

possible before 1200 when the local boats start to arrive in their hundreds.

A run ashore establishes that Saint Angelo is a really lovely town with a great little beach in the harbour. Conclusion being that the grandchildren will love the beach and proximity to boat and town as well as the adventure of taking the tender out of the port and around the bay. We have at last found a solution for the week we have our next guests on board – forget anchoring and proceed straight to Saint Angelo.

Friends often ask about how Myra and I are managing when we are so far apart for what is now six months. Well, this is not the first time we have been apart for long periods although this is the longest for many years and us seamen have an old adage – ‘absence makes the heart grow fonder’ - to fall back on. The reality is that it would have been a risk for Myra to fly out to Italy over the last few months and although I got close to flying home for a medical procedure in August, in the end I had this done in Olbia.

Covid 19 has made this a very strange year for everyone and this includes Myra and I. She stayed at home, designing and building a garden whilst I am out here just with my crew enjoying Blue Legend, the summer and the Mediterranean. It has been fine for both of us. But we do not want it to happen again and I will, if the virus is still an issue, bring the boat back to the UK next year and cruise our own waters.

Since arriving in the Bay of Naples and with the various issues we have faced I am now looking forward to returning home and we are planning to get Blue Legend back to Olbia for mid-September so she can be hauled out and stored whilst Jack and I fly home. The season is drawing to an end and I am not sorry that is the case.

## **End of the Season**

The final two weeks at sea are to be with my family and friends in the Bay of Naples. I have decided that anchoring here is just too stressful and so we will spend the final two weeks in a number of ports.

From Saint Angelo, Jack and I motor down to Stabia, a marina close to Pompei and directly below Vesuvius. Here we are to pick up my daughter and son in law along with their children for a final week of fun before Guy goes back to school and Amaia starts her first term.

Stabia is not the most lavish of places and it is quite a distance to the town of Castellammare di Stabia, so we plan to leave the morning after the family arrive. The trip out of Stabia and across the bay back to Ischia is not very pleasant as a strong westerly gale is picking up forming short steep seas. However it is only a three hour passage, so we tough it out until we reach the lee of Saint Angelo.

After two hours waiting for the sea to die down so we can enter the port, the Harbour Master informs us it is too rough to enter, and we anchor close into the harbour wall out of the weather. By eight in the evening the gale has blown itself out, but the HM has retreated to a bar for his supper and we are not able to enter until the following morning.

Next day we enter the port and tie up right in the town next to a really pleasant sandy beach. The next four days we stay in Saint Angelo so the family can enjoy the fabulous weather and the really good restaurants in the village.

All too quickly the week is over, and we need to get the family back to Naples airport to fly home. Having been disappointed with Stabia as a marina we decide to go back to Pozzuoli which is closer to the airport anyway. The plan is that the family leave ten minutes before four of my mates arrive. They are flying in from the UK.

All goes smoothly with the changeover and I have already prepped my friends - Martin Cubbon, Andrew Corlett, Peter Slater and Chris George - that we are going to stay at several ports during the following week. They are keen to visit the various islands, including Capri, before cruising the Amalfi coast.

In fact this goes particularly well in Ischia and Procida, however when we arrive in the Grand Marina di Capri a few days later we have a bit of a shock. I had

pre-booked a berth there and had been quoted Euros 970 per night for a berth. This is the most expensive port we have ever visited, but things get worse once we have tied up and go up to the office to pay.

On the booking form I have put the beam of Blue Legend as six metres when in fact she is actually 6.11 m. Well, the marina picked this up and promptly stated we would fall into a different category and a night's stay would be Euros 1,900! Well this is a bit rich even for my well healed pals and no negotiation would get the price down. So, we decided to leave immediately and proceed down the Amalfi coast instead.

In fact we all thought this was probably for the best as the Grand Marina is actually a hell of a walk from Capri town and not very convenient for anything. Anyway off we went back to the mainland.

During the previous week Jack had been talking to the Harbour Master of Amalfi and was on first name terms with him. When Jack phoned to say could we come in a day early the HM said 'Jack, of course, my friend'. This positive conversation turned out to be a grand welcome when we arrived in Amalfi and we actually really felt happy to have berthed here. The HM was indeed a really good guy, and we managed to negotiate a great rate to stay two nights until the boys flew home.

Now, I should explain that these friends are used to Michelin starred restaurants with serious wine lists, and we had already visited the best of the best in each port we had overnighted in. However, here in Amalfi we managed to excel with not one but two top restaurants. I think Jack must be finding the Start Bay Inn a bit of a comedown after that week!

We all loved Amalfi, and had a really good few days there before we had to say farewell to the guys and send them off to the airport.

Chris George, our sometimes mechanic, had agreed to stay on board for the passage back to Olbia. This was because, after Caitlin left for the UK, we were a little short-handed for a twenty three hour passage. We decided to stay a further night in Amalfi before setting off at 0600 the next morning to steam directly back to Sardinia.

The trip was uneventful except for the wildlife. We saw many tunas, dolphins and even a few turtles on the voyage back, arriving in the Golfo di Aranci at about 0500 to anchor. The plan being to spend the day making water whilst giving the boat a thorough wash down.

In fact after a few hours sleep we decided to head into the commercial wharf in Olbia town and do the wash down there with the water we had on board. From Aranci to Olbia we did a high speed passage at 22 knots for 30 mins to give the engine a really good de-coking before the winter layup. Jack went off in the tender and filmed our manoeuvres for fun, and to stop us having a problem towing the tender at 22 knots!

Once in Olbia we had a day's work before celebrating rather too much in the evening. It was the end of what had been an amazing summer - certainly for me! But I was now keen to get home and was very relieved when on the Monday SNO Yachts were able to lift us out of the water, and take the boat to their internal winter storage.

Our final night in Olbia was back in Carpe Diem, the B&B from where it all started. I had spent the whole of the Italian lockdown here, and Cait and Jack first set foot here when in Sardinia. Memories of that period, and my Australian friend, Paul Kinney, who has still not made it back to Australia, came flooding back.

If that was not enough, our hosts, Angelo and Tiziana put on a farewell feast for the three of us at the B&B. Leaving them the following morning six and a half months since I had first arrived was emotional, and I will never forget Olbia - whatever may happen over this winter with Covid. If we get a chance in the spring I would like to do a month on the Sardinian coast with Myra before I steam the boat back to the UK (if we decide to do this rather than head to Greece which was the pre Covid plan).

And it was huge thanks to my crew, Caitlin and Jack, who I know will go on to greater things. Caitlin is going back to safeguarding vulnerable children and

adults whilst Jack is going to take his Yachtmasters in October along with my son in law, Sam, to continue his career in the marine industry.

It has been a strange year, but I will be ever grateful for their work, friendship, camaraderie and support. Good luck both of you.

And....Myra, I am coming home!!

My next post will be after Xmas when I hope I will have something to report on the maintenance that Blue Legend will be undergoing at the hands of Giovanni and Alessandro. Till then ‘In bocca al lupo’ as the Italians say.

## **Back in Blighty**

It was an interesting few weeks since we disembarked from Blue Legend in mid-September. After six and half months away it was surreal to arrive back here to find Salcombe so changed from when I left in February.

The lockdown here had been over for some weeks , and Salcombe was once again heaving with people and cars. So much so that it was impossible to walk down Fore Street and socially distance.

One of my first adjustments was the fact people do not wear masks here. For the entire time I have been away, masks have been mandatory all over Sardinia and Italy when out and about. We have all got used to that. Oh, and they are not masks here in the UK, but ‘face coverings’!

Anyway, it was soon clear that everything here relating to Covid seems to be a recommendation rather than the law, as it was in Italy. Over there you could not go for food in the lockdown without being stopped by the police to make sure you were getting, or had got, only the essentials. In addition, everywhere you went there were guards, and wow betide anyone who did not follow protocol.

My first experience of a coffee out in Salcombe was a shock as well. Although I had to pay at the till and was not allowed close to anyone, the waiter then appeared at my table unmasked , and the people waiting for a table had to be shooed away from breathing down my neck.

Things have not got better since, and the only outing Myra and I enjoyed before Lockdown Two occurred was to Turtley Mill where they were vigorous in applying the rules.

Myra was happy to see me home, although I think it took four months away before she noticed my absence - except when it came to things being fixed! However, our next door neighbour Simon and his wife, Jane, seem to have ensured she had everything she needed ,as well as helping to redesign our garden.

Myra had also been very lucky with food supplies; having persuaded Cranchi’s to bring her a delivery of essentials every week, topped up by stuff from Ashby’s on occasion.

Although the lockdown was not ideal, we have both made the most of it. I think I had the better billet cruising in the Mediterranean, but Myra enjoyed her garden and Zoom calls.

So, it was back into Salcombe life. Jack and my son in law ,Sam, went off to take their Yachtmasters exams in late October. Sam came away with an Offshore ticket, however Jack was held back for not having a VHF certificate in hand. Hopefully he is rectifying this. In the meantime, Sam is now a fully qualified boaty.

I have teamed up with our Harbour Master and started doing up an old Bentley. It is not an expensive one, but just a bargain we think we can improve and then either sell or do weddings next year! A project for Lockdown Two was essential, and at least I can lock myself away in my unit and work on a car during these tricky times.







The boat of course is tucked up in a shed in Olbia, and by all accounts very happy with her digs. Giovanni and Alessandro have soda blasted the hull from the waterline down to remove all the antifouling before re-priming. It is as smooth as a baby's bottom now having been rather rough for the last few years. They hope to finish the 3 primer coats and put on one coat of antifouling before closing for the Xmas break.

Olbia has had a second wave just like the rest of us. Giovanni's oldest son was sitting next to a boy at school who had Covid but luckily did not catch it himself or pass onto the family. However, it reminds one of the global nature of this pandemic when you hear of such incidences in other countries.

We have one window out on the boat. This window had been leaking since the day I bought her. This is to be replaced with a new one made in England by the same people who did the original windows. I found them by sheer chance, but they immediately remembered doing Blue Legend twenty four years ago! Hopefully the new one will be installed in the new year.

Time passes rapidly when you are busy, and I am looking forward to going back out to Sardinia to see how the work is progressing in late January. However, as Myra has already pointed out, this just may not be possible. I certainly don't want to have another six month trip away from home, and I will need to be careful not to get locked down again over there.

Looking back on 2020 you have to wonder how we managed to get in this mess. If you had asked me even a year ago whether the UK would ever be involved in a pandemic I would have laughed at you. Here we are a year on and the unthinkable has happened. The whole world has been infected with a virus from a Chinese bat – really!

But here's to a very happy Christmas and a far more fun Covid free 2021.

## **Christmas really ?**

It was difficult not to blog at Christmas as this was a once in a lifetime situation - or at least I really hope so. Here we are in Salcombe with the whole world going in different directions in order to control a problem brought to us by bat eaters in China.

Who would believe that Xmas 2020 would see an almost total lockdown of the planet?

As we approach Christmas itself our contractors in Olbia Sardinia are covering up Blue Legend for the Xmas shutdown as though it is a perfectly normal event. However, at home they are worrying about their son who has been sent home as a classmate he sits next to has developed the dreaded virus.

They now know just as we do today that Christmas is all but not happening in Italy -not even in Sardinia which is a Tier 2 zone as we now call it. So, in a country where everyone is touchy feely, they will not even be able to get together even with their local family.

Angelo and Tiziana in the B&B I spent two months of this year in are not only isolated at home, but have one son locked down in Ireland and a second trying to keep his shop going in Olbia.

Over the water my friend from France, Paul, who I spent a fair part of March and April with is locked down in Antibes with his girlfriend, mulled wine and a guitar. The latter he is learning and by the time I may see him again in April will no doubt be as good as Brian May !

Over on mainland Italy, a friend mine from Palma in 2019, Zander, is locked down on a boat in Imperia having had a brief break in South Africa before returning to face the music.

Brian, my old boss in Queensland, is enjoying almost unabated freedom, although even he reports a few cases there, but its not stopping the sunshine, sand and cocktails. My seagoing pal, Sam and his wife Val in Western Australia, are likewise enjoying summer even if they are unable to leave their state.

Marty in Hong Kong is locked down in their fourth wave - apparently caused by a number of ageing Tai Tai's (rich Chinese grandmothers) cavorting on the dance floor with their twenty-something toy boys and ignoring social distancing!

Peter, the retired chairman of our charity, has just returned home from Vietnam where cases are few and far between. However on passing through Singapore Airport a few days ago he found the departure lounge deserted.

Let's not say too much about the States. I am actually wary of contacting my old secretary, Sib, there as I hate to think what it must be like with a President ignoring the problem.

Of course we, along with the rest of the world, are now putting all our faith in a number of vaccines which hopefully will bring this catastrophe to an end sometime in 2021. I, for one, will be at the front of my queue to get it. I think Myra and I are about number 12,235,128th on the list here in the UK.

So, with all this in mind, and with the utter disbelief that this could ever have happened in my lifetime and with the fact our family are in a luckier position than many - we would like to express our best wishes and love to everyone who is going to find this Christmas difficult, lonely, a struggle, or, God forbid, a Covid one.

As for the boat, Blue Legend is safely wrapped up in a Covid resistant plastic cover and lying comfortably in a shed with her mates in Olbia.

## **2021 – New Year – New Season – New Variants**

The start of the 2021 boating season was a somewhat rocky ride. With endless travel restrictions, changes to Covid and quarantine rules, plans have had to be constantly changed.

During the winter Myra and I had agreed that the Med was just not the place to be during Covid as travel restrictions, and our new status as non-EU citizens, was going to make 2021 a difficult year for cruising. On this basis - and bearing in mind the likelihood we would have more freedom in the UK than in Europe - we made the decision to bring Blue Legend back to the UK for this season at least.

This would allow us to cruise the Western Isles in July and cruise to the Isles of Scilly and Channel Islands in August and September. It is unlikely we will re-enter the EU at all once the boat is cleared back into the UK.

After almost three great years in the Med, I am now quite happy to bring the boat home and suffer the colder, wetter, weather we are hardened against in the British Isles!

Initially it was planned that Jack and I would fly out in early April with a view to being in the water and away by the end of the month. This plan was wrecked in early April when Sardinia went from being a white (no restrictions) province to red (total lockdown) in the space of a week. This was largely due, as all Sardos will tell you, to the influx of tourists from the red and amber mainland to the delightfully white Sardinian coast. I am sure some in Salcombe feel the same way that the Sardo's do!

Anyway, this massive change in the situation led to me flying out on my own having had one vaccine dose, leaving Jack behind who, because of his age, will not be vaccinated for some months.

I had already agreed with Chris George that he would fly out on the 1st of May and would act as a second watchkeeper for the trip home. Shortly before leaving the UK on the 14th, we had also been joined by Victoria Greaves - a very experienced superyacht hand.

On arrival in Olbia, I found the boat in good order but with quite a few jobs to complete. Giovanni, my right-hand man there, was down with Covid along with his wife and three children. So he was out of action until early May. However, Alessandro, Giovanni's sidekick, was still functioning, and he starts completing



the hull jobs over the two weeks leading up to the first week of May.

I, in the meantime, have been doing other jobs on the boat with the equipment and fittings I had sent out on a pallet from the UK before Brexit late last year. This pallet included 150 cans of Fever Tree tonic, a huge flagon of Heinz Salad Cream, another of Branston Pickle and a case of Heinz Baked Beans. All to go with my pasta and tuna sandwiches - much to the disgust of several of my mates.

Anyway, by the 1st of May and the imminent arrival of Chris and Victoria most of the work on the boat is completed and it is just the fiddly final bits that we are all working on.

Chris and Victoria had to quarantine for five days at our favourite B&B, Carpe Diem, in Olbia whilst I finalised things on the boat. Giovanni finally appeared at the end of the first week of May and we were set for launch on Monday 10th.

But very unfortunately, the wind blew up strongly from the Southeast as I was manoeuvring the boat onto its water berth. Victoria caught two of her fingers in a bight of rope which caused a very painful break and dislocation.

Once we had got things under control and were tied up, I took Victoria up to the A&E hospital for her fingers to be x-rayed. This took for ever and we did not see Victoria back on board until the evening. The doctors had not been able to do much and had declared Victoria needed an operation, but that they could not perform it for at least two weeks.

After much discussion and reading endless government advice, we decided to declare a medical emergency, and put Victoria on the first flight to London the next day. Mercifully she managed to talk her way onto the aeroplane out of Olbia based on an undocumented PCR test the hospital had done the day before, and then she was able to have a further test in Rome airport before flying to London.

As a tested seafarer there is no requirement to quarantine on arrival UK from an amber country, so she was able to go home and seek medical advice. All very traumatic but getting her home was clearly the best course of action under these circumstances.

At this point a young friend of Chris's, who is a Merchant Navy Chief Officer, agreed to come out to help us bring the boat back to England. Toby Dowling flew out two days later, without incident, to join the boat and we set sail for Southern Sardinia the following day with a compliment of three lads on an adventure!

I will miss Olbia deeply having spent a fair amount of the last 18 months on the island. I made some great friends amongst the local population, and had some fabulous times.

It is just a massive pity that through all that, Myra has never been to Sardinia, and may well never do so. Once Covid is behind us maybe we will return as tourists.

## **Off across the Med**

From Olbia we head south to Albatax, about halfway down Sardinia's Eastern coast. We spent some time here the previous year with the grandchildren and loved it. So we felt a two-day stay would be a good break in our travels to Tunisia. As it turned out we found very few people, but a most welcoming village longing for the return of tourism.

Carrying on South we reached the fabulous beaches east of Villasimius. Unfortunately the weather was blowing a force 7 and there was no lee on either side of the peninsula. Rather than suffer an uncomfortable and sleepless night we decided to go into Villasimius Marina and stay out of the weather. I was hesitant to do this as last year we visited the marina in the tender and felt it was a bit of a heartless concrete jungle. However, that is not really the case and indeed we ended up staying here two nights whilst exploring the area on land by bicycle and walking. The peninsular is beautiful and with no tourists it was very quiet

and pleasant.

We cycled over to the beaches we so enjoyed last year, as well as out to the furthest point to the south.

From Villasimius it was an easy two hour steam to Cagliari where we had agreed with the Harbour Master to stay for two nights. Cagliari is a great port to visit and the city is very pretty and inviting. There are many good shops and even better restaurants and once again we tasted two of the latter. Chris and Toby had, by their own admission, the best tuna steak they had ever tasted at a small seafood restaurant, Is Ferminas, in the old part of Cagliari. I had a mixed seafood platter that was also fantastic.

After clearing out of the EU with the help of our agents, Nautica Assistance, we sailed for Bizerte in Tunisia in the early morning so that we could arrive early evening there. The trip was very pleasant with a light breeze from the northeast - giving us a gentle roll but no discomfort. Bizerte was as last year, except this time we were not allowed to disembark, even though we had PCR tests before leaving Cagliari at the main hospital there.

There are few restrictions for locals in Tunisia, but they are very strict about visitors. Having 'cleared in' during the evening we then waited until noon the next day for our tanker delivery of diesel. Diesel here is 39p a litre so you can see why it is worth the detour to Tunisia when filling up with 12,000 litres!

I was disappointed we could not land as Caitlin, Jack and I had fun last year heading into Tunis and visiting Carthage, something we could not repeat on this visit. So, as soon as the fuel was loaded, we departed for Palma in Majorca. This is almost a two-day trip but once again we were blessed with a following sea and minimal wind.

We made landfall on Palma two days later at around 0300, and proceeded to anchor in Palma Bay to await daylight. The trip across had seen us visited by several pods of dolphins and at least one whale, although he was low on the horizon. A pleasant and comfortable crossing of a very busy shipping area.

Our arrival in Palma coincided with the Palma Boat Show so we were lucky to get a berth in the STP port area, which is my favourite stop in the city of Palma. Right next to the Cathedral, Boat Show and only a stones throw from the old town. We are sandwiched between a J Class yacht called Topaz, a truly magnificent vessel, and a modern racing yacht. Unbelievably the engineer on Topaz comes from Newton Ferrers which got us an invite to drinks on board.

The First Officer was a Mexican from Yucatan and we had lots of stories to trade about my time in the area, even though it was before he was born!

We pottered about the boat for three days while all around us was a veritable hive of activity; much of which involved the endless washing and polishing of yachts. We however were done by lunch time allowing the rest of the day off to explore Palma.

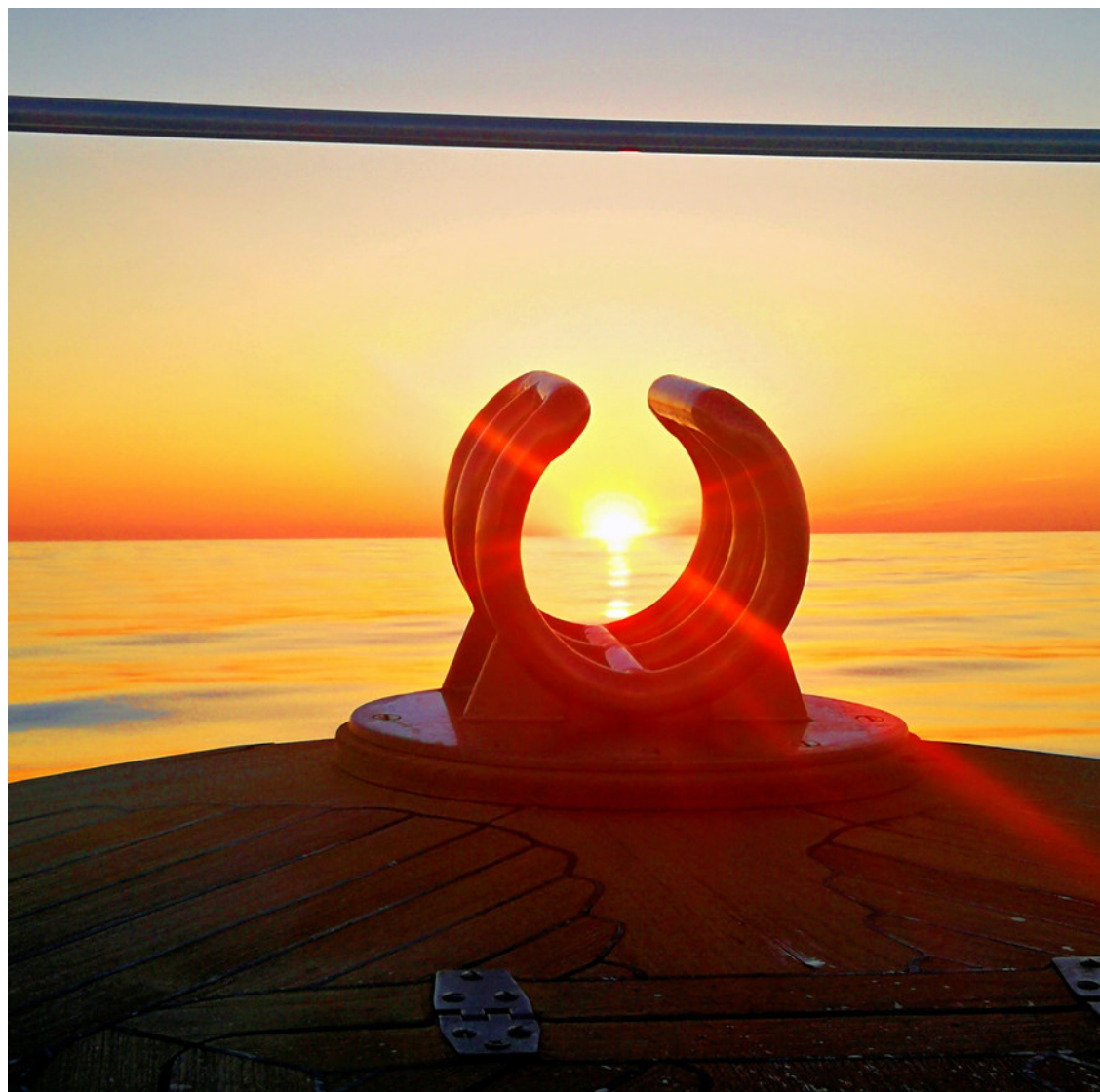
Having had such a difficult year organising crew due to Covid and having lost Victoria, I decided to put an advert on the Facebook page of Palma Yacht Crew for two 'greenie' deckhands before we left Olbia.

Chris and I waded through the 120 responses we received and shortlisted 10, most of whom were in Palma. However, that was not very successful as many of the Palma hands were just desperate for a job and took the first one that came along as opposed to planning ahead. After a while we realised that this was not the best source for us as we needed the crew in a month when we arrived in Palma.

We redid the shortlist and this time included several applicants from the UK as we knew they were unlikely to get jobs in Palma as they were not immediately available there. This worked out much better and we recruited two new crew, Katy Hoare, and Cameron Swan. Both were just completing a three-week induction course in Southampton and were very keen to be trainees.

We arranged for them to join us in Palma and thus, the day before we departed STP, they arrived on board having flown out from Stansted. Having had a welcome dinner ashore they prepared themselves for their first day at sea: a trip to Puerto Andratx on the western side of Majorca.







## Bye bye Med, we sail for Blighty

The next few weeks went by in a blur and I completely forgot my blog. But it was a particularly fun time - what with our passage home from Majorca and then a couple of cruises along the Southwest coast of England.

We left Puerto Andratx with the view of stopping in Formentara for a few days to get a last go at swimming and Sea bobbing in the Med before hitting the chilly Atlantic waters after Gibraltar.

Katy and Cameron were very quick to settle in and along with Toby and Chris made up a fine crew for our epic voyage home. Formentara was, as expected, possibly the most beautiful island in the Mediterranean and one we could easily spend the summer on. As it was, we had four days to sample the sea and the food before departing Spain for Gibraltar.

The two-day trip to Gib was without incident and we had very calm and clear seas. Chris did most of the catering - considering the galley to be his domain. Cameron and Katy were itching to try their recipes, but for the time being the ‘old gaffer’ was in charge. The food was excellent so there were no complaints from Toby or me.

We arrived in Gibraltar very early in the morning to wait for the fuel depot to open. By 0930 we were fully loaded and on our way out of Gibraltar to Cape St Vincent. We were trying to keep ahead of some poor weather coming into the Atlantic and although we had a calm crossing to the Portuguese coast, we started hitting heavy weather just short of St Vincent.

I decided we would make for a small port just east of the cape to shelter until the wind died down. This little port was called Baleeira and although it seemed quite pretty, I was not keen we should re-enter Europe if we could avoid it as the endless Covid restrictions would probably make it difficult. So we just anchored in the bay.

After 24 hours we went back to sea and rounded Cape St Vincent in moderate weather. Because we had stopped at the cape there seemed no point in pulling into Lisbon just a hundred or so nautical miles further North, so the plan was to continue to Vigo and stop there for a night.

As we progressed Northwards along the Portuguese coast it became obvious we were experiencing the calm before the storm. Several deep depressions were working their way across the Atlantic and into the Bay of Biscay and/or the Channel. By the time we had reached Vigo we had spent several hours analysing the weather charts and concluded that if we kept going, we could get across Biscay and into Brest before the storm became intolerable.

The planned stop in Vigo was aborted at the last minute and we then made haste North to pass Cape Finisterre and into Biscay. Once again, I got a bollocking off the coastguard for being in the ‘Inshore Traffic Zone’ when strictly speaking I should have been 20 miles offshore in the NE bound lane. However, they seemed to accept my excuse of having come from near Vigo and our need for haste to get north. It wasn’t helped by the fact Chris bloody George had turned down the VHF volume so that the CG got more and more annoyed that he could not raise us! Anyway, I didn’t get a nasty letter yet from the IMO so hopefully we are past that.

Biscay was fine, with a supple rolling all the way across. We only started getting a more intense sea about six hours out of Brest. But it never reached the point where we had to slow down, and we arrived in the Brest estuary in the middle of the night to anchor off Camaret on the southern side.

Over the next four days whilst the ocean was raging, we had a wonderful time in and around the café and bars of Camaret. The first day there we totally overdid it and only managed to make it back to the boat by the skin of our teeth. However, we had a brilliant time, and the hangover was worth it.

Camaret, like all things French, took the Covid restrictions with a pinch of salt and besides wearing face masks in cafés and shops, we noted no real restrictions on our activities. The harbour staff were great, and it was all just typically laissez faire.







Once the wind had passed, we departed for St Peter Port to top up with fuel for the summer months. We had already been informed that we could not enter Guernsey without a special exemption and that permission would only be granted for us to self-load fuel there. This was fine but it did make our trip to Guernsey a real damp squid and we only stopped long enough to take on diesel before departing on our final leg to Salcombe.

Having left Olbia on the 20th of May we finally finished our Spring Tour in Salcombe on the 19th of June, after travelling a distance of 2,284 nautical miles.

## **Summer of Fun 2021**

Having arrived safely back in Salcombe to a sea temperature of 14 degrees we were all feeling a bit disappointed that we had left the Mediterranean behind us.

However, it was lovely to be back where we are in a controlled environment and not exposed to different Covid rules in every port we visit. Within days of our return Jersey closed to UK citizens and then two days later Guernsey opened. It was for this reason I had made the decision last December to leave the Med for home. Coupled with the knowledge that we were nowhere near the end of Covid and hence Myra's determination not to travel abroad.

I didn't keep the blog up over the summer as cruising the Southwest of England is very different to having summers in the Mediterranean - not least because the water temperature is at least 8 degrees cooler and I for one have not had a swim all summer.

The rare occasion I have been in the water it has been in a wetsuit and even then I hated it. In contrast our children and grandchildren have had no such qualms and have been in and out all summer. Ayesha is even swimming daily through the winter - never mind the water temperature.

I was also disappointed in the Sea Bobbing as all I seem to find was bad visibility and kelp! However, on the positive front, we have had a great summer in many of the ports and harbours we have visited.

I think the standout locations have been the Helford River and Fowey where we always seem to have fun and some good runs ashore. Restaurants have been difficult as the staycations have meant that anywhere that sells food is fully booked weeks in advance. As such we have eaten on board a lot and had some fabulous meals cooked by our crew, Katy, and Cameron.

Cameron has been a chef for five years prior to this season at sea and Katy has clearly been well trained by her mum. Between the two of them we have had my personal favourites of fish pie and lasagne regularly, coupled with Katy's ability to make fabulous bread and focaccia.

So, I could not have selected a better crew for 2021. Out of the 120 applications I received, I had two who can cook as well!

We have had lots of different people on board throughout the summer and have enjoyed all the different characters and outlooks on life.

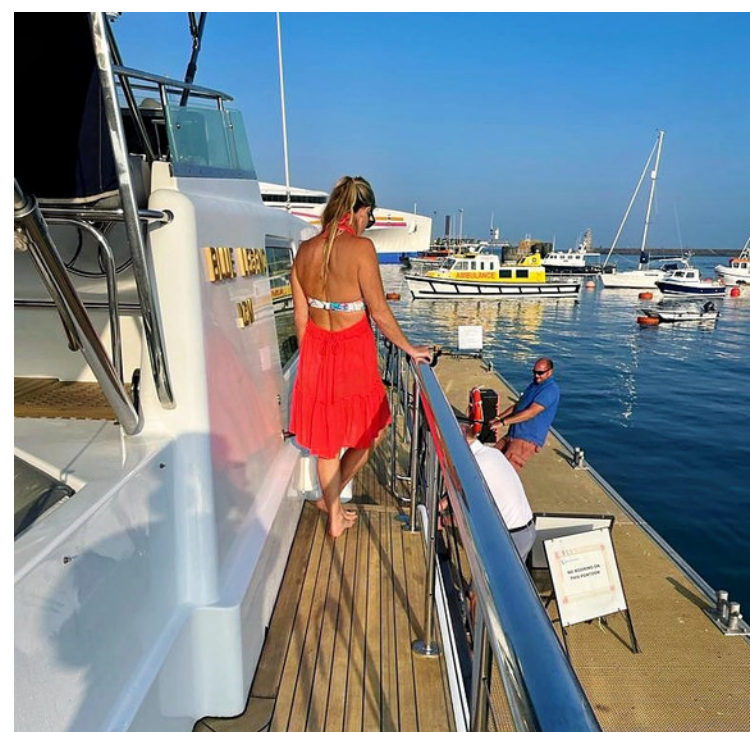
We have done one trip to the Isle of Scillies which was cut short by the summer storms we experienced through a lot of August. After two great days in St Agnes a storm came across the Atlantic and we had to high tail it back to the Helford and then into Falmouth for three days whilst the weather abated.

Although disappointed at our short time in the Scillies we did have a good time and it is still firmly on our list of favourite destinations.

We tried on a couple of occasions to go to Guernsey, but the travel restrictions were so strong that it was not until the beginning of September that we were able to go and even then, we had to leave Cameron behind in the UK as he had not had his second vaccine fourteen days prior.

I have to say I was disappointed with St Peter Port on this visit. I think Covid has taken its toll there both in the nature and character of the place, with many restaurants shut or only occasionally open. There did not seem to be many tourists and there were few visiting boats. The Covid test requirements are very rigid and that probably adds to the problem.











However, we had a lovely two days in Sark at anchor on the southwest coast out of the rather strong and constant easterly wind we experienced in the Channel Islands. Guy and Amaia had a lovely time in and out of the sea whilst Grandma, Sam and Ayesha lounged on the empty beach.

Cameron and Katy have completed over 2,500 nautical miles at sea in the last four months and proved their ability to work at sea. Cameron is going on to do Yachtmasters this autumn whilst Katy, I feel, will return to midwifery at least for a few months. Both have learnt tons and I know will be sought after if they wish to return to sea. They have been a great asset to me personally, and my friends and family with whom they have sailed.

Many thanks guys for taking on the challenge of working with me and Blue Legend!

As the season draws to a close, I plan to berth Blue Legend again alongside Whitestrand in Salcombe for the winter where I have access to power. I would rather she was back in the shed in Olbia but feel it is just too big a trip to sail back there in October when it is so unclear what 2022 will bring regarding health and border restrictions in southern Europe. Better I feel to keep her close until the spring and decide at that time whether to steam south to the Mediterranean again.

## **Winter in Salcombe 2021 - 2022**

Well, after a great summer around the South Coast, IOS, Channel Islands and France, we are now wintering in Salcombe. It is definitely not as good as putting the boat in a shed in Sardinia! However, it does allow for all sorts of work to be carried out by myself rather than employing contractors.

I have been lucky enough to book a berth on the town quay, Whitestrand, for the worst of the winter. This has allowed me daily access to the vessel and the provision of 24 hour power and water supplies. I think being out in the Bag for this period would have made daily working on the boat a real chore and would require a lot more discipline than I have.

Having her alongside Whitestrand has made life much easier and has meant that I have been able to do all sorts of little jobs that I have had on the list for a long time.

I decided that we would concentrate on the interior of the boat and focus on replacing some of the windows where we have suffered small but annoying leaks when in big seas on passage. To do this I have had new windows made complete as I felt the time spent in dismantling the old ones that have been in situ for 25 years would just not be worth the effort. It was a good call as brand new replacement windows look far better and are much easier to handle. The guys we found to make the windows still had some of the original frame extrusions so the new ones are identical to the existing windows.

I have had a shipwright, Guy Savage, working on board for some weeks tidying up, replacing and repairing areas of the interior American Oak finish. Guy made a lovely job of this and the results are excellent.

A French polisher from Surrey, Ian Savill, who did all the original polishing 25 years ago came down, and spent a few days tidying up the veneer where necessary.

Besides the above projects, Chris George and I have been busy servicing the engines, generators and other bits and pieces - all of which went fine. However, the Italian tank measuring and pump control system that I have struggled with since buying the vessel finally threw its hand in two months ago and forced me to look for a better solution.

A company in Plymouth, Applied Automation, who do significant electronic installation work for Princess Yachts, came on board to have a look at the Italian system and see what could be done. It soon became clear that the cost of sorting the existing system was likely to far exceed fitting one of the latest state of the art systems.

Two years ago I had a company in Palma fit a Maretron Fuel Flow system to the boat which is linked into the NMEA 2000 backbone and from there into the







Simrad navigation system.

I felt confident about Maretron and so decided to investigate their options. I am pleased I did as two months later we have a fabulous system on Blue Legend, fully integrated, simple but powerful and seamless with the existing Simrad navigation system. It was a plug and play installation which I was more than able to do. The longest job being documenting the layout, interfaces, and cabling: all of which has been completed now.

So, by the beginning of February 2022 we are more or less ready for the season. Hopefully we will have the interior back to normal by early March and then just be waiting for some warmer weather to take her out. We have accumulated a bit of weed over the winter but I am planning to have a hull scrub while she's in the water in April, as the anti-foul is in great condition and will last until the autumn.

## **Goodbye Blue Legend**

After last year cruising the waters of the UK I had concluded that if we were to keep Blue Legend it would have to be in the Med. Quite simply it is too cold, wet and windy around the UK to have even a fraction of the fun we have had in the Balearics and Sardinia.

Taking her back down again and having another few seasons in the Med is doable but I am far from certain that my wife, Myra, will get much use out of the boat and as such I will spend many more months on board with just my crew with occasional family visits. Personally I would be happy to do this but it is not fair on Myra and hence I feel my time with Blue Legend has reached its natural end.

We had agreed when we bought it that we would have it for 4 to 5 years to give us time to explore the Med however Covid somewhat restricted the scope of this exploration and in particular we never did make it to Greece. However, we have had a fabulous time within the limitations of the last few years and I am actually quite relaxed about selling her on.

This being said, Sam put her on the market in February 2022 and we started what I had anticipated might be a long sales campaign. One of the reasons for returning to the UK was in anticipation of the sale and the likelihood that such a Nelson would find more buyers in Northern Europe than it would in the Mediterranean.

In fact we only had four or five people come to look at her before the eventual buyer came on board and immediately said he would buy her for our asking price. This was in March but with a proposed sale completion date of late June. I was not overly concerned about this as he had agreed to pay a handsome deposit in advance.

Unlike many I could not just stop my programme of work on the boat and we continued on through March and into April doing the normal pre-season work on her decks and superstructure etc. In mid-April we hauled her out in Yachthaven, Plymouth for a hull inspection, antifouling and anode renewal to which the new owner, Sean Brown, attended. This haul out was remarkable straightforward even though I had been worrying for weeks about the rather small size of the lifting gantry.

Once back in the water, after only 24 hours, she was ready to be used again.

I decided to take a final trip to the Channel Islands with my friends and Sean asked that we load fuel at the same time. So in early May we departed Salcombe for St Peter Port on my last official trip to sea on Blue Legend. We had an excellent few days in Guernsey, Sark and Herm before returning to Salcombe.

On June 24th, the money for the sale came through and on the 28th I spent two days running through everything with the new owner. Then, on the 30th with Chris George on the helm and Sean and his friends crewing, Blue Legend left Salcombe for the last time en route to Swanwick in the Solent. Apparently this was an easy run in good weather and she arrived safely at her new berth without incident.

Farewell to Blue Legend, one of the greatest motor launches ever built and a boat which has given my family lifelong memories to treasure.















