



Member's view
ANN ROWE

I have been a member of the CA for seven years and in that time spent three years sailing from the UK to the Ionian, cruising Brittany, crossing Biscay to Spain, down the Portuguese coast and then into the Mediterranean where we now keep our boat.

Initially we joined on the recommendation of friends who cruised Brittany and said they'd had a lot of help with regulations and gleaned a wealth of other information, not to mention benefiting from a range of discounts. When we discovered Captain's Mate, the CA app, it helped us throughout our trip down the French, Spanish and Portuguese coasts and round into the Med. The information from the CA is invaluable and we get discounts from a variety of suppliers, including some in the UK who ship specialist parts, as well as 5 per cent off our yard fees in Greece, all of which adds up to more than our CA subscription.

We've also found the HLRs (honorary local representatives) extremely helpful and friendly – we particularly remember an enjoyable stay in Vigo where the HLR there even drove us to the large supermarket.

● ABOVE
The CA has honorary representatives all over the globe, including the Caribbean, who are there to help members

CRUISING ASSOCIATION

Membership is soaring and average age plummeting. We decided to find out what makes the Cruising Association so appealing

If you went to the recent Southampton Boat Show you might have walked past the Cruising Association stand. Perhaps you were one of the 2,000 people who stopped by to talk to CA staff. In the past three years, it has pushed up membership by almost a quarter and much of that growth has come from younger sailors.

CA general manager, Beryl Chalmers, said: "People are buying their dream boats earlier and are planning to head off to the sun. A lot of them are still working, but travel is easy and cheaper

these days so they hop to and from the boat, wherever it is."

The CA's 5,760 members must be the envy of yacht clubs around the country. But it was set up not to be simply another yacht club, most of which at the time were focused on racing. The association has its origins in 1907. A lively correspondence had been carried in the pages of *Yachting Weekly* about the feasibility of forming some sort of union of cruising sailors to compile a register of 'honest' boatmen in various ports who could supply moorings or services. Cruising as a pastime was only just taking hold,

● ABOVE
Limehouse Basin is the home of CA House, the square building behind the rotunda

● BELOW
CA's Captain's Mate app presents location specific info on a handy world map



and these amateurs needed support.

The magazine's editor offered a room to those interested in discussing the formation of an association and around 30 people turned up to the first meeting in the Strand, London. A committee was elected and its first annual general meeting was held the following December.

If the CA's aims have remained very similar – the exchange of cruising information between like-minded sailors – the means have not. It still maintains a library of over 10,000 books, charts and guides at its Limehouse base – something

one of its former leaders Herbert Hanson described in the 1920s as: "a collection of great interest, containing a number of beautiful books".

But the CA has embraced the digital age, and an increasing number of its members' reports are available online in a library of 16,000 pages: the distilled wisdom of generations of cruising sailors. This has developed into the Captain's Mate app, which displays the CA's rich mine of location-specific information on a world map. Every pin logo on it represents a report or a log that can be viewed online – there are thousands.

The app is being relaunched and will display the hundreds of marinas, chandleries, shops and boatyards where CA members can get a discount, as well as the ports around the world which have an honorary local representative.

"With all our cruising information available online to our members they don't have to be in London to find out where to winter their boats at home or abroad, enjoy the hundreds of companies who offer our members discounts or find out how their VAT status might land them in deep water," added Beryl.

And that room in Fleet Street has become a purpose-built home on Limehouse Basin in London. It was built in 1994 with an investment that came from a peculiar source. The CA owned Captain Cook's handwritten logs, but its insurer would not allow the logs to be displayed. Cambridge University offered to buy them for £750,000, with the proviso that CA members could still see them in organised visits.

The building serves as a clubhouse, bar and restaurant, library and even offers bed and breakfast to members for £60 for a couple for the night. It also hosts lively talks and seminars on Wednesday nights.

But the CA is not just about CA House. There are 20 sections organising rallies, cruising in company, talks and visits. The sections include areas around Britain, the Baltic, Biscay, French inland waterways, Mediterranean and further. There's even an Antipodean section. So wherever you live or sail there is a section near you.

- Subscription from £125 (UK)/£82 (overseas)
- theca.org.uk



CA PICS/ANN ROWE