

Commodore: ALECK TIDMARSH  
e.mail : [aleck@mq-sales.fsnet.co.uk](mailto:aleck@mq-sales.fsnet.co.uk)  
mob:+44 (0) 7905 105 596

Treasurer: SUSAN STACEY  
e.mail: [susanmstacey@sky.com](mailto:susanmstacey@sky.com)  
mob: +44 (0) 7985 022 540

# Catamaran Cruising Association



Formerly Bobcat & Catalac Cruising Association

Secretary: PETER GIMSON  
Tel: +44 (0) 1 202 773 749 Mob: +44(0) 7971 808 777

e-mail: [Peter.Gimson@sky.com](mailto:Peter.Gimson@sky.com)

[www.bobcatandcatalac.btinternet.co.uk](http://www.bobcatandcatalac.btinternet.co.uk)

## Disclaimer

Neither the CCA nor Committee will accept any liability for personal injury arising out of participating in any event, rally or race organized by or through the CCA whether sustained by members, guests, or visitors, or caused by the said members, guests or visitors whether or not such damage or injury could have been attributed to or was occasioned by the neglect, default or negligence of any of the officers, committees or servants of the CCA.

## Boat Owners Third Party Insurance

It is the responsibility of all boat owners to have adequate third party insurance in respect of him/herself, vessel, his/her crew for the time being & his/her visitors.

**Hello fellow Catamaran sailors everywhere.**

**December 2010**

*The committee and I*

*Wish you a Merry Christmas and a prosperous New Year.*

*Hopefully you have enjoyed this summer's weather and made the most of the opportunities that were there. This year we have done the usual I.O.W., Poole and crossed the ditch three times but have needed to stay closer to home in the UK. My boat was used less this year as family life took priority over sailing at times. Here's hoping next year for kind weather so the balance can be restored.*

*When you receive your 2011 diaries, here are two dates for you to remember.*

*Our first event of the season a "Meet and Eat", our second the AGM.*

**"Meet and Eat"**

**at lunch time (noon) on Saturday the 5<sup>th</sup> of February**

at the Spinnaker PH, Swanwick situated opposite Moody's Boatyard, Hampshire.

We have reserved space and they have asked us to give in numbers a week beforehand, as they may put us in the bar area. We look forward to seeing you. Please confirm the number in your party asap. by e.mail: to [peter.Gimson@sky.com](mailto:peter.Gimson@sky.com) or text to +44(0) 7971808777

Thank you.

The "Meet & Eat" and AGM to be held on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> March at the Gun PH, Keyhaven.

Members are asked to suggest venues for the 2011 bank holiday rally on the second bank holiday in May.

It's that time again when **subscriptions** are due and we would like to receive the subs by the end of January so we can budget for the coming year. Our subs have remained unchanged since last century and this is surely a record. Members have been receiving ten newsletters a year this will be changed to six. I am pleased to say that the subs to receive the newsletter by e.mail remain unchanged at £20.00 per annum.

(1) Hon. Sec. Office 196 Harewood Ave. Queens Pk. Bournemouth, Dorset BH7 7BQ

However, because of the increased costs of both postage and ink to receive the newsletter by post will now be £30.00 per annum. So please can we ask you to check your payments, whether by Standing order / or Cheque. If you want to receive a newsletter for the coming year, then please let us have the correct amount now.

Members who now receive the newsletter by post may either

Receive it by email by paying £20.00 per annum or

Receive it by post by paying £30.00 per annum.

To help those who have been receiving the newsletter by post a standing order form is enclosed, so please fill in the details on the attached bank standing order.

It's that time of year when I try to update our records, so please inform me of any boat or address changes.

If you require a new 2011 C.C.A. Register of Owners please send £8.00 or a new BCCA burgee to smarten up your cat send £15.00 to cover the cost of posting and printing. The winter months are also a good time for you to get your fingers out onto the keys or put pen to paper and send us your stories or mods, queries, experiences etc.

The newsletter is only as good as the info you give us and your efforts are very much appreciated by all.

Talking about experiences:-

In the last two newsletters we read about bouncing around on a Biscay cruise from two different points of view.

We continue with an extract from another Biscay passage by a member with many years sailing experience, who having recently sold his boat, has decided that the time has come to retire from cruising.

See extract from his log: Falmouth to La Coruna 1989.

By midnight on the 26<sup>th</sup>.

The wind has dropped off and we are back to motor sailing again.

However, at 08:00 in the morning the wind had picked up to a F5 from the SW and had put us about again, so we decided to make out to the West for a while. We continued tacking to obtain the best heading towards our destination, the wind keeping us on our toes trying to make the best course. By 5 o'clock in the evening the ships log reads "Bloody 'orrible" and it was the sea being really nasty. By midnight the log read, "Really rough, a good force 7, probably more, not nice at all."

On this night, Margaret, who it could be said had been shanghaied to make up the numbers, and really wasn't the best of sailors in much above a force 3, also suffered badly from the cold. When I relieved her on this cold, wet, windy, rough night she was not a very happy "bunny". Off she went below to try and get warm and dry, in a very wet, cold, bedraggled state, with bucket in hand as now she was very sick as well.

Margaret and husband Doug were using the double berth. Doug (not being able to get any sleep himself in the prevailing conditions) was waiting for her, to offer his sympathy, knowing full well what state Margaret would be in as she came off watch. Almost crying, she asked Douglas, "What am I doing here? I'm sick; soaking wet; cold and miserable. Why on earth am I here?" "Oh" said Doug (long pause) "Sex is out of the question, then?"

Margaret's comments have not been recorded.

Doug is keeping quiet.....

We now rejoin Squib on her summer cruise.

## Barmy Bohemians

We wandered across the river Tiber (well via the bridge anyway!) into the enchanting medieval Trastevere area and found a small friendly family run bar for a much needed refreshment before finding a restaurant for an evening meal. Every restaurant had been very busy with long queues, then after our meal we got lost and as a consequence missed the last train back. In the railway station we were just deciding whether find a hotel or bed ourselves down on the station benches, when Sam came back from a wander to tell us she had negotiated a good price for a taxi to take us back home.

The following day we decided we'd done enough sight seeing and after chilling out (metaphorically of course) went to see what was on offer locally. It was the end of a week long festa to celebrate the Assumption of the Virgin Mary and a procession was planned for the evening. A trip to the beach and a swim was the popular choice first and later we checked out the market stalls along the canal selling local wares and produce. The atmosphere was buzzing as more and more people gathered and then the procession began followed by a spectacular firework display - another lovely day.

Much as we would have liked to go back into Rome to explore further, the heat was draining all of us and we wanted to go somewhere to anchor and just swim, so the next day we set off for the port of Anzio 27 miles south. Just before we arrived we noticed in a small port encircled with a breakwater in ruins. On checking our pilot book we discovered it was once Emperor Nero's port and very shallow with a lot of the ruins just below the surface. With Emma and I on the bow checking the depth as we drifted slowly in, we found a beautiful spot to anchor and dived in for a swim, luckily *Squib* doesn't draw much as we also found that the water only came up to our waists!

Both engines so far had behaved themselves quite well, but the following day as we approached the canal at Terracina the port engine died just as we were negotiating a spot in a basin.

This made steerage difficult with the wind and the current. We were moved on and told it was - by now familiar - 'completo' (full). Into the canal again and a similar story in the opposite basin so we finished up in the canal itself wedged between the trawlers. The



harbour police pounced on us immediately, but when we explained about the engine problem, they allowed us to stay, but we had to leave at 8am!

Paul worked all evening after discovering the problem was due a seized solid starter motor. We wouldn't be going anywhere at 8! The police were very sympathetic and even suggested a place to get it fixed and 2 days later we were on our way to the Isola Ponza, one of the Ponziene Islands.

Sam had been on continuous dolphin watch since we had left Fiumicino, but had been unlucky so far. However everyone moved very quickly when Paul spotted a whale at about 50 metres away diving up and down and blowing his trumpet. A few more miles and we entered the beautiful Cala di Feola on the northern side of Ponza and although quite crowded, we managed to anchor within a few metres of an interesting piscine naturale (natural pool) and wasted no time getting the snorkelling gear out to investigate. The four days spent on the island were wonderful; we found the main town around on the eastern side and spent a couple of days at anchor and one very expensive night on a pontoon with water and electricity. Ashore we found an historical town with narrow streets and tiny interesting shops and restaurants.

Now we were heading back to the mainland and possibly their last chance to spot any dolphins. We arrived at Gaeta but this was full so we sailed onto the port of Formia and squeezed into a spot on the town quay with a millimetre to spare either side.

Formia was well placed to access Naples so the next day we found ourselves on the train to the colourful, confusing and crazy city. We walked and bussed and frequently got lost. We found the famous back streets with the washing strung out, we saw three people and a dog on a Vespa, witnessed young kids pick-pocketing and found some wonderful monuments and shops. After lunch in a pizzeria, we got on a train bound for Pompeii and passed Mount Vesuvius en route. Arriving at Pompeii our first sight was a Roman villa, now a museum, housing the famous casts of bodies found during excavations. When Vesuvius erupted in 79AD, Pompeii was destroyed and covered in ash and rain forming moulds around the bodies. The bodies eventually decayed but left the moulds and on discovery in the 18 century, the casts were filled with plaster and this is how they are exhibited today. We walked around the ruins via the original roads made from huge boulders complete with grooves made by chariot wheels presumably. Each side of the roads were the ruins of shops, houses, theatres, baths, public buildings and temples and once more our imaginations went into overdrive. Pompeii was everything we expected and more. On the journey back to Formia we had to change trains at Naples and with an hour to wait for the next train, what better way to while away the time than to sample the local carozza, a savoury doughnut filled with a selection of fillings including ham and mozzarella and then deep fried very quickly - mmm scrumptious.

With just 1 more day left of their holiday the girls were looking forward to a swim and last minute sunbathing the next day, BUT when we woke the sky looked grim followed by a downpour and followed very quickly by howling winds! We all fought to get the awning down and

got soaked in the process and even though we were wedged in between 2 boats we still came close to hitting the quay. Luckily there was no damage and it didn't last too long and the sun came out so they got their wish. However later we were treated to more torrential rain and almost gave up our plan for the last supper (a tradition maintained on all previous family holidays where we don the best kit and find a really good restaurant) but the Thompsons are made of sterner stuff. So decked out in sad anoraks and gumboots (forget the ball gowns tonight girls!), in true brit style, we sloshed our way through the floods to the restaurant and arrived like drowned rats. Realising what a picture we must have made, we just burst out laughing and the mood was set for a fun evening with much talking, laughing and of course a superb Italian meal.

Z e, Emma and Sam are all now in their 20's with partners/families of their own and we're fortunate they could spend some time with the aged parents - albeit it was a free holiday on a boat in the Med! It had been a special time for us.

With the girls on their way home we set about getting ship-shape and underway heading south to Coppola Pinetamare. The weather was still inclement and the marina there looked sheltered.



6 derelict apartment blocks forming an island in the centre of a 'u' shaped canal greeted us on arrival. NATO staff used to occupy them until they were deemed unsafe and demolition is now their fate. The marina was very run down, but we'd noticed a steady decline the further south we travelled anyway. The marina wasn't cheap just average, but it was a safe hide-away from the weather. This turned out to be the only virtue. The town was awful with little or no maintenance carried out for a long time, the beaches all barricaded in and very dirty and the locals not as congenial as we'd encountered in other parts.

In complete contrast Isola di Procida our next port of call couldn't have been better. One of the Flegree Islands in the Gulf of Naples it is small, enchanting and very friendly. We tied up bows-to on a rickety, ramshackle pontoon we just prayed would hold us for the duration and were given a brief summary of this quaint medieval town with its huge fishing fleet, then went to find out for ourselves. This island is a well kept secret from tourism and refreshing to visit and we found everything as described, so it was with great reluctance we set sail a day later with light, favourable winds across the Bay of Naples to the island of Capri.

Unfortunately the light, favourable winds didn't last and the engines were cranked into action. We hadn't gone far when we noticed a slick of debris stretching for 100's of metres in front and to both sides and did a quick detour to try and avoid it. Absolutely impossible and of course the props got fouled. We spent the rest of the journey trying to rid the props of the rubbish and avoid more rubbish slicks. When we arrived at Capri, the props made manoeuvring and anchoring difficult. Paul dived in to check the situation and cut away a huge ball of fruit nets, fishing nets and plastic bags from around both of them.

Later we went ashore to explore and took the Funicular - a train going up the steep incline to the town - and wandered through the maze of tiny streets and passages lined with designer shops with unbelievable prices. We saw neither Gracie Fields nor Emperors Augustus and Tiberius, but we did see thousands of tourists! We decided to play our favourite game of people-watching and saw how the other half lived once more. Despite the tourists though we loved Capri and toured the mountainous, craggy island by sea and land over the next couple of days and found some truly beautiful spots to visit and swim in. On the last evening we were treated to yet another violent storm which kept us up for most of the night on anchor watch and had us tempted to retreat into the nearby megabucks marina, but we managed to resist that and the next day set off in a very lumpy sea back to the mainland.

By now it was early September and we started to consider where to spend the winter. In the 'instep' of boot of Italy? Sicily? Malta? Some months back when we'd been travelling with Len and Gill we'd discussed Sicily and had all agreed it might be interesting. We'd kept

in touch by SMS, but were all still undecided, so meanwhile with still a month at least to make up our minds, we just kept heading south to higher winter temperatures.

After an uncomfortable trip sometimes sailing, sometimes motoring we arrived on the mainland in a place called Serlena, where we found a surprisingly enchanting town akin to Naples behind the façade of apartment blocks and port industry. A day later we were moving south again and were forced by the weather (Popeye is there an end to these thunderstorms?!) to stay for 2 days in the ancient town of Agripoli - the name is said to derive from Acropolis belying its Greek origins. It was not a hardship to stay as the town was very interesting with some wonderful architecture and it also provided a rare opportunity to play with the new computer; Zõe had already helped us a lot, but we still had much more to learn. We also got talking to a young German couple on the neighbouring boat who were cruising on a shoestring and busking their way around performing puppet shows. As we were heading in opposite directions we were able to swap notes on harbours, marinas and free quays.

Popeye had gone on his holidays at this point, so we had to rely solely on the weather information on the SSB from Hamburg, which is usually accurate, but the sea areas so large and therefore making the forecasts very general. On a wing and a prayer and with sunshine and a clear blue sky - for the time being at least - we set off the next day. The wonderful F3 tailwind sailed us gently down the coast, perfetto!

For a recent birthday present, my very good friend Anne who just happens to be a fan.....atic of the Beatles sent me a tee-shirt with the words "Hey Jude" emblazoned across the front and when we arrived at our next port of call, Cameroto, I was on the bow ready to pass the marina staff the lines when they, and a boat full of Germans all chanted the song at the top of their voices....what a welcome! Everyone we met in this town went out of their way to be friendly and to help in any way and we thoroughly enjoyed our 2 day stay. We also joined in the festa which was being held for whatever reason and watched a band playing in the village square and a vibrant firework display just a few metres away from *Squib!*

This hospitality was duplicated at the next stop in Vibo Valentia where on arrival the guy working there took and secured our lines then disappeared after asking how many people were on board. Must be something to do with customs? Wrong - he came back a few minutes later with 2 glasses of a local cocktail on a tray with some nibbles! Yet another warm welcome and again the rest of the staff and nearby town echoed this.

And yet again we were reluctant to leave, but nice as these places were, we wanted to be further south for the winter. Our pilot book had extolled the virtues of the town of Tropea informing us it was 'picturesque' so heading south the following day, we went to find out.

The description was no exaggeration and we soon found a spot on a fishing quay next to Dutch boat and a German boat and had a chat to both as you do.



After a couple of hours we decided to explore the town which overlooked the marina and which both the Dutch and Germans had said was full of character. We politely said "buona sera" to the nearby old guys fishing for their dinner on the quay nearby and climbed up what seemed like a thousand steps in search of the town.

The quaint old place with its narrow streets, washing strung out, the whole bit, unfolded in front of us. We discovered a very popular pizzeria down a narrow side street with tables and chairs strewn haphazardly blocking the way naturally; mamma was inside cooking the pizzas in the enormous wood oven and we couldn't resist. A most delicious pizza, a carafe of vino rosso and an hour and a half later we ambled back to *Squib* for coffee and bed for an early start in the morning.

What happened next is almost beyond words.

I climbed aboard first and noticed that the cabin door was open - strange when we always lock it when we go out. On closer inspection I could see that it had been forced. I shouted to Paul as I went in and discovered to my horror that we had been cleaned out.

It was Friday 13<sup>th</sup>. We'd never been superstitious, always making a bee-line for propped up ladders, spilling salt and breaking mirrors you know the things, but from now on we're not so sure!

Now we can laugh but then no. I felt sick as we both saw that the electronic equipment had been stolen - autopilot, GPS, VHF, SSB, a mobile phone, CD player, Game Boy and both the old and the new computer and printer along with all the software. The binoculars had gone too, but what upset me the most was my jewellery box was also stolen and it not only contained my jewellery, most of which were presents, but also my Mum's jewellery.

They had very kindly left us 1 mobile phone, the one with the Italian SIM card (we'd taken it with us) and we used it to phone the police.....Much later we had wondered why we'd bothered. We waited for nearly 2 hours and then they had a problem finding us, despite giving them an exact location and shining our very powerful search-light on their approaching car. We then had a language problem even though one of the two spoke a little English (our fault I suppose for not learning Italian) and then we had to supply a piece of paper and pen for them to write down their report. We were told that in order to get a crime number we would have to go to the police station at 9am on Monday and complete a Denunzia. Ok but where's the police station? "About 5 kms away."

That night we had a thunderstorm to beat all others and didn't sleep at all.

Over the weekend we went through a series of emotions - anger over the violation, sadness over Mum's jewellery. Paul made a temporary repair to the broken door and we started to think about the impact the theft would have. With no autopilot, steering would be tedious; we had a spare GPS and VHF so no problem there; no binoculars would be a problem when identifying shipping around us and when coming into port; the spare mobile with an English SIM card we would miss only when back in the UK; the SSB meant no weather apart from Popeye; CD player and Game Boy, not life threatening, and with both computers and the printer gone, no birthday cards for anyone. I also couldn't finish the newsletter I had been halfway through - writing a newsletter with no computer is like riding a bike with no pedals not impossible but a bit awkward!

We spoke to a lot of people of all nationalities in the marina who had sadly heard nothing on Friday evening, but were very sympathetic. We spoke also to the guy who runs the marina to ask for directions to the police station and a taxi service. He was appalled when he heard what had happened and offered to give us a lift, he said it was 20 minutes drive and he'd be ready at 8.30 on Monday morning.

All over Italy we have seen and chuckled at the Ape car - Italian for bee. These are 3 wheeler small trucks, a bit like a motorized wheel barrow, that buzz around all over the place and reminiscent of the Tuk-Tuks in Bangkok. When we turned up at his office on Monday... yep you guessed it, he had an Ape! After a very sombre weekend, we just burst out laughing. For 20 minutes we both sat in the back in the open air, on a plank of wood 4 inches wide, going up a 1:1 hill with fumes spilling out and in the intense heat. When we arrived at the police station (we'd never have found it) he offered to wait for us to take us home again - we refused saying we'd walk back and thanked him politely!

Armed with our crime number and having completed our Denunzia, we walked home via the markets and second hand shops in the hope of finding some of the stolen goods, but nothing doing. Then we had to inform the insurance company which is when the real stress began. Staying in Tropea was the last thing we wanted to do, but we knew there was a shop to receive a fax. After several phone calls and attempted faxes we finally managed to get the form and completed it in the town square on a bench in the heat and fax it back; we then made the long trek back home and got ready to leave ASAP. We went to see our 'friend' to pay our bill, but he wouldn't let us saying we could have it on him, because we had a "beeg problemo".

The weather remained unsettled with storms alternating with blue skies, but luckily as we travelled south over the next few days we managed to dodge them. We stopped in a few places before arriving at the mouth of the Messina Strait, the stretch of water dividing Sicily and mainland Italy. Our plan was to stay in a small port there called Scilla and find out the state of the tide and weather pattern before heading through the Strait and across to Sicily, but there were only 2 places and they were both full. We deliberated for a few minutes and decided to go for it. Behind us in the distance we saw another whale gliding along and blowing, but again not close enough to identify which kind.

The sea had been a little choppy but had calmed down and as we sailed across the separation zone, we spotted the famous peculiar sword fishing boats with their enormous bowsprits. Amidships is a man perched on a tall tower on the lookout for the sword fish who like to swim slowly on the surface and bask in the sunshine. He lets the guy on the end of the bowsprit know who in turn harpoons the unsuspecting fish.

The other hazard we encountered was the busy commercial traffic. We saw only 2 other yachts and they were heading towards us making us think that we may have got it wrong! When we'd managed to dodge all the ferries and at times there were 3 or 4 very close to us travelling in different directions, we sought refuge in the Marina Nettuno in the town of Messina, Sicily. Founded by the Greeks and subsequently occupied by the Romans, the town of Messina has a history of earthquakes and in 1908 an earthquake killed almost 70,000 and the town was completely flattened and destroyed. Today it's a very large, bustling town with a flat appearance, with buildings said to be earthquake proof.



Cruising on *Squib* without the lost equipment was beginning to take its toll, having to steer constantly was very taxing and no binoculars was frustrating to say the least. We took turns to steer and used the video camera when desperate for magnification. We also felt that communication with the insurance company may be a problem as finding an internet café was hit and miss and letters normally take weeks to catch up with us when cruising. The phone was our only direct means, but our insurance company seemed to have a problem with any communication! On the basis of this we decided to head for Syracuse approximately another 80 miles.

We stopped in a couple more places on the way, firstly at Riposte in the shadow of the mighty Mount Etna, who at this time was peaceful, but was soon to get angry. Our last stop before Syracuse was Acitrezza with 3 curious basaltic rock pillars arranged at the entrance to the harbour. According to Greek legend when Odysseus and 12 of his crew landed on Sicily, the one-eyed Cyclops monster, Polyphemus took them prisoner and ate 6 of them. Odysseus blinded him with a burning stake and escaped with the remaining 6 men by clinging underneath the Cyclops sheep. The rocks known as the Ciclopi were said to have been hurled at the fleeing Odysseus.



With the F4/5 wind on the nose the next day we punched the 30 miles south and arrived at Syracuse. We had to look at everything with a critical eye if this was to be the place where we'd spend the next 6 months. The greeting was friendly, there was water and electricity and the marina had showers, the town was close by and we were given a favourable price, but what appealed to us most was the 24 hour security in light of our recent catastrophe. So after a couple of days exploring, we finally decided to settle down for the winter - the temperature was in the mid to late 20's.

Soon after arrival we sought out the nearest reasonably sized supermarket to stock up. We found one after walking round in circles for miles and yes they would deliver; we just bought a couple of necessary goods that day, but made the trek the following day for the big one - did we think to bring the marina address with us? No. Paul stubbornly refused to go a third time so off I went on my bike to do the shop. Armed with everything including our address I got to the check-out. It was obvious the assistant was not happy about something, but despite listening intently and trying to find the 10 words of my Italian vocabulary, si, no, ciao, buono, completo etc. I understood nothing until a lady behind me stepped in to offer some help. She explained that they couldn't deliver everything and I would have to take half with me. On my bike....?! On your bike! No. The lady spoke fluent English and sorted everything out for me and introduced herself and said she had just come back yesterday from spending a year in England, where? Croydon, our home town - small world.

The following week I signed up for Italian classes in the local primary school.