

SURVEYING METAL CRAFT and SURVEYING WOOD CRAFT – Ian Nicolson.
Both published in soft covers by the International Institute of Marine Surveying
[www.iims.org.uk] at £25.00. 64 and 54 148mm x 210mm pages respectively, including
21 and 12 full-page diagrams. ISBNs 978-1-9110-5812-0 and 978-1-9110-5804-5

These twin volumes are published by the International Institute of Marine Surveying for their members and intending surveyors. Any prospective metal or wooden boat owner can learn from the accumulated experience of a lifetime of owning, sailing and surveying these craft. Successive chapters review tools used (rather more complex for steel craft), the limitations of any survey and the pitfalls of litigation.

The construction of wooden and metal vessels is dealt with in a logical sequence, with tips and wrinkles abounding on every page. The first 20 or 30 pages will hold no surprises for those familiar with Ian's books – immaculate line drawings which easily orientate the novice to the basics of construction.

The author rightly stresses that the vessel must be soundly built initially, and suggests a blueprint for this based on strength and prevention of deterioration of the structure. She must have been well-maintained, and the rule that the more awkward it is to get at, the less likely it is to have been maintained, is stressed.

Wooden boats will often be old, and many traditional aspects of construction – ie. wooden masts – are covered in surprising detail, refreshing to a traditionalist but initially frightening to a prospective owner only familiar with alloy spars.

Electrolysis can kill steel boats, but gets little mention in the metal volume and rather more in the wood! Almost all the headings could merit a book on their own, but Ian has covered all the basics well. His philosophy comes through on every page – the surveyor's responsibility to owners to prevent unsuitable or unseaworthy vessels going to sea. The warning to surveyors is to prevent litigation; the warning to those commissioning surveys is that they are not infallible. Thirty years ago my boat was surveyed and a short report typed: 'Me and me brother think she's alright.' I'm pleased to say that, coming from experienced boat builders, it was accepted by my insurers! Clearly times have changed.

I see these books as essential reading, allowing further detailed study of specifics. There are no indexes, but a comprehensive contents page and useful suggestions for further reading. Perhaps the cover price is a little high, but if prospective owners or surveyors read them and put all Ian's words into practice it could be good value indeed.

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