

Show Boat

# Bring on the POWER!

Words and Photography  
by Ingrid Abery

After having photographed sleek, sharp sailing yachting and billowing spinnakers for many a year, my eye was inadvertently drawn last year to the 'petrol head' world of powerboating. Only my second taster of the sport produced a spectacular mid-air barrel roll which was to lure me hook, line and sinker for good. The occasion in question took place at the annual Honda Cowes Classic, an international smorgasbord of powerboats competing for sizable amounts of silverware. Two days of inshore, round the buoys courses, and the Honda 225HP, 135HP and 40ft long Pro-Vee classes headed out of the Solent and around the Isle of Wight on a 55-mile loop.

In what seemed to be time enough only to blink, the lead powerboat in the Pro-Vee class was blasting its way back up the eastern Solent. Having circumnavigated the isle in a record breaking thirty nine minutes, the boat 'Paneria Ceramica' hit a rogue wave and catapulted itself through the air like a torpedo towards me. Panic? No, it was a photographer's dream. I snapped furiously, capturing the scene. The boat had left the water some forty feet from my photo boat and by the time it was totally inverted the 'scud' was just twenty feet to my left. A close shave indeed. Reeling from the experience and with the evocative smells of oil and burning rubber wafting down the Solent I

decided it was time 'feel the need for speed!' myself.

A basic powerboat course was a good start and I made my enquiries. The Poole based school, **Powerboat Training UK** run by the renowned Paul Glatzel sounded just the ticket. If the RYA, the national governing body for watersports in this country, looked to his expertise (a revised guide on powerboating penned by Mr. Glatzel himself has just hit the book stands) then so should I. Armed with my foul weather gear and manual I headed off to Dorset.

Right in the heart of the south coast marine world at Cobbs Quay, Powerboat Training UK turns out many a competent

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powerboat driver. I joined a group of five men with varied backgrounds and levels of powerboating experience for the two day Powerboat Level 2 course. The range spanned an airline pilot to a complete novice, not unlike myself. The RYA endorsed course is aimed at furnishing you with the competence to drive a small pleasure craft – small compared to commercial. Despite the current 'rumble in the jungle' regarding on the water drinking and driving laws in Britain, you can still purchase a motorboat up to a mind-boggling 80 feet without previously gaining a license. This I find quite bizarre. Hence courses such as the one I had embarked upon which was shaping up to give me the confidence and training to manoeuvre a modest sized powerboat, are ideal and much in demand. Having recently taken on part-ownership of a RIB (Rigid Inflatable Boat) I felt it a pre-requisite to know how to control the beast with both grace (making a hash of parking alongside a mooring for the delectation of onlookers was not on my agenda) and confidence.

Some 120,000 boating enthusiasts take to these RYA shore-based courses each year. Paul Glatzel's course, designed by our marine governing body is an intensely practical one complimented by several hours integral theory. Fuelled and enthusiastic, I arrived for a concise two hours of instruction in the classroom on the opening morning which included safety at sea, pilotage and basic navigation which then paved the way for the practical training.



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*Here we are examining the flares. It is all very well having them on the boat but knowing how to use them in a moment of crisis is another.*



*Points to consider when embarking on trip.*

Chief instructor Terry McFall and his assistant were very thorough in their teaching and prepared the way for the practical stage. The shore-based element of the course covered the basic boat types, engines and drives, through to use of power tilt and trim, safety checks and personal buoyancy, collision regulations, towing, communication with other craft, emergency action, distress signals, fire precautions, fire fighting and rope work.

This was where the fun really began – out on the water. My five fellow petrol heads' eyes lit up when the promise of getting behind the wheel of the school's eight metre 300HP inboard

larger, throatier number. Basic boat handling skills were shown and we practised turning, stopping, reversing, turning in a tight spot and gaining an understanding of how a boat steers in contrast to a car.

For several of the 'students' this was old hat as they possessed their own boats. For two of the party it was our first experience of 'taking the reigns'. Terry McFall divided us into two groups in order that we had concentrated tutelage.

Poole harbour with its intricate passage and outlets certainly made for an excellent training ground. As day one progressed the

engine RIB was offered. Hands on exercises were carried out, to my relief, also in a 4.8 metre RIB to gently acquaint myself whilst the lads made a bee line for the

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Practising coming alongside a pontoon (Above). Instructor Terry McFall using the VHF radio (Right). Executing a three point turn within a confined mooring space (Below).



wind picked up to an animated 20 knots which made for entertaining manoeuvres. Wind, current and tidal streams were covered as were dropping anchor and picking up buoys for mooring purposes. The course was a very hands-on one and we all had good practice. It was then back to the class room for a debrief and to check that we had appreciated and understood the manoeuvres.

On day two, having soaked up some good quality reading matter the evening before we prepared a passage plan on the charts at base camp before heading out to test our knowledge. It all seemed pretty straight forward until the choppy sea with the tide blowing against us hampered visibility. However, the promise of speed was like a red rag to a bull. A successful student must demonstrate a sensible control of the boat at speed and so we launched out into the open water off Studland bay. This was what we had been waiting for. After having driven the smaller boat it was my turn to gain some confidence out in the open water. Terry instructed me to 'open her up' a bit and appreciate how to handle a decent sized boat. That sense of control and handling ability was inspiring.

The obligatory 'man over board' drill was learnt as was comprehensive pilotage training.

I must say that for a two-day course Powerboat Training UK were slick in getting across the key issues in a powerboat level 2 course. We finished with a succinct test and full debrief in the class room. I can understand why this company has the standing it does. People in the world of powerboating talk about Paul Glatzel and his courses with reverence. Each one of us left the room far more prepared and with a basic grounding in the principles of driving and everything that goes with it. We fanned our chests and there was a glint in the eye – keen to improve upon the boat handling skills gleaned and of course, with my new found love of power over sail, I was at the steering wheel the following morning of our RIB Hot Mustard, stretching my proverbial wings as we glided across the Solent to Cowes for a photo shoot – ah, another day at the office for our "Hot Capers" venture.

**Powerboat Training UK**  
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Ingrid Abery's new website has an animated collection of both power and sailing photos to entertain:

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