

Jenny & family on board Stormtrooper



## It's a family affair

The CA's new Honorary Solicitor, **Jennifer Bowes**, started sailing as a child and, with her father, introduced her husband to boats too. Now she and her family have taken their own boat to the Med

My sailing experience started as a baby. My Dad owned and still owns a wooden gaff-rigged cutter, 26ft on deck with a 6ft bowsprit, *Young Alert*, which he keeps in the Hamble river. *Young Alert* was built in 1886 and rebuilt after the war in 1946 as a sailing yacht. Every three-week August holiday was on board *Young Alert*, sailing the Solent, the West Country, the Channel, the Brittany coast and Scilly Isles. At that time we had no chart plotter, depth sounder and at the very beginning, a "bucket and chuck-it". Navigation involved compasses, waypoints, transits and all the things you learn on a Day Skipper course. Now our navigation involves checking the weather is ok and

navigating by chart plotter. I still ensure I have paper charts aboard for everywhere we go, just in case.

*We took our son sailing when he was just a few days old, with a travel cot in the tiny saloon*

My childhood cruising aboard *Young Alert* was a lot of fun and I enjoyed exploring all the new places we sailed to with my parents and my sister. It also included some harrowing times, running aground in many places, almost getting sucked into the turbines in La Rance and our first

attempt at the Scilly Isles which ended up in a 24-hour ordeal in a force 10-11. She leaked from the deck when it rained and from the hull most of the time, and if it was really hot the planks opened up to let in more water.

I attended Peter Symonds College and made the sailing team for a leg of the tall ships race from Norway to Denmark. It was an amazing trip.

After I started university I lost touch with sailing until Dad suggested that my now husband, Chris, might like to join us for a trip on *Young Alert*. We went to Chichester for a few nights and despite the inclement weather Chris took an interest. So in 2009 we bought our first boat, *Emma*, a Signet 20, which sailed like a dinghy and had a little outboard on the back. We had great fun in the Solent.

After three years we decided to upgrade, to a Cobra 750 with an inboard engine, *Maitresse*. We sailed a little further, to Weymouth and crossed Lyme Bay to Dartmouth. We took our son Thomas out when he was a few days old and just managed to fit a travel cot in the saloon (though you couldn't walk anywhere once the baby was in there!) When Matthew was born three years later, space was tighter but we carried on sailing regularly at weekends. We kept *Maitresse* at Universal Marina on the Hamble (in a semi-tidal berth) so that we could simply push the buggy to the boat and load on the children and all their clobber!

Emma, a Signet 20, moored alongside Jenny's Dad's classic gaffer *Young Alert*







Maitresse, a Cobra 750



Stormtrooper in Solta, Croatia, this year

Mum decided she'd had enough of British weather sailing so chartered a boat in Turkey to celebrate their 25th wedding anniversary – would we join them? Of course! First Turkey, then over the years Croatia and Greece. The non-tidal, blissfully warm sailing environment was much welcomed.

Our next upgrade coincided with a pipe dream of sailing the Med. Chris and I had discussed sailing destinations when we retired, but at the end of 2019 a colleague sent me an article about a family that had gone sailing for a couple of years; she said it sounded like something I would do! The seed was planted, and we started to think that our next boat should be one capable of realising the dream. Covid hit and many people were selling their boats due to unfortunate personal circumstances. Chris and I were lucky: we were still earning salaries and as soon as the restrictions were eased we purchased *Stormtrooper* in May 2020, a bigger boat than I ever thought we would own. Chris and I did our Day Skipper theory during lockdowns and had an RYA instructor aboard *Stormtrooper* to do our practical course.

We slowly started kitting her out, and then planned, and replanned our trip several times. This is when I joined the CA. The wealth of information, experience and knowledge available was invaluable. We wanted to do the French canals and I had my heart set on it. Could we do it? Would be tight. Canvassing opinion through the CA we decided it could not

be done, her draft was too deep. What about Brexit? Again, the CA had the answers (as far as they were available!)

A plan was finally settled on (by this time it was around plan F!) Chris finished work on 31 January 2023 and spent a month preparing *Stormtrooper* for the trip. The boys finished school, I started my sabbatical from work on 24 February 2023, and we flew to Marseille on 28 February. *Stormtrooper* was trucked (by a company found on the CA information pages) from Southampton to Port Saint Louis and we joined her on 1 March 2023. Watching her arrive was quite emotional – we had done it!

## ***Our pilot book is pre-Covid and pre-Brexit; Captain's Mate is far more up to date***

Now it was just a matter of getting to Montenegro in 90 days! Someone at work asked me once whether that was possible. I said I didn't know, I hadn't done it before. That is the thing I love about sailing: the challenge, the adventure, the not knowing what you might find and what you might see. We left Otranto and the EU for Montenegro with five days to spare.

Having stayed in Montenegro to regain some Schengen days, as I write this in July we are in Croatia, living through a European heatwave like no other, but glad to be by the sea where there is normally a breeze and the ability to cool

off in the water whenever we want!

The CA has been an invaluable source of information and assistance in getting us here. *CAPTAIN'S MATE* is an excellent supplement to our pilot book because it is far more up to date. Our Montenegro/Croatia/North Coast of Italy pilot book is 2019 (the most up to date in the chandlery at home) which was pre-Brexit and pre-Covid. While those marinas in Italy that were not finished in 2019 are still not finished today, the same is not true of Montenegro which has obviously been going great guns to build marinas (not in the pilot book) to welcome the pleasure yachting community. The reports on anchorages, holding ground, shelter, facilities and experiences of other yachtsmen are invaluable.

I did my law degree at Southampton University, trained at Trethowans solicitors, qualified in 2010 as a commercial litigation solicitor and made partner in 2021. When I noticed the CA required a new honorary solicitor I volunteered. I have already assisted with a couple of matters and while thankfully they are not litigation-based, my knowledge of company law and other areas which coincide with my practice area put me in good stead to assist.

My use of the CA resources is likely to reduce when we return in September, but I hope to get more involved in the Solent Section and keep an eye on the European Inland Waterway Section because I would still one day like to go through the French canals!

