

Dear YM...

Write in no more than 200 words to:
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Sailing gave me courage

For many years I've enjoyed sailing and since 1999 have owned a Contessa 26, *Sulali*, which I sail singlehanded most of the time. Recently I was diagnosed as dyslexic. At school I was always put at the back of the class and told they couldn't teach me. After leaving school, I wanted to prove myself and found sailing the perfect sport. In my early 20s I bought a dinghy and taught myself to sail in Poole Harbour. I've gained so much confidence from sailing. In bad weather you are on your own and you just have to get on with it. It's all about believing in yourself and knowing what your strengths and weaknesses are, which they never taught at school. Being dyslexic has helped me to develop the courage and determination to cope with sailing on my own.

'Being dyslexic has helped me develop the courage to sail on my own'

I revel in the practical side

of sailing, but it is still a challenge to get organised and think ahead, without any advice or help. Writing lists helps, but my short-term memory is unreliable when it comes to absorbing vital information. After years of not knowing what was wrong, it was such a relief when I was told that

I had dyslexia. It has helped me understand why I struggle with some aspects of sailing – particularly

tidal and other calculations and remembering information for entering an unfamiliar port. Over the years I have developed strategies for coping and I have crossed the Channel singlehanded. However, I find studying for exams like the RYA Day Skipper very stressful. Things such as deviation/variation and working out bearings gets me in a muddle. In school exams, dyslexic pupils are allowed an extra 20 minutes to complete their answers. It's also



Jo revels in the practical side of sailing and frequently sails solo

Photo: Jo Mooring Aldridge

LETTER of the MONTH

been discovered that words with a coloured overlay, or background don't jump around so much for dyslexic readers. In my case, pale blue works.

Do any RYA examiners or sailing schools have any experience of working with dyslexic sailors? Do any YM readers have similar problems or advice they can offer? **Jo Mooring Aldridge (by email)**

Editor's footnote: Please send your replies c/o Yachting Monthly and we will forward them.

WIN malt whisky

The Letter of the Month wins a bottle of Balvenie DoubleWood 12-year-old Single Malt Scotch Whisky. This award-winning, prestigious single malt is handcrafted using solely traditional distilling methods.

Website: www.thebalvenie.com



When is a boat a car?



Pacific Seacraft 40 - a blue-water boat

Photo: Pacific Seacraft

In April 2004 I bought a Pacific Seacraft 40 direct from the USA builder and imported it to the UK. I paid the required VAT through the clearing agents,

Peters & May, to HM Customs & Excise in Southampton Docks. I was told that HM Customs did not issue VAT receipts and that the C88 and related clearance

documentation would be all I needed to prove payment of VAT within the EU.

In October, 2007 I entered Larnaca Marina in Cyprus and was told to report to Customs (despite having been cleared by Cyprus Customs when I entered Saint Raphael Marina from Turkey on 4 October). The officials demanded proof of payment of VAT – and they rejected my original C88 and associated documentation. I was given 45 days to obtain proof from UK Customs or VAT would be levied again by Cyprus Customs.

To cut a long story short, Peters & May produced a form (C&E 386) designed for importing motor vehicles and headed 'Payment of charges

on motor vehicles brought permanently into the UK'. It came from HM Customs at Salford, to which Peters & May had been referred by Southampton Customs.

Another UK Customs office suggested I solicit help from the British Consulate in Cyprus to try and browbeat Cyprus Customs – or revert to HM Customs at Salford to obtain another form more applicable to boats than cars. In the end, and to my surprise, Cyprus Customs reluctantly accepted the ridiculous C&E 386 form. It's difficult not to be incredulous at the UK Customs' ongoing refusal to issue a relevant receipt for payment of VAT, or at least a letter confirming payment.

Peter A Bailey, Cyprus