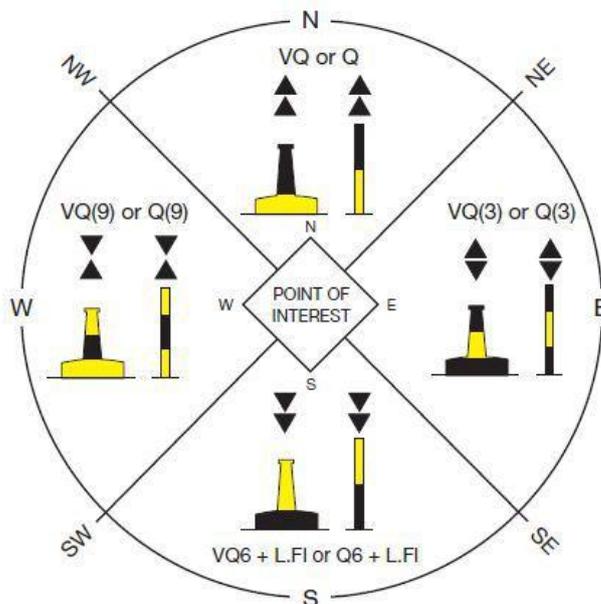


Taken from an article by Viki Moore (Astrolabe Sailing) and sent in to SEQSK by Tess Dodd adventuretess@gmail.com with permission.
Formatted by Ian McDade

Well Hello Big Buoy!

Cardinal Marks

These are marking an isolated area of danger, and they indicate what side you should pass. So if you see a South marker, then you should pass to the South of it. Of course you do need to know where South is – so have a look at the compass or the chart if you are unsure.



There are a few easy ways of remembering which is which – and the lights on top.

First of all the lights are always white and they are either Q = Quick or VQ = Very Quick flashing.

- North – the arrows on the top point up (i.e. to the North) and they are a continuous Q or VQ flashing
- East – one arrow points up and one points down. I remember this one as it kind of looks like an Egg – Egg = East and the light flashes in groups of 3 – just like 3 o'clock on the face of a clock.
- South – the arrows both point down (i.e. to the South) and they flash 6 times – just like the clock, and they add 1 long flash at the end of the 6. (*Not sure why? I would have just been happy with 6 flashes*)
- West – one arrow points up and the other down and I remember this one as it looks like a wine glass! Wine = West! And yes you guessed it, this one flashes 9 times! (Brilliant!)

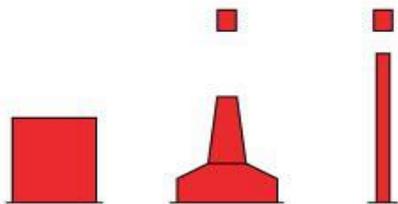
Lateral Marks

Lateral marks identify the channel going in to the harbour – or in the direction of the flood tide. Just to confuse everyone, there are two systems IALA region A and region B. New Zealand, UK, Europe are system A and North & South America and some parts of South-East Asia use region B.

LATERAL MARKS

PORT HAND

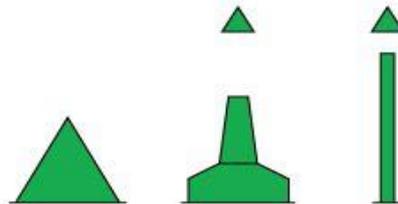
Colour: Red.
Shape: Can, pillar or spar.
Top mark: Single red can.



REGION A

STARBOARD HAND

Colour: Green.
Shape: Conical, pillar or spar.
Top mark: Single green cone point upward.

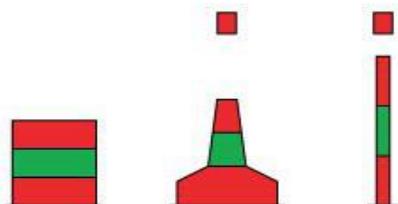


LIGHTS, when fitted, may have any rhythm other than composite group flashing (2+1) used on modified Lateral marks indicating a preferred channel.

PREFERRED CHANNELS

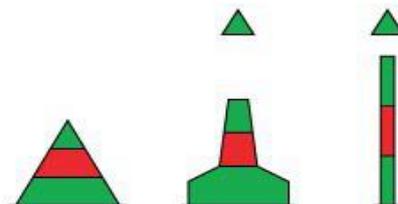
Preferred channel to starboard

Colour: Red with one broad green band.
Shape: Can, pillar or spar.
Top mark: Single red can.



Preferred channel to port

Colour: Green with one broad red band.
Shape: Conical, pillar or spar.
Top mark: Single green cone point upward.

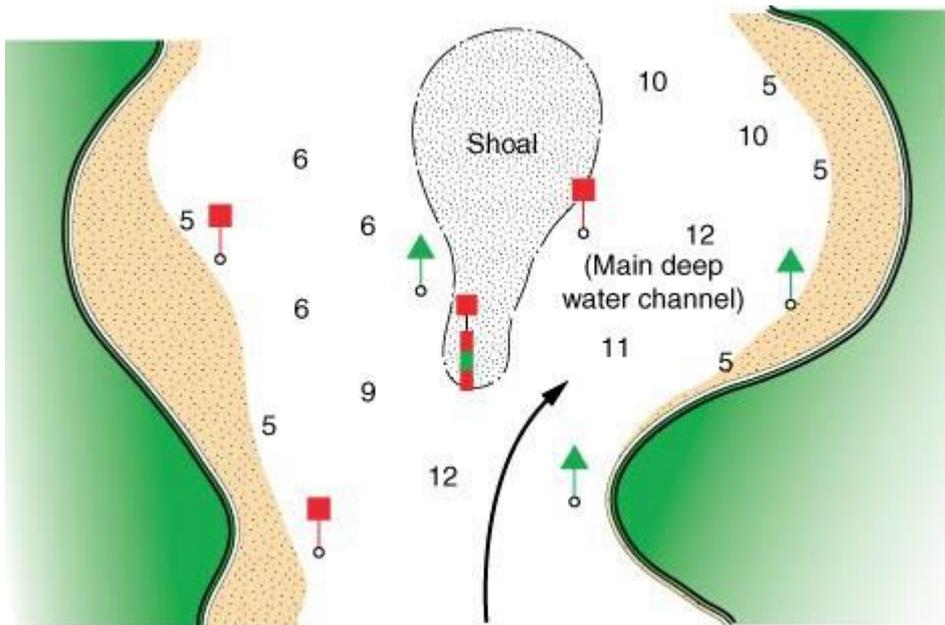


Red light Composite group flashing (2+1) light Green light FI (2+1) R FI (2+1) G

In region A the red cans mark the port side of the channel, and the green cones mark the starboard side of the channel (when going IN to the harbour)

I remember the shapes because of course port is red, and the shape is a can, which beer comes in – beer & port are both alcohol. Keep them on the left when you are coming in to a harbour.

- Green = starboard, and the shape is like a cone, cones kind of look like a Christmas tree shape. Christmas trees are of course green, and green is starboard and so keep that one on the right hand side when you are coming in to harbour.
- When there are two channels, these are indicated by the same marks, but with a stripe identifying which way is best. So in the picture below, the port marker at the bottom of the shoal is still marking the port side of the channel but it has a green stripe – saying “Starboard channel is best!”
- These are identified at night with a composite flash – which is two flashes and then a gap and then one flash.



- IALA B differs in that the shape of the marks is the same as A but the colours are different! Arraagh! I haven't worked out how I am going to remember that...?!

Other Markers

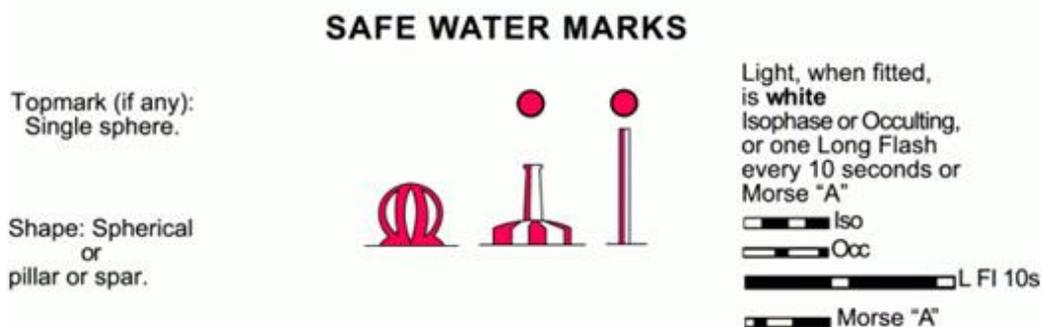
There are also isolated danger marks, special marks and safe water marks to keep an eye out for.

Special Marks

- Isolated danger marks are red and black with two black balls at the top. They flash white in groups of two. They indicate a relatively small danger in a patch of clear water all around. You can pass either side of these. I remember these as two black balls look like two black eyes – and no one likes to get a black eye, let alone two of them, so stay away!

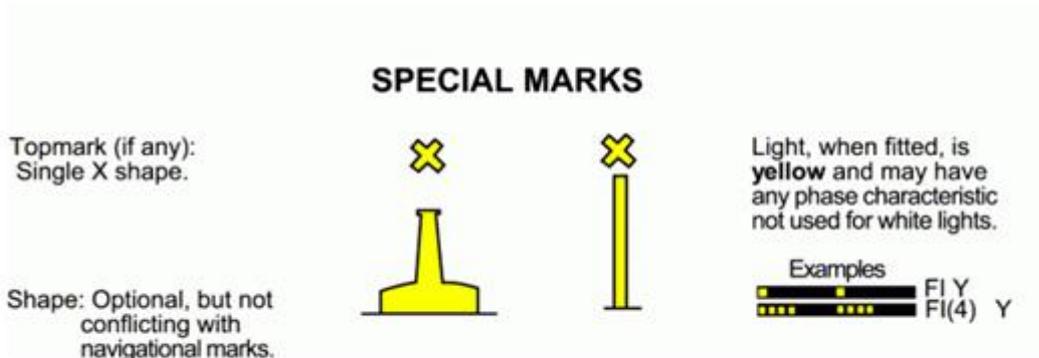


- Safe water marks are red and white vertical stripes and have a red ball on the top. Traditionally they are a good waypoint to aim for and mark the transition from open water to the harbour. They also have a white flashing light, with the sequences mentioned above in the picture. I remember these ones as the red and white stripes look kind of like a fun carnival or candy cane – kind of inviting & fun, possibly safe...? (*Hmm anyway, as I said you can use your own way of remembering!*)



Special marks

- Special marks are yellow. It has a yellow flashing light and a period of 5 seconds – so I presume that goes: flash! – followed by a pause of 5 seconds – flash!



- So anyway they are special – the X reminds me of a pirate map – X marks the spot, and there is usually treasure underneath, and treasure is pretty special it also usually has gold which is kind of yellow, so yellow X = special mark.
- There are also lighthouses and leading lights and their various different flashes and colours, but I am going to talk about those in another post.
- Of course don't assume that all dangerous rocks and channels are going to be marked. The ones that are marked are mainly for the benefit of big ships, so when you head off in to a small bay its unlikely that there will be any marks at all.