



# The Manchester Cruising Association

## Yacht Surveying - an insight: 14th October 2004

Bob Sheffield

Bob Sheffield lives in Rossendale, Lancashire. A strange location for a yacht surveyor at first sight but not in his view – near enough to the M62 to travel east-west and near enough to the M6 to travel north-south. Maybe one shouldn't put too much store in first sights. Again Bob may disagree. For instance, when you go to have a look at a boat you may be interested in, he recommends that you have a look at it from a reasonable distance first of all. Look along the hull, preferably with the light shining along it – is it smooth, are there any lumps and bumps, any obvious inconsistencies? If there are, you should find out why they are there and, if there isn't a good explanation, you could save yourself the expense of a survey.

That was very much the tenor of Bob's talk – you can be your own surveyor to a certain extent. It's in the detail that the surveyor becomes so important.

Bob started sailing dinghies as a lad and eventually moved to bigger boats during his career with the RAF. He was heavily involved in organisation maintenance of RAF fleet when retired from force it only natural that should think moving into something do sailing. Since then has steadily built up experience reputation Northern Yacht Surveys. He showed us many photographs of examples of problems with boats ranging from RIBS to yachts to fishing boats to canal boats. Some he was unable to show us because the boats were the subjects of dispute or litigation.

His work covers pre-purchase surveys, insurance surveys and pre-delivery surveys. The latter pre-delivery surveys were on new boats. That may seem surprising but he quoted a case where he found an enormous number of faults, some of them quite serious, on a brand new boat. He strongly recommends this kind of survey on new vessels as a survey fee, relatively little compared to the price of the new boat, could save heartache, danger and cost later on.

The surveys can also cover ships' papers, something we possibly don't think about as part of the job.

Bob likened his work to that of a marine detective. For instance, damage to the keel may indicate a grounding – has the engine been disturbed on its mountings, has the mast been disturbed, has the rigging been strained, what about the keel bolts...? Bob is still a sailor himself and he had photographs of his own boat to show us. He keeps it in Greece so pictures of sunshine sailing warmed us up a bit and got the juices flowing in this cold weather. One of his photos was of a transit of the Corinth Canal – the most expensive canal trip he has ever made!

As mentioned above, Bob is in business as Northern Yacht Surveys and can be contacted on telephone number 01706 226145 or mobile number 07906 831736.

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