



Introduction lesson

Lesson 2.2: Extreme weather

Wind

The wind is an all-important factor for a sailing vessel. On board of ships of the Republic the wind power was partly indicated by naming the maximum amount of sails that could be used at that moment. Nearly half of all the expressions related to wind power contain the name of a specific sail. Thanks to the descriptions given of which sails were used at a given moment, the wind force can be calculated and converted quite accurately to the currently used Beaufort scale.

Wind force on Beaufort scale - Descriptions used in the logbook

Force 0	Calm, glassy sea. Quiet, no wind.
Force 1	Ripples, no crests. Breeze, weak breeze, fresh breeze, light breeze, gentle breeze.
Force 2	Small wavelets with a glassy appearance, no breaking. Light royal sail breeze, breeze, gentle topgallant sail breeze, gentle breeze, and weak to average breeze.
Force 3	Large wavelets with some whitecaps and breaking crests. Topgallant sail breeze, light topgallant sail breeze.
Force 4	Small waves, breaking crests, more white caps. Stiff topgallant sail breeze, fresh topsail breeze, topsail breeze.
Force 5	Moderate, longer waves with many whitecaps. Reefed topsail breeze, double reefed topgallant sail breeze, stiff topsail breeze.
Force 6	Long waves with frequent white foam crests and airborne spray. Double reefed topsail breeze, stiff breeze, stiff reefed topsail breeze.
Force 7	Foam from waves creates streaks of white in the direction of the strong wind.
Force 8	Moderately high waves, crests beginning to break. Lower sail breeze.
Force 9	High waves, crests of the waves sometimes roll over, large amounts of airborne spray. Closely reefed topsail breeze, reefed lower sail breeze.
Force 10	Very high waves; sea looks white due to foam; lots of airborne spray. Closely reefed lower sail breeze, storm and heavy storm.
Force 11	Exceptionally high waves, sea covered in white foam streaks (in modern description: violent storm).
Force 12	Massive waves, air filled with foam and airborne spray (in modern description: hurricane).

Storm

In the night of October 9th, 1761 a heavy storm hit the ship around 1 a.m. This meant the crew needed to take down all the sails to maintain some control over the ship. The pumps were manned throughout the night, as a lot of water had entered the constable's cabin. The storm reached its peak between October 9th and 12th. The Unity took on a lot of access water and had trouble sailing. Finally on October 20th the crew caught sight of other ships surrounding them, and land: Cabo Ortegale by Spain. It was the first day in fifteen days that it did not rain.

More information

About wind and sails: <http://eenigheid.slavenhandelmcc.nl/middelburgse-commercie-compagnie-en/wind-and-sails/?lang=en>

About the storm: <http://eenigheid.slavenhandelmcc.nl/trajecten-van-de-reis/uitreis/navigatie-uitreis/>