

OCEAN SAILING – Paul Heiney. Published in hard covers by Adlard Coles [www.adlardcoles.com] at £35. 288 257mm x 177mm pages in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-1-4729-5539-5

Paul Heiney's well-written, well-illustrated and beautifully presented hard back is, in a single volume, an A-Z of ocean sailing, the clue being in the title. It clearly comes with the benefit of huge experience and a great deal of careful thought, as you would expect from a Commodore of the Royal Cruising Club who, in his time and among other adventures such as the OSTAR, has breezed down to Cape Horn and back, mainly single-handed.

In the early stages it takes a little head-scratching to work out the particular audience for whom the book is intended. It seems to be aimed primarily at sailing couples who may be contemplating chucking in their conventional land-based existences and converting their leisure-time hobby into a completely different and extremely adventurous way of life, roaming the Seven Seas. A lot of personal detail that needs to be considered by would-be ocean sailors is included, and I found myself fast-forwarding the parts about whether I should sell my home outright, jumping off the property ladder for good, or rent it out to tenants who would not look after it and give me endless headaches during the long years spent cruising exotic islands in the South Pacific.

That said, there is a great deal of useful and interesting information to be found between its covers, even though most fully-fledged OCC members may choose to skip large chunks, given that they are only members at all through having serious ocean passage time under their belts. Aspiring Associate Members will certainly gain a lot from it. As the long-time owner of a Rustler 36 I found myself heartily agreeing with Paul's comments on the characteristics of the most suitable boats for ocean passagemaking, but did not learn much that was new to me in that section. I did, however, learn a lot about some other things – ocean currents in the Pacific, for instance. I also have a better feel now for how to handle medical emergencies, how to plan in advance for disaster, and the intricacies of today's competing communication systems which seem to improve all the time while becoming more complex. There is a lot in this book and much of it worth noting.

Ocean Sailing is not just a textbook by Paul Heiney, however. He has drawn on the experience of individuals and couples, members of the OCC, RCC and Cruising Club of America, who have progressed far beyond the 'armchair dream' stage (presumably a microscopic percentage compared to the people who never get out of their armchairs at all) and have been out there and actually done it, surviving to recount their experiences. These accounts take up about 130 pages, which is quite a lot considering the large number of photos and other illustrations in the remaining 160-odd pages. The third party accounts are interesting and enjoyable, as well as being instructive and very humbling. In one short paragraph they can cover a voyage sweeping up from New Zealand to cruise the high Arctic and the like in a nonchalant manner (in contrast to the over-dramatised accounts of storms on the way to Cherbourg etc which seem to be a recurrent theme in some mainstream sailing magazines). It is rather a shame that these gripping experiences are printed on a dark pink background to differentiate them from the main text. While this is a good idea in principle, given a font which is already quite light it is not that easy to read by the light of a cabin bulb. Younger eyes might have less of a problem.

The message of the book seems to be that, if you plan properly and do everything correctly, you have an excellent chance of surviving the setbacks, enjoying life on the ocean very much, and one day returning safely, having been less at risk than while crossing a busy street in land-based life. Fair enough, but as we all know that is not always the case – for instance, the great Bill Tilman disappeared at sea in unknown circumstances. As well as the lively accounts from a current generation of sailors, there is a brief mention of Eric and Susan Hiscock, a famous and well-loved cruising couple from earlier times, but I was disappointed that there was no reference to Miles and Beryl Smeeton, personal heroes of mine and pioneers of short-handed ocean voyaging when few were doing it. The Smeetons survived some incredible adventures in their *Tzu Hang*, but only just, and their *Once is Enough*, first published in 1959 and still available via Amazon, could usefully be read in conjunction with *Ocean Sailing* to give a more rugged perspective.

BH

