



MANCHESTER CRUISING ASSOCIATION

Boat Electrics - Jerry Armitage

Re-Upholstery - Lesley Pickles

20 September 2007

If you thought that shrink wrapping was a game psychiatrists played as their drunken parties began to get out of hand, then you should have come to Jerry's talk. His aim was to teach us some of the basics of checking boat electrical systems with a multi-meter. Alarming the audience with a mention of Ohm's Law (were Archimedes' Principle and Fleming's Left-hand Rule just around the corner?), he reassured us all with some practical tips:

- Be methodical when you track down faults
- Don't jump to conclusions
- Don't send Sue up the mast to replace a faulty bulb with another faulty one
- Don't put a spanner across your battery because it melts the spanner
- It doesn't do the battery much good either
- Measure the normal currents you expect through switches and write them on tape.
- Stick the tape near the switch
- Do this in the winter
- Run a bit of solder into crimped connectors

A propos Ohm's Law, to save us getting out our calculators, Jerry distributed a chart that let you work it out with no effort. To me it looked like some cabalistic horoscope ready-reckoner but people took all the copies. Psychiatrists present probably took it as a potentially welcome relief from those wrapping games. Which of course brings us back to shrink wrapping. This is a way of keeping water out of your connections by sealing them with heat-shrink plastic sleeves.

The presentation was much better than I can capture here and Jerry had some nifty diagrams. Everyone learned something useful. Jerry caught us off guard and raffled off a couple of multi-meters for MCA and RNLI funds. A number of us, worried by Jerry having come on with a yellow foam duck under his arm (some sort of comfort toy?), were relieved when he announced that you could buy them for £1.00 for another money-making scheme.

Not many people would take on a talk entitled "Re-upholstery". But Lesley Pickles did, and did it very well. Lesley is half of Sherlock Foams; Mike, the remainder(sorry Mike) was in the audience with a young Pickle.

Lesley gave us plenty of practical tips about re-upholstering: about patterns, materials (watch out for fire safety and BS5852) and the surprising variety of

foams available. She had prepared a crib sheet for measuring up the chamfers on the sides of mattresses to fit the internal hull shape. But, when she showed some of the bizarre shapes they had been asked to produce and the complexities of some of the split mattresses, you realised none of it was easy even with a crib. Maybe, once you've mastered Ohm's Law you can move onto the challenge of making your own cushions and mattresses but I'm not so sure. Best left to experts - so have a look at the Sherlock Foams website.

The man who forgot he'd taken the cap off the diesel tank under the forepeak mattress was surprised when he came to fillup by how much he had to put in. Then he found that the tank had overflowed and the mattress had absorbed a season's fuel. If *he* was in the room, he kept quiet. But there were some spontaneous recommendations from members whose boats had been used as illustrations of the Sherlock magic with things foam-like

One member, normally fairly sensible, admitted he'd washed a foam mattress in the bath. It worked quite well except that so much water was absorbed that he couldn't lift it afterwards. Mike P revealed a useful professional tip: sandwich the mattress between two planks and drive a car over it. The member said that he hadn't thought of that but anyway couldn't see how to get a car in his bathroom. Perhaps the mattress is still there; perhaps he's come to like it. No-one was inclined to ask.

These were two presentations by people who knew what they were talking about and could do it with some style and humour. It's what members' talks are all about.

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