book & video review

reviewed by Paul Talbot

Australian Boating Manual

by Capt Dick Gandy
RRP $69.95 (852 pages; 210 mm x 280 mm)

A friend and colleague of mine, Mike, has completed his Coxswain’s certificate at TAFE. He has more than a passing interest in Afloat and while we were chatting about the magazine I revealed that this month’s review was on the recently released, revised (third edition) Australian Boating Manual.

Mike said he was well acquainted with this book, too, but he had a good deal of trouble understanding why it needed to be revised. After all, in the previous edition’s almost 600 pages, TAFE had enough confidence to set it as the principle text for the several courses. Well, if they had confidence in the second edition, the third edition will blow them away.

Reviewing what is essentially a textbook might sound like a pretty dry way to spend a few hours, especially for a person fresh from reviewing books about the Volvo Ocean Race. It was tempting to rely on the media release that the publisher, Ocean Publications, provided. I had a widely accepted and respected maritime work, the anecdotal evidence of a survey of one and enough content in the media release to get me off to the Christmas party early.

But the tempting challenge in the media release that “Australia has never seen a boating manual as comprehensive as this one”, got me going.

It was a curiosity that on the page after Captain Gandy’s dedication, he saw fit to cover a few “points of interest”. Among them were a few words on which way water drains down a plughole and some comments about whether marine volunteers are at risk of being sued.

Puzzled, but undeterred, I pressed on to find the list of Contents was an impressive indicator of what may well be chapters on every kind of a professional and competent way. The Contents promised major chapters on Navigation and Occupational Safety and Health (OH&S) – this is a book to get you to Master Class IV certificate. And it dealt with the go to whoa of “all you ever wanted to know about …”

Bearing in mind the reference nature of textbooks, it didn’t seem unreasonable for the author to have included material on International and Local Collision Prevention Regulations, for example. Or Australian Boating Regulations and Pollution Control – people just have to know these things if they are involved in the trade.

But Captain Gandy helps the recreational boater out too, with tips on buying and insuring a boat. He takes the reader on a tour of the world of GPS, sounders, logs etc and all the engines you’d ever want to know about.

I was particularly taken with the chapter on boat handling and towing. If you ever wondered why what seemed to be a straightforward matter of approaching or leaving a wharf that did not quite go as you thought it would, then the author covers the cause of your particular red-faced moment. Notice I said “your” not “my”. But you would be right if you got the impression that a few bells were ringing in my head.

A feature, and the constant reminder that this is a significant text for the serious sailor, is the multiple-choice questions at the end of each chapter. So, you can study the contents of Ropes, Knots and Splices or Load, Buoyancy and Stability and test your retention of the information in all these comprehensive chapters afterwards.

Well, on reflection and after much thumbing through the book, grazing on interesting bits when they caught my eye, I think I’ll agree with the media release and give it the last word. “Don’t ask what this 852-page manual covers; ask what it doesn’t cover”.

Postscript: Mike passed (thanks to Dick).
The Armidale class is a class of patrol boats built for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN). Planning for a class of vessels to replace the fifteen Fremantle-class patrol boats began in 1993 as a joint project with the Royal Malaysian Navy, but was cancelled when Malaysia pulled out of the process. The project was reopened in 1999 under the designation SEA 1444, with the RAN as the sole participant. Of the seven proposals tendered, the Austal Ships/Defence Maritime Services (DMS) proposal for twelve Welcome to Australia's Leading Chandlery, Australian Boating Supplies. We pride ourselves on providing you with all your boating parts, accessories and equipment along with sound technical advice from our highly knowledgeable and experienced team. With over 8,000 products in stock can supply you with everything from anchors and buoys, cabin and deck hardware, electrical, plumbing, fittings, mechanical, safety gear and yacht accessories. Can't find what you need? Our team are experts at sourcing a solution for your next job call us on 07 5502 8484. Visit us at F31 Gold Coast City Mari