

# Adrian Morgan



## It's wet, wet, wet

*Adrian* is back in the real world... and it's raining cats, dogs and sheep

Having twice been cruelly duped by pranksters from beyond the grave, I have decided to bury my Ouija board with full naval honours, and make no more attempts to contact the shades of our maritime heroes. To think that I was so easily fooled by an Admiral Beaufort ignorant of his eponymous Scale, and believed that Nelson wore Emma Hamilton's drawers on the quarter deck at Trafalgar. Naive or what?

It's not easy to admit you've been a prat, but I've had some practice over the years. The other day I dropped in to see a boatbuilder of my acquaintance: Tim, late of Ullapool, now building an Ed Burnett 34-footer down in Cockenzie. Actually, building is too pedestrian a word. She's being crafted with extraordinary attention to detail: bronze floors, laminated beams, handmade fittings, and so on. "Come up," says Tim. So I nip smartly up the ladder and gaze around me in awe. I'm transfixed – not a bad word as it happens.

"No, wet, wet," says Tim.

What's he on about? Oh b\*gger. The deck paint's still wet.

I unstuck my shoes, leaving behind a muddy tread mark, and step up onto the teak lazarette hatch cover. B\*gger. I'm stuck to the hatch this time, only with paint. So I spring lightly down into the cockpit (it's also wet). Then up again onto the teak cockpit seats (see above). Finally, under the pitying gaze of Tim and his father (whose handiwork I have ruined), I tear off my shoes and chuck them over the side. I'd not have been surprised to hear a yell of fury from the yard foreman passing below with a gallon of hot bitumen.

Having dabbled in the occult, and made a fool of myself generally, it's back this week to the real world, and the gales that have been blowing without a break since mid November up here in Wester Ross. One after another, nasty little secondary depressions have been spinning off at high speed towards Loggie Bay, where *Sally* is moored to a new length of  $\frac{5}{8}$ in chain, clove-hitched and shackled to a hefty piece of ground tackle attached to two large anchors. It's not nearly hefty enough, however, to give me peaceful nights.

One night last week our croft house was literally shaking to its foundations, and the chickens, had they not been bedded down safely in their wooden bunker, would have been flying horizontally past our bedroom window like the feathered escapees from Wallace & Gromit's *Chicken Run*. Next morning whirligigs of spume were being lifted off the wave tops and a big ferroement ketch was up on the beach. Luckily, *Sally* was riding safely to her mooring.

*"There's a trio of sheep marooned on an island, my boatshed's leaking and the drain's blocked"*



CHARLOTTE WATERS

And, by heck, it's been wet. The river burst its banks, the fields are running with water, and skeins of wind-blown spray are driving right to left down the valley as I write. There's a trio of sheep marooned on an island, my boatshed's leaking from a skylight and the drain's blocked. This is no weather to be working outdoors; this is weather to curl up by the wood burner with a book.

As for *Sally*... what more can I do? Ah, you say. There's always the insurance. And yet, somehow that doesn't seem right – to profit from the loss (heaven forbid) of a boat that's survived since 1937. Which is why, this year, for the first time, I made the decision not to insure her. Foolish? Maybe. If ever she is lost, I'll be inconsolable; no amount of money could make amends. Meantime, I'll continue to check the shackles and renew the chafing pads and, like all owners of boats on swinging moorings, when the wild winds of winter blow, pray she stays safe. 🌧