



A SEA MONSTER'S TALE: In Search of the Basking Shark – Colin Speedie. Published in hard covers by Wild Nature Press [www.wildnaturepress.com] at £18.00. 296 162mm x 242mm pages, with a limited number of drawings and colour photos. ISBN 978-0-9573-9468-1

When I agreed to review a book about basking sharks I anticipated a well-researched but relatively slim volume full of photos and drawings with explanatory captions, covering the usual details of life-cycle, worldwide habitats, preferred diet, etc etc ... but relatively little text. Other than the 'well-researched' aspect I could hardly have been more wrong. Although fascinating, with more than 260 pages of punishingly small text *A Sea Monster's Tale* could not be described as a quick read. Colin Speedie cheerfully admits to being addicted to basking sharks and anything to do with them, and by the time they finish his book the reader will either have caught at least some of his passion, or feel they know far more about the species than they ever wished to. Fortunately Colin is an entertaining writer who keeps the narrative moving at all times.

A Sea Monster's Tale leads off with a very brief introduction covering most of the points outlined in the previous paragraph. This is followed by chapters on 'The Early History', 'The First Hunters' (up to the late 19th century) – both illustrated with clear, black-and-white line drawings – and 'Changing Views', covering the early years of the 20th century, when basking sharks came to be seen, in some areas at least, as a threat to local fishing industries.

It was not until the late 1930s that the species began to be hunted commercially in the UK, mainly for the high-grade oil which could be obtained from its liver. But it was not a simple undertaking, as first Anthony Watkins, and then Gavin Maxwell, discovered the hard way. Both attempted to establish fisheries on the west coast of Scotland and both were, eventually, defeated. Watkins appeared to be on the verge of success when the Second World War intervened – he was an officer in the British Army's Supplementary Reserve – and when he returned to the hunt in 1945 it was to find that he had competition from Maxwell (who sounds to have been a great deal less organised). The central part of *A Sea Monster's Tale* comprises detailed accounts of both men's efforts, apparently based largely on their own two books – *The Sea my Hunting Ground* (AW) and *Harpoon at a Venture* (GM), both now long out of print. It is ironic that Maxwell is remembered largely for being an early proponent of animal conservation due to his later, and much better-known, *Ring of Bright Water*.

From Scotland, Colin Speedie moves on to post-war shark fishing on the west coast of Ireland and around Vancouver Island in the Pacific, where sharks were killed in great numbers – mainly by ramming and shooting – at the behest of local salmon-fishermen,

who blamed them for damage to their nets. This was so 'successful' that the species was virtually wiped out, with no real sign of recovery some 50 years later.

Only on page 168 does the author enter the story in person, first as a small boy fascinated by these giant fish, and then as a young man with his first cruising boat, who fortuitously encounters a small group of basking sharks on his first cross-Channel trip. This was the start of a lifetime of study and on-the-water research, much of it in the same Scottish waters fished by Watkins and Maxwell more than 40 years previously, as well as around the southwest coast of England. It seems likely that Colin Speedie has made more basking shark sightings than anyone else alive today, mainly from the decks of his own yachts, the 11.7m *Forever Changes* and his current boat *Pèlerin*, an Ovni 43. He has also planted many electronic tags in an effort to learn more about the life-cycle and migratory habits of a species about which, even now, relatively little is known. With little formal training but limitless enthusiasm and determination, he is the classic 'citizen scientist', willing to fight the elements in pursuit of data and the authorities to put that data to good use – in this case to get basking sharks added to the CITES list of endangered and vulnerable species, finally achieved in February 2003.

A Sea Monster's Tale concludes with an assessment of continuing threats to the species, from unintentional harassment by commercial shark-watching boats to wind farms, tidal turbines and the effects of climate change on the sharks' food supply. Absolutely nothing of relevance is omitted from this book, which is rounded off by a 14-page source list and a useful index. Also very near the end are the only colour photographs – eight pages, the majority taken by Colin himself. It would have been good to have had more.

Reading *A Sea Monster's Tale* requires time and some concentration, but repays them in full. Most cruising yachtsmen are interested in the marine environment, and reading this book will open a window on a creature which is widely known but rarely seen ... though thanks to Colin and others like him this may not always be the case as, very slowly, their numbers begin to recover.

AOMH



WINDSWEPT TO THE MED – Annie Busch. Available for Kindle from Amazon Media EU at £5.47. 452 pages, file size 7671kb.

At 7560 pages on my iPad, this is not a quick afternoon's reading! In fact, *Windswept to the Med* deserves to be read slowly, with attention, as there is a lot of valuable insight and thought contained within its pages.

It is divided into six sections, each one covering a different part of the journey in detail – beginning with searching for and purchasing the right boat, then taking her to Scandinavia, around UK and Ireland, across to France and finally into the Mediterranean. There is much good information and detailed planning contained herein, and much we can all learn from Anne and Walt's carefully considered decisions.

Each section could, in fact, be read on its own and used as a blueprint for that specific operation (deciding on a boat, fitting her out), or a guide for the passage undertaken (Scandinavia, round Britain and Ireland, down to the Med, western Med and eastern Med). The only problem I foresee is that it all took place in 1989 and 1990 so some of the places may have changed dramatically – but then again, many of them will hardly have changed at all, though certainly prices will have!

As a possible guide, there is vast detail about what was available then. Coupled with current guides, it could prove interesting to follow in their footsteps and explore the many anchorages and bays they found, away from the madding crowd. The tale of two years' travel reads at the same pace as an enjoyable sailing season – this is not a page-turner novel but a bedside companion book, one which cruises along, taking time to explore, discover the surrounding history and venture into unknown waters, every now and then meeting up with boats and previous companions, every now and then erupting into an altercation with boats anchoring too close, irritating ski-boats or drunken grockles!*

All in all a delightful read – but more than that, an insight into what cruising was like almost thirty years ago and an encyclopaedia of passages to make and ports to visit.

JC-T



TALES FROM THE CAPTAIN'S LOG – The National Archives. Published in hard covers by Adlard Coles Nautical [www.adlardcoles.com] at £25.00. 304 205mm x 255mm pages, richly illustrated with maps, drawings and facsimile documents. ISBN 978-1-4729-4866-3. Also available for Kindle

Every day, often every hour, over hundreds of years, in every ship on the Seven Seas, someone has made an entry in the log. Much of this vast mountain of information is preserved in the National Archives and housed on its 126 miles of shelving. *Tales From The Captain's Log* contains snippets, tasters, samples from these logs chosen by archivists each with a particular area of expertise.

The book is divided into five chapters: Exploration and Discovery, Mutiny and Piracy, Science and Surgery, The Navy, and Emigration and Transportation. Within each chapter are five or so essays. The first essay in the book is on Grenville Collins, who systematically charted the British coastline. Of Falmouth, home to our Commodore and guarded by Black Rock, he says in 1677: 'You may sayle in or out of either side of the Rock...which Deepe place is called Carrack Road and is the place for Great Ships to ride att'. Still true 340 years later.

The logs quoted are carefully chosen, most written by celebrated sea dogs or relating to famous voyages and events. So in Chapter 1 we read of Samuel Wallis in Tahiti discovering that his men were exchanging the ship's nails for sex and consequently

* A slightly derogatory word for a tourist, thought to have originated in England's westcountry.

worrying about the integrity of his vessel. When Captain Cook later found syphilis among Tahitians he, of course, blamed the French. When William Parry was iced-in and wintered aboard HMS *Fury* while seeking the North West Passage, he staged theatrical productions but also wrote in his log *'a school was established for the instruction of such of the men who were willing to take advantage of this opportunity of learning to read and write'*. James Clark Ross charted much of the Antarctic coastline and in 1839 took with him tinned food. We learn in his log that, while a fan of the new technology, he complained that they should be *'of a much stouter tin'*.

The mutiny on the *Bounty* is so well known that the account here, excellent if brief, tells us little new. But it is still interesting to review a facsimile of Bligh's log, to see his neat handwriting and to read his personal explanation of what occurred. By contrast few people will know of the mutiny on HMS *Hermione* in 1797. Hugh Pigot had risen by patronage, and once a captain became a savage and unstable sadist. He started the irrational practice of flogging the last seaman down from the yard; men died falling from the spars trying to descend in time. When his ship collided with an American vessel he flogged the American commander, which started an international incident. He was finally hacked to death by his crew and thrown overboard – a certain justice one might think. 1797 was also the year of the mutinies at Spithead and the Nore, which at least led to improvements in conditions for Jack Tar.

I was drawn to the medical essays. The horrors of yellow fever are described in fearful detail by those very men, the naval surgeons, who witnessed them at the time. *'Of more than 200 persons sent from the Alfred to Port Royal Hospital, not a third survived the day'*. An attempt to help victims by blood-letting recorded *'extreme debility followed and death soon after'*. Similarly, a case of pneumonia was treated with vigorous blood-letting with the inevitable fatal result. Apparently a tarantula bite caused *'a sedate melancholy accompanied with nausea'* and was treated by applying rum and oil to the affected part.

Chapter 4 provides descriptions of four famous battles including Trafalgar and the Battle of Navarino Bay. The latter, fought in Greece in 1827, was the last naval engagement between fleets of sailing vessels.

In Chapter 5 we read of the First Fleet, the name given to the six convict transports that left Portsmouth for New South Wales in 1787. Of nearly 1000 people aboard, only 28 souls succumbed. Later, conditions on ships deteriorated and many died on passage until, in 1815, a Royal Navy surgeon was placed on board every transport ship with significant improvement.

Tales From The Captain's Log is well produced on fine paper between hard covers, and the illustrations are beautifully presented. Astonishing paintings and drawings of flora and fauna, charts, coastlines and diseased men adorn the text. The facsimiles of the log entries add authenticity. Most are handsomely written with no crossings out or ink blots – line upon line of neat handwriting like the ripples of sand left by the ebbing tide. They were often set down at sea so the detail, of weather and gales, of battle plans, of disease symptoms, of treachery, is remarkable. It is a shame but inevitable that some of the logs are difficult to read – a magnifying glass helps.

The essays are short so the informed mariner will learn little extra about the celebrated people and events (Cook, Nelson, Trafalgar) but they contain sufficient lesser-known detail to make delving worthwhile. Multiple archivist authors has led to some repetition especially on Cook's first voyage and in the chapter on emigration.

Tales From The Captain's Log is too superficial to be a history text, but deserves more than the coffee table. With the advent of air travel we have lost a sense of our maritime heritage and its importance in the history of nations, especially Britain's. This book helps to reconnect us to our maritime past. I recommend it to any sailor, you will not be disappointed.

MHT



IONIAN: Corfu, Levkas, Cephalonia, Zákynthos and the adjacent mainland coast to Finakounda – Rod and Lucinda Heikell, 9th edition. Published in soft covers by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson [www.imray.com] at £19.95. 270 246mm x 189mm pages, in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-1-8462-3868-0

The new 9th edition of *Ionian* has been thoroughly revised. The authors, Rod and Lucinda Heikell, have updated the text and plans, and added helpful new photographs. Like the companion guides *West Aegean* and *East Aegean*, *Ionian* contains detailed information on many of the smaller harbours and anchorages which cannot be covered as comprehensively in Rod Heikell's major guide, *Greek Waters Pilot*. *Ionian* covers the coasts and islands south from Corfu to Finakounda and eastwards to Mesolongion.

The Heikells' style is full of ease, and the details of history, religion, geography and food make it so much more than a pilot book. It has, of course, essential and up-to-date sailing information, but also delightful asides about places to visit ashore and insights into travelling around Greece. Cruisers will find valuable additional pilotage when cruising the area, and much more about what they will find when they arrive in a port or anchorage, or even in a smuggler's cove.

Ionian is also coloured by the commentary of a man who has had a love affair with the region for decades and is the acknowledged expert on the area. His notes on how things have changed over the years, and anecdotes about such topics as the 'The Captain Corelli Effect' add a personal touch which makes the places come alive. The background about earthquakes, wars and migrations provides insights beyond what one can see. Together with the detailed sailing instructions and stunning aerial photography, every page beckons one to go there now.

DOB



THE BOAT COOKBOOK – Fiona Sims. Published in soft covers by Adlard Coles Nautical [www.adlardcoles.com] at £16.99. 160 187mm x 559mm pages, in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-1-4081-9200-9. Also available for Kindle

Mealtimes on any long cruise, especially an ocean passage, take on an importance which

is rarely matched at home where work, chores or other activities keep you busy, so a yacht's library is almost certain to contain several recipe books. Going through them on night watch, trying to get inspiration for the next day's lunch or dinner, is a useful way to pass the time. But depending on the size of your boat, what stores you have, and how 'high tech' you are – fridge? freezer? neither? – complicated recipes requiring recently-bought ingredients are often challenging or impossible. Fiona Sims makes it clear from the beginning that she's a weekend sailor, with access to supermarkets and fresh ingredients, but she does cook on a 29ft Westerly with a modest galley. (I'm glad to see that she's a fan of pressure-cookers – mine is still in almost daily use, ten years after coming ashore from extensive ocean cruising).

Apart from the actual recipes, this book – subtitled 'Real food for hungry sailors' – is packed with interesting anecdotes and useful tips, with colourful illustrations and photos. Even if you lack the necessary ingredients, the pictures of some quite exotic dishes should inspire you. Cruising yachties are masters of improvisation – it's amazing what you can do with a can of Spam.

The Boat Cookbook starts off with breakfast ideas and snack lunches (with instructions on how first to catch, kill, and fillet a mackerel, plus two pages of illustrated steps). Fiona likes to use plenty of herbs and spices, particularly sumac, which I hadn't come across before – it sounds interesting! – and *chorizo*, which does amazing things for the flavour of an otherwise rather boring bean stew. She is a big supporter of sustainable fishing, and includes plenty of vegetarian recipes. There are several delicious-sounding desserts using various fruits including peaches and cherries, and the Salted Caramel and Banana Crunch – see page 80 of this issue – is truly decadent!

The last third of *The Boat Cookbook* contains recipes mostly intended to be cooked or baked at home and taken on board, including a savoury pumpkin tart to keep the Brits happy – for non-Americans, sweet pumpkin pie takes some getting used to – a new slant on the ever-favourite flapjacks, a new brownie recipe, and a chocolate fruit cake. There's a section on booze (and ideas for making use of an empty wine-box bag) followed by a selection of mixed drinks, covered much more extensively in *The Boat Drinks Book* by the same author (see *Flying Fish* 2017/1). The anecdotes keep coming, on almost every page, from recommendations for 'great boating novels' to weather forecasting, seasickness remedies to nice places to anchor around the UK, so even if some of the recipes are impractical while you're at sea, *The Boat Cookbook* should entertain you nevertheless.

EHHMH



METALS IN BOATS – Vyv Cox. Published in hardback by The Crowood Press Ltd [www.crowood.com] at £22.50. 126 250mm x 175mm pages with over 100 colour photos and drawings. ISBN 978-1-7850-0262-5

Don't go afloat ! It's dreadfully dangerous. Propeller shafts and rudder stocks break, anchor chains snap, while standing rigging sneakily comes apart inside the swages

where no-one can see the burgeoning disaster. And as for anchors ... some are made of metal-coloured toilet paper. All these crises are described in this book, which is great because it warns us about the numerous problems lurking in all those many metal parts which are scattered throughout our boats. It is also excellent in that it describes clever tricks such as doing amateur low-cost metal hardness testing at home.

The author can be described as the technical grandfather to the whole world of boat owners. His contributions to *Yachting Monthly* have saved a lot of boats from sinking. He makes it clear, by inference, that the old Lloyd's Register Rule about taking all seacocks right off the hull every four years (or more often) should always be followed. Once off the boat the fittings should be dismantled so that they can be checked thoroughly.

He is also sound on such matters as the danger of using C-links to join two parts of an anchor chain. It is almost always better to use a tested shackle, which has its safe working load marked on it. Such shackles will not go round a windlass gipsy of course, but that is where the two chain hooks and tackles come in. It's astonishing how many otherwise well-equipped yachts do not have this essential equipment. These chain hooks and their gear are needed to take the anchor chain load off the windlass so that it can be transferred to a strong point. Anyone who anchors leaving the chain tension on a windlass is likely to find the yacht ashore, because few windlasses have full reliability. Their casing splits under severe loads, or the axle breaks, or the gipsy peels apart. It is always sensible, even for a lunch-stop, to secure onto a massive mooring bollard.

If there is a small quibble, it is in the caption of the photo on page 24. This shows a traditional folding fisherman anchor *and* a 'big ship' stockless anchor. The caption says the fisherman is also called an Admiralty type, whereas it's the stockless one which was developed by the Royal Navy's old organisation, the Admiralty. And very horrible this ugly anchor is, with its stumpy shank and thick blunt flukes which dislike digging into the seabed. When first produced many years ago this anchor was tested in the black, soupy mud beneath the Clyde, outside my office window. Of course it worked there because the unusual sea bed suited it. It should never be used by a yachtsman, except perhaps by one who has a boat so big the stockless anchor may work by its sheer weight. If your yacht is over 100m (300ft) overall maybe you can get away with this sort of inefficient ground tackle ... but the Royal Navy have moved on in this department.

Metals in Boats may frighten an owner, but the way it scares is sensible and helpful. It's packed with valuable information and the price could easily be recouped 80 times over by preventing an accident.

IN



MEDITERRANEAN SPAIN: Gibraltar to the French Border – RCC Pilotage Foundation & Steve Pickard, 10th edition. Published in hard covers by Imray Laurie Norie & Wilson [www.imray.com] at £45.00. 408 A4 pages, in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-1-8462-3650-1

There was a time when, if you needed a pilot, you would either pay one to come along with you or, in more extreme circumstances, persuade one, possibly at the point of a sword. Later the process became more polite, with pilots racing out from scarily difficult entrances to win business from vessels whose skippers were anxious to protect their no claims bonus. Move on to global maritime trade and global gunboat diplomacy and pilots became books of sailing directions. Turning pages was so much easier than dealing with the grumpy, unhygienic, overpaid sort of pilot. I imagine, if it hasn't been done already, it won't be long before you click on a port on a GPS plotter to access pilotage, harbour information, images etc.

Meanwhile the latest addition to the book variety is a new pilot covering the coast of Spain from Gibraltar eastward to the French border, from the RCC Pilotage Foundation charity. This one volume supersedes the previous two volumes, one of which covered the Costas del Sol and Blanca, the other the Costas del Azahar, Dorada and Brava.

So first question: what's been left out to combine two into one? Well, this is no intellectual method to critique a pilot, but the simplest answer is this: the two volumes amount to 408 pages, including two lots of preamble like weather, history, culture, index etc. The now single volume is 400 pages. So there you are, one book instead of two, about the same size. There have been no short cuts of pictures, chartlets or information. This is a mere rationalisation. And a good thing too. These pilots have been indispensable since their inception, giving really invaluable insight into this coastline, and the authors and publishers have avoided any temptation to radically alter something that already works, and works well.

The region is a firm favourite with sailors the world over, but particularly with Brits. In the past fifty years facilities for visiting yachties have proliferated all along Spain's Mediterranean frontage, and are still being built. A new, massive, long-overdue marina will shortly be opening at Gibraltar, and at Adra the pontoons of a new marina will soon be vacated by seagulls (and the inevitable results of their presence) and occupied by cruisers.

Although at first glance the new edition seems very similar to its predecessors, a good deal of thoughtful tweaking has been done to hone an already user-friendly layout. There is more about Spanish import tax rules, which could easily trip up the unwary, although British-flagged owners will have alarm bells ringing anyway following recent democratic decisions.

To gauge the sorts of changes, let's look at a couple of ports chosen more or less arbitrarily (Gib was excluded as being unfair since the new marina does not appear in the new edition). Estepona's entry has been revamped. Harbour charges appear in the first details list. The chartlet remains in the same glass-clear format, but now without the unnecessary entry waypoint. The entry advice has been completely revised and made more relevant, but the most helpful change is the provision of more and better images, both aerial and from sea level. They really are worth the thousand words that save skippers a new port-related nervous breakdown and a relapse into alcoholism. The next door port of José Banus also now sports three photos of the vital lumps, bumps and arrival pontoon, instead of just one.

Further up the coast is the port of Denia, deep in the British enclave there and a good setting-off point for the Balearics and the eastern Med. Here the basic information, especially about the different marinas, is much clearer and easier to read. There are

three sea-level photos instead of one. The loss of the aerial view is a pity, but the chartlet remains a good size and simple to translate into what you see over the bow.

Altogether the amalgamation of the two pilots is an improvement on the two already comprehensive and highly thought-of pair. It is a surprisingly difficult trick to impart an enormous amount of information in a simple format. The changes in this pilot have been subtle yet effective in making it even more easily digestible to someone salt-caked, hungry, thirsty and tired.

Author and sailor Steve Pickard readily acknowledges that in this update he stands on the shoulders of those who have previously helped create these pilots.

MEP



YACHT WERE YOU THINKING? *An A-Z of Boat Names Good and Bad* – Jonathan Evers. Published in hard covers by Adlard Coles Nautical / Bloomsbury Publishing [www.adlardcoles.com] at £9.99. 160 120mm x 180mm pages, with a few mono drawings. ISBN 978-1-4729-4437-5. Also available for Kindle

I must admit that my heart sank when I saw the title of this book and took note of the author's previous publications. Humour is very much a matter of personal taste and few jokes take long to progress from grin to groan.

The introduction reassured me – Jonathan Evers clearly believes that naming a boat, any boat, requires serious consideration. The perennial popularity of books listing names and their meanings for application to babies shows that many people feel the need for information and support when it comes to this important choice. The changing fashion in names is faithfully reflected in classroom registers a few years later, and it is apparently true that there are similar league tables in boat names! Whether striving for originality or preferring the comfort of fellowship, the important things to remember are to keep it short – and, as with a child, that a boat may be part of the family for many years to come.

This is a book to dip into according to mood, and the various sections have introductions giving fair warning of content. It is evident that a good deal of research has gone into the tradition of boat names before the explosion in boat ownership gave the topic general relevance.

This nicely-produced volume has been issued in time for Christmas, and doubtless many copies will be bought as presents. Whether or not looking to name a new purchase, there is much to interest anyone who has ever had occasion to wonder how and why that particular moniker came to be chosen for someone's pride and joy.

FASF

