to relax and chill out, which wasn't too difficult with the re-appearance of the sun, which seemed to go on ~ holiday whilst Sam and Richard were with us on theirs.

We found another island to explore 5 miles south east called Isla Tabarca with just a small fishing community. It is said to have once been used as an old pirate base, but to us it made an ideal destination for a day sail, a picnic lunch and a chance to swim and snorkel around the shoals looking at the marine life. By contrast we took the train a couple of days later to Benidorm. All that can be said is it's everything we expected -unbelievably tacky and touristy, but definately a place to go and have fun!

Alicante itself is quite an historic city and has been much improved since our visit last year. The castle majestically overlooks the marina and port and creates a well lit landmark at night. One evening whilst sipping our wine in the cockpit we heard loud music and saw what looked like a fashion show in the distance beneath the castle. Zoe and I being equally nosey decided to investigate and found that it was some kind of parade involving hundreds of teenage girls in the most exquisite dresses. Still none the wiser we again watched a younger version the following day and then curiosity got the better of us and we asked the receptionist in the marina office who thankfully spoke perfect English. It transpired that it was a selection process for the carnival queens for the John the Baptist parade, which takes place on the 24th June to mark the end of winter and spring and welcome in the summer. Bonfires are lit and fiestas abound. In Aguadulce last year at the same ceremony we watched everyone go into the sea at midnight to wash away the evil spirits. Obviously it's a very important date in the Spanish calendar especially judging by the vast amounts of money spent on these girl's outfits.

We said au revoir to a much chilled out Zoe and sailed northwards in tandem with Caroline and Peter *on Mas'luerade* to a beautiful but expensive town called Moyrayra before crossing to the Balearics to the island of Ibiza.

This much maligned island of Ibiza was a complete surprise to us. Once we had penetrated the facade of our 1st port of call, San Antonio with its abundance of souvenir shops, restaurants, funfairs and bars serving pints of vodka or gin at 750/1000pesetas {£3/4-no wonder the British get completely slaughtered!) we found a tranquil, rural and agricultural island with sheep farms, olive groves and steeped in history.

On a girls' day out with Caroline and another friend Niki, we discovered Ibiza town and port on the eastern side of the island. We explored the enchanting old town with its white washed houses adorned with climbing flowers and wrought iron balconies. A high battlement led us to a castle and cathedral and an excellent viewpoint for the small island of formentera. The quaint shops bordering the tiny, narrow streets provided us with some retail therapy (always much more enjoyable without the men around). On a whim I found an English speaking hairdresser and had my hair dyed a reddy colour to cover up the marmalade cat look which keeps coming back with the strong sun. Len and Gill on *Lady bear* had arrived in San Antonio and later the 8 of us enjoyed an amusing evening on *Squib*, sharing news, nautical stories and experiences, culminating in a sing-song with the 4 men attempting to play the guitar, some better than others but anything sounds good when you / I are drunk!

We made an abortive attempt the next day to leave the port and head for a small cala {bay) on the northeastern coast, called Portenax. However we hadn't travelled very far when the port prop started playing up again, so we decided to resolve it once and for all and head back to San Antonio. By chance on the way back, we discovered the most idyllic, secluded cala called Cala Salada, which had crystal clear water and a white sandy beach bordered by rocks and caves where we spent a glorious afternoon and temporarily forgot about our prop.problem. Returning to San Antonio and reality we engaged the services of a diver to change both our folding props back to the original 2 bladed fixed ones, which apparently worked well for the first 15 years of *Squib's sailing* life and would hopefully solve our problem.

Nuts, bolts and spanners were not part of our Spanish vocabulary, but they are now after spending 4 days at the mercy of the diver and a mechanic who brought virtually no tools with them but thankfully had the diving equipment which we lacked. We created an eternal triangle in the cockpit from diver to dictionary to toolbox. The job eventually completed and worked out quite expensive but necessary and worth it. Or so we thought.

We set off once again for Portinax only to find that although the props were working okay, the vibration of the folding ones had caused the engine mounts to split. Fortunately the wind decided to be sympathetic to our predicament and we sailed all the way to Portinax.

Our attention was diverted the next day when our fridge decided it didn't want to work any more on gas after a serious gas leak (not a good idea on a boat). Paul stripped it, swore at it and decided it needed new parts, unfortunately only available from England.

In the Balearics we have consciously avoided marinas in favour of anchoring for economic reasons and also because it's so lovely to anchor in the many calas. It does mean however that we have to be fairly self sufficient power wise. We have a solar panel which keeps our domestic batteries topped up to run things like the lights, pumps and instruments, but it will not cope with running the fridge or our cool box for unlimited periods, so until we had the parts we would have to do without (not recommended in this heat).

We set sail for Mallorca the following day and sail we did! It was a perfect and we sailed

the 50 odd miles to Andraitx on the western coast with very little sail trimming necessary, occupying ourselves instead with watching a school of dolphins who followed us for a good part of the way.

Andraitx is a large fishing port with many locals as well as a large German community. It's extremely beautiful and picturesque and no hardship at all to settle down for a few days and catch up with some housework or boatwork in our case. Being at anchor also means we have to be very frugal with our water supplies and the washing of clothes is normally kept to a minimum (no big deal as it's too hot to wear much), so when we found a launderette we cheated and took along the sheets and towels which by now were pretty desperate.

Ship-shape again and we moved south a few miles to the very busy resort of Santa Ponsa and managed to find a quiet corner in bay and went for a welcome dip. Shortly after drying off in the sun we noticed 3 small sharks swimming by in the crystal clear water, unaware they had just missed their lunch! The bus ride to Palma the next day was hell on earth. Packed to capacity with very few seats, a miserable driver who would have been more suited to the Le Mans circuit, we stood all the way in the blistering heat with nothing to hold onto except each other (reminiscent of my commuting days). Our main purpose for going was to collect our mail sent ten days ago to one of the marinas -it hadn't arrived. Philosophically we made the most of it and explored this incredibly busy city. The ride home was equally horrendous and so priority on arrival was a dip in the sea to cool off -move over SHARKS, we're coming in!

We needed to stay relatively near to Palma until our mail arrived but didn't want a repeat of the bus journey. All the marinas in Palma were full or charged a fortune, so we moved closer to Illetas, a small but very beautiful town with a tranquil cala protected by some islands and only 5 kms from Palma. We stayed for a few days making several trips into Palma, this time on air conditioned buses with very few passengers and plenty of seats. But still no mail.

Unfortunately we got nowhere by phoning the marina to check if the mail had arrived so eventually we gave up the wait and sailed south to find a safe place to leave *Squib* to make a trip to the UK to see my brother Chris and his wife Merran who were on a visit from Australia. We had originally hoped to meet them in Sardinia, but as usual our master plan changed. We anchored in a few more wonderful calas before arriving at Porto Colom on the west coast where we were lucky to find a mooring buoy to tie up to for the duration.

We still had a week before our flight so after spending a couple of days getting acquainted with life in Porto Colom, we hired a car for a day to go back to Palma for the mail and see what happens in inland Mallorca. The bad news was the mail still wasn't there! and the good news is inland Mallorca held as many surprises as Ibiza. After the disappointment of the mail we did a whirlwind tour of the island heading first north to Alora on the edge of the Sierra Tremantana, south to Inca for lunch in a street cafe and then onto a beautiful old unspoilt

town called Sineu, before heading for Santanyi in the south and Felanitx in the east absorbing the most spectacular scenery along the way.

A few days later and we were once again joined by Len and Gill on *Lady Bear* who agreed to take us to Palma Airport the next day if we hired a car. One last try in the marina at Palma on the way to check for the mail. Ureka! it had finally arrived after 3 weeks wait and on the day we were flying back to the UK and could have collected it ourselves! Oh the irony.

We spent 2 days in Wales seeing Zoe and Emma and checking our house, before heading for London to spend some time with Chris and Merran and of course to see Sam and the rest of our families. Unfortunately my Mum was admitted into hospital the day before we arrived and in the event was in for 5 weeks. She's now home with all her bits in working order (her words not mine) and with plenty of life in the old gal yet! It was really great to catch up with Chris and Merran's lives again. Our week ended all too quickly and we flew back to Mallorca whilst Chris and Merran flew to New York, the next stop on their world tour.

Arriving back in Palma airport at 7.15 pm and we had missed the last bus to Porto Colom, so it was either thumb a lift or get a taxi. Fortunately the coach strike had finished the day before so a taxi was no problem with exception of the cost £36! On arrival at the port we dug deep into our pockets and then sat on the quay with our luggage and a half a kilometre of water between us and *Squib*. This time we had no option but to thumb a lift from a passing dinghy! Thankfully we didn't have to wait too long before someone felt sorry for us.

During our trip to the UK we managed to buy a secondhand laptop thanks to Zoe ( she might actually be regretting it by now) with a view to untangling the mysteries of the internet and e-mails. The story is far too long to tell and you'd be sleeping before we had finished, but in short we have spent a fortune on the phone to Comuserve our ISP and so has Zoe and we are still shrouded in confusion. However I remain optimistic that soon all will be revealed - Paul thinks the laptop would make a good spare anchor! Moving swiftly on to more important matters, we also bought some new engine mounts and parts for the fridge - yippee no more warm beer or mouldy cheese!

Two days later with the engine mounts fitted (the old ones looked past their sell-by dates) and the fridge working a treat we headed north to Ratjada our hopping off point for Menorca. This was to prove a very productive and interesting stopover. With a swell running in the nearby cala, we headed for the marina where we tied up alongside the quay. The fridge had been working a treat but despite the new mounts the engine was still vibrating and overheating, the internet wasn't the only mystery.

After 2 months at anchor we now had plenty of running water and electricity in a marina, things we used to take for granted. For the next two days we were very productive and worked like beavers catching up with the washing and cleaning and then charging all our equipment. The interesting part came when a 75 year 'young' retired Irish actor called Kevin rafted up alongside us in a ramshackle ketch rigged yacht, together with his bilingual parrot named Snowy , who apparently was the captain. Kevin had the appearance of Uncle Albert in *Only Fools and Horses* and kept us entertained during our stay with his many stories. The next day a film crew from an Irish TV company arrived to film his and Snowy's antics in the marina and then out at sea. The star of the show was Snowy when late in the afternoon he was filmed taking his shower on the pontoon and spreading his wings for the cascade to reach all parts! Truly 2 wonderful stars we will never forget.

Menorca beckoned and with the engine problem put on the back burner for now, we sailed across to the quaint historical town of Cuitadela where we lay at anchor for a week soaking up our surroundings.

*Lady Bear* joined us after a couple of days and we caught up with all the news over a few drinks and a BBQ. Together we explored the town and stocked up the food supplies before heading north to Cala Fontanelles for a tranquil night which happened to be the calm before the storm

We'll save that bit of excitement for next time.

Until then take care of yourself and have a good summer **Judy and Paul**