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ROB PEAKE, EDITOR

Setting out the tripod



There was a trainspotter at my local station this week, all set up with camera on tripod, ready to photograph the 0732 into Waterloo. I felt an affinity with the man. The reason was I'd just spent two weeks sailing from Cowes, trainspotting with the best of them. The trains I'd had in my sights bore masts and sails, and were more attractive, in my opinion, than carriage 430114, but the spotter and I weren't poles apart.

One of my favourite books at home is Vanessa Bird's *Classic Classes*. I have pored over this masterly tome so often it's almost embarrassing, so you can imagine my joy at being out on the water during Charles Stanley Cowes Classics Week this past month and seeing Vanessa's book come to life. I was in boat-spotter heaven as Sunbeams, SCODs, Squibs, Seaview Mermaids, Swallows, 6-Ms and many more inscrutable sail insignias blasted past and I mentally ticked them off.

I was far from alone. In fact, sitting on the rail of a yacht watching the organised spaghetti junction of keelboats and dinghies rounding different sets of buoys in the distance, naming the classes became quite competitive. Stern words were exchanged in disagreement over the meaning of S – was it Sunbeam, Soling or Herreshoff S-Class?

My boat-spotting continued during the Royal Yacht Squadron's Bicentennial Regatta, a week later. This was a different kind of fleet and I found myself ticking off the entries from another well-thumbed classic on my shelf, Maynard Bray's *Guide to Wooden Boats*. Were *Infanta* and *Dorada* as jaw-droppingly gorgeous as in the book? They were.

Three Js were also racing. They now have so many attendant boat-spotters they need patrol boats to keep everyone a fair distance off.

Another entry in Maynard's book, *Hallowe'en*, is our lead feature this month. She's part of the Med regatta scene, where classic yacht ubiquity is so acute that boat-spotting is rendered pointless. Not that that stops me.

Spotters of the world, I salute you. It's a noble hobby.