

'The Work of a Yacht Surveyor'
presented by Don Buckley

Report by James Merrington



Don Buckley (AKA 'The Admiral') is a very keen sailor, having sailed with many elite sailors including Iain Murray, Andrew Buckland (18ft Skiff Channel 7), Grant Simmer, Peter Gilmour and Dave Forbes inter alia, and has competed in many regattas and Sydney Hobart races.

He subsequently was a yacht rigger until 2007 when he became a yacht surveyor. His work covers two main areas: surveying yachts for sale and insurance purposes, and reporting for insurance companies when claims are made.

When surveying yachts for sale he finds that two to three per year are substandard and recommends the prospective buyer not proceed.

Don's talk highlighted numerous issues and problem areas that all boat owners should be aware of.

Insurance companies are seeing ageing fleets and hence an increase in major failures. In many cases, if preventative maintenance is not evident, claims may be rejected. There are also more instances of lightning strikes, with six boats being affected in one storm alone. Do check your insurance company's cover for lightning strike.

Areas of concern:

1. Electrolysis, especially if yacht is fitted with a leg type of drive – the water intake should also be kept clean of marine growth, otherwise engine overheating may occur. Seals around sterndrives need to be replaced every five to seven years.
2. Moisture ingress – moisture can enter the boat by many means. Ensure all windows are properly sealed; replace the seals and re-seat hatches and windows with new sealant if required. Chainplates are also prone to leaking and need to be resealed if necessary. The sealing of the keel to the hull may also need attention. Moisture causes rot in timber with consequent damage. Moisture may also corrode metal fittings over time which can result in weakness due to electrolysis. Many failures caused by water ingress are not covered by insurance and may not be apparent if they occur behind the internal trim in a boat, vigilance is necessary.
3. Rigging – insurers now require standing rigging to be replaced every 7-10 years (depending on your insurer.) It is important to replace the rigging screws at the same time and also ensure that the chainplates are still robust.

4. Check skin fittings and hoses periodically. Skin fittings need to be checked to ensure that they are not corroded; some reinforced hoses have stainless steel wire which can react with the bronze fittings if in contact with it.
5. Always view with concern areas where weeping appears. Hoses may need to be replaced if they get hard over time; always ensure that there are double hose clamps on all joints. Both hoses and clamps should be procured from ship chandlers not hardware stores (where the quality of the items is not suitable for a harsh marine environment.)
6. Read the fine print on your insurance policy and ascertain from your insurance company if they have special requirements when the above items should be replaced.

Have a preventative maintenance plan and replace items as necessary over time.

Don Buckley's presentation was highly informative and entertaining, a reminder to all of us to develop a maintenance plan and document it.