

# NEWS

If you have a news story to share, contact News Editor Dick Durham  
**EMAIL** dick\_durham@ipcmedia.com **TEL** 020 3148 4865



Read Dick's controversial, off-the-cuff blog online at [www.yachtingmonthly.com](http://www.yachtingmonthly.com)

## 'Nightmare' of seacock safety: it's a lottery, says surveyor



Many boat owners don't know their seacocks are dangerously inadequate

**A** leading marine surveyor is warning yachtsmen that their boats could be in danger of sinking because thousands of seacocks and through-hull fittings are made from brass rather than bronze.

Paul Stevens, 58, a founding member of British Marine Surveyors Europe, is 'incredulous' that some boatbuilders are fitting out yachts with brass ball valve-type seacocks which are designed for fresh water plumbing and piping systems. In salt water, brass is prone to a form of corrosion called dezincification, which makes them brittle and subject to failure.

Mr Stevens, who has written a special report for *Yachting Monthly* on seacock safety (see p70), has examined yachts where cheaper brass seacocks

have corroded so badly that they snapped off in his hands on inspection.

'It used to be the case that boatbuilders only ever fitted bronze seacocks which are virtually failsafe,' he said. But



Paul Stevens is an eminent yacht surveyor

**'Ordinary brass, bronze and DZR brass are impossible to tell apart'**

bronze and DZR brass – which is resistant to corrosion – are four times the price of ordinary brass. Ironically, the European Community's Recreational Craft Directive of 1998 made

the situation worse with its ISO standard for metallic seacocks and through-hull fittings, which states they should be corrosion-resistant for a service time of five years.

'A five-year service life is not acceptable for crucial below-the-waterline fittings,' says Mr Stevens, who adds that the situation is a nightmare: 'Ordinary brass, bronze and DZR brass all have a natural gold colour and the three materials are impossible to tell apart. There is so much confusion that choosing the right one is a lottery.'

Ordinary brass will probably last five years, Mr Stevens admits, but if you introduce other factors, like electrical current leakage and associated electrolytic action (especially with marina shore power), the rate of dezincification of brass fittings will be rapidly accelerated.

Nigel Calder, the world's foremost expert on boat systems, told *YM*: 'I have raised concerns for several years about through-hull fittings on a number of new boats, especially those built in Europe, many of which appear to use

some form of plated brass and not bronze. This concern was recently reinforced by a through-hull tailpipe on a two-year-old boat with a leaking hairline fracture. On investigation, the fitting was found to be almost corroded through. It could easily have broken off and sunk the boat. A through-hull is essentially an extension of the hull. It needs the same integrity as the hull for the life of the boat. In terms of metal fittings, only high quality bronze is suitable.'

We spoke to several builders about the problem and asked them which type of metals they used in seacocks.



Pink spots on this 2009 Elan seacock are an obvious sign of dezincification

Luka Kepec, spokesman for Slovenia-based Elan Yachts, said: 'We use standard brass seacocks, from Maestrini. They have all the necessary quality certificates and insurances, therefore they fulfil all requirements.'

Jean-Francois Lair, export manager of the French boatbuilding giant, Bénéteau, told *YM* that the company uses

marine-grade DZR brass. A spokeswoman for Bavaria Yachts told *YM* that its 89mm seacocks are made from saltwater-proof aluminium

**50** The Folkboat celebrates her 50th birthday this year. The Great Britain and Ireland Folkboat Association, which has more than 300 members, met at the Royal Lymington Yacht Club.

**1m** £1m is needed to create a new RNLI lifeboat station in Cowes. The move from Shepherds Wharf to the old Custom House, near the mouth of the River Medina, would reduce lifeboat response times by four minutes.

**44** The National Coastwatch Institution's 44th station has opened at Burton Cliff, overlooking Lyme Bay, Dorset. It covers 80 miles of coastline between existing NCI stations at Portland Bill and Exmouth.

## FAIR WINDS FOR

**Dee Caffari**  
 Yachtswoman Dee Caffari sailed into the record books in April as the first woman to sail non-stop around the planet three times. She finished the two-handed Barcelona World Race with Spanish co-skipper Anna Corbella. Her solo races were the 2005 Aviva Challenge and the 2009 Vendée Globe Race.

**Chichester sailors**  
 Former Deputy harbourmaster Richard Craven is the new harbourmaster. Irish ocean sailor Siun Cranny will take up a new post, as director of the Harbour Conservancy.

**Raft sailors**  
 Four men sailing a raft made from plastic pipes have crossed the Atlantic in 10 weeks, on a 3,000-mile voyage from the Canaries to the Caribbean.

## FOUL TIDES FOR

**British climate**  
 Melting sea ice in the Arctic is allowing 20% extra fresh water to flow into the sea from Canadian and Siberian rivers. If this huge volume of water flowed into the North Atlantic it could shut down the Gulf Stream, which brings the heat equivalent of one million power stations to the UK.

**Coastguard families**  
 The dole queue beckons, thanks to government job cuts. RNLI operations director Michael Vlasto said: 'It is with some sadness that we see their livelihoods at risk.'

**EPIRB users**  
 Search and rescue tech firm Sartech claims that up to 60% of EPIRB distress beacons won't work because the batteries are flat. The company is launching an appeal to find the 406MHz EPIRB with the most out-of-date battery in the UK. The holder of this dubious title will win a new EPIRB worth £450.

and chromed brass, and their 57mm seacocks from brass.

Adrian Jones, sales and marketing director for Falmouth-based Rustler Yachts, told *YM*: 'We use bronze everywhere. It is much more resistant to corrosion. Brass is more flexible but it is prone to corrosion.'

A spokeswoman for Cornish Crabbers told *YM* that its boats are fitted mainly with Marelon plastic seacocks. But where these do not fit the hull's shape, DZR brass seacocks are used.



Bénéteau spokesman Jean-Francois Lair

Mr Stevens' advice to readers buying new boats is to request in writing details of the seacock metal so they can establish an appropriate inspection and maintenance regime.

Second-hand boat owners can check their seacocks when the boat is laid up, using a tungsten-braided scraper on exterior fittings. 'If they come up a clean, bright, uniform colour there's no problem. If they come up with a pinky, pitted surface that is characteristic of dezincification,' Mr Stevens said.

■ **Are your seacocks safe?** Find out in our shocking report on p70.



The Queen will sail aboard a specially adapted Thames barge

## YM readers invited to Queen's river pageant

*Yachting Monthly* readers are invited to join the £8 million Thames Diamond Jubilee Pageant which will celebrate the Queen's 60 years on the throne on 3 June, 2012. Many historic yachts are expected to join the flotilla, including *Gipsy Moth IV*, Sir Francis

Chichester's famous globe-girdler. A spokesman for the UKSA – which looks after the boat on behalf of her new owners – said that it has applied to join the pageant.

The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, announced the pageant at London's City Hall in April. He was joined by the event organiser, Lord Salisbury. More than 1,000 boats laden with 30,000 passengers will follow the Queen's barge – a converted Thames spritsail barge – from Putney to Tower Bridge.

Here, downstream of the bridge, an 'avenue of sail' will gather, including Thames sailing barges, oyster smacks, Tall Ships, Dunkirk Little Ships and sailing yachts, which will then head downriver to Limehouse Reach.

It will be the biggest river pageant for 350 years, estimated



*Gipsy Moth IV* hopes to join the pageant

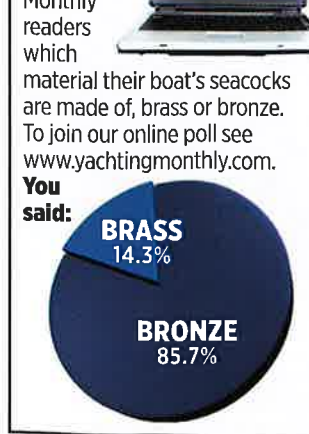
to be watched by more than a million people on each bank of the Thames. A floating belfry with eight ringing bells will follow the Queen's barge and fire hoses, fireworks and ship's hooters will herald the flotilla as it drops down the Thames on the ebb at a steady 4 knots.

The pageant will celebrate the Commonwealth and launch a charity that hopes to raise £100 million for sporting activities across the UK and the world. '*Yachting Monthly* readers should send us an email and we will consider every request,' said pageant master Adrian Evans. The pageant will act as a curtain raiser for the London Olympics, which start on 27 July.

To register your boat, go to [www.thamesdiamondjubileepageant.org](http://www.thamesdiamondjubileepageant.org).

We asked *Yachting Monthly* readers which material their boat's seacocks are made of, brass or bronze. To join our online poll see [www.yachtingmonthly.com](http://www.yachtingmonthly.com).

**You said:**



Rustler Yachts of Falmouth fit top-quality bronze seacocks on their yachts