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# SOLID GROUND

**S**top. Just stop. Do you ever feel like the world is spinning, shifting, and changing faster than you can keep up with? The political sphere seems on the brink of boiling over, the environment teeters precariously, and technology threatens to run away from its creators. Now even the steadying effect of the compass is on the move.

The span of our lives may be infinitesimally brief compared to the tectonic shifting of the ground under our feet, but the swirling molten iron core on which we float is accelerating, taking the poles with it. In the last 25 years, the North Pole has migrated 400 miles and the South Pole was last seen wandering around the Southern Ocean, south of Australia. There's nothing new about this, but the higher rate of travel indicates that the poles could eventually, in thousands of years, flip end for end. Then we really wouldn't know which way was up (p40).

Similarly, ice no longer moves glacially. One sailor who regularly cruises north has witnessed the speed of the Arctic melt. He responded by selling his house and most of his possessions, eschewing consumerism and limiting his use of resources to what can be carried aboard his yacht. Perhaps liveaboard cruising really is the best way to save the planet (p58).

So where do we turn for solid ground? For many, myself included, faith is a lighthouse amid stormy seas. For the monks of Mount Athos, their Byzantine way of life has endured continuously for nearly two millennia, following tradition, after Jesus's own mother sailed and settled there. Now that's some staying power by today's standards (p48).

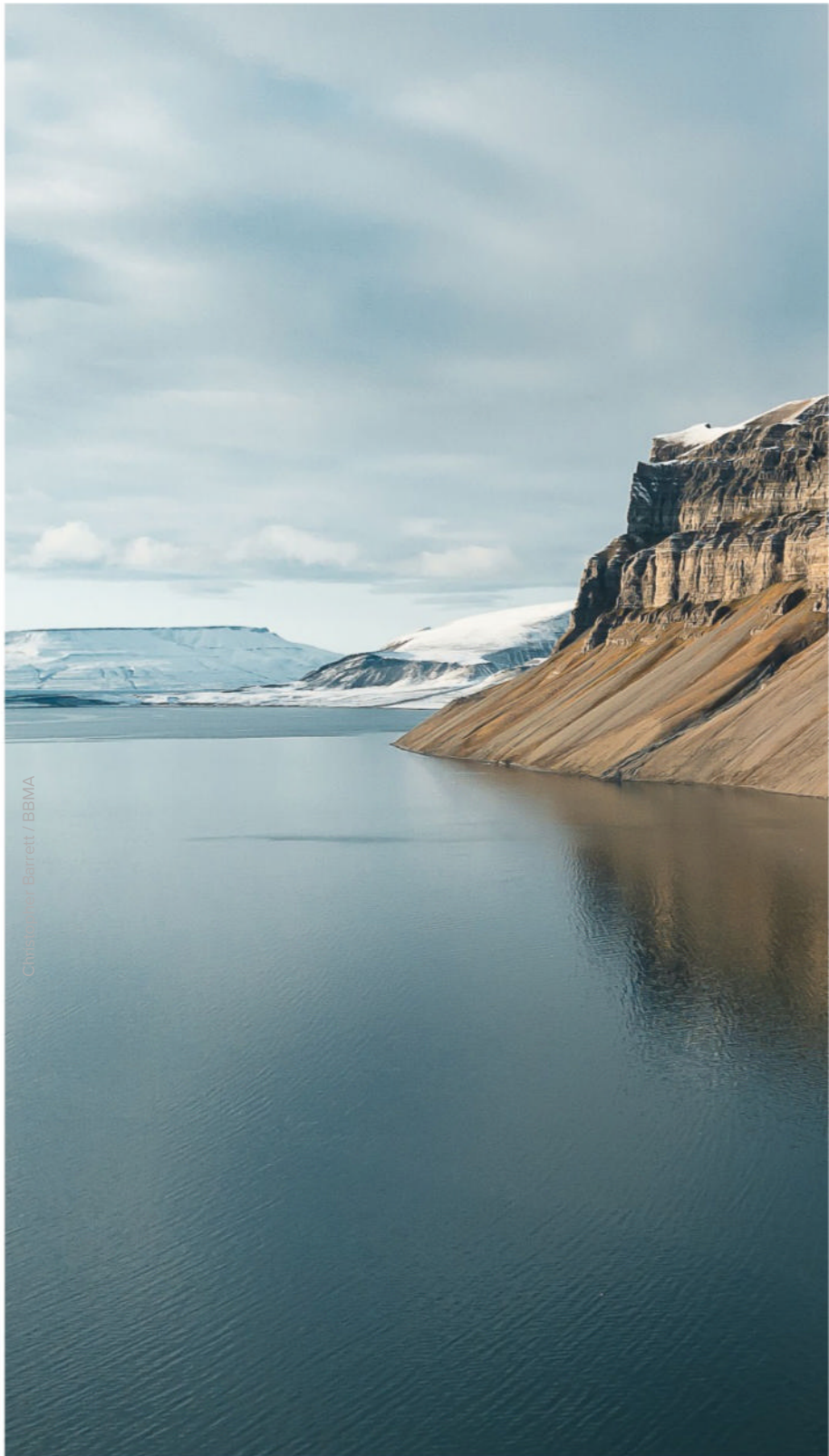
At a rather more prosaic level, we have a spectrum of old to new for you this month. Whether you rather enjoy progress and the vast space that can now be magicked into a yacht such as the Jeanneau's new Sun Odyssey 350 (p18), or you prefer the era-defining appeal of the Nordic Folkboat (p86), it's all here. And if you fall between those two tectonic plates, then making an old boat better than new might be more up your street (p82). It's no panacea for the world's ills, but it might just prove to be a bargain.

*Theo*

Theo Stocker  
Editor, *Yachting Monthly*

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Christopher Barrett / BBMA

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SEE PAGE 80





## WILD STORIES SEE PAGES 7 & 58

The winners of this year's Brian Black Memorial Award were announced at the Southampton Boat Show. Jon Amtrup won the prize for the best article (p58), while Christopher Barrett won the prize for best video. Jon Amtrup and Christopher Barrett's images are both stunning and heart-rending, as the Arctic reveals its beauty, and the pressure it is under. Polar bears swimming hundreds of miles, while their cubs can't keep up, and flocks of dead birds show that all is not well.



Jon Amtrup / BBMA





## Expedition Zero unveils 'net zero' yacht

Expedition Zero, a trailblazer in sustainable expedition sailing, has unveiled a cutting-edge 'net zero' yacht designed to be the world's most environmentally friendly adventure sailing vessel. It will lead an expedition through the Northwest Passage next year.

The revolutionary, fully recyclable 78ft expedition yacht will be the first of a fleet of 'net zero' adventure sailing yachts to be built by award-winning Innovation Yachts in France, and is aimed at opening the world to truly sustainable ocean sailing.

The design, presented at the Southampton International Boat Show, addresses a growing global demand for sustainable exploration (a market estimated to be worth \$485 billion) and is crafted with commercial operators in mind.

'We are thrilled to reveal this groundbreaking yacht design and share plans for the exciting Northwest Passage expedition,' said Andrew Cowen, CEO of Expedition Zero. 'The innovative design of this yacht, crafted for the demanding conditions of the commercial off-shore adventure market, exemplifies our commitment to a truly sustainable future for ocean adventure.'

Innovation Yachts, based in Les Sables d'Olonne, are designing and building the revolutionary yachts with the first model operational in 2025. The yard, founded 15 years ago by



Christophe Favreau/Innovation Yachts

**A fully recyclable  
Open 60 yacht by  
Innovation Yachts**

extreme sailor Norbert Koch who has raced in two Vendée Globes, uses only sustainable and renewable materials to deliver innovative custom-built yachts that offer outstanding performance.

Innovation Yachts uses volcanic and mineral fibres in a process where different volcanic rocks are ground, mixed according to a recipe, melted and then pulled into fibres, which can be customised according to the demands on the yacht. The fibres are fully recyclable, stronger than steel, extreme shock resistant, lighter than fibreglass, hydrophobic, acid resistant, UV resistant and temperature resistant up to 850°C. No fossil fuels are used in production. The hardwood balsa core is FSC certified and is 100% plantation grown, controlled from seedling to final product.

Steve Backshall MBE has also announced a collaboration with Expedition Zero. 'This is a sensational concept that aims to take the idea of a boat and make both its creation, its locomotion and its future disposal carbon-neutral using the latest technology and the latest materials.'

The yachts are powered by the latest solar, hydro generation and wind systems which are monitored remotely and are entirely sustainable.

Expedition Zero says the new yachts should result in a 90% reduction in the environmental footprint and will not result in abandoned boats. According to 2022 European Boat Industry figures there are 70,000 tons of waste per year from yacht construction, with 24,000 abandoned yachts in the EU alone.

Expedition Zero also plans to lease the yachts to partners, not sell them, thereby making the yachts more affordable and quicker to integrate into charterer's fleets.

Wavysail Ocean Adventures, Expedition Zero's sister company, will be the first to operate this new fleet of yachts. Wavysail, renowned for its award-winning expeditions led by elite skippers, will integrate the new yachts into its line-up of adventures.

The first Expedition Zero vessel is planned for launch in 2025, with an epic voyage through the Northwest Passage. Since the Northwest Passage was first crossed in 1906, less than 200 sailing vessels have successfully navigated it. This voyage presents a rare opportunity for a select few to join a journey pushing the boundaries of sustainable sailing.

Visit [www.innovation-yachts.com](http://www.innovation-yachts.com) and [www.expeditionzero.co.uk](http://www.expeditionzero.co.uk) for further information.



**No fossil fuels were used in production,  
and the yacht is made from mineral fibres**



**VENDÉE GLOBE PROTECTION**

Alain LeBoeuf, president of the Vendée Department, has announced new biodiversity protection zones during the Vendée Globe 2024 to protect wildlife

**ROYAL APPOINTMENT**

HRH the Princess Royal, Princess Anne, attended the 30th anniversary party for the National Coastwatch Institution at Trinity House, London

**MAN-MADE REEF**

The 60m *MV Shingle*, a former smugglers' ship, has been deliberately sunk off the coast of County Mayo to form Ireland's first biodiverse artificial reef

## Zhik Spirit of Adventure Award

Zhik and YM presented the Zhik Spirit of Adventure Award at the recent Southampton Boat Show, celebrating the most inspiring cruising adventures undertaken in British and Irish waters.

Winner Hamish Southby-Tailour captivated readers with his detailed account of exploring the Isles of Scilly and Guernsey with his family, also illustrated by beautiful drone shots of his Moody 33 MkII *Equinox* at anchor. Hamish was presented with a suite of lightweight high-performance Zhik

sailing kit, which included the CST500TM jacket and salopettes, plus a pair of Seaboot 700s and a 45-litre waterproof duffel bag.

'Family sailing has become my passion ever since I have had a family. I am grateful for this award and for the privilege of having been brought up sailing on my father's boat,' he said. Other commended entries included: 'Highland Hopping' by Dick Durham, and 'The Kingdom of the Isles' by Joanna Martin.



Zhik UK director Tristan Hutt (left) presents Hamish with the award

**NEWS IN NUMBERS**

# 86

Southampton Boat Show (SIBS) had 86 world and UK premières, such as the Hanse 360 and Rustler's first motor yacht

# 100,300

More than 100,300 visitors visited SIBS this year, enjoying watersports, boating experiences, interactive marine workshops, informative talks and boats galore

# 44%

of Brits have a shoulder-season getaway booked, a Sunsail survey showed, made easier by flexible working, better weather and fewer crowds

# £75,000

Southampton Hospitals Light the South art trail raised £75,000 through the auction of 40 8ft lighthouse sculptures at SIBS

## Winners of the Brian Black Memorial Award

**BBMA winner Jon Amtrup writes about how to live sustainably aboard his 45ft yacht sailing in the Arctic. The sail is decorated with the Keep the Ocean Clean logo (in Norwegian)**

Two incredible stories won this year's Brian Black Memorial Award, in association with Coppercoat and YM.

With entries focusing on 'treading lightly' in the marine environment, Jon Amtrup wrote about living aboard his yacht in the Arctic, eloquently setting out the case for more sustainable living and highlighting the rate of change in the Arctic. 'Winning the Brian Black Memorial Award is a big honour and inspires me to sail and write even more from the Arctic,' he says. 'Right now I am in Tromsø and

it's very warm here – over 20° in mid-September. It's just yet another example of how fast the climate is changing in the Arctic, and we all have to push the decision makers to do something about it. Not just talk about the challenges, as they have been doing for the last 30 years.'

Video award winner Christopher Barrett joined the Ocean Warrior research ship, *Linden*, also in the Arctic, and learned of the heart-wrenching difficulties facing polar bears that have to swim hundreds of miles to hunt. In his film *Facing the Bear*, Christopher gives an urgent call to action to ease the pressures on the ecosystems around the globe and to help save endangered species.

Each winner was awarded £2,000. The award includes a donation of £1,000 to the marine conservation charity Sea-Change. Journalist Brian Black, a lifelong sailor, was passionate about the marine environment and was a regular YM contributor. Visit [www.yachtingmonthly.com/brianblack](http://www.yachtingmonthly.com/brianblack)



## Sunsail wins 2024 Sustainability Award

British Marine announced Sunsail and The Moorings as the winners of the Sustainability Award at the 2024 Southampton Boat Show, honouring companies that demonstrate a strong commitment to reducing their environmental footprint. Sunsail has introduced electric outboard motors

to five Mediterranean bases, with 110 electric outboards in the fleet. Sunsail says this gives a reduction of 4,355 gallons of fossil fuels annually. The company has also fitted 300 yachts with water purification units that results in an estimated reduction of 24 tons of single-use plastic per year.



Sunsail is doing its bit for sustainability



# Jon Amtrup skippers Greenpeace yacht to map ecosystems prior to deep-sea mining

Expert sailor Jon Amtrup, winner of the 2024 and 2022 Brian Black Memorial Award, is currently the skipper of Greenpeace high-latitude expedition boat *Witness* off the coast of Norway and in the Arctic. *Witness* has spent two weeks documenting the ecosystems of whales and dolphins in the region – many of which are threatened by Norway's proposals to allow deep-sea mining.

The mission was planned following a Norwegian government proposal to allow deep-sea mining in an area twice the size of Denmark – from Jan Mayen island in the south, through international waters to Svalbard.

In a *YM* exclusive, skipper, Jon, explains more about the mission: 'For a Norwegian, deep-sea mining conjures up mental pictures of harpoons firing, red-coloured salt water, and a bitter taste of an old era when we did our worst to drive the big animals to extinction.'

'I first heard the whales singing when I was helming *Witness*, a 74ft aluminium expedition vessel formerly known as Skip Novak's *Pelagic Australis*. The sound made me happy.'

'We were somewhere between Jan Mayen and Bear Island in the west Norwegian Sea. Our boat was filled with scientists, campaigners from Greenpeace, and my crew – 12 people in total who were on a mission to search for life in an area which the Norwegian government is pushing hard to open up for deep-sea mining.'

'Behind the boat we had a 350m-long cable with four hydrophones at the end of it, and we had heard the



Christian Åslund/Greenpeace

**The 74ft yacht *Witness* was donated to Greenpeace in 2021**

whales singing and talking to each other for days. Our constant watch on deck had seen a few whales in the distance, The Norwegian Sea is up to 2,300m deep and in the best case, we only know 10% of the species down there, not to mention the complex ecosystems.

'All of this is at stake if we let the deep-sea mining industry loose in the area. We were trying to do a very little bit of what the Norwegian government should be doing: survey the area before they let commercial interests destroy it.'

'The backdrop for our expedition was pretty bleak, so the first sighting

of a giant sperm whale diving down to the deep, right in front of us, brought out our smiles.'

'All the data, sounds and sightings from the 14-day-long expedition, are now being analysed by scientists.'

**The Norwegian government sent out a proposal for the first round of permits for the extraction of seabed minerals on June 26 for public consultation. The proposal covers 386 blocks and the combined area of all blocks makes up an area that is twice the size of Denmark. The 90-day consultation period ends on September 26. [www.greenpeace.org.uk/challenges/#oceans](http://www.greenpeace.org.uk/challenges/#oceans)**

## Pendennis Shipyard takes majority stake in Cockwells

Custom superyacht builder Pendennis Shipyard has taken a majority interest in its Cornish neighbour Cockwells Boatbuilding for an undisclosed sum.

'Cockwells has been actively seeking support in the marine sector to move the business to the next phase in its business plan – including the production of this year's new model, the Duchy 45,' says Cockwells MD, Dean Short. 'Pendennis is perfectly placed to provide that support and we are delighted to be moving forward with the company.'



**The 59m Camper & Nicolson classic, *Marala*, restored at Pendennis in 2022 with her Cockwells custom-built tender**

Cockwells and Pendennis have worked together for many years with a number of Pendennis superyachts having commissioned Cockwells' custom-built tenders. Both companies

are also known for their highly skilled workforce, for innovation, apprentice training and excellence in all aspects of yacht building and will work together to develop their teams.

Pendennis owns the Pendennis Shipyard as well as Pendennis Vilanova, a service centre near Barcelona. Pendennis Shipyard has an annual turnover of £50m and more than 400 employees.

Cockwells builds superyacht tenders and sailing yachts, and owns the Duchy Motor Launch brand in addition to Hardy Marine.

Stuart Pearce/Yacht Shot



**FIRST SOLAR FISHING VESSEL**

A Scottish fishing vessel *Lorna Jane* is the UK's first fishing boat to be converted to solar and electric power in a significant step towards more sustainable fishing practices

**RS DINGHY MAKES IOW MOVE**

Production of RS Marine Group's RS Aero racing dinghy will move inhouse to the group's facilities in Cowes on the Isle of Wight, alongside its RS21, RS400 and RS500 models

**ROYAL QUAYS WINS AWARD**

The Yacht Harbour Association Marina Awards 2024 saw Boatfolk Royal Quays win 'Coastal Marina of the Year for over 250 berths', with Pool Quay Boat Haven winning the under-250 category

# New boatfolk sustainability unit EcoMarine

UK marina and boating business, boatfolk, has launched a new sustainability division called EcoMarine. It promises to offer a low-impact vessel upgrade and modernisation service using the most environmentally friendly systems.

The new division, under the helm of boatfolk division boatcare, will focus on four key areas to promote environmental responsibility across the sector, including:

**Coatings** – Using environmentally friendly products like Coppercoat.

**Power** – Partnering with leading brands such as Ecobat, MG Energy, Vitron Energy and Fischer Panda to provide sustainable power solutions.

**Propulsion** – Collaborating with innovators like Oceanvolt to offer green propulsion systems.

**Waste** – Implementing effective waste management practices, with support from Halyard's Wave International Filtration Systems and Ecobat battery recycling services.

The launch of EcoMarine follows British Marine's recent push to decarbonise the industry over the next five years. 'At boatfolk, sustainability is at the core of



**Nazca, a Contessa 34 that has been retrofitted to be fully electric by boatfolk**

our values, and we are dedicated to promoting boating in a low-impact, environmentally responsible way,' says Michael Prideaux, managing director of boatfolk. 'As more

boat owners become conscious of their environmental impact, we are committed to helping the boating community make conscious decisions about the products and services they use. By incorporating environmental awareness into every aspect of our operations, we ensure our customers have access to the best sustainable products available.'

The new EcoMarine strategy will see boatfolk integrate with key partners such as Oceanvolt and Coppercoat to deliver state-of-the-art innovation into its boatcare operations, including electric propulsion and hydro-generation systems as well as energy storage and control systems.

'We are thrilled to join forces with boatfolk to introduce our advanced electric propulsion and hydro-generation systems to their customers,' said Alec Von Weissenberg, commercial director for Oceanvolt. 'Together, we aim to make sustainable boating more accessible and widespread around the world.'

Portland Marina in Dorset will be the first to establish EcoMarine.

Heather Prentice

## Essex Police Marine Unit rescues yachtsman

Roy Harris and his partner Caroline Wilson were sailing back to the River Crouch from Kent on Sunday 25 August when a storm whipped up unexpectedly, causing his 40ft yacht *Samphire* to take on water.

'We sailed for six to seven hours in good conditions but then the wind started whipping up and, when we turned into the Crouch, the wind caught the tender on the front of *Samphire*, the jib sheet broke, the

**The yacht *Samphire* in heavy seas**



ropes got tangled and water started pouring through the hatch,' said Roy.

'I became exhausted very quickly and sent a PAN-PAN. I didn't want to call for assistance because the airwaves were busy but I had no choice. The Essex Police

Marine Unit turned up out of the blue. I can't express my gratitude and appreciation enough. I feel as though my life has been saved.'

Sergeant Alex Southgate, PC John Perry and special constable Scott McCabe were on Operation Wave-Breaker patrols in the rib *Sentinel* when they picked up the distress call. They were able to reach *Samphire* and board the yacht, steering it to the safety of Brightlingsea Harbour.

Essex Police Marine Unit



**Essex Police approach *Samphire* near Gunfleet Sands, Clacton, after she was hit by an unexpected storm**

Essex Police Marine Unit



# LETTERS

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

**WIN!** Letter of the month wins a Captain Curry Three Piece Rigging Kit (£49.95). Made in England, this handcrafted kit comprises a shackler splicing spike, pliers, and a stainless steel rigging knife with a brass riveted rosewood handle, in a leather sheath. [www.captaincurry.com](http://www.captaincurry.com). UK 18+ only



## Where there is a will there's a way



When the shackle pin parted and one of the main sheet blocks disintegrated, replacing it was straight forward. Not so finding a

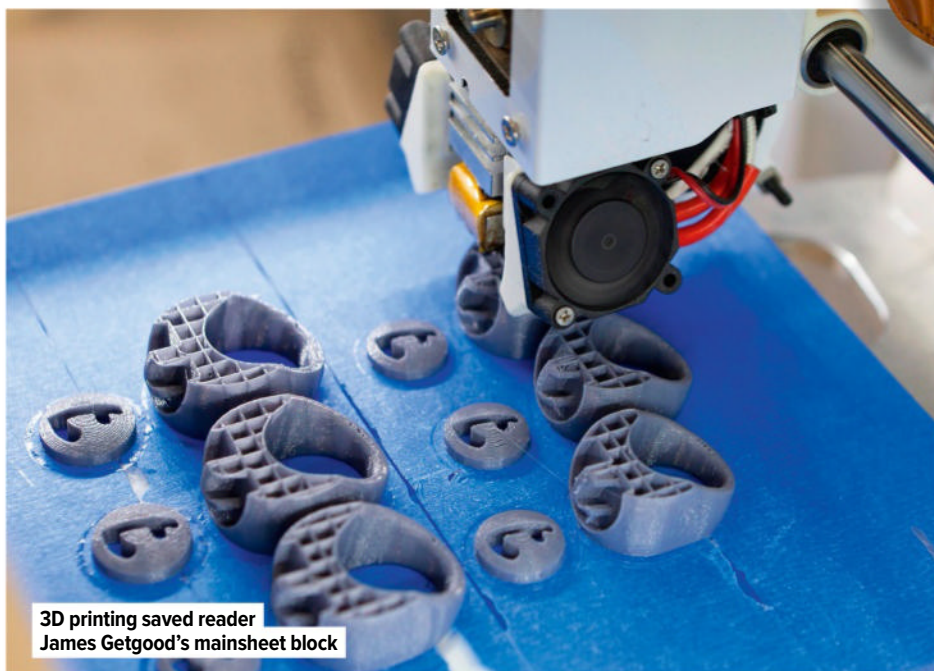
replacement for the 'thingamy' which used to sit on top of the spring, and now resides at the bottom of the Solent.

Clutching an identical 'thingamy' from the second mainsheet block I lamented as much to my son's housemate, Will – part of a hobbit-hole of former BAE Systems engineering apprentices.

'Give it to me James and go and have a coffee,' he said. I returned 10 minutes later to find that he had scanned and 3D-printed four copies of the thingamy. His only question was: 'Is this OK for a trial, what material would you really like PETG, PLA or TPU, and what colour?'

So, whilst we might not be able to quite yet 3D print an entire yacht it is an invaluable tool for replacing those illusive 'thingmies'!

**James Getgood**



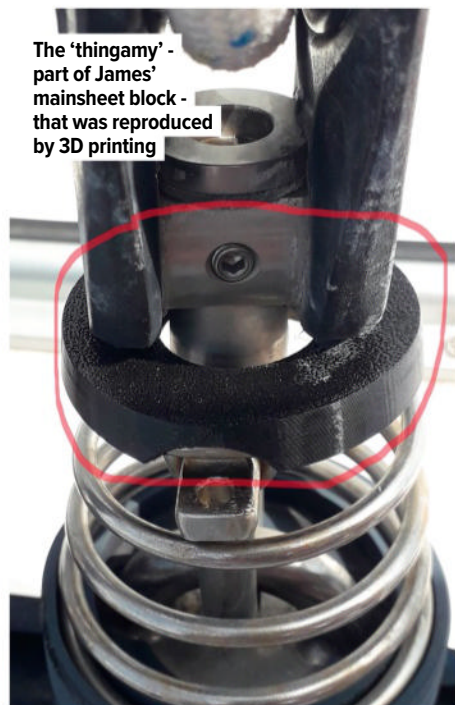
3D printing saved reader James Getgood's mainsheet block

B Christopher / Alamy Stock Photo

## The September issue

Your September 2024 edition is a corker, perhaps the best ever, covering a wide range of interesting topics – well done.

It was interesting to read the test of a catamaran, and although I have never sailed one I have always thought that 'flipping'



The 'thingamy' - part of James' mainsheet block - that was reproduced by 3D printing

caused by strong wind under the boat from directly ahead or astern could be an issue. I wondered if this is accounted for in the design/testing as it could be an issue when moored or at anchor

The article on cruising 'around Norway's South Cape' is interesting but, from experience, Lindesnes is not to be trifled with in strong winds from west to north, and the stretch northwest from Lindesnes to Stavanger is fairly exposed compared to the south side (the Costa del Sol – Norwegian style) described in your article with some well-placed boltholes (Farsund – excellent and extremely well sheltered, as is Egersund and Tananger) and incidentally has a very small tidal range, virtually nil at Egersund.

Immediately north of Stavanger all the offshore islands begin and the basin known as the 'Ryfylke', with its numerous and interesting islands (and very small tidal range), is my day sailing heaven and here the route to the far north through offshore islands begins with only a few exposed sections. Thanks for a super read. **Ken Fawell**

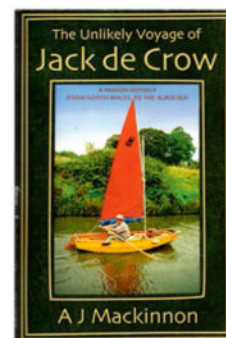
### Heather Prentice replies:

*Thanks very much for your lovely and inspiring comments.*

*It is always very encouraging to have positive feedback about the content of the magazine. If you have any particular ideas of topics you would like to see in the magazine, do please let us know. Thank you for your support. Best wishes, Heather*

## Reading with Pete Goss

I always enjoy *Yachting Monthly*, probably because I don't get much chance to actually sail these days. I particularly enjoy the Pete Goss column as I appreciate his approach to boats and the sea.



In his September column I was delighted to find that we enjoy similar reading matter. He mentions *The Unlikely Voyage of Jack De Crow* by A J Mackinnon, which is the story of the author's journey in a Mirror dinghy from Cheshire, via canals, rivers and sea, all the way across Europe to the Black Sea. He originally hoped to get as far as Bristol, but the rest just happened.

It is a great read about what can be achieved through inspiration and effort, and the journey could only have been done by an Englishman! Thank you for producing such a great magazine.

**David Pick**

### Theo Stocker replies:

*Many thanks for your email. It's great to hear you're enjoying the magazine, and Pete's column in particular. He will be pleased to hear that. Best wishes, Theo*



## VAT uncertainty

I have a question about VAT. The boat is from 1998 and has UK VAT paid. The boat was domiciled in Portugal at Brexit and I have proof from the marina available. The boat sailed around Med and then to the Caribbean and then back to the UK in July 2024. It subsequently sailed to Northern Ireland in August 2024 and then was sold there to a Spanish national later in August 2024. The boat sailed to Southern Ireland in late August 2024 and will be kept in Ireland over this winter 2024-25. It will be sailed back to Spain in 2025.

Is the boat EU VAT paid and free from import tariffs in Ireland? Thank you.

**Nick Tudor**

**Robin Baron (Chair) and Roger Bickerstaff from the Cruising Association RATS VAT Group reply:**

*This question reveals a number of the complexities and uncertainties associated with the VAT status of cruising yachts.*

Goods, such as yachts, which have had VAT paid on them, can be freely moved throughout the customs zone where VAT has been paid without further VAT being paid (e.g. throughout the EU if EU VAT has been paid). For the EU this is referred to as the yacht having 'union status'. It is not, however, always realised that this VAT-paid status is lost as soon as the yacht leaves the relevant custom zone. Under EU VAT rules for Returned Goods Relief (RGR) the VAT-paid status can be recovered if the



Graham Snook

yacht re-enters the EU within the three years of departing, as long as various conditions are satisfied. In this instance, we do not know when the yacht left the EU or if the conditions have been satisfied. If a yacht is outside the EU for more than three years, 'special circumstances' have to be demonstrated in order for VAT-paid status to be recovered.

The conditions to claim RGR in the EU are: (a) the vessel must not have had more than 'running repairs' to it during its period of

export that do not increase its value; and (b) the person importing the goods is the person who originally exported them.

If the yacht was returned to the EU within the three-year period and the other RGR conditions were satisfied, the EU VAT-paid status of the yacht would have been recovered and would have been transferred to the Spanish owner when the yacht was sold in Ireland to the new owner in August 2024. The yacht would have union status and this status would enable the yacht to be moved throughout the EU, including to Spain, without further VAT being paid.

The status of Northern Ireland raises complexities. The EU regards Northern Ireland as being within the EU customs zone. This may well mean that in this instance the three-year RGR period could be determined by reference to the date on which the yacht entered Northern Ireland. However, as this is such a complex area it is hoped that the yacht entered the Irish Republic within the three-year RGR period.

Customs duties which may also be payable on the import of yachts are another area of considerable complexity but in this instance the good news is that the Irish customs authority website shows that no further customs duty is payable on the import of sailboats into Ireland with a length between 7.5 and 25m in addition to any VAT which may be payable.

The advice in this article is for information only and shouldn't be relied upon as a substitute for independent financial advice.





## DON'T MISS NEXT MONTH

### 200 YEARS OF THE RNLI

A year of celebrations and a look at the charity's future

### DIESEL BUG

How to get rid of the dreaded contamination

### CHRISTMAS GIFTS

A host of festive ideas

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## Help us find the missing Hunter Pilots

Since our appeal in the April issue of YM, the Hunter Association has found 70 of the 100 Hunter Pilot 27s produced. Including one in Japan! If you have any information (HIN/sail number, name, location, owner past or present) please email John Milne at [eastcoast-rep@hunterassociation.org.uk](mailto:eastcoast-rep@hunterassociation.org.uk).

You can find the unique HIN stamped above the stern window, or the number on the main sail (see photo above).

Many thanks for agreeing to publish a follow up letter. All my thanks to you and the *Yachting Monthly* team. **John Milne**

## Heads up for fresh water

Flushing the heads with sea water might be economical from the point of view that it saves your fresh water, but if your pipes get blocked from the calcification of uric acid and seawater why not just use fresh water? We rarely need to ration our fresh water as we are usually back at port in the evenings so we flush the contents using the shower pipe which extends from the sink. The heads stay fresher and we reduce build-up. As for smelly heads a couple of sprays of antibac is generally enough to get rid of any lingering odours. **Jacques Pace**



Graham Snook

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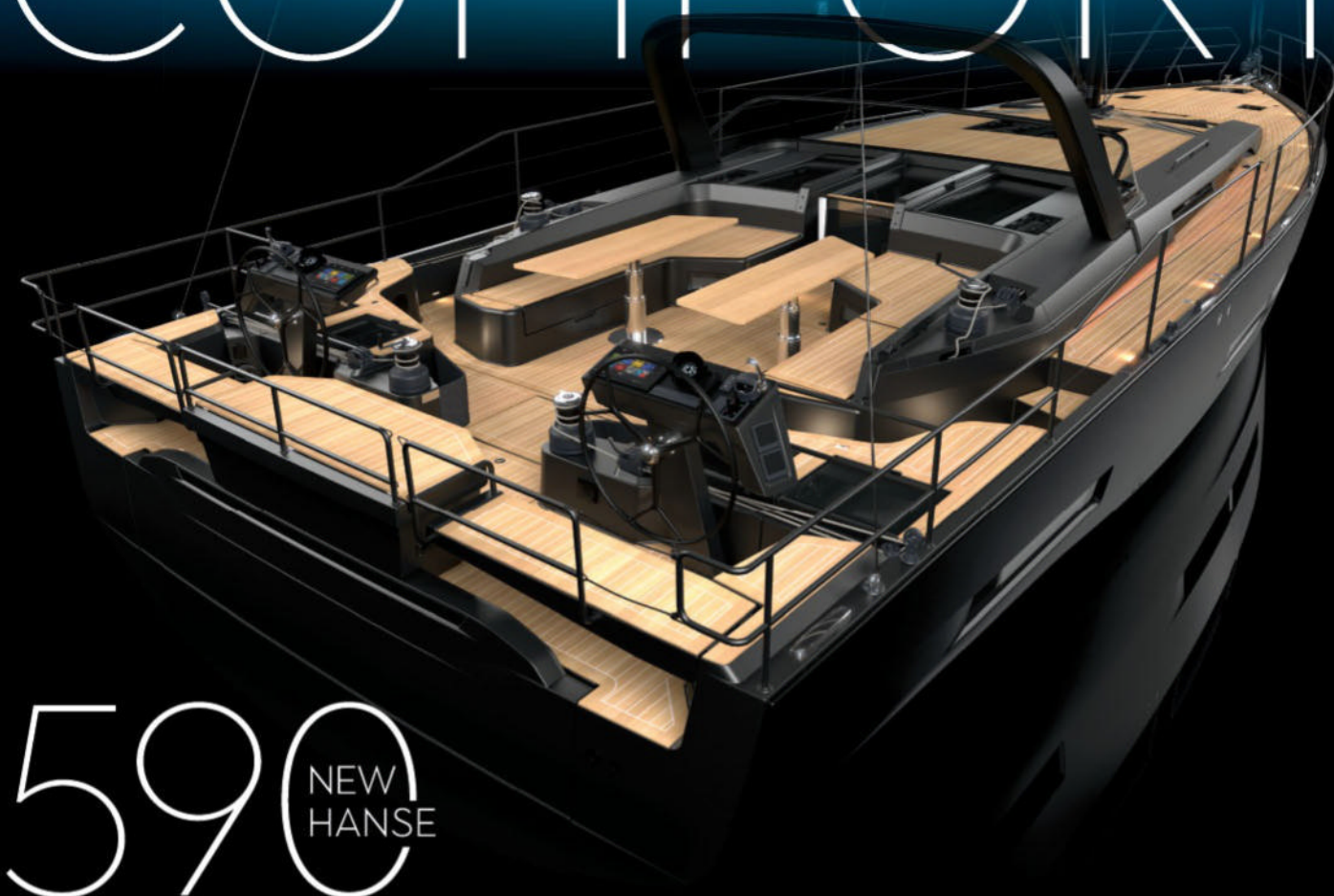
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**PETE  
GOSS**

# It pays to make the tide your friend

**W**hen I was a ship's boy in the Royal Maritime Auxiliary Service, an old-timer once offered a piece of advice: 'Make the tide your friend, boy.' I've embraced it ever since, for it makes sense to work with nature as opposed to against it.

Not all, it seems, are this way inclined, as illustrated by an anecdote from one of the harbourmasters who buzz about in Guernsey's St Peter Port, bringing order to the daily influx of various nationalities, sizes and abilities. Recently, impervious to advice that a 1.7m keel won't cross the sill with only a metre of water above it, a skipper imperiously pronounced that he was going in. Gunning the engine, he hit the sill at five knots. Not to be deterred, he backed up and had another go at it! Some people just don't get it.

Tracey and I have been enjoying the Channel Islands on *Oddity* and find that with my recovering wrist supported with a sports splint, we can get by under engine and jib alone. Alderney was our first port of call and as the tide fell it reminded me of an incident from my early teens on the sail training yacht *Falmouth Packet*. The crew were split between erks and those of perhaps more refined parentage. I, through being sponsored as a ship's boy, not parentage, naturally fell into the category of an erk.

One of the public school girls was a caricature. Beautiful, sophisticated and smelling wonderful as she radiated youthful arrogance. Lofty opinions on the great unwashed were imparted with the absolute conviction of naivety. Her whining pitch when things didn't go her way put everyone's teeth on edge. An anchor watch was required and I know not why but I was volunteered to take the evening watch while everyone went ashore, and guess who I was paired with.

Blessed with an earnest demeanour, she took our responsibility with all seriousness and in this I spied an opportunity. Picking a bright light just above and beyond the harbour wall, I taught her how to use the hand-bearing compass and nefariously

explained that the skipper expected a continual watch on said light. Of course, to great agitation, the light soon disappeared below the wall on the outgoing tide. I spent the next four hours winching her further and further up the mast. Making the tide my friend gifted an amusing and peaceful watch! Oddly enough, once the cat got out of the bag, we became the best of mates; it turned out she had a wonderful sense of humour. Indeed, her generosity of spirit taught me never to judge a book by its cover. I guess that's what youth training is all about.

On leaving Alderney for Guernsey we decided to embrace the Swinge, which has a frightful reputation, with ten-knot tides and nasty standing waves. Despite it

being neaps and doing the numbers a couple of times, it still induced a degree of trepidation as we were sucked in beyond the point of no return, particularly as standing waves started to breach the horizon. I knew it would be fine but there was no denying that I still felt a tickle of adrenaline. As friendly as you make the tide, it is completely

indifferent to a sailor's fortunes.

My final abiding memory of big tides in the Channel Islands is an epic pier jump in St Peter Port. It was while working on the Royal Marines Sail Training Yacht with a crew of novices, having rowed ashore at what happened to be high tide. After a lively afternoon in the pub, we returned to our little Avon dinghy and one of the lads was absolutely stunned that it was now 30 feet below.

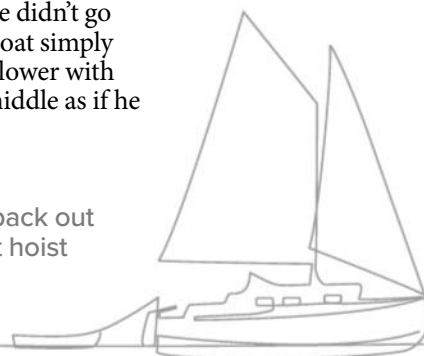
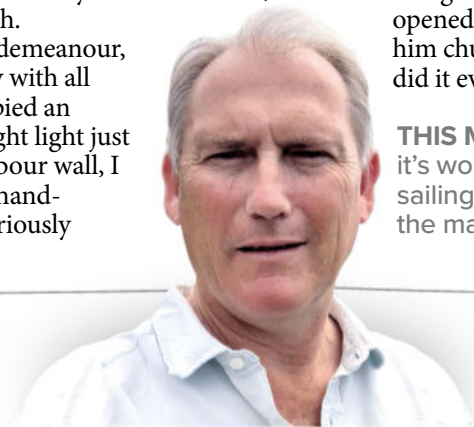
What does a Royal Marine do with a belly full of beer and no idea how things are done at sea? It was like watching a disaster unfold in slow motion as my desperate grab brushed his sleeve. All I could do was watch his graceful launch. He hit the target dead centre and I shall never forget as the dinghy folded in half, with bow and stern rising to clap him on either ear.

It's one of life's little cameos that's never left me, and no he didn't go straight through. The boat simply opened back up like a flower with him chuckling in the middle as if he did it every day.

## THIS MONTH...

it's wonderful to be back out sailing, even if I can't hoist the mainsail yet

**I spent the next four hours winching her further and further up the mast**







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# Heading west is still such a thrill

**Y**ou don't really notice it too much at first. At each stopover on our summer Mediterranean wanderings we meet up with other yachties, and talk inevitably comes to your cruising plans. 'We're heading west,' we say. 'Us too,' is the increasingly common reply. The further we sail towards Gibraltar, the more likely you are to hear the same refrain. It becomes clear we are part of the annual migration. We imagine a map of the Med, with yachts converging on Gibraltar from all parts, and as others peel away to their winter yards, we continue westwards with the rest of the herd in our quest for ocean adventures. Boat names become familiar and sailors become friends. By the time we reach southern Spain, talk is of provisioning and final kit modifications. Spare parts are sourced and broad routing plans are discussed. We analyse the weather for a window to exit the straits, swap contact details and agree a radio schedule for fellow SSB users.

By the time we arrive in the Canaries the group has grown from a few to a dozen. This is not a rally, just the normal flow of yachties aiming to swap the European winter for Caribbean warmth. Our Mediterranean herd is joined by our northern European counterparts. Marinas and anchorages are abuzz with final preparations. The old hands are mined for information from the first-timers. Youngsters help elders with tech. Hopeful spare crew tramp the pontoons to secure a ride across the pond. Tips are swapped and problems solved. And of course, weather forecasts are interrogated for the ideal passage. The anticipation is palpable.

Finally, farewells are made. Some of us slip lines, taking the route south via the Cape Verdes. Others we hope to see in the Caribbean. Rendezvous are planned, but now, suddenly,

we are on our way. Our preparations are over and we must now rely on our boat and our teamwork to make a successful passage.

People often ask, in a general sense, 'Do you get nervous?' Well here's the truth – yes, of course we get nervous. What have we forgotten? What have we overlooked? What if? A million mini-concerns flood the mind as we set off, every time we slip the lines. Of course the levels vary – a day trip raises far fewer questions than casting off for an ocean passage. But yes, the nerves are still there – sometimes utterly stomach

**The nerves are still there – sometimes utterly stomach churning**

churning, but more usually more like a frisson of understanding of what you are undertaking. For sure, experience allows you to think more broadly of what is required, and what might be expected, but it is no panacea for a successful voyage. And while it is good for all crew to be aware of the demands, no one wants an Eeyore for a skipper. It is a fine balance. I

often think back to my first Atlantic crossing, and muse on my rank inexperience – and my admiration of the skipper for taking on such a novice. On reflection I reckon 'ignorance is bliss' indeed. No worrying about much, simply because I didn't know that much. These days, I no longer have that advantage, but it's still easy to find the joy in our sport. Sailing remains the most amazing mode of transport where you have a genuine sense of not being entirely sure how it is all going to pan out.

Fair winds to all the sailors heading off across the pond this season!

## THIS MONTH...

I will be following a friend's transatlantic adventures from my office





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# **FIRST TEST**

# **JEANNEAU SUN ODYSSEY 350**

*With the latest evolution of the vastly popular Sun Odyssey range, Jeanneau has tried to push what we can expect from a cruising boat. Theo Stocker went to see how well the concept works in reality*





## SPECIFICATIONS

**MAKE**  
Jeanneau

**MODEL**  
Sun Odyssey 350

**PRICE FROM**  
£118,957 ex VAT

**DESIGNER**  
Marc Lombard  
Yacht Design

**BUILDER**  
Jeanneau Yachts

Words: Theo Stocker Photos: Paul Wyeth

**W**hen it comes to building successful cruising yachts, there are few yards that can match the might and scale of

Jeanneau. If the number of hulls sold is any measure of how good a yacht is, then the fact that Jeanneau built over 2,500 Sun Odyssey 349s in its 12 years production run is a pretty big stamp of approval.

Every boat has its day, and the time came to bring the 349 up to date. Jeanneau unveiled the new baby in its cruising range at the Düsseldorf boat show in January 2024. Anyone who has sailed on the 349 will

feel instantly like they've just been reacquainted with an old but subtly different friend, as if they've had a midlife crisis, started working out and had a touch of cosmetic surgery. When I arrived on the pontoon at Swanwick Marina in August for a test sail with the Sea Ventures stock boat, the new 350 was lying alongside a 349 being sold on brokerage; it was like a game of spot the difference.

The most significant change comes to the hull shape. The hull is more muscular and beamier, though only by 15cm, carried both all the way aft, and also much further forward, resulting in a fuller bow. The waterline has been kept narrow thanks to the full-length hull chines onto which the boat should heel under sail and generate both more power from its form stability, and a more balanced hull ➔



Refining the previous model, the cockpit offers plenty of bracing and stowage as well as comfort



## LOGBOOK

**TESTED BY**  
Theo Stocker

**LOCATION**  
Central Solent

**WIND**  
SE F2 - SW F4

**SEA STATE**  
Smooth

**DATE** August 2024

shape when heeled. On deck, the hallmark of this, the eighth generation of Sun Odyssey yachts has now also been added, in the shape of the stepless access from the cockpit to the side decks by means of a walk-through aft of the wheels and up a ramp to level out with the deck just before the shrouds to minimise the amount of stepping up, down and over that yacht sailing often entails.

The forecast was for the wind to veer from the south east to the southwest, promising anything between 5 and 20 knots; it was always going to be a bit pot-luck with the breeze on what turned out to be the hottest day of the year, though in this largely chilly year, that doesn't feel like much of a claim to fame.

Nevertheless, we slipped the lines and hoped for something to get us properly moving. Taking the boat astern out of a rather fiddly marina berth, I was pleased to find that the twin rudders developed steerage quickly at low speeds, helping me get clear, though without the benefit of prop wash, most owners will opt for the tunnel bow thruster to keep the shallow forefoot under control. Motoring down the river, I was impressed with just how much oomph the 29hp Yanmar delivered, chugging us along easily at 5.8knots with 2,400 revs on the clock, while acceleration to full chat was rapid

and gave us 7.8knots at 3,400rpm, helped by the fixed three-bladed prop, though the optional 3-bladed folding prop would be preferable for sailing.

## ON THE WIND

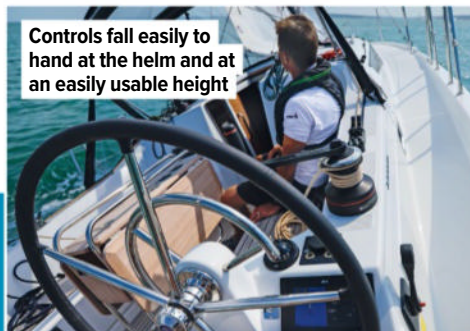
This is a boat that is designed for ease of handling as well as for enjoyable, efficient sailing, and setting sail with two of us aboard was straightforward. All halyards and furling lines are taken to the coachroof winches (Harken ST35s) so sails are hoisted at the companionway – rope bags on the coachroof and below the wheels are standard to tame the rope tails. A furling main is also an option that will probably prove popular, though I'd be tempted to go the other way and take the Performance pack for a slightly larger, fully battened main.

Not that we were short of power – the boat soon heeled to the 7-9 knots or so of breeze funnelling in past Calshot and quickly speed up to over 5 knots at 35° to the wind. This being a new boat, we found the mainsheet strops – a solution that works well in place of a traveller – were a little too long and we couldn't

get quite enough leach tension to fully power up the main. I think we'd have got another quarter of a knot and another degree or two of pointing had this been sorted, though we did manage to shorten them enough to just about get the telltales looking right. After a brief and windless hiatus for lunch, the breeze filled in again from the south-

west this time, giving us a modest and very pleasant Force 4, in which we nudged 6 knots boatspeed at about 32-35° to the apparent wind, which looks pretty close to the boat's polars. Point much higher, and the speed drops off, but we were up over 7 knots without

Controls fall easily to hand at the helm and at an easily usable height



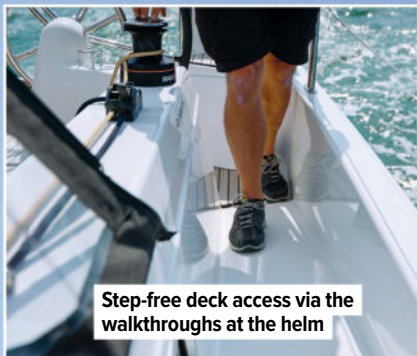
## PERFORMANCE FIGURES

POINT OF SAIL	AWA*	AWS**	speed
Close Hauled	32-34°	18-20	5.8-6.1
Fetch	60°	15-17	7.1-7.5
Beam Reach	90°	12-13	6.4-6.6
Broad Reach	120°	9-11	5.5-5.7
Run	150°	7-9	4.9-5.1

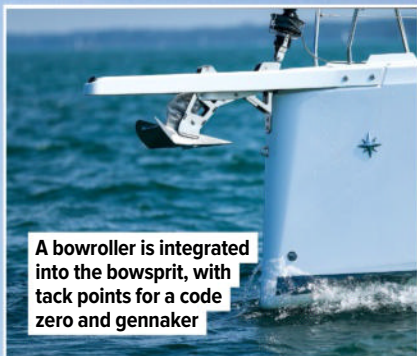
UNDER ENGINE (Yanmar 29hp) 5.8knots @2,400rpm; 7.8knots @3,400rpm

\*APPARENT WIND ANGLE \*\*APPARENT WIND SPEED





Step-free deck access via the walkthroughs at the helm



A bowroller is integrated into the bowsprit, with tack points for a code zero and gennaker



The boom is low, making accessing the sail easy. The mainsheet sets from a bridle forward of the sprayhood



Folding mast steps help access the head of the mainsail



Furling lines are led neatly aft across the foredeck

If you want a backstay to control mainsail shape and forestay tension, you'll need the Performance pack

Offwind sails are easily set from the generous bowsprit







**ABOVE:** The saloon has amazing amounts of space for a boat of this length



**ABOVE:** The chart table is an option, with a chaise-longue seat as an alternative



**ABOVE:** With full headroom and stowage either side, this is a generous forward cabin



**ABOVE:** The galley is a decent size with decent stowage for a boat of this size. There are just three steps leading down into the saloon from the cockpit above



**ABOVE:** The aft cabin has an almost rectangular berth. Note the sloping deck moulding for the helm walkthrough left



If you opt for the three-cabin version, you lose the huge compartment aft of the heads



# The 350 has just the right balance of being forgiving while still rewarding at the helm

trying too hard on a close reach – that's a pretty good turn of speed for a cruising boat of this size.

Our boat didn't have an offwind sail on board, but the moulded bowsprit projects the tack point 40cm (18in) forward, which you'd definitely want if you had the optional self-tacking jib. The 110% overlapping genoa gave pretty good all round performance, and the in- and out-haulers actually give more control over sheeting angle than jib car tracks. A self-tacking jib is also an option. The boat is fitted with a backstayless 9/10ths fractional deck-stepped rig from Selden, supported by two spreaders swept well aft. There's no backstay, but you can add one with the conventional main (but not with the larger fathead Performance main). I did notice a small amount of forestay sag as the wind built, though the new rig needed a little more tension, so a backstay would be a nice addition, if you don't mind it impinging on the helm seat. For those heading offshore, the Voyager pack includes a removable inner forestay on which to set heavy weather sails.

## WELL-BALANCED HANDLING

Sail-handling and tacking was straightforward singlehanded with main and genoa sheets taken to clutches and winches (Harken ST40s) just ahead of the wheels, where both sails can be trimmed from the same side by using the clutches. Just make sure crew don't use the coaming-top lines as handholds when you're working the sails.

On the helm, she remained remarkably well balanced for such a beamy boat; even when heeled to

20° or so, with the chine well dug in, I could let go of the wheel and she just kept tracking obediently to windward. As with all twin rudder boats, there's slightly less feedback than from a single rudder, and the stainless steel wheels made the helm a little heavy, but the optional composite wheels would liven this up. That said, you don't want a cruising boat to bite your hand off and I felt the Sun Odyssey 350 has just the right balance of being forgiving while remaining rewarding on the helm. When I bore away with the sails pinned in, there wasn't a hint of the rudders losing grip, meaning broaches are unlikely.

## ATTENTION TO DETAIL

I am also a big fan of the helm seats tucked into the stern quarters – they're just the right size and distance from the wheel to sit and helm looking forward with your legs stretched out in the walk through, or on the high side braced against the foot blocks, while leaving enough space to stand and helm comfortably on either side. Going forwards on deck felt more secure than on most boats – the walkthroughs mean there's no clambering and the guardrails are waist-height rather than knee-height for much of the way to the shrouds, with plenty of handholds as you go. The only improvement I could see here would be to have the lower shrouds split inboard; as it is, it's just a slight duck under on your way to the foredeck.

At the mast, two steps fold down to help reach the main, though with the gooseneck at knee height, zipping up the stack pack is easy even for shorter crew. The foredeck itself is amazingly broad, but

**BELOW:**  
Wide beam and muscular chines help generate power to keep the boat driving in chop





**RIGHT:**  
Twin rudders  
ensure lots of grip  
when heeled



with good grip moulding, moulded toe rails and fairleads for lines crossing the deck to keep them low down, the foredeck is still pretty secure. The anchor locker has the same slope under the windlass as on the 349, but the chain well forwards has been made deeper to minimise chain pile ups. There's space in here for a couple of fenders if you need it, but the main stowage comes in the cockpit.

If you opt for the two-cabin version of this boat, the space aft of the heads to port becomes a vast cockpit locker, lined with a wooden base and shelving to make this a really practical space. The gas struts on the test boat were a little short, limiting the amount the lid opened, but this would be easily remedied, while the hatch from the heads compartment into this locker gave excellent access.

On the three-cabin version, the cockpit locker becomes a shallow, sole-depth locker, while the starboard lazarette offers stowage alongside some of the systems mounted there. The port lazarette gives top access to the liferaft stowage, with rear access also opened up when the bathing platform is lowered. There's space for a single gas bottle in the draining locker under the port helm seat, while the starboard one houses the bilge pump and deck shower.

Drinks holders by the helm and in the fixed cockpit table, along with a small stowage bin, means there's plenty of space for cockpit clutter to be kept secure. I also like the layout of the engine controls – putting the engine panel on port side, opposite the throttle on starboard meant I could see the rev counter without having to bend down. The instruments and plotter

are tucked behind the wheel at the aft end of the cockpit coaming – useful for the helm, though crew can't see them unless they come aft.

#### STEP THIS WAY

Jeanneau has worked hard to reduce steps on the 350, and the companionway has three gently-sloping steps down to the saloon. Down below, there's a sense of light and space, while providing a practical layout – the heads is to port, in this version with a separate shower compartment that also boasts a huge locker for sailing kit, and a removable rail to hang wet weather gear. To starboard, the galley includes a top-opening fridge and two-burner gas oven with a decent amount of stowage in drawers and lockers below the work surface, and in lockers above it, though worktop space is limited. I'd have liked a double rather than single sink, but the double bins and extra drawers beneath it work well.

## Hull construction is in hand-laid fibreglass while the deck is injection-moulded to reduce weight

**BELOW:** Twin rudder and right outboard ensure good grip when heeled







**LEFT:** Access for the 29hp Yamar is excellent

Our test boat had the optional aft-facing chart table to port – you can have Jeanneau's signature 'chaise longue' style seat instead, but I'd far rather have somewhere to wield a pair of dividers. It was a shame the chart table stowage was designed around storing a laptop, as it wouldn't be big enough for leisure folio charts, though the chrome clock/barometer and the leather-covered table top all added a touch of class.

### GENEROUS LIVING SPACE

Straight settees either side were long enough to make good sea berths under way, and a folding saloon table is large enough for six to eat comfortably. There's masses of stowage beneath the settees and behind the seatbacks, as well as in the deep-fiddled shelves outboard. Some overhead lockers or shelves would be a nice addition, though without them and with the large hull windows, the saloon feels huge for this size of boat. A forward-opening coachroof hatch, and an opening window over the galley, give good ventilation. The only negative on the accommodation was that the Alpi-wood veneers felt thin, and corners without solid-wood mouldings could be vulnerable to wear.

Accommodation in the cabins was more than comfortable with 190cm headroom forward and 193cm aft (189cm at the aft end of the saloon), and all the berths are 2m long. The forward V-berth is 180cm wide at the head end, and leaves standing room inside the double doors, with hanging and shelved lockers outboard and great views out thorough the hull windows. The aft cabin has one large locker, and a row of bin lockers outboard of the berth, meaning that the bed isn't squeezed under the sloping side decks – even though it's 160cm wide. A water tank forward and fuel tank aft takes up the space under the berths. Access to the 29hp Yanmar engine was good, with all systems easily accessible from the forward end below the companionway steps, and side hatches giving access to the oil filter. Hull construction is in hand-laid fibreglass while the deck is injection moulded to reduce weight above the waterline.

Uniquely for a boat of this size, Jeanneau offers three keel options – the standard deep-fin we tested, a 1.49m shoal-draught wing keel, and a lifting keel which gives the best performance thanks to its 2.54m draught when lowered and lighter weight, while allowing the boat to dry out with the aid of sea legs. I reckon I'd go for this option for both the performance and the flexibility of staying afloat in 1.2m of water.



## JEANNEAU SO 350

### THE TEST VERDICT

There's a good reason the Sun Odyssey range has lasted as many decades as it has – the concept strikes just the right balance between sailing performance and comfort aboard for many cruising sailors. For a boat of this size and that is this simply rigged, she has a good pace that is easily achieved and could be improved once the rig is properly bedded in. Jeanneau have clearly put a lot of thought into the evolution of this boat – details such as the sidedeck walk-throughs, the low goose neck and the flying fairleads for the jib all just work. She was well-finished on the whole, let down only by the quality of the veneers and a couple of little details that could be easily remedied.

### WOULD SHE SUIT YOU AND YOUR CREW?

I had a genuinely enjoyable day sailing her with just enough feel at the helm to make her fun for experienced sailors, while she's forgiving enough to be kind to novice crews. Handling her couldn't have been simpler, though most will want the bowthruster for marina manoeuvres. Charter companies will love the ability to squeeze up to eight guests into a 34-footer, while private owners can enjoy a boat that's got space for them, two guests and a full load of cruising kit. The range of keel options also makes her stand out for those wanting options for sailing in shallower areas and accessing anchorages that deeper boats couldn't contemplate. Don't go crazy on the options list if you want to keep the cost down, but otherwise this is an accomplished all-rounder at a sensible starting price.

### PROS

- Easy, fun and quick to sail
- Cockpit and accommodation work well
- Sidedeck walk-throughs are great

### CONS

- Veneers felt thin on corners
- Options can add significant cost
- Basic sail controls

### FACTS AND FIGURES

#### PRICE AS TESTED

£199,934 inc VAT

**LOA** 10.94m / 35ft 9in

#### HULL LENGTH

9.99m / 32ft 9in

**LWL** 9.38m 30ft 9in

**BEAM** 3.59m / 11ft 9in

#### DRAUGHT

Standard 1.98m

/ 6ft 5in

Shoal 1.49m / 4ft 9in

#### LIFT KEEL

1.28m - 2.54m /

4ft 2in – 8ft 4in

#### DISPLACEMENT

Deep keel, 5,656kg

/ 12,470 lbs

#### BALLAST

Deep keel 1,580kg /

3,483lbs

**SHOAL** 1,860kg /

4,101lbs

Lift 1,522kg /

3,356lbs

**SAIL AREA** 55m<sup>2</sup> /

592 sq ft

**BAL/DISP** ratio 27.9%

**DISP/LENGTH** 192.3

**SA/D RATIO** 17.6

**ENGINE** Yanmar 29hp

#### TRANSMISSION

Shaft drive

#### WATER

206L / 54 gal

(+optional 336L /

89 gal)

**FUEL** 130L / 34 gal

**RCD** Category A6

#### DESIGNER

Marc Lombard

Yacht Design

#### BUILDER

Jeanneau Yachts

#### UK AGENT

Sea Ventures

**WEBSITE** www.

sea-ventures.co.uk



# **The first book to be officially authorised by Rolex**

For the first time ever, Rolex has authorised an immersive history of its Oyster Perpetual Submariner watch. The first in a series of titles exploring the brand's unique watch portfolio, this full-colour tome offers a deep dive into the story of the classic Rolex timepiece, retracing the Submariner's illustrious 71-year history and its role in the exploration and protection of the marine environment through dazzling photography and testimonies. Published by Wallpaper\* and written by watch expert Nicholas Foulkes, this silk-bound volume is an essential acquisition for the watch aficionado.

**A limited number of silk-covered books can be  
purchased exclusively at [wallpaper.com/store](https://wallpaper.com/store)**

**For worldwide distribution, editions in English and  
French are available through [accartbooks.com](https://accartbooks.com)**

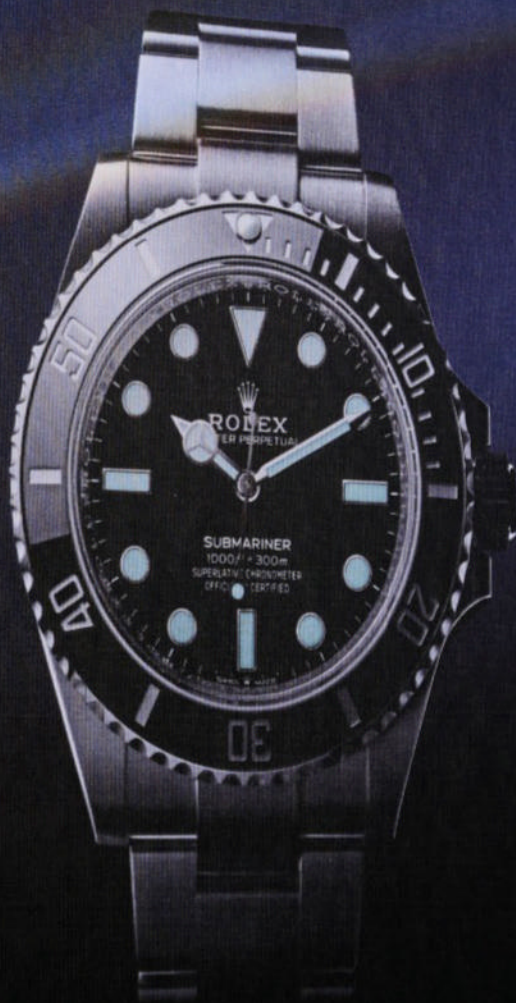


SUBMARINER

OYSTER PERPETUAL  
**SUBMARINER**

The Watch that Unlocked the Deep

NICHOLAS FOULKES



\*

ROLEX

ROLEX

Wallpaper\*



# SKIPPER'S TIPS & YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED

Send your questions to our experts at [yachtingmonthly@futurenet.com](mailto:yachtingmonthly@futurenet.com) for the chance to win a bottle of Chilgrove gin

## THIS MONTH'S EXPERTS

**COLM CLEARY** is a Yachtmaster Instructor for sail and motor at Sunsail, Prometheus Sailing and Pure Latitude Boat Club Hamble.



**GRAHAM WALKER** has been sailing for over 50 years and is now cruising with his wife on *Barracuda*, their Ovni 395, in Australia and SE Asia.



**ALAN WOOD** is an RYA instructor and RNLI crew and has been sailing the world with his family since 2017. He's on YouTube at *MotherShip Adrift*.



**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.



## Try this clever hack for singlehanded bow spring

I was recently asked to deliver a boat singlehanded from Lymington to Hamble. When I arrived at Lymington Yacht Haven the boat, *Pure Momentum*, a Hanse 348, was bows-in on a finger pontoon with a 13-knot wind blowing her on to the berth.

I decided that in this instance a bow spring was needed to get the stern away from the dock and reverse out of the berth.

As I was singlehanded with nobody on the pontoon to assist, I used the following technique.

A long line was attached to the bow cleat on the boat and led aft to the mid-finger pontoon cleat, with an

overhand loop knot on to its aft horn. This loop was sufficiently small such that it could not reach the forward horn of the cleat. From there, the line was attached to the aft cleat on the boat with slack to allow the stern to come away from the dock.

The stern part of the line can be eased from the helm position if required as the stern comes away.

I drove forward against the spring, using the helm as required to get the stern clear, and when the correct angle was achieved, I reversed positively out of the berth.

The loop then pulled off the cleat as I reversed away and the line

remained attached until I was in clear water, where I then safely organised the fenders and line.

Even when you have crew, this technique has the following benefits:

**1** The helmsman controls the whole manoeuvre so there is less chance of miscommunication and timing issues.  
**2** It reduces the risk of finger damage to bow crew or snagging of a traditional bow spring slip line on the dock cleat.

As always, choosing the appropriate technique for each situation is key to success.

Why not give this one a try!

**Colm Cleary**

**BELOW:** Letting go of a spring by yourself isn't easy, but this tip will help

**BELOW RIGHT:** As you start moving astern, the line will slip off the cleat





## Communicating safety rules

I was comparing notes on documenting boat procedures with another skipper and his material included a very concise page on the boat's golden rules, to give to all crew before they joined the boat. I thought this was a great idea. When sailing offshore with new or regular crew it is a very good idea to be ultra-clear about the few ship's rules that really matter. Skippers will obviously have different rules depending on the boat, crew size, experience, or the passage they are embarking on. For example, when lifejackets should be worn, when crew should clip on, leaving the



**LEFT:** Safety rules, such as when to wear lifejackets and when alcohol can be consumed need to be understood by all on board

cockpit at night, alcohol, smoking or when to wake the skipper. Sailing offshore with just my wife and me, we have mandatory rules about clipping on at night and not leaving the cockpit

without alerting the other. We know this is for our own safety. So, as a skipper, what rules do you have and how do you communicate them?

**Graham Walker**

### THE BIG QUESTION

## When does AIS become stalking?

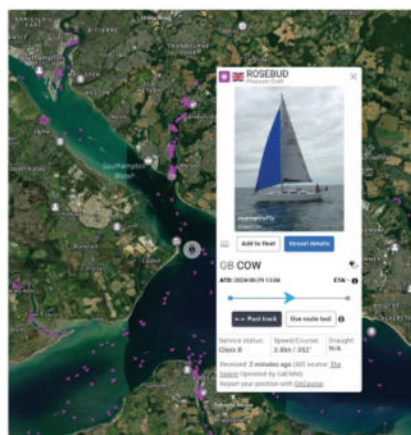
**Q** Few mariners, whether on the sea for commercial or pleasure use, will deny that AIS is the most important piece of equipment for preventing collisions at sea.

So it is a travesty that this brilliant system has been turned into a tool for stalkers. I was contacted by a friend who told me that there was a photo of my boat on the internet. Internet vessel-tracking sites such as Marine Traffic and Vessel Finder have become the Big Brother of the sailing world. We sailors and ships' crews are constantly under surveillance; we cannot hide unless we disable the transmit function of our AIS, thereby destroying the very benefit of installing one.

To add insult to injury, photos of boats are uploaded to, in my case, Marine Traffic with no prior request to ask if this is acceptable. There appears to be no easy way to remove these photos, though they have since taken down the photo after we requested Marine Traffic to do so.

My boat, with me and my wife clearly visible, was photographed as we entered Tarbert in Scotland. The weather was appalling and I can only assume that the photographer was lurking in the rocks, waiting for an un-photographed vessel to enter, much like the train and plane spotters of bygone years.

One of the joys of sailing has gone



**MarineTraffic.com** allows users to upload images of any boats with an AIS signal

– the experience of being anchored in a deserted bay or cove, away from the world, completely alone. Perhaps enjoying a glass of wine or an intimate moment, but unaware of a telephoto lens being pointed towards you by a stalker hiding on the shore, waiting to take snaps of you and your yacht to upload onto Marine Traffic.

Imagine the outcry if car drivers were subjected to this sort of surveillance – photos of your car and registration number uploaded and in the public domain.

This would correctly be regarded as completely unacceptable. Why is it allowed with vessels? **John Burns**

**A** A Marine Traffic spokesperson replies: Please be advised that we are a free community and all photographers are able to upload any current and clear photo of any vessel. According to our terms of service, we can only delete photos that are offensive or violent. However, if you feel strongly about removing these photos, it might be worth contacting the photographer and requesting that he takes them down. You can do so, by using the 'Contact Photographer' form.

### **Polly Beauchamp, head of rights management at Future Publishing adds:**

If someone is in the background of a shot and is included incidentally where content is being used editorially, then we do not require their consent, and where someone has agreed to be filmed or photographed, we don't always require a release because there is an implied licence from them to use their image for that purpose. However, in this instance it does sound like the boat (and people on the boat) are essentially the subject of the shot and do not necessarily know they are being filmed/photographed so don't have the opportunity to 'opt out'. There is a risk here of images being published of people on their boat without their consent. If I were giving advice to a team wishing to use one of these images I would suggest blurring the faces so the identity is unknown (unless we can seek permission from those individuals).



### 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](http://www.chilgrovespirits.com) (UK residents only, RRP £39.95)



## Settle into long-term family cruising

To paraphrase Sir Francis Chichester, any damn fool can circumnavigate the world solo; try doing it with kids!

Don't launch your kids into the cruising lifestyle overnight – ease them into it slowly. Manage their expectations by gradual exposure. Take them away on long weekends or a charter holiday, and take some homework along, so they don't always associate cruising with 'holidaying'.

If you're planning on boat schooling long-term, consider taking them out of school six months before the departure date to get them (and you!) used to a home schooling environment. Do a few overnights and get them involved with watches, navigation, and victualing. Explain that there are no passengers on a yacht, only crew. All the kids on *Mothership* do night watches, usually with one of us parents asleep in the cockpit. Although admittedly, this is heavily incentivised with snacks, hot chocolate, audio books, and the promise of a lie-in the next morning.

**Alan Wood**



**RIGHT:** Take time to settle into family life aboard and get the kids involved with everyday chores on board

## The value of splicing

Today more and more people are opting for Dyneema lines on board. With their added strength and limited stretch, the quality of rope should make them last longer – warranting the higher price tag (a 40m halyard can cost in the region of £200!).

However, replacing bowlines with splices on your existing lines is a more cost-effective way to have stronger sheets and halyards.

I made my first eye splice when I was 17 and it was a painful experience. Messing about with fids and milking back a cover which was dead set on not moving took hours. However, the process taught me a lot, and with more practice it gets a bit easier every time.

A simple search through YouTube will show that in a load test, eye splices last significantly longer than a standard bowline. Added to this, they are neater, work better with blocks, and look much better!

Calculating the places on a line which face the most chafing and sewing in an extra cover can better protect the core of a rope, improving its lifespan; for example, adding an extra cover to the section which is jammed in the clutch when a halyard is fully loaded.

Splicing is a great skill to learn over the winter months. I was able to teach myself basic splicing through online guides and apps such as Premium Ropes – the internet has it all.

Then, with more complex problems, I found my local rigger was always happy to point me in the right direction. Happy splicing!

**Timothy Long**



## Keep maintenance manageable

It's easy to become overwhelmed and demoralised on really big jobs. Try splitting them into bite-sized chunks that can easily be accomplished in a day. Give yourself about half an hour to tidy away tools and clean up the mess at the end of each day and put on some uplifting music as you do it. Reward yourself with a shower (water allowing), swim, beer or cup of tea, which will help with your morale and motivation. Unless time is a factor, don't be tempted to work late into the night, which will only lead to burnout in the long run. Instead, note down the tasks for the following day, then forget about the job until the morning. It's a far more motivational start to the day when you've got a clean work environment and a positive mindset.

**Alan Wood**

**BELOW:** Splices are strong, neater and more usable than knots, for little extra effort

**FAR RIGHT:** Maintenance needs to be broken into chunks





# A QUESTION OF SEAMANSHIP

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



## Would you sail if you found this in the bilges?

**Q** Andy and Jane are on the trip of a lifetime to the Caribbean on board their 12m cruiser racer *Ambition* with two crew.

They are currently in Las Palmas preparing for the passage to Antigua. On the way down they met strong winds off Portugal, but *Ambition* weathered the storm and they arrived safely in Gran Canaria. However, there is a slight ingress of seawater in the bilge.

*Ambition* is eight years old. She was previously owned by a charter company and

was used for skippered and bareboat charter. She was certified and inspected for commercial use. Andy and Jane have fitted her out for ocean sailing with all the safety equipment. The sails and rig look fine.

Because the boat was fairly new and had been used commercially, Andy and Jane decided to save by not having a survey but an experienced friend looked over it out of the water and reckoned it was fine. By chance they meet a fellow sailor who

recognised the boat and informed Jane and Andy that he bareboat chartered *Ambition* to enter a regatta in the Solent.

Jane has inspected the bilge for damage. The fittings look OK and it's hard to know where water is entering. The keelbolts look solid but on lifting the floorboards and table

she notices that the area on one side and also aft of the keel looks as if it has been repaired. They are victualled and ready to go. Should they depart?

Even a strong keel structure can be damaged by a grounding or collision. Get a survey if you are in any doubt



Richard Langdon

Madeleine Strobel

**A** They would be taking a big risk if they set off across the Atlantic, even though the yacht previously went through some rough weather.

Yachts used for bareboat charter and particularly bareboat charter for racing have probably grounded. Some charterers are less than honest about how hard they went aground. Clearly there has been a serious incident requiring repairs to the keel area. This should always be a matter of real

concern when buying a boat. Andy and Jane should have had a professional survey, which would have picked up this problem.

It requires considerable skill by the boatyard to repair damage caused by grounding. There are a number of well-known accidents where catastrophic failure has occurred on yachts with keel repairs or alterations including *Cheeki Rafiki*, a Beneteau 40.7, which capsized in the North Atlantic in heavy weather with the loss of its four crew in 2014. The 10m racing yacht

*Hooligan*, whose keel had been redesigned, capsized off South Devon in 2007 with the loss of one of the crew.

Commercial yachts are surveyed every five years and inspected regularly but can still suffer damage between surveys which might not be reported. It is a really tough decision for Andy and Jane to delay after so much expense and planning, especially as they are 1,500 miles from home in the Canary Islands, but abandoning the voyage until the keel problem is solved is really the only option.

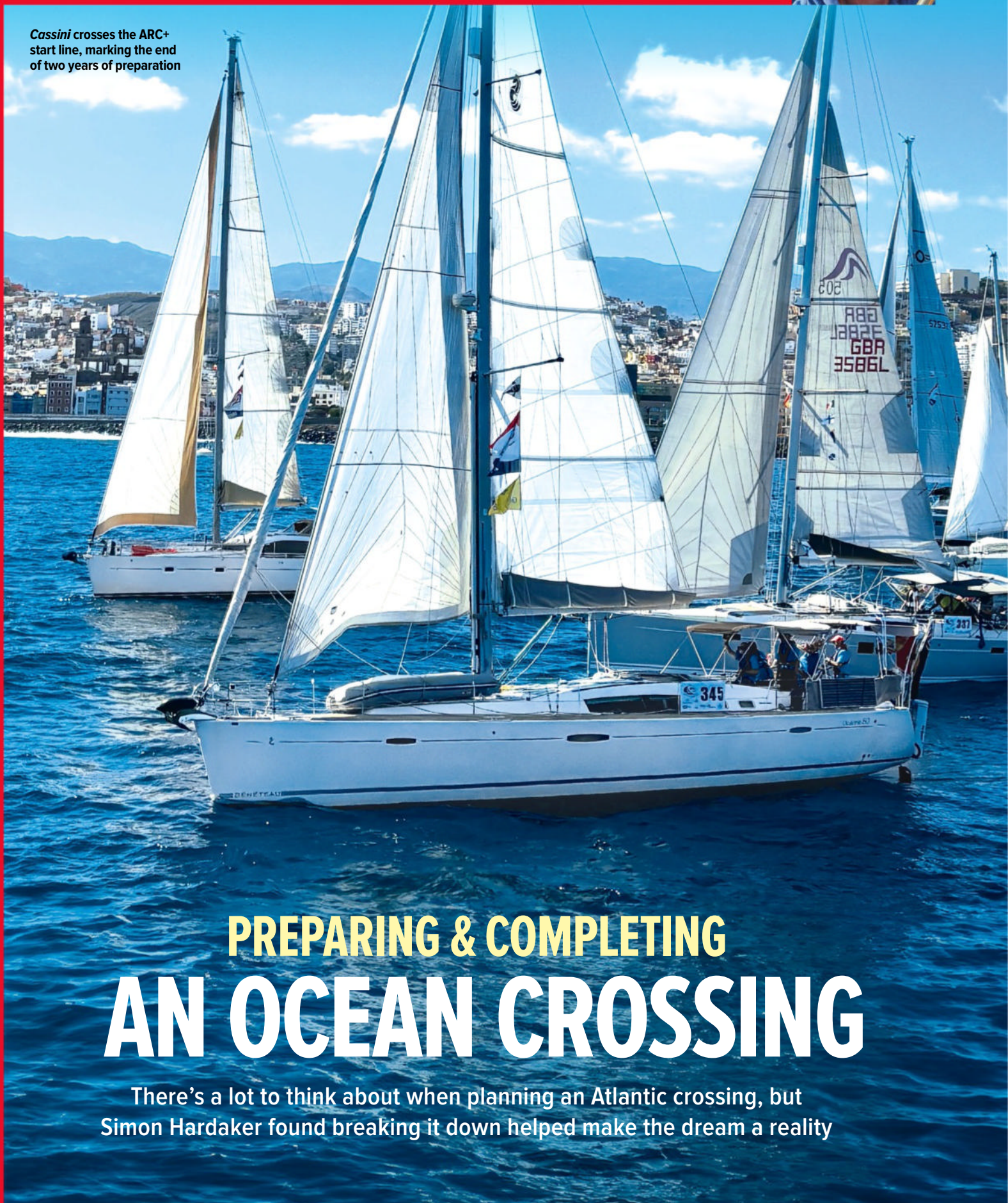


# EXPERT ON BOARD

SIMON HARDAKER owns a Beneteau Oceanis 50 with friends Nigel and Catherine Langhorn. They completed the ARC last year and have cruised in the Caribbean.



*Cassini* crosses the ARC+ start line, marking the end of two years of preparation



## PREPARING & COMPLETING AN OCEAN CROSSING

There's a lot to think about when planning an Atlantic crossing, but Simon Hardaker found breaking it down helped make the dream a reality





If crossing the Atlantic in your own boat is high on your list of sailing dreams, I can thoroughly recommend the experience. However, a dream will stay a dream without making a serious plan to bring it to life. There's lots to think about to prepare for a successful and safe voyage. You'll need the time and resources not only to make the trip but to prepare yourself, your crew and your boat. Having already committed the resources to buying a boat and put the time aside, there remained a host of other issues to deal with. While many of these are lesser issues, we found that most of our planning came down to five major considerations before embarking on the trans-Atlantic passage in November and December 2023. Having sailed the Atlantic, I am still convinced these are the big questions you'll need to answer before setting sail:

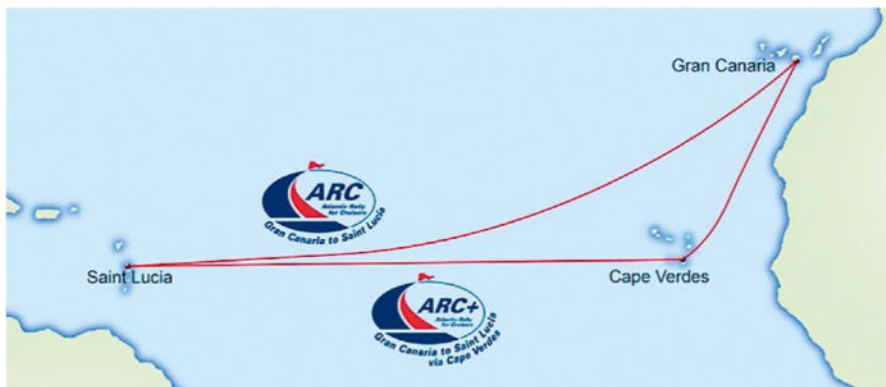
■ Do you want to make the ocean crossing independently, or would you prefer to travel with a rally like the ARC or similar?

■ Will the boat and its equipment stand up to the rigours of being permanently 'on' for three or more weeks non-stop, and afterwards cruising in the Caribbean?

■ How will your boat deliver enough power for myriad electrical devices, both at sea and at anchor in various destinations?

■ How will you recruit and train a crew to help achieve the ocean crossing safely?

■ How will you provision the boat for your crew for the required amount of time? In our case, a crew of six on a 50ft boat for up to 30 days ate a substantial amount of food!



## ALONE OR IN COMPANY?

We chose to cross the Atlantic with the Atlantic Rally for Cruisers, run by the World Cruising Club, and opted for the ARC+ route, the plus being for an extra leg down from the Canaries to Cape Verde, which takes you far enough south to reliably get into the trade winds before turning west. It's run by the World Cruising Club (WCC) who offer guidance in preparation, make marina bookings along the way and provide the reassurance that comes with sailing in company, albeit spread over a very wide area. Travelling independently, while giving a greater degree of flexibility, particularly in departure times that may line up with weather windows, doesn't

provide anything like the framework that we felt would be helpful on our first major ocean crossing.

### CHOOSING THE BOAT

We bought our Jeanneau Oceanis 50 *Cassini* in 2022. She had completed the ARC in 2021 and had been well prepared for ocean crossings, with wind and hydro generators and solar power capacity. To ease the electrical load, a Hydrovane had also been fitted to steer for long stretches offshore rather than hand-steering or using a power-hungry autopilot. Standing rigging was replaced in 2021 and a new water-maker fitted at the same time.

Mark and Sally chose Beneteau Oceanis 50 *Cassini* in part due to how well-specced she already was for ocean sailing

Hydrovane self-steering is a big plus for offshore passage making





# UPGRADING A BOAT FOR AN OCEAN CROSSING

If it sounds like our boat was completely ocean-ready, but there are always improvements that could be made and general repairs to do before setting off.

## RUNNING RIGGING

We replaced nearly all the sails' sheets and halyards, several blocks and some sheaves. They had all worked hard on the last 10,000-mile Atlantic circuit, not to mention the previous 10 years of sailing, and it was beginning to show. The strut vang had been installed upside down at some stage and as a result suffered corrosion leading to a total failure of one of the aluminium tubes which we replaced.

## STANDING RIGGING

Since we were about to subject the boat and rig to another 10,000-mile journey, we had a professional rig check done. This uncovered some small cracks in the mast by the lower spreaders and necessitated the mast removal. Doublers were manufactured and installed around all the spreaders to reinforce them. Doublers are simply extra aluminium plates, shaped and secured around the mast and spreaders to 'double' the thickness of the mast section at these high stress points. Doing all of them might seem like overkill, but given the cost of removing the mast and putting it back, it made sense to do everything in one go and have a bit more peace of mind.

## COMMUNICATIONS

The World Cruising Club insist that rally yachts must either have satellite or shortwave radio to receive daily weather reports and other information from the



Running rigging, including the kicking strap, was replaced

organisers, and just as important, to stay in touch with family and friends while away. We installed a new satellite communication system, Iridium's Certus 100, which combines satellite capability with 4G, and connected an external 4G aerial to enhance this. We wrote regular blogs to chart our

progress so that family and friends could keep up to date, and published these throughout the trip to the Canaries and then across the Atlantic.

You can read more about our experience at [www.blog.mailasail.com/cassini](http://www.blog.mailasail.com/cassini).

## REFRIGERATION

We upgraded one of the two fridges to enable it to do duty as a freezer with the addition of a keel cooler, new door seals and a larger evaporator plate. The refrigeration system was serviced to ensure it was fully gassed and ready for warmer climes.

## SHADE AND COOLING

Keeping the boat cool, especially at anchor in the tropics, and without air-conditioning, is a challenge we've come across quite a few times on our various yacht charters. We designed and made our own awnings

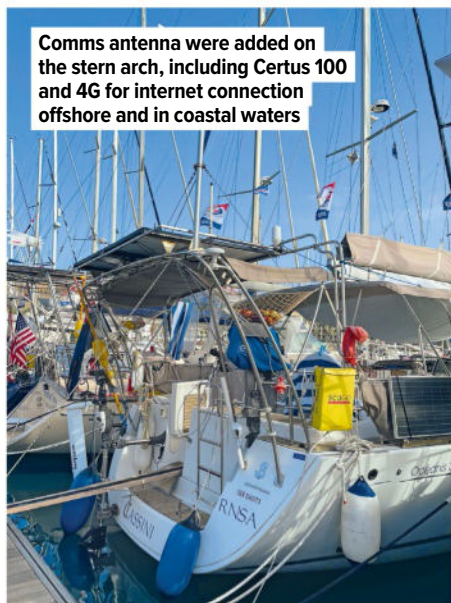


A full standing rig inspection was done, and Simon added padding around the spreaders and other possible chafe points

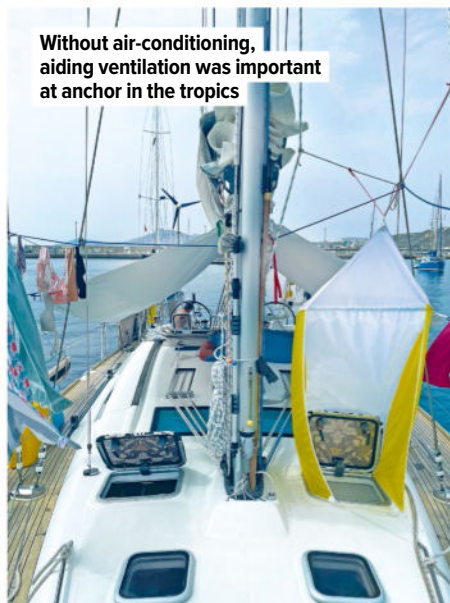


The mast was reinforced around the shroud terminals where cracking was discovered





Comms antenna were added on the stern arch, including Certus 100 and 4G for internet connection offshore and in coastal waters



Without air-conditioning, aiding ventilation was important at anchor in the tropics



Awnings to keep the sun off the deck is one of the best ways to keep the boat cool

to cover most of the deck, from stem to stern to keep the deck cool. Together with the addition of wind scoops over the hatches, we're able to direct air flow across and through the boat, augmented by multiple DC fans throughout. While we can't cool this air, the movement of it makes the cabin areas more comfortable.

## SAILS

All the sails came ashore in the winter and were laid out and inspected minutely in a local church hall. The old main sail was replaced as it was long past its best.

This turned out to be a bigger job than we'd planned as the original sail battens were different lengths to the pockets in the new sail and the luff cars not the right ones for our Harken main sail track.

We also managed to source brand new battens and refitted all the Harken sail and batten cars from the old sail.

## DECK GEAR

We put extra backing plates behind all the mooring cleats to strengthen them in the event we needed to attach a drogue in heavy weather at the stern, and more routinely to form part of the preventer rig for

the boom when sailing downwind on the forward and midships cleats.

The bow ones are also better able to withstand the snatch loads from the bridle (which takes the load of the anchor chain) when at anchor in any kind of swell.



Sails are laid out on the village hall floor for close inspection



Stern cleats were reinforced with backing plates to be strong enough to use for deploying a drogue

## POWER SET UP

One of the things we had not planned to do ahead of the ocean trip, was to change the service or 'house' batteries or modify the electrical supply system.

In early-season cruising, though, it became clear that the existing batteries were nearing the end of their useful life. Typically, we use between 150 and 180 Amp hours (Ah) per day in both sea-going and anchored scenarios, depending on how much things like the water-maker or our electric cooking devices are run.

We thought that sailing as a liveaboard, it made sense to change from lead acid batteries to Lithium Iron Phosphate (LFP) batteries for the advantages in capacity and expected lifetime. We actually reduced the amount of Ah capacity we carry (from 600Ah to 400Ah) on the basis that the amount of useable capacity in LFP was so



The original 600Ah bank of batteries prior to replacement



The large batteries, at the end of their lives, were extremely heavy



Bank of LFP lithium batteries gives more usable capacity

much greater than the existing batteries. With our ability to charge them from multiple and sustainable sources, and do it quickly: wind, solar and hydro, we expected that 400Ah LFP would be sufficient. Our experience since has shown that it is, just,

but we should have installed the extra capacity to create a buffer.

There was also some new equipment: a new battery charger and charge management device from Victron fitted to manage the charge to the batteries.



# CREW SELECTION AND PREPARATION

My co-owner Nigel and I have wanted to do this journey for years. Our wives committed to the passage to the Canaries, quite a journey in itself, but were much less keen on the Atlantic Ocean crossing. Our experience at the conclusion of the whole journey was that the journey to the Canaries actually proved much more demanding on boat and crew than the whole of the Atlantic crossing.

As an 'ownership' core crew of four, we'd prepared together for the voyage south and west, with the RYA's Sea Survival and First Aid courses, and Nigel and I enrolled on a one-week Yacht Maintenance course to learn more about how to maintain our boat. We also signed up together for the Yachtmaster Ocean course to learn more about Astro Navigation and how to use the sextant.

## PREPARATORY COURSES

To help prepare for the Atlantic crossing, the ARC+ organisers lay on seminars and open days. These included visits to a sail loft, advice on how to repair sails at sea, suggested safety gear, and online presentations on communication and First Aid at sea. The courses and webinars are not mandatory, but the organisers recommend them together with a range of RYA courses to help prepare. A very comprehensive handbook for the rally was provided by them, listing all the mandatory equipment, mostly safety and communication, that all participants must carry.

A full safety inspection was carried out by the WCC team in Las Palmas in the Canaries before the rally start.

For the Atlantic crossing we felt we needed a total crew of six. Our experience together, of doing yacht deliveries and offshore racing, showed what a difference a watch system of one in three (three hours on, six off) can make to crew, physically and mentally, over two to three hours on and off watch.

The four joint owners, Simon and Sally Hardaker and Catherine and Nigel Langhorn, at the start of their voyage south in August



Simon with Ronan, the doctor

A mixture of family and friends were stepping forward initially to crew, but inevitably work and other commitments were limiting factors. In the end, we signed up two retired friends, 'the two Marks' from our Royal Navy days, my sister Sarah (a teacher) and another experienced sailor and yacht owner, Ronan, from my Fastnet sailing days (a consultant surgeon and our de facto medic).

## CREW FAMILIARISATION

We were pleased we'd begun the process early. Our intention at the outset was to get the crew together as much as we could beforehand. Apart from getting to know each other better, we needed to see what strengths each would bring, and delegate some responsibility so that not everything

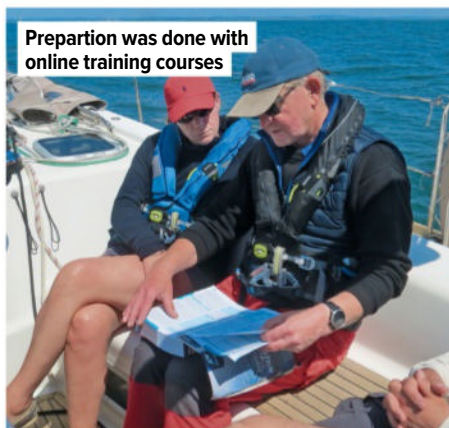
would fall to us, the owners. All of this had to fit into work and family commitments. After setting up the obligatory WhatsApp group, we had some meetings, to begin with on Zoom, before the first of three planned training weekends on the boat together.

On our first weekend together, the training began with a safety briefing covering everything from the gas cooker to toilet operation. As we have a range of crew on at different times over the next year, we also committed a number of the 'standard' activities and procedures to comprehensive check lists, not just for safety, but for things like leaving and returning to our berth, storage, watch standing orders etc. These lists enable more involvement of all the crew in these activities rather than being the sole responsibility of the owners.

The crew took 20L of water on deck, alongside 80L of fuel,



Preparation was done with online training courses



The crew only managed one of three planned training weekends





On our first training weekend at sea, outside the crowded waters of Portsmouth harbour, we set off for the Eastern Solent to test our man overboard (MOB) drills, getting the crew into the swing of operating the boat and its equipment, taking turns at roles like helming, sail handling, dummy radio Mayday calls and enabling everyone to get an appreciation for how the MOB scenario plays out and the complications that can occur. One such, and quite unforeseen event, was the accidental activation of a lifejacket while reaching overboard to recover the 'person' in the water.

### INSIGHTFUL MOB DRILL

Apart from the jacket inflating as it should, several things followed which served to enhance the learning opportunity. The Automatic Identification System (AIS) personal locator beacon (PLB), attached to the lifejacket, was activated. This showed up as a MOB alarm on our own, and other chart plotters in the vicinity. We immediately radioed Solent Coast Guard to alert them, and all other vessels in the vicinity, about the false alarm, providing the beacon's unique identifying number. The conversation with the Coast Guard was important to prevent an escalation of an accident into a full-blown rescue operation and served as practice in correct radio procedure too.

We had planned on future training weekends to practise some of the down-wind sail setups we planned to use, familiarise everyone with the Hydrovane steering and just get the Atlantic crew more used to the boat and its systems. But there is a saying in the Armed Forces that 'no plan survives first contact with the enemy'. We were truly relieved that we managed to get one weekend in together. The second planned weekend was blown out by gales raging through the south of England. That could have presented a learning opportunity perhaps, but most likely would have resulted in either damage to the boat or crew. Our third weekend was unfortunately interrupted by emergency repairs to the mast that were mentioned earlier.

However, we did manage to 'get together' and continue preparations virtually, using our WhatsApp and Zoom chatrooms.



During the MOB training, a lifejacket inflated, accidentally triggering the AIS beacon. Dealing with this was all good training



Eating well is key to an enjoyable crossing. Simon and Mark take their turn in the galley

## PROVISIONING

Feeding six crew over two legs of the crossing – a week for Canaries to Cape Verde and 16 days for the passage to Grenada, was quite a logistical exercise. Our volunteer caterer, Mark, leaned heavily on two great books: *The Boat Cookbook* by Fiona Simms, and *The Boat Galley Cookbook* by Carolyn Shearlock and Jan Irons. While the total passage time was eventually 24 days, we prepared and stored for up to 30 days.

A meal plan was produced, together with the required quantities for six people, which was in turn, translated into a shopping list. Mark and his wife tested the menus and produced some simple modifications to some of them.

### FOOD STORAGE LOGISTICS

We stored onboard a very large part of the tinned and dried goods in the UK before we left and topped up in Las Palmas where we also stored fresh food. Remarkably, it was possible to store the vast majority of the food below the saloon and cabin floors in large plastic crates, behind seats and in storage cupboards. We rigged nets across the back of the boat to store, on one side, fresh fruit and on the other vegetables. We carried 20L emergency water on deck (alongside 80L of spare diesel) and four further 5L water bottles in the saloon, which, as we emptied them, we used to keep food waste compacted and airtight during the passage.

Breakfasts consisted of Weetabix, porridge oats, honey, nuts and dried fruits, while lunch was sardines, corned beef, cheese and ham placed in wraps and bread that we baked every few days.



Food was bought, labelled and stowed

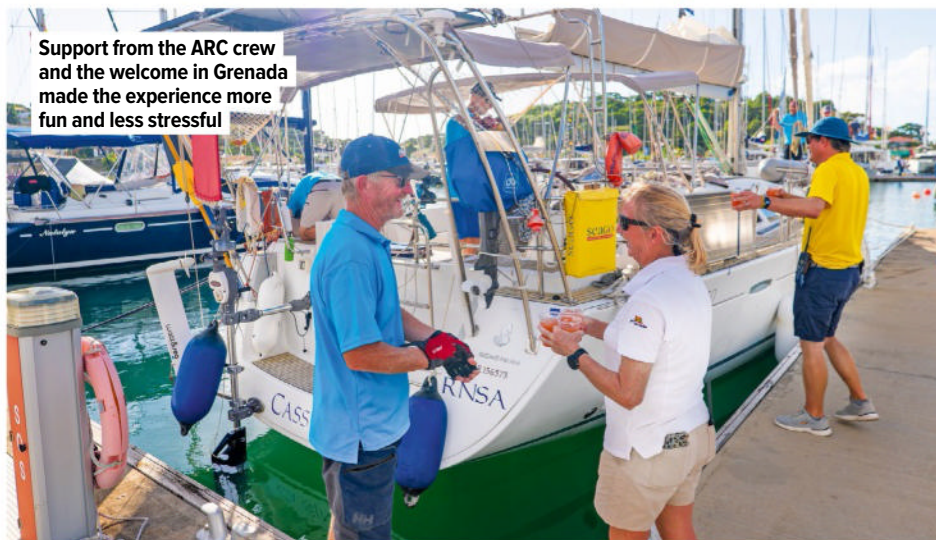
Sally demonstrated the Ninja multicooker

Since we wanted some variety when it came to our main evening meal, Mark put together a comprehensive menu of 17 different main courses, with puddings of tinned fruit and custard for the last week or so of the ocean passage.

Before each leg, we cooked up and chilled down three meals so that for the first few days we were mostly re-heating dinner rather than starting from scratch.

We hoped, rather than expected, to catch fish to augment our planned diet, and while we drew a blank on the first leg, on our second, Mark caught dorada, wahoo and mahi mahi that fed us for several days at a time.





Support from the ARC crew and the welcome in Grenada made the experience more fun and less stressful



Mark bakes fresh bread en route

## DOING IT FOR REAL

### RALLY SUPPORT

We decided early on that we'd be joining a rally; this enabled us to prepare the boat and crew with that in mind. The WCC lectures and various briefings were great value, both in the lead up to the event, and again in Las Palmas. The camaraderie amongst the various ARC+ crews was great and the social aspects of the rally certainly delivered. Some boats did get into difficulties but with the coordination provided by WCC, support was provided to get them across the finish line.

### DO IT YOURSELF, WHERE POSSIBLE

We added equipment (like sat comms) and had to repair things like the mast ahead of the crossing. Throughout, we've been pragmatic about the balance between hiring people to repair things like the mast and make the change to LFP batteries for example, and doing much of the rest of the work ourselves.

We replaced the windlass ourselves after its gearbox failed, repaired the autopilot and steering gear and made numerous smaller repairs to the bimini and running rigging. We've generally taken the view that the more that we can learn and do ourselves, the better prepared we'd be to handle repairs at sea on the ocean crossing where help could be hundreds, even thousands of miles away.

### MANAGING CHAFE

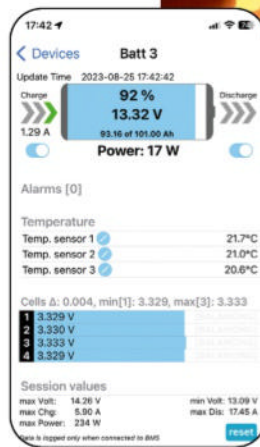
Preparing for and reducing chafe on sheets and halyards was time well spent, and managed largely by splicing Dyneema covers over high wear areas like the main sail halyard at the masthead and where the genoa sheets pass through the spinnaker pole end.

### MANAGING RESOURCES

The discussion about power could equally have been about water, but inheriting a 60L per hour water-maker helped keep water topped up. Power management during the crossing worked well, but after a few light wind days, we did consolidate all the food requiring chilling into one (top-loading) fridge and shut the other one down. We ran the water maker most days which provided sufficient water for cooking and drinking, and for flannel washes every day and even showers every couple of days. A solar shower provided hot water if required, but cool showers were often preferred.

### BUILDING CONFIDENCE

Training, both of the 'ownership' crew and the ocean-crossing one, provided us with some



LEFT: Smart battery management system helps monitor power levels

new skills. The watch systems worked well and enabled the crew to get sufficient rest, enjoy some films and books during the crossing, and keep watch. We did not push the boat or crew early in either leg, preferring to settle into a routine with some extra skills development, like how to spot squalls on the radar.

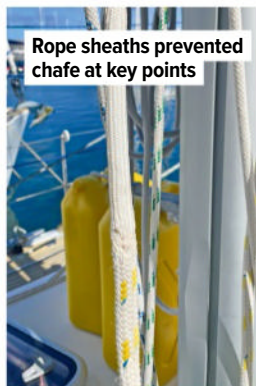
We set the sail plans everyone could manage and built up to the full downwind rig over 24 hours. This developed confidence and probably limited damage to only minor repairs over the whole voyage.

### COMFORT EATING

Eating well on a long-distance passage is important to morale and worth spending time on. Provisioning for six people for up to 30 days was an exercise in planning and logistics. We double bagged all the bags of pasta and rice, and used various storage containers that fit snugly between the frames below the saloon floor to store the tins. We created detailed storage plans and tried to ensure that what we needed at any stage in the passage was ready to hand. The 'caterer' role was essential to the management of all this and ensured that the team preparing meals for the day had everything they needed.

### SHARED RESPONSIBILITY

Involvement of the additional 'ocean' crew in a variety of things like medical stores, catering, even fishing, was important to develop team spirit and share the load. The importance of being able to delegate responsibilities can't be over-stressed.



Rope sheaths prevented chafe at key points



The crew enjoy 'library time' in the shade on the crossing



The crew (minus Sarah) arrive in Grenada



**HONDA**  
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SIMON PHILLIPS, a Master 200 and Yachtmaster instructor, has 380,000 miles and 36 transatlantics under his keel. He now runs Seaway Yacht Deliveries



## A [brief] end to magnetic variation?

You may never have heard of agonic and isogonic lines, but they are the secret behind what your compass tells you, says Simon Phillips





**I**magine for a moment, after a long expedition, you are at the geographic north pole. You look at your compass, but, perhaps unsurprisingly, it is far from pointing at your feet. The needle in a compass is attracted towards the magnetic north pole, which happens to be on the move. Depending upon your point of view, this makes for something remarkably interesting or somewhat of an inconvenience, and anyone who has navigated with a paper chart is familiar with checking the compass rose for the correct amount of variation, plus or minus the correction for the years since the chart was published, to move between true and compass courses.

You may not have wrestled with the concept of variation much since sitting your theory exams, and at the moment, you can pretty well ignore it (in the UK at least), for reasons I'll come to, but as time goes on, getting variation right is likely to become more and more important again when navigating with a compass.

For sailors, understanding the Earth's magnetic field is important for safe and accurate navigation. Central to this understanding are what are known as agonic and isogonic lines. These play a crucial role in determining magnetic declination – the angle between true north and magnetic north at a given location.

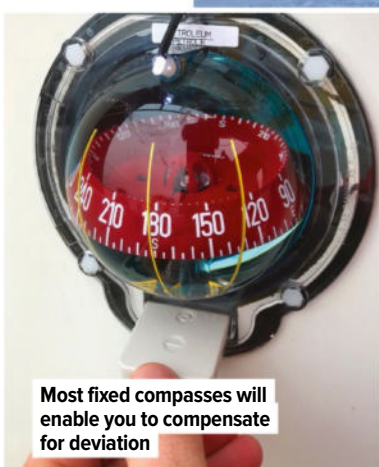
## THE COMPASS

On your yacht, the compass will in theory point to magnetic north all by itself. However, there is another factor at play here called

While the geographic north and south poles are fixed, the magnetic poles are highly mobile



Colin Harris / era-images / Alamy Stock Photo



Most fixed compasses will enable you to compensate for deviation

deviation. This is caused by onboard items that will alter the magnetic field locally on your boat – a list that includes the engine, navigation equipment, gas bottles, nearby wiring and, of course, a mobile phone running a navigation app

placed next to the compass. All these items will distort the reading on the compass to varying extents. While some exert a magnetic influence of their own, others merely disrupt the Earth's magnetic field – an effect that will vary depending on the yacht's heading.

We'll put aside any considerations of the vessel's deviation for the moment, as this is different on every vessel and must be compensated for accordingly by a compass adjuster. Instead, let's talk a little more about where the compass points to and how this is different in various locations around the world.

# TRUE NORTH VS MAGNETIC NORTH

Lines of longitude are drawn on the charts from the (geographical) north pole to the south pole. True North is where these lines of longitude – known as meridians – all converge together in the north, forming the North Pole, which is in the Arctic Ocean. Similarly, the same is true for the South Pole – the lines of longitude all converge at a single point, forming the South Pole, which is on the Antarctic landmass deep beneath the ice. It is around the axis connecting these two points that the Earth rotates and subsequently how angles of tilt are measured, seasons and daylight hours are known.

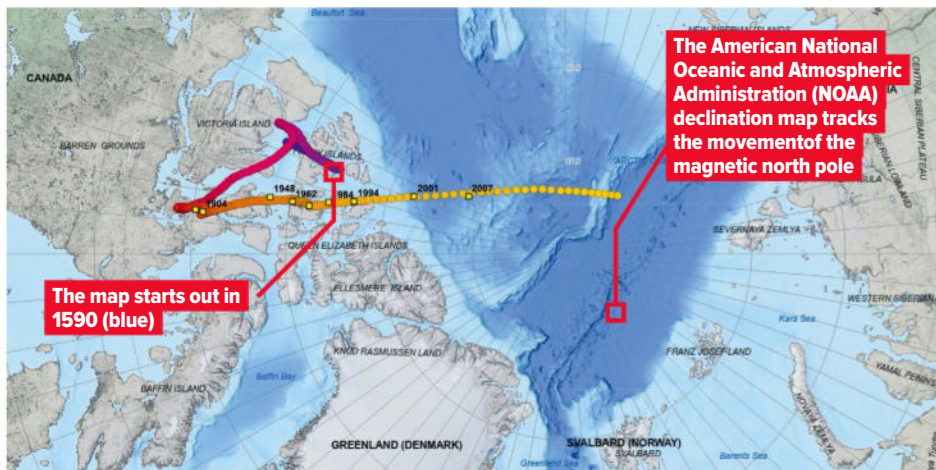
If you wish to travel from the bottom of your chart to the top, you travel true north, following the lines of longitude. Your compass, however, points to magnetic north. If you used it to steer 000 degrees continually, you would eventually find the Earth's magnetic North Pole, but not necessarily the top of your chart. Currently, magnetic north is at 86° north and 142° east, approximately 280 miles south of the geographical North Pole in the depths of the Arctic Ocean north of Russia, having moved over 400 miles in the last 25 years.

If you consider that after 60 miles of sailing, a 1° course error will put you one mile away from your intended destination, you'll see this can start to add up – especially when sailing long distances, such as a transatlantic. The British Virgin Islands and Antigua both

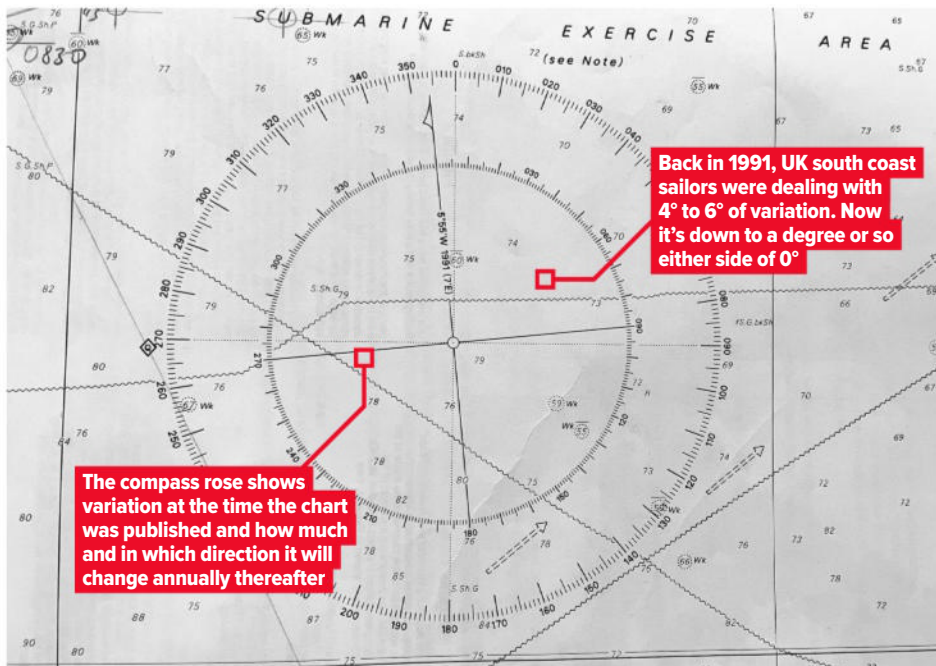
Using a hand-bearing compass can help highlight course compass errors







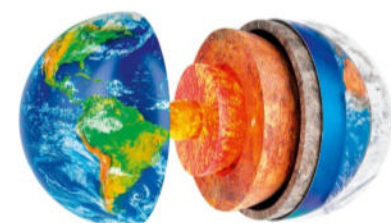
NOAA



Theo Stocker

have beautiful beaches, clear waters and lovely anchorages, but nevertheless it is a wise idea to know where you are. On that crossing, you will also be moving through areas of greater and lesser variation, increasing the potential for error. Therefore it's a good idea to know what variation you're dealing with.

Furthermore, the positions of magnetic north and south move, keeping us on our toes. Over the last 150 years, the magnetic North Pole has moved approximately 620 miles, or around 1,000km. According to scientists, the magnetic pole migrates around 10km per year, although this increased to around 40km a year a few years ago. The poles can also, in theory, flip from pole to pole – but this is



Currents in the Earth's molten iron core result in changes to its magnetic field

only thought to occur every 300,000 years, according to NASA.

### THE EARTH'S CORE

The reason why the magnetic pole changes and is constantly on the move is due to the composition of our planet. Earth's core is composed of molten iron, the outer core of which moves and is like a huge magnet. Although this magnetic field is relatively weak, it extends out into space, influencing things like solar radiation and the Aurora Borealis, as well as the needle or card of your compass.

At any given point on Earth's surface, there are three main magnetic elements: declination, inclination, and intensity.

This angle varies depending on where the observer is located on the Earth's surface. Inclination is the angle that the geomagnetic field is tilted with in relation to the surface of the Earth. This magnetic inclination varies from 90° (perpendicular to the surface) at the magnetic poles to 0° (parallel to the surface) at the magnetic equator. Finally, the intensity is the strength of the magnetism at any given point.

# DECLINATION

Magnetic declination is given by the difference and direction between the magnetic pole and true north. Depending upon where you are in the world, the direction and amount of declination differs based on how these two poles align relative to each other. When these two poles align, declination is zero and it is here that there is nothing to be done to convert magnetic to true because you are situated on what is known as an agonic line.

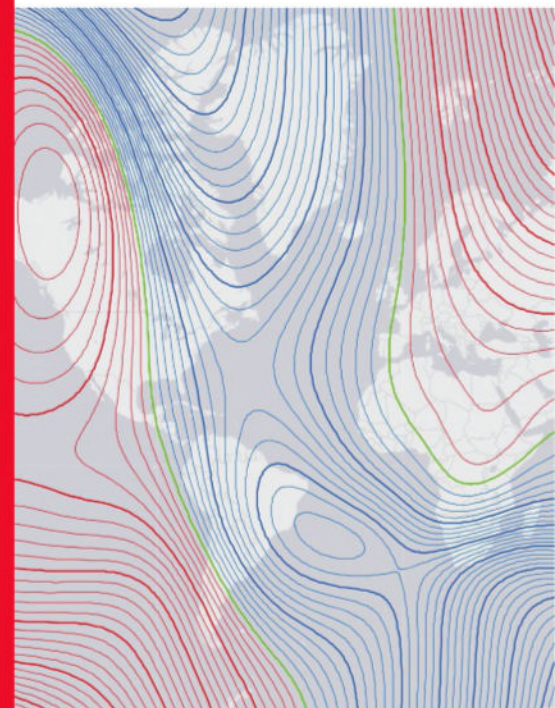
The first chart with declination lines on it is believed to be from 1701, made by Edmond Halley, a physicist, astronomer and mathematician, Fellow of the Royal Society, of comet fame which he observed in 1682.

### AGONIC LINES

The word agonic is from the Greek for 'no angle'. An agonic line is defined as 'an imaginary line around the earth passing through both the north pole and the north magnetic pole, at any point on which a compass needle points to true north.' It is, however, very far from a straight line in the way a Great Circle is, and snakes its way around the globe.

If you are west of this agonic line, your compass will point east of true north, giving a positive declination. Similarly, if you are east of the agonic line, the compass will point west of true north, giving a negative declination. As an example, in the English Channel the declination is almost zero, as of 2024, while in the mid-Atlantic it is over 16° W. This increases to up to 24° W in the Southern Atlantic Ocean.

www.ncei.noaa.gov/maps/historical\_declination





## ISOGONIC LINES

All areas with constant magnetic declination are connected with isogonic lines. Much like isobars on a weather chart, these are magnetic 'contour lines' joining areas of the same magnetic declination. Isogonic lines are illustrated by the magenta lines drawn on small-scale charts in degrees and minutes either east or west. On larger-scale charts, you will find compass roses around the chart with more information – degrees and minutes, along with the annual increase or decrease in this figure.

These isogonic lines form curved lines across the globe, reflecting the irregularity of the Earth's magnetic field. Where isogonic lines converge, declination is zero, and true north aligns with magnetic north.

As we move away from an agonic line, the declination becomes either east or west.

There is currently an agonic line (green in the illustration) running through the UK, crossing the English Channel and entering the coast just east of Bridport in Dorset and exiting close to the Royal Northumberland Yacht Club in Blyth. Anywhere along this line, you have no calculation to do to convert Magnetic to True as they are the same. Travelling east, you'll find 1° E of declination running from Beachy Head in Sussex to Brancaster Staithe in Norfolk, while the 1° W isogonic line skirts Land's End, clips Pembrokeshire, Anglesey and the Isle of Man, slicing Scotland in half and shooting off through the Orkneys.



**ABOVE:** NOAA's historical declination map showing the agonic line in green running across the UK

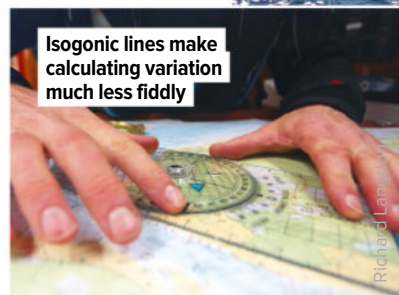
**LEFT:** Agonic and isogonic lines of magnetic variation are shown here across the globe

# PRACTICAL

In practical terms, knowledge of agonic and isogonic lines gives an awareness of how we need to apply calculations to convert magnetic to true for chartwork and in many respects, an idea of where we are in the world. This is important as it is how our navigation is affected.

## COMPASS COURSE CORRECTIONS

Knowing the magnetic declination at any given location allows us to adjust the compass readings to find true north accurately. This is essential for plotting courses on the chart and determining bearings – for example, obtaining a position using a three-point fix using a hand-held compass and then knowing what to do to convert magnetic to true. Having a picture in your mind's eye of where the agonic and isogonic lines currently are at the start of each year could be an easy way to make quick interpolations of the right amount of variation to apply, without any fiddly mental arithmetic.



## HAZARDS AND ROUTE PLANNING

Incorrectly accounting for magnetic declination would lead to navigation errors, resulting in the wrong course steered and potentially putting you in a position you do not want to be in. Understanding the variation in declination along the route, we can plan safe passages and avoid hazards.

## CHARTPLOTTERS

While many modern navigation systems, such as GPS, radar and chartplotters, rely on magnetic bearings for accurate positioning, it is not as easy to extract magnetic variation information from an electronic chart as it is a paper one. The settings of some plotters can, however, be changed to show magnetic or true north. If you use magnetic north, you can go straight from chart to compass, accounting only for deviation.

## SERIOUS ERRORS

As magnetic declination varies from one location to another, for instance when crossing the Atlantic, it is important to be aware of these changes from one location to another. In the Canaries, the declination is approximately 3° W, and in Antigua it is approximately 15° W. Therefore, after a couple of weeks of sailing in the sunshine, we gradually need to change the calculations to remain on

Make a 1° course error and you could be 45 miles out after an Atlantic crossing



course. The odd few degrees here and there can't be accurately helmed,

but a difference of 15° probably can.

In conclusion to this, understanding agonic and isogonic lines is important as they are fundamental concepts in magnetic navigation and essential for us to navigate accurately and safely across the world's oceans. By understanding the background and theory behind these lines, we can apply this knowledge to ensure precise navigation, efficient voyages, and the safety of our vessels and crew. With this understanding, we can confidently navigate the wonderful magnetic maze of our planet's oceans, using the Earth's magnetic field to chart a course with precision and skill.



Using magnetic rather than true north courses on your plotter can save your mental arithmetic





# I WAS PAST THE POINT OF NO RETURN WHEN THE STEERING FAILED

*Having experienced steering failure once, Henry Wootton was faced with the same issue again, but this time he was alone, and in much more challenging conditions*



Henry Wootton

The crew centred the rudder with the emergency tiller and lashed it amidships then used the Hydrovane to steer



The eastern Pacific was quiet and beautiful at 0300 in the middle of May 2022. *Hippolyta* and her crew were transiting an area of squally calms, not truly the ITCZ but with similarly unstable conditions. But on this night the ocean was living up to her peaceful name and, with my friend Shaun on watch, we were motoring quietly through a calm under the panoply of stars, pleased to finally be clear of the ubiquitous and poorly marked longlines of the Colombian offshore fishing fleets. Suddenly our electric wheelpilot, only pressed into service in the absence of wind to drive the Hydrovane, screeched the wheel left and right to no effect and the boat's head started to wander aimlessly. Urgent investigation revealed sheared steering cables at the rudder quadrant.



Henry Wootton recently took 18 months off his time in the British Army to complete a sailing trip from Hornet in Gosport to New Zealand in a 30ft Maxi 95 (*Hippolyta*). He sailed the Atlantic and Caribbean with one friend and then, following a full steering failure on their first attempt to cross the South Pacific, he continued solo from the coast of Ecuador across to the Pitcairns, French Polynesia, Tonga, Fiji and New Zealand.



Maxi 95 *Hippolyta* before Henry's solo Pacific attempt

In a not too dissimilar calm two months later, and now singlehanded, the alarm woke me from my doze in the cockpit as the newly-upgraded chain-driven autopilot complained (much more smoothly) of exactly the same problem; it was no longer connected to the rudder. Except this time I was 300 miles SW of the Galapagos in the tradewinds, past the point of no return, with my next safe haven 3,500 miles to the west in Tahiti.

#### BLUEWATER REFIT

Shaun and I had set off from Haslar Creek in Gosport on the first day of October the previous year, bound for the South Pacific. *Hippolyta* is a 30ft Maxi 95, a centre-cockpit Swedish weekendend sloop. Although she is not designed for bluewater work, she has a four inch-thick hull in places, with an encapsulated keel. We spent four months refitting her including new spars, engine and electrics. We charged off at breakneck speed across Biscay, the Atlantic, Caribbean and through the Panama Canal to give ourselves a full season to cross the Pacific.

While conducting the hull-up refit, we were always nervous of the ancient-

looking morse cable system that connected the rudder quadrant to the wheel, but the type of cable was no longer produced and we couldn't face the time and expense of having a new cable and pulley system designed and installed. We fitted a Hydrovane windvane and knew that it would do most of the steering work, providing a reliable back-up if the steering system broke. It held solid until 7,000 miles and 12 months, finally giving up at that exact moment in the Pacific, when the stainless steel foot of one of the cables sheered completely off at the quadrant.

We were able to immediately attach the emergency tiller to gain control of the rudder, although this necessitated emptying the aft cabin which had become something of a dumping ground for all our gear. Steering under power could now be achieved with the tiller, or with the emergency tiller on the Hydrovane; under sail, the vane could continue its work.

We had an immediate decision to make. Our planned fuel stop in Galapagos seemed unlikely to provide the facilities to design and install a replacement, and surely it was unwise to continue to our ultimate destination of Tahiti via Pitcairn? With heavy hearts we decided it was too much of a risk; we turned south-west on starboard tack fetching towards Puerto Lucia on the Pacific coast of Ecuador. The next two days were grim, with the wind forward of the beam and the boat smashing directly into the face of the Humboldt current. Luckily, the return of the wind at least allowed the windvane to relieve us from the helm – the emergency tiller was unergonomic and uncomfortable for long periods, and standing on the swimming platform to use the Hydrovane emergency tiller wasn't feasible in the heavy seas. The equator passed in a haze of nasty







The boat was soon lifted out for work to begin in Puerto Lucia

weather and seasickness and we limped into port three days later.

Quickly hauled out of the water in a marina with dangerous-looking tidal surge, our problems were only just beginning. It is difficult to explain to non-sailors that a 50-year-old boat has no parts catalogues. With the help of a resident Belgian, we spent five weeks ashore designing and installing a new system with cable runs and metal blocks. Parts had to be templated in cardboard and manufactured in metalworking shops that were mostly preoccupied with reboring motorcycle engines. With extremely limited chandlery and a 150% tariff on imported boat parts, even simple blocks had to be fabricated from scratch. As we wandered the back streets of Salinas, we

## The new system lasted just about long enough for me to sail for 900 miles west, just past the point of no return

were thankful that our pathetic Spanish was rendered unnecessary by Google Translate and the universality of engineering sign language.

On the plus side, we took the opportunity to fit a chain-driven autopilot to the shiny stainless steering shaft that the new system demanded, consigning our unseaworthy wheel pilot to future service as a wheel clamp. How dearly we wished to install the ideal solution: a ram connected to the rudder quadrant and happily 'downstream' of the steering cables, but the narrow and shallow stern simply didn't allow the space. We also used the time to renew the antifoul, which paid dividends later on.

On the downside, our Pacific season was wasting away and my friend Shaun decided he had to return home. After some soul-searching I decided to continue solo, so the 7 July saw *Hippolyta* motoring out of the marina with a slippery bottom and a newly-installed and untested wire steering system, bound for Pitcairn Island and thereafter French Polynesia.

The new system lasted just about long enough for me to sail for eight

days and 900 nautical miles west, just past the point of no return. On *Hippolyta* the steering system gets the most work during motoring through calms, when the Hydrovane can't steer. During my first long motoring spell, the friction chewed through one of the wires that connected up the new system. Once again we were without steering. Rather peeved by this point, I removed the offending strands of stainless steel and began emptying sails and spares. Inevitably, the steering run travelled beneath all of the main storage areas of the boat.

By the time I got to Tahiti I was something of a dab hand at the evolution of piling everything I owned in the cockpit, having completed a further four repairs to our prototype system in different variations of disgusting weather.

### INSTALLING DYNEEMA STEERING

The repair was quite simple because fortunately I had 20m of precious Dyneema on board. It's wonderful stuff; it can be knotted, spliced and is highly resistant to chafe.

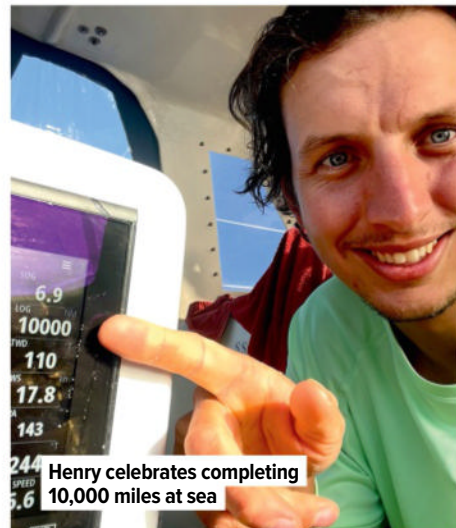
Substituted into the steering system in place of stainless steel, it is strong and easy to make and adjust. With some adjustments to the blocks in Tahiti, it was also a much smoother movement than wire because of the lower friction.



A new chain cog had to be machined after the original cracked



The new pulleys soon chewed through the replacement steering cable



Henry celebrates completing 10,000 miles at sea



REAL LIFE

With a makeshift steering system rigged, Henry was able sail another 8,000 miles solo



## LESSONS LEARNED

### 1 REDUNDANT STEERING

When setting up self-steering systems, electric or mechanical, one should always take the opportunity to set them up directly onto the rudder stock, or completely independently, particularly on wheel-steered boats with cables and pulley steering runs. A Hydrovane-style auxiliary rudder windvane is the gold standard as it uses no part of the existing steering gear.

### 2 REFIT DECISIONS

Shaun and I spent five months refitting *Hippolyta* for our voyage from the hull up. Although we knew that the morse cable steering system was a 50-year old original, a like-for-like replacement was unobtainable so we decided to take it on risk, to avoid having to install a new system. This decision eventually cost us our first attempt to cross the Pacific.

### 3 KNOW YOUR BOAT INSIDE OUT

If you don't have the knowledge or wherewithal to access and repair your steering gear while offshore then you will be caught out. My brand new steering system entirely failed eight days out of Ecuador, with 31 days left to run to Tahiti, but I was able to repair and replace it.

### 4 DYNEEMA, DYNEEMA, DYNEEMA

When I left Ecuador solo, I took about 20m of 6mm Dyneema in order to pass the time learning to splice soft shackles. By the time I next saw a chandlery in Tahiti, I had used that length to replace the entire steering system, reinforce a broken lower shroud and many smaller repairs. Sailing long distance again, a 100m roll of 6mm Dyneema would be the first item in my spares box.

### 5 BE THE ENGINEER

If you sail an old boat, you will probably have to work out how to fix the boat yourself. Be prepared to work out what you need and have parts made. Marine diesel engineers are easily found wherever you are, but the only person with knowledge and experience of the more obscure systems in an old sailing boat may well be you.

### EPIGRAPH

Unsurprisingly, as I hopped across the Pacific to Pitcairn, and after the first two failures marking the death of the port-side and starboard-side steel wires respectively, I never fully trusted the system. It required tightening as the *Dyneema* stretched and I did daily checks of potential chafe points. Luckily, the Hydrovane meant that the rudder did almost no work.

I was able to manage the problem and turn my attention to a fast and furious passage across the south-east tradewinds which blew an unforecast average of 20-30 knots for three weeks. Visiting Henderson Island and getting ashore on Pitcairn Island were ample rewards for all of my travails with the steering and, a few adventures later, I made it to Tahiti.

Although I almost had to sell a kidney to afford it, my first purchase was a 100m roll of Dyneema. Alongside the more practical pleasure of hot showers, I was able to take my time alongside in Tahiti to properly sort out the steering runs with some new blocks and pre-made spare steering lines.

People often cite chafe as a key disadvantage of Dyneema compared to stainless wire; all I can say is that I started my voyage from Ecuador with a full wire system and by Day 10 I had completely re-reeved the system with Dyneema. I was uncomfortable that it had to pass through metal blocks, but those two lengths of rope survived a further 8,000 miles of passage-making. When I checked them in New Zealand six months later they were undamaged.

On reflection, a small spares box of bulkhead fairleads, low-friction rings and standard sailing blocks could have been used to design and install the system at sea, whereas a custom (and ultimately flawed) stainless steel system cost us five weeks in Ecuador. Food for thought if considering steering repairs on wheel-steered boats while offshore.

Ultimately the whole saga drove home that you have to make the right decisions when refitting your boat for a long voyage, and that the inside-out knowledge of your boat thus gained will be vital. Our decision to fit a Hydrovane gave me the confidence to continue even with a sub-optimal steering system, and fulfilled my dreams of visiting Tahiti, Fiji and Tonga before arriving at the final destination of Opua in New Zealand.



The new pieces machined for the steering gear repair



# CRUISING SAILING TO MOUNT ATHOS

*Alexander Shaw explores an important Eastern Orthodox monastic republic, dating from the Byzantine era, perched on the most eastern of the Halkidiki peninsulas in the northwest Aegean*



Words & pictures **Alexander Shaw**







**MAIN:** Sailing to Mount Athos

**LEFT:** Shaw's Westerly GK29 *Granny Knot* at Monemvasia earlier in Shaw's voyage

**T**he Monastic Republic of Mount Athos, roughly the size of Malta, dates back to at least 800 AD. The sovereign region within Greece has a policy of extreme isolation which has defended the Orthodox Christian communities there against

invasion and political upheaval for over a millennium. Athosite roads don't connect to the Greek mainland and foreign boats are forbidden from landing on its shores... Or are they?

Having sailed 3,000 miles single-handed from Britain, I was determined not to depend on the few Athos-flagged boats which ply the last 20 miles across the frontier from Greece. Would a lone foreign sailor be granted access to the 500-metre coastal exclusion zone? Satellite images revealed four potential landings on the territory: three on the south side, belonging to the monasteries of Panteleimon, Xeropotamos and Simonopetra, and one (the best), on the north, belonging to Vatopedi.

I set sail from Neos Marmaris on Sithonia, the middle peninsula of Halkidiki, bound for the nearest harbour on the 'Greek side' of the Athos isthmus, Ierissos. Besides offering a welcome stop on my onward journey to the Dardanelles, Ierissos is less than 20 miles from the harbour of Vatopedi.

Night fell as I was crossing the Singitic Gulf towards Mount Athos. The lore of the fishermen's canteen rang in my ears: Xerxes' Revenge is a wind named in honour of the Persian king whose fleet was wrecked here in 592 BC. Half a millennium later, another shipwreck brought the Virgin Mary to Athos, not as a divine apparition but as a lady in her own lifetime. Mount Athos is known to its inhabitants as the Garden of the Mother of God. According to the tradition of the Holy Mountain, Mary the Mother of Jesus set foot on the east coast of Mount Athos after being blown off course when travelling with St. John the Evangelist. Thus began the Christian society which endures there to this day.



**TOP RIGHT:** Boat skeletons are slowly brought to life in Ierissos shipyard

**BELOW RIGHT:** With some deft brushwork, the eagle of Byzantium flies once more

**CENTRE:** Looking down a valley towards the Monastery of Vatopedi

**BOTTOM:** Vatopedi harbour is good for a fixed-keel boat but trying to get permission feels like purgatory



### BYZANTINE HERITAGE

My sheet-to-tiller rig kept me on course for the cape as night fell. Behind me, the lights of Sithonia scintillated in golden chains of infrastructure. Ahead, dark hills shrouded a brilliant sky and the velvet mitre of Mount Athos rose to a lacquered fang of moonlit snow. By 0100 I was rounding the Athos headland, where the most devout ascetics live in huts and alcoves gouged into the cliffs connected by a system of pulleys and man-sized baskets. Passing under the high windows of Megali Lavra – Europe's oldest monastery – I steered west. A sparse constellation of lights glowed on the north coast. The bells must have rung matins.

Dawn unveiled a scene that was more Himalayan than Hellenic. Gone were the whitewashed and blue-domed churches of the dusty Cyclades, the jewel-box harbours of the Sporades and the pastures and vineyards of Kassandra and Sithonia. Here, the foothills, soaring terraces and canted roofs recalled more the Potala in Lhasa.

Ierissos is a well-sheltered, small fishing harbour which receives very little yachting tourism and retains a substantial year-round population who make their living from the sea. Electricity and water were freely available on the wharfs as I made my hopeful preparations to land at Vatopedi. Athos still flies the flag of the ancient Byzantine Empire: a black eagle on a yellow field. To my puzzlement and dismay, the Lowestoft chandlers had omitted this from their Mediterranean courtesy ensign pack. Fortunately I was joined by a friend, Nicholas Tang, who is a portrait painter by profession. A perfectly good Q-flag has now gone to waste.



### MONASTICAL MACHINATIONS

Visas at the ready, we embarked the official ferry and landed on Athos as regular foot passengers. I walked through hills towards Vatopedi, scrambling up gullies and over the forested ridge until cenobitic glades of agriculture broadened down a valley beneath me like Shangri-La under Karakal. It was early evening by the time I reached the Monastery. Pondering my papers at the gatehouse, my cassocked hosts directed me to the church for vespers.

Revise your mental image of unclaimed yachting frontiers. This is no skerry in the Southern Ocean. Supernovas of incense whirled around blazing chandeliers and stucco murals annotated in Old Slavonic. Biding my time in the flickering kaleidoscope of rose and tulip lanterns, I formulated my request to bring in my Westerly GK29 *Granny Knot* to a deep hum of Byzantine chanting. The doors finally opened and we filed out into eddies of almond blossom. A dozen monks paused in the





## SAILING NORTH THROUGH GREECE

# CRUISING NOTES

European civilisation was profoundly shaped by the Etesian northerly winds of the Aegean. Southerlies are rare and never occur in summer.

There are three accepted routes north, described to me by a fisherman's daughter in Monemvasia: a western route via the gulfs of Euboea, a central route through the Steno Kafirea and straight up to Lemnos, and the eastern route through the Cyclades and then hugging the Turkish coast to the Dardanelles. But I took none of these. After visiting the Cyclades, Athos was to the north-west, so I went through a tiny gap between Andros and Tinos and hugged the Etesian polished northern cliffs of Andros and Euboea. Beware – the rare north-facing harbours which afford shelter from the Etesians seem, perhaps by the same anomaly, to be exposed to katabatic blasts from the southerlies which the northbound sailor must depend upon.

Halkidiki is a friendly coast, but required me to cycle for miles to re-fuel, jerry can by jerry can from remote petrol stations. Pro Tip: Greek bureaucrats retain the muscle memory of several dictatorships. If you want to avoid endless official persecution, dress like you're the one in charge.

## ALEXANDER SHAW

Alexander Shaw is a publicist based in Beijing, Warsaw and Brussels. He has sailed his Westerly GK29

*Granny Knot* from Lowestoft to Constanța, Romania. Setting out in

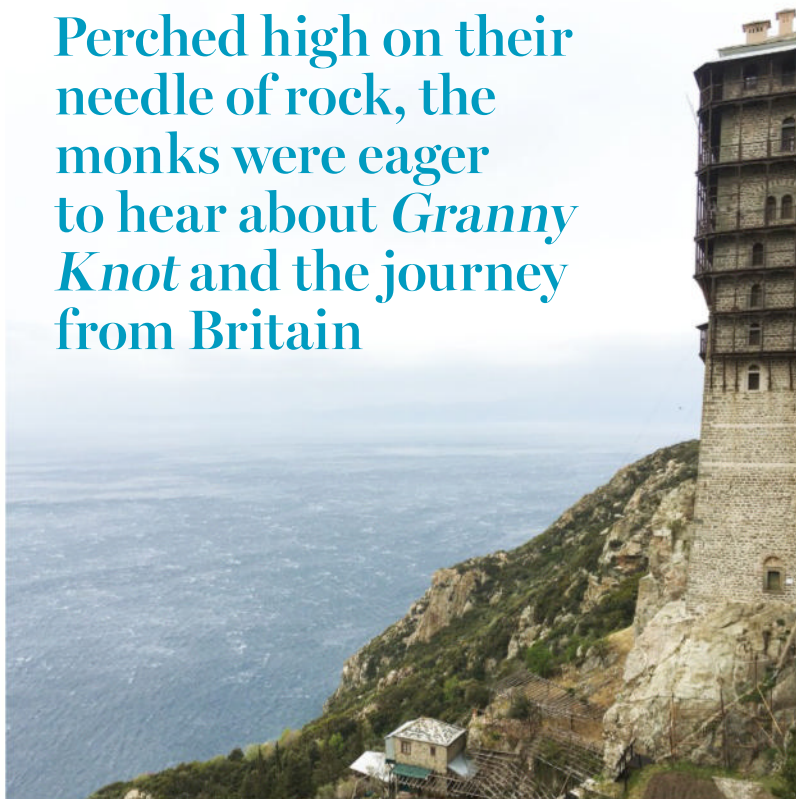
2019 during the lockdowns, he also sailed to several places made famous by Homer and Byron: Gibraltar, Melilla, Calvi, Monte Carlo, Amalfi, Ithaki, and then around the south Peloponnese into the Aegean. He describes it as a glorious time to have a boat in the Mediterranean, which was bereft of tourists due to the pandemic. His ambition is to reach a place marked on a 14th Century Genoese Chart as 'Porto di Susacho' ('Port Sussex'), where a group of Saxon antecedents settled after they fled the Norman invasion of 1066. It is located in the Black Sea in what is now Southern Russia.







Perched high on their needle of rock, the monks were eager to hear about *Granny Knot* and the journey from Britain



courtyard to hear my request. The younger ones translated for their elders. The monastery would give careful consideration to this matter and let me know.

Buoyed by their response, I wandered down some worn donkey steps to the large, tidy harbour. Of course, Navionics has no record of its capacity. I unwrapped a plumb line from my pocket – three metres by the dock. Perfect!

Then a bell pealed behind me, gathering everyone back within the monastery walls before the mighty doors were closed for the night.

#### REBUFFED

Next day, there was some bad news. 'Our territorial integrity is protected by agreement with the Mount Athos government and the Greek coastguard and, regrettably, the Greek coastguard won't grant you permission to enter without you first gaining approval of the civil authorities here.'

So I headed up into the hills to start banging desks in the fog-wreathed Athonite capital, Karyes. The government offices were all closed for an event in the liturgical calendar which I hadn't considered (Athos observes the Julian, rather than Gregorian, calendar). A group of young monks filed from the ecclesiastical







academy to an antediluvian Mercedes bus which was readying for departure to the main port of Dafni. It was the last transport out of town. I joined, and after 45 minutes we emerged from the cloud layer into the Athonite port. A glance at the piers confirmed what I had guessed from the satellite images: it is unsuitable for any boat with a pronounced keel.

I petitioned both the port police office and the customs office. Each sent me back to the other. I contemplated the bitter irony that, on this one occasion that civil authorities seemed broadly sympathetic, it was heaven which needed moving rather than earth. No one could grant me a final word of approval.

Hitch-hiking to Simonopetra, I arrived in the back of a 1980s Toyota pickup. Perched high on their needle of rock, the monks were eager to hear about *Granny Knot* and the journey from Britain as we paced the wind-buffed balconies and admired the monastery's Arsanás (fortified harbour), a sheer half-mile below. They told me that, alas, their pier is too dilapidated for any vessel other than the landing craft.

The bell rang and we assembled in the near pitch darkness of the chapel. Wind roaring around the buttresses outside, the hum of Byzantine chanting



ABOVE: The Singitic Gulf stretches out before the gatehouse of Simonopetra monastery

LEFT: Pilgrims and passengers get ready to set foot on the Holy Mountain

FAR LEFT, FROM TOP: Holy Ghost Street - the central area of Karyes; The view west from Simonopetra; Dark passages and high balconies connect the various areas of Simonopetra





‘Oh no! Not that Englishman again? No! No! No! Not even for King Charles! He must completely get this idea out of his head!’



continued until dawn rippled in the marble embrasures. After breakfast, I set out on foot to the vast monastery of Saint Panteleimon.

Scrambling around the headlands, several eroded slipways and overgrown huts lingered from the era of skiffs and Caïques. I also passed the isolated Xeropotamos harbour. Despite the depth inside, waves break at its shallow entrance.

#### ABANDONED HOPES

Athonites are roughly divided into 20 monasteries according to language. Saint Panteleimon houses the Russians. Their harbour looked excellent, with a fishing boat wintered at the top of a slipway, but the thought of bringing *Granny Knot* back around the peninsula filled me with dread. My passport was regarded with suspicion at the guesthouse. A storm was gathering. I decided to head back to Ierissos.

As a last roll of the dice, I texted my friend the painter and asked him to make the request. He had by this time managed to make friends with one of Athos' top iconographers who picked up the phone to the coast guard. Halfway into his first sentence, the poor monk received a tirade from the other end.

‘Oh no! Not that Englishman again? No! No! No! Not even for King Charles! He must completely get this idea out of his head!’ The phone was slammed down and that was that.

Disappointed, I paced the St. Panteleimon mole (two metres, by the way, and fresh water on the dock – but no electricity), and waited for the ferry. I suppose it was a long shot, turning up on spec – but I couldn't have forgiven myself for not trying.

As the vast fortifications of the coastal monasteries attest, my ambition to land a foreign boat on Athos is nothing new, but the survival of Athonite society





**LEFT, TOP:** Athos observes Byzantine Time – the hours of each day are counted up from sunset the day before. Greek time is also displayed

**LEFT:** The harbour at St. Panteleimon

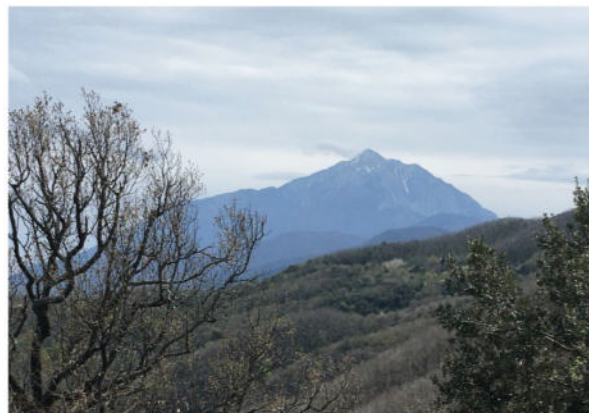
**BELOW:** Mount Athos is an ancient haven for an international community of Eastern Orthodox monks

today owes more to its sharp-witted negotiations with powers on the mainland than to its defences.

The key to landing there, I am sure, lies in gaining the confidence of the Holy Council (Ierá Sýnaxis). This body comprises a representative of each of the 20 monasteries on Athos and has a veto over the Athos Civil Authority which, in turn, works with the Greek Foreign Office to protect Athos' autonomy.

The successful voyage probably won't involve dropping plumb lines from the monastery jetties, but perhaps it will benefit a little from the observations of somebody who once did.

For my part, I left the Holy Mountain, like King Charles and everyone else, as a foot passenger on a stygian landing craft; a stark reminder (as if the vast ossuaries hadn't been enough), that however far we may have come, the last short crossing is made on terms we cannot negotiate.

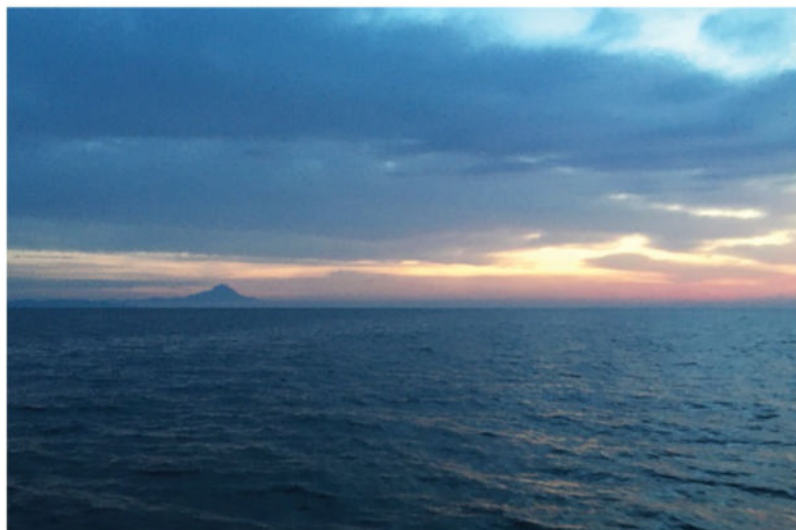


## MOUNT ATHOS

Little is known about The Monastic Republic of Mount Athos in pre-Christian times, but monastic communities already existed when the Western Roman Empire collapsed in 476 AD. The Eastern (Byzantine) Empire, which endured for 1,000 years, granted Athos its present autonomy in 883 AD. The most prominent of Athos' monasteries have now been active for over a millennium. The Athonite monasteries house a rich collection of rare artefacts, books, ancient documents and historic works of art. Only 100 entrance visas are granted to Eastern Orthodox visitors per day, with just 10 visitors permitted from outside the faith. Women and children may not enter at all.

The community includes 20 monasteries housing around 2,000 Eastern Orthodox monks from Greece and other Eastern Orthodox countries such as: Romania, Moldova, Georgia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, Serbia and Russia. In 17 of the monasteries, the monks are predominantly ethnic Greek. The Helandarios Monastery is Serbian and Montenegrin, the Zografou Monastery is Bulgarian and the Agiou Panteleimonos monastery is Russian.

Elements of Orthodox culture have now been re-established in the UK with a translation of ancient Athonite texts *The Philokalia* and the music of Sir John Tavener. This revival is not just nostalgic. 'Our last guest in that suite was one of your countrymen,' said the Vatopedi Guest Master, leading me up to my room. 'Your King, in fact.' King Charles visited Mount Athos a fortnight before his coronation.





# PLYMOUTH 2024 CADETS FOR A NEW GENERATION

*Over 100 dinghies from as far afield as India and Ukraine raced across the World Championships line this summer as iconic ex-Cadets cheered*

Words Julia Jones Photos Paul Gibbons Photography



ABOVE: The start had over 100 boats  
CLOCKWISE FROM  
RIGHT: The Indian  
competitors; There  
were teams from  
Belgium, Ukraine,  
Great Britain,  
Czechia, Argentina,  
India and Australia  
on the start line;  
The team from  
Kyiv; UK National  
Champions  
Samatha Nee and  
Isabelle Davies





Enjoy every minute of it,' said INEOS Britannia team member, Nick Hutton, presenting prizes on Day 5 of the ABP Cadet World Championships in Plymouth. Nick's own last event as a Cadet had been the World Championships in Hobart,

Tasmania, 30 years ago. He was delighted to meet his former teammate, Dominic Stanislaus, who was also in Plymouth. Dominic's daughter, Mia, was competing – still sailing the same dinghy, *Utopia*. That's one of the joys of the Cadet class – its combination of an international reach and a strong inter-generational feeling.

Event organiser Alan Krailing from Suffolk, shared the thrill of returning to Plymouth after 32 years and watching his own children compete. He also managed a convincing win in the hotly contested ex-Cadet sailors' race, where the lanky and the bulky squeeze themselves into the 10ft cockpit dinghies, designed by Jack Holt in 1947 to keep adults out.

Nick Hutton talked about the special qualities of these long-lived dinghies. Not just the technical challenge of dealing with traditional rigs and spinnaker poles but the mentoring relationship which can develop between the older child, helming, and the younger child, crewing. 'You're mentoring them through a bit of life,' he says.

Not that the personal chemistries always work. Triple circumnavigator Conrad Humphreys described his clashes with his helm Jamie Lea when they were both part of the highly talented Exmouth squad in the late 1980s. Cruising sailor Nick Coughlan, poised to publish his guide to '50 of the most fabulous off-the-beaten-track sailing destinations on the planet', wrote to describe his teenage disappointment when he took up Cadet sailing from his all-boys boarding school, in a hope of meeting girls from a convent 30 miles away. They were 'nice cheery girls' but 'disappointingly reluctant to fraternise, even when blue with cold.' Yet that little wooden dinghy in the cold North Sea started him on a lifetime of adventurous sailing.

The last day of the championships had my eldest granddaughter Gwen blinking back tears. She's about to be 17, compulsory retirement age for Cadets. She's been sailing with



ABOVE: Dinghies from Argentina, Great Britain, the Netherlands and Germany preparing to launch

her crew, Primrose, since she was 12 and will be passing the dinghy, *Toucan*, to Primrose to take over. It's a moment where it's not always easy for the retiring youngster to see their way forward. For Nick Hutton it was racing 420s, then match-racing and a professional sailing career. Conrad Humphreys was selected for the 1993-94 Whitbread Youth Challenge team. The friendships he'd developed with the Ukrainian team in the first post-cold war world championships (Puck, Poland 1990) led to him joining them for the second leg of the race.

Back then, Ukraine was a newly independent nation, having left the USSR in December 1991. Now it's fighting for survival. The Cadet class and its sponsors banded together to ensure it was financially and logistically possible for six youngsters from Kyiv to compete in Plymouth. They took 2nd, 9th and 14th places, though nothing shook the dominance of the Australians. Josh Garner and Jack Benyan from the Royal Geelong YC won convincingly. Samantha (*She Who Dares*) Nee and Isabelle Davies were UK National Champions for the second time.

The Cadet class in Britain has been overtaken by more modern, more reproducible, less technically complex starter dinghies – though to see this year's fleet of more than 100 boats spreading across the Sound was a heartening sight. This was the first time for over 20 years that India had been able to send a team. More fundraising had made this possible. Six youngsters from the Yacht Club of Hyderabad, which specialises in those who are economically deprived – sailed in both the main and promo fleets. They will be taking a container of 12 dinghies and equipment back to India with them.

Outreach doesn't have to be international. There are needy youngsters in our own country. My stay in Plymouth included a morning sailing with Conrad Humphreys on his *Bounty* replica.

This was part of Plymouth City Council's 'Fit and Fed' initiative aimed at children who receive free school meals. It's part of the campaign initiated by footballer Marcus Rashford to help such youngsters through the summer holidays. Our four teens steered the boat, climbed the mast, fished, swam, watched a dolphin and ate their meal in the fresh air. That's surely what we want for all our children.



LEFT: Young sailors from Belgium and Germany sail nose to nose

INSET Nick Hutton and Dominic Stanislaus 30 years on at the 2024 World Cadet Championships, Plymouth





ABOVE: The ultimate cruising setup wing-on-wing. The sail is decorated with the Keep The Ocean Clean logo (in Norwegian)







# ADVENTURE LIVING WITH THE OCEAN

*Having witnessed dramatic changes in the Arctic,  
Jon Amtrup decided to reduce his impact, move aboard  
and embrace a simple lifestyle*

Words & pictures Jon Amtrup

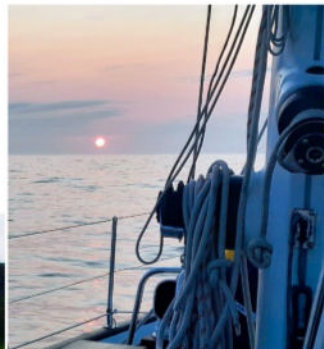






**L**ong before living in tiny houses became a big trend, sailors did exactly that. Living a good life in a small space with scarce resources. Not necessarily because they had slim wallets, but because they wanted to go sailing and space is always limited on a boat.

Life would have it that I could fulfil a lifelong dream four years ago. I had been sailing extensively, winter and summer, along the Norwegian coast. The wind always lured me out on new adventures. And I was always happy as soon as the dock disappeared behind me. Back home again I had flashbacks sitting by my desk. Flashback of anchorages, windy passages, morning swims, and whales breaching. It was like a Post Duress Happy Disorder – a letter combination everyone should have as a diagnostic.



## SURRENDERING TO A LIFE AT SEA

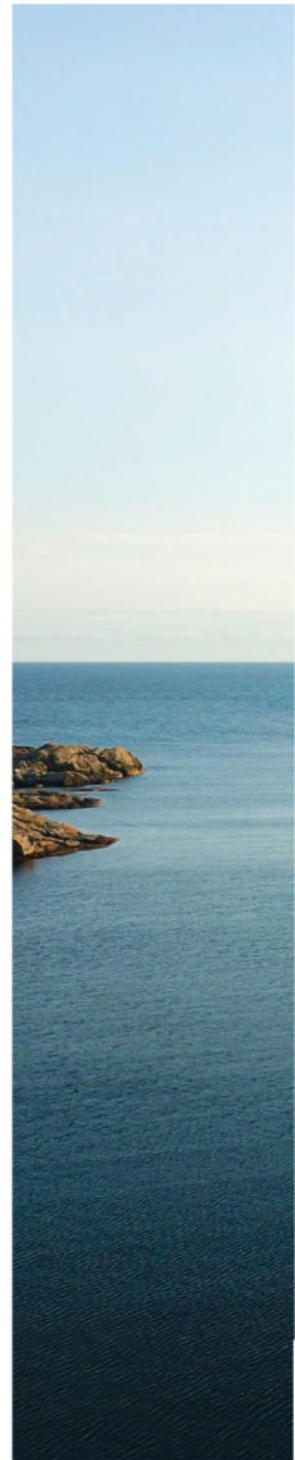
After a long winter adventure in Lofoten in the winter of 2020, it became clear that my boat life would be permanent. It was time to let my earthly things go. My boat awaited. And the amount of stuff I had accumulated was just sickening. A 45ft boat has no room for four suits and a tuxedo with matching shoes, so much outdoor equipment that I could equip a six-man team for an ascent of Everest, a lawn mower, paintings, and enough kitchenware to support a village. Did I need all of it? Not even a quarter. But the most vital question is: Can the planet handle that kind of consumption? No.

The south coast of Norway is littered with summer cabins, many of them way bigger than a big home. The cupboards they need to fill up to make it a second home for a few short weeks a year are sad. There I was in my boat, sailing along downwind towards Lindesnes, the southernmost lighthouse in Norway. I had all my gear stowed away in *Njord*, my aluminium 45ft sailing boat, yet I still felt I had room for a little more gear. But I had no intention of buying any. After sorting out what I needed to live a good life, what was nice to have, and what I didn't need, I was happy with my choices.

My boat was now my home.

After a long 48 hours downwind and reaching passage, I could finally get some rest. Instead of sailing into the very well-protected harbour of Egersund, I passed the entrance and navigated through a maze of crab pots into the anchorage east of Eigerøy Lighthouse.

One of the many satisfying things about anchoring is that you don't have to spend any money. As soon as you tie up in harbour your credit card starts to live a life of its own. Harbour fees, dinner out, more groceries, maybe a souvenir, ice cream, and a beer. It's all nice, but it's far from a sailing adventure.



TOP LEFT: Salmon farms in Trena

LEFT: Memorable moments with Gunhild Vigdisdatter on a beach in Bolga

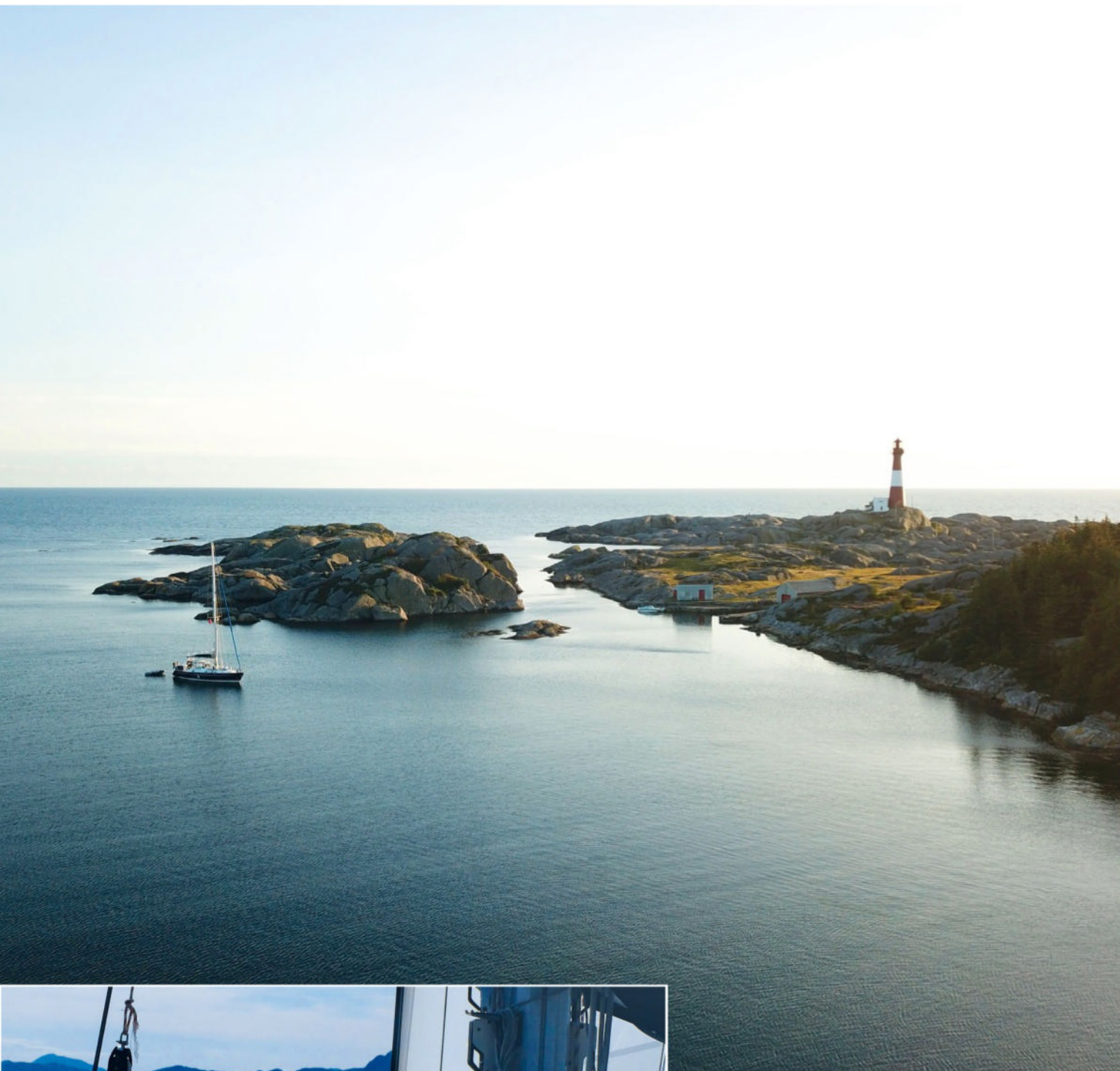
INSET LEFT: Sailing towards the midnight sun

ABOVE: The anchorage at Eigerøy has stupendous views

RIGHT: Small living in big conditions

**After sorting out what I needed to live a good life, I was happy with my choices. My boat was my home**





Instead, I dropped anchor and watched the lighthouse sweeping its colours over the ocean while sipping my beer and enjoying some leftovers from last night's dinner. My mind calmed and drifted.

#### ENVIRONMENTAL DEBT

The date is 12 May, exactly one month since the Norwegian overshoot day. 12 April, 2024 was the date the Norwegian people used the resources available this year. All the natural resources we consume after this date are more than the planet can reproduce. It's like spending 12 months of salary in the first four months and then taking up a loan to cover the rest of the year. Our children and grandchildren will have to pay that loan with interest, and then some. World Overshoot Day is in August, and in the last 35 years, the date has been pushed three months in the wrong direction. And there is no sign that we will reverse this race to the bottom.



As a liveaboard,  
I am at least doing  
something to  
lighten the burden  
on our planet



**ABOVE:** The floating dock in Senjahopen  
**BELOW:** Historic Kjerringøy  
**INSET:** Jon lands a decent-sized cod  
**RIGHT:** Enjoying a peaceful read

So there I sit in the cockpit of my little floating home. I've got everything. For the last three years I haven't bought any new clothes. I don't need to. If I buy a new shirt I have to throw one I already have. All of them fit and still look good. So why should I? The small space of a sailing boat

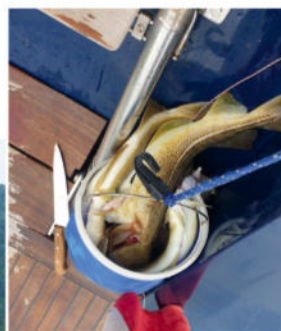
has made me think more about my choices. When I find something I want to buy, I think about it for at least 48 hours. The conclusion is almost always that I don't need it. So I don't buy it.

I wake up to a new day. It is still blowing from the north, so I stay and reel in a 1.2kg cod. Dinner for the next coming days is secured. And even better: I can avoid harbors and shops for even longer. I have food and water.

We live in a society that is built around consumption. Are you feeling a little hungry? There is always a convenience store close by that offers ultra-processed fast food. Thirsty for coffee? Pop into a coffee bar. Spilled coffee on your shirt?

Buy a new one for a few quid. We have lost the ability to make plans because everything is available almost 24/7. And we don't need to repair anything because it is cheaper to buy a new gadget or trousers. We have become consumers, and the thing we consume is the planet we are supposed to hand over to the next generation.

It's a depressing thought indeed. And it does not match the sunset in Utskavågen, just north of Bergen. I finally got some south-westerlies and did a 36-hour sail partly offshore and then in between the







### THE BRIAN BLACK MEMORIAL AWARD

YM's Brian Black Memorial Award, which celebrates the best written and video storytelling about marine environmental issues as explored by boat, is sponsored by Coppercoat, makers of the environmentally responsible multi-season anti-foul. For the last 35 years, Coppercoat has offered an award-winning alternative to self-ablating antifouls that are expensive and time-consuming to apply annually, while also leaching uncontrolled amounts of the toxic biocides into the marine environment. Tests by sailing magazines, commercial operators and for offshore installations have repeatedly found Coppercoat to be the best-performing product with a negligible impact on the waters it is in. The company constantly works to improve its product, packaging and operations to further reduce its footprint, and is delighted to support this initiative to promote healthy seas. [www.coppercoat.com](http://www.coppercoat.com)

### ABOUT THE AWARD

Award-winning environmental broadcast journalist Brian Black was passionate about the marine environment and eloquent in his writing and filmmaking about the crises facing fragile Arctic ecosystems. He was also a lifelong sailor and contributor to YM. His wife Lesley was a sailor and author in her own right, becoming Northern Ireland's first female yacht club commodore. Both passed away in recent years.

The Black family, with YM, established a journalism award in their name to celebrate sailing adventures which shed fresh light on marine environmental issues. The judges include round-the-world race winner, multiple world champion Mike Golding OBE, six-time circumnavigator Dee Caffari MBE, TV presenter and marine biologist Monty Halls, conservation expert Dr Robert Brown OBE, marine environmental consultant and daughter of Brian and Lesley Black, Sarah Brown, and the YM team. The award is sponsored by Coppercoat and supported by the Green Blue, the RYA, Imray, the Royal Highland Yacht Club, the Irish Cruising Club, and the Ocean Cruising Club.

There are two prizes, each of £2,000 for the best video and for the best written article and images. In 2024, the theme was 'Treading lightly'. YM will also be making a donation of £1,000 marine conservation funding charity Sea-Changers, [www.sea-changers.org.uk](http://www.sea-changers.org.uk)



rocks and islands after Haugesund. The landscape with white-capped mountains in the distance does lighten my mood. And the fact that, as a liveaboard, I am at least doing something to try and lighten the burden we are placing on our ocean and planet.

### OCEAN THERAPY

The next morning I jump into the 12°C water. That's one of the many perks of living on a boat. The morning swim clears the head, invigorates the body, and makes me meet the new day smiling. I have always liked starting the day by jumping in, no matter what temperature. Last year I read the book *Blue Mind* by Wallace J. Nichols and discovered why water is so liberating. The Blue Mind theory is the idea that proximity to water will ease your mind into a meditative state. It will connect you to water and yourself. Hopefully, it also makes you realise that you have to make an effort to save the ocean as a way of saying thanks.



### BIOGRAPHY

Norwegian Jon Amtrup has been sailing and writing for most of his life.

He is a journalist and has worked in several different Norwegian newspapers. He has also founded and been responsible for two PR companies.

Jon has sailed the Norwegian coast several times, summer and winter, crossed the Atlantic twice, circumnavigated Svalbard, sailed in Greenland and Iceland, and is

currently living on his boat.

He has also assisted several high-latitude sailing expeditions, and done several yacht deliveries. He also runs a popular sailing podcast. He also won the Brian Black Memorial Award in 2022.

He has written *High Latitude Sailing: Self-sufficient Sailing Techniques For Cold Waters and Winter Seasons*, *Sail to Svalbard*, and several other books. Jon is also the co-founder of an environmental ocean non-profit charity called Gate to the Arctic. To find out more, visit [www.explorenorth.no](http://www.explorenorth.no).



# Living on a boat makes you appreciate the water you have and encourages you to save as much as possible



**ABOVE:** Stunning beaches and mountains in Vesterålen, Lofoten's little sister

**BELOW:** A wind farm provides the backdrop to the lighthouse at Haugesund

Fresh water is a scarce resource all over the world. The prediction is that it will be even scarcer in the future. Living on a boat makes you appreciate the water you have and encourages you to save as much as possible. This morning's swim saved me a couple of litres as I didn't shower. I have a foot pump in the galley that lets me pump in saltwater, and helps me save fresh water. It is, or should be, a standard long-distance setup on boats. I wash veggies and cook potatoes and eggs in salt water, to mention just a few.

I hoist the anchor and head north again. The wind is still pushing me from behind and my

favourite sail set up, wing-on-wing, is rigged. I am in no hurry, and even if the wind just gives us 3.5 knots speed I let the engine rest. Diesel, just like water, is a scarce resource. It will also kill the sound of waves and birds, and contribute to the ever-warming of the planet and acidification of the ocean. I have been thinking of changing to an electric engine, but I will stick with what I've got for the moment. In the big equation, it seems better to use the diesel engine until it breaks instead of contributing to yet another 'thing' being produced.

But as the fuel prices continue to rise it will come to a point where sail and electric propulsion will be the only viable solution. I am looking forward to it, as it will force us to think of sailing in a different way. When propulsion time is limited by battery capacity we have to let the wind decide our destination. Like right now.

## LESS IS MORE WHEN SAILING

The wind has picked up and should be this way for the coming 48 hours. The solar panels are sucking up the sun and the wind generator hums happily. They both power my autopilot, instruments, fridge, and freezer. So I decide to sail as long as the wind would carry me. I pass the mighty Stad, the Cape Horn of Norway, with a tired face and decide to hold my course offshore so I can get a little shut-eye.

Two days later and very sleep-deprived – but very happy – the wind dies and I snuggle up in my bed safely anchored in one of my many favourite spots, Hjartøya, west of Sandnessjøen.

The cod that I caught in Eigerøya is eaten, and there is not much left in the fridge. I have no bread,







**BELOW:** Crewmate Jillian Neve looks happy to cross into the land of the midnight sun



but I will make do with all the pasta, eggs, onions, and cans I have. Less is way more when you are cruising, and experiencing nature gliding silently through a magical landscape. The Arctic Circle is just a day's sail away. I sleep like the baby I am.

In ten days I have placed my home under the midnight sun, and it is here that I will stay for the coming month. Picking my remote anchorages, fishing just what I can eat, meeting new people that live on and from this ocean, letting the wind decide where to sail, which just allows me to be here in the moment. The lesson here is to look after the ocean and the ocean will look after you.

## LIVEBOARDS WILL...

# SAVE THE PLANET

Living on a boat can be considered sustainable for several reasons, primarily due to the reduced environmental impact and the potential for a minimalist, eco-friendly lifestyle. Here are five reasons you should seriously consider moving onto your boat full-time.

### 1 MINIMALIST LIFESTYLE

Limited space on a boat encourages a minimalist lifestyle, reducing consumption, and reducing waste because you buy less, repair more and throw away fewer things and less food.

### 2 ENERGY EFFICIENCY

You have limited battery capacity so you are very aware of how much electricity you use – and produce through solar panels, wind turbines, and hydropower. A small boat also requires less energy to heat, cool, and power compared to a house.

### 3 MOBILITY AND REDUCED LAND USE

Sailing boats generally have a smaller environmental footprint compared to traditional homes, which require land, construction

materials and infrastructure.

And you don't need a summer home because you can always sail to a new anchorage.

### 4 CONNECTION TO THE OCEAN

Living on a boat fosters a direct connection to nature and a deeper love and care for the ocean.

### 5 SELF-SUFFICIENCY

As a sailor you are relying on your own resources for electricity, water, and sometimes even food, reducing our impact on public resources.

### 6 REDUCED CARBON EMISSIONS

Sailing emissions can often work out to be lower than car or air travel, particularly for sailing boats or fuel-efficient engines.





## Monty Halls launches Leaderbox Blue project

*Yachting Monthly* columnist, renowned marine environmentalist and broadcaster Monty Halls is launching Leaderbox Blue, a project encouraging local groups, schools and individuals in South Devon to put forward ideas for marine conservation projects. These will be carried out in the local South Hams area.

Leaderbox Blue enables anyone to get actively engaged in a marine conservation project as part of Monty's drive to increase citizen science research in the marine world. The project, also sponsored by Henri Lloyd, aims to launch more than 1,000 community marine conservation projects nationally and internationally within 5 years.

The Leaderbox Blue kit contains all the elements required for projects which cover key areas – Beach Clean, Habitat Restoration, Biodiversity Survey and

Awareness Campaign. The system comprises a support network with website and group forums, helpline and e-learning facilities, and all the equipment required to carry out the chosen project is contained within the box. This includes activity and data cards, handouts, system paperwork, quick start guide, risk assessments and insurance documentation. The box also contains the data forms, collection equipment, radios, gloves, and first aid kit.

Amy Hawke, manager of the Henri-Lloyd store in Dartmouth, welcomes people to apply in store as well as online directly to Monty Halls. Applications will be assessed by Monty Halls who will choose the winning entry. [www.montyhalls.co.uk](http://www.montyhalls.co.uk)



Store manager Amy Hawke, Monty Halls, with Sydney Luscombe and Mirela Majkic from Henri-Lloyd Dartmouth

## RNLI 200th anniversary ball

National Maritime and the RNLI marked the RNLI's 200th anniversary in early September with a black tie Grand Maritime Charity Ball on board the river yacht *Silver Sturgeon* sailing down the River Thames from Greenwich. The guests enjoyed live entertainment by Temple Band, spectacular sights and the 'Illuminated River' artwork as they cruised through London. Tower Bridge RNLI crew saluted the guests with a drive by.

Peter Green, CEO, National Maritime, said: 'We can't think of a better way to mark our conference than by supporting the vital work of the RNLI as they celebrate their 200th anniversary.' Sir Robin Knox-Johnston CBE RD, sailing legend and RNLI Vice President the RNLI was an honorary guest. He was the



first person to sail single-handed, non-stop around the world between 1968-69.

To date, the RNLI volunteer crews have launched lifeboats 380,328 times, saving 144,277 lives – this equates to an average of two lives saved each day for 200 years.

## Dover Regatta raises £10,000

Dover's biggest annual event, the Dover Regatta and Dragon Boat Race, attracted around 9,000 people from across Kent to the Waterfront, raising £10,000 for local charities Dover Lifeguard Club and Pegasus Playscheme. This year saw the biggest Dragon Boat Race yet. The event has been given a platinum certification since 2022; the Clean Regatta award, which is the world's leading environmental accreditation for water-based events.



### SCUTTLEBUTT

#### IN PRAISE OF DIGIMAP

A good resource for info on ports in Brittany and Normandy and the relevant post-Brexit forms and requirements is Marinas – [digimap.gg](http://digimap.gg) a free resource. [www.digimap.gg/marine/marinas](http://www.digimap.gg/marine/marinas)  
Bandit

#### WHALE-SPOTTING

More than fifty whales, not orcas, seen off Finisterre migrating north.  
Wansworth

#### BISCAY MEMORIES

Not seen that many for a long time. I remember many years ago on my first Biscay crossing with my father, meeting a "wall" of whales. They were that dense that there appeared no way through. It took a 20nm detour to get around them. I've never seen so many in one place again. 1977 if my memory is good.  
greeny

#### EXTORTIONATE FEES

Overnight 31ft boat rafted (in the area called the Cove) 10mins walk to facilities no internet electric extra £40 per night. I feel this is a total rip off. And won't come back depriving the traders in town of income from food/beer expenditure.  
Am I alone in feeling like this?  
fontmell



Send your sailing gossip, diary dates, cruising news and club or owners' association updates to Heather Prentice via email [Heather.prentice@futurenet.com](mailto:Heather.prentice@futurenet.com)

### OFFICE CLOSURE

Volunteers at Gosport are closing the Tourist Information Office after running it for 15 months without council support

### HOTEL UP FOR GRABS

The luxury 14-bedroom Foresters Hall hotel in Cowes, Isle of Wight, is being put up for sale through Christie & Co

### DIARY DATES

#### SEPT, OCT Ocean

Film Festival World Tour, [www.oceanfilmfestival.co.uk](http://www.oceanfilmfestival.co.uk)

**5 OCT - 30 NOV** RYA Connected Events. [www.rya.org.uk/news/connected-conferences](http://www.rya.org.uk/news/connected-conferences)

**25 OCT** Sir Edward Heath Morning Cloud Sailing Talks, Salisbury Methodist Church, Salisbury [www.arundells.org](http://www.arundells.org)

**9 NOV** RIN, Royal Met Society host weather and sailing event with Golden Globe Race sailors Kirsten Neuschafer and Tapio Lehtinen [www.rin.org.uk/events](http://www.rin.org.uk/events)

**18-26 JAN** Boot Düsseldorf, world's largest yacht show [www.boot.com](http://www.boot.com)

**6-9 FEB** BoatLife, NEC Birmingham, [www.boatlifeevents.com](http://www.boatlifeevents.com)

**22-23 FEB** RYA Dinghy & Watersports Show, Farnborough International, [www.rya.org.uk/events](http://www.rya.org.uk/events)

**9-11 MAY** South Coast and Green Tech Boat Show, MDL's Ocean Village Marina, Southampton, [www.mdlmarinas.co.uk/events](http://www.mdlmarinas.co.uk/events)

Largs RNLI volunteers with Belinda and James Richardson



RNLI/Claire McRae

### ROUND BRITAIN TO RAISE £100,000 FOR THE RNLI

Retired Londoners Belinda and James Richardson are aiming to visit all 238 UK and Ireland RNLI stations in their Porsche 911 to raise funds to buy a new D-class lifeboat for the RNLI relief's fleet. So far they have raised £83,000 of their target of around £100,000. Belinda and James began their epic 8,500-mile journey in Morecambe on 23 August and plan to complete their challenge at Peel, Isle of Man, on 30 September.

## Ambassadors tackle Vendée Globe protected by HPX GORE-TEX

The technological kit innovations developed for the professional offshore sailor inevitably feature in the very gear developed for the everyday sailor. On 10 November, eleven Musto Ambassadors will take the start line for the notorious solo Vendée Globe, non-stop round the world race wearing the HPX GORE-TEX collection. Musto celebrates a 30-year partnership with GORE-TEX this year – a partnership that has created the most advanced outer layer for pro racers and cruising sailor. GORE-TEX Pro technology is used in the Musto HPX kit with the ultimate stay-dry promise. [www.musto.com](http://www.musto.com)

**MUSTO**

### GEMS FROM THE WEB

## New AMS buoys set to protect seagrass zones

A new generation of Blue Meadows 'smart' buoys are marking sensitive habitats of seagrass and maerl around Falmouth Harbour. The seagrass bed off Trefusis Point is now marked by two of the Advanced Mooring System (AMS) buoys, bringing the total to 26 markers that protect around 30 hectares of seagrass habitat.

The buoys represent a partnership between Falmouth Harbour and the Ocean Conservation Trust, Mylor Mooring Services Ltd and Cornwall Council. Seagrass is vital for marine life which depends on its meadows for food and shelter and is essential to the health of our seas as it captures carbon and provides a host of other 'ecosystem services' - a nursery for juvenile species and minimises the impacts of weather events by dampening the force of waves.



Mylor Mooring Services Ltd



A seagrass bed off Falmouth

Ocean Conservation Trust Paul Naylor



# YOUR CRUISING STORIES

ALEXANDRA HARTLEY swapped corporate life in London to help run flotilla holidays in the Gulf of Corinth



The sun setting over the Corinth Canal



Alex takes the wheel early in the season, before the mercury soars



The fleet moored in Antikyra, a perfect location for visiting the archaeological site at Delphi

## Life behind the lines on a flotilla

Alex Hartley gives us a glimpse into life as a charter host in Greece

Fair weather sailors will undoubtedly be familiar with the flotilla. From family-friendly holidays to booze cruises, many readers will know the feeling of arriving at a fleet garnished with flags of blue and yellow, orange or green. Flotillas begin with afternoons waiting in the taverna whilst the crew deal with last-minute 'routine maintenance' (spoiler: it's never routine). Flotillas end with hugs, leftover bottles of olive oil and exclamations of, 'See you next year!' But what is flotilla life really like, behind the sunglasses, flip flops and handheld VHF's?

Patrons know flotilla as raft-building, group meals and morning briefings. It's where many of the best intentions of the RYA and Day Skipper initiatives go for a crash course in alternative mooring. Being on a flotilla is slipping lines and having a slight fumble whilst recalling how to hoist sails, with last year's sailing holiday a distant memory. It's about finding elusive sea legs once more and breathing with a sigh of relief as the recommended bay appears around the headland, or anticipating the inevitable smattering of choice words between fraught crew members as their boat hurtles towards the concrete quay.

For us – your willing, abiding, calm and well-presented crew – your week with us is a glimpse into our life, and our life is

exceptional. For us, scenery morphs into an opportunity. A volcanic, craggy stretch rendered a perfect opportunity for a long-lined raft. An expansive and peaceful bay soon to be semi-immortalised by whiteboard marker, shared on the Whatsapp group

and christened as another fabled 'lunch stop'. We spend evenings perusing the menu we've seen 20 times before, sharing the same taverna with a different ensemble of holiday makers, unfamiliar and familiar intertwined.



Sun Odyssey 449 under sail in the Gulf of Corinth



It's clocking your fellow crew as you realise the wind has shifted. The raft we convinced the guests was perfectly safe is now looking a little precarious. Another beer?

It's the peculiar matchmaking that goes along with the job, strangers at the start of the season now inevitably and forever attached, knitted together by the trauma and joy of running a 'Flot' together. It's the crew confabulations as our fleet enter the previously calm harbour with well-spaced out vessels. There's not really enough space here for our 11 boats, but we've made our assessment, calculated and verified which boats will stand up to the challenge. Much time is spent whispering to each other as we're docking a boat: 'What's their name?' 'Vicky and James, James, that's James.' 'That's right, James, just make sure that mooring line is attached to your cleat before you throw it to me.'

It's nodding, convincing and empathetic as guests exclaim, 'Oh, but I am looking forward to a proper bed and not having to worry about filling up my water tanks.' Except our incomprehension is very thinly veiled, we haven't slept in a proper bed in months and topping up water tanks is as normal as emptying holding tanks. We awake as the wind changes, waking up to check the weather before scrolling through Instagram.



Photos Alexandra Hartley

Our life is slipping lines, turning the volume on the stereo up, coffee in hand and feet on the wheel. It's glancing towards familiar landmass – navigation instruments redundant. It's the tentative first evening, relief and joy, as we meet sailors who are really just here for the social aspect. For us, it's one less boat to worry about and one more to drink with at the end of the day. For us, flotilla is late night tender rides into the bay to cool down after the intensity of the sun, beer cans rattling the next day as we untangle anchor chains.

Sometimes we're sweating lines in 40°C heat, pleading with Jeremy to put the boat in neutral and wondering how far your patience and diplomacy will stretch as he insists they are already in neutral. Sometimes it feels like trying to carry two watermelons under one arm, as the Greek saying goes.

Except sometimes it feels like arriving at home, only that home changes every evening. It's the complementary Freddo Espresso (medium sugar), the beer on the house and the kiss on the cheek. It's having everyone in the local Greek equivalent of Sainsbury's know who you are because you purchase inordinate amounts of toilet roll. It's unexpectedly seeing other flotilla crew

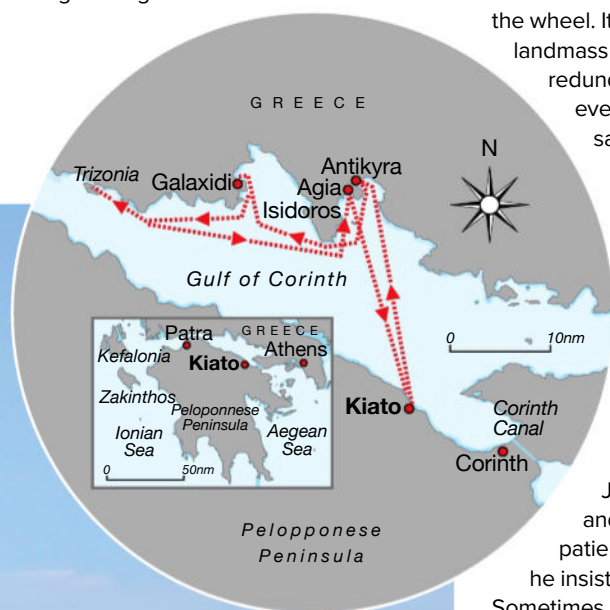
– comrades, brothers-in-arms – recounting the same experiences only the names and places have changed. It's the irony that in all the beauty the only tales that are remembered are the ones where things went terribly wrong. Sometimes we remind ourselves that the current storm and the latest crossed anchor will soon morph into fond recollection in the taverna. It's saying goodbye at the end of the week, hours before saying hello to the next.

It's waving away the taxis, part of us wishing we were going home too. But of course, the cleaners have arrived, loo roll has been bought, the main briefing has been prepared. It's time to do it all again.



Calm at the end of the day

Maxine Heath







[www.yachtingmonthly.com/books](http://www.yachtingmonthly.com/books)

# Waiting for the start

*Jean-Luc describes his feelings as he waits for the start of the 2018/19 Golden Globe Race. He's already circumnavigated the globe five times, but this time will be different – he's racing 'the old-fashioned way'.*

It's time to cast off the lines. The last days on land are quite exhausting, with demands from all directions – information briefings, final checks, meetings with journalists, visits from friends and family, my children and grandchildren, my sisters and my brother. The usual anxiety before departure seizes me but I don't show it, reinforcing my reputation as a tough guy and the associated monikers such as 'man of iron' or 'hermit'. A major regional newspaper drives the point home: 'VDH: the old man of the sea'. My white beard and my venerable age make the comparison easy and suddenly I'm elevated to the level of the famous hero from Ernest Hemingway.

To be honest, I find all this amusing. Over the years I've grown accustomed to it. People like me and I like people. There's a connection and my infectious laughter adds to the mix. Am I relaxed though? Not entirely. The start of a race is just that – a race. There's the pleasure, the satisfaction but there's also stress, doubt, erratic sleep – everything that comes with that unique moment when, in every sense of the word, you dive in.

This is my sixth circumnavigation. In theory, I know what to expect. But at the same time, I've never done such a long journey. The distance is the same but it is going to take much longer.

No one is immune to last-minute issues.

Shortly before departure, a France Télévision crew joins me for one final report. I lose focus for a minute and that's when a foil windsurfer skims past close to the stern of my boat and rips off my log. Of course I don't realise it right

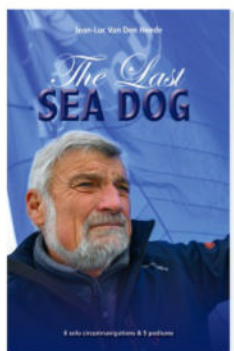
away, only when the same madman still zooming by tosses the cordage and its small propeller onto the deck. The problem is that the log is now missing. I am beside myself because this mechanical log not only measures the distance travelled but also provides the speed. When navigating without GPS, both distance travelled and speed – along with heading from a compass – are essential in working up a dead reckoning position on a chart to compare with a position fixed from a sextant sight.

Lionel, my assistant, had spent ages sourcing it and, thanks to a friend, I had five propellers specially made just in case they got eaten by a fish.

I searched the internet to see if I can find another one. No luck. I'll have to make do with the Walker, my backup log. Bernard Moitessier had the same log which lasted throughout his entire journey, even though he lost nine propellers in the end.

For this log, I have only one spare propeller, and there's no time to make more. So, as a precaution and with the organisers' approval, I secure it with a Spectra line made of high-tech fibre – just in case a new windsurfer passes by. As it turns out, this proves to be a blessing. Four months later, during my dismasting, this unbreakable five-millimetre line allowed me to make makeshift repairs and, in the process save my circumnavigation.

Caution and precaution. Patience and perseverance. You need to stock up on these



## THE LAST SEA DOG

Jean-Luc Van Den Heede  
(translated by Riaan Smit)  
Fernhurst £14.99

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



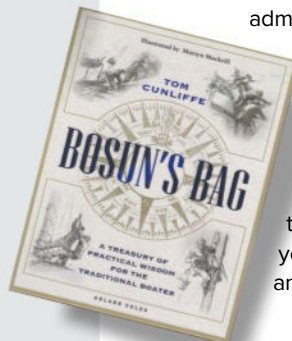
## BOSUN'S BAG

£25

**Tom Cunliffe, Adlard Coles**

'A yacht is the sum of all the little details her people care about,' says Tom Cunliffe in this compendium of practical experience and advice. He shares tips and anecdotes from the traditional boats he has owned and those he has admired. He's as eloquent and opinionated as

ever and (as usual) I was glad of the glossary. While the primary audience is the gaffer community, even those who have moved to plastic hulls and triangular sails – as Tom himself has been forced to do – will learn from his attitude that 'the more you put into a boat the more you get out'. It's illustrated with beautiful and accurate paintings by Martin Mackrill.



before considering orbiting the planet. Twenty years ago when I contemplated breaking the record for a solo circumnavigation against the prevailing winds and currents, sailing from east to west, I knew from the get-go, more or less, how long it would take – between 120 and 140 days at sea. It seemed quite daunting, but that didn't stop me from attempting it three times previously – and failing every time.

In 1999, the hull delaminated. In 2001, the keel gave way. In 2002, it was the mast that broke. To achieve my goal and improve on Philip Monnet's record, it took me 122 days. For this new retro-style circle navigation, I knew it would take 100 days or more, and for a good reason – my boat is almost 15 metres shorter.

I made my decision knowingly, with the right mix of recklessness and selfishness. As so often before my departure, those around me show more concern than I feel myself. Since I live in Les Sables-d'Olonne, when I return home each day, I inevitably meet neighbours in the elevator lobby. They are lovely, caring but they must think I'm a gentle madman. I try to put on a brave face, make jokes, act relaxed.

The same goes for my competitors. Most of them are heading into the unknown. Not me. I know that the first days of the race will be crucial, especially psychologically. You must set the pace, not let yourself fall behind, but also conserve energy. I'm here to finish and win at the end of the race, not just at the beginning.



**Jean-Luc was the winner of the 2018/2019 edition of the Golden Globe – and finally retired from racing around the world. Jean-Luc is often known as 'VDH'. He was born in 1948, survived a difficult childhood and worked as a maths teacher. He began sailing aged 17, has competed in many transatlantic races as well as racing round the globe in both directions.**

## BUCKED IN THE YARN

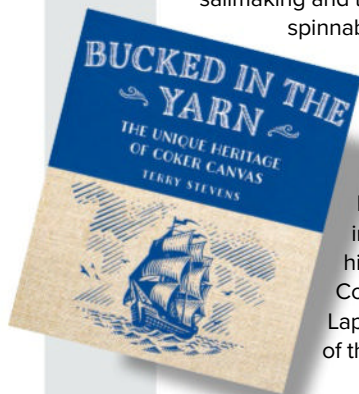
£25

**Terry Stevens, Graffeg**

*Bucked in the Yarn* is subtitled 'The Unique Heritage of Coker Canvas' and tells the intertwined stories of the Coker villages in Devon, the development of high quality sailmaking and the processes that turn flax and hemp into

spinnable materials. Into the weave come the brutal colonisation of Jamaica, the buccaneer and naturalist William Dampier, and T.S. Eliot, whose ancestors left East Coker for the US.

This is a beautifully produced gift book which cannot explore its topics in depth but succeeds in offering a highly attractive, illustrated introduction. Continuing links with the firm of Ratsey and Lapthorn mean that even the synthetic sails of the current America's Cup have relevance.



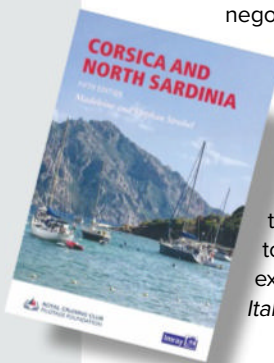
## CORSICA AND NORTH SARDINIA

£39

**Madeleine and Stephan Strobel (5th edition)  
RCC / Imray £39.50**

The authors describe Corsica as 'one of the finest cruising areas in the Western Mediterranean' and if your taste is for a rugged coastline with spectacular headlands, many small coves and off-lying islands, this must obviously be true, particularly off the west coast. Complex wind patterns and weather changes can make negotiating such an area complex. The Strobels

are to be congratulated on the clarity with which they have linked chartlets, text and coastal photographs. Information on mooring arrangements and regulations covering marine reserves are similarly clear. The publisher's decision to include only the north of Sardinia seems to be historically based. Sailors wishing to explore further south will need Rod Heikell's *Italian Waters Pilot*.





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# NEW GEAR

*Dennis O'Neill reviews the latest sailing products, from clothing to electronics*



## SAIL JACKET WEATHER PROTECTION

£230

[www.henrilloyd.com](http://www.henrilloyd.com)

Part of Henri Lloyd's latest range of waterproof marine clothing, featuring a dropped adjustable hem, soft fleece lining, hood adjusters and mid-height collar with a microfleece chin guard. It also has a mesh and taffeta lining, asymmetric cuff ends for extra protection over the hands, and laminated cuff adjusters with secure hook and loop cuff closure, to optimise warmth and comfort in the harshest of sea conditions. Its conspicuous high visibility, meanwhile, is enhanced thanks to three tonal reflectors and reflective logos.

There are also fully waterproof zippers on all of the pockets, with the main YKK zipper sporting an anti-corrosive aluminium puller. Available in red, ice white and navy blue.



FROM  
£250

## YOUSAFE PRIME VIKING LIFEJACKET

[www.viking-life.com](http://www.viking-life.com)

Developed for commercial maritime use, this automatic lightweight lifejacket has proven popular with offshore wind farm workers who need as much comfort and manoeuvrability as possible while working long hours in rough sea conditions. Viking are confident these characteristics also make it ideal for serious cruising sailors who need to wear their life jackets for many hours at a time. Made from high-spec materials, and featuring single chamber construction, a detachable double crotch strap and a snug fit, it also has an easy-to-use clear inspection window to help you check on its inflation readiness. Available in two buoyancy versions: 150N + 275N.



FROM  
£920

## EZ RAFT ULTRALIGHT DINGHY

[www.ezraft.com](http://www.ezraft.com)

Sporty new trimaran inflatable dinghy made from ultra-light high tensile materials, and designed to make transporting and packing a small tender as hassle-free as possible. Claimed to be half the weight of an equivalent conventional inflatable, the EZ Raft folds up to no more than 85cm x 30cm x 30cm, whilst weighing just 12 kg all-in. No thwarts or floorboards need to be installed, and it can be inflated in just a few minutes using the included rechargeable pump. The paddles and transom are always fixed in place and immediately ready for use. Available in five lengths, from 240cm up to 360cm.





## DUBARRY PALERMO SAILING TRAINER

[www.dubarry.com](http://www.dubarry.com)

Lightweight sports deck shoes designed for comfort and support whilst moving around on deck. The uppers are made from a quick-drying lycra/synthetic mesh combination coated with an anti-microbial finish to reduce foot odour, while the quick-tying lacing system has been designed to ensure a precise fit. Features a hard-wearing toe guard and flexible, shock-absorbing midsole. The cushioned footbed is removable, allowing you to dry it out quickly, while the non-slip soles have a special water dispersion channel system to prevent aquaplaning and promote a sure-footed grip in wet conditions. Available in four colours: grey, grey/cerise, navy, and navy/citrus.



## GILL PILOT YACHTING GILET

[gb.gillmarine.com](http://gb.gillmarine.com)

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Placing a smartphone near the beacon will automatically open up an app providing full product data, including its remaining battery life and an audit of the times it has been tested. Class M compliant, it comes with a five-year warranty.





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# HOW TO AVOID A CORE DISASTER

*Ben Sutcliffe-Davies explains the best ways to check the structural integrity of your GRP hull and deck*

Core sample revealing dangerously degraded balsa

Photo: Ben Sutcliffe Davies



Water ingress can quickly turn your structural core into an ineffective mush

Check your hull and deck fittings to ensure they are sealed properly – freezing winters can quickly compromise a yacht's laminate core

Modern boatbuilding's favourite construction material, GRP (glass reinforced plastic), may be strong and durable, but it's also, unfortunately, relatively heavy. To overcome this problem, naval architects and yards will laminate much lighter core materials between the GRP layers to reduce the boat's weight and increase its stiffness. Older-style balsa wood cores suffer from rot and structural failure once moisture has begun to make its way along its grains. Modern balsa materials are, thankfully, a lot more resilient to moisture transmission while offering even greater compression strength and impact resistance. Newer synthetic foam cores are lighter still and a lot more moisture resistant. But while they will never rot, as such, they can still delaminate from the GRP layers because their bonding properties are a lot weaker than balsa's. Any water getting into

a foam laminate and freezing has the potential to reduce the foam core to little more than an ugly ineffective mush.

As a marine surveyor, the majority of structural issues

I tend to come across on boats are usually common and predictable degradations that can be easily spotted visually. However, trying to discover what might be lurking within a yacht's hull and deck GRP layers and cores can be a lot more difficult to assess without taking discreet, but intrusive, core samples. A thorough assessment of a yacht's hull or deck core will, therefore, almost always have to be an inspection from the inside of the craft. The locations of the laid-in core within the hull will usually be fairly obvious, especially when you're looking inside anchor lockers, aft cockpit lockers or hull voids. However, access to the underside of the working deck will, in many cases, require the unwelcome task of having to remove fitted cabin linings or cabinets.



**BEN SUTCLIFFE-DAVIES** has worked as a boat builder and surveyor for 45 years and is a Fellow of the Yacht Designers & Surveyors Association (YDSA)



# SKIN-FITTING FAILURES

For the last 40 years the majority of boat builders have usually 'relieved' (cut back) the core in a hull all the way to the external hull laminate when they are attaching skin fittings. When it comes to decks, they usually add extra suitably sized plywood blocks onto all of the areas where additional reinforcement will be required, while continuing with the usual balsa or foam core for the rest of the deck's non-loading areas. Some Asian-built craft have even been found to have had multitudes of small plywood off-cuts laid-in to provide core strength. This will work – but only up to a point. It's important to be aware that as fittings age and sealants break down, moisture will work its way into the core via these vulnerable areas, creating, in some cases, very costly problems. On most craft moisture ingress through underwater skin fittings or deck fittings is nothing more than an operational inconvenience. But on a yacht that doesn't have a good core set in place to provide the required reinforcement to strengthen its hull and decks (to protect it from you lumping over and back across its deck) things can become a complete disaster very quickly. And, trust me, there are a lot of craft just like that out there.

## DIY DANGERS

Sadly, over the years, I've discovered teak decks where there were no obvious screws or dowel caps present but where, instead, small grub screws were put into the 'lands' (joints) by the boatbuilder to keep the strips laid down while the bedding mastic was curing – something that will only be revealed when the caulking starts to fail or wear out. Other unfortunate issues crop up when someone has decided to drill through a boat's topsides to fit a discharge for an item such as a

heater or extra bilge pump, or drilled through the deck when fitting a few extra blocks or clam cleats for lines leading back from the mast to the cockpit. Classic examples are where holes have been made to add extra spring cleats to a boat's midships or to pass solar panel wiring through the deck. These

actions will always compromise the core. After just a few years those innocent little holes through the deck sandwich will start to absorb a lot of moisture.

Any damp in any section of a core is never good. Moisture making its way into balsa will, in just a few seasons, turn it into little more than papier-mâché! And, all too often,

it will only be discovered when a pre-purchase survey is being carried out, through hammer tapping or when the hull or deck has been observed starting to flex.

A damp core will, in some cases, have been caused by someone fitting fastenings internally in a location where water has a tendency to gather. The most memorable example I've come across was in the bilges of a yacht where the heating conduit pipe work had been run within the heads shower arrangements! ➔

A good moisture meter will quickly reveal if moisture has begun to reach the core

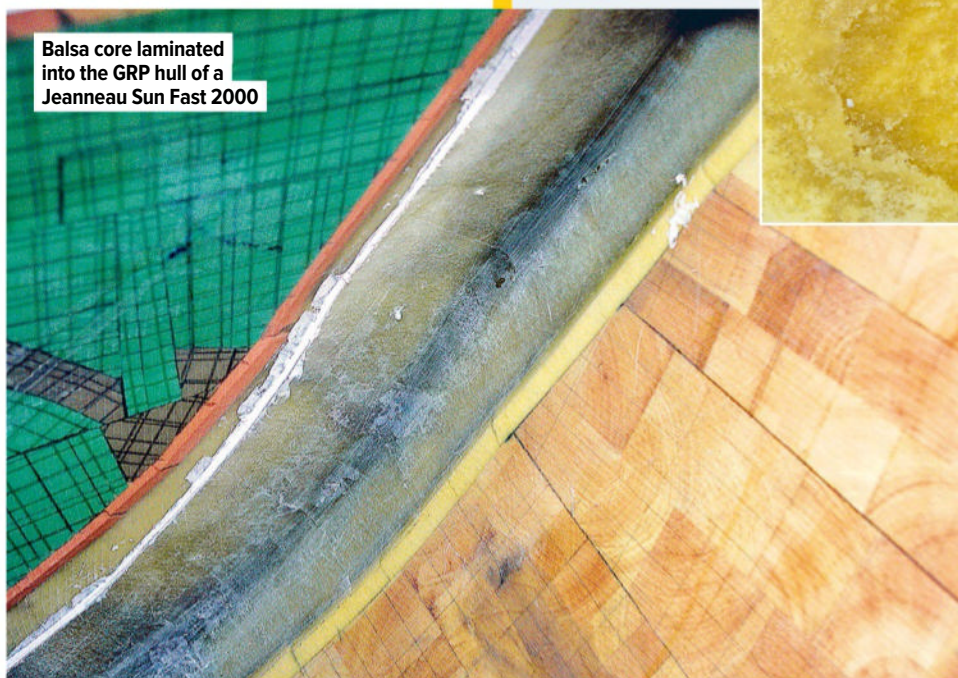


Ben Sutcliffe Davies

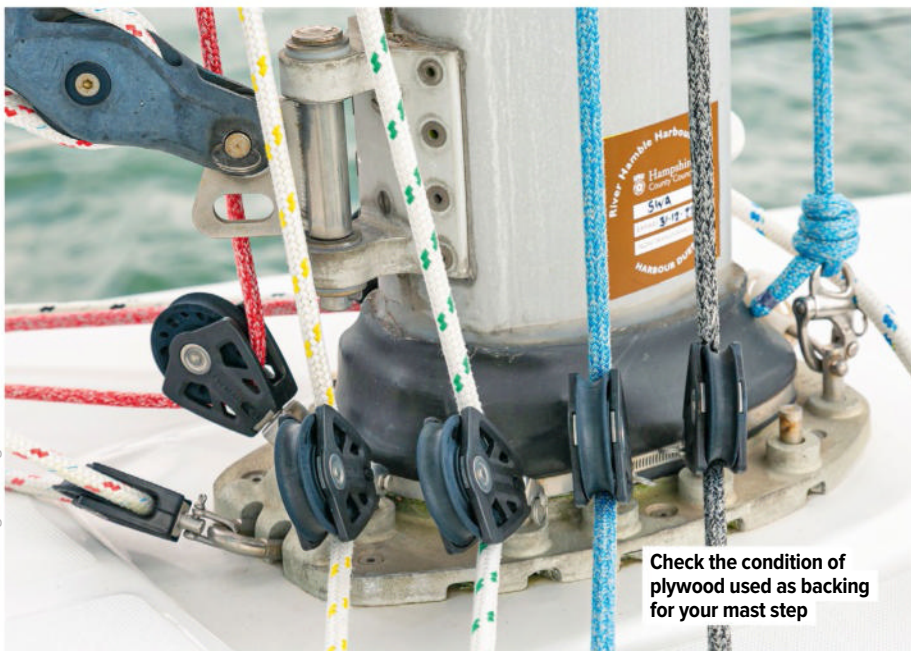
Sodden foam core that has deteriorated badly



Balsa core laminated into the GRP hull of a Jeanneau Sun Fast 2000







© David Harding / SailingScenes.com

## FOAM AND PLYWOOD

Before you start thinking that foam or plywood cores are any better than balsa cores, let me gently disappoint you. Generally, moisture in a foam core will not break down the foam's actual structure, but freezing water near the foam will slowly degrade the bond between the materials used and, in time, compromise the strength of the hull and deck strength. And I'm sure most of us will, over the years, have had issues with high moisture content building up in plywood used as backing for deck winches, cleats, genoa tracks or mast steps. Compared to balsa it's not such a rapid failure, but it can lead to quite significant reductions in structural strength. It's vital, therefore, that boat owners understand that regular checks to monitor and prevent damage to your boat's structural core is a lot better than the expensive headaches that can result.

One example I came across recently was a real surprise to me. The stanchion bases on the yacht had the commonly

found loops provided to secure life lines, etc. However, I found that one of the bases was loose and, with just a little wiggle, the entire fitting came off in my hand! Both of the stainless steel fastenings had completely dissolved due to crevice corrosion, where water had found its way in and around the fastenings due to a lack of sealant.



## SEALING SURFACES

So, what can we do to prevent core disasters happening, and how do we assess the integrity of our decks? Well, first of all, if you have a serious urge to fit anything through your deck that will have to take any kind of load, it would be prudent to remove an area of the hull or deck core, sealing the exposed edges properly to stop moisture ingress, and then ensuring that a well saturated epoxy coated plywood packer is fitted exactly where the extra strength will be required. Sometimes it will also be sensible to add a suitable stainless-steel plate.

The fastenings need a good sealant and it's important to seal the hole in the packer you create for the fastenings. Use appropriately sized backing washers as well. It may sound strange but on some boats I have surveyed with a balsa core I've frequently found equipment like boat hook clips, spinnaker snubbers, anchor chocks, and wiring plugs around the mast, just screwed in with no mastic applied. I remember back to how my father loved his old mastic sealant. It came in tubes, like toothpaste, with a massive key to help roll the tube up! It never really went off, but it was the best long-term means of sealing off surfaces while still allowing a bit of movement.



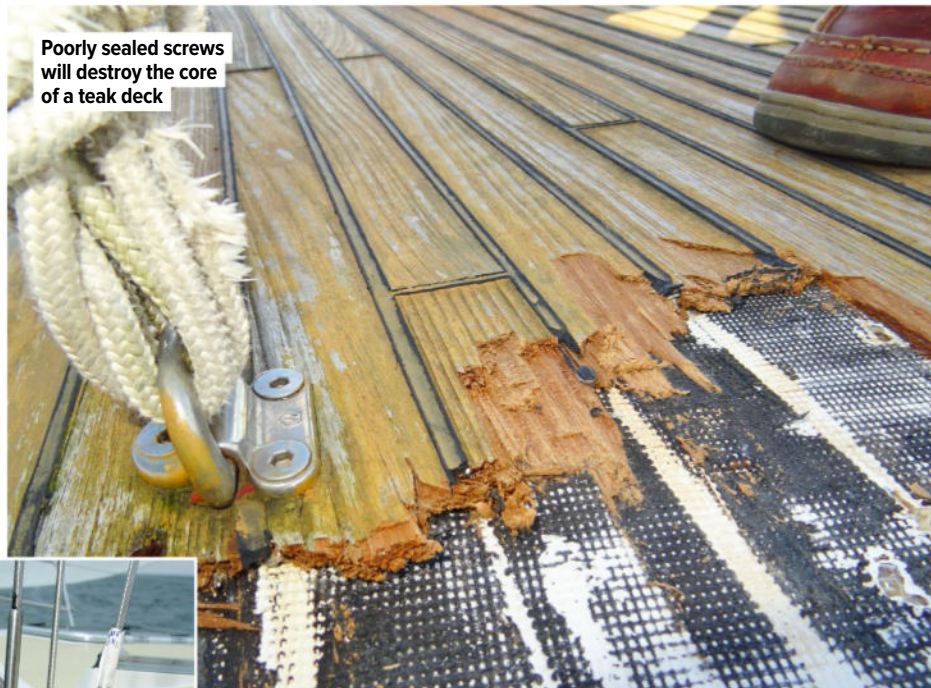
# VITAL CHECKS TO PREVENT CORE DAMAGE

**HULLS:** Make sure there are no skin fittings drilled through a core. A light hammer and moisture meter will quickly reveal what could end up being significant and costly core issues. Sadly, I've seen well-built craft where fittings have been drilled through both foam and balsa cores, proving very costly for the owners to properly repair.

**DECKS:** Carefully check all deck fittings, including pulpit and pushpit feet, for any movement, and look for any fittings with poorly sealed screws or bolts because overloading will let moisture into the deck substructure. And check around baby stay and life line harness points on deck. Then there's the mast step: How is it supported? What is it sitting on? And how well are the deck sockets sealed around the mast shoe? Also, is there any downward compression developing around the mast step? Any pooling of water will be an important clue!

**TEAK DECKS:** If you have teak decks fitted, how are they secured? I recently surveyed a 15-year-old production craft that had terrible issues with small set screws that had allowed moisture to leak into the balsa core. The whole deck was a write-off at a cost of around £30,000. I've also seen several craft with ply blocks that have been incredibly costly to deal with. Initial assessments can be made very simply by just walking around the deck to see if it is flexing more than you think is normal.

**CHAIN PLATE FITTINGS:** There are many ways that shrouds are connected and anchored these days. Some have basic 'D' bolts fitted though the outer deck margins with bolts held internally by the hull and deck joint. Others can be hidden away behind side deck



Poorly sealed screws will destroy the core of a teak deck



The true condition of chainplate fittings can often be checked from inside the boat

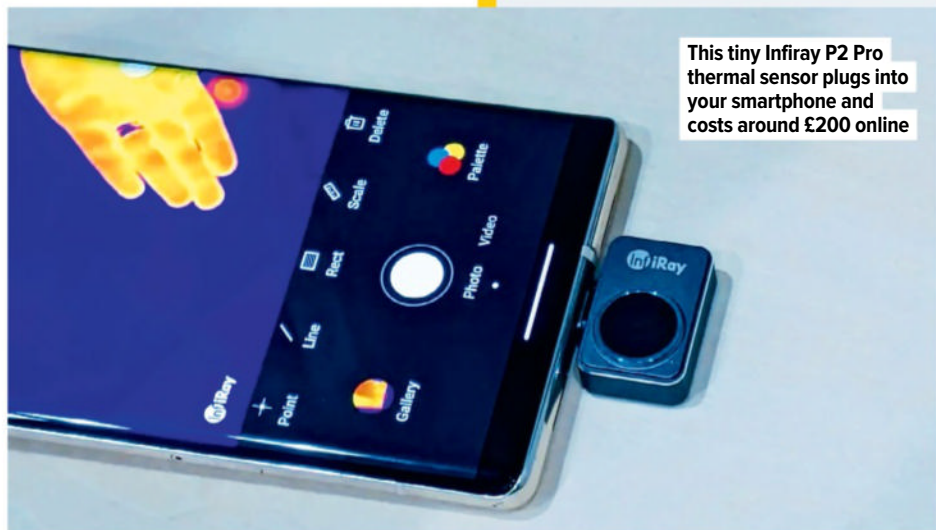
underside soft linings which, if you are lucky, can be pulled back carefully to expose the fastenings. Others, where plywood is secured as part of the structure, give you little hope. That's where a good moisture meter help..

I often use a moisture meter on the underside

of cabin linings and around plywood fit-outs where deck fastenings are located. It's quite sad when, for instance, you find out that every screw used for the spray hood hooks and blocks is leaking!

## ESSENTIAL EQUIPMENT

A wonderful piece of kit I use regularly is a thermal imaging camera, which will show up any damp very quickly. I know they can be expensive but they have come down in price dramatically in recent years. I'd say they are worth every penny. If you are a serious cruising sailor a thermal imaging camera will also be great for checking that your engine is running at the right temperatures. Also, if you take a photo with your phone's camera with the flash on, you will very often be able to see any damp or discoloration to the wood finish under the lacquer!



This tiny Infiray P2 Pro thermal sensor plugs into your smartphone and costs around £200 online



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# TECHNICAL UPCYCLING AN OLD BOAT

*When it came to choosing his next yacht Paul Dale decided to breathe life back into a sad and neglected 1980s cruiser-racer*



**W**hen it came to searching for a smaller yacht, I was quite specific. I wanted a boat I could keep on my Chichester Harbour mooring while my other big boat, a Dufour 41, remained in the Caribbean for long winter cruises. The new boat, therefore, had to be cheap, yet enjoyable to sail, capable of Solent weekends and cross-Channels, and comfortable. I had other specific requirements: it had to be good looking with a racing pedigree, have a tiller for single-handed sailing, have double cabins fore and aft with the heads by the companionway, and a forward-facing chart table.

I soon realised, however, that these criteria, especially on a budget of around £25,000, could only be matched by the French cruiser-racers of the



**PAUL DALE** has sailed out of Chichester Harbour for 40 years. In the 1990s he raced a Sigma 362 before completing the 2003 ARC in a Dufour 41.

late 1980s and early 1990s. My extensive internet search narrowed it down to two boats: the Beneteau First 30 and Jeanneau Sun-Light 30. I looked at examples of both, and thought the Jeanneau had a much better teak-laid cockpit. Original *Yachting Monthly* reviews of both boats were very good. I travelled to see three examples of the Sun-Light 30 on offer across the country, in Barrow-in-Furness, Brighton and Wales. The one in Wales was cheap, grubby, and uncared for. It also had an incredibly stupid name: *Thrilla*, and the engine took forever to fire up. The broker eventually gave up while trying to get it started and walked away, but I persevered and it eventually coughed, very smokily, into life. I made a low offer, which was accepted. The survey advised that the rigging was at least 20 years old, and that I should





An older design, but with plenty of space and light

make no attempt to sail it! So, I put it on a lorry and had it driven from North Wales to Chichester Harbour at a cost of £800 – far better than being dismantled off Land's End!

I bought the boat very cheaply, just £17,000, because I knew I would have to spend a great deal more money on it. I immediately changed its name to *Alexia* and replaced the rigging. I decided to make do with the smoky engine, the sad sails and the tired interior, in order to work out what I could really do with her and how I could transform her. I started working on her the following winter.

### COMPLETE OVERHAUL

The hull was inspected thoroughly and found to be solid enough. The rudder was removed and found to have osmosis, so I had it fully repaired and fitted with new bearings. The topsides were also repaired where necessary and buffed up, with the outdated red and black pinstripes replaced with contemporary grey and navy ones. New graphics for the name, SSR, and home port were also applied. The only original items on the boat now are the hull, the spars, 80 per cent of the interior and exterior teak, and the fridge compressor, which just keeps on going! If anything didn't work or move properly – notably the water pump, sea toilet and seacocks – I had it replaced. I don't include what I call 'service items', equipment ranging from the batteries to the standing rigging, which need to be replaced on any boat according to a sensible schedule. I always put a reliable engine at the very top of



A dedicated chart table was a prerequisite

my list of priorities. The original 16hp Yanmar 2GM20 was rattly, smoky and coarse, so I replaced it with a 20hp Yanmar 3YM20, which was inserted into a revamped engine bay lined with modern acoustic shielding. Being fresh-water cooled it also runs a calorifier, so that meant plenty of hot water and a shower in the heads!

I made the most boring film in the world, entitled 'Cold Start', which featured me simply starting the old engine from cold and running it. I posted it on YouTube, then re-posted the link on eBay. The engine sold immediately for £1,500 in cash!

So, with the purchase price of £17,000 plus the renovation costs of £36,000, it's really a £53,000 boat, plus or minus.

We eventually sold our Dufour 41 in the Caribbean, and our thoughts turned to how we really wanted to sail from our mooring in Chichester Harbour. By now we had cruised *Alexia* over to Brittany and Normandy, so my wife suggested we think about buying a larger 32-footer. However, I sail single-handed quite a lot, and find that anything from around 32ft can become a bit of a handful when motoring into marinas on your own. So I looked at some new, and nearly new, boats in that

### RENOVATION JOBS ON DECK

- New Lewmar electric windlass
- New Furlex
- New gooseneck
- Running rigging, with Dyneema
- LED running, steaming, and anchor lights
- Four new Lewmar ST winches and rope clutches
- All new windows and hatches
- New teak coachroof handrails
- New sprayhood
- Teak cockpit grating and laid bridge deck
- New tablet chartplotter, AIS transceiver and VHF
- Raymarine Evo-100 autopilot
- Stackpack, suit of North laminate sails and bright pink Crusader spinnaker

### RENOVATION JOBS BELOW DECKS

- All-new foam upholstery and covers (Denim Heritage Subrella)
- Composite teak & holly floor, (no more worries about dropping a hammer)
- Teak cupboard fronts (to replace dated louvres)
- All-new LED lighting
- Headlinings repaired and replaced
- Double sink (with additional electric saltwater tap)
- Neptune Cooker (to replace ancient two-burner hob)
- Engine, drive train, feathering three-blade prop



A brand new 20hp Yanmar 3YM20 replaced the smoky old 16hp Yanmar 2GM20



size range for around £80,000 to £120,000, with very basic kit.

### DECISION TIME

As I researched and looked at the newer boats I soon realised that, in my opinion, modern boats are just plain ugly. The trend towards oblong-esque side profiles with huge topside windows really doesn't appeal. And I like sugar scoop sterns, as opposed to drop-down swim platforms, as a safety and recovery resource. Contemporary wood laminates also don't age well, while the interiors in less expensive boats can be very 'plasticky'. Having chartered a few new boats, I've found that the poor-quality fittings, such as table hinges, have a very short life. *Yachting Monthly* recently published tests of two contemporary open-plan 30-31 footers, and I'm still trying to get my head around the idea of buyers who don't mind undressing at night while watching their weekend guests doing exactly the same thing in a boat with no substantial bulkheads and absolutely no privacy? 'Dreadnought' bows also mean you have to have a stupidly long anchor bow roller fitting. So, I looked again at *Alexia*, our little Jeanneau Sun-Light 30, and thought – why change? She looks great, she's comfortable and dependable, and she sails beautifully. The clever design provides a sense of spaciousness and, as the name implies, she has a lot of interior light. I also thought about that year's Round The Island Race, where I was helming *Alexia* and closely overtaking a 42-footer, whose skipper

Relaxing in the renovated cockpit after competing in the Round The Island Race



*Alexia*, with its sugar scoop stern, has become the ideal boat for Paul's future cruising ambitions

shouted over to me, 'I used to have one of those' And then, as we started to ease ahead, added, 'I don't know why I sold it!'

### NEW OPPORTUNITIES

My experience of recycling and upgrading an attractive older boat shows that it really can work – and make solid financial sense, especially if you look at the prices of new, or nearly new, production cruisers, and then work out what the actual price really is once they are fully kitted out.

*Alexia* now has top of the range sails, an electric windlass, new winches, instrumentation, autopilot, three-blade feathering prop, and much more. And all within a £50,000 budget. I'm not saying it's for everyone, but I do feel that recycling a boat makes a great deal of sense and ticks the environmental box,

especially for younger owners who are thinking of entering the yachting world with no need for the validation of having something that's 'new and shiny', and preferring, instead, to take a more sympathetic and environmentally friendly approach.

I also feel that there is an opportunity for a UK boatbuilder to start recycling late 1980s and 1990s cruiser-racers, just as I did. They could do it a lot cheaper than I managed to do it, and make a decent margin as well.

Paul feels boatbuilders should start recycling 1980s and 1990s cruiser-racers like *Alexia*



### RENOVATION COSTS: £35,900

ENGINE £6,000 (NET)

SAILS (INCLUDING SPINNAKER) £5,000

UPHOLSTERY £2,000

STACKPACK £600

WINCHES, HATCHES, WINDOWS £6,000

FURLEX £1,500

WINDLASS £800

INSTRUMENTS/ELECTRONICS £2,000

PROP £1,500

JOINER WORK £3,000

SINK, COOKER £1,500

ELECTRICAL £1,000

BITS AND BOBS £5,000

TOTAL £36,000

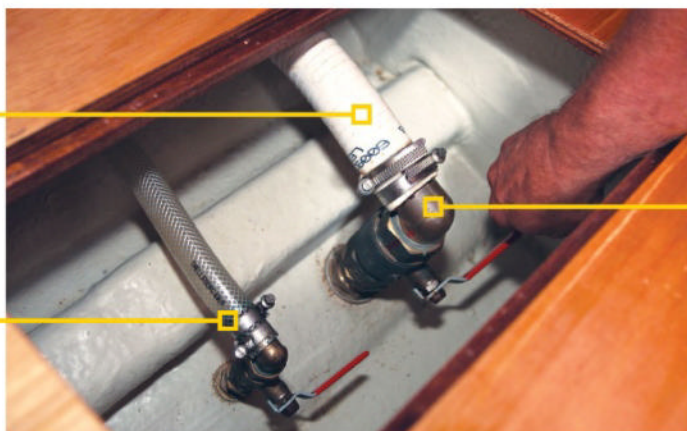


# HOW IT WORKS

## SERVICING SEACOCKS

Open and close your seacocks regularly to make sure they are not seized

Clean away fouling and old grease, but don't use anything that could gouge the metal



**PROFESSIONAL TIP**  
 On relaunch, check all of your seacocks closely for any leaks

**TOOLS NEEDED**  
 Just a normal toolkit

**DIFFICULTY RATING:**  
 3 / 5

Servicing seacocks should be a routine part of winter maintenance

Seacocks close holes below the waterline. Should one fail, the boat is likely to sink. Additionally, if there's a leak in the pipework and the seacock is seized, you may not be able to stop the leak. It's important, therefore, to operate your seacocks regularly to ensure they are not seized. Seacocks for use in salt water should be made from a marine material. They are sometimes made of brass, an alloy of copper and zinc, which will gradually de-zincify in the presence of seawater. Make sure yours are made of DZR bronze, which resists dezincification. Seacocks are also available in reinforced plastic. Always service your seacocks when the boat is out of the water.

### BALL VALVES

These usually have a bronze body with a chromium-plated bronze ball set in a Teflon seal. More common are in-line

ball valves screwed directly onto the tail of the skin fitting. These are not designed to be taken apart and are relatively cheap. When the boat is out of the water a stiff ball valve may be greased from outside the hull, and the inner pipe removed and the ball greased from this side as well. Do not try to clean the ball with a sharp object as the surface can be damaged. Regular operation is the best form of maintenance.

### BLAKES SEACOCKS

Traditional Blakes seacocks are purpose-designed for marine use. The latest design has a grease nipple. To service, remove the two flange bolts and withdraw the tapered plug from the



*Simple Boat Maintenance* author Pat Manley is an RYA Yachtmaster Instructor. Other titles include *Essential Boat Electrics*, *Diesels Afloat* and *Practical Navigation*

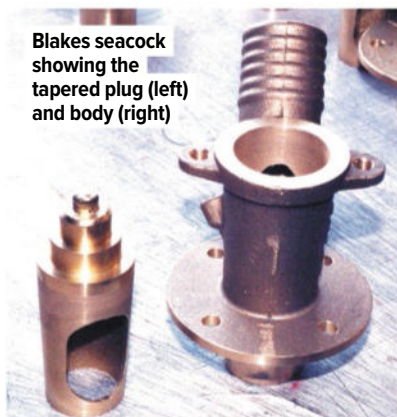
body (see photo below). Look for any wear and pitting. Apply cutting paste to the tapered plug. Insert the plug into the body. Rotate the handle backwards and forwards while putting light downwards pressure on the plug. Withdraw the plug and check for even grinding marks all round, along the contact area, including above and below the side intake hole. Apply seacock grease to the tapered plug and reassemble.

### GATE VALVES

Gate valves have no place on a boat, for several reasons: You can't tell visually if they are open or closed; debris can prevent them from closing fully; some are not suitable for use in sea water. If you have a gate valve, never leave it screwed fully open as it will be tight to operate. Close it back a quarter-turn to keep it free.

This makes it quick to check if it's open or closed because, although the handle will turn either way, it will come up tight in the open direction.

The latest edition of *Simple Boat Maintenance* is available at [www.fernurstbooks.com](http://www.fernurstbooks.com). It explains the most common jobs to maintain your yacht, with no special tools or experience.



Blakes seacock showing the tapered plug (left) and body (right)



Be extra careful if your boat has a gate valve seacock



# ME & MY BOAT

If you want to tell us why you love your boat, get in touch by email [yachtingmonthly@futurenet.com](mailto:yachtingmonthly@futurenet.com) or by post Future PLC, 121-141 Westbourne Terrace, Paddington, London, W2 6JR

NIC COMPTON grew up on boats in the Med until the age of 15. He was editor of *Classic Boat* magazine from 1996-2000. His Freedom 33 is based in Greece.



Richard found his boat in Sweden and brought her home by trailer



All Photos Nic Compton



**RICHARD GREGSON** grew up in Salcombe and sailed wooden boats as a child. He worked as a boatbuilder before becoming a pro sailor, skippering the ketch *Bessie Ellen*. He took over his father's yacht brokerage, Wooden Ships, in 2012.

## NORDIC FOLKBOAT

Despite low headroom, spartan accommodation and a potentially wet ride, the Folkboat remains one of the most iconic yachts of the last 100 years. Nic Compton finds out why





boats for sale in Sweden with very little local demand. So Richard bought the boats cheap and sold two of them on at a profit. The third he kept for himself.

So, why did Britain's leading expert on wooden boats choose a Folkboat?

'For its versatility,' says Richard. 'The beauty of this boat is that I can go out round the river of an evening and sail it like a dinghy on my own, or I can race it competitively and have some fun, or I can go with the family and potter up the river and go camping. It's also trailable. She came with a big road trailer and I have friend with a farm, so she goes inside in winter and it costs me peanuts. She's just so versatile – and dead pretty to look at.'

### THE BACKGROUND

The Folkboat design is that rarest of things: a successful design-by-committee. Back in 1941, while the rest of Europe was at war, neutral Sweden was still happily messing around on boats. The Royal Swedish Sailing Association (RSSA) launched a design competition for an affordable, easy-to-sail cruising/racing boat. They received an astonishing 58 entries and, while no single design clinched the prize, they commended six designs. Up-and-coming yacht designer Tord Sundén was asked to combine the best features of the six winning designs, and came up with a boat that somehow managed to be fast yet seaworthy, elegant yet functional, traditional yet timeless.

The first Folkboat was built at the Arendal yard in Gothenberg and launched in April 1942. Although it took a little while for the design to take off, the boat's remarkable seaworthiness combined with a good turn of

With a few minor tweaks, he turned her from a racing machine into a family-friendly cruiser



There was only ever one sort of boat that Richard Gregson was going to buy. As the owner of the Wooden Ships brokerage firm in Dartmouth, he was duty-bound to buy a wooden boat. For, as he puts it: 'I can't preach to people to buy a wooden boat if I don't have one myself.'

That said, wooden boats come in all shapes and sizes, and Richard was perfectly placed to choose from any number of boats that pass through his business. Instead, he did a remarkable thing. He went to Sweden and bought not one but three Folkboats, and had them shipped back to the UK. This was pre-Brexit, and there were lots of wooden



speed soon won sailors over – not just in Sweden but, eventually, the world over. But, while there's no question that Sundén drew the lines for the Folkboat, from the outset the RSSA claimed ownership of the design. Despite repeated attempts to prove his ownership, Sundén could only sit back and watch as thousands of boats were built to his design, without him getting a penny in royalties.

So what makes the Folkboat special? There's that sweeping sheer, dipping down to as little as 1ft 10in (0.56m) amidships, and the sharp overhanging bow which deflects the waves so effectively. She has a firm tuck in the bilge, which cuts into the boat's accommodation but gives her an extra turn of speed and improved windward performance. The sternpost is dramatically raked, with a huge, deep rudder with tiller steering, which makes her exceptionally comfortable to steer. The tall, fractional Bermudan rig looks modest, but is ample for such an easily driven hull.

All in all, it's a well-judged design with great all-round performance. And the boat soon acquired a devoted following. By the late 1960s, wood was falling out of favour, and in 1969 the Marieholm Bruk yard in Sweden commissioned Sundén to design a fibreglass version, which became known as



The cockpit is deep and secure but isn't self-draining

the International Folkboat, or the Marieholm IF. And it was this version that took off in countries such as the USA, where an active fleet of International Folkboats sprang up on San Francisco Bay, numbering 110 by the mid-1990s. That fleet is still going strong.

There have been many exceptional voyages undertaken on Folkboats. Two Nordic Folkboats competed in the first OSTAR in 1960: Blondie Hasler on *Jester*, which was fully decked over and fitted with a junk rig, and Val Howells on his conventional Folkboat *Eira*. Hasler finished second, eight

days behind Francis Chichester in *Gipsy Moth III*, and Folkboats have been a regular feature of transatlantic races ever since – not least the Jester Challenge series for smaller boats, which have been run since 2006.

Perhaps the longest voyage undertaken on a Folkboat was Australian sailor Ann Gash's solo circumnavigation of the world. Gash was 55 years old and a grandmother when she set off on *Ilmo* in 1975, returning two years later in 1977.

### RICHARD'S BOAT

It goes without saying that Richard's Folkboat isn't just any Folkboat but one with special pedigree. Built in Sweden in 1954, *Wilma* was raced in the highly-competitive Swedish fleet, finishing as the highest-placed wooden boat in the World Championship in Sweden in 2018.

Stepping on board, the first thing I noticed was the large, deep cockpit. It's slightly unnerving, as I can't help thinking about the potential for being swamped by a wave and the boat filling up with water, especially with such a low freeboard. But it turns out that most Folkboats don't have self-draining cockpits and never have: the waterline is so high that the cockpit floor would also have to be uncomfortably high to be self-draining. And yet the boats race very competitively without any trouble. Certainly, it gives the cockpit a wonderfully spacious feel for such a small boat.

And, because most Nordic Folkboats are fitted with outboards rather than inboard diesels, there's very little difference between the level of the cockpit floor and the cabin sole. That makes getting in and out of the cabin very easy – something Richard, who has two children aged two and four, has found very useful. 'If they're down below, they want to be in the cockpit; if they're in the cockpit, they want to be down below. If they can't do that themselves, you're



Control lines are led aft to simple cam cleats





Lazy jacks help when sailing solo, while propulsion is from a simple outboard engine



Coaming-top cockpit winches are contemporary to the boat, though added by Richard



The boom's weight is taken off the flexible mast by a crutch when in harbour



Cockpit lockers either side provide reasonable stowage



On her mooring, a cover protects the brightwork

The hull is remarkably sea-kindly for such a small boat

The fractionally rigged wooden mast is supported by a jumper strut.





constantly carrying them up and down, but like this they can just potter around to their hearts' content. That works really well.'

Below decks, *Wilma* is simplicity itself. Whereas most Folkboats have a small saloon with a forward bulkhead leading to an even smaller foc's'le, Richard deliberately chose a boat with an open plan layout. There's a wet locker on the port side, right next to the companionway, so wet gear can be stowed before you go in. Then there's a small chart table next to the locker, which opens up to reveal the galley, that is to say, an Origo 3000 spirit stove, with the open lid doubling up as a worktop. The rest is simply settee/bunks, with space enough for two adults lying head to toe on the starboard side, and an adult and a child on the port side (or, in Richard's case, an adult and a child on each side). And the heads? You guessed it: it's a bucket and chuck it. 'No blockages!' says Richard.

#### A FAMILY-FRIENDLY APPROACH

Like most Nordic Folkboats built in Scandinavia, *Wilma* was built of pine planking on steamed oak frames, all copper fastened, and an oak centreline. She has an iron ballast keel. Although Richard knew the boat needed some work doing when he bought her, he ended up doing more than he expected – which just goes to show that even a wooden boat expert can sometimes be over-optimistic. In the end, he removed the canvas covering from the deck, refastened the tongue-and-groove planking and resurfaced the whole lot with fibreglass and epoxy, adding a varnished king plank fore and aft for visual effect. In the process, he removed the leaky foredeck hatch and decked it over completely, thereby getting rid of a potential source of leaks. Although this reduced the light below decks and accessibility to the foc's'le, the open-plan interior means this isn't really noticeable.



The outboard bracket allows the engine to slide up over the transom on passage

A common problem with Nordic Folkboats is cracked ribs, which might need to be replaced or doubled up. *Wilma's* broken ribs had already been repaired by the previous owner, but some of her planking was rotten in way of the chainplates, where someone had fitted steel bolts, so that had to be cut out and repaired. In fact, by the time Richard had finished fixing the planking with graving pieces, there was such a mix of different coloured wood that he decided to paint the hull, rather than varnish it as before. The side benefit of this is that it will require less maintenance in the long term.

Sailing with a young family means that Richard often has to sail the boat on his own, rather than the three crew usually employed to race a Folkboat. To this end, he's fitted a pair of winches and jammer cleats on the cockpit coamings, so the jib sheets can be managed easily from the helm rather than reaching forward to the coachroof where the original winches are still located.

Another family-friendly alteration Richard has made is adding a downhaul on the hanked-on jib. Both the halyard and

downhaul lead back to the cockpit, which means the sail can be quickly doused without going forward. With the downhaul and the sheet both pulled in tight, the sail is pinned to the foredeck and can be left alone until it's convenient to go on deck. As Richard points out, it's cheaper than fitting roller furling. In practice, many Nordic Folkboats do have roller furling jibs, although the class rules state that: 'Furling of the jib is prohibited while racing.'

Richard likewise tamed the mainsail. Although the boat came with a smart, crisp racing mainsail courtesy of North Sails, he bought a 'soft' second-hand main which he uses for normal sailing and fitted lazyjacks, so the sail can be dumped when needed without smothering the crew. He also had a single, huge reef put in the mainsail, which reduces the sail area by about 45%. This would be seen as sacrilege by serious racing folk, as most Folkboats don't have reefs. Instead, the mainsail sheet is fitted on a track and, when the wind pipes up, the mainsheet is simply moved to leeward to spill the wind and everyone just carries on as usual,



A hanging locker and galley/chart table unit are the only interior joinery



Accommodation is simple, with a warm, homely feeling, despite limited headroom





A pronounced sheer, high bow and clinker strakes help the boat handle waves

non-draining cockpit notwithstanding. But Richard has other priorities. 'It's cautious sailing with the family,' he says.

### LOW-TECH

As you might expect, *Wilma* has minimal electronic gadgetry. The fanciest bit of kit on board is the tiller autopilot, which allows Richard to singlehand the boat, effectively

freeing him up to do what's needed on deck – or to make a cup of tea. He also has a handheld VHF with integral DSC and GPS for safety, which sits in a custom-made wooden bracket in the cockpit. His only chartplotter is the Navionics app on his phone. He does have an electronic log, but no depth sounder, preferring to use a lead line instead.

Like most Nordic Folkboats, *Wilma* is fitted with an outboard instead of an inboard. This simplifies the mechanical chores – 'Every winter I just take it off, flush it out with fresh water to winterise it, shove it in my garage, and forget about it' – but it does mean Richard has to sit at the back of the boat when manoeuvring into harbour in order to change gear. As with most Nordic Folkboats,

## EXPERT OPINION

### WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY...

**BEN SUTCLIFFE-DAVIES**, Marine Surveyor and full member of the Yacht Brokers Designers & Surveyors Association (YDSA)  
[www.bensutcliffe-marine.co.uk](http://www.bensutcliffe-marine.co.uk)



Whether it's a classic wooden Folkboat or the GRP version, this simple yet classic design is timeless. I once owned a GRP version and loved her to bits before moving up to a Trapper 28.

Knowing the materials and method of fastenings of any given boat is essential for understanding what could potentially be going on with her. For instance many mahogany-on-oak frames with copper rivets can, in time, suffer with the heads working loose, which is inevitable without proper maintenance.

The design is exceptionally good at sea but can be wet to windward, so ensuring you have suitable bilge-pumping is wise. When I was apprenticing at the Whisstock's yard we looked after a number of Folkboats and every year they would come out, mast off, a hard back would go on over which a good canvas cover was fitted with good through-ventilation. Looking for rot is one thing you should spend time on, especially around hull to deck joint, through-deck fastenings and to the underside of the deck-to-hull area (the beam shelf). The deck hatch was always a water trap issue too.

Lastly, keels vary dependent on who built them and where, but be wary about iron bolts through an oak keel to the ballast keel section – tannic acid from the oak will rot iron if not properly protected. Equally, be careful of using stainless because of crevice corrosion; the right material was bronze!





Though many Nordic Folkboats are now GRP, there are keen racing fleets around the country



the outboard is fitted with an ingenious sliding track, which lifts the engine out of harm's way. Richard has improved this by fitting a block and tackle to haul the outboard up, rather than having to reach over and pull it up at a tricky angle.

## SAILING

Like the original design, *Wilma* has a keel-stepped mast, which means her rigging is extremely simple too: a single shroud each side, a fixed forestay and an adjustable backstay. Jumper struts support the top of the mast in place of a masthead forestay. Yet even this minimal rig provides enough scope to making sailing interesting – as generations of sailors have learned. And it doesn't have to be boring. Richard recently clocked up 6.5 knots sailing across Start Bay – slightly faster than the boat's theoretical hull speed of 5.9 knots.

*Wilma's* standard rig is mainsail, jib and spinnaker, but Richard has simplified things further by replacing the spinnaker with an asymmetric made by Cormorant Sails in Dartmouth. With no troublesome spinnaker pole to worry about, the new sail has proven to be a valuable asset. 'It's really easy: there's just one sheet, one halyard, and away you go,'

he says. 'Off the wind, it gives you so much drive; everything forward of the mast is pulling you along, and she tracks beautifully. When you want to get rid of it, you just drop it and bag it.'

## VERDICT

There are any number of 25-footers that pack in far more accommodation than a Folkboat, but if you are after a simple, seaworthy boat with a performance far in excess of its size, then you can't really go wrong with Sweden's 'people's boat'. Cruising is definitely at the camping end of the spectrum, though not all Folkboats are as spartan as Richard's. Some even have heads and inboard engines.

The boat's reputation means you shouldn't have any trouble selling one on, with well-tended versions selling for up to £25,000. Not everyone wants the hassle of a wooden boat, in which case a GRP Folkboat might be a better option. But Richard would only have it one way.

'There are lots of plastic Folkboats out there, and they're fantastic boats, but for me, they don't have quite same feel. Sat in the cabin here, looking at the varnished interior and the hull planking, it's just got a nice feel, which you don't get with GRP boats.'

# ALTERNATIVES TO CONSIDER

## CONTESSA 26

Jeremy Rogers had already established a name for himself building wooden Folkboats – not in clinker, as the original boats were built, but in strip-plank – when he decided to join the GRP revolution and build the boats in fibreglass. First, though, he decided to tweak the design a little. According to legend, he cut the transom off one of his strip-planked Folkboats and used wedges to open up the hull until it looked about right.

He also raised the topsides slightly, added bulwarks, and levelled off the bottom of the keel so the boat would sit level when taking the ground, rather than dipping down at the bow as regular Folkboats do. He then redesigned the coachroof, taking inspiration for the 'keyhole' companionway devised by Van de Stadt, and gave the boat a masthead rig, instead of the fractional rig sported by most Folkboats.

When the Folkboat Association complained about describing the boat as a 'revised Folkboat', Rogers rebranded it, crediting the design to David Sadler (who had drawn the lines retrospectively) and naming the boat after Sadler's own Folkboat (built by Rogers), Contessa of Parkstone.

The first Contessa 26 was launched on 28 April 1966 and displayed at the London Boat Show the following January. The boat was an immediate hit, and 314 were built by Jeremy Rogers up until 1977, when MacLan Marine acquired the moulds and built many

The Folkboat's legacy is apparent in the lines of the Contessa 26



David Harding



MAKE AND MODEL  
NORDIC FOLKBOAT

<b>DESIGNER</b> Tord Sundén / Royal Swedish Sailing Association
<b>YEARS BUILT</b> 1942 onwards
<b>LOA</b> 25ft 2in / 7.68m
<b>LWL</b> 19ft 8in / 6.00m
<b>BEAM</b> 7ft 2in / 2.20m
<b>DRAFT</b> 3ft 11in / 1.19m
<b>DISPLACEMENT</b> 4,255 lbs / 1,930kg (minimum)
<b>BALLAST</b> 2,206 lbs / 1,000kg
<b>SAIL AREA</b> 258sq ft / 24m <sup>2</sup>
<b>PRICE</b> £6,500 - £22,000

MAKE AND MODEL CONTESSA 26

<b>DESIGNER</b> David Sadler
<b>YEARS BUILT</b> 1942-present
<b>LOA</b> 25ft 6in / 7.77m
<b>LWL</b> 20ft / 6.1m
<b>BEAM</b> 7ft 6in / 2.29m
<b>DRAFT</b> 4ft / 1.22m
<b>DISPLACEMENT</b> 5,400lbs / 2,449kg
<b>BALLAST</b> 2,300lbs / 1,043kg
<b>SAIL AREA</b> 304sq ft / 28m <sup>2</sup>
<b>PRICE</b> £5,000-£30,000

MAKE AND MODEL MARIEHOLM 26

<b>DESIGNER</b> Tord Sundén
<b>YEARS BUILT</b> 1977-87
<b>LOA</b> 26ft 3in / 8m
<b>LWL</b> 20ft 2in / 6.15m
<b>BEAM</b> 7ft 2in / 2.2m
<b>DRAFT</b> 4ft 1in / 1.24m
<b>DISPLACEMENT</b> 5,511 lbs / 2,500kg
<b>BALLAST</b> 2,645 lbs / 1,200kg
<b>SAIL AREA</b> 280sq ft / 26m <sup>2</sup>
<b>PRICE</b> £5,000-£25,000

MAKE AND MODEL STELLA

<b>DESIGNER</b> Kim Holman
<b>YEARS BUILT</b> 1959-1972
<b>LOA</b> 25ft 8in / 7.84m
<b>LWL</b> 20ft / 6.1m
<b>BEAM</b> 7ft 6in / 2.29m
<b>DRAFT</b> 3ft 9in / 1.17m
<b>DISPLACEMENT</b> 6,040 lbs / 2,740kg
<b>BALLAST</b> 2,780 lbs / 1,261kg
<b>SAIL AREA</b> 338sq ft / 31.4m <sup>2</sup>
<b>PRICE</b> £5,000-£8,500



David Harding



David Harding



more. The pattern was repeated on the other side of the Atlantic, where 400 boats were eventually built in Canada.

The boats continue to be popular and some older boats have even been taken back to the Rogers for expensive refits. The low sheer means, like the Folkboat, you don't get a self-draining cockpit or standing headroom below. But, apart from that, you get the performance of a Folkboat with a much more comfortable interior, including an inboard engine and heads as standard. Like the Folkboat, the boat is initially tender (ie tippy) but soon settles into a groove and can carry full sail in up to 20 knots of wind. And, unlike a Folkboat, no-one will be offended if you throw in a reef.



## MARIEHOLM 26

Soon after Jeremy Rogers launched his 'revised Folkboat' (the Contessa 26, see left), the Marieholm-Bruk shipyard in Sweden had the same idea. In 1967 they commissioned the Folkboat's original creator Tord Sundén to design a sister boat for GRP construction. The International Folkboat (aka the Marieholm IF) was 6in longer, had a higher freeboard to give more space below decks (though it was still limited to 4ft 8in) and, not being clinker-built, could have a smooth hull.

In 1977, that was upgraded by Sundén to produce the Marieholm 26, which featured a longer raised coachroof – giving a positively luxurious 5ft 8in headroom below – and slightly smaller cockpit. The boat had a conventional interior layout, with heads amidships, galley aft and four berths – although it's reputed that six people can sit around the saloon table.

Unlike the Contessa 26, the Marieholm 26 retained the original design's fractional rig – the idea being that this allowed a taller mast and mainsail, all the better to catch the zephyrs blowing over the islands in the Swedish archipelago. The boats were fitted with 7.5hp Volvo Penta engines as standard and featured another major improvement: a self-draining cockpit.

Although the Marieholm 26 shares its predecessors' reputation as an exceptional sea boat, it also shares another trait, which can be best summed in three words: wet, wet, wet. But then, to paraphrase a Swedish saying, there's no such thing as a wet boat, just the wrong clothing.

## STELLA

If you asked a British designer to draw a Folkboat, this is what they'd come up with. We know this because that's exactly what happened in 1959, when AE 'Dickie' Bird asked the Tucker Brown boatyard at Burnham on Crouch to build him a cruiser racer based on the lines of a Folkboat but adapted for the East Coast.

Kim Holman (then at the beginning of an illustrious career) was the man charged to fulfil this request. What he came up with was a bigger, beamier boat which had greater initial stability and more accommodation space. Legend has it he named the boat while he was having a pint with the owner and the builder, and spotted the word on a beer mat.

The first boat built to the design – *La Vie en Rose* – was launched later that year and beat all comers in her class at Burnham Week, sealing the boat's reputation. Tucker Brown was soon inundated with orders and had to farm them out to other yards. More than 100 boats were built before production in the UK ceased in 1972, and another dozen were built in Australia.

The Stella doesn't have quite the seagoing reputation of its Swedish muse, but it makes a more comfortable cruiser and yet is still capable of a reasonable turn of speed. Only wooden versions are available, so you'll need to choose your boat carefully (look out for cracked ribs and rot in the plywood decks). This boat is less fashionable than a Folkboat, but better value for money.



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## Contritely peeling the potatoes

Michael Shryane

Our January Antigua charter had many highs, but the winds were unkind. Unseasonable gales meant we caravanned, albeit in the beautiful surrounds of Jolly, Falmouth and English Harbours, and Carlisle Bay. Motoring into Falmouth we battled heavy winds for a mooring buoy, and the yacht club RIB got a single line on for us. Anxious to secure the boat, your foolish correspondent then took the dinghy to try for two lines, bridled across the prow. Concerned for new, expensive varifocals I set off without them. Paddling round, I grabbed onto the buoy, though the prevailing wind and tide was fierce. Convinced I'd tied us on, I undid what now seemed superfluous, only to cast us adrift. Mercifully, I caught the prow and clung on, upright in the dinghy. Quick-thinking crew put us under engine, away from the crowded mooring lines and I wept with relief as the eagle-eyed yacht club RIB raced to our rescue. Bless them, they took us into the dock itself and parked us amidst the superyachts. And I contritely peeled potatoes for an apologetic casserole for the crew's supper. And yes, I would charter in Antigua again!



## New Zealand, the hard way

Jeremy Evans

We were backpacking around New Zealand, my girlfriend and I, when we came to the Bay of Islands; probably the best anchorage in the world, I'd say. Here the scenery is pure green fields and woodland, shelving into an extensive, blue-water bay



blessed with gorgeous anchorages and secluded sandy beaches. Sometimes you even see other boats.

We decided to hire a small weekendender to spend the night on. I had only ever sailed on my dad's boats up until then. Each of those yachts had an inboard engine even though they were of modest size themselves. This little craft was basic, but perfect for us. It had something I had never come across before: an outboard sunk into a well in the stern.

Off we set. I found the sailing fun and the overnight on a mooring (although, apparently, you don't borrow moorings in NZ like we do in the UK) all went well. The only thing that I found really tricky was travelling under engine.

I leaned down into the sunken well. The outboard started first time, but as soon as we started motoring, I felt I couldn't see properly over the coachroof and that my arm was aching furiously. I complained to my girlfriend about it the whole while.

When we got back, the owner asked if we'd had a good time and I said, 'yes, but I found the outboard hard work.'

'Oh, dear, why's that?' he asked.

'Leaning down to steer the boat...' I said.

'Ah,' he said. 'You're the second person I've had this week say that. You know, the idea is that you leave it facing forward and continue to steer with the tiller.'

'Ah, ha!' I said.

Now it made sense.



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