



I REALLY MUST...

RIB INTERNATIONAL'S GARETH WELTON SWAPS HIS DESK FOR A RIB AND FINALLY GETS ROUND TO TAKING HIS LEVEL 2 POWERBOAT TRAINING. IS HE UP TO THE CHALLENGE?

Are you like me and have a long list of 'must get round to's, if you are then you'll also never quite get round to doing them and they sit there year after year waiting to get to the top of the list. Working for RIB International it seems pretty weird that one of my big 'to do's' is to get boating more but whilst you'd probably think that I spend all of my time afloat playing with wonderful RIBs on gloriously sunny days sadly that's not the case (Hugo always seems to nab those jobs!) and I spend my time helping to organise RIBEX from a very non RIB like desk whilst others get the really glamorous jobs. So there I was sitting on the stand at the London Boat Show having a chat with one of RIB International's writers, when the subject of me and RIBing turned to training and the fact that on that 'must do list' was my Level 2 Powerboat course.

And that's how I came to be driving across to Poole on a bleak winter's day listening to a forecast of extreme cold and possibly snow - even when I do get on the water those lazy days under sparkling sunshine seem to pass me by!

The Level 2 powerboat course (also known as the 'National Powerboat Certificate') is the backbone of the RYA powerboat scheme and is undertaken by thousands of students each year in the UK, Europe and now even in places such as South Africa, Australia and New Zealand - even the Royal Navy uses it as a basic qualification for new Officers. Those attending Level 2 courses seem to fall into two camps, those with their own boats (or are thinking about getting a boat) who want the Level 2 to

broaden and enhance their capabilities when boating in the UK, and those who want to achieve the Level 2 qualification as a means to then apply for their ICC - more of which later.

The Level 2 course was revamped a few years ago with the emphasis on schools providing as much time on the water and away from a classroom as possible, and so reflecting the desire of the RYA to focus most of the course time on developing people's practical boat handling skills.

The school I was going to train with is run by Paul Glatzel and trains the RYA Powerboat, Motor Cruising and Shorebased courses plus Paul wrote the RYA guide on the subject (The RYA Powerboat Handbook) so it seemed as good a place as any to go and get trained. Cobbs Quay Marina, where the school is based, is home to over 800 boats of which about 180 are 'berthed' on a racking system - a set up I hadn't seen before.

There were two of us on the course and we met our Instructor Dan who is an Advanced Powerboat Instructor (so he teaches Level 2 and the courses up the scale such as Intermediate and Advanced) in a nice warm classroom - we were making the most of it given the conditions outside! We kicked off with a brief discussion on safety and the things to think about before going afloat. We brainstormed the personal kit we needed, talked about weather, launching and looked at some of the safety gear we might need and also got to play with some (dummy!) flares; we also briefly touched on the need to passage plan and what this entails.



So what's an ICC?

Often wrongly referred to as the 'International Boat Driving Licence' the ICC is just what its name suggests - a certificate evidencing your competence in a certain type of craft. It's then up to countries and boat charterers to decide if they will accept it as evidence of your ability when you want to boat abroad or to hire a craft. There are two classifications of ICC in respect of powered craft - 'Up to 10m' and 'Up to 24m'. Up to 10m ICCs are obtained by either submitting a copy of the Level 2 certificate to the RYA or alternatively evidencing your ability via an ICC test. 24m ICCs are obtained either via a test or by using your RYA Dayskipper Practical Course completion certificate. To get an ICC you need to be British or a British resident.

Then it was get kitted up and out into the cold. The next stage was aboard one of the RIBs (we spent day one on a 5.6m Avon and day two on a 8.5m Scorpion) where we checked the boat over, got to grips with the kit it was carrying and ran through another safety briefing. We then ran through the pre start checks and got the wonderfully quiet Mariner Four Stroke engine up and running.

Away from the pontoon we practiced some slow speed stuff (basic into and out of gear, steering, figures of 8, approaching and picking up mooring



Essential reading:

There is no need to do any preparation ahead of your Level 2 course, however if you want to the best book is the *RYA Powerboat Handbook* (actually written by Paul) and the *RYA Powerboat Logbook* - both are available from the RYA website but some schools give them out free on courses. www.rya.org.uk



buoys etc) to develop our basic skills and to start to get us to grips with how the wind and tide effects the craft and how we can start to use them to our benefit. We then took our new found skills into a marina and started to practice coming alongside pontoons from various different directions in plenty of different ways - I'm not convinced of the title we jokingly gave this session - 'pontoon bashing'! The afternoon led to more practice amongst the pontoons and also a run at speed along the main

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channel in the harbour as the speed limit was lifted for the winter.

Day two beckoned with clear skies and temperatures in the 30s! (okay so the last bit is not quite true!) and it was back into the classroom to learn about charts, tides and passage making. After getting to grips with the wealth of information a chart contains and how Spring and Neap tides work, we settled down to planning a short passage through the Harbour and out into Poole Bay.

Passage planning complete and it was time to don waterproofs, warm socks, wellies, hats and gloves and ten layers of clothing - we were then set for our expedition into the Antarctic wastes of Poole Harbour.

Gareth Welton taming a 300 horse power 'beast' (well, manoeuvring it at least!).

Just to confuse matters, the dredging in the harbour meant that most of the buoyage wasn't where it was supposed to be which highlighted the need to keep abreast of local information about such work. As we zoomed past the Sandbanks Peninsula (the 4th most expensive place in the world to live seemingly!) I made a mental note to speak to the boss about a payrise so I could move there (Ed. Declined!) before we got into practicing some higher speed turns coupled to our Man Overboard practice. I hadn't really given much thought to dealing with a MOB situation before and was amazed to see how quickly the casualty (in this case a sad looking small fender with a lump of chain underneath it) became hard to spot and quite challenging to come alongside, doing it for real and trying to recover a real person in any conditions would've been really tough. The recommendation that if you have a real MOB you immediately launch a Mayday unless you are 100%

certain that you will recover the person on the first attempt made perfect sense.

Some more slow speed handling followed en route back to our base at Cobbs Quay Marina and then we were glad to be back in the classroom for a warm cuppa and a debrief of the two days. I was delighted to learn that I'd reached the standard to be awarded the certificate and had really enjoyed the two days with Dan. Dan emphasised the need to get out and practice reflecting the fact that just two days won't make me a decent boater whereas practice and experience built on the firm foundations I now had, might. So Hugo - where are the keys to the magazine's RIB?

Gareth Welton

Where should I train?

RYA Accredited Schools are to be found listed on the RYA website www.rya.org.uk. I trained at Paul Glatzel's school (Powerboat Training UK) which has bases in Poole & The Solent. Their website is at www.powerboattraininguk.co.uk

When looking for a school to train with don't book before checking out their website and having a good chat to the school to see if you 'click' with them. See how they approach their relationship with you, check out their boats and facilities and make sure their Instructors know what they are on about - an 18 year old Instructor who usually teaches windsurfing won't be able to give you as much extra value as one who has been there, seen it and had the T-shirt printed.



What course should I do?

Level 1: A one day starter course which works well as a taster session or to develop some basic skills. Popular with children as it is available to kids aged 8 or over

Level 2: The workhorse of the scheme and the entry point for almost everyone who has not had any training before. Success at Level 2 allows an application to the RYA for an ICC. The course equally suits those with loads of experience afloat but needing to tidy up their skills and develop their ability in respect of navigation and charts etc as well as those who are new to boating and don't know their sheet bend from their transom. (Kids aged 12 and over can attend this course)

Intermediate (also known as 'Powerboat Day Cruising'): A new course that focuses on those boaters wishing to undertake coastal passages. More focus on the navigation and theory stuff than Level 2 plus an emphasis on how to safely plan and execute passages.

Advanced: Suits the very experienced leisure user or the professional helm. Looks at areas like rough water handling, helicopter rescues, passage planning and includes a night exercise.

Advanced Powerboat Examination: For those who want to work commercially there's a need to pass the Advanced Examination.

Safety Boat: For those involved in providing safety cover to dinghies, kayaks, windsurfers etc.

All courses are 2 days duration except Level 1. The only course that requires you to possess any prior RYA qualification is Safety Boat for which you must have Level 2.