

## The Covid Pandemic 2020

This blog starts just after Christmas, in early January 2020. At the time Myra, my wife, had agreed to be admitted into hospital for a full knee replacement. She had been very nervous about this for several months, but as the date approached she was keen to see it done and dusted. Meanwhile I had been hoping to be out in Olbia, Sardinia, on our boat whilst she was out of the water and in the SNO dockyard shed. However, along with the need for me to be at Myra's bedside in January, in mid-December SNO announced that their Xmas shutdown was to be from 21<sup>st</sup> Dec to 15<sup>th</sup> January, making going out there pointless until late in January.



Just after Myra went into hospital, I was listening to a 'health expert' on Radio 4 discussing this new virus in China and how it was not something that gave him any cause for concern. Gosh! I bet he's eating his words right now!

So, Myra was in hospital from the 9<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> January and then home to be cared for by her loving - but domestically helpless (or is that hopeless?) - husband!

Well, I went to boarding school. Then to sea aged 16, and then married at 20, and then - here we are. There hasn't been any necessity for me to have wide ranging domestic skills!

However, to the rescue comes Diet Chef. We have been watching our weight for some weeks and there are lots of their precooked meals in the garage for me to heat up and serve. We also have a steamer, and I am more than capable of throwing a large pile of veg into said steamer and turning it on.



Cleaning lessons involves me being shouted at from two floors above! However, as January progressed, we were as close to marital bliss as we have ever been.

I had planned to fly out with one of our new crew, Jack Durrant, on the 28<sup>th</sup> January for just three days so that he could see the boat out of the water and get an idea of what goes on in a major dockyard. I meanwhile could inspect the work on the boat. Myra by this time is steadily improving, although still in a fair bit of pain. However, she has largely taken back the cooking responsibilities, (thank heavens!) and I now just have a daily stream of orders relating to the house.

So, Jack and I set off for an event free four days in a B & B called Carpe Diem (a most appropriate name) in Olbia. The boat maintenance is well under way and my contractors Giovanni and Alessandro are making good progress towards a relaunch at the end of February.

Jack is able to get a good look in the bilges when we decide to test all the hull fittings, and we have a good look around the yard at a number of fabulous boats. The four days are a success, and we fly home none the wiser about what is happening in China.

However, ever since I had encephalitis two years ago, caught I believe on public transport, I never fly on Easyjet without a mask so, although I do not know it, I have already started to take precautions against Corona Virus!

Early February sees me back on some domestic duties with Myra itching to get out shopping and desperate to get back to driving a car. Our next plan - well at least mine! - is to return to Olbia on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February, a few days after Myra's six week driving ban is over.



As I leapt on the plane to Pisa without a care in the world, I am completely oblivious about what is about to happen. I actually fly from Gatwick to Pisa on the day they announced a red line North of Pisa. Well, it didn't matter to me - I was South of that line wasn't I? So, I land in Pisa, and hire a Europcar to drive to Portofino to pick up our new toy for the summer.

I have been given instructions where to go but I use the satnav anyway. Silly me! I drive for 15 mins up a mountain lane in the right direction before I meet a lorry parked across the road with a very clear message that I won't be going any further. I backtrack ten miles and then find another route up to the hills above and behind Portofino. It is dark by now so the scenery will have to wait for the morning.

I eventually arrive in this village, but can I find the house? I must have driven past it five times before I realised where it is. If that was not bad enough, when the little hotel nearby phoned me to check what time I was arriving, I thought it was the housekeeper of the Seabob's (my new toy!) owners so I then spent ten minutes in total confusion with Google Translate trying to ask the Hotel owner where the Seabob was!



Tranquillo, as we say in Italy. Yes, I now speak Italian, but more on that later. Eventually I find the house of the owner of Chris Craft whose Seabob I have purchased on the internet.

Now for all of you who are not familiar with my penchant for toys a Seabob is an electric on surface and underwater sea scooter! Yes really, the sickest piece of underwater equipment on the market today. See how I slipped the word 'sickest' in there because I am reverting to my youth listening to pop songs and generally acting the fool. Myra calls me 'the teenager' now I am on Instagram, something 6 months ago I would have told you was never ever ever going to happen. Well, you only live once so why not?

Anyway, I eventually find the house, meet the retainers, and load the Seabob into my Fiat Panda having first stripped the inside of the car so it will just fit in. Off I go to the hotel which by now I know exactly where it is.

Up at 0600 the next morning into the car and down the hill to Livorno. The scenery is spectacular in the morning light as I head down to La Spezia.

I arrive at the Grimaldi Ferry embarkation point as directed two hours early. I am then told that the ferry was delayed for two hours, so I settle down for a four hour wait. Thankfully I had stopped twice on the motorway for breakfast and coffee.

We eventually load cars, find cabins, settle in, and depart for Olbia. It is a good trip in daylight so I can see Elba, Corsica, Italy and Sardinia on our route South and West to Olbia. The ferry takes about ten hours, so I arrive in about 2200 and get off the ship and down the road to the same B&B as last time. Angelo the owner is there to greet me.

Saturday morning first thing I nip around to the Marina to see if the carbon folding cycle I ordered from Carbo in America six months ago has arrived. It has, but I have to persuade a Marinero (Boat boy - great name) to let me in to get the package. Soon I had this loaded up in the car and am on my way back to the hotel to off load.



Next I drive down to the yard. I had been pre-warned that I would not be able to get in. However, that was with a car, and I quickly see that I can walk in and thus go and see how the boat is getting on. I am delighted, park the car, and sneak in just in case I get a bollocking.

The boat is in one of the huge sheds and when I get there, I can see just how much has been done, and most notably the teak decks which have been grey since I bought the boat but are now gleaming as new. She looks fantastic, and I return to the hotel knowing that the following week I am going to get a lot done.

When I left the boat in Olbia Marina back in October there was another boat alongside us called Alexandra Maria with an Australian skipper called Paul Kinney. His story back then was that he had been down to Tunisia on a VAT trip and had left with a major engine control problem which was so bad he limped into Olbia for repair.

Having had the controls sorted he was due to sail onto Antibes for the winter before returning home to Broom for Christmas. However, with the weather ever worsening he could not find a window to get the boat back to France. Finally, in November he gave up and left the boat in Olbia Marina.

Roll on two months and the boat is still there, and Paul arrives in Sardinia the day before me. Well, this is good as I do not know anyone here - although I had met the skipper of the 150-footer behind me, Ian, who is married to a Sarda and lives in Olbia. Either way it is nice to have a pal to go for a drink with.

I get back to the hotel late afternoon to meet Paul for a welcome back drink. This takes several hours and may have included a meal....

However, on Sunday morning I am up with the lark to assemble the cycle and get off for a ride. After breakfast I take it for a preliminary ride around this part of Olbia before deciding it is ready for an adventure. It is awesome, and so much better than the older bike I have on board which has given good service for two years but is now rusting badly in the control and gear mechanism.

Delighted with new bike I load it, folded, into Panda and head for Alghero on the West side of Sardinia about 110 kms away. A pleasant but not inspiring drive ensues with endless road works and minor traffic. Weather is grey and overcast but not cold. I arrive in Alghero and wind my way down to the port where I think it will be an interesting ride.



I parked up and had a quick coffee before a cycle ride around the docks and town. A very pleasant town which in summer would be lovely but on a grey drizzly day it was not at its best. However, there were lots of people about, some very interesting fortifications and castle and a great looking town beach.



Heading back to Olbia I had no idea what was about to occur. Yes, we all knew that China was struggling to control this thing and that Northern Italy had got it bad, but affect us South of the Red Line? No, that was not a problem and anyway I am on an island ...

So, having arrived safely in Olbia and in blissful ignorance as to just how fast this thing is moving, I start Monday morning by dashing down to the boat to start work on my long list of jobs. Giovanni and Alessandro who are the contractors working on the boat arrive and we spend the morning going over their work, which I have to say is exemplary.

Stopping for coffee at Mac D's to meet my friend Paul everything in Olbia seems as normal. A pleasant lunch in the local Crew Cafe is followed by unpacking the pallet that has arrived from the UK with all the gear I need for the 2020 season.

The week progresses without incident and much work is completed. But the RED line is slowly working south and now encompasses Pisa from where I am due to fly out the coming Monday. However I am taking the hire car on the ferry on Sunday to Livorno arriving just in time for my flight.

By Thursday it is not looking good for my return to the UK as I will be required to self isolate on arrival in the UK for two weeks which more or less takes me to the date on which I am due to fly back out here with my second crew member, Caitlin Fergusson.

Thinking on this I decide that it would be better to avoid the mainland and the flight home just now and instead stay here in Olbia for the rest of the month. Having spoken at length



with Myra ,who is enjoying her new independence, we decide this is a sensible course of action.

So on the Friday I cancel the ferry and flight and prepare for a further two weeks in Olbia quietly working on the boat whilst enjoying the culture and occasional meals out with Paul and Ian.

That night my host at the Bed and Breakfast I am staying at, Carpe Diem, invites me to meet his son and friends for supper.

I had assumed that the hors d'oeuvres followed by a pasta dish of spaghetti and Vongoles (Clams) was it, but I was moderately surprised, and not very hungry having had seconds of both, when my host appears with a whole Sea Bream for each of us. Having politely refused a second helping of this fabulous dish she then appears with the potatoes. Luckily, I felt it polite enough not to have too many of these, as I was now unclear what was coming next!

Indeed, no sooner had we had the potatoes then an enormous plates of cakes and pastries appeared. Please bear in mind that we started supper at 22.00 (I usually eat at 19.00), so by now I was feeling full, tired and a little emotional! But I persevered and eat cakes and drank Grappa. Finally at 01.00 the ordeal was over, and I headed to bed (miraculously without indigestion).

Don't get me wrong. It was all fabulous, but my guard was now up for the second and subsequent invitations!



On Saturday I slipped off to the yard to do a bit of tidying up as by this time there was not a space or cabin that I had not turned upside down. After work, a few drinks, Negronis, with Paul in a local cafe in the sun was followed by a quiet night in.

Sunday Paul and I venture off south in the car looking for lunch. We get about 90 kms south of Olbia before finding a pretty town on the coast called Orosei.

Returning home after a very pleasant bowl of Sardinian pasta I had a quiet night preparing for Monday.

The entire week has been Covid 19 free although the number of jokes appearing in every form of communication is mind boggling. I am sure you have seen them many of them so I won't reproduce them here.

So, Monday comes around again, and blissful ignorance still here in Olbia. Giovani and Alessandro were not due on board today, so I take the opportunity to work on deck fitting the new capstans which would be difficult with them about.

I have decided to fly home from Olbia direct to London on Saturday. I cannot fly before as Olbia Airport is closed for a runway extension project but due to re-open on Friday. My ticket is booked, and I should get home even if I cannot return at the end of the month.

All goes well, and I head for Mac D with Paul for coffee (I know you are thinking, is that the best we can do ? Well for one thing it is next to the shipyard and two, unlike coffee shops in the UK, they make fantastic Cappuccinos. So there!). Lunch progresses as normal. No change anywhere.

Supper was at a local restaurant, Gil's. I had a very pleasant Cocaletto which looks like an escalope of veal but is actually chicken, then Tiramisu followed by, yes you guessed it, a Cappuccino.

Life is but hours away from changing drastically!

On Tuesday morning when I get down to boat, the Italian Prime Minister has made an announcement. I am not sure what it is as I cannot speak or read much Italian but the first signs of disaster occur at 0930 when G & A have not turned up for work and call me to say they are searching Olbia for face masks.

Then I bump into Ian, the skipper of the boat behind me, with his children looking for masks. Why I ask are the kids out of school? The answer brings the world tumbling down around me. The PM has shut all schools, bars and restaurants throughout Italy and Sardinia. Jesus!



G & A finally turn up around lunchtime and start work for 20 mins before stopping for the normal 2.5 hour lunch here. They are in their masks, full blown sawdust ones, and are finding work quite difficult. Anyway, we all break for lunch and head our separate ways. My favourite cafe is still open as is our favourite bar - however they are all wearing gloves and masks.

Now, fortuitously as I hate Easyjet when it comes to cleanliness, I also carry a mask or two with me. So, I enjoy one final day eating out before the world implodes.

After lunch I head for the pharmacy in the vain attempt to get some hand sanitiser and masks but to no avail. However, they do have 200 gloves in a pack which I buy 'just in case' !

Back to the boat and Giovanni explains that Italy is to go into lockdown in regard to restaurants and bars which I feel is sensible and not too much of an imposition, but I still have not got the message!

On the Wednesday morning I arrive at the boat to then receive a call from Giovanni to say that the yard is closing and they are coming to get their things. I am thunderstruck but take it on the chin. Sure, enough they turn up and we all mutter about the worsening situation and how unfortunate it is but not before we have cleared the boat of their equipment. Off they go with promises of WhatsApping me once things become clearer.

On my way home I note MacD is shut. Every bar and restaurant I pass is shut. There are few people in the 'high street', and I have nowhere to go for supper.



I wake up Thursday morning to find that Angelo has closed the B&B with me in it, thank God, and Easyjet have cancelled my new flight this Saturday from Olbia to London, I am marooned !

Easyjet have however announced an emergency evacuation flight from Cagliari, 250 kms to the south of Olbia with an 8 hour stopover in Milan, none of which is very appealing, never mind a plane load of Covid 19 possibilities.

Then mid morning I get a visit from the dockyard telling me I cannot come into the yard tomorrow as it will be closed to non employees. At this point I thought it was for a briefing or whilst they decided how to proceed so I was not overly worried. Indeed, I decided I would call in on Friday and see what the score was.

Angelo and his wife, Tiziana, invited me for supper, this time slightly more toned down but delightful just the same and Angelo tried to explain to me that we were entering Lockdown and hence only Pharmacies and Supermarkets would be open going forwards. This did not seem the end of the world so on I went not quite in blissful ignorance but largely unconcerned.

Friday morning and up with the lark. I call in on the yard and a manager tries to wave me in. I apologise and say I was just trying to understand the plan and was told 'yes all well come in as usual'. I didn't because I had decided a day off was a good thing and that I was going to ride my new bike 80 kms to Golfo Aranci and back.

Leaving the yard gate I set off meeting very few cars on the road which should have been the final trigger to me understanding what was going on, but it was not until I arrived in a deserted- and I mean deserted - Golfo Aranci that it finally dawned on me that there were no children in the streets, no cars cruising by, no people in the shops and indeed no one at all outside.

I rode back to Olbia in shock, again hardly seeing a soul. In Olbia many shops were still open and indeed remained so until Sunday but the number of people on the streets was minimal. Umberto 1, which is the high street of Olbia was completely empty of people. It is a pedestrian zone and hence usually packed.



Back at the B&B I was in shock. I woke on Saturday to wonder what next. I had decided to go to the yard which was operating as it normally does on a Saturday and just spent the day making sure the boat was in a condition I could abandon it. I returned home in the evening to silence.

Sunday, I went for a bike ride to the local electronics shop to buy a set of headphones. It was open but deserted as was the DIY store next door. Just staff, and no customers.

I returned home in a daze. Listening to the UK news I knew that nothing was happening there

but over here in Italy the country was grinding to a halt.

Little did I know when I went to bed Sunday night ....

Monday morning brings more setbacks. I cycle down to the yard and get on board without an issue. I have decided to do a number of small sorting jobs so am busily engaged in the bilges when the young manager from SNO dockyard comes on board. He tells me that only shipyard personnel can work, and I must go home.



I explain to him my dilemma. There was no way back to the UK now ALL flights have stopped, and ferries were carrying only freight. I was staying in a B&B which is strictly closed except for me, and I am working alone in isolation. Whilst I am having a coffee on deck with Paul, he agrees to talk further with his manager but to no avail. The rule is you can only travel away from 'home' if it is to work, a medical emergency, to go to supermarket or pharmacy or in transit. None of these apply to me.

Reluctantly I pack up and leave for the B&B. Leaving the dockyard I pass Tron, the shop where I bought the headphones, and it is now closed; so is Fadda DIY next door where I have purchased all sorts of bits and pieces. Olbia is now truly in lockdown, and everywhere is shut.

I get back to Carpe Diem in a daze and decide to chill out for rest of the day. In the evening I have a long chat via Google Translate with Angelo my host who is completely supportive and gives me the run of the second floor of his house which has its own galley and saloon as well as my bedroom and bathroom. How can you thank people like that?

He explains that we can no longer have dinner together as his wife has a precondition and has been sent home from work. I do not understand what it is, but she must take extra care not to get infected. So, we are deciding how we are going to live together for an indefinite period.

All of us have been wearing mask and gloves outside the house, and gloves most of the time inside but we now agree we will wear masks when we are in close proximity to one another. I know the UK attitude to masks but quite frankly no one here cares what you guys do or don't do in the UK, we have our own rules and I am willing to live with those.

When having a chat or a beer we stand at opposite ends of an outside balcony with an iPhone in between set to 'conversation' on Google Translate. This occasionally produced hilarious translations but is good most of the time.



Tiziana has sent down two meals this week - after I smoked out and nearly burnt down the galley - which has been a God send. Even fantastic puddings. I had some sort of sweet dumpling today made with cheese and honey in a large ravioli. It is a Sarda (Locals call themselves) dish called Seadas. It was delicious.



So Monday is the huge wake up call. Tuesday morning it is time to get prepared for the long haul. I go food shopping to look for things I can deal with, along with toiletries, gloves, and the ingredients necessary to make a hand sanitising gel. No hand sanitiser now exists in Sardinia.

Back at base I cook up the gel following instructions on Youtube and get this bottled for use. I have 200 pairs of surgical gloves from the pharmacy and quite a few paper masks as well as my tried and tested woollen ones.

Booze wise I am self sufficient in Negroni's, G&T and wine with a super deli just around the corner selling drink and tasty morsels. Oh, did I say the B&B is opposite the hospital and I can always see two ambulances from the front balcony so hopefully that contingency plan is in place.



Although I have a car (a little Fiat Panda), I am cycling everywhere to keep fit and look a sight in mask, gloves, cap, headphones, and glasses. But who cares? I went 40 kms up a mountain and back to get the bread on Wednesday before realising there is no bakery on top of Caba Abbas, just a great view of Olbia.

That was Wednesday when I also met up with Paul Kinney at the Marina di Olbia where my boat was and will be if we ever get out of dock. We sat in the sun 10 feet apart comparing notes before going to the supermarket, so we had an excuse if stopped by the cops.

Thursday, I wake at 0500. That's the problem with not expending enough energy! Carried on with the blog and then cycled off to get the bread, headed south this time and went up into the hills overlooking Isola Molara. Couldn't find any bread up there either but got some on my way back through Olbia!



Waking up on Friday we were all a bit depressed. The news is not good. Nineteen new cases in Olbia after 10 days in lockdown. The Italian government announced that they are extending lockdown from 4th April to 18th, that supermarkets will shut each Sunday and that the lockdown will be further viperously enforced. I suspect SNO will shut its doors to all on Monday.



Even the weather was unusually gloomy !

Saturday is another ride out. This time to Telti where I was able to get bread! It was a fantastic ride up into the hills with no one about. I saw one other bike, a few cars, and no people walking.

News from the UK is now not good. This week appears to have been a partial wakeup to the complacency over there. The situation is deteriorating rapidly, and things are looking grim.

Wishy washy instructions from the government were finally changed into law on Friday although they are lamentably short of the rules that are in place here and in Spain. The UK just does not get it!



My hometown in Devon where Myra is living has been overrun by tourists with second homes from London demanding to have their boats put in the water early. One has even been in a pub with Covid 19 and asked to leave when he started coughing! Even the Norwegian who has a second home next to us appeared for the first time since we lived there yesterday.

It has been a fast moving two days here in Italy. As of Monday, the SNO yard where the boat is has now closed completely, and all the employees sent home. The fine for being out without a permit has now been raised from Euro 220 to Euro 3,000. The number of new cases in Olbia are ZERO and there have been no deaths here amongst a population of 45,000.

Italy may, and I emphasise MAY be on the turning point. Although deaths have increased, the number of new cases has dropped for THREE consecutive days. We live in hope.

There are very few people about now. All work has more or less stopped, and only the supermarkets and pharmacies with their strict rules remain open.

I am incredibly lucky to be in this B&B, Carpe Diem. Angelo and Tiziana are just some of the best people in this world. Not only have we now consolidated shopping trips, but no more than a day goes by of starvation before they invite me to eat. The remaining time I live off pasta. I have not as yet resorted to the last tin of Heinz Baked Beans in the whole of Sardinia!



In fact Angelo has just poked his head in to say lunch at 1300 so I may have to cut this post short.

On Saturday and Sunday there was a feeling of some depression here over the fact that we thought we were on the turn and then Sunday's figures were bad. However, I think that has been replaced by optimism as reports again seem to be more promising.

I am now doing 50 kms most days away from people up into the hills. I passed a parked Carabinieri car this morning and he just waved as I cycled madly for the next hill. I am a bit conflicted about the cycling but now I am off my treatment feel that getting fit could help me if I do contract the virus. I am certainly feeling a lot stronger after ten days on the road. I justify my actions by saying to myself that I see no one, approach no one, do not stop in villages and when I do stop it is miles from anyone.



On the positive front the weather is good here most days, although I did get caught in a short hailstorm this morning which meant I got back to Carpe Diem soaked from head to foot and really quite cold. Nothing a shower could not

solve.

I have not seen my friend Paul Kinney for a week as we cannot rendezvous anywhere now, not even the car park at the Marina di Olbia. However, except for bugging his fridge with a knife whilst trying to defrost it, he seems fine.

I have started helping two guys in Majorca with their Yachtmaster studies from afar. Both got in touch on Facebook and from there we have set up a video call bi daily to help them in their studied. It keeps my brain sharp.

In the UK I see we have finally got around to social distancing although it is certainly no 'lockdown' maybe a 'slowdown' at best. Hopefully like here after a few days everyone over there will finally get the message and avoid other people.

If Italy is over its peak, I do not see much changing until the end of April as I think they will wait until then to ensure everyone who has it has been identified. However, after that my guess, and it is a guess, is they will start reversing the lockdown and let people get back to work.

If this thing is a bit like a flu epidemic, then we should get a few months before it all starts again thus taking us closer and closer to a vaccine. If it follows that path, then I am sure as soon as it reappears, we will be put in lockdown again, but one might hope we get the summer in freedom.

Maybe wishful thinking on my part, but I don't see how we eradicate this without a vaccine.

As I write this blog on Sunday 29th March it is hard to comprehend the situation here in Italy. After a false start earlier this week the number of deaths continues to increase and for the first time in five days the number of new cases has gone up.

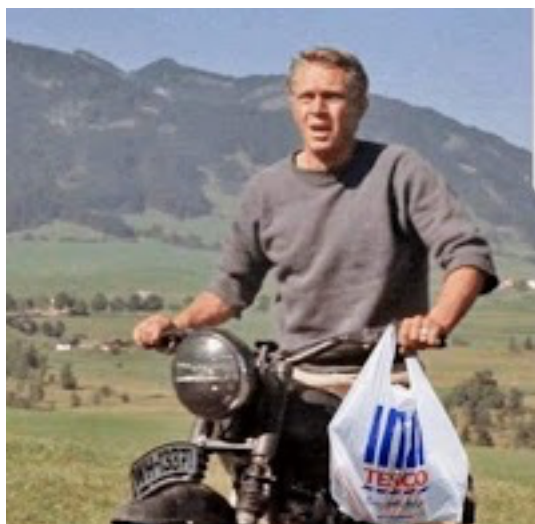
For us here in Olbia things seem to be fairly settled although I have been unable to ascertain how many new cases we have in this region. The tightening of movement regulations has meant that there are even fewer people, cars and pets around with just a few small queues outside supermarkets on Saturday which seems to be the favoured day for the weekly shop.

Ironically post seems unaffected as I received two packages from Amazon this week and one from England.

I have continued my daily cycles although this is also getting more restricted as strictly speaking I am not allowed out of our commune. I have been stopped by the Carabinieri once, but they were satisfied with my medical note in regard for the need for exercise after two years of hormone treatment.

Today I rode straight out into the hills and although it was a much shorter ride most of it seemed to be uphill !

During the week I have spoken to a number of friends marooned around the Med and this is some of the things they had to say.



Henry Turner, who was part of the crew last year, is stuck on board a superyacht in Puerto Portals, Majorca, not far from Palma. He is with his Captain and a stewardess but is not allowed to leave the vessel, even for a walk on the jetty. Needless to say, he is worried about the family in Devon and was concerned he should have tried for an emergency flight when they were running. However, it is all too late for that so now, like me, he just has to sit it out. On the plus side Majorca's lockdown is total and with luck that should help restrict the likelihood of him catching the virus.

Andy Hawkins, who lives on an old fishing boat in Puerto Pollenca, has a different problem. He is on a buoy off the port and is not allowed to move the boat alongside or anywhere else for that matter. He is running out of fuel for his tender so has to restrict his shopping trips to as few as possible. The police in Pollenca are relentless and he is stopped when coming ashore. Getting fuel is proving very difficult as the petrol stations are mostly shut with a few opening for a few hours a day. In due course his fuel situation will become critical, and he is likely to ask the police for help. Must be particularly difficult to stay focused when you are completely isolated in these circumstances and your wife is an essential worker for the Police at home.

Paul Kinney, my friend here in Olbia, like me, is fairly well set up although he did destroy the apartment fridge with a knife whilst trying to defrost it. Fortuitously this has led to the supply of a much bigger replacement fridge allowing him to not shop as often. I have not seen him for ten days as we cannot meet easily, not even in a car park as we did on one occasion. His partner in France is finding things difficult without him but there really is no solution to that at present.



Tom Summerton is on a superyacht in dry dock in Southern France with a crew of 17, all of whom are staying on board isolated, more, or less, from the rest of the world. However, work continues on the yacht so presumably they have to take extra precautions to avoid infection. He was due to be married this year to Isabelle and that has had to be called off. Although very sanguine about this, it must be a real blow for the two of them.

Back home my family seem to be doing fine having taken very strong precautions early on and is settled into isolation fairly well. Myra bought up Avon Mill before they closed and has enough gardening to keep her going for the summer I reckon. Ayesha, Sam, and the children



are still in self isolation. I guess when Ayesha returns to the NHS this next week she will be tested. For the time being she will continue her oncology liaison work from home with a once a week trip into Derriford. Charles, Kate and Teddy are hunkered down in Fulham and working primarily from home.

That leaves me. Well in addition to spending hours on telephone, blog, Facebook and Instagram, there is the coaching, so I don't really have a spare minute.



I continue to be indebted to my hosts who have once again just invited me to lunch today. Their generosity seems to hold no bounds.

The shipyard of course remains closed completely and in fact the Industrial Zone here is all but empty. The latest word is that there will be a review of matters on the 4th, however no one expects that to loosen regulations so we figure the 18th will be the day we next look at the situation.

I actually have flights for the crew, Chris George and Andrew Thompson to fly out on the 18th but with the worsening situation in the UK it is quite likely that the restrictions that end, if not this, will see these flights cancelled. Probably the next window of opportunity will be the 2nd May but who knows.

I have always considered myself a lucky chap who took opportunities when they presented themselves throughout my life. Most of my successes have involved a large amount of luck with a lot of support from people around me both at home and those I have met through work.

When a crisis as large as this comes along and this is my first it makes one reflect on life and just how lucky one has been. When I rallied across the world to Sydney, one of my co-drivers, Chris Simons, when confronted by the most appalling conditions some countries were living in used to quip 'We have never really had a bad day (in our lives) have we Paul?' and how true that is when you see or hear of some of the terrible problems that befall others whether relating to their health, life, circumstances or environment.

Can you imagine how this virus is going to affect India for instance ? I hope I am wrong, but I cannot help thinking it could be catastrophic.

In crossing Asia and indeed on all the rallies that I have done with friends and family I have always tried to be generous to the indigenous population under the maxim 'I will only ever pass this way once'. The funniest instance of this was on the China/Laos border when Chris and I had just had the car rebuilt in Lijiang after I had a head on with a lorry on a mountain track. We had the car rebuilt by 39 workers in 36 hours before rushing along to catch up with the main part of the rally at the border.

Having put a shock absorber through the wing of the Mercedes we managed to get through the border only to run into a road blasting operation on the Laos side. being forced to stop whilst this took place, I noticed a welding machine in a shack on the side of the road and decided to investigate. A Laos chap came out and I showed him our problem. He

immediately ran off and got his gear to repair the wing.

In the meantime Chris and I were invited by a group of teenagers to join them in a drink in a raised bed beside the road. This was a mistake, we had no idea what we were drinking but we had too much.

On returning to the car, now repaired, I went and got the Laos Kip I had exchanged at the border. I had no idea how much this was but it stood a pile about 3 inches high. Ongoing over to the welder I put my hand out with this pile of Kip on it whereupon the welder just took the lot!

Chris, when I returned to the car said, 'Well, we only pass this way once' and that was that. We are fairly certain the guy now lives in a mansion!

Anyway, the point being, we have had a pretty good run at things and my recent experiences over the last year with young crew on board and meeting so many younger people in the yachting world is that it is their time now and on the back of this disaster we need to start taking notice of what concerns them rather than us old grumps (Speaking entirely for myself!).

Many think Greta Thurlberg is a danger but she is no different to CND when we were young. Maybe it is time we do reconsider if we need all this air travel, thirsty cars, polluting lives and perhaps, if nothing else, we will come out of this thinking more about our young and their young rather than the sixty great years we have had as baby boomers.

Just something to mull over whilst we stay locked down....

So, on Wednesday I had a call from Giovanni, my contractor on the boat, to say that SNO (Blue Legend's shipyard) is considering reopening on Monday 6th April to contractors and owners. This seems a little unlikely, being the week before Easter, but is definitely under consideration.

The thinking behind this is that Italy is moving to a position where they are considering matters commune by commune when it comes to getting economic activity going again. Although Sardinia, as a whole, has a number of cases these are centred around Cagliari to the South and Sassari to the west. Olbia has had no new cases for some time.

Now you might wonder why this is the case, Olbia has a population of around 46,000 so should not be any better off than Cagliari or Sassari but for one simple fact - its airport has been shut for a couple of months prior to the lockdown whilst they were extending the runway. Guess what Cagliari and Sassari have in common? Yes - airports!

Now I do not know whether this is the only reason, as we do have ferries coming in here although they were closed to passengers very early on, but does it not make you wonder if the world was SLOW to stop inter country travel, at least by air. If, as I suspect, this was for economic reasons then one wonders how much better off we would be now if they had stopped the flights two months earlier than they did ?

It also begs the question that if before we have a vaccine we have another flare up of this

virus, will the governments around the world have learnt their lesson and jump on travel at a much earlier stage?

Anyway, back to Olbia and the shipyard. All week various discussions have taking place but my read of it is that they will not open tomorrow but hold off until Tuesday week after Easter. Makes sense to me both from a timing point of view and a further week to see if the nationwide cases are continuing to reduce.



I started a discussion on Facebook about all this a few days ago and am beginning to wish I hadn't as so many people got involved. However, I think the net result is that there are as many people supporting a return to economic activity however small as there are for staying locked in at home. Ergo it is down to our so called experts in government to give us a guide.

Clearly if we control the borders around Olbia and we are fairly free of the virus then it should be manageable, even if we do see an upturn in the cases as we can soon shut down again. The key for me is NOT to restart air and ferry travel for the foreseeable future except, as is now, for freight and provisions.

Anyway, watch this space, we will see.

On the home front I continue my early morning cycle, which is now restricted to the commune where I live, and generally head straight up into the hills to the North where I see no one. Besides the daily confrontations with donkeys, goats, a horse today and many pairs of partridges, I have the place to myself.

As I get fitter, so I get higher, and today not only went over the top of my first challenge Monte Plebi 473m from a week ago but carried on to top another 350m hill Punta Calcinaio having descended 300m in between them. The track however was bad on the ascent, and I had to push the bike a kilometre to the top which was not fun. Luckily the track coming down was not so badly chewed up and I managed to ride down. However, not without incident - I came off once and landed rather embarrassingly on all fours so I now have grazes on both wrists and both knees !

Anyway the challenge I need to achieve is Monte Pino at 742m. I saw the track up the final 350m today from the ridge I crossed and it looks hard, possibly not bike-able but I plan to change routes tomorrow and go directly to the ridge rather than via Monte Plebi, which will cut down the distance, and then reconnoitre the route up from there.

Life in lockdown otherwise is as you are now experiencing in England but I am not finding it too taxing and quite enjoy sitting outside for hours at a time!

However, would be nice to get back on board the boat even if it stays in the shed. This year's crew, Jack, and Cait, back in England are itching to go but with the lockdown there being a couple of weeks behind us I don't think they have any chance of getting out here



before early May. Easyjet just cancelled all my April flights, so I will now try to rebook for May.

At home Myra and the family are all well. She is gardening madly but had a major setback this week when Avon Mill closed and wouldn't deliver!

Sam is looking after two very happy grandchildren, who I understand are driving him mad. Ayesha is back at work partly in Derriford

Hospital and partly at home. Her unit is taking over the Nuffield this week so she will be moving there shortly.

Charles is busy selling his Bodega Bay drinks online. Apparently it is doing very well through the internet while pubs and bars are all shut. Kate is also working from home expecting a happy event in June, and Teddy is getting the best of both worlds by having both parents around to drive mad whilst having a wonderful time jumping off things.

It's been a bit of a mixed week. I've heard nothing about re-starting on the boat on Monday, but then suddenly on Tuesday I get a WhatsApp from Giovanni saying they are on the boat and working. This is followed by a whole load of photos showing all the bits and pieces they are working on.

Wednesday and Thursday seemed to go on a pace and by Friday they have more or less completed the outstanding hull jobs, all except the props and shafts. I am allowed to visit Friday to see the completed work and highlight a couple of jobs that I would like done before we lift and launch. Obviously, Easter weekend looms so although they do not have Good Friday off here, they do take off Easter Monday.

I am fully expecting that by mid-week we should be 100% ready to launch. Whether that will happen is really down to the yard. There were no launches on Friday whilst I was there, and all boats seem to be where they were three weeks ago, so who knows. Anyway, if the boat is all ready we are one step closer to summer.



On the Olbia front we are still locked down, and it has been a very quiet week on the streets. The townspeople are very concerned about any move towards opening the airport or port, so I do not see this happening for quite a time. Bear in mind that Sassari Alghero, the airport which remained open in the early days of this pandemic, has 880 cases at present and people here put that down to travel from outside Sardinia.

I have had a spectacular week of cycling. With each passing day I have tried to ensure I am as far away from villages or towns within the commune as possible and have therefore taken to the hills North of Olbia where there are just gravel tracks.



On Monday I had planned to go up Monte Pino but decided instead to recce the route I thought would be the best approach. This worked fine and I set myself the goal of getting to the top of Pino for Tuesday.

Tuesday 0800 I am all prepared. This is a two bottles of water job, and an apple, so soon all was packed and ready to go. Anyway, I head off up the old provincial road to the start of the more or less straight climb 742 metres to the top of Monte Pino. There are some up and downs on tarmac getting to the base but once on the ridge below the final ascent I am onto gravel tracks. Luckily most of these are passable on the bike with only a few hundred metres where I have to dismount and push because the track is badly rutted from winter rain.

Anyway to cut a long story short I make it to the top. I wasn't sure I could at 500 metres as I was knackered but a brief water stop and then pressed on for the last 250 metres.

Called Myra from the top and filmed it just to ensure the doubting Thomas's had proof !

Well that was Tuesday. On Wednesday I had a flattish ride before venturing into the hills again on Thursday to see Nostra Signora di Sa Monte - which is a prime spot for views from Olbia to the southeast, and all the way around to Cale di Volpe to the northwest. It was spectacular and brought back so many great memories from 2019 when I had my mates staying over here on board and we did navigation training all up through this bay. I cannot wait to show Myra all these great coves, bays, marinas and islands if the summer ever comes.

Friday it was off to San Pantaleo which is in amongst the mountains just southwest of Porto Cervo. This is a lovely ride on back roads, and I never saw a car or person on way up or back but did pass one cyclist.

It's been a great week so far. I've no real plan for Easter although I have bought my hosts both an Easter Egg - a Guinness one for Angelo and a Bailey's for Tiziana. I suspect I will be invited up as some point as I do not think they will allow their son to come over for fear of contamination.

As we get to the end of this week, I do not think there is any chance of us being released from lockdown next week and fear we will not be able to do so in any meaningful way until the end of the month at the earliest.

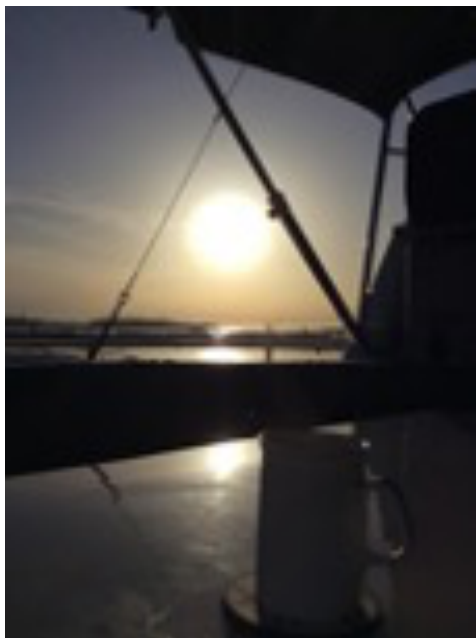
I still have flights booked for 25th but am sure these will be cancelled. The big question is whether flights for the 2nd May will remain operable and that probably comes down to what is happening in the UK at that point.

Seems to be lot of talk about exits over there, and lots of pressure on the government to design and communicate one but without tests, a cure, a vaccine or even the knowledge of the real mortality rate, I do not see us returning to normal any time soon here or there . And as for USA - just plain scary!

Just as I was finishing up the Italian Prime Minister has announced we will remain in lockdown until 3rd May at the earliest. Wow, not there yet then....

Who would believe this situation just three months ago? To say the world is a different

place is not an exaggeration and one cannot help wondering if things will be the same again in my lifetime. Maybe this is a watershed moment when the world will change for the better. You only have to look around to see the changes - in community, nature, pollution, economy. All with new priorities.



As someone who has never had a bad day in his life, I cannot help but think it is time we reconsider our priorities for the younger and future generations. We have had sixty years of taking everything that has been offered and, oh yes, we did give a lot back, but you are only as good as your last job and it is time for the world to move on and find a new 'job' for future generations as the current 'take,take,take' attitude cannot continue - with the youth paying the price for it.

Our government and for that matter all governments need to refocus on what is important. Whole departments need scrapping, councils need a rethink from bottom up - the status quo is not sustainable particularly now we are in yet another economic crisis. Questions need to be asked as to why government and councils have property assets.

Is that their purpose or is it to administer services? The whole basis of the public sector needs re designing.

Now the anarchists would get rid of capitalism, well be careful what you wish for! The only hope for the future economy is to get all these nasty capitalist operations going again. It does not mean that we cannot refocus them, for instance does air travel ever need to be so prolific again? Businesses have a dozen ways to communicate directly between themselves without leaving the office. Ring the bell for the end of business travel.

People still want to travel on holiday, but how many young people will now shy away from air travel having seen the devastating effect it has on spreading a disease, never mind the pollution. Greta T may be impractical in much she advocates, but she is right in one thing: we ALL need to wake up and smell the coffee.

Of course all this is easy for me to say, sitting in a B&B in Olbia, boat alongside with not a care in the world, but at least I recognise the need for change which, quite frankly, most people don't.

For weeks now I have been screaming at my family and friends about Covid 19 telling them what I had been learning here four weeks in advance of the UK. My family and friends took quite a lot of that advice and just today the news is reporting how cavalier the attitude of the UK government in the early days was towards this virus. I hate 'I told you so' but I bloody well did endlessly! Why has the UK made such a mess of this when anyone could just look at Italy to see what was coming? Germany did and look at the result.

Anyway enough ranting. It is a complete waste of my time. Now, onto practical things.

The lockdown here has tightened quite a bit since Good Friday. Italy was very worried about families trying to get together over Easter so really put the pressure on. I didn't even go for a bike ride to make sure I would not be criticised.



This increased restriction seems to have continued all this week, and there are fewer and fewer people around. The supermarkets have now started fencing off all items that are non-essential. I cannot really see the point as they are in aisles next to the essentials but nevertheless you now cannot buy a pen in the supermarket.

The boat was worked on Tuesday and

Wednesday to get it ready for launch. Surprisingly on Thursday they lifted Blue Legend into the water and left her hanging in the strops overnight, just in case of leaks! Friday morning, I fired up the engines and Alessandro and I moved her out of the lift dock and around to a stern to berth close by in the dock area.

Thankfully this manoeuvring all went well, and the boat is now safely moored ready for a bit of deck work to be carried out this week. However, the dock seems overly worried about me and would like me to go and stay on board. I don't have a particular problem with this except I shall miss the occasional meals in the B&B, and also the company.

So, tomorrow I will meet the management and see what is causing them concern. I suspect it is to do with the lockdown rules but a lot gets lost in translation here.

Jack and Cait, my 2020 crew, are safely in the UK but itching to get out here. I don't see there's much chance this month, but Alitalia have agreed that, subject to me completing the paperwork, they will be able to fly early next month. I had been hoping that Easyjet may start up again in early May but have heard from one of their pilots that he is not expecting to return to work until July. Who knows? But early May does seem a bit doubtful as they would need to be selling tickets now. That is not an issue for me. I have rolled over 14 tickets again and again and now have flights booked for almost any time in early May!

The crew will have to go into quarantine here for fourteen days, but the Commune is happy for that to be on board Blue Legend which I do not think would be too much of a hardship. There are plenty of things to do on board.

So things are still very much up in the air here as elsewhere. Finding a way out of this

lockdown is proving extremely difficult, so it may be a lot of planning for nothing.

Monday saw me back to work on Blue Legend for the first time in some weeks. The weather was foul but I had plenty to do internally, not least of which was to tidy up the mess in almost every space.

The dockyard now seemed disinterested in me. I avoided going to talk with the management and just got to work. With the constant rain through to Wednesday I hardly saw a soul anyway and Giovanni failed to come to work or even call. Not surprising really as he could have done very little.

There is a lot of talk here about lifting of some restrictions but as yet, here on Sunday night, no announcement has been made and it is clear that the government are struggling to balance the need to get the economy going with the chance that Covid 19 will flare up again very quickly. What a nightmare.

There is talk of allowing exercise outside again and allowing people to move within their Region; in our case, that's the whole of Sardinia. This would be a step in the right direction, but I also need the Port to free up our ability to move the boat to make things really good. We could then cruise Sardinia even if we cannot go to the mainland.

I have booked Caitlin and Jack on a flight from London on the 4th of May to Cagliari having completed the required documentation laid out by the Italian Government. Their flight on Alitalia has staggered seating so that basically there is only one person per row of six seats. In addition to which they wear masks and gloves, and the cabin air is not recirculated. I feel that this makes the flight as safe as it can be, and I will collect them from Cagliari if the Carabinieri give me permission. They will then be required to quarantine on board Blue Legend for two weeks supervised by the local health authority.

Serious process but with luck we will then be free to move on or about the 18th of May. Bit of a gamble, but they are both keen to get out here so I think it's worth giving it a go.

However, as to a plan, I still have no more idea what to do than the British government so we will just have to see how things pan out.

Every week the flights I have booked with Easyjet get cancelled, and I roll them over a couple more weeks. I have so many now I could fly out a football team. The latest cancellations I have moved to the 2nd of June in the hope someone will be able to travel and the quarantine is reduced. I rather think I am on a hiding to nothing but as I paid so little for the flights and I am sure rebooking them will cost much much more I keep taking up Easyjet's offer of moving them to any date to and from anywhere.

So, in the coming week I am going to service the main engines and change their oil and filters. This required a lot of lugging 25l cans around of new and old oil as well as trying to avoid getting covered in the stuff myself. It is the last major job to be done before fuelling up and sailing away !



As to Covid 19, I fear we are going to be stuck with this virus for another year until someone finds a working vaccine. Lots of talk of vaccines and cures but when you listen carefully to the sensible experts, they all say it is a long road. I guess therefore that masks and gloves are going to continue for many months, and I doubt we are going to have much of a summer on the beach. Hey ho! We can only hope that a way forward is found.



Maybe if this antibody test works the way it should we can get a handle on the real mortality rate and then make a rational decision whether we let Covid 19 run its deadly course or destroy the world economy completely. That is all except the country which brought us both SARS and Covid 19 - CHINA . There has to be a reckoning over this, if only to stop it ever happening again!

Well, this is it! It's the final week of lockdown before Italy starts lifting restrictions on its population. All week various comments have been coming from the Government as to how it may look but as of today a definitive proposal does not seem to have been made law.

Basically people will go back to work in industry taking various precautions including mandatory masks. I find this slightly amusing as I have not seen anyone without a mask in eight weeks, but at least now it is official. A load more shops will open with the social distancing rules that have now become a way of life and maybe, just maybe, the bicycle shop will reopen, and I can get my bike serviced! I think I have more or less cycled the whole of the Olbia Commune!

On board I have had a brilliant week of doing loads of little jobs I have put off for ages, as well as seeing Giovanni and Alessandro completing their work on board. And on Thursday at 1300 my list of jobs was completed for the first time since I bought the boat!

The most complex part of the week has been organising the crew to fly out from the UK. This has required a considerable amount of work and worry. Having booked their flights with Alitalia for the 4th, we then had to find a way of getting them safely to Heathrow and from Cagliari to Olbia. Every option was considered but eventually we went for private hire from Salcombe to London and a Limo from Cagliari to Olbia.

By Wednesday I thought we had got this organised as we had the documentation in place requested by the Italian Government and the various bookings sorted. I had been following a couple from Bali trying to get into Italy to crew a new boat. In their post they explained all the issues they had faced, and I felt I had covered all these. However, they also said that having an agent made things a lot easier so I thought I would ask the local agent here, who I had met, if he could just check things through for me.

Thank heavens I did, because on Thursday morning one of his staff got back to me to say that, as the Sardinian Region is autonomous, we had to have special permission to bring the crew here. She went on to say that if I gave her all the information, she would apply to the Sardo Government for the necessary permission. It is now noon on Thursday and Friday was to be a Bank Holiday.

She puts the documents in, but do we hear anything back by Thursday night? No, not a word. I am about to look into the postponing option when Angelo the agency boss messages to say the government must reply with 48 hours on a 24/7 basis. As I am reading this a second message comes in saying we have the authorisations for Jack and Cait. Phew, that was a close call. Celebrated with two Negronis at lunch with Angelo and Tiziana and spent the afternoon sleeping them off.

So, on we go with the plans, and a conference call on Friday night with Cait and Jack clarifies all the arrangements. Thank heavens again that Caitlin has now received her Discharge Book which initially got caught up with the virus. So, they are both formally essential workers and therefore can travel.

So, tomorrow they leave at 0800 for Heathrow and I will be spending a worrying day in Olbia wondering what will go wrong. Mike of Coast to Coast taxis will wait in LHR until they are checked in, just in case, before returning home. Then it is down to Alitalia, Rome Immigration, Rome Customs, Rome Health, Cagliari Immigration, Cagliari Customs, Cagliari Health and then finally the Limo to all do their bit so the guys arrive here in Olbia at about 0300 on Tuesday morning.

They have two weeks in quarantine on the boat to look forward to but at least they can get some sun! Oh, and give the boat a good spring clean, which, needless to say an undomesticated person, such as myself, is not skilled or qualified to do!

So a new chapter starts in both the life of Italy and Blue Legend. What the weeks ahead will bring no one really knows. It's uncharted territory that no one would have believed would exist a mere four months ago. What a complete mess we are in....

Still, what an exciting week for me, and the boat, even if the rest of the world is still in varying degrees of disarray. From an imbecile in the USA through to the macho man in Russia and the President for life in China. Hard to believe these people have power over billions !

So, in my small microcosm of life, the arrival of Caitlin and Jack from the UK brought an immeasurable uplift to my sanity and companionship.

Monday was a fraught day as they transited between Salcombe and Olbia, and every step had to be carefully planned to ensure they were not turned around and sent home. Armed with the documents we had obtained for them here; they were taken to London by Mike from Coast to Coast in his big van to ensure social distancing. He then had to wait at Heathrow for a time until we were sure they would be accepted for check in. First wrinkle occurred on arrival at Terminal 4 when they were promptly told T4 was shut that day and they needed T2!

When they approached check in 4 hours before take off time they were told to come back later. I was concerned about this as we knew they had to clear documents before check in. Caitlin went back to the desk and found a manager who, thank heavens, knew what was necessary and checked their documents before telling them to mention his name at check in.

It was just as well because the moment they started to check in the girls on the desk started clucking their teeth about them being able to fly. Luckily the manager had told the team leader about Cait and Jack which quickly sorted things out.

Heathrow is empty, so just as well they took sandwiches and snacks for the twelve hour trip because they would have starved otherwise. Onto the plane and we all breathe a sigh of relief. There was a three hour wait for their call from Rome. Off the plane and into the airport to be shouted at by various officials wearing masks, standing behind barriers 3 metres distant. We had been warned by an Italian stewardess who said on Facebook she could not understand a word of what she was asked so Cait and Jack knew to just play it cool and wait for some sensible instruction. Just as well.

Anyway, their paperwork got them through various hurdles and then onto flight to Cagliari. Phew !

Another hour and then a call from Cagliari. They had made it safe and well and into the waiting limousine, another big van, to bring them to Olbia.

The flights had been busier than we expected but each passenger had 3 seats to themselves to ensure some distance between them.

The car to Olbia arrived at 0200 on Tuesday, and a very tired crew disembarked and headed straight for their pits. What a day! It was physically and mentally exhausting, but they are now safely here.

So on Tuesday we move to Blue Legend, and Cait and Jack get their gear on board. As I need to move the boat to the Marina, I have to keep them inside whilst Giovani and I take her across the harbour and tie up at our 'long' term mooring.

The rest of the day is orientation and a discussion about their duties before they have a well earned evening to themselves, and I return to the B&B.

For the rest of the week, I am sitting on the jetty giving helpful instructions on boat cleaning and other essential tasks. We are having a daily session of tender driving. Jack has completed a Powerboat 2 course and is very proficient at helming, so he is teaching Caitlin how to handle the tender. We have the whole marina to use as a training area, which is fantastic.



Then there are seamanship lessons everyday and a vast vocabulary of terms and phrases to learn - many of which were used by Methuselah when he was a boy!

All in all their time is pretty well used up learning the ropes. I beetle off back to the B&B in the evenings and leave them to get on with feeding themselves.

And so it was a fabulous week in our little world.

In Olbia things have started to change, with many more cars on the road as a lot of industrial businesses go back to work. Shops are, in the main, still closed but exercise is now permitted and so I am meeting a lot more cyclists on

the roads now.

Italy is taking a very cautious approach to re-opening, and it will be some weeks before all types of shops can open. Drive Thru take aways like Mac D are now open, but there is no date for eating in or pick up takeaways yet.

People are still brilliant at following the rules but everyone is a bit worried about the summer: some want the tourists to earn money, others want them to stay away to keep safe. I am not sure how this conundrum will pan out, but currently there seems to be no clear indication of how inter regional travel will be resumed.

And there's no sign of us being allowed to leave port or anchor in any of the bays. I do not think this will change under 'freedom to move' rules without new restrictions coming into force. This is likely to mean moving only within ones existing Region. As our region is the whole of Sardinia, I will be very happy when that happens.



On the family front, we watch their holidays planned for Blue Legend slip away and I fear I will be out here alone with the crew for this summer. It is hard to see how anyone is going to travel far with two weeks quarantine at each end of their journey. Myra and I have discussed this and decided just to wait and see what transpires. It is no different to when I was at sea with Shell in the mid 70's.

The UK seems as confused as ever. I cannot believe the Boris announcement last night; talk about a muddle. No doubt ten million people will enter UK before a new quarantine is imposed, and then another ten million will arrive from France. Talk about a fiasco, and this after twelve weeks of open borders. God help you all !

In contrast Italy has plotted a cautious path so far, and I hope they continue to do so.

Well, the eleven weeks in lockdown now has felt like a hell of a long time. But finally, it looks as though we are coming out of it step by step. Major changes are happening this week. From Monday the number of cars on the road has exploded, and I have been forced to wear my helmet when cycling as I am now having to share the highways after 10 weeks of seeing no one and hardly any vehicles.





Most people here have returned to work, as have all the shops including hairdressers and barbers. The only things still shut are bars and restaurants - although you can have takeaways from both. In fact, there are a few bars where one sees locals idling outside with a beer in their hand, keeping two metres apart from their mates. This will change tomorrow when bars and restaurants will all be allowed to open. I am unclear as to exactly how they will arrange the interior layouts, but I think most will be operating their outside sections rather than internal spaces.

So, Olbia is almost back to normal. Masks and gloves are still de rigueur, and most people wear these all the time in public. However, if a family is walking as a unit, they tend to pull the masks down and just stay away from everyone else. Definitely a little relaxation of this rule is occurring, but you cannot enter a shop or premises without both, and indeed without having your gloves sanitised at the entrance. In addition to this, the bigger shops are now taking your temperature at the door and turning away anyone in excess of 37 degrees.

On board Cait and Jack are still in quarantine, although this finishes tomorrow. They take their temperature every morning as an extra precaution but have not left the boat once in 13 days now. Masks and gloves worn most of the time when out on deck. The Health Authorities have not visited but both the Police and Marina Ops Manager have been around to check they are confined to the boat.

The only escape is the daily tender practice out in the Marina waters which has allowed us to train Cait up in handling the tender. She had her first solo day yesterday which went really well. Only going backwards into confined spaces still makes her nervous, so today we will cruise the Marina stern first!

Seamanship lessons continue. The knots are more or less all cracked now, and moorings, stoppers, rigging all going well. We will probably spend time on the anchors this week whilst continuing the daily chores around the boat.



We plan a small celebration on Tuesday to mark the end of quarantine which may involve a bit of dancing. Watch this space !

On a personal front I am still in the B&B, but will leave here on Tuesday to join the boat. After 11 weeks of being looked after by Angelo and Tiziana it will be an emotional farewell. They have been so kind to me during the lockdown which could have been intensely lonely if I had been staying in an hotel. We intend to have a meal for them on the boat later in the week, and who knows by then we may be able to sail out into the Golfo di Aranci.

On that front there is still no word on boat movements. However, there is a chance we will



be released tomorrow as the travel restrictions inside Sardinia will be lifted. If that does not trigger a change then the 3rd June is the next key date as quarantine for travellers will cease that day, as will restrictions on travel between regions. Not ideal for us as our prepaid mooring in the Marina comes to an end on the 31st May and the Marina wants blood to stay on the berth into June. If nothing happens tomorrow, I am going to have to look into other options!

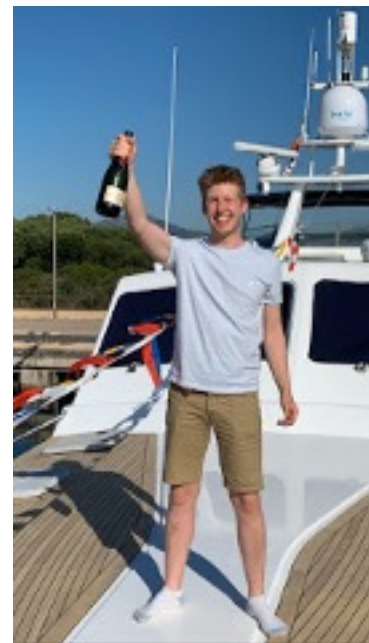
So, there's broadly an optimistic picture here in Sardinia for the coming weeks. I think everyone is a bit fearful about travel from overseas restarting but at least we don't have daily arguments about going back to school. They will not reopen here until September. I am slightly amused about all the adults in the UK education system saying how children want to get back to school. I can never remember a time when I wanted to go back to school!

I hope all well with my readers and their families. Let's just hope the second wave never comes.

This week has been the first when we have been able to move the boat within Olbia waters. It was supposed to be all of Sardinia but there is much confusion here amongst the Coastguard. Olbia's Guarda Costa says we are free to move but Porto Rotondo and Maddalena sent two boats packing when they tried to berth in their ports. So it looks like we just cruise around here until the 3rd of June when all Italian ports re-open.

It is not the end of the world as Caitlin and Jack were only freed from quarantine on Tuesday and we had much to do during the week, completing some of the jobs not done in drydock including the installation of the starboard windlass and touching up the equipment on the mast.

Tuesday we all went ashore for the first time together to get some shopping and have a wander around Olbia. Many cars and people were about but, masks and gloves being worn by all. Friday was Jack's 21st Birthday so we celebrated by going for a team outing to Porto Cervo and having a picnic lunch on a beach in Liscia di Vaccia. PC was completely closed but at least the water was crystal clear, and we got to look where we will moor at some point this summer.



From there we headed to my favourite scenic view atop Nuestra Signore del Monte overlooking both the Golfo Aranci and the bays to the North. After tea and birthday cake we went out to supper at the Wild West Steak Bar only to find they had no steaks, only burgers.

Apparently it has been difficult getting the suppliers back up and running. Although it was strange being in a restaurant where the staff wear masks and gloves, it seemed to work fine with the tables widely separated and everyone being sensible.

I had been asked by Jack's mum if there was any chance of a Baklava for his birthday. Having absolutely no idea what this was, I consulted with Google and Caitlin to see if we could make one. It seemed a bit tricky to do on board so I asked Tiziana at the B&B if she

knew about this dish to which she replied she did not.

The next day however Tiziana announced that she would make a trial one for us to see if it was what we were after. But by Friday I had forgotten about this, and in the meantime we had bought Jack a chocolate cake - another favourite - for his birthday tea.



For Sunday lunch Jack and Caitlin were cooking a full blown roast beef and yorkshire pudding special for Angelo and Tiziana as I had invited them to thank them for looking after me so well over the last three months. Anyway, we had gathered all the ingredients on Saturday including a lovely bit of beef , and the crew had everything ready for Angelo and Tiziana's arrival for Sunday lunch.

Well, blow me down if Tiziana did not climb out of their car carrying an enormous baklava she had made for Jack's birthday. To say we were stunned is an understatement. Soon recovering, Jack whisked it away before we could get our hands on it and put it in the galley for dessert.

The meal was fabulous, and Tiziana was so pleased as she had never had roast beef before. I think we gave her a bit too much, but she certainly enjoyed it - as did Angelo.

Then the Baklava. Well, Caitlin and I are now fully converted to this. It is fab after a meal, and we still have some left four days later!

So all in all it was a great week bringing to the end our current Corona Virus Sardinian Refuge. I am sure it will be back, but we are now going to make the very most of this summer and hope to get family and friends out as soon as humanly possible. Who knows what that will mean, or whether there is the 'second wave' , or even whether anyone coming out will be able to get home afterwards. The most important thing is that we will try whilst continuing to take precautions when we are not on the boat.



We will sail on the 31st from Olbia probably to Tavolara, the beautiful island just south of the estuary from there, we will cruise north to La Maddalena in the national reserve.

Farewell from this Blog.