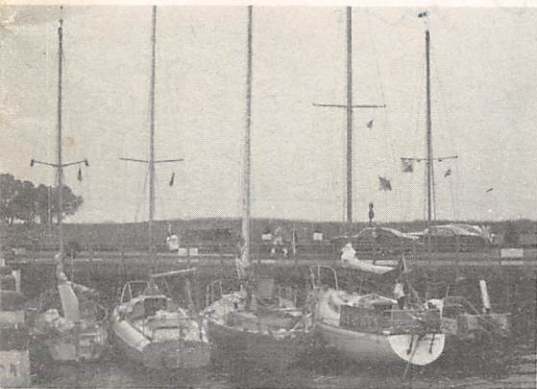


# Atalanta

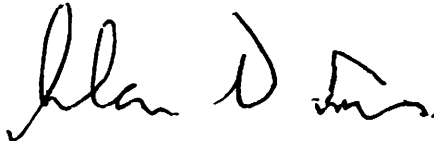
OWNERS ASSOCIATION BULLETIN 1976/77



*From Alan Vines, President of the Atalanta Owners' Association:*

To date, no one has suggested a tax on 'Wind, salt-water and sunshine', so all owners of sailing boats make the most of it while you can!

Congratulations are due to Rod White for completing the Single-handed Transatlantic Race in *Bluff A146*. Thanks also to General Odling for his great efforts in increasing membership to 100, and to Cyril Staal for producing the Bulletin.



**MAYDAY**

The Bulletin requires a fresh editor to take the place of the one who has done the job for the past few years. I am no longer an Atalanta owner and feel that a 'practicing' yachtsman would be better at the job; contact with other owners is really essential in getting contributions. The job is not an arduous one, nor does it take a great deal of time, so I am hoping that someone will do as I did; volunteer for the task. Please consider it, and if you will have a go write to the Secretary or me and say so.

*Cyril Staal*

**ATALANTA OWNERS' ASSOCIATION**

Hon. Secretary:

Major-General W. Odling, CB., OBE., MC., DL.,

Hon. Editor:

Cyril Staal,

Phone: 057

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# OBSERVER SINGLE-HANDED TRANSATLANTIC RACE 1976

Roderick M. White — *Bluff* — A146

The start was on Saturday June 5th, and after a week of furious activity it was good to get to sea. There was very little breeze as the gun sounded for the Jester Class (up to 38 feet L.O.A.) and after an hour's racing the fan-club found me floundering at the back of the fleet as I had been determined to set out with my smart new two-tone jib rather than an old scruffy Genoa.

The first happening of any note was on day three, Monday June 7th, when a cruising Spanish yacht of about 30 feet hailed me and one of the crew said they were looking for Brest. I set them in the right direction and told them they had a long way to go. Then, two days later, at 0400, while the wind was gusting force 8, *Bluff* inadvertently went about, causing the line of the Walker log to wrap itself around the self-steering paddle. I discovered that the self-steering had become disengaged and preferred to assume that this was the problem. But later my innermost fears were confirmed: the rudder itself had broken off. Oh well, I attached the self-steering to the rudder stock that remained, turned south, and had some curried chicken. (It was too early in the venture to consider turning back).

Entries in the log over the next ten days alternated between (a) recording my menus and (b) pithy and progressively stronger comments on both my marginal progress and the weather patterns that determined it. In getting south and avoiding the worst of the storms I became a prisoner of the high pressure over sea area Sole. Even a favourable following breeze was difficult to capitalise on as I had to deep-reef the mainsail to avoid the considerable yawing that resulted from the inadequate steerage. Exasperation was interrupted by the exchange of a morse code message by Aldis lamp with a vessel which transpired (on checking in Newport) to belong to the French Navy, and seeing the Royal Yacht bound for Bermuda and the US Bicentennial Celebrations.

Day 14 proved to be a good day. I was able to clear up the mystery of why ships did not respond to invitations for a chat on my new toy, the VHF radio-telephone; there was a fault in my microphone extension cable. I then spoke to the British ship *PHOTINIA* and was able to validate my fix from celestial navigation which had been in conflict with my DR; I've never been sufficiently methodical with DR. *PHOTINIA* was travelling in the same direction as *Bluff* (SSW) and as she was bound, so the Mate told me, for the Great Lakes, I asked why they were taking the course they appeared to be. 'Weather routed' was the answer. They had been advised to go to 40 North before making any Westing, and he told me that the leading French yacht in the race had blown out so many sails that she was putting in to St. Johns, Newfoundland. My log entry for later the same day makes an ironic contrast with the plight of the yachts going the direct route; 'v. pleasant afternoon sunning myself on a li-lo in the cockpit'.

Day 16 (June 20th) Eat last of real bread. The special long life bread that I had obtained was all thrown over the side on day 4.

Day 18 Brilliant "*Bluff*" curry – in fact the only acceptable way to eat TVP (soya); followed by strawberries – think of Wimbledon.

By the end of the third week I was within fifty miles of the nearest Azorean island and waiting for the weather to give *Bluff* an even break. But being becalmed again allowed me to summon up courage enough to take my first swim. The next day I decided to sort through the lockers to see that all was well, and found in the 'nose cone', from which the ship's heads had been removed, so much more food that I reckoned that I could afford to take a whole year over the trip. My main food hold was the engine compartment, the engine having also been removed. The concluding remark for day 21, after working out that day's pitiful run, was that having such quantity and variety of provisions was just as well.

On day 23 I saw the island of Corvo where I expected to see it, which was gratifying, although I noted in the log that 'I am glad there are not islands all the way along the route – it would prove to be a very unrelaxing way of noting the lack of progress; still an outside chance of getting to Newport RI within 7 weeks from Plymouth'.

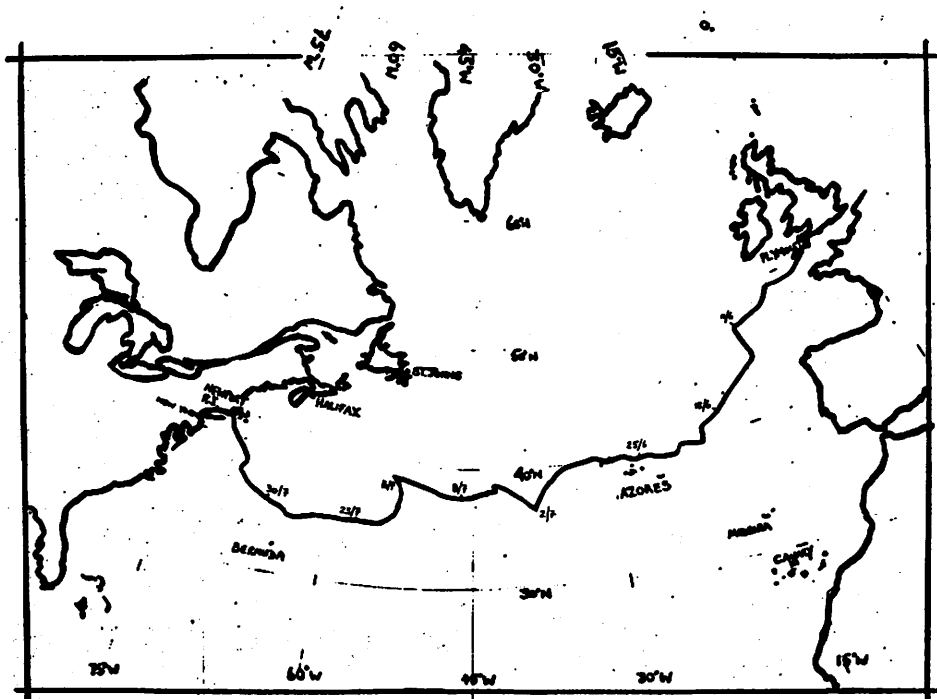
Day 25 was half-time within the official time allowed for the race; it was also the day that the BBC World Service reports brought news of the first boats in Newport. In the following ten days I was able to make tolerable progress and get sufficiently far south to avoid the strongest effects of the Gulf Stream.

On July 5th (Day 31) I noted that we were slicing through the water like a knife through concrete. The next day we were forced to heave-to and the log records thus:

'Try to be nonchalant as possible! – difficult when being knocked over.  
Drifting E. at possibly half a knot? Wind 8/9 but seas too big to allow sailing progress with many breaking crests. Lying a-hull quite comfortably shipping the occasional wave. No astro today'.

The storm's aftermath brought two days of useful easterly winds. In fact the following week was one of acceptable progress, but for being pushed further north than I would have really liked. During that time I saw my first flying fish, recording a wish that some might come aboard, and on July 19th I spoke to the Russian merchantman *LUBNY* who said that he would report me to Lloyds. He did.

On Sunday July 11th (Day 37) the barometer began to fall slowly and I spent a fruitless half hour in an involuntary hat-overboard exercise, and unwelcome reminder of how unmanoeuvrable my rudderless craft had become. By Thursday the steadily increasing south-west wind had built up a big sea and I was sailing under storm jib and mainsail with two slab reefs in. But when the waves began breaking there was no future in expecting *Bluff* to try slamming on and on so we hove-to yet again. I was glad to have taken the decision when I did, for not long after I recorded a gust of 60+ knots, enough to keep me below. I noted: 'All very tedious (the whole exercise is beginning to appear somewhat protracted)'. In fact I was by now well and truly resigned to exceeding the official time allowed. I was still hove-to 24 hours later, but although this was undoubtedly unnecessary it was a comfortable way of having a general clear up. On Saturday July 17th the sun shone and I was able to dry out bedding, charge batteries and have a swim. The following seven days were largely spent drifting and provided time enough to swim, finish all my books and make incisive remarks on anything and everything.



*Bluff's progress across the Atlantic*

**EXTRACTS:**

Sunday July 18th

Would cheerfully accept a tow for America.

Monday July 19th

Blazing hot: no progress.

Tuesday July 20th

Marginal but sedate progress — doubt if astro-navigation (mine) could detect movement over the past 24 hours.

1815. See a shark! That is the end of swimming. In fact it wasn't; but I hesitated for at least two days before plunging in again.

Wednesday July 21st

Gentle easterly breeze continues: Smooth seas, glorious sunshine — unbelievably pleasant sailing.

Thursday July 22nd

Start a log book paper economy — I would like to complete the course in one volume.

Friday July 23rd

Hotter than yesterday — stayed below. 1900. Some breeze at last. Hallelujah!

Saturday July 24th

Yes, it is possible — it is calmer than yesterday; I resign!

By now there was so much Sargasso weed that I had withdrawn the log rotator as the readings could not be relied on. Besides, my confidence in celestial navigation was

quite high, and I was enjoying the effort in working sun sights, morning, noon and afternoon, not to mention the occasional moon, planet, and star sight. The race organisers had promulgated a late rule prohibiting navigational aids that used satellites, but I worked on the assumption that my moonshots, initially at least, could hardly be described as an aid.

On Thursday July 29th (Day 55) I was north of Bermuda by approximately 150 miles. Just before the time for my noon sights I was attempting to find interesting listening on my transistor. Bermuda Radio had a cricket match commentary, so I was trying American stations. When I turned the set off I could hear a quickly loudening roar outside. Had a ship been causing the noise I would have been within yards of its engine room, so I leapt into the cockpit to see a reconnaissance aircraft of the Canadian Armed Forces pass about 100 to 200 feet overhead. Just the opportunity to allow me to fulfil one of my more simple dreams – I dived for the signal book and found, conveniently near the beginning of the code groupings, an appropriate signal. I extracted the flags from the set that I had generously been given by friends from work, and while the aircraft circled I hoisted BA 'You may not alight on my deck'. It worked. There was a chance that I had not been reported and, with the race being officially over, I thought that the authorities might be concerned over the well-being of the laggards. So in case this was so I raised on a separate hoist CK: 'I do not require assistance', but by that time the aircraft had lost interest.

The last week of the crossing was one of better-than-average progress; with fine days, but thundery nights which I did not enjoy. On August 2nd the first trappings of New World civilisation arrived: flies and beasties! The marine forecast for off-shore Rhode Island the next day was force 2 from the north, exactly the direction I needed to go, but mercifully this proved no more accurate than any sailor expects. However, my indignation at the projected weather was completely dissipated by the catching of a fish which, after being photographed from every possible angle, was cooked and eaten. The log says it was 'equisite'. On Wednesday 4th I could easily detect that I had passed out of the Gulf Stream as the colour of the sea had changed from indigo blue to bottle green. At 0200 GMT on Thursday 5th August – two calendar months after leaving Plymouth – I saw the light on the end of Martha's Vineyard. Soon enough I could see other lights to confirm my course for the Brenton Reef Tower, the finishing line, and thence to the marina at Goat Island, Newport, reached by noon local time the same day.

Within a further half day, three more, and the last remaining boats in the race arrived. I had beaten a Folkboat (and he had to admit to motor-sailing from Bermuda), a Rival 32, and the 28 foot Junk-rigged *One Hand Clapping* who received the wooden spoon.

*Bluff* had covered an estimated 4,500 n.m. in the 61-day crossing, just over 3 knots, using only 25 out of 50 gallons of water and I even had some beer left with which to celebrate.

I conclude my log with 'Ah, well! Tricks end, as they say. It's all been good fun'.

**Note on sail changes:**

- (a) **Twenty headsail changes, of which six were reefing/unreefing the working jib**

Used	Working jib for	78.66%
	Working jib reefed	4.8%
	Storm jib	4.4%
	No headsail	4.6%
	Genoa	7.2%
	Loose-luff Masthead	
	Genoa	0.3%

- (b) **Fifty-one changes to Mainsail**

	With no reefs	60.7%
	With 1 slab in	13.2%
	2 slabs	20.5%
	3 slabs	1.8%
	No Mainsail	3.8%





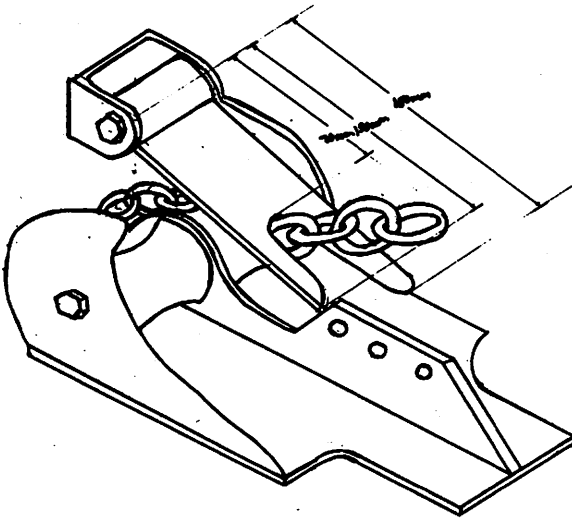
# MODIFICATIONS TO BLUSTER

E.F.R. and M.H. Stearn – *Bluster* – A183

## (a) A BOW-ROLLER PAWL

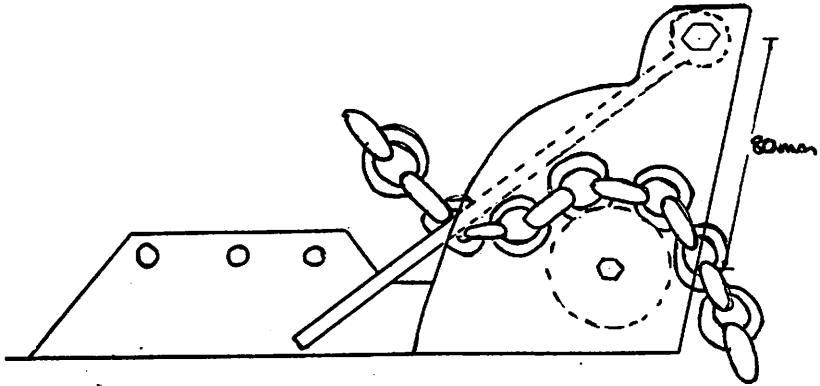
Weighing anchor can be a long hard haul if you have all the chain out, there is a strong tide running and the wind is against you, too. There is little room for an anchor winch on an Atalanta even if you can afford one and want one. A pawl will give you a rest when you need it and when conditions are bad you can use the motor to help, and pull in short bursts.

I felt the pawl had to be simple, secure, to allow the chain to be removed easily, and cheap. After a lot of thought and a few mock-ups I came up with the one illustrated. It was made in a farm workshop and consists of a stout plate welded on to the starboard side of the standard Atalanta bow-roller fitting, drilled to take the bolt around which the rollers themselves revolve. The plate protrudes above the fitting and is drilled to receive a strong bolt which is welded to the plate and carries the pawl. A nut and lock-nut secure it. Thus the chain can be removed on the port side, over the port-hand roller. The length and shape of the pawl is critical. It was made out of an old field gate hinge, cut down, shaped and smoothed off. The fork shape was found to be the most effective, catching the vertical link in the notch and the two prongs abutting against the shoulders of the horizontal link. Finally I had the whole fitting shot-blasted and hot dip galvanised.



A Pawl for an Atalanta

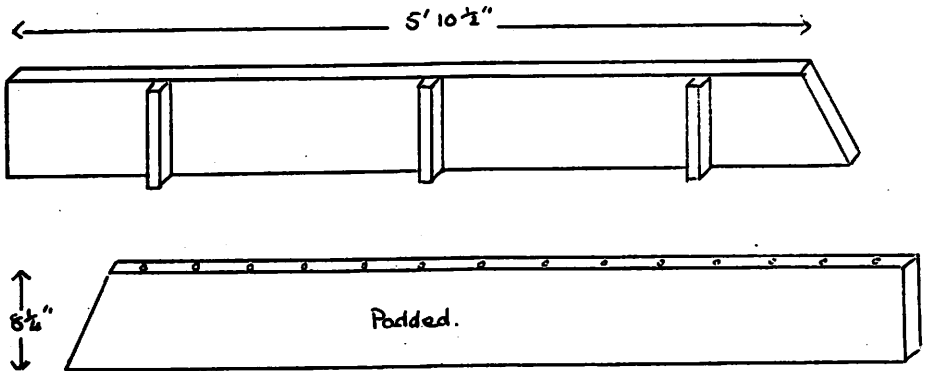
I found it to work well in practice. The angle that the chain has to be pulled up is about  $45^\circ$  and the pawl always catches if you let the chain out a little, slowly. When letting out the chain just flip the pawl over the top and the chain is free to run. The inward curve of the bow fitting will prevent it from going too far. I was glad to have it many times and as I get older I shall be more so.



**(b) ONE MODIFICATION: FOUR USES**

This all started because chronic back trouble means that I like something solid to lean against and I soon discovered that Atalanta berths are far too wide for sitting comfort. It soon developed into a multi-purpose modification that has proved its worth for four seasons now.

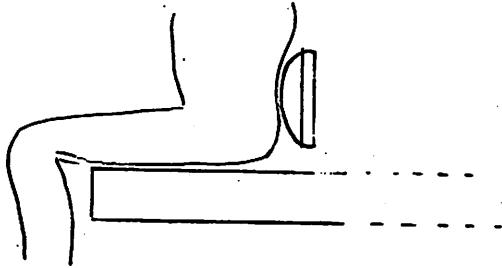
Basically you make two mirror-image boards, padded and vinyl covered on one side, and ribbed on the other, thus:



Port Side

(1) **Back rests:**

The boards stay in this position most of the time. They slat into wooden fittings on the bulkheads at each end of the bunks, giving a comfortable seat as follows:—

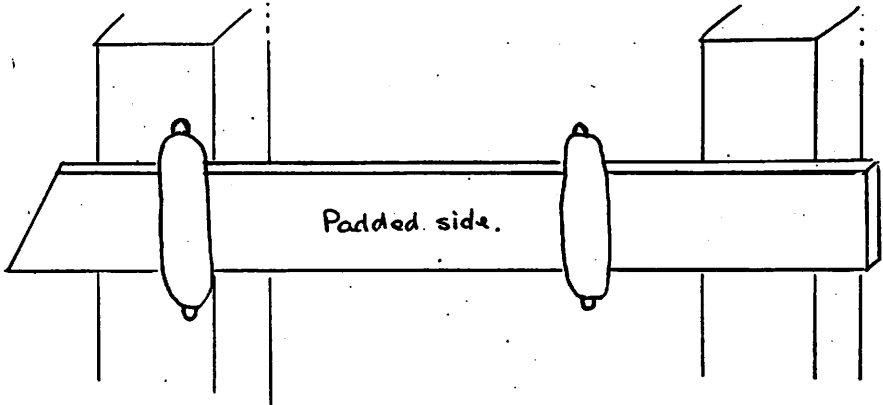


(2) **Lee Boards:**

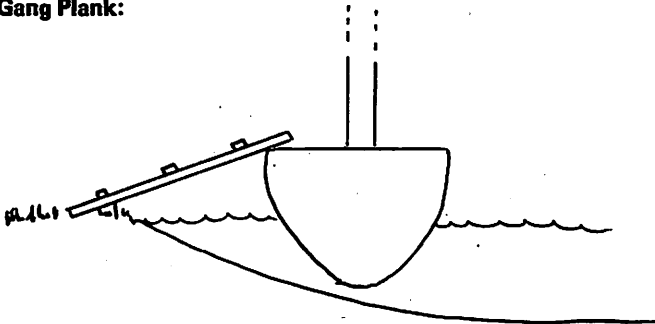
This is the use for the boards at night and at sea at any time, enabling the bunks to be used without any thing (or person) rolling off on whichever tack. In this case the port board becomes starboard and vice versa, so that the padding is inwards and the slanting end still fits the angled bulkhead.

(3) **Fender Board:**

This can be used when moored between piles, with or without fenders.



(4) **Gang Plank:**



# 'Letter from America'

R.C. Coile – *Patience IV* – A101

Last January, several of us met for the 'first annual' dinner of the American branch of the Atalanta Owners Association. We naturally met on the same night as the dinner in London.

Brad Coolidge (A149 *Tala*), Bob Snow (A23 *Gypsy*) and Russell Coile (A101 *Patience IV*) were present Jim Lytle (A182 *Skimmer*) of Virginia Beach and Capt. James Smith (A103 *Tambalu*) of Gambrills. Maryland could not be there. Bob Snow showed color slides of his trip to Newfoundland.

Brad Coolidge and Russell Coile have tried to track down as many as possible of the approximately 25 Atalantas brought over here years ago. We are now in contact with nine owners, namely –

Captain Joseph Smith (A6 *Kittiwake*, a Titania).  
Robert Snow (A23 *Gypsy*).  
Kevin Rolfe (A57 *Odyssey*).  
Paul Roy (A62 *Coco*)  
Robert & Linda Margolin (A85 *Kicky-Wicky*)  
Russell Coile (A101 *Patience IV*)  
Cdr. Bruce Bauer (A103 *Tambalu*)  
Jack Campbell (A149 *Tala*)  
James Lytle (A182 *Skimmer*)

The big excitement of the year, of course, was the achievement of Rod White in A146 *Bluff* in the Observer Single-handed Transatlantic Race. We tried to arrange to be of help if Rod were going down to Florida, but it turned out that he went back to England with a French friend. Brad Coolidge was able to welcome him, since Brad was up on Nantucket. We alerted the Campbells on Long Island, the Snows in Connecticut, and the Margolins in New York City.

Capt. James Smith (U.S. Army) was posted to Germany and sold his Atalanta (A103) to Commander Bruce Bauer of the Naval Research Laboratory. There are still three Atalantas still on the Chesapeake Bay with Russell Coile (A101) at Annapolis and Jim Lytle (A182) at the Norfolk, Virginia end of the Bay. Brad Coolidge sold his boat (A149) to Jack Campbell who took her north to Long Island, New York.

The Americans enjoyed hospitality in England this past summer with Russell Coile sailing with Brig. Templer (A140 *Treenlaur*) and with Major-General Odling (A150 *Salizanda*) in July. Brad Coolidge sailed with the Odlings in September.

We hope the pound will improve so that the British can visit over here. Please try to figure out some way to get here so that we can repay this hospitality. The Coiles were able to provide some hospitality to members of the Little Ships Club and the Cruising Association. We were unable to get up to Canada to the Olympic Games where Paul Roy (A62) had invited us to contact him. He has owned *Coco* since 1958 and she is

'still spic and span and attracts attention wherever we go'.

Capt. Joseph Smith (U.S. Navy, retired) has his A6 in storage on Long Island. He works for Grumman Aircraft Company and is temporarily in California on some missile-trials with the F-14 fighter. When he finally retires from working, *Kittiwake* will return to Jo's real home at Birdneck Point at Virginia Beach, Virginia. When Jo was commanding officer of an aircraft carrier he bought A6 in Gibraltar and it has been across the Atlantic five times, but never by sail power.



# AN EASTCOASTER GOES WEST

J.S. Stearn — *Bluster* — A183

Last month I met a couple who had been to the same South Coast resort for their holidays to bask on the same sands in what they claimed was always the same perfect weather for ten years. Well, some people are made like that and some just are not. We like to have a small stab at the unknown, to stretch ourselves just a little further, to clock up a few more 'firsts', to build up a bit more experience. So 1975 saw us shaking ourselves out of our comfortable East Coast ways, determined to sample ROCKS. Wailing Willie of Woolverstone recounted hair-raising horrors; 'are you sure you know what you're doing?' asked Fearsome Fred. We knew. We also know our limitations only too well, but hope to make up what we lack in strength and stamina with thorough preparation and a philosophic acceptance of 'defeat' when necessary.

Over the years *Atalanta* Bulletins have been saturated with accounts of cruises to the Channel Islands. Here's another, but with a difference. This one started from Ramsholt on the Deben in Suffolk. Husband, wife, and three teenage children travelled the usual one mile up-river to *Bluster* in the dinghy, one of those expanded polystyrene affairs which are said to be able to support eight people even if broken in half, and a good thing with the appalling amount of gear we seemed to be taking with us. *Bluster's* latest acquisition is an electronic log of the impeller type. After only two weeks on the mooring this was once again seized up.

Lacking the refinements of the more expensive installations, cleaning the impeller involves taking it out and having a go with a toothbrush, stemming *Bluster's* desire to play sperm whales with your foot. This particular cleansing yielded four small shrimps and a baby barnacle.

Hoping for a fair wind and a fast passage we stowed our gear, rehearsed (verbally) man-overboard and abandon-ship drill, got all essentials to hand, prepared the passage food, put new batteries in the torches and retired to bed. Well, I did say thorough preparation.

As it turned out it was all to no avail, the following days bringing fog, calms, and a frustrating mixture of sailing and motoring through the long, hot, misty days. Despite our new kicking-strap and a longer-than-last-year jib-stick for the genny, progress was slow. So off Littlehampton while waiting for the tide to turn in our favour for the Looe, we swam around with scrubbing brushes to clean up the bottom, resolving to make a better job of it later. Once again a forecast of 'fog patches' turned our bows havenwards, this time to an incredibly crowded Brading Harbour which we entered at the last possible moment, keels half up and rudder lifted a little, but scraping nevertheless. How often have we been grateful for this *Atalanta* ability to test the situation whilst leaving open the option of retreat.

Because of the poor visibility we had been having and which was worse at night, we decided on a day passage to Cherbourg. I don't like doing this; you always feel rushed and in this instance we did not know the port either, but crossing those shipping lanes in

dark and fog was just not on. It was bad enough in daylight. Ships loomed out of the mist far too close for comfort. All went well until about five miles from France, and then it came down a real pea-souper. After that it was a constant watch on radio bearings and soundings. Let the purist deride these modern electronic aids all he pleases; they had my blessing that evening and our first view of land was the Fort de L'Ouest. We even had to feel our way across the harbours with compass and log, rejoicing as each new light came up as expected.

Cherbourg — we were on our way. The boys would call it Cherryburger, perhaps a little lighthearted on this breezy, sunny day, so different from the tribulations of yesterday. We had a treat in store too. Earlier in the year we earned a small reward for retrieving a dinghy at sea and this was earmarked for a 'meal ashore in France'. (Bank clerk on production of a few francs, overcome by curiosity, 'may I ask how long you are staying in France?'). May I here recommend 'La Taverne' in the Square Napoléon Bonaparte. A memorable meal.

Visibility remained poor and our hopes of delivering our daughter (not a sailor this one; rather a bikini-clad adorning of foredecks) to her friends in Jersey, were declining. Encouraged by the settled conditions, a good wind, neap tides, and the ability to return if Alderney did not come up on schedule, we did set out for the island, armed with excellent sailing directions. The sail was exhilarating, a fast reach averaging  $6\frac{1}{2}$  knots and touching  $7\frac{1}{2}$  k. in surges, but after the appointed time, no Alderney. Visibility was about a mile. An equally puzzled French boat came up to confer and the navigator (to my shame on this occasion — me), learnt her first useful Channel Island lesson: D.R. just is not good enough. The tides are so variable that to be any use D.R. positions must be calculated at least half hourly and are no substitute for sight. Hasty calculations now showed that we could not have overshot, with the attendant risks of encountering Burhou or the Casquets, but we were too far north. The strong, fair wind was sufficient to overcome the neap tide and we retraced, accompanied by the French boat. If a little subdued at first our spirits were soon lifted by the glorious sail, *Bluster* cutting through the sparkling water, her beautiful blue and white genny taut as a drum, and the day yet young. This time we were more vigilant and constant checks soon brought us in sight of Quenard Point light, and the rest was easy.

The weather was hot and sunny, but determined to stay misty, so we settled down to enjoy Alderney until it cleared. The wind that had been so helpful in the morning was a lusty Nor'easter, not the best of conditions for Braye Harbour, but we tucked in behind the Toulouse Rock under Fort Albert, lying to a 25 lb. C.Q.R., 15 fathoms of nylon warp with a weight let down, and she held with no trouble. For three days we tramped all over the island, lay on the hot sands, dived off the rocks into the clear depths below and revelled nostalgically in the glorious old-fashionedness of the place. May it never, never be 'developed'. (In Alderney the telephones work because the vandals face the birch). Emma left ship here, departing like a queen, only passenger in her own shining yellow aeroplane from the perfect miniature airport. Then followed a bottom-scrubbing-by-careening operation. In all my years of sailing I have never seen anyone do this, afloat, and we are indebted to the Bulletin for the idea. It was so simple and satisfactory I cannot think why we never did it before.

Wednesday, August 6th dawned bright and clear. At last we could really see; rocks and birds and sands on Burhou instead of just a grey shape in the mist. With continuing

good visibility promised, this was our chance. At the propitious time we upped anchor, and we were not the only ones. A small fleet left the harbour together, the winds were kind, and our first experience of Channel Island pilotage had begun. One by one, the correct transits came up; Quenard Point, Fort Albert, Clonque Fort, Nanelle Rock, Les Etacs, Telegraph Tower, all fell into place as the Swinge bore us through on its best behaviour, past the wreck of the Shell tanker **Point Law** on the rocks north of Telegraph Bay, just to remind us not to take this benign mood for granted. But today was a real beginner's day. The light winds, heading us at times, necessitating some beating, made the 23-mile journey with tide take eight hours but were perfect for our purpose. They allowed time for the identification of each new landmark, time to be sure, and time to enjoy. I shall never forget my first view of the Casquets with their towering white lighthouse shining in the sunlight.

After the ecstasies of the sail St. Peter Port was an anti-climax. Packed with floating humanity; after squeezing *Bluster* in we went ashore to even more packed walking humanity, driving humanity, shopping humanity, knick-knacks, souvenirs, crowds; in fact a rude shock. I cannot but sympathise with any population having to entertain mass tourism for their survival; we left at the first possible opportunity.

The essence of success in sailing around the Channel Isles, as any pilot will tell you, is to make careful use of the tides. All the easier without a harbour sill to be covered and a long wait at the fuelling pontoon. The forecast was for settled weather and a south-east force 2-4. Perfect for a quiet anchorage on the lee side of Sark we thought, and set out against an already turned tide in the Little Russell. Picking up and identifying those little beacons marking a safe passage to Herm was more difficult than expected, but a glimpse of their foundations at Low Water Springs gives you a healthy respect for accuracy. Jethou to starboard, Rosière Steps to port, Vale Mill (just visible) astern, and the *Bluster* cork-popped out of the *Passe Percée* into the Great Russell. Here the light wind failed us, the spring tide caught, and power was once again called for: another pilot maxim ('... and a good engine will be necessary'). Slowly the cliffs of Sark approached but still no visible sign that Brechou was truly an island. We had opted for the Gouliot Pass, that narrow, rock-girt strip of rushing water between the towering cliffs of Sark and Brechou. Once again conditions were perfect, so helpful for 'first-timing' in those waters. A passage of the Gouliot into the dramatic ancient harbour of Sark, Havre Gosselin, beyond, is an experience to be recommended. We intended to spend the night there, but for the day we continued to the anchorage at La Grande Grève where we could swim, enjoy the sands, and explore the island. What actually happened was rather different but, I afterwards learned, a common enough Channel Islands happening, and an unpleasant one. The boys had a wonderful afternoon in the surf, but the wind was backing and it was obvious we could not leave *Bluster*. We never did see Sark, except to climb up to the tiny causeway that joins Little Sark to its bigger sister and enjoy the enormous panoramic view it affords. When we got down again it was to find that with the rising tide a swell was coming straight into the bay and beginning to break on the shore. It was time to leave, and a bit late at that. Masts were swinging and conditions were distinctly uncomfortable. Our plan was to carry the Avon out, lifting it up over the waves as far as possible, the jump in and paddle like mad until beyond the surf. The first time it did not work. We went out too far so that clambering in took too long and we were ignominiously tipped back into the sea. So was the Seagull outboard but we had the little book with us containing 'what to do if



totally immersed in sea water', and so yet another 'there's always a first time' was added to the list. At the second attempt we went out less far, then stood and watched, waiting for a lull, and a load of very wet sailors and their belongings reached a now wildly-rolling *Bluster*. It was time to get out, and with the wind rising we took the southern route back to St. Peter Port. Turned away from the marina, the outer harbour crammed full, we spent a peaceful night outside in Havelet Bay under the floodlit Castle Cornet.

Now followed a few days of exceptionally high and low water making cruising tricky, but low water quite fascinating. For instance, miles of sand and rock, shrimps and seaweeds, are exposed west of Herm, easy to explore from the Rosière Steps anchorage. One slight hazard here, apart from the poor, weedy holding ground, is the huge excursion launches which arrive constantly and it is well worth tucking well in, north of the Steps.

The time came all too soon to start the return journey. We had a fast passage back to Alderney on a very strong tide. The Swinge is much more difficult on the northward passage, especially if you dawdle on the way, when you are apt to find the tide has beaten you to it, but on this occasion we had a good wind and no trouble. At least we may not have had a six-hour wait, but there was a small price to pay after all. With only a mile to go a continuous line of overfalls appeared ahead, between Burhou and the breakwater. Adlard Coles warns of this possibility, so the inevitable just had to be borne. Breaking waves came at us from all directions, tugging and pushing at poor *Bluster* as the wind drew her steadily through, and then a beam-on wave broke right over the boat. We were drenched, but of course, being an *Atalanta*, the water had drained away almost before we could see again, and *Bluster* was soon into the sunny and calm waters of Braye and another first clocked up. Four dripping people in the cockpit on such a day – impossible!

We left again pre-dawn the next morning, but our new pride and joy, the electronic log, ceased to function. An hour later still no sign of life, so we abandoned the passage in favour of some more sleep and very fortunate that turned out to be as we woke again to unforecasted thick fog. During the morning two or three boats came in from Guernsey, their crews very shaken, having been caught near Alderney with the especially strong August spring tide giving them no option of returning, and being swept through the treacherous Swinge quite blind and quite miraculously. On a similar occasion earlier one boat did not make it and ended up on the rocks at Saye. There was apparently no great damage and it was later refloated. Such is the changing face of this place.

The fog cleared to reveal an *Atalanta* called *Apple*. As we rowed over to reconnoitre, so they were rowing to us! *Apple's* new owner, a young Australian, came aboard and showered us with questions. He had just bought *Apple* off the Upper Thames where she had been for seven years, and never saw the owner who was in hospital. Consequently the unusual features of the boat were a complete mystery to him: 'why do the keels slam about so?' – he had only discovered one keel bolt; 'why does the boat go backwards powerfully under engine but will only creep forwards?' – the variable pitch propellor was set in reverse, etc. He and his wife were on their way to the Med. for a year, full of optimism.

In the late afternoon we set forth once more, the log now time-consumingly 'repaired'. Before long it was playing up again, but with a steady westerly and a quiet night coming up we gave up and crossed on the home-made trailing log, which we hope explains our appalling landfall.

'There's Old Harry' – doubtfully; 'It doesn't look quite right somehow'; had never seen it before, anyway. Half an hour later it was positively identified as – the Needles. Shame! A spanking, sparkling sail round the Island followed; another first. 'Hold on, St Catherine's overfalls coming up'; the slight ensuing popple caused some rather derisive laughter. This crew knew about overfalls.

And that is it really. The long haul home was enlivened by a run to Newhaven in a rising gale, and what an unwelcoming haven when you make it; the new charges are £2-50 per night. Also a night entry into Dover using the Aldis to request entry, and for once being understood and getting a reply! Finally a fast Estuary crossing, Ramsgate to the Deben in nine hours with Thomas undertaking the navigation and everything coming up spot on, leaving us at the end of the day with one cocky Thomas. As we sat in the cockpit on our mooring once again, sampling the duty-free and recounting endlessly the events of this incident-packed cruise, it was already 'where shall we go next year?'. The end of a wonderful experience for us but *Bluster* will be off again in a few days, skippered by our eldest and his crew. Their destination? The Channel Islands!



# MODIFICATIONS TO AN A31

D. Merrett – *Moby Dick* – A31/7

D. Merrett (*Moby Dick* – A31/7) writes mentioning some modifications he has made. The keels are lifted by a hand hydraulic pump, there is also an electric pump, but owing to drain on the batteries this is kept mainly for use in emergencies. Non-standard is the sealing and clamping of the keel bolts; the bolts have been grooved to take O-ring seals and the clamping is hydraulic by cylinders which he designed and made. It is still possible, however, to clamp by hand in the normal way should there be a failure in the hydraulic system. Other features are dual steering (wheel and tiller), and a raised rear hatch cover (four inches) to improve headroom. The reversible PNP propellor has been replaced by a fixed propellor driven through a PRM oil-operated gear box. Although this is better for manoeuvring in harbour, it does have the disadvantage of prop drag when sailing, against being able to feather the blades with the old one. One major addition also fitted to *Moby Dick* is a 'Cetrec' auto-pilot; this works very well.



# RIGHT UP EVERY CREEK

Frances Martin – *Seamajor* – A92

We started our summer holiday this year at West Mersea, Essex. There, we launched *Seamajor* down such a gently-sloping hard that we eventually had to push the trailer into the sea, adding extra ropes to those already on the car to prevent the car having to go into the sea too. We then made our way across the Blackwater and anchored for the night west of Bradwell Power Station, having taken care to select a place where the smell from this did not reach us!

We had arranged to take part in the West Mersea town regatta on the Saturday, so on the Friday we sailed up the Blackwater to Maldon and back to Bradwell to anchor for the night. We saw many sprit-sail barges on the way to and at Maldon and innumerable jelly-fish of a much paler variety than our local ones.

The Saturday race was much enjoyed and proved very exciting as the first 4 *Atalantas* arrived at the finishing line within ten minutes of each other after sailing an 11-mile course. We came fourth with our host Major-General Odling about thirty-seconds ahead of us. We are indebted to him for much useful information and help both before and during our holiday. After the race we decided to sail to Brightlingsea, near the mouth of the River Colne to find shelter. The following morning with a brisk breeze blowing we went up river, reefed to the first batten. We sailed up to Rowhedge, then back to Wivenhoe to have a look at the town and thence to anchor off Brightlingsea again.

Monday saw us sailing past the Bench Head Buoy again (it has been one of our racing marks) and back to spend the night at Bradwell, but this time we went into the marina to enable us to make use of their washing facilities. We managed to touch our keels once while trying to follow the tortuous entrance channel, having failed to see one vital buoy.

The next morning we abandoned our plan of going to the Medway, because the wind would have been on the nose and very light, and decided to go to Harwich instead. The wind died completely as we reached the Land Guard Buoy and we finished the journey under motor, having taken ten and a half hours to cover the twenty-six miles.

We found Harwich a most interesting town and spent the morning visiting the Redoubt (a fortification built during the Napoleonic Wars), the Old Pilot Station and the old lighthouse, and replenishing our supplies. After lunch we left for Ipswich, taking the tide up to Orwell past Pin Mill. The dock at Ipswich appeared to be full of commercial traffic, so we sailed back down river to Ostrich Creek where we made fast to a vacant mooring. We left the boat there while we made a mad dash on foot into Ipswich to look at the city and find a second-hand bookshop. We were back on the boat within two hours to catch the outgoing tide to Pin Mill, where we were lucky enough to find another empty mooring, although we almost had to dry out.

On the following day we decided to sail to Woodbridge. We passed the entrance, which

looked fearsome with water breaking over the bar, but in fact it was quite safe if the leading marks were followed. We anchored at Felixstowe Ferry and watched the National Firefly Championships while waiting for the tide to turn, after which we sailed up to Woodridge, going aground once when the channel became narrow. Picking up a mooring, we went to visit the tide-mill, a cap mill and then the flint church before drifting down to Waldringfield for the night.

Between Waldringfield and Woodbridge Haven we saw some interesting birds when we sailed down the Deben and out to sea the next morning. Then we visited the river Ore. The keels bumped once which crossing the bar, despite the fact that the chart said that we had enough water. We again anchored just inside the river, at Orford Haven, to wait for the tide before proceeding to Orford and Aldeburgh. We saw only one other person tacking up the river; everyone else merely took down their sails and motored, despite the force four breeze. We sailed on past Aldeburgh and finally grounded at Iken Cliff, trying to get out of the Channel to anchor. Trying to push off with a long pole was a mistake, as all we succeeded in doing was covering the boat and ourselves in thick black mud. We kedged off and had to anchor in the middle of the channel so as to have sufficient water to float for the night. Some of the crew walked to Snape, while others rested and enjoyed a beautiful sunset.

A head wind and the narrow channel caused us to motorsail for a short distance out of the Iken Cliff anchorage and then we had an uneventful sail to Aldeburgh, where we were just in time to find a mooring before being surrounded by sailing boats taking part in a race. There was the usual dash to see something of the town before moving on to Orford where we repeated the process. Orford Castle was found to be an absolute gem.

The wind increased during the night and it was still blowing hard in the morning, when the forecast was for near gale force winds later. After our experiences on the previous day, we decided to stay where we were and not risk crossing the bar under these conditions. Perhaps it would have been better had we gone, because as we were sitting quietly in the cabins reading a Shark Catamaran punched a neat hole just above our younger son's head. The skipper spent the rest of the day making a temporary repair which fortunately lasted for the rest of the holiday.

We left Orford for Harwich the following day and with a force five wind on the port quarter, had quite an uncomfortable sail. Sheila (now 17) was sick for the first time this holiday and the rest of us didn't feel our usual sprightly selves. Off Felixstowe the sea became very confused and when a pilot boat, which had slowed down to pass us, accelerated again, all I could see of it was the flag at the masthead! We had lunch tied up to a mooring off Harwich and when the tide was favourable moved on to the Suffolk Marina in the Orwell river.

As we had not visited the river Stour on our way north, we sailed as far as Mistley, which I found disappointing; A place with such a name should not have been so drab when seen from the river. As 'Secret Waters' was our next destination, we sailed down the Stour again, past Harwich and on to the Walton Backwaters, where we anchored off Stone point and enjoyed the local birdlife. The next morning we sailed to the Marina on the Twizzle, walked to Walton on the Naze and returned to the boat to sail into all the possible creeks of the Backwaters, before making our way back to Harwich to be ready for an early departure the next morning.

We asked Alan (11 years old) to tell us what he thought of Harwich Harbour. He replied: 'Most yachtsmen's idea of a pleasant anchorage is a nice quiet backwater with only the birds (!) for company. I myself prefer a harbour like Harwich where I can watch a ship going in or out every five minutes, so the book says. I do not agree, but when the ships do come they come in rushes of five or six. Here is a list of the types of ships seen: Ferries, Dredgers, Tankers, Container Ships, Tugs, Pilot Boats, general Cargo ships, lightships, Trinity House vessels, and Life Boats'. He also made a list of aeroplanes seen during the holiday mostly from the Deben which reads, 'Belfast 2 or 3, F111 3, Seaknight 3, Phantoms innumerable'.

Michael (aged 13) takes up the count. 'We left Harwich at 0530 in the dark. Kenneth, Dad and Mum were the only people who were on deck as the other crew members were catching up on lost sleep. When I awoke I went on deck and discovered that we were moving quite quickly with the tide, with a rolling swell on the quarter. Sheila awoke, took an anti-seasickness pill and went back to sleep. Alan was making superb models of boats out of Lego below decks. We sailed quietly towards Burnham and put up our spinnaker. A meal was requested and provided by Mum. We arrived at 1200 and the boatman came and moved us to another buoy. Then we went ashore and had a look at *Morning Cloud* (there for Burnham Week) and had an excellent shower in the Royal Burnham Yacht Club. We returned to *Seamajor* duly refreshed and saw *Morning Cloud* moored a few boats away'.

Kenneth went shopping at 1100 next morning and when he returned we sailed up the Crouch. It was an enjoyable sail up to Hullbridge, where we picked up a vacant mooring, went for a walk round the village and bought some fruit. When we left Hullbridge we had to motor because of the tightly packed moorings. Then as we tacked down the Crouch a squall hit us, the rain beat down and the wind disappeared; this happened twice. With the next squall the wind increased and we were just in sight of Burnham when we saw a dinghy drifting with its mast broken. We threw them a line and towed them under sail to Burnham, where they let go of the rope and went on to a mooring. We went with the tide past Burnham and entered Yokesfleet Creek, reached a quiet anchorage and passed the night in peace. The following morning we sailed towards Haven Gore Bridge and waited for the tide. We tacked about, but held on too long and grounded on a lee shore. I rowed out an anchor and we kedged off. Then we sailed down to Haven Gore, passed under the lifting bridge and over the Maplin sands on our way to the Medway.

Kenneth (aged 15) continues, 'In a forecast force eight wind, we made five knots: under spinnaker following the sticks to an Army watchtower with the depth being a constant 6ft. at H.W.S. (It was H.W.S!). We could see in the distance five twenty-foot high towers on the south side of the Thames. Our ordinary spinnaker enabled us to reach our maximum speed in a force four. We saw seven ships in the two-hour Thames crossing, only two of which came within half a mile of us. There was a two knot tide against us and a good food shop in Queenborough, Isle of Sheppey'.

'At the Elizabethan Upnor Castle we saw A1, HMS *Endurance* (Ice patrol ship) and a good slipway. The force three to four north-easterly wind died in the rain back at Queenborough and we could only find one mooring in eight feet of water, although there is an anchoring area off the hard'.

'To go up the Thames we had to go with the two to three knot tide which helped us to

tack into a westerly force two wind. We saw about sixty merchant ships on the way to Woolwich but only twenty were operating. The Royal Albert Dock Marina charged £1.50 and allowed us to lock out at 0700 the following morning. A free car-ferry takes people to Woolwich, where there is also a walking tunnel built in 1912'.

'We sailed down river in the spitting rain, past the interesting Thames industry and oil refineries, to Hole Haven, west of Canvey Island, where a mile-long new jetty has been built. The Hole Haven fairway is only thirty yards from Canvey Island, but the shops are two miles away. Later we anchored in Southend's Ray Gut, three-quarters of a mile from shore, across flat sands'.

'The following morning we went from one buoy to the next until we passed *Morning Cloud*, number 2468, outside the Crouch. We raced away from a sleek thirty-foot yacht in a force five squall. Had we followed the line of the deep draft boats in West Mersea we wouldn't have got into two feet of water. The hard was very flat, but we managed to recover and return to Major-General Odling's to park *Seamajor*, ready for the three hundred mile drive home another day'.

This year we sailed nearly four hundred miles during our three week holiday. With Kenneth taking his share of the helming with the skipper and the mate, it has become possible to make longer passages, but we find that boredom sets in if we try to sail for too long. Michael and Alan have become expert at kedging off, with Michael rowing and Alan looking after the anchor, while Sheila has taken over the preparation of meals.

We really enjoyed our holiday, visiting all the main rivers between the Alde and the Swale and in most going as far up as navigation permits. We can recommend the area to anyone who wants good winds for sailing. With the easterlies reinforced by the onshore breezes we were never without wind at all (except in the very early mornings and late evenings), although sometimes it was lighter than we could have wished and we only once had to remain in port because there was too much.

After our rather poor, untuned performance in the West Mersea race on the third day of our holiday, we gradually improved both ourselves and the boat and by the end of our holiday had beaten countless Snapdragons, Folkboats, Centaurs and other Westerlies and a number of thirty-foot boats, both upwind and down. The only types of boat to show us a clean pair of heels in the three weeks were a 26ft. Contessa, a Vega and a "Spirit", a Van der Stadt half-tonner. We even thought of renaming *Seamajor* 'Burnham Off!'



# TRAILERS

E.A. Payne — *Hullabaloo* — A166

Owners who are thinking of hauling out their boat for the Winter should carefully examine the trailer before doing so, as they may find, as I did, that corrosion has occurred after frequent immersion in sea water. The greatest danger is to the curved steel plates enclosing the rubber mountings for the Flexitor springs, which I found to be nearly rusted away. By good luck, I found that galvanised steel roof troughing, off-cuts of which can be found in most builders' yards, fitted exactly over the corroded covers; I packed them well with Seelastic and bitumen and secured them in position by stout steel straps on each side of the channel axles and held them with bolts. The spare spaces I filled with wood, suitably shaped to fit the curver covers, covering the whole assembly lavishly with black tar-varnish. As an additional precaution, I limited the travel of the swinging arms holding the wheel axles by inserting an additional axle of angled steel, so if the worst should happen, the arm would be held by it. It will also probably be found that the walls of the tyres will be perished, but scrap tyres can be obtained from most garages, which have too many but have been discarded because of worn treads and garages are only too glad to get rid of them! It is as well to select tyres with as large a diameter as possible in order to help the springing and lessen the strain on the Flexitors. The boat bearers will probably need recovering, canvas for which can be obtained with off-cuts from sail or tarpaulin makers. Preferably the whole trailer should be treated with anti-rust solution before repainting and it should be turned over on its side to expose the underside, which is where most attention is needed.

## Accumulators

When buying a battery for the boat it is advisable to choose one having screw stoppers which should be tightly screwed down; those having push-on filler covers in one piece are liable to allow the electrolyte to leak when the boat heels, with disastrous results!





# A MOST ENJOYABLE FORTNIGHT

Valerie Donovan – *Aquilo II* – A184

**Captain: Maurice Donovan. Crew: Valerie and Liz Donovan.**

*Aquilo II* started her summer cruise to the Isles of Scilly on July 18th, by motoring up the Dart to Sunday lunch at Tuckenhay in company with *Treenlaur, Trio* and *Tilacions*. *Trio* had engine trouble, but the Rowe family, having sailed within sight of 'The Maltsters', finally arrived by dinghy to join the party in excellent ploughman's lunches before the ebb tide sent us all down river.

Poor visibility on Monday kept us in Dartmouth, anchored near *Trio* while her engine was put right. Tuesday (20th) saw both *Atalantas* off to Salcombe, where the Rowes had a flat and most kindly invited us to supper. During the afternoon the unmanned *Trio* dragged her anchor, and no sooner had Maurice and Liz left to capture her than *Aquilo* also moved off up the harbour. She was rescued by the Harbour-master, after which both boats were moored to a buoy for the night.

Our next stop, after eight hours on a broad reach, was St. Mawes; which was almost too quiet with both its hotels shut. Eventually we managed to get a meal ashore. No wind the next day, but after motoring across Mount's Bay a good North-West got up. We were able to set the genoa and the auto-pilot for the crossing to St. Mary's, arriving at Hugh Town 12 hours after leaving St. Mawes. The harbour at Hugh Town was crowded with French boats, and on moving to the anchorage at Tresco we were again surrounded and even serenaded with guitars, flutes and French songs.

After five days spent in exploring the Islands on foot, we returned to Penzance, just missing the chance of locking into the inner harbour and having to dry out by the wall. One or two large boulders gave us some anxious moments before we settled down for the night. Next morning an early start was made, and a light N.W. wind gave us our first real chance to try the spinnaker that we had bought through an advertisement in this Bulletin. All went well until we rounded the Lizard, where it was found that we had miscalculated the tide and it took eight hours' hard sailing to reach Fowey.

Here we spent two nights at anchor, enjoying the hospitality of the Yacht Club. We met the *Salters* in *Turnstone*, and *Titania Missee Memsahib* from Exmouth. *Moby Dick* (A31) was moored at Polruan.

The passage from Fowey to Salcombe started quickly with the genoa, but from Rame Head to Bolt Head we were racing along at 6–7 knots with the aid of a spinnaker – most exhilarating. Finally, came a quiet sail back to our own mooring at Dittisham, with a pause on the drive home to finish as we had started with lunch by the river at Tuckenhay. It was our first holiday with neither fog or gales, and a most enjoyable fortnight.



# SOME THOUGHTS OF SECRETARY O

A condition of membership is that owners should report all Atalantas and allied craft seen which are not entered, or are incorrectly listed, in the Register. Also, if you sell please report the name and address of the buyer.

To save postage cheques are not normally acknowledged.

Members who have not received papers, etc., for which they have applied and paid for should write again to the Hon. Secretary, who sometimes gets snowed under.

Owners appear to be keener on sailing than on answering letters. This is meritorious, but trying to Hon. Sec.

Paid-up membership in mid-October for 1976-77 is 108. There are still many more who should belong : Unity is Strength.

H. Bauer (A103) reports ample accommodation for visiting yachts at Navy Dock, Fishing Creek, Chesapeake Bay Harbour, U.S.A.

Trailers for hire: A46, A128 and A147 trailer plus Land-Rover.

A76 wants a trailer. Hon. Sec. would like to know of any for hire or sale or any place of manufacture.

A46 wants, in particular, a No. 1 working jib; also other sails and an inflatable dinghy..

A78 wants a Coventry-Victor engine and a lightweight genoa.

A146 has a S.L. toilet for sale.

The Association welcomes Fulmar owners as members.

Boats for sale: A9 (perhaps), A65, A115, A132, A161, A185.

Back numbers of this Bulletin: 1968/9 to 1975/76 available at 50p. each.

'Donovan on Keels' and 'Hull Repairs' have proved to be best-sellers. Now trying to produce 'Sailing to advantage', 'A Summary on Fitting and Gadgetry' and a better index to back number of the Bulletin.

'Donovan on Keels': Some early applicants for copies may have received them without the amendment to the paragraph and diagram on the 'Thickness of the Backing-plate'. In short, the Backing-plate must not be replaced with a thicker plate. Details from Hon. Sec.

The **Daily Telegraph** of 16th September, 1976 printed a double-column piece headed 'Amateur Sailors angered by snooping Taxmen'. The reporter Maurice Weaver, stated that irritation and anger were rampant among yachtsmen because of inquiries being made by Inland Revenue officials regarding purchases of boats. It would seem that information about yachts was obtained from the Registrar General of Shipping and Seamen at Cardiff, and this source was confirmed by Customs and Excise, who admitted that details of purchases and changes of ownership are being passed on.

Mr. Gordon Fairley, of the R.Y.A. was quoted as saying 'I think it is really a move to catch out those chaps who have a lot of undeclared cash under the bed'. It was further noted that prices of yachts are no less inflated than those of everything else, but a boat being classed as a 'tangible, movable object with a predictable life of less than 50 years' is not subject to Capital Gains Tax. The report ended by suggesting that if registration of a boat merely qualifies for a tax check, 'it seems likely that the Cardiff office will have a lot less work to do in the future'.

Footnote: The Hon. Sec. will gladly supply certificates of identity of long-standing members who are going abroad.

On a lighter note: An old owner but a new member writes — "I would have joined ages ago, but I thought the Association was DEAD!



COVER PICTURES:

(Top, left and right) Start and Finish:  
*Bluff* at Plymouth and at Newport, R.I.

(Bottom, from left): *Seamajor* and *Kookaburra*  
before the race at West Mersea, page 18.

*Moby Dick*, page 17; a trio at Tuckenhay on the river Dart, page 23.