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10 SCOTTISH ANCHORAGES

TO ESCAPE THE CROWDS

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You don't have to own a boat or spend lots of money to get plenty of time afloat



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Changing from a ketch rig may sound drastic, but one sailor is delighted with his new rig



18 TESTED: LINJETT 39
Has this Swedish yard found the perfect formula for a boat with timeless appeal?

SLAVES TO THE MACHINE

Computers have changed how we think, as well as how we navigate. Using a satnav in your car all the time not only means you can't remember the route you've driven so well, it also materially degrades your brain's ability to remember, full stop. Our dependence on machines makes us less able to orientate ourselves in the real world.

Your phone, or chartplotter, sees a route as a transaction – the fastest way from A to B with a minimum of distraction – while for us humans, maps are more like stories. A series of landmarks, episodes and decisions that see us travel through landscapes and lifetimes, building a mental picture of where we've been and who we've become in the process.

The same is true at sea. Tell your chartplotter where you want to go, and it'll automatically generate a safe route for you, taking account of hazards, tides and weather to navigate you along a precise line without deviation or hesitation. You hardly even have to touch the helm to get there.

Much like humans, however, yachts and their dependence on the wind are organic, malleable and imprecise. It's what makes for such good yarns. No epic poems have yet been composed about journeys in self-driving cars, as far as I'm aware.

So ditch the route, as Justin Morton says (p38), and get your head out of the chartplotter. A few handy navigation tricks and a bit of forethought is all you need to dodge the hazards and know where the safe water is. Then you can look up, out and forward, anticipating where you're going to be – mind, body and soul – without being a slave to the virtual line.

Theo

Theo Stocker

Editor, *Yachting Monthly*

▼ SCAN CODE...

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SEE PAGE 62

A yacht motors towards Pap of Glencoe along Loch Leven in the calm of an early morning. We've picked 10 of the best lesser-known anchorages on the West Coast worth exploring [p28]

FREE DIGITAL ACCESS TO MORE THAN 130 ISSUES

SEE PAGE 86

We've wanted to offer this for ages, and are finally able to. We've thrown open the doors to our digital archives for all of our subscribers – print or digital. You can now access the last 10 years-plus of *Yachting Monthly* issues on your phone or on your computer, as long as you're an active subscriber. That's over 130 issues, all the way back to December 2012. Have a look on page 86 for more information.

ON THE COVER: Elegant, understated lines and a powerful rig make the Linjett 39 a satisfying boat to sail (p18). Photo: Linjett/Ludovic Fruchaud





Heather Prentice
 News editor

Russia suspected of 63-hour attack on GPS signals in the Baltic region

Russia is suspected of launching a 63-hour-long attack on GPS signals in the Baltic region, starting on 31 March, Easter Sunday, in a move that affected more than 1,600 passenger planes, as well as other GPS users.

The incident, which saw at least 1,614 planes affected, occurred amid rising tensions between Russia and the NATO military alliance more than two years since the start of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

'Seafarers should continue to be aware of the potential for electronic interference and notify their flag state of any suspicious activity,' a spokesman for the Department for Transport told *YM*. 'The Department for Transport provides security advice to British-flagged shipping, including areas of potential increased risk from electronic interference.'

WIDESPREAD DISRUPTION

While most of the GPS attacks appeared to be taking place in Polish airspace, Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) blogs have reported that planes flying in German, Danish, Swedish, Latvian and Lithuanian airspace have suffered interference problems.

The missing or fake GPS signals — known as GPS jamming or spoofing — have been occurring regularly since the start of the war in Ukraine in 2022.

The loss of GPS signals is also significant for yachtsmen. Were similar GPS blackouts to occur in coastal areas, it could mean that yachtsmen lose their primary source of position fixing as well as the loss of accurate AIS data for collision avoidance, the loss of some input data for autopilots as well as a loss of GPS functionality for distress signalling, whether via VHF DSC or via GMDSS satellites such as EPIRB/PLB and/or AIS beacons.

Although any GPS data sent over AIS is likely to be affected by a jamming or spoofing attack, the AIS virtual navigation aid position will be correct, since the position transmitted is a true static position and is not derived from GNSS signals, the

Department for Transport stressed. If in doubt as to the validity of navigational information, sailors should cross-reference AIS data with other available methods. If sailors are not able to ascertain the vessel's position relative to navigational hazards, then the vessel should be brought to a safe stop. Preparation through diligent passage planning is important,

identifying where effective cross-checks and assurance of the system can be confirmed.

Domestically, the UK has established a National Positioning, Navigation and Timing Office, which is delivering greater resilience, including developing proposals to provide backup Position and Navigation, the DfT added. Newsweek reported

that the pattern of the 63-hour GPS interference suggested it originated from Kaliningrad, a Russian enclave between Poland and Lithuania. Russian forces stationed there are believed to possess equipment capable of disrupting global navigation satellite systems (GNSS), such as GPS or other constellations, such as the European

Galileo system. Russia has its own GLONASS satellite navigation system.

An RAF plane carrying Defence Secretary Grant Shapps had its GPS signal jammed while flying close to Kaliningrad in March.

The plane was travelling between the UK and Poland when its satellite signal was temporarily interfered with on both legs of the journey.

SUPERIOR CAPABILITIES

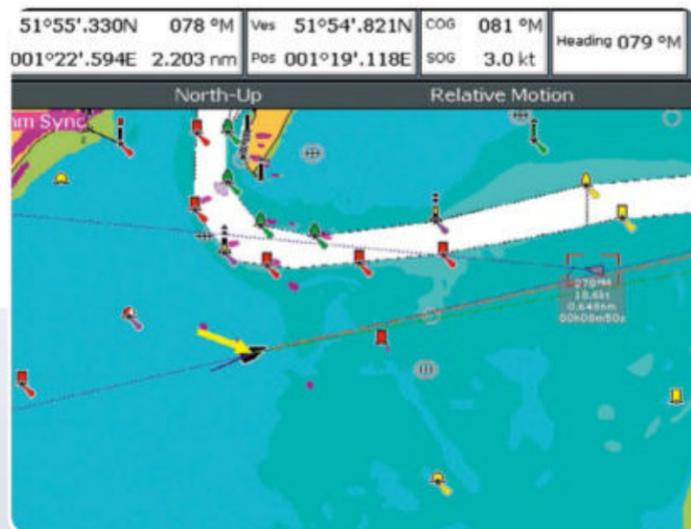
The apparent technological prowess showcased by these interruptions has raised alarms in military circles.

Melanie Garson, an expert in international security from University College London, highlighted to *Forces.net* the edge that Russia seems to hold in electronic warfare.

'The mother of invention over the last two years during the war have actually actively solidified their capabilities in this regard.

'They've had the chance to use it more concretely, and there's a real concern that particularly NATO currently doesn't match that capability,' she said.

RIGHT: Accurate AIS data is important for collision avoidance



BELOW: A loss of GPS functionality could affect EPIRB distress signalling



WHALE IS FREED

Rescue teams have saved a large humpback whale, known as Ivy, that got caught in fishing ropes off the coast of Cornwall, UK

INSIDER INFO

The Environment Agency's new portal makes it easier for internal water company whistleblowers to report environmental wrongdoings

YAMAHA BUYS TORQEEDO

Yamaha has purchased electric motor pioneer Torqeedo from Deutz AG, which Yamaha says is a milestone towards achieving carbon neutrality

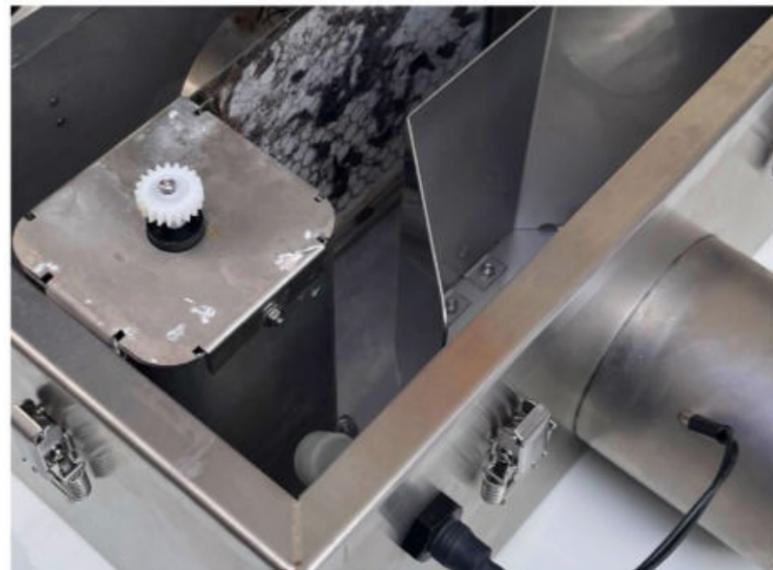
Falmouth installs green filters

Falmouth Harbour has become the first harbour in the world to partner with the Cleaner Seas Group, installing the group's ground-breaking green tech filters in the marina amenity centre to prevent plastic microfibres washing from clothes into the sea.

Each of the industrial INDIKON microfibre filters attached to the harbour's washing machines will prevent around 91 million microfibres a year from polluting the sea. The International Union for Conservation of

Nature (IUCN) has found that microfibres from synthetic fabrics are the largest source of primary microplastics in our oceans.

A smaller Indi home microfibre filter has also been developed by the Cleaner Seas Group. The filter unit takes 10 minutes to install and plugs into any washing machine to remove the millions of microfibres washing out of clothes each year. A cartridge recycle system means the fibres do not end up in landfill. www.cleanerseas.com



The Indiko filter prevents microfibre pollution from washing machines

NEWS IN NUMBERS

29

Oyster Yachts has returned to profit, showing a 29% year-on-year increase in turnover to £56.4m in 2023

250

OneSails GBR has recycled, re-used and repurposed over 250 old and unwanted sails in the first year of setting up its 'ReSail' platform.

3.2

MDL Marinas has bought a 3.2-acre plot in Southampton, to expand Shamrock Quay Marina

3.6m hours

Figures from the EA show that the number of sewage spills into England's rivers and seas by water companies doubled in 2023 to 3.6m hours

£3.5m

Property tycoon Myck Djurberg has been found guilty of a £3.5m fraud after selling houseboats on a stretch of the river Thames that could not be lived on.

EU conference on end-of-life boats

The Belgian EU Presidency, in collaboration with the European Commission and European Boating Industry (EBI), convened a landmark conference in March in Brussels to address the pressing issue of end-of-life recreational boats.

Representatives from the Belgian EU Presidency, European Commission and the EBI underscored the urgency and necessity of cooperation in tackling this critical issue.

Robert Marx, President of EBI said: 'As we move forward, it is imperative

that the momentum generated by this conference translates into concrete action. The implementation of the EU Roadmap must be the key next step after the approaching EU elections. Industry is ready, the technology is ready and we now need to set up the regulatory framework to make it happen. We are delighted to have the support of the European Commission and Belgian Council Presidency in this endeavour'.

Separately, South Hams District Council in Devon has launched a new project aimed at stopping abandoned boats from ending up in landfill, working with Creeksite Boatyard in Dartmouth to recycle old sailing boats.

In another initiative, Responsible Boat Disposal is offering re-homing and recycling services to boat owners who seek to dispose of their vessels, operating all over the country. The group searches for new owners for the boats and removes the yachts from both land and water. If no other options are available, the group dismantles and scraps boats. www.boat-disposal.co.uk



Spirit Yachts new Q Class yacht

Spirit Yachts has been commissioned to build a contemporary version of a Q Class yacht, working alongside Dykstra Naval Architects.

Q Class yachts, sometimes known as the 'mini J Class', were first built to the Universal Rule of Measurement in the early 1900s. The rule was adopted by

the New York Yacht Club in 1903 to determine entry criteria for the America's Cup. At least 16 Q Class boats were built in the 1920s and 30s, some of which are still racing today.

'The Falcon Study' project is being commissioned by the founder of Q7 Yacht Designs, Peter Silvester.



Tributes paid to boatbuilder Iain Oughtred



Tributes have flowed in for renowned boatbuilder and designer Iain Oughtred who died on the Isle of Skye in February, aged 84.

Born in Melbourne in 1939, Iain grew up in Sydney sailing, building and designing fast dinghies from an early age, becoming one of the greatest designers of traditional sailing dinghies in a career that spanned more than 50 years.

Iain drew, always by hand, more than 100 designs for traditionally styled boats, starting with an 18ft cruiser *Happy Jack* in 1967. In the

Iain Oughtred steers his Ness Yawl design Albannagh on the Jamestown canal

1980s, Iain moved to Scotland, originally to race 10m² canoes, but never left, living in Glasgow, Edinburgh and Findhorn. The vessels he designed were of Scottish and Norwegian working boat descent and well-known for being beautifully proportioned. He continued to build more prototypes of his designs, and developed a series of double-enders, which he sailed in many raids (small boat cruises in company).

Iain moved to the Isle of Skye in 2001 and continued designing, building and sailing. Iain designed the

popular Caledonia Yawl, Ness Yawl, Grebe, Tammie Norrie, Shearwater, Arctic Tern, Elf Faering and the Acorn Skiff. He was best known for his St Ayles Skiff, which was the result of a Scottish Fisheries Museum design brief in 2008 to create a boat for four rowers and a cox, buildable from a kit by Jordan Boats. The St Ayles has spawned a worldwide community of amateur boatbuilders and rowers.

Author Nic Compton, who wrote the book, *Iain Oughtred: A Life in Wooden Boats* said: 'Back in the 1980s, Iain pioneered the concept of building traditional boats in glued-clinker construction. His designs combine sweet lines with a meticulous attention to detail and a delightful drawing style. He achieved a lasting legacy, but always remained modest about his achievements.'

The Scottish Coastal Rowing Association paid tribute: 'All of us who row in St Ayles Skiffs owe a quietly spoken Australian boat designer a big debt of gratitude.'

'He introduced thousands of people to the pleasures of building traditional boat designs in clinker construction, but the St Ayles Skiff is his most successful design with 400 built so far.'

'For the last 23 years Iain has lived on the Isle of Skye, north-west Scotland. Many of us have met him at St Ayles Skiff world championships, the Portsoy Traditional Boat Festival and Toberonochy Small Boat Muster. He was a good shanty singer and fond of poetry as well as a fine draughtsman and a superb boatbuilder.'

'Rest in peace Iain, we will miss you.'

Nic Compton / Alamy Stock Photo

Yacht lost after snagging discarded fishing gear

A yacht ended up smashed on the rocks in southern Ireland in June last year after snagging a large trawling net, a Marine Casualty Investigation Board (MCIB) report showed in March, highlighting the hazards of discarded fishing gear.

The 12.85m Sun Odyssey 42i, named *Inish Ceinn*, snagged a large trawl net off the west Cork coast and was then swept onto the rocks. The skipper, an experienced yachtmaster and diver, along with three crew and one guest, were all rescued.

The yacht left Baltimore harbour in moderate conditions and then headed west on the planned course



The yacht *Inish Ceinn* lies smashed on the rocks

towards Cape Clear Island. The course was around 0.5 miles from the southern shore of Sherkin Island and at around 1430 the skipper felt the yacht slow down rapidly and turn into the wind. Nothing could be seen in the water, so he started the engine

and engaged the propeller.

The report says there was vibration and a burning smell, so the engine was shut down and the yacht was immobilised. Wind and swell quickly pushed the yacht towards the rocks and it ran aground.

Four of the people on board got onto the rocks and the skipper sent a Mayday message on VHF radio. He then also got onto the rocks. At this point he saw a large trawl net around the stern gear.

The RNLI Baltimore lifeboat and the Irish Coast Guard R115 helicopter from Shannon came to the rescue. The yacht broke up and was lost.

SHOW REVAMP

The Southampton International Boat Show has announced a new entrance location and a revamped marina layout for the 2024 edition of the show.

EMPLOYEE OWNED

Emsworth Yacht Harbour, a marina on the UK's south coast, has sold an 80% controlling stake to an Employee Ownership Trust, making it the UK's first employee-owned marina.

WELSH OWNER

Port Dinorwic Marina in North Wales, opposite Anglesea, has been sold to a new company of local investors, The Waterside Consortium. It was previously owned by The Marine and Property Group.

Translated 9 retires from OGR with hull damage

Translated 9, one of the leading yachts in the Ocean Globe Race (OGR), has been forced to retire from the round-the-world race with hull damage and has diverted to Madeira.

The Italian yacht, the current International Rating Certificate (IRC) leader of the fourth leg, pulled out of the race after a heavy broach when 50-knot gusts slammed her down, reopening previously repaired cracks in her hull around the rudder skeg and causing her to take on water.

On 5 April, OGR race control received a text message from co-skipper Nico Malingri stating that the yacht's previous rudder skeg repairs were failing with obvious signs of hull flexing and delamination with the original hull.

All pumps were ready and while not expected, all preparations to abandon ship were made and all sailing pressure taken off the boat. The weather was moderate with 25-30 knots of wind and 3-4m seas. The skipper did not request any assistance at that time.

The Italian Swan 65 left Punta del Este on 5 March for the finishing line in Cowes having already sailed over 5,000 miles in the final leg of the



Translated 9 leaving Punta del Este for Leg Four of the Ocean Globe Race

Ocean Globe Race. Formerly known as *ADC Accutrac* during the 1977 Whitbread, the yacht was first in IRC for Leg Four, first in the Flyer Class and third in the fleet for line honours.

During Leg Three of the race – Auckland to Punta del Este – *Translated 9* was forced to return to the Falkland Islands after two cracks developed in the stern sections of the yacht following broaches in

strong winds. One crack appeared near the rudder skeg. It was deemed unsafe to continue racing to Punta del Este and the crew sailed to the Falkland Islands.

The situation was not considered a Code Orange (to advise MRCC) by the OGR and was under control with a close watch being maintained.

Translated 9 reached Madeira on 8 April where repairs are expected.



ABOVE: The crew completed a mammoth task to get the Swan 65 ready to sail for Punta del Este in time for Leg Four

Aida Valceanu / OGR2023

OGR2023 / Translated 9

RNLI and Peter Beales create the 'With Courage' rose



A new rose from Peter Beales will star at the Chelsea Flower Show

The RNLI has teamed up with award-winning grower Peter Beales Roses to create a new rose to celebrate 200 years of saving lives at sea. The orange rose has been named 'With Courage' by the charity's supporters in homage to one of the RNLI's key values and the words of founder Sir William Hillary who said: 'With courage, nothing is impossible.'

The floribunda rose will form part of Peter Beales's display at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show – which opens to the public on Tuesday 21 May – and will be flanked by a D class inshore lifeboat, the workhorse of the RNLI fleet.

Peter Beales nursery manager, Ian Limmer, whose grandfather volunteered at Sheringham Lifeboat



This year the RNLI celebrates 200 years

Station, Norfolk, for 30 years, has overseen the breeding of the rose for the RNLI's 200th anniversary year. Supporters are able to buy the flower from Peter Beales online, with 20% of proceeds going to the RNLI. www.classicroses.co.uk

RNLI / Chris Taylor

LETTERS

Send us your questions in less than 200 words by email to yachtingmonthly@futurenet.com or by post Yachting Monthly, Future PLC, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, London, W2 6JR

WIN

The letter of the month wins a bottle of Mermaid Spiced Rum, a smooth blend of Caribbean rums infused at the Isle of Wight Distillery with white cherries, rock samphire, apricots, honey and black salt. www.isleofwightdistillery.com



The Rules you can ignore



Excellent article by Andy du Port in the April edition of YM. At times light-hearted but always very clear instead of giving a boring full printout of the Colregs. Bravo Andy!

I still have a question. I have crossed the Channel many times, and hit most of the TSS between Dartmouth and the Adriatic when I sailed my boat from Dartmouth to Dubrovnik. Fortunately I have both radar and AIS (Tx & Rx) so it is easy to see the ships travelling along a TSS in each direction. As Andy du Port said of TSS in general it was like 'crossing the M25 on foot'.

I have found myself often facing a long line of ships in the TSS and wondering how on earth I can get across. Yes, I am fully aware of the need to cross with a heading as near as possible to 90°. On occasions I have found ships making a noticeable turn of maybe 5° towards me so it opens up a space behind the ship in front of them for me to safely pass. After which I call on VHF with a 'thank you'. On other occasions I have had to alter course to run parallel to a long line of ships until I can see an opening. Having successfully crossed the first TSS section the exact same problem occurs on the other side of the TSS. I have had this problem around Brest and also Gib and the Adriatic.

So having crossed the first half of the TSS I am then stuck and have to await an opening on the other side. While going around Brest in fog a crew member of mine said it was safest to stay in the no-man's-land between each channel of the TSS. So what are the regs for the no-man's-land between each of the TSS directions? Can we use it? What are the Colregs? Do ships lose their TSS priority if they stray out of the designated channel?

Andrew Geddes



Shipping follows standard routes in the English Channel, even when not in a TSS



It's hard to apply the rules in the same way to a yacht as you would to a container vessel, but we all share the same water

Laurie MacBride / Alamy Stock Photo

Andy Du Port replies:

Many thanks for your kind comments about the Colregs article. You raise some interesting issues. To take your various points in turn:

I would be very wary of a ship altering course while following a traffic lane in a TSS. It may be that she is doing so to give you more room, but it is also likely that she is just adjusting her course to maintain her planned track or to open up the CPA of a ship she is overtaking – regardless of your presence.

Rule 10 (j) tells us that we should not impede the safe passage of a ship following a TSS traffic lane, but the ship is still obliged to take avoiding action if necessary to avoid a close quarters situation. So, if you are on her starboard bow she is perfectly free to alter her course to starboard to pass astern of you. Any alteration to starboard will, of course, take her closer to the outer limit of the TSS. However, a small alteration is not in

compliance with Rule 8 (a) and (b), and if she is indeed giving way to you I would expect her to make her intentions clear by making a bold alteration and, perhaps, sounding one long blast.

I think I agree with your crew member who advised waiting in the 'no-man's-land' (aka separation zone), but you can't



Container ships must keep clear of the separation zone

Patrick Eden / Alamy Stock Photo

wait forever. You are certainly allowed to hang about in a separation zone, and even start fishing if you want to! The '90° heading rule' does not apply in the separation zone, and it is often useful to make ground towards your destination in the zone before resuming a 90° heading for the next lane.

As for ships, Rule 10 (b)(i) says that they shall follow the appropriate traffic lane, and Rule 10 (b)(ii) also tells them to keep clear of the separation zone – so far as is practicable. In my experience of using TSSs, in ships as well as in yachts, a ship is very unlikely to turn to port and thus wander into, or close to, the separation zone.

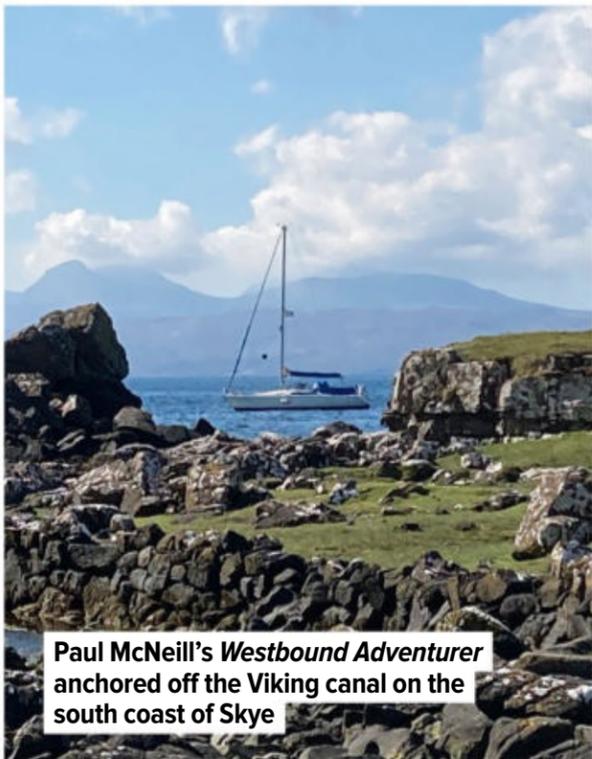
Your final point about ships 'losing their TSS priority' is interesting because it so rarely happens unless they are 'restricted in their ability to manoeuvre' or are 'not under command'.

I think it is clear, though, that any vessels in the separation zone simply have to comply with the usual Steering and Sailing Rules, ie Rules 4 to 8.

Expert tutor

Paul McNeill's article on 'Hebridean Hideaways' (April *YM*) was an absolute pleasure to read. Having been a former student (twice) on board *Westbound Adventurer* I may be biased however!

Paul's encouraging and expert manner shone through his words, as he guided us gently from impromptu island sheep shearing as a young boy to a love of sailing (and whisky!). I fondly remember my trip to Barra and our successful attempt to reach St Kilda under Paul's expert tutelage. A second trip up the West Coast from



Paul McNeill's *Westbound Adventurer* anchored off the Viking canal on the south coast of Skye

Paul McNeill

Ballachulish and on to Stornoway was equally rewarding. His love of the West Coast was evident and he always rewarded himself and the crew with a 'wee dram' if we dropped the hook in an unfamiliar anchorage. I have long suspected that his logbook may have told a different story to his reward scheme! Paul was the best that sailing tuition can be. **Neil Taylor**

Setting an example

I subscribe to *YM* and it's a really great publication. However, each month I am surprised at the number of sailors pictured who aren't wearing life jackets. The main image on your website is the same.

I appreciate that safety standards in the US are lower but many of your contributors are on this side of the pond. Anyone writing for your magazine should be reminded to have people in life jackets on deck, in the marina or out sailing. It's the correct example to set for all. **Joe Coleman CIPD**

Theo Stocker replies: Many thanks for your message. Yes, lifejackets and the wearing of them or not is one of the things that stirs up strong feelings on both sides of the debate.

YM encourages all crew to wear life jackets on board



I ensure that everyone who sails with me and in any of the photoshoots over which I have editorial control wears a life jacket. If I were to exclude images of people not wearing life jackets, however, we would also exclude some very good content by highly experienced sailors, and of interest to our readers. Our view, and that of organisations such as the RYA, is that the skipper is

responsible for the safety of the crew and the decisions made on board. I am not about to enforce a moratorium on anyone not wearing lifejackets, though we do encourage everyone to wear them when out on the water.

In praise of VHF

I must take issue with Andy Du Port when he discourages us from calling approaching vessels on VHF. I do not condone gratuitous

chatter, but I have often found that a word on Channel 16 complements AIS. Two vivid experiences come to mind:

The first, with two yachts in company on the ARC in mid-Atlantic at night, a merchant ship appeared out of nowhere, Murphy's law putting her on a collision course with both yachts.

I called the ship on Channel 16, explained that both yachts were rigged for down-wind sailing and weren't very manoeuvrable. After a chat, the ship altered course to pass astern. The other yacht was German, not confident in English, and the skipper told me afterwards that they were most grateful that I had taken the lead.

The second instance was when I was sailing up the coast of Queensland inside the Barrier Reef. The channels were narrow and a constant stream of traffic, much of it big, with an open dialogue between ships on Channel 16 conducted most professionally, the yacht in no way the junior partner. Communication was the key to safety, and the yacht's skipper was much comforted, especially at night.

Donald Begg.

Andy Du Port writes:

While there are some situations when contact by VHF is justifiable, the MCA's guidance is clear that it can often be confusing and potentially dangerous.



Following the rules in a predictable manner is essential when in busy waters, but a pragmatic approach is also required

Peter Titmuss / Alamy Stock Photo

DON'T MISS
NEXT
MONTH

OCEAN GLOBE FINISH

YM will be on the finish line as the crews sail home

FAMILY CRUISE CORNWALL

Monty Halls heads off on his first proper family cruise

CRASH GYBE!

The perils of sailing downwind, and the kit and skills you need to avoid them

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Remarkable West Coast hideouts

I enjoyed Paul McNeill's article in the April issue. There must be an element of serendipity lurking out there!

I too have shared the experience of exploring the magical Hellisay and Gighay, treating *Barbican* to a bit of adventure! (Barbican was the late *Yachting World* editor Bernard Hayman's Buchanan-designed cutter.)

Acarsaid Fallach, well therein lies another story. In 1990-ish I was part of a team that reenacted Bonnie Prince Charlie's escape from Culloden. My involvement was the seagoing element, onboard the 52ft Macduff built ex-fishing boat *Families Pride* we anchored overnight in Acarsaid Fallach. Magical. On returning home I dug out Eric

Linklater's book *The Prince in the Heather*. In the book he describes how Bonnie Prince Charlie hid aboard his ship in the anchorage and could hear the Redcoats in the distance! A total coincidence.

We raised £16k for Macmillan Cancer Support. And now we head for the Viking canal, off Rubha an Dùnain in Skye. With a long family association with the Island of Soay, the 'Rubha' as we knew it was a regular venue for amazing summer camping sleep-overs, facilitated by boat of course. Now it is just a privilege to anchor off, when the weather allows, and take in the extraordinary atmosphere. My current screensaver is a lovely photo of *Ailsa* my Catalina 34 at anchor off the canal!

Paul, thank you for a great article, and I think we will allow our sailing colleagues to share in our impeccable selection of West Coast hideouts! **David Gilbertson**

Ailsa, David Gilbertson's Catalina 34, anchored off the Viking canal on the Isle of Skye



David Gilbertson

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Are you brave enough to have a go?

The flexing of spring's muscles calls for a dusting down of my jobs list. I never intend winter boat maintenance to become last minute but a busy life creates a bow wave of tasks that end up clamouring for last-minute attention.

As ever, booking the launch date has triggered a succession of dominoes that should see us off on our first and long-awaited weekend on board. The list of jobs is pretty easy this year – engine service, tidying behind the switch panel, anodes and antifouling.

The only priority is that we need to sort out the prop anode which is too active on the fizzing front. We shall put a meter across the coupling and my hope is that a copper strip will suffice. If that doesn't work we are exploring a system which puts brushes on the shaft.

With such a small job list you wouldn't expect *Oddity* to be on our minds but truth be known there has been a lot of interest in her. Enough to warrant the production of further Oddities.

We already have someone prepared to step up with the second prototype. I say prototype in the sense that the way forward seems to be the option of detailed construction plans or a flat pack kit for professional builders or braver self-build souls. It's a new and interesting world to explore; I'll keep you posted.

On a separate vein I recently delivered a winter talk to the Plymouth Corinthian Yacht Club and they kindly offered to make a donation to a cause of my choice. I suggested they might put their name on Pip

Hare's boat so that they can be a part of her exciting Vendée Globe campaign.

I know that everything helps when times are tough, which they always are as a big start looms. It also means a lot to have the spirit of others in the ring with you. Tracey and I have included our names. All you have to do is visit www.piphare.com and click away. Go on I dare you!

Pip has always impressed me with her grit, determination and ability to draw you in through her writing and multi-media. The last Vendée saw her explode from a relative unknown to one of the most popular sailors in the event. I don't think she will mind me saying that hers was a solid corinthian entry which went on to produce a great result.

Many would walk away with their heads held high but Pip immediately committed to professional campaign in the next Vendée with sights on a podium finish. She immediately purchased a competitive boat and transformed it with foil technology. This is a huge step change and so it was fantastic to see

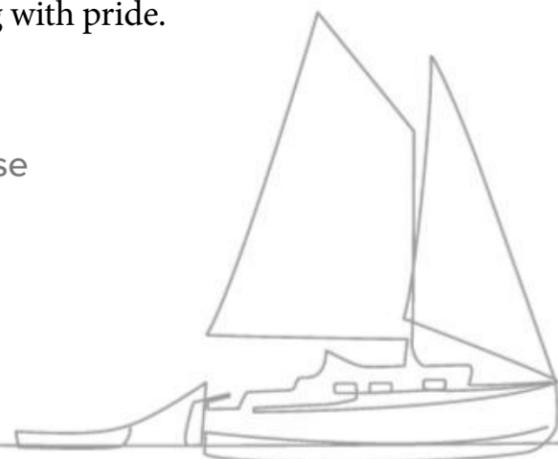
her finish amongst the competitive group in the last Atlantic qualifier.

That was the the big test. Could she tussle with the front runners? She obviously can. Fair winds Pip, we hope you carry our flag with pride.

**Lots of people
want their own
Oddity, and we may
produce kits for
homebuilding**

NEXT MONTH...

With a winter of house building behind us, we're very much looking forward to being afloat again



A man is shown from the chest up, leaning forward on the railing of a boat. He is wearing a red and white Henri Lloyd Biscay Jacket, which is wet with water droplets. He is also wearing black gloves. The background is a bright, overcast sky. The text "For the Freedom." is overlaid in large white letters on the left side of the image.

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LU HEIKELL

Harbours that carry happy memories

There is a narrow street leading up from Port du Rosmeur to the town centre of Douarnenez, in the Finistère region of Brittany. Rue Obscure is paved with cobbles and lined with old stone cottages and is accurately named. Most sailors know Douarnenez for being a safe stopover in the wide bay on route between the Raz du Sein and the Chenal du Four, those two notorious tidal gates that mark the northern entrance to the west coast of Brittany.

I first visited Brittany on a little bilge-keeled Snapdragon more than 35 years ago, on the brilliant Somerset schools sailing programme. The crew consisted of the long-suffering skipper, John, two other adults, me, and two other teenagers. It was certainly cosy on board, but the experience was unforgettable. After a largely wet and chilly first week; we had left Roscoff only to shelter from a gale in Île de Batz for two days before haring off south down to the Morbihan. We were on the way back home to Falmouth when we took the sand in Port du Rosmeur after shooting the tide through the Raz. I think it was the first time the sun showed itself as three youngsters were let loose to explore this great little town. As we walked up Rue Obscure I thought: wouldn't that be a great address?

Roll forward 20-odd years: Rod and I had decided to buy a little bolt-hole and Douarnenez fitted the bill as somewhere that was open all-year-around, unlike so many seaside towns which can become ghostly quiet in the winter. We were welcomed by the locals – on the first morning after moving in I walked up Rue Obscure into town for croissants, and in both the local Spar and the boulangerie it was clear that everyone already knew we had bought Mme Rochedreux's house.

We immersed ourselves in this traditional sardine fishing town, with a daily market and

seafood that was literally still flapping or crawling when you bought it. We would wander around to Port Rhu, the locked port on the west side of the town, where traditional boatbuilding is celebrated both in the workshops and in the pages of the famous magazine *Le Chasse Marée*.

Every Wednesday, come rain, wind or shine, the Oppies were towed out into the bay for the next generation of sailors to learn our sport. I wonder how many future Mini Transat or Vendée Globe heroes we saw out there? Summer would bring the Dragon class for their annual regatta, often accompanied by the Danish royal yacht and the charmingly low-key late Prince Henrik, who would drive up the breakwater in a Renault Megane and give the fishermen on the quay a cheery wave before hopping on board.

My favourite event in Douarnenez though, without doubt, is the Temps Fêtes, a festival of traditional craft that sees the town full to bursting, the whiff of Stockholm tar in the air and sizzling sardines cooking over charcoal. Sea shanties are sung and cider is swigged. We watch as a flotilla of tan sails appeared from across the bay. Old workboats and fishing boats; gaffers, luggers and square-riggers now enjoying their retirement gather from across the continent. By midweek you could literally walk from one side of the harbour to the other without getting wet. The

bad news is it only happens every other year. The good news is it is this year.

Sardines cook over charcoal, sea shanties are sung and cider is swigged

NEXT MONTH...
I will finally be back on *Skylax*, getting the salt back in my hair.





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FIRST TEST

LINJETT 39

This long-established, yet little known, Swedish yard believes it has the perfect formula for a contemporary yacht with timeless appeal. Rupert Holmes put her through her paces

Words Rupert Holmes



SPECIFICATIONS

MAKE Linjett

MODEL 39

PRICE FROM

4,624,000 SEK ex VAT
(ca. £415,142 inc VAT)

DESIGNERS

Linjett Design Team

BUILDER Linjett Yachts

Main image: Ludovic Fruchaud

Today's new designs are invariably variations on a common theme. Happily they tend to sail better than earlier designs, while also offering more accommodation volume. But are other approaches to yacht design viable today?

The Rosättra Boatyard, 90 minutes north of Stockholm, definitely believes there are better options. The firm, which has only had one change of family ownership since it was founded in 1886, introduced the Linjett range of cruiser racers in 1973.

Today it quietly produces 10-15 performance cruisers a year across a three-model range from

34-43ft. The yard also enjoys outstanding customer loyalty, looking after 220 Linjetts every winter – a quarter of all boats built since the range's inception. The small production numbers of new yachts means design and tooling costs must be amortised over a long period – each model is expected to remain in production for up to 15 years. Together these factors foster a long-term mindset, and the promise a boat that won't date as quickly as more mainstream offerings.

The Linjett 39 is the latest model and, like the rest of the range, was designed in house. From a distance it has echoes of classic early 1990s designs such as Stephen Jones' excellent Sadler Starlight 39. However closer up, and especially



Rope bin keeps things organised at the helm



LOGBOOK

TESTED BY
Rupert Holmes

LOCATION
La Rochelle

WIND 5-16 knots

SEA STATE slight

once you start sailing, it's very clear this is a more contemporary design in many respects, with performance and handling to match.

I have long believed light airs performance is a good test of a thoroughbred design. The Linjett's hull has plenty of curvature on the fore and aft rocker shape and, without maximum beam carried right aft, can be surprisingly quick in light airs. This translates to less time spent under power, bringing forward the blissful moment when the engine can be switched off.

Immediately after leaving La Rochelle's Port Des Minimes marina we hoisted the main, deployed the furling nylon cruising gennaker and sailed out of the narrow channel at decent speeds despite having just 7-8 knots true breeze.

IMPRESSIVE NUMBERS

We headed upwind with the 107% jib and made a useful 4.7 knots boat speed, which reduced to 3.8 when the wind eased to 5 knots. There are not many yachts with displacement close to 9 tonnes that match these numbers. The test boat was with a gennaker that produced a useful speed boost when reaching in light airs – in 8 knots of true wind we made 6.5 knots boat speed with the true wind

just forward of the beam. There was a time that the most common way to achieve good light airs performance was to increase the size of the rig, but this inevitably led to a boat that lacked stability and needed reefing early to keep it under easy control. On the second day of my test we had a solid Force 4 to 5, which gave opportunity to push the boat hard.

PUSHING HER LIMITS

Close hauled at an impressively tight 39° true wind angle in 14 knots of breeze we made 6.5 knots of boat speed, still carrying full main and jib and nowhere near being overpowered. I was then able to test how she handles close to the limit, broad reaching under the cruising gennaker in 16 knots of true wind, clocking 9 knots of boat speed, with the true breeze a little aft of the beam and the apparent well forward.

The boat was very powered up at this stage and lacked the rock solid feel in gusts of today's twin rudder boats that also have full forward sections and therefore extremely high form stability. Nevertheless, it is still much better in this respect than earlier designs, partly thanks to a hefty keel bulb, with ballast ratio a shade over 40 per cent, allied to a deep 2.15m draught.

The powerful 1.85m deep rudder is set well forward, away from disturbed water at the transom. Single rudder yachts tend to offer more feedback than twin rudder

designs and this one is no exception, with a positive feel on the helm that builds in a predictable fashion as the rudder becomes progressively loaded.

Even when heavily loaded the rudder retains so much grip that our first few attempts to broach failed.



PERFORMANCE FIGURES

WHITE SAILS ONLY

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	SPEED
Close hauled	27°	19.5	6.5
Fetch	40°	17	6.9
Beam reach	90°	11.5	8.8***
Broad reach	120°	8.1	8.2***
Run	150°	6.4	8.1****

*APPARENT WIND ANGLE **APPARENT WIND SPEED
***SPEEDS DERIVED FROM POLAR PREDICTIONS
****SPEED ONLY AVAILABLE WITH GENNAKER SET

Photos: Linjett/Klaus Andrews

Ludovic Fruchaud



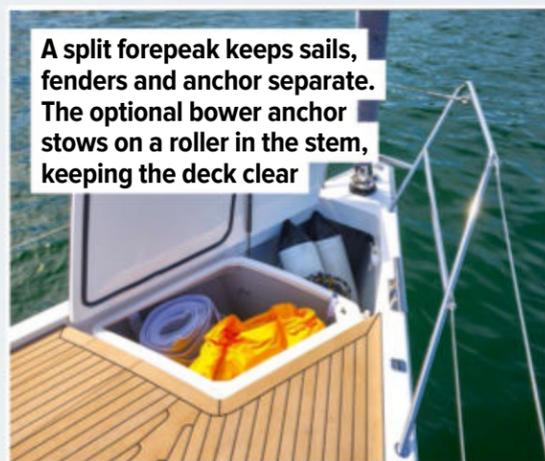
Captive washboards and decent handholds at the companionway are a nice touch



Helm-seat lockers are lined with wood, and bars keep mooring lines and sheets tidy



Rope bins help keep control lines tidy at the helm



A split forepeak keeps sails, fenders and anchor separate. The optional bower anchor stows on a roller in the stern, keeping the deck clear



For Baltic bows-to mooring, a stern anchor is permanently rigged

The boat will slip along nicely in as little as 5 knots of true breeze

Modest freeboard, a raked stem and a subtle sheer make this a distinctly attractive boat

The transom is noticeably narrower than the latest trends, allowing her to sail easily in light airs





Some owners opt to put a chart table here instead of the lockers

Galley stowage is generous with a reasonable amount of worktop space for food prep

In the three-cabin layout, the starboard compartment is a shower that doubles as a wet locker, but not a heads



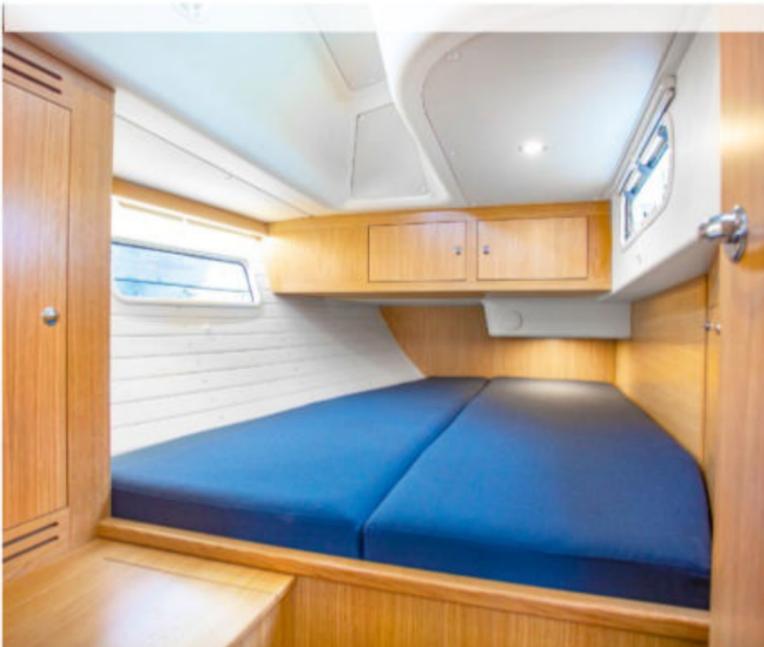
Locker space abounds in the galley, with a simple layout that works well



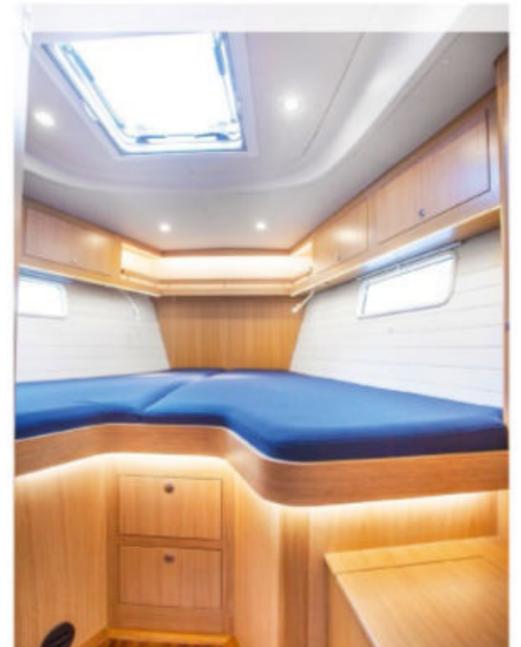
The forward heads are athwartships and separate to the aft shower compartment



Coachroof hatches and windows, plus large hull lights, make the accommodation light and well ventilated



Double aft berths are 130cm wide and comfortable, though the cabins have slightly less volume than modern square-ended boats



A V-berth is standard, but the two-cabin version has a larger cabin and island double

Photos: Linjett/Klaus Andrews

Linjett/Klaus Andrews

Eventually the blade aerated as the stern lifted on a bigger wave and the flow stalled. But there was no great flogging or drama – just ease the spinnaker sheet, wait a few seconds for the rudder to regain grip, then bear away and sheet in.

Cockpit benches are close enough to brace your feet even when the boat's well heeled. This gives a much more solid feeling of safety and security than most of today's very wide cockpits, yet there's still space for a removable cockpit table with folding leaves. Instruments and a small MFD under the spray hood make this a good watch keeping station when the pilot is steering.

ALL UNDER CONTROL

All control lines are taken along the cockpit coamings to control stations ahead of each wheel, with 10 clutches and two pairs of Anderson winches each side. The latter are manual as standard, but to date every boat has been fitted with at least two electric winches. The mainsheet is led to a coachroof traveler with all controls led aft, which generally works better than boats where you have to go forward from the helm to the companionway to trim the sail.

Big cockpit lockers are provided under the helm seats, plus liferaft stowage and additional space for

a couple of sails or a dinghy in the centre of the cockpit sole. All have neat catches – press a button on the side deck and the lid pops up on a gas strut. The foredeck sail locker has a separate forward section for warps, fenders and so on, as well as space for a windlass and chain locker for the optional bower anchor.

LIGHT AND SPACE

The interior blends solid woodwork with lots of light and space in a semi open-plan layout, which uses double doors to close off the forward cabin when required. A combination of generous hull windows, two overhead hatches in the saloon and the light oak finish of our test boat make this a very pleasant area in which to spend time and gives it a very contemporary feel.

On descending the companionway there's a separate shower compartment to starboard, which doubles as a giant stowage space for foul weather gear. It's an excellent solution, but the downside is that the toilet is forward of the saloon, which is less convenient at sea. There's also a useful large dry hanging locker forward, opposite the heads.

The saloon has a big folding table offset to port with C-shaped seating around it, plus a straight settee to starboard. Both could make good sea berths. The

BELOW: A draught of more than 2m and generous ballast make this a stiff boat upwind



There is a positive feel on the helm that builds in a predictable fashion

RIGHT: While there's space for a removable table, the cockpit feels secure and is narrow enough for easy bracing

L-shaped galley at the foot of the companionway has reasonable fixed worktop space, twin sinks, two fridges, four drawers, four big lockers as well as a pan locker and space for bins. The substantial stainless steel crash bar doubles as a handhold.

The test boat we took out lacked a conventional chart table; instead there's a small square cabinet with deep fiddles on the top and four large useful drawers, though a common customisation is to have a chart table installed here.

TRIPLE CABIN LAYOUT

The aft cabins are comfortable, with 130cm-wide double bunks but less volume than other boats of this size. The 50cm-wide space between the aft cabins has shore power chargers, batteries, retractable stern thruster and so on. Most examples sold to date have the same three-cabin layout as our test boat, although a handful have a two-cabin arrangement, with aft heads and a much larger forecabin with a peninsula bed.

The boat is constructed using a vinylester and Divinycell foam sandwich, primarily using woven rovings, and is infused in one shot to create a stiff yet light hull structure.

Structural engineering is based on ring frames made of unidirectional rovings, with furniture glued and bonded in place, creating a very stiff structure that's quiet underway.

Linjett/Klaus Andrews



Our test boat was a prototype used as a test bed to trial a variety of new technology, including a Vetus joystick docking system in which the 50hp motor is married to retractable bow and stern thrusters. It's a combination that makes for very easy handling in tight spaces – spinning the boat in its own length was easily achieved, for instance. On the downside, however, it adds to the boat's complexity and is an expensive option.

Tankage, which is of a reasonable size, is mostly to starboard, although there's also one water tank in the bow, but the weight of this is offset by both the weight of the galley furniture as well as any provisions.

RIGHT: Speeds of 5 knots are achievable off the wind in as little as 8 knots of true wind

BELOW: Most owners opt for the overlapping genoa, with sheet cars on the coachroof, though the test boat was also fitted for a self-tacking jib

It is a very stiff structure that's quiet underway

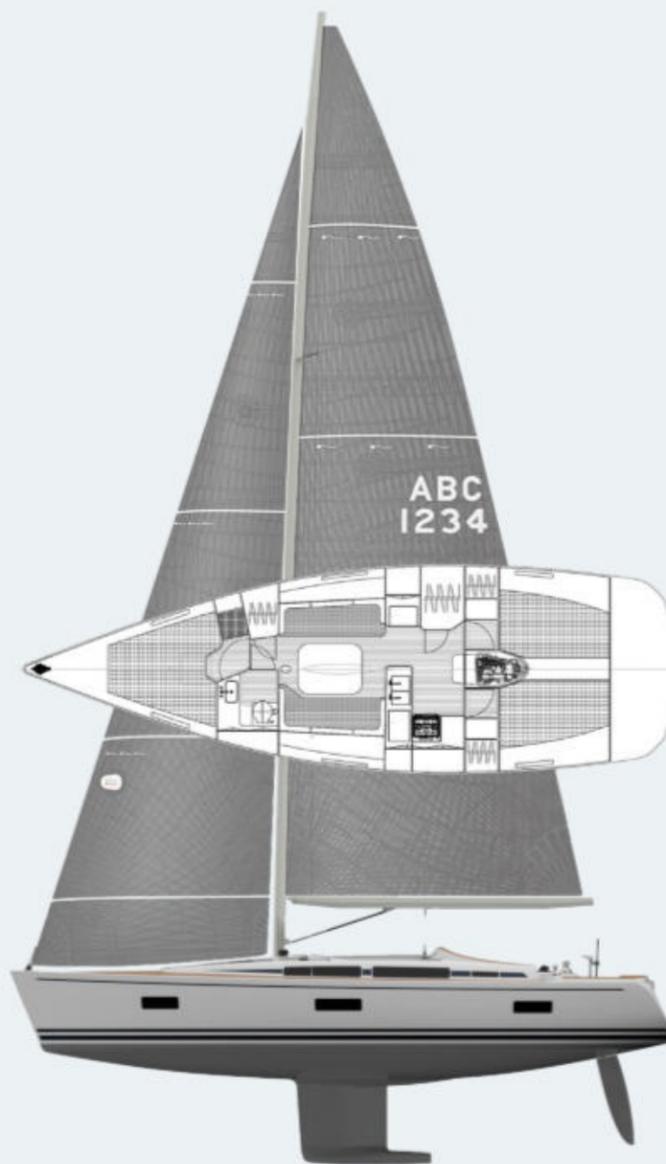




Ludovic Fruchaud



Linjett/Klaus Andrews



LINJETT 39

THE TEST VERDICT

The Linjett 39 is a very appealing fast cruiser, geared around the attributes needed for that role, without compromising sailing qualities in exchange for marginally larger accommodation. It's definitely not an old-fashioned boat, yet there's nothing faddish about it that will date quickly. Instead, it's an impressively executed, contemporary interpretation of traditional thoroughbred design. Accommodation is comfortable and well thought out, while the deck layout is nicely executed and ergonomic.

WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

The result is a boat that sails impressively well in light airs, yet will reassure less experienced crews and old salts alike in a blow. In this respect the draught represents a good compromise, as it doesn't massively restrict where you can go, but it is sufficiently deep for good sailing performance and stability.

Equally, this boat is a lot more comfortable at sea when sailing upwind than many of today's yachts, and generally has a good setup for shorthanded sailing. It would be an excellent choice for anyone looking for a boat that's a bit different to those offered by the better known brands.

At the same time, the degree of customisation available will make it an excellent choice for those who need a boat that's a bit different to mainstream norms, or are looking to the long-term and plan to keep the same yacht for many years, if not decades.

PROS

- Well-balanced hull
- Easily driven in light airs
- Solid construction and beautifully finished

CONS

- Less form stability than the latest hull shapes
- Heads is forward of saloon
- Traditional lines may not appeal to all

FACTS AND FIGURES

PRICE AS TESTED
6,820,000 SEK
ex VAT (ca. £612,300
inc VAT)

STANDARD SAILAWAY PRICE 4,953,000
SEK ex VAT (ca. £444,680 inc VAT)

LOA 12.15m / 39ft 10in

LWL 11.0m / 36ft 1in

BEAM 3.95m / 13ft 0in

DRAUGHT 2.15m / 7ft 1in

DISPLACEMENT 8,700kg / 19,200lbs

BALLAST 3,500kg / 7,720lb

SAIL AREA (Main and 107% jib) 90.9m² / 1,149sq ft

BAL/DISP RATIO 40.2%

DISP/LENGTH 182

SA/D RATIO 19

ENGINE 50hp Volvo Penta

FUEL 200L / 44 gal

WATER 350L / 77gal

RCD CATEGORY A

DESIGNERS Linjett Design Team

BUILDER Linjett Yachts

WEBSITE www.linjett.se



A sea change in lifejacket design

Mustang Survival introduces its new ISO approved Atlas 190



Mustang Survival is an internationally recognised brand with more than 56 years of experience designing and manufacturing safety marine gear for on, above and below the water. Fondly dubbed 'Mustang,' they provide equipment to the Navy Seals, police, coastguard, military, tugboat operators, ocean racers, professional athletes, recreational paddlers and anglers, and even Hollywood actors. In the late 1960s, John Wayne personally telephoned the head office in Vancouver, demanding 'one of those floating coats', since a friend of his had one and he'd always admired it. Floater coats, while still in everyday use, have

DURABLE: Abrasion-resistant cover + aluminium hardware



COMFORTABLE: Ergonomic shape sits off the neck

SECURE: Integrated deck safety harness

evolved into a complete range of life-saving solutions, and now the time has come for Mustang Survival's

new ISO-approved Atlas 190 Pro Sensor lifejacket to make its UK debut.

The developer of the Atlas, Nigel Parkes, has decades of experience designing and engineering lifejackets: 'The primary goal was to make this design super comfortable,' Parkes explains. 'I wanted to design a product that is very free around the neck when you're wearing it in its packed state but offers ultimate performance when inflated. The secondary goal was to challenge conventional bladders and

‘It’s so comfortable, there are moments I forget I’m wearing my lifejacket’

SCOTT SHAWYER, OFFSHORE RACER
CANADA OCEAN RACING



SAFETY: ADAPT
Technology delivers strong turning and airway protection

UNIQUE DESIGN:
The 3D Pillow cradles your head

EXTRAS: Comes with optional sprayhood and torch/light

PERFORMANCE:
190N Buoyancy

FUNCTIONAL:
PLB + AIS storage is optimally placed

Model pictured:
Atlas 190 DLX

paces at sea. Currently under the tutelage of British solo round-the-world sailor, Alex Thomson, Sawyer cites the 190 as one of his most vital pieces of kit: ‘The Atlas lifejacket is a crucial piece of my safety gear. Sailing solo offshore, I rely on easy-to-use and high-performing equipment. This jacket is so comfortable, there are moments I forget I’m wearing it!’

The new Atlas has proven market appeal; it received the Red Dot Award in 2024 and a special mention at the 2023 DAME Design Awards. Building on the innovative inflatable platform and redesigned bladder of the Atlas 190 Pro Sensor lifejacket, the DLX (deluxe) model adds an integrated sprayhood for added airway protection and a water-activated light for increased visibility in emergencies, ensuring everyone returns home safely.

The Atlas 190 is a lifejacket so comfortable that it’s what the Greek god Atlas would have wished for with the celestial sphere weighing on his shoulders. He could only have dreamed of that same all-day comfort.

For more information, call 0800 808 5347 or visit www.mustang-survival.co.uk



increase the safety features without impacting comfort, resulting in a revolutionary new design.’
The jacket’s sleek silhouette includes a low scooped neckline. This vest is comfortable to wear all day long, with twin buckles making for quick and efficient tensioning of the waistbelt. The innovative contoured bladder is wrapped in a soft multiple-foam layered package and has a three-dimensional shape to follow the body.

It is designed using Mustang’s ADAPT technology: ADvanced Airway Protection and Turning. When the bladder is inflated, the high buoyancy effectively turns the wearer over as fast as possible. The pillow keeps the head upright and slightly forward, and the airway stays clear. This ensures that in precarious situations the wearer can spot incoming rescuers and hazards.
Scott Sawyer from Canada Ocean Racing has been putting the Atlas 190 through its

10
BEST

HIDDEN SCOTTISH ANCHORAGES

The sheer beauty of the Western Isles draws many yachtsmen, but cruising on the west coast of Scotland has always been for the brave.

The weather dominates every decision. Forecasts up to two weeks ahead are getting increasingly good so it may be possible to time the voyage accordingly. When cruising in the Scottish Western Isles, or Inner and Outer Hebrides, one should hope to have a large area of high pressure centred over the island of Rum, but boat and crew should be prepared for depressions to swing in from the north Atlantic.

A good personal strategy is to have good waterproof clothing, insect repellent, walking boots, thermals, books and an iPad to watch films.

Berths are far more plentiful than they used to be. In addition to Ardfern, Craobh, Kerrera and Dunstaffnage there are now alongside berths at Port Ellen, Oban, Fort William, Corpach, Loch Aline, Salen (Loch Sunart), Tobermory, Ulva, Mallaig, Kyle of Lochalsh and Kyleakin.

In the outer isles there are marinas at Lochboisdale and Stornoway with smaller ones at Barra and Lochmaddy, all of which have water and provide access to shops. Anchoring arrangements should be well constituted as moorings and alongside berths are not always at hand. In the outer isles, where food, water, gas and fuel are not always available, it's advisable to plan ahead and have plenty of provisions.

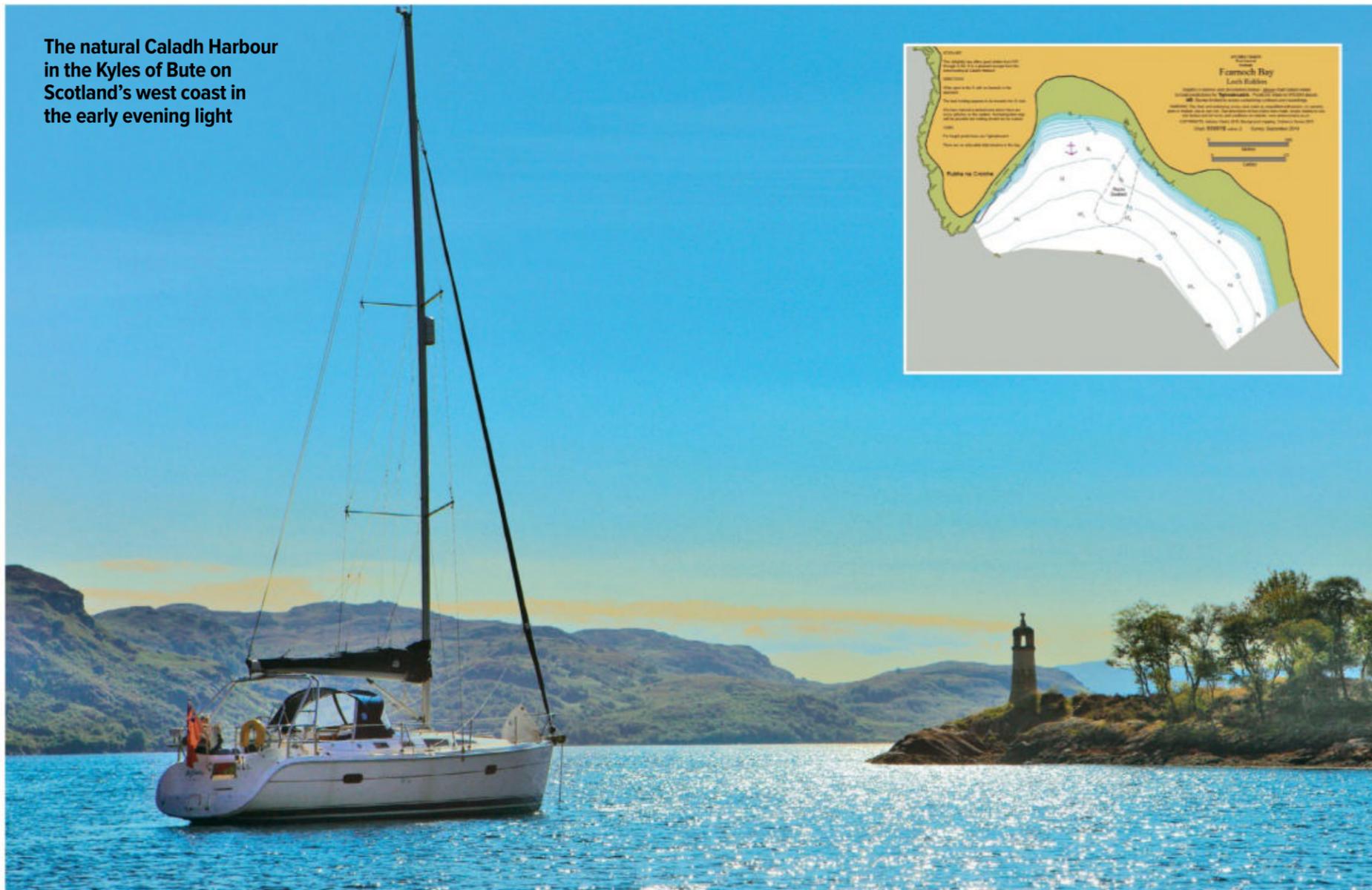
Thanks to the brilliant Antares charts (www.antarescharts.co.uk; 624 charts for £20), a number of lovely new anchorages have been made known. The ones described here have been chosen because they are appealing and well-sheltered from most directions.



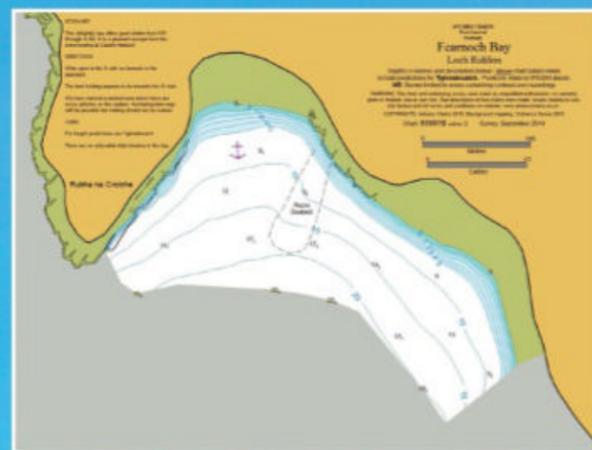
Words: Peter Bruce

Loch Riddon, Kyles of Bute, from the viewpoint near Tighnabruaich. One Tree Island is on the left

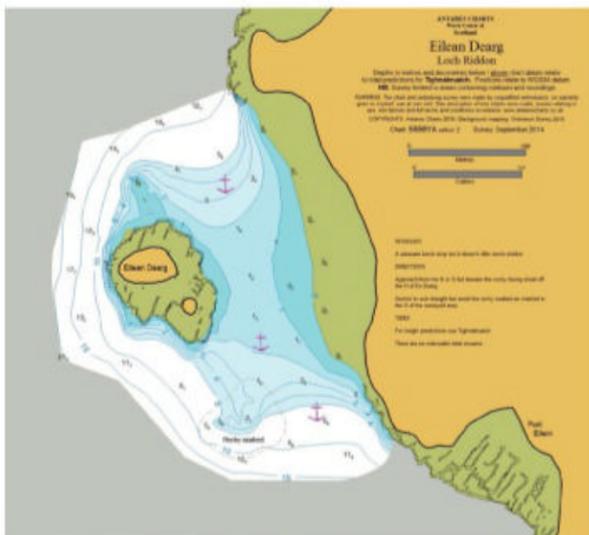
Alamy Stock Photo



The natural Caladh Harbour in the Kyles of Bute on Scotland's west coast in the early evening light



Charts: www.antaresharts.co.uk



1 LOCH RIDDON: CALADH, FEARNOCH BAY & EILEAN DEARG (ONE TREE ISLAND)

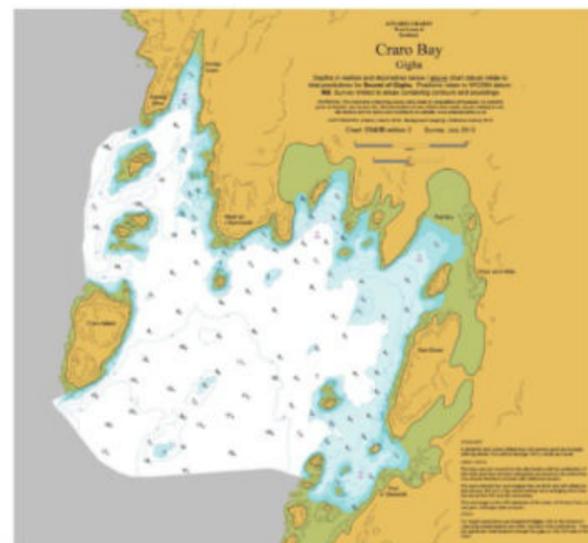
Loch Riddon in the Kyles of Bute is an extremely picturesque loch lying north of the island of Bute that can make a suitable stopping point on the way to the Crinan Canal. It is a site of Special Scientific Interest and raptors such as eagles and ospreys are often to be seen. Although well-endowed with moorings and fish farms, there should be room left to anchor either at Caladh, Fearnoch Bay (Rubna na Croiche) or by Eilean Dearg, also known as One Tree Island, not that this name is strictly valid anymore. There are other anchorage areas at the head of the loch or near Tighnabraich. *Antares 5556YB/5556YA/5556Y*



Portan Craro looking north. This yacht has put out a line from the stern to the shore

2 CRARO BAY, ISLE OF GIGHA

On the southwest side of Gigha lies Portan Craro at Craro Bay, described as a gem by Antares chart-maker, Bob Bradfield. Only a pot-float at Portan Craro gives any sign of life in this beautiful spot. You can put out a shore line to Carraig Mhor if necessary. The tidal range is small and the bay is open to the south. More swinging room is to be found at two bays to the east and open to the south west, and another to the south east at the sheltered Port a' Gharaidh. *Antares 5540B*



Peter Bruce

Alamy Stock Photo

**Camas a Mhor-Fhir,
Isle of Lunga, north of
Scarba and Mull**

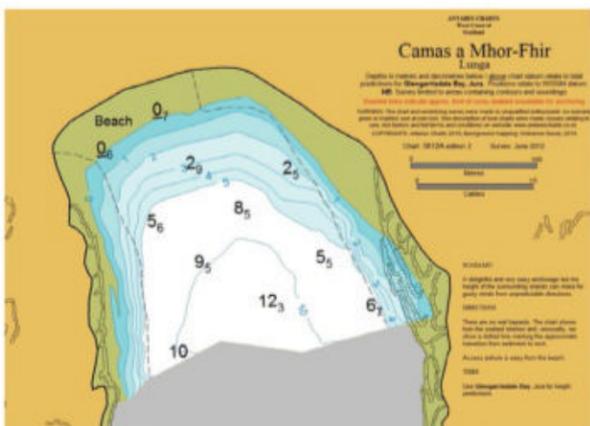


Peter Bruce

**Anchored between
Eilean Dubh Beag
and Dubh Mor**



Peter Bruce

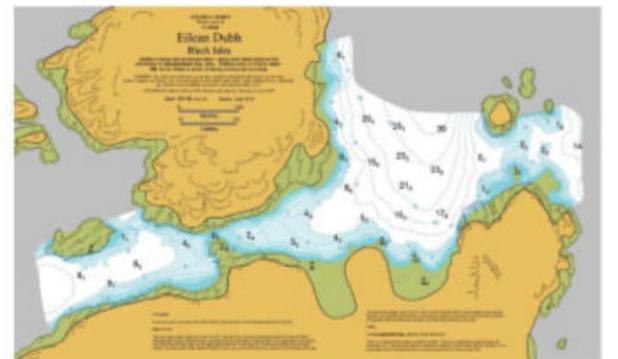


3 CAMAS A MHÒR-FHIR, ISLE OF LUNGA, NORTH OF SCARBA AND JURA

This attractive bay on the south side of Lunga Island is open to the southwest but otherwise affords a very pleasant place to stop, perhaps to wait for slack tide at the nearby Grey Dogs, famous for its strong and turbulent tidal streams. The Antares chart shows a useful inshore dotted line where the seabed changes from sediment to rock and warns of gusty winds from unexpected directions. There is a hut on the shore and one can land anywhere on the beach but keep clear of the bracken which will be carrying ticks that can cause the worrisome Lyme disease. *Antares 5612A*

4 BLACK ISLES, BETWEEN EILEAN DUBH BEAG AND DUBH MÒR

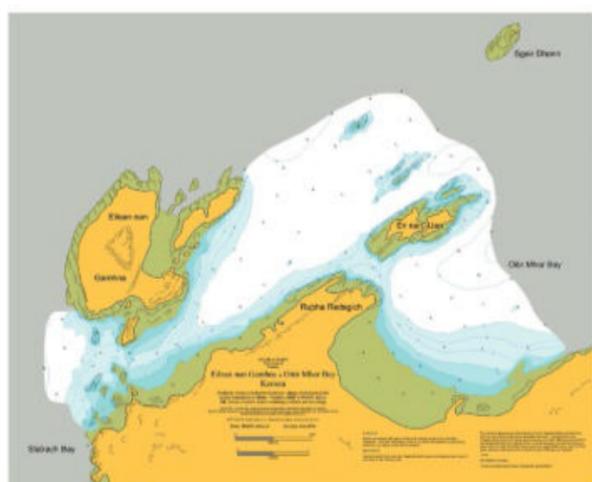
When the wind is from the west, the eastern bay between the two Black Isles makes a delightful overnight stop. The ledge between the islands acts as a wave screen, though it may not be quite so good in a westerly gale. Both these uninhabited islands are worthy of exploration, however landing places are not that easy. A few of the bays will be found to



be entirely composed of smooth white marble. The swinging room is more than it looks and the Royal Highland Yacht Club claims 40 of its members' vessels managed to anchor there at one time. *Antares 5614B*

5 EILEAN NAN GAMHNA ISLAND, OFF KERRERA

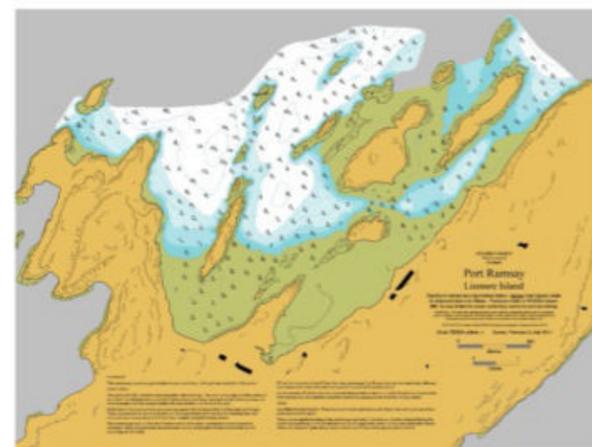
Not far from Oban, on the west side of Kerrera Island and to the west of Mhor Bay, there is a pleasant sheltered anchorage to be found inside the island of Gamhna. Seals are the sole mammalian inhabitants of this island which is adorned with the wildflower tormentil and daisies in summer. There is a beach on the Kerrera side from which tracks can generally be taken to walk around the island, giving terrific views. The anchorage has good holding but it is open to the north-east. There are two covering isolated rocks in the approach to watch out for. *Antares 5624A*



6 PORT RAMSAY, LISMORE ISLAND

Port Ramsay on the north-east end of the fertile Lismore Island is a big, pleasing sheltered anchorage with mud holding from where vessels carrying lime used to operate. Some buoys have been laid in the bay.

There are many splendid walks from this anchorage, the nearest of which is in parts a scramble around the north-eastern end of the island. As much of the harbour dries out, if you decide to venture out on this walk, land your dinghy near the phone box at the village an hour or two before high tide,

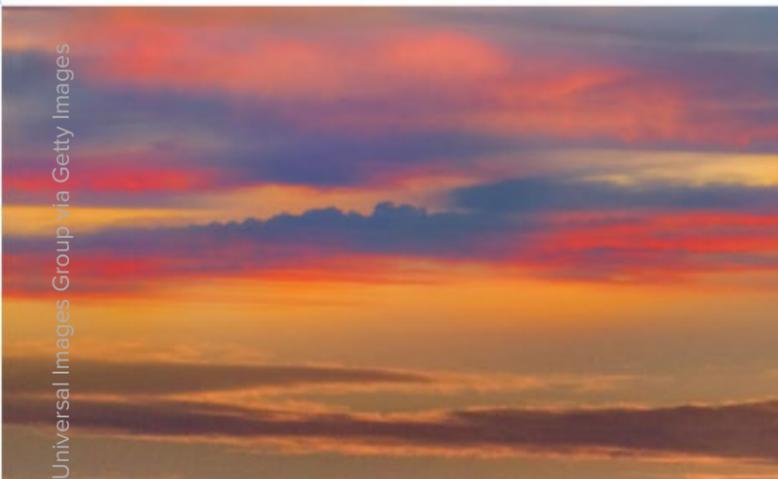


which will bring about plenty of water depth when you return back to the boat around three hours later. *Antares 5633A*



Port Ramsay appearing in the distance during the lovely walk round the north-east end of Lismore

Peter Bruce



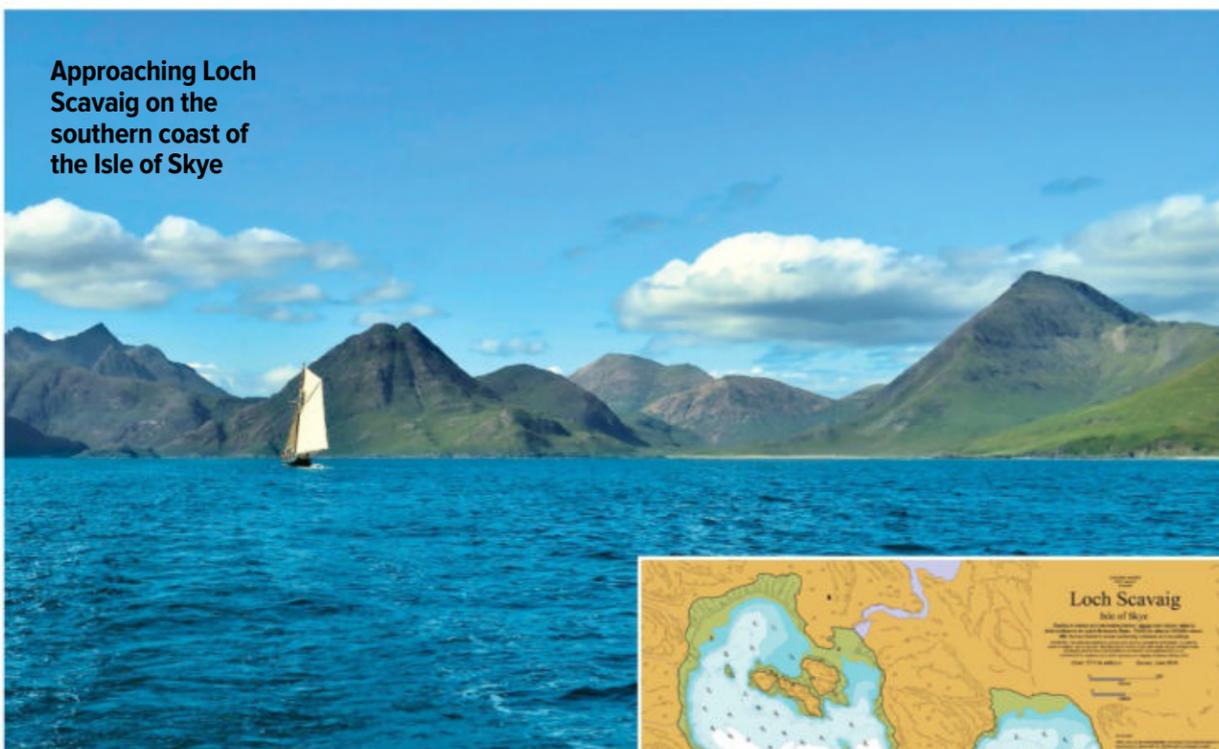
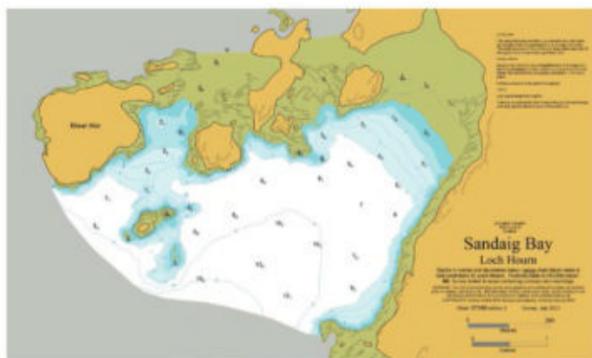
Universal Images Group via Getty Images



Stunning sunset over Kerrera with the Lismore Ferry in the foreground

7 SANDAIG BAY, LOCH HOURN

While waiting for a fair tide through Kyle Rhea, anchor at either of the two Sandaig Bays. One is on the north side of Loch Nevis and the other on the north side of the lovely Loch Hourn. This latter bay is the prettiest and has been made famous by the naturalist Gavin Maxwell, who wrote his best-selling book *Ring of Bright Water* here. His dwelling, sadly burnt down in 1968, used to be a house on the shore where his memorial and ashes lie. The beach is good for bathing. Be aware of the 1.1m rock on the south side of the islands which noted in the Antares chart. *Antares 5709B*

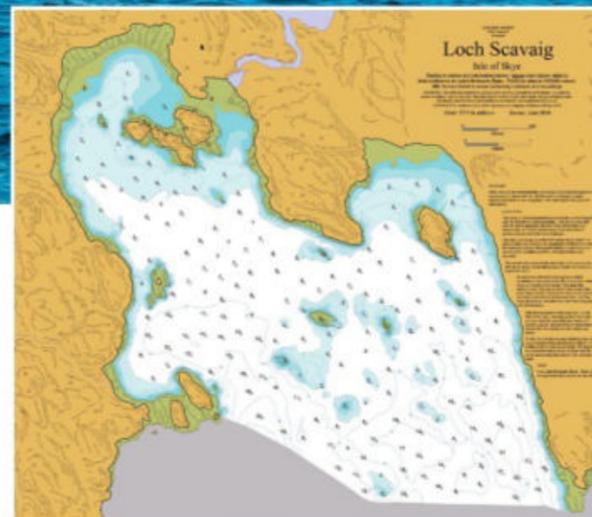


Approaching Loch Scaivaig on the southern coast of the Isle of Skye

Peter Bruce

8 LOCH SCAVAIG, ISLE OF SKYE

Loch Scaivaig is sometimes described as the most beautiful sea loch in Scotland: it is certainly the most dramatic. The shallow, sometimes squally and congested inner pool of Na Cuilce, closely bounded by the Cuillin mountains, is quite spectacular. Watch out for the 2.8m rock at the entrance and expect the anchor to collect kelp. The seabed is thick mud. An alternative anchorage is north of the



Reamhar promontory on the west of the loch. Another appealing spot is off the sandy beach to the east of the Na Cuilce islands where Loch Coruisk flows into the sea. *Antares 5711A*

Sandaig Bay inspired Gavin Maxwell's *Ring of Bright Water*



Alamy Stock Photo

Neist Point lighthouse,
 Isle of Skye,



Alamy Stock Photo

9 POLL DOMHAIN, INNER SOUND, SKYE

When passing through the Inner Sound of Skye between the mainland and Raasay the pleasant wooded Poll Domhain is a good place to stop. Anchor at the top of the bay clear of the mooring buoy, the holding being satisfactory. If landing for a walk on the Ardban peninsula there are two adjoining holiday cottages and a beautiful sandy beach on the west side of the promontory. Look out for greylag geese, wheatears and otters. Though there are no close-by facilities, when tucked up at the pretty south end, this anchorage will be very comfortable, except in a fresh north-westerly. *Antares 5723A*

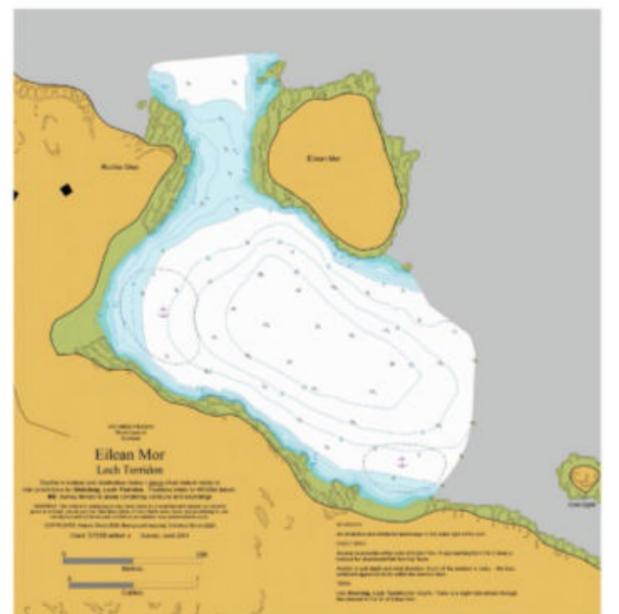


View over Loch Torridon
 towards Ben Dàmph, in
 the Scottish Highlands

Alamy Stock Photo

10 EILEAN MÒR, LOCH TORRIDON

The anchorage inside Eilean Mòr at Loch Torridon is completely sheltered from the prevailing westerlies. This beautiful spot in grand scenery is made even better when cormorants swoop up to their nests on the island. The Antares chart denotes where the seabed is best holding, but the anchor may still pick up weed. From the diminutive pier there is a walk up the road to the crest of the hill. There may be no phone signal and you'll need to head to Shieldaig for shopping, but you'll still be surrounded by the magnificent scenery. *Antares 5733B*



SKIPPER'S TIPS & YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Send your questions to our experts at yachtingmonthly@futurenet.com for the chance to win a bottle of Chilgrove gin



HAMISH SOUTHBY-TAILYOUR grew up cruising on his father's gaffers before sailing professionally. He now cruises with his family from Plymouth

TIMOTHY LONG sailed a Hunter Impala around the UK solo at the age of 15 and is now looking for support for a Solitaire du Figaro campaign in 2024

LOU LUDDINGTON is a nature photographer and writer with a PhD in marine biology. She recently spent three years aboard her Westwind 35

VYV COX has sailed for more than 50 years, initially racing dinghies and catamarans, and for the past 25 years, cruising yachts. He is a Chartered Engineer

KEN ENDEAN is an ex engineer and pilotage enthusiast who cruises a twin-keeled Sabre 27. He has written several sailing books including *Channel Havens*



Practise heaving-to, whatever the weather

You should run through and be familiar with your boat's characteristics for heaving-to in different conditions. Just because you know how to do this in principle your boat will behave differently to others and differently in varied sea states and wind speeds, and will depend on what reefs you may have in at the time.

Often the main sheet is not long enough to allow the main to be fully free so a simple lengthening strop is required if you have a clip fastening for your mainsheet block to the track. An alternative is to undo the figure of eight and unreeve the sheet from the block/jammer part of the set up and

attach an extra length of cordage. I like to keep this designated line/strop stored with the main clue reefing strops so it is in a known place. This is simply because if you need to heave-to it is usually needed in a hurry to sort out a problem or MOB. Its rare to heave-to for lunch or supper anymore. We all appear to be in a hurry, even at sea!

The genoa reefing line should also be marked appropriately to match the reef in the main and it may need to be adjusted before tacking onto the hove-to tack so that the leach does not rub on an unprotected part of the inner forestay or catch on the radar or

forward mast spinnaker fittings. Practice single-handed and make sure your crew know how to do this. It will instil confidence.

There are many nuances to set this up well and they will always be particular to your boat and conditions. However it does appear to attract attention as the last time I practised this 6 miles south of Plymouth sound, three boats altered course to check whether I needed assistance, which was both deeply reassuring and encouraging that the oldest traditions of the sea are still alive and well. It was as I was having a beer with my lunch.

Hamish Southby-Tailyour

BELOW: Whether it's stopping to have a cup of tea on a calm day, or to sort out problems in bad weather, heaving to will be different on every boat and is well worth practising



Richard Langdon

Rinse your radios

As a youngster born into the world of iPads and iPhones, tech has always been central to my life. I used to regularly break phone chargers and headphones, but now that I am paying for them myself, I appreciate the importance of looking after technical equipment.

As the world turns into one massive computer, and technology becomes increasingly important in the marine world, it is critical that we develop good habits of maintaining electrical devices. Seawater and marine technology are NOT friends, and if they socialise it can get pretty explosive – literally.

On deck, electronics are water-proofed – but over time UV damage can cause seals to degrade. Radios can be particularly susceptible; seawater loves to get into the speakers, and eventually it will break them. It's important to always rinse down anything electronic on deck. On racing boats particularly, we often dunk all the sheets into buckets of water to irrigate the salt, and the same should apply to radios.

Rinse them in water whilst you tidy up or go for a post-sail beer – it could make the cost of sailing slightly less expensive!

Timothy Long

RIGHT: Rinse your radio and other electronics after every sail to get the salt out and protect the seals



Tim Long

THE BIG QUESTION

How do I stop my fenders popping out?

Q Whilst moving into a small concrete-lined cove to be lifted out of the water, a crosswind pushed our boat against the wall and the fenders on the lee side were squished so hard that they 'popped' up like flying balloons. As a result, our hull was exposed to the concrete wall and suffered some light scuffs. How can I avoid this scenario from repeating? Are there fenders that will not compress and 'fly out' in the same manner? Ours were set low enough so I don't think sailor error was the issue.

Andre von Muhlen

A **Vyv Cox replies:** Fenders can fly up from their desired location for several reasons. Perhaps the most common occasion is as the boat arrives to berth next to a wall or another boat. The rotation of the fender against a stationary surface and the movement of the boat causes the fender to spiral upwards, where it lands on deck. Gusting winds during berthing or, once berthed, movement of the boat away from its neighbour or the wall or pontoon in windy conditions can achieve the same result.

Fortunately, this is one of the reasons that fenders are made in the shape they are, with an eye at each end. Running a warp through the lower eyes of all fenders



LEFT: Tie a line through the bottom of the fenders to stop them rolling up and out

on each side will hold them vertically as desired. Sometimes you will see small harbour ferries that take this even further, a grid of horizontal and vertical fenders offering total protection to vessels that berth many times per day.

My photograph shows my Sadler berthed in Corsica in the aftermath of a Force 11 storm. All of my fenders

are down as they should be, with an Octoplat warp threaded through the lower eyes. Some fenders on the adjacent boat have blown on deck. My starboard side is protected in the same way but additionally we lifted out the stanchions that would have been damaged by rolling against a boat on that side.

(Editor's note: There are a few other approaches you could try too. Flat foam fenders don't offer quite the same cushioning but are designed not to roll over or pop and could be a useful backup. Many sailors who keep their boats on moorings with lots of movement also use a fender cloth or mat, a heavy tarpaulin that sits between the topsides and the fenders, to protect topside polish as fenders rub.

Finally, when coming alongside a wall, a fender board can bridge the gaps between fenders, as well as help keep fenders in place.)



QUESTION OF THE MONTH WINS A BOTTLE OF CHILGROVE GIN

Bluewater Edition ultra-premium gin is made by sailors in the Sussex Downs, who blend the finest botanicals with a neutral grape spirit. www.chilgrovespirits.com (UK residents only, RRP £39.95)

Vyv Cox

Neap tide anchorages

When cruising to an area with shallow depths and wide, drying foreshores, and especially if you don't want your boat to take the ground, it is worth planning the visit for a period of neap tides. When the low water level is well above Chart Datum, many potential

anchorages that would become dry land or shallow puddles at low springs will retain adequate depths for a yacht to lie afloat. Good examples are the Isles of Scilly, where MLWN is 2m, and North Brittany where MLWN is around 4m.



Pilot books are inclined to favour the traditional, deep-water havens, and to ignore the neap tide alternatives, but the latter are particularly valuable during stormy weather, when they may offer a choice of shelter to suit different wind directions.

The photo is of an anchorage within Ile de Bréhat's rocky fringe, sheltered from all directions except east. Charts show this as walk-ashore territory, on a foreshore with stony patches, but at LW neaps those yachts are floating comfortably, clear of the bed. If you want to try it, look on the SE flank of the archipelago and then nose inshore, just north of Île Logodec.

Ken Endean

LEFT: If you don't want to take the ground, many anchorages remain accessible during neap tides that don't look suitable on a chart

Ken Endean

Learn to freedive

On multiple occasions Tom and I have saved the day for ourselves and others because of our freediving skills. Retrieving solar panels blown overboard in a storm, untangling boats that were dragging anchor, checking the anchor has set, checking dubious moorings and cleaning the hull. Our most dramatic intervention came about when nearby sailors hailed us to join the rescue of an unattended boat in the anchorage that was up to the gunwales and about to sink. With some quick

thinking Tom grabbed a selection of wooden bungs and mallet and his dive mask, fins and weight belt and we raced over. Whilst a team of us bailed furiously below deck, Tom plopped over the side and dived beneath the hull. Running his hand over the hull to feel for suction he found the offending hole and plugged it with a bung; a seacock in the heads had failed. By the time we'd arrived on the scene there was so much water inside the boat it was impossible to tell where it was coming in. Having the skills and confidence to dive underneath the boat to find the hole was the key to this rescue.

An entry-level freediving course will teach you essential knowledge for improving your diving and breath-holding skills and most importantly help you to learn to do so safely.

Learning the skills to check your anchor, clean your hull, retrieve that item dropped overboard safely or simply enjoy time with the sealife is both extremely useful and hugely enriching. **Lou Luddington**

BELOW: Being able to freedive takes time to master but allows you to check your hull and enjoy life beneath the waves



Lou Luddington



Wrap fender lines around both guardwires to spread the load and protect stanchions

Hamish South

Fenders around both guard rails

For me this just makes more sense. Spreading the load of the fenders across both rails. With a tiny bit of practice it takes no extra time to set up and helps to keep the load bearing equal. As it equally loads the rails it significantly lowers the centre of force and torque on the stanchions which is particularly important if the fender comes under any pulling pressure from a rolling boat.

Hamish Southby-Tailyour

A QUESTION OF SEAMANSHIP

JAMES STEVENS,
author of the
Yachtmaster Handbook, spent 10
of his 23 years at the
RYA as chief examiner



Could you sort the fallout of a violent gybe?

Q It is the roughest sea Simon has ever experienced. He and his four crew are sailing eastwards on his classic 1960s 12m wooden sloop, *Sea Thrift*, towards the Azores with about 500 miles to go. Fortunately it is daylight for the next few hours. Simon is an experienced sailor and his crew are all reasonably competent.

Sea Thrift is well kitted out for ocean cruising with the recommended safety

equipment and satellite communications. The wind is Force 8 and freshening. The boat and crew are broad reaching with a triple-reefed main and storm jib. Simon reckons it is time to drop the main.

As he briefs the crew in the cockpit, shouting in the wind, the helmsman loses concentration. The yacht accelerates down a wave and gybes. The mainsail tears from leech to luff. As the yacht turns beam on to the sea, a breaking wave rolls over the deck and lifts off the hatch over the main

saloon. The hatch is still just attached by a hinge but the saloon is open to the sea.

During the gybe, Jim, one of the crew members, was sitting in the path of the mainsheet and has been hit pretty hard. He is injured and clutching his arm and crying in agony. The remaining three crew are fortunately all ok but still badly shaken by the experience.

They look to Simon for the next instruction. What would you do in his position? What should be the main priorities?



In heavy weather downwind, things can go wrong quickly, but how would you react when they do?

A The man with the injury and the flogging mainsail will be making the most noise but in my view the most immediate problem is preventing water from entering the boat's main saloon.

The yacht needs to be steered downwind and the hatch repositioned and lashed down – not easy in a big sea. If the hatch is lost the gap must be covered with a tarpaulin or something which will keep most of the water out. The boom will have to be sheeted in or lashed down to prevent it from scything

across the deck. The main halyard can be released but the flogging remains of the mainsail will have to stay on the mast for the time being.

The amount of water below should be checked and a crew member needs to start pumping. Simon needs to have a plan for abandonment if the water level is rising uncontrollably. If so, a Mayday call should be sent.

It is now time to look at the casualty. *Sea Thrift* is out of range of lifeboats and SAR helicopters. A call ashore to Falmouth

Coastguard by satellite phone will be a way of accessing advice from a doctor. If the casualty has a really serious injury, another vessel might be diverted towards them, but either way, the injured person is going to be on board for some time. Making him comfortable and providing the appropriate first aid is the best they can do before help arrives.

In situations like this a skipper is tested to the limit. The ability to think, prioritise, stay in control and lead the crew can be a matter of life and death.

EXPERT ON BOARD

JUSTIN MORTON is a former RYA instructor. He had a career in the Marines, but didn't buy a yacht until he retired



AN EASIER WAY TO NAVIGATE

Sometimes, rather than knowing where you are, it's easier to know where you aren't, says Justin Morton



When you first start to navigate it can seem complex and pretty nuanced, but in reality what you are doing falls into two overarching styles. The first style of navigation is to know exactly where you are all the time, so you can manoeuvre to get to where you want to go and stay safe whilst you do it. This is the way commercial shipping, Naval warships, satnavs and, increasingly, your chartplotter, navigate. It's therefore natural to want to do likewise.

The second, very old, style is rather than know exactly where you are, you instead know precisely where all the dangers are

in relation to you. That is, you definitely know where you are not. You can then safely manoeuvre to your chosen location.

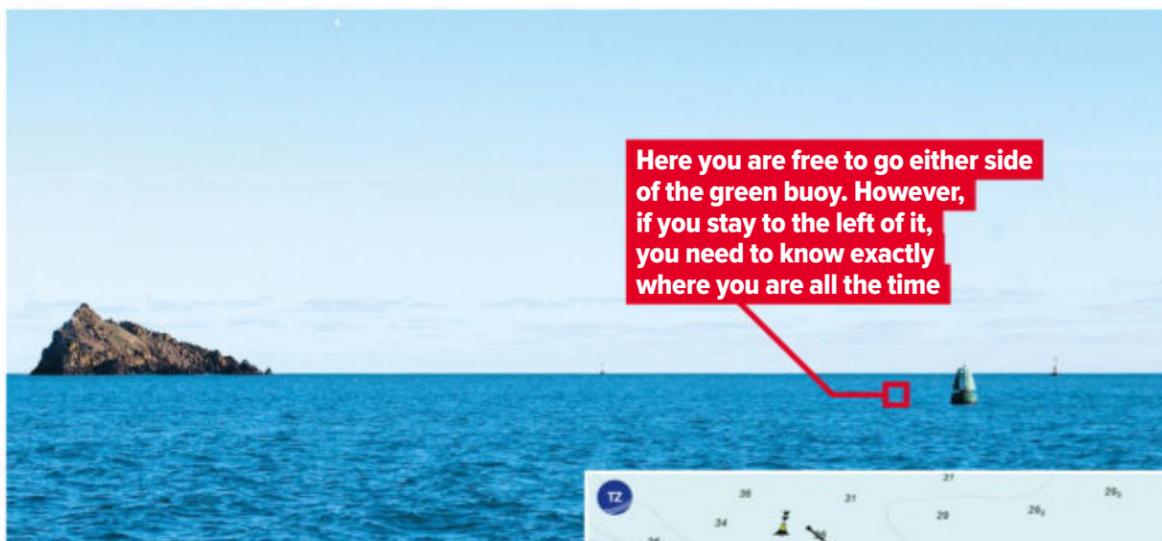
CHARTPLOTTER DRAWBACKS

'Knowing' where you are is however very different from being told where you are. A chart plotter can tell you where you are but it is meaningless until you ask 'So what?', such as, 'Do I have to worry about those rocks?' It always requires some level of thinking, which has to be done there and then to help you orientate yourself. Consequently, because our position is always changing, 'knowing' where you are all of the time is time consuming and taxing. Chart plotters

tempt us into doing this type of navigation, and a symptom of relying totally on chart plotter navigation is that uneasy feeling you get when having zoomed in far enough to see the chart detail, the bit you are interested in is now off screen. However, your position constantly shown on a chart plotter is a great comfort and convenience when you know there are no dangers nearby, and herein lies the clue to why the second style of navigation is of great benefit to a busy yachtsman.

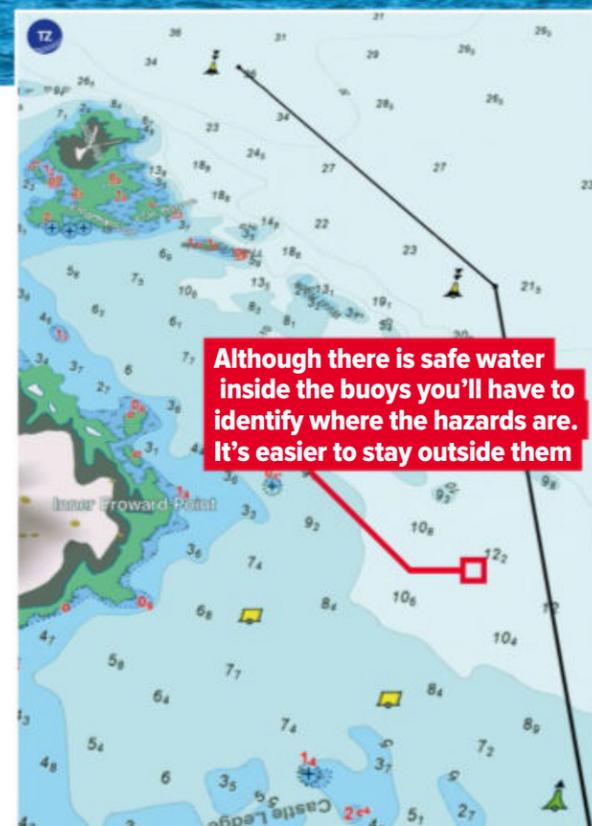
If you know where all of the dangers are in relation to your boat, you can assess whether you are heading into 'danger'. Helpfully the 'dangers', be that shallow water, isolated

KNOW YOUR LIMITS & ESTABLISH A BOUNDARY



Here you are free to go either side of the green buoy. However, if you stay to the left of it, you need to know exactly where you are all the time

The key to 'knowing where you are not' is being able to establish a boundary that is identifiable from the cockpit (and ideally anywhere you happen to be on the boat). In its simplest form, it is a line which on one side is safe, where you don't need to think too hard about navigating, and on the other, you need to know exactly where you are. A line of red or green buoys marking a channel is a good example, as you can see when you are complying with the rules of the buoyage system. Generally, as long as you don't go outside the buoys that define a navigable area's edges, you don't need to know exactly where you are. Go the other side of the 'line,' though, and you really need to start devoting time to knowing what's underneath you. By choosing to 'box' yourself in this way you can devote less time to navigation but still remain safe.



Although there is safe water inside the buoys you'll have to identify where the hazards are. It's easier to stay outside them

SETTING BOUNDARIES

This style of navigation is not a shortcut and requires a good amount of planning prior to departure. You will reap the benefits though, because the time spent planning is saved once on the water. If you are going for a day sail, drawing out

a little sketch map of the area with your boundaries on will help you remember them and if it's a passage, include the information in your passage plan.

And how much more do I need to learn to do all this you may be asking? Not much, I would suggest. You will most likely know the few techniques that are involved. All are taught as part of sailing courses and the rest is just expanding those techniques.

Some skippers never seem to navigate whilst others always seem to be bobbing up and down below or obsessing over the chart or plotter. Or perhaps you've noticed how relaxed your sailing instructor is while you are navigating your socks off. You have most likely seen both styles of navigation in practice. Both have their place and the 'know where you definitely are not' approach is only safe if you have a reasonable idea of where you are and always have the time to move back towards safety. If you want to give it a go, it's best to employ just one or two of the following techniques at a time and build from there. And although I have referred to it as a 'box', it's very rarely, if ever, a complete box.

rocks, or any other feature, generally don't move, so once you can work out where they are and how you can avoid them you don't need to do any more recalculation.

ECONOMY OF TIME

I am a firm believer in economising on my effort when skippering because I always want to have some spare capacity to deal with any unfolding situations but primarily to relax and enjoy what I'm doing. This 'knowing where you are not' style of navigation is the least mentally taxing, allowing us to focus on the myriad other things going on around our boats. Also the less 'challenged' we are the lower our stress levels will be.



Time spent planning will free you up to focus on sailing and managing the boat later

BOUNDARY DEPTH CONTOUR

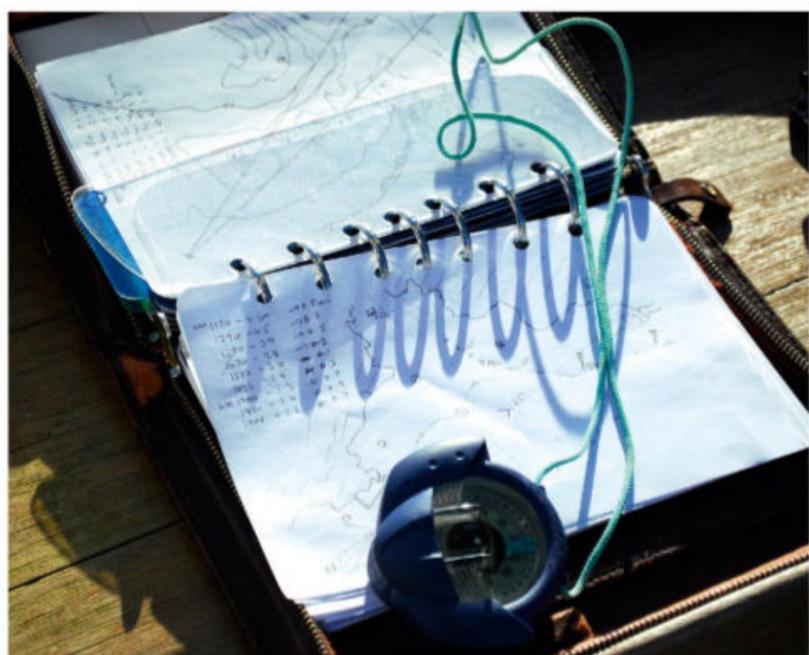
Depth contours often form the most convenient boundaries. They work day and night, and in fog. The only drawback is you need to know the height of tide, and your depth sounder needs to read depth correctly, so ensure you check it.

The basic principle is to look and find an obvious (and reasonably straight) depth contour that forms a boundary you can use. As long as the depth with the tide

added is either more or less than that, you know which side of the line you are on. Even though my plotter tells me the height of tide, I still manually write the relevant tidal heights out at hourly or half hourly intervals and have it close to hand. I also make sure I have my depth sounder offset to read depth from the surface, so all I need to do is add the contour depth to the tide height at the time.



1 DEPTH CONTOUR
As an example, Start Bay has a really prominent 10m contour about 350m from the shore, which makes an excellent boundary. It's good practice to pick a contour some distance from any dangers to give you time to react if necessary. Here I have superimposed an electronic boundary line (in green) on my pilotage app which will trigger an alarm if it is crossed.



2 DEPTHS
As a back up, I always write down my depths and try to keep track of what the tide is at any given time. In this example, as part of a crew briefing I would mention that the boundary would be the 10m contour and what the height on the instrument would read with the tide added when we get there.

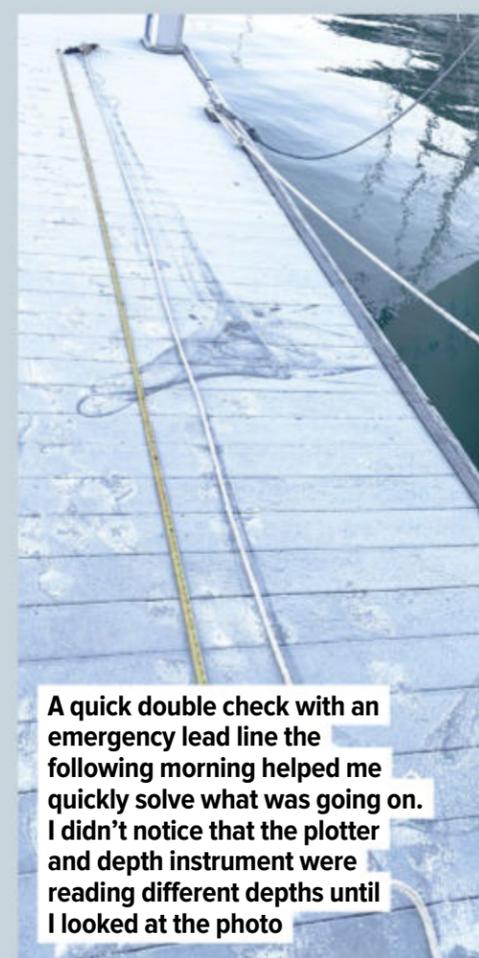


3 DEPTHS SAILING
We don't all have chart plotters at the helm but fortunately most boats have depth instruments visible from most positions in the cockpit. Depths tend to decrease gradually so any crew member can monitor the depth and let the skipper know in enough time to do something about it

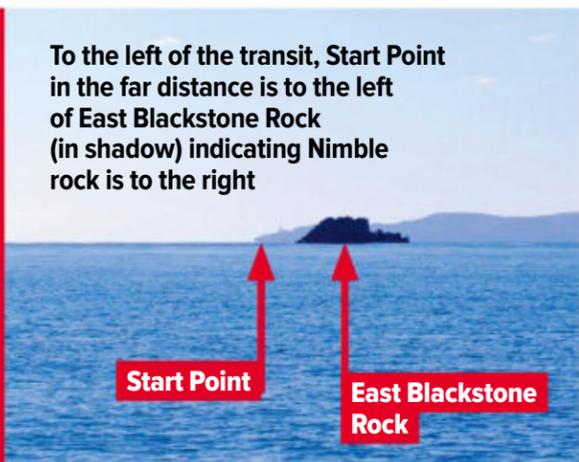
Most boats have depth instruments visible from most positions in the cockpit. Depths tend to decrease gradually so any crew member can monitor the depth and alert the skipper in enough time



A DEPTH SOUNDER ERROR
Do make sure you know your depth sounder is reading correctly and where from. I was working from the instrument on the bulkhead which I had set up, oblivious that the plotter was giving me a different reading. A quick double check with an emergency lead line (winch handle and sheet) the following morning helped me quickly solve what was going on. I didn't notice that the plotter and depth instrument were reading different depths until I looked at the photos.



A quick double check with an emergency lead line the following morning helped me quickly solve what was going on. I didn't notice that the plotter and depth instrument were reading different depths until I looked at the photo



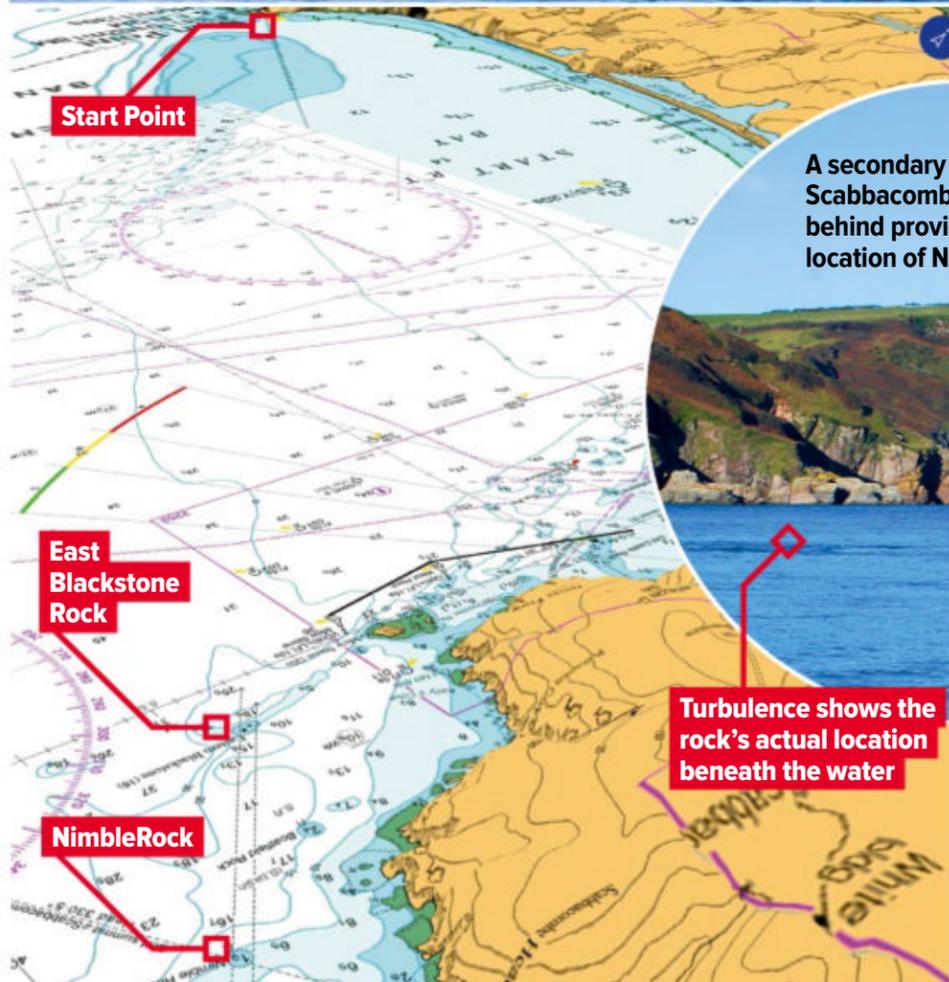
TRANSITS

Look at any chart and you will see helpful transits with identifiable features such as towers, headlands and masts already marked. They are a bit more obvious on paper or raster charts but most vector charts display established transit lines (sometimes called navigation lines) but they may need to be interrogated. Transits can be used in two ways: ones that cross isolated features to help pinpoint them, or more often they are used to provide a boundary line. Pick whatever works and the most obvious objects (as seen from the sea) are usually marked on paper charts but can include headlands and rocks as long as they are steep-sided. Aerial photography can also help and you can use the divider measuring tool on your plotter to give you a bearing so you know its the correct object. Do make sure you read the bearing the right way around.

PICK YOUR OWN

Picking your own unmarked transits is easy enough when you sail regularly in the same place and could even be something as strange as the line of an obvious street that runs perpendicular to the shore. Remember, whatever you choose needs to be easy to see and must work as a transit.

Nimble Rock is my favourite example of how 'definitely knowing where you are not' works. To quote from the *Admiralty Chart*, 'Start Point Lighthouse



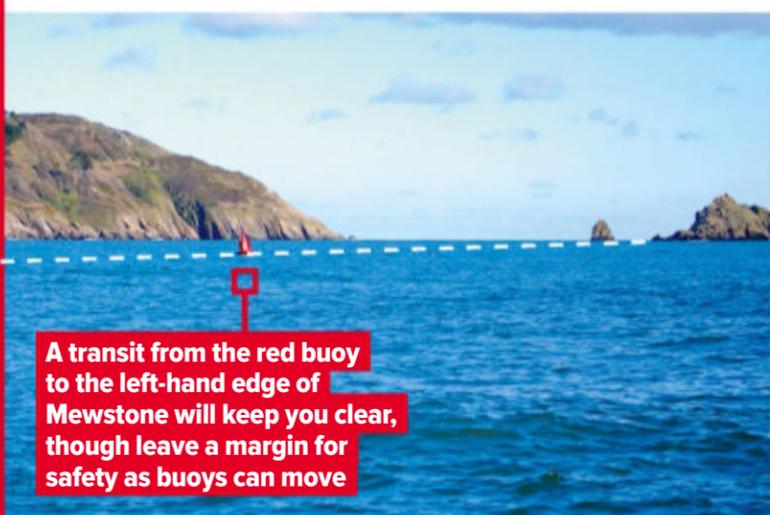
Transit in line, the rock is just ahead and to the right – you can see the turbulence. There was 4m of tide and about a knot of tidal stream

open either side of East Blackstone [Rock] clears Nimble Rock'. Therefore, as long as the lighthouse and the rock don't line up you can't hit Nimble Rock (charted depth 1.9m). It is very rare for an additional transit to pinpoint anything exactly – in this case Scabbacombe Head lining up with the summit beyond does just that.

This navigational technique has been in use for far longer than depth sounders and electronic positioning systems. In reality, it's far easier to just stay east of the 20m or 30m depth contour when heading north.

You can also choose your own transits.

I am travelling south west here, heading into Start Bay, and because the 10m contour discussed earlier is a little close to some rocks in this area I have found a transit to provide an obvious boundary so I don't get too close. I have decided to use the northern edge of the Mewstone with the red buoy I passed on the way out of the mouth of the river. By keeping the buoy and rock 'open', I can judge my approach angle and stay a comfortable distance from the shore. Picking something with a steep side or that doesn't dry out reduces the error when the tide falls and more of the rock is exposed.



CLEARING BEARINGS

The principle of a clearing bearing or safety bearing is that as long as an object bears 'no more than' or 'no less than' a bearing you have calculated, you will definitely be on one side of that line or the other. Staying on the safe side 'clears' the object. Some helpful clearing bearings are marked on charts and confusingly can be named navigation lines or, as my app does, routes! If your chart plotter isn't showing any you may need to turn them on in settings.

You can choose anything that you know you will be able to identify from the sea. You want to pick things that are quite close to mitigate errors that could be made by taking a poor bearing, but they can be useful in orientating you at any distance. You can use the same object multiple times to make a cone, and the fewer objects you need to identify, the less you have to think about.

HAND-BEARING COMPASS

However, we've mostly neglected our compasses over recent years so you must make sure it doesn't deviate wildly. Handheld compasses (without bubbles in) are the most accurate but sighting over the binnacle steering compass is an equally valid technique as long as the compass is directly between you and the object when you take the bearing. As it usually gives bearings in 5-degree increments it is much less accurate than a hand-bearing compass, so give yourself a bigger safety margin i.e. draw your line to pass further from the

Use a hand-bearing compass for clearing bearings



danger. If your chart plotter is near your compass, definitely check your deviation as your compass might be quite a way out. Here, Start Point Lighthouse in the distance bears about 225°. To clear Skerries bank with it on my left I have calculated it needs to bear 'no-more-than' 210°. In theory it's not a difficult calculation to make but it can be. For example, 'lighthouse bears 225°, it shouldn't bear more than 210°, so I need it to reduce.' When you are tired, you can't think which way you need to go! It's much quicker and more orientating to look where 210° points on your compass and imagine a parallel line back from the object rather than taking a bearing to the object.

In this example, you can see I need to be much further over to the right. When accuracy is important you should use a hand-bearing compass but again it's easier to align yourself with your bearing and then imagine the parallel line back from the object.

Justin sets a boundary line on the plotter as a quick reference



Preset boundaries make monitoring the plotter much easier

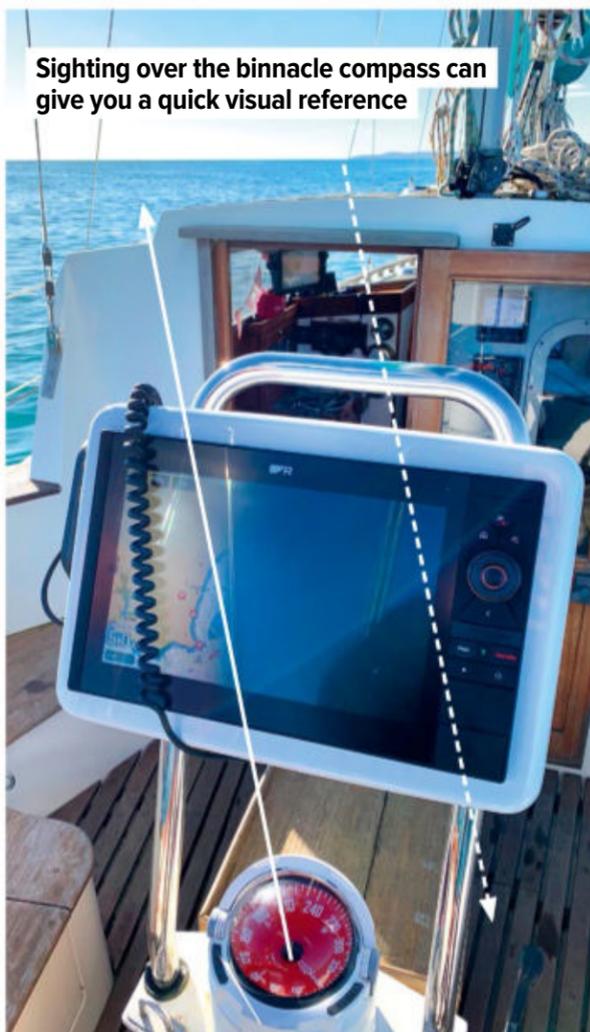


BOUNDARIES, ROUTES AND WAYPOINTS

Modern chart plotters usually have a boundary function and you could even use just a route line to 'box' your sailing area in, but whatever you use, to be useful, the question the plotter needs to easily answer is 'how far away from the boundary am I?' Unfortunately, as you zoom in and out, the physical distance on the screen changes, requiring some additional assessment. It is therefore much easier to use an electronic boundary line as a handrail as it is not imperative to know how far away you are, just that you are definitely on the correct side of the line.

Chart Plotter boundary lines work really well when there isn't much to look at to orientate yourself. Here, from my lounging position in the saloon, I can see my compass course and using the chart plotter can also monitor if I am being swept to the right towards the

Sighting over the binnacle compass can give you a quick visual reference

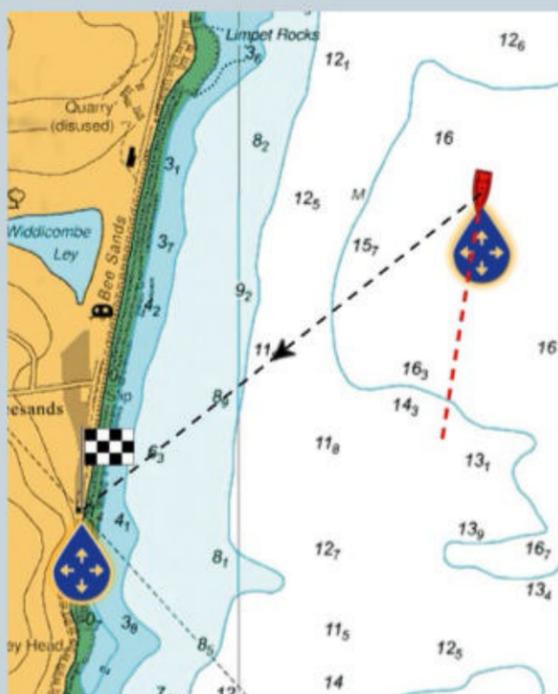


The clearing bearing keeps you inside (to the west) of the Skerries Bank



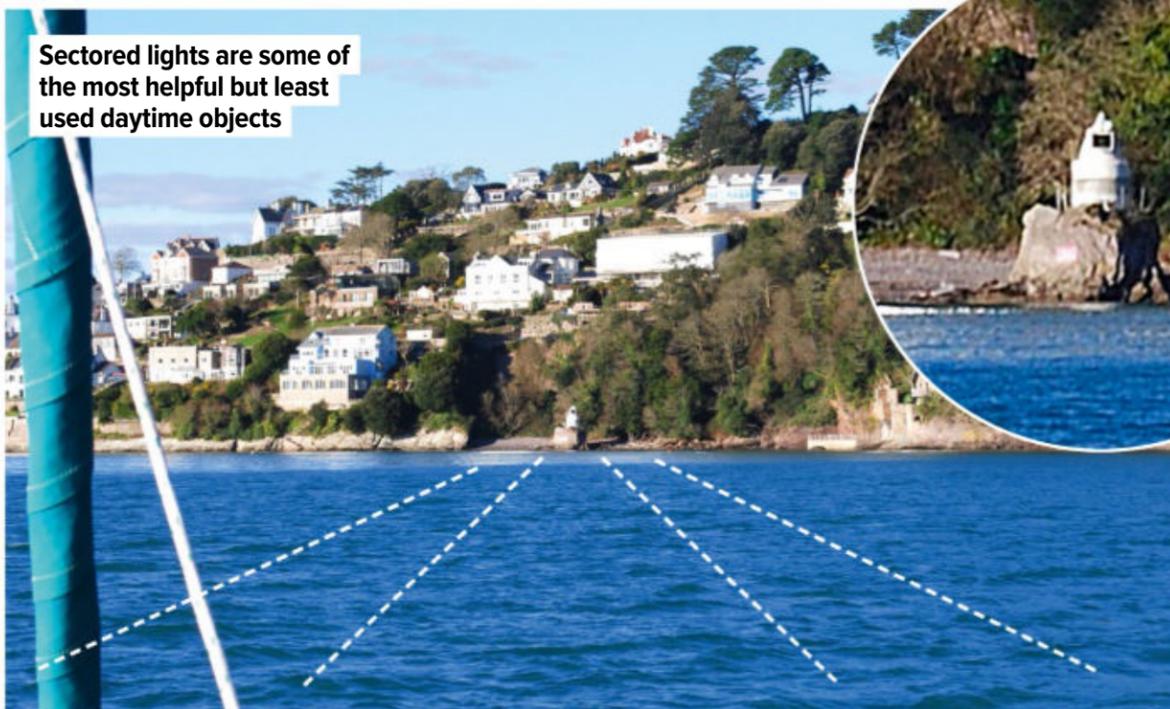


ABOVE: To make absolutely sure you have identified the correct object, it takes seconds to take a bearing on a chart plotter to confirm. Just make sure the bearing is the right way around. This house I was passing was going to become important later in my sail.



shallow bank. The electronic boundary line takes any ambiguity out of whether I am drifting left or right but it's not the distance to the line that's important here, just that I am staying to the left of the line.

Where modern chart plotters are really useful is if they have a Look Ahead / Perspective 3D or Augmented Reality function. You can set any object, be that on land or at sea, as a waypoint or mark. This can be useful if a particular object is difficult to find initially as the plotter can point it out for you. You can even ask some advanced cameras to track whatever you are looking for. For the chart plotter to be accurate any cameras need to be set up properly and your electronic compass definitely needs to be calibrated correctly. If you don't have a camera or any 3D-type functions, it will be capable of giving a bearing from your boat to any object you select. You can then identify it by compass.

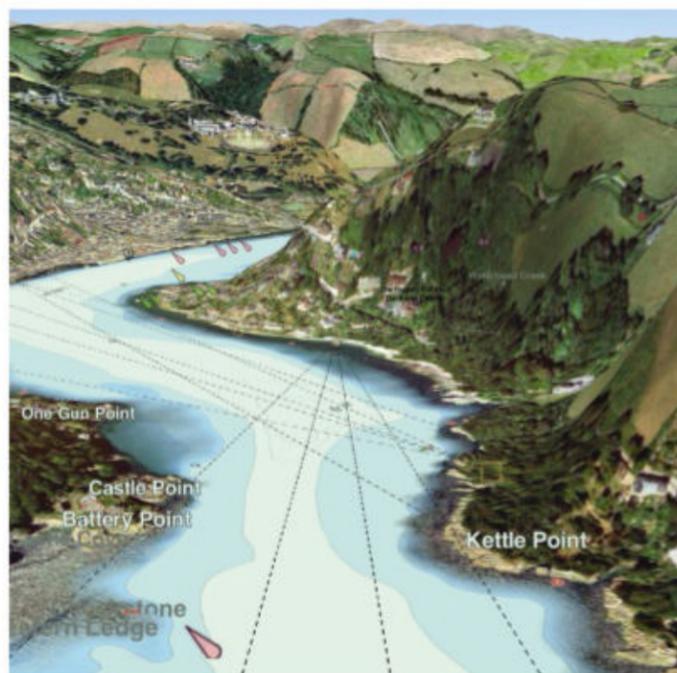


USE WHATEVER'S THERE [AS LONG AS IT DOESN'T MOVE]

The final technique is to just use whatever is there. Remember we are trying to draw a boundary line that can be identified when on the water without too much effort, preferably by just looking. This could be something as simple as not going north of a line drawn between a particular cardinal mark and a green buoy. It could be staying east of the last boat on a line of trots and a

marina outer pontoon. You can even use sector lights in daylight if you can see them, the crossover point between white (centre) and red or green is particularly useful.

Judging distance is hard at sea so unless you have practised and really know your distances don't rely on judging a distance off a single object to keep you safe.



LEFT: Sector lights are some of the most helpful and least-used daytime objects. Here, even if I am on the foredeck heading into Dartmouth, by using the light sectors I can keep myself orientated but still be where I need to be around the boat. As the white sector denotes the central part of the channel, as long as the light doesn't change to red or green – which you can usually see happen over a flash or two – I can be confident I am safe in the channel. Additionally, by coming up the line between the white and green crossover point, I can stay on the correct side of the channel



Having looked at the chart, I can use the moored yachts on the left and the industrial moorings on the right as my boundaries (about 200m of width). This is a much more flexible approach than hugging a chart plotter route. I should, of course, keep to the right in a channel

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

You may be forgiven for thinking I don't like chart plotters, but that couldn't be further from the truth. If your only job onboard is the navigator, you have the time to draw out the information and orientate it to what is around you. Most of us sail short-handed or with our families, so we skippers have to juggle childcare, deck work and helming whilst still trying to work out where we are and where we need to go next. That's why I think both on-deck navigation skills and modern electronics used together are a really powerful combination that makes things safer and our lives easier. This final example I think highlights this.

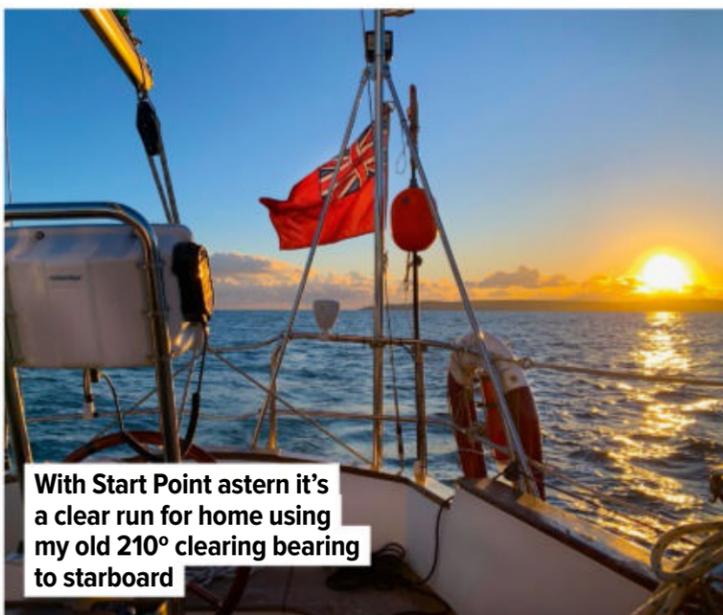
CHANGING TACK

Here is a common scenario, namely, having relied on hugging your route to navigate, you now can't follow it. In my example I am rounding Start Point with the intention to cut through the inner channel into the bay to get into sheltered water and get to Dartmouth sooner – it's been a long day. Unfortunately the wind is such that I now need to tack up through the channel. Whether I'd have planned for this or not, I now have a lot to

do and sort out. I've got to get the boat ready to tack a good few times, possibly reef, make sure things are stowed below, brief the family, and work out the new route.

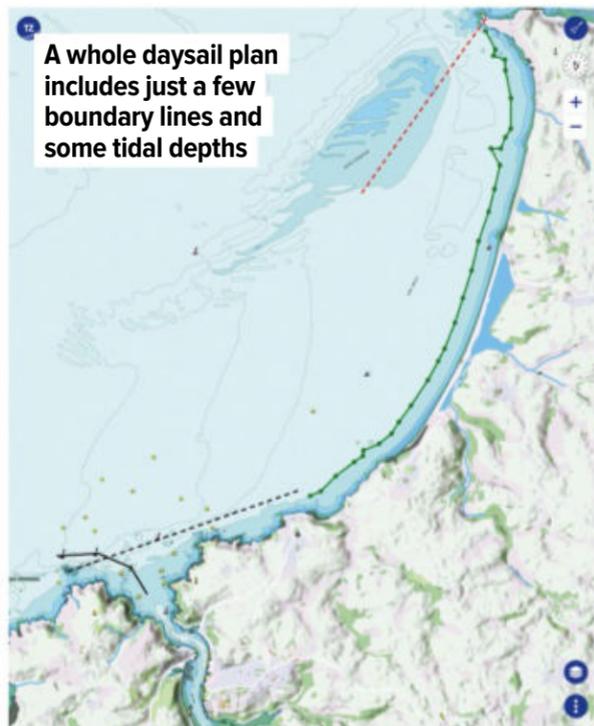
If you just rely on the chart plotter for navigation it will be unnerving when you can't see it or worse, hold you to it. This fixes you, and as arguably the most competent person onboard, reduces your effectiveness

should your skills be needed elsewhere. Ideally, what you need is a way to be able to navigate whilst up on deck and looking out. In this example, a clearing bearing and a transit can help you do this. Having worked out exactly where you don't want to be, it is comforting to glance down at the chart plotter when you need to and have it confirm you are exactly where you thought you were.



With Start Point astern it's a clear run for home using my old 210° clearing bearing to starboard

Thanks to Monty Halls for lending me Sobek with her extensive Raymarine equipment. Also thanks to mytimezero.com for allowing me to include TZ iboat screenshots from my iPad. The navigational detail included here is included for illustrative purposes only. Whilst I stand by the principles, the detail should not be used for your own navigation.



A whole daysail plan includes just a few boundary lines and some tidal depths



The route looks like a scary zigzag around some nasty hazards...



... but in reality, even beating it's a simple case of staying between two bearings



1 USING THE GIVEN TRANSIT

Choosing to go inside the Skerries bank, I use the transit given to us by the chart on a bearing of 319° to keep us west of the shallow bank and my own clearing bearing.



2 FAMILIAR BEARINGS

Having orientated myself to what the clearing bearing and transit angles look like on each tack using the big white house, I can then head on in and upwind.



3 SIMPLE REFERENCE POINTS

Having positively identified the white house is the one I think it is on the chart, I can then use bearings to it to limit each tack until I am though into open water.



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UK

Finally, an inflatable boat with style - here's how PudBoat did it

PudBoat - an exciting new style of inflatable boat arrives in the UK, offering a design never seen before. This unique and groundbreaking boat is set to revolutionise the boating experience for enthusiasts across the country.

Created with comfort, safety and ease of use in mind, the PudBoat is a gamechanger for boat owners. Using drop-stitch technology this design combines looks and practicality. It features inward-facing seating with rigid sides that double as backrests, providing a nice touch of comfort. Unlike many traditional inflatables, it boasts an inflatable flat deck allowing for more seating space and leg room. The built-in outer side buoys provide stability and a smoother, safer

ride for passengers even on coastal waters.

As well as its innovative design, PudBoat aims to make boat ownership easy. With no need for a mooring or a trailer, setting up is a breeze taking fewer than 15 minutes to go from flat-packed to fully inflated. It takes only one person to deflate and pack away to just 1/10th of its full size. And once wrapped in its packing bag, owners can store in their car to take from place to place.

The backboard at the center of the transom is the only solid non-inflatable part of the entire craft. This allows a choice of detachable outboard motor, either petrol or battery driven (not included). Being lightweight and having a shallow draft, even small outboards can propel the boat.

PudBoat might be new but the company is committed to making the most stylish, safe and comfortable inflatable boats available.

The current model enables four adults to sit comfortably but there are plans to introduce models of different sizes and design. 'The goal is always to encourage more people to take to the water and enjoy the benefits of owning a PudBoat' says the company.

To learn more about owning a new PudBoat yourself, visit www.pudboat.com or email boats@pudboat.com

PudBoat
The New Style of Inflatable Boat

ROBIN ASHCROFT spent 15 years in the City after a career in the Army. His first love was mountaineering, but he now spends his spare time sailing



Affordable routes into sailing

Sailing doesn't have to break the bank. Crewing on other people's boats offers many low-cost sailing opportunities, says Robin Ashcroft



It's quite possible to have lots of fun afloat for very little money

Robin Ashcroft

Morecambe Bay
Prawner *Pilkington* in the Conwy Nobby Race. Several of these boats now operate as trusts



Alamy Stock Photo

Pardon the liberal use of clichés, but as somebody once said, 'Sailing equates to standing in a cold shower tearing up £10 notes.'

If it's racing, it will be £50 notes you're shredding! And as a wise soul further commented, 'The two happiest days in a sailor's life are when one buys a yacht and then, when one sells it!'

That may not be strictly true, but even running a small cruising yacht on a modest budget is unlikely to count as 'cheap'.

Sailing itself needn't be expensive, however. My own route into sailing came after I gave up mountaineering, when, hitting my late 50s, my joints started complaining. I had sailed in my youth and in the Army, but boots and crampons were more affordable once I'd left the military. Having swallowed the ice axe – so to speak – like many I set out on the RYA programme, starting off with Competent Crew and then working my way through Day and Coastal Skipper. This undoubtedly gives a good grounding, but the issue then emerges, what to do when you have these tickets, but no boat?

As with driving a car, you only really learn to drive once you've got your licence, and I needed some experience to actually know what I was doing. I certainly wouldn't disparage the RYA training programme and doing the tickets opened up my first affordable access to yachting.

I must have appeared reasonably competent when doing both my Day Skipper and Coastal Skipper, as both instructors suggested a solution.

Clubs are a great way to get youngsters out on the water too

MEMBERSHIP ORGANISATIONS

Back in the day, large organisations – public utilities, banks, major corporations – had funded sports clubs for their staff. These included sailing clubs, complete with well-found yachts for the use of their employees. But with the arrival of ‘Big Bang’, shareholder value and privatisation, the powers that be declined to support their employees’ hobbies, and sports grounds and other facilities were let go, including the yacht clubs. So to keep sailing, these clubs opened membership to non-employees.

On the advice of my two instructors, I’m now a member of two of these and have regular access to four yachts sailing out of Plymouth, Southampton, Portsmouth and the Clyde. These boats are all well-found and properly maintained mid-sized (35ft) modern yachts, with space for four to six crew.

Both groups work in very similar ways, with an annual membership of around £40 to £50. While they like prospective members who already have some skills – ideally Day Skipper, but Competent Crew is fine – before they join and crew, this is a preference rather than an obstacle. And if suitably qualified – typically Yachtmaster – you can expect, after an assessment, to skipper independently with a crew of your own. Or if you’re not quite at that level, you can join a skippered cruise. Typically, options come in at around £50 per berth per day.

There’s a variation on the latter, as these groups are keen for members to develop their skills so they can, when ready, join the pool of skippers. To this end, regular skills



Robin Ashcroft

development and assessment weekends are run with a view to bringing on those with Coastal Skipper to a level so they can skipper independently. This became my route and, safe to say, there’s much focus on ‘pontoon bashing’!

As for the boats, predictably many of these charter boats are modern GRP production boats, but it’s not just the ‘plastic fantastics’ that are out there.

2023 was the 60th anniversary of the Old Gaffers Association, and to celebrate, a fleet of gaff-rigged yachts set out to

circumnavigate Britain via Dublin and various other ‘party ports’. A friend tipped me off and a quick scan of the OGA website, followed by rapid emails, led to invitations to come aboard for three legs of the circumnavigation. These saw me gathering considerable experience sailing from Plymouth to Ireland and then from Ardrrossan to Oban, with quite a bit of partying in-between.

With my logged night hours doubled in my RYA logbook, I came to realise just what a practical rig a gaffer is and gained a considerable appreciation for wooden boats. Certainly, I also began to realise the value of ‘networking’, the modern term for simply talking to people, plus a bit of proactive online research.

MORECAMBE CLASSICS

And sticking with wooden boats, I’m also able to access three truly classic boats. Living in the southern Lake District I overlook Morecambe Bay, which of course has its own remarkable boat the ‘Prawner’, or latterly, in its sporting guise the ‘Nobby’, and I can sail with one of these classics most summer weekends. As the first name suggests, these gaff-rigged boats were first used for fishing, and as well as being seaworthy and fast they also had to be able to take the ground as the tide ebbed and the bay revealed its sands. They were later raced competitively and formed a fleet for the Royal Mersey Yacht Club.

My entrée to these boats came through the remarkable Arnside Sailing Club,



Getting on with strangers is all part of the job

Robin Ashcroft

The Royal Navy Sailing Association is accessible for serving and retired Armed Forces members



Theo Stocker

**Morecambe Bay Prawner
Ploughboy** – many of the
boats are looking for crew



**ABOVE: Sailing on
a traditional
Morecambe Bay
Prawner is fun
and affordable**

Alamy Stock Photo

tucked away deep into Morecambe Bay, and over lunch at its bi-annual Crossfield Conference. While for the moment it's mostly dinghies that ply the waters of the Kent Estuary (nothing to do with the county of Kent), back in the day this was a significant maritime highway and epicentre of all things Prawner, with many built at the Crossfield's family boatyards in the village.

But that will change shortly as the club has bought and is having restored *Severn* – a River Class racing Nobby. And they're currently looking for suitably experienced crews and skippers to help sail her.

TAKEN ON TRUST

At the same conference came an introduction to *Heart of Oak*, a 112-year-old Prawner originally used as the pilot cutter for Ulverston, but now based at Roa Island at the end of the Furness Peninsula. She's very much afloat and regularly plies the Walney Channel and further afield most summer weekends. Again, the trust which runs her is keen to engage with competent crew or potential skippers, and for £15 a year and £5 per day afloat you could find yourself sailing a wonderful, wooden gaff-rigged classic.

Separately, as of March 2024, *Spray* has returned to her home waters. Built in 1898 to fish, she was later given a cabin and turned into a cruiser. It's in this guise that she'll be sailed by the trust which has bought her. The plan is to take a similar approach to the Nancy Blackett Trust's approach to sailing a classic yacht and giving the wider public a chance to sail an historic vessel. With these three afloat on Morecambe Bay this living museum opens up sailing in historically important craft to a wider audience.

The British Army's historic habit of pocketing items on campaign is now frowned upon, but an exception would undoubtedly be made by most right-thinking sailors over the wonderful 55ft classic 1930s racing yacht *Overlord*. When Field Marshall Montgomery's men arrived in Kiel in May 1945, they discovered Herman Goering's fleet of yachts. They had been enjoyed by officers from the Luftwaffe, but by then they had other things on their mind.

Amazingly they had remained untouched by the ravages of war and a quick conversation with the Royal Navy ensured that they didn't remain in Germany for much longer. Once back in the UK, they were taken over by the Armed Forces' various sailing associations and henceforth they became known as 'Windfall yachts'.

In time GRP would replace wood in armed service's sailing and the Windfall yachts fell by the wayside, except however, for *Overlord* which was taken on by a trust –

**Sailing on the West
Coast of Scotland with
the Old Gaffers as crew**



Robin Ashcroft

USEFUL SOURCES FOR CREWING

- **Go Sailing Association:**
www.gosailingassociation.co.uk
- **Portcullis Sailing Club:**
www.sailportcullis.org.uk
- **Old Gaffers Association:**
www.oga.org.uk
- **Nancy Blackett Trust:**
www.nancyblackett.org
- **Offshore Cruising Club:**
www.sailoverlord.org
- **Royal Naval Sailing Association:**
www.rnsa.org.uk
- **Army Sailing Association:**
www.sailing.britisharmysport.com
- **RAF Sailing Association:**
www.rafsailing.co.uk
- **Arnside Sailing Club/Friends of Severn:**
www.arnsidesailingclub.co.uk
- **Boat Buddys:**
www.boatbuddys.co.uk
- **Hearts of Oak Boat Trust: Facebook**
- **Morecambe Bay Prawners Trust/ Spray: Facebook**



Many classic boats will welcome skilled crewmembers

Robin Ashcroft

now known as the Offshore Cruising Club. The trust is keen to have both competent sailors – as well as those just keen to learn the ropes – join them. Annual membership is £100 with a daily berth fee of £55. This is a ridiculously cheap way to sail on a stunningly beautiful classic yacht.

If you've served in the Armed Forces, it's also worth checking with the relevant service sailing association to see if they accept veterans. Fortunately for me, the Army Sailing Association does and treats the 'old and bold' in the same way as it does serving members, offering an incredibly good deal to sail the Solent and beyond.

STAND AND DELIVER

Another of the options suggested by one of my RYA instructors is yacht delivery. This typically involves volunteering to crew on a trip taking a yacht from A to B under a professional skipper. As crew there's usually no payment, but travel expenses are covered. The skippers tend to make it clear that, while you should be able to gain from the experience, it is part of a business, and they are not there to develop the crew's personal skills. That said you can take part in some significant passages and gain true blue-water experience for next to nothing.

There's also the expectation that the customer will pick up their yacht in a cleaner condition than when the delivery crew stepped aboard. While we all expect to tidy up the boat once the mooring lines are secured, it does take a bit of additional personal motivation at the end of a long passage to go that extra mile.

Yacht delivery isn't for everyone and you should go onto any yacht with your eyes



Theo Stocker

open and some reasonable experience gained elsewhere. And if the boat doesn't feel right to you, and the skipper isn't able to answer sensible questions – such as 'Is there a survey?' – then you should be prepared to walk away (even if you lose out on your travel expenses).

There are undoubtedly other routes into sailing; clubs are certainly one possibility, and some organisations have social media and WhatsApp groups to put skippers in touch with crew and vice versa. Some clubs even host skipper-crew 'speed dating' events open to non-member sailors – and there are plenty of crew-finder websites out there, such as Boat Buddys.

It is certainly true that in an age of busy working lives and social media, many older skippers are struggling to find crew keen to come with them, but these approaches have worked well for me.

And unless I win the wretched Lottery it's the way I'll continue to sail both as crew and as skipper.



Working on a yacht delivery is a good way to build experience

Duncan Mckenzie / Professional Yacht Deliveries

TOP CREWING TIPS

- As my grandmother used to say, 'If you don't ask you won't get!'
- Be proactive – there's lots of sailing out there – so don't be frightened of asking. The internet is the first place to start, but if you simply talk to people, opportunities will open up.
- Be enthusiastic but not too pushy.
- Come to understand the culture of each group or crew – they all have one and frequently their origins are reflected in their approach.
- Skippering a yacht is as much about handling people as sailing. While you may not be skippering first off, it's important to have reasonable social skills and to get on with people (even if you find you don't like some on a particular trip).
- That said, it's a yacht not a democracy, and the skipper's word should be final.
- Avoid lengthy debates on WhatsApp and social media.
- Group yachts are owned by the membership and all members – not least the organising committee – will be protective about the group's boat.
- Handover-takeover procedures really are key – do the checklist and paperwork diligently.
- The time when most damage is done to any yacht is when coming alongside a pontoon – never pass up the opportunity to practise your mooring under the watchful eye of a committee member.
- Accidents do happen. Everybody will know that, so don't be frightened of owning up – what really annoys the 'committee' is discovering damage or breakages they were unaware of.
- All yachts need annual maintenance, so play your part.
- Volunteer to clean the heads at the end of the trip.



THE CURIOUS INCIDENT OF AIS IN THE NIGHT-TIME

When container vessels mysteriously started keeping clear of Peter Webb's yacht, it seemed odd, but the answer to their unusual behaviour didn't emerge until they were safely in harbour



All photos: Peter Webb

Crossing the North Sea in a small boat usually involves a lot of dodging large shipping, but this passage was mysteriously different

Dodging ships can feel like being a chicken crossing a very busy motorway

The North Sea at night: I love it. It can turn wild, like any mountain or desert, but that's not all the time. When it's calm, fishing lights appear, dodge about, and disappear. Wind farm constructions march through the waves, towering above small boats, flashing red and white in the moonlight. The black waves and unseen sand banks demand respect, as does the shipping.

Collision avoidance work is easier these days. One navigation aid, the Automatic Identification System (AIS), transmits small packets of (live) navigational and (pre-programmed) vessel information alongside regular VHF radio audio broadcasts, and receives similar information from others in return. Overlay this on a chart plotter and you have a map of the surrounding traffic, or at least, of those ships with AIS functioning correctly and switched on.

NORTH SEA CROSSING

On a recent night crossing I found the AIS had the unexpected benefit of clearing the shipping out of the way. How did that happen? You may well ask.

Last year, I set out to cross the North Sea with my 16-year-old son. It was a late-season outing from Harwich to Ostend. And it seemed like a fine idea for a long weekend in the October half term. We loaded food and fuel in Shotley marina. And as the light started to fade at 1700, I did reflect that the nights are much longer on the winter-side of the equinox. Not to worry.

Night had fallen by the time we reached the Landguard Cardinal. So, with waypoints for Medusa and Gunfleet set, then Trinity and Sunk



West, and with the helpful glow of our trusty cockpit compass, we made our way out across King's Channel and the traffic around the Sunk Lightship. The Galloper turbines were flashing in lines of red in the distance, and we crossed the shallower ground of North Falls. It was a clear night and Fred kept watch for several hours while I slept.

I wanted to be fresh for our next challenge, familiar to many readers, which was the main north-south shipping lanes. Because, as any sailor who has done it will confirm, dodging ships in a busy TSS (traffic separation scheme) lane in a 10m yacht can feel very like the video game *Crossy Road* in which a chicken has to cross a multilane motorway. Except there is more steel and power involved, and 'game over' equals, at best, a long, cold swim.

As we approached the first lane, with traffic from north to south, one freighter on our side of the lane, quite close, seemed to choose a course that took her

away from us. That was interesting. But she was only a small one. My attention was on a line of three container ships in line astern not many miles distant.

According to AIS these were big; 300 to 400m in length, and going fast, at 14-18 knots. That's a lot of steel moving through the water in the darkness, covering a mile and a half in just five minutes; changing from a pinprick of light on the horizon to a towering, thumping great container ship in less than the time it takes to make a quick cup of tea. But I'd done this before, and the container ships can be relied upon to hold their line. To go back to the *Crossy Road* analogy, I was the chicken, and it was my job to aim for the predictable gaps.

MYSTERIOUS MOVES

I had them all on the AIS read out, and I was wondering whether to simply stop and wait for the three of them to pass, when an odd thing happened. The first of the three ships seemed to adjust its course away from me. So, no need to slow down for that one.

A short interval later, the second did the same thing and adjusted course. How odd. Container ships don't do that. Then, more curious still, the third altered course to come behind my stern. Really? Was I seeing all this correctly? I wondered at the time. But my attention soon turned to the north-bound lane on the far side of the traffic separation zone. And my night watch continued.

In the event, crossing the northbound lane was easy, because those ships that were there seemed to have had →

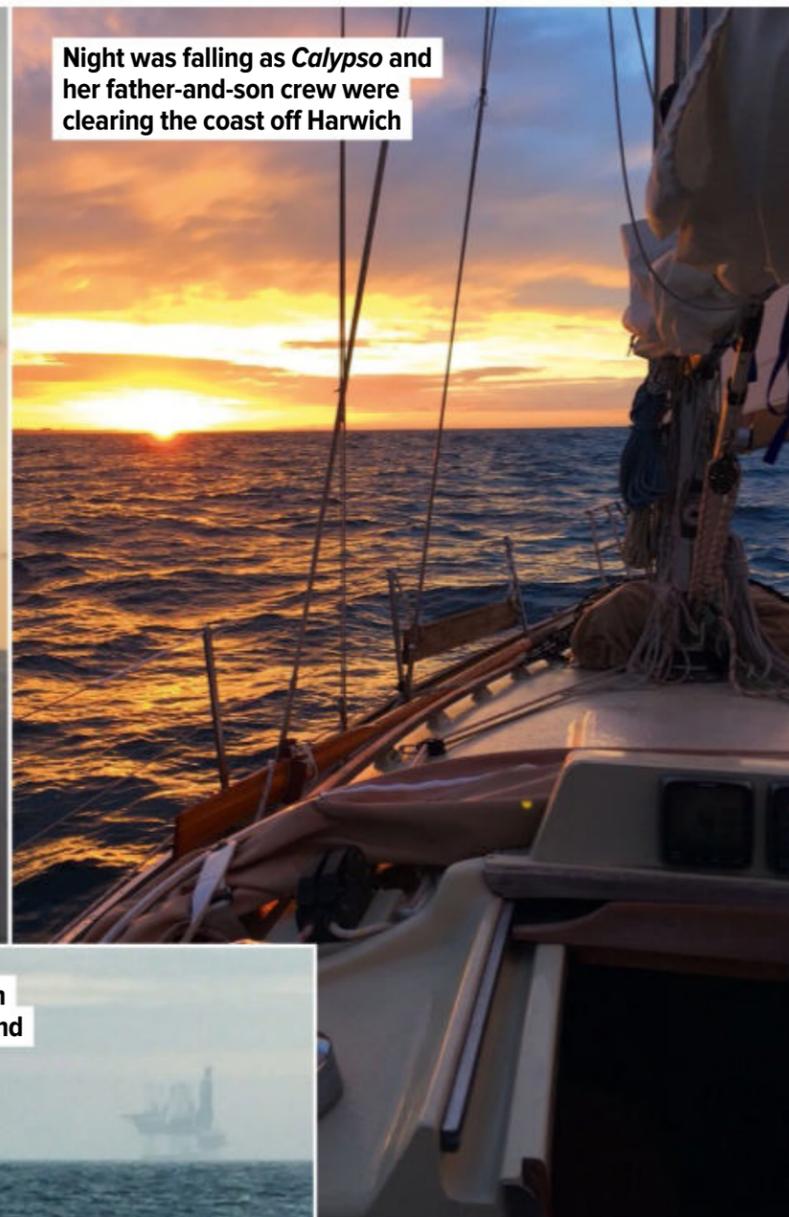
Peter learned to sail on the rivers of East Anglia and the North Sea and as a student took a 17ft open boat around Spitsbergen in the Arctic. Since starting a family, camping adventures using a Canadian canoe and cruising in the Contessa 32 *Calypso* have taken precedence. Having worked as a travelling engineer on oil rigs, he now helps to decarbonise energy systems. He lives in Shotley, Suffolk, and continues to sail on the Orwell and nearby rivers.



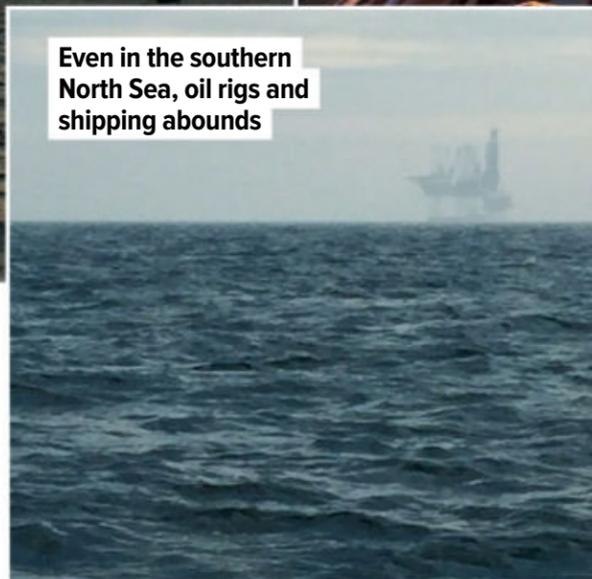
I was wondering whether to stop and let the ships pass when an odd thing happened



Dawn revealed serried ranks of wind turbines that had been flashing red dots overnight



Night was falling as *Calypso* and her father-and-son crew were clearing the coast off Harwich



Even in the southern North Sea, oil rigs and shipping abounds

chosen lines that took them clear. Well, it was surprisingly easy, but that does happen sometimes. When I could see the way through, Fred came on watch. Later and shortly before the late pre-dawn, the four strong flashes of the West Hinder Light beckoned and before long we ran due east to the outermost end of the buoyed channel into Ostend.

Tower blocks loomed on both sides of the leading lights and the harbour walls materialised between the two greys of sea and sky. I stepped up onto the foredeck and raised the Belgian courtesy flag, unaware of the camera trained on us. And we made the transition from the rocky open sea to calm water in the harbour basin.

The pontoons of the Royal North Sea Yacht Club had just closed for the season. It was late October, after all. So, we tied

up on a waiting pontoon for the lock gates to the Mercator basin. Fred and I packed away the sailing gear and hung wet kit out to dry. We made some coffee and watched a pair of kingfishers flashing to and from their nest in the harbour wall.

I called home. My wife seemed relieved. Apparently, she'd been unable to follow our AIS track on marinetraffic.com and she usually can, which was a little odd, because all the systems had been working all the way across, at least from what I could see. Oh well, I thought, grabbed the passports and went to the harbour office to check in.

'Which vessel, and where are you from?'

'Yacht *Calypso*, we've just arrived from Harwich.'

'So, not HMS *Enterprise*?' This response surprised

me, he was smiling. Had I missed a joke? 'No, not the *Enterprise*', I said. Do us Brits even have one of those? Or is it a star ship?

I paid harbour dues, told him our plans, and asked about the shower block. That *Enterprise* thing was a bit confusing, I let it drop. Then walking back to *Calypso*, a thought occurred.

As I walked, I clicked onto the Marine Traffic website, and zoomed in to Ostend. The information on the map graphic showed all the traffic with the

At night, the North Sea coast is a thin line of shore lights. Picking out buoyage is essential





I stepped up onto the foredeck, unaware of the camera trained on us

latest vessel and navigation system information on the central servers. And there, tied up alongside the waiting pontoon, right where I could see *Calypso* in the water in front of me, at least according to Marine Traffic, was HMS *Enterprise*, a rather different vessel. That made me smile.

THAT'S OUR NUMBER!

I clicked through to the *Enterprise* vessel information and found what I was already beginning to suspect. Their Maritime Mobile Service Identifier (MMSI) number looked very, very familiar. I checked the digits. And it was in fact our very own, assigned by Ofcom to *Calypso*. The same that I'd entered on the Home Office webpage with our 'single pleasure craft report' SPCR passage plan. I strongly suspect the radio operator on HMS *Enterprise* had recently re-programmed their VHF with the wrong number. But hey.

A little later that day I also suspect they turned their VHF and AIS systems on. Because HMS *Enterprise*, the real Royal Navy Survey vessel, suddenly appeared on Marine Traffic in Den Helder, North Holland transmitting our MMSI, making the jump from Belgium to North Holland at (apparently) light speed. Maybe a space craft after all? But it seemed the Royal Navy radio team



Neil Watkin / Alamy

The Royal Navy hydrographic survey ship HMS *Enterprise*, for which Peter's yacht was mistaken

sorted out the problem quite quickly, because when arriving back in the UK with Roughs Tower in full view, Harwich called us up using our correct name.

'*Calypso, Calypso, Calypso* this is Harwich VTS'

All resolved. One might think. Well. Not quite.

This experience reminded me that when we installed our radio in 2016, it did seem odd that the MMSI number was already in use by another vessel. Now, months later, I checked my records from that year, and I saw that the vessel with our MMSI was the 'coalition warship' HMS *Example*, an Archer-class patrol vessel based in Gateshead Northumberland.

On that occasion I wrote to Ofcom and they presumably contacted the ship's crew because the HMS *Example* MMSI changed some months later. But two ships, both Royal Navy, programming the same incorrect MMSI six years apart, what are the chances?

My final strong suspicion is that a communications training officer somewhere in the Senior Service has written a training aid for naval radio operators on programming a new VHF, and I suspect the training aid has an example MMSI number, which just happens to be the nine digits that are assigned to *Calypso*.

The way I see it, I have two options. Write a letter, along the lines of, 'Dear Royal Navy, with respect to my MMSI, 232002883, please don't use it. And maybe check your training guides and remove it if you find it there.' (This article may achieve the same.) Or look forward to the next time all shipping takes avoiding action because they think I am a British Coalition Warship.

In the meantime, we on board *Calypso* will go back to being the chicken in our own maritime version of *Crossy Road*. Just like everyone else. Except the warships.

LESSONS LEARNED

1 HANDLE DATA WITH CAUTION

See the information coming from complex global systems for what it is: numbers transmitted by VHF or satellite with identifiers that match (and sometimes do not) vessel information stored elsewhere. While precise information looks appealing, there is still plenty of opportunity for it to be wrong, and therefore misleading, either through machine malfunction or human error.

2 HUMAN DECISIONS

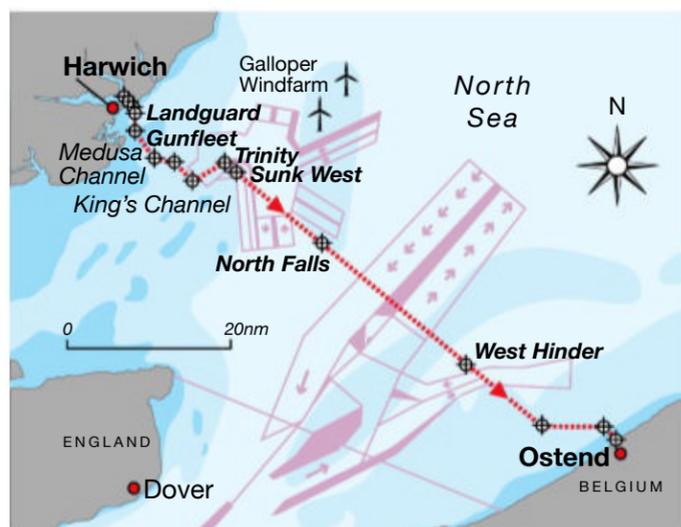
Behind the high steel freeboard, engine noise and lights of large commercial traffic, there is probably a human in a small cabin, looking at a small screen, trying to decide what to do. This will be based on the best information available, so sometimes the decisions and resulting actions may be wrong.

3 DOUBLE CHECK

If the electronic information is too confusing or doesn't seem to tally with what's out there in the real world, then good ol' eyes, ears, binoculars, accurate charts and the compass in a well-found boat, will still give you all the information you need to make decisions in the way sailors have done for years.

4 AIS RADIO CHECK

All of our equipment was working properly and had been programmed. You don't need to do a voice VHF radio check all the time, but looking on Marine Traffic will show if your AIS is transmitting, and if it's transmitting the correct information.





CRUISING HIGHLAND HOPPING

*Every anchorage in the Western Isles is different,
giving the sailor the experience of a new world,
as Dick Durham discovers*

Words & pictures Dick Durham







There aren't many places where you can anchor so close to a mountain it breathes on you. In heavy weather the draughts of exhaled tempest that rush down the sheer face of Sgùrr Dubh Mòr will sail your boat, under bare poles, around her ground tackle.

Many sailors down the years have experienced violent katabatic-like winds in the Isle of Skye's Loch Scavaig and yet it continues to lure yachtsmen into its deceptively pond-like embrace.

When Republican gun-runner Conor O'Brien's 26-ton cutter, *Kelpie*, anchored next to the 3,000ft Big Black Peak in 1921, seven years after delivering a shipment of rifles to the Irish Volunteers, he was astonished to witness sea spray 'streaming up a perpendicular cliff' as a gale created a giant vacuum through the Cuillins.

In 1938 Eric Hiscock, the famed world-girdling Royal Cruising Club (RCC) member, feared his 24ft cutter *Wanderer II*, would part her anchor chain as 'the squalls tore round and round in that devil's cauldron, whipping the spray from the sea and whirling it away overhead to be lost in the low mist which made a roof for the dark pit in which we lay.'

As for the giant's proximity, even the 19th-century Admiralty Sailing Directions report: 'the rocky precipitous sides of the mountain [...] are altogether so steep that a stone loosened from its summit finds no resting place until it plunges into the sea.'

Now it was our turn to visit 'one of the most dramatic and awe-inspiring anchorages in Europe' as the pilot book describes it.

Like those who had sailed there before us we hailed from very different ports and professions, with one common aim: to anchor in a sea-filled mountain pool.

Peter Haworth, a semi-retired judge and deputy bailiff of Guernsey, had driven from his home in Skipworth, Yorkshire. I had taken the night train from London to Glasgow and an early connection to Oban. And our skipper Martin Thomas, a retired vascular surgeon, had sailed his boat *Charm of Rhu*, a classic 40ft Fife, from Bosham in West Sussex, to our departure port of Kerrera island, the natural breakwater for the port of Oban.

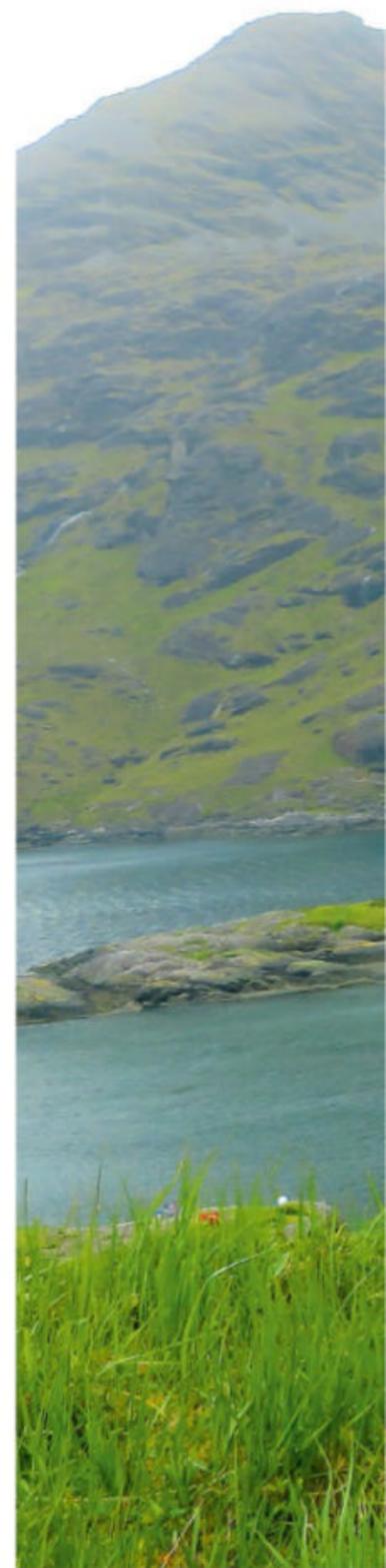


IN THE SHADOW OF GIANTS

Under a light northwesterly breeze and fluffy grey cloud drifting over the Big Black Peak's summit, we gingerly motor-sailed *Charm of Rhu* into our destination Loch Na Cuilice (Gaelic for recess), the inner sanctum of Loch Scavaig, with Peter on his laptop, Martin steering and myself gawping. For reassurance we had spotted two masts over the entry rock, En Glas, which almost blocks the black-surfaced pond like Christ's

resurrection stone. I helmed as Martin went forward and dropped his Rocna anchor in 4.5m giving her 20m of chain, mindful of Hiscock's *Wanderer II* being 'pinned down', her lee rail awash from squalls coming vertically down the Big Black Peak from 'all points of the compass.'

The other yachts in our anchorage were *Aurora III*, a GRP sloop, sailed by Forth Yacht Club member Oliver Ludlow and his wife, and a French Ovni 36 whose skipper asked if we had a spare rivet gun aboard as his was malfunctioning!



ABOVE LEFT: *Charm of Rhu* at anchor off Eigg, and above right, in Loch Scavaig
RIGHT: Dick Durham joined *Charm of Rhu* at Oban for the voyage out to Skye
LEFT: A deer at Kinloch Castle

It was our turn to visit one of the most dramatic and awe-inspiring anchorages in Europe



Charm of Rhu lay beneath black-brown boulders which climbed at all angles almost vertically up into the sky, shining with wet patches of water oozing from a crazy paving of green peat. A waterfall could be plainly heard and gushed a white slash down a black rock gorge as a cuckoo fluted somewhere from an impossible perch.

VERTIGINOUS SURROUNDINGS

The wind came in gentle puffs down the mountain, but each time it did so we were chilled to the bone, and even the strong May sunshine, when eventually it broke free of cloud, warmed us only momentarily.

Peter and I took the inflatable across the loch to a steel ladder, the only landing place available. He is a man of taciturn expression – as you would expect from someone who has spent their life weighing things up – and I found myself wondering if this RORC (Royal Ocean Racing Club) racing skipper,

Rum appeared to be on fire as its massive bulk forced cloud to smoke along its flanks



ABOVE: Sailing to the island of Eigg
RIGHT: Skipper Martin Thomas as lookout
BELOW: Clouds gathering over the island of Rum

Atlantic yachtsman and hot-air balloonist approved of my boat handling, as I skewed the electric outboard handle this way and that. So, I tried to make him laugh. When I succeeded, I thought: 'I'm not guilty, Sir? Are you sure?'

Peter struck off on foot for Loch Coruisk, a fresh water lake above which the Cuillins cut their spiky teeth on glacial ice, some 50 million years ago. I, instead, climbed a steep gully and panted out onto a flat rock to aim my camera at *Charm of Rhu*, 800 feet below me. Much to my irritation another yacht had anchored in the loch between my lens and *Charm*. So, I climbed higher to get a clear view of the boat. As boat selfies

go, Loch Scavaig seemed worth the effort. The boat that spoiled my photo opportunity turned out to be *Pixie*, a very smartly kept Rustler 36, whose skipper rowed across to us to say that his father was a member of the RCC, too.

'Oh, who is your father then?' asked Martin. 'Charles Warlow.'

'Ah, Charles Warlow, consultant neurologist at Edinburgh Hospital,' said Martin.

The world of sailing is small, the world of medicine is smaller, and membership of the RCC smaller still.

It seems the more exclusive the union the tighter the knit. Add to that anchoring in Loch Scavaig and you could start a new elite.

That night I stood on deck. There were just two lights in that dark amphitheatre: a reflection of a new moon on the black water and the riding light of the Danish-built gaffer, *Eda Frandsen*, which had crept in at dusk.

A seal marked the last of the submerged rocks, giving us a point to miss as we motored out the following morning.

Our next island, Rum, appeared to be on fire as its massive bulk soared up into the sky forcing the cloud to smoke along its flanks.

We picked up a mooring and went ashore, landing at an ancient stone pier and walking along a lonely track beneath drooping trees, passing the sandstone bulk of an abandoned stately home, Kinloch Castle.





‘The castle’s no longer open then?’ I asked the proprietor of a nearby convenience store.

‘No, too dangerous. The roof’s falling in,’ the young mother answered rather wistfully, as she had once worked there. This came as a disappointment to *Charm of Rhu’s* crew. I had visited the place some 20-odd years before and had enthused to my companions about its strangeness. ‘There has been a move afoot to repair it,’ she said, ‘but many feel it would be a waste of money,’ she added dejectedly.

ECCENTRIC OPULENCE

Kinloch Castle was built for Sir George Bullough, who inherited a fortune from his father, John, a Lancashire textile magnate. Finished in 1900, it was used as a ‘lodge’ by Bullough and pals to shoot red deer, which still run wild on Rum.

The rooms are stuffed with stags’ heads and rather tacky ashtrays made from their hooves. He bestowed the castle with all sorts of exotic creatures including alligators, which escaped from their compound, and humming birds which he had stuffed after they died when the heating failed in the conservatory.

Bullough’s bizarre zoo was also legendary for its salacious parties. The butler never saw anything, however, as drinks were served through a one-way hatch into the ballroom.

We peered through the leaded windows of the fenced-off castle and were astonished by the opulence: a grand piano, huge and expensively

TOP: *Charm of Rhu* anchored in the dramatic Loch Scavaig
ABOVE: Kinloch Castle on Rum has fallen into disrepair

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ABOVE: Martin Thomas takes the helm while Peter Haworth navigates
LEFT: Peter Haworth at the helm, gathering speed

upholstered chaise longues, oil paintings, weird and violent statuettes, including a stuffed eagle clawing a dead lamb and two Inuit biting each other, all left to rot under the leaky roof.

On our way back to the tender we passed a burly young man. He told us there had been a billionaire ready to spend £8m on the castle. ‘But he lost interest and pulled out because he’d been accused by some of wanting to control the island,’ he said, disgusted.

INSPIRING A LITERARY CLASSIC

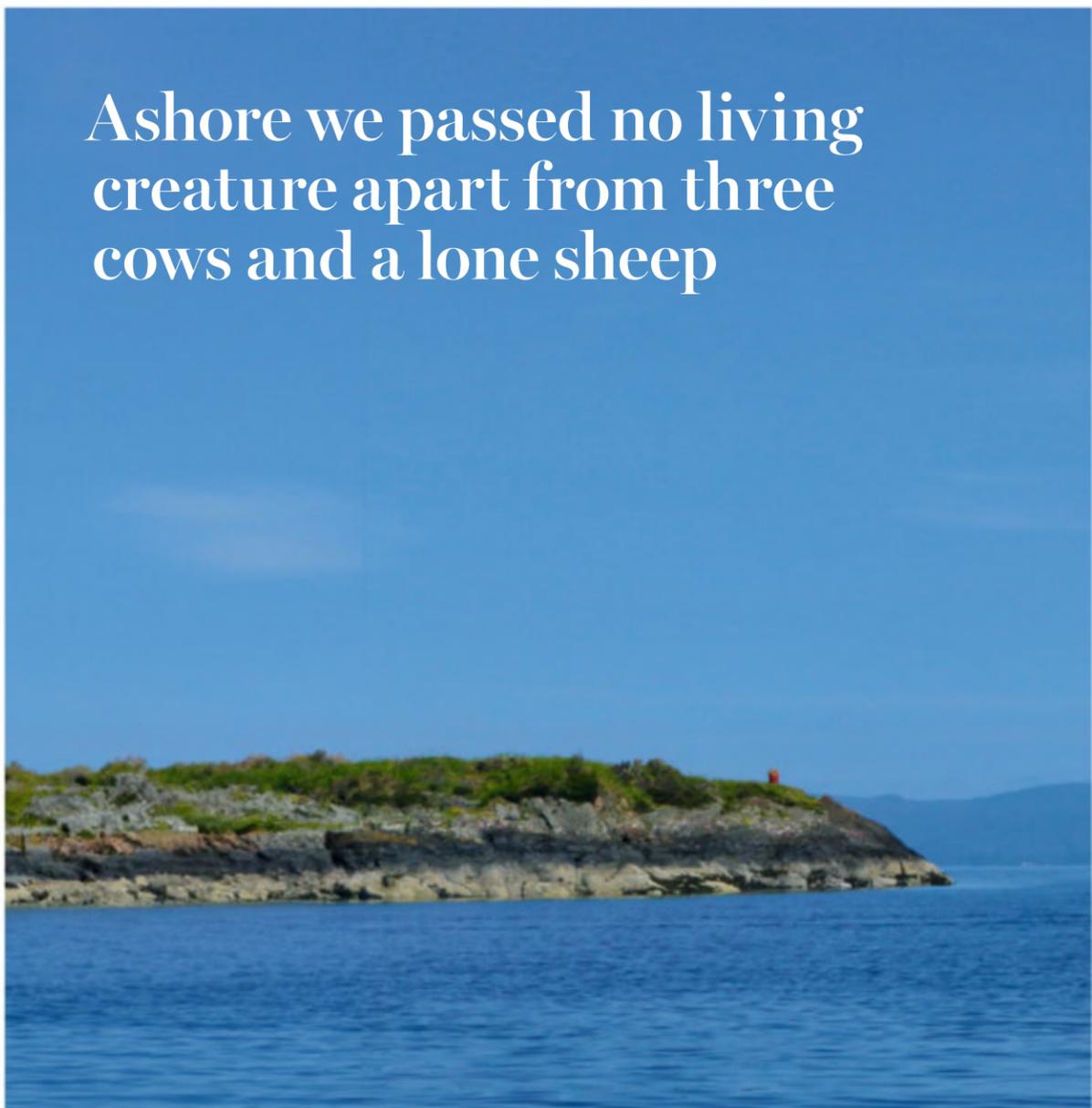
Our next anchorage was Poll nam Partan, on the south-eastern corner of Eigg. The island appeared like a giant green submarine, its conning tower the sugarloaf crag (An Sgùrr) the largest volcanic column in Britain. It partly inspired former resident, JRR Tolkien, when he was writing *The Lord of the Rings*.

The bay was shoal and yet calm. However, winds from south round to east would make the place untenable. Ashore, we found a stunning new restaurant right at the landing place, with a plate glass window that made you feel you were dining in a living picture of the Sea of the Hebrides. Every male on the island sported a beard, noted Peter, and they were all very large: perhaps the descendants of clansmen? It was as though Netflix was making a biopic of the Highland Clearances.

After spending the night it was time to head for the Isle of Muck for breakfast. Port Mor is a tight

anchorage, but enjoys a well-marked entrance with perches like street lamps either side of the rocky channel and good shelter in anything other than south or south-east winds. Ashore we passed no living creature apart from three cows and a sheep.

Ashore we passed no living creature apart from three cows and a lone sheep



RIGHT: Leaving the sheltered harbour of Puilladobhrain (Pool of the Otter)

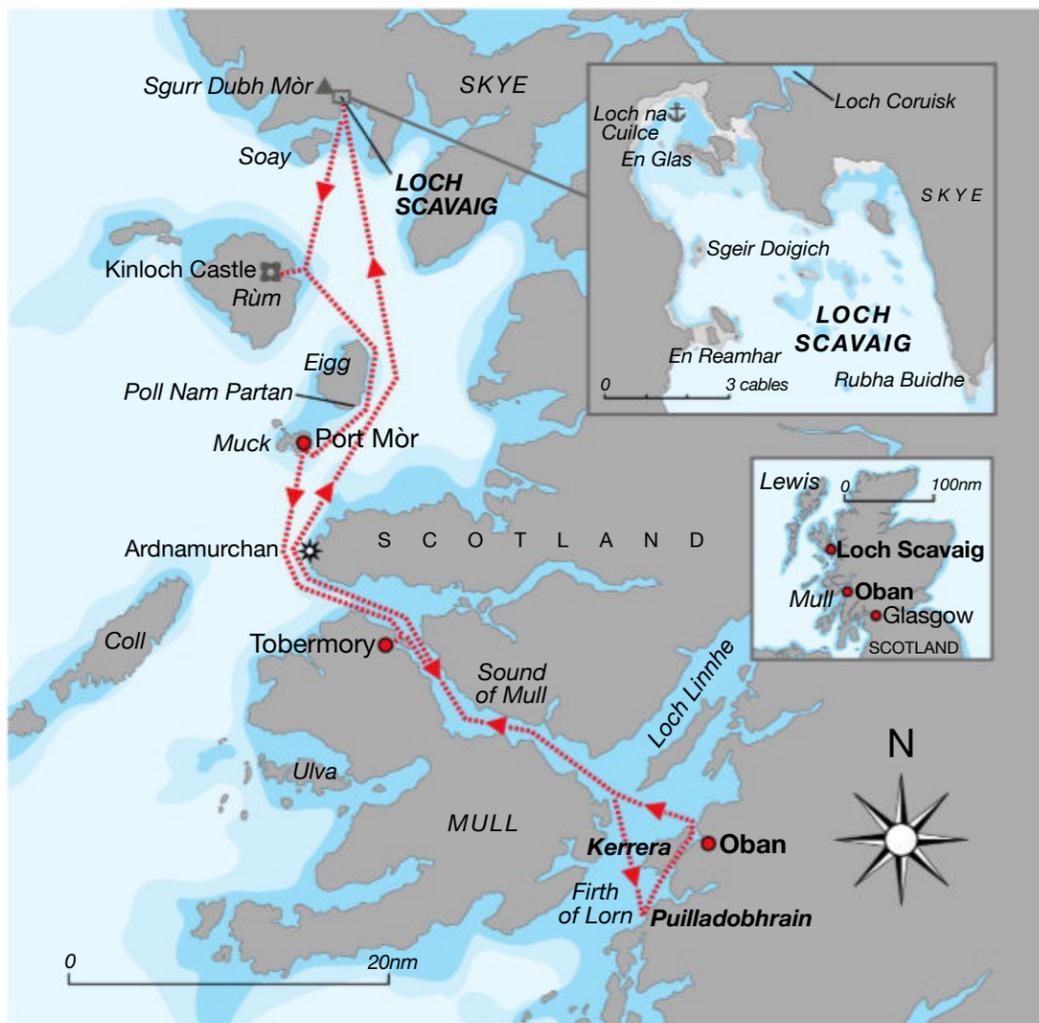
Even the ubiquitous craft shop selling boxed toy puffins at £20 a pop was manned only by an honesty box. It's hardly surprising that Lawrence and Ewen MacEwen, owners of Muck, advertise sporadically for new inhabitants with children so that the primary school remains viable. But then we found the bakery. It seemed as though all the island's 27 citizens were in there. I can recommend the steak pies, which quickly sold out.

At last, we had a good stiff breeze and *Charm of Rhu* sent spray flying as we rounded the lighthouse at Ardnamurchan Point and sailed into Tobermory on the Isle of Mull. Perfect shelter and moorings aplenty we moored up opposite the pink, yellow and blue habitats on the promenade and made ready for dinner ashore.

SUBLIME ANCHORAGE

A dead-run in sunshine down the Sound of Mull and round into the Firth of Lorn saw us heading for our penultimate anchorage: Puilladobhain, described by the aforementioned Hiscock as the most perfect anchorage in the world, which is why we had to share it with six other yachts. Perhaps Hiscock kept his booze locker filled and had no need to leave his boat, because the crew of *Charm*, seeking a hostelry, stumbled over weed and rock to get a footing ashore: one thing that's not perfect about Puilladobhain is the landing. However, an arcadia awaits the sailor who does manage to land: we walked over wooded hills covered in bluebells to the Tigh An Truish pub which I couldn't spell on the way in and certainly couldn't pronounce on the way out.

Looking back, my lasting impression of these beautiful Scottish cruising grounds was one of yearning: I cannot wait to go back.



YOUR TOP TEN

CRUISING TIPS

The late Hamish Haswell-Smith once told me that when he sailed close to a surfaced smoking nuclear submarine to see if he could offer assistance, the commander invited him aboard to share the sausages he was barbecuing! There is nothing to compare with Hamish's book...

- 1 **FURTHER READING** *The Scottish Islands*, Haswell-Smith (£35 Canongate). 'The Rosetta Stone of island hopping' as it was once described.
- 2 **WEATHER FORECASTS** can be obtained from BBC Radio Scotland on medium wave and from Irish stations on long wave.
- 3 **ANCHORING** The big issue is kelp. You need to ensure your anchor has gone down through the kelp to the sea bed, by setting it in.
- 4 **PASSAGE PLANNING** Can be assisted with information gleaned from the Clyde Cruising Club sailing directions.
- 5 **BEST TIME TO VISIT** is May-June when high-pressure systems are most likely, and fine, clear days are the result.
- 6 **SHELTER** The whole area is under the lee of the Outer Hebrides which act as a wind barrier to the Atlantic Ocean's wind systems.
- 7 **EATING OUT** The greatest choice of bars and restaurants, along with deep water moorings, is to be found at Tobermory.
- 8 **ACCESS** It is easiest by road or train to Oban from where ferries operate to most islands.
- 9 **CLOTHING** Make sure you take a set of thermals as temperatures are a degree or three lower here than on the Solent all year round.
- 10 **BERTHING** Costs here are much lower than on the South Coast as a result many cruising folks base their boats here during the summer months.



DICK DURHAM

is a novelist, biographer and journalist, and has been sailing since childhood.

His adventures have taken him to Norway in the north to Gibraltar in the south as well as the Med, Caribbean, and in the Far East.

When he was features editor for *YM* he was watch leader for two legs of *Gipsy Moth IV's* second circumnavigation.

He now sails a 25ft gaff cutter, *Betty II*, first launched in 1921.



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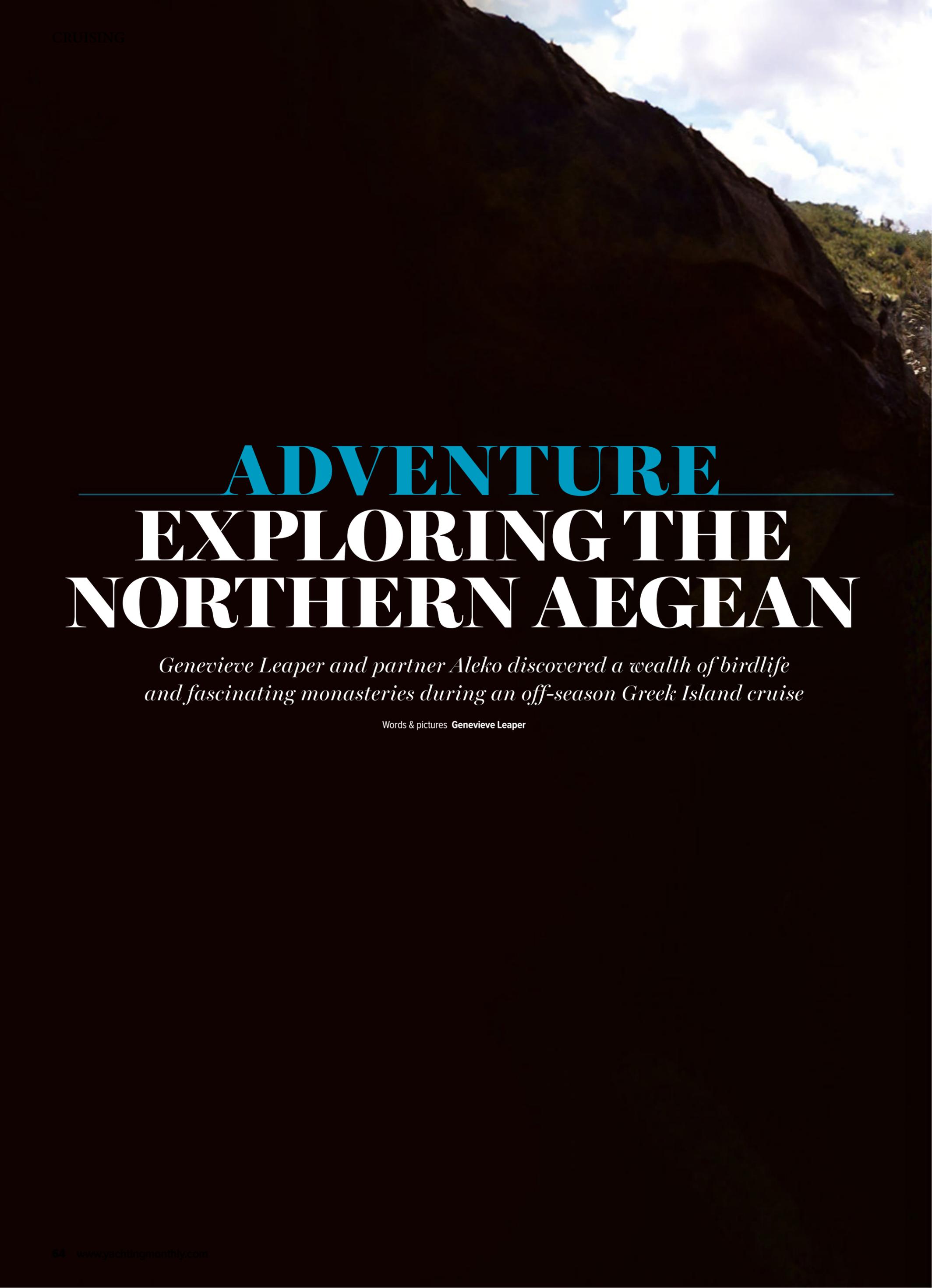
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ADVENTURE EXPLORING THE NORTHERN AEGEAN

Genevieve Leaper and partner Aleko discovered a wealth of birdlife and fascinating monasteries during an off-season Greek Island cruise

Words & pictures **Genevieve Leaper**



RIGHT: *Beduin* anchored off Penna, an uninhabited islet in the Singitikos Gulf as a thunderstorm approaches



A

rriving in late March at my partner's home in Greece, I was expecting a few days at the house before sailing. But with a period of southerly winds forecast – unusual enough to be worth making the most of – the skipper was

itching to get going. Having been east and south to the Dodecanese and Cyclades in recent years, we had decided to head north for a change. Aleko had been preparing *Beduin*, his Nicholson 32, before I arrived.

From our base in Milina in the Pagasetic Gulf, we were soon out through the Sporades, passing between Skiathos and Skopelos. An early start on the third day saw us passing Gioura by sunrise. It was a long day (62 miles) to Limnos but we enjoyed a good sail once the wind picked up, with Scopoli's shearwaters our constant companions all day. Bow-riding dolphins and a loggerhead turtle completed the day's wildlife.

NATURAL WONDERS

We anchored in a small bay in the northwest corner of Limnos. With a shorter distance to Samothraki, there was time to go ashore in the morning to investigate the bizarre rock formations.

Samothraki, the most northeasterly of the Greek islands, is steep-sided and lacks anchorages, so there isn't much choice but to stay in Kamariotissa harbour. Having enjoyed a lovely walk up a river valley on a previous visit, I was hoping to stay for a few days, but the weather was cold and wet. At least the wind was still favourable to press on to Alexandroupoli.

The enormous outer harbour at Alexandroupoli is enclosed by a mile-long breakwater which shelters the commercial port and a large naval base, where tugs were fussing around a French frigate. The tiny inner harbour is overlooked by the lighthouse that stands incongruously within the town. Most berths were occupied by resident yachts but we squeezed onto the end of a pontoon.



Aleko has taken *Beduin* through to the Black Sea but had never visited this part of the country. As soon as the weather improved we hired a car for an excursion inland to Dadia National Park. The park is renowned for birds of prey and we saw vultures and eagles on a walk in the hills, enjoyed close views of nesting storks from our hotel and visited the impressive petrified forest at Lefkimi on the way back.

From Alexandroupoli we headed west along the mainland; a low, unremarkable coastline backed by the Rhodopes mountains. With the prevailing wind offshore, the long sandy beaches, for once, gather more seashells than plastic rubbish. There always seems to be some swell through, and no sheltered anchorages, just a few small fishing harbours. At Makri the breakwater was breaking up but Maroneia was a pleasant little harbour. Many cats were hanging around the quayside and a bold black and white tom cat leapt onboard before we'd tied up. Despite our attempts to chase him off, he was joined by a lady friend. Our uninvited guests only left when a fishing boat came in late at night.

Beating into a light breeze next morning it felt like we were getting nowhere – the lack of progress was only explained when we passed a small buoy, which showed a significant current. And no wonder we felt cold; looking back I realised the bank of white clouds

LEFT: Aleko has sailed *Beduin* for more than 35 years, here in home waters of the Pagasetic Gulf (Gulf of Volos), Thessaly, Greece

RIGHT: *Beduin* approaching Kamariotissa harbour on Samothraki, the most northerly Greek island

Looking back I realised the bank of white clouds was actually snow on the mountaintop



BELOW: Looking down on Nisos Diaporos, off the Sithonia peninsula in the Singitikos Gulf, Greece



over distant Samothraki was actually fresh snow on the mountain top. We later heard that it was the coldest spring for 60 years.

Our spirits were lifted by a pod of bottlenose dolphins who kept us company for more than an hour. As well as the usual shearwaters and gulls I was surprised to see seabirds from northern Europe; black-throated divers and skuas on migration.

Porto Lagos was our favourite harbour. Situated between the channels connecting Lake Vistonida to the sea, it is approached by a buoyed

entrance channel across a shallow bay. This part of East Macedonia and Thrace National Park is fantastic for bird-watching.

Beduin had been suffering from gearbox problems so the cockpit floor came up and the tools came out. Feeling slightly guilty about leaving Aleko working, I went for a bike ride along the lake shore, stopping first at the walkway to the monastery and chapel which sit picturesquely in the lagoon next to the town. Next came a shallow lagoon with a flock of flamingos. On the shore of the main lake (one of





LEFT:
A white stork
(*Ciconia ciconia*) on
a nest in Soufli.
Storks also nest in
the villages around
Lake Vistonida



the largest in Greece) a herd of water buffalo grazing reinforced the feeling of being in a different country. I saw many unfamiliar birds and was startled when two golden jackals burst out of the bushes and dashed across the shallow pool where I was photographing waders and egrets.

EXPLORING HISTORIC SITES

There was only one other cruising yacht in the harbour. James and Diane had found Lagos a good place to spend the winter, but now had a problem. Having rescued three abandoned puppies, they were desperately trying to get them re-homed so they could leave for Turkey.

Somehow they had managed to carry a moped on deck and were generous enough to lend it to us so we could go further round the lake and up to Xanthi. There is no car hire in Lagos, so Kavala, 70km further east, would be a better base for exploring inland. But we were heading straight for Thassos, with one more stop in Avdira, and missed out the Gulfs of Kavala and Strimonikos.

Like Maroneia, Avdira was a far more important place in the past. This coast was a major trade route in ancient times. The many ruins, which date from the 7th century BC to Byzantine times, range from properly excavated sites to crumbling walls half hidden in the undergrowth.



GENEVIEVE LEAPER

Freelance wildlife photographer Genevieve Leaper, based near Aberdeen on the east coast of Scotland, has been sailing all her life. She has sailed a wide variety of boats from racing dinghies to square riggers, but mostly small cruising yachts. Sailing trips to the west coast of Scotland provide a change of scene and many photographic opportunities. Over the last few years, since meeting partner Aleko while sailing in Patagonia, she has spent a lot of time cruising in Greece in his Mk 1 Nicholson 32, built 1964.



It felt good to be on our own again after so much time in harbours

Thassos is another mountainous island but the most conspicuous feature was the ridiculous number of ferries coming and going from Kavála and Keramoti. I counted 10 at once, but thankfully they berth outside the large new harbour where there was plenty of space. More ancient ruins were scattered throughout the modern town and a short walk led up to the amphitheatre (closed for renovation) and a hilltop castle with fine views.

SECLUDED ANCHORAGE

As we headed down the east coast, a ship coming up from the south unexpectedly altered course across our bows to load at the marble quarry. Most of the bays were taken up by tourist resorts with names like Golden Sands, Paradise Beach and Blue Dream Resort – probably not my sort of place. But Aleko has a rare talent for finding an anchorage from the slightest hint on the chart, this time a small shallow patch in the bay behind Akro Stavros. It felt good to be on our own again and get the paddleboards out after so much time in harbours.

Tall masses of cumulus were building over the mountains again as we continued to Limenaria. The harbour is not particularly pretty, but quiet with no ferries. We hired a moped and took a short ride up to Kastro, a small village where the houses are roofed with heavy flat stones. It felt like a different island to

the touristy coast as we walked down through the pine forest and then upstream beside a dry riverbed with enormous plane trees. Further up there was water in the river and we ate our picnic by a beautiful waterfall.

Mount Athos is one of the most imposing features of the northern Aegean. When the weather is clear we see the snow-capped peak from the Sporades, 60 miles away and it had been in view most of this trip. The

ABOVE: Monastery of Agios Nikolaos and chapel of Panagia Pantanassa, Lake Vistonida, Lagos

BELOW: Aleko paddleboarding around Akro Stavros on the east coast of Thassos



The outcrops of rounded pink granite and sandy beaches reminded me of the Scillies



ABOVE: *Beduin* anchored off Nisos Diaporos in the Singitikos Gulf with its unusual granite outcrops

INSET, RIGHT: Small fishing boats in the harbour on the mid Aegean island of Agios Efstratios

mountain lies at the southern end of the 50km-long Athos peninsula, easternmost of three 'fingers' of Chalkidiki and an autonomous region, governed by the monastic state. Now we were finally going to this place I had long been curious about. Not that I could go ashore, all females being banned!

At the northern end of the peninsula, the town of Ierissos lies just outside the monastic state. But Aleko had heard that anchoring is tolerated at Ormos Plati, just within the boundary, which would save us a few miles. We started early for a long day of sightseeing. After several miles of wild forest, the monasteries started with Esphigmenou. Then came Vatopedi, with extensive terraced gardens and vineyards, a harbour and helipad. At least the monks have prevented tourist development of the peninsula so it is still largely wild and unspoiled.

At the southern end, behind Megisti Lavra, the oldest and largest monastery, clouds were swirling round the peak of Mount Athos which rises abruptly to 2,033m. We had intended to carry on around the peninsula but it was getting late and eight monasteries were enough for one day. As we set the asymmetric spinnaker and headed away towards the Sithonia peninsula, the clouds parted to reveal the summit.

After a night in an unnamed bay we paid a brief visit to Sarti harbour, as we were running low on diesel. We had the folding bikes out ready to pedal a mile into the village with cans when a fuel truck

drew up next to one of the fishing boats.

The Singitikos Gulf turned out to be a lovely area. A short downwind sail brought us to Diaporos island. As we came between two rocky islets into the shallow waters behind the low-lying island the outcrops of rounded pink granite flanking sandy beaches vaguely reminded me of the Scillies or North Brittany.

Continuing a circuit of the gulf, we spent a couple of days around Ammouliani and its off-lying islets,

where yellow-legged gulls nest among purple flowers. We had a brief stop for shopping at Ouranoupoli which boasts an impressive mediaeval tower but no real harbour, and then it was another day of monasteries. They are all different, some grim and fortress-like, and the Russian monastery of St Panteleimonas is more like a palace with its green domes and gold crosses. There were still clouds around Mount

Athos but they didn't hide the fresh snow on its slopes.



LAST-MINUTE DIVERSION

Again it made sense to cross to Sithonia for the night, this time to Ormos Sykia. It was time to head back – the Kassandra peninsula would have to wait for another time. The most direct way home would have been straight back to the Sporades, but having missed Agios Efstratios on the way out we took a zigzag eastwards. This peaceful island is a favourite as well as a useful stepping stone when crossing the Aegean. Back in the familiar territory of the Northern



BELOW: A skete (monastic settlement) at the southern end of the Athos peninsula

Sporades we realised the season had started. After weeks with hardly another yacht to be seen, suddenly there were sails everywhere, and Patitiri harbour on Alonnisos was full of charter boats. We fitted in a beach-cleaning session on Peristera and enjoyed a couple of lazy days before reluctantly returning to Milina, where everyone else was busy getting their boats ready to go.



CRUISING THE NORTHERN AEGEAN ESSENTIAL INFO

1 WEATHER

In summer the prevailing wind is northeasterly, but the Meltemi in the far north is less strong and less regular than elsewhere in the Aegean. Along the mainland coast and around Samothraki there can be many days with no wind and, when there is no Meltemi wind, a southwesterly sea breeze often picks up in the afternoon. From autumn to spring, winds blow most frequently from northeast or south. The climate is cooler than in central and southern Greek waters. Winter comes earlier and can be cold and wet.

2 CURRENTS

The pilot books disagree regarding the general direction of currents along the mainland coast. The current in the Thassos strait (Stenon Thasou) depends on wind direction and can reach 3 knots. East of Thassos, the currents flow in the opposite direction to the wind and tend to be stronger in spring. Athos is best avoided in bad weather, with currents of up to 6 knots and violent gusts from the mountain.

3 PILOT BOOKS

Greece, Sea Guide Volume 2 Evvoia, Sporades, North Aegean, by Nicholas D Elias, Eagle Ray

laminated pilot charts from www.eagleray.gr/en/ **Greek Waters Pilot** A yachtsman's guide to the Ionian and Aegean coasts and islands of Greece by Rod and Lucinda Heikell, Imray 13th Ed 2018

4 ATHOS

Mount Athos has been listed as a World Heritage Site since 1988. The mediaeval monasteries house a rich collection of rare and ancient artefacts. For men it is possible to visit but numbers are restricted to 100 Greeks and Orthodox plus 10 non-Orthodox visitors per day. Permits must be obtained in advance. Women are not allowed to enter at any time. Yachts are not allowed to anchor or approach within 500m of the shore.

5 CHARTER

Although less well known than other parts of the Aegean, there are plenty of options for chartering in northern Greece.

Boats are available from Thessaloniki, Nea Skioni (on the Kassandra peninsula), Kavala, Keramoti and Avdira – all within reasonable distance of the major international airport at Thessaloniki. Kavala (which also has a small airport) is probably a good bet.

YOUR CRUISING COMMUNITY

Send your sailing gossip, diary dates, cruising news and club updates to heather.prentice@futurenet.com

Orford Sailing Club celebrates 100 years

Situated in arguably one of Suffolk's prettiest villages and under the watchful eye of its medieval castle and church, Orford Sailing

Club celebrates its centenary in 2024. The club is situated on the foreshore of the River Ore close to Orford Quay, five miles

up from the notorious Orford bar, and offers 15 miles of sheltered sailing in the river Alde-Ore tidal estuary.



Orford Sailing Club

Orford Sailing Club is planning a summer of events including a regatta and sail-past to celebrate 100 years

The members are very active with cruising members sailing long distances and dinghy sailors mastering both how to sail and how to cope with the river – strong currents rip past the town quay. The club still has a fleet of Orford Dabchick Ten Footers alongside the Wayfarers, Toppers and Fevas.

The friendly club offers plenty of social activities. There are a series of special events to celebrate the centenary. On 1 June, there is a centenary 1920s dinner dance in Orford town hall with live band Hollie B and the Rocketeers. There is an exhibition: A centenary of sailing at Orford in The Watch House gallery, Orford. There will also be a summer centenary regatta on 17-18 August with a 1924 Orford regatta summer party and a centenary flotilla sail-past. www.orfordsail.org.uk

Guildford club celebrates 50 years

Guildford Coastal Cruising Club (GCCC) celebrated its golden jubilee in style, cutting a cake in 2023 and closing the year with a golden jubilee dinner dance in December.

Formed in 1973 by a group of yachtsmen who attended night school navigation classes together, the GCCC provides Guildford boat owners who moor their boats on the south coast with social activities and a programme of seasonal weekend rallies.

The summer barbecue attracted its largest ever attendance including many past members who came back to help celebrate. The festivities continued on the water with



boats gathered in Lymington for the best dressed boat competition, with dinner at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club. A dinner dance was held in December at Sutton Green Golf Club. www.guildfordsailing.org

First female Commodore for Royal Mersey YC

Carys Jarvis, who took office in March, is the first female commodore in the 180-year history of the Royal Mersey Yacht Club, which dates back to a Royal Charter by Queen Victoria in 1844. 'I feel it is a great honour and privilege to have been voted into this role,' Carys Jarvis said. royalmersey-yc.co.uk

Carys Jarvis makes history at the 180-year-old club



SCUTTLEBUTT

LESS FANCY

Why are yachts required to be fitted out to such high standards in their interiors? The finish on Hillyards or other yachts from the 1930s-onwards is and was quite adequate. Do we need such perfect joinery today? **Wansworth**

AGEING SAILOR

I seem to do more day-sailing than trips in recent years, without making a conscious effort to do so. Is this a natural progression when starting to become ancient? Ironically, day-sailing takes more out of me, with all those jobs to do. **Snowgoose-1**

ALMOST ALL

As a slave to work, I often day-sail. I also go through phases: fair weather, any weather sailor, fog, wind, calm. Although generally I don't do cold, wet and windy combined; two out of three is fine. **Onesea**

HOME BASED

Young people do adventurous trips in small cheap boats. As they become more affluent their boats get bigger with more gadgets and they do fewer long trips. Eventually they effectively have a country cottage which seldom leaves the boat park. **Dan Tribe**

HELLY DONATES

Helly Hansen is supporting the RNLI's Mayday campaign by donating 25% of all UK online sales during May to the RNLI, as it has done since 2018.

COVER EXTENDED

The RYA is renewing its 35-year partnership with boat insurance specialist Bishop Skinner Marine, offering a wide range of cover to RYA members.

KINGS AWARD

The Lord Lieutenant of Devon presented the Disabled Sailing Association with The Kings Award for Voluntary Service in April at a ceremony in Torquay.



The film celebrates engineless sailing on boats like *Blue Mermaid*



Thames barge tour

NEW FILM WIND, TIDE & OAR ON TOUR

A new film *Wind, Tide & Oar* explores the lives of those who sail on traditional boats without relying on auxiliary power. The film premieres at the National Maritime Museum in Greenwich on 23 April, followed by a three-month sailing tour on Thames sailing barge *Blue Mermaid* crewed by youngsters. The tour offers free film screenings, Q&As and school workshops showcasing traditional maritime trades in 10 ports along the south-east coast. www.windtideandoar.com

DIARY DATES

- 2 MARCH TO 1 DEC** Women of the RNLI, National Maritime Museum exhibit, Greenwich. www.rmg.co.uk
- 4 MAY** Devon Boat Jumble. www.boatjumbleassociation.co.uk
- 4 MAY** Horning Boat Show. www.horningboatshow.com
- 4-6 MAY** Jersey Boat Show, St Helier Marina and Weighbridge Place. Free entry. www.jerseyboatshow.com
- 12 MAY** Solent Boat Jumble, Royal Victoria Country Park, Netley. boat-jumbles.co.uk
- 18 MAY** RNLI 200 Poole Lifeboat Festival, RNLI College, Poole, Dorset. RNLI.org/200
- 16-19 MAY** British Motor Yacht Show, Swanwick Marina. www.britishmotoryachtshow.com
- 24 MAY** Royal Escape Race, Brighton to Fécamp. www.sussexyachtclub.org.uk
- 31 MAY 2 June**, Royal Solent Yacht Club Contessa Regatta www.royalsolent.org
- 2 JUNE** Richard Mille Classic Yacht Regatta, Falmouth www.richardmillecup.com

BooM Windsurfing wins RYA Impact Award

Nick Jupp and Paul Dunn – the two members of BooM Windsurfing – have been awarded an RYA Scotland Impact Award for their exceptional commitment to boosting the windsurfing community.

Their aim is to grow the sport, regularly uploading to social media, sharing tips, tricks and even kit reviews.

With a focus now on getting and retaining young people within the sport, the BooM windsurfers have also been involved with several university teams, and have supported events such as the annual Tiree Wave Classic.



Nick Jupp and Paul Dunn with their Impact award

Call for Round the Island Race entries

The Island Sailing Club is calling for boats to register for the 87th edition of the Round the Island Race taking place on 15 June. The annual race around the Isle of Wight, which started in 1931, is an adventure that is fun for professional and amateur sailors alike.

Ben Meakin, a former deputy editor of *Practical Boat Owner* who works for B&G as a test engineer, has competed in the race for over 25 years, most recently aboard his Impala 28, *Polly*. Seven RNLI volunteer crews from Cowes, Calshot, Bembridge, Yarmouth, Lymington, Mudeford and Portsmouth are involved in the race. www.roundtheisland.org.uk



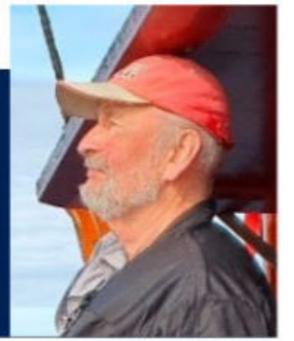
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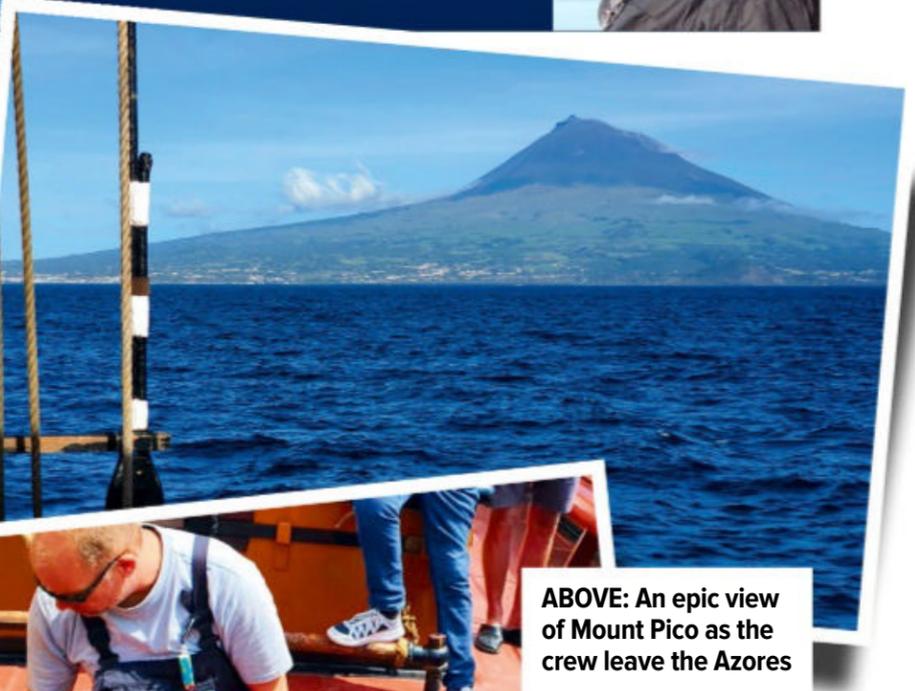
George Mills

YOUR CRUISING STORIES

NICK QUIRKE sails out of Lymington in his yacht *Ensemble*, but ventures further afield in tall ships. He has recently been sailing around Chile



Oosterschelde moored at Faial



ABOVE: An epic view of Mount Pico as the crew leave the Azores



LEFT: Lessons from the skipper using the deck as a chalkboard

Sailing as a trainee on the schooner *Oosterschelde*

I have always wanted to sail on a tall ship; to experience night watches on the high seas, to make sail changes, to helm. Although I've done all these things in my yacht, *Ensemble*, I wanted to know how it would be done on a much larger vessel. I was also influenced by Patrick O'Brian and his stories of Aubrey and Maturin. The glorious tales of the fight at sea against Napoleon, the details of the rigging and ship to ship combat inspired my inner romantic. So, when I saw the possibility of sailing

aboard *Oosterschelde*, a topmast schooner, in what was advertised as a hands-on adventure with training, no experience necessary, I thought why not?

The ship, named after the Oosterschelde river in the south of the Netherlands, is a former freight schooner. It was built in 1917, starting life as a sail-driven general cargo and bulk goods carrier including salted herring and bananas. In 1988 it was bought by a private owner and the Rotterdam Sailing Ship Foundation was established to raise the funds for the restoration, returning

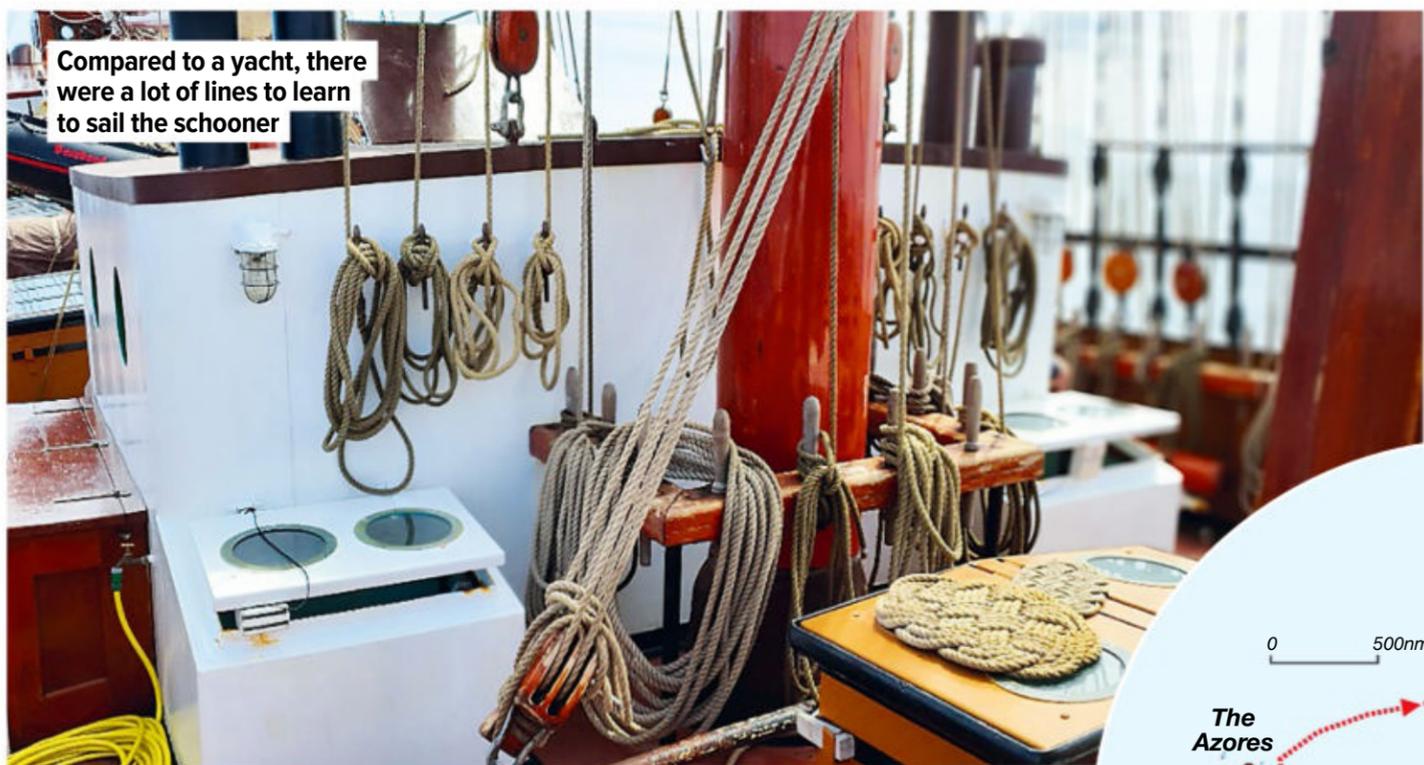
her to her former glory as a schooner. It has three masts, all gaff rigged with topsails for the main and schooner sails and two topsails (upper and lower).

There were to be two legs to the voyage: from the island of Sal, part of the Republic of Cape Verde, to Horta, on the island of Faial in the Azores; then Horta to Rotterdam. A total distance of around 3,500 miles. I flew to Sal and after a few days in a local hotel, I boarded the *Oosterschelde* with other trainees in Palmira, Sal, and we were shown our cabins. The first two days we had light duties, in that there were no watches, but we did start the training. This commenced with a safety drill and some sail setting. However, several people were feeling under the weather (including yours truly) and it was a matter of helping where we could.

The second day we had a talk on weather systems, including Coriolis forces, from the skipper, who used the main deck as his blackboard. We sailed as much as possible with mizzen, main and schooner hoisted and the two topsails (upper or gallant and lower). After two days we had a watch system of four hours on and eight hours off every 12 hours. I started with 2000 to midnight (and 0800 to 1200), then every few days we rotated by four hours so the watch was midnight until 0400 and so on. When we motor-sailed, watches were stopped.



Trainees (L to R) Nick, Warren and Jurgen



Compared to a yacht, there were a lot of lines to learn to sail the schooner

It was not obvious how this would work but we got used to it and slept when we were free. In the end it was enjoyable, especially when there were no clouds to obscure the stars and the moon had set.

It was a surprise to me how difficult it was to helm *Oosterschelde* compared to a yacht. We were given a course to steer by compass on the binnacle, but the ship was slow to respond to the wheel, meaning it was easy to over-correct. Although there were no other boats until we got nearer to Horta, we did have company in the form of pods of dolphins, whales, and Portuguese men of

war. The wake often showed luminescence, so we also had company at night.

I soon got to know the crew and the volunteer trainee crew. It was a northern European affair: Dutch, German, Swiss, Austrian and English trainees, whilst the skipper was Dutch and crew were Dutch and German. The lingua franca was English although I learnt a little Dutch. Among the trainees were experts in celestial navigation and the night sky and we had informal talks on both. I identified Mercury for the first time, and extended my knowledge of the night sky beyond the big dipper. We were also introduced to the mystery of sextant use, with a number of us bringing the noon sun down to the horizon.

The ages of the crew and trainees ranged from 75 to 17, with the 17-year-old demonstrating an amazing authority when teaching the trainees how to raise and lower sails. The 75-year-olds were the experts at celestial navigation and star spotting. Meals were communal, taken in the saloon with mostly Dutch cooking and Indonesian food a speciality. The seats were anchored to the floor to prevent them overturning when the inclination of the ship reached 20°. It was an art form to be able to get from the serving hatch to the chair and then stay in it. A talent that we developed out of necessity!

We had time in Horta to have dinner at Peters sports bar, kindly bought for all of us by Maarten, and to explore the island of Faial including the 2km-wide caldera of the volcano that was last active in 1957-58. After Faial, we sailed east towards the European mainland making the northern Spanish coast and the dreaded Bay of Biscay which, contrary to expectations, was completely calm. We sailed without incident to Ushant, where we took the inner channel.

The fine weather stayed with us through the English channel where it was cold but bright. We went past the Isle of Wight at

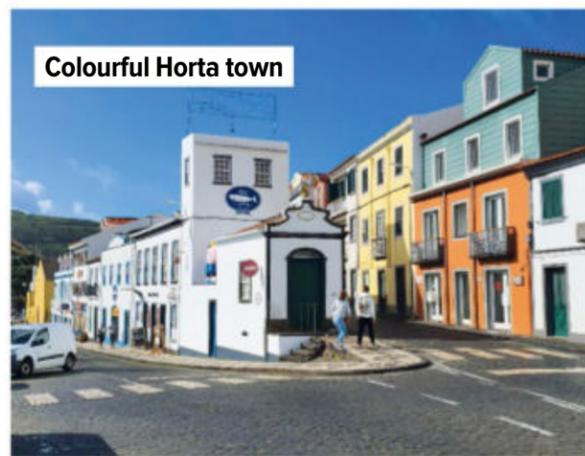


night, seeing the ships at anchor in the eastern approaches, and stopping at Dungeness, where we anchored for one night before arriving at Rotterdam and the end of the voyage.

I was sad to leave *Oosterschelde* in Rotterdam; we had all got to know and like each other, crew and trainees alike. She was well run as a ship and the crew had worked extremely hard to make it a very pleasant adventure.



Trainees all stood watches, helmed and helped handle the many sails



Colourful Horta town



The crew on arrival in Rotterdam

NEW GEAR

Dennis O'Neill reviews the latest marine products – including two new app upgrades offering quick and affordable AIS data



SAILFORCE SMART E-WINCH

www.ewincher.com

SailForce's latest range of electric winches feature two variable speeds and a highly sensitive tension limiter to help reduce the risk of injury or damage should a line or sail become snagged or tangled. The tension limit is determined by the user so that the winch can be set to appropriate power settings for different trimming applications. A 29V lithium ion battery powers the brushless motor to help reduce energy consumption to half that used by earlier E-Winch systems. Available in six sizes from 40 to 70.

FROM
Ca. £3,146

BRIGHTWIND WIND SENSOR/NAV LIGHT

Ca. £1,263

www.weems-plath.com



A clever consolidation of navigation lights and electronic wind sensor into a single unit to save valuable footprint space at the top of the mast. The wind sensor makes use of four ultrasonic transducers to measure wind speeds up to 100mph, while the integrated LED navigation light cluster can be seen more than two miles away – all while using less than 20% of the energy consumed by separate conventional units. Hand-assembled with military-grade anodised aluminium and a UV-resistant acrylic lens to ensure it's able to withstand the harshest of ocean environments. NMEA 2000 compatible, it comes with a lifetime warranty on the navigation lights and a two-year warranty on the wind sensor.

PREDICTWIND AIS WEATHER APP

£49.99
PER MONTH

www.predictwind.com

With most boat owners still not owning an AIS (Automatic Identification System) transceiver, the recent introduction of AIS data onto existing marine apps is a welcome development. Leading weather forecasting platform PredictWind has gone one step further, and now features 'Over The Horizon' AIS, which extends its existing AIS range to an impressive 300 miles – giving offshore sailors a lot more time to consider and navigate potentially hazardous situations. The new upgrade provides data from the entire global AIS network every 60 seconds. It also acts as an ideal back-up should your standard AIS receiver, if you already have one, ever fail.



SAVVY NAVVY AIS NAVIGATION APP

£89
PER YEAR

www.savvy-navvy.com

Navigation tech company Savvy Navvy has also rolled out Over the Horizon AIS in the latest upgrade to its popular multi-functional app. It means users can now see and identify vessels directly on their electronic chart, with different vessel types clearly defined by distinct colours. The new upgrade will also send alerts when no position data has been received from a vessel for more than 30 seconds, and then mark out the potential positional variance around it, giving users plenty of time to be extra vigilant when making their navigation calculations and decisions.





5G XTREAM OFFSHORE INTERNET

www.digitalyacht.co.uk

A neat new set-up from Digital Yacht that provides 4G and 5G connectivity, as well as integration with Starlink satellite systems, to provide affordable internet while afloat. Able to support 5G shoreside connection speeds up to 3.1GB and equipped with a 4G modem to capture connectivity 25 miles from shore at speeds of up to 2GB. Can also accommodate dual SIMs with auto (failover) or manual switching between operators, while featuring dual band (2.4 and 5GHz) wireless connections so that users on board can simply search for the secure WiFi point and connect. Sports four LAN ports to connect to wired devices.

WAVESTREAM BILGE FILTER

www.waveinternational.co.uk

Originally designed for boats cruising the world's most environmentally sensitive waters, but now advisable for all craft wherever they sail, the Wavestream range of bilge filters are built to ensure that pollutants such as fuel, oil, microplastics, and even microfibrils are never pumped out from your yacht. The units are compact and easy to fit in less than an hour. The smaller System 1 (measuring 315 x 130mm) copes with a flow rate of up to 40 litres per minute (lpm) and costs £144, while the larger System 2 (350 x 180mm) will filter 265Lpm at a cost of £280.



GOBIUSS C DIGITAL TANK MONITORING

www.gobius.se

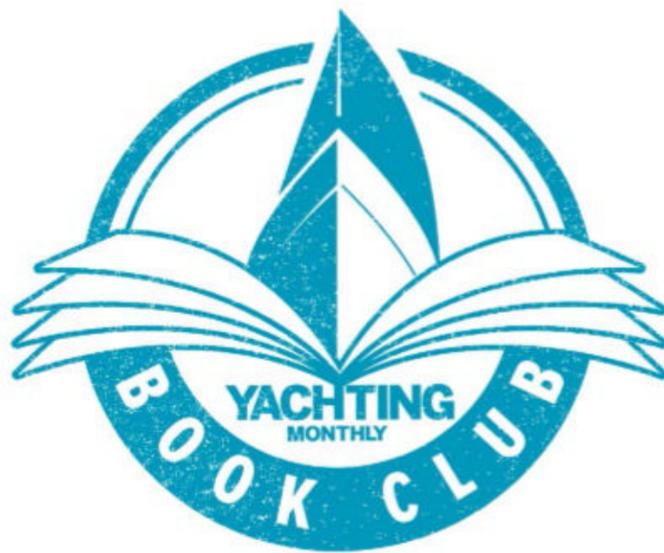
A simple to install top-mounted micro radar tank monitoring system designed to indicate exact and continuous liquid levels, down to two metres, regardless of the shape of the tank. The Gobiuss C monitor can be used for diesel, petrol, black water, grey water or fresh water, and takes just 15 minutes to fit and link to a smartphone or NMEA 2000 interface in order to work with multi-functional electronic displays and smart devices. Measures 65mm high x 90mm wide and features a simple calibration setup.



LE CHAMEAU LUXURY SEA BOOTS

www.lechameau.com

Two new premium products from French firm Le Chameau, both lined with 3mm-thick neoprene for added warmth and comfort, and handmade from saltwater-resistant rubber to ensure they remain 100% waterproof. The blue Marinord sports reflective taping and reinforced panels to support the leg, foot and ankle, while the red Neptune features a gaiter with quick-release cord lock. They have been designed with input from offshore yachtsman Guirec Soudée, who is due to take part in this year's 25,000-mile singlehanded non-stop Vendée Globe race. The Marinord costs £160, while the Neptune retails at £300.



www.yachtingmonthly.com/books

Helpless witnesses

In 1957, Penny Hughes and Sally Hinchcliffe were sailing their converted ship's boat Crab from Preveza to Levkas with friends Robin and Mags when they were caught in a gale.

The wind was impressive now. It tugged at the small sail, visibly lifting the boat as the gusts came. The helm was hard to control. This was unlike any conditions I had met. In the estuary one could anchor and ride out the gale until the tide dropped and one could wade home.

In a wind like this I had never actually been at the helm. Here there was no alternative but to push on. These waves started somewhere in the northern end of the Adriatic and had rolled their way southwards, gaining momentum. They were as big as elephants and I was scared.

My chief difficulty was that the wind was on our quarter, which meant that our course lay diagonal to these waves. Whenever a particularly steep wave rose behind us, I would have to swing to meet it fair and square, the pointed stern directly cutting it. If I should turn the boat too late, and catch a big wave on her quarter, she would be swung round by the wave's impact. The technical word for this is 'broaching to'. If we were to broach-to in the way, and the boat were to lie sideways to wind and wave, the full force of the wind would suddenly hit the mainsail, at a moment when we were already tilted by the overtaking wave. We would turn over – everybody and everything getting tipped overboard as if dumped by a dumper truck. With one hand on the tiller, in my free hand I grasped the rope that controlled the foot of the storm mainsail. And in order to keep swivelling round every few minutes to see what was

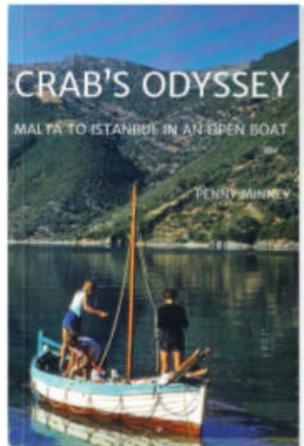
coming up behind us, I still sat perched up on the gunwale, with no hand free to hold on with. I remember like yesterday the utter drowsiness induced by being continually drenched with cold water, till I was chilled to the marrow. Once I

almost went overboard – I must have momentarily fallen asleep. What was worse, I had the tiller firmly grasped in my hand as I began to fall. The crew would have lost their tiller as well as their helmsman. Sally raised a strong arm and grabbed the tiller; either Robin or Mags must have grabbed me.

We intended to aim for the harbour of Levkas but the entrance to Levkas Sound was impossible to make out, the island lying so close to the mainland. Ahead there was no other vessel that might have indicated the route to us. Visibility was poor – the air laden with fine spray. Robin moved close to me, singing a seemingly endless repertoire of Irish folk tunes in a soft voice to keep my spirits up.

Mags drew my attention to a caique which had become visible behind us, under shortened sail, but overhauling us. It was enormously comforting to see another boat in the distance. All of a sudden Mags, who was bailing, shouted that it was gone. She had seen it keel over and disappear. None of us saw what had happened, all we knew was that it had been close enough behind us for us to hazard a guess that there was only one man on board and then suddenly it had disappeared from view. We knew we ought to go back and try and rescue the man we had seen at

the helm, but we also knew that we would never make headway against that sea under sail with *Crab*, and that lifting the engine and lowering it overboard to mount it on its brackets, would have been out of the question



CRAB'S ODYSSEY

Penny Minney

Taniwha Press £10.50

Check out our online book club for many more recommended titles and extended reviews from YM literary contributor, Julia Jones

AMAZING SAILING STORIES

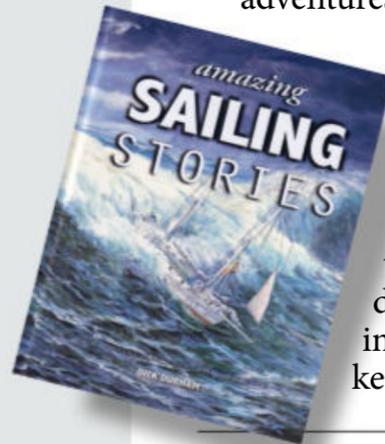
£15

Dick Durham, Fernhurst (3rd edition)

Dick Durham retells 60 of sailing's most exciting stories. Most are from the classics of sailing literature, but some are based on Dick's own experiences and interviews. If you wonder why his happiest and most characteristic stories are small scale adventures off the Essex coast, then you might

like to read his experience of the 2001

Fastnet Race which begins: 'Hell is not fire and brimstone but cold water and a lump of limestone four miles off the south-west coast of Ireland. I know because I've been there.' Almost all these stories involve disasters which are usually (but not invariably) survived. A book which will keep you content to cower in the marina.



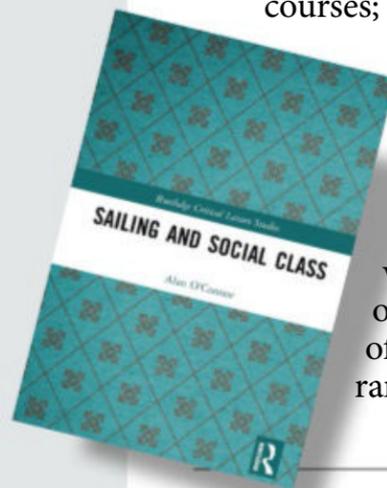
SAILING AND SOCIAL CLASS

£130

Alan O'Connor, Routledge

Alan O'Connor is a professor of media studies in Canada and a disillusioned yacht club member. His criticisms include lack of help for people who are new to sailing; dull teaching materials on written courses; absence of facilities for disabled

people; and lack of welcome for people from ethnic minority groups and LGBT+ people. For him, recreational sailing is an upper-middle class activity, dominated by white men with conservative political views. Many readers will find his use of modern structuralist discourse off-putting and others may feel his range of reference is overly restricted.



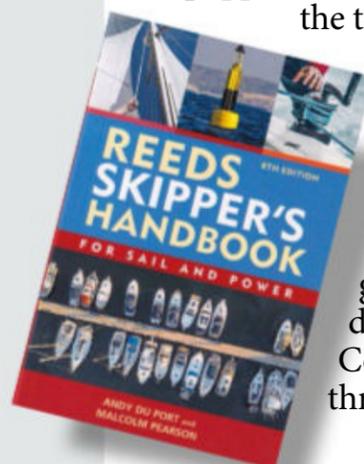
THE SKIPPER'S HANDBOOK

£11

Andy du Port & Malcolm Pearson, Reeds (8th edition)

This latest edition of *The Skipper's Handbook* has been fully revised by Andy du Port. There are no concessions on the need to be properly equipped with paper charts and remain on top of the techniques for traditional navigation.

In fact, du Port goes further in recommending that navigators ensure they have a sextant on board and are confident using it. This pocket-sized volume provides handy ready reference for when memory goes blank at the Colregs, rising and dipping lights or International Distress Codes and you don't want to be leafing through a hefty almanac in the cockpit.



in such rough water. No one said anything. Words couldn't help in this situation.

I don't think Sally realised how serious our own situation was – or else she was too dazed with cold to realise anything until we got quite close to the shore of Levkas and still could not make out the harbour entrance. We were now rapidly approaching a shore which consisted of a harbour wall built of boulders and concrete, but we still could not make out the actual entrance and the sea was as rough as ever. I shouted to her that we needed her, and it was her sharp eyesight that first made out the entrance to the Sound. She guided me towards it, and then, quite suddenly, we had rounded the harbour wall and were in quiet water. We were safe!

We were safe but we were still travelling at five or six knots. I was stiff with cold and exhaustion I suppose because before I could turn *Crab's* head to the wind we hit the quayside head-on with our prow. I still recall the resounding thump and my cringing embarrassment.

Alerted I suppose by the loud thump, people emerged from a little café on the Levkas quayside. I remember their bemused faces, and them helping us ashore, stiff and dizzy with exhaustion, and the owner of the café insisting on giving us glasses of ouzo to revive us.

We sat recuperating at a table in the little kafenion. We must have been there for at least an hour. In our dazed state, we saw a woman come in with some news that was causing a stir.

'What are they saying?' I asked the café owner.

'A fisherman capsized this morning and his boat sank. But he swam and the wind blew him to the shore.'



Penelope Hughes (1934-2023) was reading Classics at Somerville College Oxford when she and Sally Hinchcliffe (Humphreys) decided to explore the Mediterranean and Aegean. Later she married Robin Minney, worked as a teacher and continued to sail all her life.

TECHNICAL CHOOSING THE RIGHT PROPELLER

A change of propeller can dramatically improve a yacht's performance while saving money on fuel. Sam Fortescue reports on the latest options

EcoStar feathering propeller on a Passport 42 yacht

A well-known truism of boat ownership is that sailing with a fixed propeller is akin to towing a bucket astern. We all know that a feathering or folding propeller has huge advantages under sail, but what are the costs of motoring with a sub-optimal propeller? Even purists will use the engine to manoeuvre in and out of busy harbours, and most of us are willing to fill in with horsepower when the wind drops.

You won't be surprised to hear that propeller manufacturers believe that sailors often have the wrong screw fitted. And if that delicate balance between the propeller size, engine power and the boat's speed potential don't align, you'll be losing money to inefficient performance under power.

'It's pretty common that props aren't the right size,' explains David Sheppard, managing director



SAM FORTESCUE is a marine journalist and former editor. He sails a Sadler 34, which he has cruised to the Baltic via the Caribbean

of Bruntons, maker of the Autoprop. 'The usual first sign is that the engine is being overloaded or underloaded. If it doesn't reach its full rpm, then it's overloaded. And if it's underpropped, you'll get revs above the rated rpm. It's more difficult to tell with modern diesels, but in the old days, you'd get black smoke coming out of the back because there'd be too much diesel going in and the engine wouldn't be able to turn fast enough to burn it.'

There are some reasons why you might want to be overpropped, but engine manufacturers will often void the warranty if the propeller is incorrectly sized. Worse still, you'll be putting additional wear and tear on the engine which will result in a shorter service life and greater maintenance. With labour rates of £50-80/hr, even minor repairs can cost hundreds of pounds, with any new parts taking it into the thousands.

PROP MISMATCH

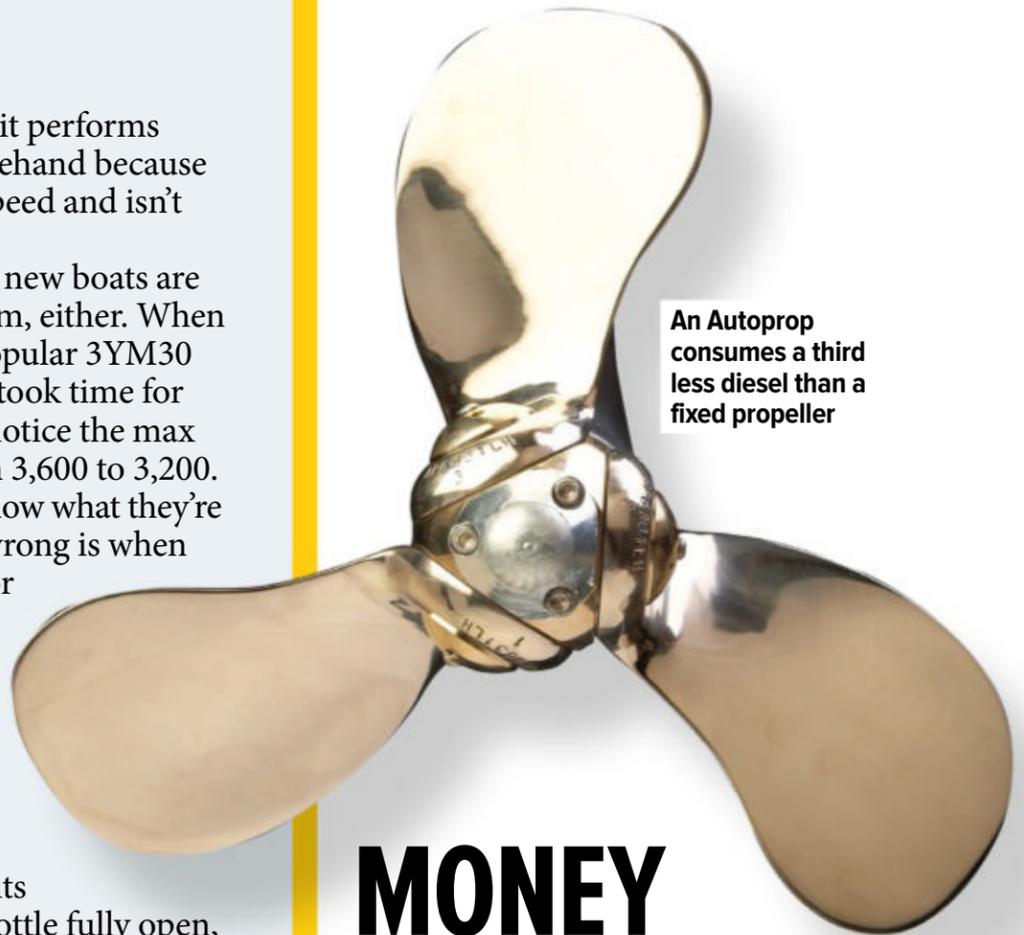
A mismatch between engine and prop often creeps in when a boat is repowered. 'We usually get customers ringing up after their boat's been re-engined,' explains Chris Hares of Darglow Engineering, which manufactures the FeatherStream propeller. 'If you just take out an old 30hp engine and replace it, you can end up with a different gear ratio that requires a different propeller.'

For many cruising boats with faster turning engines, a 2.6:1 gear ratio gives the best balance between prop diameter and speed. A low 2:1 ratio means a higher propeller speed and therefore a smaller diameter. The opposite is also true. There is a lively trade in 10-year-old Bukh DV20/24 lifeboat engines, which have to be replaced by law but have seen little use. They use a high 3:1 reduction ratio which requires a bigger-than-average propeller, and most sailing boats simply don't have the space for it. 'People can spend £9,000 repowering

the boat and then find it performs worse than it did beforehand because it's got a higher shaft speed and isn't efficient,' says Hares.

And don't think that new boats are immune to this problem, either. When Yanmar replaced its popular 3YM30 with the 3YM30AE, it took time for some boatbuilders to notice the max revs had been cut from 3,600 to 3,200.

'Designers usually know what they're doing, but what goes wrong is when the supply of engines or gearboxes changes and nobody connects the dots,' Hares says. 'We saw it a lot during Covid because of the supply problems.' Ideally, you want the engine to hit its rated rpm with the throttle fully open, and it is simple enough to test. 'You need to take the boat out on a fine day before it gets covered in barnacles and going full throttle,' says Hares.



An Autoprop consumes a third less diesel than a fixed propeller

MONEY SAVINGS

If you've established that your engine and propeller combination isn't giving you the performance it should, or if you've decided it's time to invest in a feathering or folding prop to increase your sailing speeds and reduce passage times, what next? Well, working out a budget is a good first step.

Feathering props are on average 20 per cent more expensive than folders, if you overlook the good-value Kiwiprop. This alone might be enough to steer you one way or another.

Set against this is the efficiency of the propeller itself under power. Trials by French sailing magazine *Voiles* offer a good insight. In tests with a 34ft Jeanneau using a 29hp Volvo engine with a top rpm of 3,600, the Autoprop, Gori and Flexfold all outperformed a fixed prop. The Autoprop consumes a full one-third of a litre less diesel per hour to maintain six knots of boat speed – a saving of around 50p/hour at current pump prices. The difference between the Autoprop and the worst performing feathering propeller was starker still – nearly one litre per hour.

But perhaps more striking than the potential fuel savings is the gain in range. At six knots, the Autoprop could manage 42.5 miles on 10 litres of diesel. The fixed prop gave 34.6 miles and the Maxprop managed just 27.2 miles. The test was done in flat water conditions, but it illustrates the big differences in safety cushion offered by the different prop designs. →



Check that you have a viable engine-to-prop gear ratio. Note that additional blades can be used where there isn't sufficient space for a larger diameter prop, as on this four-bladed Maxprop

WHAT SIZE?

Sailing boats should have large propellers, turning slowly with minimal slippage. However, there is limited space under the hull, so the smallest blade and least amount of drag, is best.

‘The most efficient pitch-to-diameter ratio is 2:3,’ explains Hare. ‘But it’s not always possible to do that because there isn’t always enough room to accommodate that diameter.’

Pitch is the distance the prop would travel forwards in a rotation through a soft solid. Thus, a 15in pitch means that the propeller blades are angled so they would advance 15in in a single rotation if there were no slip.

‘There’s an optimum diameter and pitch,’ adds Sheppard of Bruntons. ‘If you can’t fit that, you get a restricted-diameter prop, with greater pitch. The more you compensate, the less efficient the prop becomes. You don’t always notice it on a heavy sailboat, but it’s important because you get more prop walk due to the greater paddlewheel effect.’



The most efficient pitch-to-diameter ratio is 2:3

HOW MANY BLADES?

For engines below 100hp, you don’t need more than three blades. On saildrive yachts with plenty of hull clearance, it’s common to have a larger two-blader, which is efficient but subject to vibration. It’s essentially a case of having sufficient blade area to handle the horsepower. More blades means more drag, but when there isn’t space to fit the right size prop you might need an extra blade.



Space below the hull limited prop diameter on this boat hence the five-bladed Maxprop, at the cost of additional drag

WHICH MATERIAL?

We tend to think propellers should be made from honey-coloured bronze, but they are, in fact, usually made of a complex alloy involving copper and tin plus differing amounts of aluminium, nickel, manganese, zinc and iron, which results in a material with good corrosion resistance that’s easily machined.

Italian firm Ewol, however, builds beautiful, but expensive, feathering props from polished stainless-steel because it is less susceptible to galvanic corrosion from stray current while offering greater strength for a finer profile.

Seahawk, meanwhile, has less expensive stainless props with its Autostream and Slipstream cast in 316 and 2507 steel, while Darglow has developed a bronze body with stainless steel blades in a hybrid called the Featherstream.

‘All-bronze props will wear out quicker and need reconditioning sooner on the blade bearing surface, where it rubs against the hub,’ explains Hares. ‘But, it’s very difficult to have an all-stainless prop. You can’t run stainless steel on another piece of

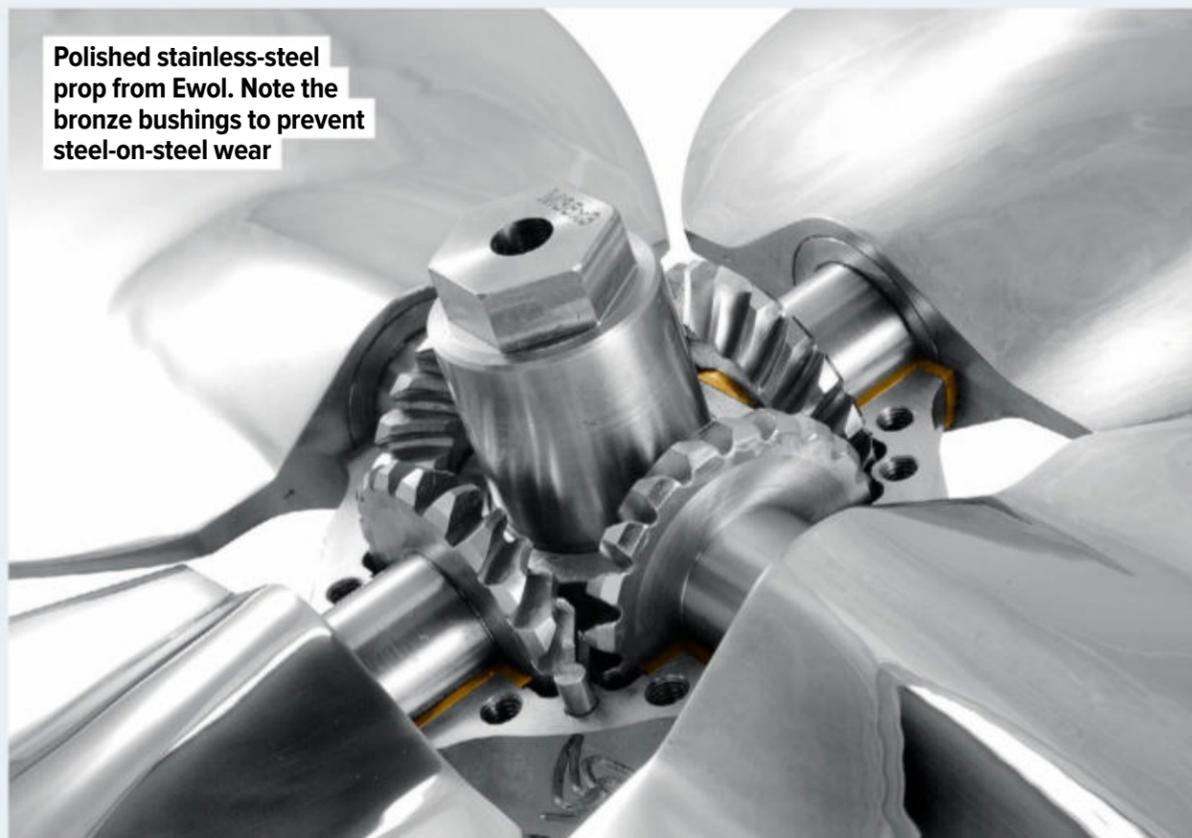


The Featherstream hybrid propeller with stainless steel blades and a bronze body

stainless as a bearing surface, where they catch each other and get stuck. So, you need a bronze bushing between blade and body, which tends to wear down quite fast.’

Composite propellers are a cheaper solution to the corrosion problem, with the best-known being the Kiwiprop, whose black Zytel blades are mounted on a stainless steel pin and never wear. They’re not the most efficient blades, due to their broad, flat profile, but they are the cheapest feathering option.

Flexofold also produces a folding two- and three-blade prop with a composite boss, which provides the same galvanic isolation.



Polished stainless-steel prop from Ewol. Note the bronze bushings to prevent steel-on-steel wear

FOLDING VS FEATHERING

Compared with a fixed propeller, either option will offer massive improvements in hydrodynamic efficiency under sail. You can expect 10-20 per cent more boat speed in given wind conditions – at least half a knot and possibly more than one knot for bigger boats, enough to save an hour sailing a 40ft yacht from Dartmouth to Plymouth.

It's harder to draw a distinction between the drag from a feathering propeller, such as the Autoprop or the Kiwiprop, and a folding prop.

'Feathers have flat blades which reduces their efficiency a little, to perhaps 95% of a folding prop,' says Hares at Darglow. 'But most sailing boats have more than enough power in the engine, so you're going to hit hull speed with any of these, but you'll burn less fuel with a folding prop.'

Of more concern are the other variables around prop design, such as maintenance, performance astern, regeneration potential and noise/vibration. Folding props tend to be easier to maintain with fewer wearing parts and no annual greasing. They may also be more efficient motoring ahead. A feathering prop, meanwhile, will go much better astern.

With the exception of the Gori, folding props can't swivel to offer the leading edge in reverse, which makes them just as inefficient as a fixed prop. Their design also means that the thrust they generate astern is trying to close the propeller, so, you need to give the engine higher revs, and that means more prop walk. 'If you're struggling with a fixed prop, that's going to get worse with a folding prop. Feathering props are much better at stopping the boat and give less prop walk than folders as you can manoeuvre with a modest amount of throttle.'



Gori's folding propeller can swivel to offer the leading edge in reverse



The Flexofold feathering prop is having success with electric motors



SPW's new Variprop GP has been specifically designed to offer efficient regeneration

ELECTRIC PROPULSION

There is no real difference between the dimensions of a prop for electric vs diesel operation if all other variables remain the same. However, the high torque often means electric systems have lower shaft speeds, which will require a bigger prop or an extra blade to increase power transmission.

'If you're putting in an electric motor, we specify a very slow shaft speed and a slow-turning prop because the torque is flat, which is good for a propeller,' says Sheppard. 'Otherwise, considerations are broadly the same.' But because

regeneration is so important in an electrical system, feathering props dominate. The hybrid folding-feathering Gori can regenerate, and Flexofold reports some success too, while the Kiwiprop and Seahawk's Autostream are not suited. Of the feathers, Bruntons has re-engineered its Autoprop specifically to increase regeneration potential. Called the Eco Star, it can produce 200W at five knots of sailing speed or 550W at seven knots. Ewol has also developed an expensive regen version of its three-bladed Orion called the EnergyMatic, and SPW's new Variprop GP has been fine tuned for regeneration.

VARIABLE PITCH

Variable pitch propellers are commonly found on large ships, but Oceanvolt has developed a small-scale product for the cruising market as part of its electric propulsion package. Its ServoProp is a unique feathering three-blader for saildrives, which can rotate more than 180 degrees to present the leading edge both forward and astern. But its clever electronics are all directed at a single purpose: generating power. Paired with an Oceanvolt electric motor, the ServoProp can be used to make electricity when the boat is under sail. It adopts an optimal pitch for being dragged through the water to produce around three times as much power as a fixed-pitch propeller. The latest HighPower ServoProp 25, launched this year, has continuous pitch control for even better regeneration and more efficient motor sailing. Ideal if you're looking to fill a big battery bank and give yourself near endless range.



Oceanvolt's award-winning HighPower ServoProp 25

CASE STUDY: DUFOUR 24 [FLEXOFOLD]

'The improvement to my hull speed when I changed propeller was unbelievable,' insists Dufour 24 owner Paul Kievan. 'I didn't want to pay €3,000 for a new prop, so I paid €1,450 for a two-blade 14" x 11" Flexofold to replace the existing fixed 13" x 8" prop, which was grossly undersized for my boat. With the new prop I've been able to drop from

2,600 rpm to 2,100 rpm and still reach hull speed. Fuel consumption is better, but the best thing is the sailing performance. I get over a knot of extra hull speed below 16 knots of wind and she now points up better by a degree or two. I always used to put my gearbox in reverse to lock my old prop, which created turbulence on the rudder, but now the rudder is relaxed and stable.'

Paul Kievan's new Flexofold prop is saving him money on fuel



CASE STUDY: PASSPORT 42 [AUTOPROP]

Owner Jack Patton converted his yacht from diesel to electric propulsion after growing frustration as he cruised from Vancouver Island to the Sea of Cortez.

'I was so done with the old diesel – and I was a BMW mechanic for years!' he explains. Patton helped develop a 22kW electric motor with Powerflow Marine, an Australian business he has since bought as a going concern. His previous 17in Maxprop has now been replaced by a 485mm (19.1in) Bruntons EcoStar feathering propeller,

which is closely modelled on the better known Autoprop, with some adjustments to improve regeneration potential.

'The improvement in performance has been startling,' he says. 'We now do the same speed with a 200 rpm decrease, with a big reduction in noise between 2,500 and 2,700 rpm. A diesel engine would also be able to run at a lower rpm with the EcoStar, with less wear and tear and better

fuel economy. If the performance were replicated in a modern 30hp diesel installation, the 200 rpm saving would equate to a one-litre fuel saving every hour, around £1.50/hr at current pump prices, while you would increase your range by around 25 per cent.



Electronic propeller monitoring on Jack Patton's new electric propulsion system



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TECHNICAL

THE RETURN OF SQUARE RIGGERS

With the drive to reduce carbon emissions, could high-end sailing tech be ushering in a new age of working sailing ships and square riggers? Ben Lowings investigates

Currently the preserve of sail training vessels, could square riggers be making a comeback for commercial shipping?



Another World Adventures

Most cruising yacht sailors would agree that any field of knowledge that might sharpen their own skills is worthwhile learning about. But does Patrick O'Brian rattling on about thimbles and cross-catharpings help you claw home across the Solent?

Square-rig men-o'-war and old windjammers are ghosts from the past. But a wave of excitement is washing over the cargo shipping industry. Square-rig – and the power it offers – is catching on.

FastWings or WindWings are some of the options. DynaRig, set up by Southern Spars for the superyachts *Black Pearl* and *Maltese Falcon*, is another. Canada-based Veer Group is planning to use this for its Design No.1. With electricity from hydrogen as its secondary power source, it'll be the



Ben Lowings is a journalist, RYA instructor, former RNLI lifeboatman, and commercial skipper. He has written several sailing biographies

first clean oceangoing container ship. According to Danielle Southcott, Veer's CEO and herself a tall ship master, all the sails on the three masts, each with five yards, can be set or taken in within six minutes. Winches on the yardarms drag out a boltrope to unfurl each sail, double-rolled on a single mandrel inside the mast. Southcott goes on to explain how the entire rig – around 25,000 square feet (2,323m²) of sail – is operated by a single person by flick switches and buttons on a control panel.

'It's like a Game Boy console,' she explains. 'The masts are comparable to wind turbines. Very strong – they're made from carbon fibre.'

The tall ship training school – the only one in the world, at Enkhuizen in the Netherlands – now offers a DynaRig course (www.ezs.nl). The vision

Technology developed for superyachts such as the *Maltese Falcon* could pave the way for cleaner shipping and a rebirth of sail at sea



Stuart Pearce / Alamy Stock Photo

is of an entirely green fleet of ocean trading ships. When I ask how realistically that could replace today's merchant navy and its ever-increasing deadweight-tonnage sea miles, she explains how a great volume of today's cargo is fossil fuel. An industry with a carbon footprint larger than Germany has been asked to overhaul itself: sailing ships don't need to deliver fuel.

The call has not yet gone out for legions of cruising yachtsmen and women to take over the bridges of the next-generation merchant shipping fleet, however. Technologies have already been merged. A combination of old and new can be seen on *Tenacious*, the barque until recently operated by the Jubilee Sailing Trust. The yards work like in-mast furlers, with each sail winding up inside like a horizontal theatre curtain. *Tenacious* is designed for a mixed-ability crew. Wheelchairs can be taken aloft and visually impaired people can also go aloft to hand sails.

Best-placed to explain square-rig for cruising yachties might be the yachtswoman and tall ship sailor, Hannah Hurford. 'Sailing Tall Ships is more physical,' she argues. 'You have more sails to work with, heavier rigs and usually a larger vessel. You're more appreciative of what sailing used to be, what our bodies are capable of and the way the world once was.'

For Hurford, one of the benefits of switching between yachts and tall ships is a greater understanding

of teamwork. The order of command in a larger crew also tends to be more rigid. 'As the crew each have a specific role, it is clear who has the final word. That's [not] a particularly bad thing to experience.'

PRESERVING THE PAST

Of course most ships flying square sail also have versions of the fore-and-aft sails used on yachts. Hannah explains that the lines' names and parts of the sail are the same, so this helps the transition.

For those interested in learning more, Hannah hosts a popular podcast *Off Watch* (www.offwatchpodcast.co.uk), along with fellow sailor Jess Clay at the Classic Sailing travel agency. Jess says square-rigs make one truly value how easy modern boats are to sail. For her, it's about understanding in more depth 'the challenges seafarers from yesteryear had. If people are passionate sailors,' says Jess, 'there is a need... to help preserve traditional ships for future generations.'

And preservation is a live issue. At the time of writing this article, *Tenacious* was in dry dock in Sharpness, her fate to be decided by receivers. Graham Strudwick, a spokesperson for the Save Tall Ship *Tenacious* campaign team, believes her loss is being felt very widely.



Veer's container vessels, fitted with RynaRig masts, are capable of carrying a large number of cargo containers (below)

Tall ship *Tenacious* is uniquely equipped for disabled sailors, but her future is currently uncertain

Max Mudie / Alamy Stock Photo



Ben Lowings

ABOVE: Going aloft to hand sail is a rite of passage for anyone who has sailed a square rigger

Square rig

Square rig is not named for the boxy shape of most sails, but because the sails are raised across the vessel's beam, athwart or 'square'.

Bermudan sloops can draw their sails at an angle about 20 degrees closer to the wind direction than square-riggers.

Lines are (traditionally) sweated and hauled through belaying pins. Usually halyards go to a fife rail, a kind of three sided bench around the base of each mast. The lines for the lowest sails are foremost and lead aft as each sail is higher.

Furling sails or stowing (if you're not using DynaRig) usually requires people aloft, on the yards, a little like securing the main to the boom on yachts with no lazyjacks.

Most work is still done on deck. Topmen and women don't have to drag the whole weight of the sail upwards to furl it. Ropes attached to the corners (clews), drawing up the belly (bunt) and side-edges (leeches) all get hauled in through the rails below by sailors standing firmly on the main deck.

He echoes Hannah Hurford's point about teamwork. 'You have to learn to do things together as a watch. In the watch up to half could be disabled. The Watch Leader has to quickly assess what [tasks] individuals are capable of to ensure maximum involvement whilst keeping people safe. As the voyage progresses the watch leader will have to reassess this as people's skills and knowledge improves.'

Yacht crew on passage will be very familiar with the benefits of off-watch down-time, when people gel and become more supportive. Graham says his long voyages have left him with many friends in different parts of the world. He lists the many readily transferable skills: 'Sail handling, working the ropes, lookout duties, using electronic systems to monitor any ship movement whilst at anchor, navigation using charts and electronic systems as well as sextant use and use of conversion table. Even simple things like "always one hand for the ship" and "three points of contact" while climbing the rigging.'

One would be hard pressed to see any commonality between the AC72 crews screaming around relatively flat inshore waters controlling sails with the push of a button, and bands

America's Cup crews have to communicate constantly to perform, much like the crews of every other sailing vessel



Neil Farrin / Alamy Stock Photo

of sinewy jack-tars hauling on their braces while singing a shanty.

These apparently irreconcilable opposites actually share a belief that good seamanship is at heart about communication between team members to form a cohesive entity. Remember the America's Cup helmet microphones on sticks and the constant chit-chat between them under the howl of the 50kn apparent wind and those groaning hydraulics heaving the giant foils? In spirit, one could argue, it is little different from the team queuing up at the tallship

main brace, the rhythms of the repetitive shanty interspersed with the whispers of adjustment or encouragement. If there are 'racers', the 'leisure cruising community', the 'old gaffers', and the 'tall ship sail training community', as well as professional deck crew and officers on cargo ships, then it is as well to remember they are all one, united, 'sailing community'.

While modern yachts are a world apart from square riggers both old and new, it's not inconceivable that a new era of working sail may be on the horizon.

TECHNICAL KETCH TO SCHOOONER

Roger Hughes explains why he swapped his masts to create an impressive brigantine square-rigger

St George squaresail flying from Britannia's yard



People have asked why I decided to change a perfectly good ketch into a staysail schooner? It's a reasonable question. The simple answer is that I always wanted a brigantine.

Traditionally, a brigantine is a schooner with the foremast square-rigged and all other sails fore and aft. The name comes from the brigands who pirated their trade along the Mediterranean Barbary Coast – which is what I might have to resort to after spending all my money on my 51ft yacht, *Britannia*.

A brigantine is the ideal small boat cruising rig. It offers the best of all worlds: capable of hauling tolerably close to the wind with its fore and aft sails;



ROGER HUGHES is an ex-pat English writer based in North Carolina, who has lived and sailed in the USA for the past 40 years.

having fast reaching capabilities and unbelievable downwind stability using the squaresails. Also, like a ketch, the sails are divided into smaller manageable sizes. Squaresails have been used on boats for centuries, and when the wind is astern or a few points either side, it is a very efficient way to propel a craft of any size.

I have sailed on a few square riggers and learned the advantages and shortfalls of the rig. Anyone with Bermudan sails knows how tricky it can be to hold a steady course when running before the wind, especially when a big sea is rolling up astern. Even with whisker poles and preventers the helmsman still needs to keep a keen eye on the

Britannia's new schooner rig boasts a spread of up to five sails, all furling and controlled from the cockpit



Her ketch rig before the masts were swapped



THE BIG HEAVE

A crane was needed to hoist both masts out of the boat. It took four days beforehand to remove the booms, loosen all of the rigging screws, and remove all other fixings. A heavy hawser noose was then slipped around the mainmast from the crane and the tension taken up. The crane operator indicated the load from his cab, one finger for each 1,000lb of lift. He said it normally took between 1,000 and 2,000lb to break an old embedded through-mast out of its step. However, we sailed right past 2,000 to 3,000lb, and the only thing that happened was that the boat lifted 10in out of the water. I went below and whacked the mast with a hammer, while my helpers waggled the mast from on deck, but still nothing happened.

I decided to try one more 1,000lb lift but there was still absolutely no movement in the mast, except that the boat lifted even higher. I had visions of pulling the mast and half the keel out, so I chickened out and stopped the lifting. Drastic action was then required.

wind and his course to prevent the sails collapsing, then filling with a resounding crack, imposing great strain on the sail. With squaresails correctly braced there is absolutely none of this and the boat becomes very stable, yet the course can fluctuate widely. There is no concern about gybing or broaching, and the helmsman or autopilot will have little difficulty in keeping a steady downwind run. The squaresail is a fine downwind sail, and the boat will also roll a lot less.

FURLING AND REEFING

There are, however, a few significant problems with having a whopping great sheet of canvas billowing out from a yard high up a mast. Those problems are furling, unfurling and reefing.

This has, traditionally, precluded the use of squaresails on vessels that don't have large crews, such as sail training ships with lots of youngsters prepared to scale the ratlines and edge along flimsy foot-ropes to secure or release the canvas. Even if they're harnessed to the yard it is still a dangerous operation.

But what if you could easily furl, unfurl and reef a squaresail from the safety of the deck or cockpit, with no-one having to go aloft? That would bring a totally different perspective to their use on a short-handed sailing boat. I spent two

years designing and building such a system, with a squaresail that rolls up inside the yard. It's not unlike a roller-furling mainsail, but mounted horizontally with control lines coming back to the cockpit and operated by just one person.

MAIN AND MIZZEN

Changing the rig meant moving the positions of the existing main and mizzen masts – swapping them over so the mizzen went forward and the main went aft. Then, just to complicate things, the forward mast would be termed the 'fore', but the after mast would still be the 'main'. It also meant repositioning all the chain plates to new positions. Luckily these were simply bolted through the hull with stainless half-inch bolts, and were changed after the masts were moved.

BREAKING FREE

With the crane lift struggling (see right) a crowd began to gather. They were astonished when I appeared on deck with a hefty electric saw and started to merrily saw my mast in half. The crane took



The nerve-racking crane lift



Forklift truck carrying away the sawn-off mast

the weight and as the last cut went through, the mast broke free and lifted a mere 3in. The yard crew lowered the swaying stick onto a forklift truck, and off it went to be laid down on trestles. The mizzen was then easily lifted off its deck-stepped location and laid next to the main. The entire operation took just two hours, but it seemed a lot longer to me. I was very relieved when it was over.

HYDROCHLORIC ACID

I had to think of a way to pull the remaining mast section out of the boat. I decided to pour hydrochloric acid down the pipe to dissolve the corrosion that was still gluing the mast to the keel. For a while the boat looked like it had a steam engine, with fumes coming up out of the deck. I then set up two wooden blocks each side of the mast and placed a trolley jack across the gap. I drilled holes at either end of the mast stub and shackled a chain from one hole to the other and over the lifting end of the jack. It took all of the jack's power to break the joint at the mast step, which finally separated with a disappointingly indifferent 'pop'.

SPLICING PIECES

The mainmast would now come through the saloon, but I didn't want a 10in by 7in mast obstruction right in the middle of the cabin, so I spliced a 4in square compression post to the mast using splicing pieces supplied by the mast maker. This extended the mast by 11ft to the bottom of the boat where it locates in a heavy wide stainless steel spreader plate directly on the keelson.

FORE-COURSE SAIL

The new foremast was now stepped forward of where the ketch mainmast had been, so I made a new mast step by pouring cement into a wooden mould directly on to the keelson. I also extended the foremast height by 8ft to make a wider slot between the jib and fore staysail. The taller foremast also increased the jib luff by some 8ft, which improves her upwind performance.

I also needed a taller foremast to be able to carry a second square topsail above the forecourse if I ever got around to it in the future. The foremast was extended with a length of the same

section, using splices. (The lower squaresail of any vessel is called the 'course', consequently the squaresail on *Britannia* is the forecourse sail).

NAVY BLUE PRIMER

All the spars were repainted with aluminium primer undercoat, then two coats of undercoat, and around seven layers of Interlux Navy Blue two-part polyurethane paint. The original spruce spreaders were worn and cracked, so I bought longer aluminium spreaders for both masts. The spreaders on the foremast were also raked back 30 degrees to allow for bracing the yard.

CLIMBING STEPS

I fitted a Facnor roller furling system to the back of the mainmast, which converted it into a roller furling mainsail. Originally only the jib was roller furling but I wanted to control all the sails from the cockpit so I converted both the fore staysail and the 'tweenmast staysail to roller furling. That made

all five sails roller-furling.

I also riveted aluminium climbing steps up both masts at 20in centres. They do increase windage, but are very convenient for singlehanded mast work.

RE-STEPPING THE MASTS

Re-stepping both masts was simply the reverse of lifting them out and went relatively smoothly. As *Britannia* is a UK-registered vessel I placed the

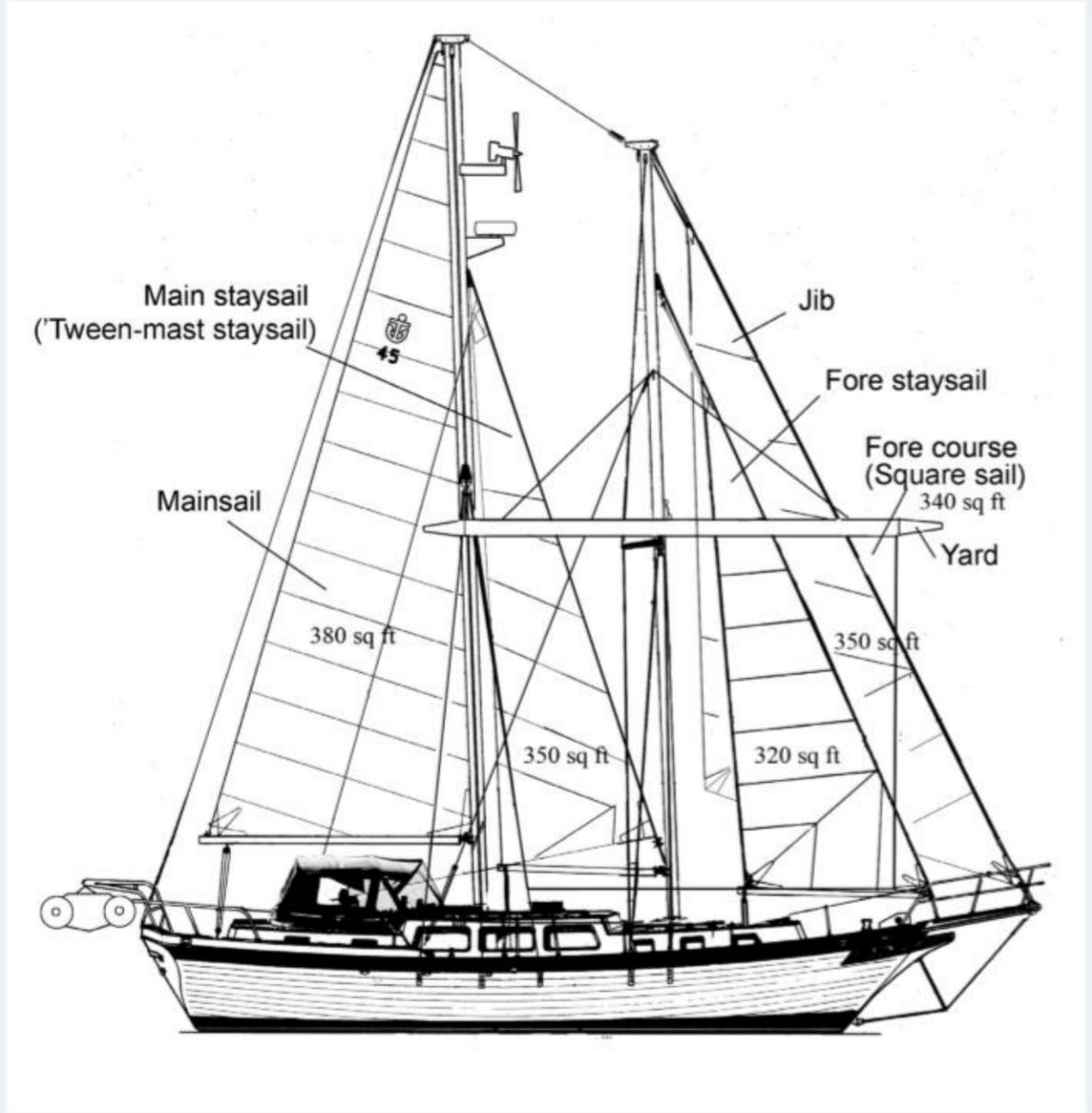


The mainmast spliced to a new section below deck

A new mast step was required for the mainmast



Re-stepping the mainmast in its new position further aft with the new compression post visible



traditional antique British penny under both masts before they were lowered onto their mast step.

WATERLINE TRIM

I was a bit concerned about whether the boat's balance would change by switching the mast positions, but nothing appeared amiss at the waterline once masts were finally in place. There are advantages in having a heavy long keel cruising boat with a 14ft beam – you can add more or less any weight you like with no ill effect.

Re-chromed cleats and rigging screws ready to go back on the boat



Initially the masts were stayed with ropes in place of the steel rigging that had yet to be measured and ordered. To do this I had to go up both masts and measure from each wire attachment point down to their turnbuckles.

The original wires were 5/16in and 1/4in, but I ordered new wires using 3/8in stainless throughout.

I also installed twin mainmast backstay chain plates, instead of the single one for the original mizzen. I always believe in a belt and braces approach for an ocean cruising boat.

While waiting for the standing rigging to be delivered I also had all the rigging screws and turnbuckles chrome plated, along with the deck winches and cleats. These were then connected to the masts.

Within a few weeks the new wires arrived and I was hoisted up the mast a dozen or so times bolting them into place. Thank goodness for the new Maxwell electric windlass, which made the job effortless for the deck crew.

With help, I manoeuvred the long yard into position across the boat and set up the various control lines.

Then up she went on the track that I'd riveted to the front of the mast. The combined yard and sail weighed 135lbs (61kg) but it was easy using the windlass.

To separate and identify all the lines coming down the masts I made four teak pin-rails and turned 16 belaying pins on a lathe. These make for a very clean deck with no loose lines lying around and also add a traditional air to an otherwise modern boat.

We quickly discovered another life affirming advantage of having a yard on the foremast. If the skipper and crew fancy a refreshing gin and tonic around noontime, but the sun still hasn't managed to rise above the yardarm, we simply lower the yard a bit – yet another problem solved!

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Classic complacency

Mike Bugle

A few years ago four of us chartered a boat from Split. We like to think we are seasoned sailors who have at various times owned boats in both the Med and Solent which were cruised and raced extensively. The sun shone, there wasn't a breath of wind, and the two wives enjoyed the sun and their books. A somewhat dull routine, in terms of not being able to sail, established itself: decide on a bay for lunch, motor to it, swim, lunch, head for the evening's anchorage. With benign weather, no tides, no wind, few offshore hazards, it was fair to say a mood of complacency had set in.

One evening I spotted on the chart plotter a gap offering a shortcut to our anchorage so duly headed for it. The topography either side of the gap looked good, with steep sides, but the depth under the keel quickly fell to 2m then 1m and then down to 10cms, and I wasn't confident in reversing out down the same track. Breath was held and we entered the bay unscathed.

Later that evening, idle curiosity made me expand the chart plotter and I was shocked to see the gap marked by a line of red crosses which we had unwittingly passed through. I then spent several hours unsuccessfully trying to remove our track from the plotter. I just hope no one else chose to blindly follow the indelible track!



Catching fire

Justin Morton

Once I have cleared a port and I am about to settle in for my first leg I make a point of having a wander through the boat to make sure lockers are closed and everything looks shipshape. Part of my checks include watching the engine do its thing for a few seconds and to ensure its running smoothly.

Recently I was departing alone from a popular west country sailing destination. I did as previously described and all was well, right up until the point I lifted the engine lid to be greeted by a cloud of dense smoke. The engine was on fire! I slammed it back

down just as the smoke alarm went off. I switched off the engine and tried to think. It was definitely fire smoke, not exhaust gases, but it didn't smell of burning fuel. Had the engine set wooden bits of the boat on fire?

I gingerly opened the smallest side hatch to the engine compartment and peered inside. It was completely filled with smoke but I couldn't see any flames, so I relaxed a bit. It also definitely smelled like a wood fire. I opened up the hatches and let the smoke clear. I rang my wife; primarily for moral support, and also to tell her what I was going to do next, just in case.

I drifted for 30 minutes as I checked out everything I could think of, but could find no source for the fire. I decided, as it wasn't very far, to head back to port. I turned the engine on and with the engine exposed so I could keep an eye on it I began motoring.

As someone who likes to quietly go about his sailing business I thought the last thing I needed was to provoke the response I knew I would get if I mentioned I happened to be on fire. But with my anchor at the ready just in case, I maintained radio silence and quietly entered the port and motored onto the easiest spot I could find on the visiting pontoon. I felt bad.

And so to the cause. After much dismantling of the boat and about an hour of searching I found the scorched remains of an 'industrial' wet wipe. I had given the engine a good clean over the winter and somehow missed this one wipe. It had been gradually drying out over the four or five hours the engine had been running previously and had finally started smoking. In hindsight I had noticed a new warm 'chemical' smell that morning but had dismissed it.

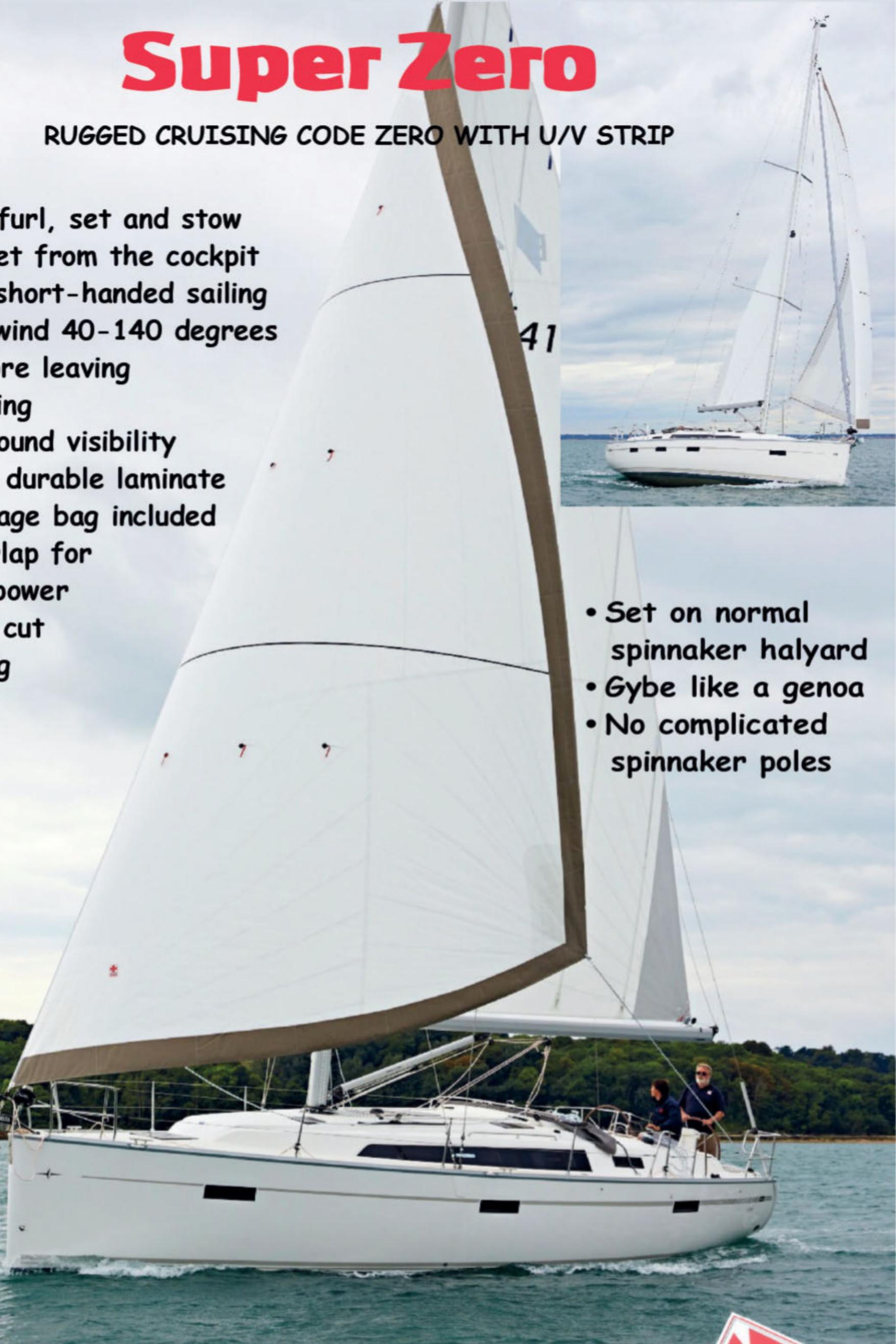


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