

*“To Pee or not to Pee
...”*

Or

*“Much ado about
nothing.”*

Or, much more to the point:

*“For this relief much
thanks: ‘tis bitter
cold and I am sick at
heart.”* Hamlet: Act 1, Scene 1.

by Tony Langmead

HAVE LONG ENVIED THOSE BRIGHT YOUNG THINGS who, for fear of dehydration, clutch a bottle of mineral water as they perambulate the shopping malls. (No longer call them ‘arcades’, or worse, ‘centres’.) Lightly dressed and optimistic, they run their fingers over the clothing racks, lips pursed with concentration on the serious business of retail therapy. In contrast, I spend my leisure time dressed like an antediluvian Star Wars storm trooper in my high tech, waterproof garments supplied – at some considerable cost, I might add – by the likes of Crewsaver, Musto, Henri Lloyd and Co.

Will I be sipping delicately from an Evian bottle?

No. Not !! Not even swigging from a warming flask of Bruichladdich.

Why not?

Because from the first of November to the last day in April the sailing club’s insurers insist that all its members will wear a complete covering of anti-hypothermia gear and therefore, you see, once I have completed my full-

body isometric work-out (what I call, ‘Putting on my dry-suit...’), there is a need to keep my fluid input, or rather output, as low as possible. Even so, once the ritual knees-bend has expelled excess air from the suit and the industrial strength zip is finally hauled closed (with fingers whitened and eyes bugged from over-tight seals), an overpowering urge to ‘use the facilities’ nearly always becomes apparent, reinforcing the notion that anything to do with boating is more expensive and more difficult than the non-yachtie equivalent. Even taking a leak. At some risk of offending the famously delicate sensibilities of readers of this periodical I will endeavour to describe the process as endured in a small open boat.

First, undo the zip far enough to allow access. Not just for one hand. Oh, no! Best make sure that there is room for all the emergency services in there, just in case things go horribly wrong.

Next, find the shoulder straps of the internal waistband support (needed to prevent the gusset area from sagging around the knees) and detach from the internal bib. Make sure this does not result in the strap pinging back over your shoulder or disappearing down a leg.

Having negotiated the First Level one must now delve deeper to find ... Calm down, Dear! ... Level Two, the zip of the all-important thermal layer, the Onesie from Hell, which, if you are wise, you have never worn in front of your wife, children, psychoanalyst or anyone at all who has not experienced how cold it can get on a small boat.

Other Levels may have to be negotiated but the final obstacle is a matter of personal taste –or lack of it, i.e. Y-fronts, G-Strings, Boxers, Budgie Smugglers or what-have-you. We know these things are often gifts from a loved one but some consideration should be shown to others, possibly of a nervous disposition, who may come across the wearer unexpectedly. By this time the would-be urinator is up to his – don’t worry. I’ll be getting to the other 50% of the human race later – up to his elbows in elastic and sharp-edged zips and is beginning to wish that he’d taken up synchronised swimming instead. The only certainty in the whole business is that the access points of all these garments will in no circumstances ever, ever, line up!

Disturbed at the difficulties and uncertain outcome involved I wrote to the manufacturers of my own suit outlining the problem and suggesting that the zip might be lengthened by an inch or two in order to ease the situation somewhat. The reply I found to be most unsatisfactory. Prefaced by the all-too frequent, comment that ‘no one had ever complained before’ they made the scurrilous suggestion that maybe it wasn’t actually the zip that was too short. Well, I hope they enjoyed a good laugh because I will be taking my custom elsewhere in future.

I could not believe I was the only person suffering from this inconvenience, so, casting my net, I trawled the web for answers. Sure enough, professional divers in the North Sea are similarly





afflicted – it must be all that cold water – and have developed a workable answer. They used to say there are two types of diver. Those that pee into their suits and those who lie about it. I used to empty a thermos of warm water into my wetsuit before diving in cold water. Honest, I did! Now there is a hi-tech alternative. (You're going to love this!)

What you do is glue a sort of condom on to the penis. This thing has a spigot at the end into which plugs a tube.

...

'Hang on a minute. Did you say glue?'

'Yes. Some sort of Superglue. Anyway, this tube plugs into a bag which you...'

'GLUE! You're joking! No, no, no. Sorry. I've been misinformed. There is absolutely NO way I'm going to be mucking about with glueing ANYthing down there... not after that nasty experience I had laminating the tiller! I'll wear a wet suit instead. Dammitall, I'll join the sailors who deliberately capsize on their way back to the pontoon after a sail, just to flush the suit out.'

No need to, friend. I have other options for you. Read on!

If you don't like the idea of being plumbed into your own underwear with a plastic bag strapped to your leg you are going to have to struggle with a zip and ten layers of clothing. If you can heave to while occupied in this fashion your troubles are not necessarily over. While drifting slowly down wind, struggling with zips, seals, Velcro and elastic you can be sure that a sharp-eye Club Safety Boat Driver has spotted that you are obviously in difficulties and, without a thought as to the nature of your problem, has leaped into action at high speed. His crew, inevitably female, under 25 years of age and the

product of a sheltered upbringing, possibly in a nunnery, will be poised in the bow waving a tow rope. You had better hope that when realisation dawns, he doesn't slam the throttle closed too quickly or she will end up in your lap.

The problem is worse for the female sailor. Squatting on the rim of a bucket is no fun for anyone and as a father of four girls (and grandfather to four more) I understand the urgency of the plaintive cry of 'Do NOT tack!' coming from the cuddy/cabin of *Four Sisters*. In open dinghies all of us look for reasons to go ashore when Nature calls. My girls are what you might call 'well-tanned', if not totally brazen, in their attitude to exposed flesh but even they are reluctant to drop everything in full view of mixed company. Well, most of them. The under tens don't seem to give a damn!

If left in peace long enough to get cleared for action we now have the problem of where to direct our ...er... attention. On a small boat peeing over the side is even more risky than on a large cruiser (remember Robert Maxwell!). However, your falling over the side might well be the preferred outcome for the rest of the crew, if present. Think of the mayhem that could result from a sudden lurch – so a receptacle of some kind is required. Bucket or bailer will do for many

of us single handers but some crew object to handling dual use items. I can't say that I blame them. There are a number of alternatives on the market, not all for the bed-ridden, and for your edification I have tested a few, with advice and guidance from the women in my life, designed for the more or less able-bodied amongst us.

1. Portable urinal <https://www.medisave.co.uk/urinal-unisex-1000ml>. A medical product made to be cheap and not very cheerful at under two quid. It has a rather iffy snap-on cap with a retainer like the lens cap on a pair of binoculars – and just as likely to snap off. You could go posh with the 'Little John' <http://www.flightstore.co.uk/little-john-portable-urinal.asp> (£10.99 but £20.00 with female adaptor!) This is a tough plastic bottle with a screw cap, originally designed for pilots of light aircraft, it seems. It has a neck wide enough for ease of use, a wide flat base to avoid tipping over and a reasonably large capacity to allow for multiple use before emptying. It also has a shaped funnel accessory to allow the girls to use it without exposing too much on a cold day. It might take a bit of practice to get the angles right but it's a possibility, or so I thought. Unfortunately, the cap isn't watertight as sold, due to poor mould quality. It has to be trimmed with a sharp knife and a steady hand to make it so. For some reason they've made it bright, fire engine red. Absolutely no chance of being mistaken for a hip flask but recognisable over half a mile of choppy water for exactly what it is! I prefer to use the bailer when sailing but having a lid makes this a good alternative to crawling out of the cabin on a wet night.

Female comment: 'Discriminative pricing! Funnel too

big, requires major disrobing to use, as underwear can only stretch so far ... Looks like an NHS bed pan. Why bright red? Surprised they hadn't thought of a flashing light and a siren for night-time use!

2. **GoPilot Deluxe** <http://www.mypilotstore.com/MyPilotStore/sep/9553> A sort of up-market, over complicated version of the above that will set you back 30 bucks. It has a corrugated flexible pipe that will involve you with a lot of complicated scrubbing and flushing out to keep it sanitised.

Female comment: 'Don't you dare come near me with that thing!'

3. The 'Travel John' <http://www.traveljohn.com> £9.95 per pack of 3

This is a disposable bag affair designed to be totally spill-proof by utilising an absorbent polymer material. Again, it has the capacity for at least a couple of uses by either gender. Being disposable it is inherently an expensive option, but, at least it's not red.

Female comment: 'Impossible to use unless wearing Big Pants. Like peeing into a nappy.'

4. The 'She Wee Extreme' <http://www.shewee.com> From £9.99

As the name suggests, this is for the female half of the species and is not a container, more an extension, enabling ladies to nip behind a tree, like a bloke, without the necessity of totally disrobing. The 'Extreme' (there's

a pun in there somewhere) at £11.75 comes in a handy case and in a range of colours.

Female comment: 'Neat, and the case makes it easy to pack in a rucksack. Need to hook an arm around the mast or similar when on a boat, as two hands are needed to hold the narrow funnel in place securely.'

5. The 'Whiz Freedom' <http://www.whizproducts.co.uk> From £9.95

This is a similar product to the above but with a wider aperture of softer plastic. As for the 'She Wee' the travel case and a range of other accessories are extras.

Female comment: 'Size just about right for pushing aside rather than removing clothing. Shape of funnel makes it easier to use one-handed with confidence.'

My youngest daughter discovered these one year at Glastonbury (the disposable cardboard versions) and was pleased with the freedom of use, particularly as there was a half mile queue for an especially noxious ladies' toilet. It takes a certain amount of 'Chutzpah' to line up with the lads behind a hedge but she said it was worth it for the looks on their faces. Whether the ladies in your life would agree and be as confident in its use in the confines of a small boat is a matter of conjecture.

Four possible solutions to an age-old problem. None perfect, perhaps, but all better than the alternative.

Well, now that we've sorted out that little problem, would you care for a beer?

Don't mind if I do!

Er... that's not MY wet suit you're wearing, is it?

