



OFF 'OLD HARRY' ROCKS

Time To Change

As winter turns to spring, for many of us it's the time when thoughts turn to careers, job satisfaction and generally improving our quality of life. **Words: Paul Glatzel**

i **NAME:** Paul Glatzel. **PROFESSION:** RYA Powerboat Trainer and Examiner and runs Powerboat Training UK.
LOCATION: Poole, Dorset, UK

No doubt this year is no different and many people are thinking about how to turn their passion for boating into a career. In today's uncertain world there is actually a strong argument for a more 'portfolio'-type lifestyle, so having a range of qualifications and skills that you can use makes sense. So what are the options if you want to do this in the wonderful world of boating?

As a commercial skipper you could be employed in a wide variety of jobs, from helming a small craft as a taxi boat in a harbour to helming a RIB carrying ten passengers on a treasure hunt, ferrying workers to a building

site or navigating around our coasts supporting the huge wind farm developments that are to be a feature of our coastline for generations to come. For skippers with a good range of experience and qualifications there are plenty of roles out there, some of which are seasonal and some that require you to move around – but good work nonetheless.

So how do you get qualified and what level should you qualify to? Inevitably this will depend on the job. Helming the river ferry in Christchurch Harbour will generally be OK with Powerboat level 2 (commercially endorsed), but skippering a wind farm vessel some distance offshore tends to require Yachtmaster Offshore.

If you want to be a commercial skipper it is essential that you get plenty of time afloat.

Which direction you take will also be determined initially by the boating experience you have. If you have experience on small craft then you will typically pursue a route through from Level 2 to Advanced Powerboat and then the Advanced Examination ('Certificate of Competence'), which can be commercially endorsed. The advanced level is the one that most

will aim for on craft up to about 10m.

If you want to be a commercial skipper it is essential that you get plenty of time afloat. If you have your own vessel then this is easy. Try and challenge yourself by boating in new locations, planning entries and executing them into unfamiliar harbours, and generally just pushing your experience levels. If you don't have your own boat then try to get crewing jobs on charter boats at weekends – offer to act as crew on any boats that are working commercially. Get afloat socially too. On forums you can offer yourself as a willing crewmember as some people struggle to get family members/friends to boat with them and would welcome the company. Organisations like the Maritime Volunteer Service (www.mvs.org.uk/), the RNLI (www.rnli.org.uk/) and local harbour masters need volunteers too. Sometimes sailing clubs will consider crews who want to helm the safety craft rather than sail – another good option.

To work commercially you will usually need a mixture of qualifications, including one-day courses – VHF Radio, Sea Survival

and First Aid – and longer theory courses to ensure your theory knowledge is at the right level. While technically you don't need to actually attend a course (you could self-study), undertaking the five-day Day Skipper Theory courses tends to be the preferred route.

Afloat, what you need by way of qualifications will vary according to what you want to do. If your intention is to undertake a job such as a helm on a small ferry in a harbour or river then in all probability a basic RYA qualification will suffice if you ensure you get it commercially endorsed – generally Powerboat Level 2. If your job will take you away from a very simple and safe location then invariably you will need to be tested by an RYA examiner to

prove your capability to look after passengers afloat. Typically this will mean starting by undertaking the Advanced Powerboat Course once you have the required skills and experience to do so. The course is not mandatory before the exam, but undertaking it ensures that you are adopting 'best practice' and approaching your boat handling and night navigation in a way the examiner would expect to see you doing. The Advanced Powerboat exam itself is conducted by a Powerboat or Yachtmaster Examiner and will give you the opportunity to demonstrate your competence as a skipper. Every examiner has a slightly different approach; however, broadly speaking they will seek to assess four areas: 1)

PROFESSIONAL PRACTICES AND RESPONSIBILITIES ('PPR') COURSE

AS A COMMERCIAL SKIPPER you have a duty of care to everyone on your boat who is trusting you to give them a great time but keep them and their loved-ones safe. Becoming a commercial skipper requires you (usually) to pass a test of your competence with an RYA Examiner which allows you to evidence your knowledge and competence afloat and to prove that you are at the right level to command a vessel. However, for some time there has been a view that skippers need to better understand the various rules and regulations that surround operating a vessel for charter and skippering that vessel. A skipper's lack of understanding can adversely affect the safety and enjoyment of those they are taking afloat.

To address this, the RYA has created a new online course that educates and tests a skipper to ensure they are conversant with all the rules that will govern their time afloat. For example, as a skipper, when you are joining a vessel for the first time do you know what documents should be on board, which ones state how many flares, fire extinguishers and life jackets should be there and where on the Web can you look this up? Know the answers to these questions and you are starting to do well, but many skippers don't and they should. I've had the chance to undertake the new PPR course and it is very good – I learnt quite a few things I didn't know even though I feel quite knowledgeable about the area. For me, with a reasonable level of understanding already, the course took two to three hours, and if you are unfamiliar with the subject, budget on four to six hours. You can spread this time investment out and at the end of the course you need to take and pass a test.

The course will be available from April 2012 and will become mandatory for all those applying for commercial endorsements from June 2012 and for those revalidating. Once you have completed the course, on subsequent revalidations you will undertake a more limited refresher/update course.

The PPR course will be available directly from RYA centres, which will charge £31 + VAT and will provide a level of support as you go through the course.

More information: www.rya.org.uk; search 'ppr'.



Your ability to undertake effective safety briefs then demonstrate appropriate command, control and seamanship when afloat; 2) Your ability as a boat handler at slow speeds – berthing, MOB etc; 3) Your ability to plan then execute a night navigation exercise; 4) That your level of theory knowledge is at the level of Day Skipper Theory.

six months before the course and ensures that you are at the right level in respect of theory and boat handling to attend. The course itself introduces teaching methods, develops an understanding of what to teach and how to teach it, ensuring you understand and can pass across the key teaching points surrounding the various tasks and



There are, of course, other jobs you can do afloat, the most obvious of which is to teach people how to helm and navigate a boat – becoming an RYA Powerboat Instructor. To become an RYA Powerboat Instructor you should have a range of experience across a variety of craft and ideally across a range of boating areas. You will have gained experience over at least five years (perhaps less if you are working full-time in boating) and are likely to have a level of theory knowledge to about Day Skipper Theory level. You must also possess First Aid and logically your VHF Radio certificate too.

The course itself is preceded by an assessment which should be taken between four weeks and

manoeuvres people will undertake at the entry level of boating. As a Powerboat Instructor you will probably not end up driving the latest Porsche but you will end up sporting a huge grin. Teaching others how to enjoy and do safely something you love is very satisfying.

Like anything in life, any change of direction or new pastime can't occur overnight and requires research and planning. If you are keen to change direction or add a new 'string to your bow' then working within the world of boats offers up some great prospects. Yes, you will need to invest time, effort and money, but at least in our world the 'getting there' can be just as much fun as arriving. Good luck.