

# reviews

## ‘Only as good as your last report’

The secrets of good report writing are revealed in a new handbook targeting marine surveyors. Author Mike Wall, an industry veteran with 25 years experience, reminds surveyors that “you are only as good as your last survey and report”.

What his book aims to do is provide sound advice for producing the best possible report. He acknowledges that the challenge of translating sound technical knowledge can be difficult – especially given that half a surveyor’s work is carrying out the inspection and half is compiling the report.

There are five chapters, preceded by an engaging introduction in which Wall outlines several types of report. Chapter two, ‘The basis of reports’, examines the report as a legal document and provides a list of questions the surveyor should ask while compiling it. Some of the initial advice may seem obvious, but should still be read carefully, as Wall has summarised many legal loopholes. These include the need for protocols, sources of evidence for appendices, intellectual property rights and even how to describe cases where evidence cannot be gathered.

Chapter three focuses on preparing the report, and in 10 pages offers tips on interviewing skills, highlighting the difference between fact and opinion, avoiding jargon and the importance of keeping the tone objective. Wall also offers examples of clichés to be avoided.

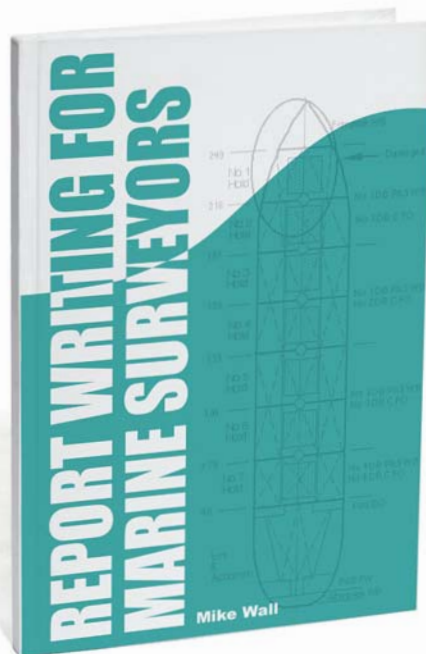
The fourth chapter examines different report types, including pro forma reports, P&I club surveys and collision damage reports and the intricacies behind them. Towards the end, he considers situations where marine surveyors need to supply expert opinions in independent cases, such as arbitration.

Wall makes helpful suggestions on presenting the information and warns surveyors that, in a consultative role, “you are only as good as your last opinion”.

The last chapter of the handbook dedicates almost 60 pages to the actual writing of the report. The ethics of providing a sound, logical report are explained in detail. Wall carefully considers the format too, and the importance of presentation.

The book contains 10 valuable appendices that give textbook examples of actual reports, such as the ‘Specimen container damage survey report’. **■ Miriam Fahey**

**Report writing for marine surveyors** by Mike Wall is published by Petrosport. [www.petrosport.com](http://www.petrosport.com), £75



## Over the sea to Harwich

Harwich in Essex, England, has been connected to Hook of Holland in the Netherlands by regular ferry service for 117 years. The ships deployed on the service include paddle steamers from the late Victorian era, car ferries from the 1960s and next-generation cats.

Hendy, Cowsill and Brown have dug into the past to retrieve images that capture the romance of the short crossing.

Among the many challenges faced by every ferry business are events that bring interruptions. In spring 1982, with the UK needing ships for the Falklands conflict, the ferry *St Edmund* was requisitioned by the Ministry of Defence to become a troop carrier with medical facilities. The move left the service severely stretched – especially as the ship was then sold and eventually operated in the Mediterranean.

Technology also brought challenges. In 1997, Stena brought its high-speed catamarans. Soaring fuel costs, mechanical troubles and bad weather combined to force Stena to reconsider.

HSS activity is described here as “an experiment that failed” – although the testing lasted for almost a decade.

A must-read for ferry enthusiasts. **■ Miriam Fahey**

**Harwich Hook of Holland, 1893-2010**, by John Hendy, Miles Cowsill, and Stephen Brown. £18.50, [www.ferrypubs.co.uk](http://www.ferrypubs.co.uk)



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