

BOOK REVIEWS

YACHT DESIGNER'S NOTEBOOK – Ian Nicolson, 3rd edition, and YACHT DESIGNER'S SKETCH BOOK – Ian Nicolson, 2nd edition. Both published in soft covers by Amberley Publishing [www.amberley-books.com] at £14.99. Each containing 160 234mm x 165mm pages. ISBNs 978-1-4456-5158-3 and 978-1-4456-5150-7

Amberley Publishing, which has a wide range of maritime titles mostly of a historical nature, has recently added a number of Ian Nicolson's books to its range – six in 2015 with more due this year. Nicolson, a Founder Member of the OCC and a highly prolific author with many books on yachting subjects and thousands of magazine articles, has a distinctive hand-drawn style seen in most of his work. One reviewer noted that they are 'obviously not computer drawings, they're proper hand drawings'. This is so partly because many of them date to three or more decades ago, before CAD was in widespread use, but his style continues to this day. He reduces each subject to its basic elements, amplified by numerous call-outs delineating the important features and in some cases how to execute a project. Each drawing is accompanied by descriptive paragraphs.

This reviewer has in his library 18 of Nicolson's titles, including earlier hardcover editions of *Yacht Designer's Notebook (YDN)* from 1988 when it was titled *Designer's Notebook*, and *Yacht Designer's Sketch Book (YDSB)* from 1983, allowing careful comparisons to be made with the new paperback editions. Both of these 2015 volumes have 160 pages and are of a smaller size than those from the '80s. Interestingly, the back cover of *YDN* refers to it as 'this fully revised third edition', whereas basically it is just re-formatted to cut its page count down from 192 pages. The drawings now have borders and many have been reduced in size. All the slightly larger text is virtually identical. For example two words, chainplates and guardrails, are no longer hyphenated and a couple of sentences have been added or deleted. Nicolson's current introduction has a new final sentence and is no longer dated 1986. In the case of *YDSB* the page count has been increased by one and one drawing has disappeared – it referred to using asbestos cloth when adding lead to an existing ballast keel.

None of the foregoing detracts in any way from the value of the books, but those who possess either of the earlier editions need not consider purchasing the paperbacks. With the predominance of vintage concepts, their greatest appeal may be to owners of wooden boats with a do-it-yourself bent. Those with more modern boats should not disregard these books, however, since they can stimulate thinking about features that may not have crossed their owners' minds, or help solve a problem arising in some remote part of the world.

Both books have 'chapter' headings indicative of the range of topics within. Of the 11 headings in *YDSB*, nine are paired with the same or analogous headings among the 15 in *YDN*. The only heading in *YDSB* that truly is not covered in *YDN* is one titled *Racing Dinghies*. In most cases the drawings under headings such as Construction, Cabin Furniture, Deck Fittings, Engines, Plumbing and Spars illustrate a single item, but there are some that address a range of features.

Two final items that reflect the traditional aspect of *YDN* are the tables on the last two pages giving recommended rope sizes for various applications where the sizes are specified by circumference. Surprisingly, there is no formula given for converting circumference to diameter, by dividing the circumference by 3.14 (pi). While there are values for imperial to metric conversions, there is a quick way to go from imperial circumference to metric diameter without a calculator. Based on the methodology this reviewer presented in an article titled *Mental Metrics*, just multiply the circumference in inches by eight and the result is the diameter in millimetres. For example, for a rope with a circumference of 3.14 inches (a diameter of one inch) double 3.14 to get 6.28, double that to get 12.56, and finally double that again to get

25·12mm – only one percent less than the exact value of 25·4mm.

In this day and age when many publishers minimise taxes on their inventory by not keeping titles in print for decades, it is good to see many of Ian Nicolson's books available again.

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