

NEW GEAR

Amsterdam's Marine Equipment Trade Show (METS) is a sailing geek's utopia. Chris Beeson and Graham Snook share their favourite finds

AIS and DSC man overboard alert

Within 15 seconds of activation, ACR's new AISLink MOB will begin transmitting distress signals, relaying the casualty's position via AIS to all vessels within a range of five miles, and also via the boat's own DSC VHF radio. It can keep transmitting for over 24 hours.

Light, small and rugged enough to be packed in a lifejacket, the AISLink MOB is waterproof to 10 metres and can be clipped to a lifejacket's manual inflation tube and activated automatically when the lifejacket inflates. Should that fail, the device can also be

manually operated. If you're not wearing a lifejacket, it can be clipped to a belt.

The unit also has a high-intensity strobe light to help identify the casualty at night or in poor visibility. Stored battery life is seven years.

Price €253 (around £228)

Contact ACR

Tel See website

Web www.acrartex.com



Waterproof, floating stereo

Smartphone man overboard locator

Exposure Lights has just launched the OLAS (Overboard Location Alert System), which uses a smartphone app linked to Exposure's OLAS tags. The tags are the size of wristwatch and have a four-month continuous battery life, but can be switched on and off before and after each trip.

When the app is on, it displays data from the phone's GPS, which includes speed over ground, course over ground and lat/long position. If the range of a tag from the phone exceeds 30 metres or the tag is immersed in water, it triggers the smartphone app, which alerts the user. On activation the app displays a large arrow point in the direction of the MOB along with a bearing and course to steer.

The app has a number of



data screens. One handy screen is the VHF script, which gives all the details you need to relay to the coastguard including the vessel's call sign and position, so all you have to do is read the screen. A tag with a light will be launched later in the year.

Price App £2.49, tag £24.95

Contact Exposure Lights

Tel 01798 344477

Web www.exposurelights.com

Magnetic LED Light

This is such a gleamingly simple idea, so glaringly obvious, that it's hard to believe it hasn't been around for years. The problem is one we

all know. It's been

a lovely sunny day and the drinks are flowing in the congenial cockpit. Then dusk arrives and you can't see a thing. Or worse still, you're returning to your boat by dinghy at night and can't find her in the dark. That's where this comes in.

It might look like a UFO, but it's a plastic disc of warmly-coloured LEDs, powered by four AA batteries. Its two light levels are controlled by a small remote control –



powered by a penny battery, the sort you find in watches.

There's a fold-up loop on top of the disc, so it can be hung from something, a mounting hole for a screw, or you can press it against the underside of the sprayhood/bimini etc, put the magnet (included) on top of it, then slide it into position.

Price €30 (around £27)

Contact See website for nearest dealer

Tel + 49 7432 220166

Web www.fender-design.com



Skywatch Windoo 3



Accurate weather information is essential for safe sailing, James Turner looks at a live weather station that plugs neatly into your smartphone

It's no secret that having accurate weather data is important for safe sailing, but you don't need large or expensive dedicated instruments. I found there is now a big choice of accessories for smartphones – you simply plug them into the headphone socket on



The Windoo plugs into the headphone jack of your smartphone

your phone and download the free app from the Internet, hey-presto a handheld weather centre in the palm of your hand.

One such add-on is Skywatch Windoo, available in three versions: Windoo 1, 2 and 3. All are compatible with iOS and Android devices. The Windoo 1 gives wind speed and air temperature, the 2 adds humidity and the 3 adds air pressure as well. All three models

come with a handy aluminium container to protect the device when not in use, as well as a key ring and short lanyard. A 50cm extension is available, should you want to use the Windoo away from the phone

I tested the 3, and I was impressed. In addition to the 'live data' page, there are detail pages for each feature. Minimum, maximum and average are displayed and recorded. There's also a handy sea level-adjusted pressure reading (known as QNH to aviators).

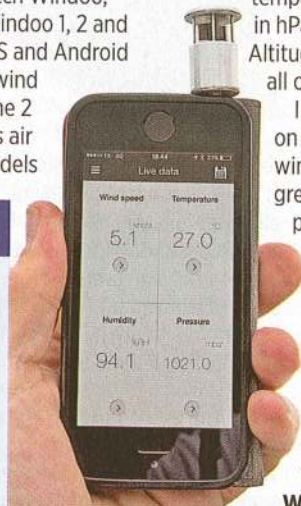
Wind speed can be read in mph, m/s, km/hr, knots and Beaufort, whilst temperature is in °C or °F and pressure in hPa, millibars or inches of mercury. Altitude can be set to metres or feet; all can be set simply.

I particularly like sharing data on Facebook, Twitter and at www.windoo.ch. Why, I hear you ask? The great thing is that you can see other peoples' Windoo data too. This will be handy when the service becomes more popular, but at present data is sparse, so its usefulness is limited

Price Windoo 1 £44.95, Windoo 2 £64.95, Windoo 3 £99.95

Contact Meridian Zero
Tel 01268 493 200

Web www.meridianzero.co.uk



OUR VERDICT

The Windoo 3 does what it says. It's rare to find something so neat, simple and reliable. With a variety of units available as well as the max/min values recorded, the data can be personalised too.

RATING
9/10

PROS

- Small, light and portable
- Simple to use

CONS

- The smart phone needs to be switched on to record data
- Not many users uploading data

Gill 95L Rolling Cargo Bag



Travelling light for sailing isn't easy, so having tough luggage that is suitable for onboard use is important, says Theo Stocker after testing this new roller bag

Going on a boat, even for a weekend, there is so much kit to take. A holdall quickly reaches such proportions that carrying it any distance risks serious back injury.

Gill has launched a series of soft 'cargo bags' with wheels at one end and a handle at the other. The largest, the 115-litre version, does have a solid base and

retractable handle, but the smaller versions have a base that is stiff enough to stop it sagging, but flexible enough to cram into a locker. I opted for the 95-litre bag, which, when fully packed, is L79 x H33 x W37cm (2ft 7in x 1ft 1in x 1ft 3in) and weighs 2.4kg (5lb) when empty.

The bag has a huge main compartment, a ventilated end pocket, a side pocket that can expand into the main compartment for wet or dirty clothes, and a smaller compartment for small items that need to stay dry. A nice detail was that the internal dividers between the compartments could be 'reefed' away with little straps, to adjust the size of each compartment.



PHOTO: THEO STOCKER

It's clear from using the bag that Gill have thought about the yachtsmans' needs



Price £109 **Contact** Gill
Tel 0115 946 0844 **Web** www.gillmarine.com

OUR VERDICT

The lack of retractable handle on the 95-litre bag made it less comfortable for wheeling long distances, but the bag isn't too bulky, which is a big advantage on a yacht. I felt the compression straps on the top were slightly too short, but this, and a broken shoulder strap clip are small details. On the whole, it's great.

RATING
8/10

PROS

- Well-thought out design
- Robustly made
- Soft bag for easy stowage

CONS

- No retractable handle
- Compression straps slightly too short

PHOTOS: DUNCAN KENT



The small masthead unit is solar powered and requires no wiring

RIGHT: The masthead transducer weighs just 195 grams



Nasa Clipper wireless wind instrument



Do you want apparent wind speed and direction read-outs, but don't want to run wires down your mast? Duncan Kent tests an inexpensive solution

Wireless masthead instruments save a great deal of unnecessary wiring and weight inside the mast. The Clipper Wind transducer weighs just 195g and its rechargeable battery is kept constantly charged via the small solar panel mounted on top. Fully charged, it is said to be capable of 2,000 hours operation without ever seeing the light.

The base unit requires 12V power from the vessel's normal supply, but receives wind data wirelessly, sending it via a wired NMEA-0183 connection to a Clipper Wind display or any other NMEA-0183 compatible display. The Clipper Wind display is medium resolution and uses 60 individual six-degree segments over a 360° direction compass face to show apparent wind direction.

Installation

The unit comes with a masthead pole and two clamp brackets that are screwed to the mast. The upper end is then clamped onto



The data box/base unit is not waterproof, so it must be installed below decks

the sender. The base unit is installed in the dry below decks and powered from the 12V ship's batteries via the supplied lead and plug. If you're using the Nasa Wind display, you simply need to connect the three wires from the display to their respective terminals in the base unit.

It's best to test the units prior to installing the transducer at the masthead, for obvious reasons. When first powered up, a red LED lights up on the base station until contact is acknowledged with the masthead sender, after which it flashes whenever data is received. To calibrate the unit, once it's mounted, you simply point the wind vane dead ahead and then press and hold the set button until the LED glows solid. In case of interference

there are four channels to choose from by changing switch settings in the base unit.

When the base unit is switched off the transducer goes to sleep to save power.

Operation

Once the transducer and base have been paired together there's little else to do. Initially the pointer is a single 6° segment, but this can be thickened in increments by pressing the 'Inc' button. The 'Dec' button reduces it again. An alternative pointer is also available that shows an arrowhead pointer with two tail fins, which some might find clearer to read.

The last two adjustments are your chosen speed measurement and the backlighting. The Scale key selects between mph, knots and m/s. Pressing 'Illum' increases the backlighting from 0-9. The chosen level returns after switching off back on again.

Price £349.20

Contact Nasa Marine Instruments

Tel 01438 354033

Web www.nasamarine.com

OUR VERDICT

A simple unit offering apparent wind speed and direction, either on its own display or via another device such as a chartplotter. Its directional accuracy is around +/- 10° or so, but the wind speed seemed close to the Raymarine ST60 wind indicator it was tested alongside. It's a little slow to update and there's no true wind data, but it's a third of the price of most other kit.

RATING
7/10

PROS

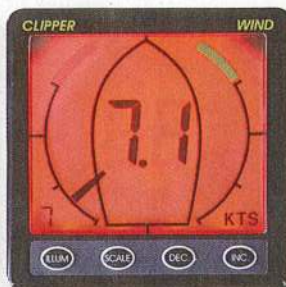
- Inexpensive
- Simple to install
- Easy to use

CONS

- Apparent wind only
- NMEA-0183 network output only



Display option one: showing apparent wind direction with two arrow tails



Display option two: showing apparent wind direction with a single line



With the backlight switched off, the display is still clear and readable