



We must start with an apology, both for delay and for the lack of formatting. The content of this issue was ready on time, but formatting for publication was then hit first by illness, and then by a massive (but welcome) increase in professional workload arising from a new job. So we give Jenny our very best wishes for her new job, but as a result of that she has been unable to complete the desktop publishing task for this issue. I did try to at least use the part that she had completed, which as usual looked excellent, but my software (or my limited skills) weren't up to the task, so it perforce goes out more or less raw.

That apart, I don't know how the rest of you fared in what passed for the second half of this year's summer, but after a glorious first half - during which I was sailing a desk, with a very full load of examining duties - I myself feel distinctly cheated by the weather in late July and throughout August. If the media are to be believed, there was general acceptance that it was quite dreadful for the time of year. I am reminded of one of Michael Flanders' comments, he of Flanders & Swann fame: talking about the Great British Summer in one of their shows he said "I missed it this year; must have been in the bathroom!"

As my personal plans evolved, by a fairly late stage the intention was that this would once again be a dinghy year, my second one in succession. The bald statistics are: 600 miles towing, first to Pembrokeshire and then the Lakes, giving a grand total of only about 6 to 8 hours sailing in Pembrokeshire split between two days, and initially just a couple of hours on a single day in the Lakes. Alright I did other enjoyable things in both holidays, including in Pembrokeshire socialising with a group of old sailing friends, and a day on a Rother class historic lifeboat (and getting to helm her for the second half of the day); and then in the second trip visiting some of my favourite haunts in the Lakes. I also twice extended my Lakes holiday in the hopes of getting some more sailing, which did eventually yield two further half-days; but the weather was simply unattractive for much sailing.

Finally the glorious but short-lived heatwave which eventually arrived in September was most enjoyable in itself, but there was almost zero wind, so again no sailing. I hope you all fared better.

Now that I am at last admitting to becoming elderly I have become a fair-weather sailor: nothing left to prove, and I don't now go out (particularly in a dinghy) if the weather is not enjoyable for the sport! Additionally I have now reluctantly accepted for the first time that I have reached an age where single-handing a GP14 in strong and gusty winds has become too much for me, despite many decades doing so fairly regularly when I was somewhat younger.

Literally as we went to press your Editor and Roger Kirk-Smith teamed up to represent the Club in the Commodores' Cup race, run by Liverpool Yacht Club, trying (but in vain) to make it a hat trick, having won the Cup last year (jointly with Crosby SC and also the previous year (outright). This is an annual race for the Commodores of the Kindred Clubs - or in our case a past Commodore from a dozen years ago deputising for the present Commodore - sailing in yachts provided by the host club, and lots are drawn before the race to decide who sails which boats. So it is literally pot luck as to which boat one gets, but the one thing that is fairly certain is that one will be totally unfamiliar with her.

With the conditions on the day I was somewhat outside my comfort zone with this particular boat, so perhaps did not drive her quite as hard in the gusts as I might have done had I been totally familiar with her, and I also misjudged a tack at one of the buoys and so had to put in an extra couple of tacks, and both of these cost us valuable seconds. Having done most of my racing in dinghies, and many decades ago at that, and with most of my yacht sailing having been cruising, I am used to the dinghy dictum that "Flat is fast, and is safe"; but I have also long been used to the fact that ballasted yachts inevitably heel when working to windward in a stiff breeze, albeit with an inevitably loss of efficiency - at least in regard to the sails. (Depending on hull design, the hull shape and occasionally also the keel may sometimes be very efficient when heeled.) Without having ever measured it, I suspect that my comfort zone for a racing yacht when beating to windward is up to about 30° heel, and at somewhere around 45° I start to be concerned about stability, as well as being very aware that we are probably sailing inefficiently; but apparently that angle is well within the mainstream in this particular boat! However don't be misled by the photos taken off Otterspool Promenade, which happen to show us during the lulls rather than the gusts.

We ended up in third place, which at least is no disgrace; nonetheless we had to hand back the Cup, and Roger and I were joking that we will be relegated to cleaning the toilets until we can hope that the club can redeem ourselves in next year's event!



*Photos from Otterspool by Christine Kirk-Smith*



*Oliver*

## SHORT COLREGS QUIZ

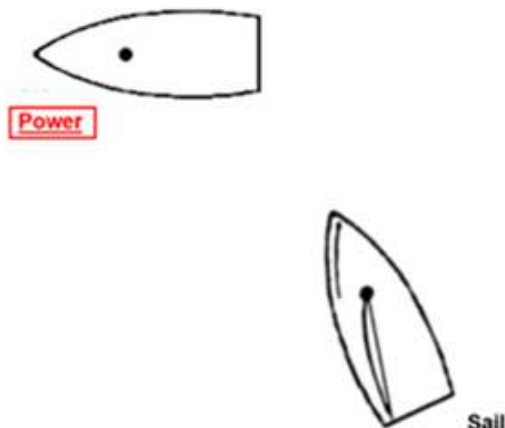
The start of a new short series, as an entertaining way (I hope) of helping members to brush up on an important topic.

The topic is considered so important that when the Editor took his Yachtmaster exam the pass mark on the Colregs paper was 100%. That's right, no allowance for error whatsoever. It is the only exam he has ever come across, either as a candidate or a teacher or an examiner, where the pass mark is anything like that high.

Questions follow, and some of them are very deliberately not straightforward; answers after the Bar Chat in this issue.

1. While out on the water at night you see a single white light (not flashing). What does it signify (give as many correct answers as possible), and what action should you take?

2. Which vessel is required to give way here? (Lengths and distances are not to scale, however angles/aspects of vessels may be relied on. Assume that there may be a risk of collision, that the vessels are in sight of each other, and that there is still time to take the necessary action. Consider all reasonable possibilities for how this situation arose.)



3. You are out on the Mersey in your own boat, somewhere between the Pier Head and New Brighton and on the Liverpool side of the river, and you are disabled because of rig failure or engine breakdown (as appropriate to your boat). You see one of the Mersey Ferries approaching on a collision course. Who has right of way, and what action should you take?

# CRUISING; CUMBRIAN CRUISE

## Part 5

### To Glasson Dock

Like all good things, cruises eventually have to come to an end, Bernard Moitessier and *Joshua* notwithstanding. I had an important commitment at church commencing mid-September, and before I set off I told all concerned that I planned to be back in harness on Sunday 14th. That was particularly important that year, because not only was I the Organist and Choirmaster, I am also a composer, and after ten years I had at last managed to persuade the church to introduce my mass setting, commencing that September. So naturally enough I wished to be there to preside!

Exactly a week, to the day, after the idyllic summer day at Piel Island the weather relented and allowed me to make onward progress. First stop was to be Glasson Dock, using the marina there for the first time in this cruise; after more than a month away I was ready for marina facilities, including perhaps most importantly shoreside electrics to recharge the two batteries. The 10W solar panel had done sterling service, and the outboard had made occasional modest but no doubt useful contributions, but the older of the two batteries was dying on its feet (it was actually well outside its expected lifespan, but it still kept on working ... ..), and the brand new and slightly larger capacity one was down to 70% capacity, so I would be very glad of the opportunity to recharge them both. Other marina facilities would also be welcome, for a change, although they were less urgent.

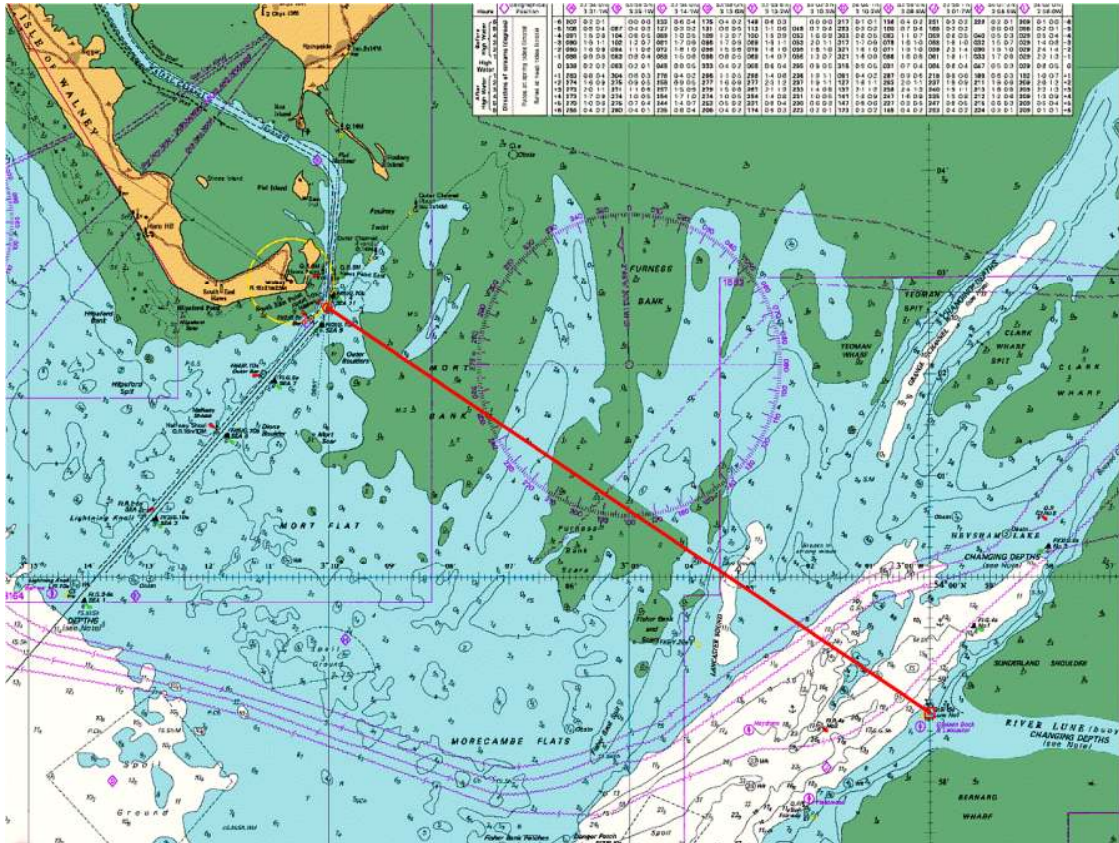
I had wondered about a passage the previous day, but the forecast was marginal, and that is usually a good reason for staying put. Later in the day I had good reason to be thankful for that decision; I was chatting with a yachtsman who had just come in from Fleetwood, and they had had 20 knots of wind (top end of force 5) all the way across Morecambe Bay. They had had it on the quarter, which is fine, but if I had gone - in the opposite direction - I would have had it on the nose. There is no doubt that the boat and I would have survived the experience, although in this boat it might well have been a case of motoring all the way, but there would have been no pleasure and it would have been an exhausting slog.

I am reminded of a very perceptive comment by Bill Anderson, a past RYA Chief Instructor and the instigator of the Yachtmaster scheme, in one of his then recent *Question of Seamanship* articles in *Yachting Monthly*: the criterion when deciding whether to go or stay in the light of the weather forecast is not whether one will survive the experience, but whether everyone on board will enjoy it. We sail for pleasure, and to my mind there is little pleasure in a 15-mile slog to windward in a 20-ft boat in force 5 - whether under power or sail.

Far better to choose to do it in weather which will enable the passage to be enjoyed, and the following day turned up trumps. And the next several days were pretty good, too. As *The Times* reported two or three days later, after my arrival in Glasson; after an August whose latter parts had many people reaching for the thermostat, summer had returned in September, and seemed on course to remain for the month.

I motored down the first part of the Barrow channel, and then when the channel turns I cut straight across the drying banks on a direct course for Lune No. 1 buoy. That saves several miles as against the route for deeper draught vessels, and in advance of this passage I had asked the advice of members of the local boating club and been told that this is what they would do. My passage planning showed that the highest charted drying height was 4 m lower than the drying height from which I was leaving, and I was doing at

least the critical part of the passage on a rising tide, so in fair weather I would have a comfortable margin of depth all the way. Indeed as I was crossing one of the banks I found that I was apparently crossing paths with shipping, and at first could not understand how they could be using a route where there was so little charted depth, but if there was enough for them there was clearly ample for me. Then I realised that these were exceptionally large fishing boats, about the size of a small ship - say a coaster, and naturally enough they were fishing the banks. But the fact remains that their draught was vastly more than mine.



There was no realistic hope of entering Glasson Dock on the same tide on which I left; I floated at about HW - 2 hours, which at best would have given me less than 2 hours to make the 15 mile passage. So that removed all pressure on time; there was ample time to get into the Lune and anchor in the river, then proceed to Glasson Dock the following day. So I could enjoy the sail, without worrying about maintaining a particular passage speed, which with the distances between ports on this coast is a rare luxury for the middle aged single-hander.

I carried full plain sail all the way across Morecambe Bay, broad on the wind, at between 3 and 4 knots all the way, and in pleasant sunshine. I met half a dozen yachts slogging it out close-hauled in the reverse direction; all of them bermudian rigged, and no doubt strongly crewed, but as Ed Wingfield says - "Gentlemen don't go to windward". Incidentally they also validated my choice of route; they were using the same route in the opposite direction, and by the time they reached the banks they would have been not only lower on the tide but the tide would also be falling.

Then we entered the Lune against the young ebb, so handed sail and motored up to the anchorage above Sunderland Point. Ed and I had used this in April that same year year, when we had been directed onto

a particular mooring by a local, only to find when we dried out that we were perilously close to a steep shelf in the mud; we did actually dry out level, but it could have been nasty. This time I was more lucky, and perhaps it is only luck, since there is so much silt in the water that it is quite impossible to get any indication of the bottom before it is too late. I prefer my own ground tackle to a totally unknown mooring (since it is very difficult to know how safe - or otherwise - the latter may be), and I dropped the hook in what seemed a good place; when I dried out I was on firm and level and slightly ridged sand; firm enough indeed to walk on, so I took the opportunity to inspect the impeller of the log, since that instrument has been thoroughly unreliable throughout. The sand itself was vaguely reminiscent of Coleridge: "For thou art long, and lank, and brown, as is the ribbed sea sand" - quoted from my very vague recollections of *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*, which I studied during my schooldays.



*Sunset, from my anchorage off Sunderland Point  
(It was even more spectacular a little earlier, but the \*\*\$!\$\*\* camera malfunctioned ...)*

There was one quite remarkable onboard incident, part way across Morecambe Bay. The preamble to this is that (for reasons that are unimportant to this narrative) there was a temporary problem of large uncorrected compass deviation, pending purchase of a new steering compass which was to be installed in a different position. I had expected to be able to buy the type I wanted at one of the various chandlers encountered during the course of this cruise, but in the event none of them had that type in stock.

So with that situation, there was I, part way across Morecambe Bay, steering a dead straight course. Piel Castle was straight over the transom the whole time, the set of the sails indicated that my course relative to the (steady) wind was not changing, and the chartplotter showed a beautifully straight line for my track. Out of idle curiosity I looked at the compass to see how much deviation we were carrying;

and lo and behold, over the space of a few minutes the compass slowly rotated through about one and a half complete revolutions!!!

Alright, I know that on some headings the deviation was enormous, but this behaviour suggests that the deviation must be combined with a serious magnetic anomaly in Morecambe Bay. And, sure enough, an internet search reveals that indeed there is one, although I never fully checked it out, so I don't know whether it is in the right location or has the right characteristics and magnitude to have accounted for this phenomenon. I find it bizarre. However there are numerous wrecks in the area, so I might conceivably have been over one of them at the time: [North West Shipwrecks \[Morecambe Bay, Barrow, Duddon\]](#) (liverpool.ac.uk).

It reminds me of a student experience around fifty years earlier. Two of us were sailing Firefly dinghies on the Menai Strait in ghosting conditions, and doing everything right for those conditions; minimal movement inside the boats, slack rigging, sailing slightly free even when going to windward, heeling the boats until the rubbing strake just kissed the water (to put belly in the sail and reduce the wetted area), and we were both achieving almost identical speed through the water. Then I realised that we were both close-hauled, or as close as was effective in those conditions, on parallel courses, but *on opposite tacks!* Then I looked up at my own burgee, for a check on the wind, and saw it slowly rotating!

I got into the anchorage at about half ebb, having had a minor tussle of horsepower between my engine and the ebb stream in getting that far. Let's say that my engine won! But the tidal stream does fair shift!

The following day there was nothing very much to be done until HW, which was afternoon, but in the course of a leisurely morning I sorted out all the ropes and fenders for the intended locking into the marina, and did odds and ends of shiphusbandry, and I had the pleasure of witnessing a second superb example of the intimate knowledge that a local fisherman has of his own local conditions. The first example had been at Ravenglass, when a local fisherman led me in a full hour before the pilot book considered entry being attempted, and with our respective keels smelling the bottom all the way but never quite going aground.

This second occasion was equally superb. Two small inshore open fishing boats had gone out together a few hours earlier on the ebb, for some Low Water fishing. Now they came back on the flood. Each skipper motored straight in to the beach, stepped ashore, picked up his mooring off the beach and hooked it onto the boat, then picked up the bagged catch and walked ashore. Five minutes earlier, or later, it would not have been possible. They had not even left dinghies at their moorings; they knew, beyond doubt, that they would simply walk ashore when they returned!

That apart, I also tried several times to raise the harbourmaster on VHF, to arrange locking in. No point trying the marina, because I knew from that visit with Ed in April that they are closed Sundays and Mondays. Eventually I resorted to the phone for the harbourmaster, at which point I got his office, and learned that the VHF is manned only around High Water, when the requirement for locking operations can immediately arise. I also learned that as of that morning the inner lock through from the dock into the canal basin (and the marina) was out of action. No further information was available as to when it would be repaired!!!

However the office did give me the harbourmaster's mobile number and suggested that I contact him direct, and he was in fact as helpful as he could be in the circumstances. He would at least accommodate me in the main dock, but beyond being a safe place to moor there are nil facilities for small craft there. And he thought that if necessary it would be possible to arrange something for battery charging.



So in I went. Moored rafted up alongside a Folkboat derivative, which in turn was alongside a fishing boat; I gather from the owner of the former that she was a precursor to the Twister and slightly smaller, which probably makes her a Stella. Ahead of me, rafted up outside another yacht alongside the same fishing boat was another Folkboat derivative; my guess is a Contessa 26. All told, by the time the lock was operational again there were no less than 8 yachts in the main dock, of whom a few (number uncertain) were based there; although the facilities are non-existent the fees reflect that - I was charged £12 per week, which has got to be exceptional value for money.



*8 yachts in the main dock;  
at least two, and possibly more, waiting to use the lock after repairs.*

The engineers told me that the problem was a roller 15-ft beneath the winch for one of the gates, and that all the rollers were replaced earlier that year, and it was a new part which had failed. My neighbour on the Stella, who I think was living aboard, claimed that the problem was lack of maintenance, and said that they replace these parts every year; what they really need to do is to spend some serious money on repairing or replacing the actual lock gates. I note the differing claims, but venture no opinion!

In fairness to all involved, given that there was a mechanical breakdown, all involved were most concerned to be as helpful and co-operative and informative as possible. And once the repair was done, even before the work was fully finished and before the lock was officially open for use, they arranged a special transit of the lock to let me through.

Once through I then had full marina facilities, and a pleasant berth. An opportunity to recharge the batteries, and also run up the laptop and update the cruising log, and I had hoped to post it online. And there is easier access ashore into the bargain. However they had no wi-fi because (at the time of my visit) they were in a rural broadband blackspot and had been quoted a massive £15k to install it! So I then purchased a dongle on my next visit to Lancaster, only to find when I tried to install it that we were no further forward because I needed to connect to the internet in order to source the necessary driver. Er, the reason for buying a dongle is that I didn't have access to the internet ... ..

So the actual posting online had to be by other means, after I had returned home.

**To be continued**

# TWO-POT PAINTS & VARNISHES

## UPDATE

Over the first half of the summer I stocked up with International Perfection Paint and Varnish while I could still get the stuff, sufficient (all being well) to provide for one further repaint and varnish of both *A Capella* and *Tarka II*. That exercise involved buying what was available from three different chandlers.

The last of the three, 1<sup>st</sup> Mark in Golborne (erstwhile Leigh Dinghy Stores), gave me an interesting and potentially useful update.

First, the useful bit; as at the time of my visit (August) Hempel are still doing 2-pot finishes; probably reformulated, although that is not totally clear. They also tell me that they supply Tim Harper, who built *A Capella* for me, and that Tim has now switched to Hempel paints.

The other information, interesting rather than specifically useful, is that periodically certain chemicals go onto either the “red list” or the “amber list”, the latter being early warning that the chemical concerned is destined for the red list in the moderately near future. Manufacturers then have a period of time in which they can, if they choose, reformulate their products; and it appears that Hempel may well have done that.

However they tell me that International’s UK sales of their Perfection 2-pot products have been declining for some years, so it is suggested that they may have considered just how many cans they sell in the UK each year, and taken the commercial decision in the light of that declining number to withdraw from this market rather than go to the expense of reformulating. However I gather from Bruce Idleman in the USA that the products are still marketed there, with no restrictions beyond the strong advice that amateurs should not apply them by spray, and appropriate safety advice for professionals doing so (with proper hazmat protections in place); it seems that they do not see the need to reformulate the products for that market.

# NAUTICAL DEFINITIONS

## Ullage

Ullage is the empty space above the cargo in a loaded tanker or bulk carrier; and the term is also used in the drinks industry for the dead space at the top of a filled bottle, and in both cases there are standard recommendations as to how much this space should be. There are a number of reasons for this space, including evaporation and leakage.

From time to time I have mentioned the late Bill Skutil in these columns. He was a retired 4-ring naval Captain, one of the very earliest senior members of the club (although not I think a Founder Member), a close friend of my family, and my one and only mentor in seamanship.

Ullage, as Bill described it, is also the leakage from whisky barrels, and therefore no tax is paid on it.

**By strange coincidence it leaks into bottles!**

## Course

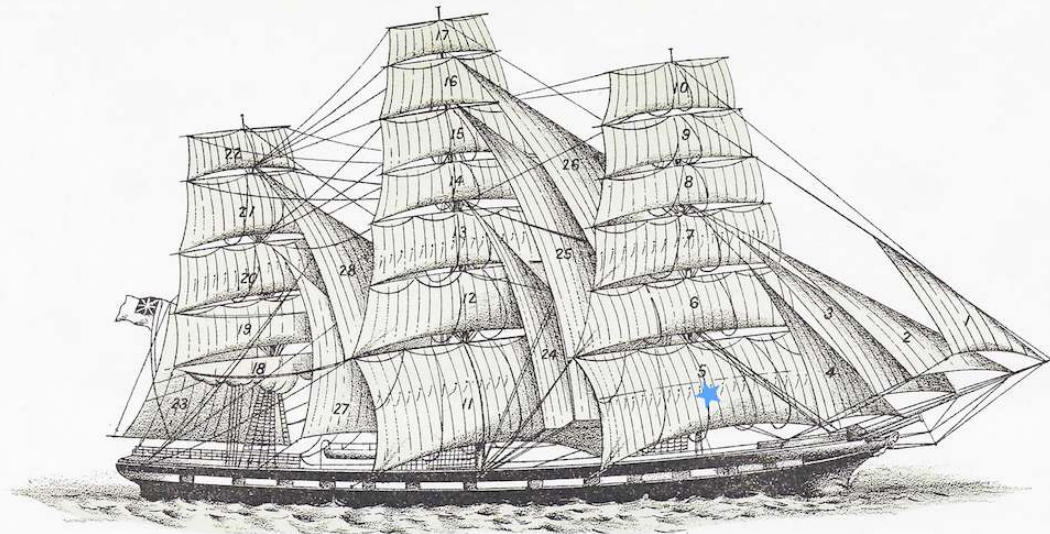
This may seem so well-known as to be not worth including, and indeed the most obvious meaning is probably in that category; the direction or route taken by a vessel, or intended to be taken (sometimes the two are not quite the same, as we all know).

But there is another entirely unrelated meaning; it is the name of a (type of) sail. It is a square rig term, and refers to the lowest square sail on any mast; that is, the sail bent onto the lowest (square) yard on any mast. It will also normally be the largest square sail on that mast, and the yard will normally be at about the height of the first set of shrouds, while the foot will be only modestly above deck level, and will be sheeted directly to the deck.

Where a square-rigged vessel has several masts, and indeed most of them do have, there will be a course on each mast (with the possible exception of the mizzen mast - that depends on the particular rig configuration), and for identification they will be designated with the name of the mast as well as the type of sail; thus there will (usually) be a main-course - sometimes alternatively known as the mainsail, often also a fore-course - sometimes alternatively known as the foresail, and sometimes a mizzen-course (all may be either with or without the hyphens). The mizzen-course (if any) is sometimes alternatively called a **crossjack** (usually pronounced as the abbreviated form, **cro'jack**); and either as well as or instead of this sail the mizzen mast may also carry a fore-and-aft gaff-rigged sail, known as a **spanker**, or **driver**. See the diagram following; sail nos. 5, 11, 18 and 23.

Some vessels carry both square sails and fore-and-aft sails, and the term "course" applies very specifically to the square sails; so a mast - other than sometimes the mizzen mast - which has a fore-and-aft sail as its lowest (and largest) sail will not normally have a course.

## SAILS OF A FULLY-RIGGED SHIP



- |                             |                                 |                                 |                                  |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1. Flying jib               | 8. Lower fore-top-gallant-sail  | 15. Upper main-top-gallant-sail | 22. Mizzen royal                 |
| 2. Outer jib                | 9. Upper "                      | 16. Main royal                  | 23. Spanker, or Driver           |
| 3. Inner jib                | 10. Fore royal                  | 17. Main skysail                | 24. Main top-mast stay-sail      |
| 4. Fore topmast stay-sail   | 11. Main-sail, or main course   | 18. Cross-jack (brailed up)     | 25. Main top-gallant stay-sail   |
| 5. Fore-sail or Fore-course | 12. Lower main top-sail         | 19. Lower mizen top-sail        | 26. Main royal stay-sail         |
| 6. Lower fore top sail      | 13. Upper "                     | 20. Upper "                     | 27. Mizzen top-mast stay-sail    |
| 7. Upper                    | 14. Lower main-top-gallant-sail | 21. Mizzen top-gallant-sail     | 28. Mizzen top-gallant stay-sail |

A SHIP IS A VESSEL WITH 3 MASTS AND SQUARE RIGGED ON ALL MASTS.

CLASSIC SAILOR

<https://classicsailor.com/2019/11/the-fully-rigged-ship/>

And, immediately following that diagram, I am eminded that in the infancy of this club we ran a number of social events, which also served as vitally important fund-raisers. One of these events was a nautical Quiz Night, put together by our first ever Sailing Instructor, Philip Latham.

One of Philip's questions was **"How many ropes on a fully-rigged ship?"**

For those readers who might like to pit themselves against Philip's quiz challenge I will not print the answer here, but if you then wish to check your own answer you can find two takes on the official answer (each of them initially believed to be fully correct, so far as they go, and complementary to each other), plus a further comment, immediately after the Colregs Quiz answers, which follows the Bar Chat section.

### **Topsail Schooner rig:**

It is worth noting that certain fore-and-aft rigs also have additional square sails high up, normally set above the first set of shrouds, known as topsails. A well known example of this is the topsail schooner rig. Although these sails conform to part of the definition of a course, in that they are the lowest (and largest) of the square sails on that mast, they are too high up (yard well above the first set of shrouds, and foot a long way above the deck, and sheeted to another yard); so they are never known as courses, always as topsails.



*Topsail schooner "Vilma"*

[http://www.tallship-fan.de/cgi-bin/tallship\\_e.pl?ACTION=DISPLAY&SCHIFFSID=2146](http://www.tallship-fan.de/cgi-bin/tallship_e.pl?ACTION=DISPLAY&SCHIFFSID=2146)

Vilma, photographed from *Tarka II*, 2013:



*Peel Bay, Isle of Man*



*Conwy Bay, North Wales*



# BAR CHAT

## Teaching Methods ....

Ten years ago this year I sailed *Tarka II* from LSC over to Traeth Bychan, on Anglesey. At the time I was still also a member of the local club there, Red Wharf Bay SWC, famous for (amongst other things) the Anglesey Offshore Dinghy Race. I spent a bit of time at Traeth Bychan before moving on, first to Porth Eilian, a lifelong favourite, and the Isle of Man (for my first visit there and specifically in order to participate in the Peel Traditional Boats gathering).

While dried out on the sands at Traeth Bychan I was most impressed by a bit of teaching that I witnessed. Alright, this was for kids, and the technique would not work with adults; but with kids it was an absolutely superb way of reinforcing previous teaching of the names of the parts of a boat. On the sands and in brilliant August sunshine (something that has been notably lacking this present year!) the 18-year-old instructor, about to go off to university, had the kids running in a large loop around a boat. Then he would suddenly call out “Touch the mainsheet”, or whatever part of the boat he wished, and they had to immediately make a beeline for the specified part. Superb, because it was both teaching and fun.

About the time the then new RYA training scheme was introduced, I and others had strong reservations about the overriding emphasis on getting trainees able to actually sail (albeit at a limited level) in the shortest possible time, *no matter what had to be left out of the training to achieve that*. In fairness, that scheme was deliberately designed around very short courses, which was where they saw their market, whereas my own teaching (in schools and also a youth organisation) had a captive audience for the longer term; so different approaches for the two different scenarios are not unreasonable. In the first iteration of the scheme, c. 1970, my understanding was that one was supposed to teach them to handle “that bit of wood” rather than the tiller, and “that rope” rather than the mainsheet, or jibsheet, or main halliard, or whatever. I could see where they were coming from, but it presupposed that trainees would continue their training outside of the actual courses, and it relied on them doing so; and it was potentially dangerous, because if a skipper orders the genoa sheet to be eased, or the mainsheet to be dumped, or “tiller down”, or “tiller up”, or whatever, these are very precise instructions, and the safety of the boat may sometimes depend on them being correctly understood at the first attempt and then acted upon promptly.

I personally decided in the mid-eighties to retire from teaching sailing rather than get involved with an RYA scheme which at that time I saw as a mixture of good ideas plus also some very serious flaws - and after almost 25 years teaching sailing I was ready for retirement anyway - but thankfully I have the impression that today’s courses are much better in these respects.

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## Tact: ....

A few years ago I developed an Advanced Cruising Course for the GP14 Class Association. Last September my old friend Steve White invited me down to Southampton to run a further iteration of it there for his club. For other reasons I had borrowed *A Capella* back from her custodian, my godson, and

I took her down as the demonstrator boat. For the third day of the course we planned a day-cruise to the head of Southampton Water, and Steve and I teamed up in “my” boat, *A Capella*.

Both of us are now dyed-in-the-wool cruising men, but both of us had also been seriously good racers in our youth; I had been a regular member of my University Team and also my College First Team, while Steve had been on track for a place in the Olympics FD squad until he had to drop out because of the financial cost of it (no sponsorship in those days!). So as well as being now two expert dinghy cruisers we are also two erstwhile high-level dinghy racers; and we each have great respect for each other’s abilities and seamanship.

I confess that nowadays, when not racing (which is most of the time), I am slightly less assiduous than I might otherwise be at continuously watching for changes in the wind and adjusting the set of the sails accordingly; I can do it when needed, but unless there is some special reason for wanting to maximise speed (such as when bucking a foul tide) it is less relevant when cruising. The imprecision is usually only minor, but it is there. Of course that attitude won’t do when racing – it may cost you a place or two – but provided you remain safe it doesn’t greatly matter when cruising.

I helmed on the outward passage, and we swapped ends for the return. And on this passage there were numerous eddies, a consequence of the various large buildings and also ships along the shoreline, so the wind was almost as variable as on inland waters – which as primarily a coastal and estuary sailor I have never really been used to. When I was helming, Steve was the master of tact. If I failed to adjust to a change in the wind, Steve would just quietly remark that “**My end of the boat is on a close reach (or whatever point of sailing it was)!**”

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### **Emergency Communications;**

We all know, one hopes, that the official recommendation of all relevant authorities and organisations (including this club) is that whenever you go afloat you should always be carrying VHF radio, not least so that in the event of emergency you can call for help if necessary. A second valuable means of calling for help is an automatic radio beacon, either a PLB or an EPIRB. Coastguard have very recently created a new Beacon Registry Service at <https://www.gov.uk/register-406-beacons>, and the Editor has duly registered his PLB with the new service.

The opening paragraph of their confirmation email contains the sentence “Remember a beacon should only be used when all other methods of communication have failed.” That instruction may perhaps not be generally known or appreciated: **always use VHF first, and resort to the beacon only if other methods have failed.**

VHF will usually get through, and provided it does the response should then be immediate; and you then know that the call has been received, and you can have a two-way conversation about the situation (and the rescue, if needed). It also alerts other craft in the area, and you can similarly interact with any of them which are able to assist.

A beacon will always get through, but not necessarily immediately, and many beacons are also equipped with GPS and will then encode your position in their broadcast. However the downside is that it may need to wait until the next satellite pass before the transmission is picked up, and this can be up to **two**

**hours;** so although there is a guarantee that your distress call will be received there is the potential for significant delay.

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### **Pilot Boats**

At the beginning of August I had the great pleasure of hosting one of my oldest friends for the best part of a week. We go back to when we were at university together around 60 years ago, and for part of our week we were revisiting haunts old and new in and around Bangor and Anglesey. On our second night we stayed at the Dinorben Arms hotel in Amlwch, and this had a number of 19<sup>th</sup> century nautical paintings decorating the dining room. I was very struck by this one in particular:



Almost everything about this painting was telling me that the right-hand vessel is a pilot boat, and that she is either hailing the ship or is about to put a pilot aboard her. Amlwch was an established pilot station for Liverpool even before the official Liverpool Pilot service was set up, and thereafter (with the official Pilot Station off Point Lynas) Amlwch was still used on occasion as a base; we have the right size of vessel; we have the cutter-headed gaff rig; we have the very large and prominent single-digit sail number; we see one man just inside the weather gunwale apparently hailing the ship (or perhaps preparing to board her); and we see just one other person on deck, the helmsman, who would either pick up a disembarking pilot from an outward bound ship or alternatively sail the boat back to port single-handed once his last pilot had boarded his ship.

The one fly in the ointment is the schooner rig (i.e. two masts, with the mainmast being the after one of the two); I confess that I had never been aware of pilot vessels having more than a single mast.

However when I then checked an online history of Liverpool Pilots I found a painting there of a Liverpool Pilot vessel with precisely that rig:



<https://www.liverpoolmuseums.org.uk/news/press-releases/safe-hands-250-year-story-of-heroic-liverpool-pilots>

And then an actual photo on an Amlwch history site:



<https://amlwchhistory.co.uk/pilot-boats/>

So, we live and learn; Liverpool pilot vessels were indeed apparently gaff schooner-rigged.

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**The importance of super-clear diction when giving your vessel's name over the radio:**



[worst-ship-name.jpg \(400×267\) \(gcaptain.com\)](#)

[Titan Uranus | Ships Nostalgia](#)

Phrasing, and clear enunciation of the second syllable, coupled with perhaps a just discernible gap between the two words, is everything! And, for that matter, the choice of which of the two accepted pronunciations of Uranus; i.e. whether to put the stress on the first syllable or (more usually) the second.



[TITAN URANUS \(IMO: 7614252\) Ship Photos | AIS MarineTraffic](https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid:922319/mmsi:-7614252/imo:7614252/vessel:TITAN_URANUS)

[https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid:922319/mmsi:-7614252/imo:7614252/vessel:TITAN\\_URANUS](https://www.marinetraffic.com/en/ais/details/ships/shipid:922319/mmsi:-7614252/imo:7614252/vessel:TITAN_URANUS)

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**I am intrigued:**



The photo is of sailing off this Club in, I think, 1969; a black-and-white photo with the colour later dubbed in (by myself, and I have the original black-and-white photo). The helmsman is myself, at age 26, still at that time a regular and reasonably competitive racer. I had two friends sailing with me (not club members, but a teaching colleague and his wife), so we were sailing three-up in my then GP14, the second one that I owned, *Tantrum*. Alan was behind the camera, and Jean (his wife) is just partially in shot.

*Tantrum* was Sills-built, only a very few years old, and a reasonably competitive boat, which implies that the rig was correctly set up. As one can see, the boat is being sailed pretty level, and the mainsheet is moderately well out (but only perhaps 10° off the vertical), so on the basis of both the sheeting angle and the traveller position we were probably on somewhere around a beam reach. The wake is dead straight, but is showing a surprising amount of leeway; but that is not the real puzzle here.

I hope that the photo was taken at the exact instant of initiating a turn downwind, before the boat had yet responded to the rudder, and so she had not yet actually started to turn, and therefore the wake didn't yet show this turn; but if that is indeed the case it must have been an incredibly brief instant.

If that is not the explanation, why on earth - in a class of boat that is normally almost perfectly balanced - was she carrying so much weather helm that I needed a whopping 20° of rudder to keep her on course???

And I cannot believe that the centreboard was too far up; if it were, which is most unlikely, that would account for the leeway, but certainly not for the tiller angle, as it would give significant lee helm rather than weather helm, i.e. the tiller would be at a significant angle in the other direction.

# SHORT COLREGS QUIZ

## Answers

1. A single white light may indicate any of the following:

- A stern light, on any vessel
- A single all-round light permitted for a power-driven vessel of not more than 7 m, capable of not more than 7 knots. She could be moving in any direction, including coming straight towards you
- A rowing boat
- A sailing dinghy or other small sailing boat
- The masthead light of any vessel - including a ship - which is hull down over the horizon, or otherwise far enough away for her other lights not to be visible
- A vessel at anchor (or aground, if for some reason her additional Not Under Command lights are not visible)
- The horror one; a very large ship coming straight towards you in mist or fog, forward steaming light visible, all others lost in the murk
- A fixed white light ashore.

So essentially it could be almost anything; you know that something is there, but you have little idea of what that something might be, or of what it is doing.

Your correct action is to keep well clear.

Bear in mind that a ship which is hull down beyond the horizon, with only her masthead light/s visible, may be only a very few miles away - and your horizon at a height of eye of, say 3 feet above the horizon is only 2 miles away. She may well be travelling at 20 knots or more, covering 2 miles in only 6 minutes or less. Some fast ferries travel at twice that speed, i.e. 40 knots, so will cover 2 miles in just 3 minutes. So keep that white light under observation; ships can creep up on you faster than you may realise.

2. We do not of course know what came earlier, i.e. how this situation arose. We also know nothing about their relative speeds; the powerboat could be planing fast, or alternatively could be just idling, perhaps fishing; but for the purpose of this quiz we will exclude fishing in the context specified by Colregs - i.e. (commercial) fishing with lines nets or trawls, such that it impairs her ability to manoeuvre, so sea angling does not automatically make her the stand-on vessel. Likewise the sailing boat could be doing any speed from ghosting up to seriously fast; the current world sailing speed record stands at 65.45 knots (Paul Larsen, *Vestas Sailrocket*, Walvis Bay, 24 November 2012), and although not recognised for record purposes she reported a maximum instantaneous speed of 68.33 knots. Foiling craft routinely achieve well over 20 knots, and indeed even the (non-foiling) Shearwater catamarans of the sixties were good for 20 knots. So there are several different possibilities, and we have only a single snapshot.

If the powerboat has crossed the path of the sailing vessel (from starboard to port) she was originally the give-way vessel because, even if she was not initially overtaking (which she may possibly have been),



power gives way to sail anyway; and she remains the give-way vessel until safely past and clear. But if that was the case she is possibly now clear ahead, and the risk of collision has possibly already passed.

However if that did not happen, and the sailing vessel closed on the powerboat from the angle shown, then the sailing vessel gives way; this is because she either is or may be within the arc of the stern light, and therefore she is overtaking. We don't need to know anything about their relative speeds - although that may determine whether there is or is not a risk of collision in the first place; whether or not she is overtaking is defined solely in terms of angles. Whether she is or is not within the overtaking arc has very deliberately been drawn as too close to call, but if in doubt she must assume that she is.

The diagram has been carefully drawn to put her very close to the demarcation angle; the draughting intention, set up with the aid of photo-editing software, was just  $2\frac{1}{2}^\circ$  inside the arc, but when I actually measured it on a printed version of the page I made it  $2^\circ$ , with a measurement tolerance of  $\pm 1^\circ$ , although I have since slightly tweaked the diagram. The tolerance is primarily because of the uncertainty in identifying the centrelines of the two vessels. So she is indeed within the overtaking arc, but only just; and this also illustrates in passing just how very wide that arc is.

**The overtaking rule overrides almost all other rules, including the “power gives way to sail” rule.** The only rules that override the overtaking rule are those giving precedence to vessels constrained by their draught when using narrow channels, and to vessels using Traffic Separation Schemes.

3. First point; in the normal course of events you are required to give way to any vessel using a narrow channel and constrained by her draught. It might seem a fair question whether a highly manoeuvrable (and relatively shallow draught) Mersey ferry comes into that category, and especially since with her draught (c. 2.5 m) the depth of water is ample for her across almost the entire width of the Mersey in this section apart from the extreme edges of the river; however a local Notice to Mariners used to deem all shipping within the Mersey to be in that situation, although greatly to my surprise that particular NOTM seems to be no longer listed on the port website (at the time of writing). So it would seem that you may be legally required to give way; but by force of circumstance you find yourself unable to do so. You therefore very urgently need to let the ferry know of your predicament; and even if not legally required to give way you still need to let her know that you cannot get out of her way..

If you are disabled in a hazardous area like this one would very much hope that you have **already** got on the VHF and called up either Liverpool VTS or Coastguard to advise them of your difficulties; that should have been done more or less at outset, certainly as soon as it became clear that you weren't going to be able to sort out the problem more or less immediately. You will then be already in contact with them, and either they can alert the ferry or you can call them up directly. If you haven't already called them up then now is the time to do so, urgently, and I suggest that a PAN PAN call would probably be justified.

Not carrying VHF? You will please forgive us saying so, but **you SHOULD be carrying it**, and it has long been a very strong club recommendation that you should do so. Indeed that recommendation was brought in at your Editor's instigation when he was serving as Vice-Commodore over 15 years ago, and it has been our recommendation ever since.

However if you are nonetheless caught out in such a situation without VHF, if you are carrying a mobile phone you could try 999 and ask for Coastguard.

Failing that you can be reasonably sure that the watchkeeper on the ferry will be watching you acutely. So I suggest that in those dire circumstances and if you have no electronic means of alerting the ferry to your situation it would be legitimate to try one of the Colregs visual distress signals, if only to indicate that you cannot move out of the way. The use of distress signals is restricted by law to situations where there is “grave and imminent danger” to either a vessel or life, but that test would seem to me to be satisfied if you reasonably fear that you may otherwise be run down. I suggest stand up facing the ferry, and slowly raise and lower both arms repeatedly.

## NAUTICAL QUIZ

Answers to the late Philip Latham's quiz question; **“How many ropes on a fully-rigged ship?”**

Two answers are offered, both initially believed to be fully correct so far as they go, and complementary to each other.

Philip was a retired professional seaman (Merchant Navy, deck), and his answer was **“Two; the bucket rope and the bell-rope; all the others are sheets, braces, halliards, warps, etc.”** He could have also added many others to that list, including “lines (including buntlines, gantlines, etc.), gaskets, strops, stoppers, points (as in reef points), vang, guys, stays, martingales”, etc.

Richard Moore, my oldest sailing friend, as well as being a first class recreational seaman is a retired professional engineer, and his take on the question is different and reflects his engineering background; **“All the ones in the boatswain's store which haven't been allocated yet.”**

Put the two answers together, and at first I thought that the result is probably both correct and complete.

**However;** on further reflection, I recollect from my very brief experience sailing on *Royalist* around 45 years ago, the first of the two successive Sea Cadet ships bearing that name, that there was either a rope or a steel rail under each of the yards, on which we stood while bending over the yards working the sails. I suspect that in a modern ship like *Royalist* this was steel tube, or other rigid metal structure, and certainly I do not recollect any suggestion of feeling it sway under foot - which would be a disconcerting experience when perhaps 80-feet up in the air. But I also suspect that that in an earlier age they might well have been rope, although the potential then for fore-and-aft sway while working the yards is worrying (to say the least). If they were rope it seems likely that they were called footropes, so that is potentially several more ropes (two per yard, one either side of the mast) to be added to the list, a further 36 for the specific rig in the diagram which went with this item.

## UNUSUAL BOATS – 32

### Prout Folding Boats

We have two articles this time, this present one being a late addition to the planned piece, but you will see why very shortly. Those readers with long enough memories may recollect that we did an article on these wood-and-canvas folding boats exactly seven years ago, in Autumn 2016. Commencing as a very small boy in 1949, and continuing into my early teens in the mid-fifties, I cut my nautical teeth on one of these.

Incidentally the online forum that I drew heavily on for that article is here:

<https://forum.woodenboat.com/forum/building-repair/116526-hello-from-a-folding-prout-owner>

I was delighted to learn last month from Roger Kirk-Smith that he had very recently purchased one, dating from that era and purchased from a Sue Ryder charity shop, as a fun boat. This is the rowing/sailing/outboard version, and I gather comes with complete sailing rig, and also with a 4 h.p. outboard - which is a whopping size for such a small and light boat. In their day they performed very well when powered by just a 1½ h.p. Anzani Pilot.

I look forward to seeing her in the flesh.



*In the LSC Moat*



*Folded, and being transported on a car roof rack*



*Sailing rig, in the moat.  
Clearly just trying it out, and in zero wind,  
so we will excuse the set of the sail!*



*Part assembled; thwarts (at least) yet to be fitted.*

We had one glorious incident with our one, although I myself was not directly involved, and I heard about it only many years later from my father. At that time we regularly holidayed at Porth Eilian, on Anglesey, a delightful small cove where most of the holidaymakers were regulars, and we all knew each other. One day a newcomer came down to the beach, parked his car, and started carrying things down to the beach. These items included a large valise, which he unpacked to reveal a (disassembled) skin-on-frame wood-and-canvas canoe.

Having unpacked and spread all the various bits of wood out on the beach he returned to his car for something else. With everyone on the beach watching, Father took the opportunity to remove one

similarly sized piece of wood from our own boat and place it amongst the newcomer's parts, and we then all sat back to watch the fun.

The owner returned to the beach, and assembled his canoe, but found he had one piece left over; *and it wasn't our piece!*

He then took it apart, and tried again; and this time he had a different piece left over!

After several attempts he gave up and went back to the car to get his lunch, at which point Father removed our piece.

After lunch the guy couldn't understand why the canoe went together perfectly easily, when it had been so much trouble before lunch.

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## Dunkirk Little Ships

These boats are unusual only in their individual participation in one particular great event in history; but through the sheer heroism of their skippers and crews at the time, and the ultimate success of the operation, they have earned a well-deserved place in the nation's corporate memory, and rightfully also a place in this series.

To our older members the saga of the Dunkirk Little Ships is very well known, even though the oldest of us still alive were no more than very young children at the time and have no first-hand memories of it. For any who do not know the story, suffice it to say that they were a fleet of small vessels, ranging from fishing boats to motor yachts, and if one famous contemporary novella by the American novelist Paul Gallico is to be believed (*The Snow Goose*) even rowing boats and sailing dinghies, which in 1940 crossed the Channel to assist in rescuing the defeated and retreating British Army from the beaches of Dunkirk, under the bombardment of the German forces. They ferried the soldiers from the beach out to waiting ships in deeper water, and in doing so saved some 338,000 British and French soldiers, and as a result they grasped some breathing space out of what would otherwise have been total defeat.

It may not be fair to say that it was one of the events which enabled us to actually win the War, but it was most certainly one that helped us to avoid immediately losing it at that point, and enabled us to fight another day.

The owners of many of the surviving Little Ships from that operation are intensely proud of their history, and rightfully so; and they celebrate it as a group even today, with regular events both on and off the water. And to quote Tom Cunliffe in an email just this month, “**Many of these are no more than Thames river cruisers from the 1920s and 30s. Now restored to a glory some may never have enjoyed even in their heydays, they are exquisite craft ...**”; and, quoting him again, “**the fiftieth Dunkirk Anniversary when I sailed with the fleet from Dover to Dunkirk on *Providence*, one of the few sailing yachts among their number. In those days veterans of Operation Dynamo were still among us and were aboard the boats. Prince Philip waved us off and it blew hard on that sunny day. The sailors were making fine weather of it, but some of the smaller launches were suffering. One boat helped another and the spirit of comradeship was strong when suddenly all heads turned northwards as the unmistakable growl of a Rolls-Royce Merlin split the Force 6 wind like a hot knife. A lone Spitfire appeared from over the white cliffs of Dover to fly over us at low altitude; then the pilot pulled back the stick, opened the throttle and soared away into the fathomless blue. I swear there wasn't a dry eye in the fleet.**”

We now offer a photo montage taken from the Association of Dunirk Little Ships website:  
<https://www.adls.org.uk>

We have space for only a very small, and random, selection, and there are vastly more known to the Association. Most of them are lovingly cared for, and their historic role is justly celebrated, as well as being still used for the purpose for which they were originally designed and built - as viable boats irrespective of their history.







## NEXT ISSUE

**Press Date will be 15<sup>th</sup> December, please**