

9. Conduct

In the 1960s we drank a lot during races and threw the cans overboard the metal was thicker in those days so marlin spikes were used to pierce. (Everyone seemed to carry a spike to open shackles on sail clews)
We always pee-ed over the side (ladies were not present) but "heads" were unreliable and often blocked up. Although there were more "gentlemen" in the 1960/70s "newcomers" led to our de-barring as 7 above.

10. Navigation

Only really used for Cherbourg passages. In absence of radios owners relied on dead reckoning, 180 degrees steering and visual sightings.

Boats I went on used radio DF tuning to a variety of stations e.g. Niton, Anvil, Needles, Hurn, Barfleur, Cherbourg, Portland depending on the time they broadcast. Ex WWII crew were best a reading morse code call signs.

Brooks and Gatehouse electronic systems were a real revelation in the 1970s

11. Safety

In my experience Life Jackets were only ever worn in rough Cherbourg races. They were bulky (ex ship) or what we now call buoyancy aids.

Few boats had harnesses

PYRA required dinghies to be half pumped up and lashed on deck for Cherbourg and Dartmouth races. This was also voluntary common practice for many solent races because of the need before marinas to row ashore at Beaulieu/Yarmouth/Lymington/Cowes.

Life rafts only became a possibility in the 1970s because they were scaled down to yacht size and could also be rented for a weekend

Waterproofs were really waterproof as they were PVC. Rubber boots were used before affordable yachting boots were more common. Dunlop "Magisters" were the main sailing shoe.

12. My Background

My father (Richard Edmonds a Vickers Armstrong- Hurn -electrical design engineer) and I attended the London boat show in 1957 and visited the Bell Woodworking stand. That company had made wooden gliders in WWII and was now producing three marine ply kit boats (GP 14, Osprey & Ian Proctor deigned Seagull Sloop) for home construction. My father bought the plans for GP14 and then decided in favour of an Osprey (which we named our new kitten!) He then decided it might not be comfortable enough for my Mother.

Bear in mind that my father had never been on a sailing boat and my only experience was at 14 years old bluffing my way to hire a scow on Poole park lake (and having difficulty tacking back!)

The final choice was the aforesaid Seagull Sloop. Before delivery of the kit we attended night classes in Navigation at Poole College. It was like a foreign language to us as we had nothing to relate to. All the chart exercises were around Wales

Once the kit arrived we logged 1200 hours cutting up the sheets of marine ply, steaming to bend, applying a new product Araldite, drilling & countersinking thousands of holes (my job) etc etc.

Just before completion Dr John Asbury (who lived just a little higher up Constitution Hill than us) rushed round to say he had just completed his boat & pity we had not know each other!

The boat was craned out of our garden and launched at Mitchells yard. We then motored to a Poole YC mooring using a Seagull engine. We tried to self teach ourselves in the quiet off Rockley before various owners took me in hand e.g John Astbury, Karl Bengson (cannot remember the German spelling). In 1960 onwards I joined the crew of Calypso >40 foot wooden Sparkman Stevens cutter (I have picture) owned by a hard drinking Irish doctor (Poole YC member) for longer passage races.

Although we raced Maysue very successfully in the 1960s (won Poole Week 1960) I moved to Avilion (fibre glass) owned by Councillor/late Mayor Herbert Ballam

My father sold me Maysue in 1966 because he decided that sitting out an 18' 6" boat to Weymouth in rough seas was getting too much. Larger PYRA boats sympathised when we arrived hours late!

Rod Edmonds
October 2013

