

Top Tip #10

Thank you to our commodore David Hartland for this article. As many of you will already know David spends more time than most offshore, hence he is well qualified to talk about his chosen subject for this month's Top Tip.

Transits- Go for it

Sailors win more, live longer and are better placed with transits! It's amazing how often you are chomping along in the wrong direction. In a survey of offshore yacht race results where people have time to pore over such things, it was found that winning sailors sail shorter distances. This means that if everybody goes at the same speed, you will get there first by sailing a shorter distance. This is called a straight line and is visually monitored using a transit. Very simple isn't it? Difficult to do though? No, it isn't difficult on non-tidal waters such as ours with visible land around the bank. This technique helps you to sail a shorter distance! This is as important when dinghy racing to (or from) a buoy as in entering port and avoiding a Monster Tanker. It is a key technique in collision avoidance.

You see in pic1 what the transit technique means on the water at Littleton. The straight line with arrow is now your track in your boat. This track is shorter than the other curved lines. The other 2 sailors on the other 2 tracks start off at the same speed and the same time as you. You will arrive in front!

So how do I do this magic...Look at Pic 2. You will know if you are holding this magic transit if you line up your eye with 2 stationary objects, e.g. your next buoy and a tree, and those objects don't change their horizontal position with each other.

Control your course to stay on the transit. You will hit the nearest object. Do some practice in the car (health warning here) and walking to the station... For example, line up a lamp post and the corner of a house roof. Keep them in line and hey, you are travelling in a straight line towards those objects. Don't get run over though.

Ok, I haven't made any correction for different speeds, winds or tactics to keep your wind, but your sailing will improve by using this technique intelligently. Any improvement is positive isn't it?!

