

REVIEW

A HISTORY OF SAILING IN 100 OBJECTS – Barry Pickthall.
Published in hard covers by Adlard Coles Nautical
[www.adlardcoles.com] at £20.00 / US \$35.00. 224 195mm x 254mm
pages in full colour throughout. ISBN 978-1-4729-1885-7

Following the success of the all-encompassing *A History of the World in 100 Objects*, it was inevitable that others would follow suit on slightly less ambitious topics.

A History of Sailing in 100 Objects, compiled by highly-experienced yachting writer Barry Pickthall, contains an eclectic mix of topics, each illustrated by a page-width photograph, painting or sketch plus a page – or occasionally more – of explanatory text. Each illustration also carries a short caption – not, it has to be said, always up to the standard of the main text (few builders of ferro-cement boats would agree that, having set up the steel and wire framework, ‘the concrete is poured on top of it’). Nor, for that matter, are the illustrations always quite accurate – the midshipman on page 61 is clearly carrying an octant, not the sextant to which text and caption refer.

Having said that, *A History of Sailing in 100 Objects* makes for fascinating ‘dipping’ – I had no idea that hammocks were so-called because they were originally made from fibres from the hamak tree, or that Royal Navy regulations stipulated that they should be slung only 14in (35cm) apart.

The 100 objects chosen by Barry Pickthall are obviously his own personal choices, but part of the enjoyment of any ‘list’ book is in compiling one’s own. Mine would definitely include the first production design available in GRP (any advance on the Flying Fifteen, built in GRP from the early 1950s?), the British Seagull outboard, ‘ordinary’ synthetic ropes in addition to the ‘exotic’ Dyneema® featured, and the first purpose-designed lifeboat – maybe even the RNLI itself. And to make room for them? Well, the Airfix model of the Golden Hind would certainly go, as would either the Camcorder or the Go-Pro video camera which immediately follows it. So too would Ernest Hemingway’s *The Old Man and the Sea* (possibly replaced by Erskine Childers’ *The Riddle of the Sands*), and Hannah Snell ‘the female soldier’, who presumably squeaks in because she signed on as a marine.

While probably not aiming, or claiming, to be an ‘authoritative tome’, *A History of Sailing in 100 Objects* is an attractive book which will answer questions for the curious and stimulate imaginative thinking. The price (particularly in the UK) is very reasonable for a book of this quality, and it would make a very acceptable present for either the older armchair sailor or the younger one with an enquiring mind. Many of the topics invite further investigation, for which our seemingly unlimited online resources would be ideal.

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