

LIVERPOOL SAILING CLUB

QUARTERLY REVIEW

January 2024

Hove-to

First, greetings of the season to all our members.

Having seasonally greeted all of you we now extend our best wishes to recent past Commodore David Thompson, and Gilly, for their new home at Lytham St. Annes; and it was good to see them at our Christmas Dinner.

In a sailing connection with Lytham, it may not be widely known that the famous but ill-fated 1958 America's Cup challenger *Sceptre* was at one stage in her later career based there. At the time she was (and indeed still is) owned by a consortium, the Sceptre Preservation Society, based at the time at Lytham; and my erstwhile friend Mike Briers, who when I knew him was Secretary of Ribble Cruising Club, and who sadly died a few years ago, was one of the shareholders in her.

The actual challenge for the America's Cup was fairly unfortunate - she famously lost each one of her four races - to the extent that immediately after the event a spoof advertisement for her appeared on the noticeboard of Blundellsands SC, where I was at the time a Junior Member:

FOR SALE

One 12m yacht, *Sceptre*

Never sailed fast

Needs engine, or would convert to houseboat

Owner would consider any offer

Or exchange set of golf clubs

In all fairness to *Sceptre*, the defenders had (as usual at that time) all the advantages, including a fleet of four yachts which they raced regularly against each other in the run-up to the event, naming their defender only at the very last minute; whereas the Royal Yacht Squadron had to name their single Challenger at outset, and had no adequate opportunity to tune her against similar opponents, let alone doing so in the waters where the event would be raced.

Two Dinners: The Christmas Dinner was a thoroughly convivial annual festive event, much enjoyed by a goodly gathering of Members, in early December. Since it has already been reported, complete with photos, that is all that we will say about it at this stage; but perhaps it is pertinent to remind members about the forthcoming Annual Dinner on 10th February. That also promises to be a splendidly convivial event, and if you haven't already booked you are invited to place your bookings with Sue now.

The Icebreaker event was blessed with a glorious warm sunny day, very unusual for mid-December, a very convenient tide, and initially moderate winds. What more could one want at this time of year? Well, er, a continuance of the moderate winds would have been good, instead of which by the time it was appropriate for the only two skippers considering launching to actually do so the wind had noticeably freshened. I confess that I decided that it had now become too much for myself, especially for single-handing a GP14 and at that time of year, and the member with a very smart small speedboat likewise decided not to launch - and I agree with his decision; by then there was significant chop on the water, which would likely get even more at the turn of tide, and that appeared not to be the right boat for those conditions. So what was planned in hope, and up to a couple of hours ahead of time looked very promising, in the end had to be aborted. At least *A Capella* got an airing, even though she didn't get her bottom wet!

Vacancy:

Readers will no doubt have noticed that for the second time in succession this issue is not fully formatted, and by force of circumstance is published more or less "raw". For some years Mike Hall used to format each issue, using desktop publishing software, to give a more professional appearance to it; then when Mike retired Jenny James, then a relatively new member, who was an experienced journalist, took over that role. Unfortunately, about the time of our last issue Jenny was taken ill, and then as soon as she was back on her feet she landed a new job, which is so demanding that she has reluctantly had to retire from formatting this publication.

So we are now looking for a volunteer with the requisite interest and skills, and with access to desktop publishing software (or other suitable software), to format the (quarterly) raw copy into something more professionally presented. There is also an invitation to contribute a column specifically for Club News. Anything else that the volunteer may wish to do could be discussed and considered.

This could suit a member at any stage of life; the Editor himself is now in his eighties, and over the years we have had at least two other long-retired members involved at various times. Conversely the role could suit a young person perhaps looking towards a future career in journalism, and irrespective of future career intentions looking for something to put on a CV. Or anyone in between those two extremes.

If you think you can help, please contact either Phil or the Editor. The next issue will be the Easter one, which we intend will be available for formatting towards the end of March, with the intention of publishing soon after Easter.

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Also, while referring to the production of this publication, the Editor realises - and (sadly) accepts - that despite our name we have gradually become more of a powerboat club than a true sailing club; however he is acutely aware that most of the articles that he himself has written are about sailing boats rather than power boats. That reflects his personal background and interests, so he makes no apology for that; but from the Club's viewpoint it is arguably an omission, and it is one which he would be very happy to address - however doing so requires a supply of suitable material. The solution lies in the hands of the Members; if any of you care to submit articles of interest to the powerboat fraternity we will be delighted to consider them for inclusion. So over to you guys, to produce some articles of interest to the powerboaters!

Of course seamanship is seamanship, and in that regard there is a large overlap between sail and power. So I hope that the Colregs Quiz, which this time once again presents a practical problem of something going wrong (so what are you then going to do about it?) will be a useful refresher, and perhaps provoke some thoughts, for both our sailing and our powerboating members.

By the time this issue reaches you the festive season will be all done and dusted, but I trust that you will all have had an enjoyable time with family and friends. All that remains is to wish our winter fishermen - and any other hardy souls - a good winter on the water; and for the rest of us we look forward to the Annual Dinner, and to the prospect of a good season in 2023.



SHORT COLREGS QUIZ

Answers at end, after our Unusual Boats feature

You are in a powerboat, at night, in open water, and showing the correct lights. Dead ahead of you, you see the classic red white and green triangle of an approaching power-driven vessel (less than 50 m) head-on. You (correctly) alter course to starboard, which puts the approaching vessel now on your port bow. You then see that her aspect now changes, with the result that you see her white steaming light and her green starboard light.

1. What has happened?
2. Which is the “stand-on” vessel?
3. What action/s should you take?
4. What should you specifically avoid doing (so far as possible)?

CRUISING; CUMBRIAN CRUISE

Part 6

And So Home

The last instalment ended at a point where we had just arrived and berthed in Glasson Basin Marina, at Glasson Dock.



Pleasant berth, with a pleasant view, in Glasson Basin Marina

However, before that, a very recent historical update. A previous episode (Summer last year), describing a visit to Piel Island, recounted the tale of Lambert Simnel's failed uprising of 1487 against King Henry, where his campaign was on the basis that as one of the "Princes in the Tower" he was the rightful King of England. In the last very few months a news report has appeared, from which it now appears that this story has resurfaced, and that it has been given some serious academic credence;

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/princes-in-the-tower-actually-became-pretenders-to-the-throne-gv89vc9ns>

Returning now to my visit to Glasson Dock, the marina is situated in a fairly attractive location; the village of Glasson Dock is pleasant, and of some historical interest, and there is some enjoyable level walking to be had along the river in both directions. As I originally wrote this I had just returned from a shopping expedition to the historic city of Lancaster, having chosen to walk there - which was enjoyable - along the river; then bus home with the shopping. But I had made a sad mistake in not first changing into walking boots, and I was by then paying a slight price for that!

Sunday morning saw a return visit to the delightful little church at Glasson Dock, which I had previously visited on Palm Sunday while I was in Glasson with Ed, and on that previous occasion as soon as I made my number with the organist for the day he said that he was not really a player, he just maintained the instrument; his real instrument was the bass guitar, and he pressed me to play for the service. I had demurred at pushing the appointed organist out of his place, but he insisted, and I duly played for the service. This time I was recognised on arrival, and immediately button-holed by the elderly lady organist on duty; would I please play for the service again. And it was a pleasure to do so. Of course I am full of admiration for the loyalty of the vast army of (usually) middle aged or elderly pianists (usually female) who week by week stand in and do their honest - and indeed honourable - best; where would the church be without them. But most of them are not organists, by any stretch of the imagination.

Sunday was also a nice sunny day with almost no wind, so several yachts in the marina were airing their sails while still moored to the jetties. They reminded me of another quote from the same Coleridge work, "As idle as a painted ship, upon a painted ocean." And that just about exhausts my repertoire of Coleridge quotations!

Like most marinas, harbours, and indeed sailing clubs, the boats here range from the humble to the magnificent, and from the sadly neglected - abandoned even - to the lovingly cherished and immaculately maintained. And some are intrinsically interesting; I was chatting on the Thursday with the new owner of a small two masted GRP yacht with a somewhat unusual rig; two masts, foremast a very long way forward, and probably no headsail. I commented on the unusual rig and enquired whether this was the Freedom Rig, to which he replied that it is a copy of it; the manufacturers of the boat call her the Liberty 23, being a deliberate play on the word Freedom.

Some of the yachts, and particularly some of the larger ones, really are things of beauty, even if some of them must be obscenely expensive for an individual owner; they are reminiscent of the story variously told of King George V and also of J P Morgan. In either version, a friend asked him how much it would cost to run a steam yacht like his one. When he replied "You can't afford it" the man bridled; "How can you possibly say that when you know nothing of my circumstances?" The answer was "If you need to ask the question, you can't afford it!"

Of course some of these yachts may well be owned by syndicates, or clubs, or foundations, or corporate bodies, and intended to take groups of 20 people to sea at a time.

Berthing fees here are very reasonable - by marina standards, that is; a onetime sailing friend of mine from some decades ago (Chris Golds, of Braunton) always maintained that the word “marina” was spelled **M-O-N-E-Y**! Where other marinas were (at that time, some years ago now) typically charging around £20 per night for my boat, this one was charging £10 per day or £60 per week flat rate, although they do seem to charge by the day rather than by the night, and it sometimes makes a difference. I arrived on a Thursday morning, and intended leaving on the following Monday morning, so that is 5 days (but only 4 nights, and only for 4 lots of 24 hours.) However I did overhear a conversation with a potential customer about permanent berthing; all their contracts start from the 1st of the month, so if coming in on (say) 7th it would be backdated to 1st; but it works both ways, and someone coming in on (say) 23rd of the month would have a contract dated from 1st of the following month, and get the extra few days free. So perhaps a short-term visitor arriving in late afternoon might get that day free; I don't know.

Incidentally even when I was leaving on the Monday morning, six of the eight yachts were still in the main dock. But in most cases I have no way of determining whether they are permanently based there, or had been awaiting repairs to the lock but their owners had run out of time and had temporarily returned to home and work, with a view to moving into the marina the following weekend.



*Large schooner, apparently steel (or perhaps aluminium?), with colossal beam.
And freeboard surprisingly low for that amount of beam.*

*The multiple chines, even above the waterline, rather than a truly rounded hull,
strongly suggest metal construction;
although I confess that I can't really regard that hull as a thing of beauty!*



Beautiful large carvel-built motor yacht about to be “got wet” - but possibly only to allow her to take up at this stage, since they left her still in the slings for some days. When I left she had been there for 72 hours, and when she had been there only about half an hour the owner commented that she had “taken a little up forward, but nothing to pump yet”; if the hoist and the slipway are not required for anything else she may indeed be left for another few days. That will give her a good soaking, in perfect safety.

She is part way through what looks to be a superb refit, and a beautiful job has been done on the hull. The owner says “Don’t look too closely above deck; that is next!”



Greylag; another schooner, and a superb one



Quite an attractive traditional large motor yacht, dating from the twenties.

*Would be very nice to live aboard, but I would expect that
fuel for her engines might cost an arm and a leg.
And see also below (in the text of the article) for her problems ...*

The 1920s motor yacht above is photographed from her better side; her port side was at the time undergoing major structural repairs. Five years previously her owner replaced some planks, doing the work himself, and entirely correctly using pitch pine; that is a recognised boatbuilding wood, and is the material of the original planking, most of which has lasted ninety-odd years without problem. However he used reclaimed timber for the replacement, and it turned out to have been infected by dry rot. So the job now has to be done again, but bigger, because some of the neighbouring timber has also now become infected.

Currently several sections of planking have been removed. The owner is taking it in his stride: "I did the job last time, so I can do it this time." That is a bigger job than I would like to take on, certainly now, but then he is younger than me ...



My first thought was “Velsheda? Without her keel”

Actually she is not, and is merely typical of the large racing yachts of that era, with their long overhangs

And, incidentally, Velsheda is today in the Mediterranean, in her third incarnation following two rebuilds many years apart.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Velsheda>, <http://sy-velsheda.com/racing.html> and <http://www.j-k7.com>

This present hull, clearly unfinished and needing an immense amount of work, is either built or sheathed in GRP; occasional clues make me think it is a GRP sheathing on an elderly wooden hull.

Sadly she looks as though the project has been abandoned.

Velsheda was one of the most famous J-Class yachts, built in 1933, I think the second one built by Camper & Nicholson, and with an outstanding racing career, although to quote Wikipedia “with so much stretch in the rigging and systems it was inevitable that J Class masts could not be held in column, and would collapse in stronger winds. In anything above a force 3 there was serious concern about holding the rig in place without collapse.”

An internet search on the name reveals that she was then laid up in a mud berth in the Hamble in 1937; incredibly, that is only the 4th year after her building, the end of her 5th season at the very most. She was then allowed to eventually become derelict, and after nearly fifty years lying there she was rescued in 1984 and refitted for charter work, still without an engine. She was then laid up and moored at Gosport in 1995/6, before being purchased in 1996 “from the bankrupt C&N yard in Portsmouth Harbour”. Her new owner then commissioned a major rebuild, including a new one-piece carbon fibre mast, and an inboard diesel engine installation for the first time. She was relaunched in 1997. A Dutch businessman then bought her in 1999, and “has campaigned her extensively in the Maxi and classic racing circuits in the Caribbean and in the Mediterranean.”

Returning to my own boat, on any properly maintained boat there are always shiphusbandry jobs to be done somewhere. One of a handful which I did in the marina was to adjust my reefing arrangements; I had inherited the (very good) system which came with the boat, but after reefing her off the Duddon Estuary I realised that the angles for the two respective clew reefing lines were less than optimised. Then when I came to make adjustments in the marina, I realised that there was also a problem with the alignment of the tack reefing lines. The ideal, of course, is to adequately pull down the sail, while maintaining a nice taut foot giving a suitable flat sail; the very last thing one wants in a gale is a great bag of a full sail.

In practice it may be complicated by the bunt of the reefed sail tending to bunch underneath the reefing lines. And a further complication with any system which involves screwing fittings into place is to minimise the number of holes in the spars arising from successive attempts to get it right. For different reasons the latter is important both on wooden spars, as on this boat, and on metal ones. However I think I have now made an improvement, and only time will tell.

All that remained for my summer cruise then was the “delivery trip” back home. That was a fast if slightly tedious passage; not enough wind to sail, and what wind we did have was initially on the nose until the course alteration after leaving the Lune and its approaches. So initially I had to motor, then motor-sailed until the Mersey, then motor up the Mersey.

But I had a self-imposed time limit, and really no sensible option for a bolt hole part way; Fleetwood was too early, and to get into the Ribble is so constrained by the tide that my time of arrival would have been much the same, although the Ribble did present the option of stopping for a break while awaiting the tide to get in. But I decided to press on, and was greatly helped by the ebb under my tail for the latter part of leaving the Lune, and then the flood all the way up the Mersey; once clear of the approach channels and into the river proper we were doing between 8 and 9 knots over the ground. Hence a good time for the passage; 12 hours and 10 minutes “door to door”, including about an hour to pass through the two locks at Glasson. Slipped my mooring at Glasson Marina at 0910, and anchored off LSC at 2120 - which of course means that the passage up the Mersey was in the dark, but that is not a problem; I have the correct lights, and have done more than enough night sailing over the years, and in this case it was my home waters into the bargain.

I had been locked out through the sea lock at HW - $\frac{3}{4}$ hour, so the flood was still running, and surprisingly strongly. As I passed the anchorage at Sunderland Point I noticed from the direction in which the boats were lying that all except the most downstream part of the anchorage was already enjoying the first of the ebb, or perhaps an ebbing eddy, while the rest of the river was still flooding; possibly useful information for the future. However I was unable to use this because at the time I was working the shallows on the other side of the river, and I would have lost too much ground by crossing the main flood stream to reach that local ebb.

And despite the intermittent daytime sunshine the wind was seriously cold, so I ended up wearing multiple layers, topped off with full waterproofs, just for warmth!

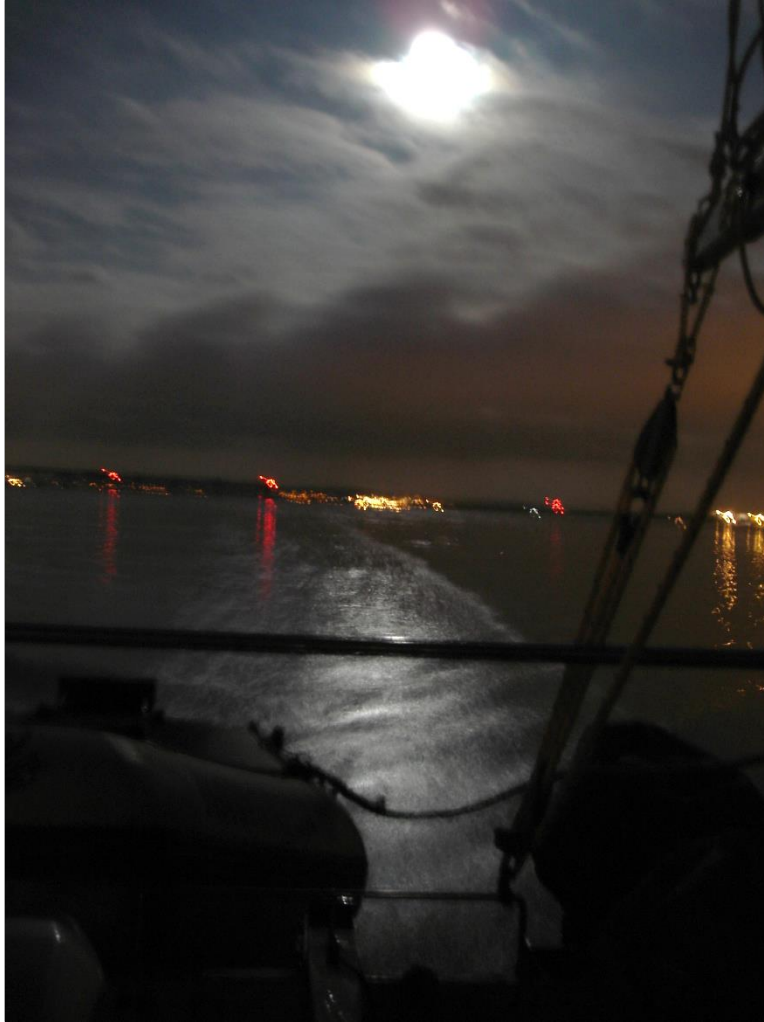
One curiosity; while passing Blackpool there was a very prominent and powerful flashing white light, which appeared to be a beacon of some sort, but I was entirely unable to make sense of the pattern of flashes, which appeared almost to be random. Certainly it was not a normal maritime pattern, and there is nothing on the chart to identify a maritime beacon in that location. Equally, I am 99.99% certain that they were not morse. Taking a compass bearing and applying that to our GPS position (assumed accurate) it does appear that it is possibly a beacon on Blackpool Airport, but I thought all aero beacons on airfields were normally morse characters, to identify the field; e.g. Liverpool **LP** (I think now discontinued; it

is not shown on the chart, and I haven't seen it in the flesh in years, but I remember regularly seeing it several decades ago), Wharton **WQ** (currently shown on the chart). And the chart certainly does not show a beacon of any sort where I saw this one, maritime, aero, or anything else.

Around 8 years later, last year I think, I saw what may have been the same flashing light again, while walking on the beach at Formby. Again I was unable to correlate it with anything on the chart, and neither could I make any sense of the flashing sequence; but I now belatedly wonder whether it has something to do with a disco!



*Sunset behind the Burbo Bank Wind Farm,
taken while coming up the Queen's Channel leading into the Mersey*



The full moon, and my most impressive wake, streaming aft from my anchored yacht, off the sailing club.

I reckon that that tide must have been running at at least 3 knots even there, possibly 4 knots, in just 10 feet of water.

And, unintentionally, my position was directly above the slipway; no wonder we have issues with launching & recovery with tides as fast as that!

And an overall assessment of the cruise?

I had come home from the previous year's cruise feeling that the boat was not really fit for the purpose for which I wish to use her, and that I had managed to achieve a worthwhile and safe and enjoyable cruise despite the very severe limitations of the boat. However in 2014 the extra ballast had (as hoped) transformed her for the better; she was now properly standing up to her canvas, and coping with the seas, even in fresh conditions offshore. That is a vast improvement, and I now feel much more confident in her. I did at first think that she might still benefit from yet more ballast, but I could not do that until I could afford to replace the trailer; and by the time I was able to do that I had decided that the present ballast is probably about right!

I also have great confidence in my main ground tackle, if not in my kedge. However for even greater security I developed it a stage further; still the same Rocna 6 kg main anchor, but now with 30 m of 8 mm chain plus a further 30 m of 6 mm chain, plus the anchorplait warp - and I have never yet needed to actually deploy the warp as well as all that chain. I have also now installed a winch in order to be reliably able to lift that weight off the seabed.

That apart, a thoroughly enjoyable extended cruise, which gave me great confidence in the boat.

On the financial front, the total cost of the cruise was only a fraction of what a package holiday abroad would have cost, and it provided vastly more enjoyment. But of course the capital cost of the yacht had already been paid for; and to justify that capital expense one then has to use the boat sufficiently to make it worth while.

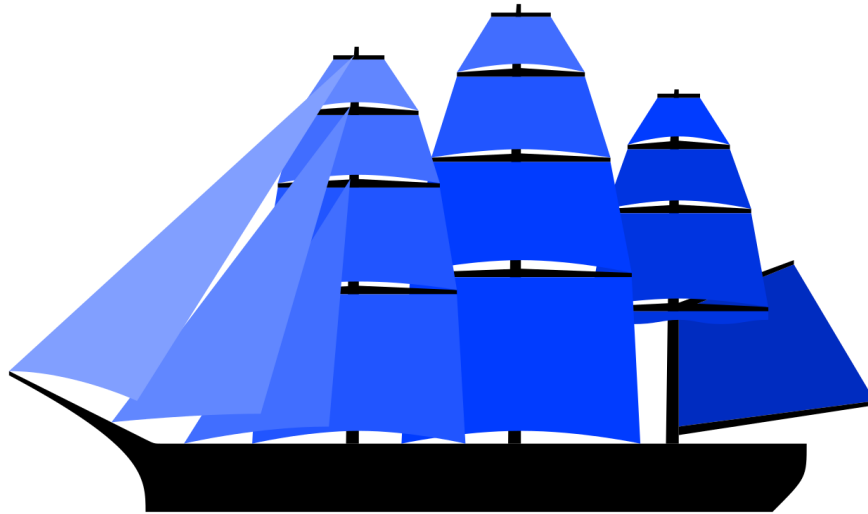
Indeed a few days after returning I treated myself to breakfast at a local pub, and I couldn't help overhearing some of the conversation at a neighbouring table. Four middle-aged gents, talking about their recent holidays, and a holiday in Benidorm had cost them (from memory) around £2,000; I imagined at the time that that was for a couple, but it might possibly have been per head. I had just returned from a significantly longer holiday, which was (for me, at any rate) vastly more enjoyable than a package holiday in any resort such as Benidorm, for only a fraction of that cost; but of course I had already tied up capital in the boat, and spent money on maintenance and upkeep and insurance, etc.

But I still think I had the better bargain!

NAUTICAL DEFINITIONS

All but two of them this time are names of different sails; and the two exceptions both have a clear connection to particular sails.

Spanker or driver A fore-and-aft sail, usually gaff-rigged, on the mizzen mast of a square-rigged ship.



The spanker is the small sail at bottom right. Although small, it is situated so far aft of the centre of the ship that it has considerable leverage; and when it is required to tack the ship this sail can therefore be very important in helping to drive the ship round onto a new tack.

Gennaker I cannot do better than quote the Wikipedia article: “A **gennaker** is a sail that was developed around 1990. Used when sailing downwind, it is a cross between a genoa and a spinnaker. It is not symmetric like a true spinnaker but is asymmetric like a genoa, but the gennaker is not attached to the forestay like a jib or genoa. The gennaker is rigged like a spinnaker but the tack is fastened to the hull or to a bowsprit. It has greater camber than a genoa (but significantly less camber than a spinnaker). This is optimal for generating lift at larger angles of attack. An early form of gennaker was the "gollywhomper", used briefly in the 1870s.

“The gennaker is a specialty sail primarily used on racing boats to bridge the performance gap between a genoa and a spinnaker. It is sometimes the only downwind sail on board because it is easier to use and less expensive than a spinnaker. Due to its geometry, the sail is less prone to collapsing than a spinnaker. A gennaker is optimal for a beam reach, while an asymmetrical spinnaker is optimal for a broad reach or run.”



[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gennaker#/media/File:49er skiff sailing AUS nationals Geelong.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gennaker#/media/File:49er_skiff_sailing_AUS_nationals_Geelong.jpg)

Cruising 'chute Another hybrid, but designed for cruising boats rather than racing boats. It is essentially the same as a gennaker or asymmetric spinnaker, but slightly smaller, and cut in such a way to give priority to it being easy to handle rather than to ultimate power and speed.



<https://jollyparrot.co.uk/blog/what-is-a-cruising-chute-344>

Code zero (Code 0) Another large high-performance sail, and again cut fairly full, this time used by both racing and cruising yachts. As I understand it, and I am open to correction, it is a large and moderately full headsail for use in light winds and when the course is not beating to windward, but a little off the wind; it is an alternative to a gennaker or an asymmetric spinnaker, and it will point a little higher (i.e. it will sail a little closer to the wind) than either of those sails.



<https://www.bavariayachts.com/we-are-bavaria/stories/choosing-sail-spinnaker-gennaker-code-zero/>

White sails (only) Perhaps confusingly, this has little or nothing to do with sail colour, except indirectly. It refers to a decision, and sometimes a racing restriction, to use only the “standard” mainsail (plus the equivalent on the other mast in the case of two-masted rigs) plus “standard” headsails; specifically it excludes the use of spinnakers (which are often flamboyantly coloured, hence the moniker “white sails” for situations where spinnakers are not used), and also arguably excludes gennakers and Code Zeroes. The term is still used if the “white sails” are in fact strongly coloured!



*To illustrate that the term does not directly refer to sail colour,
“A Capella” sailing under “white sails only”, in the form of
her then brand new suit on its very first outing.*

*Abersoch, 2007,
Owner helming, Eddie Sabino crewing.*

Full plain sail Largely what the name suggests; spinnakers, gennakers, Code Zeroes, are all excluded, but full sail apart from that. In my own regular use of the term in *Tarka II*'s log book, on gaff rig it also excludes the topsail.

Jackyard A short spar used to extend the head and/or the foot of a gaff topsail.



<https://www.woodenboat.com/online-exclusives/jackyard-topsails>

It is worth copying part of the accompanying explanation to this photo: “A Tiger of a Sail. **A jackyard topsail** is rarely seen today, and there is good reason for that. The jackyard topsail is a sail with murder on its mind, swinging long spars along the deck, intent on sweeping the crew overboard. If you see a jackyard topsail set today, such as on the P-boat JOYANT or on the NY50 SPARTAN, you should take notice, because under a jackyard topsail lies a brave captain and braver crew, whose full attention will be on that large sparred piece of canvas hoisted high into the sky. In the image of the **Herreshoff NY70 YANKEE** (above) the jackyard is nearly as long as the gaff. The jacksails on RELIANCE’s topsail, shown in the Library of Congress photo below, were 68’ and 58’ long according to the Herreshoff Museum archives. Imagine swinging the unstayed mast of a 50’ sailboat along the deck while under way... that’s what a jackyard topsail would feel like to those handling it on deck, two of them.

“A topsail... a normal friendly topsail, without the additional spar extending beyond the gaff... is a light triangular sail set as high as possible, in an effort to set more sail and catch the higher, often stronger, air moving above the gaff. A traditional fore-and-aft rigged schooner might want to set a little more sail area than her working lowers provide, especially in light air. She has to have a topmast in place, as many schooners do, and she might set two topsails at one time, one on the main, and one on the foremast. In an engineless boat, say a working Friendship sloop like the BELFORD GRAY shown here, you’d want a topsail to get home when the breeze fails, catching that bit of wind that would otherwise be lost.

“A topsail is set from the deck with a simple arrangement of sheets and halyard, admittedly using a lot of long lines. It requires vigorous hoisting with all eyes lifted skyward. A topsail on a large schooner can be a fun sail to hoist and set because it is relatively small compared to the big working gaff sails, and because the sight of the ancient sail, set and drawing high above the rest of the rig, is an exciting and heart-pumping spectacle, a thing to hold in reverential stance, and usually worth the effort involved, at least in the eyes of a sailor.

“But a JACKYARD topsail is another animal altogether, a tiger outside the cage compared to the friendly topsail described above.”

Iron Topsail Yachtsman’s slang term for an auxiliary engine, whether inboard or outboard.

AUTONOMOUS WINDSHIPS

During the early autumn last year I happened to see a mention online of a technical lecture in Barrow-in-Furness which potentially interested me; the subject had some overlap with my old degree studies, and I thought that I might be still able to understand it, and that I might find it interesting. So I took myself off to it, and I did indeed understand most of it, and found it interesting; and while there picked up a programme for the winter, as a result of which I went to a couple more.

One of these latter ones, under the auspices of the Royal Institute of Naval Architects, was entitled “Autonomous Windships”. When I told my godson that I was intending to go to it his immediate question was “**Is that a yacht out of control?**”; I like it!

As it turned out that was not a lecture on existing such vessels, but rather setting out the case for developing them, and as such it was indeed interesting. Suffice it here to say that wind-powered vessel technology is extremely well developed at the scale of yachts, even seriously large ones, but not at the scale of massive ships; however for the short-haul trade there is a very good case for a large number of modest-sized vessels rather than fewer very large vessels. And for vessels of that size the wind technology (masts, sails, rigs) already exists, is already extremely well developed, and can be ordered off the shelf. Direct wind power offers large potential savings in fuel costs, and for bulk cargoes which are not time-critical has a lot to commend it.

As a detail, indirect wind power, in the form of wind turbines to generate electricity, then using that to produce “green” synthetic fuels, transporting those fuels to ports and then burning them aboard ships in order to drive engines, which turn propellers in order to generate thrust, have significant losses along each step of the chain. The lecturer gave figures for each of these losses, with the remarkable result that less than 10% of the original wind power eventually appears as power actually delivered to the ship by the propeller. A sobering statistic.

As regards autonomy, again the technology already exists, and there are a limited number of autonomous ships in service. That technology offers very large apparent savings in manning costs.

There are several problems as yet unsolved, but a number of major firms and other bodies are actively working on them. These problems include:

- Regulatory - what counts as an adequate lookout for an unmanned autonomous vessel?
- Insurance - related to the above.
- Cargo stowage and trimming; this is a highly skilled job, normally currently assigned to the First Mate, who typically holds a Master’s ticket. Getting it wrong can endanger the ship. How would this now be supervised?
- Ongoing repair and maintenance: a large part of the work of a ship’s crew on passage is ongoing maintenance. How would this be done?
- Emergency repairs or other action in the event of storm, accident, or other mishap; how would this be effected with no crew onboard?
- How could an unmanned autonomous vessel render assistance to a vessel in distress?

Autonomous vessels might at least solve the problem of watchkeeper fatigue in the short-haul Home Trade cargo service, a problem which has caused a worrying number of collisions and groundings in which it has subsequently transpired that the lone watchkeeper had fallen asleep. That is not so much the fault of the individuals involved, as of the grossly unreasonable work schedules that they are all too often required to maintain. MAIB has been concerned about this problem for some years, and it has also been highlighted both in this publication and elsewhere in the yachting press.

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Travelling from Liverpool up to Barrow-in-Furness (about 235 miles by road for the round trip) in order to attend technical lectures is probably somewhat unusual, but it is certainly not unique; others from Liverpool also periodically attend some of them. In my case it could equally be regarded as either leisure or business: I do it primarily because I find them interesting; but because they are related in varying degrees to my professional field I can justify billing them to my business accounts as CPD (Continuing Professional Development).

My options for travel are rail or driving; and of course we are all aware that the green lobby would have us leave our cars at home and use public transport. I am not insensitive to climate concerns, and I take due note; and when it is reasonably viable I will consider using rail travel. But not, to paraphrase Michael Flanders, if the train “deposits me seventeen miles from my destination at two o’clock in the morning”.

The problem in this instance is the return journey, back to Liverpool. Short of putting up in a hotel overnight, which would add enormously to the cost, the journey by rail would depart Barrow at 2145, and get me into Liverpool South Parkway nearly 9 hours later, at 0643, after spending a presumably very cold and uncomfortable night on a station platform somewhere (or waiting room if I am lucky). Indeed my godson tells me that I might not even be allowed to do so, as stations these days close down completely overnight, and even genuine overnight travellers are thrown out onto the streets.

But if I drive, for roughly the same cost I can be home by about midnight and have a peaceful night in bed.

Guess which I am going to choose

This is not of course an argument that rail companies should be required to provide late evening services where they do not have the traffic to support them; that would be untenable. Rather, it is a caution that politicians and campaigners and others who know little or nothing of a person’s individual circumstances or of the requirements of the journey should not assume that “one size fits all”, and should not presume to dictate what mode of transport he should choose.

BAR CHAT

Although the Festive Season is now behind us, hopefully(?) it is not so far gone that we cannot hark back.

Traditions for the festive meal are much broader than always staying with turkey with all the trimmings. When I was a young adult, around sixty years ago, for a few years our family tradition for Christmas Day included a convivial evening dinner at the Victoria Hotel in Prestatyn; the reason was that an aunt lived in Colwyn Bay, and this was a venue somewhere between us (albeit very much nearer to her than to ourselves), where we could all get together. I was happy to do the driving for our side of the family, and this was before the days of the so-called Breathalyzer Act (1967); we merely ensured that both our drinking and our driving were responsible.

On one occasion, one of the offerings on the hotel menu was poached salmon. When the waiter came to take our order he did not know where to put himself when my mother asked, in all feigned innocence (and she was a seriously good actress), whether the salmon had been poached in the cooking or in the obtaining.

Of course, given due prior warning, one could think of all sorts of amusing replies to that question!

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The final instalment of the Cumbria Cruise series (earlier in this issue), referring to J Class yachts, quotes from Wikipedia *“with so much stretch in the rigging and systems it was inevitable that J Class masts could not be held in column, and would collapse in stronger winds. In anything above a force 3 there was serious concern about holding the rig in place without collapse.”*

That reminds me of the delightful story of how the famous Brixham Trawler Regatta came into being. Apparently after The Great War (WW1), when the Large Class - predominantly J Class yachts - resumed racing they had a major Regatta at Torquay, just across the Bay from Brixham. They suffered from the above problems of stretch in the rigging, so in anything above force 3, or 4 at the very most, their skippers refused to sail. The trawler skippers of neighbouring Brixham were so amazed at this apparent wimpishness that one day, when it was blowing a good force 7, they paraded their fishing boats *en masse* off Torquay, under full plain sail, just to show these “wimpish” skippers what real sailormen do, and on a daily basis - and the Brixham Trawler Regatta was born.







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In the latter part of last August I took *A Capella* up to Coniston for what was initially planned as just a few days; in the event, because the weather was not attractive for sailing I extended the visit, twice, in the hopes of more attractive sailing weather later, and meanwhile I did other things. On two occasions I dined out at the local pub, the “Ship Inn”; the first occasion was sufficiently enjoyable to prompt the second visit a week later, albeit that the weather no longer induced me to sit outside, and the previous live music - provided by a string folk music ensemble called Celtic Strings, if I remember the name correctly, were not programmed on the second occasion.

The name of the pub is curious, given the location. I am sure we are all used to finding Ship Inns in coastal locations, and even inland at locations which were once coastal; an example of the latter - which I confess I have never visited - is at Sandside, between Arnside and Milnthorpe in the upper reaches of Morecambe Bay; today it is cut off from the sea by the railway viaduct, but prior to the coming of the railway ships did indeed venture that far up the bay. But Coniston??? Resolutely inland!

Unless perhaps it has a connection to the 19th-century steam vessel *Gondola*, originally built as a “railway vessel”, which was built in sections (I think in Barrow), and then transported to Coniston and assembled on the shores of the lake just outside Coniston village, for service on the lake. But if that is the explanation, the pub is a mile or two from where she was assembled and launched, and I did not see anything at the pub to suggest a connection with this particular small ship.

However that also reminds me of fifty years ago, when I owned my first yacht, and initially had her based at Burton, on the Milford Haven Waterway. Just over the water from my base was the Ferry Inn, at Pembroke Ferry, which became a great favourite for eating out, whether for lunch or dinner. The publican was a retired Naval Commander, “Commander Sir Darling” as he became known to us, from one of his own stories.

Amongst the pictures on the wall of the pub was one of a Lakes Steamer; and the story behind the photo was that she was a Windermere steamer, but during the War (and I am guessing many years later that this would have been the first rather than the second World War, but it could at a pinch have been either) she was requisitioned by the Navy. The publican’s grandfather (query, possibly father) was the naval officer tasked with bringing her down to the sea; in normal conditions this would have been impossible, except perhaps by road - and even that may well have been impossible. However he brought her down by water, in January, while the river out from the Lake (River Leven) was in spate, and there was therefore just enough water for her to float all the way. But it must have been a prodigious feat of seamanship to bring it off, backed up of course by a very thorough survey of the river beforehand.

And the sobriquet by which we knew him?

In retirement, having bought his pub, he had a new carpet laid. The carpet fitter was more than a little overawed at working for a Commander, RN, so whenever he addressed him he was torn between addressing him as Sir, or as Commander. He also downed more than a little liquor during the course of his working day, so as the day went on he became increasingly intoxicated, and this resulted in unduly familiar modes of address, to put it mildly. Thus by the end of each day he was routinely addressing his employer as “Commander, Sir, Darling”!!

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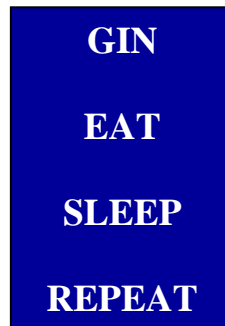
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Apologies if we have used this item previously, which I fear we may possibly have done, but I have checked in Bar Chat for the last two years and not found it.

As readers will have gathered from the previous item (if you didn't already know anyway), I enjoy dining out, albeit that an upmarket pub tends to be more my choice than a posh restaurant. And, as an aside, two long-established of my firm favourite pubs, in different parts of the country, have both closed, both under apparently straitened circumstances. Thankfully both have since reopened, albeit under new management; and I have since enjoyed both of them under their new management.

At my last visit to one of them before they closed, I noticed that the waiting staff were wearing dark coloured tops emblazoned on the back with the legend



GIN
EAT
SLEEP
REPEAT

I like it.

Then only shortly afterwards I saw a visitor at this club wearing a similar top emblazoned with the legend



SAIL
EAT
SLEEP
REPEAT

Arguably even better!

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One evening in the early autumn I took myself over to Blackpool to see the Illuminations; this was only the second time in my life that I had seen them - and they were worth the journey - and the previous occasion had been getting on for seventy years ago, when I was still a young boy. By deliberate planning

I arrived there in time to have dinner at a local Wetherspoons first, and while dining I was struck by their rope-themed lighting fittings:



This had everything going for it; unusual, striking, very well executed, and the wiring was completely hidden.

What a contrast from the rope-themed décor which I saw back in 2015 in a different Wetherspoons, in Ilfracombe; the concept there was entirely appropriate in a historic port, but what a pity that it was so badly executed:



Some of those splices are so badly finished that they might almost serve as baggywrinkle; and several of the eye splices have only two tucks, instead of the three which is an absolute minimum.

What a pity that they could not have engaged a competent seaman to make a proper job of it for them!

Ifracombe is one of the two largest commercial ports in North Devon, the other one being Bideford; indeed they are the only two still operating as real ports, as distinct from mere harbours. It is home to everything from very small open boats to coastal shipping, and everything in between. They have commercial fishing boats, excursion boats, privately-owned boats of all types, a thriving Yacht Club, and a lifeboat. And until relatively recent years, which had brought the advent of competition from online traders, they also had a substantial yacht chandlery. Along with Bideford it is one of the two home ports of the *Oldenburg*, the Lundy Ferry, which is a substantial ship; and from time to time it also becomes the short-term base of the *Balmoral*, a vintage passenger ship now serving as a historic tourist vessel. Surely to goodness in a port like that they could have found someone who knew how to splice; or they could at least have avoided advertising that they had engaged someone who doesn't!!!

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Comment from Tom Cunliffe, re our previous issue: “I enjoyed the newsletter as usual and agree with Bill Anderson's comment!

“By the way, there were definitely pilot schooners in Liverpool. I feature them in my first book on Pilots, now out of print.

<https://www.amazon.co.uk/Pilots-Pilotage-Schooners-N-america-Britain/dp/1861761937>.

“If you find a cheap copy, I think you'd enjoy reading about them.”

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Also regarding our last issue, an old friend from university who also regularly receives it writes:

“I noticed the reference to RYA training c 1970. At that time Langley had developed into an accredited training base in conjunction with the Norfolk Schools Sailing Association (*he was teaching at Langley School at that time - Ed.*). The RYA had commissioned a fellow called Bob Bond to develop a training scheme to suit the idiot-brained. I was required to attend. Being more than rebellious, the time came for more, this time sailing Wayfarers in Wells-next-the-Sea harbour. Astern of me were assessors trying to be serious. I said to my crew I'll put her in. Ignoring all the shouts from the assessors we neatly righted the boat, just getting our feet wet and sailed on. All was quiet from the assessors; we never heard another word and received our tickets. They knew that we knew, and we knew that they knew, and that was the end of the matter; and at the time I was Vice-Commodore (*of the local club - Ed.*)!”

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UNUSUAL BOATS - 33

Morecambe Bay Prawner

The Editor has had a soft spot for these fine sailing vessels ever since he bought one in 1972 as his first yacht, after a lifetime (to date) in dinghies. Despite her being “an old tore-out” she still sailed magnificently, and gave her owner a great deal of pleasure. Most Prawners, if not all, were originally gaff-rigged, and indeed most still are, but this particular one had at some time in her life been re-rigged as a bermudian sloop - and in the Editor’s experience that re-rig is unique in this particular class of boat, but it happened to work exceedingly well:



Quest, Milford Haven Waterway, 1973

Although a few of these boats were built as yachts at outset, most were built as commercial fishing boats. Various known as Morecambe Bay Prawners, Lancashire Nobbies, and Liverpool Bay Nobbies (although see next paragraph regarding these names), they were built at a number of small yards predominantly around the shores of Morecambe Bay; at Fleetwood, Arnside, Ulverston, Walney Ferry, and Millom. Crossfields of Arnside were the most prolific builder of them.

There is an excellent article about them in *Classic Boat* magazine, available online at <https://www.classicboat.co.uk/articles/class-notes/morecambe-bay-prawner/>, which claims - and I have no reason to dispute this - that the Morecambe Bay Prawners were one type of Lancashire Nobby, rather than the two names being synonymous, a claim which I am entirely happy to accept. The Editor acknowledges his debt to that article in some of the information in this present piece.

The design originated in the 1840s, when Crossfields' started to develop the local clinker-built transom-sterned smacks into the shallow draught boats that became very familiar, and that we know today. The design, and the size, evolved over the years; but perhaps most were around 31-34 ft LOA, with some of the Southport boats as large as 40-ft; they were gaff cutter rigged, and had low stern decks for ease of hauling the nets. Later boats had elliptical counter sterns, and cut away forefoots, partly in a quest for speed, in a market that was highly competitive.

The general design inspired no less than three local classes of yachts; the cutter-rigged Royal Mersey Restricted Class and Fleetwood Jewels, and the somewhat smaller sloop-rigged Royal Mersey Rivers class.

The shrimping season was August to November, and demand for the catch was boosted by the then modern growth in tourism, resulting in turn from the growth of the railways. Many of the boats were fitted with boilers amidships, so that the catch could be cooked on the run home, ready for sale to eager tourists immediately on arrival back in port.

By the 1920s the industry was changing, and although fishing under sail was still popular many boats were being fitted with engines. Crossfields built some boats with engines, but many more were retrofitted; and many of the latter were done the relatively easy way, by bringing the prop shaft out to one side of the keel, giving a propeller on the quarter - as was the case with my own yacht, *Quest*.

These boats had excellent sailing and sea-keeping abilities, and as shoal-draught boats they were well suited to the half-tide drying moorings that were (and still are) common in their area. With a single keel they dried out on their bilges, which in sheltered mooring locations drying onto soft mud was entirely safe; and I have the impression that for this reason the turn of the bilge was just slightly harder than it might otherwise have been (in order to give adequate strength), and I also have the impression that for the same reason the bilges were planked in slightly thicker wood than the rest of the hull.

Although most of these boats were built in wood during the hundred years or so up to WW2, their qualities are such that in the post-war years there has been demand for GRP replicas, and a number of such replicas were built by Eric Berqvist just upriver from ourselves, at Fiddlers Ferry.



*Quest, Milford Haven Waterway, c. 1974
Showing the elliptical counter stern*

*Not sure that today I would be happy about such a young child
wandering around the open deck; but the conditions were calm, and
his father - also a sailing man - was onboard (and behind the camera),
so it wasn't entirely my responsibility!*



Quest, Milford Haven Waterway, 1973

*Note the propeller on the port quarter;
much simpler to install as a retrofit than a central installation.*



*Hearts of Oak
Built Ulverston 1912 by Dan Lester,
restored by Scott Metcalf (Waterfront Marine, Port Penrhyn).*

*Dried out on her bilge, as is common practice for these craft
in sheltered conditions, and they are designed and built with that in mind.*

Photographed in Piel Harbour, Roa Island, Cumbria, 2014

*See her page on the Nobby Owners' Association website,
<https://nobbyowners.co.uk/members-boats/hearts-of-oak/>*



Hearts of Oak off Peel Island; photo from the Nobby Owners Association website (link above)



*Spray; built by Crosfields, 1896,
and very well-known in the north-west through
her frequent participation in regattas and other events*

*Photo from her page on the Nobby Owners' Association website;
<https://nobbyowners.co.uk/members-boats/spray-for-sale-1896-pedigree/>*



*Phyllis - basically a Royal Mersey Restricted Class yacht,
but possibly in some respects a one-off variant;
based on the Morecambe Bay Prawners, but with a transom stern.*

<https://www.theyachtphyllis.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/Phyllis-Alis-158-1.jpg>



Prawner seen at Morecambe, August 2016

*Built in GRP by one of Eric Berqvist's employees,
I think after Eric's retirement*

*Built specifically for fishing, and still (as at that date)
in the hands of her original owner, and still used exclusively for fishing*

No sign of a sailing rig; engine only (despite the mast)

Note the elliptical counter stern.

*Note also the central propeller installation (compare with the arrangement on Quest, above);
this presumably indicates that she was designed and built at outset to take an engine,
rather than it being a retrofit.*



*“Jean” on the inside berth, a GRP replica built by Eric Berqvist;
Tarka II rafted alongside her on the outside berth.*

Peel Traditional Boats Weekend, Peel, Isle of Man, 2018

SHORT COLREGS QUIZ

Answers

1. The approaching vessel has (incorrectly) altered to port. At this stage you don't know whether this is merely a case of very temporarily wandering off course, or an intentional (and incorrect) alteration for whatever reason.
2. You are the "stand-on" skipper.
3. You should strictly hold your course and speed, but it might nonetheless be a good idea to alter even further to starboard to make absolutely certain that it is your port light which is exhibited to the other vessel. **However you should also keep a close watching brief on the situation; in the event that the other vessel fails to give way in time the onus then falls on you to take whatever action is necessary to avoid collision.** That might even involve you stopping; but it is then vitally important that you continue to monitor the situation, and that you remain at instant readiness to re-engage the engine/s so that you can take further avoiding action if needed.
4. Or even, *in extremis*, reversing your course until the other vessel is safely past.
5. You can also legitimately briefly shine your spotlight towards the other vessel, but preferably not directly at them at close range; you don't want to make a bad situation worse by blinding them.
6. If at all possible you should avoid altering course to port for a vessel on your own port side.

NEXT ISSUE

Press Date will be 15th March, please