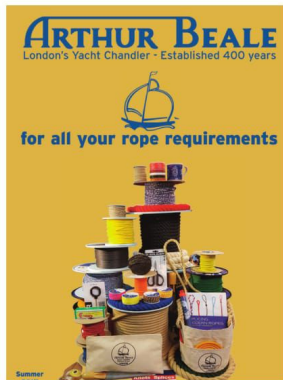


# reviews & reports

Boat gear, books, tools and technology; our regular series of impartial reviews.

Reviewers: Simon Holman, Dick Phillips and Pete Greenfield



## ARTHUR BEALE ROPE CATALOGUE

Review by Simon Holman

These days, the arrival of a new catalogue on the doorstep rarely merits much interest. However, it's not every day that a company launches their first one in 400 years! When asked to review yacht chandler Arthur Beale's new rope reference catalogue, I have to admit to wondering how much there would be to say beyond a brief comparison of the various diameters, constructions and colours of rope on offer. I couldn't have been more wrong. This is not your average glorified price list; it's more of an almanac.

Situated on Shaftesbury Avenue in London for over 120 years, Arthur Beale's history goes back to the 16th century, when the company was known as 'John Buckingham, Flax Dresser and Rope Maker'. While the flax fields which once supplied the company with fibres for their rope have now become theatres and tube stations, the wide range of rope and cordage for which they have always been known is still for sale, as well as standard and traditional marine chandlery.

When Alasdair Flint and Gerry Jeatt bought the business in 2014, little had changed at Arthur Beale's shop since the likes of Eric Shipton and Bill Tilman walked through the door to order Alpine Club manila hemp for their Everest attempts. Accounts were still hand written and customer invoices differed little from the one for ropes, pulleys and ice axes made out to Ernest Shackleton.

Under its new ownership, Arthur Beale is now being brought gently into the 21st century with a little necessary modernisation here and there. Alasdair, a keen sailor and longstanding customer, is well qualified to own a yacht chandlery in the heart of the West End. Not only does he also own a varnished wooden boat, he also runs Flint's, the UK's leading theatrical chandlers. While systems have been computerised and an online shop added, Alasdair is keen the chandler's charm and personal service of the past remain unchanged.

The catalogue is written in chronological order, from natural fibre ropes including flax, cotton and manila, working through to high modulus materials like Dyneema and Technora. There is also a wide variety of cord, twine, thread and webbing, as well as rope working tools, terminals and texts. Compared to the average chandlery, the range of rope products available is astounding. If you can tie a knot in it or splice it, it's in here!

Anyone wanting to do marlinspike ropework will find everything they need, including a full range of tools for the job. For those with less time or experience, splicing and terminating services are available and splicing classes are periodically held at the shop for those keen to learn.

In the catalogue, each product is described in detail, with a handy guide to key features and a list of typical uses and applications including everything from halyards and tug of war ropes to parrot perches and magicians' cords. Technical specifications are given, together with practical tips and anecdotes, helping customers to make educated and informed decisions.

In this age of large chandlery chains, it feels refreshing to be presented with a catalogue where product knowledge is so freely offered and customer needs are prioritised over the hard sell. The catalogue is available as a free PDF download from their website or as a print copy from the shop or on request. [www.arthurbeale.co.uk](http://www.arthurbeale.co.uk)

## BOSCH FLEXICLICK DRILL DRIVER

Review by Pete Greenfield

It seems the battle of the cordless drill drivers is on, though given the diminutive sizes of these next generation power tools, it feels more like a baseboard wargame with model soldiers. In W125, Mr Makita was adding a new and clever little drill driver to his extensive 18 volt cordless range; now Herr Bosch has entered the fray with the FlexiClick.

At the heart of it is the GSR 12v 15FC cordless drill driver, a tad over 6 1/2" (178mm) top to toe, with the tiny 2 Ah Li-Ion battery clicked into the handle. Even more remarkably, the body of the tool from stem to stern is just 5" (132mm); a short LOA made possible by having only a 15-step torque setting ring and a magnetic 1/4" (6mm) hex socket for modern bits at the... er... bow.

So far, so snug; dainty yes but weighing around 2 lbs (0.8kg) it has enough heft to feel purposeful yet comfortable in the hand. And it has all the

controls I'd expect from a larger cordless model: the usual pistol grip trigger to increase/decrease speed; above it, a slider switch for forward and reverse; on top a 2-step gear selector – first for driving screws and drilling larger diameter holes; second for higher speed drilling of smaller holes – and above the trigger, a bright LED worklight. There's also an illuminated indicator on the side of the tool to show much battery power you have left. Yes, the complete package.

At which point, the cynical reader will be thinking: 'Yeah, yeah, I get it: it's a boy's toy; all the bells and whistles to play with but I'll bet it has no power.' Dear cynical reader, you'd lose your bet. As its blue livery indicates, this is one of Bosch's Professional range, designed for the travelling tradesman who needs a tool powerful enough to finish the job quickly and efficiently and get to the next one; that's probably why it comes in a very robust carrying case – above – for stowing safely in the white van.

Which is where the FlexiClick gets even more interesting, for both the small boat builder and someone working on a boat on a mooring, away from mains power. In that same case, in addition to the battery charger and a second battery, come four drive adaptors which simply twist and click on to the business end of the tool. Most immediately recognisable is a 3/8" (10mm) keyless chuck – below – large enough for most small boat work. Rather less common but really useful when you need it is a 90° angle drive adaptor with a hex bit socket. And, the first I've seen, an offset drive adaptor which allows you



to drill holes, drive screws, when working tight up against, say, a bulkhead. Fourth and smallest is an alternative hex-drive adaptor with a sliding collet which locks the bit in place more securely rather than relying on magnetism, handy if you are up the mast – where another added extra could be useful: a nylon holster so that you can climb aloft with the drill on your belt gunslinger style!

All in all a versatile, well thought out kit; boatbuilders may not use all the included extras that often but variously offered around £170-£210, even for just the 40 minute charger, two 2 Ah batteries and an almost-get-in-anywhere powerful drill-driver, it's an appealing package. [www.bosch-pt.com](http://www.bosch-pt.com)







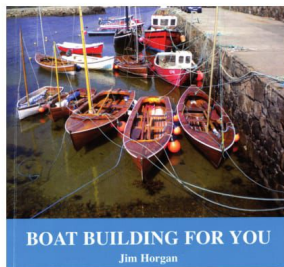
**BOAT BUILDING FOR YOU**  
by Jim Horgan, pub: Galway School of Boatbuilding, Furbo, Spiddal, Galway, Ireland.  
Tel: +353 (0)86 1234701  
72pp softback €15.00 plus post.  
Review by Pete Greenfield

Our admittedly intermittent series on the European boatbuilding schools has not yet included a proper feature on Ireland's Galway School of Boatbuilding – ideally written by someone with some first-hand experience who knows a capable snapper. After that heavy hint, here's an appetiser in the form of this book by Jim Horgan, who runs the school with his son, Connal.

A detailed introduction to traditional Irish wooden boat buildings, in its 72 pages the little book includes both practical instruction and some memories of the 50s. Jim begins: *My father Joe worked as an electrician... Two evenings a week, he taught boat building to make some extra money... When I was 12 in 1956, he brought me to a few classes, and let me use a few tools. The following year*

*I was enrolled as a full-time student, with my age written down as 16.*

Jim explains that boats were built in his father's classes: *...entirely by hand... Planks were cut out with big two handed rip saws... each involved a 39' (12m) cut... 20 minutes of sweat and sometimes blood... 25 planks per boat...*



The methods used on Jim's courses today are less herculean. Students attend two classes a week, a midweek evening and Saturday afternoon, from October to May. In their first year, they will work on

a group project; the following year they may build their own boat. If space allows, the chosen project will typically be a workaday boarding boat design between 11' and 16' (3.4-5m). Strip plank is used sometimes but in other respects the build will be traditional, following father Joe's detailed sketches in the book, which comes with a CD of colour photographs showing stages of the build.

We'll save further details of the full-size boat building course and the book for that hoped-for article but you will have gathered from the pictures above that Jim also runs model boat building courses. The prototype is the *Truelight*, the most shapely of the traditional 36' (11m) Irish turf hookers, which built to closely replicate the original construction in miniature at a scale of 1" to 1' (1:12) gives an impressive model, small enough to side on the sideboard but large enough to be noticed! Jim tells us the accurate models now fetch over €500 each in Ireland and twice that from keen collectors in the USA.

## SMITH'S CLEAR PENETRATING EPOXY SEALER & FILLER

Review by Dick Phillips,  
Willow Bay Boats

When restoring an old boat, such as the Hamble River One Design which has languished in my shed for far too long, we always scarp in new or totally replace structural timber. With small cracks or pockets of decay, we usually cut out the affected timber and glue in a 'graving piece' of similar species, carefully shaped to fit neatly into the hole we have created. This is obviously a time consuming process, so any way of speeding things up while maintaining the integrity of the boat is attractive.

Smith Et Co's Clear Penetrating Epoxy Sealer and Fill-It epoxy filler takes a systematic approach to stabilising timber and replacing decayed wood with a non-sag epoxy filler. The Sealer is supplied in two parts, resin and hardener, mixed in equal quantities by volume. It has extremely low viscosity, almost the consistency of water, which allows it to penetrate the timber to the maximum.

The recommended technique is to remove any loose, rotten timber and all previous coatings by hard wire brushing and burning off the paint. The mixed CPES is then liberally applied to the area by brushing, rolling or if possible, immersion. As the mixed sealer is slow curing it has a long pot life allowing repeated application to the area until it is totally saturated and will penetrate more.

Smith Et Co produce a warm weather formula for use from 30°C down to 10°C, and a cold weather CPES for use from 20°C down to 0°C. As with all epoxies the temperature has an effect on the pot life and the curing cycle of the sealer; the warm weather version has a pot life of 4 hours and a full cure time of two days at 30°C, while at 10°C pot life is 16 hours and full cure takes 8 days. Selecting the appropriate formulation depends on the temperature you will be using it in and the time scale of the project.

We used the sealer on some areas of the sheerstrake of the Hamble River OD. The wood was not rotten but had some edges chipped off which had been eroded by exposure to water and presented some open grain. Having mixed the sealer, I brushed it on, applying coat on coat until it stood on the surface leaving a wet layer.



This took several applications before a good quantity of sealer had soaked into the damaged area.

The follow-up treatment, filling the depression in the timber with the Fill-It, has to be left until the sealer solvents have dispersed – which took 24 hours in our mid-summer 18°C! The epoxy filler has two components, one white and one blue, making them easy to mix properly to a uniform colour. The depressions were about 6" long and 1/2" wide and deep (150 x 12 x 12mm) and the filler held its shape without sagging. The following day I sanded the filler down to fair in the repair ready for priming. The product literature says the filler is easily drilled and able to take wood screws when clearance and pilot holes are drilled.

The Clear Penetrating Epoxy Sealer is also a deeply penetrating primer for new wood or plywoods which, when two coats are applied and sanded between coats, gives a stable basis for applying paints and varnishes. It's recommended that the first coat of any oil-based finish is applied after most of the solvents have evaporated but while the epoxy sealer is still 'green' – that is not completely cured – to achieve the best bond between the primer and the coating.

Make Wood Good, the Kent company which markets Smith Et Co products in the UK, tells us that having been used in the USA for over 40 years, the range of sealants, epoxy resins and fillers is now used by boatbuilders worldwide.  
[www.makewoodgood.com](http://www.makewoodgood.com)

