



MYA STUFF

Please send any comments, questions or suggestions to the Editor at newsletter-editor@mya-uk.org

NEWS SNIPPETS

District Funding

Each of the **six MYA Districts** still has a fund to allow clubs within that District to develop and expand their operations - and every year these funds are underspent! Each proposal for such funding needs to convince the District Councillor (to whom application should be made) that the money will benefit both the club concerned and that District - as well as the MYA more generally.

So, if your club requires such support, please contact your District Councillor - and a rumour is about that these amounts are to be increased.

MYA Website - Member's Section

The Members section of the MYA website is a mine of useful information but, like many things, it is only as good as the data put into it and then maintained. So, **please ensure that the data for your own membership as shown is accurate** as, if it is not, contact with you is both more difficult to achieve and often more costly in time and money. **Please keep your details up to date.** If you have any problems doing so, please contact the Digital Communication Officer (Austin Guerrier).

DID YOU KNOW...?

Mid Feb 2020

There were then
103
clubs affiliated to
the MYA

Mid Nov 2021

There are now
106
clubs affiliated to
the MYA

1,684
members then

1,945
members now

NB: membership numbers will be at their highest in November just before the renewals are completed.



Nick's Knots IOM Trophy event sailed at Frensham SC in September - picture courtesy of Tony Schlaeppi

New Clubs

Please welcome three new Clubs to the MYA:

They are **Chew Valley Lake SC**, **Rudyard Lake SC**, and **South Lakes Model Club** - the first being in the SW District and the other two in the Northern District.

South Lakes actually joined up just after the last e-Quaint was done so welcome to them and all their members. They would all welcome visitors (with a little notice!) to their excellent sailing lakes.

Thank you.

MYA Chair - The View from the Bridge

This edition of the e-Quaint will reach you as we move into the festive season and on behalf of myself and the entire MYA Council, I would like to extend our warmest wishes to all our members and their families for a very happy and peaceful Christmas period free from stress, worry and Covid as we all look forward to 2022.

Congratulations to the winners of the annual trophies and to the winners of the first annual photo competition, details of all of these can be found elsewhere in this publication.

This is one of the busiest periods of the year for the MYA officers with final details of next years calendar, membership renewals and preparation of the 2022 yearbook (Thanks Jen) all being completed in the next few weeks and with our membership now higher than ever at 1945 the yearbook will be bigger and more colourful than ever.

Our AGM took place as scheduled albeit in a virtual format rather than the planned physical meeting in Birmingham. Although this is a less than ideal format it turned out to be the correct decision with gale force winds, heavy rain, and even snow, in the Midlands on the day. Thank you to those members who took the time to cast their vote and for electing the Council for 2021/22.

The recent resignation of the IOM class captain and some of his team has caused considerable debate recently and it is a great shame that after the 13 months of ideas, energy, and progress that they felt this was the correct thing to do. In any organisation such as ours that is managed totally by volunteers at every level it is often disagreements and personality conflicts that take centre stage rather than working together toward a common goal. No one wants to spend their time in confrontation and argument especially a volunteer and I sincerely hope that we can ALL apply ourselves to rebuilding bridges and continuing with the excellent work that has already been done.

As it is the festive season I will finish with a toast:

**There are good ships
And there are wood ships
And there are ships that sail the sea
But the best ships
Are friendships
And may that always be.**

Merry Christmas everyone.

*Phil Holliday
MYA Chair*



PRESENTATION OF THE MOST IMPROVED CLUB TROPHY - the only one not won by Fleetwood or a Fleetwood member!

This presentation was done on Tuesday 30 November by Phil Holliday at Frensham Pond SC as in the pic on the right.

The recipients were Paul Brooks (Frensham Pond RSG Captain and Nigel Barrow who won all the points with his IOM!).



MORE ABOUT "OFFICIAL MEASURERS" - WE NEED MORE?!

Question to MYA AGM 2021 - with a Scottish slant

We would be obliged if you would bring to the attention of the AGM our members grave concerns regarding the proposed changes to the measurers' appointment and training which we understand will involve the RYA. Our fear is, that if we go down this route we will end up with very few if any club measurers in the Scottish District - a reality which some of our member have seen in larger sailboats where the RYA is the authority.

IOM yachts which form the fast number of boats/sails requiring measurement in our district is already on the decline with the introduction of one design classes and we free that this proposal will only serve to speed up that decline.

Reply from the MYA Technical Officer

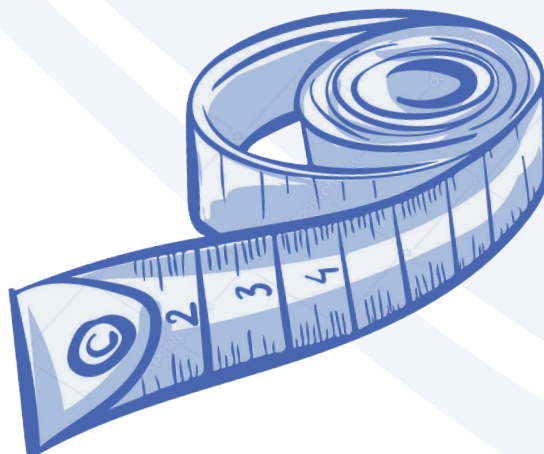
The MYA has been given authority for appointing and responsibility for training its Class Measurers, including IOM Class Measurers who shall, in order to meet the requirements of being Official Measurers, have been appointed by the RYA as Sail Measurers. The RYA appoints Sail Measurers after candidates have attended a one day course on sail measurement and have demonstrated their aptitude to a suitable level. The sail measurer course is normally run by the RYA at various venues around the country and one was to be held at Datchet on 18th March 2020 with 15 MYA members in attendance. Unfortunately it was cancelled due to Covid restrictions and the course has not re-started since.

In principle, once the sail measurement course can be run again, it will be possible for members in the Scottish, or any other, district to take part in a locally run course. Course fees and travelling expenses of candidates may be claimed from the MYA.

An on-line system for training Class Measurers is under development at present. In the interim, in response to a request from the MYA District Councillors, an interim system for appointing IOM Class Measurers is being developed. Introduction of this has been delayed by the lack of a suitable candidate who could establish a yardstick score in a series of questions. However, alternative arrangements are now in place and I expect the system to be operational in the near future.

The interim system for appointing Class Measurers, in common with the proposed long term system, is designed to be independent of the need for one person to train another. As such the systems will be able to work anywhere, anytime, and can be used at the candidate's preferred pace. No travelling will be required until the candidate demonstrates his measurement skills to an existing IOM class measurer (one of more in each district, except for Scotland, have offered this assistance).

Costs are minimised. Independence from 'trainers' means the system will not be dependent on the expertise (i.e. knowledge of the subject and ability to transmit that knowledge) of existing measurers or, indeed, the MYA or COG Technical Officers. Longevity will be integral to the system.





LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

This is a permanent opportunity for any member to express an opinion, ask a question, air a grievance or even say nice things! As ever, humour and relevance will be the main deciding factor on whether to publish a letter. This time, 3 letters:

Letter 1: To Volunteer or not?

Since I retired in 2009, I have 'worked' as a volunteer in several diverse roles, from Hospice Fundraising, Event management (Catering team Americas cup round in Portsmouth 2016) to Exhibitions. Some of these experiences I would repeat in a heartbeat, others I would run a mile from, - preferring to stick pins in my eye rather than be involved again.

Over the past 12 months I have been thinking about the people I worked with in the past, what motivated them, how they responded to the way they were managed, and why.....

Much has been said recently of how difficult it is to recruit volunteers, with various 'reasons' (aka excuses) as to why. "Competing interests" is an oft-referred to one.

So it's easy when running an organisation that relies on volunteers, to use this as a reason for maintaining the status quo, however uncomfortable that may be - but I'm afraid I don't buy that. My view is that we can do anything if we try hard enough to inspire folk into wanting to help. This has been amply illustrated over the past two years where I have been inspired by the goodwill of people going the extra mile for others. QED

A subject close to home, and here I apologise to the academics amongst us who value the written word, but the awful truth is that learning is better accomplished visually than by reading acres of text. According to <https://www.learnevents.com/blog/2015/09/07/imagery-vs-text-which-does-the-brain-prefer/> it could be something to do with the fact that 90% of information transmitted to the brain is visual, and visuals are processed in the brain at 60,000 times the speed of text. In other words, we look at pictures and videos regularly and we consume them more quickly than we do text. If an image is worth a thousand words to deliver a powerful message, then a video is worth a million images!

What has all this to do with volunteers I hear you ask? Well it's about engaging the interest by making the request human, attractive and emotionally rewarding...

Asking someone to invest their own time and money in learning how to do things they will never do, is neither attractive nor rewarding so it's unlikely that many, if any volunteers would sign up isn't it? An example might be volunteering to be an IOM sail measurer. Why would anyone want to know how to measure a spinnaker and be tested on this when the rules preclude the use of such sails? That's akin to selling ice to Eskimos - especially when the job is binary.....does the sail fit the template at the prescribed points? Yes or no?

Dysfunction breeds antipathy. Not attractive.

Fun, happiness and an appreciation of community, breeds affinity, rapport and a liking for our sport, and who would not want to be part of that. Maybe we should all look in the mirror to check if what we see coming back is attractive, and act accordingly.

Rene Van der Borsch - November 2021



Letter 2: Level Playing Field

When we are all sailing with other boats, we get competitive - whether we are hot shots or beginners, we cannot help ourselves. Even when its just a bit of fun on the pond, we start tweaking and looking for a wind shift, an angle to some way do a bit better than the other fellow.

As a novice learns to control their boat better and learns to read windshifts they test themselves against others. They start to question what is he doing that I am not that he is always at the front. They learn how to set up and maintain their boat for different conditions and improve. Eventually most do well enough that they are, at least, competing for those front of the fleet places. Then they start to think about other clubs. How they would perform against unknown sailors on ponds with different sailing conditions and may start to travel to local open events, to find out?

Mostly at novice and club level it is the skill of the sailor that makes the biggest difference in performance. As skills improve then the quality of the boat they are sailing and the way it is maintained and set up come into play. Still to a large extent this is still dependant on the skills of the sailor as even the newest 'top of the range' boats will not sail to their potential if poorly sailed and maintained.

However, there is an assumption here that many of us never question. Are we sailing/competing on a 'level playing field'? Is it only our skills and abilities that are ultimately limiting performance? Well a key factor in this, that many of us never even think about, is are all the competing boats following and being maintained in accordance with the class rules? These are designed to ensure that 'level playing field'.

Before you get too offended, ask yourself how well you know the class rules for your boat and if you can be sure that you have maintained it in accordance with the class rules? Even one design production boats have class rules which you need to follow when maintaining you boat to keep it in class. Perhaps is is time to plan some club winter training sessions involving setting up and maintaining boats, with compliance with class rules in mind.

Is there, for example, a minimum weight for your type of boat? Perhaps you have had to have a new lead or when you repaired that hull damage did you take the corrector weights out and forget to put them back afterwards? A recent checkweighing at one club found a couple of members, who should have known better, guilty. Uncertain, for how long they had been sailing with a competitive advantage in lighter conditions!

Have you had to replace some sails? Most classes require new/replacement sails to be independently verified by an official measurer to ensure no advantage of sail area or shape is being added. Yes most sailmakers are pretty accurate, but most sails are not quality assured production control items but are individually cut to order. With the best skills in the world hand crafted items can vary and some owners make their own sails. For some classes where the dimensions/shape of the sails can vary between boat designs, variations in sail dimensions can seriously affect the measurement formula, rating and class compliance of the boat, this can be very significant. Look for official measurers signatures /date and/or dimension measurements on the tack of verified sails.

Most classes have a measurement, registration and certification system. This is designed to ensure that at least at specific points in time boats meet the class rules and therefore the 'level playing field' is maintained. Owners have to sign an undertaking to maintain their boat according to the class rules so as to maintain this 'level playing field'. Changes of ownership are registered and new owners continue this undertaking. Event organisers can spot-check boats against specific class rules to check this 'level playing field' is being maintained - even at club sailing level.

So, have you acquired a new boat during the last 2 years of lockdown and remembered to register the acquisition/change of ownership with your class registrar? If you wish to test yourself against sailors from other clubs you will, for most classes, need a valid, up to date registration certificate (i.e. one in your name). It can also help to have a valid up to date certificate when you come to sell a boat on. This is a free MYA service so there is no excuse!

From a well-wisher - November 2021



...and now, a plea from the heart, apparently.

Letter 3: What is going on please?

I am a club sailor with no interest in sailing in National events and the like - but I do like the regular local competition with others in variety of classes.

My boats have been measured and still conform to the best of my knowledge but to get that checked would require lots of effort on my (and others) part - made worse by the lack of people to do it. I have zero interest in checking that they are not 1% out of spec.

I am sure that the COVID lockdown has greatly worsened the communications in many areas of our lives but why is it so hard to find out what the MYA is doing about this Measurers saga? I read stuff about why we need our Measurers to take and pass RYA Sail measuring tests and am totally befuddled as to why! All I see is fewer people prepared to do the job which bothers me not a jot (see above) - but must be very annoying to those who do need boats measured.

Why don't we just separate the workings of the MYA into those tasks needed to support our top sailors (say 10-15% of the total membership) and those tasks needed to look after me and the rest - like the Insurance? It is pretty easy to define which bits go where, surely?

Just a thought!

Disgruntled big boat sailor - November 2021

THIS IS NOT AN ADVERTISEMENT!

Model Boat magazine is in the shops from Friday 19 November (in the UK). That's me on the cover (Simon Collyer) talking about our SAILING WELLNESS (SW) project with of course Tracy Edwards MBE. There is an eleven page article in the magazine about the SW project and some fab images from photographer Sue. It absolutely rained 'cats and dogs' but we got a decent shot just before the heavens really opened. Towering rainstorms with sunshine and flat calms in between – strange day indeed.

No egos here...but I hope people will buy the magazine and I hope it helps raise the profile of RC sailing and benefits all those who sail - and of course, helps me to promote our project to help military people recover from PTSD and assist those with disabilities find new goals and a new path in life. The RC sailing fleet(s) are fantastic people. The racing scene is very tough, but it's very rewarding. I love it...

Simon Collyer

Founder of the ABC & Sailing Wellness



SITUATIONS VACANT

As many members will know there are three key Officer posts unfilled on the MYA Council but in the last couple of months this improved a bit - but now it's about to get worse again!

The posts of Vice Chair and Publicity Officer still remain to be filled - and now we are about to lose a third - our Secretary, Jen Hand. She is sadly retiring after organising everything for the MYA and is planning to relax a bit now - so thank you Jen for all your wonderful work over the last years. Everyone hopes you will have a most enjoyable time.

These three jobs are crucial to the efficient and effective operation of the MYA on behalf of its members, so the help of all readers is sought to identify people who could do these enjoyable and key jobs. The job names are fairly self-explanatory but further details of what they entail can be obtained by contacting the MYA Chair, Phil Holliday.

Please do consider volunteering for these roles as they add hugely to the ability of the whole organisation to function properly - and you will enjoy them too.

THE MYA PHOTO COMPETITION



There is a competition running which is designed to encourage members to submit their favourite photos and try to win the £50 per edition prize - with a much bigger set of prizes (£100 first prize etc) in the annual post-AGM edition in November/December each year. **The panel of Judges has considered the photos entered for this annual prize and the results are shown below.**

The winner of the annual (£100) prize is Roy Randell of Rotherham MYC with his picture of "Final adjustments to an A Class".

Second (with a prize of £50) was Gareth Jones of the Vintage Club with "Windy day at Llandudno". Some may recall this pic won the earlier competition in June 2021 - where he was wrongly attributed to live in that fine Welsh town. He comes from E. Yorkshire!

Third (£25) was Roy Randell (again!) with his "Start at RMYC".

These pix are all viewable on the MYA website.



1st: 'Final adjustments to an A Class' by Roy Randell



2nd: 'Windy day at Llandudno' by Gareth Jones



3rd: 'Start at RMYC' by Roy Randell

Please keep sending in your best pix as the one judged to be the most interesting, active and well-constructed will be considered for the **£50** first prize in the next edition due out in February/March 2022.



SELF-POSITIONING RACING MARKS

Rumours abound that a sat-nav-enabled racing mark is being tested using GPS technology to position it. These have been in use for full-sized yacht racing for a while but so far have not been employed in RC racing.

If there is further news about how successful they are (which they will be!) and how expensive they are (which they definitely will be!) watch this publication for the full story. No smoke without fire?

MYA RADIO LEAGUE ACERSAIL NEWS AND A PLEA - AND 2021 RESULTS

Members will hopefully recall that the key objective of the Radio League is "competition to further clubs' enthusiasm for open racing and to encourage club members to enter Open events, both at their Home Water and at Away events in support for their club".

It had been decided to cancel the competition for 2020 in view of the dramatic impact of Covid upon the racing calendar. There has been the inevitable hangover with the number of events during the 2021 season markedly reduced, in turn meaning that trying to make comparison with previous seasons is unrealistic. Fortunately, since the final relaxation of UK Government restrictions, there has been some semblance of a return to normality although there is still some way to go. A simple illustration is that during the 2021 season there were 48 qualifying events yet for the 2022 season there are already 94.

This starts to become reflected in the number of events which finally managed to take place, resulting in results being obtained for all 48 of the scheduled qualifying events. There were still over 300 different skippers who entered the various events and one of the most encouraging aspects is that 92 skippers who had not sailed in the previous season did so either as completely new or returning to Open event racing. The total number of race entries across the 48 events was 878 and when overseas competitors and non MYA members are extracted, can be broken down into 182 at the respective host club, 237 from within their respective district and most impressively 431 over 50% entered events at clubs in districts other than their own. This clearly illustrates that the key objective of the League is being sustained. There has been a most welcome decline in the number of points that could not be allocated because of the level of entries from UK non affiliated members.

Turning to the final competition outcomes, for the individual competition, 6 skippers managed to score more than 800 points each, in reverse order:- Tony Edwards (877.9), Peter Baldwin (960), Derek Priestley (991.3), Bob Conner (1001.6) and John Tushingam (1395.1) - but the overall winner with 1565.7 points is Shaun Holbeche.

The club competition saw 68 clubs with skippers entered, 24 different clubs hosted events and the leading 5 clubs in reverse order were:- Lincoln (2261.5), Two Islands (3048.4), Keighley (3104.8), Birkenhead (4608.2) - but with a dramatic end of season surge the winning club was Fleetwood with 4642.8 points.

In the most improved clubs competition 12 clubs scored more than 100% of their previous season scores but the overall biggest improvers, after a veritable see saw over the final weeks between ROFWAC and Frensham Pond, were Frensham Pond with 332.5%; that will take some keeping up with next season!

Congratulations therefore go, not only to the actual winners but to all those that either took part in racing or organisation of events during such challenging times.

May I just make one more plea for host clubs to please send me through copies of the final results of their various events, especially including members' personal MYA numbers. The best format for me to receive them in is a copy of the HMS file in Excel.

My view is that the current time is not the most suitable to consider if any changes to the Radio League Regulations are required and I therefore propose that the current regulations should remain in place for the 2022 season, and subject to Council's approval, I am pleased to confirm my willingness to continue the role of Radio League Secretary for the forthcoming season.

John Smith
Radio League Sec
November 2021



CLUBS

The two Clubs in the spotlight in this edition are **East Kent RSC** and **Lee Valley MYC** - with an additional bonus piece from **Gosport MYBC**.

Firstly, we have **EAST KENT RADIO SAILING CLUB**

This relatively new Radio Sailing Club was formed in June 2017 by a small group of mainly newcomers to Radio Sailing with the DragonFlite 95 (DF95) chosen as its single class of racing yacht.

The Club's home water is the southern lake at Conningbrook Lakes Country Park, Ashford, Kent. The lake is about a mile from junction 10/10A on the M20, on the A28 heading towards Canterbury. Because of the central Kent location, we have members from all over the county attending on a regular basis. The Country Park is still in the process of gradually being transformed from a former quarry site, but already has good access to the lake via a slipway and pontoon for launching and retrieving yachts. Parking is currently available a short walk from the lake, with a dedicated Country Park car park in the next phase of the development. Some of the trees and bushes around the lake have been cleared to improve wind consistency over the water. The water quality is regularly tested and managed using aeration and blue dye treatment as required to limit weed growth. The lake is shared with both local dinghy sailing and canoe & kayak clubs as well as the East Kent Scouts. All water-based activities are co-ordinated through Freedom Leisure via the Julie Rose Stadium which ensures we have a dedicated water for our sessions.



The Club has dedicated marker buoys permanently sited in the lake, and its own dinghy to adjust their positions according to the prevailing wind direction, as well as acting as a rescue boat. The Club also has a race start system and secure lakeside storage for the club equipment.

The Club holds 4 hour racing sessions every Thursday throughout the year (weather permitting). At these events we hold an average of 18 races, with fleets of between 8 to 10 boats. We have Day, Month and Annual race series results published on the Club's website. During these competitive sessions we also have a "learning lunch" break for 30 minutes, which is ideal for discussing sailing issues and boat tuning.

We currently have a membership of 16 skippers, with a wide range of abilities from absolute beginners to experienced radio sailors competing regularly in DF95 (TT) Traveller Trophy, National Championships and Open Events. Additionally, some also sail DF65, IOM and Laser classes and have dinghy and offshore yacht racing experience. We are all still learning and improving.



Next there is LEE VALLEY MODEL YACHT CLUB

We sail at the northern end of the Lee Valley Regional Park. We've been there since 1990 so we are relatively young compared with some of the other clubs around the country. The club was set up by 4 gentlemen whom we now refer to as the founding fathers. At the beginning membership quickly expanded from the original 4 to around a dozen member and at that time we sailed One metres. After a few years some of the members started to try their hand with Radio 6 metres and a fleet of around 6 rapidly grew. We had several years of sailing Laser radio yachts but eventually dropped these in favour of just One metres and Radio 6 metre boats. Over the years the club's membership has expanded to around 25 with a regular sailing fleet of 10.

The founding fathers were very keen on involving new and inexperienced members in the racing so devised what has come to be known as the 'RYGGED' start where the least able had a 30 second start reducing to scratch as experience increased. It doesn't pay to have the least able always struggling at the back of the fleet. 'RYGGED' for red, yellow and green and 30, 20 and 10 second advantage at the start.

Like many other clubs we are plagued with weed for part of the year and because we are in a regional park there's very little we can do about it so our sailing program has to be tailored to the height of the weed in the water. During the summer months we sail sixes and once the cold weather comes and the weed dies we're back to one metre racing. We've found that coots and moorhens are very good at bring bits of the dreaded weed to the surface so some of the club have been experimenting with 6 metre designs that don't catch it. Some years ago, one member designed a boat based solely on triangles, the Prismatic. This can handle very light winds, the type we mostly get at Lee Valley but is no good in a blow. We now have 3 long keel boats based on a 1929 drawing which sail well in light and medium airs.

Our sailing program consists of a single 6 metre series run through the summer and a one metre series through the winter months. During the winter we also sail a midweek series for one metres. Club competitions are always well attended.

Membership lately has been down on past years; the lack of a consistent breeze and the flukiness of the wind tends to put some off. One visitor remarked 'if you can sail at Lee Valley you can sail anywhere' (Ed.: Just what everyone says at Frensham!).



CLUBS

The bonus piece this time is **Gosport MY&BC** which has the largest membership (in number terms of course!) of any Club in the Met & Southern District - and in the MYA too.

GOSPORT MY&BC

Model yacht sailing has been a feature of the Walpole Park Lakes at Gosport, Hampshire since the late 1890's and Gosport Model Yacht and Boat Club (GMY&BC) as we know it today was formed in 1913 and celebrated its Centenary in 2013. We have over 200 members and are by far the largest Club in the Model Yachting Association (MYA). There are an increasing number of lady skippers and currently, the first lady Commodore in its history.

During its lifetime the Club has undergone several transitions from Free to Braine to Vane and Radio yacht sailing with ventures into Power Boating, Electric and Scale on the journey. However today it is principally a yachting club for vane and radio racing.

The lakes are unique being specifically built for model boating in the 1920s using Gosport Cockle Pond, dating from King John's time as a starting point. The water is fed from Haslar Creek and varies from salt, to brackish depending on the fresh rainwater intake, also being part of the local coastal plan, the lakes are designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), and under the strict control of Natural England who together with Gosport Borough Council (GBC) and the GMY&BC monitor and maintain the lakes. GMY&BC have one of the best clubhouses of any model yachting club in the UK and probably the world (Ed. Any comments from the rest of the World?!), with a meeting room, boat store and toilet facilities in a purpose-built facility called Compass Point. On the upper floor is the commercially operated Lakeside Café and Bar. The world-famous Walpole Lakes are one of the best sailing waters in the UK and we organise sailing events seven days a week and, in the summer, on evenings as well. Throughout the year there are over 450 scheduled events in our Club calendar supporting Radio A, Vane A, IOM, RC Laser, Multihull, Vane 36, DF 65 and DF95 Classes. We also can host International, District and National events on behalf of the MYA as well as special events for local Scouts and Schools and Southampton Solent University.

The Vintage Model Yacht Group visit the club, bringing beautiful examples of their classic model yachts. We welcome new members and details of our full sailing programme for each class can be found on our website www.gosportmybc.org.uk or just contact our Commodore for further help or for an invitation to visit us for a day's sailing.

Robert Hobbs, President GMYBC
Jacque Cook, Commodore GMYBC



.....and now for something completely different.

Many of you will know Derek Barratt (Solent MCRYC) but you may not know that he served as a Watch Officer on the Sail Training ship Sir Winston Churchill for twelve years and he wrote a series of four articles for Poole MSC some years ago.

This describes things that are not quite the same as we do but it may be of interest to MYA members who might still be looking for something different to relieve the boredom. This is No 3 of the Series.

THE TALES FROM THE TALL'UNS - Chapter 3

Before each cruise the trainees were required to go aloft by climbing up the ratlines, go through the crow's nest (100 feet up) and come down on the other side. If they couldn't do that then they couldn't go. Sometimes someone would get most of the way up and would then freeze. When all else failed I would climb up the inside until I was level and we were face to face and I would quietly talk to them. That always did the trick! I'm not sure if it was my face or the fact that they didn't expect it to happen.

We did one cruise around the Scottish Isles, and I joined the ship in Fort William. I went up with another Watch Officer from Worthing. We had to change trains at Glasgow and continue up in a very local one. When we got on, it was quite late at night and it was the last one that day. Apart from us, everyone on board was a railway employee. It was dark and the train did not put its headlight on, "We don't want to frighten the wee wildlife, now do we?" The door between us and the driver's compartment was left open and we could all wander in and out as we liked. No one seemed to mind, and the train would stop, usually in the middle of nowhere, to let people get off. There were also people standing beside the line now and then, and again the train would stop and they would be hauled on board. When we told them where we were going they said "Well you must both climb Ben Nevis". We had a day to spare before reporting for duty, so we did. I still have the tee shirt with I CLIMBED BEN NEVIS written on it. You could also buy one that said I (NEARLY) CLIMBED BEN NEVIS!

We didn't sail at night as there were no navigation lights anywhere and there was nowhere to moor up apart from the ferry landing stages, so we used them. It was all very picturesque and a little quaint at times. The soil in the area is totally black! We lowered the life boat and went into Fingal's Cave and later stood on the hexagonal columns of the Giant's Causeway. It apparently goes from there all the way to, and emerges again on the coast in Ireland! We went into one pub that had no less than twenty three different scotches on view, all mounted in optics! Going to remote places and looking up is an amazing sight - it's the same at sea. No light pollution up there! One can see about ten times as many stars. Surely there must be some sort of life out there somewhere, there are so many of them.

Back to sailing. The watches are four hours long, but with three groups of people (also called watches) it means that you would always finish up doing the same one. So those doing the midnight to 4 am one would get very little sleep, so two, two-hour dog watches are incorporated and this has the effect of ensuring that each day you do the earlier watch than you did the previous day. Years ago the only person with a timepiece was the Navigator so the time was rung on the bell. It wasn't the time of day that was rung; it was how long you had been on watch. Two bells for the hour and one for the half hour. So ding ding, ding ding, ding. denoted two and a half hours into the watch, which was changed at eight bells. (Ed: I hope you have been paying attention as you will be tested on this later!). When my watch was on duty I always had the bells rung. Some Captains stopped me having it done at night.

Question: There is a saying about "seeing something through to the bitter end". Do you know what the bitter end is?

.../cont



THE TALES FROM THE TALL'UNS - .../cont

Do you remember the American Sail Training vessel THE MARQUES? Well, when she went down with all hands at four in the morning, a lot of things changed. She had a twenty one year old Captain with his wife and baby on board, and it looked as if things were not being done properly. For instance everyone was apparently in bed. At four in the morning there would normally be a watch change. The Insurance Companies made a few demands and the result was that we got a generator mounted on the coach roof that ran constantly. Our batteries that were charged up during the day could no longer supply the amount of electricity needed to run the new navigation equipment and the three new linked electronically controlled compasses.

O.K. they were extremely accurate, so no more swinging the compass during the shake down cruise, but were nowhere near as easy to read and taking sightings on other ships around us became a nightmare! We also had to have a properly qualified navigator. I'm talking about professional qualifications here, Yachtmaster wouldn't do. There simply weren't enough of them easily available, so we would often finish up with an R A F navigator. Quite often we got one who had never sailed before, and it created a few problems. They would stick their head out of the chartroom in the middle of the night, and say things like "Tack the ship please!" I would have to go down and point out that in order to tack I would have to get a watch up out of bed, This would take between twenty and thirty minutes before they assembled below the bridge, and if it was early on in the cruise it would then take another twenty minutes to ensure that everyone knew what they were doing when the jobs were allocated, and by then we would have gone about six miles. So did he really want to tack the ship? It finished up with the Watch Officers making decisions that one of the more experienced Senior Officers should have made! Incidentally, I would not be allowed to do the job now!

Answer: If you go as far forward on a ship as you can, usually in the heads (toilets), you will find a plate bolted to the forward bulkhead. Behind it is the chain locker. This is taken off during the refit, all the anchor chain is removed, and someone climbs in with a paintbrush and a pot of paint. This is a small, very awkward shaped compartment and by the time it is finished the person doing it has as much paint on him as there is on the walls! In one of the corners is a small welded on bar. When the chain is fed back in it is attached to this. It should be attached by a short piece of rope, which is called the bitter end. (Shackles tend to rust up solid). If you didn't do your maintenance properly and it didn't get replaced, it would eventually rot through, chain lockers are awfully damp places, and the next time you anchored somewhere you would hear the noise of the chain going out followed by an awful silence! It really had gone through to the bitter end.

I mentioned the Chart Room. Actually this room served many purposes, Chart Room, Officers mess, Officers Dining Room, and somewhere to relax when off watch. There were two tables, both seated six people, and one of which was gimbaled. To eat at this table required a special technique. You have to remember that the table is correct as regards being level. Everything else around, including the ship, is wrong. One of the funniest things to happen was when the door to the Galley was opened and bolted back, and a trainee came in for the first time with two bowls of hot soup. Seated at the table would be the Captain and at least two Watch Officers. The trainee would take one look at the table and just stand there, watching it moving, totally mesmerised! There was no way he was going to put a bowl of hot soup down on it. You could tell him to do so but you would be wasting you time, he would simply refuse. The only way was to take it out of his hand and let him see you put it down, and he still wouldn't put the other one down! Hilarious! I used to try and sit either at the head or the foot as when you sat at the side your plate could quite easily travel up and down over a foot! If you cut anything up using too much pressure the table would go wrong and you ran the risk of everything sliding off! If an inexperienced person sat down to eat then side pieces (fiddles) would be erected. The bar was quite good, all duty free of course; you simple helped yourself, entered it in a book and paid the Purser at the end of the voyage.



We had one Captain who had something wrong with his metabolism. On the coldest of nights he would walk around in his shirtsleeves wearing the biggest pair of Eskimo boots that I have ever seen. His feet apparently were always cold. I never used to sail on The Millar very much, the ships were identical from the outside and the only way to tell them apart was to look at the doors. One had rounded tops and the other was square. The Millar was built later and there were some modifications inside to improve the layout.

I didn't like my bunk as much, as on The Churchill there was a porthole beside my bunk and on one of the tacks I could always tell what wind was blowing before going up as the porthole would be under water with a force five or over! Anyway I was on The Millar on this occasion and it was our last night. We had started from France, had gone across to the West Country and turned right. There was a force seven blowing, and we had handed the jib top sail and the gaff top sails and put a reef in the mizzen earlier and we were reaching along the south coast and going like a train, an express train! I had had to have lee boards put in the door openings to stop water going below, and put the leeside passageway out of bounds; anyone attempting to walk along it would have been knocked off their feet with the force of the water! That's how far over we were. Only the helmsman was standing upright, he had the advantage of a triangular foot board that could be inserted in the bridge grating, and one of his feet rested on that.

This was the four to eight a.m. watch. The graveyard watch and most people didn't like this one. I liked it as I liked seeing the dawn come up. I was really enjoying this, by now all the trainees knew what they were doing and I could relax a bit. Great! Suddenly, an obviously very irate Captain appeared in his pyjamas, (and Boots) "I've had enough of this Mr. Barratt, get on the other tack," and he disappeared. Twenty minutes later we were on our way back to France. When the weather is a bit rough the trainees could reach under their mattresses and pull out a lee cloth that was attached to their bunk, this had two straps that could be clipped to the bunk immediately above them and it stopped them falling out.

The Officers' bunks had a board running alongside that you had to climb over to get into bed and this did the same job. For some reason The Captain's berth was not like that. The board had been cut down heightwise and I found out later at breakfast that he had fallen out no less than four times!

Derek Barratt

The Final episode of this gripping tale/set of tales will be in the next edition.

