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# Catamaran Cruising Association

Formerly Bobcat & Catalac Cruising Association



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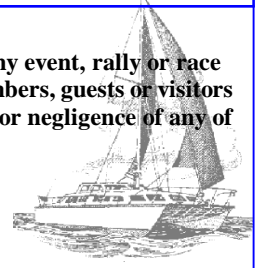
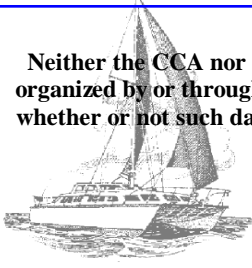
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## Disclaimer

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.



July August 2010

Dear Members,

I hope our wakes will cross during the coming months.

Don't forget our rally in August on 19 - 22 August 2010 - Bournemouth Air Festival Rally with Sunday lunch at the RNLI.

We will anchor in Poole Harbour for shelter overnight either in the area of Bramble Bush or Brownsea Island, depending on the direction of any wind. Call Sign "CAT CALL" to contact other members. As per normal we will need to know the numbers for the RNLI lunch please text to +44 7971 808 777, the booking must be advised by early July to enable us to ensure adequate seating. They are always busy on bank holidays and during the Bournemouth Air festival.

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*For members who have asked about the Mediterranean we are joining Squib as she drifts and dreams in the often in company of their friends on Lady Bear back in 2000-2001*

The Adventures of  
'Squib'  
Ciao Italia e  
Bonjour?!

By Judy and Paul Thompson

*"The sun always shines and the temperature in winter never falls below 11°C!"*

*This was the carrot that lured us donkeys on our arrival at Siracusa, Sicily.*

*"But what about the Mafia?" - we were dying to ask, but didn't dare!*

Shortly after arriving we were overwhelmed with friendliness from marina staff and locals alike and discovered a city with a harmonic blend of old and new architecture and a quirky lifestyle unique to Sicilians.

So the 'donkeys' decided to stay for the winter and the 'carrot' is proving to be very tasty!

When we first set off on our adventures in 1999, we couldn't quite get to grips with the interruption of our cruising having to stop somewhere for the winter. We thought that it was just a waste of time when we could be still travelling and seeing more places. But now we have realised we are (a) time rich (b) it's not so comfortable to cruise after October (generally speaking) and (c) and perhaps most important of all – we can get to know a town/city and it's language, culture more thoroughly instead of just skimming the surface.

As you know our first winter was spent in **Aigue Mortes** in the South of France, the second in **Aguadulce** in the south of Spain, last year in **Mahon** on the Balearic island of Menorca and this winter in **Siracusa** on the island of Sicily. In each place we have made many friends, got to know the best bars and 'parlez-ed' with the locals and albeit temporarily, woven ourselves into everyday life. People are as intrigued with us and accept and welcome our unconventional way of life.

Let us back-track for the moment to last winter and life in Mahon. In our last letter we left you with the devastating November hurricanes, fortunately there was no repeat performance and we flew back to the UK in early December to spend Christmas with family and friends and to prepare our house for marketing (yes we had finally decided to 'Sell up and Sail' for good).

On our priority list on arrival was to visit my family. After a spell in London we travelled to Wales and then spent a wonderful Christmas back in Kent at our daughters Sam and Richard's house, together with Zoë, Emma and their families.

For once transport wasn't the usual headache as Paul's Dad had decided to buy a new car and loaned his 'old' one to us for the duration which saved us the expense of renting one. With so much to and fro-ing and house clearing it was a godsend and in January with our return flight quickly approaching we thought it might be nice to take the scenic route back to Mahon by car and have the use of it (luxury!) in Menorca, so we bought it and did just that. We sold our air tickets to Len and Gill our friends of *Lady Bear* fame, who were also spending some time in the UK. We set off on another adventure across France and Spain.

'**Bonjour**' France! Of course we headed straight for Sancerre to visit Paul's sister Mandy and husband Denis 'en famille', we hadn't seen them since last in the canals in '*Squib*'. As usual they made us very welcome and after a week of catching up with all the news and gossip (and getting to grips with the Euro!) we said 'au revoir' and headed south to the border town of Toulouse. We spent a pleasant evening and the following day exploring this fascinating and historical town and vowed to return by boat someday by means of the canal du midi which snakes its way through the centre. Next stop the cold, but beautiful slopes of Andorra, oh if only we could ski, it looked so inviting – I've got the padding so I suppose that's a start!

'**Hola**' España! And the next day found us back again to one of our favourite places, Barcelona. We managed to find a reasonably priced hotel on La Ramblas, the main street and proceeded to do the whole tourist bit with a guided tour on an open top bus which was warm in the sun, but incredibly cold in the early evening! It was the start of Gaudi year and naturally all his architecture was being promoted. He designed some wonderful and totally wacky, off the wall (if you pardon the expression), fantasy land structures which we had great fun visiting. Next evening we caught the overnight ferry to Mahon This was megabucks so we cut the cost and slept in the bar/ballroom on padded seats, it seems we were the only poor ones as we had the place all to ourselves!

Back to Mahon and *Squib* was waiting loyally for us.

We quickly settled back into the chilled out approach to life, caught up with all the goss and began to explore the island, discovering inland was just as beautiful as the coast. We got down to a few maintenance jobs which had been nagging and then 2 weeks after we got back, my brother Nigel phoned early one morning in February (Valentine's Day) to say that Mum had died during the night – it was 62 years to the day since she had met my Dad. It shocked me as a phone call to her a couple of days before had been very positive and it seems she was definitely on the mend.

Back in Mahon once more and at times the grief was overwhelming; I remembered the good times and the fun we'd had as kids with Mum around, a tradition continued with her grandchildren. She had been an inspiration and had totally endorsed our bohemian way of life and longed for the next chapter of our adventures. So with these positive vibes I somehow made it through the following months.

We kept ourselves busy with more exploring, visiting Mahon's interesting military museum, catching up with, of course, the 6 nations rugby and the inevitable socialising and boules playing. On the subject of socialising, the business of the annual birthdays has to be addressed as were both soon to reach the big five O within a few weeks of each other, we naturally got busy with the plans for a fiesta. At the end of March, on a days' respite from some very wet weather, we had a huge knees up on the quay, with plenty of balloons, flags, silly hats, posters and a 'through the ages' collage of photos of Paul (did he ever look that sweet?). Of course the champagne (well Cava), wine and beer flowed and when evening fell, we adjourned to a boat and the guitar and mouth organ came out and the sing-song began. A day to remember, the ages we'll conveniently forget.

The car continued to be a godsend until one day when I went into Mahon town centre to collect some foam to make some cockpit cushions and parked the car. The rain was torrential and after swiftly making my purchase I paddled my way back to the car just in time to see the tow truck taking it to God knows where. The traffic warden doing the organising, did his best to direct me to the compound in his best English/Spanish, but after searching for over half an hour and dying for a pee (I blamed it on the rain) I went back to 'Squib' feeling very sorry for myself. Paul offered no sympathy and sent me off again armed with a wad of car documents. Around the corner John, a friendly mechanic from the marina stopped and offered me a lift. When I related my tale of woe he told me it wasn't uncommon in Mahon to be towed away and took me straight to the compound.

The whole episode had taken 3½ hours and cost €40, I was very careful where I parked after that.

After Paul's Dad and his friend Joan spent a pleasant few days with us on a diversion from their holiday in Mallorca at the beginning of April, we prepared to have 'Squib' lifted out to change her 'nappy'.

Not a job either of us looks forward to but has to be done. With 'Squib' on the hard, the sun shining and overalls donned, it took us a manic couple of days to anti-foul, replace anodes, check stern glands and sea-cocks and then give her a good spit and polish.

Paul also serviced and fitted the props which had previously given us so many problems and fingers crossed no more tantrums.

Back into the water and we both immediately got itchy hulls and strained at the mooring line to set off again. We thought it prudent to do a test run before we attempted the non-stop, 2 day, 200 miles crossing to Sardinia, so together with *Lady Bear* we sailed to Isla del Aire on the south eastern corner of Menorca, which is home to a unique breed of black lizards.

It took us no time to explore this tiny, normally uninhabited island and found a bunch of guys living almost rough, carrying out an exercise to count and identify the migrating birds, which they caught in huge nets.

*The lizards just slithered and basked in the sun seemingly oblivious.*

Back to Mahon harbour and our old haunt of Outboard Lost Overboard fame, (Cala Taulera where we dropped anchor for a tranquil night. The following day with a strong wind forecast, we ducked back into the marina for a week and made final preparations to leave.

Whilst waiting for a weather window we witnessed a fiesta for St George's Day which is quite bizarre as the English don't generally celebrate this. During the evening of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April in Menorca, they stage a re-enactment of the signing of the treaty of Amiens when Menorca was handed back to the Spanish by the English, this is an important event for them obviously and one which demands full on pomp and ceremony. During the day all over Spain, which we don't think is linked to St Georges Day, they also hold a huge book and rose fair in every town, we think the idea is to encourage reading and in the process you get a free rose for your loved one.

With the help of the internet (yes we finally managed to connect after 8 months) and the newly acquired SSB (single side band - short wave radio) we got a good 5 day weather forecast. We sold the car to a guy in the marina for what we'd paid for it. Unfortunately, we were to miss Gini and Ken's return from working and skiing in France for the winter by one day, but the weather dictates and no doubt our seas will cross again some day. We said our farewells to the many friends we had made and late one afternoon we set sail in tandem with Len and Gill on *Lady Bear* for Sardinia. Our Longest Journey so far is about to begin.

This was to be my longest journey so far. Paul being an old sea-dog tried to reassure me by reminding me of all the things that could happen and what to do in a MOB (man over board) situation and if he had a heart attack, or we lost the mast, you know the usual and promptly told me I was on the dog watch from midnight. When I mutinied he relented and said "only joking!" The watches fortunately passed with little incident. I kept warm, sane and awake by doing some strenuous jogging and dancing in the cockpit, which amused a passing school of dolphins so much so that they took one look at me and dived straight to *Lady Bear*! Day 2 the sun came up (I watched it) and produced a beautiful day with a steady 4/5 knot NW wind which sped us nearer our destination. At night fall the wind dropped and we were becalmed so we motored for the duration. Perhaps because Paul spent most of his life working shifts in the Fire Brigade he is nocturnal, whereas my body clock tells me something entirely different, so Paul took pity on me and did the dog watch again and I did the later one with more activity but this time no dolphins. It always amazes me how at sea with no light pollution from the land the sky is so dark and how the stars shine so brightly, so eerie yet magical. I promised myself then to learn celestial navigation one day. At daybreak the wind was still non-existent, but it did manage to make an appearance later and with land sighted, we sailed for the remainder of the way.

Our course had been plotted on the chart and our GPS set for Oristano Bay, approximately halfway up the western coast of Sardinia. We dropped anchor off a beautiful sandy beach in the vast bay at around midday, felt completely exhausted, but equally exhilarated at having arrived safe and sound and wasted no time joining Len and Gill and getting out the champagne (ok cava again) to celebrate, followed shortly after by a very long siesta. **Ciao Italia!!!**

After taking stock the following day and getting ship-shape we set off for our next destination heading south for a place called Buggerru (real name, I kid you not), but on arrival found the entrance to be so silted up that it was inaccessible so we renamed it 'bugger off' instead and moved on. We eventually arrived at an anchorage off the small, south eastern island of San Pietro and discovered a fascinating, quaint town called Carloforte.

We went ashore, made our first steps onto Italian soil and tasted our first real Italian pizza.

***"What is this strange tongue?" we said "What's Italian for coffee/beer/wine /toilet/how much?" we said. "I wish we had a dictionary!" All part of the adventure!***

We wandered around the narrow streets lined with ice-cream shade houses with flower-covered balconies and drying laundry.

We smelt the pizzas and coffee, garlic and the drains.

The tiny shops wrestled for space with their wares and loud patrons spilling out onto the streets. But down to business, a mobile phone shop for an Italian SIM card to replace the Spanish one. Our connection to the internet proved to be short lived (it's a long story). It was back to pigeon post and SMS.

The weather forecast on the SSB promised F6/7 winds so with this news we settled down for a few days of exploring, sunbathing and laundry. At the local museum we encountered a bunch of 7 year old school kids who were eager to try out their English with questions like "Where are you from? What is your name?" and "How old are you?!" **Ouch, dodgy subject!**

We also met an Aussie couple in the harbour who had sailed from Perth, they kept us entertained with tales of piracy in the Red Sea.

The neighbouring island of San Antioco was a different story and at the main town of Calasetta we found Basil Fawlty alive and well in the supermarket and Dick Turpin in the harbour, so we sailed back to the mainland to Portoscuso where the famous Italian hospitality was alive and well, the locals were welcoming, chatty and didn't try to charge extortionate rates. Soon after a young couple with their 2 daughters aged 9 and 13 arrived next to us; they were on their way back to their native Norway, after a circumnavigation of the world taking 3½years - more fascinating tales.

It was from Portoscuso we made our Italian first bus trip and discovered that you need to buy a bus ticket, before you get on the bus, from a bar or edicola (newsagent). Our trip to the capital Cagliari involved 2 buses and was interesting to say the least, but everyone was very helpful.



We made our way a few days later around the southern coast of Sardinia anchoring in some beautiful calas, we took our first dip of the year and discovered that it was the jellyfish season, but with temperatures approaching 30°C we were desperate.

We moored in some intriguing harbours and found much in the way of Roman ruins.

A mooring on the town quay next to the local fire station in the capital city of Cagliari provided a safe and free place to leave *Squib* whilst we made a trip back to the UK, with the friendly and obliging fireman on the fireboat offering to keep an eye on her for us for a week. *Lady Bear* was due to leave for the east coast in a few days so we said our farewells and flew off. Our trip was hectic as usual, but we managed at least to almost finalise our house sale, visit most of the family and some friends and see the girls and gangs.

Sam had a party on her birthday with a 'Cyber Funk' theme that produced some very interesting costumes!

We bought a new laptop to upgrade our old one and to (ever the optimists) connect to the internet, but back on *Squib* and we found that Bill Gates was ahead of Nokia and had brought out Windows XP before Nokia had produced the necessary software so we had to wait a few weeks for them to catch up.....and of course connect!

*Squib* had behaved herself in our absence and was champing at her anchor and raring to go, so who are we to stop her. Winding around the south western tip we dropped anchor in Villasimius for the night and the next day headed for Arbatax, but had such a good sail decided to carry on to Santa Maria Navarrese and got so carried away sailed straight past it and had to do an about turn for a half a mile!

The east coast of Sardinia is quite straight with long stretches between safe havens, but stunning nevertheless and we spent a while cruising and exploring the bays and coastal towns including Cala Ganone in the gorgeous bay of Orsei, La Caletta, Puntadia, and after weaving our way through some very pretty islands we arrived in the large harbour and town of Olbia where we spent a few days on the free town quay relaxing and catching up with some chores. We explored the old historical town and met up with yet more Aussies (are there any left down there?) for a couple of stubbies (we're even copping We explored the old historical town and met up with yet more Aussies (are there any left down there?) for a couple of stubbies (we're even copping on to the lingo!). Sadly we couldn't stay too long as the evening temperatures had now reached 34°C and the harbour was too dirty to have a swim, so off we went with the wind right on the nose up coast a bit to the very posh Cala di Volpe on the famous Costa Smeralda where, it is rumored, Princess Di spent her last day.

We were convinced God had got his paint palette out and painted the sea it was so blue, naturally we dived straight in for the long awaited swim. On the subject of nature we noticed that the Italians seemed to have a bit more shame and topless sunbathing is a rarity and nudity is almost non-existent in contrast to our experiences in other countries! Into the dinghy to explore ashore and apart from a local very expensive general store, all we found was a very posh 5 \*\*\*\*\* hotel with its own marina- the purchase of a postage stamp seemed a good excuse for a nose around!



A couple of days later, we moved around the coast a bit to the even more classy marina, Porto Cervo. This is Millionaires Paradise! The yachts were liners and the town was wall to wall designer shops. We plumped for the free anchoring and window shopping; people-watching was definitely on the agenda.

After meeting up with *Lady Bear* a few days later, we crossed to La Maddalena, the largest island in the archipelago and belonging to Italy between Sardinia and Corsica.

This old and historical town had a character of its own.

We hired some scooters to discover what the rest of La Maddalena and the neighbouring island of Caprera had to offer and were not disappointed, we found beauty and ruggedness in perfect harmony and all got very **sore bums** in the process.

We had to recover the fragments of French from the depths of our memories when we reached the astonishingly beautiful town of Bonifacio.

After a short spell back on mainland Sardinia, we negotiated the notoriously windy and hazardous 11 miles across the strait with no mishaps; we found an anchorage, but inadvertently got drawn into a commotion involving the wind, a French boat and a shortage of mooring spots and promptly forgot our own advice to use a tripping line to help us ultimately up anchor from this apparently debris littered seabed. Yep you guessed it, after a wonderful 4 days seeing the sights, try as we may the kedje would not come up! Len and Gill came to help from another perspective, but eventually it was donated to Neptune.

Bonifacio has a long and chequered history dating back to the Neolithic period; Odysseus' fleet sheltered here, the Romans utilised it and the Genoese ruled for a time. The medieval town perched precariously on the limestone cliffs, guards majestically the calanque, a slit in the cliffs and the entrance to the natural harbour.

Corsica is a place I have wanted to visit for a long time, it always has seemed mysterious.

If Bonifacio was any example I couldn't wait to see more!

The kedje anchor was not our only problem. We had used our dinghy to go ashore and couldn't believe it when it sprung a leak on a seam! Maybe you can cast your mind back to the saga in Aigues Mortes involving our other dinghy and similar leaks, Yamaha finally, under duress, had replaced it with a brand new one 2 years ago – is this how long they are designed to last?!

The prevailing winds dictated which direction to take and dodging the many reefs around the South Eastern tip, we arrived at Rondinera, a large but sheltered anchorage on the eastern coast. By now we were taking regular dips to cool down and whilst we were snorkeling Paul saw a fish with **large teeth**. We somehow got our wires crossed and I thought he told me to look at the anchor, which I did and unwittingly came face to face with a monster - and yes he had big teeth and yes he was at least 2 metres long! With bowel emptying fear, I torpedoed back to *Squib* and safety and a very amused Paul who had actually said "Look towards the anchor!" We watched it for a while getting a similar reaction from other unsuspecting boats.

Bastille Day and the sky looked ominous. Our hopes of getting into Porto Vecchio to latch on to any planned festivities were slim as every man and his spaniel had the same idea. So instead we found a very tranquil and deserted bay, dropped anchor and went ashore. The tranquillity was short lived when the impending storm broke and brought torrents of rain. We sat in a campsite bar and watched helplessly, as *Squib* was alone and at the mercy of the storm. We worried needlessly as she took it on the nose and came up smiling. Later when the clouds had cleared we witnessed the most spectacular series of firework displays all around us.

Heading in a northerly direction along the east coast we stopped in the small town of Solenzara where we managed to replace the lost kedje anchor, stock up with provisions, do some laundry and use the electricity to charge everything.

We bumped into Len and Gill again and sailed northwards once more to Campoloro and with a very windy forecast took the decision to hire a car between us to find out what the rest of Corsica had to offer. We travelled the length and breadth of the island over the next three days from the bustling northern city of Bastia and onto the 'finger' and the wild northern extremities, around the Cap Corse, stopping only to admire some of the most stunning scenery, to Saint Florent which nestles affectionately into the land in the western corner of the 'finger'. After a delicious meal we headed back via the mountains negotiating some very narrow and perilous cliff roads, which had us fighting for the 'inside' seats of the car! This set the theme for next 2 days, for Corsica we now know is very mountainous. The upside was the landscape and scenery which were breathtaking.

The capital Ajaccio and birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte was our destination the next day and we ambled through the fascinating old streets and unsurprisingly checked out the local harbour and hostelrys. On the route back to Campoloro, the fortified town of Corte in the centre of Corsica provided us with a pit stop for a meal. Day 3 and we were to explore the elusive town of Porto Vecchio and found an interesting walled town built on a precipitous bluff with panoramic views over the vast and natural harbour.

For lunch a picnic in the foothills by a babbling brook with a swim afterwards sounded romantic, but although we know we had passed one previously, it now eluded us and we got so desperate we had a sandwich on the roadside. Around the next corner after lunch we found our babbling brook!

Light south-easterly winds ferried us 40 miles across to Elba. We had relinquished the car, had a day to catch our breath and said au revoir to Corsica. We arrived on the northern side of this Tuscan island and were immediately bowled over by the beauty of this tiny, but stately island.

After laying at anchor in a gorgeous, but swelly bay for a night, we sailed in a westerly direction with the intention of exploring the southern coast. Discovering turbulent seas on the west coast we were forced to turn back and continue along the north coast to the quaint town of Marciana. We spent a wonderful 3 days at anchor here and had a superb time strolling around the warren of narrow streets. Ok unless you have a violent thunderstorm. Fortunately we anticipated the storm and moved Squib to prevent a potential problem.

Over the next few days we circumnavigated Elba and towns and anchorages of equal charm culminating in our arrival at the main ferry port of Portoferraio, where we checked into the marina to await the arrival the following day of my sister Diane, her Significant Other – Clive and our 9 year old nephew Frankie.

The marina borders the original steep town walls which generated a tremendous amount of heat adding to the summer temperatures, so whilst it was conveniently situated in the heart of the town with much to do, swimming was not on the agenda in the polluted waters and so cooling down out of the question.

After settling in our visitors, we sailed off back to Marciana for a very welcome dip at anchor.

We took a 'busman's holiday' trip to the south coast in a glass bottom catamaran several times bigger than *Squib* with both hulls made entirely of glass, observing the sea-bed en route.

The pièce de resistance was the wreck of a passenger liner, tragic but fascinating, which appeared to be only a few feet away and split in two, it was inhabited by a fantastic array of fish of many different colours and species.

Elba was put on the map when Napoleon was exiled here in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century, so when we hired a car one day, his country pad was our first destination, except it was Monday and we forgot that many places are closed. We toured inland and found some interesting towns and villages, ate ice-creams (a must in Italy!) and generally acted like tourists. We had no trouble continuing this for the remainder of the week sailing up and down the coast discovering the nooks and crannies in the coastline.

All too soon the week came to an end and it was time for them to go. After saying our farewells to our friends who were on Elba for a while, we sailed to Port Azzuro on the east coast to catch up with the laundry and to get ship-shape before crossing to mainland Italy.

With all 3 daughters due to arrive in Rome in a week's time, we will have to get our skates on.

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***We continue Squib's drifting & dreaming in the Mediterranean next month. ED.***

***We do need more stories about your cruises for the newsletter, to keep us updated with the safe and interesting places you have visited.***

***We all have our favourite anchorage please share it or them with us.***

***There will be a prize of a new CCA burgee for the best letter we receive this year so get those fingers tapping. ED.***