



## Talk Report – Myths and Legends of the Oceans – Dr Simon Boxall

This was yet another excellent attendance at the Club and on Zoom (46), for what turned out to be one of the most interesting talks given to Guildford Coastal Cruising Club – at least judging by the feedback that has been hurtling in my direction from all sides!!

Dr Simon Boxall is an important member of the National Oceanography Centre at Southampton and a University Lecturer. Indeed, Jasmine from MAT who gave our last talk, and Will Harris (who will be talking “Big Boat Racing Around the World” on the 9<sup>th</sup> Feb at Papercourt Sailing Club – who’s going?) were both tutored by Simon. In addition, he acts as a leading consultant on varied matters marine all around the world, and his stories of many and various natural disasters and opportunities were totally fascinating.



We started with some facts – Oceans make up 72% of the total surface area of Earth, reaching as deep as 11,000 m, or 11 kilometres. If each person on the planet were awarded a 2 metre deep section of water, as in a swimming pool typical depth, we would each own 78 square kilometres!!

The Deep undersea environment is the least well-known component of Earth. Because of the pressures involved, and therefore the risks, most exploration is carried out by ROV (Remotely Operated Vehicles, each costing about £5m, the NOC one is called ISIS), which can reach depths of around 6,500m, and can stay on the seabed for days. Manned explorer vessels (Remember “Race to the Bottom” between James Cameron (of Titanic fame) and Richard Branson?) cost significantly more, at around £50m each, only have roughly a 20 minute window on the seabed; and as happened recently, sadly risk significant loss of life.

The talk then moved on to the amazing creatures that live at such depths - the well-known angler fish with a lighted lure which is actually only the size of a large fist, giant squid that

can reach over 10m in length, and creatures so amazing that they have “spawned” science-fiction aliens!

Noah’s Ark was the next topic, relating to how the Black Sea level rose by 70m in the course of roughly a year, turning from freshwater to salt, because of ice-melt water building up. This led to many passed-down stories, in turn forming the myth, and another thread looked at how The Varna Gold civilisation was established, which was extremely advanced, quite a while before the Egyptians got going.

So what about the Bermuda Triangle? In this extended part Simon considered factors that might be influential on it achieving its reputation. Various theories abound, including aliens grabbing boats and people, the lost City of Atlantis (remember Kevin Costner’s “Waterworld” film?), or could it be bubbles rising en-masse from the seabed and reducing buoyancy (scientifically provable)? Yachting Monthly carried out a hilarious attempt to prove this!

Were hurricanes to blame – partly, but no more so than other hurricane zones. Could it be infamous Rogue Waves – Simon discussed how the typical maximum wave from one storm would reach 10m, but with multiple storms creating waves from different directions, in the interference areas from 3 storms, 30m waves have been observed, and even greater heights might be possible. It is known that this wave height can break the backs of ships, but no, this still wasn’t the main factor.

So, what was, or rather is?? Simon did some detailed research, that concluded that 33% of all USA registered boats (and they all do have to be registered in case of being called-up to “defend the country from any marine threat”!) are berthed in the Bermuda Triangle area. Add to this that there are no restrictions on who can own a boat, or any qualifications; and it turns out that 82% of all USA Coastguard rescues are to untrained and/or unsafe boats. Run the two numbers together and there is a massive opportunity for accidents to happen. So the Bermuda Triangle is in fact caused by USA “idiot” boat owners!!!



What next? Flight MH370 was lost in strange circumstances over a vast possible ocean area. It is known that the GPS was turned off (how can that be allowed?) soon after take-off from Kuala Lumpur, but the RR engines continued to broadcast maintenance data via satellite for some time after. Extensive searches were costly and perhaps focussed on the wrong area. When some debris was located on islands well to the west, experts were able to

confirm the likelihood of that from current direction data. Sadly the only probable conclusion to be reached was that it was a “rogue” pilot who perhaps had some personal issues, and took the plane down deliberately, with all the resulting loss of life.

A final slide was shown of Nicole “Snooki” Polizzi, who declared that she was not ever going to swim in the ocean again “because the saltiness was caused by whale semen”! How she personally knew that whale semen is salty is as yet unknown! This caused Simon to state that incidentally, whilst every existing element or chemical can be found in sea-water, it is not worth panning for gold as the effort would far outweigh the return.

Multiple questions were asked after a short break. And No, there is not a Loch Ness Monster!!

The talk ended with a heartfelt round of applause for the fascinating presentation, and I suggested that Dr Simon Boxall will be invited back on another occasion to regale us with equally interesting stories on a new and different topic. Members were in unison and delighted at the idea!

## **NEXT TALK – Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> February 2024. Clubhouse & on Zoom**

**Ropes and Rigging – “What can go possibly go Wrong”?  
Martin Bean – Spencer Rigging**