

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 gypsy 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 gypsy 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.

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