

THE INTERNET FOR MARINERS

The amazing usefulness of the Internet for a variety of purposes is readily apparent even to this confirmed Luddite. For cruising sailors far from home, for people with small businesses, and for those who live in remote places, it opens up possibilities for communication, for shopping, for conducting business, for selling a wide range of products, and most of all, for research and obtaining information available from a vast range of world wide resources. Rather than having to visit a large city library, a museum, or a seaport to find something, many questions can be answered by typing a few strategically worded commands into a search engine's maw. Want to find out about the long term effects of babesiosis, how to pasteurize milk, the status of a round the world sailing race, the weather in Micronesia, or where to buy a globe for a Victorian hanging lamp and within minutes you can have an answer. For a researcher the possibilities are almost endless and in the maritime field the resources available are mind boggling.

When reading over classic cruising stories from the twenties and thirties, even the late forties and early fifties, one is struck by how much the world changed and how quickly...partially the effects of World War II and the introduction of television. Add the jet plane, computers, and the Internet of course, and the differences in world cruising in the past twenty years make some of us feel as if we've been totally outdated. But the lure of the kerosene lamp and a quiet anchorage, or a long passage with Orion or the Southern Cross rising and dolphins riding the bow wave will never fade even though it is now possible to access e-mails and the Internet in the remotest of locations and at sea.

Now that the dark days of winter are upon us and with, perhaps, extra time to fiddle around, armchair sailors and nautically inclined readers might enjoy doing "maritime research". Here is a list of websites to lead the way; please be warned that many of them have links to other websites and link lists so 20 minutes of looking something up quickly turns into several days of mesmerizing (a cynic might say stupefying) computer time.

I've loosely organized the following websites thematically, and given each a brief introduction and explanation. The general focus of this article is websites that will lead to other sources of information. If you have a really good website to suggest, please send me the address at info@vineyardsailing.com and I'll file them for future use. The readers will notice that there are a lot of British websites, and I'm not sure why so many pop up when a search is made...either there are more British maritime websites or they are much more accessible. I would appreciate learning about more American and worldwide websites, particularly of chandlery, vendors and information.

General and link lists:

The Grand Master entry in this category is, hands down, The Mother Of All Maritime Links. This was the first nautical link list that I ever accessed and it is still the first one that I would access to begin any research. The site is omnivorous, well organized and incredibly easy to use. John Kohnen has been managing this website for years and he is to be complimented for his dedication to the collection and verification of website addresses as well as to variety of the offerings. The list started off in the Pacific North West and there is still a bit of that bias but the scope is truly international with links to everything from Amateur Boatbuilding & Repair, to Coast Guards & Lifesaving Services, to Booksellers & Publishers, to Disabled sailing to Light houses and Lightships, to Software to Tugboats and Tow boats, and ever so much more. The Mother is at www.boat-links.com and you will find that John maintains a number of other lists for subjects like nautical literature, ironclads, book sellers, etc.

Another link list site that is incredibly useful and interesting is www.apparent-wind.com which is maintained by Mark Rosenstein This list is as different from The Mother as chalk is from cheese and it covers a lot of ground, or ocean as the case may be. There is a definite bias here towards “tall ships” and specific boats but there are also endless historical research resources and you can trace the history of PAMIR (including photos of the range of mountains for which she was named) or One Design Resources, or Maritime Museums Online.

Such websites as the above are obviously labors of love and the webmasters must put in many hours of effort and energy – for which all of us give thanks!

www.BoatingLinks.com is a commercial website, there is no apparent person maintaining the website, there are advertisements and the focus is more on products and services. The site introduces itself by declaring: “BL is the most complete directory of boating links on the web – compare boats, charters, products and information sources.” Unlike the prior two websites this is full of advertisements and commercial businesses are well represented but there is also a fair amount of information for the serious researcher. For the boat owner who needs to outfit or upgrade a boat you’ll find everything here.

Another general website is www.boatbuildingring.com which “connects boat builders, designers and boat building projects on the web.” This is a supplement to the traditional directories but on it you can find large boatyards and small backyard builders, as well as information, vendors, plans, and odd ball projects. If you want to find a company selling leather for boat products, the Geezer Boat works, or a small wooden boat builder in Greece, look here.

www.TheMainSail.com describes itself as “The Worlds Chandler” and although it is a British website the coverage is international. There are reader/owner reviews of boats, navigational equipment, clothes, as well as forums, general maritime news, and a lot more.

A very interesting website is www.marmuseum.ca which is the website of the Museum of the Great Lakes at Kingston, Ontario; the range of this website is amazing. They have a section for the Ice Breaker ALEXANDER HENRY (operated in the summer as a B & B), a section for their very large research library of shipping, and information on their research facilities and capabilities, including ship lists, maritime history, international links, and information from the Canadian Nautical Research Society.

Another very extensive and extraordinarily complete Canadian website is www.aandc.org which is the Archives and Collections Society in Picton, Ontario, Canada. This is a “not for profit foundation dedicated to marine conservation, research and education.” They have collected thousands of maritime and nautical documents, books, images, charts, plans, magazines and they are expanding their databases to provide comprehensive marine and nautical research capabilities. They mention having 59,000 journals (alone) in their collection. Wow!

<http://marinedirectory.ybw.com> is a commercial website with some general information in addition to the commercial links. As so many of the websites are, this one is from England and it is part of a large group of businesses which also publish several maritime magazines including YACHTING WORLD. The introduction states that “The International Marine Directory is the only online directory to be used by multiple print and online publications across both consumer and business to business sectors” which contains over 8000 marine companies worldwide.

www.sailingscuttlebutt.com is a website focused mainly on racing, but with all sorts of added bells and whistles including a blog spot, a FORUM, and every week a small film clip. The website and its “products” comes in several forms; one is an e-mail newsletter that is sent daily during the week; another form is the actual website where you can find archived newsletter, a library of book reviews, classified ads, adverts for all sorts of gear, photos, etc. Produced and edited by the “Curmudgeon” there is a lot for every type of mariner but definitely there is more about offshore racing world wide, club and interclub racing, one designs, as well as a lot of coverage of the America’s Cup. The daily e-mail is billed as “a digest of the major sailing news, commentary, opinions, features and dock talk with a North American focus”. Based in San Diego, The Butt (and yes, the editor apparently has a license plate that reads “Butthead”) which is the daily newsletter livens up any dull day. Not much on cruising but a lot of long distance ocean racing, class racing,

and news about new products to make your boat go fast or faster. There are links to blogs and plogs and all sorts of other arcane computer things. Written with more than a bit of humor the daily "issue" always concludes with a selection of brief letters to the editor and a pithy but humorous bit of folk wisdom. The brief video clip (which I haven't been able to access) appears weekly and is always of some outstanding sailing event or balls-up.

WEBSITES AND ASSOCIATIONS FOR CRUISING SAILORS:

www.onpassage.com: This is a new website (in the past year) which advertises itself as "The global site for cruising yachts" and it is growing in scope and variety. There are hot links for weather, medical topics, tides and other very critical topics. There is an index which covers all sorts of things such as alternative energy, communication, rallies, safety, country information, navigation and seamanship, and they have a very good section of self-steering.

www.cruising.org.uk is the website of the Cruising Association, a membership organization in London, England which represents the interests of cruising sailors worldwide and makes available up-to-date cruising information. There is an extensive amount of information and columns: "around the coast", classifieds and advertisements, crewing services, cruising information, forums, RATS (regulations), and links. There is a club house in London with a superlative library of all sorts of information, charts, copies of logs, pilot books, cruising guides and there are even several small "cabins" available for members to use while in London. This group, as well as the OGA and the OCC (below) are well established groups with a world wide membership and any American cruising sailor is welcome to join if they meet the criteria.

www.oldgaffersassociation.org: Another British "affinity group", the OGA actually attracts members from all over the world – people who are interested in or who sail on gaff riggers of all types and construction, including gunter and lug rigs. There are local area groups all around the British Isles and active groups in Ireland, the Netherlands, France, Germany and Australia. The OGA began in the Solent about 40 years ago and now has a substantial membership. The OGA sponsors rallies, events, races, and a lot of interaction all focused on gaff rigged boats – whether old or new.

The Ocean Cruising Club was founded in 1954 by Humphrey Barton who crossed the Atlantic in the small VERTUE XXXV – home ported in Vineyard Haven, MA, for many years – in conjunction with several like minded sailors who had made significant passages in small boats. Today the OCC – again, based in England – is a world wide organization with members from many different

countries. The commonality is that to be voted into membership the individual must have made a non-stop ocean passage of at least 1000 miles and must be sponsored by two members. Their website, at www.oceancruisingclub.org (which is open to all) contains a lot of information about all sorts of subjects which are useful to long distance offshore sailors; the introduction page advises: "use our information with seamanlike caution!" A recent posting is 15 pages of news and information about pirate attacks and crime against cruising sailboats in Venezuela. Another posting is about serious sources of weather information for the cruising sailor.

www.shipsmoonthly.com: the best selling magazine in the UK for ship lovers – for enthusiasts and maritime professionals covering ferries, cruise ships, new building, cargo ships and the world's navies.

The Ancient Mariners Sailing Society, in San Diego, California, was founded in 1974 "to preserve & promote interest in vessels of ancient and/or classic design." With a very active program of races, regattas, lectures and talks, and their sponsorship of the Family Boat Building program (founded by WoodenBoat Magazine) this group is for all mariners, ancient or otherwise. Their website is www.amss.us.

The Classic Yacht Foundation in Edmonds, Washington is seeking to acquire (by donation) older classic yachts in need of restoration. Most of the boats available for sale on their website are Kettenburg designs – from the San Diego area. The website has some useful links and information about tax donations...www.classicyachtfoundation.org.

In Great Britain and around the coast of the British Isles there are innumerable venerable cruising clubs – many with "Royal" in the name – which sponsor cruising and racing events for families and guests, and even encourage overseas membership (for a fee). Among other activities such as regattas, sailing classes, lectures, dances, and cruises in company, they collect, collate and publish cruising directions which are invaluable guides to an area. In Scotland the Royal Clyde Cruising Club has a series of books which are the must have books for anyone cruising in Scotland...more than just local knowledge, they contain mini chartlets, tidal information, guides to sights ashore, and the best possible information about cruising grounds. They purvey local knowledge at its best. Their website is www.clyde.org In 1973 sixteen of the major British and Irish Cruising clubs banded together "to tackle problems facing those who cruise yachts at sea." Formed in 1973 from the clubs and association, The Conference of Yacht Cruising Clubs also publishes sailing directions. The website is at www.cycc.org.uk and there is an excellent selection of links.

www.intheboatshed.net is a very interesting blog spot: “the world of boat restoration and traditional boatbuilding on-line.” I came across it while reading the periodic newsletter of one of my favorite chandleries: www.classicmarine.co.uk which just arrived today. Both are British and both are full of photos and humor, comments, information and further sources as well as links. Classic Marine is the business run by Moray MacPhail and they will ship to the US as well as elsewhere in the world. They have a very interesting website which has, in addition to the merchandise that they sell, all sorts of valuable reference material about gaff rigs, metallurgy, rigging, construction, book reviews, etc. Moray’s periodic newsletter “Bowlocks” (whose name is a take off on a pithy British exclamation) is not to be missed. You should look at this website for this column alone. As to www.intheboatshed.net, the blogger, Gavin Atkin, writes a small and engaging blog every day. Topics are idiosyncratic and could be about a Swedish double ender that he saw at Mylor, or a Whitehall taken from John Gardner’s book about small craft, or wooden shell blocks from New Zealand.

www.cubshaw.com is the website of Cubberly and Shaw who publish Maritime Museum News, a monthly newsletter that contains information about New England Maritime Museums and their shows and exhibits (a different museum is profiled monthly) as well as other events of interest to the mariner.

BOATS AND SHIPS:

www.schooner-eleonora.com is a fascinating website with lots of photos (indeed many of the links are specifically for photographers) and comprehensive information about the Herreshoff schooner WESTWARD, lwl length of 97’/328 tons, built in 1910 as well as for the steel double gaff schooner ELEONORA who was built to the WESTWARD design and launched on the 30th of March, 2000 exactly 90 years to the day after the launch of WESTWARD. ELEONORA has participated in many of the Mediterranean and Caribbean classic regattas and events and is available for charter. Take a look at her under sail (and of the Fife schooner SUNSHINE – see next website) and save your pennies for a sail. NG Herreshoff, and Wm. Fife, jnr. were two of the worlds most skilled and versatile yacht designers and these two schooners are spectacular examples of their designs. When you think of the restorations of large (and languishing) vessels that have taken place in the past 20 years as well as the new builds such as ELEONORA and SUNSHINE, you realize that the world is a much better place when there are boats like these sailing around.

You can admire the schooner SUNSHINE at www.schooner-sunshine.com, the website for the 100 foot steel, double gaff schooner built in Myanmar, launched in 2003, maiden cruise in 2004.

Built with the “hull and rig exactly faithful to design #468 – also named SUNSHINE -- by William Fife, jnr, from 1900” the website has lots of photos of her under construction, under sail, on deck and below. What a boat! CLASSIC BOAT Magazine ran an article in March of 2006 about her and her build and the photos of the hull being turned over (she was built upside down) utilizing “Egyptian technology” are pretty amazing.

Any of the general link websites will direct you to many different websites for specific boats or even for fleets. Many American sailing vessels carrying passengers, or sail trainees cadets have their own websites and you can find some of them via: www.tallships.sailtraining.org which is the website of The American Sail Training Association. ASTA also has vessels from other countries (members) who are listed – each with a page of information and a photo. There are ads in the pages for all sorts of sail training opportunities. Using the general websites or the ASTA site you can search for information on a specific vessel. The general websites usually have a lot of information about historic vessels while currently sailing vessels can be found via ASTA. Or just type a specific vessel name into your favorite search engine and see what pops up.

There are also many websites devoted to classes of boats such as Six Metres, or Dragons, to types of boats: tugs, steamers, classic Australian sailboats, French canal boats, Bristol Channel Pilot Cutters, or even to boats by a specific builder: Chris Craft, etc. Six meters, both classic and modern, have been attracting increasing attention, particularly now that the Meter Rule is 100 years old. In *WoodenBoat Magazine* #194 (January/February 2007) there is a wonderful article, amply illustrated, about wooden six meters, and they mention a website: www.6mmorthamerica.com, which is for the North American Six-Metre Association. The British also have a website for their six meters, which can be accessed at www.6mr.org.uk. The article in WB reports “Though interest in the class, particularly in the older boats, has been booming in Europe for several years, much credit is being given for recent efforts. ‘It was not until Matt Cockburn and the Americans started publishing the *Classic Newsletter* on the Internet that the present great increase in numbers worldwide began,’ says Tim Street, the international class’s secretary.”

If you are interested in the classic boat scene, the British Classic Yacht Club on the Isle of Wight has an interesting website at www.britshclassicyachtclub.org – this is an organization which was founded to bring classic boat owners and enthusiasts together and to promote the ownership and enjoyment of classic yachts. JOSEPHINE, belonging to the Commodore Tim Blackman and his wife Josephine was rebuilt at Gannon and Benjamin Boatyard, and another, REBECCA OF VINEYARD HAVEN was built by G & B to a Nat Benjamin design, both on Martha’s Vineyard. The BCYC is compiling a database of classic yachts which should be on line in early 2007.

Many other classic boat groups have websites as well, and there is even a charter company which arranges charters specifically for classic boats: www.classic-sailing.co.uk through which you can charter a pilot cutter named ANNABEL J, of EVE OF ST. MAWES out of Falmouth, Cornwall, England.

The British Channel Pilot Cutter group has a website but I could not access it for some reason unknown. Suffice it to say that if you type in Bristol Channel Pilot Cutters you come up with a lot of possible websites to view, including those for specific boats.

And there are websites for various events, which may sometimes be found on the website of the sponsoring organization (ie. WoodenBoat Magazine sponsors the annual wooden boat show), MBH & H (www.maineboats.com) sponsors a boat show in Rockland, Maine in August, the Maine schooners organization have races and gatherings, there are traditional international events such as the Sea festivals held in Brittany (Dournenez or Brest) the Netherlands, Sweden, and many other places.

If you are looking for hardware, chandlery, rope, blocks, kerosene lamps, wood, fastenings, sandpaper, pine tar, and just about anything to do with classic yachts and traditional boats you can probably find it via the Internet...the problem being that it can be difficult to get a good idea of something by looking at a photo. Obviously my bias (and my skills, experience and knowledge) focus on these sorts of boats, but if you are interested in more modern vessels, or other designs (a catamaran [gasp!] or trimaran or powerboat) or in electronics and modern navigational gear it is all out there on the world wide web and a cursory search will normally locate things quickly.

Several vendors worthy of particular notice are www.classicmarine.co.uk, mentioned above. They are willing to search for what you need, and their service is fast...order on a Monday and it might even be here by Friday. www.cebeckman.com in New Bedford, MA is a family owned and managed firm that has been in business for close to 100 years. Service oriented and helpful, look at their website to see all the goods and services that Beckmans provides; shipping is via UPS or truck and their service department is wonderful. www.toplicht.de in Hamburg, Germany has a range of chandlery (several hundred pages) from sources world wide that will make any owner of a traditional boat or classic yacht drool. Their catalog, and website is in German, but there are English sub titles and if you call them, they speak impeccable English. Their prices are in Euros but we don't pay VAT so the prices are reasonable, and they provide quick service. Hamilton Marine in Maine, www.hamiltonmarine.com caters to both the recreational and the commercial mariner. They have a range of gear suitable for traditional boats. Down Wind Marine in San

Diego, California is a sort of one stop shop for cruising sailors and they will ship all over the world. www.downwindmarine.com is their website and their store is near Point Loma in San Diego...stuff is selected by sailors for sailors.

I have two favorite specialty vendors who produce wonderful things. The first is Lee Valley Tool of Canada who has a very large business presence in the US. They have separate catalogues for gardeners, carpenters, and for a very large range of all sorts of hardware. In addition to tools and all sorts of stuff for gardening, they also have bought up the rights to publish some very interesting books and one book that they publish is Clifford Ashley's THE YANKEE WHALER. You can access them at www.leevalley.com and request their catalogues as well. They have a line of wonderful tools (Veritas) which would be useful to a boat builder, and lots of items which could be used on board. The other specialty vendor is W. L. Fuller Inc. (www.wlfuller.com) of Warwick, Rhode Island. This is an old family company which manufactures a beautifully made range of taper point drills, counter sinks and counter bores, plug cutters, specialty drills, screw driver bits, reamers, taps, dies, hole saws and an interesting range of other specialty tools which will serve the boat builder and carpenter well. Their products are available at CE Beckman and you can also purchase small sets of tools which would come in handy for any craftsmen.

If you are thinking of buying a boat of any kind, or if you are trying to obtain marine insurance you will almost certainly need a comprehensive survey – there are several professional societies in the US which provide accreditation for marine surveyors, and some credibility. One is SAMS which can be found at www.marinesurvey.com – this is a group of marine surveyors who banded together in the 1980's. Another is NAMS which is the National Association of Marine Surveyors, and you can find them at www.nams-cms.org. George Welch of Welch Marine has a wonderful explanation of what a surveyor is and what they should do...you can find this at www.welchmarine.com and it is well worth reading just for the explanation alone. www.marinesurveyor.com is the website for Don Robertson, a Canadian surveyor who has an extensive amount of information by, for and about surveyors and surveys. From his links page you can access numerous other websites including those for surveyors, classification societies such as Det Norske Veritas (Norway), Continuing education for surveyors, industry associations (ABYC, ISMA, SNAME, etc.), and Insurance links. He also has vessel research and design, weather related sites, tools, materials, and a lot else. And he runs a whole slew of other websites including one called "Hullthumpers, The Marine Surveyor's Technical Forum" at www.marinesurveyor.com/hullthumpers. This is exclusively for members of NAMS, but perhaps you are a member. If not, perhaps you are a member of SAMS which has its own Forum at www.marinesurveyor.com/boatpokers. Or you can chose from one of about 20 other websites

that Mr. Robertson maintains for boat builders and other maritime vendors. His motto is “Learn from the mistakes of others. You won’t live long enough to make all of them yourself.”

Whew, this is a lot of information and a lot of computer “places” to spend a lot of time. Take a break and read a book – there are lots of maritime book sellers who are available on the Internet. Howland & Company in Boston doesn’t have a website but he does have e-mail and perhaps some day soon he will have a website. Here are a few of the best:

www.fishernauticalbooks.co.uk, www.columbiatrading.com, www.tuttlemarine.com, www.tenpound.com, and one of my favorites: www.mclarenbooks.co.uk in Scotland. All of these book dealers specialize in maritime books and provide impeccable service including a search service.

Or another break could be to pick up a magazine...same deal, here are some of the most interesting: www.woodenboat.com, www.classicboat.co.uk, www.yachtingworld.com, www.maritime-life.net, www.yachtingmonthly.com -- all with an extensive range of resources, link lists and even Forums.

Photographers and photos:

A home grown website is www.jsjohnston.org for a collection of antique yacht photographs taken by maritime photographer John S Johnston (c. 1839 - 1899) in the late 1880's and 1890's, including America's Cup participants, Herreshoff yachts,, and sail and steam yachts of all kinds. I've seen some of these images and they are wonderful – clear with lots of details of lovely boats.

Tom Nitsch is a German documentary photographer of enormous skill and creative ability. He has filmed in Europe, North America, and now has about 14 films...many of which are international award winners. His website is www.tom-nitsch-images.de and many of his films are narrated by the British yachting journalist Tom Cunliffe. There are films about schooners including one about sailing in a trans-Atlantic race on AELLO BETA (Atlantic Challenge), and another about BORKUMRIFF IV (Tracks of BORKUMRIFF IV) which includes footage from Martha's Vineyard, board ALABAMA, in Gloucester, MA, and along the coast of Maine.

www.kos.com is a website with many different parts, but the one that interested me was the maritime portion. www.photoaction.com is a website put together by Tim Wright of Bequia – he travels to a lot of the classic European regattas and races, as well as to those in the Caribbean, and some in northern Europe and the British Isles. He has an extremely easy to use website and

there are many, many images available – all organized according to the race or regatta that the boat was attending. He also can arrange to have an artist paint a painting of a boat from one of his images. Two of the most famous photographers – historically -- are the Rosenfelds of New York and the Bekens of the Isle of Wight on the Solent in England. The Rosenfeld photos are now part of the permanent collection of Mystic Seaport Museum and you can access the collection at www.rosenfeldcollection.com. Beken of Cowes is still very much in business after over 100 years of marine photography. They have a wonderful website at www.beken.co.uk and on it they sell images both modern and historic, cards, books and all manner of merchandise derived from their images. You can ask them to research a vessel and if they have images they can custom print photos. Their website is beautiful and so are their photos. Ben Mendlowitz is another marvelous maritime photographer – his annual calendars of wooden boats are must have items – you can find them at www.woodenboatstore.com or www.noahpublications.com. This is the 25th year of the calendars and Ben will be speaking about his photographs, photography and boats at Mystic Seaport Museum in their Adventure series. The current issue of WoodenBoat Magazine has a lengthy article about him as well, including a fine selection of photos from over the years. Included are some Vineyard boats including MALABAR II, WHEN AND IF, and REBECCA OF VINEYARD HAVEN as well as the fishing vessel ROANN, now in the permanent collection of Mystic Seaport Museum.

This piece could go on, and on, and on but in order to keep to reasonable confines of time and space (for now) the next section – on weather – will wrap up this article. I have a fairly eclectic selection of government and private weather sources and there are many more out on the web. You can find all sorts of information on www.noaa.gov – the resources are almost endless. Hurricane information can be found at www.nh.noaa.gov – current and historical information and even a chart that you can print out and use to track storms and hurricanes. “A Mariner’s Guide to Marine Weather Services, Coastal, Offshore, and High Seas” is at www.nws.noaa.gov. A military website that can be accessed by non-military personnel is www.nlmoc.navy.mil/home.html although the last time that I tried to access it, it was unavailable and the address may have changed. www.navcen.uscg.gov/marcomms is an exceptionally complete site about marine communications. The premier weather site that I have is another British website: www.franksingleton.clara.net which is weather for sailors with a mission to inform all sailors about weather, weather forecasts and how to use them. This is geared to British sites but is endlessly useful; it is an essential weather site and from his site are links to a lot of national weather services such as the German weather service.

I have purposely avoided including any sites for boat builders because that is an almost endless subject. I have also focused on American, Canadian and British websites but I’ve only very lightly

touched a tiny spot on the surface. The resources are endless as you will find if you start to search.

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