

# FAIRWIND

Spring / Summer 2023

Forth Corinthian Yacht Club

## Changes planned for racing and cruising

## Commodore's BRIEFING

We made some progress last year in race management and results, but we also learnt some lessons. With regard to the racing programme, we feel that the longer races lose out to the weekend and Friday short series. It must be that family commitments dictate how much time members can spend on the water at weekends! For that reason, we only have one distance race with an overnight stop in Dunbar Harbour. Dunbar SC have generously offered hospitality, including food, which I hope members will enthusiastically support. We also offer a

racing results published, both immediately after each race and on the website. Tom Louth and Tim Squires are working on this for us.

The WhatsApp group, set up for us by Jim Glass, has proved very popular, albeit a little unstructured and, at times, a little chaotic. I shall get together with Jim and see what can be done.

I didn't do much to improve our Race Officer programme last year. Many appointees apparently don't read the Handbook (produced by Council at enormous expense and effort), so I have



It feels like it's been a long winter, so all the more credit to Dougal, George, their 'Harbour Regulars' and indeed anyone who has given up their time to work on the

club moorings and have them ready for the season. *Wee Dumbo* has also been repaired and refurbished, despite the winter gales destroying her protective tent. That's a lot of work completed and we are lucky to have such people among our members.

Thanks also to Pam Strachan, who organised our winter evening talks programme, which covered a range of subjects from some very entertaining speakers.

There is a section of the club website (under 'members/technical') which includes the recently revamped FCYC Safety Management System. I would like to draw your attention to the Risk Assessments, and particularly those on lifting vessels, and removing and installing masts. We have a good safety record, and wish to maintain this, so please look out for yourself and for others.

You may be aware that the Middle Pier has recently been put up for sale. This includes the 'Heritable rights' (ie freehold) of our yard, so potentially we will have a change of landlord. Fundamentally we have a lease with 166 years remaining, with all the associated rights, and



Cruise in Company event to Dunbar on the same day for those who do not wish to race.

We have split the Weekend Series and the Friday Series into two series each and have adjusted the non-starter and non-scoring boats points values to make boats more competitive and, hopefully, produce some new winners in these events. I'm also planning to offer a small prize in the Bell Block after each race to encourage more entrants, rather than asking them to wait and receive the series prize at the end of the season.

We also plan to build on our attempt to get

to phone them and ask them nicely if they really would be a good sport and turn up! I am aware we need to carry out a more organised Race Officer development programme, as well as getting our early season Wednesday evening racing coaching course.

Well, here's wishing you a fantastic season's sailing, whether you cruise or race and even if you just spend the season in the yard on a never-ending project!

**Howard Thompson**  
Sailing Secretary

*continued on page 2*

continued from page 1

are much better off than when we previously only held short term leases. The Club Council will continue to monitor this situation closely.

With the new season we have a packed sailing programme, with activities planned for most weekends and various evenings. I encourage you to make the most of these opportunities to get out on the water, whether racing, cruising in company or attending the training events. And if the weather is kind we hope to have more barbecues in the yard after some of the events, so you can stay and socialise with fellow club members.

Please check the events calendar as to whether you're listed as a race officer; this isn't onerous, and the club can provide training and mentoring if you're new to this or unsure about what is involved. Don't forget that the race officer can alter the course to suit the conditions and improve the safety of competitors and themselves.

The club has a 'FCYC Racing & Cruising' WhatsApp Group which is used primarily to match skippers wanting crew and vice versa. This is a great way to go out on other peoples' boats and build up experience. And with a number of boats staying ashore this summer there will be plenty of experienced crews pining for sailing time!

In conclusion, be safe and have a great sailing season.

**Peter Douglas, Commodore**

## ARE YOU DOING SOMETHING?

To be more specific, are you doing something other FCYC members might find interesting this season? Sailing off into the sunset? Learning a new nautical skill? Installing some new maritime equipment?

If you are and you'd like to write about it for Fairwind we'd love to hear from you.

Just email [fairwind.fcyc@gmail.com](mailto:fairwind.fcyc@gmail.com) and let us have the details.

# GRANTON TO

This article relates to the first part of a voyage on the good ship *Hirta*:

Granton-Orkney-Lewis-Ireland-Iberian Coast-Porto Santo-Lanzarote-Maderia-Azores-Ireland-W coast Scotland-Granton. The voyage continues this April from Lanzarote

Paul Taylor and I have been planning an oceanic voyage for several years on his Rival 34 *Hirta*. The Covid-19 pandemic had meant we had to delay this

is at the very end. Winds were light (F1, F2) in the Forth and we motor-sailed to Fife Ness, sailing the rest of the way as the wind increased arriving at 19:00 a distance of 79 nautical miles in 13 hours, an impressive average of six knots.

In spite of the promising overnight conditions *Hirta's* anchor light on the stern gantry had been demolished during the night, rubbing against the wall. The next day was spent wandering around the



*Hirta, safely tied up in Stonehaven.*

adventure for two sailing seasons. Finally at the beginning of May 2022 we set sail. Our original voyage plan had been an extended Atlantic circuit but this changed as the voyage progressed.

We set off from Granton at 06:00 8th May to catch the ebb tide. Stonehaven was our first port of call on our voyage south to warmer climes.

We had a several reasons for this choice—to visit Orkney, Lewis and to explore the Atlantic coast of Ireland. This would also give us a good longitude to cross Biscay so as to be well away from the continental shelf.

The weather was looking reasonable to stay the night at Stonehaven as we sailed north. Its harbour can be problematic with a swell for a yacht with a deep draft (*Hirta's* draft is 2m) as the only place with enough water to tie up against the wall

picturesque environs of the harbour and visiting a few harbour hostelries.

A later start at 09:00 the following day to get the north going tide gave us a lively overnight sail to Wick in F4 to F5 easterlies. Conditions at Rattray Head (keeping well out) were good and we arrived at 7:00 the next morning. We tied up next to a wind farm boat and got some sleep and wandered into town in the late afternoon for something to eat at Wetherspoons.

Wick harbour has changed a lot since my first visits. Still the ever helpful and friendly harbour master (I was given a lift up to Tesco's on one visit) but new pontoons fully occupied by wind farm associated craft. The previous night we had navigated around the huge wind farm in Wick Bay which seemed to take ages to circumnavigate.

The recalcitrant tiller pilot.





# D GRANTON, PART 1



*Close encounter with a bull!*



*The standing stones at Calanish.*

Our first casualty of the voyage a recalcitrant tiller pilot. Soon sorted with the help of some red wine.

Heading off at 07:00 12th May the next day to catch the all-important tide at Dunscauby Head to cross the Pentland Firth to Stromness. It's a very interesting piece of water and to be treated with respect. I have gone around the top four times now with Paul and with *Maverick* both ways but never had any issues. This was the first time for me to sail from Wick to Orkney and I was looking forward to this novel passage. Leaving Wick at the top of the tide meant we had the tide against us at first but we powered into Stromness sailing all the way.

We arrived at 13:00 having covered 37 nautical miles. Paul went to visit an ex-work colleague and I had a haircut and visited some of the ancient structures on the Orkney mainland, Skara Brae first off and well worth the visit. Then a close encounter with a rather large bull with plenty of attitude and not very happy with me photographing him; thankfully with a fence between us, and then the Standing Stones of Stenness.

Stornoway—or as Paul likes to call it 'Stormyway', equally valid in my

opinion—lay across the Minch. Waiting for clement weather we set off from Stromness on Saturday 14th May at 21:15. An overnight passage saw us tied up in Stornoway at 19:30, 114 nautical miles. We were to spend seven nights

varied, another haircut for me, daily visits to the Criterion to prevent dehydration, a really great showing of a series of films about mountains in the community centre and general dilly dallying.

After our enforced but pleasant sojourn in Stornoway we were ready to get going again on Sunday 22nd May leaving at 12:45. The weather forecast was perfect for a two-to-three day passage going south. We had potential time pressures now if we kept to our original idea of going down the Atlantic coast. Bangor was a potential destination and we planned carefully our departure time and course as there were quite a few boat stopping currents over several tides to contend with, especially around the top of Northern Ireland. Neither of us had been around the south-west of Islay and the chart indicated several areas of overfalls and a strong tidal stream. We kept well away

from these areas

Not having any real time constraints gave us plenty of scope to wait for favourable weather for passages. Put more eloquently by a Dutch sailor met along the way 'A patient sailor always gets fair winds'.

**Ian Dawson**

## Paul's 'Bits'

**Best bit:** Blasting across Scapa Flow under all plain sail

**Worst bit:** Sailing out of Stornoway in the endless rain

**Scariest bit:** Waking up to find Ian taking the inner route round Cape Wrath

**Funniest bit:** Ian's second haircut in a week

**Most satisfying bit:** getting the tides right in the North Channel

**Most beautiful bit:** Sun rising over Kintyre after a cold night at sea

in 'Stormyway', with constant strong southerly winds all week. This was another novel visit for me but Paul had been here countless times and I went off on my own the next day to explore the Callanish Stones (which were really evocative) on the bus and was surprised to see a neolithic bus shelter on my way there. Time spent in Stornoway was

# A West Coast Adventure

A small band of Corinthians waved the dismantled *Somerled* off on its West Coast adventure from the pontoon at Granton last June. I had real mixed feelings of excitement for taking the boat out west, and also (due to a house move) wistfulness at the possibility that this may be the last time the boat will call Granton home.

Jim Glass' kind offer to use his mooring in Salen (summer home of the West Coast Corinthians) spurred us on to make the journey. My Dad agreed to help move the



*Leaving Granton.*

boat out west with me, and we had a few crew changes (my daughter, stepson and his friend from scouts joined for various legs of the journey). The Forth and Clyde was neither as weedy as the horror stories I'd heard, nor as deep as Scottish Canals claim. Still, with *Somerled's* tiny draught we got through to Bowling without a hitch. We stopped over at the fantastic new bridge at Stockingfield (which my employer Sustrans has recently delivered). With the strict control of boat movements on the canal, my crew and I felt like celebrities as we went on our way, such was the attention we got.

The boat stayed on a mooring at Fairlie for a few weeks until our main family summer cruise to Salen. Ann, myself and the kids/dog enjoyed a gentle motor from Fairlie via Lochranza to Portavadie, where we met with my extended family and camped ashore. We spent eight days pampering ourselves at

*Entering the Sound of Kerrera*



the spa and day sailing in Loch Fyne. I took every excuse I could think of to ferry people over to Tarbert for supplies and cafe fix. It's like going over to Burntisland, only even prettier (if you can imagine such a thing).

Rested and ready for adventure again, we set off up Loch Fyne motor sailing to get to the canal before the end of the day. The Crinan was a treat. We only spent one night in the canal, and would happily come again and take more time over it. We fairly flew through thanks to a fleet heading the other way leaving all the locks open and in the right state for us to enter all the way through. We made the tidal gate at Dorus Mor with ease and had a fantastic sail up to Shiel Sound. The boat reached a record speed of eight knots over the ground through the Sound of Luig. There might have been some tide behind us!

After a night at Anchor off Luig and some more dramatic tidal gates and another speed record broken (this time 9.5 knots), I dropped the family off at Oban and took the boat on to Salen myself. This is by far the biggest trip I'd done single handed and surprisingly it was a total delight. Highlights included passing the Cal Mac in a tidal race off Lismore Light (totally expected but still dramatic and caught the attention of the passengers), passing fellow West Coast Corinthian boat with Iain Dawson aboard in the Sound of Mull, and goose winging pretty much all the way from half way up the sound to Salen itself.

Ann and I enjoyed a couple of nights at anchor in Loch Sunart in the late summer, a really beautiful loch with lots to explore. I've never been prouder of my wife Ann as when she piloted the boat into a tight anchorage by moonlight while seven months pregnant. Knew there was a reason I married this one! It's surprisingly quiet considering how close to the main 'shipping' route it is, seems to be missed by people keen to get further out to sea but they're missing a trick in my humble opinion.

A friend helped me move the boat to Linnhe Marina (second shout out in as many Fairwinds articles—they really are great) in October, where it was lifted out for the winter. The highlight of this trip was waiting out a storm at anchor off Lismore. There really is no relaxation like being somewhere away from mobile data, with only food, books and instruments (and yes a bit of boat fettling) to stay entertained, knowing you can't get off the boat or sail anywhere for a good 36 hours. The time passes surprisingly quickly.



*The Crinan Canal.*

I had intended to bring the boat back east this season, but I've really got the itch now and so have taken the plunge and bought myself a mooring in Loch Sween. We're looking forward to exploring Jura / Islay / Gigha / Rathlin / Colonsay over the next couple of seasons. So I'll be itching to get my sailing fix in between holidays, looking out for crew callouts on the FCYC WhatsApp group. I'd be happy to pay forward the goodwill I've received from other members by making the mooring available when the boat is not on it, so do contact me if you're planning a trip that way to see if I'm able to help you out at all.

I've met so many great people at Granton and learned so much. I would never have had the confidence to do all of the above without wise words, kind offers and inspiration from other members. I plan to stay involved in crewing (and drinking) and chipping into club life as and when I can. With the family having moved to Dunbar, and the fantastic sailing experiences we've had out west, it's not clear if or when the boat will return to Granton. But wherever it sails, the Corinthian burgee will be flown with pride.

**Dan Robertson**

*Farewell, Loch Sunart.*





# Cheap navigation and autopiloting

I taught intellectual property law and am quite tight so the expensive proprietary navigation systems never appealed.

The government basically gives digital charts away for free, so why should you be tied in to a commercial supplier charging many pounds for a chart card? Luckily there are options available, the one I prefer to use is based upon OpenCPN which is a free navigation system with all the bells and whistles of more expensive ones and, some say, a better AIS integration.

All the low-cost options are better than the only option available in the early 1980s: paper charts, brass dividers, a Douglas protractor, a Walker log off the back of the boat, and the hope that you knew where you were. Maybe there are fewer younger sailors around now because we've lost the reckless adventure of sailing which appeals to youth. But I'm not going back.

This is an outline of a system I've just put into the *Seawolf 30*. It is perhaps a system for tinkerers at present but no doubt it will become easier to implement in future.

I use a Raspberry Pi mini computer as the core part of the system. It's been around for a few years now, having



started off as a teaching aid. Now it is used – because of its low price and power – for many tasks. It runs off 5v so needs a cheap DC to DC converter. Everything else runs off 12v.

The compass unit is a small card which plugs on to the Raspberry Pi and is an IMU—an 'Inertial Measurement Unit'—of the kind used in mobile phones. It has a compass but also various other sensors to collect information on acceleration and 3D movement. You can buy the parts but I got mine from the PyPilot developer (see below) along with the tiller/wheel driver. This is connected to the Raspberry Pi and is controlled by it. You take two wires from it off to whatever moves your

rudder. I bought it but others make their own from various electronic parts (which is beyond me).

In my case because I have a tiller I used a linear actuator but there are other options such as wheel pilots (commercial or made—cheaply—from windscreen motors). I bought from a Dutch company who buy from China (as you can, too) but carry out some modifications. I got them to provide one for a centre line of 800mm:

You can run the autopilot system without a screen, but my approach is screen based to display charts. The



lowest cost option with the largest screen using the least power is to buy a laptop screen and the driver for that. I would prefer a 12 volt TV screen but they tend to be high power users. You buy the screen off eBay; wait till it comes, then use the code on the back of it to order the correct hardware driver. YouTube taught me this.

This is my system and there are many alternatives. I know one set-up where the Raspberry Pi links in to an iPad as display, but when I tried it I found it slow and annoying. Perhaps things have improved. You can also get 7in touch screens for the Raspberry Pi.

The hardware systems bits can be seen in this photograph.



The white box contains the screen driver and Raspberry Pi and the small box above the VHF handset drives the tiller. The worst thing about the setup here is that I couldn't hide things away behind the panel. It's not too elegant especially using screws to hold the

screen.

So far, then, cost for the basic hardware is as follows.

Raspberry Pi 4—£40  
12v DC to 5v DC converter with USB C output—£7 (eBay)  
17" display screen and driver—£60 (eBay)

IMU and Driver (from PyPilot)—£75  
Linear Actuator (PCNautic)—£240

I also purchased a USB GPS to plug into the Raspberry Pi. There are no doubt several ways I could do without this, but it was only £15. Excluding the actuator, cables and GPS is £182 (for the smaller memory Raspberry Pi). Things could be much cheaper if you have the skills to purchase bits and put them together yourself but I wanted a system which worked, not a five-year project. I sold my old, weak Simrad TP10 for £200 which covered some of the costs of the new system.

I use a Bluetooth wireless mouse and keyboard which adds a few more pounds to the system. That stops wires coming all over the chart table.

You now need software and charts.

First, the *charts*. O-charts sell the UK charts for OpenCPN (and which easily integrates when purchasing and



downloading) for the princely sum of around £16. This is the only software cost in the system.

The chart plotter software I use is OpenCPN which is free. It provides a very good quality navigation tool and has a number of 'plug-ins'. These are pieces of software which give extra functionality. For example, you can add GRIB weather forecasting information to the chart display, weather routing etc. On a 17in screen the information is easy to read, and it operates just like any expensive chart plotter.

One of the plug-ins for OpenCPN is



PyPilot an autopiloting piece of software. This is what controls the driver hardware discussed above. It integrates well with OpenCPN and has a number of ways to be controlled—either on screen control, or via route planning or from a mobile phone or iPad communicating with the Raspberry Pi. Currently I have tested only the web on screen version shown in the photograph.

Wrapping around the whole software is another piece of software called OpenPlotter. It is best to think of it as an operating system for boat navigation. It has a host of possible functions and can take information from various sources (wind, temperature, engine etc) and integrate them with the navigation system. OpenPlotter is also free.

One thing which should be pointed out is that just because this software is free, it doesn't mean it is second rate. Much of the internet runs on software which is free (called 'open source') and it runs very smoothly indeed.

The wiring is not too complicated—I

added switches and put most of the bits into one large box. The installation of the software is where most people have problems. On one forum I saw a post which said the author had given up once and was now coming back to it a year later, which is why I describe it as most suitable for tinkerers. However there are a variety of step-by-step descriptions available online to help the non-technical person. One approach I wonder about is simply to make a copy of a working system and plug the copy into a different Raspberry Pi.

I spent perhaps three days attempting to sort things before I began to understand how it linked in and what settings were required. I do have a PhD in computer science but that was from the days when some people still programmed with punch cards, so I would say I have an interest in the technical but not much knowledge. After I got it working I then discovered an online introduction which had most of the information I needed. And YouTube has videos detailing it all. Too late for me, of course.

Finally, one reason why I took this route was that the small tiller pilot I had bought couldn't control the boat under sail (it was only bought for use under engine when I had a wind vane on the boat). I could have got a more powerful tiller pilot but having decided to base the navigation system on the Raspberry Pi (with an Android tablet as backup) and seen the price of these commercial tiller pilots I thought I would give PyPilot a go.

Does it work? A test trip by engine

under autopilot over to Aberdour was a straightforward task, even if the boat seemed to be going sideways on the chart screen (sorted when I got back to the pontoon) and, luckily, the wires to the linear actuator didn't have to be swapped around. Coming back under headsail was easy, too, though testing the tacking option showed that the tacking degrees needed adjustment. So, basically, yes it works. There are lots of factors which can be changed to suit the boat (just as round the world racing boats have their autopilots tuned to suit each particular vessel) which are open to the user, and which are not in commercial systems which are produced for an 'average' boat. There is clearly learning to be done on how best to set things up.

**Philip Leith**



## Rowing is opening up. At last!

At last rowing is opening up! We had a very successful fundraising quiz night in November, proceeds going towards oars and a boat cover for our wee skiff, Bow-Tow. She is currently having lots of care and attention and is looking great for the main season ahead.

We attended Kinghorn's Frostbite Regatta on Kinghorn Loch in January and had the most perfect weather for it. We took a few rowers who had never been to a regatta before, and we all thoroughly enjoyed the day. We've signed up for quite a few more regattas, the next being at Port Seton in early May. Lots more to follow, including a scaled-down Midsummer Challenge on 1st July, with many thanks to Frank from FCYC for taking on the main organising.

We are having another Come and Try It Day in April for potential new members. We still have a long list of would-be rowers but can accept those who already row or have significant sailing experience.

And for those of you who are Radio 4 listeners, you may have caught Richard's recording of The Wee Michael on Broadcasting House on 18th December. They have a slot called Slow Radio, and the recording catches the rhythmical

clunk of the oars with the movement of our skiff gliding across the water.

**Pat Lawson, Chairperson**





# THE INTERVIEW: Pete Sherlock

**Q** When did you start sailing and at what age ?

**A** Probably about 1955 , aged 12 or 13.

**Q** What got you into sailing in the first place ?

**A** My parents had a hotel in Ramsey on the Isle of Man . My bedroom overlooked a boating lake with rowing boats , motor boats and clinker built sailing boats ( *a la* Swallows and Amazons ) .Also a regular hotel guest had a prewar wooden boat I used to get invited on .

**Q** What is it that you like about sailing ?

**A** The sense of freedom and being master of your own destiny .

**Q** Do you prefer racing or cruising and why ?

**A** Cruising has less need to organise a crew and destination can be changed to suit conditions . However I still enjoy passage type racing .

**Q** What has been your most enjoyable sailing experience ?

**A** My first North Sea crossing from Granton to Amsterdam in my Evasion 32

**Q** What has been your most frightening sailing experience ?

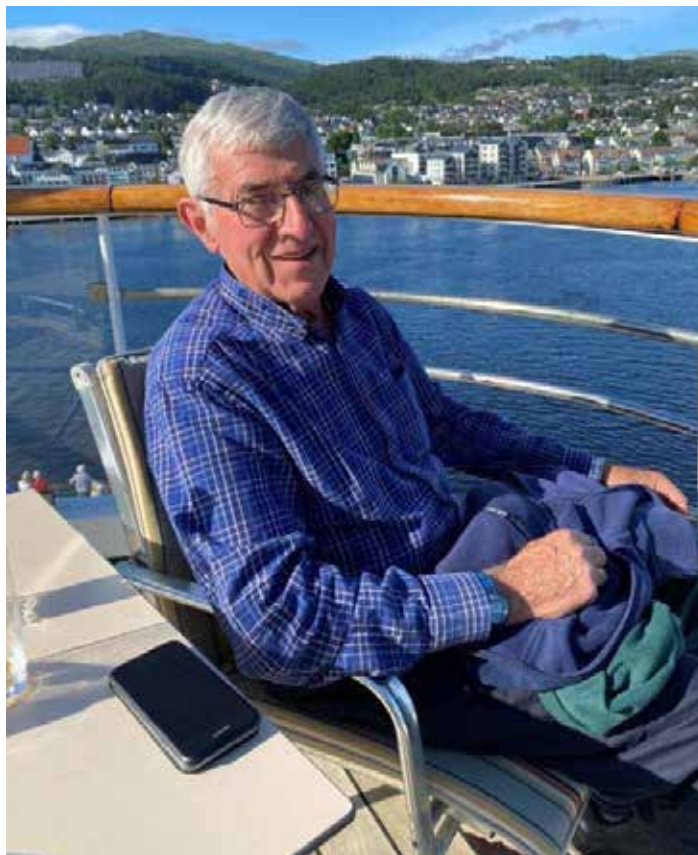
**A** On my first trip to the Isle of Man I had spent the night in Portpatrick; advice from the Harbour Master was to stay very close to the shore when approaching the Mull of Galloway to avoid the tidal race. Unfortunately I did not stay close enough and got caught in the race. I wondered if the engine was going to break free from the mounts. On subsequent trips I got it right . After lift-out that year I removed the engine and three of the mounts fell off!

**Q** What was the first boat you owned and what did you like/dislike about it?

**A** A Hurley 22 , solidly built and a pleasant boat to sail. Downside was an outboard motor and sea toilet under the fore cabin V berth.

**Q** What other boats have you owned ?

**A** Before the Hurley 22 , a Heron sailing dinghy and then a Skipper 14: after the Hurley a Seamaster 23, Contessa 28, Beneteau Evasion 32, LM 32 and currently a Fisher 25 .



**Q** What was your favourite boat ?

**A** Whatever boat I happened to own at the time .

**Q** What is your current boat and why did you choose it?

**A** A Fisher 25 ketch. A motorsailer with all home comforts in 25 feet. Heavily built and will stand up to inclement weather. Easy to get on and off. I have a fascination for ketch rigs.

**Q** Apart from the Firth of Forth , where else do you sail / have you sailed?

**A** East, West and North coasts of Scotland, Isle of Man, Ireland, several North Sea crossings to / from Netherlands and Denmark. Greek Islands . Marlborough Sounds and Bay of Islands in New Zealand.

**Q** When did you join Forth Corinthians and why?

**A** I joined in 1981. Two colleagues Bill Ballantyne and Willie Tait were members and introduced me to the club. The ethos of the club then as now centred on self help and practical help and advice from member to member.

**Q** Have you held positione on the Council of Corinthians and if so what?

**A** I was Vice Commodore for a number of years, Honorary Treasurer for two periods, Edinburgh Marina Director and Treasurer for three spells.

**Q** What important pieces of advice would you give to newcomers to sailing?

**A** When manoeuvring in close quarters, take it slowly. That way if things don't work out as planned you have time for Plan B and if you hit something you minimise the damage .

**Q** What would you like to do in the future, sailing wise?

**A** Hopefully continue to sail on my own boat for a few years yet.

**Q** What do you do when you're not sailing?

**A** Family, walking, woodturning and reading.

# Glass Eye

Another irreverent look at his own—and the club's—activities by Corinthian Jim Glass.

What's been going on? Last October's lift out was a historic one—the final one overseen by George Mackay as combined Harbour Secretary and Commodore and everything else, and I must say it was a resounding success. I must say this even although I ended up in the notorious puddle in the middle of the south yard. I'm sure I was there in the very first year of my membership but just assumed that was what a newbie could expect. Now I can only assume it's our very own naughty step.

Looking down at the pontoons (The Edinburgh Marina Ltd—not to be confused with 'Edinburgh Marina est. 1837') we do seem to have less than full occupancy which is a concern. Roughly half of the marina's income comes from winter berthing on those pontoons, and we're in the middle of an expensive program of replacing the old and knackered ones. This is the place where I insert a joke about retiring Commodores, to get my own back for that puddle. The pen is mightier!

The AGM takes place before the end of October as ever and a new Commodore is carried aloft into power with loud hosannas. Anticipating this, John Anderson and myself decide that we really should get the Commodore's boards out of the container of useless things and up on to the walls of the Bell Block. But first we need to get them updated as Paul Taylor's name is the last one recorded. Clearly that's where it all started to go wrong. He was rumoured shortly thereafter to be travelling on an Irish passport.

One minor side note to the AGM is that a new Vice-Commodore was also installed. As it has been customary for the VC to 'step up' in due course (though the previous VC didn't) it can only be hoped that a new VC is found pronto.

Once again, the December prize-giving is held and is remarkably well attended given the filthy weather. I'm pressed into action as photographer (I guess as it's unlikely I'll be on the receiving end of an

award) as a succession of trophies are handed out. Rather than letting them languish on my hard drive I remarkably enough manage to get them up on the website by the end of January! An award is well overdue.

Talking of said website, a few years ago, at the then Rear Commodore's behest, I added a 'suggestions' form to it. Happily, it's gone entirely unused since then. Well, until very recently. An unnamed person has sent in two. And of course, my lovely suggestions box signs off with 'thank

was invited to help crew *Hirta* back from the Azores. I gather he hadn't had quite enough drink to say yes.

As well as our own talks, we're invited over as guests at the RFYC to a couple of theirs. This is a thoroughly good thing of course. The talk by Torben is particularly illuminating. Don't go sailing across the North Sea with an engine which only intermittently starts is definitely a learning I intend not to forget. As for Jim Scott's talk on racing, there is much I have happily forgotten already. In particular his formula

to calculate course length to minimise boat collisions at the first windward mark. Luckily I still have the handout. Has anyone seen Howard? I want to pass it on.

One of my many hats is Director of the EML and one thing that did enliven those long winter evenings was a missive from Forth Ports, the benevolent organisation which apparently owns the water (and presumably the mud) in the harbour. They'd finally got round to upping our rent in line with the 2015 lease conditions and current RPI. I check their maths and find it matches mine to the penny. I happily send off the money—after all, they spend a considerable amount keeping the harbour in excellent condition. Sorry, I mean extracting maximum value from their assets for the pensions of the Canadian Public Services including the famous Mounties. We can pat ourselves on the back for that.

Talking of benevolent organisations, word whistles round the neighbourhood residents association that the eagerly awaited Marina in the west harbour may not actually be happening. Shocker! Large "for sale" signs admittedly give the game away. One of my snouts amongst the local councillors tells me she'd been talking to the leader of the Council about it. I can confidentially reveal that he doesn't know anything either.

Lastly I must review my list of things I was going to do before lift in. Just as I thought, very few of them really need done. Or done well. What do you think I am? *Misty Blue*?



you—we will discuss your suggestion at our next council meeting'. Damn!

One piece of good news that the New Year brings is that the redoubtable Pam Strachan has taken over temporarily (she says... try and escape, Pam!) as Social Secretary and instantly curates a series of talks around the subject of 'Intrepid Corinthians'. The downside is that she'd like my good self to be the speaker at one along with David Cox. After delivering our rapturously received spiel, David and I stay on and sup awhile with my good pal Lawrie before I have to leg it. Meeting Lawrie the following week he tells me he