



Report

Hurricane Force with Tom Cunliffe

1 October 2026



An evening of sailing yarns, humour and hard-earned wisdom brought 83 Club members, Cruising Association members and local Torquay berthholders together at the Royal Torbay Yacht Club.

A storyteller at the helm

If you have not heard of Tom Cunliffe, a glance along your sailing bookshelf may reveal one of his books. His life afloat, across all kinds of seas and yachts, has given him a wealth of experience—and plenty of stories to make an audience laugh.

Tom arrived with his wife, Ros, bringing a friendly manner and assured presence. When a laptop-to-projector connection delayed the start, he demonstrated a skipper's ability to handle the unexpected, entertaining the audience with a story about the dangers of drinking yacht club wine.

The inspiration behind Hurricane Force

The evening centred on his first fictional thriller, Hurricane Force, and what inspired him to write it. Tom described extraordinary experiences, memorable characters and heavy weather in the Caribbean that helped shape the story.



Lessons from a life at sea

Tom offered his views on onboard safety, managing difficult crew personalities, and heavy-weather sailing without an engine and with a dismantled helm. His adventures included buying potent local rum, working for a client as a trading vessel between the islands with a quarter of a ton of bikinis aboard, and surviving a hurricane at sea.

On navigation, he challenged the preoccupation with knowing an exact GPS position, suggesting that recognising when you are in the wrong place can matter more.



Royal Torbay Yacht Club

New connections ashore

The mix of 83 people from different walks of life created opportunities to meet and exchange ideas. One RTYC member was offered cabin space for a cruise to Paimpol, France, after a short conversation with the skipper of Nefertiti, a 136-foot classic yacht berthed in Torquay Inner Dock at the time of the event.

Thank you to the team

Thanks go to Membership Secretary Gordon Bentley for organising the event, and to Admiral Nigel Wollen for introducing Tom and closing the evening with his reflections. Flag Officers Martin Godfrey and Mike Currie represented the Yacht Club in their club ties. Staff members Kameron Raybone and Lucy Lake provided valuable support with audiovisual arrangements and restaurant food bookings.

Read Hurricane Force

The book is available through Amazon or directly from Tom Cunliffe's website for £9.99 who will personally sign it before dispatch.

tomcunliffe.com/product/hurricane-force/

